

PORTMAGEE LOCAL AREA PLAN

1.0 CONTEXT

1.1 Location

Portmagee (Port Mhig Aoidh; Magee's Harbour or An Caladh; The Ferry) is a coastal village located on the R565 at the western end of the Iveragh Peninsula. It is located 16 km southwest of Cahersiveen. The town is nestled between St Finans Bay and Valentia Island and is on the Skellig Ring Tourist drive.

1.2 Population

There is no specific census returns for Portmagee village. The village is located in the DED of Portmagee. The 2006 census showed 376 persons in the entire DED. This figure increased from 363 in 2002. This represented a 3% increase in population. The population in 2011 was 390.

1.3 Functions & Facilities

Portmagee is mainly a residential settlement which provides service and community facilities to the local community. Social services include a Church, a health centre, a national school, a Garda station, and a community centre. Retail uses comprises shops, a post office, public houses, a hostel. It also functions as a base for the local fishing fleet and has a modest tourism function.

The village is set in a scenic landscape situated on a tourist route on the R565 main road between Valentia Island and the main land. The village therefore benefits from passing trade. In addition, Portmagee also functions as a tourist destination. Portmagee's Annual Set Dancing and Ceili Weekend occur every May.

For its size Portmagee village has a broad range of services and facilities both for locals and tourists, however many of these facilities/services are only open during the tourist season. There are also a number of bed and breakfasts and holiday homes developments in the village and surrounding area.

The village also serves as a departure point for tourists travelling to visit Skellig Michael.

1.4 Infrastructure

There is public water supply available in the village. Water quality is an ongoing issue during summer months. There has been some recorded capacity issues. However it is anticipated that water savings associated with ongoing leak detection are likely to ensure that sufficient capacity will be available to cater for the targeted growth.

There is a primary settlement tank in the village. The treatment is by means of a septic tank and outlet into the bay. The system is currently inadequate but there are no plans to upgrade at this time.

1.5 Urban Form

The development of Portmagee has centred on the waterfront. The main street is linear and is open to the sea on the north side apart from a group of buildings at the eastern end. The western extremity of the street ends in a cul de sac. Up to recently the village had a compact urban core but recent developments including ribbon development along the approach roads has served to dilute the compact nature of the original settlement. More recent developments especially holiday home developments to the south west of the village, because of their uniformity and estate style layout sit uncomfortably next to the old waterfront area where a mixture of house sizes and colour add variety to the overall look of the area. The existing Main Street with its simple forms and broad palette of colours is undoubtedly the most attractive element of Portmagee. The village lacks a public open space while there is some space along the seafront a more sheltered location is also required.

Small-scale residential development is occurring to the rear of some properties along the main street. A new housing development has been constructed to the west of the village. This development takes the form of modern suburban type housing estate.

Access off Main Street to substantial backland sites is therefore limited and this must be addressed if a compact and permeable urban structure is to be achieved. While the village is largely linear in nature there is also extensive areas of both developed and undeveloped land to the rear of roadside development. The creation of in-depth development would provide for a more compact and sustainable urban form.

The village has a small but strongly defined urban core centred along the waterfront. The village architecture is largely comprised of traditional 19th century two storey structures. The number of vacant/ derelict sites within the village is small, but new development which will break the building line at these locations would undermine the village's potential to develop a stronger village form and should not be considered. Extending the streetscape to include vacant sites on the perimeter of the existing street would serve to reinforce the character of the village centre while allowing for the expansion of its retail and service core.

Tourism is a significant part of the local economy and the traditional character and vernacular architecture of the village is an important part of the villages tourist appeal. New development will need to reflect the traditional character of the existing built form in order to maintain and enhance this tourist asset.

1.6 Built Heritage

There are no protected structures in the plan area. It is not proposed to include any additional structures on the Record of Protected Structures. It is considered however, that those elements of the built environment which define the character of the village need to be enhanced and preserved. It is an objective of this plan to designate an ACA along a section of the Main Street along the waterfront so that its attractive form and character can be retained in any future development.

It is necessary to ensure that the local character and sense of place are enhanced and a coherent urban structure is created. It is important therefore that new development reflects the traditional elements of the existing streetscape.

1.7 Archaeology

There are no archaeological monuments in or in close proximity to the plan area.

1.8 Natural environment and Amenity

Valentia Harbour/Portmagee Channel is designated as a SAC. The village is located in an area rich in natural beauty and amenities. The mountains to the south provide attractive views from the village and form scenic backdrops against which the village is set.

There are several walking routes identified in the vicinity of the village and hill walking/mountaineering attracts many visitors to the area.

1.9 Vehicular and Pedestrian Traffic

The village is located on a busy regional route and is the main vehicular entrance to Valentia Island via the bridge.

The set back along the waterfront provides sufficient parking to meet current demand. There is one small car park adjacent to the Church grounds. The proposed amenity area adjacent to the Church will increase parking requirements in this vicinity.

Footpaths are required at a number of locations throughout the village to provide for connectivity between residential areas to the west and the east.

1.10 Employment

The 2006 Small Area Population Statistics for the DED in which Portmagee is located indicate that the main source of employment for males in the area is the construction industry (20%) followed by agriculture & fishing (17%) and manufacturing (14%). Due to the downturn in the economy this probably is no longer the case.

The majority of employed females are employed in the service sector. It is likely that a number of residents commute to Cahersiveen for employment. In order to encourage indigenous businesses and more employment in the village, lands designated for tourism and small scale industrial use is zoned within the settlement boundary.

The village itself developed traditionally as a port and fishing (market) village serving the needs of a historically successful farming hinterland. The vitality of many of the town's small businesses is dependant on the spending power of customers from the rural areas and the construction of harbour related activities.

1.11 Harbour & Marine Activity

Portmagee has a pier that has an important role in the continuing success of the marine – leisure, recreation and tourism sectors in the area. Support for the fishing industry remains the central focus of the pier. Fishing is a major source of income and direct employment for the area and also contributes indirectly, through fish exports and processing. Boat trips for Skellig Michael are on offer from the pier and powerboat trips operate also.

The area is renowned for the some of the best Salmon & Sea Trout Angling in Europe. Whale, dolphin and shark spotting are becoming increasingly popular along the coast of the Iveragh Peninsula.

1.12 Growth and Residential Development

The level of planning permissions demonstrates growth in the plan area and its immediate surrounds. Growth may be sustained if Portmagee develops the capacity to attract services and facilities. The future demand for detached dwellings would otherwise be met through rural development.

Like other towns and villages in the county, Portmagee experienced a period of growth as evidenced by the 2011 census which saw a 3.7% increase from the 2006 census. However the level of residential planning permissions granted in the period 2006 – 2011 has indicated a limited growth potential over the next number of years.

2.0 DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

The overall vision for Portmagee is to ensure that it develops as an attractive location for residents and tourists alike and that future development preserves the village's character as a small fishing village and reinforces it where necessary.

The development boundary for Portmagee defines the existing extent of the area where new development may be considered, whilst also allowing for some expansion for residential development to the east of the village core. During the lifetime of this Plan, development will focus mainly on these lands, located close to the village core.

It is important that while many new residents will commute to other centres for employment, that Portmagee develops the social and economic infrastructure to function as a sustainable community in its own right. Increased local retail and commercial uses within the village core adjacent to existing uses would serve to achieve this.

The development strategy for the village is to:

- Maximise growth in population and services to a level which will create a vibrant village, while maintaining and enhancing its physical assets, unique character and natural attributes.
- Ensure that future development supports the existing role and function of the village as a rural service centre, fishing port and small tourist village having regard to the scale of the existing settlement and the setting of the village in an attractive rural landscape.
- Ensure that all new development is of traditional design and layout and does not detract from the character of the settlement.

- Ensure that all new development is located within the settlements development boundary. A sequential approach shall be taken to all new development.
- Ensure that any future tourism developments are sensitive to the existing character of the village and should be appropriate in scale. Developments which are open on a year round basis should be encouraged.
- Provide for adequate sporting and playground facilities to cater for the recreational needs of locals and tourists in a sustainable manner.
- Promote the fishing and angling potential for the town in a sustainable manner.
- Promote the sustainable development of a high quality marina and waterfront area.
- Ensure that future residential development within the village caters for the needs of the local population who wish to live in the area on a permanent basis.
- Encourage the sustainable expansion in the range and number of commercial services within the village which in turn will provide local employment and improve the quality of life of the local community.
- Encourage the development of niche tourism market, based on marine activity, sustainable marine and adventure holidays and develop its own ecotourism brand in a sustainable manner

3.0 OVERALL OBJECTIVES

Objective No.	Overall Objectives It is an objective of the Council to:
OO-1	Ensure that the development will be carried out in a coherent and strategic manner and will be contingent on adequate infrastructure being provided. The piecemeal and uncoordinated development of such sites will not be permitted.
OO-2	Ensure that the high quality natural setting of the village is maintained and protected from inappropriate development.

4.0 SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

Objective No.	Architectural & Built Heritage It is an objective of the Council to:
AH-1	Preserve the village's architectural heritage and encourage development to be designed in a manner that is in keeping with the scale and character of the existing village. New developments should respect local design features.

Objective No.	Mixed Use Zoning It is an objective of the Council to:
MU-1	Zone lands for the development of mixed uses at appropriate locations to provide for the expansion of local employment, retail and service uses.

Objective No.	Vehicular and Pedestrian Traffic It is an objective of the Council to:
T-1	Seek the provision/improvement of continuous footpaths / walkways as indicated on the Land Zoning Map.

Objective No.	Amenity It is an objective of the Council to:
A-1	Facilitate the development of a village park at the location indicated on the Land Zoning Map.

Objective No.	Tourism and leisure It is an objective of the Council to:
TL-1	Promote the development of a niche tourism market, based on sustainable marine activity, sustainable marine and adventure holidays.