

South Lissywollen, Athlone Town Local Area Plan

October 2008



Athlone Town Council



This Plan was prepared by Loci Urban Design, Planning and Architecture for Athlone Town Council and Westmeath County Council.

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1.1 Background

Athlone Town Council commissioned Loci to prepare a Local Area Plan for the South Lissywollen Area in Athlone Town. This Plan is known as the South Lissywollen Local Area Plan (SLLAP).

The Athlone Town Development Plan, 2008-2014, includes as an objective the undertaking of a Local Area Plan at Lissywollen, south of the N6, “to identify opportunities for further sustainable growth”. The plan seeks to ensure that “the development of suburban greenfield lands is undertaken in the context of local area plans”.

The objectives of this Local Area Plan are to:

- :: Provide a broad analysis of the area and its context.
- :: identify key issues and opportunities.
- :: generate a vision and principles for development.
- :: Outline a physical framework for the future development of the area.
- :: Provide guidelines for development.
- :: Outline measures for implementation and delivery.

The Local Area Plan was prepared in consultation with Westmeath County Council, Athlone Town Council and a group of key stakeholders.

The strategy and guidelines in this plan are generally area-specific and must be read in conjunction with the Athlone Town Development Plan, 2008-2014. Unless otherwise stated, the general development plan policies and development control objectives still apply to the area.

1.2 Strategic Environmental Assessment

The Plan does not fall within the thresholds for which a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is mandatory. The Plan was screened in line with “Implementation of SEA Directive (2001/42/EC): Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes on the Environment - Guidelines for Regional Authorities and Planning Authorities” to determine whether or not a SEA would nevertheless be appropriate. After consultation with the Environmental Authorities it was determined by the Council that a full Environmental Report was not required.



Fig 1: Discovery Map of Athlone and surroundings (Source: Athlone Town Council, OS licensed) with plan area in red



Fig 2: Aerial view of plan area

1.3 Planning context

The planning and development potential of Athlone has been identified in a number of plans and guidelines at national and regional level.

1.3.1 National plans and strategies

National Spatial Strategy (NSS), 2002

The strategy designates Athlone as part of the linked Midlands Gateway. The role of the Gateway is to drive the development of the wider region, including surrounding towns, villages and rural areas to achieve sustainable and more balanced regional development. The spatial structure “must be supported by policies aimed at enhancing the attractiveness of areas for people”.

The Midlands Gateway envisages the co-ordinated development of the three towns of Athlone, Tullamore and Mullingar in the Midlands Region. They are reasonably proximate to one another, strategically located on east-west road, rail, energy and communications links, contain complementary infrastructure, and individually and collectively have substantial capacity for development in services terms. For example, Athlone contains the Institute of Technology, a range of employers and important retail functions. Mullingar and Tullamore have important healthcare and retail functions. Improved accessibility to these facilities would enable them to be shared better and would allow the region to be seen as having the type of infrastructure and critical mass comparable to a larger urban centre.

National Development Plan, 2007-2013

The plan identifies the strengths of the Midlands Gateway including its strategic location in the centre of the country; its relative proximity to Dublin on newly completed national roads (M/N/4/6); the prospect of excellent road connections to Cork, Limerick and Galway when the major inter-urban routes are completed by 2010; upgraded rail links to Dublin; improving social infrastructure, especially healthcare facilities; the Athlone Institute of Technology; and a good quality of life within the three towns that make up the Gateway. Development challenges include the relatively small size of the towns and implementing an agreed development strategy for the towns on a shared basis.

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.

1.3.2 Regional plans and guidelines

Midland Regional Planning Guidelines, 2004

The guidelines seek to implement the main aspects of the NSS and state that stronger physical and communication connections between the towns will be required. While each of the three towns have generally been planned for on a separate basis, certain specialisations are emerging, such as education and retailing in Athlone.

To implement the NSS and the linked gateway, a critical priority for the region is to improve north-south connections, with a major opportunity to establish good physical links between Athlone and Mullingar that at present do not exist in relation to either roads or public transport.

Westmeath Retail Strategy, 2007

The strategy identifies Mullingar and Athlone as the two principal town centres in the County, which form the first tier within the retail hierarchy of County Westmeath. These towns exhibit a number of higher order retail, service and specialist functions.

Additional convenience and comparison retail floor space should be provided where possible within the existing town centres. Limited convenience floor space may be appropriate in neighbourhood centres to serve existing and new housing areas.

The development of local shops should be encouraged in residential areas in the suburbs of the larger estates in Athlone as they play an important role in providing for daily top up shopping. Such developments should be easily accessible to all sections of society.



Fig 3: The Midlands region in the National Spatial Strategy, 2002



Fig 4: Existing rail and roads infrastructure (Midlands Regional Planning Guidelines, 2004)

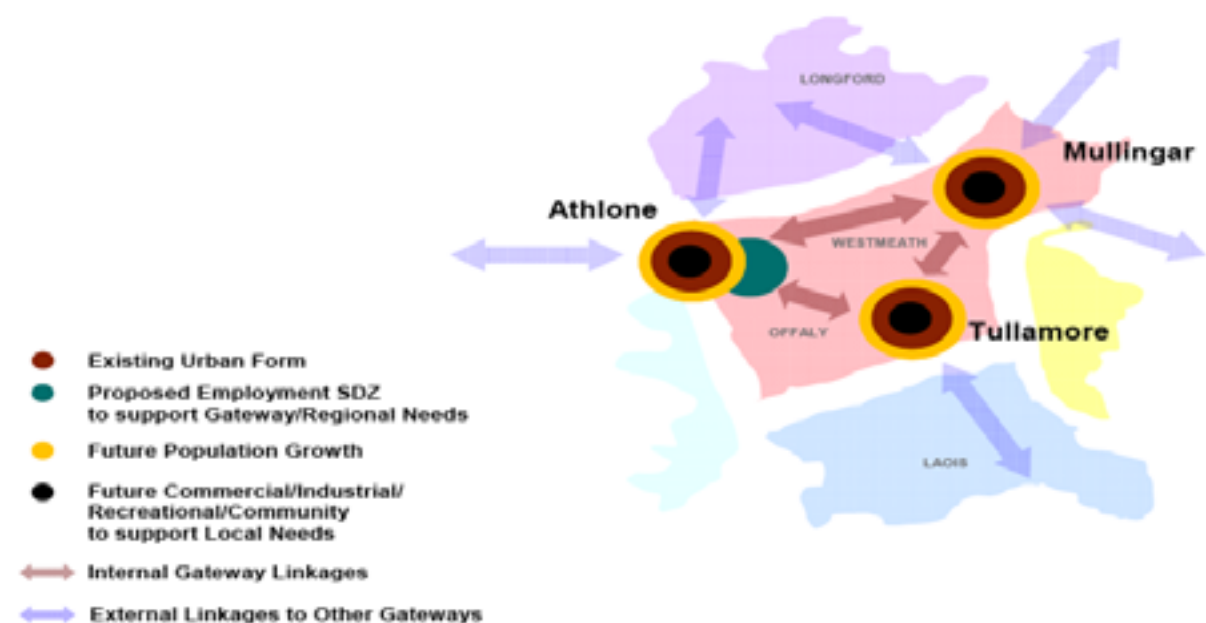


Fig 5: Recommended development option for the Gateway (Strategic Development Framework)

Strategic Development Framework for the Midlands Gateway – Developing a World Class knowledge-based Competitive Gateway

This was prepared for Westmeath and Offaly County Councils in December 2006. It develops a vision 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 framework recommends that sectoral clusters be developed and expanded by the IDA (Ireland) and Enterprise Ireland. Athlone should concentrate on ICT-related activities, pharmaceuticals and related activities, and education.

One specific project, which was seen as particularly important within Westmeath during the consultation programme, concerned a potential Mullingar-Athlone rail link.

Study to establish the extent, location of eskers and associated habitats in Co. Westmeath: Phase 2

This study was commissioned by Westmeath County Council in 2006. It contains details of the geodiversity and biodiversity interest of eskers within the County.

Athlone Town contains seven segments of an extensive esker system that runs from the River Shannon to Mount Temple and Moate. The study locates two segments (35f and 35g) of 12 ha in the plan area as part of the Mount Temple esker system. It states that “almost the entire segment 35f close to Athlone has been removed.” It describes the segments as “very low hills” that have “habitats of little interest”.

The need for careful planning, management and conservation of hedgerows was identified in the **County Westmeath Hedgerow Survey Report, 2005**. It recommends the management and conservation of certain hedges (e.g. townland boundary hedges and hedges that have high species richness), and rejuvenation of hedgerows (hedge laying, coppicing, infilling of gaps).

Fig 6: Extract from Athlone Town Development Plan, 2008-2014 showing land use zoning and objectives.

Westmeath County Development Plan, 2008-2014.

The plan identifies the development of public transport linkages between the Gateway towns and their hinterlands as an important infrastructure goal. This includes the re-opening of the Mullingar-Athlone railway line.

The plan recognises the need to consider the link between the N6 and Mullingar/Tullamore, the link between Mullingar and Athlone (Ballymahon Road); and the link between Athlone and Tullamore. These links are crucial for development of the Gateways.

The development plan identifies neighbourhood functions in Athlone for Curragh/Lissywollen, Cornamaddy, Garrycastle and Creggan.

Athlone Environs Plan (Section 3.2, County Development Plan, 2008-2014)

This plan indicates a line for a local distributor road for the residential land and a location for a regional sports centre, between the Ballymahon Interchange and the Garrycastle Interchange south of the Athlone Relief road. While there are no sites of environmental importance designated within the Environs Area, the existing Dublin – Galway/Westport rail line and the disused Mullingar – Athlone rail line are mentioned as providing important wildlife corridors.

1.3.3 Local plans

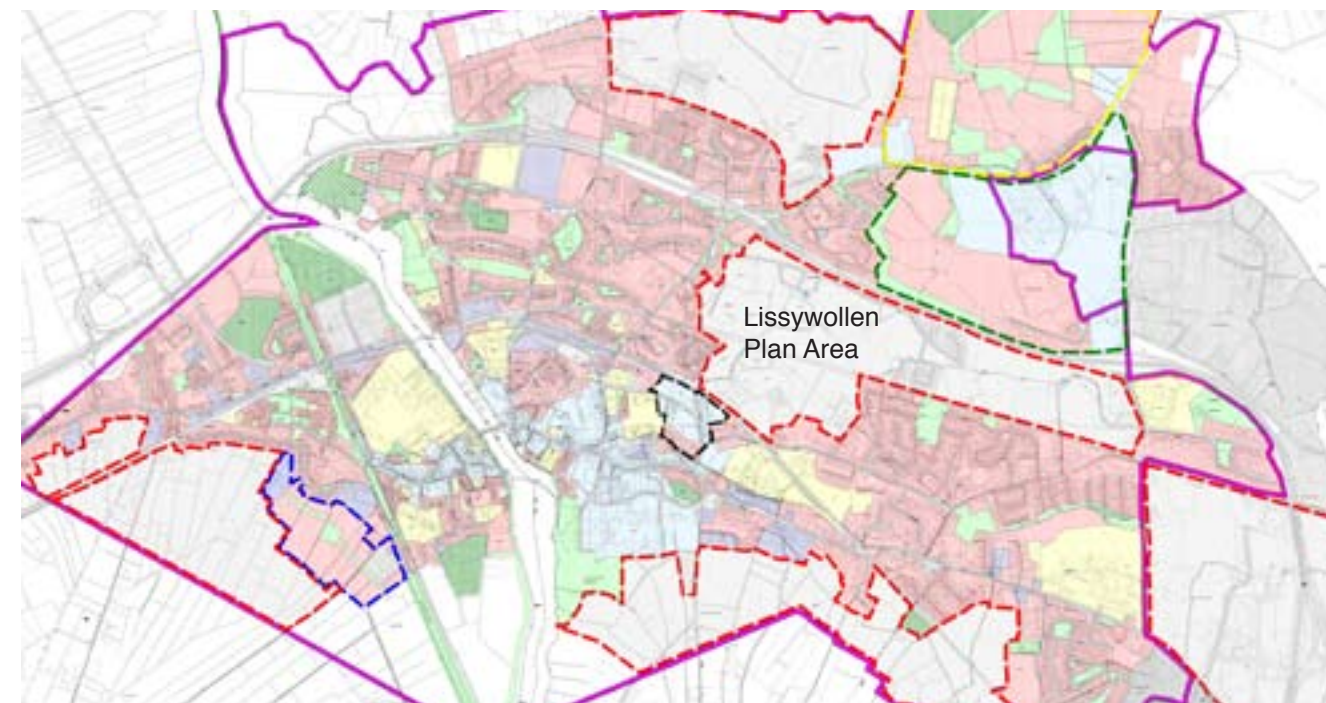
Athlone Town Development Plan, 2008-2014

The plan sets out Athlone Town Council’s policies and objectives for the proper planning and sustainable development of the area from 2008 to 2014. The Plan seeks to develop and improve the social, economic, cultural and environmental assets of the town in a sustainable manner.

Some of the relevant spatial policy objectives are:

- :: To actively promote the re-opening of the Mullingar to Athlone rail line and Moate rail station for commuting and leisure purposes and to safeguard the existing line from development encroachment in the interim.
- :: To facilitate the development of public transport throughout the town, that can facilitate links with transport initiatives in the rural hinterland, particularly where services can benefit the maximum number of people.
- :: To promote and facilitate the development of cycling and walking facilities in the town and ensure that all developments facilitate access by foot and bicycle to public transport and services.

- :: To improve the streetscape environment for pedestrians and cyclists, by providing facilities to enhance safety and convenience and by ensuring they are adequately provided for in new development and introduced into existing development where possible. It is proposed to provide north-south links in Curragh/Lissywollen–Lissywollen South–Retreat addressing barriers to access and movement created by the N6 and rail lines, integrating with existing networks.
- :: To ensure that major recreational and amenity open space is provided.
- :: To protect hedgerows in all new developments, particularly species rich roadside and townland boundary hedgerows.
- :: To seek to maintain and strengthen the existing local centres within neighbourhoods and to designate and facilitate the development of new centres where appropriate, primarily through the implementation of Local Area Plans.
- :: To use phasing arrangements in Local Area Plans for new development areas so that community facilities are provided in line with the pace of development.
- :: To provide for existing and future educational needs within the town through land use zoning and local area planning.



- Residential
- Institutional, Educational & Community
- Mixed Use - Town Centre
- Enterprise & Employment
- Commercial
- Retail Warehousing
- Sporting Recreational
- Open Space
- Agricultural/Premature
- Local Area Plan to be prepared
- Cornamaddy Action Area Plan (refer to LAP)
- Curragh-Lissywollen Local Area Plan (refer to LAP)
- Belaugh Local Area Plan (refer to LAP)
- Urban Framework Study Area
- Athlone Urban Boundary

2.1 The South Lissywollen area

2.1.1 Location

The plan area is located strategically and immediately east of Athlone town centre. It comprises approximately 81 hectares in area. Parts of the area are within a 10 minute walk of the town centre.

The plan area is bounded to the north by the N6, Athlone Relief Road, and is partially bisected by the currently disused Athlone to Mullingar rail line. The western boundary of the plan area is formed by the N55 (Ballymahon Road). The rail line from Athlone to Tullamore and Dublin delimits a portion of the south-western boundary of the plan area (see Fig 7). General access into the site is currently limited to an existing distributor road serving the Brawny residential area and a range of sporting and recreational facilities. A local road L-14261-0 traverses the site to the east. This road also provides access to agricultural lands and a small holding.

The plan area comprises lands within the townlands of Curragh, Lissywollen, Kilnafoddoge, Cloghanboy (Strain) and Cloghanboy (Homan), Retreat, Cartrontroy, Cannonsfield, Ardnaglug, Garrancesh and Garrycastle.

2.1.2 Description

The area does not have a single urban or rural character. It could in fact be currently described as comprising four separate elemental character areas (see Fig 7).

Area 1 East end

This area comprises approximately 30 ha and is characterised by a landscape typical of the rural countryside, with small, irregular and enclosed field patterns. The limits of the area are clearly defined by roads and the disused railway line. There are notable remnant hedgerows and trees enclosing the fields. An old boreen provides access to the single residence in this area and links back to Retreat Road. The ESB Regional Headquarters and the FÁS training centre are located at the eastern end.

Area 2 Brawny

This area comprises approximately 13 ha and is characterised by the existing residential development

(approximately 200 units), and a Gaelscoil (under construction and capacity for 450-500 children). A large open space is located in the Brawny development. Neighbourhood facilities and social infrastructure to support this residential area are very limited. The landscape character of the area is poor and needs significant improvement.

Area 3 Sports and recreation

This area comprises approximately 25 ha and is characterised by an expansive and open landscape of sporting and recreation facilities, the landmark buildings of the Regional Sports Centre and the new Athlone Town F.C. stadium. Full use is made of the existing playing fields and open areas provided by Athlone GAA, Pairc uí Chiarain and the Sports Centre. Small areas of undeveloped and underutilised land remain.

The area will need to cater for future consolidation and improvement of the recreational function. This will pose significant issues for the access and the coherence of the landscape and urban form.

Area 4 Education

This area comprises approximately 17 ha and is characterised by the large education buildings and their surrounding grounds. The limits of the area are clearly defined by the used and disused railway lines, Retreat Road and surrounding residential development.

The educational facilities are:

- :: Athlone Community College – providing for secondary level students. The school has two large playing fields. It is accessed from Retreat Road.
- :: Marist College – providing for 415 secondary level students. The school has three large playing fields. It is accessed from Retreat Road.
- :: Scoil gCeithre Máistrí – providing for 225 primary level students in Marist College buildings. The school has access to the playing fields of the Marist College. It is accessed from Retreat Road.



Fig 7: Aerial photograph of South Lissywollen with character areas and local features

The area also includes the former Athlone Town FC ground, St. Mel's Park and disused open space adjacent to Sarsfield Square.

There are very significant problems for access and movement in this area. The lack of adequate local access routes and connections leads to significant congestion of the area on the mornings and afternoons of school days. This is caused by the significant numbers of pupils in these facilities and the very high dependence on the private car.

2.1.3 Adjoining development

Lissywollen North lies north of the N6 'Relief Road'. The area currently comprises undeveloped land and is the subject of the Curragh-Lissywollen North Local Area Plan, 2007. This plan envisages a mix of residential and employment-based uses within a landscape and urban structure.

To the south of the plan area the disused Mullingar-Athlone rail line and the Dublin-Galway rail line represent two significant barriers to access. The lines also separate the plan area from large areas of existing housing in Retreat, Collegeland, Ardnaglug and Cartrontroy. An Urban Framework Study Area, identified in the Athlone Town Plan (see Fig. 6), centred on St. Mels / Loughanaskin adjoins the Dublin-Galway rail line.

To the west, the plan area adjoins primarily residential development, while Garrycastle GAA club is situated to the east of the FÁS training centre. Established housing at Garrycastle lies to the south of the FÁS training centre.

2.2 Urban analysis

2.2.1 Historic development

Urban development in the plan area is relatively recent in comparison to Athlone town's long established history which stretches back to the 12th century bridging and fortifications. The plan area has remained largely rural in use and character until the second half of the 20th century. Perhaps the greatest change to the nature of the locality occurred with the opening of Midland Great Western Railway Station on the west side of the Shannon in 1851, and of the Great Southern and Western Railway Station (now Athlone Railway Station) on the east side of the river in 1859.

The current and historic maps of the plan area from the years 1837 and 1952-53 show that:

- :: The lands including their surroundings were largely undeveloped in 1837 with only scattered buildings present.
- :: Some of the original field boundaries and hedgerows of 1837 remain, notably at the eastern end of the plan area.
- :: Two roads crossing the lands north to south, which are partly still existing today, were severed by the railway lines and later by the N6.
- :: The plan area was still mostly undeveloped in 1952-53 apart from scattered agricultural buildings, Our Lady's Hermitage and the football grounds.
- :: North-south road connections still existed in 1952-53.
- :: Most of the surrounding lands were still undeveloped in 1952-53, apart from some housing development towards the town centre.



Fig 8: Plan area 1837

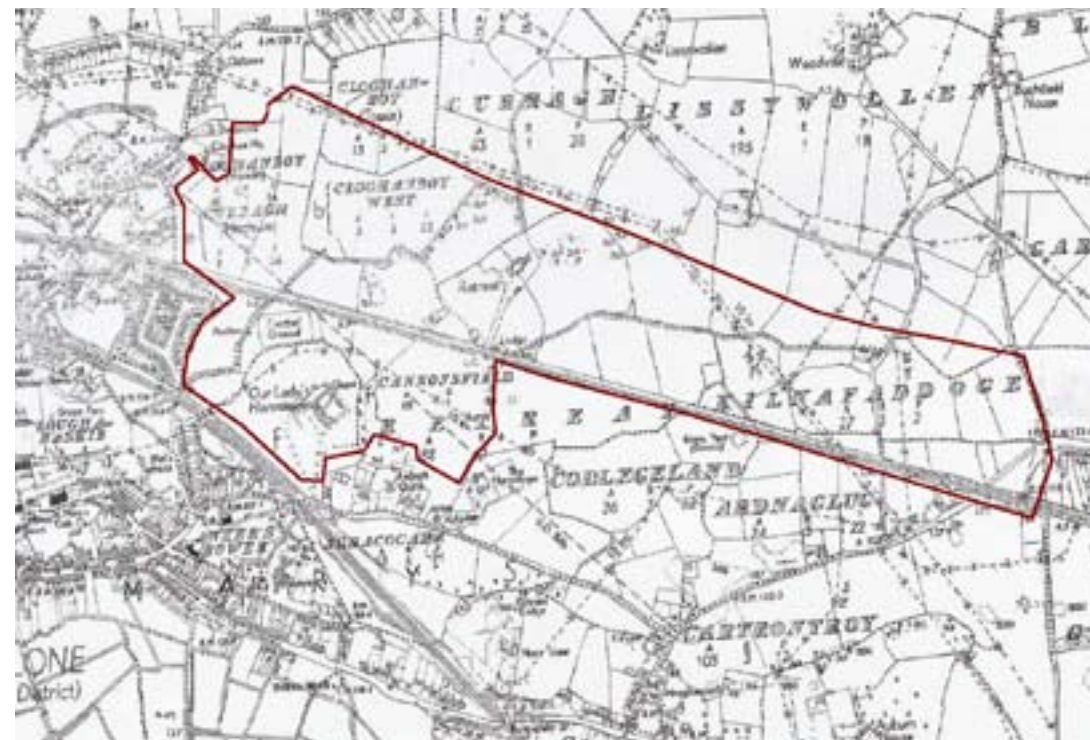


Fig 9: Plan area 1952-53



Pedestrian on disused rail line



Institutional sport fields at Marist College



Enclosed agricultural landscape

2.2.2 Built heritage and archaeology

In relation to built heritage and archaeology the following features are noted:

- :: Our Lady's Hermitage (Marist College) is listed in the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH) as being of regional importance (Reg. No. 15008008). The building was built around 1810 and extended around 1900, and is of architectural, artistic and social interest. The gateway to the Marist College is also listed (Reg. No. 15010123) and is of local importance.
- :: There are no sites recorded on the Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) within the plan area.
- :: Two recorded monuments lie outside the plan area south of the disused railway line (WM-029-22 Enclosure at Retreat, WM-029-23 Graveyard at Collegeland).
- :: There are no protected structures in the plan area included in the Athlone City Development Plan, 2008-2014.
- :: Although the plan area is situated close to the town centre, it lies outside the Zones of Archaeological Potential and the Architectural Conservation Area.
- :: There are a number of aspects of local built fabric of local historical interest which should be retained and should play a positive role in place-making. These include remnants of the historic road and field structure, elements of the rail heritage such as the rail bridge at Garrycastle and the farm cottage and yards at the eastern end.



Historic boreen/ lane

South Lissywollen, Athlone Town - Local Area Plan

2.2.3 Landscape structure and character areas

The landscape plays an important role in defining the character of the area. The positive elements of the landscape will need to be considered as part of the place-making measures in the plan strategies. The main features are summarised as follows:

- :: The undeveloped land in the east of the plan area is enclosed agricultural pasture land.
- :: The lands in the west are predominantly sports grounds and pitches, adjoining schools, GAA, and Athlone Town F.C.
- :: The lands between the railway lines are of institutional character.
- :: There are significant undeveloped lands between the GAA grounds, the Regional Sports Centre and the stadium of changing, rural to urban character.
- :: Most of the surrounding land is already developed or will be in future (Curragh-Lissywollen North LAP). The character of the surrounding land is mainly inner or outer suburban, reflecting relatively low densities and profiles.
- :: There are few open spaces and/or tree groups of significance in the surrounding built-up areas.
- :: Some of the existing hedgerows, especially along townland boundaries and the rail lines are rich in biodiversity.
- :: The quality of the existing open spaces in the area is poor. Some spaces are not landscaped and/or passively supervised.
- :: As part of the Mount Temple esker system, segments 35f (9.66 ha) and 35g (2.32ha) are located in the plan area. The esker study states that "almost the entire segment 35f close to Athlone has been removed." It describes the segments as "very low hills" that have "habitats of little interest".
- :: The subsoil of almost the entire plan area is gravel aquifer requiring careful consideration of drainage issues.
- :: There is no Natural Heritage Area (pNHA), Special Area of Conservation (SAC) or Special Protection Area (SPA) in or adjoining the plan area.

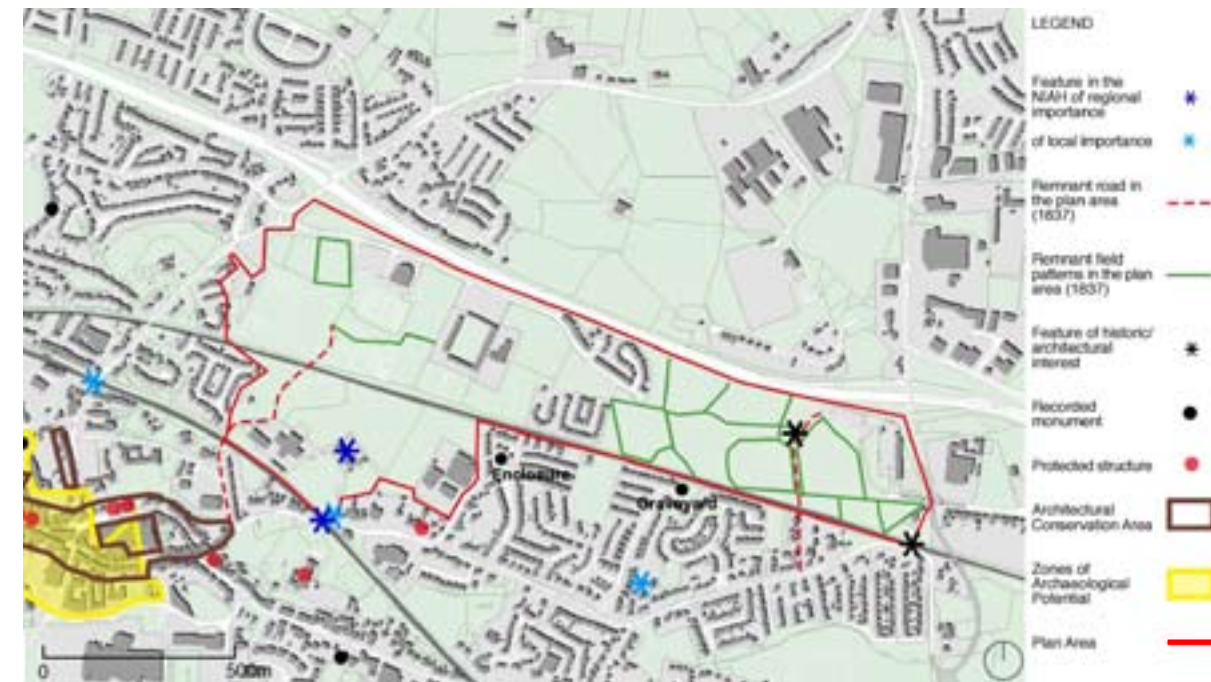


Fig 10: Built and cultural heritage

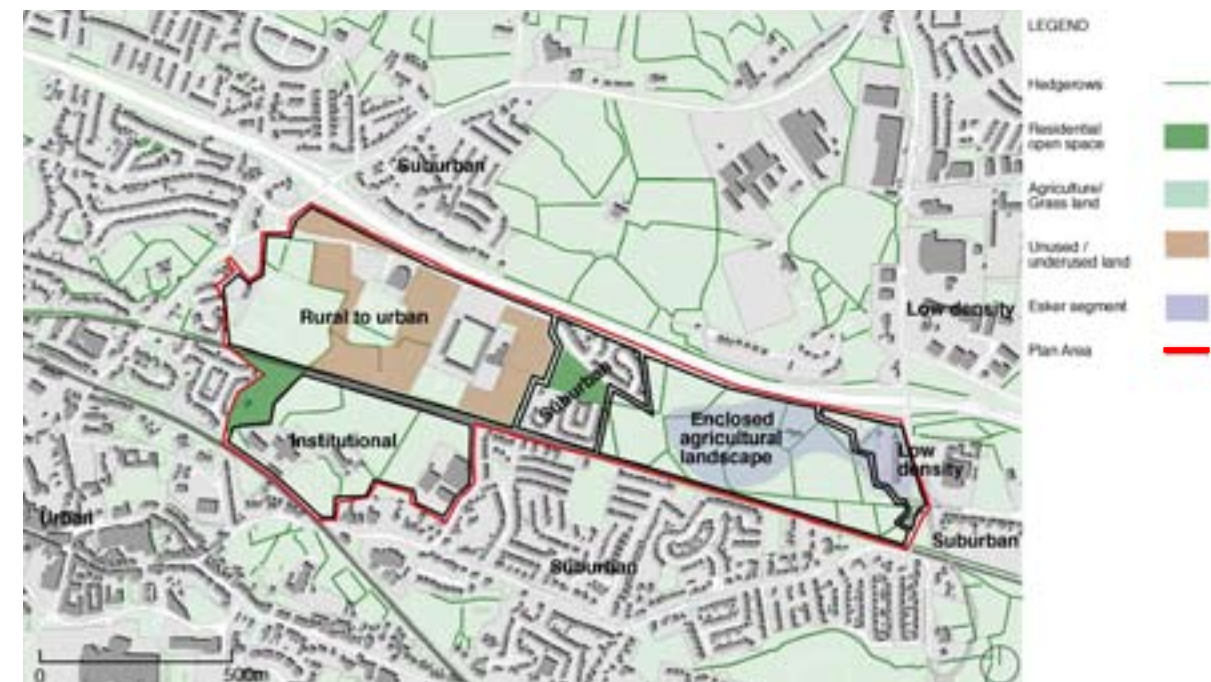


Fig 11: Existing landscape structure and landscape character areas in plan area

2.2.4 Views and topography

The topography of the area provides visual quality and gives rise to views of local value. In summary:

- :: The plan area is generally flat. To the south and southeast of the plan area the land rises gradually presenting a number of short views of the nearby schools, the water tower and the neighbourhood of Retreat.
- :: From various locations in the plan area views are opened to St. Mary's Church, the new town centre tower and St. Peter and Paul's Church.
- :: Local landmark buildings and features of mixed significance and interest in and around the area include the Regional Sports Centre, the new Stadium, Our Lady's Hermitage (Gaelscoil), the water tower in Retreat and the road bridge over the rail line in Garrycastle. Most of these features can be seen from various points in the plan area.

2.2.5 Land use and function

The following features of land use are noted:

- :: Surrounding land uses include larger residential and institutional uses and a greater degree of mixed use towards the town centre.
- :: The plan area includes agricultural, residential, recreational and educational use. Other uses are limited and include a single employment/commercial use (ESB).
- :: Community services in the plan area are currently limited to one small retail outlet (Spar) and the FÁS training centre both at Garrycastle.



Fig 12: Existing land use and function



Suburban housing in Brawny



Views to landmarks in the town centre



ESB Regional Headquarters



Our Lady's Hermitage

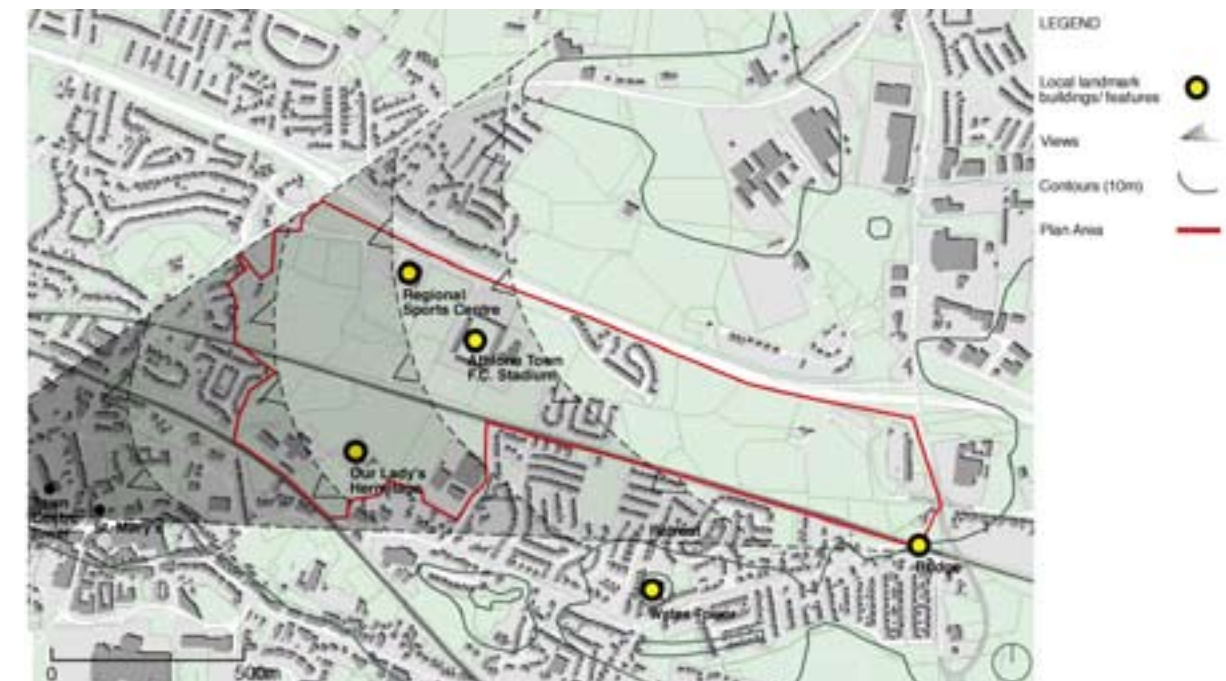


Fig 13: Visual analysis and topography

2.2.6 Regional Route Structure

The following features of movement and access at a regional scale are noted:

- :: Athlone is on the main railway line between Dublin and Galway (Westport/Ballina). There is also a disused railway line to Mullingar.
- :: Athlone is a hub for inter-urban bus transport and covers most towns and cities in the country including an hourly service to Dublin and Galway.

2.2.7 Local Routes, Movement and Access

In relation to movement and access in and around the site the following features are noted:

- :: The local route hierarchy comprises N6 'Relief road', regional roads (Dublin road R446, Ballymahon Road, Garrycastle Road), local roads (Brawny Road, Cartrontray, Retreat Road etc.) and access/residential roads.

- :: The used and disused rail line, as well as the N6, are barriers to movement to the north and south of the area.

- :: Three desire lines onto/across the disused rail line were observed from the residential area in the south of the plan area.

2.2.8 Public Transport and non-Vehicular Movement

The following aspects of non-vehicular movement and public transport are noted:

- :: Only small parts of the plan area lie within a reasonable walking distance of the train and bus station.
- :: There is a local bus service operated by Bus Éireann and a privately-operated service (Flagline) serving parts of the plan area.
- :: A taxi service is available in the area.



Fig 15: Existing access and movement



Fig 14: Existing overall route structure in Athlone



Fig 16: Existing pedestrian accessibility, public transport and cycling

2.2.9 Microclimate

The following features of local climatic conditions are noted:

- :: Athlone is colder in winter, warmer in summer and drier compared to national averages.
- :: The average minimum temperature in January is -3 °C, while in July temperatures vary between 9 °C and 23 °C.
- :: The Midlands have an average rainfall of 800-1000 mm/year. The region gets approximately 175 days of rainfall and 1400 hours of sunshine annually. Rainfall in Athlone varies from 153 to 273 mm/month.
- :: The prevailing wind directions in Athlone are from the west and south-west. Wind directions are shown for Birr, the closest station with data available.



Garrycastle Road at eastern end of the plan area



Brawny road near Regional Sports Centre

2.2.10 Infrastructure

The following features of service infrastructure are noted:

- :: The plan area is well served with storm and foul water mains, generally flowing from north to south-west.
- :: Mains for water supply run along Brawny Road and along adjoining streets in the east, south and west. The eastern part of the plan area is not served.
- :: Electricity supply is provided in the area.

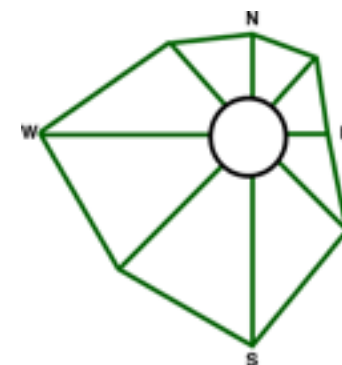


Fig 17: Prevailing wind directions, nearest station.
(Source: Met Éireann)

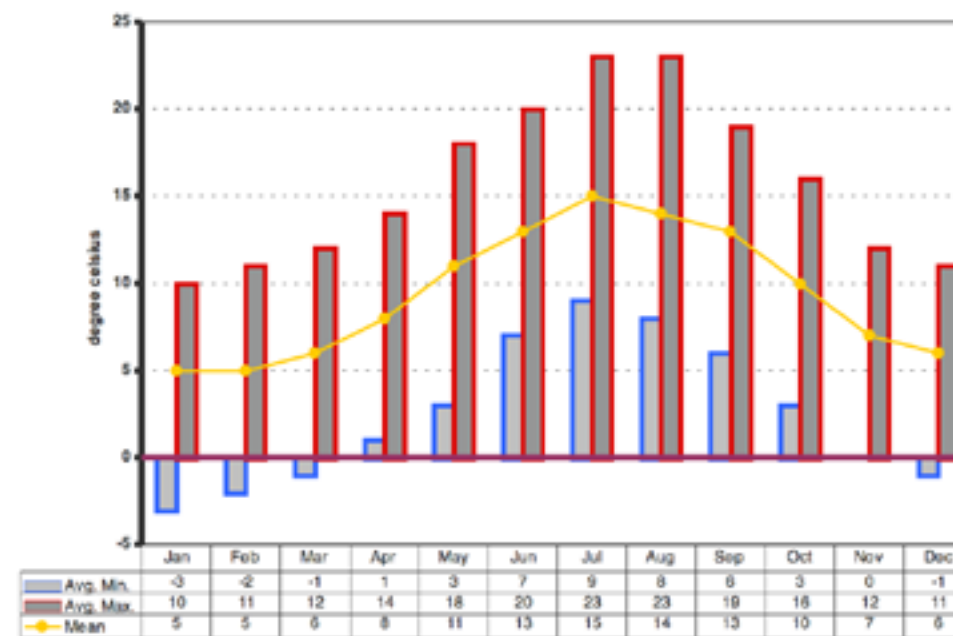


Fig 18: Average precipitation in Athlone (Source: weather.co.uk)



Fig 20: Existing water supply, storm and foul water mains

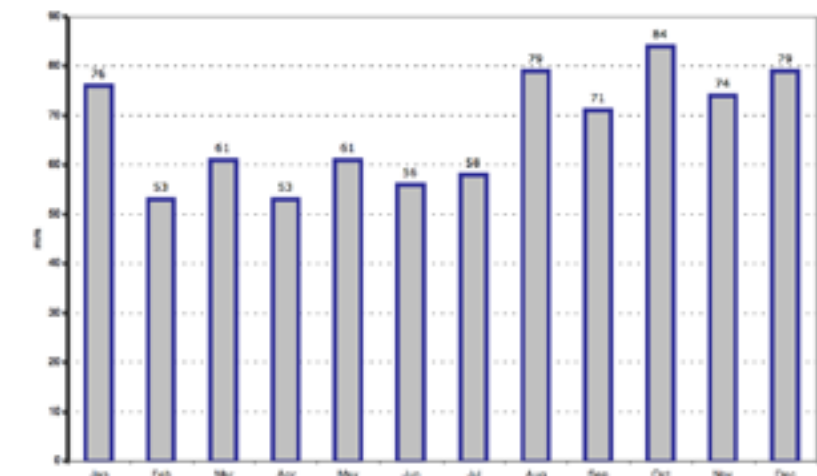


Fig 19: Average minimum, maximum and mean temperature in Athlone
(Source: weather.co.uk)

3.1 Vision

The vision for the area is:

To create sustainable, well-connected and distinctive place with character areas of distinct purpose, function and attraction. To achieve a mix of activities and uses including living, learning, working and recreation, structured on a functional and attractive urban landscape.

3.2 Principles

The principles elaborate the vision and underpin the plan strategies. They are:

To protect and enhance existing, positive aspects of character, environment and heritage.

To create new and distinctive places with identity, focus and attraction.

To enhance connectivity, accessibility and permeability throughout the area and strong linkages with the town centre.

To promote a mix of uses and diversity of activities throughout the area with focus on certain functions in different character areas.

To add strong and complementary destination functions to the existing uses.

To create a quality landscape, urban and open space structure.

To provide and enhance community, educational and recreational facilities.

To provide for sustainable patterns of movement and access with priority for pedestrians, cyclists and public transport.

To provide high quality of design and layout incorporating elements of special heritage value and character.

To promote sustainable methods of construction and energy use.

3.3 Strategies

The plan strategies provide the basic overall structure and the planning and design rationale for the plan. They are driven by the vision and principles and form the basic structure under the following headings:

- :: Land use and function
- :: Landscape and urban form
- :: Access and movement

3.3.1 Land use and function

The main elements of land use and function are illustrated in Fig 21. They are as follows:

- :: To create five areas of special land use function and mix within an area-wide, sustainable mix of uses.
- :: To reinforce, consolidate and foster activity and sense of community in Brawny through mix of housing and household type, new community uses and facilities and new local services and working opportunities.
- :: To provide for modest extensions to the community at Sarsfield Square, with a mix of housing and household types.



- :: To promote sustainable densities of development in order to achieve a critical mass of households and workplaces that will support local facilities.
- :: To support existing educational facilities, and provide for community, childcare and health facilities and services.
- :: To expand and strengthen the regional sports and recreational function and identity of the area in a high quality regional sports park/campus.
- :: To provide for a range of passive and active recreational activities, which should be based on a distinctive landscape and open space structure.
- :: To provide for a range of employment and enterprise uses focussed on the eastern end of the area in a distinctive urban business quarter.
- :: To provide for additional low impact employment and enterprise uses to support the business quarter, in an innovative, mixed use quarter, which provides for living and working in an adaptable, flexible and innovative urban environment.



3.3.2 Landscape and urban form

The main elements of landscape and urban form are illustrated in Fig 22. They are as follows:

- :: To protect and enhance the existing strategic green links along the railway lines and the bypass.
- :: To protect existing landscape features of character and amenity value such as significant hedgerows and stands of trees, and to incorporate them into the urban structure.
- :: To provide structural tree lines along the avenue and along the strategic green links.
- :: To provide a new and extended hierarchy of urban and open spaces, providing active and passive recreation and children's play areas.
- :: To connect the existing designated and undesignated pedestrian routes with amenity walks and public space.
- :: To enhance the landscape structure by providing a new framework of linked green routes and focal spaces within a safe, convenient and short walking distance.
- :: To bring together a coherent network of continuous and enclosed streets and spaces with a distinct urban quality.
- :: To provide a scale of development which is appropriate to the context and location of the area and responds to local opportunities and constraints.
- :: To consider opportunities for higher buildings where they provide a clear benefit for legibility and identity for the area, and where they are compatible with the skyline and larger planning policies for the town.
- :: To ensure a continuous frontage and appropriate massing and scale to the main routes and focal spaces.
- :: To provide intimate and comfortable urban spaces as a visual, social and functional focus of the community.
- :: To provide for passive supervision of all urban and open spaces including streets.

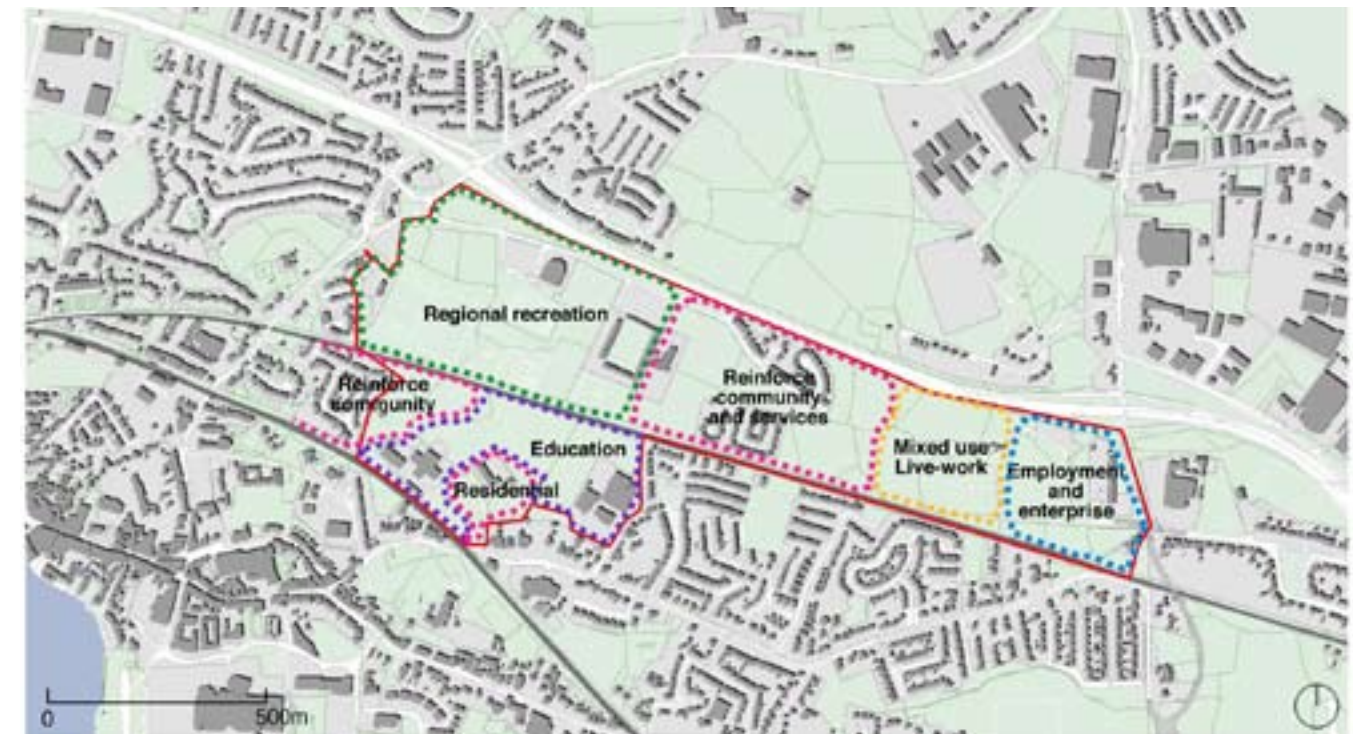


Fig 21: Land use and function strategy



Fig 22: Landscape and urban form strategy

- :: To connect to existing and planned open spaces outside the plan area.
- :: To provide for biodiversity by protecting significant areas of existing biodiversity and providing for new and extended areas of biodiversity around and through the plan area.
- :: To protect elements of the remaining esker, and to incorporate these where possible in the landscape structure.

3.3.3 Access and movement

The access and movement strategy needs to address current issues of connections and barriers and needs to present a framework for more sustainable transport and movement. The key elements of the strategy are illustrated in Fig 23 and are as follows:

- :: To provide a logical hierarchy of streets and spaces which knits into existing networks.
- :: To provide an integrated and permeable network of routes and spaces, maximising linkages within the area and to surrounding areas.
- :: To overcome the barriers of the railway lines and the bypass by establishing new and reinforcing existing pedestrian and cycle connections by means of bridges.
- :: To designate pedestrian priority streets and area-wide walking/jogging routes.
- :: To improve existing streets in terms of pedestrian and cycle facilities as well as landscape and urban quality.
- :: To provide for a bus service throughout the plan area.
- :: To provide a new and extended urban avenue as an east-west spine and primary route (Lissywollen Avenue) linking and unifying all parts of the plan area.

- :: To provide a new north-south avenue with priority for bus, cyclists and pedestrians connecting Retreat Road with Lissywollen Avenue crossing the disused railway line.
- :: To integrate a secondary network of streets with Lissywollen Avenue and existing roads.
- :: To provide detailed guidance for all new streets and spaces in the area with priority for pedestrians and cyclists (see Sections 5.6 and 5.7).
- :: To discourage the use of the main routes as “rat-runs” by the use of contemporary methods of traffic control such as altered surfaces, pinch points, strategic planting and small radius corners.



Fig 23: Access and movement strategy



Fig 24: Public transport strategy



Fig 25: Cycle strategy

4.1 Overall framework plan

The framework plan shows an indicative basic layout for the area based on the vision, principles and strategies. The framework plan shows the development of the distinctive character areas and their physical relationship to each other.

Capacity

The indicative development capacity for the area is between 1,000 and 1,500 residential units, and approximately 200,000 m² in gross commercial and other floor space.

Structure

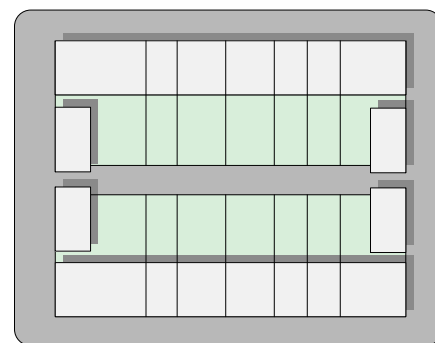
The framework plan also shows a unifying urban and landscape structure, which provides overall continuity and focal spaces for the character areas. This structure is based on retaining positive elements of local heritage and character and providing for a robust and adaptable framework.



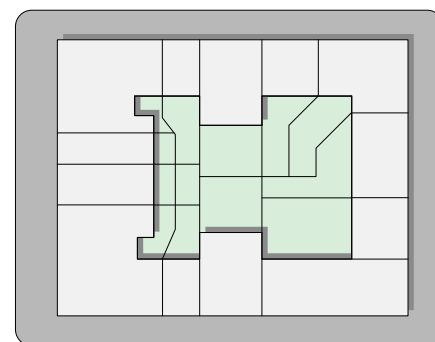
Fig 26: Framework plan

Block

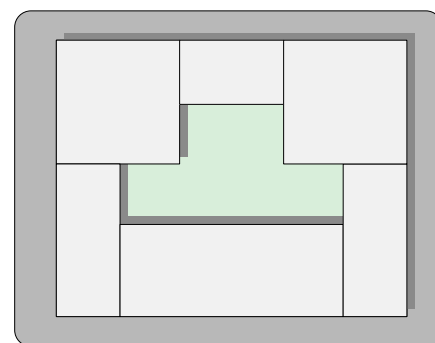
The urban block structure is derived from the urban structure. It is important that a range of block sizes and shapes are created to allow for flexibility in terms of use and building type. It is important not to leave unviable or difficult urban blocks in the plan, which would be dependent of difficult design solutions or very specific use types.



Fine



Medium



Course

Fig 27: Indicative examples of fine grain, medium grain and course grain block structure



Fig 28: Indicative 3d model perspective view of the framework plan from north-west



Fig 29: Indicative 3d model perspective view of educational area from southwest



Fig 30: Indicative 3d model perspective view of mixed-use area from south



Fig 31: Indicative 3d model perspective view of business park area from south

Grain

The urban grain will vary across the plan area. This will be determined in the first instance by the block structure and the nature and range of uses envisaged for the character area. Naturally, the educational, sports and recreation uses will require larger building footprints/floor areas, and therefore, will be broad in terms of grain. The urban business quarter will need to provide flexibility in terms of footprints. It is envisaged that footprints here would range between medium and large giving a medium to broad grain pattern. The supporting mixed use area will need to provide for a mix of employment and living, and typologies here should be mixed and diverse. The grain of this area will therefore be fine to medium. Brawny will be reinforced in terms of residential development and additional local services. The grain here will continue to be fine. The plan also incorporates “self-build” plots, which can help to reinforce this grain and provide for increased diversity of buildings and styles.

Continuity and enclosure

The urban structure reflects the overall function of the area. The educational, sports and recreation uses will be set in a structured, landscape-dominant environment. Continuity and enclosure of building form will not be appropriate here. However, the relationship between pavilion buildings and the landscape will be important. Buildings in these areas may contribute to continuity of frontage on Lissywollen Avenue and the new north-south avenue. In the other areas, continuity and enclosure is of particular importance in defining the main routes and space structure and bringing unity to the structure of the different character areas. Most areas of open space are fronted by development to allow for passive supervision.

Landscape

The overall strategy for landscape is reflected in the framework plan. The landscape is a unifying element for the periphery, the focal spaces and the open areas of the plan area. Where possible the existing biodiversity is included in this structure and new connections between other areas of biodiversity and new open spaces is achieved. The landscape structure also leaves space for water, SUDS and associated biodiversity.

Scale and density

Scale and density derive primarily from considerations of context and urban design qualities. Scale and height derive from the following considerations:

- :: The location of the area outside the town centre and the subsidiary function of the area to the town centre reflected in overall scale and prominence.
- :: The need to maintain a human scale of buildings and spaces which would indicate that building heights should not exceed 6 storeys in any case.
- :: The need to set a realistic context building height, which is suitable to the perimeter block and achieves a proper continuity and enclosure of streets and space.
- :: The potential for higher landmark buildings where they can provide for greater identity or urban legibility and not compete with the dominance of town centre.
- :: To achieve sustainable densities without over development.



Fig 32: Indicative 3d model perspective view of open space in Mixed-use area



Fig 34: Indicative 3d model perspective view of Avenue



Fig 36: Indicative 3d model perspective view of Business Quarter



Fig 33: Indicative 3d model perspective view of Mixed-use / live-work area



Fig 35: Indicative 3d model perspective view looking west along Avenue



Fig 37: Indicative 3d model perspective view of open space along Avenue

4.2 Character Area 1: Education

This area will remain in educational use. It will also provide new opportunities for residential development to improve local critical mass. The plan provides for:

- ∴ Rationalised playing facilities.
 - ∴ Major new road and access arrangements for the area as part of the overall urban structure of the area.
 - ∴ New relationships to sport-park, recreational facilities and surrounding areas.
 - ∴ Improvement of the walking and cycling environment.
- ∴ Improvement of the landscape qualities and character.
 - ∴ Passive supervision of open space to improve safety and reduce anti-social behaviour.
 - ∴ New residential development at the Hermitage, promoting a range of housing and household types.

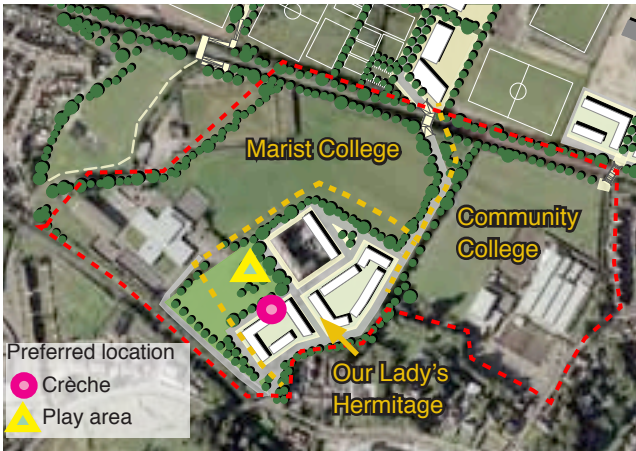


Fig 38: Character area 1 with division into parcels



Fig 39: Indicative 3d model perspective view of area 1

Parcel	Area (ha)	Land use	Scale/Height	Building type	Plot ratio	Housing units (approx.)	Other
Community College	4.8	Educational	2-3 storeys	School and related	-	-	Low site coverage. Potential for relocating the school fronting the new public transport link.
Marist College	5.8	Educational	2-3 storeys	School and related	-	-	Low site coverage. Reorganising playing pitches and open space.
Our Lady's Hermitage	3.1	Residential	As Existing 2-4 storeys	Refurbished Apartments/townhouses	Merit-based	>150	Refurbish Our Lady's as residential development. New development in grounds, respecting landscape, setting and scale.

Table 1: Development features and capacity for Character Area 1.
NB. All areas, plot ratios and units in this table are indicative and approximate and depend on appropriate, quality design responses to context, scale, function and place-making.

Density controls will not be as appropriate for the educational areas as buildings here will sit in an extensive open landscape setting. Density in these areas will be considered on a case-by-case merit basis, having regard to intensity and impacts of land use, traffic and movement and appropriateness in terms of character and context.

The gross open space provided in Our Lady's Hermitage is 27.5% of the parcel. This is to allow retention of the landscape character and setting and established active recreational usage.



4.3 Character Area 2: Regional Recreation

This area will develop over the medium to long-term as a sports park of regional and perhaps national importance. The lands comprise some 25 ha and there is good potential to consolidate and introduce new sport facilities, such as a lit walking/ jogging route through the plan area, outdoor bowling facilities, a skate park, tennis courts, an indoor climbing wall, or a velodrome. This should remain the priority for the area as this facility is an important resource for the town and the region and should not be jeopardised by development for other use categories. The lands in the ownership of the Town Council should remain in their stewardship as a further planning objective. There is potential to provide for larger urban legibility at the main intersection with the By-pass through the development of a commercial building, which may incorporate sport-related or support uses.

In summary the plan provides for:

- :: Rationalised and consolidated existing sports facilities with potential for developing a centre of sporting excellence.
- :: A structure focussed on the avenues, providing new related uses, such as medical, research and physiotherapy.
- :: Major new road and access arrangements for the area as part of the overall urban structure of the area (north-south avenue).
- :: New relationships between sporting facilities and surrounding areas.
- :: A larger sport and recreation structure for the overall plan area including children's play and adventure and running/training circuit.
- :: Potential for new or unique sport facilities of national or regional importance (such as velodrome).
- :: Improvement of the walking and cycling environment.
- :: A new landscape structure providing for legibility and coherence.

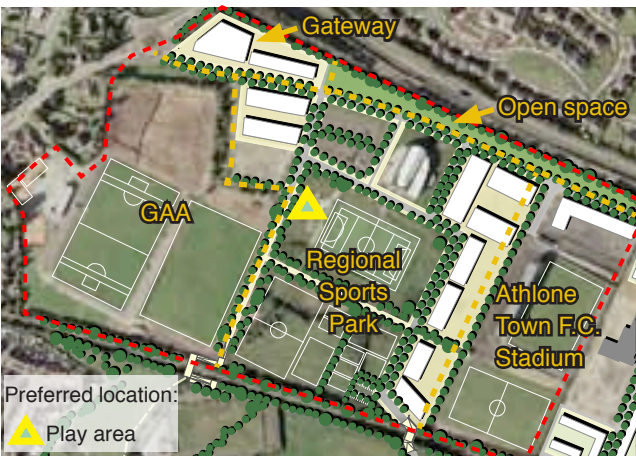


Fig 40: Character Area 2 with division into parcels



Fig 41: Indicative 3d model perspective view of Area 2

Density controls will not be appropriate for the sports and recreation areas as buildings here will sit in an extensive open landscape setting. Density in these areas for these uses will be considered on a case-by-case, merit basis, having regard to intensity and impacts of land use, traffic and movement and appropriateness in terms of character and context. The context height for the gateway will be four storeys with the option for a landmark building element of up to 6 storeys.

Parcel	Area ha	Land use	Scale/ Height	Building type	Plot ratio	m² Floor space	Other
GAA	7.7	Sport and associated	-	Educational Playing fields	-	-	Low site coverage. New linkages to other sports facilities.
Regional Sports Park	10.4	Sport and associated Medical, research Multi-functional playing pitch	-	Pavilion buildings Indoor sport and changing facilities Smaller outdoor facilities	-	-	Low site coverage. Incorporate landscape structure.
Gateway	1.0	Commercial Medical, research	3-4 / 6 storeys (land-mark)	Landmark Pavilions Office	<2.0:1	<20,000 gross	Landmark building. Principal massing to east end and avenue.
Stadium	4.2	Sport and associated	-	Stadium and pavilion buildings	-	-	Consolidate existing uses.
Open space	1.7	Open space	-	-	-	-	Structured landscape as part of walking/ jogging and training circuit.

Table 2: Development features and capacity for Character Area 2. NB: All areas, plot ratios and units in this table are indicative and approximate and depend on appropriate, quality design responses to context, scale, function and place-making.



Fig 42: Possible circuit running and training route

4.4 Character Area 3: Community

The framework plan seeks to reinforce the existing community by presenting opportunities for improving the urban form and landscape and increasing the range and type of uses, community infrastructure, housing and households.

The plan provides for:

- :: The incorporation of An Gaelscoil.
- :: A unifying, high quality landscape and open space structure.
- :: The continuation of Lissywollen Avenue through Brawny, providing the focus of the urban and space structure.
- :: New access to bus routes.
- :: Two new pedestrian/ cycle bridges over the Bypass, and two new pedestrian/ cycle bridges over railway to the south.
- :: A new range of housing and household types.
- :: New community infrastructure, such as a new community centre, including, for example, a library, crèche and play areas, as well as new local services and shops focussed on the open space.
- :: Sustainable community measures such as SUDS and a quality pedestrian and cycle network.

In Brawny, the plot ratio (ratio of gross floor area to gross site area) of new residential development should lie between 0.35:1 and 0.50:1. This is required to build a critical mass in the community to support local community services and infrastructure. Density will be closely related to location, with higher density along the avenue and fronting larger focal and open spaces. The higher density figure is contingent on provision of local bus services. The number of units resulting will be a function of land use mix, unit type and size.

Approximately 11.9% of the area will be provided as gross open space.

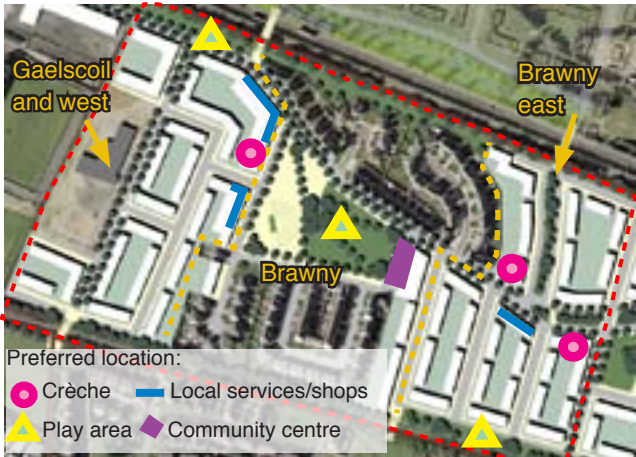


Fig 43: Character Area 3 with division into parcels



Fig 44: Indicative 3d model perspective view of Area 3



Parcel	Area ha	Land use	Scale/ Height	Building type	Plot ratio	Housing units (approx.)	Other
Gaelscoil and west	5.8	Educational	As planned	As planned	-	-	Integrate into landscape and urban structure.
		Residential	2-3 storeys	Apartments/ Townhouses	0.35 – 0.5:1	>200	Small unit retail and services at ground floor to open space/square.
Brawny	7.1	Residential, Community	As existing	As existing	Infill	Approx. 10-20	Integrate into landscape and urban structure.
		Local shops and services		Infill buildings			Major improvement of open space/square.
Brawny east	4.7	Residential, Community	2-3 storeys	Mix of residential	0.35 – 0.5:1	Approx. 225-450	Multi-purpose community/service/ health facility (approx 800sqm net site area) at east end of square.
				Apartments/ Townhouses/ Mews, courtyard			New community infrastructure.
							Multi-agency building.
							Urban community garden/ agriculture.

Table 3: Development features and capacity for Character Area 3.
NB. All areas, plot ratios and units in this table are indicative and approximate and depend on appropriate, quality design responses to context, scale, function and place-making



4.5 Character Area 4: Mixed use / Live-work

The framework plan provides an urban and landscape structure on which this living and enterprise community can grow. A flexible approach to plot sizes, building types, scale and relationships will need to be adopted. Adaptability in building type and layout will be promoted to accommodate small and medium size enterprise, such as start-up businesses, as well as residential, live-work units and self-build plots.

In the order of 25% of all housing units in both live-work parcels should be adaptable for home business and live-work. Such activities should be capable of operating independently of the residential use. The Council will prepare detailed local planning guidance illustrating a best practice approach to the development of mixed use live-work areas.

This guidance will address issues including measures to ensure the development of an appropriate mix of uses within the overall live-work area and the blocks, plots and buildings within it. It will also provide detailed design guidance on issues such as the layout and design of mixed use blocks, plots and buildings and other issues such as open space and car parking. Detailed proposals and arrangements for home business and live-work should be discussed with the Planning Authority at the pre-application stage.

In the order of 25% of housing units should be provided as self-build, serviced plots or as individually-designed, detached housing units. These units may provide a proportion, or the full amount, of the home business and live-work adapted units. The Council will prepare



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detailed guidance on how applicants can comply with this objective. Detailed development proposals should be discussed with the Planning Authority at the pre-application stage.

In the order of 50% of gross floor area in each parcel should be provided as small to medium-sized enterprise or employment uses, which may include support uses such as local shops and services. Such uses will need to be compatible with the residential function. This percentage will include space allocated within residential units for home business and live-work.

The plan provides for:

- :: A range of block sizes and shapes and potential for amalgamating or splitting blocks.
- :: A unifying, high quality landscape and open space structure focussed on the remnant built heritage, roads, and remnant features such as esker, water, hedgerow and areas of biodiversity.
- :: The construction of Lissywollen Avenue to link the business quarter and Brawny.
- :: A new range of typologies for employment and enterprise and housing promoting diversity and adaptability.
- :: New community infrastructure, such as crèche and play areas, as well as local



Parcel	Area ha	Land use	Scale/Height	Building type	Plot ratio	Housing units/gfa (sqm)	Other
North	3.4	Residential	2-3 storeys	Diverse	0.5 – 1:1	85 -170 units	Integrates landscape structure and spaces, esker field and cottage.
		Enterprise	2-3 storeys	Flexible	0.5 – 1:1	8,500 - 17,000 sqm	As above.
South	5.3	Residential	2-3 storeys	Diverse	0.5 – 1:1	125 -250 units	Integrates landscape structure and spaces and esker field.
		Enterprise	2-3 storeys	Flexible	0.5 – 1:1	Up to 25,000 sqm	As above.

Table 4: Development features and capacity for Character Area 4.
NB: All areas, plot ratios and units in this table are indicative and approximate and depend on appropriate, quality design responses to context, scale, function and place-making.

- services and shops focussed around the open spaces and along the avenue.
 - :: Sustainable community measures such as SUDS and quality pedestrian and cycle network.
- Density in the mixed-use area should not generally exceed a plot ratio of 0.5:1. This may be exceeded (to a maximum of 1:1) where an employment generating use, which requires more extensive footprints or space, is included in the development.
- Approximately 20.5% of this area will be provided as gross open space.



Fig 45: Character area 4 with division into parcels



Fig 39: Indicative 3d model perspective view of area 4

4.6 Character area 5: Business Quarter

The framework plan seeks to provide the structure on which a business quarter of urban character, as opposed to a low-density business campus, can develop. The plan seeks to maximise use of well-positioned urban land in a distinctive setting and in an innovative way.

The plan provides for:

- :: A new high quality, branded, business quarter or “gate”.
- :: Flexible urban blocks with appropriate urban scale and perimeter block massing.
- :: A unifying, high quality landscape and open space structure focussed on the new urban square.
- :: The connection of Lissywollen Avenue to Garrycastle and the live-work area.
- :: A new frontage to Garrycastle Road to achieve an avenue character and deal with level differences.
- :: New access to bus routes and facilities.
- :: Opportunities for other support uses, services, residential, hotel, crèche, etc.

The business quarter densities should range between a plot ratio of 1:1 and 1.5:1. This may be exceeded (to a maximum of 2.0:1) where a use of significance to the development of the gateway is proposed.

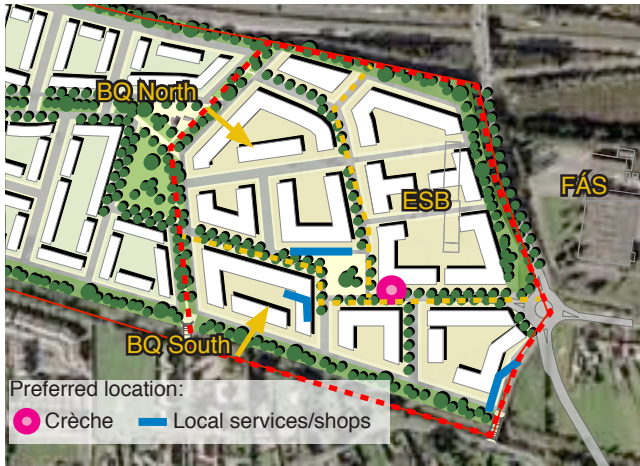


Fig 46: Character Area 5 with division into parcels



Fig 47: Indicative 3D view of Character Area 5

Parcel	Area ha	Land use	Scale/ Height	Building type	Plot ratio	GFA (sqm)	Other
Business Quarter North	2.9	Enterprise, Business	3-4 storeys	Medium and large office	1.0-1.5:1	29,000+	Potential legibility/ landmark function. Urban character. Focus on avenue streets and urban scale.
Business Quarter South	4.0	Enterprise, Business	3-4 storeys	Medium and large office	1.0-1.5:1	40,000+	Potential legibility/ landmark function. Focus on avenue streets and urban scale. New square.
ESB	3.2	Enterprise, Business	3-4 storeys	Medium and large office	1.0-1.5:1	32,000+	Urban character and frontage. Potential for redeveloping ESB lands in stages.

Table 5: Development features and capacity for character area 5

NB. All areas, plot ratios and units in this table are indicative and approximate and depend on appropriate, quality design responses to context, scale, function and place-making.

While, generally, the scale should be three to four storeys, the height of a landmark buildings of significant use and quality of design can be increased to six storeys. The intensity of use will reflect the potential of the lands to create a viable business hub, which is subsidiary and complementary to the town centre.

Approximately 10.4% of this area will be provided as gross open and green space. This will partly consist of perimeter areas to major roads and the railway.

Up to 25% of the gross floor area should be mixed, complementary and support uses such as services, residential and hotel.



4.7 Sarsfield Square Community Park

The existing open space at Sarsfield Square will be redefined as a new community park. The design of the park will be based on best practice urban design principles for the design and management of open space. It will aim to create an attractive, functional and safe community open space which is well integrated with the surrounding development and provide appropriate recreational and community facilities to meet the needs of the local residential population. This will include consideration of proposals to develop new housing on the edge of the open space in order to improve perceptions of safety and security for park users through the provision of passive surveillance and reduced opportunities for anti-social behaviour. The scale of the housing will respect the existing scale of housing in Sarsfield Square.

This area includes elements of the existing former St. Mel's Park and a margin of the Marist School. These parcels should be included as part of the coherent improvement of the area.

An appropriate design proposal for the area will be developed within the first two years of the adoption of this LAP, based on close consultation with the local community



Fig 48: Character Area 6: Sarsfield Square Community Park

Parcel	Area ha	Land use	Scale/ Height	Building type	Housing units	Other
Sarsfield Square	3.2	Open Space	n/a	n/a	n/a	Major improvement of open space.
		Possible future residential and com. facilities	Dependent on future master plan	Dependent on future master plan	Dependent on future master plan	

Table 6: Development features and capacity for character area 6



Fig 49: Indicative 3d model perspective view of Character Area 5



5.1 General

The guidelines outlined here cover aspects of the plan, which apply to more than one character area. They are also considered to be important elements requiring further elaboration.

5.2 Density and intensity

The density of the proposed development is derived from the basic concepts for the development of the plan area. The Framework Plan section includes indicative standards for building height and density.

In general terms, building height should be modest and should reflect established heights in the town and the area. A relatively consistent building height will ensure that the topography of the lands is reflected in the development. Generally, two-storey development should be considered as the context building height in residential areas. Roof space could be provided to allow for loft space or future conversions. Three storeys, or two storeys plus a roof storey, may be appropriate at and near the hub and along the avenue to reflect greater intensity of use. The context height for the business quarter should be three to four storeys.

Provision is made for an increase to six storeys in the business quarter and the gateway in the regional recreation area to reflect a significant and higher intensity of use.

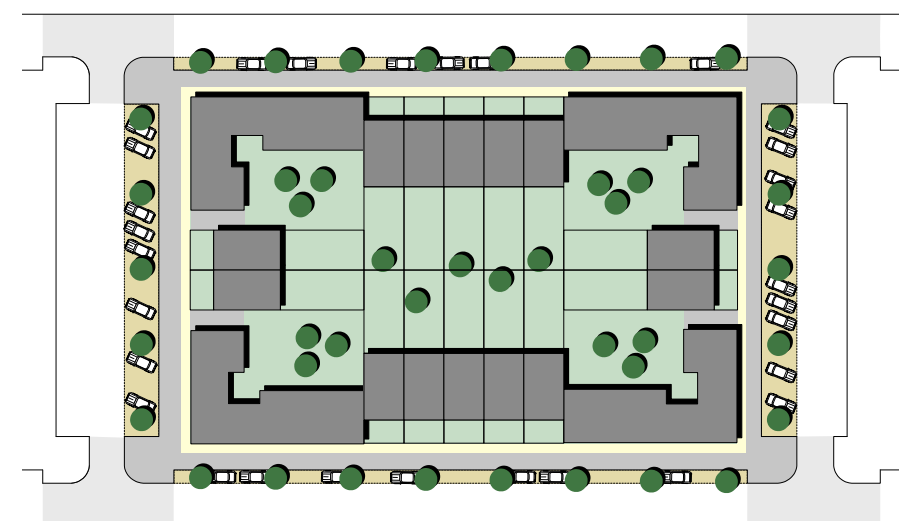


Fig 50: Typical residential perimeter block



5.3 Community services and infrastructure

The timely provision of community facilities and services is a major aspect of achieving a sustainable community. These facilities should be rolled out on a phased basis in parallel with development of the lands. Some of the facilities are already planned or under construction. The range of community services and infrastructure will include:

- :: An Gaelscoil - now under construction.
- :: Childcare – to be provided locally and in accordance with DoEHLG Guidelines.
- :: Children's play – included in the detailed design space of all residential development and facilities in open space.
- :: A new community focus and and multi-purpose facility at Brawny.
- :: Potential future community spaces – feasible within robust urban blocks in the mixed use area.
- :: Local services and shops focussed on new squares at Brawny and in the business quarter.
- :: Amenity open space – provided in a hierarchy of spaces and facilities throughout the plan area.
- :: Urban agriculture – the potential for community managed garden/allotments should be investigated.
- :: Enhanced biodiversity with potential to be managed by the community.

Additional facilities for primary or secondary education are not currently required, however a typical block of approximately 5,000m² in area could later be provided within the current plan structure for future educational or related facilities in an urban context in the live-work area or the consolidated Brawny area. Such a facility should be situated on the main avenue and would take advantage of planned open spaces and nearby recreational facilities.

The multi-purpose community facility could accommodate, for example, a reading room/library, meeting room, adult education facilities, local health facilities, general practitioner, cafe etc.

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 the avenue.

A brief should be prepared for the proposed community facilities. This will cover position, plot, nature of uses as well as overall form and access. This should be prepared by Athlone Town Council.

5.4 Employment

Local employment uses provide the basis for healthy and sustainable communities. The development of the business quarter and the mixed use/live-work area will provide for regional, town and local employment opportunities.

Live-work and small unit employment uses will be provided in the mixed use area, while significant office-based employment is provided for at business quarter.



5.5 Housing

New and improved housing is an important feature of the framework plan. It will be important to

- :: Provide a critical mass for a diverse community by providing for new household of different types.
- :: Design for social cohesion and interaction based on active and social streets and spaces.
- :: Design for life and all ages by providing for adaptability in form and layout in buildings.
- :: Provide choice and diversity by providing a variety of typologies in new housing.
- :: Reflect local character and identity.

Guidelines at national level including, Delivering Homes, Sustaining Communities, DoEHLG, 2007, and the Draft Sustainable Residential Development Planning Guidelines, 2008, and the accompanying Urban Design Manual, emphasise the importance of sustainable critical mass, movement and urban and landscape quality in new residential areas.

Achieving critical mass will require sustainable urban densities and scales. Given the low-density nature of the Brawny area at present, higher density urban forms will be required to ensure the viability of local services and infrastructure.

“In general, minimum net densities of 50 dwellings per hectare should apply within such public transport corridors and should be specified in local area plans.” (Draft Sustainable Residential Development Planning Guidelines, 2008).

A variety of typologies and styles will be promoted. It will be important to ensure variety of block type and building design. A diversity of designers in each area will be required and this will be particularly important at the focal spaces and along the avenue, where blocks should be broken up into smaller plots.

Typology	Density
Apartment	Higher
Townhouses/ Terraced houses	
Mews houses/ Maisonettes	Medium
Live-work units	
Self-built plots	Lower
Semi-detached houses	

Table 7: Housing typologies and associated density

Social and affordable housing will be provided in accordance with the Housing Strategy in consultation with Athlone Town Council and Westmeath County Council. Given the existing provision for social and affordable housing in the area, new housing is likely to be mainly private in nature to ensure a balance of tenure and household types. Contribution to social and affordable housing will be considered in lieu of direct provision in the area. Any new social and affordable housing in the area should be indistinguishable from other private housing.

5.5.1 Apartments

Apartments will provide increased density and scale to the area. They should be generally be located:

- :: Along the main avenue.
- :: Fronting larger areas of open spaces.
- :: In the business quarter.
- :: At corner locations.



Apartment buildings

The potential for smaller ground-floor retail units, for which higher ceiling heights are required, should be considered. Apartment sizes should vary and provide space for young and old singles or childless couples. Apartments should provide, communally or independently, for storage of bicycles and prams, and clothes-drying.

Apartment sizes and other standards should comply with those set out in “Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments”, 2007, DoEHLG.



Example of terraced houses



Example of townhouses

5.5.2 Townhouses and terraced houses

Townhouses and terraced houses will provide the majority of units in the residential areas and should be designed in a diverse and adaptable way. It is important to vary layout, position, size, styles, colours, materials etc. The perimeter block provides the ideal structure for different house typologies and variations.

5.5.3 Mews houses and maisonettes

Smaller or incidental spaces such as the backs of blocks or corners will provide opportunities for small mews houses and maisonettes in courtyards, lanes or shared surfaces. These units should comprise one or two bedrooms and should be typically between 50-60m² in area.



Mews houses



Example of mews houses

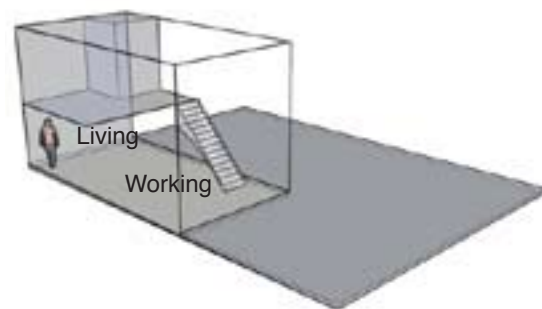
5.5.4 Live-work units

A live-work unit is where a property is used as both a dwelling and as a workspace - where the workspace occupies a certain proportion of the unit's total floor area. The work element must be compatible with residential use. There is a wide range of acceptable uses such as fashion, art, design, computing, consultancy, medical and therapeutic practices.

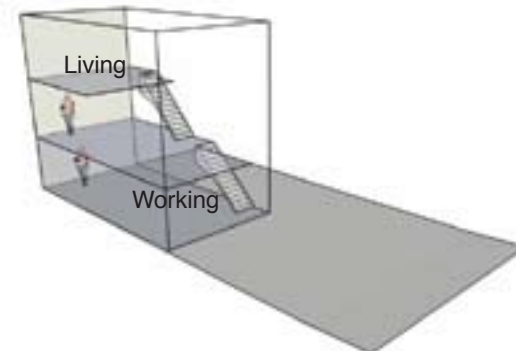
Live-work accommodation should be designed with its function in mind. It should provide for a low level of business visitors. Communal areas, such as entrance arrangements, corridors and staircases need to be of a suitable standard. A reliable and fast communications in the area is required.

Live-work units can be provided at the back of blocks, in courtyards and mews.

Integrated live-work (live in)



Seperated live-work (live over)



Courtyards, mews, lanes (live in front/ behind)

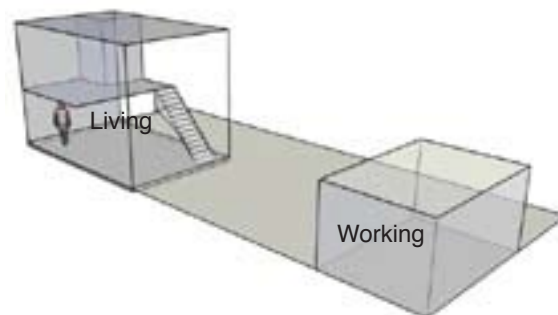


Fig 51: Types of live-work units



Examples of live-work accommodation

5.5.5 Self-build plots

To achieve diversity and promote choice, a percentage of the residential development should be provided as self-build plots or individually designed units.

Self-build plots will be designated at pre-application stage. They should consist of small to medium sized plots, which can be sold to individuals who can build their own house within defined building lines and envelopes. These townhouses may be attached to an adjoining house to create continuous building fronts. Plot width should range from 6-10 metres, the depth should be approximately 25 metres and the setback should not exceed from the pavement of 3-4 metres. The depth of the house will be determined by the designer. A garden depth of approximately 10 metres should be achieved. Brawny and the mixed-use area will be appropriate locations.

In the order of 25% of housing units should be provided as self-build, serviced plots or as individually designed, housing units. The Council will prepare detailed guidance on how applicants can comply with this objective. Detailed development proposals should be discussed with the Planning Authority at the pre-application stage.



Example of self-build terraced plots

5.5.6 Semi-detached houses

Semi-detached houses are suitable for home zone and residential streets and should not be built along the avenue or at the focal spaces. They could be used as a transition between the higher density areas and existing housing but should, due to their low density nature, will be small in number and limited in extent. Consideration of building lines are recommended for this type of housing.

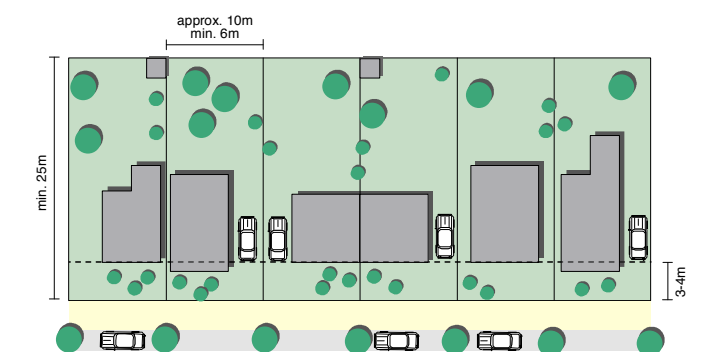


Fig 52: Indicative variation of self-build plots

5.6 Streets and parking

5.6.1 Hierarchy

The principal movement elements comprises Lissywollen Avenue, the new north-south avenue, and Garrycastle Road. The secondary structure will derive from this and will provide for residential streets and spaces, which are passively calmed by tight, slow speed, horizontal alignments. At the tertiary level, there are opportunities in the structure for shared spaces, home zones, courtyards and boithrín/lanes. Informal and established pedestrian links to adjoining residential areas will need to be improved.

5.6.2 Lissywollen avenue

The avenue will need to provide for a degree of through-traffic, thus active traffic calming or other design measures may be required. The extended section of the avenue will be passively calmed by deliberate changes in horizontal alignment and design for pedestrian, cyclist and bus priority. The urban character of the area will reinforce the purpose of the avenue as being for local purposes and functions.

The avenue will be the subject of detailed and innovative design, which will provide for pedestrian, cyclist and bus priority prior to the commencement of development of lands in the area. Particular attention will be paid to the relationship between the avenue and existing and future residential areas.

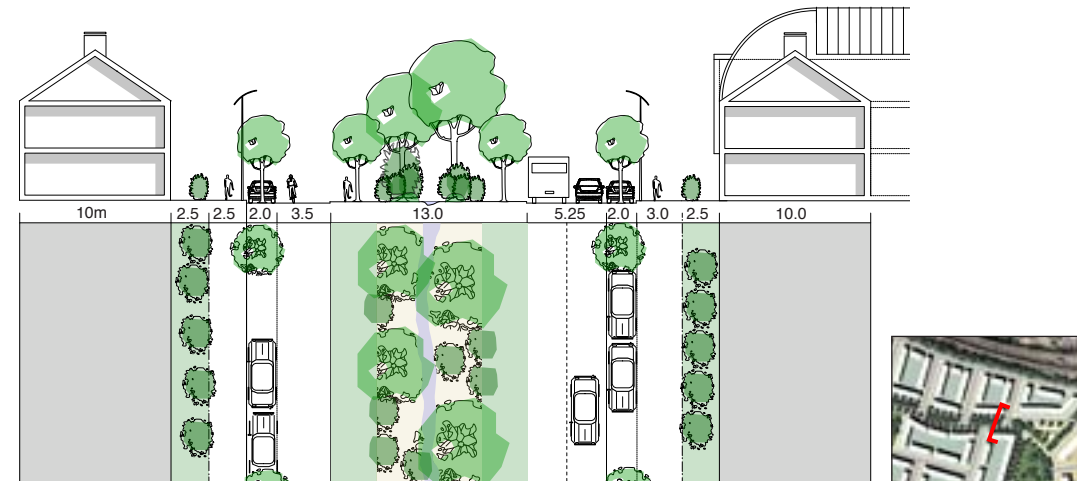


Fig 53: Indicative section through Lissywollen Avenue with swale/ preserved hedgerow

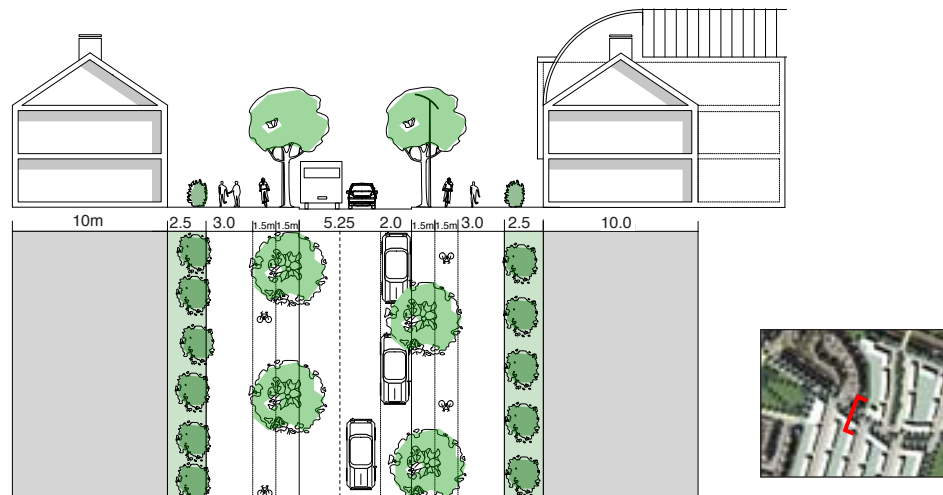


Fig 54: Indicative section through Lissywollen Avenue with townhouses

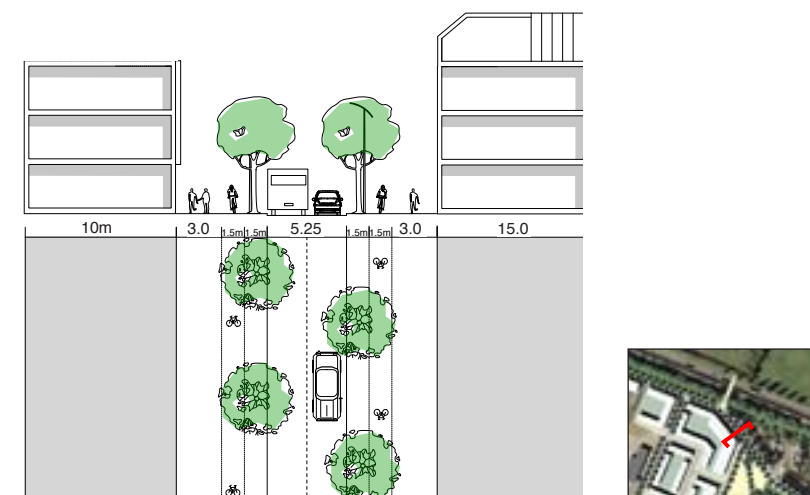


Fig 55: Indicative section through corner at Lissywollen Avenue



5.6.3 New north-south avenue

The new north-south avenue is an important part of the new structure, which is essential if major plan issues are to be addressed. The avenue is needed:

- :: To provide important new linkages for public transport, cyclists and pedestrians
- :: To address serious issues of local traffic congestion
- :: To remove physical and perceived barriers in the area
- :: To improve access to the regional sports and recreational facilities

The route will need to cross the disused railway line, and should be mainly used by bus, cyclists and pedestrians to promote more sustainable patterns of movement. In the short to medium term a level crossing could be established, while in the long-term, pending the decision to reopen the Athlone-Mullingar railway line, a bridge will need to be considered.

To avoid the development of a “rat-run” in the local area, traffic management measures will be required, such as restrictions on through traffic, restriction of classes and weights of commercial vehicles, lower speed limits of 30 km/h as well as physical traffic calming measures.

The route will have implications for existing sports facilities at the Marist School. The reconfiguration of these will be required. This will be done in consultation with the Council and may be considered in tandem with the reconfiguration and redevelopment of St. Mel’s Park. A new signalled junction at Retreat Road will need to be established, and the upgrading of the railway bridge close to that junction will have to be implemented.

As this route will be necessary to facilitate development in the plan area, it will be funded through development contributions in the plan area.

It will be a public road and it will be developed by the Council, solely or in partnership with local owners or interests.

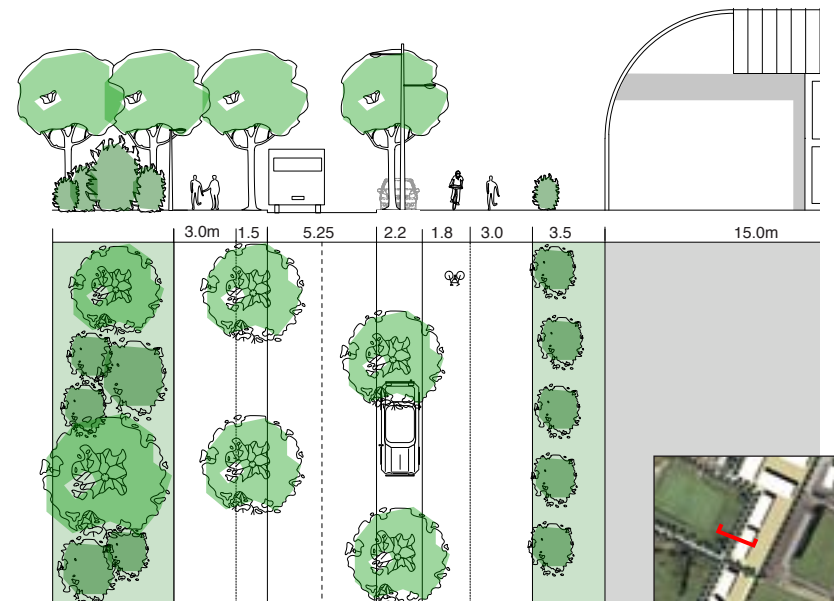


Fig 50: Indicative section through new north-south avenue

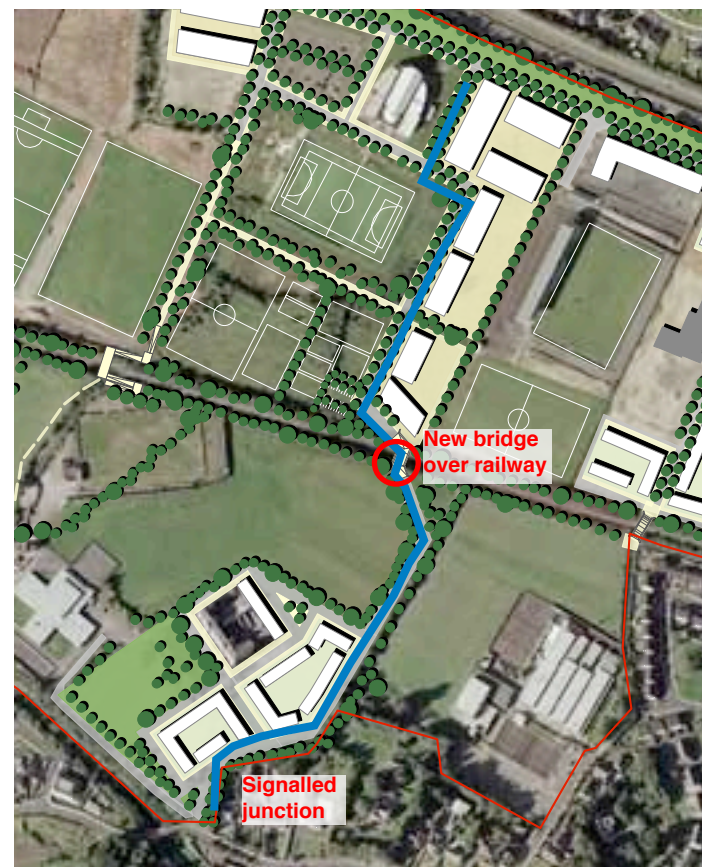


Fig 51: Location of new north-south avenue, showing main planning implications

5.6.4 Garrycastle Road (R916)

The existing Garrycastle Road, which lies within the business park area between the FÁS site and the ESB site, can play an important role in connecting these two areas. It should be designed as an urban avenue, and as an appropriate approach to the business quarter. Building frontages should be created on both sides by the redevelopment of the FÁS and ESB sites. The road margin provides enough space for a good pedestrian and cycle environment and should provide facilities for bus users.

Planning applications for significant development in Character area 5 Business quarter should be accompanied by a transport and traffic assessment and a road safety audit.”

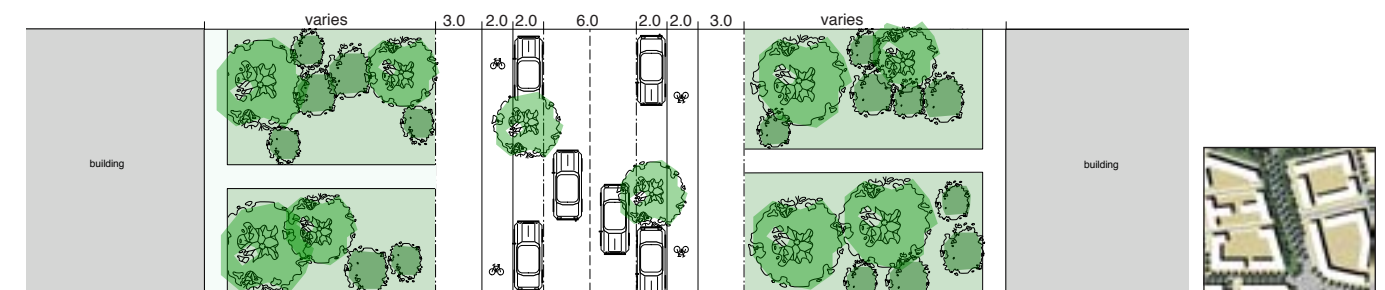


Fig 52: Indicative plan through Garrycastle Road



5.6.6 Secondary streets and spaces

Secondary streets should be designed to prioritise their use by residents, with a focus on pedestrians, children and cyclists. These streets will be formed primarily by considering the relationship between buildings and space. The scale proportions of buildings will be important in creating an intimate character.

A narrow privacy strip should be provided in preference to a large front garden and parking should be either provided parallel or perpendicular on-street or in common courtyards.

The carriageway may be “traced” through the streets. Emphasis should be placed on the quality of pavement, tree planting and other street furniture.

5.6.7 Tertiary streets and spaces

The tertiary network of shared spaces, home zones, courtyards and bothrín/lanes 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.

The existing bothrín and ditches running north-south between the mixed-use and business area should be preserved and augmented as an important character element for reasons of biodiversity.

5.6.8 Pedestrian network

The pedestrian network will extend through all routes and spaces to promote sustainable movement. All vehicular routes will provide for safe and comfortable walking in an attractive environment. The urban and block structure will ensure frontage to most pedestrian routes to ensure passive supervision, e.g. the jogging route throughout the area. The close relationship between buildings and open space must be a major consideration in subsequent planning and design.

A pedestrian priority route is proposed through Pairc Chiarain from the Ballymahon Road entrance to the Regional Sports Centre pedestrian network.

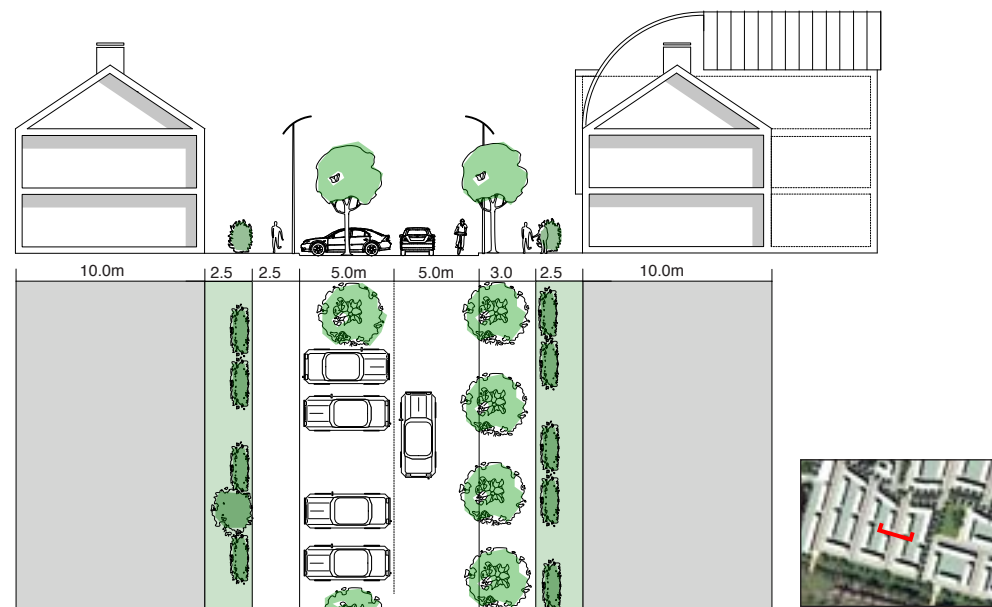


Fig 53: Indicative section through residential street with one side perpendicular parking

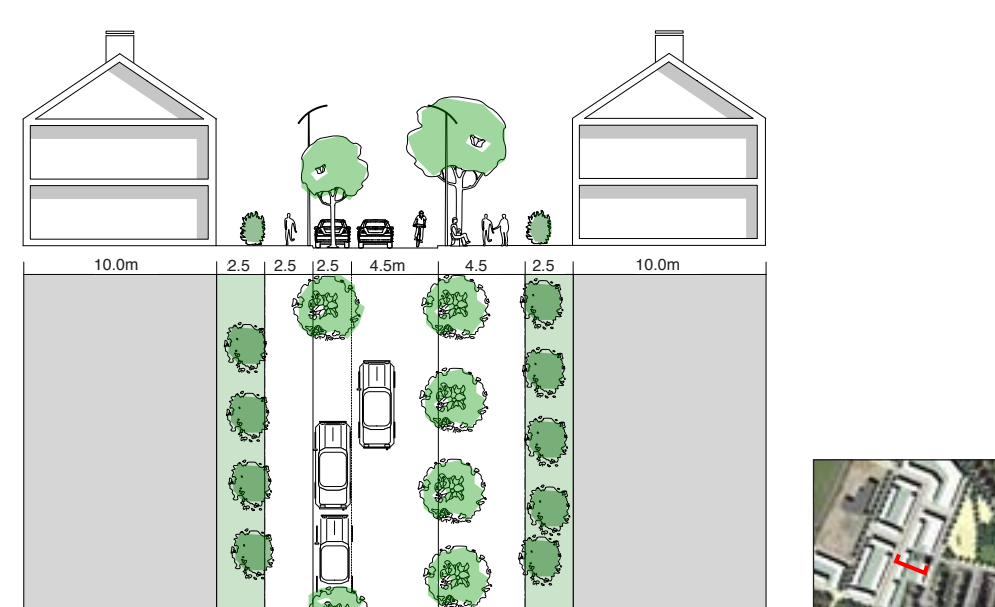


Fig 54: Indicative section through residential street with one side parallel parking

5.6.9 Cycle network

A cycleway will need to be provided along the length of Lissywollen Avenue and North-south Avenue. Other routes and spaces will be designed with safety for cyclists in mind. The cycle network will extend to Lissywollen North by two new foot and cycle bridges at Brawny. The North-south avenue will extend the cycle network to the educational area and beyond to the town centre.

5.6.10 Car parking

A balance must be found between on-street and off-street 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.



5.6.11 Safe streets and spaces

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. The entire area should be designed for a speed not exceeding 30km/h.

The design and layout of streets and parking should have particular regard to:

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

All aspects of street and space layout and design should be agreed in consultation with Athlone Town Council and Westmeath County Council.

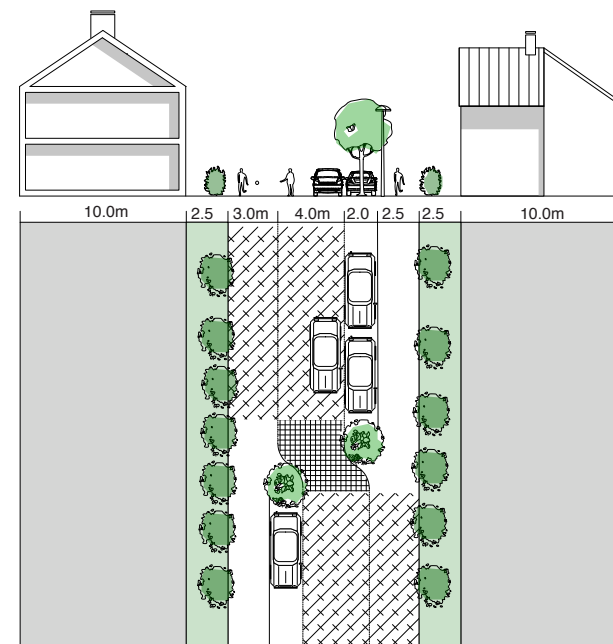


Fig 56: Indicative section through home zone

5.6.12 Noise Attenuation Along By-pass (N6) Interface

All new development adjoining the bypass (N6) will be required to provide for appropriate noise attenuation measures, which are to be designed in consultation with the Planning Authority.

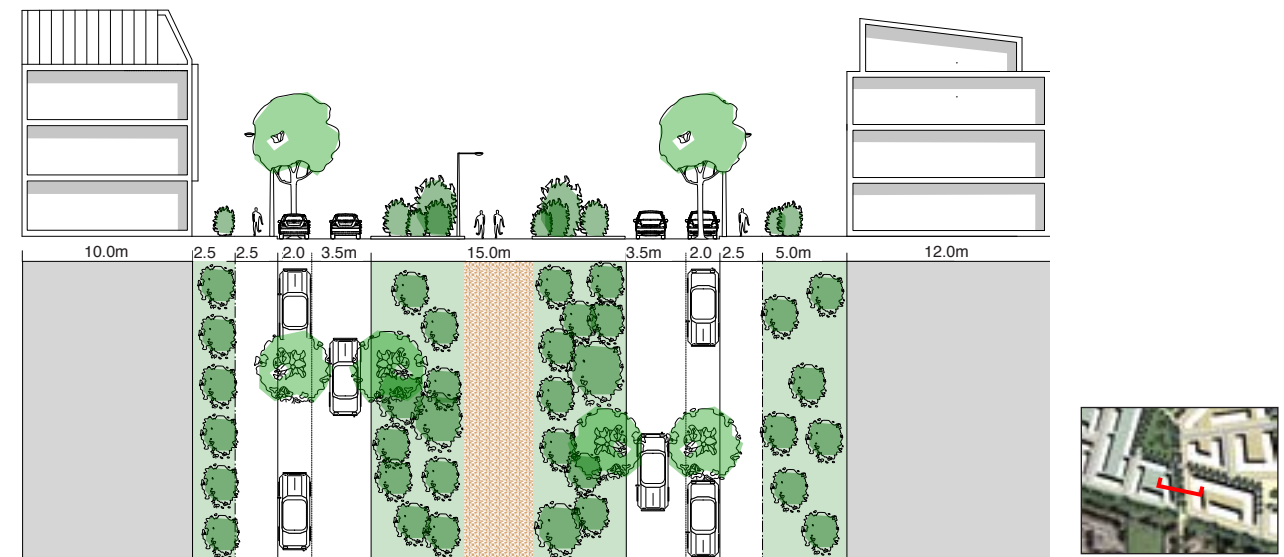


Fig 55: Indicative section through boreen

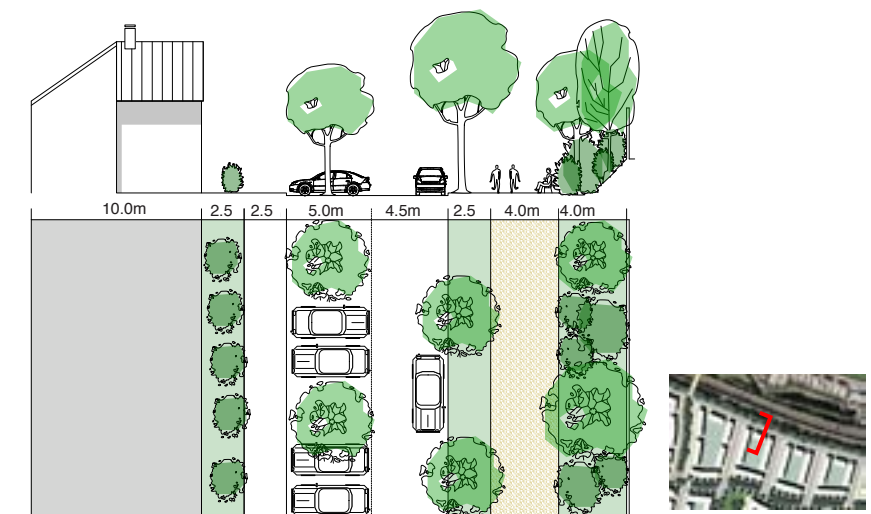


Fig 57: Indicative section near northern boundary with jogging route

5.7 Urban and open spaces

The open space structure will provide a range and hierarchy of open space function, types and sizes. The regional sports and recreation will be augmented by a network of passive and active open spaces connecting to other character areas. Options for more extensive walking and running routes are included in the plan. These routes will also serve as corridors for ecology and biodiversity.

Open space will also provide visual and functional settings and focal spaces for the character areas, in particular, providing:

- :: A setting for redevelopment at the Retreat/ educational area.
- :: A new and improved focal space for the community at Brawny.
- :: A functional focal space for the mixed use community and the potential for enhanced biodiversity along the existing drainage channel.
- :: Structured and enclosed urban space for the business quarter.

A network of spaces and squares within 250m distance is proposed. Smaller pocket parks on the minor streets and courtyards will benefit from a traffic-calmed location and direct passive supervision. The smaller spaces and lanes will provide opportunities for shared surfaces or home zones.

All aspects of urban and open space will require more detailed landscape concepts and design at subsequent planning and design stages.

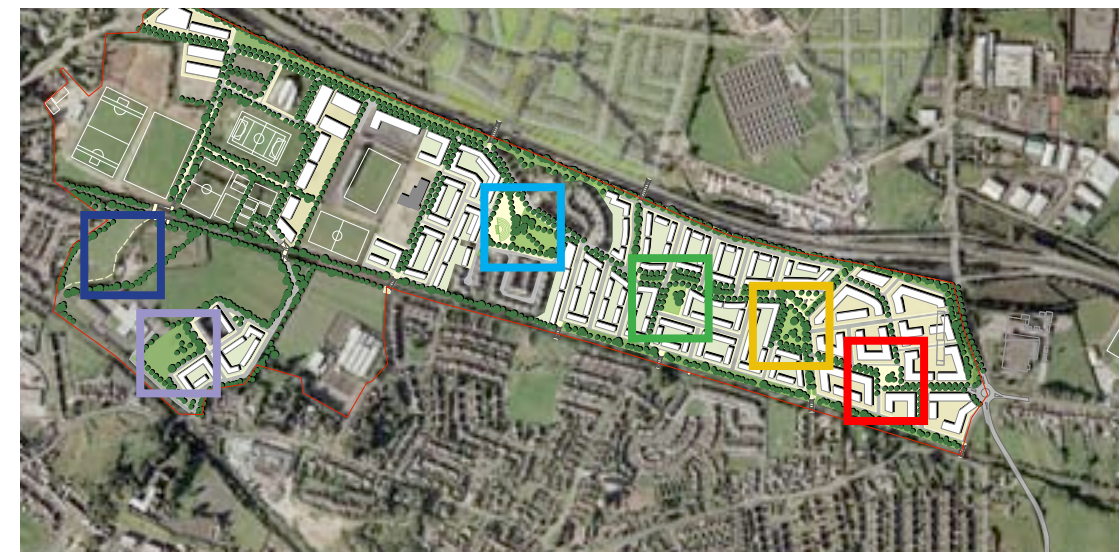
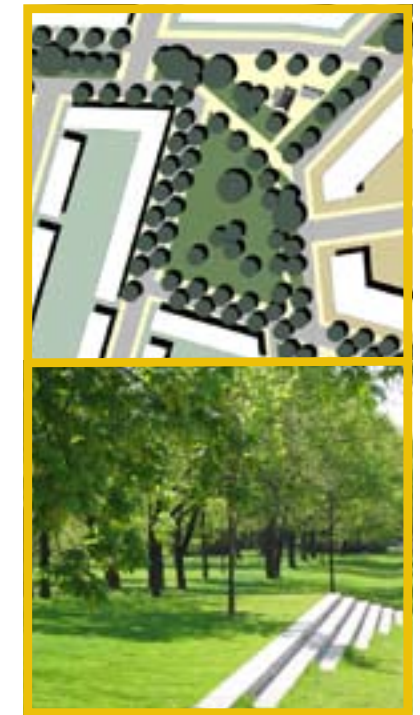


Fig 58: Indicative open space character

5.8 Heritage

The built and natural heritage should be protected and incorporated sensitively into the development of the area. The framework plan provides for the inclusion of the following elements:

- :: Parts of remnant hedgerows.
- :: The breen at Garrycastle.
- :: The cottage and enclosure at Garrycastle.
- :: Railway Bridge at Garrycastle.
- :: Our Lady's Hermitage.

Natural heritage and biodiversity

Hedgerows could be provided as part of a median strip/swale for the streets designed to provide green links through the area and as definition of places within the plan area. A policy of planting new hedgerows as part of the overall landscaping should be encouraged not only for ecological benefit but as a connection to the historic aspects of the landscape. The breen will also provide for pedestrians and cyclists.

Fauna

Bats and badgers, both protected under the National Wildlife Act, are known to inhabit the plan area. To outline if any development in the area would be significant or not in particular in the overall context of any species, an EIS or appropriate ecological assessment should be carried out in relation to any proposed significant development in the plan area that may impact upon fauna. The assessment should address proportionate mitigating measures, aimed at safeguarding the continued existence of bats species, in particular, but also other species of conservation interest.

Built heritage

The cottage at Garrycastle was present in the first survey of the town in 1837. It provides a link to the historic landscape of the area and should be retained along with its enclosure and surrounding buildings as a focal feature of new open space in this location. The use of the cottage could be changed to provide for local services supporting the business quarter, such as public house, restaurant or café.

The railway bridge and any remaining items of historic interest of the disused railway should be preserved, subject to necessary future operational priorities.

Our Lady's Hermitage is listed in the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage as being of regional importance and of architectural, artistic and social interest. It is an attractive building sitting in a prominent position in the local landscape and it should be retained as part of a redevelopment of its immediate surroundings. It should be refurbished and would be suitable for apartments.



Protection of existing railway bridges

5.9 Sustainability

An important part of achieving greater environmental sustainability will be the use where feasible of sustainable/alternative energy, services and infrastructure and low energy buildings.

5.9.1 Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS)

The proposed development should incorporate the basic elements of SUDS. This will mean considering:

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

Initial areas identified as ideal for water retention ponds are along the existing preserved hedgerows and along the boithrín. These areas have both an amenity as well as SUDS value and contribute to the overall green network.

5.9.2 Alternative energy

The proposed development should investigate the alternative and more sustainable sources of energy including:

- :: District/development or group heating, utilising solar, wood chip or other technology.
- :: Geothermal and ground/water source heat pumps.
- :: Combined heat and power for facilities in steady demand throughout the year.

5.9.3 Low energy buildings

The proposed development should consider the following elements of low energy buildings:

- :: Improved thermal insulation.
- :: Natural ventilation.
- :: Passive cooling techniques.
- :: Minimal use of mechanical ventilation and air conditioning.
- :: Exclusion of unwanted solar gains and glare.
- :: High efficiency lighting.
- :: High efficiency plant and appliances.
- :: Orientation to optimise solar gain.
- :: Built form and façade to minimise heat loss and gain.
- :: High thermal mass to provide for thermal storage.

5.10 Other infrastructure

The proposed development should comply with the requirements of Athlone Town Council and Westmeath County Council and the statutory undertakers in regard to the provision of necessary water, drainage, lighting, telecommunications, electricity and other services and infrastructure.



Green roof



Vegetated Swale



Permeable paving

6.1 Use of the Local Area Plan

This Local Area Plan provides the basic considerations of character and context and presents a set of core concepts for the development of the area.

The plan should be used to inform the next phase of the development of the lands, which is site layout and detailed design. While the plan is not prescriptive in nature there is a strong commitment to achieving:

- :: Appropriate functions and uses.
- :: Good urban and landscape form and structure.
- :: New access and transport.

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

6.2 Contributions and infrastructure

New social and physical infrastructure will be necessary and of direct benefit to development in the area. The nature of infrastructure and services and their associated costs will need to be established. The Council may prepare a General Development Contribution and/or Supplementary Development Contributions Scheme for the Area under S. 48 and S. 49 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000.

The development of the lands provides the opportunity for significant new approaches by developers to dealing with sustainable infrastructure and services. It is recommended that where these approaches are shown to be of benefit to the local environment and reduce loads on local infrastructure and services, that contributions may be reduced or waived in lieu thereof. This will need to be agreed in consultation with Athlone Town Council/ Westmeath County Council.

6.3 Ownership

The plan has considered, insofar as possible and appropriate, existing ownership patterns. Ownership patterns in the area are generally favourable for redevelopment purposes. Consolidation or splitting of plots may occur in the future, but the overriding consideration will be the larger proposed urban structure for the area.

6.4 Phasing

The vision and objectives of the plan will need to be driven by appropriate structures and arrangements. The success of the plan will be dependent on its objective application to the area over the life of the plan. Appropriate strategic direction, monitoring, and development control will be required.

The development of the area will be influenced by:

- :: The early provision of key infrastructure.
- :: The improvement of access to and through the area.
- :: Property and ownership issues.
- :: Prevailing market conditions.
- :: Sequential approaches to development.

Land use zoning and objectives

The South Lissywollen land use zoning objectives are specific to the plan area and broadly reflect the development policies and objectives of Athlone Town Development Plan.

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.

The zoning 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, at development management stage.

Type of development	Educational/ institutional/ community	Business quarter	Sporting /	Open space/ Amenity
A.T.M.'s	P	P	O	X
Abattoir	X	X	X	X
Advertising Structures	O	O	O	X
Aerodrome / Airfield	X	X	X	X
Agri-Business	X	O	X	X
Agricultural Building	X	X	O	O
Agri-tourism	X	O	O	O
Amusement Arcade	X	X	X	X
Ancillary plant	O	O	O	O
Betting Office	X	O	X	X
Car Sales/ Repairs	X	O	X	X
Caravan Park- Residential	O	X	X	X
Caravan Park-Holiday	X	X	X	O
Casual-Trading	X	O	X	O
Cemetery	O	X	X	X
Church	P	O	O	X
Cinema	O	O	X	X
Commercial car Park	O	O	O	X
Community Hall	O	O	O	O
Recreation & Functional				
Crèche/ Nursery	P	O	O	X
Cultural use	P	O	O	P
Dance Hall/ Discotheque	X	O	O	X
Doctor/ Dentist	P	O	O	X
Dwelling	O	P	X	X
Education	P	O	O	X
Energy Installation	O	O	O	O
Extractive Industry	X	X	X	X
Funeral Home	O	O	X	X
Garden Centre	X	O	X	X
Golf Course	X	X	O	X

Guest House	O	O	X	X
Halting Site/ Housing	P	X	X	X
Health Centre	O	O	O	X
Heavy Industry	X	X	X	X
Heavy Vehicle Park	X	O	X	X
Holiday Home	X	X	X	X
Hospital	P	O	X	X
Hotel	X	O	X	X
Household Fuel Depot	X	O	X	X
Kennels	X	X	X	X
Landfill Site	X	X	X	X
Light Industry	O	O	X	X
Multi-storey Car Park	O	P	O	X
Offices <100 SQ M	O	P	X	X
Offices 100 SQ M - 1000 sq m	O	O	X	X
Offices >1000 sq m	X	O	X	X
Off Licence	X	O	X	X
Open Space	P	P	P	P
Park & Ride	X	O	X	X
Petrol Station	X	O	X	X
Private Tip	X	X	X	X
Public House	X	O	O	X
Public Services				
Recycling Plant	O	O	X	X
Residential Institution	O	O	X	X
Restaurant/Cafe	O	O	O	X
Retail Warehouse	X	O	X	X
Retirement Home	P	O	X	X
Science & Technology	O	O	X	X
Scrap Yard	X	X	X	X
Service Yard	X	O	X	X
Shops - Local	O	P	X	X
Shops- Neighbourhood	X	O	X	X
Shops-Major	X	X	X	X
Small Workshop	X	O	X	X
Sports Facility	O	O	O	X
Take-away/ Fast food	X	O	X	X
Telecom Structures	O	P	X	X
Tele-services	X	O	X	X
Tourism-Recreational complex	O	O	O	X
Training Centre	P	O	X	X
Transport Depot	X	O	X	X
Urban- Nature Reserve	O	O	O	X
Veterinary Surgery	X	O	X	X
Warehouse	X	O	X	X
Wholesale Outlet	X	X	X	X
Works to Quarry	X	X	X	X

Table 1: Land use zoning matrix

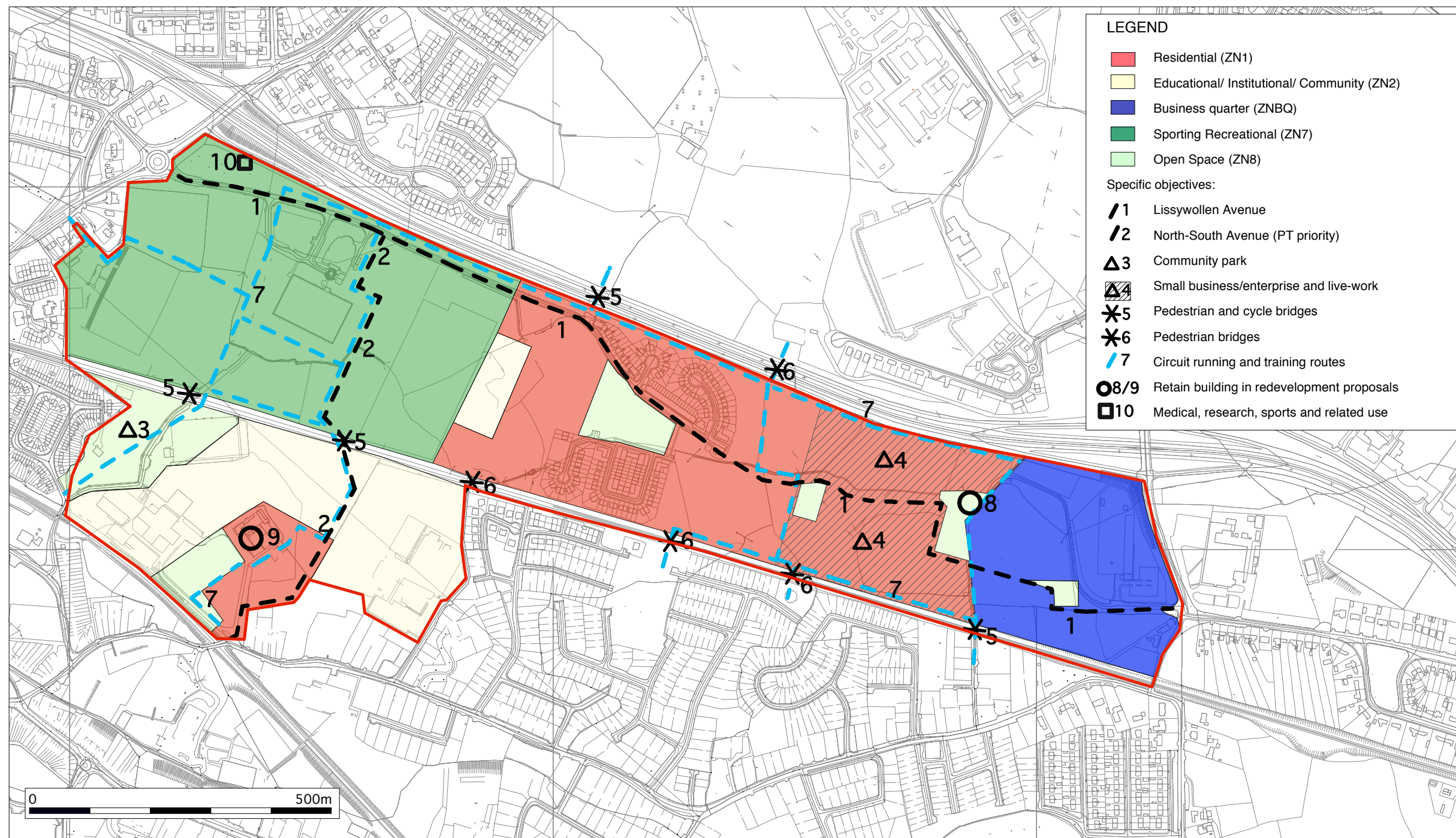


Fig 1: Land use zoning and objectives map