

Athboy Written Statement

Settlement	Athboy
Position in Settlement Hierarchy	Small Town - developed on a local, independent and economically active basis under the influence of large towns in Meath and has a strong tradition serving a large rural hinterland. The broad approach of the Development Plan for Small Towns is to manage growth in line with the ability of local services to cater for growth and respond to local demand.
Position in Retail Strategy	Level 4 retail centre
Population (2011) Census	2,397
Committed Housing Units (Not built)	159 No. Units
Household Allocation (Core Strategy)	319 No. Units
Education	Primary School (O'Growney National School), a Secondary School (Athboy Community School), a Montessori School (Athboy Childcare Centre).
Community Facilities	Health centre and three chemists, a Parochial Hall (St James' Hall), a Macra na Feirme Hall, a Post Office, a Credit Union, a Garda Station, a graveyard, GAA grounds, a soccer pitch and basketball and tennis courts, a library and two churches.
Natura 2000 sites	The Athboy River flows through the town which is a tributary watercourse of the River Boyne. The river forms part of the River Boyne and River Blackwater Natura 2000 network and is both a SAC and SPA.
Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (Meath County Development Plan 2013 – 2019)	No SFRA Required. Implement Flood Risk Management policies from CDP

Goal

To consolidate and strengthen the town through the provision of a well-defined and compact town centre area, the promotion of a range of land-uses to support the residential population of the town and its role as a 'service centre' to the surrounding local area and through the enhancement of the considerable built heritage of the town by public realm improvements and tackling dereliction and underutilised properties.

01 Town Context

Athboy is located in the 'Kells Electoral Area' towards the west of County Meath in close proximity to the border with County Westmeath. From a strategic regional context, Athboy is situated approximately 17km from Navan, 12km from Kells and 11km from Trim. It is located at the convergence of a number of National, Regional and Third-Class Roads, specifically the N51 National Secondary Road, connecting Drogheda to Devlin, the R154 Regional Road connecting Clonee to Crossdoney, County Cavan via Trim and Oldcastle, the R164 Regional Road to the north of the town connecting it with Kells and Kingscourt, and a number of Third

Class Roads connecting Athboy to surrounding towns and villages such as Ballivor, Clonmellon, Delvin, Dunderry, Kildalkey, Oldcastle and Rathcairn. These routes provide Athboy with efficient connections to the surrounding larger towns of Kells, Navan and Trim.

The amenity, heritage qualities and character of Athboy are largely derived from its historical evolution. The town possesses a relatively compact and legible town centre area arranged along an elongated Main Street encompassing many of the town's key buildings with diverse building styles, some dating from the 18th century. These consist mainly of commercial, institutional, office, residential and public buildings. This creates an attractive built environment.

In more recent times, the town has experienced a significant level of greenfield development particularly along its main approach roads, specifically the Connaught, Delvin, Dunderry, Kells/Navan and Trim roads with significant residential schemes characterising the majority of this development. A certain amount of brownfield and backland re-development has also occurred, specifically along Connaught Street and the former Railway Station area. However, the backland areas of Main Street have not experienced any significant coherent redevelopment and largely retain their 19th Century footprints. There have also been a number of refurbishments of existing premises along Main Street, Connaught Street and Lower and Upper Bridge Street. However, there has been only a limited level of uptake on the lands identified for enterprise and employment uses off the Trim Road.

The town enjoys a strategic location in a substantial and productive agricultural hinterland to the west of the County and extending into eastern areas of County Westmeath. Its main function and role is to serve as a service centre for this significant agricultural sector and to cater for the weekly shopping needs of this population. However the relative proximity to Dublin and the surrounding towns in the County has allowed for a commuting pattern to emerge with an obvious leakage of associated expenditure to areas outside of Athboy.

The strategy pursued in this Development Framework will seek to conserve and enhance the impressive built heritage of Athboy through the sensitive treatment of any infill development, the conservation of key buildings on each side of Main Street and the encouragement of compatible developments and land uses in Athboy. As provided in the overall goal for Athboy, the consolidation and strengthening of the town and its commercial core is of paramount importance to support the growing residential population and the wider rural hinterland.

The Development Framework will also seek to;

- provide for a high-quality landscape, active and passive open spaces and include provisions to improve the public domain generally;
- provide for appropriate community, childcare, educational and recreational facilities;
- create unique, clearly identifiable and memorable areas consistent with, and protective of, the town's existing character;
- develop a strong local economy and create appropriate land-use planning conditions that will contribute to the creation of employment opportunities locally;
- allow for an environment that is clearly understood and useable by the existing and proposed community, including employees, residents and visitors alike, and;
- improve local public utilities services and infrastructure by catering for future development in the town centre.

02 Water and Wastewater Services

Water: Athboy is supplied with potable water from the Athboy Water Supply Scheme (WSS). In addition to supplying Athboy, the Athboy WSS also serves Kildalkey and Rathcairn. A secure potable water supply is required to serve existing developments and to facilitate further development. The capacity of the Athboy WSS is 12,500 Population Equivalent (PE) with 11,000 PE currently subscribed.

Wastewater: The Athboy Sewerage Scheme was recently upgraded and the capacity of the wastewater treatment plant was increased to a total design capacity of 5,800PE of which 4,000PE is currently subscribed. The Athboy Sewerage Scheme also serves Rathcairn. There is capacity of 600PE reserved for Rathcairn village (if required).

03 Land Use

Due to its historic origins as an Anglo Norman walled town, Athboy has developed with a strong & compact urban form in its town centre area comprising of Main Street and Upper Bridge Street with a strong retailing base for a town of its size. In recent years development pressure has resulted in the growth of Athboy extending out onto greenfield sites towards the edge of the town particularly in relation to new residential development along the Oldcastle, Kells and Mullingar Roads. A new Business Park has been developed along the Trim Road and it is intended that future industrial and businesses with larger floorspace requirements be encouraged to locate on available sites in this business park. In addition, the *MacCann & Byrne* site is considered an inappropriate industrial / enterprise land use currently in the centre of the town which will be encouraged to relocate to more appropriately zoned land in the Business Park. The future development strategy of the town will consolidate new residential development (Phase 1 lands) to being as close as possible to the town centre area on a sequential basis thus promoting sustainable land use where walking, cycling and public transport uses can be promoted. Meath County Council will support the proposed relocation of the playing pitch facilities associated with Clann na nGael GAA club to a new site on the north eastern edge of the town given the growing needs of the club and the site restrictions on their current grounds along the Kells Road.

04 Residential Development

Older terraced and semi-detached developments have been integrated in the town centre, specifically Connaught, Lower and Upper Bridge, and O'Growney Streets. As the town grew in the more recent past, the scale and form of the residential developments have changed to lower density suburban type developments located on the approach roads to the town.

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

The aim of this Development Framework is to ensure that there is adequate land available in appropriate locations for housing, complemented by clear policies regarding any future development proposals to construct additional houses. The availability of housing, catering for a range of household needs, is important for sustaining communities in smaller urban settlements such as Athboy and enhances the quality of life for their occupants. Residential development will be accommodated in the areas zoned for residential use and also in the town centre area preferably as part of mixed use schemes.

Athboy has not experienced a significant level of Local Authority social housing in the past with the only notable exception being the residential development of 'Coille Dios' constructed in the Townparks area to the north of the town comprising of approximately 57 no. dwellings. This is considered to be a comparatively low level of provision in relation to the overall number of households in the town. Ultimately, future private residential developments should

be encouraged to provide for a broad mixture of household types. It is also noted that the Local Authority purchased additional lands for residential development purposes to the north of the town, consisting of approximately 18 hectares. Plans for the development of these lands are currently pending.

The Core Strategy of the County Development Plan (Table 2.4 refers) provides a housing allocation of 319 units to Athboy over the 2013 – 2019 period. In addition, Table 2.5 indicates that there are a further 159 units committed to in the form of extant planning permissions. These sites with the benefit of extant planning permission are identified on the land use zoning objectives map. The principal sites in question pertain to an extension to the Turry Meadows development off the Oldcastle Road and a large development off the Ballivor Road to the south west of the town.

The land use zoning objectives map has identified the lands required to accommodate the allocation of 319 no. units provided for under the Core Strategy. This followed the carrying out of an examination of the lands previously identified for residential land use in the 2009 Athboy Local Area Plan and still available for development. The lands which have been identified for residential land use arising from this evaluation largely arise following the application of the sequential approach from the Main Street outwards. It was considered that the other sites which were previously identified for residential development in the 2009 Local Area Plan were less favourable on the basis of their identified flood risk, peripheral location relative to the town centre or lands being land locked with no obvious or deliverable access available. The only exception to this is the proposed relocation of the GAA grounds (Clann na nGael) on the Navan Road which presents a considerable planning gain to the local community. It was considered prudent to retain the residential land use zoning objective which previously applied to the existing GAA grounds. All other lands are identified as a Phase II and are not intended for release in the life of this County Development Plan.

All designers of multiple residential developments within the Development Framework boundary are requested to submit a Design Statement to the Planning Authority with their planning applications in accordance with the requirements of Section 11.2 Residential Development of Volume I. A Design Statement is an appraisal of the distinctive character of the area adjoining the proposed development site and must consider how the design and layout of the proposed development responds to, and preferably enriches that character.

05 Commercial, Economic and Retail Uses

Athboy is identified as a Level 4 retail centre in the County Retail Hierarchy. Given Athboy's extensive hinterland and the population of the town, it has a noted range of commercial and retail services. Commercial and retail development in the town currently comprises of both convenience and comparison services. The range of services offered includes a significant number of boutiques and clothes shops, convenience retail shops, a hotel, a significant number of public houses, financial institutions, a post office, hardware shops, a Garda Station, and numerous retail service shops, such as butchers, chemists, florists, hairdressers, gift shops, restaurants, cafés, beauty salons, furniture stores, dry cleaners, solicitors, a veterinary surgery, and a number of garages and petrol filling stations. There are also a number of vacant retail shops in the town centre along Main Street.

Athboy's retail and commercial areas are located along Main Street, Lower and Upper Bridge Street, O'Growney Street and Connaught Street. Any future commercial and retail development should be directed into the town centre thereby facilitating multi-purpose trips. This could include the change of use of some existing residential properties in the town centre, particularly those along Main Street, in order to retain the centre as the core retailing area of the town. This would aid in the consolidation and strengthening of the existing retailing base of Athboy.

To cater and provide for the possible growing population base, as well as the town's role as a significant service provider for the surrounding rural area, Athboy will need to retain and expand upon its commercial and retailing functions over the course of the Development Plan

period. Any future commercial and retail development should be directed into the town centre thereby facilitating multi purpose trips. This would aid in the consolidation and strengthening of the existing retailing base of Athboy. Future commercial and retail development will need to respect the existing vernacular design traits evident in the town in order to protect its character and that of the Architectural Conservation Area (ACA) that it is situated in. The roof pitches, façade and fenestration details must respect this setting.

5.1 Future Business and Enterprise Development

There is a notable business and industrial base currently in existence in Athboy. Having regard to the nature, role and scale of the town, the strategy for economic development in Athboy must focus on the achievable delivery of local services, and potential employment and enterprise generation. There are lands available in the Trim Road Business Park to accommodate employment generating uses. These lands allow for the relocation of existing non-conforming and incompatible businesses in the town. There is one business site in the town's boundary which is considered to represent a nonconforming use; namely *MacCann & Byrne's*, building construction suppliers. The Council will favourably consider the appropriate redevelopment of this site for uses which are consistent with the planning policies and development objectives of this Development Framework. Planning permission was previously granted for the relocation of the use to the more appropriate location of the 'E2' zoned lands located at the Trim Road Business Park. The Planning Authority has identified 17.2 hectares of lands for "E2" General Enterprise & Employment within the Trim Road Business Park. It is considered that this is more than adequate to cater for the projected employment needs of Athboy during the life of this Development Plan.

06 Community Facilities & Open Spaces

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

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

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

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

The town is also well served by community amenities encompassing GAA, soccer and basketball and tennis courts and contains a locally equipped Children's Play area in the

Townparks area. The GAA facilities currently available in the Development Framework area are noted as constrained for further expansion, commensurate with local demands, at the current location.

Athboy is well served by active and passive recreational and community amenities that largely maximise and appropriately utilise natural and man-made environmental assets, and are also well interlinked. A comprehensive open space network is also being developed for the Townparks area, which will allow for a greater level of amenity for local residents while this Development Framework also identifies safe pedestrian walks in the town to ensure that Athboy is both pedestrian friendly and permeable.

07 Heritage

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

7.1 Archaeological Heritage

Athboy contains two sites of archaeological interest. The town centre area outlines the initial early development of the town comprising of Connaught Street, Main Street, and Lower and Upper Bridge Street. The second zone of archaeological interest surrounds the complex of buildings of Danes Court to the south of St James' Church of Ireland. The town also contains approximately 13 items identified on the Sites and Monuments Record (SMR). These items highlight the extensive length of human occupation in the town and are arranged around a number of separate historical areas, specifically Danes Court, the St James' Church of Ireland ecclesiastical complex, St James' Holy Well and the town's former defences located along Main Street and the Kildalkey Road.

Developers are advised to consult archaeological maps, which are available for consultation from the Planning Authority and on the website of the National Monuments Service (www.archaeology.ie), in order to ascertain whether their site is located within a known area of archaeological potential. All Planning applications should have regard to the Heritage Council's 'Archaeology and Development: Guidelines for Good Practice for Developers, 2000'.

7.2 Built Heritage

There are numerous buildings and structures of historical significance in Athboy. Athboy has 42 structures listed on the Record of Protected Structures (RPS) contained in this Development Plan. Volume I shall be consulted in relation to the policy framework for assessing development proposals relating to such structures. Furthermore, there are numerous structures within the Development Framework boundary that have been recommended for protection by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government's National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH) compiled in 2004. The continued protection of the built heritage of Athboy is intrinsic to the sustained success and viability of the town.

7.3 Architectural Conservation Area

Athboy contains an Architectural Conservation Area (ACA) encompassing the majority of the centre of the town (See Map 9.2.2 of the Meath County Development Plan 2013-19). The ACA extends from Lower Bridge Street to O'Growney Street and includes all of the town centre's land plots on both sides of the Main Street. This designation recognises the special significance of the built heritage which characterises Athboy and that care must be taken with regard to any future proposals in this area. The Planning Authority will continue to ensure that all future changes will enhance, rather than detract from, the character of this area and its setting.

Information on ACAs is set down in Section 9.6.12 of this County Development Plan. Further information on Athboy ACA is detailed in the Character Statement which is available on the Council's website (<http://www.meath.ie/CountyCouncil/Heritage/ArchitecturalHeritage>)

7.4 Natural Heritage

Athboy and the surrounding environs are characterised by significant environmental assets, none are designated at national or local level. The Athboy River flows through the town which is a tributary watercourse of the River Boyne. The river forms part of the River Boyne and River Blackwater Natura 2000 network and is both a SAC and SPA. The Athboy River flows into the River Boyne approximately 9.2km to the southeast of the town. A sustainable approach to future development is needed to protect and conserve the considerable diversity evident in Athboy.

There are a number of significant tree stands and hedgerows in and around Athboy which should be retained and incorporated where possible into any future development proposals in the town. These are identified on the accompanying land use zoning objectives map.

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

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

This view has been identified on the accompanying land use zoning objectives map.

08 Movement & Access

8.1 Roads

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

The Main Street is recognised as a constrained route which caters for local and regional traffic. This traffic is a mixture of heavy goods vehicles (HGVs), bus and utility service vehicles, as well as regional and local car traffic. Traffic is observed as relatively significant and constant throughout the day, particularly at peak times. It is an objective of this Development Framework to provide for an N51 bypass of Athboy. This route will serve to improve through traffic movements and consequently the environment and streetscape of the centre of Athboy.

The principal entrance routes to Athboy and Main Street are heavily trafficked and environmental improvements and traffic calming measures are required to facilitate an

improved townscape and environmental quality. Such improvements include upgraded pedestrian pathways, cycleways, textured surfacing, tactile paving (excluding tarmac) and improved road markings and signs for all users. Such improvements can be appropriately progressed in conjunction with the current tree planting and public improvement initiatives in Athboy, many of which are currently driven by a pro-active Tidy Towns Committee.

In February 2013, Meath County Council commenced works on a road improvement scheme along the Main Street through Athboy. The scheme, on completion, includes the construction of approximately 2 km of a pavement overlay and pavement reconstruction. Kerbs and footpaths will be replaced in some areas together with the upgrading of the existing drainage network, which will improve the surface water drainage on the Main Street. Road safety measures at the newly built Community School will be enhanced by the introduction of a new controlled pedestrian crossing between the Trim Road and the school. Also included is ducting in road-crossings to facilitate future ESB networks and public lighting work.

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

8.2 Pedestrians & Cyclists

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

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

The existing pedestrian traffic signals mid-way on Main Street are considered as ideally located with no obvious requirement for any further pedestrian crossing facilities in the town centre at this point in time.

The existing parks and open spaces located in Athboy provide an excellent opportunity for the strengthening of pedestrian walk and cycling routes. In order to further encourage cycling in the Athboy area, cycle priority lane provision should also be incorporated into all major new development applications. Sufficient space should be provided for bicycle parking to the standards as outlined in the Meath County Development Plan 2013-2019.

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

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

8.3 Car Parking

The recommendations of the Athboy Parking Survey (2008) are considered to represent an effective method of curtailing inappropriate parking practices in Athboy:

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

8.4 Public Transport

Bus Éireann provides Athboy with a bus service which serves the Dublin-Trim-Granard route (Bus Éireann Route 111). This route offers a comprehensive all day service (Monday to Saturday) with a limited bus service on Sunday. Although there are no designated 'bus stops' in the Town, services pick up and drop off passengers along the Main Street (currently at the 'Londis' Store) and on the Trim Road.

Strategic Policies

SP 1	To promote the future development of Athboy as a compact settlement with a pedestrian friendly environment, a legible and coherent physical form, and a variety of land uses and amenities.
SP 2	<p>To operate an Order of Priority for the release of residential lands in compliance with the requirements of CS OBJ 6 of the County Development Plan as follows:</p> <p>i) The lands identified with an A2 "New Residential" land use zoning objective corresponds with the requirements of Table 2.4 Housing Allocation & Zoned Land Requirements in Volume I of this County Development Plan and are available for residential development within the life of this Development Plan.</p> <p>ii) The lands identified with an A2 "New Residential" land use zoning objective but qualified as "Residential Phase II (Post 2019)" are not available for residential development within the life of this Development Plan</p>
SP 3	<p>To operate an Order of Priority for release of lands identified for E2 "General Enterprise & Employment" in compliance with the requirements of ED OBJ 2 as follows:</p> <p>i) The lands identified with an E2 "General Enterprise & Employment" land use zoning objective are available for development within the life of this Development Plan.</p> <p>ii) The lands identified with an E2 "General Enterprise & Employment" land use zoning objective but qualified as "Phase II" will only be available for development when all of the Phase I lands have been developed or being developed (i.e. permission granted and development substantially completed) and may be available within the life of this Development Plan.</p> <p>iii) The only exception is where a significant development is proposed which could not be accommodated within the lands identified as Phase I, for reasons of scale, lack of availability or unsuitability of the relevant phase I lands, lands within Phase II may be considered in this regard. The development of the lands</p>

identified as Phase II will be subject to the preparation and agreement of a Framework Plan with the Planning Authority prior to the submission of any planning application on said lands.

Policies

Water and Wastewater Services

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

Flood Risk

FR POL 1 To manage flood risk and development in Athboy in line with policies WS 29 – WS 36 inclusive in Volume I of this County Development Plan.

FR POL 2 Where existing development within the core town centre is at potential risk of flooding (A1 “*Existing Residential*” and B1 “*Town Centre*” land use zoning objectives refer) as identified on the land use zoning objectives map, any significant extensions / change of use / reconstruction shall be subject to an appropriately detailed Flood Risk Assessment in line with the policies (WS POL 29 - 36) contained in Volume I of the County Development Plan.

FR POL 3 The Eastern CFRAM flood mapping and management plan when complete and available will provide additional clarity to flood mapping and risk management measures than was available to inform the land use zoning objectives presented for Athboy. The Eastern CFRAM flood mapping and management plan shall be consulted when available in conjunction with this Written Statement & Volume I of the County Development Plan.

Public Utilities

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

Land Use

LU POL 1 To promote the demarcation and consolidation of the town centre area through the development of viable and feasible infill backland sites.

LU POL 2 To encourage new or re-developments along Main Street to contain ground floor retail/commercial uses.

Commercial, Economic and Retail

CER POL 1 To maintain and improve the vitality and viability of Athboy’s town centre area as the focus of all commercial and retail activity, in order to ensure both a mixture and variety of local shopping to serve the shopping needs of the local community.

CER POL 2 To address the leakage of retail expenditure from the town and its catchment by facilitating the strengthening of the range and quality of its retail offer to allow Athboy to meet its local shopping needs.

CER POL 3 To work with the County Development Board and other relevant agencies to promote Athboy as an attractive place for inward investment, thereby encouraging business, enterprise and industry to invest in the town.

CER POL 4 To require and provide for the appropriate landscaping of all employment, enterprise or light industrial developments, so that they integrate sensitively in the natural environment of Athboy, especially adjacent to residential development and open space areas. A landscaped buffer zone, minimum of 5 metres in depth, will be a requirement of any development proposal for Light Industrial/Warehousing development where it adjoins another zoning or where it could potentially injure the amenities of adjoining land uses. All lighting proposals within 100m of a Natura 2000 sites, or those deemed to have potential to result in adverse impacts, must undergo AA Screening.

CER POL 5 To require the preparation of a Framework Plan for the backlands to the north of Main Street identified for 'B1' land use zoning objective extending from MacCann & Byrne's light industrial premises towards and including Connaught Street. Any redevelopment of these lands must include provision for a high quality usable public space area along the Yellow Ford River; have a maximum of 50% residential development and provide an access road connecting Main Street to Connaught Street. The visual impact of any development of this site to the Townparks area will be determined through the submission of a Visual Impact Assessment with any future planning application(s). Due to proximity to the River Boyne and River Blackwater cSAC, it is likely that this Plan will require full Appropriate Assessment. A detailed flood risk assessment should be carried out for the element of the MacCann & Byrne site which is contained in Flood Risk Zones A & B in accordance with the recommendations of the Flood Risk Assessment and Management Plan for Variation No. 2 of the Meath County Development Plan 2013 – 2019.

Community Facilities and Open Spaces

CF POL 1 To facilitate any necessary future expansion of Athboy Library, O'Growney National School, Athboy Childcare Centre and Athboy Community School to accommodate their future needs.

CF POL 2 To facilitate dual access requirements to facilitate further residential development and the development of appropriate health facilities in the Coille Díos area.

CF POL 3 **Open Space:**

a) To encourage and promote the development of publicly accessible river based amenities, such as bird watching and walking, to include the provision of benches along the river way, and fishing, through the provision of designated fishing beats. The locations and detailed design including construction will be informed by ecological surveys which may also inform an Appropriate Assessment which is likely to be required.

b) To examine the possibility of extending the riverside walks where the opportunity arises in partnership with the community and private developers. All proposals are likely to require a full Appropriate Assessment which must

be informed by ecological surveys of the relevant area.

c) To facilitate and encourage the preparation of a Conservation Plan for St James' Church of Ireland ecclesiastical site and adjoining lands.

d) To retain those areas of high amenity and open space lands surrounding Danes Court and the Townparks free from development by reason of their high amenity nature and sensitive locations and views.

e) To promote the retention and development of walking routes throughout the town that are interconnected and allow for circuitous routes to be developed. These walks will create pedestrian friendly designated pedestrian linkages and safe walking routes, the majority of which will be un-associated with motorised traffic. These walks include:

- To retain the pedestrian walkway currently connecting the junction of Lower Bridge Street and the Trim Road, with the former Athboy Railway Complex and crossing the Yellow Ford River via the iron bridge over the River before continuing south along its southern bank.

- To retain the walkway connecting the Kildalkey Road, via Barnes Avenue, with the Yellow Ford River and interconnecting with the pedestrian route crossing the iron bridge over the River.

- To retain the pedestrian walkway connecting the town's Library with Barrack Lane, which connects Upper Bridge Street, at the Bank of Ireland and the former National School (currently 'Athboy Furniture Shop') with the iron bridge over the Yellow Ford River.

- To retain the pedestrian walkway along the northern bank of the Yellow Ford River to the north of the town in the Townparks area.

f) To encourage the provision of additional historical and interpretative signage, where appropriate, in order to inform visitors of the historical importance of Athboy.

CF POL 4

To further consult with the board of the Clann na nGael GAA club to establish the level of facilities required for Athboy GAA into the future. It is anticipated that new GAA facilities can be provided to the northeast of the current site as provided for under OS OBJ 1.

CF POL 5

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

CF POL 6

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

Urban Design

UD POL 1

To require all new developments in the Development Framework area to contribute to the creation of high quality functional and well designed environments. To achieve this, new development proposals in the town shall be required to consider and reflect the physical, social and environmental context of the town. Proposed uses shall be compatible with the surrounding areas and the established character of town.

UD POL 2 To promote the appropriate re-use, re-development, façade improvement and re-generation of derelict sites and buildings in Athboy. The Council will use its powers, where appropriate, in considering such sites for inclusion in the Register of Derelict Sites.

UD POL 3 To ensure that Athboy avoids the monotony of urban sprawl, excessive and monotonous duplication of house styles in residential developments will be strongly resisted. The unique character, vernacular style and special setting of the town mean that its capacity to absorb large-scale residential developments is limited. Future developments must have regard to the local setting and aim to create a sense of place and identity in any proposed development.

Heritage

HER POL 1 To implement a presumption against the removal of both hedgerows and trees during the course of developments as the Planning Authority recognises the heritage and amenity importance of the County's hedgerow and tree resources.

HER POL 2 To ensure continued protection for the following natural environmental features and allow for these features to be integrated within the overall vision for the town:

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

HER POL 3 To support access, if appropriate, to the various sites of archaeological importance in Athboy, with the prior co-operation of the individual landowners and to integrate, where possible and if appropriate, sites of archaeological interest into walking trails in the town.

HER POL 4 To protect the burial grounds in the town identified in the RMP, in co-operation with the National Monuments Section of the DoEHLG, specifically the churchyard of the St James' Church of Ireland and the burial ground located to the south of the Clonmellon Road.

Movement and Access

MA POL 1 To implement appropriate traffic management and environmental improvement measures throughout the town.

MA POL 2 To reserve access points throughout Athboy to allow development of vehicular routes to undeveloped zoned lands. Such access routes should be so designed to be overlooked and appropriately landscaped.

MA POL 3 To provide for an integrated network of cycle ways throughout the town where considered appropriate in order to promote more sustainable modes of transportation.

MA POL 4 To seek the provision of adequate bicycle parking facilities throughout the town and in all new residential developments.

MA POL 5 To investigate the provision of heavy goods vehicle parking within the town's development boundary.

MA POL 6 To facilitate the upgrading and the provision of the identified car parking spaces in the town as outlined in this Written Statement.

MA POL 7 To work in conjunction with National Transport Authority to provide bus stops and accompanying shelters in the town centre to serve all bus users.

Athboy Architectural Conservation Area

ACA POL 1 To protect the character and appearance of the Athboy Architectural Conservation Area and existing architectural features.

ACA POL 2 Future development within the Athboy Architectural Conservation Area shall have regard to the detailed 'Statement of Character' guidance document published in 2009 for the town. The Statement of Character includes information and descriptions of the Athboy ACA outlining the specific character of the area, guidance notes on development and exempted development for use by residents, community members, businesses and statutory bodies with an interest in the area.

Water Quality

WQ POL a) To protect the water quality of the stretch of the Yellow Ford River which passes through the town and ensure it is not compromised by any existing or proposed developments in Athboy.

b) To require future development proposals on lands adjoining the Yellow Ford River and its main tributaries in Athboy to include the identification of the River's associated riparian zone and to maintain such areas free from development intrusion (including night lighting) as a natural environmental feature and amenity resource.

Strategic Development Objective

SD OBJ To develop a strong local economy by continuing to encourage the role of Athboy as a 'Service Centre' for the surrounding rural hinterland and encourage small businesses to set-up in the town by facilitating the expansion of existing employment uses.

Objectives

Flood Risk

FR OBJ Any re-development to the north of Upper Bridge Street / Main Street (existing McCann and Byrne site) to facilitate the orderly expansion of the town centre through the area identified with B1 "Town Centre" land use zoning objective an appropriately detailed Flood Risk Assessment, which would form part of the planning application. The Flood Risk Assessment shall clearly assess flood risks, management measures and demonstrate compliance with the "The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities" (November 2009). The Flood Risk Assessment shall have regard to the potential negative impacts which

developing within Flood Zones A or B could have on flood risk elsewhere, both through obstructing flow paths and reducing floodplain capacity. The Flood Risk Assessment shall consider the Sequential Approach within the subject site and would typically involve allocating water compatible development within Flood Zones A and some / all of Zone B. Where necessary, compensatory storage should be provided. Buildings should be sited at an appropriate finished floor level, which should be above the 1 in 100 year flood level, with an allowance for freeboard and climate change.

Community Facilities and Open Spaces

CF OBJ To ensure that any future residential development on the lands identified for "A2" incorporating the existing Clann na nGael GAA grounds off the N51 (Kells Road) will only be developed once sufficient relocation works, to the satisfaction of the Planning Authority, for the GAA club has taken place onto a new site outside of the development envelop, to the north east of the town. The relocation shall be inclusive of footpaths and public lighting from the town to the facility, in tandem with the first phase of residential development. Access shall not be permissible from the N51 at a point where the general speed limit of 80 kph applies and national policy seeks to avoid the creation of additional access points onto national roads to which speed limits in excess of 60 kph apply. A shared entrance to serve the lands identified for G1 "Community Infrastructure" and A2 "New Residential" land use zoning objectives for lands east of the Gillstown Road shall be provided for.

Heritage

HER OBJ 1 To protect the following tree stands in the town:

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

HER OBJ 2 To retain, where possible, the following hedgerows and incorporate them into future development layouts in the town, specifically those hedgerows along the approach roads into the village:

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

Movement and Access

MA OBJ 1 To undertake an overview of the level of signage in Athboy, and where required, to augment current signage. Suitable signage to be maintained on the current Athboy approach roads.

MA OBJ 2 To initiate public footpath upgrades in the town centre area involving the use of textured surfacing and tactile paving in order to fully separate pedestrian and vehicular movements to provide a safer environment for pedestrians particularly along the Connaught Street, and the Delvin, Fraine, Kells/Navan, Kildalkey and Trim Roads.

MA OBJ 3 To facilitate the provision of car parking improvements as outlined in the Athboy Parking Survey Report study, including:

- To encourage short-term parking only along Main Street.
- Limited public parking along Connaught Street
- Prohibited public parking at O'Growney Street, and in the vicinity of the Civic Recycling facility, where this parking is currently observed on footpaths and prohibited areas.

MA OBJ 4 To provide adequate disabled car parking spaces at appropriate locations throughout the town.

MA OBJ 5 To provide for a new bypass of the N51 National Secondary Road through Athboy generally to the south of the town and to ensure that the selected route is reserved and protected free from development. During the environmental impact assessment stage of the detailed design which shall inform the final alignment of this bypass, a Justification Test will need to be applied if alignments assessed interact with Flood Zone A/B. A detailed Flood Risk Assessment will be required to manage the risk and to demonstrate there will be no impact on adjacent lands. The detailed design of this route shall also be subject to an Appropriate Assessment pursuant to the Habitats Directive.

MA OBJ 6 To identify a road link connecting Connaught Street to Upper Bridge Street via MacCann & Byrne's building construction suppliers. During the consideration of the detailed design which shall inform the final alignment of this link road, a Justification Test will need to be applied if alignments assessed interact with Flood Zone A/B. A detailed Flood Risk Assessment will be required to manage the risk and to demonstrate there will be no impact on adjacent lands. The detailed design of this route shall also be subject to an Appropriate Assessment pursuant to the Habitats Directive.

MA OBJ 7 To facilitate the upgrading and the provision of the identified footpaths and public lighting in the town as outlined in this Development Framework, particularly along the Connaught Street, and the Delvin, Fraine, Kells/Navan, Kildalkey and Trim Roads. All lighting proposals within 100m of a Natura 2000 site, or those deemed to have potential to result in adverse impacts, must undergo AA Screening.

MA OBJ 8 To review the current public lighting provision in Athboy and to provide additional lighting in areas highlighted as lacking in facilities. Public lighting is recognised to be required in the following areas:

- Kells/Navan Road,

- Around the Fair Green amenity space,
- 'Fosterfield' residential development.

All future developments proposed along routes of public lighting upgrades will be contingent upon the delivery of this objective in conjunction with the Council. All lighting proposals within 100m of a Natura 2000 site, or those deemed to have potential to result in adverse impacts, must undergo AA Screening.

Views & Prospects

VP OBJ

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

Appendix to Athboy Written Statement - Urban Design Statement

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

Purpose of this Urban Design Strategy

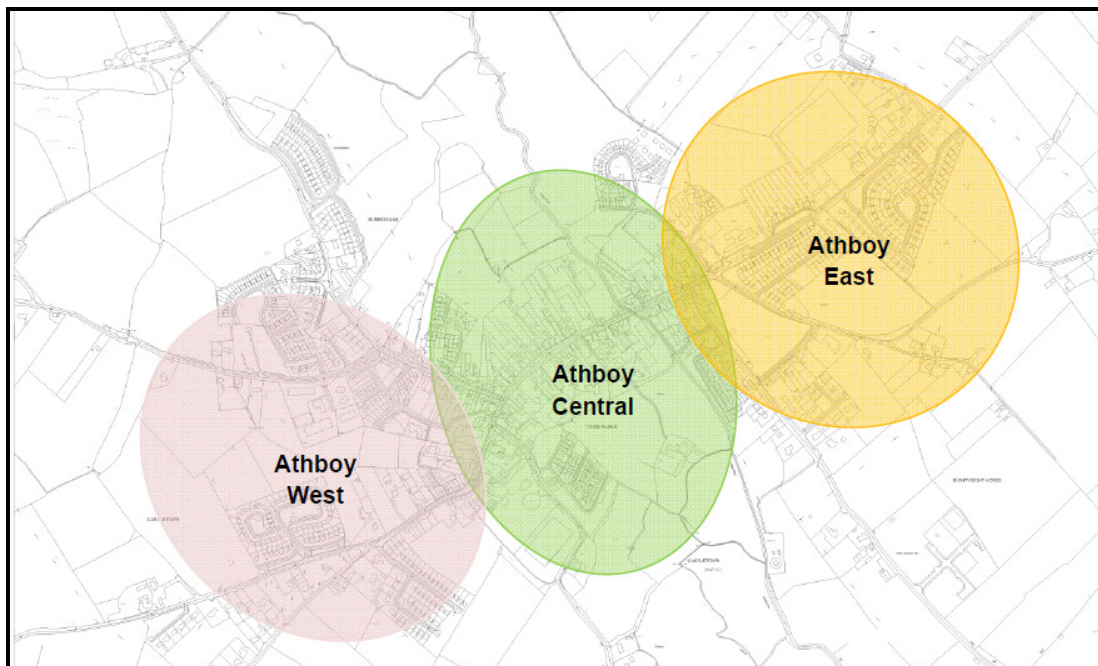
The urban design strategy seeks to assist the planning process at pre-planning consultation stage and through the decision making process. It is therefore envisaged that the Urban Design Strategy will:

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

Character Areas

A physical and visual assessment of Athboy has identified three distinct Character Areas namely:

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



Indicative Character Areas in Athboy

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

Athboy West

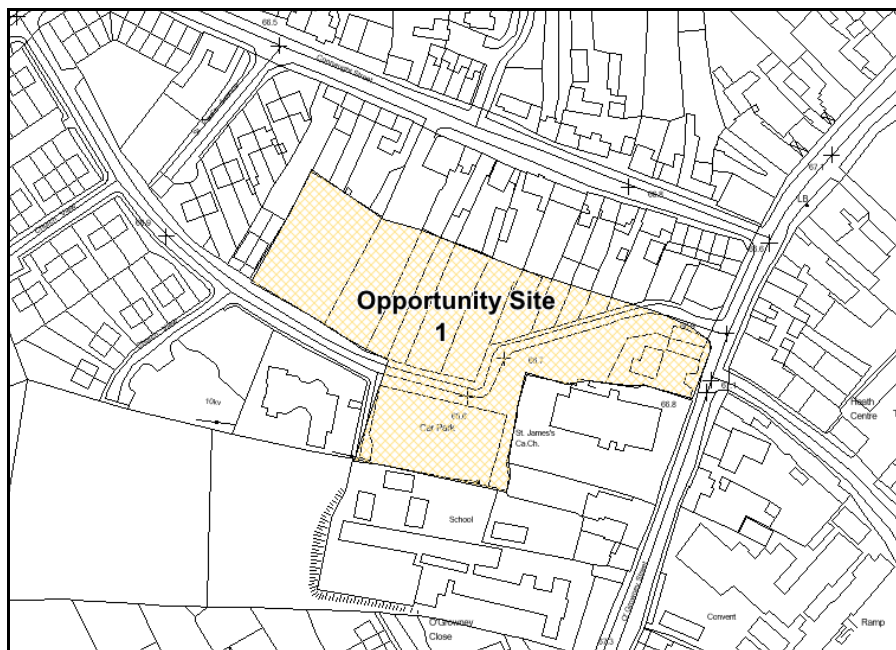
The western approaches via the Mullingar Road (N51) and Fraine Road indicate a predominant residential land use. Proximity to the urban boundary is indicated by a proliferation of urban generated rural housing on both approach roads. Upon entry into the urban area, established residential areas are evident.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

The line of the proposed by-pass route to the south of the town forms the southern boundary of this Character Area. The route of this by-pass is subject to further route analysis and study by Meath County Council and the National Roads Authority (NRA) and is thus indicatively shown in order to reserve this general route free from development. The predominant land uses located along O'Growney Street are community uses, which serve the established residential communities located to the North and South of this area. Community uses, including the St. James' Roman Catholic Church, O'Growney National School, and the former Athboy Community School grounds and sports pitches are located both north and south of O'Growney Street. Whilst the approach road to Athboy from the west indicates moderate and largely well established residential and community uses, O'Growney Street heralds the approach to the town centre area and provides an important active community area.

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

Opportunity Site No. 1

An opportunity exists to provide enhanced permeability between the Athboy West Character Area and the surrounding residential areas. The continuing development of the backlands area to the rear of St. James' Roman Catholic Church is encouraged. This should include the backlands of those buildings fronting onto Connaught Street in accordance with UD POL 3 of this Development Framework.



Athboy Central

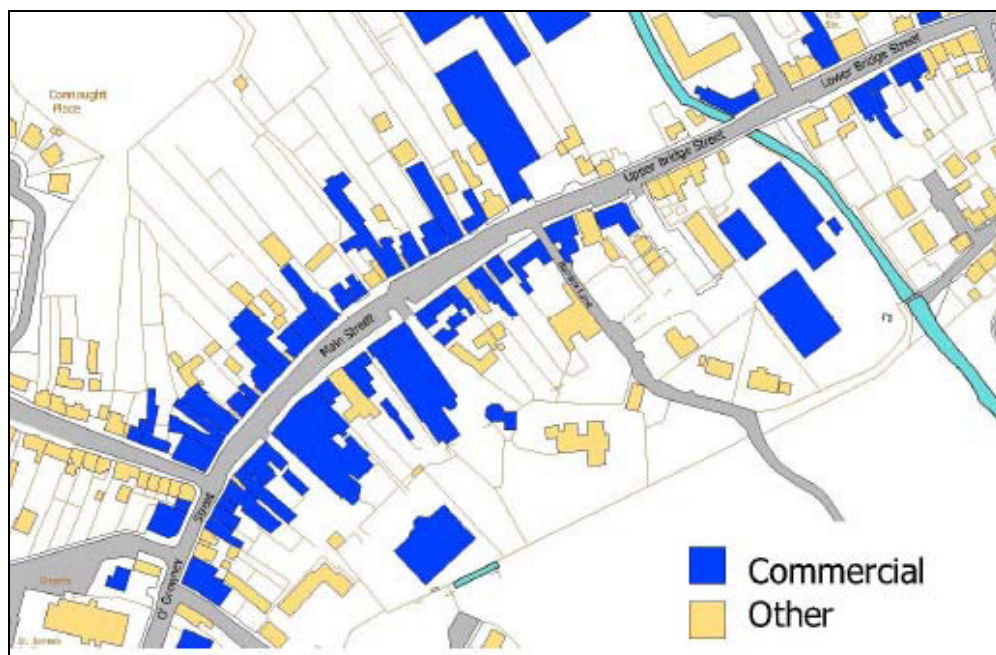
This Central Character Area comprises the historic core of Athboy, which is recognised to have evolved over centuries, influenced by the medieval town walls, much of which is reflected in the current Athboy Architectural Conservation Area (ACA) designation. This layout has further influenced the tight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

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

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

Significant open spaces are located to the north and south of Main Street, including the Fairgreen and Danes Court to the south and Townparks to the north. The Yellow Ford River runs in a north - south alignment through this character area and is bridged by the 'Metal Foot Bridge' at the former railway station enclosure and 'The Bridge', located at Upper Bridge Street. This provides an attractive feature in the town centre and is currently well signposted as a heritage item in Athboy.

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



There is a distinct building line associated with Main Street, broken only by the St. James' Parish Hall and warehousing/industrial units located to the north and south of Main Street.

Access to this Central Area is provided via the main access spine of Main Street. To the north of Main Street, permeability is achieved via Connaught Street and local roads that provide access to the 'Coille Dios', 'Newman's Mills' and 'Connaught Place' residential areas. TRAN OBJ 6 of this Development Framework seeks the provision of an access road from Connaught Street to MacCann and Byrne's for access to the backland areas.

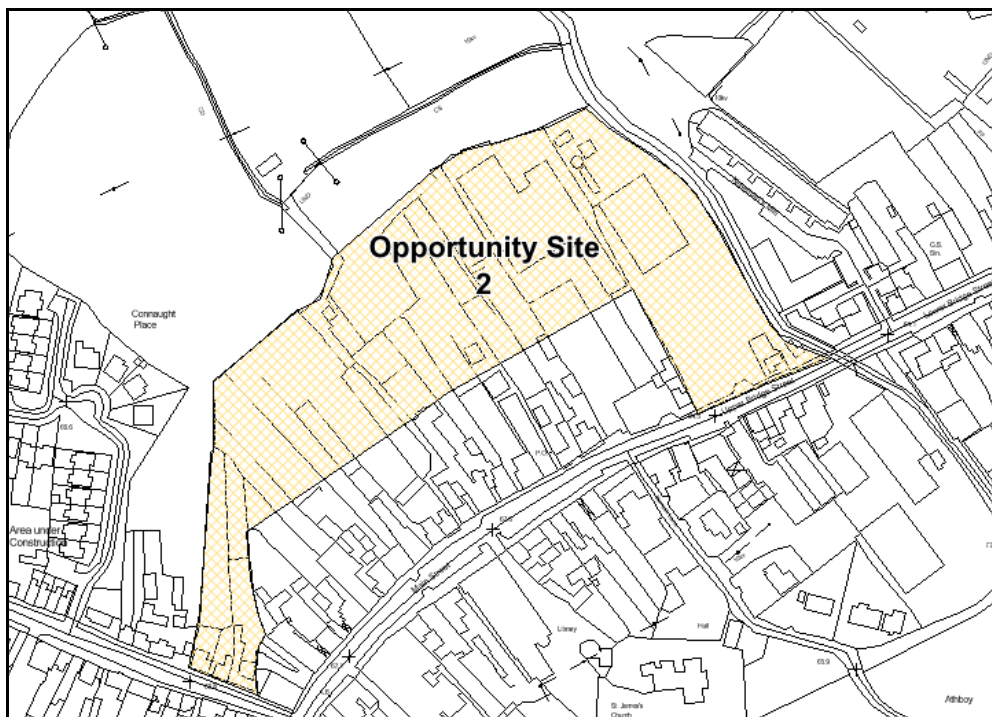
Relatively little back-land development has taken place to date in Athboy, on either side of Main Street. It is envisaged that the development of the local access route as a first priority will provide the impetus for future development, which also provides an opportunity to create a vibrant streetscape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

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

Opportunity Site No. 2

Athboy contains older commercial activities, specifically 'MacCann & Byrne's' along the Main Street, which present a 'jaded' appearance. The warehousing units aligned on Main Street and Upper Bridge Street impact upon the quality of the streetscape and these sites would benefit from a more consolidated and Town centre urban form. Relocated uses will also indirectly impact on the level of traffic movements passing through the Main Street and it is considered appropriate that car parking provision to provide for backland development can be facilitated in the backlands area. This redevelopment will require the development of a connecting access road between Connaught Street and Upper Bridge Street to allow for such redevelopment in accordance with TRAN OBJ 6 of this Development Plan.

A further street study of arch ways that can potentially lead to the Backlands should be carried out to provide a framework of pedestrian linkages back to the Main Street. Such links indirectly promote additional commercial activities, such as café, homeopath, etc, uses along pedestrianised laneways.



Athboy East

In contrast with Athboy West, the approach toward the town centre from the east provides a slightly elevated view towards the town centre, providing an opportunity to mark this access point in a suitable manner. The eastern approach via the N51 presents low density residential lands, which quickly turn to suburban residential uses in the urban area and provides a gradual arrival point to the urban boundary of Athboy. This approach road is considered

generally good and meets with Lower Bridge Street and Main Street in the Athboy Central Character Area.

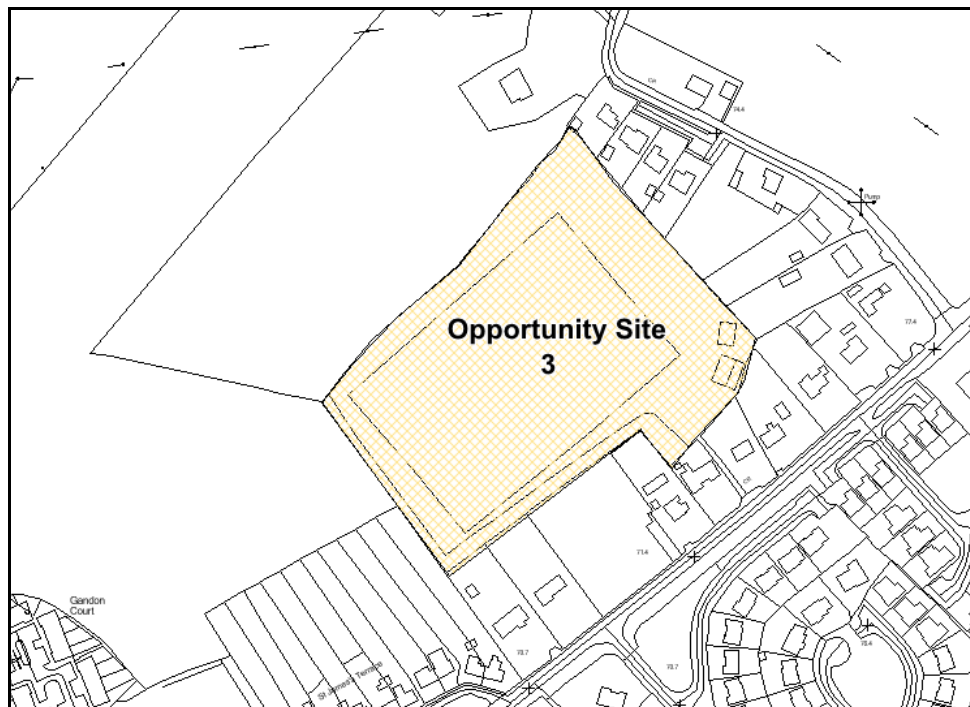
As evident in Athboy West, the bypass route provides a natural southern boundary to this area. The route of this by-pass is subject to further route analysis and study by Meath County Council and the NRA and is thus indicatively shown in order to reserve this general route free from development.

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

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

Opportunity Site No. 3

An opportunity exists to relocate the current constrained GAA facility to lands further northeast of the existing GAA location. This relocation will be subject to the provision of playing pitch facilities in advance of the release of the current GAA facilities for redevelopment, in accordance with Zoning Objective 'A2'. This opportunity is also informed by the provisions of OS OBJ 1.



Opportunity Site No. 4

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

