

ATHENRY LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN

Athenry Local Area Plan
2023 – 2029



Comhairle Chontae na Gaillimhe
Galway County Council



ATHENRY DRAFT LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN



ATHENRY LOCAL AREA PLAN 2023-2029

Athenry Draft Local Transport Plan

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.	INTRODUCTION	7
1.1	OVERVIEW OF LTP	7
1.2	STUDY METHODOLOGY	7
1.3	REPORT STRUCTURE	8
2.	POLICY CONTEXT	9
2.1	INTRODUCTION	9
2.2	POLICY REPORT	9
2.3	LOCAL POLICY AND PLANS FOR ATHENRY	10
2.4	SUMMARY	17
3.	BASELINE ASSESSMENT	18
3.1	DESCRIPTION OF STUDY AREA	18
3.2	DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE	21
3.3	ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS & PHYSICAL CONSTRAINTS	23
3.4	EXISTING TRAVEL PATTERNS	24
3.5	MODE SHARE	27
3.6	TRIP LENGTH DISTRIBUTION	29
3.7	ACCESS TO EDUCATION (ATOS TOOL)	30
3.8	EXISTING TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES	33
3.9	SWOT ASSESSMENT	42
4.	LTP OBJECTIVES & FUTURE DEMAND FOR TRAVEL	45
4.1	OVERVIEW	45
4.2	DEVELOPING THE OBJECTIVES AND KPIS	45
4.3	FUTURE DEMAND FOR TRAVEL	47
5.	OPTIONS DEVELOPMENT & ASSESSMENT PROCESS	48
5.1	OPTIONS DEVELOPMENT	48
5.2	OPTIONS ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY	51
5.3	SUMMARY	53
6.	EMERGING PREFERRED STRATEGY	54
6.1	OVERVIEW	54

6.2	WALKING & CYCLING	54
6.3	PUBLIC TRANSPORT	66
6.4	ROAD & TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT OPTIONS	67
6.5	SUPPORTING MEASURES	67
6.6	KPI ASSESSMENT	69
7.	MONITORING STRATEGY & LTP REVIEW	74
8.	SUMMARY	75
<hr/>		
8.1	OVERVIEW	75

APPENDIX A – POLICY REVIEW

APPENDIX B – BASELINE ASSESSMENT REPORT

APPENDIX C – OPTION SELECTION REPORT

APPENDIX D – ATOS RESULTS

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1-1: Athenry LTP Methodology	7
Figure 2-1: Reimagine Athenry Town Centre Vision	13
Figure 2-2: Market Square Option 5	14
Figure 2-3: Proposed Safe Routes to School Interventions for Scoil Chroí Naofa	16
Figure 2-4: Proposed Safe Routes to School Interventions for Athenry Boys National School	16
Figure 3-1: Athenry Population Density	19
Figure 3-2: Athenry Employment Density	20
Figure 3-3: Athenry Services and Amenities	21
Figure 3-4: POWSCAR Sector map	25
Figure 3-5: Employment Mode Share	27
Figure 3-6: Education Mode Share	28
Figure 3-7: Education Trip Length Distribution (Trips to work in Athenry), by Mode [POWSCAR, 2016]	29
Figure 3-8: Access to Primary Schools (Walk)	31
Figure 3-9: Access to Post Primary Schools (Walk)	31
Figure 3-10: Access to Primary Schools (Cycle)	32
Figure 3-11: Access to Post-Primary Schools (Cycle)	32
Figure 3-12: Highlighted Sections of Walking Infrastructure in Athenry	33
Figure 3-13: Permeability block in Athenry (700m walk for 50m crow fly distance)	34
Figure 3-14: Cycle Infrastructure in Athenry	35
Figure 3-15: Athenry Bus Network	37
Figure 3-16: Athenry Strategic Road Network	38
Figure 3-17: Athenry Town Centre Local Road Network	39
Figure 3-18: Zebra Crossings at Court Lane/Caheroyan Road junction	40
Figure 3-19: Main Railway Line Road Crossings in Athenry, Railway Overbridge (left) and Level Crossing (right)	40
Figure 3-20: Congestion During Pick-Up at Presentation College	41
Figure 4-1 Draft Athenry Land Use Zoning Map	47
Figure 5-1: NIFTI Modal and Intervention Hierarchy	48
Figure 5-2: Example of a Segregated Cycle Track	49
Figure 5-3: Options Assessment Methodology	51
Figure 6-1: Emerging Preferred Strategy Walking & Cycling Measures	55
Figure 6-2: Emerging Preferred Strategy Walking & Cycling Measures (Town Centre)	56
Figure 6-3: Proposed New Active Travel Bridge	57
Figure 6-4: Short/Medium Term Active Travel Connections Across the Rail Line – Athenry Town Centre	58
Figure 6-5: Town Centre Circulation and Active Travel Proposals	59
Figure 6-6: Market Square Proposals as part of the Athenry Public Realm Enhancement Scheme	59
Figure 6-7: Bridge Street Existing Layout	60
Figure 6-8: Church Street Existing Layout	60
Figure 6-9: North Gate Street Proposals	61
Figure 6-10: McDonald’s Lane Existing Layout	62
Figure 6-11: Abbey Row Existing Layout	62
Figure 6-12: Key Active Travel Links	63
Figure 6-13: Draft Athenry Land Use Zoning Map	65
Figure 6-14: Emerging Preferred Strategy Road Infrastructure Measures	68
Figure 6-15: ATOS Walk Access to Post-Primary Schools Results (existing vs LTP network)	71

LIST OF TABLES

Table 2-1: Background Planning and Policy Documents	9
Table 3-1: Athenry Population Structure by Age	22
Table 3-2: Athenry Employment Opportunities	22
Table 3-3: Trip Pattern Summary	24
Table 3-4: Destination of Athenry Origin Trips	25
Table 3-5: Origin of Athenry Destination Trips	25
Table 3-6: Athenry Rail Services	36
Table 3-7: Athenry Bus Routes	36
Table 3-8: SWOT Assessment of Athenry	43
Table 4-1: Athenry LTP Objectives and KPIs	46
Table 5-1: Interim MCA Scoring System	53
Table 6-1: Emerging Preferred Strategy Accessibility & Social Inclusion Outcomes	69
Table 6-2: Emerging Preferred Strategy Integration Outcomes	69
Table 6-3: Emerging Preferred Strategy Safety & Physical Activity Outcomes	70
Table 6-4: Emerging Preferred Strategy Environment Outcomes	72
Table 6-5: Emerging Preferred Strategy Economy Outcomes	72

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview of LTP

Galway County Council (GCC) has prepared a new Transport Study for the county alongside Local Transport Plans (LTPs) for the towns of Tuam and Ballinasloe. The Galway County Transport and Planning Study (GCTPS) has been adopted alongside the Galway County Development Plan (2022-2028).

SYSTRA Ltd (SYSTRA) has been commissioned by the Council to support the development of the GCTPS and the LTPs for Tuam and Ballinasloe. Through this work, SYSTRA has identified a range of sustainable transport measures and options suitable for the context of Galway County relating to the pedestrian, cycle, public transport and road networks. This LTP extends this process to the town of Athenry and seeks to determine how the transport needs of the town and its visitors can be met in a manner which reflects overarching national policy and builds upon the wider strategy set out in the GCTPS, as well as the Policy Objectives within the draft Athenry Local Area Plan 2023-2029 (LAP).

1.2 Study Methodology

The methodology for developing the Athenry LTP follows guidelines set out in TII/NTA’s ‘Area Based Transport Assessment (ABTA) Guidance Notes – December 2018’¹, as illustrated in Figure 1-1:

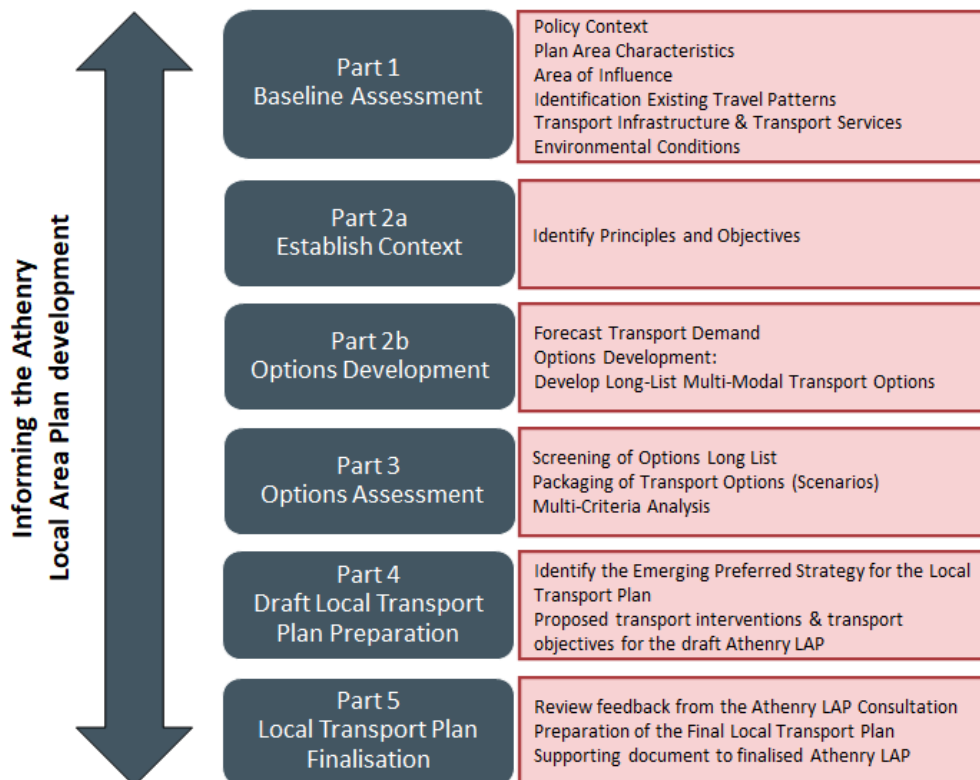


Figure 1-1: Athenry LTP Methodology

¹ Source: https://www.nationaltransport.ie/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Area_Based_Transport_Assessment_LTP.pdf

This report covers parts 1-4 of the ABTA methodology, and provides an overview of all tasks undertaken to derive the emerging preferred strategy for the Athenry Local Transport Plan (LTP). The preferred strategy has fed transport interventions and Policy Objectives into the draft Athenry LAP for public consultation. Feedback from the consultation process will then be used to update and inform the finalised LTP for the Athenry study area.

1.3 Report Structure

The Athenry LTP report is structured as follows:

- **Chapter 2** provides an overview of existing local policies, plans and guidelines that are relevant to the study area. Background international, national, regional and county policies, plans and guidance can be found in Appendix A: Galway Policy Context Report;
- **Chapter 3** gives an overview of the Baseline Assessment phase of the ATBA, including a summary of the area characteristics, existing travel patterns and transport conditions;
- **Chapter 4** examines the objectives for the LTP which have been determined from consideration of policy, transport baseline and demand information;
- **Chapter 5** outlines the process for developing and assessing the long-list of transport options to overcome existing constraints within the study area and assist in achieving the overall study objectives;
- **Chapter 6** sets out recommendations with regard to the combination of transport measures which the LTP will seek to promote and implement (with engagement and assistance from other parties such as the NTA where appropriate);
- **Chapter 7** outlines the monitoring strategy for this LTP; and
- **Chapter 8** provides a summary and conclusion to the report.

2. POLICY CONTEXT

2.1 Introduction

The following chapter provides an overview of relevant local polices and plans, along with relevant international and national policies, plans and guidance relevant to the Athenry Local Transport Plan. The development of the LTP will be shaped by and reflect these policies

2.2 Policy Report

A technical note comprising a policy review of international, national, regional, and county level policies and plans relevant to the studies in the Galway Transport Support Programme has been compiled. This note will be used as a reference for the LTP development. An overview of the policies, plans and guidance documents reviewed for this note is presented in the table below. More detail can be found in Appendix A: Galway Policy Context Report.

Table 2-1: Background Planning and Policy Documents

International Policy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ European Union Green Deal (European Commission, 2020) and Fit For 55 Package (European Commission, 2021) ○ UN Convention for the Rights of People with Disabilities (2019)
National Policy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Project Ireland 2040 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ National Planning Framework (NPF) ○ National Development Plan 2021-2030 (NDP) ○ National Investment Framework for Transport in Ireland 2021 (NIFTI) ○ Climate Action Plan 2023 (2022) ○ National Sustainable Mobility Policy (2022) ○ Our Journey Towards Vision Zero: Road Safety Strategy 2021 – 2030 ○ Five Cities Demand Management Study (2021) ○ National Disability Inclusion Strategy (NDIS) 2017-2021 ○ Local Link Rural Transport Programme Strategic Plan 2018 to 2022 ○ Transport – Climate Change Sectoral Adaption Plan (2019) ○ Spatial Planning and National Roads - Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2012) ○ Irish Rail Strategy 2027 (2021) ○ Travelling in a Woman’s Shoes (2020) ○ Get Ireland Walking ○ Healthy Ireland: A Framework for Improved Health and Wellbeing 2019 – 2025 (2019) ○ Healthy Ireland: National Physical Activity Plan (2019) ○ Sport Ireland Participation Plan 2021 – 2024 (2021) ○ Housing for All – a New Housing Plan for Ireland (2021)

National Guidance

- Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (DMURS) (2019)
- Permeability Best Practice Guide (2015)
- Universal Design Walkability Audit Tool for Roads and Streets
- National Cycle Manual
- Traffic Management Guidelines Manual (2019)
- Greenways Guidelines & Rural Cycleway Design (Offline and Greenways)
- TII/NTA Area Based Transport Assessment (ABTA) Guidance Notes (2018) & ABTA How to Guide, Pilot Methodology (2021)
- Safe to School: An Ideas Document for Safe Access to School (2020)
- NTA Safe Routes to School Design Guide (2022)

National Consultations

- Connecting Ireland Rural Mobility Plan
- TII National Cycle Network
- TII National Roads Strategy

Regional Policy

- Northern & Western Regional Assembly, Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) 2020-2032 (2020)
- Galway Transport Strategy (2017)
- N6 Galway City Ring Road Project
- Western Rail Corridor Financial and Economic Appraisal (2020)
- JASPERS Project Screening Note: Western Rail Corridor Phase 2/3 (2020)

County Policy and Plans

- Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028
- Galway County Transport and Planning Study (GCTPS) (2022)
- Galway County Walking & Cycling Strategy (2013)
- County Galway Climate Change Adaptation Strategy 2019 – 2024 (2019)
- Galway City and County Age Friendly Programme 2014 – 2019
- Galway County Integration & Diversity Strategy 2013- 2017

2.3 Local Policy and Plans for Athenry

2.3.1 Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028

Athenry is classified a town with strategic potential in the Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028 (GCDP 2022-2028). The development plan allocates population growth of 1,350 to Athenry over the lifetime of the plan, resulting in a target population of 5,795. This is an increase of 23% from the 2016 population stated in the CDP of 4,445.

Specific infrastructural and other Policy Objectives for Athenry in the CDP are:

- To promote the upgrade of the capacity of the Athlone – Athenry – Galway rail line including the provision of a dual track and increased service stops between Galway and Athlone;
- To support the opening of the Western Rail Corridor route from Athenry to Collooney serving Tuam and Claremorris;

- Supporting active modes of travel and the implementation of infrastructure that will assist in the creation of a low carbon economy;
- Safeguarding the function of the strategic road network, ensuring the capacities are not overloaded and to include future capacities in all national road network developments; and
- In line with the Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas Guidelines (2009), with consideration given to pre-existing settlements, to promote in towns and villages the development of serviced lands.

2.3.2 Draft Athenry Local Area Plan 2023-2029

The draft Athenry Local Area Plan 2023 – 2029 (LAP) states its vision as:

“Athenry, a strategic potential town, which will continue to grow as a sustainable, dynamic, and inclusive community while retaining its distinct medieval character. Continued investment will enhance Athenry’s potential to become an innovative growth hub within the Strategic Economic Corridor, while also providing a skilled workforce for the county. The town’s growth will sustainably take place, using the sequential approach, to ensure high levels of connectivity and permeability throughout Athenry, which will, in turn, facilitate the creation of a healthy, safe, and age-friendly community”

The draft LAP document lists a number of strategic aims relevant to the Local Transport Plan, including:

- To achieve compact growth resulting in a critical mass within the Plan Area;
- To support investment in regeneration and other town centre improvement works to maintain Athenry as an attractive place to live, work and visit; and
- To encourage the promotion of sustainable mobility, including walking and cycling, under the aspirations of the LTP and support the continued provision of investment in public transport.

Among the key consideration in developing the LAP was that of the transport network: “limited availability of public transport services to date has resulted in traffic congestion in the town centre, therefore addressing deficiencies in the existing pedestrian/cycling network, promoting walk/cycling and broader Smart Travel initiatives, along with reducing car dependency, are other key considerations in the LAP process”. A specific reference to Universal Access in the design of future transport infrastructure is included in the LAP document.

In reference to the town centre, Galway County Council has a vision for:

“The plan will support a vibrant town centre that is a pleasant place for people to live, work and visit. It must be accessible to all, including those with impaired mobility. Sustainable modes of transport will be prioritised in the town centre, with good connectivity to the nearby residential and employment locations”

Specifically in relation to transport and the role of the LTP, the draft LAP highlights the GCTPS prepared as part of the GCDP 2022-2028 before outlining the vision for Athenry’s transport system. The document outlines the need to balance space allocation and the need for “greater emphasis placed on infrastructure in relation to walking, using buggies, wheelchairs or cycling”. The rebalancing of the

transport system is to take place in tandem with land use planning, through the development within the existing town footprint.

Proposals within this draft Local Area Plan have been integrated into the Options Development phase of the Athenry LTP, ensuring that transport options are aligned to any future changes in land use – draft LAP Land Use Zoning map outlined in Figure 4-1. Likewise, transport recommendations from the Athenry LTP have been incorporated within the draft LAP.

2.3.3 Other Relevant Local Studies

2.3.3.1 Regenerating Athenry

Regenerating Athenry is a strategy developed by Galway County Council, which aims to position Athenry as a food innovation town as well as creating liveable streets, a connected and inclusive community and maximising the town’s tourism offering.

It includes a list of projects to achieve these aims. The major project is the Bia Innovator Campus being built outside Athenry, just west of the M6, including co-working kitchens and a range of other food business related resources. To support the campus there are a number of smaller projects including an all-weather canopy in the town park for food events or markets.

A number of public realm projects are proposed, including for Market Square and Cross Street, active travel projects, and multiple projects to develop and promote Athenry’s heritage offering. In addition, there are projects to repurpose existing town centre buildings and small, community building projects.

2.3.3.2 Reimagine Athenry

Reimagine Athenry is a community led vision for Athenry’s town and its environs commissioned by Athenry Community Council and funded through a LEADER grant. It was undertaken by Dutch firm DMAU. The project sets out a future framework for the town based on the ambitions of the community, developed during public consultations and an online survey – with the final report published in January 2020.

The plan states that the “key challenge for Athenry is how to maintain its accessibility while simultaneously improving the public realm for its residents and visitors.” The plan includes a number of proposed projects, including public realm works to pedestrianise the immediate Market Square areas, a linear park/walk along the Clarin River, a Town Wall walk and a housing development on Brady’s Field.

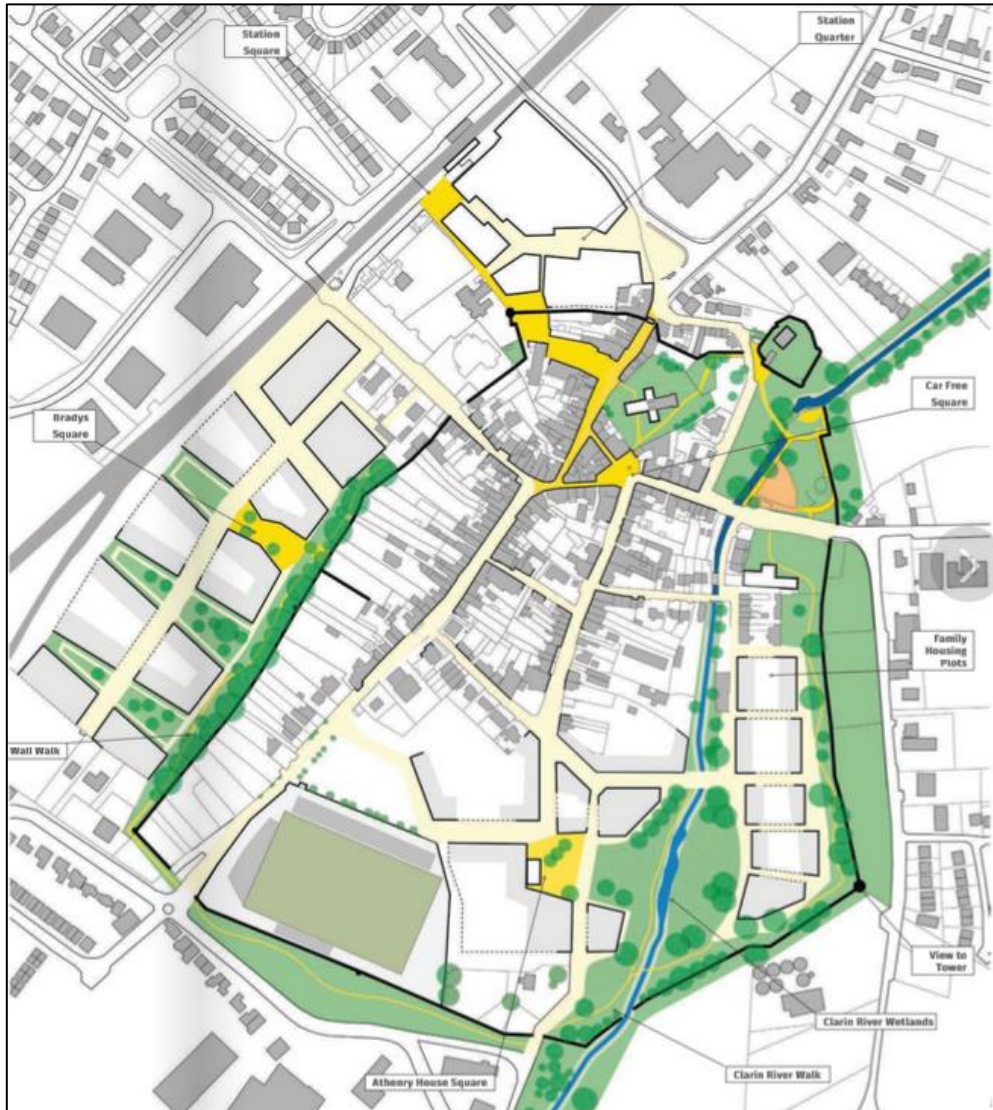


Figure 2-1: Reimagine Athenry Town Centre Vision

Further information on Reimagine Athenry can be found in the published document here: <https://www.studiodmau.com/reimagine-athenry>

2.3.3.3 Market Square Public Realm Enhancement Project

Galway County Council has embarked on a project to upgrade the public realm of Market Square, the focal point of Athenry town.

The scheme objectives are to:

- Reimagine the town centre by investing in quality of life and quality of experience;
- Improve the urban environment by creating public spaces for the community and visitors;
- Link the town centre heart to key tourist sites;
- Improve safety for vulnerable road users; and
- Improve the permeability of the town centre for greater pedestrian circulation.

Funding for the design stage of the project was secured through the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund. An options assessment process resulted in five shortlisted options presented for public consultation, ranging in ambition from maintenance of the parking bays and footpaths to pedestrianisation of the entire square as well as Davis Street and Burkes Lane. Various options for levels of parking and pedestrianisation of either Davis Street or Burkes Lane were included.



Figure 2-2: Market Square Option 5

Option 5 was identified as the emerging preferred option and is currently at preliminary design stage and scheduled for the commencement of Part 8 planning application approvals in the near future. Under this Option, Burkes Lane would be pedestrianised, parking on the square would be removed, bar a drop-off/pick-up point and a pedestrian plaza created on Market Square.

2.3.3.4 Cross Street Proposals

Proposals to upgrade Cross Street are also in preparation for a Part 8 application. It is planned to align the design with the Market Square proposals. The current design option involves the expansion of the northern footpath through narrowing of the vehicular carriageway and removal of some on-street parking spaces.

2.3.3.5 Athenry Urban Improvement Proposals

Cunnane Stratton Reynolds (CSR) Landscape Architects & Town Planners were appointed by Galway County Council to undertake a review of Athenry Town following an allocation of some funding received intended for small to medium scale urban realm improvement projects.

Interventions that largely maintained the existing street layout but with upgraded public realm and materials were recommended for Old Church Street, Market Square, North Gate Street, Tuam Road, Athenry Castle, Community Park, Cross Street and Backlawn Car Park. While these projects would improve the public realm in Athenry, they would have minimal effect on the transport network. The current proposals for Market Square and Cross Street go further in reducing car parking and reallocating space to pedestrians and urban realm improvements.

2.3.3.6 Safe Routes to School Draft Delivery Plan

A draft outline delivery plan for Safe Routes to School (SRTS) interventions in Athenry was developed by the SRTS team in An Taisce during 2022, in partnership with the schools, the NTA and Galway County Council. Two schools are included in the plan: Scoil Chroí Naofa and Athenry Boys National School.

The plans contain concept designs of interventions to improve infrastructure both directly outside and on the routes to the schools, with the aim of increasing the number of children who walk, cycle or scoot to school. The proposed interventions will require further work including detailed design, and input from stakeholders such as landowners and the local community. Some interventions may require planning permission.

Proposed interventions for Scoil Chroí Naofa include an improved walkway through the school campus, front of school School Zone treatment on Court Lane and Church Street, as well as a junction upgrade on Tuam Road and the provision of new pedestrian crossings.

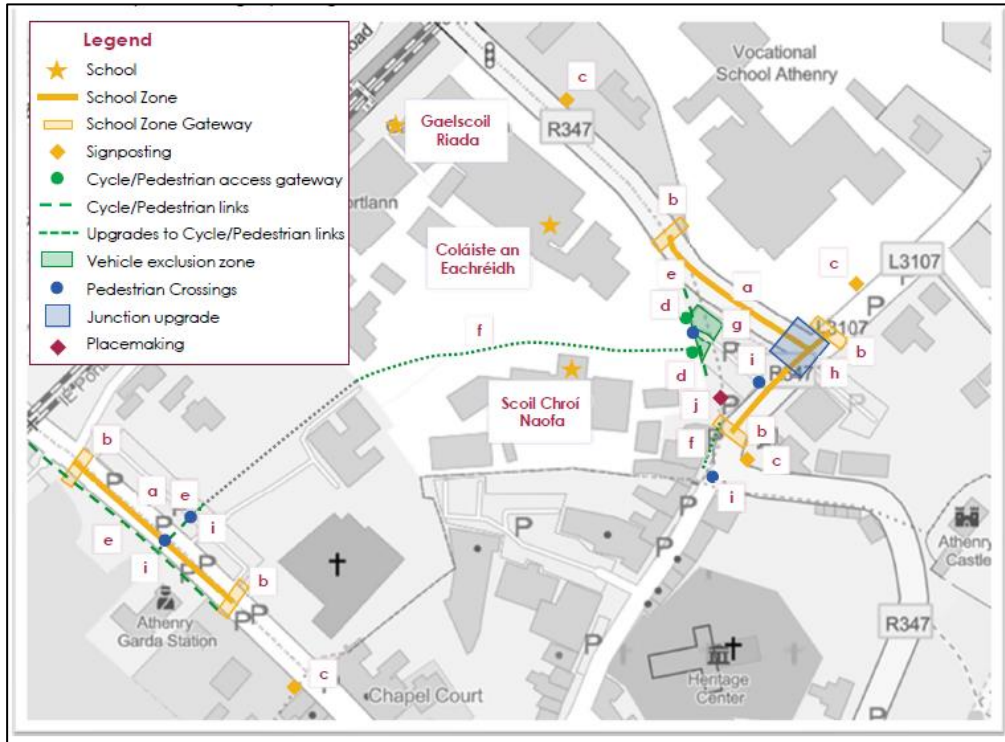


Figure 2-3: Proposed Safe Routes to School Interventions for Scoil Chroí Naofa

Proposed interventions at Athenry National School include a junction upgrade at Bridge Street, School Zone treatment and improved footpath provision outside the school.

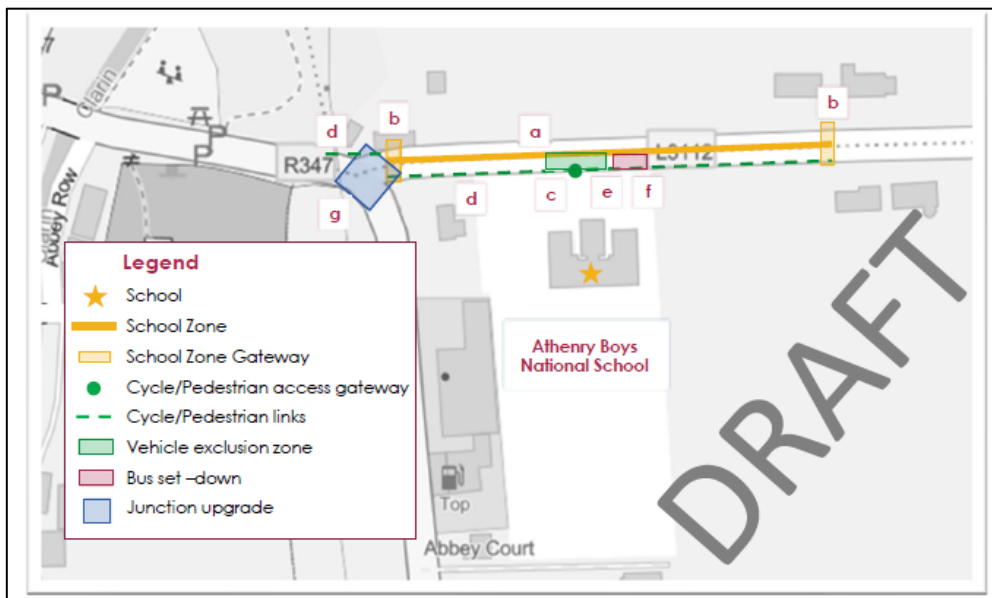


Figure 2-4: Proposed Safe Routes to School Interventions for Athenry Boys National School

There are a number of other proposed interventions across Athenry focused on providing Safe Routes to School for students in the town. These include a number of new permeability links from housing estates, a pedestrian crossing of the railway line on Church Street, the provision of “park & stride” sites

for school drop-offs and making Court Lane one-way for motor traffic to provide pedestrian improvements at this pinch point.

2.4 Summary

- A technical note comprising a policy review of international, national, regional, and county level policies and plans relevant to the studies in the Galway Transport Support Programme has been compiled and is available in Appendix A.
- Athenry is classified a town with strategic potential in the GCDP 2022-2028, and allocated population growth of 1,350 people or 23% on 2016 levels.
- The GCDP 2022-2028 includes a number of specific infrastructural Policy Objectives related to the rail line through Athenry, including policy to support dual-tracking of the line between Galway and Athenry, and the reopening of the Western Rail Corridor between Athenry and Collooney serving Tuam and Claremorris.
- The GCDP 2022-2028 includes a number of specific infrastructural Policy Objectives related to transport including the completion of the Athenry Relief Road, provision of an integrated public transportation hub close to the railway station, an “amenity cycleway/pathway” along Cashla Road, a River Clarin Walkway and long stay car parking on Backlawn and Knockaunglass.
- Both the GCDP 2022-2028 and draft Local Area Plan include Policy Objectives to promote the use of sustainable transport in place of the private car in the town including the provision of active travel infrastructure and facilities, appropriate traffic management and compact growth.
- A number of other local plans for Athenry were also examined, including the council’s Regenerating Athenry plan, the community developed Reimagine Athenry plan, plans for public realm enhancements for Market Square and Cross Street, and the draft Safe Routes to School Delivery Plans developed for Scoil Chroí Naofa and Athenry Boys National School.

3. BASELINE ASSESSMENT

The following chapter provides an overview of the Baseline Assessment undertaken for the Athenry LTP. The aim of the Baseline Assessment was to gain a clear understanding of the existing spatial characteristics, land uses, transport conditions and constraints relating to the Plan area. Further detail is provided in the full Baseline Assessment Report in Appendix B.

3.1 Description of Study Area

The study area boundary for the Athenry LTP has been identified in collaboration with Galway County Council. It broadly aligns with the LAP boundary, containing the established town and surrounding areas earmarked for development and buffer zones. A ‘best-fit’ selection of Census Small Areas (CSAs) has been identified to form the study area for the purpose of undertaking baseline analyses of census data.

Located approximately 20km to the east of Galway City, Athenry constitutes Galway’s sixth largest town with a population of 5,023 persons as of 2016 (Census 2016). The previous census in 2011 put the population at 4,570, representing an increase of 9%.

Athenry hosts 1,631 jobs and is a strategically located urban centre benefitting from a well-established road network. The M6 links Athenry to Galway City westward and eastward toward Ballinasloe, Athlone and Dublin. The town is served by the regional roads R348, R347 and R346 connecting to Tuam, Craughwell, Oranmore and Ballinasloe. Athenry railway station is located on Church Street in the town centre, providing accessibility to the Dublin–Galway and Galway-Limerick lines with onward connections to Cork and Belfast.

Athenry town serves a rural hinterland as a market town and service centre. It serves a particularly large education catchment, with over 2,000 school places in Athenry. The main attraction of the town is Market Square and the commercial core of Church Street, Old Church Street, Cross Street and North Gate Street. There are several structures of historical importance including the Dominican Priory, Athenry Castle, the St Mary’s Collegiate Church ruins, the market cross and the historic walls that encompass the town.

3.1.1 Trip Generators and Attractors

To present the concentration of local trip generators and attractors in Athenry, maps of the town’s distribution of population and employment density by 2016 Census Small Area have been generated and are shown below in Figure 3-1 and Figure 3-2.

The analysis has been derived from Census Small Area Population Statistics (SAPS) data along with 2016 Place of Work, School or College - Census of Anonymised Records (POWSCAR) data. The POWSCAR database includes a range of information on travel patterns for trips to work and school as recorded in the Census². This data was used to identify the total number of destination work trips for each of the Census Small Areas (CSAs) within the Athenry LTP study area.

Population

Figure 3-1, below, illustrates the population density for CSAs within the Athenry study area (represented as population per square kilometre). The results indicate that the most densely

² Further information on POWSCAR is available on the CSO website at:
<https://www.cso.ie/en/census/census2016reports/powscar/>

populated areas of Athenry are the residential estates along the R347 and in Ballydauid to the north. There are also highly populated (but not as dense) residential areas surrounding the train station and the town centre.

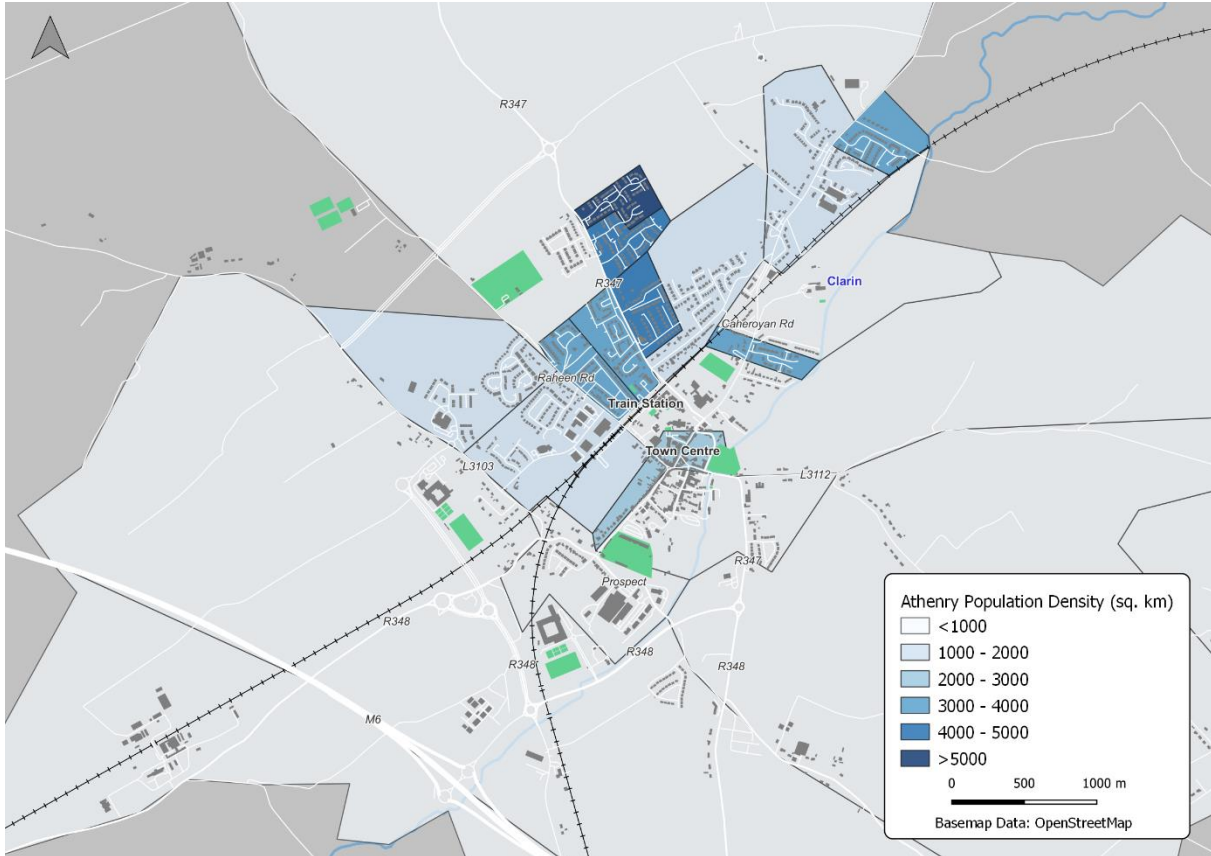


Figure 3-1: Athenry Population Density

Employment

Figure 3-2 illustrates the employment density for CSAs within the Athenry study area (represented as jobs per square kilometre). The results indicate that the town centre is the largest attractor of employment trips within the study area.

The northeast of the study area attracts a large number of work trips, an area featuring Galway and Roscommon Education Training Board (GRET B) and the railway station. Other key employment destinations in the town include Arrabawn, Mullins Construction and Raheen Industrial Estate.

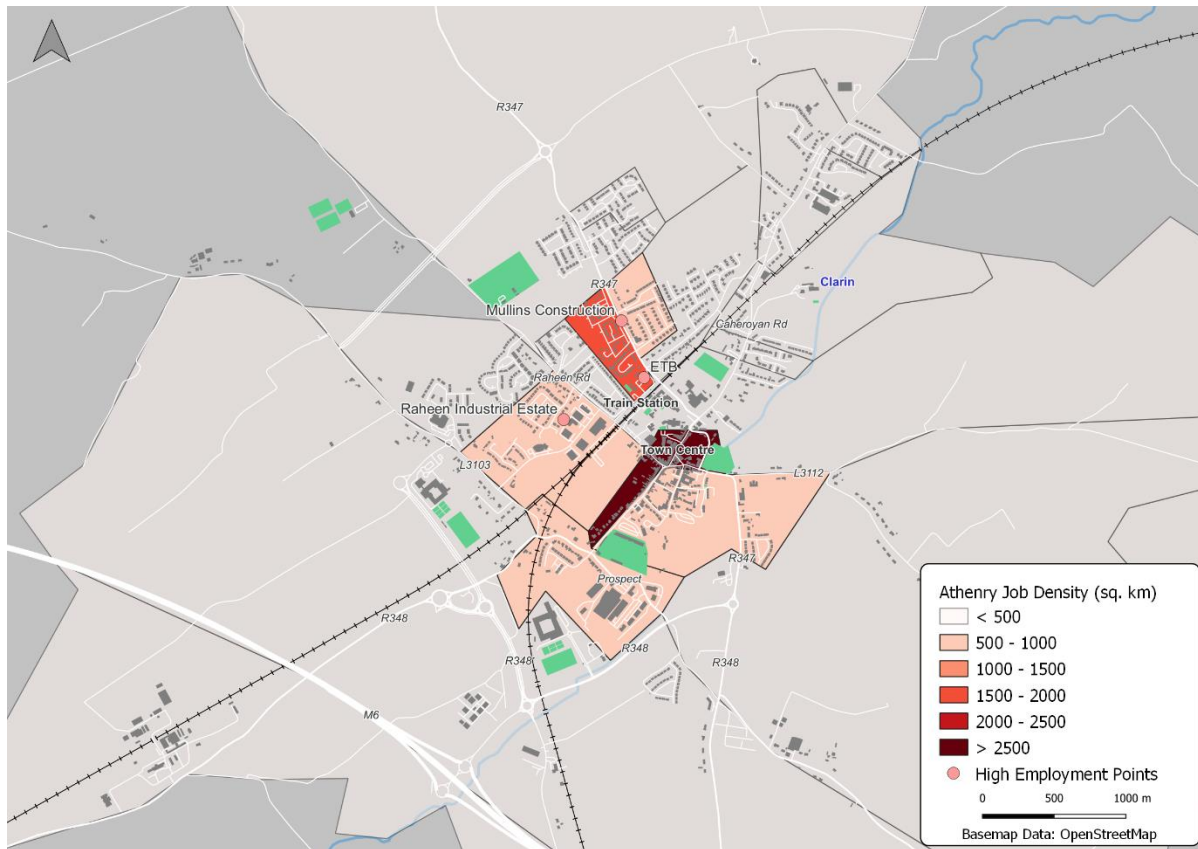


Figure 3-2: Athenry Employment Density

3.1.2 Services and Amenities

The location of key services and amenities within Athenry are presented in figure 3-3:

- Within Athenry, there is a clear concentration of services within the town centre including multiple schools, the Church of the Assumption and main shopping streets.
- The rail station is located on Station Road, just to the north-west of the town centre.
- The main primary schools in Athenry are located in the town centre on Court Lane/Tuam Road. A third primary school, the Boys National School is located close to Community Park on the L3112. The recently developed new campuses for both Clarin College and Presentation College post-primary schools, catering for nearly 2,000 pupils between them, are located in the South-West of the study area near the M6.
- Athenry Primary Care Centre is located in the centre of the study area, west of the town centre on Raheen Woods Road.
- The main supermarket in Athenry is Tesco (recently Joyce's) in the Athenry Shopping Centre complex to the south of the study area, which has buildings centred on a large amount of parking. The complex has a number of other shops and services. Other shops and services in the town are located in the town centre in the area stretching from Kenny Park to the North Gate. In addition, Aldi are currently building a supermarket off Cross Street/Clarke Street.

- The main car parks in Athenry are located around the town centre, at Backlawn, Tuam Road, North Gate Street and at the train station. Additional public parking facilities are available on-street on many streets within the town centre and in Market Square.



Figure 3-3: Athenry Services and Amenities

3.2 Demographic Profile

To better understand the profile of residents in the Athenry LTP study area, and their travel patterns, this section presents data extracted from the 2016 Census Small Area Population Statistics (SAPS) dataset. It summarises information on the proportion of residents travelling to work and school, as well as high level information on age, gender, and car ownership.

Total Population

As shown in Table 3-1 below, the Study area has an estimated population of 5,023 according to the 2016 Census³. This represents a population growth of 9% compared to the 2011 Census (4,570), which is a higher growth rate than seen nationally (3.8%). The GCDP 2022-2028 targets a population increase of 1,350 persons for Athenry during the plan period.

Table 3-1 also outlines the age profile of residents in Athenry. The results indicate that the Athenry LTP study area has a lower proportion of residents over the age of 65 than both the Galway County Area

³ As outlined in Section 3.1, the Athenry LTP study area broadly aligns with the LAP boundary but has been derived from a 'best-fit' selection of Census Small Areas to facilitate ease of analysis of baseline Census data.

and the national average. Approximately 28.3% of the study area population are under the age of 18, a higher proportion than both the County Area and the national average.

Table 3-1: Athenry Population Structure by Age

LOCATION	POPULATION 2016	0-15	16-64	65+
Athenry	5,023	28.3%	61.6%	10.0%
Galway County	179,390	24.0%	61.4%	14.5%
National	4,761,865	22.4%	64.2%	13.4%

Employment & Education

Table 3-2 outlines the number of employed people and number of jobs within the study area. As can be seen below, the number of jobs is lower than the number of employed people, resulting in a Job Attraction/Employed ratio of 0.66.

This compares to a ratio of 1.2 for Galway City and 0.5 for the rest of Galway County, highlighting the attractiveness of the city as an employment destination. The ratio in the study area results in a net flow of employed people leaving the study area for work.

Table 3-2 also outlines the number of education attractions within Athenry. With 2,321 students commuting to schools within the study area, compared to 1,428 workers and a study area population of 5,023, it shows the prevalence of school trips entering the area.

Table 3-2: Athenry Employment Opportunities

LOCATION	EMPLOYED PEOPLE LIVING IN THE AREA	JOB ATTRACTION OF THE AREA	RATIO (JOB ATT/EMPLOYED)	PUPILS / STUDENTS
Athenry	2,161	1,428	0.66	2,321
Galway City	34,951	42,062	1.20	25,494
Rest of Galway County	75,116	37,325	0.50	33,068
National	2,006,641	1,468,093	0.73	982,185

3.3 Environmental Conditions & Physical Constraints

The following environmental conditions are of note within the study area:

- The town is generally quite flat, although it rises towards the relief road, while the surrounding greenfield land within the study area is generally hillier, rising again towards Monvia and Attymon. The flat nature of the town core is beneficial for active travel.
- Part of Esker Riada ('the Great Way' a strategic early route-way on a gravel esker that once stretched from Dublin to Galway) is located on the south eastern and northern fringes of the study area boundary.
- The River Clarin runs south-easterly through the town, continuing onwards before running into Galway Bay at Clarinbridge.
- A review of the Archaeological Survey of Ireland shows that there are a large number of entries in Athenry on the Sites and Monuments Record and the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage in Athenry, as would be expected given its Medieval history. A number of structures at the railway station are listed and the site of the Dominican Friary and St Mary's Church also feature heavily. Also recorded are Athenry Castle, the corn mill, market cross and a number of buildings on Cross Street and surrounding Market Square.

There are also a number of physical constraints to transport in the study area, in particular the railway line and the River Clarin.

The railway line passes through the centre of the study area, causing considerable severance. There are only two railway crossings in the centre of the town, on the Tuam Road (railway bridge) and Church Street (level crossing). There are also four additional railway crossings on the outskirts of the town traversing the Galway rail line (comprising two railway bridges and two level crossings), three crossings of the Limerick line (two bridges, one level crossing) and three crossings of the Tuam line (one road overbridge, one road underbridge and one level crossing). Given most of the residential areas in the study area are north of the railway and most attractors (schools and shops) are to the south, the railway line causes considerable barriers to movement within the town aligned to desire lines.

The River Clarin runs south-easterly through the town, to the east of the town centre. The main central river crossing is on the R347. Given the river's easterly location, it is less of barrier to movement than the railway line, with the vast majority of development in the study area located to the west of it. There are two major crossings of the River, on Bridge Street and Prospect as well as multiple crossings by new M6 link roads. It does however require people travelling from or along the Caheroyan Road to come through the town centre or circle around the town via the relief road in order to access Athenry Boys National School and other trip attractors located along the R347 due to the lack of river crossings north of the R347. Any future development east of the river will require consideration of this barrier.

3.4 Existing Travel Patterns

3.4.1 Trip Distribution Profile

The POWSCAR database was analysed to identify the distribution of employment trips travelling to/from the study area in the AM period. Results are presented in Table 3-3, 3-4 and 3-5 below.

Table 3-3: Trip Pattern Summary

TRIP TYPE	TRIP PURPOSE	NUMBER OF TRIPS
Internal trips within the Study Area	Work	506
	School	800
	All	1,306
Inbound trips from outside towards the Study Area	Work	2,172
	School	1,639
	All	3,811
Outbound trips from the study area	Work	2,123
	School	419
	All	2,542

The Tables below show the trip distribution for AM employment trips to and from the study area. There are 1,306 trips that both start and end within the study area, which represents 34% of all trips originating in the study area, and 26% of trips travelling to the study area.

For more detailed results of the geographic distribution of trips to/from the study area, surrounding areas have been grouped into sectors. Insofar as possible, these sectors have been designed to align with the main transport corridors to/from Athenry. For example, trips to/from the “West” sector will mainly be along either the M6 or the Galway-Dublin rail line, and trips to/from the “North” sector will mainly be via the M17. The results of the sector distribution analysis are illustrated in the figures below.

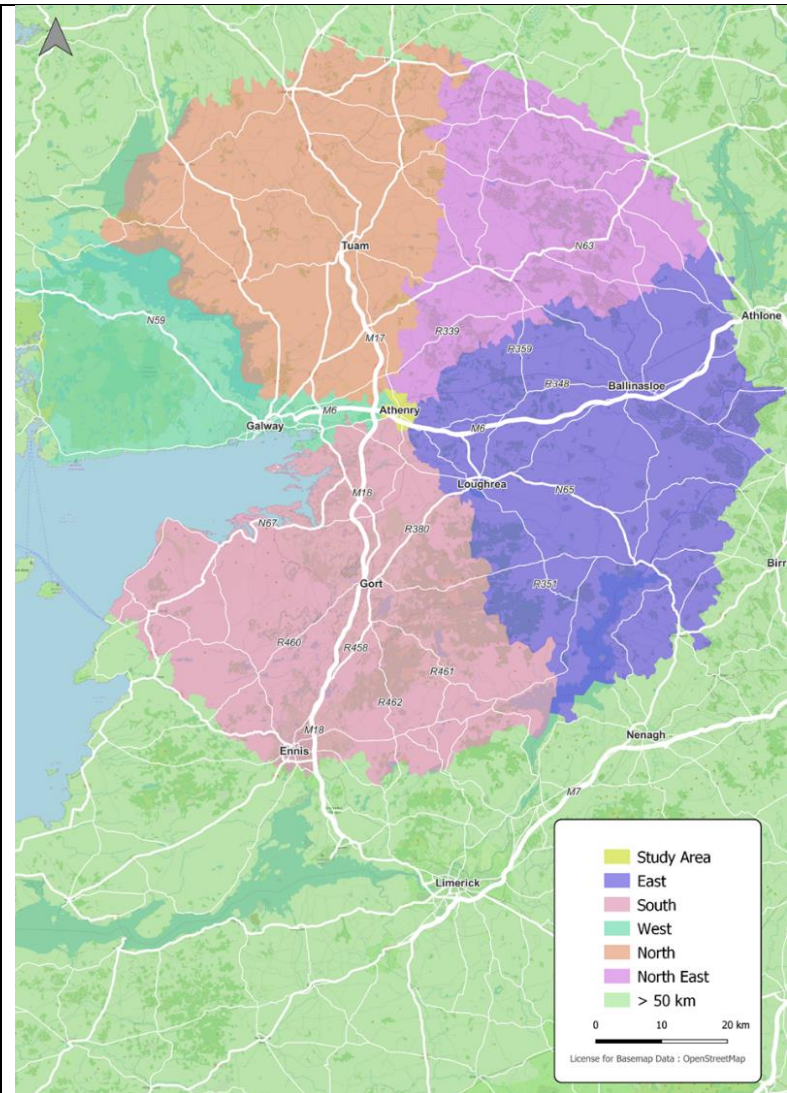


Figure 3-4: POWSCAR Sector map

Table 3-4: Destination of Athenry Origin Trips

DESTINATION	WORK	EDUCATION	TOTAL	%
Study Area	506	800	1,306	34%
East	138	37	175	5%
South	118	16	134	3%
West	1,371	262	1,633	42%
North	228	40	268	7%
North East	56	12	68	2%
> 50 km	212	52	264	7%
Total	2,629	1,219	3,848	100%

Table 3-5: Origin of Athenry Destination Trips

ORIGIN	WORK	EDUCATION	TOTAL	%
Study Area	506	800	1,306	26%
East	442	264	706	14%
South	336	476	812	16%
West	462	161	623	12%
North	424	482	906	18%
North East	298	244	542	11%
> 50 km	210	12	222	4%
Total	2,678	2,439	5,117	100%

Key findings

As can be seen in the tables above, while 34% of combined work/education trips start and end in the study area, this breaks down to 65% of education trips and only 19% of work trips.

Over 80% of work trips originating in the study area have external destinations. The most significant external destination for trips from the study area is the western sector which encompass Galway City, with 1,633 trips. A majority of work related trips, 56%, and 42% of combined work/education trips from the study area are in the direction of Galway City.

86% of education trips either stay in the study area or head towards Galway City. Therefore, the M6 and Galway-Dublin rail line are the most important outbound routes for Athenry commuters.

The second most significant external sector for outbound trips from Athenry is the Northern sector towards Tuam along the M17, with 268 trips. These three sectors (Study Area, West and North) account for 83% of trips from the study area, the remaining trips are spread between the south, east and north east. Trips greater than 50km account for 7% of trips.

For trips travelling to the Study Area, the travel patterns are more varied. Internal trips within the Study Area represent 26% of work and school related travel to Athenry. Roughly equal numbers of trips come from the surrounding East, South, West, North and North-East sectors, between 11% and 18%.

Flows towards Galway are mainly tidal with the West sector accounting for 42% of outbound AM trips but only 12% of inbound trips. The effect of the large secondary schools in particular in Athenry is apparent in the figures, with only 33% of education trips originating within the study area. Over 1,600 education trips to Athenry begin outside the study area. Few trips greater than 50km in length are made to Athenry for work/education, at only 4% of trips.

3.5 Mode Share

SAPS data provides information from the census on the typical mode of transport used for travelling to work and education. This data was used to identify the proportion of trips originating within the study area which are made by walking, cycling, public transport and car.

3.5.1 Employment Trips

The figure below illustrates the mode share for trips to work originating within the study area by walk, cycle, public transport and car (including drivers, passengers, vans and lorries), and also compares the study area mode share to the Galway County average as a whole, Galway city and nationally.

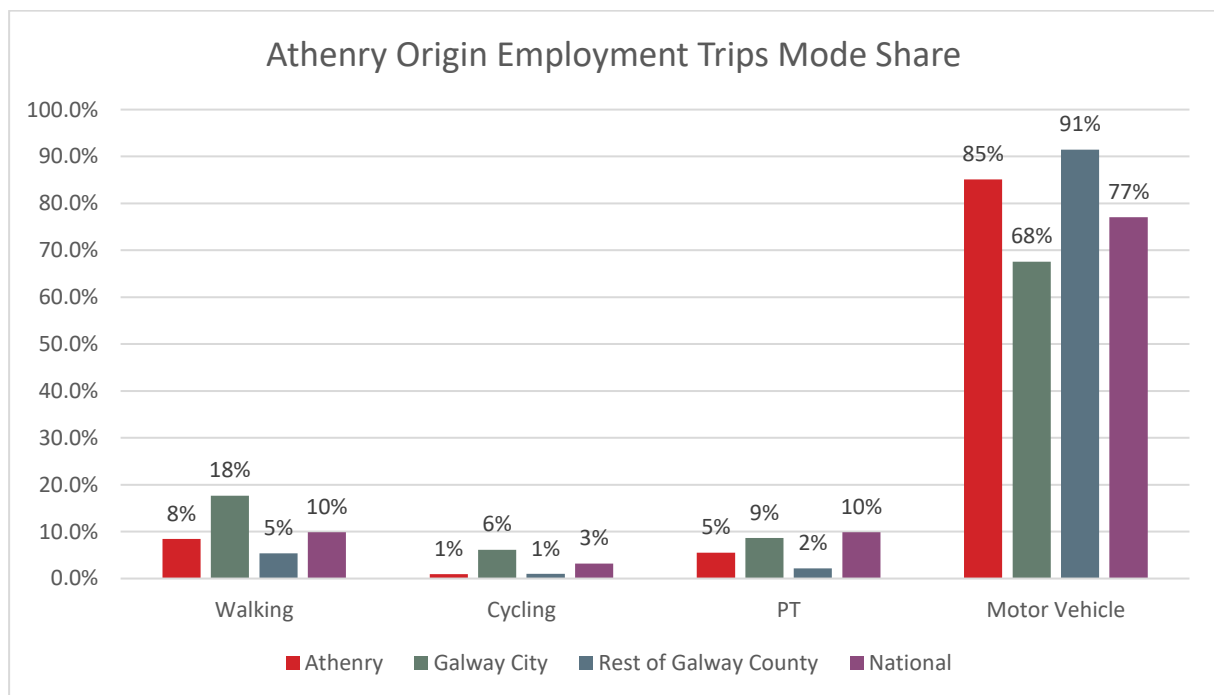


Figure 3-5: Employment Mode Share

Key findings observed from the mode share data for employment trips in the study area include:

- Approximately 9.5% of commute trips originating in the study area are undertaken by active modes. Walking trips form the majority of these and are lower than the national average. Cycling accounts for just 1%, far less than the national average but on par with the County average (with Galway City excluded).
- Public transport represents only 5.5% of commute trips, just over half of the national average, but more than twice the County average (with Galway City excluded).
- The private car is the dominant mode of transport for work trips from the study area at 85.1%, compared to the national average of 77.0%. Despite its urban form, the commute car mode share is only slightly lower than the county average of 91.5

3.5.2 Education Trips

Figure 3-6 below illustrates the mode share for trips to education originating within the study area.

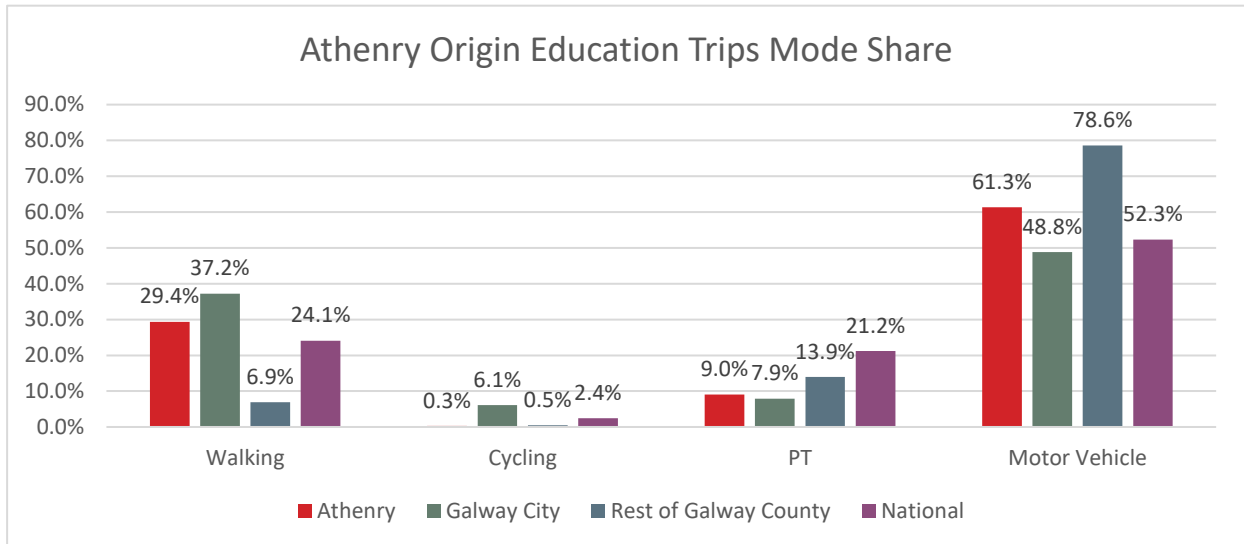


Figure 3-6: Education Mode Share

The key findings for education trips include:

- The overall mode share for active travel (walking and cycling) to education is 29.7%, slightly higher than the national average (26.5%), and significantly higher than the county average of 7.4% (excluding Galway City) showing the advantages of the study area's urban form.
- Cycling mode share is well below the national average (0.3% vs 2.4%)
- Public transport mode share is 9%, significantly below the county average of 13.9% (excluding Galway City).
- Overall, car is still the dominant mode of transport for education-related trips, accounting for 61.3% of all journeys, compared to a national average of 52.3%.
- Car trips are predominantly concentrated in areas further from Athenry schools, however, there are still a sizeable number of car trips within the study area that are within a reasonable walk or cycle.

3.6 Trip Length Distribution

Analysis was undertaken to determine the trip length distribution by mode for education purposes from 2016 POWSCAR data. This was used to establish the typical trip lengths, and modes used, for journeys by residents of the study area and help identify where opportunities might exist to further support a shift away from the private car and onto sustainable modes.

Figure 3-7 below outlines the trip length distribution by mode for all education trips travelling to schools within the study area.

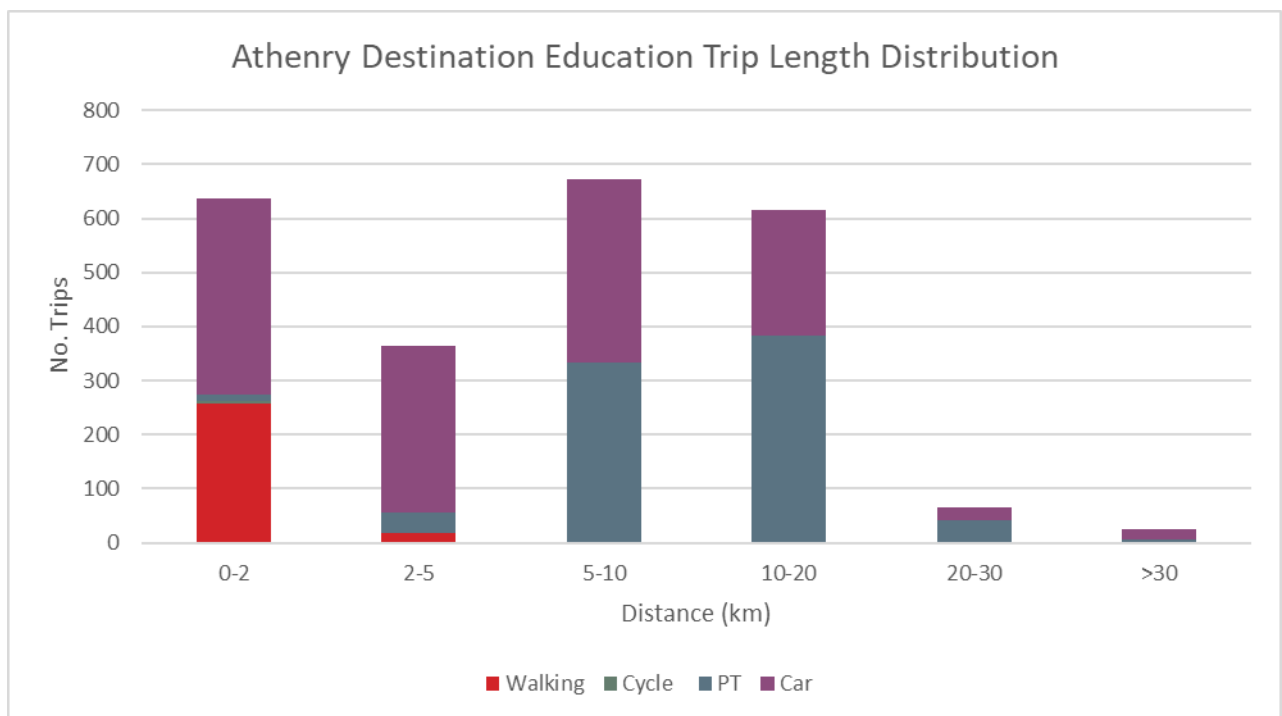


Figure 3-7: Education Trip Length Distribution (Trips to work in Athenry), by Mode [POWSCAR, 2016]

Key findings:

- A majority (55%) of longer distance (>5km) education trips are made by public transport.
- There are a significant number (707) education trips longer than 10km coming to Athenry.
- A majority of trips to school under 2km (57%) are undertaken by car.
- Trips to education in Athenry are generally shorter and therefore more suited to active travel than employment trips.

There is a general association between trip length and mode choice. For example, at shorter distances the average person may be willing to walk or cycle to access goods, services or employment. However, as trip lengths increase, these modes become less attractive.

Similarly, short distance trips by public transport may be unattractive compared to alternative modes as the wait time would be a significant proportion of overall journey time.

In terms of distance, trips can be broken down into:

- Short – generally serviceable by walking or cycling
- Medium – generally serviceable by cycling (including eBikes), public transport or car; and
- Long – generally serviceable by public transport or car.

The significant proportion of education trips in Athenry under 10km, and particularly under 5km and 2km, provides an opportunity to shift car trips to active travel given the right package of measures. For trips over 10km, public transport options may be competitive to the car for certain trips patterns. Insofar as is practicable, a public transport option should be provided for these longer trips for social equity reasons even where journey time competitiveness is challenging.

3.7 Access to Education (ATOS Tool)

3.7.1 Introduction to ATOS

Access to Opportunities and Services (ATOS) is a measure of how easy it is to access key services and employment by walking and cycling. In developing the ATOS tool, the National Transport Authority (NTA) have followed a methodology established by Transport for London and adapted it to make it more suitable for use outside of large metropolitan areas.

The ATOS tool has been run for access to primary and post-primary schools within the study area by walking and cycling. For this analysis, the defined criteria was the ability to access any primary school (at least one) and any post-primary school within a 15 minute walk and 15 minute cycle. The scoring for each grid is then determined by how the travel time compares to the average travel time for all squares that have access to a primary/post-primary school within the specified timeframes.

It should be noted again that the score is calculated based on how travel times to the nearest relevant destinations (for the specific type of service) compared to the average travel time across all locations in the study area. The score is comparative, measuring where accessibility is higher and lower than the mean in the study area, rather than an objective score of the levels of accessibility.

The figures below present the ATOS results for accessibility to schools in Athenry by walking, with analysis, first and then cycling. ATOS maps for access to other services including employment, healthcare and shops is provided in the full Baseline Report included in Appendix B.

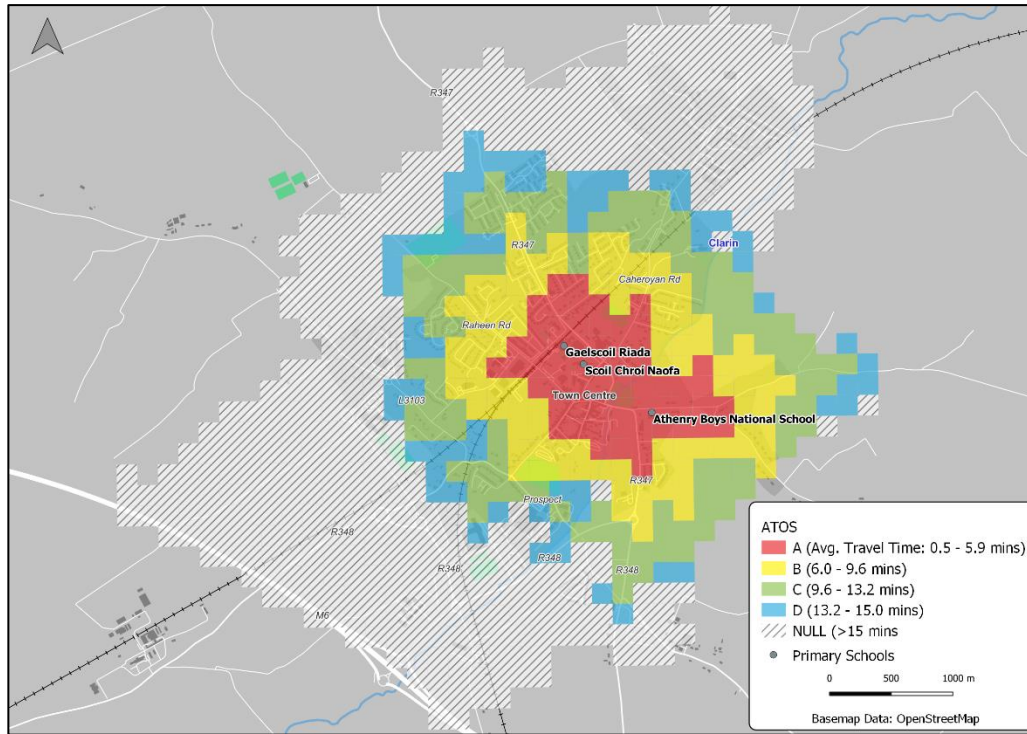


Figure 3-8: Access to Primary Schools (Walk)

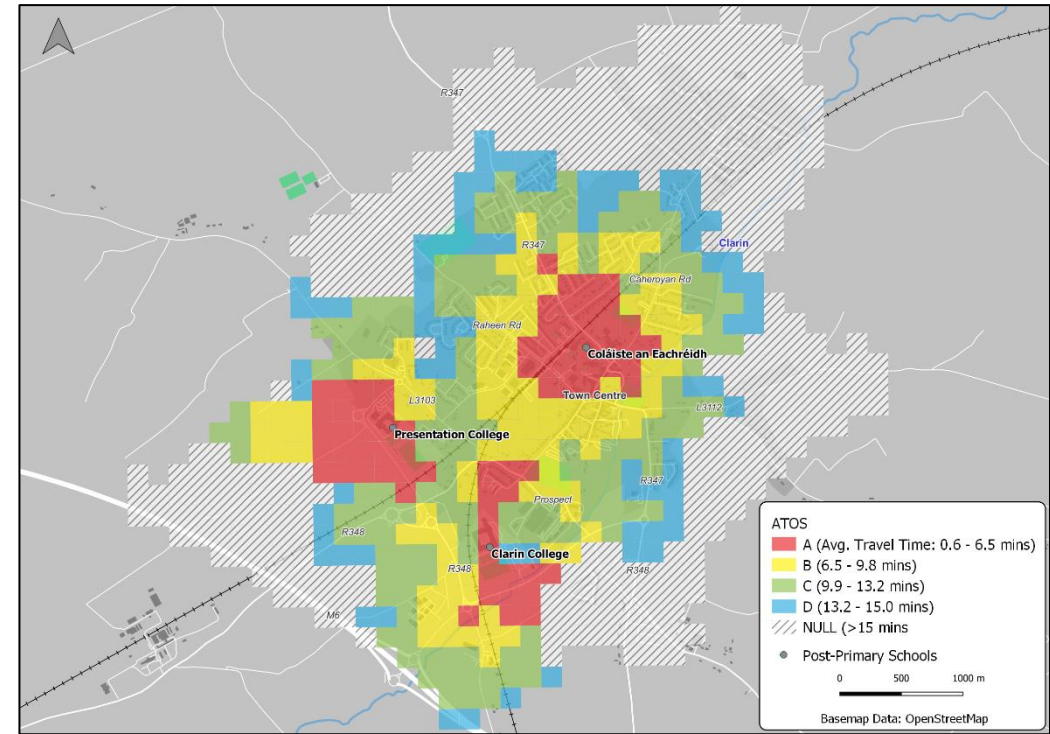


Figure 3-9: Access to Post Primary Schools (Walk)

The ATOS results for walking to schools in Athenry shows very high levels of accessibility in the town centre for both primary and secondary schools. The denser street network around the town centre enables a high level of access to the schools from the centre. The relatively poor level of permeability between housing estates and between the Tuam Road and Raheen Road is evident once again however, with a relatively quick transition from areas with A ratings to areas with C or D ratings moving north and west of the town centre. For primary schools, housing in the south and north-east of the study area are too far from the centrally located primary schools to reach in a 15-minute walk.

For Presentation College and Clarin College located in the west and south of the study area, the lack of a dense street network and development between these sites and the M6 is evident in the relatively small walking catchment of the two schools. Presentation College in particular suffers from poor east-west permeability between housing estates along the Tuam Road and Raheen Road. The lack of connection between Páirc na hAbhainn and the R348 severs this housing area from Clarin College’s 15-minute walking catchment.

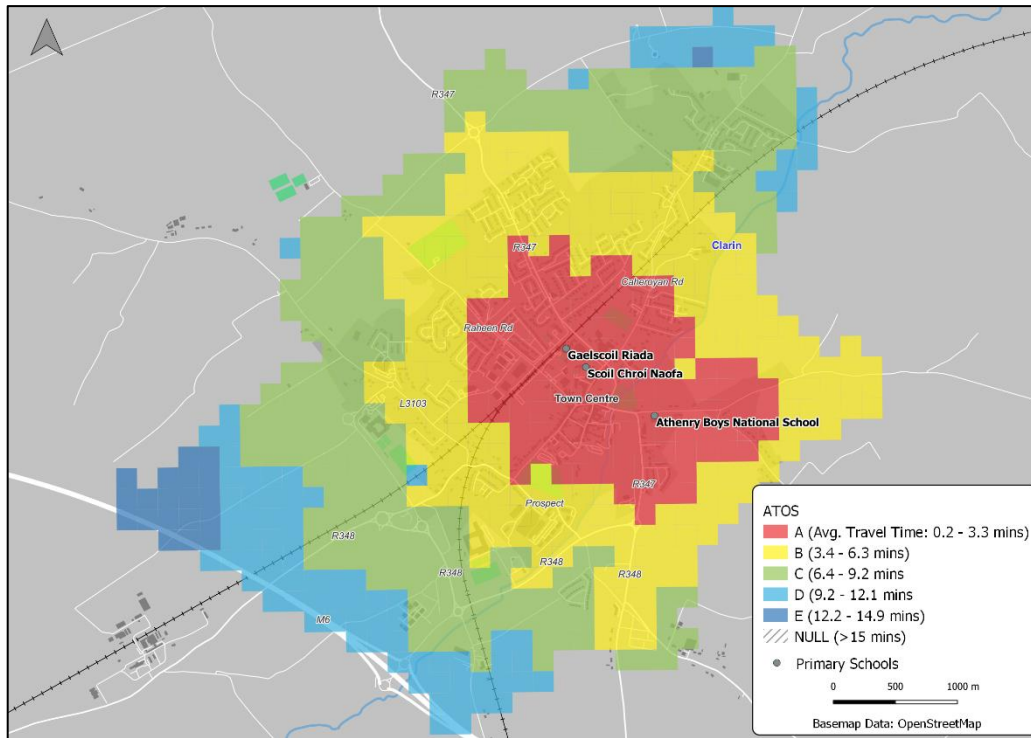


Figure 3-10: Access to Primary Schools (Cycle)

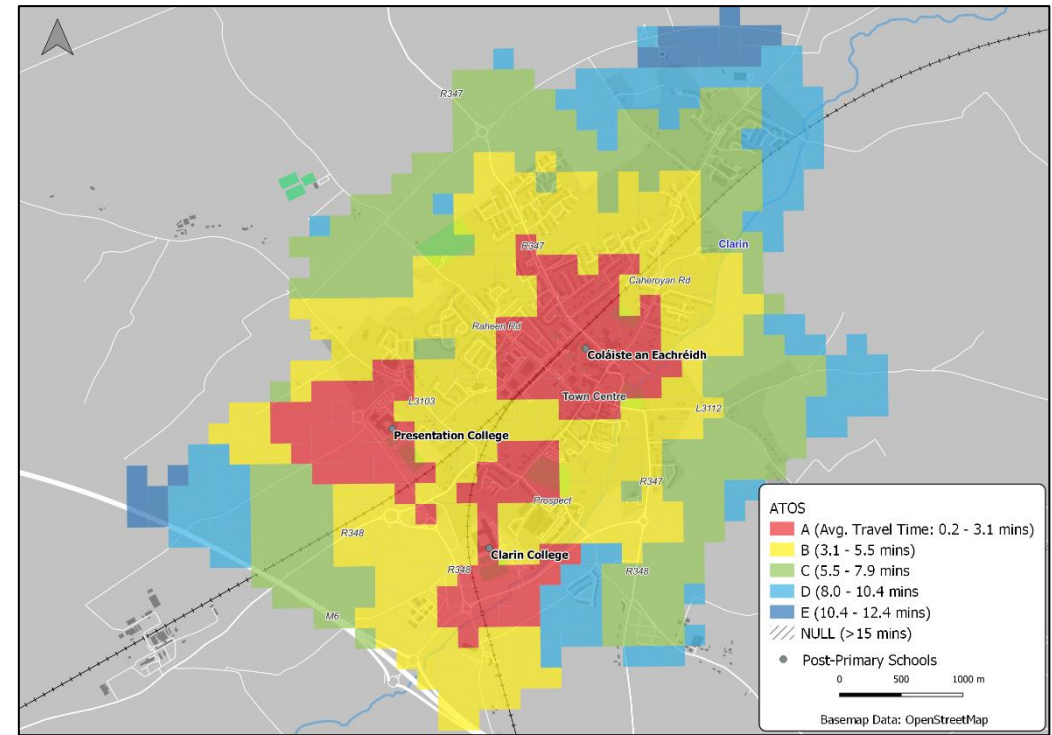


Figure 3-11: Access to Post-Primary Schools (Cycle)

The increased distances that can be covered by cycling are again evident in the much greater area that gets achieves a B or C rating for access to both primary and secondary schools compared to walking. As in access to employment, housing around Ballydavid towards Monivea has relatively poor levels of access to schools by both walking and cycling due to its increased distance from the town centre. The lack of access between Páirc na hAbhainn and the R348 by Clarin College is visible by the estate's better access to primary school (Atherry Boys National School) than Clarin College which it is much closer to as the crow flies.

The much higher levels of access by cycling than walking to schools and employment in the study area shows the potential of cycling in Atherry to provide great levels of access without the need to drive.

3.8 Existing Transport Infrastructure and Services

3.8.1 Walking Network

An analysis of the walking network in Athenry has been undertaken involving both a desktop review and site visit. Key areas, including both strengths and weaknesses are highlighted in Figure 3-12 below.



Figure 3-12: Highlighted Sections of Walking Infrastructure in Athenry

The quality of pedestrian infrastructure in Athenry is quite varied. While most of the approach roads to the town centre have footpaths of acceptable width on at least one side of the road, and often both sides such as on Tuam Road in Figure 3-12, footpaths tend to narrow or disappear completely at pinch points in the town centre. As shown in the figure above, pinch points such as on Court Lane and Barrack Street have limited or no pedestrian infrastructure, a pattern that is replicated along most side streets in the town centre.

A notable exception is at the Railway overbridge on the Tuam Road (right), where restrictions are in place for motor traffic in the form of a stop-go shuttle system, and continuous footpaths are maintained at this location close to multiple schools. High quality walking infrastructure is also evident on the eastern end of Cross Street where the public realm and footpath widths have been enhanced.



Outside of main roads and streets, the residential areas north of the railway line in Athenry suffer from poor permeability in places, particularly in an east-west direction – see example in Figure 3-13 below. This can significantly increase walking distances to key services for residents in the town.

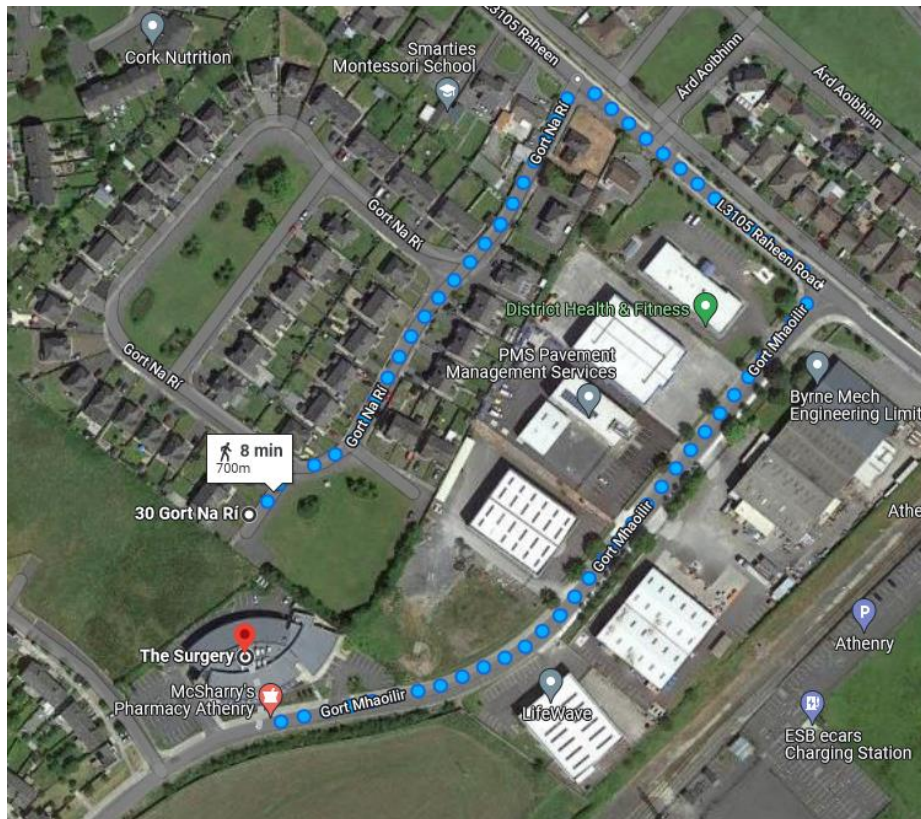
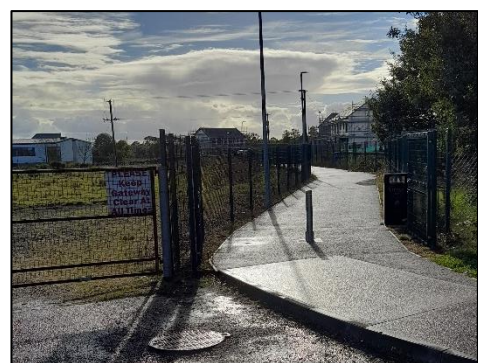


Figure 3-13: Permeability block in Athenry (700m walk for 50m crow fly distance)

A positive piece of walking permeability however is the footpath from Lorro Gate to the new Clarin College site which greatly increases the walking accessibility of the new school site from the town and local residential areas, as well as removing the need for pupils to walk along the busy R348.

Throughout the study area there are limited formal crossing facilities, apart from a small number of zebra crossings at schools in the town centre, leading to a low level of service for pedestrians with mobility or visual impairments.



3.8.2 Cycling Network

Figure 3-14 below illustrates the existing cycling infrastructure in Athenry. There are grade separated cycle tracks on the completed sections of the Athenry Relief Road to the north of the town and along the newly completed section of road at Presentation College, however there are no cycle tracks along the section at the school gate. These cycle tracks have a version of a cycle friendly roundabout at junctions, featuring shared space, but no raised crossings resulting in priority for vehicular traffic and reduced safety for cyclists and pedestrians.

In addition, there is a new section of one-way cycle track along the R348 between Clarin College and the Baunmore Roundabout, stopping short of the roundabout itself.

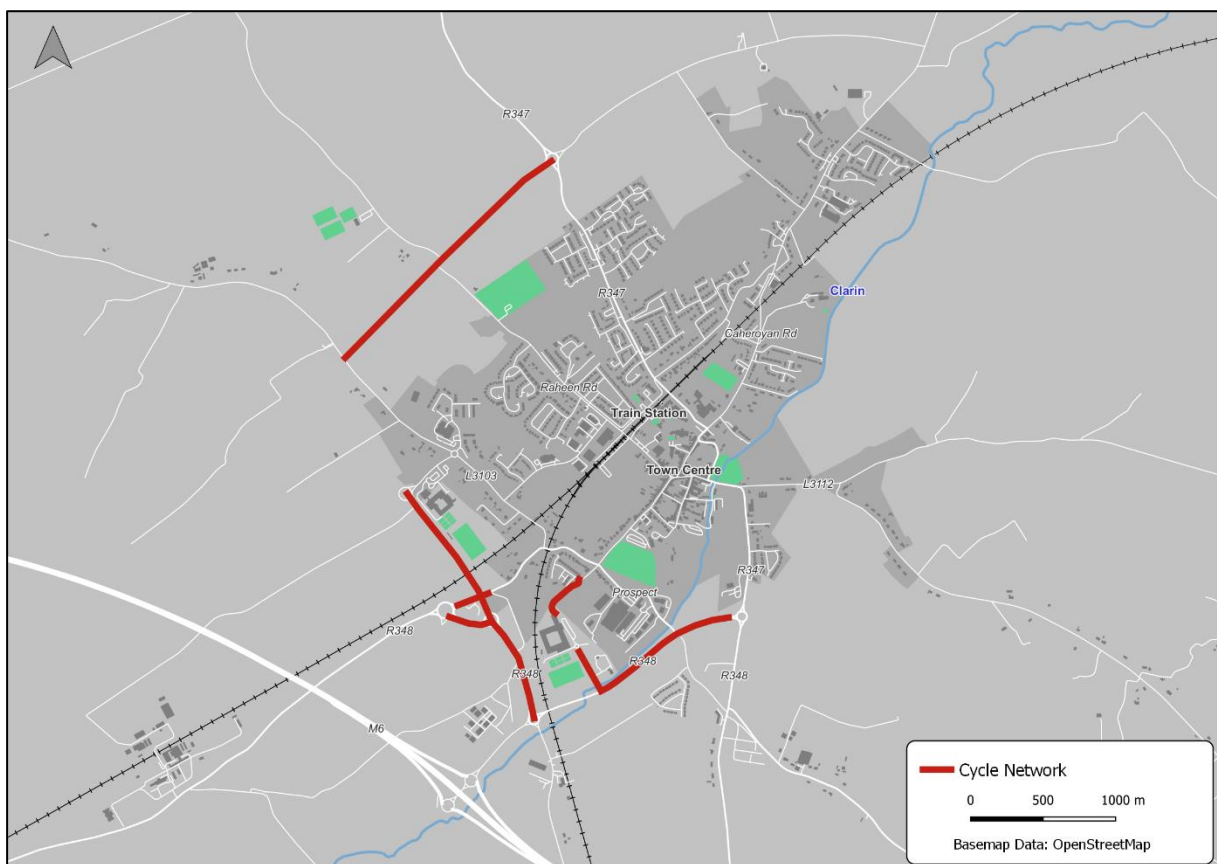


Figure 3-14: Cycle Infrastructure in Athenry

Existing proposals for cycling infrastructure investment in Athenry have been analysed, along with the development of potential new cycling options, during the Options Development and Assessment stages of the LTP.

3.8.3 Public Transport

Rail Network

Athenry rail station is located on the Galway to Dublin rail line and is also the current terminus of the Western Rail Corridor providing connections to Ennis and Limerick. Athenry therefore has direct rail connections to Galway, Limerick and Dublin.

The table below outlines the daily services to/from Athenry:

Table 3-6: Athenry Rail Services

ROUTE	MAX NUMBER OF SERVICES (MONDAY – FRIDAY)	MAX NUMBER OF WEEKEND SERVICES (SATURDAY)
Athenry - Galway	17	15
Galway - Athenry	18	15
Limerick - Athenry	9	9
Athenry - Limerick	8	8
Athenry - Dublin	10	9
Dublin - Athenry	9	8

The station is located in the centre of the town, with access via Station Road and Church Street. Active travel links to the rail station are poor for cycling, with no dedicated cycling infrastructure and front of station treatment aiming to maximise ease of car drop offs and parking.

Bus Network

Figure 3-15 illustrates the bus services currently operating in Athenry. There are no town bus services, with the main service being a commuter route to Galway City operated by commercial operator Farrells focused on the AM and PM peaks. This route is complemented by a once-weekly return service to Loughrea on Thursday operated by Local Link Galway/Bealach na Gallaimhe Teo., leaving at 09:30 and returning at 13:30. This is a door to door, advance booking service and times vary depending on pick-ups. The bus routes and frequencies serving Athenry are presented in the table below:

Table 3-7: Athenry Bus Routes

ROUTE	OPERATOR	MAX NUMBER OF WEEKDAY SERVICES	MAX NUMBER OF WEEKDAY SERVICES
418 (Athenry – Galway)	Philip Farrell	7	7
Athenry – Loughrea (Door to Door Service)	Local Link Galway/Bealach na Gallaimhe Teo.	1	1

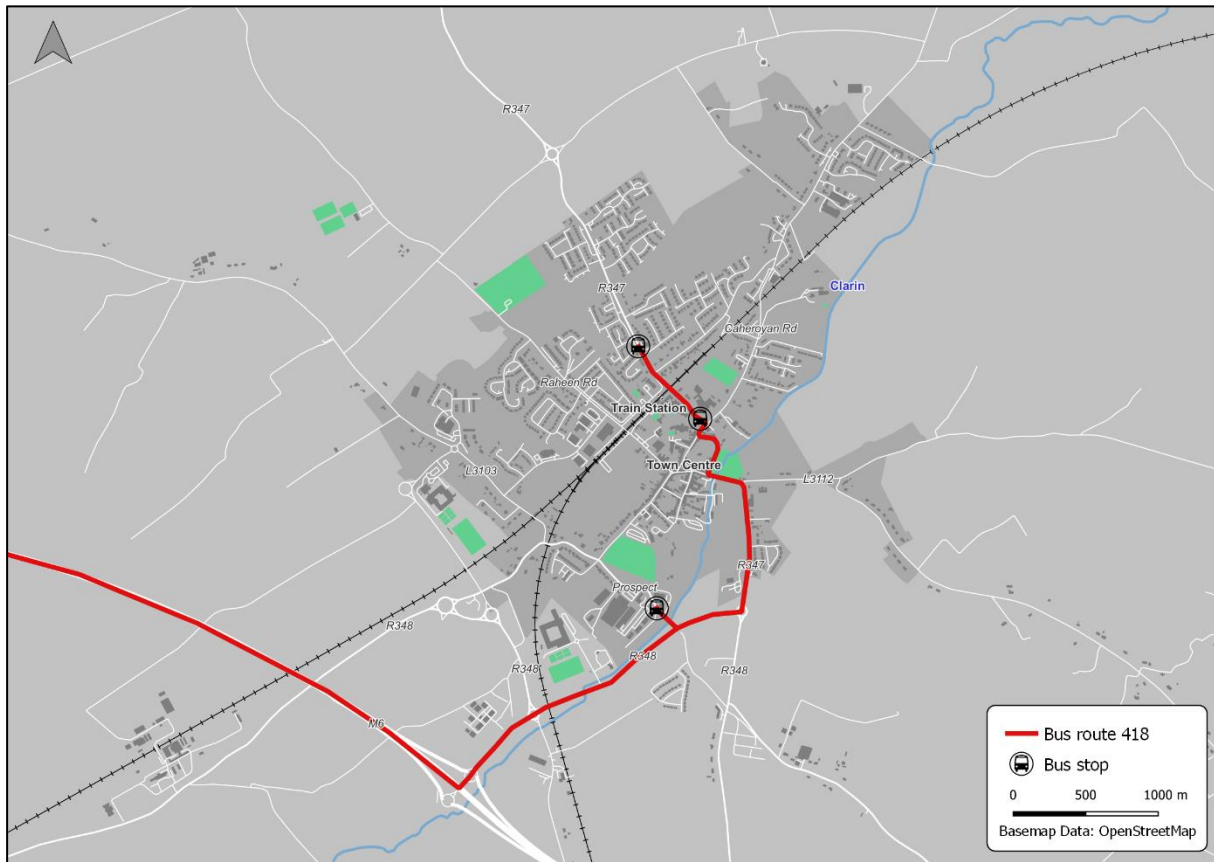


Figure 3-15: Athenry Bus Network

The Farrells bus serves three stops in Athenry – Londis on Tuam Road, the Arch Car Park and Athenry Shopping Centre. There is no formal bus stopping infrastructure at any of these locations. All existing bus stopping locations lack any dedicated facilities such as bus stop poles or shelters, benches, tactile paving, timetable information or real-time information.

The Connecting Ireland Rural Mobility Plan⁴ is a major national public transport initiative developed by the National Transport Authority (NTA), with the aim of increasing connectivity, particularly for people living outside our major cities and towns. Consultation on the proposed network took place during 2022, with the feedback currently being assessed by the NTA. For Athenry, there are no new services proposed, with the existing 418 route retained.

School buses also serve the local educational institutions in Athenry. The School Transport Scheme provides transport to and from school for children who live remote from their nearest school. The scheme is operated by Bus Éireann on behalf of the Department of Education.

⁴ Source: <https://www.nationaltransport.ie/connecting-ireland/proposals/>

3.8.4 Road Network

Strategic Road Network

The primary road serving Athenry is the M6 which bypasses the town and provides links to Galway and Dublin. The M6/M17/M18 junction lies roughly 3km west of Athenry, linking to Ennis/Limerick and Tuam and onwards to Claremorris and Sligo.

Access to the town road network from the M6 is via Junction 17 and the R348.



Figure 3-16: Athenry Strategic Road Network

In addition to this national route, two main regional roads serve the town. The R347 connecting to Tuam and Craughwell and the R348 connecting to Oranmore and Ballinasloe act as main arterial routes towards the town. The L3107 towards Monivea, and the L3112 from the east also act as arterial routes to the town.

Local Road Network

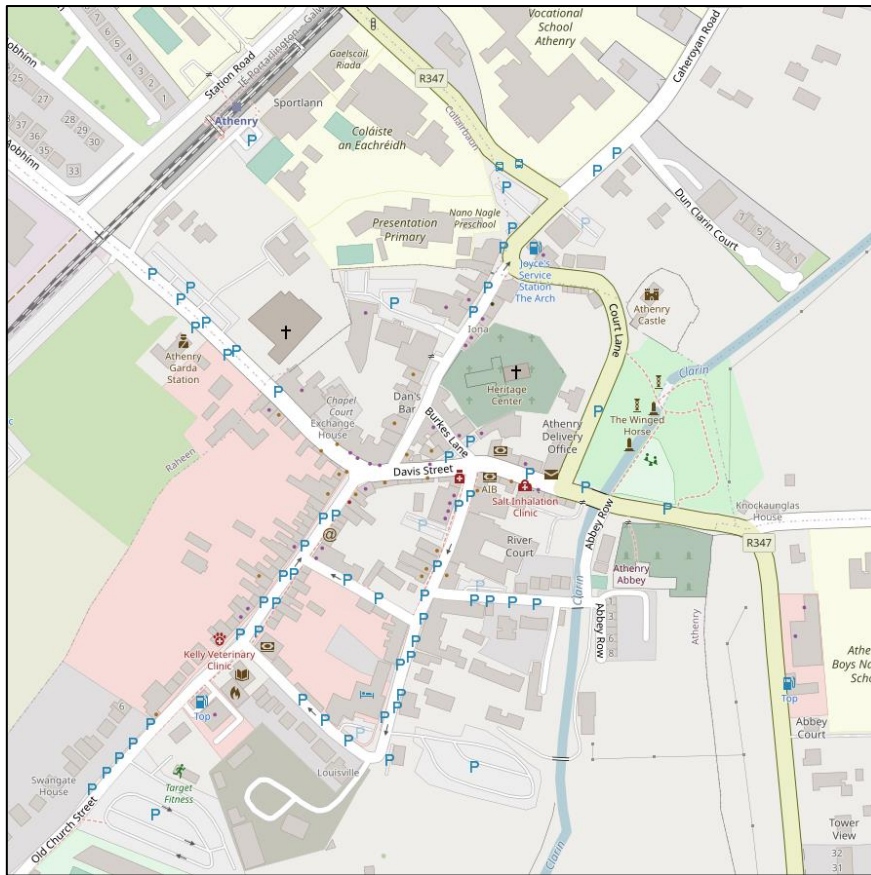


Figure 3-17: Athenry Town Centre Local Road Network

In the town centre, the L3107 connects with the R347 and flows into North Gate Street, meeting with Davis Street towards Cross Street and Old Church Street. The R347 becomes Bridge Street then Court Lane, passing Athenry Castle before crossing over the railway lane and onwards to the Athenry Relief Road.

Outside the school campus on Court Lane, there is an unsignalised junction with Caheroyan Road where north/south traffic meets east/west traffic through the town. There are two raised zebra crossings which provide pedestrian priority and traffic calming, but there is no formal pedestrian crossing on the Caheroyan Road arm and no cycle lanes/tracks.

The Relief Road also connects with the L3103 and L3105 which links residential areas north of the railway line with the town centre on the southern side.



Figure 3-18: Zebra Crossings at Court Lane/Caheroyan Road junction

There is an effective gyratory in place in the town centre, up Old Church Street and down Cross Street via Davis Street and Clarke Street. There is minimal carriageway width along much of this route due to parking on both sides of Old Church Street and Cross Street.



Figure 3-19: Main Railway Line Road Crossings in Athenry, Railway Overbridge (left) and Level Crossing (right)

Given the existing land uses in the town, with residential development concentrated on the northern side of the rail line and the town centre to the south, there is an element of severance with a large amount of traffic to the town centre required to cross the rail line at either the railway overbridge on the Tuam Road or the level crossing on Church Street (see Figure 3-19).



Figure 3-20: Congestion During Pick-Up at Presentation College

Congestion in the town is mostly associated with school traffic, with traffic building up around the new Presentation College site in particular. This is despite many school bus services running. Footpath parking on both sides of the road outside the school exacerbates issues with congestion.

The Raheen Woods Roundabout by Presentation College does not have raised pedestrian crossings despite proximity to the large school, and the footpath can be too narrow to cater for the number of pupils at peak times. There are no cycle lanes/tracks at the roundabout. These congestion issues have been taken into account during the Options Development and Assessment stages of the LTP.

3.9 SWOT Assessment

The findings summarised above from the Baseline Assessment have been used to inform a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis for the study area. The results are outlined in Table 3-8 below. This has been used to inform subsequent stages of the LTP, in particular the objectives setting and options development.

Table 3-8: SWOT Assessment of Athenry

Strengths	Weaknesses
<p>Key Points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Athenry is classified a town with strategic potential in the GCDP 2022-2028. ○ Strategic traffic to Galway, Dublin and Limerick is well served by the nearby M6 and onward connection to the M18. ○ There are public transport services provided to Galway City by bus and train. ○ Athenry town centre is the largest attractor of employment trips (1,428 attractions) within the study area. Other key employment areas include the train station environs and Raheen Industrial Estate. ○ The town is generally quite flat, although it rises towards the relief road, while the surrounding greenfield land within the study area is generally hillier, rising again towards Monivea and Attymon. The flat nature of the town core is beneficial for active travel. 	<p>Key Points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Very limited public transport connections to surrounding towns. ○ There is severance caused by the rail line, limiting access from northern residential areas to southern destinations. ○ There is an absence of cycle infrastructure in the town, bar some disconnected links on the town edge, although cycle parking is present in a few locations. ○ Pedestrian facilities (pavement widths and pedestrian crossings) are poor or lacking at a number of links and key junctions within the town centre. ○ Car remains the dominant mode of transport, even for shorter distance commute trips. ○ A number of key junctions are unattractive to pedestrians and cyclists due to design prioritising motor vehicles. ○ Public transport represents just 5.5% of commute trips and active travel just 9.5%.

Opportunities

Key Points:

- Most of the study area is accessible within a 15-minute cycle. The provision of safe and attractive active travel links provides a potential opportunity for modal shift from car.
- Footpaths and crossing points for pedestrians in the town centre could be greatly improved within existing street widths, improving the attractiveness of the town.
- The large number of school places within the study area compared to the study area population shows the large catchment of the town that could potentially be better attracted to shop and spend time in the town through improvements to the urban realm.
- Approximately one-third of work and education combined trips from Athenry remain within the study area, and due to the local nature of these trips, there may be an opportunity to support this demand via active travel.
- The relatively flat topography of the study area would be beneficial for potential trips shifted to active travel.
- Significant improvements to public transport between Athenry and Galway City will be enabled by the passing loop to be installed at Oranmore station, and further improvements could be made possible via double tracking between Galway and Athenry as proposed in regional and local policy.
- The very low cycling mode share for education trips, despite high levels of cycling accessibility to schools from the study area in the ATOS assessment and large number of shorter trips, provides an opportunity to see large growth in numbers cycling to school through active travel measures

Threats / Constraints

Key Points:

- School traffic is the major cause of congestion in the town, exacerbated by footpath parking on key links.
- There are a very large number of school trips destined for the study area originating within the surrounding rural hinterland. It will be difficult for these trips to be served by active travel.
- The LTP study area is constrained by the physical barrier of the rail line which causes severance.
- Car ownership is quite high within the study area with 90% of households owning at least one car, and 42% owning 2 or more. If this pattern continues for new developments, it will likely lead to additional vehicular traffic on the road network.

4. LTP OBJECTIVES & FUTURE DEMAND FOR TRAVEL

4.1 Overview

Part 2 of the ABTA process focuses on applying the information gathered from the baseline assessment (including the SWOT analysis) to determine the principles and objectives that guide the development of the Local Transport Plan (LTP). The following sections provide an overview of the methodology used to derive the objectives for the Athenry, along with the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) used to assess the performance of the strategy options in meeting the study objectives.

4.2 Developing the Objectives and KPIs

The development of the principles and objectives for the Athenry LTP were informed by:

- The opportunities and constraints identified in the Part 1 Baseline Assessment SWOT Analysis;
- Existing local policies and objectives; and
- National level policy guiding the delivery of sustainable development.

In order to ensure a robust assessment of transport options, the objectives were broadly aligned with the key categories outlined in the Department of Transport's Common Appraisal Framework (CAF) with common themes identified:

- Accessibility & Social Inclusion: supporting local accessibility by walking and cycling within Athenry for all users;
- Environmental: supporting climate change initiatives and a general switch to more sustainable modes of travel;
- Economic: supporting the vibrancy and connectivity to Athenry Town Centre enhancing its economic competitiveness;
- Integration: supporting the integration of land use and transport planning in a manner that can affect significant modal shift to walking, cycling, and public transport; and
- Safety & Physical Activity: promote walking and cycling, and provide a safe environment for vulnerable users.



A detailed review was then undertaken of Local and National Policy to identify existing objectives under each of the CAF headings and themes outlined above. In particular, strategic outcomes and policies from the GCDP 2022-2028 were identified which could inform the principles and objectives for the Athenry LTP. The SWOT analysis from the Baseline Assessment was also reviewed to identify specific constraints and issues currently within the study area which should be addressed by the Athenry LTP objectives.

Performance measurement is used to determine if the full set of recommendations proposed under the Athenry LTP achieve the desired outcomes. Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) have been identified and were used to measure the performance of the LTP strategies under the various objectives. Table 4-1 below outlines the objectives and associated KPIs developed for the Athenry LTP.

Table 4-1: Athenry LTP Objectives and KPIs

HEADING	OBJECTIVE	KPI
Accessibility & Social Inclusion	Support and implement transport measures which reduce car dependency and improve access to local services by sustainable modes	Access to key services (ATOS Analysis)
		Qualitative (Rating scale) access to PT opportunities
Integration	To align and integrate with existing and emerging national, regional, and local planning policy	Compatibility of transport measures with local, regional and national policy - Rating Scale
Safety & Physical Activity	Provide safe access to schools for vulnerable road users and ensure a safe front of school environment	Qualitative assessment of walking and cycling infrastructure to schools - Rating Scale
		Reduction in walking/cycling distances to school sites (GIS/ATOS assessment)
Environment	Contribute to achieving Climate Action Plan targets through the creation of an environment which encourages a modal shift from the private car to more sustainable modes	Anticipated change on sustainable mode shares - rating scale
		Length of additional / improved walk and cycle infrastructure
Economy	Contribute to Athenry's economic vitality through improved connectivity and enhanced public realm	Access to Town Centre for each mode - Comparison of change in journey length (can be measured back to Do Min) and quality of route to town centre by mode
		Quality of Town centre streetscape /public realm – Rating Scale
		Deliverability Rating Scale- (With consideration to cost, engineering constraints e.g. topography / flooding constraints, third party support/acceptability e.g. does the measures require land acquisition from a single or multiple bodies)

4.3 Future Demand for Travel

In addition to the review of present-day conditions in Athenry, the project team examined the Draft Athenry Land Use Zoning Map. In collaboration with Galway County Council, an assessment of appropriate lands for future potential development was completed. The existing development patterns in Athenry were taken into account during this process. Access to existing, and planned, development sites was taken into consideration when determining the transport options for the LTP.

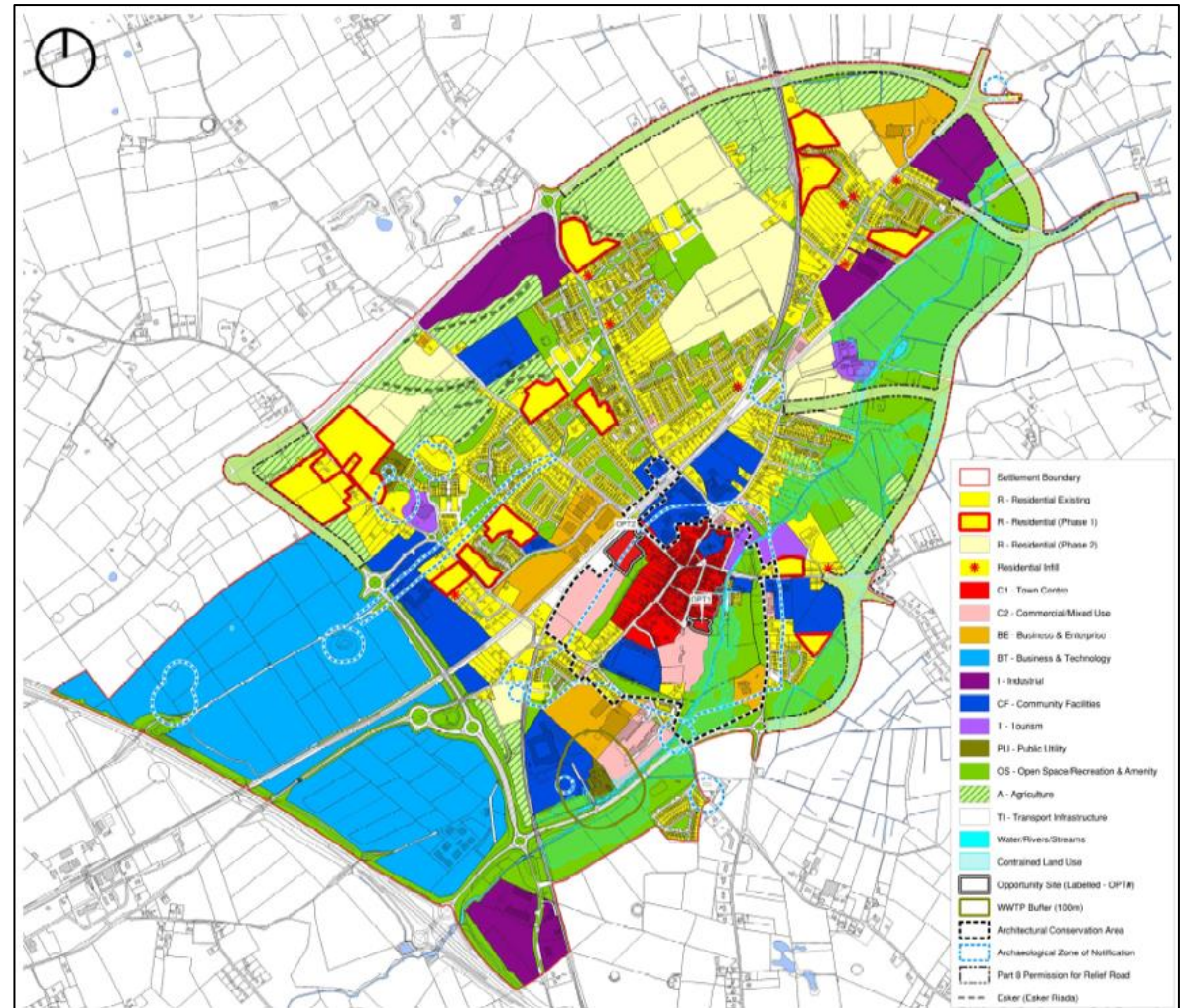


Figure 4-1 Draft Athenry Land Use Zoning Map

5. OPTIONS DEVELOPMENT & ASSESSMENT PROCESS

5.1 Options Development

An initial long-list of transport options were developed to address some of the weaknesses and constraints identified in the baseline assessment, and achieve the defined objectives for the LTP. The options list was developed in collaboration with the wider project working group including members from GCC and the NTA, through the following:

- **Data review** to identify proposals from wider policy/strategies for the study area;
- **Site visits** to review issues identified in the baseline assessment and opportunities for improvement; and
- **Workshops** between the project working group to discuss and agree potential options.

The options development process followed the Department of Transport’s National Investment Framework for Transport in Ireland (NIFTI) modal and intervention hierarchies (Figure 5-1). As such, options for applicable measures were first considered in relation to active modes (walking and cycling), followed by public transport and finally vehicular traffic. Options were also initially focused on maintaining, optimising and improving existing facilities before considering the construction of new infrastructure.



Figure 5-1: NIFTI Modal and Intervention Hierarchy

The following sections provide a brief overview of the options considered across active modes, public transport, vehicular traffic and supporting measures identified to assist in achieving the overarching Athenry LTP objectives. Full details on the long list of options, including maps and descriptions can be found in Appendix C.

5.1.1 Active Travel – Walking and Cycling

The development of the walking and cycling options built on the existing proposals of the NTA’s Cycle Connects inter-urban network and planned network improvements identified by Galway County Council.

The key aim in developing Active Travel Options is to provide Athenry with a safe, comfortable and integrated walking and cycling network enabling trips to school, work, shopping and all other purposes to be made using active travel. Options focused on improving connectivity and permeability from residential areas to main trip attractors, including the town centre, key employment and education

sites and leisure opportunities. Of particular focus was connecting residential areas north of the rail line with schools south of the rail line, building on the work underway with An Taisce’s Safe Routes to School programme.

Where feasible, fully segregated cycle facilities are proposed to improve safety for cyclists. Where segregation was not possible given space constraints, particularly within the town centre, measures have been proposed to provide a safe, low speed, traffic calmed environment for sections of cycle trips which must be made on-road.



Figure 5-2: Example of a Segregated Cycle Track

The town centre’s medieval streets are often very narrow, creating difficulties for the provision of segregated cycle infrastructure. Footpath widths are generally below minimum standards with a lack of formal road crossings creating an unattractive environment for pedestrians and cyclists. Given these spatial constraints and existing conditions, improving pedestrian safety and comfort was the priority in central areas. In addition, a number of contra-flow cycle tracks are proposed to increase cycling safety and permeability on the town centre’s one-way streets.

A number of leisure and amenity routes have also been proposed. This includes the proposed town wall walk and a pedestrian/cycle route along the Clarinbridge River connecting Clarin College to the town centre.

5.1.2 Public Transport Options

While active travel investment focuses on encouraging people to switch from car to cycling or walking for short distance journeys, public transport has the potential to encourage mode shift from car journeys for medium and longer distance trips.

The development of public transport options has incorporated insight from the Baseline Assessment and engagement with the NTA, with the aim of encouraging increase in use. As such, the options within the LTP seek to:

- Enhance accessibility for active modes from residential areas to bus stops and the rail station;
- Improve facilities at public transport nodes, through the provision of sheltered waiting areas, cycle parking, passenger information etc; and
- Work alongside the NTA to deliver enhanced bus and rail services to villages and towns in the wider region.

5.1.3 Road & Traffic Management Options

Options for the Road Network strategy were identified in order to improve safety for all road users. The priority in the development of the road network options (as per NIFTI) is to maintain, renew, manage and operate the existing road infrastructure in a more efficient manner, and any new road schemes must demonstrate that public transport, traffic management or demand management measures can’t effectively address the problem prompting the road proposal or are not applicable/appropriate.

Therefore, road options that would unduly induce car trips that could otherwise be made by active travel would not be appropriate. However, road options that facilitate the reallocation of road space in the town centre by enabling traffic to bypass the town centre streets are more in line with the LTP objectives and current national policy.

Given these considerations, the main road options are associated with the Athenry Relief Road as defined in the LAP, and included as a Policy Objective in the GCDP 2022-2028. The sections yet to be completed of this scheme have been separated out for assessment. No further new road infrastructure options are proposed as part of the long list.

In addition to options concerning upgraded and new road infrastructure, a number of traffic management options were developed in combination with associated Walking & Cycling proposals. These traffic management options are mainly located in the town centre where streets are narrow and active travel facilities are presently poor. These options and their associated Walking & Cycling measures aim to improve the public realm in key areas and provide a safer environment within the town.

5.1.4 Supporting Measures

In line with the Five Cities Demand Management Study Avoid-Shift-Reduce-Manage Transport Demand Management (TDM) Toolkit to reduce carbon, improve air quality and the urban environment, and manage congestion, a range of TDM Measures have been identified to support the switch to sustainable modes across the Study Area.

In line with Safe Routes to School measures proposed by An Taisce in Athenry, a number of potential Park & Stride⁵ sites have been identified which would reduce congestion at school gates. Schools in Ireland which have implemented park and stride have found that children are more alert in the morning, having had some fresh air and exercise⁶.

Supporting measures include those to promote Active Travel, Public Transport and School Travel. A number of behavioural change measures are identified, including the role that Mobility Management can play in both avoiding the need to travel and supporting a switch from car travel to sustainable modes on a site by site basis.

⁵ The concept of 'Park & Stride' means parking the car a short distance from your destination and making the last leg of the journey on foot. This can have health benefits in terms of promoting physical exercise, whilst also removing traffic from heavily congested areas e.g. outside school gates.

⁶ Fingal School Streets: Pilot Review 1 <https://www.fingal.ie/sites/default/files/2020-03/20200302-300548-school-streets-pilot-review-1-issue-1.pdf>

5.2 Options Assessment Methodology

Having developed a long list of options, an assessment process was undertaken to determine which of these options are to be included in the Emerging Preferred Strategy for the Athenry LTP. The long list of options were passed through a four-stage assessment process as outlined in Figure 5-3, including:

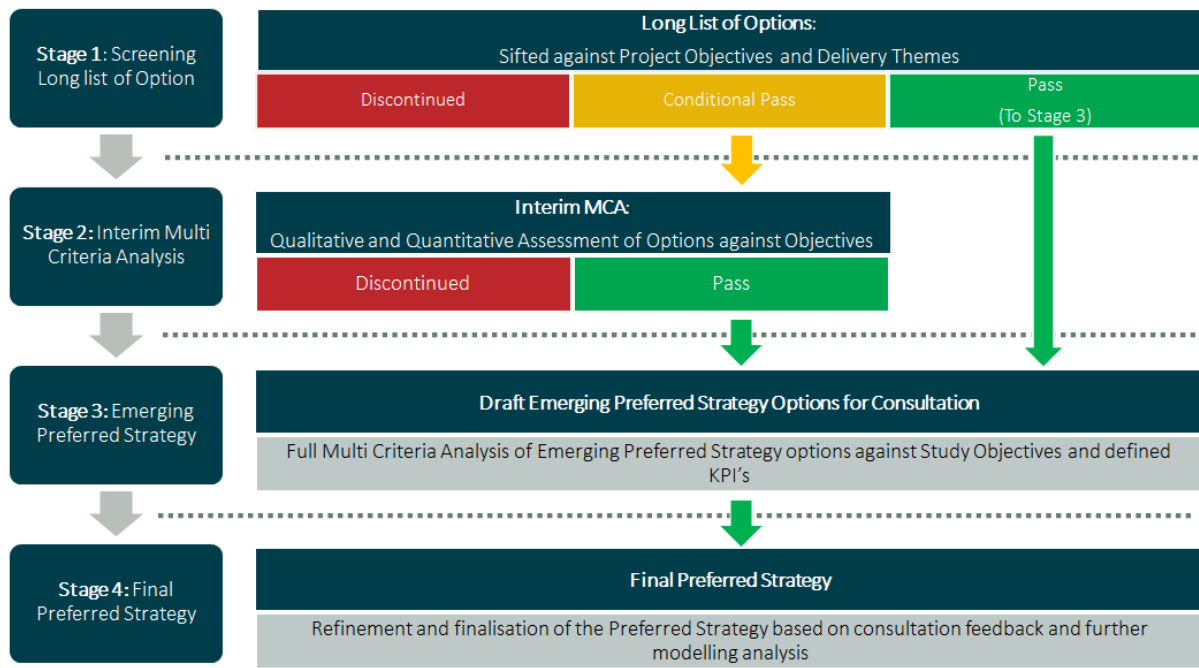


Figure 5-3: Options Assessment Methodology

- **Stage 1 Options Screening:** The long-list of options were screened against the overall project objectives and core delivery themes to identify which ones should be discontinued, which could pass directly to the final strategy, and which required further assessment;
- **Stage 2 Interim Multi-Criteria Analysis (MCA):** Options requiring further analysis were passed through a MCA with qualitative indicators used to score each option against the study objectives;
- **Stage 3 Draft Emerging Preferred Strategy Options for Consultation:** Options passing Stage 1 and Stage 2 form the initial draft Emerging Preferred Strategy for the LTP.
- **Stage 4 Final Preferred Strategy (Post LAP Consultation):** Feedback from the project steering group and public consultation as part of the Athenry LAP process, will be used to refine the preferred strategy for the LTP.

The following sections provide a more detailed description of Stages 1 and 2 outlined above, full details of the process along with the assessment results for the long-list of options are available in Appendix C.

5.2.1 Stage 1: Options Screening

Stage 1 of the Options Assessment examined each of the long list of measures against the LTP objectives. The options were also assessed against the following core delivery themes:

- Engineering feasibility;
- Acceptability;
- Funding potential; and
- Value for money

Based on this initial screening, options were classed as follows:

- **Discontinued:** the option did not align with the LTP objectives and therefore is not included in the Emerging Preferred Strategy;
- **Pass:** the option satisfied the project objectives and the core delivery themes, and no alternative proposals were identified in the options development process. These options passed directly into the Emerging Preferred Strategy without the need for an interim assessment.
- **Conditional Pass:** the option aligned with the LTP objectives, however, either didn't fully meet all of the core delivery themes or had a number of alternative proposals identified. In these instances, the options were assessed in further detail as part of the interim MCA described in Section 5.2.2.

5.2.2 Stage 2: Interim MCA

The Interim MCA stage was used to evaluate alternatives based on their performance in achieving the overarching study objectives outlined in Table 4-1. This assessment was predominantly qualitative in nature. A five-point scoring system, outlined in Table 5-1, was used to assess the options across the various objectives. This produced a performance matrix which was reviewed to rank the scenarios and identify which ones performed best in terms of achieving the defined objectives of the study, and therefore, passed into the Emerging Preferred Strategy.

To ensure that the options that had advanced to the interim MCA stage were assessed holistically, and that mutually exclusive options were assessed at the same time, where possible/reasonable options were packaged together for the MCA process. Detailed work was undertaken to balance the positive and negative outcomes of each option to assess whether it would be included in the Emerging Preferred Strategy.

Table 5-1: Interim MCA Scoring System

Scoring	
Major Benefit: The proposal is expected to have a clear and considerable benefit or positive impact when compared to existing conditions.	
Minor Benefit: The proposal is expected to have a minor benefit or positive impact when compared to existing conditions.	
Neutral: Overall, the proposal is expected to have neither a positive nor negative impact when compared to existing conditions.	
Minor Disbenefit: The proposal is only expected to result in a minor negative impact when compared to existing conditions.	
Major Disbenefit: The proposal is expected to have a clear and considerable negative impact when compared to existing conditions.	

5.3 Summary

This section has outlined the process followed in developing a longlist of options for active travel, public transport, road & traffic management and supporting measures for Athenry as well as the assessment process followed to determine which options would be included in the LTP's Emerging Preferred Strategy. The full details and results of this process are available to view in Appendix C.

The following chapter outlines the Emerging Preferred Strategy arising from this Options Development and Assessment process.

6. EMERGING PREFERRED STRATEGY

6.1 Overview

The previous chapters in this report have detailed the process followed in identifying the Emerging Preferred Strategy for the Athenry LTP. The following sections provide a summary of the proposed measures which have passed through the assessment process and now form part of the Draft Local Transport Plan for Public Consultation.

6.2 Walking & Cycling

The overall proposed walking and cycling measures in the Emerging Preferred Strategy for Athenry are illustrated in Figure 6-1 and Figure 6-2. These measures will deliver radically improved connectivity and permeability from residential areas to main trip attractors including the town centre, key employment and education sites and leisure opportunities.

Where feasible, segregated cycle infrastructure has been proposed to improve safety and comfort for cyclists across the network. In addition to these significant measures, a number of permeability links are proposed which will increase the walking catchment of schools and the town centre. Also included are new and improved footpaths and traffic calming on roads and streets with insufficient width for segregated cycle infrastructure. A full description of the proposed measures included in the Emerging Preferred Strategy are provided in Appendix C. The key elements of the active travel strategy are summarised in the remainder of this section with the following terminology used to describe proposed interventions:

- **Cycle Tracks** = cycle lanes separated from vehicular traffic with a physical barrier.
- **Contra-Flow** = segregated cycle tracks running in the opposite direction to traffic on a 1-way road. This facilitates safe 2-way cycling on 1-way streets.
- **Traffic Calming** = measures to reduce vehicle speeds and create a safer environment for pedestrians and cyclists. Typical measures include:
 - Narrowing of the traffic lanes to minimum recommended widths;
 - Raised pedestrian crossings to provide priority for pedestrians;
 - Tightening of corner radii at residential estates to reduce crossing distances and improve safety;
 - Reduced speed limits; and
 - surface treatments, streetscape and landscaping enhancements.
- **Quietway** = low-trafficked street (typically <2,000 Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT)) and low-speeds meaning cyclists can safely share the carriageway. Typical measures include:
 - Traffic calming to enforce low-speeds;
 - Improved public realm to encourage active travel;
 - Improved signage and way-finding to encourage use; and
 - surface treatments and landscaping.
- **Permeability links** = walking and cycling links connecting neighbourhoods and providing greater accessibility along desire lines.
- **Traffic Filter** = interventions that allow through access for pedestrians and cyclists but local access only for vehicles.
- **School Zone** = front of school works to prioritise safe pedestrian and cycle access to the school, improving school visibility through signposting & placemaking, reducing vehicle congestion & preventing illegal parking in the area.

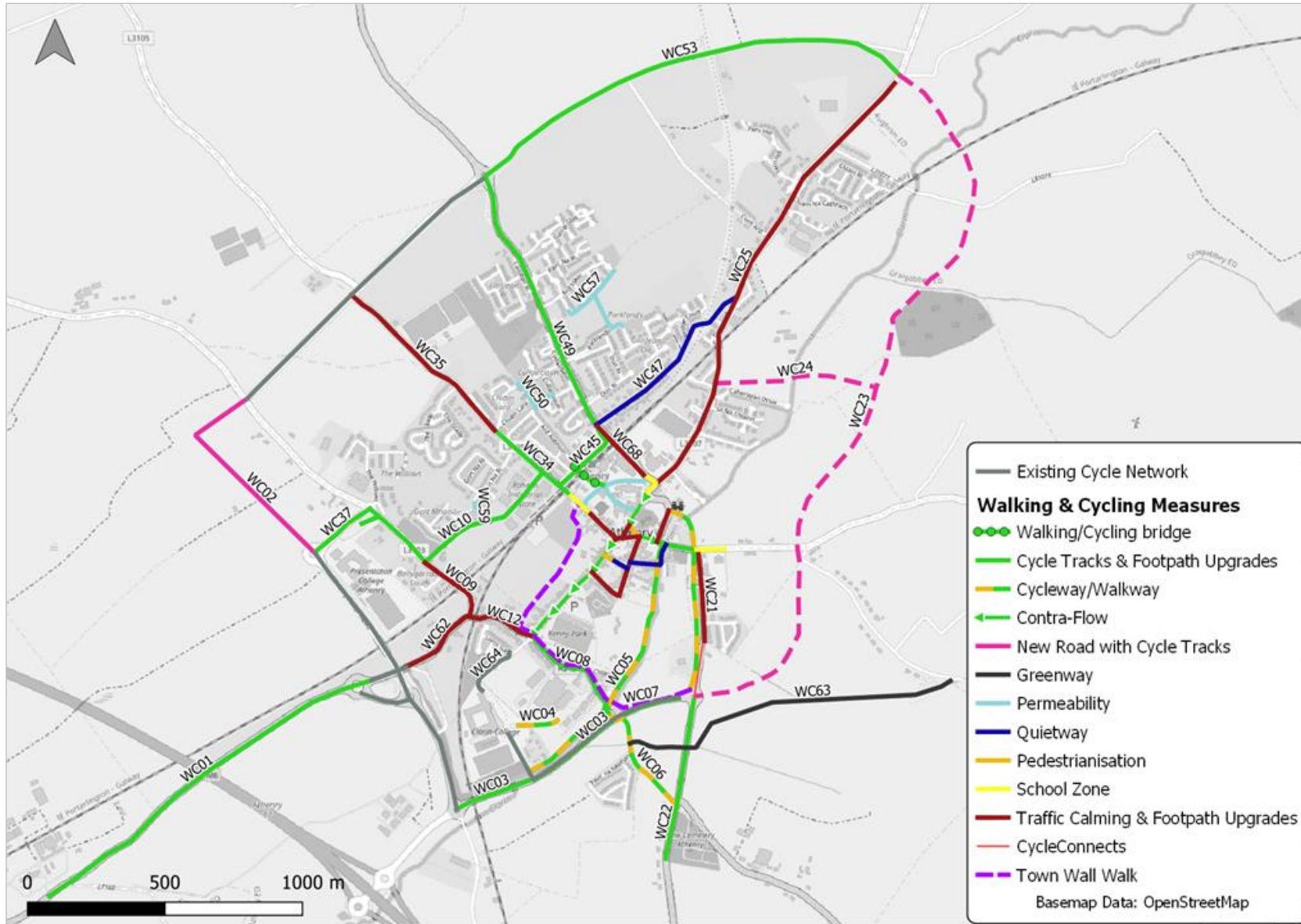


Figure 6-1: Emerging Preferred Strategy Walking & Cycling Measures

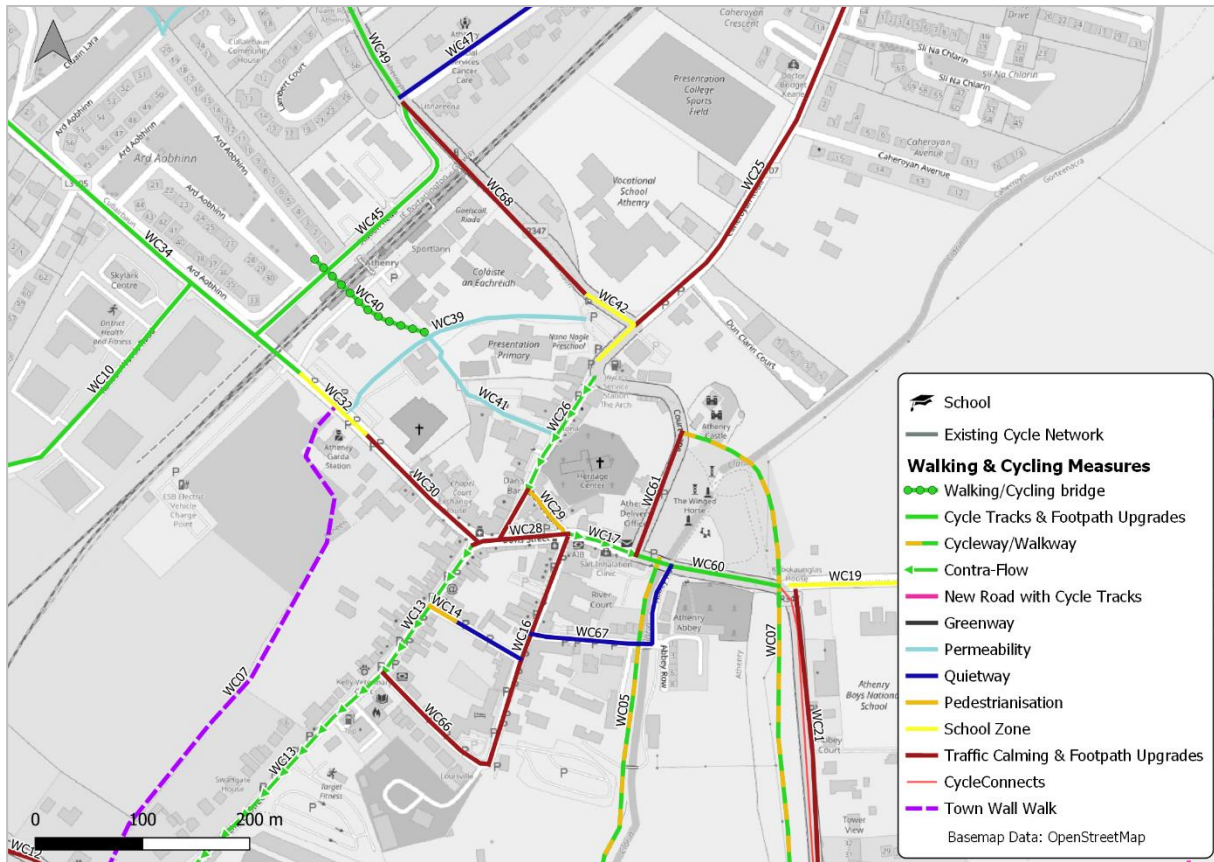


Figure 6-2: Emerging Preferred Strategy Walking & Cycling Measures (Town Centre)

6.2.1 Railway Crossings

The Baseline Assessment for Athenry highlighted the severance caused by the rail line with a significant population living to the north of the railway and a number of key destinations to the south including the town centre and schools. The majority of education trips in the town are under 2km, however travel by car makes up the largest share of journeys. The provision of safe routes to school will help achieve a shift to sustainable modes thereby contributing towards achieving climate action plan targets and helping to create an enhanced quality of life for the town's residents.

The current railway crossing points in the town centre are quite constrained with a level crossing along the L3105 and a narrow bridge on the R347. There is a strong desire line between the residential areas and the schools and town centre, and connecting these via safe and attractive pedestrian and cycle facilities is key to encouraging sustainable travel within Athenry.

A detailed optioneering process was undertaken (see Appendix C) to determine the optimal package of measures for supporting active travel across the rail line. In summary, the following is proposed as part of the Athenry LTP:

Upgrade of the existing level crossing on the L3105 Church Street

This short term solution includes widening of the rail crossing to enable separate, segregated entry points for pedestrians and cyclists away from vehicular traffic. This connection is important as it provides a link into the train station as well as the school zone proposed as part of the Scoil Croí Naofa Safe Routes to School delivery plan.

Construction of a new active travel bridge

This longer term proposal includes the delivery of a new active travel bridge (indicative alignment illustrated in Figure 6-3) providing a safe, segregated walking and cycling connection over the rail line. This combined with permeability links through the Church lands could provide an attractive route for pedestrians and cyclists to the school campus and town centre via North Gate Street. Completely segregated from traffic traversing the town, the route would encourage substantially greater levels of walking and cycling to the town centre and surrounding schools. The delivery of this connection would help alleviate current severance issues due to the rail line and provide significantly improved accessibility for local residents via safe walking and cycling infrastructure.

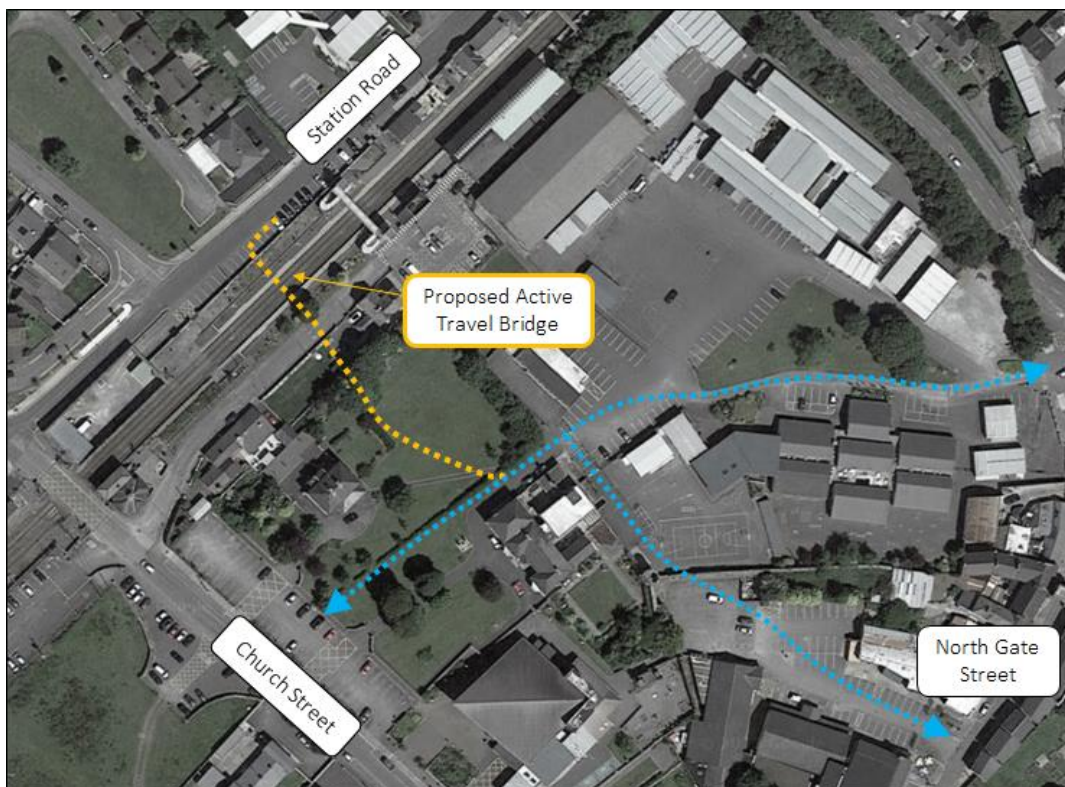


Figure 6-3: Proposed New Active Travel Bridge

However, it is acknowledged that the construction of a new bridge would be a longer-term measure given the cost of delivery and land-ownership. In the short/medium-term, it is proposed to upgrade footpaths along the R347 providing a strong pedestrian link to the schools south of the rail line. Traffic calming measures will be proposed to reduce vehicle speeds and increase safety along this route.

An alternative safe route for cyclists will be provided as part of the wider Emerging Preferred Strategy of measures with segregated cycle infrastructure along Station Road and connecting to the Safe Routes to School scheme on Church Street. Station Road is a critical link in the wider Athenry network, and the upgrade of pedestrian and cyclist facilities along this route will:

- Facilitate safe access by walking and cycling to Athenry Train Station from residential areas along the R347 and L3105 encouraging interchange and sustainable travel;
- Provide a connection for large residential areas to the school campus south of the rail line and the town centre – linking to the bridge crossing option described previously and proposed upgrades to the existing level crossing;

- Connect with cycle infrastructure proposed on Raheen Woods Road and the L3103 providing a safe pedestrian and cycle route to Presentation College. This should help encourage active travel for local school trips.

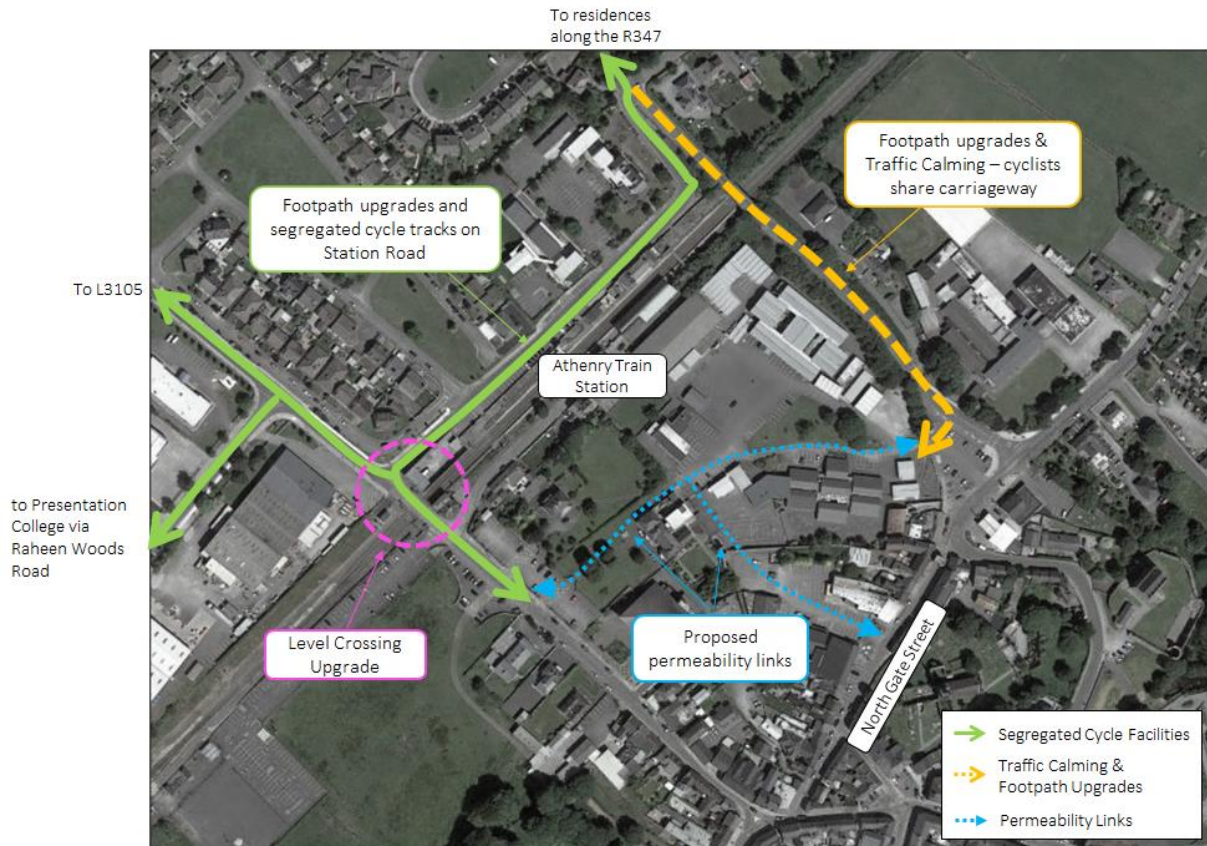


Figure 6-4: Short/Medium Term Active Travel Connections Across the Rail Line – Atherry Town Centre

6.2.2 Town Centre Improvements

Atherry is a historic town which is characterised by meandering and irregular width streets within its centre. The constrained widths result in narrow footpaths at a number of key locations which severely impedes safe access for pedestrians, particularly those with mobility impairments. This, combined with a general lack of formalised pedestrian crossing points, create an unwelcoming environment for visitors arriving on foot or by bike.

In order to improve the attractiveness of the town centre environment, and alleviate safety concerns, a series of traffic management and active travel measures have been proposed as illustrated in Figure 6-5. The goal of the town centre measures is to create a more pleasant environment for people to spend time in Atherry, adding to footfall and supporting the economic growth of the town.

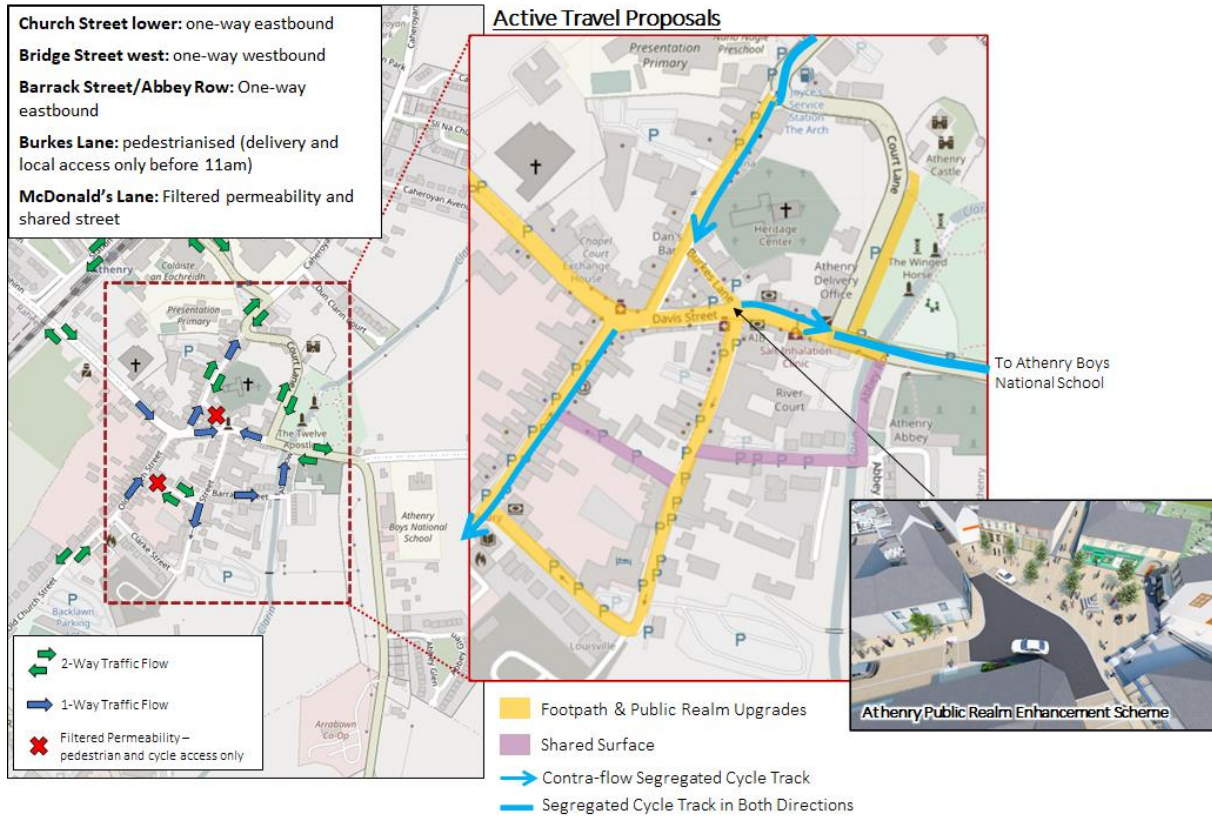


Figure 6-5: Town Centre Circulation and Active Travel Proposals

Market Square & Cross Street

A first step towards improved public realm in Athenry’s Town Centre is being taken as part of the upcoming Athenry Public Realm Enhancement Scheme. As part of the scheme, Burkes Lane will be pedestrianised (with access for deliveries before 11am). Parking on the square will be removed bar a drop-off/pick-up point and a pedestrian plaza created on Market Square. It is intended that the public realm scheme will be submitted for planning early in the near future and, subject to approval, will begin construction in 2024.



Figure 6-6: Market Square Proposals as part of the Athenry Public Realm Enhancement Scheme

GCC are also progressing upgrades on Cross Street. This includes more formalised parking arrangements along with footpath upgrades and public realm enhancements.

Bridge Street

Bridge Street is the main connection from the east of the town into the proposed Market Square plaza. It currently operates two-way for vehicular traffic, however, there is insufficient space for vehicles to pass each other safely due to the narrow carriageway widths and on-street parking and loading bays. Footpaths are also extremely narrow in places creating an unattractive environment for pedestrians.

It is proposed that Bridge Street be converted to 1-way westbound for vehicular traffic entering the town centre. This will allow for reallocation of road space to provide improved footpaths and an eastbound contra-flow segregated cycle lane. This will help provide a safe walking and cycling connection to the planned Market Square plaza. Combined with wider measures on Bridge Street and the Safe Route to School proposals, this will facilitate a continuous safe connection between the Athenry Boys National School and the town centre

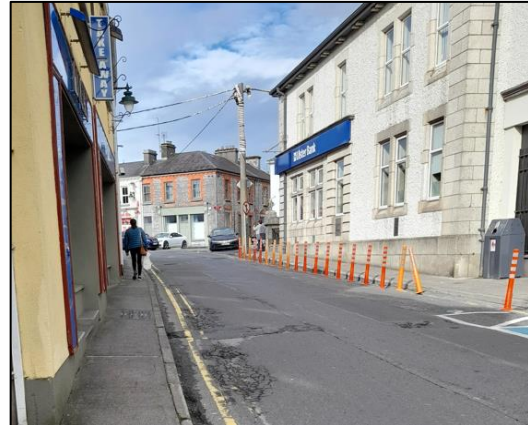


Figure 6-7: Bridge Street Existing Layout

Church Street

Figure 6-8 illustrates the existing layout of Church Street at the connection with Davis Street and Old Church Street. Currently, it accommodates traffic movements in both directions. However, the narrow carriageway results in both carriageway and footpath widths considerably below the standards set out within the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (DMURS) guidance. This leads to vehicles mounting the footpaths to pass each other creating a safety hazard for pedestrians. The footpaths along this section of road on access to the town centre are also extremely narrow with insufficient space for pedestrians to pass each other safely or to facilitate safe access for pedestrians with mobility impairments.



Figure 6-8: Church Street Existing Layout

In order to overcome these issues, it is proposed that Church Street be converted to 1-way at its eastern end for traffic heading eastbound towards the town centre. This will remove the dangerous manoeuvre for vehicles attempting to pass each other on this narrow stretch of road, whilst providing additional space to significantly upgrade the footpaths for pedestrians accessing the town centre.

North Gate Street

North Gate Street is an important link in the Athenry town centre network connecting from the school campus and the R347 to the heart of the town on Market Square where public realm upgrades are planned. It is currently lined with local businesses and framed at the northern end by the old medieval town wall. However, currently North Gate Street is dominated by on-street parking with very narrow footpaths in places creating a generally unattractive environment for pedestrians and cyclists.

The proposed option for North Gate Street is illustrated in Figure 6-9 and includes the improvement of the public realm and active travel environment along the street through widened pedestrian areas and public realm works, as well as provision of a contra-flow cycle track to the junction with Burkes Lane, facilitating onwards travel to Market Square.

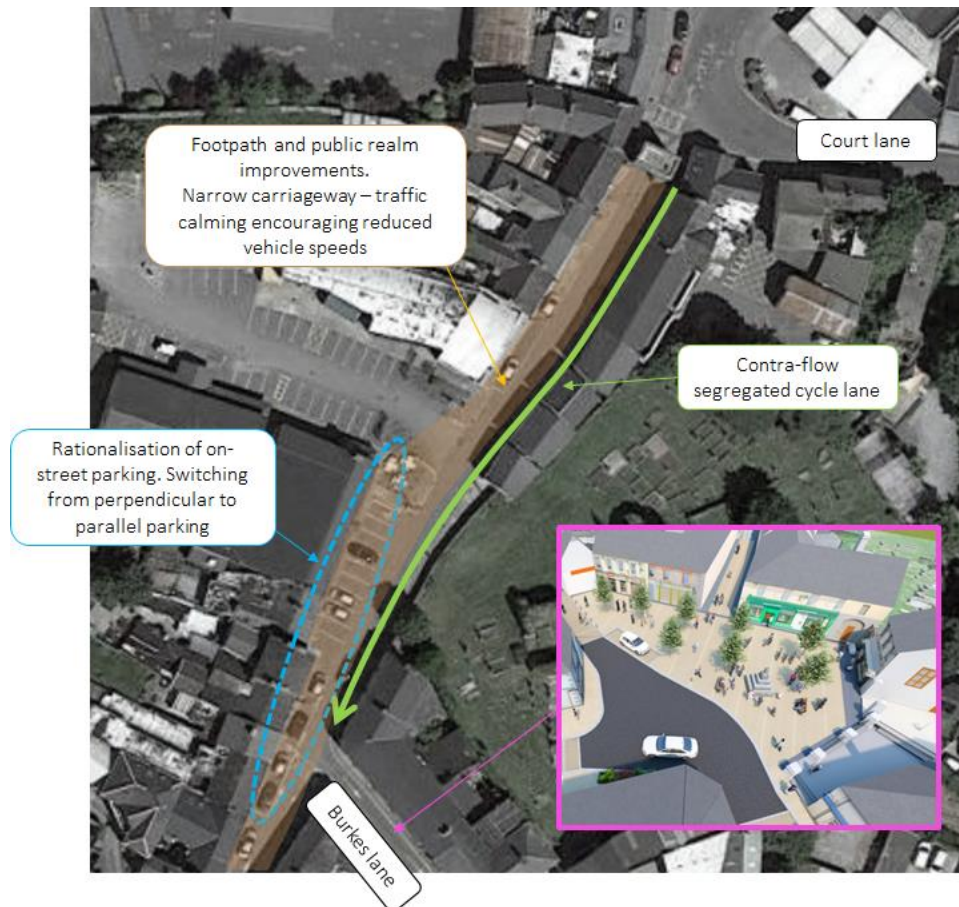


Figure 6-9: North Gate Street Proposals

The proposals for North Gate Street should transform this area into an attractive and vibrant location framed by the old town gate. Footpath upgrades with public realm enhancements will create a nicer environment for pedestrians and for people to spend time on North Gate Street. The introduction of a contra-flow cycle lane will provide safe access for cyclists towards the town centre and the planned upgrades to Market Square and Burkes Lane. Overall, this should encourage increased walking and cycling to the town centre via North Gate Street, and support local businesses along the route. Whilst the proposals may require some rationalisation of parking, there is a large off-street car park available along North Gate Street where any parking removed could potentially be reallocated.

Old Church Street

The proposals for Old Church Street include the reallocation of road space to deliver:

- A contra-flow cycle track from the junction with Church Street to Clarke Street continuing down to the R348 (Prospect); and
- Footpath and public realm upgrades along Old Church Street.

The proposed upgrades for Old Church Street will provide a significant improvement in the public realm and walking environment on the street as a result of the wider, more comfortable footpaths, meeting national policy on promotion of active travel, improved urban public realm and a reduction in car dominance in town centres.

The delivery of a segregated contra-flow cycle track will facilitate safe cycle movements in both directions along Church Street resulting in reduced travel distances and journey times for cyclists. The

reduction in carriageway widths, along with cycle infrastructure provision, will help to reduce traffic speeds along the street improving general safety for pedestrians and cyclists and creating an improved town centre environment.

The provision of upgraded active travel infrastructure along Old Church Street will improve connectivity for pedestrians and cyclists from the town centre further south to Kenny Park as well as shops and businesses along the R348 (Prospect) via the proposed town wall walk. It will also improve access from the town centre to Clarin College via the permeability link through Lorro Gate residential estate.

The space for this improved walking and cycling infrastructure will mostly come from a reduction in carriageway width (including removal of the left filter lane at the Church Street junction which would no longer be required due to the 1-way system proposed). Where reducing carriageway widths is not sufficient to deliver these measures, localised reductions in on-street parking may be required. It is envisaged that any spaces removed could be reallocated to the large Backlawn Car Park located nearby to the south. It is assumed that high-quality disabled parking bays will be prioritised for Old-Church Street in any designs.

McDonald's Lane

McDonald's Lane is a narrow one-way street connecting Cross Street to Old Church Street within the town centre. At the western end of the lane, existing building layouts create an unsafe environment for pedestrians. There is very poor visibility for pedestrians on Old Church Street to see traffic exiting from McDonald's Lane onto Old Church Street. There are also no footpaths provided at this pinch point for pedestrians using McDonald's Lane to access Old Church Street as illustrated in Figure 6-10.



Figure 6-10: McDonald's Lane Existing Layout

It is proposed that McDonald's Lane is closed for vehicular traffic at the western end on access to Old Church Street, with two way access retained for residents on the street. This will allow for the creation of a shared street on McDonald's Lane which will be very low-trafficked and provide a safe connection for pedestrians and cyclists from Cross Street to Old Church Street. It is envisaged that two-way local access will be provided for vehicles along McDonald's Lane to off-street residential parking which will be prioritised for mobility impaired residents. There may be some reallocation of existing on-street parking required to nearby streets.

Barrack Street & Abbey Row

Barrack Street and Abbey Row are narrow residential streets in the heart of Athenry town centre. These roads currently operate with traffic in both directions, however, with parking on street, it often acts as an informal 1-way as it is not feasible for two cars to pass each other on certain sections.



Figure 6-11: Abbey Row Existing Layout

Pedestrian facilities are also poor. There are no footpaths on either side of Abbey Row. On Barrack

Street there are footpaths along some sections but these are well below minimum width standards.

In order to improve the environment for pedestrians and cyclists, it is proposed to convert Barrack Street and Abbey Row to 1-way traffic only in an eastbound direction. Public realm upgrades are proposed along the route including elements such as pavement treatments and traffic calming measures to promote its function as a residential street rather than a through route for vehicular traffic.

Traffic survey data and modelling analysis indicates that the volume of traffic using Barrack Street and Abbey Row is very low, mainly providing access to local residences and businesses. These low traffic volumes along with slow speeds would allow for the creation of a shared space environment where pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles could share the carriageway. This would provide a safe route for active travel providing a connection to the town centre and also Athenry Community Park and playground off Bridget Street. This has the potential to be an extremely attractive route with the Clarin river running along Abbey Street and the historic Church also located along the route.

6.2.3 Other Key Proposed Active Travel Links

Figure 6-12 illustrates some additional key active travel routes proposed as part of the Athenry LTP. These links, combined with the railway crossings and town centre improvements detailed above, will provide the backbone of a network of safe active travel facilities in Athenry.

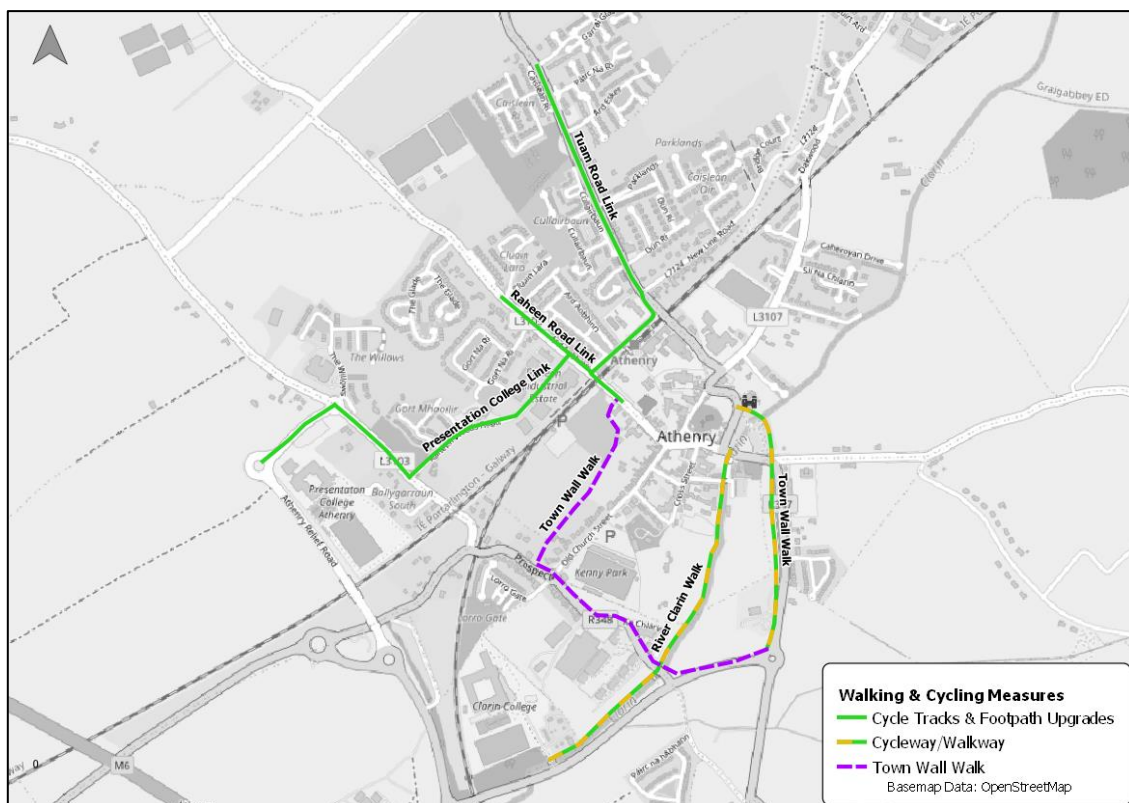


Figure 6-12: Key Active Travel Links

The Presentation College Link provides segregated cycle tracks and upgraded footpaths between Presentation College and the railway station via the L3103, Raheen Woods Road and Raheen Road. Junctions along the link will also be upgraded to provide safe crossings for people walking and cycling. Similar upgrades are proposed for the Tuam Road, Raheen Road and Station Road. As can be seen in the figure above, these routes combine together to form a network of safe links providing connections

from the residential areas to the north of Athenry to the train station and Presentation College for children walking and cycling to school. When combined with other proposals within the LTP including the active travel bridge on Station Road and potential onward connections through the school campus, they will create an attractive walk and cycle network linking residential areas to schools and the town centre. This will help support a shift towards active travel and away from the car for shorter distance trips within the town.

Two other key active travel and leisure routes proposed are the Town Wall Walk, leveraging Athenry's Medieval History, and the River Clarin Walk. Both of these routes will provide high-quality leisure facilities for residents of Athenry, as well as transport links on desire lines that couldn't otherwise be provided. The map in Figure 6-12 above shows the proposed route for these links.

The River Clarin Walk provides a safe, segregated walking and cycling link from the town centre directly to both Athenry Shopping Centre and Clarin College, two major destinations. The Town Wall Walk provides safe walking and cycling facilities along the R347 into town, as well as along Prospect and potentially bypassing the narrow Old Church Street towards the railway station. It should be noted that the mapped routes are indicative only and would require detailed feasibility assessment prior to being delivered.

6.2.4 Connections to Future Zoned Land

As outlined previously in Section 4.3, the proposed LTP measures considered access to existing development but also took cognisance of the draft Athenry land use zoning illustrated in Figure 6-13. This was to ensure that all future zoned land are served by strong active travel infrastructure to support the sustainable growth of Athenry.

Residential Lands

The majority of the zoned Residential Phase 1 lands will be served by proposed segregated cycle facilities and footpath upgrades along the R347 Tuam Road, L3105, Raheen Woods Road and the L3103. As outlined earlier in this chapter, these routes provide a connection to the wider active travel network linking to Presentation College, Athenry Train Station, schools south of the rail line and the town centre.

The largest bank of Residential Phase 2 land is located to the north of the town between the R347 and Cúirt Ard. If this land is developed, it is recommended that access is provided onto the R347 Tuam Road to connect to the safe walk and cycle infrastructure along this road. This would provide an onward connection to schools and the town centre.

It is also recommended that active travel connections are permitted through existing residential areas to the south to provide a link on the New Line. As part of the LTP, New Line is being promoted as a safe, quiet residential street for active travel. Any access to the east of the Phase 2 lands would require an upgrade of Cúirt Ard including the crossing of the rail line.

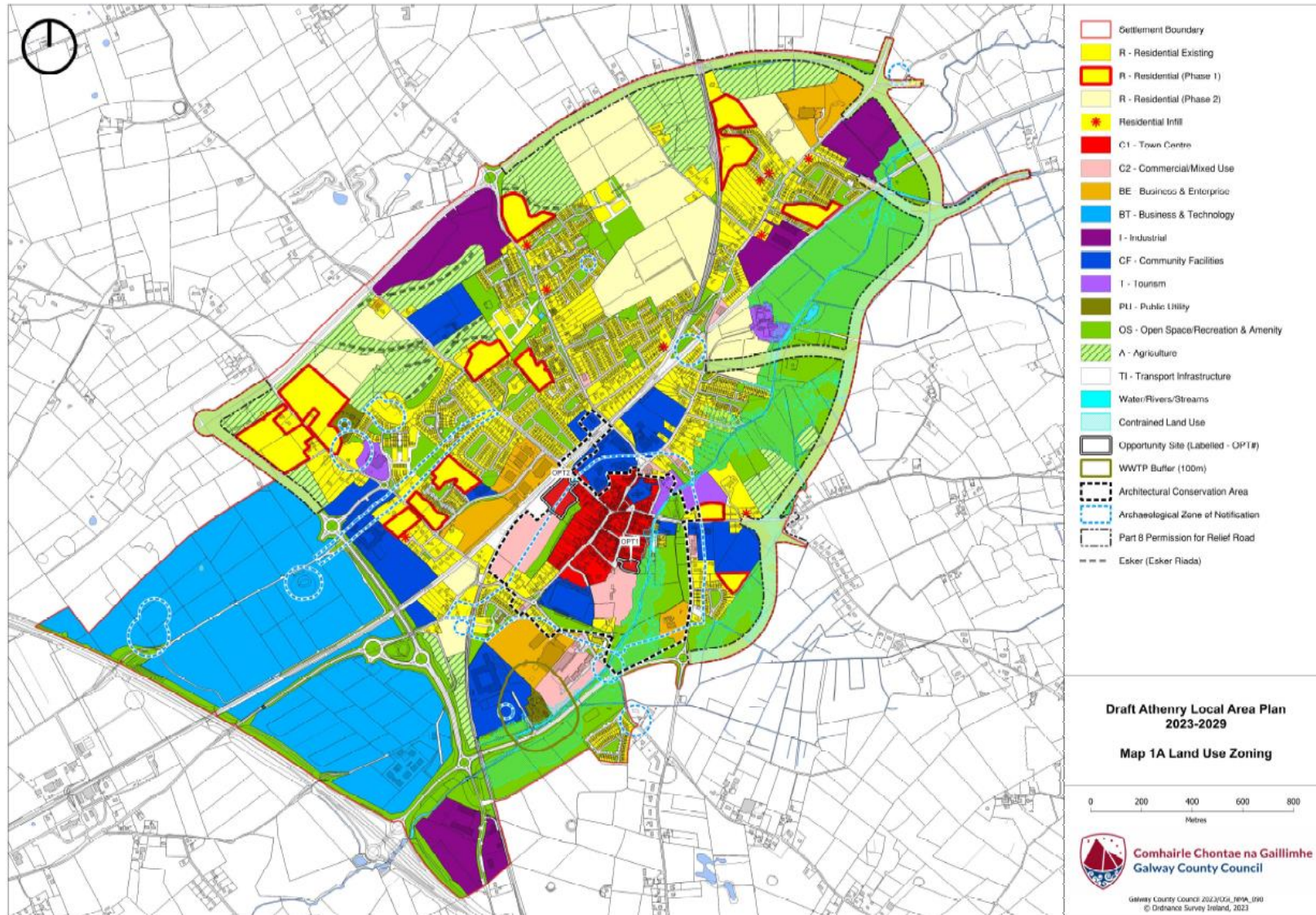


Figure 6-13: Draft Athenry Land Use Zoning Map

Employment Lands

The largest bank of zoned employment land is located to the southwest of the town close to the M6 interchange and the R348. As illustrated in Figure 6-1, these lands will be served by proposed footpath upgrades and segregated cycle facilities along the R348. Combined with the wider active travel network, the LTP proposes a strong walk and cycle network connecting these lands to residential areas along with the town centre.

To the north of the town near Ballydavid there are also lands zoned for ‘Industrial’ and ‘Business & Enterprise’. These lands are served by the L3107 Caheroyan Road which is proposed for traffic calming and footpath upgrades as part of the LTP. This will help to improve the safety for access to these lands by walking and cycling. They would also benefit from the proposed completion of the western bypass of the town with associated segregated walk and cycle facilities.

6.3 Public Transport

The public transport measures proposed in the plan are focused on medium and longer distance trips to and from the study area. The town was considered too small for the provision of a town bus services, with these shorter distance trips better served by active travel.

Athenry is strategically located in terms of rail transport, at the junction of the Galway-Dublin line and the Western Rail Corridor. This provides the most significant opportunity for the development of public transport services in Athenry, building on the projects ongoing to improve capacity on the Athenry-Galway line.

The main public transport measures for rail included in the Athenry LTP are aligned with the following GCDP 2022-2028 Policy Objectives:

- To secure in co-operation with relevant stakeholders (e.g. Iarnród Éireann & NTA) improved rail infrastructure and services between Galway and Athlone, which includes a dual railway track and additional improvement works to include an additional platform and passing loop at Garraun, Oranmore to ensure enhanced capacity and frequency of service;
- To support the opening of the Western Rail Corridor route from Athenry, Tuam, Claremorris to Collooney as an option for passenger and cargo transportation; and
- To support the addition of Loughrea to the Western Rail Corridor and to plan for the addition of a commuter route from Loughrea to Galway by linking Loughrea to either Attymon or Athenry train station to create a commuter tributary to Galway.

The proposed LTP active travel network has also been developed to provide better access for residents of Athenry to the train station by walking and cycling. This should be combined with additional safe cycle parking facilities at the station to support cycle and rail trips.

From a bus perspective, the LTP proposes engagement with the NTA on the provision of bus services through their ‘Connecting Ireland’ and ‘Local Link’ programmes connecting to surrounding towns not currently served by rail. The Athenry LTP also proposes the upgrade of waiting infrastructure and passenger information at all bus stops within the town.

6.4 Road & Traffic Management Options

As outlined in Section 6.2.2, a number of traffic management arrangements have been proposed within Athenry town centre to support walking, cycling and public realm improvements. These include one-way systems on Bridge Street, Church Street, Barrack Street and Abbey Row along with the closure of certain streets for non-local vehicular traffic.

The completion of the Athenry Relief Road, as illustrated in Figure 6-14, is a Policy Objective in the GCDP 2022-2028. The Athenry Relief Road Phase 2 (R01) is currently being delivered by GCC. Priority is given to completion of the western section of the Athenry Relief Road (R02) as a longer term measure to provide a full bypass of the town. This includes the upgrade of the existing L7125 which is a sub-standard road along with the delivery of segregated pedestrian and cycle facilities. In addition to reducing town centre traffic, this would provide an orbital active mode connection for residents to employment lands and schools to the northeast and southwest of the town.

The delivery of the eastern section of the Athenry Relief Road (R03) is likely to be beyond the lifetime of this LTP. As such, it is a recommendation of the plan that this corridor is preserved and the need for the road is reassessed as Athenry continues to grow beyond the current draft LAP.

The LTP also proposes the upgrade of a number of junctions throughout the town to improve safety for all road users. The current transport network in Athenry is often difficult to traverse for pedestrians and cyclists, with few formal crossings provided in the town and most junctions featuring wide, splayed turns for cars leaving long crossing distances for pedestrians and hazards for cyclists from turning vehicles. As the active travel measures illustrated in Figure 6-1 are delivered, all junctions along the routes will need to be reviewed and upgraded to provide safe access for pedestrians and cyclists. Exact details on proposed upgrade works will be defined at the individual project level.

6.5 Supporting Measures

A number of supporting measures have been proposed in the LTP to compliment the transport network improvements and support modal shift. These measures include a number of park and stride sites on the periphery of the town centre to reduce congestion at the school gate, the roll out of cycle parking, provision of improved bus stop infrastructure, and a range of behavioural change measures including mobility management plans. A full list of supporting measures included in the Emerging Preferred Strategy can be found in Appendix C.

- Church Street lower: One-way eastbound
- Bridge Street west: One-way westbound
- Barrack Street/Abbey Row: One-way eastbound
- Burkes Lane: Pedestrianised (local delivery access)
- McDonald's Lane: Filtered permeability and shared street

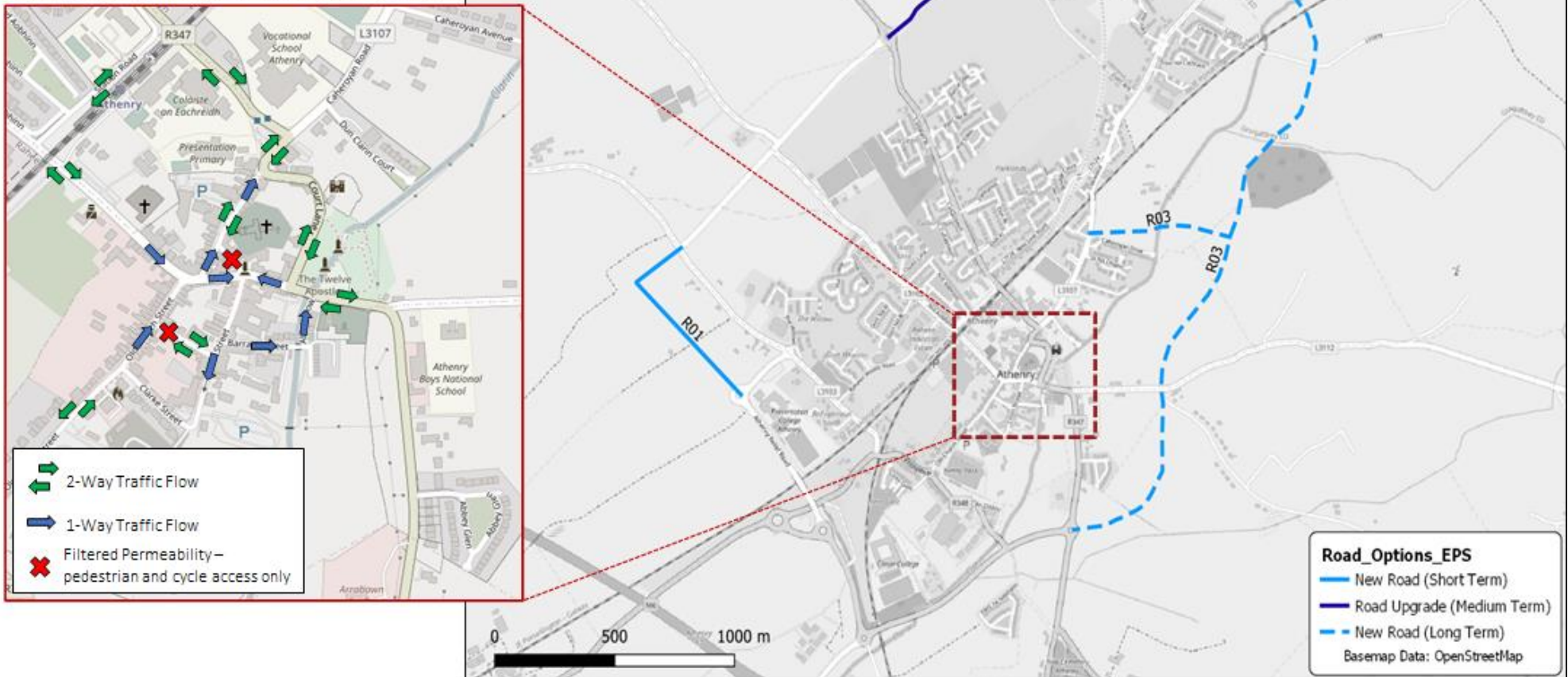


Figure 6-14: Emerging Preferred Strategy Road Infrastructure Measures

6.6 KPI Assessment

The draft Emerging Transport Strategy as a whole has been assessed against the objectives and KPIs listed in Table 4-1. The strategy has been assessed against an existing ‘Do Nothing’ scenario using the 5-point rating scale outlined in Table 5-1. The following sections provide an overview of the performance of the draft Emerging Preferred Strategy in meeting the overarching study objectives.

6.6.1 Accessibility & Social Inclusion

Table 6-1: Emerging Preferred Strategy Accessibility & Social Inclusion Outcomes

OBJECTIVE	KPI	SCORE
Support and implement transport measures which reduce car dependency and improve access to local services by sustainable modes	Access to key services (ATOS Analysis)	
	Access to Public Transport	

As outlined in Figure 6-1, the Emerging Preferred Strategy for Athenry includes the creation of an integrated active travel network providing improved accessibility to key services including the town centre and local schools. Strong pedestrian and cycle linkages are proposed to existing, as well as future planned employment locations within the town to support sustainable travel to work. Local permeability improvements have been identified, providing connectivity particularly for residential areas to the north of the rail line substantially reducing access times to key services by walking and cycling. The NTA’s ATOS tool was re-run for the future Emerging Preferred network proposed as part of the LTP. These maps are provided in Appendix D and illustrate the improvement in accessibility to services within Athenry as a result of the LTP measures.

The Emerging Preferred Strategy includes significant improvement to public transport such as frequency increases on existing services, the reopening of northern sections of the Western Rail Corridor and exploration of new bus services. Active Travel measures in the strategy will improve walking and cycling accessibility to rail and bus stops. It also includes supporting measures which will improve the quality of bus stop infrastructure in the town and the quantum of cycle parking at public transport stops/stations.

6.6.2 Integration

Table 6-2: Emerging Preferred Strategy Integration Outcomes

OBJECTIVE	KPI	SCORE
To align and integrate with existing and emerging national, regional, and local planning policy	Compatibility of transport measures with local, regional and national policy - Rating Scale	

The focus of the Emerging Preferred Strategy on active modes and urban realm enhancements is deemed to comply with national and regional policy as covered in Chapter 2. In particular, the town centre improvements align with the Town Centre First policy and active travel improvements align with the focus by the Department of Transport on Safe Routes to School. The overall rebalancing of the transport network towards sustainable modes aligns with the National Planning Framework, National Sustainable Mobility Policy, the Climate Action Plan 2023, the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy and the GCDP 2022-2028.

6.6.3 Safety & Physical Activity

Table 6-3: Emerging Preferred Strategy Safety & Physical Activity Outcomes

OBJECTIVE	KPI	SCORE
Provide safe access to schools for vulnerable road users and ensure a safe front of school environment	Qualitative assessment of walking and cycling infrastructure to schools - Rating Scale	
	Reduction in walking/cycling distances to school sites (GIS/ATOS assessment)	

The Emerging Preferred Strategy has a significant focus on providing safe routes to school by active modes. Examples of this include new or improved walking and cycle infrastructure on the Tuam Road, Raheen Road, Raheen Woods Road, R348 and the River Clarin Walk as well as the significant provision of an active travel railway crossing in the vicinity of the Tuam Road.

In addition, a number of streets in the town centre currently feature dangerously narrow, or even no footpaths. The Emerging Preferred Strategy proposes reallocation of road space and traffic management measures to provide continuous and safe walking and cycling facilities. These measures will provide a step-change in the quality and safety of active travel infrastructure for all trips through the town, including school trips.

The ATOS tool was re-run with the future LTP active travel network to illustrate the impact of the proposed measures on access to schools. Figure 6-15 outlines the results for walk access⁷ to post-primary schools within Athenry. The results highlight a significant increase in accessibility due to the proposed LTP active travel network with substantially more areas within the town scoring A or B.

⁷ Results for walk and cycle access to primary schools is provided in Appendix D

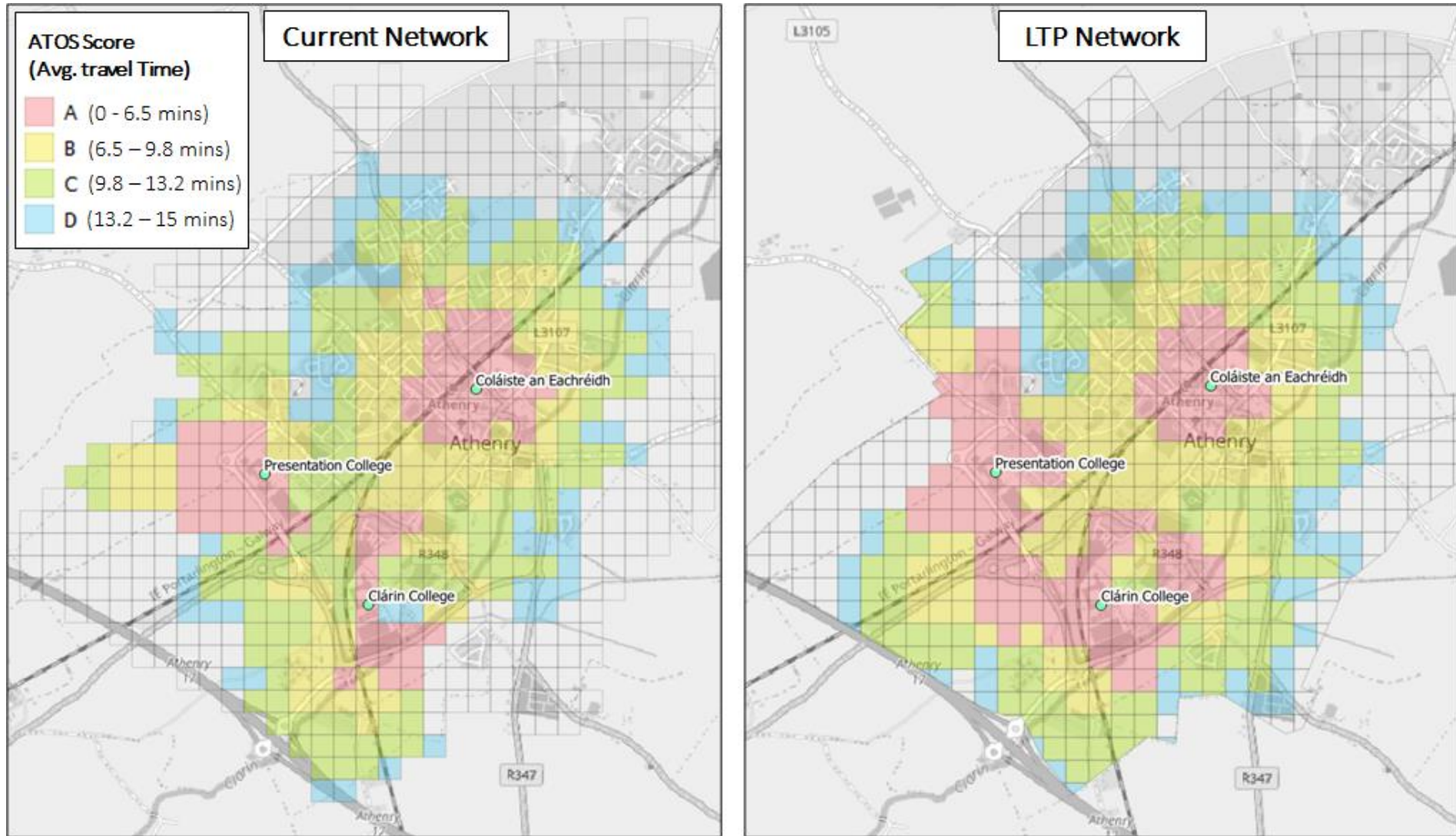


Figure 6-15: ATOS Walk Access to Post-Primary Schools Results (existing vs LTP network)

6.6.4 Environment

Table 6-4: Emerging Preferred Strategy Environment Outcomes

OBJECTIVE	KPI	SCORE
Contribute to achieving Climate Action Plan targets through the creation of an environment which encourages a modal shift from the private car to more sustainable modes	Anticipated change on sustainable mode shares - Rating Scale	
	Length of additional / improved walk and cycle infrastructure	

The Emerging Preferred Strategy will deliver enhanced sustainable connectivity across Athenry, supporting environmental improvements through reductions in carbon emissions, improving local air quality and enhancing the public realm to support active travel. The provision of a wider network of safe pedestrian and cycle infrastructure should help encourage a modal shift to active travel, particularly for short distance trips within Athenry.

The Emerging Preferred Strategy includes over 22km of new and upgraded walking and cycling infrastructure, delivering a considerable increase in the potential for safe active travel trips in Athenry. The increase is most notable in cycling infrastructure, with over 19km of new cycling infrastructure provided against a current network of 3.5km.

6.6.5 Economy

Table 6-5: Emerging Preferred Strategy Economy Outcomes

OBJECTIVE	KPI	SCORE
Contribute to Athenry's economic vitality through improved connectivity and enhanced public realm	Access to Town Centre	
	Quality of Town centre streetscape and public realm – Rating Scale	
	Deliverability Rating Scale	

While the Emerging Preferred Strategy does involve changes to the town centre circulation patterns for motor traffic and requirements for rerouting to complete some trips, this is compensated by a step change in accessibility to the town centre by sustainable modes, cycling in particular. The reallocation of road space enabled by these traffic management changes results in an improved walking environment on a number of streets where footpath provision was substandard or even non-existent.

The delivery of the Market Square plaza, along with wider improvements to footpaths throughout the town centre will result in a significant improvement to the town centre's public realm. This will make

Athenry a more attractive place to spend time, increasing footfall within the town centre and supporting local businesses.

The vast majority of measures in the Emerging Preferred Strategy involve reallocation of existing road space to active travel measures and are therefore cost effective and can be delivered in a short timeframe. These short term measures are focussed on providing strong connections from residential areas to key attractions in the town, notably the town centre, schools and employment sites.

Some longer term proposals will require significant resources in terms of both design and construction. This would include elements such as the proposed new active travel bridge over the rail line along with the delivery of the Clarinbridge River walk. There are also a number of options proposed for traffic management within the town centre which need to be investigated in further detail to determine their acceptability and overall deliverability.

7. MONITORING STRATEGY & LTP REVIEW

A Monitoring and Evaluation Plan will be developed and implemented as part of the delivery process for the Athenry LTP. This will monitor mode share ambitions and benchmark performance during the plan period.

The NTA guidance recommends undertaking reviews during defined timeframes (e.g. short term 1-2 years; medium 2-5 years; long term 5 to 10 years; future-term 10 to 15 years). At the end of each timeframe, monitoring can be conducted to establish the following:

- Progress on the implementation of all infrastructure measures for each mode of transport.
- Progress on the implementation of all public transport service measures for each mode of transport.
- Progress on the implementation of all demand management and supporting smarter travel measures.
- Cross-checking of assumptions in the ABTA against current transport patterns and population at the time of monitoring.
- Assessment of actual development and land use outcomes within the ABTA Study Area at the time of monitoring against the original ABTA assumptions related to land use.

Evaluation of the outcomes of the ABTA can also be undertaken within similar timeframes including evaluating the following:

- Sustainable Travel Mode Share – for example via updated Census POWSCAR data, Employment and School Mobility Management Plan data, local residents' surveys, cycling and walking counts and bus patronage data.
- Economic Benefits – for example via town centre footfall and spend surveys, distinguishing between those who travelled to the town centre by car and by sustainable means.
- Health and Safety Benefits – for example via analysis of available local road safety statistics.
- Environmental Benefits – for example via Air Quality and Noise monitors at key locations within the Town Centre and usage of public Electric Vehicle car charging and eBike parking facilities. User surveys can also be conducted to determine user satisfaction levels with new active travel infrastructure and public transport services and waiting environments.
- Accessibility and Social Inclusion – updated catchment analysis for access into and within town centre, including for those without access to a car.

8. SUMMARY

8.1 Overview

This report outlines the process undertaken to develop the draft Athenry Local Transport Plan (LTP) for consultation. The key purpose of the LTP is to guide the future transport and mobility needs of Athenry, taking into account the transport demand arising from existing and projected development both within the study area and the wider area of influence.

In developing the LTP, SYSTRA have followed guidelines set out in TII/NTA's 'Area Based Transport Assessment (ABTA) Guidance Notes. A detailed Baseline Assessment was undertaken to understand existing conditions within Athenry along with potential opportunities and constraints. Core study objectives were identified for the Athenry LTP grounded in National, Regional and Local policy.

Through site visits, and a review of existing conditions and relevant policies and plans, a long-list of proposed measures were identified to support the future transport needs of Athenry. These options were passed through a detail options assessment process to determine the package of measures that would form the draft Athenry LTP for consultation. The full set of draft strategy measures were assessed against the study objectives using identified Key Performance Indicators.

The results indicate that the draft LTP measures score very positively in meeting the overarching LTP objectives. The delivery of a safe, integrated walk and cycle network will improve accessibility across Athenry encouraging an increase in sustainable travel. A number of measures have focused on improving safety for access to local schools, supporting active travel and improving the health and wellbeing of children within the town. Measures within the town centre are focused on improving public realm and the pedestrian environment with footpath and junction upgrades. This will make Athenry a nicer place to be and spend time, increasing footfall within the town centre. In terms of wider accessibility, the draft LTP includes upgrades to existing public transport services and facilities, including improved frequencies of trains to Galway along with a potential wider expansion of the rail network.

SYSTRA provides advice on transport, to central, regional and local government, agencies, developers, operators and financiers.

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