

1 Introduction and Strategic Context

1.1 Introduction

The Draft Athy Town Development Plan 2012-2018 has been prepared in accordance with the requirements and provisions of the Planning and Development Acts 2000-2010. It relates to the functional area of Athy within the Athy Town Council boundary.

The Plan sets out an overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of the town over the period 2012-2018. It is prepared with reference to the Draft Kildare County Development Plan 2011-2017 which sets out strategies, policies and objectives for the development of County Kildare. Population targets for Athy and the strategy for economic development as outlined in the County Plan have informed the preparation of this plan.

The Development Plan consists of a written statement with accompanying maps. It comprises 16 chapters as follows;

Chapters 1 and 2 set out the introduction, strategic context and core strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of Athy.

Chapters 3-14 set out detailed policies and objectives under a range of headings which the Town Council will seek to achieve over the six-year life of the Plan e.g. economic development, housing, town centre development, retail, movement and transport, infrastructure, social, community, heritage and the development of opportunity areas.

Chapter 15 sets out development management objectives and standards to be applied to future development proposals. The purpose of these standards and objectives is to guide and assist the preparation of development proposals and to regulate the impact of development on the environment.

Chapter 16 sets out the land use activities referred to under each zoning objective and

indicates the acceptability or otherwise of specified land uses within each zone.

Appendices include the Housing Strategy, the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment and the Environmental Report on the Strategic Environmental Assessment.

1.2 The process that has been followed to date

This Draft Plan has been formulated following a period of pre-draft public consultation between April and June 2010 which included public displays, workshops and various meetings with relevant stakeholders, service providers and elected representatives.

The submissions received during the public consultation process fell into two broad categories namely those that concerned planning issues in the general sense (issue-based) and those that concerned zoning or re-zoning of lands (zoning). An analysis of the issue-based submissions indicated four key areas of greatest public interest:

- (i) Transport infrastructure including the provision of distributor roads, public transport facilities together with improvements for walking and cycling.
- (ii) Promotion of economic development and the facilitation of employment opportunities.
- (iii) Improvement and promotion of the town centre area together with retail facilities.
- (iv) Provision of open space, amenity and recreational facilities.

These key issues, and many others articulated through the public consultation process, have been taken into account together with the directions received from the Elected Members during the pre draft consultation process. The

issues raised are addressed in the relevant chapters of the Draft Plan.

This Plan sets out an overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of the town. It has been prepared having regard to those matters that must be included in a Development Plan (i.e. mandatory objectives) as well as those matters that may be included (discretionary objectives) as required by the Planning and Development Acts 2000-2010.

Consideration can only be given to matters that relate to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area. In summary, the main mandatory objectives of the Act for this Plan include the following:

- Zoning of land where the proper planning and sustainable development of the town requires land uses to be indicated¹;
- The provision of infrastructure including transport, energy and communication facilities, water supplies, waste recovery and disposal facilities, waste water facilities and ancillary facilities;
- Promotion of sustainable settlement and transportation strategies including the promotion of measures to reduce energy demand, reduce anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions, and address the necessity of adaptation to climate change;
- The conservation and protection of the environment, including in particular, the archaeological and natural heritage and protection of the European designated sites and any other sites which may be prescribed;
- The encouragement, pursuant to Article 10 of the Habitats Directive, of the management of features of the landscape, such as traditional field boundaries, important for the

¹ It should be noted that there shall be no presumption in law that any land zoned in a particular development plan (including a development plan that has been varied) shall remain so zoned in any subsequent development plan (Section 10(8) Planning and Development Act 2000).

ecological coherence of the Natura 2000 network and essential for the migration, dispersal and genetic exchange of wild species;

- The promotion of compliance with environmental standards and objectives established for bodies of surface water, by the European Communities (Surface Waters) Regulations 2009; for groundwater, by the European Communities (Groundwater) Regulations 2010; which standards and objectives are included in river basin management plans (within the meaning of Regulation 13 of the European Communities (Water Policy) Regulations 2003);
- The integration of the planning and sustainable development of Athy with the social, community and cultural requirements of the town and its population;
- The preservation of the character of the landscape, including the preservation of views and prospects and the amenities of places and features of natural beauty or interest;
- The protection of the structures, or part of structures which are of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest;
- The preservation of the character of architectural conservation areas;
- The development and renewal of areas in need of regeneration;
- The provision of accommodation for Travellers and the use of particular areas for the purpose of accommodating Travellers;
- The preservation, improvement and extension of amenities and recreational amenities;
- Reducing the risk of a major accident having regard to the Major Accidents Directive;

- The provision of services for the community including schools, crèches and other education and childcare facilities;
- The preservation of public rights of way which give access to riverbank or other place of natural beauty or recreational utility; and
- Providing a framework for identification, assessment, protection, management and planning of landscapes having regard to the European Landscape Convention.

In accordance with Section 15(1) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 as amended, there is a duty on the planning authority to take such steps within its powers as may be necessary for securing the objectives of this Plan. However, the achievement of many objectives will depend on the availability of funding and resources.

1.3 Key Challenges for the Plan Period

This Draft Plan has a critical role to play in ensuring that the needs of the existing population and future population growth are carefully planned for. It has been prepared at a time of unprecedented change in the economy. Athy experienced significant population growth from 5,306 in 1996 to 7,943 in 2006 representing a 50% increase in the population of the town. Having regard to the significant period of growth, the population targets indicated for Kildare in the Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area 2010-2022, coupled with the significant changes to economic development, employment levels and Government finances, the following are key challenges facing Athy over the Plan period (2012-2018) and beyond:

- Promoting Athy as a Moderate Sustainable Growth Town by encouraging significant new economic development in the town.
- Unlocking infrastructural constraints and ensuring adequate investment in infrastructure (including improving

transport links in and around the town) in order to maintain and facilitate economic development.

- Promoting a sustainable transport network including the provision of roads, footpaths, cycle lanes, public transport infrastructure and promoting inter-connectivity.
- Securing and encouraging the appropriate redevelopment, renewal and improvement of areas within the town.
- Consolidation of development and avoidance of urban sprawl.
- Continuing the protection of the environment at all levels, including the built and natural heritage.
- Facilitating the creation of sustainable and integrated communities.
- Integrating climate change considerations into the achievement of strategic objectives.

1.4 Main Policy Considerations

The Planning and Development Act 2000 as amended requires that a Development Plan shall, so far as is practicable, be consistent with national plans, policies and strategies, which relate to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area covered by the Plan. The most central Government plans, guidelines and policies and strategies influencing preparation of this Draft Plan are noted below. Other relevant documents include various Guidelines for Planning Authorities issued by the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government include:

- Architectural Heritage Protection;
- Best Practice Urban Design Manual (Parts 1 and 2)
- Childcare Facilities Guidelines

- Design Standards for new Apartments;
- Development Plans- Guidelines for Planning Authorities
- Guidance Note on Core Strategies
- National Cycle Policy Framework 2009-2020
- Provision of Schools and the Planning System
- Retail Planning Guidelines
- Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines
- Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas
- Telecommunications, Antennae and Support Structures
- The Planning System and Flood Risk Management

These are dealt with in the relevant sections of this Plan.

1.4.1 National Planning Policies and Strategies

The following sections set out a summary of the main provisions of national plans, policies and strategies, which relate to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area covered by the Plan.

(i) The National Spatial Strategy (NSS) 2002-2020, People, Places and Potential

The National Spatial Strategy is a twenty year spatial strategy designed to achieve a better balance of social, economic, physical development and population growth between regions. It provides a framework to guide policies, programmes and investment. The strategy emphasises continued strong growth in the Greater Dublin Area (GDA) but with significant improvement in the regions outside the capital and more particularly in the nine

gateway cities and nine hub towns identified in the strategy. Athy is neither a gateway nor hub however, with a population of over 5,000 it will act as a focus for a balanced pattern of growth. Athy will have to compete with higher order cities and towns to secure funding for strategic investment opportunities.

(ii) The National Development Plan 2007-2013 (NDP)

The goal of the NDP is to integrate strategic development frameworks for regional development, rural communities, all-island co-operation, and for protection of the environment with common economic and social goals. There are a number of challenges facing the country which the NDP aims to address including infrastructural bottlenecks, improving skills and education, creating and sustaining high value economic opportunities and redistribution of wealth. The NDP sets out a strong framework for the promotion of regional development with particular focus on investment in the NSS gateway centres. The changes to the international and national fiscal situation is likely to impact on the level of available funding for the projects, identified in the NDP impacting on prioritisation and timing of delivery.

(iii) Sustainable Development: A Strategy for Ireland (1997)

The national strategy for sustainable development provides a framework for the achievement of sustainability at the local level. It calls on planning authorities to incorporate the principles of sustainable development into their development plans.

(iv) Transport 21 and Smarter Travel, A Sustainable transport Future (2009)

Transport 21 is the capital investment framework for the transport system under the NDP over the period 2006-2015. It addresses the twin challenges of past investment backlogs and continuing growth in transport demand and comprises two investment programmes - a national programme and a programme for the

Greater Dublin Area. County Kildare will benefit from both programmes. The programmes aim to increase accessibility, ensure sustainability, expand capacity, increase use of public transport, enhance quality, create an efficient national road and rail network and strengthen national, regional and local public transport services.

‘Smarter Travel, A Sustainable Transport Future’ is the new transport policy for Ireland for the period 2009-2020. The policy recognises the vital importance of continued investment in transport to ensure an efficient economy and continued social development, while also setting out the necessary steps to ensure that people choose more sustainable transport modes such as walking, cycling and public transport.

Actions are proposed in order to achieve the following:

- To reduce the distance travelled by private modes of transport and to encourage smarter travel;
- To ensure that alternatives to private modes of transport are more widely available;
- To improve the fuel efficiency of motorised transport through improved fleet structure, energy efficient driving and alternative technologies.

(v) Ireland National Climate Change Strategy 2007-2012

The National Climate Change Strategy outlines the measures that Ireland should take in order to meet its commitments to limit greenhouse gas emissions over the period 2007-2012. This shall be achieved through legally binding limits to the production of greenhouse gases with the strategy incorporating a programme of actions for achieving those limits. The main focus is on reducing transport emissions, encouraging renewable energy sources, changing agricultural practices and changing waste disposal policies and plans. The strategy recognises that decisions by local authorities on the location,

design and construction of domestic and commercial developments and of related economic and social activity can have a significant effect on greenhouse gas emissions.

(vi) National Energy Efficiency Action Plan 2009-2020

The National Energy Efficiency Action Plan outlines Government proposals and actions to achieve a target of 20% energy savings across the economy by 2020. The strategy aims to reduce the country’s dependency on imported fossil fuels, to improve energy efficiency across a number of sectors and to ensure a sustainable energy future.

The Government’s energy policy framework ‘Delivering a Sustainable Future for Ireland- The Energy Policy Framework’ (2007-2020) is designed to steer Ireland towards a new and sustainable energy future, one that helps increase security of supply, makes energy more affordable, improves national competitiveness and reduces greenhouse gas emissions.

1.4.2 Regional Planning Policies and Strategies.

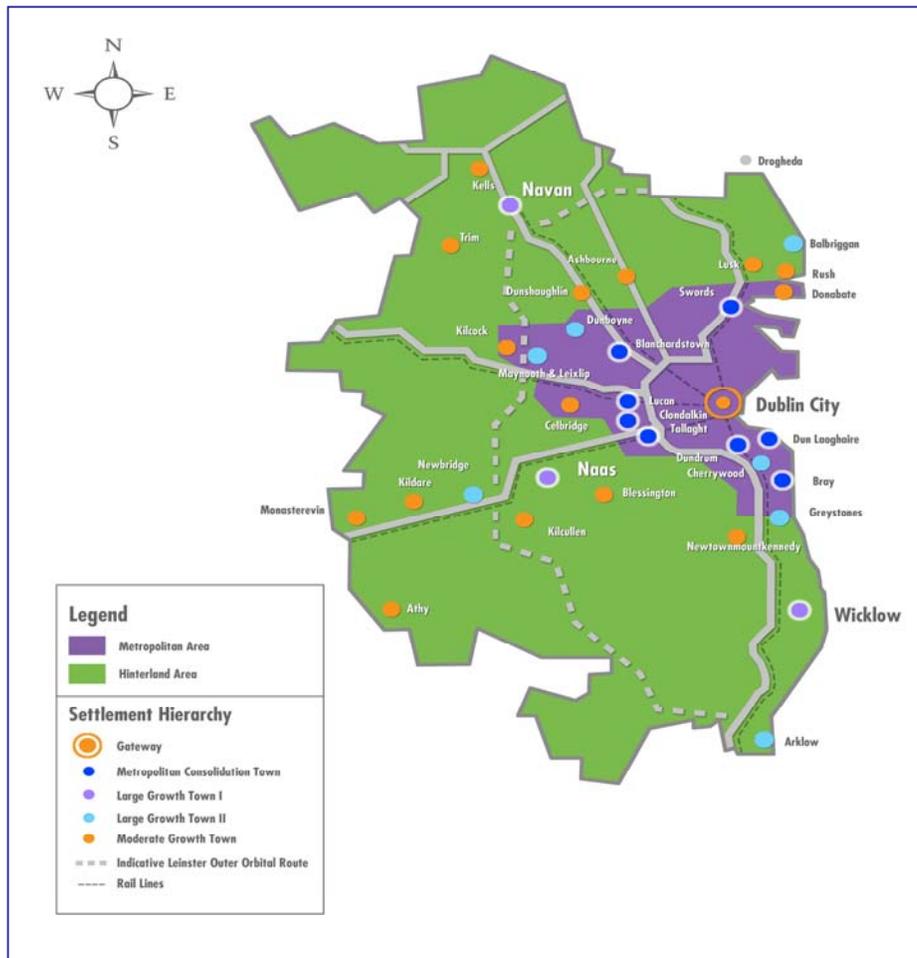
Regional policies and strategies provide the policy link between national policies and guidance documents, and local authority planning policies and decisions. The most relevant are outlined in the following sections:

(i) Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area (RPGs) 2010-2022

The RPGs provide the overall strategic context for the Development Plans of each local authority in the Greater Dublin Area including population and housing targets, and also provides the framework for future investment in environmental services, transportation and other infrastructure. The key principle of the strategy involves consolidating the growth of the Metropolitan Area and concentrating the future development of the Hinterland Area into a number of selected towns to be developed as self sustaining growth towns. Athy, Kildare,

Monasterevin and Kilcullen are designated as Moderate Sustainable Growth Towns within the hinterland area. These strategically placed, strong and dynamic urban centres are to absorb most new population growth in the hinterland area acting as key centres for the provision of services for surrounding smaller towns in rural areas. They are also recognised as having an important supporting and complementary role in

the development of economic growth throughout the GDA. The long term objective is to consolidate existing employment and service sectors and create new employment opportunities, particularly in the areas of high value added manufacturing and internationally traded sectors with I.D.A. support around transport corridors and routes, in tandem with continued investment in education and skills.



Map 1.1: Regional Planning Guidelines 2010-2022

(ii) Retail Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2008-2016

The Retail Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area sets out a coordinated and sustainable approach to the assessment and provision of retailing within the Greater Dublin Area so that:

- Adequate and suitable provision is made to meet the needs of changing population

patterns in order to provide for healthy competition and consumer choice.

- The enhancement and expansion of the retail offer in suitable locations is also provided, which should be integrated within the existing growth areas while having regard to public transport investment.

- Significant over provision is avoided, as this would place more marginal locations under severe pressure and undermine sustainability driven policies aimed at revitalising town centres.

By setting out a strategic framework for retailing, the strategy seeks to give guidance on where future retail facilities should be provided while identifying issues that need to be addressed. To this end, the strategy includes a retail hierarchy as a core spatial policy around which proposed future growth, rejuvenation and expansion in the retail sector should be addressed.

(iii) Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area

The Dublin Transportation Office (DTO) 'A Platform for Change 2000-2016' seeks the development of an efficient and high quality system of public transport connections within the Greater Dublin Area. It comprises two independent objectives, namely:

- Infrastructure and service improvements to expand the public transport network, strategic road construction and traffic management.
- Demand management to reduce the growth in private travel through the application of land use and other policies while maintaining economic progress.

The National Transport Authority (NTA) has commenced work on developing a new Transport Strategy for the GDA which will be linked to sustainable land use planning and will be directed by the economic, social, cultural and environmental needs of the people of the GDA.

(iv) River Basin Management Plan

The Water Framework Directive was adopted in 2000 and requires the preparation of a management plan for all waters in an area

called a River Basin District. Athy is located in the South Eastern River Basin District. The Directive's main aim is to maintain all water bodies, rivers, lakes, groundwater and estuaries at high status, to prevent deterioration in the existing status of water, and to achieve at least "good status" in relation to all waters by 2015. The River Basin Management Plan describes in detail the status of all waters and protected areas. A programme of measures will be put in place to provide the works necessary to bring water bodies to good quality status. These measures have informed the preparation of this Draft Plan.

1.4.3 Strategies and Studies for County Kildare and Athy

A number of strategies and studies carried out by Athy Town Council and/ or Kildare County Council have informed the preparation of this plan. The most relevant of these are outlined in the following sections:

(i) Draft Kildare County Development Plan 2011-2017

The Draft Kildare County Development Plan 2011-2017 due for adoption in April 2011 has been prepared having regard to the NSS, the RPGs and various Government guidelines. It sets out the context for future development in County Kildare and includes a core strategy, development objectives, a settlement hierarchy, and policies for the protection of the environment.

The settlement strategy for County Kildare ranks settlements from large growth towns to moderate sustainable growth towns consistent with the Regional Planning Guidelines 2012-2022. Table 1.1 outlines the higher order settlements within the settlement hierarchy for County Kildare together with principles governing the categorisation of each settlement type.

Table 1.1: Higher Order Settlements within the Settlement Hierarchy for County Kildare.

Hierarchy	Description	Locations
Large Growth Towns I	Key destinations, economically active towns supporting surrounding areas.	Naas
Large Growth Towns II	Smaller in scale but strong active growth towns, economically vibrant with high quality transport links to larger towns / city.	Leixlip (including expansion area of Collinstown) Maynooth Newbridge
Moderate Sustainable Growth Towns	(i) In Metropolitan Area, strong edge of metropolitan area district service centres, HQ linkages and increased densities at nodes on public transport corridors. (ii) In hinterland areas, circa 10km from large town on public transport corridor, serve rural hinterland as market town.	Celbridge Kilcock Athy Kildare Kilcullen Monasterevin

Arising from the Draft County Development Plan 2011-2017, the following strategic considerations will inform the preparation of this Draft Plan:

- Athy is to plan for potential population growth of 2,736 between 2006-2018 equating to 1,252 residential units.
- Athy is identified as a secondary economic growth centre providing an important and complementary role in developing economic growth and sectoral interests in tandem with the primary economic growth towns.
- Development of sectoral strengths will be promoted comprising high value-added manufacturing and internationally traded sectors in tandem with IDA support around transport corridors and routes such as the rail station supported by continued investment in education and skills development.

(ii) Kildare Local Authorities Corporate Plan 2009-2014

The Kildare Local Authorities Corporate Plan 2009-2014 sets out the Mission Statement for the Kildare local authorities and a strategic framework for actions by the authorities. The Plan outlines the core values of the local authorities and the key strategic objectives to be pursued over the five year period, subject to available resources. The Plan also sets out the context for the preparation of the annual budget and business plans for each section of the local authorities.

(iii) Kildare County Development Board Strategy (2012)

The County Development Board's (CDB) "*Kildare 2012- An Economic, Social and Cultural Strategy*" is a Strategy for the development of Kildare based on a shared vision for the county over a ten year period. It seeks to "*make Kildare a better place to learn, work, visit and do business in*" and is accompanied by a set of goals and objectives to achieve this vision

together with actions that will build on the strengths and opportunities of the county. Strategic goals and objectives from the CDB strategy have been taken into account in the preparation of this Plan.

(iv) Draft Retail Strategy for County Kildare (2010)

The Draft Retail Strategy for County Kildare is set within the context of the Retail Strategy for the GDA. Athy, along with Clane and Kildare, is designated as a Level 3 Sub County Town Centre in the GDA Regional Retail Hierarchy and a Hinterland Area Tier 1 Level 3 Sub County Town Centre in the County Retail Hierarchy. The County Retail Strategy advises that Sub County Town Centres in the Hinterland Area of the County should play an important strategic role in the shopping patterns of their generally extensive hinterlands. In respect of Athy, it is the main retail centre in the south of the County. The range of retailing which is deemed appropriate in the County Retail Strategy for centres at this level in the County Retail Hierarchy is large scale convenience and middle order comparison, but not excluding higher order comparison particularly that related to the tourism economy. It is recognised that there are deficiencies in the retail offer of Athy which is undermining the town delivering its strategic role and potential. It is an important priority that, over the timescale of the Development Plan and beyond, Athy fully develops into its designated role in the County Retail Hierarchy.

(v) Competing in a Globalised World- An Economic Development Strategy for Kildare

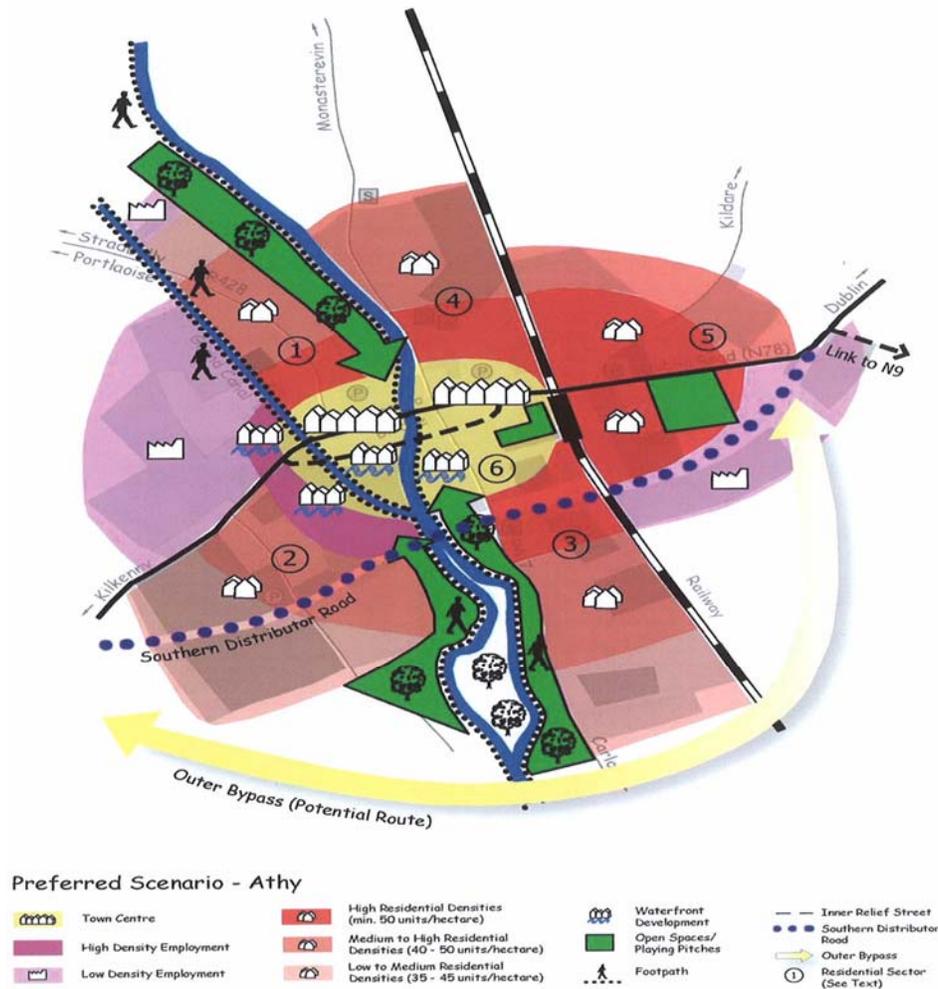
Competing in a Globalised World – An Economic Development Strategy for Kildare is

the current economic strategy for County Kildare. The key message is that Kildare has to compete internationally in order to attract and retain investment and skills to stay ahead. It recognises that the county will need to develop and attract more strategic activities in the manufacturing sectors and re-orientate towards high value- added traded services. At a strategic level it advocates the importance of identifying locations that have the highest potential for the attraction of high-tech, high value-added and research intensive activities and that these sites be ring-fenced specifically for those developments. It also recognises the need to cater for a wide range of business, residential and infrastructure developments throughout the county.

(vi) Athy Integrated Framework Plan for Landuse and Transportation (IFPLUT) (2004)

In 2004 Kildare County Council and Athy Town Council, in conjunction with the Dublin Transportation Office, prepared an Integrated Framework Plan for Land Use and Transportation for Athy (IFPLUT Study). The purpose of this Integrated Framework Plan is to integrate the strategic and coordinated planning of land use and transport up to 2016 and beyond. The IFPLUT Study has a timeframe until 2020, and will complement the Development Plan for Athy. It sets down the principles for future development, guiding the level, scale and location of development within the wider area of Athy, to provide for a quality living environment.

Map 1.2 Athy Integrated Framework Plan for Landuse and Transportation - Preferred Scenario



Map 1.2 illustrates the IFPLUT preferred scenario for the town at a macro level with the development pattern for the town focused on the reinvigoration of the town centre and waterways with limited development to the east of the railway line.

(vii) Athy RAPID Area Action Plan 2003

RAPID (Revitalising Areas through Planning, Investment and Development) is a government initiative aimed at improving the quality of life of disadvantaged communities throughout Ireland. The RAPID Area Action Plan for Athy sets out a vision for the town, *“to promote social inclusion and significantly improve the quality of life and the opportunities available to people in Athy.”*

The RAPID programme involves the main statutory and local development agencies working together with the local community to co-ordinate and improve services through strategic and joint planning, targeting of existing and additional investment and community participation. The RAPID Plan reflects the agreed priorities set by the community and statutory agencies and provides the basis for the prioritisation of investment by statutory bodies. The strategic objectives of the RAPID Plan comprise:

- Supporting the construction of new educational facilities and the implementation of additional resources to support students to counter risks of early school leaving.

- Co-ordinating the development of Garda / Community liaison.
- Co-operating with the development of specific schemes and projects to enhance the visual and physical environment of residents.
- Co-ordinating and supporting the enhancement of the capacity of local organisations to provide new and additional services for RAPID target groups.
- Implementing new family support initiatives and providing improved access to essential care.
- Supporting the implementation of initiatives to provide improved road and rail transport and safer access to facilities for pedestrians and residents.

These objectives as they relate to landuse planning are reflected in the objectives and policies included in this Plan.

Other Plans and Strategies which informed the preparation of this Plan, include, County Heritage Plan 2005-2009, Kildare Open Space Strategy, December 2008, County Biodiversity Plan 2009-2013, Athy Access Plan and Athy Traffic Management Plan Part VIII (2010).

1.5 Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

The Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive (2001/42/EC), was transposed into Irish Law through the European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004 (SI No 435 of 2004) and the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004 (SI No 436 of 2004) which requires the Athy Town Development Plan to undergo Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in order to improve planning and environmental management of future development in the County.

The Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), the term which has been given to the environmental assessment of plans, is a systematic process of predicting and evaluating the likely environmental effects of implementing a plan in order to ensure that these effects are appropriately addressed at the earliest appropriate stage of decision-making on a par with economic and social considerations. The SEA was carried out in parallel to the preparation of this Development Plan.

The environmental issues which are considered by the SEA are as follows:

- Biodiversity (flora, fauna),
- Landscape/Geology;
- Agriculture and Forestry;
- Population;
- Water Quality;
- Air Quality;
- Waste Management;
- Cultural and Material Assets;
- Climate

The Environmental Report of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of the Athy Town Development Plan 2012-2018 provides a clear understanding of the likely environmental consequences of decisions regarding the future accommodation of development in the town. The evaluation of the likely environmental consequences of a range of alternative strategies for accommodating future development in Athy is part of the SEA process.

The Environmental Report has guided the preparation of objectives, policies and development alternatives for the Development Plan with the aim of achieving sustainable development in the town without causing adverse harm to the environment.

1.6 Appropriate Assessment

Articles 6 (3) and 6 (4) of the Habitats Directive require an Appropriate Assessment of any plan or project whether within or outside a designated Natura 2000 site, which does not directly relate to the management of the site but may impact upon its conservation objectives.

All land use plans also require to be 'screened' for any potential impact on areas designated as Natura 2000 sites. In any case where, following screening, it is found that the draft plan may have an impact on the objectives of a Natura site, or such an impact cannot be ruled out, an Appropriate Assessment (AA) under the EU Habitats Directive must be undertaken.

This AA process comprises the assessment, based on scientific knowledge, of the potential impacts of the plan on the conservation objectives of any Natura site and the development, where necessary, of mitigation or avoidance measures to preclude negative effects. The impacts assessed must include the indirect and cumulative impacts of the plan, considered with any current or proposed activities, developments or policies impacting on the site. It informs plans of the environmental impacts of alternative actions and contributes to the integration of environmental considerations into plan making.

A Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment has been carried out on the Draft Plan. This Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment is to determine if the Plan will adversely affect the integrity of the Natura 2000 site i.e. River Barrow/River Nore cSAC. This involves the identification of potentially affected sites and their location in relation to Natura 2000 sites. It involves the identification of the habitats and species within the site, and an assessment of the significance of impacts on their conservation status. An assessment of cumulative impacts should be carried out, and mitigation measures proposed for potential impacts. Any negative impacts on the integrity of these sites will require the implementation of avoidance or mitigation

measures to avoid progression to Stages 3 and 4 of the Appropriate Assessment process.

1.7 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA)

Under Section 28 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 as amended statutory guidelines entitled 'The Planning System and Flood Risk Management – Guidelines for Planning Authorities' were published by the DoEHLG (November 2009). These guidelines require planning authorities to introduce flood risk assessment as an integral and leading element of the development plan process. The SFRA for Athy is an assessment of flood risk in the town to inform strategic land-use decisions with the purpose of ensuring that flood risk management is fully integrated into the Town Development Plan.

1.8 Overall Vision

Through the public consultation process a number of key themes emerged for consideration regarding the overall vision for Athy. These themes have been amalgamated and expressed in the following vision statement:

"To plan for and facilitate appropriate levels of sustainable development in Athy, addressing its weaknesses and building on its strengths based on high quality employment, residential and recreational areas with a balanced range of facilities to meet the needs of those living, working or visiting the town, thereby improving the quality of life for all."

1.9 Next Steps

A ten week period of public consultation on the Draft Athy Town Development Plan takes place from March to June 2011. The plan will be available in the Town Council's offices, Athy library and on the internet at www.athytowncouncil.ie.

Public consultation will be undertaken and written submissions are currently being invited. At the end of the public consultation period a Manager's Report on any issues arising will be



prepared and submitted to the Members of Athy Town Council. If, following consideration of that Report, the Members decide to materially amend the Draft Development Plan, a further period of four weeks public consultation on those amendments will take place. A further report on those submissions is then prepared for the Members, who, having considered the report, make the new Athy Town Development Plan 2012-2018 with or without the amendments.