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Barter, Gracen Management Plan: Cupáin Cúpla- Ballineen & Enniskeane, West Cork, Ireland. UNSPECIFIED. (Unpublished)

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cupáin

cúpla

a couple of cups

ballineen & enniskeane

west cork, ireland

INTRODUCTION

Located roughly halfway between Cork City and Bantry sit the twin towns of Ballineen and Enniskeane. The two towns were incorporated in 1952 and are now referred to as one. The area is heavily rural and is located within the West Cork Municipal District, governed by the Cork City Council. These twin towns are a strong example of a rural community in Ireland, with a main street in which shops and dwellings are intermixed.

The area of interest is at the eastern entrance of Main Street where it intersects with R588. This management plan will focus on the adaptive reuse of a dilapidated building, the former Castle Ahán restaurant, bar, and bnb.

Policy Context

There are many resources available that outline the current policy and recommendations for the management of heritage, including but not limited to:

(English Heritage, 2008) (Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, 2011) (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2024) (Government of Ireland, 2024) (Government of Ireland, 2025)

This structure is not listed as archaeologically or architecturally significant, so there are no heritage-related concerns for its development. It will still need planning approval, and if it were to become nominated for listing, there would be restrictions in place for any modifications.

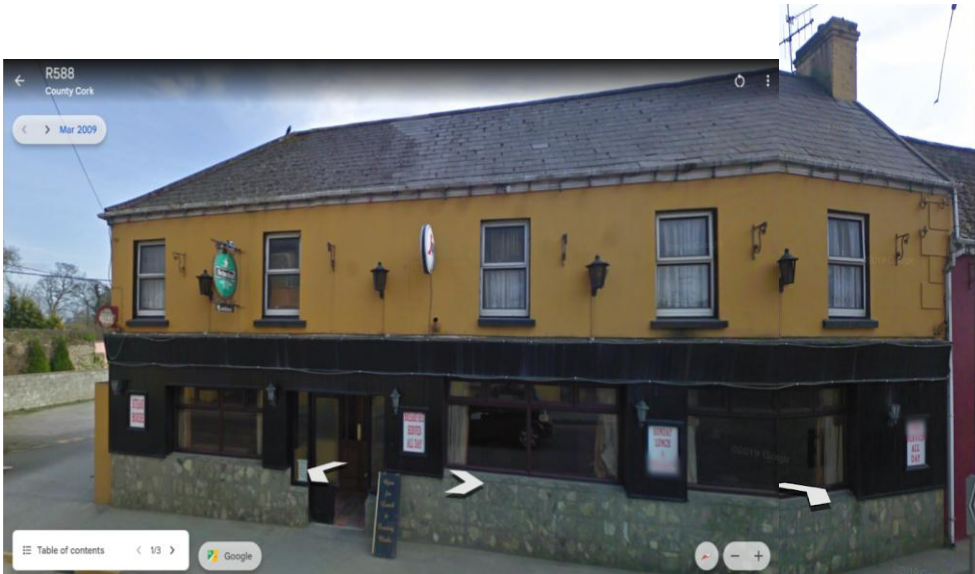
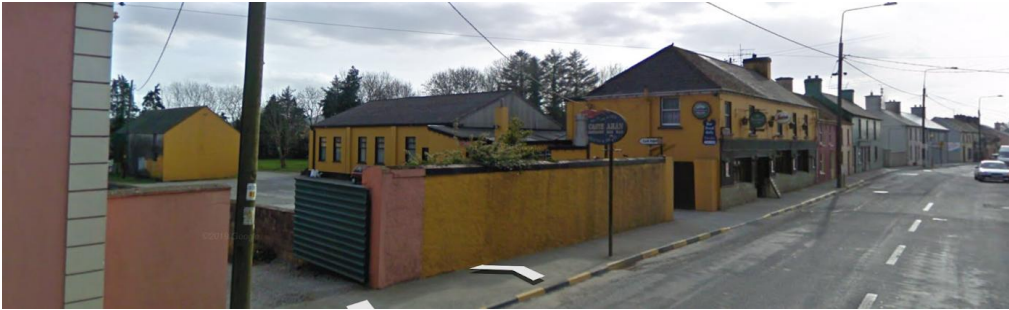


Figure 1: Location maps.

2009

Figure 2: Decay of site over a period of sixteen years.

2025



Purpose of the Plan

Introduction

This heritage management plan is aimed at increasing heritage-based infrastructure in the twin towns of Ballineen and Enniskeane in West Cork, Ireland. A former pub, now derelict, sits at the eastern entrance of the Main street, where its significance and geographic positioning make it a strong option for redevelopment. Listed on the Derelict Sites Register List, there is the threat of legal interference from the government if the owner does not take reasonable steps to end its dereliction (Cork County Council, 1990).

Undertakings

This plan outlines the strategic management of heritage aspects, particularly for adaptive reuse. The main undertaking is to transform this dilapidated site into a “third place” for the locals in the form of a reading café. It will be themed to spotlight and teach about local traditions, history, and national identity. The adaptive reuse of this building will involve an almost complete reconstruction of the building as its state has largely surpassed repair. There will be efforts made to maintain the building’s significance as much as possible, particularly by salvaging intact materials.

Parties involved (stakeholders)

Involving all interested parties ensures that the project is executed in a manner that is sensitive to their desires and is comprehensive in the stories it tells. Differing opinions, perspectives, and priorities reveal more about the site, though it is a given when working from a bottom-up approach that there will be disagreements between parties (English Heritage 2008, 38). While it is impossible to appease everyone, it is important to keep in mind, especially for a site with such high communal value, that the locals’ feelings take priority. All residents, especially historians, writers, and artists, are invited to contribute to the aesthetic of the space through objects, documents, and photos that are representative of the local culture. The current owner of the building is experiencing pressure from the government to revitalize the structure as the Irish government is investing millions of dollars into the preservation and development of rural villages. Neighboring businesses may experience pressures from more competition or more engagement. A conversation is needed about how to ensure they are supported and how best to work together.

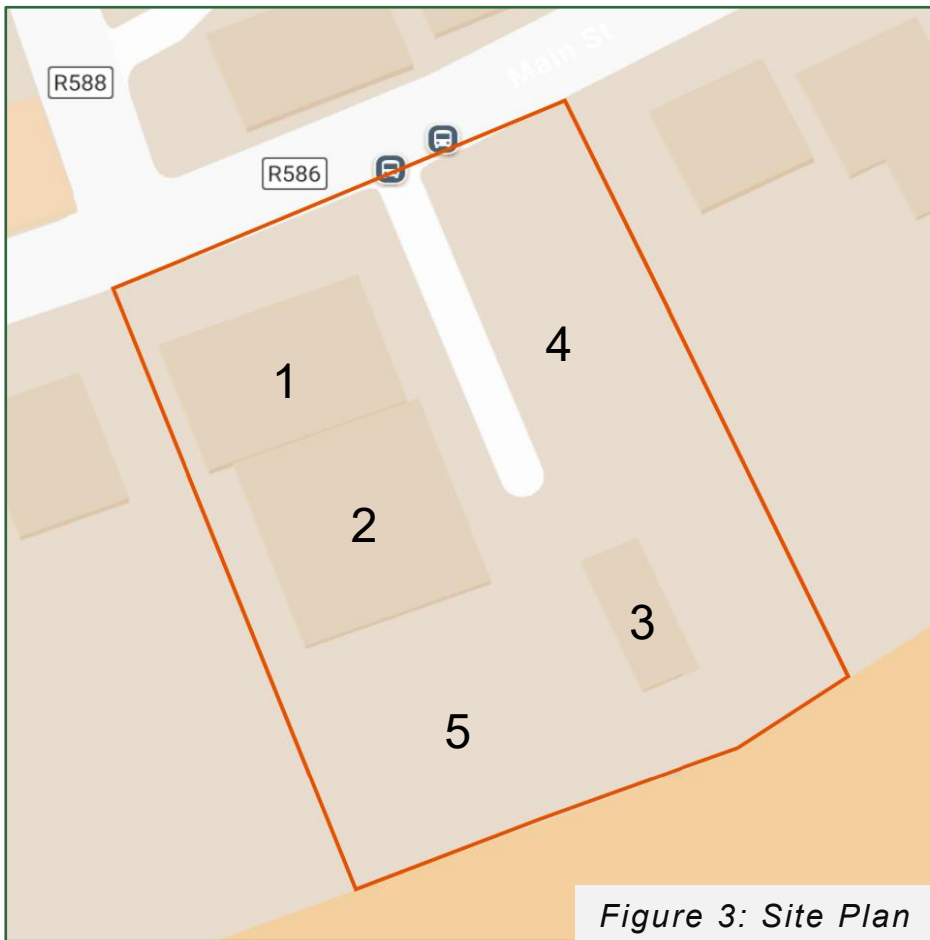


Figure 3: Site Plan

Buildings

- 1** Café
- 2** Reading Nook
- 3** Restrooms

Outdoor Spaces

- 4** Parking
- 5** Outdoor Seating

Site Plan and Aims

Social Connection

To maintain significance of a traditional building and preserve rural culture.

(Hofmann, Holler and Kulmer 2014, 71; Mahon 2007, 351).

Pride in Culture

Redevelop what was once an iconic local pub: resupply a third place to increase socialization and community.

(Cabras and Mount 2017, 71; Mahon 2007, 353; Woods 2018, 166, 171, 174).

Economic Development

To generate income and create jobs so residents stay in the town instead of commuting/moving elsewhere.

(Cabras and Mount 2017, 71; Kulmer 2014, 10; Shadar 2024, 1).

Figure 4: Aims of management plan.

Assessment of Significance

Evidential Value

- Archaeological Evidence

Though the evidential value of this exact site is unclear, there is an abundance of archaeological evidence in the surrounding area, including prehistoric features (National Monuments Service, 2026; Howle Outlaw and O'Donoghue 2024, 6).

Historical Value

- Historic area
- Architectural heritage

There is an abundance of historical value at this site. Not only from the town's vital positioning on the Bandon river, the West Cork Railway line, and as a mill town (Howle Outlaw and O'Donoghue 2024, 4, 8-12) but the structure itself dates to at least the 1850s. There is also a large amount of architectural heritage in the surrounding area (National Monuments Service, 2026; Howle Outlaw and O'Donoghue 2024, 4-11).

Aesthetic Value

- Traditional Irish building methods and materials

The aesthetic value of this site comes from the beautiful historic architecture of the main buildings, which use traditional Irish building methods and materials. The wood and stone on the façade form a streetscape and building typology that is typical for Irish communities, especially in rural areas (O'Reilly 2011, 214). Additionally, the construction of public toilets adds design value as it invokes appreciation and safety (English Heritage 2008, 30).

Communal Value

- Pub culture
- Ontological security
- Local heritage trail
- Livelihood

The communal value of this site is very prominent. A pillar of Irish society for centuries has been 'Pub Culture' (Cabras and Mount 2017, 71) where social value is continuously accumulating. Though it is unclear whether this site was purpose built as a pub, it was a well-beloved landmark in the town for decades. Its consistent presence in the streetscape has also contributed to ontological security (Grenville 2007, 449), where it is so vital that despite its dereliction, it is included on the local heritage trail. The new public toilets also have communal value as the locals fought hard to secure a necessary feature that will improve their livelihood.

Figure 5: Assessment of significance.

Café

Building 1 will occupy the space of a former iconic community pub and as the frontmost part of the complex, this building will need to make a visual impact. This will be achieved by using natural recycled materials and restoring the existing bar to create a bright and airy café. The design will maintain a traditional Irish pub feel to honor local building techniques, materials, and cultural importance. Coffee and light food will be served in the daytime, and the space will transform into an alcohol-free art gallery and music venue in the evening. This café will be decorated using objects and photos that highlight local heritage. As there is no museum in town, this is an important opportunity to educate and inspire residents to participate in their own heritage. Additionally, this space is designed as a “third place” for all community members to come together, but there is a particular focus on attracting a young adult audience who can reinvest into their hometown.



Figure 6



Figure 7



Figure 8

Reading Nook

Building 2 will be a darker and cozier extension of the café in which visitors can grab a seat to enjoy their food and drink. A wide selection of used books are available to read and buy, making this a calm space for working in the daytime, and vibrant for socializing at night. By using reclaimed wood and decorative elements, there is continuity of the Irish pub aesthetic, while still feeling distinct from the café. Historic objects and photographs serve as decoration that contextualize the space within local history. Additionally, an electric fireplace is a sustainable option for heating and warm, moody lighting. Wide doorways and level flooring allow fluidity between both the café and reading nook and ensure accessibility for all to move about the space comfortably.

INSPIRATION
PHOTOS

Restrooms

In 2017, plans were announced detailing the demolition of public toilets in Ballineen despite a previous €60,000 allocation promised for their refurbishment. The author of the town Facebook page “Ballineen Agus Enniskeane” has posted multiple updates expressing disappointment about the issue in which other residents have left strongly-worded comments in support. Comments include stories of how the site of these toilets, demolished in 2021, were heavily used since the 1970s by travelers, families, elderly people, and bus passengers, who must now travel to distant towns to find facilities. The author claims that this demolition was apart of a broader pattern of neglect by Cork County Council and is contributing to the decline of rural villages in the area.

Lobbying efforts and public outrage proved unsuccessful until October 2025 when plans were approved to rebuild new toilet facilities in the exact same location.

The demolition and delayed replacement of the public toilets in Ballineen highlight how important free, clean, and easily accessible public facilities are, even in rural villages that do not seem to get a lot of foot traffic. Building upon the newly approved plans for construction in Ballineen, the proposed restrooms in this heritage management plan provide a second facilities option for visitors within a twenty-minute walk and is conveniently placed at the Eastward bus stop. To further improve visitor comfort, there will be water fountains accessible from the exterior of the structure. These new public toilets are a facet of the proposed adaptive reuse of a historic building that already forms part of the Ballineen & Enniskeane Heritage Trail. This prime location promotes walkability, visitor engagement, and pride in local heritage and infrastructure while minimizing disturbance to the surrounding habitat and archaeology.

Heritage work is not always glamorous or exciting and is sometimes the opposite. However, these are often adjustments that are the most impactful to the livelihood of the community. By communicating directly with locals and researching the town’s social media accounts, it was revealed how desired these facilities are, which is critical information that would not have otherwise been known without a participatory and bottom-up approach to heritage management.



Figure 9: Original toilets from the 1970s.



Figure 10: Site of toilets after demolition in 2021.

Parking

Limited street parking on Main Street has caused congestion and limited essential foot traffic to businesses. This parking area will make it more convenient to travel to the café and provide a safe place to park while patrons spend time exploring the rest of the town. The parking area can accommodate up to twenty cars. It will be a gravel lot to prevent an excess of loose dust from affecting the outdoor seating area, and to avoid paving which makes potential archaeology more costly.

The café is the site of the Eastward bus stop, and while it is encouraged for visitors to utilize public transport, this additional infrastructure would help tidy up the cars that park atop the sidewalks and make it easier for large busses to pass through.



Figure 11

INSPIRATION PHOTOS

Outdoor Seating

Rural communities are defined by their abundance of open space that is often equated with agriculture, their basic level of service provision, and their safety because of close association with neighbors (Mahon 2007, 351-353). Outdoor seating builds upon this by strengthening rural social life and redefining open space beyond agricultural use. It also brings attention to the traditional architecture on the exterior, especially the historic storefront typology.



Figure 13



Figure 12

Management Issues

Physical State	Financial Management	Public Opinion
<p>The current management of this site is poor as the dilapidation of the building has threatened its significance. The building appears to have no cyclical maintenance programs, and though there is visible evidence of repair, it has not held. The most pressing issue is the physical state of the building, mainly because damp and mold have infiltrated the mortar, and the exterior timber has rotted. In its current state, it is uninhabitable and will require a large amount of work to salvage as much as possible.</p>	<p>The site is not currently up for sale, so there will need to be negotiations to acquire it from the owner. There is also a lack of funding for any improvements.</p>	<p>The definition of 'rural culture' is subjective, so to fulfill the plan's aim of 'Pride in Culture,' it is vital to be intentional with next steps. It is possible that the redevelopment of this site will bring unwanted changes to the area, such as increased tourism or a shift of focus from agriculture to leisure and heritage (Shadar 2024, 2). It is possible that the locals will be unhappy with these plans and will be adamant about certain adjustments.</p>

Management Objectives SMART goals format: (Aldridge and Colvin 2024, 3-5).

Physical State	Financial Management	Public Opinion
<p>The objective is to improve the physical condition of the buildings through targeted conservation-led repairs, material salvage, and regulatory consultation. Compliance will be measured against national and local building regulations, food safety standards, accessibility guidelines, and conservation frameworks. The physical improvements will be measured by progress towards 100% removal and replacement of unusable materials. This work is achievable as there are many credible methodologies and successful case studies to reference. Improving the physical condition is relevant and essential to safeguard the site's heritage significance and to enable meaningful public use. This project will take 2 years to complete. An evaluation of the site by the construction company will be completed within 1 month, restoration will continue for a 16-month period, and final transformations fit for opening will be completed within an additional 7 months.</p>	<p>The objective is to secure funding for this project, including any acquisitions, improvements, and the first two months of operation as a café. The success of this objective will be measured by reaching 85-100% of the funding goal of £1 million. This work is achievable by applying to Irish governmental grants like the 'Built Heritage Investment Scheme 2026,' 'Rural Regeneration and Development Fund,' 'LEADER programme for Rural Development,' Town and Village Renewal Scheme,' and 'Tidy Towns.' This objective is relevant as the full potential of the project would not be possible without exterior funding. It will take 1 month to apply to these grants and 4 months to receive a decision.</p>	<p>The objective is to maximize satisfaction within public opinion of the adaptive reuse of this site. This will be measured by qualitative data, such as surveys, comments, and interviews, aiming for a satisfaction rate of at least 65%. This is most achievable by using the popular discussion forums on the town's Facebook page and in the local newspapers. Gathering this feedback is relevant as taking an authoritative approach to local heritage and decision making can often lead to disappointment and distrust within the community. This fieldwork will run in multiple 1-day sessions periodically throughout the 2-year project.</p>

Conclusion

In conclusion, this derelict site in Ballineen and Enniskeane has great potential for adaptive reuse into a café. Its assessment of significance revealed an abundance of value despite not being a listed structure. Once revitalized, the former pub will once again facilitate pride in local culture, encourage social connection, and develop the economy.

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