Section 4
Rowlestown: Village Design Code

The Village Design Code is a generic set of guidelines and prescriptions for the village as a whole. It should be read in conjunction with Section 3, Design Codes 1 to 11, which are specific to location of each of the Development Areas.

4.1   Sustainable Design Objectives

Environmental Sustainability

Reduce pressure on the environment:
- Foster walking and cycling by provision of safe, attractive, clutter-free pedestrian and cycling routes between attractors of activity: school, church, community facilities, shops, businesses, recreation areas and riverside park
- Promote biodiversity by conserving existing hedgerows and trees. Introduce 'green' pathways through the village. Encourage community-led planting programmes
- Provide for food production through allotments and/or community gardens
- Maximise microclimatic advantages of tree belts and hedgerows
- Use quality, where possible, locally sourced materials and detailing to make streets and spaces more attractive, accessible and inclusive
- Make the best use of land – a finite resource, for recreation and countryside conservation as well as building, to create an attractive, sustainable whole
- Foster waste reduction. Provide a convenient, attractive and well-maintained recycling area in the village

Making villages more attractive and sustainable: Local Identity
- Build on the strong, distinctive identity of Rowlestown village: it will assist community and economic regeneration. A quality environment with pride of place will benefit the community, attract visitors and promote long-term economic, social and environmental well-being
- A quality public realm is very important as the outdoors meeting place for all people of the village

Heritage and Culture
- History and heritage of place are central to shaping and building local distinctiveness
- Conserve older building stock especially vernacular buildings, and find sustainable opportunity for sensitive reuse
- Cherish distinctive local features – provide good signage and encourage cultural tourism for the village

Community
Assets that already constitute local identity include a strong community spirit, a culture of friendliness and neighbourliness, and a strong and unique local brand that is born of history and shared experience.
- Promote community participation in the implementation of proposals for the public realm
- Erect and manage a public notice board for events, local news

Leisure

- Strengthen existing amenities and leisure: make them accessible to all sectors and age groups
- Diversify: Target additional leisure activities that could act as attractors to the village, such as healthy hubs in the riverside park and its continuation as a regional park for the county

Natural Beauty

- Cherish the extraordinary value of an unspoilt rural environment and strive to maintain it
- Confine development within the village envelope: it will increase its identity and strengthen the distinction between village and open countryside
- Maintain important views from the village to the countryside
- Develop good walking trails from village to countryside incorporating special features. Identify 'green' roads around the village and make them pedestrian friendly

Economy and Destination

- Identify what would attract visitors to this area: look for untapped opportunities to enhance distinctiveness –
- Village shops within convenient walking distance play a vital economic and social role in rural areas and are important for essential day-to-day needs. Rowlestown needs basic shopping provision, and should also strive to increase market share with speciality shops to attract visitors from the region, eg crafts, coffee shop etc
- Local country markets devoted to indigenous agricultural and craft produce are good for the rural economy and the village, becoming attractors of visitors. Explore ways to further enhance this activity and possibly extend it into the public realm in summer months
- Encourage home-based office and economic activities which are not traffic-generating

New Buildings

- Site-sensitive, contemporary, sustainable design recognising the special character of place will be encouraged
- Design for adaptability and flexibility – to promote long building life and socially sustainable settlements which are adaptable to life change - should be incorporated within every house plan
- Conserve energy in buildings. Aim for zero carbon design and incorporate high insulation, passive design and energy-efficient components. Exploit orientation. (www.seai.ie)
- Shape building form to create attractive, usable public and private spaces. Design to minimise wind and overshadowing, and to enhance shelter and sunlight
- Use environmentally friendly and preferably local materials where available for construction. Minimise construction waste and spoil by careful specification and segregation
- Reduce water consumption through water-sparing sanitary equipment. Encourage rainwater harvesting and grey water recycling in new development

4.2   General Village Objectives

4.21   Entrances to the Village

Generally:
- Upgrade village and speed signs, and introduce traffic calming through the village for the R125
- Hedgerows and trees creating leafy approach roads to Rowlestown should be rigorously protected, and, where degraded, new planting encouraged with indigenous types
- New entrances on approach roads should not be permitted except where it is possible to minimise damage to, or use a degraded section of hedgerow
- Protect stone walls

Entrance from Swords and M1, R125
- Introduce lower speed limits and traffic calming on the approaches to the village centre at the key junction leading to Church Street
- A paved, raised platform at this point would heighten the sense of entry and reduce speed

Entrance from Ashbourne
- Ensure that this attractive tree lined approach road is maintained, arriving at the old school which marks the beginning of the built up village

Local Road Entrance from the North
- Discourage development on this entrance as it approaches from open countryside. Define the road as a 'green lane' for pedestrians and cyclists first

Local Road Entrance from East, continuation of Church Road
- This is also a country lane of character which might be designated as a 'green lane' to ensure that moderate speeds are maintained by cars

4.22   The Public Realm

Generally:
- Promote the removal of overhead wires and poles, especially around the New Square and community centre
- Establish a principle of unfettered pedestrian and disabled mobility, applied to the New Square in particular
- Retain green in the public realm by trees, grass, shrubs, preserving glimpses to countryside etc
- Where village outdoor furniture is deemed necessary, it should be contemporary in style and similar in type throughout the village to provide cohesive identity
- Assess existing litter bins – clean or replace where necessary with contemporary, attractive solutions
- Keep seats in good repair and regularly paint
- Preserve stone walls and trees
- New, contemporary street lighting of village scale relating to pedestrian routes and traffic will enhance safety and look better
- Proposed new tree planting should be deciduous.
- Encourage the implementation of a 'litter-free' village
- Bollards are visually intrusive and best avoided in village locations, except where safety is a priority. Favour trees or planting instead
- Reduce traffic speed on Church Road by widening footpaths and providing accessible pedestrian crossings

4.23   Public Buildings

Generally
- Recognise the importance of setting and 'place-making' in new design, for example in the proposed village centre square
- Introduce descriptive historical information for heritage buildings and notice board for events

Old School
- Once a use is determined for the old school, provide pedestrian crossing and traffic calming to school approaches
- The entrance to the old school grounds is already well presented, although the concrete ground areas could be softened

Community Centre
- Encourage improvement and extension to the Centre, to achieve a better external appearance, and plan for future community resources on or near to it, including parking and play
- The Centre already has an important local role as well as further potential for regional tourism development
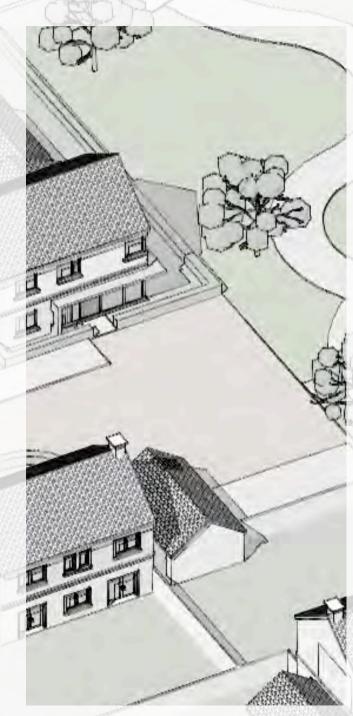- Aim for flexibility of use, reinforcing a dual role as community and cultural centre

4.24   The Village Centre and New Square

Generally

- Adhere to the design requirements of the Architectural Conservation Area, the LAP and the County Development Plan
- Design should respect and conserve the architectural quality, character and scale of its surroundings: the introduction of new design ideas could help to revitalise and modernise the village
- Existing 'gaps' between buildings, or stone walls, allow glimpses to the countryside beyond and add rhythm and character in the village streetscape. Rowlestown village has no shortage of gaps, but they should not all be filled
- Utilise a restricted design palette that respects existing materials, scale and rhythm
- In new design, find a contemporary, simple, modern expression derived from context, and design creatively with it
- Avoid fussy detailing, porches, dormers, overhanging eaves, heavy barge boards - simple is best
- Make quality boundaries, for example stone walls or trimmed hedges where fronting along Church Road
- Quality materials should be used, preferably locally sourced; stone, clay tiles, natural slate and timber windows and doors: composite aluminium and timber windows can retain visually slender sections
- Don't introduce 'fussy' landscaping – learn from what is there
- Ensure quality 'finishing' of all development in and around the village centre

More Specifically for Rowlestown village architectural heritage

- The traditional village pattern and structure is still evident, and should be conserved.
- Some of the old vernacular cottages still remain. They need to be further examined to establish and protect their heritage significance. Their retention is paramount and will need expert help to ensure that they may be reused and are not lost by default.
- Mature trees in the centre of the village are an important part of its distinct character, especially along the river. They need to be mapped and listed for protection.
- The Architectural Conservation report gives detailed advice on building conservation and should be consulted

4.3   Residential Design Recommendations

Provide a Site Design Statement, (See 4.4), to precede or accompany a planning application.

4.31   Aims:

- Design with careful regard to the objectives set out in Fingal County Development Plan, the Local Area Plan and the Architectural Conservation Area Plan for Rowlestown
- The achievement of high quality, innovative, safe and pleasant residential environments is a key objective
- Avoid typical patterns of estate housing - creative, site-sensitive innovation will be encouraged
- Respect neighbouring developments, the historical significance of the village and special character of site
- Allow the form of the land and landscape to shape design: contours are relatively steep in Rowlestown and should be acknowledged in design solutions
- Residential amenity, environmental sustainability, high standards, quality materials and attractive forms are significant factors
- Apply Sustainable Design Objectives
- Avoid long straight roads in favour of gentle curves
- Provide for cycle and pedestrian routes in development areas to increase permeability and access
- Courtyard development will be encouraged where appropriate
- Make a secure, attractive, intimate feeling within the development, creating shared space and safe play areas
- Shape design for easy access by children to green areas; design for safe children's play in public areas close to home
- Optimise outlook onto green / open space to provide passive surveillance
- Exploit orientation to increase light and passive solar gain
- Shape design to reduce the visual clutter associated with rear gardens - sheds, washing lines etc
- Zero carbon design is the aspiration - creating a house which does not make a negative affect on non-renewable fuels
- Consider and avoid overshadowing where possible
- Use materials judiciously on site to enhance the ambience and create a sense of identity and place
- Create special places of intimate scale within the design
- Promote views to landscape

4.32   Form:

Design to provide:
- Simple legible forms of varying size and type
- High standard of detailing and workmanship
- Natural roofing materials
- Contemporary design
- Sustainable design

4.33   Materials:

- High quality materials, if possible locally sourced
- Slate roofs
- Rendered elevations
- Timber windows and doors preferred, or composite windows of aluminium and timber
- Provide quality boundary walls, planters, seats and other special areas

4.34   Landscaping and Sustainable Drainage:

- Design and incorporate suitable landscaping, hard and soft
- Design to maximise microclimatic advantage
- New residential development should incorporate planting which takes into account existing tree types and patterns
- Identify plant and tree types at the outset. All external landscaping will require a completion certification to be submitted to Fingal County Council before residential units may be placed on the market

4.35   Soft Landscaping and Sustainable Drainage:

- Make it meaningful - to enhance privacy, to create attractive neighbourhoods or to provide play area
- Learn from existing on-site planting and local planting
- Retain and protect all existing mature, healthy trees and hedgerows
- Promote co-ordinated planting at boundary edges
- Be creative but keep it simple – identify specific types to bring simplicity and cohesion
- Use soft landscaping as an opportunity for permeable drainage surfaces, and make swales (shallow channels in green areas which have the capacity to hold surface water and slow down the entry of water into the local stream).
- Use pervious materials on areas which may normally be hard such as parking areas, and recreational areas. These must be designed as engineering contributions with a high landscape sensitivity.

4.36   Hard Landscaping:

- Minimise hard landscaping; use permeable gravel or hogging where appropriate.
- Quality materials; resist the tendency to cover paved surfaces with cobble effect concrete bricks. The appearance of these areas deteriorates with use, whereas natural stone, appropriate to location, has a more durable lifespan
- Hard landscape space should have a useful purpose. Left over hard surface space may be a future liability.

4.4 Site Design Statement (SDS)

All development must reflect the need to safeguard the quality of village life in Rowlestown, to protect and to enhance the character of its environmental assets.

Successful design relies on effective contextual analysis to identify the characteristics of place - scale, character, rhythm, materials, opportunities, challenges and even the oddities in a particular streetscape. The aim should be to stimulate contemporary reinterpretation and placemaking.

This document suggests that all planning applications within Rowlestown should be preceded or accompanied by a Site Design Statement with accompanying contextual photographs and maps. This checklist is not intended to be prescriptive, since each proposal will have its own specific influences and requirements.

An SDS should include the following:

- Introduction - the applicant, the proposal, existing use and planning history if any.
- Planning Requirements - County Development Plan, Local Area Plan, Architectural Conservation Area, zoning, designations applicable to site or adjoining lands, protected structures, archaeological interest, National Monuments in vicinity
- Development context – existing pattern language, neighbouring buildings, uses, character, materials, scale, rhythm, frontage widths, landscape, etc
- The Site - Site dimensions, topography, orientation, overlooking, views and prospects drainage, plot ratio, site coverage, location and capacity of services and relevant planning conditions
- Proposed Use - main issues, attractor/generator of activity, benefits, challenges
- Urban Opportunity - identify benefits to village
- Design Opportunities - identify the main design issues
- Landscaping Opportunity - vegetation and landscape features
- Vehicular and Pedestrian Opportunities – safe pedestrian routes and linkages
- Preliminary Design Proposal - Summary of design aims, preliminary sketches including Before and After sketches of the streetscape