

KNIGHTSTOWN LOCAL AREA PLAN

1.0 CONTEXT

1.1 Location

Knightstown (An Chois - the pirate) is named after the former local landlord 'The Knight of Kerry'. Knightstown is located on the eastern side of Valentia Island, which is off the western coast of the Iveragh peninsula. It is the largest village on the island and is directly connected to the mainland by ferry during the summer months. Knightstown is approximately 3km to the north east of Chapeltown and approximately 5.5km to the south west of Cahersiveen (via ferry).

1.2 Population

There is no specific census returns for Knightstown. The DED of Valencia covers the town and the entire island. The 2006 census showed 713 persons. This figure increased from 690 in 2002. This represented a 3% increase in population. The figure decrease in 2011 to 664, this represented a 6% decrease in population.

1.3 Functions & Facilities

The settlement of Knightstown is designated as a village in the Kerry County Development Plan 2009-2015. It provides a range of services to its rural hinterland and also acts as the main settlement on an island that benefits substantially from tourism. Many of the residential units in the village are holiday homes.

The village has a broad range of facilities including a Roman Catholic Church, a Church of Ireland church with a sensory garden, A Garda station, a residential/training centre for the mentally handicapped, an RNLI lifeboat station, a heritage centre, hostels, restaurant, shops, a grocery shop, and a scuba diving centre. Due to the seasonal nature of demand for services in the area a number of businesses in the village are closed during the winter period.

The newly built breakwater and marina in the harbour offers a broad range of marine based activities. The marina will have 220 berths when fully completed.

For its size Knightstown 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.

1.4 Infrastructure

Wastewaters in Knightstown receive primary treatment, before discharge to Valentia Harbour. The design capacity of the treatment facility is 800pe and is considered to be approaching capacity. The system acts as a combined system with no separate provision for storm water runoff. The town is served by public water.

1.5 Urban Form

Unlike some other villages in south Kerry, Knightstown has a highly developed and attractive street system. The prolific Scottish engineer, Alexander Nimmo was commissioned by the Knight of Kerry in 1830 to prepare a layout plan for what was then referred to as the New Town of Valentia. The village was developed in the 1840s and has managed to retain its distinctive character. The attractive streets and impressive terraces give Knightstown an architectural character unsurpassed in any other village in Kerry. Market Street which forms the core of the village runs west to east from the Church of Ireland and terminates in the beautifully restored clock tower on the pier. The varied assortments of buildings along the Promenade are a further addition to the rich architectural mix found in Knightstown.

The village has an attractive promenade extending along the seafront which forms the eastern boundary of the village and includes the pier area. There are opportunities to extend this walkway amenity throughout the town.

The village is rich in architectural heritage, archaeological heritage and local history. An item of particular interest is the Altazmuth Project which has been promoted by the local community in recent years

1.6 Built Heritage

The village has a rich architectural heritage. The Cable Station building which is one of over fifty Protected Structures in the village was designed by the renowned 19th century Cork architect Thomas Deane in 1868. Many of the officer's houses, which form the terraces along the Promenade and are on the RPS, have been bought as holiday homes and are well maintained by their new owners. It is considered that future development should preserve and enhance the elements of the built environment which define the character of the village. Two sections of streetscape have been identified which present a particularly coherent and attractive traditional frontage and should be retained.

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 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. It is important therefore that new development reflects the traditional elements of the existing streetscape.

1.7 Archaeology

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

1.8 Natural environment and Amenity

Knightstown is located on a flat coastal plain at the north eastern tip of Valentia Island. The village's sheltered harbour area makes it a popular location for water based activities. It is part of the Valentia Harbour/Portmagee Channel candidate Special Area of Conservation. The site contains important examples of reefs, shallow inlets and tidal mudflats

1.9 Vehicular and Pedestrian Traffic

Knightstown is the terminus for the Valentia island ferry which operates from March – October. The ferry generates quite an amount of traffic especially during the months of July and August. During the winter season access to Knightstown from the mainland is via the bridge at Portmagee.

1.10 Employment

The 2006 Small Area Population Statistics for the ED in which Knightstown are located (Valentia) indicate that the main source of employment for males in the area is the construction industry (20%) followed by manufacturing (10%). These figures are likely to have reduced due to the current economic situation. The majority of employed females are professionals, followed by those working in the service sector (28%). There is no major employment in the village other than Valentia Hospital. Employment opportunities within the village are limited and many islanders travel to work on the mainland. In order to encourage indigenous businesses and more employment in the village, lands designated for tourism and small scale mixed use is zoned within the settlement boundary. Two opportunity sites have also been identified.

1.11 Growth and Residential Development

There has been a considerable amount of development in the village in recent years mainly to the south and west of the village core, off the R565. These developments are estate type developments and have not contributed to or extended the existing streetscape. A development of houses and apartments fronting Market Street and in the grounds of Reenellen House and a smaller development at the eastern end of Market Street fronting the Promenade have regenerated the village centre. All these developments cater predominantly for the holiday home market. There has also been a demand for one off houses mainly to the west of the village.

The level of planning permissions demonstrates growth potential in the plan area and its immediate surrounds. Future growth may be sustained if Knightstown develops the capacity to attract services and facilities including upgraded waste water treatment facilities. The future demand for detached dwellings would otherwise be met through rural development.

The development boundary for Knightstown defines the existing extent of the area where new development may be considered, whilst also allowing for expansion /re-development in the village core. It is an objective of the plan to encourage the development of a compact and sustainable village structure by ensuring that new development is contiguous with existing development and makes effective use of backland and infill sites.

1.12 Opportunity sites

Opportunity sites are defined here as sites which are visually or functionally important and where the application of good urban design would have the maximum impact on the social and economic growth of the village. This plan has identified two sites; Market Street and the former Slate Yard. Further appraisal of these sites is contained in Appendix 1.

2.0 DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

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

Knightstown is probably one of the most attractive settlements in County Kerry with very few if any settlements matching its mix of architectural, historical and cultural heritage. The village still retains its innate character and it is essential, that this is retained. The retention of the architectural heritage of the village is critical to its future development as a tourist destination. Knightstown has a number of innate strengths including an attractive seafront, spectacular sea views and a defined urban form with character and charm. It is important that the village capitalises on its location and its heritage. It is considered, that, through the implementation of high quality urban design, architecture and public facilities that Knightstown can enhance its development potential as a tourist destination with sustainable heritage and water based activities as its main attractions. It is important that the features which attract tourists to the area are protected, while appropriate opportunities for employment generating tourist development are encouraged.

As mentioned previously, the village is serviced by a primary wastewater treatment plant. This plant is nearing capacity and there are no immediate plans to upgrade. Discharge is into the Valentia Harbour which has sensitive receiving water with Natura 2000, bathing water and shellfish water designation. In the short term therefore, and pending the upgrading of the treatment plant, the development potential of the village is seriously curtailed. Notwithstanding these restrictions, this plan sets out a development vision for future uses throughout the settlement in order to avoid inappropriate development compromising proper planning principles in the interim.

The development strategy for the village is to:

- Ensure that future development should support the existing role and function of the village as a rural service centre and small tourist village
- Ensure that all development shall have regard to the scale and setting of the existing village in an attractive rural landscape.

- Encourage the sustainable development of adequate sporting and playground facilities. These should be provided for within the village to cater for the recreational needs of locals and tourists.
- Promote the enhancement of the promenade/waterfront area in a sustainable manner.
- 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.
- Protect the natural environment, architectural and archaeological heritage of the village from developments of an inappropriate nature and scale given that these attributes contribute greatly to the distinctive character of the village.
- 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.
- Develop ecotourism and other niche markets along with the sustainable extension and diversification of tourist facilities as a possible source of employment

3.0 OVERALL OBJECTIVES

Objective No.	It is an objective of the Council to:
OO-1	Ensure that new residential development shall be small-scale and low density served by individual treatment units/septic tanks that comply fully with the EPA Code of Practice on waste water treatment and disposal systems serving houses/small communities, until such time as the waste water treatment system for the village is upgraded. .
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.
AH-2	Encourage the appropriate reuse and sensitive restoration of unused/derelict properties along the Main Street.
AH-3	Designate the area indicated on the map as an Architectural Conservation Area (ACA)

Objective No.	Vehicular and Pedestrian Traffic It is an objective of the Council to:
T-1	Provide for continuous walkway footpath within the village.
T-2	Seek the provision of continuous walkway from Jane Street to the Promenade.

Objective No	Natural Environment It is an objective of the Council to:
NE-1	Preserve any existing mature trees where possible and promote additional planting of native trees and shrubs in new developments.

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

APPENDIX 1

Opportunity Sites

Site 1 Market Street

Aim: To sustainably redevelop and improve this village centre site in order to provide a strong urban streetscape and a significant area of public space

Site Location and Description

The site is located on the southern side of Market Street. The buildings along the northern streetscape are set back. The area is currently used as private residential open space. The site is on either side of the junction on Jane Street.

Development Potential

The redevelopment of this site presents an opportunity to create a strong urban streetscape which would regenerate the heart of the town, which would benefit the community.

This site should make provision for a two storey traditional streetscape on the south side of Market Street, and shall allow for retail and residential use. In relation to the mixed use streetscape the emphasis will be on residential development with the potential for future conversion to retail and commercial use. Planning applications are to be accompanied by comprehensive urban design statements

A small plaza or other central public space would give expression to a town's history and character, provide a visual and social focal point, and contribute to a sense of identity and place.

Site 2 – The Slate Yard

Aim: To sustainably develop this brownfield site as a tourist/leisure site

Site Location and Description

This area comprises the site of the former slate yard. Currently it is rather poorly presented, particularly on the eastern side, by low-grade commercial buildings and houses (including rear gardens and storage areas for properties fronting onto Market Street and the Promenade). The north and the east side must be improved and consolidated with new tourist facility overlooking the historically important Altazamuth Trigonometric point. The site comprises of structures, some of which are derelict or unoccupied.

Development Potential

The development of this site presents an opportunity to regenerate a large site in the heart of the village. This site has the potential to be a focal point of the village. The development would be mixed use including a mixture of tourist, recreational and leisure use typical of any small town centre site.

Any redevelopment of this area should encourage the refurbishment and re-occupancy of the existing structures. The large stone building is a protected structure which should be sensitively restored and utilized.

It is of significant importance that the relevant landowners work together to ensure the entire land is developed in a uniformed and coherent approach. Piecemeal development of these lands will not be favourably considered.

General Requirements

To ensure that the proposed development is a success and will integrate easily into the surrounding townscape, the design and layout of the development will be required to be of a high design standard and must contribute its visual identity. Permeability for both pedestrians and car users is of utmost importance throughout the development. A walkway from Jane Street through the Slate yard and onto the Promenade would give added vibrancy to the area.

Given the size of the site an urban design statement must be prepared and submitted to the council with any planning application for the lands. The urban design statement must comply with the requirements of section 13.3 of the County Development Plan 2009-2015.

Appendix 2

Knightstown Architectural Conservation Area

Introduction

See the introduction to the Cahersiveen ACA .

Location and boundary of the Conservation Area

The proposed ACA is comprised of four blocks centred on Market Street and Peter Street.



Map. 1: ACA Boundary

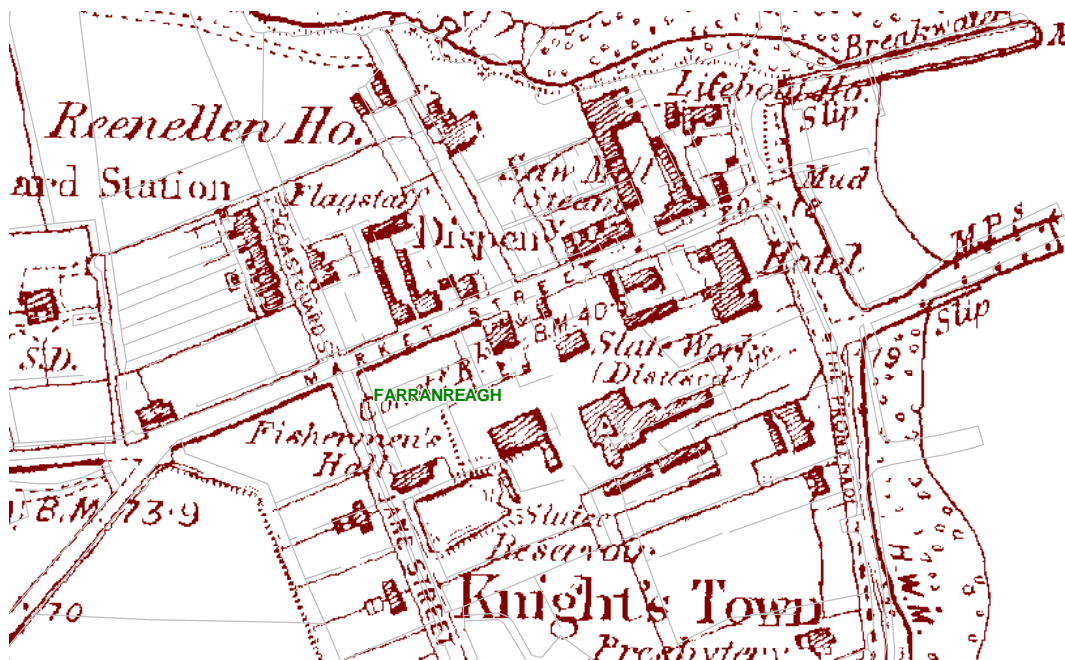
Historical development of the area

The Scottish engineer, Alexander Nimmo was responsible for the layout of Knightstown, having been commissioned to carry out the task by the Knight of Kerry in the early 1830s. In the 1st edition (1842) and the 2nd edition (1897) of the OS maps, Peter Street is referred to as Coastguard Street and the terrace of six buildings on the west side of the street is referred to as Coast Guard Station. In the first edition the only buildings shown on the north side of Market Street are the Post Office and adjoining building and the nearby terrace of four buildings referred to on the map as Police Barracks.

In the second edition five additional structures are shown on the north side of Market Street including what is now the Knightstown Coffee House and adjoining building.



Map 2 1st Edition OS Map (1842)



Map 3: 2nd Edition OS Map (1897)

Schedule of Protected Structures and Recorded Monuments

Knightstown has a rich architectural heritage and has a higher concentration of Protected Structures than any other settlement in the county. There are five structures included in the Record of Protected Structures within the ACA.

- | | |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| - RPS Ref. No. 21401318 | Knightstown Coffee Shop, Market St. |
| - RPS Ref. No. KY-079-037 | Former Post Office, Market St. |
| - RPS Ref. No. KY-079-043 | Town House, Market St. |
| - RPS Ref. No. KY-079-047 | Radio Tce., Market St. |
| - RPS Ref. No. KY-079-048 | Radio Tce., Market St. |

There is no Recorded Monument within the proposed ACA.

Description of Existing Built Environment

a) Street pattern:

Market Street is now the main thoroughfare in Knightstown, although mainly residential in character there are a small number of commercial premises also located on the street. Market Street runs east west from the junction opposite St. John the Baptist Church to the waterfront. Peter Street and Jane Street intersect with Market Street at right angles, Peter Street to the north and Jane Street to the south



Photo. 1 Terrace on Market Street

b) Form and arrangement of public and private open space.

All of the buildings, apart from the old Post Office and adjoining structure have an area of private open space to the rear of the buildings. There is no public open space within the confines of the ACA. The two uniform terraces within the ACA have private open space to the front bounded by stone walls.

c) Socio economic functions. The buildings within the ACA are mainly private, with a small number of commercial premises.

d) *Built fabric-general description.* The buildings within the proposed ACA are either two storey or one and a half storey, with the exception of St Derercas Hall which is single storey. A number of the buildings have simple traditional style open porches. One of the buildings within the ACA, Knightstown Coffee House has one of the finest examples of shopfront craftsmanship in the county. The two terraces within the ACA are comprised of attractive vernacular style buildings simpler and less elaborate than some of the other terraces in Knightstown.



Photo. 2 Original roof covering



Photo. 3 Shop front detailing

e) *Roofs, ridges, chimneys.*

Some of the buildings have retained the original slating material which has a lot more character and texture than the newer variety of roofing material. (Photo.)

f) *Walls.* The majority of the buildings within the ACA have a smooth plaster or lined render finish.



Photo. 4 & 5 Peter Street





Photo. 6



Photo. 7

g) Openings.

Some entrances and openings have been altered over the years to suit particular commercial or domestic circumstances, but overall, window openings and doorways have remained relatively intact. Two contrasting styles of window opening are evident on Peter Street in one instance the first floor window openings are much smaller than the ground floor a feature often found, whereas on the other side of the street the first floor windows are larger. (Photo 4 & 5)



Photo. 8



Photo. 9

h) *Boundaries*. Most structures within the ACA do not front directly onto the pavement but have an area of private open space. An interesting feature connecting the properties forming the four unit terrace on Market Street is the use of a slate slab over the water channel (Photo

i) *Rainwater Goods*. Some original cast-iron rainwater pipes and gutters remain but there has been replacement in a piecemeal manner. Cast iron is a resilient material and the retention of cast iron rainwater goods not only makes sense from an economic viewpoint but also enhances the heritage value of buildings.



Photo. 10



Photo 11

j) *Views*. The vista looking east along Market Street towards the waterfront, with the clock tower in the forefront and the harbour and Reenard in the background is one of the iconic views associated with this part of south Kerry.

Summary of Special Character

The principle features of the built form are

- traditional urban style buildings dating mainly from the late 19th to the early 20th century.
- pitched roofs covered in slate or artificial slate
- roofs have variable ridge and eaves heights
- the use of traditional unobtrusive signage
- the retention of a high proportion of timber sash windows

Negative features

- some unsympathetic alterations to historic features such as windows, the cumulative effect of which is damaging to its status as a conservation area.

Guidelines for development within the Conservation area.

For the Guidelines for development within the Conservation area., works not affecting the character of the ACA (do not require planning permission) and works impacting on the character of the area (works requiring planning permission) see Cahersiveen ACA