

Proposed Improvement Works at Mallow Town Park, Mallow, Co. Cork

Landscape/Planning Design Report

BSM

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**Brady Shipman
Martin**

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Landscape Design **Built Environment**

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background

Cork County Council are seeking to provide a number of improvements at the existing Mallow Town Park, Mallow, Co. Cork. Located in the heart of the town, on the banks of the River Blackwater, the c.23ha. Park has a number of existing pitches (soccer, rugby, GAA), and riverside walkway.

The Park is connected to the grounds of Mallow Castle, Deerpark, and Demesne grounds which are owned and managed by Cork County Council as a public amenity. The Castle and remaining Demesne features are monuments of national significance.

Mallow Town Park lies to the south and south west of Mallow Castle and was originally part of the overall demesne of Mallow Castle. The park was given to the people of Mallow for use as an amenity in 1907 by the then owner of Mallow Castle, Katherine Jephson Norreys and was subsequently purchased by Cork County Council in 2015.

Mallow Town Park is located centrally in Mallow Town adjoined by Park Road (N72) to the north, Blackwater River from the south, Hospital Stream to the west and Lover's Leap to the east. Mallow Bridge crosses the Blackwater River with the town park's riverside walk passing under the northern eye of the bridge.

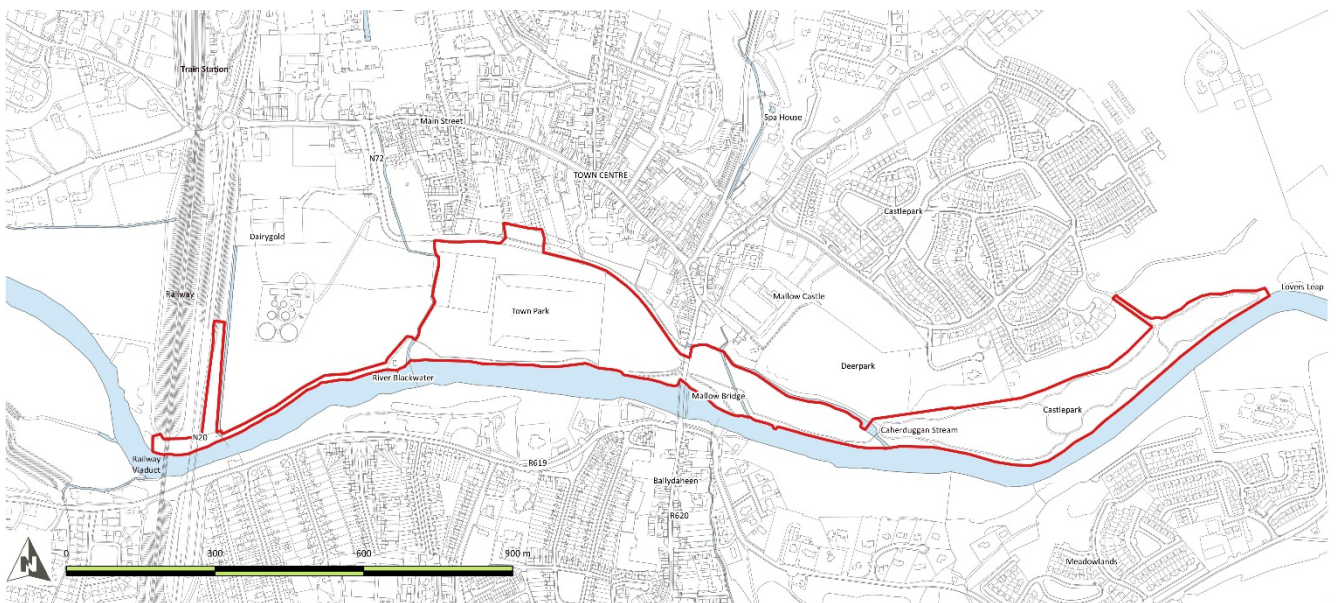


Figure 1 Location of Mallow Town Park application area (red line)

Brady Shipman Martin (BSM), in collaboration with a wider team of specialist consultants, were commissioned by Cork County Council to prepare a framework plan for the development of the existing Mallow Town Park as well as the gardens and historic landscape at Mallow Castle, and the Spa House to:

'Strengthen their connectivity with Mallow town, and maximise the use of the parks for the people of Mallow and visitors to the town of all ages in a sensitive, safe, sustainable, attractive, and inclusive manner.'

Evolving from the framework plan and preliminary design report, which were prepared and put on public display in 2019, this landscape report outlines the proposed amenity improvement within the Town Park which are aimed at improving public access, active sport and training, play and recreation for people of all ages and abilities. A copy of the 2019 Preliminary Design Report is provided for information with this application.

1.2 Context

With a population of 12,459 ¹, Mallow is located in north Cork on the banks of the Blackwater River - a feature which has a strong influence on physical development of the town. It was originally as a fording point of the River Blackwater dating back to the 12th century where the Anglo-Norman's built a castle/defensive settlement overlooking the Blackwater on the northern side of the river. Over time the town developed as a plantation settlement with Mallow Castle at its core, developing westwards, and later as a Spa Resort in the 18th and 19th century when Mallow became a prime destination and holiday resort in Ireland during this time. The arrival of the railway in the 1800's positioned Mallow to become one of County Cork largest settlement and population areas.

The town historically developed on the northern side of the River Blackwater prior to the settlement expansion on the southern side aided by the construction of Mallow Bridge.

More recent developments have seen a greater concentration of primarily new residential development extending eastward on both the northern and southern sides of the river.

The town is approximately 30km north of Cork City and 60km south of Limerick City and is strategically located with a number of road (N20/N72) and rail crossings (Cork/Kerry/Dublin) and has been colloquially referred to as 'the crossroads of Munster'.

Mallow is the largest town outside of Metropolitan Cork and with good road and rail connections and services, and has the potential to grow in a sustainable manner. With its central location and good connectivity, the town functions as a strategic economic, employment and social hub for the County and western region. The town has an important role to play in supporting the objectives set out in the National Planning Framework, Southern Spatial and Economic Strategy, County Development Plan, Local Area Plan and Mallow Town Plan.

The redevelopment and improvement of Mallow Town Park is important in increasing the attractiveness of the town, improving liveability and supporting social and economic vibrancy in the town.



Figure 2 View from western side of Mallow Town Park over existing playing pitches

¹ CSO, 2016

1.3 Description of Proposed Development:

The objective of proposed improvement works for Mallow Town Park are to enhance the park and provide a wide range of public amenities which will be developed and integrated in a safe, sensitive, sustainable, accessible and positive manner for all ages and abilities.



Figure 3 Artist's impression/photocollage of riverside walk/main town park area illustrating widened footpaths and range of additional opportunities for amenity within the Town Centre

In summary, the proposed improvement works include:-

1.3.1 Entrances and circulation

- Enhancement/ refurbishment of existing 3 no. pedestrian and 2 no. controlled vehicular entrances to the Park from Park Road.
- Construction of 2 no. pedestrian entrances from Park Road (N72) and 1no. new entrance to the existing footpath on the N20 to the west, providing better connectivity and accessibility to Mallow Town. The entrance and pathway linking the N20 to the river path will require the removal of 4no. Lombardy Poplar (*Populus nigra 'Italica'*) along the N20 road embankment to allow for the construction of the proposed pedestrian path and cycle path from the existing N20 to the lower river paths. These mature trees are c. 18m in height, in fair condition, and are growing in a distinctive avenue of trees along the N20. The proposed connection will provide access and connectivity between the Town Park/River walk with the existing path along the N20 which runs north/south, connecting to Mallow Train Station c.570m to the north and to Mallow Town to the south of the River Blackwater c. 700m to the south.
- Widening of existing concrete riverside footpath from 2m to 3m along a length of c.1,540m.
- Construction of new 3m wide concrete footpaths at a total length of c.1,230m as part of circulation and access network improvements. This includes the construction of a new path from the west end of Town Park up to the existing footpath on the N20 to the west.
- Construction of a c.425m long 2m wide reinforced grass path along the northern edge of Town Park.

- Widening of the existing pedestrian bridge (c.1.2m wide) within the Town Park over the Caherduggan/Spa Glen Stream to c.3m in width.

1.3.2 Play

- Refurbishment of an existing play ground on the northside of the N72 to include new play equipment and a skate park.
- Construction of a 'pump' track (for non-powered bikes, skateboards, rollerblades, scooters).

1.3.3 Active sports

- Relocation of the existing GAA pitch (145m x 90m) c.15m north, including the removal of the existing mounding, including demolition of former entrance gates to GAA pitch. Entrance plaque to be relocated and incorporated in to new park entrance (opposite St James Avenue). Perimeter post and rail spectator fencing to pitch and ball catch posts/netting.
- Retention and improvement of existing soccer and rugby pitches.
- Provision of a grass training area (155m x 35m).
- Provision of permanent orienteering course within the park.

1.3.4 Other amenities

- Construction of reinforced grass multi-use events area at a surface area (c.147m x 73m).
- Construction of angling stands to Inland Fisheries Ireland Standards along the banks of the Blackwater River with due consideration of the SAC designation, to include:-
 - 1 no. concrete accessible stand under the Railway Viaduct/Road Bridge (N20) (measuring c.5.2m x 2.5m), and
 - 4 no. fishing stands constructed of recycled plastic measuring c.2.4m x 1.8m, located downstream of the Caherduggan/Spa Glen stream and Lover's Leap with Castlepark to the east of the town park.
- Construction of landscaped and permeable car park at a total surface area 2,590m² for Town Park with capacity for 96 car parking spaces, including disabled and parent and toddler spaces.
- Construction of a reinforced grass parking area (only for use only in association with authorised seasonal/summer events when the flood risk is very low). Total surface area c.,4,720m² with capacity for car parking 114 spaces, including 3no. setdown spaces, and include vehicular entrance to the car park.

1.3.5 Landscape Improvement Works

- Supporting locational and wayfinding signage, seating and services, including wayfinding signage to nearby existing car parking.
- Undergrounding of existing overhead power line in the Town Park to the west of Mallow Bridge.
- Provision of surface water detention basin.
- All associated site development, fencing, park furniture (seating, bike parking etc.), landscape and biodiversity improvement works.
- Planting of over 180 additional new semi-mature, primarily native, trees and over 400 lin..m. of native hedges.

The proposed development will connect to existing public utilities.

1.4 Key Protected Features/Designations

Mallow is set in a rich and diverse landscape on the banks of the River Blackwater and developed over a number of centuries, defining it's unique character and sense of place.

The town possesses a wealth of historical buildings and archaeological remains, with much of the town centre designated as architectural conservation areas including much of the town centre, Mallow Castle and the Spa House, and Bear Forest on the southern side of the town. There are 116 Protected Structures within the town.

The proposed works are within the curtilage of a number of Protected Structures, RPS No's 79, 120, 22, 124, 129 and 130 of the Mallow Development Plan 2010-2016 (still in effect), and are within the Architectural Conservation Area 1 for Mallow Town.

Sections of the park along the River Blackwater are located within the Blackwater (Munster) Special Area of Conservation (SAC 002170). A Natura Impact Statement has been prepared as part of the application for approval in respect of the proposed development.

The tree lined banks of the river provide an important habitat, amenity and aesthetic function. The Blackwater is renowned for fishing and it's salmon fishing in particular.

Much of the Town Park is located within the flood plain of the Blackwater River and regularly floods in winter months.

Further detail on the statutory planning context is provided in Section 2.4 below.

1.5 Other public infrastructure

Cork County Council, in partnership with a number of other statutory bodies and with the support of central Government, have developed and continue to invest in improving Mallow town in a number of significant projects, including:-

- Development of pedestrian and cyclist boardwalk at Mallow Bridge with connection to Mallow Town Park at the northern end of the boardwalk, which is currently under construction and due for completion in 2021.²
- OPW Flood Defence Scheme protecting the town³
- Mallow Sewerage Scheme Upgrade by Irish Water⁴ due to commence in 2021 with a 24 month construction programme and which includes new sewer infrastructure to ensure compliance with wastewater discharge regulations. It will also improve the performance of the sewer network and water quality in the River Blackwater. A sewer will be laid in the northern part of Mallow Town Park, connecting to the town centre.

The proposed improvement works associated with the application respond to and are integrated with these other infrastructural developments.

² <https://www.corkcoco.ie/sites/default/files/news/Boardwalk%20on%20Mallow%20Bridge%20Full%20details.pdf>

³ <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/922c16-mallow-flood-defence-scheme/>

⁴ <https://www.water.ie/news/sewer-upgrade-works-to-br/index.xml?&page=227>

1.6 Plans and Particulars of the Application

There proposed plans and particulars associated with the proposed improvement works include:-

- Landscape Design Drawings and Report, prepared by Brady Shipman Martin including:

Doc. No.	Title
6615-365	Site Location Plan
6615-366	Existing Site Survey Sheet 1 of 4
6615-367	Existing Site Survey Sheet 2 of 4
6615-368	Existing Site Survey Sheet 3 of 4
6615-369	Existing Site Survey Sheet 4 of 4
6615-370	No drawing
6615-371	General Arrangement Plan
6615-372	General Masterplan 1 of 3
6615-373	General Masterplan 2 of 3
6615-374	General Masterplan 3 of 3
6615-375	Town Park Entrance 1
6615-376	Town Park Entrance 2
6615-377	Town Park Entrance 3
6615-378	Town Park Entrance 4
6615-379	Town Park Entrance 5
6615-380	Town Park Entrance 6
6615-381	Town Park Entrance 7
6615-382	Existing Playground Survey
6615-383	Proposed Skatepark Plan
6615-384	Skatepark Sections and Elevations
6615-385	Pump Track
6615-386	Bridge to River walkway
6615-387	Town Park Sections
6615-388	Town Park Detention basin
6615-389	Angling Stands
6615-900-1000	Town Park Typical Details – series of A3 details

- Civil Engineering Design Drawings and Report, prepared by Horgan Lynch Consulting Engineers including:

Doc.. No,	Drg. Title
CQ15-20-A	Proposed Site Civil Works Layout Plan
CQ15-21-A	Proposed Car Park Drainage
CQ15-22-A	Proposed Swale Drainage
CQ15-23-A	Proposed Skate Park and Pump Track
CQ15-24-A	Proposed Pedestrian Bridge Widening Works (Caherduggan/Spa Glen Stream Crossing)
CQ-15-R002	Civil Engineering Planning Report and Design Basis Document

- Electrical Services Design Drawings and Report, prepared by Varming Consulting Engineers

Drg. No,	Drg. Title
17766-VCE-ZZ-ZZ-DR-E-1001	Proposed Car Park Lighting Layout
17766-VCE-ZZ-ZZ-DR-E-1002	Proposed Car Park Lighting Calculations
17766-VCE-ZZ-ZZ-RP-E-0001	Public Lighting Calculation Report

- Flood Risk Assessment (Ref. 276568-00), prepared by Arup

- Architectural Heritage/Designed Landscape Appraisal Report prepared by conservation architects, JCA Architects
- Archaeological Appraisal Report (incl. Geophysical survey), prepared by Daniel Noonan Archaeological Consultants
- Appropriate Assessment Screening and Natura Impact Statement, prepared by Dixon Brosnan.
- Ecological Impact Assessment Report, prepared by Dixon Brosnan.
- Invasive Species Management Plan, prepared by Dixon Brosnan.
- Construction and Environmental Management Plan, prepared by Brady Shipman Martin with inputs from wider team.
- Environmental Impact Assessment Screening Report, prepared by Brady Shipman Martin

It is anticipated that the construction and implementation of the park proposals will be implemented incrementally and in phases subject to funding.

A Construction and Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) has been undertaken to address at a high level the key elements that will be considered through the construction process to mitigate any potential adverse impacts on the local communities and park users as well as on the overall environment during the construction process.

1.7 Preliminary Design Report and Framework Plan

A preliminary design report and framework plan for the overall lands including Mallow Castle, Town Park and Spa House was prepared for Cork County Council in April 2019.

The purpose of the non-statutory framework plan set out a flexible strategy for the phased and incremental development of the Mallow Castle and Gardens, Mallow Town Park and Spa House.

Arising from the Framework Plan, a number of proposed improvements to Mallow Town Park were identified which is the subject of this planning application, and which are focused on improving access, development and enhancement of existing amenities within the Town Park.

1.7.1 Stakeholder Engagement

Stakeholder engagement is key to the success of the project to encourage public participation and gain further insight into key challenges and concerns and to identify opportunities and constraints that can be addressed through the design process.

A series of stakeholder engagement meetings and presentations were undertaken with the community, sports clubs, local businesses and statutory bodies (Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, OPW, Inland Fisheries Ireland) – details of some of these meetings are outlined below.

- 17th June 2019-Meeting with North Cork Municipal District Council
- 19th June 2019-Meeting with GAA Committee
- 19th June 2019-Meeting Chamber of Commerce
- 20th June 2019- Public Information Event, Hibernian Hotel Mallow.
- 26th September 2019 - Meeting Castlepark Resident Committee



Figure 4 Preliminary Design Report (BSM/CCC, 2019)



Figure 5 Overall Framework Plan for Mallow Town Park, Mallow Castle and Spa House



Figure 6 Framework Plan for Mallow Town Park



Figure 7 Public Information Event, The Corkman Press-27/06/19



Figure 8 - BSM Image, 20/06/19

Stakeholder and community engagement, as well as constraints and options selection during the framework plan design process highlighted the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges for Mallow Castle, Town Park, Spa House and Mallow town centre.

1.7.2 Constraints and Options Selection

Site analysis and community engagement for the framework plan highlighted strengths and weakness that has informed the proposed improved access and landscape development in the Town Park such as:

- **Access and connectivity** – whilst located in the town, access to Mallow Town Park is poor in places with narrow footpaths, heavy traffic and poor presentation of areas approaching and at the existing main entrances. New entrances, and the enhancement of existing ones, with strategic connections to the town centre, are proposed;
- **Flooding** is a regular feature of the River Blackwater (*Figure 9*) with the Town Park acting as part of the flood plain. Flooding events are generally within the winter months. The proposed park features need to be resilient to flooding, not interfere with existing flood defence infrastructure or reduce the capacity/flow of Blackwater. The proposed public open space improvements are designed to have minimal/no effect on the flood capacity and performance of the area in meeting these requirements.



Figure 9 River Flood Extents (Source OPW)

- Existing concrete footpaths at Mallow town park are narrow (2m wide), the development proposes the widening of these footpaths to 3m with new connections to proposed entrances;
- Mallow Town Park presents a very large area with potential for **development of many activities**, promoting physical activity, social interaction and support to health and well-being. The improvement of existing sports pitches as well as the creation of new areas for training and open air activities (e.g. outdoor cinema, theatre, fetes, circus etc.)and creating a new Active Sports Hub for the town;
- **Temporary/overflow car parks** are proposed at strategic locations and connections of the town park. These will provide safe linkages with the Mallow Castle demesne and all the sports pitches. These parking facilities will also support Mallow Town Park as an day to day destination for more people, providing visitors with a safe and pleasant experience.;

- The lands are zoned as a **Blackwater Amenity Corridor** in the Mallow Town Development Plan, 2010-2016 (Map 5a), as illustrated in Figure 10 below.

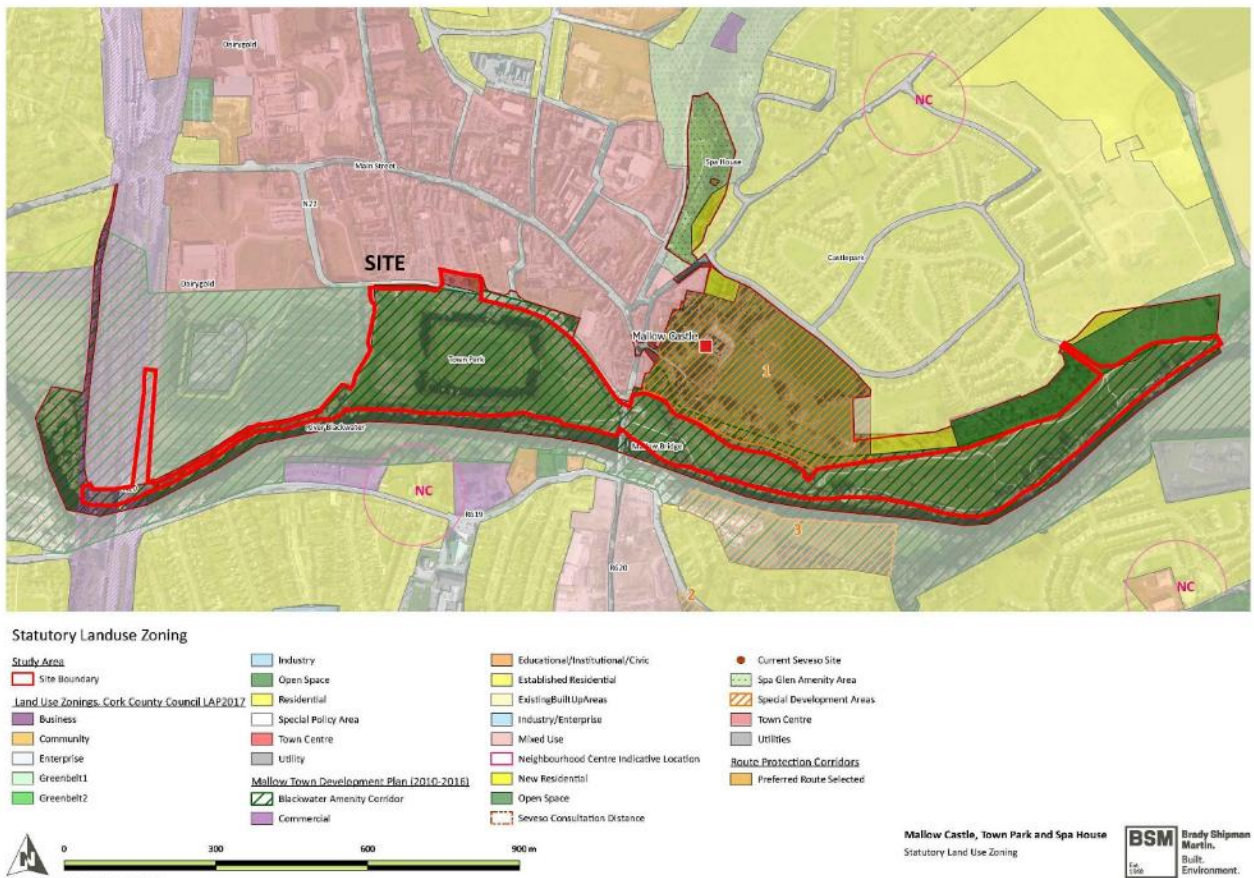


Figure 10 Composite map of Statutory Land Use Zoning Maps (Kanturk/Mallow MD Local Area Plan, 2017 and Mallow Town Development Plan, 2010 (as extended))

- The River Blackwater (Cork/Waterford) **Special Area of Conservation** (SAC Site code 002170) is located at the southern part of Mallow Town Park and covers Riverwalk Park area, as illustrated in Figure 11 below.

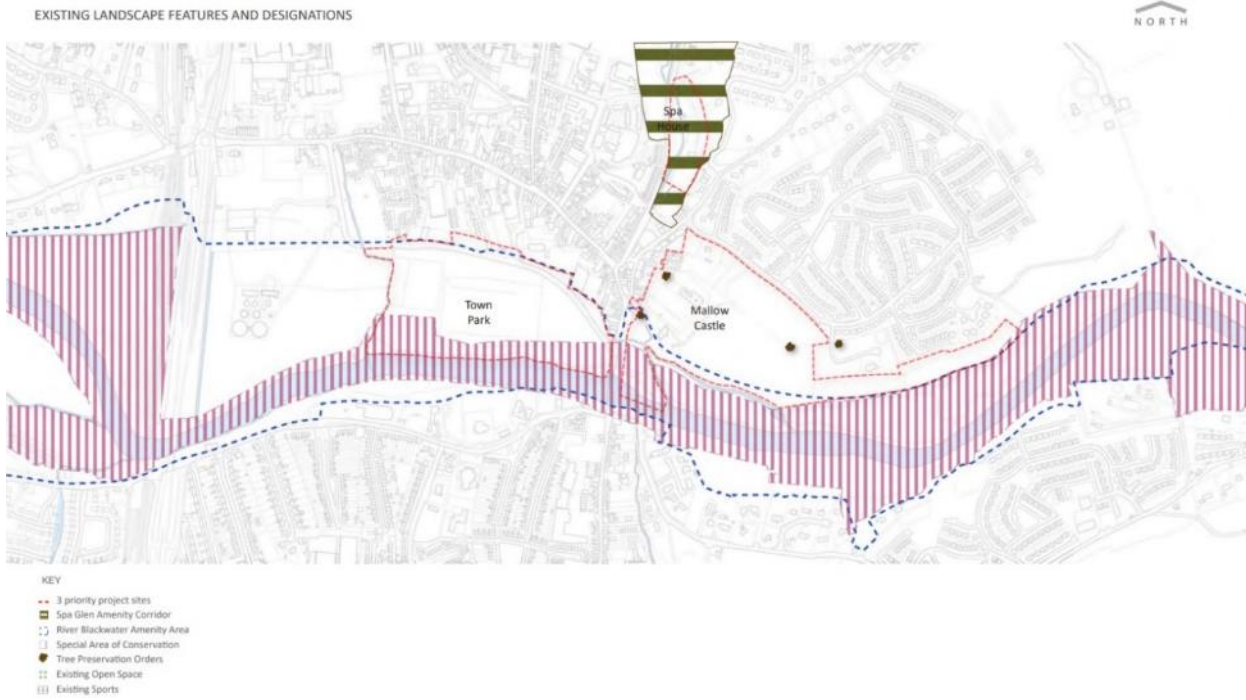


Figure 11 River Blackwater (Cork/Waterford) Special Area of Conservation (SAC)

2 Site Context

2.1 Mallow Town and Mallow Town Park

Mallow is designated as a Key Town in the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Southern Region. The overall vision for Mallow is to sustainably strengthen the employment-led growth and town centre-led regeneration of Mallow as a regional economic driver, leverage its strategic location and accessibility on inter-regional road and rail networks to build upon inherent strengths, in particular food production and tourism potential, while protecting and enhancing the natural environment of the Blackwater Valley. It aims to ensure new development delivers enhanced quality of life for all, based on high quality residential, working and recreational environments, respectful of the unique character and heritage of the town and supported by a good range of services and community facilities.

2.2 Town Park

Mallow Town Park is located immediately south of the Mallow Town Centre, and south of Mallow Castle (see Figure 12 & 13 below).



Figure 12 Site context - Mallow Town Park and Riverwalk west towards Railway Bridge

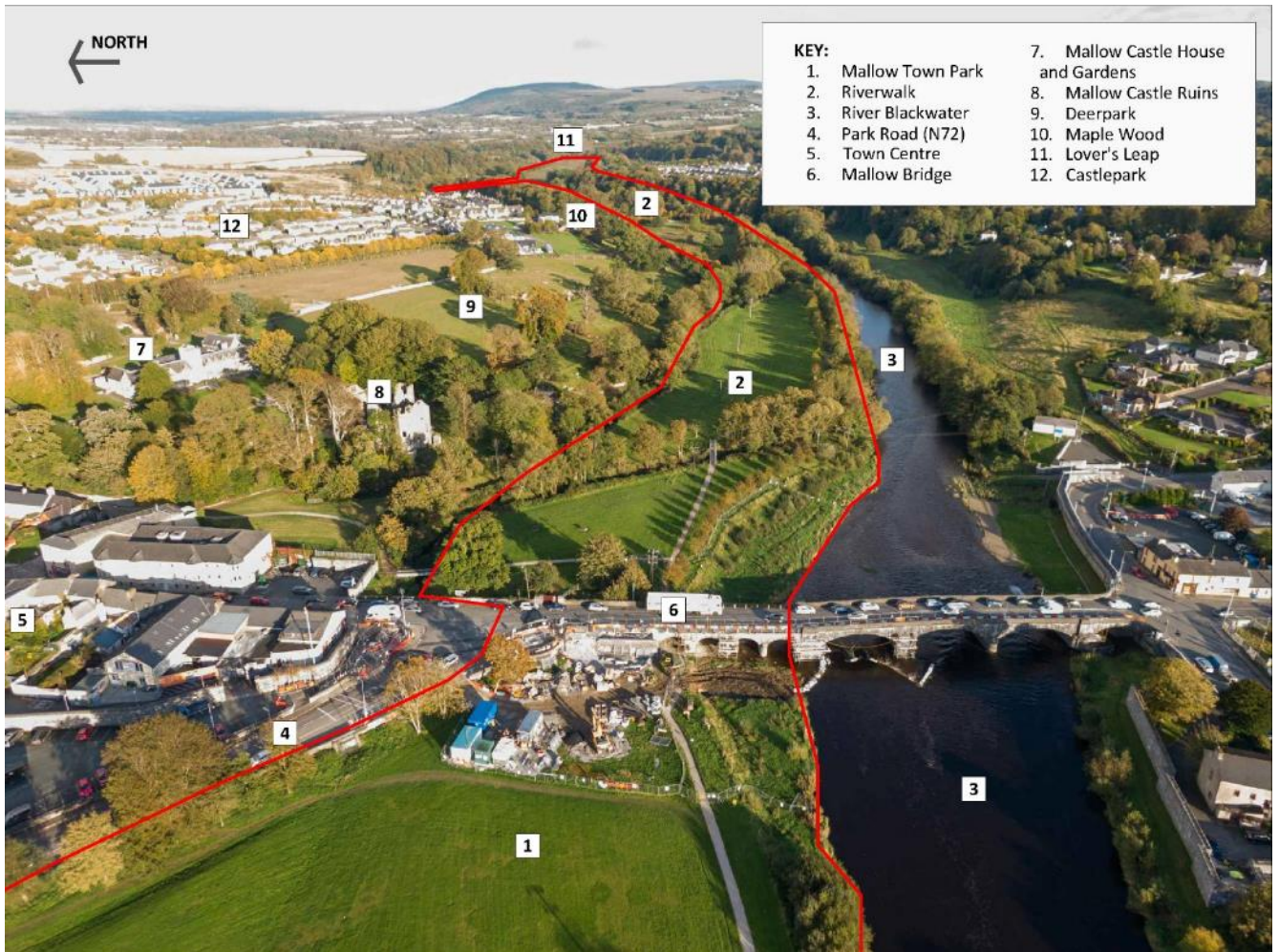


Figure 13 Site context - Mallow Town Park and Riverwalk west towards Lover' Leap

The main entrances to the Town Park are from the N72/Park road adjacent to the northern boundary of the site. This is a busy, heavily trafficked vehicular road. Outline proposals to improve the public realm and connections with the town centre were provided in the Preliminary Framework Plan. Whilst outside the scope of this application, the proposals for Town Park include new pedestrian entrances and footpaths coordinated with these future public realm improvements.

Multiple parking areas in Mallow provide over approximately 900 car parking spaces within a 5 minute walking distance to the Town Park (See figure 14 below). These are primarily used for retail and commercial activity in the Town Centre.

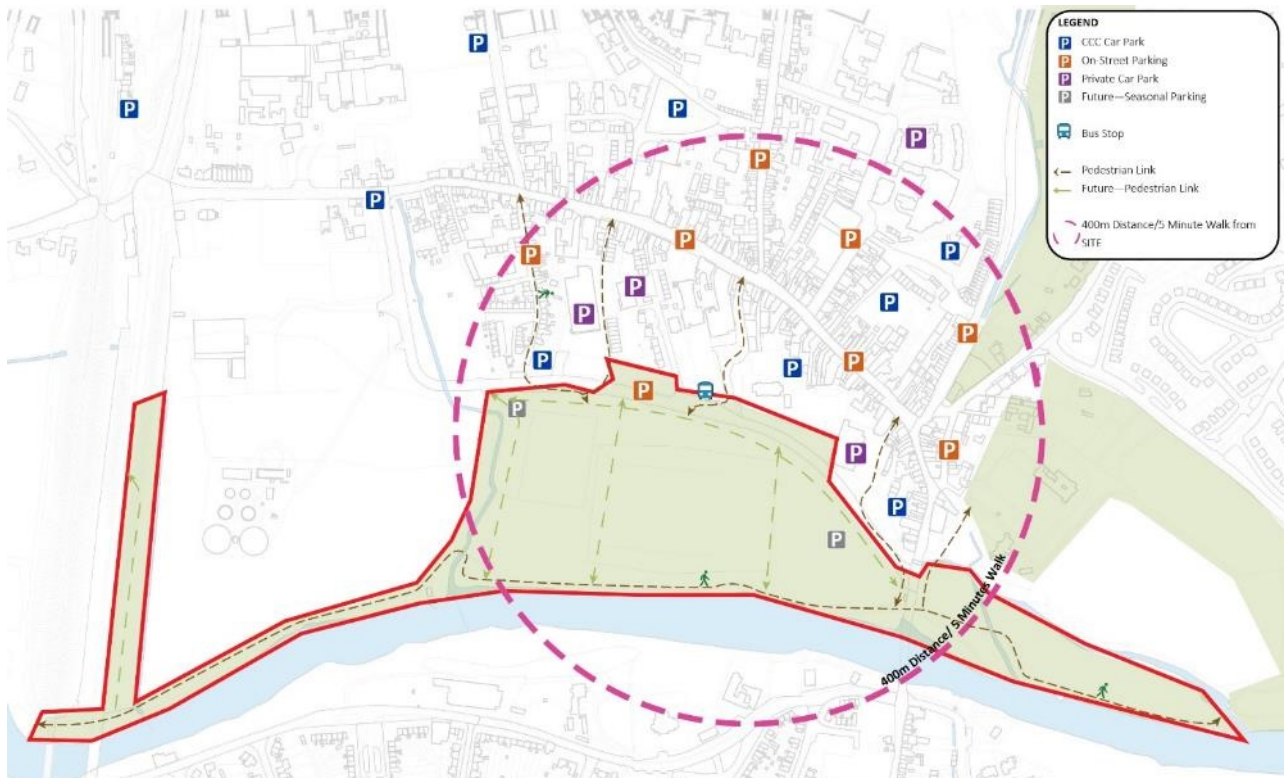


Figure 14 Site Accessibility

2.3 Overview of Historical Development of the Park

Located to the Southwest of the Mallow Castle Demesne, the Town Park, historically known as the Long Meadow (identified on the first OS map of c. 1842, figure 13 below), where it extended to the properties in Mallow Town Centre to the North, comprising the R.C. chapel (St. Mary's), the Church of Ireland (St. James's) and the old St. Mary's Church and graveyard.



Figure 15 First edition of Mallow OS Survey Map c. 1842, showing the Town park area, formerly known as “The long meadow”.

Park Road/N72 was not constructed until the 20th century. To the northwest the boundary is defined by the Barracks, a Tannery to the northeast and The Mallow Bridge built in 1712 to the east.

Being situated within the flood plain, Town Park did not allow for the development of protected structures. Although some can be observed outside its boundaries, influencing the vistas from Town Park, such as the Castle ruin east of Mallow Bridge.

The evolution of Town Park continued throughout the 19th century with incremental changes, including the reconstruction of Mallow Bridge following a significant flood event in 1853. Since the mid-19th century the Long Meadow hosted sports events, as described on the Cork Examiner from 1869, such as “Mallow foot races and athletic sports”. The same grounds were also used for cricket in the summer months as well as hay.

On the 19th October 1903, the Cork Examiner noted the *‘intention of the council of the Mallow Urban District to acquire the same lands for future use as recreation grounds (horse races, athletic sports, hurling, football contests, hockey, etc.) and public walk for the inhabitants of the district.’*



Figure 16 Colourised photo of original railway viaduct/10 arch bridge (the later development of Mallow Town Park is on the right hand side). Photo courtesy of Lawrence Collection, National Library of Ireland

Further detail on the archaeological and architectural heritage of the Town Park and surrounding context are provided separate accompanying impact assessment reports.

2.4 Policy and Planning Designations

The current Cork County Development Plan (2014)⁵, draft County Development Plan (2021)⁶ and Kanturk-Mallow Municipal District Local Area Plan⁷ provide the planning policy for the Town Park and Mallow environs. The Town Park is located on a fertile plain within the Town and is considered a High Value Landscape. No scenic views or routes occur on site.

The River Blackwater and its flood plain is designated SAC (Special Area of Conservation Cork/Waterford 002170) and overlaps with Town Park and Riverwalk area (see Figure 15)

Mallow heritage trail runs through the town centre and highlights the Town Park, Castle and Spa House.

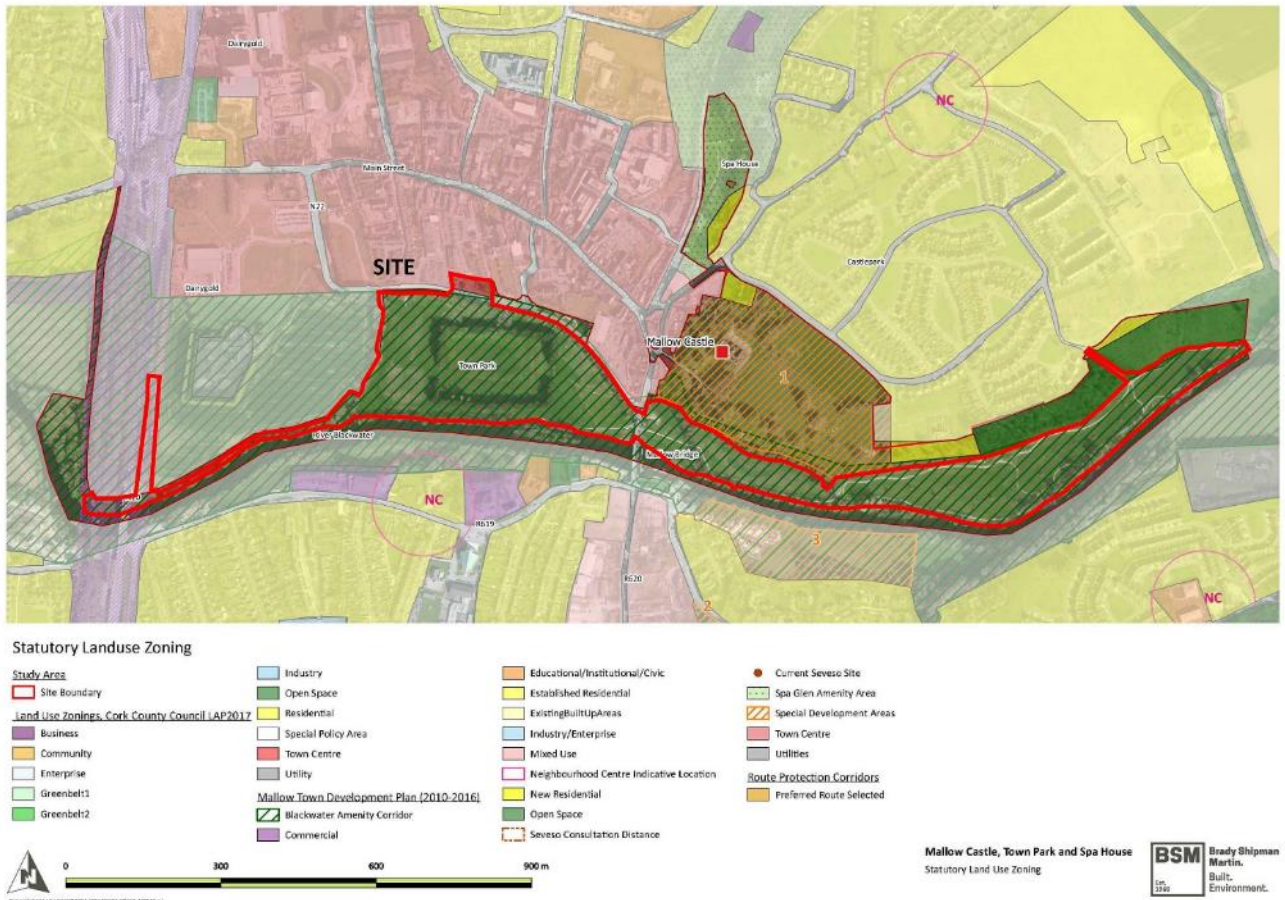


Figure 17 Composite map of Statutory Land Use Zoning Maps (Kanturk/Mallow MD Local Area Plan, 2017 and Mallow Town Development Plan, 2010 (as extended))

Mallow town is located within the Kanturk/Mallow Municipal District Local Area (2017), with the town centre located within the Mallow Town Development Plan.

In the Kanturk/Mallow Municipal District Local Area (2017) states:

'The town has a good supply of active and passive open space, including Mallow Racecourse, a large GAA complex, rugby grounds, soccer pitches, golf courses and grass tennis courts. A number of riverside walks have

⁵ <https://www.corkcoco.ie/en/planning/planning-policy-documents-monard-strategic-development-zone/cork-county-development-plan-2014>

⁶ <https://www.corkcoco.ie/sites/default/files/2021-04/volume-3-north-cork-fermoy-kanturk.pdf>

⁷ <http://corklocalareaplans.com/kanturk-mallow-municipal-district/>

been developed along the northern banks of Blackwater. There is an opportunity to develop further links including additional bridging points across the River and the new plan can explore these issues.

The attractive river valley setting of town offers many opportunities for the development of new recreational and cultural amenities for the town which would enhance the overall quality of life for residents.'

The River Blackwater runs through Mallow Town and is designated as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) under the Habitats Directive as it is a significant site containing important species:-

'Blackwater Corridor – East-west Amenity corridor and protected area of biodiversity – area subject to flooding and within SAC so any works will need to respect designations. Explore opportunities to allow greater water/ fishing activity on the River from the town and walking routes close to the river.'

The Blackwater River forms part of 'Green Infrastructure' next to N20 Corridor, Northern Relief Route (Railways line), Mallow Castle, Bearforest Demesne:

'The future development of the town offers enormous opportunities to develop and integrated approach to green infrastructure which can perform a number of functions including passive and active amenity areas, wildlife corridors and carbon filters to offset impacts of increased development and traffic within the town.'

Within the Mallow Town Development Plan, Town Park is located within the 'Community/ Recreational Quarter':

'The Community/ Recreational Quarter is that area of land located on the northern bank of the River Blackwater extending from the N20 to the west and beyond Mallow Bridge to the east. Park Road defines the northern boundary. This area is historically been subject to flooding from the River Blackwater and therefore is unsuited for significant urban development purposes. Currently used for both passive and active recreational purposes, it is considered that this Quarter could be future enhanced to provide for recreation, community and amenity uses, whilst also functioning as a significant visual and tourist attraction in the town.'

The opportunities that arise from the location of Town Park is closely connected with adjoining the Blackwater River and its natural environment features:

'The River Blackwater flows through the heart of the town in an easterly direction effectively splitting the town in two.... It is also recognised that much of the area is subject to severe and regular flooding and the effect of this flooding potential is to eliminate or restrict development.

The opportunity is therefore afforded to create a substantial riverside park along the banks of the River Blackwater and this should be enforced where possible. Indeed it is noted that a section of this river corridor has already been developed into an attractive walkway as part of the Castlelands Estate development and the tone of this development should be extended to cater for variety of potential recreational users.

The substantial are known locally as the town park is located within the Blackwater Corridor and has been developed as one of the main sports and recreational areas in the town. Compromising some 11 hectares, the town park represents a tremendous amenity resource to the people of Mallow but due to the significant flooding experienced on the land as a result of the inadequate flow capacity of the River Blackwater and the Spa Stream, the land is not being used to its full potential as a recreational and amenity area.'

The Council's Natural Environment Objectives include:-

'EH1: Protect the habitat, landscape, visual and amenity qualities of the River Blackwater and its flood plains so that they can contribute to the environmental diversity of the area for future generations and be used for recreation and other compatible uses during the lifetime of the Plan.

EH2: Protect and enhance the setting of the town park and to develop it into an attractive amenity line with the recommendations and findings of the study "The Strategy for the Future Provision of Community, Social and Recreational Infrastructure in the Mallow Area"

EH3: Protect the ecological integrity of the designated areas around Mallow town including the River Blackwater, the Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and the Spa Glen Amenity Area. Outside these designated areas, the natural and semi-natural habitats, their linkage and the diversity of life therein shall be protected.

EH4: Continue to protect stands of mature trees as identified on the Heritage and Environmental Parameters Map

EH5: Support the implementation and action of the County Biodiversity Action Plan and to support the development of a habitat map of Mallow to tie with the County Habitat Mapping Project.'

Natural environment Policy EH1 states:

'EH1-1: The natural environment, biodiversity and waterways of Mallow shall be protected conserved and enhanced and shall be specifically protected from invasive species.

EH1-4: Features of the landscape that's serves as refuges for wild plants shall be maintained in all development proposals as far as possible, including hedgerows, trees, rivers, (...), parklands, stonewalls, (...)and roadside verges.'

Blackwater Amenity Corridor Policy EH2 states:

'EH2-1: The Blackwater Corridor shall be retained as an undeveloped green corridor for recreational and amenity use.'

The Council's recreation public amenity and community facilities objectives are:

'CR1: Work with community groups and organisations to provide suitable sites for additional sports, recreation and open space provision, to ensure that provision is properly coordinated with other forms of development and other land-use policies, and to protect open space and other land with recreational or amenity value.

CR2: Facilitate development of the town park for the community and recreational purposes in accordance with the findings of the 'Mallow Recreational Infrastructure Audit'

CR4: Protect the use of existing playing fields within the town and maintain such land for recreational purposes.

CR5: Facilitate the development of a public walkway and cycleway on the southern and northern banks of the River Blackwater (..)

CR7: Enhance and develop existing recreational and community facilities within the plan area and implement the findings and recommendations of the 'Mallow Recreational Infrastructure Audit'.'

The following policies are provided to guide and control future development and to assist in contributing to the environment and heritage objectives:

'Policy CR1 Improving Amenity Spaces: ENV1-1: The provision of parks and play spaces shall be improved, and those spaces and pathways that can usefully form green links, footpaths and cycle ways to connect residential areas with parks and open spaces shall be extended, and linked with each other

Policy CR3 Open Maintaining Open Space Provision CR3-1 The development of existing public or private open space, including sports ground, or other recreational facilities, for the purposes shall not be permitted unless a suitable alternative open space or the enhancement/ upgrading of an existing facility, can be achieved as a replacement in the same area.'

Tourism, art and culture objectives based upon the understanding of the detailed issues and which shall contribute to the effective implementation of Strategic Objective No 3 of the Development Plan which seeks to achieve a 'positive physical natural environment'. It is an Objective of the Council to:

'TAC1: Provide a slipway and fishing stands at suitable locations on the River Blackwater to facilitate boating and fishing within the town

TAC2: Provide a pedestrian trail along the northern and southern banks of the River Blackwater and facilitate implementation of the identified heritage trails on the tourism arts and culture spatial plan subject to the appropriate level of assessment

TAC6: Improve the signposting of scenic routes, walks, riverside trails, historic and archaeological heritage features and laneways throughout the town in an attractive and well-designed manner.'

Policies provided to guide and control future development and to assist in contributing to the tourism arts and culture objectives:

'TAC1-1 The development of tourist facilities by the banks of the river Blackwater must be compatible to the recreational and amenity use of the Blackwater Corridor area and suitable location within a flood risk area. The risk of flooding, biodiversity and amenity designations along the banks of the river, however, has the effect of substantially restricting development to water based sports such as fishing.'

2.5 Draft Cork County Development Plan 2021 (dCCDP)

Mallow, Mallow Castle and Town Park have a number of specific objectives in the latest Draft County Development Plan (dCCDP, 2021)⁸.



Figure 18 River Blackwater at western end of Town Park

In Section 2.3.29, the significance of Mallow Town Park to the Town is noted:-

‘Of strategic importance are the existing gardens and historic landscape at Mallow Castle together with the main public spaces at Mallow Town Park and Spa House Park all located within walking distance of the town centre. The vision for this trio of amenities is to create a well-connected, high quality public amenity and tourist destination in the form of an integrated multi-use park network. The Council continues to advance its plans (Mallow Framework Plan) for the future development of these significant assets, which combined, will function as a regional scale facility with potential to act as a catalyst for further development as well as boosting the local economy. Between them these areas cover approximately 50 hectares’.

In Section 2.3.31 of the draft CDP, it notes that:-

‘There remains a strong need to improve movement and accessibility to existing recreational facilities. The southside of the town is relatively underprovided for in terms of recreational infrastructure and will benefit considerably from the enhanced connectivity that will be provided by the new boardwalk once completed’.

The boardwalk at Mallow Bridge is currently under construction and due to be open in 2021, with connection into the Town Park at the N72 junction. A further pedestrian and cycle connection is provided to the N20 at the western end of the park. Whilst not part of this application, provision has been made for a potential future pedestrian/cycle bridge crossing of the Blackwater into the Park (as part of the Framework Plan).

The River Blackwater (An Abhainn Mhór), with its significant flood plain, forms a central green infrastructure feature within Mallow and its hinterland. The Blackwater flows from west to east through the town centre, and

⁸ <https://www.corkcoco.ie/sites/default/files/2021-04/volume-3-north-cork-fermoy-kanturk.pdf>

the river itself, as well as a substantial part of the floodplain, is designated as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) - a site designated for nature conservation under the EU Habitats Directive.

Mallow Town Park forms part of the Blackwater Amenity Corridor following the River Blackwater from the Railway/N20 bridges to the west to Lover's Leap in the east.

The advancement of a linear green recreational corridor along the Blackwater in Mallow has been long promoted and there has been significant progress in recent years in delivering different aspects of this, particularly in the area south and east of the town centre (including Mallow Castle and Spa House Park). Existing walkways in the Town Park have been enhanced and expanded and there is now a continuous link from the walkway to the west of the railway line via the town park/Mallow castle and as far as the picturesque Lovers Leap to the east of the town. To complement this a nature themed inclusive children's playground amenity at Mallow Castle partly funded by the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF) is due to be completed in the summer of 2021.

Section 2.3.35 of the draft CDP notes:-

'The Blackwater Amenity Corridor represents the primary piece of multifunctional green infrastructure in Mallow and taking into account both existing and planned attractions within or proximate to this corridor as well as its undoubted habitat value, it is considered to be of regional significance.'

Section 2.3.37 highlights the ecological sensitivity of the landscape:-

'The River is flanked for much of its extent through the town by treelines. These act as ecological corridors linking other areas of woodland and wetland habitat. The river supports otter, freshwater pearl mussel, white-clawed crayfish and lamprey species, all qualifying interests of the SAC. The grounds of Mallow Castle and eastern parkland adjoining the Blackwater support an impressive collection of veteran trees (some of which are potentially of regional importance) and habitat rich meadow. In recent years substantial areas of grassland are being managed by the Council in this area to support species rich swards. This Blackwater Amenity Corridor has been zoned as MW-GR-04.'

Objective MW-GR-04 outlines the specific development objectives for the Blackwater Amenity Corridor:-

*'Protect and enhance the habitat, landscape, visual and amenity qualities of the River Blackwater (including **town park**) and its flood plain so that they can contribute to the environmental diversity of the area for future generations and can be used for recreation and other compatible uses during the lifetime of the Plan. Opportunities to extend the riverside park should be considered over the lifetime of the plan including provision of further pedestrian crossings over the river to link the north and south parts of the town. Protect and enhance vistas of Mallow Castle and other landmarks within the town and environs. The Castlelands area (south and east of Mallow Castle) is subject of a Tree Preservation Order designation. Some of this area is located within or close to the Blackwater Special Area of Conservation and any proposals within this area will need to give appropriate consideration to this designation.'*

2.5.1 Landscape Character and Sensitivity

There are a number of distinct character areas within and surrounding Mallow Town Park (see Figure 17 below).

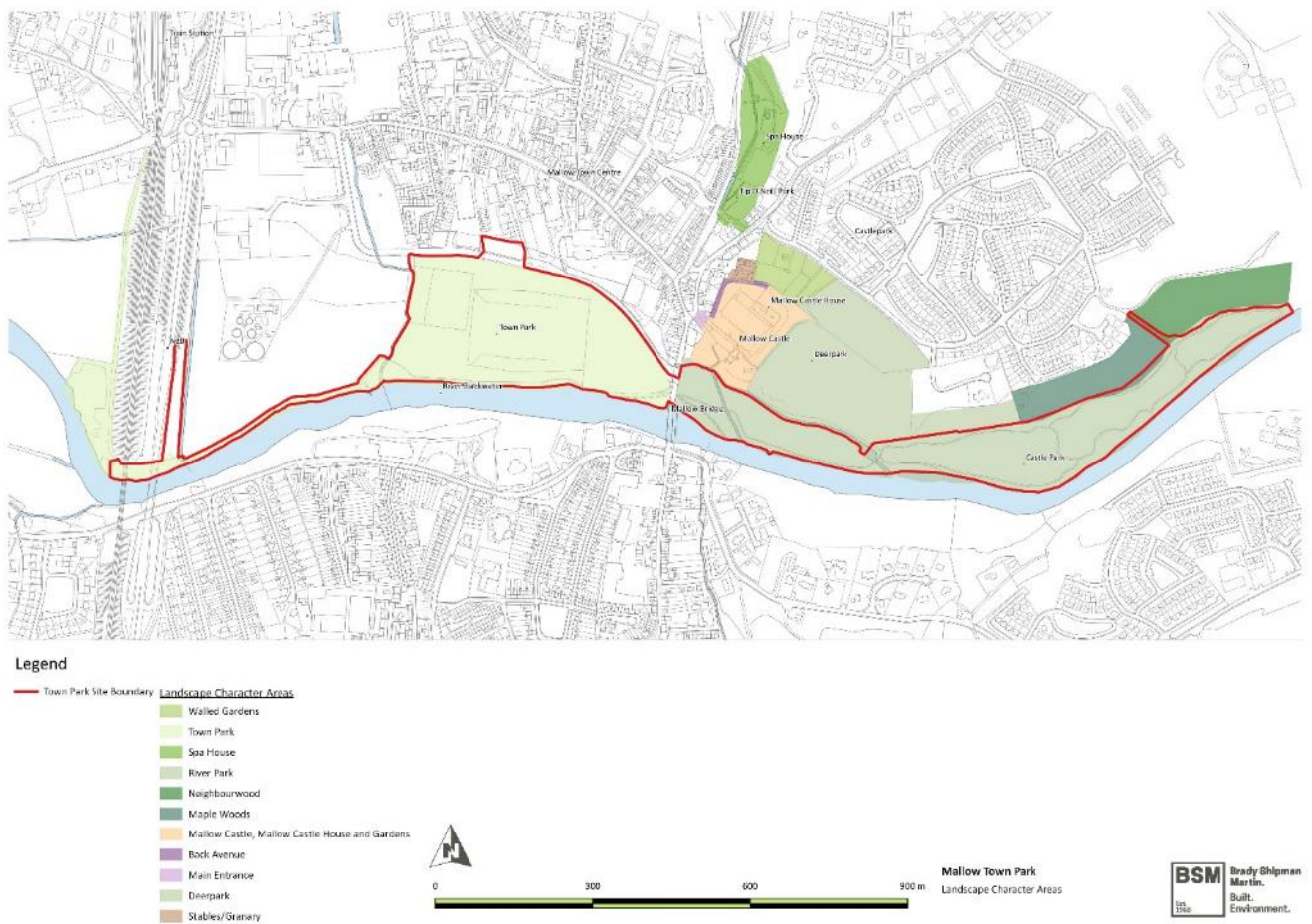


Figure 19 Landscape Character Areas of Mallow Town

2.5.1.1 Mallow Town Park

The main Town Park area to the west of Mallow Bridge is a large open and generally level area, containing a number of pitches (GAA, Soccer and Rugby). There is an existing 2m wide concrete footpath parallel to the river. Riparian vegetation grows along the river bank with glimpsed views of the river in places. Closer to Mallow Bridge, there is less riparian vegetation with more open views (see Figure 20 below).

The northern part of the park (to the south of the N72) is bordered by a narrow, linear tree group made up mostly of Norway Maple, but also includes smaller numbers of Lime, Birch, Ash, Alder and Oak. These trees are almost all early-mature in age class and appear to be in reasonable condition. The tree-line forms an attractive and functional landscape screen between the road and interior of the park.

The western boundary area of the park is marked by a long row of mature Lombardy Poplar trees running north-south, just inside the park. A tree-line/hedgerow of mature and early mature Ash, Hawthorn and Sycamore runs parallel to the Poplars, to the west of the small watercourse (Hospital Stream).



Figure 20 Mallow Town Park looking east

The riverside walkway continues westwards in a narrow strip of ground to the south of agricultural land and Dairygold water treatment plant.

The Cork/Kerry/Dublin rail line and N20 pass over the Blackwater and river walkway at the west end of Town park (see Figure 21 below).



Figure 21 Mallow Town Park looking west to N20 and Railway Viaduct

2.5.1.2 Castlepark/River Park

To the east of Mallow Bridge, the park has a more enclosure with existing trees. There are views up to Mallow Castle on higher ground (see Figure 22). An existing path links up to the main avenue in the castle grounds. An historic boundary demesne wall runs along the northern eastern boundary of the Riverwalk Park.



Figure 22 Mallow Castle from Town Park

To the east of the Caherduggan/Spa Glen stream (see Figure 23 below), a looped walk with planted with Norway Maple trees extends eastwards to Lover’s Leap.



Figure 23 Mallow Town Park (Castlepark) Existing bridge crossing of Caherduggan Stream

The area contains a ‘neighbourhood forest/tree planting’ scheme which was planted a number of years ago with the trees at a young stage.

A local access entrance is available at the eastern end of the Castlepark residential estate to the north of the park.

3 Park Development Principles

Cork County Council propose to further enhance the connectivity, accessibility, use appearance and biodiversity of Mallow Town Park in a sensitive and sustainable manner.

The objectives for the proposed treatment of the landscape development at the Town Park and Riverwalk seek to:-

- Improve universal access and inclusive accessibility to Mallow Town Park for all ages and abilities.
- Develop and improve the amenity and visitor experience for the people of Mallow and visitors to the town, developing a destination with strong historical, horticultural, and recreational qualities and establishing improved connections to Mallow town and its surround environs
- Protect, repair, and retain the existing historical and ecological features of the site,
- Form an active place which builds on the strength of existing uses and activities, promotes new, compatible uses and sustainable re-use of spaces
- Establish an attractive place where open spaces are clean, safe, secure, well maintained and sympathetic to the built & natural heritage

The proposed development and interventions are illustrated on General Arrangement drawing 6615- 371 (see Figure 22 below) and accompanying detailed plans, sections and typical details package.

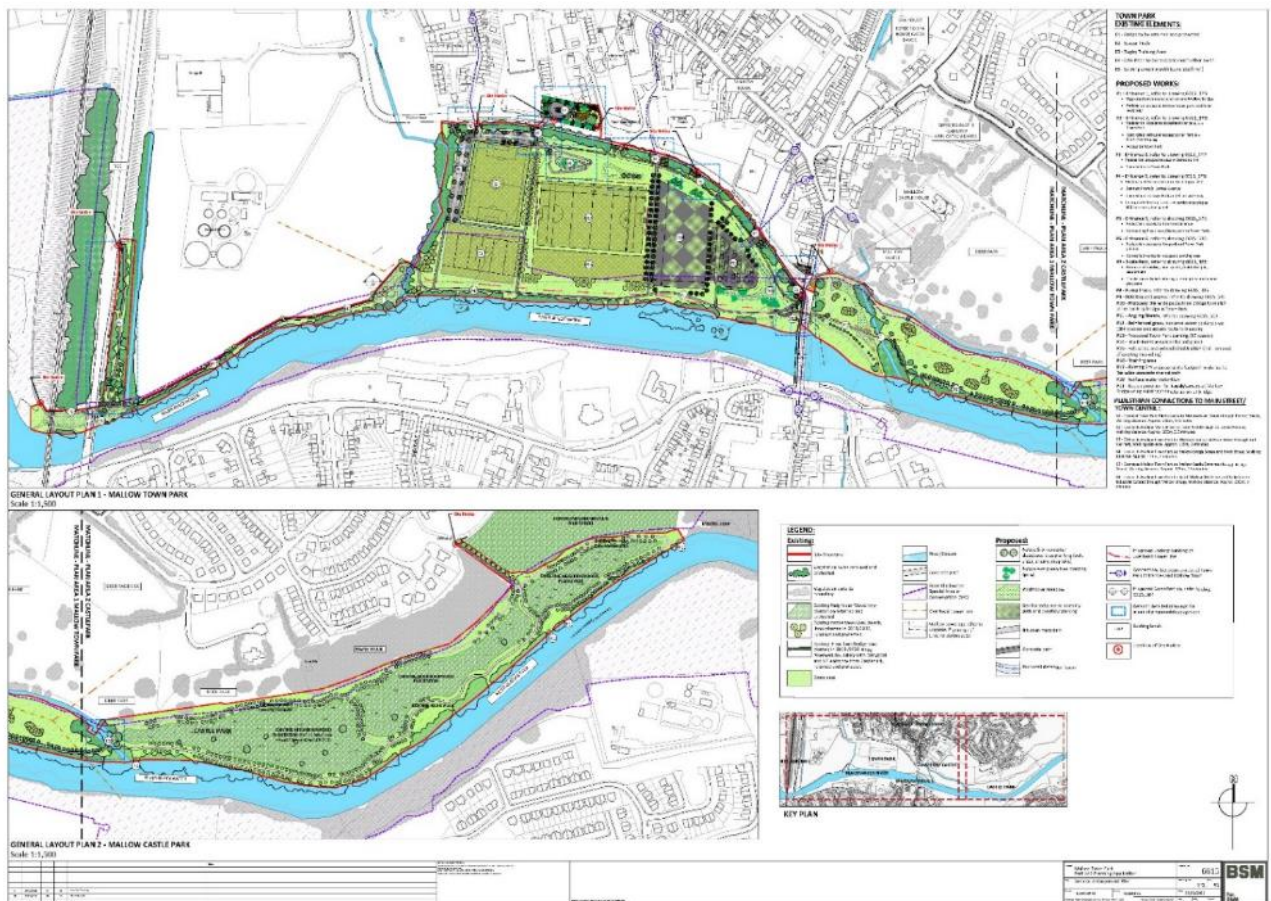


Figure 24 General Arrangement Plan

The proposed improvement works aim to:

- Improve connectivity to the Town Centre, Mallow Castle & Spa House, and southern part of the Town, and quality of paths and surfaces.
- Enhance existing entrances to the Town Park and provide new pedestrian friendly accesses to the Town Park and Riverwalk. Emphasise and improve park entrances with attractive planting and signage.
- Optimise the Park layout and provide a range of uses and activities from active sport and passive recreation.
- Provide opportunities for community involvement and social interaction.
- Unify hard landscape materials used in the scheme (paving, boundaries, park furniture, angling stands, signage etc.). The selected materials have been selected to sensitively complement and enhance the setting of the Town Park and provide consistency with the nearby Mallow Castle and Spa House grounds. They have also be chosen to withstand the annual flooding events in the Park.
- Protect existing riparian vegetation and the Blackwater River and its margins.
- Enhance the park with varying types of landscape and vegetation to provide multiple ecosystem services and providing habitats.
- Encourage and manage the park and riverside setting of the Town Park with new native tree planting and encourage wildflower meadow growth following the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan⁹.
- Develop the park which is resilient to annual flooding and does not interfere with flood hydrology.



Figure 25 Artist's Impression/ Photocollage of Main Town Park

The proposed improvement works also include:-

- Cleaning and repair works to existing Town Park walls and features,
- Relocation of Bishop Casey plaque and demolition of old gate,
- Retention and protection of existing soccer and rugby pitches,
- New boundary fencing, gates and planting within the walled gardens

⁹ <https://pollinators.ie/councils/>

- Supporting locational and wayfinding signage, seating and services, including wayfinding signage to nearby existing car parking to encourage increased walking and footfall within the town centre.
- Undergrounding of existing overhead power line in the Town Park,
- Construction of porous asphalt and reinforced grass overflow car parks (the latter only used in controlled events in the Park (e.g. events in Town Park, Mallow Castle etc.),
- Construction of reinforced grass multiuse event area,

The proposed development will connect to the existing public water supply, storm sewer, and public utilities.

3.1 Supporting Guidance

The proposals follow the guidance set out in:-

- *'Improving the Accessibility of Historic Buildings and Places'* (NDA, 2015)
- *'Best Practice Access Guidelines Designing Accessible Environments'* (IWA, 2014)
- *'Great Outdoors – A guide for accessibility'* (IWA/Sports Ireland, 2019)
- *'Being Age Friendly in the Public Realm'* (Age Friendly Ireland)
- *All-Ireland Pollinator Plan (National Biodiversity Data Centre, 2015-2020)*

Investigations were carried out to aid and inform the historical fabric of the site.

- Cork County Council undertook a detailed survey of the park road, Mallow Bridge and N20 road;
- Arup undertook a detailed flood risk assessment of the town park area;
- The conservation priorities of protecting any existing historic fabric or design have been undertaken by Dan Noonan Conservation and JCA Architects
- A Geophysical Survey Report of Mallow Town Park was prepared by J.M. Leigh Surveys;
- The UCC archives was visited by the Design Team to review archived documentation of Mallow Castle House and walled gardens, Spa house and Town Park.

These surveys and archives highlighted the various elements of historical interest throughout the site.

All retained trees will be protected in accordance with BS5837:2012, *Trees in relation to Construction*.

All landscape operations will be carried out in accordance with BS 4428:1989, *Code of practice for general landscape operations*.

4 Overview of Proposed Improvement Works

The proposals for Mallow Town Park are designed to achieve the best fit between the unique characteristics of the site, provision of active and passive recreation and linkages to Mallow Castle, Mallow Town Centre and surrounding residential areas north and south of the River Blackwater, whilst taking a sensitive approach to the visual, historic and ecological attributes of the landscape.

The successful implementation of the Town Park improvements is one of a number of key specific objectives of the draft County Development Plan for the town and is part of the wider 'reimagining' and rejuvenation of Mallow Town as an attractive place to live, work and visit by Cork County Council.

Key aspects addressed during the design process included:-

Sense of Place

Strengthen and enhance the sense of place within the Park connected with nature, with linkages provided to the adjacent Mallow Town Centre, Mallow Castle & Spa House. Interpretive signage will be provided to outline the natural and built heritage of the park and River Blackwater, which contribute to define the sense of place.

Connectivity and Permeability

Appropriate strategies for increasing connectivity and universal access to the Park from the surrounding Town Centre and communities are sought.

Landscape Unity and Diversity

A vital part of the park's improvement works is to diversify the park spaces and create greater texture and interest in the landscape, within a context of unifying and providing a consistent approach to works and management of the park.

Balance of Structured and Casual Spaces

A significant portion of the Town Park land is committed to structured recreation. The proposed improvement works seek to maximise efficiency of space and effective use of existing playing fields and community facilities. These are balanced with less formal/casual areas of the park for walking, running, sitting, informal play and other sports such as orienteering etc.

Resource Sustainability

Mallow Town Park presents an opportunity to promote sustainability and to become a model for sustainable park development for Cork County Council. Opportunities for sustainable urban drainage (SuDS) and for resource/greenhouse gas reduction are to be embedded as part of the vision for the park.

Play provision

The proposed improvement works include proposals for improved playground, introduction of skate park and pump track attractive to a wide range of children and teenagers in a safe and well supervised location.

Biodiversity

Mallow Town Park will seek to increase the diversity and quantity of local indigenous flora & fauna within the park, retaining and protecting existing landscape features, changing management to promote and support biodiversity.

Parking

Opportunities to provide parking availability specifically for the park and for events held there.



Figure 26 Town Park Plan

4.1 Footpaths, entrances and enhanced accessibility

4.1.1 Footpaths

The existing concrete footpaths parallel to the river Blackwater (and within the Blackwater SAC) are currently 2m in width and are proposed to be widened by 1m north to provide improved pedestrian comfort and enhance usage. The footpaths are constructed in concrete to increase flood resilience. The proposal includes for the construction of an additional 1,230m of 3m wide concrete footpath within the park, linking the park entrances to the river walk and offering accessible looped routes of varying lengths. The widened footpaths and new footpaths are located within managed amenity grass areas and no impact of other vegetation.

The one exception to this will be the proposed footpath the N20 connection to the river path at the western end of the park, where 4no. existing c. 18m high Lombardy Poplar (*Populus nigra 'Italica'*) in fair condition will need to be removed to construct the footpath. The tree removal will be carried outside bird nesting season and will have an immediate prior inspection by a qualified ecologist for nesting birds/bats.

It is proposed to construct c.425m long 2m wide reinforced grass path along the northern edge of Town Park, to provide an accessible grassed surface for walking, running etc.

It is also proposed to widening of the existing pedestrian bridge (which is currently c.1.2m wide) at the Caherduggan/Spa Glen Stream to 3m in width. (see Figures 27 & 28 below, BSM drawing. 6615-386 and Horgan Lynch drawing CQ15-24-A).

Due to the sensitivity of the landscape and Blackwater SAC, no lighting of footpaths along the river/within the park is proposed.

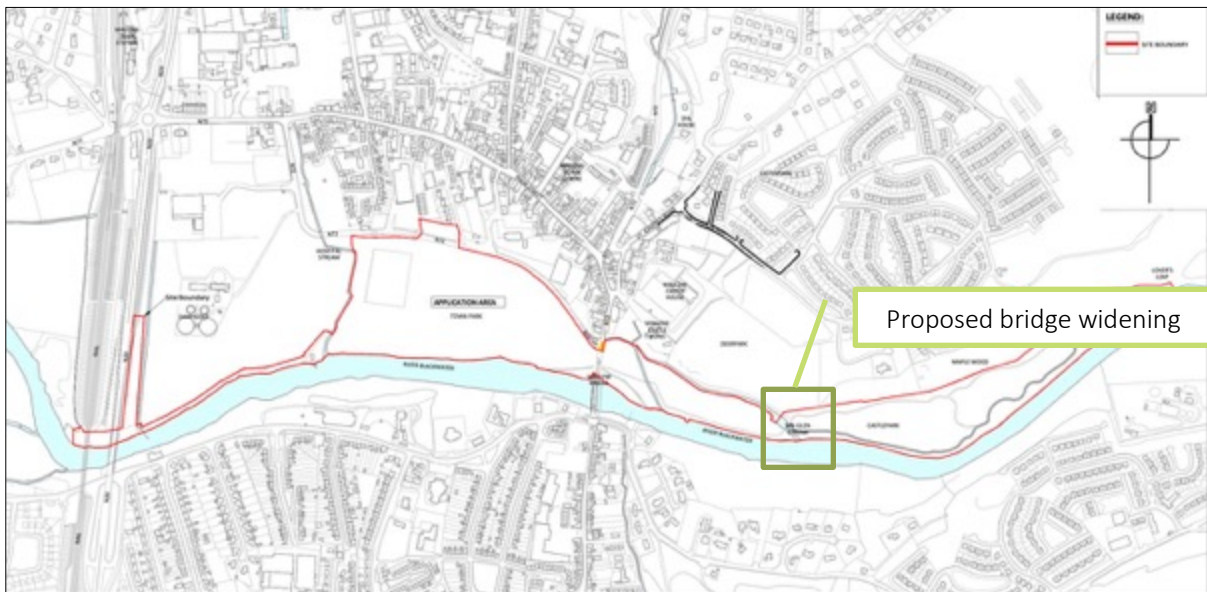


Figure 27 Location of Widened bridge crossing of Caherduggan/Spa Glen Stream

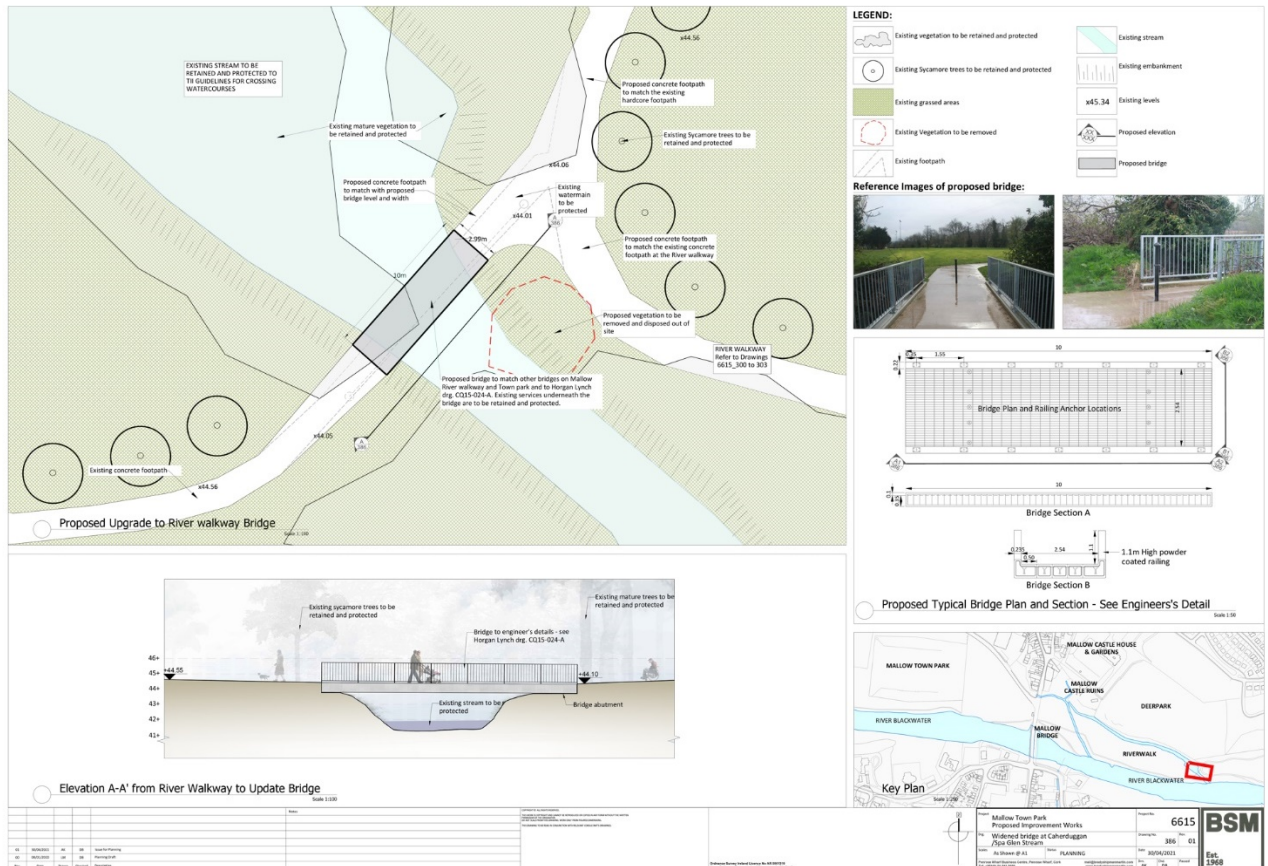


Figure 28 Widened bridge crossing of Caherduggan/Spa Glen Stream

4.1.2 Entrances

The proposal intends to create three new stream entrances and the renewal of six existing ones, with nine entrance points to the Town Park.

Works will comprise;

- Protection of existing low flood walls and flap valves at the northern boundary of the Town Park to the N72 Park road, with measures to enhance to surface water drainage from Park Road. Where it will be necessary to cut section of wall to allow a new entrance, the same top of wall height level shall be maintained in the new entrance landscape in order to keep the integrity and functional structure of a flood wall;
- Preservation and protection of existing mature vegetation at the northern boundary of town park, connecting with N72 Park Road. The proposed entrances have been positioned at the locations where the Irish Water Mallow Sewer infrastructure has required the removal of existing trees to connect the drainage scheme to the town (Cork County Council Planning Ref. No. 195078¹⁰).
- Preservation and protection of all riparian and mature vegetation at the new entrance from the N20, west of Town Park, with the exception of the removal of 4no Lombardy Poplar trees to allow the new ramped footpath connection (further details are provided on Entrance 7 below) ;
- Two of the entrances will be used as for controlled vehicular access, with one allowing for access of occasional trucks (e.g. annual circus) which may use the multi-use events area in the park;
- All other entrances shall be exclusively for pedestrian universal access

¹⁰ <http://planning.corkcoco.ie/ePlan/AppFileRefDetails/195078/0>

- The entrances are located at key junctions and streets providing increased connectivity with Mallow Town Centre and adjoining areas.
- The existing 2m wide concrete footpaths will be increased to 3m wide allowing for improved accessibility, Town Park;
- The presentation and attractiveness of the entrance will be enhanced and unified through the use of high quality, durable hard and soft landscape materials and detailing, along with consistent park signage and park furniture.

Further details on each of the entrance areas is provided below:-



Figure 30 Artist's Impression/Photocollage of Main Entrance to the Town Park and improvement works to the N72 junction

Entrance 2 – Proposed new pedestrian and vehicular entrance to the park to the overflow reinforced grass car park and multi-use event area (Refer to Figure 30 and drawing 6615-376)

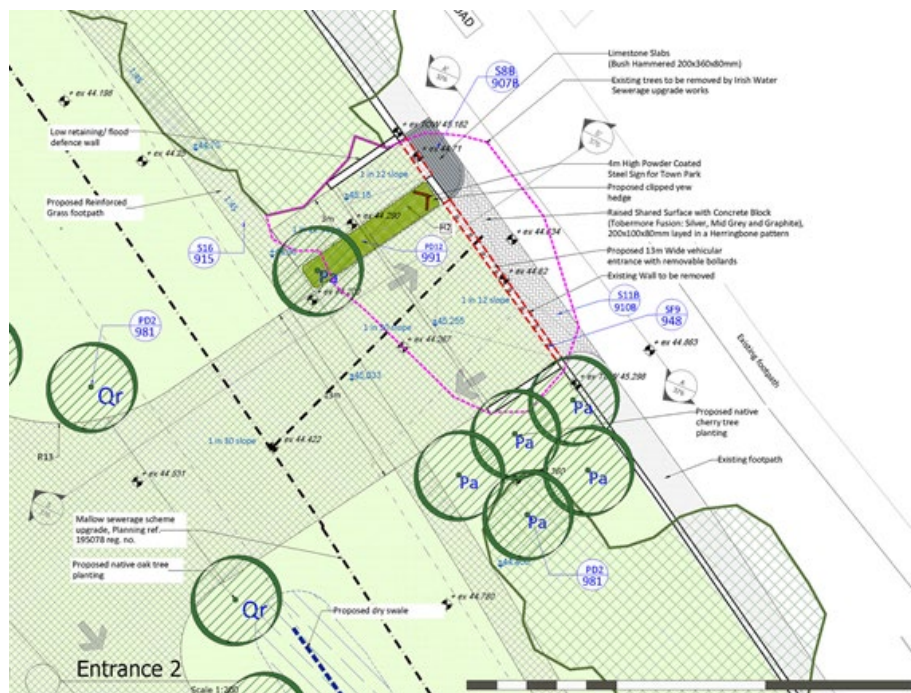


Figure 31 Town Park Entrance 2 Plan

The works will comprise:-

- Removal and reconstruction of section of existing flood wall to allow for new entrances.
- Ramped access to the park and construction of underground and above ground flood defence walls to match and maintain existing wall height levels,
- Highlighting new entrance to the park by new paving from the Park Road (stone slabs at the pedestrian entrance and raised shared surface at the vehicular entrance laid in herringbone pattern using high quality, textured, exposed aggregate concrete block paving.
- Reinforced grass surface connecting with overflow car park and multi-use events area as well as with amenity footpath.
- Controlled access to the vehicular entrance using removable bollards.
- Enhancement of the entrance by tree planting, clipped hedges and new entry signage.
- Surface water drainage measures including vegetated swales.
- Retention and protection of existing trees, planting of tree, hedging and seeding.

Entrance 3 – Existing pedestrian stepped entrance and landing to be enhanced by enlarging the landing and widening steps (See Figure 31 and drawing 6615-377). Works will include:-

- Removal and reconstruction of sections of existing low flood wall,
- Relocation and extension of flood walls with stone finish to match Town Park wall to match and maintain existing wall height levels,
- Relocation and extension of railing/handrail, railing to be painted black (RAL 9005).
- Enlargement and widening of landing and resurfacing with limestone slabs,
- Relocating and widening steps to 3m to allow for better pedestrian access to the park,
- Enhancement of the entrance through tree planting, clipped hedges and new entry signage.
- Surface water drainage measures including vegetated swales.
- Retention and protection of existing trees, planting of tree, hedging and seeding.

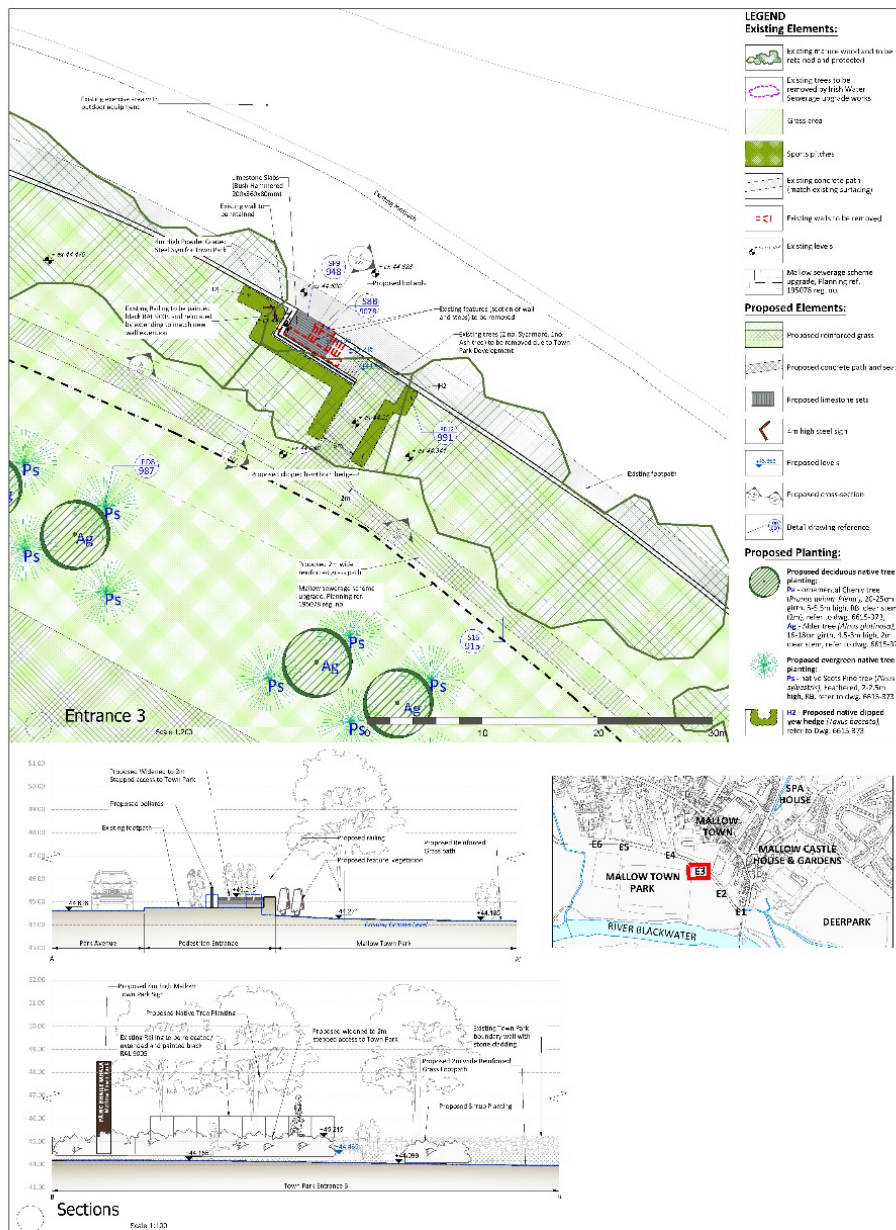


Figure 32 Town Park Entrance 3 Plan

Entrance 5 – Proposed new pedestrian entrance located opposite the Skatepark entrance and pedestrian access to Tesco car park (Refer to Figure 34 and drawing 6615-379). Works will comprise of:-

- Removal and reconstruction of section of existing flood wall to accommodate new entrance,
- Construction of ramped access to the Town Park to match and maintain existing wall height levels,
- High quality limestone slab paving to accent new entrance from Park Road side, with tactile paving to the pedestrian crossing to improve safety in the area,
- Construction of 3m wide concrete path with avenue tree planting connecting Park Road with river walk amenity path,
- Installation of removable bollard to prevent unauthorised vehicular access,
- Access to permeable car park and pump track,
- Enhancement to the entrance with trees and clipped hedge planting and 4m high bespoke feature signage,
- Surface water drainage measures including vegetated swales, and,
- Retention and protection of existing trees, planting of tree, hedging and seeding.

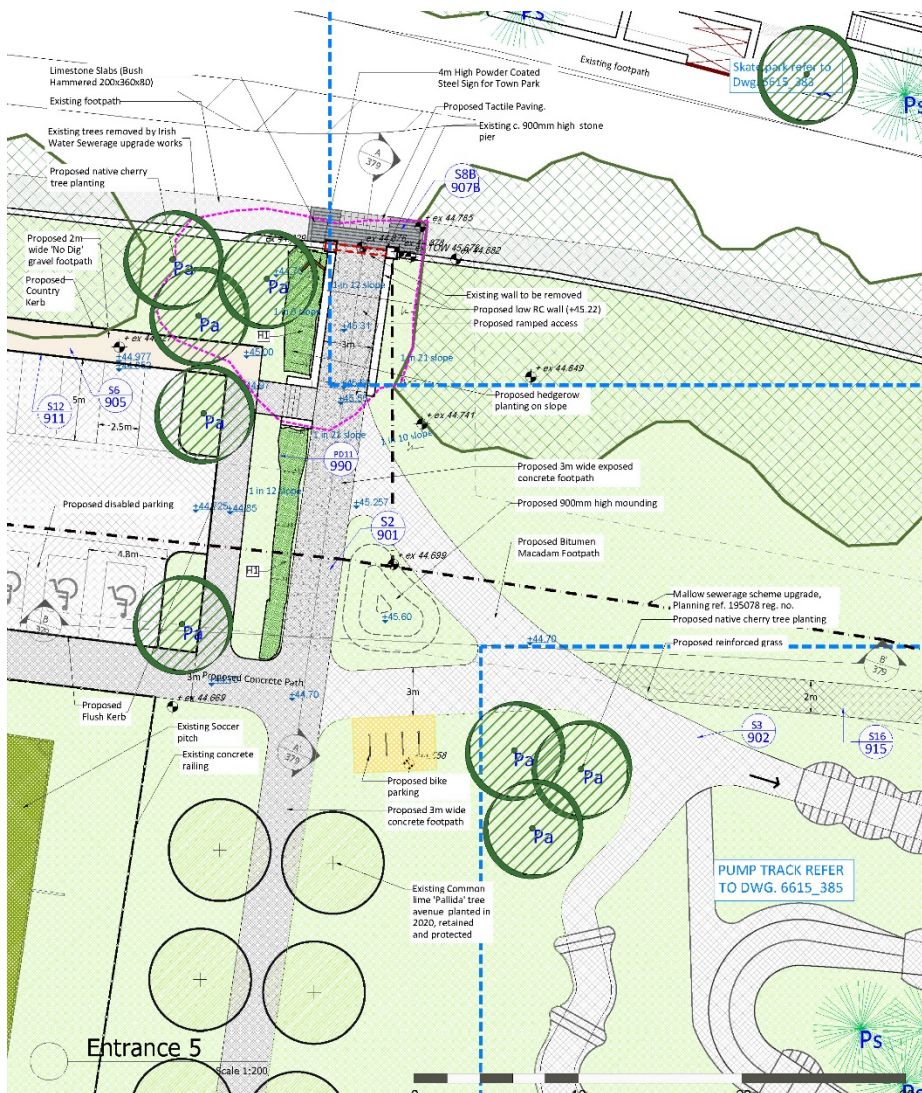


Figure 34 Town Park Entrance 5 Plan

Entrance 6 – comprises two entrances (Refer to Figure 35 and 6615-380 drawing 6615-380). Existing vehicular entrance (6a) will be widened to 6m and new pedestrian access gate added. Works will involve:-

- Removal of section of wall to widen the vehicular entrance and to introduce pedestrian access gate,
- Defining the new vehicular entrance to the town park from Park Road by laying raised shared surface (exposed aggregate concrete blocks laid in herringbone pattern),
- Proposed tactile paving to the pedestrian crossing opposite to the new pedestrian entrance,
- Installation of 1.2m high 6m wide black powder coated gates to control vehicular access to north western parking area and removable bollards to the reinforced grass event parking area and multi-use events area,
- Enhancement of the entrance with ornamental trees, native hedgerow and clipped hedge planting and 4m high bespoke feature signage,
- Existing pedestrian entrance (6b) to be widened to provide more generous accessible entrance,
- Existing wall and pillars to be partly removed to accommodate widened access. New limestone pillars with sliding gate to control access,
- High quality limestone slab paving laid at the entrance from Park Road to highlight the park access,
- Construction of 3m wide gently sloped footpath connecting with the car park, sport pitches and the rest of the Town Park,
- Surface water drainage measures including vegetated swales, and
- Retention and protection of existing trees, planting of tree, hedging and seeding.

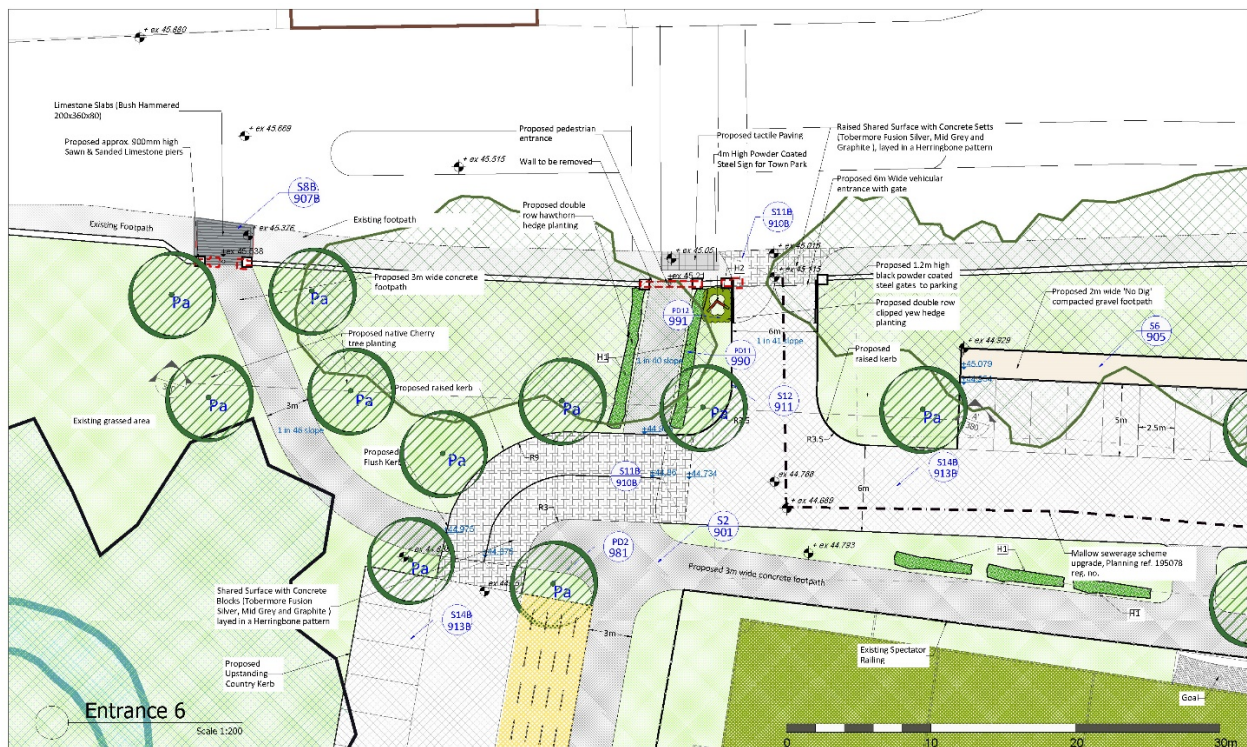


Figure 35 Town Park Entrance 6

Entrance 7 – Proposed new ramped access from N20 to Riverwalk, angling stand and Town Park (Refer to Figure 36 and drawing 6615-381). Works will comprise:-

- Removal of 4no. Lombardy Poplar (*Populus nigra 'Italica'*) along the N20 road embankment to allow for the construction of the proposed pedestrian path and cycle path from the existing N20 to the lower river paths. These trees are c. 18m in height, in fair condition, and are growing in a distinctive avenue of trees along the N20,
- The remaining two rows of Poplar trees and other existing vegetation growing on a steep embankment and along the stream to be retained and protected,
- Existing stream to be retained and protected,
- Construction of a series of brushed concrete ramps, level landings and handrail to provide a route that is accessible to all users,
- High quality limestone slab paving laid at the access from the N20,
- Providing rest stops with seating on level landings for path users,
- Enhancement of the N20 entrance with clipped hedges and signage,
- Surface water drainage measures including vegetated swales, and,
- Native oak trees to be planted along the lower section of the ramped path and at the junction with existing Riverwalk.

The proposed connection will provide access and connectivity between the Town Park/River walk with the existing path along the N20 which runs north/south, connecting to Mallow Train Station c.570m to the north and to Mallow Town to the south of the River Blackwater.

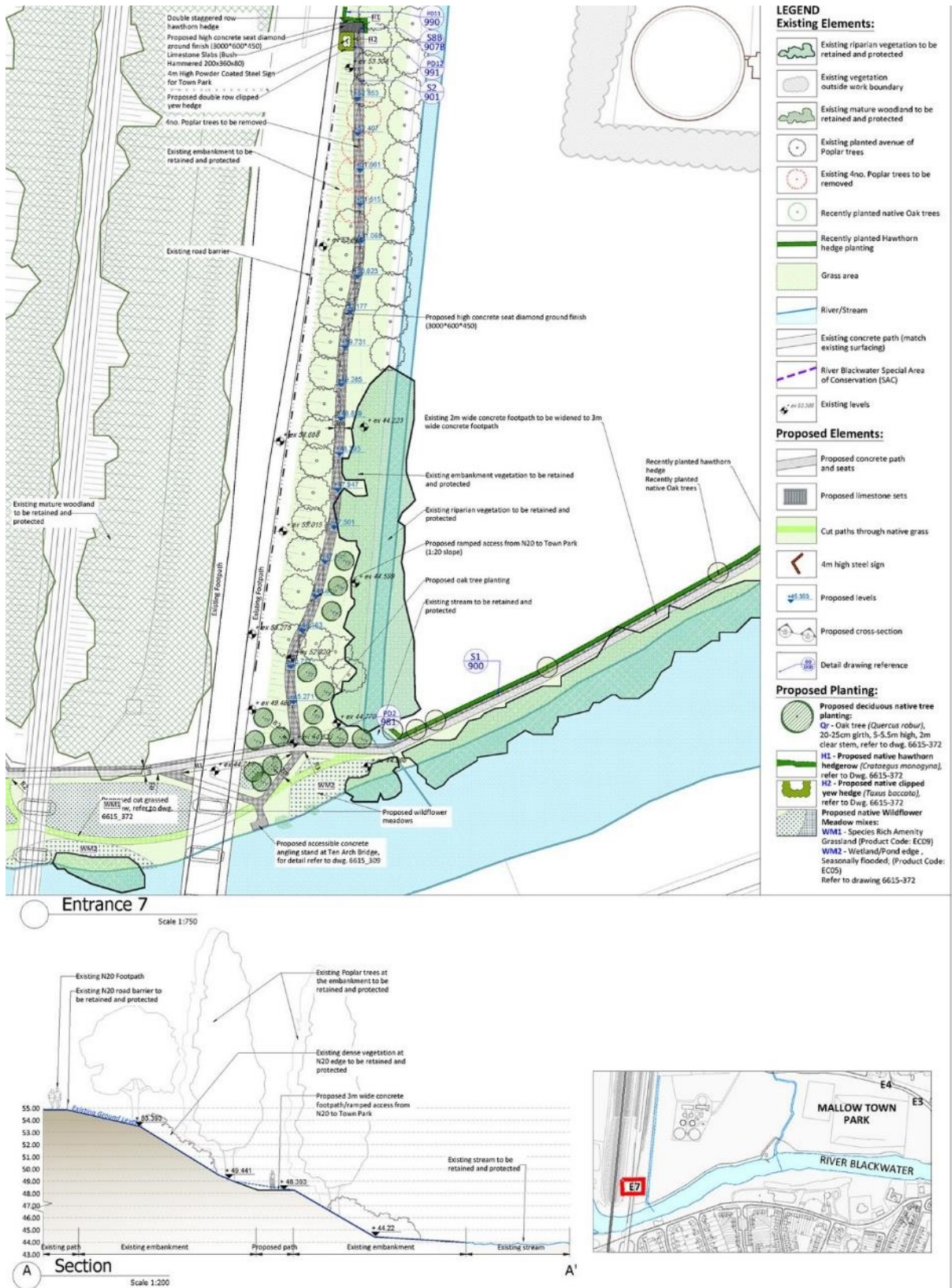


Figure 36 Town Park and Riverwalk Entrance 7

4.2 Sports Hub and Multi-Use Event area

Currently, the Town Park contains a GAA, rugby and soccer pitch. These will be retained with the GAA pitch moving north to provide more training space.



Figure 37 Artist's Impression/Photocollage of Sport Hub and Multi-Use Events area in the Town Park

The works will comprise:-

- Retention, protection and improvement of the existing soccer and rugby pitches;
- Improvement of GAA pitch;
 - Increased to c. 145 x 90m with removal of mounding at the northern side and removal of original gate at eastern side. The original stone plaque will be relocated and incorporated into the new entrance opposite St James Avenue.
 - Spectator railing will be installed around the GAA pitch.
 - 12m high ball catch net with adjustable netting at the base will be installed to heighten the netting in winter months.
- Development of grass training area south of the GAA pitch;
- Construction of reinforced grass multi-use events area east of the GAA pitch allowing for events and training; The multi-use events area will be provided to increase new areas for sports, training and dedicated area for events such as visiting circuses, fairs etc. Due to the nature of flooding, events (will only occur in summer months).
- Construction of a pump track north of the GAA pitch (Refer to Figure 38 and drawing 6615-385)
 - A pump track is a circuit of rolling mounds, banked turns and features designed to be ridden completely by riders “pumping” –generating momentum by up body movement rather than pedalling. Providing a fun, active experience for all age groups using a bike, roller skates, skate board, or any other non-motorized wheeled vehicle including wheelchairs;
 - This will consist of a 2m wide bitumen macadam trail with raised (0.5-1.2m high) ‘rolling’ course with reinforced grass (Enkazon mesh) mounds. The course has been designed to be floodable and free draining when flood water abate.



Figure 38 Pump Track Plan and Sections



Figure 39 Reference photo of Pump Track

- The existing Town Playground on the northern side of the Park Road N72 will be refurbished with new playground equipment at the eastern end of the playground and new Skatepark to the west. This will allow different age groups to play and exercise in a safe environment, appropriate to their needs and social development skills (Refer to Figure 40-44, BSM drawings 6615-382-384 and Horgan Lynch drawing CQ15-023). Works will comprise:
 - Removal of existing play equipment, safety surface, street furniture, removal of railing along the southern boundary with Park Road and timber fence at the eastern boundary with Cannon Field road.
 - Existing western and northern boundaries (walls and fences) to be retained and protected.
 - Existing trees retained and protected, with additional planting to increase sense of place, with aromatic and sensory planting.
 - Construction of a new Skatepark plaza with retaining walls and skate feature elements.
 - Installation of accessible Play Unit (up to 4m high) and ‘cube’ play elements (up to 7m high) and safety surfaces.
 - Construction of 1.2m high stub wall with fencing along southern and eastern boundary.
 - Construction of feature gateways and signage to the Skatepark and Playground.



Figure 40 Photo of existing playground



Figure 41 Proposed Skatepark and Playground Plan



Figure 42 Artist's Impression/Photocollage of improvement works in the Mallow Town Playground – Proposed Skatepark and Play units, View from Park road entrance

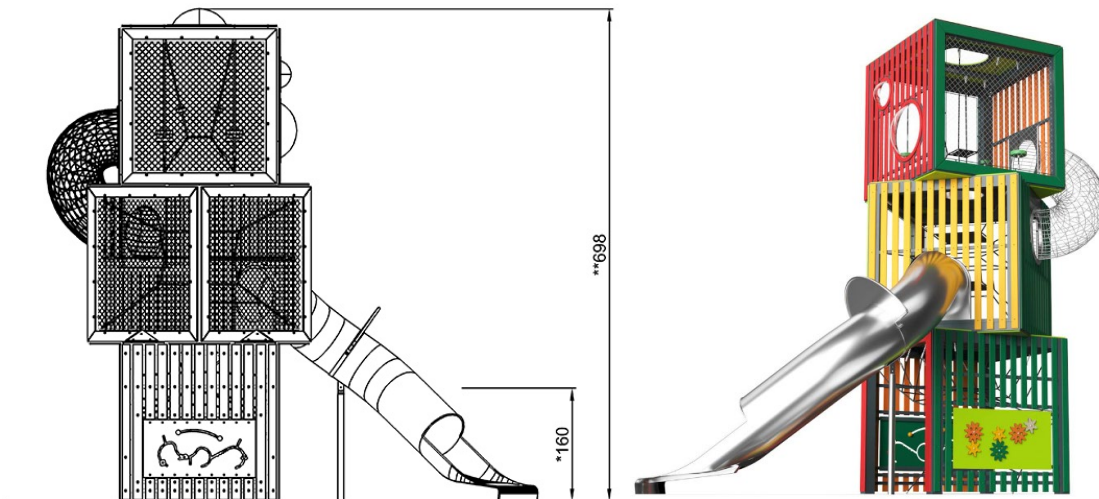


Figure 43 Play tower structure (reference image)



Figure 44 Accessible play structure unit (reference image)

- High quality public led lighting with full cut-off luminaires (2.8K warm white light) in Anthracite Grey powder coated finish.
- Screen planting to the western and northern Skatepark boundaries comprising beech hedging, feathered native columnar oak trees and fathered pine trees.
- Other planting works include feature a Sweet Gum tree in the middle of Skatepark plaza surface, 2m clear stem Oak trees along southern boundary with Park Road providing filtered views with low clipped hedges along the fence perimeter, and finished with low maintenance grass seeding and planting mixes to increase biodiversity.

4.3 Parking

Car parking for Park users is proposed at the north western corner of the Town Park, together with a reinforced grass events car park to the east of the multi-use events area...

The works will comprise:-

- The proposed car park located at the north-western part of Town Park will be used for sports events and park users. This controlled car park will be laid with a permeable surface (with further details in the accompanying engineering report. The landscaped car park will provide 96 spaces, including 5no. disabled and 4no. parent and child parking, with 64no. cycle parking spaces and associated landscape planting. Access will be via the existing entrance gate at the north west corner of the park. During winter months/risk of flood events the car park will be closed to parking. The parking area will be landscaped, incorporating SuDS and lighting (see BSM drawing 6615-373 and 388, Horgan Lynch drawing CQ15-021 and Varming drawings E-1001-1002).
- Event car parking area is located at the eastern side of the multi-use events area. This will be a reinforced grass/grasscrete surface (see figure 45 below), and only used for controlled events with provision for 114no. spaces during summer months, e.g. summer fair, organised events at Mallow Castle, circus etc.



Figure 45 Reinforced grass/grasscrete surface for event parking area(reference image from Farmleigh House, Dublin).

The entrance/exits for the car park areas are at existing/older entrances onto Park Road/N72 which is within the urban speed limit of the town and will be designed and construction in accordance with the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (DMURS).

4.4 Surface Water Detention basin

As a flood plain, Mallow Town Park regularly experiences significant flood events. The low wall along Park Road/N72 acts as a barrier in smaller flood events and has integrated flap valves to drain the N72 into the park, which will be protected and enhanced as part of the works.

In places, the existing ground levels within the park are slightly higher than levels on Park Road (N72). The ground level and topography to the south of the tree line in the Town Park parking area will be gently re-graded into a vegetated swale to drain towards the Blackwater via a grassed and native wet meadow detention basin (see figure 46, BSM drawing 6615-373 and 388, and Horgan Lynch drawing CQ15-022).



Figure 46 Vegetated swale and detention basin area

4.5 Angling stands

The Blackwater River is renowned for the angling. During consultation and discussions with Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI), local anglers and Cork County Council, a number of suitable locations for the provision of angling stands were identified and agreed. Historically, there were a number of timber angling stands along this stretch of the Blackwater and it is proposed to reconstruct publicly accessible angling stands within the park.

The angling stands will be constructed with reference to IFI guidance¹¹. See figure 39 and drawing 6615-389. Due to the sensitivity of the SAC and flooding of the river, the angling stands will be built on the river bank with no 'in-stream' works.

The nearest trees will have their crowns lifted to 2m above ground level to improve views of the river.

¹¹ <https://www.fisheriesireland.ie/documents/angling-1/1002-accessible-angling-infrastructure-guidelines/file.html>

The angling stands have been positioned at known good locations for angling and have been set back from the other walking paths in the park.

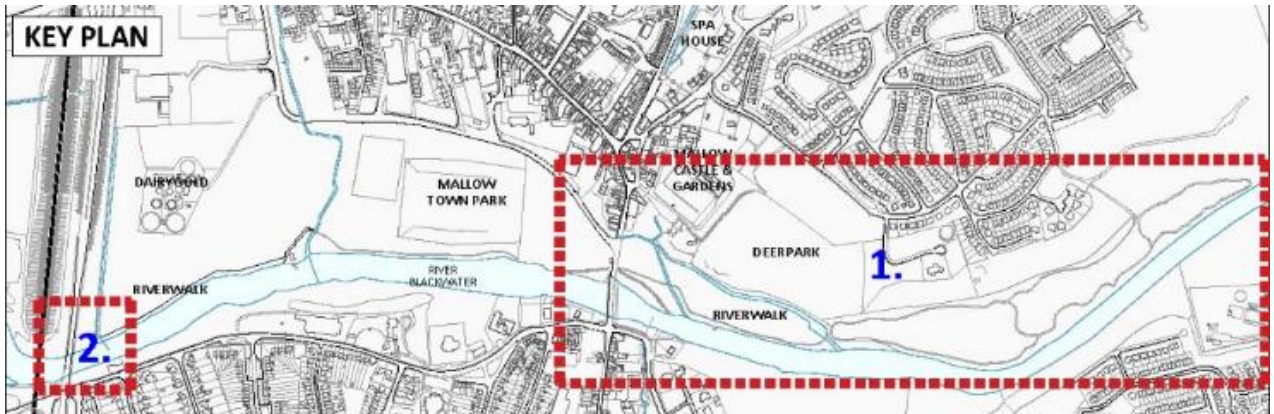


Figure 47 Key Plan – Location of Angling Stands

Four angling stands will be provided in Area 1 to the east of Mallow Bridge and Caherduggan/Spa Glen stream in Castlepark (see Figure 47 above). These platforms will be constructed of recycled plastic (for durability, low maintenance and slip resistance) in existing openings in riparian vegetation along the river bank. Localised regrading and revegetating with reinforced geotextile for soil stabilisation will be carefully carried out. Screw pile foundations will be used in the river bank during the summer/early autumn avoiding in-stream works.

Access to the angling stands will be via the existing footpath network in Castlepark (Refer to Figures 48 and 49, and drawing 6615-389).



Figure 48 Location of angling stands in Castlepark

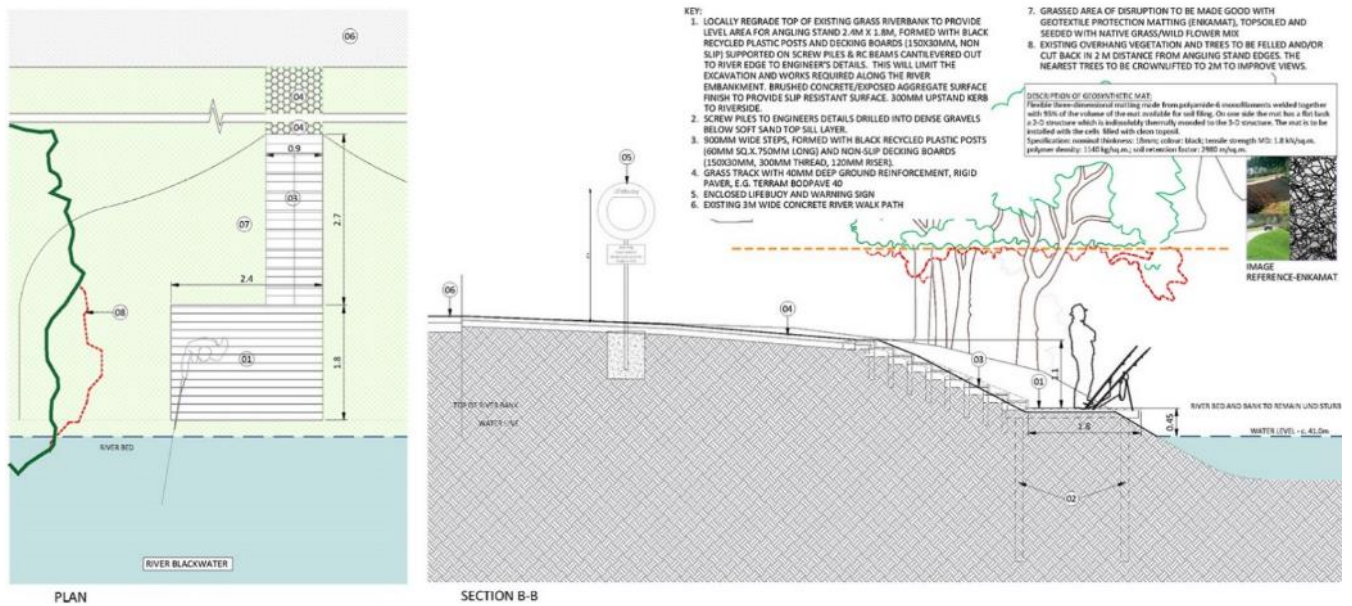


Figure 49 Recycled plastic Angling Stands typical detail

One angling stand is also provided at the western end of the Park (see Area 2, Figure 47 above) downstream from the Railway/N20 bridges and it is constructed as a wheelchair accessible concrete platform with a low plinth wall at the riverside edge. The platform will connect to the existing concrete river path and eastwards to the main Town Park (Refer to Figures 50-52 and drawing 6615-389).

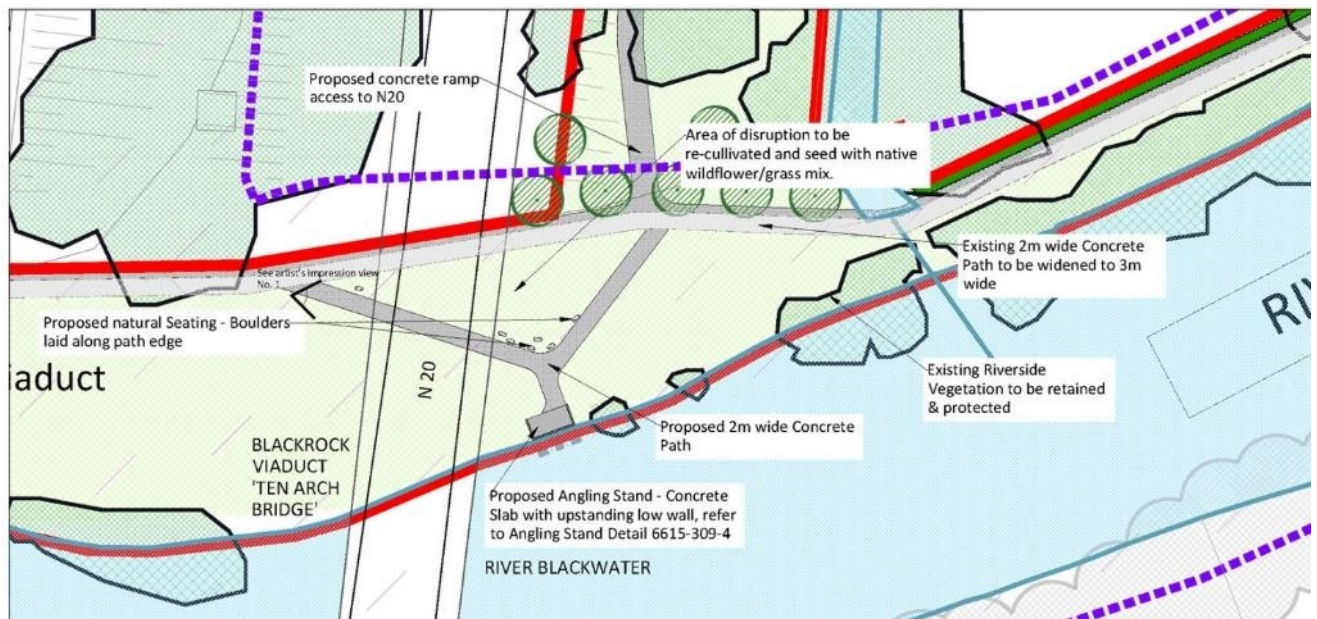


Figure 50 Wheelchair accessible angling stand plan

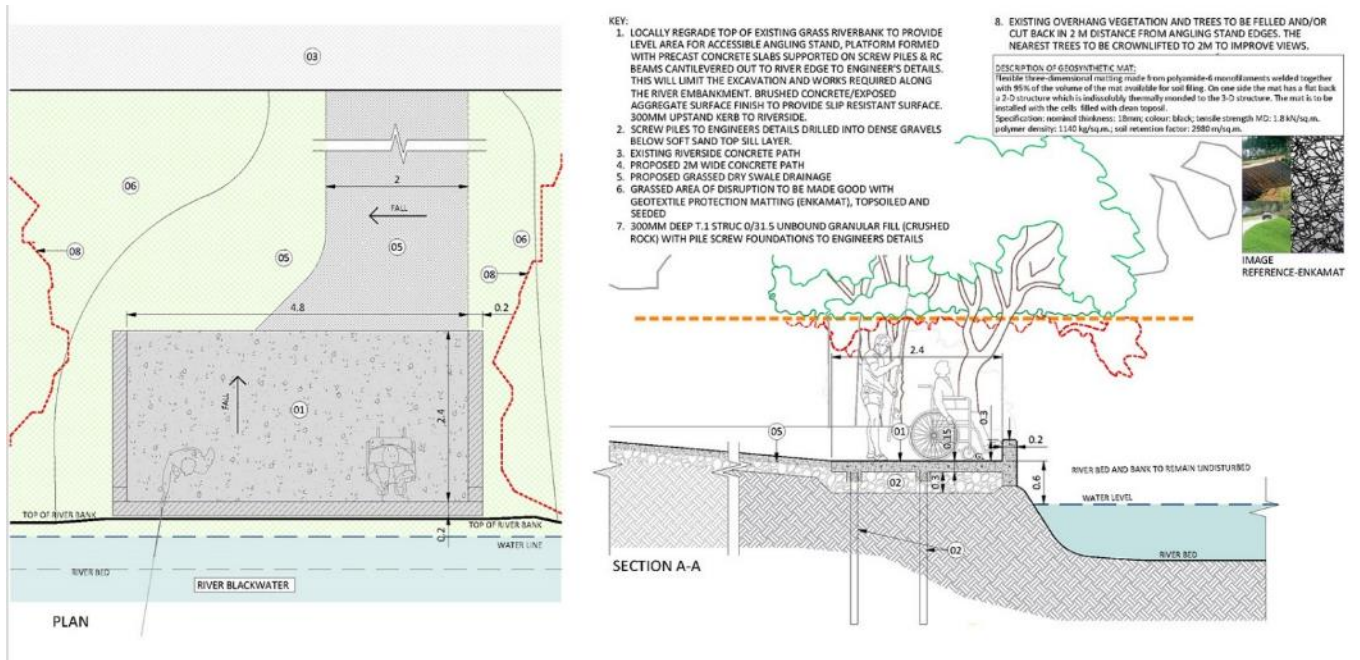


Figure 51 Wheelchair accessible concrete angling stand detail



Figure 52 Artist's Impression/Photocollage of Riverwalk and Angling stands under the N20 Bridge

4.6 Proposed Planting

A number of important beneficial changes are proposed in the Town Park, which will modernise the park and make it more responsive to the needs of people in Mallow, whilst respecting its history and existing value as an amenity and green infrastructure asset.

As part of the proposed development, the landscape treatment at the Town Park will comprise:

- The Town Park will provide a dynamic and flexible arrangement of open spaces for a range of uses and activities. The proposed planting will provide a spatial structure for the park with the introduction of new trees including Oak, Cherry, Pine and Alder (Figure 53). The new tree planting will be arranged along proposed avenues and footpaths or in clusters at the detention basin framing views to important sites along the borders of the Town Park. Hawthorn and Yew hedges will define the proposed entrances, marking the transition from the urbanised environment of Mallow Town to the natural and green tranquillity of the Blackwater Amenity Corridor.
- An interpretive tree trail will be developed using the Irish Tree Alphabet¹²
- Feature ornamental tree planting will be introduced at focal entrance points within the Town Park. Selected species will include *Magnolia 'Galaxy'*, *Prunus 'Plena'*, *Pinus 'Radiata'* with ornamental pollinator-friendly shrub planting and perennials at the Main Town Park entrance (see Figure 51a and 52).
- Retention and protection of all existing mature trees & riparian vegetation.
- The removal of 4no. Lombardy Poplar trees at the access from the N20 to facilitate the construction of an access path from the N20 to the lower river path.
- Planting of over 196 semi-mature trees and 400 lin.m. of primarily native hedges.
- Retention and protection of 160no. recently planted semi-mature trees, 490 lin.m of Hawthorn hedgerows as well as wildflower meadows planted in recent years (2019-2020).
- Grassland management to develop short and long meadow areas following All-Ireland Pollinator guidelines to promote biodiversity, enhance the landscape value of the Town Park and Riverwalk and the connection between the natural and built environment.



Quercus robur



Alnus glutinosa



Pinus sylvestris

Figure 53 Native tree planting scheme (Oak, Alder and Pine trees)

¹² <http://www.treealphabet.ie/>



Magnolia 'Galaxy'

*Liquidambar
'Worplesdon'*

Prunus 'Plena'

Shrub mix

Figure 54 Ornamental trees and shrub planting mix



Taxus baccata

Crataegus monogyna

Ilex crenata 'Dark green'

Fagus sylvatica

Figure 55 Proposed hedges in the Town Park (yew, hawthorn, box-leaved holly and beech)

4.7 Grassland habitats

Grassland habitats are already present at throughout the Town Park. The key to creating and maintaining diverse grasslands is good management, slowly removing soil nutrients by removing grass at key times in the year.

Certain areas remain uncut until late summer, for example those fields in the eastern part of the Park, which will allow flowering plants to produce and set seed. Areas of long grass, with a variety of species will enable insects, birds and small mammals including bats to thrive. Paths will be mown through and along the edges of the grasslands. This will facilitate access to the habitat for pedestrians and will also ensure that the habitat looks cared for and well maintained.



Figure 56 Proposed grassland management to encourage and support pollinator

Well managed grasslands are relatively straightforward to deliver and manage, and can make a significant contribution to biodiversity. All work undertaken will be in accordance with best practice, in particular the guidelines developed for the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan

4.7.1 Key Actions for Landscape and Biodiversity Management

4.7.1.1 Implementation Stage Actions (Year 1-2)

- Remove rubbish and debris, particularly from watercourses, taking into account the need to protect nesting birds over the summer months;
- Develop a town-wide pollinator plan and identify areas for different grassland cutting/management regimes to provide a range of grassland types (including spring and summer meadows) and to increase pollinator diversity and abundance. Provide mown paths to facilitate public access;
- Minimise (or where possible eliminate) the use of herbicides for the management of vegetation;
- Prioritise nectar- and pollen-rich perennial native plants over annual bedding plants in flower beds and borders. Incorporate pollinator nesting sites (small areas of bare soil or insect hotels) into suitable areas;
- Implement and monitor invasive species management plan;
- Develop a town-wide Invasive Species Management Plan including appropriate biosecurity signage;
- Provide log piles from felled timber in woodland areas (e.g. Maple Woods) to encourage invertebrates;
- Where appropriate plant additional trees, scrub and woodland floor species and identify locations for the planting of native wetland trees and scrub such as willow, and alder;
- Erect bat boxes in woodland areas, and bird boxes of a range of types throughout the study area;
- Provide interpretive panels on local biodiversity as part of the wider strategy for Mallow.

4.7.1.2 Management Stage Actions (ongoing)

- Removal of invasive alien plant species, following the Invasive Species Management Plan;
- Monitor the stream(s) on a regular basis, paying particular attention to the potential spread of alien invasive species;
- Modify the vegetation management regime as required to enhance biodiversity objectives. It is likely that different sections of each stream would need some management intervention every few years;
- Monitor woodland development every 5 years and modify management plan as required;
- Ongoing monitoring and removal of undesirable species;
- Manage social activity within the different areas, with ongoing engagement with adjoining residents;
- Monitor bat activity and the use of bat boxes annually.
- Foster appropriate activities that will not negatively impact on the more sensitive habitats, such as the meadows and woodlands;
- Organise field trips for children and schools;
- Undertake ongoing maintenance in accordance with the pollinator-friendly policies suggested in the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan 2021-2025¹³;
- Outside of sports pitch, training and multi-use events areas, grass areas will be managed to enhance biodiversity as grassland meadows through the following measures:-
 - (i) Reduction in the frequency of mowing in existing grassland areas with differential cutting heights to paths, short and long flowering grass meadows;
 - For short flowering meadow, grass cutting will be delayed until mid April to allow Dandelion flowers to bloom. Thereafter, grass will be mown the grass every six weeks to allow flowers like Clover to bloom broadly following the timeline below;

¹³ <https://pollinators.ie/>

Brady Shipman Martin

DUBLIN

Canal House
Canal Road
Dublin 6
+353 1 208 1900

CORK

Penrose Wharf Business Centre
Penrose Wharf
Cork
+353 21 242 5620

LIMERICK

11 The Crescent
Limerick
+353 61 315 127
mail@bradyshipmanmartin.com
www.bradyshipmanmartin.com