

PRINCIPLES & OBJECTIVES



5 PRINCIPLES AND OBJECTIVES

In order to develop the Preferred Framework Strategy the consultants firstly developed assessment criteria upon which the strategies would be based. These criteria were developed in the form of guiding principles and objectives based on the strategic policy review in Section 2, the existing profile of the Study Area in Section 3, the feedback from the consultation process in Section 4 in addition to the consultant's own experience and expertise. A summary of the principles and objectives development is illustrated in Figure 5.1.

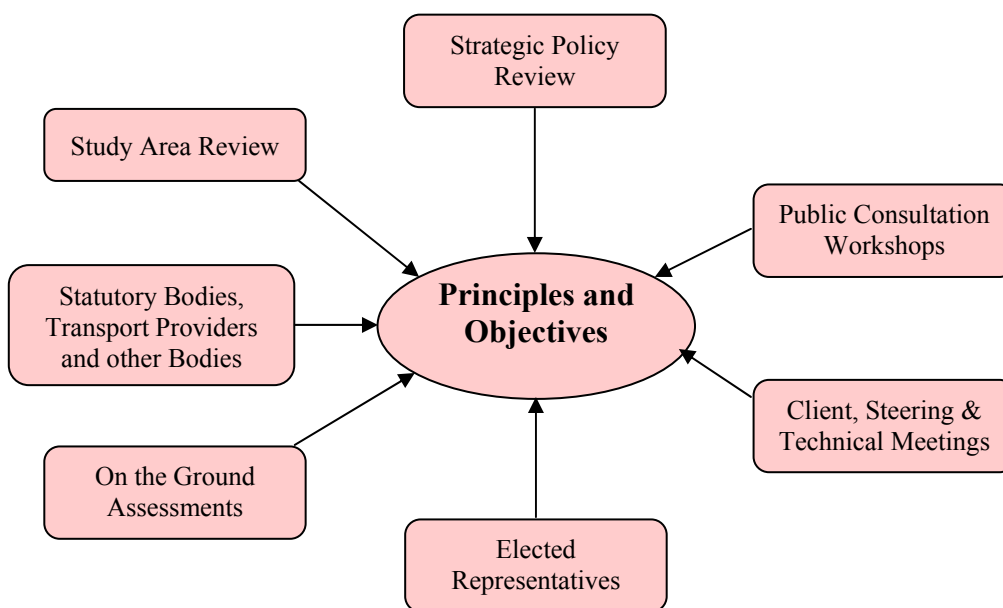


Figure 5.1. Development of Principles and Objectives

5.1 Principles

The Guiding Principles for the Study as outlined below also took into account the policy aims and options for the territory of the EU as set out in the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP) (European Commission, 1999) and the Sustainable Development Strategy for Ireland (1997). The ESDP outlines policy aims in relation to promoting the control of the physical expansion of towns and cities, promoting a mix of functions and social groups and aiding better accessibility by different means of transport which are not only effective but also environmentally friendly.

Principles

- Mix of Land Uses and Promotion of Sustainable Travel
- Best Use of Existing and Proposed Infrastructure
- Building on the Physical and Cultural Heritage

Thereby Improving the Quality of Life for All.

The principles were used to assess all potential development scenarios for the town detailed in Section 7.

Mix of Land Uses and the Promotion of Sustainable Travel

An important element of integrating transport and land use planning is to ensure that the spatial organisation of land use activities is linked to transport networks in an efficient and sustainable manner. Through the illustration of best practice the public can see that integrated land use and transport planning can have a positive effect on their quality of life, leading to greater public support for the proposed measures. Important aspects when building these areas are attractiveness and liveability mixed with high density and comprehensive infrastructure. A mix of housing, working, education and leisure in town centres maximises the use of land that is accessible by all modes of transport but particularly that of public transport, walking and cycling. The provision of a mix of functions within the core urban area will serve to reduce trip demand and distance concentrating various functions within the most accessible zones.

Making Best Use of Existing Infrastructure

It is important to maximise the use of existing infrastructure for example existing roads, public transport, walking cycling water and drainage networks. Such infrastructure has been provided at substantial cost in both financial and environmental terms and we must make best use of that investment.

Building on the Physical and Cultural Heritage

With the growing acknowledgement nationally of the key role and importance of heritage the Framework aims to increase awareness and appreciation of Athy's manmade, cultural and natural heritage leading to actions which promote its protection, enhancement and vitality. Heritage is there to be enjoyed and can be used to create an economic return. It is a valuable indicator when examining the quality of life and it is thereby crucial to focus on ways to bring awareness and enjoyment of the town's heritage for the benefit of all.

5.2 Objectives

The Objectives as set out below are derived from the Guiding Principles and indicate what in broad terms the viable Framework aims to achieve over its lifetime, and are used to measure the effectiveness of the various development scenarios for the town as stated in Section 8, thereby assisting with setting directions for the town in a way, which helps frame the parameters for follow-on actions. The objectives are consistent with the overall Study Area review undertaken in Sections 2, 3 and 4 and are measurable in both qualitative and quantitative terms. It was important that objectives were set out to be both measurable and achievable.

Objective 1 Consolidate growth within the Athy Urban Area allowing for natural increases in population in the Study Hinterland Area.

This objective accords with the overall strategy as outlined in the Strategic Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area, which requires the consolidation of future growth into a limited number of locations, where adequate transport infrastructure can be provided. Outside these 'development centres', in the surrounding hinterland area, development will be limited to meeting local needs.

Key Considerations:

- Relative population growth between urban area and the hinterland
- Re-development of under-utilised land within the existing built environment

Objective 2 Develop a compact urban form within Athy.

A compact urban form promotes, in contrast to conventional forms of development, the efficient use of land and re-use of land, as well as the efficient use of existing infrastructure. It discourages urban sprawl at low densities, which consumes greenfield sites on the edge of the urban area, is expensive to develop due to infrastructure costs and is located away from existing communities and existing infrastructure. Compact development has been widely recognised as more supportive of resource conservation goals, including water quality protection and flood

mitigation because inter alia it is more efficient in reducing impervious coverage of streets, driveways and parking lots.

This Study will attempt to concentrate higher-density uses on available sites within the town centre. Any uses that cannot be accommodated here will be provided for on land that is readily accessible to the town centre and consolidates development within the urban area of Athy. It is important to note that high-density does not necessarily mean high-rise development, but a high-quality mixed-use development of the town where the different uses are easily accessible and intermixed with high-quality urban open space.

Key Considerations:

- Re-use of under-utilised land
- Scale of green-field development on the fringes of the urban area
- Mix of land uses
- Consolidation of town centre
- Reinforcement of sense of place and character for the town
- Supporting integrity and vitality of the community at large
- Conservation of resources

Objective 3 Create opportunities for a range of housing types and densities.

By providing an adequate supply of accessible zoned land for housing, it will be possible for different house types to develop, thereby increasing vitality and enhancing social and economic sustainability. The development of housing at higher densities than currently exists, required by the Residential Density Guidelines, will offer a greater range of dwelling types, and not just semidetached houses, which currently dominate new housing schemes. This will correspond to apparent demographic changes towards smaller household sizes.

Key Considerations:

- Residential densities
- Supporting integrity and vitality of the local residential communities
- Reinforcing a sense of place

Objective 4 Develop safe slow mode linkages between residential areas and railway station.

This objective aims to achieve a comprehensive slow mode network linking residential areas to the rail station. The objective is consistent with the policies outlined in the DTO's Platform for Change and the Strategic Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area

Key Considerations:

- Walking distances to railway station
- Deliverability of slow mode routes

Objective 5 Consolidate commercial and retail development in the existing town centre.

As the residential population of Athy grows, commercial and retail provisions have to develop to serve the increasingly large population and hinterland. For a town of the scale of Athy additional facilities are most sustainably located in or adjacent to the town centre. This is fundamental for the consolidation and revitalisation of the town centre, which is the main commercial centre of Athy and also a potential key tourist attraction. The

reinforcement of the town centre will vitally contribute to the character of the town and provide one of the crucial elements of identification for residents and visitors alike. Developing new facilities in the town centre will also reduce the number of trips necessary within the town centre itself and encourage movement by slow modes.

Key Considerations:

- Location of future commercial and retail facilities
- Location of residential areas in relation to the town centre

Objective 6 Locate high-density employment opportunities in appropriate locations with respect to residential areas and public transport nodes.

Recent years have seen a change in employment trends with regards to the distance people are prepared to travel to work and the frequency at which they seek new employment opportunities. This transformation in employment behaviour has led to a change in the relationship between where people choose to live and their place of work. In order to develop the town towards its optimal level of self-sufficiency coupled with the opportunity to attract inward movement of workers high-density employment opportunities should be located in appropriate locations with respect to residential areas and public transport nodes.

Key Considerations:

- Proximity of high density employment to potential labour supply sources

Objective 7 Locate schools in areas that will be serviced by safe walking and cycling routes.

An important part of the route planning and design process for the town is the ability to provide safe routes to schools for children and youths. Safe routes to schools are important for both pupils and the local residents as they not only improve the safety of children but also help reduce traffic congestion and pollution in the local environment. Walking or cycling to school benefits children’s health and helps them become more confident and independent. Furthermore, in developing a culture of walking and cycling among young people the foundations are set for the next generation of working people and parents to consider walking and cycling as second nature. A pattern of travel behaviour can therefore be established that will result in sustainable transport choice into the future.

Key Considerations:

- Accessibility of schools from their catchment areas
- Safety of school children and accompanying adults
- Promotion of travel by slow modes

Objective 8 Locate low-density employment opportunities adjacent to strategic internal distributor and national road links.

Well-located employment can play an important role in addressing the complexity of providing sustainable travel patterns and minimising the impact of the private car and heavy goods vehicles where alternative modes cannot be incorporated. Therefore lower density employment areas should be located close to existing distributor road links on the edge of town sites where the impact is less pronounced, especially in terms of mixing goods traffic with school travel and other vulnerable road users and where direct access to the strategic /national road network is possible.

Key Considerations:

- Minimising car and HGV travel in the town centre
- Optimising Athy’s location adjacent to the national road network

Objective 9 Maximise slow mode penetration to the town centre and bus stops.

Key to the sustainable principles of the Study is the accessibility of the town centre by walking and cycling. In order to encourage slow mode travel, a comprehensive pedestrian and cycle network needs to be developed linking residential areas to the major trip attractions. Throughout the route planning process, a number of important criteria need to be considered if the full potential of the route is to be achieved. In following these criteria, the route should be:

Key Considerations:

- Connected: linking the places where people want to go
- Convenient: direct routes should follow desire lines, with easy to use crossings
- Comfortable: good quality footways with adequate widths and free of obstructions
- Convivial: attractive, well lit and safe, with a variety along the route
- Conspicuous: easy to follow routes with helpful signage

Objective 10 Minimise car access and through traffic through the town through the utilisation of key road links.

A fundamental objective of the Framework is the minimisation of the number of through car trips and the incorporation of slow modes and public transport within the town centre. The completion of the Kildare Bypass and the N9 realignment will reduce the volume of through traffic in the town. In addition, the inner and outer relief roads together with demand management throughout the town offer the opportunity to allow for reallocation of road space to cyclists and buses and the possibility of pedestrianisation. Reducing the number of private cars and improving conditions for non-motorised users is an integral objective and should clearly be pursued. Conversely, road links must be designated as primary and district distributor roads to cater for car travel in the environs of the town.

Key Considerations:

- Hierarchy of road network
- Facilitation and removal of through traffic

Objective 11 Create opportunities for cultural, social, community and passive and active leisure activities that maximise the potential of the existing heritage and amenity.

The physical and cultural heritage is one of Athy's major assets. It provides identification for residents and attracts visitors to the town. Urban research has revealed that "soft" factors like a rich heritage, cultural, social, community and recreational facilities and a clean environment are as important as "hard" factors like housing and employment in the decision of people and investors alike to choose a particular town for living or for investing. Providing wide ranging opportunities for active and passive recreation would also encourage visitors to stay longer in Athy than just for a day- or half-day trip. The importance and potential of Athy's waterways for tourism and general recreation cannot be over-emphasised in the context of this objective.

Key Considerations:

- Location of facilities in relation to town centre
- Supporting integrity and vitality of local community
- Development of the waterway amenities
- Development of the built environment and heritage

Objective 12 Facilitate access to and from Athy from the hinterland and Dublin for all trip purposes by all modes

Realignment of the N9 and the provision of improved public transport facilities, providing services to nearby centres and the Greater Dublin Area will allow for further opportunities for access to and from the town. The establishment of the Rural Transport Initiative has facilitated a connection from the hinterland and nearby centres such as Monasterevin and Kildare into the town.

Key Considerations:

- Key trip attractor locations outside of town
- Key trip attractor locations within the town
- Provision of town centre car parks
- Location of public transport nodes within the town
- Bus routing within town and routes between town and other settlements