



*for Kildare County
Council*



Athy Architectural Conservation Area
Athy, Co. Kildare

STATEMENT OF CHARACTER

Preface

This assessment of the special character of Athy Architectural Conservation Area was prepared in 2020 by Lotts Architecture and Urbanism Ltd. The architectural historian Dr Michael O'Neill contributed to the section on the history of the town.

The study was commissioned by Kildare County Council and its progress was guided by Amy Granville, Senior Executive Planner, David Jordan, Executive Planner and Peter Black, Architectural Conservation Officer.

Desmond Byrne B.Arch MRIAI

Director

Lotts Architecture and Urbanism Ltd.

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Acknowledgements

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Architectural Conservation Areas

Planning legislation allows a planning authority to include objectives in its development plan / local area plan to preserve the character of places, areas, groups of structures, or townscapes that:

- are of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest or value, or
- contribute to the appreciation of protected structures.

Such areas, places or groups of structures are known as Architectural Conservation Areas, or ACAs.

An ACA could be an historic town centre, a distinctive streetscape, a terrace of houses, or it might be a wider group of structures associated with a specific building such as a country house, an old mill or a canal.

In the case of Athy, many of the above categories of interest were observed and their evolution over time have given rise to its special character. This document assesses that special character.

The document also looks at the proposed ACA boundary and, having assessed the special character of the town, gives recommendations to include or exclude certain areas. It also identifies important views within, into and out of the area, even if all territory encompassed by such views is not encompassed by the ACA boundary.

The aim of ACA designation is to preserve and enhance the character of the area or group of structures. The form and arrangement of buildings, structures and landscape features within an ACA are important in how they contribute to the character of the area or group of structures. Historic materials, architectural features, prevailing heights, building lines and plots sizes, as well as the scale and arrangement of streets and open spaces all contribute to the character of an ACA.

For this reason, the external appearance of buildings and the features of the open space are protected in an ACA. Planning permission is required for any works that would have an impact on the character of an ACA. Importantly, works which in other locations would meet the criteria for exempted development as outlined in the Planning Regulations will require planning permission if they are within an ACA.

Designation as an ACA does not prevent alterations, extensions or new build within the area, but aims to ensure that any new development respects or enhances the special character of the ACA. Works must therefore be carried out in consultation with the planning department and architectural conservation officer, and this is usually through the planning process.

This document defines the special character of the Athy ACA and gives guidance to homeowners, developers, architects and planning professionals on important features and characteristics of the area and the type of works that would require planning permission within the ACA.

1.2 Location and Setting of ACA

Athy, in *Irish Baile Átha Í*, meaning ‘The town of the ford of Í’ is a market town on the River Barrow located in the southwest of County Kildare. It is located on the N78 a national primary road and lies at the centre of a network of smaller roads linking it to its rural hinterland. The small market town of Stradbally is located 13km to the northwest, Kildare town lies 22km to the north and Carlow is 19km to the south.

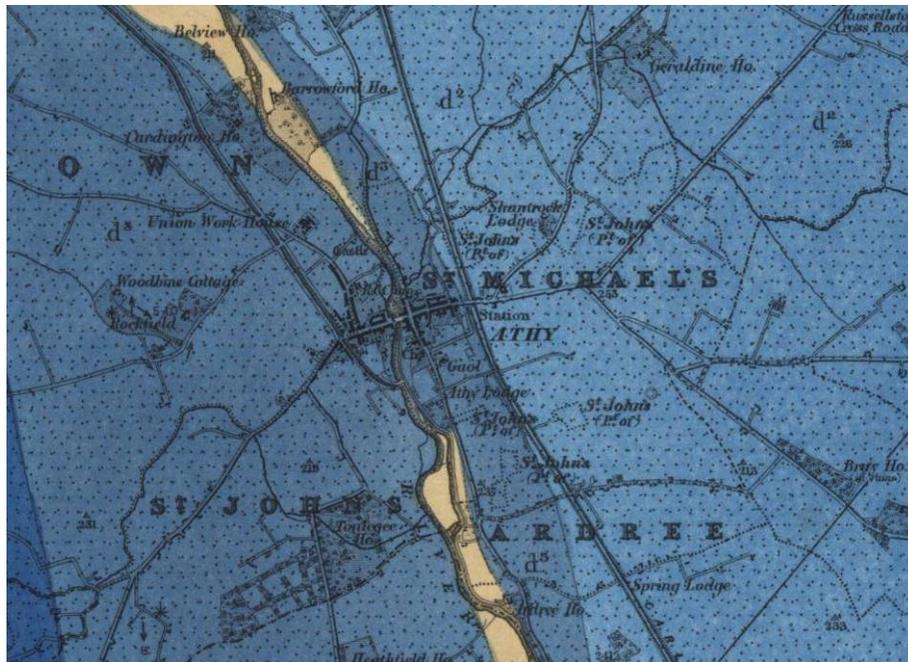


Fig. 1: Extract from the historic Geological Survey map of 1858, sheet 128

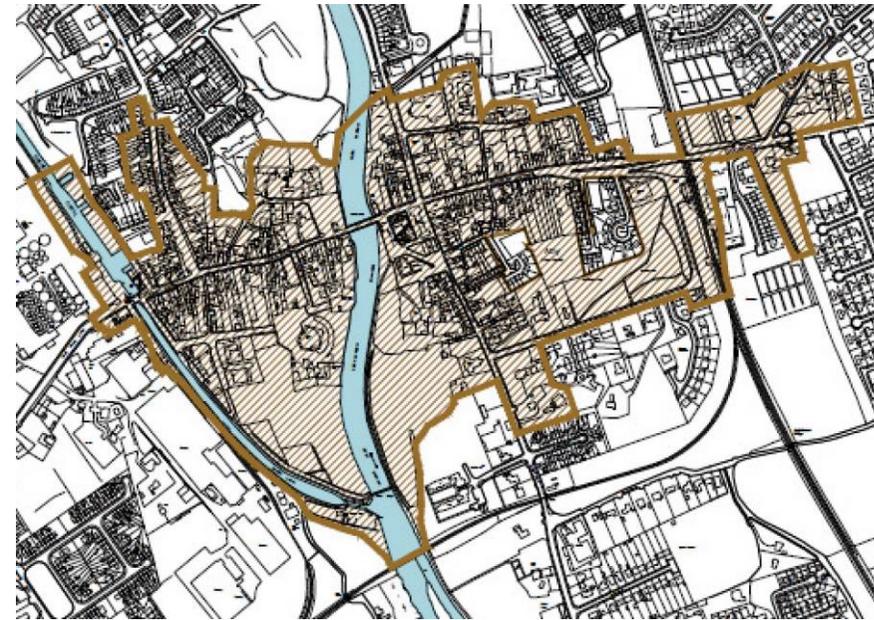


Fig. 2: ACA boundary from the Kildare County Development Plan 2017-2023

The town is situated in a landscape described in the Kildare County Development Plan 2017- 2023 Landscape Character Assessment as ‘Southern Lowlands: ...fertile lands with relatively high levels of local population and intensive land management. The slope and topography of areas occur in a shallow/gradual transition; the area is generally characterised by flat terrain and low vegetation. Concentrations of tillage lands in this lowland area tend to be characterised by extensive views across large fields with low, maintained hedges’. The underlying geology is of limestone with a band of alluvial covering along the river path.

Athy is also located on the important River Barrow corridor and Barrow Line of the Grand Canal. These have site specific relationships to the larger landscape. Both waterways play an important part in the history and experience of the town.

Athy is arranged around the bridge crossing of the River Barrow, guarded by White's Castle and has two main routes organised in a cruciform east of the river with an attractive main square at the road crossing. The canal marks the west end of the town, it runs north south and meets the river south of the town centre. The railway marks the east end of the historic town and runs in a north-south direction. A

branch off this line runs south of the town and crosses the river near the meeting point of the canal and river. The topography town is relatively flat with no highpoints or locations offering an overview. For the most part, the town is experienced along its street spaces, river and canal.

SECTION A: Historical and Architectural Description

2.0 Historical Development of Athy

2.1 Medieval Period

There is no evidence of occupation at this location before the thirteenth century. Prior to the arrival of the Anglo-Norman's (1169-70), Athy was part of the minor kingdom of Iarhar Lifhi, ruled by the Uí Muircedag dynasty.

Anglo-Norman towns were often first settled with a motte and bailey and when security was achieved, continued with the development of a borough - an economic and legal entity with various incentives to attract colonists to the new venture. This included being offered properties known as burgages (hence burgage plots) within the settlement area - as distinct from the rural hinterland, to settle, build on and from which to engage in trade. The town gave a ready market for trade and collective legal protection - local courts, set market days - and provided some element of physical security to the inhabitants. The Anglo-Norman overlords of Athy were the de St. Michael's, barons of Narragh and Riban. The de St. Michael's first and ultimately unsuccessful settlement was at Woodstock, 600 metres northwest of the fording point around which Athy would develop. Woodstock Castle dates from the thirteenth century.

There is no documentary evidence for the foundation of medieval Athy. By the late thirteenth century, it was an established town with a religious foundation on either side of a stone bridge across the Barrow and a parish church located to the east at a distance from the river

crossing. The Dominican Priory was on the east bank, south of the bridge, close to the present Emily Square, founded either 1253 or 1257. St. Michael's Priory (Priory of St. Thomas and house of St. Michael of the Crutched Friars) was located on high ground on the west bank, founded in either the late twelfth or mid-thirteenth century.

Athy was a relatively prosperous frontier town in the marches of the Pale, where in 1331 the Red Book of Kildare recorded the town as having ten burgesses paying £23 in dues to the Earl of Kildare. It was subject however, to sporadic attacks, the O'Moores in 1308, during the Bruce invasion in 1315, and again by the O'Moore's in 1370 and 1374. In order to secure the ninth Earl of Kildare's active cooperation in assisting the Dublin administration and the recovery of lands, Henry VIII in 1515 approved a bill which, if passed through the Irish Parliament, would have conferred on him (the Earl of Kildare) all the possessions formerly owned by Maurice Fitzthomas, the fourth Earl (1342-90). Henry VIII also conferred other privileges on the earl in 1515, notably a grant of two charters for the towns of Kildare and Athy. These invested the sovereign and portreeves (town official) of both towns with the authority to determine all pleas and assizes within their respective jurisdictions and with the right to collect all profits and payments arising from those cases. Both towns' officials were to oversee the return of writs, a measure which effectively excluded the king's sheriff from their jurisdictions. They were also granted the power to act as justices of the peace, and to administer the offices of escheator (royal official), clerk of the town's market and coroner. Furthermore, they were permitted to levy customs which they were expected to spend on

the walls and pavements of the towns, and they were ordered to account for the levies collected to the Earl of Kildare.



Fig. 3: Interpretation of the circuit of Athy town walls, Daniel Noonan

2.2 Sixteenth Century

In 1500 the eighth Earl of Kildare had thoroughly repaired the castle at Athy and thirty years later, the ninth earl garrisoned and fortified Woodstock Castle nearby. As a result of its strategic location and its close association with the Kildares, the town and its inhabitants suffered considerable destruction during numerous raids in the course of the rebellion in 1534-5.

Athy's strategic importance in the 1530s was highlighted in the Dublin government's acute concern that the bridge in the town along with the Earl of Kildare's garrison at Woodstock should be recaptured by English

forces, both having been occupied by the Irish since the outbreak of rebellion. The O'Moores razed the bridge and broke all doors, windows and battlements in the manor of Woodstock. The enormous amount of labour and supplies invested in the re-edification of the castle and bridge of Athy, and the manor of Woodstock (1536), after the suppression of the rebellion provide an indication of the lengths to which the Dublin administration was prepared to go in order to keep a foothold in the southwestern march of County Kildare. Concern for the fortifications included rebuilding of the town walls was also stipulated in a 1515 royal charter.

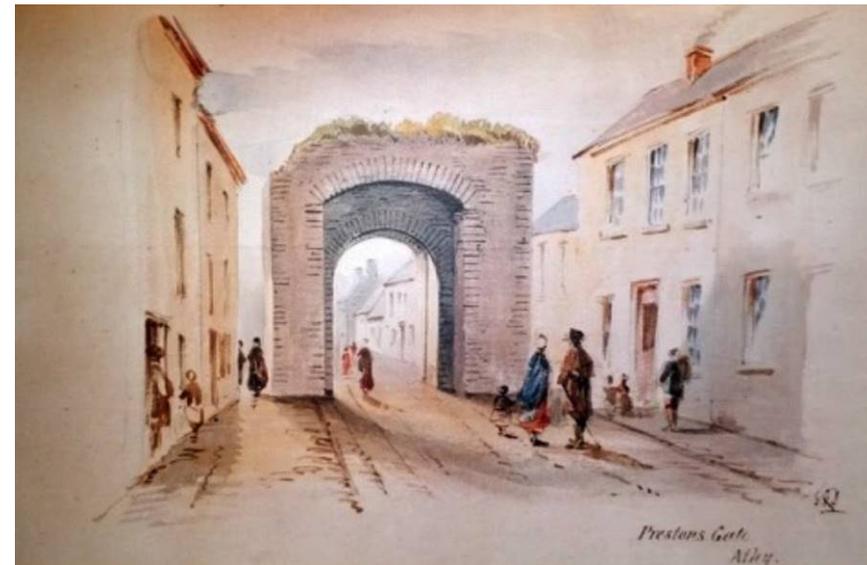


Fig. 4: Preston's Gate, c.1840, by Du Noyen (courtesy of Royal Irish Academy)

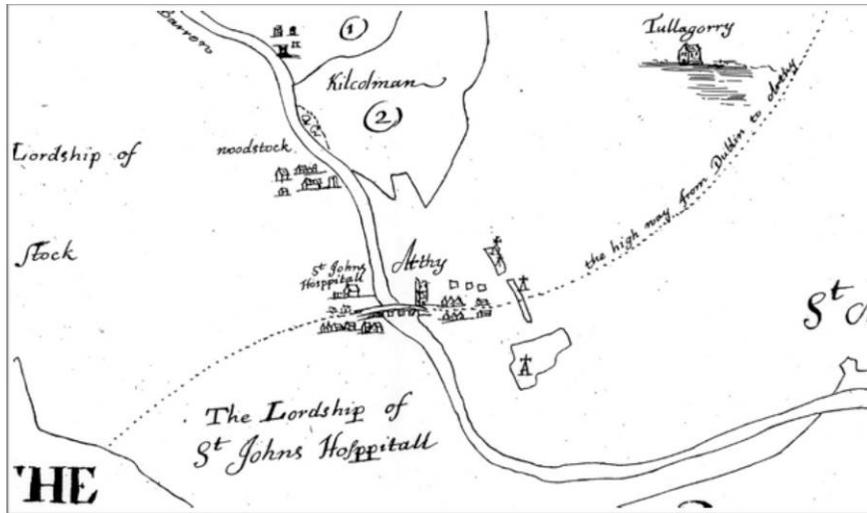


Fig. 5: Extract from the Down Survey map c.1655

2.3 Seventeenth Century

An extract from the Down Survey Map of the Barony of Narragh and Reban c.1655 shows considerable settlement on both banks of the river, a medieval castle and stone bridge and former religious foundations (Fig. 5). To the north is the smaller settlement of Woodstock associated with the thirteenth-century castle.

2.4 Eighteenth Century

Moll's map of 1714 shows the bridge in Athy to be the main crossing of the river between Carlow and Monasterevin (O'Keefe & Simington 1991). The cartographer John Rocque surveyed Athy east of the river Barrow in 1756 on a scale of 16 perches to one inch (Fig. 6 and Fig. 7).

His survey of Athy west of the Barrow dates to 1768 on a more detailed scale of 4 perches to one inch.

The defensive town wall is not evident in the survey. Like many towns at this time, Athy no longer needed these kinds of fortifications.

Preston's Gate to the southeast survived into the nineteenth century (Fig. 4). Today the wall may remain embedded in later buildings and below ground.

The manuscript town maps prepared by Rocque indicate that the road pattern evident today was well established by the middle of the eighteenth century. Some roads such as Church Road and the Stanhope Place/Mount Hawkins Road were not then laid down. Street names included Duke Street (St. John's Street), Market Street (Emily Square), Preston's Gate (Offaly Street), High Street (Leinster Street) and Cotters Lane (Stanhope Street). The east side of the town was better developed than the west, where extensive development is shown flanking the approach roads from Stradbally and Castlecomer (Fig. 8).



Fig. 8: John Rocque's map of Athy west of the River Barrow 1768, scale 4 perches to one inch.

The river crossing is marked by Cromaboo Bridge, which dates from 1796 and its classical style and harmonious symmetrical appearance is well appreciated by views up and down the river.

Public buildings associated with an urban settlement - the Town Hall which also served as Courthouse and Market House, the town jail and the Church of Ireland and Catholic Churches are located to the east side of the river. The cavalry barracks was erected west of the river in Barrack Street early in the eighteenth century.



Fig. 9: Extract from A Map of the County of Kildare. Lieutenant Alexander Taylor of His Majesty's 81st Regiment 1783

2.5 Nineteenth Century

A map of Athy (Fig. 10) was prepared in 1827 for the Duke of Leinster by Clarges Greene of Dominick Street, Dublin. On a scale of 80 feet to one inch the manuscript map shows the entire town on a single sheet.

Changes in local street names since Rocque's Surveys of 1756 and 1768 include:

- St. John's Street to Duke Street
- High Street and Bore Buoy to Leinster Street
- Preston's Gate to Ophaly Street (present Offaly Street)
- Cotters Lane to Kildare Street (present Stanhope Street).

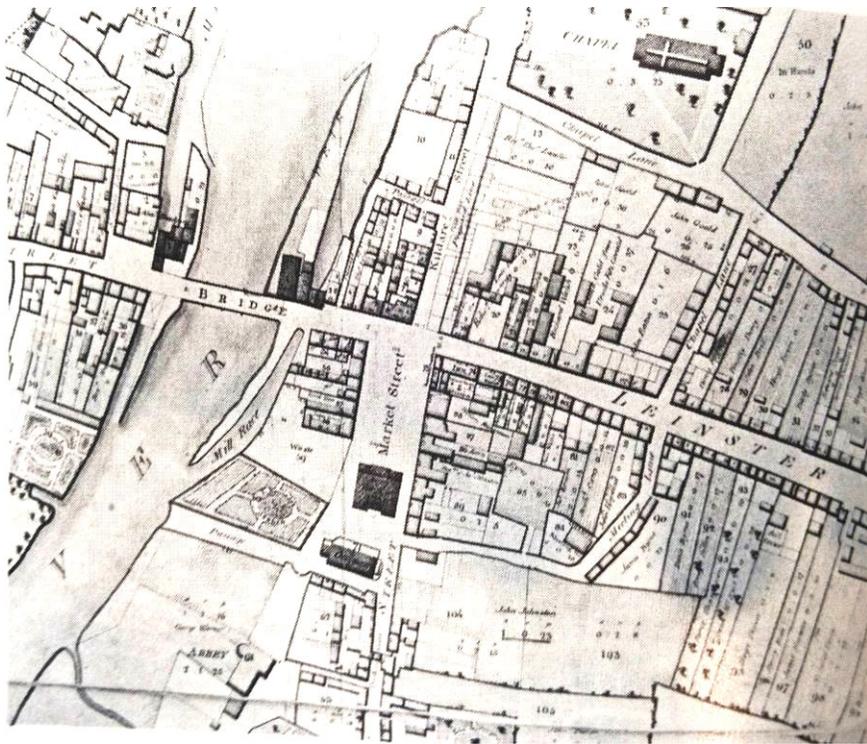


Fig. 10: Survey of the Town of Athy in the County of Kildare The Estate of His Grace Augustus Frederick Duke of Leinster by Clarges Greene 1827, Dominick Str., Dublin. Scale: Eighty feet to an inch (56 x 82 ½).

The map records the principal monuments of the town including the Market Hall and places of worship. The Church of Ireland church is shown on the site of the former Dominican Priory, south of the Market Hall. The priory was destroyed in 1650 during the Confederate Wars and the structure shown in this plan was to be replaced in the 1840s by another on a site to the south (St. Michael's). The Methodist chapel on Meeting Lane dates from the early part of the century and remains in

essence today. St. Michael's Catholic Chapel is located prominently on Stanhope Street close to the town centre. It enjoys a large site and is well set back from the road. This structure was replaced in the 1960s. Other changes reflected in the 1827 map included the removal of the Turnpike Gate and the Turnpike House at the junction of Green Alley and Duke Street with the subsequent realignment and widening of Duke Street from Green Alley to a point approximately opposite St. John's Lane. Another road widening project, although not completed in 1827, was also noted by Greene. The realignment of the former Cotters Lane, now renamed Kildare Street, was to be completed before 1837, following which it was renamed Stanhope Street.

The form of the river is worth noting; the map shows a mill race and mill beside the bridge. Later maps indicate a substantial weir in the river. The width of the river at this location was greater than present day.

Lewis noted in his Topographical Dictionary of Ireland in 1837 that the town had a population of 4,484 inhabitants and that it comprised 733 houses in 1831. He also noted the principal trade to be corn and the use of the Grand Canal for its transport. Commercial tillage in Ireland grew since the proceeding century to require mills, malt houses, breweries and distilleries in towns with navigable rivers.

The major development in Athy since Rocque's days was of course, the construction of the Barrow Line of the Grand Canal in 1791. Clearly intended in its approach to Athy to cause the least disruption to the town's layout, the canal skirted the town requiring the demolition of few houses, except where it traversed the Castlecomer Road. With the

construction of the canal and its numerous ancillary stores, the as yet unnamed Shrewleen and Nelson Street were laid down. Another laneway opened up since the Rocque period and noted on Greene's map was the future Stanhope Place and Mount Hawkins. In 1827, the unnamed laneway connected Kildare Road with the lane (present Convent View) leading from Leinster Street to Moneen Commons. Names given in Greene's manuscript map for previously unnamed thoroughfares included William Street, Meeting Lane and Chapel Lane (taking in the present lane of that name and Stanhope Place).

The canal gave order to the development of the west part of Athy and to the south and southwest border of the town. It included a lock and bridge on William Street and a lock and horse bridge to the south where the river and canal join together.

The 1839 First Edition Ordnance Survey map gives an overview of the town and its surrounding (Fig. 11). Some items are worth noting, the construction of a national school to the front of the Catholic Chapel, a jail to the southeast on Mount Offaly Road and a barracks on Woodstock Street to the northwest. The riverside is shown populated with a number of free-standing houses with landscaped grounds; St. John's House northwest of the bridge, Riversdale, Clareville, Janeville, Mount Offaly and Athy Lodge to the south.

The First Edition OS map was revised in 1872-4 (Fig. 12). Its most important feature is the addition of the railway to the east between the town and historic church and graveyard of St. Michael's. This was completed in 1846 as part of the Great Southern and Western Railway network. A stone bridge and substantial approach ramps were

constructed to span the line and a station with platforms lies south of the bridge.

The Second Edition Ordnance Survey map dates from 1907-9 (Fig. 13). It records developments that include:

- St. Michael's Church of Ireland Church located on Mount Offaly Road replaced the earlier church to the north near the Market Hall. It is also visible from the river (Fig. 19)
- Prospect Lodge house replaced the jail on Mount Offaly Road
- Church Road was built to run between St. Michael's Church of Ireland Church and the railway station. A substantial L-shaped park (People's Park) with tree planting and serpentine paths is located on the north side of the road.
- The Model School, a manse and Presbyterian Church were added to the area just east of the railway bridge, replacing earlier structures
- A large convent was added to the rear of St. Michael's Catholic Church (Fig. 18) and a school flanking the space to the church front.
- A free-standing courthouse southwest of the Market Hall.
- A large school on the north side of St. John's Lane to the west of St. John's House. The mill structures and mill race at the bridge remain.
- Large mill and malt-house structures clustered around the canal bridge to the west end of the town.
- South of the town centre, St. Dominic's Catholic Chapel, beside Riversdale House (Fig. 21), which retained its views to the river.

The town continued to grow around its cruciform road layout and river crossing. The growth was arranged in an informal grid of streets and blocks. The streets were defined by terraces of dwellings and shops, all in a simple and homogeneous classically influenced style (Fig. 16 and Fig. 17). The layout is punctuated by public buildings and churches situated at important viewpoints. The earlier castle retained its prominent focus at the bridge (Fig. 14 and Fig. 15). The river and canal were aligned with buildings, uncluttered quays and banks.



Fig. 11: Extract from first edition Ordnance Survey map of 1839 (enlarged from original scale of 6" to 1 mile).



Fig. 13: Extract from second edition Ordnance Survey map of 1907-9 (enlarged from original scale of 25" to 1 mile)



Fig. 14: View of White's Castle and Cromaboo Bridge from the south c.1900, Lawrence Collection (NLI)



Fig. 16: View of Market Square c.1900, Lawrence Collection (NLI)



Fig. 15: View of White's Castle and Leinster Street from the east c.1900, Lawrence Collection (NLI)



Fig. 17: Woodstock Street c.1900, Lawrence Collection (NLI)



Fig. 18: Convent of Mercy c.1900, Lawrence Collection (NLI)



Fig. 20: Duke Street c.1900, Lawrence Collection (NLI)



Fig. 19: St. Michael's COI church c.1900, Lawrence Collection (NLI)



Fig. 21: Dominican Friary c.1900, Lawrence Collection (NLI)

2.6 Twentieth Century

The early twentieth century witnessed modest change in the development of Athy. The 1903 Gordon Bennett Cup car race, the first of its kind in Britain and Ireland, passed through the town. An asbestos cement factory opened on the west side of the canal in 1937, an important industrial facility in the new state that also had a railway spur and bridge connection over the river south of the town. The factory no longer makes asbestos but manufactures roof slates. Other small-scale industries as well as shops and supermarkets made up the economic life of the town and it continued to be a busy service centre for the surrounding region.



Fig. 22: Aerial view of Athy, 1947 (courtesy of Historic England)

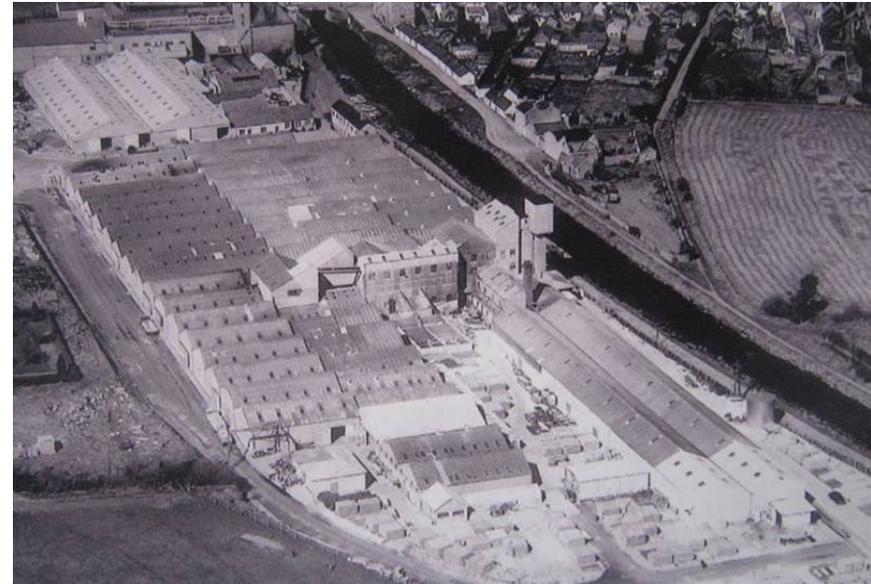


Fig. 23: Aerial view of asbestos cement factory (courtesy of UCD Digital Archive)

The post-war period saw many changes to the town, including:

- Extensive areas of low-density suburban housing to the north, east and south (Fig. 27)
- Additional industrial and commercial buildings on land west of the canal
- Construction of large Catholic churches of St. Michael's on Stanhope Street and St. Dominic's on Convent lane (now a library), in the early 1960s
- Construction of recent large educational facilities at Ard na Tríonóide on Lower St. Joseph Terrace and Athy College to the north of the town

- The Grove Cinema on Leinster Street (since demolished), another on Offaly Street and dance hall on the Castlecomer Road (now a community hall)
- Large supermarkets in the centre and periphery of the town

Like many other towns the main streets and public spaces today are clogged with traffic and parking. A ring road diversion is planned to run south of the town centre. The river and canal now serve as attractive walks for locals and visitors.



Fig. 24: Construction of St. Dominic's church, 1961 (courtesy of the NLI)



Fig. 25: Grove cinema, established 1957, no longer extant



Fig. 26: Former cinema on Offaly Street

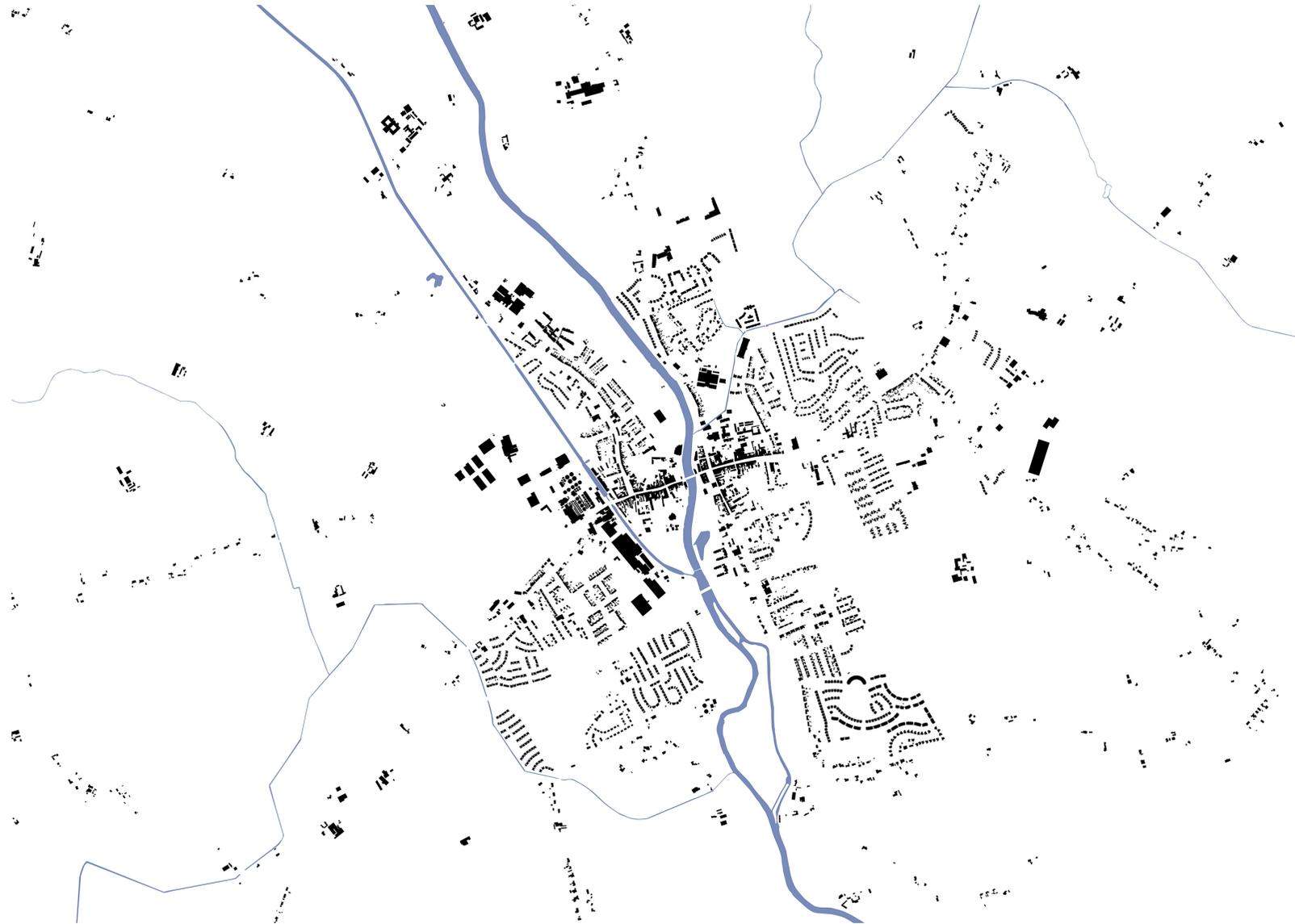


Fig. 27: Contemporary figure-ground map of Athy (Kildare County Council)

2.7 Historical Sources

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www.buildingsofireland.ie

www.osi.ie

www.griffiths.askaboutireland.ie

3.0 Statutory Protection and Planning Objectives

In addition to the protection afforded by the ACA designation, some individual structures within the ACA are protected by other statutory designations.

3.1 Protected Structures in the ACA

The structures listed below, which lie within the boundary of the existing Architectural Conservation Area are included in the Kildare County Council Record of Protected Structures (RPS), in the County Development Plan 2017-2023.

In addition to the protection conferred by the ACA, these structures and their attendant grounds, known as their curtilage, are protected in their own right under Part IV of the Planning and Development Act 2000.

AY001	St. Michael's Cemetery, Boherboy
AY017	The Grand Canal
AY020	Cromaboo Bridge
AY021	The White Castle, Leinster Street
AY022	Fountain, Emily Square
AY023	5 Emily Square
AY024	W. T. Duthie, 30 Leinster Street
AY025	31 Leinster Street
AY026	Bank of Ireland, Emily Square
AY027	O'Brien's, Emily Square
AY030	Stanhope Place

AY032	The Emigrant, Barrow Quay
AY033	Bapty Maher's, Leinster Street
AY034	Rafter's, 25 Leinster Street
AY035	Manleys, 25 Leinster Street
AY036	46 Leinster Street
AY037	Athy Community Centre, Stanhope Street
AY038	Carlton Hotel, former convent, Stanhope Place
AY040	Carlton Hotel, former convent, Stanhope Place
AY041	Carlton Hotel, former convent, Stanhope Place
AY042	St. Michael's Catholic Church, Stanhope Street
AY043	Bridge, Rathstewart Road
AY046	St. John's Cemetery, St. John's Lane
AY048	Wall, St. John's Lane
AY049	McLaughlin's Bar, 9 Leinster Street
AY050	82 Leinster Street
AY051	69 Leinster Street
AY053	Meeting Lane
AY054	20 Leinster Street
AY055	21 Leinster Street
AY057	Post Box, 69 Leinster Street
AY058	67 Leinster Street
AY059	6 Leinster Street
AY060	5 Leinster Street
AY061	11 Leinster Street
AY062	12 Leinster Street
AY063	Athy Railway Station, Church Road

AY064	Athy Railway Station, Church Road - Post Box	AY103	24-25 Duke Street
AY065	Athy Railway Station, Church Road - Water Tower	AY104	43 Duke Street
AY066	Athy Railway, Church Road - Bridge	AY105	44 Duke Street
AY067	Trough, Leinster Street	AY107	The Rectory, Church Road
AY075	Athy Town Hall, Emily Square	AY108	The Rectory, Church Road
AY077	Athy Court House, Emily Square	AY109	Chruch Road
AY079	22 Griffin Hawe	AY110	Athy Lodge, Church Road
AY080	Griffin Hawe, Duke Street	AY111	Teach Iosa, Carlow Lodge
AY081	Athy Post Office, Duke Street	AY112	St. Michael's COI
AY083	Janeville Cottage	AY113	Post Box, Offaly Street
AY084	Casa Maria, Janeville	AY115	Prospect House, Carlow Road
AY085	Offaly House, Janeville	AY116	Prospect House, Carlow Road
AY086	8 Offaly Street	AY120	St. Anne's B&B, Church Road
AY087	7 Offaly Street	AY122	3 Emily Square
AY088	6 Offaly Street	AY123	6 Emily Square
AY089	5 Offaly Street	AY124	The Immigrant
AY090	4 Offaly Street	AY125	Athy Presbyterian Church, Dublin Road
AY091	13 Emily Square, rear	AY126	The Manse, Boherboy
AY094	13 Emily Square	AY127	The Model Farm, Dublin Road
AY095	Barrow Quay	AY128	Model Court, Geraldine Road
AY096	3 Duke Street	AY129	Model Court, Geraldine Road
AY097	5 Duke Street	AY130	Model Court, Geraldine Road
AY099	1 Duke Street	AY131	Model Court - Youth Reach, Geraldine Road
AY100	16-17 Duke Street	AY132	Model Court, Montessori School
AY101	14 Duke Street	AY133	The Model School, Dublin Road
AY102	23 Duke Street	AY137	Bollards, Grand Canal

AY138	Dry dock, Grand Canal
AY139	W.Doyle, Woodstock Street
AY140	Methodist Church, Woodstock Street
AY141	7 Woodstock Street
AY142	8 Woodstock Street
AY143	9 Woodstock Street
AY144	10 Woodstock Street
AY145	Post Box, Woodstock Street
AY146	39 Duke Street
AY150	Bollards, Grand Canal
AY151	Minch Norton & Co., Upper William Street
AY153	15 William Street
AY154	Canal lock crane, William Street
AY155	Canal lock, William Street
AY156	Augustus Bridge, William Street
AY157	97 Woodstock Street
AY158	98 Woodstock Street
AY159	99 Woodstock Street
AY160	100 Woodstock Street
AY165	Post box, William Street
AY167	27 Duke Street
AY168	26 Duke Street
AY169	1 Woodstock Street
AY170	2 Woodstock Street
AY172	Convent Lane gates
AY173	Horse bridge and lock

AY189	Former Maltings Nelson Street
AY190	Lamp post, Cromaboo Bridge
AY192	20 Emily Square
AY193	18 Emily Square
AY195	18 William Street

3.2 Recorded Monuments in the ACA

The following archaeological sites, features and artefacts within the Athy ACA are listed in the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP) as Recorded Monuments and are thereby protected under the National Monuments Acts of 1930 to 2004:

RMP No KD035-022002	Town Defences
RMP No KD035-022004	Religious house
RMP No KD035-022006	Religious house
RMP No KD035-022008	Bridge
RMP No KD035-022010	Castle
RMP No KD035-022016	Grave slab
RMP No KD035-022018	Crucifixion plaque
RMP No KD035-022019	Architectural feature
RMP No KD035-022020	Grave slab
RMP No KD035-022023	Memorial stone
RMP No KD035-022024	Armorial plaque

3.3 ACA Boundary

Following the study of the history and special character of Athy, an assessment was made of the original ACA boundary (Fig. 28) with the following recommendations:

- Remove areas ('B' in Fig. 29), that are beyond the historic core and already enjoy protected status (i.e. areas within the curtilage of protected structures) or have been recently developed
- Include areas ('C' in Fig. 29), that are the probable location of the historic wall fortifications and may contain remains above and below ground

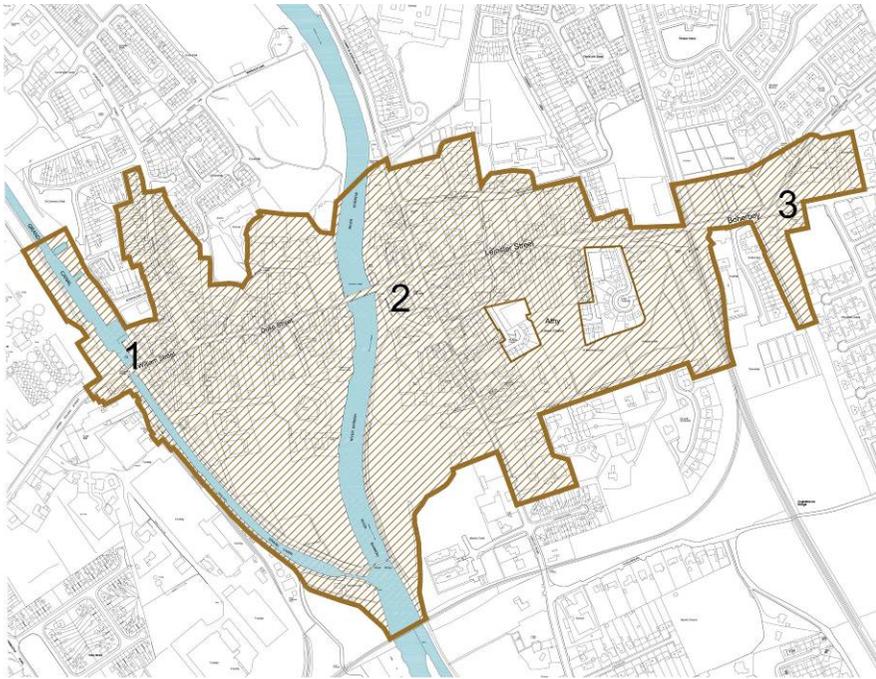


Fig. 28: Athy ACA map in Kildare County Development Plan 2017 - 2023, the numbers 1,2,3 represent character sub-areas.

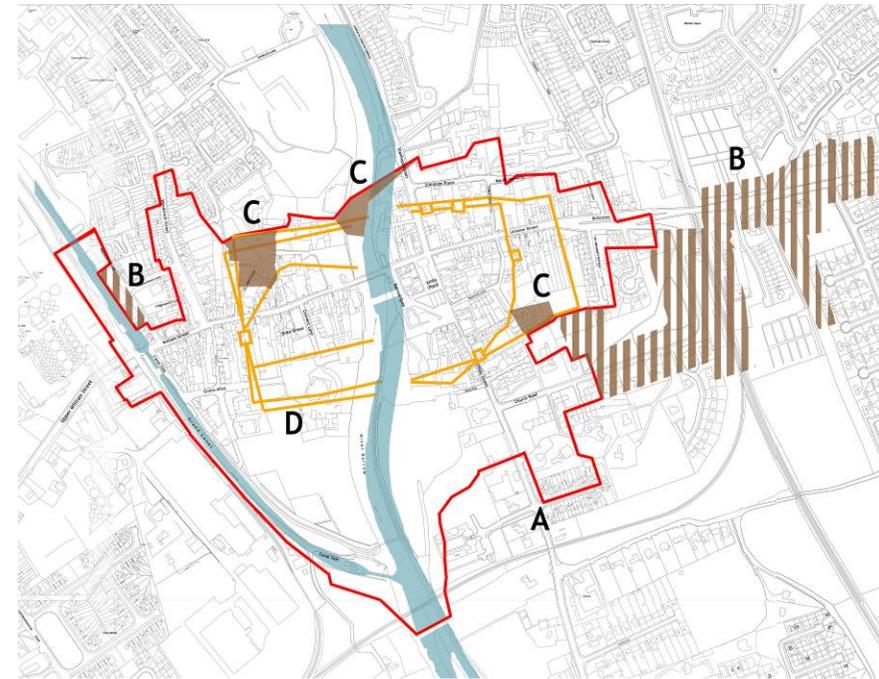


Fig. 29: Amended ACA boundary

A: Revised boundary in red

B: Areas to be removed from proposed ACA

C: Areas to be included in the proposed ACA

D: Probable location of historic wall fortifications (see also Fig. 3)

4.0 Description of Historic Built Environment

4.1 Defining Characteristics

The special character of the Athy ACA can be defined under the following distinctive attributes:

- Layout
- Socio-economic functions
- Building types, scale and materials
- Quality and treatment of open spaces



Fig. 30: Aerial view of Athy, 1947 (courtesy of Historic England)

4.1.1 Layout

Athy is arranged around a main cruciform road layout, the east-west arm crosses the River Barrow and the north-south route runs parallel to the river. The road intersection is marked by a formal public space at Emily Square, just south of the crossing. The streets have a gentle meander to their layout, views are closed to give an intimate sense of place.

The river follows a gently meandering route and buildings are set well back, the exception to this is around the bridge, where White Castle is located, one of the main features of Athy. The river has a strong spatial and visual presence, and this is one of the defining characteristics of the town.

The Barrow Line of the Grand Canal marks the west boundary of Athy and is flanked on the west by a band of industrial sites. The east boundary of the town is marked by the railway line that runs parallel to the river and main north south street axis. This boundary is further marked by the presence of St. Michael's Old Cemetery, St. Michael's New Cemetery and the People's Park. To the north and south there are less well-defined general boundaries to the town, historically it petered out in an irregular manner in these directions.

The canal and river join together south of the town and form a large triangular area south of Duke Street. This is well-defined by buildings to the north and few structures to the south, where it has a rural character. Otherwise the sectors between the main street axes are built up with roads and laneways branching off the main arms:

- To the northwest the layout is arranged around Woodstock Street with minor roads and lanes branching either side. The scale is generous, the street widens to the south and has the character of a public square.
- To the northeast the informal orthogonal pattern is defined by Leinster Street, Stanhope Place/Mount Hawkins, Stanhope Street, Chapel Lane and Kirwan’s Lane.
- To the southeast the orthogonal pattern repeats and is defined by Leinster Street, Offaly Street, Church Road, Beech Grove, Butler’s Lane and Meeting Lane

Today the medieval wall defences are no longer visible above ground but they probably follow the orthogonal layout that remains today (see Fig. 3).

The subdivision of the areas off the main axes is composed of long narrow parcels known as ‘burgage plots’. This type of site division survives to a good extent in Athy and is one of its defining characteristics. The architecture of the principal streets is marked for the most part by domestic and commercial architecture, most of the commercial activity located on the east-west axis (William Street, Duke Street and Leinster Street).

The topographical setting of Athy is largely flat and the structures and spaces have a strong presence in the layout of the town and its river setting. The orthogonal layout is punctuated by the following public structures and spaces:

- Emily Square and Athy Town Hall
- White Castle
- St. Michael’s Church of Ireland church
- St. Michael’s Catholic Church
- Woodstock Street (south end)
- Methodist Chapel (Woodstock Street)

The river setting is punctuated by the following public structures:

- White Castle and Cromaboo Bridge
- Athy Courthouse
- St. Dominic’s Catholic Church (former)
- Horse bridge

4.1.2 Socio-economic Functions

Athy provides a centre of employment as well as commercial, administrative and other services to its population and to the surrounding rural hinterland. The town no longer hosts a town hall at Emily Square, a recent structure on Stanhope Street provides the administrative offices for the Athy Municipal District.

Uses associated with Athy’s role as an industrial and traditional market town contribute to its historic architectural character. It once had a number of malt houses located on the canal and these were augmented by large factories in the twentieth century. Historic industrial infrastructure consisting of mill houses at Cromaboo Bridge, mill races, sluices and weirs along the river are no longer extant. The recent

disappearance of these facilities has resulted in a loss of spatial definition to the areas northeast of the bridge.

The town had some police and prison infrastructure in the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries, largely on the outskirts, but most of this is no longer extant. Its judicial importance is evident in the fine former courthouse on Barrow Quay and previously at Emily Square.

Athy is the location of several historic and recent educational facilities serving the town and surrounding area, however, convents associated with St. Michael's and St. Dominic's Catholic churches are no longer operating.

Over the latter half of the twentieth century the trend was for traders and professionals to move away from the town centre, as happened in most other Irish market towns. Residential use is no longer an important component of the ACA, most residential houses in the ACA are located to the northeast on Woodstock Street or near the People's Park to the southeast. Most of the town population now lives outside the immediate core in extensive areas of low-density suburbs. Buildings in the town on the main streets have commercial units on the ground floor. The floors above were once used for accommodation associated with the businesses. These are now largely in use as storage or offices. Most structures retain separate street entrances for the upper floors and it is important to retain these to preserve the architectural character of the town.

Shops were traditionally small and were located on the main thoroughfare. Some retain outbuildings to the rear, and these are reached through covered openings from the street.

Recent educational facilities have been developed to the north of the town centre (Athy College, Athy Model School, Scoil Phádraig Naofa, Ardscoil na Trionoide). Athy Hospital is located on the site of a former Union Workhouse northeast of the town. Supermarket outlets are located north of the town (Aldi) and west of the railway bridge (Lidl), otherwise few major retail facilities are located outside the ACA.

4.1.3 Building Types and Scale

The quality of the historic building stock in the Athy ACA reflect its historic, architectural and social heritage and give form to its architectural character.

The street architecture of the town follows a clear hierarchy. The relatively narrow east-west streets are the primary artery and it is lined with two- and three-storey buildings, predominantly three-storey towards the centre. All are arranged in orderly rows with a consistent building line and varying architectural expression, generally rendered and having vertical window openings with shopfronts or decorative door cases at ground level. The street frontage is modulated by arched and gated openings giving access to the rear as well as narrow access lanes interrupting the terrace line.

Commercial buildings which intersperse the streetscape are marked by more conscious design in their expression, scale, detailing and choice of materials. This homogenous arrangement is seldom interrupted, exceptions being the former bank structure on the north side of Leinster Street and bank building on the east side of Emily Square.

The north-south main artery is shorter than the east-west artery and has a similar arrangement of three-storey buildings extending from the main crossing dropping to two storeys. Emily Square has a continuous three-storey terrace to the west and a mix of heights to the buildings on the east side. Offaly Street mirrors the situation on Stanhope Street with a two-storey terrace to either side that raises to three storeys nearing Emily Square.

Woodstock Street is lined with rows of two-storey structures that do not form a continuous terrace. They are a picturesque mix of sizes and detail embellishment. The south end of the street broadens to have an elegant and urban expression in contrast to the narrow main east-west corridor.

The side streets and lanes branching off the main streets have less homogenous arrangement of buildings.

Other character areas with different historic functions and resulting architectural expression include:

- The former convent and schools to the east of St. Michael's Catholic Church on Stanhope Place
- The area around the intersection of William Street and the Barrow Line Canal with its mix of historic malt and storehouses,

canal-lock infrastructure, office building and single-storey terrace dwellings

- The collection of structures north of St. John's Lane that include a former 'Christian School', St. John's house, St. John's manor and graveyard
- Large dwelling houses on Church Road and Offaly Road, near St. Michael's Church of Ireland church. These impressive free-standing structures with landscaped grounds include Janeville House, Mount Offaly (Teach Iosa), Athy Lodge, The Rectory and nearby Gate Lodge

Building types of note for themselves include St. Dominic's Catholic church on Convent Lane, the former courthouse building on Barrow Quay and the concrete tower of the former asbestos factory that lies beyond the ACA to the west.

Most of the prominent public buildings in the town are free-standing and very visible in the public realm. This is a defining characteristic of public buildings in Athy.

4.1.4 Building Materials

In the ACA the muted palette and homogeneity of materials typical of buildings in rural Irish towns is augmented by public, religious and commercial buildings in distinct architectural styles. Rendered and painted elevations are the mainstay of street scenes. The prevailing materials are rendered walls, many buildings having window surrounds of stucco. Most have little and simple decoration, though some of the more special buildings have elaborate plasterwork marking richer or commercial uses. Roofs are typically of natural Welsh slate, though many have been replaced over the years with modern coverings. Slate roofs are detailed without fascia or bargeboards and this emphasises the plain clear forms of the buildings, lending a neat appearance in contrast to the suburban detailing of more recent buildings, having fascia and soffits to eaves, and gable ends with oversailing verges, inappropriate details which undermine the simplicity of the prevailing historic character. Chimney stacks are an essential character feature of the skyline of the ACA, cases where these have been removed constitute a weakening of the historic architectural character of the town.

Brick elevations are present but represent an exception rather than the rule. These can be found in the bank on Leinster Street and a few other commercial structures on Leinster Street and Duke Street, but perhaps most imposingly in St. Michael's Catholic Church on Stanhope Street.

Stone is reserved for important public buildings such as White Castle, the former town hall and courthouse, the bank on Emily Square,

St. Michael's Church of Ireland church and the Methodist Church. It is also to be found in good application on the Rectory and gate lodge on Church Street as well as the presbytery on Stanhope Place.

Stone can also be found in great effect in Cromaboo Bridge. It is the most prominent material in the bridges and quay walls of the canal. A simple stone retaining wall and parapet is a prominent feature on the east end of Leinster Street at the approach to the railway bridge.

The church hall on the prominent site at the corner of Church Street and Offaly Street is the only historic timber structure in the town.

Some of the buildings retain historic ironwork as well as timber doors or sash windows and this historic fabric is of crucial historic importance to the character of Athy.

The general built fabric of Athy ACA conforms to the following typologies:

- Two-storey eighteenth and nineteenth century houses of more formal appearance with slate roofs, rendered walls and vertical windows.
- Two and three storey nineteenth century shops, commercial premises and banks with varying degrees of architectural decoration and articulation.
- Nineteenth century shops and public houses of varying degrees of richness in elevation treatment
- Single storey eighteenth and nineteenth century vernacular houses in secondary streets.

- Rubble stone warehouses, outbuildings, farm buildings, mill buildings and corrugated-iron barns

One-off buildings include:

- A medieval castle standing at the historic river crossing
- A Georgian market and courthouse (town hall and museum)
- Georgian mansion and houses
- A late eighteenth century Classical stone bridge
- Late eighteenth century canal bridges, locks, quay walls
- A nineteenth century former exchange and courthouse
- Remains of an early nineteenth century jail
- A Church of Ireland Regency Gothic church
- A Victorian Neo-Gothic rectory
- A Victorian Neo-Tudor lodge
- A Victorian Gothic Revival Methodist church
- A Victorian Italianate bank
- A late Victorian convent and school
- A late nineteenth century malt house and kiln
- An early twentieth century timber parochial hall
- An early twentieth century Neo-Classical bank
- An early twentieth century horse bridge
- A late twentieth century Neo-Romanesque Catholic church
- A late twentieth century Modernist Catholic church

4.1.5 Quality and treatment of Open Space

The principal public space in Athy are the main cruciform streets with relatively narrow profiles and slightly meandering layout that give a strong sense of enclosure. The formal open space is located at the formal Emily Square which opens to the southwest to Barrow Quay. Woodstock Street opens in a funnel manner towards the south and has the character of a more formal space. A large open space cleared of historic structures northwest of Cromaboo Bridge is in use as a carpark. These spaces accommodate large numbers of vehicles and parking, the roads are of tarmac with narrow paths predominantly finished in precast unit pavers and concrete. There are no visible remains of historic paving materials in the ACA.

Historic photographs give little indication of trees playing an important role in the main urban public spaces. However, there are extensive green areas along the river and canal. Green areas of note are within the large triangular site near St. Dominic's former church and convent, the site of the ruined abbey south of Barrow Quay, and landscaped grounds of large houses near St. Michael's Church of Ireland Church. The People's Park is a historic park located west of the town centre on Church Street.

4.2 Street by street appraisal

4.2.1 William Street, Duke Street, Leinster Street

This is the main east-west corridor through the town. The canal bridge marks the west end of the corridor and at the east end it fades out into a two-levelled approach to the railway station and bridge. For the most part the streets are lined with two- and three-storey terraces of buildings with shops and businesses at the ground floor and formerly dwellings above. The three-storey structures are gathered close to the main crossroads at Emily Square. The terraces are interrupted by access lanes serving areas to the rear and some have covered openings between the street and rear of their sites. The street corridor is narrow, it opens up only at Emily Square to address the former court and market building and it widens to the east towards the railway. The narrow profile is one of the streets main characteristics.

William Street and Duke Street are meandering and change width along their path. On the south side the street line jumps forward between Green Alley and a structure some ten properties to the east (Griffin Hawe Ltd.) making the structure one of the most prominent in Duke Street. The corner at Green Alley may have been the location of Lady Helen's Gate, a historic gate in the town wall. A similar change in the building line exists on Offaly Street where Preston's Gate one stood.

To the east of Cromaboo Bridge, Duke Street has lost much of its historic setting. A three-storey mill building on the north side and a large two-storey house (Millview House) on the south side were removed

in the second half of the twentieth century. The mill building, neighbouring structures and mill race were replaced by a car park, shops and supermarket. The recent shop buildings stand far back from the historic building line and the supermarket stands close to the edge of the River Barrow. It is interesting to note that the historic layout included a set-back on the north side of the street that created a small square on approach to the bridge (Fig. 31). Millview House was also set back from the street building line. Both gestures allowed appreciation of the bridge on approach.



Fig. 31: Extract from 25in OS map showing framing of Duke Street by historic structures west of Cromaboo Bridge and an urban square just west of this.



Fig. 32: Aerial view of Athy, 1947 (courtesy of Historic England)

For the most part the sites along the streets are narrow with two- to four-bay elevations. There are a few five bay structures, the most notable being the five-bay former bank building on the north side of Leinster Street. The historic burgage plots remain legible in the street space in the individual elevation compositions. The plot legibility is reinforced by variety in height of the eaves and roof ridges. There is a good variety of architectural detailing and expression along the street. Overall, the effect is homogenous, harmonious and controlled in character.

Many of the narrow burgage plots along the streets retain rows of one- and two-storey outbuildings extending to the rear. Some of these have made way for car parks and more recent structures.

The lanes off the streets have an understated architectural character and are often flanked by outbuildings. The exceptions are Green Alley, Convent Lane and Nelson Street. Green Alley and Convent Lane no longer retain their historic terraces of single-storey dwellings. Nelson Street retains some remains of canal storage buildings on the west side in a recent development and hence has more the character of a lane than a street.



Fig. 33: View of Leinster Street from east c. 1950



Fig. 34: View of St. Michael's terrace from east c.1950

The east end of Leinster Street has fewer structures along its edge as it progresses towards the railway. The street was widened considerably in the nineteenth century to allow for access up to the railway bridge, down to the railway station (south) and sites to the north. A long retaining wall in the centre of the street gives a sense of scale and order to the space. The street terraces are small scale and varied. An exception is St. Michael's Terrace, a long row of gabled two-storey terrace dwellings, though at right angles to Leinster Street, give a good sense of scale and definition to the south side of the street.



Fig. 35: View of north side of Leinster Street from the east



Fig. 36: View of south side of Leinster Street from the west



Fig. 37: View of south side of Leinster Street and White Castle from the east



Fig. 38: View of south side of Cromaboo Bridge



Fig. 39: White Castle from the southeast



Fig. 40: View of White Castle and Cromaboo Bridge from the west



Fig. 41: View of William Street from the west



Fig. 42: View of south side of Duke Street close to Cromaboo Bridge



Fig. 43: View of south side of Duke Street

4.2.2 Stanhope Street and Offaly Street

Stanhope Street and Offaly Street from the main north-south corridor through the town. St. Michael's Catholic church marks the north entrance to Stanhope Street in the ACA. Beyond this Stanhope Street runs parallel to the river and is flanked by a row of mature trees alongside the water and a modest terrace of single-storey houses on the roadside. This makes for a fine approach to the town affording views of the river setting and ruins of Woodstock Castle. St. Michael's Church of Ireland church marks the south entrance to Offaly Street. Both streets connect at Emily Square at the main junction in the town.

Stanhope Street and Offaly Street are straight with little variation along their length in contrast to the streets on the main east-west axis. The narrow street profile is one of their main characteristics, it is especially narrow to the north end of Offaly Street as this was once the location of Preston's Gate, the last of the gates in the historic town wall to survive into the nineteenth century.

The streets are lined with two- and three-storey terraces of buildings with some having shops and businesses at the ground floor and formerly dwellings above. The three-storey structures are gathered close to Emily Square and the main crossroad junction. The terraces are interrupted by access lanes serving areas to the rear.

The narrow historic burgage plots remain are legible in the street space in the individual elevation compositions. The plot legibility is reinforced by variety in height of the eaves and roof ridges. There is a good variety

of architectural detailing and expression along the street. Overall the effect is homogenous, harmonious and controlled in character.



Fig. 44: View of Stanhope Street from Emily Square



Fig. 45: View of Stanhope Street from the north



Fig. 46: View of Offaly Street from the south



Fig. 47: View of Offaly Street from the north

4.2.3 Emily Square and Barrow Quay



Fig. 48: Historic view of Emily Square, c.1900, Lawrence Collection (NLI)

Emily Square is Athy's elegant drawing room. It is located at the meeting of the main east-west and north-south routes in the town. It provides a fine vista towards the former town hall when approaching along Stanhope Street from the north and a pleasant surprise entering the square from Offaly Street in the south. It is regular in plan and proportioned 2:1. The town hall stands free to the south end, it has 2:1 proportion in its main elevation and has a regular square plan. The elevation is handsomely composed in stone and brick with an arcade to the ground floor. The west side of the square reflects the original regular Georgian rigour of the space with its uniform eaves and ridge

line and near-regular window arrangements. Some of the structures retain elegant Wyatt windows.

The east side also has a terrace of three-storey structures interrupted by an elegant stone bank building. The use of stone and arched windows in the ground floor of the bank building echo the elevation of the former town hall. The terrace does not continue in full length as a two-storey structure and vacant site mark the south-east side of the square.

The north side of the square falls into the general arrangement for Leinster Street with a mix of eaves and roof ridge heights and houses of less uniform expression.

Back Square, the space south of the former town hall is larger in area than Emily Square to the north. It has a terrace of two-storey houses on the south and east sides and a picturesque late-nineteenth-century former corn exchange (now functioning as a court house) to the west. The character of the space is much more informal when compared to the square to the north. The free-standing former exchange affords views of the river and Barrow Quay.



Fig. 49: View of former town hall from north



Fig. 51: View of west side of Emily Square from south



Fig. 50: View of east side of Emily Square from north



Fig. 52: View of former town hall from south



Fig. 53: South side of Back Square



Fig. 55: View of Barrow Quay from Cromaboo Bridge



Fig. 54: View of former corn exchange from southwest

4.2.4 Stanhope Place and Mount Hawkins

The character of this street is defined by a large church, former convent, and school to the north and a presbytery to the southwest. Rows of single-storey dwellings on the south side of the street and in the lanes connecting with Leinster Street are no longer extant which have led to a loss of architectural definition. The collection of large Catholic religious and educational structures creates an ensemble that acts as a counterweight to the arrangement of Church of Ireland church and parish hall at the south end of Offaly Street.

St. Michael's church, built in the 1960s in a historicist style, marks the north entrance of the town. It is large scale, free-standing and provides access and views of the former St. Michael's convent directly to the rear (east). The north side of the streets beyond the church is flanked by school buildings in Classical and Italianate styles. To the south a large two-storey presbytery with a robust symmetrical elevation in stone echoes the scale of the school buildings. It has a large rustic stone boundary wall that has a strong visual presence on approaching the town from the north.



Fig. 56: St. Michael's Catholic church on Stanhope Street and Stanhope Place



Fig. 57: Presbytery on Stanhope Place



Fig. 58: Convent and school structures on Stanhope Place and Mount Hawkins



Fig. 59: Former school structure on Mount Hawkins



Fig. 60: Former convent structure to rear of St. Michael's Church



Fig. 61: Former convent structure to rear of St. Michael's Church

4.2.5 Plots to rear of main thoroughfares

Historically the main north-south and east-west streets were the location of much commercial activity in the town. The products traded in the shops facing the street were produced, handled and stored in the long burgage plots to the rear, which also provided living accommodation and stabling, as well as having productive gardens to support households. Only some of these outbuildings and warehouses are evident today and front street access has often been removed. Warehouses and rear outbuildings would have been constructed of rubble stone and of simple architectural expression. Some still exist and can be viewed from the rear of individual properties can be of interest to the architectural appearance of those sites. They still give significant character definition to the lanes in Athy. Most of the large number of single-storey dwellings that once lined many of the lanes are no longer extant.



Fig. 62: Former dwellings on Garter Lane



Fig. 63: Remains of boundary walls on Chapel Lane



Fig. 64: Meeting Lane



Fig. 65: Meeting Lane seen from Leinster Street



Fig. 67: Garter Lane seen from Leinster Street



Fig. 66: Convent Lane

4.2.6 Area around St. Michael's Church of Ireland church

The imposing St. Michael's Church of Ireland Gothic Revival church stands on the west side of Mount Offaly Road and marks the south end of the ACA. This mirrors the situation at St. Michael's Catholic church on Stanhope Street to the north. The church is free standing and can be seen in the round on approaching from north or south. It also stands on the axis of Church Road, a long straight connection with the People's Park and railway site in the east.

Janeville House lies to the north of St. Michael's COI and Mount Offaly to the south. The former is an elegant late Georgian two-storey three-bay house in landscaped grounds, the latter is an early Georgian five-bay three-storey house in landscaped grounds. On the opposite side the road to the southeast, Athy Lodge is a picturesque Victorian four-bay two-storey house in extensive landscaped grounds. To the northeast, an asymmetrical five-bay two-storey Gothic style Victorian rectory (by architects Dean & Woodward) stands in extensive grounds. A lodge to the east of the rectory in the same style, stands on the edge of The People's Park. All of the above dwellings are set well back from the road and have little visual presence in the public domain.

An early twentieth century single-storey timber parish hall stands on the northeast corner at the junction of Church Road and Mount Offaly Road. Apart from the church this is the most prominent structure in the area and reflects its important public role. It is modest in size, scale and architectural expression.

The collection of fine residential structures and their mature landscaped grounds along with the picturesque parish hall evoke a

character less urban and more akin to the landscape setting of the River Barrow that passes through in the town. This is in contrast to the ensemble of church and schools on Stanhope Street to the north.



Fig. 68: St. Michael's COI seen from the south



Fig. 69: Parish hall on corner of Church Road and Mount Offaly



Fig. 70: St. Michael's COI seen from east on Church Road



Fig. 72: Lodge on Church Road



Fig. 71: Janeville



Fig. 73: Athy Lodge on Church Road/Mount Offaly

4.2.7 St. John's Lane

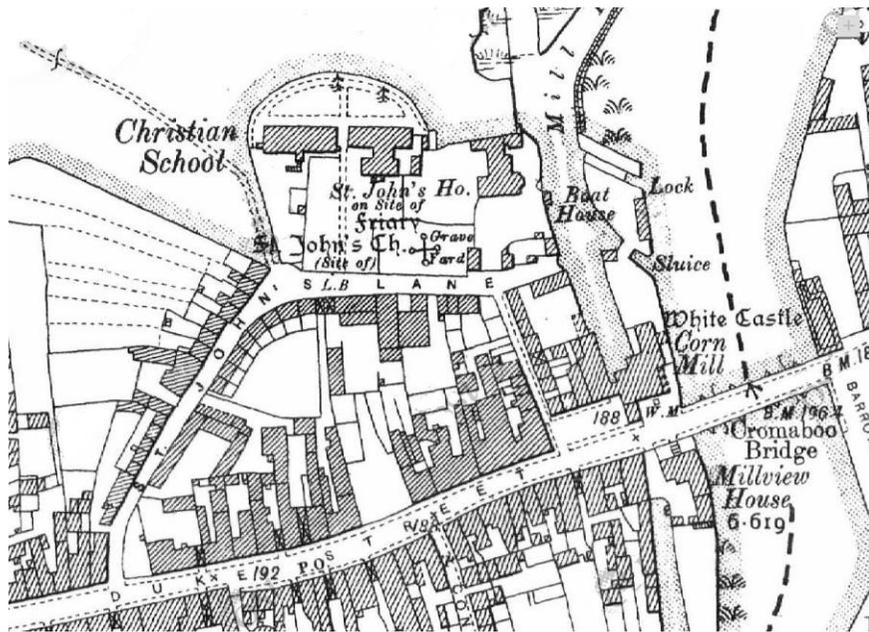


Fig. 74: Extract from OS map of 1908

The area around St. John's Lane differs in character to the lanes and hinterlands found elsewhere in Athy. This area retains traces of the medieval priory of St. Michael's and St. Thomas of the Crutched Friars and a time when the settlement was also associated with Woodstock Castle to the north. It was located on high ground in the general location of St. John's graveyard. The monasteries were dissolved in 1540 and the Down Survey map of c.1655 notes St. John's hospital in this location. The monks at St. John's had been charged with the care of sick people.

St. John's Lane connects the medieval sites to Duke Street in the west, the lane joins the street at a steep angle, a layout feature not found elsewhere in the orthogonal layout of the town.

The archaeological sites are bounded to the north by a row of three free-standing structures; a much-altered mid-nineteenth century former school, St. John's Manor and St. John's House. The manor and house are large and impressive Georgian structures with some fine boundary features. All three are set well-back from the lane and a small graveyard is located in the setback zone.

St. John's Lane was once flanked by rows of small single-storey dwellings, similar to other lanes in Athy. These have disappeared except for remains of front elevations on the south-east side of the lane.

As mentioned in section 4.2.1, the area on the east side of the lane close to the river was heavily altered in the late twentieth century with the infilling of the mill race, removal of the corn mill and structures forming a small square on Duke Street and replacement of these with some retail structures and large car park. This area retains none of its historic fabric and character and the path of the former lane is no longer legible.



Fig. 75: View of St. John's House from the west



Fig. 77: Boundary to St. John's House to the lane



Fig. 76: View of St. John's Manor from the south



Fig. 78: Remains of single-storey dwellings on the west part of the lane

4.2.8 Woodstock Street



Fig. 79: Extract from 25in OS map

Woodstock Street meanders in a gentle curve and widens to the south to connect with William Street as an elegant urban space. Woodstock Cottage and the historic nearby Barracks at the north end of the street are no longer extant and a long terrace of small dwellings has also been lost. Skewleen Lane connects Woodstock Street to Nelson Street in the southwest has been recently widened and has lost its lane character.

The street is lined with two-storey dwellings arranged in terraces of different lengths, mostly following a uniform building line but some structures, especially later ones, being set back and having front gardens. To the south the houses are larger and have finer architectural detailing. A modest stone Methodist church breaks the terrace line to the southeast. Its simple character fits well with the surrounding two-storey dwellings.

The street has a simple and quiet architectural character, given urban importance by its strong sense of continuity along its length and a wide and elegant public-square-like space at its south end. It differs from public spaces found elsewhere in Athy.



Fig. 80: South portion of Woodstock Street seen from north



Fig. 82: Typical houses on east side of street



Fig. 81: Houses on the south-west side of the street



Fig. 83: Early twentieth century houses at north end of street

4.2.9 Barrow Line of the Grand Canal and River Barrow



Fig. 84: Aerial view of Athy (Google Maps)

The River Barrow is the determining landscape feature of the layout of Athy town and is the backdrop to many of its historic structures. The Barrow Line Canal mirrors this role and the two waterways join in a picturesque landscape setting south of the town.

The open setting of the river offers fine views to its flood plain and banks, in and beyond the ACA, to sites such as the ruins of Woodstock Castle in the north and the railway and horse bridges in the south. It is the setting of White Castle and Cromaboo Bridge, landmarks of Athy. Many of the finest historic houses in the town, such as Riversdale (near the current St. Dominic's church), Athy Lodge, Mount Offaly, Janeville, Clareville enjoyed its views and proximity. The grounds of former Riversdale House, southwest of the bridge, (now the Dominican lands and site of St. Dominic's church), were historically landscaped with trees along a wide margin following the river. This is echoed today in the arrangement of mature trees on the site. St. Dominic's church is a well-scaled object of visual interest on the river setting, a role it has taken over from Riversdale House.

The union of canal and river is marked by a canal lock and horse bridge to the south of the town. The structures and their sylvan setting are highly picturesque with fine waterside walks connecting back to the town centre. Very few towns in Ireland can boast such a landscape setting of such high visual and heritage value.



Fig. 85: Historic landscaped areas highlighted in the 6in OS map

The canal setting encompasses a wide variety of historic structures of industrial heritage value. The canal in the ACA includes a lock at William Street (Athy Lock), a dry dock, stone-lined quays and a bridge, bollards and cranes, store houses and offices. At Canal Side, it retains the form of a terrace of single-storey dwelling that once flanked both sides of the river. The remains of Maltheuses on the west side of the canal bear witness to its historic function.



Fig. 86: View of White Castle and Cromaboo Bridge from the north



Fig. 87: View of White Castle and Cromaboo Bridge from the south



Fig. 88: View of Athy Canal Lock and setting



Fig. 90: Horse bridge and River Barrow setting



Fig. 89: Former offices and crane at Athy Canal Lock



Fig. 91: Houses on Canal Side

4.3 Views

The river offers fine views to the town and its landscape setting.

The flat topography of Athy allows views of its skyline from many locations throughout the town. Taller historic monuments can be seen from different locations. The skyline is relatively intact and has not been impacted much by recent unsympathetic developments.

The skyline is embellished by the various historic church spires. The concrete tower of the Tegral industrial site, though beyond the ACA, is an important landmark and it also marks the west entrance to the town in the manner of St. Michael's Catholic church to the north and St. Michael's Church of Ireland church in the south.

The following views (see plan in appendix) are the most significant features of the ACA:



View A and View B: Views from and to Cromaboo Bridge and river (north side)



View C and View D: Views from and to Cromaboo Bridge and river (south side)



View E: View into Woodstock Street from junction with William Street/Duke Street



View F: Stanhope Street looking south toward Emily Square with the spire of St. Michael's Church of Ireland church in the distance



View G: View on Church Road to St. Michael's Church of Ireland church

View H: View towards Horse Bridge and River Barrow Sluice Gate (see Fig 124, page 90)

View I: View from canal lock at William Street down the Canal Side towards the Dominican Lands (see Fig 124, page 90)

4.4 Summary of Special Character

- **General:** Athy has retained the characteristic charm of a small rural town.
- **Archaeological Significance:** Athy traces its history back to the Normans and it played a significant role in the consolidation of control from The Pale in this part of the country. As a medieval walled town Athy is of great archaeological interest. It contains sites of medieval structures which add depth to its historical interest and value. White Castle is a late but prominent remnant of what were once extensive medieval fortifications.
- **Morphology of the Town:** The historic layout is defined by the main north-south and east-west cruciform street arrangement, a river crossing and walled enclosure. The location of the walls can be traced somewhat in the present-day street layout.
- **Architectural Significance:** Athy contains significant buildings from the sixteenth to the twentieth centuries. These include infrastructural, defensive, administrative, religious, commercial, industrial and domestic structures of different types, both vernacular and of formal design. The well-arranged urban layout allows for appreciation of these buildings in a richly varied context. The informal mix of functions is significant in forming an intact and historically authentic architectural setting of informal simplicity and differing scales which defines the character of the town.
- **Architectural Character:** Athy is a good example of an Irish town in which many houses conform to a simple typology of rendered street architecture with slate roofs and simple sharp detailing. In addition, many boundary walls, outbuildings and warehouses have exposed stonework walls. These are interspersed with more elaborate structures with fine detailing and expressive use of stone and brick as building materials. The intrinsic value of the architecture lies in the mix of appealing historic formality and informality, contextual grouping and the survival of early detailing.
- **Vernacular architecture:** The informality of the town is reinforced by the survival of some vernacular buildings. These simple buildings reinforce the character of Athy as a rural market town.
- **Built landscape features:** Walls, gates and railings give strong boundary definition to properties and add considerable diversity to the streetscape. The canal, bridges, locks, quays, etc. are significant features and contribute strongly to Athy's special character.
- **Landscape:** Athy retains much of its impressive historic landscape setting along the river. It also retains a historic cemetery (St. John's graveyard) and landscaped grounds associated with Georgian and Victorian houses
- **Social and Cultural Heritage:** The intact nature of the fabric of the town and the continuity of uses provide valuable insight into the social history of the Athy.

SECTION B: Guide to Development within the ACA

5.0 Implications for Planning and Development

5.1 Planning Control

The objective of Architectural Conservation Area designation is to protect the special character of an area through the careful control and positive management of change in the built environment.

5.1.1 Limits to Exempted Development

The Planning and Development Act 2000 requires that planning permission be obtained for all development works, except for those deemed to be exempted development. In Architectural Conservation Areas only works which do not affect the special character are exempt, and many interventions which may otherwise be exempt will require permission. Section 82(1) and (2) of the Act defines exempted development in the context of an ACA:

(1) Notwithstanding section 4 (1)(h), the carrying out of works to the exterior of a structure located in an architectural conservation area shall be exempted development only if those works would not materially affect the character of the area.

(2) In considering an application for permission for development in relation to land situated in an architectural conservation area, a planning authority, or the Board on appeal, shall take into account the material effect (if any) that the proposed

development would be likely to have on the character of the architectural conservation area.

Assigning ACA status therefore imposes some restrictions on certain works to the exteriors of structures within the designated boundary. Planning permission is required for any new-build works to façades and sides of buildings or for changes to original materials, such as windows, wall finishes, boundary walls, roof coverings, rainwater goods etc. that would normally materially affect the character of the building/area. New infill development and alterations to existing structures are subject to planning permission, and only proposals which respect or enhance the special character of the area will be favourably considered by the planning authority.

More detailed direction is given in the following section on the type of works that will or will not require planning permission.

5.1.2 Protected Structures

Planning permission is required for all works that would materially affect the character of a protected structure, or any element of the structure including its curtilage, which contributes to its special character. Works to a protected structure that constitute essential repairs or maintenance may require written agreement from the Architectural Conservation Officer. The conservation officer should be contacted to agree the type of works that would or would not be considered exempted development in respect of the particular protected structure. This can be sought in the form of a declaration

from Kildare County Council under Section 57 of the Planning and Development Act 2000. A declaration issued under this section sets out the type of works the Planning Authority considers would or would not affect the character of a structure or any elements which contribute to its special interest.

5.1.3 Other Non-Protected Structures

Owners and occupiers of non-protected structures located within the ACA should be aware that works, which in the opinion of the Planning Authority would materially affect the character of the Architectural Conservation Area will require specific grant of planning permission under Section 82(1) of the Planning and Development Act 2000.

5.1.4 Public Realm

Works in the public realm are generally carried out by the local authority, Kildare County Council, and its subcontractors, or by statutory undertakers such as gas, electricity or telecommunication network companies, in consultation with the local authority.

Large scale works undertaken by or on behalf of the local authority will require permission under Part 8 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended).

It is envisaged that all agencies carrying out works to the public realm, e.g. footpaths, planting, street furniture, parking schemes, public lighting, etc., are required to consider the special character of the area as identified in this document, and should consult with the Planning

Department and the Architectural Conservation Officer of Kildare County Council.

Only materials appropriate to the character of the ACA should be permitted. New infrastructure should not be positioned where it would be detrimental to the character and setting of a protected structure or the character of the ACA.

Private sector utilities should employ professional conservation advice to minimise and mitigate the impact of any proposed intervention and shall consult with the Planning Authority and shall comply with the provisions and objectives of the Local Area Plan regarding such matters.

5.2 Works which do not affect the character of the ACA

5.2.1 Maintenance and Repairs

Planning permission is not required for regular maintenance and necessary repair works, such as to roofs, rainwater goods or windows within the ACA as long as works do not materially affect the character of the area e.g. retaining original materials where replacement is strictly limited to damaged fabric, and made on a like-for-like basis.

5.2.2 Internal Alterations

ACA designation for Athy does not prevent internal changes or re-arrangements to those buildings within the area that are not Protected Structures (see list of Protected Structures within the Kildare County

Development Plan), and as long as these changes do not impact on the exterior of the building.

5.2.3 Restoration of Character

Where original materials have been removed and replaced with modern or inappropriate alternatives, the restoration or reinstatement of these features will not require planning permission where the method, materials and details for the works have been agreed in writing with the Architectural Conservation Officer.

Reference should be made to ‘The Advice Series’, a collection of illustrated booklets designed to guide owners and others responsible for historic structures on how best to repair and maintain their properties. A full list of the Advice Series including pdf. versions available to download are available at: <https://www.chg.gov.ie/heritage/built-heritage/architectural-heritage-advisory-service/advice-for-owners/> They cover topics such as paving, accessibility, brickwork, places of worship, energy efficiency, ironwork, roof, windows and historic ruins.

5.3 Works which affect the character of the ACA

6.2.1. Roofs

Roofing Materials: The removal of the original roofing material, ridge tiles, chimneys, bargeboards, eaves details, cast-iron gutters and downpipes, and their replacement with modern materials can seriously damage the character of the ACA. Original coverings and elements can

generally be repaired and reused and should always be retained as they are essential to the character of the area. Where original roofing materials have been lost, replacement with historically correct materials will be encouraged. Materials used in repairs should also be historically correct to prevent incremental erosion of the character of the ACA.



Fig. 92: Roofs and chimneys are a strong component of the picturesque setting of Offaly Street



Fig. 93: Roofs and chimneys are a strong component views of the rear of structures and views from further afield

Chimneys: Chimney stacks are an essential component of the roofscape of an historic urban environment. Removal of stacks will not be deemed acceptable, and any external alteration will require permission.

Roof Lights: The installation of standard roof lights is only acceptable on hidden roof pitches, as they can fundamentally alter the visual character of the streetscape.

Dormer Windows: There is no tradition of dormer windows within the Athy ACA. Dormers may fundamentally change the special character of the town, therefore planning permission is required to install such windows.



Fig. 94: Typical slate roof detail without overhang at eaves and verge on structures on Leinster Street

Eaves, Fascias, Soffits and Bargeboards: Most traditional buildings in the ACA were built without timber eaves details, and this historic detail should be retained if roof coverings are renewed. Verge details at gable ends typically have no bargeboards and render extends to the underside of the roof slates, forming a neat junction characteristic of Irish traditional buildings. This detail should always be retained. Projecting eaves or verges should be avoided except in buildings where this was the historic detail. UPVC fascias or bargeboards are inappropriate and should not be used within the ACA. Few buildings have projecting eaves and gable bargeboards. These tend to be used in Gothic Revival or Arts and Crafts influenced buildings. In these cases, the detail is an important element in defining the character of the building and should always be retained.

Roof pitch: The alteration of the roof profile affects the character of the building and changes to the angle, ridge height, eaves level or span of roofs would not be deemed acceptable within the ACA, where it would be considered to negatively impact the special character of the ACA.

5.3.1 External Walls

Rainwater Goods: Historic gutters, downpipes and hopper-heads, generally of cast-iron, constitute a significant enrichment of the character of the ACA. All intact surviving elements of rainwater goods should be retained, and only individual components which are damaged beyond repair should be replaced. All replacements should be like-for-

like to match the surviving elements. Where historic rainwater goods have been inappropriately replaced, the historic type should be reinstated in any development works.

Alterations to façades: Alterations to historic or window openings will affect the character of the exterior and may not be permitted. Previous unsympathetic alterations will be required to be reversed where a proposal affects that part of the historic structure



Fig. 95: Use of brick in historic elevations on Duke Street

Brickwork Elevations: Any proposal to restore historic brick façades must retain the historic patina and character of the façade. Renewal of pointing to façades of exposed brick can substantially alter the appearance of a building. Such work must retain intact historic pointing mortar, and care must be taken to use the correct material and detail.

Removal of earlier inappropriate pointing can result in damage to the host brickwork. Pointing work will generally require planning permission, unless carried out in consultation with the Architectural Conservation Officer.



Fig. 96: Stone façades with decorative features

Stonework Elevations: Renewal of pointing to exposed stonework can substantially alter the character of a building. Such work must retain intact historic pointing mortar, and care must be taken to use the correct material and detail. This work will generally require planning permission, unless carried out in consultation with the Architectural Conservation Officer.

Removal of Render: The loss of historic external render damages the authentic character of the ACA and removes a water-resisting surface that protects rendered buildings from decay. The removal of render in such cases is not considered acceptable. Removal of render from buildings may be acceptable where it can be conclusively demonstrated that the underlying substrate was intended to be exposed. In particular the reinstatement of brick façades may be considered desirable in order to restore the former character of a street. Removal of render in such cases will only be considered acceptable where the historic substrate will not suffer inordinate damage.



Fig. 97: Decorative render detailing of a structure on Leinster Street

Un-rendered elevations: Some structures have traditionally had exposed stone or brick façades. The addition of external render to these houses damages the authentic character of the town and may add a water-

resisting surface that hinders the free exit of water from the building. The addition of render in such cases would be deemed unacceptable.

Unpainted buildings and features: Some structures within the ACA have a render finish that was always intended to remain unpainted. Such renders add to the aged patina of the ACA and should not be painted over. Similarly, structures originally constructed with exposed cut-stone or brick were not intended to be painted and later removal of such paint can damage the external surface of the material.



Fig. 98: Decorative render detailing of a structure on Leinster Street

Painting: Painted finishes are a characteristic feature of the ACA. Repainting of façades, shopfronts, doorcases and other features can alter the character of the ACA and should be undertaken in consultation with the Architectural Conservation Officer. Muted colours will be preferred and garish colours or painting of shopfronts or façades for brand identity should be avoided. Modern chemical-based paints can have a detrimental effect on historic buildings by trapping moisture in the fabric causing dampness and decay. For this reason, external paints used in historic buildings must be breathable.

Cleaning: Abrasive cleaning methods such as sandblasting damage the external surface of natural building materials. They often remove the hand-tooled surface from stonework or the protective fired surface from bricks, leading to porosity and harmful water ingress. Generally sandblasting of external walls is not advised on historic buildings. Other non-abrasive cleaning methods may be appropriate, but these must be non-destructive and must preserve the aged appearance of historic buildings. Cleaning measures may require planning permission and should always be undertaken in consultation with the Architectural Conservation Officer.

External Cladding: Most historic buildings in Athy tend to have a rendered finish, outbuildings and warehouses are of exposed stone and a few buildings are of brick. The alteration of the original finish by cladding external walls with stone, tiling or timber is generally not acceptable in the historic buildings of the ACA. Original historic external finishes must always be retained. Any proposal for the

alteration of the existing finishes will require planning permission, and changes which materially affect the special character of the ACA will not be acceptable. However, the addition of cladding to more modern structures may be considered, but only in consultation with the conservation officer and case planner.

Satellite antenna, TV aerials and other communications devices: The addition of such installations to the front elevations or roofs of structures within the ACA would be considered to have a negative impact on the character of the area. Satellite dishes should not be visible on the front elevation of buildings. Planning permission is required for the erection of a satellite dish on the front elevation of a property, whether in an ACA or not. Less visible methods of TV reception, such as cable, should be used and where the existing aerials have become redundant, they should be removed.



Fig. 99: Proliferation of cables etc. diminishes the character of the ACA

5.3.2 Windows and Doors

Alteration of Openings: Enlargement of window or door openings or the removal of stone sills or doorsteps can alter the prevailing proportions of the townscape, and result in incremental loss of historic materials on whose texture and authenticity the special character to the town relies. Any proposed change to openings would therefore require planning permission.



Fig. 100: Decorative detailing and arrangement of windows enhances the appearance of structures and gives them individual character

Replacement of Windows or External Doors: Original timber or metal windows, doors and fanlights are key features which enrich the character of the ACA. Examples of authentic historic fenestration and external doors are becoming relatively rare and their retention is therefore crucial to the preservation of the character of the ACA. Decayed timber windows can in most cases be repaired and should not be accepted as a reason for replacement. Replacement of original windows and doors with modern artificial materials such as uPVC or aluminium has a particularly negative impact and will be deemed to be unacceptable. Where windows and doors have been altered or replaced

prior to ACA designation, the reinstatement of windows of correct historic design will be encouraged, and where planning applications are made for the buildings concerned such reinstatement may be sought by way of condition of permission. Any alteration to windows or doors within the ACA which would materially affect the character of the ACA will require planning permission.



Fig. 101: Historic doors, formal and vernacular, add richness to an ACA

Ironwork: Window guards, balconettes, grilles, boot-scrapers, and other ironwork fittings are essential to the palette of materials in the ACA and shall not be removed or altered. Repairs should follow best conservation practice using traditional techniques, and welding should be avoided.

Any such work must be undertaken in consultation with the planning authority.



Fig. 102: Timber gates in covered openings are integral parts of many elevation compositions

5.3.3 Medieval Structures

Archaeology: The ACA lies within a designated Zone of Archaeological Potential, and any excavation work below ground level may uncover archaeological material.

Standing structures: In addition to below-ground archaeology, all standing structures built before 1700 or containing any pre-1700 fabric

are protected under National Monuments legislation. Any works must be carried out in consultation with the National Monuments Section of the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. Medieval structures are key to the appreciation of the character of the ACA, and due to their great rarity must be given very careful consideration in any repair or development proposal.

5.3.4 Vernacular Buildings

Vernacular houses and functional buildings built of simple materials in unpretentious style are an important component of the special character of the Athy ACA and demolition or replacement of vernacular buildings is therefore not acceptable. Raising of eaves levels, alteration of roof pitches or insertion of dormer windows fundamentally change the character of vernacular buildings and are similarly unacceptable. Alterations to provide modern facilities must be carried out in sympathy with the historic value of these buildings. Alterations to increase the size of vernacular houses are not always appropriate and generally should be facilitated to the rear of structures. Reinstatement of traditional vernacular features such as lime-washed external walls, timber sheeted doors and sash windows will be encouraged, but must conform to correct historic detail in form, material and technique.

5.3.5 Industrial Heritage

Athy has a rich industrial heritage dating from the medieval period. Accessibility to markets was greatly increased by the opening of the

Barrow Line Canal from Athy to Monasterevin in 1791, enabling both goods and people to reach Dublin by this route. The railway from Dublin through Athy to Carlow was opened in 1846 also assisted in developing the town's industries including milling and other agriculturally based industries, a union workhouse, military barracks, jail, model school and farm.

The industrial heritage of Athy contains a wide range of elements including the railway, engineering structures such as bridges and the Canal. All these elements are significant as they contribute to the social, historical, archaeological, engineering and architectural development of the town.

5.3.6 Shopfronts

Historic shopfronts: Several historic shopfronts survive throughout the ACA, varying from modest to elaborate detail, and contribute strongly to the special character of the Athy ACA. Alterations to historic shopfronts located in the ACA should be restricted to a minimum and will require planning permission.

Painting of historic shopfronts: Repainting in the historic colour, or in another appropriate muted tone, may not affect the character of a shopfront, and may be undertaken with the approval of the conservation officer. Paint stripping from historic shopfront elements should not be carried out without consultation with and approval of the conservation officer, as earlier layers, in particular overpainted traces of former signage, can be of particular interest.

Existing non-historic shopfronts: Alterations to any shopfront in the ACA will require planning permission. Care must always be taken in works to seemingly non-historic shopfronts in historic buildings, as concealed features of earlier frontages may be concealed beneath. Such hidden features as may come to light in works to shopfronts must be notified to the conservation officer, even in cases where planning permission has been obtained.

For best practice the following documents should be referred to:

Kildare County Council Shop Front Design Guide

<http://www.kildare.ie/CountyCouncil/Business/ShopFrontTownCentreImprovementGrantScheme/Shop%20Front%20Guidelinesb.pdf>

Dublin City Council Shop Front Design Guide

<http://www.dublincity.ie/sites/default/files/content/Planning/PlanningApplication/Documents/DCCShopfrontDesignGuide.pdf>



Fig. 103: Historic shopfronts add to the character of streets

New shopfronts: Insertion of shopfronts in historic buildings where none has previously existed can damage the special character of the ACA and will normally be seen as unacceptable. New shopfronts, whether in contemporary or traditional style should reflect the principle of historic examples and be restricted in size to enclose a display window and entrance door only. New shop fronts should not rise higher than the prevailing height of other shopfronts in the street and should not alter or obscure architectural details of the original building such as sills, stringcourses, windows, doorways, etc. New signage boards to shopfronts in the ACA, whether in contemporary or traditional style, must reflect the detail of historic examples. Deep fascias and off-the-shelf brackets should be avoided.

Replacement shopfronts: Shopfronts may only be replaced where the replaced frontage is not historic. Surviving components of historic shopfronts, such as pilasters or vitrolite signage fascias, should always be retained.

Pilasters or other vertical timber features should continue to the ground or sit on stone plinths. They should not be without support (visual) on the ground.

Shopfronts of contemporary design: Shopfronts of contemporary design can enhance the layered character of the ACA if properly considered. Where non-traditional designs are proposed, a design statement should be submitted outlining the rationale and concept of the design and demonstrating the intended contribution to the character of the ACA.



Fig. 104: Shop elevation details add to the character of the town

Awnings: Historic awnings are a feature of nineteenth century display windows and should be retained where they survive. Where new canopies or awnings are deemed acceptable, they should be made of heavy-duty cotton material with painted metal or timber hardware. Plastic should not be used.



Fig. 105: Shopfront refurbishment: before left and after right, Ormond Quay Upper, Dublin. A good example of refurbishment of an historic shopfront by the Dublin Civic Trust as part of overall elevation work

5.3.7 Signage and External Fittings



Fig. 106: Simple materials and signage add to the character of the town

New signage: Signage may only be permitted on shopfronts. Such signage should be of appropriate design to complement or enhance the structure and should not be overtly dominant on the streetscape. Internally illuminated and plastic fascia boxes will not be considered acceptable. Standard corporate signage which would detract from the character of the ACA should be adapted in scale, colour or material colour to be more in keeping with the area.

Outdoor Advertising Billboards: Care should be taken that outdoor advertising does not detract from the special character of the ACA. Billboards which conceal historic features or impinge on significant views will not be deemed acceptable.



Fig. 107: Shopfront refurbishment: before above and after below, Castle Street, Dublin. A good example of historic shopfront refurbishment and addition of signage by the Dublin Civic Trust

Shutters: The design of security shutters should complement rather than damage the character of the building and the ACA. Metal roller shutters with visible boxes are not acceptable within the ACA boundaries. Shutter boxes should be positioned discreetly behind the fascia board or sliding lattice grills be positioned behind the shop window. Security shutters should not cover the whole commercial frontage but only the vulnerable glazed areas. Where appropriate to the type of shop or to the historic interior arrangement, security shutters should be placed behind the window display. Where external security screens are deemed acceptable, they should be of transparent open chain-link grille design rather than solid or perforated shutters, which are not transparent when viewed obliquely. Shutters and grilles should be painted or finished in a colour to complement the rest of the exterior.

External Seating and Screening: Planning permission or a Section 254 license is required for external seating. Seats should be of wood, painted metal or other traditional material which enhances the visual appearance of the ACA. Plastic is not an acceptable material for seating. Enclosing ropes and canvas windbreaks can incrementally damage the special character of an ACA and must be carefully considered and assessed as part of the overall level of existing street furniture. Screens to enclose external seating areas should be made of heavy-duty cotton, glazed or metal panels and should not be used for advertising purposes.

Any proposal should be undertaken in consultation with the planning authority and in accordance with the provisions and objectives of the Local Area Plan.

Other External Elements to Commercial Premises: Canopies, vending machines, newspaper receptacles, etc. can damage the special character of an ACA, and are only acceptable to a limited degree. Where canopies or awnings are deemed acceptable in the ACA, they should not be made of plastic but of heavy-duty cotton material with painted metal or timber hardware. Planning permission is required for external vending machines, ATMs, newspaper receptacles, storage bays etc. Commercial premises should limit the clutter of temporary external retail furniture, such as external heaters, bins, menu-boards, etc. Such fittings are only acceptable where their design complements or enhances the character of the area.

5.3.8 Boundary Treatments

Alteration or removal of historic railings, boundary walls, piers, gates, etc. requires planning permission. Loss of such features can be seriously damaging to the character of the ACA and is therefore not acceptable. Reinstatement of lost features such as ironwork details to correct historic detail will be encouraged by the planning authority or required by condition where appropriate when granting permission for developments within the ACA.



Fig. 108: Plinth wall and metal railings with jostle stone on Woodstock Street



Fig. 109: Stone boundary wall to presbytery on Stanhope Street/Place



Fig. 110: Rendered boundary wall to house on Woodstock Street



Fig. 111: Boundary of shrine on Stanhope Street

5.3.9 Demolition

Demolition of any building visible within the ACA, whether it is a Protected Structure or not, will require planning permission. Demolition will only be permitted where the structure makes no material contribution to the character or appearance of the area or does not have the potential to do so through reinstatement of historic features. There will be a presumption in favour of retaining any structure that makes a positive contribution to the character of the ACA to avoid incremental loss or damage to its special character. Where permission is sought for demolition on the grounds of structural defects or failure, a condition report produced by a suitably qualified and experienced conservation professional, supported by photographs and drawings indicating locations of defects will be required. Justification on structural grounds for any demolition within the ACA must include details of repairs or remedial works normally used in similar circumstances demonstrating why they are not suitable in that instance. A full photographic record and measured survey will be required before any demolition commences.

Facade Retention: Although interiors are not protected within an ACA, the approach of removing historic interior walls and floors to leave only the façades will not be considered an acceptable approach to redevelopment of an area.

5.3.10 New Build Interventions

Plot Size: New buildings should follow existing plot boundaries to retain the existing grain which is an important determining factor of the special character of the ACA. In larger developments on sites where former individual boundaries have already been removed, the original plot divisions should be articulated in the volume and composition of the new buildings, both to the front and the rear.



Fig. 112: New buildings which ignore established building sizes and volumes damage the character of the street space and town skyline

New and Infill Developments: Designation as an ACA puts an onus on prospective developers to produce a high standard of architectural design, which respects or enhances the qualities of the area. New buildings should be designed to blend into the streetscape respecting

and using where appropriate the prevailing materials, proportions and massing. Buildings should have regard to the eaves heights, roof pitches, building lines which predominate in the surrounding context. Chimney stacks should be included where these are a feature of the roofscape. Windows should be of matching proportions and alignments at head and sill, and the window-to-wall ratio should be derived from the historic buildings forming the context of the infill site.

Contemporary interpretations and detail which allow the new building to be identified as an addition should be favoured over pastiche styles in order to avoid undermining the authenticity of ACA.

Alternative Design Approach: New buildings which depart from the proportions and façade arrangements typical of the context must be of a very high standard of architectural design and must positively contribute to the character of the area. A design impact statement outlining the concept of the design and providing justification for the proposal, demonstrating a considered response to the scale, materials and grain of the ACA must accompany any such application.

Materials and Features: Only materials of good visual quality and durability may be used in new developments. Features which are not typical of the historic buildings of the town should be avoided. These include roof lights, standard-issue concrete sills or copings, top-hung casement windows, pressed aluminium gutters or uPVC features of any kind. Roofs should be covered with natural slate, lead or other roofing materials which enhances the character of the ACA.

Extensions to Front or Side: All new additions to the front or visible elevations of structures within the ACA will require planning permission. Very careful consideration will be given to applications for extensions to the side or front of a structure within the ACA, as these can be particularly detrimental to the character of the area.

Rear Extensions: Additions to the rear of properties can often be visible from other parts of the ACA and can affect its character. Rear extensions which may otherwise constitute exempted development can materially affect the external appearance of a building within the ACA and would in that case require planning permission. Extensions should be designed to minimise their visibility from any public area in the ACA, they should be subsidiary to the main building, of an appropriate scale, and should follow the guidance for new infill buildings given above.

5.3.11 Amalgamation of Properties or Sites

Amalgamation of Structures: Joining buildings together into one functional unit requires planning permission. Any proposals for the amalgamation of properties within the ACA will be considered with regard to the impact of the change on the special character of the ACA, whether in its visual appearance or characteristic use. Original entrances should therefore remain in use to maintain an active and vibrant street frontage. Treatment of façades to joined buildings should emphasise the individual plot. Paint finishes or shopfronts should not aim to present adjoining buildings which have been joined in the same ownership in a uniform manner.

Amalgamation of Plots: Any proposed development of a group of sites within the ACA, especially at an increased density, must respect the scale, mass, height, and design of adjoining buildings and of the whole streetscape. This does not preclude modern design but should reflect the predominant and historically significant grain of the town, informally arranged buildings of intimate scale and narrow frontage. Developments which span across former individual plot boundaries, should be broken up in their volume and in their façades to reflect historic plot divisions, both to the front and the rear. Repeated frontages of continuous height should be avoided. The demolition of buildings that contribute positively to the character of the ACA is not acceptable. All such buildings should be retained and incorporated sensitively into any proposed re-development with respect for their historic and architectural qualities and original plot form.

5.3.12 External Lighting

Proposals for the illumination at night of buildings and other features within the ACA requires the consent of Kildare County Council. The method of lighting, i.e. type of fitting, fixing method and type of light, must be specified by the applicant in seeking permission and should be designed so that it does not affect public lighting levels, result in light pollution, or negatively impact on other structures in the ACA.

5.3.13 Views

Key views as outlined in Section 4.3 must be preserved and any works within the ACA should not adversely impact on or block these views.

5.3.14 Use of Professional Advice

Historically, Athy set a high standard of architecture quality for creation of buildings in the town, be they civic, commercial or domestic structures. Some had the involvement of architects and others made by builders followed well-used canons of composition and proportion. The materials chosen for all of the pre-war structures were of high quality and durability and have gained character over time with the patina of use and weathering. A high quality of appearance was expected to show Athy at its best.

Today, traditional craftsmanship and quality natural materials are not as of yore. However good quality architectural design can do much to improve the appearance of even modest new structures and refurbishments. High standards defined from the outset encourages good construction standards and a well-designed and executed building encourages work on neighbouring sites to keep up standards.

5.4 Works to the Public Realm

5.4.1 Works by the Local Authority

Most works undertaken in the public realm are carried out by Kildare County Council. These works include road opening works for drainage, water supply and metering, road resurfacing, paving works, accessibility improvements, street lighting, street furniture, controls and signage for traffic and pedestrians, parking provision and meters, etc. Larger-scale works will require planning approval under Part 8 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended). The Architectural Conservation Officer should always be consulted in this process.

In smaller scale interventions, the relevant engineering department should consult closely with the Architectural Conservation Officer to ensure that any unavoidable impact on the character of the ACA is suitably mitigated.

Where subcontractors are used, the tender documents should inform bidding companies of the constraints imposed by working within an ACA. Subcontractors should be carefully overseen or should be required to engage professional conservation advice in any interventions within a historic context.

5.4.2 Works by Statutory Undertakers

Infrastructure for supply of gas, electricity, telecommunications, cable tv, etc. is provided by a range of providers, and all of which can have a damaging impact on the historic built environment.

Utility and service providers are each governed by different legislation, but all must consult to some degree with the local roads authority and obtain permission for any road-opening works.

The road authority as the overseeing body should inform the relevant service provider of the constraints imposed on work within an ACA and should consult with the Planning Department of Kildare County Council and the Architectural Conservation Officer before approving interventions. Private sector utilities should be required to employ professional conservation advice to minimise and mitigate the impact of any proposed intervention in a historic context.

5.4.3 Historic Paving and Street Furniture

Alterations to paving and street furniture should be in keeping with the visual simplicity of the town. Where historic evidence of street furniture does not survive, new elements should be chosen to be high quality and low-key. Conspicuous arrays of litter bins or bollards should be avoided using integrated designs to minimise clutter. The impact of necessary items should be mitigated by careful consideration of their position in the streetscape.

The Architectural Conservation Officer of Kildare County Council should be consulted before any works commence, to ensure that works do not adversely affect, but rather enhance the character of the area.

5.4.4 Drainage

Sewers, culverts, etc. which are not visible contribute nonetheless to the historic character and civil engineering heritage of the ACA. Works to this infrastructure should be respectful of historic features and should favour repair over replacement.

5.4.5 Street Lighting

The street lighting in parts of the ACA is utilitarian roadway lighting. Consideration should be given to improving the lighting scheme with lower lamp standards to produce a more intimate lighting which would reinforce the town character.



Fig. 113: Lady Lane in historic quarter of Waterford: use of suspended street lights reduces need for mast supports on the narrow pavements

5.4.6 Traffic and Management Signage

There is considerable traffic due to the strategic location of the town in the network of national and local roads. It is important that all signage and other traffic management features be carefully sited to cause the minimum impact. Traffic engineers should consult the Conservation Officer regarding any changes or improvements proposed.

5.4.7 Management of Parking

Parking has a generally negative affect on the character of the ACA in the areas where it is provided. Cars detract from the historic character of streets and impede proper appreciation of historic buildings and spaces. In addition, off-street surface car parks also add to the degradation of the character of the town. Parking is provided throughout the ACA in different arrangements. This should be revised when possible to allow structures to regain their historic boundaries or to be free of cluttering vehicles. Site boundaries, understanding of historic plot sizes and landscape features should not be sacrificed to providing parking spaces.

To enhance the character of the ACA, the exclusion of parking from key positions in the ACA might be considered, especially in public squares. The configuration of parking bays in sensitive areas should be designed for the best possible presentation when cars are not present. For disabled-accessible parking spaces alternatives to blue surfacing should be provided.



Fig. 114: Visual clutter caused by a large variety signage with individual pole supports



Fig. 116: Neuville aux Bois, France; image of the main street in 2009 before works. Note the extensive tarmac surfaces, busy kerb layout and clutter

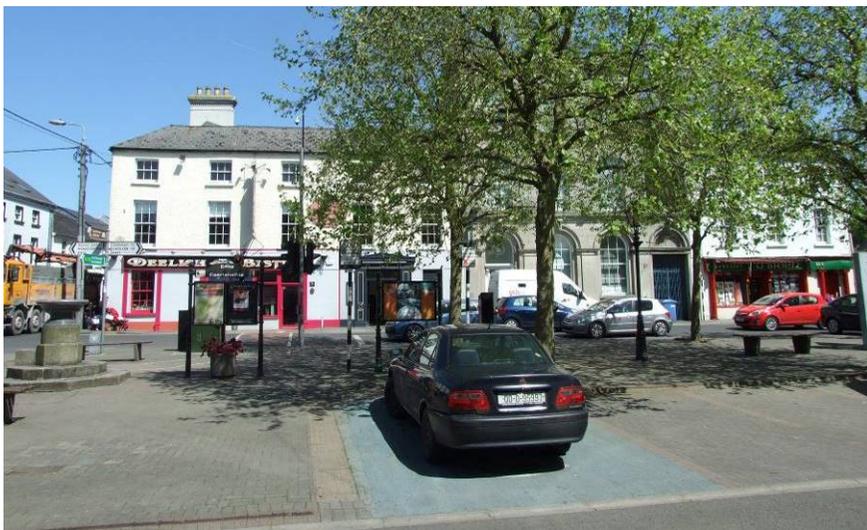


Fig. 115: Bollards and parking spaces negatively impact the urban square character of Emily Square



Fig. 117: Neuville aux Bois, following refurbishment of the main street, signage and kerbs reduced or removed

5.4.8 Planting and Landscaping

Good quality landscape design can enhance the setting of historic buildings and improve the appreciation of the urban and existing landscape setting. Such designs should employ good quality natural materials which are already found in the streetscape or are in sympathy with its scale and materials.

The quantity and quality of planting and trees within the ACA is an essential contributing element of its special character. Good quality planting maintenance and design can support this in the present and into the future. Particular attention should be paid to the canal and river settings. The Architectural Conservation Officer should be consulted in the design of any such schemes, to ensure that the impact on the historic character of the town is acceptable.

The quality of the river landscape setting is a prominent characteristic in the ACA and an important component of protected views. Careful consideration of landscape interventions along the river needs to be made to maintain and enhance this setting. Both the Architectural Conservation Officer and the Heritage Officer should be consulted in the event of larger soft or hard landscape interventions being made along the riverbanks, which constitute part of a Special Area of Conservation (SAC).



Fig. 118: View along Mount Offaly with the tower of St. Michael's Church of Ireland church framed by a large copper beech in the grounds of Athy Lodge



Fig. 119: Row of trees along Stanhope Street give scale and unity to the northern approach of the ACA



Fig. 120: Row of trees on Barrow Quay enhance the setting of the bridge and castle



Fig. 121: Trees and soft landscape treatment of the riverbanks enhance the historic quay and Athy Library (formerly St. Dominic's church) in the distance



Fig. 122: Trees on Duke Street on a site that was historically free of buildings add to the character of the public realm

5.4.9 Service Utilities

Athy ACA is adversely impacted by overhead cables and (often redundant) cables and other electrical components on elevations.

Where cabling on façades is not avoidable, these should be placed neatly in discreet positions using dark coloured cable as approved by the Architectural Conservation Officer

5.4.10 Wires and Distribution Poles

Overhead electricity supply and telephone cables and poles detract significantly from the character of Athy. The Council should facilitate and support any initiatives to place overhead services underground within the historic ACA. The removal of redundant services and signage from the façades of buildings should also be encouraged.



Fig. 123: Proliferation cables in street spaces and redundant fittings on elevations have a negative impact on the character of the street

NOTE:

Some of the works listed require planning permission irrespective of whether they are located within an ACA or not but are included to highlight the need for careful consideration of the design of the proposed works to ensure that they do not impact negatively on the character of the area.

The guidance given in Section 5 above is not in itself a comprehensive list of all works, in all circumstances, that require planning permission, but identifies those works that would impact on the character of the ACA. Development works would still have to adhere to the general provisions of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) and Planning Regulations 2001 (as amended). The Planning Department and Architectural Conservation Officer of Kildare County Council should be consulted if there is any doubt as to whether planning permission is required or not.

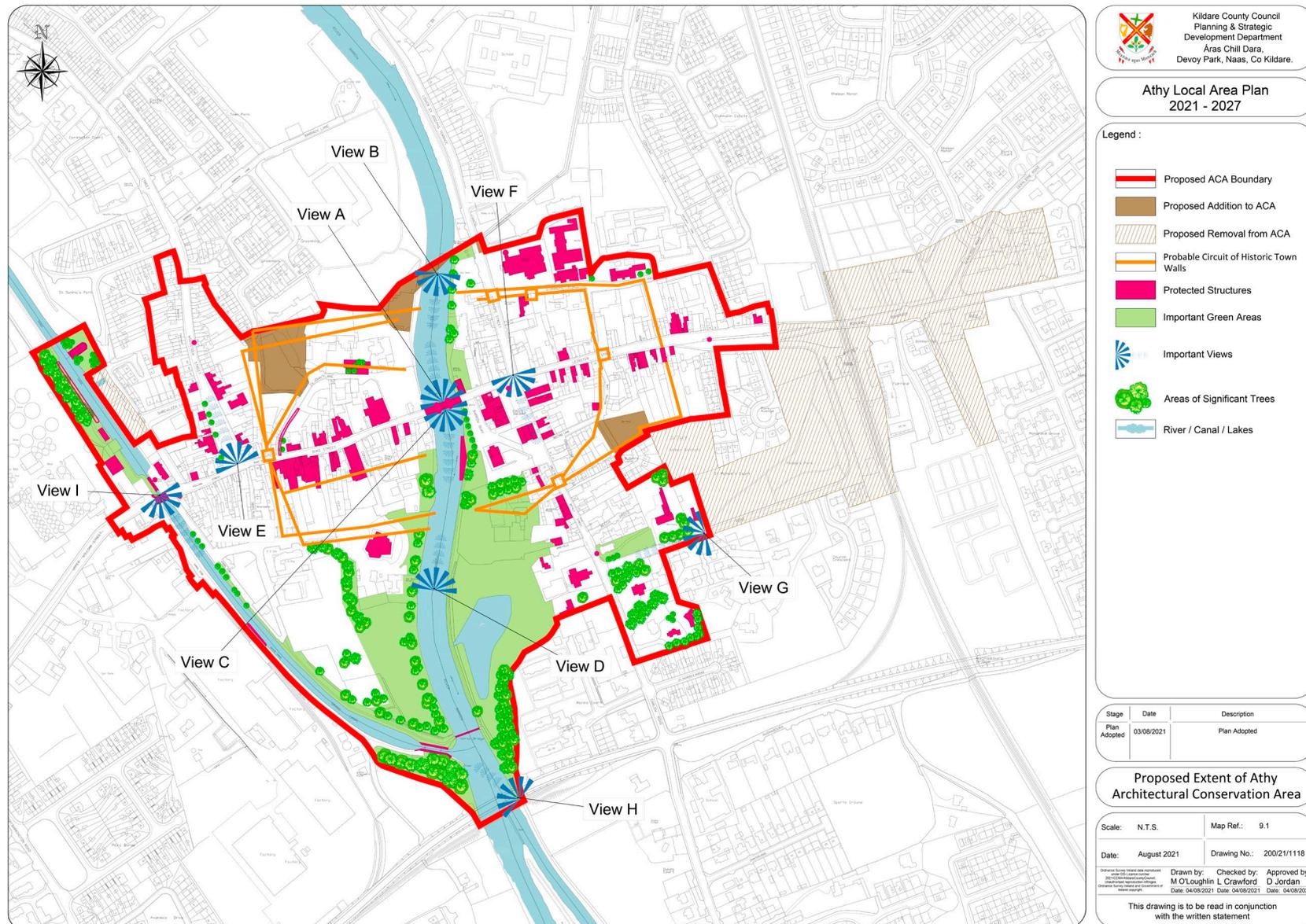


Fig. 124: Map of existing Athy ACA including proposed alterations to its boundaries and extent



Planning Department
Kildare County Council
Áras Chill Dara, Devoy Park,
Naas, Co. Kildare W91 X77F