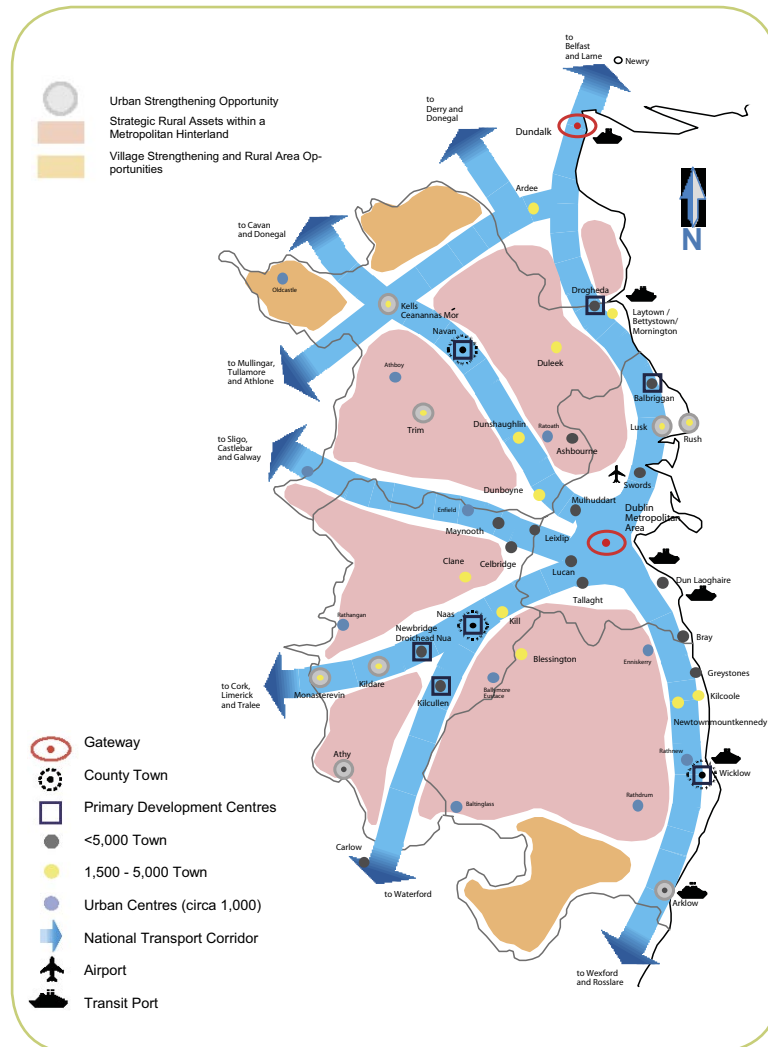


Figure 2.1, NSS: Dublin and Mid-East Region Settlement Strategy



National Spatial Strategy: Athy in the context of the Dublin and Mid-East Regional Authority

Athy is located on the southwestern periphery of the Dublin and Mid-East region. These regions are identified for consolidation. As an area that is “consolidating” the key considerations for the Greater Dublin Area include:

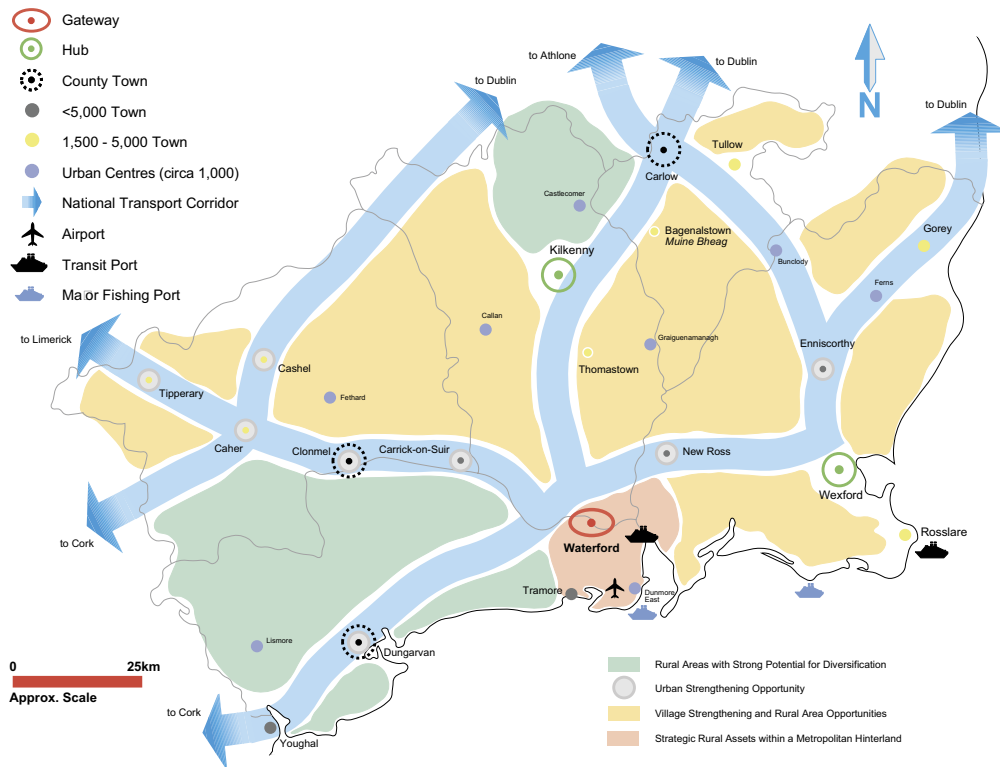
- Effective integration of land use and transportation policy within the spatial structure of the Greater Dublin Area,
- Facilitating ease of movement of people and goods within the Greater Dublin Area,
- Maintaining a high quality environment within the area,
- Clarifying the role of other urban areas within and at or near the edges of the Greater Dublin Area.

National Spatial Strategy: Athy in the context of the Southeastern Region

Due to Athy’s location on the periphery of the Dublin and Mid-East region and the Southeastern region the town needs to fulfil a dual role within the framework of the National Spatial Strategy.

The southeastern region is identified for reinforcing. Therefore, Athy has to meet a “consolidating” and a “reinforcing” role. The closest town to Athy in the southeastern region is Carlow, this town is designated as a County Town, which Athy has strong links with.

Figure 2.2, NSS: Southeastern Region Settlement Strategy



2.2 Part B: Regional Planning Policy

2.2.1 Regional Planning Guidelines 2004 – 2016

The Regional Planning Guidelines are a long-term strategic planning framework for the development of the Greater Dublin Area up to 2016 in line with recommendations as set out in the NSS. Building upon the framework set out in Strategic Planning Guidelines (SPG's) the Regional Planning Guidelines (RPG's) are based on two development policy areas

- (a) Metropolitan Consolidation Towns
- (b) Hinterland Area

The key principle of the strategy involves consolidating the growth of the Metropolitan Area and concentrating future development of the Hinterland Area into a number of selected major centres to be developed as self-sustaining towns.

The Regional Planning Guidelines also builds upon the SPG strategy of identifying clusters of settlements. The SPG's identified Primary Development Centres and Secondary Development Centres. Whereas, the Regional Planning Guidelines identify Primary Dynamic Clusters and Secondary Dynamic Clusters, respectively. The designation of such clusters identifies the relationship between constituent towns, with the aim that these towns build upon such dynamism and become self-sufficient critical mass of towns. In the Regional Planning Guidelines such clusters can relate to differing urban settlements within a five-tier hierarchy. The five different categories of towns and villages are based on size and function, and are as follows:

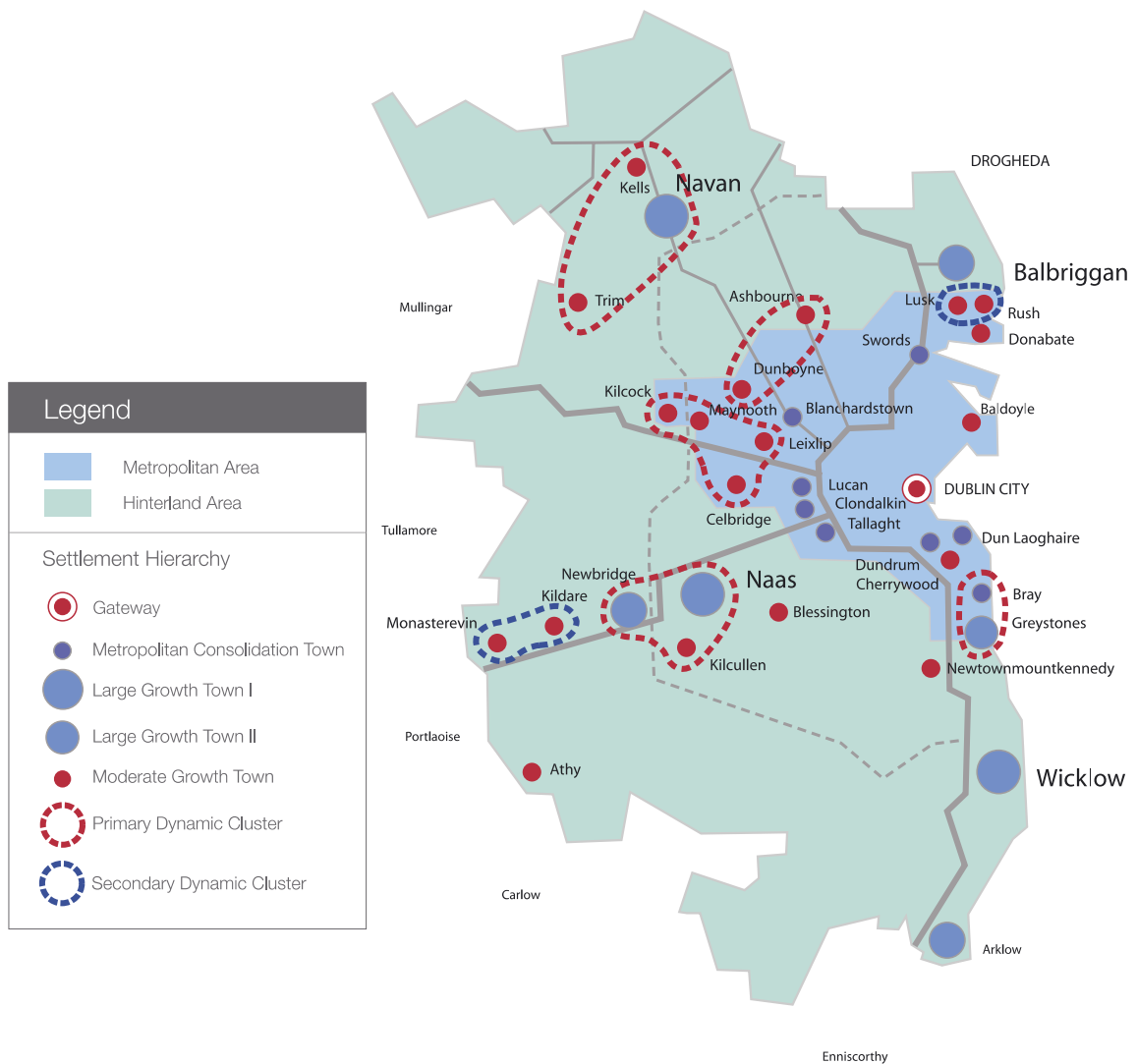
1. Metropolitan Consolidation Town – which will be the main growth areas within the Metropolitan Area
2. Large Growth Towns I & II
3. Moderate Growth Towns
4. Small Growth Towns
5. Villages

Athy in the Context of the Regional Planning Guidelines for the GDA

Athy is on the southwestern periphery of the GDA and is designated as a Moderate Growth Town in the Hinterland Area. This designation is synonymous with the category of County towns and towns with a population of over 5,000, as defined within the NSS. Moderate Growth Towns are given an indicative population range of between 5,000 to 15,000.

Throughout the GDA, areas of urban social deprivation have been designated as 'RAPID' areas. 'RAPID' is a state sponsored programme aimed at revitalising neglected areas through strategic planning to identify and prioritise new investment and development. The Regional Planning Guidelines have acknowledged the RAPID status of Athy by identifying specific actions such as the development of the N9 Kilcullen – Porterstown route including the Athy link road and the N78 Athy Relief Street. These actions would prioritise the town's economic development.

Figure 2.3, Regional Planning Guidelines Settlement Strategy



Source: Regional Planning Guidelines for the GDA 2004 - 2016

2.2.2 *South-East Regional Authority Regional Planning Guidelines*

The Southeast Regional Authority prepared a planning framework for the period 2004 - 2016 which is designed to achieve a better spatial balance of social, economic and physical development throughout the region.

The strategy defines development roles for different categories of urban centres. In defining development roles for the different types of urban centres, a typology has been developed that describes the functioning of the urban hierarchy and the issues that need to be addressed to achieve the Regional Development Strategy. The different categories of towns in the Southeast Regional Guidelines are:

- Gateway
- County Town
- District Towns
- Hub
- Large Towns

2.2.3 *The Dublin Transportation Strategy: A Platform for Change 2000 – 2016*

The DTO Strategy is the planning framework for the future development of the transportation network in the Greater Dublin Area. This strategy consists of two interdependent elements:

- Demand Management, which seeks to reduce the growth in travel while maintaining economic progress, and this is designed to encourage a transfer of trips from the private car to sustainable modes of transport such as public transport, cycling and walking.
- Infrastructure and Service Improvements, including a substantial expansion of the public transport network, some strategic road construction and traffic management.

In particular, the "Platform for Change" document explicitly states that policies to be adopted in the moderate growth towns such as Athy should be consistent with the objective of achieving self-sufficiency, having particular regard to the "Guidance on Complementary Landuse policies" as set out in Chapter 5 of the aforementioned document.

2.2.4 *Sustainable Development – A Strategy for Ireland (1997)*

Sustainable Development is defined as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs". While sustainability cannot be achieved solely through the planning process, the land use policies contained within this Plan are central to achieving, as far as is practicable in planning terms, the principles of sustainability,

2.3 Part C: Local Planning Policy

2.3.1 *Kildare County Development Plan, Kildare County Council 2005 – 2011*

The County Development Plan 2005 was adopted by Kildare County Council on the 18th May 2005 and became effective from 15th June 2005. This Plan was drafted having regard to the wider planning policy framework including the National Spatial Strategy, the Regional Planning Guidelines 2004 –2016 and Government Guidelines. It sets out the context for future development in the County, development objectives, settlement hierarchy, development control standards and policies for the protection of the built and natural environment of County Kildare.

The Kildare County Development Plan 2005-2011 establishes a hierarchical settlement pattern within the County, which was prepared having regard to the RPG settlement strategy. Athy has been identified as a “Moderate Town” with a population range of 5,000 – 15,000. The Plan also sets out indicative construction targets across the County for the period 2002 – 2011, which underscores the Regional Planning Guidelines for the GDA and is supported in this Plan. The difference in terminology for Athy between the 1999 County Development Plan and the Regional Planning Guidelines 2004 should not be construed as a dilution on the focus and strategic importance of Athy as a growth centre within the County Development Plan 2005-2011’.

Table 1.1, County Kildare Settlement Hierarchy

Type of Settlement	Metropolitan	Hinterland Area
Large Towns		
Metropolitan Consolidation Towns	None in Kildare	
Large Growth town type (1) “Satellite Towns” c.25,000 – 40,000	N/A	Naas [part of primary dynamic cluster]
Large Growth town type (2) 15,000 – 25,000	Celbridge Maynooth Leixlip [all part of primary dynamic cluster]	Newbridge [part of primary dynamic cluster]
Moderate Towns > 5,000 – 15,000	Kilcock [part of primary dynamic cluster]	Kilcullen [part of primary dynamic cluster] Kildare [part of secondary dynamic cluster] Monasterevin [part of secondary dynamic cluster] Athy
Small Towns 1,500 – 5,000	N/A	Clane Kill Prosperous Rathangan Sallins
Villages/Settlements	These can be viewed in the Kildare County Development Plan 2005-2011	

Source: Kildare County Development Plan 2005-2011

2.3.2 Kildare 2012: An Economic, Social and Cultural Strategy

The County Development Board Strategy “Kildare 2012 – An Economic, Social and Cultural Strategy” provides a framework for integrating public services at local level and facilitates closer partnership between local authorities and local development bodies.

The Strategy provides a vision for the County to 2012 where “Kildare will be the first choice as a place to live, learn, work, visit and do business.” The strategy focuses on key themes, which are vital to ensuring this vision. These are:

- Transport and Communications
- Housing and physical infrastructure,
- Community needs,
- Economic progress, skills and regional development,
- Agriculture, farming and rural development,
- Environmental issues,
- Education, training and capacity building,
- A sense of place.

The themes for achieving this vision and their subsequent goals and objectives are reflected throughout this Plan.

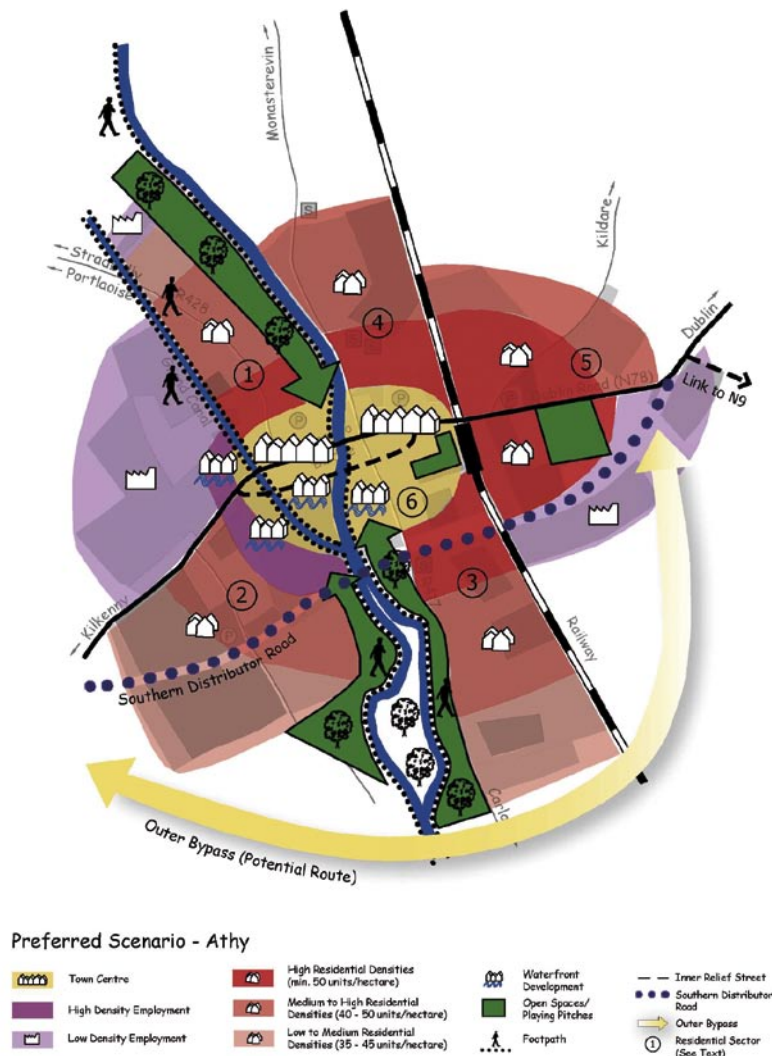
2.3.3 *Athy Rapid Area Action Plan, 2003*

RAPID (Revitalising Areas through Planning, Investment and Development) is a governmental initiative aimed at improving the quality of life of disadvantaged communities throughout Ireland. Some 45 individual areas have been identified for inclusion in the RAPID Programme with Athy town having been appointed in 2001. The Rapid Area Action Plan, 2003 sets out vision for the town "To promote social inclusion and significantly improve the quality of life and the opportunities available to people in Athy." For the town of Athy, the RAPID process involves the main statutory and local development agencies working together with the local community to co-ordinate and improve services through strategic and joint planning, targeting of existing and additional investment and community participation. The RAPID Plan reflects the agreed priorities set by the community and statutory agencies, and provides the basis for the prioritisation of investment by statutory bodies. The objectives of the Plan are reflected in the policies contained within this Plan.

2.3.4 *Athy Integrated Framework Plan for Land Use and Transportation 2004*

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 Strategic Planning Guidelines. The purpose of this Integrated Framework Plan is to integrate the strategic planning of land use and transport up to 2016 and beyond and will inform future Development Plans for the town. It sets down the principles for future development, guiding the level, scale and location of future development within the wider area of Athy, ensuring a quality living environment.

Figure 2.4, Athy Integrated Framework Plan for Land Use and Transportation Preferred Scenario



2.4 Population

Athy Urban district comprises three Electoral Divisions; Athy West Urban, Athy East Urban and Athy Rural (part).

Table 1.2 Population Change for Athy 1971 – 2002

	Year							Percentage Change		
	1971	1981	1986	1991	1996	2000	1981-1986	1986 - 1991	1991- 1996	1996- 2002
Athy U.D	4270	4920	4734	5204	5308	6058	-3.8	9.9	2.0	14.0

Source: Census of Population, 2002

The Athy Town Development Plan 2000 forecast a population of 13,900 by 2006. The results of the 2002 census indicated a population of 6,058 in Athy Town, an increase of 14.2% since 1996. This increase coincides with a period of unprecedented economic growth in Ireland and although Athy has not shared in this growth as extensively as other areas, there is evidence of a migration of Dublin based workers to the town to purchase affordable housing and have a better quality of life.

The Small Area Population Statistics (SAPS) as published by the CSO describe the challenge faced by Athy in providing a more sustainable and inclusive community. The River Barrow is an enormous natural asset, but marks a real and practical boundary across which the balanced economic, social and environmental development of the town must take place.

2.5 Housing Targets & Future Population

A total of 199 Hectares of land was zoned "New Residential" in the Athy Development Plan 2000. A detailed survey carried out in September 2004 revealed that 50 hectares of this land was built upon. A further 83.02 hectares (205 acres) was under construction or had a granted planning permission, which would equal approximately 1,700 units. It is envisaged that the development of this land would generate a population of between 9,500 and 11,000. In this plan there is a total of 195.68 hectares (483.53 acres) of land zoned New Residential. It is envisaged that the development of these lands would, if all were developed, generate an additional population of between 8,900 and 15,900, depending on average household size. This involves an over zoning factor to allow choice in the market and delivery of services.