

CASE STUDY - Clonakilty

Name: Clonakilty 400 Urban Design Master Plan

Location: Clonakilty, Co. Cork

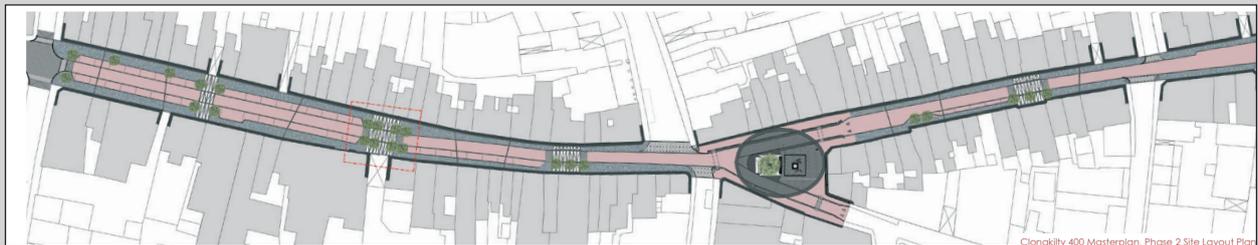
Project Type: Town Centre Regeneration

Completion: Phase 1 - 2013
Emmet and Aston Square)

Phase 2 - 2016
Pearce Street



Extent of the Scheme around Emmet Square.



Extent of the Scheme along Pearce, Ashe Streets and Aston Square.

Context and Movement:

The scheme extends for a section of Pearce and Ashe Streets (inclusive also of part of Aston Street) through the Centre of Clonakilty. These streets form part of what is the 'main street' of the town. The streets are lined with a diverse range of shops and other businesses, generating high levels of pedestrian activity. The movement function of the streets has been downgraded with the diversion of traffic around the central area of the town, giving them more of *Local* function. However the streets still play an important role in terms of providing access to business and circulation around the town centre.

Preceding Environment

Pearce, Ashe and Ante Streets were typical of many town centre streets laid out long before the advent of the motor age. Paths were very narrow, particularly for the volume of pedestrian traffic they carried. The street became saturated with traffic/car parking and the incremental addition of signage and line marking also had a negative visual impact on the historic streetscape.



Views from Pearce Street toward Ashe Square (top) and the main commercial centre (bottom). The dominance by cars (and associated signage) detracted from the townscape and created an environment that was hostile to pedestrians (Images Google Street View).

Objectives of the Scheme

The need for a major public realm upgrade and upgrade (including drainage works), created an opportunity to reexamine and reimagine the town centre environment. It was recognised that the dominance of cars (and associated signage) created an environment that detracted from the townscape and was hostile for pedestrians (safety concerns, accessibility issues and not conducive to social interaction).

Safety, accessibility and placemaking were prioritised. The scheme sought to renew the public domain, calm traffic (thus improving safety) and facilitate higher levels of social interaction.

Clonakilty 400 Masterplan was initiated in 2013 by the former town council to celebrate the 400th anniversary of the Clonakilty town charter. A heritage-led urban design plan was formulated which focused on providing new "living rooms" for civic and social events.

Scope of Works

The scheme consisted of:

- Realignment and narrowing of vehicular carriageways.
- Increased footpath widths.
- Rationalisation of on-street car parking
- Periodic changes to the carriageway surfaces including the creation of shared spaces integrated with public squares.
- Decluttering and simplification of road signage/markings, including substitution with smaller signs, use of powdered coloured poles and removal of double yellow lines.
- New horizontal (raised table courtesy crossings) and vertical (pinch points) deflections, integrated with landscape works.
- Kerb builds outs and reductions in corner radii.
- Improved pedestrian crossing facilities.
- Extension of footpath paving over side street junctions to increase pedestrian mobility.
- New planting including street trees
- New street furniture such as seating to encourage social interaction.



Ashe Square is a focal point of the scheme. Although the square is still traversed by traffic the creation of an attractive shared space has resulted in a multi-functional space that facilitates a wide range of community interactions and events increasing footfall for economic development and cultural activities.



Before (left) and after (right) images of Asna Square depicting its transformation from a somewhat isolated, confined and traffic dominated space (including a number of vacant shops) to an enhanced and integrated shared space. Vacant properties have now been occupied and property values have increased.



The integrated (self-regulating) design of the square ensures vehicle movement is slow and drivers are aware of pedestrian movement/priority. Clearly demarcated spaces following the line of footpaths also provide pedestrian only areas. People with visual impairments can use buildings lines, tactile paving and items of street furniture to navigate through the space.



Horizontal (raised table) and vertical deflection (pinch points) have been integrated with landscape works to create small sheltered areas or 'pocket squares' in order to calm traffic, enhance pedestrians mobility and enhance the visual amenities.



The 'pocket squares' also provide a space within which people can rest and interact with other members of the community.



Widened area of pavement with seating and streets trees. The extended area was previously used for parking. However as can be seen in the distance extensive parking bays have been retained along the street to enable loading and short term parking.



Tightened corner radii and build outs with paving continued across entrance treatment to slow traffic approaching the junction/turning and provide greater visibility and pedestrian priority.



Plan of a 'pocket square' courtesy crossing which integrates horizontal and vertical deflections in the carriageway with attractive landscape treatments.



Integration of services with paving materials.

Consultation

Extensive consultations with local residents, local community groups, business and elected members undertaken through multiple stages throughout the implementation of the Clonakilty 400 Masterplan, and Phases 1 and 2 of the scheme.

Impact of the Scheme

The Scheme has been widely recognized, winning multiple awards (including the Royal Institute of Architects Best public choice award 2014, 'Best Place of the Year 2017', Gubbio Price 2018), and is often cited as an exemplar for town centre renewal, place making and the implementation of DMURS. Cork Co. Co. has observed that¹:

'the contemporary public realm layer and urban design with its surroundings is considered by all to be a successful intervention that is attracting new town patrons and private investment'.

and

'Higher property prices and previously empty buildings are now occupied, delivering new urban vibrancy and a real sense of community'

Key Lessons

The scheme demonstrates that standard reinstatement works should never merely be a replacement of the existing legacy/substandard layouts. When major works are undertaken they should be seen as an opportunity to 'rethink' the street, to deliver better quality public realm and improve the quality of life for the community including socio-economic added value.

The success of this project is the result of the Urban Design approach leading a multi disciplinary design team, and demonstrates how a series of spaces can be re-imagined and how DMURS can assist with realisation of a scheme in support of the many challenges around establishing pedestrian priority over cars.

The works are particularly successful in addressing legacy issues within a highly confined space where there are several competing demands. The scheme has successfully reduced the dominance of the car, without restricting access, has improved safety and accessibility by increasing pedestrian mobility and has increased foreign investments and enhanced the townscape heritage creating renewed focal point for the community and visitors.

¹ Irish Examiner 11 November 2019



Clonakilty was named best town in Ireland and the UK by the Academy of Urbanism in 2016, beating 40 other short-listed towns to the title.