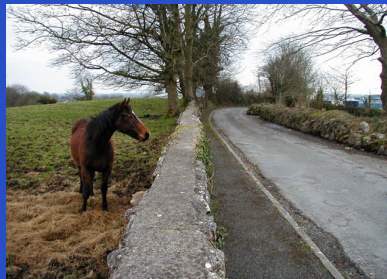
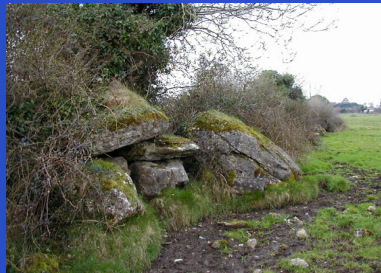


CORNAMADDY ACTION AREA PLAN - 2005



Cornamaddy Action Area Plan - 2004

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NATIONAL
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1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the Plan

The lands proposed for the Cornamaddy Action Area Plan (AAP) are located within the environs of Athlone and fall within the remit of the Athlone and Environs Town Plan 2002-2008 (see Map 1). The aim of this town plan is to 'set out a framework for the physical development of Athlone Environs, so that growth may take place in a co-ordinated and an orderly manner, while at the same time conserving the town's intrinsic character and amenity'. The plan has zoned land for residential development, with the key objective of developing an Action Area Plan prior to the development of the identified site. This objective has subsequently led to the formation of this Action Area Plan, which together with other proposed policies and objectives, will be addressed.

In accordance with sustainable development principles, this greenfield site must be carefully developed to ensure the optimum planning and development of this non-renewable resource. The site will be developed to accommodate

- Residential development of mixed types and sizes
- Two Neighbourhood Centres
- Childcare facilities
- The existing cemetery

The plan will consider environmental parameters, access and circulation for all modes of transport, the local context and integration with surrounding land uses.

An **urban design framework** will also be formulated, having due regard to the following :

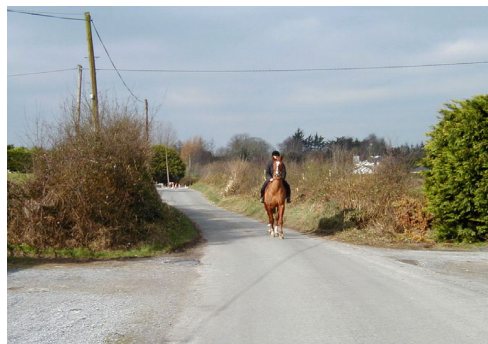
- Development of a permeable and legible spatial hierarchy, with good access and circulation for vehicles, cyclists and pedestrians.
- Creation of a hierarchy of public places, which are accessible and secure.
- Creation of linkages within the site (particularly for cyclists and pedestrians) and linkages with the surrounding area.
- Visual Interest and variety to be catered for, for example through the development of key focal buildings on prominent sites.
- Innovative and quality approaches to housing layouts, types and design, giving a sense of identity and place.
- Quality provision of public and private open space.
- Protection and integration of existing environmental features, such as valuable trees, hedge-rows and watercourses.
- Soft and hard landscaping as an integral part of the overall plan.

This Action Area Plan will be made in accordance with the Planning and Development Act 2000.





Existing Agricultural Use



Local Road Bounding the Site



N55 Route Adjoining the Site.

2 The Study Area

2.1 Context

Cornamaddy AAP covers a gross area of 85.6 hectares of land. The site is located to the northeast of Athlone, 1.5 miles from the Athlone town centre, and is strategically located in terms of its proximity to the town centre. The N55 is the main national route which runs along the southern and eastern boundary of the site. The N55 links Athlone with Cavan in the north, and also links in with the R390 to the east, connecting with Mullingar. The R916 adjoins the N55 and runs southwards connecting with the Athlone Relief Road and a further grouping of lands zoned residential and light industrial. The Cornamagh road forms the boundary of the site to the west and a further local road bounds the site to the north. The northern local road links in with the N55 heading east.

Cornamaddy is adjoined by the townlands of Tullycross (east), Clonagh (north), Cornamagh (west) and Lissywollen (south). Lands at Lissywollen are zoned residential and commercial, with provision for a municipal park and a primary school. Tullycross consists of further residentially zoned lands. The townlands to the west and north are unzoned/zoned agriculture and consist of a limited number of residential dwellings. There is a designated high amenity area beyond the northern boundary, forming part of the townland of Clonagh.

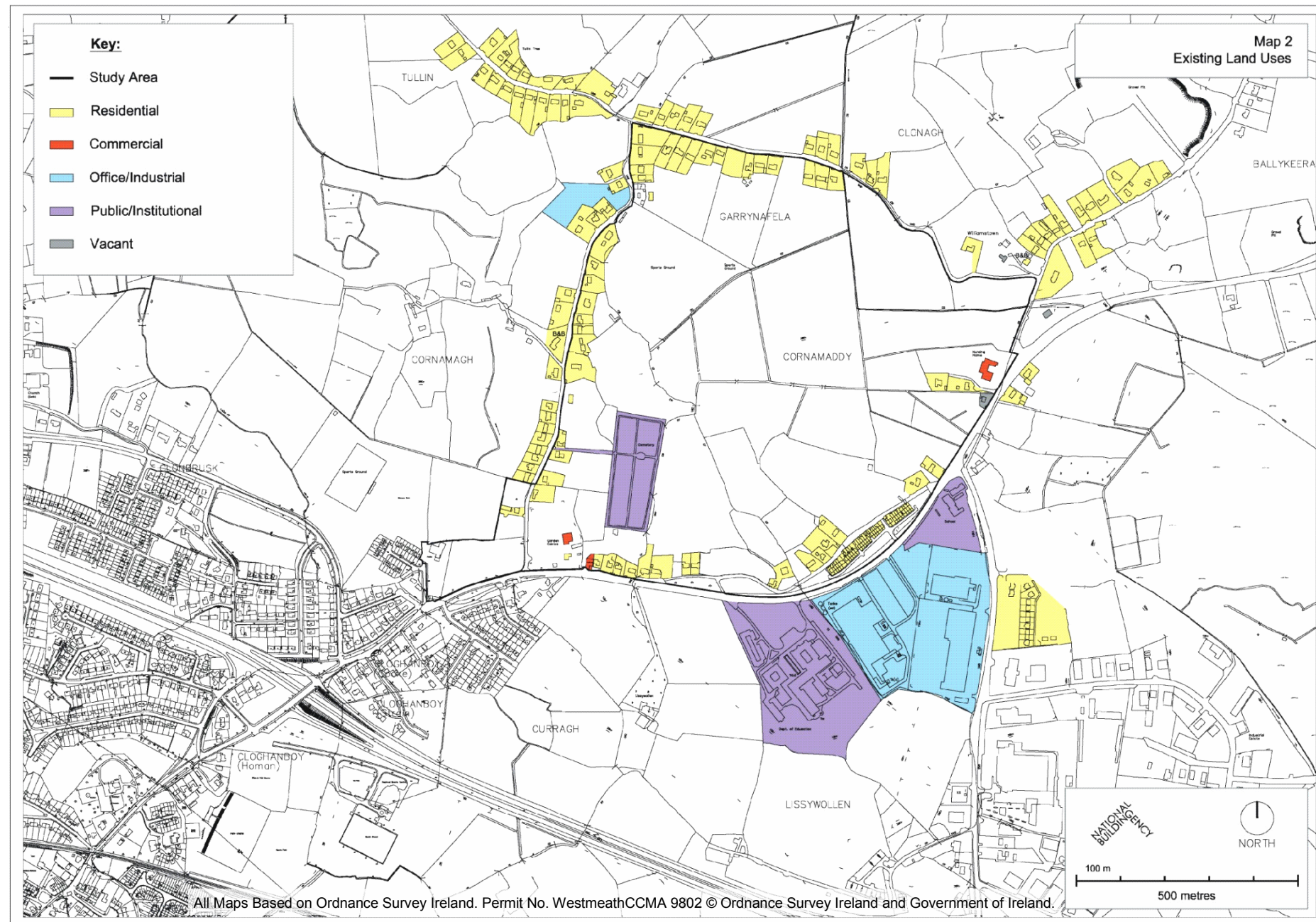
2.2 Existing Land Usage

Existing land use patterns (Map 2) and land ownership patterns (Map 3) have an effect on how land will be developed in the future. Existing land usage consists of a number of single houses located along the peripheral roads surrounding the site, with the majority of land within the framework of these roads undeveloped and/or used for pasture and grazing, although there are only a few properties with agricultural outbuildings. While there is one small residential estate located immediately off the N55 in the southeast of the plan area, the predominant residential pattern is ribbon development, which is fairly continuous on some of the roads, such as the Cornamagh Road to the west. This limits access to backland areas and restricts options for the future strategic road layout where through connections are important.

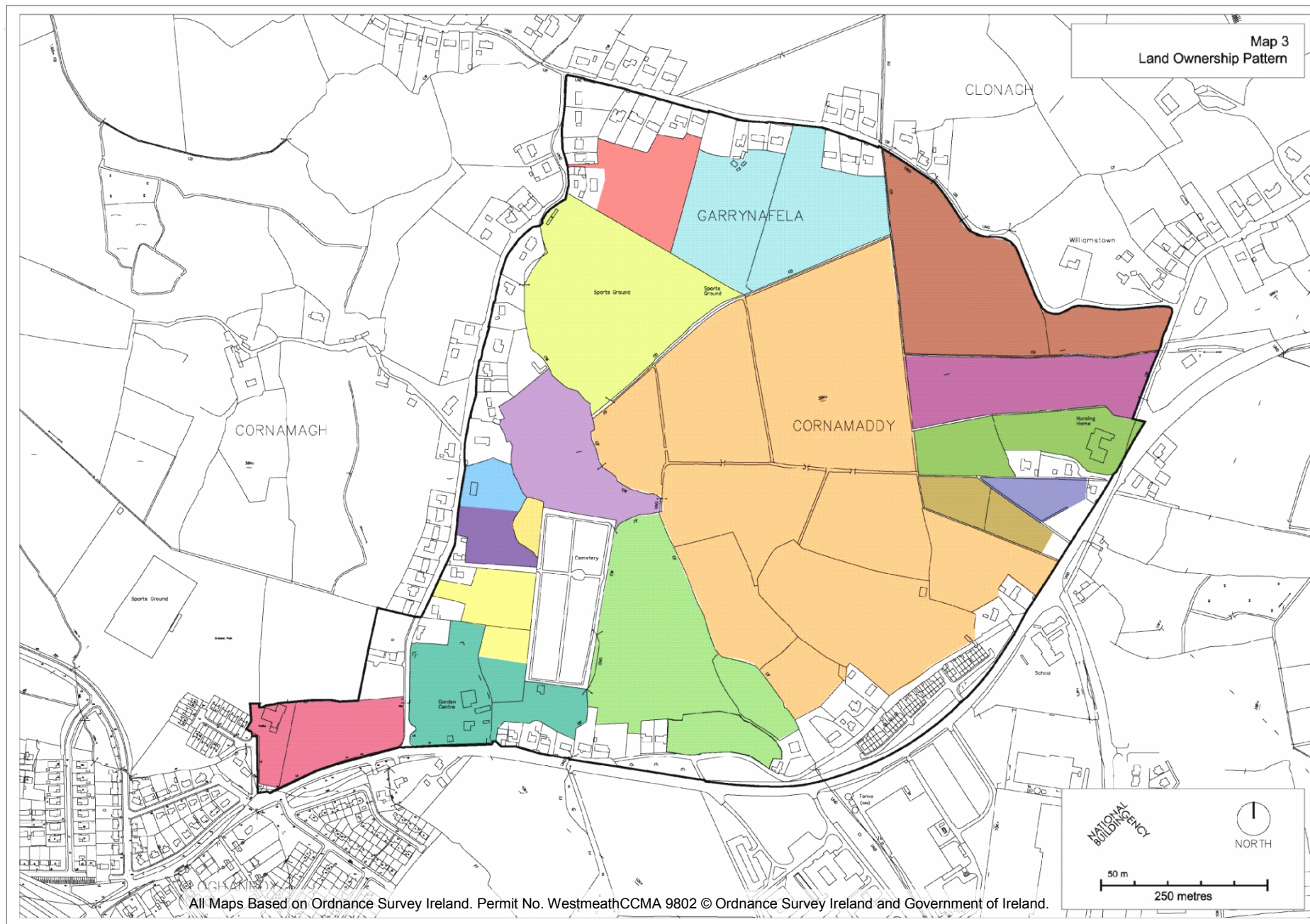
A cemetery covering 2.8 hectares is located to the southwest, with the main entrance located along the Cornamagh road. Other uses in the plan area, include a Garden Centre and a Service Station, both also located in the southwest portion of the plan area, the latter situated on the N55. A nursing home operates from a site in the east of the plan area.

In the northwest of the plan area, there is a sports field and pitch and putt course, both operated by the Department of Defence/Athlone Military Barracks. While there is some limited and occasional use of these facilities by the public - mostly organised use through some of the educational institutions - the current use is expected to continue and there are no plans to either develop or relocate the existing facilities.

To the south, just outside the boundary of the Action Area Plan, there are institutional and educational lands, accommodating a primary school (the largest one serving the town and environs) and the



CORNAMADDY ACTION AREA PLAN



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Prominent Trees and Hedgerows



Undulating Landscape



Pitch and Putt Course on Department of Defence Lands

Department of Education. Also located here are a number of Light Industrial Technological units, such as Tyco Malinckrodt Laboratories and units within Blynn Industrial Estate. A relatively recent residential development is that of Woodville Grange which is located opposite the primary school on the R916. Other phases of this development are currently ongoing.

The overall pattern of development in the area reveals that this site is on the urban fringe (the urban edge). While there is some urban development patterns to the south, agricultural lands predominate to the west, north and east. In the long term, future development to the east in the vicinity of Blyry Lower and Tullycross is likely to be limited given the presence of the existing bogland areas and to the north in Clonagh, development may be restricted due to the high amenity area designation.

2.3 Specific Site Characteristics

It is an objective of the plan to ensure that as the area is developed it retains some of its uniqueness. Therefore, as its character changes from that of a rural environment to an urban one, it is important that it does not become just another bland suburban area, but that it is distinguished through its identity and a unique 'sense of place.' One way this can be done is ensuring that any distinguishing characteristics of the landscape are carefully considered and where appropriate, incorporated into the future layout and development of the area. Therefore, in developing a scheme for the site, particular regard was had for the existing site topography, i.e., contour levels, views, and the overall landscape structure (see Environmental Parameters Map 4 and Topography Map 5). A contour survey of the site has revealed the undulating nature of sections of the land, with the key ridges highlighted. Such ridges contribute to the value of the natural environment and are included within the overall Open Space Strategy for the area.

There are a number of drainage channels running through the site, the flow and capacity of which become more evident as they flow northwards from the site. Two in particular are noteworthy; the first runs northeast along the south side of the Department of Defence sports ground, where it flows into the second more prominent stream running from approximately south to north and eventually flowing under a narrow bridge on the road that bounds the site to the north (see Map 4). The principal watercourse within the proposed site flows into the 'Inner Lakes', Ballaghkeeran Bay, part of the Lough Ree Catchment and is a potential spawning and nursery ground for trout, therefore requiring good quality water.

Existing drainage channels should form the basic network for stormwater attenuation in the plan area - the more significant streams should be maintained as 'natural' storm water channels, or incorporate stormwater retention ponds along their course within a proposed linear park system. This will provide benefits in terms of stormwater and flood control, ecology and biodiversity.

The site has a number of significant trees, hedgerows and an area of rough scrubland, which have also been highlighted on the Environmental Parameters Map. Such areas tend to be more ecologically diverse than the open fields of grassland and therefore consideration for incorporating such areas into open space networks should be considered. Map 4 also identifies candidate trees for protection under Tree Preservation Orders.



CORNAMADDY ACTION AREA PLAN

3. Relevant Policies and Guidance

3.1 National Spatial Strategy, 2002-2020

Athlone, Mullingar and Tullamore have been designated in the National Spatial Strategy as a linked Gateway. This designation will strengthen the role of the Midlands area and assist in the creation of a critical population mass, which will promote the attractiveness of each centre. Athlone's location on the N6 strategic corridor - the national primary route connecting Dublin to Galway - presents a critical edge over its partner urban centres of Mullingar and Tullamore. Additionally, the existence of the Institute of Technology and amenities in the form of the River Shannon waterways, including Lough Ree, present favourable criteria for economic and physical development.

The population of Athlone Town and Environs in 1991 was 15,358, increasing to 15,544 in 1996. This represents an overall increase of 0.2%. Athlone Environs itself had a population in 1996 of 6,639, increasing by 0.8% from the 1991 level. The population for Athlone and Environs and adjacent DEDs is expected to grow to 18,008 by 2004 and 19,352 by 2019. The development of this Action Area Plan will support the continued and predicted growth in population.

3.2 Athlone and Environs Town Plan 2002-2008

The site is subject to the provisions of the Athlone and Environs Town Plan, with the main zoning provision for residential development. A number of **Objectives** are identified which relate specifically to the site. These include:

1. Residential

A2 = Action Area Plan required for Areas in the Vicinity of Cornamaddy

2. Retail/Commercial/Town Centre

C3 = In the preparation of an Action Area Plan for the lands north of the Athlone relief road, identify a site for a neighbourhood centre.

3. Environmental Protection and Public Services

E1 = Carry out a study of the areas on the periphery of the existing drainage area in the Environs to investigate the feasibility of serving these areas by public sewerage in the future.

E2 = Carry out a study of additional areas on the periphery of the environs to investigate the feasibility of serving these areas by public sewerage in the future

Further objectives, which are not identified specifically for the site, are nonetheless important in terms of their guiding principles and the impact they have on the preparation of this plan:

B Enterprise and Employment

B3: To facilitate further non-retail, commercial development in the Athlone Environs.

B6: Identify and provide suitable sites in neighbourhood centres for grouped small starter/incubator workshops, craft or service units.

Environmental Protection and Public Services

E4: In conjunction with Athlone Town Council complete the construction of a reservoir at Annagh and associated pipe network to provide adequate water storage for the needs of the town.

E7: Development of South Westmeath Water Supply Scheme to include new abstraction point and water treatment works to serve Athlone Environs and South Westmeath.

Open Space

I12: In conjunction with the Athlone Town Council prepare and implement an open space strategy for the town.

I13: Integrate open spaces areas into the existing fabric of the town by means of pedestrian path systems.

Further related **Policies** as set out in the Athlone and Environs Town Plan:

Transportation and Accessibility

TAP3: To promote the development of walking and cycling in the Athlone Environs. It is environmentally friendly, fuel-efficient and healthy, and in line with principles of sustainability. It is intended to encourage the provision of secure bicycle parking facilities in district centres and to investigate the possibility of developing cycle-ways. It is intended to secure and further develop pathways.

TAP4: In the design and/or improvement of roads and in the assessment of planning applications for new developments, the safety of road users, including motorists, cyclists and pedestrians, will be a primary consideration.

Built and Natural Heritage

HP6: It is policy that trees or groups of trees that form a significant feature in the landscape shall be preserved wherever possible. The Council will consider making tree preservation orders, where it appears expedient in the interest of amenity.

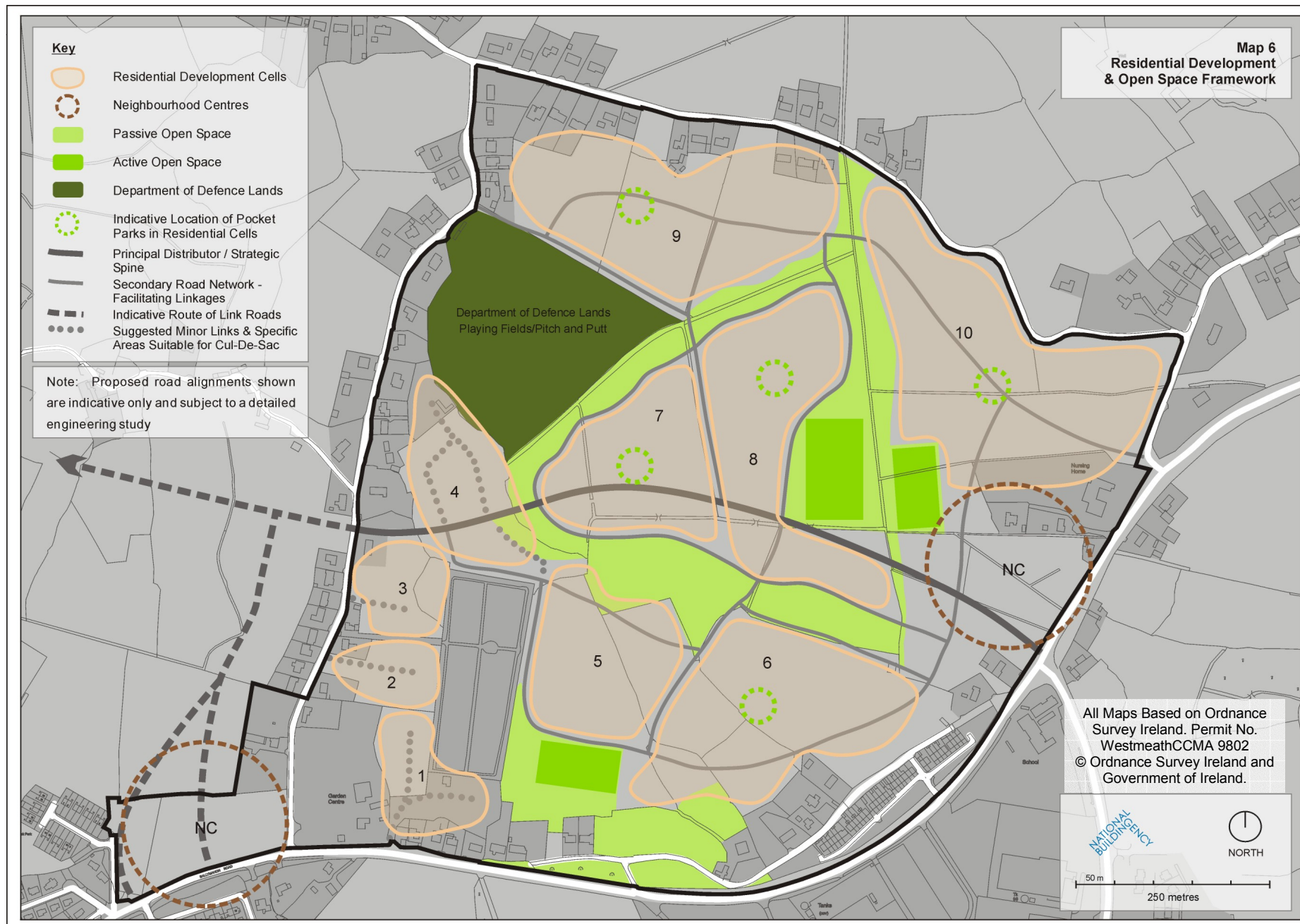
Open Space/Amenity/Recreation

OS1: It is the policy of the Council that adequate amenity and recreational open space and facilities, including community facilities and centres, should be available for all groups of the population at a convenient distance from their homes and places of work.

OS3: To link open space and amenity developments in order to secure integration of provision.

OS4: To ensure the protection of existing amenities from new developments or obsolescence.

OS6: It is the policy of the Council to protect and extend the network of pathways and public rights of way in the town.



CORNAMADDY ACTION AREA PLAN



Undulating Nature of the Site



Rural Character of Existing Road



North-South Stream

4. Proposed Development Framework and Land Use Strategy

In establishing a development framework for the area, the following basic principles have been considered:

- Consideration for the existing land use pattern in the area.
- Protection and integration of key environmental and landscape features - such features have provided the basic framework for the open space strategy.
- Integration of land use and transportation, through -
 - Providing for strategic road links to facilitate development within the site while acknowledging the importance of linking into future areas of development outside the site, i.e., namely those unzoned lands to the west;
 - Ensuring that the future land use strategy has consideration for the future provision of public transport, facilitating modest increases in residential density that will support and sustain efficient and frequent service.
- Identification of sites that are strategically located and can provide the necessary neighbourhood centres to support the development of the area.
- Identification of suitably located sites for active playing fields and sports fields.

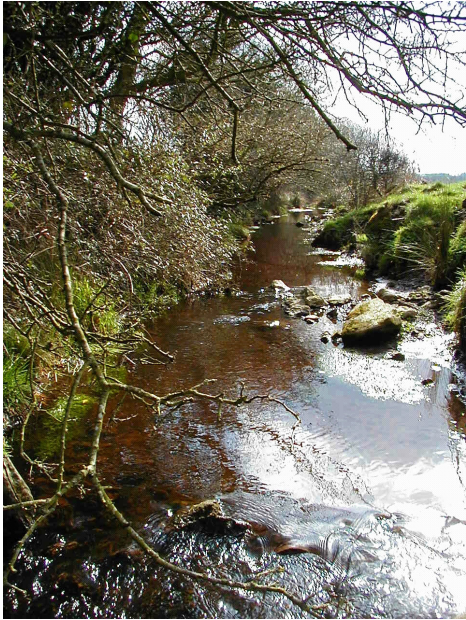
4.1 Open Space Framework

15% of each residential development must be reserved for Open Space, which will partially be catered for within the Open Space Framework, as indicated on Map 6. Additional space to make up the total 15% will then be provided at the discretion of the developer and under guidance from the local authority. Where there is difficulty in meeting the open space provisions, the local authority may attach the following conditions to an application:

1. That the developer make a financial contribution per residential unit towards the provision of an open space by the Local Authority elsewhere (as indicated under Section 48 of the Planning and Development Act 2000).
2. That the developer provide to the Local Authority's specification, open space or a portion of open space elsewhere. If this option is engaged, the open space shall generally be provided within a reasonable distance from the development (circa 400 metres).
3. Alternatively, the Local Authority may consider arrangements whereby appropriate community facilities may be provided in lieu of the developers open space requirements.

In calculating the area of open space, roads, roundabouts, footpaths, grass margins and other areas of incidental open space shall not qualify for open space assessment.

The Council will be responsible for the up-keep of the main areas of passive amenity open space, such as the park to the south, and the linear parks running north-south and east-west. With regard to active open space the Local Authority will encourage and facilitate the maintenance of these playing fields through a management committee to be established from local sporting organisations, community groups and residential groups who will benefit from their upkeep and continued safe use in the future. Areas of passive and active open space, parks, pocket parks, linear parks and pathways as outlined in Map 6, should be made wheelchair accessible.



Stream with Overhanging Branches



Department of Defence Playing Fields

In keeping with Section 2.3, the plan seeks to maintain some of the site's uniqueness, by having regard to the landscape structure and incorporating key environmental features, such as higher ridges, streams and tree groups into the open space strategy. In formulating the open space strategy, specific regard was had to the requirements of providing for both active (i.e. playing fields) and passive recreation (visual amenity, walking, strolling, dog walking, etc.), including issues such as biodiversity and ecology. The key elements of this strategy relate to the following:

- Development of a linear park system incorporating the significant ridges in the plan area.
- Creation of a linear park system along the most significant streams and open water channels
- Active playing fields
- Pocket Parks
- Establishment of 'green routes' and landscaping/greening of the environment.

The Council will consider the making of Tree Preservation Orders in the Plan Area for those trees marked on Map 4.

4.1.1 Linear Park System

It is proposed that the existing high ridges in the centre of the site be maintained and integrated within the open space network, forming a central park running east-west across the site. Lands in the south of the area, adjoining the Ballymahon Road, drop steeply and slope northwards affording significant views across the site. The steepness of the lands and the mature trees that bound the site, favour well for the development of a park in the south of the plan area. The area should be maintained as a park area for informal recreation, such as walking, informal kicking of a football, small children's play area, and as a picnic area. Landscaping can also aid, alongside an innovative approach to layout, in negating the dominance of rooftops as are likely to be viewed in the area.

The lower mounds found in the centre of the site could be lowered to accommodate residential areas, with the recovered aggregates utilised within the development areas, depending upon quality, in order to minimise importation of base materials for the road infrastructure in the vicinity.

A linear park is proposed along two streams and/or drainage channels in the site. These streams comprise natural vegetation, including established reedbeds and other flora along parts of its banks, which are bound in parts by hedgerows with overhanging branches, and should be enhanced with additional planting. The linear parks are expected to be developed on either side of the watercourses with an informal meandering delineation. A strong degree of informal supervision will be provided from the adjoining housing developments, which will be expected to orientate, so as to overlook the park.

4.1.2 Active Open Space - Playing Fields

Two areas of active open space are proposed. The first of these is on the level ground beneath the southern park that adjoins the old Ballymahon Road, while the second area of playing fields is situated on either side of the proposed linear park associated with the more eastern stream corridor. The second location (see Map 6) provides a central and accessible area within the centre of the plan, but remains close to the proposed eastern neighbourhood centre and the existing Cornamaddy National



Tree Suitable for Protection



Future Need for Children's Playground



Neighbourhood Style Park for Passive Amenity

Primary School. These two areas will therefore cater for both active and passive recreation, with playing pitches developed, and also walkways with benches provided. Hard play areas for tennis, basketball and/or skateboarding will also be encouraged. A community centre adjoining the playing fields close to the proposed eastern neighbourhood centre will be required and this location will facilitate multi-purpose use (i.e., by nearby school, community organisations, etc.).

4.1.3 Private Open Space

The existing Defence Forces playing pitches will remain within their ownership and use. Future development will have respect for the boundaries of this facility, which adds to the natural amenity of this area.

4.1.4 Pocket Parks

Within each of the proposed residential development cells, smaller local pocket parks for younger children will be expected and should be overlooked and situated to be accessible to the maximum number of people. Left over open spaces due to bad design will not be regarded as suitable in meeting the 15% open space provision.

4.1.5 The Greening of the Area

As part of the any planning permission, detailed landscape proposals must be set out, showing integration of existing environmental features, such as valuable trees, hedgerows and significant streams. In addition existing stone walls surrounding the site shall be retained and repaired (where necessary to the planning authority's requirements) in the interest of the amenities of the area.

The provision of facilities, such as seating, bins, delineated play areas, lighting, and planting must be addressed and incidental areas should not be regarded as fulfilling the open space requirement for such a development. Hard landscaped surfaces should also be considered within residential developments, such as a tennis court or basketball court, as well as the laying out of small green pitches as part of the required open space provision. Small areas of open space will be accepted if they are intended and designed as pocket parks for small children to play in and/or if they contribute to the visual amenity of the area. Emphasis will be on ensuring that such spaces are generally overlooked so that some degree of supervision may take place.

The overall open space network is designed to temper the impact of continuous urban development forms and to provide locally distinguishable residential areas, each with their own character.



Cycle Lane in Established Sub-Urban Setting

4.2 Circulation and the Integration of Land Use and Transportation

The Cornamaddy area is strategically linked to the Town Centre via the N55 national primary route. Similarly, the R916 ensures direct linkages to the south toward the business parks and the Athlone Institute of Technology.

Bound as it is on each side by a road, the action plan area is reminiscent of a super-block. Given the scale of this land block, it is desirable to dissect it and open it up for development with a road that can adequately cater for its future development. As shown on the Circulation Framework Map 7, it is proposed that the area be traversed by a main distributor road running east to west, and situated approximately mid-way between the northern and southern plan boundaries and indicatively shown from A to B on Map 7. This principal distributor road enters the site from the southeast on the N55, via a proposed junction/roundabout with the R916. This road then exits the site to the west and will be taken under the Cornamagh Road with no direct vehicular traffic access between the two roads (see Figure 4.2.2). It should be noted that the route of the central distributor road is indicative and its junction with the Cornamagh Road was subject to an engineering feasibility study.

It is an objective of the Plan to provide the following route as shown indicatively on Map 1:

- The principal distributor road at a point west of the Cornamagh Road shall be linked to the N55 by a southern link road through the neighbourhood centre and indicative routes are shown on Map 7. This road shall be flexible with the optimum location being determined at planning application stage.

It is the policy of the Council to engage in a route selection study for the following routes as indicated on Map 1:

- The extension of the east-west central distributor road of the plan further west outside the Plan area, linking to the Coosan Road.
- A second north-south route further west linking the Two Mile Round Road and the strategic east-west route.

The position of the distributor road and its linkage into the surrounding road network will enable public transport to form a key element of a sustainable transport network involving vehicular, pedestrian and cyclist circulation. In looking at traffic circulation, it is important that the main routes are accessible by public transport and can link in seamlessly with the surrounding area. Therefore, a network of local roads will link in with the main distributor road and assist traffic circulation and potential bus services.

An indicative selection of bus stops should be considered at those locations identified as 'BS' (Bus Stops) on Map 7, having regard to a generic 400 metre catchment zone.

All routes are interlinked ensuring a permeable layout, with the exception to this in proximity to the cemetery to the southwest of the site. In order to maintain the integrity of the cemetery, particularly the tree-lined avenue which forms the entrance, the lands to the south of the entrance road will be provided with independent access points from the Cornamagh Road, with pedestrian linkages to the rest of the site.

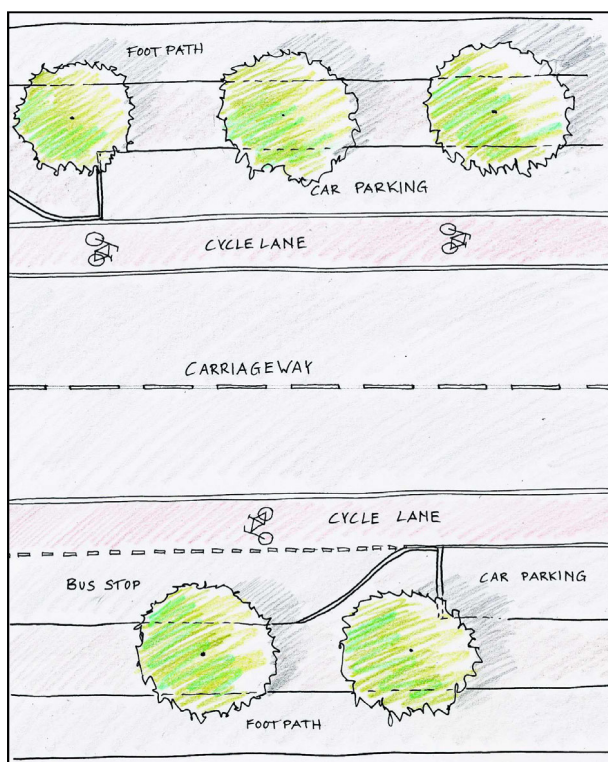


Figure 4.2.1: Street layout suitable for main Distributor Road incorporating footpaths, cycle-lanes, tree verges, carriageways and bus-stops interspersed with road-side car-parking.

It is policy to have as a primary consideration in the development of residential areas the safety of road users, including motorists, cyclists and pedestrians. With this in mind, the distributor road and secondary link roads will have pedestrian and cycle tracks associated within them. In areas where local roads predominate and separate cycle tracks are not necessary, particular attention will be employed in the design of the road system to ensure priority is given to the pedestrian/cyclist, for example through variation in the type of road materials used on approach to junctions/corners and the development of the Home Zone Concept (this is discussed further under Urban Design).

Pedestrian/cyclist only routes will also be created to ensure permeability within the development by connecting open spaces and the Neighbourhood Centres. These routes will be overlooked so as to create natural surveillance and will be of a high quality design and layout, with adequate lighting.

Developers should refer to the *DTO Traffic Management Guidelines Manual 2003* for guidance on traffic calming and management, incorporation of speed restraint measures in new residential designs and the provision of suitably designed facilities for public transport users and for vulnerable road users (cyclists, motorcyclists and pedestrians including those with mobility/sensory impairments).

Due to the proximity of the local primary school to the entrance of the site, it is of utmost importance that measures are carried out to ensure the safety of school children travelling to/from school, particularly in light of the additional traffic which is to be expected with this development. It is therefore proposed to ensure the development of a safe school route from the site linking in with the school, which will be assisted through the alteration of the existing traffic control measures along the N55. Priority pedestrian traffic lights are needed across the N55 and crossing the R916 from the residential development on the east side of this road. A reduced speed limit is also required on the approach to the town to assist in safety measures. Pedestrian/cyclist routes will also be promoted to link the site with the nearby Rugby club, GAA club and Regional Sports Centre.

Note: Any changes to the N55, including the provision of pedestrian crossings or signalised junctions, will require the approval of the National Roads Authority and are conditional on their approval.

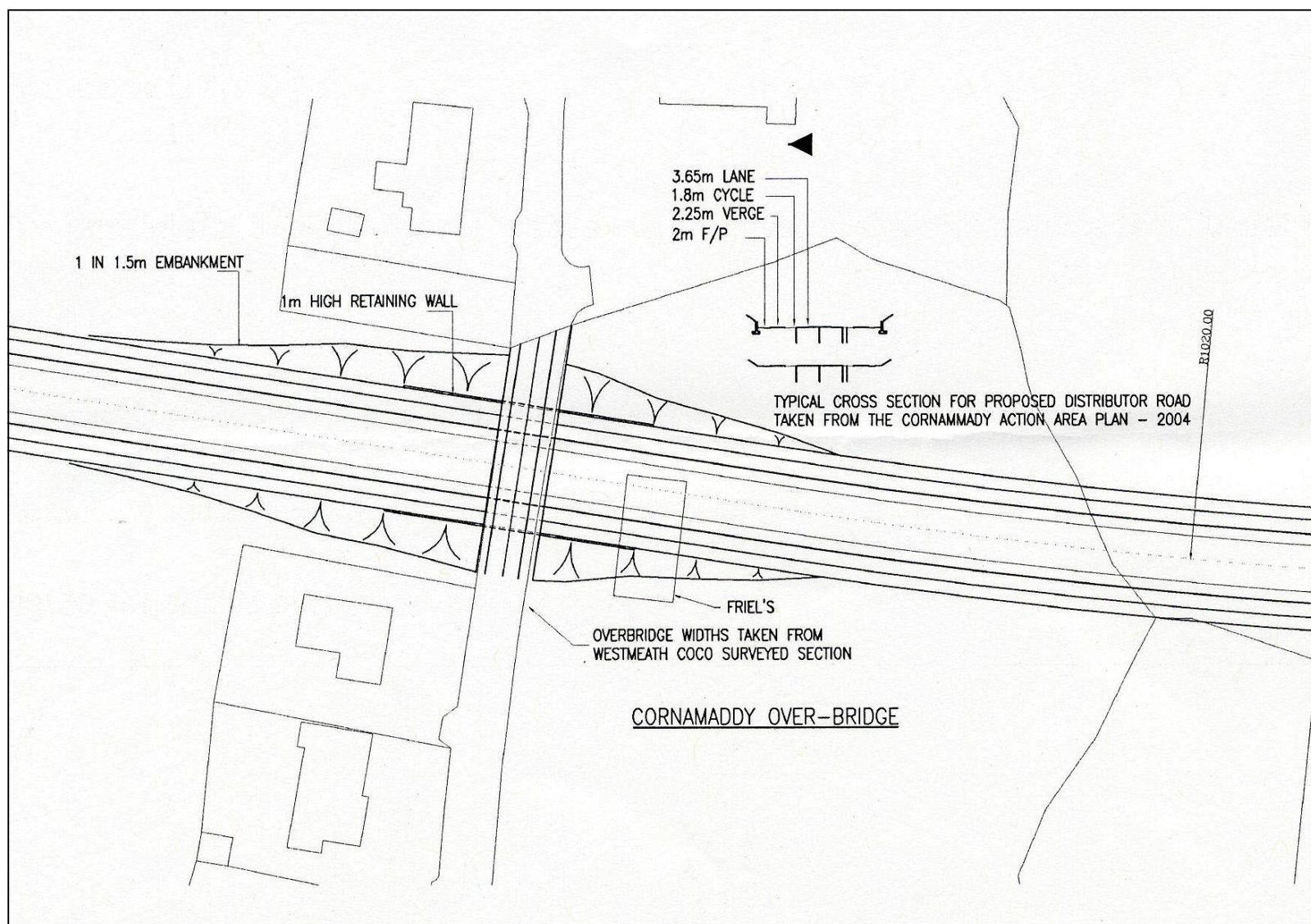


Figure 4.2.2: Engineering Feasibility Study Option 1: the proposed distributor road passes under the existing Cornamagh Road, via an underbridge, without any direct link between the two roads.



Innovatively Designed High Density Housing

4.3 Residential Development

As the most significant areas of undeveloped residentially zoned lands within the plan area are to the north-east of Athlone in Cornamaddy, these lands will play a vital role in the fulfilment of future housing needs for the town and environs.

4.3.1 Housing Supply and Demand

Family sizes are generally decreasing toward the European average of 2.67 and it is therefore important to provide a range of dwelling sizes and types to accommodate emerging demographic trends. In accordance with the Council's Housing Strategy and the concerns of existing local residents, the following range and percentage of dwelling sizes is provided as a guideline for developers:

- ☐ One Bedroom Houses: 20% of the total number of houses
- ☐ Two Bedroom Houses: 20% of the total number of houses
- ☐ Three Bedroom Houses: 20% of total number of houses
- ☐ Four Bedroom Houses: 20% of the total number of houses
- ☐ Five Bedroom Houses: 20% of the total number of houses

Cornamaddy will consist of social, affordable and private housing, which will aid in the achievement of social integration. Good design can help by ensuring that public and private sector dwellings are mixed and are not segregated into exclusive pockets.

Each residential development will facilitate pedestrian/cyclist linkages to areas of open space and routes into the town centre (as highlighted on Map 7), as well as pedestrian/cyclist linkages between adjoining residential developments and Neighbourhood Centres.

4.3.2 Sustainable Density Provisions

In accordance with government policy, as outlined in the Residential Density Guidelines 1999, higher densities will be encouraged to enable the sustainable and efficient development of land, which is a non-renewable resource. Higher densities will ensure services relating to physical infrastructure (such as roads, water and sewerage), social infrastructure (such as playing fields, a community centre), public transport system, and services provided at Neighbourhood Centres, are fully maximised and utilised by a supporting population. Other benefits of a higher density population in close proximity to neighbourhood centres and local services include a reduced dependency on car travel and subsequent reduction in car emissions.

The density range to be applied in the case of Cornamaddy will vary according to the suitability of the lands in question. Environmental constraints within the site and the importance of addressing the existing housing market demand in Athlone, has resulted in the site being subdivided into 9 Neighbourhood Cells (see Map 6). Each of these areas will be developed in a manner, which encourages distinctiveness in terms of environmental qualities, with a focus on high quality layout and design, access to local facilities, recreational facilities, and the creation of a sense of local community/ neighbourhood.



Attractive Residential Scheme with Grouped Parking

Table 1 and the associated Map 8, Residential Density, illustrate the appropriate densities within each Neighbourhood Cell.

Proposed Breakdown of Residential Cells for various density allocations:

R1: Lower Residential Density:	8.07 Hectares
R2: Low-Medium Residential Density:	35.15 Hectares
R3: Medium-Higher Residential Density:	7.86 Hectares

Residential Density Option

R1: Lower Residential Density	4 - 17 Units per Hectare (2 - 6 per Acre)
R2: Low-Medium Residential Density	18 - 34 Units per Hectare (7 - 14 per Acre)
R3: Medium-Higher Residential Density	35 - 50+ Units per Hectare (14 - 20+ per Acre)

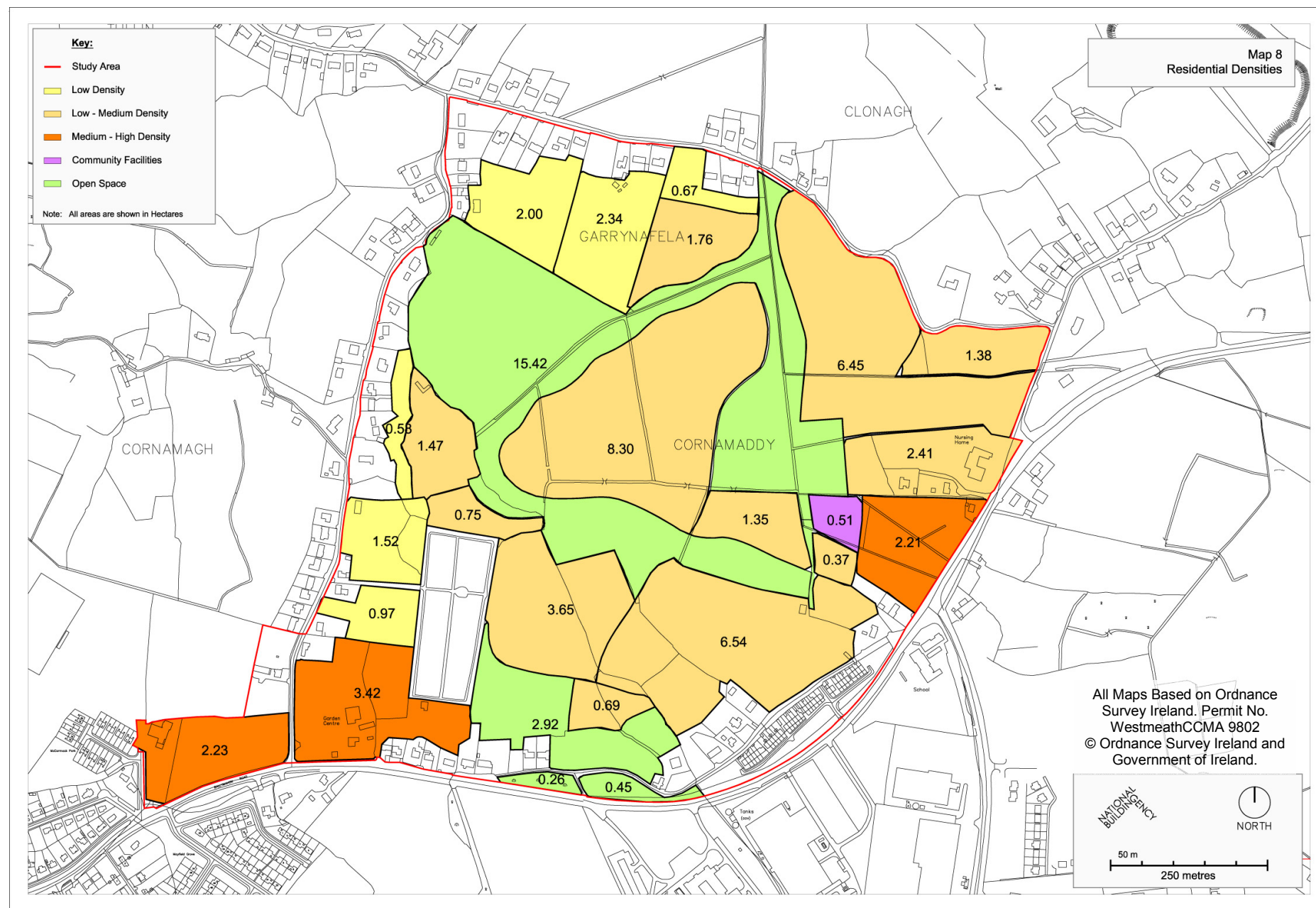
Table 1: Capacity of Lands Proposed for Residential Development

<i>Proposed Residential Zones</i>	<i>Hectares</i>	<i>Minimum No. of Dwellings</i>	<i>Population Equivalent</i>	<i>Maximum No. of Dwellings</i>	<i>Population Equivalent</i>
R1	8.07	32	94	137	398
R2	35.15	703	2039	1195	3466
R3	7.86	275	798	393	1140
Total	51.08	1010	2930	1725	5003

Note: Average Household Size of 2.9 persons has been applied to determine population equivalent

Low-Medium density will predominate across the site, providing support for the Neighbourhood Centres, community facilities, a local public transport service, and efficient use of infrastructural services, such as water and sewerage. This density range and the resultant population will be served by an adequate provision of passive amenity open space, active open space, and linear parks and streams.

Higher densities will be accommodated in both Neighbourhood Centres and in Cell 1 (see Maps 8 & 9). Neighbourhood Centres are suitable for increased density ranges, particularly in the form of apartments and town houses due to their proximity to the transportation network and access to various modes of transport, and proximity to the range of services available in the Neighbourhood Centre. Dwellings or offices can accommodate the space over shops and other ground floor uses. The presence of accommodation adds an element of night-time security to such areas, and the presence of an evening population (in conjunction with the proximity of the surrounding population), will also aid the support of an evening-economy at the Neighbourhood Centres. Cell 1, due to its location along the main N55 route, with access from this route, and situation proximate to the Neighbourhood Centre,



CORNAMADDY ACTION AREA PLAN



Relatively High Density Development with On-Street Parking

makes this an ideal location for a higher density development, subject to high quality architectural design, that sensitively addresses the existing residential developments in the vicinity.

Lower residential densities will be applied in the following areas:

- At the rear of all existing dwelling locations, at locations north and west of the Action Area Plan area, to ensure ease of transition between future development and the existing residential dwellings
- To the north due to a combination of factors; access to the northern local road will be inaccessible from within the site due to its narrowness and transport restrictions which would result from a further increase in traffic along it; in addition a significant portion of this low-density area falls beyond the Neighbourhood Centre 500 metre pedestrian catchment.
- Two low density Neighbourhood Cells in the southwest quarter. These areas have been identified due to restricted access; their compactness in size; and consideration for the integrity and character of the adjoining cemetery.

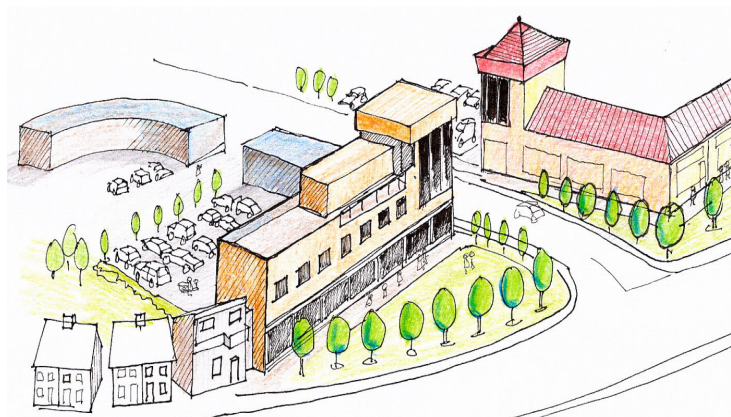
Lower density development locations backing onto existing residential units will need to provide adequate distance separation for the amenities enjoyed by existing residents and should seek to minimise any detrimental impacts such as overlooking or visual intrusion. The Council considers that there should be a minimum of 22 metres separation between opposing first floor windows between new developments and in circumstances where developments are proposed in existing residential areas, as is the case to the rear of existing residential units along the Cornamagh and Garrnafela Roads then a minimum of 35 metres distance separation between window openings should be observed in relation to new two storey developments to the rear of existing properties.

In addition any new developments should be built no closer than 4 metres to a rear boundary wall in relation to a main elevation with overlooking windows or 2.5 metres in relation to a flank wall with no windows to habitable rooms. Any new development bounding the lands of existing residential properties will be carefully scrutinised by the local planning authority to ensure that possible impacts of overlooking or visual intrusion are minimised.

4.4 Neighbourhood Centre

In the interests of sustainable development, two Neighbourhood Centres will be provided to primarily serve the local needs of the future residents of this area and to generally promote a mixed use zone. The population to be served will range from three thousand to five thousand people. In terms of the support required for a neighbourhood centre, only one such centre would generally be required for this population range, however due to the catchment coverage of each Neighbourhood Centre location (see Map 7, Circulation Framework), it is envisaged that these centres will successfully support each other (and their surrounding populations, such as those working in the business parks and existing neighbourhoods outside the area which are currently unserved), and not compete against one another.

Each Neighbourhood Centre, in order to be successful, will have a ped-shed (pedestrian catchment) within approximately a 500m radius. To ensure their vitality, Neighbourhood Centres also need to be located along main transport routes to service passing trade, and be readily accessible by a range of



Neighbourhood Centre Development, highlighting various principles, such as the creation of a strong building line along the road frontage, stepping up of buildings at gateway to the site, positioning of parking to the rear of the development and provision of civic amenity space in proximity.



Example of a Three Storey Development that would be suitable for the Neighbourhood Centre.

transport options including private car, public transport, walking and cycling. For these reasons the Neighbourhood Centres will be facilitated at the edge of the site as opposed to within the centre of the developable block of land, where a sufficient population would not be immediately available to support the range of services envisaged. This positioning of the centre within the block would also be unsupportive of existing unserved areas just outside the development boundary, and not as easily accessible by all modes of transport.

The Neighbourhood Centre to the east will also sustain services for future residential development in the residentially zoned sections of the Blyry Lower townland, to the southeast of the plan area. These centres will accommodate local needs only and will not contain retail units of a size and nature, which would attract trade from the town centre. Such developments may contain a small group of shops, typically comprising a newsagent, small supermarket/general store, sub-post office, pharmacies, take away, video/DVD rental, public house, dental/medical surgery and other small shops serving a small, localised catchment population. Mixed-use developments, including the provision of accommodation over retail/commercial, are to be encouraged at such centres, as well as grouped small starter/incubator workshops, craft, or service units, with the sustainable ideal of a person living close to where they work, to local services and to a public transport network, being strived for. Hotel and guest houses may also be permitted at these locations.

Neighbourhood Centre 1 will be located to the west of the site along the N55 and will have a commercial/retail focus, while the Neighbourhood Centre to the east (located along the N55 and the main distributor road through the site) will have a more community/social element facilitating strater/incubator units and permitting local retail units. The catchment area of each of the proposed Neighbourhood Centres covers a ped-shed of 500m, approximately 5-6 minutes walking distance. The majority of the site is therefore serviced by each Neighbourhood Centre, except for an area to the north/northwest of the site, which as a result has been allocated a low density zoning for future development.

Local parks, civic spaces and community facilities (educational, sports and recreation) are encouraged in the immediate vicinity of Neighbourhood Centres so as to enhance their role in the local community and encourage linked trips.

Neighbourhood Centre Developments:

- The total retail floor space of the western Neighbourhood Centre should not exceed 2,500 m.sq., while the one to the east should not exceed 1500 m.sq.
- 1000 m.sq will be allowed for a larger convenience/anchor store in the western Neighbourhood Centre, and 500 m.sq. for the eastern Neighbourhood Centre.
- Other individual retail units should not generally exceed 250 m.sq.
- Car parking will be placed away from road frontage, mainly to the rear of the development. Buildings should create a strong building line along the road frontage and/or consideration be given to the development of a civic square for public use to the front of the development.
- Car parking will be well lit and incorporate hard or soft landscaping appropriate to their design and

-
- setting.
 - Buildings within the Neighbourhood Centre will be encouraged to increase their heights to 3 or 4 storeys to reflect their prominence.
 - Each Neighbourhood Centre should be provided in tangent with the phasing sequence of the development so that it serves the intended population.

4.5. Community Facilities

Community Facilities such as healthcare, doctor's surgeries and new, additional or expanded school facilities can be located within the identified neighbourhood centres and within the zoned lands.

At a minimum, the area is likely to generate a demand for the following services:

- 1 Primary School
- At least one doctor's surgery
- 1 Public House
- 1-2 Corner Shops (in light of the service station already present in the area)
- 1 Local Neighbourhood Centre
- 1 Post Office
- Enterprise Units and Offices

Applications for the provision of a crèche, playschool or other similar uses will be considered on the basis of local need, impact on the amenity of adjoining residents, and traffic safety. Neighbourhood Centres are considered ideal locations for childcare facilities and this use will therefore be promoted within the Neighbourhood Centres to the East and West. Childcare facilities will be provided at a rate of 20 places for every 75 dwelling units in accordance with the DoELG's *Childcare Facilities – Guidelines for Planning Authorities* 2001.

In light of the area's location on a National Primary Route and the fact that its catchment areas can extend to the south, west and east, there is a strong likelihood that the following additional services should be considered within the masterplan:

- Community centre and/or Youth Club
- Place of worship/Church
- Local Health Centre
- Hotel

The Council will liaise with the Garda Síochána regarding crime prevention and security within the Plan area.

*The Lough Ree designated Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Area (SPA) contains the following rare plant, bird and mammal species;

- *Teucrium scordium*, a scarce plant species, found on the stony wet shores of the lake
- *Coregonus autumnalis*, one of only two populations of the endangered Pollan fish species
- The common scoter bird species (listed as endangered),
- The common tern bird species (identified on Annex I of the European Birds Directive)
- The otter (listed on Annex II of the European Habitats Directive).

**Existing local residents are concerned with the potential pollution of the Inner Lakes of Lough Ree and health risks to children of any system of ponds within the development. These concerns are addressed in the document *Sustainable Urban Drainage System—Best Practice Manual for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland*, (CIRIA C523, London, 2001).

***Stormwater Source Control Best Management Practice (BMP) includes the following management options: boreholes, gully outlets, gully spacing, in down pipes, infiltration trench, porous pavement, roof storage, soakaways and swales
For medium to large developments (typically in excess of 4 Hectares) Source Control BMP may include : On-line Tanks, Off-line Tanks, Surface Ponds, On-Line Ponds, Off-Line Ponds. In addition to these there are a number of hydraulic control options that could be considered.

4.6 Services

4.6.1 Water and Drainage

Water

It is proposed to provide a connection to the 200-metre diameter water main, which runs on the old Ballymahon road, immediately adjacent to the site. This is connected at both ends to the 300-diameter watermain linking into the Annagh Reservoir. This reservoir will adequately service the area covered by this plan.

Drainage

In relation to drainage, it is proposed that a pumped scheme be provided, with drainage routes developed along the lines of proposed roads and/or open spaces within the area. These will pump to a new gravity main sewer along the Cornamagh Road. Athlone's wastewater treatment works was constructed in 1992 and can be extended as necessary to cater for the projected needs.

The stream channels, especially the principal watercourse, are important in terms of bio-diversity* specifically for the Ballaghkeeran Bay wild trout fishery. Therefore the water quality of these waterways is not to be compromised by development within the plan area ensuring that a high water quality standard is maintained.

It is the policy of the Council to ensure that regard is had to the Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EEC).

It is the policy of the Council to ensure that regard is had to the Office of Public Works' Flood Risk and Development Report.

As this site changes from a rural to an urban landscape, so too will the number of impervious surfaces increase, including roads, paths, car parks, buildings and their rooftops. Currently rainfall flows into existing stream and drainage channels, which further flows to Lough Ree. This system is adequate to deal with the current rate of run off, however once the environment changes, there will be a need for greater management of surface water drainage via on-site storage and stormwater retention ponds, in association with the existing stream/channels. One method to ensure this is to incorporate Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) for all new developments in the Plan area**.

SUDS is an approach to managing rainfall in development that replicates natural drainage and aims to:

- ☐ Control water discharge as soon as possible after precipitation (source control***)
- ☐ Slow down the speed of discharge off-site (control of quantity)
- ☐ Use passive techniques to filter and settle suspended matter (control of quality)

SUDS techniques allow natural drainage to function in the landscape surrounding development.

There are four general design options:

- ☐ Filter strips and swales
- ☐ Filter drains and permeable surfaces
- ☐ Infiltration devices
- ☐ Basins and ponds



Stormwater Retention Facility



Recycling Facility

It is important that developers establish the soil conditions and hydrology of the site (storm water run-off, water table height, water quality) and consider appropriate SUDS at an early stage in the site evaluation and design process. This will ensure that the best drainage solution for a particular site is found and incorporated into the layout, development costs and timetable for implementation.

Where necessary silt traps, down-pipe filters and petrol separators can be used to treat run-off before it reaches the drainage system.

In order to address safety concerns, a number of measures can be used including;

- ☐ Providing shallow side slopes (1 in 4 or 1 in 5)
- ☐ Restricting access to the open water—this can be done by;
 - Using shallow, muddy margins to the pond
 - Planting reeds around the pond
 - Planting shrubs to act as a barrier
 - Routing paths away from waters' edge
 - Using and maintaining fences if necessary
 - Providing adequate opportunities for supervision and overlooking by passers-by and by the orientation of adjacent housing

It is the policy of the Council to ensure that the permitted flow from a development to a public stormwater system or natural watercourse is restricted to the natural run-off rates from a site before development commenced.

The Council will facilitate the linkage of existing residences in the Cornamaddy Action Area to the main sewer.

No development shall take place until the facilities to supply the area with water, wastewater and drainage needs are provided. Detailed studies to facilitate the extension of the serviced area, commencing with lands in the vicinity of Cornamaddy, are being undertaken.

4.6.2 Waste Disposal

In accordance with the Waste Management Act, 1996, an approach to waste management should adhere to a waste hierarchy, with the greatest emphasis on prevention and minimisation of waste production, followed by reuse, recycling and recovery (including energy recovery), with disposal to landfill as the lowest preference.

Athlone currently disposes of its waste to a modern landfill at Ballydonagh in County Westmeath, which is adequate to meet the needs of the area over the plan period. However, with the development of other methods of waste disposal, it is envisaged that only residual waste should go to the landfill site. All households have a part to play in the effort to reduce the amount of waste we produce and therefore recycling facilities will be encouraged in terms of segregation of household waste and also further separation of waste for disposal via recycling banks located in accessible locations in proximity to residential areas.

Individual dwellings must have facilities to accommodate collection of source-segregated waste, therefore space for three wheel bins needs to be accommodated. For multi-storey residential development, there should be adequate storage at ground level. Standards to be applied could be as follows: 1-2 person household, 3x120 litre wheel bins; 3-6 person household, 3x240 litre wheel bins; 2 2-bed apartments, 2x240 litre wheel bins; block of 10 apartments, 3x1100 litre wheel bins. Storage facilities for waste, particularly for apartments, should be secure from vandals, scavengers and vermin and should avoid creating a nuisance to adjacent buildings. Storage facilities or bin houses should be designed to enable access to all receptacles at any one time (i.e. residual waste, dry receptacles, organic waste) to facilitate segregation. Internal design can also affect how we dispose of our waste, for example it may also be useful to provide a 3/4 compartment bin under a kitchen sink rather than just one, so as to encourage separation by the occupants from the outset.

Neighbourhood Centres are suitable locations for recycling banks, particularly in proximity to grocery stores, so that they are used during linked trips. It is also imperative that those retail/commercial uses within the Neighbourhood Centres have adequate waste management standards. The developer/applicant will be required to detail the proposal having regard to the waste volumes arising, the segregation needed and the frequency of collection.

The recycling of construction and demolition waste and the reuse of aggregates and other materials will be supported in the construction of the roads, housing, and Neighbourhood Centres in Cornamaddy. To this end, recovered aggregates from within the site will be reused, depending upon quality. As a result the amount of new base materials required to be imported into the site will be reduced.

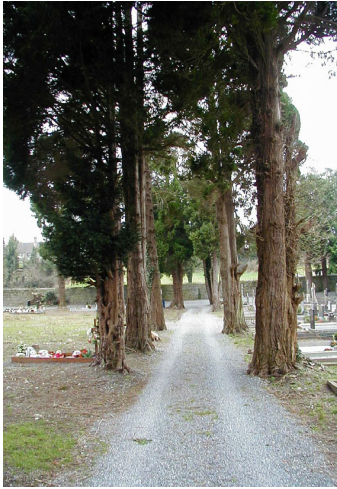
4.6.3 Electricity

Currently, a powerline runs east to west across the site. This will be placed underground for reasons of safety, to maximise use of existing land and to reduce visual intrusion caused upon the landscape.

The site will be adequately serviced by electricity, and where feasible, use of sustainable energy resources will be encouraged.



ESB Mast within the Study Area

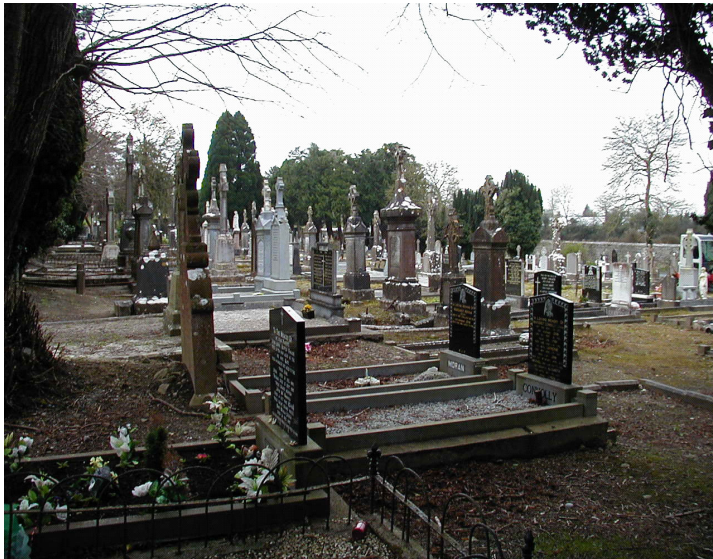


Tree Grouping within Cemetery

4.7 Accommodation of Cornamagh Cemetery

Cornamagh Cemetery occupies 2.8 hectares to the south west of the site. The cemetery dates back to the mid-nineteenth century, has a main tree lined avenue leading from the road to the burial area, and is formally laid out in a grid like fashion. The main avenue and the pathways are lined on either side with mature trees. The cemetery is of significant historical value as it is a source of information in relation to the history of the area and has also architectural value relating to the various headstones and mausoleums. Cornamagh cemetery stands as an excellent example of the traditional layout and design of a 19th century garden cemetery. The tree groupings within this cemetery are of significant value in contributing to the attractiveness of the area. It is the policy of the local authority to maintain this cemetery in its traditional form and maintain the grounds, trees and headstones within. The wall surrounding the cemetery is also to be maintained.

Development adjoining this site shall be sensitive to the cemetery and not impinge upon its existing boundaries. In order to enhance the cemetery's setting in the future development of the area it is proposed to provide a buffer of 4-5 metres width from the external face of the wall. As a general principle, roads and open space will be provided adjoining this buffer in cells 4 and 5 to enhance its setting and amenity value. Except in cells 1, 2, and 3, development will not normally be permitted to back onto the cemetery wall, i.e. private curtilage boundaries will not be permitted to share the cemetery wall boundary.



Cemetery



Cemetery Wall and Associated Mature Stand of Trees, which it is an Objective to Maintain



This development has been laid out in a clear and legible manner (in the form of a crescent). It is easily understood. Note how the near corner building is orientated to address both sides of the street. The building therefore provides a degree of natural surveillance to the front and to the side.

5 Urban Design

5.1 Guiding Principles

Cornamaddy will be developed as a sustainable urban extension, where people can live, work, recreate and access various local services within a well-defined quarter, preferably within walking distance.

To ensure the various elements of a scheme (i.e. active and passive open space provisions, dwelling layout and design, road network and pedestrian/cyclist linkages, storm water retention facilities, and Neighbourhood Centres uses etc.) are designed and operate in a coherent and sustainable manner, an urban design framework will highlight how the existing and proposed resources of this area can be utilised to serve the future community.

Key Features which will influence the overall Urban Design approach:

- Significant ridge running east-west across the centre of the site - this divides the site, providing a break within the landscape and adding definition to the scheme.
- Existing stream – this will be incorporated within a linear park and act as an amenity resource, both passive and active, support the existing habitat, and provide a pond in a parkland type system with natural stormwater retention capabilities. This park is located between cells 6, 8, and 10, ensuring ease of access by all to a nearby recreational facility, and in general will contribute to the amenity of the area.
- 19th Century Cemetery – ‘garden’ type cemetery, with a formal entrance avenue, laid out with symmetrical pathways providing an overall grid layout, supported by significant groupings of trees/shrubs. This cemetery contributes greatly to the character of the area, therefore due regard will be had for the maintenance of its boundaries and its immediate setting.
- Significant trees and hedgerows – these will be maintained and contribute to the greening of the landscape.
- Division of the site into neighbourhood cells, which will assist in the development of a sense of place and community through maintenance of local environmental features and individual design of each area.
- Provision of a hierarchy of public open spaces, from linear parks and playing fields to pocket parks within neighbourhood cells.

In order to achieve a workable and attractive environment for the future population, a number of guiding principles must be addressed, namely Permeability, Legibility, and Variety.

5.2 Permeability

Permeability refers to the ease with which people can move about within a development. The positioning of buildings and roadways determines where people can walk/cycle/drive. As can be seen from the development strategy, the transport network provides for a main distributor route, as well as secondary and locally orientated roads. The network provides access from the site to outer areas, and also opens up this land from within for balanced permeable development. From the distributor road, a network of local roads have been formulated which link together and ensure that people can move



Energy Saving Building with Solar Panels



Example of Key Gateway Building

around the site without being hindered by terminating routes at inappropriate points.

The main distributor road will be designed as a tree-lined boulevard to distinguish its role as main through-route, with key architectural buildings at each entrance point and significant junctions. Local roads will be designed at an appropriate scale to the area they serve; this is discussed further below. Particular attention will also be paid to the development of pedestrian/cyclist linkages between open spaces/playing fields, neighbourhood cells and neighbourhood centres so as to provide as direct and convenient a route as possible for those not travelling by car. This approach will encourage people to leave their car at home in favour of walking and cycling to near by facilities.

5.3 Legibility

Legibility is the extent to which it is easy to understand the physical structure of an environment or the layout of developments. If streets are legible then it is likely that the place will be more memorable or distinctive and the ease with which people can orientate themselves will be greater. To achieve legibility it is advisable to avoid a repetitive approach to design throughout the site/area. Sustainability requires that a greater mix of housing types and quality of design is required, which in turns lends itself to the development of more visually interesting, legible environments. Methods of achieving legibility and interest are discussed in more detail below.

5.4 Variety

Cornamaddy, with its undulating landscape, watercourses, mature trees and hedgerows, will be developed in a manner which will maintain the existing individual quality of the area, while transforming the site from a rural to urban landscape, with a developed sense of place and community.

- Landscape Elements: The development of a sense of place/community within each neighbourhood cell will at first be influenced by the particular landscape elements of each cell, such as prominent tree groupings, hedgerows and/or high ridge levels. Such elements will influence the overall layout of each cell. In addition open spaces/local pocket parks will be provided at a scale suitable to the cell, will be in locations that are overlooked so as to ensure safety and security, will be accessible by the majority of residents and will have quality linkages to other open space areas/residential areas.

- Variation in Building Types and Design: To achieve legibility, an innovative approach to building design is required. Each design scheme will provide for a mix of housing types, i.e. 4, 3 and 2 bed dwellings, and consider scale, bulk, massing, layout, use of materials, landscaping, and existing character of the area. Any large-scale development should provide for 5,4,3,2 and 1 bedroom dwellings.

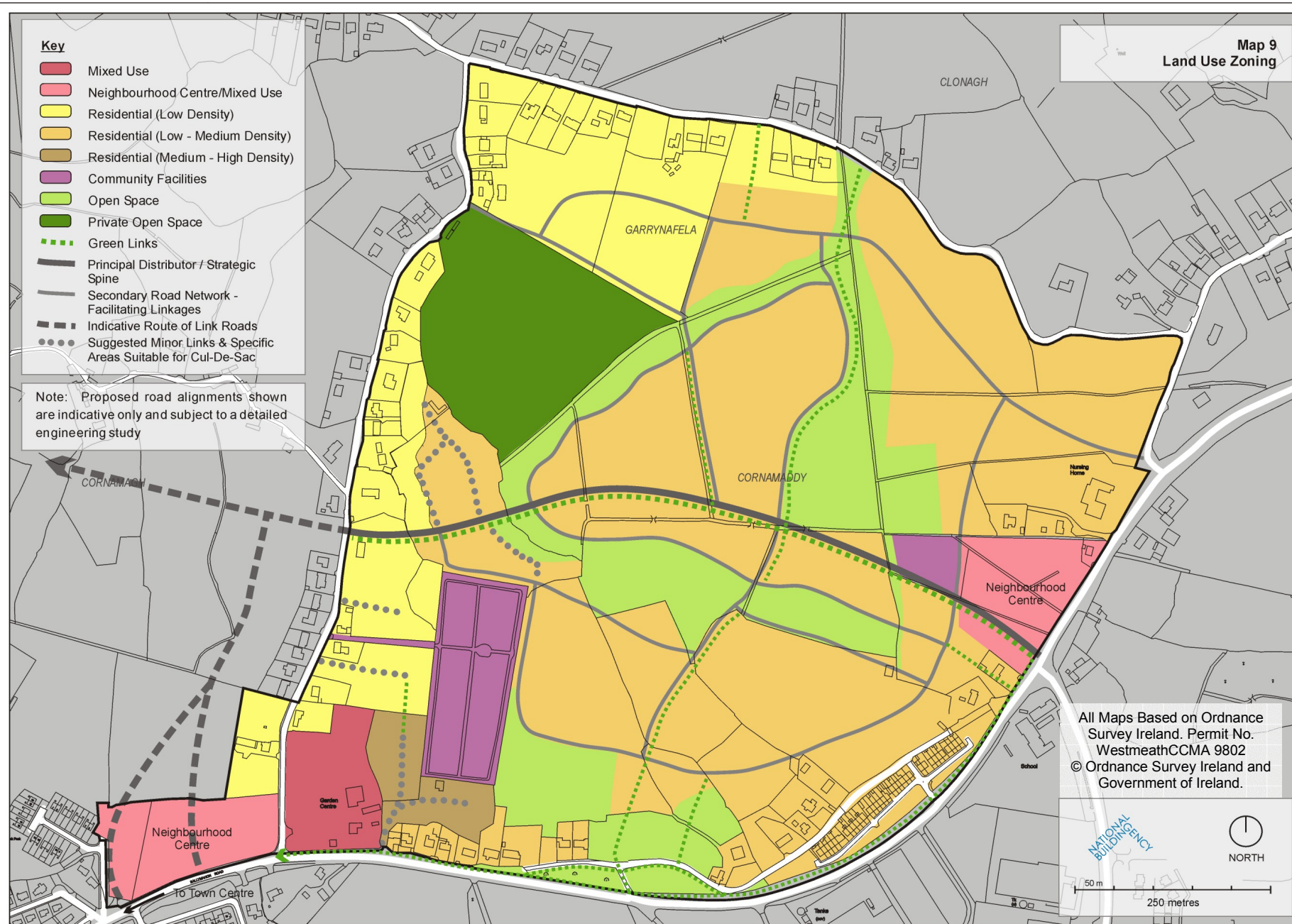
Sustainable building materials and design elements will also be promoted to encourage energy efficiency, for example, use of solar energy panels; use of central heating systems for groups of housing. Allowing for a variation in design, a mix of materials and colour schemes will be supported, however these will be provided in a coherent manner to give an overall legibility and identity to each neighbourhood cell. Buildings will be orientated so as to address the streetscape, thereby defining this public domain, and will also be orientated so as to overlook open spaces and pocket play areas. A corner

Map 9
Land Use Zoning

Key

- Mixed Use
- Neighbourhood Centre/Mixed Use
- Residential (Low Density)
- Residential (Low - Medium Density)
- Residential (Medium - High Density)
- Community Facilities
- Open Space
- Private Open Space
- Green Links
- Principal Distributor / Strategic Spine
- Secondary Road Network - Facilitating Linkages
- Indicative Route of Link Roads
- Suggested Minor Links & Specific Areas Suitable for Cul-De-Sac

Note: Proposed road alignments shown are indicative only and subject to a detailed engineering study



All Maps Based on Ordnance Survey Ireland. Permit No. WestmeathCCMA 9802
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NATIONAL BUILDING



50 m
250 metres

CORNAMADDY ACTION AREA PLAN

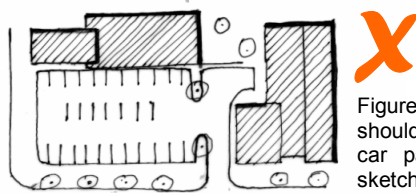
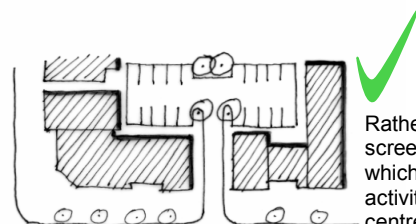


Figure 5.4.1: Corner sites should not be dominated by car parking provisions (top sketch).



Rather, the parking should be screened behind buildings which contribute to 'street activity' at the neighbourhood centre.



Home Zone Area—balancing the needs of the car with those of the pedestrian, cyclist and children

building may be required to be specifically designed to front onto two streets which it fronts. The design of each residential cell must consider the following:

- ☐ Levels of privacy and amenity.
- ☐ Traffic safety.
- ☐ Needs of children and the elderly.
- ☐ Quality of the proposed open space and landscaping.
- ☐ Quality of pedestrian and cycle linkages between open spaces and to and from local facilities.

- Quality in Housing Design: The Planning Authority will seek high standards of design quality for all development schemes in the Local Area Plan. Proposed development schemes may be refused planning permission on design criteria. For this reason, developers will be encouraged to employ professional architects and/or urban designers in the design and layout of developments, paying particular attention to the quality of materials, façade design, building composition, street layout and landscaping. Any large-scale development should have a mix of architectural designs and styles.

- Key Architectural Features: A variation in height and design of key corner buildings, and buildings which terminate vistas will be promoted, both within housing layouts and also at identified sites. A key area for innovatively designed three storey buildings will be at the following locations:

- ☐ 'Gateway' entrances/Urban Design Gateways to the site, via the main distributor road.
- ☐ Neighbourhood Centres.
- ☐ Significant junctions along the main distributor road.
- ☐ Corner sites where buildings must turn the corner and address both streetscapes.
- ☐ Within the neighbourhood cells – each cell can accommodate variations in height, for example within a row of dwellings, heights can increase to 3 storeys in the centre going down to 2 storeys on either side.
- ☐ Community buildings within the residential layout.

The design and architectural treatment of such buildings is important, as they will act within the overall urban design framework in re-working the sites unique identity.

- Building Orientation and Natural Surveillance: Buildings must be orientated in such a manner as to provide natural surveillance over transport/access routes, linear parks and pockets of open space. This will increase the feeling of safety in the area and encourage people to make use of open space areas. The degree of overlooking to be achieved along the linear park to the northeast, by the stream, is a particularly important factor in the provision of this open space.

- Local Transportation Network: The local road network will be designed with regard to the safety of children/pedestrians/the elderly. The layout/scale of housing will influence the types of roads/linkages required. Local roads will be designed at a local scale, friendly to the pedestrian, as their main function is not the movement of vehicular traffic but movement of people using all modes of transport. Attention must also be paid to the detail of road surfaces and footpaths at junctions and upon entrance to different neighbourhood cells.



Example of Home Zone form, including on street shared parking, which allows an increase in housing density



Example of a Mature Tree Lined Distributor Road in a well Established Urban Area

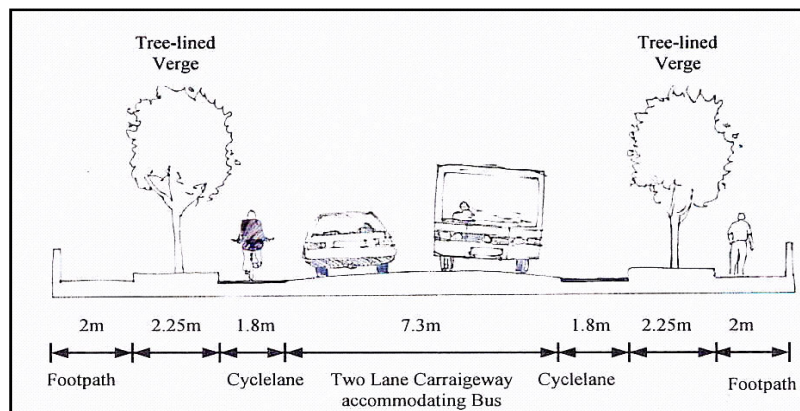


Figure 5.4.2: Road Width Dimensions Suitable for Main Distributor Road

It is advised that reference be made to 'Places, Streets and Movement' and also the Essex Design Guide for innovative and quality approaches to the creation of road layouts and design and the generation of areas with a sense of place and identity.

- **Home Zones:** Linking in with the principle of developing an area with a unique sense of place and community, the concept of Home Zones should be considered in the layout of this residential development. Home Zones will be encouraged in new residential developments, particularly as an alternative to cul-de-sacs. A home zone is a residential street or area, which is designed so as to ensure that pedestrians, cyclists and residents have priority over the car. Within home zones, the streets are designed through the appropriate use of materials, street furniture and a variation of road widths, to force motorists to drive with more care and at lower speeds. Ideally, the whole surface is level and paved in sets and blocks rather than tarmac to help distinguish the home zone from a normal road. In an effort to reduce speeds (while avoiding after-thoughts in future years such as speed ramps) drivers have to pick their way carefully around items of street furniture such as trees, planters, seating and even benches. On-street car parking is normally permitted, but is often arranged at the end of blocks or terraces, or provided as shared parking areas. The roads and streets then become places where children can play and people can interact.

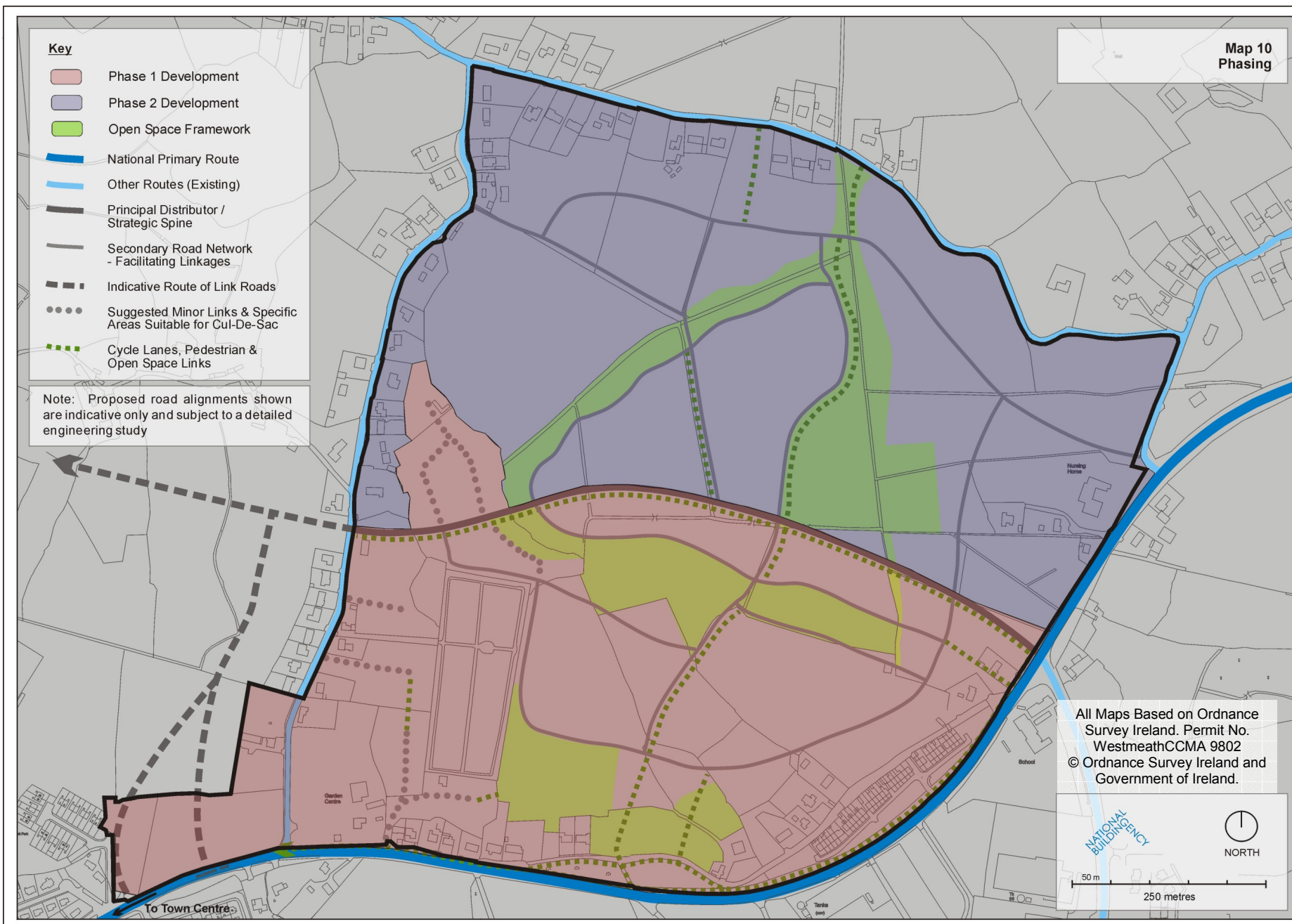
In order to successfully develop Home Zones within existing and new housing developments, it is advised to consult 'Home Zones – A Planning and Design Handbook' by Mike Biddulph, Policy Press 2001.

- **Parking Facilities:** Parking should be accommodated at a rate of 1 car space per dwelling, with .5 spaces provided for visitor parking through communal spaces. Where appropriate, rear garden spaces will be increased with a subsequent decrease in the provision of front garden space. This is particularly

suitable for some one and two bedroom units, which will have a smaller household size and also corner sites as these are generally more significant architecturally, providing an opportunity to address two streets. Appropriately located communal parking will be provided to replace on site parking needs. This approach to varying parking provisions will add to the attractiveness and uniqueness of the street environment, as well as aid in the increase of densities.

- **Street Furniture:** A coherent style should be followed when implementing elements of street design, such as benches, litter bins, signage and street lighting. These elements have a significant impact on the aesthetic quality of a residential development.

- **Placenames:** As a link to the local area, names affixed to residential developments will reflect the local and historical context of the site, wherever practical, and if possible should include the use of the Irish language.



CORNAMADDY ACTION AREA PLAN

6 Implementation

Implementation of this local area plan is dependant upon consultation between the local authority and architects/urban designers at an early stage, to ensure the overall sustainable concept/vision for the area is achieved.

The implementation of a plan may generally be constrained by a number of elements, namely, the economic climate, political support, allocated local authority funding, and funding from other sources. To overcome such limitations it is important to consider planning mechanisms currently in place to aid implementation, such as the Development Contribution Scheme. It is also relevant to examine the possibility of alternatives to local authority funding, from the national to EU level.

6.1 Phasing of Development

The Council will seek the orderly development of the area in accordance with two separate development phases, as identified on Map 10. This pattern of phasing will be subject to ongoing assessment and review of the proposed sewer and stormwater drainage network, for the area and the implementation of the transportation framework. However, it is expected that approximately 70% of Phase 1 should be complete before development can commence in Phase 2.

The Planning Authority will use its powers as provided under the Planning and Development Act, 2000, to ensure that development is carried out in an orderly fashion and that the necessary social and physical infrastructure identified in the Local Area Plan will be completed concurrent with the provision of houses. In particular instances, the Planning Authority may require developers to front load infrastructure before the development and/or sale of dwellings. There will be an expectation that a certain proportion of the neighbourhood and community facilities identified in the plan should be completed before the sale of all residential dwellings.

The Planning Authority will seek the co-operation of the landowners in the area to facilitate the orderly development in accordance with the two proposed phases. The Council will encourage the transfer of land between owners, particularly where one developer or landowner in Phase 2 may be in a position to proceed with the development process ahead of a landowner in Phase 1. In cases where there is inertia or other delays, that could affect the orderly development of the area or the provision or completion of necessary elements of infrastructure, the Council will consider its powers of compulsory acquisition.

6.2 Development Contribution Scheme

According to the Development Contribution Scheme, a planning authority may when granting permissions include conditions for requiring the payment of a contribution in respect of public infrastructure and facilities benefiting development in the area of the planning authority. (Part 3, Section 48 of the Planning and Development Act 2000). Levies for Public Infrastructure and Facilities can relate to:

- The acquisition of land.
- The provision of open spaces, recreational and community facilities and amenities and landscaping works.

- The provision of roads, car parks, car parking places, sewers, waste water and water treatment facilities, drains and watermains.
- The provision of bus corridors and lanes, bus interchange facilities (including car parks for those facilities), infrastructure to facilitate public transport, cycle and pedestrian facilities, and traffic calming measures.
- The refurbishment, upgrading, enlargement or replacement of roads, car parks, car parking places, sewers, waste water and water treatment facilities, drains or watermains.
- Any matters ancillary to the above.

Additional national and EU level programmes include, the approach of Public Participation Programmes (PPPs), National Lottery Facility Funding, Community Support Framework, as well as other funding mechanisms available from the various government departments. Such bodies have varying criteria regarding the type of developments they fund and may be useful to consider in the achievement of development objectives.

6.3 Public Private Partnerships

A Public Private Partnership involves a partnership agreement between the public and private sector for the delivery of specific projects relating to public services and infrastructure. Such an approach can ensure a commitment to funding due to interlinked public and private assistance, and aims at ensuring the most economically efficient manner of development. Education, local services, health, housing, public transport, roads, solid waste, water/waste water and other public services can benefit from the approach of a PPP.

6.4 Implementation of the Open Space Network

In residential developments, developers shall provide communal open space to a high landscaped quality equivalent in area to a minimum of 15% of the total area of the site or 1 hectare per 150 dwellings/flats, whichever is greater according to residential guidelines. In calculating the open space requirements, the relevant open space zonings as shown in the Residential and Open Space Framework (Map 6) will make up a percentage of the requirement for the open space within the area which is being developed.

Alternatively, if it is deemed by the planning authority not to be in the interests of the proper planning and sustainable development of the area to insist on the provision of open space at the above rate, and/or where there is a difficulty on the part of the developer in providing this space, the planning authority may apply conditions to ensure that the required amount of open space is achieved (Section 34 (4), Planning and Development, 2000). The local authority may choose one of the following options:

- That the developer make a financial contribution per residential unit towards the provision of an open space by the Local Authority elsewhere. (as may be provided for under Section 48, Planning & Development Act 2000)

Appendix

Sustainability and Strategic Environmental Assessment

1. Introduction

Section 19 (4)(a) of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 states that a local area plan shall contain information on the likely and significant effects on the environment of implementing the plan. This legislative requirement pre-empts a EU Directive on Strategic Environmental Assessment for plans and policies. As of yet, no guidelines exist to the nature and format such an assessment should take. This LAP addresses the overall strategy and policies of the plan under key issues that would typically be covered in an Environmental Impact Assessment, though takes a more generalised format.

2. Principles of Sustainability

In general terms the development concept and the process of developing the framework for the future development of the Local Area Plan has incorporated the principle of sustainability as a central theme. This theme was developed in Chapters 1 and 2. The overall sustainable structure is outlined in the Chapter 4. The protection of the most important elements of the environment has been integral to the plans preparation. These site characteristics were examined as part of Chapter 2, which carefully examined the environmental context of the area, with the mapping of key landscape features, such as topographically higher areas, streams, drainage channels, significant hedgerows and tree groups. The most significant of these were identified for protection and incorporation into the open space layout (refer to Map 4 - Environmental Parameters, Map 5 - Topography and Map 6 - Residential Development and Open Space Framework).

Before developing the future framework for development, the plan examined all relevant plans, policies and government guidelines that relate to planning, development and heritage in general and specifically to the area. The LAP has taken cognisance of the Government's 'Sustainable Development - A Strategy for Ireland' (Department of the Environment and Local Government, 1997) and the document 'Ireland's Environment - A Millennium Report' (Environmental Protection Agency, April 2000), while Chapter 3 established the context for development in light of the National Spatial Strategy and the Athlone and Environs Town Plan, 2002-2008.

3. Assessment of Likely and Significant Effects on the Environment of Implementing the Plan

Scoping:

The most important environmental issues that arise from the scoping process include:

1. The significant low lying areas to be found throughout the area (particularly in the northern section) and the likely impact of stormwater run-off resulting from the future development of the area.
2. The landscape and topography and in particular the protection of key landscape areas, tree groups and visually vulnerable areas (i.e., the higher exposed ridges running through the site).
3. The impact of future development on the existing pattern of low density ribbon development on the perimeter roads of the area.

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4. The demand generated from the development for local services and community facilities.
 5. The need to ensure that development of the proposed neighbourhood centres does not impact negatively on the vitality and vibrancy of the town centre retail area.
 6. Archaeology and the numerous raths, ringforts, earthworks and/or enclosures.

These issues have been covered within the following sections.

3.1 Human Beings

As the existing area is predominately in agricultural use, the current population is low relative to the capacity of the area to accommodate future population growth. The pattern of development is such that the character of these roads is slowly changing from that of a rural landscape to that of a suburban one. The allocation of housing density has been such to ensure that in most cases, lower density provisions have been proposed adjoining those existing areas of most significant ribbon development. On this basis it is assumed that there are no direct negative impacts on human beings from the implementation of the plan. Positive impacts are likely to arise to residents and nearby employees from the provision of two new neighbourhood centres in the plan area and a comprehensive network of open space.

The development of the plan will provide a mix of land uses to cater for the future population growth of the area. These uses cater for all aspects of regular daily activities such as living requirements/homes, working, shopping, the need for community facilities (including aspects such as the need for crèches, day care facilities, schools, places of worship, etc.) and recreation needs.

By providing an attractive place in which to live, work and recreate, the masterplan can provide a positive impact on the future of those using the area. The opening up of some of these areas for public access can also promote enjoyment and appreciation of nature.

3.2 Flora and Fauna

The area is currently characterised by fairly typical agricultural lands used for rough grazing - consisting of a range of field sizes, bound by hedgerows and drainage channels (ditches) - the fertility of which would not be noteworthy. Some of the drainage channels in the north of the plan area consist of bull rushes (*typha latifolia*) and other varieties of reeds.

Many of the hedgerows are low lying and poorly defined, with the more notable ones being identified on Map 4 - Environmental Parameters. The hedgerows typically consist of bramble (*rubus fruticosus* agg), hawthorn (*crategus monogyna*), blackthorn (*prunus spinosa*) and ivy (*hedera helix*) interspersed with tree species including holly (*ilex aquifolium*), ash (*fraxinus excelsior*), beech (*fagus sylvatica*) and some oak (*quercus robur*). Some significant stand-alone oak trees can be found in the field immediately west of the cemetery. The cemetery itself displays a variety of tree species including several species of conifers, of the spruce and pine (*picea* & *pinus*) varieties. Yew (*taxus baccata*) is also prevalent and forms part of a tree lined avenue within.

In the field immediately north of the cemetery, ferns and bramble have re-established themselves providing scrubland characteristics and young hazel is noted in the vicinity. The plan area contains no nationally designated habitat areas, such as National Heritage Areas or Special Areas of Conservation.

The native flora is likely to sustain a variety of insect types, bird life and typical mammal species found in an agricultural and farmland setting. Badger setts were noted in the northern field boundary of field immediately north of the cemetery, where scrubland characteristics were noted. Rabbit warrens were noted along at least one hedgerow towards the south east of the site. Both of these areas are included in the open space network and therefore should be retained. Typical and common bird species associated with farmland in the area are also to be found throughout the site. No notable species were noted. It is likely that the drainage channels towards the north of the site could harbour moorhen. These areas are identified for protection as linear parks with storm water retention ponds, which could easily be designed to enhance the habitat and promote other bird species including mallard and other waders.

While the future development of the area has the potential to lead to some negative environmental impacts such as human impacts resulting in some deterioration, destruction or human intrusion of habitats, or alternatively as a result of the impact of development (i.e., pollution or sediment run-off into adjacent streams thereby impacting flora) it is anticipated that through the recommendations outlined in the plan, that these impacts will be reduced to an absolute minimum.

All noteworthy habitats have been identified for protection or incorporation into the open space strategy. Carefully designed stormwater retention ponds (with reconstructed wetlands/reed-beds) could lead to an enhanced habitat in the area, with benefits to local wildlife. Loss of some open farmland bird species is likely to be counteracted by maturing gardens over time.

3.3 Soil

No special or noteworthy soil conditions have been noted in the area.

3.4 Water

While the rate of runoff has the potential to increase with the urban development of the area, this will be maintained by the adoption of the policy on Stormwater Source Control (Best Management Practices), including the requirement for stormwater retention ponds (see Section 4.6.1).

3.5 Air

Increases in residential density (particularly in the vicinity of neighbourhood centres), accessibility to public transport, the provision of a cycle and pedestrian network along desire lines and the provision of local employment, services and facilities can help reduce the need to travel and promote the use of alternative modes to the car, thus reducing emissions from transport (i.e., carbon dioxide, nitrogen oxides and air particulates). Future tree planting in the areas of open space could also assist in air purification.

3.6 Climate

There are no direct impacts on climate anticipated from the Local Area Plan.

3.7 Landscape

The LAP involves the urbanisation of land that was previously used for agricultural purposes. This will result in a depletion of agricultural land. However, in line with population projections this is deemed to be acceptable as the future population growth needs to be accommodated and the land is zoned and in close proximity to the existing built environment of Athlone town.

Those lands and areas that represented the most important ecological habitats and landscape features have been reserved in the interests of bio-diversity, visual amenity and public open space. Careful consideration was given to those lands that have the highest contour levels so as to maintain them free from development.

3.8 Material Assets

This includes both natural and manmade assets. Natural assets have been addressed in the foregoing sections and some of the material assets that relate to heritage are covered in the section on cultural heritage. Other material assets might include the existing infrastructure in the area, including services such as roads, water supply, sewerage infrastructure and the built fabric. No significant impacts are anticipated to affect material assets and improvements to the existing infrastructure and road network are planned for the area.

3.9 Cultural Heritage

Cultural heritage is the term used to describe the combined disciplines of archaeology, architecture, urban design, monuments and decorative features. It also includes sites or topics of religious or folklore interest, including aspects such as traditions and placenames.

There are no archaeological features on the Record of Monuments and Places that are contained within the study area. In relation to architectural heritage, there are no features within the plan area identified on the Record of Protected Structures and no noteworthy features have been identified for inclusion.

The most notable feature that relates to the cultural heritage of the area is the cemetery - accessed by an attractive tree lined avenue, bound by a stone wall and containing a variety of headstones and tomb designs. The plan seeks to protect these features and also the overall setting of the cemetery in the area - by restricting housing to back-onto the area on its eastern and northern boundaries - so that it retains its noteworthy symbolism in the area. There are no other features of particular interest for reasons of cultural heritage, however the Planning Authority will address the issue of placenames so as to retain a link or historic connection with the morphology of the area.

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