

# Athy Social Infrastructure Audit

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A supporting document of the Athy Local Area Plan 2021 - 2027

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## 1. Policy Context

The assessment of 'social infrastructure' has been considered in the context of the spatial development objectives for the town of Athy, the parameters of which have been defined in statutory planning policy documents at a national, regional and county level.

The National Planning Framework (NPF) is the Government's high-level strategic plan for shaping the future growth and development of our country out to the year 2040. It recognises the importance of quality of life and notes that how future development in Ireland is planned will continue to be a significant determinant of people's quality of life. National Policy Objective 33 seeks to "*prioritise the provision of new homes at locations that can support sustainable development and at an appropriate scale of provision relative to location*".

The Regional and Economic Spatial Strategy 2019-2031 (RSES) prepared for the Eastern & Midland Region seeks to support the implementation of Project Ireland 2040 and the economic policies and objectives of the Government by providing a long-term strategic planning and economic framework for the development of the region. Regarding the development of settlements such as Athy, this document places particular emphasis on town centre renewal and states "*keeping a town vibrant and responsive to the needs of the community is an ongoing challenge and a greater range of supports need to be put in place to enable successful town centre renewal*". The RSES does not include any specific Regional Policy Objective (RPO) for Athy but notes that the town is a Level 3 Settlement (a Key Services Centre) in the overall retail hierarchy of the region. The RSES further notes Athy's built and natural heritage, including its town walls (remains of) and its location on the Barrow Blueway.

There are a number of regional policy objectives (RPOs) within the RSES which support the provision of and access to social infrastructure, including RPO 9.13, which seeks to ensure that new social infrastructure facilities are accessible and inclusive for a range of users. RPO 9.19 states that the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly (EMRA) shall work collaboratively with stakeholders including the wide range of service providers through the Local Economic and Community Plans (LECPs) to provide an effective strategy for social infrastructure needs.

The importance of Athy at a county level is emphasised in Variation 1 of the Kildare County Council Development Plan 2017-2023, where Athy is designated a '*Self-Sustaining Growth Town*' where its function is to provide a moderate level of jobs and services, which adequately caters for the people

of its service catchment, has good transport links and a capacity for continued commensurate growth. Under the Core Strategy of the County Kildare Development Plan 2017 – 2023 (CDP) Athy has been allocated 4.8% of the county’s overall housing growth. Applying this figure to the Athy LAP translates into a requirement for 771 additional units to be built over the life of the Plan to 2027<sup>1</sup>. Using the unit occupancy rate of 2.8 persons per household, as provided for in the CDP, the population of Athy is forecast to increase by 2,160 persons by the end of the Local Area Plan period. These forecasts result in a population target of 11,837 and a dwelling target of 5,052 units by 2027.

## 1.1 Methodology

The Social Infrastructure Audit (SIA) was conducted using desktop research and surveys in the field, as well as incorporating data previously logged and mapped by Kildare County Council. The SIA assessment comprises 3 parts; An Assessment of the Existing Situation and Infrastructure Provision; A Future Demand Analysis; and Social Infrastructure Recommendations.

### 1. Existing Infrastructure Provision

The ‘*baseline*’ assessment was derived from a desktop-based examination of available information and use of digital mapping techniques to identify spatial relationships between community infrastructure and population catchment in conjunction with several site visits for verification purposes. This assessment comprised of the identification and cataloguing of existing community infrastructure features (including where relevant, their capacity) under a number of predefined themes such as: Education/Training, Childcare, Health, Sports/Recreation and Open Space, Social/Community Services, Arts and Culture, Faith, and other features.

### 2. Future Demands Analysis

Consideration of existing infrastructure provision relative to the existing and planned population and best practice provision.

### 3. Recommendations

Recommendations for future social infrastructure provision which can be taken into consideration by the Planning Authority in the preparation of the Local Area Plan, and, in the assessment of other social and community programmes.

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<sup>1</sup> This figure only includes projected population growth on lands zoned for town centre and new residential uses. It does not include any increases in population on existing residential/infill lands.

## 2. Audit Parameters and Community Profile

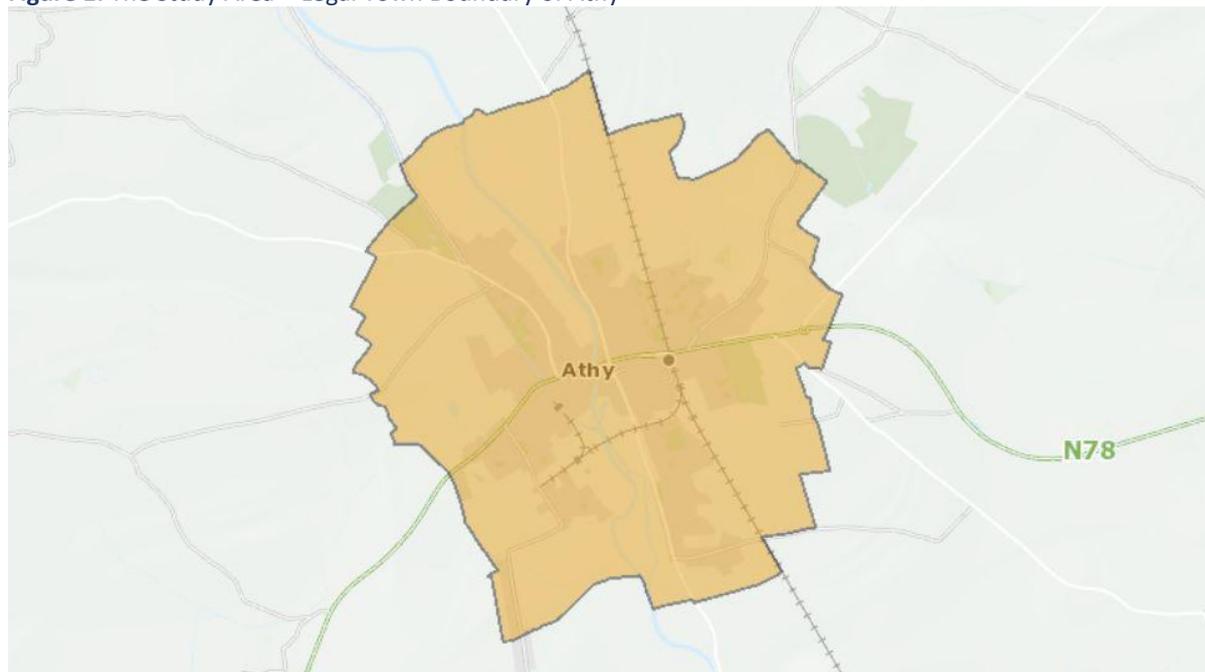
The function of a Social Infrastructure Audit (SIA) is to examine and analyse the availability and capacity of existing social infrastructure facilities, and to determine future requirements, and make recommendations based on anticipated settlement growth. The report is a statement of the outcome of the SIA.

The Social Infrastructure Audit was prepared by Kildare County Council (KCC) for the purposes of informing the content and policy objectives of the Athy Local Area Plan 2021-2027.

Social Infrastructure relates to the provision of services and facilities which are essential for health, well-being and social development of a town or community/neighbourhood. Social infrastructure facilities include education, health services such as schools, surgeries and community specific services as well as areas which can offer active sports and passive recreational activities. In addition, to the actual activity and function, social infrastructure facilities can provide an invisible platform of community and social interaction which some residents may rely upon for personal well-being. The provision of the requisite levels of social infrastructure within Athy is therefore vital to support the planned residential base in both physical facilities and social engagement.

The extent of the study area is shown in **Figure 1** (overleaf) which represents the Legal Town boundary of Athy which defined the boundaries of Athy Town Council. Although this was abolished by the Local Government Reform Act 2014 it will be used for the purposes of this audit to allow for the formation of historic comparisons and trends, and to enable the immediate hinterland of the built-up area of the town to also be surveyed.

**Figure 1:** The Study Area – Legal Town Boundary of Athy



Source: [www.census.cso.ie/sapmap/](http://www.census.cso.ie/sapmap/)

## 2.1 Demographic Profile

Census 2016 recorded a population of 9,847 persons in the defined Legal Town of Athy which represents a 2.6% (260 person) increase in the numbers recorded by Census 2011 (9,587 persons). This represents 4.4% of the county population of 222,504 in 2016. According to Census 2016, the 0-19 age cohort makes up 32.3% of the population, which is higher than the national proportion of 27.5%, while the 20-64 age cohort is also slightly lower at 56.6% when compared to the national figure of 59.1%. However, there is a lower proportion of the population aged 65+ years with 11.1% compared to 13.4% nationally.

**Table 1:** Population Profile

Age Group	Population	% of Total Population Athy	% at National Level
<b>0-4</b>	833	8.5%	7.0%
<b>5-12</b>	1,435	14.6%	11.5%
<b>13-19</b>	906	9.2%	9.0%
<b>20-64</b>	5,575	56.6%	59.1%
<b>65+</b>	1,098	11.1%	13.4%

## 2.2 Household Composition and Family Cycle

Within the study area 3,709 families are recorded. The largest family type consisted of households comprising of four persons (25% of all families), followed by three persons (20%), two persons (19%), five persons (15%), and those with one person (11%).

## 2.3 Accommodation and Home Ownership

Census 2016 recorded that the House/Bungalow is by far the largest accommodation type, accommodating 86.6% of the population with 11.4% comprising apartment living. The level of home ownership (outright ownership) and ownership with mortgage at 58% in Athy is notably lower than the national average at 67.6%. The rental sector also deviates from the national average, particularly the level of social housing (rented from a local authority or voluntary body) which at 15.4% of households far exceeds the national average of 9.4%. It is noted that in 2016, Athy had a similar vacancy percentage (12.5%) to the State (12.3%), though this has diminished greatly in the intervening period (refer to Chapter 4 Homes and Communities of the Local Area Plan).

## 2.4 Mobility

Car ownership within households is lower in Athy than the national average with 21.3% of households recording no car ownership compared to 15% for the State. However, it is noted 13.8% of the population aged 5 years and over commute 1 hour or over, which is significantly more than the state percentage of 8.3%. This is likely to be associated with travel time to/from Dublin City or the surrounding metropolitan hinterland.

17% of workers commute to their workplace using sustainable means, including walking, cycling and public transport (bus or the train). However, it is noted the vast majority use private transportation means including car driver (63%), car passenger (4%), van (7%) and motorcycle (1%). 2016 Census recorded only a very small proportion of the working population worked from home at 2%. It is considered that such a pattern may have changed with the advent of the Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent changes to work practices. The outcome of such a shift in work patterns will only become clear over the longer term.

41% of students commute to school or college using sustainable means, including walking, cycling and public transport either by bus or train. However, it is noted the majority at 48% commute to school or college as a car passenger.

## 2.5 Employment and Professional Qualifications

The largest workforce group are classified as ‘*all others gainfully occupied and unknown*’ (29%) followed by those employed in the Managerial and Technical Sector (20%) and then the Non-manual group (17%). The smallest workforce group apart from farmers and agricultural workers are the professional workers group (3%) and unskilled group (4%) with the non-manual and semi-skilled groups accounting for 32%.

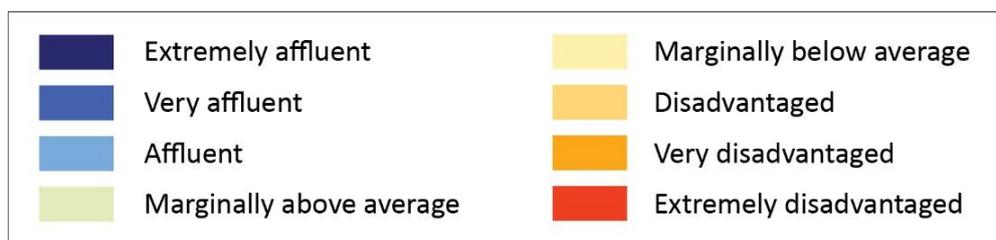
The percentage of pupils dropping out of school after primary school (under 15 years of age) is similar to that of the State, at 5.9% compared to 6% nationally. However, the level of educational attainment in Athy is lower than the national average especially for those holding professional qualifications, including ordinary and higher bachelor’s degrees. The percentage of persons holding these qualifications in Athy is 12.9%, compared to 18.3% for the State.

## 2.6 Health and Deprivation

84% of the population of Athy surveyed in Census 2016 described their health in a positive light either as ‘*Good or Very Good*’, while 12% of the population of Athy described their health in a negative light as ‘*Fair, Bad or Very Bad*’. This compares to 88% of the population of the State describing their health positively and 9% describing their health negatively.

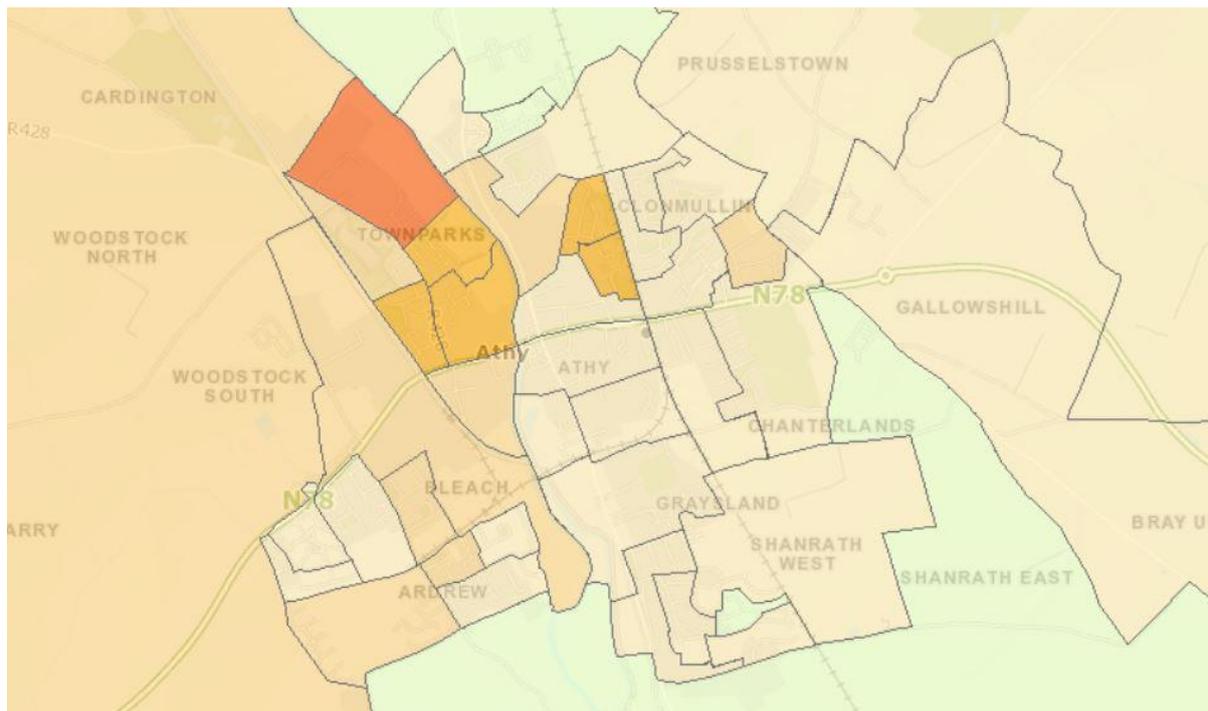
Athy compares negatively to other neighbouring comparable towns of Carlow and Kildare Town, Carlow and Newbridge in terms of social deprivation, as indicated by the Pobal HP Deprivation Index.

**Figure 2:** Key of Pobal HP Deprivation Index



Source: <https://maps.pobal.ie/WebApps/DeprivationIndices/index.html>

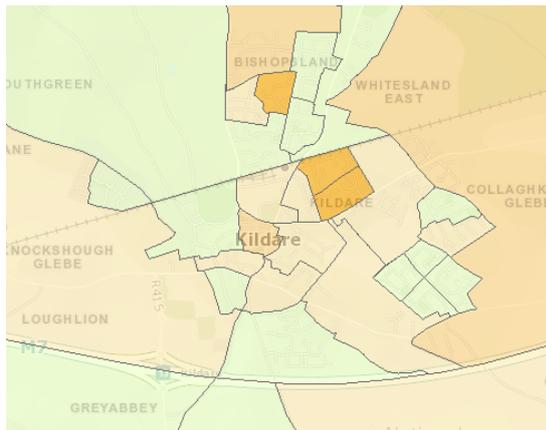
**Figure 3:** Deprivation Index of Small Area Population Statistics (SAPs) in Athy



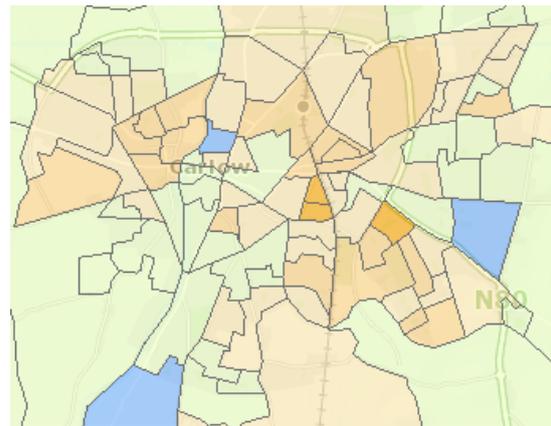
Source: <https://maps.pobal.ie/WebApps/DeprivationIndices/index.html>

This map resource (Figure 3) indicates a high level of deprivation in Athy, with no areas indicated as being affluent using the key in Figure 2. The majority of the town is designated as disadvantaged, with the Townlands area in the north west of the town designated as extremely disadvantaged. When contrasting this to other surrounding towns including Kildare Town, Carlow and Newbridge mapped (see **Figures 4 – 6**), it is clear Athy has higher levels of deprivation. It is noted, a small area in the northwest of the town is highlighted as being '*extremely disadvantaged*'. This area, known as Athy West Urban is one of the most disadvantaged small areas in the county with 48% of the adult population residing in this SAP only having received a primary school education.

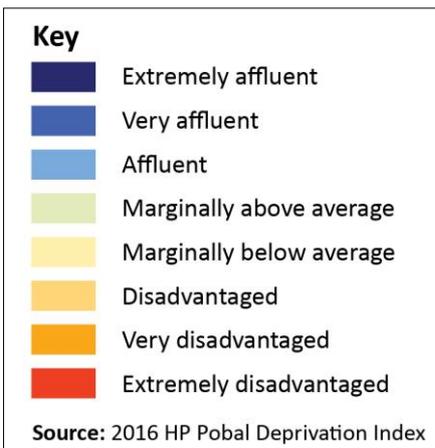
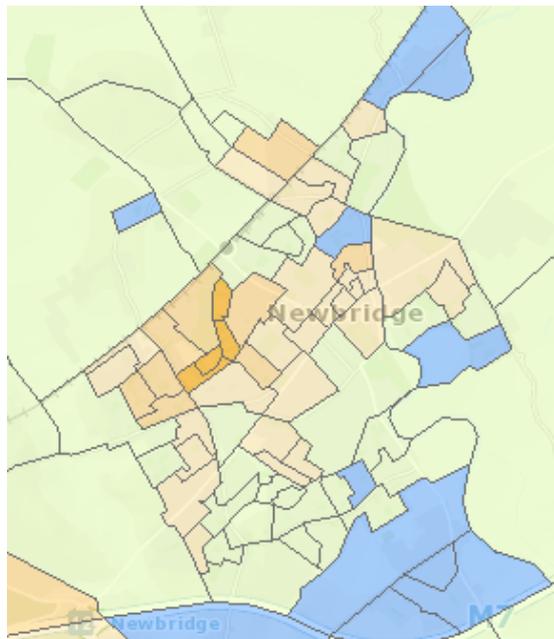
**Figure 4:** Deprivation Index of SAPs in Kildare Town



**Figure 5:** Deprivation Index of SAPs in Carlow Town



**Figure 6:** Deprivation Index of SAP's in Newbridge



Source: <https://maps.pobal.ie/WebApps/DeprivationIndices/index.html>

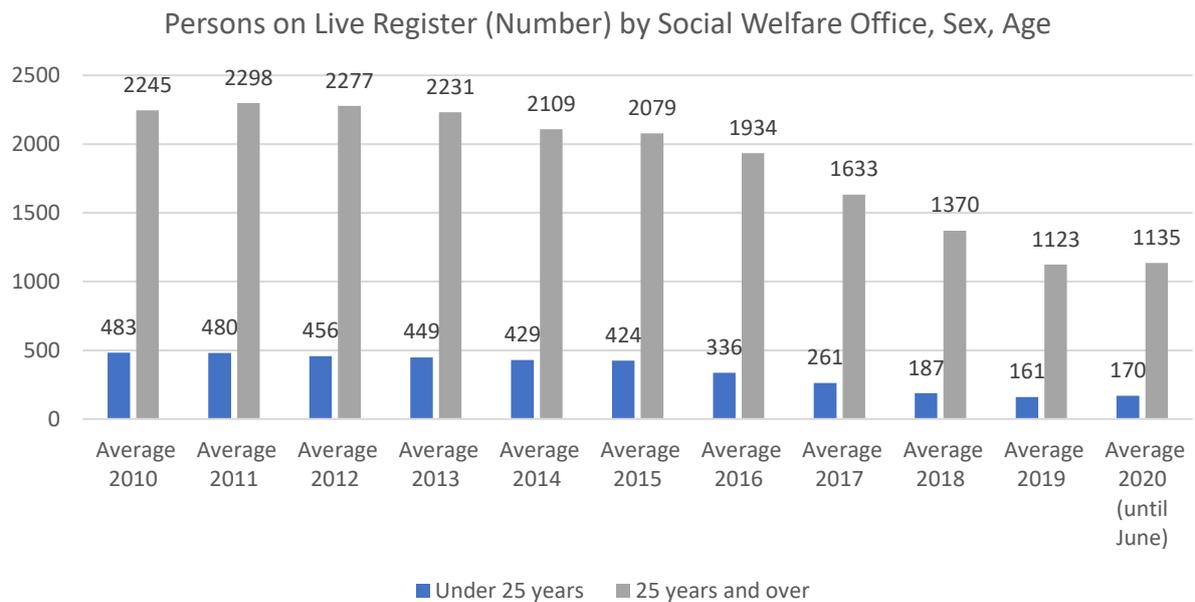
## 2.7 General Employment Profile

The Census 2016 results record Athy as an area of low employment. 44% of the population aged 15 years and over were recorded as being at work. This is ten percentage points below the national average of 54%. The level of persons looking after their home/family and unable to work due to permanent sickness or disability is quite high at 17%, in comparison to the national average of 12%.

It is noted that Athy stands out as an area of high unemployment in Co. Kildare and this is illustrated in **Figure 7**.

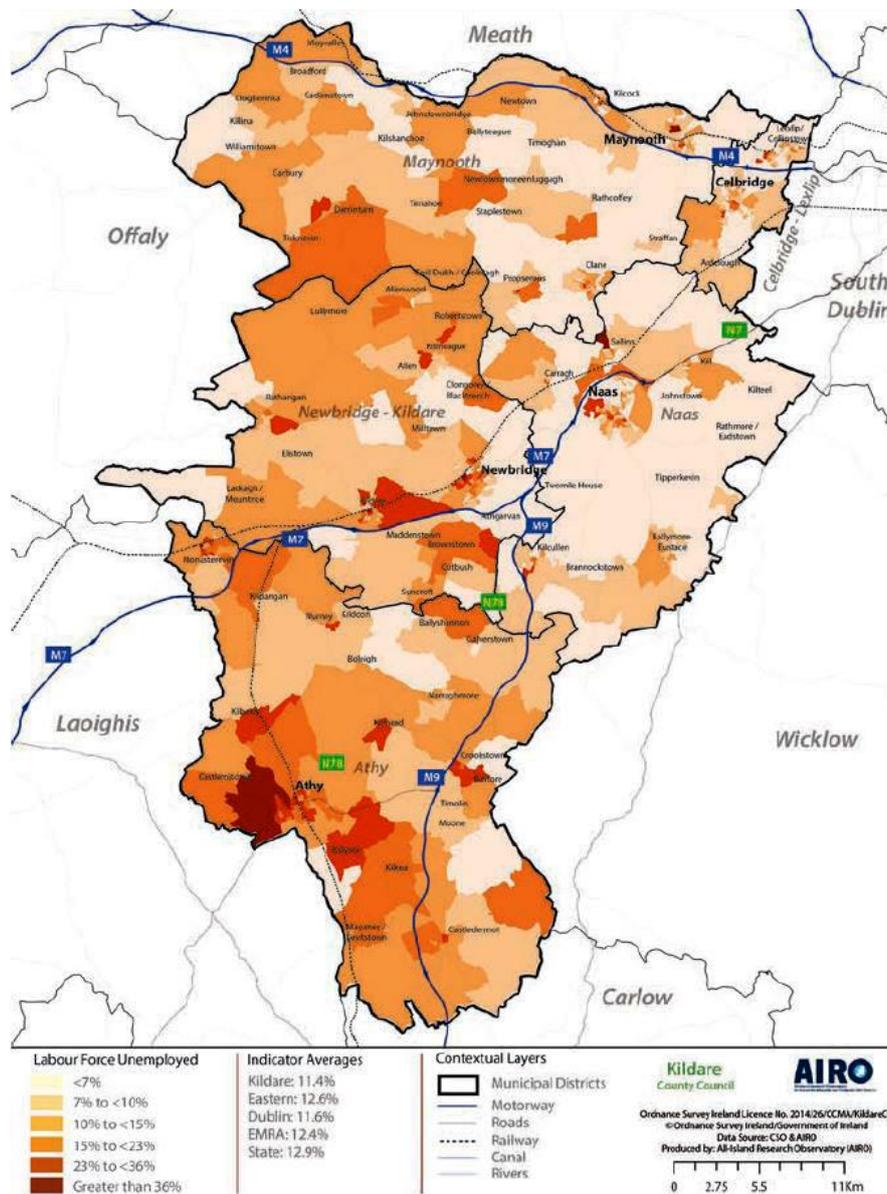
However, it is noted as illustrated in *Table 2*, the trend of persons joining the live register has been on a downwards trajectory since the height of the last recession in 2010. As of early Summer 2020 Athy does not appear to be substantially impacted by the current pandemic.

**Table 2:** Live Register Statistics for Athy (2010 – June 2020)



**Source:** <https://www.cso.ie/en/statistics/labourmarket/liveregister/>

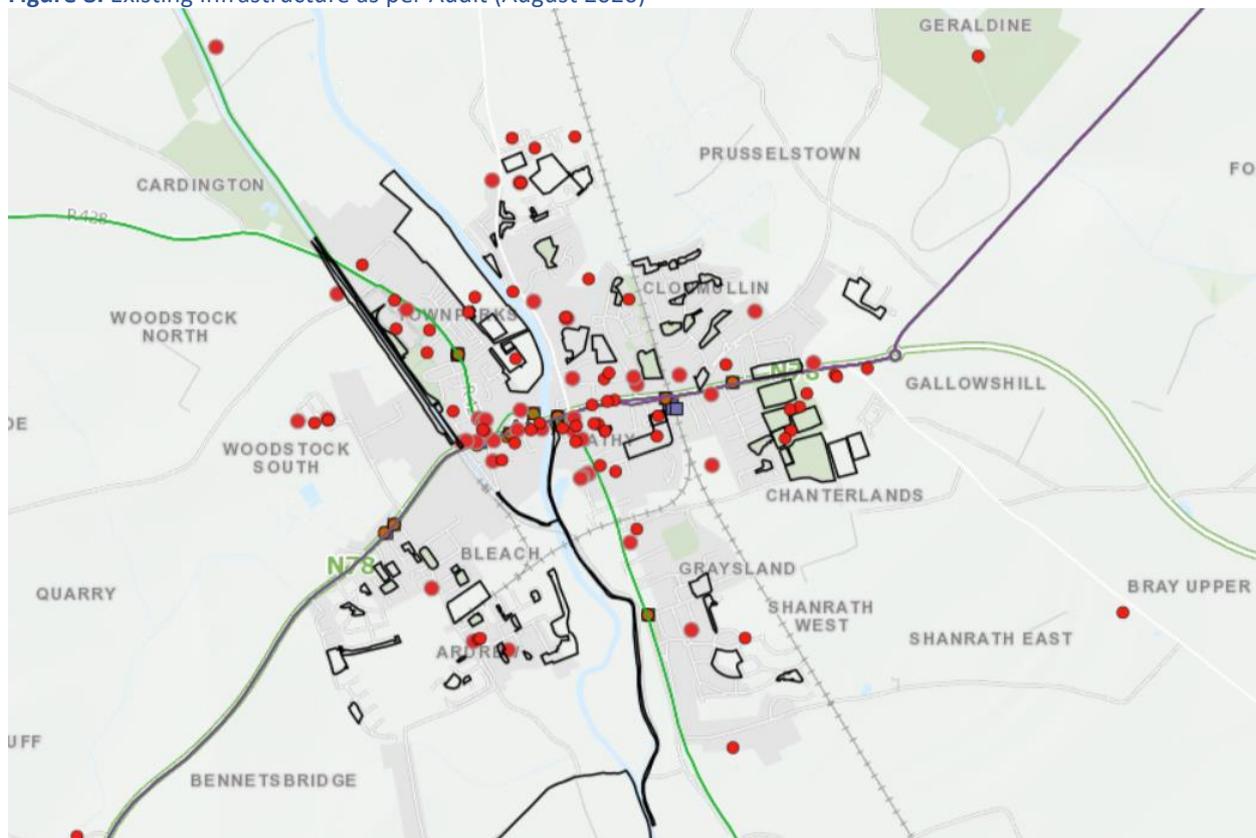
Figure 7: Map of Unemployment Rates in County Kildare (Census 2016)



Source: Kildare Census 2016 Profile Employment Industry and Occupations, Kildare County Council and All Ireland Research Observatory (AIRO)

### 3. Community Profile – Existing Infrastructure

Figure 8: Existing Infrastructure as per Audit (August 2020)



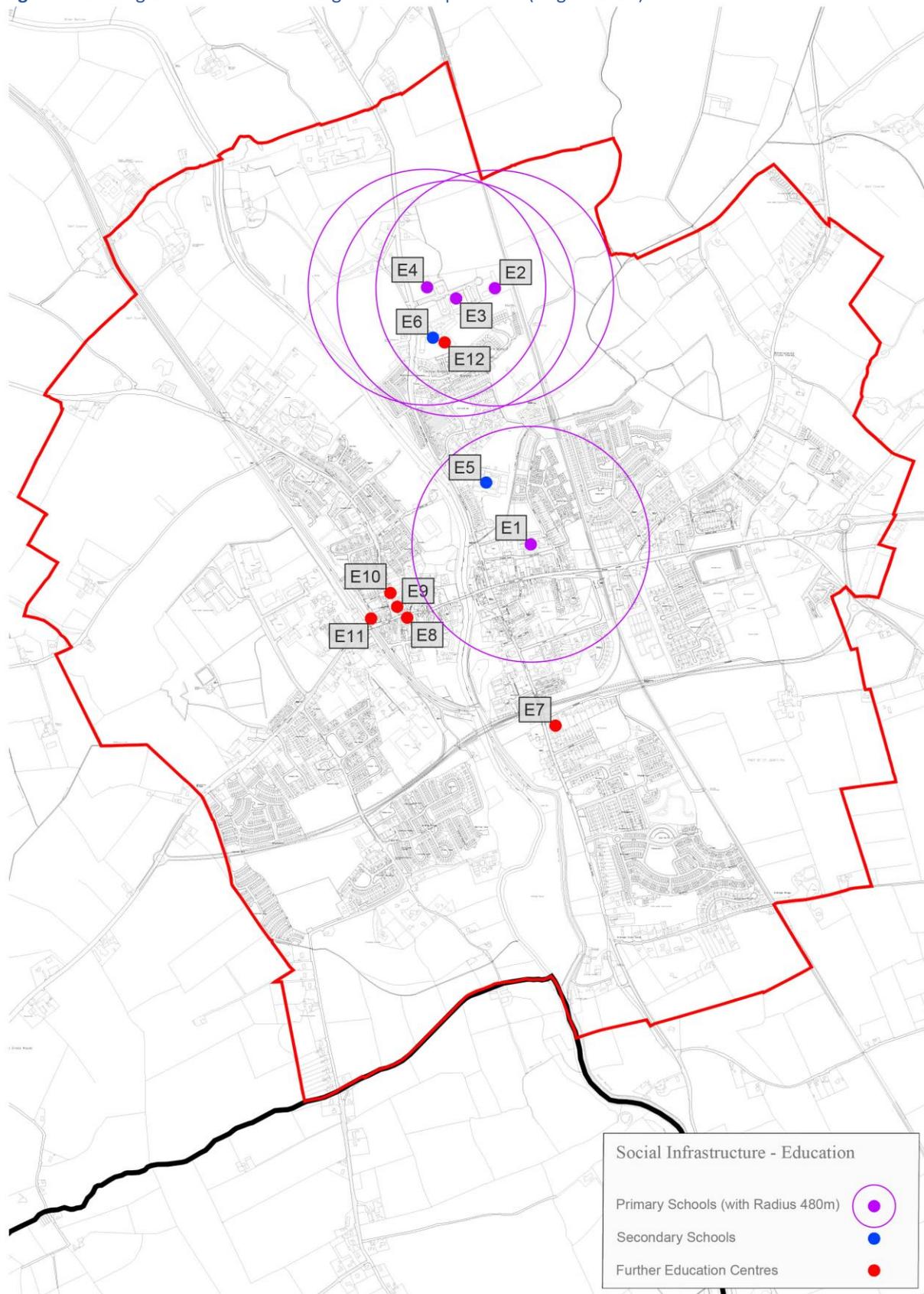
Source: Site Survey (August 2020), Social Infrastructure Portal

An audit of social infrastructure within Athy was undertaken using a series of pre-defined themes including: Education/Training, Childcare, Health, Sports and Recreation, Social/Community Services, Arts and Culture, Faith, and other features. For illustrative purposes, the location of all physical social infrastructure features identified and assessed in the study area are mapped in **Figure 8** above.

### 4. Education and Training

Facilities examined under this category include primary and secondary schools along with facilities accommodating third-level evening classes and skills development programmes. Within the study area there are four primary schools, two secondary schools and four further education / training centres. The location of these facilities is illustrated in **Figure 9** with further analysis of each type set out under the following sections.

**Figure 9: Existing Education and Training Facilities as per Audit (August 2020)**



*Source: Site Survey (August 2020), Social Infrastructure Portal*

## 4.1 Primary Schools – depicted by purple dots

**Table 3:** Table of Primary Schools as per Audit (August 2020)

<b>Primary Schools</b> (Note: these details are per the Academic year 2019/2020)				
<u>Map Ref</u>	<u>Name of School</u>	<u>No. enrolled</u>	<u>Capacity</u>	<u>Available places</u>
<b>E1</b>	Scoil Mhichil Naofa	625	Approximately 20 spaces available but in the Junior stream of the School	School plans to build 28 new classrooms (replacing prefabs etc.) and will provide 1 extra classroom overall.
<b>E2</b>	Scoil Phadraig Naofa	622	At capacity	0
<b>E3</b>	Athy Model School	97	104	9 (No plans to expand)
<b>E4</b>	Gaelscoil Áth Í,	195	208	13

Direct consultation with each school confirmed that the primary school infrastructure can accommodate 1,576 children. However, there are 1,539 pupils enrolled in the four primary schools for the 2019/20 academic year. One of the four schools is operating at capacity, while the other three are operating at over 90% capacity.

Census 2016 indicates that within the study boundary there are 1,435 children of primary school going age (5 to 12 years inclusive). The number of pupils enrolled in primary schools within Athy is 141 (circa. 9%) above the number of those within the primary school going age bracket (5 to 12 inclusive). This indicates that schools in Athy are serving a wider catchment with a sizable number of students attending schools from outside the study area.

## 4.2 Post Primary Schools – depicted by blue dots

**Table 4:** Table of Secondary Schools as per Audit (August 2020)

Secondary Schools (Note: these details are per the Academic year 2019/2020)				
Map Ref	Name of School	No. enrolled	Capacity	Available places
E5	Árdscoil na Trionóide	856	Unknown	150 for the 2019/2020 school year
E6	Athy Community College	440	School operating at over-capacity – it has 3 prefabs at the moment and will seek 3 more for the 2020/21 academic year. School has approval for an extension that will take capacity to 1,000 places - intended to bring this forward to the planning stage soon.	0

The capacity analysis confirms that Post Primary Schools in Athy are oversubscribed, with both sites operating above their capacity. Whilst previously there was pressure on school spaces at primary level the changing demographics of the town means that there is now pressure on school spaces at secondary level. Athy Community College is currently over capacity and has three prefabs and requires 3 more for the next term. This secondary school has secured funding from the Department of Education and Skills for an extension to take the capacity to 1,000 students, however, as of August 2020 a planning application for same has not yet been submitted. It is also noted Árdscoil na Trionóide no longer takes students from outside the catchment of the Athy area and there is a lottery system to enrol siblings of pupils located outside this catchment.

Census 2016 records that there are 906 teenagers of secondary school going age – i.e. 13 to 19 years inclusive inside the study area. The number of pupils enrolled in secondary schools within Athy is 1,296. This would indicate that secondary schools in Athy are serving a wider rural catchment with a significant number of students from outside the study area (30%). This is not uncommon as 46.8% of students attending post primary schools in Athy are from outside the town and the town has historically played a major role as a centre for education for the surrounding rural hinterland. There is a tendency for secondary school pupils to travel further for secondary education. In some instances, this is due to necessity whilst in other cases personal preference plays a role. It is noted many pupils in Athy commute to secondary schools in the neighbouring towns of Stradbally, Carlow and Naas.

### 4.3 Further Education and Training Facilities – depicted by red dots

**Table 5: Further Education and Training Facilities in Athy (August 2020)**

Map ref	Name of facility	Type of Service	Address
<b>E7</b>	Athy Further Education and Training Centre	Runs various education programmes including the Adult Basic Education (ABE) Service, the Back to Education Initiative (BTEI), Bridging and Foundation Level courses etc.	Carlow Road
<b>E10</b>	Athy Resource Centre	Degree in Business Administration and training and development.	The Manse, Woodstock Street
<b>E11</b>	Athy Adult Learning Centre	Currently closed and no prospectus online.	Nelson Street, Bleach
<b>E12</b>	Athy College	Various night courses	Rathstewart
	National Sports College	This facility contains gyms and studios and caters for specialist fitness training.	Fortbarrington Road <a href="https://nsc.ie/">https://nsc.ie/</a> (mapped in Recreation section as R12)

While Obair (E8) and Turas Nua (E9) are mapped it was concluded these facilities are more involved with helping individuals with gaining employment than providing further education.

There are four adult / further education facilities in the area with courses available from FETAC Level 3 up to Level 9. Three of these are located within purpose-built facilities and one within an existing secondary school. Athy Further Education and Training Centre offered 32 accredited courses in the 2019/2020 academic year.

The percentage of pupils dropping out of school after primary school (under 15 years of age) is similar to that of the State, at 5.9% compared to 6% nationally. However, the level of educational attainment in Athy is lower than the national average especially for those holding professional qualifications including ordinary and higher bachelor's degrees. The percentage of persons holding these qualifications in Athy is 12.9%, in comparison to the national average (18.3%).

## 4.4 Demand Analysis

There is no specific population benchmark for the provision of primary or secondary school facilities in Ireland. Instead, these are determined on an area specific basis by the Department of Education and Skills (DoES) having regard to available school capacity, demographic projections, an analysis of child benefit records, and local GIS travel pattern modelling.

The DoES approach includes a general standard that for every 1,000 dwellings in an area, circa 12% of the population will require primary school places and 8.5% will require post primary school places.

In Athy 14.6% of the population within the study area are eligible for primary school places compared to 11.5% nationally. Furthermore, it should be noted that primary schools within the town are currently catering for 14.9% which indicates that they are serving areas outside of the town.

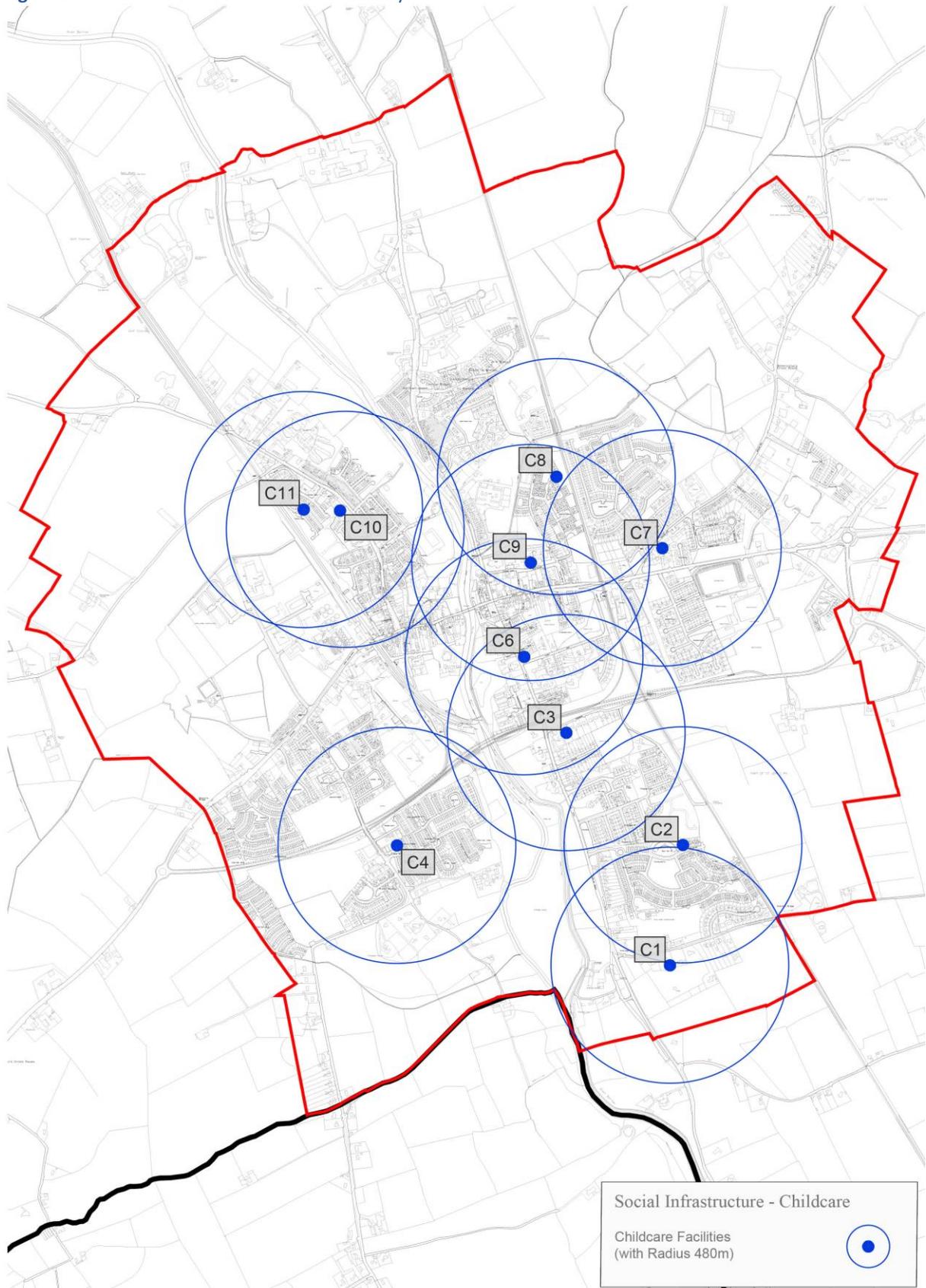
The demand for secondary school places within the town appears to be above DoES guidance with the proportion of secondary school going age (13-19) at 9.2%, which is also slightly higher when compared to the national proportion of 9%. The figure of 9.2% in Athy is somewhat misleading as the demand for secondary school places in Athy is considerably higher with 1,296 enrolled for the 2019/20 academic year. This represents 13% of the population in the study area which is over the 8.5% figure indicated by the DoES.

Significant pressures are coming on post primary schools due to demand from outside of the study area with some schools already over capacity. It is anticipated the large proposed extension to the Athy College would provide for an additional capacity for 560 pupils. Whilst this would relieve some of the existing pressure on post primary schools, the level of residential development envisaged for the plan period will add to the demand for school places within the town.

## 5. Childcare

Childcare infrastructure is well distributed spatially in Athy, with **twelve facilities** spread throughout the area and are pre-dominantly located close to or within existing residential developments. *Figure 10* illustrates the location of each childcare facility in Athy as noted by Tusla, Pobail or Kildare County Childcare Committee. As of the end of January 2020 there were 12 childcare facilities surveyed in the Athy area of which two facilities are outside the study area. The capacity audit of each is set out in *Table 6*.

**Figure 10:** Location of Childcare Facilities in Athy



*Source: Site Survey (August 2020), Social Infrastructure Portal*

**Table 6: Capacity of Childcare Facilities**

Map Ref	Name of facility	Type of Service	No. enrolled	Capacity	Available places	Address
C1	Manleys, Ardreigh Montessori and Childcare Centre	Full day	45	45	0	Ardreigh
C2	Shining Stars Academy	Full day	80	80 in each session	Morning session full - No spaces. Afternoon session some spaces approx. 20 but would need to increase staff.	Coneyboro
C3	Aughraboura Pre-School	Sessional	9	11	2	Aughraboura
C4	Creative Kids	Sessional and Full day	81	81	0	Unit 4, Ardrew Square, Dunbrinn
C5	Fun Times <b>(Outside of LAP area)</b>	Sessional	10	10	0	Scrouthea, Goulyduff
C6	Shining Stars Homework Club	N/A	65	65	Currently adding another room on to the Homework Club which will provide 17 more spaces. The facility can use the room for ECCE class in morning and afterschool in the evening.	Church Road
C7	Tir na Nóg Early Years Care and	Full day	100	120	20	Model Court,

	Educational Centre Limited					Geraldine Road
<b>C8</b>	Rainbow Kids Community Playschool	Sessional	<i>No answer during survey</i>	<i>No answer during survey</i>	Provide the Free Preschool Year, Subvention and Full Paying Children.  Open 9am - 12pm Monday to Friday for 38 weeks. Children are aged 3-5yrs.	18 Clonmullion Estate, Clonmullin
<b>C9</b>	Little Angels Childcare	Sessional	10	11	Offers ECCE (Free Preschool Year) and CCS Subvention funded scheme and is open 9am - 1pm, Monday to Friday	Mount Saint Mary's, Athy
<b>C10</b>	Happy Days Community Childcare	Sessional	57	60	3	CDP Woodstock Street
<b>C11</b>	Tiny Tots Preschool	Sessional	32	33	1	Flinter's Estate Community Building, Flinter's Close.
<b>C12</b>	Just for Kids Creche and Montessori (Outside of LAP area)	Full day	35	37	2	Castledermot Road

Figures obtained from the facilities which responded to the survey show that 479 children were enrolled for the 2019/20 year. Within the Athy area facilities can cater for up to 506 children, leaving 27 places available in the facilities surveyed.

Overall, childcare facilities are operating at 94.7% capacity within the facilities surveyed in Athy. However, it should be noted that Shining Stars Homework Club indicates they could have an additional 17 before and after school places, but this is dependent on recruiting additional staff. It should also be noted that no information was able to be obtained for Rainbow Kids Community Playschool and other small scale facilities with 3 children or less not being required to register with Tusla, and therefore could not be surveyed due to the informal arrangement of these facilities.

Census 2016 shows that 833 children are eligible for childcare (under school going age i.e. 0-4 years inclusive.) This would indicate approximately 57.5% of children eligible for childcare in Athy avail of such services.

This audit revealed that 4 of the surveyed facilities noted are at capacity. Responses from a variety of these facilities confirmed they also have long waiting lists. In total there are four full-time services in Athy that can accommodate up to 326 children which are currently accommodating 306 children with only 20 places available. There are six sessional services (generally 3.5 hours per day 9:00am to 12:30 for children aged between 2 and 6 years) in the area with a total capacity for 261 children. Currently, 254 are enrolled indicating that there are only 7 places available.

A study carried out in 2018 by the County Kildare Childcare Committee entitled '*Needs Analysis of Early Years Childcare in County Kildare*' found that services for children under the age of 2 were inadequate in Athy with parents relying on relatives and childminders. According to Census 2016 there were 475 children in this category.

## 5.1 Demand Analysis

Appendix 2 of the *Childcare Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2001)* establishes an indicative standard of one childcare facility per 75 dwellings in new housing areas. One facility providing a minimum of 20 childcare places is therefore considered to represent a reasonable target. The guidance acknowledges that other case specific assumptions may lead to an increase or decrease in this requirement.

Whilst the provision of childcare facilities must be spatially considered in the context of existing levels of service, an additional 206 places<sup>2</sup> are anticipated to be required in Athy over the plan period, having regard to the 771 additional residential units projected to be developed in Athy by 2027.

To comply with the *Childcare Guidelines for Planning Authorities*, the study area therefore requires the provision of 10+ facilities with capacity for 20 children each over the period to 2027. Each existing and new childcare facility (or capacity equivalent) is not restricted to 20 children each and such provision, for example, could be in the form of an additional 5 facilities with capacity for 42 childcare spaces each. As of August 2020, there are no extant permissions for new childcare facilities in the town and therefore having regard to the issues around capacity highlighted overleaf all proposals for new housing developments will be required to address childcare provision.

In addition, it is recommended that an objective is included in the LAP where future residential developments must justify how childcare provision has been met (i.e. existing capacity) in instances where childcare facilities are omitted from a scheme. With respect to childcare, the lead agent for delivery in this regard is the developer.

## 6. Health

This section focuses on existing health facilities including GPs, health centres, dentists, pharmacy care and other related facilities.

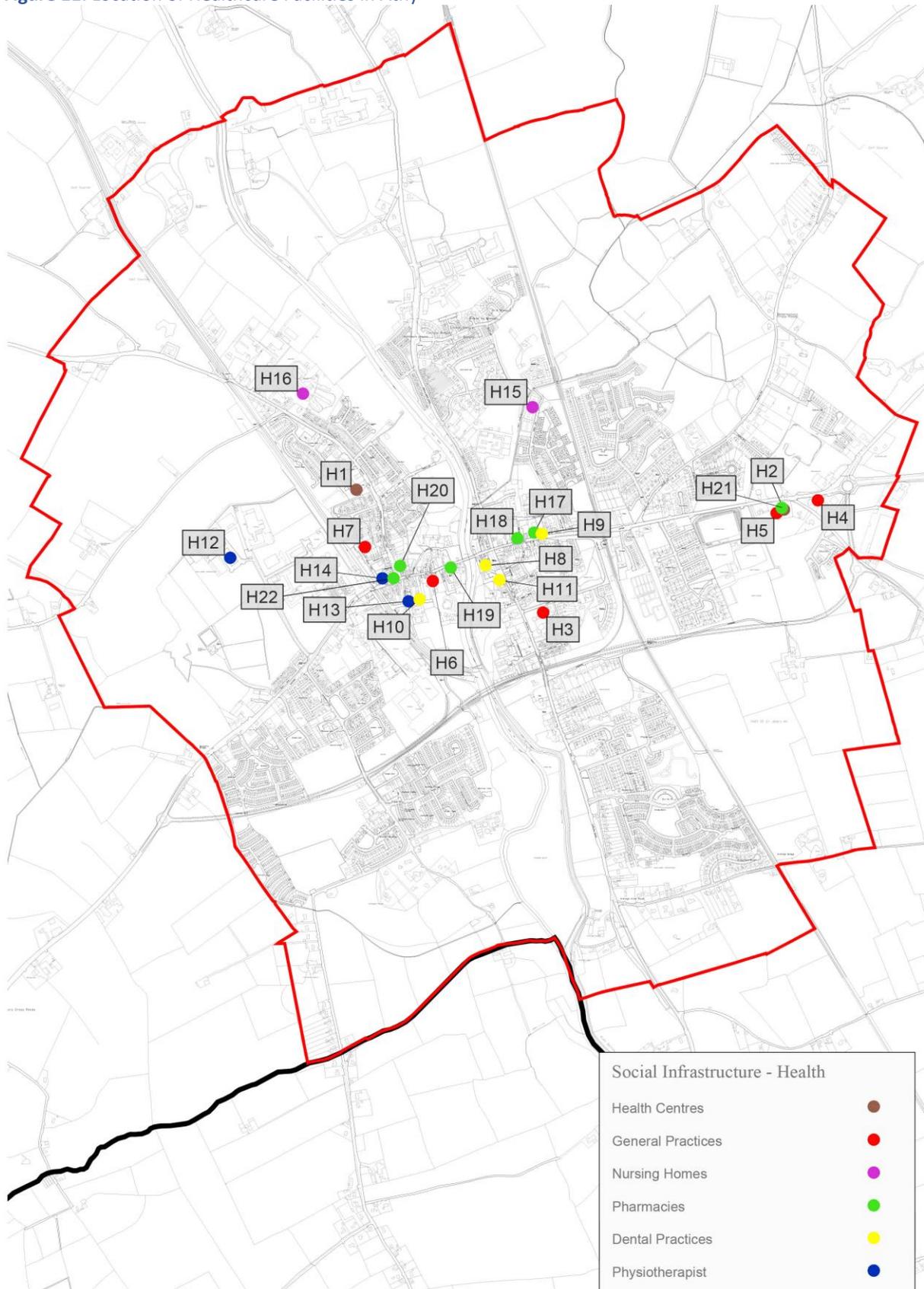
A total of 27 health facilities were identified in the town comprising 1 Primary Care Centre, 1 Health Centre, 5 General Practitioners (GPs), 4 Dentist Practices, 4 Physiotherapists, 2 Nursing Homes, 4 Specialist Services and 6 Pharmacies. Within the health facilities identified, there are a total of 13 doctors, 2 Psychiatrists, 4 dentists, 3 physios and 14 nurses (excluding nursing homes and specialist services).

The location of health facilities is dispersed throughout the town although there are obvious indications of clustering within the town centre. The locations of these facilities are illustrated in Figure 11.

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<sup>2</sup> Appendix 2 of the *Childcare Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2001)* establishes an indicative standard of one childcare facility per 75 dwellings in new housing areas. 771 additional dwellings are envisaged over the lifetime of this LAP. Therefore 206 new childcare places are envisaged.

**Figure 11: Location of Healthcare Facilities in Athy**



Source: Site Survey (August 2020), Social Infrastructure Portal and <https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/maps/>

An audit of these facilities including their neighbourhood location, services available, and the land use zoning objectives relative to their location is set out in *Tables 7 – 12*.

**Table 7: Health Centres in Athy**

<b>Health Centres</b>			
<u>Map Ref</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Description of services / No. of doctors</u>	<u>Address</u>
H1	Athy Health Centre	Centre deals with mental health services in the Athy area. There are 2 Consultant Psychiatrists and 3 Registrars.	7 Woodstock St, Townparks
H2	Athy Primary Care Centre	General Practitioners surgery, HSE and Tusla facilities comprising consulting rooms, waiting areas, meeting rooms, offices, ancillary accommodation, Pharmacy Unit and clinical rooms. This HSE Facility has 4 community nurses.	Dublin Road

**Table 8: Doctor Surgeries / GP Practices in Athy**

<b>Doctor Surgery / GP</b>			
<u>Map Ref</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Description of services / No. of doctors</u>	<u>Address</u>
H3	Athy Lodge Medical	General Practice - 2 doctors, 3 practice nurses	Athy Lodge
H4	The Park Clinic	General Practice - 4 doctors, 1 practice nurse	Gallowshill
H5	Barrowview Medical Practice	General Practice - 4 doctors, 4 nurses	Athy Primary Care Centre, Dublin Road
H6	Dr A.J. Reeves	General Practice - 3 doctors	Convent Lane
H7	Dr Padraic Farrell	General Practice - 1 doctor	89 Woodstock Street

**Table 9: Dentists in Athy**

<b>Dentists</b>			
<u>Map Ref</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>No. of Dentists</u>	<u>Address</u>
H8	The Dental Studio Athy	1	8 Emily Square
H9	Athy Dental Practice	1	64 Leinster Street
H10	Richenda Bailey Dentist	1	Green Alley, Bleach

H11	Loreto Dental Surgery	1	13 Emily Square
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**Table 10: Physiotherapists in Athy**

Physiotherapists			
<u>Map Ref</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Description of services</u>	<u>Address</u>
H12	Harrigan Physiotherapy and Sports Injury Clinic	Physiotherapy, pilates and sports injury clinic	Athy Business Campus, Unit 1 Block C, Kilkenny Road
H13	Athy Physiotherapy and Sports Injury Clinic	Physiotherapy, pilates and sports injury Clinic	8 Riverdale
H14	RW Sports Injury	Physiotherapy and pilates	K Leisure Athy, Greenhills
Not mapped	kphysio	Physiotherapy, sports injury clinic, pilates, massage and shock therapy	Hillfarm, Narraghmore (outside the study area)

**Table 11: Nursing Homes in Athy**

Nursing Home			
<u>Map Ref</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Description of services</u>	<u>Address</u>
H15	Cloverlodge Nursing Home	60 bed nursing home which also caters for respite care and dementia care	Moneen Lane
H16	St. Vincent's Hospital	Care of the elderly facility with a maximum capacity of 104 patients	Woodstock Street, Townparks

**Table 12: Pharmacies in Athy**

Nursing Home			
<u>Map Ref</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Description of services</u>	<u>Address</u>
H17	McCauley Pharmacy	Pharmacy	59 Leinster Street
H18	Madden's Pharmacy	Pharmacy	51 Leinster Street
H19	Moore's Pharmacy	Pharmacy	6 Duke Street

H20	McHugh's Allcare Pharmacy	Pharmacy	39 Duke Street
H21	McCauley Pharmacy	Pharmacy	Athy Primary Care Centre
H22	A and A Pharmacy	Pharmacy	21 Lower William Street, Bleach

**Table 13: Specialist Services in Athy**

Specialist services			
Map Ref	Name	Description of services	Address
Not mapped	Cuan Mhuire CTR	A 117 bed alcohol addiction treatment facility and a 22 bed unit for those in recovery from Drug addiction.	Cuan Mhuire
Not mapped	Athy Counselling and Psychotherapy	Counselling and psychotherapy treatments	27 Sunnyside Lawns, Ardrew
Not mapped	Athy Counselling and Acupuncture Clinic	Counselling, hypnotherapy and psychotherapy treatments	8 Leinster Court, Kirwan's Lane
Not mapped	Friends of Cuan Mhuire	Counselling for addiction	21 Lower William St, Bleach

*Source: HSE services and desktop survey, July 2020*

## 6.1 Demand Analysis

It is noted 12% of the population of Athy described their health in a negative light as 'Fair, Bad or Very Bad'. This compares to 9% of the population of the State describing their health negatively.

There are no national standards for health provision in Ireland either relating to the provision of primary care centres or the number of doctors in an area. However, the HSE states that a typical primary care centre can serve a population of between 10,000-20,000 people, subject to appropriate resourcing. It is therefore concluded Athy is well served in this regard.

In 2017 the Irish Medical Times noted that Ireland had on average 2.7 doctors per 1,000 population in comparison with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) average of 3.3 doctors per 1,000. It is assumed that these figures relate to all registered doctors in the country. A more relevant figure for Athy (excluding hospital services which serve the wider region) is a standard specifically relating to family physicians. In this regard, the Graduate Medical Education

National Advisory Committee (GMENAC) suggests a standard of 25.2 physicians to 100,000 population (or 0.25 per 1,000 population).

The current doctor to population ratio in Athy (excluding hospital services) is 1.4 per 1,000 population with 14 doctors practicing from 26 different facilities which is 6 times above the recommendations of GMENAC. However, should the population grow by the anticipated 2,160 persons by the end of the Plan period in 2027, the ratio of existing doctors per population will fall to 1.2 per 1,000 population which is still almost five times higher than the recommended standard. Assuming no increase or decrease in doctor numbers during that period this indicates that provision in Athy would appear to be well-catered for. There is also a high level of community nurses in this location. However, it must be noted the health services in Athy serve a large rural hinterland outside of the scope of this study.

In relation to care for the elderly, there are 164 bed spaces across two nursing home facilities. This would cater for 14.9% of those aged 65 and over (1,098) as outlined in the 2016 census. It should be noted that Cloverlodge Nursing home is privately run, and St. Vincent's Hospital is run by the HSE. Both care homes are likely to have a catchment which extends far beyond the Local Area Plan boundary or study area. Athy is also well-served by a high proportion of mental health services and rehabilitation centres and there are no national standards for such provisions.

The HSE is monitoring the demand for and provision of health services in Athy on an ongoing basis and Kildare County Council will continue to consult and liaise with the HSE in this regard.

## **7. Sports and Recreation**

Sports and recreation infrastructure include parks and playgrounds, dedicated public open space and amenity areas, sports centres, and formal club facilities. Overall, there are 28.7 hectares of land within the study area which provides for sports and recreational related activities. This open space provision is considered further under the subsequent headings which provide a breakdown as to the type of open space they constitute and the purpose that they serve.

**Figure 12:** Location of Sports and Recreation Open Spaces in Athy



*Source: Site Survey (August 2020), Social Infrastructure Portal*

## 7.1 Sports Facilities and Amenities

There are 12 sports clubs in Athy with sports facilities of various descriptions. Several clubs and facilities are clustered at the following locations (details of the clubs are contained in *Table 13*):

- On the eastern side of Athy (located off the Dublin Road) there is a large recreation area known as the Showgrounds which contains:
  - Athy GAA club – This club has 2 full sized flood lit pitches with a club house containing a multipurpose hall and bar.
  - Athy RFC – This club contains 2 floodlit pitches and 2 unlit training pitches, badminton courts and a clubhouse.
  - Athy Town FC – This club contains 1 floodlit pitch, 1 unlit pitch, 3 small all-weather pitches and a clubhouse.
  - Athy Tennis Club – This club contains 6 all-weather tennis courts and a clubhouse

- The Arch – This is a community centre located on the western side of Athy and its hall is home to a number of sports clubs including indoor bowls, athletics, soccer groups, junior/senior karate, Irish dancing classes and feis, fitness classes and Athy Boxing Club.
- K-Leisure Athy – This leisure centre contains a 25 metre swimming pool, an area for fitness classes, gyms, sauna and steam rooms and a multi-purpose all-weather pitch.

Other amenities include 2 playgrounds, a skate park and the two significant parks of People’s Park (Local Park<sup>3</sup>) and Woodstock Park (Neighbourhood Park<sup>4</sup>).

Overall, there are circa 28.7 hectares of sports area within the study area including the following categories of Neighbourhood Park, Local Park, Greenways, Sports Pitches and Playgrounds.

Approximately 48% of this area (13.7 ha) is made up of sports pitches.

The location of clubs is mapped in **Figure 13**, and it is noted while there are a good variety of clubs, the western part of the town has fewer facilities. There are also other significant facilities which are outside the study area that also serve the population in the town but are not shown on Figure 13.

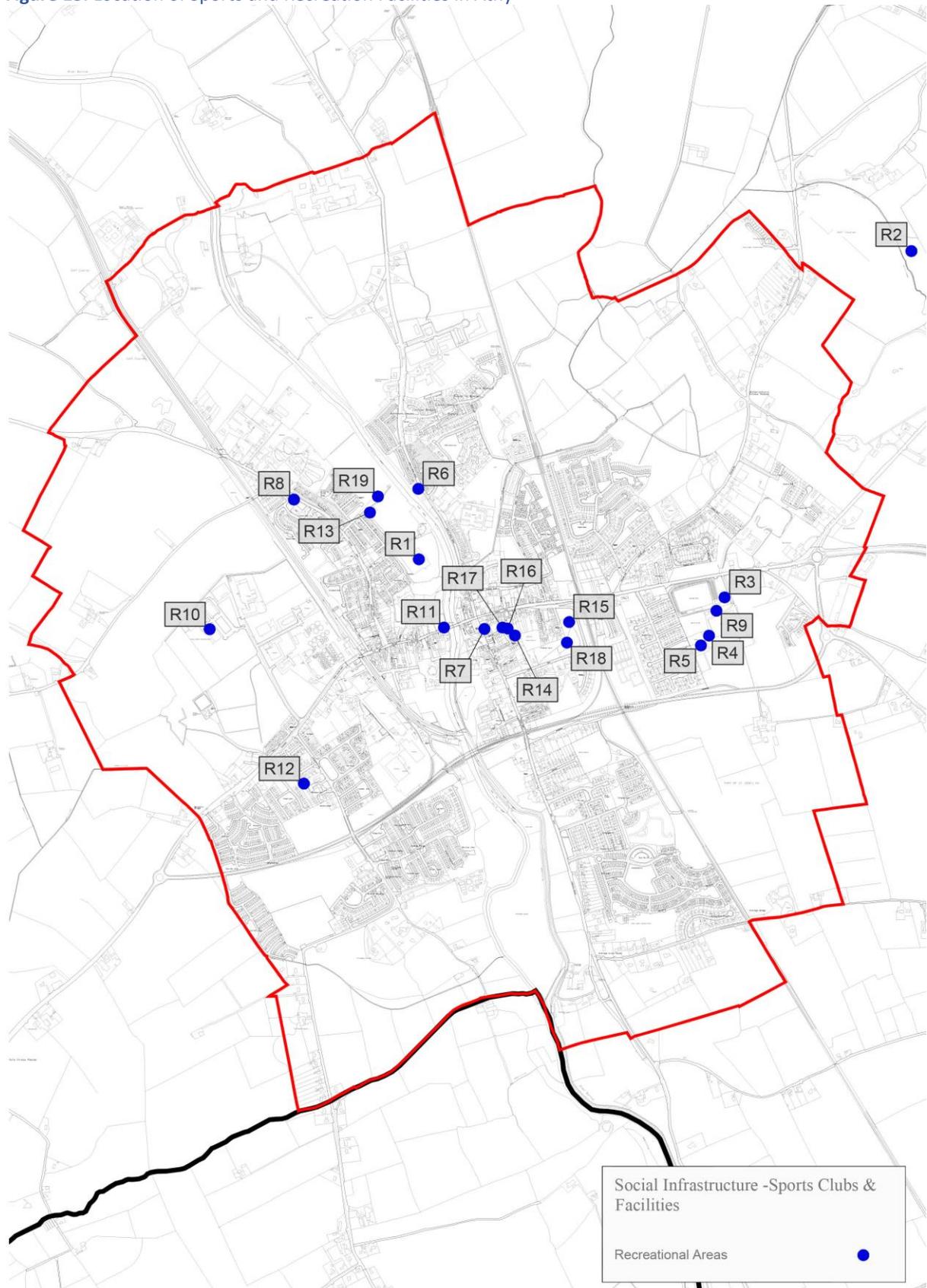
These facilities include Athy Golf Club (Geraldine Road) and Burtown House and Gardens.

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<sup>3</sup> Small area of parkland (>2 ha minimum) located within 0.4km of target population and managed for passive recreation only.

<sup>4</sup> Large area of parkland (>16 ha minimum) located within 0.8km of target population and managed as a public park to facilitate both passive and active recreation.

**Figure 13:** Location of Sports and Recreation Facilities in Athy



**Source:** Site Survey (August 2020), Social Infrastructure Portal (note sports clubs, facilities and parks have been annotated on the above map)

**Table 14:** Description of Clubs and Sporting Facilities in Athy

<b>Sports and Recreation</b>			
<b>Sports Grounds/Clubs (indoor and outdoor facilities)/ leisure facilities</b>			
<u>Map Ref</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Description of facilities</u>	<u>Address</u>
R1	K-Leisure Athy	25m swimming pool, area for fitness classes, gym, sauna and steam rooms and astroturf pitches	Barrack Lane, Green Hills
R2	Athy Golf Club	18-hole golf course with clubhouse	Geraldine Road, Geraldine (not mapped as outside of study area)
R3	Athy GAA club	2 full sized pitches with floodlights and club house which includes a multipurpose hall and a newly refurbished bar area	Geraldine Park
R4	Athy RFC	Number of pitches and training pitches, 3 small astroturf pitches, badminton courts and clubhouse	The Showgrounds, Dublin Road
R5	Athy Tennis Club	6 tennis courts and clubhouse	The Showgrounds, Dublin Road
R6	Athy Rowing and Canoeing Club	Lease a boat house facility beside River Barrow	Upper Saint Joseph's Terrace, Rathstewart
R7	Athy Wheelers Cycling Club	Based in premises on Emily Square	Emily Square
R8	St. Michael's Boxing Club	Gym and training facilities	Flinter's Place, Townparks
R9	Athy Town FC	Clubhouse, indoor astroturf pitch shares pitch facilities with Athy RFC	Aldridge Park Athy
R10	Athy Kenpo Karate Club	Based in an industrial unit	Athy Business Campus, Kilkenny Road, Woodstock South
R11	Athy and District Anglers Club	This group is currently based in the Marina - the inlet of water linked to the River Barrow and manages access to it. It is noted that they do not own the property.	The Heritage Centre, Emily Square

R12	National Sports College	This facility contains gyms and studios and caters for specialist fitness training.	Fortbarrington Road <a href="https://nsc.ie/">https://nsc.ie/</a>
R13	Castle Park Playground	Very limited facilities	Barrack Lane, Rathstewart
R14	Athy Skate Park	Small concrete facility	Off Meeting Lane
R15	People's Park Playground	Swings, climbing frames, see-saws, monkey bars and adult gym equipment.	
R16 and R17	Athy Triathlon Club	No facilities	Various <a href="http://www.athytriathlonclub.com/">http://www.athytriathlonclub.com/</a>
R18	People's Park	Park containing a playground and outdoor gym equipment.	Church Road
R19	Castle Park	Park containing a playground, a small astroturf pitch and Woodstock Castle	Barrack Lane, Rathstewart
Not mapped	Athy Chess Club	Based in Athy Public library	Athy Library, Convent Lane
Not mapped	Athy Indoor Bowling Club	Based in the Church of Ireland parish centre	Barrow Hall Parish Centre

*Source: Site Survey (August 2020), Social Infrastructure Portal*

There are no relevant standards in Ireland for sports facilities. Therefore, consideration is given to comparative recommendations and specifically, 'Fields in Trust (FIT)' recommendations which in the UK, has set out benchmark guidance for the provision of amenity and open space use in urban planning and design. The recommendations of 'FIT' go beyond the established 'six-acre standard' (six acres or 2.4 hectares (ha) per 1,000 population) and now provides quantitative guidance in relation to other open space typologies.

The 'FIT' benchmark guidance recommends that 1.6 ha of outdoor sports area should be provided per 1,000 population and that outdoor sports should be located within 1.2 km of all dwellings in major residential areas. Other 'FIT' benchmark guidance recommendations for '*formal outdoor space*' which are relevant to this study are set out in *Table 14*.

**Table 15: Fields in Trust (FIT) Benchmark Guidance for Different Recreational Facilities**

Type	Hectares per 1,000 population	Walking distance from dwelling
<b>Playing Pitches</b>	1.2	1,200m
<b>All outdoor sports</b>	1.6	1,200m
<b>Equipped / Designated play areas:</b>		
- <b>Local Areas for Play – aimed at very young children</b>	0.25	100m
- <b>Local Equipped Areas of Play – aimed at children who can go out to play independently</b>	0.25	400m
- <b>Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play aimed at older children</b>	0.25	1,000m
- <b>Multi Use Games Areas (MUGAs) and skateboard parks etc</b>	0.3	700m

*Source: Fields in Trust (FIT)*

Within the study area there are 19 ha of outdoor sports facilities (Playing Pitches: 18.46ha and Playgrounds/skatepark: 0.53 ha). Based on the Census 2016 population, the current outdoor sports area provision is 1.96 ha per 1,000 population. Accordingly, it would appear using FIT standards there is more than adequate outdoor sports ‘area’ in the town to serve the existing population in the context of these guidance recommendations.

However, should the planned population growth (projected to be 11,837 by 2027) be achieved, the standard of outdoor sports decreases to 1.61 ha per 1,000 population in 2026 and is therefore still compliant with guidance recommendations. It is also noted that a further c.5 ha of Kildare County Council lands are proposed to be converted into a future sports training hub on Council owned lands at Ardrew, in the west of the town.

The provision of two playgrounds and a skatepark (approximately 0.53 ha) within the study area falls short of the benchmark guidance in terms of quantity, and provision for all age groups. Based on the 2016 census population current playground provision is 0.055 per 1,000 people considerably short of the 0.25 benchmark. To comply with benchmark standards a further 4.55 ha of playground facilities should be provided within the study area. However, it is noted the current play area provision is of a similar level to that provided in neighbouring towns such as Naas.

## 8. Open Space

Open space has been categorised by typology of use which is consistent with the amenity space typology types employed in the Kildare Open Space Strategy 2011 which is currently being updated/reviewed with an expected completion date of Q2 2021. These include neighbourhood parks, local parks, green corridors, natural / semi natural green spaces, and other open spaces such as amenity green space associated with housing estates. The definition of each is outlined in *Table 15*. The spatial location and distribution of the open space by typology of use, is illustrated in **Figure 13**. An audit of open space typology types is also presented in *Table 16* including current provision of each type along with qualitative recommendations.

**Table 16:** Audit of amenity Open Space by Typology

Name / Typology	Definition	Amount in study area in hectares (ha)	Standards & Recommendations
<b>Neighbourhood Park</b>	Large area of parkland (>16 ha minimum) located within 0.8km of target population and managed as a public park to facilitate both passive and active recreation.	13.01 ha	Should be regular in shape and contain: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Football pitches up to 6 units</li> <li>- Tennis Courts up to 10 units</li> <li>- Netball/Basketball Court up to 2 units</li> <li>- Golf Putting Green up to 2 units</li> <li>- Children’s Playlots up to 2 units</li> <li>- Car Parking up to 1 unit</li> </ul>
<b>Local Park</b>	Small area of parkland (>2 ha minimum) located within 0.4km of target population and managed for passive recreation only.	2.03 ha	Should be designed for passive recreation only and be attractively landscaped with trees and shrubs. Paths, seats, and litter bins should be adequately provided.
<b>Amenity Green Space</b>	Relatively small areas of open space associated with individual housing estates.	25.85 ha	To be of a size and quality to enhance residential areas.
<b>Play space for children and teenagers</b>	Areas designed to facilitate children’s play usually located within an existing public park and	0.53 ha	

	easily accessible from residential areas.		
<b>Green Corridors</b>	Linear green spaces such as canal and river corridors.	4.9 ha	
<b>Natural / semi natural green spaces</b>	Areas of undeveloped or previously developed land with habitats such as woodland or wetland areas.	20.6 ha	
<b>Total</b>		<b>67.14 ha</b>	

*Source: Desktop and GIS analysis and field survey, July 2020*

There is one Neighbourhood Park within the study area, which is located north of the town centre on the western bank of the River Barrow. The Park is mainly used for passive recreation but also includes a children’s playground, a 5-a-side all-weather pitch, a soccer pitch and the ruins of Woodstock Castle (fenced off). While these uses meet FIT recommendations, this park is marginally smaller than the 16 hectare area recommended. In this circumstance this is considered acceptable as there are also 3 ha of open space surrounding K-Leisure immediately south of this park, which could in the future be incorporated.

The People’s Park off Church Road meets the criteria for a local Park in terms of passive recreation and size. However, it is also noted this park has facilities for active recreation such as a playground and adult gym equipment. This park is also served by an extensive carpark.

In addition to the two main parks there are paths along the banks of the River Barrow and the Barrow Line Canal providing a high-level public amenity. It is noted that the majority of open space in Athy is provided in the form of green space within residential estates.

Section 14.11.4 Recreation and Amenity of the Kildare Development Plan 2017-2023 (page 331) states ‘Overall, the Council will seek the provision of open space at a standard of 2.0 ha per 1000 population in accordance with the Kildare Open Space Strategy 2011.’ Therefore 19.35 ha<sup>5</sup> of open space is currently required and a further 4.32 ha<sup>6</sup> is required for the period of this LAP. It can be

<sup>5</sup>The 2016 census put the population of Athy at 9,677 persons. Therefore, if the 2ha per 1,000 persons Kildare Open Space Strategy 2011 standard it used, Athy requires 19.35ha of open space.

<sup>6</sup>Over the LAP period the population is envisaged to grow by 2,160 persons. Therefore, if the 2ha per 1,000 persons Kildare Open Space Strategy 2011 standard it used, Athy requires an additional 4.32ha of open space.

observed from *Table 16* above that Athy currently exceeds these figures. No Irish standards exist to further analyse this open space provision, so consideration has been given to the 2015 'FIT' (Fields in Trust) recommended benchmark guidelines for 'informal outdoor space'. These guidelines assess the location and quantity of various open space typologies against recommended standards.

*Table 17* indicates Fields in Trust (FIT) benchmark guidelines for open space in the sectors of area and location.

**Table 17:** Fields in Trust (FIT) Benchmark Guidance for Open Space

Type	Hectares per 1,000 population	Walking distance from dwelling
<b>Parks and Gardens</b>	0.8	710m
<b>Amenity Open Space</b>	0.6	480m
<b>Natural and Semi Natural Open Space</b>	1.8	720m
<b>Playground</b>	0.25	Not defined

*Source: Fields in Trust (FIT)*

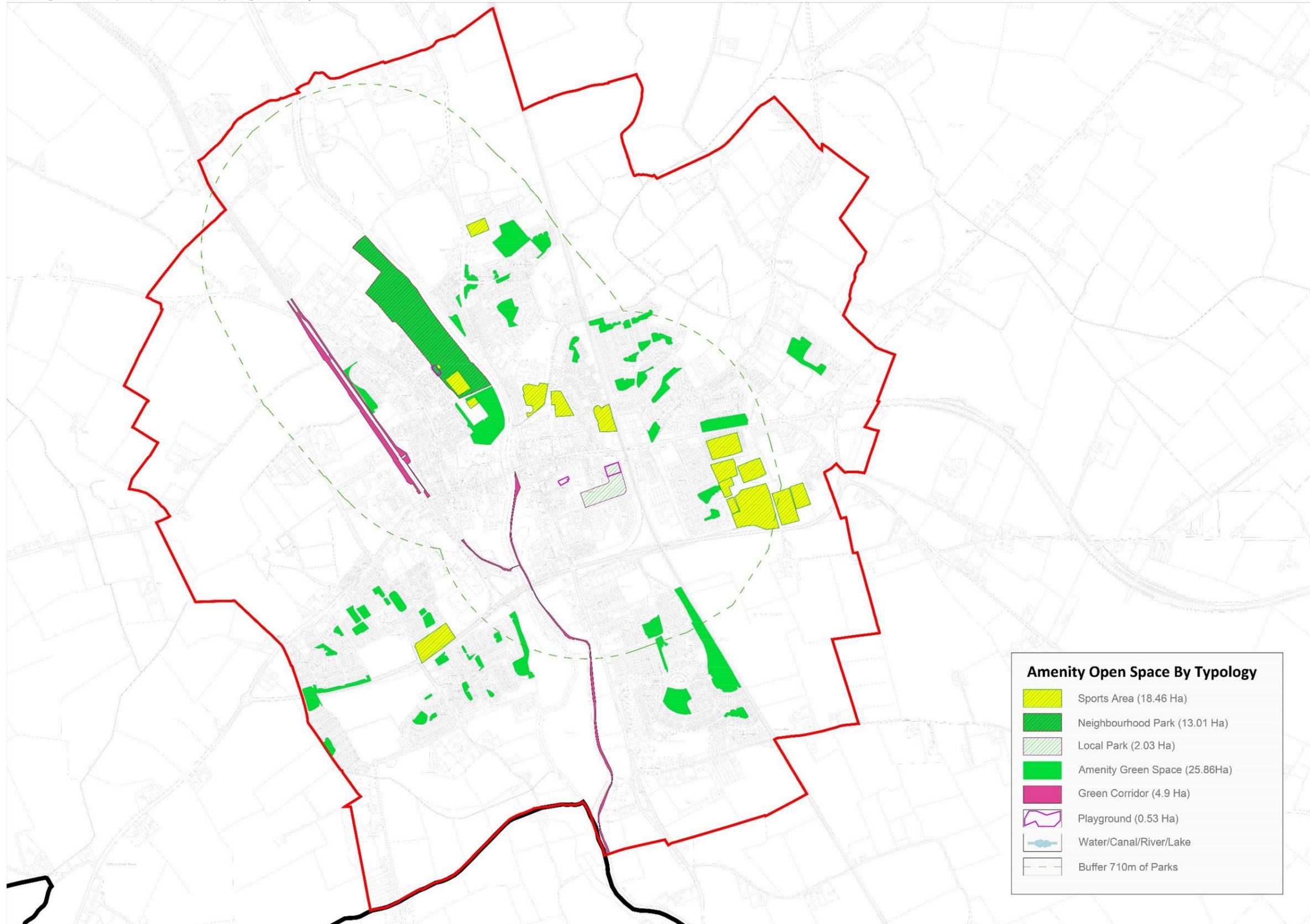
*Table 18* presents an evaluation of the existing open space provision in Athy against these benchmark guidelines.

**Table 18:** Evaluation of Open Space in Athy against FIT Standards

Typology (defined by the Kildare Open Space Strategy)	Existing Area (ha) in Athy	Typology 'FIT' definition	F.I.T. Standard (ha/1000 pop.)	Existing Provision in Athy (ha/1000 pop.)	Future Provision In Athy (ha/1000 pop.)
<b>Neighbourhood Park</b>	13 ha	'Parks and Gardens'	0.8	1.55	1.27
<b>Local Park</b>	2 ha				
<b>Amenity Green Space</b>	25.85 ha	'Amenity Open Space'	0.6	2.67	2.18
<b>Green Corridor</b>	4.9 ha	'Natural and Semi-Natural Open Space'	1.8	2.64	2.15
<b>Natural / Semi-Natural Green Space</b>	20.6 ha				
<b>Playground</b>	0.53 ha	'Playground'	0.25	0.055	0.045

*Source: Desktop and Field Surveys*

Figure 14: Map of Open Space Typologies in Athy



Source: Site Survey (August 2020), Social Infrastructure Portal

## 8.1 Demand Analysis

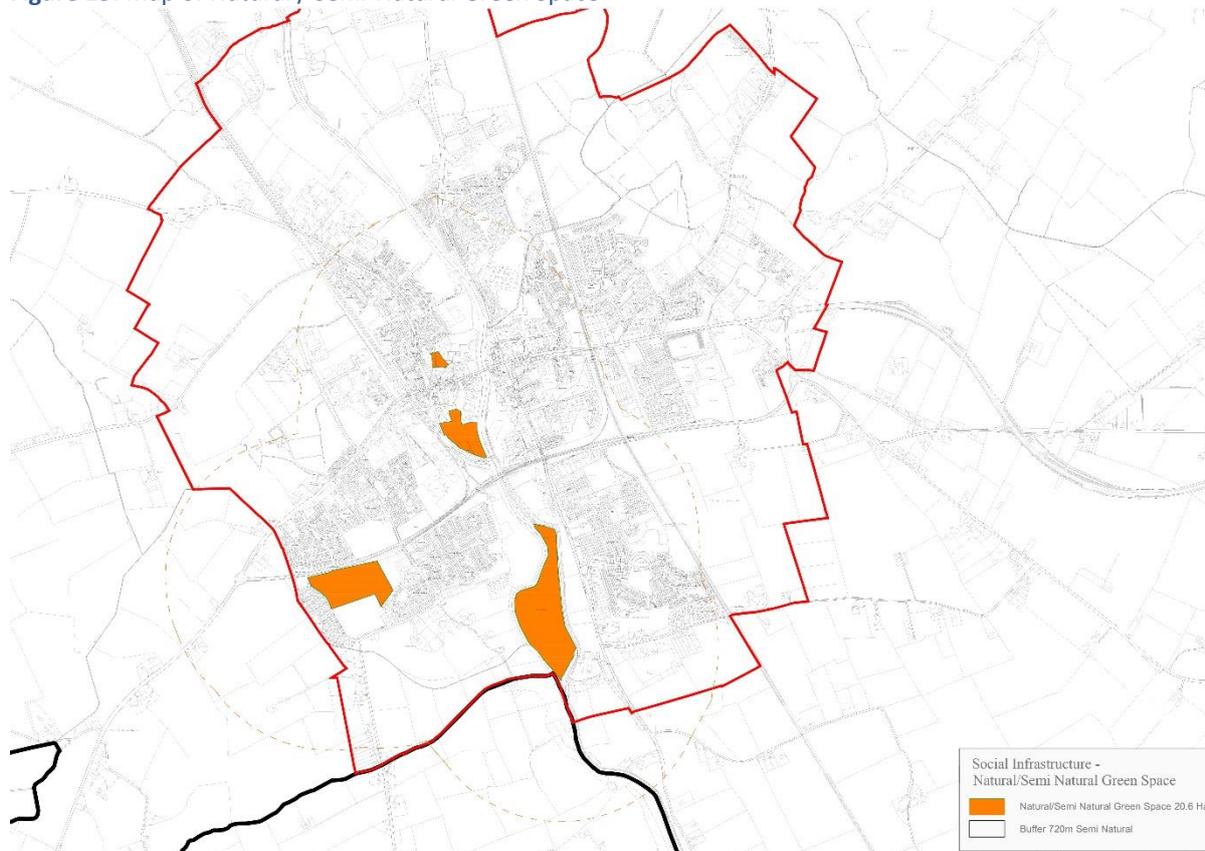
It is evident from the evaluation in *Table 18*, that the minimum recommended guidance for the playground space typology is not achieved in Athy based on current provision.

Furthermore, it is noted the Kildare Open Space Strategy 2011 recommends that per 10,000 population the following open space types should be provided.

1. A Neighbourhood Park (16 ha)
2. Two Local Parks (each comprising 2 ha)

Using this benchmark, a second local park is required by 2027. Such provision should include active uses such as football pitches, tennis courts, basketball courts and especially more playground facilities. This provision could be catered for in the spaces coloured orange in Figure 15 which are currently marked as Natural / Semi Natural Green Spaces. Locating public parks in these locations would benefit the south-east of the town, which currently has an under provision of parks as it is outside of the 710m buffer of existing parks<sup>7</sup> in Figure 14.

**Figure 15:** Map of Natural / Semi-Natural Green Space



<sup>7</sup> This 710m buffer is mapped around existing parks on Figure 14. This buffer is recommended by Fields in Trust (F.I.T.) Benchmark Guidance for Open Space (2015) and detailed in Table 17.

*Source: Site Survey (August 2020), Social Infrastructure Portal*

It is also noted the Kildare Open Space Strategy (2011) states while “*the quality of public open space in Athy is generally good, advantage ought to be taken of the setting of the River Barrow and Grand Canal for the provision of high-quality open space.*” This document also concludes Athy’s “*existing open space could be enhanced by the provision of linked access to the waterway corridors.*” It is noted that this Open Space Strategy is currently being reviewed by the Local Authority in advance of the preparation and publication of an Open Space and Outdoor Recreation Strategy for County Kildare 2021 – 2031.

## 9. Social and Community

Social and Community facilities are varied in nature and can include general civic services and services targeted to specific sections of the community. There are 20 social/community services identified within the study, which includes facilities such as the Fire Station, Garda Station and Library. Most facilities are located within the town centre area.

**Table 19: Audit of Social and Community Services**

Map Ref	Name	Description of facilities if possible	Address
S1	Athy Recreational Community Hall (ARCH Athy)	Used by an array of sports and community groups including soccer groups, athletics, Irish dancing, karate, fitness classes etc.	Kilkenny Road
S2	Athy Community Arts Centre	Uses Methodist Church and Hall (which remains in use on a Sunday) as a dual function centre to serve as a theatre, art gallery and workshop space.	Woodstock Street
S3	Athy Community Men's Shed	Provides a space for men to do many activities.	Unit 9, Athy Community Enterprise Centre
S4	Athy Community and Family Resource Centre	Provides services for disadvantaged families.	Old CPD Building, Woodstock Street
S5	Athy Church of Ireland	Provides several multi-purpose halls, meeting rooms, kitchen and coffee dock.	Carlow Road

	Centre and Hall		
S6	Mount St. Mary's Community Resource Centre	Provides services for the Traveller community.	Mount St. Mary's
S7	Athy Garda Station	Garda station open 24 hours.	Green Alley, Bleach
S8	Athy Fire Station	Also, home to the Athy Unit Kildare Civil Defence.	Athy Fire Station, Townparks
S9	Athy Community Enterprise Centre	Athy Community Enterprise Centre is a new development of 20 commercial units geared specifically to the requirements of new and emerging businesses. Units range in size from 20.4m <sup>2</sup> to 55.7m <sup>2</sup> .	Athy Community Enterprise Centre, Woodstock Industrial Estate
S10	Citizens Information Centre Athy	Open Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays.	3 Emily Row, Offaly Street
S11	Athy Municipal District Office	Municipal District Office of Kildare County Council in Athy.	Stanhope Street
S12	Obair - Local Employment Services Network	Provides job seekers with free and confidential information, guidance and job-searching support as well as training and educational opportunities.	Duke Street
S13	Mount Offaly House	A Church of Ireland run facility which supports homeless people in Athy.	Carlow Road
S14	Athy Alternative Project Company	This company is funded by the Probation Service and serves to enable individuals who are involved in criminal activity to reduce their offending behaviour, improve their life options and participate positively in the community.	2 Nelson St, Bleach
S15	Peter McVerry Trust	Provides support and housing to the homeless.	Convent Lane
S16	St. Michael's Veterans' Centre	Provides support to army veterans in Athy	38 Duke Street

S17	Scouts Hall	Provides a meeting space for Beaver Scouts, Cub Scouts, Scouts, Venture Scouts and Rover Scouts.	St John's Lane
S18	KARE Athy	Independent housing for people with intellectual disabilities.	Shrewleen Lane
S19	Athy Library	Open Monday – Saturday.	Convent Lane
S20	Order of Malta	The Athy Ambulance Corp Unit appears to be based out of this office.	Nelson Street

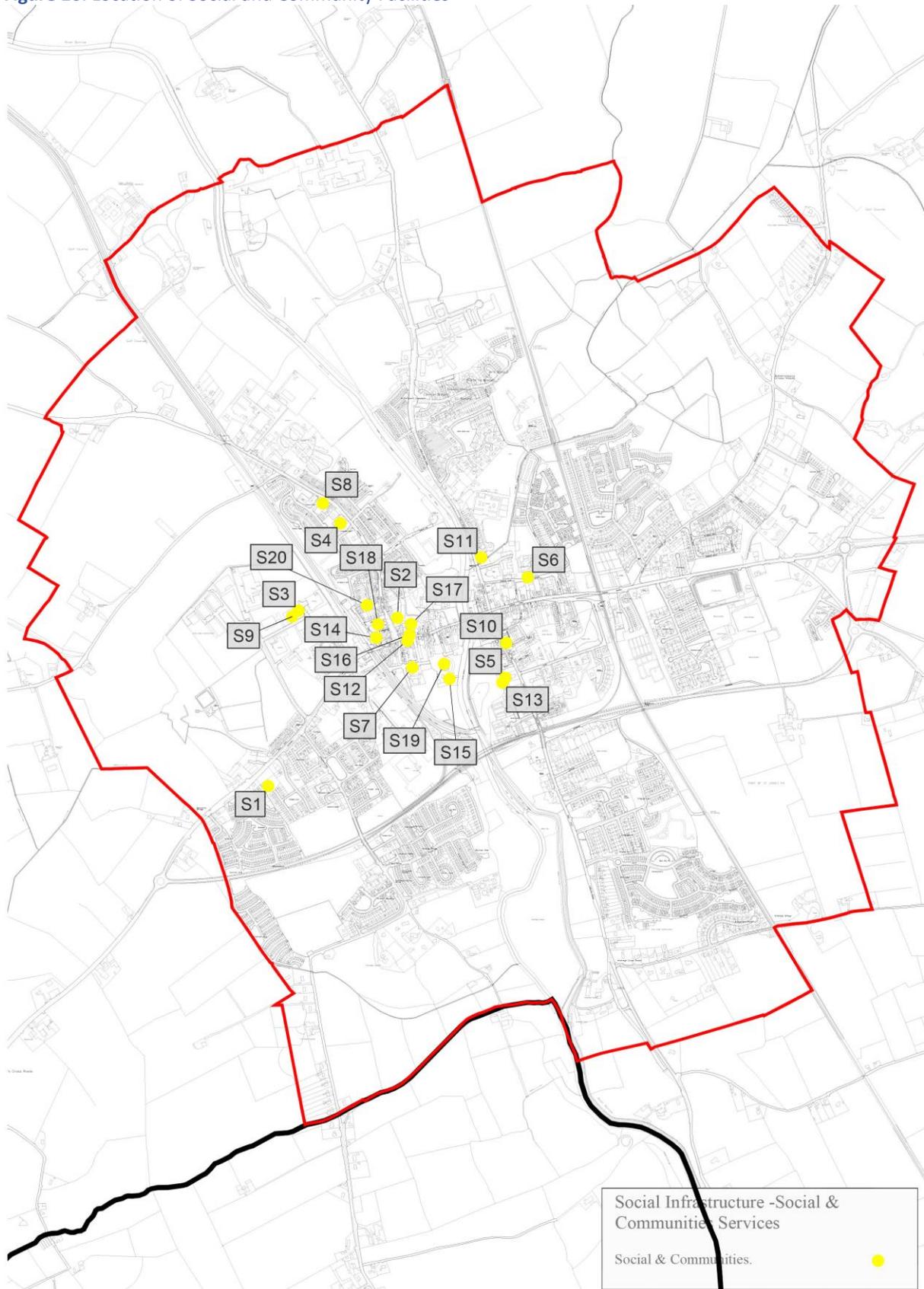
*Source: Desktop and Field Surveys (August 2020)*

*Table 19* above does not include other notable community services as they operate from some of the facilities outlined in the table and they include:

- National Learning network (Rehab) – Provides training and support for those impacted by a setback, an accident, a mental health issue, an illness, an injury or a disability.
- Athy Tidy Towns Group – Maintains and enhances the town.
- Athy Lions Club – Organises fundraising events for humanitarian needs locally and beyond.

These services / groups cannot be measured physically or numerically against any benchmark or guidance, but their existence is important in the community.

**Figure 16:** Location of Social and Community Facilities



*Source:* Site Survey (August 2020), Social Infrastructure Portal

## 9.1 Demand Analysis

There are no Irish standards for the provision of social and community facilities. However, a simplistic standardisation which has been employed elsewhere (*Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council, Strategic Framework for Community Centre Provision, 2016*) in neighbourhood planning is: 0.30 community facilities per 1,000 population. However, this approach is based somewhat crudely, on the number of buildings/facilities provided, and does not recognise the size or quality of individual facilities which are also important. Consequently, the use of this standard is applied with caution, and on the basis that it is intended to present a benchmark at this time, which might be useful for future comparative analysis.

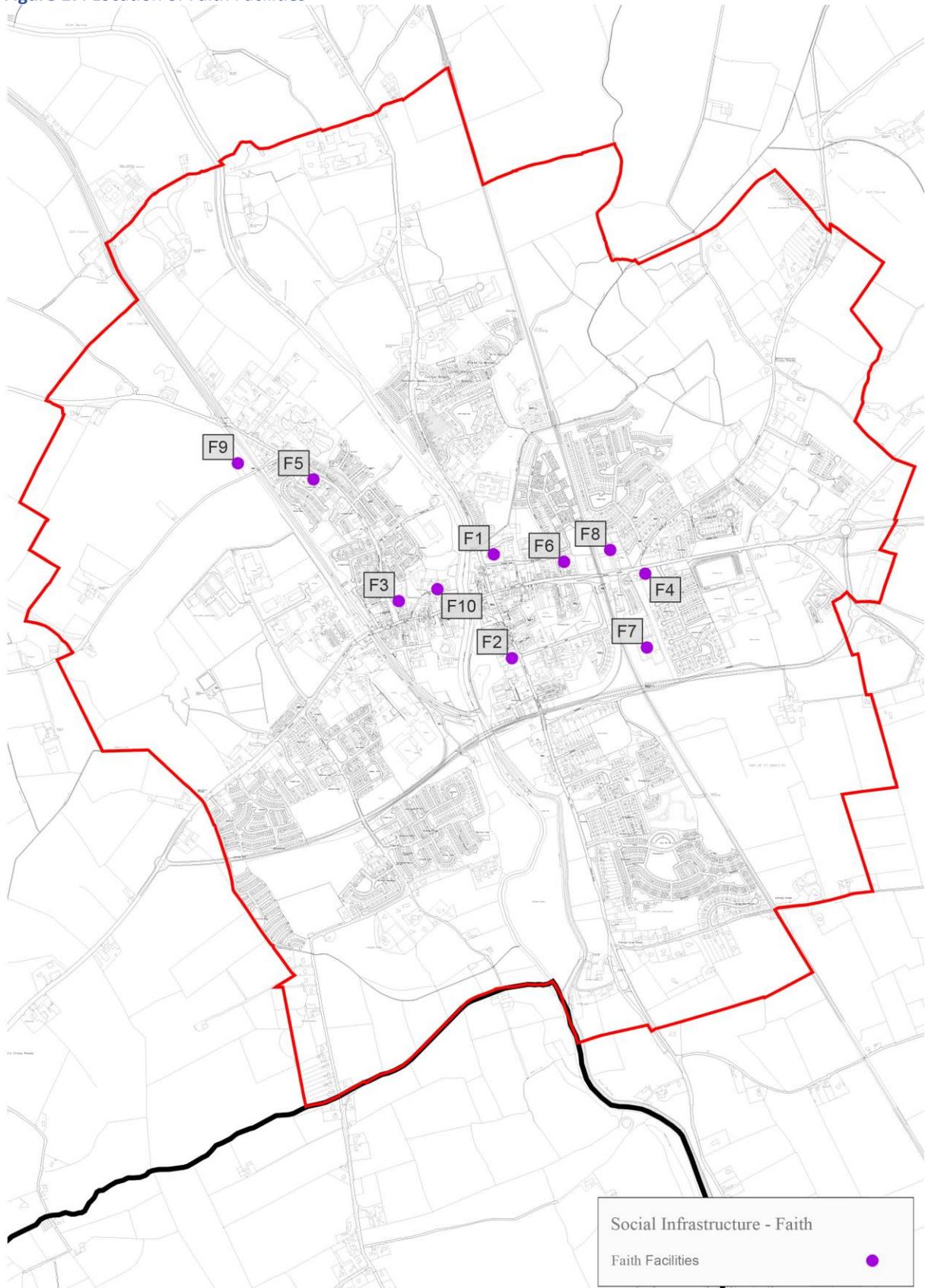
In employing that benchmark recommendation (0.30 per 1,000 pop.) a standard of 1.86 community facilities per 1,000 population is achieved in Athy (based on 18 facilities, which exclude the Fire and Garda Service) using Census 2016 data. This provision would decrease to the rate of 1.52 per 1,000 population in 2027, which is still well above the benchmark recommendations.

While it would therefore appear Athy is well served by community facilities/services, it is noted these calculations do not take the high-level deprivation present in Athy into account. Pobal's Map of Deprivation based on the 2016 census results indicates a high level of deprivation in Athy, with no areas indicated being as affluent or very affluent. This contrasts starkly with surrounding neighbouring towns in the county. Taking this into consideration more community facilities and services may be required to cater for the demand in Athy on a per capita basis.

## 10. Faith

A total of 10 faith facilities were identified in Athy comprising 6 places of worship / churches and 4 cemeteries within the SIA study area. Most facilities are located within or proximate to the town centre. These are illustrated in **Figure 17** with the details presented in Tables 20 and 21 below.

**Figure 17: Location of Faith Facilities**



*Source: Site Survey (August 2020), Social Infrastructure Portal*

**Table 20: Audit of Existing Faith Facilities**

Churches		
Map Ref	Religion (Catholic / COI / Muslim etc.)	Address
F1	St. Michael's Church (Catholic)	Monasterevin Road
F2	St Michael's Church (COI)	Carlow Road
F3	Methodist Church	Woodstock Street
F4	Presbyterian Church	Dublin Road
F5	Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses	Flinter's Place, Townparks
F5	Kingdom Life Church (Christian)	3 Kirwan's Lane

**Table 21: Audit of Existing Cemeteries**

Cemeteries		
F6	St. Michael's New Cemetery (RC)	Dublin Road
F7	St. Michael's Old Cemetery (Mixed)	Dublin Road
F8	St. Mary's Cemetery (RC)	Woodstock Road
F9	St. John's Graveyard (Ancient and closed)	Athy

*Source: Desktop and Field Surveys (August 2020)*

## 10.1 Demand Analysis

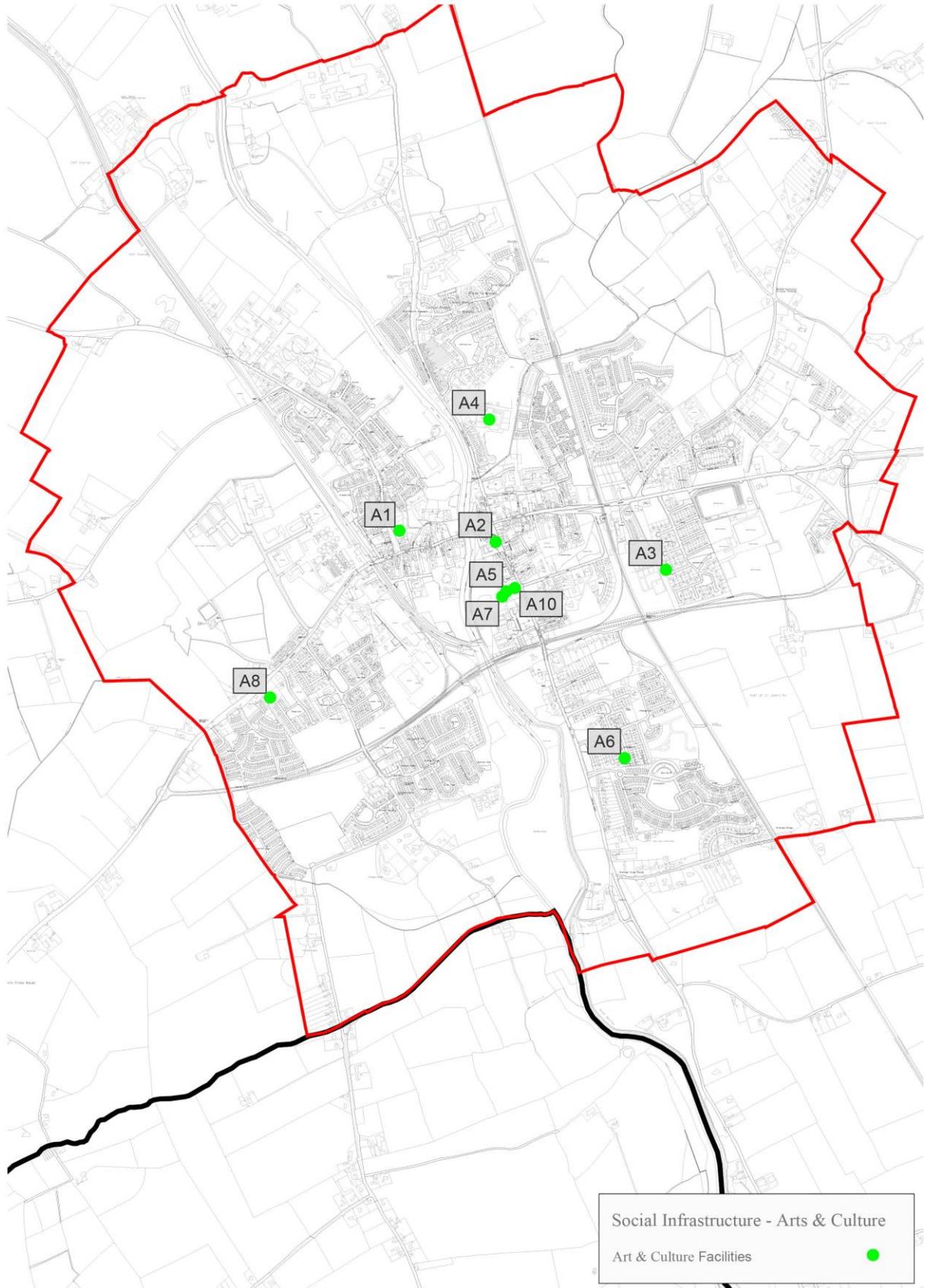
Within the study area 78% of the population identified as Catholic in Census 2016 with one catholic church serving 7,729 people. There are a number of churches for other religions present in Athy. There are no known benchmarking standards for this category of infrastructure provision.

Regarding cemetery provision, figures provided by the Environment Department of Kildare County Council indicates that there is a capacity in St. Michael's New Cemetery (in the town) for the next ten year. Accordingly, it is considered that Athy's medium term needs for cemetery spaces is adequately catered for over the life of the Local Area Plan. It is noted St. John's Graveyard is classified as ancient and has been closed for a period of time. It is further noted that there is no crematorium or columbarium within the SIA study area.

## 11. Arts and Culture

There are 9 Arts and Culture facilities most of which are related to music, dance, and drama. Facilities are dispersed in various locations across the town with a concentration of facilities in the town centre and in the northeast of the town. **Figure 18** illustrates the location of each facility and *Table 22* presents further details.

**Figure 18: Location of Arts and Culture Facilities**



*Source: Site Survey (August 2020), Social Infrastructure Portal*

**Table 22: Breakdown of Arts and Culture Facilities**

Arts and Culture			
Map Ref	Type	Name and description of facilities	Address
A1	Theatre	Athy Community Arts Centre	Woodstock Street
A2	Museum	Athy Heritage Centre - Shackleton Museum	Athy Town Hall, Emily Square
A3	Music	Athy Drama and Musical Society	25 Mansfield Grove
A4	Speech / Drama School	Athy School of Communication	Ardcoil Na Tríonóide, Rathstewart
A5	Music	Melody and Keys Academy of Music	Athy Church of Ireland, Offaly Street
A6	Music	Music Lessons Athy	29 Graysland, Coneyburrow
A7	Dance	The Dunbar School of Dance	St. Michael's Church of Ireland Church, Offaly Street
A8	Dance	Lisa Bradley School of Irish Dancing	Athy Recreational Community Hall, Kilkenny Road

Source: Desktop and Field Surveys (August 2020)

### 11.1 Demand Analysis

In addition to the facilities and groups listed in *Table 22*, festivals include the annual Athy Bluegrass Festival, with many live music events taking place in the environs of Athy. Additional opportunities for performance and music education will be provided with the roll out of *Music Generation*, commencing in 2020, led by KWETB and supported by Kildare County Council.

Typical benchmarking standards for art and culture relate to the spend per capita in each area, as opposed to the provision of physical infrastructure. There is no record of such spending patterns in Athy.

## 12. Other Facilities Including Neighbourhood Centres

Neighbourhood centres generally comprise a small group of shops, typically a newsagent, small supermarket/general grocery store, sub-post office and other small shops of a local nature serving a small, localised neighbourhood catchment population.

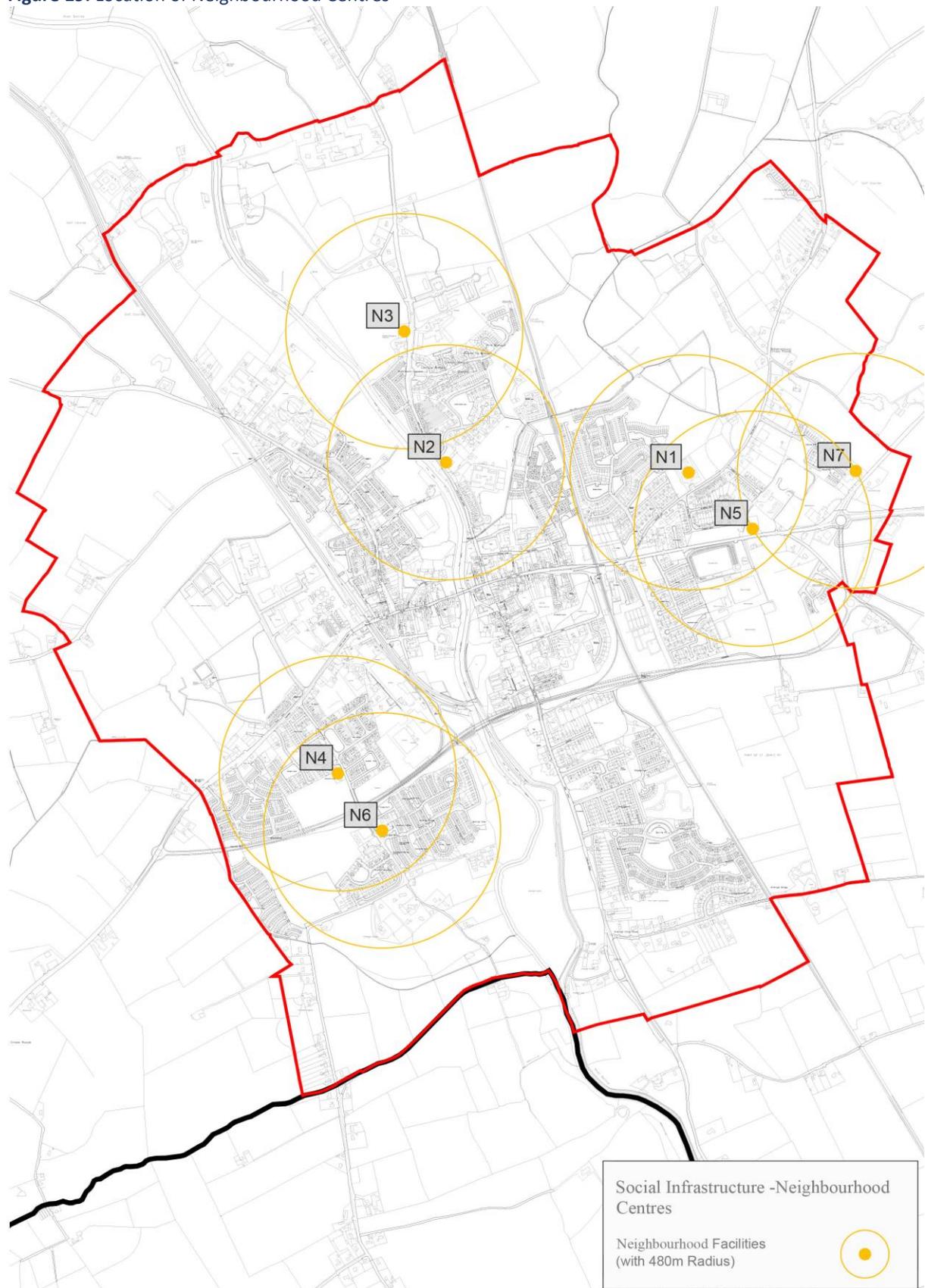
In Athy there are six definable neighbourhood centres in the town which are taken from the Athy Town Development Plan 2012-2018. These are spread throughout the town and serve existing and proposed residential areas. **Figure 19** illustrates the location of each centre and *Table 23* presents an audit of facilities in terms of retail types and unit numbers.

**Table 23:** Existing Neighbourhood Centres (as per the zoning map of the Athy Town Development Plan 2012-2018)

Map Ref	Name	Description of shops available	List of shops	Address
N1	Geraldine Road,	Industrial unit	Galú Limited - Manufacturer	Geraldine Road
N2	Stanhope Street	Grocery supermarket	Aldi	Stanhope Street
N3	Rathstewart Crescent	Petrol station and newsagents	Applegreen Service Station with Gala Supermarket	Rathstewart Crescent
N4	Fortbarrington Road	Florist	Bouquets N Baskets	Fortbarrington Road
N5	Dublin Road (Not zoned)	Service station, tyre shop	Circle K	Dublin Road
N6	Bleach Road (Not zoned)	Supermarket, childcare facility	XL Store	Fortbarrington Road, Bleach Road
N7	Dublin Road, Gallowshill (Not zoned)	Service station and newsagents	Texaco and Centra Supermarket	Dublin Rd, Gallowshill

*Source: Desktop and Field Surveys (August 2020)*

**Figure 19:** Location of Neighbourhood Centres



*Source:* Site Survey (August 2020), Social Infrastructure Portal

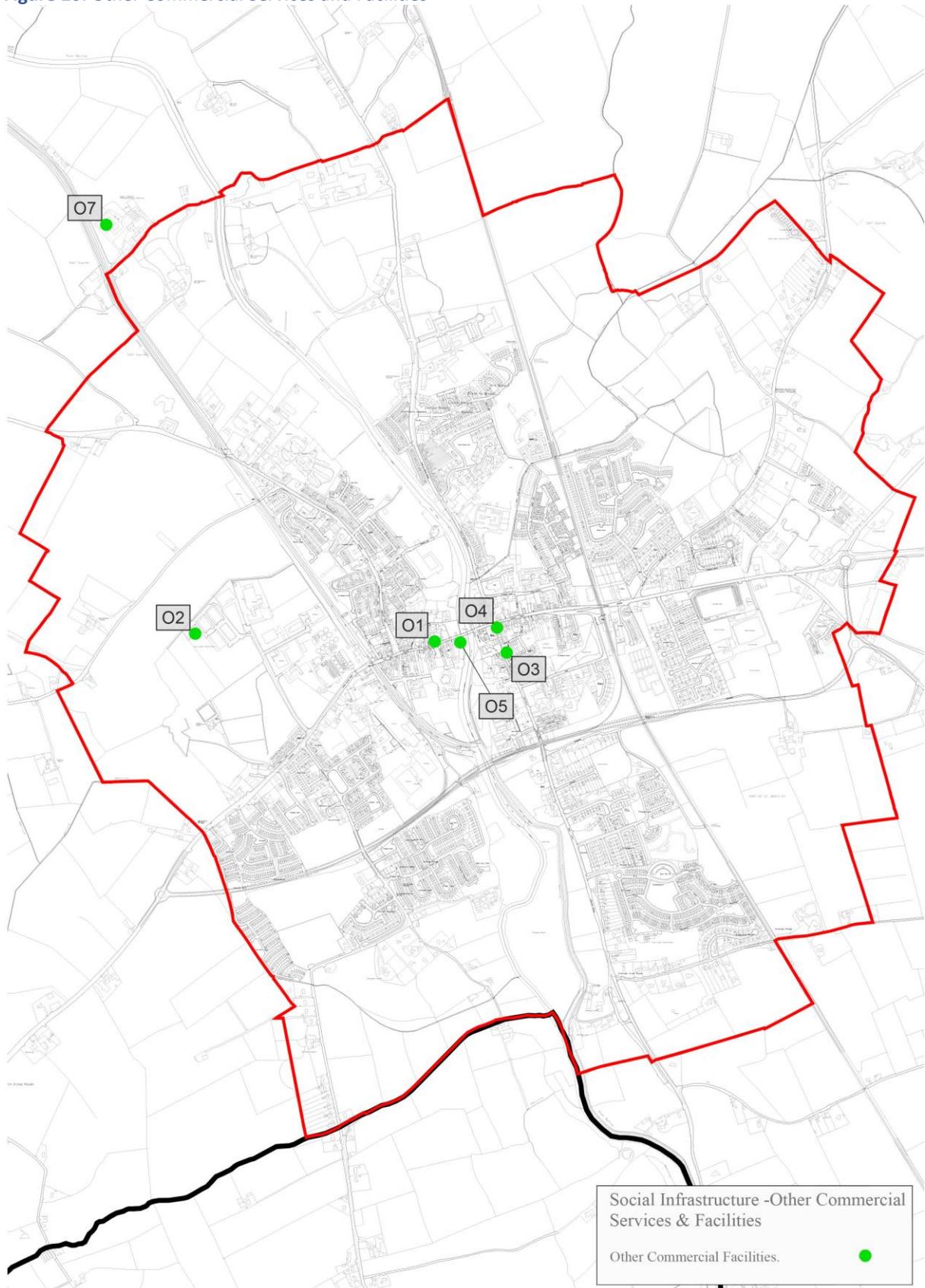
## 12.1 Demand Analysis

Within the six identified neighbourhood centres there are 5 stores / retail units for consumers to choose from. These include a range of services as outlined in *Table 23* such as convenience, comparison and service stations. These neighbourhood centres provide only a small number of retail units.

A spatial catchment as defined by a 10-minute walk-time (480 metre radii as per primary schools) from each neighbourhood centre is illustrated in Figure 19. This spatial catchment reflects the general and accepted threshold of distance that people are prepared to walk to access such local services and facilities, while not precisely reflecting routes within an urban context. In this context each neighbourhood centre would appear well located.

It is noted the Neighbourhood Centre on Geraldine Road had planning permission for the demolition of the existing industrial unit and the development of a mixed-use development of a neighbourhood shopping centre with a gross floor area of 1947.93 sqm, comprising 4 shop units with a gross area of 257.72 sqm. This application however expired in 2017.

**Figure 20: Other Commercial Services and Facilities**



*Source: Site Survey (August 2020), Social Infrastructure Portal*

**Table 24: Audit of Other Commercial Services and Facilities**

Other / Financial Institution			
Map Ref	Type	Name	Address
O1	Post Office	An Post Athy	Duke Street
O2	Post Office	An Post Sorting Office	Athy Business Campus, Kilkenny Road, Woodstock South
O3	Credit Union	People First Credit Union	13-14 Emily Square
O4	Banking Facilities	Bank of Ireland	Emily Square
O5	Banking Facilities	AIB Bank	1 Duke Street

*Source: Desktop and Field Surveys (August 2020)*

There is no Irish standard regarding the number of people living in an urban area that should be served by a neighbourhood centre or other commercial premises, including financial institutions. Infrastructure requirements are dependent on market conditions and consumer demand, factors which are beyond the scope of this study.

## 13. Conclusion

Social and community infrastructure is essential to achieving a balanced approach to the sustainable development of local communities and it is of critical importance to the economic as well as social development of a town such as Athy. This study was commissioned to examine the current context with respect to social infrastructure facilities in Athy and to determine future requirements based on projected population growth. While this audit highlights the presence of some excellent social infrastructure facilities in the area, it also identifies an absence of some others.

The study will function as an important evidence base for the Athy Local Area Plan 2021-2027 where the principal task is to deliver on Athy’s social and economic development potential. In essence, the provision of social infrastructure in an area is fundamentally about making the most of and developing the local network of assets, be they facilities, services or the programmes that bring this together.

## 14. Recommendations

The Social Infrastructure Audit has identified certain specific requirements for the future provision of community infrastructure facilities for Athy. These requirements are based on the current level of

provision in the town and the envisaged population growth over the Athy LAP plan period, which is projected to be a total of 11,837 persons and 5,052 residential units by 2027. This assessment is intended to inform the spatial development objectives for the town contained in the Local Area Plan and in this regard makes a number of recommendations.

## 14.1 Education and Training

Primary schools in Athy are nearing capacity. Based on projected growth the number of primary school places required by 2026 will be 1,689 assuming this age group cohort (5-12 years) remains stable at 14.6% of the population. Based on enrolment figures for 2019/20, schools in Athy currently cater for 9% more pupils than the school going population within the study area. This indicates primary school catchments are reaching beyond the study area. Applying the current figure of 14.6% to projected population growth will require an additional 254 student places to be made available. This equates to an additional 10 classrooms comprising 26 pupils each. These could be provided within existing schools if there is capacity to expand or through the provision of new school(s) located near existing residential areas or proposed new residential development(s). The council will liaise with the DoES regarding future provision in terms of location and size preferences.

Secondary schools in Athy are currently over capacity, with Athy Community College relying on prefab classrooms. Much of this related to the fact that the schools are serving the wider catchment areas of secondary schools from the rural hinterland. 1,296 pupils are enrolled in secondary schools within Athy town for the 2019/2020 term, while there are only 906 teenagers of secondary school going age (2016 Census data for 13 to 19-year olds) within the study area. Should growth continue as projected in line with the CDP and using the current proportion of 9.2% attending secondary school it is anticipated a further 158 additional secondary school places are required within the study area plus a further 68 places from the wider rural hinterland. It is noted Athy Community College has secured funding from the Department of Education for an extension to take the capacity to 1,000 students or 560 additional school places, but a planning application has not yet been submitted.

Athy is well served by further education facilities and courses. However, it is noted from the 2016 Census records that attainment of third level degrees is lower than the national average. The Local Authority should support these existing facilities and support any development that would help to address lack of higher educational attainment.

## 14.2 Childcare

All new residential developments and particularly those in excess of 10-minute walk-time from existing childcare facilities with sufficient capacity to accommodate that development, should be required to comply with childcare standards and the provision of childcare facilities as part of specific developments.

Census 2016 shows that 833 children are eligible for childcare (under school going age i.e. 0-4 years inclusive.) This would indicate circa 57.5% of children eligible for childcare in Athy avail of childcare services. Overall, childcare facilities are operating at 94.7% capacity in Athy and there are no extant permissions for new childcare facilities.

Using the standards set out in Appendix 2 of the *Childcare Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2001)* it is identified that 206 additional childcare places are required to be provided by the end of the plan period in 2027, if all new residential lands are brought forward for development.

## 14.3 Health

The current doctor to population ratio in Athy (excluding hospital services) is 1.4 per 1,000 population with 14 doctors practicing from 26 different facilities which is 6 times above the recommendations of Graduate Medical Education National Advisory Committee (GMENAC). Should the population grow by the projected 2,160 persons by 2027 the ratio of existing doctors per population will fall to 1.2 per 1,000 population which is still almost four times higher than the recommended standard. This provision is considered adequate even taking into consideration the large rural hinterland which are also served by existing practises. It would appear that Athy is well served by mental health services and nursing homes when compared to other surrounding similar sized towns.

## 14.4 Sports and Recreation

Overall, there are some 19 hectares of land is noted within the study area providing for sports and recreational related activities. Currently there are 1.96 hectares of sport and recreation area per 1,000 population which complies with Fields in Trust (FIT) benchmark guidance. While this would decrease during the course of the plan to 1.61 ha per 1,000 persons, taking account of the project increase in population, this figure would still comply with the FIT benchmarks.

However, current playground provision is 0.055 per 1,000 people considerably short of the 0.25 F.I.T. benchmark. Furthermore, it is noted the Kildare Open Space Strategy 2011 recommends that per 10,000 population an additional 2 hectare local park in Athy with active uses. These issues should be addressed within the lands identified in Figure 15.

Amenity green space provision in Athy is over four times above FIT benchmark guidance. However, all new residential development should seek to provide amenity green space no greater than 480 metres, from dwellings, at a minimum, in accordance with the Development Management Standards of the KCDP or any successor.

### 14.5 Connectivity and Linkages

Kildare County Council should investigate opportunities to enhance the existing cycle infrastructure network and pedestrian routes especially using the Athy Distributor Road (scheduled for completion in late 2023). Connectivity projects should be considered that seek to encourage the development of sustainable movement infrastructure to facilitate access to and through neighbourhood and local parks for the purpose of improving linkages within the town and the quality of this amenity environment. Any peripheral development on suitably zoned land should seek to take a similar approach and provide a responsive and integrated infrastructure design approach.

New and/or enhanced pathway linkages through the town should seek to connect with built and amenity heritage features such as White's Castle, the Athy Heritage Centre – Shackleton Museum, the People's Park, the Showgrounds and Woodstock Castle neighbourhood park. Any new linkages should fully integrate with the existing walkways along the River Barrow and the Grand Canal including the Barrow Blueway (currently under construction).

### 14.6 Community Services

The location of future community services should be provided relative to the location of target user groups and their level of accessibility insofar as is practical. Based on benchmarks used in Northern Ireland (*Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council, Strategic Framework for Community Centre Provision, 2016*), there is no requirement for additional facilities in Athy as the existing number will exceed the benchmark of 0.30 per 1,000 people in 2027 at 1.52 per 1,000 (based on 18 facilities excluding the Garda Station and Fire Station).

While it would therefore appear that Athy is well served by community facilities / services, it is noted these calculations do not take the deprivation of Athy into account. Pobal's Map of Deprivation based on 2016 census results indicate a high level of deprivation in Athy, with no areas indicated as being affluent. This contrasts starkly with surrounding neighbouring towns. Taking this into account, it is considered that more community facilities/services may be required in Athy on a per capita basis. Further audits should take place to see how these facilities impact on deprivation levels in the area, especially in the area of employment and if there are gaps that the Local Authority should address.

## 14.7 Neighbourhood Centres

The demand and need for additional neighbourhood centres / local retail services will be determined in the Athy Local Area Plan 2021-2027. The walkability analysis undertaken as part of this study and detailed in Figure 19 will influence the spatial arrangement and locational requirement for such facilities. However, it is considered that the vitality of Athy's designated core retail area comprising of Leinster Street, Duke Street and William Street will be paramount to enhancing the vibrancy of the town centre as such and neighbourhood centres should only have a limited role intended to serve the immediate needs of the surrounding local community.

## 14.8 Best Practice Measures in the Provision of Community Services and Infrastructure

In addition to the above specific community and social infrastructure requirements, this study recommends the following principles in the provision of social infrastructure consistent with best practice and the sustainable and effective use of resources:

- Co-location  
Co-location and clustering of complementary community services, thus facilitating coordination, convenience and access for service users.
- Multi-purpose and multi-function  
Facilities and spaces should offer flexible and diverse space and uses over a range of times to maximise efficiency, utilisation and adaptability of physical assets.
- Placemaking and community identity  
Promotion and encouragement of community facilities that create a sense of place and identity, that have a civic quality, and level of amenity that can foster community ownership, offer a focus to support community engagement and the strong '*informal community network*' that exists in Athy.

- Partnership  
Encourage delivery of infrastructure services and facilities through partnerships between different bodies for maximum efficiency and co-ordination.
- Community Asset Management  
For the local authority to maintain and enhance their strategic role in co-ordination and engagement between different service providers to ascertain up to date information of community infrastructure and facilities for the benefit of the community and service providers.