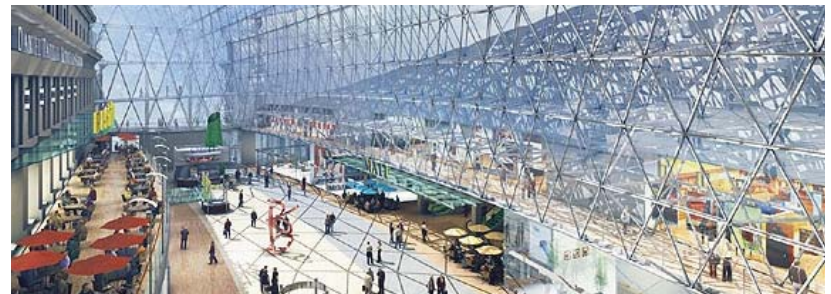


# Creggan Local Area Plan 2010-2025



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*This plan was adopted by Westmeath County Council  
on the 5th November 2010.*





## 1.1 Legislative Background

The Westmeath County Development Plan 2008-2014 includes as an objective the preparation of a Local Area Plan (LAP) for lands at Creggan in the eastern environs of the town prior to the development of these lands. The Creggan Local Area Plan comprises of 302 hectares in area.

The purpose of the Local Area Plan, prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Planning and Development Acts 2000-2010, is to guide the proper planning and sustainable development of the Creggan area in a manner consistent with the objectives of the County and Town Plans.

The strategy and guidelines in this plan are generally area-specific and must be read in conjunction with the Westmeath County Development Plan 2008-2014.

## 1.2 Aim of the Plan

The aim of the plan is to develop Creggan as a world class enterprise, innovation and trading hub, underpinned by a vibrant urban structure, excellent infrastructure and high quality environment, which will enhance the quality of life of its residents, and entice visitors and businesses alike. The plan is centred upon the principles of sustainable economic development.

The rationale behind this document is to develop an integrated Local Area Plan, which will promote the development of the Creggan lands, in conjunction with adjoining Athlone town and provide for the level of enterprise and commerce within these lands, commensurate with the status of Athlone as a 'Linked Gateway', in accordance with the National Spatial Strategy designation for the town.

The plan focuses upon a number of distinctive Character Areas set within an extensive open space network. An intrinsic aspect of the plan is the reservation of sufficient lands for

commercial and employment use, in order to stimulate inward investment and raise the profile of Athlone within the national and international arena.

In this regard, the plan proposes an area be designated as 'Strategic Gateway Zone' within Area C of the plan, to act as a driving force and major economic generator.

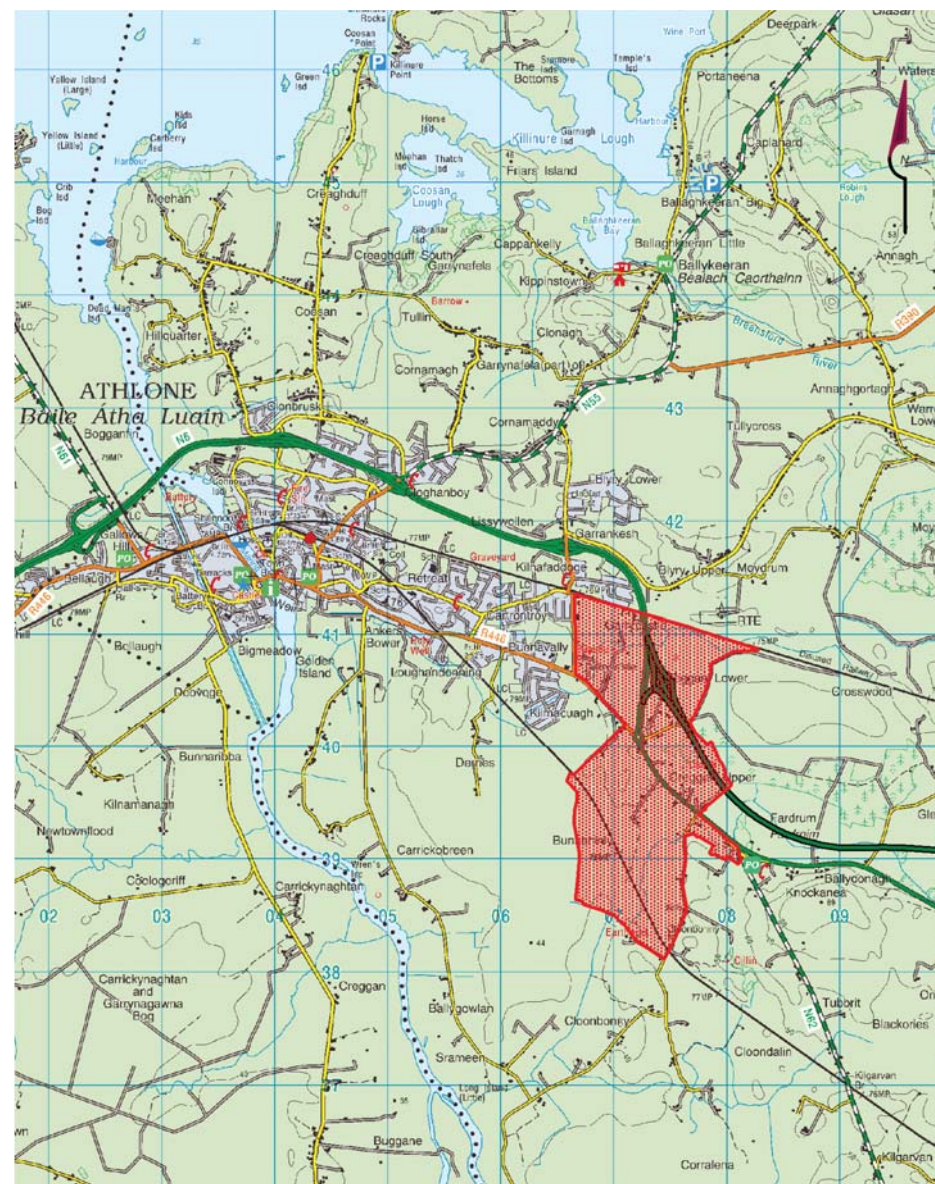
The Creggan LAP provides an opportunity for Athlone as one of the gateway towns to reaffirm and realise its role as a driver of growth at local, regional and national level. It is critical for Athlone to be planned in a focused and cohesive manner, in order to provide a competitive base for growth for both the indigenous sector but also to attract foreign investment.

The plan seeks to maximise use of well positioned urban land in a distinctive and innovative setting, whilst making provision for the potential to develop a new/unique enterprise space of national and potentially international importance.

## 1.3 Strategic Location

Athlone is a large urban centre in the Midlands and is strategically positioned in the centre of Ireland, at a crossing point along the Shannon. The growth of the town has evolved on an east west basis. In order to fulfil its role as a "Linked Gateway", the population of Athlone is expected to reach 26,000 persons by 2022<sup>1</sup>. Having regard to the siting of Lough Ree immediately north of the town, the River Shannon floodplain and past incidences of seasonal flooding occurring south of the town, it is considered that the future expansion of Athlone will be concentrated on lands to the east of the existing urban area.

Taking into consideration existing zoned land within Athlone, the Creggan Area represents the largest undeveloped land bank in the town.



Map indicating location of Creggan Local Area Plan

<sup>1</sup> According to Figure 4.2 Midland Region Population Targets for 2022, Midland Regional Planning Guidelines 2010-2016

# 1 Introduction

## 1.4 Strategic Advantages of Creggan

- Strategic location along the M6, with excellent inter-urban links to the capital and international airport
- Gateway Status of Athlone
- Highly Skilled Workforce
- The presence of Athlone Institute of Technology (AIT) and its capacity for future expansion including its established role in developing Athlone as a competitive world class knowledge based Gateway
- Advanced infrastructure network, in terms of both road and rail connections.
- Existing base of leading international companies at the forefront of their field in areas such as pharmaceutical, research and development, medical devices and life sciences and telecommunication software.
- Excellent broadband and telecommunications infrastructure.
- The Creggan area is a major land bank asset capable of supporting a substantial population and workforce of increasing diversity and variety.
- The proposed Athlone Main Drainage Scheme will serve the plan area.
- Established IDA Business Park with capacity for extension.
- Connectivity to the existing urban area by means of walking, cycling and future transport links.

## 1.5 The Vision

The plan seeks to capitalise upon these strategic advantages and potentialities, and thus compete with the global market place for business investment, by developing Creggan as:

1. An Enterprise Zone with an international profile with employment opportunities for both indigenous and inward investment – significant potential for foreign owned and domestic owned high value industry, including high end, specialised trade, manufacturing, financial, business services and other commercial activities.
2. A centre of excellence for education, research, enterprise and innovation
3. A World Class Business Centre.
4. A Premium Tourist destination with high quality accommodation and cultural attractions. Athlone boasts many high quality visitor attractions, most notably the River Shannon.
5. An Area served by an Integrated transport system including the development of a major new public transport hub, supported by a new railway station to serve the area.

## 1.6 Plan Content

For Creggan to operate as a sustainable community, it must achieve a stable, diversified and dependable economic base, provision of education and employment facilities for all and a high quality built and natural environment. In order to achieve the foregoing, the plan considers issues such as built urban form, provision of recreation, amenity, education and community facilities in tandem with residential development and employment provision. Environmental parameters, access and circulation for all modes of transport, the local context and integration with surrounding land uses are also important factors provided for within the plan.

This document describes an urban design and landscape framework with:

- A permeable and legible spatial hierarchy with good access and circulation for vehicles, public transport users, cyclists and pedestrians.
- A hierarchy of public places, which are accessible and secure.
- Linkages within the site (particularly for cyclists and pedestrians) and to the surrounding area.
- Requirements for the development of an Open Space Network that identifies and protects natural and historical features of the subject lands
- A Heritage Strategy which seeks to safeguard archaeological, natural and built heritage features within the plan area.
- Visual interest and variety to be provided through the development of key focal buildings on prominent sites.
- Innovative and quality design giving a sense of identity and place.
- Quality provision of public and private open space with soft and hard landscaping as an integral part of the overall plan.

- Protection and integration of existing environmental features, such as valuable trees, hedgerows and watercourses and wetlands.
- A consideration of mix, uses, types, and building forms necessary for the promotion of a sustainable urban expansion.

## 1.7 Timescale for delivery of the Plan

The policies and objectives set out in the Local Area Plan remain in effect for a six year period (2010 - 2016), but can be subject to amendment during this period where Westmeath County Council consider it relevant and appropriate in the interests of the proper planning and sustainable development of the town. In accordance with Section 18 (4) (a) of the 2000-2010 Acts, it is envisaged that the development of the Plan area will be phased over a longer period, to provide for a realistic timeframe within which the entire Plan can be implemented.



## 1.8 Strategic Environmental Assessment

The Creggan Local Area Plan process is subject to the requirements of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive, as set out in the Planning and Development Act 2010, and the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004. A screening process was undertaken, in consultation with the prescribed Environmental Authorities, in accordance with the criteria listed in Schedule 2A of the aforementioned SEA guidelines. It was concluded that a full Scoping and Environmental Report is required to be carried out on the plan, having regard to the nature and extent of the likely significant effects arising from the implementation of the plan.

The Environmental Report has been prepared in accordance with SEA Guidelines and the provisions of the SEA Regulations: the European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004 (S.I. 435 of 2004), and the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004 (S.I. 436 of 2004). The findings of the SEA are set out in the Environmental Report, which while constituting part of the plan documentation, is presented as a separate document. The likely environmental effects of the plan (and the alternative development scenarios considered) are predicted in the Environmental Report and their significance is evaluated with reference to the area's environmental baseline. The Environmental Report concludes that the plan may have a combination of negative, neutral and positive effects. Where negative effects are expected, mitigation measures have been identified, including measures to prevent, reduce, or off-set adverse effects.

Areas where further more detailed study or assessment, including aspects that may be subject to Environmental Impact Assessment, Appropriate Assessment and Flood Risk

Assessment, may be required on foot of specific development proposals are also identified. Subject to these measures it is concluded that the plan will not have any strategically significant negative environmental effects.

The SEA recommended that the following objectives or measures be included or clarified in the Creggan Local Area Plan.

- Preparation of a landscape and urban structure concept for the plan area to provide greater certainty as to the location, nature and extent of land uses and development.
- Objectives for the protection and restoration of Crosswood Bog and measures to ensure major development proposals in adjacent areas, particularly in Character Area B, do not impact on the existing hydro-geological regime of the bog habitat.
- An objective to have regard to the Shannon Regional Fisheries Board Guidelines for Watercourses in Urban Environments in the preparation of an overall landscape plan.
- Objectives for assessment of the potential cumulative effects of vehicular traffic on the local and strategic road network.
- To ensure design, construction and management of the road network to prioritise pedestrians, cyclists and public transport.
- An objective to require construction management plans, prepared as part of the later development management stages.
- An objective to require preparation of a detailed flood risk assessment(s) (FRA) at the later development management/EIA stages.
- An objective to provide an appropriate buffer between proposed development and established community infrastructure in Character Area C.
- To prioritise a bus-based public transport service at the earliest phases of development and to seek the earliest delivery of rail services to augment this service.
- To provide for sustainable movement with effective links to the existing urban area.
- Objectives to ensure sustainable design, construction and management of buildings including ecological foot-printing of major development proposals as part of any EIA process.
- All of the recorded archaeological sites and buildings of architectural merit (including their environs), as highlighted in this report, should be avoided and protected from any impact during the proposed development of Creggan LAP. If impact on sites cannot be avoided specific recommendations and mitigatory measures should be undertaken. All of the recorded archaeological sites identified within the study area at this stage are protected under the National Monuments Act and its subsequent Amendment.
- Detailed, development specific archaeological and architectural assessments should be undertaken in advance of any future development. These should include the results of or recommend the undertaking of non-intrusive surveys such as topographical, geophysical and architectural survey and intrusive investigations such as archaeological test trenching. Archaeological monitoring of all topsoil stripping is also recommended for all greenfield areas within the Creggan LAP study area.
- Objectives to ensure the effects on new streets and roads on local flora and fauna are minimised.
- Objectives to augment green corridors along new roads and streets.
- An objective to require the integration of sustainable urban drainage measures in the landscape structure of the area.

- An objective to ensure that cycleways and walkways are located and designed in such a way as to protect existing biodiversity, flora and fauna, including an objective to ensure any proposed amenity route across or through Crosswood Bog will be subject to further detailed assessment in consultation with the National Parks and Wildlife Service.
- An objective to locate community and social infrastructure where walking and cycling and use of public transport can be maximised.

The above recommendations/amendments have been incorporated into the plan text.

As required by Article 14I of the SEA Regulations 2004 (S.I. No. 436), an SEA Statement has been prepared which describes how the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) process has influenced the preparation of the Local Area Plan for Creggan and comprises of the following elements:

- How environmental considerations have been integrated into the LAP;
- How the environmental report and any submissions and observations received in response to the public consultation, have been taken into account during the preparation of the plan;
- The reasons for choosing the plan in light of the other reasonable alternatives; and
- The measures decided upon to monitor the significant environmental effects of implementation of the plan.

The SEA Statement while constituting part of the plan documentation, is presented as a separate document, which should be read in conjunction with the plan.

# 1 Introduction

## 1.9 Appropriate Assessment

A Habitats Directive Assessment (HDA) otherwise known as an 'Appropriate Assessment' was carried out on the Creggan Local Area Plan. The Creggan Local Area Plan was screened for potential impacts on the Natura 2000 network, in accordance with Article 6(3) and 6(4) of Council Directive 92/43/EEC and the "Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland: Guidance for Planning Authorities". Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government 2009". The Screening Report concluded that the plan has potential to have significant adverse impacts upon River Shannon Callows cSAC and Middle Shannon Callows SPA and Crosswood Bog cSAC, and therefore a Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment is required.

A Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment was carried out to identify policies and objectives that might have potential effects, including potential 'in combination' impacts, on the conservation objectives of the Natura 2000 sites.

Preliminary hydrological assessments have been carried out in relation to Crosswood Bog cSAC, and the River Shannon Callows cSAC, which assessed hydrological conditions within and adjacent to the sites and specified mitigation to avoid adverse impacts on the Natura 2000 sites from the implementation of the plan. Mitigation measures were introduced and these have been incorporated into the LAP through an iterative process. The Strategic Flood Risk Assessment provides a review of zoning objectives in relation to the Creggan LAP area and potential flood risk areas. Recommendations in relation to flood risk have also been incorporated into the LAP and will further serve to strengthen protection of the adjacent Natura 2000 site.

Overall, the prescribed mitigation as incorporated into the Creggan Local Area Plan will create a buffer zone around Crosswood Bog cSAC and prevent any development east of the M6 motorway, which is sufficient to protect the Natura 2000 site. Any alterations to the buffer zone will be in light of further hydrological surveys or further information from the National Parks & Wildlife Service (NPWS). Mitigation has also been incorporated to prevent any contamination or alteration to surface water and groundwater as a result of the implementation of the plan.

The management of Crosswood Bog cSAC is the responsibility of the National Parks and Wildlife Service of the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government. The NPWS produces Conservation Management Plans, which outlines the management framework for the site, including the sites conservation objectives. The Council is committed to supporting the aims and conservation objectives of such plans and furthering their implementation through both policy and practical means where feasible.

It has been concluded that once these mitigation measures have been fully implemented, there will be no significant effects on the extent of the Natura 2000 sites or on the key environmental factors supporting their structure and function such as hydrology. Therefore there will be no significant adverse effects on the integrity of the Natura 2000 sites as a result of the implementation of the plan.

The Stage 1 and Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment including Natura Impact Statement while constituting part of the plan documentation, are presented as a separate document and should be read in conjunction with the plan.

Location of Crosswood Bog cSAC





### 2.1 Overview of the Planning Context of the Local Area Plan

#### *The National Spatial Strategy 2002*

The National Spatial Strategy (NSS) aims to engender a more balanced approach to regional development across the State. To this end it proposes the clear integration of Athlone, Mullingar and Tullamore into a 'seamless linked gateway'.

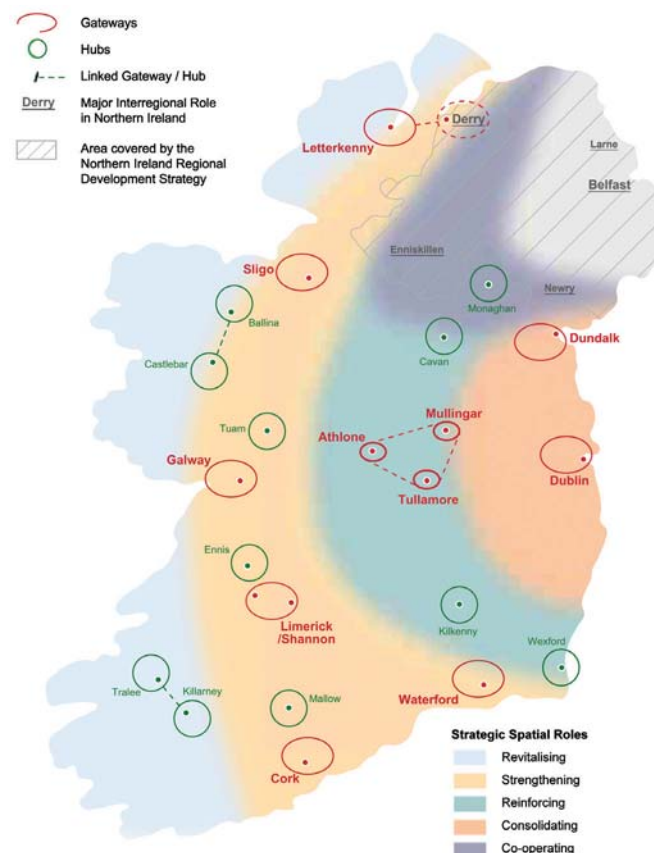
This strategy provides that the principal towns that comprise the 'Midlands Gateway' will not develop in competition to one another but rather in an integrated and mutually beneficial way that presents the Gateway as a unified competitive alternative to the urban centres of Dublin, Cork, Galway and Waterford.

To achieve this vision and realise the competitive potential of the Gateway, mutually beneficial linkages between the principal towns and the provision of choice in residential, retail, leisure and tourist facilities based on the principles of quality of life and environmental enhancement must be developed.

#### *Strategic Development Framework for the Midlands Gateway – Developing a World Class knowledge based Competitive Gateway (Indecon Report 2006)*

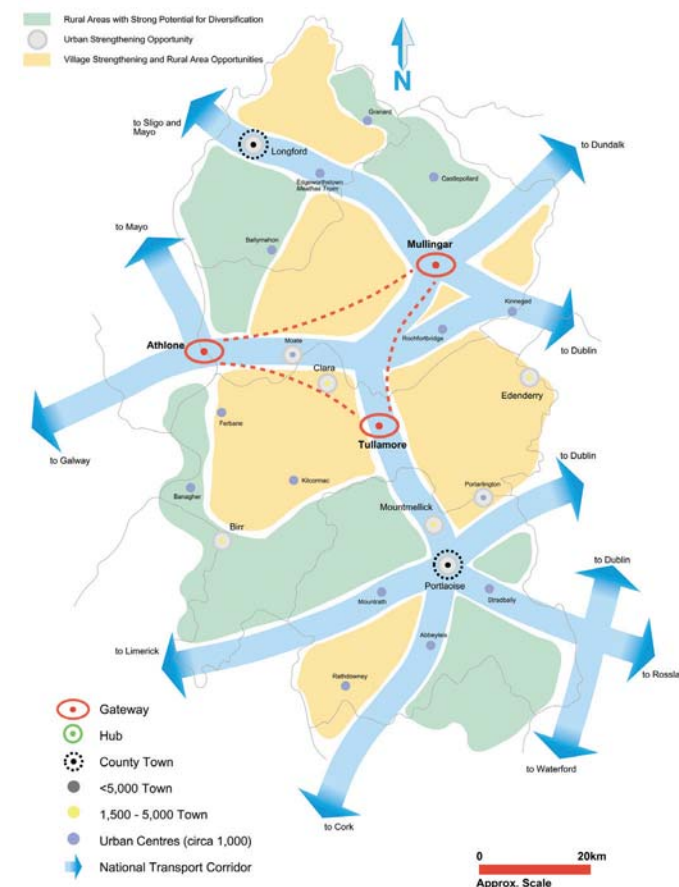
This report was prepared for Westmeath and Offaly County Councils in December 2006. It sets out a strategic development framework for the Midlands Gateway to 2020 based on "the development of a world-class, knowledge-based and competitive gateway, underpinned by a quality urban structure and environment, excellent infrastructure and a visionary leadership, which maximises quality of life for its citizens."

The key objective of this framework is to outline a long-term planning strategy to guide future development and the provision of strategic infrastructure in the Gateway and to indicate how this should be implemented in a spatial form.



*Gateways & Hubs Map, National Spatial Strategy 2002*

The success of the Gateway will require the provision of high quality transport infrastructure to achieve the necessary levels of internal accessibility and mobility and to attain improved external connectivity to national urban centres, ports and airports.



*The Midlands Region in the National Spatial Strategy 2002*

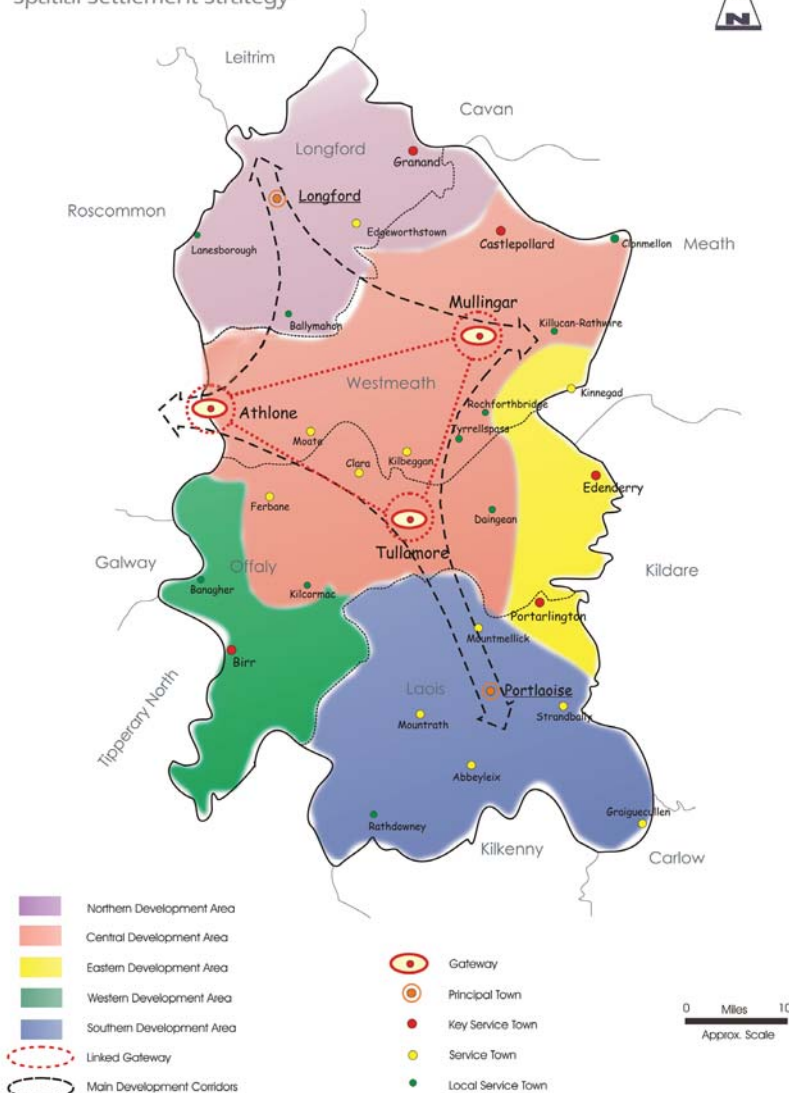
The reports review of the NSS concludes that the generation of funding and economic sustainability is the key to the successful development of the Midlands Gateway.

The framework also recommends that sectoral clusters be developed and expanded by the IDA (Ireland) and Enterprise Ireland. Athlone would benefit from continued expansion of ICT-related activities, pharmaceuticals related activities and education.

## 2 Strategic Context and Appraisal

### Midland Region

#### Spatial Settlement Strategy



Settlement Strategy, Midland Regional Planning Guidelines, 2010-2016

### The National Development Plan 2007-2013

The National Development Plan outlined the objectives of the Midlands Gateway as being the reinforcement and further development of strong links between the principal towns and the neighbouring urban centres, by means of infrastructure and services, in order to maximise internal and external accessibility as a location for investment business development and tourism.

#### Athlone Town -

Key development issues and investment requirements over the period of the Plan to the Midlands Gateway include:

- :: Strengthening the R&D capacity of Athlone Institute of Technology and its linkages to industry/employers in the Region.
- :: Development of enhanced road and public transport links between the three towns in the Gateway.
- :: Development of strategic local roads and water services capacity to facilitate and attract development to the towns in the Gateway.

### Midland Regional Planning Guidelines 2010-2016

The Midland Regional Planning Guidelines 2010-2016, provide for the successful implementation of NSS at regional, county and local level. One of the principal goals of the guidelines is "to develop and market a distinct and unique image and identity for the region that will attract investment and economic activity to the region".

The guidelines identify the potential for the establishment of a major international trading centre at Athlone, derived from its central location, high levels of accessibility including motorway access to the international airport in Dublin, public transport connections by

rail and bus and Gateway designation. The development of this facility in Athlone has potential for significant employment creation. It is also considered that there is considerable potential to build upon the existing base of international service companies currently operating within the town. A Strategic Development Zone (SDZ) is also provided for in these guidelines to the east of Athlone. This SDZ is a separate entity and independent of the Strategic Gateway Zone (SGZ) designated within this Creggan Local Area Plan.

### Developing Areas Initiative 2008

Creggan has been designated by the Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government, as a 'developing area' within the Midlands Gateway. The boundary of the Creggan Developing Area corresponds with the boundary of this Local Area Plan.

The Developing Areas Initiative, provides a mechanism for the DoEHLG and local authorities to support work at central and local government levels, to secure better co-ordination and timely delivery of key infrastructure and services in fast growing developing areas in parallel with housing development.

48 strategic and fast-growing developing areas have been identified in and around the Greater Dublin Area and in the National Spatial Strategy designated Gateways and Hubs.



### Westmeath County Development Plan 2008-2014 & Athlone Town Plan 2008-2014

Westmeath County Council County Development Plan and the Athlone Town Development Plan each include objectives for the preparation of a local area plan for 302 Ha at Creggan in the eastern environs of Athlone Town Centre. These lands are to be considered in the wider regional and national framework of the Midlands Gateway and should identify and zone specific undeveloped areas of land suitable for residential and associated uses, recreation and amenity uses; enterprise and employment development.

The strategic aims of both the Westmeath County Development Plan 2008-2014 and the Athlone Town Plan 2008-2014 can be summarised as follows:

- Facilitate the provision of sufficient employment opportunities to cater for the needs of the population of the town and its hinterland through the expansion of the manufacturing, hi-tech and services bases of the town
- Foster the development of the town's role as an (1) Education Centre and (2) Centre for the Arts
- Foster the development of the town's role as a Regional Administrative and Service Centre.

The employment structure of the town is set out in each of the plans with the Athlone Town Plan describing the dominant employment sectors as commerce; manufacturing and professional services with key employers including pharmaceutical and medical companies, IT and communications companies and a number of state and semi-state departments.

The County Development Plan also gives specific guidance on planning and development policies that will be outlined further within this document in considering land uses, use mix, design and built form.

There are a number of specific policies however that are key to the rationale guiding this Local Area Plan and these include:

P-EY2: This policy encourages the integration of industrial areas into the urban fabric through better planning and design with specific reference to enhancing the security and permeability of industrial areas for pedestrians and cyclists.

P-EY3 / P-EY4: These policies encourage the development of employment clusters and the intensification and expansion of established employers.

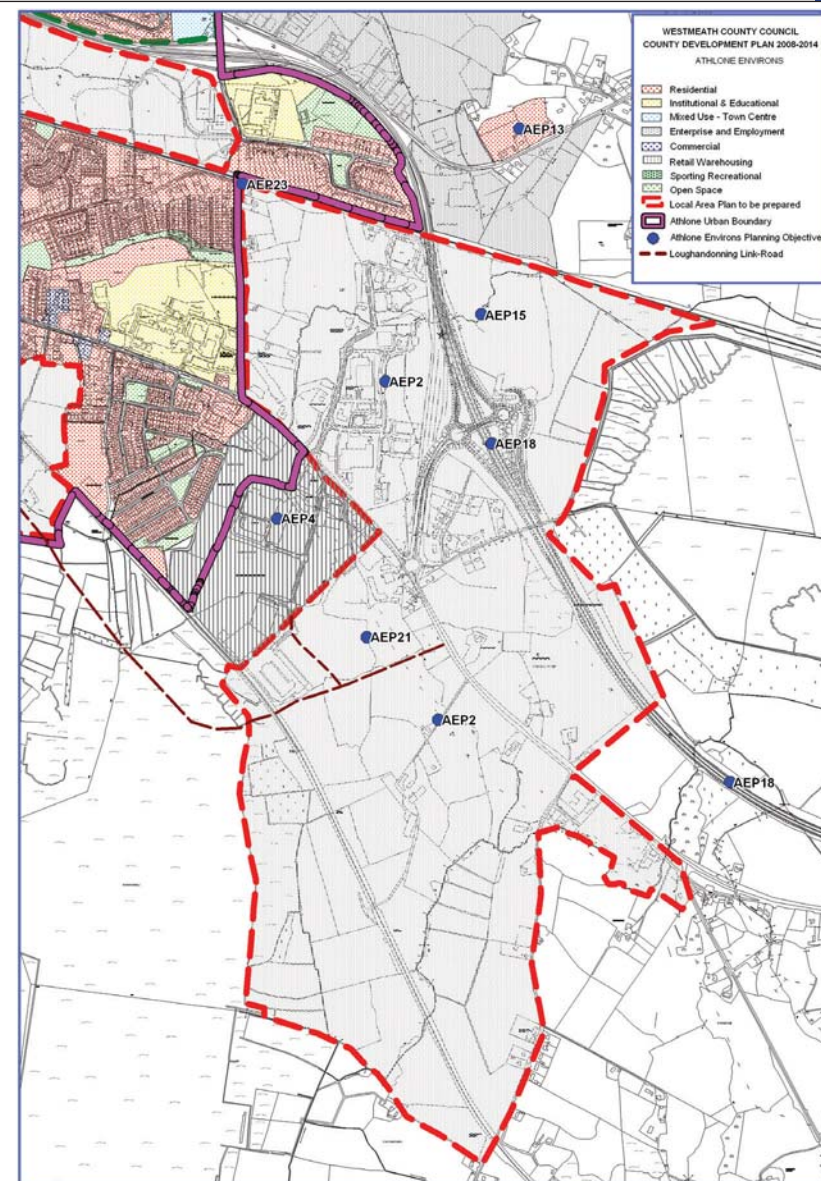
The recognition within these plans of the importance of the provision of 'soft infrastructure' within enterprise and employment development, such as community facilities, childcare and open space provision, to increase their attractiveness to employers and investors by offering the workforce enhanced quality of life is key to policies within this Local Area Plan.

The County Development Plan also reiterates the Midlands Regional Authority's strategic guidance in the following:

- reinforcement of urban centres
- development of water based activity on the Shannon
- development of linkages between AIT and regional industry
- commitment to industrial clustering of healthcare and plastics
- use of regional mail hubs in Athlone for other communication purposes, including the development of alternative public transport systems
- The need for the development of further industrial sites in the town.

### Other plans and programmes

The plan also has regard to other plans and programmes such as the "National Climate Strategy 2007-2012", "IDA Ireland Strategy Horizon 2020", "Smarter Travel - A Sustainable Transport Future - A New Transport Policy for Ireland 2009 - 2020" and "River Basin Management Plans", the implementation of which falls within the remit of said documents. Individual policies and objectives in this Creggan Local Area Plan generally support implementation of the foregoing National Plans and Strategies.



Westmeath County Council County Development Plan Athlone Environs Map  
indicating Subject Lands and Zoning of Creggan LAP

## 2 Strategic Context and Appraisal

### 2.2 Location

The Creggan plan area occupies a strategic position on the eastern environs of Athlone, approximately two kilometres from the town centre. The plan comprises of 302 hectares in area (of which the net Character Areas comprise approximately 281 hectares). To the north, the subject lands abut the disused Mullingar-Athlone railway and are bisected by the old Dublin Road (former N6) and the Dublin-Galway railway line. The newly constructed M6 Dublin/Galway motorway also traverses the plan Area to the Northeast.

The Creggan Local Area Plan contains lands within the townlands, or parts thereof of Garrycastle; Creggan Lower; Creggan Upper; Bunnahinly; Clonbonny and Kilmacuagh (Castlemaine).

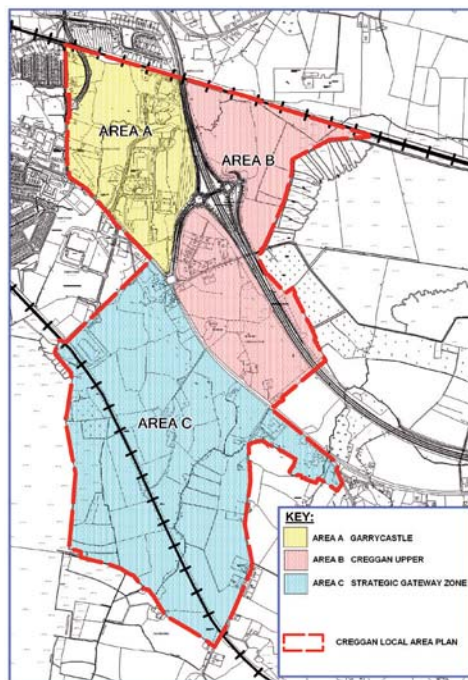
### 2.3 Site Description & Existing Land Uses

The plan area is comprised of generally undeveloped agricultural land, with a concentration of economic development located within Garrycastle Business Park, to the north of the plan area, which is of distinctive urban character. There is also a secondary commercial area centred at the Creggan roundabout. The predominant use of the lands within the plan is agricultural.

The landscape is characterised by small hills and shallow valleys, falling generally from high-point in the northeast to Shannon Flood Plain to southwest. Two water courses of significance, the AI River and the Fardrum Stream, cross the plan area. The River AI is an important ecological corridor and surface water receptor.

There are limited community facilities in Creggan, with the exception of Clonbonny National School, which is located along the south-eastern boundary of the plan area along the L5410 and has an enrolment of 71 pupils. There are no recreational facilities or areas of formal open space within the subject lands.

There are however a number of active recreational spaces within the town, most prominently including the Athlone Regional Sports Centre and a number of rugby, soccer and GAA sporting grounds. In addition, there are a series of unconnected passive amenity spaces, including the Marina and Burgess Park, each of which offer the opportunity for the recreational enjoyment of the banks of the River Shannon as it passes through the town centre area. The plan will seek to maximise connectivity to existing amenity spaces within Athlone and to provide localised facilities including pocket parks and amenity walks to serve both the existing and future population and workforce.



Map depicting development parcels within Creggan

The LAP lands are subdivided into three parcels to reflect their distinctive character and potential as follows: The Character Areas total 281 ha in area

#### Parcel A: Garrycastle

This area comprises of a 55 hectare parcel to the north/northeast of the plan area and contains part of Athlone IT and the IDA Business Park. There are a number of residential units located immediately west of the proposed realignment of the Garrycastle Road. The boundaries of Parcel A are clearly defined by the disused Athlone Mullingar railway to the north, the M6 motorway to the east and the R916 to the west. The predominant existing land use within this area is Enterprise and Employment, arising from the establishment of the Business Park.

#### Parcel B: Creggan Upper

This area contains 74 hectares, and comprises of two distinctive land parcels located either side of the M6. Apart from a suburban residential cluster and some single plot ribbon development directly south of the N6/M6 interchange, the lands within this area are largely undeveloped. This area includes the high point of the plan area lands, two national monuments and a number of structures located on the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage. Parcel B is bounded by both the former N6 and Crosswood Bog (cSAC). The latter is located immediately east of these lands.

#### Parcel C: Creggan Lower

Parcel C comprises of the largest component of the plan extending to 152 hectares in area, and is characterised by undeveloped agricultural lands. This tract of land is bound to the west by Bunnahinly Bog and bisected by the active Dublin-Galway railway line and drained by the Clonbonny River and contains sporadic residential development and Clonbonny National School. There is an area of commercial activity centred on the Creggan roundabout to the north of Parcel C, comprising of the

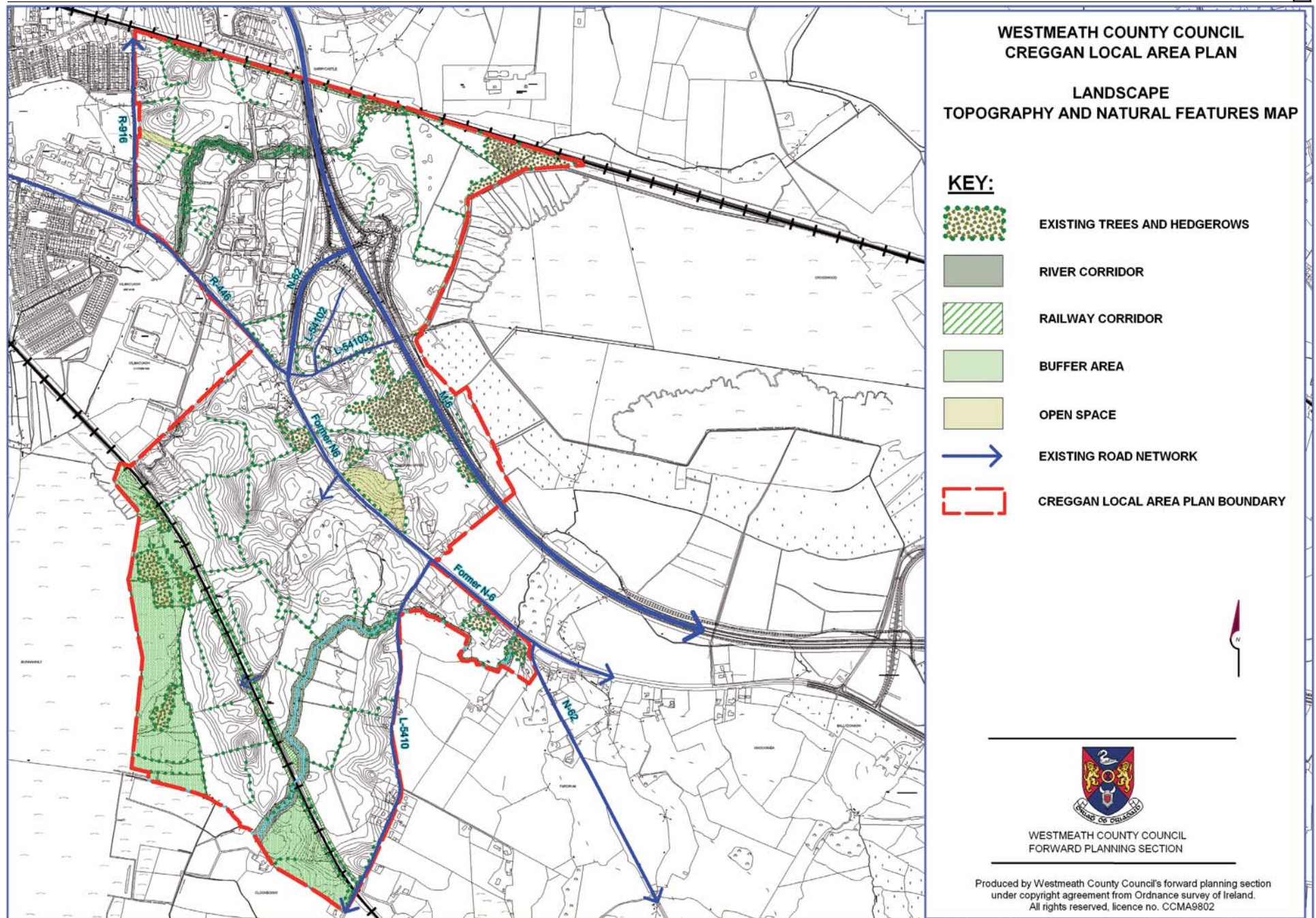
Creggan Court Hotel, petrol station, fastfood outlet, NCT centre, and a number of shops and retail warehouse units. A car sales showroom occupies a prominent location at the junction of the former N6 and the Clonbonny Road. To the southwest of this premises, there is a plant and tools sales business. There are notable established trees and hedgerows dispersed throughout the plan area, including mature tree stands adjoining the railway and river corridor.

### 2.4 Adjoining Development

The Athlone Town Council boundary immediately abuts the northern and western boundaries of the Creggan Local Area Plan. To the west of existing commercial hub at the Creggan roundabout, there is a retail warehousing park and large residential scheme. Further west, lands located within the townland of Loughandonning are the subject of the Loughandonning Local Area Plan, which is currently being drafted. This plan seeks to develop sustainable communities through the provision of residential development set within distinctive character areas in tandem with social, community and environmental infrastructure. The plan also provides for a new inner relief road which will connect the Golden Island Shopping Centre and the town centre area to the former N6. The proposed alignment of this road i.e. the Loughandonning Link Road traverses the northwestern portion of this area.

To the north of the plan area, the disused Mullingar-Athlone railway line represents a significant barrier to access. This railway line separates the plan area from residential development, the Fás Training Centre and employment based uses. Crosswood Bog abuts the plan area to the north east. Lands to the east of the R916 are occupied by AIT campus and residential estates. The lands to the east and south of the plan are in agricultural use.







## 2 Strategic Context and Appraisal

### 2.5 Landscape & Topography

The majority of the subject lands are generally of an undeveloped agricultural nature and characterised by an undulating landscape of small hills and shallow valleys. There are a number of localised high points in the north east corner within the IDA lands and another in the central eastern area south of the former N6. A significant level change occurs in the area around the active railway to the south. Otherwise the lands may be said to generally fall from a high point in the north east to the Shannon Flood Plains to the south west.



*Undulating lands as viewed from the Clonbonny Road*

The IDA lands contain a managed business park type landscape through which the significant water course of the River AI and attendant treeline and hedgerows pass. There are a number of other significant clusters and lines of trees dispersed across the site suggesting the possibility of creating a landscape structure to any new development that would allow the creation of a series of interconnected spaces retaining existing features. The other significant watercourse, the Fardrum Stream/Clonbonny River traverses the Clonbonny area of the site south of the former N6. At present there are no active recreational facilities within the subject lands but the proposals to increase synergies between the IDA and AIT Campuses, would



*Mature Specimen Trees to the north of the former N6*

mean that any proposed 'green' structure implemented on the subject lands should take consideration of the playing pitches within the AIT lands immediately east of their access to the Garrycastle Road.

The River AI will require the provision of a 20m attenuation corridor about the watercourse. Rather than constraining development, this could present the opportunity for an amenity link providing linkages across the developed lands if consideration is given to the landscape design of this wayleave rather than the canalisation of the water course. Any such proposal would need to be agreed by the managing local authority to ensure that the design would result in a working amenity route.

The Clonbonny/Fardrum stream flows in a south westerly direction within Creggan Lower and equally represents an opportunity for amenity use and biodiversity enhancement.



*Existing screen planting along the former N6*

A key landscape consideration is the screening to the edge of town, especially at the final boundaries at Loughandonning Link Road and the former N6 and N62 approaches. Consideration should be given to the visibility of the lands when deciding land uses to ensure that a visually appealing 'gateway' to Athlone is the result of the future development of the lands, and landscape screening proposals implemented to ensure that an appropriate balance between transport accessibility and visual 'place making' is achieved. Areas of particular sensitivity would include the development edges to both Crosswood and Bunahilly Bogs; former N6 approach to Clonbonny Junction which functions as rural to urban edge, and the Dublin Road Corridor.



*Existing mature planting along the rail corridor*

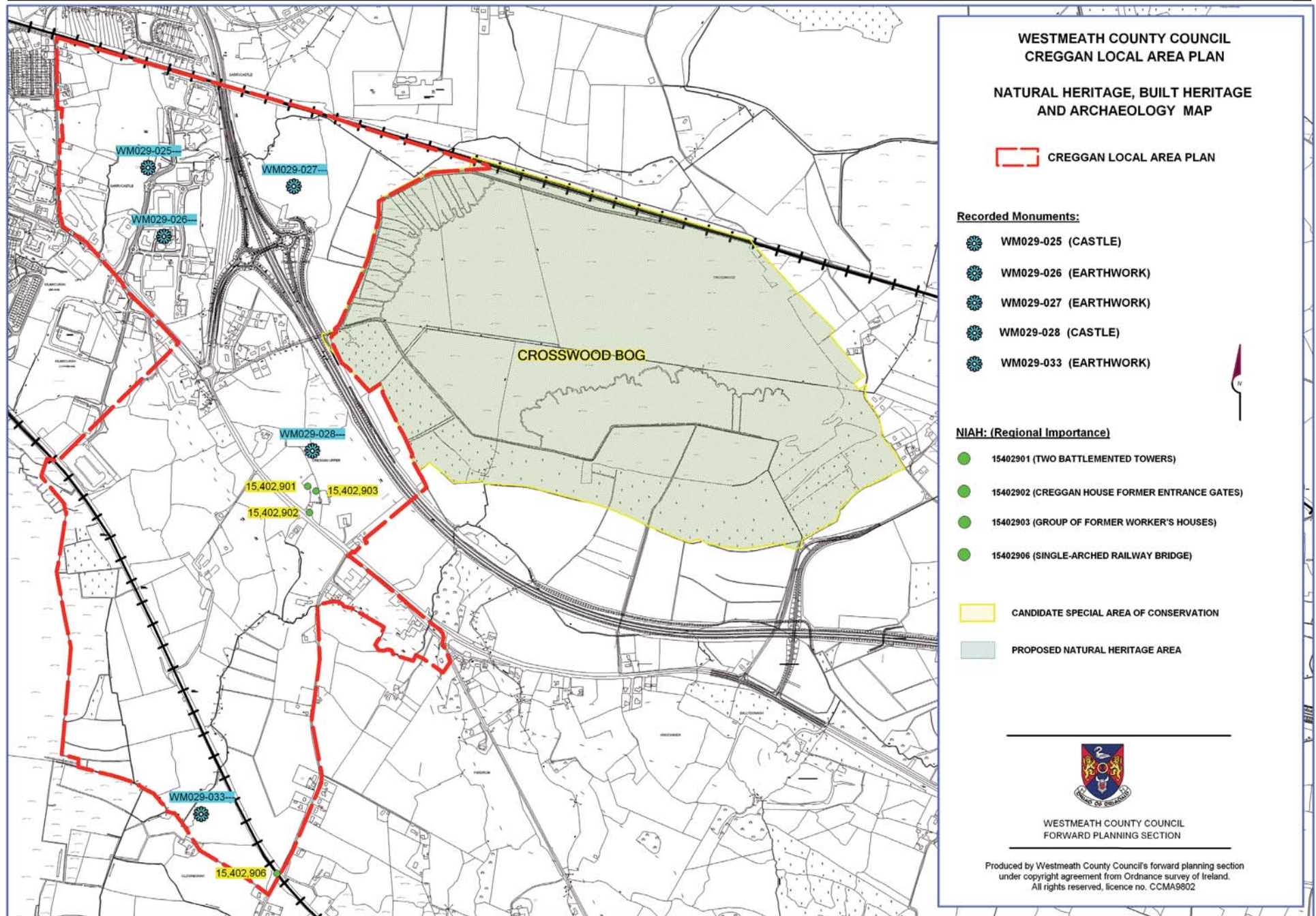
The active Dublin Galway railway line is defined by mature tree stands of considerable merit. In addition, there are a number of notable tree clusters and established field boundaries dispersed within Parcel B and C of the plan.

The Landscape and Topography Map identifies important features and amenities within the plan area, including river corridors, areas of elevated ground, trees and hedgerows and buffer zones. Development proposals shall be accompanied by a detailed tree survey which identifies trees of significant amenity and landscape value. The design guidelines and building heights criterion outlined in Section 4 of the plan will provide guidance in this regard.



*Mature tree stand along the Clonbonny Road*





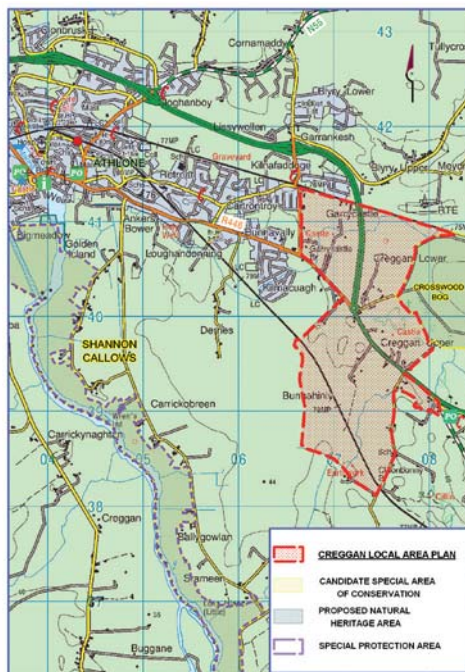


## 2 Strategic Context and Appraisal

### 2.6 Natural Heritage, Built Heritage & Archaeology

#### Natural Heritage

Whilst there are no designated natural heritage features within the plan extent, there are a number of important heritage areas within the immediate environs of the plan. Crosswood Bog which immediately abuts the north eastern boundary of the Creggan Plan area is designated as a proposed Natural Heritage Area (pNHA). This site is also designated as a candidate Special Area of Conservation, selected for active raised bog and degraded raised bog, habitats that are listed on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive. Crosswood Bog is a site of considerable conservation significance comprising as it does, a raised bog, a rare habitat in the E.U. The site also supports a good diversity of raised bog microhabitats, including hummock /hollow complexes, pools and wooded flushes.



Map depicting the Shannon Callows cSAC & NHA

The River Shannon Callows which are sited approximately 1.2km west of the Creggan plan, are designated as a proposed Natural Heritage Area (NHA) and candidate Special Area of Conservation (SAC). This site is of international importance for wintering waterfowl. In summer, the callows hold very large numbers of breeding waders, rare breeding birds and the endangered corncrake, as well as a very wide variety of more common grassland and wetland birds. The presence of Otter, an Annex II species adds further importance to the site.

#### Built Heritage

Our architectural heritage is a unique resource, an irreplaceable expression of the richness and diversity of our past. Whilst there are no Recorded Protected Structures within the plan area, there are four structures of considerable merit which are listed as being of regional importance on the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage.



NIAH Ref: 15402901

Two former main entrance gates serving Creggan House (now demolished), built c.1815, each comprising a pair of moulded ashlar limestone gate piers (on square-plan) having moulded capstones over. The well-built boundary walls complete the setting.



NIAH Ref: 15402903

A group of four attached single-storey former worker's houses associated with Creggan House (now demolished), built c.1900, which retain their early form, character and fabric. The timber casement windows are noteworthy survivals while the remarkable terracotta finials to the gables ends, including one depicting a griffin, are of artistic interest.



NIAH Ref: 15402902

Two freestanding battlemented towers on square-plan, built c.1820, formerly part of the Creggan House estate, which has since been demolished. These towers are characterised by quality ashlar limestone detailing with the battlemented parapets and the cut limestone mullioned and the ransomed window particularly noteworthy features. They originally flanked Creggan House and now act as an historical reminder of said house.



NIAH Ref: 15402906

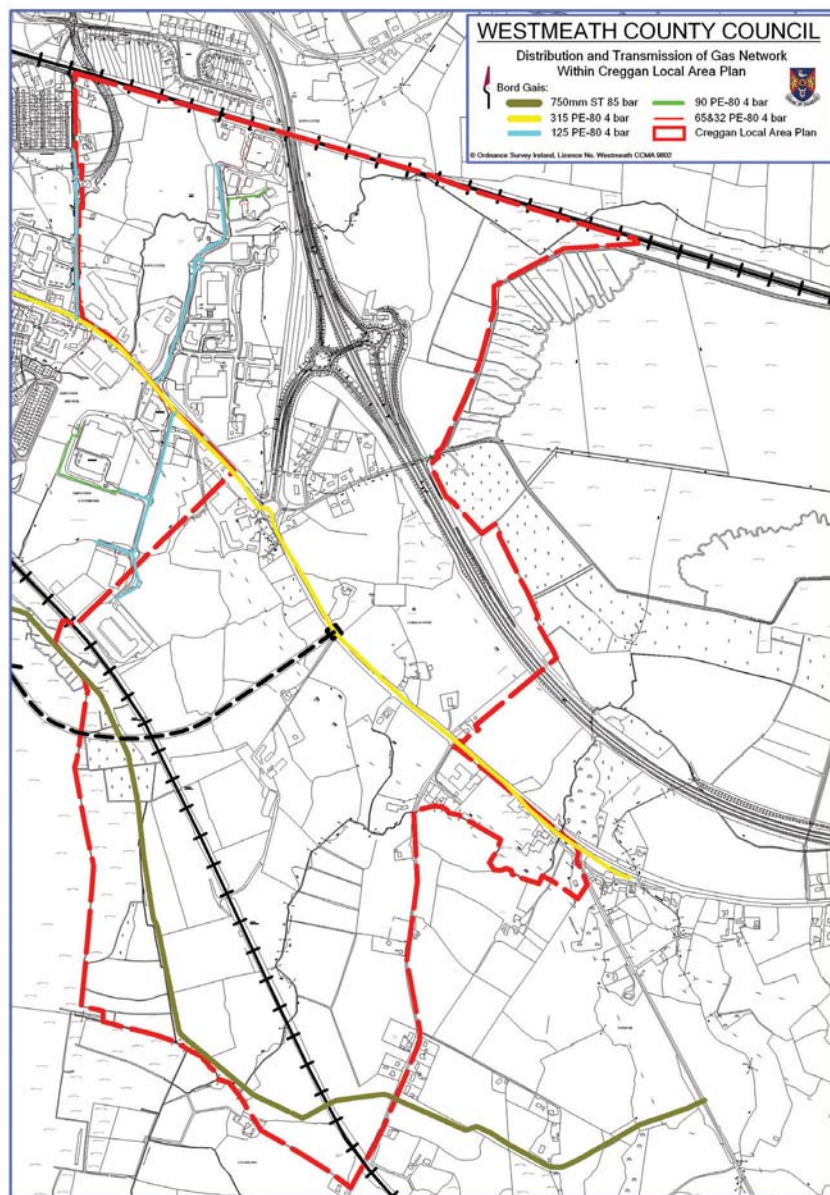
Single-arched railway bridge located on the Clonbonny Road built c.1859. Originally by the Great Southern and Western Railway Company to serve the Portarlinton to Athlone line. This bridge is well-built using snecked rusticated limestone, a typical feature of mid nineteenth-century engineering projects of this nature.

#### Archaeology

There are five Recorded Protected Monuments within the Creggan area.

Monument	Classification	Townland
WM029027	Earthwork	Creggan Lower
WM029025	Castle	Garrycastle
WM029026	Earthwork	Garrycastle
WM029028	Castle	Creggan Upper
WM029033	Earthwork	Clonbonny





Map of existing gas network within Creggan

### 2.7 Public Utilities

#### Gas

The Dublin Galway gas pipeline traverses Parcel C of the plan area. There are general site specific restrictions regarding works adjacent to gas distribution mains and consultation should be entered into with Bord Gais Networks, in this regard.

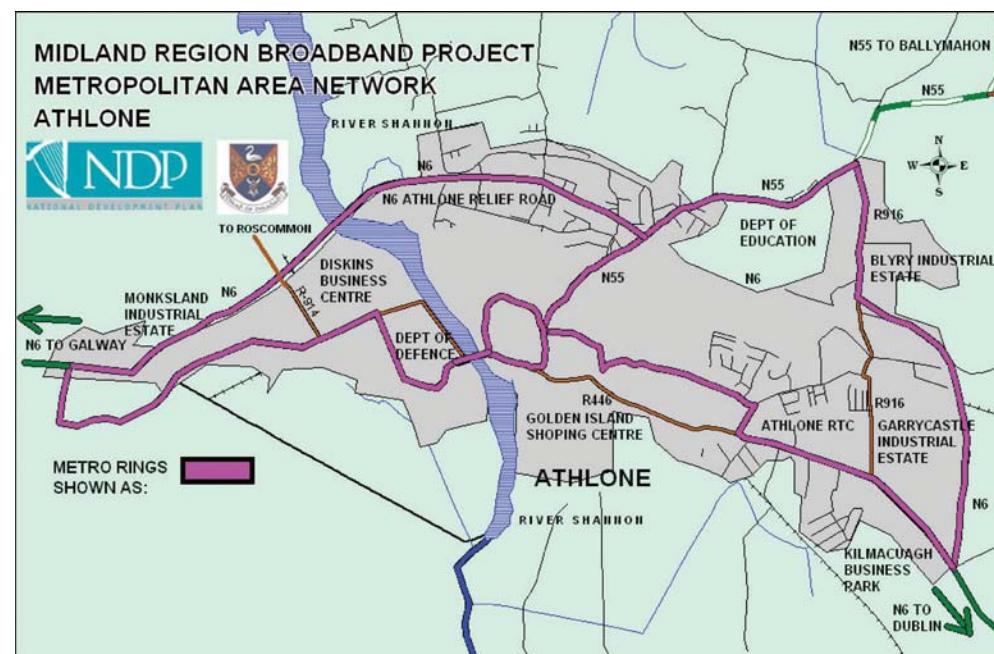
#### ESB

The Creggan area is served by a number of high voltage overhead lines. Services necessary to support development on these lands are readily available and capacity increase will be moderately easy.

#### Broadband Infrastructure

Large corporations, medical, educational, central and local government institutions, need very fast data transmission speeds and sophisticated telecommunications services. They also need additional security and reliability. For them, broadband delivered by fibre-optic cable is a requirement.

The Athlone MAN has enabled telecommunications companies to provide affordable 'always-on' high-speed access to the Internet and a range of telephony and data communications services which are vital tools for industry, business and government to be efficient and competitive. High speed internet is also invaluable for educational institutes, health and research bodies and private consumers. The MANs will facilitate new entrants, new services and more competition for broadband users in the area. There are currently six telecoms/ ISPs providing services on the Athlone MAN.



Metropolitan Area Network Athlone

## 2 Strategic Context and Appraisal

### 2.8 AI River

The Metropolitan Area Network (MAN) in Athlone covers 21.7km, the route of which is outlined above and extends into the Creggan area.

The MAN infrastructure has been built using the latest fibre optic technology, bringing unrivalled resilience and service quality. It has been designed in interconnected fibre rings, reducing the risk of service interruption common to other networks. From a technical perspective, the MAN in Athlone is a trunk network consisting of a trench with 4 x 110mm ducts, one of the ducts contains 4 x 32mm subducts. In one subduct there is a 96 fibre cable. The specification of the fibre is G652 single mode fibre. The network is constructed in a series of rings and spurs. All fibre rings are terminated in a co-location unit in Athlone. This co-location unit serves as a meet-me room where the carriers can put their equipment to light the fibre. The capacity of the data that can be carried on the fibre is limited only by the equipment used by the carrier. The fibre itself has limitless capacity. The high standard of the infrastructure build means high capacity, cost-effective and flexible bandwidth services, allowing operators to provide for customers business requirements.

The Athlone MAN infrastructure is owned by Westmeath County Council and managed on its behalf by eNet. It is a vendor-independent, open access service, ensuring increased competition on a world-class robust, resilient communications infrastructure.

In addition to the MAN, the Creggan area is well served by other broadband services, including mobile 3G broadband from the main carriers, DSL broadband from up to six providers and wireless broadband from 3 providers.

The AI River rises east of Athlone in the townland of Upper Moydrum in raised bog to the northeast of the plan lands. The channel is approximately 6km long. The source is fed by the bog. The river flows south eastward through the lands of Creggan Lower and Garrycastle and then eastward, prior to discharging into the Shannon downstream of Athlone in the townland of Golden Island.

The river is culverted under the Athlone bypass, within an invert level several metres lower than the surface level of the road. There is a culvert of 1050mm approximately 200m downstream of the Athlone bypass under a service road in the IDA Industrial Estate at Garrycastle. The flow through this culvert is controlled by a sluice gate arrangement.

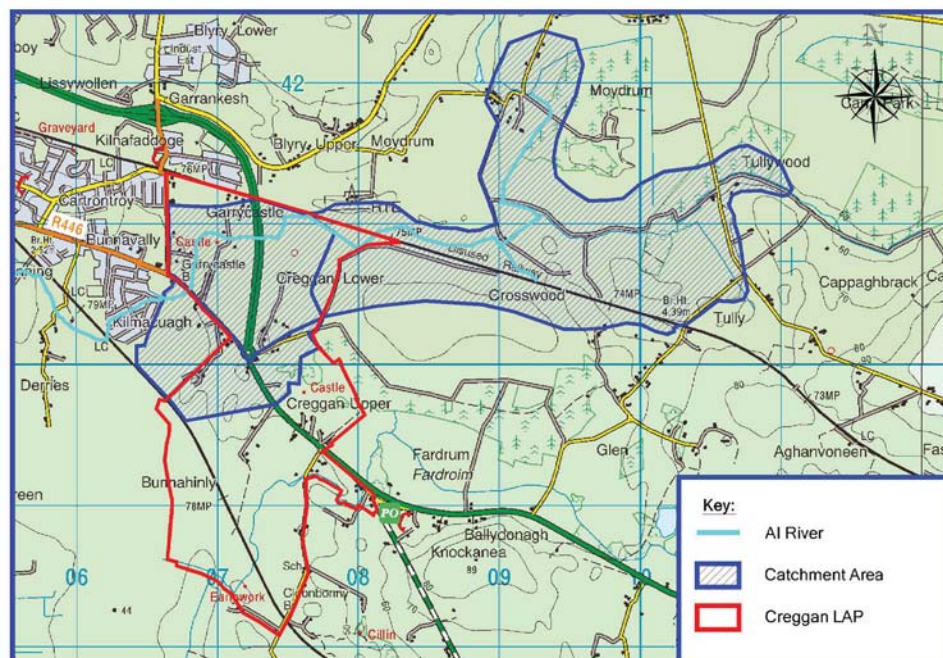
Downstream of the IDA estate, the river passes under the R446. The river is relatively steep in its channel profile through the Local Area Plan lands and is not directly affected by River Shannon flooding.

According to OPW records, there is one recorded recurring flood event within the Creggan area, namely on lands to the north of Character Area B. These lands are located within the catchment of the AI River.

The plan has been subject to a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment and lands identified as being at risk of flooding, associated with the AI River are being reserved free from development.

A number of studies have been commissioned by the Council with regard to the management of the AI River:

- "Westmeath County Council AI River Improvement Preliminary Report" by PH McCarthy & Partners, July 2002



- "Westmeath County Council Golden Island Action Area Report on Development Constraints" by PH McCarthy & Partners, July 2002
- Westmeath County Council Athlone Main Drainage – Stage 3 AI River Improvements Scheme Report" by Jennings O'Donovan & Partners & J.B. Barry & Partners Ltd

These reports highlight the need to incorporate the use of SuDS (Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems) into any approach to managing the AI River and recommend diversion of part of the river channel, west of the plan area.

Future development proposals within the vicinity of the AI River shall be subject to a detailed Flood Risk Assessment.



## 2.9 The Clonbonny River (or Fardrum Stream)

The Clonbonny Stream flows through the southeastern corner of the local area plan lands and drains the lands of Creggan Upper and lands south of the former N6 along with a network of drainage ditches.

The stream flows beneath the Dublin to Galway railway line. Downstream of the local area plan lands the stream flows through the Bunnahinly Bog and discharges to the Shannon. There are no historical records of flooding of the Clonbonny Stream within the plan area.

It is important that the area's hydrology and geology be considered in the overall context of the extent of the Clonbonny Stream both upstream and importantly downstream of the local area plan lands.

- Lands adjacent to the existing Clonbonny Stream alignment are to be maintained for possible channel realignment and provision of attenuation adjacent to the existing stream alignment.
- The route of the existing Clonbonny Stream is to be incorporated as a Linear Park and used to develop biodiversity within the plan lands.

The Strategic Flood Risk Assessment undertaken has identified lands at risk of flooding associated with the Clonbonny River, and these lands have been reserved free from development.

## 2.10 Water Supply

Water supply represents no foreseeable constraint to the continued growth of Creggan as the supply for this area is sourced from the Shannon. The capacity of the Athlone Water Treatment Plant has recently been augmented. The proposed South Westmeath Regional Water Scheme will provide a new intake from Lough Ree, and thus provide a long-term supply for Creggan and the Athlone region.

## 2.11 Waste Water

Existing development at Kilmacuagh, Garrycastle Industrial Estate, Athlone Institute of Technology and a number of housing estates is served by an existing sewer. A new foul sewer network is proposed to serve the entire plan area. The new pumping station is to be constructed on lowlying ground to the west of the Dublin-Athlone railway line in Cloonbonny. This pumping station will collect flows by gravity and will connect to the existing wastewater treatment plant at Golden Island, via a 3.07km rising main. The master sewerage plan for Creggan is in the final design stages at present.

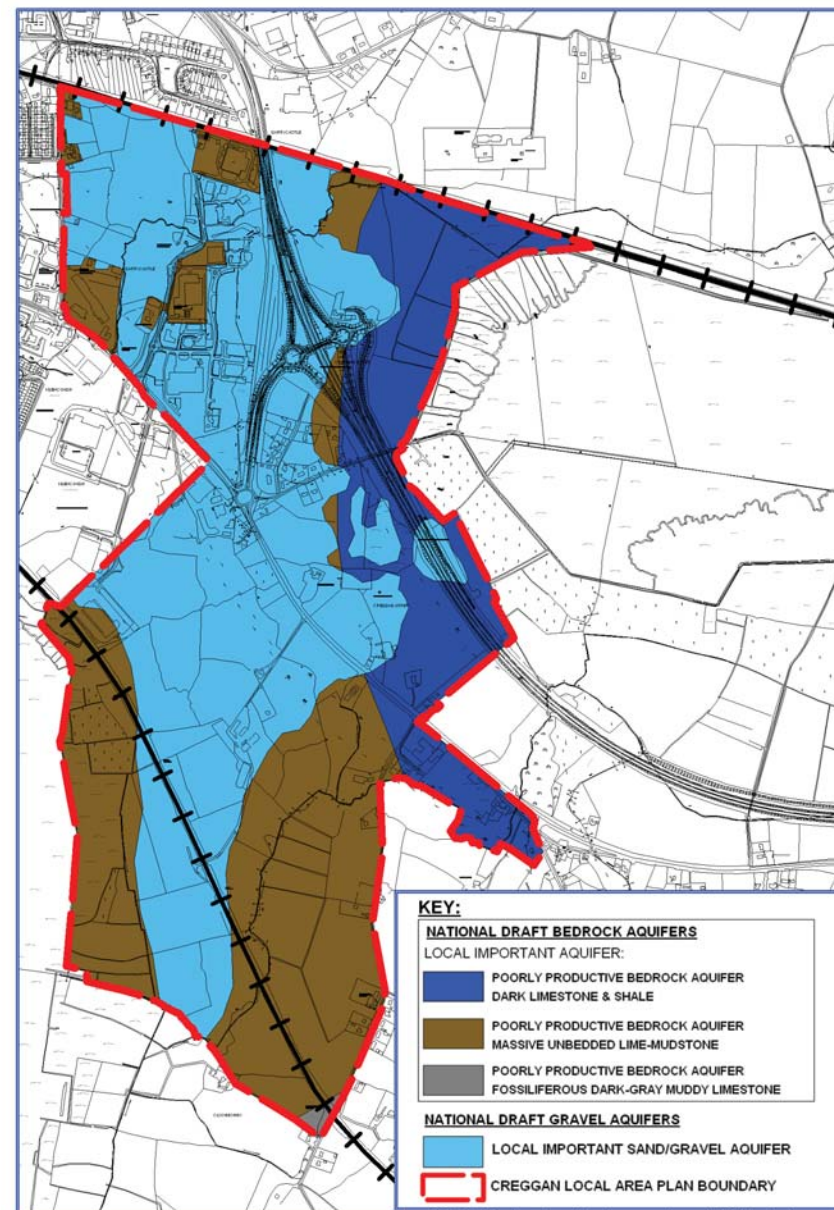
## 2.12 Surface Water

The plan area is within the River Shannon catchment. The main threat to water quality in the Shannon arises from over-enrichment from point (such as waste water treatment plants) and diffuse sources such as agriculture and urban land uses. Surface water quality within the plan area is good.

## 2.13 Groundwater

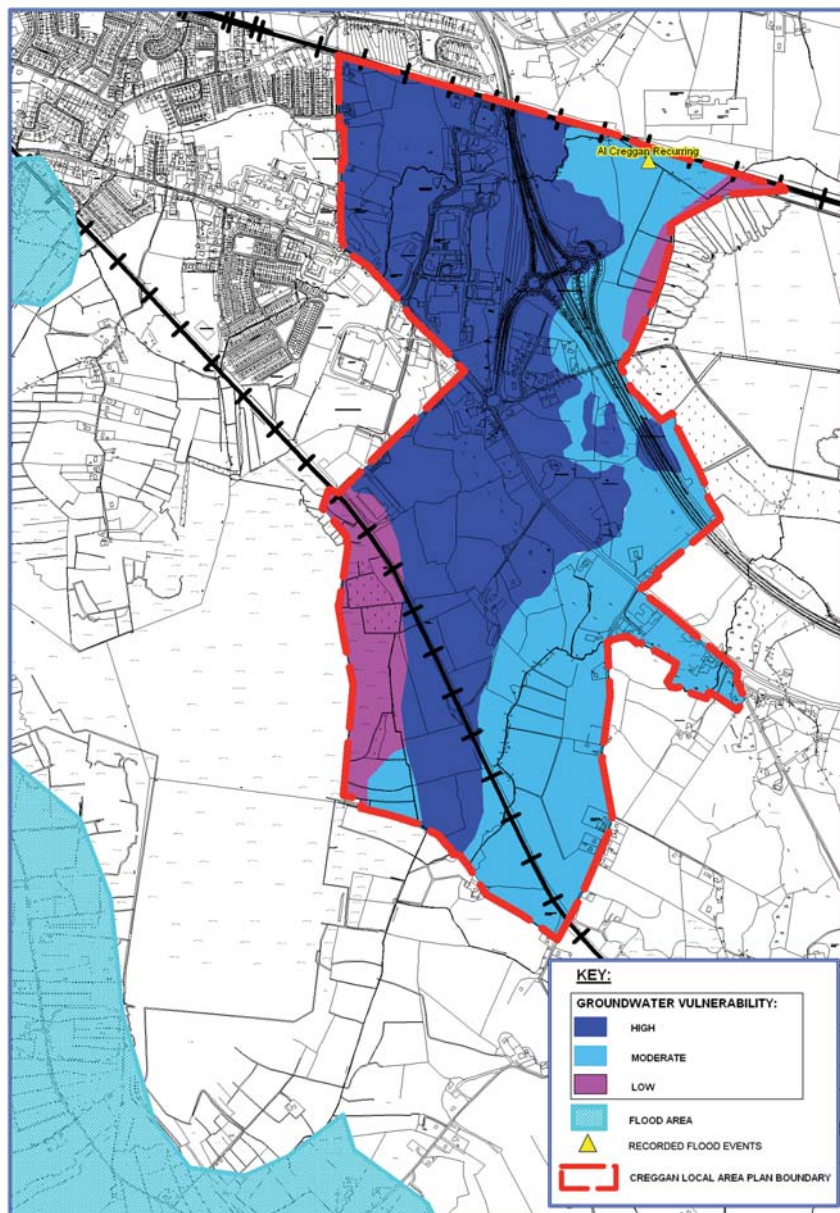
Groundwater is water that is held underground in the soil and in pores or crevices in rock. Groundwater is often an important source of potable water for private wells, group schemes and local authority supplies and for use in a range of commercial activities from agriculture to bottling water for sale.

Groundwater directly and indirectly contributes to, and sustains a variety of important ecosystems; such as the Shannon Callows to the south of Athlone.



Map Depicting Aquifers within the plan area

## 2 Strategic Context and Appraisal



Map depicting Groundwater Vulnerability within the plan area

Creggan - Local Area Plan 2010-2025

Aquifers are geological formations that contain or conduct groundwater from which water supplies for wells, springs, etc. are often abstracted. The plan area is underlain by bedrock aquifer that is moderately important only in local zones and a locally important gravel aquifer covers most of the north-eastern half of the plan area. Since the importance of these aquifers will vary with their productivity, it is essential that aquifers do not suffer from over abstraction, where pumping rates exceed the recharge rate of the aquifer.

The lands immediately west of Crosswood Bog consist of limestone and shale and poorly productive bedrock. The area encompassed by the aquifer is characterised by high groundwater vulnerability. There is a recurring flood event immediately south of the Athlone Mullingar Railway Line.

### 2.14 Transportation - Existing Context

Creggan forms the eastern gateway to Athlone and in transport terms is a strategic land bank with regard to access to the Athlone urban area, the regional Gateway, the Greater Dublin Area and other major urban centres including Galway.

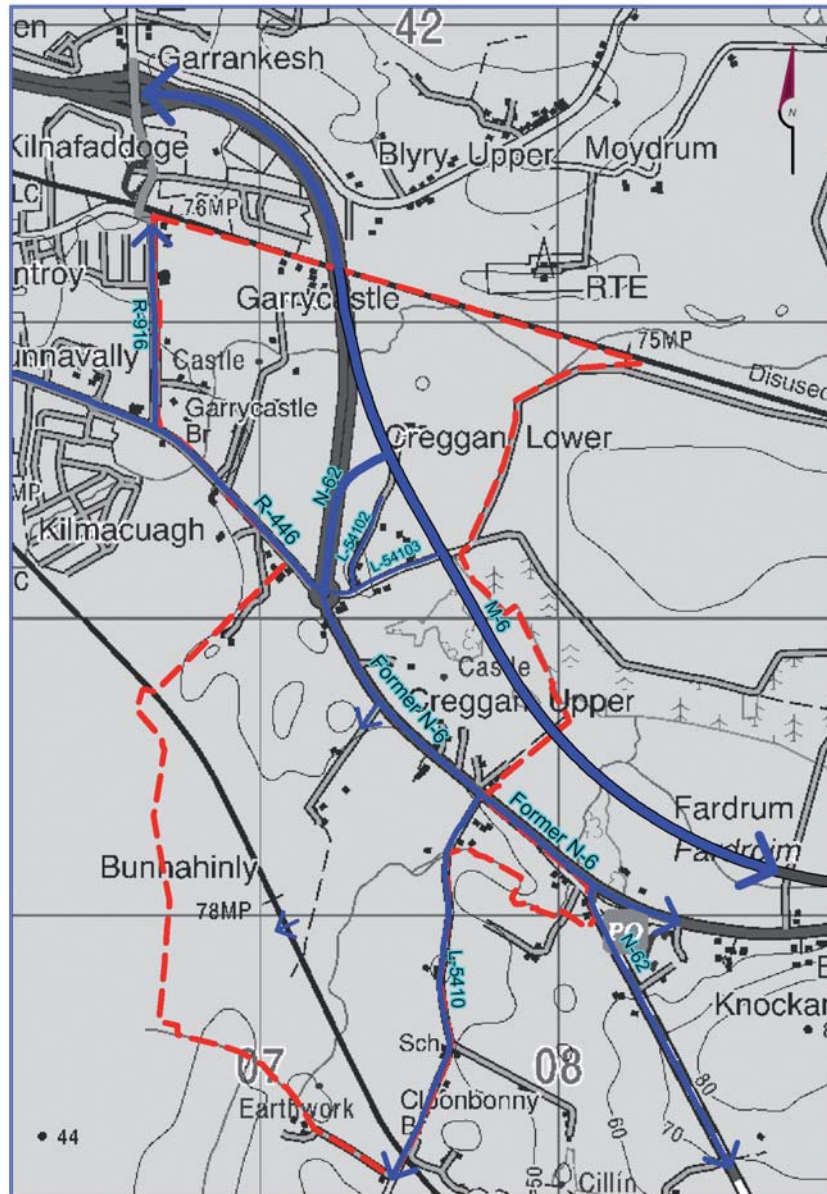
The recently constructed M6 motorway has substantially reduced travel time from Athlone to Dublin including the major transport hubs of Dublin Airport and Dublin Port and to Galway. In addition, the motorway has improved travel time between Athlone and both Mullingar and Tullamore, thereby improving connectivity for vehicular traffic between the three Midland Gateway Towns.

In the local context, Parcel A, incorporating the lands to the north of the Kilmartin roundabout are significantly developed with an established road network. To the east of the roundabout aside from the former N6, there are only limited local links. The main development lands at Athlone IT, IDA Campus and Athlone Business Park contain internal road networks. The R916 which is an important link to the N55 bounds the area on its western side.

Parcel B incorporates the lands around the new M6 Interchange and the lands to the north and east of the former N6. Local road access to residential cul-de-sacs is provided from a singular junction from the Kilmartin roundabout.

Parcel C comprising of the lands to the south of the former N6, is substantively undeveloped. This characteristic provides an opportunity to create a coherent road and street network within this area that would contribute to the creation of distinctive character areas in the context of a variety of distinctive land uses. In addition the undeveloped lands are characterised by a relatively flat topography with isolated elevated pockets.





Existing Road Network in Creggan

### Local Access & Movement

Apart from the active Dublin Galway railway line, the pattern of movement within the Creggan plan area has been determined by the M6 road network and associated approach routes into Athlone town and accordingly is car dominated. Apart from the M6, the main roads within the plan area which provide access to Athlone town centre are the N62, the R446 and the R916. The L54102 and L54103 serve the residential enclave to the east of the M6 interchange. The Clonbonny Road (L5410) abuts the eastern boundary of the plan area and provides the principal access to the National School. The recently constructed single carriageway bridge which traverses the Dublin Galway Railway Link acts as a landmark on the local landscape.

The principal barriers to movement within the plan area include the Dublin Galway and disused Athlone Mullingar railway lines and the M6 motorway.



Pedestrian & Cycleway discreetly located within highly landscaped IDA Business Park

### Pedestrian and Cyclist Movement

There are currently limited pedestrian and cyclist facilities on the existing road network within Creggan, with the exception of the network to the west of the Kilmartin Roundabout. To the east of

said roundabout, the N6 and adjoining land bank to the south is rural in nature and sparsely developed and accordingly does not benefit from any footpath or cycle-way infrastructure.

### Public Transport

#### Rail

Athlone is served by a railway station located to the north of the town centre. The Dublin Galway railway line traverses Parcel C of the plan area. Athlone is served by eleven daily services to Dublin and eight daily services to Galway. Athlone train station has undergone a recent upgrade. The disused Athlone Mullingar line abuts the northern boundary of the plan area.



Bus station in Athlone

#### Bus

Athlone is a hub for inter-urban bus transport operated by both Bus Eireann and private bus operators to the principal towns and cities within the country, including an hourly service to both Dublin and Galway.

Athlone town is currently served by two local bus routes operated by Bus Eireann. These services operate between Golden Island and Willow Park via the Bus Station and from Monksland to Garrycastle via Golden Island.

## 3 Strategy

### 3.1 Core Strategy for the Plan Area

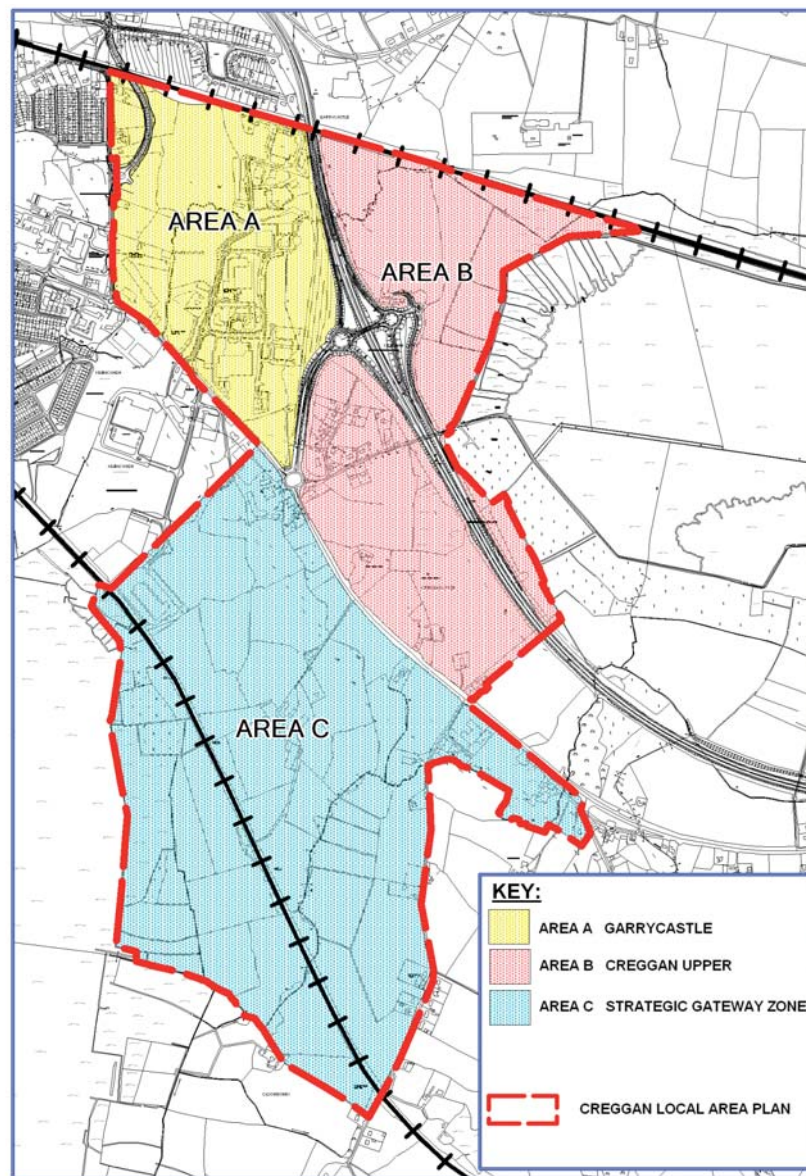
The core strategy sets out the most appropriate and optimal means of developing the area in a sustainable manner, and proposes a new urban structure set within a highly permeable layout.

The principle aim of the Creggan Local Area Plan is to develop a world class enterprise, innovation and trading hub, in order to attract high end investors from Ireland and abroad. This will be achieved by enhancing and capitalising upon Athlone's strategic location and its many assets, including its reputation for excellence in education and research and development, to create a place with unique identity befitting of the towns gateway status.

The Core Framework is based upon the following components:

- An efficient movement strategy with improved pedestrian, cycle, rail and road links
- A network of green corridors and quality open space that intertwine through the private and public domain in an integrated and aesthetically pleasing manner
- An urban design framework and land use strategy for the appropriate future development of the area
- A framework that allows flexibility to respond to changing socio-economic conditions that may affect this urban expansion

Implicit in the development of this vision, is the requirement to maximise the potential of the plan areas diverse nature and distinctive development areas. In this regard, it is considered that the three individual parcels of land with the Creggan plan should be developed as separate entities with complementary uses, in order to promote development across the entirety of the plan area. The individual character areas are described below.



Character Areas within the Creggan Local Area Plan

#### Character Area A – Garrycastle

The principle objective within Character Area A is to consolidate and develop existing economic and enterprise activity therein and promote and facilitate the development and expansion of a knowledge-based economy. The future focus of enterprise and employment development will be on the creation of knowledge-based enterprise clusters which will grow and expand to deliver knowledge-based urban quarters. The delivery of such knowledge based quarters is achievable, owing to the establishment of the Athlone Institute of Technology (AIT) and the opportunities and networks derived from same.

The linkage between the AIT campus and Garrycastle Business Park is critical for the spin-off and synergy required to fulfil the vision to develop a centre of excellence for education, research, enterprise and innovation at this location. It is considered that there is potential to develop some lands as 'technology transfer' incubators similar to current AIT operated facilities which could be expanded into the IDA campus. It is a stated objective in the Westmeath County Development Plan to promote the provision of workshop/incubator units at this location. These industries would be characterized by innovative practices which are supported by graduate led research and development.

There is capacity for intensification of enterprise and employment activity in this area having regard to available undeveloped lands in the vicinity of the IDA Business Park. The Council will continue to work with the IDA in developing these lands and will assist in the preparation of a masterplan for this Business Park in cooperation with the IDA.



### Objectives for Character Area A

- To provide for a Centre of Excellence for Education, Research and Innovation with links to AIT
- To maximise the proximity to the M6 route and high vehicular connectivity
- To provide opportunity sites as eastern 'gateway' to the Athlone with high visibility to the former N6
- To make provision for incubator/workshop units
- To provide for a 20m wildlife corridor along River AI, with potential to create landscaped walkway/cycleway to the west of this watercourse, to facilitate access to AIT lands including playing fields
- To protect the residential amenity of existing dwellings along the Garrycastle Road
- To develop an open space network, in order to maximise the amenity potential of the attendant treeline along the River AI and other significant clusters and lines of trees and established hedgerows that would allow the development of a series of interconnected spaces retaining existing features
- To investigate the potential for re-opening the disused Mullingar to Athlone Railway
- To provide a cycleway along disused railway subject to Appropriate Assessment
- To reserve free from development lands at risk of flooding
- To further develop and expand enterprise and employment activity within the IDA Business Park
- To provide a cycleway and pedestrian network with linkages to the AIT and the town centre



Existing enterprise buildings located within the Garrycastle IDA Business Park set within a landscaped network with high quality architectural built form

### Character Area B – Creggan Upper

Character Area B comprises two distinctive land parcels bisected by the M6 motorway interchange. The landbank immediately east of the M6 has been designated as a potential buffer zone around (Crosswood Bog cSAC) to ensure that there is no impact on the hydrology of the bog and to protect its conservation status. The buffer zone will extend west and south from the Natura 2000 site boundary to the existing M6 motorway and no development will be permitted in the northern parcel of Area B. The extent of the buffer zone may be reassessed once hydrological surveys, and any other required surveys and assessments, have been undertaken to ensure that there will be no adverse impacts from any development proposals on the integrity of the Natura 2000 [Crosswood Bog SAC] site.

The parcel of land to the east of the former N6 has been designated for commercial use. This landbank occupies a prominent setting and the uses prescribed for therein, must create a strong urban edge along this eastern approach into Athlone. It is envisaged that a mix of uses would be provided for within this commercial

zone such as enterprise, business/office use, tourist facilities, leisure and community uses. The principal access to this area is located off the former N6.

A tract of land along the former N6 has been reserved as open space in order to protect the amenity and setting of a cluster of structures listed on the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH).



Office Block with landscaped forecourt

### Objectives for Character Area B

- To preserve the residential amenity of existing residential cluster and individual dwellings
- To preserve the integrity of structures listed on the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage
- To provide for commercial activity commensurate with a major point of arrival to the gateway and to capitalise upon the high profile nature of these lands from former N6
- To provide new access road off former N6 to serve commercially zoned lands
- To reserve lands for open space use
- To reserve free from development lands at risk of flooding
- To reserve a buffer zone free from development, in order to safeguard the amenity of Crosswood Bog cSAC

### 3 Strategy

#### Character Area C – Strategic Gateway Zone

Given the strategic location and extent of this parcel of land (152 ha) on the periphery of Athlone, the accessibility, centrality and opportunities to avail of and enhance public transport facilities, this area represents an opportunity for development of intensive enterprise activity, which would generate significant inward investment and job creation potential.

The vision presented for the area encompasses a vibrant, high quality and sustainable centre of activity that creates a positive and lasting image of Athlone to the visitor, investor and resident alike. This vision can be realised through the development of integrated large-scale projects within the international trading sector. This centre could provide employment opportunities for both indigenous and significant potential for foreign owned and domestic owned high value industry, including high end, specialised trade, manufacturing, financial, business services and other commercial activities. In a global context, international trading has emerged as a growing economic sector. Ireland's strategic location as a gateway to the European market presents an opportunity to develop this sector and thereby contribute significantly to the local, regional and national economy.

There is considerable potential for growth in the tourism sector, arising from an increase in visitor numbers to the area, which will add significantly to the local and regional economy. Services required to support significant volumes of visitor/tourist traffic associated with the development of this area, such as hotels, leisure and conference facilities will be provided in this area.

#### Concept of Strategic Gateway Zone

In order to deliver the vision earmarked for this area, a coordinated approach is required to be taken to developing these lands. In this connection, Parcel C has been designated as a Strategic Gateway Zone.

This special status will facilitate the promotion of this area and assist delivery of an integrated proposal for comprehensive development of the area. The Strategic Zoning Designation provides for a range of specialist but complementary uses which are permissible within this area. Such uses include flagship enterprise, trade, exhibition, conference facilities and related leisure, cultural, residential and community uses including schools. High quality, creativity and innovation are of the essence within this zone.

The Strategic Gateway Zone also provides for limited residential development to support the primary uses proposed at this location. This will add to the activity and vibrancy of development at this location, in addition to providing natural surveillance throughout the day and night.

Within the Strategic Gateway Zone, the tract of land to the west of the Dublin Galway railway line is sequentially removed relative to the remaining plan area. In the interest of sequential and orderly development, it is deemed appropriate that the development of these lands would be considered in the context of the advanced development of Area C and/or the development of the proposed railway station, to ensure the continued expansion of Athlone in a sustainable manner. Accordingly, this area will provide for the medium term development of the Creggan lands.

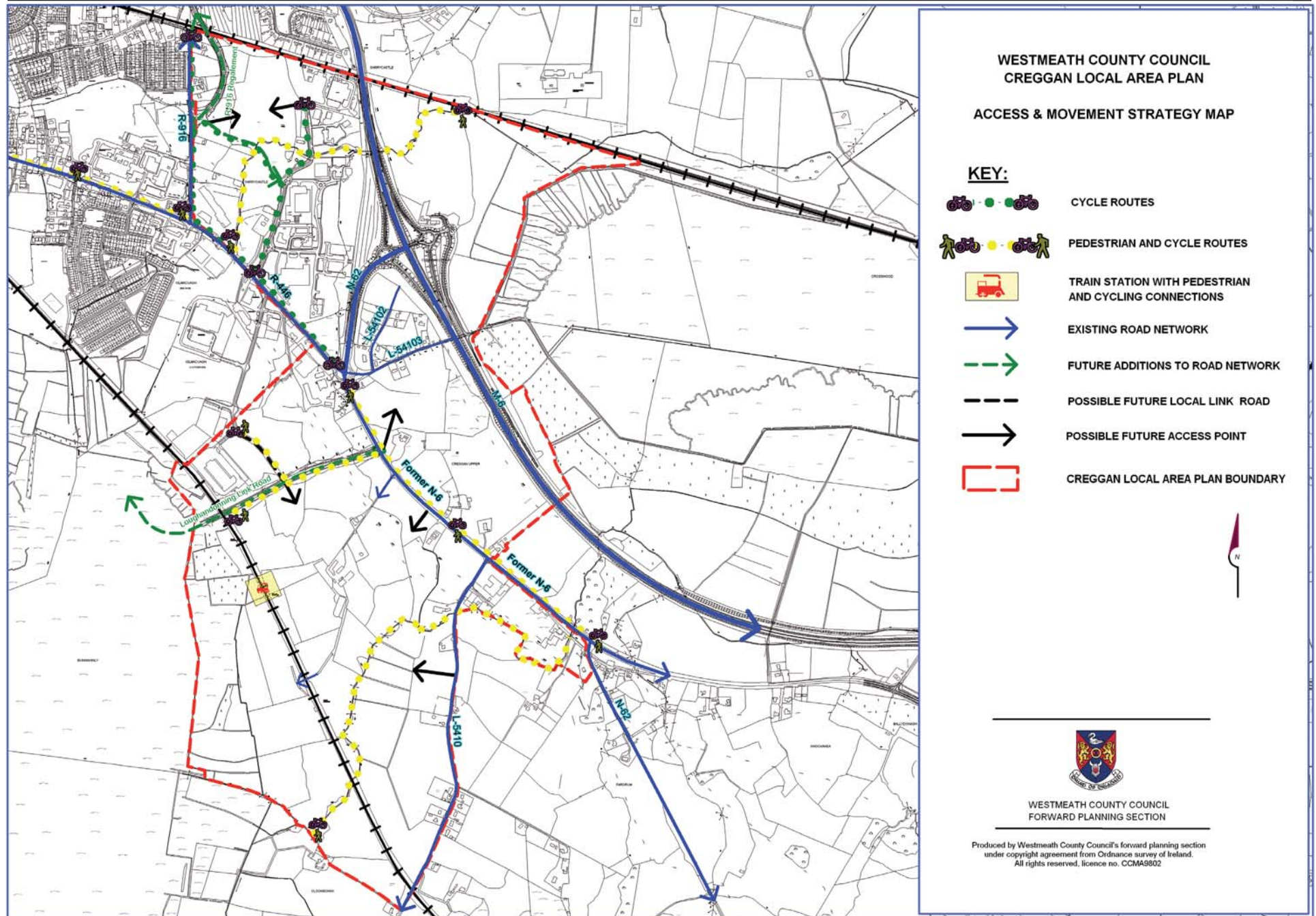
#### Objectives for Character Area C

- To provide for the integrated development of lands within the Strategic Gateway Zone
- To provide for the Loughandonning Link Road, which is a strategic road link which will connect the Creggan Area to the town centre
- To provide an internal network of roads within the Strategic Gateway Zone
- To provide a 20m wildlife and river corridor along the entirety of the Clonbonny River
- To provide for a range of educational, and community uses and local shopping to serve the area
- To provide a neighbourhood centre to the north of the proposed Loughandonning Road, in order to consolidate commercial activity at Kilmartin Retail Centre
- To investigate the potential for an open space buffer to the River Shannon area to the south and west of the plan area
- To provide a riverwalk and wildlife corridor subject to Appropriate Assessment
- To provide a public transport hub including a new train station
- To ensure that appropriate levels of service and infrastructure are available to serve the area in terms of waste water disposal, water supply and surface water disposal
- To provide a high quality internal access network to encourage the use of walking, cycling and other modes of transport
- To provide an appropriate buffer between new development proposals and established community infrastructure such as Clonbonny National School
- To reserve free from development lands at risk of flooding
- To provide for community uses and facilities in this area
- To provide for limited residential development to serve the primary uses at this location



Modern Tourist/Amenity Building envisaged within the SGZ





## 3 Strategy

### 3.2 Access & Movement Strategy

The development of the lands at Creggan including the Strategic Gateway Zone will generate additional traffic volumes both external to and within the development lands. In accordance with best practice, specific traffic management measures will be required to cater for this in a sustainable manner, that minimise private car use in a planned mobility managed environment. In particular, it will be necessary to ensure that the road network in the vicinity of the Local Area Plan area can cater for the expected demand. This in turn will depend to a significant degree on the nature and intensity of the expected development proposals that may be brought forward.

The Access & Movement Strategy seeks to address issues of connectivity by overcoming barriers to movement through the promotion of sustainable transport networks. The plan provides an integrated and permeable network of roads, thereby maximising inter connectivity within the plan area and to the town centre and surrounding lands through integration with national transport infrastructure including the M6 and national rail services. These routes will be well designed, connected, safe and easy to move through. The best practice approach to mobility is about giving people alternative options to using the car. The development of sustainable communities is based upon compact built form along public transport corridors with fully integrated cycleways and pedestrian routes. The plan seeks to achieve this goal through the promotion of public transport infrastructure, in particular, the proposed development of a new railway station in Character Area C, new pedestrian and cycleway networks and new bus services. The provision of a railway station within Area C is contingent upon a number of factors, including prior discussion and agreement with Iarnród Éireann.

The plan also recognises the benefits of integrating residential uses linked to working opportunities within Area C in particular, thereby reducing commuting patterns.

#### Public Transport

The Department of Transport in their seminal transport policy document for Ireland – “Smarter Travel – A Sustainable Transport Future 2009-2020” promote integrated land use and transportation planning, in particular the creation of compact mixed use developments which are permeable and well connected to the town centre. Central to the ethos of this policy is the requirement to provide public transport infrastructure in conjunction with the development of land. The Creggan Local Area Plan provides for the possibility of a transportation hub centred upon a new railway station along the Dublin Galway line. A residential quarter associated with the development of Area C may be established beside this important transport hub, to support the development of Creggan as an end destination. Development along this urban rail corridor should be of a sufficient density to encourage use of public transport by residents, employees and tourists. The success of this new transportation hub will be contingent upon the integration and convergence of bus routes and cycleways at this location. It is envisaged that existing bus services could be re-routed to circulate within the plan area.

#### Cycle Movement

The “Smarter Travel – A Sustainable Transport Future 2009-2020” policy document also sets out a National Cycle Policy Framework for Ireland 2009-2020”. This document seeks to promote cycling as a viable mode of transport, particularly for short journeys.

Having regard to the location of Creggan some 2km from Athlone town centre, this Local Area Plan actively promotes cycling as a sustainable mode of transport by introducing a Cycle Network within the plan area. This network will focus on centres of employment. In this regard, schools, the AIT, Garrycastle Business Park and new enterprise and commercial hubs within Parcels B and C have been identified as the principal locations within the network. Adequate bicycle parking facilities are required

at all workplaces and educational facilities located therein. The plan also provides for the integration of cycleways within the new road infrastructure in Parcel C of the plan, including along the Loughandonning Link Road.

Given the urbanised nature of Parcel A and the existing cycle network within Garrycastle Business Park, the promotion of an integrated cycle network can only be achieved through retrofitting, and by expanding the existing network with linkages to AIT, the Business Park and the R446. There is considerable potential to provide a cycleway within the landscaped campus of Garrycastle Business Park. Prioritisation should also be given to provision of cycle routes off carriageway along the approach roads into Athlone, namely the N62 and the R446 and integration with existing cycleways serving AIT. The retrofitting of cycle routes will also provide an opportunity to visually enhance the existing street network, and therefore contribute to a high quality urban landscape.

#### Pedestrian Movement

The proposed pedestrian network will extend throughout the plan area to promote sustainable movement. All vehicular routes shall provide for safe and comfortable walking in an attractive environment. The provision of pedestrian and cycle routes along the AI and Clonboony watercourses and the disused Athlone Mullingar railway line will create safe, attractive environments for pedestrians, cyclists and tourists alike, which are remote from heavily trafficked routes, thus improving permeability within the plan area and connectivity to adjoining lands. All walking and cycling routes should be well-lit, coherent, safe and signposted. There is also considerable potential to overcome the barriers of the railway lines by establishing new pedestrian and cycle connections by means of bridges.



*Well lit pedestrian route*



### Planned Road Infrastructure

#### Protection of the National Road Network

In tandem with National policy, this plan will endeavour to ensure that the safety and capacity of the National Route Network is protected. The National Spatial Strategy has designated Athlone as part of the Midland Gateway and expected growth in and around the Gateway will give rise to demands on the network. In assessing any development proposals, regard will be had to the degree to which mobility management is directed to minimise impacts on the National Route Network. In addition, significant road infrastructure improvements will be required.

#### Loughandonning Link Road

The Loughandonning Link Road from the N6 to the Town Centre at Golden Island is an objective of both the current Athlone Town Development Plan and Athlone Environs Development Plan. This road is identified as a key local road link that will provide strategic access to the Town Centre and land banks at both Creggan and Loughandonning. The Link Road will create the opportunity to open up direct access to lands in the south western sector of the Creggan Lands. This road will provide relief in terms of traffic volumes to the Dublin Road (R446) and in particular, should relieve the Dublin Road of all heavy goods vehicle traffic that is serving the Town Centre. The road is key to integrated development and connectivity of the Creggan lands within the town centre.

#### Garrycastle Road Realignment

The Garrycastle Road is a strategic regional road connecting the N55 and the N6 Garrycastle Interchange into the north west of the Creggan Lands. At present the road is significantly restricted in terms of capacity both at the interchange ramps and at the bridge over the Mullingar Rail Line. To the south of the rail line, the road connects immediately with Retreat Road and onwards into the Town

Centre. This junction is very confined with a very low traffic capacity. At its southern extent Garrycastle Road intersects with the Dublin Road at the Washhouse roundabout junction.

Westmeath County Council is currently at an advanced stage in terms of upgrading the bridge crossing, providing significantly improved access onto the southern portion of Garrycastle Road. This upgrade entails a realignment of the road via a new bridge over the rail line with new roundabout junctions both north and south of the bridge where the new road intersects the existing alignment. The proposed alignment will significantly increase the capacity of the Garrycastle Interchange and Garrycastle Road to provide local access to Athlone and the North Creggan Lands and also access to the Town Centre. Access into the Garrycastle IDA Business Park will be provided from this new road upgrade.

#### Additional Transportation Requirements

In addition to these already planned requirements, the following improvements to the public road network are likely to be required, in a phased manner commensurate within the level and intensity of development and subject to the findings of any appropriate Traffic Management Assessments, to serve the development of the lands within the Creggan and Loughandonning Local Area Plan areas.

#### Former N6

It is envisaged that a portion of the former N6 between the Clonbonny Road Junction and the Creggan Roundabout (Kilmartins) will require to be upgraded to dual carriageway status.

#### R446

It is envisaged that the section of the Regional Road R446 between the Creggan Roundabout (Kilmartins) and the Athlone Business Park Junction will require to be widened.

#### Clonbonny Road

It is envisaged that the improvement of the width and alignment of the L54101 (Clonbonny Road) from its Junction with the former N6 towards Clonbonny School will be required.

#### Junction Improvements

The following public road junction improvements are likely to be required in conjunction with the objectives of this plan, depending upon the phasing, form and intensity of development that may be proposed.

#### Creggan Roundabout

The improvement of the traffic capacity of the Junction will be required through enlargement or through alternative junction form. While it is clear that capacity improvements will be required, the precise form will depend on the form and intensity of development within the LAP area.

#### R446 Athlone Business Park/Garrycastle Business Park

Westmeath County Council has previously identified the need to improve the traffic capacity of these junctions. The Part 8 Planning Process for this has been approved by Westmeath County Council and this provides for traffic light controls. The development of the lands in the Creggan LAP area will accelerate the need for this provision.

#### M6/N6 Junction Upgrades

Depending on the intensity of development and the evolving ultimate traffic patterns, a number of junctions on the M6 Motorway/N6 Athlone By-Pass in the vicinity of the LAP area may require capacity improvements. These are likely to include (1) the M6/N6 Junction at Creggan, (2) the Garrycastle Junction, (3) the Ballymahon Junction and (4) the M6 Farnagh Junction west of Moate.



Modern Train Station envisaged within new transportation hub

## 3 Strategy

### Former N6/Clonbonny Road Junction

The junction of the Clonbonny Road with the former N6 will require to be upgraded to provide for better traffic regulation and any increased capacity that may be required in the event of access being provided to Parcel C.

### New Junctions

This plan envisages the creation of the following new junction requirements on public roads associated with the plan, the nature of which will depend upon the form and intensity of development that may be proposed.

### New Loughandonning Road Junction

The proposed new Loughandonning Road is designed to meet the former N6 at Creggan with associated junction requirements.

### New Junction to serve Parcel C and B

To access the Strategic Gateway Lands in Parcel C and the lands to the north in Parcel B, a new junction layout will be required.



Segregated Pedestrian and Cycle Routes within a Landscaped Environment

### Internal Road Network

A new network of internal roads is proposed to facilitate access within Parcel C and connectivity to the surrounding area. The precise layout and alignment of same will be determined at development management stage. The Loughandonning Link Road is a strategic route traversing Parcel C which will provide access into the Strategy Gateway Zone and another access to same will be provided off the former N6.

### Mobility Management

Development proposals on the lands within the LAP area will be required to prepare Traffic Impact Assessments, Mobility Management Plans, Parking Strategies and to show how such proposals comply with the Department of Transport "Smarter Travel – A Sustainable Transport Future 2009-2020".

It will be an objective of this plan that development of the lands in the LAP area should be designed and organised in such a manner as to achieve a modal split in accordance with the Government's "Smarter Travel" transport policy, for travel to and from the area for both workers and business visitors. All such plans will be required to reduce reliance on car based travel and to maximise pedestrian and cycle movements particularly for short journeys. The provision of bus based transport will also be a fundamental consideration. The railway line through Parcel C on the Creggan lands presents an opportunity to divert a proportion of longer distance commuters and business visitors away from road travel and this should likewise be maximised.

The Council will apply reduced car parking standards in response to proposals presented as part of a mobility management scheme.

### Strategic Transport Assessment

The plan has been brought forward within the principles established by the DoEHLG Spatial Planning & National Roads (Draft) Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2010" and has been subject to a Strategic Transport Assessment in accordance with the methodology prescribed in these guidelines. This Strategic Transport Assessment was carried out on foot of consultation with the National Roads Authority. This transport assessment provides a broad appraisal of the main traffic impacts arising from the development of these lands on the existing national and local road network. In terms of a receiving environment, the current traffic conditions in the Creggan area are suitable to support appropriate additional development of quite a significant scale.

A broad transport impact analysis has concluded that some capacity enhancements are required at the national primary roads and junctions within the plan area, to provide adequate residual capacity, in excess of that required to cater for additional traffic arising from the types of development envisaged on these lands. A suitable reserve capacity is required for future growth in long distance national traffic along the M6/N6 Dublin to Galway inter-urban route. The key areas of impact identified in the report on the existing road network are as follows: Creggan Roundabout, N6/M6 Junction 8 and the N6 Athlone Bypass. The Strategic Transport Assessment states that more detailed local traffic studies will be required to be carried out at development management stage, to determine the extent and timing of capacity enhancements.

This report recommends a number of upgrades to the road network. The key road improvements required are as follows:

- |  |          |
|--|----------|
| a) Creggan Roundabout Enhancement  | Capacity |
| b) N6/M6 Junction 8: minor enhancement   | capacity |
| c) N6 Athlone Bypass Widening to Dual 3-lanes between Junction 8 Creggan and Junction 11 Coosan over a length of 4km |          |

All feasible efforts have been proposed to reduce the traffic impact on the national road network by the following measures:

- Significantly enhanced local road network with 2 new links (Loughandonning Link Road and Athlone Business Park Link to R446) and major improvements to 2 others (R446 Dublin Road and Garrycastle Road);
- An extended town bus service to maximise modal share by public transport;
- A dense network of walking and cycling routes to encourage these modes to the greatest degree.

Modes of transportation to serve the plan area, in addition to and as an alternative to the private car are considered in detail in the Strategic Transport Assessment. Additional demand in the region of 400 to 800 passengers per hour in the peak direction would be expected to be generated by the proposed employment developments at Creggan. The required additional capacity would amount to 8 to 16 buses per hour. As such development in this area will help to sustain a high-frequency bus service along the R446 Dublin Road between Creggan and the town centre.





**Priority shall be given to a bus based public transport service**

An orbital bus service would also probably be viable along the Garrycastle Road, Ballymahon Road and Two Mile Road to Coosan which would link to most of the residential areas around the northern edge of Athlone. A further bus route option will be along the proposed Loughandonning Link Road through a new residential area linking to the town centre at Golden Island. Bus priority measures will be considered at locations of potential delay on the town road network so as to support a fast and reliable bus service.

Additional demand for walking of up to 1,000 persons per hour in the peak direction could be expected to be generated by the development of the Creggan lands, in addition to a demand for cycling of up to 600 persons per hour in the peak direction. These high numbers will sustain and justify the proposed investments in high-quality pedestrian and cycle facilities in the eastern part of Athlone.



**Proposed pedestrian and cycleway infrastructure will reduce car dependency**

### Access & Movement Objectives

- To provide a new internal road network including pedestrian and cycleway infrastructure within the Strategic Gateway Zone
- To facilitate the provision of the Loughandonning Link Road including provision of access to the Strategic gateway Zone and access to the proposed transportation hub
- To provide a primary access to the Strategic Gateway Zone off the former N6
- To provide the primary access to Parcel B off the former N6
- To provide a new junction layout at intersection of former N6 and Loughandonning Road
- To provide for the upgrade of the former N6 between the Clonbonny Road junction and the Creggan roundabout
- To integrate and improve permeability of the portions of Parcel C severed by the Dublin-Galway Railway by a link(s) from the Loughandonning Road over the railway
- To facilitate the development of a new transportation hub supported by a new railway station
- To re-open disused Mullingar Athlone Railway Line
- To improve the existing road network in terms of pedestrian and cycle facilities and necessary capacity improvements
- To overcome the barriers of the existing railway lines and watercourses by establishing new pedestrian and cycle connections by means of bridges subject to Appropriate Assessment
- To require workplaces and educational facilities to produce mobility management and transportation plans
- To reduce the need to commute longer distances to Athlone and further by providing for integrated residential land use
- To provide for sustainable movement within the plan area with effective links to the town centre
- To ensure design, construction and management of the road network to prioritise pedestrians, cyclists and public transport
- To prioritise a bus-based public transport service at the earliest phases of development and to seek the earliest delivery of rail services to augment this service
- To promote the planting of native species when considering the landscaping requirements of new transport networks and to minimise the impact of new streets and roads on existing local flora and fauna
- To promote the use of public transport including cycling and walking and thereby reduce car dependency
- To require traffic and transport assessments to be produced for development proposals which would impact on both the national and local road network

## 3 Strategy

### 3.3 Landscape & Open Space Strategy

The landscape and open space strategy develops an integrated landscape structure within which the overall development of the plan area is sited. The strategy provides for a landscape structure that will:

- Reinforce and protect positive elements of the existing environment and landscape character, including topography and archaeological features.
- Act as a structuring and integrative element that will underpin the proposed urban structure and help to mitigate the visual impact of development on the elevated landscape.
- Create a landscape that will sensitively receive and integrate new buildings as opposed to screening them.
- Create a green network that will connect places within the plan area and provide links to the wider network of green spaces in surrounding areas.

The plan provides for a range and hierarchy of open spaces for Creggan. A network of well-designed open spaces adds to the character of places and is a key determinant for people when deciding to live, work or visit an area. Open spaces also have an intrinsic value by providing green infrastructure that enables mitigation against climate change, whilst providing valuable wildlife habitats and sporting and recreational facilities. The diverse landscape within the plan area offers the opportunity to create an inspiring public realm.

In order to be successful, movement networks through the open space framework need to be inviting, overlooked by development and connected to public spaces. The provision of seating and stopping and resting options should be implemented in animated, well-lit areas, thus encouraging an integrated use of space.

#### Typology of Open Spaces

The Creggan Local Area Plan provides for a hierarchy of open spaces as follows:

- Open space buffer along western corridor of Parcel C – This tract of land is largely comprised of bog. As such, this area is considered suitable for passive recreation and will act as both a buffer to the adjacent Shannon Callows and as an important corridor for biodiversity.
- Wildlife Corridors along Rivers AI & Clonbonny – There is considerable potential to develop amenity walkways and cycle routes along these watercourses and thereby enhance and protect the ecological value of same.
- Wildlife Corridors along Dublin Athlone and Mullingar Athlone Railway Lines – The lands immediately adjoining the railway tracks are defined by mature tree stands and hedgerow which are rich in wildlife and biodiversity and thus provide an attractive environment for pedestrian and cycle links.
- Tract of land to the east of the former N6 – This tract of land has been designated as open space in order to protect a grouping of three NIAH structures and a recorded protected monument, and thus safeguard localised views of same.
- Pocket Parks to serve residential development within the Creggan land.
- Buffer area in the vicinity of each protected monument. This open space buffer is required to safeguard the integrity of these recorded monuments.
- An area of lands to the east of the M6 motorway has been designated as a buffer to safeguard the amenity and conservation status of Crosswood Bog cSAC.
- Network of Play Areas

Development proposals will be required to have regard to this network of open space and lands reserved for open space use, including Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems and shall integrate with this overall structure.

#### Open Space Objectives

- To promote the development of public green spaces throughout the plan area
- To provide a network of play areas in strategic locations overlooked by areas of housing and linked by pedestrian and cycle pathways
- To protect the ecological value of existing wildlife corridors along the railway lines and watercourses
- To protect existing landscape features of character and amenity value such as significant hedgerows and tree stands and incorporate them into the urban structure
- To provide tree lines along the Loughandonning Link Road
- To promote and maximise the use of green open spaces to facilitate sustainable drainage systems and enhance the potential for biodiversity
- Seek to ensure that commercial enterprises plant and landscape their grounds in a manner that connects to the overall public realm
- Seek the greening of new and existing roads, streets and spaces, together with the provision of new and improved street lighting, bicycle parking and well-designed street furniture spaced at regular intervals
- Promote the provision of recreation and sports uses within the plan area, suitable for use by the surrounding community



Open space integrated within an urban framework



### 3.4 Urban Design Strategy

A flexible and coherent Urban Design Strategy is critical in promoting the proper planning and sustainable development of Creggan. This section establishes the general principles and strategies that are proposed for this area. The urban form provided for the plan emanates from key structural elements, existing environmental assets, the nature of surrounding development and the overall vision to create a business and trading centre of international appeal attractive to inward investors. The urban design strategy seeks to achieve a flexible and realistic framework for the growth of this urban quarter and the creation of sustainable communities therein. It focuses upon urban design guidance at both a strategic and character area level.

#### Principles of Urban Design

Urban Design is the art of making places for people. It is therefore concerned with how places function and appear. It encompasses the connections between people and places, movement and urban form, nature and the built fabric and the processes for ensuring successful places are delivered and maintained. The plan seeks to implement sustainability at all levels of urban design and is based upon the following Urban Design Principles:

**1. Connectivity & Accessibility** – To enhance connections between and throughout the constituent character areas and to adjoining areas and the town centre, by improved relationships between community, built form, space, mix of use and the continued development of pedestrian, cycle and transport networks within an active and safe public realm. The integrated transport structure proposed in the plan provides for a network of roads, pedestrian and cycle routes and new train station, together with new river and railway crossings which will substantially increase permeability within the plan area and connectivity to Athlone town.



*Treelined pedestrian and cycle route segregated from main carriageway*



*Built form set within in a permeable layout punctuated by landmark buildings*

**2. Legibility** – To improve the legibility of the natural and built environment and encourage the connections between place and space. This is to be achieved by responding to local landscape features and existing built form and developing a legible hierarchy including key public spaces and landmark buildings. The following features within the plan are key contributors to the legibility of the area and include:

- Provision of landmark buildings within the Strategic Gateway Zone and Parcel B will act as entrance portals to Athlone town.
- The neighbourhood centre will act as a hub for local shopping and community services along the Loughandonning Link Road.

- The network of open spaces including the open space buffer, pocket parks, riverside and railway corridors and a treelined local distributor road allow residents, employees and tourists to navigate through the plan area.
- The proposed train station will provide the principal transport node serving the plan area and as such will act as a focal point within Parcel C.

**3. Variety of Uses** – To promote a good variety of uses and contribute to the quality of life of existing and future communities. A wide range of living and working environments, intertwined with public and cultural buildings and other community uses are actively promoted in the plan. Each character area is defined by distinctive land uses. The Strategic Gateway Zone in particular provides for a range of specialist uses such as conference facilities, in addition to cultural, residential, leisure and community uses.



*Business Park set within a landscaped campus*

### 3 Strategy



*High quality buildings creating a sense of place*

**4. Design & Layout** – To promote a high quality of architectural design which shall evoke a sense of place within Creggan, developed through the integration of appropriate form, function and relationship with the surrounding context. The plan actively supports cutting edge and energy efficient design for all signature buildings which are to be set within highly landscaped environments.

**5. Open Space, Landscape, Amenity** – To identify and implement strategic walking and cycling routes and networks, building strong links and connections with strategic nodes and places of importance, while also trying to strengthen local identity and opportunities for quality living. The plan puts forward an open space network with integrated public realm based upon a hierarchy of green spaces for amenity, sports, community greening, a variety of play areas and safe and friendly streetscapes.

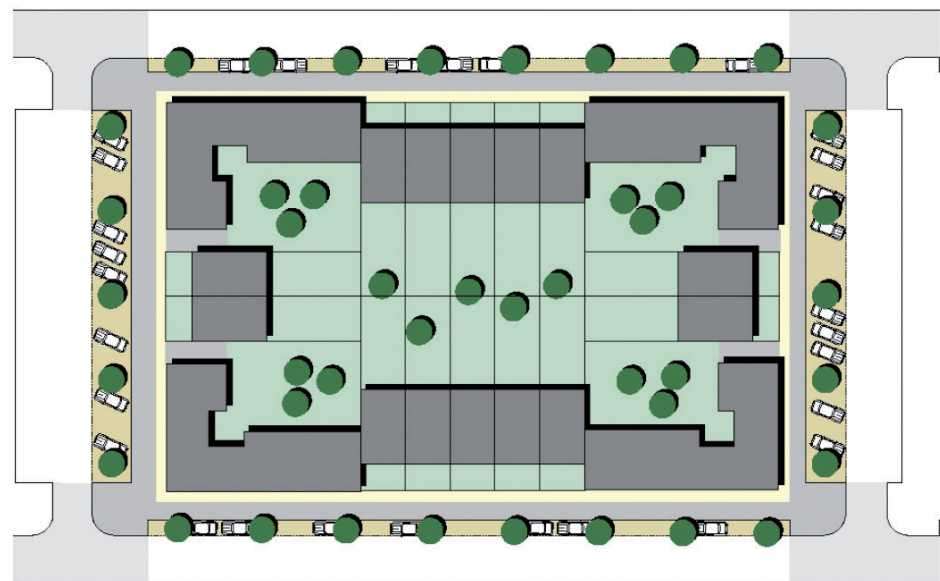


*Park overlooked by buildings*

**6. Urban structure** - A principal aspect of the urban structure is the creation of connections to surrounding areas and high levels of permeability within the plan area. A new urban avenue is a key organising element and will act as a development spine.

The perimeter block is the preferred block typology. It allows building fronts to be orientated towards streets and spaces, while the inactive backs are orientated towards the interior of the block and the private areas. This arrangement creates a clear distinction between public and private space and contributes to the creation of a legible environment. The privacy and security of interior courtyards is maintained and activity associated with the front of buildings is focussed on streets and spaces. This contributes towards the creation of a vital and active public realm that is passively policed and feels safe for users.

There are numerous variations in the way that buildings can be arranged within the overall structure of the perimeter block. The block can absorb a range of building types, each with individual entrances from the street. This degree of flexibility encourages variety in architectural and building design.



*Perimeter Block Diagram ©www.loci.ie*





*Development proposals in Character A shall take design cues from existing built form*

### Character Areas

Creggan comprises of a number of distinctive character areas, each of which contains unique historical and physical characteristics which in turn has resulted in land uses specific to those areas. A principal aim of the Urban Design Strategy is to ensure that a clear identity emerges in each character area and that connections between each area are strengthened and managed. In the following section, each of the three character areas will be characterised in terms of their specific role in the formation of the urban design strategy and the opportunities each district presents in developing Creggan as a sustainable urban quarter with a unique sense of place.

### General Urban Design Guidelines for the Character Areas

The following guidelines are applicable to each Character Area of the Creggan Plan Area:

- All developments should seek to encourage innovative, creative and contemporary architectural design solutions and permeable layouts
- Buildings shall be sited within a landscaped setting to facilitate their integration
- Public and private open spaces within the plan area shall incorporate public artwork, sculpture and/or water features as part of enhancing the public realm and the visual amenities of the area
- Development should be encouraged to use sustainable design practices and be energy efficient in terms of the building design and operation and adhere to the principles of passive solar design
- The placement of wiring and cables underground is desirable and will form an important aspect of improving the quality of the plan area
- All developments will seek to ensure that surface car parking should be discreetly integrated in the landscape, arranged into cells and defined by planting
- Development fronting the M6, former N6 and the Loughandonning Road shall be located within highly landscaped settings
- All developments should provide quality public space with a high standard of street furniture and public lighting and creation of key public open spaces
- Development should be sited so as not to impact upon or undermine the setting of recorded monuments and structures listed on the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH)
- The urban and block structure will ensure frontage to most pedestrian routes to ensure passive supervision of same
- Childcare facilities should be required within new enterprise and employment areas to serve the needs of the workforce and local community
- Community and social infrastructure should be located where walking, cycling and the use of public transport can be maximised
- Development proposals should be accompanied by Construction Management Plans at development management stage
- To ensure the sustainable design, construction and management of buildings including ecological foot-printing of major development proposals as part of any EIA process
- The Council will require the submission of a visual impact assessment for major development proposals within the plan area
- The Council will require a detailed landscape and urban structure plan for each constituent character area

## 3 Strategy

### Character Area A - Garrycastle

#### Key Design Objectives

- To respect the established pattern of development within the IDA Business Park and allow for intensification and diversification of use
- To strengthen the R & D capacity of AIT with the involvement of IDA Ireland, local industries and other research agencies
- To facilitate improved links and connectivity within Area A and to adjoining lands including AIT
- To protect and enhance the amenity of the River AI including existing mature treelines and hedgerows along its course
- To upgrade the physical character of the area, including the visual enhancement of the R446

#### Design Guidelines

- All enterprise and employment structures shall be located within highly landscaped settings with connections to the green spaces and transportation networks
- Design cues should generally be taken from the existing built form
- Adaptability in building type and layout is encouraged to facilitate all types of enterprise
- To reduce the mass of industrial buildings by disaggregating massing and volume, and considering solid to void proportions and relationships, and the locations and design of entrances
- Enclose part of the servicing function within the structure as an integral building component, including cycle and bin storage areas
- Signage should be an integral part of the building design

### Area B - Creggan Upper

#### Key Design Objectives

- To provide for commercial uses within high quality buildings set within highly landscaped environments
- To create a distinctive point of arrival into Athlone with prominent quality landmark buildings, to signify the status of Athlone as a gateway town
- To improve permeability within this area and to adjacent lands through the provision of vehicular, pedestrian and cycle routes
- To provide an open space corridor to protect the integrity of a group of NIAH structures and recorded monument
- To create a strong urban edge to the south-eastern approach into the town
- To reserve land free from development in order to safeguard the protected landscape of Crosswood Bog
- To protect and safeguard the setting and integrity of existing and identified built heritage within this area

#### Design Guidelines

- Landmark buildings shall be of the highest design quality and shall include high quality public and private open space that accentuates the landscape setting and prominent location
- The form, detailing and materials should be innovative and of a high quality
- Landmark Buildings may be the subject of Architecture competitions and should feature celebratory artwork, water features and/or other visual markers
- All new development adjoining the M6 will be required to provide for appropriate noise attenuation measures, which are to be designed in consultation with the Planning Authority
- New development proposals should have regard to Westmeath County Noise Action Plan

### Area C - Strategic Gateway Zone

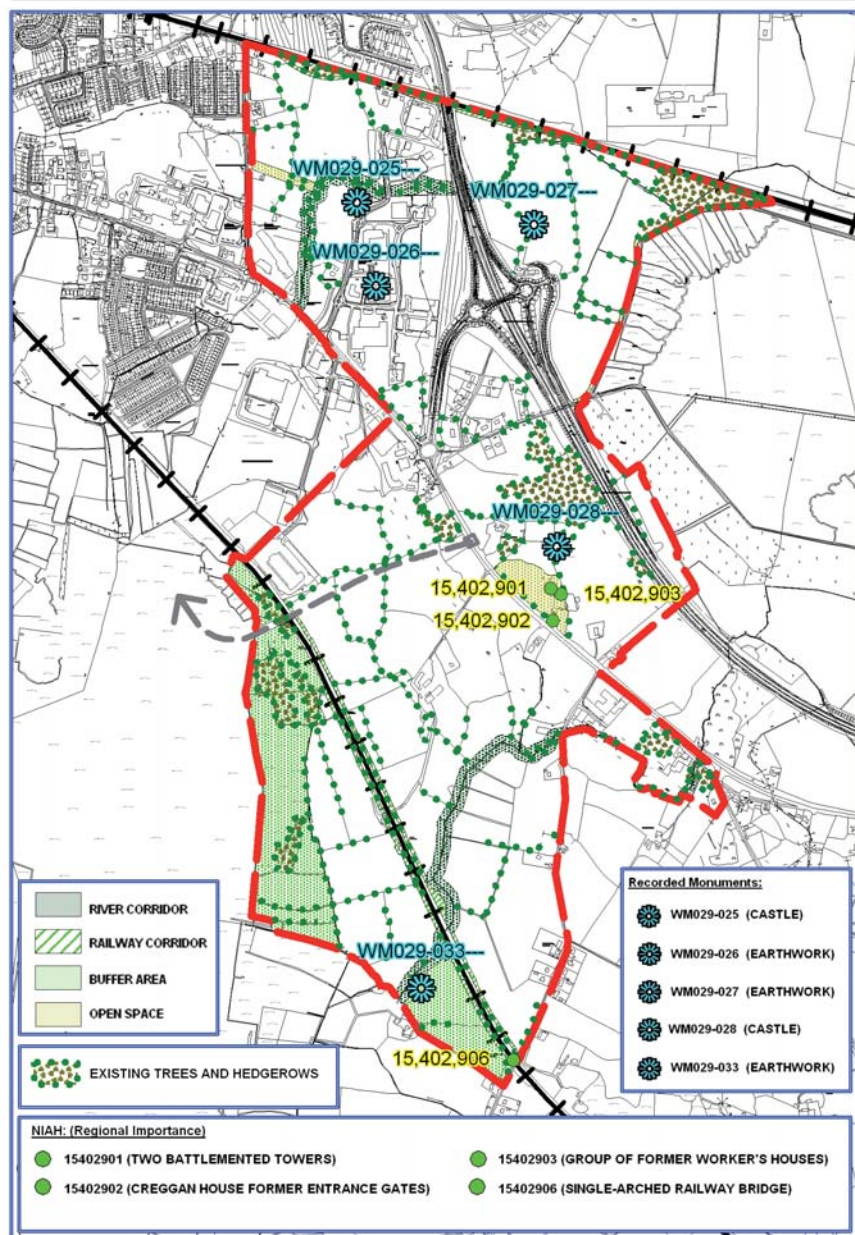
#### Key Design Objectives

- To provide an opportunity for the development of an integrated and dynamic enterprise zone
- To facilitate a mix of specialist uses, in addition to community, recreational and educational development
- To create a multi-nodal transportation hub based upon a new railway station with integrated pedestrian, cycle and bus routes
- To establish a new urban structure to serve the area, to include a network of streets, pedestrian and cycle routes and public spaces
- To facilitate the provision of the Loughandonning Link Road which will act as a main link to the town centre

#### Design Guidelines

- Creation of quality buildings to create a sense of arrival at the gateway of Athlone
- To reinforce the Loughandonning Link Road as an urban boulevard
- To provide tourist and cultural development in iconic buildings
- To provide an integrated open space network with permeable pedestrian and cycle links
- To overcome barriers to movement along the railway line and watercourses through the provision of suitably designed crossing points
- To seek to upgrade the existing urban fabric at the Kilmartin Roundabout
- Promotion of cutting edge innovative design, permeable layouts and high quality public realm, having regard to national and international best practice
- To provide an access point to the SGZ off the Loughandonning Road and former N6 to serve the SGZ and provide for a link to Athlone Business Park





### 3.5 Heritage Strategy

The built and natural heritage should be protected and incorporated sensitively into the development of the area. The strategy seeks to enhance and protect natural heritage areas and features of historic merit and their setting, together with provision of natural and wildlife environments and quality public realm. New development shall have regard to the Heritage Plan 2010-2015, which provides for the protection and conservation of the natural, built and cultural heritage of the county.

All of the recorded archaeological sites and buildings of architectural merit (including their environs), should be avoided and protected from any impact during the development of Creggan Local Area Plan lands. If impact on sites cannot be avoided, specific recommendations and mitigatory measures should be undertaken. All of the recorded archaeological sites identified within the study area at this stage are protected under the National Monuments Act and its subsequent Amendment.

In order to conserve the five recorded monuments located within the plan area, a minimum distance of 10-15m, to be measured from the outside extent of the monument, is to be reserved as a buffer zone free from encroachment by buildings or structures. Detailed, development-specific archaeological and architectural assessments should be undertaken at the pre-application stage. These should include the results of, or recommend the undertaking of, non-intrusive surveys such as topographical, geophysical and architectural survey and intrusive investigations such as archaeological test trenching. Archaeological monitoring of all topsoil stripping is also recommended for all greenfield areas within the Creggan LAP study area. The carrying out of such tests will inform the final extent of any buffer.

Archaeological monitoring of all topsoil stripping shall be carried out for all greenfield areas within the Creggan LAP area.

The existing natural heritage areas within the immediate environs of the plan contain particularly sensitive landscapes. A buffer is to be established around Crosswood Bog in order to protect the integrity of this candidate SAC. The buffer zone

will extend west and south from the Natura 2000 site boundary to the existing M6 motorway and no development will be permitted within this area. The extent of the buffer zone may be reassessed once hydrological surveys and other required surveys and assessments have been undertaken, to ensure that there will be no adverse impacts from the implementation of the plan on the integrity of this Natura 2000 site. An open space buffer has been designated along the western corridor of the plan area, in order to safeguard both the amenity and localised views of the Shannon callows.

It is important that the built heritage of the Creggan is conserved for future generations. This plan seeks to consolidate and reinforce the existing built heritage, and promote development that will complement and build upon the existing character of plan area. It is considered that the existing grouping of the battlemented towers, the workers cottages which served Creggan House and the former entrance gates to Creggan House are particularly noteworthy. The former features represent fine examples of nineteenth century architecture associated with the former Creggan House and are locally elevated on the landscape. Accordingly, in order to protect both the setting and interpretation, in addition to localised views of said structures, a linear open space corridor to the east of the former N6, is proposed forward of same.

An active approach to conserving the ecological benefits of hedgerows would include retention, where possible, of stretches of hedgerow. Hedgerows could be provided as part of a median strip/swale for the streets designed to provide green links to the surrounding countryside, or as boundaries between sites. A policy of planting new hedgerows as part of the overall landscape should be encouraged not only for ecological benefit but as a legacy of the historic agricultural nature of the landscape. In addition, newly created wetland areas under Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) will have the potential to enhance biodiversity.

## 3 Strategy

### Natural Heritage, Built Heritage & Archaeology Objectives

- To undertake detailed development specific archaeological and architectural assessments in advance of any future development proposal. These should include the results of or recommend the undertaking of non-intrusive surveys such as topographical, geophysical and architectural survey and intrusive investigations such as archaeological test trenching
- To undertake archaeological monitoring of all topsoil stripping for all greenfield areas within the plan area
- To ensure that cycleways and walkways are located and designed in such a way as to protect existing biodiversity, flora and fauna
- To provide a buffer around Crosswood Bog cSAC, in order to protect the integrity of this candidate SAC
- To have regard to the Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora
- To control and manage alien/invasive species (eg Japanese knotweed, Giant Hogweed, Zebra Mussel etc) and noxious weeds (eg ragwort, thistle, dock etc) within the plan area
- Sustainable development and flood risk management in areas that are connected to the Natura 2000 shall be subject to Appropriate Assessment
- To protect the integrity of adjacent and connected Natura 2000 sites
- To protect and safeguard the setting of existing and identified built heritage sites

### 3.6 Sustainability Agenda

The plan seeks to promote greater environmental sustainability through the use, where feasible, of sustainable built form, Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems and promotion of alternative energy sources.

#### Sustainable Built Form

It is important that buildings and spaces can respond to changes such as market conditions, climate change and living circumstances. The aim is to create life long buildings and spaces which are flexible, sustainable and can be adapted to accommodate the future needs of society. Designing to allow for extension, expansion and sub-division is a critical factor in both industrial and office buildings. The promotion of low energy built form can be achieved by adopting the following elements:

- Improved thermal insulation
- Natural Ventilation
- Orientation to optimise solar gain
- High efficiency lighting



*Land reserved for sustainable urban drainage systems*

### Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems

The basic elements of SUDS should be incorporated into the design of new development, as a means of controlling surface water discharge. The main techniques to consider include:

- Control of storm water, run-off and water retention, soakaways, water features, ecological areas, permeable paving, swales
- Collection and use of rain and grey water
- Building design and rainwater runoff.

The use of SUDS has cost advantages such as avoiding the need to install connections to storm sewers. In addition, these areas help create attractive environments and provide community, ecological and image benefits.

### Alternative Energy

New development should actively seek to incorporate renewable energy sources such as solar panels, photovoltaic cells and wind turbines, and these features should be integrated at the initial design stage.



*Use of sustainable energy*

### Sustainability Objectives

- The use of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) shall be advocated on new developments to treat and eliminate potential contamination arising from diffuse sources such as construction or stormwater runoff
- Major development proposals shall be required to submit an energy conservation strategy at development management stage
- To maximise access to sustainable modes of transport including cycling and public transport
- To provide for appropriate waste recycling facilities
- To promote the careful consideration of building orientation, form, massing and fenestration to make the most of passive solar gain for space heating
- To promote reduced water use through rainwater harvesting and recycling of rainwater and in-building grey water treatment systems
- To encourage adaptable design for building evolution
- To encourage the use of renewable energy sources



### 3.7 Water, Surface Water and Wastewater

The Creggan LAP area is well served by existing water and proposed wastewater infrastructure. The Council will seek to ensure that the protection of water resources and ground waters is a primary consideration in its water services functions. In addition to the policies of the Council outlined in Chapter 7 of the Westmeath County Development Plan 2008-2014, or the relevant chapter of any subsequent County Development Plan, the following objectives are applicable in the plan area:

#### Water, Surface Water and Wastewater Objectives

##### Water

- To promote the sustainable use of water resources and thereby minimise wastage in the water supply network
- To support the implementation of the River Basin Management Plan and its associated programme of measures

##### Surface Water

- To promote the protection of surface water and groundwater resources and their associated habitats and species, including fisheries
- To ensure that planning applications have regard to any existing groundwater protection schemes and / or the likely impacts that future development would have on groundwater source protection zones
- Development proposals within the plan shall have regard where relevant to the following documents:
  - "Fishery Guidelines for Local Authority Works" (DCENR, 2008)
  - "Guidelines on the Planning, Design, Construction & Operation of Small-Scale Hydro-Electric Schemes and Fisheries" (DCENR, 2007)
  - Eastern Regional Fisheries Board Guidance Notes "Requirements for the Protection of Fisheries Habitat during Construction and Development Works at River Sites" (ERFB, 2006)
  - "Maintenance and Protection of the Inland Fisheries Resource during Road Construction and Improvement Works – Requirements of the Southern Regional Fisheries Board" (SRFB, 2007)
- New development proposals shall have regard to the Regional Fisheries Board guidelines for watercourses in urban environments
- To ensure best practice measures are implemented during the construction phases of development to prevent contamination of surface or ground water
- To ensure that any alteration to the surface water drainage in the area does not negatively impact upon the surface water levels within Crosswood Bog cSAC and Shannon Callows cSAC
- To ensure that all developments within the Creggan area adhere to best practice and legislative requirements during construction and operation to prevent discharge of contaminants and pollutants to surface water or groundwater. Discharge from any proposed development will be properly licensed and monitored in accordance with best practice and legislative requirements
- To protect and maintain undeveloped riparian zones and natural floodplains along the River Shannon and its tributaries

##### Wastewater

- To assess the capacity of waste water facilities in the case of all development proposals within the plan area.



*Urban School overlooked by residential scheme*

### 3.8 Community Services & Infrastructure

The timely provision of community facilities and services is a major aspect of achieving sustainable communities. These facilities should be provided for in tandem with the development of this land. The plan facilitates the provision of community services for the resident population, in addition to making available adequate amenities for future communities. The provision of these facilities will form part of the "planning gain" from development of the area and will be provided for in part by Development Contributions Schemes. The Council will also seek contributions towards the cost of funding new community facilities in the area required to serve existing and proposed development.

The plan makes provision for a new school in Creggan. A typical block of approximately 5,000m<sup>2</sup> in area would be required to facilitate an urban school. There is also potential for expansion of existing Clonbonny Primary School to meet future educational demands. Any new

educational facility shall meet the requirements of the DoEHLG Guidelines "Provision of Schools & The Planning System – A Code of Practice for Planning Authorities 2008". The recreational facilities to be provided in conjunction with the school should be designed with the objective of maximising their availability to the wider community and their contribution to the wider, open space structure.

Current guidelines require the provision of one childcare facility (with a minimum of 20 places) per 75 dwellings as part of development proposals. These should preferably be located in accessible focal positions along principal routes. The business hubs within Areas B and C will have to be served by adequate childcare facilities, which shall be carried out in accordance with the DoEHLG publication "Childcare Facilities Guidelines 2001".

The plan makes provision for a number of community facilities. Community centres should

## 3 Strategy

be sited beside, near or integrated with other community facilities to assist in reinforcing the 'genius loci' of the area and to assist in facilities being accessible to all by walking, or using public transport, thus promoting a steady stream of patronage which will facilitate the operational viability of the centre.



**Park Central Birmingham - Innovative Community Park**

In addition to a school and childcare facilities the following community and civic uses are provided for in the plan:

- Train Station
- Community Centre
- Amenity walkways & cycle routes
- Provision of children's play areas
- Community/Pocket Parks
- Bus Service
- Local shopping facilities and services
- Recreation and leisure facilities to serve local community
- Health and Medical Centre

### Waste Disposal Services

Adequate provision should be made for storage and collection of waste materials, with appropriate reference to the projected level of waste generation, collection frequencies and types and quantities of receptacles required. The following general design considerations should be taken into account in the provision of refuse storage facilities:

- Sufficient communal storage area to satisfy the 3-bin system for the collection of mixed dry recyclables, organic waste and residual waste;
- Consideration should also be given to the provision of separate collection facilities for other recyclables such as glass and plastics;
- Adequate ventilation of waste storage areas so as to minimise odours and potential nuisance from vermin / flies;
- Provision of appropriate signage and instructions with respect to communal waste storage and collection services;
- Waste storage areas must not be on the public street, and should not be visible to or accessible by the general public. Appropriate visual screening should be provided, particularly outside apartment buildings.

### 3.9 Flooding

Increasingly, the location of new development is being determined by climate change and potential for increased incidences of flooding. Mitigation measures in the form of an open space buffer has been designated in the environs of the sole recurring flooding event recorded within the plan area.

It is Council policy to take into account the requirements of the EU Directive (2007/60/EC) on the assessment and management of flood risks. The DoEHLG has recently published guidelines for Planning Authorities on "The Planning System and Flood Risk Management" and all development within the plan area should have regard to the recommendations contained therein. The guiding principal is to avoid areas at risk of flooding, particularly in floodplains, unless there are "demonstrable, wider sustainability grounds that justify appropriate development and where the flood risk can be reduced or managed to an acceptable level without increasing flood risk elsewhere".

A Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) has been undertaken of the plan area, in accordance with "The Planning System & Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2009". The purpose of the SFRA is

to provide a broad (area-wide) assessment of all types of flood risk to inform strategic land-use planning decisions.

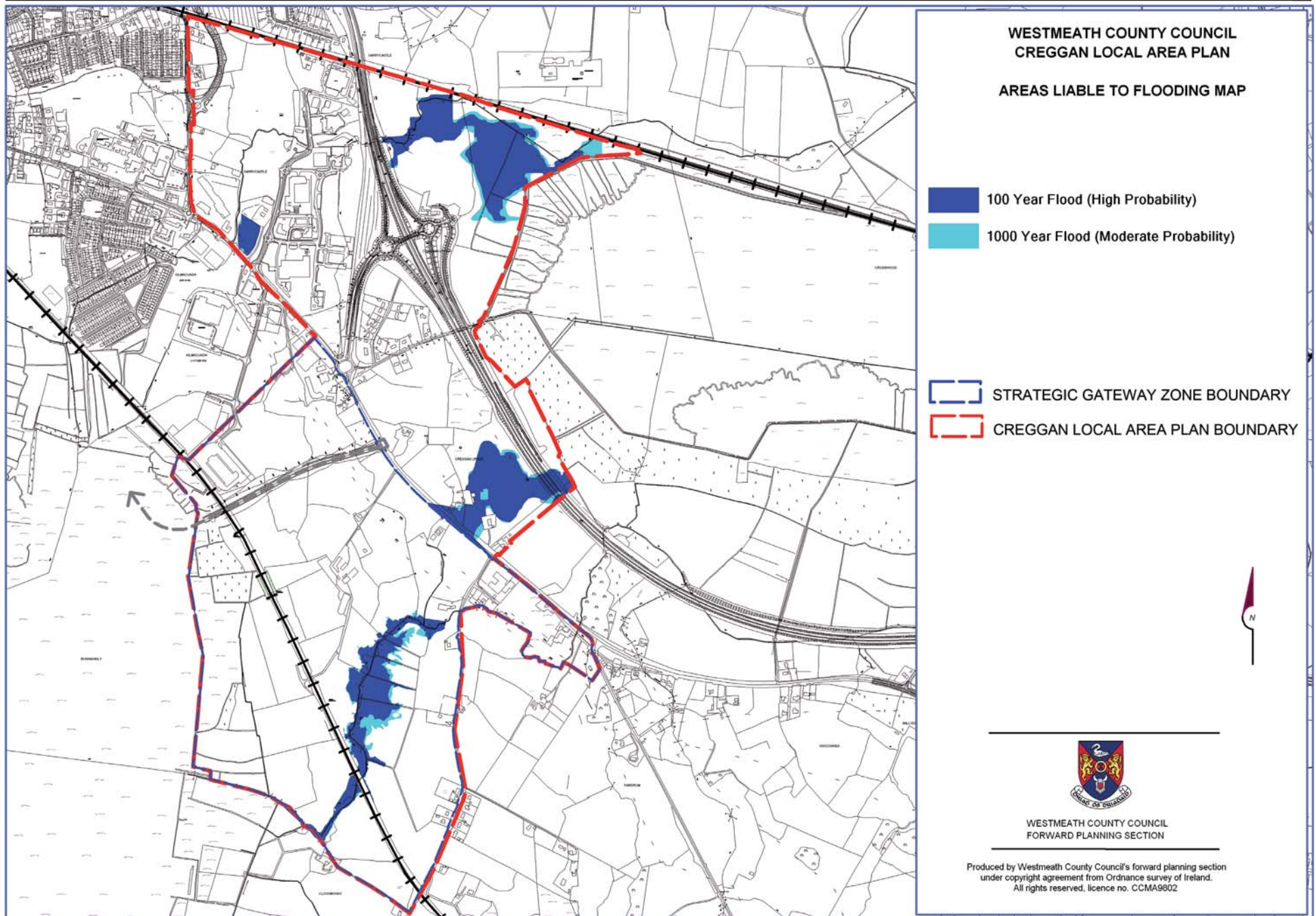
The recommendations of this SFRA assessment include the avoidance of development in areas of moderate or high risk, which is consistent with the aforementioned Guidelines. In compliance with these guidelines, development will be avoided in areas identified as being of high or moderate risk of flooding (ie) 1 in 100yr and 1 in 1000 yr, with respect to both the Clonbonny and AI Rivers. It is acknowledged that both river catchments will need further more detailed flooding investigation and analysis, to establish the exact extent of the areas at risk of flooding. In this regard, development proposals located in proximity to areas of high or moderate risk of flooding, shall be accompanied by a detailed flood risk assessment at development management stage.

In addition, an appropriate level Flood Risk Assessment should be carried out for proposed development outside these flood risk zones, where there is a history or likelihood of urban (pluvial) flooding caused by the failure or surcharging of drainage infrastructure.

### Flooding Objectives

- To implement the DoEHLG Guidelines for Planning Authorities on "The Planning System and Flood Risk Management" 2009
- To reserve lands identified as being at high or moderate risk of flooding free from development
- New development proposals shall have regard to existing hydrological studies carried out the AI and Clonbonny Rivers
- Developments should, where applicable incorporate provisions to reduce the quantity and rate of surface water run-off. Considerations should include the provision of soakaways and the use of permeable or semi-permeable materials in the construction of car parks and play areas
- Development proposals in areas at high or moderate risk of flooding shall be accompanied by a detailed Flood Risk Assessment at development management stage





## 4 Development Management Standards & Controls

### 4.1 Land Use Zoning Objectives & Matrix

#### Land Use Zoning

This section sets out the general land use and zoning policies and objectives of the Plan. It provides an explanation of the land use categories and the zoning objectives that apply to them. The purpose of zoning is to indicate the land use objectives for all the lands within the Creggan area. The primary purpose of land use zoning is to promote the orderly development of the Creggan area, by eliminating potential conflicts between incompatible land uses and to establish an efficient basis for investment in public infrastructure and facilities.

#### Land Use Zoning Categories

The following sections set out the objectives and requirements of the Planning Authority for the main categories of land use. In total there are land-use zoning categories as follows;

1. Residential
2. Commercial
3. Enterprise & Employment
4. Educational & Institutional
5. Open Space/Amenity
6. Strategic Gateway Zone

#### Residential:

To provide for residential development and associated services and to protect and improve residential amenity.

#### Commercial:

To provide for commercial development which cannot be located within the town centre and facilitate the expansion of existing commercial uses.

#### Enterprise and Employment:

To provide for enterprise, employment and related uses including industrial and service uses. As such lands within this zone could facilitate an intensification of the IDA Campus; warehousing, logistics & industry; and business, science and technology park.

#### Educational & Institutional

To provide for, protect and improve educational and institutional facilities including community facilities.

#### Open Space & Amenity

To provide for, protect and improve the provision, attractiveness, accessibility and amenity value of public open space and amenity areas, and to reserve lands for active recreational use.

#### Strategic Gateway Zone

This plan introduces the concept of a "Strategic Gateway Zone" to facilitate the development of an enterprise zone with international profile including trading, which will involve inward investment commensurate with the objective of promoting the growth of Athlone as a linked gateway and employment centre. The guidance provided within this zone is not intended to be overly prescriptive. Rather the plan has been designed to be flexible and responsive so that creativity and innovation is encouraged in the design process, commensurate with the overall objective for the integrated development of Area C as set out in this plan.

#### Land Use Zoning Objectives

The Matrix lists the more common forms of development, and indicates in which zones particular development would normally be permitted (P), is open for consideration (O) or would not normally be permitted (X). It should be emphasised that the matrix is for general guidance only and that each individual application will still be judged on its merits. Factors such as density, height, traffic generation, design criteria and physical environmental aspects are also of importance, in determining whether or not a development proposal conforms with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area

#### Non-Conforming Uses

Throughout the plan area there are uses that do not conform to the zoning objectives for the area.

These are uses which;

1. were in existence on 1st October, 1964,
2. have valid permissions or,
3. have no permission and which may or may not be the subject of enforcement proceedings.

Extensions to and improvement of premises referred to in categories 1 and 2 above may be permitted. This would apply where the proposed development would not be seriously injurious to the amenities of the area and would not prejudice the proper planning and development of the area.

In assessment of planning applications for development within the plan area, regard shall be had to the DoEHLG publication "Development Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities" (2007)



## 4.2 Zoning Matrix

Type of Development	Residential	Educational/ Institutional/ Community	Enterprise & Employment	Commercial	Open Space/ Amenity	Strategic Gateway Zone
A.T.M.'s	X	P	P	P	X	P
Abattoir	X	X	X	X	X	X
Advertising structures	X	O	O	O	X	O
Agri-business	X	X	O	O	X	O
Agricultural building	X	X	X	X	O	O
Agri-tourism	X	X	O	O	O	O
Amusement arcade	X	X	X	O	X	O
Ancillary plant	O	O	O	O	O	O
Betting office	X	X	X	O	X	O
Car Sales/repairs	X	X	O	O	X	O
Caravan park;	O	O	X	X	X	X
Caravan park; Holiday	X	X	X	O	O	O
Casual-trading	X	X	X	O	O	X
Cemetery	X	O	X	O	X	O
Church	O	P	O	O	X	P
Cinema	X	O	O	O	X	P
Commercial car-park	X	O	P	P	X	P
Community Hall (recreation & functional)	O	O	O	P	O	P
Conference	X	O	O	O	X	P
Crèche/Nursery	P	P	O	O	X	P
Cultural use	P	P	O	O	P	P

Type of Development	Residential	Educational/ Institutional/ Community	Enterprise & Employment	Commercial	Open Space/ Amenity	Strategic Gateway Zone
Dance Hall/ Discotheque	X	X	X	O	X	O
Doctor/Dentist	P	P	X	O	X	P
Dwelling	P	O	X	O	X	P
Education	P	P	O	O	X	P
Energy generation	O	O	O	O	O	P
Energy installation	O	O	O	O	O	O
Exhibition	X	X	O	O	X	P
Extractive industry	X	X	X	X	X	X
Funeral home	X	O	O	O	X	O
Garden centre	X	X	O	O	X	P
Golf course	X	X	X	X	X	P
Guest house	O	O	X	O	X	P
Halting Site/	X	X	X	O	O	X
Housing	P	O	X	X	X	P
Health centre	O	O	O	O	X	P
Heavy industry	X	X	X	X	X	X
Heavy vehicle park	X	X	O	O	X	O
Helipad	X	X	O	X	X	P
Holiday home	X	X	X	X	X	O
Hospital	X	P	O	O	X	P
Hotel	O	X	O	O	X	P
Household fuel depot	O	X	P	P	X	O
Kennels	X	X	X	X	X	O



## 4 Development Management Standards & Controls

Type of Development	Residential	Educational/ Institutional/ Community	Enterprise & Employment	Commercial	Open Space/ Amenity	Strategic Gateway Zone
Landfill site	X	X	X	X	X	X
Light industry	O	O	O	O	X	O
Multi-storey car park	X	O	P	P	X	P
Offices <100m2	O	O	O	O	X	P
Offices 100m2 –1000m2	X	O	O	O	X	P
Offices >1000m2	X	X	O	O	X	P
Off licence	O	X	X	O	X	P
Open space	P	P	P	P	P	P
Park & ride	O	X	O	O	X	P
Petrol station	X	X	O	O	X	O
Public house	O	X	X	O	X	P
Public services	O	O	O	O	O	O
Recycling plant	O	O	P	P	X	P
Residential institution	O	O	X	O	X	P
Restaurant/Cafe	O	O	O	P	X	P
Retail warehouse	X	X	O	O	X	X
Retirement home	P	P	X	O	X	P
Science & Technology	X	O	O	O	X	P
Scrap yard	X	X	O	X	X	X
Service yard	X	X	O	O	X	O
Shops - local	P	O	O	O	X	P
Shops - neighbourhood	O	X	X	O	X	P

Type of Development	Residential	Educational/ Institutional/ Community	Enterprise & Employment	Commercial	Open Space/ Amenity	Strategic Gateway Zone
Shops - major	X	X	X	X	X	X
Small workshop	O	X	O	O	X	P
Sports facility	O	O	O	O	X	P
Take-away/ Fast food	X	X	X	O	X	O
Telecom structures	O	O	P	P	X	P
Tele-services	X	X	P	O	X	P
Tourism-recreational complex	O	O	X	O	X	P
Trade	X	X	O	O	X	P
Train Station	X	X	X	X	X	P
Training Centre	O	P	O	O	X	P
Transport Depot	X	X	O	O	X	P
Urban-Nature Reserve	O	O	O	O	X	P
Utilities	X	X	O	X	O	P
Veterinary surgery	X	X	X	O	X	O
Warehouse	X	X	P	O	X	P
Waste Transfer Facility	X	X	X	X	X	P
Wholesale outlet	X	X	X	O	X	P



### Development Management Standards

Part 7 of the Westmeath County Development Plan 2008-2014, outlines the primary development management standards for the plan area. In addition, the following guidelines are also applicable:

#### 4.3 Built Form



*Athlone Town Council Civic Offices overlooking important civic space*

#### Key Buildings

Buildings and sites at prominent locations such as corner sites, end of streets, closing off vistas, have the potential to act as important locators and should address the urban context. In some cases, it may be more appropriate to increase building heights so as to provide greater emphasis on the building, but there will also be a greater expectation of design quality and architectural treatment.

#### Corner Sites

Corners should be accentuated by the building design. Buildings on corner sites should equally address both street frontages, with openings, windows and where appropriate, entrance ways. There are various possibilities to address a corner, e.g. an increase or stepping up in building height, a round corner, a stepped back corner (for example, to create a civic space), or a simple played corner. Such buildings should be designed to an exceptional standard that is carried through all its elevations.

### Landmark Buildings

A landmark or object building is a single outstanding building which can be of a different scale, or of a more notable design than its neighbours. It should be associated with a specific setting or context. Landmarks should only be acceptable where they will substantially enhance the character and legibility of an area, for example by marking an important street corner or contributing to the character and quality of a particular place. Landmarks should not compete with existing landmarks. Consideration will be given to the cumulative effect of landmark developments in an area because too many landmark developments in an area may undermine the urban fabric of the area.

Landmark buildings particularly those of civic status, help to provide reference points and emphasise the hierarchy of a place, and thus are particularly suited for inclusion with Character Area B and C, to reinforce the gateway status of Athlone at this strategic entrance. Such

buildings should achieve a high standard of architecture and should be at the cutting edge of contemporary urban design.

#### 4.4 Scale, Mass and Composition

An appreciation of scale is one of the key elements in the design consideration for new buildings; the building's size must relate to its neighbouring buildings. Building scale essentially refers to the height and massing relative to people, proportions and components and the features of the facade and how these relate to each other. If these components of a building's design are excessively large when compared to neighbouring buildings along a particular street, then the scale, mass or bulk of the building is likely to be out of place and could be an intrusion on the streetscape. Exceptions may be permitted, but will be dependant on use, particularly if it is a building of major public importance or if the use demands such a building and the location is deemed to be the

most appropriate because of site characteristics or the degree to which it can contribute to the economic vitality of the area.



*Staggered building height adds visual interest*

#### 4.5 Building Height

The plan does not stipulate building height controls per se, but these will be assessed having regard to surrounding development and location. A relatively consistent building height will ensure that the topography is reflected in the development of these lands. The context height for buildings within the Strategic Gateway Zone, and along the Loughandonning Road should be higher to reflect a greater intensity of use at these locations.

In the case of a Landmark building, each application shall be assessed on its own merits. Applications for development on such sites should be accompanied by a visual assessment.

The siting and design of Landmark Buildings shall take account of the constraints of the site in question and shall adhere to the assessment criteria as set out in Westmeath County Council Building Height Policy.

The context height for development within Character A should be two to three storeys, in order to reflect the nature of established development therein. Provision is made for an increase in height in the business and trading quarters within Character Areas B and C to reflect a significant and higher intensity of use.



*Landmark Arts Building of innovative design*

## 4 Development Management Standards & Controls

### 4.6 Density and Intensity

The Creggan Local Area Plan is not prescriptive in relation to densities and heights. The DoEHLG has in recent years, published national guidance documentation aimed at improving the overall quality, sustainability, 'liveability' and design of new residential communities and mixed-use schemes and these guidelines should be adhered to in any proposal within the plan area. The guiding principal is to create quality places in which people would like to reside, visit and do business. Qualitative standards should be the real test and innovative design solutions which achieve good performance standards should be considered on their own merits.

Generally, two-storey development should be considered as the context building height in residential areas. Roof space could be provided to allow for lofts or future conversions. There is potential for higher density development particularly adjacent to public transport hubs such as the railway station.



*Use of planting and street furniture enhances the street design*

### 4.7 Street Design & Layout

The design of streets should take into account their function, type, density and character of the development. Width of carriageway or building line need not be constant over the length of a street. In addition, localised narrowing to single lane working can be used to calm traffic. Generally, layouts of buildings and spaces should be considered first, and not be dictated by carriageway alignment. Planting should preferably be an integral part of street design.

The Loughandonning Link Road will act as the principal urban spine road within Character Area C. This urban avenue will be the subject of detailed and innovative design, and will provide for pedestrian and cycle movement and bus priority. The built form fronting this route should provide a degree of enclosure and should be set within a landscaped environment.

The network of internal roads to serve the Strategic Gateway Zone shall be fitted with pedestrian and cycle infrastructure.

Priority should be given to visually enhancing the existing street network within Creggan through the provision of additional tree planting, incorporation of high quality street furniture and public lighting and retrofitting of pedestrian and cycle links.

While the layout of streets should facilitate crossing the street for pedestrians at any point, a focus should be on junction spacing and design. A greater number of junctions and active traffic calming measures such as raised tables at junctions can facilitate crossing the road for people with prams and those with disabilities and also reduce traffic speed. Narrowing the carriageway and reducing the perceived width of the street, by closer building lines, build outs and tree lines also help to improve the pedestrian environment and moderate speeds.

Reference should be made to the following documents in the design and layout of streets:

- Traffic Management Guidelines, DoELG and DTO, 2004,
- Manual for Streets, Department of Transport (UK), 2007,
- Car Parking: What Works Where, EnglishPartnerships (UK)
- Home Zones, Dept for Transport (UK), 2005.



*Street layout with priority for residents and not cars*

### 4.8 Shared Spaces

The plan envisages a network of shared spaces, home zones and courtyards which will be designed on an individual basis responding to local conditions and urban design considerations. Vehicular access should be restricted to residents and visitors, and priority in the layout should be on pedestrian movement and children's play. Shared off-street parking, such as internal courtyards, is preferred to additional on-street parking, especially in traffic calmed streets or home zones. In all instances parking should be visually integrated with the built form.



*Perpendicular Parking*

### 4.9 Car Parking

A balance must be found between on-street and offstreet parking. In areas of lower density, on-street parallel and perpendicular parking may be adequate to serve requirements of residents and visitors. In areas of higher density, car parking on-site will be required on the surface or in purpose-built car parking structures.

It will be important to ensure that car parking does not dominate the building frontage or street character. It should be carefully designed and should be adequately softened in terms of planting such as tree lines and build-outs.

Where car parking is provided on-site it should be located behind the building line or in carefully designed courtyards. This will reduce the need for large front gardens and set-backs and so improve the street proportions and character.

In addition, adequate bicycle storage provision is required to be made within or close to both residential units. Cycle parking should be sheltered, secure and should be located no less conveniently than car parking relative to dwellings, places of work and businesses.



### 5.1 Developing the vision

The purpose of the Creggan Local Area Plan is to outline a vision for the area and a physical framework for achieving that vision. The Plan describes how three designated character areas should be developed and establishes the provision of a Strategic Gateway Zone, to act as a driving force and major economic generator for the area. The plan content includes considerations such as character, context, accessibility and connectivity and an urban design framework and provides for a set of core concepts for the development of this area. This document should be used to inform the next phase of development of these lands, which is site layout and detailed design. While the plan is not prescriptive in nature, there is a strong commitment to achieving:

- Appropriate mix of uses
- High quality urban form, landscape structure and public realm
- Improved access and permeability through the promotion of public transport infrastructure
- Major employment generation projects
- Comprehensive development based upon sustainable movement and connectivity to the existing urban area

Development proposals will be judged critically against the qualitative aspects of the plan and the principles of sustainable urban design and place-making.

### 5.2 Phasing

The vision and objectives of this plan will need to be driven by appropriate structures and arrangements. Given the extent of the lands and the nature of the ownership in the Area, it will be difficult to dictate a phasing strategy for development. Key infrastructural elements such as the Athlone Main Drainage, the Loughandonning Link Road and other road improvements identified will be essential support to the comprehensive development envisaged for Area C.

The infrastructural requirements for the development of Character Area A are already largely in place and intensification of use and further development is not dependent upon additional public capital investment.

The overall development of Character Area C should be undertaken in accordance with an integrated scheme for the comprehensive development of these lands.

### 5.3 Development Contributions

The Council will when granting a permission under S34 of the Planning and Development Acts 2000-2010, include condition/s requiring the payment of contributions in respect of public infrastructure and facilities benefiting development in its area and that is provided, or that is intended will be provided, by or on behalf of the Local Authority, in accordance with Development Contribution Schemes made under the Planning And Development Acts 2000- 2010.

The Council's policy is to reserve 15% of lands zoned for residential use or mixed development for social and affordable housing in accordance with the Planning and Development Act 2000-2010 (Part 5) and the Housing Strategy for County Westmeath 2008-2014. Accordingly Westmeath County Council will require a 15% quota of social/affordable housing to be provided on each housing development on lands zoned or reserved for residential use, or for a mixture of residential and other uses within the plan area.

### 5.4 Supplementary Infrastructure

New social and physical infrastructure will be necessary and of direct benefit to the plan area. The Council has powers which can help achieve some aspects of the plan, such as compulsory acquisition powers which may be used, if required, to facilitate site assembly or to secure the realisation of objectives contained in the Plan.

The Council can also require developers to contribute to the achievement of the specific objectives of this plan, including those relating to the provision of physical and social infrastructure, within their individual development proposals. In order to fund the support infrastructure to fully implement the plan, Supplementary Contribution Schemes may be applied to the benefiting area.

Pending the adoption of new contribution schemes, contributions in respect of public infrastructure and facilities benefiting the development, will be levied by the Planning Authority, on the basis of the established General and Supplementary Contribution Schemes for the area.

### 5.5 Monitoring

It is a requirement of Article 10 of the SEA Directive that Member States monitor the significant environmental effects of the implementation of plans in order to identify at an early stage unforeseen adverse effects and to be able to undertake appropriate remedial action. For the purposes of monitoring the implementation and effects of the plan, the Council will establish a Review Group. This Review Group in conjunction with Athlone Town Council will include relevant agencies to ensure the implementation of the plan does not compromise the environmental criteria identified for the area.

As part of the monitoring process, the Review Group will seek to:

- Carry out appropriate survey work and collate the necessary data required from other agencies to effectively monitor the environmental effects of the plan.
- Prepare a monitoring report on the implementation of the plan every two years.

Monitoring will have particular regard to the key issues identified in the assessment of the plan, and will need to provide the framework to trigger remedial action if necessary.

A more detailed programme for monitoring will be put in place, taking into account:

- :: The time, frequency and geographical extent of monitoring,
- :: Budget for cost of monitoring, and
- :: Detailed allocation of responsibilities individual monitoring collection, collation and recording tasks.

### Monitoring Proposals and Environmental Indicators

It is proposed to monitor the effects on the environment of implementing the LAP, presented in terms of the achievement of the environmental protection criteria and the impact on the environmental factors that the SEA legislation requires to be considered. Monitoring will focus on the main environmental issues.

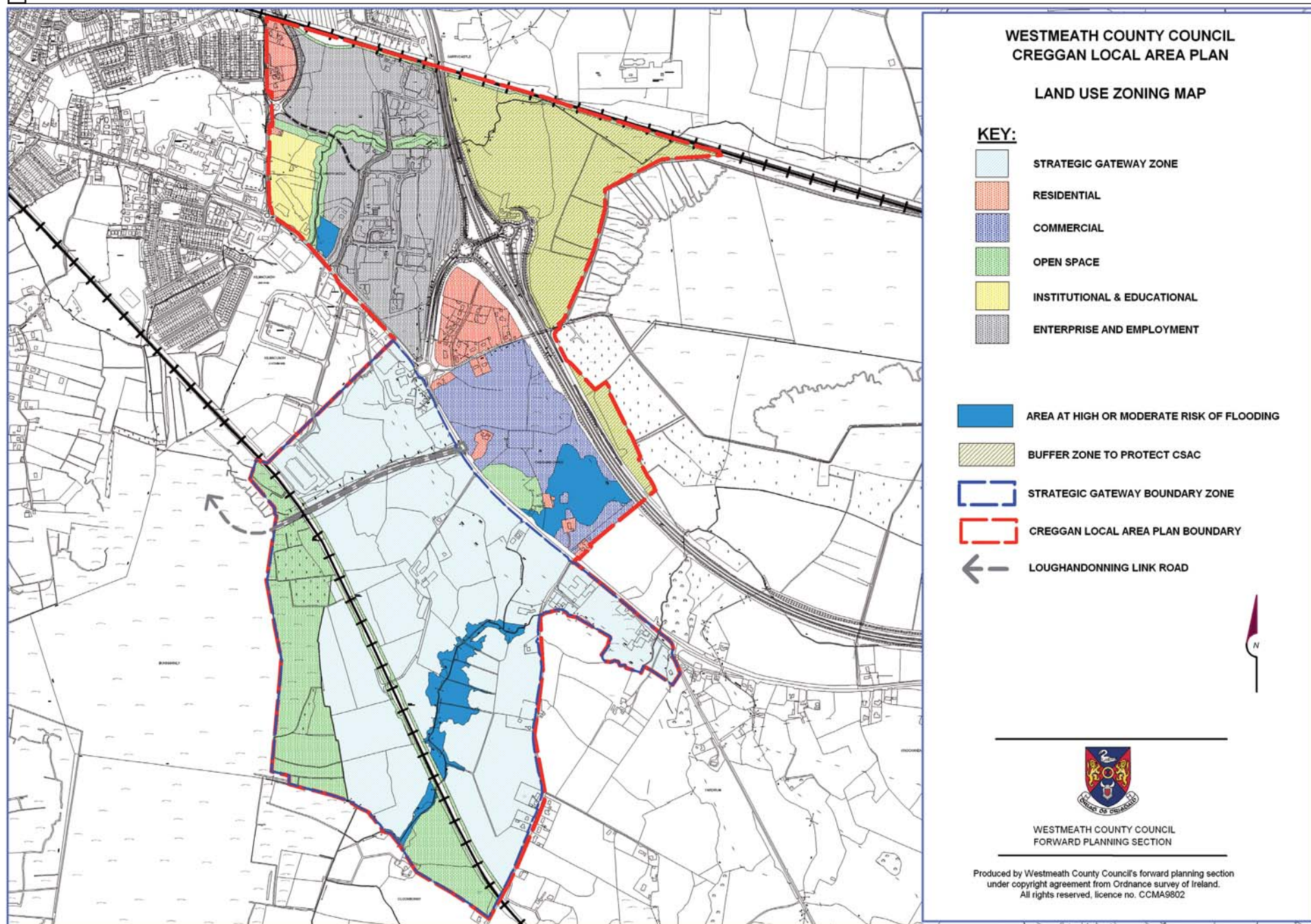
Indicators may be quantitative and/or qualitative in nature and may:

1. State the environment indicators (quality, or quantity of physical and biological or chemical phenomenon).
2. Stress indicators (reflecting development effects).
3. Performance indicators (used to evaluate long-term achievements in environmental management and protection).
4. Sustainable development indicators (seeking to describe and measure key relationships between economic, social and environmental factors).

### Monitoring Responsibility

Overall responsibility for monitoring will lie with Westmeath County Council, mostly as part of the development management process, and supported as necessary by other relevant statutory authorities according to the environmental topic under consideration.

# Land Use Zoning Map





# WESTMEATH COUNTY COUNCIL CREGGAN LOCAL AREA PLAN

## OBJECTIVE MAP



### Objectives:

01. TO PROVIDE AN INTERNAL NETWORK OF ROADS WITHIN THE STRATEGIC GATEWAY ZONE
02. TO FACILITATE THE PROVISION OF THE LOUGHANDONNING LINK ROAD, INCLUDING PROVISION OF ACCESS TO THE STRATEGIC GATEWAY ZONE
- 2A. TO PROVIDE FOR ACCESS TO THE STRATEGIC GATEWAY ZONE OFF THE FORMER N6
- 2B. TO PROVIDE A NEW JUNCTION LAYOUT AT INTERSECTION OF FORMER N6 AND LOUGHANDONNING ROAD
03. TO RE-OPEN DISUSED ATHLONE TO MULLINGAR RAILWAY
04. TO PROVIDE BUFFER TO SAFEGUARD AMENITY AND CONSERVATION STATUS OF CROSSWOOD BOG CSAC
05. TO PROVIDE FOR RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT INDUSTRY ADJACENT TO AIT
06. TO PROVIDE A NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRE NORTH OF LOUGHANDONNING ROAD
07. TO PROVIDE FOR AN OPEN SPACE BUFFER
08. TO PROVIDE A RIVER WALK & WILDLIFE CORRIDOR
09. TO PROVIDE FOR A SCHOOL, RECREATIONAL AND COMMUNITY FACILITIES
10. TO PROVIDE A RAILWAY STATION
11. TO PROVIDE A WILDLIFE CORRIDOR ALONG THE DUBLIN-GALWAY & MULLINGAR-ATHLONE RAILWAY LINE



WESTMEATH COUNTY COUNCIL  
FORWARD PLANNING SECTION

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