Ennis Walkability Study Report

April 2019

by Karen Fennessy
Age Friendly Development Officer

"If you design for the young you exclude the old, but if you design for the old you include everyone"

Glenn Miller, Director of Education and Research**,** Canadian Urban Development Institute

Introduction

As life expectancy increases, the population projections by the Central Statistics Office (CSO 2016 data) have shown that the percentage of the population in Clare over 55 will increase from 27% (32,080) to approximately 34% (48,000) by 2031.

The capital town of Ennis accounts for approximately 23% (27,327) of the county's population and based on projected growth, the town's population will increase by a further 25% (6,832) by the year 2040. The development of Ennis as an Age Friendly town will facilitate an increase in the older generation living and visiting the town.

Aim

The aim of the walkability study is to assess how easy or difficult it is to get around Ennis, and how easy or difficult it is to access the services of the town. It is anticipated that the outcomes of this walkability study will allow Clare County Council and other key organisations to instigate actions to improve the accessibility of the town of Ennis which will benefit all users.

Ennis - Background Information

Ennis has a rich heritage tradition with some of the finest monuments, buildings and waterways in the country. The town has held a strong presence every year in the All Ireland Tidiest Town Awards and won Ireland's Tidiest Large Urban Centre in 2012.

Visitors to Ennis can expect to experience unique and diverse boutiques, shops, cafes, and restaurants. It is a tourist centre of major importance for County Clare.

"As the capital of a renowned music county, Ennis is bursting at the seams with pubs featuring live sessions almost every night of the week. In fact, it's one of the best reasons to stay here"

Lonely Planet (10th Edition 2012)

What is a Walkability Study?

A walkability study is a series of short walks undertaken by a representative group of persons. Details of the walk are logged and issues that arise are noted and photographed.

Three days of Walkability Studies were carried out in Ennis during January and February 2019. After each walk, a short questionnaire developed by Age Friendly Ireland (AFI) in collaboration with the Centre for Universal Design (CEUD) was completed. All participants including the facilitators and note-takers completed the questionnaire. The results from all the different routes studied have been analysed with the results presented in this report.

The emphasis of the Walkability Study is to engage and listen to the perceptions of the participants and to encourage active positive discussion on issues and topics relating to the accessibility of the town.

Walkability Routes

The walkability study consisted of 6 routes covering much of the centre of the town (See Appendix 1 – Maps).

Route 1

Abbey Street and Abbey Street Car Park to Friary Car Park

Route 2

O'Connell Street to Friar's Walk

Route 3

Station Road to Bóthar na Trócaire

Route 4

Francis Street to the Causeway Link

Route 5
Bindon Street/Bank Place to Summerhill and Market Square

Route 6
Parnell Street Car Park and Cornmarket

Participants
Approximately 15 people contributed or took part in the study. The participants consisted of mostly older persons, people with reduced mobility and two wheelchair users. Facilitators and note takers were provided by Clare County Council.
Notes and photographs were taken by the facilitators of the issues raised.

Results

Common Issues

The issues raised throughout all the walked routes had similarities, which is not uncommon for a Walkability Study in a set defined area. A summary of the issues are as follows:

1. Crossings and Junctions

1.1 Pedestrian Crossings

The walkability study included a review of the safety of pedestrian crossings as well as dished curbed crossings. In particular the difficulties and challenges that people might encounter when trying to cross the road were examined.

Crossings overall need to be better marked e.g. more zebra crossing markings on the roads makes the crossing more visible to motorists. The group felt that lights for pedestrian crossings are also essential. The lights at Club Bridge are too fast for slower walkers. During the study, traffic did yield to pedestrians crossing the road.

Traffic lights changed very fast at Maddens Furniture, Mill Road and particularly the crossing at Carmody Street, where there was not enough time for pedestrians. They all need slowing down to allow older people to cross the road safely.

A lot of the crossing areas were not marked with black and white stripes and therefore traffic does not have to stop and pedestrians do not have the right of way. Unofficial crossings are confusing to pedestrians who may think they have right of way.

The group felt that the crossing point at the Tesco roundabout was difficult for pedestrians to negotiate and highlighted the need for an official Pedestrian Crossing.

1.2 Junctions

There was an issue highlighted at the top of O'Connell Street which is probably one of the busiest junctions in the town. There is currently no crossing there for access to the Cathedral at this busy junction.

There are no stop signs as cars come out of Francis Street by the Queen's Hotel. Continuous path crossings at Lower Abbey Street (beside the Queens Hotel) across the road at the entrance to the Abbey Street Car Park would be beneficial.

The group also recommended having a continuous path from Francis Street crossing the entrance to the Friary Car Park.

The lack of dropped kerbs does not allow wheelchair users access to cross the road. Very often it was too steep at the other side of the road or the dished curbing was not opposite each other. The wheelchair user in the study had to go back a long way at the roundabout out from Bóthar na Trócaire and Dunnes.

Most of the crossings could be updated with ramps and tactile pavings as they are not level with the road. The participants acknowledged that the recent Pelican crossings that have been constructed in Ennis are very good i.e. they are raised up with good tactile surfacing and lighting, like the one beside Dunnes.

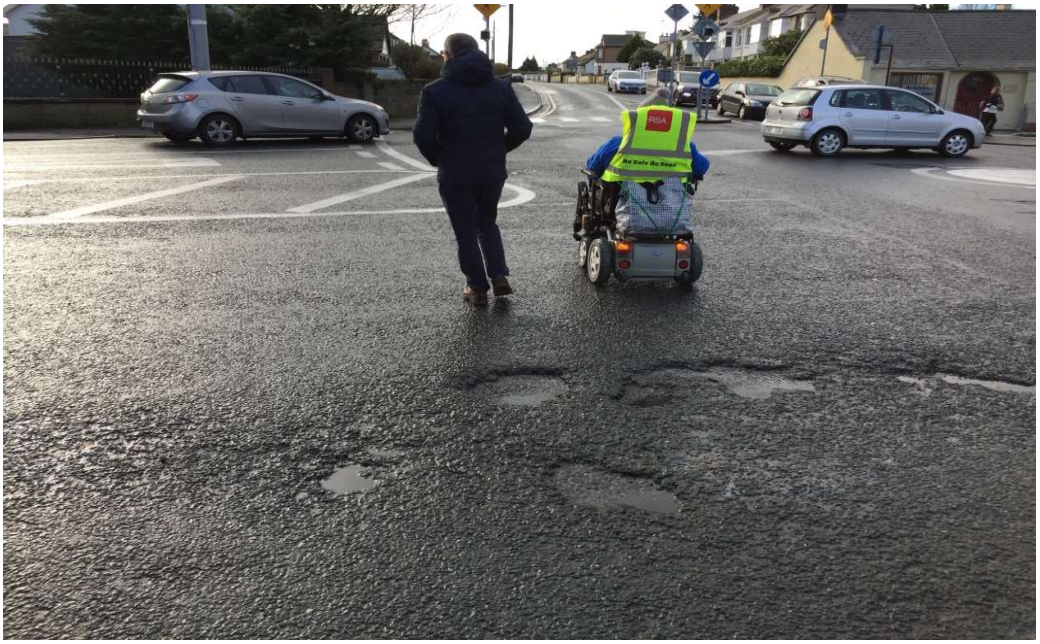
The lack of quick crossings on the Mill Road really separates out the residential area in Cornmarket and the shops on the far side. The Parnell Street car park road with lack of crossings also very much separates out the alleyways and lanes from the river which has nice views.

1.3 Accessibility

Overall there are not enough tactile ramps for wheelchair users, the visually impaired or disability users. Those that are there need repairing and realigning in places. There is a need for 'zones' of continuous pavements across junctions so that cars give way to pedestrians. There is little or no provision for areas given over to cyclists. More signage is required alerting motorists that pedestrians may be crossing.

Example of unofficial crossing on Abbey St. Pedestrians rely on cars to give way

There were a lack of access points for wheelchair users. The Station Road roundabout was particularly difficult to cross for pedestrians and wheelchairs. Crossing areas should be wide enough to facilitate wide wheelchairs or buggies and be quite obvious from a distance. In some areas the height of the crossings varied greatly.



2. Accessibility to Public Spaces, Parking and Buildings

2.1 Access to shops and buildings

The Queen's Hotel and Friary Church had steps at the front entrance which could be converted to a ramp.

Most shops were very good with street-level access but there were some exceptions e.g. access to the Cathedral. Some access ramps are needed particularly on Francis Street near Tesco/Aldi.

The group felt the Tesco entrance onto Francis Street should be looked at due to uneven paving and flooding.

On Bank Place there was no wheelchair access to Bank of Ireland and the Citizens Advice Bureau, also there is a difficult entrance to the Post Office. It would be hard for a wheelchair user or a person with reduced mobility to access them.

There were shops in Wood Quay with steps leading onto narrow paths restricting access for wheelchair users and the visually impaired.

2.2 Accessible Car-Parking Spaces

There was only one in the Friary Car Park. There were no disabled parking spaces on O'Connell Street which are the nearest spaces to the shops.

The wheelchair parking spot outside of Cusack Park was an example where there was no access to footpath due to high curbing.

Overall there were good parking facilities around the Tesco end of Francis Street. Around Cornmarket and Parnell Street Carpark some disabled parking spaces were inaccessible due to the fact they had no wheelchair ramps or wide enough pavements to reach them.

There is a recommendation for Age Friendly parking in accordance with national Age Friendly guidelines. These spaces are courtesy spaces and motorists enter into the spirit of this initiative and leave them free for older persons who need them. Parking fees are payable where they apply. (See below example of parking in Gort).

Enforcement of Parking Bye Laws are a necessity in the town to address the various issues regarding the dangers caused by illegally parked cars.

2.3 Bicycle Parking Facilities

There was only one stand beside the Tourist Office. More covered bicycle parking facilities needed as there were very few beside any shops.

Bicycles are chained to random posts - causes obstruction to wheelchairs etc.

There were some facilities at Tesco however the group found a bike chained to the lamppost beside the bike stands.

2.4 Public Toilets

No public toilets on most of the routes walked and there was no toilet accessible to the wheelchair user in the study group.

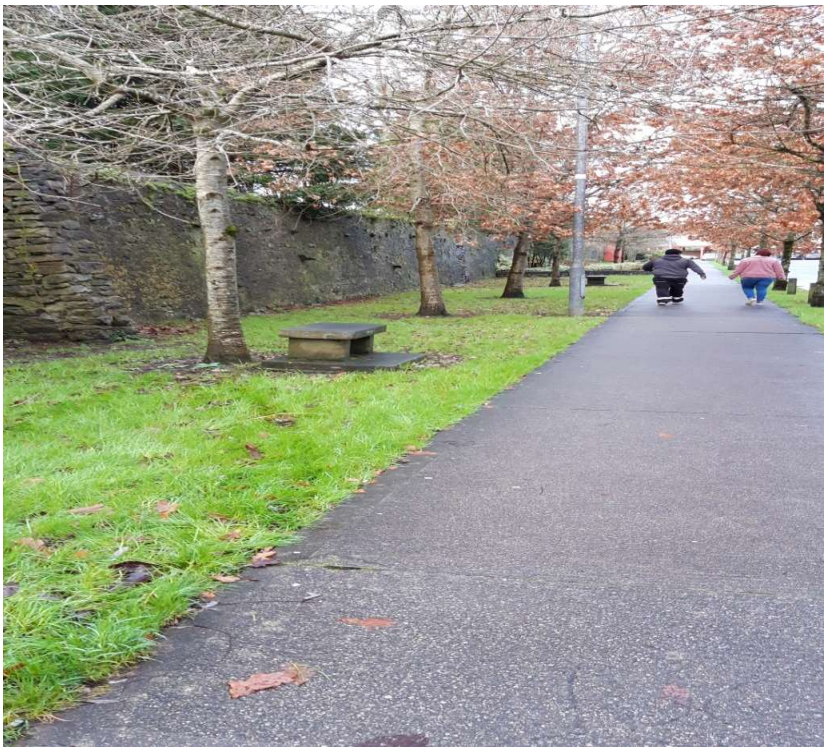
Toilets are provided in the Shopping Centre beside Tesco.

2.5 Public Benches and Resting Places

Participants sat on electrical boxes as a resting place on the Abbey Street/Car Park route as there was no other obvious seating.

Consider Age Friendly Seating with back and arm support

There was no public seating on Francis Street. On the Causeway Link seats are placed in the grass on raised plinths which reduces their accessibility. These seats were concrete benches with no back or arm rests and not in accordance with Age Friendly guidelines.



Overall the group felt that a few more seats around the town would be beneficial although O'Connell Street is too narrow for any seating to be installed. In particularly they mentioned Friar's walk as a nice area that would benefit from more seating.

There was only one bench outside the Museum. More seating outside the Temple Gate Hotel in the Plaza area would be good, particularly for tourists.

There is currently no seating on the walking route from the train/bus station to the centre of town. A seat on Station Road would be beneficial. The group felt the footpath is wide enough on one side.

A good example of Age Friendly seating is outside the Market building (see below). However providing seating is just one part of the jigsaw, it would also be necessary to consider the spatial location of the seat, the micro climate of the area, and the style of the seats in any future seating planning, as these issues are critical to the success of seat usage.

There was seating at the shelter beside the taxi rank which could be improved upon. While the Taxi rank shelter was very good, it would benefit from a stop sign as it was not clear to someone who was visually impaired that it was a taxi rank.

2.6 Other Comments

There is no town public transport system however Clare Bus operate a local link rural bus service that connects to the town of Ennis. Most of these buses stop at the Temple Gate car park where there is a good bus shelter.

A review of the location of outdoor seating throughout the town should be undertaken, with the input of older people, as resting places are vital to encourage walkability in the town.

There are opportunities for seating and leaning options to be responded to by community groups and partnership organisations e.g. Business groups installing pull-down seating on shop windowsills. All of the responsibility for seating does not have to lie with the Local Authority.

Electrical charging points for mobility scooters and wheelchairs would be beneficial for users.

The study group suggested Braille signage or obvious "zoned" areas should be considered in future street design to make routes/hazards/transport points/crossing points more obvious to people with visual impairment.

Where possible wheelchair access should be located alongside regular access points to a building.

3. Aesthetics Look and Feel

3.1 Signage

The group felt it would be helpful to have signs (incorporating braille) indicating where the Town Centre was. Signs for the laneways were too high and should be lowered to eye level to make them more relevant. The group felt the tourist amenity signage was good.

3.2 Dog Fouling

There were no dog fouling bins in or around the town. There were a lot of bird droppings along by the river.

During the walkability study the wheelchair was fouled on the Station Road/ Bóthar na Trócaire route and needed to be hosed down.

Suggestion of more dog bags and bins available (like Lees Road).

3.3 Street Planting

There was a lack of trees and planters in Parnell Street car park. Suggestion made to use verges/hedges to separate zones which would add greenery.

There were particularly good examples of street planting from Glór to Templegate. There is potential for Age Friendly seating beside good planting areas.

A few winter plants in the planters would enhance the streetscape (like in the photo of the market area above). The Causeway Link opposite Glór was described as excellent and a credit to the Council.

3.4 Litter

Other than gum litter and cigarette butts, the streets were fairly clean. There was litter around the footpaths of Market Square.

Overall the group felt that lack of litter in the town was excellent due to a good street cleaning service in operation.

3.5 Abandoned Buildings

Parnell Street Car Park had numerous abandoned buildings in very poor condition (one opposite the taxi rank in the car park). There is a lovely river walk here which seems mostly neglected. The group suggested false fronts could be erected to hide the buildings.

The Post Office field is currently wasteland but could be developed into an area for wildlife. The site beside Ciaran's Bar also looks abandoned with fencing falling down.

3.6 Other Comments

For an area beside the river with a lovely view of Church spires and bank buildings, it feels isolated and unpleasant due to the thoroughfare of cars. There is huge potential to attract people in from the car park through Bow's Lane into the Market if it was more inviting and signposted better.

There are quite a few derelict sites that could be greatly improved. There are few trees along the routes walked however there is space for more trees and planting.

There is a lot of traffic heading in the direction of the town centre. A suggestion would be to encourage more shops/pedestrians/cyclists/tourists to areas of Ennis (including the environs). The group felt that while Cornmarket and Parnell Street car park was mostly commercial, Wood Quay by the river was very pleasant. There could be more seating installed there to take in the views beside the river. Another tourist information board could be placed at the High Street end of Parnell Street Car Park.

From the Queen's Hotel to Cusack Park the streetscape needs upgrading, The Causeway Link was good, but Francis Street was not so good. Francis Street had no seating at all and the paving/surfacing was very poor. The group felt it would be nice to see more winter and native planting.

Seating opportunity beside good planting on Francis St

O'Connell Street and Arthurs Row were mainly clean and tidy. The whole area needs tidying up with a coat of paint and some weeding along the footpaths. Cigarette butts were a problem especially outside the Museum, where there was a broken receptacle.

Some areas would benefit from power washing i.e. 1916 Monument near Club Bridge.

4. Footpaths

Over the years pavement schemes have been replaced and upgraded and there are excellent examples of top quality kerbing and paving schemes in the town – the top of Francis Street and along the side street to the Wheelchair Association.

Good tactile paving example along to Wheelchair Association

Other areas of the town would benefit from the installation of a uniformed pavement scheme including O'Connell Street, Bank Place and Francis Street. A standardised scheme would eliminate many of the issues identified with the pavements on the day including cracked pavements, subsidence, and uneven surfaces.

4.1 Maintenance

There were a lot of poorly maintained utility grates e.g. Telecom manhole covers were found to be an issue on most of the streets walked and need to be better maintained.

There was also an issue with edging around the trees on Bank Place, where a square has been cut into the footpath around each tree with a large lip (see photo).

Some paving stones were loose and cracked with uneven footpaths.

At the Queen's Hotel paving slabs were uneven all along the footpath. The entrance to Tesco is high with no ramp. Not all kerbs on O'Connell Street are wheelchair friendly and some need levelling out.

O'Connell Street overall was well maintained with some cracks easily fixed (highlighted with photos). There are some drain/inspection covers that need attention.

Surface points on Abbey Street are broken/cracked e.g. ramped crossing on Abbey Street, also there are utility grates depressed into footpaths. Generally the footpaths are in good condition.

The group acknowledged that it is quite awkward for people in wheelchairs around the entrance to Abbey Street Car Park and Club Bridge. Certain sections need to be levelled out to ease access crossing the streets. Where ramps are provided they are not always at the correct gradient.

4.2 Surfacing and drainage

Cracks and trip hazards have real safety implications for older people. The group identified lots of cracks on pavements in Bindon Street, Bank Place and around the market area.

Flag stones in Bindon Street were very smooth so could be slippery when wet.

There were flooded areas along the footpath on Francis Street. Some parts of the path near Aldi were flooded and there were large puddles of water around the entrance to Tesco.

Some places on O'Connell Street and Francis Street were slippy as drains on the buildings had no ground drain underneath them therefore rainwater is currently being discharged onto the footpaths.

On Abbey Street, certain paving is very slippy due to nature of materials and finishing used. There were sections of footpaths with water pools.

4.3 Width

Negotiating hilly streets, often with steep and narrow footpaths, by a person with limited mobility, a wheelchair user or someone with a pushchair is an everyday challenge.

While there were some nice wide areas there were also many bad pinch points where paths became very narrow. The group identified numerous obstacles along Wood Quay where the paths were narrow, especially down the side of AIB bank and also at the corner opposite Roughans. Overall there were very few footpaths that were wide enough, especially for a wheelchair user.

At the Queen's Hotel the bollards have narrowed the footpath. From the Queens Hotel down to Daly's funeral home was too narrow for the wheelchair user and people walking side by side. Very often members of the group had to step onto the road to let people pass. It was also narrow on the Friary side of Francis Street.

During the walkability study an older lady had to take her walker on the road to pass the group on O'Connell Street as it is too narrow in places. There is a distinct narrowing of pavements where parking bays are that doesn’t allow someone coming from the opposite direction to pass.

It is also very narrow near Molloy's Butchers. The existing width of the street is predominantly given over to car parking and road usage for cars.

4.4 Obstructions

In a number of places there were cars parked with bumpers over footpaths which narrowed the path even more. This was identified in Cornmarket and Mill Road where cars were overhanging paths in the car park. Also in some cases the black and yellow bollards are placed too far into the path which is restricting wheelchair access.

Some paths have entrance steps to shops protruding which the group felt was a trip hazard.

There were briars overhanging paths from vacant plots on Clonroad.

Street bins were also causing problems in a number of places. While litter bins are a necessity in every town, the general consensus of opinion was that the bins are too large and dominate the street-scape. It would be preferable to replace the larger bins with smaller bins with integrated butt receptor instead.

In the lane next to AIB there were too many wheelie bins and sandwich boards were an issue in Wood Quay. On O'Connell Street posts with signage, flower poles and parking metres were presenting obstacles and could be placed nearer the road. Shop signs and artificial trees also made the paths narrow.

However the group suggested that some footpaths could do with more street furniture e.g. seating and greenery.

There is an issue with cars parking on footpaths particularly on Clonroad and around Churches and on match days. This impedes pedestrians with buggies and wheelchair users.

While there is not an issue in the centre of town because bollards are in place to prevent illegal parking, delivery vans parking beside crossings are an issue.

Sandwich boards outside shops and street lamps in the middle of footpaths were found on O'Connell Street, Abbey Street and the market area. Sandwich boards are particularly difficult to negotiate for wheelchair users and the visually impaired. In places there is room for improvement by moving existing street furniture and banning sandwich boards, wheelie bins etc.

In the interim period, outside furniture, street signs and promotional items placed on pavements need to be kept neat and tidy and close to either side of the pavement so as to ensure that wheelchair users and people with pushchairs have the space they need to pass through and that in general pedestrian traffic is not obstructed.

Street furniture randomly placed on footpaths disrupts movement and can be a challenge for people going about their daily business. There is an opportunity to reduce street furniture by combining signage with lamp-posts which would give a less cluttered look to streets.

4.5 Additional Comments

Car parks could be redesigned to make the best/more efficient use of space and give more access to pedestrians. This would make entrances into the town centre more obvious and inviting. Also more could be done to encourage cycling

around the town and help to reduce car traffic. Car parks would benefit from stoppers as a large amount of pavement is lost due to inconsiderate parking.

There were very little ramps for wheelchairs to access footpaths e.g. no access to Bank of Ireland.

The newer paths are excellent. In most cases the older footpaths are the problem i.e. too narrow, cracked pavements. Paving slabs need replacing or resurfacing along the entire route of Francis Street. Flooding is also a big issue on Francis Street.

ESB poles were also found to be obstructing footpaths in certain areas.

Some shops have un-maintained access and entrances to some shops are in need of repair.

While footpaths were good in places there were a lot of sunken drains causing issues of unevenness and trip hazards.

The footpath condition on Abbey Street is generally good but improvements are needed i.e. more maintenance required, correct dishing at crossing points, surfacing needs to be less slippy, gradients cross/longitudinal to be altered, existing cracks, dips, defective manhole covers to be fixed.

5. Safety and Comfort

5.1 Daytime Safety

There were a number of areas identified by the river's edge that were not very well lit.

Derelict buildings and poor maintenance create areas that people look to avoid. There was barbed wire around the Cornmarket area that looked unsightly.

The group felt safe and comfortable on their routes as it was daytime and there were lots of people around. The market area, Summerhill and Francis Street were all identified as areas where people felt safe.

5.2 Street Lighting

Group members said some areas have poor lighting at night. The Cornmarket doesn't appear to have any except for the alleyway between AIB and the river.

While the main Abbey Street route to the car park was well lit, Bow Lane's was highlighted as needing some lighting. Overall the group felt that all alleyways should be lit up.

All members of the group felt that new LED lighting would be preferable as it is brighter and would thereby increase the feeling of safety along all routes.

5.3 Vandalism

The group found a small amount of graffiti on some walls at the start of the river walk and in the Cornmarket area.

5.4 Car Speeds

During the study the group found that cars were speeding around Parnell Street car park and also at the junction from Abbey Street to O'Connell Street.

The group suggested rumble/textured areas to slow down cars approaching car parks around the town.

5.5 Cyclists

While the group felt that the footpaths were too narrow for cyclists to cycle on overall they felt that cyclists should not be on the footpaths at all.

There is currently a lack of provision for cyclists to cycle on the road along the routes examined. Other areas of the town have benefited from cycle lanes e.g. Roslevan.

5.6 Other Comments

A number of members of the group said they would not feel safe walking alone in the dark in the area between AIB and the river unless more street lighting was provided. This also applies along Friars Walk leading to the Temple Gate Hotel.

In Parnell Street car park and around the Cornmarket area there were very few people walking. The group felt that the lack of planting, seating and nice areas to shop and enjoy the river makes it feel "unfriendly".

Members of the group said they feel safer when the road and kerb are at the same level. The railing as you go up the steps to Ulster Bank and Fennell's Pharmacy was highlighted as a good safety feature.

The wheelchair users in the study group highlighted the fact that potentially they can block up the whole street causing pedestrians to move around them onto the road. Overall the study group said they would feel safer if O'Connell Street was pedestrianised.

6. Suggested Improvements

These suggested improvements come from the comments by the participants of the study themselves.

6.1 Route 1 - Abbey Street/Abbey Street Car Park and Friary Car Park

- Street names should be lowered, they are currently too high
- Signage to indicate direction to the Post Office, toilets, car parks etc.
- Change lighting to LED for improved safety during winter months
- The route would benefit from continuous footpaths or ramped crossings
- Increase Age Friendly seating availability and green planting areas
- Wheelchair parking bays, accessible surfaces, crossings, electrical charge points
- Creation of a mobility centre to charge wheelchair and mobility scooters, hire mobility aids i.e. for visitors or people recovering from hip/knee surgeries. Could also act as a drop in centre for all
- Slower speed - reduce speed limits
- Widen the footpaths - remove parking spaces along the streets
- Level the crossing points - roads and footpaths level surface
- Evening out of footpaths for ease of access especially for wheelchair users and people with reduced mobility
- Dropped kerbs opposite each other, adjustment of existing crossing points
- Provision of more clearly identified and controlled crossing points
- Levelling of footpaths
- More bike storage areas - covered and secured to encourage more cyclists
- More public toilets in the town
- Removal of car parking on O'Connell Street and Abbey Street allowing for drive-through rather than pedestrianisation
- O'Connell Square should be landscaped, there is an ideal area for seating and raised flower beds
- Top of Abbey Street and Friary Car Park have great potential for public spaces with native planting, age friendly seating, designated parking for disabled/age friendly spaces – it would be an enjoyable place to sit and interact for all ages
- Information sign should be placed at O'Connell's Monument for tourists and locals

- Current Pedestrian crossing outside Ulster Bank should be clearly indicated
- Footpath outside "Euroshop" in O'Connell Square is too steep and should be levelled out
- Edge of footpaths should be outlined to indicate the edge for visually impaired or elderly
- Stop sign needed at Francis Street outside Queen's Hotel

6.2 Route 2 - O'Connell Street to Friar's Walk

- Signals on pedestrian crossings should be altered to allow more time to cross the road
- Fix paving stones especially manhole covers for utility companies e.g. Eircom
- Areas with loose slabs should be replaced with tactile paving
- Clearer marking of pedestrian crossings
- Handrail needed on slope in Temple Gate car park
- Remove cobblestones from O'Connell Street and replace with tactile paving
- Remove obstacles from the narrow areas on O'Connell Street
- Improve the slippy areas of the paths
- Additional crossing point needed in Friar's Walk
- Pedestrianisation of O'Connell Street
- Widening of pavements - dispensing of car parking in O'Connell Street
- Removal of some street furniture
- Reallocate the space on O'Connell Street fairly between pedestrian and car e.g. More pedestrian space
- Pedestrian crossing needed for access from Glór across to Dunnes
- Hanging basket poles should be moved out nearer to the road on O'Connell Street. They are currently causing obstruction
- Drainpipes on O'Connell Street don't feed into drains therefore drainage of water should be looked at
- The area is the busiest in the town (O'Connell Street). I think it should be pedestrianised. It was noticeable over Christmas that a lot of people with mobilised wheelchairs came to town and used the street instead of the footpath.
- Charging stations for wheelchairs/mobility scooters (like for electric cars) this would encourage people with mobility issues to come into town
- Pedestrian crossing points should be marked on the road so they are clearly visible to both drivers and pedestrians

6.3 Route 3 - Station Road to Bóthar na Trócaire

- More dished curbing and pedestrian crossing points for improved wheelchair access
- Bollards required to prevent cars from parking on footpaths
- Age Friendly seating around the Cathedral
- Improvements required in footpaths surfaces
- Change to LED lighting for winter safety
- The route would benefit from a number of Age Friendly seating places along the route – currently there are none.
- The Station Road roundabout was particularly difficult for members of the group crossing the road as well as the cars. There should be four Pedestrian crossings points when currently there is only one.
- The group expressed a need to have a shuttle service from bus/train station to the town centre and the Hospital. Currently patients have no way to get to the Hospital from the bus station other than by taxi or to walk.
- The group that walked this route had a wheelchair user with them which highlighted a number of issues mentioned. A lot of time was spent retracing the route than going forward due to cars parking along footpaths and no dishing of curbs to allow the wheelchair to cross the road. Currently the route from the train station to town is both inaccessible and dangerous since the wheelchair user inevitably spends a lot of time travelling on the road.

6.4 Route 4 - Francis Street to the Causeway Link

- Footpaths need to be upgraded to tactile paving all along Francis Street – there were lots of trip hazards found and flooding in a number of places on the day the study was done, indicating that drainage was an issue
- Manhole covers, particularly Eircom/Telecom ones need to be replaced
- Footpaths were too narrow at a number of points for wheelchairs users on the bottom of Francis Street near the Queens Hotel – this was due to bollards placed too far in from the road
- Drainpipes on Francis Street don't feed into drains therefore drainage of water should be looked at
- A new Pedestrian crossing is required at the Tesco roundabout and at the junction of Francis Street and Causeway Link, to allow access for wheelchair users to cross the road
- Francis Street would benefit from the installation of Age Friendly seating and green planting areas.
- The area in front of the shopping centre needs significant upgrading.
- The Causeway link had concrete benches in the grass areas however these should be replaced by seating with back and arm rests to encourage people to use it.
- The Pedestrian crossing linking Tesco to Aldi was an excellent example
- Overall the group thought the Causeway Link area up to Templegate car park was a joy to walk through and could be replicated elsewhere

6.5 Route 5 - Bindon Street/Bank Place to Summerhill and Market Square

- Pedestrian crossings required near the Banks and Post Office
- Footpaths need to be upgraded to tactile paving all along the route
- The land beside the Post Office field could be converted to a wildlife park
- Need for availability of Age Friendly seating
- Improvements required to existing kerb dishing - most had large lips on them
- Lighting should be replaced with LED lighting
- Trees on Bank Place are currently a trip hazard – they are planted in squares cut into the concrete footpath that have a large lip
- Manhole covers, particularly Eircom need replacing
- Street litter of wheelie bins and sandwich boards obstructing footpaths along these routes should be removed
- Bank Place would benefit from Age Friendly Parking spaces to allow older people to park near to the services they like to use
- There is an excellent area developed around the Market building including Age Friendly seating and good accessibility i.e. raised road at same level as footpath

6.6 Route 6 - Parnell Street Car Park and Cornmarket

- Provision of ramps from footpaths required for disabled access
- Improvement of footpaths to tactile paving
- Improvement of wheelchair parking spaces and inclusion of Age Friendly parking spaces
- This route would benefit from some Age Friendly seating and green planting areas (maximising the potential of the river) e.g. the central area could be redesigned as a public social space with seating and lighting
- Widen the footpaths
- Increase crossing times at traffic lights
- Dished kerbing required at all crossing points
- Use of continuous paths (raised crossings) to encourage easier walking of the area and give priority to pedestrians
- More expanded pedestrian areas
- Improved signage to the town centre e.g. visitors to the town are not aware that Bow's Lane leads into the Market
- Pedestrian crossings required at the various junctions with ramps etc.
- There were a number of examples of car bumpers overhanging footpaths and thereby narrowing footpaths. The installation of a low wall or small bollards would address this
- More dog fouling bins are required
- Slow down the speed of cars near the river by having pedestrian friendly crossings which are raised up to the road
- In Cornmarket the group suggested repositioning car parking spaces (approx. 25 spaces) along outer footpaths with permits
- There were too many poles and sign posts on the route. A lot of these could be disposed of and their signs all put on one or two poles

7. Next Steps and Further Suggestions

This report will be used by the Ennis Town Engineers to determine which areas should be developed as a matter of priority. It will also be used as an input into the design of the future urban regeneration of the town.

The Clare Age Friendly Strategy 2018-2022 has a high level initiative for the development of Ennis as an Age Friendly town and as such, has a working group in place to implement the actions contained within it. This working group is being led by Ennis Municipal District with membership shown below.

Age Friendly Town Working Group Membership:

- Members of the Older Persons Council
- Ennis Municipal District Staff
- Ennis Municipal District Engineers
- Active Ennis
- Ennis Chamber of Commerce
- An Garda Síochána

Some further consultation could also take place which would greatly benefit the walkability study of Ennis in the future. Examples would be:

- Present the current walkability findings to the participants who took part in the walkability study with a view to getting agreement that the issues raised on the day of the study are relevant and accurate.
- A walkability study undertaken in the evening time or at a time when external lights are on would be very beneficial, especially in line with Ennis's Purple Flag achievement which would allow the town to monitor progress.
- A full modern engineering access survey should be undertaken as part of any future planned capital works in the town.
- Public Transport
  - A town bus service is needed
  - Improvements at the train station including a lift
- A further walkability study should be undertaken within a two-year period to assess progress.

A huge thank you to all the participants who volunteered for 3 days to walk the routes outlined and gave their time and input into this study of Ennis.

Appendix 1 Map of Walkability Routes