



Athboy

Architectural Conservation Area
Statement of Character
December 2009

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Athboy

Architectural Conservation Area

Statement of Character

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On behalf of
Meath County Council and
County Meath Heritage Forum

An Chomhairle Oidhreachta
The Heritage Council



Preface

In 2007 Meath County Council adopted the County Meath Heritage Plan 2007-2011, prepared by the County Heritage Forum, following extensive consultation with stakeholders and the public. The Heritage Forum is a partnership between local and central government, state agencies, heritage and community groups, NGOs local business and development, the farming sector, educational institutions and heritage professionals. The Heritage plan is a cross-agency strategic plan which aims to identify, promote, enhance and conservation Meath's rich heritage. It is an action of the Heritage Plan to evaluate the character of Architectural Conservation Areas (ACAs) in the county.

It is an objective of the county Meath Development Plan 2007-2013 to carry out an appraisal of existing and proposed Architectural Conservation Areas (ACAs) during the lifetime of the plan. This publication describes the special character of Athboy ACA and will be a useful guide for the public and local authority. We would sincerely like to thank all those who contributed to this project and to the Heritage Council for providing funding.

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Introduction

1.0 Introduction

The towns, villages and landscapes of Co. Meath contain areas of architectural, historical and cultural interest, whose character is derived from the grouping of structures and open spaces, and their setting in the landscape. These areas of particular heritage value may develop and change with time, but their special character is considered worthy of protection. Planning legislation allows a planning authority to include objectives in its Development Plan to protect the character of a place, area, group of structures or townscapes that are of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest or value, or contribute to the appreciation of protected structures. Such areas are known as *Architectural Conservation Areas (ACAs)* and may include the following:

- groups of structures of distinctiveness, visual richness or historical importance
- the setting and exterior appearance of structures that are of special interest, but the interiors of which do not merit special protection
- the setting of a protected structure where this is more extensive than its curtilage
- designed landscapes, for example, urban parks, historic demesnes, cemeteries or industrial sites
- groups of structures which form dispersed but unified entities but which are not within the curtilage of a single dominant structure.

An ACA could therefore include a terrace of houses, a streetscape, a town centre or an ensemble related to a specific building type, such as a mill or a country house. The significance of buildings within an ACA lies in their positive contribution to the character and cultural importance of the group and their protection relates to their external appearance and associated external spaces. The objective of the ACA designation is to guide change within an area and ensure that future development is carried out in a manner sympathetic to the

special character of the historic place.

Works to the exterior of a structure within an ACA only qualify as exempted development if the works do not affect the character of the exterior or that of neighbouring structures or open spaces. Whilst alterations, extensions and new build are allowed within an ACA but any new development should respect or enhance the special character of the area and should be carried out in consultation with the Planning Department of Meath County Council, following the usual planning application process.

There are currently eighteen ACAs designated in Co. Meath. This document is one in a series which identifies the special character of individual ACAs and gives advice and guidance to those seeking planning permission, such as homeowners, developers and planning professionals, on the type of works that would be acceptable within that particular ACA, to avoid loss or negative impact to its special character.

Location & Boundary of the Architectural Conservation Area

2.0 Location & Boundary of the Architectural Conservation Area

Athboy town (Baile Átha Buí, which means Town of the Yellow Ford) is a small agricultural town, located at the junction of N51 and the R154, on the Tremblestown River and near the County Westmeath border. Its position is approximately 56 km to the northwest of Dublin, 17 km from Navan and 11 km from Trim. The town serves a broadly rural hinterland and is relatively close to Mullingar and Kinnegad in County Westmeath. Athboy sits in a shallow hollow with a circular rim of rising ground around it and is bounded to the southeast by the Fair Green and the Hill of Ward (also known as Tlacthga), the site of the earliest Druid settlement in the area. A linear urban plan, the streetscape of the town extends in a gentle curve from the edge of the Fair Green towards the southwest to the Roman Catholic Church of St. James, which bookends the town to the south.

2.1 ACA Boundary

The ACA boundary for Athboy town encompasses the long plots to the north of Main Street and Upper Bridge Street (approx. the line of the old walled town) until it meets the Tremblestown River to the east, where it extends eastwards to enclose the site beyond the Garda Station on the north side of Lower Bridge Street and the Mill House property to the south of the street. The eastern boundary then continues to the south, along the edge of the Mill House site and across the river westwards. The southern boundary encompasses the plots to the south of Main Street and Upper Bridge Street, including the boundary walls of St. James's Church of Ireland and extends to the southwest until O'Growney Street. At this point the boundary encircles the plots to the south of Connaught Street bordering the Clonmellon Road and then crosses the street to meet the extension of the northern boundary, which bounds the modern development of Connaught Place. The Fair Green and the Roman Catholic Church of St. James are currently not included in the ACA. The boundaries of the ACA are clearly delineated on the accompanying Figure 1.

The following streets and thoroughfares are located partly or wholly within the boundaries of the ACA:

- O'Growney Street
- Connaught Street
- Main Street
- Barrack Lane
- Upper Bridge Street
- Lower Bridge Street

Location & Boundary of the Architectural Conservation Area

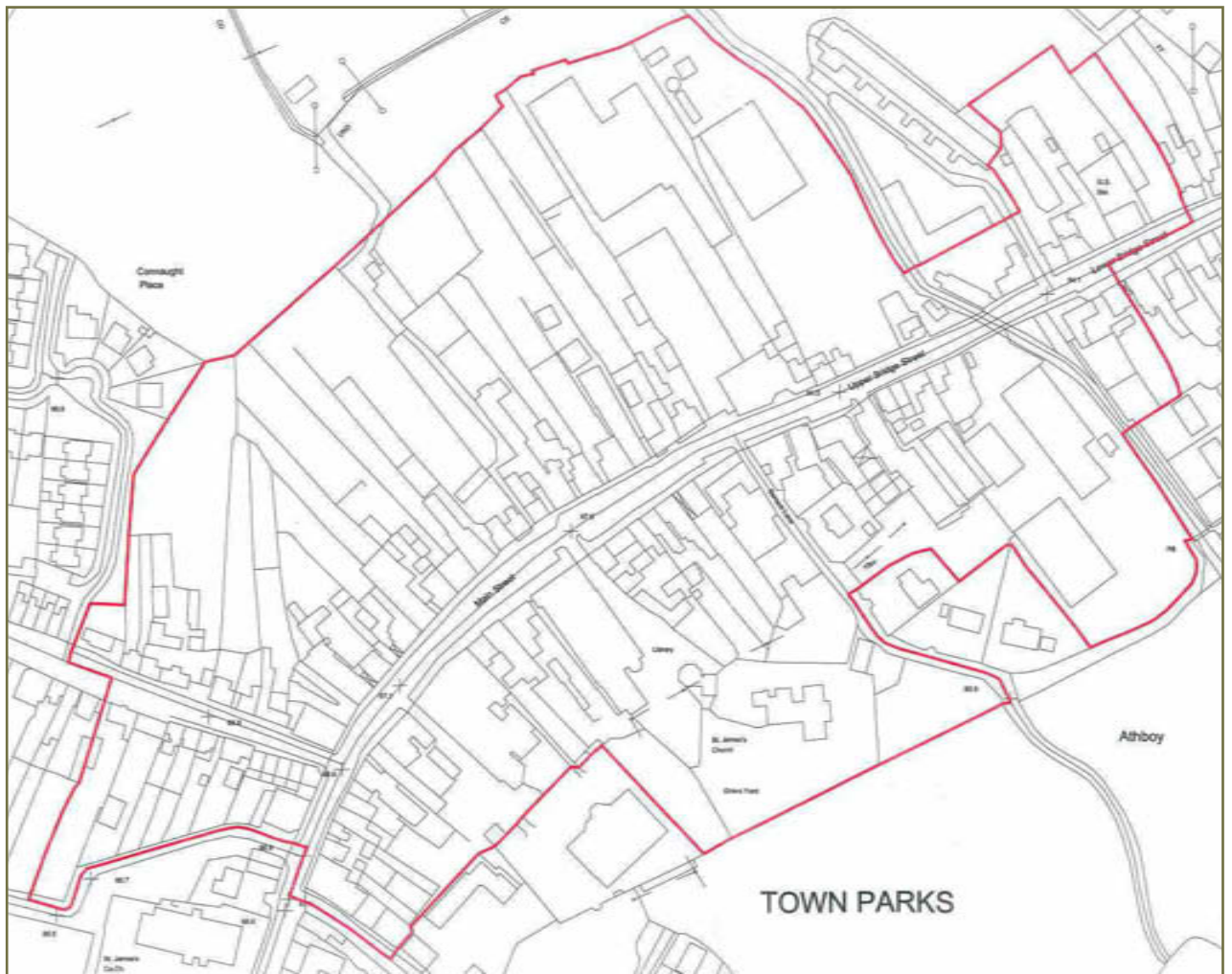


Fig.1: Boundary of Athboy ACA

Schedule of Protected Structures & Recorded Monuments

3.0 Schedule of Protected Structures & Recorded Monuments

There are a number of protected structures within the boundaries of the Athboy ACA that are protected under Part IV of the Planning & Development Act 2000. A protected structure is a structure or part of a structure that a Planning Authority considers to be of special interest from an architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical point of view. The full extent of a protected structure includes the land lying within the curtilage of the protected structure and other structures within that curtilage and their interiors. The concept of curtilage is not defined by legislation, but is understood to be the parcel of land immediately associated with that structure and which is or was in use for the purposes of the structure. The Record of Protected Structures (RPS) is contained in the Meath County Development Plan 2007-2013, Appendix V.

The Record of Monuments and Places lists structures and sites of archaeological heritage. The schedule is available to the public at the Planning Office of Meath County Council, Teagasc Offices and Town Councils and on the internet on the website of the National Monuments Services, Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government (www.archaeology.ie).

Schedule of Protected Structures & Recorded Monuments

3.1 Protected Structures

Within the boundary of the Athboy ACA there are currently sixteen protected structures comprising: landmark 18th and 19th century public buildings; small terraces of 18th and 19th century residential and commercial buildings; 19th century detached residences, and early 20th century residential buildings. A number of these buildings form significant focal points in the streetscape of Athboy, in particular nineteenth and twentieth-century structures. Others are more modest buildings that represent examples of archetypal shop-fronts or pattern-book terraced houses.

| | |
|---------------------|--|
| • RPS No. MH029 206 | End-of-terrace, Connaught Street |
| • RPS No. MH029 210 | Guinan's, Main Street |
| • RPS No. MH029 212 | Terraced house, Main Street |
| • RPS No. MH029 213 | Inn Moderation (formerly Farrell's pub), Main Street |
| • RPS No. MH029 214 | McElhinney's Shop (Old Market House), Main Street |
| • RPS No. MH029 216 | Ulster Bank, Main Street |
| • RPS No. MH029 217 | Ivy House, Main Street |
| • RPS No. MH029 218 | Leabharlann Ui Ghramhaigh – former Sexton's House |
| • RPS No. MH029 219 | Athboy Furniture Stores, Main Street |
| • RPS No. MH029 221 | St. James's Church of Ireland, West Tower |
| • RPS No. MH029 222 | Bank of Ireland, Upper Bridge Street |
| • RPS No. MH029 223 | St James's Church of Ireland |
| • RPS No. MH029 224 | Bridge, Upper & Lower Bridge Street |
| • RPS No. MH029 225 | Athboy Flower Shop, Lower Bridge Street |
| • RPS No. MH029 226 | The Mill House, Lower Bridge Street |
| • RPS No. MH029 227 | Garda Station, Lower Bridge Street |

A number of protected structures lie outside the boundary of Athboy ACA but they have a positive impact on the character on the town. These are as follows:

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| • RPS No. MH029 203 | Cast-iron water pump, Connaught Street |
| • RPS No. MH029 205 | Scoil Naisiunta Ui Gramma, O'Growney Street |
| • RPS No. MH029 207 | Cast-iron water pump, O'Growney Street |
| • RPS No. MH029 208 | St James's Catholic Church, O'Growney Street |
| • RPS No. MH029 215 | Remains of the old medieval walls of Athboy, Town Parks |
| • RPS No. MH029 228 | Danescourt House, Town Parks |
| • RPS No. MH029 229 | Stables & tunnel of the former Athboy Lodge, The Mall |

Schedule of Protected Structures & Recorded Monuments



Fig.2: Cast-iron water-pump on Connaught Street & the sacristy to the rear of St James's Catholic Church, two protected structures outside the current ACA boundary for Athboy.

Schedule of Protected Structures & Recorded Monuments

3.2 Recorded Monuments

The following archaeological sites, features and artefacts within the ACA boundary for Athboy are protected by National Monument legislation as they are listed as Recorded Monuments in the Record of Monuments and places:

| | |
|-----------------------|--|
| RMP Ref. ME029-023000 | Town of Athboy, post-1700 AD settlement |
| RMP Ref. ME029-023001 | Town defences |
| RMP Ref. ME029-023002 | Town defences, mural tower |
| RMP Ref. ME029-023003 | Church, St James's Church of Ireland |
| RMP Ref. ME029-023004 | Tomb, St James's Church of Ireland |
| RMP Ref. ME029-023005 | Grave-slab, St James's Church of Ireland |
| RMP Ref. ME029-023006 | Stone-head, St James's Church of Ireland |
| RMP Ref. ME029-023007 | Font, St James's Church of Ireland |
| RMP Ref. ME029-023009 | Crucifixion plaque, St James's Church of Ireland |
| RMP Ref. ME029-023010 | Building (part of former town walls), Town Parks |
| RMP Ref. ME029-023011 | Medieval pit, Town Parks |
| RMP Ref. ME029-023012 | Graveyard, St James's Church of Ireland |

Development Plan Zoning & Objectives

4.0 Development Plan Zoning & Objectives

The Meath County Development Plan 2001-2007 has been superseded by the Meath County Development Plan 2007-2013. The Athboy Local Area Plan was adopted on the 20th of August 2009. Detailed policies and objectives are prescribed in the aforementioned plans. In considering new development within this LAP area the policies and objectives prescribed in the Meath County Development Plan 2007-2013 and the Athboy Local Area Plan 2009-2015 are of relevance.

Historical development of the area

5.0 Historical development of the area

The town of Athboy was one of the four centres (with Navan, Ratoath and Trim) set up by the Anglo-Normans to function as important towns in County Meath. References from the annals in the eleventh and twelfth centuries indicate that it was significant topographically as a military meeting point, at the crossing at the Yellow Ford, and an acknowledged boundary point. (This meeting point can be observed to the south-east of the stone bridge in the town, near the metal footbridge over the Tremblestown River). A synod convened there by the King of Connaught indicates that there was a type of settlement prior to the arrival of the Normans and today Connaught Street still carries his name. The earliest known inhabitants were in fact the Druids, who had settlements at the nearby Hill of Ward and at the open piece of ground that now holds the Fair Green, where they held their sports and contests. Under the Normans, Athboy became the centre of a manorial settlement - which in essence meant an agricultural settlement without borough status, but which usually contained a castle and church, and sometimes a mill. The urban historian, John Bradley, concludes that the Norman motte was possibly located on the Hill of Ward (Tlacthga), described by Ordnance Survey engineer John O'Donovan in 1836 as 'four (perhaps five) concentric rings, with a moat in the centre much lowered' and in the late sixteenth century the 'Castletown of Athboy' was listed among the castles of Meath.

In terms of the urban plan of Athboy, in c.1180 the Normans walled an area extending westwards from the river along the edge of the long burgage plots to the rear of the houses on the northwest side of Main Street and encompassed an area to the south as far as the edge of the current Church of Ireland. The main route through the town as devised by the Normans reflected little of the main thoroughfare as laid out in the eighteenth century and which continues today. The old Norman route ran westwards from the crossing at the Yellow Ford (near the metal footbridge over the Tremblestown River) along the edge of the

northern boundary of the Danescourt demesne, through the grounds of the current Church of Ireland, across the current Main Street and past the old Athboy Castle (which adjoined the public house of Inn Moderation – the former Central Bar) and continued north-westwards towards the townland of Bunboggan. An unusually narrow building was constructed in the early twentieth century to fill in the gap left by the old route on the north side of Main Street, between the public house and the site of old castle. During the three sieges on the town in the 1640s, the original walls of Athboy were damaged extensively and at present only a section of the old wall to the south of the town remains. These remnants include a semi-circular cut-stone bastion and a fosse to the southwest of the grounds of the Church of Ireland.



Fig.3: Semi-circular cut-stone bastion to the south of the town, part of the remains of the extant walls of Athboy.

A lack of documentary evidence of Athboy's development during the Middle Ages impedes its exact foundation date as a functioning town and adds to the complexity of its urban history, but the first reference to its borough status

Historical development of the area

was in the late-twelfth century. The town then gained all the characteristics of a medieval borough, including a corporation and a court, and it was acknowledged that Athboy was the most westerly stronghold of the Pale. In 1317, the Carmelite Order of monks were granted a site to establish a charterhouse and a friary; their site is often confused with the location of the present Church of Ireland, but it was in fact situated between the river and Mullaghstones, on the east side of the town beyond the bridge. At the time of the Dissolution, the jurors' account noted the presence of a friar's church with a belfry, a stone tower and a mansion house with a small garden and an orchard. The Carmelites also founded a hospital and an almshouse. Royal charters were granted to Athboy between 1408 and 1612, the latter the most significant of these, which was subsequently revoked after the Battle of the Boyne. The charters thrust the town into a strong market economy, its new borough status supported by the agricultural produce of its immediate hinterland and its connections with a prosperous wine trade through Galway. Evidence of this trade can still be observed in the architecture of the town, in particular in the extensive cellars and wine vaults on the north side of Main Street, which were possibly adapted from remnants of the Norman military stores and refuge areas below the old Castle of Athboy. Documentary evidence for the seventeenth century is also poor but the Civil Survey for Meath records thirteen castles in the town together with an abbey, a church and a bridge. At this point Connaught Street and Lower Bridge Street (which were partially outside of the original town walls) were also well established. Under a seventeenth-century charter the town was granted a market and a fair patent and it continued to prosper through trade. During the 1641 Rebellion, the town was captured by Eoghan Rua O'Neill and later due to the collapse of the rebellion and the Cromwellian confiscations, the townlands of Rathmore and Athboy were passed onto Sir William Tichbourne, Sir George Rawden and Lord Gormanstown - who already owned vast tracts of land in the county. Twenty-seven years later, under a settlement by Mary and William of Orange, the same lands passed to an

Adventurer from London, Thomas Bligh. The Bligh family saw the nascent development of Athboy as a thriving agricultural town throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries until following the Wyndham Act of 1903 they lost control of the borough, and in 1909 they were forced to auction the town off in 110 lots. During the same period the old corporation of Athboy, responsible for law and order, lighting, paving etc. dissolved, leaving the town in some disarray until the establishment of the local council. The Darnley estate office, part of the current Old Darnley Lodge Hotel (where the pedimented doorcase formerly carried the Darnley arms) was finally closed in 1948.

5.1 Eighteenth and nineteenth-century development

The head of the Bligh Family was raised to the peerage in 1725, taking the title of the earl of Darnley. Although considered an absentee landlord, at least for the first half of the century, he lived at the old castle of Athboy in the centre of the town until he built a residence at Clifton Lodge and oversaw the evolution of the town, giving it the form that prevails today. A Darnley manuscript map (Fig.3) indicates that by 1767 the town plan was well-defined in a simple linear pattern, following the old route from Oldcastle to Dublin but completely unrelated to the former Norman thoroughfare. Main Street was lined with low, unassuming two-storey houses and commercial buildings, punctuated by Connaught Street (the road from Oldcastle), Barrack Lane leading to Danescourt, and the ample carriage arches that still distinguish the streetscape today. Characteristic to the eighteenth-century linear town-plan, a widening in the Main Street (then called Dublin Street and later Market Street) provided for a market place, held every Thursday and presided over by the market-house, a modest three-bay, two-storey building with a typically arcaded ground floor (currently McElhinney's shop).

Historical development of the area



Fig.4: Extract from Darnley estate manuscript map from 1767 showing the eighteenth-century development of Athboy. The large gap in the streetscape on the north side of Main Street opposite the entrance to the grounds of the Church of Ireland indicates the site of the old Athboy Castle. Courtesy of National Library of Ireland.

There was a large corn-mill on the outskirts of the town on the river, to the north of the bridge. The Fair Green, to the south of Lower Bridge Street, held a fair four times a year. Originally an open piece of ground the green evolved in the course of the next two centuries to become the town's main public space outside of the market place on the Main Street. The open green was eventually surrounded by low stone-walls with rubble-stone scotch-coping and landscaped with fine chestnut trees. It was donated to the townspeople by Lord Darnley before the auction of the town in 1909. (The Fair Green lies outside the current ACA boundary.) The eighteenth century also saw the building of St James's Church of Ireland to replace the older structure which had fallen into disrepair. In 1733 its grounds, set back at a distance from the main street in the lands of Danescourt, were described by Bishop Ellis as 'in beautiful order adorned with walks and evergreens, and planted

with trees, and enclosed with a good stone wall'. This wall incorporated part of the old town walls to the south. The new church was erected in 1772 in the form of a simple cruciform plan, standing contiguous with the extant Norman tower to the west. Twenty years later a sexton's house was built in a Gothic Revival style at the church gates.

Historical development of the area

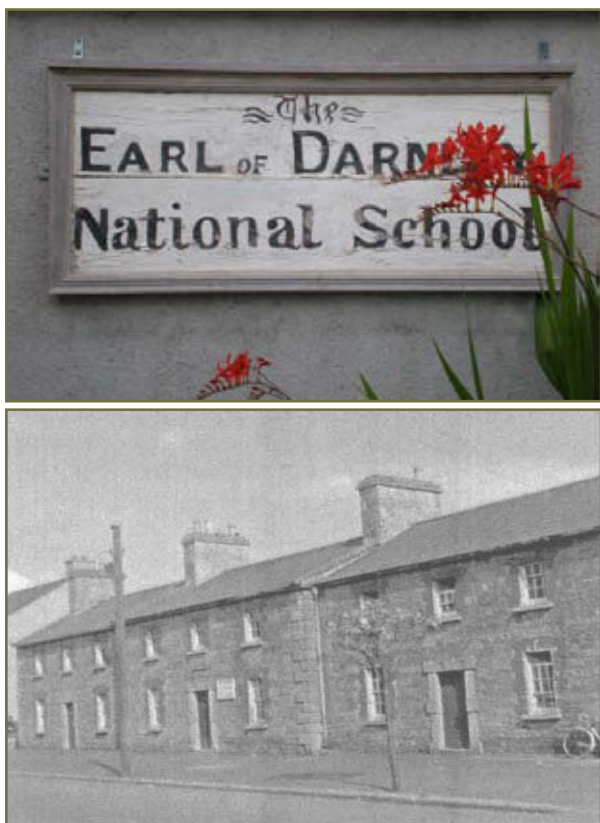


Fig.5: Painted timber Darnley National School sign (relocated to The Mall), and the Darnley Almshouses, demolished c.1970, courtesy of the Irish Architectural Archive.

During a small bout of improvements to the town in the nineteenth century some of the eighteenth-century fabric was removed and replaced with elegant nineteenth-century structures, primarily mixed-use terraced buildings, the RIC barracks and its ancillary buildings, and the fine cut stone building erected by the Darnleys to house a new school in 1885. Up until this point, five schools were accommodated in the town, typically in residential houses, in the market-house and in one small schoolhouse which was built in 1838. Darnley was also responsible for the construction of a set of almshouses built in 1813 century on Market Street (later renamed Main Street); these were three-bay, two-storey houses of cut stone, not unlike the contemporaneous structures built throughout Ireland to house the poor. They were demolished by the local authority in 1970 and replaced with new commercial premises which accommodated one of the McElhinney stores.

In 1845, during the turmoil of the famine, the Roman Catholic Church of St James which replaced the former chapel, was built on O'Growney Street (formerly Winding Harbour and Chapel Street) named after Fr. Eoghan O'Growney, native of Athboy and advocate of the Irish language and the Gaelic League. The new church and its grounds bookended the town to the southwest, the pinnacles and castellations of its impressive square tower still dominate the townscape today. In 1864 the opening of the Midland & Great Western Railway line generated the construction of a small single-storey station with a station-masters house attached. A more interesting structure emerged in the two-storey railway water tower, with its snecked stone façades and brick oculi, its industrial language enriched the architectural landscape of the town. (The Catholic Church and all of the aforementioned railway associated buildings lie outside the current ACA boundary).

Historical development of the area



Fig.6: A Lawrence Collection photograph of Chapel Street, Athboy (renamed O'Growney Street), with the tower of the Catholic Church dominating the streetscape, and prior to the removal of the thatched cottages to the left and the construction of Scoil Naisiunta Ui Gramma in 1949. Courtesy of the National Library of Ireland.

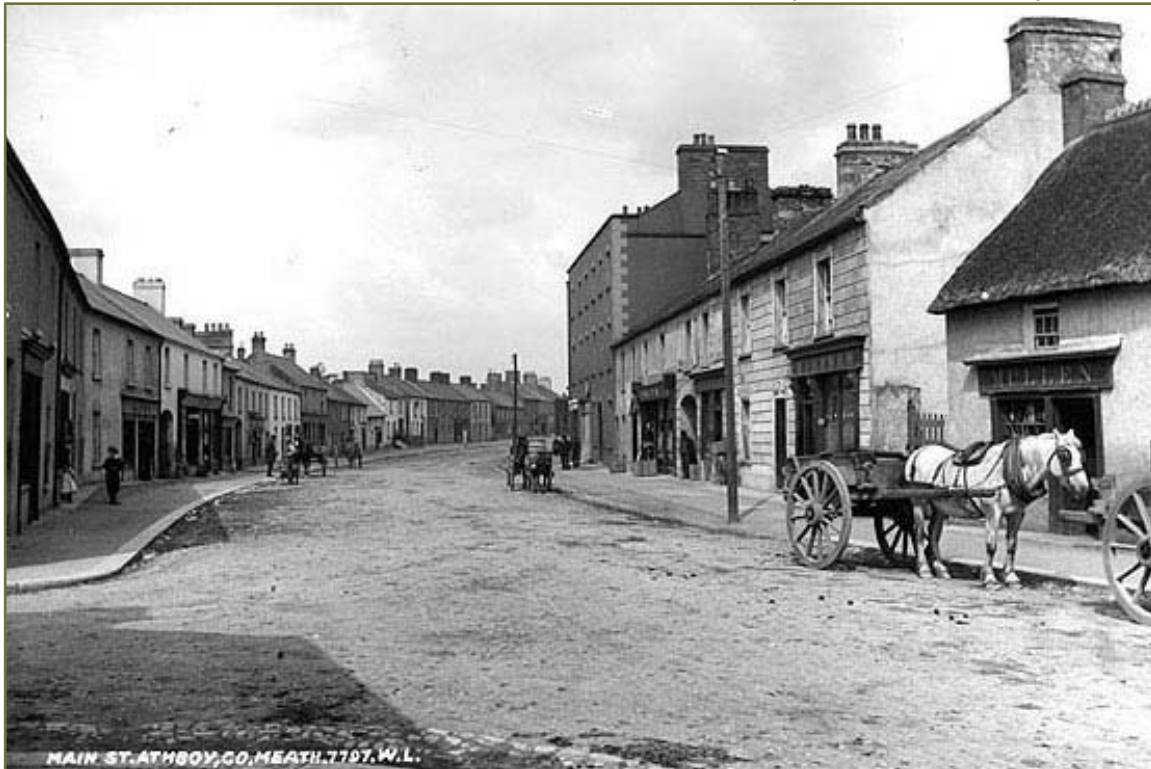


Fig.7: A Lawrence Collection nineteenth-century photograph of Main Street, Athboy showing the vernacular nature of the streetscape at the edge of the town, the archetypical nineteenth-century shopfronts and curious stucco render which embellished the buildings to the right. Courtesy of the National Library of Ireland.

Historical development of the area

5.2 Twentieth-century development

At the turn of the century another wave of development occurred with the sweeping away of some of the thatched cabins that lined O'Growney and Connaught Street. These were replaced with a new national school named Ui Gramma after O'Growney in 1949, built in the modern idiom and highly representative of its architectural period. Adjoining modern terraced houses followed later. Like the Catholic Church of St James's on O'Growney Street the national school is also outside the current ACA boundary. A variation to the nineteenth-century architectural landscape at the centre of Athboy came in the form of an early twentieth-century bank designed by G. F. Beckett and C. A. Harrington. The building was built in 1925 at the cusp of Main Street, counterbalancing the streetscape to the south of Main Street, which had been dominated by the primacy of the facades of Darnley's schoolhouse and the former courthouse.

The courthouse was built in 1863 and remodelled in 1910 to house the RIC's ancillary quarters comprising a small barracks and a jail, until later still it was taken over by Macra na Feirme and the Bank of Ireland respectively. The twentieth century also saw the demolition of some nineteenth-century buildings - including Darnley's almshouses and the old corn mill to the north of the bridge - and their replacement with modern residential and commercial buildings, many of these built to disproportionate scales and with unsuitable materials. A prime example of these developments is the incompatible addition to the former sexton's house (at the entrance to the Church of Ireland) built in 1985 to accommodate the local library, and the awkward uncharacteristic commercial premises that replaced the almshouse on Main Street. Late twentieth-century developments included extensions to the rear of the street-lined buildings on the main streets and modern infill, in particular on the generously long plots to the north of the ACA and at the former mill complex, to the north of the bridge.

Character overview of Athboy Town ACA Layout

6.0 Character overview of Athboy Town ACA Layout

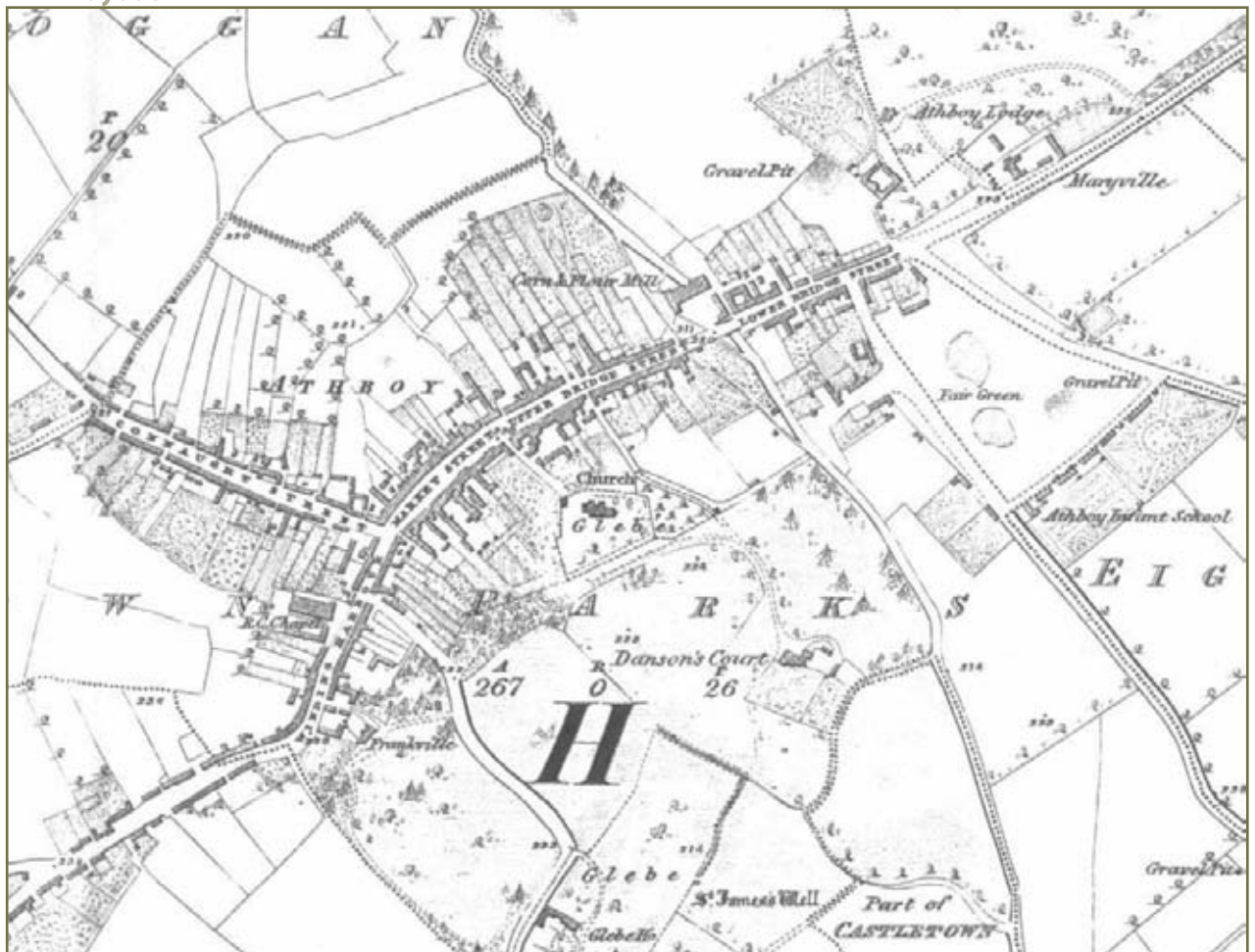


Fig.8: Detail from the 1836 Ordnance Survey Map of Athboy, County Meath.

The urban form of the current Athboy ACA is much as it was in the eighteenth and nineteenth century, and reflects both the pattern of growth during this period and the earlier footprint of the old Norman walls of the town. The town developed in a linear form along the old route between Oldcastle and Dublin, extending in a curve from the former border of the old walls of the town in the southwest towards the northeast to the Fair Green and the tree-lined mall beyond the river, now forming the main approach to Athboy from Navan and Dublin. The ACA boundary does not include the National School and the St James's Catholic Church to the southwest of the town (on O'Growney Street), the Fair Green and mall to the east, and all railway associated structures to the south of the town.

It encompasses Main Street, part of Connaught Street, Barrack Lane, Upper Bridge Street and part of Lower Bridge Street.

Main Street is gently curved and widens towards at the old market place, adjacent to the entrance to the grounds of the Church of Ireland. The linear form curves slowly from the southwest to the northeast, while the street rises to its cusp at the junction of Main Street and Upper Bridge Street before falling again towards Lower Bridge Street, highlighting the ceremonial approach to the former market-place from both directions. The linear form is interrupted only by Connaught Street to the north, by Barrack Lane to the south, and more subtly by the Tremblestown River to the east of the town. The streetscape of the main

Character overview of Athboy Town ACA Layout

streets is made up of a combination of residential and commercial buildings linked in terraces, or semi-detached and detached houses in their own grounds. A series of carriage arches on the north and south side of Main Street punctuate the uniform facades of the street, their respective laneways lead to the courtyards and gardens of the long, narrow plots to the rear. Many of these plots retain their associated stone outbuildings, former coach-houses and rubble stone boundary walls - a distinctive feature in Athboy, frequently emerging on the peripheries of the town or in areas from public view. To the south of the main thoroughfares, the plots are also regular but somewhat shorter, and some of the access points from the Main Street are entirely open in the form of laneways off the street rather than hidden behind carriage arches.

Apart from the streets themselves, there are few open spaces within the ACA boundaries, the main public open spaces in the town being the Fair Green and The Mall which lie outside the current ACA. At most, urban life rotates around the main streets primarily near supermarkets, pubs and banks, and behind the main streets in the churchyard of the St James's Church of Ireland and at the forecourt of the public library - near the churchyard gates. The Main Street contains some rather deep footpaths for sections of its length, in particular at its widest point, echoing the location of the former market place. Main Street, and Upper and Lower Bridge Street are tree-lined but not Connaught Street (which suffers therefore) or the narrow laneway of Barrack Lane, which has the advantage of being bounded on one side by a high random rubble-stone wall for most of its length and is planted with herbaceous border beneath the wall.

6.2 Socio-Economic Functions

The town of Athboy serves a broadly rural hinterland and is essentially a country town, providing a small variety of services to the local population. The mix of uses within the ACA include residential, ecclesiastical, and commercial, with commercial activity founded in supermarkets and smaller shops, banks,

hairdressers, pubs and in the hotel business. In general, the traditional pubs have retained their original plot-size, despite the tendency in rural towns to enlarge premises, and the Old Darnley Lodge Hotel adds to the economic buoyancy of the town. Most of the residential is based in private ownership but some of the over-the-shop domestic accommodation and modern infill development (in particular to the north of the bridge) is based in the rental sector. Both schools are located outside the ACA boundary and community activities are held at the public library and at the Macra na Feirme hall next to the Bank of Ireland on Upper Bridge Street.

6.3 Building types and materials

There are seven common building typologies found within the Athboy ACA.

- Eighteenth & nineteenth-century residential terraces
- Nineteenth-century detached residences
- Eighteenth & nineteenth-century commercial structures
- Ecclesiastical buildings & their ancillary buildings
- Outbuildings & coach-houses
- Twentieth-century commercial structures
- Twentieth-century public buildings

The prevailing building materials in Athboy are limestone which was quarried locally, both cut stone and exposed random-rubble form as well as stucco-facing and render. The use of limestone can be observed in many of the eighteenth-century structures in the village where the stone is used frequently in decorative façade treatment, in outbuildings and in the extensive random-rubble boundary walls which border the laneways and peripheries of the town. The colour and quality of the stonework is an important feature in defining the special character of the town. Characteristically the rubble-stone walls are built above eye level and with diverse scotch-coping styles. The aforementioned features

Character overview of Athboy Town ACA Layout

are very typical of a town with Athboy's urban history and although they are often not visible from the public realm it must be emphasised that these elements are just as significant as the building fabric on the main streets.

The nineteenth and twentieth-century buildings of Athboy were usually finished with stucco-facing or render. In some cases this has been inappropriately removed to expose uncoursed rubble stonework and brickwork around openings. In addition to the removal of the render the original lime mortar has been replaced with sand and cement pointing, a visually and technically unsuitable measure, resulting in eventual damage to the historical fabric. Brick-finished buildings are quite rare in the eighteenth-century architectural landscape of county Meath, and Athboy is no exception. The building of the Ulster Bank on Main Street in the early-twentieth century broke this trend. Brickwork was also used in chimney-stack construction and in door and window surrounds, which were then finished with stucco render. Painted timber is used for windows and doors, and as such forms standard elements of the archetypal shop-fronts. Many buildings within the ACA retain their natural slate roofs which add to the visual richness of the area. Thatch was used extensively as a roof covering, as can be seen in the historic photographs from Lawrence Collection depicting late nineteenth-century streetscapes (Figs.6&7). This tradition was swept away in the mid-twentieth century and the roofs of the smaller vernacular cottages on Connaught Street are now slated or tiled.

There is little trace of historic paving materials or furniture left within the current ACA boundary for Athboy, with the exception of a painted stone jostle stone at the foot of a carriage arch on the north side of Main Street. Footpaths and kerbs are generally reconstituted stone edges with concrete flagging or tarmacadam infill. The entire townscape is dominated by the towers and pinnacles of both churches and otherwise marred by a labyrinth of telegraph poles and overhead cables, spoiling the character of the roofscape of the ACA.



Fig.9: Examples of the variety of traditional shopfronts, building materials & finishes in Athboy.

Character overview of Athboy Town ACA Layout



Fig.10: Main Street, junction with Upper Bridge Street, showing the diverse elevations of a nineteenth-century end-of-terrace residence, bounded by cast-iron railings, and a twentieth-century shop-front, styled in traditional form.

Street by street appraisal

7.0 Street by street appraisal

All of the streets included within the boundary of the ACA contain buildings and other elements that make a positive contribution to the character of Athboy. In general the condition of the built fabric is relatively good but there are individual properties which are in poor condition or have been damaged by the replacement of original materials, in particular on Connaught Street. This section provides a brief description of each street and any open areas within the ACA boundary under the following headings where appropriate:

- Architectural Character & Building Uses
- Quality & Treatment of Open Space

7.1 Connaught Street

7.1.1 Architectural Character & Building Uses

Connaught Street is currently the least attractive of the thoroughfares in Athboy. Only part of the street nearest to the junction with Main Street is contained within the ACA boundary, much of the remainder is made up of modern development of undistinguished architectural quality. The street is relatively wide and is lined with a combination of unassuming single-storey terraced buildings and two-storey modern infill. The single-storey buildings, with rendered facades, are remnants of a vernacular typology, prevalent in the eighteenth and nineteenth century on Connaught Street and O'Growney Street - as evident from nineteenth-century historical photographs - and they are not untypical on the approach routes to provincial Irish towns of this period. These buildings, although modest in their façade treatment and in their architectural detail make a significant contribution to the special character of the town. Unfortunately the architecture of many of these vernacular cottages has been altered by the removal of traditional roofing materials and the replacement of original windows with inappropriate uPVC or aluminium.

In addition, the design of the modern infill fails to take cognisance of the original roofline and plot size, and unsuitable building materials have

been employed in their construction, resulting in developments that are insensitive and damaging to both the urban fabric and the special character of Athboy. The only building on the Register of Protected Structures that lies within the ACA boundary on Connaught Street is a three-bay, two-storey end of terrace house, built in the early twentieth century. Although currently derelict, the building retains much of its detail including its timber sashes, its red-brick decorative eaves course and fine segmental arches to the windows on both floors. With the exception of one or two small shops, the majority of the buildings on Connaught Street are primarily in residential use.



Fig.11: Modest vernacular houses on Connaught Street with their windows, doors and roofs replaced with modern materials.

Quality & Treatment of Open Space

A classic feature of provincial Irish towns are wide approach streets lined with modest street-fronted buildings, creating a kind of visual imbalance throughout despite the prevailing formality of the streetscape. It is very likely that Connaught Street was such a street, lined with single-storey cottages or two-storey terraces with understated facades. The street's inherent proportions have now been somewhat compromised with modern infill development. However the wide proportions of the historic street remain discernible. All of the buildings front directly onto the street with the exception of the last building on the north side (before Connaught Place); a single-storey cottage recently restored and set back from the street line with rubble-stone walls with scotch coping to the front.

Street by street appraisal



Fig.12: Modern developments at the junction of Connaught Street & Main Street.



Fig.13: Examples of the diverse streetscape on Connaught Street.

Street by street appraisal

Nineteenth-century historical photographs of the streets of Athboy depict a gravel surface lined with rubble stone creating a footpath or walkway along the streets. The pavement is quite wide on Connaught Street but there is no trace of historic paving materials. A lack of street furniture and soft landscaping adds to the austerity of the street, and overhead wiring mars the view of the church tower and its pinnacles to the south.

7.2 O'Growney Street & Main Street

7.2.1 Architectural Character & Building Uses

A small section of O'Growney Street lies within the current ACA boundary, namely the part between the road to Clonmellon and the junction of Connaught Street with Main Street. For the purposes of this appraisal, O'Growney Street will be considered together with Main Street, which begins at the junction of Connaught Street and

ends at the intersection of Barrack Lane and Upper Bridge Street. O'Growney Street and Main Street curve gently northwards towards Upper Bridge Street, lending a ceremonial approach to the old market place at the widening of Main Street before it connects to Barrack Lane. The thoroughfare is lined with a consistent street-front of two-storey buildings, embellished with traditional facades and archetypical pub and shop fronts which lend an architectural rigour to the town. Most buildings have with a smooth rendered finish, some with moulded stucco architraves. Exceptions to this are the former market house built in the eighteenth century with an arcaded ground floor (now converted as a commercial premises), a substantial nineteenth-century end of terrace two-storey house at the beginning of Upper Bridge Street which has a cut-stone facade, and Athboy Furniture Stores, the former Darnley school built in 1885 which is of ashlar stone.



Fig.14: View up Main Street towards the junction of Upper Bridge Street and Barrack Lane. The widening in the street indicates the location of the former market place.

Street by street appraisal



Fig.15: View down Main Street as it curves towards to the south-west.

This former school (now the Athboy Furniture Store) sits at the cusp of Main Street and at the corner of Barrack Lane, commanding an imposing presence in the streetscape. A two-storeys building of Gothic Revival style with raised gabled end bays containing the school entrances. The front facade is of snecked limestone with ashlar courses, platbands, finely tooled quoins and highly decorative window surrounds, which retain their timber sashes, while the rear windows are framed with a red-brick trim. Built by the Earl of Darnley for the younger tenants of Athboy in 1885, the building is of historical importance to the town, and its prominence in the streetscape and its highly executed architectural detail make it an important feature of the architectural, cultural, artistic and social significance of the ACA.

Street by street appraisal



Fig.16: The main façade of the former Darnley School, now Athboy Furniture Stores, & a window detail of the building facing onto Barrack Lane

In general the main street's architectural character derives from the permutation of the homogenous façades with notable nineteenth and twentieth-century buildings, such as the aforementioned Athboy Furniture Store, the former RIC barracks - with its understated rendered façade - now the Bank of Ireland, and the Ulster Bank, built in 1925 by Beckett and

Harrington in a hybrid classical style. Apart from the dominance of the aforementioned buildings among the more traditional street-fronted terraces, a primary feature to the thoroughfare are the carriage arches which punctuate the streetscape at regular intervals, offering glimpses of the stone outbuildings and private laneways that penetrate the urban plan. These carriage arches have been an integral part of the townscape since the eighteenth century and their form should not be altered as they are highly significant elements that add to the special character of the ACA. A large number of buildings have lost their original doors and windows, which have been reinstated with modern replacements.



Fig.17: Examples of typical street-fronted properties and their carriage arches which punctuate Main Street at regular intervals.

Street by street appraisal



Fig.18: Street-fronted properties in the south western end of O'Growney Street.

7.2.2 Quality & Treatment of Open Space

The spatial quality of O'Growney Street and Main Street has been sustained throughout the centuries, primarily because of its linear form curving from north to south, its widening out towards the centre and the preservation of both its streetscape and its roofline, punctuated at intervals by prominent public and historic buildings. The gentle rise at the cusp of Main Street emphasises the ceremonial approach to the former market place, and as there is no civic square as such in the town, these streets are particularly wide pavements used to their capacity.

The buildings on Main Street front directly onto the street with the exception of Athboy Furniture Store (the former Darnley School) and its counterpart on the opposite side, a substantial nineteenth-century end-of-terrace house. Both of these properties are bounded by cast-iron railings on low stone plinths. Nineteenth-century historical photographs of the streets of Athboy depict a gravel surface lined with rubble stone creating a footpath or walkway along the streets. The pavement is quite deep, in particular on Main Street, but there is no trace of historic paving materials and the footpaths are now made up of reconstituted stone kerbing with either tarmacadam infill or concrete cobble-lock paving. Despite the lack of street furniture and historic

paving materials the streets retains a certain charm and are well enhanced by extensive tree planting.

Land use on O'Growney Street and Main Street is predominately commercial, with a lively mix of shops, pubs and hotels. A small number of properties have residential accommodation in their upper floors.

7.3 St. James's Church of Ireland & approach laneway

7.3.1 Architectural Character & Building Uses

Two prominent entrances to individual properties lead off the south side of Main Street. One gives access to a car park and ancillary buildings to the rear of the Old Darnley Lodge Hotel – the former Darnley Estate Office. The second entrance off Main Street leads to the forecourt of the library in the former sexton's house - a curious single-storey Gothic Revival pavilion - and the gateway to the St. James's Church of Ireland. This forecourt is essentially a car-park servicing Main Street and the library, and this function has considerably diminished the primacy of the ceremonial approach to the ecclesiastical ensemble. In addition, a larger monolithic library extension of fair-faced concrete blockwork obscures the historic sexton's house and is inappropriate in its design and massing, detracting significantly from the special character and architectural significance of this set-piece.

Street by street appraisal



Fig.19: Nineteenth-century photo of the former sexton's house. Courtesy of the Irish Architectural Archive.



Fig.20: Norman tower of St James's Church of Ireland and the former sexton's house with library extension at the entrance to the church grounds.

Street by street appraisal



Fig.21: The forecourt to the library and Church of Ireland grounds.



Fig.22: Access laneway from Main Street to the forecourt to the library and church gates.

Street by street appraisal

St James's Church of Ireland is well-situated off the main thoroughfares, its picturesque rubble-stone walls border the former Danescourt demesne and the parkland of the Town Parks to the south of the town. The walls also encompass a mature, landscaped graveyard attached to the church grounds. Remnants of the old medieval walls of the Athboy to the southwest of graveyard consist of a semi-circular bastion and a fosse. The stone church, a replacement for an older one, is in the form of a simple cruciform plan and retains the extant Norman tower to the west. The main body of the church is of two distinct periods; the first is of 1772, when the earlier phase was completed, and the second is from the early nineteenth century, when complaints were made

by the congregation about the uncomfortable nature of the interior of the older building. Pointed arch and round-headed openings, with dressed stone surrounds, frame the intersecting Y-tracery windows. The east window of the church is made up of the former west window of the ruined church of Rathmore which adjoins the townlands of Athboy. A free-standing parochial hall with stone facings, also built in nineteenth century, has recently been renovated. This interesting group of religious structures, which includes the former sexton's house, gates and graveyard walls, are highly significant both architecturally and historically, and add a further layer of special interest to the ACA.



Fig.23: St. James's Church of Ireland and adjoining graveyard.

Street by street appraisal

7.4 Barrack Lane

7.4.1 Architectural Character & Building Uses

Barrack Lane runs perpendicular to Main Street, at the junction of Upper Bridge Street, and it leads southwards to the mature grounds of Danescourt, terminating at the gates of the demesne. The lane's name derives from the former RIC barracks at the corner of Upper Bridge Street, now the Bank of Ireland, with the Macra na Feirme hall at its side. These aforementioned buildings and the former Darnley School frame the entrance to Barrack Lane from Main Street. The character of the lane is very much formed by the high rubble stone wall all along its west side and the glimpses of the old Norman tower with the backdrop of the plantations to the rear of the Church of Ireland. Beneath the boundary wall, a pretty herbaceous border, with a loose limestone edging, has been planted on the western side as far as a secondary entrance to the grounds of the Church of Ireland opens off the lane through a small archway. The character of the east side of the laneway is less intact; the original boundary wall has been partially removed and re-pointed with an inappropriate sand-and-cement mortar and modern single-storey detached houses built in a formulaic late twentieth-century style line the route.



Fig.24: View from the lane towards Main Street & Upper Bridge Street.

7.4.2 Quality & Treatment of Open Space

The spatial quality of the lane derives from the nature of its form as it winds its way southwards and from the character of its boundary treatments, both the rubble-stone walls and the soft landscaping of the herbaceous border. Added to this, the views south towards the church tower and towards the mature trees in the graveyard, and the lane's vista terminated by the colourful facade of MacCann & Byrne on the north side of Upper Bridge Street, heightens the picturesque effect created by this inherent feature in the urban fabric of the ACA. There is no trace of historic paving here and the surface treatment to the lane (originally a gravel track) currently consists of tarmac, but. Though an unsophisticated element in the layout of the town of Athboy this laneway makes a valuable contribution to the special character of the ACA.



Fig.25: View of the old Norman tower from Barrack Lane and entrance to the church grounds from the laneway.

7.5 Upper & Lower Bridge Street

7.5.1 Architectural Character & Building Uses

Upper and Lower Bridge Streets are a direct extension of Main Street leading north-eastwards, to the natural approach to the town from Navan and Dublin. The boundary of the ACA terminates at the adjoining property to the Garda Station on the north side of Lower Bridge Street and on the south side at the property to the east of the Mill House. For the purposes of this appraisal the two streets will be considered together. The streets are divided geographically by the intersection of the bridge which crosses the Tremblestown River at an angle, resulting in a curious schewed form to the single-arched stone bridge, built to replace an older one in 1870. Due to the considerable overgrowth of vegetation the river is barely discernible from the bridge as it flows south towards the metal footbridge, and although picturesque the river banks are in a very poor state and are in need of regular maintenance.

Street by street appraisal

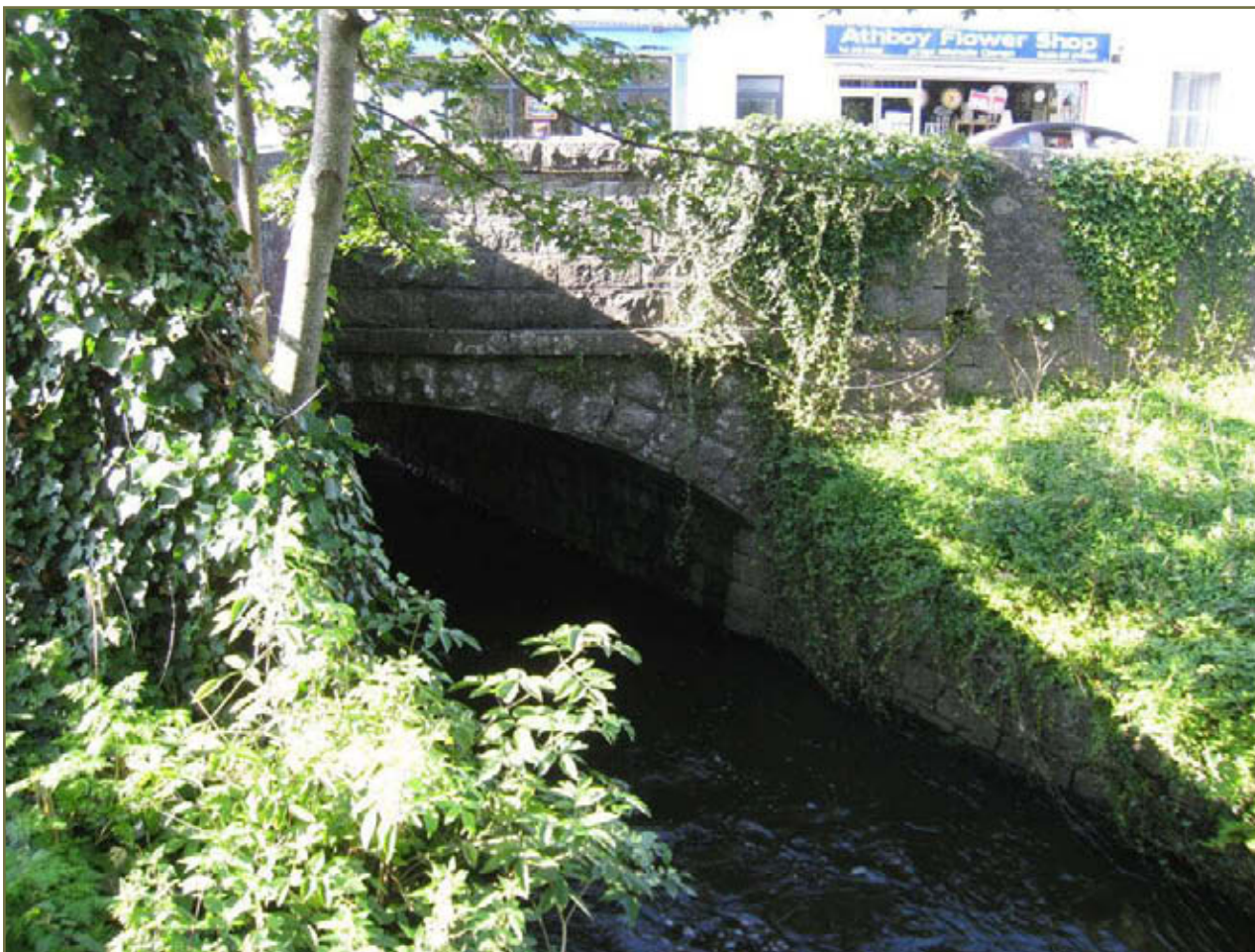


Fig.26: The stone bridge from the south showing its rock-faced parapet and segmental arch over the river.

The streetscape is very diverse here; ranging from a wide mix of street-fronted residential and commercial buildings, their provenance ranging from the eighteenth to twentieth century to a private residence in its own grounds, and from large-scale builder's yards to modern apartment developments. The architectural character of the streets has been damaged by these latter developments, which pay little heed to the original street- or roof-line, and the materials employed in their construction significantly undermine the special character of the ACA.

Street by street appraisal



Fig.27: The bridge and gable of the Mill House from Lower Bridge Street.

The most remarkable buildings on Upper and Lower Bridge Street are the former courthouse and RIC barracks, now the Bank of Ireland, which sits at the end of Barrack Lane, an early nineteenth-century residence (Mill House) on its own grounds, and another former barracks, now the Garda Station on the north side of Lower Bridge Street. The Mill House was built in 1840 to house the manager of the large corn-mill on the north side of the bridge, on the Tremblestown River. It is the only private house on its own grounds within the ACA and its setting, set back from the street against an impressive backdrop of mature shrubs and trees, is both advantageous and a positive contribution to the nature of the streetscape at this point in the town. The building is two-storeys, of three bays with a return and an extension to the rear. It is faced with un-coursed limestone, enriched by yellow-brick surrounds to windows and entrance door. Unfortunately, the building has lost its original timber sash windows but retains its purple slate roof and a cast-iron pump in the yard to the rear. Diagonally opposite the Mill House, at the end of a short terrace sits the Garda Station, an austere

six-bay, two-storey building, typical of the mid nineteenth-century barrack typology. The front facade is enlivened by paired eaves brackets and the building retains its timber sash windows, stone sills, and a central segmental-arched opening with two timber doors and double over-lights. A fine set of stone outbuildings straddle the plot line with the adjoining property to the east, currently a small garden centre, which retains the remnants of a stone facade to the street. All of these aforementioned buildings enhance the architectural character of the street and add another layer of special interest to the ACA. Almost half of the buildings in the street are in commercial use, with residential split into private and the rental sector, the latter primarily concentrated in the modern infill developments.

Street by street appraisal



Fig.28: The Mill House on Lower Bridge Street

7.5.2 Quality & Treatment of Open Space

The spatial quality of Upper and Lower Bridge Street derives from its topographical setting within the town, from its wide proportions and its diverse architectural typologies. Sadly, both ends of the thoroughfare suffer from mediocre townhouse and apartment developments of poor quality materials and detailing, set back off both sides of the street, which disregard the original street frontage and roof-line, and significantly diminish the character of the ACA. Like Main Street, the ceremonial approach up Upper Bridge Street to the former market centre of the town provides fine views through the town and the streetscape is enhanced by the variety of facades of different periods. Other than the streets themselves there are no open public spaces here and the surface treatment which displays no trace of historic materials is similar to the other streets within the ACA, of the modern generic form of concrete kerbing with either tarmacadam infill or concrete cobble-lock paving. Landscaping in the form of tree planting,

and the punctuation of the mature grounds of Mill House with the overgrown planting along the river to the south add a further dimension to the special quality of the streets.

Summary of significant views & vistas

8.0 Summary of significant views & vistas

The topographical location and the flat nature of the terrain within the Athboy ACA preclude any vantage points affording panoramic views over the town or the surrounding countryside, and the streetscape of the town is appreciated upon the approaches to the town. The main landmarks dominating the roofscape and visible from most locations within the town are the old Norman tower part of the Church of Ireland and the fine pinnacles of the Catholic Church belfry (the latter is outside the current boundary of the ACA). Unfortunately, a plethora of telegraph poles and overhead cables currently mar the roofscape of the Athboy ACA and impede certain views within the town. Picturesque views can be appreciated from Barrack Lane which provides views south towards the Norman church tower against a backdrop of mature trees in the graveyard and the parkland to the south. Equally, a fine vista is afforded back towards the north, terminated by the rear of the former Darnley School and the colourful facade of MacCann & Byrne on Upper Bridge Street.

Important approaches to the town are those from the three routes, the N51 between Navan and Delvin, the R154 between Oldcastle and Trim and the secondary route, the CR344, between Athboy and Kildalkey to the south of the town. The approach from Navan leads through The Mall, with the Fair Green towards the left-hand side, before it reaches Lower Bridge Street and the slow ceremonial approach towards Main Street, the former market centre of the town. The main views within the town are provided here, where the streetscape and urban form can be fully appreciated. The approach to the town from Delvin gives a foretaste of the Main Street as it curves away towards the northeast and again, like its counterpart, the streetscape and views through the town can be fully realised here. The entrance from Trim is just as significant, with the immense stretch of the mature trees and rubble-stone boundary walls of the Fair Green to the right curving towards Athboy centre, an exemplary approach and a classic feature of many eighteenth and nineteenth-century Irish towns.

Similarly, the entrance to Athboy from Kildalkey, lined with the impressive high stone-rubble walls of the old rectory, provides a glimpse of the Town Parks to the right (not within the current ACA boundary) and both church towers as it curves dramatically towards the centre.

These approaches present important vistas through the town of Athboy and they play a vital role in enhancing its special character.



Fig.29: Main Street looking westwards.

Summary of Special Character of Athboy ACA

9.0 Summary of Special Character of Athboy ACA

The special character of Athboy derives from its extraordinarily rich settlement history and the resulting archaeological and architectural set-pieces, from its homogenous streetscape permuted with buildings from many periods and the use of traditional building materials in its architecture. Furthermore its historical and social associations with the Darnley family, adds to its special interest.



Fig.30: The cusp of Main Street, Athboy, as seen in a nineteenth-century Lawrence Collection photograph prior to the construction of the current Ulster Bank, which replaced Fagan's on the left-hand side of the street. Courtesy of the National Library of Ireland.

Summary of Special Character of Athboy ACA



Fig.31: Twenty first-century view of the cusp of Main Street, looking towards Upper Bridge Street. The white gable of one of the buildings in the nineteenth-century photograph above can still be seen in the distance. This building is one of the few extant structures from this period in this section of Upper Bridge Street and it is vital that the building be preserved.

Due to its topographical setting on a gentle rise, which is articulated at the former market place of the town, fine views and vistas are afforded throughout the townscape, enhanced by mature trees in private grounds, a modest river and a dramatic back drop of plantations and parkland to the south. The approaches and exits to and from the town are key elements to the special character of Athboy and the peripheries are largely defined by rubble stone walls a classic feature of many eighteenth-century Irish villages, and one which penetrates the urban fabric of Athboy in its public and private laneways. In addition the historical pattern of building plots and the remains of the old town wall to the south give an important insight into the mediaeval layout of the town.

The built fabric of Athboy's streets is typical of the austere architectural style of smaller Irish towns and is well defined by a hierarchy of building typologies, forming an eclectic mix of uniform terraces, houses with varied plot

widths and detached landmark buildings in residential, commercial and ecclesiastical use. One of the most significant landmarks in the town is the ecclesiastical site of St James's Church of Ireland and its attendant grounds which retain a medieval church tower. The remnants of vernacular buildings on the approach roads and streets into Athboy, and the quality of public buildings demonstrate the layering of architectural styles and add to the special character of the town. The retention of rubble-stone boundary walls and outbuildings to the rear of the streetscape, often hidden from the public realm, heightens the special interest and architectural character of the ACA.

A palette of materials particular to the area, namely local limestone, some red and yellow brick, purple slate, painted timber and ironwork provides unity of character. Although the buildings are relatively unadorned, fortunately some retain original features such as fanlights, timber sash windows, slate roofs, railings and other boundary treatments which make up the attractive streetscapes. It is the combination of all of these elements that contribute to the special character of the ACA of Athboy.

Summary of Special Character of Athboy ACA

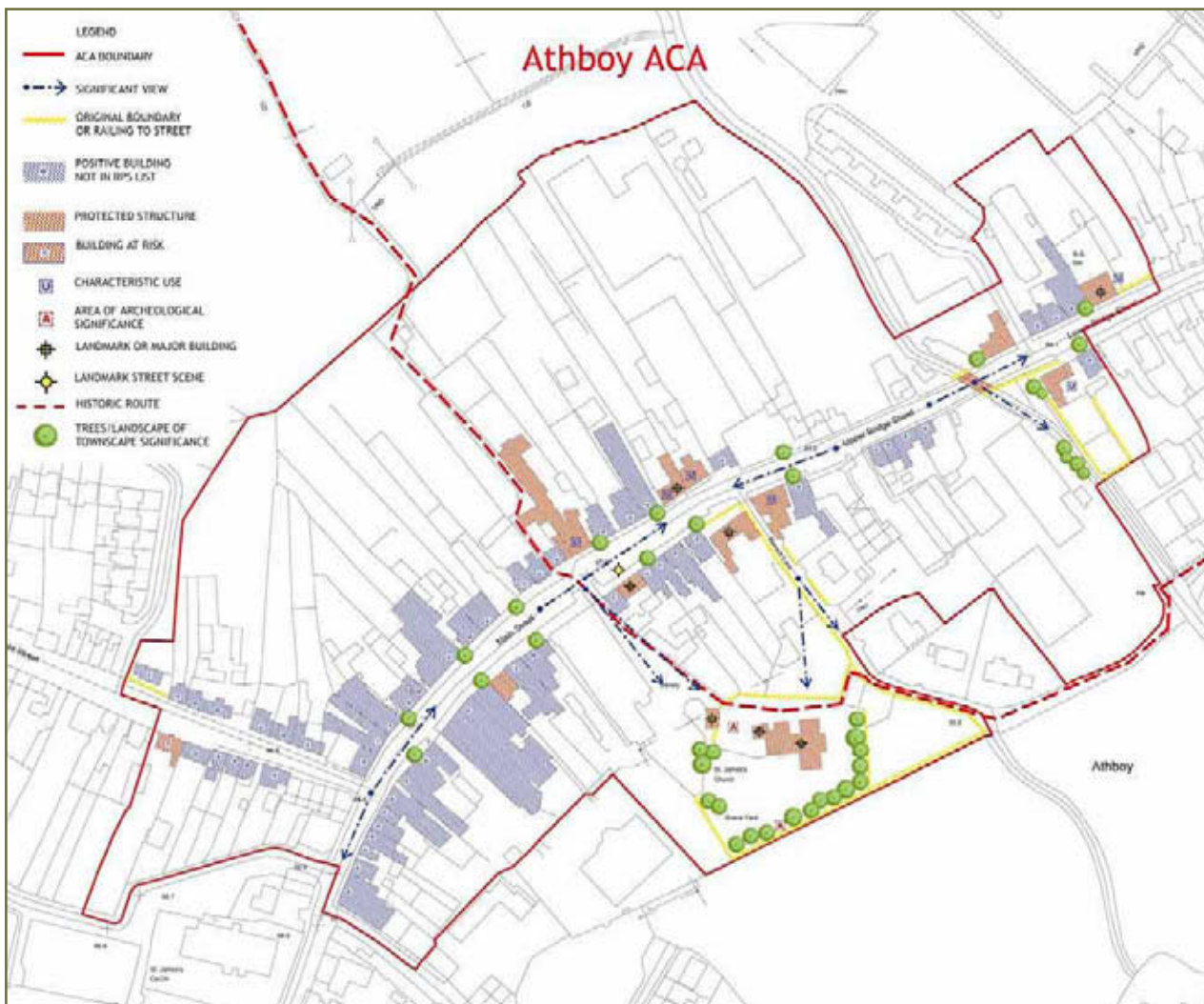


Fig. 32 Athboy ACA Character Map

Implications for Planning and Development

10.0 Implications for Planning and Development

The objective of Architectural Conservation Area designation is to protect the special character of an area through rigorous control and positive management of any changes made to the built environment. Under the Planning & Development Act 2000 there is a requirement to obtain planning permission for all development works which do not constitute exempted development. Section 4 of the Planning & Development Act 2000 lists developments which are constituted as exempt, for the purposes of the Act. With regard to Architectural Conservation Areas it is important to take into account Section 4(1)(h) of the Act which states that the following shall be exempted development:

“Development consisting of the carrying out of works for the maintenance, improvement or other alteration of any structure, being works which affect only the interior of the structure or which do not materially affect the external appearance of the structure so as to render the appearance inconsistent with the character of the structure or of the neighbouring structures”.

Protected structures:

Planning permission is required for all works that would materially affect the character of a protected structure, or any element of the structure including its curtilage, which contributes to its special character. Under Section 57 of the Planning & Development Act 2000 an owner/occupier may request a declaration from Meath County Council as to whether any works they propose require planning permission. A declaration issued under this section sets out the type of works the Planning Authority considers would or would not affect the character of a structure or any elements thereof, which contributes to its special interest.

Non-protected structures within an ACA:

Owners and occupiers of buildings and lands which are not protected structures located within the Athboy Architectural Conservation Area should be aware that works, which in the opinion of the Planning Authority would materially affect the character of the Architectural Conservation Area will require specific grant of planning permission under Section 82(1) and (2) of the Planning & Development Act 2000. In considering any application, the affect of the proposed development on the special character of the ACA must be taken into account.

10.1 Works requiring planning permission

10.1.1 External walls

With the exception of larger public buildings which were built with exposed limestone facades, the majority of buildings in Athboy have a render or stucco coating, often in a smooth finish which is ruled and lined to resemble ashlar. This rendering forms a protective layer for rubble stonework. Unfortunately, in some instances the render or plaster has been removed exposing rubblework or brickwork, which was never intended to be seen. This practice not only significantly alters the architectural character of the structure and affects the visual integrity of the building, particularly in a terrace, but it also exposes the building to decay and damage, once its protective layer is removed. In addition, many facades have had their original lime mortar pointing removed and replaced with an unsuitable cement based mortar. This type of repointing would be deemed unacceptable by the Planning Authority and the restoration of lime render following the correct historic detail will be encouraged.

Implications for Planning and Development

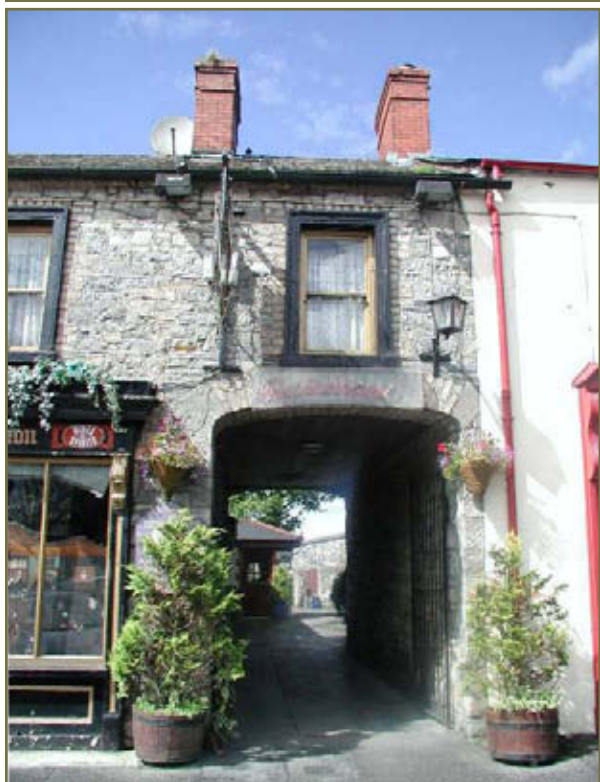


Fig.33: Central bar before removal of render facing & on the right, following its removal

Unpainted rendered buildings contribute to the patina of the historic town and should not be painted. Likewise exposed stone or brickwork should never be painted. Use of modern paints which can be detrimental to the building's fabric, or the sand blasting of external surfaces which may lead to porosity and water ingress are also unacceptable.

Covering external walls with finishes other than their historic finish, such as stone or timber cladding, is not acceptable in the historic buildings of the ACA. Original historic external finishes must always be retained. Any proposal for the alteration of the existing finishes will require planning permission and changes that affect the special character of the ACA will not be acceptable.

10.1.2 Roofs

Due to the nature of the street pattern of the Athboy ACA, its roofscape is clearly visible from the street, and from the public and private laneways that penetrate the urban plan, as well as from certain approach roads, notably from the R154 from Trim and the N51 from Delvin. The roofscape is therefore highly significant and is an integral part of the ACA's special character. The original form of the roofs must always be retained and should be repaired and reused rather than replaced. The following works require planning permission:

- The removal of the original roofing material such as natural slate and ridge tiles. Their replacement with modern materials like fibre-cement tiles will not be deemed suitable by the local authority
- The removal of existing chimney-stacks and early terra-cotta or clay pots or other features of the roofscape such as cast-iron gutters and down-pipes.
- The removal of timber bargeboards and other eaves details and their replacement in a material other than the existing.
- The installation of roof lights on the front, or prominent elevation of a structure, and the elevations visible from the public realm - which in the case of Athboy ACA includes the rear elevations to the south-side of Main Street and Upper Bridge Street. There is no tradition of dormer windows within the Athboy ACA and their installation will not be deemed appropriate by the local authority.

Implications for Planning and Development

- The erection of, or alterations to, externally mounted signs and advertisements at roof level, including banners.
- The provision of awnings, canopies, flags and flagpoles.
- The erection of solar panels, TV satellite dishes, communication antennae or support structures for same. These are considered to have a highly negative impact on the character of the area and should be avoided when visible from the public realm. Where existing aerials have become redundant they should be removed.

10.1.3 Window and door openings

The buildings within the ACA of Athboy retain a number of original window and doors but a very large number of original windows have been replaced with uPVC, aluminium or timber windows of inappropriate design, in particular on Connaught Street and the lower end of Main Street at the junction of O'Growney Street. Original elements should be retained where possible, and repaired and reused rather than replaced. The following works require planning permission:

- The alteration or enlargement of original openings.
- The removal of original timber and metal windows. Replacement with modern, artificial materials such as uPVC and aluminium will not be deemed acceptable.
- The removal of stone sills and doorsteps.
- The removal of fanlights and original timber doors. Replacement with modern, artificial materials such as uPVC and aluminium will not be deemed acceptable.
- Repairs to historic windows and doors may only be carried out following consultation with the Conservation Officer of Meath County Council.

10.1.4 Commercial frontage:

- Planning permission is required for the alteration of commercial frontages whether a structure is within an ACA or not. However alterations within the ACA boundaries will be assessed on the impact of the proposed design on its adjoining and surrounding structures, having regard to scale proportion, material and details. The overall aim in the design of new shop fronts should be to reinforce the unity and integrity of the whole elevation. The following guidance should be adhered to:
- High quality, durable materials should be used, such as stone, brick, timber, vitrolite tile and glass, rather than artificial contemporary materials.
- Signage and fascias should be in proportion to the shop front and colours should be complementary to those of the building and adjoining structures.
- New and extended shop fronts should never obscure architectural details of the original structure, such as sills, stringcourses, eaves details, windows and doorways.
- The windows to the main façade of the shop front should be of clear glass and not used as a surface for advertisements or other coloured signage.
- While outdoor advertising may be necessary for commercial activity, new signage must not detract from the special character and visual amenity of the ACA. There are very few shop and pub-fronts in Athboy with extant traditional lettering to their fascias or façades other than the hand-painted sign on the 'News Box' delicatessen at the lower end of Main Street and MacCann & Byrne on Upper Bridge Street where traditional styles have been successfully replicated. This practice should continue where possible and hand-painted signs will be encouraged by the council. Endeavours should be made by all owners and occupiers of commercial premises to maintain an appropriate traditional style, which complements extant

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historic structures. The use of corporate signage will depend on its compatibility with adjoining buildings, but plastic box signs and the use of incompatible colours on shopfronts is strongly discouraged by the Planning Authority. This is most pertinent in the case of certain commercial premises such as fast-food outlets, bookmakers, amusement arcades and phone call centres.



Fig.34: Hand-painted timber sign to the 'News Box' delicatessen on Main Street.

- Planning permission will be required for external vending machines, ATMS, newspaper receptacles, and storage boxes and bays. All commercial premises should endeavour to limit the clutter of temporary external retail furniture such as, external heaters, various bins, menu-boards, seating and tables and ensure that these elements do not detract from the special character of the ACA.

- Awnings should be traditional in style and retractable, and made of a heavy duty natural material rather than plastic.

- Where security is an issue, the design of security shutters and grilles should complement rather than negatively impact on the structure. Metal roller blinds with visible boxes are not acceptable within the ACA boundaries. Shutters can be positioned discreetly behind the fascia board or lattice grills may be positioned behind the shop window. In some buildings the original internal timber shutters can be used for security purposes. Security shutters should never cover the whole commercial frontage but only the vulnerable glazed areas and should be painted or finished

in colour to complement the rest of the exterior. Where external security screens are deemed acceptable they should be of transparent open chain-link grille design rather solid or perforated shutters, which are not transparent when viewed obliquely.

- Separate access to the upper floors of the buildings should be maintained where existing and commercial uses that bring vitality to upper floor areas will be encouraged.

10.1.5 Vernacular Buildings

Traditional houses, often single-storey, built of simple materials in modest style are an important component determining the special character of the Athboy ACA. The thatched cottages that can be seen in the Lawrence Collection photograph of O'Growney Street are long gone, but vernacular forms are still characteristic in Athboy in particular on Connaught Street. These rows of cottages are currently roofed with terra-cotta or asbestos tiles and in many cases their elevations have been compromised by the modification of original openings or the replacement of historic materials with inappropriate uPVC and aluminium substitutes. Demolition or replacement of single-storey vernacular buildings, whether detached or in terraces, is not acceptable. The raising of eaves levels, alteration of roof pitches or insertion of dormer windows fundamentally change the character of vernacular buildings and are similarly unacceptable. Alterations to provide modern facilities must be carried out in sympathy with the historic value of these buildings and amendments to increase their size are not always appropriate and must be confined to the rears of houses. Reinstatement of traditional vernacular features such as thatch roofs, lime-washed external walls, timber-sheeted doors and sash windows will be encouraged, but must conform to correct historic detail in form, material and technique.

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10.1.6 New build

- Designation as an ACA puts an obligation on prospective developers to produce a very high standard of design. The following guidance regarding new development should be adhered to:
- Direct imitation of historic styles is not always appropriate but if this model is to be followed then the elevational treatment of the new development should be well-proportioned and built with respect for its context. Buildings should follow the eaves heights, roof pitches and building lines which predominate in the respective streets and should employ windows of matching proportions and alignment. Materials should be of good visual quality and durability. Features which are not found amongst the historic buildings of the town should be avoided. These include projecting eaves, fascia and soffit boards, dormer windows and roof windows, standard-issue concrete cills or copings, top-hung casement windows, pressed aluminium gutters or uPVC features of any kind. Roofs should be covered with natural slate, terra-cotta decorative elements, lead or other roofing which enhances the character of the ACA.
- High quality contemporary architectural design that is complementary to the character of the ACA is acceptable but the development of any infill sites within the ACA, particularly of part of a street terrace, will require a very sensitive design approach and should positively contribute to the character of the area. A design impact statement providing justification for the proposal in terms of design concept, scale, materials and proportions should accompany such an application.
- New buildings should follow existing plot boundaries to retain the existing grain which is an important determining factor of the special character of the ACA. Where larger developments span across former individual boundaries, the original plot divisions should be articulated in the volume of the new

buildings, both to the front and the rear. See also the following Section 10.1.8 on the amalgamation of sites.

- Extensions should be kept to the rear of properties within the Athboy ACA, and be of an appropriate scale, built with suitable materials and finishes. Due to the nature of the street pattern of the Athboy ACA the rear elevations of its streetscape are visible from the public and private laneways that infiltrate the urban fabric of the town - a key element of the special character of the ACA. Therefore, the design of extensions to the rear of buildings, in particular on the south side of Main Street and Upper Bridge Street, should be designed to minimize their visibility from all public or private laneways, they should be subsidiary to the main building, of an appropriate scale, and will need to conform to the same principles for new development as laid out above. Extensions to the side or front of street-front structures within the ACA will not be encouraged by the local authority as these could be particularly detrimental to the character of Athboy.

10.1.7 Development within the grounds of residences with extensive gardens and properties of longer plot length

In the case of buildings of longer plot length or with large gardens, special consideration must be given to the impact of any new development on the buildings, and on their respective existing boundaries. Within the Athboy ACA this is most relevant in the cartilage of residences such as the Mill House on Lower Bridge Street (which is a protected structure), the longer plots on the north side of Main Street, and especially the large-scale builder's yards on both sides of Upper Bridge Street. These properties are particularly vulnerable to inappropriate development which could undermine the special character of the Athboy ACA. All of these sites are currently zoned B1, and are defined by Meath County Council 'to protect and enhance the special physical and social character of existing town and village centres, and to provide for new and improved

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town centre facilities and uses'. To protect the special physical and social character and setting of such sites, suburban type development is deemed unsuitable and would be damaging to the properties. New development within these sites should retain the predominance of the existing building on the site and should follow the rectilinear pattern of the historic urban grain. The standard of design of the new build - as outlined above - should follow the stipulations set out in Section 10.1.6 of this document.

10.1.8 Amalgamation of structures, properties and sites

The amalgamation of structures requires planning permission regardless of whether they are located in an ACA or not, unless it involves reversing the subdivision of what had originally been a single dwelling. Proposals for the amalgamation of properties within the ACA should take into consideration the impact of changing or extending the existing plot sizes on the streetscape. Original entrances should remain in use. The amalgamation of sites and plots within the ACA, especially with an increased density should respect the scale, mass, height and design of not just the adjoining buildings but of the entire streetscape. This will require sensitive planning and design treatment in order to complement the fine grain of the established streetscape. A design impact statement providing justification for the proposal should accompany such applications.

10.1.9 Demolition works

Proposals to demolish structures of architectural merit within the ACA, whether it is a protected structure or not, require planning permission. Demolition will normally only be permitted where the structure makes no material contribution to the character or appearance of the area. There will be a presumption in favour of retaining structures that a positive contribution to the character of the area. Where permission is sought for demolition on the ground of structural defects or failure, a report containing annotated photographs and drawings will

be required. The report is to be produced by a suitably qualified and experienced professional regarding the existing condition. As part of the justification for any demolition within the ACA on structural grounds, details will be required of repairs and remedial works usually carried out in similar circumstances and details of why they are not deemed suitable in this case.

10.1.10 Boundary Treatments

Removal of original railings, gates, gate piers and boundary walls, whether visible from the public realm or not, require planning permission. Most buildings within the Athboy ACA have street frontages, but because of the little network of public and private laneways in the town there is a predominance of rubble-stone boundary walls to the rear of the main streets. These walls are finished with diverse styles of scotch-coping and notable examples are the boundary walls to St James's Church of Ireland, the high stone walls on Barrack Lane and the walls to the Mill House, on the south side of Lower Bridge Street, which is set back from the street and is bounded with a low stone wall and hedging to the front, and full rubble stone walls to its remaining boundaries. These boundary walls are an integral part of the ACA and add to its special character of the town. Their removal can be detrimental to the character of the ACA and is therefore not acceptable. In the instance where a section of a boundary wall has been removed in order to provide a new entrance to a property or site, the broken edges of the original wall piece should be finished appropriately and never left in a ruinous state.

10.1.11 External Lighting

Proposals for the illumination during night-time hours of certain buildings and landmark features within Athboy ACA should be agreed beforehand with Meath County Council. The method of lighting, i.e. type of fitting, fixing method and type of light would need to be specified by the applicant in seeking permission and should be designed so that it does not result in light pollution or negatively impact on other structures in the ACA.

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10.1.12 Preservation of views

The significant views described in this document are namely those looking through, or towards the town of Athboy from its various approaches, as outlined in Section 8.0. It is vital to the special character of the village that these views are preserved and any works within the ACA should not adversely impact or block these views.

10.2 Works not requiring planning permission

10.2.1 Internal Alterations

The ACA designation does not prevent internal changes or re-arrangements to structures which are not listed as protected structures within the ACA, provided that these changes do not impact on the exterior of the structure. However, all internal changes must comply with current building regulations.

10.2.2 Works to the public realm

Generally, works to the public realm will be carried out by Meath County Council or major utility and service providers, and may be exempt from planning permission. However, prior to commencement of the works, consultation with the Conservation Office of Meath County Council will be required, to ensure that these works enhance and improve the special character of the ACA and do not negatively impact on it. The following areas will require careful consideration:

- Works to public footpaths, including the preservation of historical street surfaces such as cobbles or original kerbing. New pavements should not be of poured concrete or tarmacadam with reconstituted stone kerbing, but should reflect the natural materials of the village. When cobble-lock style paving is used it should be of an appropriate scale, colour and detail to complement the character of the village.
- Retention and preservation of all surviving items of street furniture, which contribute

to the special character of the ACA, such as original lamp standards, cast-iron water pumps and post boxes. New street furniture when provided will be of high quality reflecting the character of the ACA.

- The installation and location of utility boxes, such as large ESB metre boxes, should be given careful consideration with regard to their position within the ACA and the impact of its colour and massing on the adjoining boundary treatment and surrounding buildings. Painted finishes of muted colour rather than galvanised finish should be considered.
- Changes to traffic management and parking within the ACA. This should take into account its ACA designation and seek to preserve and enhance the character of the area in the design and provision of parking meter machines, signage, ramps, renewed surface treatment and pavement layout. Suitable design of public signage, in particular tourist information will be encouraged.
- New street-lighting should be in a traditional style, which enhances the village. The lighting should in no way mar or distort the current roof-scape of Athboy or obstruct the significant views within the ACA.
- The removal of redundant distribution poles, wires and services which hang across the streets or deface commercial frontages and residential terraces should be promoted. Equally, initiatives to place overhead service underground will be supported and facilitated where possible.
- Other than on Connaught Street, there is a considerable amount of tree planting throughout the town. In addition to this the mature ground of the private residence of the Mill House, the herbaceous border on Barrack Lane, the backdrop of the plantation along the river and in the graveyard and to the south add a further dimension to the soft landscaping within the ACA. The design of any new open spaces and additional landscaping should strive for the spatial simplicity visible in historical photos of

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Athboy. Good quality landscape design can enhance the setting of historic buildings and improve the appreciation of the urban spaces. Such designs should employ good quality natural materials which are already found in the streetscape, or are in sympathy with its scale and materials. The Conservation Office at Meath County Council should be consulted in the design of any such schemes, to ensure that the impact on the historic character of the town is acceptable.

10.2.3 Maintenance & repairs to non-protected structures only

Planning permission is not required for regular maintenance works and genuine repairs within this ACA (such as roof, rainwater goods or window repairs) as long as original materials are retained where they exist, or where replacement is necessary that it is on a like-for-like basis.

Please note that some of the works listed in Section 10.0 and all its subsections above require planning permission irrespective of whether the area is protected or not, but are included to highlight the need for careful consideration of the design of the proposed works. This is to ensure that they do not impact negatively on the special character of the area. The list is not in itself a comprehensive list of all works, in all circumstances that require planning permission, but identifies those works that would impact on the character of the ACA. Development works would still have to adhere to the general provisions of the Planning and Development Acts 2000-2006 and Planning Regulations. The area planner and conservation officer of Meath County Council can be consulted if there is any doubt as to whether planning permission is required or not.

