

Project No. 02.14/2020



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# Appendix 2.0 - Clonee Village Town Centre Health Check Report

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**DATE: 6<sup>th</sup> March 2020**

on behalf of: Keating Family

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## **1.0 Introduction**

Clonee village is located in Co. Meath along the Dublin Fingal border. The town is approximately 14km from Dublin City Centre. Clonee has a local population of 825 people and housing is provided in traditional housing estates with mainly semi-detached housing and apartment/duplex homes closer to the village centre. The Village is characterised as a commuter town as many residents travel to Dublin for employment or the surrounding centres of Dunboyne, Blanchardstown, Lucan. There are large employment centres surrounding Clonee such as Facebook, Kepak, Damastown and Bracetown which also provide strong local employment opportunities to residents.

This Town Centre Health Check has been undertaken by RW Nowlan & Associates to assess the current vitality, vibrancy and viability of Clonee village and to help inform a submission to the Draft Meath County Development Plan 2020-2026 on behalf of the Keating family.

## **2.0 Legislative Setting**

Within the Meath County Development Plan, Clonee is identified as a village in the settlement hierarchy. Village settlements focus on provision of services for the population but are not associated with significant expansion of the area. This is at odds with the Regional Planning Guidelines wherein both Dunboyne and Clonee are located within the Metropolitan Area of the Greater Dublin Area. The Guidelines recommend that a minimum of 11% of household growth be directed to the Metropolitan Area. Dunboyne as a Large Growth Town II directly served by new public transport infrastructure is to be the focus for the Metropolitan Area throughout the Meath County Development Plan with little in the way of zoning for residential areas in Clonee.

The Dunboyne, Clonee, Pace Local Area Plan 2009-2015 was prepared as part of the previous Meath County Development Plan. Within the previous Local Area Plan, an assessment of the retail provisions of each area was undertaken. Clonee is assessed as follows *“Clonee is weak in terms of its retail offer; however, for its size, and in comparison to Dunboyne, it has relatively good convenience provision with*

both Aldi and Lidl represented in the village. Clonee has minimal comparison floorspace which is typical for a settlement of its size in close proximity to other larger settlements in the Metropolitan Area. It is typified by small scale, ground floor commercial units within converted residential buildings; however, there are some more modern, purpose built commercial developments also. The vacancy level in Clonee is low with only one vacant unit noted during the assessment of the town carried out for the Meath Retail Strategy”.

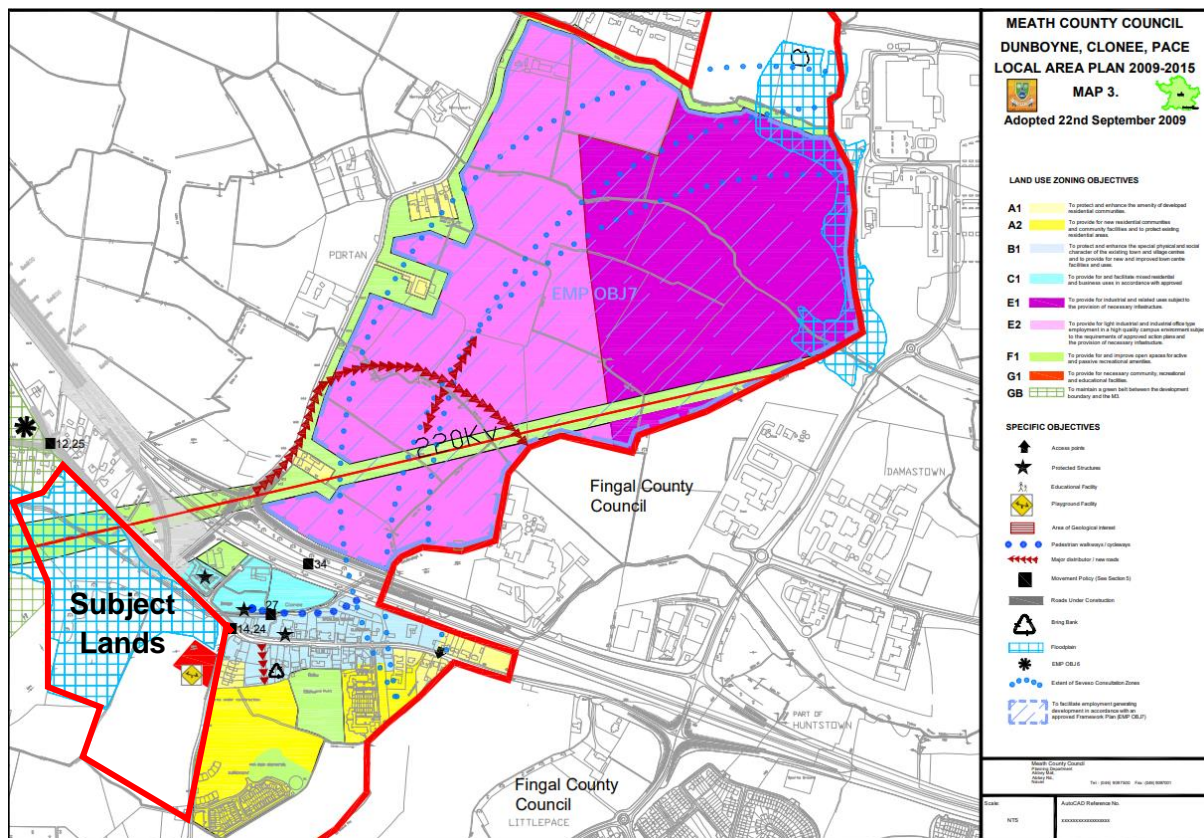


Figure 1: Local Area Plan Map of Clonee

It is also noted in the Local Area Plan that an “overarching objective of the LAP is [...] to ensure that existing centres are maintained and enhanced as part of the overall strategy for the provision of additional retail floorspace to meet the requirements of the larger population”.

In the county Retail Hierarchy Clonee has been designated as a Level 4 centre. “Level 4 centres should generally provide for one supermarket ranging in size with a limited range of local shops, supporting

*services such as a health centre, community facilities and recreation uses. This type of centre should meet the day to day needs of the local population and surrounding catchment."*

### **3.0 The Village at Present**

Clonee Village serves a population of approximately 825 local residents and is set to grow to 1,026 under the life of the new development plan. There are 52 business premises within the Clonee village. Current use ranging from salons, restaurant/takeaway, office use to supermarkets. The village currently acts as an undefined retail core, not having formed around a church, market etc. Service provision is not planned or unified leaving the village with a stretched, undefined, ad hoc development grain. Although the village is defined as a small village, Clonee has the potential to be a thriving small hub for local residents and residents from the surrounding hinterland.

The town core is characterised by a large Lidl supermarket on one end and a similarly sized Aldi supermarket at the other end, both with large surface car parks. The village stretches out between the two supermarkets in a mainly one and two story arrangement. The discount supermarkets are attractive to carborne shoppers but do little to encourage pedestrian activity in the village.

The two supermarkets also add a considerable amount of surface parking to the village core which is dominated by concrete surfaces. Each supermarket is providing approximately 100 car parking spaces. As such, it is clear the supermarkets are providing for a population much greater than Clonee alone and are drawing customers in from residential developments outside the immediate area. This is positive for the village as people are being drawn in but the limited range of other services in the village results in people driving to the supermarket and leaving the village immediately afterwards.

There is little in the way of public amenity in the village at present that would encourage visitors to stay and spend time socialising in their free time. There is a pitch and putt club in the village of Clonee and the Dunboyne Tennis Club is located just outside the village core. However, they are both under private ownership and as such do not provide much in the way of public amenity to the surrounding

residents. There is also an apparent lack of cafes or places to gather or meet friends in the village. There is one pub open in the village at present, as the other two that were previously in the town have now closed and are vacant, but the majority of other uses are office, salon, restaurant/take away uses which do not provide a space for people to meet, stop and socialise within the village and generally operate only during the evening time.

Clonee village acts as a busy through road for those travelling to Dunboyne, Blanchardstown, Lucan or joining the M3 motorway. Clonee Village has experienced a decline in recent times, many attribute this to the M3 motorway which now bypasses Clonee village. At present, 21% of premises throughout the village are vacant. The previous review of Clonee village undertaken as part of the Local Area Plan 2009-2015 noted that vacancy was low in the village with only one vacant retail unit.

The public realm in Clonee is seen to be of low quality. The village is dominated by road and pavement surfaces with little in the way of landscaping or public open space provided. The area outside the Lidl supermarket has been landscaped to provide a green buffer between the warehouse style building and the footpath. This is the most successful landscaping innovation seen throughout the village.

The village is well served by public transport with three bus routes stopping in the village connecting residents to Blanchardstown and Dublin City Centre. The Dunboyne train station is approximately 1.5 km from the village centre providing good connectivity to local residents. However, this connectivity can be improved via our clients proposed cycle and footpath route proposed in MOLA Urban Design Framework Study.

#### **4.0 Town Centre Land Use**

The overall pattern of land use in Clonee village is dominated by vacancy, salon/beauty use, takeaways and surface car parking. This review of the health of Clonee village notes that 21% of units are now vacant, showing a sharp decline in the village since the previous Local Area Plan assessment was undertaken. Appendix 3 shows a full breakdown of business in the village. Table 1 summarises the

categories of note. The village can be considered a deteriorating core with short-term, opportunistic retailing present throughout.

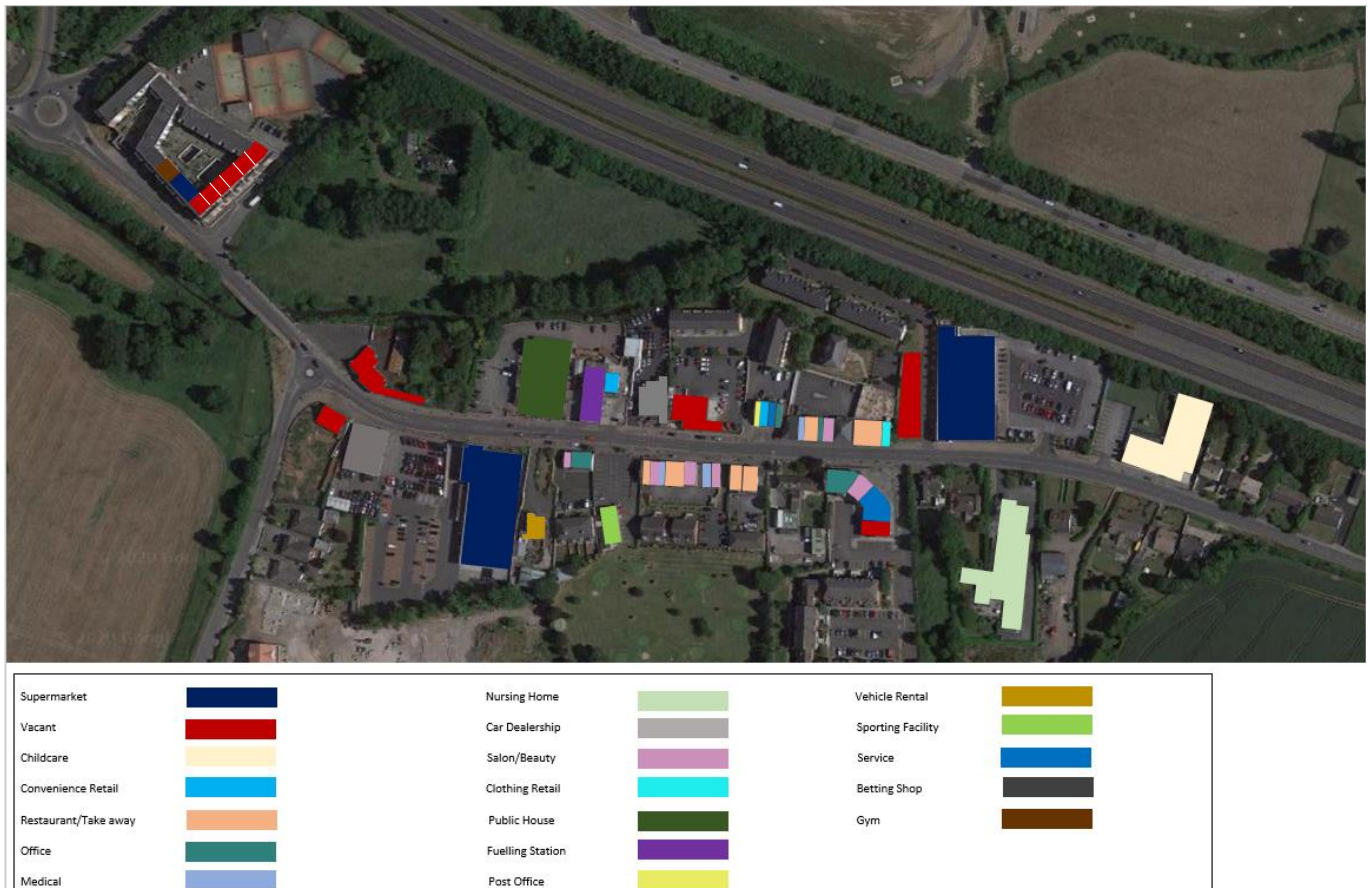
<b>Use</b>	<b>No. Businesses in Operation</b>
<b>Vacant</b>	<b>11</b>
Supermarket (discount)	3
Office	5
Retail (Convenience)	2
Retail (Clothing)	1
Service	3
<b>Salon/Beauty</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Restaurant/take away</b>	<b>6</b>
Car Dealerships	2
Medical	3
Petrol Station	1
Pub	1
Gym	1

**Table 1:** Clonee Village Land Use Summary

There are a disproportionate amount of salon/beauty businesses operating in Clonee village at present. Salon/Beauty represents the largest proportion of operating businesses throughout the village along with restaurant/take away use each with six enterprises. It is also noted that some of the now vacant units previously operated as salon/beauty businesses as well.

Restaurant/takeaway use within the village core forms a substantial amount of tenancy at present. This use accounts for 11% of the business offering in the village core, the same percentage as salon/beauty use. Restaurant/takeaway use is predominantly an evening/night time use which adds little to the vibrancy of the village core during the day. Having 11% of the village retail offering closed during the day results in a much higher perceived vacancy than is there in reality.

The current location of the fuelling station in the centre of the village is also problematic. Fuelling stations are generally most successful when located outside the village core as they can be disruptive to pedestrian and cycling routes through the village with a lot of vehicle movements throughout the day. The current location of the service station serves to further embed the impression that Clonee village at present is a place to drive through rather than spend time in.

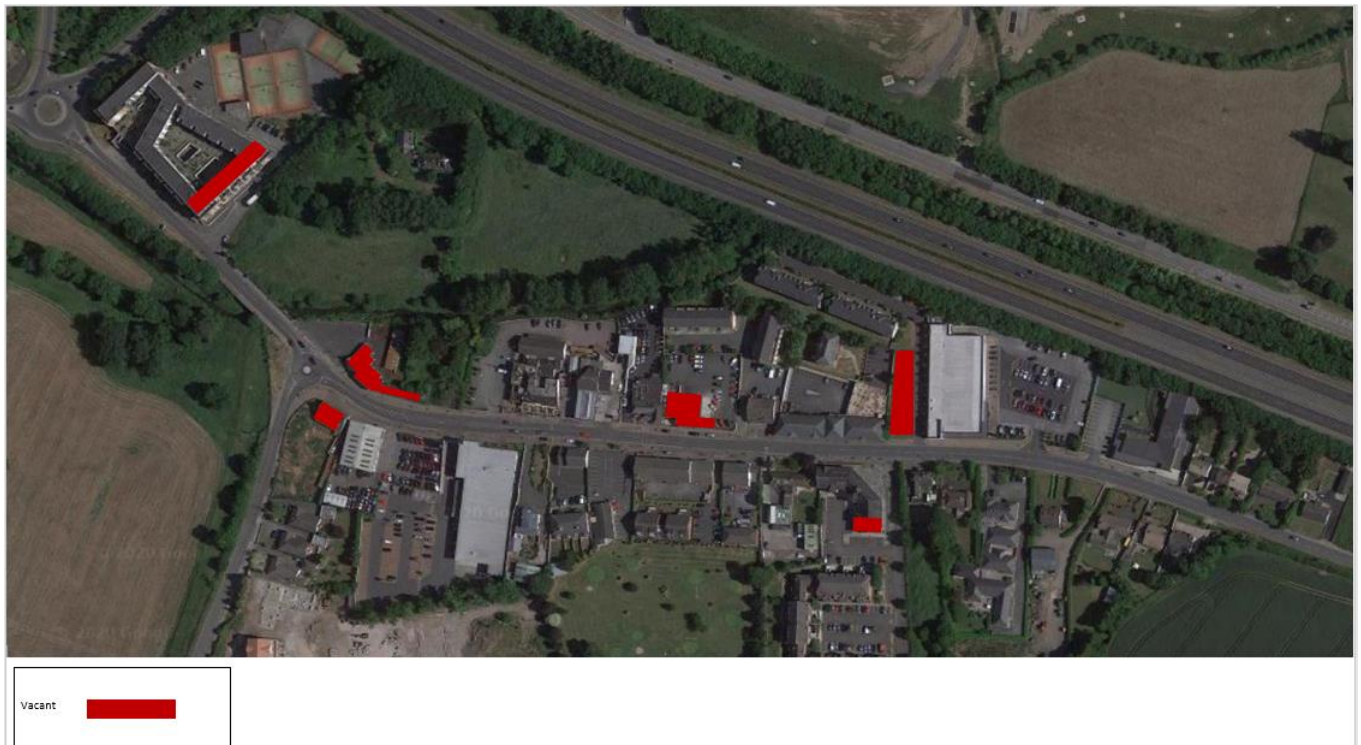


**Figure 2:** Clonee Land Use and Tenancy

There are currently eleven vacancies in Clonee village. The vacant plot identified in the centre of the village in figure 3 below is a vacant public house which currently has short term use as a second-hand car dealership. When this temporary use is considered, there are three car dealerships currently operating in the small village core. This use is not associated with a typical village make up, usually locating in large industrial estates or on the periphery of retail hotspots. The location of the

dealerships in the centre of Clonee village is seen as a result of the 'through-road' nature of the village at present with high traffic passing the businesses daily.

One plot in the east of the town is undeveloped but marked vacant as planning permission RA180228 relates. There is a grant of planning permission on this piece of land which has good potential to add much needed services to the village but works have not commenced on site to date.



**Figure 3:** Vacant Buildings in Clonee Village

While it is unclear why some business types such as salon/beauty and restaurant/takeaway are thriving in the town, it is clear that others are struggling. There is one public house open in the village at present, The Grasshopper Pub. Two of the vacant buildings were previously public houses and there are currently no café style businesses, something you would expect in a village of this size. There is also only one retail clothing business in operation which is a bridal shop. It is the provision of these businesses that encourage the local population to spend their free time in a village socialising. Without amenity space, cafes, and social space, residents have no choice but to look further afield for these services and spend their free time elsewhere.

## 5.0 Opportunities for Clonee

Clonee Village has significant potential to grow and improve to provide a quality space for people to live, work and socialise.

Public open space is shown to be poor in Clonee village. While there is land zoned close to the village as 'F1 – Open Space', the majority of this land is in private ownership and currently operates as agricultural land which does not provide public open space to residents. The landscaping outside Lidl supermarket is a positive contribution to softening the warehouse style building from view from the pavement/road. This could be replicated quite easily through the village with little cost involved. An increase in natural surfaces would greatly improve the feel of Clonee and improve the overall character of the village with minimal funding required.

There is also an opportunity in Clonee to increase the population in close proximity to the village which would enhance use and vibrancy and therefore influence a greater range of services to locate in the village. The village core is limited in terms of land available but there is greenfield land available nearby to the east and west.

Two vacant sites within the village have recent planning applications;

**Planning Reg. Ref RA190648** – Permission for the demolition of existing public house and outbuildings; construction of a part 4-storey, part 5-storey mixed use building to accommodate: at ground floor: 3 no. café/retail/non-retail services units and Public Plaza fronting Main Street; at first to fourth floors: 27 no. apartments comprising 6 no. 1-bed units, 17 no. 2-bed units and 2 no. 3-bed units with associated balconies in an L-shaped building with external landscaped terrace at first floor level; 2 bay lay-by parking spaces parallel to Main Street serving the retail units; 33 no. car parking spaces at surface level serving the apartment development; relocation of existing vehicular access from Main Street; All boundary treatments, retail signage, refuse store, bicycle parking and all associated site works and services.

This application was refused on the basis of the following; having regard to the location of the proposed development adjacent to the Tolka River and within Flood Zone B, it is considered that the proposed development would be contrary to policy WS POL 29 of the Meath County Development Plan 2013-2019, as varied, would be contrary to the DoEHLG Flood Guidelines 2009 entitled "The Planning System and Flood Risk Management" (A. The applicant has not satisfied Part 2 (ii) of the justification test as the application documentation does not consider access and egress for occupants of the proposed development in the case of a critical flood event. B The applicant has not satisfied Part 2 (iii) of said justification test as the application documentation does not consider access or egress of emergency services). Accordingly to grant the proposed development would contravene materially a policy of the County Development plan, would be prejudicial to public health, would pose an unacceptable risk to the owner/occupiers of the proposed development, would be contrary to ministerial guidelines issued to the planning authorities under Section 28 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 to 2019, and therefore be contrary to the proper planning and sustainable development in the area.

This site currently houses a vacant building which previously operated as a public house with surface car parking to the rear. The site is quite large and has the potential to provide valuable services to the local population if developed in a sensitive manner and adequately considered the flood risk associated with the site.

**Planning Reg. Ref. RA180228** – Permission for the development of a three storey pitched roof mixed use building to the front of the site, consisting of a ground floor retail unit (100sq.m) and two no. 2-bed duplex apartments on the upper floors. Proposed to the rear of the site was two no. semi-detached two-storey houses (2 bed) with rear gardens and 8 no. parking spaces within the development. Site boundary walls, bin stores and all associated site and landscape works included. Total development floor area of 454sq.m.

A grant of permission by Meath County Council was appealed to An Bord Pleanala in May 2019. The decision to grant permission was upheld by An Bord Pleanala. No works have commenced on the site to date.

To the western end of the village, there are two vacant buildings (although the building on the southern side of the road has a dereliction notice applied). These buildings essentially form the entrance to Clonee village and as such a first impression to visitors. At present the impression is poor but there is opportunity to form an attractive entrance at this location if the buildings were brought back in to use.

## **6.0 Conclusion**

There has been a sharp decline in tenancy of retail units in the village since the previous Local Area Plan (2009-2015) was drafted. At that time there was only one unit vacant in the village in contrast to 21% of units vacant at present. The combined figures for vacant units, salon/beauty use and restaurant/takeaway totals 43% of overall retail and service provision in Clonee. These findings would very much suggest that the existing retail/business core is very much struggling to find its place in the retail hierarchy of the County.

Clonee Village is categorised in the county Retail Hierarchy Clonee has been designated as a Level 4 centre. *“Level 4 centres should generally provide for one supermarket ranging in size with a limited range of local shops, supporting services such as a health centre, community facilities and recreation uses. This type of centre should meet the day to day needs of the local population and surrounding catchment.”* It is considered that Clonee is not performing in line with its Category 4 status in terms of providing supporting services, community and recreational uses, and local services. The Health Check review clearly shows that the village has lost an element of its vitality and vibrancy since the last development plan review.

Clonee has the potential to provide a high-quality offering to residents in the local area through improvement in the public realm and public amenity provision in and proximate to Clonee village. The proposed improvements shown in the MOLA Urban Design Framework Study will help attract new occupiers/businesses into the struggling village core that would have not previously have been attracted to this location.



















The retail offering at the moment in Clonee village is quite poor. 21% of units are vacant and the area is dominated by salon/beauty and restaurant/take away uses, which combined account for 22% of total retail provision in the village. As restaurant/takeaway uses are active predominantly in the evening, the vacancy during the day in Clonee feels much higher than it is in reality.

The village would benefit from an increase in footfall and the overall resident population to help support and drive new business in the village core. A key objective of the previous Local Area Plan was to ensure that existing retail centres were maintained and enhanced. This has not been successful to date in Clonee village and should be addressed in any future plans for the area.

Within the MOLA Urban Design Framework Study, a landmark building on the northern end of the village is proposed on Keating lands. This landmark building could provide valuable community facilities such as a creche, café, meeting rooms, sports facilities etc. that would go a great way to injecting some vibrancy back in to a currently struggling Clonee town and village.

## Appendix 1 – Clonee Village Land Use Distribution



Supermarket		Nursing Home		Vehicle Rental	
Vacant		Car Dealership		Sporting Facility	
Childcare		Salon/Beauty		Service	
Convenience Retail		Clothing Retail		Betting Shop	
Restaurant/Take away		Public House		Gym	
Office		Fueling Station			
Medical		Post Office			

## Appendix 2 – Clonee Vacancy Map

VACANT



### Appendix 3 – Town Centre Health Check

Unit No.	Business Name	Type	Vacant
1	McDonalds's	Pub	Yes
2	Grasshopper	Pub	No
3	Texaco	Petrol Station & Convenience Retail	No
4	Lambe/O'Connor	Car Dealership	No
5	The Village In	Former Pub – Yard to rear is currently used for car sales	Yes/No
6	Post Office	Retail	No
7	Day Today	Convenience Retail	No
8	Dry Cleaners	Retail	No
9	Construction Management Office	Office	No
10	Paddy Power	Betting Shop	No
11	Medical Centre	Medical Office	No
12	Flames	Restaurant	No
13	Solicitors	Office Use	No
14	Emagine	Salon	No
15	Public Car Park	Parking	N/A
16	Delhi Darbar	Restaurant	No
17	Bridal Shop	Fashion Retail	No
18	Site (Planning Ref: RA180228)	Three storey mixed use building to the front of the site, consisting of a ground floor retail unit (100sqm) and two no. 2-Bed duplex apartments on the upper floors. To the rear of the site will be two no. semi-detached two- storey houses (2 bed) with rear gardens, 8 parking spaces.	Yes
19	Aldi	Supermarket	No

<b>Unit No.</b>	<b>Business Name</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Vacancy</b>
20	Fonthill Lodge Creche	Childcare	No
21	Nursing Home	Nursing Home	No
22	Passion Hair Salon	Salon	No
23	Kids Cook	Cookery School	No
24	Flower Shop	Retail	No
25	Salon	Salon	Yes
26	Office Space	Office	No
27	Sherry Fitzgerald	Office	No
28	Accountancy Office	Office	No
29	Single Storey Residential Unit	Residential	No
30	The Oven	Fast Food	No
31	HKC	Fast Food	No
32	Clonee Barbers	Salon	No
33	Pharmacy	Retail	No
34	Public Car Park	Parking	No
35	Divine Styles	Salon	No
36	Macari's	Fast Food	No
37	Medical Services (Physio/acupuncture etc.)	Medical Office	No
38	Salon	Salon	No
39	Mussoorie	Restaurant	No
40	Pitch & Putt Club	Leisure Activity	No
41	Solicitors	Office	No
42	Salon	Salon	No
43	Caravan Rental	Vehicle Rental	No
44	Lidl	Supermarket	No
45	Windsor Clonee	Car Dealership	No
46	Derelict Building		Yes

<b>Unit No.</b>	<b>Business Name</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Vacancy</b>
47	ProPT Studios	Gym	No
48	Moldova Supermarket	Supermarket	No
49	Retail		Yes
50	Dry Cleaner	Service	Yes
51	Retail		Yes
52	Restaurant		Yes
53	Office		Yes
54	Office		Yes