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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

AAP1 was designated in the Navan Development Plan, 2003-2009 and relates to an 8.4 ha site located to the North West of Navan town centre close to the confluence of the Boyne and Blackwater Rivers.

This site, which is bounded by the existing road network and bisected by the River Backwater is zoned a combination of 'C1' - *"To provide for and facilitate mixed residential and business uses in existing mixed use central business areas,* 'D1' - *To provide for visitor and tourist facilities and associated uses"* and 'F1' - *To provide for and improve open spaces for active and passive recreational amenities"*. It is designated for a number of "gateway" sites in the context of the Navan Development Plan, 2003-2009.

The sites off Flowerhill have been redeveloped and apart from this, the remainder of the site is currently underutilised and underdeveloped and the site is currently in a number of ownerships.

It is envisaged that this AAP will set out the desired framework for future development of the lands in a coordinated and coherent manner, building on existing natural amenities to provide for a new urban quarter to the North West of the existing town centre.

The urban structure proposed as a result of this AAP involves:

- A new urban structure focused on the key "gateway sites" providing for new residential and mixed uses in compliance with the Navan Development Plan 2003-2009.
- Access to the site from Ratholdren Road, the N3/Kells Road and from Mill Lane.
- Bridging of the River Blackwater to provide pedestrian and cyclist access through the lands.
- Building height reflecting existing development on the opposite side of N3.
- Given the location of Elliot's Mill at a lower point of the site, a building which will create a focal point will be accommodated.
- Creation of new streetscapes along Ratholdren Road, the new inner relief Road and the N3 while maintaining views toward the River Blackwater.
- Provision of access along River Blackwater and from the site to the new town park.

A study team from various professional disciplines was established in order to facilitate the preparation of this Action Area Plan; this team is made up of the following:

<u>Planning Context</u>	Mrs. Gráinne Mallon, Ms. Mary Galvin, Mr. James McNulty & Ms. Vivienne Boylan Gráinne Mallon & Associates, 6 Merrion Square, Dublin 2.	Architects & Planning Consultants
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<u>Archaeology</u>	Ms. Rosanne Meenan Roestown, Drumree, Co. Meath.	Archaeologist
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SECTION 1- BACKGROUND TO AAP1 LANDS

1.0 **Introduction**

The town of Navan, within which this action area plan is situated, is located in the mid-east of County Meath, within the Greater Dublin Area (GDA). It is approximately 45km from Dublin City Centre. Figure 1 below illustrates the geographical location of Navan in Ireland, while Figure 2 illustrates Navan's context within the County of Meath and Map no. 1 shows the exact site boundary in red taken in the context of Navan town.

This Draft Action Area Plan relates to AAP1 as designated under Section 3.4.3 of the Navan Development Plan, 2003-2009. There are six AAP areas identified on the Navan Development Plan. It is the objective of Meath County Council and Navan Town Council to prepare an Action Area Plan for the area AAP1: The area east of the Navan Inner Relief Road Phase 2A and including the Ratholdren Road, Lower Flower Hill and the N3 Inner Relief Road. Three AAPs, including AAP1, straddle the River Blackwater with the remaining three dispersed around the outskirts of the town of Navan.



Figure 1: Geographical Location of Navan

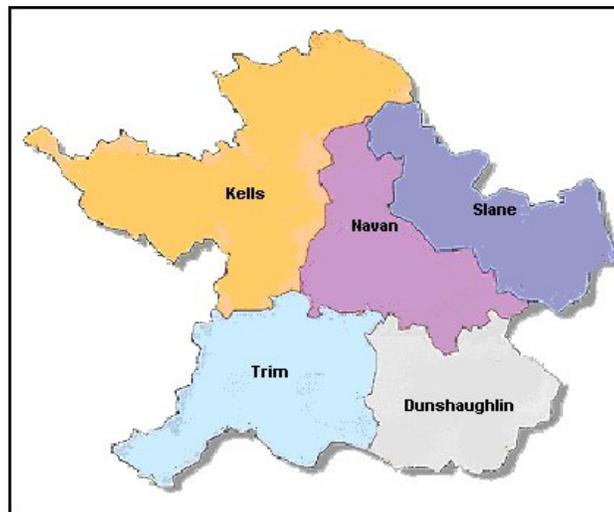


Figure 2: Location of Navan in Meath

1.1 **Status of the Action Area Plan**

This Action Area Plan does not have the statutory weight of a Development Plan or Local Area Plan as per Section 18 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000. It is derived from a specific Development Objective contained in the Navan

Development Plan as mentioned above. Action Area Plans are defined in the glossary of terms of the Navan Development Plan 2003 – 2009 as:

“A non-statutory plan prepared by or on behalf of the local authority, for a specific area, providing detail on the desirable framework for the future development, design and/or layout¹”

1.2 Description of Site Location and Boundaries

The lands proposed to be developed under this Action Area Plan (AAP1) lie to the north west of Navan town, just outside the historic town walls close to the confluence of the Blackwater and the Boyne, a location considered strategic both in the historical past and the present (Figure 3 refers).

The AAP boundaries follow existing physical boundaries; that of the local road network - Flower Hill Road to the east, the Kells Road to the south (alternatively known as the (N3) Inner Relief Road), the New Distributor Road (also part of the Inner Relief Road system) to the West and the Ratholdren Road to the north and north east. Thus the subject site is effectively an enclosed parcel of land. (AAP Map 1 refers see overleaf).

1.3 Principal Characteristics within site boundary.

The most significant natural feature of the AAP site is the River Blackwater and its river valley. The Blackwater is a tributary of the River Boyne and joins the Boyne east of Poolboy Bridge, just outside the AAP1 lands. It flows through the Action Area Plan lands physically bisecting the AAP1. Thus the APP1 plan lands are divided in two with no existing bridging point.

The lands enclosed within the AAP are in multiple ownership. A large proportion of the lands are undeveloped at present. There is an existing surface car park, controlled by the local authority at the junction of the Local Distributor Road and the Kells Rd (N3 – Inner Relief Road) and dilapidated mill buildings straddling the Blackwater. To the east of the site recent developments, mainly residential in nature, have generally been Government Tax Incentive / Designation led and are located along the western side of Flower Hill from New Lane to Poolboy Bridge. A new access road services the recent development along Mill Lane. Recent Engineering studies (Road design and Flood Plain analysis) have been carried to examine works required to upgrade and widen Mill Lane to meet Council standards as required by conditions of recently permitted development in this area.

¹ Navan Development Plan 2003, pg 195.

Save where recent development has facilitated penetration within the site to the east, to date, public access to these lands and in particular to the banks of the River Blackwater, recognised as an underutilised amenity feature, has been limited.

1.4 Principal Characteristics outside the Plan Boundary

The main commercial centre of Navan is located to the south of the AAP1 lands with existing low density residential development located to the north. Lands due west are covered by similar action area plan status, "AAP2", with little evidence of new works having commenced as yet. Beyond this area, further west, are lands recently designated as a "town park". The western streetscape of Flower Hill is contained within AAP1 whilst the eastern section is excluded. However, both sides of this street contain existing mixed used development. New riverside frontage has recently been constructed at AAP3 due east of the subject site.

1.5 General Assessment

From the brief introductory description above, it is clear that the AAP1 lands demonstrate the following characteristics which distinguish it from the other designated AAP lands.

- This AAP offers the unique physical characteristic, in that it is the only parcel of land whose area is spatially enclosed by an existing network of roads. Such a strongly bounded area can lend itself to defining its own identity and thus is capable of creating a new urban quarter within the town of Navan.
- This AAP also displays the unique characteristic, not attributable to any of the other AAPs, as designated, in that it is the only parcel of land with a total of 5 designated Gateway sites (4 of which are marked on Development Plan Map no. 2). This will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4.
- Prime position close to the confluence of the Boyne and Blackwater Rivers.
- The current nature of this subject site- an under developed , underutilised and largely inaccessible area shall change in line with the vision Meath County Council and Navan Town Council has for the planned future expansion of the town of Navan which seeks consolidation from the core outwards. Thus the sites strategic and gateway position at the confluence of the Boyne and the Blackwater shall be built upon to unlock its potential and give it a central and pivotal position for the future.

- The river Blackwater that divides the subject site in two physically, calls for a bridging point of a pedestrian nature to create linkages within the site and also to link the residential areas north of the lands through the AAP lands with the central commercial zone to the south. As such the development of the site with attendant pedestrian linkages would consolidate the town by connecting the outer residential areas to the commercial core.

1.6 Conclusion

This action area plan is guided by development and specific objectives set out in the Navan Development Plan 2003-2009 and informed by a number of issues raised in the collection of background papers. From an assessment and evaluation of the above, taken together with a comprehensive site analysis and review of the Riverside Action Area Plan, it is clear that a number of interconnected and mutually supportive goals need to be achieved. These are as follows:

1. To attain the required development mix that will benefit the town of Navan in general whilst remaining appropriate to its location.
2. To provide an enhanced living and working environment for local people.
3. To realise the full potential of the Blackwater within this valley for all potential users.

SECTION 2: PLANNING CONTEXT

2.0 **Introduction**

The chapter looks at the action area site in the context of the statutory planning framework for County Meath and the town of Navan (i.e. Meath County Development Plan 2007-2013, Navan Development Plan 2003-3009, Housing Strategy and Retail Strategy). These plans and strategies outline relevant planning policy and specific objectives which will have to be taken into consideration in proposals for development on the lands covered by this Action Area Plan.

2.1 **Meath County Development Plan, 2007**

The current county wide plan was adopted by Meath County Council on March 3rd 2007. This Plan identifies three prime development corridors in the county i.e. Navan, Drogheda Environs and the Dunboyne Pace Clonee Corridor.

The Settlement strategy SP1 contained in the plan states

“The Council will concentrate residential development first and foremost into the designated centres of Navan, Drogheda and the Dunboyne / Clonee / Pace Corridor having regard to the Settlement Strategy of the Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area. These centres shall accommodate the majority of Meath’s share of the Mid Eastern regional residential growth over the life of this Development Plan and beyond”.

Table 11 of the Development Plan sets out the actions and mechanisms of delivery necessary to achieve the objective *“To plan and provide for a Strategy which would enable Navan-Trim-Kells remain and enhance its position as the county’s primary dynamic cluster”.*

Chapter 3 of the County Development Plan relates to Economic Development and in particular to tourism and contains the following objectives which are of relevance to the AAP1 lands:

- ED OBJ 4 *To investigate the feasibility and deliverability of the potential of the Riverside Area of Navan as a cultural quarter of the town.*

- ED OBJ 5 *To commission a heritage/tourism interpretation strategy that harnesses the asset and highlights the issues in the deliverability of the product.*
- ED POL 49 *To encourage new and high quality investment in the tourism industry in Meath with specific reference to accommodation in terms of choice, location and quality of product.*
- ED POL 54 *To promote the development of high-quality tourist accommodation, especially hotels and guesthouses.*
- ED POL 56 *To encourage and retain hotel development in the County and through the Development Plan and Local Area Plan process, to identify suitable sites for the development of additional hotel and related uses.*

2.2 County Meath Housing Strategy

All developments seeking planning permission within the AAP1 lands shall have regard to the provisions of the Housing Strategy at the time of application, where applicable and the provisions of the Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2002 in relation to Part V. The current strategy was adopted by Meath County Council in conjunction with Navan, Trim and Kells Town Councils in 2007.

2.3 Retail Strategy for County Meath 2001

Navan is designated as a Level 2 County Town centre in the GDA hierarchy. In the early years of the strategy there is scope and potential for additional retail floor space in and around the core retail area. In the Strategic Policies of the Meath County Retail Strategy, Policy RS1 relates to Navan Town Centre where, it states:

“It is the policy of the Council to promote and encourage major enhancement and expansion of retail floor space and town centre functions in Navan to sustain its competitiveness and importance as a County Town Centre in the GDA”

Navan is the retail Hub for County Meath. The town centre has a vibrant and buoyant retail core and provides a wide variety of higher/middle comparison goods in a range of retail outlet sizes. Navan Shopping Centre is to the south of the AAP area on the west side of the Navan Inner Relief route. The shopping centre comprises a gross floor area of approximately 19,045 sq. m.

It is considered that this shopping centre shall adequately cater for the need of the future uses and residents of the AAP lands, save where some small convenience shops may be considered appropriate.

2.4 Navan Development Plan 2003-2009

There are significant sections of the Navan Development Plan which relates both specifically and more generally to these lands, covered by this AAP1. The Development Plan provides for the preparation of a number of Area Action Plans within the town, among these is AAP1 which relates to the subject site.

The Navan Development Plan, 2003-2009 gives a description as to the form that an Action Area Plan should take, when it states in Section 3.4.3 that:

“Each Action Area Plan shall consist of a written statement and a plan or series of plans indicating the objectives in such detail, as may be determined by the Planning Authority for the proper planning and sustainable development of the area to which it applies”²

AAP1 is described in Section 3.4.3 of the Navan Development Plan 2003 as:

“The area east of the Navan Inner Relief Road Phase 2A and including the Ratholdren Road, Lower Flower Hill and the N3 Inner Relief Road”³

Several objectives contained in the Navan Development Plan, 2003-2009 relate specifically to the lands covered by this Action Area Plan. These include the following:

- Land use Zonings
- Specific objectives
- Built Heritage and Conservation
- Archaeology and Natural heritage including views and prospects

These objectives are illustrated in Figures 4 and 5.

The zoning objectives which relate to the AAP1 lands are as follows:

D1: *“To provide for visitor and tourist facilities and associated uses”*

C1: *“To provide for and facilitate mixed residential and business uses in existing mixed-use central business areas”*

² Navan Development Plan 2003, pg 162.

³ Navan Development Plan 2003, pg 162.

F1: “To provide for and improve open spaces for active and passive recreational amenities”

With regard to the F1 zoning, the Planning Authorities recognise the importance of an adequate provision of attractive and easily accessible open space. In response to the lack of public open space in the town, 66 acres of land, on the northern bank of the River Blackwater, west of the AAP lands, is to be developed as the Navan Town Park. It is envisaged that the proposed public park will be used to accommodate both passive and active recreational facilities. Future residents of the AAP1 lands shall have access to the new town park via linkages from the site to the proposed park. Figure 6 illustrates the location of the proposed public park in relation to the AAP 1 Lands (see also Plate 1).

The open space strategy builds upon Navan's unique natural setting, at the confluence of the Rivers Boyne and Blackwater. There is significant potential to develop the riverside area as the ‘green lungs’ of Navan with integrated public footpath and cycle tracks which will further develop the significant initiatives taken by Meath County Council and Navan Town Council in recent years to improve the provision of amenity facilities and public open spaces in the town.



Plate 1: Aerial photo with proposed park in background

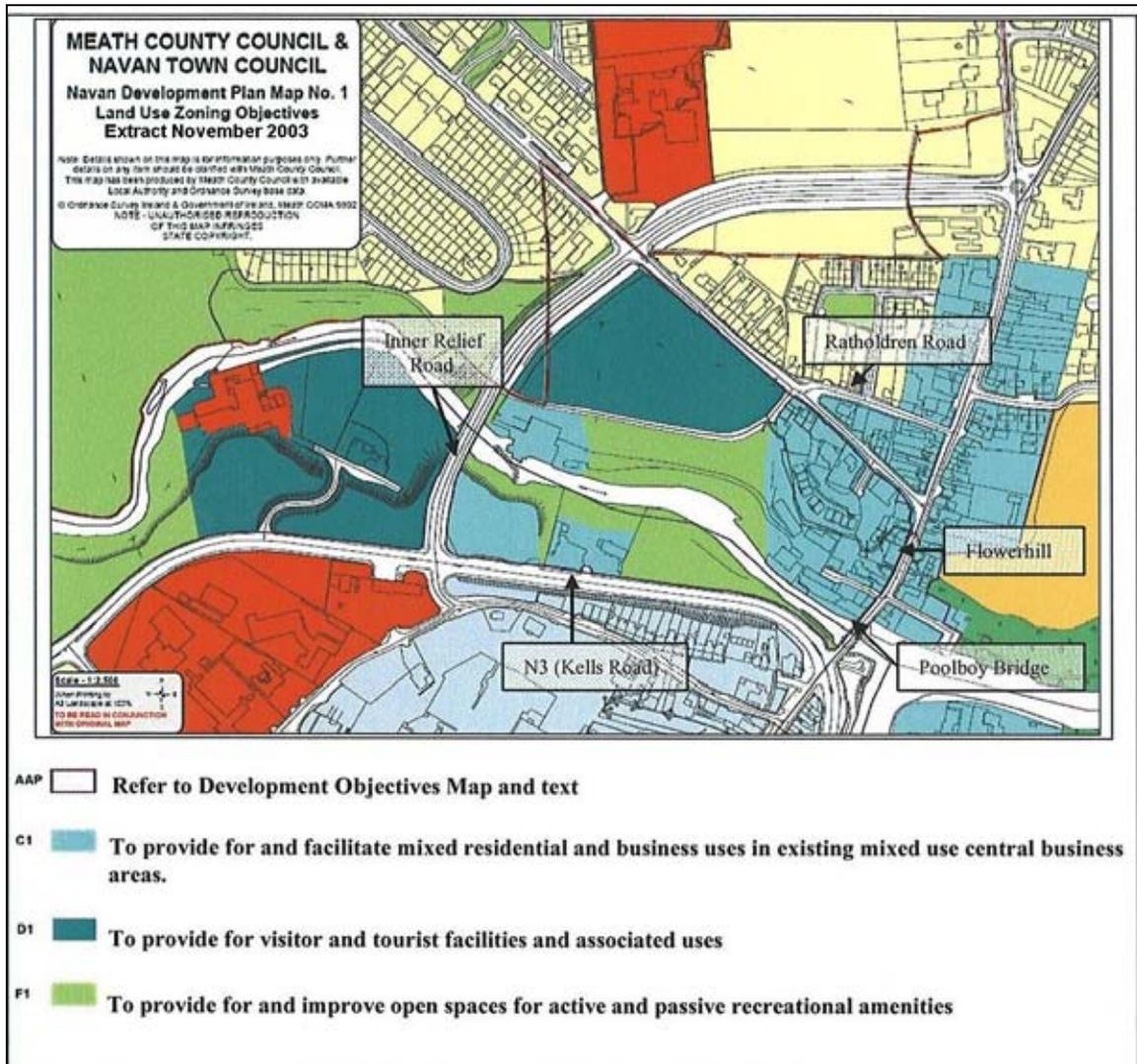


Figure 3: Land-use zonings of the Action Plan, as per the Navan Development Plan 2003-2009

The proposed green structure for Navan contains a number of major elements:

- The development of a town park in the north western sector of the town, immediately north of and adjoining the River Blackwater.
- The development of riverside linear parks and walkways along the banks of the Blackwater and Boyne Rivers would represent the green lungs of Navan.
- The Mollies along the northern banks of the Blackwater is another riverside area, which if further developed would also represent a valuable amenity resource.

The Navan Development Plan, 2003-2009 has designated a number of development (specific) objectives for the lands covered by this AAP1. These are as follows:

- Five '*Gateway Sites*' on the lands covered by this AAP including one structure for conservation and adaptation
- three pedestrian access-ways through these lands.
- two individual trees to be preserved within the AAP area.
- two structures of regional importance on the site.
- zone of archaeological importance.
- historical sites and monuments.
- part of the lands is a Proposed Candidate Special Area of Conservation.
- three views and prospects to be preserved on these lands.

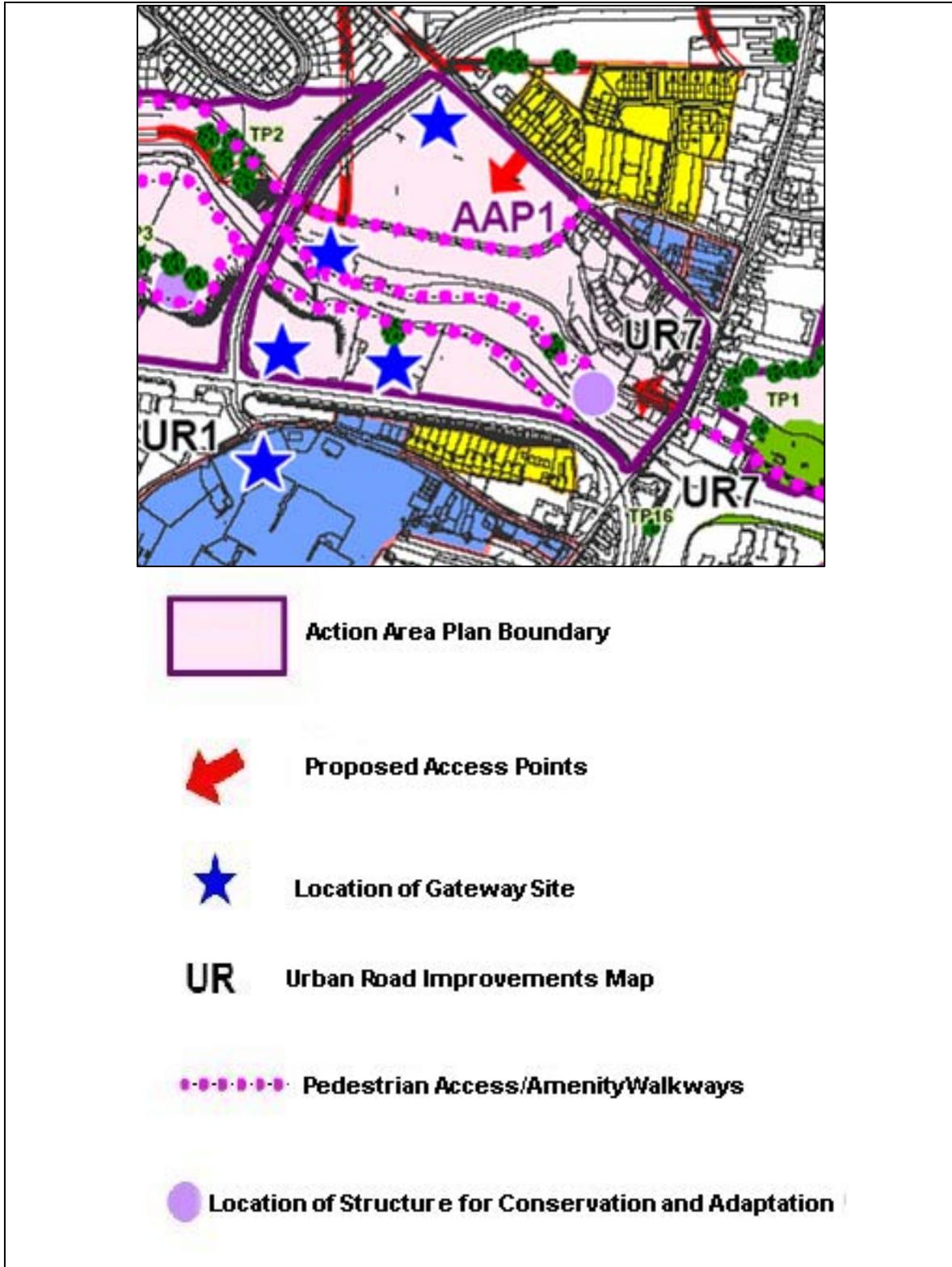


Figure 4: Specific Objectives of the Navan Development Plan 2003-2009 that relate to the AAP1 Lands (Map no.2, Development Objectives refers)

Development on these lands will be subject to further detail at planning application stage.

2.5 Navan Riverside Action Plan, 1997

This plan was undertaken by consultants Brady Shipman Martin on behalf of Navan Urban District Council. It related to Action Plan Area 1 in response to objectives contained in the Navan Development Plan, 1996. This plan preceded the designation of the town park outlined above. The main goals of this plan were as follows:

- *To attain the mix of development which will benefit the town in general and be suitable to this location;*
- *To provide an enhanced living and working environment for local people;*
- *To realise the full potential of the River Blackwater in this valley.*

The main recommendation of this report was based on:

Valley concept

- Combining economic development with recreational activity
- Attracting select projects i.e. corporate headquarters/civic building
- Environmental upgrading
- Provision for recreation

Circulation and Linkages:

- Construction of the inner relief route including a new bridge over the valley;
- Creation of rights of way facilitated by an underpass beneath the bridge
- Pedestrian linkages to other parts of town
- Town approaches or gateways at Poolboy Bridge/Trimgate Street/inner relief road/Kells road/inner relief road junction

Area Regeneration:

- Site on Ratholdren Road/new Relief Road as suitable for a major tourism/leisure scheme;
- Infill sites indicated;
- Traditional industrial stone buildings could be subject of conservation and adaptation;
- Upgrading the existing environment.

The main thrust of the Riverside Action Plan provided for the development of this area as the town park for Navan. As the current development plan has included a large and substantial town park to the west of the site, the idyllic Arcadian arrangements for the lands have been reviewed in light of this. The main physical change that has occurred in the area since this plan was published has been the introduction of the inner relief road and attendant bridging of the River Blackwater for vehicular movements. The development of the town park removes the necessity for a town park at this location, but amenity areas and walkways will be provided which should link into the proposed new town park.

2.6 The Navan Integrated Development Framework Plan

The Navan Integrated Development Framework Plan has a time frame up to 2016 which will cover the current Navan Development Plan and subsequent Development Plans. This overall Masterplan for Navan seeks to make the town more accessible and attractive accommodating an ultimate population of up to 60,000 persons. This plan denotes the Blackwater and Boyne Valley Area as one of four Key Development Areas. (See Figures 6 and 7).

The proposed Development framework within the AAP1 plan lands has been informed by this study and thus can readily comply with the key provisions of the Navan Integrated Development Framework Plan.

It shall be a requirement of the Action Area Plan to ensure that the proposals in relation to transportation and vehicular roads layout shall attempt, where feasible, to provide access to individual land holdings and to prevent individual land holdings from becoming landlocked.

The reclassification of the existing N3 between the fire station and Poolboy Bridge to create a new Boulevard will dramatically alter the central area of the town by removing the severance that currently exists due to the very large volumes of traffic using this route.

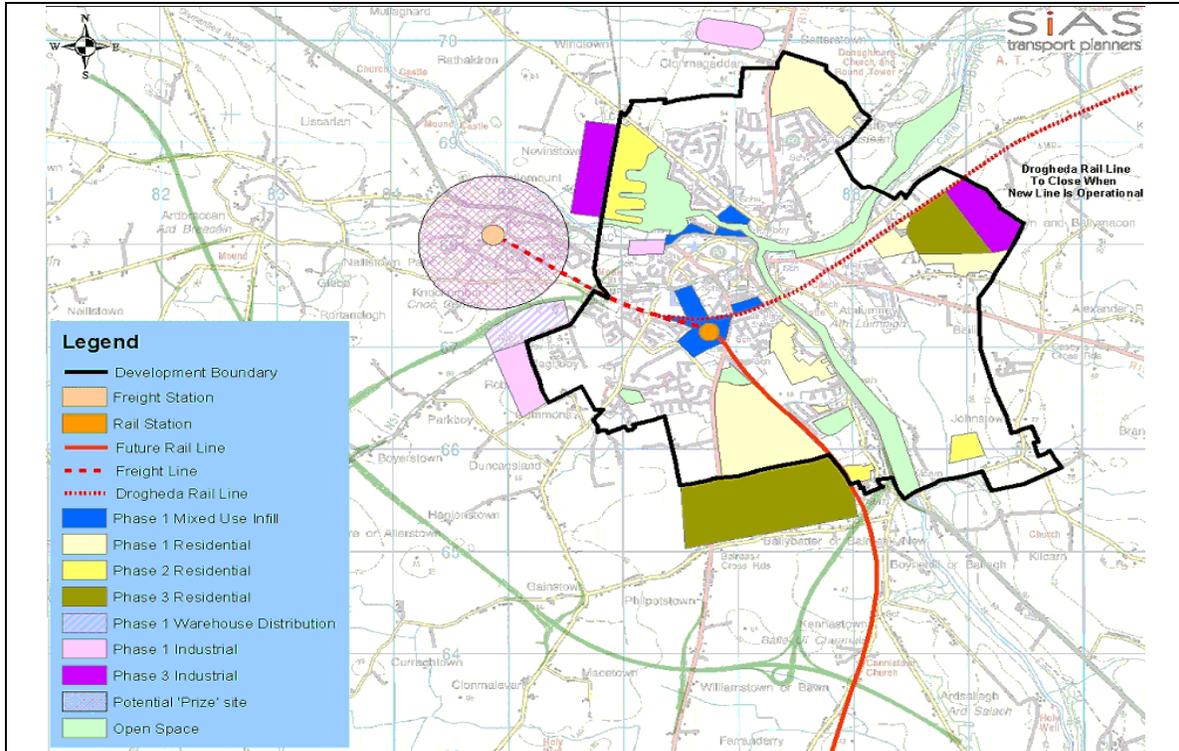


Figure 5: Masterplan from the Navan Integrated Development Framework Plan

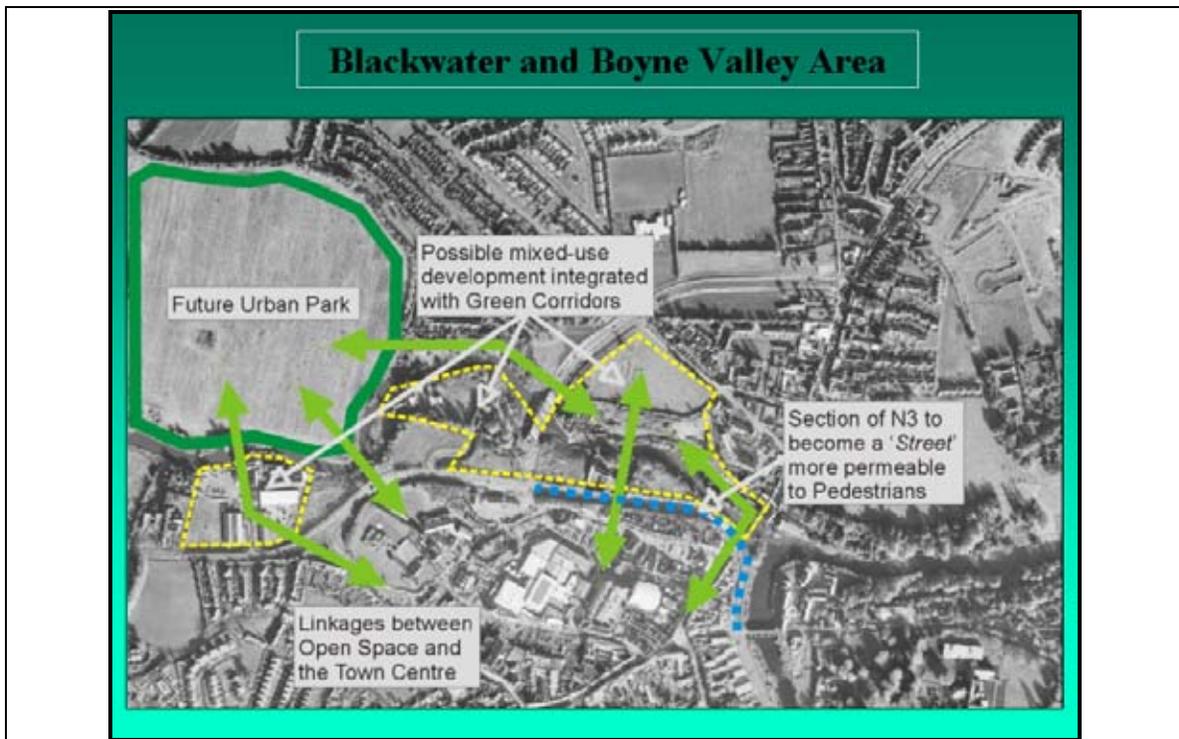


Figure 6: Slide taken from SIAS, Transport Engineers

2.7 Waste Management

Navan is served by the Waste Management Plan for the North East Region 2005-2010. The Plan aims to improve waste management in the region in line with recent government policy. All waste in County Meath is collected by private operators. Two private waste collectors operate in Navan; these are Panda Waste Disposal and Midland Waste Disposal.

2.8 Tourism

The 2004 Tourism Development and Marketing Action Plan for County Meath states that the tourism sector in Co. Meath has improved significantly over the last 5-6 years. The accommodation sector is now completely full for the majority of the year. At present there are two, 2 star hotels in Navan, these are:

- The Newgrange Hotel, Bridge Street, Navan Town Centre (36 Rooms en-suite).
- The Ardboyne Hotel, Dublin Road Navan (29 Rooms en-suite).

Only the Ardboyne Hotel has conference facilities. Given its close proximity to Dublin there is a need for additional conference facilities in Navan Town. A number of gaps exist in terms of tourist facilities in Meath. The 2004 Tourism Development and Marketing Action Plan for County Meath states that:

“Fundamentally the accommodation base itself is weak, and needs to be further invested and developed. The main area of investment (amongst others) needs to be in the following sectors:

- Large base hotel accommodation*
- Large scale hostel accommodation”*

It is stated elsewhere in this document that:

“Meath is in desperate need of more beds and top quality approved accommodation to satisfy the demand of the tourist. It is imperative that this type of investment is sought”

The Meath Tourism strategy ‘Ireland’s Heritage Capital, Marketing Tourism in Meath 2005-2010’, markets Meath as Ireland’s heritage capital. This report in its product development recommends a hotel development – large 4 star offering value for money together with the development of waterways.

Accordingly, there is an identified need for additional hotel development in Meath and in particular for hotel development that incorporates conference facilities.

2.9 Health Facilities

There is a range of health services provided by the Health Service Executive within the Navan town area. However, it is considered that a need exists for a greater variety of both private and public health care facilities particularly for elderly members of the community.

There is a continuing and growing need for nursing homes in Navan. In general, these facilities should be integrated wherever possible into the established residential areas of the town, where the residents can expect reasonable access to local services.

2.10 Childcare Facilities

There are approximately 20 pre-school childcare facilities in Navan. Any application made for development of childcare facilities in the AAP area must comply with the Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Childcare Facilities as issued by the DoEHLG, where applicable.

2.11 Education

Navan provides a wide range of educational facilities, catering for 5,293 students attending primary, post primary and special education. There are ten primary schools within the boundary of the Navan Development Plan. There are four post-primary schools in Navan. Currently there is adequate provision of post-primary facilities in the town. The projected future population for the AAP1 area shall be adequately catered for by the existing education facilities in Navan.

SECTION 3 – BUILT & NATURAL ENVIRONMENT OF THE AREA

3.0 Introduction

There are a number of features of the built and natural environment on these plan lands that must be taken into consideration when formatting proposals for this AAP and also in assessing future applications for development on the lands covered by this AAP. These are:

- The River Blackwater
- Structures and features on the lands
- Zone of archaeological importance
- Historical sites
- Views and prospects to be protected
- Proposed Candidate Special Area of Conservation.

3.1 The River Blackwater

The River Blackwater and its valley is a major feature of this Action Area Plan as it determines the area's character and the type of development that should be permitted. The Blackwater River bisects the Action Area Plan lands and has the potential to provide a green corridor in this area leading to the proposed town park further west. Given the Blackwater valley's natural visual amenities and its proximity to the town centre, an opportunity can be created to link this, at present, underutilised resource back into Navan and also create a linear park linking AAP1 to the outer edges of Navan.

The banks of the river are currently un-kempt and there are few pedestrian pathways and no crossings. There are two old mills along the river banks within this Action Plan area, one of which has recently been refurbished and extended. Elliot's Mill in its present un-maintained state detracts from the beauty of the river valley.

Because the lands of this AAP are mainly in private ownership, formal public access to the riverbank and valley has not been possible to date. This Action Area Plan aims to enhance the amenity value associated with the River Blackwater through co-ordinated development where both the built and natural environment can co-exist, generating a symbiotic relationship with the landscape.

This AAP seeks to open up this area of Navan and to develop it in an integrated manner, particularly along its riverbanks, providing access for the public through the lands. (AAP1 Map 2 refers see overleaf).

3.2 Development Opportunities Permissible to the Built & Natural Environment of the Area

The Navan Development Plan, 2003-2009 gives a number of indications as to the types of developments that can be absorbed in this area. It is stated that in general, development is encouraged on the Northern Banks of the River Blackwater;

“The re-development of these areas for mixed-use development, mainly residential and office uses, with some limited retail in the form of small local shop units. Having regard to the high profile nature of these sites, these areas are also suitable for restaurant, public house, cultural or community uses. The potential of these sites for dramatic landmark development should be encouraged which could in time become a point of reference for Navan. Innovative high quality architecture taking due cognisance of aspect and orientation allied to the careful choice of textures, materials and finishes will be encouraged in this area as the form of development is not confined by any existing development”⁴

The Navan Development Plan also gives an indication as to suitable uses on the southern banks of the Blackwater:

“The redevelopment of these areas for similar uses although of a much lower scale than on the northern bank. The re-development should provide high levels of open space to maintain views too and across the river. The most appropriate areas for the introduction of new build on the Southern Banks of the Blackwater would be adjoining the Inner Relief Road Bridge”

3.3 Structures and Features

There are three structures of regional importance within the AAP1 lands (identified in Figure 8 as items numbered 99, 102 & 103). The first of these (99) is Poolboy Bridge. The second (102) is an old mill known as ‘Darker’s Mill’ which is located on the North side of the River Blackwater to the east of the Action Plan lands and north of Mill Lane. The third (103) is the Weir at Elliot’s Saw Mill, which extends into the River Blackwater, to the west of the Action Plan lands.

As well as being a structure of Regional Importance, Darker’s Mill is also listed in the Navan Development Plan, 2003-2009 as a building for conservation and adaptation (Figure 5 refers –‘Specific Objectives of the Navan Development Plan 2003-2009). Darker’s Mill is a detached L-Plan three storey water mill with sluice and mill wheel (c.1820). This stone building which commands a significant presence along the waterfront has recently been restored in line with the

⁴ Navan Development Plan 2003, pg 102/103.

following policy of the Navan Development Plan, 2003-2009, which states that acceptable uses for this building would include:

“The refurbishment of the mill would be ideal for their conversion into residential units. Other appropriate uses would include office or cultural use, hostel or other visitor related activity. The Planning Authority will be quite flexible in terms of accommodating an appropriate use that would facilitate the retention and survival of this structure⁵”

To achieve this, the Planning Authority granted permission and construction work is completed on the refurbishment of the building. The original building has been extended and the building now comprises of a bar on the lower ground floor and restaurant on upper ground floor and six apartments on the first floor. Directly neighbouring Darker’s Mill, a new development containing 19 apartments, has been completed. North of Darker’s Mill on the opposite side of Mill Lane Road has seen significant recent development with the demolition of warehouses and the construction of a four/five storey building comprising 57 apartments and 5 commercial units. The second building is also four storeys in height and includes twenty apartments. Plate 2 illustrates the setting of Darker’s Mill along the river. Plates 3 indicate how the refurbished Mill looks.

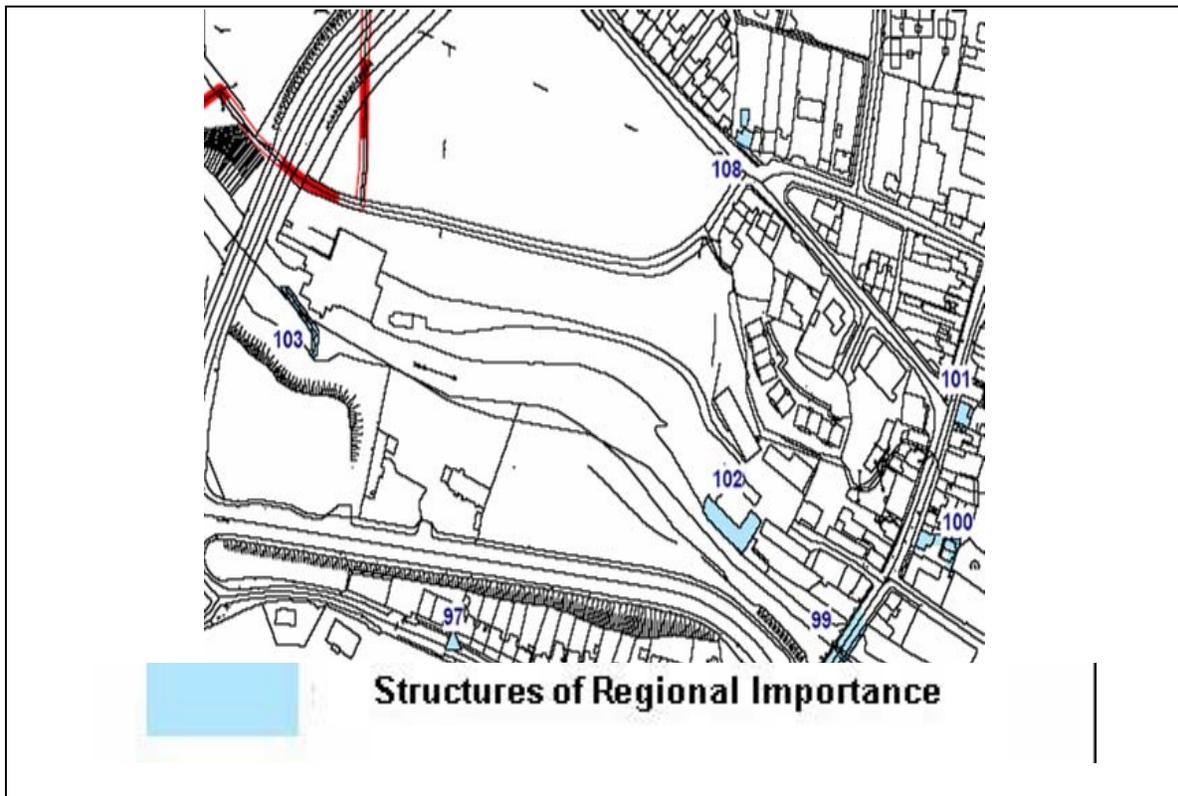


Figure 7: Built Heritage and Conservation

⁵ Navan Development Plan 2003-2009, pg 106.



Plate 2: View of Darker's Mill development along the northern bank of the Blackwater River

3.4 Zone of Archaeological Importance

AAP1 falls within zones of Archaeological importance (as illustrated in Figure 8). A portion of the lands within the zone of archaeological importance is the recently developed lands in the eastern section of the AAP lands. It is understood that minimal finds occurred. A portion of the zone of archaeological importance is on the southern bank of the River Blackwater.

It is the policy of Meath County Council to ensure that Archaeological material is not disturbed so that an opportunity will be given to investigate and record any material of archaeological value that may be found on sites, or to protect them in-situ. A desk-top study of this zone of archaeological importance has been carried as part of the background suite of research papers in the preparation of this Action Area Plan.

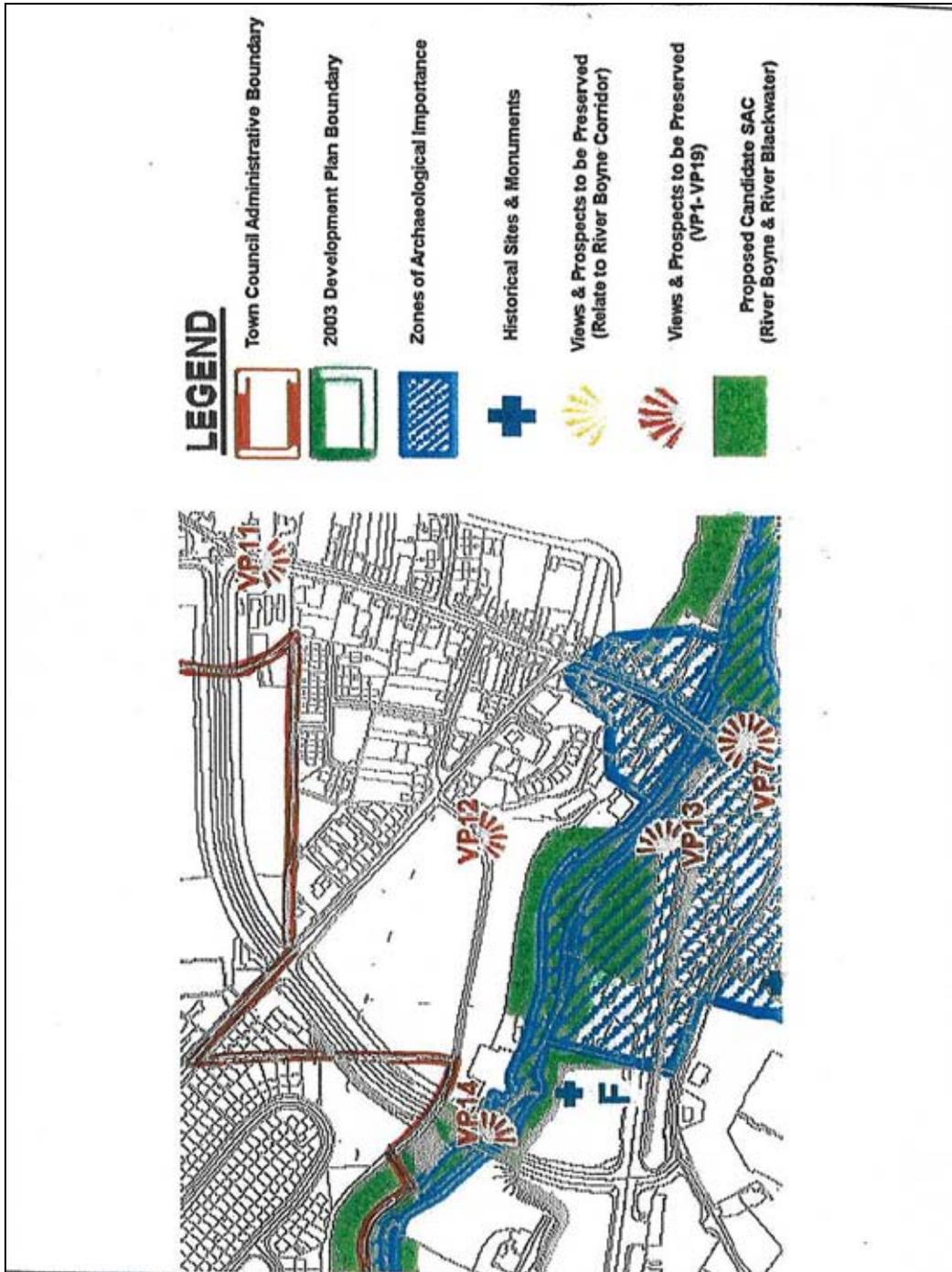


Figure 8: Archaeological and Natural Heritage including views and prospects

Any developments on these lands must take due account of the zone of archaeological importance before commencement on site. The historical site, 'The Abbey', marked as 'F' in Figure 8, is not included as part of the zone of archaeological importance.

Any developer seeking to build in the zone of archaeological importance or in the vicinity of 'The Abbey' historical site is required to give two months notice of their intentions to the National Monuments Service of the Department of the Environment. There will be a requirement for archaeological assessment and monitoring prior to application.

3.5 **Historical Sites**

There is one historical site/monument recorded in the area, an Abbey (Refs ME025-024 under the Navan Development Plan, 2003-2009). The lands on which this Abbey stood were artificially raised when the new bridge over the Blackwater was constructed. The material that was brought in may have covered buried remains of the Abbey Building and may be up to six meters in depth. The location of the historical site within the AAP1 lands is marked with an 'F' in Figure 8 above.

3.6 **Views and Prospects to be preserved**

In terms of views and prospects; it is the policy of Meath County Council and Navan Town Council:

"To ensure that development is not permitted which would restrict, intrude significantly on or materially alter the view or prospect, listed for preservation⁶".

Navan Development Plan, 2003-2009 lists 3 no. views in the vicinity of the AAP1 lands. These are:

View	Description
VP12	Towards the River mill and the Railway Viaduct from the ancient Navan- Kells walkway.
VP13	Of Darker's Mill along the bank of the Blackwater River from the area of open space on the opposite side of the river along the N3.
VP14	Of the Blackwater River and Weir from Blackwater Bridge looking east.

Table1: Views to be protected

⁶ Navan Development Plan pg 74.

VP12 may have been somewhat compromised due to recent developments in the area. However, it is considered that new views can be captured of the skyline from this location.

VP13 above is maintained and will be enhanced by current developments surrounding Darker's Mill and the refurbishment of the mill itself. This view will not be compromised by any development proposals arising out of this AAP.

No development will be proposed to obstruct VP14 as seen in Plate 4. Any development on the site of Elliot's Mill will in fact serve to frame it.



Plate 3: VP 14- View of the Blackwater River and Weir from Blackwater Bridge looking east

In addition to listed views there are a number of other noteworthy views across the River Blackwater from the higher ground to the north and from the N3/Kells Road. Development proposals should seek to allow leakage between buildings to maintain these views of the amenity that the Blackwater Valley will become as a result of this AAP1.

3.7 Proposed Candidate Special Area of Conservation (Candidate SAC)

The Rivers Boyne and Blackwater, both of which flow through Navan Town are considered to be of ecological importance and are therefore proposed as a 'Candidate SAC'. In terms of the Candidate Special Area of Conservation, it is an objective of Meath County Council and Navan Town Council, as outlined in the Navan Development Plan 2003-2009:

"To protect the area illustrated as the candidate special area of conservation of the River Boyne and Blackwater on the Archaeological and Natural heritage map, including views and prospects from development which would adversely affect their ecological properties or value as scientifically valuable sites".

"To require any planning application that proposes development within the area designated as a candidate SAC illustrated on the Archaeological and

Natural Heritage Map including views and prospects, to be accompanied by an ecological impact assessment, assessing the impact of the proposal on the Candidate Special Area of Conservation. The ecological impact assessment will be forwarded to the National Parks and Wildlife section of the Department of the environment, Heritage and Local Government for their comments prior to the making of a decision by the relevant Planning Authority”⁷.

3.8 Ecological Study

A desk-top ecology study was carried out as one of the background issue papers in order to assess the ecological value associated with the plan lands and in particular the area which is part of the proposed candidate SAC.

The area consists of the river valley with its various buildings and trees, the valley sides and the flat land on top which has been augmented by fill on the southern side but remains as an overgrown field on the north.

A mill building occupies each end of the river. The western one has been partly demolished but the eastern one has been refurbished.

Working eastwards on the southern bank, the town car park is followed by the demolished barracks and small overgrown garden above river level and then a public area with densely planted trees – semi-mature beside the road and a line of larger willows at the base.

On the northern bank much of the valley side is covered by scrub - thickets of blackthorn, young sycamore and brambles which have probably spread from the hedge above. This marks the site of an old laneway on the break of slope and adds hawthorn and ivy and a few typical herbs species like cow parsley, vetch and celandine. Eastwards there is a short length of laneway that remains open beside a wall above a grassy slope to the riverside lane.

The slope is covered by similar species to those that occur in the flat field above - mostly large grasses like meadow foxtail and false oat with a scatter of broad-leaved plants such as knapweed, creeping thistle and dandelion. Other species may appear on the slope later in the year as it is well drained and south-facing. However, the field appears uniform and rather dull in terms of vegetation.

The main ecological value of the area is the valley-side scrub which has a high bird population of small passerines. Species seen were woodpigeon, song thrush, blackbird, robin, wren, blackcap, blue tit, gold crest, willow warbler, bullfinch and reed bunting. This is a group that quickly colonises such deserted gardens/fields but is quite a feature within the town limits. The willows on the

⁷ Navan Development Plan 2003 pg 75

southern side are also important and would provide a source of insects for the warblers, as well as bats.

Mallard, moorhen and kingfisher occur sporadically on the river and the first two could occasionally nest.

On the northern side of the river it would be favourable to keep the old hedges along the laneway and convert this to a high level footpath while retaining or replanting as much scrub as possible.

On the southern side a riverside path would be worthwhile, winding between the trees close to the bank but not involving concrete. The actual bank on the northern side is being abused by pushing fill over it to make more space for development. This is within a candidate SAC and clearly undesirable.

SECTION 4- PREPARATION OF ACTION AREA PLAN

4.1 Stakeholders

The largely undeveloped lands covered by this Action Area Plan are currently in four different ownerships. Prior to and during the formulation of this plan, discussions took place with various interest groups, including Meath County Council, Navan Town Council and the land owners. Parts of these lands are owned by Meath County Council (Map 3 Land Ownership map see end of section) with the balance of the undeveloped lands owned by Mr. Paddy White, Mr. Michael Featherson and Mr. Tommy Forbes.

Name	Area (approx)
Meath County Council	1.535 ha
Mr. Paddy White	2.367 ha
Mr. Michael Featherson	2.47 ha
Mr. Tommy Forbes	0.3 ha
Already developed lands	1.728 ha
Total	8.4 ha

Table 2: Stakeholders

4.2 Gateway Sites

Section 2.7.11.3 of the Navan Development Plan, 2003-2009 outlines the gateway sites proposed for the town. The written statement of the Development Plan indicates 5 no. sites on AAP1 lands although 4.no are indicated on Development Plan Map No.2. These gateway sites present a major opportunity to develop these lands in a significant way that would add to the evolution of Navan town in the 21st century. A high quality of urban design and innovative architectural design solutions will be sought at these locations. The majority of the identified Gateways are capable of accommodating developments of notable architectural quality and design befitting their prominent locations.

The Development Plan outlines the current zoning at each of these gateways together with a range of acceptable uses and indication of acceptable building height as follows:

Site 1	Intersection of Inner Relief Road with Ratholdren Road
Zoning	"To provide for visitor and tourist facilities"
Acceptable Uses	Suitable for high profile hotel with associated leisure facilities and car parking facilities
Acceptable Height	Due regard is required to the existing scale of development in the general area and the need to protect the view particularly over the western boundary of the subject site.'

Site 2		Elliot's Mill, Mill Lane
Zoning	Mixed Residential & business use	
Acceptable Uses	Office type development with the possibility of cultural facility at bottom floor to take full advantage of the view of the Weir. Upper floors of residential would be encouraged.'	
Acceptable Height	'The topography of this subject site presents an opportunity to create a dramatic development particularly suitable for gateway developments.	
Site 3		Existing Navan Town Council Car Park Area, Navan Inner Relief Road.
Zoning	Mixed Residential & business use	
Acceptable Uses	'Office type development or a mix of office with upper floors of residential in one building maximising impressive views of the Blackwater River'.	
Acceptable Height	This site is elevated and restricts the height, bulk and massing of any new development to ensure views to the River Blackwater'.	
Site 4		The former Abbey Road National School, Navan Inner Relief Road.
Zoning	Mixed Residential & business use	
Acceptable Uses	'Office type development or a mix of office with upper floors of residential maximising impressive views of the Blackwater River'.	
Acceptable Height	Whilst not as elevated as site No. 3, the height, and bulk and massing of any new development must not impede unnecessarily views to the River Blackwater'.	
Site 9		Existing industrial buildings, north and south of Mill Lane, adjoining lower Flower Hill.
Zoning	Mixed Residential & business use	
Acceptable Uses	'Mix of residential and commercial (non retail) / tourism uses including refurbishment of Darker's Mill (Site No. 5), provision of small scale offices or craft workshops and showrooms with pedestrian access to river	
Acceptable Height	Must take cognisance of existing form onto lower Flower Hill and the presence of a protected structure, but at certain locations on the northern side of mill lane, it presents an opportunity for dramatic development having regard to the presence of Blackwater Heights development that effectively forms the skyline.'	

Table 3: Gateway Sites

All of the above accepted uses are suggestions only. Each zoning objective has a number of acceptable uses associated with same.

SECTION 5- TRANSPORT AND ACCESSIBILITY

5.0 Introduction

TPS Limited were retained by Grainne Mallon & Associates to advise on the traffic, transportation and access issues relating to the lands designated AAP1 under the Navan Development Plan, 2003 – 2009.

TPS report is attached in full as Appendix 1. The following is a summary of the main contents of the report.

The report refers to the entire 8.4 ha site which is bounded by the following road links:

- To the west by the Inner Relief Road.
- To the south by the N3.
- To the east by Flower Hill.
- And to the north by Ratholdren Road.

For the purposes of assigning existing and projected traffic associated with the development of AAP1 within the traffic report the portion of the overall site adjoining Ratholdren Road and Elliot's Mill is referred to as Site 1, sites fronting the N3/Distributor Road is referred to as Site 2 and lands accessed off Mill Lane is termed Site 3.

5.1 Scope of this Traffic Assessment.

The scope of this traffic assessment follows the schedule set down within the correspondence from Meath County Council dated 16th February 2006 that requires the following

- i) The lands within the AAP to be considered using current traffic volumes.
- ii) Traffic projections to be assigned to the proposed vehicular access.
- iii) Details of the Mill Lane proposed road upgrade.
- iv) Location and description of access points.
- v) Vehicular movements and linkages.
- vi) Car parking provision within each land use within each land use.

In addition the scope of this traffic assessment was also discussed with Mr Jim Gibney Senior Engineer with Meath County Council.

5.2 Traffic Surveys.

In assessing the existing traffic situation at any location, analysis must be based on practical, reliable traffic data gathered in a recognised and appropriate manner. The capacity and operation of any road network is dependent on the traffic volumes and traffic movements within that network.

Therefore, in order to assess the current traffic conditions in the vicinity of the proposed AAP1, traffic and transportation related surveys were carried out at junctions considered may be directly impacted upon by the proposed development. Origin and destination were undertaken on the 6th April 2006 that covered the time periods 0700hrs to 1000hrs, 1400hrs to 1530hrs and 1600hrs 1900hrs.

The traffic survey cordon included the following junctions:

- N3 Kells Road/Distributor Road/ Dublin Road/ Shopping Centre Road
- Ratholdren Road/ Distributor Road.
- R162 Kingscourt Road/Distributor Road/Flowerhill/ N51 Slane Road.
- Flowerhill/ New Lane.
- N3 Kells Road/Watergate Street/N3 Dublin Road/Pollboy Road.

Throughout the period of the traffic surveys vehicular queue lengths were also recorded every 10 minutes on all junction approach arms within the cordon.

From these traffic surveys it was possible to establish the AM peak, Off-peak and PM peak time periods on roads and junctions in the vicinity of AAP1. These traffic surveys identified the peak traffic periods within this area as being 0815hrs to 0915hrs in the AM, 1430hrs to 1530hrs in the Off-peak and 1715hrs – 1815hrs in the PM peak. Details of these recorded existing AM, Off-peak and PM peak traffic periods are shown within the Traffic report contained in appendix 1 (Figure 1.0 to 3.0).

5.3 Traffic Projections associated with AAP1

The proposed land uses within AAP1 will consist of a phased mixed use development that includes residential, office, retail, medical, hotel and leisure development within this 8.4 ha site. The likely extent of possible development within AAP1 is scheduled within the issues paper of the Traffic Study.

It is assumed that this development will be complete by 2010 and post the completion of the M3 Navan Town Bypass.

5.4 Proposed Access Arrangements

It is proposed that AAP1 lands would be accessed from 4 locations from the adjacent road network. These access points would be located at Ratholdren Road, Mill Lane and the N3 and the inner relief road. In order to assess these proposed and existing access locations the above mentioned AM and PM peak generated traffic has been assigned to the local road network and within the proposed and existing points that will serve AAP1.

It is proposed that Site 1 within AAP1, the lands north of the Blackwater, would serve the land use that will consist of residential, hotel, office, retail and bar /restaurant land use. The access from Ratholdren Road will serve car parking for the Elliot's Mill development. Access from Mill Lane will provide service access only to Elliot's Mill.

Site 2 within AAP1, the lands south of the Blackwater, would serve the land uses that will consist of residential, medical, and office development. Two access points will serve these lands off the Inner Relief Road and the N3. However, traffic will not be permitted to cross two lanes of traffic with turning movements. Consultation will be required with the Road Engineers in this regard to determine the optimal access arrangements at application stage.

5.5 Vehicular and Pedestrian Linkages

Meath County Council and Navan Town Council requested that details of proposed pedestrian and vehicular linkages from the adjacent road network and within the site are provided.

It is proposed that all the vehicular access points serving the AAP1 can accommodate all permitted vehicular turning movements within these access points.

Likewise, facilities will be provided for pedestrians, cyclists and the vulnerable road user (i.e. the visually and hearing impaired) will be provided within these access points.

Within the site, facilities will be provided for internal routes for surface and basement car parking, dedicated footpaths and riverside walkways. These pedestrian linkages are intended to provide connectivity with the town centre (by the inclusion of a footbridge over the River Blackwater) through the site from Mill Lane to Ratholdren Road and along the river via the underpass to the proposed town park. One of the proposed pedestrian links will use the informal walkway that already exists as part of the "Mollies" walkway. (AAP1 Map 4 refers see overleaf).

5.6 Car Parking Provision.

The extent of car parking provision within this mixed land use development should allow dual usage within the AAP1. Proposed developments should comply with the Navan Development Plan standards. Arguments for dual usage may be considered at application stage.

The provision of car parking spaces will be determined at application stage.

The land use within AAP1 that can reduce car borne trips and parking demand is the office land use. It would be possible to introduce a Mobility Management Plan in conjunction with the Local Authority and tenants of the various office units through the appointment of a Mobility Manager appointed by the management company to introduce the following:

- Office employee shuttle bus services between local public transport facilities.
- Liaison with bus operators to provide an employee collector bus service.
- Employee car sharing schemes.
- Secure cycle and changing facilities within the office land use.
- Monthly employee bonus award schemes for continued use of public transport and or car sharing scheme.
- Car parking for Elliot's Mill will be provided for on lands to the north.

5.7 Conclusions.

The TPS report identifies the existing traffic conditions and identified the potential level associated with the possible land uses with Navan Action Area Plan 1. They have identified possible vehicular access locations from the adjacent road network to serve these land uses.

SECTION 6- INFRASTRUCTURE REQUIREMENTS

6.1 Existing Services

Existing services surrounding the Action Area can be divided into three categories- Foul sewerage, Surface water drainage and Water Mains.

6.1.1 Foul Sewers

There is an existing 225mm diameter foul sewer running along the Ratholdren Road and in along New Lane. This 225mm diameter sewer is not in the road and is actually in part of the lands within the AAP. A 225mm diameter sewer runs adjacent to the Blackwater which feeds into the pumping station at the Poolboy Bridge. There is a new 300mm diameter foul sewer running down Flowerhill Road and turning into Blackcastle Lane.

6.1.2 Surface Water

There is an existing 600mm diameter surface water pipe running off the Ratholdren Road to the back of the existing development on Flowerhill which carries down through the lands and discharges into the River Blackwater which traverses the AAP lands.

6.1.3 Water Mains

There is no water main on the Inner Relief Road (Kells Road). A new 200mm diameter water main is located on the new distributor Road bordering the site. There is also an existing 300mm diameter water main on Flowerhill.

6.2 Proposed Services

It is envisaged that the following services will serve the area covered by this AAP:

6.2.1 Foul Sewers

The sewer connection for the area north of the river should be to the 225mm diameter sewer on the Ratholdren Road. In view of the topography of the ground it would be necessary to drain this area to a pump station at a suitable location on the site and pump it through a rising main back into the gravity sewer on the Ratholdren Road.

Depending on capacity of the 225mm diameter sewer on the Kells Road it may be possible to connect all the lands on this side of the river into this sewer. It may be necessary to pump or install a new line which would drain to the pump station at Poolboy Bridge. However, the capacity of this existing pumping station to cater for subject area would have to be investigated further. Based on the proposed land uses for the site and in accordance with the Wastewater treatment manual for commercial developments a peak flow of 15 litres per second can be expected from the lands covered by the AAP. Detailed discussions at planning stage will be necessary with the Infrastructure Section of Meath County Council to determine the required engineering solution.

6.2.2 Surface Water

All surface water will be drained into the River Blackwater which traverses the site. The existing 600mm diameter surface water pipe which traverses the site could take some of the lands depending on final architectural layouts or all the lands can be drained through a new pipe network into the River Blackwater. The need for attenuation can be investigated at Planning Stage although due to the topography of the site and its proximity to a main watercourse such as the River Blackwater it is felt at this stage that no attenuation would be necessary. All surface water pipe work will contain appropriate petrol interceptors and levels and details to be agreed with the Planning Authority at Planning Application stage.

6.2.3 Water Mains

Water main services could possibly be taken from the existing 200mm diameter water main on the Ratholdren Road or from the existing 300mm diameter water main on Flowerhill. Detailed water main layouts would be submitted at planning application stage and would be dependent on the final layout of the site for its various uses. Based on the proposed land usage expected water demand would be in the region of 90 cubic metres per day. Detailed discussions at planning stage will be necessary with the Infrastructure Section of Meath County Council to determine the required engineering solution.

A Flood Report was carried out by Hydro Environmental in relation to lands pertaining to the subject site. It established the level above which development would be required to be carried out in order to achieve the 100 year storm level OD.32.450. This figure is transferable to all lands lying within the valley catchment.

6.3 Summary

Details in relation to site services will be addressed in conjunction with the Infrastructure Department at application stage.

SECTION 7: DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK FOR PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT-DESIGN PROPOSALS FOR THESE LANDS

7.0 Introduction

The preparation of the AAP for this area has been guided by specific development objectives set out in the Navan Development Plan 2003-2009 and informed by a number of issues raised in the suite of background papers and discussed in the previous chapters. From an assessment and evaluation of the above, taken together with a comprehensive site analysis and review of the Riverside Action Area Plan, a development framework has been prepared.

The lands consisting of approx 8.4 hectares will be developed in an integrated manner as part of the Action Area Plan. It is proposed to develop these lands for a number of uses, including: tourism/leisure facility, residential, office development, commercial and park/open space.

7.1 Key Aims for AAP1

- To establish a new residential and mixed use quarter on serviced lands within the town confines with a capacity to have its own individual character and identity.
- To conserve and restore buildings of distinction so as to create a familiar sense of place.
- To provide amenity areas and walkways including a linear park.
- To link the proposed development to existing residential communities by introducing a higher quality of sustainable and permeable linkages through the lands ameliorating the quality of the built and natural environments.
- Through the above it is expected to create inclusive new communities knitting into the contemporary social fabric of existing communities of Navan.
- To create permeable and accessible linkages to the proposed town park by way of a linear walkway along the banks of the river Blackwater.
- To provide pedestrian and cyclist throughflow from the Northern section of the AAP1 site to the town centre of Navan. This can be achieved through the provision of a pedestrian bridge across the River Blackwater that bisects the AAP1 site.

7.2 Factors in Development

Historically Navan has developed around a relatively compact centre. However, recent and anticipated growth is very significant and there exists great potential for development in the town. Navan also contains outstanding natural resources such as the river valleys of the Blackwater and the Boyne, built resources such as buildings, bridges, attractive street patterns, mottes etc. These valuable resources need to be conserved. By implication, development here will need to be more controlled and carried out in a sustainable manner.

7.3 Opportunities

Because the plan lands are generally undeveloped the site presents an opportunity to prepare a masterplan of the immediate area and provide for a coherent framework document that sets out the future planned development potential for the entire plan area.

In addition to its undeveloped state, the principal strength of the AAP1 lands lie in its proximity to the heart of Navan town. Its central location gives it easy pedestrian access to nearby social and service infrastructure. The site is a finite parcel of land with clear and distinctive boundaries. These characteristics define the site spatially affording it opportunities to create a sense of identity and character unto itself.

The site is bisected by the Blackwater River (Plate 5), a natural and visual amenity that dictates location and direction of pedestrian mobility and opens a naturally intact corridor along the river bank. Further bridging of the Blackwater River will create great scope to develop permeable linkages across the river that would further encourage and promote pedestrian and cyclist access in and through the lands from other areas outside the plan area integrating the AAP1 lands with the town centre and surrounding residential areas.

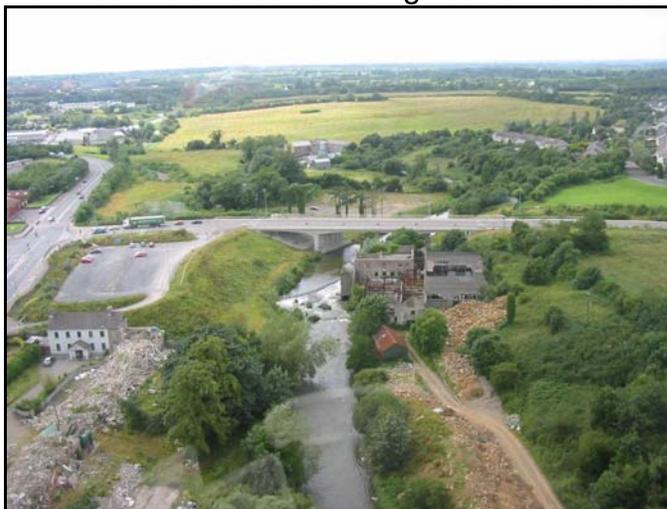


Plate 4: The Blackwater River dissecting the AAP1 lands.

7.4 Constraints

At present, the river and its natural landscape can only be appreciated as a visual amenity from a distance (along the AAP1 boundaries), as the lands are predominantly in private ownership. There are also no bridging points other than at the extreme eastern and western boundaries of the site.

There are existing protected views which were outlined in Chapter 3. Future development must not obstruct these views.

However, it is expected that the physical intervention of the proposed developments within this framework will address these current constraints providing a unique facility and amenity for the new residents and existing population of Navan.

7.5 Framework Rationale

The designation of this site by the AAP1 local objective is a commitment to coherent future development in an integrated manner drawing on the proper planning and sustainable development of the area within the town of Navan as a whole.

As stated earlier in the traffic report land uses on the AAP1 site are envisaged as being primarily residential and mixed use together with amenity space. Land uses will be in accordance with the development objectives contained in the Navan Development Plan, 2003-2009 and will reflect the range of acceptable uses set out for Gateway sites and outlined in Chapter 4.

AAP1 Map 5 illustrates the proposed indicative "Framework Rationale" while AAP1 Map 6 illustrates proposed building height (see overleaf). This framework is based on concentrating development on the principal gateway sites at the site periphery while developing the lands zoned open space for their recreational and amenity value and capitalising on the sites historic setting. The development at the sites periphery will establish new strong building lines which will create a sense of place whilst at the same time maintaining views over the valley. AAP1 Map7 shows sections through the AAP site.

The AAP1 lands can be broken into the following distinguishable sub areas which relate both to land ownership and the above mentioned gateways:

7.6 Ratholdren Road Site (The Mollies- Gateway 1)

It is envisaged that this site will be developed for a combination of hotel/leisure with enabling residential uses. The junction of the Ratholdren Road and the Inner Relief Road where the proposed streetscape turns the corner needs assiduous detailing as this is a designated “gateway” in the Development Plan. It is envisaged that this building will take the form of a slender 5 storey landmark building adjacent to the junction stepping down to 4 stories where the proposed building turns the corner parallel to the Inner Relief Road. This linear hotel will form a dramatic landmark tower at the junction of the two roads. A public space is to be proposed adjacent to this building to provide for visual and physical permeability into the site.

Along the Ratholdren Road frontage a strong edge should be developed to create an urban streetscape with buildings set back from the footpath to provide private defensible space. Building height will consist of 3 storeys. Any such development should not dominate that at Abbeylands. Sun path analysis, included at planning application stage, may be required to assess the cumulative effects that the new development proposals would have on both sun and day light requirements of the opposing dwellings. Breaks in the building line will afford views through the site.

A break in the proposed building line is also proposed along the Inner Relief Road at the north-western boundary to provide for visual permeability with an additional 4 storey leisure building proposed to the south of the proposed 5/4 storey hotel.

North of the linear park, along the “Mollies” pathway four storey, with fourth floor recessed, (subject to design) villa style units will provide supervision over the amenity space, while also allowing views of the river from the higher ground (Plate 9- example of similar style development). Such development would permit leakages of open space to facilitate vistas both to and from the river and would provide a softer transition from the built urban environment to the green river valley. These residential buildings are arranged to provide semi-public enclosed space, and terraces whilst maintaining good views through the site to the south.

This site will be accessed from the Ratholdren Road as outlined in the traffic report. Necessary amenity space for development proposed at this portion of the AAP lands will be provided on site and it is envisaged that any shortfall will be provided as part of the open space amenity area to the south and the proposed linear park along the River Blackwater.

7.7 Elliot's Mill (Gateway 2)

The Inner Relief Road running along the west of the AAP1 site also requires a strong dominant edge. The Navan Development Plan 2003-2009 recommends the Elliot's Mill site as a location for a land mark building i.e. a designated 'Gateway'. Given the difference in levels between the Inner Relief Road and the land at Flower Hill/New Lane, a physically powerful building presence will be required in order to register its presence in its context as a landmark building of Navan. Such a building should be of high class architectural and engineering merit to create a true landmark within the framework of the AAP1 and the Navan Development Plan. As stated this is likely to have an office plus bar/restaurant use and will be accessed via the Ratholdren Road access with parking provided underground on this adjacent site to the north and north east. The height of this building will be determined at application stage however, it should not exceed the ridge height of the buildings proposed to the north along the inner relief road. A service access only will be taken from the proposed 6 metres carriageway off Mill lane.

7.8 Sites at N3 (Gateway 3 and 4)

The site fronting the N3/Relief Road Junction will accommodate a mix of office and residential development. Possible uses may be a corporate head quarters or alternatively office with residential over at the corner site while the former Abbey school site could accommodate offices/nursing home/medical centre together with residential development. Many of these uses have been the subject of previous development proposals.

The N3/Kells Road currently serves as a national primary route. However, it is expected that this function will cease in the next few years as a result of the proposed Navan (M3 alignment from Dublin to Cavan) by pass and as a result this road will serve local traffic primarily. This downgrading will provide an opportunity to create a new boulevard at the N3 with frontage development giving rise to a vibrant street environment. However, given the proximity of the Blackwater River, it is considered that an elongated street frontage should not be pursued. Discreet blocks with open spaces between them would allow greater visibility here in the interest of providing views from the public road towards the river valley. A courtyard type development is suggested at the former Abbey Site (Gateway 4) which would allow leakages in open spaces to create attractive framed views. It is considered that buildings should be 4/5 storey to compliment the areas across the N3 directly south of the AAP1 lands. Whether it is 4 or 5 storey can be determined at planning application stage and will be determined by the quality of design proposed.

Any proposed development at Gateway Site 3 at the corner of N3 and the Inner Relief Road should be 4/5 storey to be determined at application stage. There is an opportunity on this corner site to provide for a building of distinction which reflects and turns the corner and creates a landmark at this prominent junction. Such a strong corner building is suggested in the Development Plan to serve as a gateway to the urban core of Navan. The scale and massing of this building should be sympathetic to the natural environment of the river and also protect and enhance views into and out of the site further eastwards along the N3 (Kells Road). There will be a requirement at this location for a building of innovative high quality design.

7.9 Mill Lane

The eastern boundary of the site is already established along Flowerhill, and should only be reinforced as deemed necessary by the Planning Authority.

Recent development in the vicinity of Mill Lane is predominantly residential with a bar/restaurant at Darker's Mill creating a strong building line to a height of four and a half storeys north of Poolboy bridge and along the river. Any additional development in this area overlooking the amenity lands will be primarily residential.

These recent developments create a rigid yet meandering building line to reflect the course of the river and define an edge to a linear riverside park. Buildings here will define the entrance to the linear park which is proposed to lead along the river to Elliot's Mill creating a route onwards to the proposed town park. Entrance to this additional block shall be from the Mill Lane accessed from new Street.

Development proposed here will also provide strong passive supervision along the northern river bank.

7.10 Amenity Lands

Preservation and enhancement of the existing natural amenities on the site is fundamental to determining the physical footprint for development outlined above. A substantial proportion of the AAP1 land is zoned F1 "To provide for and improve open spaces for active and passive recreational amenities" and a large portion of these lands are proposed to be developed as a linear park extending onto the proposed town park via a link under the distributor road. A proposed pedestrian bridge over the river will ensure linkages through the AAP1 lands promoting pedestrian use and physical permeability integrating the site within the

larger area while the setting of individual buildings with open spaces in between will ensure visual permeability from the commercial/residential buildings towards the river whilst at the same time providing passive surveillance of the riverside park.

New well lit pedestrian walkways, together with planting and landscaping will contribute to the use of this amenity space.

It is considered that the amenity lands will be preserved as a grassed area to a large extent with existing foliage retained. However, between individual buildings there will be opportunities to provide landscaped courtyards with a range of finishes to incorporate gravel, paving, decking, and grass and screen planting. As car parking will be predominantly underground maximum use will be made of the public realm as quality amenity space. This proposed linear park will provide a portion of the amenity space requirements of proposed development on sites north and south of the River including the site at the junction of Ratholdren Road and the Inner Relief Road (Gateway 1).

The downgrading of the N3 will offer an opportunity to create a tree lined boulevard and a quality public realm at this location. As a continuous building line is not proposed views towards the river will be maintained. At the same time, new edge development will ensure interaction at street level and pedestrian movement across this new boulevard by the use of pedestrian lights will assist in linking this new quarter with the existing town centre.

A portion of the amenity space is on Council owned lands.

7.11 Landscape Strategy

The purpose of this section of the AAP is to define the strategic and detailed requirements for the provision of the Blackwater riverside linear park and environs (see map of Existing Riverside Map overleaf).

7.11.1 Landscape Character

The linear park site is a proposed Special Area of Conservation under the Development Plan 2007- 2013. Access and active and passive uses need to be sensitively handled in this regard, achieving an appropriate level of use whilst enhancing the potential SAC. Much of the site is currently downgraded with spoil; noxious weeds; illegal dumping and litter; derelict buildings; and a lack of visual and physical connectivity (Existing Riverside Map see overleaf). Nevertheless, the riverside location within the Blackwater Valley, the habitats (ref Ecological Study section 3.8) and proximity to the urban centre creates an opportunity for a linear park as *rus in urbe*.



Plate 5: View from North across valley with Japanese Knotweed and spoil heap in foreground

The balance between the naturalistic character and urban uses will require restraint in the design. Habitats in urban areas are frequently regarded as unkempt, whereas in fact they are carefully managed areas. Key elements in the linear park will therefore need to be clearly designed to illustrate this, or to have interpretive signage, to avoid misunderstanding of the use of the park. For instance, areas of spoil and noxious weeds will need to be removed; however areas of scrub and regenerating woodland may be kept and managed (Proposed Riverside Linear Park Plan see overleaf).



Plate 6: Regenerating woodland and scrub looks unmanaged, but is a valuable habitat

The area is intended to be used by the local residents and employees from surrounding areas as an amenity space; by local people as a route linking school, work, and amenity spaces, including the proposed town park to the west; and by

tourists visiting the area and the proposed heritage site, also to the west of the site.

7.11.2 Topography

The river valley is set deep in relation to the surrounding areas. This natural topography is exacerbated by the introduction of earth filling, creating a gorge – like effect, particularly at the south west corner. The relationship eases towards the east. The issues that arise with the topography are twofold; the first relates to the potential for built development and servicing; and the second relates to access and supervision to the proposed linear park. The two are interlinked, in that appropriate development land is limited, however, residential and commercial uses will assist in bringing daily active use and passive supervision to the linear park. The reinstatement of the natural topographical relationship with the town by the removal of earth filling will ease the steepness of the valley and improve the access and visual amenity of the area. This relationship also exists to the west of the site along the N3.



Plate 7: The altered topography of the river valley

7.11.3 Passive Supervision

Passive supervision is essential for the safe use of the linear park. The remote and un-supervised nature of the site at present encourages anti-social behaviour such as dumping and drinking. The opportunities to enhance passive supervision rest primarily with proposed mixed use developments within the site. The relationship of the proposed buildings, at a detailed level should encourage footfall at the park level, with easy access to open spaces directly from the buildings and associated semi private space.



Plate 8: View of Inner Relief Road Bridge

7.11.4 Permeability

The proposed linear park is by its nature a corridor. Physical and Visual permeability will strengthen the functions, safety and amenity of the park (Proposed Riverside Linear Plan refers).

7.11.5 Physical

There are several potential access points along the route; from the east through the existing residential area; from the north off Ratholdren Road, and the site of the proposed mixed use development along The Mollies; from the south along the Kells Road / N3, and at the proposed development at sites 1 & 2; and the existing car park; and along the valley floor on both sides under the inner relief road bridge.



Plate 9: View from north bank looking westwards

7.11.6 Visual

The visual permeability is also important to maintain and enhance, both across the valley, and along the route of the river, where picturesque composite views are possible; towards the west along the river to the weir and road bridge; and towards the east along the river, terminating at the proposed site no 1. The wide V-shaped building proposed at the eastern end of Site 1 offers an opportunity for a suitable termination of the vista.



Plate 10: View looking eastwards

7.11.7 Routes and Accessibility

The pedestrian and cycle network of paths close to the site can be extended into the linear park area. The careful handling of gradients and levels will achieve good access, although the valley sides still pose some challenges with regard to accessibility for people with disabilities. However, as the valley is part of the character of the site, these challenges should be expected by people using the park. There is a duty under the Disability Act 2005, and other Equality Legislation to provide for appropriate accessibility in public spaces. There is potential for connecting significant level changes with new building developments either side of the river – for instance to gain access from street level to valley floor, or onto the proposed footbridge, which will be at least 5m over the valley floor.



Plate 11: Existing cycle and pedestrian routes can be linked into the linear

7.11.8 Activities and Play Spaces

The parkland is proposed primarily as a riverside pedestrian and cycle route along the valley floor, in a naturalistic environment associated with the riparian habitat. Passive uses that are associated with this include opportunities for sitting and incidental play. More active uses will be appropriate in the proposed town park to the west. The design allows for flexibility as the surrounding areas are developed and the requirements of the local community are identified. The play area is appropriate for children aged 12 upwards, and has potential as a hang-out spaces for adolescents – away from adults, yet sufficiently safe if passive supervision is effective.

Play opportunities for younger children are more appropriate within the semi public spaces identified in the housing development to the north, and should be incorporated in other residential developments within the area. Ideally, toddlers' play spaces should be within 150m of their home, and spaces for 6-12 year olds no more than 300m. Incidental play is as important as specific play grounds, as they offer possibilities for exploration, inventiveness and imagination and appropriate risk outside of the confines of prescriptive play equipment. Seating areas can be developed as picnic spots, especially in the sheltered microclimate of the north bank. These can be enhanced with permanent barbeque facilities.

There are also angling places along the banks, which can be developed if they prove popular. The design provides for appropriate uses, with infrastructure and facilities which will encourage those uses. These facilities should be enhanced as local user's demands increase or change. Consultation with stakeholders, including children, is an appropriate way to identify demand. The play opportunities should also be developed in reference to the County Council and Town Council's Play Plans (to be published) in order that they become part of a matrix of amenity spaces for children in the area.

7.11.9 Ecology and Sustainability

The river valley is proposed as a Special Area of Conservation. However, significant work needs to be carried out to develop the area as a linear park. There will inevitably be disturbance to some of the habitat areas (for instance the spoil heaps), and the careful use of herbicides. A strategy for minimum disruption should be adopted, followed by the implementation of a planting and management regime which will allow the riparian habitats to develop. Some areas of scrub on escarpments should remain intact. The valley floors are developed as poor grassland and meadow, with little use of fertilizers. New planting should be of indigenous species, preferably of local provenance. Non-native species could be included only if they offer habitat enhancement.

7.11.10 Materials and Finishes

A hierarchy of materials are proposed in the path network, according to use; service routes will be permeable block paving; intensively used paths will be macadam, and less frequently used paths will be compacted gravel. Where possible, the compacted gravel paths will be used in order to emphasise the naturalistic atmosphere and character of the valley. Reconstituted timber will be used in park furniture – as it is more robust than timber, and more easily repaired. Timber standards are proposed for lighting (see Street Materials and Finishes overleaf).

7.11.11 Maintenance and Management

The linear park will be under the control of Navan Town Council. Agreement of the detailed design is essential. Park railings and gates are not proposed, as the park is intended to be a public route with lighting. It may therefore be appropriate to provide for CCTV at entrance points. Signage in the wider area should identify routes to the linear park.

Litter collection, repairs to street furniture and paths, and inspection of play equipment, among other operations will be required frequently. The maintenance of the green spaces will be a series of simple operations – mowing grass on a fortnightly basis, and meadow areas bi-annually. Coppicing, thinning and pruning of vegetation will occur once per annum.

7.12 Access and Parking

The downgrading of the N3 with the opening of the Navan by pass is fundamental to the future development of these AAP lands. Three new vehicular access points are proposed as outlined in the traffic section in Chapter 5. The upgraded and widened Mill Lane will service the proposed development at Mill

Lane while at the same time providing service access to Elliot's Mill. The north-western portion of the site at the Mollies will be serviced by a new entrance off Ratholdren Road. This access and parking underground at this location will serve the Ratholdren Road/Mollies Site as well as the Elliot's Mill site.

Much of the car parking to be provided will be underground to maintain the visual amenities of the Riverside lands. Car parking provision should comply with the standards prescribed in the Navan Development Plan 2003-2009.

7.13 Design

Buildings shall be of a high quality design using innovative architecture with a particular emphasis of excellence at the Gateway Sites. High quality sustainable, durable and low maintenance finishes shall be used. Natural materials should also be used where possible. Orientation of buildings should be such that allows good penetration of sunlight and natural daylight, thus having a high regard for sustainability issues. The possibility of incorporating environmental systems, which will reduce the dependency on fossil fuels, should be investigated in the developments. High standards in the design of street furniture, landscaping and signage shall also be adopted.

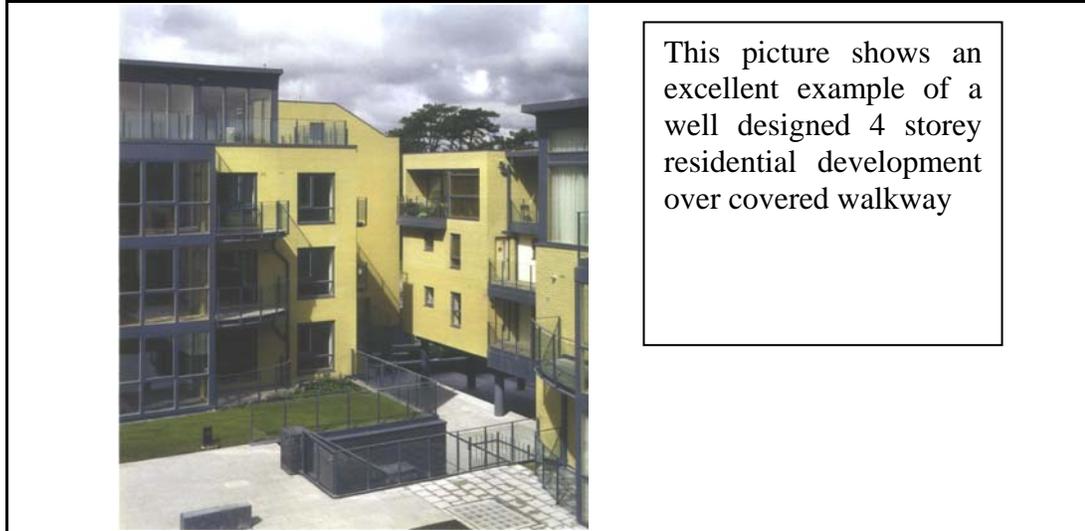


Plate 12: Roebuck Hill, Mount Merrion, Dublin 4.

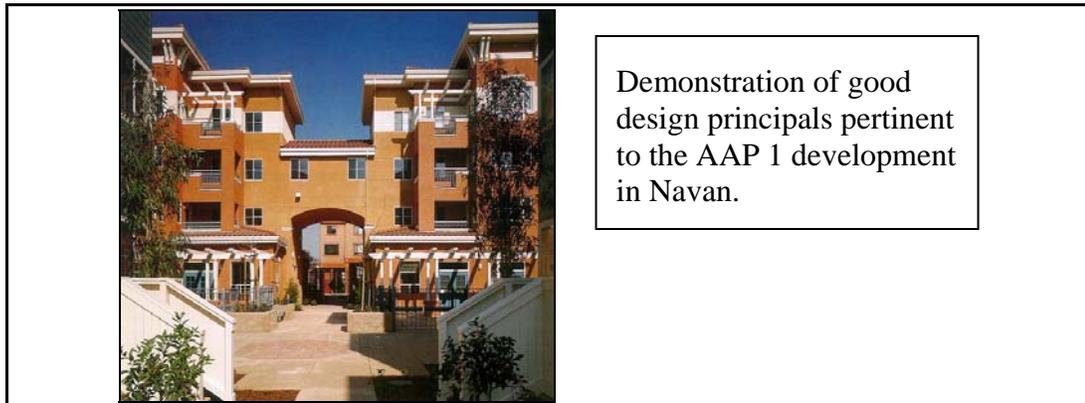


Plate 13: Residential Development with Archway.



Plate 14: Open ground floor levels can blend successfully into surrounding environments demonstrating good quality design.



Plate 15: Successfully designed villa style development of a similar site to AAP1.

7.14 Phasing of Development

It is taken that the size of the lands covered by this AAP does not require a phasing mechanism at this stage. However, it is understood that certain key infrastructure elements will be required to be provided in conjunction with particular developments. For example development of the linear park area (to the north) and provision of the pedestrian bridge shall be provided in tandem with the development of the lands to the north of the Blackwater and the development of the pocket park and amenity areas (to the south) shall be provided in tandem with the developments to the south. Where provision of these key infrastructure elements is not provided as part of individual planning applications a special financial contribution shall be sought by the Planning Authority in this regard, pursuant to Section 49 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 as amended.