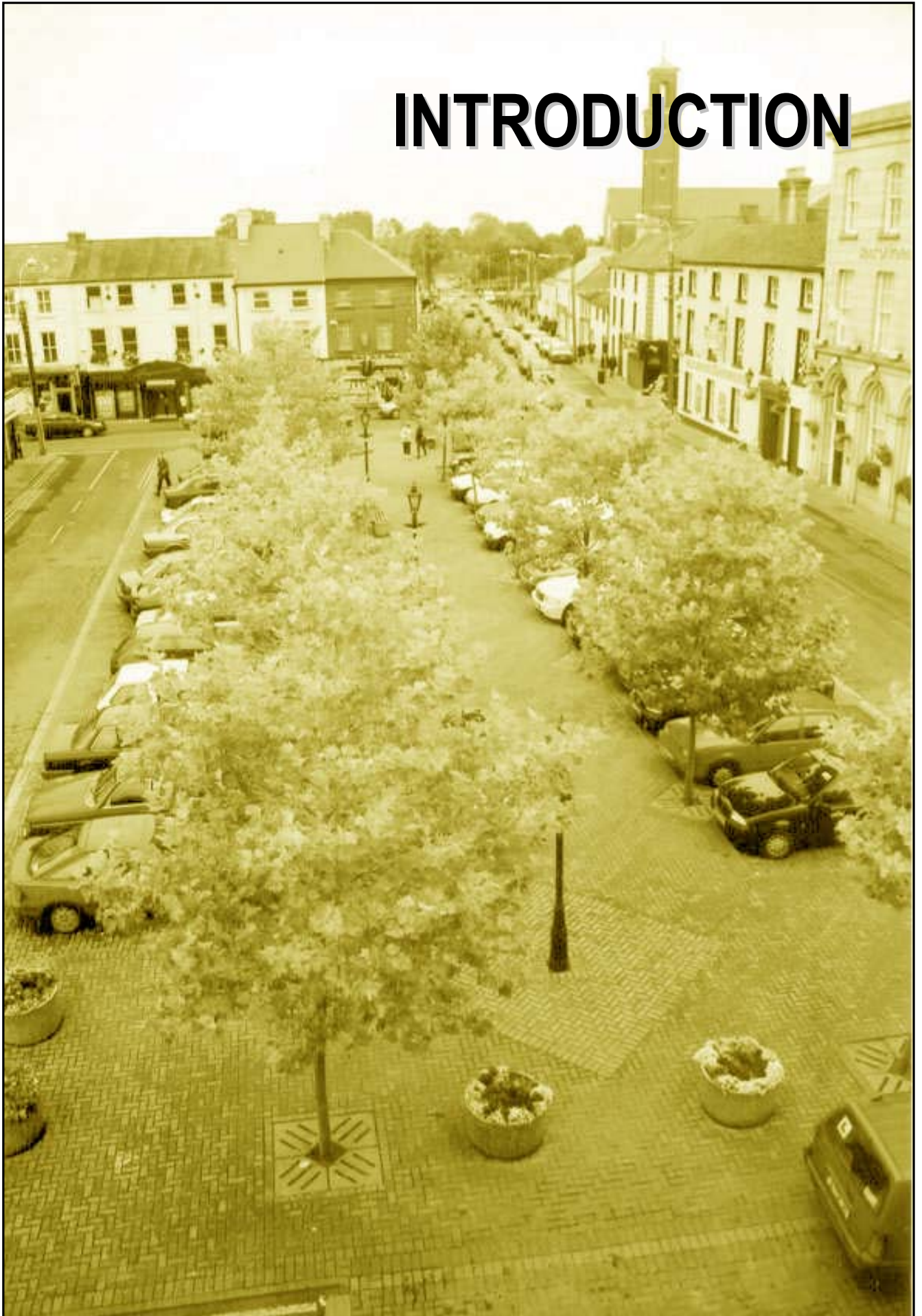


INTRODUCTION



1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of Study

The Athy Integrated Framework Plan for Land Use and Transportation (IFPLUT) was commissioned jointly by Kildare County Council and the Dublin Transportation Office (DTO) in the context of Athy's designation as a Secondary Growth Centre in the Greater Dublin Area. The Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area were adopted in July 2004 and within the context of these Guidelines Athy is designated a Moderate Growth Town.



Key to the development of urban centres is the integration between land use and transportation in order to ensure that, in the future, travel to and within towns such as Athy is carried out using the most convenient and appropriate mode of travel. This can only be achieved by planning for future provision of homes, jobs, education and social activities hand in hand with transport planning.

Integrated planning of this nature ensures that people are offered the opportunity to travel to and from these land uses by the most appropriate and sustainable mode of transport, whether by foot, bicycle, bus, car or train. Such planning fundamentally addresses the future quality of life and social inclusion of the people of Athy as it looks to build upon the opportunities in the town to make it an attractive place to live, work, play and socialise.

The Study's findings and recommendations can be considered as a blueprint for the development of the town to 2016 and beyond, both for residents and potential investors. In the shorter term the Study will be used to shape the next development plans for the town and environs and will assist in determining planning applications in the area.

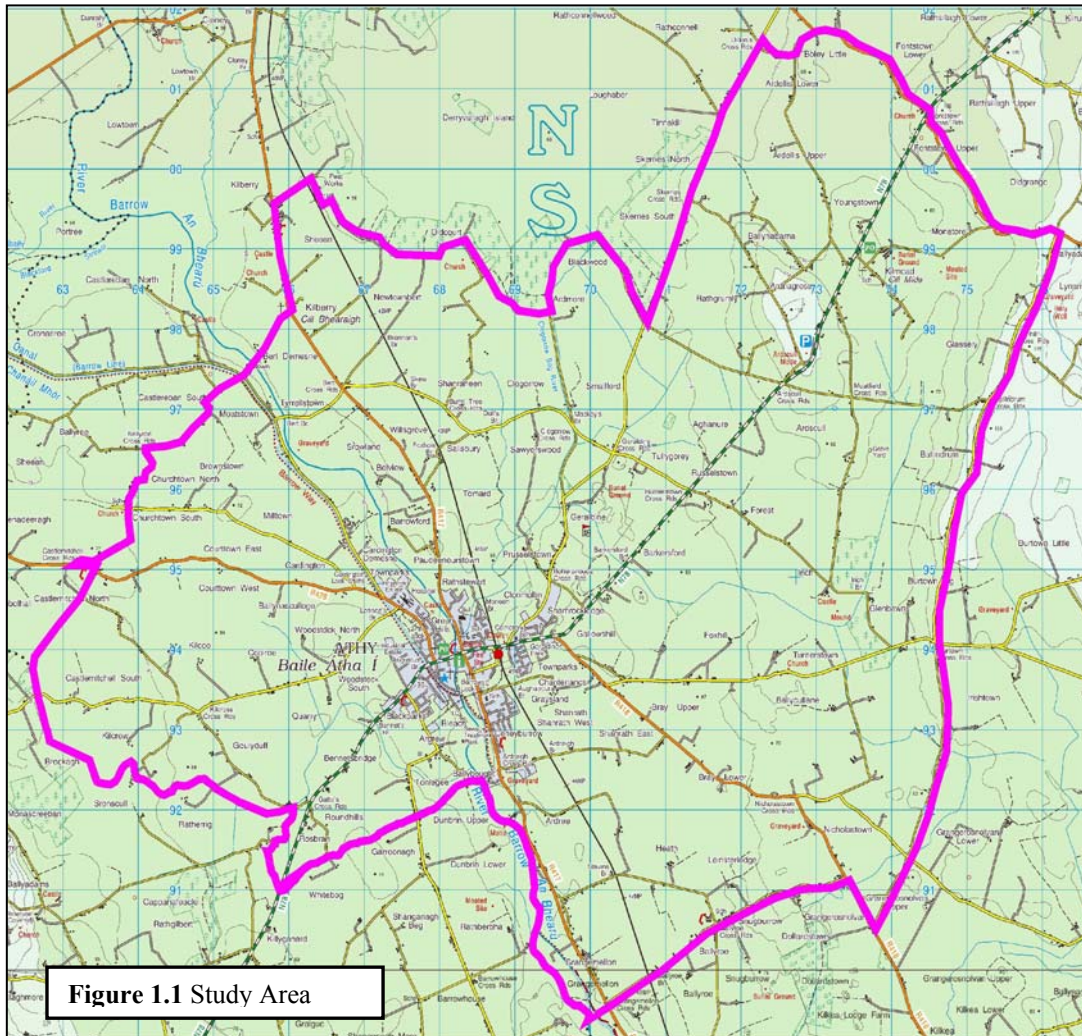
1.2 Study Area

Athy is situated in South Kildare on the heavily trafficked National Secondary Route N78, which forms the main arterial road between Dublin, Kilkenny and Waterford. The Study Area is defined on Figure 1.1 and this area was used for the determination of future population and employment growth. However the town serves a larger hinterland in southern Kildare and Laois and is proximate to a number of major employment, retail and leisure development centres including Dublin, Carlow, Kilkenny, Portlaoise, Newbridge and Naas. These centres are firmly established and their proximity provides opportunities for travel from Athy and as such act as a constraint for the development of retail and employment and leisure facilities in the town.



The town suffers from severe traffic congestion making efficient movement through the town practically impossible. This factor detracts from Athy's economic attractiveness for companies, preventing investment and employment opportunities necessary for the town's development. Full realisation of the town's economic potential will require the completion of the N9 realignment and upgrading of rail services.

Athy is a designated Heritage Town with origins as an Anglo Norman settlement and together with the convergence of the River Barrow and Grand Canal in the town provides Athy with a wealth of amenity, leisure and tourism facilities and therefore the town has a potential to become a premier tourist attraction and cultural centre in South Kildare. The town also has potential to build on its existing employment and residential land uses in order to provide the stepping stone to a self-sustaining development centre.



1.3 Study Objectives

Within the context of the role of Athy as a Secondary Development Centre the specific Study objectives are defined as follows:

- To examine the current and future integration between land use and transportation, based on the relevant policy and strategy documents, indicating suitable land use zonings, especially with respect to higher and significant trip generators, that maximise the potential for walking, cycling and public transport trips.
- Consult with key stakeholders including local resident groups and the general public to ensure the widest possible consensus is achieved.
- Carry out an audit of the existing transport infrastructure.
- Identify distributor level transport networks for all modes, which, with the aid of a traffic model and key traffic management measures, will accommodate mode split targets to be identified in the Study.
- Identify proposals for key traffic management proposals that will provide safe and convenient pedestrian and cycle links between major trip attractors.
- Recommend a timescale and monitoring arrangements for the implementation of proposed measures up to 2016.

1.4 Projected Residential and Employment Populations

A population target of 20,000 by 2016 for the Study Area has been determined based on Athy's designation as a Secondary Growth Centre within the Greater Dublin Area (see Section 2) and its role as a Primary Development Centre within County Kildare. At present the population within the Study Area is approximately 8,800 and therefore a population increase of approximately 11,000 is planned for Athy and its environs.



It is recognised that significant population growth would be required in order to reach the potential population by the design year. However in the context of this Framework Study the principle is to set in place the building blocks that will allow the town to grow in an integrated and sustainable manner in order to receive the target population regardless of the timeframe in which the growth occurs.

Of the present population in the Study Area approximately 4,600 are available for employment. The latest employment survey carried out in 2002 for the town estimates the existing employment base at 1,760.

In order for the town to become to a self-sustained employment centre for 20,000 people, 9,000 jobs would be required in the Study Area. This equates to a participation rate of 45% of the total population of 20,000 and is based on future population and demographic predictions from the Central Statistics Office.

These projections are described in detail in Section 5 of this report.

1.5 Study Methodology and Consultation

The Study methodology follows a logical sequence from baseline assessment through the development of appropriate principles and objectives for Athy to the delivery of the preferred development framework strategy for the town and environs. The methodology is outlined in Figure 1.2 and is both a qualitative and quantitative analysis based on the one hand on ongoing consultation, desktop review and on-site assessments whilst on the other hand using population and employment analysis and complex transportation modelling.

The Study is underpinned by the objectives of the relevant national, regional and local strategies outlined in Section 3. This Study is not intended to be a stand-alone document but rather it seeks to co-ordinate and address the relevant land use and transportation aspects of these relevant strategies.

The consultation process is key to the delivery of the Study recommendations as consensus and compromise with all stakeholders is necessary in order that whilst the recommendations are consistent with the Study's aims, they are also accepted by the community at large. The details of the consultation process is outlined in Figure 4.1, which indicates that the process was comprehensive and sought the views from as wide a cross-section of stakeholders as possible.

The transport assessments of the various land use scenarios were undertaken using two modelling processes. Firstly, at a strategic level, each scenario was tested against the overarching principles using map based walking assessments. This process models the sustainability of each land use scenario by determining the walking distances between major trip attractions. On completion of this walking assessment, viable scenarios were refined for the viable scenarios assessment stage. Each viable scenario was tested up to the period of 2016 using the SATURN and MEPLAN computer modelling packages. The SATURN computer programme suite models traffic behaviour around the town, whilst MEPLAN independently assesses the modal split and use of slow modes for the various journey types. The modelling results of each scenario are then assessed in terms of their compliance with the Study objectives and a final preferred scenario is selected that is considered the most beneficial to the future development of the town.

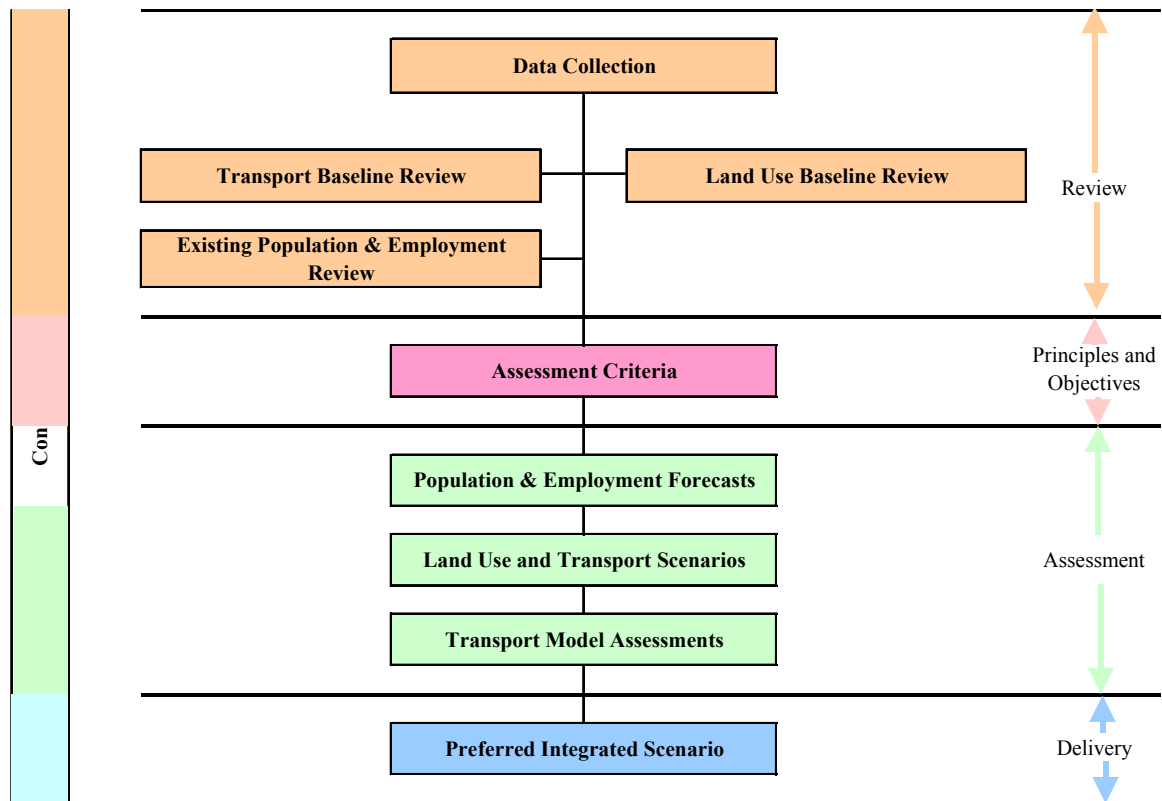


Figure 1.2 Study Methodology

1.6 Report Structure

The structure of the report is as follows:

Review	<p>Section 2 Strategic Context of Athy - Introduces the policy framework within which the report has been prepared incorporating an extensive review of strategy and policy documents at national, regional, county and local level.</p>
	<p>Section 3 Existing Profile - Reviews the current status of the Study Area in terms of population, employment, education, land use, amenity provision, water supply, wastewater treatment and transport provision. The purpose of the review is to identify at the local level the particular opportunities and issues that the town faces in terms of developing a self-sufficient centre.</p>
	<p>Section 4 Consultation - Outlines the extensive consultation undertaken with the various stakeholders and highlights the key issues raised with respect to the existing environment and the perception of the future development of the Study Area.</p>
Principles and Objectives	<p>Section 5 Principles and Objectives - Outlines the guiding principles and general objectives of the Study, which are required in order to work towards and achieve the Preferred Framework.</p>
Assessment	<p>Section 6 Assessment of Future Growth and Needs - Assesses the future growth of the Study Area in terms of population growth, employment and school requirements and travel demand.</p>
	<p>Section 7 Alternative Scenarios - Outlines the potential land use and transportation scenarios and assesses them in terms of their compliance or otherwise with the guiding principles as outlined in Section 5.</p>
	<p>Section 8 Assessment of Viable Scenarios - Tests the scenarios, which have been taken forward from Section 7 against the objectives of the Framework Plan incorporating the walking assessments.</p>
	<p>Section 9 Transport Model Assessments – Tests the scenarios, which have been taken forward from Section 8 using the SATURN and MEPLAN software modelling suites.</p>
Delivery	<p>Section 10 Development of Preferred Scenario - Details the preferred development framework within which detailed land requirements for housing, employment, infrastructure, open space and community facilities are set out together with the proposed multimodal transportation management system with the outcome being the most desirable integration of land use and transportation within Athy.</p>
	<p>Section 11 Delivery of the IFPLUT - Outlines the way forward in terms of the key steps necessary for the delivery of the preferred framework in terms of phasing and incorporation into the Development Plan.</p>

