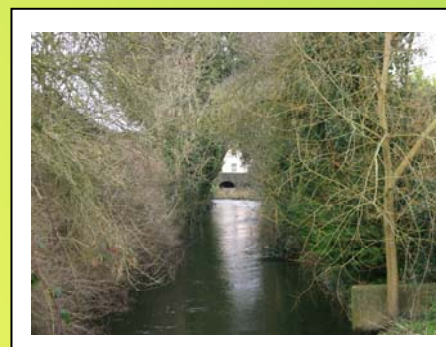


# Athboy

## LOCAL AREA PLAN

### 2009-2015

Adopted on Thursday, 20<sup>th</sup> August 2009



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## **PREAMBLE**

The Meath County Development Plan, 2007-2013 was adopted on 02<sup>nd</sup> March 2007. It identified Athboy, Duleek, Enfield, Laytown - Bettystown - Mornington East, Oldcastle, Ratoath and Stamullen as 'Small Growth Towns' and specified that the future development of Duleek, Ratoath, Athboy, Oldcastle and Enfield would be subject to the preparation and adoption of Local Area Plans. These plans should be adopted within two years of the adoption of the Meath County Development Plan 2007-2013. The existing County Development Plan, in conjunction with Variation No. 2 adopted in February, 2008, set the context for this Local Area Plan for Athboy.

This Local Area Plan builds upon the broad development objectives and planning policies outlined within the existing County Development Plan by providing a more detailed and comprehensive planning framework to guide future development proposals and the development of Athboy Town.

This Plan consists of this written statement and the attached maps, and shall be known as the Athboy Local Area Plan 2009-2015. Once adopted, the Plan shall remain in effect for a period of six years from the date of adoption or until it is the subject of an amendment, a review or a revocation by the Council. It will be subservient to the Meath County Development Plan, 2007-2013, which is the primary planning document in the County. In short, the current Meath County Development Plan takes precedence over the Athboy Local Area Plan in the event of any conflict arising between the contents of the two documents.

Within this document, references to 'the Plan' or 'this Plan' shall denote this Local Area Plan, save where the context requires otherwise. 'The Council' or 'the Planning Authority' shall signify Meath County Council. The main River that flows north-south through the centre of the Town is known by a number of names, such as the 'Yellow Ford River', the 'Athboy River' or the 'Tremblestown River'. For clarity, this Plan makes reference to the River as the 'Yellow Ford River' as it is known locally within the Town.

All mapping and diagrams throughout the document are orientated in the direction of true north. None are to scale but some do contain a scale bar for guidance purposes only. Where there is any apparent conflict between the text and accompanying illustrations, the text shall be the interpretive determinant.

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

This Local Area Plan relates to the Town of Athboy to the west of County Meath. It provides a statutory land-use framework for the physical, socio-economic, cultural and recreational development of Athboy. It promotes future development in a coordinated, planned and sustainable manner in order to conserve and enhance the established natural and historical amenities of the Town and its intrinsic character. This Plan guides and regulates future development through land-use zoning objectives, planning policies and development objectives. Particular regard is also had to any natural landscape features such as the Yellow Ford River, archaeological and historical features of interest, open space needs and the existing topographical character of the area.

### **1.1 The Challenge**

The key challenge to producing this Local Area Plan was the need to create a consensus between the Planning Authority, the general public, landowners, private developers and all interested stakeholders, as to how the future development of Athboy should be undertaken. This also needed to be undertaken in an economically, environmentally and socially sustainable manner. This Plan endeavours to create a built environment that is attractive and distinctive, and which creates a sense of place for those who both live and work within, as well as those who visit, the Town.

A further challenge was to provide a document that is sufficiently prescriptive to achieve the pre-determined development objectives and planning policies, while allowing for flexibility to account for economic and social changes that may occur over the Plan's timeframe.

The major issues addressed in this Plan are as follows:

1. **Developing New Residential Communities:** Development and growth of Athboy will take account of the Town's ability to grow in a sustainable manner without causing unacceptable impacts to the surrounding environment. Overall, the continued growth of well designed, sustainable new residential communities, which are in turn integrated with the Town's existing built environment, are key issues addressed in this Plan.
2. **Built and Natural Heritage:** Athboy has a unique collection of buildings and structures from different eras of Irish history. As the Town expands, the character that this built heritage provides will be retained.
3. **Built Form and Consolidation of the Town Centre:** The provision of a compact, vibrant and effective Town Centre is essential if Athboy is to cater for its current and future population needs in a sustainable manner. This Plan provides a comprehensive townscape plan addressing these issues.
4. **Community, Leisure and Recreation Facilities:** Community, leisure and recreational infrastructure play a vital role in the life of any town or town. Sufficient lands have been reserved for such infrastructure to accommodate both existing and proposed future populations.
5. **Communications and Infrastructure:** Communications and public utilities infrastructure play an indispensable role in everyday life through the provision of a better quality of life for the residents of an area. They also act as an important incentive in attracting economic development and investment to an area. This Plan endeavours to adequately serve the Town in terms of public utilities infrastructure, such as communications, electricity, water supply and wastewater treatment.

6. Transportation: This Plan intends that any new land-use zonings be closely linked to and integrated with the existing Town, thereby encouraging more sustainable modes of transportation.

7. Employment/Economic Development: Planning Authorities are limited in their actions in support of economic development, which will be determined in the first instance by market forces, and secondly by agencies with a remit for specific intervention in this area. Notwithstanding this, Planning Authorities can assist the development of all economic sectors by the implementation of policies relating to:

- The provision of an adequate and efficient transportation system,
- The zoning of sufficient and appropriately located lands for industrial and commercial development,
- The provision of sanitary services and other urban infrastructure,
- The zoning of adequate residentially zoned lands and the creation of an attractive urban domain to facilitate residency of the projected labour force, and
- Developing the public realm and amenities of Athboy so that the quality of life of employees and residents can be improved.

This Plan addresses each of these items.

## **1.2 Purpose of this Plan**

This Local Area Plan sets out an overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of the Town going forward and will provide for an area specific focus, whereby a detailed assessment of local planning issues can be made and pursued with the benefit of local community involvement. This presents opportunities to set specific goals and development objectives that will seek to guide future development within the Local Area Plan's development boundary. The primary focus of this Local Area Plan is to plan for, and secure, an appropriate level of facilities and services for the Town and the surrounding community.

This Local Area Plan includes policies and objectives, as set-out in the Planning and Development Acts, 2000-2006, in respect of the following:

- Location, supply and zoning of lands for an initial six-year period, but with an additional longer-term focus in mind,
- The provision and location of land for residential, commercial, retail, industrial, open space, education/recreation uses or other as considered appropriate,
- Design, density and layout of future residential development,
- Protection of existing residential amenity,
- Infrastructural including environmental, sanitary, water, roads including cycling and pedestrian provision, and
- Amenity strategy including protected structures, architectural conservation areas, open space provision, and the protection of trees, stone walls, hedgerows, etc, if required.

In addition, this Local Area Plan will provide urban development design guidance. The Plan will also identify potential opportunity sites and areas for future development. The preparation of this Draft Local Area Plan has reassessed the development boundary, the land-use zoning map, and

the planning policies and development objectives for Athboy contained within the Meath County Development Plan 2001-2007, which were later incorporated, unchanged, into the current Meath County Development Plan 2007-2013. In short, all land-use zoning objectives, planning policies and development objectives were reassessed on the basis of the provisions of the Meath County Development Plan 2007-2013.

### **1.3 Local Area Plan Content and Structure**

The Local Area Plan is prepared under a number of chapter headings, which are sequentially laid-out as follows:

Chapter 1: Sets out the Local Area Plan Process to date, the development boundary and briefly outlines the Plan in the context of the screening process for the Strategic Environmental Assessment of the Plan.

Chapter 2: Sets out the planning policy context, a review of previous policies and objectives and possible future population levels.

Chapter 3: States the vision for the Town, including the core development objectives and planning policies of this Local Area Plan.

Chapter 4: Sets out the Town's strategic context, historical development, function and role within the County, and the Town's general context.

Chapters 5-14: Outlines development objectives and planning policies in relation to numerous planning-related issues within the Town.

Chapter 15: Provides an urban design analysis of the Town, which identifies both weaknesses in the townscape and opportunities for environmental improvements.

Chapter 16: Land Use and Zoning Objectives.

Chapter 17: Phasing and Implementation.

### **1.4 The Local Area Plan Process to Date**

A Local Area Plan follows a specific statutory process, which may take up to nine or ten months before it is finally adopted by the Council. The Plan has been prepared following a four stage process, specifically;

1. A survey and analysis of the existing baseline economic, physical and social fabric of the Town and its surrounding hinterland,
2. A pre-draft public consultation process that facilitated the identification of local community aspirations, concerns and issues, from both business and community groups, as well as from individuals through a public consultation event and written submissions to the Council during the identified pre-draft public consultation time period,
3. An extensive period of consultation with local area Councillors, the internal departments of the Council, as well as local, regional and national level bodies, and
4. Consultation with various service providers such as the Gardaí, educational facilitators, public utilities providers, auctioneers and enterprise services were consulted, either through informal phone discussions or meetings during the preparation of this Plan.

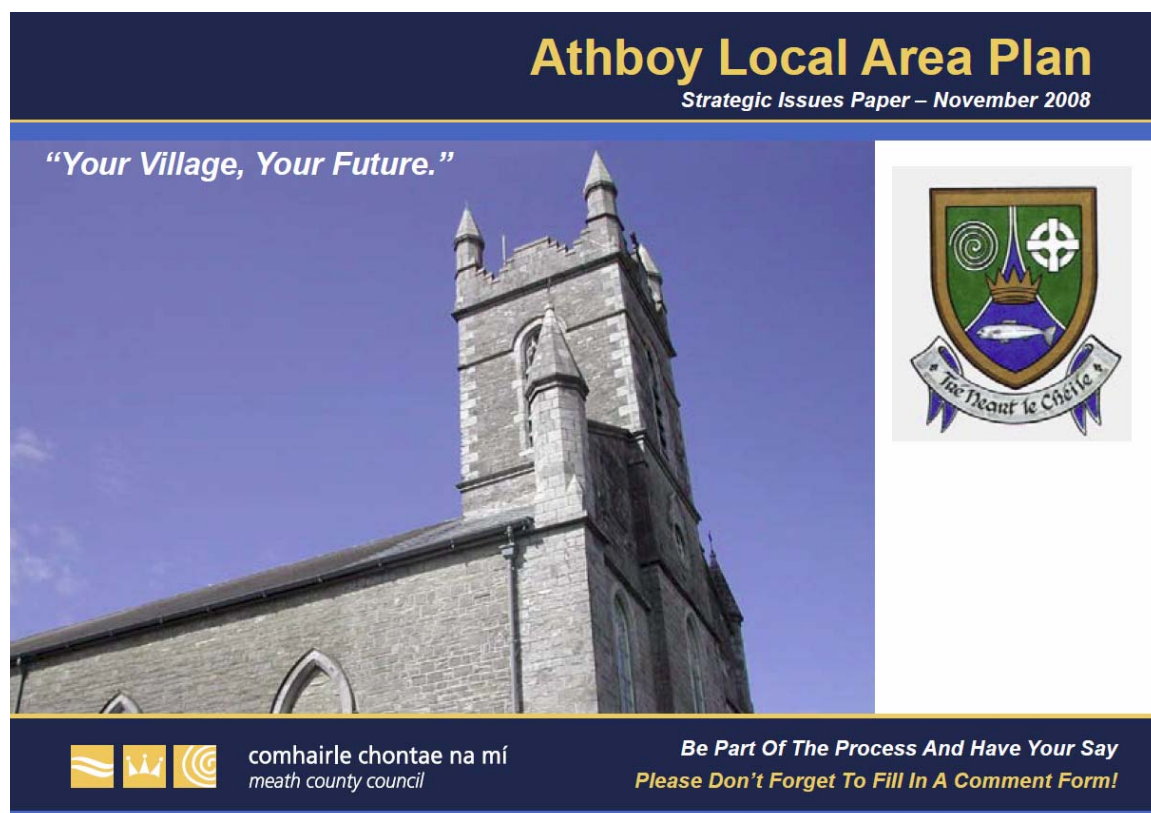


Figure One: Cover page of Strategic Issues Booklet compiled for the Pre-Draft Public Consultation held on Wednesday, 19th November 2008 in the 'Old Darnley Lodge Hotel'.

#### 1.4.1 Pre-Draft Public Consultation

Consultation is a key element of any plan-making process. It was used to identify the key issues to be addressed during the preparation of the Local Area Plan, and in order to develop an overall vision for the Town. In accordance with Section 20(1) of the Planning and Development Acts, 2000-2006, pre-draft public consultation took place and involved the publication of a 'Strategic Issues Paper', in conjunction with the hosting of a public consultation event in Athboy.

A notice was published in 'The Meath Chronicle'. It advertised the Council's intention to prepare a Draft Local Area Plan for Athboy and that a 'Strategic Issues Paper' would be available for public inspection through a series of media for a period of just over four weeks beginning on Monday, 17<sup>th</sup> November and ending on Tuesday, 16<sup>th</sup> December 2008. The notice invited written submissions from interested parties and members of the public on what matters should be addressed within the Local Area Plan. Thirty-Four submissions were received in response to the 'Strategic Issues Paper' and have been taken into account in the preparation of the Draft Local Area Plan, see Appendix A.

A process of identifying and notifying individual local businesses, as well as community and voluntary groups, of the Council's intentions was also undertaken.

To facilitate local interest in the Plan's preparation, a public consultation meeting was held in the Town on Wednesday, 19<sup>th</sup> November 2008 in the 'Old Darnley Lodge Hotel' to garner the views of local residents on how they would like to see their Town develop in the future. The attendance at this consultation meeting was very good with approximately 50-60 people present. The consultation was informal in nature and involved visual aids in the form of poster boards and hand-outs including comments cards and a 'Strategic Issues Booklet', which outlined a non-



exhaustive listing of pre-identified planning-related issues within the Town. From this a number of issues warranting further attention were identified, specifically:

- Archaeological Heritage – the need to protect the existing heritage of Athboy in any future developments.
- Landscape/Townscape Improvements – the excellent work of the local Tidy Towns Committee was commented upon in the general improvement in the Athboy townscape. Comments related to the renewal of such works and the promotion of better standards of landscaping and townscape improvements within the public realm.
- Traffic Congestion – A number of comments relating to the significant level of congestion experienced along Main Street, particularly during evening peak times were received. The general impact of increased congestion was identified as increased journey times, a negative impact on the Town Centre and also concerns for pedestrian safety.
- Waste Water Treatment – General comments were identified relating to the current level of waste water treatment capacity.
- Recent Residential Development – Some of those in attendance felt that the material finish of a number of newly developed residential areas were not to an appropriate standard and a number were left unfinished.



*Plate One: Information Panels used at Pre-Draft Public Consultation held on Wednesday, 19<sup>th</sup> November 2008 in the 'Old Darnley Lodge Hotel'.*

Numerous comment forms were received as a result of this public consultation and each was considered in the preparation of the Draft Athboy Local Area Plan. The comments raised during this pre-draft public consultation event, as well as the thirty-one submissions received from

individuals and interested parties during the pre-draft submission period have been taken into account and addressed within this Local Area Plan.

#### **1.4.2 Draft Public Consultation**

The Draft Local Area Plan for Athboy was placed on public display from Monday, 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2009 to Monday, 06<sup>th</sup> April 2009 in accordance with Section 20(c) of the Planning and Development Acts, 2000-2006. The aim of this consultation process was to enable the public and interested parties to give their observations on the Draft Local Area Plan.

A total of sixteen written submissions were received during this period. All of these submissions were considered in full in the review of the Draft Local Area Plan. A list of all of the people who made a submission during the draft public consultation phase is outlined within Appendix A.

#### **1.4.3 Material Amendment Public Consultation**

Material Amendments to the Draft Local Area Plan were proposed by Council Amendments on 25<sup>th</sup> May 2009. These Amendments were placed on public display for four weeks extending from 08<sup>th</sup> June to 06<sup>th</sup> July 2009.

A total of six written submissions were received during this period. All of these submissions were considered in full in the review of the Amendments to the Draft Local Area Plan. A list of all of the people who made a submission during the material amendments public consultation phase is also outlined within Appendix A.

### **1.5 Local Area Plan's Development Boundary**

The Council established a development boundary and a site zonings map for Athboy during the compilation of the Meath County Development Plan 2001-2007, which was incorporated, unchanged, into the current Meath County Development Plan 2007-2013. The development boundary for the Town has been amended following consideration of the following factors:

- The stated aims of this Plan,
- Strategic national, regional and county level policies,
- The existing urban structure of the Town,
- The likely future development needs and anticipated target population of the Town,
- The proper planning and sustainable development of the Town, and the surrounding area, and finally
- The presence of the Yellow Ford River, and its associated floodplain and the nature of the surrounding topography.

### **1.6 Likely Significant Effects on the Environment**

A Local Area Plan must contain information on the likely significant effects on the environment of implementing the Plan.

#### **1.6.1 Strategic Environmental Assessment**

The Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) process is the environmental assessment of plans, programmes or strategies. It is the formal systematic evaluation of the likely significant

environmental effects of implementing a plan or programme before a decision is made to adopt the plan or programme. It seeks to provide high level protection to the environment; integrate the environment and sustainable development into planning processes generally; promote sustainable development; and promote a more open, transparent and evidenced-based planning system. The process is regulated by the EU's SEA Directive (2001/42/EC) and SEA Regulations (S.I. 435 & 436 of 2004).

The carrying-out of a SEA is not mandatory under the provisions of the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations, 2004 for the Athboy Local Area Plan as it has a population of less than 10,000. An SEA Screening Exercise was carried-out to assess the likely impacts that the implementation of the proposed Plan and amendments would have in accordance with Section 14A of Planning & Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004 (S.I. 436 of 2004).<sup>1</sup> Given that a full SEA was also undertaken as part of the County Development Plan's preparation, this screening document concluded that an SEA was not required. The Screening Report is attached as Appendix B to this Plan.

Notwithstanding this, all future proposed development will have their environmental impacts individually assessed by the Council and may require an Environmental Impact Assessment of their environmental impacts to be undertaken and subsequently an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to be submitted with such a planning application.

#### 1.6.2 Appropriate Assessment

The purpose of Appropriate Assessment (AA) of local authority plans is to ensure that protection of the integrity of European 'Natura 2000' sites is included as an integral part of the planning process at a local level. An AA refers to an assessment, based on best scientific knowledge, of the potential impacts of a plan on the conservation objectives of any Natura 2000 site and the development where necessary of measures to preclude negative effects.

The impacts assessed must include the indirect and cumulative impacts of the plan, considered with any current or proposed activities, developments or policies impact on the site.

While there is no national legislation or guidelines with regard to 'appropriate assessment', it is the current recommendation of the Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government that any land use plan is screened for any potential impact on areas designated as Natura 2000 sites. In any case where, following screening, it is found that the Draft Plan may have an impact, a full 'Appropriate Assessment' must be carried out, as well as a full SEA.

The requirement for AA of plans or projects originates from Article 6 (3) and (4) of *European Union (EU) Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora*, commonly known as the 'Habitats Directive', which is implemented in Ireland through the European Communities (Natural Habitats) Regulations of 1997. The wording of Article 6 (3) of the directive is as follows:

*Any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site but likely to have a significant effect thereon, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, shall be subject to appropriate assessment of its implications for the site in view of the site's conservation objectives. In the light of the conclusions of the assessment of the implications for the site and subject to the provisions of paragraph 4, the competent national*

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<sup>1</sup> Screening is the technique applied to determine whether a particular Plan would be likely to have significant environmental effects, and would thus warrant a full SEA to be undertaken. The key indicator that will determine if a SEA is required of particular non-mandatory Plans, is if they are likely to have significant environmental effects on the environment or not.



*authorities shall agree to the plan or project only after having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site concerned and, if appropriate, after having obtained the opinion of the general public.*

The wording of Article 6 (4) of the directive is as follows:

*If, in spite of a negative assessment of the implications for the site and in the absence of alternative solutions, a plan or project must nevertheless be carried out for imperative reasons of overriding public interest, including those of a social or economic nature, the Member State shall take all compensatory measures necessary to ensure that the overall coherence of Natura 2000 is protected. It shall inform the Commission of the compensatory measures adopted.*

In February 2008, the statutory requirement for an Appropriate Assessment of all land use plans was further emphasised by a Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government Circular Letter (SEA 1/08 & NPWS 1/08). The Circular Letter entitled 'Appropriate Assessment of Land Use Plans' emphasises the fact that an Appropriate Assessment of the ecological implications of any plan or project is required, whether it is within or outside a designated site, if it may impact upon the conservation objectives of that site.

In May 2008, the Environmental Protection Agency circulated this letter as part of their guidance on the process to be employed in Strategic Environmental Assessment.

An AA Screening Exercise was carried-out to assess the likely impacts that the implementation of the proposed Plan and amendments on any Natura 2000 sites. The Screening Exercise found that there would be no indirect and cumulative impacts of the Plan on the integrity of any surrounding Natura 2000 sites. Therefore a full AA was not required. The Screening Report is attached as Appendix B to this Plan.

## 2.0 PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

A consistent theme in all planning related documents is that of 'sustainable development' defined by the Bruntland Commission in the 1980s as 'development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'. The Council supports this concept as advocated within planning policy nationally and it is a major component in the implementation of the Athboy Local Area Plan.

Planning at this local level must be informed by prevailing planning policies and national best practice standards as established in national guidelines, reports and other documents. Therefore, the future economic, physical and social development of Athboy must be considered in the context of, and be consistent with, the hierarchy of relevant National, Regional and Local level plans. The Meath County Development Plan 2007-2013 has had regard to all such national, regional and local planning policy documents.

### 2.1 Meath County Development Plan 2007-2013

The Meath County Development Plan 2007-2013 was adopted on 02<sup>nd</sup> March 2007 and aims to guide future development within the County over the period 2007 to 2013. Athboy has been identified as a 'Small Growth Town' within the County Settlement Strategy in the Meath County Development Plan 2007-2013. As a result, all future development within the Town is guided by the County Development Plan's 'High Level Development Objectives' for Small Growth Towns contained within Chapter 2.1.8, which envisages that:

*The urban centres in this tier act as sub regional centres providing primarily residential roles with a strong commercial and industrial presence. The development of each Small Growth Town is supported by the growth of an adjacent Moderate or Large Growth Town, in terms of large scale employment uses.*

*Relatively small and locally financed businesses are expected to locate in Small Growth Towns. However, other economic investment could be permitted. Retail is likely to be mainly in the convenience category, with a small supermarket and possibly local centres serving only the town and its local catchment area. Small Growth Towns would be likely to contain facilities such as a primary and / or secondary school, as well as a Health Clinic.*

*It is envisaged that major employment-generated investment companies will seek to locate in Large Growth or possibly Moderate Growth Towns, and not necessarily in these locations.*

In relation to Athboy, the County Development Plan specifically states:

*The development of residential land in Athboy has not occurred at the same pace as the other Small Growth Centres in the County due mainly to the relevant distance of the town to the Dublin Metropolitan Area and the quality of the road infrastructure which links the town to the main arteries to the Capital. There has been little take up of industrial land in Athboy and the development of the remaining significant residential land bank shall be linked to the significant development (75%) of this industrial land bank and the development of the significant Town Centre Backland sites identified in the Written Statement and Detailed Objectives for Athboy contained in Volume II of this County Development Plan. The development of the identified backlands is dependent on the objective seeking the construction of a new road linking Connaught Street to Main Street at McCann and Byrnes. The Local Authority shall also seek to progress the by-passing of Athboy on the N51 National Secondary Road.*

It is intended that the Athboy Local Area Plan will replace the written objectives and land-use zoning map adopted in March 2001 as part of the previous Meath County Development Plan

2001-2007 and re-adopted unchanged within the existing Meath County Development Plan 2007-2013.

### **2.1.1 Criteria Determining the Release of Residential Land**

Having regard to the provisions of the County Settlement Strategy, the County Development Plan provides that the release and development of residential lands shall be linked to the following criteria:

- The provision of necessary physical infrastructure, primarily the availability, in advance of development occurring, of capacity in water and wastewater infrastructure. The environment must be capable of absorbing the scale and quantum of development that is envisaged;
- Spare capacity in existing (and planned) social infrastructure, primarily national and second level educational facilities. The future planning of the Department of Education and Science of national and
- Second level educational facilities shall also be taken into account. The development of additional residential lands shall leverage the necessary recreational and amenity infrastructure commensurate with the needs of the resident population. The proposed scale and quantum of development must reinforce the integrity and vitality of the local community and services that can be provided;
- A more sustainable economic base whereby a greater percentage of local persons are employed locally. This will require closer liaison between the County Enterprise Board, County Development Board, Economic Development & Promotion Officer and the Planning Department;
- To facilitate the realisation of objectives contained in existing Local Area Plans or existing Written Statement and Detailed Objectives for Towns and Towns (Volume II of the Meath County Development Plan) in relation to the delivery of identified critical and necessary social and/or physical infrastructure in conjunction with residential development. Priority of phasing may be given to such residential lands accordingly;
- The extent of existing residentially zoned lands will be revised in the context of the individual Local Area Plan or Development Plan review for each centre and does not necessarily preclude identifying additional zoning in specific locations where the Planning Authority is satisfied that a clearly established need for such zoning is evident. Such additional zoning may only be considered where the development of such lands for residential purposes would deliver an identified piece of critical and necessary social and/or physical infrastructure in conjunction with such development and may require such lands to be prioritised for development over existing residentially zoned lands or that a corresponding amount of land has been de-zoned;
- The Local Authority social and affordable house building programme, and;
- The efficient use of land by consolidating existing settlements, focusing in particular on development capacity within central urban areas through the re-use of underutilised lands and buildings as a priority, rather than extending green field development. This should also ensure that development is concentrated at locations where it is possible to integrate employment, community services, retailing and public transport. The order of priority for the release of residentially zoned land shall attempt to ensure that there is a sequential approach which downgrades the priority of outer suburban greenfield sites.

In addition, the County Development Plan states that the extent of existing residentially zoned lands will be revised in the context of the individual Local Area Plan or Development Plan preparation for each centre and does not preclude additional zoning in specific locations where the Planning Authority is satisfied that a clearly established need for such zoning is evident. Such an established need can only be justified where the development of such lands for residential purposes would deliver an identified piece of critical and necessary social and/or physical infrastructure in conjunction with such development and may require such lands to be prioritised for development over existing residentially zoned lands or that a corresponding amount of land has been dezoned.

### **2.1.2 Meath County Development Plan 2007-2013 - Variation No. 2**

Section 19 of the Planning and Development Acts, 2000-2006, as amended by the Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2002, requires that a Local Area Plan must be consistent with the policies and objectives contained within the relevant County Development Plan; being the Meath County Development Plan 2007-2013. The Local Area Plan's stated policies and objectives must be explicitly linked to the quantum and scale of development envisaged for the settlement within the Meath County Development Plan 2007-2013. The County Development Plan is thus the 'parent' document, which sets out the strategic framework within which all zoning and other objectives of the Local Area Plan must be formulated. For example, the zoning of lands for use solely or primarily as residential development should have regard to the Council's housing and settlement strategies.

Variation 2 of the Meath County Development Plan 2007-2013, adopted on 04<sup>th</sup> February 2008, varied the County's Settlement Strategy. It identified an 'Order of Priority' for residential zoned lands within a number of settlements, including Athboy. The residential zoned lands are identified as Phase 1 and Phase 2 areas. Phase 1 relates to lands to be developed during the existing County Development Plan period, up to 2013; while Phase 2 relates to lands to be developed post 2013. Variation 2 allocates a total of 250 additional dwellings to Athboy over the period of the existing County Development Plan from 2007-2013 at a density of 25 dwellings per hectare.

This allocation does not include two specific site types within settlements, which are subject to the 'Order of Priority':

- The Council does not intend to stifle the delivery of the local authority housing programme. Therefore, units to be developed by the Council for social and affordable housing will not be taken from the numbers allocated for Athboy.
- The Planning Authority does not intend to stifle redevelopment of brown-field/infill/derelict sites and seeks to actively promote redevelopment of these lands. Therefore, units permitted on such sites will not be taken from the numbers allocated for Athboy.

As a result of Variation 2, the future development of Athboy must be undertaken within this framework and also by ensuring that 25-30% of new housing in multi-house developments is reserved for persons satisfying Policy HS POL 16 of the County Development Plan which states:

*Policy HS POL 16: The Rural Settlement Strategy states that in Small Growth Towns, Key Towns and Towns, between 25-30% of all new multi house developments, being developments in excess of four houses, shall be reserved for persons native to Co. Meath or those who by virtue of their employment require to live in the urban centre. The remainder of houses in such multiple house developments shall be provided for local growth only. The reservation of 25-30% of multiple housing units for local derived needs shall include the 20% reservation for social and affordable housing needs.*

### **2.1.2.1 Residential Implications of Variation No. 2**

As noted above, the future population growth of the Town will be provided for in accordance with the provisions of Variation No. 2 of the County's Settlement Strategy, which allocates 250 additional dwellings to the Town over the period 2007-2013; this figure does not include local authority housing programmes or residential developments on brown-field/infill/derelict sites within the Town.

At a density of 25 dwellings per hectare, these 250 dwellings equate to approximately 10 hectares of zoned residential land. It is standard practice to provide 50% more land than is needed to be zoned in order to allow for additional headroom. This will ensure that an adequate supply of residential lands will be provided, which will in turn allow for a choice of location and the potential non-release of lands over the Local Area Plan's timeframe. This would result in the need to zone enough residential lands within the Local Area Plan's development boundary to cater for 375 dwellings. At a density of 25 dwellings per hectare, this equates to 15 hectares of residential land.

This Local Area Plan must comply with the policies and objectives of the adopted Meath County Development Plan. As a result, a reassessment of each of the areas zoned for additional residential development contained within the land-use zonings map outlined in the Meath County Development Plan 2007-2013 has been undertaken. Variation No. 2 includes an 'Athboy Residential Phasing Sequence' map which identified 48.62 hectares of remaining largely undeveloped residential zoned land; 28.61 hectares of which was identified for development before 2013, while 20.01 hectares was identified for development after 2013.

The realisation of these 250 dwellings would result in an additional population increase of approximately 625-675 persons over the lifetime of the Local Area Plan. The Town's population recorded in the 2006 Census of Population was 3,236 persons. This would result in a possible future population of 3,861-3,911 persons in the Town by 2013.<sup>2</sup> This would equate to an indicative increase in population of approximately 2.15-2.32% per annum over the period 2006-2015.

## **2.2 Review of Previous Plans' Planning Policies and Development Objectives**

There has not been a previous Local Area or Development Plan prepared to specifically guide development proposals and population growth within Athboy. All previous planning applications were assessed against the relevant Meath County Development Plan. The most recent Plan was the Meath County Development Plan, 2001-2007, which contained written planning policies, development objectives and a land-use zoning map with a defined development boundary for the town. It was originally adopted as part of the Meath County Development Plan, 2001-2007 in March 2001 and was re-adopted unamended within the Meath County Development Plan, 2007-2013.

The preparation of this Draft Plan has included a review the planning policies and development objectives within the previous County Development Plan. This has identified areas that need attention, any possible weaknesses, the levels of implementation and the overall success of the previous and current Meath County Development Plan's policies and objectives for Athboy.

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<sup>2</sup> These figures are compiled using the predicted average household sizes for the period 2007-2013 outlined in Table 5 of the Meath County Development Plan 2007-2013. On 31<sup>st</sup> December 2009 the average household size is predicted to be 2.694 persons per dwelling, by 31<sup>st</sup> December 2013 this is predicted to fall to 2.5 persons per dwelling.

Significant progress has been achieved in respect of the ongoing implementation of the planning policies and development objectives contained in Section 2 of the previous Meath County Development Plan including the following:

- Specific Development Objective AB 1: 'Reserve and protect from development the by-pass route to the south of the town'.
- Specific Development Objective AB 2: 'reserve access points free of development to undeveloped zoned lands'.
- Specific Development Objective AB 3: 'To preserve existing public right of way and develop new pedestrian ways connecting development areas to the town'.
- Specific Development Objective AB 4: 'carrying out environmental improvements to main street including provision of defined parking bays and conserve buildings of merit and the established streetscape'.
- Specific Development Objective AB 5: the 'protection to the following structures and items'.
  - St. James' Roman Catholic Church,
  - St. James' Church of Ireland,
  - Old Market House (Bridal Boutique),
  - "Inn Moderation" (formerly the Central Bar),
  - Old Station buildings,
  - Danes Court,
  - Former School,
  - Bank of Ireland,
  - Ulster Bank,
  - Ivy House,
  - Mill House, and
  - Sexton's House (entrance to Library).
- Specific Development Objective AB 6: 'protection of the following trees or grouping of trees listed below because of their amenity value'.
  - Trees at Fairgreen,
  - Trees at St. James' Church of Ireland,
  - Trees on the banks of the Athboy River,
  - Trees in the environs of Danes Court,
  - Trees opposite and in the vicinity of Beechgrove, and
  - Trees in the vicinity of the GAA grounds.

- Specific Development Objective AB 7: 'preserve the archaeological interest of the area as indicated on Urban Detail Map 2 and protect the following monuments within this zone'.
  - Remains of the Town Wall, and
  - St. James' Church West Tower.
- Specific Development Objective AB 8: 'enhance the system of pedestrian network including laneway resurfacing between Athboy River, Main Street and Barnes Avenue incorporating bridge over river'.
- Specific Development Objective AB 10: which aimed 'to acquire residential lands and construct additional social housing in line with the availability of lands and finance'.
- Specific Development Objective AB 12: 'without prejudice to the existence of established commercial activities, to encourage the re-use of existing industrial and commercial lands bounding the Athboy River and Main Street for mixed use residential and commercial uses in association with the pursuit of objective AB11 and in line with an Action Area Proposal'.
- Specific Development Objective AB 13: 'encourage the development of backland and neglected areas to the rear of the Catholic Church in an ordered and comprehensive way providing for supervision of presently open and unsightly areas and the adoption of a uniform building line and elevational detail'. This policy is being implemented on an ongoing basis.

However, a number of the Policies and Objectives have not been fully or partially implemented, specifically:

- Specific Development Objective AB 9: 'integrate the civic amenity space at bridge west of Corn Mill into a town pathway system'.
- Specific Development Objective AB 11: 'promote the development of an access road from Connaught Street to McCann and Byrnes for access to backland areas and the provision of off street car parking'.

The identified objectives that have not been fully or have only been partially implemented are addressed within this Local Area Plan. It is noted that the Planning Authority is not responsible for the direct provision of all the previously adopted objectives. The complete fulfilment of some objectives mentioned-above are based on a number of external factors such as market conditions, the release of zoned lands by landowners, private investment levels and external bodies. Ultimately, the Athboy Local Area Plan 2009-2015 is intended to replace and restate these written planning policies, development objectives and zoning map contained re-adopted within the current Meath County Development Plan 2007-2013, as appropriate.



### 3.0 CORE STRATEGY

This Plan is the statutory Local Area Plan for Athboy made pursuant to the provisions of Sections 18, 19 and 20 of the Planning and Development Acts, 2000-2006. It is also in accordance with the *Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive (2001/42/EC)*, the objective of which is to 'provide for a high level of protection of the environment and to contribute to the integration of environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of plans'.

The purpose of this Local Area Plan is to provide for a comprehensive yet flexible planning and development framework to promote and guide the planned and sustainable growth of Athboy Town. The Core Strategy sets out the vision and overall planning policies and development objectives for the future development of Athboy.



Plate Two: Town Centre Area.

### 3.1 The Vision for the Town

The amenity, heritage qualities and character of Athboy are largely derived from development fronting onto the elongated Main Street of the Town. The Main Street is wide and framed by the frontages of mainly two-storey buildings with diverse building styles along its northern and southern sides, some dating from the eighteenth century. This creates an attractive built environment. It is an objective of the Council that this environment be conserved and enhanced through the sensitive treatment of any infill development, the conservation of important or key buildings on each side of Main Street and the encouragement of compatible developments and land uses within the Town.

At the same time, a clear division between the Town's built-up area and the surrounding countryside will be maintained through the strict control of urban generated ribbon development



on the approach roads. This Local Area Plan will also aim to improve local public utilities services and infrastructure by catering for future development within the Town Centre. This plan will also ensure the protection and enhancement of the natural and built heritage of the Town.

The overall focus and vision for Athboy is to consolidate and strengthen the Town, through the provision of a well-defined Town Centre area, as well as a range of land-uses to support the residential element of the Town and its role as a 'Service Centre' to the surrounding local area. This will also be complemented through the enhancement of the Town's street finishes, footpaths, green spaces and public domain generally, and the redevelopment of key Greenfield or neglected sites, as well as the re-use of any derelict buildings particularly those fronting on Main Street.

This Local Area Plan will endeavour to:

1. Provide for a high-quality landscape, active and passive open spaces and include provisions to improve the public domain generally. It endeavours to create an area of high visual and environmental amenity by respecting river corridors and flood plain channels, varying contour levels, surrounding views, open spaces and natural features.
2. Provide for appropriate community, childcare, educational and recreational facilities.
3. Create unique, clearly identifiable and memorable areas consistent with, and protective of, the Town's existing character. This will be complemented by the creation of purposeful connecting routes, providing the maximum choice for people to decide how to undertake their journeys.
4. Create appropriate land-use planning conditions that will contribute to the creation of employment opportunities locally. This will be in co-operation with both the state's and the County's enterprise development agencies.
5. Allow for an environment that is clearly understood and useable by the existing and proposed community, including employees, residents and visitors alike.

### **3.2 Core Policies**

#### **3.2.1 Sustainable Development**

The core strategy for the Athboy Local Area Plan is based upon the need to allow for the sustainable planning and development of the Town. This will create high-quality standards in the provision of community facilities, employment and enterprise opportunities, additional residential areas, an ability to cater for numerous transportation modes and the provision of adequate recreational amenities. This will only be achieved sustainably through the protection of the natural environment and biodiversity level already in existence in the Town.

#### **Core Policy 1: Sustainable Development**

1. To adhere to the principles of sustainable development through the promotion of future development or redevelopment that makes a positive contribution to the development of Athboy by recognising the importance of conserving and enhancing the quality of the Town's built and natural environment, while catering for the needs of all sections of the local community.
2. To contain new development within the development boundary of the Town thereby ensuring that the urban area can develop within a coherent built form thereby encouraging an efficient and balanced use of scarce land.

3. To sustain and enhance the role of Athboy as both a community and commercial service centre for the surrounding rural hinterland.

### 3.2.2 Future Development Proposals

This Local Area Plan includes guidelines on future development or redevelopment within the Town. They outline a broad approach to promoting development in a way that is consistent with the Plan's core development objectives and policies. In order to achieve these objectives, quality architectural design and site layouts are fundamental considerations to the overall development process.

#### Core Policy 2: Future Development Proposals

To only consider development proposals that satisfies generally the following criteria positively:

1. To provide high-quality development in accordance with the provisions of this Plan and the Development Control Guidelines contained within the Meath County Development Plan 2007-2013,
2. To protect and enhance, as appropriate, the Town's physical character and the built and natural environment, as considered appropriate,
3. To respect and protect neighbouring properties' residential amenities, and finally
4. To promote the future development of the Town as a compact settlement with a pedestrian friendly environment, a legible and coherent physical form, and a variety of land uses and amenities.

High quality design has a significant positive impact on the character and vitality of areas where it is achieved. This needs to be developed from understanding the local character of a place. This policy will ensure that the strategic objectives and key design principles are incorporated into the consideration of all planning applications. It is the policy of the Council to favourably consider forms of development only where it accords with the Land Use Zoning Map and associated urban design guidance. Any significant divergence from the guidance must adequately demonstrate how such divergences would be of greater benefit in achieving the strategic development objectives for Athboy, as set-out in this Plan.

### 3.2.3 Land-Uses

The purpose of land use zoning is to indicate to property owners, developers and the general public, the types of development that are considered most appropriate in each zone. These zoning objectives allow any would-be developers to plan proposals with a greater degree of certainty. In the control of development, zoning seeks to delimit competing and incompatible uses so as to promote greater environmental quality and thereby rationalise the land-use pattern of an urban area. This land use zoning policy is intended to be used as a general guide to assessing the acceptability or otherwise of development proposals. The various land-use designations used within this Plan have been taken from the Meath County Development Plan 2007-2013.

This Plan's Land-use Zoning Map encourages a variety of land-uses in a manner that promotes the concept of a balanced residential community with an appropriate level of amenities, facilities and services to cater for the Town's needs. At the same time it aims to ensure that the Town's character is protected and retained for future generations. The Plan also aims to allow the Town to continue to function as a compact physical place with good accessibility levels and high quality public open spaces. The development of residential land will be carefully monitored by the

Council to ensure that the overall requirements are being delivered during the lifetime of the Plan and the Plan will be modified if considered necessary.

### Core Policy 3: Land-Uses

To facilitate a variety of land uses within the Town's development boundary that can cater for the existing and future needs of the Town's population over the next six years and beyond. Proposed land-uses will have regard to the proper planning and sustainable development of the Town and respect the amenities of the neighbouring properties, and the character and visual appearance of the Town.

#### 3.2.4 Local Area Plan Implementation

One of the key issues arising from the pre-draft public consultation event and the Steering Committee Meetings with both the Executive and the Council's Members is the need for the Plan to be realistic, and ultimately to contain policies and objectives that are capable of being implemented within the lifetime of the Plan.

### Core Policy 4: Local Area Plan Implementation

To encourage and support initiatives and private and public investment, which helps to facilitate and promote coordination between the various stakeholders, identified within this Plan, who are needed to implement the development objectives and planning policies contained within it. Every practical effort will be made in partnership with other statutory and voluntary bodies, local businesses, developers and the local community to ensure the Plan is successfully implemented.

### 3.3 Core Objectives

The objectives for this Local Area Plan are derived from the Meath County Development Plan, 2007-2013, which emphasises that the development of settlements must be promoted in a strategically planned and sustainable manner.

This Local Area Plan builds upon the settlement strategy of the existing Meath County Development Plan 2007-2013 by supporting and promoting the sustainable development of Athboy as a self-supporting community, enjoying a good "quality of life" in terms of community, employment, housing, recreational and social amenities, as well as public utilities' and transportation infrastructure, while at the same time protecting the surrounding natural environment. The Council recognises that the Town must offer living and working conditions, as well as the community, educational and recreational opportunities of the highest quality in an attractive urban environment in order to achieve its stated objective of promoting a strategically planned and sustainable approach to future development.

In order to achieve these aims, the following Strategic Development Objectives have been established to underpin this Local Area Plan. They are based upon the requirements of the Town as identified by the local community during the pre-draft public consultation meeting held on Wednesday, 19<sup>th</sup> November 2008, and build-upon the strengths of Athboy, as recognised through the urban design assessment included in Section 18.0.

SDO 1	To promote a positive image of the Town through the support of the local community sector and through the encouragement of the development of community, cultural and social facilities, at an appropriate scale, at locations that are accessible to all members of the community.
SDO 2	To accommodate population and services growth in accordance with the levels

	provided for by Table 6 of the Meath County Development Plan 2007-2013 through the implementation of the policies contained within Variation No. 2 of that Plan and to cater primarily for the needs of the local population. This Plan will aim to provide a guide to any future development catering for the expansion of the Town in an ordered and sustainable fashion.
<b>SDO 3</b>	To develop a strong local economy by continuing to encourage the role of Athboy as a 'Service Centre' for the surrounding rural hinterland and encourage small businesses to set-up within the Town by facilitating the expansion of existing employment uses.
<b>SDO 4</b>	To Identify areas that are at risk of flooding with a view to ensuring that any development on such areas complies with the Consultation Draft Guidelines for Planning Authorities 'The Planning System & Flood Risk Management published by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, September, 2008, or their predecessor.
<b>SDO 5</b>	To upgrade existing public utilities' infrastructure in the Town and co-ordinate the delivery of new developments with the provision of new infrastructure. This will be mainly achieved by ensuring that additional local services and facilities in terms of community, educational, recreational and retail provision are provided in tandem with new residential development.
<b>SDO 6</b>	To retain and protect the vibrancy and primacy of the Town Centre area by controlling the location of appropriate Town Centre uses within the identified Town centre area and through the introduction of environmental improvements.
<b>SDO 7</b>	To continue to protect the existing residential amenity and unique character of the Town, through the provision of appropriate residential/infill development, which have regard to the scale, character, topography and amenities of the Town. This will also involve the consolidation of the existing retail land uses and existing commercial character of the Town.
<b>SDO 8</b>	To reserve land for the provision of active and passive open spaces to facilitate the development of playgrounds within existing and proposed residential developments in conjunction with Objective SOC OBJ 11 which aims to develop and implement a Play Strategy for County Meath in conjunction with the County Development Board and other agencies.
<b>SDO 9</b>	To create an appropriate transportation network for cyclists, pedestrians, public transportation users and motorists alike, at appropriate locations within the Town.

*Table One: Local Area Plan Core Objectives.*

### **3.4 Development Boundary**

In determining the appropriate development boundary for the Town regard has been had for the existing pattern of development within the Athboy, the previous adopted zonings and the phasing of residential lands contained within the current Meath County Development Plan 2007-2013, environmental protection, current and future infrastructural considerations, economic consideration, visual and urban design identity, community requirements and the future predicted population of the Town.

A number of additional issues have also been taken into consideration when shaping the desired future settlement structure of the Town, including:

- The Town's historic role, character and level of services available,
- The level of proposed protected structures and protected structures within the Town, the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government's zone of archaeological interest within the Town, and the Department's Inventory of Architectural Heritage compiled in 2004 for the Town,
- Protection of the unique urban character of the Town,
- Size and overall catchment population,
- Location within the County, as well as its proximity and interaction with other settlements and communities within the surrounding area,
- Potential for future possible population growth, as well as the economic and social benefits associated with this,
- Unique features, setting within the landscape and the sensitivity of the surrounding natural environment, and
- Possible constraints to future development.

The future development of Athboy will consolidate those lands within the Town Centre, specifically those backlands to the north and south of Main Street and then extend development in a sequential manner.

## 4.0 TOWN CONTEXT

### 4.1 The Town's Strategic Context

Athboy is located to the west of the County in close proximity to the border with County Westmeath. It is located within the 'Kells Development Area', along with other urban settlements such as Kells and Oldcastle. From a strategic national context, the Town is located approximately 56km northwest of Dublin City Centre within the Greater Dublin Area, between the N3 and the N4 National Primary Routes, and the soon to be completed M3 National Motorway accessed from link roads in Navan or Kells, radiating from Dublin City.



Figure Two: Town Location Map.

From a strategic regional context, the Town is situated approximately 17km from Navan, 12km from Kells and 11km from Trim. It is located at the convergence of a number of National, Regional and Third-Class Roads, specifically the N51 National Secondary Road, connecting Drogheda, County Louth to Devlin, County Westmeath, the R154 Regional Road connecting Clonree to Crossdoney, County Cavan, the R162 Regional Road to the north of the Town connecting it with Kells, and a number of Third Class Roads connecting the Town to surrounding Towns such as Ballivor, Clonmellon, Delvin, Dunderry, Kildalkey, Oldcastle and Rathcairn. These routes provide the Town with efficient connections to the surrounding Towns of Kells, Navan and Trim.

### 4.2 The Town's Historical Development

The Town has a noted historical record which can be traced to the first recordings of Irish history from the Sixth Century A.D. It appears likely that it developed around a crossing or bridging point



over the Yellow Ford River. This suggests that the settlement would have been included within an established road network within the wider region with both people and goods converging at this crossing point. This early settlement may also have benefited economically from its proximity to the Hill of Ward (Tlachta) to the east of the Town, the location for the pagan feast of 'Samhain'.



*Plate Three: The concentric circles of the former fortified settlement on the Hill of Ward.*

The settlement of Athboy came under the control of the Anglo-Norman's following their arrival in County Wexford in 1169. By 1180, Athboy was fully within the control of Hugh de Lacy who was given consent from King Henry II of England to settle the Liberty of Meath. Along with Navan, Ratoath and Trim, Athboy functioned as a centre town in the County containing a corporation and court. It was considered an important military meeting point due to its topographical nature, at the crossing of the River, and an acknowledged boundary with rival groups. As a result, the Anglo-Normans solidified their control through the fortification of the Town with a Town Wall and Castle, enclosing a square extending from the River to the Roman Catholic Church, and from Scarlet Park to the backs of the houses on the northwest side of Main Street.

The Carmelite Order of monks arrived in Athboy in c.1260. In 1317, they established a charterhouse and friary on land they were given outside the walls in nearby Danes Court. The Carmelites were also responsible for establishing a hospital and an almshouse in the Town and later built a church on the site of the present St James' Church of Ireland site constructed in 1772. The tower from the previous Carmelite Church was incorporated into the building and is clearly visible. A significant stretch of the Town's medieval walls can be seen in the grounds of the Church. During the Dissolution of the Monasteries between 1536 and 1541 by Henry VIII of England, the Jurors' account noted the presence of a small friary with stone tower and a mansion house.

Two sets of Royal Charters were granted to Athboy, the first in 1408 and the second in 1612. The Charters moulded the Town into a strong urban centre with a flourishing market economy. This was made possible by the extensive level of agricultural activity within its hinterland and also connections with the wine industry in Galway. By 1500, the Town was considered to be the most westerly stronghold of the Pale.

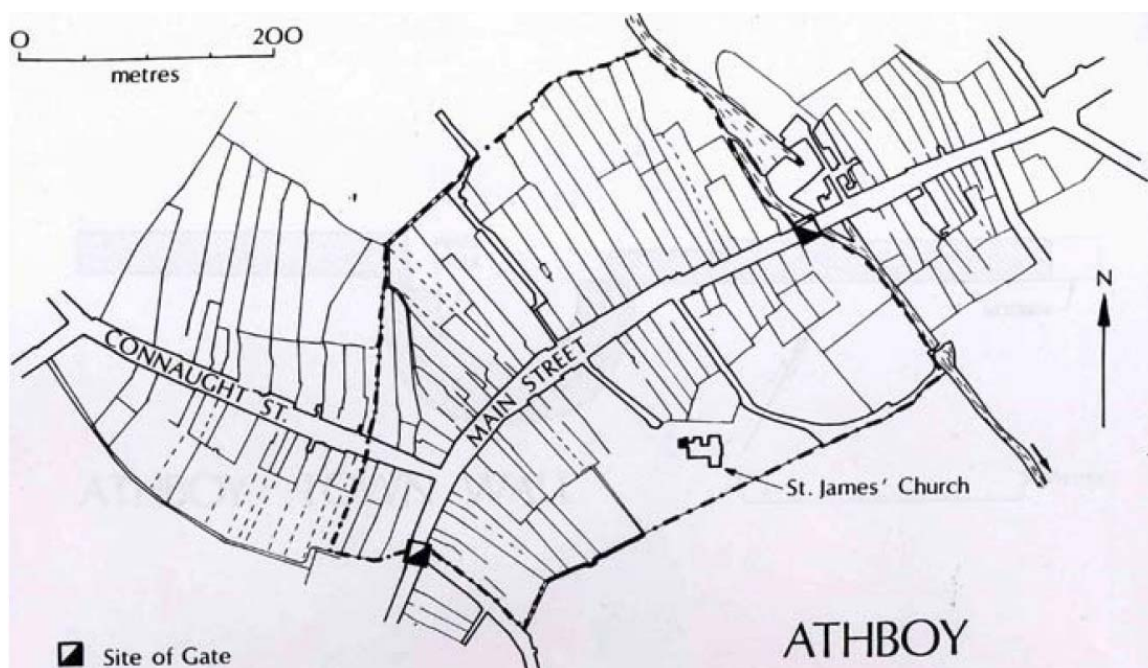


Figure Three: Athboy Outline Map Showing Major Archaeological Features. (Source: Figure 3, Urban Archaeology Survey, Part II, Co. Meath, Office of Public Works).



Plates Four and Five: St James' Church of Ireland with the original Carmelite Tower now incorporated into the building.

Documentary evidence from the Seventeenth Century records thirteen castles in the Town along with a church, abbey and bridge. Connaught Street and Lower Mount Street were also now located within the confines of the Town. During the 1641 Rebellion, Athboy was captured by Eoghan Rua O'Neill. Numerous raids on the Town during the 1640s meant that the Town Wall suffered extensive damage and only a small section currently survives close to the existing St James' Church of Ireland. Following Cromwell's arrival and the collapse of the Rebellion, the ownership of the vast majority of the land passed to adventurers from England. However, twenty-seven years later Queen Mary and William of Orange of England ordered that the Town be given to the London Explorer Thomas Bligh.

In 1725 the head of the Bligh family was raised to peerage, taking the title of the Earl of Darnley. A Darnley manuscript map in the second half of the Seventeenth Century indicated that the Town



had taken a simple linear development pattern. Main Street was lined with low-storey houses and commercial buildings which were punctuated by Connaught Street and Barrack Lane.

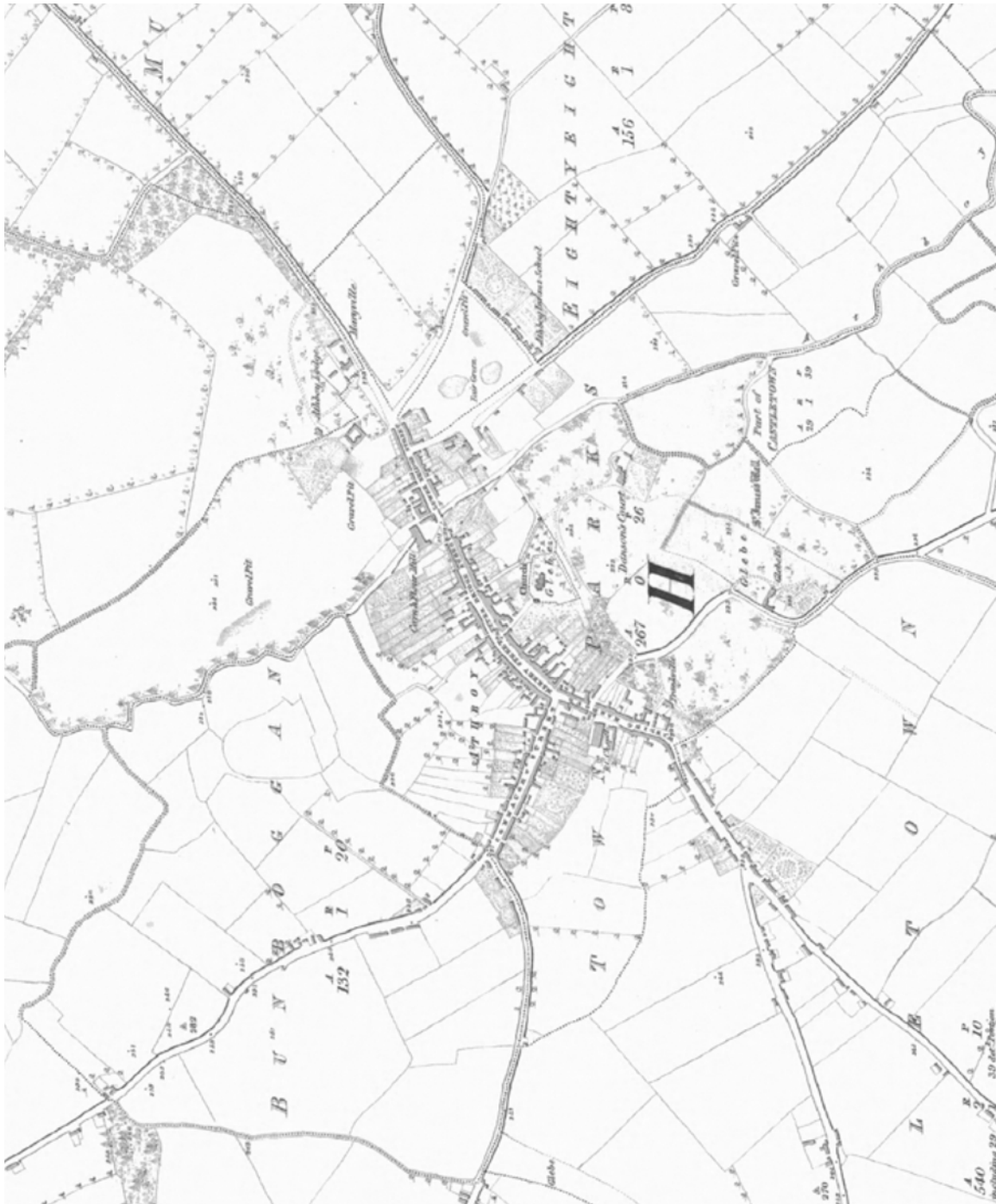


Figure Four: Historical Town Map 1842.

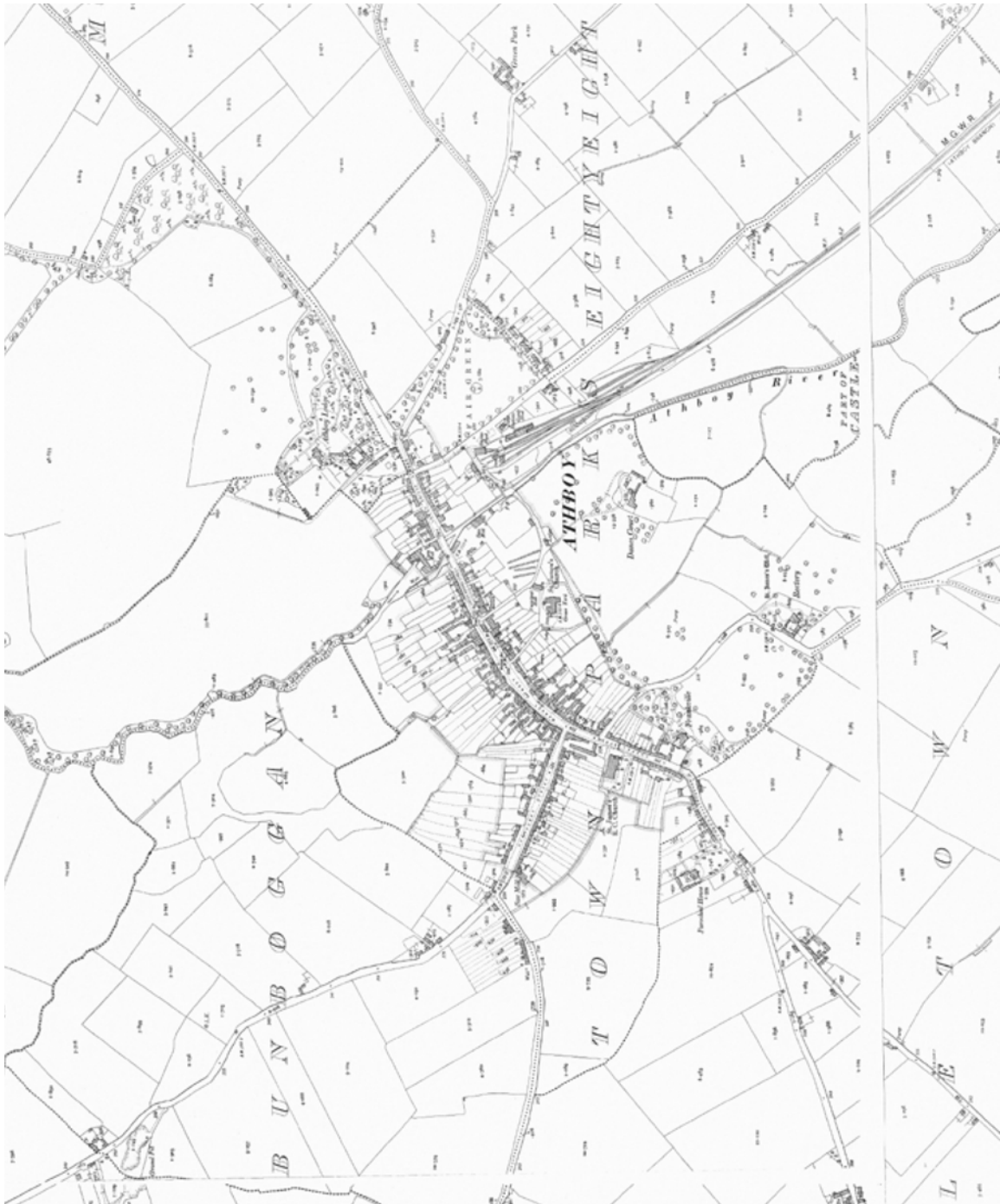
In the late Eighteenth and early Nineteenth Centuries, the Darnley Family planned and carried-out the further development of the Town, giving it the form which prevails today. During the Eighteenth Century the Main Street was widened to provide for a Market Place. This market took place every Thursday and was located close to Market House, a modest three-bay, two storey house (currently McElhinney's Bridal Shop). To the south of Lower Bridge Street, a Fair Green was located where markets took place four times a year. This Fair Green evolved over the following two centuries to become the Town's main public open space area, it was subsequently walled and donated to the people of Athboy by the Earl of Darnley in 1909. As stated, the

Eighteenth Century also saw the construction of St. James' Church of Ireland. It replaced the older Carmelite structure which had fallen into disrepair to the rear of the Town's current Library (formerly the Sexton's House).



*Plate Six: The Town's Fair Green.*

During the Nineteenth Century a mission to improve the physical façade of the Town was undertaken. This involved the building of many new structures and a drive to update and modernise many of the Eighteenth Century buildings within the Town. This period saw the construction of many mixed-use terraced buildings, the Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC) Barracks and a new school established by the Darnleys in 1885. The Earl of Darnley was also responsible for the construction of a set of almshouses along Market Street (now Main Street), these were three bay, two storey houses, contemporary to other almshouses built throughout the Country during this period. In 1970, they were demolished and were replaced by commercial premises. St James' Roman Catholic Church was also constructed on O'Growney Street during this time. This was a very significant development in the Town as its location to the southwest further enhanced building construction in this area. The impressively designed square tower still dominates Athboy's landscape today. The Midland and Great Western Railway line was opened in 1846. The Town's Station was located opposite the Fair Green and comprised of a small single-storey station with a station master's house attached.



*Figure Five: Historical Town Map 1913.*

During the course of the late Nineteenth and early Twentieth Century's a significant erosion of the power and economic bases of the landed gentry occurred, a significant element of which were the effects of the numerous Land Acts passed over this period. The Wyndham Land Act of 1903 resulted in a significant erosion of the power of the Darnleys in Athboy and subsequently in 1909 Francis Walter, the Earl of Darnley auctioned the Town into 110 lots in 1909. This turned out to be a difficult period for the Town as the old corporation of Athboy has been responsible for law and order, and public utilities and services in general, which soon became obsolete following this auction. These issues were not adequately addresses until the later foundation of a Local Council. The Darnley estate office, now the Old Darnley Lodge, was finally closed in 1948.



Further Twentieth Century development within the Town included extensions to the rear of those buildings fronting on to Main Street and modern infill housing, particularly to the long plots of land to the north of the Town.



*Plate Seven: The former Primary School constructed by the Earl of Darnley in 1885, currently 'Athboy Furniture Shop'.*

The first decade of the Twentieth Century saw further renovations to the Town's building stock. The thatched structures that lined O'Growney Street and Connaught Street were replaced by a line of modern terraced houses and notably the construction of a modern new National School, the design of which is highly representative of this architectural period. The Ulster Bank was built in 1925 along Main Street. The Courthouse was also remodelled in 1910, it was used as an RIC ancillary quarters comprising of a small barracks and a jail. In later years, this was taken over by Macra na Feirme and the Bank of Ireland, respectively.



*Plate Eight and Nine: The former Athboy Train Station with engine warehouse and water tower to the centre right.*

### **4.3 The Town's Function and Role within the County**

The function, role and overall size of the Town has largely been determined by its proximity to the surrounding urban areas of Trim, Navan and Kells, and to an extent its wider location within the Greater Dublin Area. The Town enjoys a strategic location within a substantial and productive agricultural hinterland to the West of the County and extending into eastern areas of County Westmeath. Its main function and role is to serve as a service centre for this significant agricultural sector and to cater for the weekly shopping needs of this population. As a result, the Town's retailing provision mainly comprises of convenience retailers, although it does contain a significant level of high-quality comparison goods, such as boutiques and clothes shops, such as 'McElhinney's'. However the relative proximity to Dublin and the surrounding towns within the County has allowed for a commuting pattern to emerge with an obvious leakage of associated expenditure to areas outside of the Town.

Athboy has an existing level of enterprise and employment generating uses, specifically related to agriculture and the building industry within the Town Centre core, such as 'MacCann & Byrne's'. The recently opened Business Park along the Trim Road to the south of the Town has not attracted a significant number of businesses as of yet, however this may be improved over the lifetime of this Plan. The relocation of the *MacCann & Byrne* Building Construction suppliers to a more appropriate location in order to allow for the release of a significant brownfield site within the Town Centre is an objective of this Plan.

Given Athboy's important built heritage and the longevity of settlement at this location, there is potential for the Town to cater for a greater share of the tourism market within the County. Athboy could function in conjunction with other associated heritage towns and villages, and develop as a distinctive service centre within the network of heritage towns and tourism centres in the County. Given Athboy's size, and the range of amenities and accommodation currently on offer, the Town is well placed to promote this alternative income source.

### **4.4 The Town's Topography**

The western section of the County contains unique topographical characteristics: largely a product of the last glacial period. As a result, the surrounding landscape is relatively flat with some areas of gently undulating hummocks of glacial drift deposited under the melting ice as moraines, drumlins and eskers. The wider area contains isolated hills which rarely rise 150m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD).

The topography of the Athboy region is typical of the midlands of Ireland in this regard. The general elevation fall in the area runs from a northwest to southeast direction and is reflected in the overall drainage pattern as associated with the Yellow Ford River which drains from a northwest to southeast direction.

#### **4.5 The Town Context**

The Town has historically developed in a linear fashion along Main Street, as illustrated in Chapter 15, Figure 9. The Town has experienced a significant level of Greenfield development particularly along its main approach roads, specifically the Connaught, Delvin, Dunderry, Kells/Navan and Trim roads with significant residential developments characterising the majority of this development.

A certain amount of brownfield and backland re-development has also occurred in recent years, specifically along Connaught Street and the former Railway Station area. However, the backland areas of Main Street have not experienced any significant coherent redevelopment and largely retain their Nineteenth Century footprints.

There have been a number of refurbishments of existing premises along Main Street, Connaught Street and Lower and Upper Bridge Street. However there has been only a limited level of uptake on the current Enterprise and Employment zoned lands located along the Trim Road.

As a result, the Town possesses a relatively compact and legible Town Centre area arranged along an elongated Main Street encompassing many of the Town's key buildings. These consist mainly of commercial, institutional, office, residential and public buildings. In contrast, a much more loosely knit pattern of development consisting mainly of individual houses and small to medium-sized residential developments front onto the approach roads to the Town.

#### **4.6 Key Demographic and Socio-Economic Trends**

Small Area Population Statistics (SAPS) are available for the Electoral Division (formerly called a District Electoral Division) of Athboy, see Appendix C. Athboy is wholly located within the Athboy Electoral Division.

##### **4.6.1 Employment Profile**

60.28% of the Town were in gainful employment at the time of the Census of Population in 2006, higher than the national average of 57.18%. Unemployment in the Athboy ED was estimated to be 4.79%, again lower than the national average at 5.32%. The level of 'students' within the profile, being 8.55%, is significantly less than the national average of 10.36%. The remaining profile of 'other' and 'retired' are similar to those of the State.

##### **4.6.2 Occupational Profile**

Although Athboy is located within a significant agricultural region within County Meath it has a lower percentage of agricultural workers than that of the State being 3.18% in comparison to 4.25% for the State as a whole. This is probably reflective of the fact that the SAPS only incorporates the immediate Town area and not the wider hinterland. The Town also has a significant manufacturing working population slightly in excess of the State's figure, as well as a significantly larger construction service working population, likely reflective of the Town's proximity to Dublin City. The professional, office and administrative positions within the Town are significantly less than that of the State as a whole and are likely reflective of the proximity of other urban areas within the County offering a greater level of government and civil service positions.

#### 4.6.3 Educational Profile

The education levels attained by residents of the Town are largely reflective of the State as a whole with only a slightly lower level of Primary, Upper Secondary and Third Level education, and a significantly higher quantity of Lower Secondary level students recorded.

Ultimately, these figures highlight that Athboy has a potentially substantial level of highly educated and skilled residents; however there may be scope for additional up-skilling of residents, particularly targeted at that category of the population with limited Upper Secondary education.

Statistics available from the Central Statistics Office demonstrate that although there is a well educated workforce resident in Athboy. The vast majority of residents are travelling significant distances to their place of work or education, as illustrated in Appendix C. This is not sustainable and the Planning Authority will endeavour through this Local Area Plan to facilitate the development of additional local enterprises to alleviate this situation. As significant numbers of people are travelling more than 15km to work, school and college, in conjunction with attracting employment-generating enterprises to the Town, it is important to improve public utilities infrastructure, access to other employment centres such as Kells, Navan, Oldcastle and Trim and to continually improve the appearance of the Town to make it an attractive place to invest in.

#### 4.6.4 Housing Structure

According to the SAPS from the Census of Population 2006 there were a total of 830 households in the Athboy ED housing a total population of 2,346 persons. This equates to an average household population size of 2.83, slightly less than the national average. This decline in the average household size is also set to continue in line with the European average of approximately 2.60 persons per household.



## **5.0 COMMERCIAL, ECONOMIC AND RETAIL USES**

The overall goals of the Plan are to encourage the creation of living and working environments of the highest quality through the setting out of objectives and standards for future development. These are in addition to the planning policies and development objectives contained within the existing Meath County Development Plan 2007-2013. It is the objective of the Council to implement all future development in accordance with these stated goals, objectives and policies in order to facilitate land-use in a manner that will promote the proper planning and sustainable development of Athboy.

### **5.1 Existing Commercial, Economic and Retail Uses**

Athboy is identified along with Bettystown, Duleek, Enfield, Oldcastle and Ratoath, as a 'Small Town Centres – Tier 1 Level 4 Centre' within the County Retail Hierarchy. The existing Meath County Development Plan 2007-2013 states that:

*'In terms of retail floorspace, all the Tier 1 centres listed above had greater amounts than the other Level 4 centres in the County and quantitatively they form the next level under the County's main centres in respect of quantum provision. Within the County's settlement hierarchy all the centres are identified where there will be significant increases in population relative to the baseline populations.'* (2007: 103).

Given Athboy's extensive hinterland and the population of the Town, it has a noted range of commercial and retail services. Commercial and retail development within the Town currently comprises of both convenience and comparison services. The range of services offered includes a significant number of boutiques and clothes shops, convenience retail shops, a hotel, a significant number of public houses, financial institutions, a post office, hardware shops, a Garda Station, and numerous retail service shops, such as butchers, chemists, florists, hairdressers, gift shops, restaurants, cafés, beauty salons, furniture stores, dry cleaners, solicitors, a veterinary surgery, and a number of garages and petrol filling stations. There are also a number of vacant retail shops within the Town's Centre along Main Street.

To cater and provide for the possible growing population base, as well as the Town's role as a significant service provider for the surrounding rural area, the Town will need to retain and expand upon its commercial and retailing functions over the course of the Local Area Plan period. Future commercial and retail development will need to respect the existing vernacular design traits evident within the Town in order to protect its character and that of the Architectural Conservation Area (ACA) that it is included within. The roof pitches; façade and fenestration details must respect this setting.

### **5.2 Future Commercial, Economic and Retail Development**

Athboy's retail and commercial areas are located along Main Street, Lower and Upper Bridge Street, O'Growney Street and Connaught Street. Any future commercial and retail development should be directed into the Town Centre thereby facilitating multi-purpose trips. This could include the change of use of some existing residential properties within the Town Centre, particularly those along Main Street, in order to retain the Centre as the core retailing area of the Town. This would aid in the consolidation and strengthening of the existing retailing base of Athboy. The following policies are complementary to the Council's policies regarding retail and commercial development within the existing Meath County Development Plan:



### **Objective CER 1: Commercial, Economic and Retail**

To address leakage of retail expenditure from the Town and its catchment by facilitating the strengthening of the range and quality of its retail offer to allow the Athboy to meet its local shopping needs.

### **Policy CER1: Commercial, Economic and Retail**

To maintain and improve the vitality and viability of Athboy's Town Centre area as the centre of all commercial and retail activity, in order to ensure both a mixture and variety of local shopping, to serve the shopping needs of the local community.

To encourage the retention of traditional shopfronts, which enhance the local character of the streetscape and provide the Town with an attractive appearance to attract further investment.

To encourage the use of materials and finishes for future commercial and retail developments that respect the established vernacular design traits of the surrounding properties; this includes roof pitches, facade and fenestration details and materials used.

#### **5.2.1 Shop-fronts**

Shop-fronts are one of the most important elements in determining the character, quality and image of retail streets in any town and village. In order to increase the attractiveness of the townscape, the Council will promote the protection of traditional and original shop-fronts, while also encouraging good contemporary shop-front design which is complementary to Athboy's existing character in any new developments. The Council will actively discourage poor shop-front design which detracts from the streetscape such as the use of roller shutters and their associated boxes being placed on the exterior of shop-fronts.

### **Policy SF 1: Shop-fronts**

To encourage good shop-front design, which reflects the scale and proportions of the existing streetscape. The Council will seek to retain the remaining traditional shop-fronts of townscape importance.

#### **5.2.2 Street Furniture**

Street furniture plays a vital role in helping to create an attractive, coherent and legible urban area. A street furniture palette, reflecting the nature of the Town's various character areas and spaces, should be developed and designed to accommodate a wide range of functions. It should not be dominated by any one function and would aim to provide an improved public realm setting.

### **Policy SF 2: Street Furniture**

To encourage the creation of a Street Furniture Palette to create an improved public realm setting within the Town.

#### **5.3 Existing Business and Enterprise Use**

There is a notable business and industrial base currently in existence within Athboy. There are lands still available within the Trim Road Business Park to accommodate employment generating uses; therefore the identification of further lands for employment use is not required at this time.



*Plate Ten: Part of the 'MacCann & Byrne's' Building Construction Suppliers. This landholding is located on both sides of Upper Bridge Street along the Yellow Ford River.*

#### 5.3.1 Future Business and Enterprise Development

Having regard to the nature, role and scale of the Town, the strategy for economic development in Athboy must focus on the achievable delivery of local services, and potential employment and enterprise generation. Two business and enterprise sites are located within the Town's development boundary and can facilitate for the creation and development of small-scale services and local enterprises. They also serve to allow for the relocation of existing non-conforming and incompatible businesses within the Town.

As stated, there is one business site within the Town's boundary which is considered to be a non-conforming use; namely the *MacCann & Byrne's*, building construction suppliers. The Council will favourably consider the appropriate redevelopment of this site for uses which are consistent with the planning policies and development objectives of this Plan. Planning permission has been granted for the relocation of the use to the 'E2' zoned lands located within the Trim Road Business Park.

#### Objective BE 1: Business and Enterprise

To cater for and allow the Town to expand upon its current employment base.

**Policy BE 1: Business and Enterprise**

To work with the County Development Board and other relevant agencies to promote Athboy as an attractive place for inward investment, thereby encouraging business, enterprise and industry to invest in the Town.

**Policy BE 2: Business and Enterprise**

To require and provide for the appropriate landscaping of all employment, enterprise or light industrial developments, so that they integrate sensitively within the natural environment of Athboy, especially adjacent to residential development and open space areas. A landscaped buffer zone, of a minimum of 5 metres, will be a requirement of any planning permission for any light Industrial/Warehousing development where it adjoins another zoning or where it could potentially injure the amenities of adjoining land uses.

**Policy BE 3: Business and Enterprise**

To prepare a Framework Plan for those backlands to the north of Main Street zoned 'B1' extending from MacCann & Byrne's light industrial premises and Connaught Street. Any redevelopment of these lands must include provision for a high quality usable public space area along the Yellow Ford River; have a maximum of 50% residential development and an access road connecting Main Street to Connaught Street. The visual impact of any development of this site to the Townparks area will be determined through the submission of a visual impact assessment with any future planning application(s).

## 6.0 RESIDENTIAL USES

### 6.1 Existing Residential Uses

Older terraced and semi-detached developments have been integrated somewhat within the Town Centre, specifically Connaught, Lower and Upper Bridge, and O'Growney Streets. A significant number of recent residential developments have been built in the past three decades, the earliest being 'Beechgrove' 'Castlelawns', and 'St James' Terrace' and 'Parkview' along the Delvin, Kildalkey and Kells/Navan roads, respectively.

More recent residential developments include 'Meadowlands' on the Kells/Navan Road, 'Railway Yard' on the Trim Road, 'Coille Dios' on the Townpark lands, 'Turry Meadows' on the Oldcastle Road, 'Cloran Court' on the Clonmellon Road, 'Connaught Place' on Connaught Street, and 'Priory Gate' and 'Frankville Court' on Delvin Road.



*Plate Eleven: The 'Frankville Court' residential development located along O'Growney Street.*

The site layouts of some older residential developments are not conducive to passive surveillance of internal pedestrian and cyclist movements or open spaces. Additionally, poorly paved pedestrian routes linked to the Town Centre, where pedestrians and cyclists share road space with motorised vehicles, as well as poorly laid-out and maintained public open spaces, have resulted in some poor quality residential environments through-out the Town.

### 6.2 Future Residential Uses

The Council has a statutory obligation to ensure that sufficient land is zoned for all types of housing to meet the projected housing requirements of Athboy over the Local Area Plan's lifetime. This will ensure that any undue shortage of such land will not arise.

The aim of this Local Area Plan is to ensure that there is adequate land available in appropriate locations for housing, complemented by clear policies regarding any future development proposals to construct additional houses. The availability of housing, catering for a range of household needs, is important for sustaining communities within smaller urban settlements and enhances the quality of life for their occupants. Ultimately, financial constraints will determine the rate of public sector house building, while, the demand and supply of new housing in the private sector is largely dictated by market forces.

Residential development will be accommodated within the areas zoned for residential use and within the areas zoned as 'Mixed Residential and Business' uses where residential would be 'open for consideration'. It is not envisaged that any residential development within the latter zone would be in excess of 50% of the overall development within this zone. It is also noted that Variation No. 2 of the existing Meath County Development Plan 2007-2013 explicitly states that any proposed redevelopment on such brownfield sites would not be taken from the number of houses allocated for Athboy. It is proposed that an average of 25 dwellings per hectare will be required within residential areas.

As noted above, to allow for the potential non-release of lands and choice of location, 50% more land has been zoned than considered necessary for residential development. Taking this into account, this land bank will deliver Variation No. 2 of the County Development Plan's 250 additional dwellings, which could realise a population increase of approximately 625-675 persons over the lifetime of the Local Area Plan, as outlined in Section 2.9.2.1.5 The realisation of these dwellings alone could result in a population within the Town of approximately 3,861-3,911 persons within the Local Area Plan's six year lifespan. This would equate to an increase in population of approximately 2.15-2.32% per annum over the period 2006-2015.

#### 6.2.1 Social and Affordable Housing

To achieve a fully integrated town or village, development is required to cater for people of different ages and income groups. The creation of separate enclaves of private, social and affordable housing should be strongly resisted. Settlements that provide a mix of residential types, both in terms of tenure and economic characteristics, produce enriched social settings. The most successful urban settings tend to be characterised by patterns of mixed tenure and mixed economy. Therefore, every development which must comply with Section 96 of the Planning and Development Acts, 2000-2006 shall be required to provide up to 20% of such developments for social and affordable housing purposes. The final ratio will be determined by the Council.

Athboy has not had any significant level of Local Authority social housing. The only exception is the residential development of 'Coille Dios' constructed in the Townparks area to the north of the Town comprising of approximately 57 no. dwellings. This is considered to be a comparatively low level of provision in relation to the overall number of households in the Town. Ultimately, future private residential developments should be encouraged to provide for a broad mixture of household types.

It is also noted that the Local Authority have purchased additional lands for residential development purposes to the north of the Town, consisting of approximately 18 hectares. Plans for the development of these lands are currently pending and it also noted that these lands are located within the associated floodplain of the Yellow Ford River.



**Objective H1: Future Residential Development**

- a) To ensure the implementation of the Housing Strategy and to integrate housing provided under Part V of the Planning and Development Acts 2000-2006 into private residential developments in a layout that prevents segregation and promotes good design and layout.
- b) To carry out the Council's responsibilities under the Housing Acts and to provide Local Authority dwellings, affordable units, voluntary co-operative housing and private sites as the need arises and as finances allow.
- c) To promote a high standard of architecture in the design of new housing developments and to encourage a variety of house types, sizes and tenure in individual schemes and variety, interest and social mix in private and social housing developments.
- d) To ensure the necessary infrastructural investment to facilitate the overall level of housing output required to meet the current and anticipated levels of demand in a planned and coherent fashion.

The preparation of Framework Plans will assist in achieving quality developments in terms of, inter alia, urban design, structure, delivery of community/amenity facilities and permeability. The Local Area Plan identifies large or key sites that will require the preparation of approved Framework Plans and subsequent planning applications will be required to adhere to the approved Plans. Having regard to the preparation and approval of future Framework Plans the Planning Authority considers that for proposals with a resultant population less than 2,000 persons, the approval of the Executive of the Planning Authority will be required. Framework Plans with a resultant population greater than 2,000 persons will be subject to a public consultation process and the approval of the Elected Members of the Planning Authority. The use of Framework Plans has not been confined to residentially zoned lands; Framework Plans have also been sought for lands intended for other uses. The Planning Authority considers Framework Plans as an effective means of guiding new development and providing essential social infrastructure in a phased and sustainable manner.

Each Framework Plan shall consist of a written statement and a plan or series of plans indicating the objectives in such detail, as may determined by the Planning Authority for the proper planning and sustainable development of the area to which it applies to include inter alia, the following details:

- Proposals in relation to the overall design of the proposed development including maximum heights, external finishes of structures and the general appearance and design, including that of the public realm;
- The types and extent of any proposed development indicating how these uses integrate with surrounding development and land uses;
- Proposals in relation to transportation including public transportation and non motorised modes, vehicular road layout and access arrangements, loading/unloading provision, the provision of parking spaces and traffic management;
- Proposals in relation to the provision of services in the area including the provision of waste and sewerage facilities and water, electricity and telecommunications services, broadband, oil and gas pipelines, including storage facilities for oil and gas;



- Any residential development shall include proposals relating to the provision of amenities, facilities and services for the community including crèches and other childcare services, community and resource centres;
- To make provision for sport and recreational infrastructure; and
- To make provision, where appropriate for educational facilities.

#### **Policy H1(a) Framework Plan Area**

To prepare a framework plan for lands adjoining the Navan Road, which shall include the existing GAA facility. This framework plan shall provide for a relocation of the GAA facility and shall also provide for residential development. The framework plan shall comply with the requirements as detailed above and shall contain a phasing arrangement which delivers the new GAA facility, inclusive of footpaths and public lighting from the town to the facility, in tandem with the first phase of residential development. The number of residential units to be released shall be the subject of the review of the order of priority.

#### **Policy H1(b) Framework Plan Area**

To prepare a framework plan for those lands zoned for 'F1' recreational facilities and 'A2' residential purposes to the rear of 'Butterfields Grove' along the Oldcastle Road to the north-west of the Town. This framework plan shall provide for a residential development in conjunction with community, leisure and recreational facilities. The framework plan shall comply with the requirements as detailed above and shall provide adequate parking facilities for the proposed community uses to be provided on the site, shall refer to the protection of residential amenity of existing residences, shall be accessed via the access arrow indicated on the Plan's associated Land-Use Zoning Map and shall contain a phasing arrangement which delivers the community, leisure and recreational facilities proposed for the site. The framework plan shall also include the provision of footpaths and public lighting from the Town Centre to the proposed community facility/ies in tandem with the first phase of any residential development on the site. The number of residential units to be released shall be the subject of the review of the Order of Priority.

#### **Policy H 2: New Residential Development**

- a) To zone lands to ensure that residential development in the area is suitably located, designed and serviced to enhance the local environment and prevent any inappropriate or avoidable impacts on the quality of that environment. In compliance with Policy HS POL 16 of the settlement strategy of the Meath County Development Plan 'between 25-30% of all new multi house developments, being developments in excess of four houses, shall be reserved for persons native to County Meath or those who by virtue of their employment require to live in the urban centre. The remainder of houses in such multiple house developments shall be provided for local growth only. The reservation of 25-30% of multiple housing units for local derived needs shall include the 20% reservation for social and affordable housing needs'.
- b) To ensure that Athboy avoids the monotony of urban sprawl, excessive and monotonous duplication of house styles within residential developments will be strongly resisted. The unique character, vernacular style and special setting of the Town mean that its capacity to absorb large-scale residential developments is limited. Future developments must have regard to the local setting and aim to create a sense of place and identity in any

proposed development.

- c) To encourage a strong mixture of house types, tenures and sizes. This will cater for changing household size and composition, and to provide for a social and demographic balance within the Town.
- d) To ensure that a high standard of design be incorporated into future residential developments in line with the recommendations of the 'Guidelines on Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas, 2009' and the accompanying best practice 'Urban Design Manual: A best practice guide' issued by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government in February 2008. Applications for four or more dwellings should be accompanied by a landscaping plan and a design statement. Furthermore, regard should be had to the use of local materials and house styles in designing all future residential developments.
- e) To encourage infill housing developments on appropriate sites where the proposals respect the existing scale and character of the area, and sufficiently protect the amenities of adjoining properties within the area. Proposed developments must have regard to the surrounding environment and the predominant design features, the existing residential density and the existence of particular elements within the Town, such as stands of trees, protected structures and open space areas.
- f) To only permit apartments at appropriate locations in the Town Centre. Apartments, or retail developments with apartments above, should only be located on lands zoned 'B1' within the Town Centre. In conjunction with Section 10.1.4.10 of the Meath County Development Plan 2007-2013 relating to the 'Height Control of Residential Development', three-storey duplex units will only be permitted where it is considered that the siting, layout, design and finishes used will not negatively impact on the character and the amenity of the surrounding area.
- g) To prohibit development on designated areas of open space that form part of a site layout for previously permitted developments.
- h) To require the naming of residential developments to reflect local place names, language or topographical features as appropriate and to incorporate old names from the locality as far as possible.
- i) To promote energy conservation and renewable energy technologies, as outlined under Section 12.0 of this Plan, in all future developments. Such measures should be consistent with other policies in this Plan.
- j) To support the provision of adequate engineering, as well as social infrastructure, as an integral part of any future residential development by ensuring that the necessary services and utilities infrastructure required for such developments are provided in tandem with the construction of any future residential developments.

### **Policy H 3: Social and Affordable Housing**

- a) Encourage the integration of social and affordable units within private residential developments, which prevents segregation, and promotes good design and layout.
- b) To ensure that up to 20% of any land zoned solely for residential use, or for a mixture of residential and other uses, shall be made available for the provision of social and affordable housing in accordance with the requirements of Part V of the Planning and Developments Acts, 2000-2006 and the County Housing Strategy.

## **7.0 COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND OPEN SPACE AMENITIES**

### **7.1 Existing Civic and Community Facilities**

Currently, the Town contains a significant number of community-related facilities, namely a Primary School (O'Growney National School), a Secondary School (Athboy Community School), a Montessori School (Athboy Childcare Centre), a Health Centre and three chemists, a Parochial Hall (St James' Hall), a Macra na Feirme Hall, a Post Office, a Credit Union, a Garda Station, a Graveyard, GAA grounds, a soccer pitch and basketball and tennis courts, a Library and two churches. If Athboy is to experience any additional growth, it is essential that these community facilities be maintained and augmented to cater for all age groups.



*Plate Twelve: A Locally Equipped Area of Play (LEAP) within the Townparks area.*

#### **7.1.1 Future Civic and Community Development**

Facilities for community development allow for social interaction and engagement, and are an important part of any village and town in Ireland. Building strong, inclusive communities is a key element in achieving sustainable development objectives, a core policy of this Local Area Plan. Sustainable communities require not only economic development, but also the provision of and access to community support, education and health services, amenities and leisure services and a good quality built environment. Communities also require opportunities to meet, interact and form bonds, essential prerequisites to the development of a sense of place and belonging.

A significant number of community groups are active within Athboy providing a strong public voice to the proper planning and sustainable development of the Town. As a result, youth facilities and useable public open spaces are evident and are continually developing within the Town.

Regarding the primary and post-primary schools in Athboy, the capacity and potential future demands on these facilities have been considered during the preparation of this Local Area Plan. A strategic goal of this Plan is to promote and enable the development of community facilities, public services and support mechanisms in the Town, which can adequately serve the needs of the local population over the six year timeframe of this Local Area Plan and beyond.

An opportunity exists to develop a nursing home to the south of the Town, adjoining the Trim Road. This land is zoned for 'G1' uses and development will be subject to the preparation of a Framework Plan, which provides for adequate service infrastructure and demonstration of appropriate linkages to the Town Centre.

#### **Objective CC 1: Community Facilities**

- a) To promote and enable the development of community facilities, public services and support mechanisms in the Town which can adequately serve the needs of the local population over the six year timeframe of this Local Area Plan and beyond.
- b) To facilitate any necessary future expansion of Athboy Library, O'Growney National School, Athboy Childcare Centre and Athboy Community School to accommodate their future needs.
- c) To facilitate dual access requirements to facilitate further residential development and the development of appropriate health facilities in the Coille Díos area.

#### **Policy CC 1: Shared Use of Community and Educational Facilities**

To investigate, in cooperation with relevant agencies, the possibility of maximising the shared use of existing community and educational facilities for community and non-school purposes, where possible, to promote the sustainable use of such infrastructure and community cohesion.

#### **Policy CC 2: Future Nursing Home**

To prepare a Framework Plan for those lands to the south of the Town at the Trim Road, which are zoned for 'G1' uses, for the development of a nursing home, subject to the demonstration of sufficient services infrastructure capacity and adequate vehicular and pedestrian linkages to the Town Centre.

#### **Policy CC 3: Phasing of Development**

To ensure the provision of amenity, community, cultural, educational and recreational facilities in tandem with commercial, residential and other development.

#### **Policy CC 4: Improve Public Service Facilities and Infrastructure**

To support and facilitate the improvement of public service infrastructure and facilities in the area.



### Policy CC 5: Safer Routes to School

To support the policies and recommendations outlined in the 'Safer Routes to School Initiative' (DTO 2005), to ensure adequate pedestrian access and safer routes to school throughout the Town.

## 7.2 Existing Open Spaces and Community Amenities

Active and passive open spaces and facilities are an important component of any village or town and the current Meath County Development Plan 2007-2013 explicitly sets out the manner in which residential developments must comply with open space standards.

Athboy enjoys notable and frequently more subtle environmental qualities, specifically the Yellow Ford River, the Town's unique built heritage such as the St James' Church of Ireland ecclesiastical complex, the high amenity lands surrounding Danes Court, the Fairgreen, the numerous pedestrian walks associated with the River and the Townsparks, and the significant amount of tree stands within the Town's development boundary.

The Town is also well served by community amenities encompassing GAA, soccer, and basketball and tennis courts and contains a locally equipped Children's Play area within the Townsparks area. The GAA facilities currently available in the Plan area are noted as constrained for further expansion, commensurate with local demands, at the current location.



*Plate Thirteen: Townsparks public open space area.*

The Town is well served by active and passive recreational and community amenities that largely maximise and appropriately utilise such natural and man-made environmental assets, and are also well interlinked. A comprehensive open space network is also being developed for the



Townparks area, which will allow for a greater level of amenity for local residents while this Plan identified safe pedestrian walks within the Town to ensure that Athboy is both pedestrian friendly and permeable.

#### **Objective OS 1: Open Space & Amenities**

- a) To encourage and promote the further development of river based amenities, which are open to the general public, such as bird watching and passive surveillance, by providing benches along the river way, and fishing, through the provision of designated fishing beats.
- b) To examine the possibility of extending the riverside walks where the opportunity arises in partnership with the community and private developers.
- c) To facilitate and encourage the preparation of a Conservation Plan for St James' Church of Ireland ecclesiastical site and adjoining lands.
- d) To retain those areas of high amenity and open space lands surrounding Danes Court and the Townparks free from development by reason of their high amenity nature and sensitive locations and views.
- e) To promote the retention and development of walking routes through-out the Town that are interconnected and allow for circuitous routes to be developed. These walks will create pedestrian friendly designated pedestrian linkages and safe walking routes, the majority of which will be un-associated with motorised traffic. These walks include:
  - To retain the pedestrian walkway currently connecting the junction of Lower Bridge Street and the Trim Road, with the former Athboy Railway Complex and crossing the Yellow Ford River via the iron bridge over the River before continuing south along its southern bank.
  - To retain the walkway connecting the Kildalkey Road, via Barnes Avenue, with the Yellow Ford River and interconnecting with the pedestrian route crossing the iron bridge over the River.
  - To retain the pedestrian walkway connecting the Town's Library with Barrack Lane, which connects Upper Bridge Street, at the Bank of Ireland and the former National School (currently 'Athboy Furniture Shop') with the iron bridge over the Yellow Ford River.
  - To retain the pedestrian walkway along the northern bank of the Yellow Ford River to the north of the Town within the Townparks area.
- f) To encourage the provision of additional historical and interpretative signage, where appropriate, in order to inform visitors of the historical importance of Athboy.

#### **Objective OS 2: GAA Facilities**

To further consult with the board of the Clann na NGael GAA club to establish the level of facilities required for Athboy GAA into the future. It is anticipated that new GAA facilities can be provided to the northeast of the current site, in tandem with the development of a Framework Plan, as identified in Policy H1 (c) of this Plan.

**Objective OS 3: Athboy Rugby Club**

To support and encourage the future development of Athboy Rugby Club in its current location. In this regard a realignment of the indicative route of the proposed Athboy Bypass shall be examined in the context of the Athboy Rugby Club's lands within the lifetime of this LAP.

**Policy OS 1: Active and Passive Open Space**

To provide for areas of high-quality active and passive amenity that are well designed, interlinked with one another, suitably proportioned and accessible to the surrounding community. The development of open spaces will aim to enhance and protect natural features and views, and be set in safe and secure environments enjoyed by all sectors of the community.

**Policy OS 2: Open Space in Residential Areas**

To ensure that a minimum of 15% of the total site area shall be designated as 'Open Space' in new residential developments.

**Policy OS 3: Open Space & Amenities**

To protect and retain those areas of land surrounding Danes Court and the Townparks free from development by reason of their high amenity nature and sensitive locations and views.

## 8.0 HERITAGE

### 8.1 Existing Heritage

The rich archaeological, built and natural heritage of the area both comprising of and surrounding Athboy are important resources that must be protected and enhanced to add to the local sense of place and belonging, and also to increase the attractiveness of the area to tourists and visitors. The protection of these resources and presentation of their heritage value are key considerations in this Plan. All development objectives and planning policies have been formulated with a view to improving the overall quality of their context and setting.

#### 8.1.1 Archaeological Heritage

Athboy contains two sites of archaeological interest namely, the Town Centre area outlining the initial early development of the Town comprising of Connaught Street, Main Street, and Lower and Upper Bridge Street, and the second zone of archaeological interest surrounds the complex of buildings of Danes Court to the south of St James' Church of Ireland. The Town also contains approximately thirteen items identified on the Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) with the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government. These items highlight the extensive length of human occupation within the Town and are arranged around a number of separate historical areas, specifically Danes Court, the St James' Church of Ireland ecclesiastical complex, St James' Holy Well and the Town's former defences located along Main Street and the Kildalkey Road.



*Plate Fourteen: St James' Church of Ireland with the remains of the Town's medieval walls.*

Archaeology is a non-renewable resource and is of great cultural and scientific importance. Potential sites of archaeological interest may include archaeological remains beneath the ground

surface. Such remains may only be uncovered during development work and must be investigated and recorded in detail. In relation to development proposals the planning authority will adopt a policy of archaeological monitoring which will be required on developments where the scale and nature of such developments may, in the opinion of the planning authority, have a negative impact on previously unknown archaeological features/artefacts. The value of such archaeological sites and monuments in Athboy is fully recognised by the Council. When considering development proposals within Areas of Archaeological Potential and on, or in close proximity to, sites of known archaeological significance, the Council will have regard to the provisions of Section 12 of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act, 1994, or as may be amended from time to time. The Council will also have regard to the observations and recommendations of the Office of Public Works and the Heritage and Planning Division of the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DoEHLG), as well as the views and concerns of other interested statutory bodies will be taken into account when assessing such planning applications. Additionally, anyone intending to carry-out works which may interfere with a national monument is required to apply to the DoEHLG for a licence. The DoEHLG will specify what, if any, precautions or actions are required.

When considering development proposals within areas of archaeological potential, regard will be had to the nature of sub-surface works that could impact upon archaeological remains (e.g. foundation type and design, layout and location of services, road works, landscaping schemes, etc.). It is the Council's intention to fully protect these sites insitu or if necessary following a grant of permission to allow for archaeological assessment and examination to occur before any development may occur.

In relation to archaeological assessment of sites, applicants will also be required to define the buffer area or area contiguous with any monument which will preserve the setting and visual amenity of the site. The Council may also require a developer to submit a report prepared by a suitably qualified archaeologist on the archaeological implications of the proposed development. In appropriate circumstances, the Council when granting permission for development may impose conditions requiring the following:

1. Professional archaeological supervision of site excavations,
2. The funding by the applicant of any necessary archaeological assessment, monitoring, testing or excavation of the site and the submission of a report thereon, prior to the commencement of development, and
3. The preservation of all or part of any archaeological remains on the site.

Applicants are advised to consult archaeological maps, which are available for consultation from the planning authority, in order to ascertain whether their site is located within a known area of archaeological potential. All Planning applications should have regard to the Heritage Council's 'Archaeology and Development: Guidelines for Good Practice for Developers, 2000'.

<b>Policy AH 1: Record of Monuments and Places, and Zones of Archaeological Interest</b>
<p>a) To support access, if appropriate, to the various sites of archaeological importance within Athboy, with the prior co-operation of the individual landowners and to integrate, where possible and if appropriate, sites of archaeological interest into walking trails within the Town.</p> <p>b) To have regard to the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP) and both Zones of Archaeological Interest when dealing with planning applications for development or</p>

threats to recorded structures, including public sector development. Development shall be controlled in the vicinity of a recorded feature where it detracts from its setting. In all such cases the Council shall consult with the National Monuments Section of the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DoEHLG).

- c) To fully protect archaeological sites insitu, or, if necessary, following a grant of permission to allow for archaeological assessment and examination to occur before any development may occur. The Council may require an Archaeological Report outlining the archaeological implications of the proposed development. Where permission for such proposals is granted, the applicant will have due regard to the recommendations of the Heritage and Planning Division of the DoEHLG.
- d) To promote a presumption in favour of "preservation in situ" of archaeological remains and settings, in accordance with national policy, when dealing with proposals for development that would impact upon archaeological sites and/or features.
- e) To protect the area of any National Monument. A buffer zone should be additional to the required open space requirement.
- f) To seek the publication of the results of archaeological excavations carried out within Athboy, in co-operation with relevant bodies.
- g) To protect the burial grounds within the Town identified in the RMP, in co-operation with the National Monuments Section of the DoEHLG, specifically the churchyard of the St James' Church of Ireland and the burial ground located to the south of the Clonmellon Road.

## **8.2 Built Heritage**

There are numerous buildings and structures of historical significance within Athboy. Athboy has thirty-four structures listed on the Record of Protected Structures (RPS) contained in the current Meath County Development Plan 2007-2013 in accordance with the provisions of Section 51 of the Planning and Development Acts, 2000-2006. See Appendix D for a full listing and description of each. Furthermore, there are numerous structures within the Local Area Plan boundary that have been recommended for protection by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government's National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH) compiled in 2004.

The continued protection of the built heritage of Athboy is intrinsic to the sustained success and viability of the Town.

### **8.2.1 Current Protected Structures**

There are thirty-four structures designated as Protected Structures in the Meath County Development Plan 2007-2013 within the Town's development boundary. The County Development Plan details the Council's policies in assessing development proposals relating to such structures.





*Plate Fifteen: Pedestrian gate to the side of a Protected Structure along O'Growney Street.*

#### **Policy BH 1: Existing Protected Structures**

- a) To ensure the continued protection of the Protected Structures identified in the Record of Protected Structures (RPS) appended to the Meath County Development Plan 2007-2013.
- b) To require planning permission for all works, both to the exterior and interior, which materially affect the character of a protected structure or any element of the structure that contributes to its special interest.



*Plate Sixteen: 'Inn Moderation' to the north of Main Street.*



### 8.2.2 Architectural Conservation Areas

An Architectural Conservation Area (ACA) is a legally defined designation under Section 81 of the Planning and Development Acts, 2000-2006. This section of the Planning Act obliges planning authorities to include objectives in their development plans to preserve the character of such locations. Including a structure on the Register of Protected Structures ensures that the whole building including the interior, curtilage and, to an extent, attendant grounds are protected. An ACA recognises the value of groups of buildings and settings allowing them to be treated as a whole ensuring that any new development pays respect to and/or enhances the character of the ACA.

An ACA can therefore be defined as a place, area, group of structures or townscape, taking account of building lines and heights, that is of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest or that contributes to the appreciation of a protected structure, and whose character it is an objective of a Plan to preserve. The assignment of ACA status to an area does not preclude future development, however, by defining this area as being worthy of architectural protection, it increases our appreciation of its architectural heritage.

Planning permission is required to totally or substantially demolish any building within an ACA. Generally there is a presumption in favour of retaining buildings that make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of an ACA. Planning permission must also be obtained for works that would materially alter the character of a building, as set-out in Chapter 3 of the 'Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines for Planning Authorities, 2005' by the DoEHLG, and include works such as stripping plaster, replacing windows, changing shopfronts, adding signage, lighting fixtures, roller shutters and putting up satellite dishes in order to ensure that any alterations do not detract from the area's appearance. They must also be accompanied by a Design Statement, Street Impact Assessment and Visual Statement. This does not prevent alterations, extensions or new development within the area but seeks to ensure that any new development is compatible with the special character of the area.

Athboy contains an ACA encompassing the majority of the centre of the Town, see Map 8.1.8 of the current Meath County Development Plan. The ACA extends from Lower Bridge Street to O'Growney Street and includes all of the Town Centre's land plots on both sides of the Main Street. The planning authority will continue to ensure that all future changes will enhance, rather than detract from, the character of this area and its setting.

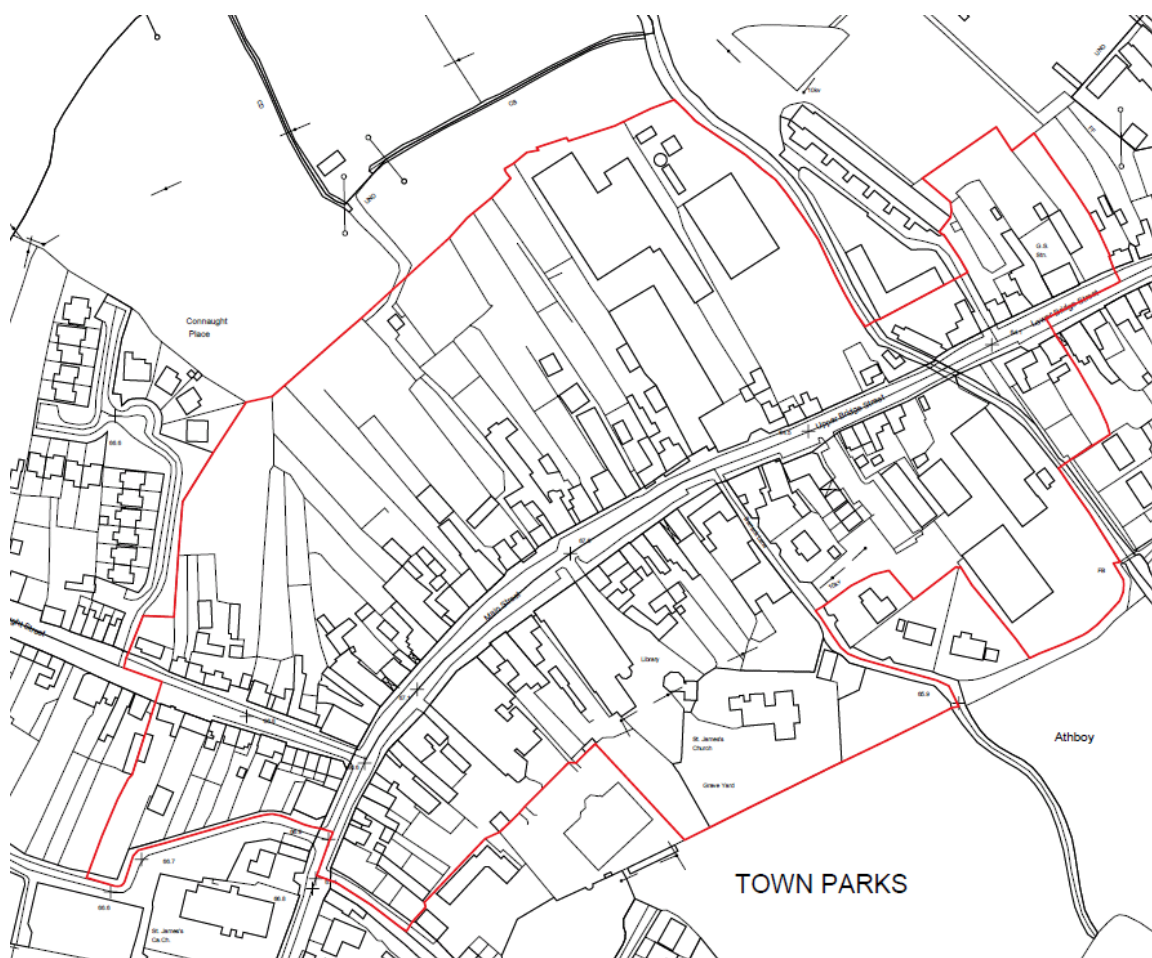


Figure Six: Athboy's Architectural Conservation Area (ACA).

#### Objective BH 1: Architectural Conservation Area

- a) To conserve, restore and rehabilitate the existing building stock in the designated ACA.
- b) To ensure that all proposed developments are carried-out in a manner sympathetic to the existing character of the ACA.
- c) To ensure a high standard of urban design within the ACA.

#### Policy BH 2: Architectural Conservation Area

It is the intention of the Local Authority by the designation of this ACA:

- To preserve, protect and enhance the architectural heritage of Athboy for future generations.
- To preserve the historic street pattern within the core of the Town.
- To require that all new developments shall observe the existing scale of the Town.
- To protect the character of the existing streetscape by giving consideration to the suitability of style, construction materials, colour and decoration to be used in any proposals for development taking place within this area.

- To encourage appropriate new uses for empty and under-utilised buildings.
- To avoid the destruction of minor historic elements whose cumulative loss would severely erode the cumulative cultural significance of the Town.

#### Policy BH 3: Architectural Conservation Area

- a) To preserve, protect and enhance the architectural heritage of Athboy and to ensure that new development makes a positive contribution to the historic character of the Town.
- b) To support and encourage the re-use of suitable redundant or obsolete buildings within the ACA in accordance with good conservation practice.
- c) To retain where practical any structure which contributes in a positive manner to the character of the ACA.
- d) Within the ACA the Local Authority will have regard to:
  - The impact of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the ACA in terms of the height and massing of built forms, and the compatibility of design, materials, colour and finishes.
  - The impact of the proposed development on the character and integrity of the area and the approaches thereto, and will promote compatible uses within compatible forms of infill development.
  - The need to retain important architectural and townscape elements such as shopfronts, sash windows, gutters and down pipes, decorative plasterwork, etc.

#### Policy BH 4: Architectural Conservation Area

To prepare a detailed 'Statement of Character' including information and descriptions of the Athboy ACA outlining the specific character of the area. It shall include guidance notes on development and exempted development for use by residents, community members, businesses and statutory bodies with an interest in the area.

### 8.3 Natural Heritage

The Town and the surrounding environs are characterised by significant environmental assets, none are designated at national or local level. The Town does not contain any Natura 2000 sites (i.e. cSACs, NHAs or SPAs), although as identified in the SEA Screening Report, the River Boyne and River Blackwater cSAC is located in close proximity to the Town.

The SEA Screening Report states that:

*'the development control provisions in the County Development Plan and the Draft LAP, as well as those inherent within the planning application process, arising from the Planning & Development Acts and Regulations, will ensure the appropriate assessment [Environmental Impact Assessment] of proposed developments on lands within the Athboy area on an individual basis'.*





*Plate Seventeen: The Yellow Ford River, photograph taken from the Iron Bridge over the River along Barrack Lane.*

This diversity is therefore not under any significant threat, however a sustainable approach to future development is needed to protect and conserve it. This should be complemented by a drive to consolidate the Town further, with a clear demarcation between rural and urban areas, and the protection of natural heritage features, such as hedgerows, individual trees, important stands of trees, and river and floodplain environments. The protection of the natural environment of Athboy is fundamental to the success of this Local Area Plan, as it will protect the Town's unique identity and amenity assets. Therefore it is vital to achieve the correct balance between protection of the natural environment and the future development of the Town.

#### 8.3.1 The Yellow Ford River

The most significant environmental feature within Athboy is the Yellow Ford River. This feature is a major asset to the Town, being one of the principal natural environmental features in Athboy's picturesque setting. Furthermore, river systems support a diverse range of animals, birds, fish, insects, reptiles and vegetation and are a natural corridor for wildlife to migrate along.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has recently defined this stretch of the Yellow Ford River surrounding Athboy as having only a 'poor' water quality status and at being in risk of not achieving 'good' status by 2015. According to the EPA, the River's water quality has been exacerbated by poor quality run-off from building sites entering the main channel. For this reason, particular attention should be given to its future protection and for mitigation measures to be borne in mind regarding any possible further degradation of its status. Protection measures both during and following construction of developments are addressed in the Plan.

**Policy YR 1: The Yellow Ford River**

To protect the water quality of this stretch of the Yellow Ford River and to ensure that it is not to be compromised by any existing or proposed developments within Athboy. All proposed future developments shall comply with the Construction Industry Research and Information Association (CIRIA) publication entitled, '*Control of Water Pollution from Construction Sites, Guidance for Consultants and Contractors, CIRIA, 2001*' to mitigate against the risk of pollution from construction activities entering the Yellow Ford River's watercourse. All construction works will be completed in line with the recommendations of this publication.

**8.3.2 Trees and Hedgerows**

There are a number of significant tree stands and hedgerows within and around Athboy which should be retained and incorporated where possible into any future development proposals within the Town.

Trees worthy of protection include mainly Horse Chestnut (*Aesculus hippocastanum*), European Ash (*Fraxinus Excelsior*), Sycamore (*Acer Pseudoplatanus*), European Beech (*Fagus Sylvatica*) and Leyland Cypress (*X Cupressocyparis leylandii*), while the hedgerows worthy of protection are mainly located along the Town's approach roads:

Hedgerows and mature trees can be multi-functional and have immense value to an area:

1. Flooding Control: root systems of hedgerows regulate water movement and help prevent flooding.
2. Disease Control: hedgerows help prevent the spread of airborne disease.
3. Water Quality: hedgerows trap silt and soil particles, which clog up fish spawning grounds if they enter watercourses.
4. Cultural/Historical: hedgerows are part of Ireland's cultural, historical and archaeological Heritage. Village boundary hedgerows are particularly important as they can often date from medieval times.
5. Wildlife: as the area of native woodlands in Ireland is significantly smaller than fellow European Union Members, hedgerows have become very important wildlife habitats. They provide food, shelter, and corridors of movement, nest and hibernation sites for many of our native flora and fauna.
6. Screening: hedgerows when incorporated into urban developments provide screening and can greatly enhance the scenic quality of the area.

The hedgerows, River and large tree stands connect various open space areas within the Town to surrounding areas, acting as optimal wildlife corridors allowing wildlife to migrate. In this way it is important for the various natural and semi-natural features and open space elements to link where possible, thereby guaranteeing flora and fauna dispersal throughout the Town. This would provide Athboy with an attractive setting and allows for interaction between humans and their surrounding natural environment. All the above components can assist in the integration of future development into the existing landscape while sustaining the natural visual image of the Town.

Development will not generally be permitted which is likely to damage or destroy either trees protected by a Tree Preservation Order or those which have a particular local amenity or nature conservation value or special interest, notwithstanding the fact that they are not listed for protection within this Local Area Plan.

### Objective TH 1: Tree Protection

To protect the following tree stands within the Town:

- a) Those trees surrounding the Fair Green,
- b) Those trees lining the Yellow Ford River's channels,
- c) Those trees surrounding the Townparks,
- d) Those coniferous and deciduous trees located within lands to the west of the Parochial House,
- e) Those trees surrounding the St James' Church of Ireland and those within the open space area to the south surrounding Danes Court,
- f) Those coniferous trees surrounding the GAA grounds,
- g) Those trees to the east of the Dunderry and Kells/Navan Road junction, and
- h) Those trees to the south of Athboy Community School (formerly St Joseph's Convent of Mercy) surrounding the GAA pitch.

### Objective TH 2: Hedgerow Protection

To retain, where possible, the following hedgerows and incorporate them into future development layouts within the Town, specifically those hedgerows along the approach roads into the Village:

- a) The hedgerow to the east of the Dunderry Road in proximity to the Fair Green,
- b) The hedgerow to the south of the Fraine Road,
- c) The hedgerow to the south and north of the Kells/Navan Road, and
- d) Those hedgerows lining the Yellow Ford River's channels and those within the open space area to the south of St James' Church of Ireland, surrounding Danes Court.

### Objective TH 3: Removal of Hedgerows and Trees

To implement a presumption against the removal of both hedgerows and trees during the course of developments as the Council recognises the heritage and amenity importance of the County's hedgerow and tree resources.

### Policy TH 1: Tree Protection

To protect the significant tree stands within the Town as indicated on the Land Use Zoning Map.



### Policy TH 2: Hedgerow Protection

To retain, where possible, significant hedgerows and stone walls, and incorporate them into future development layouts within the Town.

### Policy TH 3: Removal of Hedgerows and Trees

- a) To promote the protection and preservation of existing hedgerows and to encourage planting of native hedgerow species of local provenance.
- b) To encourage the retention, where possible, of hedgerows and other distinctive boundary treatments. Where removal of a hedgerow, stone wall or other distinctive boundary treatment is unavoidable, provision of the same type of boundary will be required of similar length set back within the site. This shall also relate to Road Improvements and Realignments carried-out by the Local Authorities or other agents on their behalf.

#### 8.3.3 Significant Views & Prospects

The topography of the landscape surrounding Athboy is generally flat. As a result only one notable view and prospect has been identified. This view and prospect of special amenity value includes:

- A view running from north to south from the northern extremity of the Townparks area into the floodplain of the Yellow Ford River and the open space area to the rear of those buildings to the north of Main Street.

### Policy VP 1: Views & Prospects

To preserve the visual amenity value of the designated viewpoint through restricting development that would represent a disproportionate visual effect on this vista.

#### 8.3.4 Natural Environment

The continued protection of the Natural Environment in and around Athboy is vital to the success of sustainably developing the Town.

### Objective NE 1: Natural Environment

To ensure continued protection for the following natural environmental features and allow for these features to be integrated within the overall vision for the Town:

- The Yellow Ford River,
- Mature tree stands,
- Significant hedgerows,
- The identified significant viewpoint,
- Open space networks, and
- Walking routes.

**Policy NE 1: Natural Environment**

To ensure continued protection for the identified natural environmental features and allow for these features to be integrated within the overall vision for the Town.

## 9.0 FLOOD RISK MANAGEMENT

There are some areas within the urban boundary of Athboy which are under threat of flooding from the Yellow Ford River. As a natural phenomenon of the hydrological cycle, flooding is largely attributed to extreme rainfall events, of which a changing climate has demonstrated over recent times. Areas which would benefit from flood alleviation works are identified by the Office of Public Works (OPW).



*Plate Eighteen: Flood alleviation works along the Yellow Ford River to the south of the Iron Bridge along Barrack Lane.*

Similar to other natural processes, flooding cannot be completely eliminated or prevented. However, its impacts can be minimised with proactive and environmentally sustainable management. The extent of paved and other hard surface areas can reduce the capacity of underlying soil to absorb run-off and thus increase the risk of flash flooding.

The management of flood risk to life and property in a manner which examines an entire catchment area, rather than an individual land holding, will facilitate sustainable development and is supported by the Local Authority. It is thus of critical importance to reduce future flood damage thus reducing the potential economic and social costs attributed to flooding.

Future large-scale development proposals within the Athboy urban boundary will be required to incorporate 'Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems' (SUDS) as part of any development proposal.

SUDS are recognised as effective in the reduction of flood risk, the improvement of water quality and the enhancement of local biodiversity and amenity. A range of sustainable measures are available to effectively manage surface water drainage and include:

- Source control measures including recycling, e.g. use of “grey water” for irrigation of green spaces;
- Infiltration devices to allow water to soak into the ground including individual soakways and communal facilities;
- Permeable surface treatments that in suitable locations, allow rainwater and run-off to infiltrate into permeable material below ground and provide storage if needed; and
- Water attenuation ponds and storage tanks that can hold excess water after rain and that can be emptied gradually and in a controlled manner in drier periods.

It is considered that the physical nature of built environments with inherent impervious surfaces, including roads, car parks, buildings and their rooftops, could increase surface water run-off into local watercourse, such as the Yellow Ford River. It is thus important to mitigate negative impacts arising from run-off that could alter the existing hydrology of the Yellow Ford River.

Development should be appropriately controlled along floodplain areas in order to provide suitable flood relief mitigation, as the alteration of natural flow patterns can often lead to problems elsewhere in a river’s catchment area.

#### **Policy FRM 1: Flood Risk Management**

- a) To assess all development proposals against the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government publication ‘The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Consultation Draft Guidelines for Planning Authorities, September 2008’ or any such guidelines in force at the time of the making of an application.
- b) All proposals for development shall demonstrate the suitability of proposed surface water outfalls to accommodate the proposed surface water discharge from a proposed development. The Council shall seek to restrict development that would result in adverse effects on existing storm water drainage or result in flooding.
- c) To encourage the use of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) both as a supplement to and as an alternative to surface water discharge from developments to existing drainage systems and water courses.
- d) In addition to these measurements, the Local Authority will aim:
  - To promote public awareness on how to maintain water quality, reduce wastage of potable water supplies and encourage good domestic practices, which prevent pollutants from coming into contact with rainfall and runoff.
  - To prevent alteration to natural drainage systems and in the case of development works, require the provision of acceptable mitigation measures in order to minimise the risk of excessive run-off, flooding and negative impacts to water quality (including erosion, run-off and sedimentation).
  - To maintain and protect natural forms of drainage control through preserving areas of woodlands, wetlands and areas of natural vegetation, where these help to regulate stream flows, recharge groundwater and mitigate pollutants.
  - To prevent the installation of non-porous hard standing in the front gardens of dwellings, thereby limiting the amount of run-off from such areas.

## **10.0 MOVEMENT AND ACCESS**

### **10.1 Transportation**

Athboy lies within easy reach of Navan, Trim and Kells, being located in the west of County Meath. As a large urban area, it is important that Athboy maintains good transportation linkages to surrounding urban and rural areas, which is a key factor in attracting future economic and residential populations.

There are five main approach roads into Athboy:

- Western approach via the Mullingar Road (N51), linking to the O'Growney Road and Main Street.
- Western approach via the Fraine Road, linking to the O'Growney Road and Main Street.
- Southern approach via the Trim Road (R154) which links to the N51 at Lower Bridge Street and on to Main Street and Connaught Street.
- Eastern approach via the Navan Road (N51), linking to Lower Bridge Street.
- Northern approach via Connaught Street lining to Main Street.

The proposed Athboy By-Pass is indicated to run along the southern boundary of the entire urban area. This alignment is subject to further detailed route design and analysis by the Council and the National Roads Authority (NRA), and is therefore considered indicative, pending the outcome of further studies. This route will serve to improve through traffic movements and consequently the environment and streetscape of the centre of Athboy.

The Local Authority is cognisant that the existing transport network requires upgrade. Studies have been progressed, including the Athboy Parking Survey Report, commissioned by the Local Authority in 2007. The Local Authority will have regard to all recommendations and conclusions established in the upgrading of the transport routes of Athboy.





*Plate Nineteen: Approach along the Trim Road into the Town. The former Athboy Train Station complex is located to the centre of the picture.*

Both the N51 National Route and R154 Regional Route are in physically good condition upon approach to the Town from both the west, east (N51) and south (R154). The Main Street is recognised as the constrained route which caters for local and regional traffic. This traffic is a mixture of heavy goods vehicles (HGVs), bus and utility service vehicles, as well as regional and local car traffic. Traffic is observed as relatively significant and constant throughout the day, particularly at peak times.

The principal entrance routes to Athboy and Main Street are heavily trafficked and environmental improvements and traffic calming measures are required to facilitate an improved townscape and environmental quality. Such improvements include upgraded pedestrian pathways, cycleways, textured surfacing, tactile paving (excluding tarmacadam) and improved road markings and signs for all users. Such improvements can be appropriately progressed in conjunction with the current tree planting and public improvement initiatives within Athboy, many of which are currently driven by a pro-active Tidy Towns Committee.

In order to improve vehicular and pedestrian safety along the principal routes of Athboy, it is important that public lighting needs are provided to an adequate standard particularly on new access points indicated to serve zoned lands (see Section 10.2 for further details). It is also of critical importance to the vitality and accessibility of Athboy that permeability is enhanced between existing and all future development proposals. The creation of pedestrian and cycle priority will aid in the promotion of sustainable travel patterns within the Town area.

**Objective T 1: Transportation**

- a) To maintain, and improve, as required, the local road network to ensure a high standard of road quality and safety.
- b) To implement appropriate traffic management and environmental improvement measures throughout the Town.
- c) To promote the provision of cycle and pedestrian priority routes and improved roadside treatments (including vegetative planting) in all new developments.
- d) To reserve and protect from development the by-pass route indicated to the south of Athboy.
- e) To reserve the road link referred to above to link Connaught Street to Upper Bridge Street via MacCann & Byrne's building construction suppliers.
- f) To require the preparation of Mobility Management Plans for large scale developments, where appropriate.

**Policy T 1: Transportation**

- a) To reserve access points throughout Athboy to allow development of vehicular routes to undeveloped zoned lands. Such access routes should be so designed to be overlooked and appropriately landscaped.
- b) To undertake an overview of the level of signage within Athboy, and where required, to augment current signage. Suitable signage to be maintained as the current Athboy approach roads.

**10.2 Pedestrian and Cyclist Provision**

Pedestrian paths are provided mainly in the central area and through-out the Town in a piecemeal fashion. They also vary in surface quality and do not all link within one cohesive network. This is particularly true of the newer residential areas, where a number of pedestrian areas are uneven and difficult to traverse, particularly for elderly, wheelchair and pram users.

It is essential to provide quality pedestrian permeability within Athboy to promote ease of access throughout the area. Pedestrian comfort and quality access are essential for the area to ensure the creation of a vibrant and safe area for workers, visitors and residents of Athboy. As a minimum design requirement, quality pedestrian access will be required as an integrated feature of all large development applications.

The existing pedestrian traffic signals at mid-way on Main Street are noted in the Athboy Parking Study as ideally located with no obvious requirement for any further pedestrian crossing facilities in the Town Centre at this point in time.

The existing parks and open spaces located within Athboy provide an excellent opportunity for the strengthening of pedestrian walk and cycling routes. In order to further encourage cycling within the Athboy area, cycle priority lane provision should also be incorporated into all major new development applications. Sufficient space should be provided for bicycle parking to the standards as outlined in the Meath County Development Plan 2007-2013.

In a substantial number of areas pedestrians and cyclists share undemarcated road space with motor vehicles. As identified in Section 10.1, the principal access routes within Athboy and the Town Centre record a significant level of heavy goods vehicle use. Aligned to resultant parking and loading bay requirements, there is a resultant lack of legibility with regard to cyclist areas within the Town Centre.

A modal shift from the private car to public transportation, walking or cycling will be encouraged throughout Athboy. Pedestrian and cyclist connectivity is desirable and therefore new developments should allow for direct cyclist and pedestrian access to and from Athboy centre.

As identified in Section 10.1, public lighting is not equitably distributed throughout the Town. In order to enhance the image of Athboy as a permeable and pedestrian safe Town it is important that public lighting provision is reviewed and appropriate upgrading is made where required. Currently public lighting is required along the Delvin, Fraine, Kells/Navan, Kildalkey and Trim Roads to the 80km road signs, the 'Fosterfield' residential area and the Fairgreen.

#### **Objective PC 1: Footpath Improvements**

To initiate public footpath upgrades within the Town Centre area involving the use of textured surfacing and tactile paving in order to fully separate pedestrian and vehicular movements, in order to provide a safer environment for pedestrians particularly along the Connaught Street, and the Delvin, Fraine, Kells/Navan, Kildalkey and Trim Roads.

#### **Objective PC 2: Public Lighting Provisions**

To review the current public lighting provision within Athboy and to provide additional lighting in areas highlighted as lacking in facilities. Public lighting is recognised to be required in the following areas:

- Kells/Navan Road,
- Around the Fair Green amenity space,
- 'Fosterfield' residential development.

All future developments proposed along routes of public lighting upgrades will be contingent upon the delivery of this objective in conjunction with the Council.

#### **Objective PC 3: Cyclist Facilities**

- a) To provide for an integrated network of cycle ways throughout the Town where considered appropriate in order to promote more sustainable modes of transportation.
- b) To seek the provision of adequate bicycle parking facilities throughout the Town and within all new residential developments.

#### **Policy PC1: Footpath and Public Lighting Improvements and Provisions**

To facilitate the upgrading and the provision of the identified footpaths and public lighting within the Town as outlined within this Plan, particularly along the Connaught Street, and the Delvin, Fraine, Kells/Navan, Kildalkey and Trim Roads.

#### **Policy PC 2: Cyclist Facilities**

To facilitate and encourage cycling as a more convenient, popular and safe method of transport, through the designation of an integrated cycle network throughout the Town linking population, commercial, community facilities and transportation nodes.

#### **Policy PC 3: Heavy Goods Vehicles Parking**

To investigate the provision of heavy goods vehicle parking within the Town's development boundary.

### **10.3 Car Parking**

There are both public and private car parking areas within Athboy. The Athboy Parking Survey carried out in 2008 has noted that:

- There are a total of 83 on-street parking spaces in the Town Centre. Of these, 69 spaces are located on Main Street with overspill parking located on Connaught Street.
- Such parking areas record high levels of occupancy, with Main Street generally at capacity throughout the day from mid-morning. This capacity issue results in potentially hazardous parking at gateways, footpaths and double yellow markings. Overspill onto Connaught Street results in parking on the footpath on both street sides.
- There is a recognised high demand for short – term parking on Main Street. Low levels of all day parking indicate a level of misuse of on street parking in the Town Centre.
- At the east end of Main Street / west end of Upper Bridge Street, parking is encountered on double yellow marking and on footpaths. Parking in this location is noted as short-term.
- The junction with St. James' Roman Catholic Church and O'Growney Street records on-street parking, which continues to the civic recycling area and its surrounding gateways and footpaths. The adjoining 52 space public car-park remains underused throughout the day, despite its close proximity to Main Street.
- There are approximately 300 off-street parking spaces available in Athboy (including those located to the rear of the Old Darnley Hotel).

The Study notes that traffic volumes will continue to increase, with consequent demand for parking. With regard to mobility management and sustainable development, the practice of parking on footpaths and at gateways is not desirable. The recommendations of the Athboy Parking Survey are considered to represent an effective method of curtailing inappropriate parking practices in Athboy:

- Short term parking only to be encouraged along Main Street and only in designated parking spaces. No additional parking spaces are required.
- Parking along Connaught Street to be limited to one side only and available for short-term parking. Residents of Connaught Street will be provided with a parking permit.
- Prohibited on-street parking to be introduced on the northern side of O'Growney Road, extending to the Civic Recycling facility.
- Prohibited on-street parking to be introduced on the southern side of O'Growney Street, extending to the St. James' Roman Catholic Church car park.

Planning applications for significant development proposals that impact on national routes should, where considered necessary by the Planning Authority, be accompanied by Transport and Traffic Assessment (TTA) and Road Safety Audits (RSA) to be carried out by suitably competent consultants, which should be assessed in association with their cumulative impact with neighbouring developments on the road network, with reference to the 'Traffic Management Guidelines' Department of Transportation publication.

#### Objective CP 1: Car Parking

- a) To facilitate the provision of car parking improvements as outlined in the Athboy Parking Survey Report study, including:
  - To encourage short-term parking only along Main Street.
  - Limited public parking along Connaught Street
  - Prohibited public parking at O'Growney Street, and in the vicinity of the Civic Recycling facility, where this parking is currently observed on footpaths and prohibited areas.
- b) To provide adequate disabled car parking spaces at appropriate locations throughout the Town.

#### Policy CP 1: Car Parking

To facilitate the upgrading and the provision of the identified car parking spaces within the Village as outlined within this Plan.

### 10.4 Public Transportation

The provision of quality, attractive public transport services will help promote mobility management and aid an increased modal split away from car-based travel. Bus Éireann provides Athboy with a bus service which serves the Dublin-Trim-Granard route (Bus Éireann Route 111). This route offers a comprehensive all day service (Monday to Saturday) with a limited bus service on Sunday. Although there are no designated 'bus stops' in the Town, services pick up and drop off passengers along the Main Street (currently at the 'Londis' Store) and on the Trim Road.



**Policy PT 1: Public Transportation**

To work in conjunction with Córas Iompair Éireann (CIE) to provide bus stops and accompanying shelters within the Town Centre to serve all bus users.

## **11.0 SERVICES AND UTILITIES**

### **11.1 Waste Water collection and treatment**

The Town is currently served by an existing Waste Water Treatment Plant located to the South of the town, adjoining the Athboy River. The current system's capacity is identified at 2,750p.e. (population equivalent). An upgrade of this facility is ongoing and anticipated to be completed within the lifetime of this Plan. This upgrade will facilitate further sustainable development within Athboy.

### **11.2 Surface Water**

Currently the Town's surface water flows directly into the Athboy River. Future development proposals will need to provide attenuation of this water prior to discharge in line with the recommendations of the 'Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems – Best Practice Manual' undertaken by the CIRIA and the 'Planning System and Flood Risk Management – Consultation Draft Guidelines, 2008 and any subsequent revisions.

### **11.3 Water Supply**

Athboy receives its potable water supply from a borehole at Townparks, with a storage reservoir at Hill of Ward. Existing water supplies to Athboy are recognised as deficient. Secure potable water supply is required to protect public health and also to facilitate further development. The ability of the current system to supply an increased level of potable water is therefore limited, as it is currently operating beyond full capacity. Therefore any future development within the area will be severely constrained until an independent water supply source can be attained.

Athboy, together with Ballivor, Kildalkey and Rathcairn, is listed as Water Service Capital Works Project Number 9<sup>3</sup>, which requires substantial water supply improvement in the short to medium term, for the purpose of addressing existing serious infrastructural deficiencies while also providing for the continued sustainable advancement and development of both the County and local areas.

#### **Policy PU 1: Public Utilities**

To endeavour to maintain and provide adequate potable water and wastewater treatment infrastructure that is sufficient to meet the development needs of the Town within this Plan period. However, the Council acknowledges that there are significant constraints on the capacity of the existing infrastructure and may consider restricting development in circumstances where such infrastructure is inadequate.

### **11.4 Other Utility Services: Telecommunications, Antennae, Satellite Dishes and all Ancillary Structures**

Other utility services, including telecommunications, broadband and electricity are also provided for within the Town. These services are supplied via telegraph poles and can detract from the streetscape and amenity of Athboy. It is therefore an object of the Local Authority that these cables should be placed underground by utilities operators, where possible.

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<sup>3</sup> Meath County Council Water Services Investment Programme Assessment of Needs, 2007 – 2013

The Council will consider applications for telecommunications masts and ancillary facilities only in appropriate locations.

**Policy TAS 1: Telecommunications**

To have regard to the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government publication 'Telecommunications Antennae and Support Structures Guidelines for Planning Authorities, 1996' and any subsequent amendments when assessing planning applications for telecommunication infrastructure.

**Policy TAS 2: Public Utilities Cables**

To promote the undergrounding of all public utilities' cabling infrastructure within Athboy Town Centre in order to improve the existing and future streetscape setting.

**Policy TAS 3: Broadband**

To work in conjunction with public utilities' providers to increase broadband infrastructure and speed within the Athboy area in tandem with future development.

## 12.0 ENERGY EFFICIENCY

All designs for new buildings should be founded on a sustainable ethos, manifest and measurable in the use of energy sources.

In this regard, the use of innovative materials and architectural designs to improve the

environmental performance and energy efficiency of buildings will be encouraged, see Appendix E. In order to ensure a more sustainable approach to development, it is proposed that the Council adopt a range of sustainable building requirements so as to ensure energy efficiency, healthy and low environmental impact buildings.

The Greener Homes Scheme is now available and is administered by Sustainable Energy Ireland, providing assistance to homeowners intending to purchase a new renewable energy heating system.

Also funding is available through the House of Tomorrow Projects to developers for the design and construction of clusters (minimum of 10 dwellings) of superior energy performing housing units.

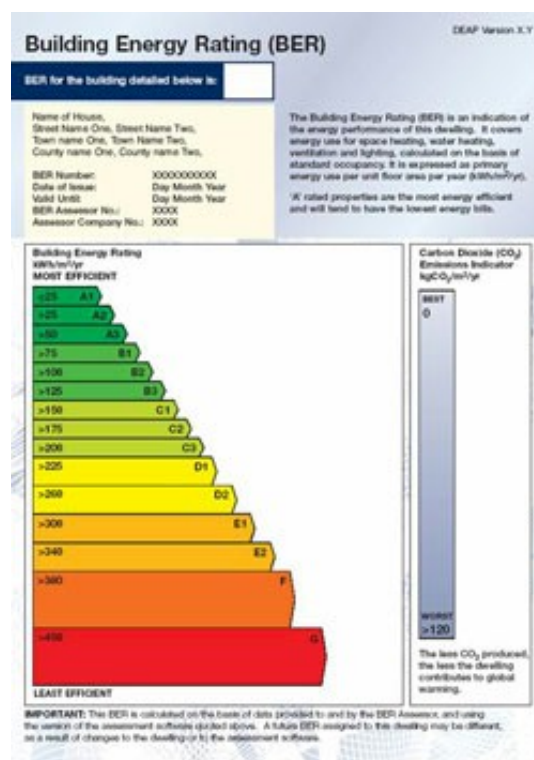


Figure Seven: The Energy Performance of Buildings Directive

### Policy E 1: Energy Efficiency

To encourage all buildings to conform to Part L of the Building Regulations, 2008 with regard to the Energy Performance of Buildings and if possible provide renewable sources of energy. This requirement will ensure that the annual space and water heating energy requirements for all buildings will be reduced.

### 13.0 WASTE MANAGEMENT

It is noted that Athboy has a small range of recycling facilities comprising of a bottle bank and clothes bin collections located in the car park located between St James' Church and the Waxies' Dargle public house. It is also considered to be within range of the Kells and Navan Recycling Centres. Currently, the Town is also served by private waste collection providers, which provide bins to cater for unrecyclable waste and dry recyclables. From 01<sup>st</sup> December 2008, this must be augmented by a third bin collection catering for bio-degradable waste.

#### Policy WM 1: Waste Management

To provide Athboy additional recycling facilities, as the need arises, in consultation with the Council's Environmental Awareness Officer.



*Plate Twenty: existing Recycling Facilities in Athboy to the rear of the St James' Roman Catholic Church.*



#### **14.0 RE-USE AND REGENERATION OF DERELICT SITES AND BUILDINGS**

By working with landowners, the Council has responsibility with regard to the re-use and regeneration of derelict sites and buildings, particularly given its powers under the Derelict Sites Act, 1990.

<b>Policy DSB 1: Derelict Sites and Buildings</b>
To promote the appropriate re-use, re-development, façade improvement and re-generation of derelict sites and buildings within Athboy. The Council will use its powers, where appropriate, in considering such sites for inclusion in the Register of Derelict Sites.

## **15.0 URBAN DESIGN STRATEGY FOR ATHBOY**

### **15.1 Introduction**

Athboy is an attractive town which has evolved from medieval beginnings and is set within a rich agricultural landscape. The wider topography of Athboy features undulating hills, which range to 150m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD). The general elevation fall in the area runs from a northwest to southeast direction, this is reflected in the overall drainage pattern.

The most significant low-lying areas in the town are those close proximity of the Yellow Ford River, which runs through the town from a northwest to southeast direction. The most elevated areas within the town are found to the east, where the Hill of Ward (Tlachta) rises to a height of approximately 119m (AOD). The County Landscape Strategy establishes that Athboy lies within a landscape of moderate value, medium sensitivity and local importance.

This Urban Design Strategy for the Town identifies an improvement scheme for the central Town area. The main rationale underlying this strategy is to address weaknesses found in the urban form of the built environment and to highlight where enhancements and improvements could be made to both the built and natural environment.

#### **15.1.1 Purpose of this Urban Design Strategy**

The urban design strategy seeks to assist the planning process at pre-planning consultation stage and through the decision making process. It is therefore envisaged that the Urban Design Strategy will:

- Facilitate the improvement of the physical appearance and general environment of the Town.
- Foster the continued development of a compact Town, through the development of suitable backland areas to the north of Main Street for the purposes of mixed use, where pedestrian connections to surrounding lands can be achieved.
- Create new, enhance existing, and complete potential pedestrian linkages identified throughout the area, which will improve permeability between educational, residential and amenity related uses.
- Promote well designed and highly considered architectural solutions to any interventions proposed to the central Town area in order to enhance the image and appearance of the area.

### **15.2 Character Areas**

The character of an area can be loosely defined as the most easily recognisable trait(s) associated with a place or space. A physical and visual assessment of Athboy has identified three distinct Character Areas namely:

- Athboy West;
- Athboy Central; and
- Athboy East.



*Figure Eight: Indicative Character Areas of Athboy.*

Character areas are identified as indicative only and do not infer that those areas unmarked are not within the Town area. The potential opportunities which pertain to each character area are identified below.

#### 15.2.1 Athboy West

The western approaches via the Mullingar Road (N51) and Fraine Road indicate a predominant residential land use. Proximity to the urban boundary is indicated by a proliferation of urban generated rural housing on both approach roads. Upon entry into the urban area, established residential areas are evident. These approach roads can be considered of good quality and generally straight, until meeting to form O'Growney Street, which provides a clear access to the Town Centre, see Section 15.2.2.

The line of the proposed by-pass route to the south of the Town forms the southern boundary of this Character Area. The route of this by-pass is subject to further route analysis and study by Meath County Council and the National Roads Authority (NRA) and is thus indicatively indicated in order to reserve this general route free from development.

The predominant land uses located along O'Growney Street are predominately community uses, which serve the established residential communities located to the North and South of this area. Community uses, including the St. James' Roman Catholic Church, O'Growney National School, and the Athboy Community School and sports pitches are located both north and south of O'Growney Street. Whilst the approach road to Athboy from the west indicates moderate and largely well established residential and community uses, O'Growney Street heralds the approach to the Town Centre area and provides an important active community area.

This area provides an important approach to the Town, which was historically the main approach to Athboy. The topography of the area provides pleasant views of the surrounding rural area and a clear main route to the Town Centre.

Given the availability of zoned and undeveloped residential lands located to the south of Fraine Road and north of the Mullingar Road, there is an opportunity to clearly demarcate the urban and rural area through the appropriate development of zoned, undeveloped residential lands. Further development will serve to strengthen both the consolidated town image and improve the residential offer within Athboy.

#### ***Opportunity No. 1***

Given the areas of zoned residential lands located to the north and south of the Delvin/Mullingar and Fraine Roads, respectively, it is considered that these lands are capable of further infill residential development, in accordance with the stated zoning objective, which in turn will facilitate the clear delineation of the rural surrounds and the urban boundary of this Character Area. In accordance with Variation No. 2 of the current County Development Plan 2007-2013, these lands present the opportunity for development over a phased basis.

#### ***Opportunity No. 2***

An opportunity exists to provide enhanced permeability between the Athboy West Character Area and the surrounding residential areas. The continuing development of the backlands area to the rear of St. James' Roman Catholic Church is encouraged. This should include the backlands of those buildings fronting onto Connaught Street in accordance with the Objective H2(b) of this Plan.



*Plate Twenty-One: Opportunity Site No. 2 to the east of St James' Roman Catholic Church and to the north of the 'Waxies Dargle'.*



### **Opportunity No. 3**

'Castletown House' is located to the north of the Mullingar Road access. This location presents a significant opportunity to ensure that the western arrival point to Athboy can be legibly and appropriately marked. An opportunity thus exists to consider this site as an Opportunity Site where development proposals including community, tourism, residential and or cultural uses are considered to be appropriate. Currently the site is the location of 'Athboy Veterinary Hospital'.



*Plate Twenty-Two: 'Castletown House' along the Mullingar Road to the east of the Town.*

#### **15.2.2 Athboy Central**

This Central Character Area comprises the historic core of Athboy, which is recognised to have evolved over centuries, influenced by the medieval town walls, much of which is reflected in the current Athboy Architectural Conservation Area (ACA) designation. This layout has further influenced the tight urban grain.

This area is comprised of three sub units; lands north of Main Street, lands South of Main Street and the length of Main Street itself. Although the backlands (those lands to the north and south of Main Street) physically comprise of a greater area, Main Street constitutes the civic area owing to its greater public profile and the quality of much of the historic built fabric. As such, the civic space is central to the public image perception of Athboy.

Main Street currently represents the major commercial and civic centre of Athboy, providing for financial institutions, service and retail uses, including community, educational, Athboy Garda Station, Athboy Library, Childcare and religious facilities.

Significant open spaces are located to the north and south of Main Street, including the Fairgreen and Danes Court to the south and Townparks to the north. The Yellow Ford River runs in a north-



south alignment through this character area and is bridged by the 'Metal Foot Bridge' at the former railway station enclosure and 'The Bridge', located at Upper Bridge Street. This provides an attractive feature within the town centre and is currently well signposted as a heritage item in Athboy.

The street pattern of Athboy has altered little over time. Access to commercial premises along Main Street is predominately taken from the front street and some side laneway gates, which demonstrate distinctive archways on the Main Street. The level of predominantly commercial uses along Main Street, as identified in blue in Figure Nine, is noteworthy.

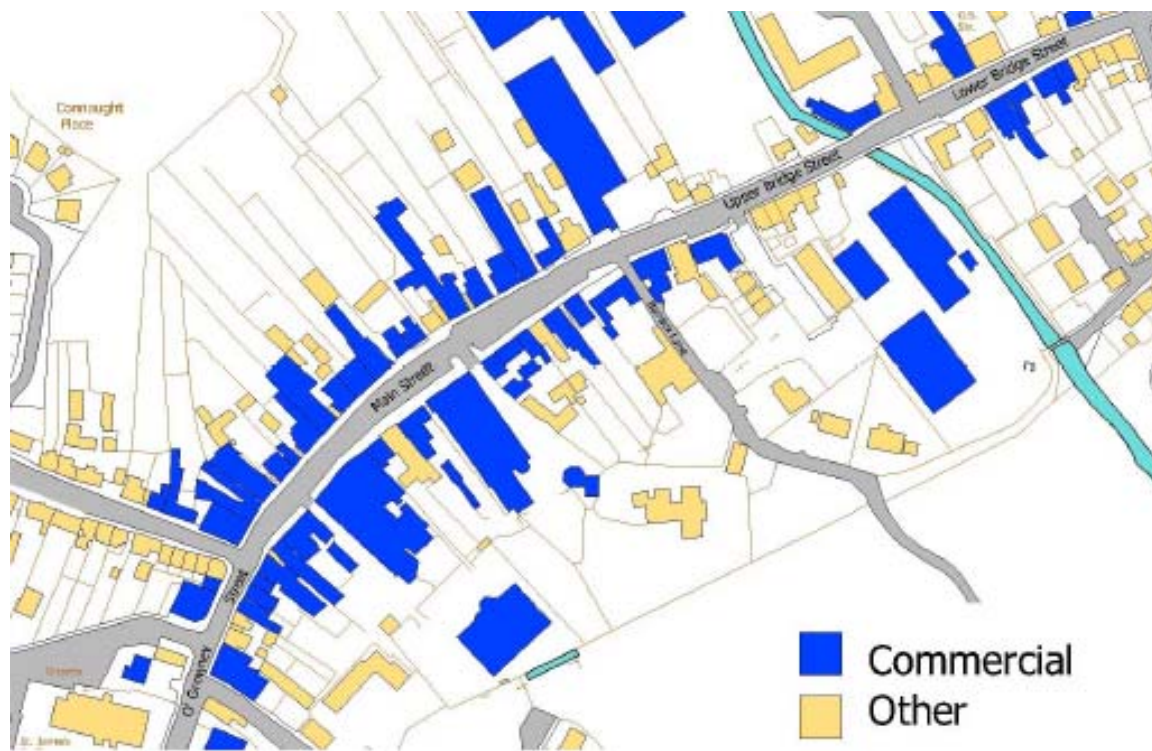


Figure Nine: Land Uses along Main Street. Source: Athboy Parking Survey, Meath County Council.

There is a distinct building line associated with Main Street, broken only by the St. James' Parish Hall and warehousing/industrial units located to the north and south of Main Street. A number of distinctive buildings are located within the central area, as illustrated in Plate Twenty-Three.



*Plate Twenty-Three: View of Main Street's building line with the western view partially terminated by St. James' Roman Catholic Church.*

Access to this Central Area is provided via the main access spine of Main Street. To the north of Main Street permeability is achieved via Connaught Street and local roads that provide access to the 'Coille Dios', 'Newman's Mills' and 'Connaught Place' residential areas.

Objective AB11 of the Meath County Development Plan seeks the provision of an access road from Connaught Street to *MacCann and Byrne's* for access to backland areas and this objective is carried forward in this Local Area Plan.

Relatively little back-land development has taken place to date in Athboy, on either side of Main Street. It is envisaged that the development of the local access route as a first priority will provide the impetus for future development, which also provides an opportunity to create a vibrant streetscape within the town centre. The final line of the access route will be contingent on acceptable future development proposals in this area.

The Local Area Plan has proposed a series of access points to residential zoned land that will connect the Town Centre to Athboy East and Athboy West thus promoting a well connected series of developments thus ensuring permeability throughout the wider area of Athboy. Such permeability will seek to provide good linkages, matched with a high quality layout to ensure passive supervision and pleasant environment.

#### ***Opportunity No. 4***

Athboy contains older commercial activities, specifically 'MacCann & Byrne's' along the Main Street, which present a 'jaded' appearance. The warehousing units aligned on Main Street and Upper Bridge Street impact upon the quality of the streetscape and these sites would benefit from a more consolidated and Town Centre urban form.

Relocated uses will also indirectly impact on the level of traffic movements passing through the Main Street and it is considered appropriate that car parking provision to provide for backland development can be facilitated in the backlands area.

#### **Opportunity No. 5**

As a consequence of the above opportunity a further street study of arch ways that can potentially lead to the Backlands should be carried-out to provide a framework of pedestrian linkages back to the Main Street. Such links indirectly promote additional commercial activities, such as café, homeopath, etc, uses along pedestrianised laneways. It is considered that the status of Athboy as a 'Small Growth Town' could absorb such development.

#### **Opportunity No. 6**

An opportunity exists to provide enhanced permeability within the Town Centre area. The development of the backlands of those buildings fronting onto the northern side of Main Street zoned 'B1' is encouraged. This shall include a connecting access road between Connaught Street and Upper Bridge Street to allow for such redevelopment in accordance with the Objective H2(a) of this Plan.



*Figure Ten: Existing Principal Access Points into Athboy.*

#### **15.2.3 Athboy East**

In contrast with Athboy West, the approach toward the Town Centre from the west provides a slightly elevated view towards the town centre, providing an opportunity to mark this access point in a suitable manner. The eastern approach via the N51 presents low density residential lands, which quickly turn to suburban residential uses within the urban area and provides a gradual arrival point to the urban boundary of Athboy. This approach road is considered generally good and meets with Lower Bridge Street and Main Street in the Athboy Central Character Area.

As evident in Athboy West, the bypass route provides a natural southern boundary to this area. The route of this by-pass is subject to further route analysis and study by Meath County Council and the NRA and is thus indicatively indicated in order to reserve this general route free from development.

Development along this route is predominantly residential. A significant community facility, in the form of the local GAA club is located to the north of the Kells/Navan Road. Athboy Community School (the former Technical School) is located to the north of this Character area and adjoins a community tennis/basketball facility.

This area provides an important approach (one of three) to the Town, which is currently lacking in a clear demarcation between urban and rural. Athboy East can thus be perceived as giving a 'delayed sense of expectation and arrival' to the urban area. Given the availability of unzoned rural land adjoining the by-pass alignment, it is considered that this represents an opportunity to clearly demarcate the urban and rural area through the erection of signage or appropriate public art, to announce arrival to Athboy.

#### ***Opportunity No. 7***

Due consideration should be given to the appropriate demarcation of the urban entrance point to Athboy on lands currently located between the junction of the N51 and the eastern by-pass alignment.

#### ***Opportunity No. 8***

An opportunity exists to relocate the current constrained GAA facility to lands further northeast west of the existing GAA location. This relocation will be subject to the provision of playing pitch facilities in advance of the release of the current GAA facilities for redevelopment, in accordance with Zoning Objective 'A2'. This opportunity is also informed by the provisions of Objective OS 2 and Policy H1 (c) of this plan.

#### ***Opportunity No. 9***

An opportunity exists to redevelop an underutilised brownfield site to the west of the former stables attached to the former Athboy Lodge, which is subject to Zoning Objective 'B1' and currently in warehousing and light industrial use. Any redevelopment proposals shall assess the architectural heritage value of the buildings currently on the site and, if deemed to be worthy of preservation, shall integrate them into any future redevelopment proposals.





*Plate Twenty-Four: Opportunity Site No. 9 to the west of the former 'Athboy Lodge' complex.*

### 15.3 General Urban Design Guidance

Successful developments can be achieved through their careful integration with the surrounding built environment of the Town through the utilisation of the right building materials, finishes, forms and landscaping elements that relates to the existing built fabric and settlement structure of Athboy.

#### Objective UDG 1: Urban Design Guidance

To require all new developments within the Plan area to contribute to the creation of high quality, functional and well designed environments. To achieve this, new development proposals within the Town shall be required to:

- a) Consider and reflect the physical, social and environmental context of the Town. Proposed uses shall be compatible with the surrounding areas and the established character of Town.
- b) Protect the Town's important historic fabric and positively contribute towards its unique identity and historic character.
- c) Address amenity issues in respect to adjoining properties such as overlooking, scale and bulk and overshadowing of habitable rooms.
- d) Demonstrate a high quality of design, finishing and building materials used including landscaping.
- e) Contribute to improvements in public safety by enhancing natural surveillance, providing



active street frontages, and by ensuring appropriate enclosure and overlooking of public open spaces generally, lengths of blank facades and boundary walls facing public spaces shall not be permitted excepted in exceptional cases.

- f) Developments shall ensure sustainable construction methods are used to minimise the use of energy and materials, and reduce pollution and waste levels generated from their construction and upkeep.
- g) In residential developments, buildings shall present a high-quality living environment for their future occupants, both in terms of the standard of individual dwelling units, and the overall layout and appearance of the development.

### 15.3.1 Land-Uses

The existing land use survey identified a number of residential units within the Town Centre, many of which appear to have plots to the rear. Whilst it is accepted that most Irish towns and Towns are characterised by residential uses fronting onto a main street, a level of commercial activity is also required to make towns viable.

In order to ensure that such possibilities can be realised, the level of residential versus commercial use should be monitored where “living over the shop” schemes should be promoted to ensure a non-residential ground floor use. Relaxation on development standards may be considered where appropriate backland development can provide alternative residential accommodation to secure on-street commercial activity.

#### Policy LD 1: Land-Uses

- a) To promote the demarcation and consolidation of the Town Centre area through the development of viable and feasible infill backland sites.
- b) To encourage new or re-developments along Main Street to contain ground floor retail/commercial uses.

### 15.3.2 Visual Impact and Building Heights

New development proposals within the ACA boundary must have regard to the existing character and heights along Main Street. In this regard, any planning application for a building with a height in excess of two-storeys must be accompanied by a written Design Statement and Street Impact Assessment setting-out a justification for the height increase, accompanied by visual 3D material.

This requirement seeks to ensure that any future proposed developments do not negatively impact upon the Town’s historic character.

#### Policy VI 1: Visual Impact

To protect the Town’s historic character, development applications involving works that would materially alter the character of a building within the ACA area, as set-out in Chapter 3 of the ‘Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines for Planning Authorities, 2005’ by the DoEHLG, will require planning permission and must be accompanied by a Design Statement, Street Impact Assessment and Visual Statement.

### 15.3.3 Urban Grain

The existing tight urban grain of the Town Centre area needs to be respected as it contributes to its character. This can be achieved through the use of existing urban grain dimensions as a basis

to guide new developments. New development can also address this existing urban grain through the use of facade design with variations in the facade composition to respect the traditional grain pattern.

#### Policy UG 1: Urban Grain

To protect the established urban grain within the Town Centre area, particularly along Main, Connaught, and Upper and Lower Bridge Streets.

#### 15.3.4 Street Furniture and Illumination

Street furniture can enhance the image of the Town Centre for both residents, workers and visitors. It is thus important that Athboy can provide a high quality urban streetscape. With regard to the issue of street and building lighting, it is becoming general practice to provide A Dark Sky Policy to be established to all night-time illumination, existing and proposed.

The following objectives are of relevance:

#### Objective SF 1: Street Furniture

It is an objective of this Local Area Plan to provide an appropriate level of Street Furniture including:

- adequate street lighting,
- public seating,
- litter bins,
- safety bollards,
- secure parking for bicycles, and
- local informational signage (with respect to identifying the location of schools, church or residential areas).

#### Objective I 1: Illumination

A Dark Sky Policy to be established to all night-time illumination, existing and proposed. Regarding the existing, it is proposed to phase the replacement of no-compliant units as these become available for repair or maintenance. The principles of Dark Sky lighting are:

- All units must be illuminated downwards.
- The general illumination of building is to be reserve of important public edifices. General illumination of residential facades is deemed inappropriate.
- Backlight signage shall be discontinued.
- Neon shall not be used externally except where part of the heritage of the buildings
- All units shall have a 100% cut off (having a deep shade for the lamps and having no spill over 180 degrees (Horizon).
- Lighting should be focused on the areas of need, paths, roads, etc, the areas of need,

paths, roads, etc for safety. Low-level lighting bollards are particularly useful in this regard as they also avoid excessive glare in relation to pedestrian uses.

### 15.3.5 Architectural Features

In order to ensure the continued protection of the Town's historic character, architectural treatment is of vital importance. Issues such as the relationship between the "solid to void" ratio (the exterior wall versus any openings including windows and doors), respecting the verticality of the existing urban grain of the Town and building features, such as chimneys, roofs, windows and doors are all extremely important.

#### Policy AF 1: Architectural Features

To ensure that any proposed developments respect the existing character of the Town Centre a Design Statement will be required to accompany a significant development application. The typical content of a design statement will include, but not be limited to the following elements:

##### *a) Facade Treatments:*

- To require a high "solid-to-void" ratio in all proposed buildings. The minimum recommended 'solid to void ratio' is to comprise a ratio of 2:5 of the façade. The maximum recommended void or glazed area is expressed as a ratio of 3:5 of the façade.
- To require vertical window forms and treatments that shall be promoted to enhance a vertical building emphasis.

##### *b) Roof Treatments*

- To promote roof pitches between 30°-45° that shall span the shortest plan dimension to avoid excessively large roof spans.
- To promote lean-to roofs to be of equal or lower pitch than the main roof.
- To encourage the use of gable and hipped roof styles to reflect the prevailing roof profile.
- To retain existing chimneys, even if disused, and any new chimneys and repairs should match the original traditional details
- To avoid inappropriate and modern box eaves with deep projecting fascia, flat soffits and projecting barge boards.

##### *c) Facade Finishes and Building Materials*

- To encourage only façade finishes and building materials within the Town Centre that both age and weather well.
- To discourage buildings where the entire façade is glazed.
- To encourage the re-use of appropriate building materials from buildings which have been unavoidably demolished.
- The building materials specified in the below are the 'base materials' to be used in any proposed new building.

Exterior Walls	Roofs	Windows / Doors
Cut Stone	Slate	Non-Tropical Hardwood Timber
Rubble Stone	Metal Sheeting with raised seams (Zinc, Copper, etc,)	
Render or Plaster		
Metal (Copper and Aluminium)		
Concrete		
Brick		

*Table Two: Acceptable Building Materials and Finishes within the Town.*

## 16.0 LAND USE ZONINGS

The Meath County Development Plan 2007-2013 sets out the general context and the nature of land-use for those towns and towns outlined for the preparation of a Local Area Plan, including Athboy. A Land-Use Zoning Map has been prepared which is to be read in conjunction with the following sections. Although some changes have been made to the zonings within the previous Land-Use Zoning Map for the Town, the quantum of zonings remains approximately the same.

The purpose of land-use zoning is to indicate to property owners, developers and the general public alike, the types of development that are considered most appropriate in each zone. In this context, zoning objectives allow a developer to plan proposals with some degree of certainty, subject to other conditions and requirements as set-out in the Plan. In the control of development, zoning seeks to delimit competing and incompatible uses so as to promote greater environmental quality and thereby rationalise the land-use pattern of an urban area.

All residential and other zoning objectives contained within this LAP (see Table xxx) are in accordance with the designations assigned within the current Settlement Strategy outlined in the Meath County Development Plan 2007 – 2013. The Athboy land use zoning designations are outlined in Table Three below.

Land-Use Zoning Objective	Description of Land-Use Zoning Objective
A1	To protect and enhance the amenity of developed residential communities.
A2	To provide for new residential communities and community facilities and protect the amenities of existing residential areas in accordance with an approved framework plan.
A5	To provide for low density residential development in accordance with an approved framework plans and individual dwelling design.
B1	To protect and enhance the special physical and social character of existing town and town centres and to provide for new and improved town centre facilities and uses.
C1	To provide for and facilitate mixed residential and business uses in existing mixed use central business areas.
E2	To provide for light industrial and industrial office type employment in a high quality campus environment subject to the requirements of approved framework plans and the provision of necessary physical infrastructure.
F1	To provide for and improve open spaces for active and passive recreational amenities.
G1	To provide for necessary community, recreational and educational facilities.
H1	To protect the setting, character and environmental quality of areas of high natural beauty.

*Table Three: Athboy Local Area Plan Land-use Zoning Objectives.*



## 16.1 Land-Use Zoning Objectives Explanatory Notes

The following explanatory notes on the Plan's Land-Use Zoning Objectives have been taken from the current Meath County Development Plan 2007-2013.

- In **A1 zones**, the Planning Authority will be primarily concerned with the protection of the amenities of established residents. Whilst infill or redevelopment proposals would be acceptable in principle, careful consideration is required for the protection of amenities such as privacy, daylight/ sunlight, aspect etc. in new proposals.
- The **A2 and A5 zones** are intended to be the main areas for new residential development. In all residentially zoned lands, no residential development shall be permitted on lands that are subject of a deed of dedication or identified in a planning application as open space to ensure the availability of community and recreational facilities for the residents of the area.
- In **B1 zones**, it is intended to accommodate the majority of new commercial and retail uses in towns and towns.
- In **C1 zones**, it is intended to provide for a mix of uses within current areas of established mixed uses.
- **E2 zones** provide for light industrial and industrial office type development in a high quality campus environment, subject to the requirements of approved framework plans addressing issues such as built form and general overall layout, transportation, integration with surrounding uses and the range of uses to be accommodated and the provision of necessary physical infrastructure.

The expansion of established and approved uses on these lands will be considered on their merits.

- **F1, G1 and H1 zones** are self-explanatory and relate to community and amenity uses or designations. No residential development shall be permitted on lands that are subject of a deed of dedication or identified in a planning application as open space to ensure the availability of community and recreational facilities for the residents of the area.

## 16.2 Zoning Matrix

Each zoning category is highlighted within a Zoning Matrix, see Table Four, with particular land uses identified as 'normally permitted', 'not normally permitted' or 'open for consideration'.

Uses other than the primary use for which an area is zoned may be permitted provided they are not in conflict with the primary use zoning objective. The Zoning Matrix illustrates the acceptability or unacceptability in principle of various uses for each of the zoning objectives. The land use zoning matrix is intended to provide guidance to potential developers. It is not intended to supplant the normal planning process. An indication that a proposal would be 'permitted in principle' from the matrix should in no way be taken to imply a granting of permission, or indeed that a planning application may be necessarily successful. Individual applications remain a matter for the Planning Authority to decide, taking into consideration the merits of individual cases and circumstances that may be relevant at a specific time or at a specific location.

The matrix relates to land use only and important factors such as density, building height, design standards, traffic generation, etc., are also relevant in establishing whether or not a development proposal would be acceptable in a particular location.

**A = Will Normally be Acceptable**

A use which will normally be acceptable is one which the Planning Authority accepts in principle in the relevant zone. However, the proposed use remains subject to the normal planning process including policies and objectives outlined in this Plan.

**O = Are Open for Consideration**

A use which is open for consideration means that the use is generally acceptable, unless indicated otherwise and where specific considerations associated with a given proposal (i.e. scale) would be unacceptable, or where the proposed development would be contrary to an objective for a given area.

**X = Will Not Normally be Acceptable**

Development which is classified as not normally being acceptable in a particular zone is one which will not be considered by the Planning Authority except in proven, exceptional circumstances. This may be due to its perceived effect on existing and permitted uses, its incompatibility with the policies and objectives contained in this Plan or the fact that it may be inconsistent with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area. The expansion of established and approved uses not conforming to land-use zone objectives will be considered on their merits.

Use Classes	A1	A2	A5	B1	C1	E2	F1	G1	H1
A.T.M. (In Commercial Premises)	A	A	X	A	A	X	X	X	X
Abattoir	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Adverts	O	O	X	A	O	O	X	X	X
Outdoor Advertising Structures	X	X	X	O	O	O	O	X	X
Agri - Business	X	X	X	O	O	X	X	X	X
Amusement Arcade	X	X	X	O	X	X	X	X	X
B & B	A	A	A	A	A	X	X	X	X
Bank / Financial Institution	X	O	X	A	X	X	X	X	X
Betting Office	X	O	X	A	O	X	X	X	X
Bring Banks	A	A	A	A	A	O	O	O	X
Car Park (Commercial)	X	X	X	O	O	O	X	X	X
Caravan Park	X	X	X	X	X	X	O	X	X
Car Dismantler / Scrap Yard	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

Use Classes	A1	A2	A5	B1	C1	E2	F1	G1	H1
Cash & Carry	X	X	X	O	O	X	X	X	X
Casual Trading	X	X	X	A	O	X	X	X	X
Cemetery	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	A	X
Church	X	O	O	A	A	X	O	A	X
Cinema	X	X	X	A	O	X	X	A	X
Community Facility / Centre	O	A	O	A	A	X	O	A	O
Conference Centre	X	O	X	O	O	X	X	X	X
C & D Waste Recycling Centre	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Crèche / Childcare Facility	O	A	A	A	A	O	X	A	X
Cultural Facility / Use	O	O	O	A	A	X	O	A	X
Dance Hall / Night Club	X	X	X	A	O	X	X	X	X
Doctors / Dentists	O	O	O	A	A	X	X	O	X
Drive Through Restaurants	X	X	X	O	O	X	X	X	X
Education	O	O	O	A	A	X	X	A	X
Energy Installation	X	X	X	X	X	O	X	X	X
Enterprise Centre	X	O	X	O	O	A	X	X	X
Fuel Depot - Domestic	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Fuel Depot - Petroleum Products	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Funeral Home	X	O	X	A	O	X	X	A	X
Garden Centre	X	X	X	X	O	X	X	X	X
Guest House	O	A	O	A	A	X	X	X	X
Halting Site/Group Housing	O	A	O	X	O	X	X	O	X
Health Centre	O	O	O	A	A	X	X	A	X
Heavy Goods Vehicle Car Park	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

Use Classes	A1	A2	A5	B1	C1	E2	F1	G1	H1
Home Based Economic Activities	O	O	O	O	O	X	X	X	X
Hospital	X	O	O	X	A	X	X	A	X
Hostel	X	O	O	A	A	X	X	X	X
Hotel / Motel	X	O	X	A	A	X	X	X	X
Industry – General	X	X	X	X	X	O	X	X	X
Industry – Light	X	O	X	X	O	A	X	X	X
Leisure / Recreation	X	O	O	A	O	X	O	A	O
Library	X	A	O	A	A	X	X	A	X
Motor Sales / Repair	X	X	X	O	O	X	X	X	X
Offices <100m <sup>2</sup>	X	O	X	A	A	X	X	O	X
Offices 100 to 1000 m <sup>2</sup>	X	X	X	A	A	A	X	X	X
Offices >1000m <sup>2</sup>	X	X	X	A	A	A	X	X	X
Open Space	A	A	A	A	A	X	A	A	A
Park and Ride	X	X	X	X	O	A	X	X	X
Petrol Station	O	O	X	O	O	X	X	X	X
Plant & Tool Hire	X	X	X	X	O	X	X	X	X
Public House	X	O	X	A	A	X	X	X	X
Public Services	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	X
Civic & Amenity Recycling Facility	X	X	X	X	X	O	X	A	X
Refuse Transfer Station	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Residential	A	A	A	O	A	X	X	X	X
Residential Institution	O	O	O	O	O	X	X	O	X
Restaurant / Café	X	X	X	A	A	O	X	O	X
Retail Warehouse	X	X	X	O	X	X	X	X	X
Retirement Home	O	A	O	X	O	X	X	A	X
Science & Technology	X	X	X	O	O	A	X	X	X

Use Classes	A1	A2	A5	B1	C1	E2	F1	G1	H1
Based Enterprise									
Shop - Local **	O	A	X	A	A	O	X	X	X
Shop - Major	X	X	X	A	O	X	X	X	X
Shopping Centre	X	X	X	A	X	X	X	X	X
Sports Facilities	O	O	O	O	O	X	A	A	X
Take-Away	X	X	X	A	O	X	X	X	X
Telecommunication Structures	X	X	X	A	O	A	O	O	X
Third Level Educational Institution	X	X	X	X	O	O	X	A	X
Tourism Complex	X	X	X	A	A	X	A	A	X
Transport Depot	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Veterinary Surgery	O*	O*	O*	A	O	X	X	X	X
Warehouse	X	X	X	X	X	O	X	X	X
Water Services ***	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	O
Wholesale Warehousing	X	X	X	O	O	X	X	X	X
* Where this use would be ancillary to the use of the overall dwelling as a normal place of residence by the user of the office.									
** A local shop is defined as a convenience retail unit of not more than 200 square metres in gross floor area.									
*** Refers to public utility installations.									

Table Four: Land-Use Matrix.



## **17.0 PHASING AND IMPLEMENTATION**

### **17.1 Introduction**

The success of this Local Area Plan rests with the degree of implementation that is achieved over its lifespan (six years). It is thus important for a plan to strive towards a higher standard in terms of economic gain, commercial success, environmental awareness and residential living. However the objectives in relation to these topics need to be realistic in terms of funding capabilities and implementation structures.

The funding of this Plan falls within the scope of three sectors: the national government, either directly or through the vehicle of Public Utilities' providers, the County Council and the private sector. The actions required to facilitate the implementation of the Local Area Plan, as well as the agents responsible for the respective actions have been identified.

The Local Authority will require developers to incorporate the objectives of this Plan, including those relating to the provision of physical and social infrastructure, into their individual development proposals. Existing objectives may also be implemented by means of conditions attached to a grant of permission on developers and their associated development proposals.

The implementation of this Local Area Plan may be constrained by a number of elements, namely the current economic climate, political support, allocated Local Authority funding, and the availability of funding from other sources. The nature of statutory Development Plans is such that no budget is agreed in advance and therefore no funding of projects or implementation of all objectives contained within the Plan is guaranteed. However, where appropriate, the County Council will seek financing from specified sources, both public and private sector, as well as from European Union (E.U.) programmes and grants.

### **17.2 Various Implementation Frameworks**

Additional National and E.U. level programmes include the National Lottery Facility Funding, E.U. Structural Fund, the E.U. Community Support Framework, as well as other funding mechanisms available from various government departments. Such bodies have varying criteria regarding the type of developments they fund and may be useful to consider in the achievement of development objectives.

#### ***The Community Grant Scheme***

This grant scheme is undertaken by Meath County Council and is intended to assist community-based projects under the following categories:

- General public interest,
- Events,
- Activities,
- Cultural and heritage development projects,
- Tidy Towns/Towns enhancement projects, and
- Maintenance of burial grounds.

### ***Various Governmental Departments***

Funding is available through various governmental departments such as:

- The Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism offers grants and funding through varying programs such as the Sports Capital Programme, which is a National Lottery Funded programme that advertises on an annual basis and allocates funding to projects that are directly related to the provision of sport and recreational sport facilities.
- The Department of Community, Rural & Gaeltacht Affairs offers two schemes. One of which is an Equipment and Refurbishment Grant providing essential physical supports for the local community and voluntary sector, and the second scheme is an Education, Training and Research Grant aimed at enhancing the capacity of local communities.
- The Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform operates the Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme 2000-2006, which is in part funded by the European Union Structural Funds (ERDF and ESF). Grant schemes operated under this programme include:
  - Capital grants to community groups and organisations which operate on a “not for profit” basis for the establishment, upgrading and enhancement of childcare facilities;
  - Staffing grants to community groups and organisations which operate on a “not for profit” basis for childcare personnel in childcare services;
  - Capital grants for self-employed/private childcare service providers of up to €50,790 subject to a maximum of 65% of the total capital cost of the childcare project.

### ***EU Structural Funds***

This programme identifies a number of areas for funding, two of which are the European Regional Development Fund and the European Social Fund. There also exists a separate programme, which is co-financed by the structural funds called Community Initiatives. Such EU programmes can be a valuable source of investment, through which specific policies and objectives, as identified in this plan, can be implemented.

### ***Conclusion***

The above sections outline some of the programmes available to aid the implementation of the objectives of the Athboy Local Area Plan. Various agencies, including voluntary groups, professional institutions, public and private bodies, and other organisations should be encouraged to participate whenever possible.

## **17.3 Phasing**

With regard to phasing, it is an objective of the Planning Authority to promote the implementation of the Local Area Plan in a rational and sequential approach that is in keeping with the ‘Order of Priority’ map for Athboy, as identified in Variation No. 2 of the Meath County Development Plan 2007 – 2013, the proposed development strategy, and to ensure that essential facilities, such as road infrastructure, water and sewerage networks, etc, are secured and in place in tandem with the proposed development projects.

The sequence with which these schemes are or will be advanced, determines the sequence and phasing of development. Within large scale developments, or where key infrastructure is proposed, developments may be phased to tie-in with these schemes or projects. The Local

Authority reserves the right to refuse development on the grounds of prematurity, pending the provision of necessary physical and social infrastructure or the provision of infrastructural capacities.

#### **17.4 Contributions**

It is considered reasonable that contributions be paid, towards Local Authority investment in the provision of infrastructure and services, by developers who benefit from such provisions. The Development Contribution Scheme in accordance with the provisions of Part III, Section 48 of the Planning and Development Acts, 2000-2006, has been adopted by the Council requiring the payment of a contribution in respect of public infrastructure and facilities benefiting development in the area of the planning authority.

#### **17.5 Monitoring and Review**

In order to ensure that the development strategy outlined in this Local Area Plan is being pursued, the Council, through the “day-to-day” activity of its development management function, will monitor the implementation and phasing of this Local Area Plan. A review will assist in assessing whether the objectives detailed in the Plan are being met.

**APPENDIX A****List of Persons who made a Submission during the Pre-Draft Public Consultation Phase of the Local Area Plan's Preparation**

Pre-Draft Submissions	
1	Aidan Hora on behalf of Loughglynn Developments Ltd.
2	Helena Gavin RPS Planning on behalf of The Moore Family.
3	Fergus O Boyle on behalf of Athboy R.F.C.
4	Michael Mc Cormack , National Roads Authority.
5	Christopher Flynn & Associates on behalf of Tom Castles.
6	John Spain & Associates on behalf of Patrick Kerrigan.
7	Ronan Healy on behalf of Carnisle Construction Ltd.
8	Liz McCormack.
9	Martin Farrelly ,
10	Frances Heaslip, Coordination Unit (Department Communications, Energy and Natural Resources).
11	Shirley Kearney, Department of Education & Science.
12	Teresa Halloran, Department of Environment, Heritage & Local Government.
13	Patrick Noonan & Co on behalf of Jennifer Waldron-Lynch.
14	Orla Ivers.
15	David Ivers.
16	Brendan & Yvonne O Connor.
17	Sean & Anne Leavy.
18	Fiachra Houston.
19	Conor Mc Dermott, Office of Public Works.
20	Barry & Anne Marie Doherty.
21	John & Theresa Doherty.
22	Foster Architects on behalf of Clann na nGael GAA Club & Homex Ltd.
23	Paraic McGuinness.
24	Mary Flood.
25	Seamus Flood.

26	Enda Shiels on behalf of Jimmy Tuite.
27	Noeline Ward.
28	Patrick O' Connor.
29	Desmond White.
30	Carmel Evans.
31	Tom Oxley, Health Services Executive.
32	Joe Fahy, on behalf of Coille Dios Housing Estate.
33	Teresa Halloran, Architectural Heritage Unit, DoEHLG.
34	Michael Owens, SEA Section, EPA, Regional Inspectorate, Inniscarra, Co. Cork.

**List of Persons who made a Submission during the Draft Public Consultation Phase of the Local Area Plan's Preparation**

Draft Submissions	
1	Michael Owens, SEA Section, EPA, Regional Inspectorate, Inniscarra, Co. Cork.
2	Patrick O' Sullivan, Spatial Policy Unit, Department of Environment, Heritage & Local Government.
3	Michael Mc Cormack, Policy Advisor, National Roads Authority.
4	Christopher Flynn & Assoc. on behalf of Tom Castles.
5	Joe Fahy, Senior Engineer, Housing Department, Meath County Council.
6	Joan Crosbie, Engineering Services, Office of Public Works.
7	Raphael Warner.
8	Hugh Kelly.
9	Frances Heaslip, Co Ordination Unit, Department of Communications, Energy & Natural Resources.
10	John Spain & Associates. on behalf of Patrick Kerrigan.
11	Christian Moore, on behalf of the Moore Family.
12	Dr Joan Macken.
13	Shirley Kearney, Higher Executive Officer, Department of Education & Science.
14	Fergus O'Boyle, Athboy Rugby Football Club.
15	David & Orla Ivers.
16	John & Theresa, Doherty.



**List of Persons who made a Submission during the Material Amendments Public Consultation Phase of the Local Area Plan's Preparation**

Material Amendments Submissions	
1	Seana McGearty, Co-ordination Unit, Department Communications, Energy and Natural Resources.
2	Michael McCormack, Policy Advisor, National Roads Authority.
3	Tadhg O'Mahony, Senior Scientific Officer, SEA Section, EPA.
4	Shirley Kearney, Higher Executive Officer, Forward Planning Section, Department of Education & Science.
5	John Spain & Associates on behalf of Patrick Kerrigan.
6	Cian O'Mahony, Office of Environmental Assessment, EPA.

## APPENDIX B

### Strategic Environmental Assessment: Screening Report



Draft Athboy Local Area Plan 2009-2014

SEA Screening Report

for submission to:

*Environmental Protection Agency,  
Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, and  
Department of Communications, Marine and Natural Resources.*

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Meath County Council intends to prepare a Local Area Plan (LAP) for the Town of Athboy in accordance with Sections 18, 19 and 20 of the Planning and Development Acts, 2000-2006. The purpose of this report is to consider whether the LAP requires Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA).

In accordance with the SEA Directive (2001/42/EC) an environmental assessment must be carried out for all plans and programmes which have the following purpose:

- Prepared for certain specified sectors (including land-use planning), and which set the framework for future development consent of projects listed in Annex I or Annex II of the EIA Directive; or
- In view of the likely effect on protected sites, have been determined to require an assessment under the Habitats Directive.

According to the DoEHLG's (Department of the Environment Heritage and Local Government) SEA Guidelines, *'in deciding whether a particular plan is likely to have significant environmental effects, regard must be had to the criteria set out in Annex II of the SEA Directive – which is reproduced in new Schedule 2A to the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as inserted by Article 12 of the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004'*.

Regarding the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment, EU Directive 2001/42/EC provides that SEA is mandatory for Local Area Plans for areas with a population of 10,000 or more. The 2006 Census records the population of Athboy at 2,213 persons. It is thus clear that the population of Athboy is not above the 10,000 person threshold and therefore does not fall within the mandatory national requirements for the preparation of an SEA for the LAP area.

Where the population involved is less than 10,000, the EU Directive requires *'Screening'* of the Plan. The following Screening Report has been prepared in order to establish whether or not the preparation of the Athboy LAP will have any likely significant environmental effects on the area, and as such, would therefore require the preparation of an SEA.

The current Meath County Development Plan 2007-2013 Zoning Map, as well as an *'Order of Priority'* map for Athboy from Variation No. 2 of the Meath County Development Plan 2007-2013 are attached as appendices.

### 1.1 Location

From a strategic regional context, Athboy is located to the west of County Meath, some 19km via the N51 to Navan and approximately 13km south to Trim via the R154 and 13km to Kells, located via the R164 to the north.

The town is recognised as having developed in an east-west direction along the N51 National Secondary Route. This route provides a strategic transportation connection from Drogheda, County Louth, through Slane and Navan, Co Meath, connecting to the N52 to Mullingar, Co Westmeath.

From a strategic national context, the Town of Athboy is located approximately 66km to the west of Dublin City Centre, connected via the N3 national transportation corridor from Dublin City.

## 2.0 OBJECTIVES OF THE LAP

The Local Area Plan will set-out the policies and objectives of Meath County Council for the sustainable development of Athboy over a six year period. The key policies used to determine the future development pattern and objectives for Athboy are informed by national, regional and local planning policy, and ultimately seek to:

- Accommodate and encourage sustainable growth to meet resident and working needs;
- Contribute to the evolution of a socially integrated community;
- Ensure physical and social integration of new development;
- Provide a mixture of uses to facilitate a more sustainable Town capable of meeting its own needs;
- Ensure sufficient land is zoned to cater for the appropriate future growth and development needs of Athboy.
- Protect the heritage of the town

### 2.1 Meath County Development Plan Policies

The need for an LAP is prompted by the Meath County Development Plan 2007-2013. Policy SS POL 3 of the Plan seeks to:

*‘...review and prepare Local Area Plans for groups of related settlements which have economic, geographical or settlement hierarchical relationships in conjunction with local communities’. As a result, Objective SS OBJ 1 of the County Development Plan aims ‘to prepare Local Area Plans for the urban centres contained in Table 7 within 2 years of the adoption of this County Development Plan in accordance with the provisions of Sections 18 – 20 of the Planning & Development Acts 2000 - 2006. These Local Area Plans will replace the individual Written Statements and Detailed Objectives for Towns and Towns contained in the 2001 County Development Plan.’*

The Meath County Development Plan sets out the contents required to be included in LAPs in the County Area.

Athboy has been identified as a ‘Small Growth Town’ settlement within the Meath County Development Plan’s Settlement Strategy and the LAP will be guided by this Strategy. The primary principle of the Council’s Settlement Strategy is to channel residential development into the three main settlements of Navan, the Dunboyne/Clonee/Pace Rail corridor and the Drogheda Environs. In relation to ‘Small Growth Towns’ it states that:

*‘The urban centres in this tier act as sub regional centres providing primarily residential roles with a strong commercial and industrial presence. The development of each Small Growth Town is supported by the growth of an adjacent Moderate or Large Growth Town, in terms of large scale employment uses. Relatively small and locally financed businesses are expected to locate in Small Growth Towns. However, other economic investment could be permitted. Retail is likely to be mainly in the convenience category, with a small supermarket and possibly local centres serving only the town and its local catchment area. Small Growth Towns would be likely to contain facilities such as a primary and / or secondary school, as well as a Health Clinic. The Planning Authority shall desist from zoning additional significant areas of residential land in these centres unless under exceptional circumstances and where a reciprocal rebalancing of existing zoned lands has taken place elsewhere’.*

The current County Development Plan also states that the release and development of residential lands shall be linked to the following criteria:

- The provision of necessary physical infrastructure, primarily the availability, in advance of development occurring, of capacity in water and wastewater infrastructure. The environment must be capable of absorbing the scale and quantum of development that is envisaged;
- Spare capacity in existing (and planned) social infrastructure, primarily national and second level educational facilities. The future planning of the Department of Education and Science of national and second level educational facilities shall also be taken into account. The development of additional residential lands shall leverage the necessary recreational and amenity infrastructure commensurate with the needs of the resident population. The proposed scale and quantum of development must reinforce the integrity and vitality of the local community and services that can be provided;
- A more sustainable economic base whereby a greater percentage of local persons are employed locally. This will require closer liaison between the County Enterprise Board, County Development Board, Economic Development & Promotion Officer and the Planning Department;
- To facilitate the realisation of objectives contained in existing Local Area Plans or existing Written Statement and Detailed Objectives for Towns and Towns (Volume II of the Development Plan) in relation to the delivery of identified critical and necessary social and/or physical infrastructure in conjunction with residential development. Priority of phasing may be given to such residential lands accordingly;
- The extent of existing residentially zoned lands will be revised in the context of the individual Local Area Plan or Development Plan review for each centre and does not necessarily preclude identifying additional zoning in specific locations where the Planning Authority is satisfied that a clearly established need for such zoning is evident. Such additional zoning may only be considered where the development of such lands for residential purposes would deliver an identified piece of critical and necessary social and/or physical infrastructure in conjunction with such development and may require such lands to be prioritised for development over existing residentially zoned lands or that a corresponding amount of land has been de-zoned;
- The Local Authority social and affordable house building programme; and
- The efficient use of land by consolidating existing settlements, focusing in particular on development capacity within central urban areas through the re-use of under-utilised lands and buildings as a priority, rather than extending green field development. This should also ensure that development is concentrated at locations where it is possible to integrate employment, community services, retailing and public transport. The order of priority for the release of residentially zoned land shall attempt to ensure that there is a sequential approach which downgrades the priority of outer suburban greenfield sites.

In addition the Development Plan states that the extent of existing residentially zoned lands will be revised in the context of the individual Local Area Plan or Development Plan preparation for each centre and does not preclude additional zoning in specific locations where the Planning Authority is satisfied that a clearly established need for such zoning is evident.

Such an established need can only be justified where the development of such lands for residential purposes would deliver an identified piece of critical and necessary social and/or physical infrastructure in conjunction with such development and may require such lands to be

prioritised for development over existing residentially zoned lands or that a corresponding amount of land has been dezoned.

## **2.2 Meath County Development Plan 2007-2013 – Variation No. 2**

In accordance with the County Development Plan policies outlined above, the Settlement Strategy has recently been reviewed, resulting in the adoption of Variation 2 of the Meath County Development Plan.

This variation was adopted in February 2008 having identified an 'Order of Priority' for residential zoned lands within a number of settlements, including Athboy. The residential zoned lands are segregated into Phase 1 and Phase 2 areas. Phase 1 relates to lands to be developed during the current Development plan period (up to 2013); while Phase 2 relates to lands to be developed post 2013. Variation 2 allocates a further 250 additional dwellings to Athboy over the period of the current County Development Plan from 2007-2013 (275 units identified in Table 6, with the reallocation of 25 units to Kells town).

This allocation does not include two specific site types within settlements subject to such an 'Order of Priority':

- The Planning Authority does not intend to stifle the delivery of the local authority housing programme. Therefore, units to be developed by Meath County Council for social and affordable housing will not be taken from the numbers allocated for Athboy.
- The Planning Authority does not intend to stifle redevelopment of brown field/infill/derelict sites and seeks to actively promote redevelopment of these lands. Therefore, units permitted on such sites will not be taken from the numbers allocated for Athboy.

The Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2002 requires that a Local Area Plan must be consistent with the policies and objectives contained within the relevant County Development Plan, being the Meath County Development Plan 2007-2013; ultimately, the Local Area Plan's stated policies and objectives must be explicitly linked to the quantum and scale of development envisaged for the settlement within the Meath County Development Plan 2007-2013.

## **2.3 The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Consultation Draft Guidelines for Planning Authorities September, 2008**

The Department of the Environment recently published '*The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Consultation Draft Guidelines for Planning Authorities September, 2008*'. These guidelines aim to integrate flood risk management into the planning process, to assist in the delivery of sustainable development. These guidelines aim to:

1. Avoid development in areas at risk of flooding by not permitting development in flood risk areas, particularly floodplains;
2. Adopt a sequential approach to flood risk management based on avoidance, reduction and then mitigation of flood risk as the overall framework for assessing the location of new development in the development planning processes; and
3. Incorporate flood risk assessment into the process of making decisions on planning applications and planning appeals.

The Athboy River runs through the town in a north-south direction. In relation to flooding within the area, the Office of Public Works has prepared National Flood Hazard Mapping which outlines



flood history for the area. Two recurring events are listed at the Kildarkey Road and Mullaghstones:

1. Kildarkey Road, CR343, Low lying land floods after heavy rain every year. The road is liable to flood
2. Mullaghstones N51, Low lying land floods after heavy rain every year. Significant area flooded. The water crosses N51 and 1 property affected

Aside from the above areas, there are no other areas identifiable by the OPW Flood Hazard Mapping within the Town area, which are liable to flooding.

As a result, there would not appear to be significant flooding issues within the Town of Athboy; however the objectives and policies contained within the Department's Guidelines will be taken into consideration in full during the preparation of this Local Area Plan.

### **3.0 CRITERIA FOR DETERMINING THE LIKELY SIGNIFICANCE OF ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS**

#### **3.1 Characteristics of the Plan**

*(i) The degree, to which the Plan sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources*

As stated, the LAP's strategic objective is to provide a framework for the general development of the Plan area. The Plan will seek to provide guidance in the form of policies and objectives for the development of social, physical and environmental infrastructure in a sustainable manner for Athboy, provided development is of an appropriate scale, does not unduly interfere with the character and setting of the existing Town. Overall, the LAP will give a general indication of the preferred urban structure and layout for Athboy.

The existing development boundary of the Town will also be the subject of a review by the Council as part of the LAP preparation. Any process for establishing a new development boundary will take into consideration a number of physical and policy issues. Physical considerations include the existing urban structure of the town; area topography and any resulting priority views and environmental features, such as the Athboy River. Physical considerations are centred upon consistency with planning policies at national, regional and local level; anticipated population target; likely future development needs; and the proper planning and sustainable development of the area in general.

Any review of the development boundary will also take into consideration the policies and objectives of the Meath County Development Plan, as varied. As stated, Variation 2 of the County Development Plan provides for a maximum of 250 additional residential units for Athboy during the 2007 – 2013 period. Using the County Development Plan's average household size figure contained within Table 5, this would result in a population increase of 625-637 persons by 2013 (based on 2013 January and December average household size figures). The LAP will therefore be required to ensure sufficient residentially zoned land to meet this target. Additionally, the draft LAP will seek to provide adequate levels of zoned land to ensure community and commercial facilities, and services are accommodated to sustain this target during the lifetime of the Plan.

Whilst considering and meeting the needs of the community the Draft LAP will have regard to the protection and enhancement of the natural and built environment and assist in achieving the principles of sustainability. Ultimately, it is foreseen that all of these requirements can be easily accommodated for within the existing development boundary.

The LAP will also make provisions with regard to design standards, services and the phasing of such development.

**(ii) *The degree to which the Plan influences other plans, including those in a hierarchy***

The LAP will be informed by the hierarchy of national policy (National Spatial Strategy for Ireland 2002-2020), regional policy (Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area 2004-2016) and local plans (Meath County Development Plan 2007-2013). The Athboy LAP will be consistent with the policies and objectives of the aforementioned plans. As the LAP will sit below these plans within the spatial plan hierarchy it will only influence any future plans that may be prepared for designated lands within the proposed Town boundary.

**(iii) *The relevance of the Plan for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development***

As stated, the LAP will be made pursuant to the provisions of Sections 18 to 20 of the Planning and Development Acts 2000-2006 and, therefore, policies and objectives of the LAP must be informed by the principles of sustainable development. As such, the Plan will seek to achieve development in a sustainable manner through the protection and enhancement of its natural, archaeological, social, economic and built heritage.

Through the policies and objectives of the LAP there are opportunities to conserve and protect the key environmental features of Athboy. These opportunities will:

- Consolidate the expansion of the Town;
- Enhance linkages within the Town;
- Provide traffic calming measures and enhance pedestrian safety;
- Promote environmental enhancement with regard to features such as existing derelict sites, community parks and the Athboy River;
- Conserve and enhance the built heritage;
- Provide physical, social and economic infrastructure appropriate to the Town.

As previously stated, the preparation of the LAP is also guided by the overall objectives of the County Development Plan which seek inter alia;

- Land use zoning of areas for residential, commercial, industrial, agricultural, recreational, open space, community facilities or otherwise, or a mixture of those uses;
- Provision of infrastructure, including the promotion of public transport and road /rail development, energy, communications facilities, water supplies, waste recovery, disposal facilities, waste water services, etc.;
- Conservation and protection of the environment;
- Protection of structures and preservation of the character of Conservation Areas;
- The integration of social, community and cultural requirements with the planning and sustainable development of the area;
- The preservation of the character of the landscape including preservation of views and prospects and the amenities of places and features of natural beauty or interest;

- The renewal and development of areas in need of regeneration;
- Provision of traveller accommodation;
- Preserving, improving and extending amenities and recreational amenities;
- Major Accidents Directive (siting of new establishments, modifications of existing establishments, development in the vicinity of establishments);
- Provision of community services, including schools, crèches, childcare facilities and other educational facilities, and;
- Protection of the linguistic and cultural heritage of Gaeltacht areas.

**(iv) Environmental problems relevant to the Plan**

The Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government's (DoEHLG) Circular letter SEA 1/08 and the National Parks & Wildlife Service's (NPWS) Circular 1/08, both dated 15<sup>th</sup> February 2008, state that any draft land use plan (Development Plans, Local Area Plans, Regional Planning Guidelines, schemes for Strategic Development Zones) or amendment/variation to a plan, proposed under the Planning and Development Acts 2000-2006 must be screened for any potential impact on areas designated as Natura 2000 sites (being SACs, NHAs or SPAs).

The River Boyne and River Blackwater candidate SAC lies in close proximity to Athboy, although the town is not located within its boundary. This is confirmed in the National Parks and Wildlife Site Synopsis 002299.

It is noted that population growth of recent years has put a strain on existing water and wastewater infrastructure throughout the County. Existing infrastructure is old and in need of upgrading. The Local Authority is anxious to address infrastructural deficiencies in settlements such as Athboy, as reflected in the Meath County Council Assessment of Needs (2007 – 2013):

- Athboy, Ballivor, Kildalkey, Rathcairn – Water Supply improvement scheme with 2009 construction start date.
- Meath grouped towns and towns sewerage scheme (including Athboy), started 2006, estimated completion date late 2009 – early 2010.

Such upgrade works will facilitate the planned and sustainable further development of Athboy. The area is also well served by a modern road network, facilitating good accessibility for residents and workers alike. Ultimately, upgrading works are planned for water infrastructure services and there are no manifest strategically significant environmental problems identified within Athboy.

**(v) The relevance of the Plan for the implementation of European Union legislation on the environment (e.g. plans linked to waste management or water protection)**

These plans and programmes are considered under the County Development Plan and will not be specifically addressed in this LAP. There exists facility for the adoption of policies and objectives arising, where necessary, from E.U. legislation via the statutory processes of; making of Planning Regulations and Material Variations of Development Plans. The LAP will therefore take into account all existing relevant environmental legislation and will accommodate any new legislation via the above processes. Any site specific issues will be addressed through the planning application process.

### **3.2 Characteristics of the Effects and of the Area Likely to be Affected**

#### **(i) The probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects**

Generally, it is considered that the effects on the existing environment will be irreversible but acceptable within the context of the proper planning and sustainable development of the Town, hinterland and County as a whole. In addition, development control provisions in the County Development Plan and the LAP, as well as the Planning & Development Acts and Regulations, will allow for the appropriate assessment of proposed developments on a case by case basis via the Planning Application process.

The policies and objectives of the Draft Athboy LAP will seek to mitigate and reduce any adverse environmental impact resulting from development.

#### **(ii) The cumulative nature of the effects**

It is not anticipated that Athboy Town will experience any unacceptable cumulative environmental effects as a result of the policies and objectives contained within the Draft LAP.

#### **(iii) The trans-boundary nature of the effects**

At this time, it is not foreseen that any extension to the existing Town development boundary will be required. Furthermore, through policies and objectives for appropriate design and siting of development within the Town, it is the aim of the Council to minimise any potential environmental effects, which may arise from development within the current Town boundary on the surrounding landscape. The policies and objectives of the Athboy LAP will have no other national, regional or inter-county transboundary effects.

#### **(iv) The risk to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents)**

The policies and objectives of the County Development Plan seek to reduce any potential impact on community health and safety. The Draft Athboy LAP will further enforce these policies and objectives. There are no designated SEVESO sites located in Athboy.

#### **(v) The magnitude and spatial extent of the effect (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected)**

At present, the Town has a population of 2,213 persons as recorded by the 2006 Census. It is an objective of the LAP to accommodate a further increase of 250 additional residential units up to 2013. This would result in a population increase of 625-637 persons by 2013 based upon the County Development Plan's Table 5 population and average household size predictions for 2013. The implementation of the LAP will therefore increase the potential population of Athboy over the plan period, however it is anticipated that this increase can be adequately accommodated within the existing development boundary. Therefore no significant alteration to the existing spatial extent is expected.

#### **(vi) The value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:**

- Special natural characteristics or cultural heritage:

There are no areas in Athboy that have been environmentally designated under EU legislation and, as such, must be preserved and protected. However, as identified above, the River Boyne and River Blackwater cSAC is located in close proximity to the Town.

The historic core and townscape of Athboy has evolved from its medieval town walls and plot arrangements over the centuries. This has resulted in the unique collection of buildings and

structures from numerous eras of Irish history within Athboy, which in turn contribute to its inherent value.

The town centre is identified within the Meath County Development Plan 2007 as an Architectural Conservation Area. This designation seeks to protect the character of the Town, its structures and townscape. Athboy also has numerous examples of Protected Structures including St. James' Church, Castletown House and the Connaught Street Water Pump.

In order to reduce the impact of new development on the existing architectural character of the Town, the Draft LAP will propose policies and objectives promoting such protection. This will allow for mechanisms for the preservation of a place, area, group or townscape of special interest or which contributes to the appreciation of protected structures collectively.

It is considered appropriate that the Council provide a policy within the LAP that will ensure all planning applications that may, due to their location, size or nature, have implications for the archaeological heritage should be subject to an archaeological assessment.

In accordance with the EC Natural Habitats Regulations 1997, it is also considered appropriate that the Council provide a policy within the Draft LAP to ensure that an appropriate assessment of the implications of proposals on designated conservation sites is undertaken in respect of developments requiring planning permission.

- Exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values

The environmental policies and objectives to be contained within the LAP will seek to reduce the overall impact of future developments on the environmental quality of the Plan Area. The value of environmentally sensitive locations will not likely be adversely impacted upon.

- Intensive land-use

It is not expected that the intensification of existing land uses in the Plan area will be such that vulnerable areas will be significantly affected. It is considered appropriate that the Council provide policies which seek to reduce the potentially negative impact of increased land uses within the Town which is achievable through appropriate quality design standards and guidelines which shall be provided in the Plan through development briefs.

***(vii) The effects on areas or landscapes which have recognised national, European Union or international protection status***

There are no such areas within the Plan area, although as identified above, the River Boyne and River Blackwater cSAC is located in close proximity to the town.

#### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

SEA is not mandatory for this Plan as its current and proposed population is less than 10,000, the threshold at which an SEA is deemed necessary. The value of the existing environment in the Plan area and the nature of surrounding areas are such that the development resulting from policies and objectives within the LAP is unlikely to lead to any significant negative environmental effects. The development control provisions in the County Development Plan and the Draft LAP, as well as those inherent within the planning application process, arising from the Planning &

Development Acts and Regulations, will ensure the appropriate assessment of proposed developments on lands within the Athboy area on an individual basis.

## **5.0 RECOMMENDATION**

Based on this screening process it is considered that an SEA will not be required for the proposed Local Area Plan in Athboy.



## Strategic Environmental Assessment: Screening Report of the Proposed Amendments



### Draft Athboy Local Area Plan 2009-2015

SEA Screening Report of the Proposed Amendments (Material Amendments)

**June 2009**

for submission to:

*Environmental Protection Agency,  
Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, and  
Department of Communications, Marine and Natural Resources.*

## 1.0 Introduction

In accordance with Section 20(d) of the Planning and Development Acts, 2000-2006, notice is hereby given that Meath County Council are proposing amendments to the Draft Athboy Local Area Plan 2009-2015. These amendments have arisen following the review of the Manager's Report on submissions received during the public display period of the Draft Athboy Local Area Plan 2009-2015 by the Elected Members of the Council.

The purpose of this report is to consider whether the material amendments to the Local Area Plan will have any likely significant environmental effects, and as such, would therefore require the preparation of a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA).

The SEA process is the formal systematic evaluation of the likely significant environmental effects of implementing a plan or programme before a decision is made to adopt the plan or programme. The key indicator that will determine if an SEA is required, of particular non-mandatory Plans, is if they are likely to have significant environmental effects on the environment or not. Screening is the technique applied to determine whether a particular Plan would be likely to have significant environmental effects, and would thus warrant an SEA.

In accordance with Section 14A of the Planning & Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004, the Draft Athboy Local Area Plan was 'screened' for environmental impacts in December 2008.

In accordance with Section 14A and 14G of the Planning & Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations, 2004, the proposed amendments to the Draft Athboy Local Area Plan 2009-2015 also require to be screened for SEA in order to ensure that the analysis previously carried out remains valid.

The proposed material amendments to the Draft Local Area Plan are outlined in Section 2.1.1 presented in the order they appear in the Local Area Plan and should be read in conjunction with the Draft Athboy Local Area Plan 2009-2015. The likely significant environmental effects or potential impacts of all amendments are screened and assessed in Sections 2.1.2 and 2.1.3.

This screening report concludes that the material amendments to the Draft Athboy Local Area Plan 2009-2015 would not warrant a full SEA.

## 2.0 SEA Screening of Proposed Material Amendments

### 2.1 Criteria for Determining the Likely Significance of Environmental Effects

#### 2.1.1 Characteristics of the Plan

Amendment	Consideration
1	Zone 2.862ha of land outside the Draft Local Area Plan's north-western boundary for 'F1' open space and recreational facilities, and 'A2' residential development.
2	Rezone 1.794ha of land to the south-east of the Town, the majority of which is within the LAP Boundary, from 'A1' existing residential and 'E2' enterprise and employment development to 'F1' open space and recreational use.
3	Move that section of the indicative route proposed to connect the Kells/Navan and Trim Roads further to the south-west.

4	Insert an additional Access Arrow to the south-west of the GAA Grounds site to connect with the community, recreational and educational land-use zoned lands to the west and south-west of the site.
5	Rezone 0.901 ha of land to the west of the Town Centre from 'A1' existing residential to 'C1' mixed residential and business use.
6	Additional Framework Plan Area designation for those lands zoned 'F1' open space and recreational facilities, and 'A2' residential development to the rear of 'Butterfields Grove' along the Oldcastle Road to the north-west of the Town.
7	Additional Open Space Objective for those lands zoned 'F1' open space and recreational facilities to support and encourage the future development of Athboy Rugby Club in its current location.

### 2.1.2 Characteristics of the Effects and of the Area Likely to be Affected

The effects have been determined having regard to:

1. The area likely to be affected,
2. The probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of effects,
3. The cumulative nature of the effects,
4. The transboundary nature of the effects,
5. The risk to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents),
6. The magnitude and spatial extent of the effect (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected),
7. The value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:
  - special natural characteristics or cultural heritage,
  - exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values, and
  - intensive land use.
8. The effects on areas or landscapes, which have recognised national, European Union or international protection status.

Amendment	Consideration
1	No Effect – Although the site is located within the floodplain of the Yellow Ford River to the north and north-west of the Town, Policy FRM 1 of the Draft Local Area Plan relating to Flood Risk Management will ensure that any potential flooding implications that future development proposals on the lands may have will be given adequate consideration during the planning application process.
2	Likely Positive Effect
3	No effect
4	No effect
5	No effect
6	No effect
7	No effect

### 2.1.3 *Significance of effects*

Assessment is the process of evaluating the importance or significance of a plan's impacts, be they adverse or beneficial in nature. In most cases, this is essentially a judgment grounded within a number of factors but it may also be made more objective with the use of a range of criteria and standards. The assessment of significance will be based upon the following main factors:

- The character and perceived value of the affected environment;
- The magnitude, spatial extent and duration of anticipated change;
- The resilience of the environment to cope with change;
- Confidence in the accuracy of predictions of change;
- The existence of policies, programmes, plans, etc. which can be used as criteria;
- The existence of environmental standards against which a proposal can be assessed (e.g. air quality standards, water quality standards);
- The degree of public interest and concern in the environmental resources concerned and the issues associated with a proposed project;
- Scope for mitigation, sustainability and reversibility.

Having regard to these factors and the identified likely impacts set out above, it is considered that given the value of the existing environment in the Plan area and the nature of surrounding areas is such that any development resulting from the material amendments to the Draft Local Area Plan is unlikely to lead to any significant negative environmental effects.

Development control provisions in the Meath County Development Plan 2007-2013 and the Local Area Plan, as well as those inherent within the planning application process arising from the Planning & Development Acts, 2000-2006 and Regulations, 2001-2008, will ensure the appropriate consideration of any development proposals on lands within the Local Area Plan's area on an individual basis.

### **3.0 Recommendation**

Based on this screening process it is considered that an SEA will not be required for the proposed material amendments to the Draft Athboy Local Area Plan 2009-2015.

As outlined in section 14A of the Planning & Development (Strategic environmental Assessment) Regulations, 2004, subject to any submissions received during the consultation period, full SEA scoping and environmental reports shall not be necessary.

## Appropriate Assessment: Screening Report



Draft Athboy Local Area Plan 2009-2014

AA Screening Report

Carried out under the requirements of:

*Article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive*

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Meath County Council is preparing a Local Area Plan for the town of Athboy, Co. Meath as required by the Meath County Development Plan 2007-2013.

Article 6(3) of Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21<sup>st</sup> May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora, hereafter referred to as the Habitats Directive, compels competent authorities to undertake an appropriate assessment of any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of a Natura 2000 site but likely to have a significant effect thereon, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects.<sup>4</sup> The assessment examines the implications of proceeding with the plan or project in view of any Natura 2000 site's conservation objectives.

The Department of the Environment Heritage and Local Government (DoEHLG) Circular letter SEA 1/08 & NPWS 1/08 (dated 15 February, 2008) states:

*'Any draft land use plan (development plans, local area plans, regional planning guidelines, schemes for strategic development zones) or amendment/variation to it proposed under the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) must be screened for any potential impact on areas designated as Natura 2000 sites (normally called Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) or Special Protection Areas (SPAs)).'*

Screening is further directed to be based upon any ecological information available to the authority and an adequate description of the plan and its likely environmental impacts, having regard to policies for future development. Where screening finds that the Draft Plan or amendment will have an impact on a Natura 2000 site an appropriate assessment of the plan must be undertaken.

As part of the process of preparing the Draft Athboy Local Area Plan 2009-2015, hereinafter referred to as the Draft LAP, an Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening Exercise must be carried out for the Plan. This document is provided as an appendix to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Report attached to the Draft Athboy Local Area Plan 2009-2015, but should also be read as independent of the SEA process.

While Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Screening addresses the potential effects that the Draft LAP might have on the wider environment, AA Screening is specifically focused on the impact of the Draft LAP (either alone or in combination with other projects or plans) on the integrity of Natura 2000 sites in the area of the Draft LAP or those that have the potential to be affected by it. The integrity of a Natura 2000 site relates to its ecological functions and the assessment of whether or not it might be adversely affected by the Draft LAP focuses on, and is limited to, the conservation objectives of the site.

The following are the stages in the Appropriate Assessment procedure:

1. Determining whether the plan is likely to have a significant effect on a European site, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects – the screening stage,
2. Appropriate Assessment ascertaining the effect on site integrity,

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<sup>4</sup> *Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Areas (SPA) are collectively known as Natura 2000 sites.*



3. Mitigation & alternative solutions - where there is a risk of the plan having adverse effects on the integrity of a site, there should be an examination of mitigation measures and alternative solutions.

The Draft LAP has been screened to ascertain if the Plan should be subject to an Appropriate Assessment as outlined in the Habitats Directive. The screening exercise has had regard to the European Commission's guidance document entitled '*Assessment of plans and projects significantly affecting Natura 2000 sites, methodological guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC*'. In line with the suggested assessment methodology put forward by the Commission, a screening matrix and a finding of no significant effects matrix have been completed.

The screening exercise process has found that the Draft LAP does not require an Appropriate Assessment to be undertaken as the implementation of the Plan would not be likely to have significant effects on any Natura 2000 site.

## **1.1 Methodology**

Insight for the appropriate methodology for this study has been gained from '*Managing Natura 2000 Sites - The provisions of Article 6 of the 'Habitats' Directive 92/43/EEC*' and has accordingly drawn on the methodology envisaged by EIA Directive 85/337/EEC with further guidance provided by '*Assessment of Plans and Projects Significantly Affecting Natura 2000 sites – Methodological guidance on the provisions Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC*'.

Through this AA Screening the likely effects of the Draft LAP on Natura 2000 sites will be examined and it will be considered whether it can be objectively concluded that these effects will not be significant. This will involve:

1. determining whether the project or plan is directly connected with or necessary to the management of a Natura 2000 site.
2. describing the Draft LAP, and other plans or projects, that have the potential for having significant effects on Natura 2000 sites;
3. identifying the potential effects on Natura 2000 sites;
4. assessing the significance of any effects.

In the following section the Draft LAP will be assessed in terms of these four issues.

## **2.0 SCREENING MATRIX**

### **2.1 Brief Description of the Project or Plan**

The LAP is intended to provide for the proper planning and sustainable development of Athboy over the Plan's six year timeframe, specifically 2009-2015, unless amended. It consists of a written statement and maps which give a graphic representation of the planning policies and development objectives contained within the Plan.

The primary purpose of this LAP is to establish a land-use planning framework for the sustainable development of Athboy in a co-ordinated and coherent manner that is respectful of the Town's existing character and size.

The overall goal of this LAP is to facilitate the development of Athboy commensurate to its designation as a 'Small Growth Town' within the Settlement Strategy in the Meath County Development Plan 2007-2013. In accordance with Variation No. 2 (Order of Priority) of the Meath County Development Plan 2007-2013, the Draft LAP will seek to promote the development of up to 250 additional residential units up to 2013 with priority for development going to Town Centre consolidation sites.

Such an increase in the local population needs to be achieved in conjunction with the provision of an increase in local employment. The growth of Athboy in line with these targets would achieve, inter alia, the following key policy objectives in line with the Development Plan:

- a strengthening of the service centre role of the Town both in terms of servicing its existing population but also that of its extensive hinterland.
- maintaining the vitality and viability of the existing Town and in particular ensuring the sustained provision of existing services, such as schools, shops, sports clubs, employment uses, etc.
- the avoidance of unsustainable ribbon development along the entrance roads and the surrounding countryside through the designation of appropriately zoned lands adjacent to the existing Town and the efficient use of existing and planned for transportation and services infrastructure, and
- the bypassing of the Town to the south to provide for the improvement of transportation infrastructure in Athboy.

## **2.2 Brief Description of the Natura 2000 sites**

There are no Natura 2000 sites within the boundary of the Local Area Plan.

### **2.2.1 The River Boyne and River Blackwater candidate Special Area of Conservation**

There is one Natura 2000 site within the vicinity of Athboy that could potentially be affected by the Plan; namely the River Boyne and River Blackwater candidate Special Area of Conservation (cSAC).

Site Code:	Site Name:
002299	River Boyne and River Blackwater

The Yellow Ford River which flows through the Town of Athboy is a tributary of the River Boyne and River Blackwater cSAC. Under the Habitats Directive Annex I habitats, and Annex II and Annex V species have been identified within the cSAC, along with migratory wildfowl listed in Annex I of the Birds Directive (NPWS).

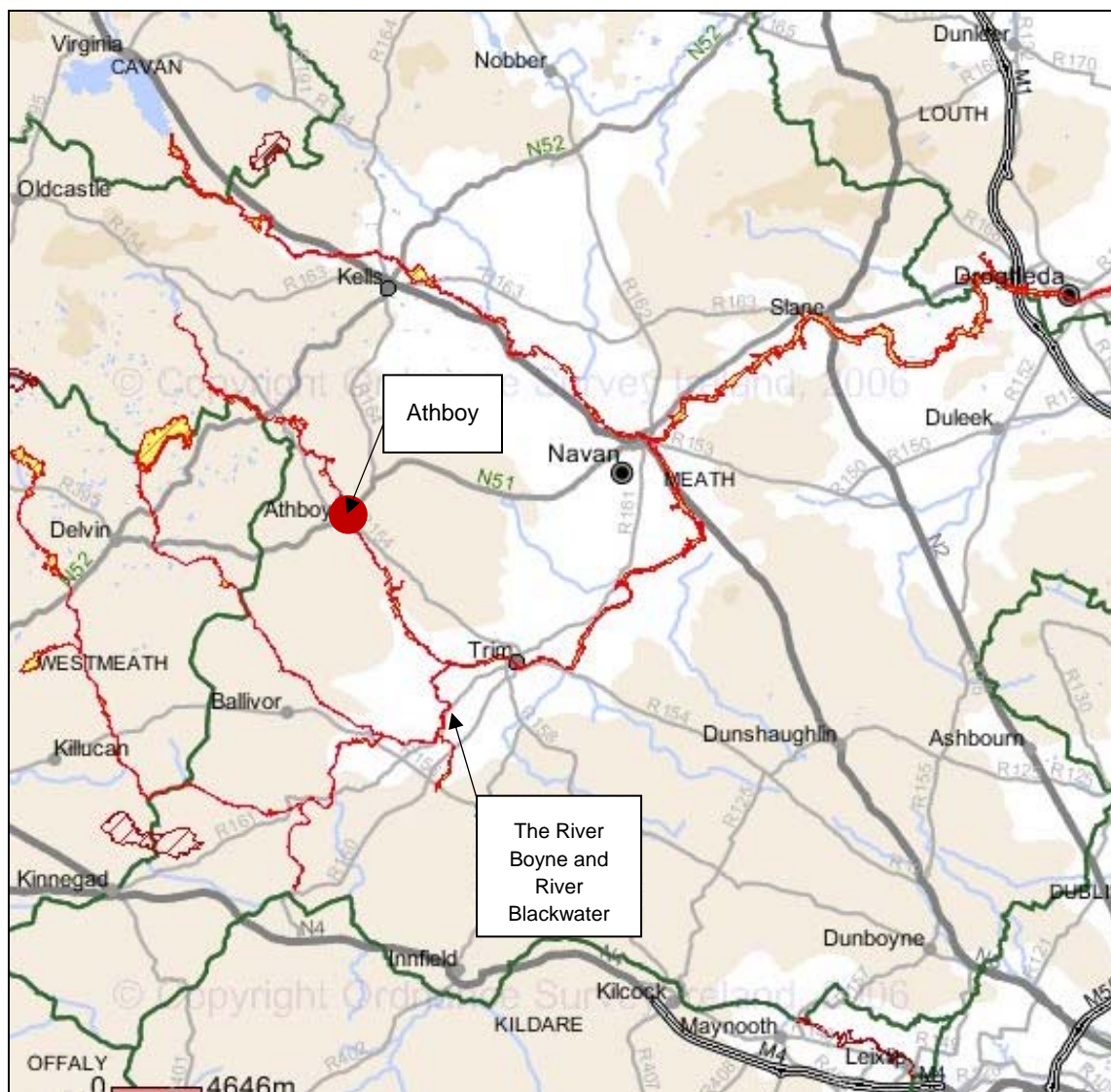


Figure One: River Boyne and River Blackwater cSAC in relation to Athboy.

## 2.3 Assessment Criteria

### 2.3.1 River Boyne and River Blackwater cSAC

*Describe the individual elements of the project (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects) likely to give rise to impacts on the Natura 2000 sites.*

The LAP has been prepared to provide a framework for the proper planning and sustainable development of this area over the lifetime of the Plan. The Plan provides for the orderly expansion of Athboy. While the Plan envisages significant additional development in the context of the current size of the Town, the level of development nonetheless remains limited when viewed in the wider context (in conjunction with Variation No. 2 of the Meath County Development Plan 2007-2013, 250 additional dwellings are projected to be catered for up to 2013) and therefore is unlikely to generate significant adverse direct, indirect or secondary impacts on the integrity of any Natura 2000 sites (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects).

*Describe any likely direct, indirect or secondary impacts of the project (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects) on the Natura 2000 sites by virtue of:*

- size and scale;

No projects which would give rise to significant adverse direct, indirect or secondary impacts on the integrity of the Natura 2000 sites, arising from the size or scale of the project, shall be permitted on the basis of this Local Area Plan (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects).

- land take;

The Draft LAP provides for sufficient residential lands to meet the household projections for the Town as set out in the Meath County Development Plan 2007-2013. The LAP has zoned limited additional lands for town centre, community and employment uses. No projects giving rise to significant adverse direct, indirect or secondary impacts on the integrity of the Natura 2000 sites having regard to their conservation objectives, arising from land take shall be permitted on the basis of this LAP (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects).

- distance from the Natura 2000 site or key features of the site;

The closest Natura 2000 site is the River Boyne and River Blackwater cSAC which traverses through the Town. Given the distance involved and the limited extent of development proposed within the LAP, no projects giving rise to significant adverse direct, indirect or secondary impacts on the integrity of the Natura 2000 sites having regard to its conservation objectives, arising from their proximity to the sites shall be permitted on the basis of this LAP (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects).

- resource requirements (water abstraction, etc.)

Athboy receives its potable water supply from a borehole at Townparks, with a storage reservoir at the Hill of Ward. The ability of the current system to supply an increased level of potable water is therefore limited, as it is currently operating beyond full capacity.

The Council's 'Water Services Investment Programme Assessment of Needs 2007-2013' has identified an advanced water supply scheme to meet the medium to long term requirements of a number of key urban centres. Under this scheme it is proposed to undertake a preliminary report to project future water demand, explore and evaluate options to meet this demand, and identify definite proposals to guarantee a continual supply of potable water to service these centres.

The anticipated completion date for this preliminary report is 2010 and will be the subject of departmental approval. Without pre-empting the outcome of this preliminary report, it is anticipated that water supply for Athboy and Kells will be provided for by the Liscarton Water Treatment Plant once the new Navan Water Treatment Works are operational (estimated date 2014).

- emissions (disposal to land, water or air);

The Town is currently served by an existing Waste Water Treatment Plant located to the south of the Town, adjoining the Yellow Ford River. The current system's capacity is identified at 2,750p.e. (population equivalent). An upgrade of this facility is ongoing and anticipated to be completed within the lifetime of this Plan. This upgrade will facilitate further sustainable development within Athboy.

Hypothetically, any such additional projects would be subject to an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and the pollution licensing regime of the Environmental Protection Agency. The relevant Planning Authority or An Bord Pleanála also has the power to refuse planning permission for development despite the issuing of an EPA license, under Section 99F of the Environmental

Protection Agency Act, 1992 (as inserted by Section 15 of the Protection of the Environment Act, 2003).

No projects giving rise to significant adverse direct, indirect or secondary impacts on the integrity of the Natura 2000 sites having regard to their conservation objectives, arising from their emissions (disposal to land, water or air), shall be permitted on the basis of this LAP (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects).

- excavation requirements;

Soils and rock are a natural resource and an important component of the local ecosystem. The policy provisions included within the LAP and the Meath County Development Plan 2007-2013 will ensure that no projects giving rise to significant adverse direct, indirect or secondary impacts on the integrity of the Natura 2000 sites, having regard to their conservation objectives, arising from excavation requirements shall be permitted on the basis of this Plan (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects).

Such projects would also be subject to an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA).

- transportation requirements;

The transportation policies of the Draft LAP (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects) would not give rise to significant adverse direct, indirect or secondary impacts on the integrity of the Natura 2000 sites, having regard to their conservation objectives, arising from transportation requirements shall be permitted on the basis of this Plan.

The Plan does include indicative route alignments for the development of a local distributor road network to the south-east of the Village. These alignments are indicative and of a very general nature. Such projects would be subject to an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and further detailed engineering studies by the Council.

- duration of construction, operation, decommissioning, etc.;

The Draft LAP shall be adopted in mid-2009 and will remain in effect until 2015. The duration of the Plan is irrelevant and not applicable to the ongoing protection of the Natura 2000 sites. No projects giving rise to significant adverse direct, indirect or secondary impacts on the integrity of the Natura 2000 sites, having regard to their conservation objectives, arising from the duration of construction, operation, decommissioning, etc, shall be permitted on the basis of this Plan (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects).

- other;

No projects giving rise to significant adverse direct, indirect or secondary impacts on the integrity of the Natura 2000 sites, having regard to their conservation objectives, arising from other considerations, shall be permitted on the basis of this Plan (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects).

*Describe any likely changes to the sites arising as a result of:*

- reduction of habitat area;

No projects giving rise to a reduction of habitat areas in the Natura 2000 sites shall be permitted on the basis of the provisions of this Plan (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects).

- disturbance to key species;

No projects giving rise to significant disturbance of key species in the Natura 2000 sites shall be permitted on the basis of the provisions of this Plan (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects).

- habitat or species fragmentation;

No projects giving rise to significant habitat or species fragmentation in the Natura 2000 sites shall be permitted on the basis of the provisions of this Plan (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects).

- reduction in species density;

No projects giving rise to a reduction in species density in the Natura 2000 sites shall be permitted on the basis of the provisions of this Plan (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects).

- changes in key indicators of conservation value (water quality etc.);

No projects giving rise to significant adverse changes in key indicators of conservation value for the Natura 2000 sites shall be permitted on the basis of the provisions of this Plan (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects).

- climate change;

No projects giving rise to significant adverse changes in climatological conditions affecting the Natura 2000 sites shall be permitted on the basis of the provisions of this Plan (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects).

*Describe any likely impacts on the Natura 2000 sites as a whole in terms of:*

- interference with the key relationships that define the structure of the site;

No projects giving rise to significant interference with the key relationships that define the structure of the Natura 2000 sites, having regard to their conservation objectives, shall be permitted on the basis of this Plan (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects).

- interference with key relationships that define the function of the site;

No projects giving rise to significant interference with the key relationships that define the function of the Natura 2000 sites, having regard to their conservation objectives, shall be permitted on the basis of this Plan (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects).

*Provide indicators of significance as a result of the identification of effects set out above in terms of:*

- loss;

Not applicable.

- fragmentation;

Not applicable.

- disruption;

Not applicable.



- disturbance;

Not applicable.

- change to key elements of the sites (e.g. water quality etc.);

Not applicable.

*Describe from the above those elements of the project or plan, or combination of elements, where the above impacts are likely to be significant or where the scale or magnitude of impacts is not known.*

Not applicable.

### **3.0 FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT EFFECTS REPORT MATRIX**

#### Name of project or plan:

Draft Athboy Local Area Plan 2009-2015.

#### Name and Location of Natura 2000 sites:

There is one Natura 2000 site either within or in close proximity to the Local Area Plan's boundary being the River Boyne and River Blackwater candidate Special Area of Conservation (cSAC) which traverses through the Town.

#### Description of the project or plan

As given in Screening Matrix Section 2.0 above page 3.

#### Is this project or plan directly connected with or necessary to the management of the sites (provide details)?

The Draft Plan is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of any Natura 2000 site but rather the future planning and development of Athboy Town. The Plan includes robust and thorough planning policies and development objectives aimed specifically at protecting, conserving and managing in a prudent and sustainable manner Athboy's natural and built heritage.

#### Are there other projects or plans that together with the project or plan being assessed could affect the sites (provide details)?

The Draft LAP is the only land use plan directly applicable to Athboy. It is placed within a hierarchy of plans such as the National Spatial Strategy for Ireland 2002-2020 and the Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area 2004-2016. The Plan is a subsidiary document to the Meath County Development Plan 2007-2013, for which a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) was prepared.

The Plan has been formulated to ensure that development arising from planning permissions granted in accordance with the provisions of this Plan (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects) shall not give rise to significant adverse impacts on the integrity of any Natura 2000 site having regard to its conservation objectives.

#### The assessment of significance of effects:

*Describe how the project of plan (alone or in combination) is likely to affect the Natura 2000 site*

The Plan has been formulated to ensure that development arising from planning permissions granted in accordance with the provisions of this Plan (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects) shall not give rise to significant adverse impacts on the integrity of any Natura 2000 site having regard to their conservation objectives.

*Explain why these effects are not considered significant.*

The policies and provisions of the Plan have been devised to anticipate and avoid the need for developments that would be likely to significantly and adversely affect the integrity of any Natura 2000 site. Furthermore, such developments as will be permitted on foot of the provisions of this Plan shall be required to conform to the relevant regulatory provisions for the prevention of pollution, nuisance or other environmental effects likely to significantly and adversely affect the integrity of any Natura 2000 site.

Additionally, it should be noted that any developments permitted in accordance with this plan also have a legal duty to conform with the relevant statutory and regulatory provisions enacted for the prevention of environmental pollution and degradation or other effects likely to significantly and adversely affect the integrity of Natura 2000 sites having regard to their conservation objectives.

List of agencies consulted: provide contact name and telephone or e-mail address.

At the time of writing Irish legislation does not prescribe statutory consultees for the purpose of consultation on the appropriate assessment of land use development plans. However Circular Letter SEA 1/08 & NPWS 1/08 from the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government states the Department should be consulted.

As part of the SEA of the Draft LAP, consultation occurred with the following prescribed bodies stating that a submission or observation in relation to the SEA process could be made to the Planning Authorities;

1. Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DoEHLG), Dún Scéine, Harcourt Lane, Dublin 2. (01 833 3190)
2. Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (DoCMNR), Leeson Lane, Dublin 2. (01 678 3084)
3. Environmental Protection Agency, Regional Inspectorate, Inniscarra, County Cork. (021 487 5540)

Response to consultation.

The response from the Environmental Protection Agency in their correspondence reminded the Planning Authority of the potential need for appropriate assessment.

The response from the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources did not refer to Appropriate Assessment in their correspondence.

The Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government reminded the Planning Authority that appropriate assessment screening is required.

### **Data collected to carry out the assessment**

Who carried out this assessment?

Meath County Council.

Sources of data

Existing records and information published by the NPWS and EPA.

Level of assessment completed

A desktop study was completed utilising existing information from the relevant state authorities.

Where the full results of the assessment can be accessed and viewed?

The full results of the assessment can be accessed and viewed in this document which is available for public inspection at the offices of Meath County Council's Planning Department, Abbey Road, Navan, Co. Meath.

#### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

Following the review of the Draft LAP in accordance with the 'Methodological guidance on the provision of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43', a Screening Matrix and Findings of No Significant Effects Matrix have been completed.

This Screening Exercise was carried out to ascertain if the planning policies and development objectives contained within the Draft LAP were likely to have significant effects on any Natura 2000 site. If this were the case then it would be necessary to carry out Appropriate Assessment.

The Draft LAP has been formulated to ensure that developments and effects arising from permissions based upon this Draft Plan (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects) shall not give rise to significant adverse impacts on the integrity of any Natura 2000 sites.

This Screening Report finds that the Draft LAP does not require further Appropriate Assessment.

## Appropriate Assessment: Screening Report of the Proposed Amendments



Draft Athboy Local Area Plan 2009-2015

Appropriate Assessment Screening Report of the Proposed Amendments  
(Material Amendments)

Carried out under the requirements of Article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive

June 2009

## 1.0 Introduction

Meath County Council is preparing a Local Area Plan for the Town of Athboy, Co. Meath as required by the Meath County Development Plan 2007-2013.

Article 6(3) of Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21<sup>st</sup> May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora, hereafter referred to as the Habitats Directive, compels competent authorities to undertake an appropriate assessment of any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of a Natura 2000 site but likely to have a significant effect thereon, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects.<sup>5</sup> The assessment examines the implications of proceeding with the plan or project in view of any Natura 2000 site's conservation objectives.

The Department of the Environment Heritage and Local Government (DoEHLG) Circular letter SEA 1/08 & NPWS 1/08 (dated 15 February, 2008) states:

*'Any draft land use plan (development plans, local area plans, regional planning guidelines, schemes for strategic development zones) or amendment/variation to it proposed under the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) must be screened for any potential impact on areas designated as Natura 2000 sites (normally called Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) or Special Protection Areas (SPAs)).'*

Screening is further directed to be based upon any ecological information available to the authority and an adequate description of the plan and its likely environmental impacts, having regard to policies for future development. Where screening finds that the Draft Plan or amendment will have an impact on a Natura 2000 site an appropriate assessment of the plan must be undertaken.

While Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Screening addresses the potential effects that the Draft LAP might have on the wider environment, Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening is specifically focused on the impact of the Draft LAP (either alone or in combination with other projects or plans) on the integrity of Natura 2000 sites in the area of the Draft LAP or those that have the potential to be affected by it. The integrity of a Natura 2000 site relates to its ecological functions and the assessment of whether or not it might be adversely affected by the Draft LAP focuses on, and is limited to, the conservation objectives of the site.

The following are the stages in the AA procedure:

1. Determining whether the plan is likely to have a significant effect on a European site, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects – the screening stage,
2. Appropriate Assessment ascertaining the effect on site integrity,
3. Mitigation & alternative solutions - where there is a risk of the plan having adverse effects on the integrity of a site, there should be an examination of mitigation measures and alternative solutions.

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<sup>5</sup> *Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Areas (SPA) are collectively known as Natura 2000 sites.*

This document is provided as an appendix to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Report attached to the Draft Athboy Local Area Plan 2009-2015, but should also be read as independent of the SEA process.

As part of the process of preparing the Draft Athboy Local Area Plan 2009-2015, hereinafter referred to as the Draft LAP, an AA Screening Exercise was carried-out for the Draft Plan in May 2009. This exercise process found that the Draft LAP did not require an Appropriate Assessment to be undertaken as the implementation of the Draft Plan would not be likely to have significant effects on any Natura 2000 site.

The proposed Material Amendments to the Draft LAP have been screened to ascertain if they should be subject to an AA as outlined in the Habitats Directive. The screening exercise has had regard to the European Commission's guidance document entitled '*Assessment of plans and projects significantly affecting Natura 2000 sites, methodological guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC*'. In line with the suggested assessment methodology put forward by the Commission, a screening matrix and a finding of no significant effects matrix have been completed.

The screening exercise process has found that neither the Draft LAP nor the proposed Material Amendments require an AA to be undertaken as the implementation of the Draft Plan and the Material Amendments would not be likely to have significant effects on any Natura 2000 site.

## **1.1 Methodology**

Insight for the appropriate methodology for this study has been gained from '*Managing Natura 2000 Sites - The provisions of Article 6 of the 'Habitats' Directive 92/43/EEC*' and has accordingly drawn on the methodology envisaged by EIA Directive 85/337/EEC with further guidance provided by '*Assessment of Plans and Projects Significantly Affecting Natura 2000 sites – Methodological guidance on the provisions Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC*'.

Through this AA Screening Exercise the likely effects of the Draft LAP's Material Amendments on Natura 2000 sites will be examined and it will be considered whether it can be objectively concluded that these effects will not be significant. This will involve:

1. determining whether the project or plan is directly connected with or necessary to the management of a Natura 2000 site.
2. describing the Draft LAP, and other plans or projects, that have the potential for having significant effects on Natura 2000 sites;
3. identifying the potential effects on Natura 2000 sites;
4. assessing the significance of any effects.

In the following section the Draft LAP's Material Amendments will be assessed in terms of these four issues.



## **2.0 Screening Matrix**

### **2.1 Brief Description of the Project or Plan**

The LAP is intended to provide for the proper planning and sustainable development of Athboy over the Plan's six year timeframe, specifically 2009-2015, unless amended. It consists of a written statement and maps which give a graphic representation of the planning policies and development objectives contained within the Plan.

The primary purpose of this LAP is to establish a land-use planning framework for the sustainable development of Athboy in a co-ordinated and coherent manner that is respectful of the Town's existing character and size.

The overall goal of this LAP is to facilitate the development of Athboy commensurate to its designation as a 'Small Growth Town' within the Settlement Strategy in the Meath County Development Plan 2007-2013. In accordance with Variation No. 2 (Order of Priority) of the Meath County Development Plan 2007-2013, the Draft LAP will seek to promote the development of up to 250 additional residential units up to 2013 with priority for development going to Town Centre consolidation sites.

Such an increase in the local population needs to be achieved in conjunction with the provision of an increase in local employment. The growth of Athboy in line with these targets would achieve, inter alia, the following key policy objectives in line with the Development Plan:

- a strengthening of the service centre role of the Town both in terms of servicing its existing population but also that of its extensive hinterland.
- maintaining the vitality and viability of the existing Town and in particular ensuring the sustained provision of existing services, such as schools, shops, sports clubs, employment uses, etc.
- the avoidance of unsustainable ribbon development along the entrance roads and the surrounding countryside through the designation of appropriately zoned lands adjacent to the existing Town and the efficient use of existing and planned for transportation and services infrastructure, and
- the bypassing of the Town to the south to provide for the improvement of transportation infrastructure in Athboy.

The Draft Plan was placed on display from Monday, 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2009 to Monday, 06<sup>th</sup> April 2009 and a Manager's Report was prepared on the submissions received (16 in total). The Draft Plan and Manager's Report were considered by the Elected Members of *Meath County Council* at a Council Meeting on Monday, 25<sup>th</sup> May 2009.

As a result of this, a number of Material Amendments have been proposed to the Draft Plan on foot of this. These include minor mapping alterations, e.g. the insertion of additional access arrows, the zoning of limited additional lands for residential purposes and the rezoning of existing zoned lands for open space and mixed residential and business uses. Additionally, the Material Amendments include provision for an additional Framework Plan designated area and an objective to support and encourage the future development of 'Athboy Rugby Club' at its current location.

The Draft Plan contains general policies relating to the protection of natural heritage and the need for adequate proposals for infrastructure and services to support future proposed development. These remain unaltered by the proposed Material Amendments.

## 2.2 Brief Description of the Natura 2000 Sites

There are no Natura 2000 sites within the boundary of the Local Area Plan.

### 2.2.1 The River Boyne and River Blackwater candidate Special Area of Conservation

There is one Natura 2000 site within the vicinity of Athboy that could potentially be affected by the Plan; namely the River Boyne and River Blackwater candidate Special Area of Conservation (cSAC).

Site Code:	Site Name:
002299	River Boyne and River Blackwater

The Yellow Ford River which flows through the Town of Athboy is a tributary of the River Boyne and River Blackwater cSAC. Under the Habitats Directive Annex I habitats, and Annex II and Annex V species have been identified within the cSAC, along with migratory wildfowl listed in Annex I of the Birds Directive (NPWS).

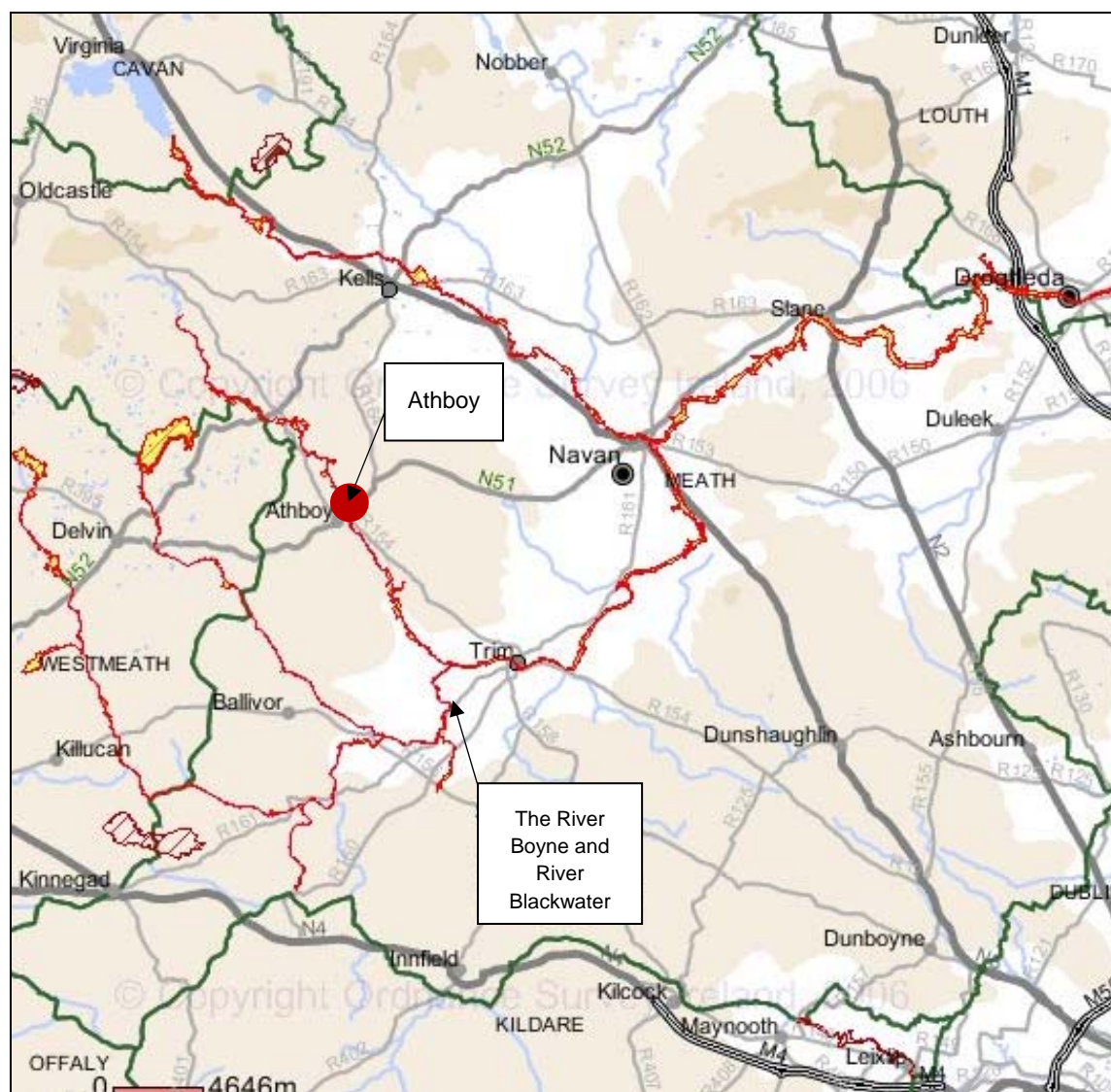


Figure One: River Boyne and River Blackwater cSAC in relation to Athboy.

## **2.3 Assessment Criteria**

### **2.3.1 River Boyne and River Blackwater cSAC**

*Describe the individual elements of the project (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects) likely to give rise to impacts on the Natura 2000 sites.*

The Draft LAP and proposed Material Amendments have been prepared to provide a framework for the proper planning and sustainable development of this area over the lifetime of the Plan. The Draft Plan provides for the orderly expansion of Athboy. While the Plan envisages significant additional development in the context of the current size of the Town, the level of development nonetheless remains limited when viewed in the wider context (in conjunction with Variation No. 2 of the Meath County Development Plan 2007-2013, 250 additional dwellings are projected to be catered for up to 2013) and therefore is unlikely to generate significant adverse direct, indirect or secondary impacts on the integrity of any Natura 2000 sites (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects).

*Describe any likely direct, indirect or secondary impacts of the project (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects) on the Natura 2000 sites by virtue of:*

- *size and scale;*

Given the limited additional land zonings contained in the Draft Plan and the proposed Material Amendments, as well as the policies of the Draft Local Area Plan in conjunction with those of the Meath County Development Plan 2007-2013, no projects which would give rise to significant adverse direct, indirect or secondary impacts on the integrity of the Natura 2000 sites, arising from the size or scale of the project, shall be permitted on the basis of this Local Area Plan (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects).

- *land take;*

The Draft LAP provides for the orderly expansion of the Town in accordance with the policy direction of the Meath County Development Plan 2007-2013. Both the Draft LAP and the proposed Material Amendments provide for sufficient residential lands to meet the household projections for the Town as set out in the Meath County Development Plan 2007-2013. The Draft LAP and the proposed Material Amendments have zoned limited additional lands for town centre, community, employment and residential uses, and represent a restrained extension to the existing development boundary of the Town. In short, the policies of the Draft Plan considered in conjunction with those of the Meath County Development Plan 2007-2013, no projects giving rise to significant adverse direct, indirect or secondary impacts on the integrity of the Natura 2000 sites having regard to their conservation objectives, arising from land take shall be permitted on the basis of this LAP (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects).

- *distance from the Natura 2000 site or key features of the site;*

The closest Natura 2000 site is the River Boyne and River Blackwater cSAC, a tributary of which traverses through the Town being the Yellow Ford River. Given the distance involved and the limited extent of development proposed within the LAP, no projects giving rise to significant adverse direct, indirect or secondary impacts on the integrity of the Natura 2000 sites having regard to its conservation objectives, arising from their proximity to the sites shall be permitted on the basis of this LAP (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects).

- *resource requirements (water abstraction, etc.)*

Athboy receives its potable water supply from a borehole at Townparks, with a storage reservoir at the Hill of Ward. The ability of the current system to supply an increased level of potable water is therefore limited, as it is currently operating beyond full capacity.

The Council's 'Water Services Investment Programme Assessment of Needs 2007-2013' has identified an advanced water supply scheme to meet the medium to long term requirements of a number of key urban centres. Under this scheme it is proposed to undertake a preliminary report to project future water demand, explore and evaluate options to meet this demand, and identify definite proposals to guarantee a continual supply of potable water to service these centres.

The anticipated completion date for this preliminary report is 2010 and will be the subject of departmental approval. Without pre-empting the outcome of this preliminary report, it is anticipated that water supply for Athboy and Kells will be provided for by the Liscarton Water Treatment Plant once the new Navan Water Treatment Works are operational (estimated date 2014).

Furthermore, any such development by the Local Authority would be subject to an assessment in the form of an Environmental Impact Assessment.

- *emissions (disposal to land, water or air);*

The Town is currently served by an existing Waste Water Treatment Plant located to the south of the Town, adjoining the Yellow Ford River. The current system's capacity is identified at 2,750p.e. (population equivalent). An upgrade of this facility is ongoing and anticipated to be completed within the lifetime of this Plan. This upgrade will facilitate further sustainable development within Athboy.

Any such additional projects would be subject to an appropriate assessment in the form of an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and/or the pollution licensing regime of the Environmental Protection Agency. The relevant Planning Authority or An Bord Pleanála also has the power to refuse planning permission for development despite the issuing of an EPA license, under Section 99F of the Environmental Protection Agency Act, 1992 (as inserted by Section 15 of the Protection of the Environment Act, 2003).

No projects giving rise to significant adverse direct, indirect or secondary impacts on the integrity of the Natura 2000 sites having regard to their conservation objectives, arising from their emissions (disposal to land, water or air), shall be permitted on the basis of this LAP (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects).

- *excavation requirements;*

Soils and rock are a natural resource and an important component of the local ecosystem. The policy provisions included within the Draft LAP, the proposed Material Amendments and the Meath County Development Plan 2007-2013 will ensure that no projects giving rise to significant adverse direct, indirect or secondary impacts on the integrity of the Natura 2000 sites, having regard to their conservation objectives, arising from excavation requirements shall be permitted on the basis of this Plan (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects).

Such projects would also be subject to an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA).

- *transportation requirements;*

The transportation policies of the Draft LAP (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects) would not give rise to significant adverse direct, indirect or secondary impacts on the integrity of the Natura 2000 sites, having regard to their conservation objectives, arising from transportation requirements shall be permitted on the basis of this Plan.

The Plan does include indicative route alignments for the development of a local distributor road network to the south-east of the Village. These alignments are indicative and of a very general nature. Such projects would be subject to an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and further detailed engineering studies by the Council.

- *duration of construction, operation, decommissioning, etc.;*

It is intended that the Draft LAP shall be adopted in mid-2009 and will remain in effect until 2015. The duration of the Plan is irrelevant and not applicable to the ongoing protection of the Natura 2000 sites. No projects giving rise to significant adverse direct, indirect or secondary impacts on the integrity of the Natura 2000 sites, having regard to their conservation objectives, arising from the duration of construction, operation, decommissioning, etc, shall be permitted on the basis of this Plan (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects).

- *other;*

No projects giving rise to significant adverse direct, indirect or secondary impacts on the integrity of the Natura 2000 sites, having regard to their conservation objectives, arising from other considerations, shall be permitted on the basis of this Plan (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects).

*Describe any likely changes to the sites arising as a result of:*

- *reduction of habitat area;*

No projects giving rise to a reduction of habitat areas in the Natura 2000 sites shall be permitted on the basis of the provisions of this Plan (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects).

- *disturbance to key species;*

No projects giving rise to significant disturbance of key species in the Natura 2000 sites shall be permitted on the basis of the provisions of this Plan (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects).

- *habitat or species fragmentation;*

No projects giving rise to significant habitat or species fragmentation in the Natura 2000 sites shall be permitted on the basis of the provisions of this Plan (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects).

- *reduction in species density;*

No projects giving rise to a reduction in species density in the Natura 2000 sites shall be permitted on the basis of the provisions of this Plan (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects).

- *changes in key indicators of conservation value (water quality etc.);*

No projects giving rise to significant adverse changes in key indicators of conservation value for the Natura 2000 sites shall be permitted on the basis of the provisions of this Plan (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects).

- *climate change;*

No projects giving rise to significant adverse changes in climatological conditions affecting the Natura 2000 sites shall be permitted on the basis of the provisions of this Plan (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects).

*Describe any likely impacts on the Natura 2000 sites as a whole in terms of:*

- *interference with the key relationships that define the structure of the site;*

No projects giving rise to significant interference with the key relationships that define the structure of the Natura 2000 sites, having regard to their conservation objectives, shall be

permitted on the basis of this Plan (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects).

- *interference with key relationships that define the function of the site;*

No projects giving rise to significant interference with the key relationships that define the function of the Natura 2000 sites, having regard to their conservation objectives, shall be permitted on the basis of this Plan (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects).

*Provide indicators of significance as a result of the identification of effects set out above in terms of:*

- *loss;*

Not applicable.

- *fragmentation;*

Not applicable.

- *disruption;*

Not applicable.

- *disturbance;*

Not applicable.

- *change to key elements of the sites (e.g. water quality etc.);*

Not applicable.

*Describe from the above those elements of the project or plan, or combination of elements, where the above impacts are likely to be significant or where the scale or magnitude of impacts is not known.*

Not applicable.

### **3.0 Finding of No Significant Effects Report Matrix**

Name of project or plan:

Draft Athboy Local Area Plan 2009-2015 with proposed amendments.

Name and Location of Natura 2000 sites:

There is one Natura 2000 site either within or in close proximity to the Draft LAP's development boundary or the amended boundary of those lands which are the subject of the proposed Material Amendments. This is the River Boyne and River Blackwater candidate Special Area of Conservation (cSAC), a tributary of which traverses through the Town.

Description of the project or plan

As given in Screening Matrix Section 2.0 above page 3.

Is this project or plan directly connected with or necessary to the management of the sites (provide details)?

The Draft Plan with the proposed Material Amendments are not directly connected with or necessary to the management of any Natura 2000 site but rather the future planning and development of Athboy. The Draft Plan including the Material Amendments include robust and thorough planning policies and development objectives aimed specifically at protecting,



conserving and managing in a prudent and sustainable manner Athboy's natural and built heritage.

*Are there other projects or plans that together with the project or plan being assessed could affect the sites (provide details)?*

The Draft LAP with the proposed Material Amendments is the only land use plan directly applicable to Athboy. It is placed within a hierarchy of plans such as the National Spatial Strategy for Ireland 2002-2020 and the Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area 2004-2016. The Plan is a subsidiary document to the Meath County Development Plan 2007-2013, for which a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) was prepared.

The Draft Plan in conjunction with the proposed Material Amendments has been formulated to ensure that development arising from planning permissions granted in accordance with the provisions of this Plan (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects) shall not give rise to significant adverse impacts on the integrity of any Natura 2000 site having regard to its conservation objectives.

*The assessment of significance of effects:*

*Describe how the project of plan (alone or in combination) is likely to affect the Natura 2000 site*

The Draft Plan in conjunction with the proposed Material Amendments has been formulated to ensure that development arising from planning permissions granted in accordance with the provisions of this Plan (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects) shall not give rise to significant adverse impacts on the integrity of any Natura 2000 site having regard to their conservation objectives.

*Explain why these effects are not considered significant.*

The policies and provisions of the Draft Plan in conjunction with the proposed Material Amendments have been devised to anticipate and avoid the need for developments that would be likely to significantly and adversely affect the integrity of any Natura 2000 site. Furthermore, such developments as will be permitted on foot of the provisions of this Draft Plan in conjunction with the proposed Material Amendments shall be required to conform to the relevant regulatory provisions for the prevention of pollution, nuisance or other environmental effects likely to significantly and adversely affect the integrity of any Natura 2000 site.

Additionally, it should be noted that any developments permitted in accordance with this Draft Plan in conjunction with the proposed Material Amendments also have a legal duty to conform with the relevant statutory and regulatory provisions enacted for the prevention of environmental pollution and degradation or other effects likely to significantly and adversely affect the integrity of Natura 2000 sites having regard to their conservation objectives.

*List of agencies consulted: provide contact name and telephone or e-mail address.*

At the time of writing Irish legislation does not prescribe statutory consultees for the purpose of consultation on the appropriate assessment of land use development plans. However Circular Letter SEA 1/08 & NPWS 1/08 from the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government states the Department should be consulted.

As part of the SEA of the Draft LAP, consultation occurred with the following prescribed bodies stating that a submission or observation in relation to the SEA process could be made to the Planning Authorities;

1. Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DoEHLG), Dún Scéine, Harcourt Lane, Dublin 2. (01 833 3190)
2. Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (DoCMNR), Leeson Lane, Dublin 2. (01 678 3084)
3. Environmental Protection Agency, Regional Inspectorate, Inniscarra, County Cork. (021 487 5540)

Response to consultation.

The response from the Environmental Protection Agency in their correspondence reminded the Planning Authority of the potential need for appropriate assessment.

The response from the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources did not refer to Appropriate Assessment in their correspondence.

The Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government reminded the Planning Authority that appropriate assessment screening is required.

Data collected to carry out the assessment

Who carried out this assessment?

*Meath County Council*

Sources of data

Existing records and information published by the NPWS and EPA.

Level of assessment completed

A desktop study was completed utilising existing information from the relevant state authorities.

Where the full results of the assessment can be accessed and viewed?

The full results of the assessment can be accessed and viewed in this document which is available for public inspection at the offices of *Meath County Council's* Planning Department, Abbey Road, Navan, Co. Meath.

#### **4.0 Conclusion**

Following the review of the Draft LAP and the proposed Material Amendments in accordance with the '*Methodological guidance on the provision of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43*', a Screening Matrix and Findings of No Significant Effects Matrix have been completed.

This Screening Exercise was carried out to ascertain if the planning policies and development objectives contained within the Draft LAP and the proposed Material Amendments were likely to have significant effects on any Natura 2000 site. If this were the case then it would be necessary to carry out an AA.

The Draft LAP and the proposed Material Amendments have been formulated to ensure that developments and effects arising from planning permissions based upon this Draft Plan either independently or in conjunction with the proposed Material Amendments (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects) shall not give rise to significant adverse impacts on the integrity of any Natura 2000 sites.

This AA Screening Report finds that the Draft LAP in conjunction with the proposed Material Amendments do not require further Appropriate Assessment.

**APPENDIX C****Population Data**

Age Cohort	Athboy ED	%	State	%
0-14 years	559	23.12	864,449	20.39
15-24 years	337	13.94	632,732	14.92
25-44 years	810	33.50	1,345,873	31.74
45-64 years	462	19.11	928,868	21.91
65+ years	250	10.34	467,926	11.04
Total	2,418		4,239,848	

*Table One: Age Profile 2006*

Area	At Work	Unemployed (Inc. First Time Job Seekers)	Student	Retired	Other*	Total
Athboy	1,120	89	159	208	283	1,859
%	60.28	4.79	8.55	11.19	15.22	
State	1,390,042	179,456	349,596	377,927	538,378	3,395,399
%	57.18	5.32	10.36	11.20	15.95	
* Other includes those with home duties, unable to work and other.						

*Table Two: Persons over 15+ Classified by Present Status*

Area	Agri	Manu	Build	Clerical/ Admin	Trans	Sales	Prof	Service	Other	Total
Athboy	38	163	183	166	69	151	152	141	132	1,195
%	3.18	13.64	15.31	13.89	5.77	12.64	12.72	11.80	11.05	
State	88,414	245,234	183,429	365,670	114,919	284,164	342,414	224,964	230,918	2,080,126
%	4.25	11.79	8.82	17.58	5.52	13.68	16.46	10.81	11.10	

*Table Three: Occupational Profile 2006*

Level of Education	Athboy ED	%	State	%
Primary	248	18.00	514,085	18.90
Lower Secondary	383	27.79	573,411	21.08
Upper Secondary	353	25.62	803,498	29.54
Third Level	394	28.59	829,102	30.48
Total	1,378		2,720,096	

*Table Four: Highest Level of Education Attained 2006*

## APPENDIX D

## Protected Structures listed within the Meath County Development Plan 2007-2013:

1	House (detached)	Detached three-bay two-storey house, built 1938, with full-height canted bay windows flanking central bay. Hipped slate roof with brick chimneystacks.
2	Parochial House	Detached three-bay two-storey over basement parochial house, built in 1869. Outbuildings excluded. Hipped slate roof with rendered chimneystacks and eaves dentils. Roughcast rendered walls with a limestone plaque.
3	Water pump	Cast-iron water pump, erected c.1870, with lion's mask to spout, fluted shaft and cap with finial.
4	House (detached)	Detached three-bay two-storey house, built 1938, with full-height canted bay windows flanking central bay. Hipped slate roof with rendered chimneystacks. Roughcast rendered walls. Replacement windows.
5	National School	Detached T-plan national school, built in 1949. Gable-fronted double-height three bay entrance block, flanked by seven-bay single-storey blocks. Original building only is protected.
6	House	End-of-terrace three-bay two-storey house, built c.1900, with gabled central porch. Pitched slate roof with projecting gables and brick chimney stacks. Timber sash windows set in segmental-arched opening with stone sills and brick dressings.
7	Water pump	Cast-iron water pump, erected c.1870, with lion's mask to spout, fluted shaft and cap with finial.
8	Church (R.C.)	Detached gable-fronted church, built in 1845, Stone high crosses and statue to site. Ashlar limestone piers with cast-iron railings and gates.
9	Convent (former)	Detached three-bay two-storey over basement house, built c.1820, with two-storey return. Formerly used as convent but now in use as house.
10	Shop, house	Terraced three-bay two-storey house, built c.1890, with disused shopfront to ground floor. Pitched slate roof with rendered chimneystacks. Rendered facade. Timber sash windows with stone sills.
11	Terraced House	Terraced two-bay two-storey house, built c.1900. Pitched slate roof with rendered chimneystack. Dressed limestone facade. Timber sash windows with stone sills. Bay window to ground floor.
12	Public House	Terraced four-bay two-storey house, built c.1890, with integral carriage arch. Shopfront inserted to ground floor.



13	Shop	Terraced three-bay two-storey former market house, built 1828 by the Earl of Darnley. Stone facade. Round-arched arch openings to ground floor
14	Town wall	Remains of mediaeval town wall.
15	Bank/Financial Institution	Terraced three-bay two-storey bank, by G. F. Beckett and C. A. Harrington, 1925. Cast-iron railings to front.
16	House (terraced)	End-of-terrace four-bay two-storey house, built c.1860. Wrought-iron and cast-iron railings with bootscraper to front.
17	Library	Detached three-bay single-storey Gothic Revival former sexton's house, built c.1790, Hexagonal extension, built c.1985.
18	Shop	Detached six-bay two-storey former school, built in 1885, Cast-iron railings and gates to front.
19	Rectory	Detached three-bay two-storey over basement former rectory, built c.1820, now in use as private dwelling. Hipped slate roof with rendered chimneystacks. Roughcast rendered walls. Some timber sash and stained glass windows.
20	Church tower	Medieval tower to north-west corner of church.
21	Bank/Financial Institution	Detached three-bay two-storey former RIC barracks, built c.1910, converted to use as bank c. 1925.
22	Church (C of I )	Detached cruciform-plan church, built in 1770. Stone gate piers with wrought-iron gates. Detached two-bay single-storey stone former parochial hall, built in 1839,
23	Road Bridge	Single-arch road bridge, built c.1870. Rock-faced masonry walls, with segmental arch having rock-faced voussoirs.
24	House, shop	Detached five-bay two-storey house, built c.1890. Hipped slate roof with rendered chimneystacks. Rendered walls with render quoins. Timber sash windows with stone sills.
25	House (detached)	Detached three-bay two-storey house, built c.1820, with lean-to outbuilding to east gable. Two-storey return and extension to rear. Pitched slate roof with rendered chimneystacks.
26	Police Station	End-of-terrace six-bay two-storey former RIC barracks, built c.1840, with two-storey return. Now in use as Garda station. Pitched slate roof with rendered chimneystacks.

27	House (detached)	Detached four-bay two-storey house, built c.1770, with double-height hall addition to the east and two-bay two-story earlier block set perpendicular to the west.
28	Stables	Group of multiple-bay single- and two-storey former stables, built c.1800, ranged around a cobbled courtyard. Brick-vaulted tunnel to northern corner formerly lead to house. Remains of former walled garden to north-west.
29	House - former water tower	Detached railway water tower with cast-iron tank, built c.1863, now disused.
30	Apartments - former locomotive shed	Detached four-bay double-height former locomotive shed, built c.1863, now in use as apartments.
31	Apartments - former railway station.	Detached five-bay single-storey former station, built c.1863.
32	House	Detached four-bay two-storey house, built c.1915, with porch. Hipped artificial slate roof with terracotta ridge tiles and rendered chimneystacks. Roughcast rendered walls with render quoins
33	Water pump	Cast-iron water pump, c.1870, with banded shaft, curved handle, fluted neck and fluted cap with finial.
34	Vent Pipe	Cast-iron water pump, c.1870, with banded shaft, curved handle, fluted neck and fluted cap with finial.

## APPENDIX E

### Energy Efficiency: Some Renewable Energy Methods

Passive solar architecture is a design approach rather than the active use of a specific technology or device. The fabric, orientation and layout of the building are manipulated to achieve maximum solar gains and minimize the need for artificial lighting, heating and ventilation.

Active solar technology involves the installation of a solar collector device, which is typically a metal box structure containing an absorber. The solar collector absorbs the sun's heat, which can in turn heat water for the building.

Solar energy can also be harnessed through the use of photovoltaic technology using semiconductor materials to convert sunlight to electricity. These can be integrated in building structures.

A green roof system is an extension of the existing roof which involves a high quality water proofing and root repellent system, a drainage system, filter cloth, a lightweight growing medium and plants. The benefits of this system are numerous including savings on energy heating and cooling costs, sound insulation benefits, potential to reduce or eliminate roof drains, potential to assist with storm water management, provision of amenity space, aesthetic appeal and improved air quality.

#### *Energy Efficiency Standards*

The following points should be incorporated into making the transition to 'greener' domestic building design:

The building regulations revised Part L came into effect in July 2006. The following are some points that will affect building of housing in the future:

- The building elements make-up and insulation should be observed to the current U-values as detailed in the building regulations.
- Any house over 100m<sup>2</sup> should have two independent heating zones. The zones can be (a) the living area and (b) the dwelling area. This will reduce heating the whole house while only a section is populated during certain times during the day.
- Hot water storage should be fitted with thermostatic controls that shut-off the supply of heat when the desired storage temperature is reached.
- Separate and independent time control for space heating and for heating of stored water should be provided.
- All hot water storage vessels, pipes and ducts should be insulated to prevent heat loss. It is preferable if the hot water storage vessel is the pre-insulated type.
- External floor, window and roof light openings should not exceed 25% of the floor area. Particular attention should be given to the orientation and type of the glazing as this affects solar overheating.
- Energy efficient light bulbs should be used in all fittings including fluorescent tube lighting in the kitchen.

- To avoid heat loss and local condensation problems, limit local thermal bridging. Details of how to limit this are described in the draft building regulations.
- The selection of heating sources should be given proper attention. Sources such as wood pellet boilers and heat pumps appear to be most appropriate sustainable heat sources in contrast to electric heating, oil and LPG fired boilers.
- Houses with central heating should avoid the placing of open fireplaces in individual rooms to prevent heat loss and inefficient heat sources. 80% of the heat produced by a fire goes straight up the chimney.
- Six litre flush toilets should be specified.
- Cooker hood and extract fans should be used in both kitchens and bathroom to reduce the amount of moisture in a dwelling; this prevents the air being drawn into living and bedrooms.
- Domestic solar water heating systems can contribute to the water heating system.