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Meath County Council Athboy Town Centre Project

PART 8 Planning
Volume 1 - Particulars

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ATHBOY TOWN CENTRE PROJECT

Part 8 Planning: Volume 1 - Particulars

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1.0 INTRODUCTION AND DESCRIPTION

1.1 DESCRIPTION OF THE SCHEME

1.1.1 Background

TOBIN Consulting Engineers have been commissioned by Meath County Council to provide design consultancy services for the Athboy Town Centre Project. This report aims to outline the Design and Environmental Assessments that have been carried out for the Athboy Town Centre Project for Part 8 Planning. This project includes the provision of a bus stop facility to the NW of St. James Catholic Church including all ancillary highway works and Public Realm upgrade works up to the N51 Junction along with the relocation of bring bank facilities to the Council grounds at Coille Dios.

Athboy lies within easy reach of Navan, Trim and Kells, being located in the west of County Meath. As a relatively large urban area, it is important that Athboy maintains good transportation linkages to surrounding urban and rural areas, which is a key factor in attracting future economic and residential populations. The Main Street is recognised as a constrained route which caters for local and national road traffic. This traffic is a mixture of heavy goods vehicles (HGVs), bus and utility service vehicles, as well as regional and local car traffic. Traffic is observed as relatively significant and constant throughout the day, particularly at peak times.

The Athboy Town Centre Project has been in planning by Meath County Council and the Athboy community for the past number of years. Key areas have been identified for improvements through the published documents of Athboy written Statement, Athboy Local Area Plan, Athboy Public Realm Plan and the Walkability Audit. These improvements have been envisaged with the goal of linking all areas of the town by introducing better walking facilities, pedestrian focused street space, and designated & controlled parking areas.

The relocation of the existing bus stops on Main St., located to the NE of the intersection of Main- Street (N51) and Connaught St. has been identified in each report. The existing bus stops have been criticized for causing traffic backups on the main street. They also require passengers to make their way through parked cars in order to embark/disembark the service which is a significant safety issue. The existing operation has a negative effect on both motorist and pedestrian.

The introduction of a defined bus stop would eliminate these issues. It would create a designated area for all passengers to access the bus services in a safe and comfortable manner, which will encourage use of the service. It will also solve the issue of traffic congestion due to the bus stop, and create improved traffic flow through the town.

1.1.2 Nature of the Works

The proposed scheme gives the town of Athboy a designated bus stop in an area just off the Main Street which is easily accessible to both pedestrians and buses. The bus stop would have the capacity to park two buses at any one time and provide a safer and more accessible space for service users.

In addition to the provision of a designated bus stop facility the scheme will enhance the public space adjacent to St. James Catholic Church, through the development of new pedestrian facilities and an upgraded urban realm space. The church is a key religious place of worship in any Irish Town, generally with historical significance, as well as being a place of fostering a sense of community and spirit. The scheme is pedestrian focused to improve the sense of community but also introduces much needed structured layout for public transport, traffic and parking.



Figure 1-1: Existing and Proposed public transport arrangement. Google Map imagery © 2021

1.2 SCHEME OBJECTIVES AND DESIGN STRATEGIES

The Athboy Town Centre Project looks at moving the existing non-designated Bus Stops within Athboy off the N51 National Road. Traffic on the N51 reaches approx. 4800 AADT (Pre-Covid). The existing bus stop provision requires passengers to embark/disembark on the carriageways of the road given the lack of a pull in area and often prevents luggage operation for the buses. This scheme will improve safety for both motorists and vulnerable road users while reducing the congestion caused along the N51 during bus operating times.

The framing of objectives of the Athboy Town Centre Project has been undertaken in accordance with the guidance provided in the TII's Project Appraisal Guidelines PAG Unit 12 (Minor Projects). That document includes a recommendation that project objectives are established which fall under the criteria included in the Common Appraisal Framework, inter alia:

- Economy;
- Safety;
- Environment;
- Accessibility & Social Inclusion;
- Integration; and
- Physical Activity (where applicable).

On the basis of the deficiencies of the existing corridor as outlined above, and responding to the aspirations policy documentation, a series of defined SMART¹ objectives have been developed and are presented here.

1.2.1 Economic Objectives & Benefits

- To promote and enhance the sustainable economic growth of rural regions by improving the national road networks capacity and reducing journey times through the town of Athboy. Relocation of the Bus Stops will help improve access to local business as well as critical services by freeing up main street parking and helping to promote sustainable modes of transport such as walking and cycling and public transport use by providing a reliable & fully accessible designated bus stop with Real Time Information.

1.2.2 Safety Objectives & Benefits

- To improve the safety along the N51 for both motorists and, in particular, vulnerable road users by providing a designated bus stop facility and turning head offline which can be accessed fully from segregated footways.
- Athboy Main Street (N51) has had several accidents ranging in severity over a relatively small stretch of road. Nine minor, one serious, and one fatal accident were recorded from 2005 – 2015, four of these accidents involved pedestrians.
- A total of 3 collisions, including one fatal, one serious, and one minor collision have happened in the immediate vicinity of the existing bus stops, they have occurred over a 7-year period of 2005 to 2012. This data reflects that there are issues with the existing layout and that safety measures should be put in place.
- The existing layout of the bus stops force buses to stop in active traffic. Passengers embarking/disembarking from the bus must manoeuvre through a row of parked cars. The walkability audit highlighted that some residents do not use the service because of this issue, they feel like they do not have adequate time or space to access the service safely. Since the existing bus stops cannot pull up to the kerb this results in no wheelchair access.
- Any proposed solution must address the need to provide interconnection between private cars and the public transport system. There are a number of car parks across the road from the proposed bus stop. These car parks would be used for various reasons related to the bus service, such as drop off and collection points or as a “park n ride” system for people travelling into cities. There is no designated footpath on the South side with only one recently installed pedestrian crossing sited 150m from the N51 / Church View Street Junction to cater for the childcare facility, national school and church area.

1.2.3 Environmental Objectives & Benefits

- Reduce fossil fuel emissions from traffic congestion at this location.
- Minimise the visual impact of the existing infrastructure through urban planting and installation of drainage attenuation measures such as tree pits.

1.2.4 Accessibility and Social Inclusion Objectives & Benefits

The existing Athboy Town Centre does not currently provide any cycling infrastructure across the town for those who may currently be socially excluded, the following objective is also defined:

- To improve transport conditions for non-car-users along through Athboy through ensuring improved public transport reliability by improving journey times and road safety.

¹ S = Specific, M = Measurable, A = Attainable, R = Relevant and T = Timely

1.2.5 *Integration Objectives & Benefits*

- To support government plans and policies in relation to Public Transport and spatial development by providing effective transport linkages between Athboy, neighbouring communities and commuter links

1.2.6 *Physical Activity Objectives & Benefits*

- To encourage physical activity and exercise by providing services like bicycle parking areas in the immediate vicinity of the designated bus stop

1.3 PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS

This application is being made in accordance with the procedure outlined in Part XI, Section 179 of the Planning & Development Act, 2000 (as amended). Part 8 of the Planning and Development Regulations, 2001 (as amended), details the class of development that is prescribed for the purposes of Section 179 of the Act, and the relevant class of the proposed scheme is as follows:

- 80 (1) b “the construction of a new road or the widening or realignment of an existing road, where the length of the new road or of the widened or realigned portion of the existing road, as the case may be, would be – (ii) in the case of a road in any other area, 1 kilometre or more”, and
- 80 (1) k “any development other than those specified in paragraphs (a) to (j), the estimated cost of which exceeds €126,000, not being development consisting of the laying underground of sewers, mains, pipes or other apparatus”

Under Part 8 of the regulations, the Local Authority is required to make details of the proposed road development available for public inspection and comment and to prepare a report in relation to the proposal for consideration by the elected members of the local authority. This Part 8 Planning report contains particular information on the design and on the potential environmental impacts of the proposed scheme and will propose measures to avoid, reduce or remedy undesirable potential impacts as appropriate. It has been prepared in accordance with the information requirements of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended), and the Planning and Development Regulations, 2001 (as amended).

Following the publication in the press (Meath Chronicle dated 29th Jan 2022, see Appendix A), of the Council’s intention to submit this proposal to construct the above road improvement scheme, (in accordance with Part 8, Article 81 of the Planning and Development Regulations, (as amended), members of the Public and other interested Bodies may make a submission in writing. A copy of the Newspaper and Site Notices for the proposed development as required by the above Regulations is included in Appendix 1.

This Part 8 proposal is for the Athboy Town Centre project and is based on the preliminary design. The design considerations presented at the Non-Statutory Public Consultations have been taken into account as much as possible at this stage, along with consultation from Meath County Council Conservation officer Robert Miles on pre-planning requirements. Minor modifications may still occur at Detailed Design Stage. The following drawings, included in the Athboy Town Centre Project, Part 8 Planning Volume 2, should be read in conjunction with this document:



Table 1-1: Drawings included for the Part 8 Planning Submission

Drawing Number	Drawing Title
11084-2000(A&B)	Overall Site Location
11084-2001	Site Layout 1
11084-2002	Site Location Map 1
11084-2003 to 2005	Geometric Plan, Profiles and Cross Sections
11084-2006	Typical Cross Sections
11084-2007	Site Clearance
11084-2008	Fencing & Boundary Treatments (Proposed Accesses & Boundary Walls)
11084-2009 to 2010	Pavement Details
11084-2011	Drainage
11084-2012	Kerbing and Paved Areas
11084-2013	Signs & Lines
11084-2014 to 2016	Public Lighting
11084-2017	Landscaping
11084-2018	Bus Stop Detail
11084-2019	Car Park Detail
11084-2020	Site Layout 2
11084-2021	Site Location Map 2
11084-2022	Church Boundary Wall Update

In addition to the above drawings listed, Photomontages of the proposed visualisation of the scheme as appended to this report should also be read in conjunction with this document.

Following the end of the submission period, the Chief Executive of Meath County Council will prepare a Part 8 Report which will summarise all the details of the submissions received and the Council's responses to same and present this report to a meeting of the Kells Municipal District Councillors. After consideration, the District Councillors may accept the Chief Executive's report, with or without modifications, and if so, the proposed Athboy Town Centre Project will proceed. Alternatively, the District Councillors may reject the recommendation of the Chief Executive and in this case the proposed scheme will not proceed.

2.0 BACKGROUND & REASONS FOR THE SCHEME

2.1 NEED FOR SCHEME

The need for this scheme has been highlighted in the Athboy Local Area Plan, Athboy Walkability Audit, The Athboy Public Realm Plan, and the Meath County Development Plan 2013 - 2019 - Athboy written statement – “*To work in conjunction with National Transport Authority to provide bus stops and accompanying shelters in the town centre to serve all bus users*”.

The Main Street is recognised as a constrained route which caters for local and regional traffic. This traffic is a mixture of heavy goods vehicles (HGVs), bus and utility service vehicles, as well as regional and local car traffic. Traffic is observed as relatively significant and constant throughout the day, particularly at peak times. The current bus stop has many negative operational, safety and accessibility issues associated confirming the need for the scheme, these issues are listed again here for completeness:

- no designated bus bay (pull-in bay) along the Main Street (and a strategic national route) is blocked during bus stops leading to safety implications and significant delays;
- no facilities for less-abled bus users. Often passengers have to step off the footpath between parked cars to access board a bus. This is considerable deterrent to some potential bus users. This set up can be prohibitive also for users wishing to store/remove luggage from the compartments;
- no car parking facilities nearby meaning commuter cars occupy valuable Main St. parking spaces all day which could be better for short term parking for customers of Main Street businesses.
- no bus shelter, provision of real time information, bicycle parking or accessible facilities for wheelchair users or other less abled users to efficiently use the public transport facility.

The principal entrance routes to Athboy and Main Street are heavily trafficked and environmental improvements and traffic calming measures are required to facilitate improved townscape and environmental quality.

The Study Area selected as part of the need for this scheme has been identified as part of the Athboy Public Realm Process. This is following on from overwhelming negative submissions from a public consultation on previous proposal to relocate the bus stop on Main Street in 2016.

2.1.1 Existing Public Transport Routes and Facilities

Athboy is located in the ‘Kells Electoral Area’ towards the west of County Meath in close proximity to the border with County Westmeath. From a strategic regional context, Athboy is situated approximately 17km from Navan, 12km from Kells and 11km from Trim. It is located at the convergence of a number of National, Regional and Local Roads, specifically the N51 National Secondary Road, connecting Drogheda to Delvin, the R154 Regional Road connecting Clonee to Crossdoney, County Cavan via Trim and Oldcastle, the R164 Regional Road to the north of the town connecting it with Kells and Kingscourt, and a number of Local Roads connecting Athboy to surrounding towns and villages such as Ballivor, Clonmellon, Delvin, Dunderry, Kildalkey, Oldcastle and Rathcairn. These routes provide Athboy with efficient connections to the surrounding larger towns of Kells, Navan and Trim.

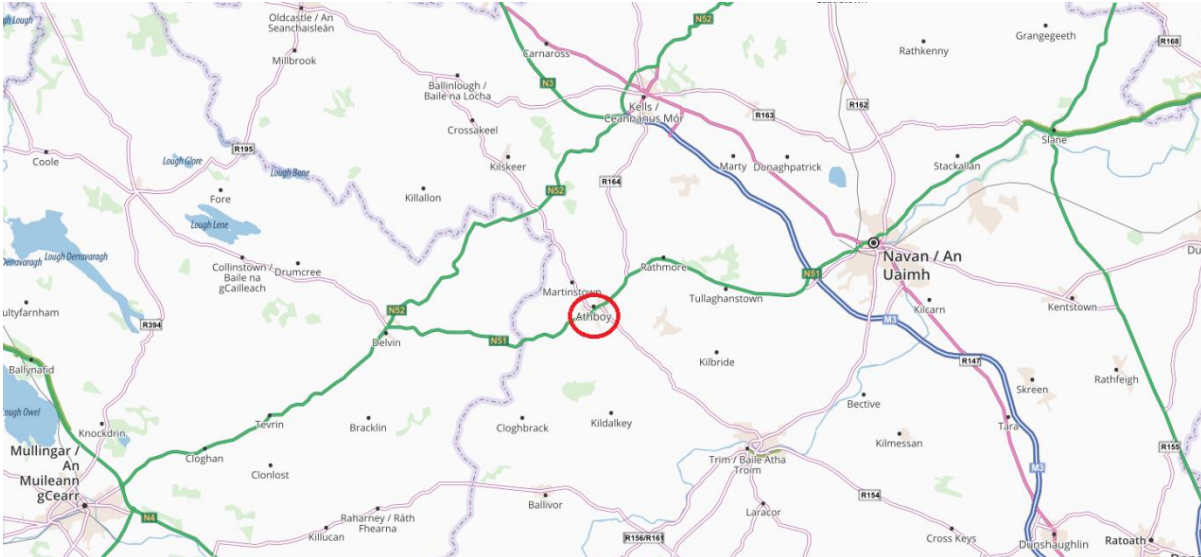


Figure 2-1: Map of road network and surrounding towns to Athboy. © viamichelin.ie

The existing bus service include:

- Bus Éireann – Route Numbers, 111, and 111X
 - ❖ Bus Éireann Route 111, Dublin - Batterstown - Athboy – Trim
 - 19 daily return services
 - ❖ Bus Éireann Route 111x, Dublin - Trim/Athboy - Delvin – Clonmellon
 - 2 daily return services
- Local Link (Flexibus)
 - ❖ Four return services daily
- Private School buses – 3 services twice daily



Figure 2-2: Existing Bus Stop Operation in Athboy with Public Transport required to stop on the main street adjacent to parked cars (©Independent.ie)



Figure 2-3: N51 Cross Section at the Existing Bus Stop Location (google imagery)

The Study Area identified for the provision of the designated bus stop facility as part of the Athboy Town Centre Project is a side street off the N51 situated along the surrounds of St. James' Catholic Church and O'Growney National School.

The existing streetscape has pedestrian facilities only on the Northern side of the road. The Southern side is bounded by uncontrolled parking and access to the carriageway giving rise to multiple vehicle movements onto the roadway and existing traffic using the parking areas as passing bays avoiding the designated carriageway and alignment of the road. This is of particular concern given the presence of the Church and National School and the likelihood these bring of pedestrians of all ages in the area.



Figure 2-4: Lack of Pedestrian facilities on the Southern Side of the Study Area leading to St. James' Catholic Church, O'Growney National School and Local Creche

The area contains two public parking zones. One with uncontrolled access as shown in Figure 2-4 above (and which is proposed to become the designated bus stop zone) and a further public car park split into 3 sections with individual single vehicle entry and exit points situated on a sub-standard 90degree horizontal alignment adjacent to recycling/ bring bank facilities as shown in Figures 2-5 and 2-6 below.



Figure 2-5: Sub-Standard Road Alignment and adjacent Recycling / Bring Bank Facilities



Figure 2-6: Public Car Park split into 3 separate zones

2.1.2 Collision investigation and analysis

Analysis of the collision history was carried out to determine the number and type of collisions along the regional roads in the vicinity of Athboy. An examination of the collision data from the Road Safety Authority database within the Study Area over a 12-year period of 2005 to 2016 inclusive.

Figure 3.1 below shows the extent of the collisions considered along the National and Regional roads running through the centre of Athboy adjacent to the proposed Study Area. These collisions have been classified as fatal, serious injury and minor injury collisions.

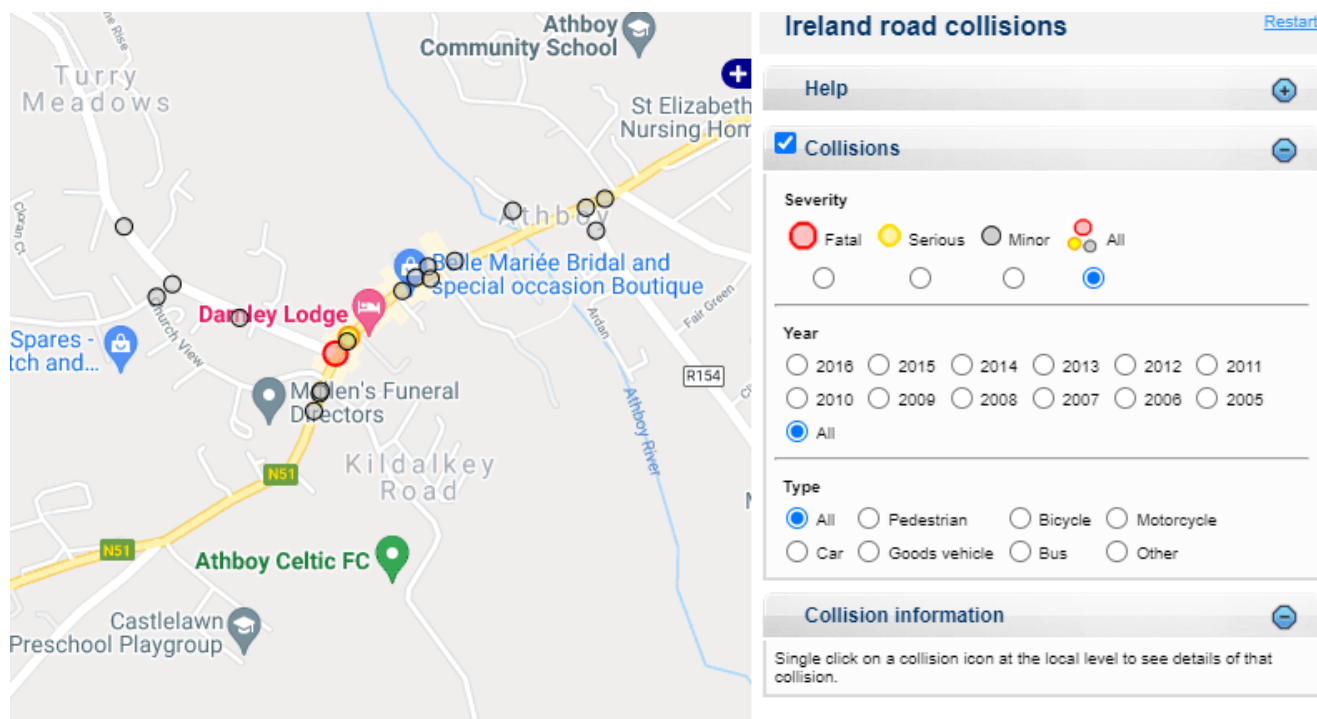


Figure 2-5: Collision data map. ©Road Safety Authority

The following Table 3.1 highlights the number and severity of collisions in and around the Athboy town centre area.

Table 2-1: Summary of Collisions in Study Area

	Fatal	Serious	Minor	Total No. of collisions on route
N51 Main Street	1	1	13	15
R154 Connaught Street			4	4

2.2 STRATEGIC FIT

The need for the Athboy town project has been identified in the following documents:

- Meath County Development Plan 2013-2019 - Athboy Written Statement
- Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027 - Draft
- Athboy Walkability Audit
- Athboy Local Area Plan 2009-2015
- Athboy Public Realm Strategy July 2021

<https://meathcountydevelopmentplan.files.wordpress.com/2011/01/athboy-written-statement.pdf>



<https://www.meath.ie/system/files/media/file-uploads/2019-05/Athboy%20%28Adopted%2020th%20Aug%2009%29.pdf>

<https://www.understandtogether.ie/Training-resources/Helpful-Resources/Publications/Guidance-and-Guidelines/Age-Friendly-Athboy-2020-.pdf>

The scope of works involved in the Athboy Town Centre Project are in accordance with the following national policies.

- Part Funding secured through the Department of rural and Community Developments 'Rural Regional Development Fund'
- The Athboy Town Centre Project is also in accordance with the NTA's Active Travel Investment Programme which aims to provide new Walking and Cycling Infrastructure. It is also in accordance with many of the aims and goals of the NTA Sustainable Mobility Policy

2.2.1 Meath County Council Development Plan 2013 - 2019

As part of the Meath County Council Development Plan 2013-2019, the Athboy written Statement includes the policies and objectives that are required for the development of the town. The Athboy Town Centre Project has addressed and incorporated the relevant proposed upgrades into the project, these include:

Movement and Access Policies

- MA POL 1 - To implement appropriate traffic management and environmental improvement measures throughout the town.
- MA POL 4 - To seek the provision of adequate bicycle parking facilities throughout the town and in all new residential developments.
- MA POL 6 - To facilitate the upgrading and the provision of the identified car parking spaces in the town as outlined in this Written Statement.
- MA POL 7 - To work in conjunction with National Transport Authority to provide bus stops and accompanying shelters in the town centre to serve all bus users.

Athboy Architectural Conservation Area Policies

- ACA POL 1 - To protect the character and appearance of the Athboy Architectural Conservation Area and existing architectural features

Movement and Access Objectives

- MA OBJ 2 - To initiate public footpath upgrades in the town centre area involving the use of textured surfacing and tactile paving in order to fully separate pedestrian and vehicular movements to provide a safer environment for pedestrians particularly along the Connaught Street, and the Delvin, Fraine, Kells/Navan, Kildalkey and Trim Roads
- MA OBJ 3 - To facilitate the provision of car parking improvements as outlined in the Athboy Parking Survey Report study, including:
 - To encourage short-term parking only along Main Street.
 - Limited public parking along Connaught Street
 - Prohibited public parking at O'Growney Street, and in the vicinity of the Civic Recycling facility, where this parking is currently observed on footpaths and prohibited areas.
- MA OBJ 4 - to provide adequate disabled car parking spaces at appropriate locations throughout the town
- MA OBJ 7 - To facilitate the upgrading and the provision of the identified footpaths and public lighting in the town as outlined in this Development Framework, particularly along the Connaught Street, and the Delvin, Fraine, Kells/Navan, Kildalkey and Trim Roads. All lighting proposals within 100m of a Natura 2000 site, or those deemed to have potential to result in adverse impacts, must undergo AA Screening.

Urban Design Policies

- UD POL 1 - To require all new developments in the Development Framework area to contribute to the creation of high quality functional and well-designed environments. To achieve this, new

development proposals in the town shall be required to consider and reflect the physical, social and environmental context of the town. Proposed uses shall be compatible with the surrounding areas and the established character of town.

2.2.2 Meath Adopted County Council Development Plan 2021 - 2027

As part of the draft Meath County Council Development Plan 2021-2027, the Athboy written Statement includes similar policies and objectives as the preceding Development Plan, the town development objectives include:

- ATH POL 1 - To consolidate and strengthen the town, through the redevelopment of backland, infill and brownfield lands based on the principles of sustainable community and the creation of a high-quality urban environment
- ATH OBJ 2 - To provide for appropriate mixed-use development at an appropriate scale which compliments the character of the town and which enhances local services and community facilities
- ATH OBJ 3 - To implement and ensure compliance with the Public Realm Plan for Athboy which provides for a themed strategy for the provision of street furniture, planting, traffic and parking, lighting, building colours, (local and tourist) signage and surface materials etc. within the town.
- ATH OBJ 4 - To require high quality design in all new developments.
- ATH OBJ 9 - To explore the potential to create a green infrastructure network by integrating the Athboy Heritage Trail into existing public open spaces and amenity areas.
- ATH OBJ 10 - To improve traffic circulation in the town by facilitating the development of bus pull in areas in conjunction with Bus Éireann.
- ATH OBJ 12 - To work with the National Transport Authority, Bus Éireann and other relevant organisations to improve the public transport connectivity from Athboy to the County Town and onto Regional and City Centres.

2.2.3 Age Friendly Athboy - Inclusivity in Athboy Report 2020

The Inclusivity in Athboy Report 2020 by Age Friendly Athboy identifies the existing issue with the bus stop provision and recommends a new facility be provided near the Church.

Bus Stop and Parking Zone

One of the major issues identified in Athboy was the lack of a dedicated pull in zone for buses using the town. Buses currently stop in the line of traffic, causing traffic disruption and potentially impacting on pedestrian safety.

Recommended actions:

- Develop a dedicated Age Friendly bus stop near the church to include pull in zone, bus shelter, seating, lighting and signage.
- Incorporate a bus turning zone in this new space.

Figure 2-6: Bus Stop Recommendations (Age Friendly Athboy - Inclusivity in Athboy Report 2020)

2.2.4 Athboy Public Realm Strategy 2021

The Athboy Public Realm Plan 2020 identifies the need to relocate the bus stop from its current location and identifies the western end of town as the preferred location. The plan has identified the chosen Study Area for the proposed bus stop facility which would also include a much-needed urban upgrade to the area of the town. - *“The Western end of Main Street and Athboy has been identified as a preferred position for the relocation of the bus stop. Proposals should also address other issues in this area such as the lack of provisions for pedestrian movement and undefined car parking”.*

The Plan recognizes existing issues within the Study Area such as the need for defined parking, introduction of green areas, and upgraded footpath facilities which would provide a better linkage with the western end of Athboy to the town centre.

2.2.5 Summary

The requirement for the Athboy town project is clearly outlined in the referenced documents and illustrate the project alignment with national, regional, and local levels. The area chosen is in accordance with the regional planning policies, including the “*Meath County Development plan 2013-2019*” and the refined Study Area to the area north of St. James Church on the street has been identified at a local level through the “*Age Friendly Athboy – Inclusivity in Athboy 2020*” and the “*Athboy Public Realm Strategy 2021*”;

3.0 DESIGN OF THE SCHEME

The proposed development has been designed in accordance with Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) Publications (Standards), (formally NRA Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB)) and the Department of Transport's Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (DMURS)

3.1 CONSIDERATION OF ALTERNATIVES

Option Selection in accordance with TII PMG-02043 was carried out to identify an emerging preferred option to bring to Part 8 planning. From 10 preliminary options, a total of 7 design options were passed through the preliminary assessment and brought forward for Non-Statutory Public Consultation and for a Stage 2 assessment. The options looked at included 'Do-Nothing' and 'Do-Something' approaches along with 7 design options within the Study Area.

All options were assessed under the criteria: Engineering, Environment & Economy. Each of the options not put forward for Stage 2 were rejected for various reasons, such as:

- Land Constraints
- Inability to provide a fully accessible bus stop outside the existing carriageway extents
- Public Consultation submissions
- Public Surveys on preferred location
- Junction Visibility issues
- Complicated Proposed Alignment / Junction Layouts
- Impact on local businesses operations.

The Stage 2 assessment is carried out in accordance with the TII Project Management Appraisal Guidelines for minor projects (€0.5 – €5m). This includes a Multi Criteria Analysis tool in line with the below documents:

- TII PE-PMG-02043: Project Manager's Manual for Minor National Road Projects
- TII PE-PMG-02037: Project Appraisal Guidelines for National Roads Unit 14.0 – Minor Projects (€0.5m to €5m)
- TII PE-PMG-02031: Project Appraisal Guidelines for National Roads Unit 7.0 - Multi Criteria Analysis

Additional planning constraints identified during the options selection phase, options 2, 4 and 6 were considered not likely to be progressed as the preferred emerging option.

Following the Multi-Criteria analysis under the headings of:

- Economy
- Safety
- Environment
- Accessibility & Social Inclusion
- Integration; and
- Physical Activity

Design Option 3 was identified as the emerging preferred option to move forward to detailed design. This Design Option was put before the Kells Municipal District on the 13/09/2021 with approval granted to progress the Design Option to Detailed Design and Environmental Evaluation and for Statutory Part 8 Planning. An extract of the appraisal matrix from the Options Selection Report is shown below identifying Design Option 3 as the preferred emerging option.

Table 3-1: Options Selection Appraisal Matrix

Route Option	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4	Option 5	Option 5A	Option 6
2.2.1 Economy	2	2	1	3	4	4	2
2.2.2 Safety	2	1	1	2	3	3	1
2.2.3 Environment	1	1	2	4	2	3	2
2.2.4 Accessibility & Social Inclusion	2	1	1	2	3	3	1
2.2.5 Integration	1	3	2	3	1	1	3
2.2.6 Physical Activity	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
OVERALL PROJECT APPRAISAL RANKING	=2	=2	1	=6	5	=6	4

3.2 PROPOSED DESIGN

Refer to the Overall Scheme Layout, General Arrangement, Cross Sections, Details and other drawings in Part 8 Planning Volume 2.

3.2.1 Alignment

The realigned route has been designed for proposed speed of 42kph in accordance with Table 9.3 DN-GEO-03031 and DMURS guidance. Given the presence of the Church, National School and Creche and extent of parking in the Study Area, 85th percentile Operational Speeds as per the Traffic Counts procured by TOBIN Consulting Engineers indicate an operational speed of 27.3kmh in the area

The stopping sight distance with the existing design is limited to 18.5m at the location of the bottle bank and 90degree bend. This has been improved to provide a minimum of 40m stopping sight distance throughout the scheme as per standards as outlined in DMURS table 4.2 for forward visibility on Bus Routes.

The cross-sectional width of the realigned proposed road is 6.5m. this is the recommended width for arterial and link streets set out in DMURS 4.4.1 Carriageway widths. The inclusion of a speed ramp (Figure 2-3) and limiting the cross-sectional width of the carriageway to 6.5m is aimed to contribute to traffic calming in the vicinity of the Church and School.

3.2.2 Footpaths and Shared Spaces

The existing Study Area is dominated by unstructured parking / pedestrian space giving rise to the potential for serious accidents occurring. The Design proposal aims to provide a segregated kerbed footpath of minimum width of 2.25m on both sides of the Study Area. In addition, the design introduces a shared public realm space providing a controlled access point to St. James' Catholic Church, local Undertakers, Public Car Park and the proposed Bus Stop facility. It provides a place for the community to utilise around times of School drop off and pick-ups and for church services.

3.2.3 Junctions and Access

The existing Study Area consists of uncontrolled access to the carriageway almost entirely on the Southern side as well as access points to the church, undertakers, public car park (x3) and rear access to



developments on the Northern side. The proposed design removes the undesignated access providing an individual access and exit point for the designated bus stop, a combined single access/egress point to the Church and Undertakers and single access/egress point to the public car park. These restrictions accessing the main road significantly reduce the potential conflict points between through traffic and turning traffic in the area. The proposal also re-sites the bring bank / recycling facility to a designated area at the council depot yard along Coille Dios where designated parking can be provided.

The proposed design also incorporates upgrades to the Study Area / N51 junction including a widened junction with overrun to cater for bus and HGV turning movements and a raised table to calm traffic. Reduced speeds associated with the raised table and implementation of road markings will facilitate easier movements between both roads in particular at flash traffic times such as school pick up and drop-offs and around church services. The proposed design removes the availability of perpendicular parking in the immediate vicinity of the junction also providing improved visibility splays and allows provision of pedestrian facilities on the Southern side.

3.2.4 Drainage

It is proposed that the existing drainage provision be retained where possible with new gullies provided to collect surface water at identified low points and around the shared space. It is proposed to introduce Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) in the form of tree pits in the shared area surrounding the Church and Car Park to help improve attenuation in the area and not increase the run-off rates to the downstream drainage systems.

3.2.5 Earthworks/Excavations

Earthworks and excavations are expected to be minimal on the scheme given the existing infrastructure in place. TOBIN have carried out a Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment given the potential for Archaeological findings or impact on any culturally significant areas during any excavations. TOBIN will work closely with Meath County Council Heritage and Conservation officers on method statements to ensure a final product in keeping with the character of the local surroundings.

3.2.6 Landscaping

Landscaping will be undertaken to ensure that the proposed development will successfully integrate into the existing environment without compromising the existing landscape character. Landscaping will aim to significantly improve the character of the area and appeal to the community.

3.2.7 Temporary Traffic Management

The alignment of the project is a combination of on-line and off-line works within the Study Area. Works to enable Construction of the scheme will have an impact on parking in the area to enable upgrade works and construction of the designated bus stop to take place. It is envisaged that Temporary Traffic Management can be put in place to minimise impact to traffic in the area but that some disruptions will be encountered to local traffic particularly in the vicinity of the N51 junction. It is not envisaged that the relocation of the bottle bank / bring back facilities to the Council Depot site along Coille Dios will result in any disruption to local traffic other than a potential road narrowing while works are being undertaken.

3.2.8 Public Utilities

Existing public utilities impacted by the proposed development will be diverted, altered or protected as necessary to accommodate the works. These include telecommunications and electricity supplies.

3.2.9 Construction Compound Site

The Construction of the Athboy Town Centre Project will require one main site compound for the duration of the Construction works. A suitable location for the Compound will be identified and chosen by Meath County Council within a close proximity to the site.

The compound will provide accommodation for the following:

- Site offices with canteen, toilet and washing facilities;
- Parking for staff, plant and machinery;
- Storage areas for construction materials; and
- Temporary working areas for prefabricating construction elements

The construction compound will be kept to the minimum size required to construct the Scheme. A Construction Management Plan (CMP) will be developed by the contractor which will detail access and egress arrangements for the duration of the construction of the scheme. The CMP will also detail measures to be put in place to reduce the risk of pollution incidents within the site compound and around the entire site. The CMP will also detail noise, dust and vibration measures to be undertaken by the Contractor to minimise impact to the area given the sensitive nature of St. James' Catholic Church and O'Growney National School and other businesses.

4.0 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT SCREENING

TOBIN ecologists have carried out an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Screening of the preferred option and bottle bank relocation against the criteria set out under Annexes I, II and III of the EU Directive 2011/92/EU, as amended by Directive 2014/52/EU (EIA Directive) and as transposed into Irish Law.

The EIA Screening report has been issued to Meath County Council for the project as competent Authority

The EIA Screening Report Concluded;

“The proposed development does not meet or exceed Schedule 5, Part 1 or Part 2 thresholds and criteria, and as such, EIA is not mandatory. In addition, the proposed road improvement scheme does not meet or exceed thresholds or criteria set out under Sections 50 or 51 of the Roads Act 1993, as amended. As such, EIA is not mandatory.”

The proposed development can be considered a sub-threshold project under Part 2 Class 10 (b) (iv). A screening determination is required for a sub-threshold development.

An EIA screening has been carried out considering the nature of the proposed development, its size and location having due regard to the criteria listed in Schedule 7 and the relevant information listed in Schedule 7A. It is concluded that the proposed development will not result in significant effects on the environment. Furthermore, the proposed development is anticipated to result in long term positive effects on public transport usage.”

A copy of the EIA Screening Report is included in Appendix C.

5.0 APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT SCREENING

TOBIN Ecologists have also carried out an Appropriate Assessment Screening on behalf of Meath County Council as the competent authority. Appropriate Assessment is an assessment of whether a plan or project, alone and/or in-combination with other plans or projects, may have significant effects on a European site, collectively known as the Natura 2000 network, in view of the site’s conservation objectives.

The project design has sought to, in as far as possible, avoid impacts on European sites. The AA Screening considers the final design. It determines if direct, indirect and/or in-combination effects could arise, or if there is uncertainty regarding potential effects.

The AA process is an assessment of the potential for likely significant effects or negative effects of a plan or project, alone and/or in-combination with other plans or projects, on the conservation objectives of a European site(s). The Natura 2000 network is made up of European sites including Special Protection Areas (SPAs), established under the EU Birds Directive (2009/147/EC) (more generally referred to as the ‘Birds Directive’) and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), established under the EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) (more generally referred to as the ‘Habitats Directive’). The Natura 2000 network helps provide for the protection and long-term survival of Europe’s most valuable and threatened species and habitats.

The Screening Stage of the AA process identifies any likely significant effects upon European sites from the proposed development alone or in-combination with other projects or plans. A series of questions are asked during the Screening Stage of the AA process to determine:

- whether a plan or project can be excluded from AA requirements because it is directly connected with or necessary to the management of a European site; and
- whether the project or plan will have a potentially significant effect on a European site, either alone or in-combination with other projects or plans, in view of the site’s conservation objectives or if residual uncertainty exists regarding potential impacts

The AA Screening Report concluded that;

“This assessment determined, using best scientific knowledge, that potential impacts associated with the proposed development, either alone or in-combination with other plans and projects, will not result in likely significant effects on any European site in view of their conservation objectives. A Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment is therefore not required.”

Enabling the project to be advanced without the requirement for a full AA screening to be carried out.

A copy of the EIA Screening Report is included in Appendix D

6.0 ENVIRONMENTAL APPRAISAL REPORT

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In lieu of an EIA, an Environmental Appraisal Report has been prepared for the scheme. The detailed report is included in Appendix 3 to this report.

The Environmental Appraisal Report has carried out a Constraints study for the proposed Study Area and relocated bottle bank / bring bank facility under the headings of:

- Ecological Constraints
- Groundwater and Surface Water Constraints
- Cultural Heritage Constraints

The Environmental Appraisal Report Concluded;

“Based on the above criteria, the relevant TOBIN specialists have carried out a preliminary assessment of the preferred new bus stop Study Area within Athboy Town centre and have not identified any significant planning or environmental issues that might impact on the submission of a planning application. It is assumed that a standalone AA Screening Assessment will accompany the application.

This conclusion is based on a preliminary overview of a number of high-level parameters and assumes that any additional constraints identified in the future will be assessed in greater detail, including the identification of potential impacts and best practice mitigation measures, where relevant.”

A copy of the EIA Screening Report is included in Appendix E

7.0 CULTURAL HERITAGE ASSESSMENT

Moore Group was commissioned to complete a cultural heritage impact assessment of the potential impact of a proposed town centre project at Athboy, Co. Meath. The report has found that *“the works will have no impact on the setting of the subject site”*

The report notes that the subject site is located partially within the zone of archaeological potential for the historic town of Athboy there remains a possibility that archaeological materials or features may be encountered. It is recommended that archaeological monitoring of engineering trial pits and trenches be carried out by a suitably qualified archaeologist.

The assessment found that the proposed works will directly impact a portion of the boundary wall of St. James Church, which is a protected structure. This protection extends to its curtilage. Structures of architectural heritage value are protected under Section 58 of the Planning and Development Act 2000. The Local Authority Conservation Officer and the DHLGH should be notified in writing prior to the proposed works commencing in order to determine whether approvals would be required, and any stipulations made should be followed. It is recommended that the removal and reinstatement of the

Church boundary wall be carried out in full consultation and with the approval of the Meath County Council Heritage Officer, the Meath County Council Archaeologist and the DHLGH

A copy of the Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment Report is included in Appendix F

8.0 LAND ACQUISITION AND ACCOMMODATION WORKS

Land Acquisition will be required in order to construct the proposed scheme. Positive outline discussions between Meath County Council and relevant landowners are currently being undertaken to obtain the minor amount of land needed to facilitate construction.

There is no requirement to acquire residential properties or other buildings as part of the scheme.

Accommodation works will be required along the route for any landowners directly impacted by the project. In Consultation with landowners, this includes paving works, rebuilding boundary walls, relocation of access points, ducting and kerbing works.

9.0 PUBLIC CONSULTATION

Plans and particulars of the proposed Athboy Town Centre Project development will be available for inspection for the duration of the inspection period as referenced in the Notices, included in Appendix 1

Appendix A: Notice of Proposed Development (Newspaper & Site)

Appendix B: Proposed Scheme Drawings

Appendix C: Environmental Impact Assessment Screening Report

Appendix D: Appropriate Assessment Screening Report

Appendix E: Environmental Appraisal Report

Appendix F: Cultural Heritage Assessment Report

Appendix G: DMURS Quality Audit Report

Appendix H: Visualisations of the Proposed Development