

1.0 Introduction

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

The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy recognises that a number of settlements within the Metropolitan and Hinterland areas have undergone rapid commuter-focused residential expansion over the recent decade, without equivalent increases in jobs and services. Ratoath has experienced a high level of population growth with a weak employment base which is reliant on other areas for employment/and or services and requires targeted 'catch up' investment to become more self-sustaining.

2.0 Context and Character

Ratoath is currently the fourth largest town in County Meath. The key planning challenge for Ratoath is to facilitate a plan led transition from an unsustainable commuter settlement to a sustainable settlement based on the 'live work' community model championed by the Economic Strategy for County Meath 2014-2022.

The town has experienced substantial growth in recent years with little corresponding growth in employment generating uses other than small scale retail provision. The Regional Economic and Spatial Strategy identifies Ratoath as a town where over half of all trips to work or education are to Dublin's urban core. Thus, the priority of this plan is to encourage and support a more balanced approach to development of the town with the promotion of significant expansion of the existing limited employment base.

The International equestrian facilities in the town are a key attractor and employment generator and will be targeted as a future key growth sector for Ratoath. The bloodstock industry is one of the prime economic assets in County Meath. The existence of these facilities at a strategic location relative to the town centre means that the future development of the town is well placed to benefit from their expansion and diversification including an expanded employment base.

The lands between the existing built up area of Ratoath and Fairyhouse/Tattersalls Equestrian complex, identified for the creation of an equestrian based employment hub, have been designated as strategic employment site to facilitate an approach to the marketing of the sites which was adopted with the original five strategic employment sites designated in the Economic

Development Strategy for County Meath. This focus is required to stimulate development on these lands.

Position in Settlement Hierarchy	Self-Sustaining Town
2016 Population	9,533
2011 Population	9,043
Percentage Change 2011-2016	5.40%
Housing stock 2016	2,960
Number of units completed 2016-2019	175
Committed units not yet built	72
Core Strategy Household Allocation 2020-2027	803 units This includes 72 extant units not built at the time of writing
Population Projection 2026	11,033
Resident Workers 2016	4,260

Total Jobs 2016	922
Job – Workforce Ratio 2016	0.21
Education Facilities	13
Community Facilities	10
Architectural Conservation Areas (ACAs)	None
Protected Structures	12
Zone of Archaeological Potential	Yes
Natura 2000 Sites	The nearest Natura 2000 site is the Rye Water Valley/Carton SAC which is located approximately 14km to the south
Strategic Flood Risk Assessment	Ratoath is exposed to fluvial flooding from the Broadmeadow River. Flood Zone A mainly affects agricultural lands and a small number of residential properties on the eastern side of the settlement. Manage flood risk and development in line with approved policies and objectives as set out in Vol. 1 Chapter 6: Infrastructure. At development management stage, any FRAs

Water Services Infrastructure/Capacity	should include consideration of culvert blockage. Pedestrian walkways may require FRA during planning application stage but the Justification Test is not required. Ratoath is supplied by the East Meath Water Supply Scheme – capacity available. Wastewater is pumped to Dublin for treatment – capacity available.
Modal Share Targets for 2026	
Modal Share for Walking	24% (Increasing from 19% in 2016)
Modal Share for Cycling	4% (Increasing from 1% in 2016)
Modal Share for Bus	11% (Unchanged from 11% in 2016)
Reduction Target for Car Use	57% (Reducing from 65% in 2016)

3.0 Vision

To promote the sustainable consolidation of Ratoath, accommodating, significant expansion of employment opportunities, whilst consolidating growth of the town and reinforcing the town centre. In this context, the plan will promote and support employment growth and expansion of the international equestrian hub in support of the town centre; and will promote sustainable movement through the completion of the Ratoath Outer Relief Road.

4.0 Opportunities

- The availability of a highly skilled and educated work force currently resident within the town.
- Proximity of Fairyhouse and Tattersalls, which can develop an internationally significant Equine Hub.
- Implementation of the Ratoath Pedestrian and Cycle Scheme will improve permeability throughout the town.
- Completion of the Outer Relief Road will reduce congestion.
- High quality town centre development/redevelopment that will contribute towards the enhanced provision of local services, an improved town centre environment, and the creation of improved amenities

5.0 Land Use Strategy

5.1 Settlement and Housing

With regard to residential development, the focus will primarily be on the build out of existing residential lands and the zoning of a modest quantum of additional lands which are necessary for the timely completion of the remainder of the outer relief road, LIHAF scheme has funded the initial part this route.

The town centre of Ratoath mainly comprises properties fronting onto the Main Street with little backland development. As a result, there is little sense of a town core. In addition to rationalising and consolidating town centre uses, it is also recognised that the town centre must grow in line with existing and projected population growth. In order to allow for town centre expansion, the town centre zoning has been extended to the rear of properties facing onto the R155. This provides a natural extension of the existing town centre and given its central location presents an opportunity to expand town centre services in conjunction with residential development in a highly accessible location close to the existing Main Street. An F1 zoning will be retained on lands within Flood Zones and to allow for a potential recreational walkway along the river.

Given that the growth of the existing town centre is significantly restricted, lands to the east of the town centre have been identified for primary residential and neighbourhood centre uses. Some of

this land is located within Flood Zone A & B and this area has been identified as open space, which shall be integrated into the overall development.

Meath County Council obtained funding, through the Local Infrastructure Housing Activation Fund (LIHAF), to deliver a portion of the Ratoath Outer Relief Road which will facilitate the development of lands to the east of the town. Any further phases of development shall include the construction of the adjoining section of the Ratoath Outer Relief Road. A walkway shall be provided along the river and within the open space to link in with the proposed walkway on lands to the west. Development on this land shall include reservation of a 0.4 hectare site for an enterprise centre (of appropriate design) to be developed by Meath Local Enterprise Office. Notwithstanding the zoning matrix an enterprise centre shall be permitted in principle, subject to compliance with relevant planning criteria, on the subject lands. Provision shall also be made for dedicated recreational facilities within the site to include provision of a playground or other similar recreational facilities with associated car parking. Any planning application made for development on these lands shall be accompanied by a Master Plan, detailing development proposals for the full extent of the lands. This shall include details of the overall site and building layout for the lands, building height and design principles, mix of uses open space and recreational provision, traffic impact assessment and management proposals and service arrangements. Given the location of the site adjoining Flood Zone A & B, a comprehensive flood risk assessment should be undertaken on any development proposal in accordance with “The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities” (November 2009).

There are two key drivers influencing the approach to residential development in the town including:

- Core Strategy - The Core Strategy (Table 2.12) of the County Development Plan provides a housing allocation of 803 units to Ratoath over the 2021 – 2027 period. A review of planning history within the town has determined that there are already 72 no. units committed.
- Outer Relief Road - Ratoath has received LIHAF funding to assist in the delivery of a section of the Outer Relief Road. This will facilitate the construction of residential units in the south-eastern part of the town. There is an opportunity to secure the completion of this road in this Plan by zoning additional residential lands to the south west. This would complete the link between the R125 and the R155 and would ensure the maximum return on the investment in this piece of infrastructure.

Additional lands identified to deliver the completion of the R125 and R155 link road amount to approximately 3.8 hectares and shall include the provision of a public landscaped park of circa 0.7 hectares with appropriate recreational facilities to be agreed with the planning authority. This facility shall be delivered as part of the overall development proposal. The public park can be provided as part of the overall open space requirement on site. The first phase of development shall include the construction of the adjoining section of the Ratoath Outer Relief Road. Any planning application made for development on these lands shall be accompanied by a Master Plan (MP 37), detailing development proposals for the full extent of the lands. This shall include details of the overall site and building layout for the lands, building height and design principles, mix of uses, open space and recreational provision, traffic impact assessment and management proposals and service.

5.2 Employment and Economy

It is acknowledged that Ratoath is largely a commuter town with little supporting employment opportunities. However, it is also acknowledged that the town is positioned mid-point between Dunshaughlin and Ashbourne, which have been earmarked to accommodate greater population growth. Presently, 12 hectares of undeveloped E2 zoned land is provided for at the south western extremity of the town boundary. An existing housing development on A1 zoned lands sit immediately to the south of these lands. The E2 zoning has been extended to provide for additional employment opportunities proximate to the current D1 zoned lands with a view to addressing the current high outbound commuting levels from the settlement. The extension of these lands will also provide opportunities to create greater synergies between these employment lands in Ratoath and the existing international equine facility at Tattersalls.

The previous plan provided for visitor and tourist facilities at locations on the Fairyhouse Road, south of the town outside the existing settlement boundary. The proposed zoning of 'White Lands' on the eastern side of the R155 recognises the unique opportunity to create a connection between the operations at Fairyhouse Racecourse and the Tattersalls complex and the existing urban settlement of Ratoath. The Plan thereby recognises the additional future employment and economic contribution that the bloodstock and sport horse industries can make to both the town and wider county in line with grounding policies set out in Chapter 4 of this Plan.

The challenge for this Plan is thus to successfully integrate these internationally important equine facilities with the settlement of Ratoath in a plan-led and integrated fashion. In recognition of this, the Plan makes suitable lands available which will connect the town centre with these equine

facilities. It is intended that these lands will provide for a suitably designed visitor and supporting economic and social related facilities and thereby support and complement existing employment-generating activities at Tattersalls and Fairyhouse Racecourse in accordance with a 'live-work' community model.

5.3 Water Services Infrastructure

Water: Ratoath is part of the East Meath Water Supply Scheme. It is supplied by the Staleen Water Treatment Plant, via Windmill Hill reservoir. There is capacity available.

The Council, in conjunction with Irish Water is progressing a Capital project to replace the trunk main serving Ratoath and to increase storage capacity at Windmill Hill Reservoir. It is anticipated that these Capital improvements will be realised 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 and collection system for these settlements that has significant capacity. Wastewater from Ratoath 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 Ratoath in this County Development Plan.

6.0 Cultural and Natural Heritage

The built heritage of Ratoath adds strongly to the character of the streetscape, therefore it is very important that it is protected. Ratoath is not currently designated as an Architectural Conservation Area, however, there are 12 structures in Ratoath which are registered as protected structures in the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027 and these act as focal points for the town. The origins of Ratoath date from early Christian times. The establishment of a Norman settlement is indicated by the striking presence of the Moat and Bailey in the centre of the town. The enclosures associated with these settlements have given the centre of Ratoath its unique curved road pattern with an intricate network of laneways, many overgrown or derelict, connecting the original enclosures with areas to the north on the Curragha Road and to the south on the Fairyhouse Road. Any development within the vicinity of this monument shall have regard to its unique setting and shall not impact adversely upon it.

7.0 Social Infrastructure

Ratoath has a significant number of community, social, sporting, and educational orientated organisations including; a Tidy Towns Committee, a musical society, youth club, cycling, football, and GAA clubs. Collectively, these organisations provide valuable community support to a broad spectrum of the population. Lands currently in use by the BMX club were previously identified for the provision of a swimming pool. It is intended to retain this objective within the Plan should funding become available for such a facility in the town.

There is one secondary school and 3 primary schools at present in Ratoath. The Department of Education and Skills has outlined that there is a need for an additional primary school and secondary school in the town. Sufficient G1 zoned lands have been identified to accommodate this within the Plan.

8.0 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:

RA POL 1

To ensure Ratoath develops in a consolidated and sustainable manner which facilitates and supports employment opportunities, accommodates local services and reinforces the existing town centre.

Objectives

It is an objective of the Council:

RA OBJ 1 (Master Plan 33)

To support the provision of appropriate and sustainable employment, visitor and tourist facilities on lands zoned as Tourism and White Land in accordance with an approved Master Plan which shall be agreed with the Executive of the Planning Authority and shall accompany any planning application on the lands subject to the provision of necessary physical infrastructure. Any planning application made for development on these lands shall be accompanied by a Master Plan detailing development proposal for the full extent of the lands. This shall include details of the overall site and building layout for the lands, building height and design principles, landscaping, mix of uses for the site, traffic impact assessment and management proposals and service arrangements.

RA OBJ 2 (Master Plan 34)

To promote the development of employment uses on E2 zoned lands located to the west of the R155 in accordance with an approved Master Plan which shall be agreed with the Executive of the Planning Authority and shall accompany any planning application on the lands subject to the provision of necessary physical infrastructure. The development of these lands shall also provide for reservation of a 4 acre site for the provision of a swimming pool site and include the realignment of the Fairyhouse Road, the extension of the Ratoath Outer Relief Road and provision of footpaths, cycleway and public lighting along the road frontage of the site. Any planning application made for development on these lands shall be accompanied by a Master Plan detailing development proposals for the full extent of the lands. This shall include details of the overall site and building layout for the lands, building height and design principles, landscaping, mix of uses for the site, traffic impact assessment and management proposals and service arrangements. The development of these lands shall be on a phased basis with the reservation of the swimming pool site forming part of the first phase.

RA OBJ 3 (Master Plan 35)

To identify lands for commercial purposes to the south east of the R125 Ashbourne Road. This area shall provide for a mix of commercial and local retail services and include the reservation of a 1 acre site for an enterprise centre (of appropriate design) to be developed by Meath Local Enterprise Office. Any planning application made for development on these lands shall be accompanied by a Master Plan detailing development proposals for the full extent of the lands. This shall include details of the overall site and building layout for the lands, building height and design principles, mix of uses for the site, traffic impact assessment and management proposals and service arrangements. The first phase of development with the exception of the residentially zoned lands shall include the construction of the adjoining section of the Ratoath Outer Relief Road. Notwithstanding the zoning

matrix an enterprise centre and car sales/repair uses shall be permitted in principle, subject to compliance with relevant planning criteria, on the subject lands.

RA OBJ 4 (Master Plan 36)

To provide for small and medium sized industries to develop on the northern side of the R125 Ashbourne Road in accordance with an approved Masterplan and subject to the provision of necessary physical infrastructure. This area should have a particular focus on providing incubator units and facilities for start-up industries. It is intended that the area will also include the provision of a civic amenity site. Meath County Council will require that a Masterplan accompanies any planning application made for development on these lands detailing the overall site and building layout, building height and design principles, landscaping, phasing, mix of uses for the site, traffic impact assessment and management proposals and service arrangements. Public lighting, footpaths and cycleways shall be provided on all roadways provided as part of the development of the lands.

RA OBJ 5

To encourage the development of lands at Raystown for appropriate general enterprise and industrial purposes to provide for small and medium sized industries to develop subject to the provision of necessary physical infrastructure ('General Enterprise & Employment' land use zoning objective applies). Building layout for the lands, building height and design principles shall be appropriate to the zoning objective of the site and minimise any potential impacts on neighbouring residential properties and the surrounding area.

RA OBJ 6

To facilitate the development of the Ratoath Outer Relief route in tandem with development.

RA OBJ 7

To further advance public footpath and cycle path upgrades in the town in accordance with the Ratoath Pedestrian and Cycle Scheme.

RA OBJ 8

To develop a system of linear parks and waterfront amenity areas with walkways and cycleways, subject to the availability of resources, along the banks of the River Broadmeadow.

RA OBJ 9

To reserve lands off the Fairyhouse Road for the provision of a swimming pool.

RA OBJ 10

To promote a high standard of architectural design, and quality of materials utilised throughout the Development Framework area, that is appropriate in scale, and form to its location.

RA OBJ 11

To require that development proposals are prepared in accordance with a Masterplan which includes an, urban design and landscape design statement.

RA OBJ 12

To prepare a public realm plan for Ratoath over the life of the Plan

RA OBJ 13

To work with the NTA to identify a suitable location for bus-based Park and Ride facility serving Ratoath.