

Transport Assessment in support of Castlecomer Settlement Plan

This document follows the principles of the Area Based Transport Assessment (ABTA) Guidance Notes¹. It includes a review of the most recent Mobility Management Plan for Castlecomer² and an assessment of the provisions of the Settlement Plan to ensure movement and accessibility of all forms, across all modes of transport, is considered as a key component.

1 Part 1 Baseline Assessment

1.1 Policy context

The policy context focused on is the Mobility Management Plan for Castlecomer (MMP) and the Castlecomer Local Area Plan 2018 (the LAP). These documents have already distilled national and regional policy to local level. As set out in the ABTA Guidelines, transport and land use policy has consistently had a stated aim of promoting modal shift away from the car.

1.2 Plan Area characteristics

The topography of Castlecomer is steeply sloped upwards on the western side of the N78. This does constrain ease of cycling in this area.

1.3 Land use types

The land use map from the 2018 LAP is set out in Figure 1. A large proportion of the area covered by the zoning is in use, but some greenfield/brownfield sites were also included in the 2018 zoning map. The four key areas are depicted, and described individually below, including an assessment of development activity during the period of the LAP.

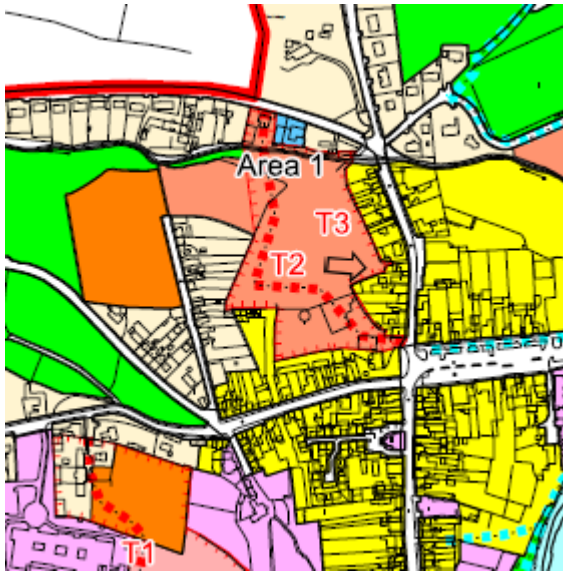
1.3.1 2018 LAP - Key Development Area 1 – Old Creamery Site (Town Centre)

This brownfield site is in the centre of the town close to 'The Square' and was zoned for Mixed Use. The LAP set out that development of this area will require the establishment of a new street with access point from Chatsworth Street, linking across the site and via a bridge across the tributary of the Dinin to the Ballinakill Road. Pedestrian/cycle linkages are also required to ensure permeability through the entire site, with two important connections to Love Lane and Chatsworth Street. The key opportunity in terms of connectivity is the potential to improve permeability in the town. The site

¹ TII, *Area Based Transport Assessment (ABTA) Guidance Notes*, 2018

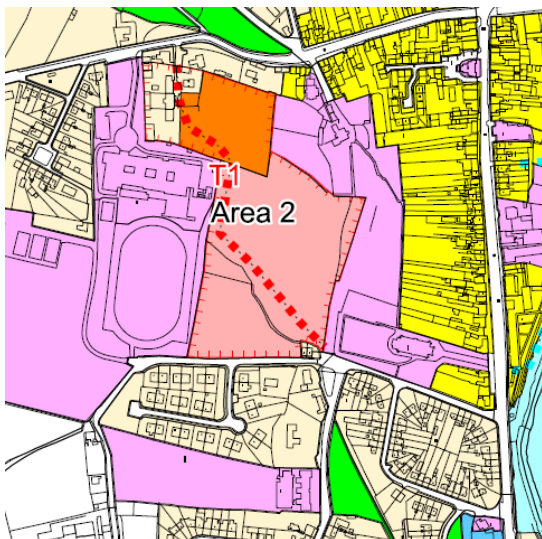
² Atkins on behalf of Kilkenny County Council, *Castlecomer Mobility Management Plan 2021-2026*, 2023

location is shown below. During the period of the last Plan applications for mixed use development on this site were approved³.



1.3.2 2018 LAP - Key Development Area 2 – Former Military Barracks and Parish Lands

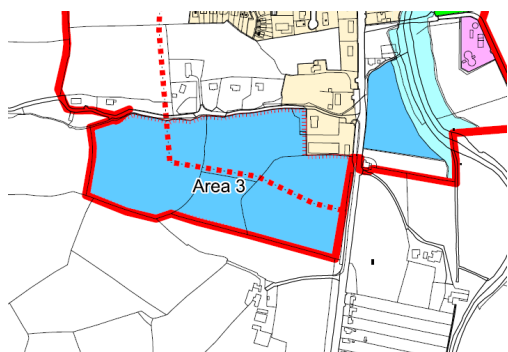
The area is comprised by Parish owned lands and the former Barracks site, and was zoned for a mix of New Residential, Community Facilities and Low Density Residential. The LAP set out that the development of this area will require the establishment of public vehicular access through the site from Barrack Street to Donaguile/Maryville. Pedestrian/cycling linkages will be required in combination with vehicular access to ensure permeability through the entire site. The site location is shown below. An application for residential development on the southwestern corner of this site was refused during the last Plan, due to the lack of capacity in water supply.



³ Permission granted for a significant mixed use development on this site during the period of the last Plan (under P.20/112 and P.23/60610).

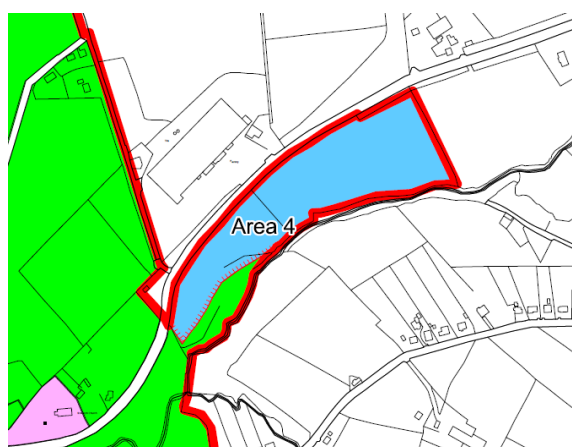
1.3.3 2018 LAP -Key Development Area 3 – Kilkenny Road Employment Area

These lands are located to the south of the town, on greenfield land. The LAP set out that the development of this area will require the establishment of a new or improved access point/s to Kilkenny Road/N78 and to adjoining developed areas. Pedestrian linkages are also required to ensure permeability through the entire area. The site location is shown below. No planning applications came forward on this land during the period of the last Plan.



1.3.4 2018 LAP - Key Development Area 4 – Athy Road

This greenfield site is located along the N78 on the north eastern outskirts of Castlecomer, opposite the former Ormonde Brick works. The site location is shown below. No planning applications came forward on this land during the period of the last Plan.



1.4 Existing travel patterns

1.4.1 Census data

The MMP included 2016 Census data on Places of Work, School, College and the modal share of trips for the Castlecomer CSO settlement boundary. Since then, the 2022 Census data has been released.

For the CSO settlement boundary of Castlecomer in 2016, private vehicles were responsible for approximately 80% of work trips. This value accounts for car driver, other, car passenger and van categories in the survey. This had decreased to 75% for the settlement in 2022.

In 2016, only 10% of all work trips were undertaken on foot and a further 3% via public transport. In 2022, the percentage of work trips via foot remained static, however there was an increase in cycling from 0% in 2016 to 0.2% in 2022. There was a decrease of trips via public transport to 1.7%.

The school/college results for both Census years displayed an improved modal shift over that for work, with approximately 46% of trips via private vehicles in 2016, increasing to 54% in 2022.

In 2016, approximately 43% of students walked to school with an additional 1% and 7% traveling via cycling and public transport respectively. In 2022, the proportion walking to school had fallen dramatically to 31%, and the numbers cycling had remained static. The proportion using public transport had risen to 8%.

This assessment aims to improve modal shift over the Plan period.

1.4.2 Existing transport assets and usage patterns

Public transport provision

The MMP set out that a number of bus services serve the town. There are two bus stops, on the Kilkenny road, and one at the Square. The MMP recommended the provision of a bus shelter on the Kilkenny Road. There are now bus shelters in place at the two bus stops.

Since the MMP, the JJ Kavanaghs airport bus service ceased serving Castlecomer. However, the TFI Local Link still provides daily services between Castlecomer, Ballyragget, Kilkenny and Athy.

Road Traffic counts

Traffic counts were carried out at 4 locations for the MMP, and this found a need to reduce traffic speeds. Four Gateway locations were identified, as follows:

- On the southern segment of the N78 to the south of Erin's Own GAA Club.
- On the eastern segment of the N78 to the east of the Castlecomer Discovery Park.
- On the R426 on the northern side of Quinn Motors/ the cemetery
- On the R694 (Ballyragget Road).

1.5 Transport Infrastructure and Services

1.5.1 Public transport services

The MMP included detail on the level of public transport services; this is beyond the scope of the Settlement Plan.

1.5.2 Service infrastructure

This is the subject of a separate Infrastructural Assessment/Settlement Capacity Audit accompanying the Plan.

1.5.3 Characteristics of existing road network, including capacity

The MMP details the local road network, and key junctions, see Figure 2. The identified improvements to the road network and junctions are as follows:

- Upgrade of the main junction at the Square/Barrack Street/Chatsworth Street junction.
- Revise car parking on the northern side of The Square, converting to parallel parking

- Provision of 4 gateways

N78 Scheme

The N78 is the main road running through the town, linking Kilkenny city to Athy. According to the MMP, there was a proposal for works on the Kilkenny Road from the Garda Station to the Community Hall. This was to include:

- no. Signalised Pedestrian Crossings;
- 1 no. Upgrade to existing uncontrolled crossing;
- no. Junction Improvements;
- Planters and Benches along wide footpaths.

These works were carried out during the period of the last Plan.

1.5.4 Walking and cycling environment

Walking connectivity

The MMP carried out an analysis of walking catchments from 3 locations; Oak Hill housing estate, Maryville housing estate, and the town centre. For Oak Hill and Maryville, it was identified that there were poor north-south connections, but better east-west connectivity.

Both the 2018 LAP and the MMP identified a number of pedestrian and cycle linkages to improve connectivity, as follows:

PL3	Pedestrian/Cycle link along the Dinin between the Athy road bridge and the former Convent along the Kilkenny road, with a branch exiting through the lane central to Florence terrace.
PL4	Pedestrian/Cycle link between the Council Yard at Maryville and The Acorns.
PL5	Pedestrian/Cycle link between Maryville and the R694.
PL7	Pedestrian/Cycle link from the R426 to the Deen Celtic AFC football grounds and the Modubuild factory.

Pedestrian crossings

The MMP identified a need for 7 new pedestrian crossings and upgrades to 3 existing, as follows:

PC1	New Pedestrian Crossing at “The Square” over the N78.
PC2	New Pedestrian Crossing across the N78 near the N78 Castlecomer Footbridge.
PC3	New Pedestrian Crossing across the R426 outside Rowes Hardware.
PC4	New Pedestrian Crossing across the R426 at river crossing.

PC5	New Pedestrian Crossing at the R694/Barrack Street Junction.
PC6	New Pedestrian Crossing outside Castlecomer Community School.
PU1	Pedestrian Crossing Upgrade across “The Square” at Lime Street Café.
PU2	Pedestrian Crossing Upgrade across “The Square” at Eurospar.
PU3	Pedestrian Crossing Upgrade across the R426 outside Post Office.

Schools

There are 4 school sites in Castlecomer as follows, see Figure 3 which depicts some of the current main trip attractors in the Plan area.

Name	Type	Location
Castlecomer Community School	Secondary	Barrack Street
Presentation Convent	Primary - to join with Boys’ school to become Scoil Iosagain	Kilkenny Street
Castlecomer Boys’	Primary – to join with Presentation Convent to become Scoil Iosagain	Maryville – but to relocate to Kilkenny Street from September 2025
Wandesforde	Primary	The Square

Two of the pedestrian crossings proposed would serve schools; PC6 outside the Community School, and PC2 would be located beside Wandesforde School.

Cycling infrastructure

There are no cycle lanes in the town at present, and no bicycle parking facilities. The permission on the former Creamery site includes for bicycle parking facilities.

River walkway

The Castlecomer LAP (2018) and the MMP both identified the need for a pedestrian/cycle link along the River Dinin, between the bridge and the former Convent along the Kilkenny road, with a branch exiting through the land central to Florence Terrace. This would enhance connectivity between the southern side of town and the Discovery Park/Wandesforde School and Avalon hotel.

1.5.5 Environmental Conditions

The N78 is the dominant transport feature in the town. The environment for cyclists and walkers needs improvement to encourage a modal shift.

2 Context for this Assessment

Part 2 of an ABTA should establish the context for the ABTA, by setting out the transport planning principles and objectives to inform the preparation of the Plan. The MMP set out the principles and objectives, and these remain up to date. The objective for the Settlement Plan is to achieve an improved modal shift away from the car towards active travel modes.

The ABTA would also determine Travel Demand, Travel Patterns and Mode Split Assumptions. The MMP did not carry out any traffic modelling, and as this is not a Transport Plan, modelling is not required here. The population to be catered for in this Plan is 1,766 by 2027.

The third element in establishing the context would be to identify Transport Development Options - Opportunities and Constraints. This has been largely addressed in the Baseline assessment, but parking is considered below.

2.1 Parking

As the MMP identifies, the majority of car parking within the town centre is located within the Square. Parking on the southern side of the Square is off street, while parking on the northern side are perpendicular bays accessed directly from the carriageway. All parking is free with no pay and display system in operation. A significant car park is provided to the rear of Avalon House. Informal parking exists on both Barrack Street (the R694 (west)) as well as Chatsworth Street (R426 (north)). Parking was identified as an issue through the consultation process for the Settlement Plan.

A survey of car parking spaces within the study area was carried out as part of the Health Check report for Castlecomer⁴. The survey included both formal and informal (including unmarked and/or unauthorised) parking spaces within the town centre and was carried out periodically throughout October 2024. The off-street parking spaces relate to locations available to the general public and do not include further off-street parking spaces within the study area that are exclusively for private domestic use. Car-parking within the town centre is predominantly located at The Square which is rich in retail and commercial land-uses. Parking on the southern side of The Square is off-street with several access points dividing the parking into smaller parking areas.

The survey found that there are c. 100 no. formal off-street car parking spaces and c. 170 no. formal on-street car parking spaces.

Informal car parking spaces in the town centre in regular use equates to c. 85 no. spaces. Informal spaces at the Square were found to be longer term spaces.

There is one age-friendly designated parking space at the library on Kilkenny Street.

The extant planning permission (PL20/112) for development at the former Glanbia Site, off High Street, includes 202 no. off-street car parking spaces.

⁴ Castlecomer Collaborative Town Centre Health Check (CTCHC) Report, 2024

Location	Total Spaces	Occupied	Occupancy (%)
The Square (on-street)	35	29	83%
The Square (off-street)	40	33	83%
High St North (on-street)	7	5	71%
High St. South (on-street)	32	30	94%
Avalon House (Patrons Only)	75	75	100%
Chatsworth Street (on-street)	15	14	93%
Chatsworth Street (off-street)	28	14	50%
Barrack St. (on-street)	2	2	100%
Bollards Car Park (off-street)	10	6	60%
Kilkenny Street (on-street)	78	66	85%
Market Square (off-street)	19	18	95%

Table 1 from CTCHC Report 2024, Formal Parking Spaces

Location	Total Spaces	Occupied	Occupancy (%)
The Square North (on-street)	15	15	100%
Chatsworth Street (on-street)	28	14	50%
Former Post Office (off-street)	4	4	100%
Barrack St. (on-street)	33	21	64%
Market Square (on-street)	9	9	100%

Table 2 from CTCHC Report 2024, Informal Parking Spaces

3 Options Assessment

Part 3 of the ABTA process is an options assessment, covering macro and micro levels. At macro level, the elements for the Settlement Plan to consider is the potential desire lines and trip attractors. These are identified on Figure 3.

The trip attractors are as follows:

- The Square
- the 4 schools,
- the Community hall/library,
- Deen Celtic football grounds/ Modubuild manufacturing facility/Prince grounds
- Erins Own GAA Club
- Tírlán Country Life store
- Discovery Park
- District Hospital

The 4 key development areas identified in the 2018 Plan were assessed, using a traffic light (Red-Amber-Green) rating, against the principles of promoting modal shift away from the car.

Area	Transport assessment	Rating
Area 1: Mixed use development at old Creamery site (20/112 and 23/60610)	Centrally located, brownfield site. Ideally suited for development.	Green
Area 2: Parish lands/Old Barrack site	Located between the school and Kilkenny Street. Opportunities to improve permeability through the town.	Green
Area 3: Ballyhimmin employment land	Greenfield land, located on edge of town. Opportunity to improve connection to western side of Kilkenny Road. Leapfrogging of unzoned land, closer to centre.	Amber
Area 4: Industrial land on Athy Road	Greenfield land, located at a remove from the town centre. No footpath beyond the Discovery Park. Leapfrogging of unzoned land, closer in to centre.	Red

On this basis, Area 4 is not being considered for development under this Settlement Plan.

The areas identified for increased development over the Plan period are as follows:

Area	Transport assessment	Rating
Key Site 1: Mixed use development at old Creamery site (20/112 and 23/60610)	Centrally located, brownfield site. Ideally suited for development.	Green
Key Site 2: Masterplan area - Parish lands/Old Barrack site	Located between the Community school and Kilkenny Street. Opportunities to improve permeability through the town.	Green
Key site 3: Boys school site	Centrally located, brownfield site.	Green
Residential zoning Love Lane	Located just west of centre, opportunity to be connected through Key Site 1.	Green

Ballyhimmin employment land	Greenfield land, located on edge of town. Opportunity to improve connection to western side of Kilkenny Road. Leapfrogging of unzoned land, closer to centre.	
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At a micro level, key measures can influence the demand for travel and mode choice. These can include school/employment travel plans and demand management measures such as parking provision/parking management. As part of the planning application for the Creamery site, under P.21/112, a Mobility Management Plan was prepared by Kilgallen & Partners, dated November 2020. This Mobility Management Plan sets out the details for future employees in relation to sustainable transport options.

The final part of the Options Assessment is to develop a range of development scenarios and identify associated transport interventions and transport impact, and finally identify the optimal development scenario, with associated transport interventions.

The objectives for the Settlement Plan, based on the MMP and the assessment conducted above, are set out in Table 3.1 below.

These objectives will be refined and finalised along with the Settlement Plan.

3.1 Table 3.1 Mobility Objectives for the Settlement Plan

Type	Map Ref.	Description
Key site (Former Creamery)	KS1	To improve permeability at the former Creamery site including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To create a new street from Chatsworth Street/The Square to the Ballinakill Road. To provide pedestrian/cycle access through the site to Love Lane. To provide a pedestrian/cycle route to Chatsworth Street. To examine provision of pedestrian facilities on Chatsworth Street, following implementation of any planning permission on the former Creamery site.
Key site (The Barracks)	KS2	To create new connections between Barrack Street and Maryville, as part of the completion of the Masterplan for the area. This to include the formalising of the pedestrian/cycle route from Maryville to the Community School.
Key site (The Boys school)	KS3	To provide a pedestrian/cycle link from Boys' school site to Donaguile
Key site (The Square)	KS4	To improve permeability and safety at the Square, providing for all users, to include consideration of the following (in conjunction with the Urban Realm Plan): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examination of the pedestrian crossings, including an assessment of need for additional Connections from the backlands to the rear of properties along the north side of the Square Bicycle parking Provision of a cycle link to the Discovery Park EV charging facilities Age-friendly parking bays Car parking configuration Upgrade of the junction with Barrack Street, following implementation of the planning permission on the former Creamery site.
Key Site (East of Kilkenny Street)	KS5	To examine provision of a pedestrian/cycle route along the Dinin between the Athy road/Miners bridge and the former Convent on the Kilkenny road, with a branch exiting through the lane central to Florence Terrace, see Section 1.12.5.
Kilkenny Road	KR1	To improve accessibility and safety on the Kilkenny Road to include consideration of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improvement of the access arrangements to the Castlecomer Business Park Provision of a gateway

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An active travel link from the town to Erin’s Own GAA club <p>A pedestrian crossing at Erin’s Own GAA club</p>
Road	R1	To support the provision of additional accesses to the Discovery Park, in line with the Discovery Park Masterplan (2024) ⁵
Road	R2	As a long-term objective, to link the Kilkenny Road/N78 to the Kilkenny Road employment area, extending to the Acorns Upper/Oak Hill.
Pedestrian/ cycle	PC1	To provide a pedestrian/cycle link from Boys’ school site to Maryville across the railway line
Pedestrian/ cycle	PC2	To examine the feasibility of a pedestrian link from the Golf Club grounds to the N78 near the Miners’ Bridge.
Pedestrian/ cycle	PC3	To examine the provision of a pedestrian/cycle link from Prince Grounds to the Discovery Park.
Pedestrian/ cycle	PC4	To examine the provision of a pedestrian crossing at the Ballyragget Road (R694)/Barrack Street Junction.
Pedestrian/ cycle	PC5	To examine the provision of a school zone outside the Castlecomer Community School, to include pedestrian crossing facilities.
Pedestrian/ cycle	PC6	To complete the pedestrian connection along the former railway line between Church Avenue and the Boys School site.
Pedestrian/ cycle	PC7	To extend the PC6 link to the entrance to Oak Hill.
Pedestrian/ cycle	PC8	To provide pedestrian access between the Council yard at Maryville/Donaguile and The Acorns (southern connection).
Pedestrian/ cycle	PC9	To provide pedestrian access between Maryville at the graveyard and Oak Hill (northerly connection).
Pedestrian/ cycle	PC10	To provide a pedestrian/cycle link between Donaguile Heights and the Community School
Gateway	GW1	To examine provision of a Gateway on the R694 (Ballyragget Road).
Gateway	GW2	To examine provision of a Gateway on the eastern segment of the N78 to the east of the Castlecomer Discovery Park.
Gateway	GW3	To examine provision of a Gateway on the R426 on the northern side of the cemetery.

⁵ Subject to the requirements of Vol. 1 Chapter 12, in relation to access to national roads

4 List of figures

Figure 1: Land use map from 2018 LAP

Figure A1 Castlecomer Zoning and Objectives Map

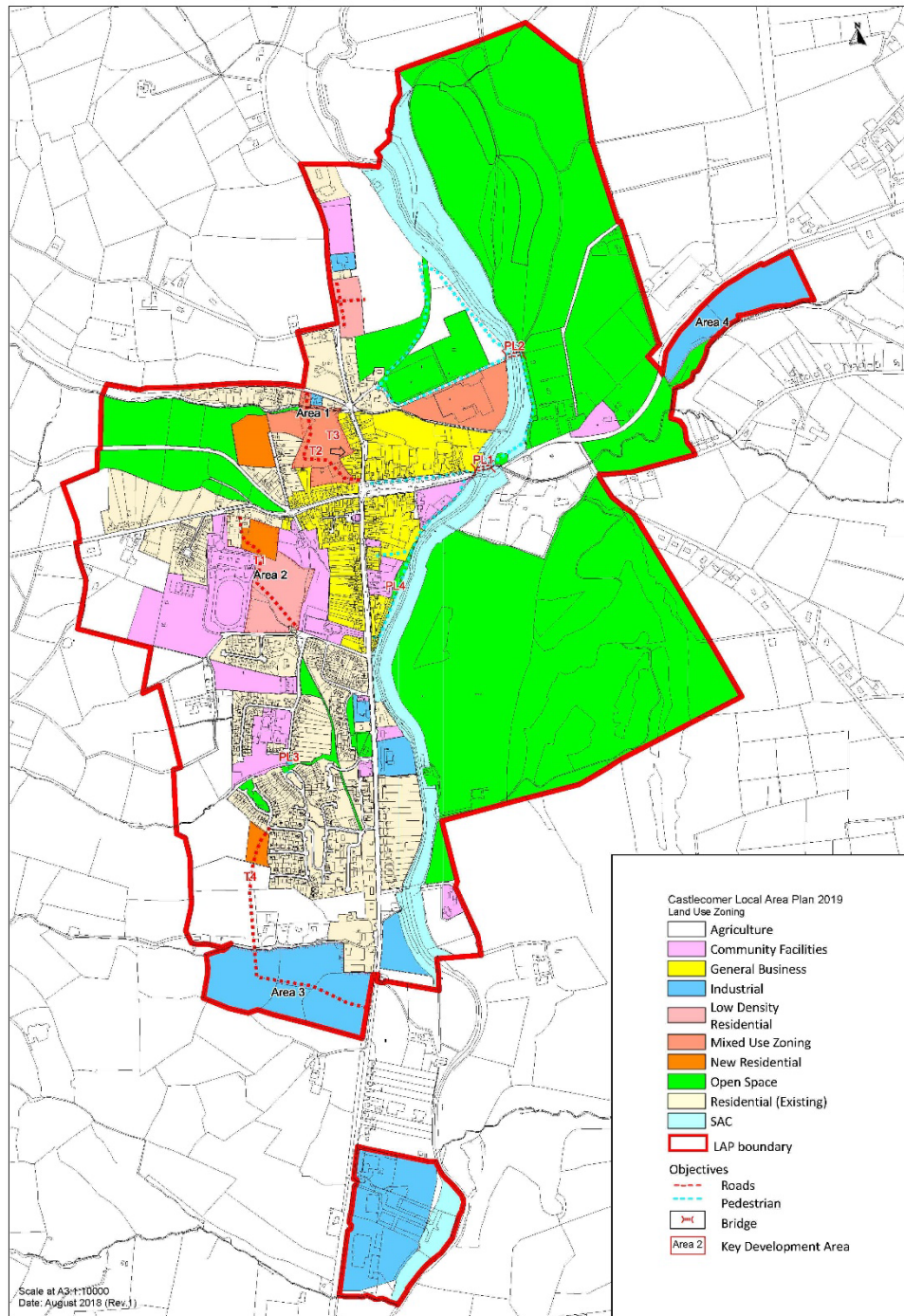


Figure 2: Road network, and key junctions



Taken from the Castlecomer MMP, 2023

Figure 3: Main trip attractors in the Plan area

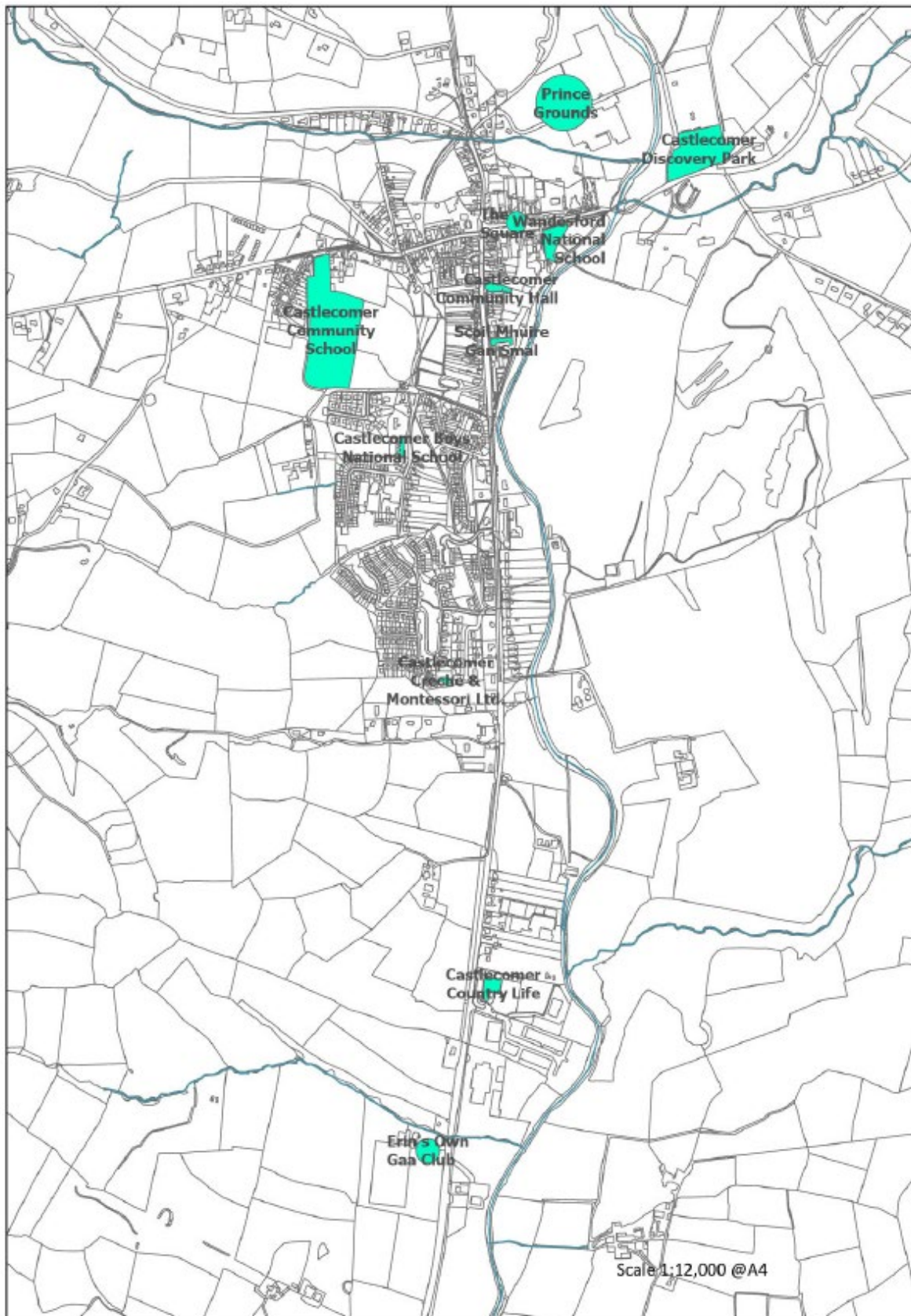


Figure 4: Mobility Objectives

