

1.42 Social

The village has grown with mainly detached houses at a low density in an area which has accommodated much urban generated housing. Residents largely depend on the car for journeys to work, secondary school, church, community facilities and the extensive services which are available in Swords town.

There is a bus service from terminus at Rowlestown, with five buses a day to Swords, the airport and Dublin Abbey St. It takes 16 minutes to Swords and one hour and ten minutes to Dublin.

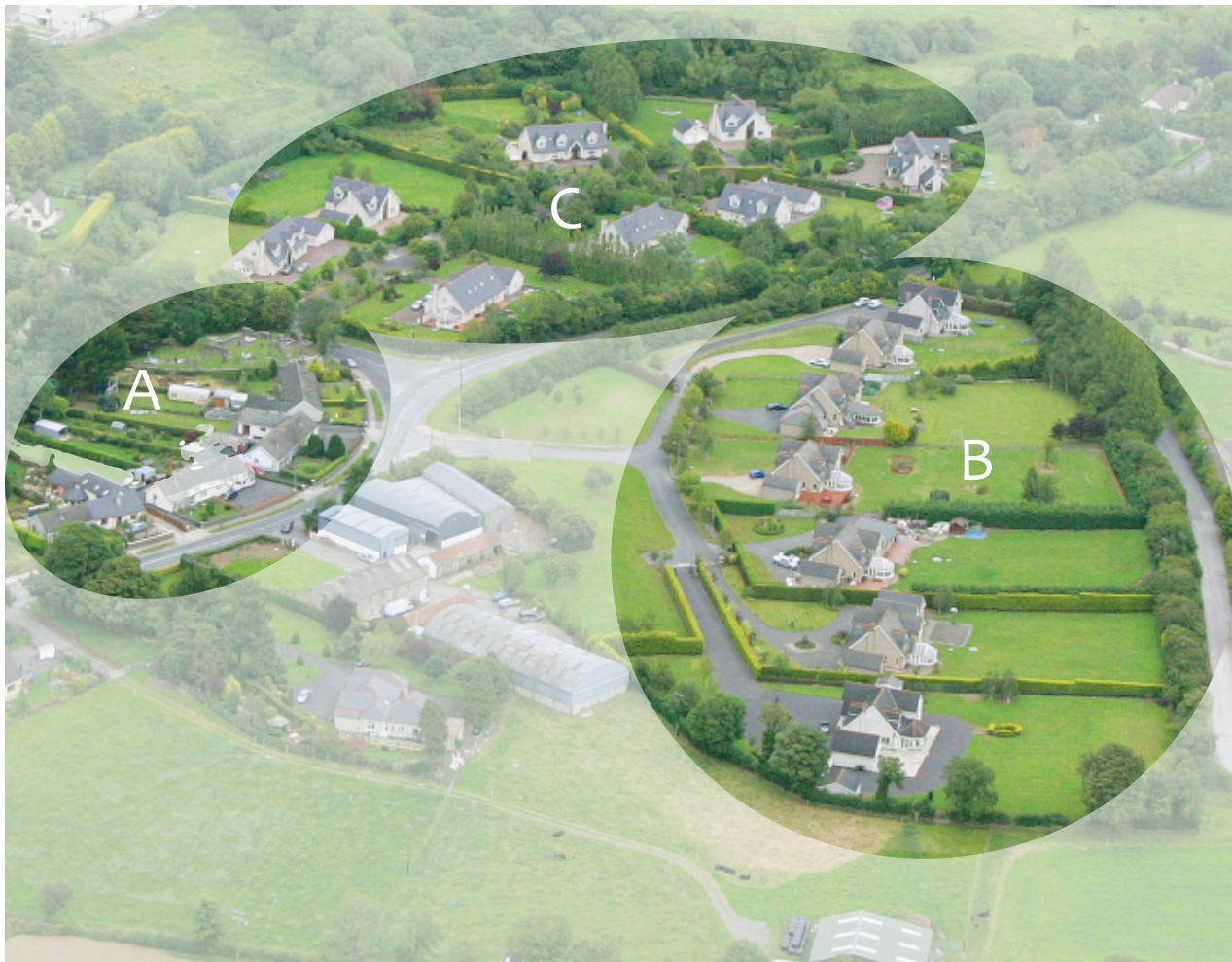
The community hall is greatly valued, with a range of activities and a lively ICA group which draws members from a wide area. The anticipated growth in the 2002 LAP did not happen; there was only modest growth of 11 units in the village.

Whilst permission was granted for retail and commercial facilities, it has not progressed. The local petrol station and newsagent closed down during the plan period and remains disused.

The need for an improved social and employment infrastructure identified in the 2002 LAP still remains. The old school, now disused may be seen as an opportunity for revitalisation as a location to meet some of the employment and social needs, and the Old Mill may be a suitable opportunity to provide a recreational resource at a regional as well as local level. These possibilities are further explored in Section 2.



Above: Aerial view of the western end of the village, showing the old National School at the extremity of the village, and, **inset,** a view of the school in its present condition; both the site and the building offer new opportunities for local and regional social development needs including employment.



Left: petrol filling station and shop, on the R125 at the southeastern entry to the village. These premises have been closed for some time, meaning that there is no retail shop in the village at present, in spite of being well-placed to pick up passing traffic as well as local business. Access to basic facilities now are beyond walking distance, which must be problematic, especially for people without cars.

Established housing projects in Rowlestown

Right, top, circled **A** on aerial map

The low visual profile of cottages allows for the background of mature trees to act as the horizon. The adjacent graveyard, **below**, is somewhat compromised by the view into back gardens.



Right, circled **B** on aerial map

Attractive housing scheme of 7 units well set back from R125 with a landscaped green area as buffer and mainly single storey scale allows the vegetation to predominate.



Right, lower, circled **C** on aerial map

Killossery is a scheme of 8 dormer units in a cul de sac, with access opposite the old graveyard. Street trees have grown to maturity, and well-managed green verges make for a pleasant environment and good visual privacy.



Rowlestown LAP

4
M1
Motorway
to Belfast
and Dublin

5
Broadmeadow River

2
Area of about 70
houses south of
Rowlestown

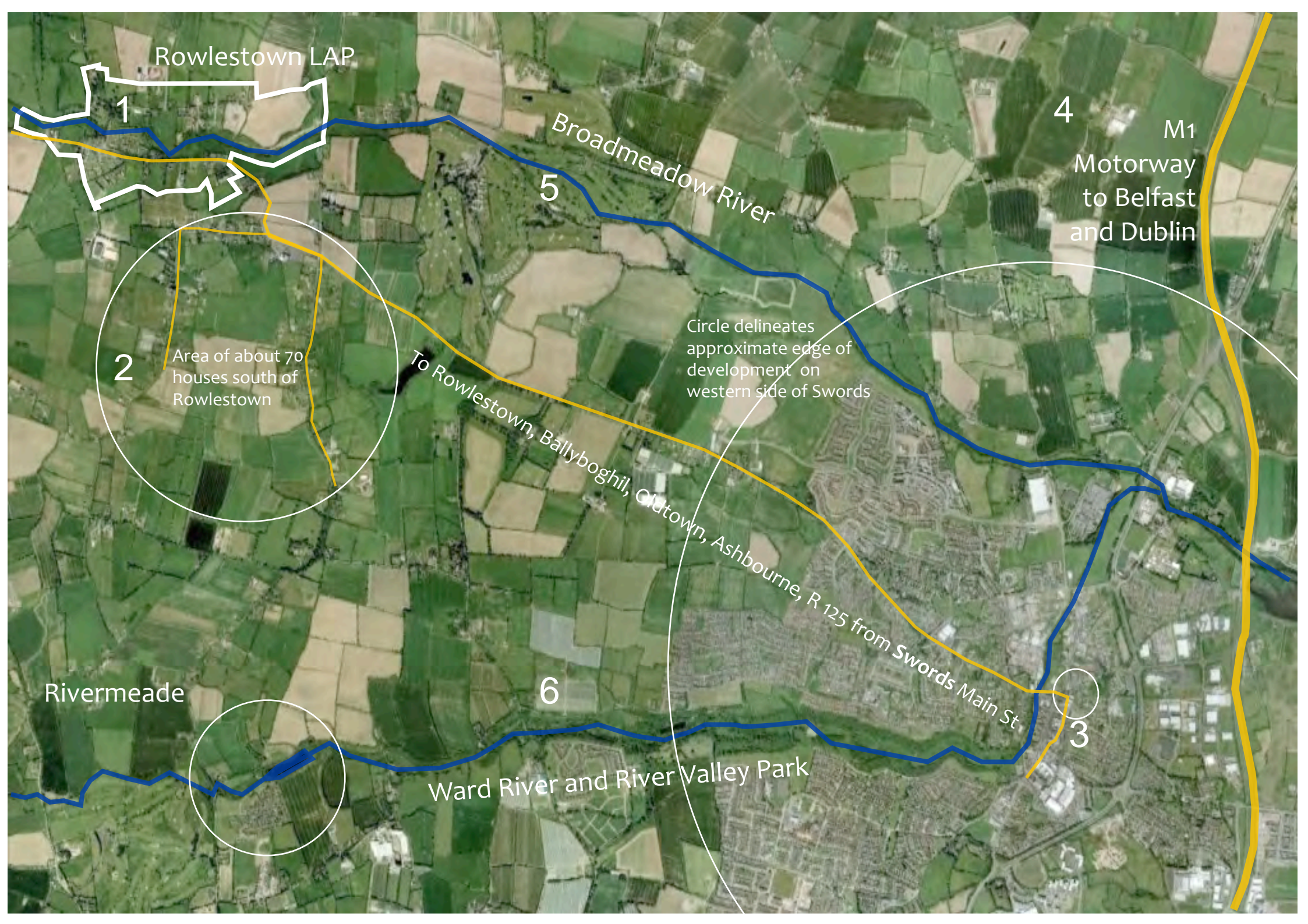
Circle delineates
approximate edge of
development on
western side of Swords

To Rowlestown, Ballyboghil, Clutown, Ashbourne, R 125 from Swords Main St

Rivermeade

6
Ward River and River Valley Park

3





Left, page opposite: Schematic description of key physical factors influencing the development of Rowlestown up to the present and into the future, on aerial survey map.

1 **Rowlestown LAP** is an area of strong landscape quality, based on the legacy of the eighteenth century landscape around Rowlestown House, and the River Valley with its steep escarpment.

2 **South of Rowlestown**, circled in white, is an area of about 70 detached houses. Combined with other dispersed development around the village, the number of urban generated houses outside would appear to exceed that of the number within the LAP boundary.

3 **The Main Street and Shopping Centres of Swords** are within fifteen minutes by car on the **R125**.

4 The **M1** links Belfast to Dublin and has become a key distributor of traffic in the county. Trucks use the R125 to cross from the M1 outside Swords to the N2 at Ashbourne, through the village.

5 **The Broadmeadow River** merges with **Ward River** and flows into the Broadmeadow estuary, just west of the M1 bridge crossing, marking the beginning of the estuary.

6 **The Ward River Valley Regional Park** may eventually extend from Broadmeadow Estuary to Rivermeade as a regional amenity.

Broadmeadow River may offer the same potential, starting from Rowlestown and eventually meeting up with the Ward River Valley Regional Park, North of Swords.

1.43 Environmental Context and the Influence of Economic and Social factors

The regional context of Rowlestown has produced a village with markedly different characteristics to other Fingal villages. It is in the thrall of its near neighbour, Swords town. It is close to the airport, with two local hotels promoting their proximity to it. It straddles the R125 Road from Swords to Ashbourne, used as a link for heavy trucks travelling between the M1 and the N2.

1.43 Development Guidance

The consequences of these characteristics have been far-reaching:

- *Proximity to Swords has fostered acceptance of its role as a satellite, generating a strong dependency on car and public transport, and hindering the creation of a normal village infrastructure.*

- *The environmental consequences of the regional road, R125 traversing the village are overwhelmingly negative, suggesting that radical solutions need to be implemented to overcome the problems.*
- *The attraction of the village in an area of strong landscape identity has prompted a supply of middle to high value housing, and a deficiency in social and affordable housing.*
- *The strong landscape quality prevails, but is threatened by the existing permissions in the village for housing schemes at a relatively high residential density.*
- *The Broadmeadow River, despite it having been deepened, channelled and realigned, is an attractive environmental feature, which needs to be reconsidered as an amenity, to be made clean and its banks accessible.*

1.44 The Village within its Local Landscape

At a local level, Rowlestown has a distinctive landscape. It has an interesting topography, producing steep inclines along the northern bank of the River and more gentle, undulating fields elsewhere. The Northeast side of the village is quite flat. Onto this topography, the landscape makers of the eighteenth century made a plantation of trees which presents a large canopy over the vista from the Main Road, dipping down to the Old Mill and River bridge, then rising to the 'Lawn Gates' of Rowlestown House. This nucleus of mature trees is contained within the Architectural Conservation Area (ACA) designation. The continuity of this nucleus is retained by mature hedgerow trees which follow the field boundaries and the river banks and much of the Main Road as it passes through the village.

Aerial map of centre of the village, highlighting those areas most characterised by tree coverage and hedgerows. Rowlestown House is circled in white. The white dotted line shows the grand entrance to Rowlestown House: down and across the bridge, up to Lawn Gates and through the paddock into the front garden. This organisation of land and trees is the most valuable legacy for Rowlestown village and needs to be protected.



1.5 Landscape Setting: Rural Countryside and Broadmeadow River

The sense of place of Rowlestown is integral with its setting in the landscape and the particular characteristics of this landscape. Development objectives need to take account of character to be certain that distinctiveness of place is maintained during development of the village. Landscape qualities today are characterised here in images and summarised with guidelines to ensure that the integral quality of village and landscape is maintained as a development strategy.

1.51 Rural Countryside: Photographic survey
Surveyed in the autumn, the countryside is highly active in that season, with movement of farm machinery along country lanes (and the R125).

...The scent of onions in the air... the golden remainder of the harvest; birds plundering the harvested fields for uncollected grain... horse chestnuts and a prolific harvest of uncollected conkers... russet leaves and striking red of virginia creeper... grazing sheep in sheltered grasslands.

Image, **this page**, is taken from the country lane which leads past Rowlestown House in fields sheltered and enclosed by hedgerows of ancient mature trees.

