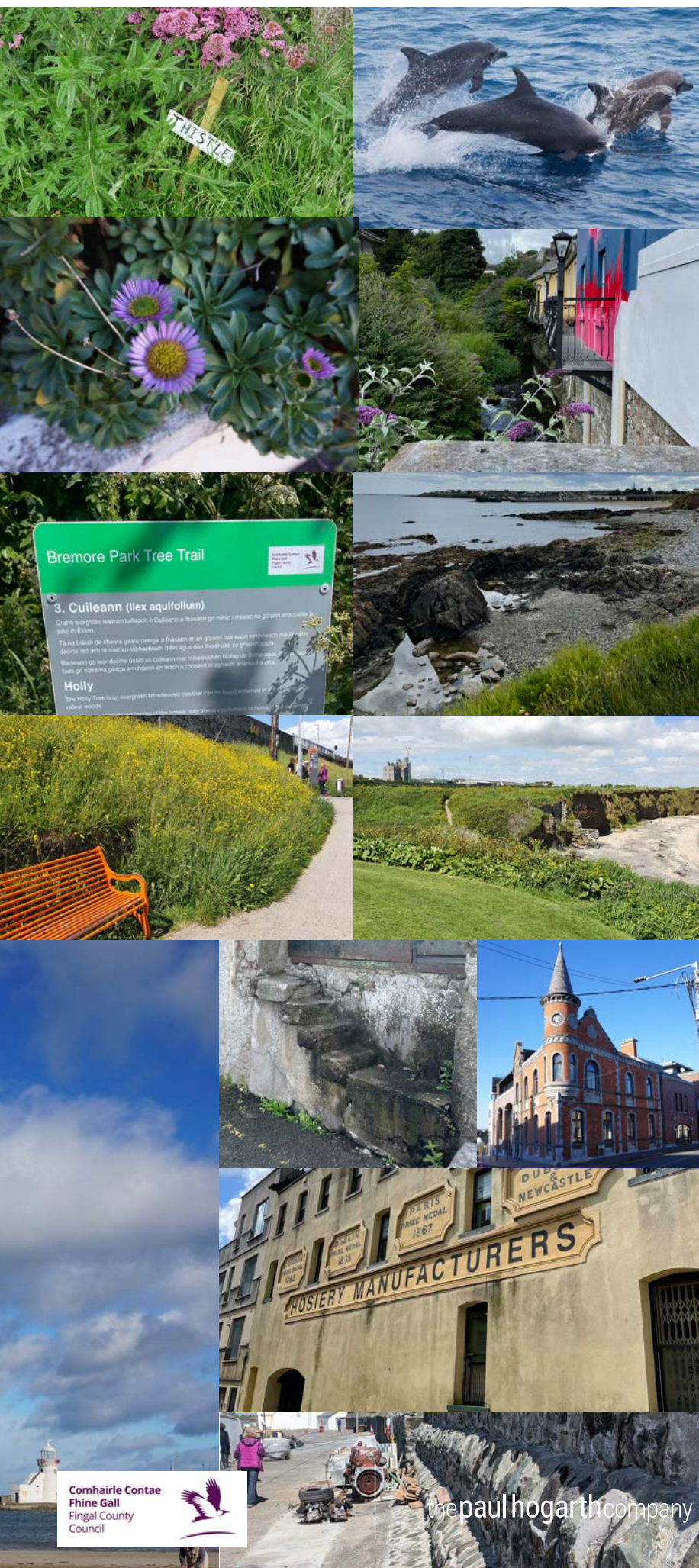


# Public Realm Design Guide

## Balbriggan







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# Introduction

 If there's a lesson in streetwatching it is that people do like basics: as environments go, a street that is open to the sky and filled with people and life is a splendid place to be.

- William H. Whyte, in his studies on  
*The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces* (1980)

## Introduction

This Public Realm Design Guide for Balbriggan has been researched and written by Landscape Architecture and Urban Design consultancy The Paul Hogarth Company on behalf of Fingal County Council.

## What is Public Realm ?

Balbriggan's public realm is defined within this document as all streets and other publicly accessible outdoor spaces. These spaces collectively and individually play a key role in defining the quality and functionality of working, living as well as visiting Balbriggan.

Through investment in the public realm a number of long-term benefits can be ensured from successful public realm including an increase in and greater variety of social activities, a growth in commercial enterprise, improved environmental and ecological contributions, an increase in local property values, a safer and healthier town to live in, and improved economic performance within the local area, to name just a few.

If public realm can provide a catalyst for future investment, a successful public realm needs to;

- Enhance the setting, character and accessibility to public space while providing a safer environment, for everyone.
- Be inclusive and considers circulation for pedestrians and all forms of traffic taking into account specific requirements of the disabled and visually impaired.
- Remain attractive, providing a setting in which everyone can feel comfortable and appreciate the character of their surroundings. Encouraging people to stay longer and return.

The quality of the public realm is important as it provides accessible, healthier and safer places, so important for residents, commuters and visitors alike. It also sets the context for Balbriggan's architecture and natural environment.

It is these spaces in Balbriggan that this guidance document addresses, ensuring that the town is a safe, healthy, vibrant and great place to be.



# Masterplan

Through the Public Realm Strategy there is an opportunity to unlock the potential of Balbriggan, building on its strengths and creating far reaching positive implications for the quality of the town centre. Strengthening the connections between people, place and nature will shift the focus to a town centre environment where people feel comfortable spending time. Streets and spaces will become the veins of local public life to carry out daily activities where people no longer feel pushed to the edges or away from the spaces altogether.





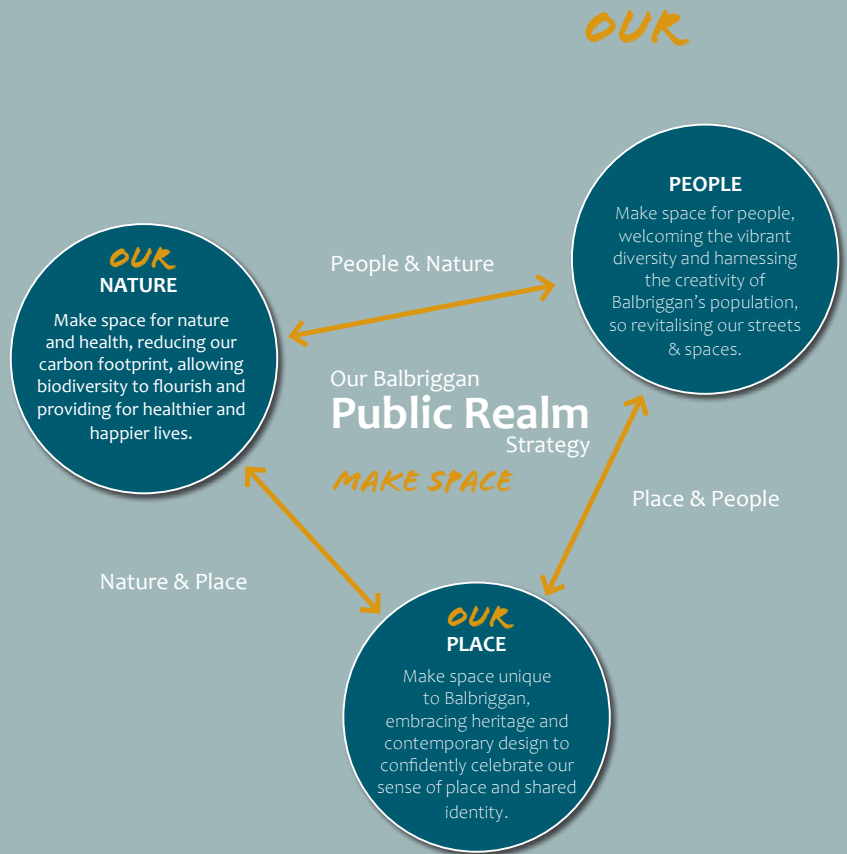




# 02

## Using the Guide





## Overview

The **Public Realm Design Guide** is a complimentary document produced alongside **The Public Realm Strategy**.

The Public Realm Design Strategy sets out strategic priorities for Balbriggan's Public Realm focused on three key aims Nature, People and Place.

The Public Realm Design Guide will concentrate on the delivery of highest quality public realm in a manner which is place specific, drawn from best practice and delivery focused.

The Public Realm Design Guide translates this strategy and its key aims to provide an informative and practical set of instructions to help guide the identified URDF funded projects and those projects identified as a result of the Public Realm Strategy and the Our Balbriggan Active Travel and Transport Plan being advanced through the 'Our Balbriggan' delivery process.

The design guide refers to 'components' structured within 4 principle chapters, as follows;

1. Surface and Edging
2. Lighting
3. Street Furniture
4. Planting.

For each of these components guidance in respect of detail, procurement, arrangement and maintenance is provided.

Importantly, this guide also ensures that proposed components are adaptive and place specific. This avoids prescription that inhibits creativity, rather the intention is to encourage uniqueness (the Balbriggan charm) to ensure that within the reimaged space the sympathetic retention and enhancement of the natural, cultural and architectural heritage adds value.

This guide concludes with a series of illustrated cross sections demonstrating the approach within selected typologies through each project area. These convey how each of the components can be coordinated within each character area, as defined in the following pages.











## Design Guidance

The information within this document offers guidance only to teams involved in the design and development of public realm spaces. It is recognised that greater amounts of design input, coordination, detailing, and consultation will be required for the successful delivery and long-term management of any public realm scheme.



# Character Areas

## The Areas

-  Civic /Events Space (s)
-  Main Streets
-  Side Streets
-  Secondary Streets
-  Conservation Area (As ACA (inc Harbour & Viaduct))
-  Approach Roads / Gateways
-  Parkland
-  Coastal Paths
-  Beach
-  Harbour







03

Policy & Guidance



## Design Practice

There are a number of important guidance and reference tools available to teams tasked with the design, development and delivery of Balbriggan's Public Realm.

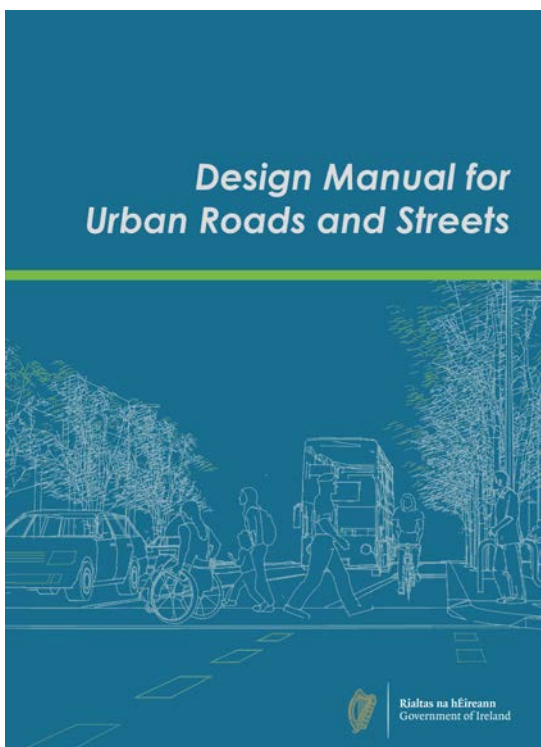
While the following documents are core references, it is important that design teams remain aware of additional design guidance and legislation that may be considered pertinent to the particular details and dynamics of the site or area in question.

# Policy and Guidance

Teams involved in the design and development of public realm spaces are recommended to have due regard to the following documents for guidance.

## Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets Department of Transport 2019

Commissioned by the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport and the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government. DMURS seeks to put well-designed streets at the heart of **sustainable communities** and supports boarder government policies on planning, transportation and the environment. With consideration towards the public realm of Balbriggan, DMURS presents a valuable resource for design teams.



## The Cycle Design Manual (CDM) National Transport Authority, 2023

The manual provides helpful guidance on the design of both on-road and off-road cycle facilities for both urban and rural locations.

## Greater Dublin Area Cycle Network Plan National Transport Authority, 2022

The cycle network plan consists of the Urban Network, Inter-Urban Network and Green Route Network for each of the seven Local Authority areas comprising the GDA and was adopted as part of the GDA Transport Strategy 2022-2042





Well-designed places include well-located **public spaces** that support a wide variety of activities and encourage social interaction, to promote health, well-being, social and **civic inclusion**.

## Local Development Plan 2023-2029 (and subsequent County Development Plans)

### Fingal County Council

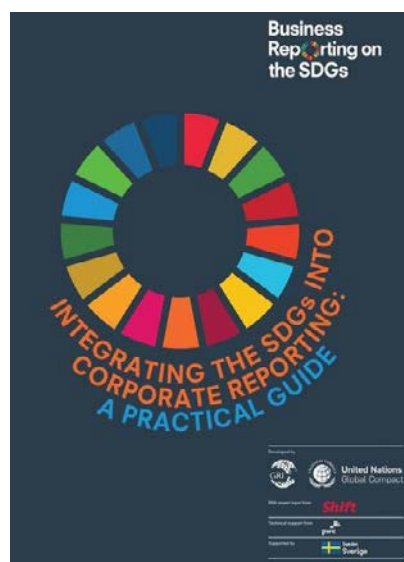
The Fingal Development Plan sets out the spatial framework to guide future development within the County and seeks to put healthy place-making at its heart, working towards a sustainable County. It envisages Fingal as an integrated network of vibrant socially and economically successful urban settlements, rural communities, strategic greenbelts and open countryside, supporting and contributing to the economic development of the County and Region. The Plan is underpinned by four cross cutting themes; climate action, health place-making and sustainable development, social inclusion and high-quality design.



## UN Sustainable development goals (SDG's) United Nations 2015

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), are an urgent call for action. They recognise that ending poverty and other deprivations must go hand-in-hand with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth.

Of particular relevance is Goal 11 which aims to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.





# Design Guidance

## All Ireland Pollinator Plan

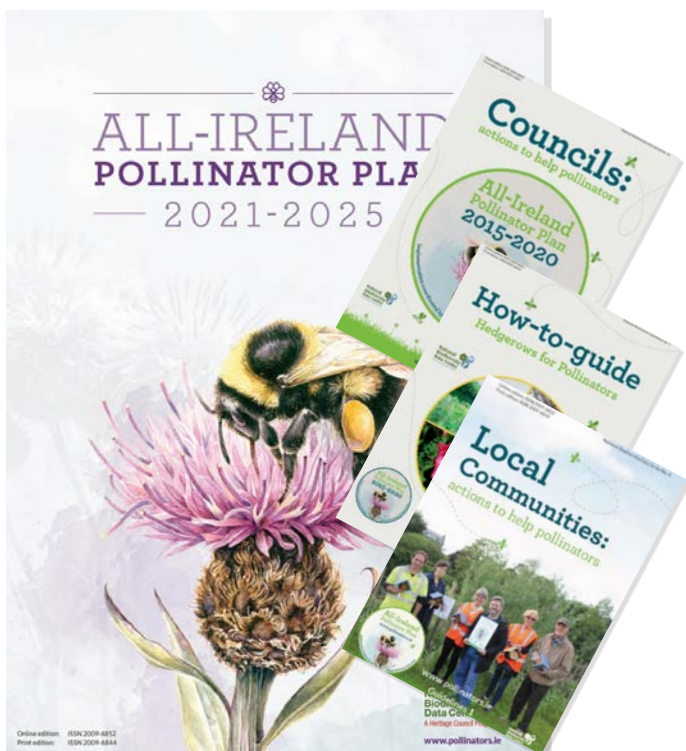
Heritage Council Ireland 2021-25

The All-Ireland Pollinator Plan is a framework bringing together different sectors to create a landscape where pollinators can survive and thrive. It sets out 186 actions across six objectives to encourage a better way of managing our whole landscape to permanently support struggling biodiversity.

## Building Regulations - Technical Guidance Document M

Government of Ireland 2022

Often referred to simply as *Part M*, the building regulations for access to and use of buildings used as dwellings and buildings used for other purposes other than dwellings and provides a **baseline for accessibility** in the built environment.



Riailtas na hÉireann  
Government of Ireland

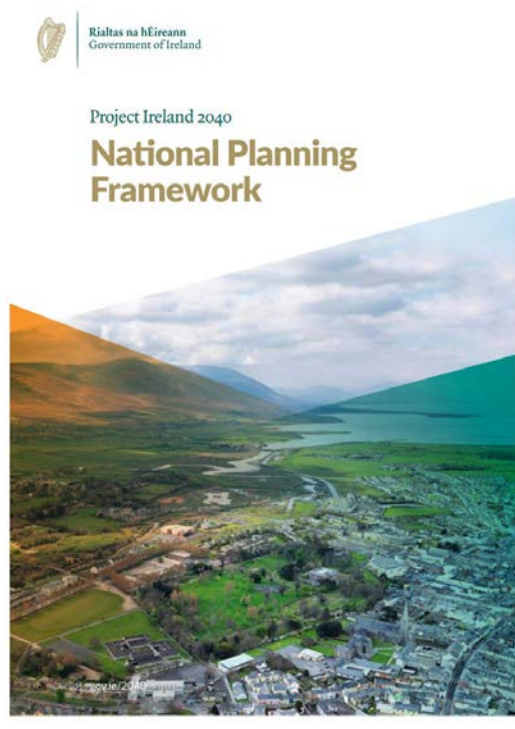
Building Regulations

**Technical Guidance Document M  
2022**

Access and Use

Prepared by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage  
[gov.ie/housing](http://gov.ie/housing)

## ...and what does it say in the National Planning Framework?



### National Planning Framework

Government of Ireland 2019

The National Planning Framework (NPF) is the Government's high-level strategic plan for shaping the future growth and development of our country out to the year 2040. It is a framework to guide public and private investment, to create and promote opportunities for our people, and to protect and enhance our environment - from our villages to our cities, and everything around and in between.



*Enhanced Amenities and Heritage, which ensures that our cities, towns and villages are attractive and can offer a good quality of life. It will require investment in well-designed public realm, which includes public spaces, parks and streets, as well as recreational infrastructure. It also includes amenities in rural areas, such as national and forest parks, activity-based tourism and trails such as greenways, blueways and peatways. This is linked to and must integrate with our built, cultural and natural heritage, which has intrinsic value in defining the character of urban and rural areas and adding to their attractiveness and sense of place."*



# 04

## Inspiration

## Overview

Most people instinctively know that **being outside is good for you**. We also instinctively know when we feel unsafe or vulnerable.

Less commonly appreciated is that public spaces are successful by the quality of design, quality of build and how well they are looked after and cared for.

All these things collectively influence how well we perceive any space, how safe we feel when we are there and ultimately influence our experience. The more positive the experience, the better we feel and the more likely we are to return.

In addition to function, practicality and management, the design of the public realm must contribute to uniqueness and sense of place.

This is what makes somewhere special.



# Materials and Colours

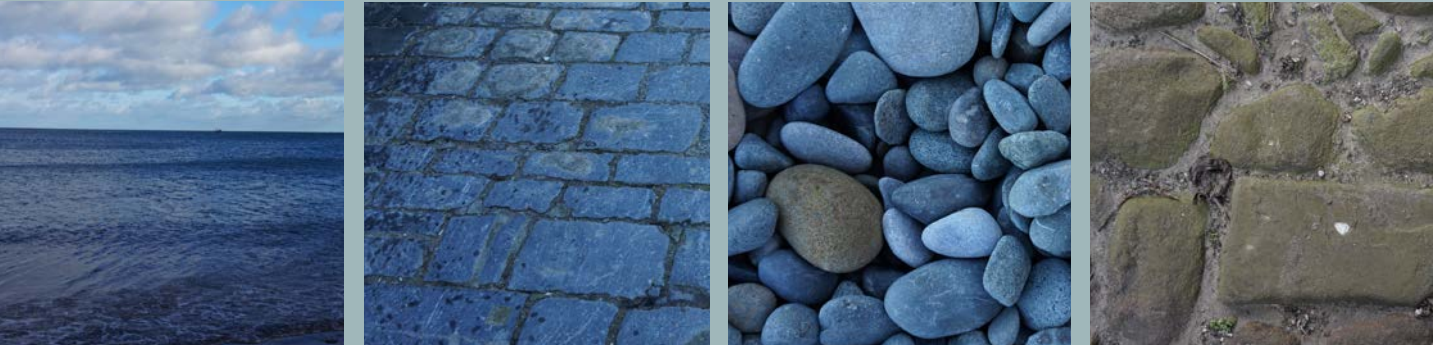
Teams involved in the design and development of public realm spaces are recommended to consider the following materials and colour palettes in development of design proposals for public realm improvement projects and to consider the long-term maintenance implications of materials in a coastal/marine environment

## Materials

								
Furniture FSC Timber Iroko	Surface and Edge Streetscape Irish / European Silver Grey			Surface and Streetscape Parkland / Coastal Accent Local Buff		Planting Throughout Varies	Furniture Highlight Brass	Furniture Principal colour Painted



Inspiration (taken from the local landscape)



View from Balbriggan Beach      Limestone Setts at Bremore Head      Sea Washed Pebbles at Seapoint Lane      Heritage Cobbles at Viaduct



## Principal Colour

## Accent Colours



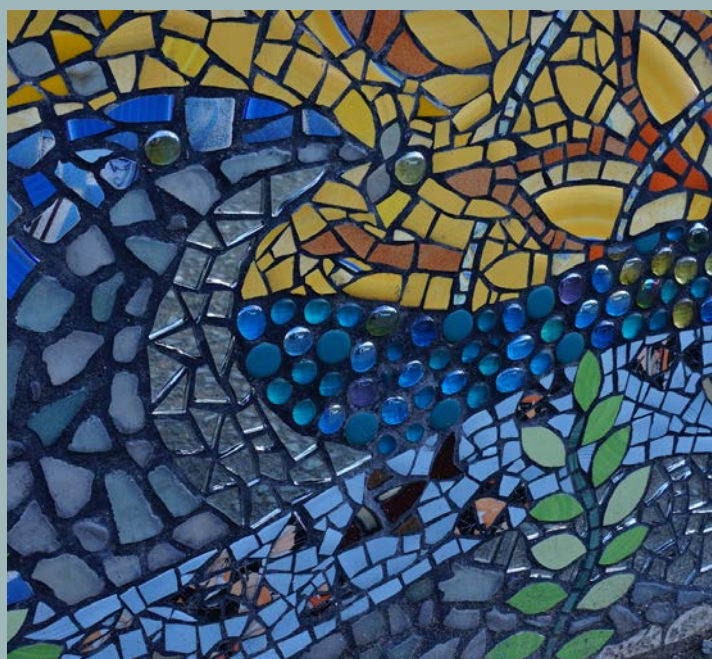
Dark Blue / Grey  
Subdued  
(background tone)



Earth Tones  
Typical



Accent Colours  
Used sparingly



Mosaic at Balbriggan Beach



Totem Signage



Fingal County Council Logo / Purple



## Colour

The colour palette is designed to reflect the distinctive character of Balbriggan's town, coast and parkland. Taking inspiration from the local landscape, geology as well as the streetscape and heritage throughout the town and landscape.

The existing signage and elements of street furniture identify a range of colours unique to Balbriggan. With consideration these can combine and form the structure of a complementary colour palette, to reinforce Balbriggan's unique identity.

This accent colour palette should be considered and located with care to ensure they are used as accent rather than become core regular elements.

Public Realm surfacing will take inspiration from the existing surfaces and heritage detailing. The silver blues and greys for the primary streetscape take inspiration from the heritage limestone as well as the sea washed pebbles. These contrast to the more earthy colours of the heritage cobbles.



# 05

## Surface & Edging

## Overview

The anticipated investment and upgrade of the town's streetscape and public spaces presents an exciting opportunity for Balbriggan. This also creates potential to consider a strategic approach to natural components, the most fundamental of which are surfaces and edges.

Of particular importance to this component is ensuring highest quality of material and workmanship, as this will significantly prolong life expectancy, mitigate the carbon footprint and reduce maintenance requirements.



# Existing Surfacing & Edging

While the town contains many fine buildings, the quality of frontages, public spaces, surfaces and edges are currently variable and inconsistent. In some areas recent public realm enhancements have made a significant improvement, whereas others can impact negatively upon first impressions.

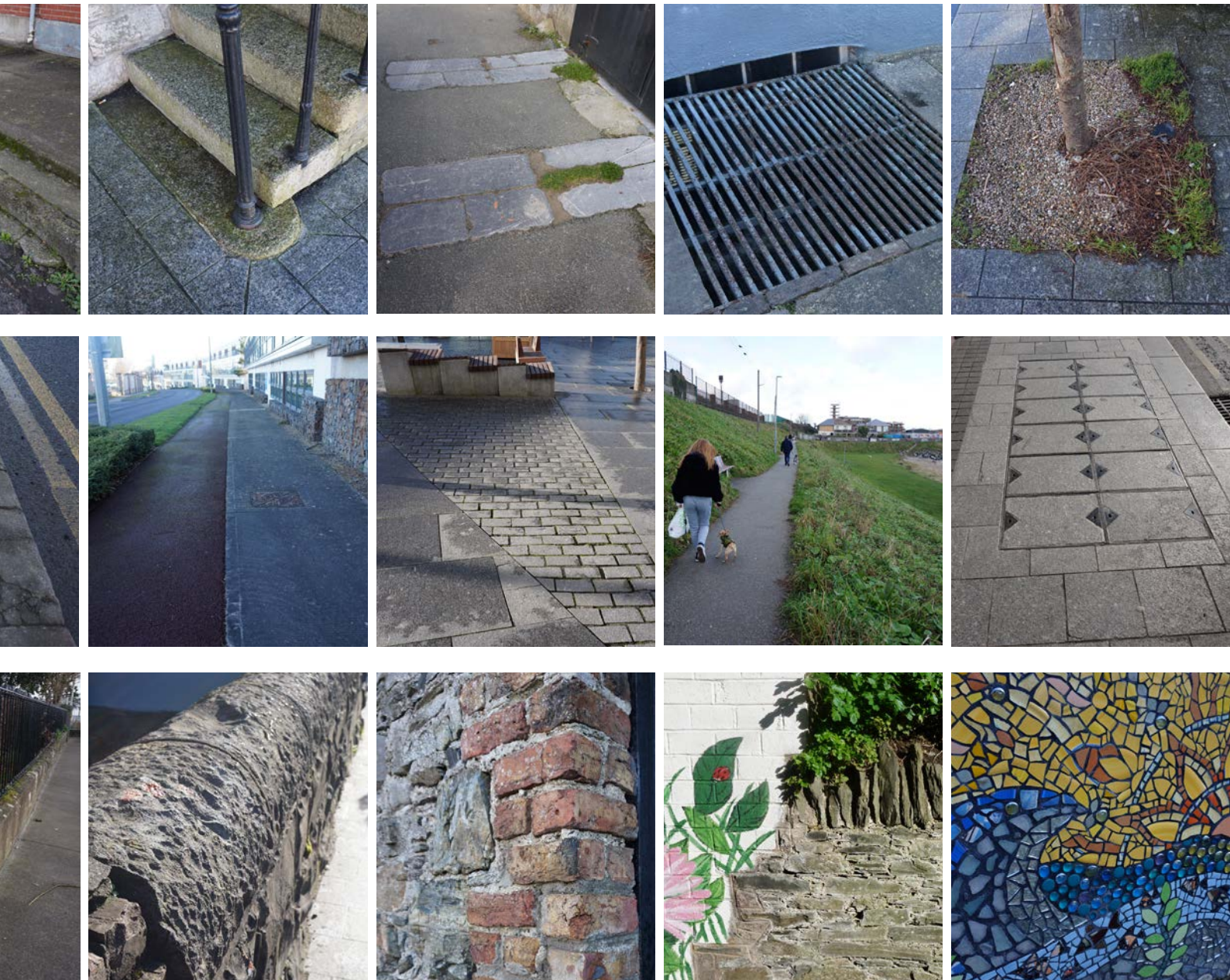
The overall impression will directly relate to the perception of quality, sense of place and the potential economic prospects of the town centre and impact on the town's ability to attract investors, customers, visitors and residents alike.

There are also a number of areas where there are heritage elements which remain intact and functioning. Without some much needed care and attention these are at risk of being lost.

Heritage elements around Balbriggan town









# Surfacing & Edging

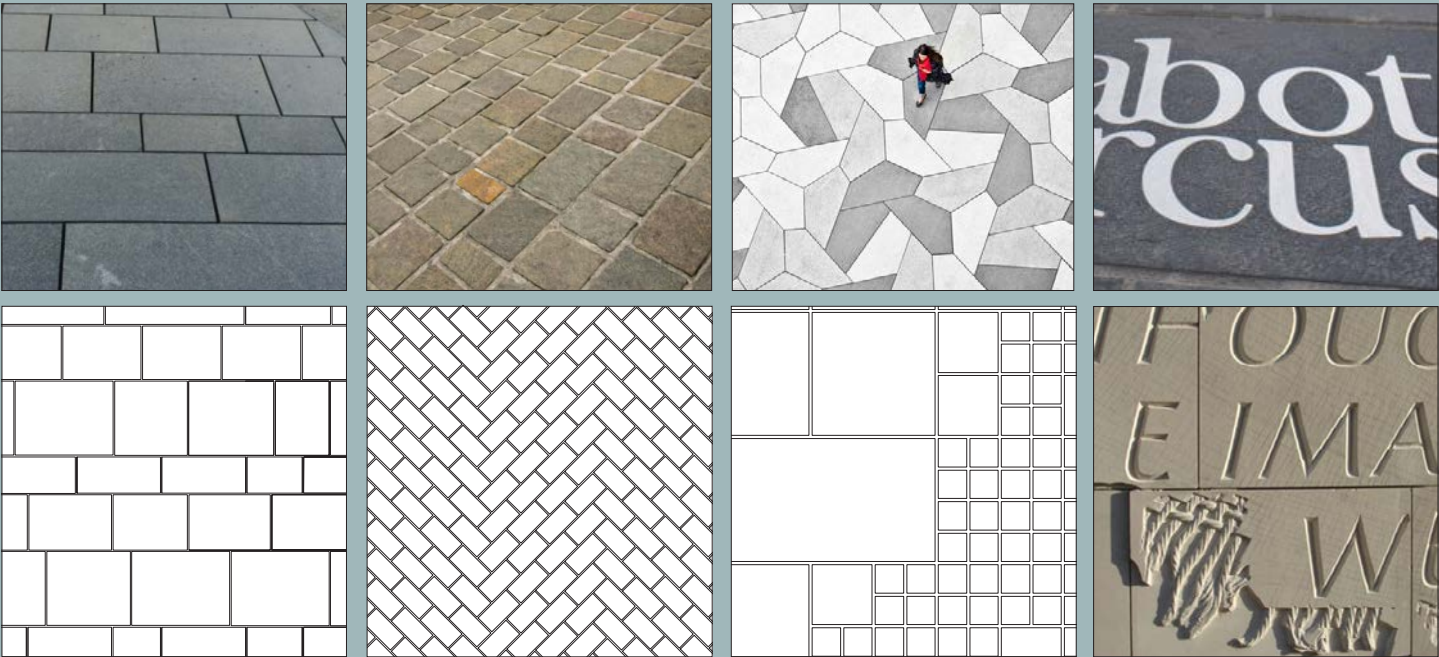
## Natural Stone Surfacing

Quality, Legible and Consistent

Paving material selection and detailing should provide clarity and help reinforce a legible public realm. Where relevant paving should be sympathetic to the historic palette, respecting scale and proportion.

With natural stone surfacing, material choice, quality workmanship and on-going maintenance is essential to fulfil life expectancy as well as secure and maintain expectation and public perception.

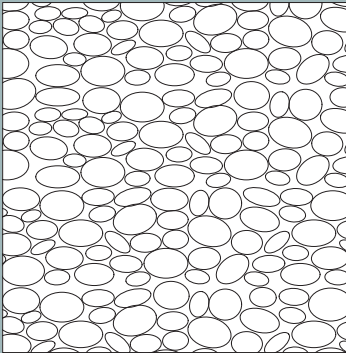
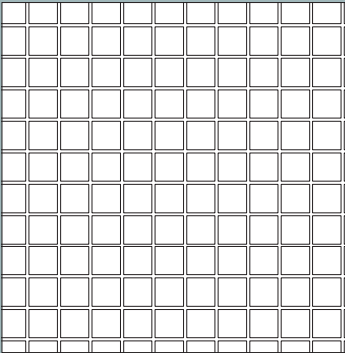
### New Paving Proposals



### Considerations

Natural Stone: Banding	Natural Stone: Setts	Natural Stone: Bespoke Pattern	Natural Stone: Interpretative / Creative
Benefits: High Quality Long Lasting & Durable	Benefits: High Quality Long Lasting & Durable	Benefits: High Quality Long Lasting & Durable	Benefits: High Quality Long Lasting & Durable
Potential Locations: Town Centre Streetscapes Civic Spaces	Potential Locations: Crossing & Junction Streetscape Level Change Delineate Ownership Entry	Potential Locations: Used to denote unique space Civic / Event Spaces	Potential Locations: Can be used to communicate, interpret / celebrate Unique Spaces Can be considered on either vertical or horizontal surfaces
Notes: Natural stone paving should be the optimum solution for town centre streets and civic spaces due to its longevity and visual appeal. Specification should be informed by an understanding of existing stone in the area and compatibility with surrounding schemes.	Notes: Stone setts are best suited for trafficked areas such as streets carriageways, crossings and vehicular entrances. Designers are required to work closely with their engineering team to ensure foundations appropriate to withstand regular vehicular over-run.	Notes: Creative stone paving patterns have the potential to accentuate civic or events spaces. Care is required, however, to avoid over complicated designs and the use of multiple different stone types and/or colours.	Notes: The use of stone surfaces to incorporate text or imagery may be appropriate subject to space available, visibility and the type of stone in question.

Salvaged Paving Proposals



Considerations

Natural Stone: Reclaimed Setts / Paving

**Benefits:**  
High Quality  
Long Lasting  
Durable

**Potential Locations:**  
Crossing & Junction  
Streetscape  
Level Change  
Delineate Ownership  
Entry

**Notes:**  
When available in sufficient quantities, of an appropriate specification and located in Ireland, the sustainable use of reclaimed stone setts is to be encouraged.

Natural Stone: Reclaimed Cobbles

**Benefits:**  
High Quality  
Long Lasting  
Durable

**Potential Locations:**  
Crossing & Junction  
Streetscape  
Level Change  
Delineate Ownership  
Entry

**Notes:**  
Reclaimed cobbles may also have role to lay in the public realm of Balbriggan. However, the quality of stone and its appropriateness to the locality must be carefully considered.

Notes

Drainage

Paved crossfall should move away from buildings and drains to gullies or linear channels. Drainage channels should be located in the carriageway, however it is understood that in areas of constraint a gully may be incorporated into the footpath, with design consideration towards the civic space's paving design / pattern.

Crossings

Where the civic space is levelled with the carriageway for crossing purposes, this space should be delineated through appropriate warning tactile paving and colour contrast. For controlled crossings a red blister paving can be used, whereas uncontrolled crossings cannot be red and it is recommended that a contrasting buff is used.

Natural Stone: Specifying Summary

**New Material:**  
Irish / European Provenance

**Standard:**  
Lawful Conformance Européenne (CE) Marked  
Min of two control samples received, demonstrating max variation to colour and finish. Along with test data from independent UKAS/ EUAS laboratory (tested within 2 years). Where natural stone is intended for use on the carriageway the UKAS test should include an additional Polished Pavour Value (PPV), if required.  
Vehicle over-run on footways should be designed out where possible, however it is recognised that the nature of a civic space often requires this - in which case the design team is expected to provide adequate reinforcing and technical solutions.  
Performance and manufacturing: BSEN 1338-1344  
Construction and maintenance: BS 7533 -101: 2021



# Surfacing & Edging

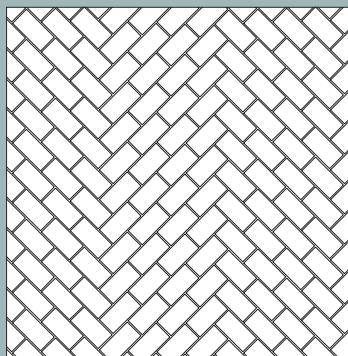
## Surfacing

### Quality, Legible and Consistent

Material choice and finish should be considered from the outset of the process. This will include its character and identity, user safety, the maintenance regime required as well as its coherence to the adjacent or wider urban context.

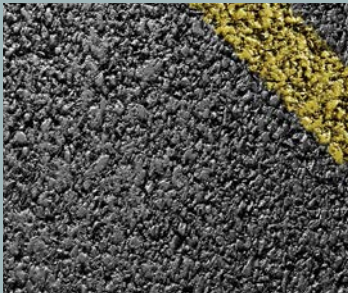
When it comes to surfacing there are many material choices influenced largely by budget and maintenance considerations. It is envisaged that the selection below represents a palette of materials which could be used throughout the public realm.

### Other Surface Options



### Considerations

Exposed Aggregate	Concrete Paving	Grass Reinforcement	Compacted Gravel
<b>Type:</b> Insitu pour Can be detailed around other surfaces	<b>Type:</b> Slabs & Setts	<b>Type:</b> Plastic Cell or Modular Concrete	<b>Type:</b> Aggregate varies
<b>Benefits:</b> Long Lasting & Durable Numerous Colour & Finishes Aggregate can be locally sourced	<b>Benefits:</b> Cost Effective Easy repair / replace	<b>Benefits:</b> Permeable Increases durability of grass	<b>Benefits:</b> Aggregate can be locally sourced Permeable Cost effective Easy repair
<b>Potential Locations:</b> Streetscape Parkland	<b>Potential Locations:</b> Footpaths Residential Streets *if private Parkland	<b>Potential Locations:</b> Parkland Coastal Paths	<b>Potential Locations:</b> Footpaths Can be used for vehicular access
<b>Notes:</b> Choice of aggregate should be informed by availability from sustainable sources and the appropriateness of colours to the site and its surroundings, including any existing stone work.	<b>Notes:</b> Concrete paving should only be used in limited instances with attention to quality and visual compatibility with surroundings. Patterns and colour combinations should not be permitted.	<b>Notes:</b> An appropriate solution for multi-purpose spaces to be used for low intensity car parking. Expert advice on latest solutions is advised.	<b>Notes:</b> Good solution for pedestrian areas. Although permeable, effective drainage essential.



**Hot Rolled Asphalt (HRA)**

**Type:**  
Black or Colour

**Benefits:**  
Cost effective  
Flexible  
Easy Installation  
Permeable options available

**Potential Locations:**  
Parkland and Coastal Paths  
Carriageway  
Cycle lane (Use Coloured)  
Park Paths

**Notes:**  
Standard road treatment.

**Recycled Plastic**

**Type:**  
Range of finishes and textures including wood effect

**Benefits:**  
\*Environmentally responsible  
Minimal maintenance (compared to wood)

**Potential Locations:**  
Timber boardwalk  
Beach dune paths  
Demarc entry to beach

**Notes:**  
Colour specification requires careful assessment in relation to context and accessibility.



# Surfacing & Edging

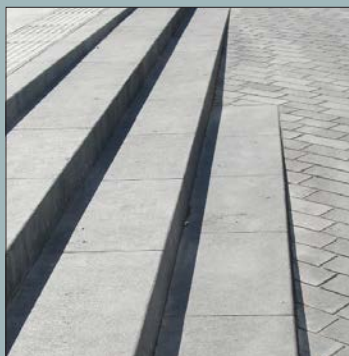
## Edge & Wall Options

Quality, Legible and Consistent

It is understood that in many areas throughout the project extents there will be need for a retaining or containment solution such as edges, steps and walls. This maybe because of design language to create a usable space, as a way of communicating change or simply to provide a delineating edge.

Below represents a number of these solutions. Materials should be selected to reference local materials (where possible) and reflect the environmental aspirations of the client team.

### Steps Proposals



### Kerb & Edge Proposals



### Considerations

Steps	Kerbs	Flush Edge: Unique	Metal Form - edge
Type: Natural Stone	Type: Flush / Upstand	Type: Varies (dependent on solution)	Type: Flush or small upstand (50mm-100mm)
Benefits: Cost effective Locally available Long lasting & durable	Benefits: High quality Long lasting & durable	Benefits: High quality Long lasting & durable	Benefits: *Environmentally Responsible High quality Cost effective (Easy Installation)
Potential Location: Carriageway & footpaths Delineation Edge restraint at surface change	Potential Location: Carriageway & footpaths Delineation Edge restraint at surface change	Potential Location: Carriageway & footpaths Delineation Edge restraint at surface change	Potential Location: Delineation Edge restraint at surface change
Notes: Colour: To contrast with adjacent surfaces.	Notes: Colour: To contrast with adjacent surfaces (upstand only)	Notes: Creative opportunities, but a need to maintain quality and consistency with adjacent materials.	Notes: Contemporary solution, range of metals suitable. Rounded edges important for health and safety.

Walls & Edges Proposals



Retaining Edge & Walls

Type:  
Varies (dependent on solution)

Benefits:  
High quality  
Long lasting & durable

Potential Location:  
Sloping sites within public open spaces

Notes:  
Height of upstand 450mm (550mm max)

Boundaries

Type:  
Varies (dependent on solution)

Benefits:  
High quality  
Long lasting & durable

Potential Location:  
Boundaries of public spaces

Notes:  
The need for boundaries should be minimised through good site planning and urban design. When necessary, quality and consistency of materials is key.





# 06

## Lighting

## Overview

Lighting plays a significant role in the regeneration of a space, neighbourhood or town. Lighting offers a variety of functions and benefits to the public realm, though the primary objective of any lighting scheme or installation is to provide appropriate levels of illumination for the safety and comfort of its users.

Lighting may also be considered as a design feature, offering bespoke form or creative geometry while also simply offering visibility.

This in turn can provide a sense of vibrancy and promote activity that could create a destination in its own right.



## Existing Lighting

There is a mix of lighting fixings and solutions throughout the town centre and wider public realm area. Although the lighting structures are an apparent part of the towns fabric during the day the lighting element helps defines the town and parkland after dark.

In both respects there is inconsistency and variation which should be addressed to improve the coherency and attractiveness of the town's public realm.

Lighting elements around Balbriggan town







# Lighting

## Safe, Illuminated and Elegant

The function of lighting is inherently linked with safety. There maybe no obvious reason to illuminate a pathway, tree or building but appropriate lighting helps create night-time space and encourages use. Balancing requirement and use is critical to attaining successful lighting.

A variety of lighting options and styles are available: the design team is tasked with working towards an appropriate solution for the constraints of the space. Considering the limitations of the installation with regard for all users and neighbours alike, as well as the adopting authorities.

### Overhead Lighting Proposals



### Considerations

<b>Lighting Columns</b> Type: Metal column 10-12m Mounting height LED Lantern	<b>Lighting Columns</b> Type: Metal: Throughout Option - Timber: Coastal and Park Paths	<b>Flood Lighting</b> Type: Varies (dependent on solution)	<b>Wall Mounted &amp; Hung</b> Type: Catenary or Wall mounted bracket
<b>Benefits:</b> High quality Long lasting & durable	<b>Benefits:</b> Long lasting & durable Natural aesthetic	<b>Benefits:</b> Accentuating landmarks and features Potential for events and activities	<b>Benefits:</b> Cost effective (Easy Installation) Removes ground level obstructions
<b>Potential Location:</b> Main Streets	<b>Potential Location:</b> Coastal and Path Parks	<b>Potential Location:</b> Civic Spaces	<b>Potential Location:</b> Narrow Streets Civic Spaces
<b>Notes:</b> Column heights to be proportionate to street scale.	<b>Notes:</b> Requires to be suitable for maritime conditions.	<b>Notes:</b> Useful to target lighting and reduce risk of spill / light pollution.	<b>Notes:</b> Suitable for relatively narrow streets where ground level obstructions need to be avoided. Requires consent of building owners.

There are many options when it comes to lighting solutions.

**Control**  
New digital technology provides many options for control, From simple on/off to more automated and dynamic solutions.

These smart lighting solutions can integrate improved sustainability and intelligence that can optimize management and energy consumption. It also benefits health and safety as well as wildlife, aiding dark skies.

Accent



<b>Strip Lighting</b>	<b>Inground</b>
Type: Varies (dependent on solution)	Type: Uplighters
Benefits: Accentuating landmarks and features Cost effective (Easy Installation)	Benefits: Accentuating landmarks and features
Potential Location: Civic Spaces	Potential Location: Civic Spaces
Notes: Range of creative solutions dependent on specifics of the task in question. Tree mounted lighting may require consultation with aboriculturalist.	Notes: Suitable in specific circumstances where light pollution risk is low.

**Accent Lighting**  
How much lighting is required? The use of LED lighting enables the lighting of specific surfaces. Ground level and surface level lighting offers human-scale solutions that also provide effective solutions.

Scale, height, adjacency, materiality, colour and lux levels (light level intensity) are each important factors for consideration in the design of a public realm space.

**Light Pollution**  
A key objective will be to minimise any adverse impacts of lighting on residents and especially nocturnal wildlife. The specification of lighting products should therefore be informed by a site specific risk assessment. In some instances, controllable light sources may be deployed, enabling light levels to be managed throughout the night and seasons.



07

Street Furniture

## Overview

Throughout Balbriggan the street furniture should be high quality, contemporary, and robust in design.

While these features are not intended to draw attention, they are to be designed into the space with due regard for ease of use, comfort and maintenance.



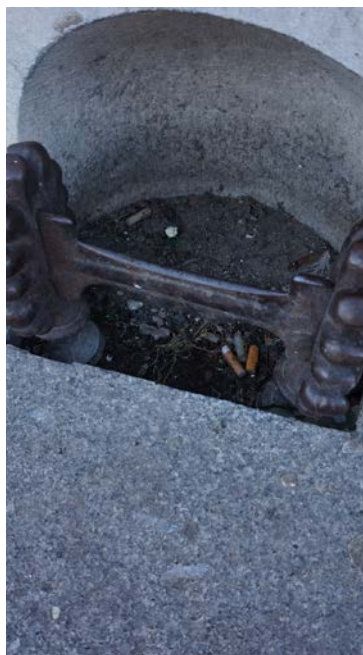
## Existing Street Furniture

The current streetscape in Balbriggan includes a mixture of different material types, finishes, street furniture and signage. The cumulative effect of these piecemeal changes and additions to the streetscape can distract from the overall coherence and character of the town.

Through simplification of this material palette, rationalising of 'street clutter' and by raising awareness to the existing heritage assets, the town's character can be revived, while at the same time creating new opportunities for people to feel pride and connection to Balbriggan.

Street furniture around Balbriggan town







# Street Furniture

## Seating

Comfortable, durable, accessible

Critical to the long-term success of great public realm is the provision of accessible and comfortable seating. This component in particular will need to take the principles of universal access into account.

In relation to maintenance, management and cleaning, it is important that the proposed seating is simple, robust, elegant and resilient to vandalism. Street furniture should use a limited traditional palette of materials such as stone, wood and metal and should not attempt to recreate a heritage style.

### Seating Proposals



### Considerations

Integrated Seating	Standalone Seating
Type: Raised planter To low wall	Type: Bench or raft
Benefits: High quality Long lasting & durable	Benefits: Flexibility in location
Potential Locations: Civic spaces	Potential Locations: Civic Spaces
Notes: Contributes to the reduction of street clutter.	Notes Consistency in style, character and materials is required.

### Classic and Standard

Effort should be made by the design team to ensure that the product is of great quality, simplicity and robustness.

Simple fixings      Quality finish      Accessible

Choice of product should ensure ease of maintenance, comfort of user and appropriateness with site context

### Unique and Special

When suitable and budget allows a bespoke solution can be created for the public realm as a one off item or as part of a suite tailored specifically for Balbriggan

Social      Durable      Planting

# Bins, Bollards and Covers

Accessible, durable and beautiful

It is important to retain cohesion and consistency across the project areas and the town, while ensuring the many areas of public realm offer a unique, particular and special quality that responds to the site's immediate context.

## Bins, Bollards and Cycle Stand Proposals



### Considerations

Bollard	Cycle Stand	Bin	Utility Covers
Type: Steel Post	Type: Sheffield Stand	Type: Compacting Bin	Type: Recessed Utility Covers
Benefits: Simple aesthetic	Benefits: Simple aesthetic Popular with cyclists	Benefits: Increased efficiencies Environmentally responsible	Benefits: Reduces visual clutter
Potential Locations: Streets Civic Spaces	Potential Locations: Streets Civic Spaces	Potential Locations: Streets Civic Spaces	Potential Locations: Streets Civic Spaces
Notes: Core drill when installed on paving	Notes: Core drill when installed on paving	Notes: Consult with Fingal County Council	Notes: Consult with utility providers

### Bollards and Cycle Stands

Central to the team's selection of components is the consideration for visual consistency between the civic space and the wider town, the choice of robust and safe elements, and user-friendly and accessible facilities.

### Bins & Utility Covers

While these features are not intended to draw attention, they are to be designed into the space with due regard for ease of use and maintenance by working personnel. Their design should take cognisance of the likelihood of vandalism on the space, as well as being able to withstand high-pressure water cleaning without degradation.

Recycling facilities should be considered as part of the infrastructure of civic space, particularly in commercial proximity. Manhole covers should be kept to the required minimum through coordination of design teams from the outset of a project.





# 08

## Signage

A faded, grayscale image of a street sign. The sign is rectangular and mounted on a post. It features the text 'an Iarnóid' on the top line and 'Y STREET' on the bottom line in a bold, sans-serif font. The sign is slightly tilted and has some visible wear and tear, including small holes and scratches. The background of the sign is dark, and the text is light-colored. The overall image is faded and has a vintage feel.

## Overview

It is essential that Balbriggan is easy to navigate, especially for those on foot or bicycle. Appropriate signage can also help share the stories of Balbriggan's fascinating history and culture.

Care must be taken, however, not to clutter the town with signs. A coordinated approach will therefore be key and the monitoring and removal of superfluous signage will be as important as the development of new ones.

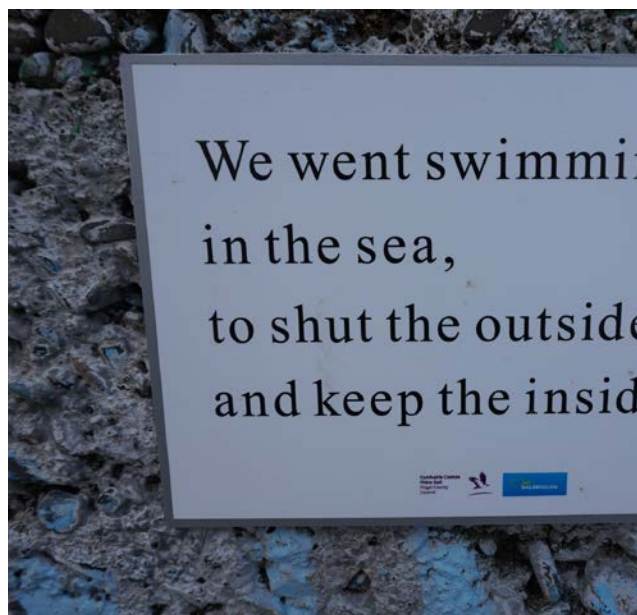


## Existing Signage

Many different types of sign are to be found in Balbriggan town centre. These include traditional bi-lingual metal street signs comprising white letter on a green back ground. Modern interpretation panels are also used to communicate the Balbriggan Heritage Trail, as well as information relating to parks and wildlife. And a series of directional finger post signs are located around the town, incorporating the distinctive red and green colours of the former Town Council.

While individual signs are generally of good quality, a lack of design consistency is in clear evidence.

Signage around Balbriggan town







# Signage

Legible, uncluttered and accessible

To aid wayfinding and ensure name plates are easy to find, they should be located in close proximity to street corners and just above ground floor level.

Guidance can be sought from Fingal County Council by the developing body in the case that regular signage guidance would be considered incompatible with the local perceived style.

## Signage: Considerations

### Street Names and Information

Traditional die-pressed aluminium plates are preferred above printed aluminium (plastic is not acceptable). Effort should be made towards stylistic simplicity and ease of communication, alongside conformity to standards.

**Pictured Below:** Signage suite for Mosman Council by Urban & Public  
Simplicity, accessibility and hierarchy of signage and information upon arrival and through the navigation of outdoor civic space is important for users.



### Wayfinding and Interpretation

All signage and fingerposts should be located in a way that does not obstruct pedestrian or other movement, while consideration must be given to wheelchair positioning around any signage or totem element.



**Pictured Balbriggan - Dublin Street**  
A simple palette of colour and typeface enables a wayfinding strategy to remain robust as well as adaptable through a changing urban environment.

## Signage



## Considerations

### Directional Signs

Type:  
Finger posts

Benefits:  
Wayfinding for visitors  
Extending dwell time

### Potential Locations:

Streets  
Civic Spaces  
Parks

### Notes

A clear and consistent suite of directional signs is required. The system should be simple, elegant and legible, avoiding the use of garish colours that detract from their surroundings.

### Interpretation Panels

Type:  
Lectern

Benefits:  
Interpretation for visitors  
Reinforcing local identity

### Potential Locations:

Streets  
Civic Spaces  
Parks

### Notes

Interpretative panels must be carefully planned, with a priority on the succinct communication of key information. QR codes may provide further information online.



Heritage elements



Considerations

**Street Name**  
Type:  
Wall Mounted and Free Standing

**Benefits:**  
Wayfinding  
Reinforcing local identity

**Potential Locations:**  
Streets

**Notes:**  
Balbriggan has an established style of bilingual street signs, although they are inconsistently applied. Focus is required to ensure the provision of street signs on all building corners at junctions, managing any aesthetic and/or heritage impacts carefully.

**Heritage Elements**  
Type:  
Varies

**Benefits:**  
Heritage artefacts  
Unique local identity

**Potential Locations:**  
All

**Detail:**  
Existing heritage elements located within the public realm should be retained and conserved at all times.



# 09 Planting

## Overview

Balbriggan is recognisable through its landscape. The town's trees, plants and flowers are central to its character. Furthermore, caring for flora and fauna is a central objective of the public realm strategy.

The selection of the planting must therefore compliment the environment so that the proposed planting contributes and re-enforces its surroundings and plays a continuing role in the immediate and importantly long term vision.



## Existing Planting

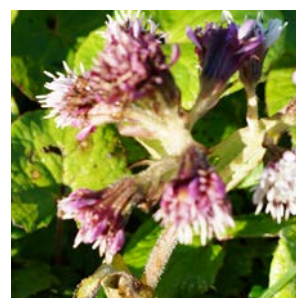
Balbriggan has a number of attractive planted areas throughout the town centre. Some trees have been planted, which are now maturing while in other cases, trees are over-mature and require thinning to open up views and vistas. The general landscaping is of mixed quality and in some cases requires consideration. There are opportunities throughout the project areas and the town itself for new planting to help soften, define space as well as add and improve character.

There is obvious ongoing and regular investment in public realm vegetation including established semi-mature street trees and large above-ground planter units with shrub and seasonal flower mixes.

Within the parkland and along the coastline the landscape relies heavily on the grass banks and self establishing native shrubs. In many areas the planting appears to be thriving while in others planting is overburdened and requires thinning/maintenance.

A transition to the use of native plants with greatly increased wildlife value, should be pursued in all but exceptional circumstances.

Planting around Balbriggan town







# Planting

## Trees & Planting

Healthy and environmentally critical

The planting approach for Balbriggan should be considered in respect of climate resilience, take influence from the existing native flora and taking reference from the Fingal Biodiversity Action Plan as well as the All Ireland Pollinator Plan. In response the proposed planting should be primarily native trees, shrubs, bulbs, wildflower and grasses in open space and recommended preferred trees within the Streetscape.

### Planting: Considerations

#### Trees& Planting

Trees and planting should be chosen to create distinctive character and quality to the proposed civic space design. Effort should be made to retain, protect and augment existing vegetation, where possible.



Increasing canopy cover is a proven method to reduce the urban heat island effect, while increasing the space's ecological and visual amenity, as well as contribute towards the site's capacity to store water and carbon.

#### Sustainable Urban Drainage (SUDs)

Accommodating Sustainable Urban Drainage Strategies (SuDS) is important for the continued health of the plant, while catering for lower maintenance requirements in the longterm. This can be considered within the tree pit.



#### Planting for Climate & Biodiversity

Planting should be planted in abundance (where appropriate), respond to context, provide interest throughout the year, be productive & flowering, enhance local biodiversity, have varied texture height, be multi sensory, resilient and native where appropriate.



Where there is reasonable opportunity to create herbaceous borders for added colour, texture and interest, effort should be made to adopt localised drainage solutions while creatively ensuring screening of visually impacting elements.

### Tree Considerations



Choice of tree species can vary between spaces, offering variety and unique character between areas across Balbriggan. **Consideration is to be given to native species as a priority.**

Due to proven benefits towards site drainage, ecology, carbon sequestration and longevity in urban environments, It is recommended that mature tree species are proposed in civic space landscape designs.

*Seasonal change in foliage colour can offer unique and special design details within an urban environment.*



### Considerations



**Recessed Tree Pit**  
Type:  
Resin bound paving (left)  
Natural Stone & Resin Bound mix

**Benefits:**  
A recessed tree pit with removable trays allows for tree growth, while also giving the design flexibility of paving through as well as access (if required) Additional options include aeration inlet covers and irrigation systems, in-built SUDs (pictured below) and in ground uplighters



**Potential Locations:**  
In paved areas

**Recommended Detail:**  
Standard: to BS 5837:2012

Galvanised or stainless steel



Design teams are to remain aware of any existing Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) and Architectural Conservation Areas (ACAs). Within a heritage context if trees are not a defined characteristic careful consideration should be given to the introduction of trees where appropriate.

Each project should ensure there is regular communication with the Biodiversity Officer, maintenance and management and ecology input with the Operations Team to ensure proposals are in alignment with current procedures and best practice.

The following table provides a summary of some key Irish native plant species that may be suitable for use in the Balbriggan area. This is not an exhaustive list and site conditions must be studied carefully prior to specification.

### Some Key Native Species



**Devil's Bit Scabious**  
*Succisa pratensis*

Grasslands, Meadows, Hedges  
This herbaceous perennial is greatly valued by insects and people alike for its bright blue balls of flowers.



**Rowan**  
*Sorbus aucuparia*

Parks, Civic Spaces  
This small native tree provides colour and seasonal interest throughout the year, plus a vital late autumn / early winter food source for birds and mammals.



**Red Valerian**  
*Centranthus ruber*

Parks, Gardens,  
This vibrant wildflower can be found growing across Balbriggan throughout the summer and can be incorporated into naturalised planting schemes.



**Crabapple**  
*Malus sylvestris*

Parks and Green Spaces  
Medium sized tree with high ecological value due to long flowering season and abundant fruits.



**Bluebell**  
*Hyacinthoides Non-Scripta*

Woodland, Shaded beds  
This ever popular native flower is well suited to shady locations below trees. Care must be taken to specify the Irish native variety and not its non-native Spanish cousin.



**Scots Pine**  
*Pinus sylvestris*

Parks, Civic Spaces  
Like most pines, this attractive native will tolerate poor soils and maritime conditions. It also one of only three native evergreen trees.



**Purple Loose-strife**  
*Lythrum salicaria*

Riverbanks  
An attractive summer flowering perennial thrives in damp conditions and can be grown along the margins of rivers and other marshy areas.



**Small Leaved Lime**  
*Tilia cordata*

Parks, Civic Spaces, Streets  
This large native tree can thrive in urban conditions, while providing habitat for wildlife. Varieties of this Tilia are also suitable for use as street trees.

# 10 Legacy



## Overview

Public Realm which has endured are those where high expectations of delivery are matched with equally high expectations of maintenance and management.

Unlike buildings a landscape scheme fulfils the design intent as it matures. Therefore fundamental to the long term success of Public Realm is the requirement for ongoing and long-term vision as well as having regard to maintenance, repair and when necessary replacement.



# Delivery

It is understood that investment and the development of Balbriggan's Public Realm will be initiated and driven by Fingal County Council, with the Our Balbriggan Programme Office taking a co-ordination role with the support of other Council Departments with additional support from public or private sector partners, or various combinations of the above.

Where a project design is being proposed, or where an existing scheme is being upgraded or maintained, it should be established and made clear from the outset which partner or agency will have a primary responsibility for its appropriate delivery, as well as its maintenance.

## Status

This Design Guide for Balbriggan is a non-statutory guidance document for all interventions within the town's civic spaces. This Guide is a supplementary document to the relevant design and construction standards, alongside national, regional and local policies relating to planning and the built environment of Balbriggan Town.

This Guide should be used and referred to by all those who are involved in shaping, informing, maintaining or looking after the public civic spaces of Balbriggan. It should be considered obligatory for all future works in the town.

The application of this guidance will be monitored and, should it be considered necessary, the Guide will be reviewed as deemed appropriate by Fingal County Council in order to accommodate lessons learned, or to absorb further guidance and best practice in the fields of urban design, landscape architecture, planning, civil engineering, architecture and environmental design.

This guide should be reviewed and updated at regular intervals.

## Sustainability

Public Realm designs should support the creation of - and contribute towards - an environment that is sustainable through its whole life cycle; a place that: uses recycled materials and recycles its waste, and has the following objectives;

1. has ambitions towards low energy consumption;
2. encourages environmentally-friendly behaviours such as active travel across the wider town; and
3. considers Balbriggan's social, environmental and socio-economic sustainability and success.

## Maintenance

Consideration towards the long-term maintenance and management of a public or outdoor space will be fundamental to the wider success of the area and the urban vitality and liveability of Balbriggan.

- All schemes are to be designed with reasonable, feasible and suitable management and maintenance strategies considered prior to final design sign-off.
- The above point is particularly true with regard to proposals to include soft landscaping (including street trees, for example), where a management plan will need to be provided to ensure healthy establishment and continued success of the vegetation.
- Consideration may be given to the storage of construction and project materials for future repairs.
- Depending on the context of the civic space, the development authority are encouraged to examine the prospective scheme's opportunity to generate income through activity on site, such as feasible outdoor market space to encourage business through local commercial vendors and community groups.
- Project materials and construction methods are to be chosen to offer durability and ease of cleaning.
- Costs of management and maintenance regimes need to be understood and secured in advance of new schemes being implemented.
- Natural surveillance - reducing the need for CCTV - should be promoted through the design of the scheme.

## What is Whole Life Costing?

“The systematic consideration of all relevant costs and revenues associated with the ownership of an asset.

## Departure from Standards

It shall be the default choice on all Our Balbriggan projects to align with this guidance document on principles, approach, materiality, and specification. There may be cases, however, where it might be acceptable or necessary to depart from this guidance with the prior agreement of Fingal County Council.

This may arise when:

- there are demonstrable site-specific technical issues or constraints that must diverge from standard design practice;
- there is an ambition to use materiality or product specification of a higher quality, combined with the commitment and resources to manage and maintain this in the longer term;
- there are works proposed or necessary in a particularly sensitive area or location (a local architectural or environmental sensitivity, for example).

It remains an over-arching principle of this document and its approaches to maintain consistency and quality, and it therefore must be asked in the case of departure from this design guidance whether the quality of the scheme is ensured while benefiting the development site, the wider context, and the end users of the development.

All design team members are to remain cognisant of departure from standard guidance and code, noting that such variation may compromise the guide's application and relevance to Balbriggan's future development.

“ If we can develop and design streets so that they are wonderful, fulfilling places to be - *community-building places, attractive for all people* - then we will have successfully designed about one-third of the city directly and will have had an immense impact on the rest.

Allan Jacobs

Urban Designer, author of *Towards an Urban Manifesto* (1982)



Helix Towpath

# Public Realm Design Guide

Balbriggan

