

1.0 Introduction

This written statement will provide a brief description and development strategy for Ashbourne. A detailed Local Area Plan for the town will be prepared during the life of this Plan.

2.0 Town Context / Character

Ashbourne is the second largest town in Meath and had a population of almost 13,000 in 2016. It is strategically located along the southern boundary of the County adjacent to Fingal with excellent transport links to Dublin Airport and City Centre. The town also benefits from local connectivity with Ratoath, Dunboyne and Dunshaughlin via the regional road network.

Ashbourne is an important centre for retail, services and employment providing jobs and services to a wide catchment population in the south of the County. Employment is concentrated in the northern part of the town where there is a cluster of Business and Industrial Parks that host a broad range of businesses including manufacturing, engineering, construction, and wholesale retail operations. The town centre is also an important location for employment, providing jobs in the retail and professional services sectors.

In addition to its function as an employment and service centre, Ashbourne is also a commuter settlement for the Dublin Region.¹

In response to the strong population growth additional services and facilities including a new Town Centre and Education Campus have been developed. It is recognised that additional community and recreational facilities are required. In this regard the Council is progressing the development of a Linear Park as part of the provision of green infrastructure in the town. A Public Realm Strategy setting out potential improvements to the town centre that would improve connectivity and create a more attractive urban environment in the centre of the town has also been prepared.

Notwithstanding Ashbourne's key assets, the settlement is not multi-modal. This continues to inhibit the towns ability to realise its potential as a fully sustainable growth town transitioning to Metropolitan status.

Position in Settlement Hierarchy	Self-Sustaining Growth Town – Important service centre that caters for a wide catchment area. There are opportunities for the town to become more self-sufficient by facilitating economic development and community infrastructure in tandem with residential growth.	
Population	12,679 in 2016 Census	Percentage Change 2011 to 2016 12% increase
	11,355 in 2011 Census	
Core Strategy Household Allocation to 2020-2027	1,349 no. units This includes 209 extant units not built at the time of writing	
Population Projection 2027	15,879	
Resident Workers 2016	6,144	
Total Jobs 2016	1,963	
Job: Workforce Ratio 2016	0.31	
Number of units completed 2016-2019	632 no. units	
Committed Unbuilt Units	209 no. units	

Education Facilities	5 primary schools (including 2 Gael Scoileanna and 1 Educate Together), 2 post-primary schools (De Lacy College and Ashbourne Community School), and childcare facilities.
Community Facilities	Athletics club, community centre, cricket club, football club, GAA club, golf club, rugby club, library, National Shooting Grounds, Garda station, International Baseball Centre, childcare options, citizens information centre, and 2no. churches
Architectural Conservation Areas (ACAs)	No Architectural Conservation Areas in Ashbourne
Protected Structures	4
Services	Capacity available as required
Strategic Flood Risk Assessment	Flood Zones in several locations in the town, to the north-east, south and south-west of the town centre along the Broadmeadow River and its tributaries
Natura 2000 Sites	There are no Natura 2000 sites within Ashbourne or abutting the boundary of the settlement. The closest Natura 2000 site is the Broadmeadow/Swords Estuary SPA, which is approximately 15km from the town. Other sites of relevance include the

	Malahide Estuary cSAC, where the Broadmeadow River, which passes through Ashbourne, enters the sea.
Modal Share Targets for 2026	
Modal Share Target for Walking	22% (Increasing from 15% in 2016)
Modal Share Target for Cycling	4% (Increasing from 2% in 2016)
Modal Share Target for Bus	16% (Increasing from 15% in 2016)
Reduction Target for Car Use	54% (Reducing from 64% in 2016)

3.0 Vision

“For Ashbourne to develop as a vibrant, modern and integrated town around a strong employment and service centre, where future growth builds upon the town’s expansion and investment to support a sustainable, diverse and attractive settlement.”

4.0 Opportunities

- The vibrant urban centre, growing population and improved educational facilities provide a platform for the continued sustainable growth of Ashbourne, supported by its strategic location in the south of the County.

- The proximity of Ashbourne to Dublin Airport and City Centre and the availability of serviced employment lands provides excellent opportunities to strengthen the employment base in the town and improve the jobs ratio.
- The implementation of the Ashbourne Town Centre Public Realm Strategy will make the town centre a more attractive place for people to visit, shop, and socialise in addition to making the town more appealing to potential investors.
- Opportunities exist for the redevelopment of vacant units in the town centre and the employment areas in the northern part of the town.
- The development of the Linear Park along the Broadmeadow River will be an important public amenity for the residents of Ashbourne and will integrate and connect green spaces in the town.
- Improve community and recreational infrastructure by identifying suitable lands for the development of a town park at regional scale that will provide a focal point for social and recreational amenities. (Refer to Chapter 7 Community Building)
- Promote more sustainable modes of transport by identifying a suitable location for a Park and Ride facility.
- Improve walking and cycling facilities in the town by supporting the delivery of the infrastructure projects on the Milltown Road and Main Street that received funding under the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund.
- Potential to explore the possibility of a rail connection to Dublin by means of a spur serving Ashbourne and Ratoath from the Navan-Dublin line.² (Refer to Chapter 5 Movement)

5.0 Land Use Strategy

The primary focus of the development strategy for Ashbourne is to strengthen the employment base and raise the economic profile of the town. There will be a focus on consolidating development in the centre of the town and improving connectivity and permeability between new residential developments and the town centre. As the population continues to grow, an emphasis will be placed on ensuring that adequate social, community and recreational facilities are available to meet the needs of residents. The Core Strategy has allocated what is considered to constitute a reasonable allocation of the overall County population to the town having regard to the need to focus on

employment activity and future sustainability.

5.1 Settlement and Housing

Ashbourne is an attractive settlement that has experienced significant growth over the past decade due to its proximity to Dublin Airport and City Centre. There are a broad mix of house types and residential developments in the town that meet the needs of the growing population. Whilst in the past residential development has preceded community facilities, there has been recent investment in social and community facilities in the town including a new school campus and public library which has assisted in creating a more balanced and sustainable community. As the population grows further expansion of facilities will be required.

Residential growth in the town remains strong, with a number of large development sites in the town recently completed or close to completion. These include Churchfields, Archerstown Demesne, Crenigans Banog, and Milltown Meadows. Alongside the development of these greenfield sites, there has also been an emphasis on compact growth with development recently completed on a number of infill sites including The Oaks and Walfre Lodge.

At the time of writing, there were c.200 unbuilt extant units in Ashbourne. It is anticipated that these will be completed within the lifetime of this Plan.

The growth of Ashbourne will continue to be based around principles of compact, sustainable neighbourhoods that include a suitable mix of housing that meets the needs of people of all ages in locations within walking distance of services and facilities.

5.2 Economy and Employment

The location of Ashbourne on the edge of the Dublin Metropolitan Area and its connectivity with Dublin Airport and City Centre makes the town an important centre for economic growth in Meath. In 2016 there were almost 2,000 jobs in the town, making it one of the highest centres of employment in the County. The range of jobs in the town is diverse and includes manufacturing, construction, education, engineering, retail, finance, professional services, and tourism.

The employment lands to the north of the Rath Roundabout have been identified as one of five strategically important sites for employment in the Meath Economic Development Strategy. These lands benefit from a location along the route of the Eirgrid east/west interconnector in addition to

access to an excellent fibre based broadband connection. A Framework Plan has been prepared for these lands. Any planning application shall be developed in accordance with this Framework Plan or a revised/updated Master Plan.

Ashbourne Business Park will continue to have an important role in the provision of employment in the town as there is capacity for additional employment uses on undeveloped lands within the Park. These lands shall provide for light industrial and industrial office type development in a high-quality campus environment.

In order to ensure sufficient lands are available to meet the future economic growth of the town and to provide investment options for potential investors, an additional nine hectares of employment land have been identified between Ashbourne Retail Park and the M2. A new Strategic Employment Site has also been zoned to the south of Ashbourne for E1/E3 purposes.

5.3 Retail

Ashbourne is the second largest retail centre in the County. This is recognised in its designation as a Level 3 Centre in the Retail Hierarchy for the County. The strong retail offer in the town centre is an important anchor for the town and its hinterland. (Please refer to Chapter Economy and Employment and Appendix 4 Retail Strategy).

5.4. Water Services Infrastructure

Water: Ashbourne is part of the East Meath Water Supply Scheme. It is supplied by the Staleen Water Treatment Plant via Windmill Hill and Rath Reservoirs. This supply is augmented by groundwater boreholes and treatment plants at Curragha and Rath.

There is capacity available at these sources and treatment plants, however, currently there are significant network constraints within Ashbourne. The Council is working with Irish Water to upgrade the network and remove these constraints during the period of this plan.

Wastewater: The completion of the Ashbourne/Ratoath/Kilbride Sewerage Scheme Stage 2 in 2010 has provided a modern and efficient wastewater collection system for these settlements that has significant capacity. Wastewater from Ashbourne is discharged to the Greater Dublin Drainage network where it flows to the Regional Wastewater Treatment Plant at Ringsend.

It is considered that adequate Wastewater capacity exists to facilitate the development and growth provided for Ashbourne during the life of this Plan.

5.5 Flood Risk

The Strategic Flood Risk Assessment prepared for the County identified lands at risk of flooding. A risk based approach to flood management in accordance with the provisions set out in *“The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities”* (2009) will be implemented in order to prevent or minimise future flood risk.³

In response to recent flood events in Ashbourne, a Flood Alleviation Scheme was prepared for the town. This scheme involves various works the upgrade of culverts, channel improvements, and the construction of low height flood defence embankments. These works are ongoing and near completion.

5.6 Movement

The successful integration of land use and transport is essential for the sustainable growth of the town. As part of the strategy of supporting the integration of land use and transport planning, the RSES requires the preparation of a Local Transport Plan for Ashbourne. This Plan will be prepared in conjunction with the National Transport Authority and will assist in the identification of measures to reduce the need to travel, improve the efficiency of public transport, promote walking and cycling, and reduce dependence on the private car as the primary mode of transport.

The attractive urban form and compact nature of Ashbourne has helped to foster a strong walking and cycling mode share which is further supplemented by a number of frequent bus services offering good connections to Dublin and neighbouring towns. The town also benefits from its close proximity to the M2 transport corridor.

Building upon the strong active mode share in Ashbourne, opportunities exist to improve permeability within the town centre and introduce pedestrian and cycle upgrades on key corridors linking residential lands to the town centre. The Public Realm Strategy for Ashbourne has identified various improvements to the streets and civic spaces in the town centre that would create a more attractive and coherent town centre. This includes the Main Street and Milltown Road, which received funding for improvements to cycling and pedestrian infrastructure under the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund.

In order to reduce dependence on the private car and to make public transport more accessible and attractive to residents, there is an opportunity to support the delivery of a Park and Ride facility in the town. Such a facility would have the benefit of easing traffic congestion and encouraging a transition from car dependence to more sustainable forms of public transport. It is thus an objective of this Plan to identify a suitable location for a Park and Ride facility in the town.

In addition to improving access to bus services, consideration must also be given to the possibility of providing a rail link to Ashbourne in the long term. As part of the reappraisal of Phase II of the Navan Rail Project, it is considered that there is an opportunity to examine the potential of including a spur from this rail line to Ashbourne (via Ratoath). It is an objective of this Plan to engage with Irish Rail and the National Transport Authority to examine the feasibility of providing this rail link.

5.7 Cultural, Natural and Built Heritage

The most significant natural feature in Ashbourne is the Broadmeadow River and its corridor, which provides a focal point for environmental quality and recreation. This river will be the feature of the Linear Park, which will also see the existing playground along the river being developed into an interactive play area for children of all ages.

5.8 Green Infrastructure and Open Space

Green Infrastructure is the network of green spaces, habitats, and ecosystems that intersperse towns and villages. It includes open spaces, waterways, gardens, woodlands, green corridors, wildlife habitats, street trees, natural heritage, and the open countryside. The purpose of identifying green infrastructure is to ensure a co-ordinated approach is taken to the management of this infrastructure that would be mutually beneficial to people and local ecosystems and habitats. Further details on Green Infrastructure are set out in Chapter 8.

This Plan provides an opportunity to enhance the provision of green infrastructure in Ashbourne through the progression of the Linear Park. This Park will extend the length of the Broadmeadow River from the Ballybin Road, adjacent to Donaghmore GAA grounds, through Castlelands and Killelland, across and along the existing playground through to the open space at Deer Park and on to the Milltown Road. The first phase of the Linear Park, which included the delivery of a new play space, construction of an amphitheatre, and the installation of a pedestrian footbridge which provides a direct link to the town centre, was completed in 2019.

The future public park, to the south east of the town centre easily accessible for the population which will be advanced during this Plan, will supplement the open spaces in the Linear Park and will provide further facilities and recreational areas for residents.

5.9 Social Infrastructure

Ashbourne benefits from a large well-resourced public library in the Town Square that is an important community asset.

The completion of the Education Campus has been a considerable success and will ensure that residents of the town can avail of high-quality and accessible educational facilities. There is an opportunity to improve connectivity from the residential lands to the east to the campus along the Linear Park.

The town is well-served by sports clubs and other community facilities however is lacking a public park that is accessible to the entire community.

In order to strengthen the community in Ashbourne and to make the town a more attractive place to live, it is an objective of this Plan to prepare a Master Plan for the delivery of a public park. This space would be a gathering place for families and various groups and organisations and would be an important resource in promoting an active and healthy lifestyle. A F1 Open Space zoning has been included to the southwest of the town centre to provide for a public park.

In recognition of the demand for additional areas of active open space c.6.2 hectares of lands have also been identified for open space uses adjacent to Donaghmore/Ashbourne GAA club.

6.0 Master Plans

There are 4 Master Plan areas identified in Ashbourne. The purpose of a Master Plan is to ensure an integrated approach is taken to the phasing, management, and development of lands within the Master Plan Area. A planning application will not be considered in the absence of the Master Plan being agreed in writing with the Executive of the Planning Authority.

Master Plan	Description	Status
Master Plan 18	Master Plan 18 relates to the lands at Milltown to the south of Ashbourne and has an area of c.19.9 hectares. It is intended that these lands shall provide a primary school site, lands for recreational uses, including playing fields, and lands for residential development. The development of the lands shall be on a phased basis to be agreed as part of the preparation of the Master Plan.	Awaiting preparation
Master Plan 19	Master Plan 19 relates to employment and tourism zoned lands with an area of c.30.5ha located off the N2 to the north west of Ashbourne Business Park.	Awaiting preparation
Master Plan 20	Master Plan 20 relates to lands on the southern edge of the town with an area of c.46.5ha that have been identified as a new Strategic Employment Site for Ashbourne. As part of the preparation of this Master Plan there will be a requirement to take account of any upgrades required to the R125 to improve the links between Ashbourne and Swords.	Awaiting preparation
Master Plan 21	Master Plan 21 relates to lands to the southwest of Ashbourne with an F1 Open Space zoning.	Awaiting Preparation

7.0 Town Development Policies and Objectives

The Policies and Objectives set out below are in addition to those included in the Written Statement in Volume One of the County Development Plan. To avoid repetition Policies and Objectives have only been restated where they have particular relevance to the settlement. These Policies and

Objectives should therefore be read in conjunction with the Policies and Objectives and Development Standards in Volume One of the County Development Plan.

Policy

It is the policy of the Council:

ASH POL 1

To support the consolidation of development of Ashbourne which facilitates the provision of residential development and employment, retail, community, and recreational facilities in order to create a more compact and self-sufficient settlement.

Objectives

It is an objective of the Council:

Settlement and Housing

ASH OBJ 1

To secure the implementation of the Core Strategy of the County Development Plan, in so far as is practicable, by ensuring the household allocation for Ashbourne as set out in Table 2.12 of the Core Strategy is not exceeded.

ASH OBJ 2

To facilitate the development of the lands at Milltown identified as 'MP18' on the Land Use Zoning Map, subject to the preparation of a Master Plan.

Economy and Employment

ASH OBJ 3

To continue to attract new industry to Ashbourne which capitalises on the quality of road infrastructure at this location and its proximity to the M50, Dublin Airport and Dublin Port.

Infrastructure

ASH OBJ 4

To liaise with and support Irish Water to endeavour to provide adequate water services to meet the development needs of Ashbourne within the Plan period.

ASH OBJ 5

To manage flood risk and development in Ashbourne in accordance with policies and objectives set out in section 6.10 of Volume 1 of the County Development Plan 'Surface Water and Flood Risk Management'.

Movement**ASH OBJ 6**

To identify a suitable location for a bus-based Park and Ride facility in Ashbourne.

ASH OBJ 7

To support and facilitate the completion of the remaining phases of the cycling and walking enhancement on the R135.

ASH OBJ 8

To support and facilitate the implementation of a new walk and cycle link from Killegland Street through to Frederick Street in partnership with all relevant stakeholders.

ASH OBJ 9

To support the delivery of walking and cycling enhancements on the Milltown Road.

ASH OBJ 10

To support and facilitate the implementation of cycling upgrades throughout the Town Centre as defined within the Greater Dublin Area Cycle Network Plan.

ASH OBJ 11

To support the implementation of the upgrade to the Baltrasna Road to accommodate walking and cycling enhancements, in consultation with all relevant stakeholders.

ASH OBJ 12

To seek to improve pedestrian and cycling infrastructure between Ratoath and Ashbourne

ASH OBJ 13

To examine the feasibility of a new junction on the R135 that could serve development lands on Hickeys Lane and facilitate a new access to Ashbourne Community College, in consultation with all relevant stakeholders.

ASH OBJ 14

To examine the feasibility of upgrading the Archerstown road to better serve the growing community facilities located along this road.

ASH OBJ 15

To safeguard, in conjunction with the National Transport Authority and all relevant stakeholders, the efficient operation of buses on the R135 and support measures to increase the level of service by bus to and from Ashbourne.

ASH OBJ 16

As part of the future planning of the Dunboyne/M3 Parkway line to Navan, the possibility of a spur serving Ashbourne and Ratoath should be explored subject to compliance with national policy and the Railway Order.

ASH OBJ 17

To prepare a Local Transport Plan for Ashbourne in consultation with the National Transport Authority and in accordance with the Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area.

ASH OBJ 18

To examine the feasibility of upgrading the R125 in conjunction with Fingal County Council to improve links and connectivity between Ashbourne and Swords

ASH OBJ 19

To ensure that access to all zoned lands are provided for and that no zoned land becomes landlocked.

Cultural, Natural and Built Heritage

ASH OBJ 20

To support the completion of the Linear Park running along the Broadmeadow River from Ashbourne Golf Club to the Ashbourne Education Campus, subject to the availability of funding.

Social Infrastructure

ASH OBJ 21

To facilitate the development of a primary school, in association with the Department of Education, on suitably located lands that would meet the educational requirements of the future population of Ashbourne.

ASH OBJ 22

To support and facilitate the development of additional sporting facilities, and in particular playing fields, on the lands identified as 'Open Space' immediately to the west of Donaghmore/Ashbourne GAA Club.

ASH OBJ 23

To prepare a Master Plan on the lands identified 'MP 20' on the Land Use Zoning Map which will comprise of a Strategic Employment Site with an E1/E3 zoning.

Urban Design and Public Realm**ASH OBJ 24**

To support the utilisation of sustainable principles in the design, planning and development of residential schemes throughout the town.

ASH OBJ 25

To implement and ensure compliance with the Public Realm Plan for Ashbourne which provides for a themed strategy for the provision of street furniture, planting, traffic and parking, lighting, building colours, (local and tourist) signage and surface materials etc. within the town.

- 1** - Census 2016 POWSCAR Data
- 2** - Further details are provided in Chapter 5 of the CDP 'Movement'
- 3** - Further details regarding Flood Risk Management are set out in Chapter 6 of the CDP 'Infrastructure'