Consolidated Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027 (as varied)

Volume 1: Written Statement

1.0 Introduction

The Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027 sets out the policies and objectives and the overall strategy for the development of the County over the plan period 2021-2027. The Plan has been prepared at a time when the national economy displayed strong signs of continued growth. Unemployment rates had fallen to their lowest rates since 2008, consumer confidence improved, and economic forecasts are positive for the future. Despite the foregoing positive signs, concern and uncertainty regarding the potential economic impact of Brexit, and the sudden and unforeseen impact from the Covid 19 pandemic, has required careful consideration in the drafting of the Development Plan.

This Plan provides a positive vision for Meath which will enable the county to continue to make a significant contribution to national economic recovery by promoting sustainable development and facilitating stable economic growth thus delivering long term benefits for the citizens of the county.

Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage in exercise of the powers conferred on him by section 31 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) ("the Act"), and consequent to a recommendation made to him by the Office of the Planning Regulator under section 31AN(4) of the Act issued a Direction to Meath County Council on matters relating to the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027 dated 28 January, 2022. Consequently, all zonings which were the subject of the Direction have been amended accordingly. A copy of the Direction is contained in Appendix 16.

The Strategic Vision of the Development Plan is as follows:

'To improve the quality of life of all citizens in Meath by creating an environment that supports a vibrant growing economy and a well-connected place to live, learn and do business.'

1.1 County Overview

The administrative area of Meath covers an area of over 230,000 hectares and is the second largest county in Leinster. It adjoins Dublin to the south and this geographical proximity and the strong functional relationship between the two counties results in Meath being a vital supporting partner in the recent growth of the Greater Dublin Area. This locational advantage has enabled the county to play a major part in the development of the National Gateway, the nation's most economically dynamic and progressive area.

Meath has a population of over 195,044[1] people accommodated in a network of attractive towns, villages and the rural area. It possesses a diverse range of landscapes, including 10 kilometres of coastline, the drumlin hills of north Meath, rich pastures, tracts of peatland and raised bog in the southwest and the central upland area that includes Tara - the ancient capital of Ireland. This landscape reflects the changing influences of its population over time; from the megalithic sites at Newgrange and Oldcastle, to the Norman castle ruins at Trim, the landed estates at Slane, Dowth and Oldbridge, to modern day dynamic settlements such as Navan, Drogheda, Dunboyne and Ashbourne.

The county benefits from a wealth of natural and man-made resources. It is supported by a well-developed road and rail infrastructure system which provides access to international transport networks at Dublin Airport and Dublin Port and the remainder of the country. The fertile soils provide the basis for a thriving agricultural and food sector, and the natural and built heritage enhances the quality of life for the people of the county and has long enticed visitors to Meath.

1.2 Legislative Framework

The Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2018 enacted legislative requirements, to enable the co-ordinated and timely incorporation of the National Planning Framework (NPF) and the relevant RSES into each City or County Development Plan. Section 11(1) of the Planning & Development Act 2000 as amended, sets out legal provisions which either suspended or deferred county development plan

processes, or require plans to commence variation or review processes within six months of the making of the RSES.

Meath County Council had commenced the preparation of the new County Development Plan with a Pre-Draft Consultation process in December 2016. The 2018 Planning Act required that the Plan review be deferred pending the completion of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy process. The Strategy was made on the 28th June 2019, in accordance with section 24(9) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), accordingly the review process recommenced.

This Plan has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) and fully complies with the mandatory requirements for preparation of a Development Plan. These consist of, inter alia, objectives for the zoning of land, the provision of infrastructure, the conservation and protection of the environment, and the integration of the planning and sustainable development with the social, community and cultural requirements of the area and its population. It is also a requirement to prepare a 'Core Strategy' for the County, which must be consistent, as far as practicable, with National and Regional development objectives as set out in the National Planning Framework (NPF) which on the 16th February 2018, replaced the National Spatial Strategy (NSS) and the RSES, which replaced the RPG's in 2019.

As stated above the NSS has been replaced by the NPF which was launched on the 16th February 2018. The purpose of the NPF is to act as a strategic development framework, setting out the long-term context for Ireland's physical development and associated progress in economic, social and environmental terms. The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) replaced the Regional Planning Guidelines and are discussed in more detail in Section 1.4.4 below.

In accordance with European and National legislation, the Council carried out a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), in line with the SEA Directive and an Appropriate Assessment (AA) under the Habitats Directive, which informed the preparation of this Development Plan. These assessments were undertaken to ensure that the potential impacts of the objectives contained in the Plan on the environment can be evaluated. This process informs the content of the Plan and ensures that the built environment responds appropriately to sensitivities and requirements of the wider natural environment.

In addition, the Plan has had to have regard to other relevant environmental legislation and guidance such as, the Water Framework Directive, Floods Directive, Dublin Transport Authority Act 2008, Shellfish Directive, Waste Water Treatment Directive, the Wildlife Acts, National Monuments Acts and Waste Management Acts. Thus, it is considered that the development objectives in the Plan are consistent, in as far as practicable, with the conservation and protection of the environment.

1.2.1 Strategic Environmental Assessment

This Plan was subject to a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), as required under the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004. SEA is the formal, systematic evaluation of the likely significant environmental effects of implementing a plan or programme before the decision is made to adopt the plan or programme. The SEA process seeks to 'provide for a high level of protection of the environment and to contribute to the integration of environmental considerations into the preparation of plans and programmes with a view to promoting sustainable development.'[2]

The results of the SEA process have been fully incorporated into the preparation and making of this Plan. The resulting Environmental Report has been published as a separate document in conjunction with this Plan and is included in Volume 4.

1.2.2 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment

The Office of Public Works (OPW), as the lead agency has statutory responsibility for flood risk management, is responsible for the overall implementation of the Floods Directive.

A Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) was undertaken of the Plan area having regard to the appropriate guidelines[3]. Flood Risk Assessment was integrated into the SEA process. The Strategic Flood

Risk Assessment has been published as a separate document in conjunction with this Plan and is included in Volume 4.

1.2.3 Appropriate Assessment

Article 6(3) of European Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (the Habitats Directive) requires Competent Authorities, in this case Meath County Council, to undertake an Appropriate Assessment of any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of a Natura 2000 site, but likely to have a significant effect thereon, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects. The assessment examines the implications of proceeding with the plan or project in view of the site's conservation objectives.

A Natura Impact Report has been published as a separate document in conjunction with this Plan and is included in Volume 4.

1.2.4 Ministerial Guidelines

Ministerial Guidelines issued to Planning Authorities regarding their functions under the Planning Acts have been fully considered in the making of this Plan in accordance with Section 28 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, as amended.

1.3 The Review Process

1.3.1 Preliminary Consultation Process: Pre-Draft Plan

The Pre-Draft consultation stage was undertaken from 14 December 2016 until 17 February 2017. 282 submissions were received during the Pre-Draft consultation period. The opinions and views set out in the written submissions, and of those expressed and recorded at the public consultation events/stakeholder meetings, were considered and a Chief Executive Report dated 5 April 2017 set out the response of the Chief Executive to the issues raised together with recommendations for the preparation of the Draft Plan.

Pursuant to Section 11 (b) (ii) of the Planning & Development Act 2000 as amended, the County Development Plan review process was suspended between May 2018 until May 2019, pending the preparation of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly.

1.3.2 Draft Plan Consultation Process

The Draft Plan consultation stage was undertaken from 18 December 2019 until 06 March 2020. 2542 submissions were received during this Draft Plan consultation period, with three submissions subsequently withdrawn. The extent and detail of the submissions and observations received highlights the significant level of public interest in the plan-making process.

Pursuant to the Emergency Measures in the Public Interest (Covid-19) Act, 2020, a further pausing of the statutory timelines occurred from 29 March to 23 May 2020.

1.3.3 Members consideration of the Chief Executive's Report on the Draft Plan

In accordance with Section 12(5) of the Act, Members considered the Chief Executive Report on the Draft Plan. A series of Special Meetings were held between November 2020 and March 2021 whereby Members resolved to place material amendments to the Plan on public display. The meetings were spread over such a long period of time due to restrictions around Covid-19.

1.3.4 Material Amendments Consultation Process

Consultation on the Proposed Material Amendments to the Draft Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027 together with associated Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Appropriate Assessment (AA) Determinations and Reports was carried out for a period of 4 weeks from 31 May 2021 to 29 June

2021 inclusive. 308 submissions were received during the Proposed Material Amendments consultation period. Under the Planning and Development Act 2000, (as amended), the final (third) phase of public consultation is solely limited to the Proposed Material Amendments to the Draft Plan.

1.3.5 Members consideration of the Chief Executive's Report on the Material Amendments

In accordance with Section 12(19) of the Act, Members considered the Chief Executive Report on the Material Amendments and at a Special Meeting held from 20-22 September, they resolved to either accept the Chief Executive's recommendation, accept the Chief Executive's recommendation subject to minor modification(s) or reject the Chief Executive's recommendation. The Plan was made on 22 September and comes into effect 6 weeks from that date.

1.4 Preparation of the Development Plan

1.4.1 Main policy considerations

The preparation of this Development Plan has been influenced by a number of strategic International, National, Regional and Local policy documents as illustrated in Figure 1.1. Details of same are contained within the Appendix 2 to this Plan. Primarily the Development Plan is required to be consistent with the National Planning Framework, the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy and the requirements of the Planning Act 2000 as amended and accompanying Regulations.

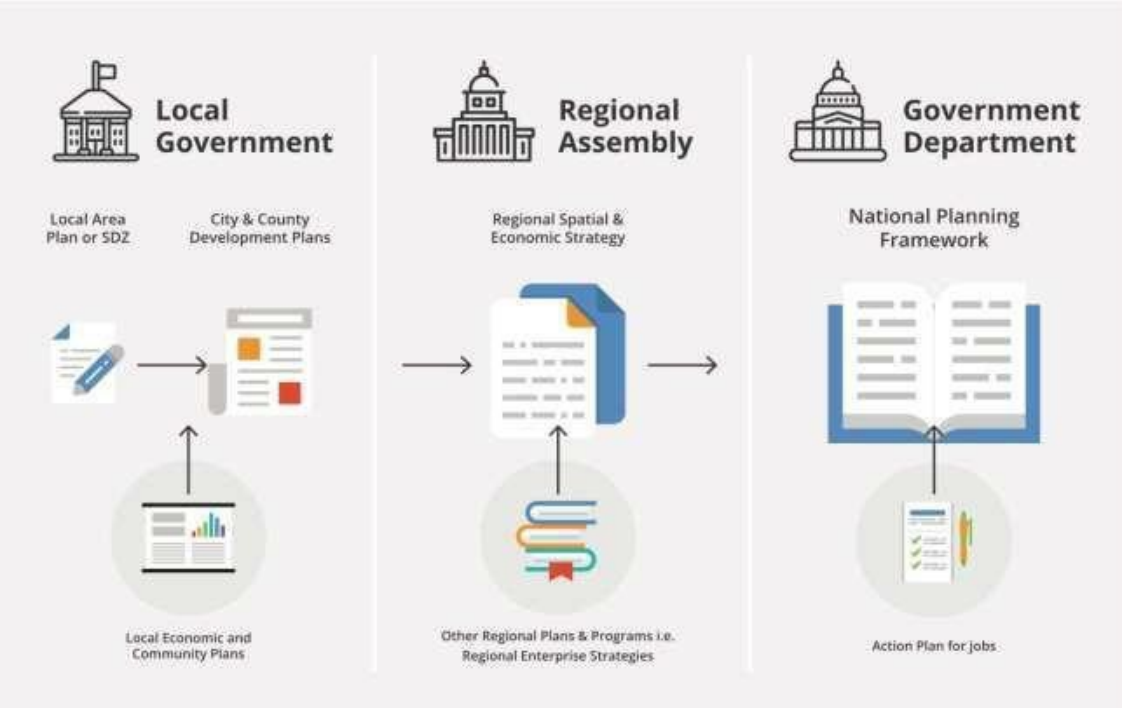
Under Section 9(6) of the Planning and Development Acts 2000, as amended, Development Plans must be consistent, as far as is practicable, with national plans, policies or strategies that the Minister for the Housing, Planning and Local Government determines as relevant to proper planning and sustainable development. The Minister can issue guidelines to Planning Authorities regarding their planning functions and Planning Authorities must have regard to these.

In addition, as a Planning Authority within the Greater Dublin Area, the Plan must be consistent with the Transport Strategy of the GDA.

Finally, this Plan must have regard to the Development Plans of adjoining Local Authorities. The Local Authorities adjoining County Meath are Louth, Kildare, Westmeath, Monaghan, Cavan, Offaly and Fingal.

1.4.2 National and Regional Guidance

The chart below demonstrates the integrated relationship between the various components of policy making at National, Regional and Local Level.



International Guidance

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015 as a roadmap to a better, more inclusive and equitable world and aims to bring every single person on this journey, a plan of action for people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnership. The 17 SDGs are integrated—that is, they recognise that action in one area will affect outcomes in others, and that development must balance social, economic and environmental sustainability. Meath County Council will embrace the SDGs and embed them into our services, projects and actions, and to include them in policy making going forward.

It is the policy of the Council:

INT POL 1

To promote the UNs Sustainable Development Goals within Meath County Council for our customers and stakeholders through the actions and policies taken by the organisation.

1.4.3 National Policy Project Ireland 2040

Project Ireland 2040 is the Government's overarching policy initiative to make Ireland a better country for all citizens. This policy initiative is set out in two documents as follows:

i. The National Planning Framework (NPF), which sets out the planning strategy for Ireland until 2040.

ii. The National Development Plan (NDP) 2018-27, which sets out details of infrastructure investment until 2027.

The investment programme set out in the National Development Plan is closely aligned to the 10 National Strategic Outcomes detailed in the NPF. This will ensure that investment priorities and capital expenditure will be consistent with the underlying principles of the planning strategy set out in the NPF.

National Planning Framework

The National Planning Framework seeks to deliver regional parity between the EMRA region and the remainder of the Country in terms of population. In order to comply with this requirement reduced population growth targets have been allocated to the EMRA region relative to the other Assembly areas. Consequently, the existing growth trend of this region has been adjusted in the RSES to ensure

compliance with National policy. The County Development Plan is mandated to implement this downward population growth trajectory.

The regional growth strategy set out in the NPF represents a significant change to current trends and growth patterns, referred to in the document as 'business as usual'. In order to implement this strategy population growth in the Eastern and Midland Region will be curtailed by implementing a policy of 'regional parity' whereby the projected growth of the Eastern and Midland Region must be at least matched by the combined growth of the Northern, Western and Southern Regions.[4] The population target for the Eastern and Midland Region is for an additional 490,000-540,000 people to be living in the region by 2040.

One of the overriding objectives (from an economic and quality of life perspective) of this Plan is to redress the current high commuter levels from the County specifically in towns such as Navan, East Meath and Ratoath where the population has grown rapidly, without equivalent increases in jobs. In order to achieve this objective a strategic and targeted approach has been applied to the development of economic opportunities within the County.

This plan has identified 7 additional key strategic employment sites within the County which support the development of compact settlements linked by multi-modal corridors and are in accordance with the criteria for employment growth as set out in Section 4.4 of the NPF. The economic development of the County and the policy direction employed by the Council, which was strongly influenced by the policies of the NPF and the RSES, is discussed in detail in Chapter 4 of this Plan.

National Planning Framework: First Revision April 2025

The National Planning Framework (NPF) First Revision was published in April 2025 reflecting the significant demographic, environmental, infrastructural and housing changes that have taken place since the original publication of the NPF in 2018.

The overarching objective of the NPF remains to guide and shape the growth and development of the country up to 2040. The NPF recognises that in the period between 2022 and 2040 the country's population is expected to grow by approximately one million people which will require new homes and jobs. The ambition of the NPF is to therefore provide a strategic vision to co-ordinate Ireland's spatial, economic, social and environmental future with the aim of achieving more balanced, sustainable and inclusive growth. The revision to the NPF retains the shared set of goals for every community across the country which are expressed as National Strategic Outcomes (NSO's). The NSO's will continue to frame the revised strategy and ensure continuity of a strategic plan-led approach to the future development of the country.

The NPF sets out updated population projections and outlines ambitious housing targets of approximately 50,000 new homes to be delivered nationally per annum to 2040 to accommodate this growth. The revision also places greater emphasis on climate transition, environmental protection and sustainability, identifies 108 National Policy Objectives (NPO's), and encourages stronger integration between infrastructure delivery and housing development.

National Development Plan 2018-2027

The NDP sets out the investment priorities that will underpin the successful implementation of the new NPF. This will guide national, regional and local planning and investment decisions in Ireland over the next two decades, to cater for an expected population increase of over 1 million people.

National Development Plan Review 2025

The updated National Development Plan sets out the Government's objectives for capital investment with a particular focus on the delivery of critical infrastructure and housing and the provision of improved public transport. The updated NDP represents the State's largest ever capital investment plan and, together with the revised NPF, will be critical to delivering the infrastructure and housing needed to meet the needs of a growing population.

Climate Action Fund

Set up as one of four funds under that National Development Plan 2018-2027 as part of Project Ireland 2040. The aim of this fund is to support initiatives that contribute to the achievement of Ireland's climate and energy targets. The Fund will also seek to facilitate projects that contribute to other Government policy priorities including:

- Supporting innovation and capacity building towards the development of climate change solutions capable of being scaled and delivering benefits beyond a once-off impact
- Generating wider socio-economic benefits such as job creation, air quality improvements, reduction in fuel poverty, bio-diversity and community resilience and development

It is the policy of the Council:

INT POL 2

To utilise the Climate Action Fund established under the National Development Plan to facilitate public and private climate mitigation and adaptation projects in line with criteria set out by the fund at that time.

1.4.4 Regional Policy

Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2019-2031

The Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly was established on 1st January 2015. The Region covers nine counties containing twelve local authorities namely – Longford, Westmeath, Offaly, Laois, Louth, Meath, Kildare, Wicklow, Fingal, South Dublin and Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Councils and Dublin City Council. The Region includes 3 sub regions or Strategic Planning Areas (SPAs), namely the Midland, Eastern and Dublin SPAs. Meath is located in the Eastern SPA with Kildare, Wicklow and Louth.

The RSES is a strategic plan which identifies regional assets, opportunities and pressures and provides appropriate policy responses in the form of Regional Policy Objectives.

The RSES vision is as follows:

"To create a sustainable and competitive Region that supports the health and wellbeing of our people and places, from urban to rural, with access to quality housing, travel and employment opportunities for all"

Due to the scale and diversity of the Eastern and Midlands Region the RSES sets out a vision for future growth and development at both a Strategic Planning Area (SPA) level and a regional level. The RSES has a much greater focus on promoting economic development.

This greater economic focus is intended to strengthen links between planning policy and economic trends and realities on the ground, and identify regional attributes that are deemed necessary to promote improved economic performance such as physical infrastructure and services, community development facilities, the general quality of the environment and other assets and amenities. The Meath Economic Strategy, which aligns with the economic policies outlined in the RSES, includes the 'live work' community model, emphasis on addressing the high levels of outbound commuting from the Eastern SPA and identification of strategic employment sites.

1.4.5 Local Policy

Meath Local Economic and Community Plan 2016-2021

The Local Government Reform Act 2014 required the establishment of Local Community Development Committees (LCDC's) within all Local Authorities. The Meath Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) was established in 2014 to develop, coordinate and implement a coherent and integrated approach to local and community development. County and City Development Boards (CDBs) were abolished in June 2014 under the 2014 Act.

One of the primary functions of the LCDCs is to develop, implement and monitor a six-year Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) for the Local Authority area.

The Development Plan and the LECP effectively operate parallel to one another whereby the LECP provides a supporting framework for the economic development and local community development of Meath, the County Development Plan provides an overarching strategy and statutory policy support for the proper planning and sustainable development of the County at a spatial level. Consequently, the policies and objectives of the County Development Plan must be complementary to and consistent with the high level goals and objectives of the LECP.

EMRA has a statutory remit in respect of the alignment of the LECP policies with County Development Plans.

Meath County Council Corporate Plan 2019-2024

The Meath County Council Corporate Plan 2019-2024 mission statement is to 'drive the economic, social, cultural and environmental growth of our County in a balanced manner that is inclusive of all our citizens'. This plan's vision for Meath is to lead economic growth of our county to enhance the quality of life of the people of Meath. This plan's vision for Meath is 'To make Meath the lead county for economic prosperity, social development and environmental protection, with efficient and good value services and a Council representing the people and communities of County Meath in an effective and accountable manner.'

The Corporate Plan sets out seven organisation wide objectives to guide and shape the direction of the functions of Meath County Council. These objectives are summarised below:

1. Deliver Excellent Public Services to our Citizens
2. Lead Economic Development, Support Enterprise and Employment Creation
3. Provide a blend of Solutions to the Complex Housing Challenges at Local Level
4. Support the Transition to a Low Carbon Economy and Lead on Climate Action
5. Engage the Wider Community, Increase Participation and work to make Meath an Age Friendly County
6. Build Strong, Influential Partnerships to Maximise the County's Potential
7. Develop Organisational Capability through Innovation and Staff Excellence

These objectives and those of the Meath Local Economic and Community Plan 2016-2021 as well as the Meath County Council Corporate Plan 2019-2024, have contributed to formulation of the vision and strategic direction of the Development Plan, set out in Chapter 2, the Core Strategy and Chapter 4 Economy and Employment.

Economic Development Strategy for County Meath 2014-2022

The Economic Development Strategy for County Meath 2014-2022 sets out clear, concise, innovative and evidence-based measures aimed at accelerating the economic transformation, revitalisation and sustainable development of County Meath from 2014-2022.

The measures recommended within the Economic Development Strategy have succeeded in enabling County Meath to fulfil its economic potential and to prosper as a successful, diverse and vibrant social, civic, commercial, and residential centre that is recognised locally, nationally and internationally as a highly attractive and distinctive location in which to conduct business.

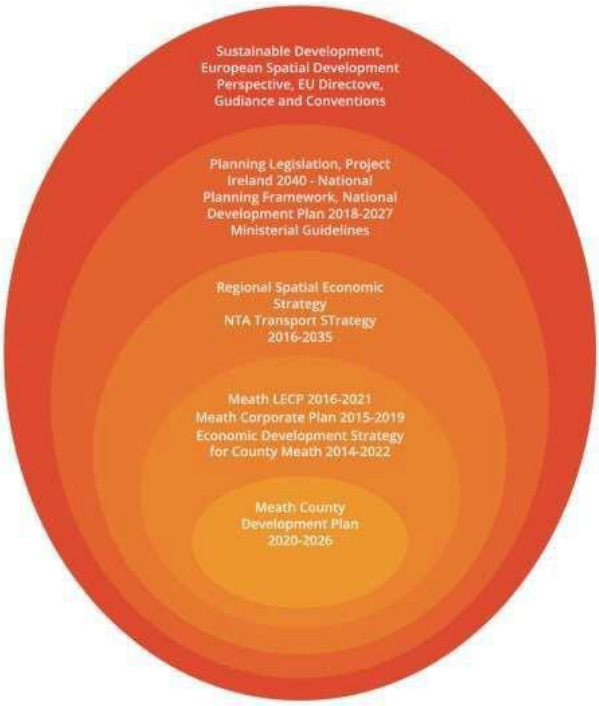


Figure 1.1: Strategic policy influences on the preparation of the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027

Strategic Employment Sites

Building on the momentum of the successful implementation of the Economic Strategy and the identification of 5 strategic employment sites, a number of additional strategic employment sites have been selected which reflect those areas with the highest incidence of outbound commuting[5] combined with high quality skill set profile. The 5 strategic sites are as follows:

- Navan (IDA Business & Technology Park)
- South Drogheda (IDA Business & Technology Park and lands in private ownership)
- Dunboyne North (Lands adjacent to the M3 Parkway Rail Head)
- Ashbourne (Lands north of the Rath Roundabout)
- Kells Business Park.

In the case of Maynooth, the opportunities presented to develop synergies with Maynooth University accord with the RSES policy direction to focus on technology and innovation poles located at universities when identifying sites for enterprise.

The sites comprise a combination of new and existing zoned lands. The intention in designating these sites as strategic employment sites in the Economic Strategy and the County Development Plan is to facilitate the marketing of the sites and to stimulate development on these lands.

These additional Strategic Sites are as follows:

- Trim Rd lands, Navan and additional lands to the north;
- Maynooth Environs (employment land);
- Ratoath, lands between the existing built up area of Ratoath and including the Fairyhouse/Tattersalls Equestrian complexes, for the creation of an equestrian based employment hub (existing employment land, additional lands identified);
- Kells, lands opposite Headfort Golf Club (existing employment land);
- Laytown, lands adjacent to Laytown Train Station (existing employment land, additional lands identified);

- Enfield, lands to the east of the built-up area of Enfield (existing employment land);
- Dunshaughlin, lands to the south of the town which will facilitate the delivery of a key route to the M3 Motorway.

1.5 Table of Contents of the County Development Plan 2021-2027

The County Development Plan consists of a written document with supporting appendices and maps, as set out in the table of contents. There are four volumes contained in the Meath County Development Plan:

1. Volume 1 Written Statement
2. Volume 2 Written Statements & Maps for Settlements
3. Volume 3 Book of Maps
4. Volume 4 Strategic Environmental Assessment, Appropriate Assessment & Flood Risk Assessment

Volume 1, the written statement, contains the policies and objectives of the Development Plan and comprises 11 chapters.

- Chapter 1 Introduction provides background information to the Development Plan.
- Chapter 2 Core Strategy sets out the overall vision for the county and the core principles underlying the development strategy in the Plan.
- Chapters 3 to 10 expand on the development strategy for the county, giving an in-depth policy direction for housing, economic development, movement, infrastructure, social issues, built and natural heritage, rural development and climate change. Each of these chapters includes a written statement in which strategic themes, policies and objectives for each topic are provided.
- Chapter 11 provides detailed development management standards. This chapter sets out the criteria which will be used by the Council in assessing planning applications. They support the various policies and objectives which are provided throughout the Plan.

Volume 2 contains the Written Statements and maps for the settlements as follows:

ASHBOURNE MUNICIPAL DISTRICT

Ashbourne
Gormanston
Kentstown
Stamullen
Kilbride

KELLS MUNICIPAL DISTRICT

Athboy
Baile Gibb
Carlanstown
Carnaross
Crossakiel
Drumconrath
Kells
Kilmainhamwood
Moynalty
Nobber
Oldcastle
Rathcairn

LAYTOWN/BETTYSTOWN MUNICIPAL DISTRICT

Bettystown/Laytown/Mornington/Donacarney (East Meath)
Donore
Duleek
Julianstown
Slane

NAVAN MUNICIPAL DISTRICT

Navan

RATOATH MUNICIPAL DISTRICT

Dunboyne (& Clonee)
Dunshaughlin
Kilcock Environs
Kilmessan
Maynooth Environs
Ratoath

TRIM MUNICIPAL DISTRICT

Ballivor
Clonard
Enfield
Kildalkey
Longwood
Rathmolyon
Summerhill
Trim

Volume 3 contains the maps associated with Volume 1, which includes:

Settlement Hierarchy
Rail Reservation Corridor
Road Upgrades National & Regional
Access to National Roads – Exceptional Circumstances
Bru Na Boinne World Heritage Site
Architectural Conservation Areas
Natural Heritage Designations (Natura 2000)
Geological Heritage Sites
GSI Aggregates Potential
Public Rights of Way
Views and Prospects
Rural Area Types Development Pressure
Tree Preservation Order's (TPO)
Gaeltacht Areas Rathcairn & Gibbstown
Management of Future Access to Strategic Corridors
Dublin Airport Safety Zones
SEVESO Sites

Finally, the Appendices include: details of all relevant Legislation, Strategic Policy Guidance the Council's approach to the implementation of Ministerial Guidelines in the Development Plan, Housing Strategy, Retail Strategy, Landscape Character Assessment, Record of Protected Structures, Architectural Conservations Areas, Protected Views and Prospects and all other relevant maps and information pertaining to the preparation of the Plan.

1.5.1 Written Statements for Settlements in Meath

A Written Statement and Land Use Zoning map to establish a framework for inter alia the future LAP's, to support economic development and to provide a basis for continued operation of the development

management process pending the completion of the LAP's (in the case of Drogheda the UAP) has been included in Volume 2 for each settlement. These Written Statements will continue to have effect unless they are replaced and superseded by their respective Local Area Plan, Joint Local Area Plan or Joint Urban Area Plan. On adoption, the Local Area Plan, Joint Maynooth Local Area Plan or Joint Drogheda Urban / Local Area Plan will replace the respective Written Statement in Volume 2 of the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027 by way of a variation to the Plan. During the intervening period, the Written Statement contained in the Meath County Development Plan will continue to have effect.

1.6 Interpretation

In interpreting this document, should any conflict arise between the written word and accompanying maps the written word shall take precedence.

1.6.1 Protocols

In all cases the following protocols apply:

- The Council refers to Meath County Council.
- The Plan refers to the County Development Plan 2021-2027.
- The County refers to County Meath.

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[1] 2016 Census

[2] European Directive 2001/42/EC

[3] Ministerial Planning Guidelines on The Planning System and Flood Risk Management 2009

[4] National Policy Objective 1a and 1b of the NPF

[5] Census 2016 POWSCAR Data

Consequent upon the Order of the High Court made on the 3rd May 2023 in proceedings 2021 No. 958 JR the following changes have been made to the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027:

(a) Removal of Sheet 35(a) Southern Environs of Drogheda, Sheet 35(a) Southern Environs of Drogheda-Combined, and Sheet 35(b) Heritage, but only insofar as relates to the A2 Residential Zoned lands in the Southern Environs of Drogheda (not including any lands that were Zoned A2 Phase I in the previous Meath County Development Plan). The order provides that these lands will be rezoned WL (White Lands).

(b) Removal of the last three paragraphs of section 2.8.1.1 of Chapter 2 - Core Strategy; and

(c) Removal of the figure "178.70" in the table to section 2.10.4, Column I, Row 1; of Chapter 2 - Core Strategy.

The aforementioned Land Use Zoning Maps and Chapter 2 Core Strategy of the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027 have been amended to reflect this judgement. The rezoning of these lands and removal of this text from the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027 shall not affect any existing development consents granted in these areas.

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of the Core Strategy[1] is to set out an evidence-based strategy for the future spatial development of the Plan area. The Core Strategy is required to demonstrate that the Plan is in accordance with National and Regional planning policy outlined in the National Planning Framework (NPF) and the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Eastern and Midland Region.

The strategy includes details of the settlement hierarchy and where future growth is to be distributed in the County together with details of population and household projections and the quantum of lands to be zoned for residential and mixed-uses. An overview of the quantum of lands zoned for employment uses is also provided.

2.2 Core Strategy Vision

The Core Strategy Vision of the Meath County Development Plan is:

"To continue to support the creation of socio-economically progressive vibrant, dynamic, and healthy communities throughout the County and ensure that future growth is based on the principles of sustainable development that delivers a high-quality living and working environment that meets the needs of all residents, in accordance with National and Regional Guidance."

2.3 National and Regional Planning Policy

2.3.1 Project Ireland 2040

2.3.1.1 National Planning Framework (2018) and National Planning Framework – First Revision (2025)

The National Planning Framework (NPF) is the successor to the National Spatial Strategy (NSS). It was published in 2018 and is a 20 year strategy setting out the growth strategy for the country up to 2040. The NPF was given a

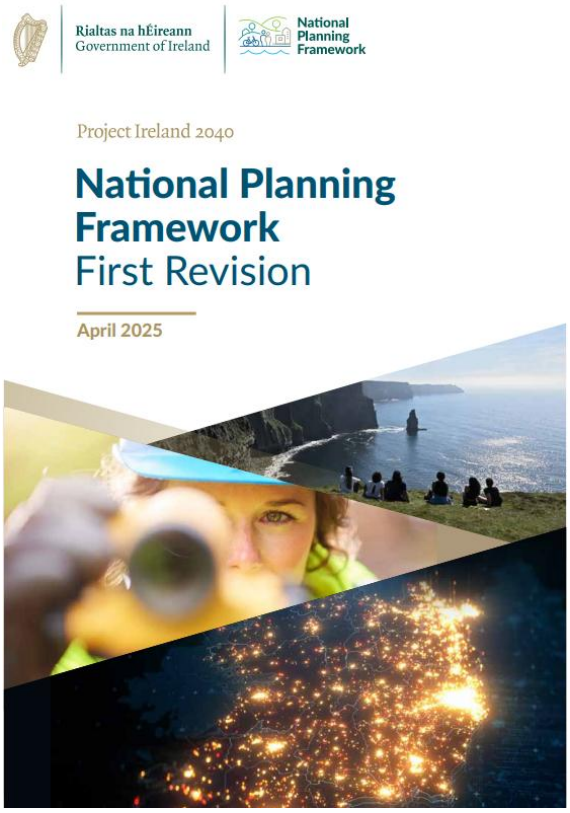
statutory footing under the Planning and Development Amendment Act 2018.[2] The objectives of the NPF as set out in the Act are as follows:

i. To establish a broad national plan in relation to the strategic planning and sustainable development of urban and rural areas.

ii. To secure balanced regional development by maximising the potential of the regions.

iii. To secure the co-ordination of regional spatial and economic strategies and city and county development plans.

The National Planning Framework (NPF) First Revision was published in April 2025 reflecting the significant demographic, environmental, infrastructural and housing changes that have taken place since the original publication of the NPF in 2018. The overarching objective remains to guide and shape the future growth of the country having regard to revised population projections and updated housing targets needed to accommodate this additional growth.



The vision/goals of the NPF First Revision continue to be expressed as 'National Strategic Outcomes' built around the themes of wellbeing, equality, and opportunity.

The strategy set out in the NPF focuses on building 'centres of scale' and addressing peripherality. At a national level Dublin (the National Gateway) will remain the principal economic driver of the country and will continue to develop as an international city of scale. As part of the strategy of promoting regional growth and building 'centres of scale' outside of Dublin, ambitious growth targets have been allocated to the cities of Cork, Galway, Limerick, and Waterford. Below these 5 cities the regional roles of Athlone in the Midlands, Sligo and Letterkenny in the North-West and the Letterkenny-Derry and Drogheda-Dundalk-Newry cross border networks are also identified. The importance of the Dublin-Belfast economic corridor in harnessing future economic growth, supporting regional development, and strengthening the urban structure in the northern and eastern parts of the country is also acknowledged.

The regional growth strategy set out in the NPF represents a significant change to current trends and growth patterns, referred to in the document as 'business as usual'. In order to implement this strategy population growth in the Eastern and Midland Region will be curtailed by implementing a policy of 'regional parity' whereby the projected growth of the Eastern and Midland Region must be at least matched by the combined growth of the Northern and Western and Southern Regions.[3] The population target for the Eastern and Midland Region is for approximately 470,000 additional people between 2022 and 2040 (c. 690,000 additional people over 2016-2040) i.e. a population of almost 3 million.

The NPF strategy is required to be ambitious and to succeed it will require a significant up-scaling of growth in the other regions. Based on their current growth levels, it is clear that the challenges presented by this task should not be underestimated.

	Growing Our Region	Building Accessible Centres of Scale	Compact Smart Growth
Eastern and Midland Region	470,000 people between 2022-2040 +320,000 jobs	Dublin City and Suburbs – +295,000 people Growth of other towns to be determined by Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies within overall National Framework	40% of new housing to be delivered on infill/ brownfield lands

Table 2.1: Targeted Pattern of growth in the Eastern and Midland Region to 2040

Securing compact and sustainable growth is an important element of the growth strategy. This will be achieved by concentrating on delivering growth within the existing built-up footprint of settlements by focusing on the re-use of previously developed 'brownfield' land, the development of infill sites, and the re-use and redevelopment of existing sites and buildings. It is an objective that at least 30% of all new homes in settlements outside the 5 cities and suburbs will be within the existing built-up footprint.[4]

2.3.2 NPF Implementation: Housing Growth Requirements

In response to the National Planning Framework – First Revision (2025), the 'NPF Implementation: Housing Growth Requirements Guidelines for Planning Authorities' were issued under Section 28 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) in July 2025. These Guidelines replace the earlier Section 28 'Housing Supply Target Methodology for Development Planning' Guidelines published in December 2020 and provide updated housing growth requirements to planning authorities in order to facilitate the revision and update of development plans in accordance with the provision of NPF (2025).

Local authorities are now required to update development plans to reflect on the national targets set out by the Department. The guidelines set the housing demand scenario up to 2040 for each local authority by translating NPF (2025) requirements into estimated average annual figures, drawing on the range of scenarios presented by the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI). The headline national target of 50,000 additional homes per annum to 2040 as set out in the revised NPF includes a provision for 'unmet demand' and it is an objective of the Guidelines that this 'unmet demand' will be addressed in the near term, up to the year 2034.

Appendix 1 of the Guidelines sets out the housing growth requirements for each Local Authority which must be reflected in the relevant City and County Development Plans. When applied to County Meath the Guidelines require the delivery of 2,942 units annually up to 2034. This figure reduces to 1,362 from 2035 to 2040 which will require the zoning of additional lands to achieve these targets. It should be noted that the Housing Supply Target for the Adopted Meath Development Plan as identified in Appendix 1 of the Guidelines contains an error. The annual average housing requirement as set out in Section 2.9.5 of this Plan is approximately 1,880 units for the county rather than the 2,826-figure listed in the Guidelines. The figure contained in the Guidelines is based on a six-year plan period rather than the seven-year period.

Local Authority	Existing Annual 2020 Housing Requirement (Housing Supply Target)	Adopted Development Plan – Annual Housing Requirement (Housing Supply Target)	New Annual New Housing Growth Requirement to 2034	New Annual New Housing Growth Requirement 2035 to 2040
Meath	1,090	2,826	2,942	1,362

Table 2.2: Housing Growth Targets for Meath as per Appendix 1 NPF Implementation: Housing Growth Requirements

An assessment was undertaken in October-November 2025 to determine the ability of the remaining residential zoned lands throughout the county to accommodate the revised housing targets as set out in the NPF Guidelines. The need for additional zoned lands over the remaining duration of the development plan was evaluated, focusing specifically on the identification of land suitable for residential development. The first phase of this assessment considered lands that have been built out, the planning history of zoned lands (August-September 2025) and activation sites, and whether or not the lands were serviced or serviceable. The table below provides a

summary overview of the planning status, quantum and potential unit yield of residential zoned land across the county.

Planning Status	Units	Hectares
Land Permitted (Not Complete)	5,458	228.44 (Combined ha of all land permitted)
Land Remaining (Undeveloped land on Mixed Use, Town Centre and Residential)	6,020	221.67
One-Off Rural Housing (predicted)	600	-
Live Applications (at time of assessment)	1,263	39.31
Total	13,341	489.42

Table 2.3: Summary of Planning History Assessment

The second phase of the assessment was both quantitative and qualitative and considered the following elements in order to ensure the lands zoned are capable of delivering the annual target of 2,942 units:

- Whether the land parcels identified in Stage 1 of this assessment are fully serviced from a water, sewerage, transport and power perspective to be built out in their entirety;
- Whether the lands identified as part of the Stage 1 of this assessment included landowners with fully serviced zoned lands for extended periods of time that have not attempted to develop their lands for residential purposes and have not engaged with the Local Authority in the previous or current development plan period;
- Whether any landowners of the parcels identified in Phase 1 have expressed their desire to have their land re-zoned for other purposes as part of the RZLT consultation process, and therefore do not intend to develop their land;
- The percentage of existing planning permissions that are likely to translate to delivered units over the next two years;
- Housing delivery trends in settlements over the past 5 years.

The third phase of this assessment identified the quantum of additional lands required to be zoned as part of Variation 5 in order to increase the likelihood of delivering 2,942 units annually for the remainder of the plan period. The assessment was guided by the NPF Housing Growth Requirements to ensure that zoning for an additional provision of up to 50% was factored into the land zoning identification process.

2.3.2.1 Headroom[7]

Policy and Objective 2 of the Guidelines requires that:

> *"additional provision of up to 50% over and above the housing growth requirement for each local authority set out in Appendix 1 is reflected within the relevant City or County Development Plan, subject to consistency with the policies and objectives of the National Planning Framework – First Revision (2025), relevant Ministerial Guidelines issued under Section 28 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), relevant Government policy, and the undertaking of necessary environmental assessments."*

The Development Plan previously considered a headroom rate of 25% in accordance with the 'Housing Supply Target Methodology for Development Planning Guidelines' (2020). For the purposes of the 'NPF Implementation: Housing Growth Requirements Guidelines' (2025) it is recommended that Planning Authorities address scope for additional provision of up to 50% in excess of the baseline housing growth requirement set out in Appendix 1 of the Guidelines. When the headroom rate of 50% is applied to the housing growth for County Meath, zoning for a total of 4,413 units per annum is required up to 2034. Table 2.3 below sets out the housing requirements for the county up to the end of the Development Plan period including the calendar year 2025.

Housing Target	New Housing Target (3-Years)	New Housing Target Plus 50% Provision
2,942 units	8,826 units	13,239 units

Table 2.4: Revised Housing Targets and the 50% Provision up to 2027 for County Meath

2.4 Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy

As part of the changes to Regional Government structures introduced under the Local Government Reform Act 2014 the 8 Regional Authorities in the country were dissolved and replaced with 3 Regional Assemblies. The Regional Assemblies were established in January 2015. Meath is located in the Eastern and Midland Region.

One of the principal functions of the Regional Assembly is to prepare and oversee the implementation of a Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES). The RSES provides the link between the NPF and the City/County Development Plans and the Local Economic and Community Plans.[9] The RSES has replaced the Regional Planning Guidelines.

Within the Eastern and Midland Region there are 3 Strategic Planning Areas; Dublin, Eastern, and Midland Strategic Planning Areas.

The objective of the RSES as set out in the Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2018 is to support the implementation of the NPF and the economic policies and objectives of the Government.[10]

2.4.1 Profile of the Eastern and Midland Region

The Eastern and Midland Region has a diverse and varied settlement structure consisting of densely populated urban areas around Dublin and a more rural, dispersed pattern of development in the Midlands.

The region had a population of over 2.3 million people in 2016, which equates to 49% of the population of the country. Population growth in the region is not evenly distributed, with over 2 million people or 87% of the total population living in the Dublin and Eastern Strategic Planning Areas.

The highest population growth in the region between 2006-16 was recorded in the Eastern Strategic Planning Area, where the population increased by 17.4% or 102,000 people.

The regional economy is continuing to perform strongly, with 830,000 jobs located in the region in 2016. Approximately 70% (578,000) of these jobs were located in Dublin, reflecting the dominance and strength of the capital for economic growth and investment.

The success of the Dublin economy can also be attributed to the interdependent relationship between the capital and surrounding counties, particularly in the Eastern SPA where a significant number of people working in Dublin reside, in part due to historic and ongoing residential availability and affordability issues. The combined population of these Strategic Planning Areas has assisted in creating a critical mass of population that is required to support the growth of the Dublin economy and wider region.

Fig 2.1: Strategic Planning Areas Eastern and Midland Region

2.4.2 Overview of the RSES for the Eastern and Midland Region

The RSES sets out the strategic framework for the economic and spatial development of the Eastern and Midland Region up to 2031.

The primary objective of the RSES is to support more sustainable settlement patterns that focus on compact growth, makes the most efficient use of land and infrastructure, and takes an integrated approach to development that provides employment opportunities and improvements to services alongside population and residential growth.

The Growth Strategy builds on the policy direction taken in the Regional Planning Guidelines of directing growth to a number of designated settlements across the region.

There are 3 policy zones identified in the strategy as follows:

- Dublin City and Metropolitan Area
- Core Region
- Gateway Region

2.4.2.1 Dublin City and Metropolitan Area

Map 2.1: Dublin Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan Area

Dublin City and Suburbs consists of the continuous built-up area of Dublin and transcends across all 4 Local Authority Areas in County Dublin. It includes settlements such as Blanchardstown, Ballymun, and Howth in Fingal, Clondalkin and Tallaght in South Dublin and Dundrum and Dun Laoghaire in Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council.

The NPF First Revision 2025 projects that there will be an additional 295,000 people living in Dublin City and Suburbs by 2040. This will be achieved by concentrating growth within the existing built-up footprint of the City and Suburbs area.[11]

The Metropolitan Area extends beyond the City and Suburbs to include major settlements that have strong connections and synergy with the city such as Swords, Dunboyne, Maynooth, Leixlip, Bray, and Greystones. 1.4 million people lived in the Metropolitan Area in 2016, which was 60% of the population in the Eastern and Midland Region.

As part of the strategy of concentrating development towards the city area, the NPF included provision for the preparation of a Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP) that sets out a high level and long-term strategic vision for the Metropolitan Area. This MASP was prepared as part of the RSES.

The Dublin MASP identifies strategic growth corridors based on their capacity to deliver compact, sustainable, and sequential growth and their proximity to existing and proposed public transport. There is a strong emphasis on aligning land use and transportation planning in order to co-ordinate policy making and investment and create more compact, sustainable communities. In addition, the requisite infrastructure requirements needed to release these lands for development have been identified.

2.4.2.2 Core Area

The Core Area consists of the peri-urban areas in the commuter catchment around Dublin, which extends into Louth, Meath, Westmeath, Kildare, and Wicklow. Key settlements include Drogheda, Balbriggan, Navan, Naas, Newbridge, and Wicklow Town.

Future growth in the Core Area is to be focused on consolidated, compact growth in key employment and service centres, with smaller settlements to grow at a more sustainable rate. There will also be a focus on improvements to services and amenities in settlements that have experienced significant population growth in order to improve the quality of the living and working environment.

2.4.2.3 Gateway Region

The Gateway Region comprises the remainder of the Eastern and Midland Region beyond the Metropolitan and Core Areas. Settlements in this part of the Region are more dispersed and rural. There is a focus on Athlone and Dundalk functioning as regional drivers for the economic growth of this part of the region. Other key settlements include Longford, Mullingar, Portlaoise, Carlow/Graiguecullen and Tullamore.

2.4.2.4 Economic Strategy

Map 2.2: Policy Areas in the Eastern and Midland Region

The Economic Strategy is positive in outlook and is focused on continuing to build on the progress made in the economy in recent years. Whilst Dublin is the primary driver of the national economy, the strategy also acknowledges the capacity of key settlements throughout the region to support and deliver economic growth. The importance of the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor in harnessing and driving economic growth is also recognised.

As part of the cross-cutting theme in the RSES of 'place making' and creating quality urban environments, there is an emphasis on improving the alignment between population and employment growth in order to create more

sustainable settlements where people can enjoy a better quality of life. This will be delivered by integrating land use and transport planning and supporting high density, compact growth, particularly along high-quality public transport corridors where more sustainable travel patterns can be encouraged. The strategy also acknowledges the importance of improving connectivity and planning for and anticipating future infrastructure demands in order to maintain the competitiveness and attractiveness of the region as a place to invest, thereby stimulating economic growth and the continued delivery of targeted employment.

2.4.3 The influence of the RSES on shaping future growth in Meath

It is a mandatory requirement that there is consistency in the spatial planning hierarchy between national, regional, and local plans. This Development Plan will therefore, be consistent, in so far as is practicable, with the national and regional policy objectives set out in the NPF and RSES.

The key elements of the growth strategy of the RSES that will influence future growth and development in Meath are as follows:

- Metropolitan Growth – the MASP has identified strategic development areas in Dunboyne and Maynooth (along the north-western corridor of the Metropolitan Area) that have the capacity to deliver significant residential and employment growth. The build out of these lands will increase the critical mass of population in the Metropolitan Area, creating more compact and sustainable patterns of growth. Kilcock has been identified as a Self-Sustaining town by Kildare County Council. Given that Kildare is the lead Local Authority in relation to the town, it is necessary that the Meath CDP aligns with that of the Kildare CDP.
- Outside of the Metropolitan Area, future growth will be directed towards key designated settlements including the Regional Growth centre of Drogheda and the Key Town of Navan. The RSES recognises the level and range of services and amenities available in these settlements and their potential to continue their development as important residential, employment, and service centres in the County and wider region.
- Below the designated settlements there are a number of small-medium sized towns that play an important role in providing employment and services to the settlement and their wider catchment. There will be a greater focus on sustainable growth in these settlements including infill and brownfield development in addition to support for an improvement in the provision of amenities and services. The growth in employment provision is a key objective for these settlements in order to create “live work” communities.
- There will be a focus on investment in rural towns, villages and rural nodes to combat the decline of rural areas. The regeneration of vacant and under-utilised sites alongside the roll out of a ‘New Homes in Small Towns and Villages’ initiative between local authorities, infrastructure agencies, and local communities will provide opportunities to boost economic development and rejuvenate rural communities.[12] In the open countryside a distinction is made between areas under urban influence i.e. within the commuter catchment of cities and large towns and centres of employment, and areas outside of these catchments.[13] This is reflected in an updated Rural Development Pressure Map and updated rural housing policy.

The settlement hierarchy as set out in the RSES is as follows:

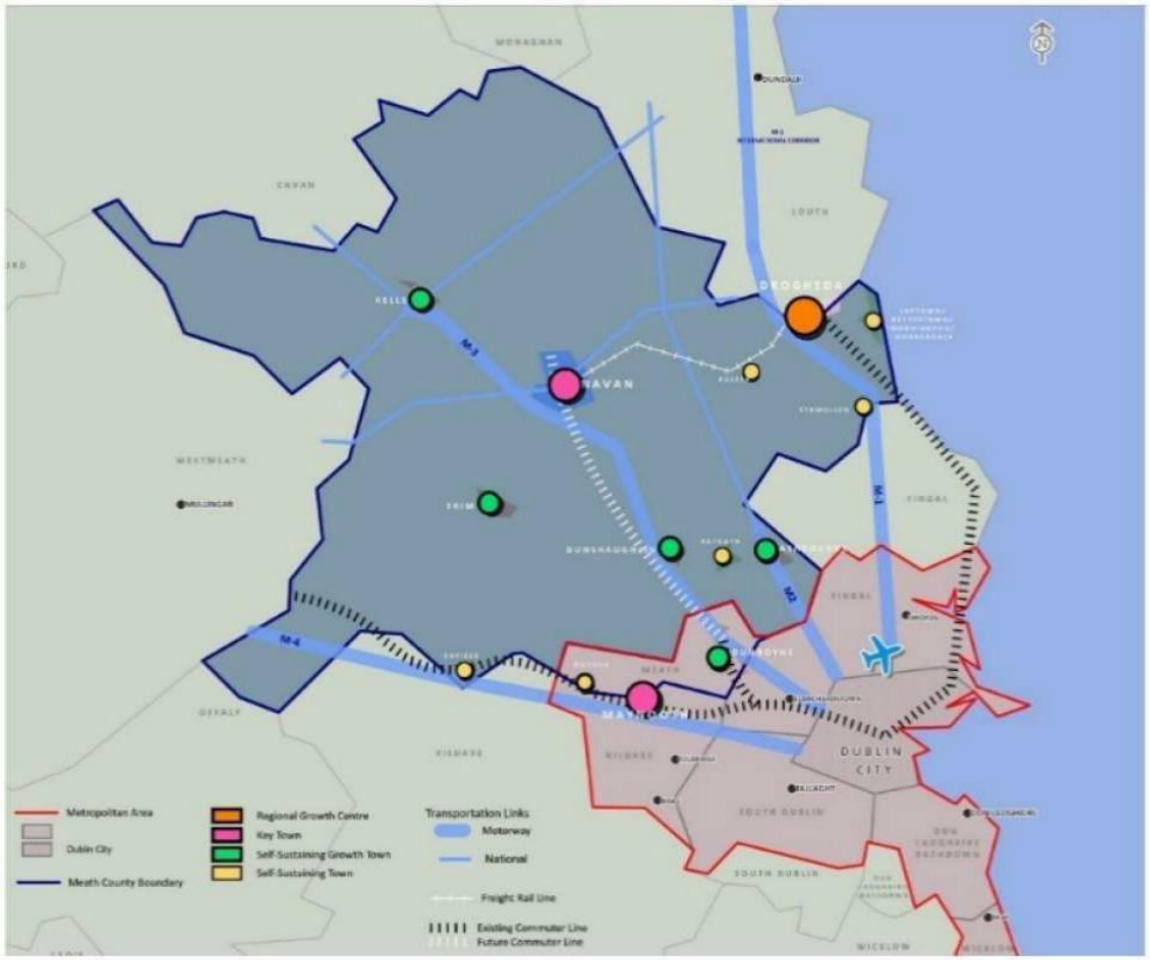
Settlement Typology	Description	Location
RSES Settlement Typology		
Dublin City and Metropolitan Area	International business core with a highly concentrated and diversified employment base and higher order retail, arts, culture and leisure offer. Acts as national transport hub with strong	Dunboyne/Dunboyne North/Clonee, Maynooth, Kilcock

Settlement Typology	Description	Location
	inter and intra-regional connections and an extensive commuter catchment.	
Settlement Hierarchy for Meath		
Regional Growth Centres	These are large towns with a high level of self-sustaining employment and services that act as regional economic drivers and play a significant role for a wide catchment area.	Drogheda
Key Towns	Large economically active service and/or county towns that provide employment for their surrounding areas and with high-quality transport links and the capacity to act as growth drivers to complement the Regional Growth Centres.	Navan, Maynooth
Self-Sustaining Growth Towns	Towns with a moderate level of jobs and services – includes sub-county market and commuter towns with good transport links and capacity for continued commensurate growth to become more self-sustaining.	Ashbourne, Dunshaughlin, Kells, Trim, Dunboyne/Dunboyne North
Self-Sustaining Towns	Towns with high levels of population growth and a weak employment base which are reliant with other areas for employment and/or services and which require targeted 'catch-up' investment to become more self-sustaining.	Laytown, Bettystown-Mornington-Donacarney, Ratoath, Enfield, Stamullen, Kilcock, Duleek.
Towns and Villages	Towns and villages with local service and employment functions.	Towns – Athboy, Oldcastle, Ballivor, Longwood.
Rural	Rural villages less than 1,500 and the wider rural region.	Baile Ghib, Carlanstown, Carnaross, Clonard, Clonee, Crossakiel, Donore, Drumconrath, Gormanstown, Julianstown, Kentstown, Kilbride, Kildalkey, Kilmainhamwood, Kilmessan, Moynalty, Nobber, Rathcairn, Rathmolyon, Slane, Summerhill

Table 2.4A: Settlement hierarchy for Meath

2.5 Core Strategy Map

The Core Strategy Map (Map 2.3) set out overleaf provides a conceptual overview of the spatial planning strategy for the County. This map illustrates the designated growth centres and strategic transport corridors in the county, set within the context of the wider region.



Map 2.3: Core Strategy Map

2.6 Short-Medium Term Outlook of the Plan

The preparation of this Plan comes at a time when growth has returned to the Irish economy. This has followed a prolonged period of stagnation and uncertainty during which the economy experienced volatility and change.

Associated with this economic growth is an increased demand for housing. Whilst the output of housing has increased, it remains substantially below that required in a normally functioning market. This has resulted in demand for housing continuing to outstrip supply, particularly in the Greater Dublin Area, and has led to rising house prices and rents and unprecedented levels of homelessness across the region and the State.

Map 2.3: Core Strategy Map

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In recent years, inward migration has been a continuous trend in County Meath,[14] placing further pressures on the demand for housing. It is, therefore, essential that there is an adequate supply of suitable housing of various types available to facilitate the growth in the economy and to ensure that the output of housing is maintained at a sustainable level that meets the needs of a growing population whilst also addressing the 'pent up' demand for housing following a prolonged period of inactivity.

Whilst this Development Plan is based on the assumption that there will be a continuation of positive economic growth consideration must also be given to the potential impact of Brexit on the Irish economy. It is widely accepted that whatever form of Brexit that is eventually agreed there will be considerable economic implications for the entire country. This impact will be particularly prevalent in the border counties. There are many Meath based companies that will also be exposed to these risks including agri-food, fisheries, haulage companies, the pharma-chemical industry, and retail businesses. The tourism sector is also exposed to additional risks.

Taking this into account it is proposed to include a reserve of residential lands that will not be available for development until after the Plan period to allow flexibility that would facilitate businesses to respond to future challenges surrounding Brexit, as well as the Covid-19 pandemic and the uncertainties it would have on the local, national and international economy.

2.7 Objectives of the Core Strategy

As part of the approach of achieving consistency with the NPF and the RSES the objectives of the Core Strategy are as follows:

- To demonstrate how the Meath County Development Plan is consistent with national and regional planning strategies, guidelines and policies including national and regional population projections.
- To provide the policy framework for the settlement strategy and Local Area Plans, particularly in relation to land use zoning and population distribution.
- To ensure the co-ordination of infrastructural investment with settlements identified for future growth.
- To facilitate the population growth of Meath up to a projected population of 228,300 in the plan period and ensure the distribution of this population is targeted towards the growth centres identified in the RSES.

2.8 Layout/Content of the Core Strategy

The Core Strategy is required to address the following 3 areas:

- Population Targets
- Future Household targets and land requirements
- Settlement hierarchy/Population and household distribution

The legislative requirements in respect of the content of Core Strategies[15] are clearly set out and require an evidence-based approach with regard to population and household allocation and distribution and land use requirements.

2.8.1 Guiding principles for Core Strategies

2.8.1.1 Eastern Regional & Economic Spatial Strategy

In its 'Guiding Principles for Core Strategies' the RSES requires Local Authorities to have regard to the settlement hierarchy in the preparation of the Core Strategy.[16] There is also a recognition that the implementation of the Growth Strategy of the NPF at a regional and county level will result in inconsistencies with existing plans, particularly with regard to the quantum of land zoned for residential use. The RSES provides the following options[17] to address the issue of excess residential lands:

- Apply prioritisation measures which takes account of the sequential development of lands which are suitable for housing but may not be forthcoming in the plan period
- De-zone the land

There is also an acknowledgement that there are instances where there are settlements with long-term development potential that are not being brought forward for development. Rather than being dependent on the release of these lands for residential development, the RSES indicates that Local Authorities should consider other suitable lands with better prospects for delivery in the short term whilst also pursuing the more strategic lands through an Active Land Management Strategy.

2.8.1.2 Development Plan Guidelines for Local Authorities (2022)

The publication of the Development Plan Guidelines for Local Authorities (2022) provides further clarity in respect to excess zoned residential lands stating that it is a policy and objective of these Guidelines that 'zoned housing land in an existing development plan, that is serviced and can be developed for housing within the life of the new development plan under preparation, should not be subject to de-zoning' but should instead take a phased approach. Alternative zoning uses and deletion of the zoning objective can also be considered when addressing excess.

The Guidelines advise that de-zoning should occur where the land zoned has remained undeveloped and unserviced through one or more development plan cycles, with no prospect of being serviced within the six-year life of the development plan.

The guidelines also acknowledge that in providing housing sites for development within settlements, it may be necessary to zone more serviced land and sites for residential (or a mixture of residential and other uses), than would equate to meeting precisely the projected housing demand for that settlement. The approach outlined in Section 4.4.2 of the Guidelines accepts that a degree of choice in development sites is desirable to avoid restricting the supply of new housing development through inactivity on a particular landholding or site.

The release of such lands can compensate for lands with live planning permissions that have no subsequent activity within the duration of their permission and will ensure site options are not curtailed at the advanced stages of the County Development Plan period and will ensure that a steady supply of land for housing in the right locations is built into the system.

In identifying the residential land requirement for this Plan and addressing the issue of excess lands, a significant quantum of residential lands was de-zoned to align the amount of lands zoned with the housing allocation for each settlement during the County Development Plan review. Having regard to the limited availability of

remaining undeveloped residential zoned lands in some settlements, which was established following a detailed analysis at the Two-Year Review of the Plan, a comprehensive evaluation of all undeveloped residential lands in each settlement by way of a Settlement Capacity Audit (SCA) will inform future zoning and phasing of residential lands. The SCA will inform a future variation to the County Development Plan. The prioritisation/phasing of residential lands will only be utilised in the larger settlements where population growth is to be concentrated i.e. Regional Growth Centre, Key Town, or Self-Sustaining Growth Towns and only where there are fundamental reasons which support the requirement to phase such lands.

Settlement	Reason for including a reserve of residential land
Dunboyne	To ensure there is a long-term strategy for the future development of this Metropolitan Town.
Navan	As the Key Town and the largest settlement in the County, it is important to have clarity and direction for the medium and long-term growth of the town. In addition, the delivery of a rail line to Navan is a cross-cutting theme of this Plan. It is therefore integral to have a development strategy that demonstrates the town has the capacity to support the population increase associated with a rail based settlement.
Dunshaughlin	To demonstrate the town has the capacity to accommodate a critical mass of population associated with a rail link delivered as part of Phase II of the Navan Rail Project.
Kilcock Environs	To provide clarity in regard to the long-term growth of this Metropolitan settlement.
Enfield	To provide clarity in regard to the long-term growth of this multi-modal settlement.

Table 2.5: List of settlements where a 'reserve' of residential lands is to be retained

In accordance with the requirements of the NPF First Revision (2025) and associated Ministerial Guidelines, Meath County Council has identified alternative lands for rezoning to account for existing zoned lands that may not come forward during the lifetime of the current Development Plan. In identifying the location of such lands, consideration has been given to:

- The Settlement Hierarchy to ensure compliance with national and regional policy, by prioritising growth in Metropolitan areas, transport-oriented growth, provision within Regional Growth Centres and Keys Towns: Dunboyne, Kilcock, South Drogheda, and Navan.
- Post 2027 lands and White Lands that have been subject to Strategic Environmental Assessment and Appropriate Assessment in the existing County Development Plan and have been recognised for their strategic location; Dunboyne, Navan, Dunshaughlin, Enfield, Kilcock, and East Meath.
- All self-sustaining and self-sustaining growth towns with a high housing demand but limited number of units in the planning pipeline; This assessed remaining capacity in Ashbourne, Dunshaughlin, Kells, Trim, Ratoath, East Meath, Enfield, Stamullen, Duleek.
- Identification of Alternative Viable Lands in settlements with incorrect Land-Use Zonings: (Athboy).
- Lands that were zoned Post 2019 Residential Use in the Meath 2013-2019 CDP and subsequently de-zoned, have now been assessed and found to contain the necessary infrastructure to deliver housing (Athboy, Carlanstown, Donore, Duleek, Kilbride, Rathmoylan, Ballivor and Stamullen).
- Settlements with a strong track record of delivery of 100+ units annually (Navan, Dunshaughlin, South Drogheda).

As such, a number of suitable sites across 11 settlements are proposed to be rezoned to ensure an efficient quantum of land is zoned for the remainder of the Plan period and that the Core Strategy remains in accordance with the Development Plan Guidelines.

2.8.1.3 Joint Urban Area Plan for Drogheda

In recognition of the requirement for a co-ordinated strategy to maximise the growth potential of Drogheda, which is designated as a Regional Growth Centre in the NPF, Regional Policy Objective (RPO) 4.11 in the RSES sets out the requirement for the preparation of a Joint Urban Area Plan for the town between Meath and Louth County Council.

~~It is acknowledged that any amendments to the land use zoning strategy for the Southern Environs of Drogheda would be premature pending the preparation of this Joint Plan. However, the Council also recognises that Drogheda is one of the principle areas for population and economic growth in the Eastern and Midland Region outside Dublin.~~

~~Taking this into account it is important that land use availability is reflective of its position in the settlement hierarchy and its anticipated role in the future growth and development of the Region, which is to act as a regional driver of economic growth. The 'Residential Phase II' designation on the A2 'New Residential' lands in the Southern Environs of Drogheda has, therefore, been removed with these A2 'New Residential' land retained and being made available for development.~~

~~This will ensure there is sufficient land available to facilitate population growth and economic development based on its designation as a Regional Growth Centre. As part of the Joint Urban Area Plan process a more detailed examination of the quantum of residential and employment zoned lands, in addition to open space and community infrastructure, will be carried out. Pending the completion of this process the Council will closely monitor development activity in the area.~~

2.8.2 Population Projections (in effect at the time the Plan was made)

The RSES includes population projections for each Strategic Planning and Local Authority area in the region for 2026 and 2031. These projections were set out in the Implementation Roadmap for the NPF and were based on a demographic and econometric model developed by the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) as part of the preparation of the NPF. A headroom factor of 25% of projected population was also incorporated into the 2026 projections to facilitate the transition towards the implementation of the growth strategy set out in the NPF.

	Census 2011	Census 2016	Projected population 2026	Projected population 2031
Eastern Strategic Planning Area	653,984	689,000	759,000-777,000	789,000-813,500
Eastern and Midland Region	2,209,463	2,328,517	2,566,500-2,619,000	2,668,000-2,740,500
Meath	184,135	195,044	216,000-221,000	225,500-231,500

Table 2.6: Regional and County population projections for 2026 and 2031

The Implementation Roadmap also recognises that there are parts of the country where projected population growth is at or above the national average. Meath is included in this list of counties. Provision is made for the allocation of an additional 25% headroom up to 2026 in these counties.

There is no allowance for this additional 25% headroom to be applied to the 2031 projection.

The population figures from Census 2016 indicate that population growth in Meath was broadly in line with that projected in the RPGs with the county experiencing a 5.9% increase in population over the five-year period 2011-2016. The population of Meath is growing at a slightly faster rate than both the region as a whole and the Eastern Strategic Planning Area where the increase was 5.4% and 5.3% during the same period.

Further analysis of the population figures for Census 2016 reveals that Meath and Fingal were the only Local Authority Areas that met the 2016 population targets set out in the RPGs.

Taking account of the recent pattern of population growth in Meath it would be prudent to utilise this additional headroom available in order to provide flexibility in a scenario where population growth would be higher than that projected. This is particularly relevant when consideration is given to the level of immigration presently being experienced in comparison to that projected in the research and projections that informed the National Planning Framework. This Research Paper projected an average net-immigration of 8,000 persons per year between 2017-2021 and 12,500 persons per year from 2021 to 2040. In comparison figures published by the CSO estimate a net immigration of 34,000 persons in 2018 and 33,700 persons in 2019. These figures indicate that the country's population is increasing at a faster rate than anticipated in the NPF.[18]

Inclusive of this additional headroom, the population projection up to 2026 is as follows:

	Census 2011	Census 2016	Projected population 2026	Projected population 2031[19]
Meath	184,135	195,044	221,250-227,500	225,500-231,500

Table 2.7: Population projection for Meath to 2031 including headroom

The population projection for Meath is therefore 227,500 in 2026. The difference between the projected 2026 population for the county and the projected 2031 population is 4,000. When this growth is divided across the five-year period, it results in an annual increase of 800 people per year. This results in the population projection for Meath being 228,300 in 2027 (with population figures to be reviewed on the publication of the 2022 census). The consequent additional population for 2027 has been directed into Navan as this reflects the County Town and Key Town status of this settlement.

Taking account of the fact that the RSES is a 12-year strategy, the NPF Implementation Roadmap also included population projections for 2031. The RSES refers to the period 2026-2031 as the medium term and provides a population projection of between 225,500 and 231,500 for Meath by 2031. This figure does not, however take account of the additional 25% headroom allocated up to 2026.

2.8.2.1 Revised Population Projections (2025)

The National Planning Framework – First Revision (2025) provides revised national, regional and city level population projections to 2040 based on demographic and econometric modelling undertaken by the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI). The updated projection is that the population of Ireland will increase to approximately 5.7 million people by 2030 and to 6.1 million people by 2040. The baseline population projections for Meath are approximately 249,000 by 2032 and 267,900 by 2040.

2.8.3 Analysis of existing and projected growth rates (at the time the Plan was made)

There was a rapid growth in population in Meath between 2006-11 when the population increased by 13%. During the following 5-year period (2011-16) a more moderate increase of 5.9% was recorded. This growth was

reflective of the prevailing economic circumstances at the time whereby the national economy was performing strongly up to 2008, following which there was a curtailment of growth due to the global recession. Over the 10-year period between 2006-16 the total population increase was 20%. This equated to an annual average population increase of 3,221 persons.

Meath	Population increase 2006-16	Average annual increase 2006-16	Projected increase 2016-27	Projected annual average increase 2016-27
	32,206	3,221	33,256	3,023

Table 2.8: Population growth in Meath 2006-2027

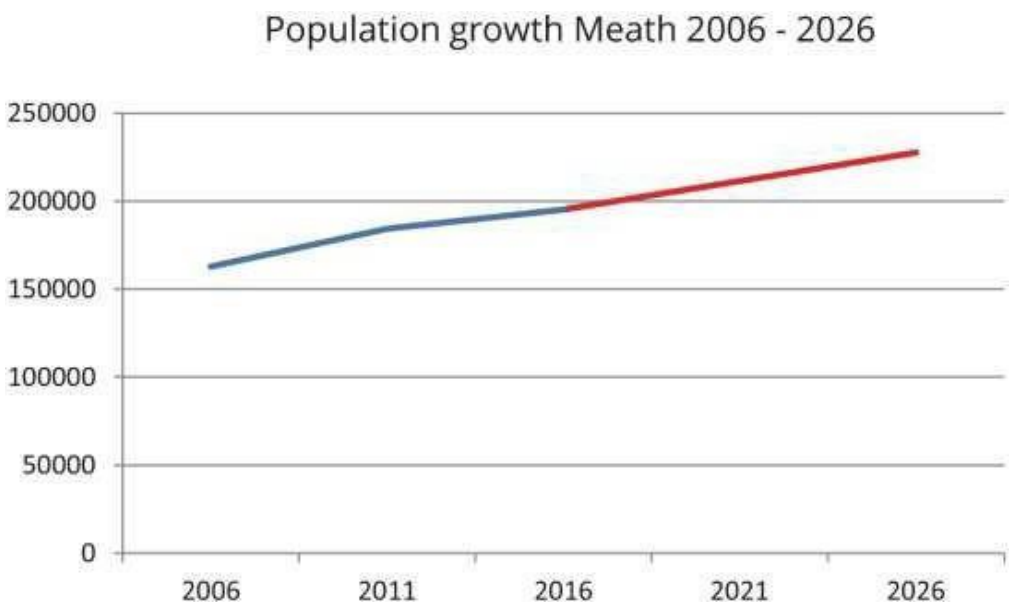

Fig 2.2: Meath Population 2006-2026

Between 2016-2027 it is projected that the population of Meath will increase by 17.3%. This equates to an annual average population increase of 3,023 persons, which is equivalent to the annual average increase between 2006-16.

The graph above sets out the projected growth in the County up to 2027 and confirms that the pattern of growth will be along a similar trajectory as that experienced between 2006-16.

According to latest Census data, County Meath had a population of 220,826 persons in 2022 which represents an increase of 25,782 persons from 2016's population of 195,044 persons. This significant growth rate of 13.2% is substantially more than the 5.9% growth experienced between the intercensal years of 2011 and 2016.

2.9 Housing

2.9.1 Introduction

The collapse of the property market in 2008 and the associated economic fallout resulted in the stagnation of household construction in the County and across the State. Housing figures published as part of census 2016 indicate that in the period 2011-16 just 952 residential units were constructed in Meath. This represented a 1.4% increase in the housing stock, with the total housing stock in the 2016 Census recorded at 70,649 units, rising from 69,697 in 2011. This slow-down in house building followed a sustained period of unprecedented growth in

the housing stock in the County. The charts below highlight the contrasting trends in the housing market in Meath over the past 20 years between 1991 to 2018.

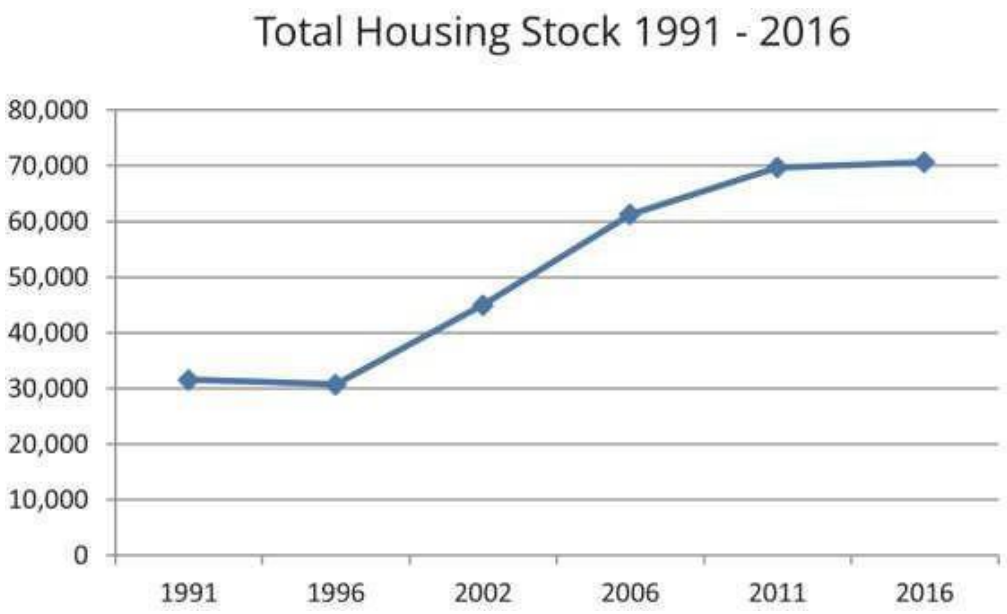

Fig 2.3: Total Housing Stock in Meath 1991-2016

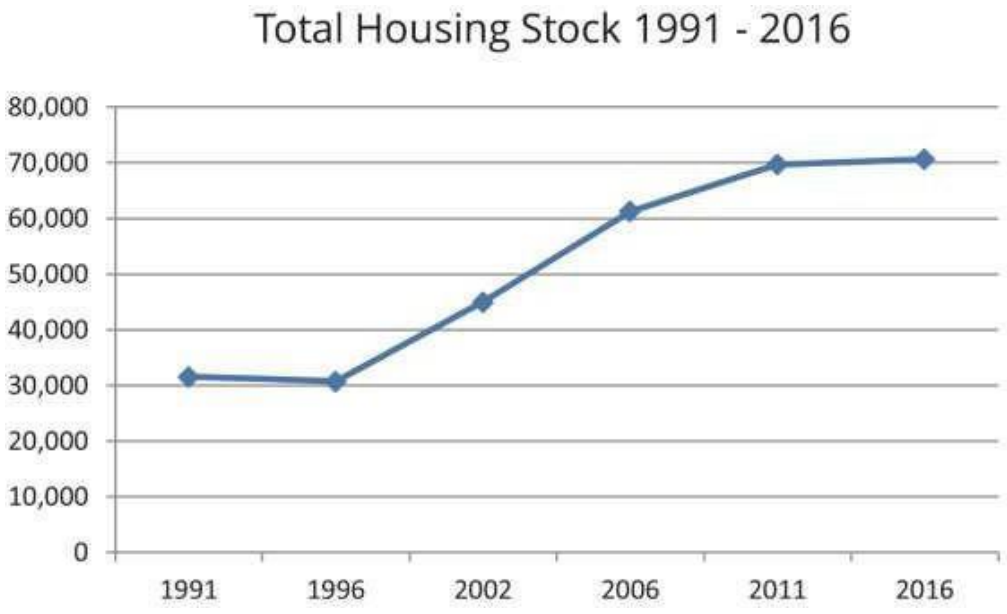

Fig 2.4: New dwelling completions Meath 1996-2018

The lack of any significant development over the past decade between 2011 and 2021 when the Plan was made, resulted in residential construction lagging behind population growth. This has placed pressure on the existing housing stock, with increased rents, house prices, and homelessness evident within the County and across the region. As the economy continues to recover the demand for additional housing in the County and wider region will continue.

The Government has responded to this challenge by publishing a number of initiatives including the following:

- Rebuilding Ireland: An Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness, published in July 2016, committed to increasing housing supply to a baseline level of 25,000 units per annum by 2020.

- Housing has been identified as one of the priority areas for investment in the National Development Plan, with a capital investment of €4.2 billion available for social housing in the period 2018-2021. This funding will support the delivery of 40,000 new social housing units.[20]
- A €200 million Local Infrastructure Housing Activation Fund (LIHAF) was announced by the Department of Housing, Planning, Community, and Local Government in 2017. This funding will provide critical infrastructure that would facilitate an accelerated delivery of housing in key development sites where there is a high demand for housing.
- In locations with above average rental increases over a consistent period Rent Pressure Zones have been designated. Annual rent increases within Rent Pressure Zones are limited to 4%. At the time of writing the entire County was designated a rent pressure zone.
- The Land Development Agency was established in 2018. This Agency will have an initial capital budget of €1.25 billion and has an objective to deliver 150,000 homes over the next 20 years. The functions of the Agency are as follows:
    a. Co-ordinating appropriate State lands for regeneration and development and opening up key sites which are not being used effectively for the delivery of housing.
    b. Driving strategic land assembly, working with both public and private sector land owners to smooth out peaks and troughs of land supply, stabilising land values and delivering increased affordability.

40% of all housing delivered by the agency must be social/affordable with 10% to be social housing and 30% to be affordable.

The immediate focus of the agency is on managing the regeneration and delivery of housing on under-utilised State-owned lands. In the longer term the Agency will assemble strategic land banks from a mix of public and private lands and make them available for residential use in a controlled manner. This represents an exciting opportunity for dynamic partnerships with Local Authorities to address housing and regeneration issues. There are a number of land parcels in State-Ownership in Meath with potential to deliver housing. The Department of Education lands in Ashbourne, (where part of this landholding was acquired by Meath County Council for the development of social housing) is an example of such lands.

This section of the Core Strategy will focus on the projected housing demand in Meath up to 2026 and will be divided into the following sub-sections:

- The housing targets for 2016 and 2022 set out in the Regional Planning Guidelines.
- Current activity in residential construction.
- Projected housing demand for the County up to 2026.

2.9.2 Revised NPF Housing Growth Requirements (2025)

As set out in the Revised NPF, updated housing targets are needed to support a consistent and plan-led approach to successfully implement the objectives of the NPF at regional and local level through city and county development plans. The NPF Implementation: Housing Growth Requirements – Guidelines for Planning Authorities sets out the housing demand scenario up to the year 2040 by identifying average annual housing targets that are needed to be delivered to accommodate projected population growth for each local authority. The targets are informed by a range of scenarios presented by the ESRI and modelled on population growth, structural housing demand and assumptions relating to unmet demand. These revised annual housing requirements, including the requirement to consider up to 50% headroom, for the county are set out in Tables 2.2 and 2.3 above.

When the revised housing targets are applied to County Meath for the years 2025, 2026 and 2027 (up to the end of the current plan period) a housing target of 8,826 units is required to be delivered. This increases to 13,239 units when the 50% headroom rate is applied.

2.9.3 Monitoring of Population Growth and Housing Growth in the County

Section 10.3 of the Development Plan Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2022, and Section 4 of the NPF Implementation: Housing Growth Requirements Guidelines require monitoring of the Core Strategy for the county to effectively measure the delivery of housing against the housing targets. This monitoring must be carried out annually and include a breakdown of the following indicators:

Indicator	
Residential	
1.	New home completions (including through refurbishment/conversions)
2.	New home completions per NPO 3 *(see below)*
3.	Planning permissions granted for residential development with: (i) A breakdown of 1, 2, 3 and 4+ units permitted and (ii) A breakdown per Tier 1 and Tier 2 lands
4.	Breakdown by relevant rural area type of rural housing: (i) Planning Applications lodged (ii) Breakdown in decisions (iii) New home completions

To address this requirement, a Residential Tracking Monitoring System for County Meath was established as a key quantitative data source to analyse and report residential planning and construction activity. This internal dataset is informed by Central Statistic Office (CSO) data on population and employment figures, internal housing completions records and Building Control Management System data.

A review of internal planning permission data and 2022 census data indicates that market and infrastructural constraints has restricted the delivery of housing across the county. 2022 census data for the county shows that the total housing stock grew from 70,649 to 78,759 between 2016-2022. This indicates an average increase of 1,352 units annually since 2016. While internal monitoring reflects an increase in construction in more recent years, this data also indicates a shortfall of an average of 528 residential units annually on the previous target of 1,880 units per annum up to 2027 for County Meath.

In accordance with the NPF Implementation Housing Growth Requirements Guidelines it is now a target of the County Development Plan to deliver 2,942 units per annum for the remainder of the plan period. This target increases to 4,413 when the 50% headroom is factored into the calculations as required by Policy and Objective 2 of the Guidelines.

Consequently, careful monitoring must be carried out for both permissions granted, units delivered, infrastructural or other impediments to ensure the likelihood of housing delivery is considered in the context of the various obstacles. In accordance with the Development Plan Guidelines, the anticipated rate of housing delivery and the likelihood of expiring permissions commencing must also be factored into the various considerations that form part of the successful delivery of the Core Strategy. The proposed phasing of larger residential developments must also be considered.

Notwithstanding that the county has zoned a sufficient amount of land to accommodate the household allocation up to 2027, regard must be had to the historical trends for housing delivery and the significant complexities that exist in delivering housing including issues such as economic viability, site assembly and site ownership, funding, timescales for delivering the necessary physical infrastructure and the nature of speculative land management that may render certain lands unavailable within the lifetime of the plan. Accordingly, where lands cannot be bought forward for development within the Core Strategy period, a degree of flexibility in the distribution of the housing and population targets, in line with national and regional policy, is required to facilitate an adequate supply of housing to meet demand in the county. This may include allowing 'additional provision' of lands to provide some degree of competition and choice in the residential development land market.

Where such flexibility is awarded, an evidence-based assessment will be carried out that will consider active and expiring planning permissions, units delivered, the function of the settlement and the existing and planned infrastructural, employment and community services available to the settlement (the Asset-Based Approach). The focus and target must however be based on housing delivery as opposed to meeting targets.

In recognition of climate change mitigation and adaptation measures, self-sustaining settlements with existing or planned high quality transport services must also be recognised for their potential to contribute to national objectives to transition to a climate resilient and low carbon society. Recognition of high-quality transport settlements also accords with RPO 8.1 of the RSES which states "The integration of transport and land use planning in the region shall be consistent with the guiding principles expressed in the transport strategy of the RSES'.

Active Land Management measures undertaken by the Council such as the Residential Zoned Land Tax will also support the delivery of housing in the county and ensure compliance with National and Regional Planning Policy.

2.9.4 Household growth and the RSES

The RSES acknowledges the need to increase the delivery of housing across the country and projects that at least half of all new homes to be built nationally up to 2040 will be required in the Eastern and Midland Region.[23]

The RSES is a much broader strategy than the RPGs in that it is less specific at a County and settlement level with regard to household growth. No household allocation or projected occupancy rates have been provided at County/Local Authority level with the document focusing primarily on population growth.

The Strategy builds on the policy of delivering more compact and consolidated growth established in the RPGs by including an objective requiring that 30% of all new homes will be within the existing built-up area of settlements.[24]

The absence of any household projections or occupancy rates presents a challenge in preparing an evidence-based strategy. This is particularly pertinent given the 'pent up' demand for housing in the County following a prolonged period of undersupply. The RSES indicates that the updated Development Plan Guidelines to be published by the DHPLG will provide guidance with regard to future household provision. These Guidelines were not published at the time of writing and consequently the calculation/projection of future household requirements is based on the interpretation of existing available data in the absence of said national guidance.

In addition to the Development Plan Guidelines reference is also made to the preparation of Housing Need Demand Assessments (HNDA) in the RSES. The requirement to prepare a HNDA stems from National Policy Objective 37 in the NPF.[25] A HNDA estimates the number of additional housing units required to meet existing and future demand. Its purpose is to provide an evidence-based rationale for housing policy and allow Local Authorities take a strategic approach to housing need and demand across all tenures. In the absence of the

publication of any guidance documents and associated data and supporting material regarding the preparation of a HNDA it is not considered appropriate or practicable to prepare a HNDA at this time. In the interim period the Housing Strategy will continue to inform Housing Policy in the County.

2.9.5 Projecting Housing Demand up to 2027

As previously indicated, the NPF Implementation: Housing Growth Requirements Guidelines set revised annual housing targets for each local authority to be delivered in order to accommodate projected population growth. Appendix 2 of the Guidelines sets an annual housing target of 2,942 units for County Meath which increases to 4,413 units per annum when the 50% headroom rate is applied to the projections.

2.9.6 Securing Compact Growth

One of the underlying principles of the growth strategy in the NPF and RSES is securing more compact development. This is a continuation of the policy approach set out in the National Spatial Strategy and the Regional Planning Guidelines where there was a requirement for a sequential approach to be taken to the delivery of housing with priority given to the regeneration of infill/brownfield sites.

There is a target in the NPF and RSES to deliver at least 30% of all new homes in towns outside of the cities to be located 'within and close to the existing built-up area' of settlements.[27]

This Plan recognises the social and economic benefits of the redevelopment of brownfield lands, particularly in relation to urban regeneration, and will continue to support the delivery of compact growth and the regeneration of under-utilised sites in towns and villages throughout the County.

An analysis of the potential capacity of infill and brownfield lands zoned for residential, town centre, or mixed-use developments in all settlements indicates that approximately 6,272 units could be delivered on these lands. This equates to 31% of the household allocation for the County. The development of these lands will make an important contribution to the creation of more sustainable communities in the County and will support the implementation of the national and regional policy objectives of creating more compact settlements.

	Potential capacity of lands
Brownfield/Infill[28]	6,272
Greenfield	14,309

Table 2.11: Brownfield and Infill development targets

2.10 Population and Household Distribution

The distribution of future population and household growth in this Plan is based on the key principles of the NPF and RSES of delivering more compact growth, improving the alignment of population and employment growth, and concentrating growth in the large urban centres that have a comprehensive range of services and public transport provision with the capacity to support growth.

Development therefore will be primarily concentrated in the Metropolitan Area (Dunboyne and Maynooth), the Regional Growth Centre of Drogheda and the Key Town of Navan, with more sustainable localised growth to take place in the remaining identified growth settlements.

The growth strategy of this Plan is also closely aligned with the Meath Economic Development Strategy 2014-2022, which supports the consolidation of development in the larger settlements in order to facilitate the economic growth of the County and broaden its employment base thereby reversing the continuing trend of outbound commuting to Dublin.

The distribution of future population and housing growth in the County has taken the following into account:

- Compliance with the RSES.
- The settlement hierarchy for the County as detailed in Table 2.3, which advocates an emphasis on:
  a. Dunboyne and Maynooth as centres within the Dublin Metropolitan area with capacity to deliver sustainable "live work" communities.
  b. Promoting sustainable growth in Drogheda as a designated Regional Growth Centre,
  c. Supporting employment and residential growth in Navan as the County's designated Key Town.
- The need to address employment creation in existing urban areas which have experienced substantial levels of residential growth to address significant outbound commuting.
- Climate Change and sustainability, particularly the availability of public transport.
- In small towns and villages accommodating local growth at a scale appropriate to the settlement size and function.
- In rural nodes and the open countryside accommodating locally generated housing needs.
- The delivery of Phase II of the Dublin-Navan Rail line
- The availability of social and physical infrastructure.

As mandated by the NPF and RSES, the growth strategy for the County will focus less on 'targets' and 'numbers' and more on identifying settlements that have the capacity and greatest potential for growth on a sustainable platform. In addition, there will be greater co-ordination between land use zoning and infrastructure availability through the implementation of the 'Tiered Approach to Land Use Zoning' set out in the NPF.[29] The development and implementation of this 'Tiered Land Use Zoning' will require a close working relationship with various agencies including Irish Water, Transport Infrastructure Ireland, and the National Transport Authority, in identifying any deficits in infrastructure and the availability of funding to carry out the necessary investments and upgrades.

The delivery of housing will be supported through the implementation of the Active Land Management Strategy for the County in addition to the promotion and identification of infill and brownfield sites for redevelopment and strategically located green field sites that would support the principles of consolidated growth.

2.10.1 Focus of Growth in the Metropolitan Area

The primary focus of future growth in the Metropolitan Area of Meath will be in Dunboyne[30] and Maynooth. Dunboyne is located along the North-West Strategic Residential and Employment Corridor as set out in the Dublin Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP). It is a strategically located multi-modal settlement that has benefitted from substantial investment in road and rail infrastructure over the last decade.

The strategic location of the town makes it one of the most important settlements in the County for economic growth. This has been endorsed through high profile developments of significant FDI employment in the area by Facebook, Takeda and Aramark (Avoca). It is an objective of this Plan to build on these recent investments and continue to attract economic investment to the town.

The Dublin MASP has identified the potential for the Strategic Development Areas in Dunboyne to deliver significant residential and economic/employment generating development. It is a vision of this Plan that the development of these lands will create a sustainable "live-work" community in Dunboyne where there are jobs close to where people live and people can enjoy a balanced and healthy lifestyle in an attractive environment.

Maynooth is identified as a Key Town in the Metropolitan area in the RSES. The RSES recognises the northern environs of Maynooth, which are located in Meath, as an important location for economic and residential development that will support the future development of the town and the delivery of the Maynooth Outer Relief Road, which is a key piece of infrastructure in the sustainable growth of the town. A Joint Local Area Plan for Maynooth is to be prepared by Meath and Kildare County Councils. This Plan will provide a co-ordinated framework for the future development of Maynooth.

The RSES includes provision for the redistribution of up to 20% of the population growth targeted for Dublin City and Suburbs to the Metropolitan Key Towns of Bray, Maynooth, and Swords.[31] These allocations will be determined by the MASP Steering Group comprising of representatives of the Metropolitan Local Authorities, independent of the projection provided for each County in the NPF Implementation Roadmap. At the time of writing this Group had not been established, however in order to factor a potential allocation for Maynooth Environs into this Plan, a preliminary population allocation of 1,000 persons has been allocated to the area. This will be subject to review and change when the MASP Steering Group has been established and is fully operational.

2.10.2 Focus of Growth in the Core Area

As part of the policy of promoting consolidation and compact growth, future growth in the Core Area will be concentrated in the higher tier settlements in the hierarchy. Drogheda has been identified as a Regional Growth Centre in the RSES, with the Southern Environs identified as having an integral role in the development of Drogheda as a Regional Growth Centre, with these lands having the capacity to deliver residential and economic development in strategic locations.

The designated Key Town of Navan is the largest settlement and primary growth centre in the County. A key corporate priority for the Council over the plan period is to secure the delivery of the rail to Navan. This Plan will continue to support the economic development of the town which will strengthen its position as a centre of regional enterprise and employment. Alongside the economic growth of the town, residential lands will be released for development which will increase the critical mass of the population required to support the delivery of a rail line to the town.

In the Self-Sustaining Growth Towns of Ashbourne, Kells, Trim, Dunboyne and Dunshaughlin there will be a focus on consolidation and the provision of employment opportunities in tandem with population growth in order to allow these centres to become more self-sufficient. The availability of infrastructural services and community infrastructure will also be an important factor in determining the quantum of new housing and population growth that these settlements could absorb.

The focus of growth in the Self-Sustaining Towns of Laytown-Bettystown-Mornington-Donacarney, Ratoath, Enfield, Kilcock, Duleek and Stamullen will be on attracting employment and investment in services alongside a limited population growth and a more balanced delivery of housing. As a core economic policy response which will allow “economic catch-up” as envisaged in the RSES, strategic employment zones have been identified in a number of these towns.

The remaining allocation will be directed to the Small Towns, Villages, Rural Nodes, and Open Countryside. Any growth in these centres will primarily be locally based with a shift away from commuter led development with greater emphasis on the creation of sustainable communities whereby the expansion of the settlements is

proportionate to the availability of services. Development in rural nodes will be assessed on a case by case basis while also ensuring compliance with the Core Strategy.

2.10.3 Rural Areas

The NPF and RSES recognise the economic and social contribution that rural areas make at a local, national, and regional level in providing employment, access to high-quality amenity areas, delivering high-quality agricultural produce, and providing raw materials and aggregates used in the construction of our urban centres. The challenges facing these areas, which include urban generated pressures, an ageing population, connectivity, and access to infrastructure and new technologies are also recognised.

In recognition of these challenges national and regional policy has placed an emphasis on creating more sustainable rural communities by focusing on the regeneration of rural towns and villages particularly in locations that have experienced decline. Support is also provided for the development of a 'New Homes in Small Towns and Villages' initiative to provide services and serviced sites in rural settlements.[32]

The NPF and RSES make a distinction between rural areas under urban influence i.e. within the commuter catchment of cities and large towns and centres of employment, and rural areas outside these catchments.[33] There is a requirement in the RSES for Local Authorities to identify areas of strong urban influence in the hinterlands of settlements on this basis.[34] This Plan supports the strengthening of rural communities and the sustainable development of rural areas in accordance with national and regional policy. Full details of the Rural Development Strategy are set out in Chapter 9 of this Plan.

2.10.4 Distribution of Population and Households in the County

The Core Strategy should be read in conjunction with the supplementary table below to reflect revised land use zonings to accommodate updated national housing targets. The housing allocation for the county for the Plan period has been adjusted in accordance with the methodology set out in the Section 28 Guidelines (2025). Settlement-level distribution reflects the principles of compact growth, infrastructure capacity, sequential consolidation and sustainable transport accessibility.

Table 2.12, the 'Core Strategy Table', sets out the population projections and household allocation for each settlement up to 2027. This table provides details of the most recent population, population projections, the development activity in each settlement between 2016-2019, the number of unbuilt permitted units, and the household allocation for each settlement between 2020-2027.

The multi-faceted nature of settlement growth and the various socio-economic factors associated with the growth of towns and villages makes it extremely challenging to provide an exact figure for a population to grow to at a specific time. Rather than focusing on the population projection as a 'target' the figures provided in Table 2.12 should be regarded as a guide as to the level of growth anticipated in that settlement during the plan period. The emphasis will instead be on the delivery of the objectives of the NPF and RSES, and in particular the creation of balanced, sustainable growth.

It is acknowledged that due to various circumstances there are some settlements that may grow at a rate faster than anticipated and others which will develop at a slower rate. As part of the monitoring and implementation process of this Plan the Council will analyse settlement growth within the County, particularly following the publication of data from the next census. This exercise will form a significant element of the formal 2-year statutory review.

As part of the strategy of securing compact growth, an analysis of the potential number of units that could be delivered in the built-up area of each settlement was carried out. This figure is set out in column H of the table.

This includes lands zoned as 'New Residential', 'Existing Residential', Mixed-Use', or 'Town Centre' uses. The quantum of lands zoned 'New Residential' in each settlement has also been provided.

The total adopted Development Plan housing target for the years 2022-2024 plus the revised housing target including 50% headroom for the years 2025-2027 is 18,879. Approximately 7,678 homes were built between 2021-2025 (excluding Q4 of 2025) which leaves a requirement of 11,201 homes to be delivered to 2027.

Volume 2 of this Plan includes a Written Statement and zoning map for each settlement in the County. These Written Statements set out the strategy as to how the core strategy will be implemented in each of these settlements.[35] Chapter 9 sets out the relevant policies and objectives in respect of residential development in rural nodes and the open countryside.

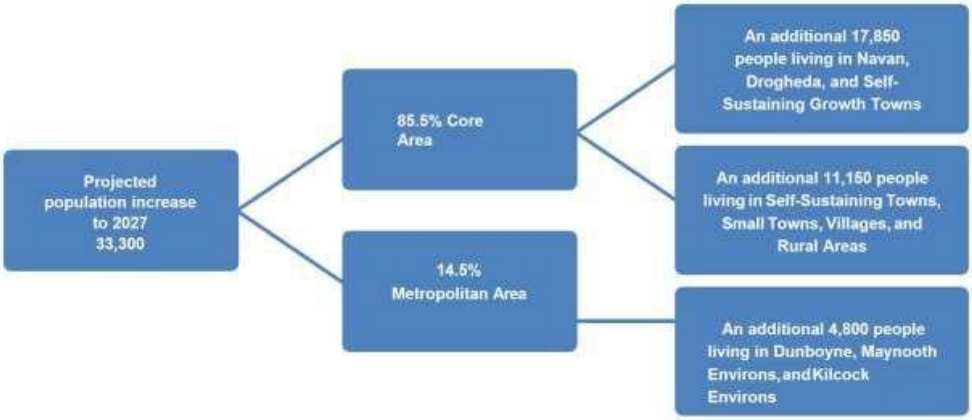

Fig 2.6: Distribution of Population in the County to 2027

It is noteworthy that the yield from mixed-use developments over the 2013-2019 plan period is relatively small at approximately 128 units. It is not anticipated that the quantum of lands zoned mixed-use as part of the Draft Plan will lead to a significantly higher yield of housing outside of that provided for in Table 2.12. An assessment of the existing residential lands in the 2013-2019 plan period resulted in a yield from the existing residential lands of c. 949 units. It is considered that the delivery of residential units on lands zoned existing residential will be low as development will be restricted to backlands and gap sites in existing residential areas. The expected number of units to be delivered has been accounted for as part of Table 2.12 and is consistent with the figures above.

Column A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K
Settlement	**Population 2016**	**Projected population increase to 2027**	**Projected population 2027**	**Approximate households completed 2016-2019**	**Extant units not yet built**	**Household allocation 2020-2027**[36]	**Potential units to be delivered on infill/brownfield lands**[37]	**Quantum of land zoned for residential use (ha)**	**Quantum of land zoned for existing residential use (ha)**	**Quantum of land zoned for mix of uses (ha)**
Regional Growth Centre										
Drogheda*	6,527	3,300	9,827	113	572	1,631	0	~~178.70~~ 57.09	118.59	5.00
Key Town										
Navan*	30,173	5,900	36,073	781	924	3,204	1,936	79.84[38]	570.83	96.03
Maynooth	0	1,000[39]	1,000	0	0	500	0	21.36	0.19	0
Self-Sustaining Growth Town										
Dunboyne*	7,272	3,300	10,572	48	119	2,002	1,180	72.89	116.97	26.65
Ashbourne	12,679	3,200	15,879	632	209	1,349	351	31.48	218.27	18.62
Trim	9,194	2,250	11,444	31	437	1,333	812	41.92	177.94	36.65
Kells	6,135	1,000	7,135	48	391	452	400	19.67	135.20	24.07
Dunshaughlin*	4,035	2,200	6,235	470	1,156[40]	1,003	82	33.09	110.33	15.26
Self-Sustaining Towns										
Bettystown-Laytown-Mornington East*	11,872	1,500	13,372	689	518	746[41]	264	19.59	288.6	23.47
Ratoath	9,533	1,500	11,033	175	72	803	101	27.37	187.12	14.34
Duleek*	4,219	500	4,719	36	85	336	250	10.9	96.33	6.14
Enfield*	3,239	1,000	4,239	45	135	474	84	16.13	49.27	16.64
Stamullen*	3,361	500	3,861	1	215	290	58	11.8	56.07	8.72

Column A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K
Settlement	**Population 2016**	**Projected population increase to 2027**	**Projected population 2027**	**Approximate households completed 2016-2019**	**Extant units not yet built**	**Household allocation 2020-2027**[36]	**Potential units to be delivered on infill/brownfield lands**[37]	**Quantum of land zoned for residential use (ha)**	**Quantum of land zoned for existing residential use (ha)**	**Quantum of land zoned for mix of uses (ha)**
Kilcock*	93	500	593	100	180	180	0	8.79	15.5	0
Small Towns										
Athboy*	2,445	350	2,795	34	127	200	100	16.37	56.6	15.12
Oldcastle	1,383	350	1,733	16	0	166	110	9.75	34.51	13.23
Ballivor	1,809	100	1,909	0	0	40	40	1.93	39.63	7.09
Longwood	1,581	200	1,781	16	68	104	20	1.24	28.81	4.89
Villages	10,540	2,025	12,565	178	318	840	484	51.21	280.18	53.34
Rural nodes and open countryside*	68,948	3,125	72,079	300	c.300	1,336	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Total	195,044	33,800	228,800	3,713	5,820	16,958	6,272	~~654.03~~ 532.42	2,580.93	378.71

Table 2.12: Core Strategy Table, Population and Household distribution to 2027

**Additional Zoning Quantum to accommodate the revised housing growth requirements as set out in the NPF Housing Growth Requirements: Implementation Guidelines (2025) is included in Table 2.12B Core Strategy Supplementary Table*

A review of the Residential monitoring data that informed Table 2.12: Core Strategy Table, on Population and Household distribution to 2027 has identified an issue in the existing residential planning permissions in the County. While it was previously understood that the existing units not yet built in the county comprised 5,820 units, subsequent commencement and completion data as part of the Two-Year Review of the County Development Plan identified that 781 of these units were completed and/or expired in 2019 and therefore were outside of the household allocation period of 2020 - 2027. This situation occurred as a result of delays in the preparation and adoption of the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027 which was originally planned for adoption in 2019 but incurred significant delays pending the publication of the National Planning Framework in 2018, Regional and Economic Spatial Strategy in 2019 and the Covid pandemic in 2020.

In Variation No. 1, it is now proposed to re-allocate these units to Settlements in Tier 3 – 4 in accordance with the County Development Plan growth and settlement strategy and to ensure full utilisation of existing infrastructure and resources in the County. This data coupled with the fact that a number of settlements are reaching or have reached their targeted household allocation demonstrates the need for incorporating flexibility into the Core Strategy to ensure appropriate housing delivery against the backdrop of the current housing crisis and in line with the Government Housing Strategy, Housing for All (2021).

Settlement	Additional Household Allocation 2020-2027
Settlement Tiers 3-4	781*

***Units recorded as extant permissions that were completed or expired prior to 2020**

Table 2.12B – Core Strategy Supplementary Table outlining the lands to be brought forward as part of this variation to accommodate revised housing growth requirements as set out in the NPF Housing Growth Requirements: Implementation Guidelines (2025). For the purposes of calculating the projected number of units that may be achieved on the newly zoned A2 New Residential lands, a net development area of 80% of the site area was used to account for unknown site constraints and the need to provide non-residential space as part of future development proposals. It should be noted that the potential number of units listed in the table per settlement are indicative only and should not be viewed as a de-facto cap or unit target for the lands.

Settlement (Column A)	Area of Adjusted Lands (ha) (B)	Previous Land Use Zoning (C)	Revised Land Use Zoning (D)	Area of Additional A2 – New Residential Zoned Lands (E)	Density (dph) (F)	Potential No. of Units (G)
Regional Growth Centre						
Drogheda	11.03	White Lands	A2 – New Residential	20.66	30-50	661
Key Town						
Navan	26.37	A2 Phasing – Post 2027	A2 – New Residential	26.37	50	1,164
Self-Sustaining Growth Town						
Dunboyne	8.56	A2 Phasing – Post 2027	A2 – New Residential	8.56	45	308
Dunshaughlin	5.89	A2 Phasing – Post 2027	A2 – New Residential	5.89	35	165

Settlement (Column A)	Area of Adjusted Lands (ha) (B)	Previous Land Use Zoning (C)	Revised Land Use Zoning (D)	Area of Additional A2 – New Residential Zoned Lands (E)	Density (dph) (F)	Potential No. of Units (G)
Self-Sustaining Towns						
Bettystown-Laytown-Mornington – Donacarney	9.7 5 3	White Lands RA – Rural Area RA – Rural Area	A2 – New Residential A2 – New Residential G1 – Community Infrastructure	14.7	35	503
Duleek *	3.32 3.24	RA – Rural Area A2 – New Residential	A2 – New Residential	0.06	30	80 N/A
** Note: Zoning alterations to Duleek result in net increase of 0.06ha of A2 lands*						
Enfield	3.18	A2 Phasing – Post 2027	A2 – New Residential	4.29	35	120
Stamullen	5.11	RA – Rural Area	A2 – New Residential	5.11	35	143
Kilcock	6.81	A2 Phasing – Post 2027	A2 – New Residential	6.81	35	190
Small Town						
Athboy **	3.63 3.81	RA – Rural A2 – New Residential	A2 – New Residential G1 – Community Infrastructure	-0.81	30	90
*** Note: Zoning alterations to Athboy results in a net loss of 0.81ha of A2 lands*						
Carlanstown	0.8	RA – Rural Area	A2 – New Residential	0.8	30	20
Total	99.45			92.44		3,444

Table 2.12B: Core Strategy Supplementary Table

2.10.5 Implementation of Revised Housing Targets

As outlined earlier, a comprehensive multi-staged assessment was undertaken to determine the extent of remaining lands zoned for residential use and their ability to accommodate the revised housing targets for the County as set out in Appendix 1 of the NPF Implementation: Housing Growth Requirements Guidelines. The assessment also identified the quantum of additional lands that would be required to be zoned as part of this variation to increase the likelihood of delivering the revised targets. This included incorporating the additional provision of up to 50% above the baseline growth requirement to address potential inactivation of zoned lands.

Table 12.2B above, which should be read in conjunction with the Core Strategy Table 12.2, sets out the location and quantum of additional A2 zoned lands that are proposed to be brought forward under Variation 5. When considered collectively these lands amount to approximately 92.44ha of additional A2 – New Residential zoned

lands which can deliver up to approximately 3,444 units. These additional lands, together with exiting and serviced undeveloped residential lands can achieve the revised housing targets for the county.

As shown in the Table below, the revised housing target for the County up to 2027 is 18,879 which includes the 50% headroom provision above the baseline requirement as set out in Appendix 1 of the NPF Implementation Guidelines. A total of 7,678 homes have been constructed since the Plan was adopted which results in an outstanding requirement of 11,201 homes to be delivered up to 2027 (including the 50% headroom). The existing A2 zoned lands have a capacity to accommodate approximately 6,020 no. additional homes excluding extant permissions. This increases to 11,478 when consented residential zoned lands are factored into consideration. When a delivery rate of 70% is applied to the extant permissions, a final shortfall of 1,360 units is remaining. The proposed rezoned lands have the capacity to accommodate approximately 3,444 units which will contribute to maintaining a robust supply of residential zoned lands for development and will actively address existing zoned lands that are not being brought forward for development.

New Housing Requirement 2025 – 2027 (including 50% headroom)	Total Adopted CDP Housing Target (2022, 2023, 2024) plus Revised Target incl. headroom 2025, 2026, 2027	Homes Built 2021-2025	Requirement (including 50% headroom) to 2027 minus Delivery	Potential Capacity of Remaining Residential Zoned Lands to 2027 (excluding extant permissions)	Potential Capacity of Permitted Residential Zoned Lands	Total Shortfall	Potential Capacity of Land Proposed to be Rezoned as part of Variation 5
13,239	18,879 (5,640+13,239)	7,678 (includes completions Q1-Q3 2025)	11,201 (18,879–7,678)	221.67ha (6020 units)	228.48ha (3,821 units**) ** assumed 70% delivery rate	1,360 (11,201-6,020-3,821)	3,444

Table 2.12C: Core Strategy Summary Table

Settlement	Projected population increase to 2027	% of total population growth	Approximate households completed 2016-2019	Household allocation 2020-2027[42]	Quantum of land zoned for residential use (ha)
Regional Growth Centre	3,300	9.76%	113	1,631	178.70
Key Towns	6,900	20.41%	781	3,704	102.92
Self-Sustaining Growth Towns	11,950	35.36%	1,278	6,139	199.05
Self-Sustaining Towns	5,500	16.27%	910	2,829	94.58
Small Towns	1,000	2.96%	86	510	29.29
	5,150	15.24%	494	2,176	51.21

Settlement	Projected population increase to 2027	% of total population growth	Approximate households completed 2016-2019	Household allocation 2020-2027[42]	Quantum of land zoned for residential use (ha)
Villages, Rural Nodes, and Open Countryside					

Table 2.13: Summary of population and household distribution in each settlement category

The strategic policy mechanisms by which the additional growth set out in the Guidelines will be facilitated are as follows:

- The release and rezoning of specific lands previously zoned for residential development post 2027 to A2 – New Residential.
- The rezoning of specific lands previously zoned RA – Rural Area and Whitelands to A2 – New Residential
- The allocation of additional housing targets to each of the settlements where lands are proposed to be rezoned to A2 – New Residential as part of this variation
- The identification of lands that were previously de-zoned and deemed suitable to accommodate additional growth to be brought forward as part of the County Development Plan review process.

Furthermore, and having regard to Section 86(7) of the Planning and Development Act 2024 (as amended), once commenced, the Planning Authority may consider granting planning permission for housing developments that are located on appropriately zoned lands and where the proposed development(s) would result in an exceedance of the housing targets for that settlement subject to compliance with the relevant policies and objectives pertaining to that settlement.

2.11 Economic Development

The Council set out an ambitious framework for economic development in the County in the Economic Development Strategy for Meath 2014-22.[43] The overriding objective of this Strategy is to facilitate more jobs within the County thereby improving the jobs ratio and reducing the volume of outbound commuting. This Plan will continue the implementation of this Strategy and will seek to build on the successes achieved to date. The direction and underlying principles of this Core Strategy are consistent with the national and regional economic policy set out in the NPF and RSES in that it advocates that future growth should take place on a sustainable platform that concentrates development in local and regional centres of growth that have the capacity to accommodate significant development in a consolidated urban environment.

The concept of the 'live-work' community model also emerged from the spatial implementation phase of the Strategy and will continue to be promoted as a model of best practice in place making and the creation of balanced and healthy communities. This concept is strongly endorsed in both the NPF and the RSES.

The 5 strategic centres of employment were identified for growth in the Economic Strategy are Navan, South Drogheda, Dunboyne North, Ashbourne, and Kells. Having regard to the need to generate employment opportunities in centres which have experienced high levels of population growth without commensurate employment development and high levels of outbound commuting it is proposed to identify further 7 strategic employment sites as follows: Kells, Ratoath, Dunshaughlin, Laytown, Maynooth, Navan and Enfield.

Full details of the Economy and Employment Strategy are set out in Chapter 4 of this Plan.

2.12 Retail Development

A Retail Strategy for the County has been prepared as part of this Plan. This Strategy is consistent with the Retail Hierarchy for Meath as set out in the Regional Retail Strategy for the GDA 2008-2016. It has also been informed by the DECLG Retail Planning Guidelines (2012).

The aim of this Strategy is to sustain and improve the retail competitiveness of the County, address expenditure leakage, and ensure an equitable and sustainable distribution of retail floorspace across the County. An evidence-based approach has been taken to the requirement of any additional lands for convenience or comparison floorspace and has been based on projected changes to the local population, consumer spending, and turnover potential.

Full details of the Retail Strategy are set out in Chapter 4: Economy and Employment and Appendix 4 Retail Strategy.

2.13 Climate Change

Whilst Climate Change policies and mitigation measures are set out at a National and International level Local Authorities have a central role in the implementation of these policies and in promoting behavioural and attitude change towards climate change.

A Climate Change Adaptation Strategy has been prepared for this Plan as part of the requirements of the National Climate Change Adaptation Framework (2012). This Strategy will ensure that this Plan will appropriately address adaptation to climate change.

Climate change is a cross cutting theme of the Plan, however, climate change is specifically addressed in detail as part of Chapter 10 Climate Change.

2.14 Core Strategy and SEA/AA

A Strategic Environmental Assessment and Appropriate Assessment has been prepared in tandem with the Core Strategy. The Core Strategy has had regard to both assessments with any changes/recommendations incorporated into the strategy. All subsequent land use plans arising from Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027 will be subject to full environmental assessment such as Strategic Environmental Assessment and Appropriate Assessment in compliance with existing legislation.

2.14.1 Policies

It is the policy of the Council:

CS POL 1

To promote and facilitate the development of sustainable communities in the County by monitoring and managing the level of growth in each settlement to ensure future growth is in accordance with the Core Strategy and County Settlement Hierarchy in order to deliver compact urban areas and sustainable rural communities.

2.14.2 Objectives

It is an objective of the Council:

CS OBJ 1

To secure the implementation of the Core Strategy and Settlement Strategy, in so far as practicable, by directing growth towards designated settlements, subject to the availability of infrastructure and services.

CS OBJ 2

To ensure that sufficient zoned lands are available to satisfy the housing requirements of the County in designated settlements over the lifetime of the Plan.

CS OBJ 3

To ensure the implementation of the population, housing growth and household allocation set out in the Core Strategy and Settlement Strategy, in so far as practicable. Meath County Council will monitor the number of units that are permitted and delivered as part of the implementation of this objective, in compliance with the Development Plan Guidelines 2022 and the NPF Implementation Housing Growth Requirements Guidelines 2025.

CS OBJ 3A

The 781 residential units shall only be applied to Tier 3 to 4 Settlements where there is a demonstrated demand for housing and sufficient supporting services available including access to employment, public transport, water/wastewater, commercial/retail services and social infrastructure. This will be implemented through the Development Management function, monitored by the Forward Planning Department and applicable until such time as the National Planning Framework Review is completed and adopted.

CS OBJ 4

To achieve more compact growth by promoting the development of infill and brownfield/regeneration sites and the redevelopment of underutilised land within and close to the existing built-up footprint of existing settlements in preference to edge of centre locations.

CS OBJ 5

To deliver at least 30% of all new homes in urban areas within the existing built-up footprint of settlements.

CS OBJ 6

To strengthen the social and economic structure of rural towns and villages by supporting the re-use of existing buildings and the regeneration of under-utilised buildings and lands.

CS OBJ 7

To operate an Order of Priority for the release and development of residential lands with any lands identified as being 'Post 2027' not being available for residential development during the lifetime of the subject development plan and consequently planning permission for residential dwellings will not be granted on these lands by Meath County Council.

CS OBJ 8

The existing Southern Environs of Drogheda Local Area Plan 2009 (The LAP) shall remain the statutory plan for the Southern Environs of Drogheda until such a time as it is replaced with a Joint Urban Plan for Drogheda in

conjunction with Louth County Council having regard to the requirements of the Report of the Drogheda Boundary Review Committee (February 2017), the National Planning Framework, and the Eastern and Midland Region Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy. This plan shall be read together with the County Development Plan 2021-2027. The County Development Plan 2021-2027 shall take precedence if a conflict arises between the Plans and the conflicting provision of the LAP shall cease to have effect.

CS OBJ 9

To prepare new local area plans for the following settlements within the lifetime of this Plan: Navan, Dunboyne, Ashbourne, Trim, Kells, Dunshaughlin, Ratoath, Bettystown-Laytown-Mornington East-Donacarney, Duleek, Enfield, Athboy, Oldcastle, Stamullen.

CS OBJ 10

To prepare, as a priority, a Joint Vision and Urban Area Plan for Drogheda in partnership with Louth County Council within the lifetime of this Plan in accordance with the requirements of Regional Policy Objective 4.8 of the RSES for the Eastern and Midland Region and the recommendations set out in the Report of the Drogheda Boundary Review Committee published in February 2017. As part of the preparation of this Plan, a detailed infrastructure assessment, consistent with the methodology for a Tiered Approach to Zoning under Appendix 3 of the NPF will be undertaken.

CS OBJ 11

To support the implementation of the policies and objectives set out within the Maynooth and Environs Joint Local Area Plan 2025 – 2031.

CS OBJ 12

To ensure that all settlements, in as far as practicable, develop in a self-sufficient manner with population growth occurring in tandem with the provision of physical and social infrastructure.

CS OBJ 13

Support the implementation of the National Climate Change Strategy and the National Climate Change Adaption Framework Building Resilience to Climate Change 2012 through the County Development Plan and through the preparation of a Climate Change Adaptation Plan in conjunction with all relevant stakeholders.

CS OBJ 14

To support the economic growth of Meath as set out in the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy and the Economic Development Strategy for County Meath 2014-2022.

CS OBJ 15

To continue to promote economic development of the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor.

CS OBJ 16

To support the creation of 'live work' communities, in which employment and residential accommodation are located in close proximity to each other and strategic multi-modal transport corridors, and to reduce long distance commuter trends and congestion.

CS OBJ 17

To work closely with government departments and agencies to assist in the delivery of critical infrastructure that would facilitate the economic growth of the county with particular reference to the development of the rail to Navan.

CS OBJ 18

To incorporate the relevant housing needs for 2027 into the Housing Strategy over the lifetime of the Development Plan.

CS OBJ 19

To implement an Active Land Management Strategy in relation to vacant land in settlements within County Meath and to maintain and update as required a Vacant Sites Register to ensure efficient and sustainable use of the County's land resources in accordance with the provisions of the Urban Regeneration and Housing Act 2015 as well as the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended.

CS OBJ 20

To undertake a review during the lifetime of the Plan so as to ensure compliance with Climate Change requirements as outlined in the forthcoming Updated Development Plan Guidelines for Planning Authorities as per section 10(2)(n) of the Act.

CS OBJ 21

To undertake, over the lifetime of the Plan, the measures outlined in Appendix 15 relating to the Implementation & Monitoring of the Plan.

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[1] Section 10(1A) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended)

[2] Sections 20A, 20B, and 20C of the Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2018

[3] National Policy Objective 1a and 1b of the NPF

[4] National Policy Objective 3c of the NPF

[9] A Local Economic and Community Plan is a six year strategy that sets out the objectives and actions needed to promote and support the economic and community development of a local authority area. The Meath LECP 2016-2021 is available from the following location: County Meath Local Economic and Community Plan 2016-2021

[10] Section 23 of the Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2018

[11] National Policy Objective 3b of the NPF sets a target of at least half (50%) of new homes in the City and Suburbs to be delivered in the existing built-up area.

[12] National Policy Objectives 18a and 18b in the NPF

[13] National Policy Objective 19 of the NPF and Regional Policy Objective 4.78 of the RSES

[14] Census 2016 recorded 82,346 immigrants arriving in Ireland in the year to April 2016 in comparison to 53,267 in April 2011. Population and Migration Estimates published by the CSO in August 2019 estimate the number of immigrants to the State to be 88,600 between April 2018 and April 2019

[15] Section 10(2A) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended)

[16] Section 4.3 of the RSES 'Defining a Settlement Typology'

[17] Section 4.3 of the RSES 'Taking Account of Existing Plans'

[18] See page 43 of the 'Prospects for Irish Regions and Counties' published by the ESRI and the CSO 'Population and Migration Estimates' published in August 2019

[19] The Implementation Roadmap for the NPF does not provide for an additional 25% headroom in 2031

[20] National Development Plan 2018-2027

[23] Section 9.3 RSES Housing and Regeneration

[24] Regional Policy Objective 3.2 RSES

[27] National Policy Objective 3c of the NPF and Regional Policy Objective 3.2 of the RSES

[28] This includes greenfield sites in the 'existing built-up area of settlements'

[29] Appendix 3 of the NPF

[30] This includes lands at Dunboyne North and Clonee'

[31] Section 5.7 of the MASP 'Housing Delivery'

[32] Regional Policy Objective 4.78 of the RSES

[33] The NPF defines a commuter catchment as the area from which at least 15% of the relevant settlement workforce is drawn from outside the settlement area

[34] Map 9.1, Rural Area Types Development Pressure Map, Volume 3 Book of Maps, Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027

[35] Following the adoption of this plan it is intended to prepare a Local Area Plan for each of the following settlements: Navan, Dunboyne/ Clonee, Ashbourne, Trim, Kells, East Meath, Dunshaughlin, Duleek, Enfield, Stamullen, Oldcastle, Athboy and Ratoath. A Joint Local Area Plan for Maynooth is to be prepared with Kildare, a Joint Urban Plan is to be prepared for Drogheda with Louth.

[36] This figure does not include the units completed 2016-2019. The calculation of the household allocation has factored in the 'pent up 'demand for housing which has resulted in an increase in the average household occupancy rate for existing households. As the housing market continues to normalise and supply begins to meet demand it is anticipated that the average household occupancy rate for both existing and new households will begin to decrease.

[37] This includes both greenfield and brownfield sites in the built-up area of each settlement and consists of lands zoned for town centre, mixed use, and residential development. For clarification these units have been included in the Household allocation.

[38] This does not include the 38.1ha SDZ at Clonmagadden. This SDZ will span over multiple Development Plans. Taking this into account in addition to the fact that a review of the Planning Scheme is required, the SDZ has not been included in the Household allocation for Navan.

[39] Half of this population allocation (500 persons) is taken from the MASP allocation. This is provided for in section 5.7 of the Dublin MASP 'Housing Delivery'. This is a preliminary figure, with the final figure to be agreed with the MASP Implementation Group. At the time of writing the MASP Implementation Group had not been established.

[40] Under a Strategic Housing Development application permission was granted for 913 units. This is a 10 year permission where it is envisaged the lands will be developed across multiple Development Plans . Taking this into account 600 (two-thirds) of the 913 units have been included in the Household allocation during this Development Plan.

[41] Includes provision for 30 no. social housing units

[42] Does not include the units completed 2016-2019

[43] Economic Development Strategy for Meath 2014-2022

3.1 Introduction

This Chapter seeks to transpose the high-level objectives of this Plan as detailed in the Core Strategy into a more local context by setting out a strategy for the future direction of settlement growth in the County. It will identify the settlements where growth will be prioritised and will inform infrastructure investment decisions required to facilitate this growth.

The settlement structure in Meath consists of different categories of settlements ranging from small rural villages to large urban towns. These settlements have an important function at a local, county, and regional level, dependent on their position in the settlement hierarchy; in supporting jobs, providing services and a mix of housing options, and acting as a focal point for community networks and activities.

This Plan recognises the importance of creating a strong network of settlements where there are a broad range of services, amenities and job opportunities as this will contribute to a more balanced and healthy quality of life for our communities.

A settlement hierarchy for the County has been developed to take account of the role and function of each settlement and is positively aligned to the hierarchical format set out in the RSES. It should be noted that, as of March 2026, there has been no update to the RSES and as such the settlement hierarchy remains unchanged since the adoption of the Plan. It is anticipated that the review of the RSES will commence in Q2 of 2026 on the back of the commencement of Part 3, Chapter 4 of the Planning and Development Act 2024 (as amended). Once updated, Meath County Council will consider the impacts of the revised RSES on the Development Plan and vary accordingly (if required).

The second part of this chapter outlines the housing policy in the County over the lifetime of the Plan, which focuses on the creation of sustainable communities and takes into account the key findings of the Housing Strategy and current Government policy in relation to the delivery of housing in the country.

3.2 Settlement and Housing Strategy Vision

To facilitate the sustainable growth of the towns and villages throughout the County by promoting consolidation and compact development in an attractive setting that provides a suitable mix of housing and supporting amenities and ensuring co-ordinated investment in infrastructure that will support economic competitiveness and create a high quality living and working environment.

3.3 Context

To set the context of the Settlement Strategy, an overview of recent trends in population and employment growth in the County will be provided. This information has been extrapolated from Census data which is a useful source of up to date information that has assisted in the preparation of an evidence-based growth strategy for this Plan.

3.3.1 Population Growth and Distribution

County Meath experienced considerable population growth between April 2016, and April 2022 having grown from 195,044 in 2016 to 220,826 in 2022. This reflects a growth of 13.2% or 25,782 people in the intercensal period, equating to an average growth of 4,297 persons annually, well-beyond the projected increase of the RSES. This trend far exceeds the level of growth that took place between 2011 and 2016 where the county

experienced population growth of 5.9%. It is apparent that periods of economic prosperity and decline have had a significant influence on the population growth within the county and improving economic conditions combined with a high level of inward immigration and natural growth rates has cumulatively contributed to continued growth within the county. Over the same period, Ireland's population grew by 8% from 4,761,865 to 5,149,139.

In accordance with the Eastern and Midlands Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy, growth has been substantially concentrated towards key designated settlements, including the Regional Growth Centre of Drogheda and the key town of Navan. An analysis of the population growth at a settlement level has shown that growth has been guided towards key designated settlements such as the Southern Environs of Drogheda and Navan, having grown by 25% and 12.3% respectively since 2016.

The influence of Dublin on settlement growth remains apparent, with commuter-based settlements in the south and south-east of the County (including Ashbourne and the East Meath Settlements) experiencing the highest levels of population growth. Between 2016-2022, Ashbourne's population grew by 3,001, while Dunshaughlin grew by 2,609. While Ashbourne is close to reaching its 2027 population projection, Dunshaughlin exceeded its projected population growth by 2023. This is due to both settlements having the infrastructural capacity to absorb growth and their proximity to Dublin, with higher demand. The self-sustaining towns of Bettystown-Laytown-Mornington East in East Meath have had the fastest pace of growth, having grown by 3,770 persons, reflecting an increase of 32% in the overall population. Growth within the Meath administrative area of Kilcock has also been significant, having grown from 93 in 2016 to 972 in 2022.

Anomalies with the growth trajectories are evident in Dunboyne and Maynooth Environs, where infrastructural constraints have restricted development. However, the resolution of such infrastructural constraints in Dunboyne and the high number of Large-Scale Residential Development (LRD) planning applications that have been granted in the last two years, indicate that this metropolitan settlement is likely to grow substantially in the coming years and the remaining plan period. In addition to this, Dunboyne is located within the Dublin Metropolitan Area with high-frequency rail and bus transport services into Dublin City. Given its proximity to Dublin and potential to deliver compact and sustainable mobility, Dunboyne has been identified as a strategic location for Transport-Oriented Development (TOD), a government initiative to deliver development at scale near public transport nodes. Southern Drogheda has also been identified as a TOD location for two candidate sites. These designations will add further growth potential to each strategic town.

While growth in small towns and villages is steady, growth in rural areas and the countryside is at a rate of three times above its annual average projected increase.

Settlement Category	Settlement	Population 2016 (CSO)	Actual Population 2022 (CSO)	% Change
County	Meath	195,044	220,826	13.2%
Regional Growth Centre	Drogheda (South Environs)	6,527	8,137	24.7%
Key Towns	Navan	30,173	33,886	12.3%
	Maynooth Environs	0	0	N/A
Self-Sustaining Growth Town	Dunboyne	7,272	7,155	-1.6%
	Ashbourne	12,679	15,680	23.7%
	Trim	9,194	9,563	4.0%

Settlement Category	Settlement	Population 2016 (CSO)	Actual Population 2022 (CSO)	% Change
	Kells	6,135	6,608	7.7%
	Dunshaughlin	4,035	6,644	64.7%
Self-Sustaining Towns	Bettystown-Laytown-Mornington East	11,872	15,642	31.8%
	Ratoath	9,533	10,007	5.0%
	Duleek	4,219	4,899	16.1%
	Enfield	3,239	3,663	13.1%
	Stamullen	3,361	3,720	10.7%
	Kilcock	93	972	945.2%
Small Towns	Athboy	2,445	2,596	6.2%
	Oldcastle	1,383	1,409	1.9%
	Ballivor	1,809	1,870	3.4%
	Longwood	1,581	1,685	6.6%
Villages		10,540	12,014	14.0%
Rural Nodes and Open Countryside		68,948	74,619	8.2%
Total		195,044	220,826	13.2%

Table 3.1: Population Growth Per Settlement

As outlined in the figures above, growth has occurred in every settlement category and tier. Furthermore, growth has occurred in almost every settlement in Meath, including all villages and rural areas.

3.3.2 Age Profile

The age structure of a population is influenced by patterns of natural increase and migration. In order to analyse recent trends in the age profile of the County a population pyramid for the County and the State based on 2022 Census data has been prepared (Fig. 3.1A below and 3.2A overleaf). These pyramids are useful in highlighting the differences in age cohorts.

The average age in the County in 2022 was 36.9 (35.2 in 2016) in comparison to 38.3 for the State (37.4 in 2016). 88% of the population in the County is below the age of 65. This compares with an average of 85% for the State. Child dependency[2] in the County is the highest in the State with 39% of the population under the age of 14 in comparison to an average of 30.2% for the State.

Old dependency[3] in the County increased from 16.6% in 2016 to 18.9% in 2022. However, this remains substantially below the figure for the State, which stood at 23.1%.

This Plan will take into consideration the future needs of the population, based on its age profile, particularly with regard to infrastructure provision. This includes the requirement for childcare and education facilities for the younger population and the healthcare, transport, and residential needs of older people. The Economic Strategy will also identify the benefits of a young and well-educated population in providing a source of labour to potential investors in the County. The quality of life of older people can be improved through planning and the incorporation of universal design principles in the design of the built environment, particularly housing community and care facilities and accessible transportation including public transport and footpaths.

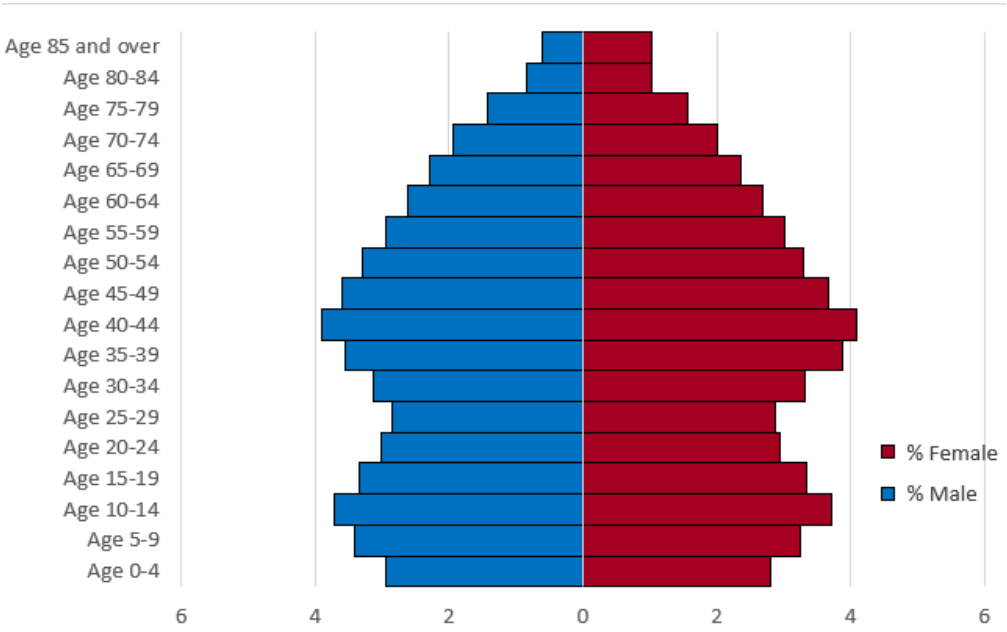

Figure 3.1A: Age Structure State 2022

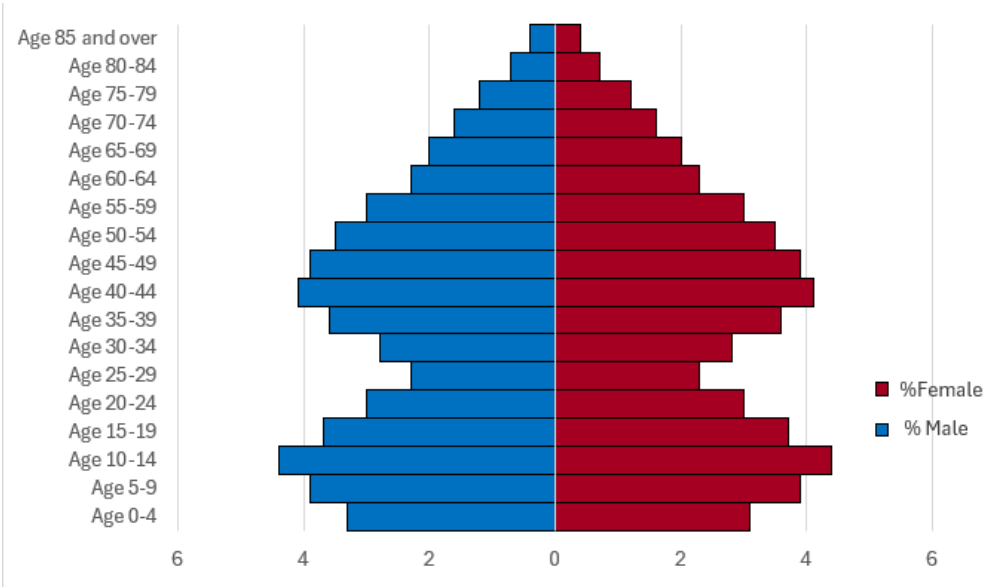

Figure 3.2A: Age Structure Meath 2022

3.3.3 Employment

One of the underlying objectives of this Plan is to broaden the economic base of the County and increase employment in order to reduce the volume of outbound commuting and create more sustainable settlements. Whilst it is not uncommon for people to work in a different location than where they live; the distance travelled,

the journey time, and mode of transport can have a considerable impact on quality of life and sustainability of the receiving environment at a macro and micro level.

At present there is an imbalance in Meath between the location of jobs and where people live. In 2016 there was a resident workforce of 82,605 persons in the County while the total number of jobs recorded in the County was 50% of this figure at 41,757. This equates to a Job: Resident Workforce of 0.505[4], which is confirmation of the high volume of outbound commuting for employment. Some of the key employment statistics for the County are set out in Table 3.3 below.

Labour force participation rate	**64.2%**
Resident workforce 2016	82,605
Total jobs 2016	41,757
Jobs: Resident Workers 2016	0.505
Outbound commuting 2016	55%

Table 3.3: Key Employment statistics Meath

Census 2016 POWSCAR Data provides useful information at a local level with regard to employment trends in settlements. Figure 3.3 below sets out details of the resident workforce and number of jobs at a Municipal District (MD) level in 2016 whilst Figure 3.4 overleaf provides these details for the key settlements in the County.

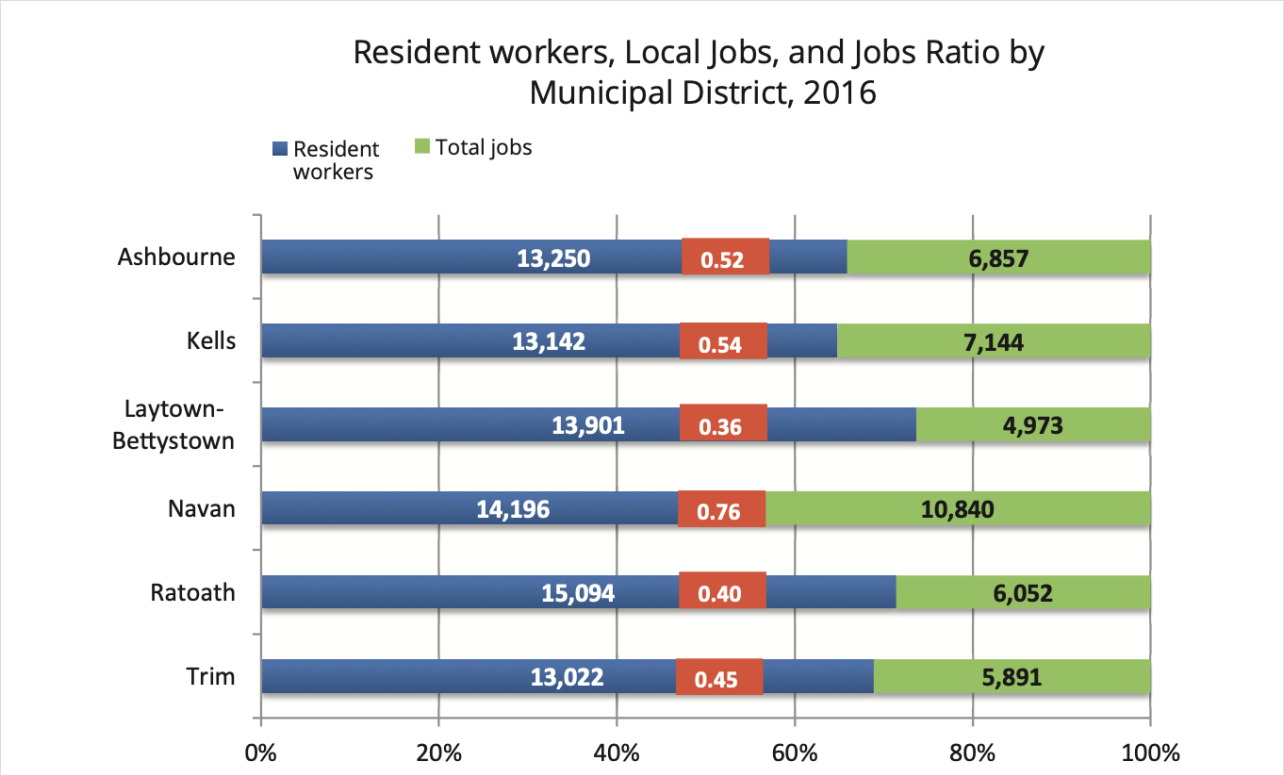

Figure 3.3: Resident workers, Local Jobs, and Jobs Ratio in each Municipal District in Meath in 2016

Whilst the resident workforce in each Municipal District is broadly the same, it is clear that there is a disparity in the location of jobs between each Municipal District. As would be expected, the Navan MD has the highest proportion of jobs. What is of interest is the fact that the Kells MD, which is characterised as being rural in character, has the second highest number of jobs in the County. With 3 of the 6 Municipal Districts in the County

having a jobs:workforce ratio of less than 0.5, the dependence on outbound commuting for employment is evident. This is particularly prevelant in the Laytown-Bettystown MD where there is a jobs:workforce ratio of 0.36, which is the lowest in the County.

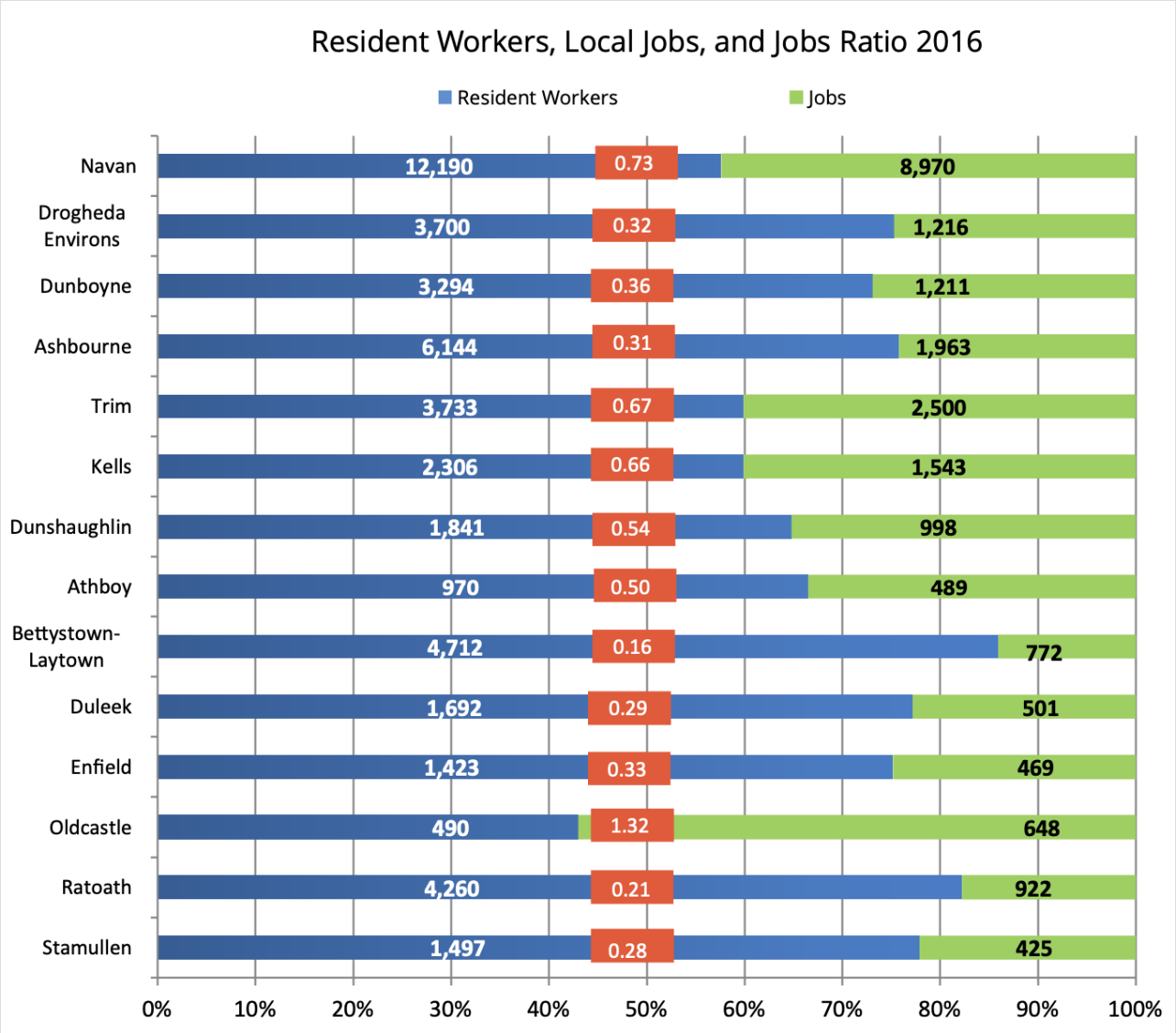

Figure 3.4: Resident workers, Local Jobs, and Jobs Ratio in key settlements in Meath in 2016

An analysis of this data at a settlement level confirms that Navan is the principal employment centre in the County with almost 9,000 jobs located in the town. This equates to 21.5% of the total jobs in the County. With 2,500 jobs and a jobs ratio of 0.67 Trim is the second largest centre for employment in the County.

The importance of Oldcastle as a centre of employment in its wider catchment is evident by the fact that it has a jobs ratio of 1.322. This is the only settlement in the County where there is a net in-flow of workers.

Ashbourne, South Drogheda and Dunboyne have a solid employment base however relative to the resident workforce in these towns the total number of jobs is quite low, resulting in each of these settlements having a jobs ratio of c.0.3. The strategic location of these towns adjacent to and within the Dublin Metropolitan Area (Ashbourne and Dunboyne) and along the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor (South Drogheda) provides opportunities to increase employment and economic activity.

The settlements with the lowest jobs ratio are in the southern and eastern parts of the County where there are high volumes of outbound commuting towards Dublin for employment. This includes the East Meath settlements

of Bettystown-Laytown-Mornington-Donacarney (Census Town) where the lack of any significant employment base has resulted in the town developing as a commuter settlement. Ratoath is also a settlement where the population has increased in the absence of any significant economic development.

3.4 Settlement Strategy

As part of the ambition to continue to secure economic growth and increased productivity in the County it is essential there is a clear and coherent strategy in place outlining how and where this growth will take place. This Settlement Strategy will support the strengthening of urban structures and networks in the County and the creation of an attractive living and working environment that will make the County an attractive location for economic investment. It also recognises the complementary role of settlements in the County in supporting growth and providing services.

This Strategy will also attempt to address some of the challenges facing towns and villages which include job creation, town/village centre renewal, lack of amenities and services, sustainable transport, and pressure from commuter driven development.

3.4.1 Alignment of Settlement Strategy with the NPF First Revision 2025 and RSES

Placemaking, compact growth, active land management, and addressing the impact of climate change are some of the key themes of the growth strategy in the NPF, NPF First Revision 2025 and RSES. There is also an underlying objective to create attractive and 'liveable' environments where more people will choose to live.

The Settlement Strategy of this Plan has taken cognisance of these themes and will support the implementation of the National and Regional Strategic Outcomes and Policy Objectives for population and settlement growth set out in the NPF, NPF First Revision 2025 and RSES. It is anticipated that the RSES will be updated in due course to ensure consistency with the Revised NPF, at which stage the Planning Authority will consider the impacts on the current Development Plan (as varied) and align the objectives within through the appropriate policy and legislative mechanisms.

As part of the strategy of aligning the spatial policy with the capital spending programme the Government established an Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF) and a Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (RRDF) under Project Ireland 2040. These Funding Programmes aim to stimulate residential and commercial development in under-utilised lands and areas in towns and villages across the country. They are closely linked to the National Policy Objectives in the NPF with regard to:

- Strengthening urban structures.
- Encouraging population growth in strong employment and service centres of all sizes.
- Reversing the stagnation or decline of smaller urban centres, by identifying and establishing new roles and functions and enhancement of local infrastructure and amenities.
- Addressing the legacy of rapid unplanned growth, by facilitating amenities and services catch-up, jobs and/or improved sustainable transport links to cities, together with a slower rate of population growth in recently expanded commuter settlements.
- Supporting a continuation of balanced population and employment growth in self-contained settlements.

This Plan will follow these principles in its approach to urban development. To assist in the implementation of these policy objectives the Council has successfully obtained funding for various projects under URDF and RRDF which will support urban regeneration, provide additional services and amenities, make town and village centre living more appealing, and make these areas more attractive for private investment.

3.4.1.1 Compact Growth

National Policy Objective 7 of the NPF First Revision 2025 requires that we "*deliver at least 40% of all new homes nationally, within the built-up footprint of existing settlements and ensure compact and sequential patterns of growth.*" The Council acknowledges the social and economic benefits of more compact settlements therefore this Plan will continue to support the sequential approach to the delivery of housing with priority given to infill development and the regeneration of brownfield sites. This will be achieved through an active land management strategy which includes:

- Continued proactive implementation of the Vacant Site Levy.
- The identification of opportunity/under-utilised lands.
- The identification of potential constraints inhibiting the development of zoned lands.
- Ongoing monitoring of the implementation of planning permissions.

3.4.1.2 Sense of place

In addition to achieving compact growth, it is important that a sense of place is created in the local environment that strengthens the connection between people and the place they live and work. This will improve the interaction people have with local amenities, create a local identity, thereby assisting in building a community.

To assist in improving the sense of place in settlements, the Council has embarked on the preparation of a significant programme of public realm plans. It is intended to implement these plans over the life of this Plan.

Further details regarding the public realm and urban design standards are set out in Chapter 11 Development Management Standards and Land Use Zoning Objectives.

3.4.2 Settlement hierarchy

The RSES includes a settlement hierarchy which sets out the settlement structure for the Region. This settlement hierarchy identifies the Regional Growth Centres and Key Towns. The position of the remaining settlements in this hierarchy is to be established in the Development Plan process.

When grouping towns into each 'Settlement Type' consideration was given to recent trends in population, employment, and household growth, the level of services available in the settlements, and their ability and appropriateness to accommodate future growth. The settlement hierarchy for Meath is set out in Table 3.4 below.

Settlement Type	Description	Settlement
Regional Growth Centre	Large towns with a high level of self-sustaining employment and services that act as regional economic drivers and play a significant role for a wide catchment area.	South Drogheda Environs
Key Town	Large economically active service and/or county towns that provide employment for their surrounding areas and with high-quality transport links and the capacity to act as growth drivers to complement the Regional Growth Centres.	Navan, Maynooth

Settlement Type	Description	Settlement
Self-Sustaining Growth Towns	Towns with a moderate level of jobs and services – includes sub-county market towns and commuter towns with good transport links and capacity for continued commensurate growth to become more Self-Sustaining.	Dunboyne, Ashbourne, Dunshaughlin[5], Kells, Trim
Self-Sustaining Towns	Towns with high levels of population growth and a weak employment base which are reliant on other areas for employment and/or services and which require targeted 'catch up' investment to become more self sustaining.	Laytown/Bettystown/Mornington/Donacarney, Ratoath, Enfield, Duleek, Stamullen, Kilcock
Towns and Villages	Towns and villages with local service and employment functions.	Towns – Athboy, Oldcastle, Ballivor and Longwood
Rural	Villages and the wider rural region	Baile Ghib, Carlanstown, Carnaross, Clonard, Clonee, Crossakiel, Donore, Drumconrath, Gormanston, Julianstown, Kentstown, Kilbride, Kildalkey, Kilmainhamwood, Kilmessan, Moynalty, Nobber, Rathcairn, Rathmolyon, Slane, Summerhill

Table 3.4: Meath Settlement hierarchy

3.4.3 Future Settlement Growth

The primary focus of growth in this Settlement Strategy will be towards the Metropolitan Settlements (Dunboyne and Maynooth Environs), the Regional Growth Centre (Southern Environs of Drogheda), and the Key Town of Navan. The concentration of development in these locations will strengthen the urban structure of the County and support the creation of a critical mass of population in key locations which will assist in creating economies of scale for businesses, investors and infrastructure service providers whilst also providing opportunities to improve the level of community facilities available.

The Self-Sustaining Growth Towns have a solid employment base with capacity to accommodate further expansion. There will be a greater emphasis on achieving a greater balance between employment and population growth in these settlements. Rapidly growing settlements such as Ashbourne, which is the second largest town in the County, will continue to perform an important function in the provision and delivery of services on the edge of the Metropolitan Area.

The Self-Sustaining Towns in the County have experienced rapid population and household growth in the absence of supporting employment, services, and amenities proportionate to this growth. These settlements have developed as commuter towns and remain under considerable pressure for development. The focus in these settlements will be on managing residential growth and ensuring there is a greater emphasis on consolidation and the delivery of employment land and social and physical infrastructure.

The Small Towns and Villages will continue to have an important function in supporting local growth and providing access to local services that will ensure the more rural parts of the County can continue to develop on a sustainable platform.

Chapter 9 of this Plan 'Rural Development Strategy' sets out the settlement policy in respect of rural areas in the County, including rural nodes.

The Core Strategy has been updated in accordance with the National Planning Framework – First Revision (2025) and the associated NPF Implementation Housing Growth Requirements Guidelines which set revised housing targets for the county. In order to accommodate the growth forecast for the county over the Plan period, additional lands located within certain settlements as set out in Chapter 2 have been brought forward to facilitate future residential development. The Settlement Strategy will continue to direct future development in accordance with the settlement hierarchy and achieve compact growth by prioritising infill and brownfield development within established urban areas.

3.4.4 Written Statement for each Settlement

As part of this Plan Written Statements and Land Use Zoning Maps have been prepared for all settlements in the Settlement Hierarchy (see Table 3.4).[6] The Written Statements and Zoning Maps contained in Volume 2 of this Plan will inform these Local Area Plans.

3.4.5 Local Area Plans

There is a mandatory requirement under section 19 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), to prepare a Local Area Plan for the following settlements:

- Navan, The Southern Environs of Drogheda[7], Dunboyne, Ashbourne, Kells, Maynooth, Trim, Ratoath, and the census town Bettystown-Laytown-Mornington East-Donacarney

In addition to the mandatory requirements under the Act regarding Local Area Plans, Planning Authorities can also prepare a Local Area Plan for any part of its functional area. In this regard it is also proposed to prepare a Local Area Plan for the following settlements:

- Athboy, Dunshauglin, Duleek, Enfield, Oldcastle, and Stamullen

The reasons a Local Area Plan is to be prepared for these settlements can be summarised as follows:

Athboy is a compact settlement with distinct heritage qualities. A Local Area Plan will provide an opportunity for a detailed strategy to be prepared that will identify specific uses and opportunities that will respect the historical value of the settlement. A public realm plan has been prepared for the centre of the town which will be implemented over the life of this Plan.

Dunshaughlin is a settlement that is presently experiencing significant residential growth primarily due to its connectivity with Dublin via the M3. The settlement has benefitted from recent investments in water and waste water infrastructure. In addition, the town is located along the route of the proposed future rail line to Navan. The Local Area Plan will focus on the facilitating employment growth, the delivery of road infrastructure facilitating access to the M3, and the provision of social and community amenities that will support the development of a balanced and sustainable settlement.

Duleek is an important settlement for enterprise and employment in the eastern part of the County that has the capacity to generate additional employment in the existing business park and facilitate residential growth on a number of infill sites. A detailed analysis of the potential opportunities for Duleek and how any future growth will be co-ordinated will be set out in a Local Area Plan.

Oldcastle is an important employment and service centre in north-west Meath with the highest jobs ratio in the County. The town has a catchment extending into the rural hinterland of Meath and neighbouring counties of Cavan and Westmeath. Oldcastle is a traditional market town with an urban fabric of high-quality. There are significant opportunities for the town to function as a tourism hub given its location proximate to Sliabh Na Calliagh. The Local Area Plan will focus on expanding the employment base of the town that will meet the needs

of the local community and surrounding hinterland. A public realm plan is being prepared for the centre of the town which will be implemented over the life of this Plan.

Enfield is located on a multi-modal corridor with excellent road and rail access to Dublin via the M4 motorway and the Dublin-Longford commuter rail line. This infrastructure provides an opportunity to develop the employment base of Enfield based on the principles of sustainable transport provision. A Local Area Plan is required to identify future infrastructural requirements in the town and to set out a coherent growth strategy.

Stamullen is strategically located along the international Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor. It is a local service centre that performs an important economic function to the local community. A Local Area Plan will focus on strengthening the employment base in the town and improving the accessibility of the town to the M1 via the City North Business Park and identifying a long-term solution to waste water constraints.

3.4.6 Regional Growth Centre

Drogheda has been identified as 1 of 3 Regional Growth Centres in the Eastern and Midland Region in the NPF. It is a settlement with significant growth potential due to its location along the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor, the existing service and employment provision in the town, and its capacity to accommodate further growth.

The RSES sets out a strategic framework for Drogheda that will support the continued development of the town and allow it to function as a driver for regional growth. This growth strategy includes a population target of 50,000 for the town by 2031.

The Southern Environs of Drogheda is located in Meath. In 2016 this area had a population of 6,527, which was 16% of the total population (40,956).

In recognition of the importance of preparing a coherent and co-ordinated strategy that will ensure the town can develop to its maximum potential, the RSES requires the preparation of a Joint Urban Area Plan (UAP) for Drogheda by Meath County Council and Louth County Council.[8]

The RSES recognises the contribution that the Southern Environs of Drogheda can make to the economic development and the creation of a sustainable community due to the availability of enterprise and employment lands in strategic locations close to residential areas.

3.4.7 Key Towns

Key Towns are settlements with a strong employment base and a broad range of services that serve a wide catchment area. Navan has been identified as the Key Town in Meath in the RSES. It is the County town and primary retail and employment centre. In 2016 over 20% of all jobs in Meath were located in Navan.

One of the key objectives of this Plan is to attract further economic investment to Navan in order to strengthen its position as a primary centre for employment in the County. It is recognised that 'Placemaking' can make a significant contribution to attracting investment by enhancing the urban environment and improving the interaction people have with the local environment. In this regard, the Council recently published a public realm plan and public transport strategy for the town 'Navan 2030' which sets out a strategy for the renewal of the town centre together with public transport improvements. In addition, the Council was successful in a number of funding applications under URDF that will reinvigorate the urban core of the town. This includes the Flowerhill Regeneration Project, Railway Street Regeneration Project and County archive, and a housing focused Active Land Management Project.

Whilst Navan is well connected to Dublin via the motorway network and a frequent bus service, improvements in connectivity are essential to the economic development of the town. There is no rail service to Navan at present,

however as part of the 6-year review of the Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2016-35, the National Transport Authority has committed to reviewing the requirement for the extension of the railway from the M3 Parkway to Navan in the Transport Strategy for the GDA 2016-35. This commencement of this review has recently advanced with the allocation of funding from the NTA, towards a Feasibility Study for the Rail Line to Navan. The advancement of the delivery of this rail line is a key objective of this Plan. The RSES recognises the importance of this project in the economic development of the town and therefore supports its reappraisal.[9]

Maynooth is also identified as a Key Town in the RSES. Whilst the town is located within the administrative boundary of Kildare County Council, there are Environs lands along its northern boundary located in County Meath. These lands are considered to be a natural extension to the town.

In order to ensure a co-ordinated approach is undertaken to the future development of Maynooth Regional Policy Objective 4.35 of the RSES requires that a Joint Local Area Plan is prepared by Meath and Kildare County Council.[10] The Maynooth and Environs Joint Local Area Plan 2025-2031 was adopted in February 2025, and it came into effect on the 1st of April 2025. To ensure consistency of the adopted Maynooth & Environs Joint LAP with the Meath County Development Plan, the Meath County Development Plan was varied (Variation 4) to replace the Maynooth Environs Written Statement in Volume 2 of the Meath County Development Plan.

The Maynooth Environs lands will be a focal point for employment and complementary residential uses. The development of these lands will facilitate the delivery of the Maynooth Outer Relief Road (MOOR) which is strongly supported in the RSES. This is a critical piece of infrastructure in the future growth and development of Maynooth.

3.4.8 Self-Sustaining Growth Towns

Self-Sustaining Growth Towns are those settlements that have a solid employment base and a broad range of services and have the capacity to accommodate additional growth on a sustainable platform.

There are 5 settlements in the County identified in this category; Dunboyne, Ashbourne, Kells, Trim, and Dunshaughlin. The Metropolitan settlement of Dunboyne is a strategically important settlement in Meath. It is an important centre for economic growth in the County due to its location in the Dublin Metropolitan Area and along a multi-modal corridor. The town has enjoyed recent successes in attracting inward investment. It is an objective of this Plan to continue to attract high-quality investment to the town. In addition, there is capacity for the town to accommodate significant population growth, with strategically located lands zoned for residential use in proximity to the rail stations available for development.

Ashbourne is the second largest town in the County. The rapid expansion of the town from a small village to a large urban centre is primarily related to its proximity to Dublin Airport and Dublin City Centre. The completion of the new town centre development in Ashbourne has significantly improved the retail provision in the town.

Employment and enterprise in Ashbourne benefits from its proximity to Dublin Airport, its strong links with the Dublin Metropolitan Area, and its location along the N2 strategic road corridor. As Dublin Airport continues to expand it is anticipated that the strategic importance of Ashbourne as a place of employment in Meath and the wider region will increase. This Plan identifies the strategic importance of Ashbourne and will support and facilitate industry, employment, and enterprise in the settlement as it continues its transition to a Metropolitan Centre.

As part of the future growth strategy for Ashbourne and to improve connectivity with Dublin City Centre it is an objective of this Plan to explore the feasibility of providing a rail link to Ashbourne as part of Phase II of the Navan Rail Project[11].

Kells and Trim have a unique cultural and built heritage and are accordingly designated heritage settlements. They are important tourist destinations in the County. Both settlements have strong links with the principal economic centre of Navan. Kells is an important centre for local enterprise and employment. The designation of the Kells Municipal District as a Regional Economic Development Zone (REDZ) has had a positive impact on employment and enterprise activity in the town.

With a 'Jobs:Resident Workforce' ratio of 0.67 and 2,500 jobs in 2016, Trim is the second largest centre for employment in the County behind Navan. It is an objective of this Plan to continue to maximise the number of local job opportunities in Trim during the life of this Plan. It will also support the investment in and expansion of the tourist product in the town.

Dunshaughlin is an important growth town in south Meath that benefits from strong road links to Dublin due to its proximity to the M3. Whilst there is a frequent bus service to the capital the car remains the predominant mode of transport. The town has a strong employment base with potential for future expansion. The population growth of the town would support the delivery of the Navan rail project as it would provide a critical mass of population along the rail line. The delivery of this rail project is a key element in supporting the sustainable growth of the town.

The town is in the unique position of having benefitted from significant investment in water and waste water infrastructure. The front loading of these services alongside upgrades to the local network has created significant capacity in this infrastructure to accommodate medium-long-term growth.

Dunshaughlin has experienced significant growth in recent years with the delivery of a number of new housing developments in the settlement. Future development in Dunshaughlin will focus on undeveloped A2 zoned lands including the additional lands proposed for residential development in accordance with the growth requirements set out in the Revised NPF 2025. In addition, support will be given to the creation of additional employment opportunities in the town alongside necessary services to ensure the development of the town takes place on a sustainable platform. Additional local road infrastructure will be required to address localised access issues and in particular securing a more direct link to the M3 Motorway.

3.4.9 Self-Sustaining Towns

The Self-Sustaining Towns in the County vary in size, built form, and service provision. The location of these settlements has influenced their growth rate and function. The settlements in the commuter area of Dublin have experienced higher levels of growth and have the characteristics of dormitory settlements due to the high levels of outbound travel for employment. Growth in the more peripheral settlements has been largely based on local growth.

Ratoath, Bettystown-Laytown-Mornington East-Donacarney (East Meath), Enfield, Kilcock, Duleek and Stamullen have all developed on the basis of outbound commuting to Dublin. The highest levels of growth have been in Ratoath and the East Meath settlements. Social and physical infrastructure and employment provision in these settlements has struggled to keep pace with population growth.

Whilst Duleek has experienced commuter-led residential development, employment in the town has also grown through the expansion of the Business Park. The continued expansion of the Business Park will be encouraged in order to provide a greater proportion of employment locally, consistent with the settlement's role as a self-sustaining town proximate to a regional growth centre.

Future development in these settlements will generally be focused towards local growth with appropriately sized employment and enterprise encouraged in order to assist in the creation of more sustainable communities. A

strategic employment site has been identified in Laytown adjacent to the train station in order to provide a focus for addressing the employment deficiencies in this area.

Ratoath received LIHAF funding to assist in the delivery of a section of the Outer Relief Road. This section of road is currently under construction and when completed will facilitate the release of lands for residential development in the south-eastern part of the town.

The completion of this Outer Relief Road has been a Local Area Plan objective for a number of years. There is an opportunity to maximise the investment in this LIHAF funded infrastructure by facilitating the completion of this Outer Relief Road and complete the link between the R125 and R155. This will be achieved by zoning additional lands for residential development and requiring that the remainder of this link road is delivered as part of the development of these lands.

There is also an opportunity to provide additional employment opportunities in Ratoath by supporting the integration of existing major equestrian facilities with the town. To facilitate such economic investment a strategic employment site has been identified and will be strongly promoted from an economic and employment creation perspective.

In general, it is envisaged that growth in the Self-Sustaining Towns will expand at a sustainable rate in line with the availability of local services and infrastructure. Employment and economic opportunities will be supported at appropriate locations where they are of a nature and scale proportionate to the size and service availability in the town. Retail development will be primarily in the convenience category, with small supermarkets and local centres serving the town and its local catchment area only.

3.4.10 Towns and Villages

Below the Self-Sustaining Towns are towns that are experiencing lower levels of population growth that are primarily based on locally based growth. These towns perform important employment and service functions in their surrounding area.

Athboy and Oldcastle are important service centres in the western parts of the County. Athboy has a strong retail base that serves an extensive hinterland. It is also an important centre for local employment and community activities.

Oldcastle is a historic market town that has a strong tradition in the manufacturing industry that includes furniture and engineering. Another important employment sector in the town is the service industry. Similar to Athboy, Oldcastle has an extensive catchment that stretches into the neighbouring counties of Cavan and Westmeath.

The Villages in the County vary in size with a population ranging from c.200 to in excess of 1,000 people. They provide important local community and retail services with smaller scale rural enterprises also present in a number of villages. The level of service and catchment population of the villages is smaller than that of the towns further up the settlement hierarchy.

The future development of these villages will be focused on organic growth only that primarily serves the local population. There will be a strong emphasis on brownfield and infill development delivering this growth. Any development in villages, within commuting distance of Dublin, will be managed so as to avoid unsustainable travel patterns. These are primarily the villages in the south and east of the County including Rathmoylon, Donore, Julianstown, Clonard, and Kentstown.

In the more remote areas of the County there are key villages that perform a more important function due to their distance from the larger settlements. These villages operate as rural service centres and have a vital role in

sustaining rural communities. Such villages include Carlanstown, Rathcairn, and Baile Ghib. This Plan will support locally based services and enterprise in these villages whilst residential development shall meet the needs of local growth.

In order to retain the distinct character of these villages, any future development shall be of a character and scale reflective of the village in question.

The villages of Baile Ghib and Rathcairn are the only Gaeltacht settlements in the County. Any future development in these adjacent villages shall reflect the distinctive character of these areas and will support the Irish language. Further details are contained in Chapter 9 Rural Development Strategy and Volume 2.

Below Villages in the Settlement Hierarchy are Rural Nodes. The strategy for Rural Nodes is set out in Chapter 9, Rural Development Strategy[12].

3.5 Tiered Land Use Zoning

The NPF, and First Revision to the NPF 2025 advocate close co-ordination between infrastructure agencies and Planning Authorities when zoning land for development. This will result in a standardised methodology that will differentiate between zoned land that is available for development and zoned land that requires significant further investment in services and infrastructure for development to be realised.[13] This two tier approach to land zoning is as follows:

Tier 1: Serviced Zoned Land
These are lands that are either serviced or can connect to existing services.
Tier 2: Serviceable Zoned Land
These are lands that are not currently sufficiently serviced to accommodate new development but have the potential to become fully serviced during the life of the Plan

Section 2.4 of the NPF Implementation Housing Growth Requirements Guidelines provides local authorities with guidance on the tiered approach to land use zoning. The Guidelines recommend that Planning Authorities should prepare a “Settlement Capacity Audit” in line with the provisions of the “Development Plans – Guidelines for Planning Authorities” (2022) to identify zoned serviced/serviceable lands, and to highlight infrastructural requirements.

An analysis of all undeveloped lands zoned for employment and residential uses in each settlement to identify any potential infrastructure constraints inhibiting lands from being developed has been carried out. A further Settlement Capacity Audit was undertaken as part of Variation 5 to inform the identification of lands that would be suitable to meet the revised housing targets for the county. The Audit was undertaken in full compliance with the recommendations of the Guidelines.

3.6 Land Use Zoning in each settlement

A Land Use Zoning Map has been prepared for each settlement included in the settlement hierarchy. These maps illustrate the location and extent of zoned lands in each settlement.

The quantum of lands zoned for residential uses is reflective of the population projection and household allocation for each settlement as set out in the Core Strategy which has subsequently been amended to

accommodate the revised housing targets as set out in the NPF Implementation Housing Growth Requirements Guidelines 2025.

In settlements where a surplus of residential land remains, lands have been prioritised based on their location, the availability of services, and the likelihood of the lands being developed within the lifetime of the Plan. A reserve of residential lands not available for development until after 2027 has been provided in settlements where there are fundamental reasons, supported by national and regional policy that would support the requirement to phase such lands. These 'Post 2027' lands have been identified in Dunboyne, Navan, Dunshaughlin, Enfield and Kilcock Environs.[15] Several lands previously designated as 'Post 2027' lands have been rezoned to A2 – New Residential Development to accommodate additional growth as required by the Revised NPF and subsequent Ministerial Guidelines. These lands were recommended for development based on their suitability having regard to their location and access to existing services and infrastructure.

Through the implementation of the active land management strategy with particular reference to the Vacant Site Levy, the Council will be supporting promoting the regeneration/development of infill and brownfield site and the development of key strategic green field sites.

Whilst the Council advocates a sequential approach to development this is not always possible due to lands not being brought forward for development. This can lead to instances where there are strategically located sites close to town centres and public transport remaining undeveloped. There are various reasons for such lands not being developed including lack of impetus from land owners, lack of finance, and infrastructure deficits.

This presents a challenge for the Council with regard to quantifying the residential land requirement for the particular settlement. The RSES recognises that there are instances where such strategic sites are not being brought forward for development and recommends that Planning Authorities should not place an "unreasonable dependency" on these lands delivering development where this would impede other suitable lands with more prospect of being developed in the short term.[16]

In settlements where there are challenges in releasing such strategic lands, the Council will continue to support the development of these lands through its active land management strategy. In instances where this has arisen, the quantum of residential lands identified for development has taken account of the fact that certain lands may not be developed during the life of the Plan in order to ensure there are sufficient lands, likely to be brought forward for development, to meet the projected population growth.

3.7 The Settlement Hierarchy and Future Population Growth in Meath

The Settlement Strategy in this Plan is consistent with the approach set out in the NPF, NPF First Revision 2025 and RSES in that it will encourage consolidation of existing urban centres with an emphasis on delivering more compact growth. It supports the creation of sustainable 'live work' communities whilst also maximising on recent investment in physical and social infrastructure. The larger settlements at the top of the settlement hierarchy will receive the greatest proportion of growth, with development in smaller towns and villages primarily focused on local growth.

An emphasis on the consolidation of growth in the Metropolitan Area is also a key element of this Strategy, with 14.5% of the total population growth to be directed to the Metropolitan Area.

Navan, the Southern Environs of Drogheda, and Dunboyne are strategically located settlements within the County and are important centres for enterprise and employment. These settlements have the potential to make a significant contribution to the delivery of housing in the County in the medium term with a substantial quantity

of “ready to go” serviced lands available for development. An example of such lands is in the Farganstown area of Navan where LIHAF funding will support the delivery of up to 1,600 residential units in the long-term.

An incremental, sequential approach will be taken to the development of these settlements that will support the long-term objective of achieving a population of 50,000 in Navan and Drogheda and 25,000 in Dunboyne.

The future expansion of the Self-Sustaining Growth Towns other than Dunboyne will be more moderate than Navan and Drogheda and will focus on the delivery of social and physical infrastructure in tandem with residential growth and employment. Ashbourne and Dunshaughlin are two Self-Sustaining growth settlements that have the capacity to absorb further growth.

Ashbourne’s link to Dublin Airport and Dublin City Centre provides a solid basis for the settlement continuing to expand. There will be a stronger emphasis on the provision of employment and necessary social and physical infrastructure with any continued residential growth.

Dunshaughlin is strategically located along the route of Phase II of the Dublin-Navan Rail Line. In this regard, it is considered appropriate to provide for the future growth and expansion of the town on the basis that it will be located along a sustainable rail based corridor in the future. Dunshaughlin has also benefitted from recent upgrades in water and wastewater infrastructure that will facilitate future population and employment growth.

In the Self-Sustaining Towns there will be a strong focus on consolidation and strengthening the employment base and improving services which will support the creation of more balanced and sustainable communities.

The level of growth in the Towns and Villages will be primarily focused on local growth proportionate to the size of the settlement rather than commuter driven development. The consolidation of these settlements will provide a greater focus on the provision of necessary services that would facilitate the creation of sustainable communities. Residential development in these settlements will be modest in scale and will have regard to the scale of existing development in the settlement.

Settlement Strategy Policies

It is the policy of the Council:

SH POL 1

To ensure that all settlements, in as far as practicable, develop in a self-sufficient manner with population growth occurring in tandem with the provision of physical and social infrastructure.

SH POL 2

To promote the consolidation of existing settlements and the creation of compact urban forms through the utilisation of infill and brownfield lands in preference to edge of centre locations.

SH POL 3

To support the creation of healthy and sustainable communities that encourages and facilitates walking and cycling and general physical activity through the implementation of best practices in urban design that promotes permeability and interconnecting spaces.

Settlement Strategy Objectives

It is an objective of the Council:

SH OBJ 1

To ensure that sufficient zoned lands are available to satisfy the housing requirements of the County over the lifetime of the Plan.

SH OBJ 2

To ensure the implementation of the population and housing growth allocations set out in the Core Strategy and Settlement Strategy and in accordance with the NPF Implementation Housing Growth Requirements – Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2025).

SH OBJ 3

To operate an Order of Priority for the release and development of residential lands with any lands identified as being 'Post 2027' not being available for residential development during the lifetime of the subject development plan and no permission for dwellings will be granted on these lands by Meath County Council.

SH OBJ 4

To prepare new local area plans for the following settlements within the lifetime of this Plan: Navan, Dunboyne/ Dunboyne North/Clonee, Ashbourne, Kells, Trim, Dunshaughlin, Ratoath, Enfield, Bettystown-Laytown-Mornington East-Donacarney-Mornington (East Meath), Oldcastle, Athboy, Duleek, and Stamullen. As part of the preparation of these Plans, a detailed infrastructure assessment, consistent with the methodology for a Tiered Approach to Zoning under Appendix 3 of the NPF will be undertaken for each settlement.

SH OBJ 5

The existing Southern Environs of Drogheda Local Area Plan 2009 (The LAP) shall remain the statutory plan for the Southern Environs of Drogheda until such a time as it is replaced with a Joint Urban Plan for Drogheda in conjunction with Louth County Council having regard to the requirements of the Report of the Drogheda Boundary Review Committee (February 2017), the National Planning Framework, and the Eastern and Midland Region Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (2019-2031). This plan shall be read together with the County Development Plan 2021-2027. The County Development Plan 2021-2027 shall take precedence if a conflict arises between the Plans and the conflicting provision of the LAP shall cease to have effect.

SH OBJ 6

To prepare a Joint Vision and Urban Area Plan for Drogheda in partnership with Louth County Council within the lifetime of this Plan in accordance with the requirements of Regional Policy Objective 4.11 of the RSES for the Eastern and Midland Region.

SH OBJ 7

To support the implementation of the policies and objectives set out within the Maynooth and Environs Joint Local Area Plan 2025 – 2031.

SH OBJ 8

To develop Navan and the Southern Environs of Drogheda as the primary development centres in Meath and to continue to promote Dunboyne as a key settlement in the Metropolitan Area of Dublin. The long-term growth of

these settlements shall be based on principles of balanced and sustainable development that support a compact urban form and the integration of land use and transport.

SH OBJ 9

To ensure that in Villages no single application on a defined parcel of land shall increase the existing housing stock by more than 15%.

SH OBJ 10

To continue to support the sustainable development of Ashbourne by supporting its development as an enterprise and employment hub and by strengthening links and connectivity between Ashbourne and Dublin Airport and City Centre and the wider Metropolitan Area.

SH OBJ 11

Where appropriate, serviced sites may be accommodated within existing zoned residential land or on lands immediately adjoining the development boundary of Tier 5 and Tier 6 towns/villages, subject to normal planning considerations.

3.8 Housing

3.8.1 Introduction

The delivery of housing in the appropriate location and the creation of attractive neighbourhoods with a range of housing options and a strong sense of place and community are key objectives of this Plan.

It is recognised that the availability and supply of housing to meet the required demand is a critical element in maintaining the competitiveness of the County and its attractiveness as a place to live and invest.

This section of the Settlement Strategy sets out the framework for the provision of housing over the lifetime of the Plan.

3.8.2 Challenges in the Delivery of Housing

One of the consequences of the recession was a dramatic decline in the output of housing, particularly in urban areas where a demand has remained. Following a prolonged period of undersupply there is a ‘pent up’ demand for housing, which has resulted in increased house prices, rents, and homelessness across the country. The Government has responded to these challenges with legislative changes and policy initiatives which are intended to stimulate development and increase the supply of housing.

3.8.2.1 Legislation changes and Policy Initiatives.

The Planning and Development Act 2024 & Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2025

The Planning and Development Act 2024 was signed into law in October 2024 and introduces mandatory decision-making timelines, a restructured national planning body (An Coimisiún Pleanála), reformed judicial review pathways, and a revised hierarchy of statutory plans. The Act provides for transitional arrangements until full commencement, during which certain provisions of the Planning and Development Act 2000 remain in force.

Under the Act of 2024, development plans remain the central document for planning in all local authorities informed by the national and regional plans as part of a policy hierarchy. The fundamental approach to evidence-based planning, informed by a structured public consultation and decisions by elected members on behalf of the public remains in place. The biggest changes from a forward planning perspective are perhaps the duration of the development plan which in the future will be 10 years and the structure of the plan itself. There is an opportunity to reshape the form of a development plan into a more concise document that is strategic in nature and led by an overall strategy which sets out the policies and key objectives. The 10-year timeframe will require bigger parcels of land and naturally provide more choice and flexibility to the market.

On 1 August 2025, the Planning and Development (Amendment Act) 2025 came into force with the aim of providing the legislative mechanism to further accelerate housing delivery. The Amendment introduced three key changes – provisions to extend the life of planning permissions by up to three years for un-commenced housing developments, the suspension of time for certain types of planning permissions that are subject to judicial review proceedings (subject to notification requirements) and the ability to modify a planning permission for residential development subject to certain conditions and notification requirements.

The National Planning Framework – First Revision (2025)

The National Planning Framework (NPF) First Revision was published in April 2025 reflecting the significant demographic, environmental, and infrastructural changes that have taken place since the original publication of the NPF in 2018.

The overarching objective of the revised NPF remains to guide and shape the growth and development of the country up to 2040. The NPF recognises that in the period between 2022 and 2040 the country's population is expected to grow by approximately one million people which will require new homes and jobs. The ambition therefore is to provide a strategic vision to co-ordinate Ireland's spatial, economic, social and environmental future with the aim of achieving more balanced, sustainable and inclusive growth.

The revised NPF sets out updated population projections and outlines ambitious housing targets of approximately 50,000 new homes to be delivered nationally per annum to 2040 to accommodate this growth. The review of the National Development Plan sets out the Government's objectives to achieve accelerated housing delivering to meet increasing demand. The Plan places a particular focus on the delivery of critical infrastructure and housing and the provision of improved public transport. The updated NDP represents the State's largest ever capital investment plan and, together with the revised NPF, will be critical to delivering the infrastructure and housing needed to meet the needs of a growing population.

Delivering Homes, Building Communities – Housing Action Plan 2025-2030

Published in November 2025, the Government's new national housing plan, Delivering Homes, Building Communities, sets out a framework to deliver 300,000 homes by 2030 through significant capital investment, regulatory reforms, zoning measures, and infrastructure delivery. The plan builds on Housing for All and introduces a strong focus on activating land, supporting utility providers, modern construction methods, and boosting viability through tax measures and targeted funding schemes.

Sustainable & Compact Settlement Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2024)

The Sustainable and Compact Settlement Guidelines set out policy and guidance in relation to the planning and development of urban settlements, with a focus on residential development and the creation of sustainable and compact settlements. These Guidelines replaced the Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas Guidelines for Planning Authorities published in 2009.

Design Standards for New Apartments (2023)

The Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2023) forms the primary national guidance for apartment design, setting standards on apartment mix, internal space, dual aspect, and amenity provision. The Guidelines were subsequently updated in July 2025 which introduced further changes intended to support compact growth and improve apartment viability, including revised internal space standards, new apartment typologies, reduced dual-aspect ratios, amended floor-to-ceiling height provisions, and greater flexibility in core ratios, storage and amenity spaces. The 2025 Guidelines are currently the subject of a legal challenge and so their long-term status is currently uncertain and contingent on the outcome of the legal proceedings.

Development Plan Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2022)

The Guidelines provide updated national guidance for the preparation, variation, and implementation of local authority development plans, replacing the previous 2007 guidelines. Issued under Section 28 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), these guidelines seek to modernise the plan-making process and ensure that development plans are fully aligned with national housing, climate, compact growth, and regeneration objectives. They set out a clear methodology for preparing evidence-based plans, including core strategies that reflect national and regional policy, robust settlement strategies, and zoning approaches that prioritise serviced and strategically located lands capable of delivering new homes within the lifetime of the plan.

Residential Zoned Land Tax Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2022)

The Residential Zoned Land Tax (RZLT) was announced in Budget 2022 and was introduced into Part 22A of the Taxes Consolidation Act (TCA) 1997 by the Finance Act 2021. The principal purpose of the RZLT is to encourage the timely activation of zoned and serviced residential development land for housing. The RZLT Guidelines outline the criteria for the inclusion of lands within the scope for the tax and the formal process which must be followed.

3.8.3 Meath County Housing Strategy

The preparation of a Housing Strategy is a mandatory requirement under Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended. The purpose of a Housing Strategy is to evaluate the housing needs of the existing and future population in the County.

National Policy Objective 47 of the NPF First Revision 2025 requires a Housing Need Demand Assessment (HNDA) to be carried out for each Local Authority Area.[20] This assessment will evaluate the number of additional housing units required to meet existing and future demand.

The Meath County Housing Strategy is closely aligned with the Core Strategy in that the future housing need is based on the population and household projections outlined in the Core Strategy. The Strategy is also informed by the most recent Social Housing Needs Assessment for Meath in addition to National Housing Policy publications including *'The Social Housing Strategy 2020 – Support, Supply, and Reform (2014)', and 'Rebuilding Ireland – Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness (2016)'*.

The Strategy includes an analysis of housing requirements in the context of affordability and addresses the need to ensure that housing is available for persons with different levels of income. It also assesses the mix of house types and sizes (including accommodation for the elderly and persons with disabilities) and highlights the need to counteract undue segregation in housing between persons of different social backgrounds.

The Housing Strategy estimates that there will be a requirement for 1,397 social and affordable units between 2020 and 2026.

The mechanisms for delivering social housing include the following:

- Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).
- Direct construction by Local Authorities or in partnership with Approved Housing Bodies (AHBs).
- Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS), Social Housing Lease Initiatives and Housing Assistance Payments (HAPs).
- Purchase of new or second-hand residential units.
- Casual vacancies.

The Council is seeking to prioritise the delivery of social housing in a number of settlements where a combination of high demand, limited and/ or no suitable land in Council ownership and difficulties in acquisition of land are all factors inhibiting supply. Taking this into account an objective supporting the delivery of social housing in addition to that required by Part V will be included in the Written Statement for Ashbourne, Dunboyne, Dunshaughlin, Ratoath, and Trim in Volume 2 of this Plan.

Housing Strategy Policies

It is the policy of the Council:

SH POL 4

To promote social integration and the provision of a range of dwelling types in residential developments that would encourage a mix of tenure, particularly in any State funded house building programmes.

SH POL 5

To secure a mix of housing types and sizes, including single storey properties, particularly in larger developments to meet the needs of different categories of households.

SH POL 6

To support the provision of accommodation for older people and for people with disabilities that would allow for independent and semi-independent living in locations that are proximate to town and village centres and services and amenities such as shops, local healthcare facilities, parks and community centres.

Housing Strategy Objectives

It is an objective of the Council:

SH OBJ 12

To secure the implementation of the Meath Housing Strategy 2020-2026.

SH OBJ 13

To support the delivery of social housing in Meath in accordance with the Council's Social Housing Delivery Programme and Government Policy as set out in Rebuilding Ireland: Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness.

SH OBJ 14

To apply a 10% social housing requirement, pursuant to Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, to land zoned for residential use, or for a mixture of residential and other uses, except where the development would be exempted from this requirement.

SH OBJ 15

To address the identified need to increase the supply of social housing in Trim,Ashbourne, Ratoath, Dunboyne, Dunshaughlin by seeking the provision of social housing additional to that required by way of Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2000 as amended, subject to funding.

SH OBJ 16

To review the Housing Strategy two years after the adoption of the Development Plan as part of the mandatory Two-Year Development Plan review.

SH OBJ 17

To implement the 'Meath County Council Traveller Accommodation Programme 2019-2024' and any subsequent programme adopted during the lifetime of the Development Plan.

SH OBJ 18

To support the provision of accommodation that would satisfy the requirements of people with a disability and the implementation of the 'Strategic Plan for Housing Persons with Disabilities 2016-2019' and any subsequent Plan adopted during the lifetime of the Development Plan.

SH OBJ 19

To support the implementation of the Mid-East Regional Homeless Action Plan 2018-2020 and any other subsequent Homeless Action Plans adopted during the lifetime of the County Development Plan.

3.8.4 Residential Zoned Land Tax

The Residential Zoned Land Tax (RZLT) was introduced under the Finance Act 2021 as a key Housing for All measure to activate underutilised zoned and serviced residential land, supporting compact growth and regeneration. The legislation requires that Planning Authorities prepare annual draft, supplemental and final RZLT maps identifying all residential and mixed-use lands that are zoned and serviced, or capable of being serviced, for development. These maps form the statutory basis for determining tax liability, with land generally becoming liable in the third year after it is first zoned and serviced. Existing, permanently occupied residential properties are included for transparency but are exempt from the tax. The process of identifying land to which the tax applies is ongoing. The final map for 2025, published on 31st January 2025, identifies land that may be liable for the tax in 2025. Meath County Council has prepared an annual draft map for 2026, identifying the land considered to be in scope for the RZLT as of January 1, 2025.

The tax operates as a development activation tool rather than a revenue-raising measure, encouraging the release of serviced lands to support housing supply. The RZLT aligns with broader national planning objectives by discouraging land hoarding, ensuring efficient use of public infrastructure investment, and contributing to more sustainable, compact settlement patterns.

3.8.5 Lands zoned for residential purposes

The following zonings will be applicable to the 'residential' category:

i. A1 'Existing Residential'

ii. A2 'New Residential'

iii. B1 'Commercial/Town or Village Centre'

iv. C1 'Mixed Use'

3.8.6 Lands in need of regeneration

It is an objective of the Council:

SH OBJ 20

To promote the development of vacant residential and regeneration sites in all development centres in the County, as appropriate.

3.8.7 Sustainable Communities

The Institute of Sustainable Communities defines a sustainable community as one *"that is economically, environmentally, and socially healthy and resilient."*[22]

Common elements of a sustainable community include:

- Healthy and safe surroundings in which the needs of everyone are met.
- A strong economy with employment opportunities.
- An environment that is appreciated.

The creation of a sustainable community can be achieved through well designed buildings and spaces, which promote social interaction, ensure ease of access, and create an open and safe environment. An attractive and well-maintained environment also creates a sense of identity that promotes a sense of community in a local neighbourhood.

This Plan continues to promote the development of sustainable communities by supporting a suitable mix of housing units, services, employment, community facilities, and associated infrastructure in appropriate locations.

A key element of a sustainable community is the provision of social and recreational amenities. As the population of settlements increase, existing facilities can sometimes struggle with the associated increased demands on these amenities. In order to ensure there is an appropriate provision of such facilities and amenities, it is a requirement of this Plan that a Social Infrastructure Assessment is included with planning applications for the development of 50 units or more. This Assessment will be required to determine whether or not existing social and recreational facilities are sufficient to cater for the needs of the future residents of the development. (Please refer to Chapter 7 Community Building Strategy for full requirements in respect of Social Infrastructure Audit).

3.8.7.1 Live Work Communities

As part of the spatial implementation of the Economic Development Strategy 2014-22 the Council has piloted and targeted the creation of 'live-work' communities in designated towns at the upper end of the settlement hierarchy. This is a more integrated approach to settlement growth which promotes the location of employment close to residential areas and services such as schools and shops. Dunboyne North and Farganstown in Navan are

two examples of locations in the County where the Council is supporting the delivery of the 'live work' community model.

As stated, these 'live work' communities are targeted particularly towards the larger settlements in the County. There are a number of benefits to the implementation of this model, some of which are as follows:

- A reduced travel time to work which results in people having more time to participate in local activities, which improves the level of social interaction and the sense of community in settlements.
- Improved health and quality of life. If people are working near their home they are more inclined to walk/ cycle to work and participate in other physical activities.
- Fewer cars travelling long distances reduces congestion which benefits the environment and reduces the carbon footprint of the County.

By providing a mix of house types in these communities there is a greater capacity for people to buy a house that suits their needs and will allow people to live in the same neighbourhood through all stages of life, if they so desire. The 'Live work' development model is fully supported in the RSES.

3.8.8 Housing for Older People

With people living longer it is important that provision is made to allow older people to live independently in their local community for as long as possible. Living close to local services and facilities creates a convenient lifestyle for older people and encourages them to remain active and healthy. In Ireland, the Housing Options for Our Ageing Population - Policy Statement 2019[23] emphasizes the importance of choice in housing for older people. A key principle underpinning Government housing policy is to support older people to live in their own homes with dignity and independence for as long as possible. The Council has published an 'Age Friendly Strategy 2023-2028', which seeks to cater for the needs of older people.

This Plan supports the provision of a mix of house types that provide a choice for older people and encourages private developers to incorporate the principles of universal design into new residential properties. Consideration should be given to providing single storey properties in large residential developments that would provide older people with the option of downsizing if so desired. This would have the positive knock on effect of releasing larger homes for younger families.

The adaption of existing homes to meet the changing needs of older people is also supported. It is recognised that there are opportunities for infill development in central locations in established urban areas to meet the housing needs of older people. Such development will be encouraged, subject to the appropriate standards being met.

3.8.8.1 Housing for People with Disabilities

The delivery of housing for people with disabilities requires co-ordination between design teams and community support networks in order to ensure specific housing needs are met.

The Council provides accommodation for disabled people through various means including the adaption of existing housing stock and the construction of specially designed units, subject to adequate funding and resources being available.

The Council published a 'Strategic Plan for Housing Persons with Disabilities' in 2016. This Strategy aims to provide an appropriate range of housing and support services that will meet the needs of persons with disabilities. This Plan will support the implementation of this Strategy.

3.8.8.2 Traveller Accommodation

The Council Traveller Accommodation Programme 2019-2024 outlines the Council Policy regarding the provision of Traveller Accommodation. It sets out the range of social housing supports for Travellers including standard Local Authority Housing, Approved Housing Body Housing, Group Housing and Halting Site Bays.

Provision has been made for two Group Housing Schemes in Navan consisting of eight and six-unit schemes and one Group Housing Scheme in Trim consisting of six units.

The Programme also identifies that the existing Halting Site at St. Francis Park in Navan is under-utilised. The Council is presently seeking funding from the DHPLG for the refurbishment of this site which will allow for full occupancy.

3.8.9 Design Criteria for Residential Development

Well-designed residential developments can make a significant contribution to the creation of an attractive urban environment where people want to live, work, and socialise.

Applications for new residential developments should strive to create a sense of place by responding positively to local surroundings. This can be achieved by taking into account local building types and styles, landmark buildings, and any important views or features in the local landscape. Innovative designs that would not compromise the local environment are encouraged.

New buildings should be designed to take account of the potential implications of climate change including higher temperatures, different rainfall patterns and a potential increase in extreme events such as flooding and storms. Improving the energy efficiency of buildings would reduce energy consumption and therefore reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

New developments should include a suitable mixture of house types that will support the creation of a sustainable community. The principles of good urban design should be embraced. This includes the creation of permeable streets that promote walking and cycling and provide direct and safe routes to adjoining developments and town/village centres in accordance with the principles and recommendations set out in the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (DMURS). Public realm and open spaces should be of a high-quality and design that benefits all residents, whilst measures should also be taken to ensure the creation of a safe and secure environment that would minimise any opportunities for anti-social behaviour and promote the use of high-quality finishes to buildings and boundaries.

The principles of universal design that support the optimal design and layout of buildings and neighbourhoods that cater for all age groups, and the promotion of energy efficiency to improve the environmental performance of buildings and the integration of renewable technologies into the design of new buildings is also encouraged. This concept of providing lifetime adaptable homes is a national policy stated in objective 34 of the NPF, which states: ‘Support the provision of lifetime adaptable homes that can accommodate the changing needs of a household over time’.

The following guidance documents are useful reference points in relation to the design and layout of residential developments:

- The Guidelines on Quality Housing for Sustainable Communities, DEHLG (2007)
- Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlements: Guidelines for Planning Authorities, DHLGH (2024), and associated Design Manual.
- Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments DHLGH (2023)

- The Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets, DTTAS and DECLG (2013 and updated in 2019)
- Permeability Best Practice Guide, NTA (2015)
- Design Manual for Quality Housing, DHLGH (2023)
- Universal Design Guidelines for Homes in Ireland (National Disability Authority & Centre for Excellence in Universal Design)
- Building for Everyone (National Disability Authority & Centre for Excellence in Universal Design)
- Ten Universal Design Features to include in a Lifetime Adaptable and Age Friendly Home (June 2021) Age Friendly Ireland
- Being Age Friendly in the Public Realm, Guidelines and Good Practice, Age Friendly Ireland
- Universal Design Guidelines Dementia Friendly Dwellings for People with Dementia, their Families and Carers (National Disability Authority & Centre for Excellence in Universal Design)

Further details of the standards and requirements for residential developments are set out in Chapter 11 'Development Management Standards and Land Use Zoning Objectives'.

3.8.10 Densities

Building at higher densities makes more efficient use of land and allows for a more compact form of development that supports and maximises investment in critical infrastructure such as public transport..

This Plan seeks to maximise the use of serviced residential lands and promotes the creation of compact, high-quality developments, with higher densities supported in appropriate locations.

Density policy is informed by the Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlements Guidelines (2024) and the National Planning Framework, which supports higher densities in city and town centres and along public transport corridors through mechanisms such as reduced vacancy rates, infill development and the regeneration of centrally located lands.

It is an objective of this Plan to require higher densities on more centrally located and strategic lands in Regional Growth Centres, Metropolitan Towns and Key Towns. Furthermore, this Plan seeks to promote 'live work' communities by promoting higher densities within walking distance of town centres and public transport infrastructure.

It is acknowledged that there may be instances where these densities cannot be achieved due to site constraints, however all developments should strive to achieve the prescribed density in order to support the delivery of more compact development and to ensure a maximum return on investment in social and physical infrastructure.

Further details in relation to density requirements are set out in Chapter 11 'Development Management Standards and Land Use Zoning Objectives'.

Housing Development Policies

It is a policy of the Council:

SH POL 7

To encourage and foster the creation of attractive, mixed use, sustainable communities that include a suitable mix of housing types and tenures with supporting facilities, amenities, and services that meet the needs of the entire community and accord with the principles of universal design, in so far as practicable.

SH POL 8

To support the creation of attractive residential developments with a range of housing options and appropriate provision of functional public and private open space that is consistent with the standards and principles set out in the Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlements Guidelines (2024), the associated Urban Design Manual and any subsequent Guidelines.

SH POL 9

To promote higher residential densities in appropriate locations and in particular close to town centres and along public transport corridors, in accordance with the Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlement Guidelines (2024) .

SH POL 10

To require that applications for residential development take an integrated and balanced approach to movement, place making, and streetscape design in accordance with the requirements of the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets, DTTS and DECLG (2013 and updated in 2019).

SH POL 11

To encourage improvements in the environmental performance of buildings by promoting energy efficiency and energy conservation in existing and new developments in line with best practice.

SH POL 12

To promote innovation in architectural design that delivers buildings of a high-quality that positively contributes to the built environment and local streetscape.

SH POL 13

To require that all new residential developments shall be in accordance with the standards set out in the Development Management Standards and Land Use Zoning Objectives set out in Chapter 11 of this Plan, in so far as is practicable.

Housing Development Objectives

It is an objective of the Council:

SH OBJ 21

To require that, where relevant, all new residential developments shall be in accordance with SSPR 1 to SPPR 4 of the Urban Development and Building Heights Guidelines for Planning Authorities, December 2018 as well as SPPR 1 to SPPR 9 of the Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments Guidelines for Planning Authorities, 2023. All new residential development should comply with the densities outlined in Chapter 11 of this plan.

SH OBJ 22

The Planning Authority will require the provision of between 15-30% of dwellings and apartments in new residential developments of ten units or more to be Age Friendly Lifetime Adaptable Homes, suitable to accommodate or adaptable to provide accommodation for people with disabilities and older people in

accordance with the requirements of the 'Housing Options for Our Ageing Population Policy Statement' (2019), published by the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government and the Department of Health and 'Building for Everyone: A Universal Design', 'Universal Design Guidelines for Homes in Ireland' developed by the Centre for Excellence in Universal Design (National Disability Authority) and section 11.5.29 of this Plan. Planning applications will be required to demonstrate compliance with this objective, and to show an accessible route to the residential units from the boundary of the property. Proximity and access to local services must also be considered relative to the units which are accessible. A universal design statement shall be provided as part of all new planning applications to demonstrate this requirement.

SH OBJ 23

To require that all new residential development applications of 50 units or more are accompanied by a Social Infrastructure Assessment (SIA) to determine if social and community facilities in the area are sufficient to provide for the needs of the future residents in accordance with the requirements of policy SOC POL 6 in the 'Community Building Strategy' (Chapter 7).

SH OBJ 24

Meath County Council recognises the importance of social inclusion and will require 30% of social housing to be fully accessible and built with a universal design approach which will mean that the property will be flexible and can be changed as needed over the course of the occupants lifetime.

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[2] Persons aged 0-14 (Source: CSO Census 2016)

[3] Persons aged 65+ (Source: CSO Census 2016)

[4] The 'Data and Indicators' section in the Appendices of the RSES indicates a Jobs:Resident workforce ratio of 0.7 or greater represents an area has a strong economic function.

[5] Section 3.4.8 of this Plan 'Self-Sustaining Growth Towns' sets out the reasons for including Dunshaughlin as a Self-Sustaining Growth Town in the Settlement Hierarchy

[6] The Written Statements and Land Use Zoning Maps are in Volume 2 of this Plan.

[7] As previously indicated a Joint Urban Area Plan for Drogheda is to be prepared in conjunction with Louth County Council.

[8] Regional Policy Objective 4.11 of the RSES sets out the requirements for the Joint Urban Area Plan

[9] Table 8.2 Rail Projects for the Region , pg. 190 Eastern & Midland Regional Assembly RSES 2019-2031

[10] Regional Policy Objective 4.35 of the RSES

[11] See objective MOV OBJ 3(b) in Chapter 5 Movement Strategy

[12] A list of the Rural Nodes in the County are set out in section 9.5.4

[13] Section 2.4 of the NPF Implementation Housing Growth Requirements Guidelines set out the Methodology for the tiered approach to land use zoning

[15] See Table 2.4 in the Core Strategy together with the supplementary tables included in Variation 5 for further details

[16] Section 4.3 of the RSES 'Taking Account of Existing Plans'

[17] A list of all Rent Pressure Zones in the country can be accessed from this link: Rent Pressure Zones July 2019

[18] Section 38 of the Residential Tenancies (Amendment) Act 2019

[20] National Policy Objective 47 of the NPF First Revision 2025

[21] November 2019

[22] Key elements of a Sustainable Community

[23] Housing Options for Our Ageing Population - Policy Statement 2019

[24] Child Dependency 0-14 (Source: CSO Census 2022)

[25] Persons aged 65+ (Source: CSO Census 2022)

4.1 Introduction

This chapter sets out the economic vision for the County for the period 2021-2027. Continued economic development and job creation will be supported by the work of the Planning and Economic Development Directorate and the Local Enterprise Office (LEO) guided by this Plan via a range of policies and objectives. These policies and objectives have been developed cognisant of the forth coming economic challenges that the County will face during the Plan period.

The Council's staff have an excellent record of delivery, local knowledge, skills and experience necessary to address these challenges. The preparation of an Economic Strategy for the County sets out key targets which support continued economic development. The Economic Strategy for County Meath 2014-2022 a first of its kind, recognises Meath's significant strategic location within the Eastern Midland region and the County's unique competitive advantage within Ireland. This Plan seeks to promote the County as a nationally and internationally attractive and distinctive location in which to conduct business. The policies and objectives of this Plan seek to continue the successful implementation of the Economic Strategy which has facilitated the delivery of a number of significant F.D.I and indigenous projects since its inception.

The National Planning Framework (NPF) acknowledges the opportunities for growth of urban areas and well connected towns that are accessible to significant population catchments.[1] It also recognises the interdependencies between cities and their surrounding Metropolitan Areas and the importance of the Metropolitan Areas in contributing to the economic success of a city. This is clearly acknowledged by the inclusion of an objective within the NPF that a Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP) is to be prepared for the cities of Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Galway, and Waterford.[2]

At a regional level the NPF is implemented through the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES). Due to the diversity and scale of the Eastern and Midlands Region the RSES sets out a vision for future growth and development at both a Strategic Planning Area level and a regional level. The RSES has a much greater focus on economic development and potential than the previous Regional Planning Guidelines. This greater economic focus is intended to strengthen links between Planning policy and economic trends.

The RSES identifies that improving the alignment between the location of residential development and employment is one of the key challenges facing the region. Thus, the RSES fully supports the Council's approach to economic development which established the central importance of 'live work' communities as a panacea to positively manage the extent of outbound commuting from the Mid-East.

A targeted evidence-based Plan led approach has been applied to this chapter which identifies a number of strategically important sites intended to attract specific employment sectors based on a number of variables such as: the strategic location of the sites within the County; the proximity of the sites to a critical mass of skilled workers and public transport and the level of critical infrastructure provision at each location. This targeted Plan led approach endorsed by a strong marketing strategy based around the 'Make it Meath' brand

and supported by a multidisciplinary Planning and economic development team within the Council will provide a platform for the County to be promoted County as an attractive business base for both FDI and SME's over the life of the Plan and beyond.

The need to identify additional strategic economic development sites in those centres which are experiencing significant out bound commuting due to the extent of their resident populations and the lack of local employment opportunities is a key objective of this Development Plan. Thus, building on the notable successes already achieved in the implementation of the Economic Strategy.

4.2 Statutory Context

The Local Government Reform Act 2014 gives legislative effect to the proposals contained in 'Putting People First', and provides for a range of changes to the organisation and work of local authorities. Local Authorities are now required to develop a Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) which seeks to establish an integrated approach to economic and local community development at County level, while Regional Assemblies are in turn required to produce Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies. Further changes include the establishment of the Local Community Development Committees (LCDC's), and Local Enterprise Offices (LEO's) within Local Authorities. A new Regional Assembly Structure has been established reducing the total number of regions to 3; Meath is located within the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly (EMRA)

4.3 Policy Context

4.3.1 Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2019-2031

The EMRA Region provides more than half of what is produced and is home to one in every two people living in the Country, therefore the economic Regional Policy Objectives are central to ensuring this economic powerhouse continues to function effectively. The economic vision is to facilitate sustainable, competitive, inclusive and resilient growth. The economic strategy focuses on a number of key objectives which are as follows:

- Smart Specialisation;
- Clustering;
- Orderly Growth;
- Placemaking;
- Future Proofing and Risk Management.

The strategy sets out a number of guiding principles for the identification of locations for strategic employment growth at Metropolitian, Regional and Local level. These include:

- A focus on technology and innovation roles located at Institutes of Technology, Technological Universities and Universities;
- Current employment locations, density of workers, land take and resource/infrastructure dependency;
- Locations for expansion of existing enterprises;
- Locations for new enterprises based on whether they are people intensive/space intensive, tied to a particular resource or dependant on a particular piece of infrastructure;
- Locations for potential relocation of enterprises that may be better suited to alternative locations and whether such a move would facilitate the release of urban land for more efficient uses;
- Within large urban areas locations where significant job location can be catered for through infrastructure servicing and proximity to public transport corridors.

The foregoing principles have been considered in the drafting of this economic strategy. Having regard to the plentiful supply of land designated for employment uses in suitable locations in County Meath, there is potential to accommodate some enterprises seeking to relocate from Dublin City and thus make available urban land in the city for redevelopment. Bearing this in mind it is intended to target specific employment uses which align with the principles of the Economic Strategy and direct same to suitable locations.

A number of the guiding principles for investment priorities have relevance to the challenges to be addressed in this strategy including availability of human capital, proximity to third level institutions, availability of transport infrastructure and broadband, capacity of place and impact of commuting, alignment with NPF in respect of Data Centre locations etc.

The Dublin- Belfast Economic corridor is a key element of the RSES strategy and its importance to the economic success of the region is emphasised. The role of Key Towns in the region in the provision of a strong employment base for their resident population and hinterlands is also acknowledged.

In respect of the rural economy RPO 6.5 advocates the identification of measures in LECP's for the regeneration in small town and village cores. The strategy advocates the exploring of options to co-locate housing in rural towns and villages with incubator space near Institutes of Technology/Technological Universities to facilitate technological spill over. The strategy fully supports the enhancement of the agriculture, food, forestry, energy sectors in tandem with encouraging diversification in the context of landscape and heritage protection.

4.3.2 Putting People First – Action Programme for Effective Local Government

Putting People First – Action Programme for Effective Local Government sets out the Plans for the greater alignment of local government and local development. It seeks to provide

Local Authorities with more autonomy in the support of enterprise and the promotion of wider economic development, thereby creating and sustaining jobs. It's four key objectives are:

- Doing more for the economy, enterprise and the local economy
- Building a local government system for the 21st Century
- Local Government that is soundly funded, working better and serving the community
- Good governance, strong leadership and democratic accountability

4.3.3 Action Plan for Jobs 2017

This document is a high level, ambitious, all-of-Government initiative designed to mainstream creativity in the life of the nation so that individually and collectively, Irish people at home and abroad, can realise their full creative potential. The purpose of the document is to respond to the immediate challenge of the UK's decision to leave the EU and also to inform the Government's response to a more volatile and changing external environment by strengthening the resilience and agility of the Country's enterprise base.

4.3.4 Mid-East Regional Enterprise Plan to 2020

The Mid-East Regional Enterprise Plan builds on the success of the Mid-East Regional Action Plan for Jobs (2016–2017) to ensure that it remains effective and that it continues to deliver jobs across the Mid-East region and can be robust to address the challenges we face, including Brexit.

This Plan focuses on four core objectives:

1. Developing the Mid-East as a hub for the Screen Content Creation Sector;
2. Developing a Network of Innovative Coworking Workspaces;
3. Building an ecosystem framework to support the Agri-food sector;
4. Ensure the availability of Skills and Talent to realise the Region's future economic potential and address upskilling requirements.

4.3.5 Winning: Foreign Direct Investment, 2015-2019, (IDA)

This strategy aims to increase foreign direct investment at a regional level, more evenly throughout the Irish economy which positively impacts indigenous business and regional locations. The strategy seeks to continue winning investments and see the benefits flow as widely as possible in economic terms throughout Ireland. Ambitious targets include; 80,000 new jobs; 900 investments; €3bn R&D investments and balanced regional growth. The core role of IDA Ireland set out in this document is 'to create employment with economic and social benefits for the Irish people'.

4.3.6 Meath Local Economic and Community Plan 2016-2021

As outlined above the Council is obliged under the Local Government Reform Act 2014 to develop a 6-year LECP for the County. This Plan is required to be consistent with the National Planning Framework, Regional Spatial Economic Strategy and the County Development Plan. It provides economic and community objectives that promote and support the economic and local community development of the County. Tourism and recreation are noted as key sectors in both the economic and social development of the County, providing opportunities for employment and wealth generation, and also facilities and infrastructure that enhance the quality of life for residents. This is reflected within the policy framework of the Meath LECP.

4.4 Vision for the Economy and Employment Strategy

It is a cross cutting theme of this Plan to enhance the competitiveness and attractiveness of the County in order to make it one of Ireland's prime locations for indigenous and foreign economic and employment generating investment. It is the policy of this Plan to promote the County as a cost-competitive and well-connected investment location in the Greater Dublin Area. This vision will guide ongoing external engagement process between the Council and the IDA, Enterprise Ireland and other agencies, now and in the years ahead.

It is the policy of the Council:

ED POL 1

To facilitate and support the continued growth of the economy in the County in a sustainable manner and in accordance with the National Planning Framework (NPF) and the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES).

4.5 Economic Development Strategy for County Meath 2014-2022

Since the adoption of the Local Government Reform Act 2014 the Council has taken a very proactive approach to leading economic development in the County, which includes the establishment of the Meath Economic Forum in 2013 and the publication of the Economic Development Strategy for County Meath 2014-2022. The Strategy sets evidence-based measures aimed at accelerating the economic transformation, revitalisation and sustainable development of the County. The Strategy contains 8 no. key actions/recommendations designed to achieve the projected level of employment growth in the County by 2022 of an additional 7,500 jobs in order to broaden the County's economic base by growing the share

of employment taken up by knowledge-orientated activities and thus growing both indigenous and Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) enterprises in the County.

The promotion of economic development requires a multi-pronged approach, the key components of which are as follows:

- Identifying key strategic sites for employment generation in County Meath for the promotion of economic growth locally;
- Reserving sufficient employment zoned land in suitable locations for industry and enterprise uses;
- Offering a good quality of life encouraging and providing a sustainable "live work" development model in the County, thereby reducing unsustainable long-distance commuting patterns for employment;
- Providing and facilitating the provision of requisite physical infrastructure;
- Facilitating relevant bodies regarding the availability of high-speed telecommunications;
- Facilitating relevant energy suppliers regarding the availability of clean and reliable sources of energy;
- Promoting and facilitating appropriate educational/training measures to ensure a suitably skilled local workforce;
- Providing for appropriate zoned lands at strategic locations to accommodate synergies between third level institutions and business enterprises including start-up companies;
- Forging mutually-beneficial linkages and partnerships with the business and third level institutions including research and development facilities;
- Securing high standards of landscape and environmental protection/enhancement;
- Ensuring that towns and villages remain attractive to investment, and;
- Recognising the critical role tourism and related activity plays in the economic base of the County and to support the continued investment in this key indigenous industry.

The measures recommended within the Economic Development Strategy seek to promote County Meath to fulfil its economic potential and to prosper as a successful, diverse and vibrant social, civic, commercial, and residential centre that will be recognised locally, nationally and internationally as a highly attractive and distinctive location in which to live and conduct business.

The Economic Development Strategy recognises that the County has an unparalleled and unique competitive advantage within Ireland, due to its:

- strategic location within the fastest growing region in Ireland;
- proximity to the Dublin Metropolitan Area and its markets;

- proximity to Dublin Airport and Dublin Port;
- location within the Dublin – Belfast Economic Corridor;
- highly skilled labour force;
- high-quality built and natural environment, and;
- lower housing prices.

These advantages offer distinctive economic and commercial investment opportunities. Notwithstanding this, the Strategy also identifies existing trends within the County which impact on the economic performance of the County including:

- Narrow base of economic activities in largely traditional areas;
- FDI deficit;
- Low penetration of knowledge orientated activities and;
- Substantial skills leakage due to commuting trends from the County.

The key aim of the Economic Strategy is to positively address these trends, providing for a more robust economic base within the County in order to improve the County's economic resilience to changes in the geo political sphere both nationally and internationally.

The sites contained in the Economic Strategy are listed below, and illustrated in Map 4.1,

- Navan (IDA Business & Technology Park)
- South Drogheda (IDA Business & Technology Park and lands in private ownership)
- Dunboyne North (Lands adjacent to the M3 Parkway Rail Head)
- Ashbourne (Lands north of the Rath Roundabout)
- Kells Business Park

4.5.1 Economic Variation to County Development Plan 2013-2019

In order to enable the spatial implementation of this Strategy it was necessary to align the policies and objectives of the Plan to the tenets of the Strategy as they relate to statutory land use Planning.

The implementation of the 8 no. specific actions contained in the Strategy was the primary response of the Local Authority to seek to improve the number of local employment opportunities available to the resident population. In particular Action 3 of the Strategy identified a number of revisions required to the County Development Plan 2013-2019 to positively provide the framework for investment and employment creation while at the same time removing non–essential potential barriers to employment generating development. The requirements arising from Action 3 of the Strategy were a key reason for

the preparation of Variation no. 3, therefore a comprehensive review of the County Development Plan was undertaken.

On the 23rd May 2016 Meath County Council Members voted to adopt Variation no. 3 to the Meath County Development Plan 2013-2019 and therefore commenced the process which has instigated the economic successes within the County to date.

4.6 Changing Economic Climate

The economy has emerged from a difficult period and is forecast to achieve healthy, sustainable growth rates over the medium-term. Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has outpaced all other European economies with year on year growth of 8.2% in Ireland recorded in 2018[3]. This figure is forecasted to remain robust over the coming years with the headline GDP rate forecast to increase by 4.9% in 2019 and 3.1% in 2020[4]
The most significant threat to the stability of the Irish economy is generally accepted to be BREXIT. A number of scenarios can be considered in relation to same, irrespective of the final outcomes of negotiations, it will undoubtedly affect our economy significantly. In this regard the NPF stresses 'the cross-border and all-island dimension of spatial strategy. The continued strengthening of the economic relationship between Dublin and Belfast can help reinforce the competitiveness of the Eastern and Midland Region, while also helping to mitigate the adverse effects of Brexit'[5].

Irish based companies who rely on the UK for exports may be adversely affected by increases in the cost of doing business as a result of tariffs or currency depreciations and will be required to diversify their markets in order to maintain healthy trading levels. In line with the government's commitment to facilitate European trade InterTrade Ireland will continue their supports for SME's trading across the Border and Enterprise Ireland will continue supports for access to foreign markets. Fortunately for the County a significant number of companies assisted by the Local Enterprise Office based within the County trade towards Dublin and this is likely to lessen the impact of BREXIT in respect of these businesses. However those businesses with a high dependence on the UK for imports of raw materials or exports of goods and services will face significant challenges and uncertainties associated with the introduction of tariffs or regulatory divergence between the EU and UK as part of any Withdrawal Agreement.

While the County must future proof against any ill effects from BREXIT there are potential gains which may emerge. Ireland is in a strong position to attract FDI from the UK, in 2015 the Country had 3% of the net inward Global FDI, this amounted to half that in the UK – an extraordinarily high proportion for Ireland given the much smaller size of its economy and population compared to that of the UK. The level of US investment and other non-EU investment in the UK is expected to decline post-Brexit as the investors involved will seek a base in the EU (a much larger market than the UK, even when the UK leaves the EU). This presents an opportunity for Ireland and for the County in particular, given the County's strategic location adjacent to the National Gateway and the availability of a highly educated and skilled workforce.

During the finalisation of this Plan the Covid-19 pandemic has impacted on economic activity across the country. The full impact of this pandemic on economic activity and the wider society is unclear, however, it is considered that the need to increase employment opportunities and promote 'live-work' communities continues to be an economic priority for Meath County Council. It is considered that this Plan as well as the 2014-2022 Economic Strategy provides an appropriate platform for County Meath's economy to withstand the impacts of the ongoing pandemic as well as being in a strong position to recover and prosper in the coming years once appropriate treatments/vaccines are provided to address the Covid-19 pandemic.

4.6.1 Successes and Projecting beyond 2022

Since the launch of the Economic Strategy, positive outcomes have been delivered - not by coincidence but as a result of the implementation of the actions set out in the Economic Development Strategy. Employment rates have increased by 1.47% on an annual basis with 2,935 additional jobs within the County, which equates to an 8% increase in employment. The Council has played a leading role in the implementation of the actions, which were deliberately kept limited in number and targeted on key areas reflecting the comparative strengths of the County and the issues that need to be addressed;

1. Increasing the jobs-to-population ratio,
2. Reducing the economic leakages in the form of outward commuting and
3. Reducing retail loss and broadening the employment base of the County by facilitating more high-quality, knowledge-oriented employment.

Recent successes include the Facebook data centre developments, Shire (Takeda) Pharma Group and the Avoca development at Dunboyne which will jointly provide more than 550 jobs to the County in the near future. The development of EMeRI Nutrition in the IDA Business Park is a welcome indicator of additional employment activity in Navan.

The timeframe of the current Economic Strategy is to 2022, however it is projected that the long-term issues outlined above in terms of the current narrow base of economic activities, FDI deficit etc., will be as relevant post 2022 as they are currently. It is also predicted that there will be improvements in the trend in these metrics, in favour of Meath, with particular improvements to the local economic base. In order to reach the target of 7,500 jobs identified in the Strategy by 2022 a rise in employment growth to a rate of 1.74% is required. Given that the annual employment growth rate within the State is 2.16% it is considered that this target is achievable and it is anticipated that the target can be met prior to 2022, depending on the economic effects of the Covid-19 pandemic.

While much attention has been given to FDI and the successes achieved since the preparation of the Economic Development Strategy, the more traditional economic base of the County must continue to be supported, including extractive activities (mining and quarrying), meat processing, other agri-food, engineering and furniture making etc. The indigenous sector has seen an increase in employment from 11.4% of total jobs in the County in 2011 to 15.4% in 2016. Such has been the growth in employment in Enterprise Ireland (EI) clients that the County ranked 5th among all counties in the country in the latter

year in terms of the number of jobs provided. Increases have also been seen in Údarás client firms in the County rising from 0.4% to 0.5% of total employment. These statistics are a positive performance indicator for the County because EI client companies are relatively large and have access to international markets. The County's advantage in this regard relative to the State has remained strong with a widening gap of 6.6 percentage points in 2016. Accordingly, the employment prospects are likely to remain positive for larger Irish-owned companies based in the County.

4.7 Development Plan Economic & Employment Strategy

Building on the momentum of the successful implementation of the Economic Strategy and having regard to the need identified in the RSES to address the disconnect experienced most acutely in the Mid-East between where people live and work the Council is setting out an ambitious programme for the delivery of a wider spread of economic growth throughout the County. The successful implementation of the Strategy to date could not have been achieved without significant support from national employment support agencies particularly the IDA/EI. The focus in this strategy will be on securing the 'build out' of the remaining strategic sites originally designated in the Economic Strategy complimented by additional sites. Support for this process comes from the RSES which has strongly endorsed the 'live work' community development model championed in the spatial implementation of the Meath Economic Strategy. The strategic employment sites identified support the development of compact settlements linked by multi-modal corridors and are in accordance with the criteria for employment growth as set out in Section 4.4 of the NPF, in that these sites are located proximate to a critical mass of skilled workers; can be served by readily available infrastructure in terms of water supply, waste water capacity, electricity and fibre optic connections; and all locations have the potential for expansion of existing large industry and the provision of lands which could facilitate co-location of similar industry.

In addition to the 5 Strategic Employment Sites identified in the Economic Strategy 2014-2022, this Plan has identified an additional 7 sites that have been potential to deliver economic development and support the creation of sustainable communities. These sites are a combination of new and existing zoned lands. The intention in designating these sites as strategic employment sites is to facilitate a similar approach to the marketing of the sites originally designated in the Economic Strategy. This focus is required to stimulate development on these lands. The location of these lands are identified in Map 4.1 overleaf and are as follows:

- Trim Road lands, Navan identified for High Technology Uses and Warehousing and Distribution[6];
- Maynooth Environs (existing and additional employment land);
- Ratoath, lands between the existing build up area of Ratoath and Fairyhouse/Tattersalls Equestrian complex, for the creation of an equestrian based employment hub (existing employment land, additional lands identified);

- Kells, lands opposite Headfort Golf Club (existing employment land);
- Laytown, lands adjacent to Laytown Train Station (existing employment land, additional lands identified);
- Enfield, lands to the east of the built up area of Enfield (existing employment land);
- Dunshaughlin, lands to the south of the town centre (existing and additional employment land).

Map 4.1 Strategic Employment Sites

It is the policy of the Council:

ED POL 2

To support and facilitate the economic development of the County in accordance with the Economic Strategy 2014-2022 or its replacement. There will be a general presumption against development that would prejudice the implementation of the Economic Strategy.

ED POL 3

To encourage the provision of 'live work' communities, in which employment, residency and sustainable transport facilities are located in close proximity to each other, to reduce long-distance commuter trends and congestion.

ED POL 4

To identify and promote a range of locations within the County for different types of enterprise activity including international business and technology parks, small and medium enterprises (SME) and micro enterprise centres.

ED POL 5

To co-operate with local and national development agencies and engage with existing and future employers in order to maximise job opportunities in the County.

ED POL 6

To ensure that people intensive developments are located close to strategic public transport networks.

ED POL 7

To support start-up businesses and small scale industrial enterprises throughout the County.

ED POL 8

To encourage and facilitate small indigenous industries, at appropriate locations with good communication infrastructure, in recognition of their increasing importance in providing local employment and helping to stimulate economic activity within small communities.

ED POL 9

To support the use of town centre locations for new service focused enterprises.

ED POL 10

To ensure that zoning for employment uses will be carried out in a manner which protects investment in the national road network, in accordance with Chapter 2 of the DECLG guidelines on 'Spatial Planning and National Roads.

ED POL 11

To require that all new developments with over 100 employees shall have a mobility management Plan, (Refer to Chapter 11 Development Management Standards and Land Use Zoning Objectives).

ED POL 12

To support appropriately considered events on the County's beaches which do not impact on sensitive coastal environments (e.g. dune systems, coastal wetlands and estuaries) and are compliant with the requirements of the Habitats Directive and other environmental considerations.

It is an objective of the Council:

ED OBJ 1

To address the rate of out bound commuting, the highest of any County in the State, with the provision of 'live work' communities in strategic settlements served by sustainable transport, thereby improving quality of life, encouraging volunteerism a and community engagement.

ED OBJ 2

To continue to promote Meath as a strategically located economic and employment hub within the Greater Dublin Area.

ED OBJ 3

To continue to work with key state agencies and other stakeholders to develop opportunities for employment creation in the County.

ED OBJ 4

To identify suitable locations and support the provision of co-working facilities, digital hubs/eHubs and eWorking centres throughout the County that function as outreach hubs for city-based employers and promote flexible working arrangements.

ED OBJ 5

To work with Irish Water and other infrastructure providers, to support the provision of services and facilities to accommodate the future economic growth of the County and to seek to reserve infrastructure capacity for employment generating uses.

ED OBJ 6

To acquire suitable land (subject to the availability of funding), including where appropriate, disused sites in State ownership, for creative and innovative entrepreneurial initiatives and the provision of clustered incubator units.

4.7.1 Economic Areas – Metropolitan Area

4.7.1.1 Dunboyne

It remains a priority for the Council to deliver on the very significant potential presented by the lands adjacent to the M3 Parkway in Dunboyne North as one of the five key strategic employment sites identified within the Economic Development Strategy for County Meath. The area is intended for high technology employment opportunities mixed with other complementary and supporting land uses such as residential and community built on the sustainable community model. The Council remains fully committed to the delivery of a vibrant 'live work' community at this location in accordance with the RSES. Having regard to the limited area of land in County Meath located within the Metropolitan area of Dublin it is critical that these lands are prioritised for services and infrastructure in order to deliver the planned quantum of mixed use development as set out in the RSES. Furthermore, development of these lands would build on the significant public financial investment already made in the area to create a public transport interchange and is intended to reduce the significant out bound commuter rate of 77% in this area[7]. This area is identified as one with the potential to accommodate increased building height, (Refer to Chapter 11 Development Management Standards and Land Use Zoning Objectives). It is also noted that there is the opportunity to complete the implementation of the Transportation Study for Dunboyne and Environs, as noted in Section 4.0 of the Dunboyne & Clonee Written Statement, in Volume 2 of this Development Plan.

The Facebook data centre developments on the enterprise and employment lands at Portan Clonee have been a notable success for County Meath. Given the proximity of these lands to the T50 fibre optic cable and the access to high voltage electricity, there is an opportunity to generate further economic investment in the area by identifying additional lands for enterprise and employment uses. These additional lands will promote clustering and agglomeration effects of similar format developments at this location. National and Regional

policy supports the accommodation of 'land hungry' developments NPF /RSES policies support the accommodation of 'land hungry' development at such locations.

ED OBJ 7

To promote an educational partnership with accessible third level institutions such as Maynooth University, UCD, Trinity College Dublin, Technological University Dublin and Dunboyne College of Further Education and existing and future businesses and the Council. To promote Dunboyne as an employment base with direct access to a pool of skilled graduates and encourage the location of start-up businesses in the area.

ED OBJ 8

Encourage mixed use settlement forms and sustainable centres, in which employment, residency, education and local services / amenities are located in close proximity to each other.

ED OBJ 9

To encourage the development of synergies between Dunboyne North and Maynooth in relation to complementary Life Science / SMART Park campuses in partnership and collaboration with established third level institutions.

4.7.1.2 Maynooth

Maynooth Environs in County Meath is located on the northern periphery of the dynamic university town of Maynooth. These lands comprise of 139 hectares approximately 1.5km to the north east of the town centre. The lands enjoy an attractive setting and character in proximity to the Carton House Estate on which there is a high-quality hotel used for business and recreational purposes. The town has a growing student and residential population with established rail and motorway links to Dublin and the West.

The RSES acknowledges the potential of Maynooth to accommodate significant employment and residential growth with its designation as a Key Town. The RSES states that in order to enhance co-ordination of development in Maynooth, including its environs in County Meath, the preparation and adoption of a Joint Local Area Plan (LAP) should be carried out by Kildare and Meath County Councils, (RPO 4.35 refers). This RPO sets out that the joint LAP will set a boundary for the town and will identify strategic housing and employment development areas, infrastructural investment requirements and promote greater co-ordination and sequential development of serviced lands for development. Therefore, the preparation of the joint LAP will allow the Meath Environs of Maynooth to play an active supporting role in the further development of this university town.

The development of the Meath Environs of Maynooth is envisaged by the Council as a natural extension to the town. The Council intend to pursue the 'live work' development model, as supported in the RSES, with significant emphasis on the delivery of strategic employment uses and housing at this location. Given the proximity of the Maynooth Environs to the University campus, the accommodation model could provide for an element of student accommodation. The lands adjacent to Carton present an opportunity to further enhance a successful tourism product at this location.

The RSES emphasises that there are significant opportunities to further develop knowledge-based employment focusing on ICT and manufacturing through the development of a research and technology campus to the west of the existing university campus in Co Kildare.

The further development of Maynooth University as a leading third level research and educational facility is critical for the economic development of the town and the region with potential synergies to large established employers such as Intel and Hewlett Packard. Lands at Moygaddy within the Maynooth Environs of County Meath have also been identified by the RSES for Science and Technology based employment. The County Development Plan sets out that the Environs will be a focal point for science and technology employment with potential for additional tourism related uses. Employment uses are based on the Economic Strategy objectives which focus on the development of Life Sciences, High Tech, Bio Tech, ICT, Research & Development and seeks to benefit from synergies with third level institutions which may include Maynooth University (MU) and major employers already established in the sub Region (Intel, Hewlett Packard). The Economic Strategy seeks to brand this area as a centre of excellence in the knowledge-based economy, particularly having regard to its location viz a viz the M4 Knowledge Corridor. The objective is to foster a 'dynamic partnership' between multinational companies, indigenous Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SME's), and third level institutions which may include NUI Maynooth University (MU), in a campus style environment of exceptional high-quality design. The Council is aware that there is interest in the development of a private hospital and associated medical related uses in the Maynooth Environs. A development of this type would contribute significant levels of employment to the locality and may possibly also include medical research type uses.

RPO 4.33 of the RSES acknowledges the need for co-ordinated delivery of strategic infrastructure by stating as follows: ' Support the continued development of Maynooth, co-ordinated with the delivery of strategic infrastructure including pedestrian and cycle linkages within the town and to the Royal Canal Greenway, DART expansion and road linkages forming part of the Maynooth Outer Orbital Route in a manner which supports future development and population growth and builds on synergies with Maynooth University promoting a knowledge-based economy.'

This Development Plan contains supporting objectives for the delivery of the Maynooth Outer Orbital Route located in the Meath Environs, refer to Chapter 5, Movement Strategy. Part of this orbital route in County Kildare has received LIHAF funding. A critical component of any development proposals in the Maynooth Environs will be the ability to deliver sustainable connections to the train station. The RSES identifies Maynooth as a key settlement on the north- west corridor and considers that the electrification of the Maynooth line, to be delivered by 2027 will support sequential growth in Leixlip and Maynooth.[8]
The MASP supports employment generation at strategic locations within the metropolitan area to strengthen the local employment base and reduce pressure on the metropolitan transport network, including; future employment districts in Swords and Dublin Airport/South Fingal; Maynooth; Bray; Greystones; Dunboyne-Portan; and Leixlip.

ED OBJ 10

In accordance with RPO 4.33 of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy, to support the continued development of Maynooth, co-ordinated with the delivery of strategic infrastructure including pedestrian and cycle linkages within the town and to the Royal Canal Greenway, DART expansion and road linkages forming part of the Maynooth Outer

Orbital Route in a manner which supports future development and population growth and builds on synergies with Maynooth University promoting a knowledge-based economy.

ED OBJ 11

To further key linkages and partnerships with Maynooth University including the branding of the area as a centre of excellence in the knowledge-based economy.

ED OBJ 12

To work with Kildare County Council to further develop the area as an attractor for Life Sciences, High Tech, Bio Tech, ICT, Research & Development employment. The council in conjunction with Kildare County Council will work with Irish Water and other agencies to ensure the delivery of key infrastructure to facilitate future development.

ED OBJ 13

To promote the development of high-quality tourism, leisure and complementary activities that can build on and complement the existing attractions in the area which include Carton House and Demense, the town of Maynooth and Maynooth University to provide a destination venue of national significance.

ED OBJ 14

It is a priority for the Council to deliver on the significant potential of the lands in the Maynooth Environs, a designated strategic employment site to create a unique employment hub centred on a high tech/bio tech campus within the lands, supported by a 'live work' community with a mixture of employment, residential, community, medical and tourism uses to be progressed following the preparation of Master Plans. Said Master Plans shall be agreed in writing with the Executive of Meath County Council in advance of the lodgement any Planning application. This area can accommodate increased building height which shall be addressed as part of the Master Plans. (Please refer to Volume Maynooth Environs Written Statement for detailed requirements in respect of Master Plans).

4.7.2 Economic Areas – Core Area

4.7.2.1 Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor

The Dublin – Belfast Economic corridor is acknowledged within the NPF as the 'largest economic agglomeration on the island of Ireland'. This corridor is the national entry point to the island and it is a policy of the NPF to support and 'promote the economic potential of the corridor and develop it as a distinct spatial area'.

This Corridor connects the two main cities of scale on the Island and its area of influence hosts a combined population, between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, of more than 3.3 million people of which Drogheda, Dundalk and Newry are part. The Corridor has the capacity to provide the only potential paired city growth pole of scale on the Island reaching a European benchmark 5 million population target to compete with similar city regions in the EU. The imperative to counteract BREXIT with a proactive spatial economic policy adds to the international significance of the Corridor. It also provides opportunities to further Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), for example with the Louth Pharma hub at the centre of the Corridor, and the e-payments cluster. By increasing its critical mass, population and jobs growth will take place in a sustainable growth pattern focused on clusters and

smart specialisation, in line with the Region's Economic and Settlement Strategy set out in the RSES. The Corridor also offers extended strategic connections throughout the Island through links with the TEN-T network and the Dublin- Rosslare route.

M1 Digital Payments Region
An M1 'Digital Payments Region' is a key part of the Government's North East Action Plan for Jobs which proposes the creation of a 'digital payments hub' along the M1 economic corridor with the potential to create hundreds of sustainable new jobs.

4.7.2.2 Regional Growth Centre – Drogheda

The RSES sets out the function and role of a Regional Growth Centre, which is to act as a focal point for population growth and economic development and to enhance national and regional growth.

The designation of Drogheda as a Regional Growth Centre in the NPF is a recognition of the strategic location of the settlement along the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor and its potential to attract jobs and investment. Its connectivity with Dublin and Belfast in addition to Dundalk and Newry highlights the opportunities there are to develop synergies and economic links along this corridor.

The RSES also acknowledges the potential of lands in the Southern Environs of Drogheda to accommodate economic investment in section 4.5 of the Strategy where it states that support is given to "the sustainable development of existing zoned lands in the Northern and Southern Environs of the town with particular emphasis on the promotion of the IDA Business Park as a location for economic investment.'[9]
In addition, there is a large parcel of employment lands at Bryanstown that have the potential to make a significant contribution to the economic development of the area.

The Council is committed to the development of a Joint Urban Plan for this area with Louth County Council and to develop the area in partnership in a coordinated and complimentary manner. The economic potential of these lands is evident in the growth of employment rates in this area during the inter-census period in which persons employed grew by 44%.[10]
With regard to port facilities in the area, the RSES supports the role of Drogheda Port in RPO 4.12. The RPGs supported the examination of the expansion of Dublin Port for a new Port facility on the east coast, however this was not continued in the RSES. There have been previous proposals for the development of a world class deepwater port, logistics centre and business park at Gormonston, County Meath.[11] The potential economic benefits of such a facility in this location are recognised.
The economic development objectives for this area positioned on the M1 which is identified within the NPF as the national entry point to the island include:

ED OBJ 15

To develop in conjunction with Louth County Council and other stakeholders a strategy for the expansion and economic development of Drogheda as part of a joint vision and Urban Plan for Drogheda.[12]

ED OBJ 16

To continue to support and promote the inherent economic potential of the M1 corridor, building upon existing strengths. There will be a focus on developing the corridor as a distinct spatial area with international visibility.

ED OBJ 17

To develop the Drogheda IDA Business Park (Donore Road) and adjoining land as a location for economic investment. There is significant scope in the IDA Business Park for further expansion which will be prioritised by the Council in conjunction with the IDA.

ED OBJ 18

To promote an educational partnership with accessible third level institutions such as Dundalk DIT and Drogheda Institute of Further Education and existing businesses and the Council.

ED OBJ 19

To promote the Southern Environs of Drogheda as an employment base and encourage the location of start-up businesses in the area.

ED OBJ 20

To encourage the development of employment lands at Bryanstown and Mill Road/Marsh Road as part of a 'live –work' community at these locations.

ED OBJ 21

To encourage the further development of high value added employment and financial services in the Drogheda Environs.

ED OBJ 22

To seek to maximise the tourism potential of the significant tourism hub within the Boyne Valley region which includes the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Brú na Bóinne, the Battle of the Boyne Site at Oldbridge, the Boyne River, and the coastal area of East Meath stretching from Mornington to Gormonston whilst ensuring the environmental protection of sensitive and protected coastal habitats and landscape.

ED OBJ 23

To support and protect the role of Drogheda Port as a port of regional significance, including facilitating the relocation of Drogheda Port in Meath subject to a feasibility study and appropriate coastal zone management, as well as supporting the future development of the Port Access Northern Cross Route (PANCR), in line with RPO 4.12.

4.7.2.3 Key Town - Navan

Rail connectivity to Dublin is critical to significantly strengthen the attractiveness of Navan as an investment and employment centre and would therefore in turn have a positive impact on growing the population of the town which is expected to increase to 50,000 in the longer term.

This development strategy seeks to rebalance the provision of jobs so that residents of Navan have access to opportunities for employment within easy distance from their homes, thereby reducing levels of commuting in the area as a whole. The Strategy will ensure that the primacy of Navan is recognised, protected and promoted whilst ensuring that over time, a number of other major supporting employment centres as outlined above are developed

which provide balance to the location of employment opportunities across the County. Navan, in appropriate locations having regard to adjoining land uses, pattern and character of development, can accommodate increased building height which shall be addressed as part of the future LAP.

The IDA Business and Technology Park within Navan is one of the key strategic employment sites within the County. The Strategy identified that approximately 23.5ha of land is available for development within the IDA Park and these lands have the potential to accommodate both people and product intensive economic activity including E1 High Technology – knowledge orientated services and manufacturing. Further employment lands were identified at Farganstown Navan (circa 40 hectares) which could accommodate similar types of development to include land intensive development such as a data centre. Strategic employment lands have been identified to the south of the town off the Trim Rd. RPO 47 of the RSES states as follows: 'Support the development of strategic employment lands on the Trim Rd in Navan, subject to the outcome of appropriate environmental assessment and the Planning process.'

The Economic Strategy seeks to build on the success of the Mullaghboy Industrial Park and Liscarton Industrial lands and additional lands have been identified adjacent to these sites to facilitate the continued growth in the indigenous and SME sectors.

A proactive approach to marketing and delivery of economic development on these lands is strongly promoted within the Economic Development Strategy.

It is an objective of the Council:

ED OBJ 24

To promote the Key Town of Navan as a primary centre of employment in the County so that its significant residential population will have employment opportunities within easy distance of their homes, thereby reducing outbound commuting.

ED OBJ 25

To support the reappraisal and thereafter, promote, facilitate and advance the Dunboyne/M3 Parkway rail line to Navan during the Midterm review of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy, in accordance with Table 8.2 of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy.[13]

ED OBJ 26

To recognise the significance of the Regional Hospital as a catalyst for significant employment opportunities in accordance with RPO 4.44 of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy.

ED OBJ 27

In accordance with RPO 4.42 of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy, to support the delivery of road infrastructure to release strategic residential and employment lands for sustainable development and to improve connectivity and the efficient movement of people and services in Navan.

ED OBJ 28

To promote Navan as an employment base and encourage the location of start-up businesses in the area.

ED OBJ 29

To promote an educational partnership with accessible third level institutions such as UCD, Trinity, DCU, DKIT and Blanchardstown IT and existing businesses, future employers and the Council.

ED OBJ 30

To promote the further development of the Navan IDA Business & Technology Park as one of the strategic sites for economic investment in Meath as identified in the Economic Development Strategy 2014-2022.

ED OBJ 31

In accordance with RPO 4. 47 of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy, support the development of strategic employment lands at the Trim Road in Navan, subject to the outcome of appropriate environmental assessments and the Planning process.

ED OBJ 32

To promote the development of the Strategic Employment lands at Farganstown for high technology general enterprise and employment uses (E1/E2 zoning).

ED OBJ 33

To continue to develop Navan as a Level II Town Centre and primary retail location within the County. A variety of comparison shopping will be encouraged within the town in order to stem the comparison retail leakage to the wider region.

ED OBJ 34

To support the implementation of the Public Realm Plan 'Navan 2030' to make the town a more attractive place to live, shop, visit and do business in accordance with RPO 4.43 of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy.

ED OBJ 35

To support the future redevelopment of Pairc Tailteann as a modern sports hub which will be an important economic, sporting and cultural asset for the County and the Region comprising an upgraded Pairc Tailteann, to include associated and complementary uses in accordance with the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy.

ED OBJ 36

To facilitate the appropriate expansion of the Liscarton and Mullaghboy Industrial Estates.

4.7.3 Self Sustaining Growth Towns

4.7.3.1 Ashbourne

Located on the border with Fingal, Ashbourne is the second largest town in Meath, and is one of the fastest growing towns in the County. Between 2011-2016 the population increased by 11.7%, bringing the total population to 12,679. It is an important employment and service centre in that it supports almost 2,000 jobs, which is c.5% of the total jobs in the County. Many of these jobs are concentrated in the recently redeveloped town centre and a number of business and industrial parks in the northern part of the town. Transport, distribution and logistics, and retailing and wholesaling are important sectors for the town,

reflecting its favourable location, including its proximity to Dublin Port and Dublin Airport. Ashbourne's competitive advantage is based on its unique location on the boundary of Fingal and County Meath. The town is close to Dublin Airport with excellent transport links that rapidly connect the town to Dublin city centre.

The Council recognises that there are opportunities to further enhance the economic performance of Ashbourne by capitalising on its proximity to Dublin Airport and the associated national and international connectivity that this provides. As previously indicated, there are a number of business/industrial parks in the town that benefit from access to the M2 Motorway. The importance of Ashbourne as a centre for employment growth in Meath is demonstrated by its inclusion as one of 5 strategically important settlements designated to attract FDI in the Economic Development Strategy. The Strategy identifies employment lands at the Rath roundabout as a strategic site for major inward investment. The Council has prepared a Master Plan to ensure a Planned approach to the site's development and the lands are being marketed by the Council's Economic Development Team to potential investors in conjunction with external employment partner agencies. It is noteworthy that currently zoned strategic employment lands identified by Fingal at Ballymadun are adjacent to the strategic employment site in Ashbourne. Due to the configuration of the lands, access to the Ballymadun employment lands in Fingal, can only be provided via the Rath roundabout.

The Regional Planning Guidelines, 2010-2022 acknowledged the potential for Ashbourne to capitalise on opportunities for economic growth due to its proximity to Dublin Airport and the Dublin Metropolitan Area and identified the town as a 'Secondary Economic Growth Town'. These Guidelines support the consolidation of economic development in Ashbourne that would assist in the creation of a more sustainable settlement. Reference is also made to the creation of synergy between Ashbourne and Ratoath that would optimise local employment opportunities by availing and utilising the highly skilled workforce that reside in these towns. Section 3.7.5 of the Regional Planning Guidelines stated that Ashbourne is: "transitioning away from a dormitory hinterland context to a more urbanised, metropolitan character." The RSES acknowledges that Ashbourne[14] is one of the towns in the region which recorded the highest growth rates in the Country over the last 10 years (>32%) which have lower levels of employment.

The RSES notes that 'such towns are important employment and service centres. In addition, some of these settlements, such as Ashbourne and Ratoath have the potential to strengthen their employment base and develop as important centres of employment due to their strategic location, connectivity with surrounding settlements, and the availability of a skilled workforce. In recognition of the delivery of Metro North to Swords during the lifetime of the National Planning Framework, the Council will support the strengthening of links and connectivity between Ashbourne and Swords, in order to further improve the links between Ashbourne and Dublin City centre whilst also promoting more sustainable modes of transport by facilitating the use of the Metro for commuters travelling to Dublin City centre and Airport for employment.

The delivery of the rail to Navan will include provision of a station in Dunshaughlin, an alignment east of Dunshaughlin would facilitate a future spur to serve Ashbourne/Ratoath thereby further supporting the economic viability of the rail project and

creating sustainable communities in these towns containing a future population of circa 40,000, please refer to MOV OBJ 3 (b).
It is an objective of the Council:

ED OBJ 37

To promote the development of the key strategic employment site identified in the Economic Development Strategy for County Meath – employment zoned lands to the north of the Rath Roundabout in Ashbourne.

ED OBJ 38

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

4.7.3.2 Dunshaughlin

Dunshaughlin's future potential is intrinsically linked to the delivery of Phase 2 of the Dublin-Navan Rail Project. The construction of the Rail Line will result in Dunshaughlin becoming a hub for economic and residential growth due to its location on a multi-modal corridor with direct road and rail links to Dublin and the wider region.

The combination of the potential delivery of the Rail Line and the proximity of the town to the Dublin Metropolitan Area makes the town an attractive location to potential investors as a place of employment whilst the connectivity of the town to Dublin and Navan via the local road network and frequent bus service makes the town an attractive location for the general population as a place to live.

In order to ensure the viability of the Navan Rail Line, it is essential that there is a critical mass of population living along the rail corridor. The location of the future rail station will be central to the future usage of the line i.e an eastern alignment is more accessible from the town. As part of the rail project the station location will be examined. Continued population growth in Dunshaughlin is required to support the delivery of the Rail Line. It is essential however that employment delivery is balanced with population growth to create a 'live work' community in the town.

Employment lands in Dunshaughlin are concentrated in the southern part of the town with additional lands available to accommodate expansion. The existing Business Park and Industrial Estate are important locations for local employment.

In order to ensure employment opportunities are commensurate with population growth, it is proposed to designate and extend the employment land to the south west of Dunshaughlin as a strategic employment site. This designation will facilitate the comprehensive marketing of these lands by the Council's Economic Development Team and the delivery of a major distributor road connecting the town to the M3 Motorway.

In addition to supporting the delivery of the Rail Line, the Council also support the review of the Railway Order for the project by ensuring any Rail Station is optimally located to promote walking and cycling from the town centre and residential lands in addition to serving surrounding settlements including Ratoath and Ashbourne.

It is an objective of the Council:

ED OBJ 39

To promote the development of the key strategic employment site – employment zoned lands to the south west of Dunshaughlin.

ED OBJ 40

To support the continued development of the existing business park in Dunshaughlin.

4.7.3.3 Kells and Trim

Kells acts as a major economic development centre in the north of the County. The Economic Strategy identifies lands at Kells Business Park as one of 5 key strategy sites within the County. The lands are designated as an Assisted Area in the Regional Aid Map for Europe 2014-2020. A Strategic Employment Zone of circa 33 hectares was zoned E1/E3 in 2016 in conjunction with the spatial implementation of the Economic Strategy for County Meath 2014-2022. The lands are located to the south east of Kells easily accessible to the M3 motorway and are identified for high end technology/manufacturing and major campus style office-based employment as well as providing for potential logistics, warehousing, distribution and supply chain management uses. The development of these lands will provide a balance of employment opportunities for the area of north Meath.

Trim is a self-sustaining growth town with a unique cultural and built heritage identified in the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) as a medieval heritage town. With a 'Jobs: Resident' Workforce ratio of 0.67 and 2,500 jobs in 2016, Trim is the second largest centre for employment in the County behind Navan. The vision going forward for Trim is to maximise the number of local job opportunities while investing and expanding in the tourist product in the town. A variation to the Trim Development Plan adopted in Q3 of 2019 supported the continued economic development of the town through the facilitation of the development of a live work community including a key piece of road infrastructure for the town. Trim is designated as being eligible for the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF) (as a town of fewer than 10,000 people but with more than 2,500 jobs) which will present opportunities for funding going forward. In this regard, the Council has taken a proactive approach in securing funding to obtain Planning approval to develop Trim Library and Cultural Centre.

It is an objective of the Council:

ED OBJ 41

To encourage the development of Kells and Trim as a tourism cluster with improvement in the connectivity between both centres. Each town to develop a strategy for niche tourism as integral part of their overall development strategy e.g. culinary tourism, regional food hub, creative industries, etc. Continue the ongoing protection of the intrinsic built and natural heritage of Kells and Trim and their promotion as a basis of tourism.

ED OBJ 42

To promote the further development of the Kells Business Park which is identified as one of the five key strategic sites for economic investment in the County in the Economic Development Strategy for County Meath 2014-2022.

ED OBJ 43

To promote and support the development of the strategic site located on the southern side of the strategically important R147 (Navan Road) in Kells where lands with an E1/E3 land use zoning objective have been identified. These lands will provide for high end technology/manufacturing and major campus style office-based employment as well as providing for potential logistics, warehousing, distribution and supply chain management uses.

ED OBJ 44

To continue to support and promote existing industries and enterprises in Kells and build upon the status of Kells as part of an EU designated Regional Aid area and to explore funding streams such as the REDZ initiative to support enterprise within the County.

ED OBJ 45

To further develop the indigenous enterprise, logistics, manufacturing and retail base in Kells.

ED OBJ 46

To encourage and facilitate the successful development of the Oaktree and Scurlockstown Business Parks.

ED OBJ 47

To promote sustainable economic development in Trim Town and Environs through the promotion of identified economic growth areas which provide employment opportunities locally and reduce the volume of long-distance commuting.

ED OBJ 48

To provide for the development of high-end Business and/or Corporate Headquarters including FDI, at Navan Road, Trim.

ED OBJ 49

To work with and support the Office of Public Works, Fáilte Ireland and other relevant stakeholders in facilitating the development of visitor centre services at the Market House premises on Castle Street for the promotion and development of visitor facilities in Trim and the wider Boyne Valley region including the Trim Castle attraction.

ED OBJ 50

To seek funding for underused areas, through the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund, for the town of Trim.

4.7.4 Self Sustaining Towns

4.7.4.1 Laytown/Bettystown

The vision for Laytown/Bettystown seeks to facilitate the development of Bettystown as a vibrant town centre while redefining Laytown to function as a support centre. The residential expansion of the Laytown/Bettystown area in the absence of any employment generating development has resulted in the settlements having a weak employment base. In 2016 the Jobs: Workforce ratio in East Meath was 0.16, which was the lowest recorded in the County. Due to the proximity of the area to Drogheda and Dublin, it would be challenging to attract a large-scale employer however there are opportunities to attract small-medium sized enterprises that could avail of the skilled workforce and the

connectivity that the area provides to Dublin and Drogheda. Such employment would be vital to improving the jobs ratio and creating a more sustainable settlement.

In order for the settlement to function in a sustainable manner, the town's retail offer needs to be broadened. The Council recognises the importance of a high-quality public realm in attracting new businesses into the area and creating a desirable living and working environment and has embarked on the preparation of a Public Realm Plan. Further, a proactive approach is being taken by the Council to improve the Public Realm through the acquisition of land at the entrance to Bettystown beach for the development of a landmark building providing amenities and services at the beach for the local community and tourists.

A key element of the development strategy for Laytown/Bettystown is the construction of the north-south spine road connecting the R150 at Scoil an Spioraid Naomh Primary School to the Eastham road roundabout. This will reduce traffic congestion along the Coast road and improve traffic movements in the town centre thereby improving the Public Realm.

The Council has identified a strategic employment site in Laytown to address the sustainability issues currently experienced in this area. These lands could accommodate a potential people intensive enterprise opportunity. This would help redress the current commuter levels from the area. It is also intended that these employment lands would support a greater use of the train station in Laytown along with the provision of a public car park. This would allow for the redevelopment of the existing carpark adjacent to the playground. Potential uses of this central space adjacent to a High Amenity area on the banks of the River Nanny could be a Public Park/amenity area for the general public in line with the Public Realm Plan once completed. This would provide a central hub for the community creating an improved sense of community in Laytown and in turn creating a better live work environment while also promoting the tourism sector creating further employment in the area.

It is an objective of the Council:

ED OBJ 51

To promote East Meath as an employment base and encourage the location of start-up businesses in the area.

ED OBJ 52

To support the development of industrial, manufacturing, distribution, warehousing, technology and campus style office-based employment on the strategic employment lands to the northern side of the R150, immediately west of Laytown rail station. Enterprise and employment proposals shall be developed in tandem with park and ride facilities and enhanced pedestrian connectivity between the rail station and the residential development further north in Laytown all to facilitate the development of a sustainable live work community in order to address outbound commuting from the Laytown/Bettystown area.

ED OBJ 53

To continue to support the delivery of the North-South Spine Road linking Bettystown and Laytown.

ED OBJ 54

To implement the Public Realm Strategy for Bettystown and Laytown.

ED OBJ 55

To facilitate the provision of a new Park and Ride Facility at Laytown Train Station in conjunction with the National Transport Authority and Irish Rail.

ED OBJ 56

To support the design and construction of a Beach Facilities building of high architectural quality at the entrance to Bettystown beach that will improve the provision of amenities and services available at the beach.

4.7.4.2 Ratoath

Ratoath is currently the fourth largest town in County Meath. As recognised in the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy Ratoath is one of the towns recording the highest population growth rates in the country over the last ten years (>32%) which has a lower level of employment provision. It operates primarily as a commuter settlement, with almost 75% of the workforce travelling outside Meath for employment in 2016[15], with 70% of these people travelling to the Dublin Region and 36% travelling to Dublin City Centre. This confirms the close inter-relationship between Ratoath and the Dublin Metropolitan Area. Reducing the volume of commuting from Ratoath and expanding the employment base is one of the key challenges facing the town in terms of the future role, function and management of the town. A unique opportunity to strengthen the relationship between Ratoath and the equine industry, including Fairyhouse Racecourse and the Tattersalls International Equestrian facilities, which are important equine assets of national and international significance, has been identified as a key economic asset and an area where future employment opportunities could be generated.

The key Planning challenge for Ratoath is to facilitate a Plan led evidence-based 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. This will enable the town to capitalise on the existing highly skilled and educated work force currently resident within the town. An alignment of the Navan-Dublin rail line to the east of Dunshaughlin would facilitate a future spur to serve Ashbourne/Ratoath thereby further supporting the economic viability of the rail project and creating sustainable communities in these towns containing a future population of circa 40,000, please refer to MOV OBJ 3 (b).

The RSES recognises the towns potential to strengthen its employment base and develop as an important centre of employment due to its strategic location, connectivity with surrounding settlements, and the availability of a skilled workforce. Future growth will promote and support the development of further visitor and tourist facilities at Fairyhouse and Tattersalls to develop an internationally significant Equine Hub at this location. Future development will focus on brown field/infill development in the town centre to reduce vacancy levels. Provision will also be made for the sustainable expansion of the town centre to support employment growth and service provision for existing and future residents. In summary the development strategy for Ratoath will give emphasis to the creation of jobs

and the provision of social and community infrastructure that is essential in the creation of a vibrant and active sustainable community.

It is an objective of the Council:

ED OBJ 57

To seek to develop Ratoath as an employment hub in recognition of its highly skilled and educated workforce.

ED OBJ 58

To support the development of an equestrian hub at Ratoath within the Strategic Employment Site that maximises the internationally recognised equine facilities at Tattersalls and Fairyhouse and ensures the County continues to be a leader in the Irish and International sport horse industry, including breeding, racing, competing, and training as well as facilitating the diversification of these businesses to enable their continued expansion and employment generation.

ED OBJ 59

To promote and, support the development of strategic employment lands between Ratoath and the National and International equine hub at Fairyhouse.

4.7.4.3 Enfield

Enfield functions largely as a commuter town with settlement growth influenced by its proximity and accessibility to Dublin City and its metropolitan city economy, with strategic road and rail commuter connections to the Capital and the northwest as part of the national Dublin-Sligo rail line. The population of Enfield increased significantly during the last inter census period, from 2,929 persons in 2011 to 3,239 persons in 2016. This 10.6% increase was the largest increase to occur across the 'Small Towns' and is well above the 3.8% national average growth. Some 44% of the town's population make up the labour force, of which, 66% are in employment, a figure higher than the County average. 37.2% of the workforce living in Enfield (530 persons) commute to Dublin City and suburbs, with an average journey time of 55 minutes.

Given the strategic location of Enfield proximate to the M4 knowledge corridor, there is a significant opportunity for economic and commercial development growth in the town. In this regard, a large site on the eastern edge of the town has been designated as a strategic employment site (c. 31 hectares), suitable for development and use as a data centre or other use compatible with the E1/E3 zoning objective, based on the strategic position of the town and the proximity of the site to the national fibre network optic cable. It should also be recognised that Enfield is a multi-modal location with access to a train station. This is unique for a town of its size, that is also in close proximity to Dublin and provides an opportunity for the town to expand as well as facilitating further growth. Further, there are two sites in the centre of the town which would support consolidation in the urban core. There is sufficient capacity in the existing Enfield Business Park to accommodate industrial and enterprise development. Employment growth is subject to the capacity of infrastructure and quality of environment to support it.

It is an objective of the Council:

ED OBJ 60

To encourage the development of Knowledge orientated enterprise, High Tech, Bio Tech, ICT, Research & Development synergies with third level institutions which may include Maynooth University (MU[16]), and major employers already established in the sub region (Intel, Hewlett Packard).

ED OBJ 61

To further key linkages and partnerships with Maynooth University including the branding of the area as a centre of excellence in the knowledge-based economy.

ED OBJ 62

To facilitate the location of emerging employment sectors including (but not limited to) industrial, Engineering, ICT, Science, Data Analytics, Data Centre and Business and Financial Service, and other Foreign Direct Investment on the strategic employment lands zoned E1/E3 to the east of the town.

ED OBJ 63

To work with Eirgrid, as far as practicable, to ensure power infrastructure is available for the development of zoned employment lands within the M4 corridor.

ED OBJ 64

To promote, encourage and facilitate economic development and diversification of Enfield and to support the development of the Royal Canal Greenway and the potential spin off enterprises generated from this facility.

4.7.4.4 Stamullen

Stamullen has developed as a commuter settlement primarily due to its proximity to Dublin and associated road and rail links via the M1 Dublin-Belfast Motorway and Gormanstown Rail Station.

The town functions as a local employment centre that serves the wider East Meath area. The City North Business Park has capacity for further expansion. The location of this Business Park, which includes a hotel with conference facilities, along the M1 Dublin to Belfast Economic Corridor makes it an attractive location for investment due to its transport links with regional and national growth centres. Thus there is significant potential for economic development given the strategic location of the town on the Dublin-Belfast Economic corridor which will address out bound commuting levels.

The development strategy for Stamullen will focus on the development of the settlement as a local service and employment centre.

The City North Business Campus is strategically located off the M1 at Junction 7, however, the absence of a direct road link to the campus from Stamullen has inhibited the creation of a synergy between the town and this employment zone.

It is an objective of the Council:

ED OBJ 65

To facilitate development of employment lands at the City North Business Park in tandem with the development of the necessary link road from these lands to the Gormanstown Road.

ED OBJ 66

To continue to support and promote the inherent economic potential of the M1 corridor, building upon existing strengths. There will be a focus on developing the corridor as a distinct spatial area with international visibility.

4.8 Data Centres

Recent years have seen a marked increase in the number of new data centres constructed worldwide and this trend is expected to continue into the foreseeable future. The demand has been fuelled by a dramatic surge in data management requirements caused by, amongst other factors, the growth of IT requirements, web-based services and emerging technologies.

Data centres by nature, are land intensive developments and can have differing locational requirements depending on the type of data accessibility speeds they cater for. All data centres have common infrastructure requirements such as access to high voltage electricity lines, high powered fibre optic cables, good site security and accessibility. Given the infrastructural requirements for data centres the Council's Planning and Economic team have liaised extensively with industry leaders and stakeholders and have pioneered a Plan led approach to the identification of specific suitable sites for data centres within the County. Such Data Centres are more appropriately located within close proximity to the Metropolitan Area where direct access can be provided to the T50 fibre optic cable and high voltage electricity, both of which are present on lands identified at Dunboyne and Dunboyne North. The location of these less people intensive uses outside of the M50 ring and separate from but connected to the existing built up area is a key growth enabler for Dublin and the policy position is endorsed within the NPF[17] Alternative sites deemed suitable for such development include but are not limited to: employment lands at appropriately zoned lands in the Southern Environs of Drogheda, Farganstown and the Trim Road in Navan, employment lands at Enfield and lands adjacent to the Lagan Cement Plant on the outskirts of Kinnegad which have access to the high voltage electricity lines and in the latter two cases, the M4 fibre optic cable. The Council will continue to work with industry leaders and stakeholders in the identification of suitable sites for data centre development.
It is the policy of the Council:

ED POL 13

To support and facilitate the development of data centres on suitable sites with supporting infrastructure subject to obtaining the relevant consents.

It is the objective of the Council:

ED OBJ 67

To continue to identify suitable sites for the development of data centres and ICT related development within the County.

ED OBJ 68

To promote and support the development of lands within the Metropolitan Area for the provision of data centre and ICT related development.

4.9 Quantum of Available Zoned Employment Generating Land

Planning for future employment development requires a more broadly based approach than Planning for other sectors due to the increasingly diverse nature and requirements of development in the economic and employment sector. In order to respond to the diverse nature and requirements of this sector the council has employed a targeted approach to the selection of lands within the County, ensuring that there is sufficient variety and quantum of zoned lands to achieve sustainable and balanced growth within the County.

It is acknowledged within the NPF that certain employment sectors have very specific locational attractions and requirements. In particular, those related to the information economy and knowledge development, tend to be very place specific. These sectors tend to locate in urban areas which have 'a denser, more skilled workforce and have a steady stream of local talent and innovation associated with third level research institutions'[18]. They also tend to have good international connectivity and are located in close proximity to international airports. The Council has been responsive to these trends as outlined in the NPF and in 2014 developed a targeted approach to these issues via the preparation of the Economic Strategy for County Meath 2014-2022.
In order to facilitate the implementation of the Economic Strategy, Variation no. 3 was adopted to the Meath County Development 2013-2019 which provided for the spatial implementation of the economic strategy for the County. The Council promoted a highly selective approach to the zoning of land for specific employment sectors and continues this Plan led approach to the identification of employment lands within the County in this Plan.

4.9.1 Summary

Overall the Economic Development Strategy of this Plan seeks to facilitate the provision of adequate land for employment uses, having regard to spatial Planning, infrastructural, environmental and transportation requirements and their compatibility with adjoining land uses.

The development of a targeted and Plan led approach directs specific employment uses to suitably zoned lands within designated urban centres. It is the policy of the Plan to support and protect the existing economic base within the County and to promote the diversification of the economy through inward investment at key growth centres and the parallel promotion of agriculture, forestry and tourism-related industries in rural areas.

It is the policy of the Council:

ED POL 14

To ensure that there is sufficient land zoned within the County for economic activity in line with the requirements of the Economic Strategy 2014-2022 and any replacement/updated

Strategy. Such land will be protected from inappropriate development that would prejudice its long-term development for employment and economic activity.

Chapter 11 Development Management Standards and Land Use Zoning Objectives sets out in detail the land use zoning objectives which are applicable to all statutory land use Plans in County Meath.

4.10 Green Economy

The Green Economy refers to an increasingly sustainable approach in undertaking economic activity by reducing the reliance on fossil fuels and upgrading inefficient buildings, and the need to do so in order to attract investment. The term Green Economy covers a wide range of sectors that have in common the objective of 'providing goods and services in a sustainable way that reduces impact on the environment and contributes to the circular economy'.[19] In Ireland, this covers activities such as sustainable food production, tourism, green financial services, green products and services, waste and water management, renewable energy and energy efficiency. The NPF recognises and supports the development of the circular and bio economy.

The Government's Action Plan for Jobs 2017 outlines that there is a 'strong economic dimension to the transition to a low carbon, climate resilient and environmentally sustainable economy'. The Council recognises the significant role the 'Green Economy' has to play in the competitiveness of the County and the country as a whole.[20] The growing international emphasis on reducing greenhouse gas emissions and improving resource efficiency presents a major opportunity for indigenous enterprises to grow and export innovative products and services.

The geographical location of the County adjacent to the national Gateway and the proximity of the routes, through which significant energy transmission networks (electricity and gas) traverse, present potential for future economic development in the County. This Plan aims to recognise and develop the full potential of green energy including biomass for energy production / manufacturing and the export of green electricity to the national grid. The Plan seeks to support industries and business seeking to generate energy within the confines of their specific sites and the export of surplus energy to the national grid.

It is the policy of the Council:

ED POL 15

To seek to support and facilitate both existing and new businesses who seek to maximise the re-use and recycling of resources, create new business models and promote innovation and efficiency.

It is the objective of the Council:

ED OBJ 69

To work in partnership with relevant stakeholders to ensure that a sustainable approach is taken to enterprise development and employment creation across all sectors of the Meath

economy in accordance with the Green Economy national frameworks relevant to each sector.

ED OBJ 70

Engage with all relevant government stakeholders, enterprise agencies and sectoral representatives in pursuing 'green' approaches to economic development, and actively collaborate with key industry and educational bodies to promote Meath based initiatives across the economic sectors.

4.11 Rural Economy

The development and maintenance of the rural economy is a complex issue, and one which the government is committed to supporting. This will continue to be important, especially during the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic that is noted in Section 4.6 of this Chapter. This is reflected in the number of government initiatives currently available to promote and assist enterprise within the rural economy. The NPF recognises the 'role rural areas play in driving our economy and our high-quality environment' and seeks to encourage and attract entrepreneurship and innovation development in these areas, particularly where low carbon outputs can be achieved.[21] In order to create future employment opportunities in the rural economy measures are required to support rural entrepreneurship and innovative rural SMEs. The Rural Regeneration and Development Fund established as part of Project Ireland 2040 will assist in revitalising the rural economy.

Through the 'Action Plan for Jobs 2017' the Government committed up to €60 million in competitive funding over the period to 2020 to support collaborative initiatives. The Government is also committed to the implementation of the Action Plan for Rural Development (2017) and will deliver the 2014-2020 EU LEADER Programme which has a total budget of €250 million and includes up to €30 million per annum for other rural development schemes such as Town & Village Renewal, CLÁR and the Rural Recreation programme. The REDZ (Rural Economic Development Zone) initiative is classified within the CEDRA (Commission for Economic Development in Rural Areas) and are intended to complement the Town and Village Renewal Scheme and cater for projects between the towns and surrounding hinterland that maximise local assets in areas such as tourism, culture, heritage and other areas that support rural economic activity.

Investment under the National Development Plan 2018-2027 will allow an 'tÚdarás na Gaeltachta to continue to play its important role in employment creation in Gaeltacht areas over the period of the Plan. There are existing Údarás funded projects in both Baile Ghib and Rathcairn and it is an objective of this Plan in conjunction with Údarás na Gaeltachta and Gaeltacht na Mí Economic forum to continue to support economic development in the Gaeltacht areas of the County.

The Meath Local Enterprise Office (LEO) works in conjunction with the aforementioned initiatives in providing support to existing businesses and start-ups which includes financial assistance, training, mentoring and management development programmes.

The NPF also recognises the important role of telecommunications in the development of the rural economy. It acknowledges that as digital links and opportunities for remote

working and new enterprises continue to grow, they will increasingly have the capacity to accommodate employment focused on ICT based industries, multi/media and creative sectors in areas such as agri-tech, tourism, transport and in particular, an added value bio-economy and circular economy.

In order to maintain competitiveness and connectivity in rural areas, the Government is supporting the delivery of high speed broadband services to all businesses, farms, and households in Ireland through the National Broadband Plan.[22]
The government has acknowledged the specific issues posed by BREXIT to the rural economy and is seeking to support vulnerable businesses in their response to the changing economic climate through initiatives such as the BREXIT fund.

Much of the larger indigenous employment in the County occurs in traditional manufacturing industries, as noted in the Economic Development Strategy. These activities depend to a large extent on the UK market (including NI), which raises the uncertainty posed by Brexit and the likelihood that the exports from the County may become more expensive to the UK in the post-Brexit environment (due to the probability of the UK leaving the Common Market and the Customs Union and from leaving the EU's External Tariff). In order to highlight the attractiveness of the County as a business base, rural networking, clustering and branding will be promoted and supported by the Council, in order to target smaller niche FDI investment into rural areas of the County and increase the share of export business already exporting and those with potential to export.

No single economic sector offers the total solution to the challenges facing rural areas. The optimal response most likely lies in the development of a variety of measures to tap into the potential that individual rural areas possess. In all areas of the County, there is a role for rural development in contributing to the general economic growth of the County. The Council will encourage diversification by promoting the unique assets of the County, its strategic location within the GDA, the availability of an indigenous highly skilled workforce coupled with the benefits of living in the gateway to Ireland's Ancient East promoting appropriate forms of rural employment development such as agriculture (arable, dairy, sheep, horticulture and organic), equine, forestry, tourism (walking, cycling, leisure, fishing, golfing, water based activities, beach and cultural heritage), mineral extraction and rural enterprises. In summary this Plan promotes and encourages economic development to meet the needs of rural areas whilst recognising and seeking to protect their environmental character and heritage.

4.11.1 Rural Enterprise

It is the policy of the NPF 'to enhance the competitiveness of rural areas by supporting innovation in rural economic development and enterprise through the sustainable diversification of the rural economy into new sectors and in particular those with a low or zero carbon output'. This Plan accepts that there is a need to develop a rural economy that offers viable and sustainable employment for existing communities. There is also a need to strengthen the provision / retention of services, regenerate rural communities and promote the economic development of rural areas. This manifests itself in the need to both acknowledge the need for, and promote the development of, small scale enterprises in rural areas. Given the County's strategic location within the GDA its excellent transport links,

proximity to a multiplicity of third level institutions providing a steady stream of skilled workers and its access to urban centres served by high speed communications infrastructure the County is ideally located to attract and grow new and innovative employment sectors into its rural areas. The Council provides a comprehensive, multidisciplinary support system to businesses who seek to locate in the County.

It is the policy of the Council to support the location of once off medium to large-scale rural enterprise if it is demonstrated, to the satisfaction of the council, that the enterprise can be more readily accommodated in a rural setting than provided in a designated settlement centre and subject to standard development management considerations being applied. It is equally accepted that there are certain types of rural enterprises, especially those that involve processing of natural resources, which serve rural communities which have a critical role to play in sustainable rural development. There are already a number of successful enterprises of this nature existing in the County in the food processing and development areas, as well as the extractive industry.

The promotion and facilitation of micro enterprises (up to a maximum of 10 employees) is a key area for the generation of sustainable employment opportunities in rural areas. The Council will seek to facilitate the development of this sector by ensuring that incubator units for micro enterprises are provided in lower tier centres (Small Towns and Villages) as well as considering their individual appropriateness in rural nodes and possibly, the open countryside. In particular, the reuse of redundant agricultural buildings and the development of new buildings to accommodate such diversification / enterprise, within an overall farmyard complex, will be considered on their individual merits.

The Government's Action Plan for Rural Development "Realising our Rural Potential" highlights the potential of activity tourism to contribute to economic growth in rural areas. It states that "Outdoor adventure tourism is a key growth sector worldwide and has been identified as a priority for Irish tourism in future years. The development and promotion of this sector provides opportunities for growth, in rural areas in particular, by facilitating businesses to leverage the tourism assets in their area in a sustainable way to support recreational activities such as canoeing, cycling, angling and hill walking". The development of a new Greenways Strategy to support activity tourism in rural areas is specifically identified as an action point in the Action Plan. Given the rich cultural heritage and rural tourism present in the County, it is well placed to continue the development of its tourism product and place itself as one of the top destinations for diversity of choice in this sector.

It is the policy of the Council:

ED POL 16

To support the location of a once off medium to large-scale rural enterprise only in instances where it is demonstrated, to the satisfaction of the Council, that the enterprise can be more readily accommodated in a rural setting than in a designated settlement centre and subject to standard development management considerations being applied.

ED POL 17

To support in conjunction with Meath LEO and other agencies the development of indigenous industry and business start-ups in rural employment centres (villages and

settlements) in the County, subject to compliance with siting, design and environmental considerations.

ED POL 18

To support rural entrepreneurship and the development of micro businesses (generally less than 10 no. employees) in rural areas where environmental and landscape impact is minimal and such developments do not generate significant or undue traffic. This policy shall not apply to sites accessed from the National Road Network.

ED POL 19

To support and facilitate sustainable agriculture, agri-food, horticulture, forestry, renewable energy and other rural enterprises at suitable locations in the County.

ED POL 20

To support the implementation of the new LEADER Rural Development Strategy 2014-2020 and any subsequent amended/updated Strategy for the County.

ED POL 21

To support the Department of Rural and Community Development in the identification of other potential REDZ zones across the County and assist local communities to prepare for future funding opportunities.

ED POL 22

To support all relevant stakeholders in the development of a programme of Agri-Innovation/ Agri-Tech, Agri-Green, Food Innovation, and Niche Food for consumers.

ED POL 23

To support the development of activity tourism facilities, in appropriate locations, within the County subject to standard development management considerations being applied.

ED POL 24

To consider, on their individual merits, the reuse of redundant agricultural buildings and the development of new buildings to accommodate farm diversification / enterprise within an overall farmyard complex.

ED POL 25

To support sustainable game and coarse angling throughout the Boyne Valley in County Meath in line with normal planning considerations so as to enhance and support angling tourism in addition to protecting and raising awareness of aquatic based species and habitat improvement.

ED POL 26

Meath County Council shall positively consider and assess development proposals for the expansion of existing authorised industrial or business enterprises in the countryside where the resultant development does not negatively impact on the character and amenity of the surrounding area. In all instances, it should be demonstrated that the proposal would not generate traffic of a type and amount inappropriate for the standard of the access roads. This policy shall not apply to the National Road Network.

ED POL 27

To support the implementation of the Rural Development Investment Programme and the Town and Village Renewal Scheme across the County and prepare for future funding opportunities from these initiatives or any new initiative that may replace these.

4.11.1.2 Equine Industry

There are a considerable number of people employed both directly and indirectly in the equine industry which is an important economic contributor to County Meath. There are three race courses located at Fairyhouse, Navan and Bellewstown along with the annual beach races at Laytown. In addition, there are a number of stud farms located throughout the County and the Tattersalls International Equestrian facility near Ratoath. The equine industry in the County presents an opportunity to sustain and grow the sector through increased employment with integration and diversification of equine facilities for related leisure and sporting activities.

It is the policy of the Council:

ED POL 28

To support and promote the equine industry in the County as an economic and employment provider.

ED POL 29

To support the racecourses and associated facilities at Fairyhouse, Navan, Bellewstown and race event at Laytown to ensure that these centres remain viable for long-term development for employment and economic activity.

Please refer to Chapter 9 Rural Development Strategy for further information regarding rural enterprise. Chapter 11 Development Management Standards and Land Use Zoning Objectives provides further information regarding permitted uses in RA Rural Areas and RN Rural Nodes zones.

4.12 Retail

4.12.1 Introduction

The importance of the retail sector to the national economy is hugely significant delivering 270,000 jobs and constitutes,[23] the largest share of sectoral employment. The sector plays a pivotal role in the growth of the domestic economy as it is the only sector to have a presence in practically every town and village in the country. A strong retail sector has the multiple benefits of drawing people into centres to interact with their community (thereby reducing social isolation), supporting local employment, and obviating the need for people to travel long distances for essential shopping needs, thereby reducing car dependency. The current Retail Strategy for Meath has been undertaken at a time of growth within this sector compared to the previous Retail Strategy conducted for the 2013-2019 Development Plan. At that time the economy had experienced continuous contraction in which the retail sector was significantly affected. Recent forecasts indicate recovering employment rates and increases in consumer disposable income levels, both of these factors are already having a significant positive effect on the growth of the sector. It is the policy of this Plan to promote expansion of growth levels in the retail sector and to provide a clear Plan led approach for

future development.

In the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, it is noted that the value of the convenience retail sales have increased year on year for 2020 and that the value of comparison retail sales has reduced over the same period.[35] It is important that such information is monitored in light of the ongoing Covid 19 pandemic and if necessary, the Development Plan and the associated Retail Strategy may be subject to a variation.
Please refer to Chapter 11 Development Management Standards and Land Use zoning Objectives and Appendix 4 Retail Strategy for further information.

It is an objective of the Council to:

ED OBJ 71
To undertake a review of the Meath County Retail Strategy 2020-2026, over the life of the Development Plan.

4.13 Policy Context

The policy context for the Plan in relation to retail is informed by retail guidance documents at national and regional levels. These include the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy, Guidelines for Planning Authorities: Retail Planning issued in 2012 by the DoECLG; and the Retail Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area, 2008-2016, published in 2008 on behalf of the Dublin and Mid East Regional Authorities.

4.13.1 Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy, 2019 - 2031

The RSES acknowledges that retail is a significant contributor to economic activity and employment in the region. The 2008 Retail strategy for the Greater Dublin Area has not yet been updated and the RSES states that EMRA will 'support and drive the preparation of a new retail strategy which will update the retail hierarchy and floor space requirements. RPO 6:10 states:

'EMRA will support the preparation of a Retail Strategy/Strategies for the Region in accordance with the Retail Planning Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2012, or any subsequent updates, to update the retail hierarchy and apply floorspace requirements for the Region.'

Table 6.1 of the RSES sets out the Retail Hierarchy for the Region. Navan, Maynooth and Drogheda are designated Level 2 centres (major town centres and County town centres), Ashbourne, Dunshaughlin, Kells, Trim and Laytown/Bettystown are designated as Level 3 centres (town and/or district centres and sub-County town centres).

4.13.2 Guidelines for Planning Authorities: Retail Planning (DECLG) 2012

In order for Planning to support the retail sector through the provision of retail development and the maintenance of vibrancy in towns, the Retail Planning Guidelines outline 5 overriding objectives which include:

- Ensuring retail development is Plan led.
- Use of the sequential approach within towns.
- Securing competitiveness in the retailing sector through quality designed suitably located projects.
- Increasing access to retailing opportunities through more sustainable forms of transport.
- Delivering quality urban design outcomes.

The 2012 Retail Planning Guidelines are accompanied by the Retail Design Manual (April 2012). The Manual provides Planning authorities, developers and designers with evidence-based quality principles to ensure that future Planning for the retail sector is focussed on the creation of vibrant, quality places.

4.13.3 Retail Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area (2008-2016)

The current GDA Retail Strategy covers the period 2008-2016 and provides guidance and policies for retail development at a strategic level and aims to ensure a co-ordinated and sustainable approach to the assessment and provision of retail development in the Greater Dublin Area. The strategy was based on economic conditions prior to the recession. It is a requirement of the Retail Planning Guidelines that a Retail Strategy is prepared for the GDA. Given that the current strategy has passed its expiry date it is anticipated that a Retail Strategy for the Eastern & Midlands Regional Assembly will be developed within the life of the Plan. In the absence of any updates to the Retail Strategy the current document applies.

In relation to Meath the current Retail Strategy for the GDA, 2008-2016 supports the continued development of Navan as the main retail centre in the County (Level 2 Major Town Centre & County Town Centre). The Strategy identifies Dunboyne, Ashbourne, Dunshaughlin, Kells, Trim, Laytown/Bettystown & Enfield as Level 3 centres (Town and/or District Centres and Sub-County Town Centres. The Retail Strategy 2008 provides that Dunboyne will gradually develop to Level 2 status by 2028. The Strategy states as follows: 'To provide for the future development of Dunboyne from Level 3 to a Level 2 centre over a 15-20 year time frame alongside the development of the rail line and associated future population growth, with this growth guided by the Integrated Framework Plan for Landuse and Transportation Plan and the Local Area Plan for Dunboyne.'

4.14 Development Plan Vision

The overriding aim of the retail strategy for the County is to create the appropriate conditions to foster a healthy and vibrant retail environment in the County over the life of the Plan and beyond. The in-depth review of the current situation and consideration of future environmental improvements, to include public realm improvements and floor space provision will be framed within the national and regional context to ensure appropriate and optimal retail activity throughout the County.

Please refer to Chapter 11 Development Management Standards and Land Use Zoning Objectives for more information regarding town centre renewal/public realm/placemaking.

4.15 Meath Retail Strategy

The previous County Retail Strategy was prepared during a time when the national retail market was experiencing a significant decline due to the recession and national economic downturn. The current strategy has been prepared, prior to the economic impacts of Covid 19, in the context of national economic recovery in which the retail market has shown signs of improvement, with marked increases in the volume of recorded sales. This optimism within the market must be tempered within the context of a level of uncertainty derived from geo-political events and a sustained period of the 'price conscious shopper'. In addition, the growth of online shopping is a feature that continues to be apparent in the retail sector and is an area that retailers must engage in if they are to remain competitive.

The strategy aims to sustain and improve the retail competitiveness of the County, address retail expenditure leakage and ensure an equitable, efficient and sustainable spatial distribution of retail floorspace across the County. The emphasis of the Retail Strategy is on ensuring that the County sustains its role and importance in the shopping patterns of local people, the region and nationally. This should be largely driven by the continuing improvement of the County's comparison shopping offer particularly in its main centres. It is important to note that the Council will undertake a joint Retail Strategy with Louth County Council for Drogheda. This is will be an integral part of the joint vision and Joint Urban Plan for the town of Drogheda.[24]

4.16 Survey & Analysis – Key Findings

A comprehensive survey of households in the County was undertaken in June 2017[25] to establish existing shopping patterns as was a detailed Health Check survey of all the high tier settlements. Ratoath was included in this Health Check exercise due to its high population and its evolution as a dormitory town within the GDA. The survey highlights continued significant levels of comparison expenditure leakage from the County, however, improvements have been noted in the settlements of Navan, Kells and Trim where the survey indicated that the majority of respondents remained in the County for comparison shopping. 90% of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with their experience of shopping in Navan. This demonstrates that improvements to the diversity of uses available

and improvements to public realm have impacted positively on the retail sector in the town. Variety of goods was stated as the main reason for people to leave the County, as was convenience and proximity of other centres to their home.

Convenience (Main Food & Grocery Shopping) - Highlights

- 78.56% retention of convenience expenditure within the County, which is up from 77% at the time of the previous retail strategy
- Kells (high) retains 97.56% compared to Bettystown (low) retaining only 50% within the County.
- Drogheda attracts 50% shoppers from the East Meath area
- 93% of respondents undertake their top up shopping locally within the County at their local and nearest convenience store.

Main reason cited for selection of shopping venue is geographical proximity. It is noted from the surveys carried out that towns in the County do not provide a significant attraction outside of their immediate catchment area. People tend to travel for an experience a 'day out' and this type of destination shopping is lacking in the County.

Comparison (Clothes & Footwear) - Highlights

- 64.5% of respondents carry out their main comparison shopping outside of the County which is an increase from the 58.9% recorded at the time of the last survey.
- Navan fulfils a sub-regional comparison retail role – 62.5% retention within its own catchment which is a decrease from the 70% recorded at the time of the last survey and attracts 55% & 68% expenditure from Trim and Kells catchments. Kells percentage has seen significant improvement from the 37% recorded at the time of the last survey.
- Ashbourne retains 27% comparison goods expenditure in its own catchment area which is a significant improvement from the previous retail strategy where it only retained c.11% - the main attraction remains as Blanchardstown (29%).
- Almost all comparison expenditure from the east coast settlements leaves the County primarily to Drogheda (63%), this has reduced from 78.8% at the time of the previous retail strategy.
- The main reason cited for shopping outside of County is to avail of a more varied product range.

Bulky Goods Shopping - Furniture and Electrical Goods – Highlights

- Expenditure leakage for bulky goods was 57.5%.
- Geographical trends evident in comparison goods expenditure leakage are reaffirmed, with Blanchardstown being the most popular destination.

- Navan performs quite well retaining 77% of expenditure for bulky goods and 67.5% of Kells area expenditure in this category which is a large improvement from 48.65% recorded in the previous survey.
- The majority of survey respondents in Trim stated that they conduct their shopping between Navan (17.07%) and Trim (46.34%).
- Ashbourne catchment – 57.5% of bulky goods takes place outside the County with Blanchardstown satisfying 26% of this.
- Bettystown catchment – retention of expenditure within the County in this area is an issue with 75% taking place in Drogheda, however it will be difficult to address this in any significant way given the population size of this area and its close proximity to Drogheda.
- However as per the previous strategy, the Southern Environs of Drogheda continue to perform well.

4.16.1 Commentary

The survey confirms that the continued leakage of comparison and bulky goods expenditure from the east Meath catchment to Drogheda and from the Ashbourne catchment to Blanchardstown is based largely on geographical proximity. The Retail Strategy indicates that this is not surprising given their geographical proximity. Blanchardstown has an influential pull on shopping trends, with the centre being named as the most frequented competing centre outside of the County. The majority of trips generated to Blanchardstown, Dublin City and Liffey Valley are for comparison goods shopping. The results of the household survey demonstrate a requirement for an increase in the variety and range of comparison stores provided within the County. This would help reduce the leakage to external centres.

4.17 Retail Hierarchy

The County Retail Strategy confirms a retail hierarchy, as set out in Table 4.1 overleaf. This hierarchy is consistent with the Retail Hierarchy contained in the Retail Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area completed in 2008.

Level	Type of Centre	Centre	Type of services
Level 1		None	
Level 2	Major town centre/County Town	Navan	Level 2 centres should offer a full range of types of retail services from newsagents to

Level	Type of Centre	Centre	Type of services
			specialist shops, large department stores, convenience stores of all types, shopping centres and a high level of mixed uses. Level 2 centres should be well serviced by public transport.
Level 3	Town And/Or District Centres and Sub County Town Centres	Ashbourne, Dunboyne*, Dunshaughlin, Kells, Trim, Laytown/ Bettystown	Level 3 centres will vary in terms of scale of provision and the size of catchment. Generally where the town is not close to a major town such as Ashbourne/Dunboyne and there is a large catchment there should be a good range of comparison shopping with a mix of uses and services. At least one supermarket and smaller scale comparison department store to cater for local needs.
Level 4	Small towns, village and local centres	Various locations within the County including (although not exclusively) Athboy, Ballivor, Clonee, Duleek,	Level 4 centres should generally provide for one supermarket ranging in size with a limited range of local shops, supporting services such as a health centre, community facilities and

Level	Type of Centre	Centre	Type of services
		Enfield, Kilmessan, Nobber, Oldcastle, Ratoath, Slane and Stamullen.	recreation uses. This type of centre should meet the day to day needs of the local population and surrounding catchment.
Level 5	Small villages	Various locations	These centres should meet the basic day to day needs of the surrounding residents. These shops can present as a rural focal point with a local post office near to the local primary school or GAA club or as a small terrace of shops in an urban area such as Blackcastle Shopping centre in Navan
Other		Southern Environs of Drogheda	Drogheda environs contain a relatively large quantum of retail development due to its association with Drogheda, a second tier centre in the national retail hierarchy. Southgate Shopping Centre (District Centre) is located at Colpe Cross on the southern fringe of Drogheda and includes a significant office component. The retail provision in Drogheda

Level	Type of Centre	Centre	Type of services
			environs performs an important function in serving the needs of the local and surrounding communities.

***Dunboyne will gradually develop over the next 20 years towards a Level 2 Centre in recognition of the status affirmed in the Retail Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area**

Table 4.1 Indicative Comparison Floorspace Potential

4.18 E-commerce

Online shopping, or 'e-commerce' has a major presence in the Irish retail market, with most multiples having a significant online presence. E-commerce Europe estimates that 82% of Ireland's population of 15 years and older use the internet and 1.9 million of this population shop online, spending €3,143 per year, representing €5.9bn in 2015.[26]
Visa's Irish Consumer Spending Index has recorded sales in all payment types since 2014. In January 2017, the Visa Index highlighted the contrasting fortunes of online sales versus face-to-face sales with spend on the latter decreasing -0.7% year-on-year - a marginal reduction, but the fourth in as many months. In contrast, online shopping continued to record strong growth in expenditure. Spending was up +12.3% year-on-year, with the rate of expansion in double-digits for the sixth month running.[27]

Online shopping is therefore one of the most significant growth areas in the retail market in the past decade. While this represents an opportunity for retailers as an additional sales platform, many traditional retailers have suffered loss of sales and in this way, online sales or 'e-commerce' represents a significant competitor. In recognition of this, many retailers are adapting by co-locating leisure uses (particularly food and beverage) alongside retail to provide an 'experience' that cannot be replicated in an online setting. On the main street where floorplates are generally not large, leisure uses such as restaurants and cafes have tended to replace vacant former retail units. While online shopping is a major factor in loss of sales, there is an opportunity for town centres to provide something that is not possible online, a market-place where experience and social interaction is possible.

4.19 Identification of Core Retail Areas and Opportunity Sites

In accordance with the guidance set out within the Retail Planning Guidelines, the County Retail Strategy identifies Core Retail Areas for the first and second level centres within the

County Retail Hierarchy. The Retail Strategy also identifies a number of Opportunity Sites within each town which are considered to be suitable locations for retail development. In accordance with the objectives of the Retail Planning Guidelines, new retail development should be located within or close to these identified core retail areas, where possible.

4.20 The Requirement for Additional Retail Floorspace

One of the key requirements of the Retail Planning Guidelines is that retail strategies should provide a broad assessment of the additional retail floorspace required in counties over the lifetime of their strategies. The requirement for additional retail floorspace within the County is estimated having regard to the changes to the population, population forecasts, updated information on expenditure, retail floorspace, extant Planning permissions and the findings of the 2017 household and shopper surveys.

The County Retail Strategy sets out broad guidance on the type and amount of additional floorspace that will be required to accommodate additional expenditure over the timescale of the Strategy. This is summarized in Table 29 of the Retail Strategy at Appendix 4 of the Plan.

It is noted that there are a number of extant permissions for town centre schemes which have not been implemented and which have not been included within the above floorspace figures. The permissions pertaining to these sites predominantly refer to the provision of supermarkets. For example, a major town centre scheme has been permitted in Kells, however given the limited level of retail floorspace required in the town it is unlikely that this permitted floorspace will come to fruition in the format and scale as originally planned.[28] Changing retail formats and patterns in recent years will influence the implementation of historic retail grants of planning permissions.
The Council remains committed to promoting retail development at an appropriate scale on key sites. A case by case consideration of the relevant pipeline floorspace will be necessary in considering any significant retail development. The key consideration in assessing future Planning applications is the location of the proposed retail floorspace. The appropriate redevelopment and revitalization of town centres lands should continue to be promoted as a priority.

The results of the household and shopper's surveys undertaken to inform the retail strategy identify a significant degree of leakage of comparison expenditure from the County. A key objective is to reduce this level of leakage throughout the lifetime of the retail strategy.

4.21 Strategic Guidance on the Distribution of Retail Floorspace

The County Retail Strategy provides a strategic policy framework for the spatial distribution of new retail floorspace within the County. The assessment takes account of both emerging

trends in the retail market and general estimates of future demand, based on projected changes in the local population, consumer spending and turnover potential. The focus of this is to provide strategic guidance on the location and scale of major retail development.

New retail floorspace for comparison retail uses will be promoted in particular within Navan and Dunboyne balanced with incentives to address vacancy.

Enhancing the range and quality of comparison floorspace within the County is essential in ensuring that the County enhances its retail offer and attraction and claws back some of the leakage of expenditure that is occurring to competing centres such as Blanchardstown. As the County Town Centre, Navan, in particular, should be promoted and developed as a centre for higher order comparison floorspace.

In terms of convenience retail provision, it is evident that certain centres most notably Dunboyne and Enfield are under provided for in terms of convenience offer. Convenience retail development will in particular be promoted in these urban centres in order to improve competition choice and diversity in the retail market. A large convenience store has opened in Dunboyne (2018) which will make significant inroads in convenience leakage from this centre.
In terms of retail warehouse development, the County is well served. There are two large retail warehouse parks in Navan and a further retail park in Ashbourne. Vacancy levels have been reduced low levels in Navan but remain high in Ashbourne. The retail strategy has outlined that there is no current need for additional floorspace of this type within the County. A very cautious approach will be taken regarding further such development over the period of the Plan other than completion of existing parks and existing areas identified in Volume 2.

Centre	2026
Navan	4,000-8,806
Trim	1,000-1,450
Kells	800-1,250
Ashbourne	1,000-1,872
Dunshaughlin	1,200-2,322

Centre	2026
Dunboyne	2,000-4,744
Enfield	1,000-1,450
Laytown-Bettystown	1,000-1,450
Ratoath	500-1,545
Stamullen	500-895
Other	1,000-1,125
Total	14,000-26,909

Table 4.2 Indicative Convenience Floorspace Potential

Centre	2026
Navan	4,00-6,388
Trim	1,250-1,750
Kells	1,000-1,500
Ashbourne	1,500-2,100

Centre	2026
Dunshaughlin	700-977
Dunboyne	1,640-3,200
Enfield	400-500
Laytown/Bettystown	400-500
Ratoath	200-876
Stamullen	200-226
Other	500-768
Total	11,790-18785

Table 4.3 Indicative Comparison Floorspace Potential

Tables 4.2 and 4.3 set out the indicative potential for additional convenience and comparison floorspace in the main towns within the County in accordance with the role of each settlement within the County Retail Hierarchy, emerging trends in the retail market and general estimates of future demand, based on projected changes in the local population, consumer spending and turnover potential.

For both convenience and comparison goods retailing, Navan, as the Key Town in the County is to receive approximately one third of the total allocated additional retail floorspace potential. Navan's population has risen to above 30,000 and continues to grow at a strong rate.

Dunboyne is allocated the next largest share of potential floorspace. As a Large Growth Town II, Dunboyne has grown (from 2011-2016) at a lower rate when compared to Navan, however it is envisaged that the settlement will grow significantly during the lifetime of the Development Plan as part of the Dublin Metropolitan Area.

The allocations shown in Table 4.2 & 4.3 for additional convenience and comparison retail floorspace in Kells, Trim and Ashbourne reflect their status and their projected growth over the life of the Plan. Dunshaughlin's relatively low population growth rate between 2011-2016 and the higher vacancy levels recorded in the land use survey for this retail strategy indicate that significant additional retail floorspace potential is less likely in Dunshaughlin than in Navan and Dunboyne. A convenience foodstore completed in Dunshughlin in 2018 has enhanced the retail offering in the town centre. Notwithstanding the significant level of recent residential activity in Dunshaughlin and the likely corresponding increase in population significant additional floorspace is not likely to be required over the Plan period.

Both Enfield and Laytown/Bettystown have recorded a high population growth in the Census 2016 and Planning permissions granted in 2017 will address any significant deficits in retails floorspace for these areas. Construction of the convenience foodstore in Laytown commenced in 2019. There are a number of challenges for the Bettystown/Laytown area over the Plan period including the sustainable completion of the town centre development in Bettystown, the implementation of the public realm strategy and the development of a hub for beach related services over the Plan period, all of which will contribute significantly to the regeneration of the area.

Ratoath's large population base and low vacancy rate is acknowledged by a higher allocation of additional convenience and comparison retail floorspace potential to serve the existing population while Stamullen will continue to operate as a small settlement in retailing terms.

In considering the potential for additional retail floorspace within the County, the figures contained in Tables 4.2 and 4.3 above should not be considered as upper limits, merely as indicative of the scale of new floorspace required to meet the needs of existing and future organic population growth and expenditure within the County. The figures represent the potential additional floorspace over that existing and do not include unimplemented permitted retail schemes in the County. The figures set out within Tables 4.2 and 4.3 may be subject to further analysis in the context of future Local Area Plans. Additional new floorspace may be proposed and this could replace some existing outdated or poorly located retail floorspace. The key consideration for this type of development is the location of new floorspace.

4.22 Criteria for the Assessment of Retail Developments

In accordance with the Retail Planning – Guidelines for Planning Authorities' (April 2012), new significant development should be directed primarily into the town centres in the County (Level 2&3). New development in small towns and villages (Level 4&5) should be of an appropriate scale and offer to sufficiently meet local retailing needs only.

Retail development in Level 2 and 3 centres should be located within the core retail areas identified for these centres. Retail development outside of the identified core areas will only be considered in exceptional circumstances where the Planning Authority is satisfied that

there are no other sites available and the development is necessary to serve the needs of the area.

In all instances when assessing new retail developments, the sequential approach shall be applied. This will maintain the retail importance of the town centre and protect the viability and vitality of our town centres. Promotion of an appropriate mix of day and night time uses to include residential, civic, cultural, recreational, commercial and social uses is a critical aspect in this regard. Developments which make a positive contribution to the area in terms of adding value and diversity will be encouraged by the Planning Authority.

The Council will require a high standard of design in all retail developments. This is of particular importance due to the visual role which retail plays in a town or village streetscape.

Chapter 11 Development Management Standards and Land Use Zoning Objectives provide guidance for Retail Development whilst individual Town Statements and future Local Areas Plans will include a range of design principles and policies which respond to local circumstances.

4.23 Shop Fronts

The shop front forms an important part of a street's character as it constitutes a highly visible part of the building at street level. Shop fronts which are well designed and well maintained make for a more attractive street experience for the shopper and passer-by. All proposals for retail development should have regard to Meath County Councils Shop Front and Signage Guidelines 2017.

Refer also to Chapter 11 Development Management Standards and Land Use Zoning Objectives for further requirements in respect of shop fronts.

It is the policy of the Council:

ED POL 30

To implement the Meath County Retail Strategy 2020-2026.

ED POL 31

To have regard to the policies and objectives of the Retail Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2008-2016 and any replacement document.

ED POL 32

To promote and encourage Navan to sustain its competitiveness and importance as a Level 2 County Town Centre in the Eastern and Midland Region.

ED POL 33

To support the vitality and viability of existing designated centres and to work in conjunction with Retail Excellence Ireland, DJEI and all relevant stakeholders to facilitate a competitive and healthy environment for the retailing industry into the future.

ED POL 34

To ensure that future growth in retail floorspace responds to the identified retail settlement hierarchy.

ED POL 35

To support the development of Core Retail Areas in each of the retail settlement areas as identified within the County Meath Retail Strategy and reinforce the role and function of the Core Retail Areas.

ED POL 36

To adhere to the Sequential Approach principle in the consideration of retail applications located outside of core retail areas.

ED POL 37

To facilitate the development of key opportunity sites as identified in all existing retail centres by the County Meath Retail Strategy 2020-2026.

ED POL 38

To promote the reuse or reactivation of vacant and under-utilised properties/shop units in order to assist within the regeneration of streets and settlements in the County.

ED POL 39

To encourage a healthy diversity of retail types and scales, as well as uses that are complementary to retail, in particular leisure uses, within all Core Retail Areas.

ED POL 40

To facilitate LEO in supporting all existing retail business with an on-street presence in all Core Retail Areas to establish an online sales platform.

It is an objective of the Council:

ED OBJ 72

To continue to implement and facilitate environmental, amenity and recreational improvements to the public realm, including the restriction where appropriate of vehicle use in existing Core Retail Areas.

ED OBJ 73

To promote and facilitate on-street activities including festivals, events, street markets and farmers / country markets in all existing retail centres.

4.24 Tourism

4.24.1 Introduction

The County has much to offer as a tourist destination, in particular its rich heritage, quality rural landscape, attractive towns and villages, and its appealing coastline. The promotion of Ireland as a tourism destination in overseas markets has a multifaceted impact on the Country. Successful tourism marketing not only increases visitor numbers and revenue to the Country, the positive message that it conveys about the Country's natural environment and friendly people support the Government in other areas of economic development such as the attraction of foreign direct investment. Tourism has played a significant role in the

economic recovery in recent years and is fundamental in terms of the opportunities it generates for businesses and employment throughout the country. The government is seeking to expand on this growth through the marketing of 'Irelands Ancient East' as a tourist destination. The Boyne Valley is identified as the birth place of Ireland's Ancient East and the County in particular is the gateway to this destination, with its unique collection of pre-historic sites and monuments in particular the Brú na Bóinne UNESCO World Heritage Site. The County is marketed by Fáilte Ireland as a destination to tell the story of Ireland through a diverse range of authentic and exciting visitor experiences.[29]

While the County is a particularly attractive location for day-trippers, additional enhancement of the visitor experience is needed to increase dwell time to ensure the County fully benefits from growth in the tourism sector. The implementation of strategies and programmes by the tourism agencies aims to ensure that visitors are aware of, and directed to, a broad range of attractions across the County, thereby better managing visitor numbers at sites.

4.25 Policy Context

4.25.1 Boyne Valley Tourism Strategy 2020, (Boyne Valley Tourist Office 2016)

The Boyne Valley Tourism Plan has been created to focus on areas of growth potential, identify key projects that will act as a stimulus for tourism development and bring the Boyne Valley brand to the next level through marketing innovation. The immediate goal of the Plan is to support the creation of employment through increased tourism activity. The introduction of Ireland's Ancient East programme and the increasing awareness of the Boyne Valley as a national tourism destination highlight the immediate scope for tourism growth within the region. The Plan seeks to capitalise on this in order to grow the tourism product of the region to its full potential.

4.25.2 People Place and Policy - Growing Tourism to 2025, (DTTAS, 2014)

This document is a policy framework for the development of tourism within the Country. It seeks to provide a basis for the prioritisation of investment in order to maximise the return from tourism in the long-term. It examines the role of people, places, Local Authorities, Central Government, Europe and international policy. The framework has a strong focus on developing the sector to attract 10 million overseas visitors, create a range of direct and indirect enterprise opportunities and to grow employment in the sector to 250,000 persons by 2025. A Tourism Action Plan (2016-2018) has been created by the Tourism Leadership Group and sets out actions required in the period to 2018, to achieve the overall objectives of People Place and Policy – Growing tourism to 2025.

4.25.3 Tourism Development and Innovation – A strategy for Investment 2016-2022, (Fáilte Ireland, 2016)

In order to stimulate innovation in the tourism product, and to improve international competitiveness, Fáilte Ireland has launched a significant new Tourism Development and Innovation fund which will be the main source of funding in the sector over the next five years. This strategy sets out the framework and mechanism for the delivery of investment to cities, towns, villages, communities and businesses across the country. It identifies priorities to support innovation in the sector to retain and grow the country's competitiveness in the marketplace. Its ultimate aim is to strengthen the appeal of Ireland for international visitors.

4.25.4 Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy, 2019-2031

The RSES sets out that three of Fáilte Ireland's regional tourism brands are based in the EMRA region. Tourism is a strong contributor to the economy of the region and the RSES seeks to support Fáilte Ireland and other organisations to deliver greater tourism benefits to the Region.

4.26 Development Plan Vision for Tourism

The Plan seeks to facilitate the further development of the County as the gateway to Ireland's Ancient East. It is proposed to promote and facilitate the development of sustainable tourism[30] and recreation and support the development of the Boyne Valley Bucket list[31] through the provision of a diverse range of activities, historic sites and accommodation types within the County. Improvements to the tourist experience of the County and increases in overnight stays will positively influence the creation of new and varied employment opportunities throughout the County.

Fáilte Ireland has started work on the 'Ancient' Visitor Experience Development Plan (AVEDP) which aims to develop world-class experiences focused on the region's rich ancient heritage. This destination development plan will be implemented over the next five years and will be based primarily around Brú na Bóinne and the greater Boyne Valley areas. It is designed to be a roadmap for enhancing the existing Ancient visitor proposition to achieve the objectives of addressing seasonality, increasing visitor numbers, improving dwell time and visitor dispersion across the destination. The plan will provide a destination wide tourism development focus, harnessing existing plans and examining new projects to create a world class destination, using Ancient as the core theme.

The AVEDP seeks to capture these projects within one plan and maximise their potential over the next five years. In the development of the AVEDP, the associated objectives reflect

the contribution of this plan to achieving the goals of 'People, Place and Policy: Growing Tourism to 2025' that include growing visitor numbers, overseas revenue and employment. In achieving these, the plan also addresses the challenges of seasonality, regional dispersion of visitors and sustainability. Recent multi-million-euro investment into the destination by Fáilte Ireland has already mobilised projects with the potential to be transformative. Examining the broader opportunity around the Brú na Bóinne visitor experience in a UNESCO World Heritage Site has been a central focus. However, the AVEDP has identified an additional range of emerging opportunities with the ability to deliver some of the most experiential Ancient experiences in the world.

It is the policy of the Council:

ED POL 41

To co-operate with Fáilte Ireland, Tourism Ireland, Boyne Valley Tourism, Louth County Council, and any other relevant bodies in the implementation of the Boyne Valley Tourism Strategy 2016-2020 and Ireland's Ancient East Programme.

4.27 Tourist Infrastructure

Fáilte Ireland research has shown that overseas tourists want to visit a destination with a variety of experiences to offer. This has formed the basis for the Wild Atlantic Way and Ireland's Ancient East campaigns. The marketing of themes for locations in the County supported by softer route enhancements such as food and local culture is an objective of this Plan. The Plan will seek to support the development of a number of initiatives within the County including the Boyne Valley Food Series and Kells Cultural Quarter and Arts Collective and seeks to facilitate any associated development arising from these initiatives in appropriate locations. The Council will endeavour to facilitate new tourist attractions which are sensitive to the rural character and heritage of the area, such as the opening of historic houses or gardens to the public, farm visits, museums and interpretative centres.

It is the policy of the Council:

ED POL 42

To facilitate the development of tourism infrastructure such as accommodation, restaurants, car and coach parking and toilet facilities in the designated hubs throughout the County.

ED POL 43

To promote the development of sustainable tourism and encourage the provision of a comprehensive range of tourism facilities, subject to satisfactory location, siting and design criteria, the protection of environmentally sensitive areas and areas identified as sensitive landscapes in the Landscape Character Assessment for the County. (Refer to Chapter 8 Cultural Heritage, Natural Heritage, Landscape and Green Infrastructure and Appendix 5 Landscape Character Assessment).

ED POL 44

To support the development of new tourist facilities or upgrading/ extension of existing tourist facilities at tourist sites within the County such as the Hill of Tara, Loughcrew and

Trim Castle in conjunction with OPW and DCHG in accordance with the National Monuments Acts 1930 to 2014 and with proper Planning and sustainable development principles. These facilities should avail of shared infrastructure and services where possible, and will be designed to the highest architectural and design standards.

ED POL 45

To encourage new and high-quality investment in the tourism industry in the County with specific reference to leisure activities (including walking, cycling, angling, equestrian and family focused activities) and accommodation in terms of choice, location and quality of product.

ED POL 46

To work with all relevant stakeholders and Fáilte Ireland to facilitate the erection of standardised signage for tourism facilities and tourist attractions as part of National and Regional initiatives.

ED POL 47

To encourage the clustering of tourism products and services within identified hubs and nodes to facilitate the sharing of infrastructure and services where possible, to increase linkages within and reduce leakage from the local economy.

ED POL 48

To support the use of the Kells Court House building for tourism and arts related activities.

ED POL 49

To encourage and support the development of the Boyne Valley Food Series, Kells Cultural Quarter and Kells Arts Collective.

ED POL 50

To encourage and support the development of the former Town Hall to use as a Visitors Centre for Trim Castle to be undertaken in conjunction with OPW and DCHG.

ED POL 51

To support and seek to secure additional funding for the restoration of the Former St Patrick's Classical School for use as a County Archive, genealogy research centre and performance and study space.

It is the objective of the Council:

ED OBJ 74

To support the development of sustainable tourism and encourage the provision of a comprehensive range of tourism facilities, subject to satisfactory location, siting and design criteria, the protection of environmentally sensitive areas and areas identified as sensitive landscapes in the Landscape Character Assessment for the County. (Refer to Chapter 8 Cultural Heritage, Natural Heritage, Landscape and Green Infrastructure and Appendix 5 Landscape Character Assessment).

4.28 Tourism Sectors

4.28.1 Agri-Food

The agri-food sector has been credited with playing an integral role in the national economic recovery in recent years. The sector is the country's largest indigenous industry, with an estimated turnover of €26 billion and providing 170,000 jobs or 9% of the total employment figure. The sector makes a significant contribution to employment in rural areas, being a pivotal source of enterprise creation and opportunities.

Meath Food Series are a group of businesses – restaurants, hoteliers, food producers and visitor attractions – who are passionate about food, keen to celebrate its journey from producer to the table, and to link it to the rich heritage of this region. Through this medium food producers organise many free and family events throughout the County which include gourmet cycles and farm walks. The focus of this medium is to market the multitude of food experiences there are in the County and in doing so to positively impact growth in this sector. Food tourism has significant potential within the County and provides an alternative experience for visitors. It is a policy of this Plan to support the expansion and growth of food enterprises and associated tourist development in appropriate areas in the County.

It is the policy of the Council:

ED POL 52

To facilitate and support the development of the Boyne Valley Food Series and associated development in the County at appropriate locations and to encourage co-location of enterprises at suitable sites.

4.28.2 Festivals and Events

Fáilte Ireland recognises the importance of festivals and events with regard to the attraction of both domestic and overseas visitors. The economic and community benefits of such events are well documented. The County has a number of annual festivals and events such as Hinterland book festival, Kells type trail and Guth Gafa film festival all located in Kells, Nobber Harp festival, Spirits of Meath throughout the County and many more. It is a policy of this Plan to support the development of festivals and events throughout the County at appropriate locations and subject to any relevant consent required. Refurbishments of existing buildings for such events will be encouraged within the County, at appropriate locations, such as the refurbishment of the Heritage Centre in Kells and the Town Hall in Duleek.

The inaugural Púca festival, held in 2019 with a total number of 19,546 attendees across the 3 days, celebrated Ireland as the birthplace of Halloween with venues in Trim, Athboy and Drogheda aims to attract international visitors to Ireland in October and November. It is intended that this would become an annual event.

It is the policy of the Council:

ED POL 53

To support and promote existing and new festivals and sporting events to increase the cultural, heritage and lifestyle profile of the County, and where appropriate to promote and facilitate the development of new events and venues to host these events.

It is the objective of the Council:

ED OBJ 75

To support and promote existing and new festivals and sporting events to increase the cultural, heritage and lifestyle profile of the County, subject to the satisfactory location, access, parking provision and protection of the surrounding environment.

4.28.3 Multi-Experience Attractions

The provision of multi experience facilities, particularly family friendly attractions such as those developed at Tayto Park, Slane Castle and Causey Farm, is supported by the policies and objectives of this development Plan. The discerning modern tourist wants a variety of experiences suitable for both families and adults in a variety of settings.

The development of significant family attractions such as Tayto Park at Curragha, Ashbourne, Irish Military War Museum in Starinagh and Causey Farm at Fordstown has had a positive impact in attracting a different target market to the County, who, when visiting these sites, create spin off revenue for local shops, hotels and other commercial businesses. The addition of Tayto Park in particular, has provided a new national tourist attraction deviating from the traditional attractions based on heritage and culture. The Plan acknowledges this regional amenity and the tourism role for the County and supports the sustainable development of these parks, farms and complexes at suitable locations throughout the County.

Slane Distillery has provided a further form of tourism diversification within the County which attracts a different target market not previously captured by the County. The development of Slane Demesne as a multi experience tourism destination is supported by this Plan subject to the protection of the integrity of the protected structure and it's setting for future generations.

It is the policy of the Council:

ED POL 54

To enable, facilitate and encourage the growth and sustainability of the tourism sector through the provision of tourism enterprise developments in rural areas including open farms subject to the provision of adequate infrastructure and compliance with normal Planning considerations. (Refer to Chapter 8 Cultural Heritage, Natural Heritage, Landscape and Green Infrastructure and Appendix 5 Landscape Character Assessment)

ED POL 55

To promote Tayto Park in Curragha as a flagship family visitor attraction in the County, subject to the normal development management standards. The Council will support and encourage further appropriate sustainable development of the integrated tourism product at Tayto Park subject to the provision or upgrade of the requisite physical infrastructure.

ED POL 56

To promote Slane Castle as a multi experience tourism destination and attraction in the County, subject to the normal development management standards. The Council will support and encourage further appropriate development of the integrated tourism product at Slane Castle subject to the provision or upgrade of the requisite physical infrastructure and the protection of the integrity of the projected structure and its surrounds, including the River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC and SPA.

ED POL 57

To promote Causey Farm as a rural multi-experience tourism attraction in the County. The Council will support further appropriate development at Causey Farm subject to the provision of adequate infrastructure and compliance with normal Planning considerations.

ED POL 58

To promote the Irish Military War Museum as a rural multi-experience tourism attraction in the County. The Council will support further appropriate development at the Irish Military War Museum, subject to the provision of adequate infrastructure and compliance with normal Planning considerations.

ED POL 59

To promote the historic demesne at Killeen Castle Estate as a high-quality integrated tourism product of National significance bearing in mind the unique historic, cultural and architectural importance of the lands and its success to date in hosting International sporting events and its further potential as an integrated tourism destination centred on a premium Hotel together with facilitating the completion of the previously approved ancillary and residential accommodation within the complex. Any future planning application to carry out new development within the demesne or grounds of Killeen Castle shall be supported by an Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA) which will include bat and breeding bird surveys and other ecological surveys as appropriate undertaken by qualified specialists of the areas of the demesne which might be affected by the proposed development.

It is an objective of the Council to:

ED OBJ 76

To promote the sustainable use and further development of the Dalgan Park Campus, compatible with existing and established uses which include educational, residential, commercial office, medical, leisure, institutional, tourism and agricultural uses; and future use which include various ancillary tourism uses. The approach seeks, in relation to existing and new development, to protect the heritage, cultural and historical attributes of the Dalgan Park Campus and to ensure the retention of public access. The objective seeks to promote the reuse, expansion and adaptation of existing buildings within the Campus, and to provide suitable future accommodation for the Columban Missionaries.

ED OBJ 77

To support the development and conversion of Lagore House and Farm, a historic building and protected structure (MH044107) part of the local cultural heritage, for use as a hotel with associated leisure and equine facilities. The existing walled garden and other vernacular farm buildings attached to Lagore House should be retained and converted as part of the development of the site subject to good planning and architectural conservation practice.

4.28.4 Culture & Heritage

The Boyne Valley is identified as the birth place of Ireland's Ancient East and the County in particular is the gateway to this destination, with its unique collection of pre-historic sites and monuments in particular the Brú na Bóinne UNESCO World Heritage Site[32].
It is recognised that there is a need for improved and new tourist facilities within the County in particular at Loughcrew, Hill of Tara, Trim Castle, Newgrange, Knowth and Hill of Slane. The development of tourist facilities at these locations and within the wider County should respect the outstanding quality and variety of the natural and built environment in the County and should not damage the resource or prejudice its future tourist value in any way. In assessing such proposals regard will be had to the Landscape Character Assessment for the County.

It is the policy of the Council:

ED POL 60

To support the development and improvement of tourist facilities at historical sites in the County only in instances where the development does not damage the resource or prejudice its future tourist value in any way, particularly in and proximate to the Brú na Boinne and Hill of Tara areas to be undertaken in conjunction with OPW and DCHG.

4.28.5 Walking and Cycling Routes

Greenways offer a unique opportunity to develop a further strand in tourism for the County, through the provision of infrastructure for adventure tourism which has demonstrable economic benefits. In 2015, Fáilte Ireland estimated that 355,000 of overseas visitors engaged in cycling representing 7% of the overall overseas tourist market. Greenways also provide opportunities for active travel which supports sustainable transport policy[33] and recreation in the localities along their routes and can also provide economic, social, environmental and health benefits.

As mentioned in Section 4.25 above, the Government's Tourism policy statement "People, Place and Policy – Growing Tourism to 2025", recognises the importance of investing in the visitor experience in order to continue to grow tourism including investment in facilities for visitor activities such as greenways and other outdoor recreational activities. This Plan recognises the important role that suitable cycle and pedestrian routes have in the attraction of tourists to the County. The Council will endeavour to assist in the delivery of such routes and, in particular, the delivery of the Royal Canal Greenway which is currently under construction, the Boyne Valley Greenway (Trim – Navan – Slane – Drogheda-Newbridge House), Boyne Valley - Lakelands Greenway (Navan – Kingscourt - Monaghan), subject to appropriate assessments and consents. (Refer to Chapter 5 Movement Strategy).

In 2018, 28% or 2.6 million overseas holidaymakers to Ireland engaged in some type of walking, the highest engagement in any type of outdoor activity while 5% or 504,000 overseas holidaymakers engaged in cycling. Pedestrian walks, such as the Royal Canal, and the Navan Ramparts will also be improved and maintained subject to obtaining the relevant consents. Other routes that arise from time to time will also be supported. Public rights of way which contribute generally to the amenities of the County and local areas will be protected and maintained.[34]

It is the policy of the Council:

ED POL 61

To work with the National Transport Authority (in conjunction with relevant objectives in Chapter 5 Movement Strategy of this Development Plan), Boyne Valley Tourism, Fáilte Ireland, Waterways Ireland and all stakeholders to develop a co-ordinated approach to the selection, delivery and servicing of future greenways, blueways, trails and routes throughout the County.

ED POL 62

To support developments which will enable and encourage countryside recreation and an increased appreciation of the natural environment, through facilitating the development of community walks, off road trails / rural trail developments, parks and other outdoor amenities and recreational infrastructure. All proposals will require screening to determine if a full Appropriate Assessment of the likely significant effects on Natura 2000 sites, is required.

ED POL 63

To encourage and support sensitive development which provides for the appreciation, interpretation, upgrade and provision of access to natural habitats, scenic vistas and heritage features for the benefit of rural tourism subject to normal Planning and nature conservation considerations.

It is an objective of the Council:

ED OBJ 78

a) To promote and develop the upgrade of the towpaths along the Ramparts at Navan to Stackallen.

b) To deliver the Boyne Greenway from Oldbridge to Navan via Slane in conjunction with the NTA, Fáilte Ireland and all relevant stakeholders and subject to obtaining all relevant assessments and consents.

c) To deliver the Royal Canal Greenway as part of the Dublin to Galway Greenway project in co-operation with Waterways Ireland, and neighbouring Local Authorities and all relevant stakeholders, and subject to obtaining all relevant assessments and consents.

d) To deliver the Lakelands Greenway (Navan-Kingscourt–Monaghan) in co-operation with Irish Rail and neighbouring Local Authorities and subject to obtaining all relevant assessments and consents.

The delivery of these Greenways and the upgrade of these towpaths will be subject to the outcome of the Appropriate Assessment process.

ED OBJ 79

To explore the provision of sustainable medium and long-distance walking routes.

ED OBJ 80

To explore the feasibility of developing the Turas Columbanus walking trail in conjunction with all relevant stakeholders and neighbouring Local Authorities and subject to obtaining all relevant assessments and consents.

4.29 Accommodation

Managing the provision of tourist accommodation is essential to ensuring the delivery of a sustainable tourism strategy. It is acknowledged within the Boyne Valley Tourism Strategy that there is a significant deficit in accommodation within the County. The provision of new quality hotels is outlined as a requirement of the strategy in order to attract over-night dwellers and increase the County's benefit from tourism. While the provision of new hotels in appropriate locations will be supported by the Planning Authority, the County must broaden the type of bed night stock through the provision of more contemporary forms of accommodation and the development of rural based tourism enterprise. The redevelopment of outbuildings as part of such a rural enterprise for accommodation purposes would be considered in appropriate locations.

4.29.1 Caravan / Camping grounds

The Council recognises the potential and growth nationally of sites for caravans, motor homes and camping. This sector is an important element in the overall accommodation provision of all holiday makers. Such developments should ideally be located within or at the edge of development centres within the County in order to provide ease of access to services for tourists. It is an objective of the Plan to ensure that the design, operation and impact of such tourist and visitor accommodation do not unreasonably affect the amenity of the surrounding landscape.

4.29.2 Holiday Homes

With the possible exception of the coastal strip, the County is not under significant pressure for second home or holiday home development. It is recognised that there is a market for small short term let holiday home complexes associated with a particular tourist attraction in areas such as the equine industry. Applications for such developments will only be considered in suitable locations including towns, villages and rural nodes and where there is an existing established visitor attraction in operation.

It should be noted that as part of the measures to help address pressures in the private housing rental market, new planning legislative reforms to regulate the short term letting sector, came into effect on 1 July 2019.[36] These reforms have restricted the number of days that a permitted "*dwelling*" can be let on a short term basis. These new provisions apply in areas designated as "rent pressure zones" under the Residential Tenancies Act 2004, as amended. The entirety of County Meath is designated as a rent pressure zone, as noted earlier. Meath County Council's planning enforcement unit will be responsible for monitoring and enforcing these new requirements.

It is the policy of the Council:

ED POL 64

To facilitate the development of a variety of quality tourist accommodation tourist types, at suitable locations, throughout the County.

ED POL 65

To positively consider the development of new hotels in existing settlements, with particular preference for locations in larger settlements such as Navan. In rural locations (i.e. villages / rural nodes), it must be demonstrated that: (i) the area proposed to be served by the new development has high visitor numbers associated with an existing attraction / facility; been identified having regard to the profile of the visitor and the availability and proximity of existing hotels in the area; and (iii)The distance of the location from a significant settlement is such that visitors to area/attraction are unlikely to avail of existing hotel facilities.

ED POL 66

To positively consider the development of a new hotel at an appropriate location in Navan, subject to the provision of required infrastructure and compliance with Development Management Standards.

ED POL 67

To encourage touring/holiday vehicles, caravan, and camping sites to locate adjacent to or within existing settlements or established tourism facilities, having due regard to surrounding land uses and proper Planning and development of the area.

ED POL 68

To positively consider the (part) conversion of existing dwellings to Bed & Breakfasts (B&Bs) and Guesthouses, to be operated by the owner-occupier of the dwelling. Applications for new build B&Bs /guesthouses will in the first instance be evaluated as private dwellings and the objectives and standards applicable in that area type (e.g. large town, rural town, rural area etc) will be applied.

ED POL 69

To facilitate, where appropriate, the conversion of former demesnes or estate dwellings and their outbuildings into tourism facilities subject to good Planning and architectural conservation practice. (Refer to Chapter 8 Cultural Heritage, Natural Heritage, Landscape and Green Infrastructure and Appendix 5).

ED POL 70

To ensure that the provision any accommodation (ED POL 69 refers) , shall not be occupied as permanent place of residence. This accommodation type will in any event only be considered favourably in the case of refurbishment and adaptation of a Protected Structure or group of structures within attendant grounds for tourism use.

ED POL 71

To encourage proposals to reinstate, conserve and/or replace existing ruinous or disused dwellings for holiday home purposes subject to normal Planning considerations relating to design, safe access and provision of any necessary wastewater disposal facilities.

ED POL 72

To require new holiday home / self-catering developments to locate within either established settlements or at established tourism / recreation facilities, other than those developments involving the renovation / conversion of existing buildings.

ED POL 73

Holiday home / self-catering developments on a farm holding shall be provided by farmhouse extension or by the utilisation of other existing dwellings / structures on the property. Only where it has been demonstrated that these are not viable options, will permission be considered for new build development. Any new build development shall be in close proximity to the existing farmhouse.

ED POL 74

To facilitate the development of hostels along established walking / hiking routes and adjacent to existing tourism / recreation facilities, subject to normal Planning criteria.

4.30 Town and Village Enhancements

The important role that towns and villages throughout the County play as tourist centres and the facilities and services they can provide are recognised by Government, which through 'Realising our Rural Potential' seeks to revitalise town and village centres through the implementation of initiatives such as the Town and Village renewal scheme and others set out within Section 4.11 above.

The Council has sought to improve the overall appearance of the County's towns and villages in recent years through Pride of Place Initiatives, Tidy Towns Initiative and through policies contained within Local Area Plans and through effective development management and enforcement.

The Council has included a policy to work closely with local communities in implementing village design Plans that have been prepared in a public consultation process whilst ensuring that such Plans are consistent with adopted Local Area Plans and development objectives contained in the County Development Plan.

ED POL 75

To facilitate and support in the implementation of Village Design Plans and other community led projects to enhance village environments that have been prepared through a public consultation process whilst ensuring that such Plans are consistent with adopted Local Area Plans for such centres and town/village development objectives contained in the County Development Plan.

Please refer to Chapter 11 Development Management Standards and Land Use Zoning Objectives for further information on public realm/town renewal.

1- For further information see Section 4.4 of the National Planning Framework
2- National Policy Objective 67 of the National Planning Framework
3- CSO National Income and Expenditure 2018
4- Quartely Economic Commentary, Autumn 2019, ESRI
5- National Development Plan 2018-2027
6- Part of these lands were identified for employment uses under Variation 3 of the Navan Development Plan. This Variation was adopted in Q4 2019.
7- Data obtained from Census 2016 POWSCAR Data

8- Eastern & Midland Regional Assembly Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy 2019-2031, Section 5.4, pg. 104
9- Written Statement for Drogheda in Section 4.5 of the RSES page 64
10- Data obtained from Census 2016 POWSCAR Data
11- Section 4.1.5 of the Meath County Development Plan 2013-2019 'M1 Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor & Provision of Deepwater Port Facility at East Meath' indicated that this project is at the pre-feasibility and environmental assessment stage. At the time of writing there have been no further developments with regard to this project.
12- As required by the boundary committee review.
13- Subject of a Draft Ministerial Direction, August 2019
14- Eastern & Midland Regional Assembly Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy 2019-2031, Section 4.7, pg. 93
15- Census 2016 POWSCAR Data
16- Maynooth University (MU) formerly NUIM
17- National Planning Framework page 37
18- Page 56 of the National Planning Framework.
19- DJEI Action Plan for Jobs 2017
20- For more information on Meath County Council's policy on green house gas reduction, refer to chapter 10
21- Page 139 National Planning Framework
22- In November 2019 the Government approved the appointment of a preferred bidder to deliver this project.
23- Action Plan for Jobs 2015, January 2015, Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, pg. 121.
24- See report of Drogheda Boundary Review, February 2017, and RSES.
25- Publication of Meath County Council Development Plan delayed by Planning and Development Act 2018 as well as Section 251A of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended
26- https://www.ecommerce-europe.eu/research-figure/ireland/
27- https://www.visa.ie/about-us/press-releases/irish-consumer-spending-increases-plus-4-percent-year-on-year-in-january-1801988?returnUrl=/about-us/press-releases/listing
28- Current Planning permission due to expire in 2020.
29- People, Place and Policy; Growing Tourism to 2025
30- Tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities).
31- Fáilte Ireland marketing campaign for Ireland Ancient East
32- See Built Heritage Chapter for more details on the Bru na Boinne
33- see Section 8.16 Public Rights of Way
34- See Chapter 5 Movement for additional policies and objectives on walking and cycling
35 - Retail sales index July 2020, Available at: https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/er/rsi/retailsalesindexjuly2020/ Last Accessed: 14:18 10/09/2020
36- As provided for in the Residential Tenancies (Amendment) Act 2019 and supplementary regulations made by the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government entitled the Planning and Development Act 2000 (Exempted Development) (No. 2) Regulations 2019

5.1 Introduction

Transport is fundamental to how we live and work. The maintenance and delivery of an efficient, integrated and coherent transport network in line with national and regional policy is fundamental to the future economic, social and physical development of the County. Failure to facilitate efficient transport creates costs for society and acts as a barrier to economic growth. A key priority for this Plan is the development of a sustainable transport system, promoting measures to increase the use of public transport, while also increasing the modal share for walking and cycling in towns and villages across the County.

National and regional transport policy recognises that current transport trends in Ireland and the Greater Dublin Area, in particular with regard to levels of car use, are unsustainable. A transition towards more sustainable modes of transport is essential to reduce Ireland's carbon emissions and reach the Government's goal of an 80% reduction in carbon emissions by 2050.

While the emphasis in this chapter is to encourage this modal shift it is also important to recognise that some essential travel will continue to be made by cars and goods vehicles and the Plan also facilitates improvement in road infrastructure to cater for the required improved efficiencies.

5.2 Statutory Context

Legislation in the form of the Dublin Transport Authority Act 2008 and the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) established the role of the National Transport Authority (NTA)[1] in the planning process for the GDA. Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSES) are to be consistent with the National Transport Authority's Transport Strategy as are Local Authority Development Plans and Local Area Plans.

5.3 Policy Context

There are a number of National and Regional policy documents which provide the basis for Meath's transportation strategy as follows:

National Planning Framework and National Development Plan- Project Ireland 2040
The National Strategic Outcomes of Compact Growth (NSO 1), Enhanced Regional Accessibility (NSO 2), Strengthened Rural Economies and Communities (NSO 3), Sustainable Mobility (NSO 4) and Transition to a Low-Carbon and Climate-Resilient Society (NSO 8) and a Strong Economy supported by Enterprise, Innovation and Skills (NSO 5) are all of relevance to this Movement Strategy.

The NPF focus is on the delivery of compact growth with the emphasis on an efficient public transport system thereby reducing reliance on the private car which will reduce emissions, improve air quality etc.

Implementing the Ireland 2040 Framework will be guided by targeting the following national strategic outcomes:

Compact, Smart Growth:
'Carefully managing the sustainable growth of compact cities and towns adds value and should create more attractive places for people to live and work in. All our cities and many rural towns contain large potential development areas, centrally located and frequently publicly owned, that are suitable and capable of re-use to provide housing, jobs, amenities and services, but which need a streamlined and co-ordinated approach to their development, with investment in enabling infrastructure and supporting amenities, to realise their potential. Activating these strategic areas and achieving effective density and consolidation, rather than more sprawl of urban development is a top priority.'

Enhanced Regional Accessibility:
'Once the core areas in key cities and urban areas have been mobilised, the next priority is to enhance accessibility between key urban centres of population and their regions such as the key cities of Cork and Limerick and through the Atlantic Economic Corridor to Galway as well as access to the larger urban centres in the North-West. Investment in connectivity first without urban consolidation measures will likely worsen the current trends towards sprawl.'

Sustainable Mobility:
'in line with Ireland's Climate Change mitigation plan, we need to progressively electrify our mobility systems moving away from polluting and carbon intensive propulsion systems to new technologies such as electric vehicles and introduction of electric and hybrid traction systems for public transport fleets, such that by 2040 our cities and towns will enjoy a cleaner, quieter environment free of combustion engine driven transport systems.'

National Strategic Outcome 2 refers to enhanced regional accessibility. The N52 Ardee Bypass and the N2 Slane Bypass are projects listed as part of the programme of investment set out in the National Development Plan, and as illustrated by figure 5.2, aims to achieve the objective of enhanced regional connectivity.

A number of sections of the national road network will be progressed through pre-appraisal and early planning to prioritise projects which are proceeding to construction in the National Development Plan. These projects include: N3 Clonee to M50, N3 Virginia Bypass, N2 Rath Roundabout to Kilmoon Cross, N2 Ardee to south of Castleblayney and N2 Clontibret to the Border.

A number of local roads are listed in the NDP for progression over the life of the plan, one being, the Bettystown/Laytown Spine Road.

The NDP states that Local Authorities are planning to progress a wide range of regional and local roads projects across the country. These projects are at various stages of planning and appraisal. Examples of projects currently subject to appraisal include the R157 Maynooth Road, Dunboyne (safety upgrade) and the R162 Navan to Kingscourt road (safety upgrade).

National Transport Authority - Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2016-2035
This Transport Strategy provides a framework for the planning and delivery of transport infrastructure and services in the Greater Dublin Area over the next two decades. The strategy has identified that since the 1990's car ownership in Meath has consistently risen even through the recession years and is now reaching saturation point. Cycling mode share in the County is low. The strategy emphasises the need for additional walking and cycling infrastructure in the region and outlines the improvements required to achieve this. The NTA's Transportation Strategy is required by legislation to be consistent with the RSES.

National Development Plan 2018-2027 (NDP)
The National Development Plan 2018 - 2027 (NDP) sets out the investment priorities that will underpin the implementation of the National Planning Framework, through a total investment of approximately €116 billion. This level of capital spending will provide clarity to the construction sector, allowing the industry to provide the capacity and capability required to deliver Government's long-term investment plans. With Enhanced Regional Accessibility a National Strategic Outcome, the Plan outlines the national road network projects which will be provided with investment. This includes the N2/A5 road, serving Meath, Monaghan and Donegal and the N2 Slane Bypass.

Planning Land Use and Transport – Outlook 2040
Transport investment must have due regard for the Project Ireland 2040 National Strategic Outcomes, particularly those which are most relevant to the transport sector, such as enhanced regional accessibility and sustainable mobility.

To ensure a consistency of approach across Government in relation to Project Ireland 2040, Planning Land Use and Transport: Outlook 2040 sets out a framework for future transport investment. This document will replace Transport Future – A Strategic Investment Framework for Land Transport (SIFLT) and will ensure a joined-up approach to planning across Government.

Spatial Planning and National Roads Guidelines for Planning Authorities (Department of Environment, Community and Local Government 2012)
These guidelines set out planning policy considerations relating to development affecting national primary and secondary roads, including motorways and associated junctions, outside the 50-60 kmph speed limit zones for cities, towns and villages.

Smarter Travel – A Sustainable Transport Future – A New Transport Policy for Ireland, 2009-2020 (Department of Transport)
This strategy aims to deliver a sustainable transport system which is fundamental to the climate change agenda. The Government reaffirms its vision for sustainability in transport and sets out five keys goals: (i) reduce overall travel demand, (ii) maximise the efficiency of the transport network, (iii) reduce reliance on fossil fuels, (iv) reduce transport emissions and (v) improve accessibility to transport and thus improve our quality of life. This plan currently remains in place though it is likely to be reviewed during the lifetime of the County Development Plan.

National Cycle Policy Framework 2009-2020 (Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport)
The National Cycle Policy Framework (NCPF) 2009-2020, uses the targets outlined in Smarter Travel and focuses more specifically on cycling as a sustainable transport mode. The document sets out the stated aim of creating a strong cycling culture in Ireland making cycling the norm, rather than an exception, for all short trips undertaken.

Dublin Area Cycle Network Plan 2014-2024
This document focuses on establishing an inventory of cycling facilities in Dublin, Kildare, Meath and Wicklow and identifies potential cycle routes such as greenways, cycle paths, cycle lanes, and roads. The plan sets out a ten year strategy to guide investment into cycling in the GDA and seeks to increase the regions cycle network fivefold in length to 2,840km.

Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets 2019 (DMURS), (Department of Transport and the Department of Environment)
The focus of the manual is to create streets that are safe, attractive and comfortable for all users. It presents a series of principles, approaches and standards that are necessary to achieve balanced, best practice design outcomes with regard to street networks and individual streets. Well-designed streets can create connected physical, social and transport networks that promote real alternatives to car journeys, namely walking, cycling or public transport. The manual gives guidance on the layout of new developments and on the design of individual roads and streets taking into account streetscapes, urban design as well as engineering criteria. Where relevant, the manual must be implemented by all Planning Authorities when permitting or planning development.

National Cycle Manual 2011 (National Transport Authority)
This offers guidance on integrating cycling infrastructure into the design of urban areas. The manual challenges planners and engineers to incorporate cycling within transport networks more proactively than before.

Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments 2018 (Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government)
This includes standards for car parking.

National Disability Inclusion Strategy (2017-2021)
The National Disability Inclusion Strategy (NDIS) 2017-2021 is the key framework outlining the policies and actions needed to address the needs of people with disabilities. This Inclusion Strategy is the outcome of a broad and comprehensive consultation process that has resulted in key actions under a range of themes to ensure persons with disabilities are recognised and treated equally before the law.

United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD).
The United Nations Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) states that all persons with all types of disabilities must enjoy all human rights and fundamental freedoms.

This requires change from viewing people with disabilities as receivers of charity, medical treatment, and social protection to view-ing people with disabilities as having rights, who are capable of claiming those rights, can participate fully in all aspects of life and who are capable of making decisions for their lives based on their free and informed consent. Accessibility is one of the key rights of persons with a disability so that they can live independently and participate fully in all aspects of life. The UNCRPD puts obligations on State Parties to ensure access for persons with disabilities to, inter alia, the physical environment and transportation in both urban and rural areas.

DMURS Interim Advice Note – Covid-19 Pandemic Response

In response to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Department of Transport Tourism and Sport (DTTAS) announced funding for technical and financial support to deliver improved walking and cycling infrastructure across the country. This entails technical and financial support to review current street arrangements, including the widening of footpaths, potential pedestrianisation of some streets, potential one-way systems, altering traffic signal times and provision of some external space where appropriate to support business activities. This Interim Advice Note provides guidance to Local Authorities to assist in the implementation of these measures and advises that Local Authorities, when considering Covid-19 related measures, also consider the longer term alignment with the principles, approaches and measures contained within the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets which prioritises sustainable modes of transport (walking, cycling and public transport), advocates a multi-disciplinary approach to street design and promotes the principles of universal design.

Local Link Rural Transport Programme Strategic Plan 2018 to 2022

This is the National Transport Authority's first strategic plan for the Local Link Rural Transport Programme and covers the period 2018 to 2022. The key priorities of the Programme continue to include addressing rural social exclusion and the integration of rural transport services with other public transport services. The Programme mission statement is 'to provide a quality nationwide com-munity based public transport system in rural Ireland which responds to local needs'

National Aviation Policy for Ireland 2015 (Department of Transport)

This document serves as a general guidance document for the development of aviation within the Country. It highlights three principal goals for the Irish aviation sector:

- To enhance Irelands connectivity by ensuring safe, secure and competitive access, responsive to the needs of business, tourism and consumers;
- To foster the growth of aviation enterprise in Ireland to support job creation and position Ireland as a recognised global leader in aviation; and,
- To maximise the contribution of the aviation sector to Irelands economic growth and development.

Eastern and Midlands Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy, 2019-2031

Regional Policy Objective RPO 6 Integrated Transport and Land Use Planning seeks to: 'Promote best use of Transport Infrastructure, existing and planned, and promote sustainable and active modes of travel to ensure the proper integration of transportation and land use planning.'
The RSES acknowledges that transport as a sector is one of the significant contributors to our national Green House Gas (GHG) emissions and as a nation we need to act on climate change and adapt and mitigate all sectors accordingly. The need to transition to a low carbon society by reducing transport usage and transitions to lower carbon options, including transition to clean renewables is a key aspect of Ireland's response to climate change. Transition to a low carbon transport system is firstly about reducing the need for travel and then shifting to economically efficient modes, i.e. active travel modes and public transport. Transitioning existing fossil fuel vehicles to clean renewable vehicles is a vital further step.

The NTA's Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area (GDA) provides a framework for the planning and delivery of transport infrastructure and services over the period 2016 - 2035.

The following RPOs are relevant:

RPO 8.1:

'The integration of transport and land use planning in the Region shall be consistent with the guiding principles expressed in the transport strategy of the RSES.'

RPO 8.2:

'The capacity and safety of the Region's strategic land transport networks will be managed and enhanced, including through the management of travel demand in order to ensure their optimal use.'

RPO 8.3:

'That future development is planned and designed in a manner which maximises the efficiency and protects the strategic capacity of the metropolitan area transport network, both existing and planned and to protect and maintain regional accessibility.'

RPO 8.4:

'Land use plans within the GDA shall demonstrate a consistency with the NTA's Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area and plans with or outside of the GDA shall be consistent with the guiding principles expressed in the RSES.'

RPO 8.5:

'To support the preparation of a regional strategy for freight transport in collaboration with the relevant transport agencies and the other Assemblies.'

RPO 8.6:

'In order to give local expression to the regional level Transport Strategy within the Region in conjunction with the NTA, Local Transport Plans (LTP) will be prepared for selected settlements in the Region.' The settlements for which Local Transport Plans will be made will include, but will not be limited to, Athlone, Dundalk, Drogheda, Arklow, Ashbourne, Balbriggan, Longford, Mullingar, Portlaoise, , Naas, Navan, Newbridge, Tullamore, and Wicklow-Rathnew and certain large settlements or development areas within the Dublin Metropolitan Area.

RPO 8.7:

'To promote the use of mobility management and travel plans to bring about behaviour change and more sustainable transport use.'

RPO 8.8:

'The RSES supports delivery of the rail projects set out in Table 8.2, subject to the outcome of appropriate environmental assessment and the planning process.'
These projects include:

- Re-appraisal of the extension of the Dunboyne/M3 Parkway line to Navan during the Mid Term Review of the GDA Transport Strategy;[2]
- Dart expansion Programme - new infrastructure and electrification of existing lines, including provision of electrified services to Drogheda, Maynooth and M3 Parkway on the Maynooth/Sligo Line.

RPO 8.9:

'The RSES supports delivery of the bus projects set out in Table 8.3 subject to the outcome of appropriate environmental assessment and the planning process.'
Table 8.3 includes a broad range of measures addressing all aspects of bus transport including routes, fare structures, passage information etc.

RPO 8.10:

'The RSES supports appraisal and or delivery of the road projects set out in Table 8.4 subject to the outcome of appropriate environmental assessment and the planning process.'
These projects include:

- N2 Slane Bypass;
- N2 Rath roundabout to Kilmoon;
- N2 Ardee Bypass;
- N2 Ardee to Castleblayney;
- N3 Clonee to M50
- M4 Maynooth to Leixlip.

In addition, long term protection shall remain for the Eastern Bypass and the Leinster Outer Orbital Route.

RPO 8.11:

'Support the improvement, and protection, of the EU TEN-T network and the strategic function of the Dublin to Belfast road network.'

RPO 8.12:

'Support the delivery of a higher speed rail connection between Belfast and Dublin and Cork.'

RPO 8.13:

'Support the Local Link Rural Transport Programme throughout rural areas of the Region.'

RPO 8.14:

'The RSES supports delivery of the strategic park and ride projects set out in Table 8.5 subject to the outcome of appropriate environmental assessment and the outcome of the planning process.' These projects include Dunboyne.

In terms of cycling the RSES focuses on implementation of the NTA Greater Dublin Area Cycle Network Plan, delivery of the National Cycle Plan, provide safe cycling routes in towns and villages across the Region, enhance pedestrian facilities in all urban areas in the Region; and investment priorities for cycleways feasibility and route selection studies for cycleways shall identify and subsequently avoid high sensitivity feeding or nesting points for birds and other sensitive fauna.

The RSES sets out the following in respect of air transport:

RPO 8.17:

'Support the National Aviation Policy for Ireland and the growth of movements and passengers at Dublin Airport to include its status as a secondary hub airport. In particular, support the provision of a second runway, improved terminal facilities and other infrastructure.'

RPO 8.18:

'Improved access to Dublin Airport is supported, including Metrolink and improved bus services as part of BusConnects, connections from the road network from the west and north. Improve cycle access to Dublin Airport and surrounding employment locations. Support appropriate levels of car parking and car hire parking.'

RPO 8.19:

'Spatial planning policies in the vicinity of the airport shall protect the operation of Dublin Airport in respect to its growth and the safe navigation of aircraft from non-compatible land uses. Policies shall recognise and reflect the airport noise zones associated with Dublin Airport. Within the Inner Airport Noise Zone, provision of new residential and/or other noise sensitive development shall be actively resisted. Within the Outer Noise Zone, provision of new residential and/or other noise sensitive development shall be strictly controlled and require appropriate levels of noise insulation in all cases.'

RPO 8.20:

'Spatial planning policies for areas located within the Public Safety Zones shall reflect the guidance set out in the ERM Report "Public Safety Zones, 2005" (or any update thereof) commissioned by the then Department of Transport and the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, in assessing proposals for development falling within Airport Public Safety Zones.'

5.4 Vision for Movement Strategy

It is a strategic aim of this Development Plan to create attractive efficient compact settlements which reduce the need to travel and improve the quality of life for inhabitants. Land use and the manner in which it is developed is the primary influencing factor for travel demand[3]. It is the Vision of this Plan is to use the resources at the Council's disposal to provide safe, efficient and accessible transport networks which meet both local needs and wider regional and national strategic aims. Maintaining and improving transport networks remains a priority, particularly in relation to the delivery of important infrastructural development and transport measures which support the economic development strategy for the County. Achieving sustainable patterns of transport in accordance with national and regional policy as set out in Section 5.3 will enable settlements to function more efficiently and effectively.

5.5 Integration of Land Use and Transportation Planning

Land use planning can proactively influence travel behaviour; clustering of development coupled with improvements in street layouts, design and effective planning process can strongly influence how people make their daily journeys. Research has shown that travel by non-motorised modes is highest in pleasant 'liveable' streets in areas of good permeability with direct access to public transport. It is a key priority of the National Planning Framework (NPF) to achieve effective density and consolidation rather than urban sprawl and thus improve mobilisation of core urban areas to achieve enhanced connectivity between regions. It is stated within the NPF that achieving effective density within centrally located urban areas and urban consolidation measures rather than more sprawl of urban development is a priority[4]. It is advocated within the NPF that these measures will be delivered in accordance with the NTA Strategy for the GDA 2016-2035. Consequently, it is therefore the policy of the Council to continue to support effective integration of land-use and transportation in order to generate and reinforce sustainable patterns of development in the County that reduce the need to travel by car. This policy focus is intended to, not only reflect the policy position as outlined in the NPF, and critically to take cognisance of the objectives of 'Ireland's Climate Change Strategy to 2020 and beyond'.

It is a policy of the Council:

MOV POL 1

To support and facilitate the integration of land use with transportation infrastructure, through the development of sustainable compact settlements which are well served by public transport, in line with the guiding principles outlined in RPO 8.1 of the EMRA RSES 2019-2031.

MOV POL 2

To carry out strategic studies to identify and set out the delivery mechanisms for the necessary transport infrastructure to implement the Economic Development Strategy for County Meath.

MOV POL 3

To promote sustainable land use planning measures which facilitate transportation efficiency, economic returns on transport investment, minimisation of environmental impacts and a general shift towards the greater use of public transportation throughout the County.

MOV POL 4

To promote higher residential development densities in settlement centres along public transport corridors, subject to compliance with normal planning criteria.

It is the objective of the Council:

MOV OBJ 1

To prepare and commence implementation of Local Transport Plans (LTP), in conjunction with the NTA and relevant stakeholders, for Drogheda (in conjunction with Louth County Council as part of the Joint Urban Plan), Ashbourne, Navan, Ratoath, and other settlements where Local Area Plans are undertaken, having regard to the Area Based Transport Assessment Guidance Notes (2019).

MOV OBJ 2

To seek regular engagement between Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) and the relevant Municipal District regarding road safety issues communities located on Meath's national roads.

5.5.1 Demand Management

The NTA's Transport Strategy envisages that there will be limited provision of new road capacity in the Greater Dublin Area up to 2030. While investment in public transport networks will free up road space, the forecast for growth in population and employment will negatively affect congestion in the Greater Dublin Area. The NTA acknowledge that, even with all of the planned improvements aimed at reducing the dependency on car travel, it will not be possible to meet the targets in the Smarter Travel Policy without significant demand management measures of a fiscal nature.

Management of demand for road use is broadly grouped into three categories:

- Control measures where access to, and use of, the road infrastructure or on and off street parking spaces is controlled e.g. on street parking controls, ramp metering, dedication of

road space to certain transport modes, better development management to reduce demand and need to travel,

- Fiscal measures where pricing mechanisms are utilized to achieve road usage modification,
- Other complementary measures used in combination with 1 and 2 above e.g. mobility management plans, car clubs, lift sharing, marketing and promotion of non-car modes of transport.

The Strategy aims to provide an efficient and effective transport system across the region and to accommodate future travel growth in a managed and balanced way. Increased public transport provision, coupled with enhanced cycling and walking facilities in the urban areas, will provide the means to cater for much of the increased travel demand. However, without complementary demand management measures the full benefits of the Strategy will not be achieved.

Accordingly, the Plan will support the NTA in its prioritisation of the following:

- Encourage land use policies which support the provision of development in locations and at densities which enable the efficient provision of public transport services;
- Set maximum parking standards[5] for all new developments, with the level of parking provision applied being based on the level of public transport accessibility;
- Reduce the availability of workplace parking in urban centres to discourage car commuting, where alternative transport options are available;
- Implement, at the appropriate time, demand management measures to address congestion issues on the radial national routes approaching the M50 motorway, to ensure that these routes retain sufficient capacity to fulfil their wider strategic functions;
- Secure the introduction or expansion of on-street parking controls, and charging structures, that seek to reduce commuter parking and which contribute to greater parking turnover for non-commuting purposes;
- Support and facilitate the implementation and expansion of:

1. Workplace Travel Plans for all large employers[6];
2. Tailored travel planning information provision for residential and commercial/retail areas;
3. Travel Plans for schools, colleges and all education campuses; and
4. Car club schemes, car-pooling and car sharing.

5.6 Strategic Infrastructure

5.6.1 Challenges

A significant gap still remains between the allocation of funding for transport proposals and the minimum funding requirements to maintain the condition of existing transport systems in adequate condition. Such restricted funding levels limits scope for network improvements and capacity increases. The challenge now faced by the Local Authorities is securing increased investment levels in the future and ensuring that a strategic focus is maintained as to where and how investment is directed and utilised. Since the onset of Covid 19, the Irish economy is facing an uncertain future. For the transportation system, this brings with it challenges and opportunities. In the absence of knowledge on the future path of Covid 19, the consequent economic uncertainty and a potential reduction in the use of public transport, arising from lifestyle adjustments to control the virus. All transport investment must be focused and prioritised to secure the most advantageous outcome. Given the likelihood of a continuing upward trend in traffic congestion and as outlined in the NPF, EMRA RSES and the NTA Transport Strategy, the focus will remain on improved accessibility within urban areas and on strategic regional routes and corridors to plan for an efficient transport system beyond Covid 19.

5.6.2 Key Principles

The following are considered to constitute the key principles underlying future investment in land transport networks:

1. Funding should focus on the maintenance and renewal of identified strategically important elements of the existing land transport system, so as to protect earlier investment and maintain essential functioning.
2. Inclusion of measures to address current and future urban congestion is considered essential.
3. Inclusion of measures to improve the efficiency and sustainability of urban transport including improved and expanded public transport; capacity and walking and cycling infrastructure, improved traffic management and bus priority; and better use of Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS), where appropriate.
4. Any further investment should be targeted to maximise the contribution of land transport networks by enhancing the efficiency of the existing network, particularly through increased use of ITS applications or through investments that improve connections to key seaports and airports or support other identified national and regional spatial planning priorities, where appropriate.
5. In the case of roads, investment should provide access to poorly served regions, promote access for large-scale employment proposals and complete missing links or address critical bottlenecks and safety issues, including those in Slane.

6. Secure implementation of transport projects supported by national and regional spatial planning policies, along with other demand management measures where appropriate.

It is the goal of this Plan to ensure that future transport investment, as governed by these principles, will seek to maintain and improve the quality of life of citizens and be consistent with environmental, climate and biodiversity objectives, imperatives and obligations, including those arising from the EU Habitats Directive.

5.7 Sustainable Transport

The promotion of use and increased delivery of sustainable modes of transport is fundamental to achieving Ireland's carbon emission reduction requirements of 30% by 2030 and 80% by 2050. In addition to the reduction of emissions, failure to deliver public transport investment will result in a highly congested network that cannot meet the economy's transport needs. 'The provision of a well-functioning, integrated public transport system, enhancing competitiveness, sustaining economic progress and enabling sustainable mobility choices for citizens supports the overall objectives of Ireland 2040'.[7] Given the current funding constraints in major transport investment programmes additional public transport capacity requirements for the GDA area must be met in the medium to long term through investment in lower-cost alternatives. The Plan will seek to support and facilitate an increase in modal share for cycling and increases in the use of the bus network in the County. Emphasis will also be placed on supporting the delivery of the rail line to Navan in accordance with the Transport Strategy for the GDA 2016-2035.

5.7.1 Modal Changes

The Council engaged with the NTA to develop modal share targets for the promotion of measures to increase the use of public transport, while also increasing the modal share for walking and cycling in towns across the County. Further information on modal targets are outlined in the Volume 2 Written Statements for Settlements.

The modal share targets have been informed by the Census 2016 POWSCAR Data and an assessment by the Transportation Department of Meath County Council and the NTA of achievable modal share targets for 2026.

From the Census 2016 POWSCAR Data, the following information on settlements within County Meath was noted:

Highest levels for Walking:	Kells/Ratoath 19%
Highest levels for Cycling:	Maynooth 3%

Highest levels of Bus Use:	Duleek 20%
Highest levels of Rail Use:	Maynooth 12%
Highest levels of Car Use:	Kilcock 74%
Highest Combined Public Transport:	Laytown 26%

Conversely, the following statistics were also observed:

Lowest Walking:	Maynooth 2%
Lowest Cycling:	Kilcock 0%
Lowest Bus:	Maynooth 6%
Lowest Rail:	Ashbourne/Kells/Navan 0%
Lowest Car Usage:	Dunboyne/Enfield 59%
Lowest Combined Public Transport:	Navan 11%

The potential for growth in bus patronage is greatest in Navan where the Council and the NTA are working to deliver major bus improvement works as part of the Navan 2030 project.

Notwithstanding this, it is considered that there is limited scope for growth in rail users over the life of the plan (although this is a key aim of Meath County Council in the medium to longer term) and the benefits from the electrification of the lines to Drogheda, the M3 parkway and introduction of DART services will not be realised until post 2027. While it remains the policy of the Council to promote, facilitate and advance the delivery of Phase II of the Navan railway line project and associated rail services in cooperation with other relevant agencies, no account of the potential benefits of this project could be been taken for this study.

5.7.2 Cycling & Walking

The Council recognises cycling and walking to be healthy, safe, ecologically-sound and socially-just forms of movement. Walking and cycling are the most sustainable modes of transport available in terms of their positive impacts on the environment. The NTA's strategy for Transport in the GDA emphasises the need for additional walking and cycling infrastructure in the region and outlines a number of improvements required to encourage more people to walk which includes improvements to the existing environment for people with mobility, visual and hearing impairments.

Planning policy can encourage walking to become the principal method of movement for shorter journeys through the arrangement of land uses and by utilising good urban design. Providing a comprehensive network of safe, well-lit and convenient footpaths (both road-side and segregated)

within new residential areas with links to schools, local neighbourhood centres, public transport stops and workplaces will encourage people to walk more. The Council will continue to improve walking facilities in the County in conjunction with the NTA.

As a consequence of the ambitious objectives outlined in the National Cycle Policy Framework (NCPF) which seeks 10% of all journeys in 2020 to be taken by bicycle, the NTA commissioned the Greater Dublin Area Cycle Network Plan. This document outlines existing and required cycling infrastructure in both urban and rural areas of the region. Information outlined in that report will provide for cycle infrastructure projects to be prioritised in terms of the importance to the strategic network and the likely cycle demand for such a scheme. The Network Plan has provided Local Authorities with an evidence-based strategy for the implementation of cycle infrastructure that will see tangible returns for investment.

The fundamental issue arising from the NCPF in relation to the County is the overall fragmentation of the existing cycle network. Poor linkages within towns are common place as is the absence of any network linkages between urban centres. The NCPF identified potential linkages in the network and particularly mentioned the potential to link Ashbourne, Ratoath and Dunshaughlin as a cluster.

While the Council has been successful in the delivery of improvements to the cycle network in recent years, it will continue efforts to make improvements in this area in accordance with the recommendations of the NCPF.

The Council has enjoyed a successful roll out of the Greenway programme in the County with the success of the Boyne Greenway and the construction of the Royal Canal Greenway which should be completed in 2019 and remains a priority for Government[15]. The Council will continue its efforts in the delivery of further greenway facilities in the County including all future phases of the Boyne Greenway subject to obtaining relevant consents and further phases of the Royal Canal Greenway which forms part of the Eurovelo Route in Europe[16]. Significant progress has been made on the Boyne Greenway with funding secured under the National and Regional Greenway Fund to enable the advancement of plans for the Navan to Newgrange section. The Council has the opportunity to work in conjunction with Fingal and Louth County Council in relation to Joint proposals to develop a cycle route between Newgrange and Newbridge House, Donabate.

The RSES recognises that there is potential for a coast to coast network of national greenways, including the Royal and Grand Canals and the Barrow Way, with regional water-based trails along the Old Rail Trail Greenway, and the Boyne Valley to Lakelands Greenway on the old Kingscourt line. Meath County Council has applied to the Department of Transport for funding for the advancement of the Lakelands Greenway (Navan – Kingscourt)[17] which will form part of the northern greenway extending into Counties Cavan, Monaghan and Louth.

Cross border greenway projects are recognised within the NPF as an opportunity to maximise market exposure from a tourism perspective and the provision of a North – South long-distance cycling route is supported within this document. The Council will seek to support the delivery of a North – South Greenway in conjunction with neighbouring Local Authorities and those within Northern Ireland. The Strategy for the future development of National and Regional Greenways was launched in July 2018. The RSES includes an objective to support the extension of the Boyne Greenway to include Navan to promote sustainable transport choices and as a recreation asset for the town.

MOV OBJ 3

To ensure that design for cycle infrastructure for all relevant developments shall be carried out in accordance with the Greater Dublin Area Cycle Network Plan, other relevant design standards or any successors to these documents.

5.7.3 Rail

At present, rail services are available at stations located in Dunboyne, Pace (M3 Parkway), Enfield, Laytown and a limited service provided from Gormanston. There are rail stations located immediately adjoining the County which are also used by Meath residents – Maynooth, Kilcock, Clonsilla, Drogheda and Balbriggan. The Short Hop Zone (SHZ) rail prices operated by Irish Rail currently operate as far as Balbriggan and Kilcock. Given the close proximity of a number of train stations in County Meath, i.e. Laytown, Gormanston and Enfield, the pricing discrepancy is having an undesirable impact on user behaviour. It is diverting rail users to a considerable extent to utilise stations outside of the County in order to avail of cheaper fares thereby creating more congestion at certain locations. This is not a sustainable model and with population growth continuing in County Meath, the problem is certain to be further exacerbated in the future. Meath County Council is committed to working with Irish Rail to review the operation of the Short Hop Zone (SHZ) rail prices and encourage an extension of same to stations in Laytown, Gormanston and Enfield.

The provision of a rail line from Pace (M3 Parkway) to Navan is a critical component of the Council's vision for the county while facilitating the development of Navan as a key town, as designated in the RSES.

Strong population growth in recent years and under-investment in public transport services within the County has led to unsustainable levels of outbound commuting by way of private car usage. Recognising the unsustainability of these commuting patterns, the Council is fully committed to the advancement of a rail line which will result in significant economic stimulus, carbon emissions reductions and societal benefits for citizens of the county. When delivered, the Dunboyne/ M3 Parkway-Navan Rail Line will comprise an electrified rail line, through the Dart + Programme, which will transform the county and provide sustainable links to the Greater Dublin Area.

The delivery of Dunboyne/M3 Parkway-Navan Rail Line is supported at a regional level in the Eastern and Midlands RSES which includes an objective 'to support the delivery of a number of rail projects including the re-appraisal of the extension of the Dunboyne/M3 Parkway line to Navan during the Mid Term Review of the GDA Transport Strategy.' The commencement of the aforementioned appraisal is now underway and the results of this will inform the mid-term review of the GDA Transport Strategy.

The Council note that the absence of a rail service from Navan to Dublin places the town and wider county at a competitive disadvantage to the other twelve administrative capitals within the region. The delivery of this critical infrastructure will serve to strengthen the transport links in the County and will significantly improve the County's economic competitiveness, while having a meaningful improvement on the quality of life of the County's residents. It is therefore imperative that the delivery of the rail line is included in the next GDA Transport Strategy and subsequent Capital

Infrastructure Programme in order to ensure investment can be secured to achieve these public transport improvements and consequent carbon emission reduction targets for the County. Though the re-appraisal will be conducted by the NTA, the Council will actively participate in this appraisal to ensure the assessment is rigorous in its consideration of all relevant matters pertaining to the County's need for a rail line.

Considerable efforts have been undertaken in the past decade which has included the substantial completion of the Railway Order application for Dunboyne/M3 Parkway line to Navan and the preparation of the Environmental Impact Statement and Natura 2000 Appropriate Assessment in 2011. This route maintained an alignment largely in keeping with the historic Navan – Dublin rail route and was selected as the preferred option after extensive consultations were undertaken by Irish Rail with Meath County Council and all relevant stakeholders.

Notwithstanding this progress, the advancement of the project has faced delays as the Transport Strategy for the GDA 2016-2035 states that 'based on current population and employment forecasts, the level of travel demand between Navan, Dunshaughlin and various stations to the city centre is considered insufficient to justify the development of a high-capacity rail link at this time. It is intended that, as part of the next Strategy review, the likely future usage of a rail connection to Navan will be reassessed, taking into account the level of development that will have taken place over the next six years in Navan and Dunshaughlin and their environs. Pending that review, the corridor previously identified for a rail link to Navan should be protected from development intrusion'.

Notwithstanding the re-appraisal outcome, this Plan maintains a strong policy stance to ensure that the detailed designed alignment is protected from further development, and that this protection also extends to potential stations and park and ride sites along the route. The Plan will also ensure, through the inclusion of a specific zoning objective R1 Rail Corridor which seeks 'to provide for a strategic rail corridor and associated physical infrastructure' that the design route of Dunboyne/M3 Parkway rail line to Navan (as confirmed by the NTA) will not be compromised. Furthermore, this Plan advocates a rail solution that will best serve the county and would therefore support the completion of a route option study to confirm the most optimal route, once the principal of the rail line has been established. Finally, the Council will continue to actively and strongly pursue the advancement of the rail line to appraisal and beyond, having regard to the wide-ranging long-term benefits of the project.

It is the policy of the Council:

MOV POL 5

To support the extension of the rail network in the County and to actively and strongly pursue a rail line from Dunboyne/M3 Parkway to Navan subject to proper planning and environmental considerations.

MOV POL 6

To actively pursue, in conjunction with Irish Rail and the NTA, the re- appraisal of the extension of the Dunboyne/M3 Parkway line to Navan during the Mid-Term review of the GDA Transport Strategy in accordance with the precepts of the RSES[10].

MOV POL 7

To support the reappraisal and thereafter, promote, facilitate and advance the Dunboyne /M3 Parkway line to Navan railway line project and associated rail services in cooperation with other relevant agencies.

It is the objective of the Council:

MOV OBJ 4

To improve, in conjunction with the NTA and Irish Rail, facilities at existing stations.

MOV OBJ 5

(a) To protect and safeguard the detailed designed alignment of Phase II of the Navan rail route and surrounding lands (including identified station locations), as illustrated on Map Series No. 5.1 in Volume 3, free from development and any encroachment by inappropriate uses which could compromise its future development as a rail facility, prior to the reappraisal of the project as part of Mid Term Review of the GDA Transport Strategy in accordance with the precepts of the RSES. (b) 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.

MOV OBJ 6

To facilitate and encourage the upgrading of existing railway stations, and protect, as required, lands necessary for the upgrading of existing railway lines or stations or the provision of new railway stations throughout the County.

MOV OBJ 7

To facilitate the provision of a train station at Bettystown (in addition to the existing station at Laytown) as part of the DART expansion works to Drogheda through the planned electrification of the Northern rail line by Irish Rail.

MOV OBJ 8

To encourage, support and work in conjunction with Irish Rail to review the operation of the Short Hop Zone (SHZ) rail prices with an extension to stations in Laytown, Gormanston Enfield and Drogheda.

MOV OBJ 9

To support the delivery of an additional train station in the Northern Environs of Drogheda as part of the future Joint Urban Plan.

MOV OBJ 10

To explore the feasibility of a train station in conjunction with Irish Rail and Louth County Council as part of the Joint Urban Area Plan.

5.7.4 Bus

There have been significant improvements to the quality and frequency of bus services to and from the urban centres of the County to Dublin and to other regional centres. Bus Éireann currently

operates Commuter and/or Expressway services to and from all major employment centres in the County to Dublin. The high level of service also reflects the fact that other national expressway services to the North West and West are routed through the County. Bus Éireann also provides public transport services linking population centres in the County and adjoining counties such as Drogheda to Navan, Navan to Kells and Navan to Trim. Bus Éireann's commuter network into Dublin City Centre is constantly evolving and improving to meet the changing demographic profile of the Greater Dublin Area. A number of private services including Ashbourne Connects, Collins, and Matthews Coaches which serves the population centres in East Meath, are also in operation and play an important role in meeting the overall demand for transport services. These compete with, and complement, the existing public transport provisions of Bus Éireann. Bus Éireann also provide a local bus service in Navan. National bus routes are complemented by Dublin Bus in Clonee and Dunboyne.

Notwithstanding this high level of service, in the context of restricted investment in future major transport infrastructure, the NTA as part of the transport strategy for the GDA has undertaken a number of studies which have identified those routes where demand for travel necessitates significant levels of investment in order to minimise delays. Improvements will include, enhanced bus lane provision on these corridors, removing current delays on the bus network in the relevant locations and enabling bus services to provide a faster alternative to car traffic along these routes. Arising from this analysis a Core Bus Network was identified which comprises sixteen radial bus corridors, three orbital bus corridors and six regional bus corridors, three of which pass through County Meath and include;

1. M1, via Dublin Port Tunnel
    - Serves long-distance bus routes from Belfast, Dundalk, Derry, Monaghan and Drogheda; and
    - Serves other regional bus routes from Balbriggan, Skerries and East Meath.
2. M2, via Dublin Port Tunnel
    - Serves regional bus routes from Ashbourne and Slane.
3. M3/N3, via Navan Road
    - Serves regional bus routes from Cavan, Navan, Trim and Dunshaughlin.

Given the funding restrictions on major transport programmes the NTA are recommending that improvements to the Quality Bus Corridor network are prioritised and implemented. Projects specific to the County proposed under the NTA's Transport Strategy for the GDA 2016-2035 include:

- Enhanced bus service along the M3/N3
- The provision of a bus hub in Navan
- Enhancement of bus services on the N2

Investment will also be made available for the maintenance of the existing bus network outside of the core bus network identified by the NTA, including the provision of bus priority measures at locations where delays are reducing efficiency. Funding will also be made available for a variety of bus infrastructure improvements in relation to bus stops, travel information and bus shelters.

There has been an increased frequency of local bus services largely as a result of the establishment of Louth Meath Fingal Local Link. Louth Meath Fingal Local Link run a daily route between Trim and Navan to assist passengers who wish to access education, training or employment. Regular weekly services run between a number of towns and villages while Dial-A-Ride services are available from a number of centres. The improvement in public transport between larger towns and between villages and towns is of paramount importance to reduce isolation and improve linkages between the towns, villages and their hinterlands.

It is the policy of the Council to:

MOV POL 8

To cooperate with the NTA and other relevant agencies to have ongoing reviews of the network of bus routes in Meath, and to support and encourage public transport operators to provide improved bus services in, and through the County.

MOV POL 9

To ensure that the design and planning of transport infrastructure and services accords with the principles of sustainable safety, in order that the widest spectrum of needs, including pedestrians, cyclists, the ageing population and those with mobility impairments are taken into account.

MOV POL 10

To ensure that new developments in Regional Growth Centres, Key Towns, Self-Sustaining Growth Towns and Self-Sustaining Towns are laid out so as to facilitate the provision of local bus services and the provision of Park and Ride facilitates as appropriate.

MOV POL 11

To facilitate in conjunction with relevant statutory agencies alternative transport modes to the private car, including enhanced delivery of public transport services along regional corridors (as defined in the NTA's Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2016-2035); frequent local bus services linking residential areas to District Centres and Town Centres, and which also serve shopping areas, employment areas and other activity centres, and connecting to key transport interchange points.

MOV POL 12

To support the implementation of recommendations presented in the NTA's Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2016-2035 and any subsequent reviews thereof.

To ensure that design for cycle infrastructure for all relevant developments shall be carried out in accordance with the Greater Dublin Area Cycle Network Plan, other relevant design standards or any successors to these documents.

MOV OBJ 11

To provide bus priority measures on existing and planned road infrastructure, where appropriate, in collaboration with the NTA, Bus Éireann and TII[11] (where relevant).

MOV OBJ 12

To identify deficits in bus infrastructure and develop a priority list as a basis to secure funding for improvement works, including the provision of bus shelters, bus stops and travel information at stops.

MOV OBJ 13

To require Mobility Management Plans and Traffic and Transport Assessments for proposed trip intensive developments, as appropriate. Please refer to Chapter 11 Development Management Standards and Land Use Zoning Objectives.

MOV OBJ 14

To deliver, in conjunction with the NTA and the Department of Transport, a Public Transportation Hub in Navan to accommodate national, commuter, regional and local bus services.

MOV OBJ 15

To work with the NTA and all transport operators to make all existing public transport services throughout the county accessible for people with disabilities, reduced mobility and older people and require that proposals for new transport infrastructure are subject to an Accessibility Audit.

MOV OBJ 16

To work with the NTA and relevant stakeholders to provide bus services in rural communities in the County.

5.7.5 Park and Ride Facilities

Park and Ride facilities integrate car use with public transport and assist those living in remote locations not well served by public transport to access public transport connections. It is important that park and ride facilities improve public transport accessibility without unduly intensifying road congestion, or increasing the total distance travelled by car. Park and ride sites should not be located where they might encourage transport users who would otherwise access public transport locally to drive further to access a site, thereby adding to congestion.

It is thus considered appropriate to include a policy in the Plan to provide Park and Ride schemes which improve public transport accessibility. These schemes shall be developed at appropriate locations which will not exacerbate road congestion or increase car travel distances. These locations shall be close to high quality road corridors leading from Core towns with good bus priority to commuter destinations in the metropolitan area.

It is the policy of the Council:

MOV POL 13

To promote and support the provision of Park-and-Ride facilities which improve public transport accessibility without exacerbating road congestion at appropriate locations within the County. NTA funded Park & Ride Schemes will be carried in accordance with the recommendations of the Park & Ride Development Office of the NTA.

MOV POL 14

To support the NTA to extend bus routes to the M3 Parkway Train Station in order to deliver a strategic multi modal park and ride facility at this location.

It is the objective of the Council:

MOV OBJ 17

To assess and determine the potential for bus-based Park and Ride facilities, in particular, close to high quality road corridors leading from settlements in the Core Area, with good bus priority to commuter destinations in the Dublin Metropolitan area.

MOV OBJ 18

To identify and develop suitable lands to provide for Park and Ride facilities at appropriate locations in the County.

MOV OBJ 19

To identify and develop suitable lands to provide for additional Park and Ride facilities at appropriate locations in Navan.

MOV OBJ 20

To support the delivery of a new car parking facility at Laytown Train Station in conjunction with the NTA and Irish Rail.

MOV OBJ 21

To facilitate the provision of a new car parking facility at Enfield Train Station in conjunction with the NTA and Irish Rail.

MOV OBJ 22

To implement suitable charging structures for Park and Ride facilities to make it more likely that those who need the service (i.e. those outside walking distance and where alternative public transport options are not available), will obtain parking. In addition, implement where appropriate, suitable measures on local roads adjacent to Park and Ride facilities to discourage commuters from parking on such roads.

5.7.6 Taxi

Accessible taxi and hackney services are a vital element in the public transport offering providing a demand-responsive 24 hour door-to-door service. Accessible taxis are often the only means of public transport available for those using wheelchairs or with mobility impairments. An accessible integrated public transport service is an essential prerequisite to enable people with disabilities to participate in the normal activities of daily living i.e. work, education, leisure and social activities. The NTA Strategy seeks to meet a target for wheelchair accessible taxis of 10% of the fleet by 2020, with the full fleet to be wheelchair accessible by 2035. It is desirable that taxis are modern and suitable for the needs of all users, and that they do not have an undue impact on local air quality or CO2 emissions.

The Council will continue to support improvements in taxi and hackney services in the County and will seek to ensure that all public transport services complement each other through the development of effective interchange opportunities throughout the County.

Please also refer to Chapter 11 Development Management Standards and Land Use Zoning Objectives.

It is the policy of the Council:

MOV POL 15

To support and facilitate the provision of an accessible taxi and hackney service in the County particularly in the main urban centres.

It shall be an objective of the Council:

MOV OBJ 23

To provide public transport interchange facilities, including facilities for taxis, at appropriate points on the public transport network particularly in the main urban centres in cooperation with the NTA.

MOV OBJ 24

To facilitate the development of properly designated taxi ranks in order to improve public transport infrastructure and services at suitable locations such as retail development and leisure facilities in conjunction with the NTA.

5.7.7 Electric Vehicles (EV) and Alternative Fuel Vehicles

Electric Vehicles (EV) refer to both Battery Electric Vehicles (BEV) and Plug-in Hybrid Electric Vehicles (PHEV). In line with the Government target to electrify all new cars and vans by 2030, the NPF acknowledges the need to move away from 'polluting and carbon intensive propulsion systems to new technologies such as electric vehicles and introduction of electric and hybrid traction systems for public transport fleets'. There are a number of charging points around the County and this Plan promotes the further installation and expansion of charging points for these vehicles in order to achieve the 2030 targets for full electrification.
The transport sector will undergo significant changes in the years ahead with technologies evolving to facilitate greater battery life and longer travel range as well as the development of alternative methods to fuel the transport sector. In this regard, the Council will also support non-EV alternative clean fuel sources as these technologies develop and subject to proper and sustainable planning considerations.

It is a policy of the Council:

MOV POL 16

To support the provision of infrastructure for electrical vehicles and alternative fuel vehicles both on street and in new developments as such technologies advance to become viable transport options.

It is an objective of the Council:

MOV OBJ 25

To facilitate the provision of electricity charging infrastructure for electric vehicles both on street and in new developments in accordance with car parking standards and best practice.

MOV OBJ 26

To liaise and collaborate with relevant agencies to support and encourage the growth of electric vehicles and E-Bikes with support facilities/infrastructure, through a roll-out of additional electric charging points in collaboration with relevant agencies at appropriate locations including retrofit of charging points in existing urban centres and park and ride facilities.

5.7.8 Green Schools

The Green-Schools programme is an environmental themed education programme, environmental management system and award scheme that promotes and acknowledges long-term, whole school action for the environment. The aim of Green-Schools is to increase the students' and participants' awareness of environmental issues and transfer this knowledge into positive environmental action in the school and wider community. One of the themes of Green-Schools is focused on Travel. Walking School Buses consist of adults walking groups of pupils to and from school along set routes, with children joining the walking bus at various pick-up locations along the route. Many schools start the Walking School Bus on a one-day per week basis and increase its schedule over time. Initiatives such as Walk to School Week/Walk on Wednesdays can also be used to encourage children to become more active in their communities. These programmes facilitates children to walk safely to and from school, and to get used to this means of travel. The Council will continue to support An Taisce in the development of the Green Schools programme throughout the County.

It is the policy of Meath County Council:

MOV POL 17

To identify and seek to implement a strategic, coherent and high quality cycle and walking network across the County that is integrated with public transport and interconnected with cultural, recreational, retail, educational and employment destinations and attractions.

MOV POL 18

To support the provision of a long-distance inter-connecting walking/cycling route(s) between the Irish Republic and Northern Ireland.

MOV POL 19

To support the NTA in the development of a strategic pedestrian network plan for the main urban centres of the County[15].

MOV POL 20

To encourage, where appropriate, the incorporation of safe and efficient cycleways, accessible footpaths and pedestrian routes into the design schemes for town centres/neighbourhood centres, residential, educational, employment, recreational developments and other uses.

MOV POL 21

To require that adequate facilities for the secure parking of bicycles be provided at convenient locations close to public transport nodes and public transport interchanges.

MOV POL 22

To prioritise the safe movement of pedestrians and cyclists in proximity to public transport nodes.

It is an objective of the Council:

MOV OBJ 27

To implement, in conjunction with the NTA, the recommendations of the NTA strategy with regard to walking and cycling infrastructure.

MOV OBJ 28

To revise road junction layouts, where appropriate, to provide dedicated pedestrian and cycling crossings, reduce pedestrian crossing distances, provide more direct pedestrian routes, and reduce the speed of turning traffic.

MOV OBJ 29

To implement at appropriate locations pedestrian permeability schemes and enhancements.

MOV OBJ 30

To request the submission of a quality audit pedestrian and cycling permeability plans as part of new housing developments.

MOV OBJ 31

To implement at appropriate locations pedestrianisation schemes, particularly in central areas of high pedestrian footfall, such as core retail areas.

MOV OBJ 32

To continue the development of a network of Greenways in the County in accordance with the Department of Transport Strategy for Future Development of Greenways.

MOV OBJ 33

To engage in the Compulsory Purchase Order process when required in order to facilitate the timely delivery of the Greenway programme within the County.

MOV OBJ 34

To identify the provision of a trail head/public car park at the Hill of Down Rural Node proximate to the Greenway, to facilitate the re-opening of the rail station, subject to feasibility.

MOV OBJ 35

To support the installation of appropriate traffic management measures on a case by case basis on the approach roads to all schools throughout the county in the interest of road safety.

5.8 Developments of National and Regional Strategic Importance

5.8.1 Slane Bypass

A bypass for Slane has been a long-standing objective of the Council and has the support of the majority of the local residents, who have campaigned for its construction for many years. The

bypass is noted within the National Development Plan 2018-2027 as key infrastructure 'investment to support the ambition for development of the border region' and is identified as a priority for delivery[18]. Further, the RSES (RPO 8.10 of the Strategy refers) supports the appraisal and delivery of the N2 Slane Bypass. It is an important infrastructural development that is required as a matter of urgency. Since the refusal of the scheme by An Bord Pleanala in 2012, the Council and the TII have carried out a number of studies looking at traffic management alternatives through Slane and along the N2 aimed at reducing the number of HGVs travelling through the village and across Slane bridge. These studies examined the effects of various HGV bans, tolling measures, speed limits and other traffic management options on the road network.

Two public consultation meetings were held in relation to these studies in November 2012 and March 2015 and the findings were presented to the Council. The outcome of these studies concluded that traffic management options would not satisfactorily address the particular circumstances in Slane and were not shown as representing viable alternatives to a bypass.

An east-west bypass option in conjunction with the proposed north-south bypass has been considered however detailed studies indicate that there were insufficient benefits to warrant this additional bypass at this time. Work has now recommenced on the preparation of an application for consent to develop an N2 bypass for Slane village and funding and support is being provided by the TII to do so. The provision of a bypass in Slane has been prioritised in terms of funding and is identified as a priority project in Building on Recovery: Infrastructure and Capital Investment 2016-2021. Traffic management alternatives will continue to be examined as part of these studies.

There is agreement that the potential safety risks that affect the future well-being of all road users and communities, particularly the Slane community must be addressed. There are numerous road safety problems associated with the existing N2, particularly on the section which runs across the Slane Bridge and through Slane Village. These problems include substandard vertical and horizontal alignment, including steep gradients on the approaches to Slane Bridge and the N2/N51 crossroads junction, sharp bends, one-way shuttle traffic across Slane Bridge, tight turning radii at the N2/N5 junction, particularly for Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGV's) and reduced forward visibility and junction visibility.

High volumes of HGV's have led to traffic congestion, delays and nuisance for residents and visitors to the village, posing significant ongoing road safety risks for all road users. Meath County Council and Transport Infrastructure Ireland have long recognised these significant road safety issues. The installation of interim road safety measures in 2002 improved some of the safety issues but the inherent safety problems continue to exist on the substandard N2 alignment and by effect, so too does the risk of serious collisions for both road users and residents.

In seeking a solution the Council recognises that a balance must be achieved between environmental, historical and archaeological considerations and the safety and other negative impacts caused by the current traffic situation in Slane village.

It is an objective of the Council:

MOV OBJ 36

To support and facilitate the delivery of an N2 Bypass to the east of Slane Village, which is considered to comprise essential infrastructural development and to construct same subject to obtaining the relevant development consents required and to reserve and protect route option corridors from development which would interfere with the provision of the project. Development of the project will be subject to the outcome of the Appropriate Assessment process.

5.8.2 Leinster Outer Orbital Route

The RSES indicates that long term protection shall remain for the outer orbital route (Leinster Outer Orbital Route) extending from Drogheda to the Naas/Newbridge area with intermediate links to Navan and other towns. The NTA Strategy for the GDA 2016 -2035 notes that while this project is not planned for implementation during the period of the Strategy, the finalisation of the route corridor and its protection from development intrusion is recommended.

It is the policy of the Council:

MOV POL 23

To support the delivery of the Leinster Orbital Route, which is considered to comprise important infrastructural development, and when finalised, to protect the route corridor free of developments which could interfere with the provision of the project.

It is an objective of the Council:

MOV OBJ 37

When finalised and agreed, to reserve the route corridor of the Leinster Orbital Route free of developments which could otherwise interfere with the provision of the project.

5.8.3 N2 Corridor

The N2 corridor functions as a vital cross border economic artery which is essential to facilitate strategic traffic movement and to maintain and improve accessibility to employment areas. The importance of this North-South route and its role in maintaining an “open all island” economy post Brexit is recognised within both the National Development Plan 2018-2027[19]and the NPF[20]. The NTA Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2016-2035 includes an objective to provide ‘enhancements of the N2/M2 national route inclusive of a bypass of Slane, to provide for additional capacity on the non-motorway sections of this route, and to address safety issues in Slane village associated with, in particular, heavy goods vehicles.[21]’ The National Development Plan makes particular reference to and prioritises the upgrade of the N2 from Rath Roundabout to Kilmoon Cross section of road which is already underway. The delivery of these works will continue to be supported and facilitated by the Council and the Council will seek the delivery of the Slane Bypass in the future in conjunction with TII and the Department of Transport.

It is an objective of the Council:

MOV OBJ 38

To continue to support and facilitate TII, Fingal County Council, Louth County Council and Monaghan County Council in the planning and delivery of upgrades to the N2, as appropriate and to reserve route corridor free from development which would interfere with the delivery of identified schemes, when finalised.

5.8.4 N3 Corridor

The N3 corridor is a critical cross border economic route which is essential to facilitate strategic traffic movement and to maintain and improve connectivity to the North-West and border region. The importance of this route is recognised in both the National Development Plan 2018-2027 and the NPF 2040.

The NPF identifies regional economic resilience and connectivity to the North- West as a strategic priority and the National Development Plan makes reference to the progression of the N3 Virginia Bypass which ties into the existing dual Carriageway in the jurisdiction of Meath County Council. The recently adopted Northern and Western RSES supports the TII and Cavan County Council in the planning and delivery of this strategically important Scheme. The delivery of these works will be supported and facilitated by the Council in conjunction with Cavan County Council, TII and the Department of Transport.

5.9 Roads Infrastructure

Whilst the Council is committed to the promotion of sustainable means of travel, and the encouragement of modal change from the private car, it is recognised that road infrastructure retains a central position in the overall transportation network, catering for the movement of buses, goods vehicles, pedestrians, cyclists, as well as the private car. In undertaking transport policies, the Council will strive to provide, maintain and enhance road infrastructure to ensure the sustainable economic development of the County. Whilst traffic reduced noticeably during the recession, now, as the economic recovery takes hold, traffic numbers are growing steadily and particularly strongly in the south of the County. The Council is successfully implementing an ambitious Economic Development Strategy 2014-2022 and there is also further pent up demand for housing in the context of measures contained in Rebuilding Ireland.[22] Both of the foregoing will inevitably require additional roads to be built and existing roads to be modified and upgraded.

5.9.1 National Roads

The County is well serviced by the national road network with the M1 Dublin - Belfast (formerly N1, now R132), the N2 Dublin – Derry, M3 Cavan-Dublin (formerly N3, now R147), and M4 Dublin to Galway, Castlebar and Sligo (formerly N4, now R148), all traversing through the County linking the Dublin metropolitan area to the regions. The RSES recognises the importance of maintaining, improving and protecting the strategic function of the key transport corridors including the imperative to improve and protect the strategic function of the Dublin to Belfast International road

corridor, which forms part of the TEN-T core network. The national secondary roads, N51 and N52, are medium distance through-routes connecting important towns. The N52 is a particularly important infrastructural development and strategic route, linking Dundalk and Mullingar-Athlone-Tullamore. The County is very reliant on its road infrastructure for intra and inter county movement and access.

The development of the national road network is critically important for national inter-urban traffic in order to provide ready access to ports, airports and other strategic locations. The National Development Plan recognises the importance of achieving steady-state maintenance and safety of the National Roads network as a priority in order to ensure that the existing extensive transport networks, which have been greatly enhanced over the last two decades, are maintained to a high level to ensure high quality levels of service, accessibility and connectivity for transport users. Although responsibility for National Roads comes under the auspices of TII, the Council in conjunction with TII carries out major upgrading and improvements to National Roads in the county. These works include the provision of pavement overlays to existing roads, the provision of new sections of road and the provision of bypass roads or relief routes to towns on routes where their provision is necessary on planning, traffic, safety or environmental grounds.

Given that there are continuing restrictions on funding, the first priority for road investment is likely to be the expenditure required to maintain, renew, manage and operate the extensive existing network.

The NTA's Transport Strategy for the GDA 2016-2026 includes provision to further develop and enhance the national road network including the delivery of the following projects relevant to the County:

- Junction upgrades and other capacity improvements on the M1 motorway, including additional lanes south of Drogheda, where required;
- Enhancements of the N2/M2 national route inclusive of a bypass of Slane, to provide for additional capacity on the non-motorway sections of this route, and to address safety issues in Slane village associated with, in particular, heavy goods vehicles;
- Widening of the N3 between Junction 1 (M50) and Junction 4 (Clonee), plus related junction and necessary changes to the existing national road network[23];
- Provision of additional service areas on the national road network in line with national policy;
- Provision of necessary upgrades to the national secondary road network, including bypasses, in line with the "Principles of Road Development" set out in Section 5.8.3; and
- Various signage, safety interventions, junction improvements and local reconfigurations on the national road network.

5.9.2 Regional and Local Roads

Regional and local roads serve an important economic role and have a valuable social and community function. These roads account for 81% of the country's roads and are often the sole means of access for local economic activity, for example, designated towns such as Trim.

There are extensive lengths of road which the Council are required to maintain. This maintenance programme is financed from the Council's own resources and/or supplemented by State grants. As outlined in 'Investing in our Transport Future – A Strategic Investment Framework (DTTAS, 2015)', the level of funding required to maintain the existing road network will result in opportunities for new investment. Funding for maintenance will continue to be constrained which will have implications as to how such funding is targeted nationally. Local Authorities will be required to define a 'strategic road network of national, regional and strategically important local roads'24 and identifying funding targeted in these areas. There is an increased emphasis nationally on project appraisal requirements which identify and prioritise upgrades that make the most appropriate use of available funding.

The Council will work in conjunction with Kildare County Council to deliver the section of the Maynooth Outer Orbital Relief Road within its administrative area. The RSES has a specific objective to support the continued development of Maynooth, co-ordinated with the delivery of strategic infrastructure including road linkages forming part of the Maynooth Outer Orbital Route in a manner which supports future development and population growth and builds on synergies with Maynooth University promoting a knowledge-based economy. Further, the RSES includes an objective to, 'Support the delivery of road infrastructure to release strategic residential and employment lands for sustainable development and to improve connectivity and the efficient movement of people and services in the town'.

It is the policy of the Council:

MOV POL 24

To safeguard the capacity and safety of the National road network by applying the provisions of the Department of Environment Community and Local Governments – 'Spatial Planning and National Roads-Guidelines for Planning Authorities, 2012' to avoid the creation of any additional development access to national roads and intensification of existing access to national roads to which speed limits greater than 60kph apply, save in accordance with agreed 'exceptional circumstances' included in MOV POL 33.

MOV POL 25

To implement the actions of the Meath Road Safety Strategy and promote road and traffic safety measures in conjunction with Government Departments, the Road Safety Authority and other agencies.

MOV POL 26

To provide for and carry out improvements to sections of national, regional and county roads that are deficient in terms of alignment, structural condition or capacity, where resources permit, and to seek to maintain that standard thereafter. To ensure that, where possible, any maintenance and improvement strategies have regard to future climates.

MOV POL 27

To regulate, control and improve signage throughout the County and avoid proliferation of roadside signage, especially outside the 50-60kmh speed limit areas.

MOV POL 28

To promote the carrying out of Road Safety Audits and Road Safety Impact Assessments on new road schemes, road and junction improvements and traffic management schemes in accordance with the TII Publication TII-GE-STY-01024 and advice contained in the DTTAS (DTO) Traffic Management Guidelines 2012.

MOV POL 29

To liaise with TII and DTTAS regarding the revision of speed limits in the County.

MOV POL 30

To liaise with the NTA and TII (where appropriate) on appropriate control measures within its remit, designed to better manage the demand for road space to allow the efficient movement of essential traffic.

MOV POL 31

To have regard to the TII's Policy on Service Areas (August 2014) in the assessment of proposals for such developments.

It is an objective of the Council:

MOV OBJ 39

To facilitate the delivery of all of the roads projects outlined in the National Development Plan 2018-2027 and National Transport Authority's Transport Strategy for the GDA 2016-2035, in conjunction with the NTA, TII, Department of Transport and other stakeholders. Development of these road projects will be subject to the outcome of the Appropriate Assessment process.

MOV OBJ 40

To develop an annual strategic road network plan for upgrading and required works for national, regional and strategically important local roads for the targeting of funding.

MOV OBJ 41

To develop in consultation with the TII, a programme for the upgrading, improvement and maintenance of the national road network within the County.

MOV OBJ 42

To develop and implement, in consultation with the Department of Transport a programme for the upgrading, improvement and maintenance of the non national road network in the County.

MOV OBJ 43

To implement a programme of traffic and parking management measures in towns and villages throughout the County, as resources permit.

MOV OBJ 44

To safeguard the capacity and efficiency of the national road network drainage systems in County Meath for road drainage purposes, save in exceptional circumstances.

MOV OBJ 45

To work in conjunction with Cavan County Council in the planning and delivery of the N3 Virginia Bypass Scheme located within the administrative area of Meath County Council. This project will be subject to the outcome of the Appropriate Assessment process.

MOV OBJ 46

To require provision of parking standards in accordance with the standards set out in Chapter 11 Development Management for all developments.

MOV OBJ 47

To support and facilitate the delivery of the Ardee bypass and to prohibit development along any selected route that could prejudice its future delivery. This project will be subject to the outcome of the Appropriate Assessment process.

MOV OBJ 48

To implement maintenance and improvement of roads in the County as set out in the Schedule of Municipal District Works and the Council's Annual Roadwork's Programme funded from the Council's own resources and State Agency grants.

MOV OBJ 49

To support essential public road infrastructure including, bypasses of local towns and villages and proposed national road schemes and where necessary reserve the corridors of any such proposed routes free of development, which would interfere with the provision of such proposals. Such road schemes include those specified in the non-exhaustive list in Table 5.1: Each of these projects will subject to the outcome of the Appropriate Assessment process.

Table 5.1

Scheme Name	Description of Works
Slane By-pass (N2)	To deliver key strategic infrastructure including Slane Bypass incorporating new bridge over the River Boyne.
N2 Rath Roundabout to Kilmoon Cross	Improvements of road and junctions to address current capacity constraints.
N3 Virginia Bypass	Strategic radial corridor linking Dublin with Cavan and onward to Enniskillen
M1 Junction 9 Drogheda (M1 South Junction)	Possible upgrading of this junction to improve capacity.
M1 Junction 8 Duleek	Possible upgrading of this junction to improve capacity

M1 Junction 7 Julianstown/Stamullen	Upgrading of this junction to improve capacity inclusive of the facilitation of vehicular access to / from Stamullen via the City North Business Campus to the M1 Interchange.
N3 Clonee to M50	Possible upgrading of this junction to improve capacity.
M3 South of Junction 4	Introduce an additional lane on both M3 carriageways in order to manage capacity on the network, in co-operation with planned M3 upgrades with Fingal County Council and TII.
M3 Junction 5 Dunboyne	Possible upgrading of this junction to improve capacity.
M3 Junction 8 Navan South	Possible upgrading of this junction to improve capacity.
M3 Junction 9 Navan North	Possible upgrading of this junction to improve capacity.
N51 Tullaghstown	Improvements of the National Secondary Route
N52 Grange – Clontail (formally known as Fringestown Scheme)	Re-alignment of the existing N52 and R162/N52 junction from a point west of the R162 junction eastwards to Clontail.
N51 Dunmoe Phase II	Realignment of N51 between Blackcastle Demense and Cruicetown. Final phase of N51 Navan – Slane.
N51 Halltown	Construction of junction improvement and re-alignment of minor roads.
R132 Julianstown Bypass	Examine feasibility and thereafter if appropriate progress the design and delivery of a preferred option.
R147 Blackbull roundabout	To replace the Blackbull roundabout with a signalised junction and the provision of a signalised controlled access on the R147.
N51 Slane to Louth County boundary	Re-alignment including widening of Mattock Bridge, and junction improvements.
R150 Bettystown – Laytown Spine Road	To continue to support the delivery of the North –South Spine Road linking Bettystown – Laytown.

N52/R154 Junction	Improve junction and re-align regional road to introduce a staggered arrangement.
N52 Balrath Junction	Re-align N52 and improve junction layout.
N3-N4 Link road	Provision of Ongar to Barnhill link road
R162 Navan Kingscourt Road and R157 Dunboyne Maynooth Road	Safety Upgrades
Strategic Local Bypasses / Relief Roads (Map 5.2 refers)	Examine feasibility and progress where appropriate local bypass and relief roads within the County.

MOV OBJ 50

To continue to deliver targeted capacity road upgrades within the County to eliminate congestion blackspots.

MOV OBJ 51

To support the delivery of two new signalised junctions to facilitate access to Dunboyne North for all modes of transport from a high quality regional road.

MOV OBJ 52

To continue to support the delivery of key strategic roads within Dunboyne to include an eastern distributor road to facilitate rail-focused development, new bus routes and reduce traffic levels in the town.

MOV OBJ 53

To promote the delivery of key strategic roads in the Key Town of Navan to include but not limited to: 1) link road from Dublin road to Trim road, 2) distributor road from R153 at Farganstown and future bridge across the River Boyne to N51 and North Navan 3) link road from Rathaldron road to R147 inclusive of bridge across the Blackwater 4)Trim Road to N3 Kilcarn Road, 5) Commons Road to N51 Athboy Road, (6) N51 Athboy Road to Rathaldron Road. Each of these projects will subject to the outcome of the Appropriate Assessment process.

MOV OBJ 54

To work in conjunction with Kildare County Council to deliver the section of the Maynooth Outer Relief Road located within the administrative area of Meath County Council.

MOV OBJ 55

To promote the delivery of the following key strategic roads included but not limited to: Ratoath Outer Relief Road, Bryanstown Link Road (Drogheda), Navan Road – Dublin Road Link, Trim, M3 Junction 6/R125 to R147 distributor road. Each of these projects will subject to the outcome of the Appropriate Assessment process.

MOV OBJ 56

To avoid locating residential development and other noise sensitive land uses in areas likely to be affected by inappropriate levels of noise.

MOV OBJ 57

To prepare updated Road Safety Plans in line with the National Road Safety Strategy and in consultation with the Road Safety Authority and relevant stakeholders.

MOV OBJ 58

To improve the visual quality of landscaping and naming of roundabouts in various locations throughout the County.

MOV OBJ 59

To carry out a transport study for Drogheda in conjunction with Louth County Council as part of the future Joint Urban Plan.

MOV OBJ 60

To carry out transport studies in the County and in conjunction with other Local Authorities as required.

5.9.3 Section 48 and 49 Levies

Financial contributions will be sought as part of the development management process for certain development under the provisions of Section 48 and Section 49 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended). Section 48 (general) schemes relate to proposed provision of public infrastructure and facilities which benefit development within the area of the Planning Authority, and are applied as a general levy on development.

A 'special' contribution under Section 48(2) (c) may be required where specific exceptional costs not covered by the general scheme are incurred by a Local Authority due to a specific development.

Section 49 (supplementary) schemes relate to the separately specified infrastructural service or projects – such as Dunboyne- Navan rail or roads infrastructure, which benefit a specific area (normally a corridor). Where schemes overlap with another Local Authority, the Section 49 Scheme will be developed in conjunction with that Local Authority.

It is the objective of the Council:

MOV OBJ 61

To utilise, where appropriate, the provisions of Section 48 and 49 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended) to generate financial contributions towards the capital costs of providing local and strategic transport infrastructure, services or projects in the county. This will be done in conjunction with adjoining Local Authorities, where appropriate.

MOV OBJ 62

Where indicative road proposals are shown on the edge of a settlement boundary, they shall be considered to be included within the development boundary.

5.9.4 Exceptional Circumstances

Government policy regarding access onto national roads as provided for in the "Spatial Planning & National Roads Guidelines" seeks to avoid the creation of any additional access point from new development / intensification of traffic from existing entrances onto national roads outside the 60 kph speed limit. Section 2.6 of the Guidelines provides for exceptional circumstances to the above general policy provision. Planning Authorities may identify stretches of national roads where a less restrictive approach may be applied as part of the Development Plan process. Two scenarios arise, firstly in relation to developments of national and regional strategic importance and secondly, in relation to lightly trafficked sections of National Secondary Routes.

The Guidelines provide that a less restrictive approach may be adopted in the case of developments of national and regional strategic importance which by their nature are most appropriately located outside urban areas, and where the locations concerned have specific characteristics that make them particularly suitable for the developments proposed.

The Development Plan has identified a number of locations where exceptional circumstances to the general policy may be considered, as follows:

1. N52 south of Balrath Cross to facilitate bioenergy manufacturing plant and CHP plant
2. Navan North (Junction 9) to Mullaghboy Roundabout on N51 (New Junction Only);
3. Navan South (Junction 8) to Kilcarn Roundabout on R147 (New Junction Only);
4. N2 at Slane in the vicinity of the existing Grasslands Fertilizers facility (Seveso Site)
5. N51 at Slane Distillery and Castle;
6. N2 at Knockharley in the vicinity of existing regional landfill facility
7. N2 at Rath Roundabout to junction of Curragha Road
8. These are identified on Map 5.3.

It is the policy of the Council:

MOV POL 32

To ensure the protection of the existing roads infrastructure while improving the capacity and safety of the road network to meet future demands.

MOV POL 33

To avoid the creation of any additional access point from new development/intensification of traffic from existing entrance onto national roads outside the 60kph speed limit, except at the following locations:

1. N52 south of Balrath Cross to facilitate bioenergy manufacturing plant and CHP plant(Map 5.3.1);
2. Navan North (Junction 9) to Mullaghboy Roundabout on N51 (New Junction Only) (Map 5.3.2);
3. Navan South (Junction 8) to Kilcarn Roundabout on R147 (New Junction Only) (Map 5.3.3);
4. N2 at Slane in the vicinity of the existing Grasslands Fertilizers facility (Seveso Site) (Map 5.3.4);
5. N51 at Slane Distillery and Castle (Map 5.3.5);
6. N2 at Knockharley in the vicinity of existing regional landfill facility (Map 5.3.6);
7. N2 at Rath Roundabout to junction of Curragha Road (Map 5.3.7).
8. Each of these projects will subject to the outcome of the Appropriate Assessment process.

MOV POL 34

To review, as part of the Local Area Plan process, land at strategic locations adjoining urban-related motorway junctions which has previously been identified for employment generating uses, subject to compliance with the Spatial Planning and National Roads – Guidelines for Planning Authorities. In this regard, the following junctions will be examined:

- M1 Motorway Junction 7 (Julianstown)
- Junction 8 (Duleek)
- Junction 9 (Drogheda)
- M3 Motorway Junction 4 (Clonee)
- Junction 5 (Dunboyne)
- M3 Motorway Junction 6 (Dunshaughlin)
- Junction 8 Navan South
- Junction 9 Navan (North)
- N2 Rath Roundabout to Kilmoon

The Planning Authority will continue to support development proposals in such circumstances where all of the criteria specified in Section 2.7 of the "Spatial Planning & National Roads Guidelines" are adhered to.

5.10 Climate Change

As set out in the Draft Climate Change Adaptation Strategy, 43.4% of County Meath's emissions coming from transport, it is a priority area of action as part of the strategy to address same. Providing more sustainable travel choices to our residents is a strategic priority that should reduce transport carbon emissions while delivering number of key economic, social and community benefits. A focus on residential development in sustainable locations, accessible to public transport infrastructure utilising brownfield lands in our existing settlements is essential to deliver a reduction in emissions.

It is an objective of the Council:

MOV OBJ 63

To undertake a risk assessment of County Meath transport infrastructure to identify areas at high risk of climate change impacts (e.g. flooding), over the life of the Development Plan.

MOV OBJ 64

To ensure that any transport maintenance and improvement strategies consider future climates by allowing appropriate selection of materials and prioritisation of road for repair subject to adherence to TII standards.

5.11 Freight

Efficient freight transport is essential to support economic activity. Given the geographic size of Ireland and the proximity of Dublin Port to the various centres in the GDA, movement by road is, and will continue to be, the dominant mode of freight transfer in the region, and throughout the wider State. The NTA Transport Strategy for the GDA, seeks to retain sufficient capacity within the road network to ensure that freight can be moved reliably and quickly to key destinations including ports and airports and has outlined a number of measures to achieve this within the Strategy. The Council will continue to support the NTA with the implementation of these measures in order to ensure the efficient movement of freight through the County. The potential impact of Brexit is a significant concern which must be factored into plans for the effective and efficient transport of freight.

Tara Mines has one of the few freight flows still operating on Irish railways today, for the transportation of zinc ore from Navan to Dublin (via Drogheda). Up to four trains a day are operated, and each of these is estimated to take the equivalent of forty lorries off the road. Irish Rail have been undertaking research into multimodal freight movement and have successfully completed three trials which increased load capacity up to 50%. Longer trains on the network will boost the competitiveness of rail freight to industry. The environmental benefits of rail freight would also be enhanced by operating higher capacity services – currently moving freight by rail instead of road reduces emissions by 75% per unit, longer trains could see emissions reduced to as little as one-tenth of the road equivalent. Irish Rail is continuously working with its customers as well as Freight Forwarders, Ports and the Irish Exporters Association to identify further opportunities and trends for rail freight development within the Irish and European market.

It is a policy of the Plan to facilitate and support the improvement of freight movements in the county via both road and rail. Facilities for truck parking are desirable to prevent nuisance and annoyance, and for safety reasons. It must be borne in mind that the road network represents the working environment for many people involved in the movement of goods and services. It is therefore important that service facilities and truck parking is provided, in appropriate areas, to

cater for their needs. It is also important to protect investment in the road network and protect key arteries, which are vital for movement of freight and are essential for commercial activity in the metropolitan area and hinterland areas from becoming overly congested.

It is the policy of Meath County Council:

MOV POL 35

To co-operate with and support the NTA and TII (where appropriate) on measures designed to improve freight transport in and throughout the County.

MOV POL 36

To support the preparation of a regional strategy for freight transport in collaboration with the relevant transport agencies and the other Regional Assemblies.

It is objective of the Council:

MOV OBJ 65

To identify appropriate locations for freight intensive developments, and require the preparation of Distribution and Servicing Plans[25] for such developments as part of the planning process.

MOV OBJ 66

To assess the potential for, and, if appropriate, introduce, HGV management measures in town centres.

MOV OBJ 67

Where appropriate, to require the provision of HGV parking facilities at on-line and off-line motorway service areas, petrol filling stations and other appropriate locations within the County in accordance with relevant planning guidelines and government policy.[26]

5.12 Aviation Sector

The development and safeguarding of Dublin Airport is fundamental to the economic growth of the County given its proximity to Dublin Airport. The economic benefit to the region is outlined in the InterVISTAS report Dublin Airport Economic Study 2015. This study confirms Dublin Airport as an essential driver of the Irish Economy, as a primary gateway serving the country for air passengers and cargo. It is estimated that 97,400 jobs are supported by the airport and that €6.9bn is contributed to Irish GDP. In this context the Plan will seek to support and facilitate the development and expansion of Dublin Airport.

In 2019, a review of the effectiveness and appropriateness of the existing noise zones for Dublin Airport was undertaken. This review, completed by the Noise Regulator for Dublin Airport, concluded that noise zones should be updated to take into account increased annoyance to aircraft noise at lower noise exposure levels, and to account for night-time aircraft noise exposure which had not been previously considered. Based on the outcome of this review, the previous noise zones were replaced to set out revised noise zones.

No part of County Meath falls within Noise Zone A, which seeks to actively resist new provision for residential development and other noise sensitive uses. Instead, a portion of the County falls within Zone B and Zone C of the Noise Zones. Within these geographical areas, there is a need to minimise the adverse impact of noise without placing unreasonable restrictions on development.

Developments located with Noise zones B & C should therefore be controlled to require noise insulation where the predicted noise environment of the site is considered exceed levels appropriate for the development. In the case of residential development, this serves to protect the residential amenity of the proposed dwelling whilst safeguarding the future operations of Dublin Airport. The extents of the Noise Zones and Public Safety Zones for Dublin Airport are shown in the Plan maps nos. 5.4.1 & 5.4.2.

Guidance on Public Safety Zones and land use is provided in the document 'Public Safety Zones, 2005' by ERM ltd. The Council will follow the advice of the Irish Aviation Authority and daa regarding the effects of proposed development on the safety of aircraft and the safe and efficient navigation thereof. Impacts of green energy infrastructure such as wind farms and photovoltaic's will be examined and considered under the Development Management Chapter of the Plan. The Irish Aviation Authority require that all planning applications for Solar PV arrays within a 15km radius of airports shall be accompanied with a Glint and Glare assessment which shall be referred to them for comment. These assessments should have regard to potential Glint and Glare towards existing and planned aviation receptors, in particular (i) Glare towards the 2 mile (3.2) km approach path for runways and (ii) Glare towards Air traffic control towers.
It is the policy of the Council:

MOV POL 37

To support aviation policy as set out in 'A National Aviation Policy for Ireland 2015'. In particular, through supporting the role of Dublin Airport as a key tourism and business gateway to the County and the wider Eastern and Midland Region.

MOV POL 38

To promote appropriate land use patterns in the vicinity of the flight paths serving Dublin Airport, having regard to the precautionary principle, based on existing and anticipated environmental and safety impacts of aircraft movements.

MOV POL 39

To implement the policies to be determined by the Government in relation to Public Safety Zones for Dublin Airport.

MOV POL 40

To take account of the advice of the IAA with regard to the effects of any development proposals on the safety of aircraft or the safe and efficient navigation thereof.

MOV POL 41

To refer all planning applications for Solar PV arrays located within a 15km radius of Dublin Airport to the IAA.

It is the objective of the Council:

MOV OBJ 68

To manage noise sensitive development in Noise Zone B and Noise Zone C, where aircraft may give rise to annoyance and sleep disturbance, and to ensure, where appropriate, noise insulation is incorporated within the development.

MOV OBJ 69

To ensure that development which would give rise to conflicts with aircraft movements on environmental or safety grounds on lands in the vicinity of Dublin Airport and on the main flight paths serving Dublin Airport is restricted.

MOV OBJ 70

To require noise sensitive development in Noise Zone B and Noise Zone C to undertake an internal noise assessment and where appropriate, demonstrate that relevant internal noise guidelines will be met.

MOV OBJ 71

1) To require that planning applications within a 15km radius of airports for Solar PV arrays shall be accompanied by a Glint and Glare Assessment.

2) These assessments shall consider potential Glint and Glare towards existing and planned aviation receptors, in particular (i) Glare towards the 2 mile (3.2) km approach path for runways and (ii) Glare towards Air traffic control towers.

1- The NTA is the transport authority for the Greater Dublin Area and the public licensing agency for Ireland. It was established under the provisions of the Dublin Transport Authority Act 2008 and the Public Regulation Act (2009), on 1st December 2009.

2- The subject of a Draft Ministerial Direction, August 2019

3- [1] National Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2016-2035 **4**- National Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2016-2035

5- See Chapter 11 Development Management

6- See Chapter 11 Development Management

7- Page 144 Project Ireland 2040- National Planning Framework

8 - National Development Plan 2018-2027 page 58:

9- NTA Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area page 56

10- This is subject to the Draft Ministerial Direction issued in relation to the RSES 2019-2031.

11- The National Roads Authority (NRA) was the state body responsible for the national road network. The NRA was established as part of the Roads Act 1993 and commenced operations on 23 December 1993 in accordance with S.I. 407 of 1993. The NRA merged with the Railway Procurement Agency and was effectively dissolved on 1 August 2015. The merger of the two agencies is called Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII).

12- National Development Plan page 52

13- For further information on the development of greenway see Chapter 4 Economic Development

14 There is an approved Planning Scheme in place for this Greenway.

15- NTA Strategy for Greater Dublin Area p. 81

18- National Development Plan 2018-2027 page 31

19- Page 43 National Development Plan 2018-2027

20- Page 142 Project Ireland 2040-National Planning Framework

21- Page 82 National Transport Study for the Greater Dublin Area 2016-2035

22- Chapter 2 Core Strategy

23- This project is identified as a priority for delivery under the National Development Plan 2018-2027, (page 431)

24- Investing in our Transport Future – A Strategic Investment Framework for Land Transport 2015

6.1 Introduction

The sustainable future socio- economic growth of the County is dependent on the provision of the required water and wastewater infrastructure and ensuring high-quality reliable service provision. A plan led approach in accordance with the County's Core, Settlement and Housing Strategies is critical to securing economic investment, creating sustainable and attractive communities and in supporting the future development of the County.

One of the key challenges is the ability to address and keep pace with the infrastructural demands of a growing County while safeguarding public health and managing the protection of key environmental resources in the context of a changing climate. In this regard the Council, in conjunction with other agencies and authorities needs to ensure that development of infrastructural services occurs in tandem with and facilitates physical development to ensure the continued economic growth of the County and the delivery of residential accommodation for the growing population.

Chapter 11 Development Management Standards and Land Use Zoning Objectives sets out detailed requirements for the content of planning applications for infrastructure projects.

6.2 Vision

It is the vision of the Council:
"To develop, protect, improve and extend water, wastewater, surface water and flood alleviation services throughout the County and to prioritise the provision of water services infrastructure to sustain and complement the overall strategy for socio-economic and population growth and to achieve improved environmental protection. These service improvements must be considered in the context of addressing the causes of climate change through reducing reliance on fossil fuels and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Achievement of these environmental imperatives can only be guaranteed by means of effective and ambitious action across all sectors which will require demonstrable behavioural change in our society."

6.3 Irish Water

Since the adoption of the Meath County Development Plan 2013-2019 there have been significant changes in responsibility for Water Services in Ireland. Irish Water was formed (in July 2013) as a semi-state company under the Water Services Act 2013. As of January 2014, Irish Water replaced Local Authorities as the single provider of water and wastewater services. Irish Water is responsible for the operation of public water and waste water services nationally including, strategic planning, policy development, service provision, customer service and capital investment planning and delivery.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is the environmental regulator of Irish Water and the Commission for Regulation of Utilities (CRU) is the economic and customer service regulator. The Council will work closely with Irish Water to inform and influence the timely provision of infrastructure within the County in line with the Core and Settlement Strategies of this Plan.

The Council is contracted to manage and maintain all aspects of water and wastewater provision, operation and maintenance and capital project management in the County, on behalf of Irish Water[1].
The Council remains the designated Water Authority for the assessment and approval of individual domestic on-site wastewater treatment systems in the County and is responsible for the rural water programme (including group schemes, private regulated water supplies and well grants) , surface water drainage, flooding and monitoring of surface water quality.

6.4 Water Services

Irish Water prepared a Water Services Strategic Plan (WSSP) in 2015 that set out the strategic objectives for the delivery of water services in Ireland up to the year 2040. The WSSP identified current and future challenges regarding the provision of water services nationally and identified specific priorities to be addressed in the short to medium term. The WSSP is to be reviewed every five years to ensure that the plan is relevant and up to date. The WSSP provides the context for shorter term (circa 5 years) capital investment programmes that will address key water service areas such as water resources management, wastewater compliance and sludge management.

It is acknowledged within the WSSP that the “Future development of water services must be in line with agreed National and Regional development plans. We will therefore work with regional and local planning authorities and other agencies in the forward planning of water services infrastructure to meet social and economic growth” (Chapter 1, Pg 1).

The current Irish Water Capital Investment Programme (CIP) 2020-2024 outlines the indicative priorities and investments in water services infrastructure over the five year period. This CIP aims to deliver improvements in drinking water quality, leakage detection and remediation, wastewater compliance, business efficiencies and customer service.
As part of the CIP, Irish Water have developed a Small Towns and Villages Programme (STVGP) to cater for growth in smaller settlements which would not otherwise be provided for in the current Investment Plan. The Plan is limited to growth in smaller settlements already served by Irish Water Infrastructure. Under the STVGP, funding will be allocated to Meath County Council for new Wastewater or Water Treatment Plants or upgrades to eligible settlements with a population of less than 2,000 persons.

6.5 Statutory Context

Water Services Acts 2007-2014
These Acts provide the legislative basis in relation to the planning, operation, delivery and maintenance of water treatment and supply and wastewater collection and treatment services.

EU Floods Directive 2007

The EU Directive on the assessment and management of flood risks [2007/60/EC], often referred to as the 'Floods' Directive, came into force late in 2007[2]. The Floods Directive was transposed into Irish Law in 2010 (Statutory Instrument No. 122 of 2010 European Communities (Assessment and Management of Flood Risks) Regulations 2010. The Regulations set out the responsibilities of the OPW and other public bodies in the implementation of the Directive and detail the process for implementation of the measures set out in the Flood Risk Management Plans.

6.6 Policy Context

Greater Dublin Area Strategic Drainage Study-Dublin Region Local Authorities-2005

The Greater Dublin Strategic Drainage Study (GDSDS) was commissioned in 2001 to carry out a strategic analysis of the existing foul and surface water systems in Dublin City, Fingal, South Dublin, Dun Laoighaire-Rathdown, Meath, Kildare and Wicklow County Councils. It delivered an overview of the performance of the drainage infrastructure in the region's catchments and proposed infrastructural improvement works to facilitate the anticipated future growth in the catchment to the year 2031 and beyond. Since the establishment of Irish Water (IW) the main elements of this policy have been incorporated into IW's policy.

The GDSDS concluded that in addition to optimising the capacity of the existing wastewater treatment plants in the GDA that a new regional wastewater treatment facility, including a new orbital sewer to intercept flows from the Ringsend catchment was required in north Dublin with an outfall to the Irish Sea. The site selection process was completed in 2013. In November 2019, An Bord Pleanála granted planning permission for the Greater Dublin Drainage Project. This plant is expected to be operational by 2024 will serve the Meath towns of Dunboyne, Ashbourne and Ratoath and the villages of Clonee and Kilbride.

Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) 2005

Following on from the GDSDS the local authorities in the GDA introduced new policies in relation to surface water drainage. These provisions included a commitment to the use of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) in all new public and private developments, effective implementation of this policy will ensure that any future development does not increase flooding or pollution of water bodies. SuDS aim to mimic the natural drainage of a site to minimise the effect of a development on flooding and pollution of waterways. The Council and Irish Water strongly endorse and advocate the comprehensive application of SuDS in the County in the interests of environmental sustainability.

Code of Practice: Wastewater Treatment Systems for Single Houses-Environmental Protection Agency-2010, updated 2012 & 2013

The EPA Code of Practice: Wastewater Treatments Systems for Single Houses establishes an overall framework of best practice in relation to the development of wastewater treatment and disposal

systems in un-sewered rural areas, in order to promote the protection of the environment and specifically water quality. All planning applications for rural dwellings on unserviced sites are required to demonstrate compliance with the Code of Practice[3].

Draft Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Water Services-Department of Housing, Planning & Local Government-2018

These Guidelines are intended to provide best practice guidance in relation to the interface between the statutory planning and development functions of the Planning Authorities and the delivery of water services by Irish Water. The key aims of the guidelines are to:

- Provide advice to planning authorities on the operational framework within which Irish water must operate to deliver water services;
- Establish mechanisms for effective engagement between Planning Authorities and Irish water across all relevant functions of Planning Authorities, and
- Ensure that the planning process, in setting out a spatial framework for national growth and development, will relate to and inform the planning and delivery of water services by Irish Water at national, regional and local levels.

6.7 Drinking Water

As the National Water Service Authority, Irish Water is now responsible for managing the provision and supply of drinking water.

Approximately 45 million litres of potable water were treated and supplied through 64 separate public water supply schemes and a watermain distribution network of over 1,800km in County Meath in 2018.

The 2016 census POWSCAR Data indicates that almost 50,000 private households (out of a total of 64,234 private households) in the County and 6,000 businesses throughout the County are served by public watermains. The remaining households and business premises are served by either Group Water Schemes or private wells, which do not fall within the remit of Irish Water.
Practical water conservation measures including active leakage detection, demand management and pressure management play and will continue to play a major role in reducing the demand for potable water, thus facilitating additional development and improving the level of service to existing consumers in the County through the existing watermain networks.

Notwithstanding adoption of water conservation measures, existing water supply sources do not have the capacity or resilience to meet likely future demand in Dublin and the Midlands. A preferred scheme has been published which proposes the supply of water from the Parteen Basin on the Lower River Shannon, with water treatment nearby at Birdhill, County Tipperary. Treated water

would then be piped 170km to connect to the Greater Dublin network and provide treated water supplies to communities in North Tipperary, Offaly, Laois, Westmeath, Kildare, Meath and Wicklow. It is envisaged by Irish Water that, planning permission for this project will be sought during the lifespan of this Plan.

Irish Water is also preparing for the future by developing the National Water Resources Plan (NWRP). The strategic plan for water services will outline how we move towards a sustainable, secure and reliable public drinking water supply over the next 25 years, whilst safeguarding our environment. The NWRP will outline how Irish Water intends to maintain the balance between our supply from water sources around the country and demand for drinking water over the short, medium and long-term. This will allow preparation for the future and ensure the provision of sufficient safe, clean drinking water to facilitate the social and economic growth of our country.

6.8 Private Wells

Private bored wells used as a source of water supply to single dwellings are the responsibility of the householder. Such wells are not regulated under the European Communities (Drinking Water) Regulations 2014 and Irish Water has no regulatory function in this regard. The Council is responsible for providing guidance and advice in relation to the protection of water quality and in this regard the Council administers and manages well grants on behalf of the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (DHP&LG).

It is the policy of the Council:

INF POL 1

To liaise and work in conjunction with Irish Water in the development and upgrade of water supply systems to ensure that the County has an adequate, sustainable and economic supply of suitable quality piped water for all users.

INF POL 2

To utilise the existing water supply in an efficient and equitable manner and in the best interests of the proper planning and sustainable development of the County.

INF POL 3

To seek to secure water resources for the County in conjunction with Irish Water from any project supplying water to the Greater Dublin Area from the River Shannon or any other water source.

INF POL 4

To liaise and work in conjunction with Irish Water during the lifetime of the Plan to seek to secure investment in the provision, extension and upgrading of the piped water distribution network across the County to serve existing and future populations and facilitate the sustainable economic growth of the County, in accordance with the requirements of the Core and Settlement Strategies.

INF POL 5

To require that in the case of all developments where public watermains are available or likely to be available and have sufficient capacity, that such development shall connect to them.

INF POL 6

To advise and assist in the upgrade/provision of group-water schemes in the County.

INF POL 7

To continue to support Irish Water's Water Conservation Programme.

INF POL 8

To continue to work with Irish Water to ensure the protection of public health through the ongoing provision of high-quality drinking water in compliance with drinking water standards.

INF POL 9

To consider the potential for the provision of temporary water treatment facilities for new developments but only where a permanent solution has already been identified and committed to by Irish Water but has not yet been implemented. The provision of such temporary facilities shall only be considered where the solution is environmentally sustainable and would not affect the quality status of water sources. Adequate provision shall be made by the developer for the operation and maintenance of the proposed temporary facility for the duration of its required existence and thereafter for its decommissioning and removal from site.

INF POL 10

To liaise and work in conjunction with relevant stakeholders, to ensure a co-ordinated approach to the protection and improvement of the County's water resources.

It is an objective of the Council:

INF OBJ 1

To liaise and work in conjunction with Irish Water to promote the sustainable development of water supply and drainage infrastructure in the county and the region, in accordance with the objectives and recommendations set out in the Greater Dublin Drainage Study and Irish Water's Water Services Strategic Plan.

INF OBJ 2

To liaise and work in conjunction with Irish Water to ensure that an adequate supply of drinking water for domestic, commercial, industrial and other uses is available for the sustainable development of the County.

INF OBJ 3

To liaise and work in conjunction with Irish Water during the lifetime of the Plan to develop and identify an additional sustainable water source serving the Eastern and Midlands Region while also facilitating the sustainable development of the County, in accordance with the requirements of the Core and Settlement Strategies.

INF OBJ 4

To liaise and work in conjunction with Irish Water in the delivery of the Capital Investment Plan 2020-2024 and any subsequent Capital Investment Plans.

INF OBJ 5

To liaise and work in conjunction with Irish Water to realise the Navan and Mid-Meath/East Meath Water Supply Scheme. Development of the project will be subject to the outcome of the Appropriate Assessment process.

INF OBJ 6

To liaise and work in conjunction with Irish Water in their implementation of water conservation measures.

INF OBJ 7

To promote the sustainable use of water and water conservation in existing and new development within the County and encourage demand management measures among all water users.

INF OBJ 8

To protect both ground and surface water resources and work with Irish Water to develop and implement Water Safety Plans to protect sources of public water supply and their contributing catchment.

INF OBJ 9

To proactively implement the Rural Water Programme.

INF OBJ 10

To provide guidance and advice regarding the protection of water supply to private wells with the overall responsibility remaining with the householder.

6.9 Wastewater

The provision of well-maintained quality wastewater treatment infrastructure is essential to facilitate sustainable development in the County, while also protecting the environment and public health. Irish Water is now responsible for the treatment and disposal of wastewater where public wastewater facilities exist within settlements.

There are over 40 wastewater treatment plants and more than 1,000 km's of sewer network in County Meath. Irish Water currently collects and treats the wastewater from the majority of the counties' urban centres. Wastewater from a number of these centres is discharged to and treated in wastewater treatment plants outside the County as follows:

- Wastewater from Ashbourne, Ratoath, Kilbride, Dunboyne and Clonee is discharged into Dublin where it is treated in Ringsend;
- Wastewater from the Kilcock Environs is discharged into the Leixlip Wastewater treatment plant;
- Wastewater from the Southern Environs of Drogheda, Bettystown/Laytown/Mornington/Donacarney and Julianstown discharge to the Drogheda Wastewater Treatment Plant.

The Greater Dublin Strategic Drainage Study (GDSDS) carried out an in depth assessment of the Greater Dublin drainage system. A key recommendation of the GDSDS Strategy, provides for the expansion of Ringsend Wastewater Treatment Plant to its ultimate capacity and also the

development of a new Regional Wastewater Treatment Plant, Orbital Drainage Network and Marine Outfall in the northern part of the GDA. This is known as the Greater Dublin Drainage (GDD) Project.

Irish Water is progressing the GDD Project and it is envisaged that it will be realised by 2026. The Council will continue to work with Irish Water to advance and realise capital expansions and upgrades of wastewater infrastructure for the continued sustainable growth of the County.

In unserviced areas and outside the main settlements, the main method of sewage disposal is by means of individual septic tanks and proprietary wastewater treatment systems. The requirements for these systems are set out in the EPA Code of Practice for Wastewater Treatment Systems and Disposal Systems Serving Single Houses (2010). For larger developments the requirements are set out by the EPA Wastewater Treatment Manuals – Treatment Systems for Small Communities, Business, Leisure Centres and Hotels (1999) and EPA Guidance on the Authorisation of Discharges to Groundwater (EPA 2011).

Please Refer to section 9.5.6 of Chapter 9, Rural development Strategy.

It is the policy of the Council:

INF POL 11

To liaise and work in conjunction with Irish Water during the lifetime of the Plan in the provision, upgrading or extension of wastewater collection and treatment systems in the County to serve existing and planned future populations and enterprise in accordance with the requirements of the Core and Settlement Strategies.

INF POL 12

To require that in the case of all developments where the public foul sewer network is available or likely to be available and has sufficient capacity, that development shall be connected to it.

INF POL 13

To consider the potential for the provision of temporary wastewater treatment facilities for new developments but only where a permanent solution has already been identified and committed to by Irish Water but has not yet been implemented. The provision of such temporary facilities shall only be considered where the solution is environmentally sustainable and would not affect the quality status of receiving waters. Adequate provision shall be made by the developer for the operation and maintenance of the proposed temporary facility for the duration of its required existence and thereafter for its decommissioning and removal from site.

It is an objective of the Council:

INF OBJ 11

To ensure that all development shall connect to the public foul sewer network where available within the County.

INF OBJ 12

The Planning Authority shall consider the provision of temporary wastewater treatment facilities for new developments only in circumstances where a permanent solution is identified and committed to by Irish Water. The temporary solution shall only be considered where it is deemed to be

environmentally sustainable and would not affect the water quality status of receiving waters. Adequate provision shall be made by the developer for the operation and maintenance of the temporary facility for the duration of the operation of the required infrastructure.

INF OBJ 13

To ensure that septic tanks, proprietary effluent treatment systems and percolation areas are located and constructed in accordance with the recommendations and guidelines of the EPA and the Council in order to minimise the impact on surface water of discharges.

6.10 Surface Water and Flood Risk Management

Under Clause 3.5 of the Service Level Agreement between Irish Water and the Local Authorities it is a requirement that both parties act in good faith to develop a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in respect of surface water drainage and flood management. A MoU has recently been agreed in principle between Irish Water and the Council and is expected to be formally signed off during the life of this Plan.

6.10.1 Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems

The Greater Dublin Strategic Drainage Study (2001) contains five policy documents as follows:

- Environmental Management;
- Drainage of New Developments;
- Climate Change;
- Inflow/Infiltration and Basements.

The study sets out a design approach and criteria for drainage infrastructure within new development to ensure that future development does not increase flooding and/or the pollution of waterways. Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) can best be summarised as offering a “total” solution to rainwater management and is applicable in both urban and rural situations. New development is required to incorporate ‘Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems’ (SuDS) measures. SuDS are effective technologies which aim to reduce flood risk, improve water quality and enhance biodiversity and amenity.

It is the policy of the Council:

INF POL 14

To co-operate with the EPA and other authorities in the continued implementation of the EU Water Framework Directive.

INF POL 15

To continue efforts to improve water quality under the Local Government (Water Pollution) Act 1977, as amended and by implementing the measures outlined under the Nitrates Directive (91/676/EEC) and complying with the requirements of the European Communities Environment Objectives (Surface Waters) Regulations 2009 and other relevant regulations.

INF POL 16

To ensure that all planning applications for new development have regard to the surface water management policies provided for in the GDSDS.

INF POL 17

To liaise and work in conjunction with Irish Water in the implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for surface water drainage and flood management, including the separation of foul and surface water drainage networks where feasible and undertake drainage network upgrades to help remove surface water misconnection and infiltration.

It is an objective of the Council:

INF OBJ 14

To require the use of SuDS within Local Authority Developments and other infrastructural projects in accordance with the Greater Dublin Regional Code of Practice for Drainage Works.

INF OBJ 15

To require the use of SuDS in accordance with the Greater Dublin Regional Code of Practice for Drainage Works for new developments (including extensions).

INF OBJ 16

To ensure that all new developments comply with Section 3.12 of the Greater Dublin Regional Code of Practice for Drainage Works V6 which sets out the requirements for new developments to allow for Climate Change.

INF OBJ 17

To ensure that all new commercial developments provide on-site petrol/oil interceptors and silt traps as per Section 20 of the Greater Dublin Regional Code of Practice for Drainage Works V6.

INF OBJ 18

To ensure that new developments provide for the separation of foul and surface water drainage networks within application site boundaries.

INF OBJ 19

To ensure that developments permitted by the Council which involve discharge of wastewater to surface waters or groundwaters comply with the requirements of the EU Environmental Objectives (Surface Waters) Regulations and EU Environmental Objectives (Groundwater) Regulations.

6.10.2 Flood Risk Management

The Office of Public Works (OPW) is the lead State body responsible for the coordination and implementation of Government policy on the management of flood risk in Ireland. The OPW is also the National Authority for the implementation of the EU Directive on the Assessment and Management of Flood Risks [2007/60/EC].

The EU Floods Directive and the National Flood Policy Review Report (2004) set the parameters for flood management in Ireland. The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities, DECLG and OPW (2009) addresses flood risk management within the planning system. A Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) of the County is being prepared to support the Strategic Environmental Assessment of the Plan. The SFRA was carried out in accordance with the Flood Risk Management Guidelines (2009) and will form part of the Development Plan.

In response to the Floods Directive, the Council in partnership with Fingal County Council and the Office of Public Works (OPW) completed a catchment-based flood risk assessment and management study of 19 rivers and streams in the Fingal and East Meath area, the Fingal East Meath Flood Risk Assessment and Management Study (FEM-FRAMS). The FEMFRAMS was completed in 2012 and covered the east of the County including inter alia the Broadmeadow, Mosney, Delvin, Mayne and Nanny rivers. The OPW began a national programme of river catchment-based Flood Risk Assessment and Management. The Catchment Flood Risk Assessments and Management Studies (CFRAMS) has been completed on river catchments of all key watercourses and coastal areas in the County and has been included within a review of the FEMFRAMS.

Over the past number of years there have been significant instances where flooding has occurred in areas of the County causing damage to homes and businesses. However, relative to other counties the extent of flooding in the County has been low. Meath is a maritime county and given the reality of global warming there are areas which are at risk of coastal, fluvial or pluvial flooding. As a result of climate change, there is a likelihood of increased rainfall and rising sea levels. This reality in combination with the ongoing urbanisation of catchments, means that the flood risk to property is likely to increase in the future.

A major function performed by floodplains, wetlands and coastal areas is to hold excess water until it can be released slowly back into a riverine system or the sea, or seep into the ground as a storm or tidal surge subsides. Vulnerable floodplains, wetlands and coastal areas should, therefore, be identified and preserved to the maximum extent possible, in both urban and rural areas, as “Green Infrastructure”. Zoning of land for this purpose enhances opportunities for the creation of habitats which promote and protect flora and fauna and thus increase diversity etc.

6.10.2.1 Pluvial flooding

Pluvial flooding occurs as a result of high intensity rainfall where the volume of run-off exceeds the capacity of the existing surface water network and the excess water cannot be absorbed. It is usually associated with high intensity extreme rainfall events (typically >30mm/h) resulting in overland flow and ponding in depressions in the topography. In urban situations surface water drainage systems and surface watercourses may be completely overwhelmed.

Effective utilisation of SuDS can alleviate and mitigate against such flooding. An example of such a system is a constructed swale[4]

6.10.2.2 Fluvial flooding

Fluvial flooding occurs when the capacity of a watercourse is exceeded or the channel is blocked or restricted, and excess water spills out from the channel onto adjacent low-lying areas (the floodplain).

6.10.2.3 Groundwater flooding

Groundwater flooding occurs when the level of water stored in the ground rises as a result of prolonged rainfall to meet the ground surface and flows out over it i.e. when the capacity of this natural underground reservoir is exceeded.

6.10.2.4 Coastal flooding

The Irish Coastal Protection Strategy Study (ICPSS) was commissioned in 2003 by the OPW and has been updated on a number of occasions, most recently in November 2013 for the North-Eastern region (which includes the Meath coastline). This study identifies locations along the north-east coast at risk of coastal flooding and coastal erosion. In addition, the ICPSS provides a strategic assessment of coastal erosion around the Irish coastline using aerial photography records of the coastline from 1973-75, 2000 and 2006 as the primary basis for the erosion assessment. This study provides strategic current scenario and future scenario (up to the year 2100) coastal flood hazard maps and strategic coastal erosion maps for the national coastline.

Coastal erosion is intrinsically linked with coastal flooding as the loss of natural coastal defences (such as sand dunes) due to erosion can increase the risk of flooding in coastal areas. Flood Risk areas for both fluvial and coastal flooding are shown on the maps included within the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment as part of the preparation of the Plan (See Volume 5 of the Plan).

It is the policy of the Council:

INF POL 18

To implement the “Planning System and Flood Risk Management – Guidelines for Planning Authorities” (DoEHLG/OPW, 2009) through the use of the sequential approach and application of Justification Tests for Development Management and Development Plans, during the period of this Plan.

INF POL 19

To implement the findings and recommendations of the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment prepared in conjunction with the County Development Plan review, ensuring climate change is taken into account.

INF POL 20

To require that a Flood Risk Assessment is carried out for any development proposal, where flood risk may be an issue in accordance with the “Planning System and Flood Risk Management – Guidelines for Planning Authorities” (DoECLG/OPW, 2009). This assessment shall be appropriate to the scale and nature of risk to and from the potential development and shall consider the impact of climate change

INF POL 21

To consult with the Office of Public Works in relation to proposed developments in the vicinity of drainage channels and rivers for which the OPW are responsible.

INF POL 22

To retain a strip of 10 metres on either side of all channels/flood defence embankments where required, to facilitate access thereto.

INF POL 23

To consult, where necessary, with Inland Fisheries Ireland, the National Parks and Wildlife Service and other relevant agencies in the provision of flood alleviation measures in the County.

INF POL 24

To ensure that flood risk management is incorporated into the preparation of Local Area Plans in accordance with 'The Planning System and Flood Risk Management - Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2009)'.

INF POL 25

To have regard to the recommendations of the Fingal East Meath Flood Risk Assessment and Management Study (FEMFRAMS) and the Eastern Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management Study (CFRAMS).

INF POL 26

To undertake a review of the 'Strategic Flood Risk Assessment for County Meath' in light of the completed flood mapping which has been developed as part of the Eastern Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management (CFRAM) Study.

INF POL 27

To liaise with the Office of Public Works in relation to proposed developments in the vicinity of drainage channels and rivers for which the OPW are responsible, prior to the making of determinations/assumptions on surface water management proposals.

INF POL 28

To consult with the Office of Public Works in relation to proposed developments which include the construction, replacement or alteration of a bridge or culvert and to require that the developers obtain consent from the OPW under Section 50 of the EU (Assessment and Management of Flood Risks) Regulations 2010 and Section 50 of the Arterial Drainage Act 1945, where appropriate.

INF POL 29

To facilitate the provision of new, or the reinforcement of existing flood defences and protection measures where necessary and in particular to support the implementation of flood schemes being progressed through the planning process during the lifetime of the Plan. The provision of flood defences will be subject to the outcome of the Appropriate Assessment process.
It is an objective of the Council:

INF OBJ 20

To implement the Planning System and Flood Risk Management-Guidelines for Planning Authorities (DoEHLG/OPW 2009) or any updated guidelines. A site-specific Flood Risk Assessment should be submitted where appropriate.

INF OBJ 21

To restrict new development within floodplains other than development which satisfies the Justification Test, as outlined in the Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines 2009 for Planning Authorities (or any updated guidelines).

INF OBJ 22

To ensure flood relief measures are suitably designed to protect the conservation objectives of Natura 2000 sites, and to avoid direct or indirect impacts upon qualifying interests or Natura 2000 sites.

INF OBJ 23

To protect and enhance the County's floodplains, wetlands and coastal areas subject to flooding as "green infrastructure" which provide space for storage and conveyance of floodwater, and ensure that development does not impact on important wetland sites within river/stream catchments.

INF OBJ 24

To identify existing surface water drainage systems vulnerable to flooding and develop proposals to alleviate flooding in the areas served by these systems in conjunction with the Office of Public Works. The delivery of such proposals will be subject to the outcome of the Appropriate Assessment process.

INF OBJ 25

To require the use of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) to minimise and limit the extent of hard surfacing and paving and require the use of sustainable drainage techniques where appropriate, for new development or for extensions to existing developments, in order to reduce the potential impact of existing and predicted flooding risks.

INF OBJ 25B

Planning applications for new developments in the potential Zone of Influence of a European site shall submit details of surface water management plans for construction and operation to ensure compliance with the water quality standards and to protect the water quality and flow regime of surface and groundwater resources.

INF OBJ 26

To discourage the use of hard non-porous surfacing and pavements within the boundaries of rural housing sites.

INF OBJ 27

To encourage the use of Green Roof technology particularly on apartment, commercial, leisure and educational buildings.

INF OBJ 28

To ensure that proposals for the development of solar farms located within areas identified as being within Flood zones A or B are subject to a Site-Specific Flood Risk Assessment as per the Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines 2009 for Planning Authorities (or any updated guidelines).

6.11 Water Quality

The County has a rich and extensive aquatic environment consisting of coastline, rivers, streams, lakes and estuarine waters (surface waters) and ground waters (underground water). The Rivers Boyne and Blackwater are the prime watercourses within the County. The Royal and Boyne Navigation Canals, also form part of this aquatic environment. Collectively, they constitute an important economic, recreational, ecological and aesthetic resource for the County.

The Council is responsible for maintaining, improving, enhancing and protecting the ecological quality of all waters in the County by implementing pollution control measures, licensing of effluent discharges, implementing and monitoring compliance with environmental legislation and drawing up pollution contingency measures on a local and regional level. This role is likely to become even more critical as changes in water availability are predicted as an outcome of climate change.

6.11.1 Water Framework Directive

The EU Water Framework Directive (WFD, 2000/60/EC), which was published in 2000 and transposed into Irish law in 2003 (SI No 722 of 2003 'established a framework for community action in the field of water policy'. The overall objective of the Directive and associated Regulations is to prevent deterioration in the status of any waters and achieve at least 'good ecological status'[5]. The county lies within a single National River Basin Management Plan (RBMP) for the 26 counties. The RBMP for Ireland 2018-2021 was published in April 2018. The Council is currently implementing the River Basin Management Plan, in fulfilment of its WFD obligations, and the associated programme of measures as detailed within this plan. The main thrust of the Plan is as follows:

- Plan to result in the protection and improvement of water quality in approximately 726 water bodies in Ireland by deploying 43 specialist local authority investigative assessment personnel;
- A €1.7 billion investment in urban wastewater treatment infrastructure by the year 2021 in 255 urban areas;
- A greater focus on protecting drinking water sources in over 700 public and private drinking water supplies and a €73 million per year investment by Irish Water to reduce leakage;
- Extension of the local authority-led domestic wastewater treatment systems grant scheme;
- New agricultural Sustainability Support and Advisory Programme to promote best agricultural practice regarding water quality in 190 targeted areas.

In order to encourage greater implementation of the RBMP the Local Authority Waters and Communities Office (LAWCO) has established a Local Authority Catchments Team employed to undertake scientific assessments initiating the roll out of mitigation measures at a local level and to increase the level of community participation and to raise public awareness of water quality[6]. A regional integrated Catchment Management Programme for the Eastern and Midlands region has been published setting out the precise areas prioritised for action. A schedule of works for the Catchment Assessment Team has been devised setting out how community and stakeholder engagement will take place.

6.11.1.1 Rivers

In total 25 rivers are sampled by the Council for the purposes of physio-chemical monitoring under the WFD at 67 river sampling locations, which complements the EPA's biological monitoring[7]. This operational and surveillance monitoring programme is key to directing the implementation of the River Basin Management Plans and also determines whether the targets and objectives of the Water Framework Directive are being achieved.

Based on the results obtained from the WFD monitoring programme including an assessment of pressures, impacts and water quality investigations, extended deadlines have been included in the RBMP. Such extended timelines will facilitate the achievement of environmental objectives in a significant number of water bodies, primarily on the basis that it will not otherwise be technically feasible to achieve these targets by earlier dates. In such cases targets are to be achieved by 2021, 2027 or beyond 2027.

Water quality monitoring and analysis by the EPA and the Council has demonstrated a long-term trend of reducing nutrient concentrations (Nitrogen and Phosphorus) in watercourses in the County since the late 1990's. Recent EPA analysis however indicates nutrient concentrations have been rising in many watercourses since 2004.

EPA data on the biological quality of watercourses, based on monitoring up to 2017, indicates that 19% of monitored river sites in Co. Meath achieved Good Status or better, while 81% of monitored river sites in Co. Meath are at less than Good Status, i.e. currently failing WFD objectives.

Significant work is required if the objectives of the WFD are to be achieved within the timeframes adopted in the RBMP. It is equally important that where water quality is of good status that this status is protected. This presents a significant challenge in meeting WFD objectives, particularly in respect of technical resources available to the Council.

6.11.1.2 Lakes

There are 4 lakes in the County which are designated WFD operational monitoring lakes, namely Lough Sheelin, Lough Bracken, Lough Bane and Annagh or White Lake. The EPA Water Quality in Ireland Report 2010-2015, published in 2017, reports that the water quality in White/Annagh lake was classified as being of good status and Lough Bane was classified as being of high status, Lough Sheelin and Lough Bracken were both classified as being of moderate status.

6.11.1.3 Coastal and Transitional (Estuarine) Waters

The Meath coastline extends for a distance of approximately 10 km and stretches from the mouth of the River Boyne at Mornington, bordering County Louth to Gormanston at the mouth of the River Delvin, bordering County Dublin.

EPA monitoring of coastal and transitional waters under the WFD classifies the coastal waters off the Co. Meath coast as being of Good Status and the Boyne Estuary is classified as being of moderate status.

Laytown/Bettystown is the only bathing area in Co. Meath designated in accordance with the Bathing Water Quality Regulations, 2008 (S.I. No. 79 of 2008). The Council is responsible for the implementation of the Bathing Water Quality Regulations. This includes monitoring (on a weekly basis during the bathing season) and reporting bathing water quality results to the EPA, making up-to-date information and advice available to the public and responding in the event of incidents which could impact on bathing water quality. Laytown/Bettystown is classified at good quality by the EPA in 2018, based on rolling monitoring results attained during the 4 year period 2015-2018.

The County's coastline is also part of a designated Shellfish Area namely 'the Balbriggan/Skerries Shellfish Area'. In 2011, The Council adopted Pollution Reduction Plans for the purposes of protecting the quality of its shellfish waters, particularly with a view to establishing the potential risk of microbial contamination to the quality of such waters from both on site wastewater treatment systems and agricultural sources.

Mornington Beach attained a 'Green Coast Award' in 2017[8]. The Green Coast Award is a symbol of environmental excellence and has been established to acknowledge, promote and protect the environment of beaches in the Republic of Ireland, Northern Ireland and Wales. The award is for beaches which meet EC bathing water quality standards, but which are also prized for their natural, unspoilt environment.

A Beach Management Plan for Bettystown and Laytown beaches was approved by the Laytown-Bettystown Municipal District in February 2019. It addresses, inter alia, environment and wildlife, management of the beach, beach cleaning, access and parking, bye-laws and communications/signage. The implementation of some of the recommendations contained therein will require some revisions to the County Meath Foreshore Bye Laws 2010, a process that will involve further public consultation and approval by the Elected Members.

6.12 National Maritime Spatial Plan

6.12.1 National Marine Planning Framework

The NMPF is a national plan for Ireland's maritime area, setting out, over a 20 year horizon, how we want to use, protect and enjoy our seas. The NMPF sits at the top of the hierarchy of plans and sectoral policies for the marine area. The plan has been informed by existing sectoral plans and will, in turn, be used to inform future cycles of those plans in an ongoing feedback loop. It provides a coherent framework in which those sectoral policies and objectives can be realised. The marine plan will cover Ireland's maritime area, including internal waters (sea area), territorial seas, exclusive economic zone (EEZ) and continental shelf. The maritime area comprises approx. 490,000 km2 and extends from mean high water mark at the coast seaward to in excess of 200 nautical miles in parts. This NMPF contains the objectives, policies and supporting actions the Government considers necessary to support the effective management of marine activities and more sustainable use of our marine resources. It sets out the policy, legislative and regulatory context for Marine Spatial Planning in general and, more specifically, for the development of Ireland's first plan. Consideration

of the objectives of the plan, once adopted, will form part of the decision-making process for marine developments and activities.

It is the policy of the Council:

INF POL 30

To implement the policies and objectives as set out within the National Marine Planning Framework to realise the full benefits of our ocean wealth in a managed and sustainable way ensuring climate change is taken into account.

6.13 Groundwater

The EPA report annually on 46 groundwater bodies in County Meath. Overall groundwater quality within the County is very good with only two groundwater bodies classified at poor status in the EPA Water Quality in Ireland report 2010-2015 published in 2017. The Council engages in ongoing consultation with the EPA in this regard.

Groundwater is a major natural resource in the County providing between 20%-25% of drinking water supplies. In rural areas that are not served by public or group water schemes, ground water is usually the only source of supply. For this reason, it is essential that this natural resource is protected.

In conjunction with the Geological Survey of Ireland (GSI) a Groundwater Protection Scheme has been prepared for the County. This provides guidelines for the planning and licensing authorities in carrying out their functions, and a framework to assist in decision-making on the location, nature and control of developments and activities in order to protect groundwater. The Scheme aims to maintain the quantity and quality of groundwater and in some cases improve it, by applying a risk-assessment-based approach to groundwater protection and sustainable development.

Groundwater protection responses for the different areas have been developed for potential hazards such as landfills, on-site wastewater treatment systems and septic tanks for single houses, and land spreading of organic wastes[9]
In accordance with the EU Water Policy, Abstractions Registration Regulations 2018, all abstractions from groundwater or surface water above 25m3/day are required to be registered with the Environmental Protection Agency.

It is the policy of the Council:

INF POL 31

To protect and develop, in a sustainable manner, the existing groundwater sources and aquifers in the County and to manage development in a manner consistent with the protection of these resources.

INF POL 32

To ensure, through the implementation of the River Basin Management Plan(s) and the associated Programmes of Measures and any other associated legislation or revised plans with all relevant stakeholders, the protection and improvement of all drinking water, surface water and ground waters throughout the County.

INF POL 33

To protect recognised salmonid water courses (in conjunction with Inland Fisheries Ireland) such as the Boyne and Blackwater catchments, which are recognised to be exceptional in supporting salmonid fish species.

It is an objective of the Council:

INF OBJ 29

To strive to achieve 'good status' in all water bodies in compliance with the Water Framework Directive and to cooperate with the implementation of the National River Basin Management Plan 2018-2021.

INF OBJ 30

To ensure the County's natural coastal defences, such as beaches, sand dunes, salt marshes and estuary lands, are protected and are not compromised by inappropriate works or forms of development.

INF OBJ 31

To employ soft engineering techniques as an alternative to hard coastal defence works, as appropriate.

INF OBJ 32

To identify, prioritise and implement necessary coastal protection works subject to the availability of resources, whilst ensuring a high level of protection for natural habitats and features, and to ensure due regard is paid to visual and other environmental considerations in the design of any such coastal protection works. This will include the identification of coastal areas sensitive to climate change and consequent coastal erosion.

INF OBJ 33

To protect the special character of the coast by preventing inappropriate development, particularly on the seaward side of coastal roads. New development, wherever possible, shall be accommodated within existing developed areas.

INF OBJ 34

To strictly control the nature and pattern of development within coastal areas and ensure that it is designed and landscaped to the highest standards, and sited appropriately so as not to detract from the visual amenity of the area. Development shall be prohibited where the development poses a significant or potential threat to coastal habitats or features, and/or where the development is likely to result in altered patterns of erosion or deposition elsewhere along the coast.

INF OBJ 35

To prohibit development along the coast outside existing urban areas where such development is not adequately safeguarded over the lifetime of the development without the need to construct additional coastal defences.

INF OBJ 36

To protect and develop, in a sustainable manner, the existing groundwater sources and aquifers in the County and manage development in a manner consistent with the sustainable management of these resources in conformity with the EU Environmental Objectives (Groundwater) Regulations 2010 and the second cycle National River Basin Management Plan 2018-2021, and any subsequent plan and the Groundwater Protection Scheme.

INF OBJ 37

To implement the recommendations of the Meath Groundwater Protection Scheme(s).

INF OBJ 38

To establish riparian corridors free from new development along all significant watercourses and streams in the County as follows: -A 10 metre wide riparian buffer strip measured from the top of the bank either side of all watercourses in urban areas; - A 30m wide riparian buffer strip from top of bank to either side of all watercourses is required as a minimum outside of urban areas.

6.14 Climate Change

Mitigation of the causes and impacts of climate change is one of the cross cutting themes of this Development Plan. In December 2015 the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015 was enacted. The Act establishes the national objective of transitioning to a low carbon, climate resilient and environmentally sustainable economy in the period up to and including the year 2050.

While Ireland is taking positive steps to mitigate the causes of climate change, the Country will, however, inevitably experience the changed conditions being forecast for increasing global temperatures and possible significant changes in rainfall patterns over the next 100 years. The future forecast for Ireland is for drier summers, wetter winters, stronger storms and warmer average temperatures throughout the year.

CO2 emissions are largely emanating from the agricultural, transport, energy and residential sectors. It is necessary to address the causes of climate change by reducing our reliance on fossil fuels and our greenhouse gas emissions. Adaptation/climate proofing measures to counteract these harmful impacts will form part of an overall comprehensive response. A comprehensive response is required in order to meet our National commitments to reduce our carbon emissions by 30% for 2030 and 80% by 2050. These challenges will require significant investment, will necessitate the implementation of adaptation and mitigation measures across all sectors and will demand significant behavioural changes.

6.14.1 Statutory Context

Framework Convention on Climate Change - United Nations - (UNFCCC) 1992

A range of international climate change agreements and frameworks have been approved that provide information on climate change impacts, vulnerability and adaptations. The work of the UNFCCC provides individual participant states with detailed technical information, including current

and future climate change projections, which enables determination of practical adaptation measures to improve long-term resilience.

Adaptation Strategy - European Union- 2013
The European Union published its Adaptation Strategy in April 2013 with the overall aim of increasing climate resilience across Europe. Through increased coordination and a more consolidated approach, the Adaptation Strategy will enhance the preparedness and effectiveness of various governance levels to respond to the impacts of climate change.

The Strategy is focused on three key objectives:

- Promoting action by Member States
- 'Climate-proofing' action at EU level
- Better informed decision making

The primary adaptation initiatives promoted by the Strategy are achieved through the provision of mitigation and adaptation requirements within EU sector policies and funding mechanisms. The initiatives run across a range of areas including:

- infrastructure and buildings
- marine and inland water issues
- forestry
- agriculture; and
- social cohesion

Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act - Dept of Communications, Climate Action and Environment - 2015
The Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015 is the key policy instrument which addresses climate change. This Act sets out a roadmap for Ireland's transition towards a low carbon economy and details mechanisms for the implementation of the National Mitigation Plan (NMP), published in July 2017. The aim of these mechanisms is to lower Ireland's level of greenhouse emissions. In addition, the Act requires a National (Climate Change) Adaptation Framework (NAF) to provide responses to changes caused by climate change.

Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended)
The Act sets out provisions for climate change within Section 10 (2) (n). These include requirements to:

- Reduce energy demand in response to the likelihood of increases in energy and other costs due to long-term decline in non-renewable resources,
- Reduce anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions, and
- Address the necessity of adaptation to climate change; in particular, having regard to location, layout and design of new development.

National Climate Change Adaptation Framework (NCCAF) - Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government - 2013
The NCCAF provides guidance on the role of Local Authorities in local climate change adaptation and guidance on the preparation of Local Adaptation Plans.

6.14.2 Policy Context

National Adaptation Framework - Planning for a Climate Resilient Ireland - Department of Communications, Climate Change and the Environment - 2018
The National Adaptation Framework (NAF) sets out Ireland's first statutory strategy for the application of adaptation measures in different Government sectors, including the Local Authorities. This 'NAF – Planning for a Climate Resilient Ireland' was published on 19 January 2018. The Framework aims to reduce the vulnerability of the State to the negative effects of climate change but also seeks to promote any positive effects that may occur.

This NAF will build on the substantial work already carried out under the existing NCCAF and ensure that climate adaptation in Ireland is brought forward in line with EU and international best practice.

National Mitigation Plan- Department of Communications, Climate Change and the Environment - 2017
In July 2017 the first National Mitigation Plan was published which represented an initial step to set Ireland on a pathway to decarbonising its economy.

It is a whole-of-Government Plan addressing the following core sectors:

- Electricity Generation
- Built Environment
- Transport
- Agriculture

The measures set out in the plan lay the foundations for transitioning Ireland to a low carbon, climate resilient and environmentally sustainable economy by 2050. In support of this, the Plan also includes over 100 individual actions for various Ministers and public bodies to progress and implement.

National Planning Framework (NPF)

The NPF states that: "While the overall quality of our environment is good, this masks some of the threats we now face. Some of the key national environmental challenges include the need to accelerate action on climate change".

National Policy Objective NPO 8 seeks to drive a transition towards a low carbon and climate resilient society. This policy objective will seek to drive investment choices to mirror goals set down within the National Mitigation Plan and National Adaptation Framework incorporating a more renewable energy focused approach prioritising energy sources such as solar, wind and wave.

Eastern Midlands Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2019-2031

The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) published in June 2019 sets out an integrated policy to enable the creation of sustainable regions with the capability to be resilient to future climate change. The Regional Policy Objectives (RPOs) contained in the RSES are designed to promote efficiencies in water and energy use and the move towards a low carbon economy. They aim to encourage a modal shift towards green transport and energy options in addition to bolstering the robustness of local regional ecosystems through a regional green infrastructure strategy.

In the specific context of climate change RPO 7.29 refers to the preparation of a greenhouse gas inventory for the region to inform the preparation of a strategic mitigation action plan. RPO 7.31 requires Local Authorities to develop Climate Action Strategies (CAS) as well as local climate adaptation and mitigation strategies. The Meath Climate Action Strategy was adopted in September 2019.

6.15 Energy

Ireland's island location on the edge of Europe accentuates the need for secure and continuous energy supplies. Despite a reduction in energy consumption in recent times, Ireland's expenditure on energy imports remains significant. International, EU and National policies all promote a much more energy-efficient society relying on sustainable renewable energy sources. This will ensure that we secure our international competitiveness by increased use of and demand for indigenous resources and increased security of supply. Consequently, policies and objectives promoting energy efficiencies and the development of indigenous resources will be pursued during the lifetime of this Plan.

This Development Plan has an overarching role in progressing a sustainable energy future for the County by recognising the central role of land use planning in promoting a low carbon society and mitigating the impacts of climate change.

6.15.1 Statutory Context

EU Energy Performance of Buildings Directive 2010 (2010/31/EU) (EPBD)

This Directive seeks to promote high energy performance within buildings and aims to strengthen the provisions of Directive 2002/91/EC which it supersedes. The EPBD also contains a target that by

31st December 2018, all new public buildings owned and occupied by public bodies are nearly zero energy consumption buildings (NZEB's).

EU Energy Efficiency Directive 2012 (2012/27/EU)
This Directive was transposed into Irish Law as S.I. 426 of 2014, European Union (Energy Efficiency) Regulations 2014, sets out the policy roadmap up to 2020 and identifies measures that are required to be introduced by Member States in order for the EU to meet its binding energy efficiency and emissions targets.

National Energy Policy White Paper-Ireland's Transition to a Low Carbon Energy Economy-Department of Communications Climate Action and the Environment-2015-2030
This national energy policy framework was developed in the context of the significant role played by European institutions in determining energy policy, markets, and regulation. It takes account of European and International climate change objectives and agreements, as well as Irish social, economic and employment priorities.

Building Regulations-Part L-S I No 259-Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage-2011
The Part L Amendment Regulations 2011 applies to dwellings, both new and existing. These regulations relate to the application of Part L contained in Technical Guidance Document L - Conservation of Fuel and Energy.

6.15.2 Policy Context

Climate Change and Energy Package-European Union- 2010
At European Level the '20/20/20' commitments agreed under the EU 'Climate Change and Energy Package' set three targets for 2020 as follows:

- A minimum 20% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions based on 1990 levels.
- 20% reduction in primary energy use compared with projected levels, to be achieved by improving energy efficiency.
- 20% of final energy consumption to be produced by renewable energy resources.

Ireland's 4th National Energy Efficiency Action Plan - Department of Communications, Climate Action and the Environment 2017-2020
Ireland's 4th National Energy Efficiency Action Plan (NEEAP) published in 2017 reaffirms the country's commitment to delivering a 20% reduction in energy demand across the economy by 2020 in tandem with a more challenging target of 33% reduction in public sector energy use. The NEEAP outlines energy efficient measures that will be implemented to reach the national energy saving targets.

Delivering Homes Sustaining Communities - Statement on Housing Policy-Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government 2007

This document supported the adoption of new technology and innovative approaches to design and construction of dwellings leading to enhanced quality and energy performance over their lifetime[10].

Delivering a Sustainable Energy Future for Ireland - The Energy Policy Framework- Department of Communications, Marine and Natural Resources 2007-2020, 2007;

This White Paper contained a number of proposals regarding the energy market generally including the adoption of new technology and innovative approaches to design and construction of dwellings

Towards Nearly Zero Energy Buildings in Ireland-Planning for 2020 and Beyond-Department of Environment, Community and Local Government-2012

This document was published in 2012 by the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government. The public sector aim to improve its energy efficiency by 33% by 2020 as set out in the National Energy Efficiency Action Plan (NEEAP) and, in accordance with the requirements of Directive 2010/31/EU on the energy performance of buildings (recast), "would be seen to lead by example in order to demonstrate clearly to all sectors what is possible through a programme of strong and committed actions".

Built and Archaeological Heritage Climate Change Sectoral Adaptation Plan (DCHG 2019).

Heritage in Ireland ranges from the many modest sites of local and regional importance to those of national and global significance. It includes private homes, commercial and public buildings, national monuments, underwater and buried archaeology and the physical and cultural settings of all of these. The adaption plan considers not only those structures and sites that have been statutorily listed, but all man-made assets that have historical, aesthetic and cultural value, even though they may not be officially protected.

The adaptation strategy and action plan aims to:

- Build adaptive capacity within the sector
- Reduce the vulnerability of built and archaeological heritage to climate change and;
- Identify and capitalise on the various potential opportunities for the sector.

The goals outlined are commensurate with the five-year term of this plan.

Wind Energy Development Guidelines - Department of Environment, Community and Local Government-2006

These Guidelines set out the parameters for the appropriate siting and design of wind farm developments. They emphasise the importance of wind energy as a renewable energy resource.

Draft Review of Wind Energy Guidelines, Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government 2017

The emerging preferred draft review of the 2006 Wind Energy Guidelines was published in June 2017[11]. This review is in the context of ensuring that Ireland can deliver on its EU renewable energy targets, while simultaneously addressing the concerns of local communities in the areas where wind farm developments are proposed.

Draft Bioenergy Plan for Ireland, Department of Communications, Marine and Natural Resources - 2014

Ireland has significant potential to develop its bioenergy resources to generate electricity for use as transport fuels, heating and cooling buildings and for conversion into bio-chemicals as industrial raw materials.

Offshore Renewable Energy Development Plan 2014

The Offshore Renewable Energy Development Plan sets out the context for the development of Ireland's offshore wind and ocean renewable energy sectors, and the current state of play with regard to the range of policy areas that must be coordinated in order to create the conditions necessary to support the development of these sectors. The Plan was subject to an interim review in 2018 which identified a list of challenges and proposed next steps required to implement the recommendations identified by the Oversight Group.

6.15.3 Renewable Energy

Section 9.2 of the NPF states the following in relation to energy "Ireland's national energy policy is focused on three pillars: (1) sustainability, (2) security of supply and (3) competitiveness. The Government recognises that Ireland must reduce greenhouse gas emissions at 1990 levels from the energy sector by at least 80% by 2050, while at the same time ensuring security of supply of competitive energy sources to our citizens and businesses".

The potential feasible renewable energy options for the County include, but are not limited to, a balanced mix of:

- Bioenergy - crops, forestry;
- Biomass - anaerobic digestion, combined heat and power (CHP);
- Geothermal - hot dry rock reservoirs, groundwater aquifers;
- Hydro energy - small and micro hydro systems;
- Solar - electricity generation, passive solar heating, active solar heating;
- Waste - landfill methane gas collection;
- Wave - wave action, and;
- Wind - onshore wind, offshore wind (single turbines and groups).

RPO 7.34 of the RSES sets out that EMRA is proposing, in conjunction within its constituent Local Authorities within the region, to identify Strategic Energy Zones (SEZ). These zones will designate areas suitable for larger energy generating projects; the role of community micro energy production in urban and rural settings will be explored and the potential for renewable energy production

within areas specifically identified for industrial development will also be considered. The SEZ's for the region will ensure that all environmental considerations are taken on board at an early stage within the initial analysis prior to their identification. A regional landscape strategy is to be developed to support the delivery of projects within SEZ's.

RPO 10.24 of the Eastern Midlands RSES also sets out its support for the sustainable development of Ireland's offshore renewable energy resources in accordance with the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources 'Offshore Renewable Energy Development Plan' and any successor thereof including any associated domestic and international grid connection enhancements.

6.15.3.1 Solar Energy

There are a range of technologies available to exploit the benefits of harnessing energy of the sun, including solar panels, solar farms, solar energy storage facilities all of which contribute to a reduction in energy demand. Solar technologies can be designed into buildings or retrofitted. Large scale solar farms have been positively considered on suitable sites within the County in the recent past. As of May 2019, twenty solar photovoltaic farms were granted planning permission across the County. A number of other solar farm proposals are at the pre-planning stage.

Proposals for the development of solar farms will be subject to a Site-specific Flood Risk Assessment as set out in the Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines 2009 for Planning Authorities (or any updated guidelines).;

6.15.3.2 Wind Energy

Wind Energy has been the most significant source of renewable electricity. In 2017, installed wind capacity had increased to 2,851 MW across the island of Ireland. In 2020, Ireland fell short of its mandatory European target for an overall 16% renewable energy share. However, if Ireland is to reach our 2030 renewable electricity target, 70% of our electricity generation must be from renewable energy.

The growth of renewable energy and in particular wind energy requires the modernisation and expansion of electricity infrastructure. Ireland continues to face challenges inherent to successfully further deploying renewable energy in electricity, heat and transport, including predictable and transparent frameworks, regulatory certainty, cost efficiency and effectiveness and social acceptance.

The Council will continue to support and encourage the principle of development of wind energy, in accordance with Government policy and having regard to the provisions of the Landscape Characterisation Assessment of the County and the Wind Energy Development Guidelines (2006) or any revisions thereof.

6.15.3.3 Geothermal

The Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland commissioned a study in 2004 on geothermal energy in Ireland. This study identified potential national resources of geothermal energy. This report found that the most abundant warm springs are found in the Mallow area in north County Cork and the Dublin/Meath/Kildare area. The highest recorded geothermal gradient at 1000 metres in the Republic is 28.4 degrees Celsius/km and is located in the vicinity of the north of County Meath. The Geological Survey of Ireland (GSI) is currently undertaking a further study on shallow geothermal energy resources in Ireland. This project aims to produce best practice guidance for the geothermal systems in Ireland, suitability maps for the utilisation of shallow geothermal energy resources and a database of existing systems.

6.15.3.4 Bioenergy

Bioenergy is solar energy that has been bound up in biomass during the process of photosynthesis. The photosynthesis process uses solar energy to combine carbon dioxide from the atmosphere with water and various nutrients from the soil to produce plant matter – biomass. The Council will encourage the production of bio-crops for biomass in the generation of renewable energy.

6.15.3.5 Hydro Energy

The Council encourages the use of rivers, where suitable, within the County for the development of Hydro Energy, and in particular, will be supportive of developments along the banks of rivers which propose hydro energy to provide an element of their energy requirements. The Council will not encourage the use of the canal system which is designated for tourist and amenity use for this purpose. In all proposals, the Council will consult with the National Parks & Wildlife Section (NPWS) of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage and Inland Fisheries Ireland with regard to the impact of such proposals for the free passage of fish, salmonid qualities of the river and ecological impact of any sites of E.U. or national designation.

6.15.3.6 Energy Efficiency

The Council support the concept of generating renewable energy at a 'local' level and is cognisant of the benefits that accrue to local communities, for example using solar energy as a means to empower communities to take control of the production and consumption of energy. Local community engagement will form a key part of the Council's future energy strategy, and this engagement could be developed through the Public Participation Network (PPN) which could be used to inform people of the economic, environmental and social benefits of moving away from solid/fossil fuels towards a low carbon economy.

The Council will endeavour:

- To promote the rational uses of energy;
- To promote renewable energy;
- To promote and disseminate energy information;

- To protect the environment;
- To reduce energy waste in all sectors of society, and;
- To encourage the replacement of imported fossil fuels with regionally generated renewable energy in an effort to ensure security of energy supply, where it is feasible.

It is the policy of the Council:

INF POL 34

To promote sustainable energy sources, locally based renewable energy alternatives, where such development does not have a negative impact on the surrounding environment (including water quality), landscape, biodiversity, natural and built heritage, residential or local amenities.

INF POL 35

To seek a reduction in greenhouse gases through energy efficiency and the development of renewable energy sources utilising the natural resources of the County in an environmentally acceptable manner consistent with best practice and planning principles.

INF POL 36

To support the implementation of the National Climate Change Strategy and to facilitate measures which seek to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases.

INF POL 37

To seek to improve the energy efficiency of the County's existing building stock in line with good architectural conservation practice and to promote energy efficiency and conservation in the design and development of all new buildings in the County, in accordance with the Building Regulations Part L (Conservation of Fuel and Energy).

INF POL 38

To encourage that new development proposals maximise energy efficiency through siting, layout, design and incorporate best practice in energy technologies, conservation and smart technology.

INF POL 39

To encourage the attainment of high standards of energy efficiency and environmental sustainability in development and to support the development of sustainable buildings that achieve certification under the Home Performance Index.

INF POL 40

To support and encourage pilot schemes which promote innovative ways to incorporate energy efficiency.

INF POL 41

To encourage the development of wind energy, in accordance with Government policy and having regard to the Landscape Character Assessment of the County and the Wind Energy Development Guidelines (2006) or any revisions thereof.

INF POL 42

To support the identification, in conjunction with EMRA, of Strategic Energy Zones, areas suitable to accommodate large energy generating projects within the Eastern and Midlands Regional area.

INF POL 43

To require that development proposals in respect of solar panel photovoltaic (PV) arrays in the vicinity of Dublin Airport shall be accompanied by a full glint and glare study to assess the potential impact upon aviation safety (Refer to Chapter 5 Movement, Section 7.11, Aviation Sector).

INF POL 44

To support Sustainable Energy Communities and local community group initiatives to develop clean energy opportunities within the county.

INF POL 45

To support the development and implementation of a local Climate Action Strategy which should identify vulnerability climate risks, quantify emissions produced, identify costs and prioritise adaptation actions in accordance with the National Adaptation Framework.

It is the objective of the Council:

INF OBJ 39

To support Ireland's renewable energy commitments outlined in national policy by facilitating the development and exploitation of renewable energy sources such as solar, wind, geothermal, hydro and bio-energy at suitable locations within the County where such development does not have a negative impact on the surrounding environment (including water quality), landscape, biodiversity or local amenities so as to provide for further residential and enterprise development within the county.

INF OBJ 40

To seek to reduce reliance on fossil fuels in the County by reducing the energy demand of existing buildings, in particular residential dwellings.

INF OBJ 41

To promote the generation and supply of low carbon and renewable energy alternatives, having regard to the opportunities offered by the settlement hierarchy of the County and the built environment.

INF OBJ 42

To support the recording and monitoring of renewable energy potential in the County in partnership with other stakeholders including the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI).

INF OBJ 43

To require, where feasible and practicable, the provision of Photovoltaic solar panels in new residential developments, commercial developments, and public buildings for electricity generation/storage and/or water heating purposes so as to minimise carbon emissions and reduce dependence on imported fossil fuels and reduce energy costs.

INF OBJ 44

To require, where feasible and practicable, the provision of green roof technology for all new public buildings (Council buildings, school buildings, hospitals, community centres, sports facilities, libraries, Garda stations etc) to assist in flood alleviation, insulation and improved biodiversity, and to actively promote these measures appropriate in new commercial and industrial buildings.

INF OBJ 45

To ensure that all plans and projects associated with the generation or supply of energy or telecommunication networks are subject to an Appropriate Assessment Screening and those plans

and projects which could, either individually or in-combination with other plans and projects, have a significant effect on a Natura 20000 site (or sites) undergo a full Appropriate Assessment.

INF OBJ 46

To support the implementation of the actions of the Meath Climate Action Strategy 2019-2024 and review and update the Energy Management Action Plan 2011-2012, "Think Globally Act Locally".

INF OBJ 47

To investigate the preparation of a Renewable Energy Strategy promoting technologies which are most viable in the County.

INF OBJ 48

To support Ireland's renewable energy commitments by promoting the use of district heating systems in urban residential and enterprise developments, where such developments will not negatively impact upon the surrounding landscape, environment, biodiversity or local amenities.

INF OBJ 49

To support the use of heat pumps as an alternative to gas boilers, where appropriate, for domestic and commercial development

6.15.4 Energy Networks Infrastructure

6.15.4.1 Electricity and Gas Networks

The two main energy sources currently serving the County are electricity and gas. The County's location within the Greater Dublin Area together with the potential for significant economic and supporting residential development within the Plan period demonstrates the importance of ensuring that the existing networks can be upgraded and can provide enhanced capacity. This capacity is essential to facilitate the future development of the County in line with the Core and Settlement Strategies.

The RSES highlights the importance of reducing energy consumption from fossil fuel sources and promotes the use of more sustainable sources such as wind, wave solar and biomass. The use of smart technology systems and the recognition that buildings can act as both generators and consumers of energy and the promotion of electric vehicles will all place greater pressure on the national electricity grid. Thus, the strengthening of the national grid is important for a number of reasons including improving security of supply for the domestic, residential and enterprise market as well as attracting high-end enterprise which often require significant energy capacity and reliability.

6.15.4.2 North-South Interconnector

The north-south interconnector is an above ground electricity connection proposal linking the existing converter station at Woodland, Batterstown, Co. Meath and traversing through Meath, Cavan and Monaghan linking to a converter station at Turleenan in County Tyrone. Planning permission was granted by An Bord Pleanala for the sections in Counties Meath, Cavan and Monaghan in December 2016. Following a successful legal challenge, planning permission for the northern section of the interconnector has been delayed.

Section 10.3 of the RSES outlines the following in relation to future north-south electricity interconnections “Increased connectivity with other grids is also needed and projects such as the north–south interconnector are of great importance for the region”.

It is the policy of the Council:

INF POL 46

To support and facilitate the development of enhanced electricity and gas supplies, and associated networks, to serve the existing and future needs of the County and to facilitate new transmission infrastructure projects that may be brought forward during the lifetime of the plan including the delivery and integration, including linkages of renewable energy proposals to the electricity transmission grid in a sustainable and timely manner.

INF POL 47

To co-operate and liaise with statutory and other energy providers in relation to power generation in order to ensure adequate power capacity for the existing and future business and enterprise needs of the County.

INF POL 48

To ensure that energy transmission infrastructure follows best practice with regard to siting, design and least environmental impact in the interest of landscape protection.

INF POL 49

To require that, in all new developments, multiple services are accommodated in shared strips underground and that access covers are shared, whenever possible.

INF POL 50

To require that the location of local energy services such as electricity, be undergrounded, where appropriate.

INF POL 51

To seek to avoid the sterilisation of lands proximate to key public transport corridors such as rail, when future energy transmission routes/pipelines are being designed and provided.

INF POL 52

To seek to generally avoid the location of overhead lines in Natura 2000 sites unless it can be proven that they will not affect the integrity of the site in view of its conservation objectives i.e. by carrying out an appropriate assessment in accordance with Article 6(3) of the E.U. Habitats Directive.

INF POL 53

To ensure that development proposals, including quarrying and mining operations involving explosives, do not negatively impact on the gas network. The Council shall refer applications for developments in proximity to the natural gas network to Gas Networks Ireland and will have regard to their comments in the assessment of the application.

It is an objective of the Council:

INF OBJ 50

To seek the delivery of the necessary integration of transmission network requirements to facilitate linkages of renewable energy proposals to the electricity transmission grid in a sustainable and timely manner.

6.16 Information and Communication Technologies

The provision of a high-quality competitive telecommunications service is considered essential in order to promote industrial and commercial development, to improve personal and household security and to enhance social inclusion and mobility. The increased usage of new technologies has placed an increased reliance on the provision of such services in all areas for industrial, commercial, tourism and social development. The expansion of these services is key to meeting the needs of the County's population and a modern digital economy.

6.16.1 Statutory Context

EU Directive 2014/61/EU (SI. 391 of 2016)

This Directive pertains to the reduction of cost of deploying high-speed communications networks to limit operators ability to develop their own network and to use existing ducting in place.

6.16.2 Policy Context

Telecommunications Antennae and Support Structures – Guidelines for Planning Authorities - Department of the Environment-July 1996

The Guidelines provide guidance on locational and other requirements for antennae support structures. The Guidelines also address the issue of access roads to base stations.

Code of Practice on Sharing of Radio Sites-Commission for Communications Regulation, 2007

This Code of Practice explores the potential of facilitating of sharing of radio sites between 3G Operators.

Circular Letter PL07/12-Department of Environment, Community and Local Government-October 2012

This Circular provides direction for all forms of telecommunications infrastructure in terms of the recommended duration of permissions, separation distances from residences/schools, bonds and a register of structures.

A Connected County, Meath's Digital Strategy 2020

This Strategy will address aspects such as Digital Infrastructure, Digital Education, Digital Enterprise & Economy and a Digital Council for County Meath.

Waste Action Plan for a Circular Economy – Ireland's National Waste Policy 2020- 2025

This policy shifts away from waste disposal and moves it back up the production chain, seeking to embed the circular economy into the products life cycle. This new circular economy will also present opportunities in job creation and long-term sustainability as well as helping to meet our climate targets.

The policy will be supported by existing and pending legislation.

The policy document contains over 200 measures across various waste areas including Circular Economy, Municipal Waste, Consumer Protection and Citizen Engagement, Plastics and Packaging, Construction and Demolition, Textiles, Green Public Procurement and Waste Enforcement.

6.16.3 Broadband

Broadband is one of the key drivers in maintaining competitiveness and supporting socio-economic development. It provides a connectivity that has transformed the way people and businesses operate.

The National Broadband Plan is the Government's plan to deliver high speed broadband services to all businesses, farms, and households in Ireland. It will ensure that people living and working in rural areas have the same digital opportunities as those in urban areas.

The contract for the National Broadband Plan State intervention area was awarded in November 2019.

The Council has been given specific responsibilities within the plan to support its delivery.

A critical aspect of the National Broadband Plan is the development of Broadband Connection Points within existing and developing community facilities in the Intervention Areas. These facilities will enable local residents to access high speed broadband for leisure, economic, educational or work activities.

The WIFI4EU network, a publicly accessible free Wi-Fi service, is being delivered across Ireland in collaboration with the European Commission and the Department of Rural & Community Development. In Meath, residents and visitors are able to access high speed broadband in the main population centres of the County.

The Council will seek to support the delivery of these services and promote enhancement of broadband delivery in County Meath in the period of the Development Plan in accordance with National policy in order to:

- Promote the attractiveness of further regional locations outside of the main urban centres for economic development both indigenous and FDI;
- Facilitate more flexible study and working arrangements such as working from home and working hubs;
- Reduce social isolation.

6.16.4 Telecommunications Antennae

The Council recognises the essential need for high-quality communications and information technology networks in assuring the competitiveness of the County's economy and its role in supporting regional and national development generally.

It shall be the preferred approach that all new support structures fully meet the co-location or clustering policy of the current guidelines or any such guidelines that replace these, and that shared use of existing structures will be insisted upon where the numbers of masts located in any single area are considered to be excessive. The placement of appropriately designed antennae on street furniture and lamp posts will be supported in suitable locations. Specific care and attention will be required in designated ACA's.

Due to the physical size of mast structures and the materials used to construct them, such structures can severely impact on both rural and urban landscapes. When assessing planning applications, great care needs to be taken to minimise damage through discreet siting, appropriate and good design. In the assessment of individual proposals, the Council will also consider rights of way and walking routes. The design of mast structures should be simple and well finished. They should employ the latest technology in order to minimise their scale and visual impact. Mast structures are most visible and exposed within upland/hilly or mountainous areas. In these locations, softening of the visual impact can be achieved through planting of shrubs, trees etc. as a screen or backdrop, if appropriate. Disguised masts e.g. as trees, will be encouraged in appropriate locations.

In accordance with circular PL07/12,[13] the Plan will seek to support applications for telecommunications infrastructure in appropriate locations in compliance with all environmental requirements.

It is the policy of the Council:

INF POL 54

To facilitate the delivery of a high capacity Information and Communications Technology (ICT) infrastructure and broadband network and digital broadcasting throughout the County.

INF POL 55

To seek to have appropriate modern ICT, including open access fibre connections in all new developments and a multiplicity of carrier neutral ducting installed during significant public infrastructure works such as roads, rail, water and sewerage, where feasible and in consultation with all relevant licensed telecommunications operators.

INF POL 56

To promote orderly development of telecommunications infrastructure throughout the County in accordance with the requirements of the "Telecommunications Antennae and Support Structures – Guidelines for Planning Authorities" July 1996, except where they conflict with Circular Letter PL 07/12 which shall take precedence, and any subsequent revisions or expanded guidelines in this area.

INFPOL 57

To promote best practice in siting and design in relation to the erection of communication antennae, having regard to 'Guidance on the potential location of overground telecommunications infrastructure on public roads', (Dept of Communications, Energy & Natural Resources, 2015).

INF POL 58

To encourage and facilitate pre-planning discussions with service providers and operators prior to the submission of planning applications.

INF POL 59

To encourage co-location of antennae on existing support structures and to require documentary evidence as to the non-availability of this option is proposals for new structures. The shared use of existing structures will be required where the numbers of masts located in any single area is considered to have an excessive concentration.

INF POL 60

To assess proposals for the location of telecommunication structures in sensitive landscapes in accordance with the policies set down within the Landscape Character Assessment.

It is an objective of the Council:

INF OBJ 51

To support the delivery and implementation of the National Broadband Plan

INF OBJ 52

To require that open access communications cables and associated infrastructure are undergrounded in urban areas with particular reference to Architectural Conservation Areas in order to protect the visual amenities of streetscapes. Proposals for overground cables located within Architectural Conservation Areas will be subject to outcome of development management process.

INF OBJ 53

To secure high-quality of design of masts, towers and antennae and other such infrastructure in the interests of visual amenity and the protection of sensitive landscapes, subject to radio and engineering parameters.

6.17 Waste Management

The Eastern Midlands Regional Waste Management Plan 2015-2021 defines waste as "any substance or object which the holder discards, intends to discard or is required to discard, by the Waste Framework Directive (2008/98/EC)". Maintaining economic progress in the County is contingent on a good environment and the availability of necessary waste management facilities. Waste management policy is predicated on the EU Waste Hierarchy of prevention, preparing for reuse, recycling, energy recovery and sustainable disposal.

Waste management involves measures to protect the environment and human health by preventing or reducing the adverse impacts of the generation and management of waste.

6.17.1 Statutory Context

Waste Framework Directive-European Commission- 2008/98/EC

This Directive incorporates the Polluter Pays Principle along with the waste hierarchy. Article 4 of the Directive outlines the following "Member states shall take the necessary measures to ensure that waste is recovered or disposed of without endangering human health and without processes or methods which could harm the environment, and in particular avoiding the following negative impacts:

- risk to water, soil, plants or animals;
- causing nuisance through noise or odours; and
- adversely affecting the countryside or places of special interest"

The Directive (2008/98/EC) sets out measures to progressively divert and reduce the amount of biodegradable municipal waste sent to landfill by 2016. The Directive specifies the priorities for waste management as follows:

- Prevention
- Preparing for Re-Use
- Recycling
- Other Recovery (e.g. Energy Recovery)
- Disposal

Waste Management Acts-Environmental Protection Agency- 1996-2013
These Acts contain a number of key legal obligations, including requirements for waste management planning, waste collection and movement, the authorisation of waste facilities, measures to reduce the production of waste and/or promote its recovery.

EC (Waste Directive) Regulations 2011 (SI NO 126 of 2011), EC Directive 2008/98/EC
These Regulations set a 70% target for the re-use, recycling and recovery of man-made construction and demolition waste and was transposed into Irish Law in 2011. The EPA Report-"Progress towards EU waste targets" published in August 2017 states that Ireland is on track to achieve this target by December 2020.

European Union (Household food waste and bio-waste) Regulations 2015
These Regulations increase the amount of food waste to be recovered through the production of energy, compost and digestate, thereby creating opportunities for added jobs and value. The Regulations will also facilitate the achievement of the targets set out in the Landfill Directive (Directive 99/31/EC) for the diversion of biodegradable municipal waste from landfill sites, by directing source-segregated household food waste to composting and to other forms of treatment.

6.17.2 Policy Context

A Resource Opportunity Waste Management Policy in Ireland, Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government 2012
This document sets out the measures through which Ireland will make further progress to become a recycling society, placing a focus on resource efficiency and seeking the elimination of land filling of municipal waste. It is based on five key principles, prevention, preparing for reuse, recycling, recovery and disposal.

The Eastern Midlands Region Waste Management Plan-Eastern Midlands Regional Waste Management Office- 2015 -2021
The overall vision of the Regional Waste Management Plan is that waste should be seen as a valuable material resource. The Plan supports a move towards achieving a circular economy which is essential if the region is to make better use of resources and become more resource efficient. The move to a circular economy replacing the outdated industrial model of 'take-make-consume – dispose', is essential to deliver the resource efficiency ambition of the Europe 2020 Strategy. The Plan contains three targets:

- Reduction of 1% per annum in the quantity of household waste generated over the period of the Eastern Midlands Regional Waste Plan;
- Prepare for a reuse and recycling rate of 50% of Municipal waste by 2020;
- Reduce to 0% the direct disposal of residual municipal waste to landfill from 2016 onwards in favour of higher value pre-treatment processes and indigenous recovery practices.

By virtue of the Waste Management Acts, 1996-2013, the objectives of the Waste Management Plan are deemed to be included in the Development Plan. Where the objectives of the Development Plan and the Waste Management Plan are in conflict, the objectives in the Waste Management Plan shall prevail. The adoption of the Waste Management Plan is an executive function.

Draft Waste Facility Siting Guidelines-Southern Region Waste Management Office-2016
The 2015-2021 Regional Waste Management Plan included the policy action G.3.1 which required the preparation of Waste Facility Siting Guidelines to advise on the siting of waste management infrastructure thus protecting the environment, human health and advising what represents a sustainable use of selected lands.

6.17.3 Waste Infrastructure

In terms of waste infrastructure, the County is well served with a wide range of waste facilities from waste transfer stations, a Waste to Energy facility, landfill, a construction and demolition waste facility and a network of recycling facilities supported by the Council. Recycling is a key component of sustainable waste management. Navan, Trim, Kells and Dunboyne are served by recycling centres. The remainder of the County is served by a network of bring banks which accept a broad diversity of materials. The Waste Management Plan notes that finding suitable locations for bring banks is a challenging task for all Local Authorities. The Council will continue to promote awareness of and promote an increase in the amount of waste that is re-used and recycled to reflect the objectives of the waste hierarchy.

6.17.3.1 Circular Economy

Waste is defined as any item that is discarded. The circular economy is one where materials remain in use at their highest value for the longest period of time and are then up cycled/recycled or re-used, thereby minimising the volume of residual waste.

6.17.3.2 Prevention and Minimisation

In line with the principles of sustainable development, the Council will continue to promote a waste prevention and minimisation programme to target all aspects of waste in the County, focusing on both commercial and domestic waste producers. It is considered that raising the awareness of citizens and businesses owners with regard to their responsibilities as producers of waste is essential.

6.17.3.3 Reuse

The Council will promote an increase in the amount of waste reused and recycled consistent with the current Eastern Midlands Region Waste Management Plan. Re-use, can contribute to the community and local economy.

6.17.3.4 Recycling

Ireland has made considerable progress in recent times in its recycling performance which ultimately is a reflection of growing awareness among the public.

6.17.3.5 Recovery

The Indaver Waste to Energy facility (WtE) in Duleek is a privately owned recovery facility with capacity beyond the lifetime of this Plan.

6.17.3.6 Disposal

The Knockharley regional landfill, near Kentstown, accessed off the N2 National Primary Route is a privately operated landfill facility which has capacity beyond the lifetime of this Plan. It is recognised that a contingency capacity for landfill is required to facilitate emergency situations for example, the management of waste from a foot and mouth disease outbreak.

6.17.3.7 Construction and Demolition Waste

The Eastern Midlands Region Waste Management Plan 2015-2021 states that Construction and Demolition Waste (C&D) consists of all wastes that arise from C&D activities which include excavated soil from contaminated sites, however the definition is one that is being continuously subjected to change. The Regional Waste Management Plan recognises that at many of these sites it is deposition rather than improvement that is the primary activity and this can have complications for habitats. Given the move away from landfill which is a significant outlet for C&D waste, alternative recovery options will be required to facilitate C&D Waste in the future years. The EC (Waste Directive) Regulations 2011, set a 70% target for the re-use, recycling and recovery of man-made C&D waste in Ireland by 2020. It is imperative that capacity to manage C & D Waste is made available and this is a requisite to facilitate key economic development in the County. In addition, an outlet is required for uncontaminated, non-hazardous soils, which are subject to export at present.

6.17.3.8 Hazardous Waste

Hazardous waste is generated by every sector of society and is for the most part managed by authorised operators. The Environmental Protection Agency has prepared a revised National Hazardous Waste Management Plan 2014-2020. It takes into account progress that has been made since the previous plan and the waste policy and legislative changes that have also occurred and includes an objective regarding self-sufficiency in managing hazardous waste.

6.18 Litter Management

Litter is an environmental problem that significantly detracts from the visual appearance of both urban and rural areas. The Council recognises the importance of protecting the County from indiscriminate dumping and bill posting and of keeping the environment free from litter. Each Local Authority is obliged to prepare a Litter Management Plan for its area. The Litter Management Plan

2019-2021 was published in Q3 of 2019. It sets out the Council's objectives to prevent and control litter as well as measures to raise public awareness of the issue. Local Authorities are responsible for the prevention and control of litter and they have the power to take enforcement action against individuals who break these laws. Gardai also have the power to issue on-the-spot fines for litter offences.

The Tidy Towns is a well-established environmental competition in Ireland and is organised by the Department to Environment, Climate and Communications. The nature of the competition has evolved over time from being largely an anti-litter competition to being a much more broad ranging environmental competition with categories including inter alia Community involvement and planning, built environment and streetscape, landscaping and open spaces, bio-diversity, litter control, waste management, streets and residential areas, approach roads and back areas.

There are a significant number of other local voluntary community groups established throughout the County who are also very actively involved in maintaining a high standard of maintenance within our local communities outside of the formal Tidy Towns process. These groups receive significant support from the Council in terms of the supply of equipment.

6.19 Air Pollution

Air pollution has been acknowledged as the main environmental cause of premature death in Europe. Poor air quality also adversely impacts on the economy with increased healthcare costs and lost working days.

The Council's role in relation to air quality is to promote a reduction in air pollution, through the implementation of relevant legislation and through the provision of advice and guidance on best practice. Air pollution challenges include:

- Transport emissions, primarily from road transport (cars, buses and HGV's) rail, air and shipping;
- Industrial and agricultural emissions;
- Emissions from domestic burning of fossil fuels;
- Emissions from fire-house fires, gorse fires, bog land fires etc. Which may result in localised poor air quality;

Ireland's first National Clean Air Strategy[14] is being developed and submissions were invited on the draft Strategy during 2018. "This Strategy will provide the framework for a set of cross-Government policies and actions to reduce harmful emissions and improve air quality and public health to meet current and future EU and international obligations".

Primary responsibility for monitoring air quality, as well as the nature and extent of emissions is assigned to the EPA. Under the Air Pollution Act 1987, primary responsibility for addressing local instances of air pollution is assigned to local authorities.

Results of air quality monitoring can be viewed on the EPA website15. The EPA has introduced the National Ambient Air Quality programme (AAMP) which will see a greater number of monitoring locations established.
Good air quality and progress in the climate change area go hand in hand. The Paris Climate Change agreement informs and promotes positive improvements in this area.

6.20 Noise Pollution

Noise is defined as being "so loud, so continuous, so repeated, of such pitch or duration or occurring at such times that it gives a person reasonable cause for annoyance".16
Environmental noise means unwanted or harmful outdoor sound created by human activities, including noise emitted by means of transport, road rail and air traffic and from sites of industrial activity. It is among the most frequent sources of complaint regarding environmental issues in Ireland and throughout Europe, especially in densely populated urban areas and residential areas.

The EU Environmental Noise Directive requires that Local authorities prepare Strategic Noise Maps and action plans, which set out mitigation proposals to reduce the negative impacts caused by noise. These plans will identify quiet areas which are deemed to have positive health effects upon our population.

The Council prepared a Noise Action Plan (2018) in accordance with the requirements of the Environmental Noise Regulations (SI 140 2006). The Noise Action Plan (is largely transport based) proposes strategic long-term management of environmental noise from transport systems i.e. traffic noise.

Parts of the County are located within the noise zones B & C and the outer public safety zone for Dublin Airport and planning restrictions are in place for these zones. Any planning applications for development in these zones will be referred to the Dublin Airport Authority for comment in order to minimise any potential adverse impacts.17

6.21 Light Pollution

Artificial light is necessary for the operation of industry, recreational amenities and for illumination within our homes, however inappropriate or excessive light can be especially harmful to wildlife and human health, due to sleep patterns being disrupted. With increased development comes increased light pollution and therefore measures to minimise the harmful impacts of light pollution must be introduced to ensure that new developments are appropriately lit and that environmentally sensitive areas are protected.

It is the policy of the Council:

INF POL 61

To facilitate the implementation of National Waste Legislation, National and Regional Waste Management Policy and the circular economy.

INF POL 62

To encourage and support the provision of a separate collection of waste throughout the County in accordance with the requirements of the Waste Management (Household Food Waste) Regulations 2009, the Waste Framework Directive Regulations, 2011, the Waste Management (Commercial Food Waste) Regulations 2015 and other relevant legislation to meet the requirements of the Regional Waste Management Plan.

INF POL 63

To encourage the development of waste infrastructure and associated developments in appropriate locations, as deemed necessary in accordance with the requirements of the current Eastern Midlands Region Waste Management Plan and the Draft Waste Facility Siting Guidelines 2016 (when finalised) or any subsequent replacement guidelines.

INF POL 64

To encourage and support the expansion and improvement of a three-bin system (mixed dry recyclables, organic waste and residual waste) in order to increase the quantity and quality of materials collected for recycling in conjunction with relevant stakeholders.

INF POL 65

To adopt the provisions of the waste management hierarchy and implement policy in relation to the County's requirements under the current or any subsequent Waste Management Plan. All prospective developments in the County shall take account of the provisions of the regional waste management plan and adhere to the requirements of the Plan. Account shall also be taken of the proximity principle and the inter-regional movement of waste.

INF POL 66

To ensure that hazardous waste is addressed through an integrated approach of prevention, collection, and recycling and encourage the development of industry-led producer responsibility schemes for key waste streams.

INF POL 67

To continue to promote and encourage education and awareness on all issues associated with waste management, at school, household, enterprise and community level.

INF POL 68

To promote and facilitate communities to become involved in environmental awareness activities and community-based recycling initiatives or environmental management initiatives that will lead to local sustainable waste management practices.

INF POL 69

To require the provision of bring banks, bottle banks or other appropriate recycling facilities as part of the overall development in the case of new or extended commercial, employment, educational, recreational facilities and managed residential developments[18].

INF POL 70

To encourage the recycling of construction and demolition waste and the reuse of aggregate and other materials in future construction projects.

It is an objective of the Council:

INF OBJ 54

To facilitate the transition from a waste management economy to a green circular economy to enhance employment opportunities and increase the value recovery and recirculation of resources.

INF OBJ 55

To facilitate the provision of appropriate waste recovery and disposal facilities in accordance with the principles set out in the appropriate Waste Management Plan applicable from time to time made in accordance with the Waste Management Act 1996 (as amended).

INF OBJ 56

To support developments necessary to manage food waste in accordance with the requirements of the current Waste Management (Food Waste) Regulations and the regional Waste Management Plan.

INF OBJ 57

To continue to expand environmental awareness initiatives designed to create increased public awareness of waste prevention, minimisation, reuse and resource efficiency.

INF OBJ 58

To co-operate with the Department to Environment, Climate and Communications, the Environmental Protection Agency and other relevant stakeholders in implementing proposals which discourage or illegal or improper disposal of waste and promote the diversion of recyclable items from the waste streams including &“bottle return and refund” schemes.

INF OBJ 59

To seek to ensure, in cooperation with relevant authorities, that waste management facilities are appropriately managed and monitored according to best practice to maximise efficiencies to protect human health and the natural environment.

INF OBJ 60

To promote and facilitate high-quality sustainable waste recovery and disposal infrastructure/technology including composting (anaerobic digester) plants for managing organic solid waste, at appropriate locations, with the County subject to the protection of the amenities of the surrounding environment including European Sites, and in keeping with the EU waste hierarchy.

INF OBJ 61

To identify suitable sites for additional recycling centres and bring bank facilities subject to the availability of appropriate funding and infrastructure, through the public or private sector, as appropriate.

INF OBJ 62

To seek the effective engagement of local communities in the County to promote their role in recycling waste and tackling the problem of illegal dumping within the County through liaison with the Environmental Awareness Officer.

INF OBJ 63

To encourage community/voluntary groups to establish additional waste services or facilities (e.g. small scale facilities for recycling, reuse/repair) in their area and assist them to develop a strategy to provide such facilities for and with members of their community.

INF OBJ 64

To ensure that during the assessment of planning applications through the Development Management process that provision for household waste recycling is adequately addressed in all new residential developments.

INF OBJ 65

To liaise, work with and support Irish Water in the preparation of a National Sludge Management Plan and seek to implement the recommendations of that plan.

INF OBJ 66

To support the development of infrastructure necessary to meet the objectives of the Meath's Sludge Management Plan having regard to the Waste Facility Siting Guidelines (when adopted).

INF OBJ 67

To require developers to prepare construction and demolition waste management plans for new construction projects over certain thresholds which shall meet the relevant recycling/recovery targets for such waste in accordance with the national legislation and national and regional waste management policy.

INF OBJ 68

To support the development of facilities to cater for commercial waste not provided for within the kerbside collection system such as the WEEE, C & D type waste and hazardous materials in accordance with the requirements of the Eastern Midlands Regional Waste Management Plan.

INF OBJ 69

To continue to reduce incidents of littering through the continued implementation and updating of the Councils Litter Management Plan.

INF OBJ 70

To continue to support and work with local and Tidy Towns initiatives in the maintenance and conservation of our local urban and rural communities throughout the County.

INF OBJ 71

To continue to monitor air and noise quality results submitted from selected locations throughout the County in co-operation with the Health Service Executive and the Environmental Protection Agency.

INF OBJ 72

To support the collation or air quality and greenhouse gas monitoring data in support of a regional air quality and greenhouse gas emission inventory.

INF OBJ 73

To support and facilitate the preparation of strategic noise maps and action plans, in conjunction with EMRA, that support proactive measures to avoid, mitigate and minimise noise, in all instances where it is likely to have adverse impacts.

INF OBJ 74

To require that outdoor lighting proposals minimise the harmful effects of light pollution and to ensure that new street lighting is appropriate to a particular location and that environmentally sensitive areas are protected from inappropriate forms of illumination.

1- Service Level Agreement in place until 2025.

2- /www.cfram.ie/home/eu-directive/

3- See also Chapter 9, Rural Development

4- A swale is a depressed land form, a gradual depression typically located in open spaces. The use of the swale is to carry or hold flood waters.

5- http://www.wfdireland.ie/

6- http://watersandcommunities.ie/about/

7- http://www.epa.ie/water/wm/rivers/

8- An Taisce with support from Department of Climate Change, Community and Environment, Fáilte Ireland and Coca Cola

9- The Groundwater Protection Scheme is available at www.gsi.ie.

10- Quality Housing for Sustainable Communities' which promotes high standards in design and environmental performance

11- The review has been conducted by the Minister for Environment, Climate and Communications in conjunction with the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government and relevant stakeholders.

13- Circular Letter PL 07/12 Telecommunications Antennae and Support Structures Guidelines, Department of Environment, Community and Local Government, October 2012.

14- www.dccae.gov.ie/documents/CleanAirStrategy

15- www.epa.ie/air/quality/monitor

16- Source Department to Environment, Climate and Communications website.

17- See Section 5.11 Aviation Sector and map 11.1 in Vol 4 of the Plan

18- See Section 11.8 Development Management Standards re Commercial Development

7.1 Introduction

The creation of healthy, socially inclusive communities is a cross cutting theme of the Development Plan. The County faces a number of challenges in particular the unsustainable levels of out bound commuting which is having significant impacts on community building and volunteerism. The spatial implementation of the Meath Economic Strategy focuses on the creation of 'live work' communities by promoting economic development in tandem with an inclusive and diverse community structure. This will allow people not just to live in the County, but also to invest in, work in and learn in Meath. Only then will citizens be able to enjoy the benefits of the rich cultural and natural environment of the County. A community's quality of life does not solely depend on housing, employment and infrastructure support, but also on social and personal enhancement.

Understanding the County's demographic structure is central to preparing a strategy which will address future community needs. The average age in the County in 2016 was 35.2 years (33.8 in 2011) in comparison to 37.4 for the State (36.1 in 2011). 83.4% of the population in the County is below the age of 65. This compares with an average of 79.6% for the State. Child dependency[1] in the County is the highest in the State with 39% of the population under the age of 14 in comparison to an average of 32.3% for the State. Old dependency[2] in the County increased from 13.5% in 2011 to 16.6% in 2016. However this remains substantially below the figure for the State, which stood at 20.4%.

In summary the age profile of the County's population is young when compared with the state, therefore generating immediate requirements for additional childcare, educational facilities, playgrounds etc. In line with national population trends the County's population is ageing which will require specific responses to ensure we deliver age friendly communities into the future. This response will influence design of housing, delivery of transport and community facilities etc.

7.2 Statutory Context

Section 10(2) of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, sets out a list of mandatory objectives to be included in a Development Plan. A number of these objectives relate to social infrastructure, either directly or indirectly.

The Local Government Reform Act, 2014 gives legislative effect to the proposals contained in the Government's document 'Putting People First, Action Programme for Local Government' 2012 and provides for a range of changes to the organisation and work of Local Authorities. The Local Government Reform Act recognises the importance of economic and community integration and includes a requirement for Councils to prepare a Local Economic and Community Plan, (LECP) every six years.

7.3 Policy Context

In working towards establishing viable and sustainable communities, it is important to ensure that the Plan is underpinned by policies and proposals that are consistent with overarching national guidance and policies in respect of social and community development.

National Planning Framework, (NPF)
The NPF in Chapter 6 'People, Homes and Communities' outlines how location, place and accessibility influence the quality of life that people enjoy.

Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES)
The RSES addresses a wide range of issues including education, health, sports and community facilities. The RSES aims to address mis-alignment in the Region across a range of factors including school provision, facilities and child-friendly amenities. RPO 9.16: In areas where significant new housing

Relevant additional national guidance and policies to be considered are as follows:

- Putting People First Action Programme for Effective Local Government, 2012, Dept. of Environment, Community and Local Government.
- National Disability Strategy Implementation Plan 2013-2015, National Disability Strategy Implementation Group.
- National Women's Strategy 2007-2016, Department of Justice and Equality.
- Building for Everyone: A Universal Design Approach, 2012, National Disability Authority.
- Get Ireland Active, National Physical Activity Plan for Ireland, 2016.
- Charter for Rural Ireland, 2016 Department of Environment, Community and Local Government.
- Our Communities: A Framework Policy for Local and Community Development in Ireland, 2015, Department of Environment, Community and Local Government.

This chapter reflects the overarching principles of the aforementioned national policy documents.

7.4 Local Community Development Committees and Local Economic and Community Plans

The Local Government Reform Act 2014 required the establishment of Local Community Development Committees (LCDC's) within all Local Authorities. The Meath Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) was established in 2014 to develop, coordinate and implement a coherent and integrated approach to local and community development. County and City Development Boards (CDBs) were abolished in June 2014 under the 2014 Act. Local and community development activity previously undertaken by the Meath County Development Board generally now comes within the remit of the LCDC. One of the primary functions of the LCDCs is to develop, implement and monitor a six-year Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) for the Local Authority administrative area. Central to the Meath LECP 2016-2021 is the understanding that economic, local and community development is mutually supportive in building sustainable communities with strong local economies. The purpose of the LECP is therefore to identify objectives and implement actions to strengthen and develop both the economic and community dimensions of the County over a six year period.

The Plan is based on and seeks to progress the following values:

- Community;
- Community development;
- Equality and Human Rights;
- Sustainability;
- Sense of Place;
- Partnership.

The Development Plan and the Local Economic and Community Plan effectively operate along parallel and supportive lines. The LECP provides a supporting framework for economic and local community development of Meath, whereas the County Development Plan provides an overarching strategy and statutory policy support for the proper planning and sustainable development of the County at a spatial level. Consequently the statutory policies and objectives of the County Development Plan must be complementary to and consistent with the high level goals and objectives of the LECP.

The LECP sets out five goals:

- To promote and secure the wellbeing of all people and communities in the County.
- To stimulate and support a dynamic competitive economy to best meet the needs and aspirations of the people and communities in the County.
- To build and enable the resilience of all people and communities in the County.
- To stimulate and empower a flourishing for all people and communities in the County.
- To develop and implement ongoing renewal in public sector bodies that addresses how they fulfil their mandates and work with other stakeholders.

The foregoing goals are reflected in the policies and objectives of this chapter. The LECP is now required to be reviewed to ensure compliance with the adopted RSES

7.4.1 Joint Policing Committees

The Garda Síochána Act, 2005 established Joint Policing Committees (JPCS), whose function is 'To serve as a forum for consultations, discussions and recommendations on matters affecting the policing of the Local Authority's administrative area'.

JPCs are a successful example of how a collaborative approach between Local authorities, An Garda Síochána and the community & voluntary sector can support policing and enhance community safety.

Key functions of the JPC, as cited in section 36(2) of the Garda Síochána Act are as follows:

(a) Keep under review:

(i) The levels and patterns of crime, disorder and anti social behaviour in that area (including the patterns and levels of misuse of alcohol and drugs), and

(ii) The factors underlying and contributing to the levels of crime, disorder and anti social behaviour in the area.

JPCs are required to approach their work strategically, so as to ensure a coordinated and focused approach in tackling crime, disorder and anti social behaviour within their administrative areas. Accordingly, JPC s must develop a six year strategic plan, and to report on their implementation in Annual Reports to the Policing Authority. The Meath JPC is implementing the Joint Policing Committee Strategy 2015-2020.

7.5 Vision for Community Building

To enable our communities to have sufficient resources to support economic, social and environmental wellbeing, the creativity to flourish, and the strength to be resilient. This will in turn support the creation of a vibrant, sustainable, and competitive economy, based on shared goals and collaboration between statutory, community, voluntary, environmental and private sectors.

7.6 Social Inclusion

One of the overall aims of the Plan is the promotion of social inclusion. Social inclusion can be defined in many different ways but one of the most common understandings is that, through acting inclusively, society can ensure that everyone has an equal opportunity to participate in, and contribute to, community life – regardless of their age, ability, nationality, religion or any of the many other characteristics which makes society diverse. It is, therefore, important that our living, working and leisure environments are designed and maintained in a manner that is accessible to all.

At a local level the Council, through its Social Inclusion Activation Programme (SICAP) 2018-2022 and considered policies, encourages and proactively promotes an ethos of social inclusion.

The Development Plan policies and objectives which advocate the development of sustainable communities with good quality public realm, access to housing, community facilities and public transport are central to the promotion of social inclusion in the County. The Plan also seeks to promote equality of opportunity and protection of human rights enshrined in the UN charter. The Council is fully committed to developing a more socially inclusive society and promoting participation and access for all.

7.6.1 Community Participation

The community and voluntary sector has always played a considerable and positive role in promoting community development in the County. Public Participation Networks (PPN) have been introduced throughout Ireland as part of Local Government reform. Meath PPN is the link through which the Council connects to and engages with the community, voluntary, social inclusion and environmental sectors Countywide, for consultation and information sharing. The PPN enables the public to take an active role in influencing plans and policies of the Council. Membership of the PPN is open to all community and voluntary groups in the County. Currently there are over 550 member groups from the community and voluntary, social inclusion and environmental sectors across the County. (2017)

The Meath LECP, the NPF and RSES encourage community participation and endeavour to equip local communities with the necessary tools and resources to problem solve, address challenges and flourish.

The Pride of Place Initiative is one example of active community participation in the County whereby communities' work in partnership with the Council to encourage best practice, innovation and leadership in providing vibrant sustainable communities that improve the quality of life for all through environmental improvements to towns and villages.

7.6.2 Diverse and Inclusive Communities

There are several groups considered to have specific planning and design needs. These include children, young people, and people with a disability or illness, lone parent young families, older people, travellers and members of ethnic minority groups. It is a policy of the Council to recognise that people with special needs have access to and enjoy an appropriate living environment and the Council supports the provision of facilities for people with special needs.

7.6.2.1 Children and Young People

The birth rate in the County declined from 3,527 in the 2011 Census to 2,805 in 2016. There was a 10.1% reduction in the pre-school population in the same period.[3] However, the County experienced a 14.4% increase in the primary school population to 27,198 persons, the second highest in the Country. There was a significant increase of 18.1 % in the secondary school population in the County, also the second highest in the Country. The County, with an average of 1.51 children per family, was also recorded as having the highest average number of children per family in the Country in 2016. These figures will inform decision-making on present and future needs for facilities such as childcare facilities, play areas, sports facilities, schools, health centres etc in the County.

According to the 2016 Census commuting times rose in every County with Meath having one of the longest average commute times nationally, of almost 35 minutes. One in five parents in the County of 0-4 year-old child had a commute of over one hour. This has a major impact on quality of life, community participation, volunteerism and community building in the County.

Meath Children and Young Peoples Services Committee (CYPSC) bring together the main statutory, community and voluntary providers of services to children and young people in the County. They provide a forum for joint planning and co-ordination of activities to ensure that children, young people and their families receive improved and accessible services. The Council is a member of the CYPSC committee and works closely with other agencies to implement actions that respond to children and young people's needs.

Meath Comhairle na nÓg provides a forum for young people (aged between 12-18) in the County to discuss local and national issues of relevance to them. Comhairle na nÓg is recognized as the

official structure for participation by young people in the development of policies and services. Meath Comhairle na nÓg is represented on a number of boards locally and at Dáil na nÓg nationally and is under the direction of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs.

7.6.2.2 Older People

While the population of Meath increased by 12.9% from 195,044 in 2016 to 220,296 in 2022, there was a 30% increase in the persons aged 65 and over, one of the largest increases in the country. The changing demographics and the ageing of the County's population profile pose challenges for the development of responsive social policies. The 'Age Friendly Ireland' Initiative is a key policy document that provides leadership and guidance in identifying the needs and opportunities of an ageing population and is now embedded within the local government system. Meath County Council hosts the National Age Friendly Ireland Shared Service Centre on behalf of all local authorities. It supports and provides technical guidance to the 31 local authority-led, multi-agency Age Friendly City and County Programmes and drives policy change in the provision of services to an aging population. The Council is committed to this initiative and the current Meath Age Friendly County Strategy 2023-2028 sets out solution focussed commitments for improvement to 8 specific themes to benefit older people, such as outdoor spaces and public buildings, transportation, housing, respect and social inclusion, social participation, communication and information, civic participation and employment and community support and health services. The strategy provides an overall response to the issues being experienced by this group across the County.

Engagement with the Age Friendly initiative means that Meath will seek to obtain the following outcomes for its citizens:

- Be a great place to live, work and grow older.
- Ensure critical services are accessible and timely, and delivered in a cost effective and efficient manner.
- Have easily accessible public buildings, shops and services.
- Incorporate older people's views into significant decision-making processes.
- Promote a positive attitude to ageing and address negative stereotypes regarding older people.
- Create opportunities for older people to be engaged with their County socially, as employees and volunteers.

High quality public realm can create inclusive communities and age-friendly spaces. When public realm is attractive and accessible, older people, and indeed people of all ages, can enjoy more active and connected lives. Practical changes and age friendly led design thinking can help to

create environments which provide enhanced access for all. Design and maintenance in the context of public realm can make the difference between a healthy and active lifestyle, or one characterised by limited mobility and high levels of social isolation. The Council fully recognises the contribution an age friendly approach to the design of public realm can make to older people's quality of life.

Please refer to Chapter 11 Development Management Standards and Land Use Zoning Objectives for further information on public realm.

Housing is a key social policy functional area that needs to adapt in order to meet the changing needs of older people. The NPF supports national policy to assist older people to live with dignity and independence in their own homes and communities for as long as possible. In particular it highlights the need for well-designed lifetime adaptable infill and brownfield development close to existing services and facilities, supported by universal design and improved urban amenities.

It is the policy of the Council that proposals for accommodation for older people should be located in existing residential areas well served by social infrastructure and amenities such as footpath networks, public transport (where possible) and local facilities and services to allow for better care in the community, independence and access and ensure that residents are not isolated. In order to provide suitable housing for older people throughout the County, the Council will continue to work closely with other housing bodies and agencies associated with the provision of housing for older people and/or assisted living accommodation.

The National Quality Standards for Residential Care Settings for Older People in Ireland, 2009 sets standards for the provision of care facilities for older people in relation to the design and layout of the internal and external environment of care facilities.

Refer to Chapter 11 Development Management Standards and Land Use Zoning Objectives for further information.

In accordance with the requirements of National Policy Objective 30 of the NPF, which states 'Local planning, housing, transport/accessibility and leisure policies will be developed with a focus on meeting the needs and opportunities of an ageing population along with the inclusion of specific projections, supported by clear proposals in respect of ageing communities as part of the core strategy of city and county development plans, relevant information and analysis is included in Chapter 2 Core Strategy which sets out in greater detail the accommodation needs of this demographic.

7.6.2.3 People with Disabilities

People with disabilities and the mobility impaired face particular physical barriers to access and movement not only in buildings, but on footpaths, streetscapes, open spaces etc. The Council will encourage integration of accommodation within a mix of housing types providing mobility and access for people with disabilities in order to remove barriers to involvement in community and employment activities.

Furthermore, the Council will also promote the provision of 'Changing Places Facilities' in certain instances. Standard accessible toilets do not meet the needs of all people with a disability. Some people often need extra equipment and space to allow them to use toilets safely and comfortably. These needs are met by 'Changing Places' facilities. The provision of these facilities should be provided in any new build large building development where the public have access in numbers and/ or where the public might be expected to spend longer periods of time, for example, educational establishments, health facilities, civic centres, public libraries, cultural buildings, motorway services, sport and leisure facilities, including large hotels.

All proposals for development shall have regard to the provisions of the National Disability Authority's document 'Building for Everyone: A Universal Design Approach – Planning and Policy' (2012) in order to ensure that access and movement through the development is available to all users of the development.

7.6.2.4 Traveller Community

Meath's Traveller Accommodation Programme 2014-2018 assessed the need for Traveller accommodation in the County and sets out the Council's policy regarding the provision of same. According to the 2016 Census, 971 members of the Travelling Community are living in Meath. The Council will, as necessary, continue to update its accommodation programme for the Travelling Community and will promote the use of mainstream public services that are accessible, relevant and welcoming to enable the Travelling Community to integrate fully and participate in wider society.

7.6.2.5 Migration and Diversity

Meath is becoming an increasingly diverse County. According to the Census 2016, non-Irish nationals account for 10.1% of County's population in comparison to 11.6% nationally. Certain areas of the County have a more ethnic or culturally diverse population than others and service provision and community facilities in these areas should reflect the varying needs of the community.

Cultúr, a community organisation, works with ethnic minorities in the County, including immigrants, migrant workers, asylum seekers and refugees. The Cultúr Strategic Plan 2015-2018 aims to promote the empowerment, participation, self determination and rights of ethnic minorities who experience or are at risk of poverty, social exclusion or racism.

Migrant integration is a dynamic, multi-faceted and long term process aimed at mutual accommodation and acceptance by both the migrant and host populations. The process of migrant integration involves and affects migrants, Local Government institutions, and the local community. Meath and Louth County Councils are currently preparing a Joint Migrant Integration Strategy, 2019-2022 which will reflect the National Migrant Integration Strategy, National Policy Objectives and the Meath and Louth LECPs. The strategy will ensure that integration issues continue to be reflected in strategic policy documents.

The strategy focuses on a number of thematic objectives as follows:

- Employment and economic Activity;
- Education and Training;
- Active civic and civil participation;
- Social inclusion-engaging and interacting with service providers, expressing culture and identity and addressing discrimination.

7.7 Social Infrastructure

Community infrastructure is an essential part of all communities. Facilities such as community centres, sports centres, libraries and playgrounds can serve as a focal point for communities they serve, and provide venues for local sporting, cultural, community, education and social events. The Council recognises that the provision of good quality community facilities in existing and developing areas is a key element in the development of sustainable, healthy communities across the County. There are a large number of voluntary agencies and community initiatives that continue to play a central role in contributing to the delivery of a wide variety of local social infrastructure.

The Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlements Guidelines (2024) emphasise the need to integrate housing with the provision of supporting community and social infrastructure. The Guidelines acknowledge that community facilities should be located within, or close to, neighbourhood centres and be well served by public transport.

Different levels of service provision are appropriate to settlements of different sizes, it is therefore important that the Council ensures that an appropriate range of community facilities are provided in all communities, taking account of the population profile and growth targets identified in the Core Strategy.

7.7.1 Community Hubs

In designing new facilities it is essential to ensure that they are adaptable over time to meet the changing needs of the population and to provide potential for maximising their dual usage during evenings/weekends/school holidays. When considering proposals for development, the Planning Authority may take into account benefits to the public in the form of community facilities. Where new social and community facilities are being retrofitted into established neighbourhoods, the issue of potential adverse impacts on residential amenity and increased pressures on limited on-

street car parking spaces will be addressed in a sensitive manner. The Council will also support improvements to and/or redevelopment of existing community facilities throughout the County as appropriate. All such proposals should have regard to the provisions set out above and the guidance provided within Chapter 11 Development Management Standards and Land Use Zoning Objectives.

7.7.2 Social Infrastructure Assessments

As a result of the rapid population growth experienced in County Meath in recent decades, the provision of facilities which contribute to community building is challenging. The Healthy Meath Strategy[4] 2019-2021 seeks to ensure that all citizens have good physical and mental health. Availability of suitable facilities is a part of this overall strategy. It is essential that in those areas identified as priority areas for development in the Core Strategy sufficient and suitable community facilities are provided in tandem with new development, where possible.
Therefore, it is a requirement of the Council that planning applications for multiple developments (i.e. 50 residential units or greater) be accompanied by a Social Infrastructure Assessment (SIA) undertaken by the developer, to determine if facilities in the area are sufficient to provide for the needs of the future residents(of all age cohorts) and where deficiencies are identified, proposals will be required to either rectify the deficiency (through direct provision or development contributions) or suitably restrict or phase the development in accordance with the capacity of existing or planned services. The assessment should identify membership and non-membership facilities which allow access for all groups. Where facilities are deemed to be required, the type of facility shall be determined by the Planning Authority through the Development Management process.

Please refer to Chapter 11 Development Management Standards and Land Use Zoning Objectives for further information.

It is the policy of the Council:

SOC POL 1

To promote and facilitate the delivery of the objectives and actions set out in the Meath Local Economic and Community Plan 2016-2021. (or any subsequent replacement).

SOC POL 2

To support the provision and distribution of a range of community infrastructure facilities in accordance with the Settlement and Core Strategies to meet the needs of the County's population in conjunction with other statutory, voluntary, private sector and community groups.

SOC POL 3

To ensure that, where practicable, community, recreational and open space facilities are clustered, with the community facilities being located in local centres or combined with school facilities, as appropriate. Community facilities should be located close to or within walking distance of housing, accessible to all sectors of the community and facilitate multi-use functions through their design and layout.

SOC POL 4

To ensure the delivery of community facilities commensurate with the needs of the resident population is done in tandem with new residential developments in the interests of the proper planning and sustainabledevelopment of the area, and to assist in the delivery of such facilities.

SOC POL 5

To require, as part of all new large residential and commercial developments, and in existing developments, where appropriate, that provision is made for facilities including local/neighbourhood shops, childcare facilities, schools and recreational facilities, and to seek their provision concurrent with development.

SOC POL 6

To require that all new residential development applications of 50 units or more on zoned lands are accompanied by a Social Infrastructure Assessment (SIA) to determine if social and community facilities in the area are sufficient to provide for the needs of the future residents(of all age cohorts). This should include details regarding the following essential facilities: Playgrounds, parks and other green spaces, education, childcare, health and others such as shops, banks, post offices, community meeting rooms/centres and recreational facilities. The assessment should identify membership and non-membership facilities which allow access for all groups. Where deficiencies are identified, proposals will be required to accompany the Planning application to address the deficiency. In certain cases however, residential development under these thresholds may, at the discretion of the Planning Authority, require the submission of a SIA. (Please refer to Chapter 11 Development Management Standards for further information).

SOC POL 7

To promote and encourage social inclusion through universal access to services and facilities and to encourage the upgrade of community facilities.

SOC POL 8.

To continue to provide care facilities for older people, such as own homes (designed to meet the needs of older people), sheltered housing, day-care facilities, nursing homes and specialised care units at appropriate locations throughout the County

SOC POL 9

To provide and promote adaptability and flexibility in the design of homes and community facilities.

SOC POL 10

To require that all residential care facilities for the elderly comply with all relevant standards set out in the 'National Quality Standards for Residential Care Settings for Older People in Ireland' published by the Health Information and Quality Authority (February 2009) or the relevant standards for any subsequent national guidelines.

SOC POL 11

To support the implementation of the Meath County Age Friendly Strategy, 2017-2020 (or its replacement) in consultation with the relevant agencies and authorities.

SOC POL 12

To support the implementation of the Meath Joint Policing Strategy, 2015-2020 (or its replacement) in consultation with the relevant agencies and authorities.

SOC POL 13

To ensure that all buildings, public and open spaces, recreational and amenity areas are accessible for people with disabilities, having regard to the Building Regulations, the objectives of 'Building for Everyone' (National Disability Authority) and 'Access for the Disabled' (No. 1 to 3)(National Rehabilitation Board).

SOC POL 14

To support the implementation of the Joint Migrant Integration Strategy, 2019-2022 (or its replacement) in consultation with the relevant agencies and authorities.

It is an objective of the Council:

SOC OBJ 1

To assist in the provision of community and resource centres and youth clubs/cafes and other facilities for younger people by the identification and reservation of suitably located sites, including sites within the landbanks of the Local Authorities and by assisting in the provision of finance, where possible. A centrally located youth premises (to accommodate various youth agencies/organisations and services) should be considered, and where viable outreach support centres should also be considered.

SOC OBJ 2

To promote and assist in the provision of lifetime adaptable housing units to meet the needs of all in society taking account of climate change.

SOC OBJ3

To facilitate the development and improvement of new and existing residential and day care facilities throughout the County.

7.7.3 Education Facilities

The Economic Development Strategy for County Meath 2014-2022 acknowledges that the level of educational attainment among the County's outbound commuters exceeds that of the Country as a whole and these skillsets are one of the principle advantages the County has in terms of attracting both indigenous employment and Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). Educational attainment outside of this group is relatively low when compared with the national average. Therefore, access to good quality educational facilities for all citizens of the County is a key requirement to encourage the economy of the County to continue to grow. Educational facilities have an important role to play in sustaining our town centres and in developing sustainable and balanced communities. These facilities function as important public buildings in the County. The Department of Education is responsible for the delivery of educational facilities and services. The Council works proactively with the Department of Education on an ongoing basis to identify educational needs and the spatial and land use implications of same as they arise. Under a nationally agreed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), the Council assists in identifying and promoting sites for new primary and post-primary schools in conjunction with the Department through regular meetings and communications

There are 114 primary schools in the County (2016). The total number of students attending Meath Primary Schools in 2015-2016 was 26,320. There are 22 post primary schools in the County, catering for 14,443 pupils, (2016).

7.7.3.1 Additional Primary and Post Primary Educational Requirements

A 'Code of Practice on the Provision of Schools and the Planning System', prepared jointly by the DoEHLG and the Department of Education and Science in 2008, provides guidelines for the forecasting of future planning for schools nationally.

The Department of Education has identified that the following areas are likely to require additional school facilities/ reservation of sites over the plan period:

- A new primary school in Ashbourne, Navan, Dunboyne, Dunshaughlin, Ratoath,Trim and Kilcock Environs.
- A new post primary school in Drogheda Environs, Ashbourne, Navan, Dunboyne, Enfield, Trim and Ratoath.
- A new third level (PLC) facility for Dunboyne.

In addition to the above locations, the Plan makes provision for future educational facilities through the identification and reservation of potential new sites/ sites to accommodate the potential future expansion /relocation of existing facilities. In the identification of sites, consideration needs to be given both to the co-location of childcare provision and the potential use of school facilities by the wider community outside of school hours and during school holidays. Future school provision, within new growth areas specifically, will be planned and implemented in tandem with residential development. The age profile of the County is of particular relevance and it is likely that additional schools provision will be required over the plan period.

In addition to new school development, the Council will support the appropriate development and/or redevelopment of existing schools within the County that will enhance existing facilities, including sports facilities, on site. All planning applications received for school developments should have regard to any requirements set out by the Department of Education and standard planning criteria (Refer also to Chapter 11 Development Management Standards).

While the reservation of sites for educational use does not in itself guarantee the timely provision of necessary educational facilities, the Council will continue to liaise with the Department of Education, the Louth Meath Education and Training Board (LMETB) and other stakeholders to assist, where possible, in the development of suitable educational facilities.

7.7.3.2 Third Level Education and Further Education

The Council recognises the important role of higher education in providing for the economic and social wellbeing of the County's population. Great effort has been made, on the part of the Council, and various other organisations within the County to develop third level initiatives. The LMETB promote Adult Learning Services, Community Education, Back to Education Initiative, Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme and Adult Guidance. In addition, Meath Local Enterprise Office offers business information and advice, business skills training and mentoring support as well as other skills and training options to support businesses in the County.

The only third level college operating in the County at present is located in Dunboyne. The college is enjoying great success and as a result has outgrown its current premises. A site to accommodate the college is required. The development of further linkages between new and existing employers with the College of Further Education will add to the attractiveness of the area for investors due to the availability of potential future employees with the necessary skills locally.

It is the policy of the Council:

SOC POL 15

To facilitate the development of preschool, primary, post primary, third level, outreach, research, adult and further educational facilities to meet the educational needs of the citizens of the County.

SOC POL 16

To ensure the provision of preschool, primary and post primary education facilities in conjunction with the planning and development of residential areas, maximises opportunities for use of walking, cycling and use of public transport.

SOC POL 17

To ensure that adequate lands and services are zoned and reserved to cater for the establishment, improvement or expansion of all educational facilities in the County. The Council also supports the concept of multi-campus educational facilities.

SOC POL 18

To continue to support and promote existing schools serving communities in town and village centres.

SOC POL 19

To encourage, support and develop opportunities to open up schools to wider community usage in conjunction with the Department of Education and other stakeholders.

It is an objective of the Council:

SOC OBJ 4

To facilitate the Department of Education, LMETB, other statutory and non-statutory agencies in the necessary provision of preschool, primary, post primary and third level educational facilities throughout the County by reserving lands for such uses.

7.7.3.3 Childcare Facilities

The provision of childcare facilities is recognised as a key piece of social infrastructure required to enable people to participate in accessing employment, education and social networks. There continues to be a growth in demand for childcare services and the provision of good quality and affordable services close to local communities is supported by the Development Plan.

The Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme provides early childhood care and education for children of pre-school age. All children are entitled to 2 full academic years or 76 weeks from September 2018 under this scheme. The recent addition of a second ECCE scheme year has increased demand for pre-school services. There are 5,864 ECCE registered children (free preschool places) in County. (2017). Areas with the highest demand include Ashbourne, East Meath and Trim. Meath County Childcare Committee assists in the development and coordination of preschool services in the County. 89% of childcare facilities in the County are privately owned and 11% are community based services which are non-profit and run by voluntary management committees. Community based services have 526 children registered under the Community Childcare Subvention Scheme.

The Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government's produced Planning Guidelines on Childcare Facilities in 2001 which set out guidance on policies and objectives to be included in the Development Plan in respect of childcare provision. These guidelines identify appropriate locations for childcare facilities including in the vicinity of concentrations of work places, of schools, of neighbourhood, district and town centres and adjacent to public transport corridors, park-and-ride facilities, pedestrian routes and dedicated cycle ways. The Guidelines advocate a more pro-active role by Planning Authorities in the promotion of increased childcare provision while at the same time protecting amenities. New childcare facilities, whether in existing or developing areas, should not create a nuisance for the existing and future residents. In particular, set down/pickup areas, parking places and play areas are key considerations when planning new or extending existing childcare facilities. The Council will continue to be proactive in promoting and sustaining childcare facilities in the County. Detailed requirements and standards with childcare development projects are set out in Chapter 11 Development Management Standards.

It is the policy of the Council:

SOC POL 20

To encourage, promote and facilitate the provision of quality affordable childcare facilities in accordance with national policy and relevant guidelines and in consultation with Meath County Childcare Committee.

SOC POL 21

To support the provision of childcare facilities of an appropriate type and scale at the following locations:

- Areas of concentrated employment and business parks;
- Neighbourhood centres;

- Large retail developments;
- Schools or major educational facilities;
- Adjacent to public transport nodes;
- Villages and Rural Nodes; and
- Within new and existing residential developments.

SOC POL 22

To permit childcare facilities in existing residential areas provided that they do not have a significant negative impact on the character or amenities of an area, particularly with regard to car parking, traffic generation and noise disturbance.

SOC POL 23

To promote childcare facilities, of appropriate size and scale, in villages and rural nodes, and/or adjacent to community and educational facilities provided:

- the proposed development will not have a significant impact on the character or amenities of an area, particularly with regard to car parking, traffic generation and noise disturbance;
- the proposed development satisfies environmental standards;
- the proposed development addresses the needs of the community.

Where feasible facilities will generally be required to locate within community/educational campuses, where purpose built childcare facilities are being provided.

7.7.4 Healthcare Facilities

The Planning Authority has a significant role in supporting suitable healthcare provision through ensuring that there are sufficient lands reserved in the Development Plan to accommodate the development of adequate healthcare facilities for the population of an area.

Healthcare and medical facilities are provided by a range of public, private and voluntary agencies. The Health Service Executive (HSE) is the primary organisation responsible for the delivery of health care and personal social services to the people of Meath. Our Lady's Hospital in Navan is an acute hospital for the north-east region whilst St. Joseph's Hospital in Trim is a district facility. The residents of the County also have access to hospitals in the surrounding counties – Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital in Drogheda, the Midland Regional Hospital in Mullingar, Cavan General Hospital, James Connolly Hospital, Blanchardstown etc.

The HSE provides disability services and services for older people, which include daycare and residential facilities. Child Care services include child protection, fostering and long term care and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS).

The Department of Health and Children published 'The Primary Care Strategy' in 2001 which promotes a team-based approach to service provision, designed to make available a fully integrated primary care service. Primary care centres provide a mix of the following services at each centre: Psychology; Occupational Therapy; Physiotherapy; Speech and Language Therapy; Public Health Nursing; Social Work; Primary Care Counselling; Podiatry; Dietetics. Some centres also provide community Mental Health Services and Palliative Care. The centres also accommodate local G.P. Practices.

Primary Care centre locations in Meath (2018) are as follows: Kells, Trim, Summerhill, Dunshaughlin and Ashbourne. Primary Care Centres are under consideration for Navan and East Meath.

The ability of Primary Care Centres to provide local and integrated facilities, in line with the Government's Primary Care Strategy, is acknowledged and supported by the Council. The Plan seeks to locate these facilities, together with community support services, on suitably zoned lands in close proximity to new and existing residential areas to allow communities access to multi-disciplinary health care, mental health and wellbeing services in easily accessible locations throughout the County.

The Council will continue to work closely with the HSE to ensure that there is adequate land zoned to accommodate health care facilities when the requirement arises in accordance with best planning practice.

7.7.4.1 Regional Hospital

The Health Partnership Report published in 2008 identified Navan as the optimum location for the development of a Regional Hospital for the North East Region. In response, the Council engaged Planning and Environmental Consultants to examine potentially suitable sites throughout the town and to identify a suitable location for a Regional Hospital. This process identified 3 sites in the town as being potentially viable, including:

1. Nevinstown

2. Balreask Old & Limekilnhill (part)

3. Limekilnhill

The Navan Development Plan 2009 subsequently identified Nevinstown to provide for the proposed new Regional Hospital and ancillary healthcare uses. SOC OBJ 3 of that Plan states that it is an objective of Meath County Council "To investigate and reserve in consultation with the Health Service Executive a suitable site for a Regional Hospital in Navan (possible suitable locations include Nevinstown, Limekilnhill and Balreask Old & Limekilnhill (part))". The recommendations of this report are acknowledged in the 2010 Regional Planning Guidelines. The County Development Plan 2013-2019 contained the following policy: "To facilitate and support the Health Service Executive and the Department of Health in the provision of a new Regional Hospital in Navan" and

the following objective SOC OBJ 4: 'To investigate and reserve in consultation with the Health Service Executive Dublin North East Region and other statutory agencies and Navan Town Council a suitable site a for a Regional Hospital in Navan.' The RSES also includes a policy to 'support development of a regional hospital to serve the north east of the country'. The development of a regional hospital in Navan has the potential to have a very significant positive impact on the town and region's economy.
It is the policy of the Council:

SOC POL 24

To co-operate with the Health Service Executive and other statutory and voluntary agencies and the private sector in the provision of appropriate health care facilities covering the full spectrum of such care from hospitals to the provision of community based care facilities subject to proper planning considerations and the principles of sustainable development.

SOC POL 25

To encourage the integration of healthcare facilities within new and existing communities and to discourage proposals that would cause unnecessary isolation or other access difficulties, particularly for the disabled, older people and children.

SOC POL 26

To ensure that adequate lands and services are available for the improvement, establishment and expansion of health services.

SOC POL 27

To consider change of use applications from residential to health care facilities/surgeries only where the privacy and amenity of adjacent occupiers can be preserved and the proposal does not have a detrimental effect on local amenity. The full conversion of semi-detached or terraced type dwellings will not normally be permitted.

SOC POL 28

To facilitate and support the Health Service Executive and the Department of Health in the provision of a new Regional Hospital in Navan.

SOC POL 29

To support and co-operate with promoters or operators of public and private health care facilities by facilitating and encouraging the provision of improved health care facilities in appropriate locations.

SOC POL 30

To support the provision of 'one stop' primary care medical centres and GP practices at locations easily accessible to members of the wider community.

It is an objective of the Council:

SOC OBJ 5

To facilitate the Health Service Executive and the Department of Health in the provision of health centres and other health related facilities throughout the County through various initiatives including the reservation of lands for such uses.

SOC OBJ 6

To facilitate and support the Health Service Executive and the Department of Health in the provision of a Regional Hospital in Navan on a site identified at Nevinstown, or Balreask Old and Limekilnhill (part). The availability of adequate capacity in piped water services and roads infrastructure will be taken into account in the final site selection process as will environmental sensitivities including likely significant effects on European Sites (SACs and SPAs).

7.7.5 Healthy Communities

Sporting, leisure and recreational facilities are essential to promoting good health, social cohesion, a sense of community and enhancing quality of life and well being. Nationally there has been, in recent years, an increased focus on fitness, sports and recreation generally. Therefore the provision of facilities for sports and recreation to serve our growing communities has become an increasingly important planning issue. Thus, the appropriate provision of these facilities is a key issue for Development Plans.

Meath Local Sports Partnership (LSP)[5] Strategic Plan 2013-2017 aims to increase participation in sports and physical activity throughout the County and to provide more quality sports and physical activity opportunities, participation and resources available to and enjoyed by all citizens. "Healthy Ireland" is a Government initiative which seeks to improve the health and wellbeing of the citizens of Ireland. World Health Organisation priorities for a healthier world are set out in Health 2020. NPO 26 of the NPF seeks to support the objectives of public health policy including Healthy Ireland and the National Physical Activity Plan, through integrating such policies, where appropriate and at the applicable scale, with planning policy.

The Healthy Meath Strategy[6] 2019-2021 is currently being prepared. The vision of this strategy is for a Healthy County where everyone can enjoy a good standard of physical and mental health and wellbeing to their full potential, where wellbeing is valued and supported at every level of society and is everyone's responsibility. The Plan has two key objectives:

- To create the appropriate environmental conditions to enable citizens to make healthier lifestyle choices;
- To inform, support and encourage citizens to take responsibility for their own health by making healthier lifestyle choices.

7.7.6 Existing Sport and Leisure Infrastructure

Sport is an important contributor to the life of the citizens of Meath, ranging from a proud Gaelic football tradition (resulting in seven All-Ireland Senior Football Titles) to horse racing at Fairyhouse, Navan, Bellewstown and Laytown, to baseball and cricket in Ashbourne.

There are 10 equestrian centres and 18 golf courses within the County. There are also a number of walking routes such as the Boyne towpath, extensive beaches at Bettystown-Laytown and public swimming pools at Navan, Trim and Kells as well as private facilities in hotels.

Progress has also been made in developing greenways: along the disused Navan to Kingscourt rail line, along the Royal Canal from the Kildare border at McLoughlin Bridge to the Westmeath Border and along the Oldbridge road from Drogheda Ramparts to Oldbridge Estate. Refer to Chapter 5 Movement Strategy for more information.

The presence of beaches, watercourses, equestrian and related activities, along with golfing facilities and swimming pools etc., has a growing and an important role to play in the tourism economy.

Specific objectives are contained in Volume 2 of the Development Plan where the provision of sporting and leisure infrastructure will be directly linked to the development of certain areas, to address existing deficiencies and ensure balanced sustainable development.

It is the policy of the Council:

SOC POL 31

To support the implementation of the Healthy Meath Strategy 2019-2021 in consultation with the relevant agencies and authorities.

SOC POL 32

To encourage and support local sports, community groups and other groups in the provision and development of outdoor and indoor sporting and community facilities.

SOC POL 33

To support local sports groups, community groups and other groups in the development of facilities through the reservation of suitable land and the provision of funding where available and appropriate.

SOC POL 34

To cater for the sporting and recreational needs of all sectors and ages of the community and promote the integration of those with special needs into the sporting and recreational environment.

SOC POL 35

To require the provision of alternative open space, leisure and sporting facilities provision where such existing facilities are being discontinued as part of development proposals.

SOC POL 36

To ensure that new leisure facilities, where possible, are located in proximity to public transportation routes and where they can best meet the needs of the community that the facilities are intended to serve.

SOC POL 37

To facilitate the development of children’s play areas and playgrounds in proximity to existing and proposed neighbourhoods, where feasible.

It is an objective of the Council:

SOC OBJ 7

To implement the recommendations of current and proposed Meath County Council Play Policy in conjunction with all relevant agencies.

SOC OBJ 8

To support Meath Local Sports Partnership in the delivery of relevant strategies and plans.

SOC OBJ 9

To support the provision of multi-purpose sports halls, all-weather playing pitches and associated facilities in appropriate locations.

SOC OBJ 10

To investigate in conjunction with the OPW the feasibility of the provision of a playground at the Battle of the Boyne Site.

7.7.7 Open Space

Public open space is a critical element in the creation of a quality and distinctive urban environment, offering opportunities for both passive and active recreation, contributing to the quality of life of residents and visitors alike.

Accessible, useable, dedicated open spaces and recreational facilities to meet both passive and active recreational needs offer environmental and ecological benefits and improve building energy performance. There are significant health benefits for communities with access to green spaces and blue spaces (rivers, lakes and canals).

The RSES supports the preparation of open space and parks strategies by local authorities, and for enhanced cross boundary collaboration to provide for a hierarchy of open space provision including regional scale open space and recreational facilities.

Open space can be categorised as having a regional, county or local function. It is important to ensure that the County is well served by an adequate network of open spaces. The Key town of Navan has a regional park, Ashbourne and Dunboyne will also require the provision of regional scale parkland type facilities. Sites for regional parks in Dunboyne and Ashbourne have been identified in the written statement of these towns in Volume 2. The Regional Growth Centre of Drogheda will also require the provision of a regional park and lands have been identified which can accommodate same in the Southern Environs. In respect of residential development, in all cases the development site area (which shall make provision for open space) cannot include lands zoned FI Open Space, G1 Community Infrastructure and H1 High Amenity.

Development Plans have tended in the past to emphasise detailed quantitative standards, but there is now an increasing focus on the quality of public open space, which ensures that the reasonable expectations of users are more likely to be fulfilled. The qualitative standards set out in ‘Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlements Guidelines ’, 2024, relating to

design, accessibility, variety, shared use, biodiversity, sustainable urban drainage systems and the provision of allotments and community gardens should be adhered to in all planning applications for new residential developments.

Private open space provision is a fundamental element of residential amenity, offering the resident an opportunity for safe and private recreation.

Public and private open space standards are set out in Chapter 11 Development Management Standards and Land Use Zoning Objectives. It is a requirement that all planning applications for residential development demonstrate compliance with same.

It is the policy of the Council:

SOC POL 38

To promote the development of a wide variety of high quality accessible open space areas, for both active and passive use, and formal and informal activities in accordance with the Core Strategy and Settlement Strategy and the standards set out in Chapter 11 Development Management Standards and Land Use Zoning Objective taking into account any environmental sensitivities including likely significant effects on European Sites (SACs and SPAs).

SOC POL 39

To protect the integrity of Natura 2000 sites during the identification of suitable sites for recreation, in particular in terms of their design and use.

SOC POL 40

To resist the loss of existing public open space, unless alternative recreational facilities are provided in a suitable location.

SOC POL 41

Identify free from development, lands that are the subject of a deed of dedication identified in a grant of planning permission as public open space, to ensure the availability of community and recreational facilities for the residents of the area.

It is an objective of the Council:

SOC OBJ 11

To carry out an audit of all public open space assets in the County over the life of the Development Plan.

SOC OBJ 12

To prioritise the delivery of town parks at regional scale in Drogheda Southern Environs, Dunboyne and Ashbourne.

SOC OBJ 13

In respect of residential development, in all cases the development site area cannot include lands zoned FI Open Space, G1 Community Infrastructure and H1 High Amenity.(i.e. the open space requirements shall be provided for within the development site area.)

SOC OBJ 14

To examine existing public open spaces and carry out improvements where necessary to increase their usefulness as recreational spaces.

SOC OBJ 15

To ensure public open space is accessible, and designed so that passive surveillance is provided.

SOC OBJ 16.

To provide multifunctional open spaces at locations deemed appropriate providing for both passive and active uses

SOC OBJ 17

To ensure permeability and connections between public open spaces including connections between new and existing spaces, in consultation to include residents.

7.7.8 Libraries

The library service provided by the Council is playing a very important community, information, cultural and outreach facility role within the County. The public library service has for many years provided an important means of access to information and to (leisure) reading facilities and has played a major role in the advancement of the arts, education and local history throughout the County. Libraries have also become an important venue for cultural activities. This cultural role is recognised by the central role libraries occupy in the delivery of cultural projects such as the decade of centenaries and the Creative Ireland programme.

The Council manages and operates the County's public library service from its headquarters in Navan. In addition there are 12 branches throughout the County. (Louth County Council delivers a mobile service to East Meath in partnership with Meath County Council.)

Over half a million items were issued across the County in 2018. Free membership and the abolition of fines in 2019 will ensure that the library service is available to all. Over €500,000 has been invested in ICT in libraries across the county in 2017 and 2018.This has enabled the introduction of RFID (Radio Frequency Identification) self-service and the development of a wide range of new digital services at each location. These services include new initiatives like the 'The Magic Table /Tovertafel' which is specifically designed for people with dementia and autism.

Laytown/Bettystown/Mornington/Donacarney is the third largest settlement in the County, addressing the deficiencies in library facilities in this area is a key priority. The Development Plan for the library service in Meath 2005-2009 sets out a number of measures to be implemented. It provides for new libraries in Ballivor, Laytown/Bettystown and Kells. Major upgrades were completed at Athboy (2018), Slane (2019) and Kells (2019) Nobber (2020) and Oldcastle (2020) Libraries. Minor works have also been carried out in Dunshaughlin Library and the remaining works are planned for completion in 2021. Works are also proposed for Navan Library. Trim Library is the second busiest library in the County and it is proposed to combine Trim Library and the adjoining church to create a larger library with an Arts/Theatre space on the extended site. The 'My Open Library' initiative went live at Trim in February 2019. This allows members of the library

to use the services out of hours seven days a week (8am – 10pm). It is proposed to review uptake at Trim with a view to extending the service to other branches in line with national policy and funding schedules.
The Council intends to commence a review of the 2005-2009 Plan for the library service in the near future to coincide with the review of the national strategy for the library service - 'Our Public Libraries 2022 – Inspiring, Connecting and Empowering Communities.'

It is the policy of Meath County Council:

SOC POL 42

To continue to expand and improve the library service to meet the needs of the community, in line with the objectives and priorities of the Library Development Plan 2005-2009 (or as otherwise amended) and subject to the availability of finance.

It is an objective of the Council:

SOC OBJ 18

To enhance library facilities in Navan, and to retain and develop its function as the library headquarters for the County.

SOC OBJ 19

To investigate and if feasible to provide a new library in the Laytown/Bettystown area and in Kells.

SOC OBJ 20.

To investigate and if feasible to provide a library facility in Ballivor. To explore the restoration and renovation of St. Kenneth's Church to accommodate such a use.

SOC OBJ 21

To provide and improve existing library facilities and services and to encourage an integrated approach to the delivery of library, arts and other related services.

7.7.9 Burial Grounds

Local Authorities are responsible for ensuring that there are adequate burial facilities, including the reservation and acquisition of lands for such facilities, where necessary. In 2011, the Council completed a survey/needs analysis of burial grounds and identified 231 burial grounds in the County.

Changes in society have resulted in the need to provide multi-denominational graveyards. New sites are developed as burial gardens, where the site is aesthetically pleasing through use of careful landscaping and use of sustainable products as well as providing a number of burial options for customers and a full range of services such as car parking, toilet facilities, etc. It is also recognised that burial gardens have a potential amenity value and there are options to create facilities such as a loop walk through or around sites.

A multi denominational burial garden was opened in Derrockstown, Dunshaughlin in May 2016. The ethos of Derrockstown burial garden as 'a place for respect, reflection and remembrance' will be reflected in future developments which will also be developed in a garden style and will offer a number of options for burials and cremated remains including green burials, traditional burials, columbarium walls, burial of ashes, etc. It is proposed to develop future sites in a sustainable, climate action friendly manner using natural products and low carbon construction and it is a goal to make the sites self sufficient in energy needs. It is recognised that burial gardens also have an amenity benefit and any surplus land purchased for burial gardens will be used for tree planting and the creation of a bio-diversity areas, this is supported by the Climate Action Strategy for the County.

The Council is currently searching for geologically suitable sites for burial grounds in Dunboyne, Trim and Stamullen, and their environs.

There are no proposals currently for a crematorium in Meath, however, it is likely to become a requirement in the near future given the population growth and lack of burial ground space. The Council may also have to consider, in the context of the scarcity of environmentally suitable land and the restricted availability of funding, possible regional based solutions to the provision of burial space at some time in the future.

It is the policy of the Council:

SOC POL 43

To facilitate and support the development of multi-denominational burial grounds, taking cognisance of the needs of multi-faith and non-religious communities and evolving trends in end of life management.

SOC POL 44

To facilitate the provision of new burial grounds, facilities and the extension of existing cemeteries, as appropriate, to cater for the needs of the County.

SOC POL 45

To encourage local community groups to develop, manage and maintain burial facilities.

SOC POL 46

To protect the cultural heritage of historical burial grounds within the County and to encourage their management and maintenance in accordance with best conservation practice. (Please also refer to Chapter 8 Cultural and Natural Heritage).[7]

It is the objective of the Council:

SOC OBJ 22

To facilitate the development of new or extended burial grounds and crematoria by reservation of land at suitable locations and provision of local authority burial grounds subject to appropriate safeguards with regard to ground and surface water, environmental, noise and traffic impacts.

7.7.10 Places of Worship

As the population of the County becomes more diverse there has been an increase in the number of faith communities in the County. This has given rise to demand for worship spaces. Community centres may provide temporary solutions, as communities become more established and/or numbers increase, a dedicated place of worship may be required. The Council will encourage appropriate, easily accessible locations which comply with the Council's standards with regard to design, vehicular movement/parking and landscaping etc.

Please refer also to Chapter 11 (Section 11.9.4) Development Management Standards and Land Use Zoning Objectives.

It is the policy of the Council:

SOC POL 47

To encourage and facilitate the development of places of worship in appropriate locations in urban centres and proximate to residential communities.

7.7.11 Fire Stations

Fire fighting and other rescue services are vital public safety services provided by the Council. There are seven fire stations throughout the County: Navan (the headquarters of the network), Trim, Kells, Oldcastle, Nobber, Dunshaughlin and Ashbourne.

The role and functions of the fire service are intertwined with other core services of the Council such as planning, housing, water services and roads. It is important, therefore, for the benefit of the community, that there are effective working relationships and co-operation between the fire service and the other local authority services on a continuous basis.

The Council adopted a 'Fire Service Operations Plan, 2015-2019' and this Plan sets out a number of recommendations in relation to the fire service. Capital funding for the development of the Fire Service and the purchase of capital equipment is provided by the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government. Dunshaughlin, Oldcastle and Nobber fire stations have been approved for capital funding for extensions and upgrade works. These works are expected to be completed during the life of this Plan. Navan Fire Station has sought funding for provision of an office building.

Policies

It is the policy of the Council:

SOC POL 48

To ensure communities are adequately serviced by a modern and effective Fire Service.

SOC POL 49

To facilitate the accommodation of fire service facilities in locations that allow ease of access and safe functioning with respect to the road network.

SOC POL 50

To facilitate the implementation of the 'Fire Service Operations Plan 2015-2019', or as otherwise amended.

It is an objective of the Council:

SOC OBJ 23

To support the upgrade and extension of fire stations as appropriate, including Dunshaughlin, Oldcastle, Nobber and Navan, to cater for the needs of the County.

SOC OBJ 24

To examine the feasibility of providing a new fire station in the Laytown/Bettystown area, to ensure that this growing community is adequately serviced.

7.7.12 Arts and Cultural Facilities

Arts and cultural facilities not only contribute to the artistic, social and general quality of life of communities, they are also significant contributors to the economy of the County by attracting visitors, investment and job creation. Arts and cultural facilities are wide ranging and include arts centres, museums, theatres, galleries, community venues, music venues and studio and workspace for artists. Libraries can also serve as arts and cultural outlets.

The arts sector in Meath is a very vibrant one, which encompasses a broad range of people, places and activities. There is a considerable pool of artistic talent and enterprise in the County. The Council, through its Arts Office, seeks to further develop and promote the cultural life of the County and to increase accessibility to arts and culture facilities by audiences, participants and practitioners. The County Arts Development Plan 2019-2024 identifies four Strategic Priorities with a specific set of goals and actions to be achieved during the life of the Plan.

- Strategic Priority 1 – To nurture and support Artists and Creators,
- Strategic Priority 2 – To enhance our local cultural and creative infrastructure,
- Strategic Priority 3- To provide children and young people access to high quality participatory arts experiences, and
- Strategic Priority 4-To promote inclusivity and diversity through the arts.

The County Development Plan takes cognisance of the four Strategic Priorities and the relevant goals and actions.The Solstice Arts Centre in Navan is Meath's only multi-disciplinary arts centre.

Through its programme, Solstice aims to inspire, entertain, enthral, challenge and connect. The centre provides a hub for cultural and arts activity. As well as presenting theatre, music, dance, comedy and visual art, Solstice facilitates workshops and lectures to cater for all interests.

The Council is currently investigating the potential development of the County Library and the Solstice Arts Centre into a Cultural Quarter. If developed the Solstice Arts Centre and County Library would function as a destination multi-use space. Furthermore, the Council secured Urban Regeneration funding to prepare a Master Plan on adjacent lands for the former Meath County Council headquarters site. Funding was also secured for the preparation of a conservation plan for the restoration of the Former St Patrick's Classical School for use as a County Archive, genealogy research centre and performance and study space. The former St Patrick's Classical School has been described as one of the most unusual pieces of historic architecture in the Country. The building is a detached seven-bay two-storey former school, c. 1840 with elliptical plan, inclined buttresses, classical niches, eaves course of paired timber brackets and tripartite sash windows which was converted to a furniture factory c. 1975. The building has been disused for some time and its regeneration and reuse as the home of the County Archive will make a significant contribution to the Cultural Quarter at this location.

The Council is also exploring possibilities and planning for the development of further cultural facilities/hubs across the County including:

- Trim Theatre Project - plans to develop Trim library with the adjoining church to create a community theatre space while expanding Trim Library.
- Kells Creative Placemaking Project which includes –Kells Tourism & Cultural Hub at the Courthouse Kells; Kells Printworks; the Convent Chapel Cinema and Convent Artists' Studios.
- Dunshaughlin Courthouse multi-purpose community arts space.
- Slane Cottages development – plans to explore the possibility of developing a writer's retreat using the existing cottages.

The County Arts Development Plan 2019 – 2024 provides for the continued development of an arts service that is inclusive, accessible and sustainable for the County's communities. In doing so, the Arts Plan focuses on the creation of a sustainable environment and provision of appropriate facilities for the development, creation, making, production, performance and exhibition of work. The planned development of a number of Creative/Cultural hubs in the County combined with the support and enhancement of existing facilities will provide a focus for local, professional, amateur and community arts initiatives and the creative and economic benefits generated as a result. It will also provide a stable base for high quality artistic endeavour and space for dialogue re same.

The proposed 'Hubs' will also support the implementation of the Meath Culture & Creativity Strategy 2018-2022 and the national Creative Ireland Programme as they will align with the operating principles of collaboration and communication, community empowerment and internationalisation.

7.7.12.1 Public Art

Public Art can assist in developing a sense of place and provides an identity and character to a community that is distinctive and unique. The Council will continue to identify and implement new Per Cent for Art Schemes attaching to Capital projects, as appropriate, and will continue to broaden the scope of commissions to include a variety of arts disciplines.

The Council will also continue to implement the Private Developer Public Art Scheme through the planning process and in consultation with the Arts Office, please refer to Chapter 11 Development Management Standards and Land Use Zoning Objectives for further details. (Sections 11.7.12 and 11.8.2)

Policies

It is the policy of Meath County Council:

SOC POL 51

To continue to recognise the importance of the Arts in areas of personal development, community development, economic development and tourism and to endeavour to create opportunities in each of these areas.

SOC POL 52

To continue to enhance the range and quality of arts infrastructural provision in the County and to support the ongoing development of cultural infrastructure throughout the County in particular those parts of the County where such provision has been identified as an enabler for growth in the creative industries sector.

SOC POL 53

To support the development, provision and sustainability of arts and cultural infrastructure e.g. festivals at appropriate locations throughout on the success and support the clustering of the film and audio visual sector in the County and, where appropriate, in association with libraries.

SOC POL 54

To promote the provision of public art, including temporary art and sculpture, through such mechanisms, as appropriate.

SOC POL 55

To encourage and support the creation and display of works of art in public areas, including appropriate locations within the streetscape, provided no unacceptable environmental, amenity, traffic or other problems are created.

SOC POL 56

To implement the County Arts Development Plan 2019-2024 and in doing so to recognise the economic value and contribution of arts and cultural facilities to the County.

Objective

It is an objective of the Council:

SOC OBJ 25

To explore and promote measures to enhance the Arts and Cultural offering with particular economic value in conjunction with the Arts Office.

SOC OBJ 26

To support and seek to secure additional funding for the restoration of the Former St Patrick's Classical School for use as a County Archive, genealogy research centre and performance and study space.

SOC OBJ 27

To support and encourage the development of Creative Hubs throughout the County in particular the Kells Creative Placemaking Project; Trim Community Theatre & Library; Dunshaughlin Courthouse Community Arts space and to seek and secure additional funding for same.

SOC OBJ 28

To continue to explore the opportunities to provide a writers retreat in Slane.

SOC OBJ 29

To incorporate works of public art into the overall scheme of major new infrastructural, employment and residential developments in the County in order to enhance the amenities of the local environment. (Please refer also to Chapter 11 Development Management Standards and Land Use Zoning Objectives.)

SOC OBJ 30

To seek to build on the success and support the clustering of the film and audio visual sector in the Dublin and Wicklow areas and to support training of film workers and crew around the region, as well as exploiting opportunities for the industry outside of these hubs with particular reference to the recently permitted Film Studio Development in Ashbourne.

1- Persons aged 0-14 (Source: CSO Census 2016)

2- Persons aged 65+(Source: CSO Census 2016)

3- Source: Census 2016

4- Local Community & Development Committee and Meath Local Sports Partnership joint initiative.

5- Established in July 2002 under the direction of the Irish Sports Council to plan, lead and co-ordinate the development of sport and physical activity in Meath.

6- Local Community Development Committee and Meath Local Sports Partnership joint initiative.

7 - Guidance for the Care, Conservation and Recording of Historic Graveyards (2011)

8.1 Introduction

The County's wealth of built heritage makes it exceptional in Ireland. It includes the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Brú na Bóinne, the seat of the High Kings of Ireland at Tara, the passage tombs of Loughcrew, the largest Anglo-Norman castle in Europe at Trim, the historic towns of Navan, Trim and Kells, great country houses, demesne landscapes and a significant industrial heritage of canals and mills.

The County's natural heritage includes scenic river valleys, rolling farmland, a network of mature hedgerows and diverse coastal habitats.

The identity of the County is linked to its heritage, and is central to how we see ourselves as individuals, communities and as a County. Our unique heritage is an intrinsic part of the character and attractiveness of the County and is a catalyst in attracting tourism and investment.

Where natural and cultural heritage features are relevant to any development proposal, applicants are advised to contact the Planning Department, who will facilitate pre- application discussions at the earliest opportunity.

The Council will also encourage engagement between the relevant national agencies and residents, farmers, landowners and local communities who are located in close proximity to heritage sites and walkways, in order to mitigate any adverse impacts arising from high volumes of visitors to an area.

8.2 Vision

To identify, protect, conserve and manage the cultural and natural heritage of the County and to encourage its sensitive integration into the sustainable development of the County for the benefit of present and future generations. The Plan seeks to achieve a balance between the foregoing and economic prosperity and social integration.

8.3 Cultural Heritage

Cultural Heritage[1] refers to monuments, buildings, groups of buildings, and sites which are the combined works of nature and man. Within this great variety of building types and uses are structures of significance and distinctive character that are deemed worthy of protection.

8.4 Statutory Context

Ireland has ratified a number of key international conventions in the field of cultural and natural heritage. Ireland gives effect to the obligations it has so undertaken through the relevant provisions of its own domestic law, including relevant aspects of the World Heritage Convention 1972, the National Monuments Acts, the Wildlife Acts and the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended). EU law (in particular the Birds and Natural Habitats Directives and the Environmental Impact Assessment Directive), and domestic implementing measures in that regard, is of great importance in regard to heritage protection.

8.4.1 Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended

Section 10 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, sets out a list of mandatory objectives to be included in a development plan. A number of these relate to cultural heritage, including - the protection of archaeological heritage, structures and areas of special interest, the preservation of the character of the landscape, views and prospects.

8.4.2 The National Monuments Acts 1930 – 2014

These Acts provide for the protection of the archaeological heritage.

8.4.3 The European Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage, 1992 - the Valletta Convention (ETS No. 143)

The aim of the Valletta Convention is to 'protect the archaeological heritage as a source of the European collective memory and as an instrument for historical and scientific study' (Article 1). The provisions of the convention deal with statutory protection measures and maintenance of an inventory of the archaeological heritage, authorisation and supervision of archaeological activities, measures for the physical protection of archaeological heritage. It also provides for the consultation between archaeologists and planners in drawing up development plans and schemes. Further provisions are made for educational aspects and information exchange between states that have signed the convention.

8.4.4 The Convention for the Protection of the Architectural Heritage of Europe, 1985 - the Granada Convention (ETS No. 121)

This Convention was ratified by Ireland in 1997 and recognises that architectural heritage constitutes an irreplaceable expression of the richness and diversity of Europe's cultural heritage which fosters the economic, social and cultural development of states and regions.

8.4.5 European Landscape Convention, 2000 – the Florence Convention (ETS No. 176)

This Convention defines landscape as '…an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors' and applies to both rural and urban landscapes. The Convention requires landscape to be integrated into planning policies and promotes interaction between local and central authorities, and trans-frontier cooperation to protect landscapes.

8.4.6 Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-Making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters, 1998 - the Aarhus Convention

The Aarhus Convention lays down a set of basic roles to promote citizens involvement in environmental matters and improve enforcement of environmental Law; its provisions are broken down into three Pillars: Access to information, Public Participation in environmental decision making and Access to Justice. Same has given rise to the European Directive 2003/4/EC on Public Participation, both of which have been transposed into Irish Law. Ireland ratified the Convention on 20th June 2012

8.5 Policy Context

8.5.1 Framework and Principles for the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage (1999); Policy and Guidance on Archaeological Excavation (1999)

This Framework and these principles which stipulate the basic principles for the protection of archaeological heritage are based on a presumption of avoiding development impacts on archaeological heritage with preservation in-situ being the first option followed by preservation by record where the archaeological heritage is affected or proposed to be affected by the development.

8.5.2 Government Policy on Architecture 2009-2015

The Government Policy on Architecture 2009- 2015 and beyond recognises the place of architecture in society as an expression of cultural, aesthetic and social values both past and present. Its recommendations include the implementation of 45 actions by a number of government departments over a period of time.

8.5.3 The Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines 2011

These Guidelines are issued under Section 28 and Section 52 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended. Under Section 52(1), the Minister is obliged to issue guidelines to planning authorities concerning development objectives, a) for protecting structures, or parts of structures, which are of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest, and b) for preserving the character of architectural conservation areas. Guidelines issued under Section 28 of the Act require planning authorities to have regard to them in the performance of their functions.

8.5.4 Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2019-2031

The RSES acknowledges that the region's historic environment provides a unique sense of place and makes a positive contribution to quality of life. The RSES highlights the importance of incorporating best practice in heritage management into land use planning through the protection

of historic urban fabric, the sensitive reuse of historic properties and the enhancement of places of special cultural or natural significance and the provision of high quality public realm and recreational spaces. It is a regional policy objective to - promote historic towns in the Region in the practice of heritage-led generation, to promote sensitive and adaptive re-use of historic building stock, industrial features and protected structures; support the designation of UNESCO candidate sites in the Region.

8.6 Archaeological Heritage

Archaeology is the systematic study of past human societies through the investigation and analysis of the material evidence left behind. Uniquely archaeology provides insights into periods and civilisations that existed prior to written records. The archaeological heritage of an area includes monuments, sites, and objects whether situated on land or under water. In this respect, the County has a significant archaeological heritage, and provides a valuable cultural, educational and tourism resource.

Copies of the Record of Monuments and Places for County Meath are available at www.archaeology.ie.

Details of statutory objectives, international and national legislation are contained in Appendix No. 1 and 2. A list of National Monuments in State Care and Register of Historic Monuments are contained in Appendix No. 9.

New sites are continually being discovered through research and development including delivery of infrastructure projects and it is advisable to check the National Monument Archaeological database on www.archaeology.ie when considering development on any site.
Archaeological structures may, in some situations, also be considered as architectural heritage and therefore may appear on both the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP) and the Record of Protected Structures (RPS).

It is the policy of the Council:

HER POL 1

To protect sites, monuments, places, areas or objects of the following categories:

- Sites and monuments included in the Sites and Monuments Record as maintained by the National Monuments Service of the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht;
- Monuments and places included in the Record of Monuments and Places as established under the National Monuments Acts;
- Historic monuments and archaeological areas included in the Register of Historic Monuments as established under the National Monuments Acts;

- National monuments subject to Preservation Orders under the National Monuments Acts and national monuments which are in the ownership or guardianship of the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht or a local authority;
- Archaeological objects within the meaning of the National Monuments Acts; and Wrecks protected under the National Monuments Acts or otherwise included in the Shipwreck Inventory maintained by the National Monuments Service of the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

HER POL 2

To protect all sites and features of archaeological interest discovered subsequent to the publication of the Record of Monument and Places, in situ (or at a minimum preservation by record) having regard to the advice and recommendations of the National Monuments Service of the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht and The Framework and Principles for the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage (1999).

HER POL 3

To require, as part of the development management process, archaeological impact assessments, geophysical survey, test excavations or monitoring as appropriate, for development in the vicinity of monuments or in areas of archaeological potential. Where there are upstanding remains, a visual impact assessment may be required.

HER POL 4

To require, as part of the development management process, archaeological impact assessments, geophysical survey, test excavations or monitoring as appropriate, where development proposals involve ground clearance of more than half a hectare or for linear developments over one kilometre in length; or developments in proximity to areas with a density of known archaeological monuments and history of discovery as identified by a suitably qualified archaeologist.

HER POL 5

To seek guidance from the National Museum of Ireland where an unrecorded archaeological object is discovered, or the National Monuments Service in the case of an unrecorded archaeological site.

It is the objective of the Council:

HER OBJ 1

To implement in partnership with the County Meath Heritage Forum, relevant stakeholders and the community the County Meath Heritage Plan and any revisions thereof.

HER OBJ 2

To ensure that development in the vicinity of a Recorded Monument or Zone of Archaeological Potential is sited and designed in a sensitive manner with a view to minimal detraction from the monument or its setting.

HER OBJ 3

To protect important archaeological landscapes from inappropriate development.

HER OBJ 4

To encourage the management and maintenance of the County's archaeological heritage, including historic burial grounds [2], in accordance with best conservation practice that considers the impact of climate change.

HER OBJ 5

To promote awareness of, and encourage the provision of access to, the archaeological resources of the county.

HER OBJ 6

To work in partnership with key stakeholders to promote County Meath as a centre for cultural heritage education and learning through activities such as community excavation and field/summer schools.

8.6.1 UNESCO World Heritage Site - Brú na Bóinne

The World Heritage Site of the Archaeological Ensemble of the Bend of the Boyne is commonly known as Brú na Bóinne. It refers to the area within the bend of the River Boyne around Newgrange, Knowth and Dowth, and is one of the world's most important archaeological complexes. Brú na Bóinne contains many outstanding archaeological features, including the largest assemblage of megalithic art in Europe, large and varied grouping of monuments, and evidence of continuous settlement and activity in the area for some 7,000 years. The international significance of Brú na Bóinne has gradually been revealed through an ongoing process of discovery and research which began 300 years ago. In December 1993 the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) inscribed Brú na Bóinne as a World Heritage Site. This inscription recognises the universal importance of this landscape to the whole of humanity and requires the State to protect the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the area of the World Heritage Site to the highest international standards.

One of the best known features of Brú na Bóinne is the mid-winter solstice phenomenon, when the sun, rising over the ridge of Red Mountain, shines through the roof box above the entrance to the tomb at Newgrange to light the chamber within.

Brú na Bóinne is one of the foremost and popular heritage site visitor attractions in the Country and as such, is a very important Local, Regional and National tourism asset with 261,340 visitors recorded in 2018.

8.6.2 Sustaining the Outstanding Universal Value

The first management plan for the site was published in 2002 by the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government. The management plan was included in the 2013-2019 County Development Plan. Under the Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention (July 2019), every site contained on the World Heritage list must have a management plan which explains how the Outstanding Universal Value is to be maintained. The

replacement for this 2002 management plan was sent to UNESCO in January 2017 by the Department of Heritage, Culture and the Gaeltacht. The Management Plan is not a statutory planning document.

Planning Guidance, additional information on UNESCO World Heritage and the Statement of Outstanding Universal Value for Brú na Bóinne and Brú and Bóinne World Heritage Site Management Plan are contained in Appendix 8 of the County Development Plan.

8.6.3 Statement of Policy

Meath County Council is committed to the protection and conservation of the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Brú na Bóinne. The Council acknowledges the need for additional bed spaces and other tourist facilities to enable the local community to benefit from the area's World Heritage Site status. The refurbishment of existing building stock will be supported and encouraged in this regard. The World Heritage site is a key component of Ireland's Ancient East and its potential to generate additional tourist activity in the wider Boyne Valley region as a generator of local employment is acknowledged. The Council welcomes the support of key national stakeholders in developing appropriate policies to ensure the area benefits from its unique International heritage standing.

It is the policy of the Council:

HER POL 6

To protect the Outstanding Universal Value of the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Brú na Bóinne in accordance with the relevant guidelines and national legislation, so that its integrity, authenticity and significance are not adversely affected by inappropriate development or change.

HER POL 7

To encourage the retention, conservation, and appropriate re-use of traditional buildings within the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Brú na Bóinne in preference to either their replacement, or the construction of new buildings on green field sites.

HER POL 8

To ensure that development within the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Brú na Bóinne shall be subject to the Development Assessment Criteria set out in Appendix 8 and the Development Management Guidelines in Chapter 11.

HER POL 9

To consider individual housing within the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Brú na Bóinne, as shown on Map 8.1 - UNESCO World Heritage Site - Brú na Bóinne, only for those involved locally in full time agriculture and who do not own land outside of the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Brú na Bóinne and subject to compliance with all other relevant provisions contained in this Development Plan.

HER POL 10

To ensure that residential extensions within the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Brú na Bóinne respect the scale, design and character of the original building.

HER POL 11

To support the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht and all stakeholders in the implementation of the Brú na Bóinne Management Plan, 2017.
It is the objective of the Council:

HER OBJ 7

To work in partnership with the community and all other relevant stakeholders to promote, understand, conserve and sustainably manage the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Brú na Bóinne.

HER OBJ 8

To encourage and facilitate pre-application discussions, in conjunction with the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, regarding the siting and design of developments affecting the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Brú na Bóinne and the scope of any necessary impact assessments.

HER OBJ 9

To refer all planning applications within the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Brú na Bóinne to the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht for comment. These comments will be considered in the assessment of all such planning applications.

HER OBJ 10

To actively support and encourage the re-use of vacant and derelict dwellings within the Core and Buffer Zone of the World Heritage Site of Brú na Bóinne by providing assistance and professional advice to owners seeking to re-develop such sites.

HER OBJ 11

To protect the ridgelines which frame views within and from the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Brú na Bóinne from inappropriate or visually intrusive development.

HER OBJ 12

To prepare and implement a Business Plan for the World Heritage Site in conjunction with relevant stakeholders, subject to funding.

8.6.4 World Heritage Tentative List

The protection of the world's cultural and natural heritage is of importance for present and future generations and to this end the State is committed to the identification, protection, conservation, presentation and promotion of the World Heritage Site in accordance with Article 4 of the World Heritage Convention.

A Tentative List is an inventory of those properties which a country intends to consider for nomination to the World Heritage List. The current Tentative List was approved by the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht and submitted to UNESCO in March 2010. The nomination of any property from the Tentative List for inscription on the World Heritage List will only take place after consultation with local communities and other relevant stakeholders. Two sites in the County have been included on the Tentative List as part of larger assemblies of sites:

- The Tara Complex as part of The Royal Sites of Ireland (Cashel, Dún Ailinne, Hill of Uisneach, Rathcroghan Complex and Tara Complex).

- Kells, as part of the Early Medieval Monastic Sites (Clonmacnoise, Durrow, Glendalough, Inis Cealtra, Kells and Monasterboice).

In January 2019, the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht invited applications for Ireland's Tentative List of properties for potential future nomination to the World Heritage List 2020-2030.

It is the policy of the Council:

HER POL 12

To recognise and respect potential World Heritage Sites in Meath on the UNESCO Tentative List – Ireland.

It is the objective of the Council:

HER OBJ 13

To support the State in the nomination process of Tara and Kells to World Heritage status as part of an assemblage of Royal and Monastic Sites in co-operation with the relevant Local Authorities.

8.6.5 Walled Towns

Navan, Trim, Kells and Athboy are medieval walled towns. Of these, only Trim has substantial lengths of town wall remaining upstanding. While the others have some fragmentary upstanding remains, parts of the walls have been shown to survive below ground. Town defences include walls, gates, bastions, banks, ditches, outworks and other features. Each walled town is considered as a single recorded monument and the line of the town walls and defences are classed as National Monuments under the National Policy on Town Defences 2008.

It is the policy of the Council:

HER POL 13

To protect and preserve in situ all surviving elements of medieval town defences.

It is the objective of the Council:

HER OBJ 14

To retain the surviving medieval street pattern, building lines and burgage plot widths in historic walled towns.

8.7 Architectural Heritage

The architectural heritage of Meath contributes to its unique sense of place. The Council wishes to ensure that those buildings, streetscapes and features which are of merit are protected and managed so that they retain their character and special interest.

8.7.1 Record of Protected Structures

The Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended (Part II, Section 10) places an obligation on all Local Authorities to include in their Development Plan objectives for the protection of structures, or parts of structures, which are of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest. These buildings and structures are compiled on a register known as the Record of Protected Structures (RPS).

The RPS may be varied by a Section 55 process separately to a review of the Plan and an up-to-date RPS, including any additions, deletions or amendments can be viewed on the Council's website or checked at the public counter of the Council's Planning Office. Developers and persons proposing to purchase historic buildings are advised to check the updated Record of Protected Structures.

A Protected Structure, unless otherwise stated in the RPS, includes:

- the interior of the structure;
- the land lying within its curtilage;
- any other structures within the curtilage, and their interiors, and:
- all fixtures and features which form part of the interior or exterior of any of these structures.

The term 'curtilage' is generally taken to mean those lands immediately associated with the structure, and in the case of smaller properties usually means all land within the boundaries. In the case of larger properties, the curtilage must be determined on a case by case basis.

A review of the RPS was undertaken in preparation for this Plan. [3] Additions, deletions and amendments are proposed and may be viewed in Volume 2, and on the Meath County Council Map Portal. Following the abolition of the town councils of Navan, Trim and Kells, the RPS for those towns has been incorporated in the County RPS.

The Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, places an onus on owners and occupiers of Protected Structures to ensure that the structure, or any element of the structure which contributes to its special interest, is not endangered either through neglect, or by inappropriate works. Owners and occupiers are advised to consult the Planning Department if they are considering works to or affecting Protected Structures.

Section 5 of the Planning and Development Act and supporting regulations set out those works which constitute exempted development and therefore do not normally require planning permission. However, in the case of a Protected Structure, such works can only be carried out without planning permission if it is determined that the works would not affect the character of the structure or any element of the structure that contributes to its special interest. An owner or occupier may seek a declaration from the Council as to the types of works, which would or would

not, materially affect the character of the structure and would or would not require planning permission.

It is the policy of the Council:

HER POL 14

To protect and conserve the architectural heritage of the County and seek to prevent the demolition or inappropriate alteration of Protected Structures.

HER POL 15

To encourage the conservation of Protected Structures, and where appropriate, the adaptive re-use of existing buildings and sites in a manner compatible with their character and significance. In certain cases, land use zoning restrictions may be relaxed in order to secure the conservation of the protected structure.

HER POL 16

To protect the setting of Protected Structures and to refuse permission for development within the curtilage or adjacent to a protected structure which would adversely impact on the character and special interest of the structure, where appropriate.

HER POL 17

To require that all planning applications relating to Protected Structures contain the appropriate accompanying documentation in accordance with the Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2011) or any variation thereof, to enable the proper assessment of the proposed works.

HER POL 18

To require that in the event of permission being granted for development within the curtilage of a protected structure, any works necessary for the survival of the structure and its re-use should be prioritised in the first phase of development.

It is the objective of the Council:

HER OBJ 15

To review and update the Record of Protected Structures on an on-going basis and to make additions and deletions as appropriate.

HER OBJ 16

To identify and retain good examples of historic street furniture, e.g. cast-iron post boxes, water pumps, light fixtures and signage, as appropriate.

HER OBJ 17

To promote best conservation practice and encourage the use of appropriately qualified professional advisors, tradesmen and craftsmen, with recognised conservation expertise, for works to protected structures or historic buildings in an Architectural Conservation Area.

HER OBJ 18

To provide detailed guidance notes and continue to develop the Council's advisory/educational role with regard to heritage matters and to promote awareness, understanding and appreciation of the architectural heritage of the County.

HER OBJ 19

To commission a study over the lifetime of the Plan to assess the significance of the Mass Rocks and Holy Wells throughout County Meath.

8.7.2 Architectural Conservation Areas

An Architectural Conservation Area (ACA) is a place, area, group of structures or townscape, which is of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest. [4] They may also include areas which contribute to the appreciation of Protected Structures.

An ACA may consist for example, of a terrace of houses, a street, town centre or a cluster of structures associated with a specific building such as a mill or country house. Although the individual buildings may not be of special merit, their importance is in their context and interrelationship and the contribution each makes to the character of the area. Unless a structure is also included on the Record of Protected Structures, the protected status afforded from inclusion in an ACA only applies to the exteriors and streetscape.

Piecemeal alterations on individual non protected structures can have a significant cumulative effect on a streetscape. Any works which would have a material effect on the special character of an ACA require planning permission.

The following areas have been designated as ACAs:

Ardbraccan Demesne

- Athboy
- Dunboyne
- Dunsany Castle Demesne • Headfort Demesne
- Julianstown
- Kells Historic CoreKells – Headfort Place
- Kilmessan
- Laytown – Netterville and Victoria Terrace • Longwood
- Moynalty
- Navan Historic Core
- Oldbridge Demesne
- Oldcastle

- Slane
- Slane Castle Demesne
- Slane Mill Complex
- Somerville Demesne
- Stackallen Demesne
- Summerhill
- Trim Historic Core
- Trim Porch Fields

The boundaries of these areas are defined on Map 8.2 - Architectural Conservation Areas and on the Meath County Council Map Portal. Character statements have been prepared for the ACA's to guide further redevelopment proposals. These are contained in Appendix No. 7. It is intended that character statements for Ardbraccan Demesne, Dunsany Castle Demesne, Oldbridge Demesne, Slane Castle Demesne and Stackallen Demesne will be prepared during the life of the Plan.

It is the Policy of the Council:

HER POL 19

To protect the character of Architectural Conservation Areas in Meath.

HER POL 20

To require that all development proposals within or contiguous to an ACA be sympathetic to the character of the area, that the design is appropriate in terms of height, scale, plot density, layout, materials and finishes and are appropriately sited and designed with regard to the advice given in the Statements of Character for each area, where available.

It is the objective of the Council:

HER OBJ 20

To identify places of special character, with a view to their designation as Architectural Conservation Areas and to modify existing ACAs, where necessary.

HER OBJ 21

To prepare and review, where necessary, detailed character statements and planning guidance for each ACA.

HER OBJ 22

To avoid the demolition of structures and the removal of features and street furniture which contribute to the character of an ACA. The Council will require that any planning application for demolition or alteration within an ACA be accompanied by a measured and photographic survey, condition report and architectural heritage assessment.

8.7.3 Historic Building Stock and Vernacular Architecture

Historic buildings form the backdrop to most of the towns, villages and rural areas in the County. Although some may have used architects in their design, most are in the vernacular tradition – the homes and workplaces built by local people using local materials. Generally, these buildings are not so special as to be designated Protected Structures, however, small differences in materials, layout and forms contribute to local distinctiveness and the character of the area.

Further policies relating to traditional and vernacular rural houses are contained in Chapter 9 Rural Development strategy.

It is the policy of the Council:

HER POL 21

To encourage the retention, sympathetic maintenance and sustainable re-use of historic buildings, including vernacular dwellings or farm buildings and the retention of historic streetscape character, fabric, detail and features.

HER POL 22

Seek the retention of surviving historic plot sizes and street patterns in the villages and towns of Meath and incorporate ancient boundaries or layouts, such as burgage plots and townland boundaries, into re-developments.

HER POL 23

To actively promote the retention and restoration of thatched dwellings as a key component of the built heritage of the County.

It is the objective of the Council:

HER OBJ 23

To ensure that conversions or extensions of traditional buildings or the provision of new adjoining buildings, are sensitively designed and do not detract from the character of the historic building.

HER OBJ 24

To update the survey of surviving thatched structures in the County and to promote available grant schemes to assist owners with their retention and repair.

HER OBJ 25

To carry out a survey of Land Commission dwellings over the life of the Development Plan, to acknowledge their contribution to the building stock of the County, as appropriate.

8.7.4 Industrial Heritage

Industrial heritage consists primarily of structures associated with manufacturing, transportation, communications, public utilities and materials extraction. Examples include canals, railway

structures, mills, warehouses, lighthouses, lime kilns and milestones. A desktop survey of the industrial heritage of the County was carried out in 2008.[5]

It is the policy of the Council:

HER POL 24

To encourage appropriate change of use and reuse of industrial heritage structures provided such a change does not seriously impact on the intrinsic character of the structure and that all works are carried out in accordance with best conservation practice, subject to compliance with normal planning criteria.

HER POL 25

To protect and enhance the built and natural heritage of the Royal Canal and Boyne Navigation and associated structures and to ensure, in as far as practically possible, that development which may impact on these structures and their setting be sensitively designed with regard to their character and setting. Development of the project will be subject to the outcome of the Appropriate Assessment process.

It is the objective of the Council:

HER OBJ 26

To require an architectural / archaeological assessment, as appropriate, which references the Meath Industrial Heritage Survey and other relevant sources, for all proposed developments on industrial heritage structures or sites.

HER OBJ 27

To carry out Phase 2 of the Industrial Heritage Survey which will comprise a field survey and assessment of surviving structures and sites and consider (if appropriate) proposing them for addition to the Record of Protected Structures.

8.7.5 Designed Landscapes, Gardens and Demesnes

Historic designed landscapes consist of private gardens, public parks and the gardens and landscapes associated with country house demesnes. In the County, the designed landscapes are largely found in demesne or estate lands and frequently form the setting for protected structures.

The National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH) carried out a desktop survey of Historic Gardens and Demesnes in Ireland, which commenced in 2003 and identified approximately 300 such sites in the County. This survey can be seen on their website www.buildingofireland.ie.
It is the policy of the Council:

HER POL 26

To encourage the protection and enhancement of heritage gardens and demesne landscapes, and to support, in consultation with the owners, the provision of public access to these sites as appropriate.

It is the objective of the Council:

HER OBJ 28

To discourage development that would adversely affect the character, the principal components of, or the setting of historic parks, gardens and demesnes of heritage significance.

HER OBJ 29

To require that proposals for development in designated landscapes and demesnes include an appraisal of the landscape, designed views and vistas, including a tree survey, where relevant, in order to inform site appropriate design proposals.

8.8 Natural Heritage

8.8.1 Introduction

The County's natural heritage and biodiversity is of local, national and international importance. It includes geology and forms a central component of the landscape of the County. Protecting and enhancing our biodiversity and landscapes is vital to the health, well-being and quality of life of our communities and assists societal adaption to the challenges of climate change

8.8.2 Statutory Context

8.8.2.1 EU Birds and Habitats Directives

The Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora, better known as "The Habitats Directive", provides legal protection for habitats and species of European importance. Articles 3 to 9 provide the legislative means to protect habitats and species of Community interest through the establishment and conservation of an EU-wide network of sites known as Natura 2000. These are Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) designated under the Habitats Directive and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) designated under the Conservation of Wild Birds Directive (79/409/ECC).

Articles 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive set out the decision-making tests for plans and projects likely to affect Natura 2000 sites. Article 6(3) establishes the requirement for Appropriate Assessment (AA). This requirement is implemented in the Republic of Ireland by the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (SI 477/2011) and the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended. The Government published Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland – Guidance for Planning Authorities in December 2009 (revised in February.

8.8.2.2 Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended

Development Plans must include mandatory objectives for the conservation of the natural heritage and for the conservation of European sites and any other sites which may be prescribed.

8.8.2.3 Wildlife Act 1976, as amended

The Wildlife Act 1976, as amended is the principal national legislation providing for the protection of wildlife and the control of some activities which may adversely affect wildlife.

8.8.2.4 Flora (Protection) Order, 2015

Sets out the current list of plant species protected by Section 21 of the Wildlife Act, 1976, as amended

8.8.3 Policy Context

8.8.3.1 Convention on Biological Diversity (1992)

Ireland is a signatory to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the Cancun Declaration (CBD, 2016), which focuses on the need for governments at the national, sub-national and local levels to mainstream the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity for human well-being. All parties to the Convention are required to prepare national biodiversity strategies and action plans.

8.8.3.2 National Biodiversity Plan(s)

Ireland's first National Biodiversity Plan was published in 2002. The second National Biodiversity Plan – Actions for Biodiversity 2011-2016 was published in November 2011. The Plan was developed in line with EU and International Biodiversity strategies and policies. It recognised that locally-led action is crucial in protecting biodiversity and ecosystem services and sets out the measures Ireland should take to ensure its conservation. The third National Biodiversity Action Plan 2017-2021 was published by the Department Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht in October 2017.

8.8.3.3 Local Biodiversity Action Plan(s)

The Council adopted its first Biodiversity Action Plan in April 2010 in accordance with the National Biodiversity Plan. The second County Meath Local Biodiversity Action Plan 2015-2020 was adopted in April 2015. The Plan provides a framework for the conservation of biodiversity and natural heritage at a local level.

8.9 Biodiversity

Biodiversity is the variety of life on Earth – all plants and animals (including humans), fungi, algae and micro-organisms, the habitat where they live and their genetic diversity. Biodiversity is important because all of life depends on biodiversity for survival and humans in particular rely on it for food, clean air and water, clothing and building materials, as well as for medicines and places in which to unwind and reconnect with nature. Our biodiversity underpins important economic sectors such as agriculture and tourism and provides many other benefits or ecosystem services free of charge which can be grouped into four main categories:

- **Provisioning services** (production of food and water, etc.)
- **Regulating services** (e.g. the control of climate and disease)
- **Supporting services** (e.g. nutrient cycling and crop pollination)
- **Cultural services** (such as spiritual and recreational benefits)

The protection and wise use of the county's natural resources is vital to achieving sustainable development. The economic value of biodiversity to Ireland has been calculated as at least €2.6 billion per annum (IEN, 2012).

It is the policy of the Council:

HER POL 27

To protect, conserve and enhance the County's biodiversity where appropriate.

HER POL 28

To integrate in the development management process the protection and enhancement of biodiversity and landscape features wherever possible, by minimising adverse impacts on existing habitats (whether designated or not) and by including mitigation and/or compensation measures, as appropriate.

HER POL 29

To raise public awareness and understanding of the County's natural heritage and biodiversity.

HER POL 30

To promote increased public participation in biodiversity conservation by supporting and encouraging community-led initiatives.

HER POL 31

To ensure that the ecological impact of all development proposals on habitats and species are appropriately assessed by suitably qualified professional(s) in accordance with best practice guidelines – e.g. the preparation of an Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA), Screening Statement for Appropriate Assessment, Environmental Impact Assessment, Natura Impact Statement (NIS), species surveys etc. (as appropriate).

It is an objective of the Council:

HER OBJ 30

To implement, in partnership with the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, relevant stakeholders and the community, the objectives and actions of Ireland's National Biodiversity Action Plan 2017 - 2021 which relate to the remit and functions of Meath County Council.

HER OBJ 31

To implement, in partnership with the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, relevant stakeholders and the community, the objectives and actions of the County Meath Biodiversity Plan 2015-2020 and any revisions thereof.

HER OBJ 32

To actively support the implementation of the All Ireland Pollinator Plan 2021-2025 and any revisions thereof.

8.9.1 Protecting Biodiversity in Meath – Sites Designated for Nature Conservation

There are a number of international and nationally important sites designated for nature conservation in the County.

8.9.2 European Sites (Natura 2000)

The EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) and EU Birds Directive (2009/147/EC) provide for the conservation and protection of core breeding and resting sites for rare and threatened species, and rare habitat types in a European context considered to be most in need of conservation. Such sites form part of an EU network of ecologically important and protected sites known as Natura 2000 and comprise:

- **Special Areas of Conservation (SACs)** – these sites are selected for the conservation and protection of plant and animal species (other than birds) and habitats listed in Annex I and Annex II of the EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) respectively.
- **Special Protection Areas (SPAs)** – these sites are selected for the conservation and protection of birds and their habitats designated under the EU Birds Directive 2009 (2009/147/EC) (first adopted in 1979) and transposed into Irish law by the Conservation of Wild Birds Regulations (SI 291 of 1985).

The main aim of the Habitats Directive, which was adopted in 1992, is to achieve and maintain favourable conservation status for habitats and species that are considered to be at risk. The Habitats Directive was transposed into Irish law through the European Union (Natural Habitats) Regulations, 1997, which have been amended twice in 1998 and 2005. The 1997 Regulations and

their amendments were subsequently revised and consolidated in the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations, 2011.

There are 13 Natura 2000 sites within the County. The National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht identify, evaluate and propose sites for designation. The boundaries of protected areas may change and/or new sites may be proposed for designation during the lifetime of this Plan. Up-to-date information on boundaries, and details, of designated sites is available on the National Parks and Wildlife Service website (www.npws.ie).

Table 8.1 Special Areas of Conservation in County Meath

Site Name	Site Code
Mount Hevey Bog	002342

Table 8.2 Candidate Special Areas of Conservation in County Meath

Site Name	Site Code
Killyconny Bog (Cloghbally)	000006
Rye Water Valley/Carton	001398
White Lough, Ben Loughs and Lough Doo	001810
Boyne Coast and Estuary	001957
Lough Bane and Lough Glass	002120
River Boyne and River Blackwater	002299
Moneybeg and Clareisland Bogs	002340
Girley (Drewstown) Bog	002203

Table 8.3 Special Protection Areas in County Meath

Site Name	Site Code
Lough Sheelin	004065
Boyne Estuary	004080
River Nanny Estuary and Shore	004158
River Boyne and River Blackwater	004232

Planning Authorities are required to ensure that an Appropriate Assessment of the implications of proposals on designated nature conservation sites (Natura 2000) is undertaken. This assessment is required for all planning applications likely to have significant effects on these sites through a screening process. Screening for Appropriate Assessment applies to all development proposals, either within or outside a Natura 2000 (Please refer to Tables 8.1, 8.2, 8.3 and Map 8.3).

8.9.3 Natural Heritage Areas

Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs) and proposed Natural Heritage Areas (pNHAs) are designated under the Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2000 and encompass nationally-important semi-natural and natural habitats, landforms and geomorphological features.

8.9.4 Statutory Nature Reserve

In January 2019 the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht published notice of making Statutory Instrument (S.I. No. 602 of 2018) under section 16 of the Wildlife Act established the first Nature Reserve in County Meath at Newcastle Lough. The reason for recognising the land as a nature reserve is the presence of lake, reed bed, wet grassland and woodland habitats and an associated diversity of flora and fauna. The objective for which the land is to be used or managed as a nature reserve is to maintain and enhance the diversity of the habitats and species on the land.

Table 8.4 Natural Heritage Areas in County Meath

Site Name	Site Code
Jamestown Bog	001324
Girley Bog	001580
Molerick Bog	001582

Table 8.5 Proposed Natural Heritage Areas in County Meath

Site Name	Site Code
Ballyhoe Lough	001594
Ballynabarny Fen	001573
Balrath Woods	001579
Boyne Coast and Estuary	001957
Boyne River Islands	001862
Boyne Woods	001592
Breaky Loughs	001558
Corstown Loughs	000552
Crewbane Marsh	000553
Cromwell's Bush Fen	001576
Dowth Wetland	001861
Doolystown Bog	001577
Duleek Commons	001578
Kilconny Bog (Cloghbally)	000006
Laytown Dunes / Nanny Estuary	000554

Lough Naneagh	001814
Lough Sheelin	000987
Lough Shesk	000556
Mentrim Lough	001587
Mount Hevey Bog	001584
Rathmoylan Esker	000557
Rossnaree Riverbank	001589
Royal Canal	002103
Rye Water Valley / Carton	001398
Slane Riverbank	001591
Thomastown Bog	001593
Trim Wetlands	001357
White Lough, Ben Loughs and Lough Doo	001810

Table 8.6 Statutory Nature Reserves in County Meath

Site Name	Site Code
Newcastle Lough [6]	NA

It is the policy of the Council:

HER POL 32

To permit development on or adjacent to designated Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas, Natural Heritage Areas, Statutory Nature Reserves or those proposed to be designated over the period of the Plan, only where the development has been subject to the outcome of the Appropriate Assessment process and has been carried out to the satisfaction of the Planning Authority, in consultation with National Parks and Wildlife.

HER POL 33

To have regard to the views and guidance of the National Parks and Wildlife Service in respect of proposed development where there is a possibility that such development may have an impact on a designated European or National site or a site proposed for such designation.

HER POL 34

To undertake appropriate surveys and collect data to provide an evidence-base to assist the Council in meeting its obligations under Article 6 of the Habitats Directives (92/43/EEC) as transposed into Irish Law, subject to available resources.

It is an objective of the Council:

HER OBJ 33

To ensure an Appropriate Assessment in accordance with Article 6(3) and Article 6(4) of the Habitats Directives (92/43/EEC) and in accordance with the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland – Guidance for Planning Authorities, 2009 and relevant EPA and European Commission guidance documents, is

carried out in respect of any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary for the management of the site but likely to have a significant effect on a Natura 2000 site(s), either individually or in-combination with other plans or projects, in view of the site's conservation objectives.

HER OBJ 34

To protect and conserve the conservation value of candidate Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas, Natural Heritage Areas and proposed Natural Heritage Areas as identified by the Minister for the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht and any other sites that may be proposed for designation during the lifetime of this Plan in accordance with the provisions of the Habitats and Birds Directives and to permit development in or affecting same only in accordance with the provisions of those Directives as transposed into Irish Law.

8.9.5 Protecting Biodiversity in Meath - Non-Designated Sites

There are many sites throughout the County that host a range of plant and animal species or their habitats (including Annex I Habitats, Annex I Birds, Annex II and IV species, Flora (Protection) Orders etc.), which are not designated for nature conservation but nonetheless their ecological value is of high importance in the county.

It is the policy of the Council:

HER POL 35

To ensure, where appropriate, the protection and conservation of areas, sites, species and ecological/networks of biodiversity value outside designated sites and to require an appropriate level of ecological assessment by suitably qualified professional(s) to accompany development proposals likely to impact on such areas or species.

8.9.7 Protected Species

Certain plant, animal and bird species are protected by law. This includes plant species listed in the Flora Protection Order, 1999 (or other such Orders) and animals and birds listed in the Wildlife Act, 1976 and subsequent statutory instruments, those listed in Annex IV of the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC), and those listed in Annex I of the Birds Directive. Proposals for developments, where appropriate, will require an assessment of the presence of bats and/or other protected species and ensure that suitable avoidance and/or mitigation measures are put in place accordingly.

It is the policy of the Council:

HER POL 36

To consult with the National Parks and Wildlife Service and take account of their views and any licensing requirements, when undertaking, approving or authorising development which is likely to affect plant, animal or bird species protected by law.

It is the objective of the Council:

HER OBJ 35

To ensure that development does not have a significant adverse impact, incapable of satisfactory avoidance or mitigation, on plant, animal or bird species protected by law.

8.9.7 Woodlands, Hedgerows and Trees

Although the County is one of the least wooded counties, its woodlands, hedgerows and individual trees contribute positively to biodiversity and landscape character. (Please refer to Chapter 9, T.P.O Map 9.3).

Woodlands tend to be small and highly fragmented for the most part and are more frequent near rivers, particularly along the lower stretches of the River Boyne. The most abundant native woodland habitat type in the County is Oak-Ash-Hazel woodland (WN2) reflecting the limestone derived soils. A large proportion of the County's woodlands are parklands associated with historic demesnes.

Hedgerows are perhaps the most characteristic feature of the County's landscape and provide an important habitat for many species and act as a wildlife corridor in a landscape dominated by large tracts of intensive agriculture. Under the Wildlife (Amendment) Act, 2000 the cutting of hedges (and uncultivated vegetation) during the bird-nesting season (March 1st to September 1st) is prohibited, except in certain legally defined circumstances.

It is the policy of the Council:

HER POL 37

To encourage the retention of hedgerows and other distinctive boundary treatments in rural areas and prevent loss and fragmentation, where practically possible. Where removal of a hedgerow, stone wall or other distinctive boundary treatment is unavoidable, mitigation by provision of the same type of boundary will be required.

HER POL 38

To promote and encourage planting of native hedgerow species in new developments and as part of the Council's own landscaping works.

HER POL 39

To recognise the archaeological importance of townland boundaries including hedgerows and promote their protection and retention.

HER POL 40

To protect and encourage the effective management of native and semi-natural woodlands, groups of trees and individual trees and to encourage the retention of mature trees and the use of tree surgery rather than felling, where possible, when undertaking, approving or authorising development.

HER POL 41

To protect trees the subject of Tree Preservation Orders (see Map 9.3), Champion and Heritage Trees identified on the Tree Register of Ireland and Heritage Tree Database when undertaking, approving, or authorising development.

HER POL 42

To promote the preservation of individual trees or groups of trees as identified on the Heritage Maps in Volume 2 and to manage these trees in line with arboricultural best practice.

It is an objective of the Council:

HER OBJ 36

To promote awareness, understanding and best practice in the management of the County's woodland, tree and hedgerow resource.

HER OBJ 37

To continue to work in partnership with relevant stakeholders to develop and enhance Balrath Wood and to explore opportunities to develop additional sites under the Neighbour Wood Scheme.

HER OBJ 38

To review the Meath Tree, Woodland and Hedgerow Survey (2011), over the life of the Development Plan, as appropriate.

8.10 Invasive Species

Invasive non-native plant and animal species are a major threat to biodiversity (www.invasivespeciesireland.com) and prohibitions are in place in relation to the introduction or dispersal of certain invasive species as set out in the Third Schedule of the European Communities (Birds and Habitats Regulations 2011 (S.I. 477/2011) and as set out in EU Regulations 1143/2014 on the Prevention and Management of the Introduction and Spread of Invasive Alien Species.

Invasive alien species can negatively impact on native species, transform habitats and threaten whole ecosystems causing serious problems to the environment and the economy. They may in certain cases pose a threat to human safety. There is potential for the spread of invasive species during excavation and construction works and for such species to be introduced into the environment via spreading from private gardens, boat users, horticulture etc. e.g. Japanese Knotweed and Himalayan Balsam.

It is the policy of the Council:

HER POL 43

To promote best practice in the control of invasive species in the carrying out its functions in association with relevant authorities including TII and the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport.

HER POL 44

To require all development proposals to address the presence or absence of invasive alien species on proposed development sites and (if necessary) require applicants to prepare and submit an Invasive Species Management Plan where such a species exists to comply with the provisions of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011-2015.

8.11 Peatlands

The County represents the eastern limit of raised bogs in Ireland and the Council recognises the potential for utilisation of protected areas for tourist, amenity, educational and research purposes. The Council will liaise with the various government and non-government organisations involved in an effort to secure the conservation of the peatland areas having regard to National Peatland Strategy and the National Raised Bog SACs Management Plan 2017-2022. The Council also recognises the potential for some cutaway to facilitate various complimentary activities such the generation of renewable energy, diverse ecosystems and places of public amenity.

It is the policy of the Council:

HER POL 45

To ensure that peatland areas which are designated (or proposed for designation) as NHAs, SACs or SPAs are conserved for their ecological, climate regulation, archaeological, cultural and educational significance.

It is an objective of the Council:

HER OBJ 39

To work in partnership with relevant stakeholders on a suitable peatland site(s) to demonstrate best practice in sustainable peatland conservation, management and restoration techniques and to promote their heritage and educational value subject to Ecological Impact Assessment and Appropriate Assessment Screening, as appropriate, having regard to local and residential amenities.

8.12 Geological Heritage

The National Parks and Wildlife Service and the Geological Survey of Ireland (GSI) are currently drawing up a list of nationally important geological sites. As part of this process the GSI undertook

an audit of The Geological Heritage of Meath in 2007, which identified 28 sites of county geological importance (Table 8.7). These sites will be designated in due course, as Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs), because of their geological interest from a national perspective. In the interim, the Council, through the Plan, will protect and will maintain the geological heritage value of these sites. Any development proposals within or likely to have an impact on County Geological Sites may be referred to the GSI to seek their advice.

Table 8.7 County Geological Sites[7]

1. Gibbstown Castle	15. Boyne Valley
2. St. Keeran's Well	16. Galtrim Moraine
3. Bellewstown	17. Mullaghmore
4. Grangegeeth	18. Murrens
5. Barley Hill Quarry	19. Rathkenny
6. Cregg	20. Rathmolyon Esker
7. Poulmore Scarp	21. Trim Esker
8. Laytown to Gormanston	22. Altmush Stream
9. Benhead	23. Bray Hill Quarry
10. Blackwater Valley	24. Duleek Quarry
11. Kilbride Quarry	25. Riverbank at Nobber
12. Painestown Quarry	26. Rockwood Cliffs
13. Carrickleck Quarry	27. Dunshaughlin (site)
14. Boyne River, Trim	28. St. Gorman's Spring

It is the policy of the Council:

HER POL 46

To maintain the geological and geomorphological heritage values of County Geological Sites listed in Table 8.7 and, through consultation with the Geological Survey of Ireland, protect them from inappropriate development.

8.13 Inland Waterways

The County contains significant stretches of both operational and derelict waterways including stretches of the Royal Canal and Boyne Navigation Canal. Both the navigable and non-navigable waterways are an important amenity and wildlife habitat. All development proposals shall be subject to Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA) and screening for Appropriate Assessment (as appropriate).

It is the policy of the Council:

HER POL 47

To protect the ecological, recreational, educational, amenity and flood alleviation potential of navigational and non-navigational waterways within the County, towpaths and adjacent wetlands.
It is an objective of the Council:

HER OBJ 40

To work in partnership with Waterways Ireland and relevant stakeholders to encourage best practice biodiversity management of canal and towpath habitats.

8.14 Wetlands

Wetlands range from ponds to rivers, reed beds to bogs and fens and can also include areas influenced by the marine – from coastal and estuarine salt marshes, dune slacks and saline wet meadows and lagoons. They support a variety of habitats and species, function in the protection of water quality and/or flood control, have archaeological potential, are important carbon stores contributing to climate resilience and provide open space and recreational opportunities. The County Meath Wetland and Coastal Habitats Survey, 2010 provides baseline ecological data. Any proposals for land reclamation in coastal areas shall be subject to Screening for Appropriate Assessment and to an assessment of any likely impacts on wetlands, coastal habitats, estuarine marsh lands and on coastal processes (including erosion, deposition, accretion and flooding particularly in light of climate change).

HER POL 48

To manage, enhance and protect the wetlands of the County having regard to the 'County Meath Wetland Survey 2010' and ensure that there is an appropriate level of assessment in relation to proposals which would involve draining, reclaiming or infilling of wetland habitats.

8.15 Coastal Zone

The coastal zone of the County contains important resources that provide economic, recreational, aesthetic and conservation benefits. The coastline of the County is classified as a soft coast and stretches between the Boyne Estuary in the north and the River Delvin in the south. The coastline is home to a variety of natural habitats and there are several species of flora and fauna, reflected in the cSAC, pNHA and SPA designations that cover much of the area (please refer to Map 8.3).

It is the policy of the Council:

HER POL 49

To protect the character, visual, recreational, ecological and amenity value of the coast and provisions for public access, in assessing proposals for development.

HER POL 50

To ensure that the County's natural coastal defences, such as beaches, sand dunes, coastal wetlands and estuaries are not compromised by inappropriate works or development.

It is an objective the Council:

HER OBJ 41

To maintain the beaches along the coast to a high standard and develop their recreational potential as a seaside amenity, subject to appropriate environmental assessments and in co-operation with the relevant agencies, in order to bring them to a Blue Flag standard.

HER OBJ 42

To undertake conservation works in accordance with best practice on the coastal dune systems subject to ecological impact assessment and Appropriate Assessment, as appropriate.

HER OBJ 43

To implement, in partnership, with all relevant stakeholders the Laytown, Bettystown and Mornington Beach Management Plan.

HER OBJ 44

To maintain and enhance our natural coastal defences to increase resilience to climate change.

HER OBJ 45

To investigate how the County's natural coastal defences, can be enhanced to increase climate resilience of our coastal communities.

8.16 Public Rights of Way

The Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended requires that development plans include an objective for 'the preservation of public rights of way which give access to seashore, mountain, lakeshore, riverbank or other place of natural beauty or recreational utility, which public rights of way shall be identified both by marking them on at least one of the maps forming part of the development plan and by indicating their location on a list appended to the development plan'.

Appendix 12 provides a list and mapping of such public rights of ways, identified to date, in accordance with this provision. It is important to note that this is may not be an exhaustive list and that the omission of a right of way from this list shall not be taken as an indication that such a right of way is not a public right of way.

It is a policy of the Council:

HER POL 51

To preserve and protect for the common good, existing public rights of way which give access to seashore, mountain, lakeshore, riverbank or other place of natural beauty or recreational utility as identified in Appendix 12 and Map 8.61- 8.6.24.

It is an objective of the Council:

HER OBJ 46

To seek to identify and protect over the lifetime of the Plan further existing rights of way which give access to seashore, mountain, lakeshore, riverbank or other place of natural beauty or recreational utility (accompanied by mapping showing public rights of way).

HER OBJ 47

To seek to negotiate access to lands using permissive access agreements, where appropriate and feasible, in order to provide public access to lands for public amenity purposes.

8.17 Landscape

8.17.1 Statutory Context

The definition of 'landscape' as defined by the European Landscape Convention has been included in the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended. The Act also specifies that development plans shall contain particular objectives relating to landscape, including objectives in accordance with 'relevant policies or objectives relating to providing a framework for identification, assessment, protection, management and planning of landscapes having regard to the European Landscape Convention.

8.17.2 Policy Context

8.17.2.1 The European Landscape Convention and National Landscape Strategy

The European Landscape Convention (ELC), ratified by Ireland in 2002 and which came into effect on 1st March 2004, states that landscape means '…an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors', and this definition has been incorporated into the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended. The Convention requires landscape to be integrated into planning policies and promotes interaction between local and central authorities and trans frontier co-operation to protect landscapes. The Convention recognises the cultural, environmental and economic value of landscape and how it contributes to our quality of life and sense of place. The implementation of the recently published

National Landscape Strategy 2015-2025 will ensure compliance with the European Landscape Convention in Ireland.

It is the objective of the Council:

HER OBJ 48

To support the aims and objectives of the European Landscape Convention by implementing the relevant objectives and actions of the National Landscape Strategy 2015-2025 and any revisions thereof.

8.17.3 Landscape Character Assessment

Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) is a process which describes, maps and classifies landscapes. Landscape character is defined as 'a distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements in the landscape that makes one landscape different from another, rather than better or worse' [8]. Defining landscape character enables an understanding to be formed of the inherent value and importance of individual landscape elements and the processes that may alter landscape character in the future. The cultural and ecological aspects of the landscape cannot be subtracted from its physical and visual characteristics so all of these elements are considered. Draft Guidelines for Landscape Character Assessment were published by the DoEHLG in 2000 and a Landscape Character Assessment for the County was carried out in 2007. A key objective of The National Landscape Strategy 2015-2025 is to develop a National Landscape Character Assessment and to publish statutory guidelines on local Landscape Character Assessments, following best international practices and incorporating Historic Landscape Characterisation for Planning Authorities.

The key objectives of the Landscape Character Assessment are

1. To improve the understanding of the County's landscape in terms of its inherent and unique character and to recognise what elements should be preserved, conserved or enhanced.
2. To predict the broad pattern of future changes and devise policies and objectives as guidance to planners and other parties which will ensure that change is complimentary to landscape character. Sensitivity and capacity of the landscape should be given due consideration in all aspects of decision-making,
3. To assist in the achievement of sustainable development. This underlying principle of all current planning practice and legislation will be adhered to by promoting a unified approach to landscape planning and management which links policies and recommendations for landscape character to existing planning policies.

The Landscape Character Assessment forms Appendix 5 to the Plan. It provides guidance for a detailed understanding of the landscapes of the County, and sets out guidance and recommendations to assist in the development of related planning policies, development of strategies and development management within the County.

8.17.4 Landscape Character Types and Areas

Landscape Character Types are distinct types of landscape that are relatively homogenous in character and are generic in nature in that they may occur in different localities throughout the County. Nonetheless, where they do occur, they commonly share similar combinations of geology, topography, land cover and historical land use, e.g. Hills and Upland Areas.
Landscape Character Areas are units of the landscape that are geographically specific and have their own character and sense of place. Each has its own distinctive character, based upon patterns of geology, landform, landuse, cultural, historical and ecological features e.g. the Boyne Valley.
The Landscape Character Assessment 2007 divides the county into 4 landscape character types (LCTs). These are:

- Hills and Uplands Areas;
- Lowland Areas;
- River Corridors and Estuaries;
- Coastal Areas.

These LCTs are sub-divided into 20 geographically specific landscape character areas.

8.17.5 Landscape Character Sensitivity

The sensitivity of the Landscape Character Areas is defined as its overall resilience to sustain its character in the face of change and its ability to recover from loss or damage to its components. Sensitivity is evaluated using criteria ranging from 'High' to 'Low' and is based on the interaction of individual components such as landform, amount of evident historical features (time depth) and distribution of viewers. A highly sensitive landscape is likely to be vulnerable, fragile and susceptible to change whereas a landscape with low sensitivity is likely to be more robust and/or tolerant of change.

A Matrix of Landscape Character which indicates the Value, Importance and Sensitivity of Landscape Character Areas is included in the Meath Landscape Character Assessment 2007 which forms Appendix 5 of this Plan.

8.17.6 Landscape Capacity

The potential capacity of each LCA is based on indicative types of development that are likely to occur within the study area. Capacity is the ability that the landscape has to absorb specific types of development. It is only possible to define actual capacity on a case-by-case basis because it will vary according to the type and form of development, its location in relation to the landscape character area in question, and its visibility from it.

It is a policy of the Council:

HER POL 52

To protect and enhance the quality, character, and distinctiveness of the landscapes of the County in accordance with national policy and guidelines and the recommendations of the Meath Landscape Character Assessment (2007) in Appendix 5, to ensure that new development meets high standards of siting and design.

HER POL 53

To discourage proposals necessitating the removal of extensive amount of trees, hedgerows and historic walls or other distinctive boundary treatments.

It is an objective of the Council:

HER OBJ 49

To ensure that the management of development will have regard to the value of the landscape, its character, importance, sensitivity and capacity to absorb change as outlined in Appendix 5 Meath Landscape Character Assessment and its recommendations.

HER OBJ 50

To require landscape and visual impact assessments prepared by suitably qualified professionals be submitted with planning applications for development which may have significant impact on landscape character areas of medium or high sensitivity.

HER OBJ 51

To review and update (if required), in the context of a regional approach to landscape assessment, the County Landscape Character Assessment following publication of statutory guidelines for Planning Authorities on local Landscape Character Assessments, as outlined in the National Landscape Strategy 2015-2025.

8.17.7 Historic Landscape Characterisation

Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) is concerned with identifying and detailing the contribution of the past to the present day landscape and broadens the understanding of landscape character. HLC is an important contribution to landscape management because it considers the historical development of the landscape and the relationship of buildings and monuments to landscape patterns. The Council has completed a pilot project on Historic Landscape Characterisation of the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Brú na Bóinne with the School of Archaeology in UCD in accordance with the Heritage Council guidance on Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) in Ireland: Policy and Best Practice Guidance (2010).

8.17.8 Landscape Conservation Areas

Section 204 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended enables a Planning Authority to designate a Landscape Conservation Area, within its functional area, in order to preserve it. The Meath County Development Plan 2007-2013 had an objective to explore the designation of

Landscape Conservation Area(s), in respect of their core areas for (a) Tara Skryne area (s) and (b) Loughcrew and Slieve na Calliagh Hills.

In March 2009, the Council in partnership with then named Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government and the Heritage Council commenced the process of the designation of a Landscape Conservation Area for the Tara/Skryne landscape (as a national pilot project). A draft Landscape Conservation Area was published in May 2010. However, there is no statutory timeframe for adoption of a Landscape Conservation Area. [9]

It is the policy of the Council:

HER POL 54

To protect the archaeological heritage, rural character, setting and amenity of the Tara landscape and Loughcrew and Slieve na Calliagh Hills.

It is the objective of the Council:

HER OBJ 52

To support the designation, of a Landscape Conservation Area, pursuant to Section 204 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, for the Tara Skryne Landscape, in conjunction with the relevant Government Departments and other stakeholders.

HER OBJ 53

To explore, over the life of the Plan, the designation of a Landscape Conservation Area, pursuant to Section 204 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, in respect of Loughcrew and Slieve na Calliagh Hills.

HER OBJ 54

To work in partnership with the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, OPW, local communities and all relevant stakeholders to complete and implement the Conservation Management Plan for the State Owned Lands at Hill of Tara.

HER OBJ 55

To work in partnership with the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, OPW, local community and all relevant stakeholders to address visitor management issues and augment the visitor experience at the Hill of Tara.

8.18 Views and Prospects

The landscape of the County has many vantage points which offer attractive views from hilltops and upland areas, along river valleys and the coast. Many of these views are associated with heritage and tourism sites and provide vantage points over high quality landscapes. These scenic views are of an amenity and tourism value and contribute to our quality of life. It is not envisaged that the designation of a protected view would prohibit all development within the view, rather that any development proposed within the view should be designed and located so as not to obstruct the view or be unduly intrusive in the landscape as seen from these vantage points.

It is an objective of the Council:

HER OBJ 56

To preserve the views and prospects listed in Appendix 10, in Volume 2 and on Map 8.6 and to protect these views from inappropriate development which would interfere unduly with the character and visual amenity of the landscape.

HER OBJ 57

To undertake a review of existing protected views and prospects contained in the County Development Plan and to assess and consider additional views and prospects deemed worthy of inclusion/protection.

8.19 Green Infrastructure

The term Green Infrastructure[10] (GI) can be broadly defined as 'Green Infrastructure is a strategically planned and managed network featuring areas with high quality biodiversity (uplands, wetlands, peatlands, rivers and coast), farmed and wooded lands and other green spaces that conserve ecosystem values which provide essential services to society'. The environmental and heritage resources of the County are vital resources for the County and can be described as the County's 'Green Infrastructure'.

Green Infrastructure can include parks, open spaces, rivers, farmland, playing fields, woodlands, allotments and private gardens which surround and intersperse our towns and villages. It should be designed and managed as a multifunctional resource capable of delivering a wide range of economic, environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities including:

- Attracting businesses and inward investment by creating an attractive environment;
- More places for people to access nature, outdoor recreation and for social interaction;
- Local food production - in allotments, gardens and through agriculture;
- Encouraging physical activity and improved health and well-being by providing quality green spaces for walking and cycling and other physical activity;
- Creating a sense of place and local distinctiveness;
- Space for nature and wildlife to flourish;
- Climate change adaptation - for example flood alleviation and cooling urban heat islands;
- Environmental education.

The European Union's Biodiversity Strategy, 2011 seeks to halt biodiversity loss in European by 2020. This strategy is built around six mutually supportive targets which address the main drivers of biodiversity loss. Target 2 aims to ensure that 'by 2020, ecosystems and their services are maintained and enhanced by establishing Green Infrastructure and restoring at least 15% of degraded ecosystems'. In 2013 the EU published Building a Green Infrastructure for Europe and

Green Infrastructure: Enhancing Europe's Natural Capital to provide a framework and strategy in order to promote and facilitate Green Infrastructure projects. The EU GI Strategy is made up of the four key elements:

- Promoting GI in main EU policy areas;
- Supporting EU-level GI projects;
- Improving access to finance for GI projects;
- Improving information and promoting innovation.

Nationally, there are a number of organisations responsible for developing GI guidance and GI actions in Ireland, namely the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, The Heritage Council, National Parks and Wildlife Service and Comhar - Sustainable Development Council are a number of the key state stakeholders in providing information on GI in Ireland as well implementing the delivery of GI actions. Comhar - The Sustainable Development Council published 'Creating Green Infrastructure for Ireland: Enhancing Natural Capital for Human Wellbeing' (August 2010) and this document is a key tool in GI as it sets out how a network of green spaces can be developed to benefit natural heritage and biodiversity as well as the greater economy and society.

The Council acknowledges that Green Infrastructure planning involves a holistic approach and should be provided as an integral part of sustainable development, alongside other infrastructure such as utilities and transport networks, if we are to get the maximum benefit from our natural assets

It is through the conservation of ecological infrastructure such as hedgerows and riparian corridors that we can develop a 'network of sites' to strengthen and enhance our green infrastructure. These allow for the migration and the exchange of species between conservation areas. To this end, and with a view to improving the ecological coherence of the Natura 2000 network, the Council will encourage the management of features of the landscape which are of major importance for wild fauna and flora. In addition, the Council will identify sites of local biodiversity value through the on-going implementation of the County Heritage Plan 2015-2020 and County Biodiversity Plan 2015-2020. The Council will also encourage the management of features of the landscape which can help us adapt to a changing climate.

8.19.1 Green Infrastructure Strategy for County Meath

The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy supports further development of a Green Infrastructure policies and the coordination of mapping of strategic Green Infrastructure in the Region. The principles of a Green Infrastructure approach to land use planning has been embedded as a cross cutting theme in the policies and objectives of this Plan.

The Council has commenced the preparation of a Green Infrastructure Strategy, in accordance with international best practice and emerging national guidance. The network will operate at all spatial scales from urban areas to the wider countryside and to the regional landscape, providing connections between these scales.

The strategy addresses the four main themes identified, namely:

- Biodiversity and natural heritage;
- Landscape, recreation and amenity;
- Water resources;
- Built heritage and culture.

It is the policy of the Council:

HER POL 55

To recognise the economic, social, environmental and physical value of Green Infrastructure.

HER POL 56

To require that all Land Use Plans protect, manage and provide where possible green infrastructure in an integrated and coherent manner.

It is an objective of the Council:

HER OBJ 58

To develop and support the implementation of a Regional and County Green Infrastructure approach by working in partnership with the Eastern Midland Regional Authority and other key stakeholders to identify, protect, enhance and manage existing green infrastructure within the County and to provide additional Green Infrastructure, where possible.

HER OBJ 59

To identify and map green infrastructure assets and sites of local biodiversity value over the lifetime of the Plan.

HER OBJ 60

To encourage, pursuant to Article 10 of the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC), the management of features of the landscape, such as traditional field boundaries, important for the ecological coherence of the Natura 2000 network and essential for the migration, dispersal and genetic exchange of wild species.

1- World Heritage Convention, 1972

2- Heritage Council (2011). Guidance for the Care, Conservation and Recording of Historic Graveyards

3- Local Government Reform Act 2014

4- Section 81 , Planning and Development, 2000 (as amended)

5- https://www.meath.ie/council/council-services/heritage-architectural-conservation/heritage/heritage-projects-and-grants/projects/meath-industrial-heritage-survey

6- Nature Reserve (Newcastle Lough)

7- Clarke, A., Parkes, M. and Gatley, S. (2007). The Geological Heritage of County Meath. Geological Survey of Ireland and Meath County Council. Report available at www.gsi.ie

8- Swanwick, C. (2002). Landscape Character Assessment: Guidance for England and Scotland

9- Project information is available at www.taralandscape.ie.

10- Comhar (2010) Creating Green Infrastructure for Ireland: Natural Capital for Human Wellbeing. Comhar – Sustainable Development Council.

9.1 Rural Development Context

County Meath is a predominantly rural county in terms of land use, with a large rural population. The rural landscape which includes scenic river valleys and rolling farmland provides a tranquil setting. Rural areas within Meath are home to a diverse range of uses ranging from agriculture and equine industries, centres of local food production, recreational and tourist activities, established villages and one-off rural housing. Ensuring the continued vitality and viability of the rural area is a significant issue for the county, particularly in terms of how best to manage sometimes competing social, economic and environmental considerations. This chapter sets out the rural settlement strategy which is informed by the Core Strategy set out in Chapter 2 of this Development Plan.

Goal

To encourage the continued sustainable development of rural communities without compromising the physical, environmental, natural and heritage resources of the County.

To realise this goal, the Planning Authority has identified a series of key strategic objectives relating to the county and rural development generally, and has devised more detailed objectives specific to development types and rural area types.

Strategic Objectives

It is a strategic objective of Meath County Council:

RUR DEV SO 1

To support the continued vitality and viability of rural areas, environmentally, socially and commercially by promoting sustainable social and economic development.

RUR DEV SO 2

To identify and protect rural resources such as locally and regionally important aquifers and water sources from development which would prejudice their sustainable future usage.

RUR DEV SO 3

To identify and protect known or potential aggregate resources, where feasible, from development which would prejudice their sustainable future usage.

RUR DEV SO 4

To recognise the strategic roles the county will play in the regional and national context in terms of recreation, heritage conservation, natural resources and food production, and to ensure compatibility between this plan and regional and national strategies.

RUR DEV SO 5

To support the vitality and future of Nodes for rural development and ensure a functional relationship between housing in Nodes and the rural area in which they are located.

RUR DEV SO 6

To protect and enhance the visual qualities of rural areas through sensitive design.

RUR DEV SO 7

To support the continuing viability of agriculture, horticulture and other rural based enterprises within rural areas and to promote investment in facilities supporting rural innovation and enterprise with special emphasis on the green economy, in the context of sustainable development and the management of environmental resources.

RUR DEV SO 8

To support and protect the existing economic base and seek to diversify the economy through both inward investment and the promotion of agriculture, forestry and tourism-related industries in rural areas.

RUR DEV SO 9

To ensure that plans and projects associated with rural development will be subject to an Appropriate Assessment Screening and those plans or projects which could, either individually or in-combination with other plans and projects, have a significant effect on a Natura 2000 site (or sites) undergo a full Appropriate Assessment.

RUR DEV SO 10

To promote rural economic development by recognising the need to advance the long term sustainable social and environmental development of rural areas and encouraging economic diversification and facilitating growth of rural enterprises.

9.2 Rural Settlement Strategy

Meath County Council recognises the long tradition of people living in rural areas and promotes sustainable rural settlement as a key component of delivering more balanced regional development. Rural development should be consolidated within existing villages and settlements that can build sustainable rural communities as set out in the National Planning Framework (NPF) and the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Eastern and Midlands Region (RSES). The Development Plan seeks to accommodate rural generated housing needs[1] where they arise, subject to local housing need criteria and development management standards. The Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government published Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines for Planning Authorities in April 2005 and issued a circular SP5/08 which provides advice and guidance in relation to local need and occupancy conditions.

Goal

To ensure that rural generated housing needs are accommodated in the areas they arise, subject to satisfying good practice in relation to site location, access, drainage and design requirements and that urban generated rural housing needs should be accommodated within built-up areas or land identified, through the development plan process.

Strategic Policies

It is a strategic policy of Meath County Council:

RUR DEV SP 1

To adopt a tailored approach to rural housing within County Meath as a whole, distinguishing between rural generated housing and urban generated housing in rural areas recognising the characteristics of the individual rural area types.

RUR DEV SP 2

To ensure that individual house developments in rural areas satisfy the housing requirements of persons who are an intrinsic part of the rural community in which they are proposed, subject to compliance with normal planning criteria. An assessment of individual rural development proposals including one-off houses shall have regard to other policies and objectives in this Development Plan, and in particular Chapter 8 Section 8.6.1 UNESCO World Heritage Site of Brú na Bóinne.

9.3 Rural Area Types

The Meath County Development Plan 2007-2013 identified three area types in the county following detailed research and assessment.

The three rural area types are identified on Map 9. 1 and are described as follows:

Area 1 - Rural Areas under Strong Urban Influence

Key Challenge: To facilitate the housing requirements of the rural community while directing urban generated housing development to areas zoned for new housing in towns and villages in the area of the development plan.

This area exhibits the characteristics of proximity to the immediate environs or close commuting catchment of Dublin, with a rapidly rising population and evidence of considerable pressure for development of housing due to proximity to such urban areas. This area includes the commuter- belt and peri-urban[2] areas of the county, and are the areas that are experiencing the most development pressure for one-off rural housing. These areas act as attractive residential locations for the inflow of migrants into the county.

Policies

It is the policy of the Council:

RD POL 1

To ensure that individual house developments in rural areas satisfy the housing requirements of persons who are an intrinsic part of the rural community in which they are proposed, subject to compliance with normal planning criteria.

RD POL 2

To facilitate the housing requirements of the rural community as identified while directing urban generated housing to areas zoned for new housing development in towns and villages in the area of the development plan.

RD POL 3

To protect areas falling within the environs of urban centres in this Area Type from urban generated and unsightly ribbon development and to maintain the identity of these urban centres.

Area 2 - Strong Rural Areas

Key Challenge: To maintain a reasonable balance between development activity in the extensive network of smaller towns and villages and housing proposals in the wider rural area.

This area is underpinned primarily by relative levels of residential stability compared to Area Type 1 within a well-developed town and village structure and in the wider rural area around them. This stability is supported by a traditionally strong agricultural economic base and the level of individual housing development activity in these areas tends to be lower than that within Area Type 1 and confined to certain areas.

This area type is to be found in rural areas along a spine from the north of the county east of and including Kells as far as Oldcastle. The environs of Athboy and Slane are also included in this category. This area has less of a tradition of urban settlement. It is under more moderate pressure for one-off housing development than the areas under strong urban influence.

Policies

It is the policy of the Council:

RD POL 4

To consolidate and sustain the stability of the rural population and to strive to achieve a balance between development activity in urban areas and villages and the wider rural area.

RD POL 5

To facilitate the housing requirements of the rural community as identified while directing urban generated housing to areas zoned for new housing development in towns and villages in the area of the development plan.

Area 3 - Low Development Pressure Areas
Key Challenge: To arrest population and economic decline.

This area type covers much of the north-western, western and south-western parts of the county. This area is associated with relatively high levels of residential stability above average percentages of family households and high rates of agricultural employment. In addition, it is characterised by the lowest average population densities. This area has the weakest urban structure within the county and the rural housing policy applicable should reflect same.

Policy

It is the policy of the Council:

RD POL 6

To accommodate demand for permanent residential development as it arises subject to good practice in matters such as design, location and the protection of important landscapes and any environmentally sensitive areas.

This Development Plan identifies Policies for one-off rural housing – referring to housing outside of the development boundaries of any settlements identified in the Settlement Strategy in Chapter 3 (i.e. on unzoned lands/rural area). Meath County Council will assess applications for rural dwellings on the basis of the policies set down for each Area Type above and the criteria set out below.

9.4 Persons who are an Intrinsic Part of the Rural Community

The Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines outline that Planning Authorities in formulating policies recognise the importance to rural people of family ties and ties to a local area such as parish, townland or the catchment of local schools and sporting clubs. It also delivers positive benefits for rural areas and sustains rural communities by allowing people to build in their local areas on suitable sites.

The Planning Authority will support proposals for individual dwellings on suitable sites in rural areas relating to natural resources related employment where the applicant can:

- Clearly demonstrate a genuine need for a dwelling on the basis that the applicant is significantly involved in agriculture. In these cases, it will be required that the applicant satisfy the Planning Authority with supporting documentation that the nature of the agricultural activity, by reference to the area of land and/or the intensity of its usage, is sufficient to support full time or significant part time occupation. It is also considered that persons taking over the ownership and running of family farms and/or the sons and daughters of farmers would be considered within this category of local need. The applicant shall satisfy the Planning Authority

as to the significance of their employment. Where persons are employed in a part time capacity, the predominant occupation shall be farming / natural resource related. It should be noted, that where an applicant is also a local of the area, the onus of proof with regard to demonstrating the predominance of the agricultural or rural resource employment shall not normally be required.

- Clearly demonstrate their significant employment is in the bloodstock and equine industry, forestry, agri-tourism or horticulture sectors and who can demonstrate a need to live in a rural area in the immediate vicinity of their employment in order to carry out their employment. In these cases, it will be required that the applicant satisfy the Planning Authority with supporting documentation that the nature of the activity, by reference to the area of land and/or the intensity of its usage, is sufficient to support full time or significant part time occupation. The applicant shall satisfy the Planning Authority as to the significance of their employment. Where persons are employed in a part time capacity, the predominant occupation shall be bloodstock and equine industry, forestry, agri-tourism or horticulture related. It should be noted, that where an applicant is also a local of the area, the onus of proof with regard to demonstrating the predominance of the agricultural or rural resource employment shall not normally be required.

The Planning Authority recognises the interest of persons local to or linked to a rural area, who are not engaged in significant agricultural or rural resource related occupation, to live in rural areas. For the purposes of this policy section, persons local to an area are considered to include:

- Persons who have spent substantial periods of their lives, living in rural areas as members of the established rural community for a period in excess of five years and who do not possess a dwelling or who have not possessed a dwelling in the past in which they have resided or who possess a dwelling in which they do not currently reside;

- Persons who were originally from rural areas and who are in substandard or unacceptable housing scenario’s and who have continuing close family ties with rural communities such as being a mother, father, brother, sister, son, daughter, son in law, or daughter in law of a long-established member of the rural community being a person resident rurally for at least ten years;

- Returning emigrants who have lived for substantial parts of their lives in rural areas, then moved abroad and who now wish to return to reside near other family members, to work locally, to care for older members of their family or to retire, and;

- Persons, whose employment is rurally based, such as teachers in rural primary schools or whose work predominantly takes place within the rural area in which they are seeking to build their first home, or is suited to rural locations such as farm hands or trades-people and who have a housing need.

The Planning Authority also recognises that exceptional health circumstances may require a person to live in a particular environment or close to family support. In such cases, the exceptional health circumstances would require supporting documentation from a registered medical practitioner and a disability organisation supporting a planning

application. In the absence of any significant environmental, access or traffic reasons for refusal and the proposal adheres to sensitive design and siting criteria, the Planning Authority will consider granting planning permission, subject where appropriate to conditions regarding occupancy.

Where an applicant for a one-off house in the countryside can demonstrate, by the submission of documentary evidence, that their original dwelling was sold due to unavoidable financial circumstances, such applications will be considered on their individual merits, where the applicant satisfies local housing need criteria. This consideration does not override the other normal assessment criteria as set out in this Development Plan for a one-off house.

Where an applicant has resided in a rural area for a considerable period of time, being a period of time in excess of the previous 10 consecutive years, in a dwelling attached to their business, such as farming, and the business inclusive of dwelling house is being sold for retirement or other circumstances, such applications will be considered on their individual merits, where the applicant satisfies local housing need criteria. The Planning Authority will facilitate preplanning consultation in such circumstances.

9.5 All Areas

9.5.1 Development Assessment Criteria

The Planning Authority will also take into account the following matters in assessing individual proposals for one-off rural housing:

- The housing need background of the applicant(s) in terms of employment, strong social links to rural areas and immediate family as defined in Section 9.4 Persons who are an Intrinsic Part of the Rural Community;
- Local circumstances such as the degree to which the surrounding area has been developed and is trending towards becoming overdeveloped;
- The degree of existing development on the original landholding from which the site is taken including the extent to which previously permitted rural housing has been retained in family occupancy. Where there is a history of individual residential development on the landholding through the speculative sale of sites, permission may be refused;
- The suitability of the site in terms of access, wastewater disposal and house location relative to other policies and objectives of this plan;
- The degree to which the proposal might be considered infill development.

9.5.2 Ribbon Development

Ribbon development is considered to be a high density of almost continuous road frontage type development, for example where 5 or more houses exist on any one side of a given 250 metres of road frontage. (Please note that in all instances where ribbon development is referred to in this Development Plan, the example contained in Appendix 4 of the Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines for Planning Authorities as published by the DoEHLG in April 2005 shall apply).Whether a given proposal will exacerbate such ribbon development or could be considered will depend on:

- The type of rural area and circumstances of the applicant;
- The degree to which the proposal might be considered infill development, and;
- The degree to which existing ribbon development would be extended or whether distinct areas of ribbon development would coalesce as a result of the development.

Meath County Council will endeavor to arrive at a balanced and reasonable view in the interpretation of the above criteria taking account of local circumstances, including the planning history of the area and development pressures.

9.5.3 Occupancy Conditions

Meath County Council is committed to attaching occupancy conditions in accordance with the Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines and Circular SP 5/08 issued by the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government.

Policy

It is the policy of the Council:

RD POL 7

To attach an occupancy condition to all individual one-off rural dwellings, including those located in Nodes, and on unzoned land/rural area, pursuant to Section 47 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), restricting the use of the dwelling to the applicant, as a place of permanent residence. The period of occupancy will be limited to a period of 7 years from the date of first occupation. No such occupancy condition shall be imposed with respect to housing located in Rural Area Type 'Low Development Pressure Area'.

9.5.4 Rural Nodes

The housing needs of those members of the rural community who are not part of the agricultural/horticulture community as set out at section 9.4 will be facilitated in the extensive network of rural nodes.

The majority of rural nodes, (see Table 9.2) comprise largely of unserviced rural areas with limited social and community infrastructure. Rural nodes are designated for limited development at a sustainable scale for immediate local need through the development of

Ashbourne MD - Rural Nodes
Ardcath
Bellewstown
Clonalvy
Curragha
Cushinstown
Edoxtown
Lismullin
Oberstown
Kells MD - Rural Nodes
Ballinacree
Ballinlough
Castletown
Cortown
Dromone
Drumbarragh
Fordstown
Kilallon
Kilbeg
Kilberry

Kilskeer
Meath Hill
Newcastle
Oristown
Rathkenny
Rathmore
Teervurcher
Wilkinstown

clusters. It is anticipated that each rural node can cater for a small population increase from their current population base over the period of the Plan.

Consideration of planning applications for development within the nodes will have regard to the role and form of the node within the wider rural area with particular care being taken that these settlements do not compete with designated villages in the services they provide or the role and function they play within the rural area.

Detailed siting and design guidance including best practice examples and layouts in terms of the development of the rural nodes will be provided in the Meath Rural House Design Guide when reviewed.

The Council will support infill development on appropriate sites in rural nodes which make the most sustainable use of serviced land and existing public infrastructure. The Council will also promote the clachan tradition of clustering houses together in the modern context. Cluster Housing Schemes in rural nodes should be developed in a sustainable way respecting the unique aspects of the village and the site itself, whilst also responding to current economic and social needs.

Residential use of the upper floors of commercial properties is positively encouraged and can make a positive contribution to the regeneration of rural nodes. Where external alterations are proposed to facilitate the conversion of existing premises to residential use these will only be permitted where they are in keeping with the host building and the character of the surrounding rural area in terms of design, scale and use of materials.

Table 9.2 Rural Nodes

Laytown-Bettystown MD - Rural Nodes
Yellow Furze
Grangegeeth
Lobinstown
Monknewtown
Newtown
Navan MD - Rural Nodes
Bohermeen
Boyerstown
Robinstown
Ratoath MD - Rural Nodes
Batterstown
Culmullin
Drumree
Dunsany
Kilcloon
Kiltale

Moynalvy
Trim MD - Rural Nodes
Ballinabrackey
Bective
Castlejordan
Coole
Dunderry
Kilbride
Killyon
Hill of Down
Rathcore

Policies

It is the policy of the Council:

RD POL 8

To ensure that the provision of housing in all rural nodes shall be reserved for persons who are an intrinsic part of the rural community. In all cases applicants shall certify to the satisfaction of the Planning Authority that they have been a rural resident for a minimum of 5 years. The node shall be within 12 km of their current place of residence.

Detailed documentary evidence shall be submitted to support the foregoing applications as follows:

- Completed Local Housing Needs Assessment Form;
- Details of all places of residence of the applicant over the previous 5 years;

- Documentary evidence of the applicants Intrinsic Links to the area which shall include, where applicable, : Copy of applicant entry on Electoral Register, Evidence of attendance at Local School confirmed in writing by the School, Evidence of Membership of local community/sports groups; letter from a Financial Institution confirming address, Utility bills confirming address.
- Health/ Financial/Unacceptable accommodation circumstances (Refer to Section 9.4)

The Planning Authority may seek additional information to that set out above if considered necessary.

Objectives

It is the objective of the Council:

RD OBJ 1

To support rural nodes located across the County in offering attractive housing options to meet the needs of the established rural communities and to support existing local community facilities such as schools, post offices, recreational facilities and childcare facilities etc.

RD OBJ 2

To seek to ensure that new residential development in rural nodes is in accordance with 'the Meath Rural Design Guide' and is of a design and layout compatible with the character of its setting including the requirement to provide footpaths where appropriate.

RD OBJ 3

To promote the development of central brownfield sites in rural nodes, if existing, as appropriate. Suburban type developments or multiple housing developments will not be permitted.

RD OBJ4

All development in rural nodes should take cognisance of the prevailing scale, pattern of development and services availability.

RD OBJ 5

To promote the development of local craft/artisan facilities in Rural Nodes, of a design and layout reflective of its rural setting.

RD OBJ 6

To promote the provision of childcare facilities within rural nodes to meet local demand and encourage the location of such facilities near schools where possible.

RD OBJ 7

To encourage the provision of local small-scale convenience shops, exclusive of service stations, at an appropriate scale in rural nodes where there is a clear deficiency in retail provision, subject to the protection of residential amenity and the rural character of the area.

RD OBJ 8

To require the provision of high quality, durable, appropriately designed, secure boundary treatments in rural nodes reflective of the rural environment in all developments.

RD OBJ 9

To promote the retention of field boundaries and mature trees and hedgerows to protect the rural character of the area.

RD OBJ 10

To ensure that proposals for infill development take account of the character of the area and where possible retain existing features such as building line, height, railings, hedgerows, trees, gateways etc.

RD OBJ 11

To require that infill proposals accord with the relevant Development Management Standards contained in this Plan and should contribute positively to the renewal of these areas and to the established character and amenities of the area.

RD OBJ 12

To promote residential use above shops and other business premises subject to compliance with the relevant Development Management Standards s contained in this Plan.

RD OBJ 13

To promote the clachan tradition of clustering houses together in rural nodes while respecting the unique aspects of the node and the site itself. An overall indicative scheme layout shall be provided as part of the first planning application on the subject landholding.

RD OBJ 14

To require the provision of footpaths and public lighting as part of residential development in rural nodes, as appropriate.

RD OBJ 15

To require a minimum site area of 0.2 hectares (0.5 acres) for each residential unit in rural nodes where serviced by an individual waste water treatment plant.

9.6 Rural Residential Development: Design and Siting Considerations

Traditional buildings in the countryside evolved in response to their setting and function on the land. They blend sympathetically with their surroundings and do not appear incongruous in the landscape. It is essential that similar care is exercised in the siting and design of new buildings to ensure that they too can integrate harmoniously with their surroundings and thereby protect the amenity and character of the countryside of County Meath. Meath County Council has prepared design guidelines for rural houses and it is the policy of the Council to implement these guidelines through the development management process. The guidelines are included in Appendix 13 of the Development Plan.

Policy

It is the policy of the Council:

RD POL 9

To require all applications for rural houses to comply with the 'Meath Rural House Design Guide'.

The determination of whether a new building integrates into the landscape is not a test of invisibility; rather it requires an assessment of the extent to which the development of the proposed site, including necessary site works, will blend in unobtrusively with its surroundings.

The main criteria against which the degree of visual impact will be considered include;

- The location of the site within the landscape, the position of the building within the site and its relationship with surrounding buildings. This will help determine whether the development will be a prominent feature in the landscape;
- The attributes of the site and its landscape surroundings and whether these provide sufficient enclosure for the new building. This includes the existence or otherwise of natural boundaries and/or a visual backdrop, and whether there is any intervening vegetation or natural features between the site and critical views; and
- The suitability of the design of the building for the site and its locality, including its form, scale and massing.

The assessment of integration will be judged from critical views along stretches of the public road network, shared private lane-ways serving existing or approved dwellings, public rights of way and other areas of general public access and assembly.

New buildings that would read as skyline development or occupy a top of slope/ridge location or otherwise be a prominent feature in the landscape will be unacceptable.

New buildings should be sited to take advantage of the opportunities afforded by existing mature planting, hills, slopes or other natural features to provide suitable enclosure. These features can provide a visual backdrop to development and equally where located in the foreground between the site and critical views can assist integration by filtering views of the new building. A group of existing buildings, such as a farm complex may also provide an opportunity to sensitively integrate a new building provided this does not adversely impact on rural character.

Where trees provide enclosure or a backdrop to a site they should be retained and where necessary augmented by new planting with native or other species characteristic of the area. This will assist the integration of the new building and help promote biodiversity. Care should be taken to ensure that an appropriate distance is maintained between tree root systems and building foundations, so neither is compromised.

While new tree planting for integration purposes will be considered together with existing landscape features, new planting alone will not be sufficient. A building on an unacceptable

site cannot be successfully integrated into the countryside by the use of landscaping. New planting will inevitably take a considerable length of time to mature and in the interim will not mitigate the impact of new development. Similarly, a new building that relies on significant earth works, such as mounding or cut and fill for integration will be generally unacceptable.

Due to the widespread views generally available in flat landscapes or exposed hill areas, it is all the more important to ensure that new buildings integrate well with their surroundings. In such areas, poor siting and design carries with it a greater potential for adverse impact on visual amenity and rural character. Particular care is therefore required in site selection so that new buildings will integrate into these landscapes.

9.6.1 Access and Other Ancillary Works

New accesses are often a visible feature of development in the countryside and on occasion can be more obtrusive than the building itself, particularly if they include ornate walls, gates and fencing.

All new access drives and services, such as electricity and telephone lines, should be run unobtrusively alongside existing hedgerows or wall lines and should be accompanied by appropriate landscaping measures. Access driveways should respect site contours and cross them gently, thus integrating the building with its entrance and site. Sweeping driveways which create a suburban emphasis and access arrangements, will not be acceptable.

While adequate visibility at the road access is necessary in the interests of road safety, access driveways surfaced in tarmacadam and with concrete kerbing can look out of place in the countryside and less formal solutions should be sought.

The traditional field pattern should be preserved and roadside and field boundary hedges and stone walls retained or reinstated following any access works. Retention or reinstatement of boundaries, hedges and walls and the provision of gates and piers in keeping with the character of the area is an important element in mitigating the impact of new development and where necessary will be controlled by condition.

The provision of external lighting to serve dwellings requires careful consideration in order to meet the functional requirements of residents while remaining in character with the rural area. Floodlighting can result in light pollution and may have adverse impacts on the fauna of an area while ornate, suburban style garden lighting may also be inappropriate in a rural context. Where considered necessary, the Planning Authority may attach conditions to grants of permission stipulating what type of lighting should be provided.

9.7 Agriculture

County Meath's rich pasturelands support a wide variety of farming types. Agriculture has traditionally been the most important contributor to the rural economy of County Meath. While it may now provide less employment, it still remains important as a significant source of income and employment in rural areas. Furthermore, it is recognised that the agriculture

sector plays an important role in environmental management and landscape protection and can play a central role in maintaining and enhancing the quality of the rural countryside.

9.7.1 Employment in Agriculture

To sustain rural communities, farm diversification and new employment opportunities will be required. In recent years there has been significant growth in the demand for fresh local produce and the development of allotments. Further development in horticulture and in value added food and agricultural enterprises are sectors with opportunities for growth. Specialist beef production and Intensive dairying are the most common types of farming. Meath is the country's second most important centre for the bloodstock industry, after County Kildare. The equine industry is important both economically and culturally.

Fairyhouse Racecourse, Navan Racecourse and Tattersalls Bloodstock Auctioneers are highly prominent enterprises in the area. Race meetings are also held in Bellewstown and Laytown. Bloodstock and sport-horse enterprises generate employment directly and also through other associated enterprises and sectors such as tourism.

Agriculture will continue to be an important component of the economy. The agricultural sector must adapt to the challenges posed by modernisation, restructuring, market development and the increasing importance of environmental issues. An economically efficient agricultural and food sector, together with forestry, sensitive exploitation of natural resources and diversification into alternative on-farm and off-farm activities, are essential components of the development of the rural economy.

Goal

To maintain a vibrant and healthy agricultural sector based on the principles of sustainable development whilst at the same time finding alternative employment in or close to rural areas to sustain rural communities.

Policies

It is the policy of the Council:

RD POL 10

To encourage and facilitate agricultural diversification into agri-businesses such as organic foods, rural tourism and small to medium sized enterprises subject to the retention of the holding for primarily agricultural use and the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

RD POL 11

To protect the economic and social benefits of local country markets devoted to the sale of local agricultural and craft produce and to support their role as visitor attractions.

RD POL 12

To facilitate the development of agriculture while ensuring that natural waters, wildlife habitats and conservation areas are protected from pollution.

RD POL 13

To protect agricultural or agri-business uses from unplanned and/or incompatible urban development.

9.8 Agricultural Development

9.8.1 Agricultural Buildings

The provision of well-located structures and facilities necessary for good and environmentally sound agricultural practice shall be supported by the Planning Authority. The suitability of a given proposal will be determined by the following factors:

- The provision of buildings to a design, materials specification and appearance and at locations which would be compatible with the protection of rural amenities. Particular attention should be paid to developments therefore in sensitive landscapes as identified in the Landscape Character Assessment (Refer to Appendix 5);
- The availability of an effective means of farm waste management to ensure nutrient balancing between application of farm wastes to land and its balanced uptake by agricultural use of land;
- Whilst the Planning Authority recognises the primacy in land use terms of agriculture in rural areas and that the presence of individual housing should not impinge unduly on legitimate and necessary rural activity, regard should also be had to the unnecessary location of major new farm complexes proximate to existing residential development.

9.8.2 Intensive Agriculture

The requirements of the preceding section will be applied to intensive agri-business proposals in the pig and poultry sectors. Whilst the Planning Authority recognises the role of this sector to contribute towards national economic targets and the economic well-being of the county in general, it is vital that the environmental qualities of the county are recognised in such proposals and protected accordingly. The scale and intensity of such activities within a limited area and the appropriateness of the activity in relation to the quantum of waste generated and its effect on the area is an important consideration in assessing development proposals for intensive agriculture. This applies in particular where the management of nutrients would be located in areas identified as major aquifers and which would be vulnerable to contamination of ground water.

9.8.3 Alternative Agri-Enterprise

The Planning Authority shall support proposals for agri-tourism developments such as farmhouse guest accommodation, equestrian centres, outdoor pursuit centres and other similar activities including small-scale craft activities where normal development criteria in relation to satisfactory access, appropriate location and design and waste management are observed.

Whilst the Planning Authority would encourage and endeavour to facilitate the expansion and diversification of agriculture, some agri-business activities may be more appropriately located within serviced settlement centres on lands identified for such uses in the Local Area Plans, where piped wastewater disposal facilities are available. Detailed policies on economic development within rural areas are included in Chapter 4 - Economy and Employment Strategy.

9.8.4 The Informal Horticulture Sector

Allotments are becoming increasingly popular and play an important function in serving communities. Private landowners have a role in providing this resource and service which promotes sustainable living. Allotments shall be located such that they do not have an adverse impact on the safety and capacity of the surrounding road network, and shall be designed and sited to have a minimal impact on the surrounding landscape. (For further information on Allotments refer to Section 11.7.6)

Policy

It is the policy of the Council:

RD POL 14

To support the development of appropriately located allotment development, in areas which have good access to and are proximate to built-up and residential areas.

9.9 Forestry

Forests and woodlands play an important role within the Greater Dublin Area in terms of supporting rural employment and rural diversity, climate change management and carbon sequestration, biodiversity and as a source of renewable/alternative energy sources. Forests and woodlands have a significant recreational and amenity value. Further growth in forestry plantation will need to take into account potential impacts on water quality and biodiversity.

The introduction of large-scale forestry areas can have negative impacts on an area if they are not in harmony with the surrounding environment. Forestry activities must be appropriate in terms of nature and scale to the surrounding area, so they are not visually

obtrusive on the landscape or cause damage to important habitats or the ecology of the area. The use of native species or broadleaf/conifer mixture and age class diversity can enhance the visual impact and biodiversity of forests. In order to facilitate guidance on areas which contain opportunities for the creation of new woodland and areas which might be sensitive to new forestry proposals, the Landscape Characterisation Assessment of the county should be consulted (Appendix 5). There are several areas of commercial forestry in County Meath but it is not currently a widespread land use. There are already some young plantations in parts of the County which are a likely result of farm diversification. Coniferous plantations are significant and long-term landscape features which should be located sensitively. If located in prominent or highly visible locations they will change the traditional farmed appearance of the landscape and may attract attention from long distances. They have the potential to adversely affect scenic value, biodiversity and archaeological features.

At all times, the recommendations of the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine and the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage guidelines on forestry and fisheries, archaeology and landscape, will be adhered to. In addition, the Planning Authority will encourage the provision of public access to new forests through walking and bridle paths, recreational areas and other similar facilities. The appropriateness of a given site will also be determined by reference to any effects upon established housing which might be enveloped and the proposed manner of transporting harvested timber and the adequacy of transport routes for haulage.

Goal

To develop forestry to a scale and in a manner which maximises its contribution to the economic and social well-being of the County on a sustainable basis and which is compatible with the protection of the environment.

Policies

It is the policy of the Council:

RD POL 15

To encourage sustainable forestry development, which is planted, managed and harvested in accordance with the Forest Service Guidelines for Landscape, Forest Harvesting and Environmental, Archaeology, Biodiversity and Water Quality.

RD POL 16

To promote forestry development of appropriate scale and character whilst ensuring that the development does not have a negative visual impact on the countryside or cause pollution or degradation to wildlife habitats, natural waters or areas of ecological importance.

RD POL 17

To encourage the provision of public access to new forests through walking and bridle paths, recreational areas and other similar facilities.

RD POL 18

To promote the avoidance of deforestation or commercial afforestation within Natura 2000 sites unless directly relating to the management of the site for its qualifying interests.

Objectives

It is an objective of Meath County Council:

RDOBJ16

To continue to involve the Local Authority in the NeighbourWood Scheme and to identify areas at local level that are suitable for such schemes

RDOBJ17

To co-operate with the Forest Service of the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine to encourage and promote the preparation and implementation of an Indicative Forest Strategy for the County.

9.10 Tree Preservation

Throughout the county, series of trees or groupings of trees have been identified as being of particular importance or value to the area. As a means of protecting these areas of planting, Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) have been made for a number of sites (Map 9.3). In 2011, Meath County Council in conjunction with the Heritage Council commissioned the County Meath Tree, Woodland and Hedgerow Survey. During the course of field surveys of woodlands and parklands, a number of trees were surveyed including the trees and groups of trees protected under TPOs. The survey details the location of notable trees in County Meath classified according to the nature of their heritage value and recommends that these trees be afforded protection by Meath County Council under TPOs.

Notwithstanding the existence of TPOs, it is recognised that in some instances tree felling will be unavoidable over the life of the Plan. Where felling of trees is unavoidable, new planting will be required and the planting of native species will be encouraged. The Planning Authority will consult with the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine advisors regarding its recommendations on Tree Felling Licence applications.

Objective

It is an objective of the Council:

RDOBJ18

To review and update the current list of TPOs and explore the option of making additions having regard to the recommendations set down in the County Meath Tree,Woodland and Hedgerow Survey (2011) and having due regard to the Council's policies and objectives elsewhere in this County Development Plan.

Policies

It is the policy of Meath County Council:

RD POL 19

To consider the preservation of any tree, trees or groups of trees or woodland of special amenity or environmental value by use of Tree Preservation Orders.

RD POL 20

To require the submission of landscape plans where appropriate to accompany planning applications for rural development prepared by competent professionals and to promote the use of native trees for boundary treatment and shelter belts.

9.11 Extractive Industry and Building Materials Production

Meath County Council acknowledges the need for extractive industries in terms of supply of aggregate materials for the construction sector, delivering transport infrastructure projects, and for the export market. However, the potential for conflict in the operation of these industries with wider environmental issues needs careful consideration. By their nature, aggregates can only be worked where they occur. The cost of haulage affects economic competitiveness in this sector. This inevitably leads to conflicts and environmental concerns. Extractive industries by their nature can give rise to detrimental environmental and residential amenity effects including traffic generation, vibration, dust, noise, water pollution, visual intrusion and loss of ground water supplies. The impact on the road network of the County is significant.

Meath contains a variety of natural resources such as building raw materials in the form of sand, gravel, stone reserves including high purity limestones and shale used in cement and magnesia manufacture and base metal deposits. The potential of these resources to underpin construction output and provide employment and economic growth in the local and regional economy is recognised as is the need to exploit such resources in an environmentally sound and sustainable manner.

The RPGs require development plans to map key natural aggregate resources. The wide distribution of resources is recognised and particular known deposits and sites have been mapped by Geological Survey of Ireland (GSI) in 2004. The GSI Aggregate Potential Mapping illustrates potential crushed rock and sand and gravel deposits and assesses the interactions between the development of these resources and future land uses. These maps are acknowledged as not being exhaustive and additional reserves may adjoin those shown on Map 9.5 and 9.6. Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Quarries and Ancillary Activities were published by the DoEHLG in 2004. A number of other guidelines relating to quarrying have been produced by various bodies for example ‘Geological Heritage Guidelines for the

Extractive Industry' (GSI), 'Institute of Geologists of Ireland Environmental Impact Statements Guide' and 'Wildlife, Habitats and the Extractive Industry' (NoticeNature).

Meath County Council has undertaken an examination of quarries within its administrative area in accordance with section 261A of the Planning and Development Act 2000 as amended to determine whether development was carried out which would have required Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) or Appropriate Assessment (AA) having regard to the Environmental Impact Assessment Directive and the Habitats Directive. The Department of Environment, Community and Local Government published Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Section 261A of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 and related provisions in January 2012.

Goal

To facilitate adequate supplies of aggregate resources to meet the future growth needs of the County and the wider region while addressing key environmental, traffic and social impacts and details of rehabilitation.

Policies

It is the policy of the Council:

RD POL 21

To ensure that projects associated with the extractive industry carry out screening for Appropriate Assessment in accordance with Article 6(3) of the E.C. Habitats Directive, where required.

RD POL 22

To facilitate the exploitation of the county's natural resources and to exercise appropriate control over the types of development taking place in areas containing proven deposits, whilst also ensuring that such developments are carried out in a manner which would not unduly impinge on the visual amenity or environmental quality in the area

RD POL 23

To support the extractive industry where it would not unduly compromise the environmental quality of the county and where detailed rehabilitation proposals are provided.

RD POL 24

To seek to ensure that the extraction of minerals and aggregates minimise the detraction from the visual quality of the landscape and do not adversely affect the environment or adjoining existing land uses.

RD POL 25

To ensure that the extractive industry and associated development minimises adverse impacts on the road network in the area and that the full cost of road improvements,

including during operations and at time of closure, which are necessary to facilitate those industries are borne by the industry itself.

RD POL 26

To ensure that all existing workings shall be rehabilitated to suitable land uses and that all future extraction activities will allow for the rehabilitation of pits and proper land use management. The biodiversity value of the site should be considered in the first instance when preparing restoration plans. Where landfilling is proposed, inert material is the preferred method. Each planning application shall be considered on a case by case basis and where relevant will be dealt with under the relevant regional Waste Management Plan.

RD POL 27

To ensure that development for aggregates / mineral extraction, processing and associated processes does not significantly impact in the following areas:

i. Existing & Proposed Special Areas of Conservation (SACs);

ii. Special Protection Areas (SPAs);

iii. Natural Heritage Areas and Proposed Natural Heritage Areas;

iv. Other areas of importance for the conservation of flora and fauna;

v. Areas of significant archaeological potential;

vi. In the vicinity of a recorded monument, and; Sensitive landscapes.

vii. World Heritage Sites

9.12 The Meath Gaeltachts/Gaeltachtaí na Midhe

County Meath contains two separate Gaeltachts that have been officially designated by the Department of Community, Rural, and Gaeltacht Affairs namely (a) Rathcairn, three miles south east of Athboy and (b) Baile Ghib, six miles east of Kells (Map 9.4).

There is a requirement on Planning Authorities to include objectives in the development plan for:

"the protection of the linguistic and cultural heritage of the Gaeltacht including the promotion of Irish as the community language, where there is a Gaeltacht area in the area of the development plan."

The two key elements therefore are protection and promotion.

It has been a long-standing objective of successive Governments to maintain Irish as the language of the community and of the home in the Gaeltachts and the Planning Authority fully supports this objective. The normal requirements to demonstrate that an applicant(s) is an intrinsic member of the rural Gaeltacht community will apply to all applications for individual applications within the defined areas of the Gaeltachts. This would accord with both national and regional planning guidance. Nonetheless, special consideration will be given to Irish applicants or those who would ensure the stabilisation and the promotion of Irish as a community language.

In addition to the Development Plan, Meath County Council in performance of its duties pursuant to the Official Languages Act 2003 has drafted its own plan towards providing:

- A clear policy towards bi-lingual signage;
- Attending the needs of the public and providing services in Irish;
- Attend the needs of the Gaeltacht completely in Irish, and;
- Assign persons with Irish to provide services through Irish, as required

The Language Scheme/Plan is monitored to ensure that its provisions are clearly met in an efficient and effective manner and in accordance with the Official Languages Act 2003.

Volume 2 of the Development Plan provides detailed objectives for the promotion of development in the two Meath Gaeltachts in a manner that protects and enhances their cultural distinctiveness.

Goal

To ensure the continued survival and development of the Gaeltachts as an area distinct in the linguistic and cultural life of the county, whilst seeking to realise their economic and development potential in a balanced and sustainable manner over the lifetime of the Plan.

Policies

It is the policy of the Council:

RD POL 28

To ensure that all new development in the Gaeltachts have a positive impact upon the use of Irish in the area and the cultural heritage of the area, whilst seeking to realise their economic and development potential in a balanced and sustainable manner over the lifetime of the Plan.

RD POL 29

To require all applications for rural houses within the Gaeltachts to comply with the ‘Meath Rural Design Guide’.

Objectives

It is an objective of Meath County Council:

RD OBJ 19

To require that a "Linguistic Impact Study" be carried out before any application for housing (for single and multiple housing developments) is considered within the Gaeltacht Area. Such a study, by reference to the linguistic background of intended users or occupants, or identification of its relationship with linguistic or cultural development objectives of groups associated or charged with the development of Gaeltacht areas will need to prove that a given proposal will have a positive impact upon the promotion and use of Irish as the language of the community.

RD OBJ 20

To promote the provision of signage in Irish in the Gaeltachts regarding:

a. entry and exit points with explanatory details of the cultural significance of the areas to visitors;
b. the provision of all commercial signage in Irish, and;
c. in association with the relevant professional and vocational groups, that auctioneers and other temporary signs are in Irish.

9.12.1 Development Assessment Criteria

Special consideration shall be given to Irish speaking applicants or those who qualify under the rural housing policy i.e. to persons that are an intrinsic part of the rural community, and that demonstrate compliance with the local housing need criteria as set out in Section 9.4

To assist in assessing the impact of new residential development upon the use of Irish in the Gaeltachts, all planning applications for residential development, both single and multiple house developments, will be referred to the - Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage and the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media and Údarás na Gaeltachta Management for comment.

9.13 Integrated Rural Tourism Complexes

Rural tourism can play a strong role in stimulating rural economies. The location of the county largely in the hinterland of the largest metropolitan area in the state has generated considerable demand for golf course and leisure estate type developments over the past decade. The Development Plan acknowledges this regional amenity and tourism role for the county while recognising the importance of ensuring tourist development does not have a negative impact on the overall character of the area. Policies and guidance in relation to tourist accommodation, hotels, holiday homes, caravan and camping sites, tourist signage, festivals and walking and cycle routes is set down in chapter 4 of this Development Plan.

9.14 Vernacular Rural Buildings and Replacement Dwellings

A key component of the rural landscape of Co. Meath is the built legacy of traditional dwellings and buildings, many of which have been neglected in preference for new dwellings, or because traditional buildings have become unsuitable as farming practices changed. In the majority of cases in recent times, most vernacular 'Parnellite' cottages are being replaced with larger contemporary and in particular suburban style dwellings that in many instances, are out of keeping with the rural character of the area. Thatched cottages, which were once commonplace, have been and continue to be in decline, and every effort will be made by the Council to encourage and facilitate the survival of the remaining examples. Detailed policy in relation to refurbishment and reuse of existing vacant structures within the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Brú na Bóinne are contained within the Heritage Chapter, section 8.6.1.

Policies

It is the policy of the Council:

RD POL 30

To promote the viable re-use of vernacular dwellings without losing their character and to support applications for the sensitive restoration of disused vernacular or traditional dwellings.

RD POL 31

To encourage and facilitate the appropriate refurbishment of existing housing stock in rural areas and in certain limited cases the replacement of existing dwellings subject to development assessment criteria outlined below.

RD POL 32

To oppose the demolition and replacement of traditional or vernacular rural houses in order to protect the varied types of housing stock in rural areas of the County and to preserve the rural built heritage.

RD POL 33

To consider the limited conversion of outhouses and other structures attached to large country houses or other heritage structures where acceptable conservation practice is observed in line with the other policies and objectives of this plan and where acceptable site suitability has been established in terms of access, car parking, open space, wastewater disposal and maintaining the setting and amenities of the main structure.

RD POL 34

To respect the sensitive restoration and conversion to residential use of disused vernacular or traditional dwellings or traditional farm buildings, including those which are Protected Structures, such proposals shall not be subject to the Rural Housing Policy (i.e. local need) that applies to new dwellings.

RD POL 35

To actively promote the retention and restoration of thatched dwellings as a key component of the built heritage of Co. Meath.

Objective

It is an objective of Meath County Council:

RD OBJ 21

To update the survey of surviving thatched structures in Meath and to promote available grant schemes to assist owners with their retention and repair.

9.14.1 Development Assessment Criteria

The Planning Authority shall assess applications for refurbishment and/or replacement of existing housing stock in rural areas, having regard to the criteria outlined hereunder:

- That in the case of refurbishment and extension proposals, that the scale and architectural treatment of proposed works are sympathetic to the character of the original structure and the surrounding area including adjoining or nearby development;
- That in the case of replacement dwellings, to require that the original structure was last used as a dwelling and that its roof, internal and external walls are generally intact;
- That replacement dwellings are provided at locations where safe access and acceptable wastewater disposal arrangements can be put in place and where specific development objectives or other policies of the Planning Authority are not compromised, and;

- That the replacement dwelling shall be designed to be of a size and scale appropriate to the site, and;
- The design of replacement dwellings in rural areas shall comply with the 'Meath Rural Design Guide'.
- In the assessment of whether a house which it is proposed to replaced is habitable or not, the Planning Authority will rely on the definition contained in Section 2 (Interpretation) of the Planning & Development Act 2000 as amended.

A "Habitable House" means a house which:

a. is used as a dwelling;

b. is not in use but when last used was used, disregarding any unauthorised use, as a dwelling and is not derelict, or;

c. was provided for use as a dwelling but has not been occupied.

9.15. Restricting Access to Certain Categories of Roads

9.15.1 National Primary and National Secondary Routes

National policy in relation to development involving access to national roads and development along such roads is set out in the Spatial Planning and National Roads Guidelines published by the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government in January 2012. The Guidelines state, 'The policy of the planning authority will be to avoid the creation of any additional access point from new development or the generation of increased traffic from existing accesses to national roads to which speed limits greater than 60kmh apply. This provision applies to all categories of development, including individual houses in rural areas, regardless of the housing circumstances of the applicant'.

Under Part 4, Article 28 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 as amended, notification of planning applications which involve a new access or material widening of an access to an existing or planned national road, or where the development might give rise to a significant increase in the volume of traffic using a national road, must be sent to Transport Infrastructure Ireland. The Authority may make submissions or observations on such planning applications in accordance with Article 29 of the Regulations. National policy in relation to access to national routes has been outlined previously in Chapter 5 Movement Strategy.

Policies

It is the policy of the Council:

RD POL 36

To develop and maximise the opportunities of the county's national primary and secondary roads as key strategic infrastructure vital to the county's continued economic development and to protect this strategically important infrastructure from unplanned ribbon development or random one-off housing development.

RD POL 37

To ensure that future development affecting national primary or secondary roads, shall be assessed in accordance with the guidance given in the document 'Spatial Planning and National Roads - Guidelines for Planning Authorities'.

9.15.2 Regional and County Roads (Refer Map 9.2)

It is vitally important that new housing in rural areas that is located along non-national routes is located in such a manner as to avoid endangering public safety by way of a traffic hazard. There are a number of regionally and locally important functions of certain regional and county road type routes that act as particularly important transport links that traverse Co. Meath.

Policies

It is the policy of the Council:

RD POL 38

To ensure that all development accessing off the county's road network is at a location and carried out in a manner which would not endanger public safety by way of a traffic hazard.

RD POL 39

To identify and protect those non-national roads of regional or local importance from unnecessary and excessive individual access/egress points, which would prejudice the carrying capacity and ultimately the function of the road.

RD POL 40

To restrict new accesses for one-off dwellings where the 80km per hour speed limit currently applies in order to safeguard the specific functions and to avoid the premature obsolescence of identified regional and important county link roads (see Map No 9.2.) through the creation of excessive levels of individual entrances and to secure the investment in non-national roads.

9.15.3 Development Assessment Criteria

Exceptions to the above policies relating to regional and county roads will be considered on their merits in the following circumstances:

- For those who have a location specific rural housing need on family owned lands and cannot provide access onto any other non-identified regional or county road and therefore need to access one of the regional or county roads identified on Map No. 9.2. In this circumstance, the applicant will be encouraged to maximise the potential of an existing entrance. The onus shall be on the applicant to demonstrate that they have no other access or suitable sites within their landholding, and;
- Where an existing dwelling with a vehicular entrance that is not considered to constitute a traffic hazard is to be demolished and replaced with a new dwelling.

New development proposals onto certain regionally and locally important county road type routes that act as particularly important transport links that traverse Co. Meath shall be assessed having regard to:

- Avoiding unnecessary new accesses, for example where access could be provided off a nearby county road.
- Ensuring that necessary new entrances are located in such a manner as to provide effective visibility for both users of the entrance and users of the public roads so that opportunities for conflicting movements are avoided.
- Avoiding the premature obsolescence of regional roads in particular, through creating excessive levels of individual entrances.

9.16 Roadside Boundaries

Roadside boundaries, whether hedgerows, sod and stone bank, stone wall or other boundaries, provide important features that are elements of both the landscape and ecology of rural areas. The retention of such boundary treatments assists in absorbing new rural housing into its surroundings and should generally be encouraged.

Occasionally, the removal of substantial lengths of roadside boundaries is proposed as part of an element of improving visibility at the junction of a new entrance onto a road. Where an alternative site is available and otherwise suitable, applicants and Planning Authorities should consider a location that avoids the necessity for widespread boundary removal.

Policy

It is the policy of the Council:

RD POL 41

To avoid the removal of existing roadside boundaries where they are more than 3 m from the road edge (edge of carriageway), except to the extent that this is needed for a new entrance, and where required for traffic safety reasons. (Please refer to policies contained in Section 8.9.7 Woodlands, Hedgerows and Trees in this regard).

9.17 Roads Served by Unmanned Railway Crossings

Under the National Development Plan, a rail investment and safety programme has yielded substantial route renewal and service upgrades that will deliver, over time, more frequent and faster rail passenger services over the rail network. In some areas, laneways accessed via unmanned level crossings that were originally designed to provide access to agricultural lands are the subject of significant residential development. In certain circumstances, the provision of substantial additional development that is completely dependent for access using unmanned and unprotected level crossings may increase the risk of a safety incident unacceptably or to the degree that alternative crossing arrangements are necessary. The provision of such arrangements needs to be carefully considered given the likely costs involved and the availability of resources.

Policy

It is the policy of the Council:

RD POL 42

To refer proposals for new housing development requiring access via unmanned and unprotected level crossings to Iarnród Éireann and to carefully consider the subsequent views of Iarnród Eireann such that due and proper consideration has been made for the safety of road users and rail safety.

9.18 Technical Requirements

9.18.1 One-Off Houses: Sight Distances and Stopping Sight Distances Policy

It is the policy of the Council:

RD POL 43

To ensure that the required standards for sight distances and stopping sight distances are in compliance with current road geometry standards as outlined in the NRA document Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB) specifically Section TD 41-42/09 when assessing individual planning applications for individual houses in the countryside.

9.18.2 Groundwater Protection and the Planning System

Ensuring that the country's water resources are of the highest quality is a prerequisite for a healthy environment, a healthy economy and is a key part of Government policy. The planning system at national, regional and local level has a key role in ensuring that development proceeds in a manner that ensures Ireland's water resources continue to be of the highest quality.

Circular Letter SP 5/03 issued on July 31st 2003 covers three main issues in relation to the role of the planning system in ensuring that development proceeds in a manner that offers the best possible environmental protection, including protection of groundwater quality. S.I. 9 of 2010 European Communities Environmental Objectives (Groundwater) Regulations 2010 also places duties on the Local Authority's to protect groundwaters.

(1) Groundwater Protection and the Development Plan

Identifying groundwater resources and protecting them in a way that integrates environmental protection and the operation of the planning system requires that effective linkage be created between any groundwater protection scheme which has been put in place. This includes:

- identifying key aquifers and groundwater resources, assessing their vulnerability to contamination, incorporating protection schemes for specific sources of public water supplies;
- the development plan made under the Planning and Development Act 2000, and;
- the operation of the development management system as it relates in particular to the assessment of proposals involving on-site disposal of wastewater, agri-wastes and any other development activity that potentially may affect groundwater quality.

Meath County Council has prepared groundwater protection schemes and it is imperative that these are linked in a variety of different ways to the new County Development Plan. As progress is made with putting these groundwater protection schemes in place, they will be accompanied by appropriate supporting policies.

Policies

It is the policy of the Council:

RD POL 44

To ensure that new development meets the highest standards in terms of environmental protection.

RD POL 45

To utilise a "Groundwater Protection Response Matrix" to assist in deciding the appropriateness of various categories of development to areas that have different levels of vulnerability in terms of groundwater contamination. This approach will support the proper input of information into planning decision-making processes.

By consulting this matrix, prospective applicants as well as the Planning Authority will be able to get an indication of the likelihood of a proposed development being acceptable on a given site, or whether further investigations or adjustments to the proposals are necessary. For the Planning Authority, this matrix will also be of assistance in determining the nature of any planning and monitoring conditions to be attached to planning permissions.

(2) Groundwater Quality and Decisions on Planning Applications

Under Section 34(2)(a) of the Planning Act, when making its decision in relation to an application, Planning Authorities are restricted to considering the proper planning and sustainable development of the area, regard being had to the provisions of the development plan as well as other provisions. These other provisions include, where relevant, the policy of the Government, the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage or any other Minister of the Government.

Good siting and design of necessary development in rural areas is vitally important. In this regard, the current standard for domestic effluent treatment and disposal from single dwelling houses is set out in the EPA Code of Practice Domestic Waste Water Treatment Systems 2021. It includes an assessment methodology to determine site suitability, a methodology to select suitable waste water treatment systems, information on the design and installation of septic tanks and treatment systems and maintenance requirements. As an alternative to recommending a minimum site size, the EPA Code of Practice makes recommendations about matters such as separation distances from water courses and wells, site boundaries, etc.

The assessment of site conditions is critical to ensuring that new development does not adversely affect water quality generally and groundwater quality specifically. The Planning Authority propose to use a standard site characterisation form along the lines of the model included at Annex A-Site Characterisation Form in the EPA Code of Practice Domestic Waste Water Treatment Systems 2021 and insist upon the use of such qualified personnel in carrying out site assessments.

It is also very important that on site systems - both conventional septic tank systems and innovative effluent treatment systems - are installed in accordance with the manufacturers or supplier's specifications and instructions and the terms and conditions of planning permissions. Innovative effluent treatment systems should be certified by the NSAI Irish Agrement Board (IAB) or by the Agrement Board (or equivalent) of an EEA Member State;- where the latter certificate ensures in use an equivalent level of safety and suitability. It is important that any installation instructions incorporated in the relevant Agrement Certificate (or equivalent) should also be strictly followed. The process of installation should proceed under the supervision of a competent person and be certified by that person.

Evaluation of site suitability will be undermined if the system is not installed as designed. The Planning Authority will ensure that conditions attaching to a grant of permission provide for the above as well as a suitable means of confirming that the installation process has been adequately supervised by a competent person.

(3) Monitoring and Enforcement of Planning Requirements

The primary responsibility for ensuring compliance with the terms of a planning permission rests with the person carrying out the development pursuant to a planning permission. In the normal course of carrying out developments, there will also be parallel requirements to comply with other codes such as the national Building Regulations made under the Building Control Act 1990 or water pollution legislation, to mention two examples.

The Department of Environment, Community and Local Government has published the Water Services 2007 Act to regulate waste water discharges from all homes that are not connected to the public sewer network. It provides for registration and inspection arrangements for on-site septic tank systems or domestic waste water treatment systems.

9.18.3 Wastewater Disposal

Wastewater from housing developments in unserviced areas is normally dispersed underground. Individual wastewater treatment facilities in rural areas should therefore, be located, constructed and maintained to the highest standards to ensure minimal impacts on water quality and particularly groundwater quality.

Policy

It is the policy of the Council:

RD POL 46

To ensure that new development is guided towards sites where acceptable wastewater treatment and disposal facilities can be provided, avoiding sites where it is inherently difficult to provide and maintain such facilities. Sites prone to extremely high water tables and flooding or where groundwater is particularly vulnerable to contamination shall be avoided.

In order to ensure both public health and environmental protection, it is essential that any new dwelling is served by drainage arrangements that meet the Council's requirements and standards.

Policies

It is the policy of the Council:

RD POL 47

To ensure that the site area is large enough to adequately accommodate an on- site treatment plant and percolation area.

RD POL 48

To ensure all septic tank/proprietary treatment plants and polishing filter/percolation areas satisfy the criteria set out in the Environmental Protection Agency 'Code of Practice Domestic Waste Water Treatment Systems (Population Equivalent ≤10)' (2021) (or any other updated code of practice guidelines) in order to safeguard individual and group water schemes.

RD POL 49

To require a site characterisation report to be furnished by a suitably qualified competent person. Notwithstanding this, the Planning Authority may require additional tests to be carried out under its supervision.

RD POL 50

To ensure a maintenance agreement or other satisfactory management arrangements are entered into by the applicant to inspect and service the system as required. A copy of this must be submitted to the Planning Authority.

RD POL 51

To ensure that direct discharge of effluent from on site waste water disposal systems to surface water is not permitted.

RD POL 52

To ensure wastewater treatment plants discharging into the Boyne catchment or to coastal Natura 2000 sites are suitably maintained and upgraded in advance of any additional loadings beyond their capacity in order to protect water quality, as required.

RD POL 53

To promote good practice with regard to the siting and design of septic tanks and the maintenance of existing tanks. A high level of scrutiny will be placed on applications within 2km of watercourses in the Boyne catchment. Proposals in this area shall not have an adverse impact on local water quality that could affect the qualifying interests of the cSAC and SPA.

1- Urban generated housing is housing in rural locations sought by people living and working in urban areas, including second homes / holiday homes whereas rural generated housing is defined as housing needed in rural areas withinthe established rural community by people working in rural areas or in nearby urban areas. Source: Guidelines for Sustainable Rural Housing

2- Peri Urban areas are parts of the open countryside that have been subjected to very high levels of urban generated adjustment.

3- National Forest Inventory, Forest Service (2007)

10.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the approach to climate change adaptation and greenhouse gas mitigation, as required by the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended. This Act highlights the need to reduce the overall quantity of greenhouse gas emissions and to develop an adaptation strategy to manage anticipated future climate risks.

The chapter firstly defines climate change and the known associated risks, which are expected to impact Ireland in both the short and long term, before outlining the statutory context in which climate change is managed from an International, National, Regional and Local perspective.

The chapter examines how mitigation and adaptation strategies have been integrated into the main body of the County Development Plan. This is to ensure that the climate change strategy has been developed collaboratively and is fully integrated and consistent with the Policies and Objectives of the County Development Plan as climate change is one of the cross-cutting themes of the Plan.

A Citizens Assembly in 2018 debated the challenges of climate change and produced a set of recommendations. The Joint Oireachtas Committee on Climate Action issued a comprehensive set of recommendations in 2018. The Committee report was unanimously endorsed by Dáil Eireann in 2019. These recommendations form part of the Climate Action Plan 2019 which is Ireland's response to tacking climate breakdown.

The urgency of the need to address climate issues was highlighted in May 2019 when Dáil Eireann declared a Climate and Biodiversity Emergency. Ireland became only the second country in the world to pass such a declaration.

10.2 What is climate change?

Climate change refers to a long term, large scale change in global or regional climate patterns. In recent years, global temperatures have been rising. The ever-increasing rate of carbon dioxide combustion, and the emission of other greenhouse gases such as methane and nitrous oxide since the industrial revolution, has resulted in the 'greenhouse affect'. Many activities generate these gases; the production of electricity, industrial activity, transportation and agriculture are just a few of the examples contributing high quantities of these emissions. These gases build up in the Earth's atmosphere, and trap a constantly increasing amount of the sun's energy, creating an overall shift in global atmospheric patterns.

As a result, Ireland and Meath's climate is changing and the scientific consensus implies that this is only going to accelerate in the coming years.

Incremental changes in climate are already evident these include:

- increases in average temperatures,
- wetter winters,
- more intense rainfall,
- more flooding,
- increase in summer droughts,
- rising sea levels,
- damage to existing ecosystems and biodiversity.

There may also be some positive impacts, such as fewer very cold days.

Although the type and magnitude of impacts are uncertain, immediate action is required to prepare for and manage these impacts.

10.3 Statutory Context

The Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) also sets out provisions for climate change within Section 10 (2) (n). This include requirements to:

i. reduce energy demand in response to the likelihood of increases in energy and other costs due to long-term decline in non-renewable resources,

ii. reduce anthropogenic (manmade) greenhouse gas emissions, and

iii. address the necessity of adaptation to climate change; in particular, having regard to location, layout and design of new development.

10.4 Policy Context

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) (1992)
A range of international climate change agreements and frameworks have been approved that provide information on climate change impacts, vulnerability and adaptations. The work of the UNFCCC provides countries with detailed technical information, including current and future climate change projections, which enables them to determine practical adaptation actions to improve their long-term resilience.

Linked to the work of the UNFCCC – The Kyoto Protocol was adopted in Kyoto, Japan, on 11 December 1997 and took effect from 16th February 2005. It sets binding targets for 37 industrialised countries and the European Community for reducing emissions. Additionally,

'The Paris Agreement' was agreed on 12 December 2015. All 196 members under the umbrella of the UNFCCC agreed to hold the increase in global temperature to well below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels and to keep the more stringent target of below 1.5 degrees in sight. The European Union and its Member States provide funding and support to climate change adaptation in countries within the UNFCCC.

The European Green Deal

The European Green Deal plans to make the EU's economy sustainable and climate neutral by 2050 and position the EU as a Global leader. This will be achieved by turning climate and environmental challenges into opportunities, and making thetransition just and inclusive for all. The goals of the Green Deal will be enshrined inlaw. Actions under the Green Deal include:

- The Just Transition Mechanism: Making sure no one is left behind
- Investing in Climate neutral and circular economy
- EU funded projects to green the economy
- A Climate Pact
- Circular Economy Action Plan
- EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030
- Renovation Wave
- Methane Strategy
- Offshore Renewable Energy
- A new European Bauhaus
- Chemicals Strategy for sustainability
- European Year of Rail 2021
- From Farm to Fork

European Union Adaptation Strategy (2013)

The European Union published its Adaptation Strategy in April 2013 with the overall aim of increasing climate resilience across Europe. Through increased coordination and providing a more consolidated approach, the Adaptation Strategy will enhance the preparedness and effectiveness of all governance levels to respond to the impacts of climate change

The Strategy is focused on three key objectives:

- Promoting action by Member States
- 'Climate-proofing' action at EU level
- Better informed decision making

The primary adaptation initiatives promoted by the Strategy are achieved through the provision of mitigation and adaptation requirements within EU sector policies and funding mechanisms. The initiatives run across a range of areas including:

- infrastructure and buildings
- marine and inland water issues
- forestry
- agriculture and
- social cohesion

Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act (2015)
The Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015 is the key policy instrument to address the issue of climate change in Ireland. The Act sets out a roadmap for Ireland's transition towards a low carbon economy and details mechanisms for the implementation of the 'National Low Carbon Transition and Mitigation Plan' (National Mitigation Plan), to lower Ireland's level of greenhouse emissions and a 'National Climate Change Adaptation Framework' (National Adaptation Framework), to provide for responses to changes caused by climate change – Both plans were to be submitted for approval in 2018. They will be renewed every five years and are required to include tailored sectoral plans.

The Act requires public bodies to actively consider mitigation and adaptation efforts, drawing on the objectives set out in the National Low-Carbon Roadmap, national adaptation framework and sectoral adaptation plans

National Climate Change Adaptation Framework (NCCAF) (2012)
The Framework provides the policy context for a strategic national adaptation response to climate change in Ireland. It highlights the role of planning and development in implementing adaptation measures and recognises the benefits of wider stakeholder engagement in achieving climate change objectives at a local level.

The NCCAF provides an overview of challenges for sectors that are impacted from climate change, including:

- water,
- coasts,
- marine,
- agriculture,
- forestry,
- biodiversity,
- energy,
- transport,

- communications,
- insurance,
- heritage;
- and health

National Adaptation Framework

The National Adaptation Framework (NAF), published in 2018, sets out Ireland's first statutory strategy for the application of adaptation measures in different Government sectors, including the local authorities. The Framework aims to reduce the vulnerability of the State to the negative effects of climate change but also to promote of any positive effects that may occur.

The NAF will build on the substantial work already carried out under the existing NCCAF and ensure that climate adaptation in Ireland is brought forward in line with EU and international best practice.

National Mitigation Plan

The first National Mitigation Plan, published in 2017, represents an initial step to set Ireland on a pathway to decarbonising its economy. It is a whole-of-Government Plan, which covers the following core sectors:

- Electricity Generation.
- Built Environment,
- Transport and
- Agriculture

The measures set out in the plan lay the foundations for transitioning Ireland to a low carbon, climate resilient and environmentally sustainable economy by 2050. In support of this, the Plan also includes over 100 individual actions for various Ministers and public bodies to take forward through its implementation. Action 20 is to finalise the wind Energy Guidelines, completion of same is awaited.

National Planning Framework (NPF)

Sets out the role of the planning system in facilitating mitigation of and adaptation to climate change and ensuring that sustainable infrastructure networks build resilience to climate change.

In this regard National Strategic Outcome 8 is dedicated to achieving transition to a Low Carbon and Climate Resilient Society. This objective will shape investment choices over the

coming decades in line with the National Mitigation Plan and the National Adaptation Framework noting that new energy systems and transmission grids will be necessary for a more distributed, renewable energy focused system, harnessing both the considerable on-shore and off-shore potential from energy sources such as wind, wave and solar and connecting the richest sources of that energy to the major sources of demand. Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy.

The RSES acknowledges that climate change is a global challenge which requires a strong and coherent response at national, regional and local level. Climate change will have diverse and wide-ranging impacts on the Eastern and Midland Region's environment, society and economic development, including managed and natural ecosystems, water resources, agriculture, food security and bio-economy, human health and coastal zones.

EMRA will work closely with the newly appointed Climate Action Regional Offices (CARO's). The Dublin Metropolitan Region Climate Change Office (run by the four Dublin local authorities assisted by Codema) and the Eastern and Midland Region Climate Change Office (run by Kildare County Council) will be responsible for planning and actions regarding Climate Change mitigation and adaptation in their regions. Climate Action Regional Offices shall ensure coherence and coordination with the RSES when formulating regional climate change adaptation plans.

The following Regional Policy Objectives relate to Climate Change:

RPO 7.30:

Within 1 year of the adoption of the RSES, the EMRA shall seek with other stakeholders to carry out an assessment of transport emissions in the Region to identify GHG forecasting and to analyse the emissions impacts of development in the Region.

RPO 7.31:

Within 1 year of carrying out a regional emissions assessment, EMRA shall compile and publish an emissions inventory and, in collaboration with the relevant departments and agencies, agree emissions reductions targets in accordance with agreed national sectoral plans and to support an aggregate 40% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 in line with the EU 2030 Framework.

RPO 7.32:

With the assistance and support of the Climate Action Regional Offices, local authorities shall develop, adopt and implement local climate adaptation and mitigation strategies which shall address issues including local vulnerability to climate risks and identify and prioritise actions, in accordance with the Guiding Principles of the National Adaptation Framework, National Mitigation Plan.

RPO 7.33:

Climate Action Regional Offices shall provide support to the local authorities on the development, adoption and implementation of local climate action strategies (which can address both adaptation and mitigation). Ongoing support should relate to the specific actions, and obligations and timescales for same that must be undertaken by the local authorities in accordance with local climate change adaptation strategies and compliance with national policy.

RPO 7.34:

EMRA supports the National Policy Statement on Bioeconomy (2018) and supports the exploration of opportunities in the circular resource-efficient economy including undertaking a bioeconomy feasibility study for the Region to identify the area of potential growth in the Region to inform investment in line with the national transition objective to a low carbon climate resilient economy.

Climate Action Plan 2019 To Tackle Climate Breakdown.

The Climate Action Plan is a national policy document adopted in 2019. The Plan identifies the critical nature of the challenge faced as a result of global warming.
The Plan underpins this ambition to deliver a step-change in our emissions performance over the coming decade by setting out clear 2030 targets for each sector and the expected emissions savings that will result. The overall aim will allow Ireland to meet its EU targets for 2030 and will also be well placed to meet our mid-century de-carbonisation objectives.

Just Transition Fund

The Just Transition Fund (JTF) is a key pillar of the government's just transition plan for the Midlands region. A 2020 fund will be available for projects focusing on retraining workers and proposals to generate sustainable employment in green enterprise in the region, and supporting communities to transition to a low carbon economy.

The objective of the Just Transition Fund 2020 call is to fund innovative projects that contribute to the economic, social and environmental sustainability of the Wider Midlands region and which have employment and enterprise potential. It will support projects that take a whole-of-Midlands strategic approach and complement other sources of public funding.

The scope of the fund is limited in the context of County Meath, given its particular relevance to the Midlands region and the re-skilling of Peat Production workers. Notwithstanding this, the Council supports the ethos of climate justice and would welcome the opportunity to partner and collaborate with both the public and private sector on 'Just Transition' projects where opportunities arise.

Meath Climate Action Strategy

The Meath Climate Action Strategy covers the period from 2019-2025 and aims to support businesses, social enterprises, public bodies and communities to change their energy systems to produce a climate resilient economy. The Strategy focuses on changes to key areas such as mobility, the built environment, clean energy, resource management, water and natural resources identifying methods by which Meath County Council can support change in these areas.

10.5 Integrating Mitigation and Adaptation into the County Development Plan

Climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies have been incorporated into the core Policies and Objectives of the County Development Plan. This is to ensure that climate change has been consistently integrated into the policy themes addressed by this plan. Only those sources and impacts of climate change within the Statutory remit of the County Development Plan are included. The Draft 'County Meath Adaptation Strategy' explores potential methods of emission reduction and sets out adaptation options.

10.5.1 Climate Change Objectives

1. To support the implementation of the Climate Action Plan 2019 and to facilitate measures which seek to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases in the Electricity, Enterprise, Built Environment, Transport, Agriculture and Waste sector.
2. To support the implementation of the Climate Action Plan 2019 and the National Climate Change Adaption Framework Building Resilience to Climate Change 2012 through the County Development Plan and through the preparation of a Climate Change Adaptation Plan in conjunction with all relevant stakeholders
3. To implement the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy in regard to the following:
    - Compact development in locations served by public transport;
    - Control of speculative rural dwellings in the open countryside;
    - Increased residential densities adjacent to public transport nodes;
    - Provision of 'live work' communities

10.5.2 Climate Change Mitigation

Mitigation is defined as any human intervention aimed at reducing harmful influences on the earth's climate system, including actions which actively reduce emissions and the creation or enhancement of carbon sinks. This can be achieved by using new technologies, making older equipment more energy efficient, or by changing management practices and consumer behaviour.

However, even with significant improvements to the efficiency of technology, energy demand will still remain high. It is therefore essential to progress towards an energy system based on low or no carbon fuels. This means moving away from using conventional coal and gas-fired power to electricity generated from renewable sources, and examining new technologies such as carbon capture and storage.

10.5.3 Emissions sources in the County

County Meath completed a Baseline Emissions Inventory in 2012, that was based on 2012 data, to determine the major sources of emissions in the county. This generated an indicative picture of Meath's current and projected energy footprint, which equated to a total of 1, 453 CO2 equivalent kilotons.

The sector split of the total emissions is as follows:

Sector	Proportion of Total Emissions
Transport	28.8 %
Agriculture	24.1%
Residential	23.9 %
Industry	14.6 %
Services	7.5 %
Meath County Council	1.2 %

The proportion of emissions split between the different sectors broadly aligns with the results from the National Ireland Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory, but with a slightly higher allocation for transport. This is because the number of cars in County Meath is marginally higher than the national average.

10.5.4 Transport

The transport sector is the biggest contributor of GHG emissions in County Meath. The predominant source of this is private vehicle travel, with the majority of the emissions originating from the use of petroleum-based fuels - the combustion of which produces carbon and nitrogen dioxide. The County has the highest rates of outbound commuting in the Country[1] much of which is car based.
Encouraging people to move towards a higher uptake of public and active transport will therefore be critical if the emissions from this sector are going to be reduced.

The following areas of mitigation have therefore been addressed in the County Development Plan:

Mitigation Strategy	Associated Objectives
• Increasing the efficiency of the transport system and reducing the need for car ownership. • Promoting the development of 'live work' communities, • Focus on consolidation, brownfield, infill development close to public transport nodes	**MOV POL 1** To support and facilitate the integration of land use with transportation infrastructure, through the development of sustainable compact settlements which are well served by public transport in line with the guiding principles outlined in RPO 8.1 of the EMRA RSES 2019-2031. **CS POL 1** To promote and facilitate the development of sustainable communities in the County by managing the level of growth in each settlement to ensure future growth is in accordance with the Core Strategy and County Settlement Hierarchy in order to deliver compact urban areas and sustainable rural communities. **CS OBJ 4** To achieve more compact growth by promoting the development of infill and brownfield/ regeneration sites and the redevelopment of underutilised land

Mitigation Strategy	Associated Objectives
	within and close to the existing built up footprint of existing settlements in preference to edge of centre locations. **MOV POL 3** To promote sustainable land use planning measures which facilitate transportation efficiency, economic returns on transport investment, minimisation of environmental impacts and a general shift towards the greater use of public transportation throughout the County. **MOV POL 4** To promote higher residential development densities in settlement centres along public transport corridors, subject to compliance with normal planning criteria. . **MOV POL 9** To ensure that the design and planning of transport infrastructure and services accords with the principles of sustainable safety, in order that the widest spectrum of needs, including pedestrians, cyclists, the ageing population and those with mobility impairments are taken into account. **MOV POL 11** To facilitate in conjunction with relevant statutory agencies alternative transport modes to the private car, including enhanced delivery of public transport services along regional corridors (as defined in the NTA's Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2016-2035); frequent local bus services linking residential areas to District Centres and Town Centres, and which also serve shopping areas, employment areas and other activity centres, and connecting to key transport interchange points.

Mitigation Strategy	Associated Objectives
	MOV POL 13 To promote and support the provision of Park and Ride Development which improve public transport accessibility without exacerbating road congestion at appropriate locations within the County. NTA funded Park & Ride Schemes will be carried in accordance with the recommendations of the Park & Ride Development Office of the NTA.
• Improving the infrastructure necessary for people to be able to work from home or from local technology hubs, to reduce the need for outbound commuting	**INF POL 54** To facilitate the delivery of a high capacity Information and Communications Technology (ICT) infrastructure and broadband network and digital broadcasting throughout the County. **INF POL 55** To seek to have appropriate modern ICT, including open access fibre connections in all new developments and a multiplicity of carrier neutral ducting installed during significant public infrastructure works such as roads, rail, water and sewerage, where feasible and in consultation with all relevant licensed telecommunications operators.
• Encouraging greater uptake of public transport in the region	**MOV POL 4** To promote higher residential development densities in settlement centres along public transport corridors, subject to compliance with normal planning criteria. **MOV POL 6** To actively pursue, in conjunction with Irish Rail and the NTA, the re- appraisal of the extension of the Dunboyne/M3 Parkway line to Navan during the Mid-Term review of the GDA Transport Strategy in accordance with the precepts of the RSES.

Mitigation Strategy	Associated Objectives
	MOV POL 7 To support the reappraisal and thereafter, promote, facilitate and advance the Dunboyne /M3 Parkway line to Navan railway line project and associated rail services in cooperation with other relevant agencies. **MOV POL 8** To cooperate with the NTA and other relevant agencies to have ongoing reviews of the network of bus routes in Meath, to support and encourage public transport operators to provide improved bus services in, and through the County. **MOV POL 10** To ensure that new developments in Regional Growth Centres, Key Towns, Self-Sustaining Growth Towns and Self-Sustaining Towns are laid out so as to facilitate the provision of local bus services and the provision of Park and Ride facilitates as appropriate. **MOV OBJ 4** To improve, in conjunction with the NTA and Irish Rail, facilities at existing stations. **MOV OBJ 6** To facilitate and encourage the upgrading of existing railway stations, and protect, as required, lands necessary for the upgrading of existing railway lines or stations or the provision of new railway stations throughout the County. **MOV OBJ 11** To provide bus priority measures on existing and planned road infrastructure, where appropriate, in collaboration with the NTA, Bus Éireann and TII (where relevant).

Mitigation Strategy	Associated Objectives
	MOV OBJ 12 To identify deficits in bus infrastructure and develop a priority list as a basis to secure funding for improvement works, including the provision of bus shelters, bus stops and travel information at stops. **MOV OBJ 14** To deliver, in conjunction with the NTA and the Department of Transport a Public Transportation Hub in Navan to accommodate national, commuter, regional and local bus services. **MOV POL 13** To promote and support the provision of Park-and-Ride facilities which improve public transport accessibility without exacerbating road congestion, at appropriate locations within the County. NTA funded Park & Ride Schemes will be carried in accordance with the recommendations of the Park & Ride Development Office of the NTA. **MOV OBJ 23** To provide public transport interchange facilities, including facilities for taxis, at appropriate points on the public transport network particularly in the main urban centres in cooperation with the NTA.
• Encouraging greater uptake of active transport in the region	**MOV POL 17** To identify and seek to implement a strategic, coherent and high-quality cycle and walking network across the County that is integrated with public transport and interconnected with cultural, recreational, retail, educational and employment destinations and attractions.

Mitigation Strategy	Associated Objectives
	MOV POL 18 To support the provision of a long distance inter-connecting walking/cycling route(s) between the Irish Republic and Northern Ireland. **MOV POL 19** To support the NTA in the development of a strategic pedestrian network plan for the main urban centres of the County. **MOV POL 20** To encourage, where appropriate, the incorporation of safe and efficient cycleways, accessible footpaths and pedestrian routes into the design schemes for town centres/neighbourhood centres, residential, educational, employment, recreational developments and other uses. **MOV POL 21** To require that adequate facilities for the secure parking of bicycles be provided at convenient locations close to public transport nodes and public transport interchanges. **MOV POL 22** To prioritise the safe movement of pedestrians and cyclists in proximity to public transport nodes. **MOV OBJ 27** To implement, in conjunction with the NTA, the recommendations of the NTA strategy with regard to walking and cycling infrastructure. **MOV OBJ 28** To revise road junction layouts, where appropriate, to provide dedicated pedestrian crossings, reduce pedestrian crossing distances, provide more direct pedestrian routes, and reduce the speed of turning

Mitigation Strategy	Associated Objectives
	traffic **MOV OBJ 29** To implement at appropriate locations pedestrian permeability schemes and enhancements. **MOV OBJ 30** To request the submission of pedestrian permeability plans as part of new housing developments. **MOV OBJ 31** To implement at appropriate locations pedestrianisation schemes, particularly in central areas of high pedestrian footfall, such as core retail areas. **MOV OBJ 32** To continue the development of a network of Greenways in the County in accordance with the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sports Strategy for Future Development of Greenways. **MOV OBJ 33** To engage in the Compulsory Purchase Order process when required in order to facilitate the timely delivery of the Greenway programme within the County.
• Encourage the uptake of electric vehicles	**MOV POL 16** To support the provision of infrastructure for electrical vehicles and alternative fuel vehicles both on street and in new developments as such technologies advance to become viable transport options.

Mitigation Strategy	Associated Objectives
	MOV OBJ 25 To facilitate the provision of electricity charging infrastructure for electric vehicles both on street and in new developments as such technologies advance to become viable transport options. **MOV OBJ 26** To liaise and collaborate with relevant agencies to support and encourage the growth of electric vehicles and EBikes with support facilities/infrastructure, through a roll-out of additional electric charging points in collaboration with relevant agencies at appropriate locations including retrofit of charging points in existing urban centres and park and ride facilities.

10.5.5. Agriculture and Land Use

Agriculture is the second biggest producer of greenhouse gas emissions, owing to high proportion of both arable and livestock farming occurring in the county. On a farm by farm basis, total emissions vary significantly depending on the nature of outputs produced, farming practices employed, and natural factors such as weather, topography, and hydrology.

Land use change can also be significant. Trees play a very important part in the carbon cycle, absorbing and storing significant quantities of carbon. Deforesting an area for agricultural purposes removes this benefit, but also releases all of the previously stored carbon back into the atmosphere.

Mitigation Strategy	Associated Objectives
• Promotion of environmentally sustainable approach	**RD POL 12** To facilitate the development of agriculture while ensuring that natural waters, wildlife habitats and conservation areas are protected from pollution.

Mitigation Strategy	Associated Objectives
to agricultural practices	
• Maintaining and improving the quality of peatland to reduce their emissions	**HER POL 45** To ensure that peatland areas which are designated (or proposed for designation) as NHAs, SACs or SPAs are conserved for their ecological, climate regulation, archaeological, cultural and educational significance.

10.5.6 Residential

Greenhouse gas emissions produced by the residential sector predominantly arise from the activities and processes necessary for heating homes and for producing electricity. Direct residential consumption of primary oils (natural gas, heating oil, coal, kerosene, peat etc.) make up a significant proportion of overall emissions, but CO2 emissions associated with the generation of electric power for household use, including electricity-related losses are also very high.

Building energy standards in residential buildings need to be improved with objectives and policies needed to promote and incentivise reduction and efficiency in residential electricity and energy usage.

Mitigation Strategy	Associated Objectives
• Promote and facilitate energy efficient building design, environmentally sustainable layout and locations	**INF POL 37** To seek to improve the energy efficiency of the County's existing building stock in line with good architectural conservation practice and to promote energy efficiency and conservation in the design and development of all new buildings in the County, in accordance with the Building Regulations Part L (Conservation of Fuel and Energy)

Mitigation Strategy	Associated Objectives
	INF POL 38 To encourage that new development proposals maximise energy efficiency through siting, layout, design and incorporate best practice in energy technologies, conservation and smart technology. **INF POL 39** To encourage the attainment of high standards of energy efficiency and environmental sustainability in development and to support the development of sustainable buildings that achieve certification under the Home Performance Index. **INF POL 40** To support and encourage pilot schemes which promote innovative ways to incorporate energy efficiency. **INF OBJ 43** To require, where feasible and practicable, the provision of Photovoltaic solar panels in new residential developments, commercial developments, and public buildings for electricity generation/storage and/or water heating purposes so as to minimise carbon emissions and reduce dependence on imported fossil fuels and reduce energy costs. **INF OBJ 49** To support the use of heat pumps as an alternative to gas boilers, where appropriate, for domestic and commercial development. **SH POL 7** To encourage and foster the creation of attractive, mixed use, sustainable communities that include a suitable mix of housing types and tenures with supporting facilities, amenities, and services that meet the needs of the entire community and accord

Mitigation Strategy	Associated Objectives
	with the principles of universal design, in so far as practicable.
• Promote the use of lower carbon fuels in the home.	**INF POL 44** To support Sustainable Energy Communities and local community group initiatives to develop clean energy opportunities within the county. **INF OBJ 40** To seek to reduce reliance on fossil fuels in the County by reducing the energy demand of existing buildings, in particular residential dwellings. **INF OBJ 41** To promote the generation and supply of low carbon and renewable energy alternatives, having regard to the opportunities offered by the settlement hierarchy of the County and the built environment. **INF OBJ 42** To support the recording and monitoring of renewable energy potential in the County in partnership with other stakeholders including the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI). **INF OBJ 43** To require, where feasible and practicable, the provision of Photovoltaic solar panels in new residential developments, commercial developments, and public buildings for electricity generation/storage and/or water heating purposes so as to minimise carbon emissions and reduce dependence on imported fossil fuels and reduce energy costs.

10.5.7 Industry and Services

Nationally, the main source of greenhouse gases generated from the industrial and commercial sectors arises from the combustion of fuels used in manufacturing, industrial process emissions and the release of fluorinated gas emissions.

Public lighting constitutes a significant proportion of the Councils own energy use.

Although the industrial and commercial sectors are large consumers of energy, there a number of options available to help reduce emissions substantially. These include an increase in the uptake of low-carbon and energy efficient technology, and a transition to low carbon energy supplies.

Mitigation Strategy	Associated Objectives
• Promote and facilitate energy efficient building design, operations, environmentally sustainable layout and locations	**ED POL 15** To seek to support and facilitate both existing and new businesses who seek to maximise the re-use and recycling of resources, create new business models and promote innovation and efficiency. **INF POL 37** To seek to improve the energy efficiency of the County's existing building stock in line with good architectural conservation practice and to promote energy efficiency and conservation in the design and development of all new buildings in the County, in accordance with the Building Regulations Part L (Conservation of Fuel and Energy). **INF POL 38** To encourage that new development proposals maximise energy efficiency through siting, layout, design and incorporate best practice in energy technologies, conservation and smart technology.

Mitigation Strategy	Associated Objectives
	INF POL 39 To encourage the attainment of high standards of energy efficiency and environmental sustainability in development and to support the development of sustainable buildings that achieve certification under the Home Performance Index. **INF POL 40** To support and encourage pilot schemes which promote innovative ways to incorporate energy efficiency . **ED POL 68** To work in partnership with relevant stakeholders to ensure that a sustainable approach is taken to enterprise development and employment creation across all sectors of the Meath economy in accordance with the Green Economy national frameworks relevant to each sector. **ED OBJ 69** Engage with all relevant government stakeholders, enterprise agencies and sectoral representatives in pursuing 'green' approaches to economic development, and actively collaborate with key industry and educational bodies to promote Meath based initiatives across the economic sectors. **INF OBJ 43** To require, where feasible and practicable, the provision of Photovoltaic solar panels in new residential developments, commercial developments, and public buildings for electricity generation/storage and/or water heating purposes so as to minimise carbon

Mitigation Strategy	Associated Objectives
	emissions and reduce dependence on imported fossil fuels and reduce energy costs. **INF OBJ 49** To support the use of heat pumps as an alternative to gas boilers, where appropriate, for domestic and commercial development. **INF OBJ 39** To support Ireland's renewable energy commitments outlined in national policy by facilitating the development and exploitation of renewable energy sources such as solar, wind, geothermal, hydro and bio-energy at suitable locations within the County where such development does not have a negative impact on the surrounding environment (including water quality), landscape, biodiversity or local amenities so as to provide for further residential and enterprise development within the county.

10.5.8 Energy

Although emissions from the energy sector are not directly included in the inventory above, indirectly many of the previously discussed emissions sources (particularly the residential and industrial/service sectors) arise from the production of electricity from non-renewable sources. The burning of fossil fuels for electricity generation is a major source of emissions. Policies and Objectives therefore need to focus on reducing demand and need for fossil fuels and increase uptake of renewable energies.

Mitigation Strategy	Associated Objectives
• Encourage the uptake of more renewable energy sources	**INF POL 34** To promote sustainable energy sources, locally based renewable energy alternatives, where such development does not have a negative impact on the surrounding environment (including water quality), landscape, biodiversity, natural and built heritage, residential or local amenities. **INF POL 35** To seek a reduce greenhouse gas emissions through energy efficiency and the development of renewable energy sources utilising the natural resources of the County in an environmentally acceptable manner consistent with best practice and planning principles. **INF POL 41** To encourage the development of wind energy, in accordance with Government policy and having regard to the Landscape Character Assessment of the County and the Wind Energy Development Guidelines (2006) or any revisions thereof. **INF POL 42** To support the identification, in conjunction with EMRA, of Strategic Energy Zones, areas suitable to accommodate large energy generating projects within the Eastern and Midlands Regional area. **INF POL 44** To support Sustainable Energy Communities and local community group initiatives to develop clean energy opportunities within the county. **INF OBJ 39** To support Ireland's renewable energy commitments outlined in national policy by facilitating the development and exploitation of renewable energy sources such as solar, wind, geothermal, hydro and

Mitigation Strategy	Associated Objectives
	bio-energy at suitable locations within the County where such development does not have a negative impact on the surrounding environment (including water quality), landscape, biodiversity or local amenities so as to provide for further residential and enterprise development within the county. **INF OBJ 41** To promote the generation and supply of low carbon and renewable energy alternatives, having regard to the opportunities offered by the settlement hierarchy of the County and the built environment. **INF OBJ 42** To support the recording and monitoring of renewable energy potential in the County in partnership with other stakeholders including the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI). **INF OBJ 43** To require, where feasible and practicable, the provision of Photovoltaic solar panels in new residential developments, commercial developments, and public buildings for electricity generation/storage and/or water heating purposes so as to minimise carbon emissions and reduce dependence on imported fossil fuels and reduce energy costs. **INF OBJ 47** To investigate the preparation of a Renewable Energy Strategy promoting technologies which are most viable in the County . **INF OBJ 48** To support Ireland's renewable energy commitments by promoting the use of district heating systems in urban residential and enterprise developments, where such developments will not negatively impact

Mitigation Strategy	Associated Objectives
	upon the surrounding landscape, environment, biodiversity or local amenities.

10.6 Climate Change Adaptation

A changing climate will have specific impacts on County Meath, with the following predicted changes likely be key concerns for County Meath.

- Mean temperatures are set to increase up to 1.7 °C by 2060, with the largest changes expected in the East of Ireland.
- In the extremes, the hottest summer days could be up to 2.6 °C warmer, with peak winter temperatures increasing 3.1 °C by 2060.
- Extended dry periods in the summer set to increase between 12 – 40% by 2060.
- Frequency of heavy rainfall events set to increase by 20 %.

Sea levels are set to rise by 0.55 m by 2050. “Adaptation” means any adjustment to - (a) any system designed or operated by human beings, including an economic, agricultural or technological system, or (b) any naturally occurring system, including an ecosystem, that is intended to counteract the effects (whether actual or anticipated) of climatic stimuli, prevent or moderate environmental damage resulting from climate change or confer environmental benefits.

The climate change risk assessment undertaken for County Meath, examined specific impacts across a number of sectors and the potential likelihood and magnitude of these impacts in both the short and long term.

These impacts are summarised below, in addition to areas where adaptation considerations are highlighted in the preceding chapters of the development plan.

10.6.1 Transport

Key Risks	Associated Objectives
• Increased damage to asphalt road surfaces in hotter temperatures • Sea level rise increasing the risk of flooding and erosion to coastal roads • Increase in magnitude and frequency of storm surges, increasing the risk of road damage and closure • The occurrence of more frequent flood events after heavy rainfall events damaging and closing roads across the county and damaging road infrastructure such as bridges. This could have significant knock-on implications for businesses and industry in the areas affected. • Increase in disruption to public transport following floods and road closures and damage to public transport	**INF OBJ 23** To protect and enhance the County's floodplains, wetlands and coastal areas subject to flooding as "green infrastructure" which provide space for storage and conveyance of floodwater, and ensure that development does not impact on important wetland sites within river/stream catchments. **INF OBJ 30** To ensure the County's natural coastal defences, such as beaches, sand dunes, salt marshes and estuary lands, are protected and are not compromised by inappropriate works or forms of development. **INF OBJ 32** To Identify, prioritise and implement necessary coastal protection works subject to the availability of resources, whilst ensuring a high level of protection for natural habitats and features, and to ensure due regard is paid to visual and other environmental considerations in the design of any such coastal protection works. This will include the identification of coastal areas sensitive to climate change and consequent coastal erosion.

Key Risks	Associated Objectives
infrastructure, such as busses and bus terminals	

10.6.2 Energy and Waste Infrastructure

Key Risks	Associated Objectives
Energy • Potential increase surges in demand for energy to meet cooling requirements during heatwave • Flooding may increase damage/disruption to energy infrastructure and supply • Coastal infrastructure will be at a particular risk of damage, particularly with regard to an increase in storm surges • Demand for freshwater for use in cooling is likely to rise significantly during hotter temperatures, which may affect already stretched supply	**INF POL 37** To seek to improve the energy efficiency of the County's existing building stock in line with good architectural conservation practice and to promote energy efficiency and conservation in the design and development of all new buildings in the County, in accordance with the Building Regulations Part L (Conservation of Fuel and Energy). **INF POL 38** To encourage that new development proposals maximise energy efficiency through siting, layout, design and incorporate best practice in energy technologies, conservation and smart technology. **INF POL 40** To support and encourage pilot schemes which promote innovative ways to incorporate energy efficiency. **INF OBJ 14** To require the use of SuDS within Local Authority Developments and other infrastructural projects in accordance with the Greater Dublin Regional Code of

Key Risks	Associated Objectives
Waste • Increased risk of flood damage to waste facilities • Increased waste arising's in the aftermath of flood and heavy rainfall events • Flooding of landfill sites can increase groundwater/surface water contamination	Practice for Drainage Works. **INF OBJ 15** To require the use of SuDS in accordance with the Greater Dublin Regional Code of Practice for Drainage Works for new developments (including extensions). **INF OBJ 16** To ensure that all new developments comply with Section 3.12 of the Greater Dublin Regional Code of Practice for Drainage Works V6 which sets out the requirements for new developments to allow for Climate Change.

10.6.3 Water Resource Management

Key Risks	Associated Objectives
• Surges in demand for water with hotter temperatures may extend beyond capacity. Increased demand for water for cooling energy and industry infrastructure may be particularly significant. • Increased pressure on current abstraction points during	**INF POL 19** To implement the findings and recommendations of the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment prepared in conjunction with the County Development Plan review, ensuring climate change is taken into account. **INF POL 20:** To require that a Flood Risk Assessment is carried out for any development proposal, where flood risk may be an issue in accordance with the "Planning System and Flood Risk Management – Guidelines for Planning Authorities" (DoECLG/OPW, 2009). This assessment shall be appropriate to the scale and nature of risk to

Key Risks	Associated Objectives
droughts may be unable to sufficiently match demand. • Water quality risks are most likely to be exacerbated during extreme weather events, particularly if timing coincides with fertilisation of agricultural land • Increased risk of sewerage flooding/overflow	and from the potential development and shall consider the impact of climate change. **INF POL 24:** To ensure that flood risk management is incorporated into the preparation of Local Area Plans in accordance with 'The Planning System and Flood Risk Management - Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2009)'. **INF POL 26:** To undertake a review of the 'Strategic Flood Risk Assessment for County Meath' in light of the completed flood mapping which has been developed as part of the Eastern Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management (CFRAM) Study. **INF OBJ 25:** To require the use of sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) to minimise and limit the extent of hard surfacing and paving and require the use of sustainable drainage techniques where appropriate, for new development or for extensions to existing developments, in order to reduce the potential impact of existing and predicted flooding risks. **INF OBJ 27:** To encourage the use of Green Roof technology particularly on apartment, commercial, leisure and educational buildings. **INF POL 29:** To facilitate the provision of new, or the reinforcement of existing flood defences and protection measures where necessary and in particular to support the implementation of flood schemes being progressed through the planning process during the lifetime of the Plan. The provision

Key Risks	Associated Objectives
	of flood defences will be subject to the outcome of the Appropriate Assessment process. **INF OBJ 30:** To ensure the County's natural coastal defences, such as beaches, sand dunes, salt marshes and estuary lands, are protected and are not compromised by inappropriate works or forms of development.

10.6.4 Built Environment: Residential, Business and Industry and Services

Key Risks	Associated Objectives
• Increased risk of buildings overheating in the summer, particularly for new homes meeting strict energy efficiency regulations • Risk of household water disruptions during both drought and flood events. May lead to a decrease in quality which can cause health and well-being concerns • Existing drainage capacity may be exceeded with more	**SOC OBJ 2** To promote and assist in the provision of lifetime adaptable housing units to meet the needs of all in society taking account of climate change. **INF OBJ 14** To require the use of SuDS within Local Authority Developments and other infrastructural projects in accordance with the Greater Dublin Regional Code of Practice for Drainage Works. **INF OBJ 15** To require the use of SuDS in accordance with the Greater Dublin Regional Code of Practice for Drainage Works for new developments (including extensions). **INF POL 19** To implement the findings and recommendations of the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment prepared in conjunction with the County Development Plan

Key Risks	Associated Objectives
extreme rainfall occurrences. • An increase in the prevalence of storm surges puts coastal infrastructure at risk • Increased risk of flooding may cause damage, damp and mould in buildings. • Severe flooding may also damage stock and machinery. Road damage and closures will also reduce accessibility and demand for shops and amenities, which could generate significant economic impacts. • Damage to/inaccessibility of critical amenities such as health services.	review, ensuring climate change is taken into account. **INF POL 20** To require that a Flood Risk Assessment is carried out for any development proposal, where flood risk may be an issue in accordance with the "Planning System and Flood Risk Management – Guidelines for Planning Authorities" (DoECLG/OPW, 2009). This assessment shall be appropriate to the scale and nature of risk to and from the potential development and shall consider the impact of climate change. **INF POL 24** To ensure that flood risk management is incorporated into the preparation of Local Area Plans in accordance with 'The Planning System and Flood Risk Management -Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2009)'. **INF POL 26** To undertake a review of the 'Strategic Flood Risk Assessment for County Meath' in light of the completed flood mapping which has been developed as part of the Eastern Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management (CFRAM) Study. **INF OBJ 21** To restrict new development within floodplains other than development which satisfies the justification test, as outlined in the Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines 2009 for Planning Authorities (or any updated guidelines). **INF OBJ 14** To require the use of SuDS within Local Authority Developments and other infrastructural projects in accordance with the Greater Dublin Regional Code of

Key Risks	Associated Objectives
	Practice for Drainage Works. **INF OBJ 15** To require the use of SuDS in accordance with the Greater Dublin Regional Code of Practice for Drainage Works for new developments (including extensions). **INF OBJ 27** To encourage the use of Green Roof technology particularly on apartment, commercial, leisure and educational buildings. **INF POL 29** To facilitate the provision of new, or the reinforcement of existing flood defences and protection measures where necessary and in particular to support the implementation of flood schemes being progressed through the planning process during the lifetime of the Plan. The provision of flood defences will be subject to the outcome of the Appropriate Assessment process. **INF OBJ 30** To ensure the County's natural coastal defences, such as beaches, sand dunes, salt marshes and estuary lands, are protected and are not compromised by inappropriate works or forms of development.

10.6.5 Agriculture

Key Risks	Associated Objectives
• Heat stress in plants may result in lower crop yields. Warmer temperatures may also introduce new	**HER POL 43** To promote best practice in the control of invasive species in the carrying out its functions in association

Key Risks	Associated Objectives
and invasive pests and diseases for both crops and livestock • Increase in animal stress due to both water shortages and heatwaves • Irrigation requirements may increase during more frequent droughts • Increase in crops loss/damage during floods and inaccessibility of farming machinery. Increased risk of livestock mortality, and loss of grazing land • Water damage to fodder stores can decrease availability for livestock • Damage to/loss of farm infrastructure during heavy rainfall and flood events	with relevant authorities including TII and the Department of Transport. **HER POL 44** To require all development proposals to address the presence or absence of invasive alien species on proposed development sites and (if necessary) require applicants to prepare and submit an Invasive Species Management Plan where such a species exists to comply with the provisions of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011-2015. **GOAL 9.7.1** To maintain a vibrant and healthy agricultural sector based on the principles of sustainable development whilst at the same time finding alternative employment in or close to rural areas to sustain rural communities. **RUR DEV SO 7** To support the continuing viability of agriculture, horticulture and other rural based enterprises within rural areas and to promote investment in facilities supporting rural innovation and enterprise with special emphasis on the green economy, in the context of sustainable development and the management of environmental resources. **RUR DEV SO 2** To identify and protect rural resources such as locally and regionally important aquifers and water sources from development which would prejudice their sustainable future usage.

10.6.6 Ecosystems and Biodiversity

Key Risks	Associated Objectives
• Increase in prevalence of invasive species in warmer temperatures, both through the spread of existing and introduction of new. Increased risk of loss of native species • Increase in risk of forest fires during drought episodes • Increased risk of damage and loss to habitats during flood events and a significant increase in erosion rates • Ecosystems in the coastal zone (and the services/functions they provide) are at a high risk of loss/damage	**INF OBJ 22** To ensure flood relief measures are suitably designed to protect the conservation objectives of Natura 2000 sites, and to avoid direct or indirect impacts upon qualifying interests or Natura 2000 sites. **INF OBJ 23** To protect and enhance the County's floodplains, wetlands and coastal areas subject to flooding as "green infrastructure" which provide space for storage and conveyance of floodwater, and ensure that development does not impact on important wetland sites within river/stream catchments. **INF OBJ 31** To employ soft engineering techniques as an alternative to hard coastal defence works, as appropriate. **INF OBJ 32** To Identify, prioritise and implement necessary coastal protection works subject to the availability of resources, whilst ensuring a high level of protection for natural habitats and features, and to ensure due regard is paid to visual and other environmental considerations in the design of any such coastal protection works. This will include the identification of coastal areas sensitive to climate change and consequent coastal erosion. **INF OBJ 35** To prohibit development along the coast outside existing urban areas where such development is not adequately safeguarded over the lifetime of the development without the need to construct additional coastal defences.

Key Risks	Associated Objectives
	HER POL 45 To ensure that peatland areas which are designated (or proposed for designation) as NHAs, SACs or SPAs are conserved for their ecological, climate regulation, archaeological, cultural and educational significance. **HER OBJ 44** To maintain and enhance our natural coastal defences to increase resilience to climate change. **HER OBJ 45** To investigate how the County's natural coastal defences, can be enhanced to increase climate resilience of our coastal communities. **HER POL 43** To promote best practice in the control of invasive species in the carrying out its functions in association with relevant authorities including TII and the Department of Transport. **HER POL 44** To require all development proposals to address the presence or absence of invasive alien species on proposed development sites and (if necessary) require applicants to prepare and submit an Invasive Species Management Plan where such a species exists to comply with the provisions of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011-2015.

10.6.7 Heritage and Tourism

Key Risks	Associated Objectives
• Increased risk of erosion and damage to heritage sites, decreasing tourist attraction following heavy rainfall and storm events • Increased risk of land damage/footpath erosion around popular sites • Loss/damage of coastal attractions- particularly for more vulnerable small businesses which are clustered here • Damage/closure to roads/rail, both within the county and in the surrounding areas, may limit the accessibility of Meath	**HER OBJ 4** To encourage the management and maintenance of the County's archaeological ; heritage, including historic burial grounds[2], in accordance with best conservation practice that considers the impact of climate change. **MOV OBJ 62** To undertake a risk assessment of County Meath transport infrastructure to identify areas at high risk of climate change impacts (e.g. flooding), over the life of the Development Plan. **MOV OBJ 63** To ensure that any transport maintenance and improvement strategies ensure future climates are considered, to allow appropriate selection of materials and prioritisation of road for repair subject to adherence to TII standards.

1- Outside the Dublin Authorities.

2- Heritage Council (2011). Guidance for the Care, Conservation and Recording of Historic Graveyards

DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT STANDARDS AND LAND USE ZONING OBJECTIVES

11.1 Introduction

This Chapter sets out the development standards and land use zoning objectives to be applied in the assessment of planning applications to ensure that development takes place in an orderly manner in the interests of the common good.

This chapter should be read in conjunction with the remainder of the Development Plan. Please note parking requirements for all development types are set out in Section 9. Section 4 which sets out general development standards should be considered in all cases when designing a development.

Please note that the **Policies** of the Council are labelled as **'POL'** and **Objectives** of the Council are labelled as **'OBJ'** within this chapter.

Section 1 – Statutory & Policy Context

11.1.1 Statutory Context

Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, and Planning and Development Regulations, 2001, as amended.

Section 34 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, sets out the process to be followed when seeking planning permission for the development of land.

Section 28 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, provides that guidelines can be issued at any time by the Minister to Planning Authorities regarding any of their functions under the Act and Planning Authorities are required to comply with any guidelines issued under Section 28 in the performance of their functions.

Planning Authorities are required to have regard to Ministerial Guidelines when assessing planning applications.

Planning and Development (Housing) and Residential Tenancies Act 2016
This Act provides that certain planning applications for certain types of housing development (SHD's) could be made directly to An Bord Pleanála. The associated regulations, the Planning and Development (SHD) Regulations 2017 came into effect in July 2017.

The Strategic Housing Development legislation was introduced as part of the Governments Policy- 'Rebuilding Ireland' and is intended to accelerate the delivery of large housing and student accommodation proposals.

11.1.2 Policy Context

This section is not exhaustive; however, the principal documents which should be consulted are set out below. Further details can be obtained from www.housing.gov.ie.

- **Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments (2023), Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.**
- **Urban Development and Building Heights, Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2018),** Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government.
- **Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (2019), (DMURS),** Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport and the Department of Environment, Community & Local Government.
- **The Planning System and Flood Risk Management (and Technical Appendices) – Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2009),** Department of Environment, Heritage & Local Government and OPW.
- **Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlements: Guidelines for Planning Authorities, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (2024).**
- **Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines (2005),** Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government. The following circular was issued since the publication of these guidelines:
    - Circular PL 2/2017 Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2005 – Local Needs Criteria in Development Plans.
- **Wind Energy Development Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2006),** Department of Environment, Heritage & Local Government. A number of circulars have been issued since the publication of these guidelines including the following:
    - Circular PL 5/2017 Interim Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Statutory

Plans, Renewable Energy and Climate change and Wind Energy Development Guidelines 2006- Update on Review.

- Circular PL 20/2013 Review of Wind Energy and Renewable Energy Policies in Development Plans
- Circular PL 19/2013 Review of 2006 Wind Energy Development Guidelines
- Circular Letter PD/3/08 Wind Energy Developments – Planning Permission and Grid Connections

- **Telecommunications Antennae and Support Structures, Guidelines for Planning Authorities, (1996**), Department of Environment and Local Government. The following circular was issued since the publication of these guidelines:
  - Circular PL03/2018 Revision of Development Contribution Guidelines in respect of Telecommunications Infrastructure.
- **Retail Planning Guidelines (2012),** Department of Environment, Community and Local Government.
- **Spatial Planning and National Roads Guidelines, (2012),** Department of Environment, Community and Local Government.
- **Development Management Guidelines (2007**), Department of Environment and Local Government.
- **Childcare Facilities Guidelines (2001),** Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government.
- **Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas (2009),** Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government.
- **Urban Design Manual (2009**), Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government.
- **Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (2000), Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage**. Further Guidelines on Part V of the Planning and Development Act were issued in 2003 and 2017. In addition, a number of circulars have been issued following the publication of these guidelines including the following:

  - Circular Housing 5 of 2017 – Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2000 – Guidelines January 2017, Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government.
  - Circular Housing 20 of 2016 and Planning 4 of 2016
  - Circular PL 10/2015 Part V – Implementation of Article 22(2)(e) of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended – Validation of Planning Applications.
- **Quarries and Ancillary Activities (2004),** Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government and Section 261A Supplementary Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2012), Department of Environment, Community and Local Government.
- **Towards Nearly Zero Energy Buildings in Ireland - Planning for 2020 & Beyond (2012),** Department of Environment, Community & Local Government. European Energy Performance of Buildings Directive Recast (EPBD -EU Directive 2010/31/EU) requires all new buildings occupied after the 31st December 2020 to be Nearly Zero – Energy Buildings (NZEB) and all new buildings owned and occupied by public bodies after the 31st December 2018 to be NZEB.
- **Energy Efficiency in Traditional Buildings (2010),** Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government.
- **Bringing Back Homes Manual for the reuse of existing buildings (2018),** Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government.
- **Best Practice Guidelines, Quality Housing for Sustainable Communities (2007),** Department of Environment, Heritage & Local Government.
- **Smarter Travel – A Sustainable Transport Future – A New Transport Policy for Ireland (2009- 2020),** Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport.
- **Irish Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (2013),** Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport and Department of Housing Planning and Local Government.
- **National Cycle Policy Framework 2009-2020**, Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport.
- **National Energy Efficiency Action Plan for Ireland 2009-2020**, Department of Communications, Climate Action & Environment.
- **Government White Paper Ireland's Transition to a Low Carbon Energy Future 2015-2030**, Department of Communications, Energy & National Resources.

- **National Renewable Energy Action Plan, Ireland (2010**), Department of Communications, Climate Change & Environment.
- **National Climate Change Adaptation Framework; Building Resilience to Climate Change (2012),** Department of Environment, Community & Local Government.
- **National Mitigation Plan (2017**), Department of Communications, Climate Change & Environment.
- **National Biodiversity Action Plan 2017-2021,** Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht
- **The Building Control Acts, 1990 and 2014** and technical guidance documents, particularly Part L of the Building Regulations for Domestic and non-Domestic Buildings, conservation of fuel and energy. Part M regarding universal access.
- **Guidelines on Residential Development for 3rd Level Students (1999**) and the supplementary review document of July 2005, Department of Education and Science.
- A number of **circulars** have been issued by the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government in relation to **short-term letting** as follows:
    - Circular PL 05/2019 Regulation of Short Term Letting – New Rent Pressure Zone Designations
    - Circular PL 04/2019 New Regulation on Short Term Letting
    - Circular Letter PL 10/2017 guidance on Planning Applications for Short Term Lettings

- Housing Options for Our Ageing Population, Policy Statement (2019) Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government & Department of Health
- Building for Everyone: A Universal Design developed by the Centre for Excellence in Universal Design (National Disability Authority)
- Ten Universal Design Features to include in a Lifetime Adaptable and Age Friendly Home, Age Friendly Ireland.

11.1.3 Environmental Impact Assessment

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is the process of examining the anticipated environmental effects of a proposed project - from consideration of environmental aspects at design stage, through consultation and preparation of an Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR), evaluation of the EIAR by a Competent Authority, the subsequent decision as to whether the project should be permitted to proceed, encompassing public response to that decision.

Circular letter PL 1/2017 confirms that an EIAR submitted to the EPA or other Consent Authorities on or after the 16th May 2017 must meet the requirements of Directive 2014/52/EU.

An EIAR is required to accompany a planning application for development of a class set out in Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended, which exceeds a limit, quantity or threshold set for that class of development. In the assessment of the EIAR of the proposed development (including the entire project), the relevant guidelines include the DECLG (2013) Guidelines for Planning Authorities and An Bord Pleanála on carrying out Environmental Impact Assessment.

The EIA Portal, hosted on the Department of Housing and Planning's website, is a central point for notification to the public on all applications for development consent that are subject to an EIA, including development, works or activities, made across the country and under the various legislative codes. Further information can be found at; https://www.housing.gov.ie/planning/environmental-assessment/environmental-impact- assessment-eia/eia-portal.

11.1.4 Appropriate Assessment

Appropriate Assessment (AA) is a focused and detailed assessment regarding the implementation of a plan or project, alone and in combination with other plans and projects, on the integrity of a Natura 2000 site. There are four phases to the process, firstly the preparation of a Screening Report (Stage 1) and if, following screening, it is considered that further assessment is required a Natura Impact Statement (Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment) must be prepared (Refer to Chapter 8- Cultural & Natural Heritage Strategy and in particular HER OBJ 33 for further detail and guidance on AA). The remaining two phases are assessment of alternative solutions (Stage 3) and assessment where no alternative solutions exist and where adverse impacts remain (Stage 4).

Section 2 – Pre-application discussions

11.2.1 Pre-Application Discussions

Section 247 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended) sets out the formal procedure for prospective applicants seeking planning advice. The Planning Authority actively encourages pre-application discussions prior to the submission of any planning application.

The Planning and Development Act 2018 amended Section 247 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 to provide for at least one pre-application consultation for development of:

- (i) more than 10 housing units (to include Part V);
- or non-residential development of more than 1,000 square metres gross floor space (Gross floor space is clarified as meaning the internal measurement of the floor space on each floor of a building (including internal walls and partitions), disregarding any floor space provided for the parking of vehicles); and
- or (ii) such other development as may be prescribed.

Such consultations shall be held within 4 weeks of the date of receipt of a request for a meeting, unless extended by a specified period. The failure of the Planning Authority to comply shall not prevent an applicant from making a planning application. Regulations may be made with respect to this procedure.

There are assessments that may be deemed necessary to accompany planning applications including, but not limited to: Flood Risk Assessment, Landscape Impact Assessment, Archaeological Assessment, Architectural Assessment, Ecology/Biodiversity- including for example bat surveys. These requirements are decided on a case by case basis, and these are discussed with the Planning Authority at pre-application discussion stage.

Traffic and Transport Assessment (TTA), Road Safety Audits (RSA) and Road Safety Impact Assessments are required to accompany planning applications for major developments with significant potential to generate traffic and or which could create a significant hazard or safety performance impact on a major road, particularly national roads. When preparing the TTA's regard should be had to the provision of the 'Design Manual for Urban Roads and

Streets and the 'Traffic Management Guidelines, 2012'. Where a Transport and Traffic Assessment identifies necessary on and off-site improvements for the development to be able to proceed, the developer will be required to fund the improvements by entering into a formal agreement with the Council.

The requirement for a TTA is at the discretion of the Council but the following thresholds can be used for guidance purposes only:

- Traffic to and from the proposed development exceeds 10% of the traffic flow on the adjoining road;
- Traffic to and from the proposed development exceeds 5% of the traffic flow on the adjoining road where congestion exists;
- Residential development in excess of 100 dwellings (Applications for 100 or more dwellings are decided by An Bord Pleanála as an SHD);
- Retail and leisure development in excess of 1,000 sq.m;
- Industrial development in excess of 5,000 sq.m, and; and
- Distribution and warehousing in excess of 10,000 sq.m.

11.2.2 Small-Scale Projects & Rural Development

Clinics which facilitate pre-application discussions for smaller scale projects, including residential development of less than 100 units, non-residential development of more than 1,000 square metres gross floor space and rural development are currently held fortnightly. Further information and how to obtain an appointment are set out at www.meath.ie.

11.2.3 Economic Development

The Council seeks to positively assist businesses during the planning process by offering relevant advice and assistance for proposals of economic importance. The Council's staff are available to advise and assist potential investors.

Pre-application enquiries for economic proposals are afforded priority. Decision making is expedited where possible. Further information and how to obtain an appointment are set out at www.meath.ie.

11.2.4 Strategic Housing Development (SHD)

Applications for 100 or more dwellings are decided by An Bord Pleanála as an SHD. Strategic Housing Development (SHD) applications are defined as applications for:

- The development of 100 or more houses on land zoned for residential use or for a mixture of residential and other uses;
- The development of student accommodation units which, when combined, contain 200 or more bed spaces, on a land use zoning which facilitates the provision of student accommodation or a mixture of student accommodation and other uses thereon.
- Development as outlined above or containing a mix of houses and student accommodation; and
- The alteration of an existing planning permission where the proposed alteration related to development specified above.

The Planning Authority is statutorily required to facilitate pre-planning discussions in respect of prospective Strategic Housing Developments.

The SHD provisions applied for an initial period, until the end of 2019 and have since been extended by Government Order until 31/12/2021 to coincide with the timeframe of Rebuilding Ireland.

Further details regarding the SHD process are available from www.pleanala.ie.

11.2.5 Strategic Infrastructure Development (SID)

The Planning and Development (Strategic Infrastructure) Act 2006 provides that applications for permission/approval for specified private and public infrastructure developments should be made to An Bord Pleanála. These developments are listed in the 7th schedule of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, and include major energy, transport, environmental and health infrastructure developments.

It is a mandatory requirement for a prospective applicant applying for planning permission for development listed in the 7th Schedule to enter into pre-application consultations with the Board and obtain notice from the Board stating whether or not the proposed development is regarded as strategic infrastructure development. For the purposes of these consultations, the prospective applicant must supply sufficient information to the Board to enable it to assess the proposed development in the light of the criteria set out for strategic

infrastructure development.

Section 3 – Public Realm

11.3.1 Public Realm

Meath's built, cultural and natural heritage has an intrinsic value in defining the character of urban and rural areas and adding to their attractiveness and sense of place. Public realm has a key role to play in this process. Public realm consists of all areas to which the public has access (such as roads, streets, paths, lanes, parks, squares and bridges). It includes the publicly accessible spaces between buildings, along with the buildings or other structures that enclose them. The quality of the public realm plays a vital role in the creation of a place with an enhanced sense of identity, where people will choose to spend their time. It gives great scope for public art, community-based activities, temporary interventions/events, 'greening' the town/village centres with landscaping and the inclusion of creative lighting schemes. The public realm provides the context for highlighting the built heritage. Well-maintained and presented buildings are an important component of the public realm. There is now a better understanding of the economic, social and environmental benefits that public realm can contribute to an area. It is acknowledged that a successful public realm is a component of a successful place. The importance of investment in public realm is recognised in the National Planning Framework, 2018 as one of the '*key factors in developing, promoting and investing in a sense of place and aligning the objectives of creating high quality with that of spatial planning.'* (National Policy Objective 18 (a) refers). This is further reflected by the Governments commitment to public realm improvement projects in the Urban and Rural Regeneration and Development Funds.

Public Realm Plans have been prepared by Meath County Council for Ashbourne (Ashbourne Public Realm Strategy, July 2018) and Navan (Navan 2030-Public Realm Strategy, December 2016). Public Realm Plans have also been completed for Athboy, Bettystown/Laytown and Oldcastle. Public Realm Plans are also currently advancing for brownfield underutilised sites in Navan in need of regeneration (i.e. Flowerhill/Abbeylands and lands at Railway Street) where funding was successfully secured through the Urban Regeneration Fund. All of the aforementioned strategies are the result of input from multidisciplinary teams and extensive public consultation. These consultations are instrumental in exploring and identifying the best way to help an area reach its full potential.

The Public Realm Plans will be used as a tool to guide the development of these central areas into the future. These strategies seek to strengthen and enhance the attributes of a town or village which contributes to the distinctive physical and social character of the area. While these strategies are design-led, compliance with prevailing planning legislation and Development Plan context is required. These strategies will continue to be promoted and it is proposed to extend this programme to include other settlements such as Kells, Ratoath and Duleek.

DM POL 1: To support, be proactive and implement the objectives, actions and recommendations of the Public Realm Plans as completed.

DM OBJ 1: To prepare and implement Public Realm Strategies, throughout the County where appropriate, liaising closely with residents, community and local business groups and other relevant stakeholders.

DM OBJ 2: To enhance the visual amenity of existing town and village centres, minimising unnecessary clutter, and provide guidance on public realm design, including wirescape, shopfront design, street furniture and signage.

DM OBJ 3: To implement the following Public Realm Strategies: Navan 2030, Ashbourne, Athboy, Laytown/Bettystown, Oldcastle, Flowerhill and County Hall/St Pat's Classic School (Navan), when complete.

DM OBJ 4: To prepare a Public Realm Strategy for Kells and Ratoath over the lifetime of this Development Plan.

Section 4 – General Development Standards

11.4 General Standards applicable to all Development Types

11.4.1 Energy Efficiency

Mitigation of the causes and impacts of climate change is one of the cross-cutting themes of this Development Plan. The importance of reducing energy requirements associated with the built environment is one of the challenges identified in the Climate Action Plan 2019. The issues to be considered in addressing this challenge include selection of building materials, type of buildings being constructed, orientation on site and life time energy demands of the building. The challenge presented in measuring the carbon footprint of new residential development is currently being examined by EMRA in conjunction with other State Agencies. It is noted that ongoing research relating to the number of jobs located in towns and the size of the resident population forms part of this process. The 'live work' community concept, one of the key tenets of this plan represents a solution to the disconnect between where people live and work, this is particularly relevant to County Meath which experienced the highest level of out-bound commuting in 2016 (Census 2016). The Council's approach to encouraging gains in energy efficiency is based on the following concepts:

- Focus on compact sustainable growth as set out in the National Planning Framework;
- Increased energy efficiency in the design of buildings,
- Increased promotion of sustainable mobility measures in order to achieve significant future reductions in energy demands.

DM POL 2: Appropriate energy conservation strategies should be employed in location, design, mass, orientation and the choice of materials of all new and renovated developments.

DM OBJ 5: Building design which minimises resource consumption, reduces waste, water and energy use shall be incorporated where possible, in all new and renovated developments.

DM OBJ 6: Building design shall maximise natural ventilation, solar gain and daylight, where possible, all new and renovated developments.

DM OBJ 7: Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) measures are required to form part of the design of all developments.

11.4.2 Access for All

Universal equality of access to all aspects of the built and external environment is an essential part of an inclusive society. Part M of the Building Regulations (Public Buildings & Residential Dwellings) sets out standards to ensure that buildings are accessible to and usable by everyone, including older people, people with disabilities and people with children. The Council will have regard to the Universal Design Guidelines for Homes in Ireland issued by the National Disability Authority and Housing Options for our Ageing Population, issued by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage and the Department of Health, the National Disability Authority's Building For Everyone: A Universal Design Approach 2012 and will seek to encourage the implementation of best practice standards with regard to access in relation to both indoor and outdoor environments.

DM OBJ 8: The Council will seek to encourage the implementation of best practice standards with regard to access in both indoor and outdoor environments.

11.4.3 Public Lighting

Functioning public lighting that is well designed and suitably located is of critical importance to our urban communities. It is important that trees and other vegetation do not impede the functions of public lighting units. Trees planted in close proximity to public lighting often block the light, rendering the light useless. This can lead to road safety issues, security concerns for residents and leads to demands on the Council to prune or remove the problematic trees.

DM POL 3: All public lighting proposals shall be in accordance with the Councils Public Lighting Technical Specification & Requirements, June 2017, and the Council's Public

Lighting Policy, December 2017, (or any updates thereof).

DM OBJ 9: A separation distance of 5 metres between the lighting column and the outside of the crown is required for the lighting to work as designed. Trees or vegetation shall not be planted within 7 metres of a public light column.

DM OBJ 10: The design of all new developments shall take into consideration the layout of the proposed public lighting column locations and the proposed landscape design. Both layouts should achieve the 7 metres separation between all trees and public lighting columns.

11.4.4 Trees and Hedgerows

Trees and Hedgerows are an important consideration with all developments and it is considered that the retention of trees and hedgerows should be considered as part of any relevant planning application. (Please refer to policies contained in Section 8.9.7 Woodlands, Hedgerows and Trees in this regard).

DM OBJ 11: Existing trees and hedgerows of biodiversity and/or amenity value shall be retained, where possible.

Section 5 – Residential Development Standards

11.5.1 Residential Development

This section sets out the Development Management Standards for residential development in towns and villages. Development Management Standards for rural nodes and rural dwellings in the open countryside are contained in Chapter 9 Rural Development Strategy. Please note that parking standards (car and cycle) applicable to residential development are set out in Section 9 of this chapter. Section 4 General Development Standards and Section 14 Land Use Zoning Objectives should also be consulted.

11.5.2 Urban Design

Design of development must demonstrate compliance with relevant National, Regional and Local planning policy while promoting best practice in architectural design incorporating the principles of sustainability, energy efficiency and accessibility. Urban design is concerned with the relationships of buildings to each other and to the spaces around them. Good urban design is fundamental to creating and shaping vibrant urban places. The following steps should be taken when preparing a masterplan or urban design framework for an area and in the preparation of a development proposal:

- Analysis and Appraisal
- Vision and Strategy
- Detailed Design

The key principles of good urban design are set out in the Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlements Guidelines 2024 and accompanying Urban Design Manual and this should be referred to in the preparation of a planning application.

Detailed Design

Residential development proposals shall demonstrate compliance with the principles set down in the Urban Design Manual which accompanies the Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlements Guidelines 2024.

DM POL 4: To require that all proposals for residential development demonstrate compliance with the Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlements Guidelines 2024 and the associated Design Manual, or any updates thereof.

DM OBJ 12: To encourage and facilitate innovative design solutions for medium to high density residential schemes where substantial compliance with normal development management considerations can be demonstrated.

DM OBJ 13: A detailed Design Statement shall accompany all planning applications for residential development on sites in excess of 0.2 hectares or for more than 10 residential units.

The Design Statement shall:

- Provide a Site Analysis
- Outline the design concept;
- Clearly demonstrate how the criteria set down in the Urban Design Manual and

Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlements Guidelines 2024 have been taken into account;

- Include any supplementary information as required in Appendix C of the Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlement Guidelines (DHLGH, 2024);
- Set out how the development meets the relevant Development Plan Objectives, Local Area Plan, Masterplan, Public Realm Strategy, etc;
- Provide site photographs;
- Provide an open space/landscape strategy which identifies any areas of ecological interest and sets out proposals for same; and
- Set out how energy efficiency measures have been incorporated into the project design process (Refer to DM POL 2).
- Provide a universal design statement for all new residential development of ten dwellings/apartments or more demonstrating the universal design principles applied through the proposed development and how the proposed development complies with the 'Building for Everyone: A Universal Design', 'Universal Design Guidelines for Homes in Ireland' developed by the Centre for Excellence in Universal Design (National Disability Authority) and section 11.5.29 of this Plan. In residential schemes of 100 units or more, this statement shall include a community safety audit to ensure a high level of safety and security is maintained including, overlooking, passive surveillance, street lighting and clear accessible routes.

11.5.3 Density

In general, the number of units to be provided on a site should be determined with reference to 'Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlements Guidelines' (2024) or any update thereof. The methodology for the residential density of a site is outlined in Section 3.2 of the Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlements Guidelines 2024. As per the guidelines, density is measured in dph (dwellings per hectare[1]) which can be seen in the tables below. Further guidance on measuring/calculating densities is given in Appendix B of the Guidelines. When carrying out settlement capacity audits for the higher tiered settlements, Meath County Council will prepare a map defining area types which will further provide a roadmap for densities. These should be referred to when establishing the right density on an individual site where applicable.

[1] The number of residential units (all housing typologies) within a defined geographic area.

This Plan seeks to promote the development of 'live work' communities by promoting sustainable development by creating compact, high quality developments. Higher residential densities will be encouraged within walking distance of town centres and public transport infrastructure.

It is acknowledged that there may be instances where specified densities cannot be achieved due to specific circumstances such as site constraints; however, all developments should strive to achieve the prescribed density in order to support the delivery of more compact development and to ensure a maximum return on investment in social and physical infrastructure.

DM POL 5: To promote sustainable development, a range of densities appropriate to the scale of settlement, site location, availability of public transport and community facilities including open space will be encouraged.

DM OBJ 14: The following net densities shall be encouraged when considering planning applications for residential development:

Regional Growth Centres and Metropolitan towns

Centre and Urban Neighbourhoods	50-150 uph
Suburban/Urban Extension	35-50 uph Up to 100 uph open for consideration at accessible[2] suburban/urban extension locations

Key Towns and Large Towns (5000+ population)

Centre and Urban Neighbourhoods	40-100 uph
Suburban/Urban Extension	30-50 uph Up to 80 uph open for consideration at accessible suburban/urban extension

[2] Lands within 1,000 metres (1km) walking distance of an existing or planned high capacity public transport node or interchange, namely an interchange or node that includes DART, high frequency Commuter Rail, light rail or MetroLink services or locations within 500 metres walking distance (i.e. up to 5-6 minute walk) of existing or planned high frequency (i.e. 10 minute peak hour frequency) urban bus services.

Small and Medium Sized Towns (1,500-5,000 population)

Town Centre	Responds to existing scale, form and character of existing development and to the capacity of services and infrastructure
Town Edge	25-40 uph

Rural Towns and Villages (<1,500 population)

Rural Town and Village	Responds to the existing scale, form and character of existing development and to the capacity of services and infrastructure

Densities at or above the mid-density range is encouraged at the most central and accessible locations in each area, densities closer to the mid-range at intermediate locations and densities below the mid-density range at peripheral locations. The definition of accessible, intermediate and peripheral is set down in the Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlements Guidelines 2024. It should be noted that SPPR 1 of the Urban Development and Building Heights Guidelines for Planning Authorities December 2018 shall be considered in the implementation of the above densities.

11.5.4 Plot Ratio

Plot ratio seeks to control the mass and bulk of buildings to prevent the adverse effect of over-development whilst ensuring the efficient and sustainable use of serviced land. Plot ratio is calculated as the gross building(s) floor area divided by the gross site area. For clarity, the gross floor area is the sum of all floor space within the external walls of the buildings, excluding basement, plant, tank rooms and above level car parking areas with the gross site area constituting all land within the curtilage of the site.

To ensure an appropriate level of development, plot ratio standards need to be used in combination with other development management standards, including site coverage, building height, public and private open space, and parking provision. Plot ratio will apply to both new buildings and extensions to existing buildings. A maximum 50% of any development on C1 zoned lands can comprise of residential development, (please refer to Chapter 2 Core Strategy for further details). A maximum 30% of any development on B1 zoned lands can comprise of residential development, (please refer to Chapter 2 Core Strategy for further detail in this regard).

DM OBJ 15: As a general rule, the indicative maximum plot ratio standard shall be 1.0 for housing at edge of town locations with an indicative maximum plot ratio of 2.0 in town centre/core locations.

11.5.5 Site Coverage

Site coverage standards seek to avoid adverse effects of over-development particularly in urban areas thereby safeguarding sunlight and daylight within or adjoining a proposed layout of buildings. Site coverage relates to the percentage of the development site covered by buildings and structures (excluding the public roads and footpaths) and is calculated by dividing the total area of ground covered by buildings by the total ground area within the site.

DM OBJ 16: Site coverage shall generally not exceed 80%. Higher site coverage may be permissible in certain limited circumstances such as adjacent to public transport corridors; to facilitate areas identified for regeneration purposes; and areas where an appropriate mix of both residential and commercial uses is proposed.

11.5.6 Building Line

In the context of urban development, building lines should be followed where appropriate. Where located along major roads with significant traffic flows, increased set back may be required to provide for greater amenity and safety of road users and residents. On existing roads, building lines may be required to be set back to accommodate future road widening.

DM OBJ 17: To seek to provide building setbacks along Motorways, National Primary, National Secondary, Regional and Local Roads to allow for future road improvements.

11.5.7 Separation Distances

DM OBJ 18: A minimum of 16 metres separation between directly opposing rear or side windows above ground floor level in the case of detached, semi- detached, terraced units shall generally be observed.

DM OBJ 19: A minimum of 16 metres separation distance between opposing rear or side windows will apply in the case of apartments/duplex units up to three storeys in height.

DM OBJ 20: Any residential development proposal which exceeds three or more storeys in height shall demonstrate adequate separation distances having regard to layout, size and design between blocks to ensure privacy and protection of residential amenity.

DM OBJ 21: A minimum distance of 2.3 metres shall be provided between dwellings for the full length of the flanks in all developments of detached, semi-detached and end of terrace houses.

The relaxation of any of the standards set out at DM OBJ 18-21 will be assessed on a case-by-case basis and should not be accepted as the Council setting a precedent for future development.

11.5.8 Dwelling Design, Size & Mix

All residential schemes should ensure an appropriate mix of housing typologies and unit sizes to support the provision of a variety of household types and tenures that accord with the Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlements Guidelines 2024.

The changing nature of the age profile of the County requires greater consideration of the housing needs of an ageing population. For those who wish to continue to live independently in their community but wish to downsize, it is imperative to offer a range of attractive and appropriately located accommodation choices which in turn will enable the underutilisation of larger houses, particularly in more established areas, to be addressed. Design of accommodation needs to take account of the needs of persons with a disability. Housing with long term adaptability and potential for flexibility allows for change as circumstances alter or families grow. Adaptability that allows for the alteration of the fabric of a building and flexibility which allows for spaces to accommodate a range of uses are key considerations in the design of a home.

A high standard of building design, specification of materials and detailing are required.

Contemporary designs are welcomed and will be assessed having regard to the context of the site.

All applications for residential development shall include a phasing plan. Phasing proposals shall ensure that open space and infrastructure to serve dwellings in a given phase e.g. public lighting, footpaths, and community facilities such as crèches and playgrounds are completed to the satisfaction of the Planning Authority prior to the initiation of the succeeding phase.

DM POL 6: To require that the unit typologies proposed provide a sufficient unit mix which addresses wider demographic and household formation trends. The design statement required at DM OBJ 13 shall set out how the proposed scheme is compliant with same.

DM OBJ 22: The design of any housing scheme shall have regard to the requirement for connectivity between residential areas, community facilities etc. The design of any walkways, lanes or paths connecting housing estates or within housing estates shall be of sufficient width to allow for the safe movement of pedestrians and cyclists. They shall be adequately overlooked and lit and not be excessive in length.

DM OBJ 23: To require that all applications for residential development shall be accompanied by a detailed phasing plan which demonstrates the early delivery of key infrastructure associated with that scheme.

DM OBJ 24: To require the provision of EV charging points to serve residential development.

11.5.9 Building Height

The Urban Development and Building Height Guidelines (2018) require that Development Plans identify and provide policy support for specific geographic locations where increased building height is a fundamental policy requirement.

In this regard in accordance with SPPR1 of the Guidelines, the following locations have been identified as suitable to accommodate increased building height in the County:

- Dunboyne at both Dunboyne Central and Pace rail stations,
- Maynooth Environs,
- Drogheda Environs,
- Navan
- Proposed rail station Navan

DM OBJ 25: To require development with increased building height at the following locations;

- Dunboyne Central rail station
- Pace Rail Station
- Maynooth Environs
- Drogheda Environs
- Navan
- Proposed rail station Navan

In all cases all proposals for buildings in excess of 6 stories at these locations shall be

accompanied by a statement demonstrating compliance with the Urban Development and Building Heights, Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2018), or any updates thereof.

11.5.10 Open Space

The provision of accessible and useable open space is a critical element in community building. Existing green infrastructure should be identified at the initial stages of the design process and should guide the design of an appropriate site layout. A landscaping plan submitted with an application should clearly illustrate how existing green infrastructure and opportunities to create more linkages have informed and been incorporated into the development Residential development shall layout.

11.5.11 Public Open Space

Public open space within residential developments should be designed so as to complement the residential layout and be informally supervised by residents. A variety of types and sizes of open spaces should be provided at suitable locations to cater for the active and passive recreational needs of children and adults of all ages.

DM OBJ 26: Public open space shall be provided for residential development at a minimum rate of 15% of total site area. In all cases lands zoned F1 Open Space, G1 Community Infrastructure and H1 High Amenity cannot be included as part of the 15%. Each residential development proposal shall be accompanied by a statement setting out how the scheme complies with this requirement.

DM OBJ 27: Standalone residential developments comprising of 9 residential units or less shall be exempt from the requirement to provide 15% open space. In all such cases the private amenity space serving each dwelling shall exceed the minimum requirement.

A reduction in public open space provision (not less than a minimum of 10% of net site area) may be considered in exceptional circumstances where it has been clearly demonstrated, through the submission of a Social Infrastructure Assessment, that existing and proposed public open space provision in the area meets the needs of the potential population increase associated with the development. In other cases, the planning authority might consider that the needs of the population would be better served by the provision of a new park in the area or the upgrade or enhancement of an existing public open space or amenity. In such circumstances, the planning authority may seek a financial contribution within the terms of Section 48 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) in lieu of provision of public open space within an application site.

11.5.12 Private Open Space

All houses should have an appropriate and useable area of private open space, exclusive of car parking, to the rear of the front building line. The minimum area of private open space to be provided is set out in Table 11.1. Exceptions to this may only be considered in relation to the redevelopment of brownfield/regeneration sites where a focus should be on design led and performance-based outcomes rather than specific absolute requirements in all cases. Flexibility will only be permissible in response to well–designed development proposals. Housing developments which provide private open space at the minimum standard throughout the scheme will be discouraged.

DM POL 7: Residential development shall provide private open space in accordance with the requirements set out in Table 11.1. Each residential development proposal shall be accompanied by a statement setting out how the scheme complies with the requirements set out in Table 11.1.

House	Minimum Private Open Space	Max Semi-Private (in lieu)
1 bed house	20 sq.m	10 sq.m
2 bed house	30 sq.m	15 sq.m
3 bed house	40 sq.m	20 sq.m
4 bed + house	50 sq.m	25 sq.m

Table 11.1 Minimum Private Open Space and Semi-Private Standards for Houses

A further reduction below the minimum standard of private open space may be considered acceptable where an equivalent amount of high quality semi-private open space is provided in lieu of the private open space, subject to at least 50% of the area being provided as private open space (see table 11.1 above).

11.5.13 Boundary Treatments

DM POL 8: To require the provision of high quality, durable, appropriately designed and secure boundary treatments in all developments.

DM POL 9: To support the retention of field boundaries for their ecological/habitat significance, as demonstrated by a suitably qualified professional. Where removal of a hedgerow, stone wall or other distinctive boundary treatment is unavoidable, mitigation by provision of the same boundary type will be required.

DM OBJ 28: To require that boundaries between the rear of existing and proposed dwellings shall be a minimum of 1.8 metres high and shall be constructed as capped,

rendered concrete block or brick walls, to ensure privacy, security and permanency. Alternative durable materials will be considered.

DM OBJ 29: To require that all rear boundaries within the development shall be a minimum of 1.8 metres high and shall be constructed as capped, rendered concrete block or brick walls, to ensure privacy, security and permanency. Alternative durable materials will be considered.

DM OBJ 30: Open plan front gardens will generally be discouraged and will only be acceptable in innovative layouts and where a high level of safety is achieved and services can be accommodated at a location which meets the needs of service providers. Open plan gardens will not be permitted on main access roads. In general, front boundaries shall be defined by walls or fences at least 0.5 metres high in keeping with the house design and to a uniform scheme design.

DM OBJ 31: In the case of residential development where the layout does not provide for front boundaries, there will be a general prohibition against the erection of front boundaries.

DM OBJ 32: To encourage the use of measures specifically designed to enhance wildlife in residential schemes such as gaps/holes, should be considered and incorporated into boundary treatments to allow for passage of all wildlife including hedgehogs, bat boxes and swift bricks/boxes.

11.5.14 Naming of Residential Development

DM POL 10: The name proposed for all residential developments shall be clearly linked with the locality in which the scheme is located.

DM OBJ 33: In all cases the name chosen for a residential development shall reflect local place names, particularly townlands or local names which reflect the landscape or shall reflect culture and /or history, including names of historical persons who have some association with the area.

DM OBJ 34: Names shall be in English accompanied by an Irish translation. Name plates shall be fixed to walls and buildings where they can be clearly seen. Bilingual (Irish & English) street name plates, shall be erected on all estate roads at a location that is clearly visible.

DM OBJ 35: In order to assist the public, all houses within housing estates or in street developments shall be provided with numbers and/or names, which shall be visible from the adjoining roadway.

DM OBJ 36: Applicants shall, as part of pre-application discussions include three draft name proposals in accordance with DM OBJ 33 and 34 for consideration.

DM OBJ 37: Three draft name proposals in accordance with above objectives shall be submitted to the Planning Authority as part of a planning application. The name shall be approved by the Meath County Council Naming Committee comprising of the Senior Executive Officer/Planner, Conservation Officer, Planning Department and County Librarian.

11.5.15 Art Work

DM OBJ 38: All proposals for residential developments above 75 units shall incorporate works of public art into the overall scheme or make a financial contribution to the Council to provide the piece of public art in order to enhance the amenities of the local environment (Refer to Chapter 7, Community Building Strategy).

11.5.16 Light and Overshadowing

Daylight and sunlight levels should, generally, be in accordance with the recommendations of Site Layout Planning for Daylight and Sunlight: A Guide to Good Practice (B.R.209, 2011), A New European Standard for Daylighting in Buildings IS EN17037:2018, UK National Annex BS EN17037:2019 and the associated BRE Guide 209 2022 Edition (June 2022) and any updates thereof.

DM POL 11: New residential development should be designed to maximise the use of natural daylight and sunlight. Innovative building design and layout that demonstrates a high level of energy conservation, energy efficiency and use of renewable energy sources will be encouraged.

11.5.17 Apartments

Please note this section must be considered in conjunction with Sections 4, 9 and 14 of this chapter.

DM POL 12: Apartment schemes shall generally be encouraged in appropriate, sustainable, locations, accessible to public transport in the following settlements: Drogheda, Navan, Dunboyne, Kilcock, Maynooth, Ashbourne and Dunshaughlin.

DM POL 13: In towns and villages, there will be a general presumption against apartment developments however there are opportunities for infill developments and consolidation which would contribute to the regeneration of these settlements.

DM POL 14: All planning applications for apartments are required to demonstrate compliance with, 'Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments (2023), Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage' and any updates thereof. While these Guidelines set out minimum design standards, the Council strongly encourage the provision of apartments above these standards, in the interest of creating attractive living environments and sustainable communities.

DM OBJ 39: An appropriate mix of units shall be provided to cater for a variety of household types and tenures. Apartment development proposals will be assessed having regard to the following requirements:

- Aspect-dual aspect units are encouraged;
- Mix of units- to cater for different size households;
- Floor areas and room widths;
- Private and communal amenity space;
- Floor to ceiling height;
- Car and bicycle parking;
- EV Charging points;
- Lift/ stair core access;
- Storage provision;
- Adaptability.

All planning applications for apartment development shall be accompanied by a statement which sets out how the scheme complies with this objective.

DM OBJ 40: A Design Statement is required to be submitted with any planning application for apartment development.

11.5.18 Build to Rent and Shared Accommodation

The build to rent (BTR) and shared accommodation sectors are emerging sectors in housing

provision. Specific Planning Policy Requirement 7 and 8 of the Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments sets out the requirements in respect of BTR schemes including specific reference in public notices that a BTR scheme is proposed, supporting communal and recreational amenities must be provided and details of same must accompany any planning application.

The requirements in respect of shared accommodation or shared living/co-living are set out in Specific Planning Policy Requirement 9 of the Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments (2018) – Please refer to updated Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments (2020).

DM OBJ 41: To require that all planning applications for Build to Rent Schemes demonstrate compliance with Specific Planning Policy Requirement 7 and 8 of the Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments (2018) or any updates thereof.

11.5.19 Infill Sites in Urban Areas

Infill development relates to development located in gaps between existing buildings in built-up urban areas. The Council will support infill development on appropriate sites that make the most sustainable use of serviced land and existing urban infrastructure.

DM OBJ 42: Infill development shall take account of the character of the area and where possible retain existing features such as building line, height, railings, trees, gateways etc.

11.5.20 Backland Sites in Urban Areas

Backland residential development relates to small scale development located to the rear of existing buildings in built-up areas. Having regard to the requirement to protect the residential amenity and character of existing A1 zoned residential areas backland site development shall satisfy the criteria for infill development and avoid undue overlooking and overshadowing of adjacent properties.

DM OBJ 43: Backland development proposals shall avoid piecemeal development that adversely impacts on the character of the area and the established pattern of development.

11.5.21 Corner/Side Garden Sites

Corner Site/Side Garden development refers to sub-division of an existing house curtilage to provide an additional dwelling in existing built-up areas.

Larger corner sites may allow for a variation in dwelling design, however, proposals should more closely relate to adjacent dwellings, albeit with a modern design in order to avoid a pastiche development. At the discretion of the Planning Authority there may be some relaxation in private open space and car parking standards for this type of proposal. The Council will require corner site /side garden development proposals to have regard to the following criteria: Size, design, layout, building line and the relationship with existing dwellings and immediately adjacent properties; External finishes; Accommodation standards for the occupants; Car parking for existing and proposed development; Private open space for existing and proposed development; Development Plan standards for dwellings; Side/gable and rear access/maintenance space, where possible.

11.5.22 Upper Floors/ 'Living over the Shop'

One of the guiding principles of the RSES 2019-2031 is to, '*Set out measures to reduce vacancy and the underuse of existing building stock and support initiatives that promote the reuse, refurbishment and retrofitting of existing buildings within urban centre*s'. It is desirable to maintain an element of residential use in or close to town centres as it provides night time activity. Further, a more substantial residential presence adds to the vitality and viability of a town centre. Unfortunately, residential uses in some of our towns and villages have become limited. As such, proposals for the residential conversion of the upper floors of retail and commercial premises will be favourably considered. Any proposed residential use must respect the historic fabric (if relevant), whilst also providing adequate residential amenity.

In recognising the need to protect the historic fabric of our towns/villages while encouraging people to live in upper floors of retail/commercial premises, it is not always possible or practical to achieve current residential standards. In this regard, at the discretion of the Planning Authority and subject to protecting residential amenity, a reduction in open space and car parking standards may be considered for 'living over the shop' accommodation proposals particularly in town centre locations. Minimum standards in relation to overall floor areas, storage space and natural light must be complied with in order to protect residential amenity.

The Department of Environment has brought in exemptions in relation to vacant commercial buildings being converted to residential use. In this regard, a manual was launched by the Minister of State for Housing and Urban Development in 2019 entitled, 'Bringing Back Homes', to assist property owners, the public, local authorities and the construction industry to develop vacant buildings. Further information can be found at www.housing.gov.ie

DM OBJ 44: To require that these proposals accord with the relevant guidelines and standards contained in this Plan and should contribute positively to the renewal of these areas and to the established character and amenities of the area.

DM OBJ 45: To require that a separate and distinctive point of entry with an identifiable address be provided. Mitigation measures to address possible sources of external noise should be provided.

DM OBJ 46: To allow a reduction in open space and car parking standards for 'living over the shop' accommodation proposals in town centre locations, subject to protecting residential amenity, where considered appropriate by the Planning Authority.

11.5.23 Student Accommodation

The demand for high quality student accommodation is increasing nationally.

DM OBJ 47: To require that all proposals for student accommodation comply with the Department of Education and Science Guidelines on Residential Development for Third Level Students (1999), the subsequent supplementary document (2005) and the 'Student Accommodation Scheme', Office of Revenue Commissioner (2007), or any updates thereof.

DM OBJ 48: To require that written confirmation of a 'Qualifying Lease' as defined in the Guidelines on Residential Developments for Third Level Students published by the Department of Education and Science in 1999 which demonstrates that the accommodation is let to students within.

11.5.24 Family Flat Extensions

Family flats (often known as granny flats) are a way of providing additional accommodation with a level of independence for an undefined temporary period of time. Family flats allow for semi-independent accommodation for an immediate family member (dependent on the main occupants of the dwelling). Applications for family flats will be considered favourably subject to criteria set out in the relevant policy set out below.

DM POL 15: The creation of a custom-built 'family flat' to be occupied by a member of the occupant family with a housing need is generally acceptable subject to site suitability and compliance with DM OBJ 49.

DM OBJ 49: All applications for family flat development shall comply with the following criteria:

- The flat shall form an integral part of the structure of the main house with provision for direct internal access to the remainder of the house i.e. not detached;
- The flat shall not have a separate access provided to the front elevation of the dwelling
- There shall be no permanent subdivision of the garden/private amenity space;
- The flat shall remain in the same ownership as that of the existing dwelling on site. In this regard, the flat shall not be let, sold or otherwise transferred, other than as

part of the overall property;

- The design proposed shall enable the flat to easily fully revert to being part of the original house when no longer occupied by the family member(s);
- If the site is not connected to public mains, the existing wastewater treatment system on site must be capable for any additional loading from the flat, and if not, proposals should be submitted to accommodate the additional loading.

11.5.25 Extensions in Urban and Rural Areas

The objective below relates to residential extensions in urban and rural areas.

DM OBJ 50: All applications for residential extensions in urban and rural areas shall comply with the following criteria:

- High quality design which respects, harmonises and integrates with the existing dwelling in terms of height, scale, materials used, finishes, window proportions, etc;
- The quantity and quality of private open space that would remain to serve the house
- Flat roof extensions, in a contemporary design context, will be considered on their individual merits;
- Impact on amenities of adjacent residents, in terms of light and privacy. Care should be taken to ensure that the extension does not overshadow windows, yards or gardens or have windows in the flank walls which would reduce a neighbour's privacy;
- Extensions which break the existing front building line will not normally be acceptable. A porch extension which does not significantly break the front building line will normally be permitted;
- Dormer extensions shall not obscure the main features of the existing roof, i.e. should not break the ridge or eaves lines of the roof;
- Proposed side extensions shall retain side access to the rear of the property, where required for utility access, refuse collection, etc.
- Ability to provide adequate car parking within the curtilage of the dwelling house
- In all cases where diversion or construction over existing sewerage and/or water mains is required, the consent of Irish Water will be required as part of the application.

11.5.26 Home Based Economic Activity

Home based economic activity is defined as small scale commercial activity carried out by residents of a house or person's main residence, being subordinate to the use of the house as a single dwelling unit and includes working from home. The Council recognises that such working arrangements can benefit individuals, families and the local community in addition to contributing to more sustainable land use patterns by reducing the need for commuting. There is no objection to minor changes of use to allow for this provided the use remains ancillary to the main residential use, the applicant continues to reside in the house and the use has no adverse impact on the amenities of neighbouring dwellings.

DM OBJ 51: In determining applications for developments involving working from home, the Council will have regard to the following:

- The nature and extent of the work.
- The impacts on the amenities of adjoining occupiers, particularly in relation to hours of work, noise and general disturbance.
- Anticipated levels of traffic generated by the proposed development and the potential increased demand for parking.
- Arrangements for the storage of refuse and collection of waste.
- There will be a presumption in favour of this type of use in residential areas.

  However, such uses will not normally be permitted in apartments except in the case of own-door units accessed from street level.

11.5.27 Waste Management

Regard should be had to the number of individual bins required to serve each residential unit at design stage and in particular the requirement for segregating waste for recycling and food waste, (Refer to Chapter 6 Infrastructure for further details).

DM POL 16: All new residential schemes shall include appropriately sited and designed secure refuse storage areas, details of which shall be clearly shown in pre-application discussion and planning application documentation.

DM OBJ 52: In residential schemes, appropriately sized bin storage areas must be provided to the front of terraced dwellings in locations which are easily accessible by the householder. These areas shall be well screened and the design shall integrate with the dwelling.

DM OBJ 53: Apartment schemes shall make provision for waste segregation and recycling. Bin storage shall generally be on the ground floor level of development, be adequately ventilated, screened from public view and adjacent to the block it serves. Where appropriate, the bin storage area shall be a separate structure to the apartment building.

DM OBJ 54: Shared bin storage areas shall be located conveniently for residents and collection service providers with appropriate security measures.

11.5.28 Short Term Letting

Legislation to regulate the short-term letting sector, Planning and Development Act 2000 (Exempted Development) (No. 2) Regulations 2019, came into effect on 1 July 2019 which is applicable only in areas designated as "rent pressure zones" (please refer to Chapter 3 Settlement and Housing Strategy to obtain further information on rent pressure zones). These regulations are intended to address the '*impact on the private rental market by the use of residential homes for short-term tourism type letting in areas of high housing demand*'. Short-term letting is defined as 'the use of a bedroom or bedrooms in a home as paid overnight guest accommodation for a continuous period of up to 14 days. Planning permission is now required to be obtained for a formal change of use. Further details can be obtained from:

https://www.housing.gov.ie/planning/private-rented-housing/new-regulation-short-term-letting

Section 11.5.29 Age Friendly Lifetime Adaptable Homes

In accordance with the principles of *Housing Options for Our Ageing Population – Policy Statement 2019*, the Planning Authority will advocate an age-friendly approach with respect to new residential developments in county Meath.

Applicants for residential development should consider the incorporation of homes suitable for older persons within proposed schemes and homes should include the age friendly principles taken from the Ten Universal Design Features in a Lifetime Adaptable and Age Friendly Home, published by Age Friendly Ireland. These set out that an Age Friendly Home should include the following features:

1. Is well-connected to local amenities;
2. Is connected to the outdoors;
3. Is easy to move about in;
4. Is easy to approach and enter;
5. Has a guest bedroom;
6. Has accessible and adaptable toilets and bathrooms;
7. Are energy and cost efficient;

8. Has good technology systems;
9. Has good security systems;
10. Has easy-to-use fittings and fixtures;

The Council will consider proposals, including the development of small infill sites for appropriate forms of residential development for age-friendly housing, including opportunities for those wishing to downsize from larger family homes to more appropriately sized units 'Right-Sizing' with benefits of town centre living and proximity to community infrastructure, transport etc.

Housing proposals specifically aimed at older people should be designed having regard to Universal Design Standards enabling the property to be future proofed for the possible care needs of the occupant and to ensure sufficient floor space to cater for care assistance/visitors. In this regard, development proposals will be required to comply with any future technical guidance relating to design specifications for housing for older people in place at the time of making the planning application.

11.5.30 Safe and Secure Design

The relationship between buildings and their adjoining spaces strongly influences the sense of personal safety and design plays a key role in ensuring that spaces are well designed and have appropriate passive surveillance. All residential developments shall refer to Design for Safety and Security guidance contained in the DEHLG 'Quality Housing for Sustainable Communities – Best Practice Guidelines for Delivering Homes Sustaining Communities' (2007). New developments and refurbishments should be designed to promote safety and security and avoid anti-social behaviour by:

- Maximising passive surveillance of streets, open spaces, play areas and surface parking.
- Avoiding the creation of blank facades, dark or secluded areas or enclosed public areas.
- Eliminating leftover pockets of land with no clear purpose.
- Providing adequate lighting.
- Providing a clear distinction between private and communal or public open space, including robust boundary treatment.
- Enabling residents to watch over the entrance to their home; recessed entrances should be avoided and front doors should also be overlooked from other houses or from well-trafficked public areas.
- Locating back gardens next to other back gardens or secure private areas rather than on to roadways or other public areas.
- Ensuring that the layout and design of roads within residential areas encourages appropriate traffic volumes and speeds.
- Providing clear and direct routes through the area for pedestrians and cyclists with safe edge treatment, maintaining clear sight lines at eye level and clear visibility of the route ahead.
- Using materials in public areas which are sufficiently robust to discourage vandalism.
- Avoiding the planting of fast-growing shrubs and trees where they would obscure lighting or pedestrian routes; shrubs should be set back from the edge of paths.
- Consulting with An Garda Síochána crime prevention design advisor where appropriate; Meath County Council will also have regard to the Guidelines on Joint

Policing Committees as established under the Garda Síochána Act 2005 as amended (2014), in order to ensure safe and secure communities.

Section 6 – Employment Development Standards

11.6.1 Retail Development

Retailing has an important role in the economy of the County. Retail development is generally located at key locations in our urban areas and has an important contribution to make to the character and sense of place of urban spaces. It is essential therefore that retail development is of a high design quality and at an appropriate scale to the centre in which it is located. (Please refer to Chapter 4 Economy and Appendix 4 Retail Strategy for further information).

11.6.2 Fast Food/Takeaway Outlets

Fast food outlets have the potential to cause noise, littering and can detract from the amenities of an area. Therefore, proposals for new or extended outlets will be carefully considered, particularly in locations where a proliferation of such uses already exists. Chapter 7 of the Development Plan sets out the Council's policies and objectives in respect of its 'Healthy Meath Strategy'. An over concentration of such uses will affect the achievement of the objectives of this strategy.

DM POL 17: To assess the appropriateness of any proposal for a new or extended takeaway/fast food outlet on the potential cumulative effect of these uses on the amenities of an area and schools.

DM OBJ 55: To require that all proposals for new or extended fast food/takeaway outlets address the following as part of any pre-application discussion or planning application documentation:

- The cumulative effect of fast food outlets on the amenities of an area.
- Opening/operational hours of the facility.
- The location of vents and other external services
- Advertising signage

- External seating.

DM OBJ 56: To only consider drive-through restaurants in locations where development will not interfere with the free flow of traffic or detract from the amenities of an area.

11.6.3 Shop Fronts

Shop fronts make a significant contribution to the visual amenities of a settlement and many have strong heritage value which should be preserved. The Council produced a 'Shop front and Signage Guidance' document in 2017 to assist designers of shop fronts and signage, which is available to download from www.meath.ie (Refer to Chapter 4 Economy and Employment Strategy).

DM POL 18: To ensure new/replacement shop fronts are of an appropriate scale and design in order to integrate successfully with existing streetscapes.

DM OBJ 57: To require that proposals for new/replacement shop fronts have regard to the 'Shop front and Signage Guidance' document, 2017 or any updates thereof.

11.6.4 Local/Neighbourhood Shopping Facilities

Shops in neighbourhood centres in our larger settlements perform a key function locally providing services including convenience shopping, laundry, hairdresser, takeaways etc. The aim of providing such shopping facilities locally serve catchment areas within approximately 800 metres is to reduce the necessity to travel by car to the town centre to avail of basic services and thereby ensure reduced traffic congestion and improved sustainability.

Additional neighbourhood facilities may be required as part of large residential developments, these will be determined on a case by case basis having regard to the policies and objectives of Chapter 4 Economy and Employment and the Retail Strategy in Appendix 4.

In rural villages and nodes, these facilities often provide a focal point for the locality and can include post services etc.

11.6.5 Service Stations

The role of service stations has become more diverse with the expansion from merely

selling fuel to also providing convenience services and goods including functioning as rest areas. Ancillary uses include tyre repair, collection points for online retail activity and self-service launderettes.

In responding to the need for adequate provision of service area facilities the TII published the Service Area Policy in August 2014. The Service Area Policy had four complementary goals. These were:

1. To ensure adequate social protection for commercial road users;
2. To improve road safety by averting road fatigue of road users;
3. To comply with European Union regulations including the Trans-European Transport Networks (TENT), Driving Time and Rest Periods Regulations, and Road Infrastructure Safety Management and Intelligent Transport System Directives; and
4. To inform the Spatial Planning and National Road Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2012).

The Service Area Policy states that on the motorway/dual carriageway network, services areas are to be provided approximately every 100km. Proposals for new and extended service stations will be carefully considered by the Council and will not generally be encouraged within the core retail area of urban centres or in rural areas outside of villages and rural nodes.

The Council supports the development of on-line motorway service facilities in appropriate locations in accordance with the guidance set out in the TII Policy on Service Areas (August, 2014) and the Spatial Planning and National Roads Guidelines for Planning Authorities, DECLG (2012).

DM POL 19: Proposals for petrol filling stations in close proximity to the National Road Network shall have regard to the "Spatial Planning and National Roads Guidelines for Planning Authorities", Department of Environment Community and Local Government, 2012, TII Policy on Service Areas (August, 2014) and the Dangerous Substances (Retail and Private Petroleum Stores) Regulations 1979 to 2010 (or any such other relevant standards and legislation that may be enacted).

DM POL 20: Proposals for new and extended service stations will be carefully considered and will not generally be encouraged within the core retail area of urban centres or in rural areas outside of villages and rural nodes and shall be located in all cases within the speed

limit restriction zones.

DM POL 21: Service stations will not generally be permitted in/adjoining residential areas, unless it can be clearly demonstrated no significant effect on residential amenities by reason of HGV facilities, where appropriate noise, traffic, visual obtrusion, safety considerations or fumes and smells. Hours of operation will be limited if a service station is permitted in a residential area. Proposals to demonstrate the above will be required to be submitted as part of pre-application discussion and planning application documentation.

DM OBJ 58: The following shall be submitted as part of pre-application discussion and/or planning application documentation for a service station:

- A high-quality design including roof design, layout and external finishes to ensure it integrates and complements the surrounding environment. The layout should provide for safe pedestrian access to the shop and rest facilities.
- Adequate provision of rest areas and toilets accessible safely by pedestrians and cyclists.
- Where the development would be likely to have a significant impact on the historic or architectural character of the area, the use of standard corporate designs and signage may not be acceptable.
- A comprehensive landscaping scheme prepared by a fully qualified landscape architect.
- Any retailing component shall not exceed 100 sq.m. of retailing area and shall be restricted to convenience goods only. Where permission is sought for a retail floorspace in excess of 100sq.m, the sequential approach to retail development shall apply.
- Forecourt lighting, including canopy lighting, should be limited where possible. All external lighting shall be cowled and diverted away from the public roadway to prevent a traffic hazard.
- The placing of signs on footpaths, grass verges or any part of a public roadway will not be permitted. No advertisements or other structures, whether temporary or permanent, shall be placed on the forecourt which would interfere with the sight lines of motorists entering / egressing the site.
- EV Charging points for electric cars shall be provided with every new/extended service station.
- The provision of HGV facilities, where appropriate.

11.6.6 Retail Warehousing

The Retail Strategy has outlined that there is limited current need for additional floorspace of this type within the County. A very cautious approach will therefore be taken regarding further such development over the period of the Plan, (please refer to Chapter 4 Economy Strategy and the Retail Strategy contained in Appendix 4 for further details), other than completion of existing parks and areas identified in Volume 2.

Any retail warehousing development shall be restricted to 'bulky goods' or goods which are not easily portable by customers travelling by foot, bicycle, or bus (See Annex 1 of Retail Planning Guidelines 2012 for definitions of bulky goods), otherwise these developments could have a damaging material impact on the commercial viability of town centres. Ancillary products should not exceed 20% of the total net retail floorspace of the relevant retail unit.

DM OBJ 59: To ensure that retail warehousing is only permissible on lands identified in Volume 2 of this Development Plan. All planning applications for retail warehousing shall set out clearly in the planning documentation how the proposal complies with the Retail Planning Guidelines 2012, this Development Plan and the Retail Strategy.

DM OBJ 60: Any retail warehousing development shall be restricted to 'bulky goods' as defined by Annex 1 of Retail Planning Guidelines (2012). Ancillary products shall not exceed 20% of the total net retail floorspace of the relevant retail unit.

11.6.7 Industrial, Office, Warehousing and Business Park Development

Building on the momentum of the successful implementation of the Meath Economic Strategy and having regard to the need identified in the RSES to address the disconnect experienced most acutely in the Mid-East Region between where people live and work the Council is setting out an ambitious programme for the delivery of a wider spread of economic growth throughout the County. Support structures are in place in the Council to encourage the development of quality enterprise development.

The Development Plan identifies a range of lands to accommodate various employment uses. It is intended that these areas will develop as high quality, sustainable working environments which will attract further investment. Therefore, the Development Plan

places significant emphasis on ensuring development proposals are of high design quality, suitably landscaped, provide good facilities for pedestrians and cyclists and include staff facilities. The choice of coloured cladding used should be most suitable to Ireland's natural landscape. The development of high-quality employment development is a critical component to realising and supporting the 'live work' community concept.

This section should be considered in conjunction with Chapter 4 Economy and Employment while Section 9 of Chapter 11 sets out the applicable parking standards for these developments.

DM OBJ 61: Any planning application for industrial, office, warehousing and Business Park Development shall address the following development assessment criteria:

- To require innovative contemporary designs for new industrial, office, warehousing and business park developments.
- External finishes shall be suitable for the local/natural landscape
- That indicative site coverage for industrial/commercial development on greenfield sites is 50% coverage unless the design characteristics of the scheme, proposed uses and mobility management plan indicate support for higher site coverage.
- In town centre locations, in order to encourage and facilitate the development of a compact town centre, and to achieve desirable massing and heights of buildings, plot ratio and site coverage of 1.5 and 70% respectively will generally be the norm.
- To require that full details of the proposed use(s), including industrial processes involved are provided.
- To require that full details of the hours of operation be provided.
- To require that details of suitable access arrangements, internal roads layout including details of footpaths, turning areas, loading bays be provided.
- Boundaries which are visible from the public road should be of a high architectural quality. Palisade fencing to the front of any building line shall not be permitted.
- The use of retention ponds as an urban design feature within business parks will be encouraged to enhance the setting, subject to compliance with all relevant safety requirements.
- To require that proposals for and location of onsite areas for storage and disposal (if applicable) of waste be provided as part of any planning application. All external storage including bin storage, oil tanks, etc, shall be visually screened from public areas.
- To require that waste and recycling areas be covered, screened and enclosed from public view and wind, compliant with the Council's Waste Management Strategy.

- All overground oil, chemical storage tanks should be adequately bunded to protect against spillage.
- To require that a survey of any existing vegetation onsite and a suitable landscaping scheme prepared by an appropriately qualified professional, taking account of same, be submitted as part of any planning application to enhance the development.
- Open space shall be provided in suitable locations as part of the development in order to enhance the development and provide amenity and passive recreation for future employees.
- To require that all significant Industrial, Office, Warehousing and Business Park Development incorporate works of public art in the form of outdoor sculptures, special architectural and landscape features or other appropriate art work in the development.
- To require that all planning applications for Industrial, Office, Warehousing and Business Park Development on sites in excess of 0.5 hectares are accompanied by a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP).
- To require that all new developments with over 100 employees shall have a Mobility Management Plan.
- To encourage the provision of supporting facilities for employees including childcare facilities, leisure uses and coffee shops in business parks.
- To encourage research and development activities as an ancillary part of all new and existing business parks in the County in conjunction with 3rd level Institutions.

11.6.8 Agricultural Buildings & Structures

The design, scale, siting and layout of agricultural buildings should respect, and where possible, enhance the rural environment, (Refer to Chapter 9 Rural Development for further information.)

DM OBJ 62: All applications for agricultural buildings and structures shall address the following criteria as part of a planning application;

- To require that buildings are sited appropriately in order to minimise obtrusion on the landscape, having regard to the Landscape Character Assessment contained in Appendix 5.
- The use of dark coloured cladding, for example dark browns, greys, greens and reds are most suitable for farm buildings, and roof areas should be darker than walls.
- Developments shall comply with the European Union (Good Agricultural Practice for

Protection of Waters) (Amendment) Regulations 2014, (GAP Regs 2014).

- All planning applications for agricultural development shall be accompanied by comprehensive details of all land holdings and herd number(s), if applicable.
- All new and existing agricultural developments will be required to contain sufficient detail which demonstrates that all effluent, including yard run-off, is collected and stored within the confines of the development.
- In the case of new farm enterprises, a clear evidence base must be provided which demonstrates the need for the proposal and details of how any buildings proposed form part of a comprehensive business plan for the farm holding supported by Teagasc.

11.6.9 Extractive Industry

The Council recognises the contribution of the extractive industry in supporting jobs in the construction and aggregates section of the County. (Please refer to Chapter 9 Rural Development Strategy for grounding policies and objectives regarding extractive industries).

DM POL 22: To encourage the rehabilitation of disused pits and quarries to productive agricultural use where appropriate having regard to all appropriate environmental considerations.

DM OBJ 63: Where possible, sites shall be subject to rehabilitation and landscaping programmes in tandem with the various phases of extraction. Possible uses post closure could include agriculture and recreation/amenities.

DM OBJ 64: All applications for extractive industry development shall comprehensively address the following criteria as part of a pre-application discussion and/or planning application proposal:

- Impact on Natura 2000 sites, NHAs, sites of ecological importance, geological or geomorphological heritage features; (Refer to Chapter 8 Cultural Heritage for further information);
- Impact on groundwater, surface water and important aquifers and compliance with the objectives of the Water Framework Directive (Refer to Chapter 6 for further information on Water Framework Directive);
- Effective control of emissions and dust;

- Phasing programme for extraction and rehabilitation;
- A scheme of rehabilitation and after care for the site upon abandonment / exhaustion of resource. Details to be submitted should include plan and section drawings, detailing the following:
    - Anticipated finished landform and surface/landscape treatments (both of each phase and the whole excavation);
    - Quality and condition of topsoil and overburden;
    - Rehabilitation works proposed;
    - Type and location of any vegetation proposed,
    - Proposed method of funding and delivery of restoration/reinstatement works etc; Please note that provision for sinking funds under the control of the Council may be conditioned to ensure satisfactory reinstatement on completion of extraction, if considered appropriate;
- A planning application shall include a Planning Report which details the planning status and planning history of the quarry;
- Visual impact of the development, a detailed landscape and visual assessment prepared by a suitably qualified professional (Refer to Volume 3 Book of Maps for Views and Prospects, Appendix 5 Landscape Character Assessment, Appendix 6 Record of Protected Structures, Appendix 10 Protected Views and Prospects for further information.);
- Impact on existing local communities with regard to but not limited to noise, vibration and subsidence;
- Contents of the 'Archaeological Code of Practice' (Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage and Irish Concrete Federation, 2009);
- The extent of land ownership, nature of the deposits and details of any ancillary processes (such as crushing, concrete manufacture, etc);
- Proposals for surface water management and flood risk minimisation;
- Transportation impacts with particular reference to details of all haul routes, trip movements etc (A special contribution may be attached to a grant of permission in accordance with Section 48 of the Planning and Development Act, as amended).

11.6.10 Land reclamation

The Council recognises the need for land reclamation for the improvement of agricultural lands. It is also of note that in recent years significant pressure has come on the Council to facilitate the provision of waste recovery sites for soil and stone.

DM POL 23: To require that all land reclamation developments which include the importation of any material onto site have the requisite waste authorisation in place in accordance with the stipulations of the Waste Management Act 1996.

DM OBJ 65: All applications for land reclamation / soil and stone recovery shall comprehensively address the following criteria as part of a pre-application discussion and/or planning application proposal:

- Impact on groundwater, surface water and important aquifers and compliance with the objectives of the Water Framework Directive (Refer to chapter 6 for further information on Water Framework Directive);
- Impact on Natura 2000 sites, NHAs, sites of ecological importance, geological or geomorphological heritage features; (Refer to Chapter 8 Cultural Heritage for further information);
- Details of the overall and annual quantities of material to be brought on to the site in tonnes having regard to Mandatory EIA Thresholds set out in Schedule 5 Part 2 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 as amended;
- Details of the nature of material including EWC or LoW codes for all waste materials proposed for acceptance at the site;
- Justification for agricultural improvement and detail of proposed agricultural use;
- Transportation impacts with particular reference to details of all haul routes, Load size, Trip movements (A special contribution may be attached to a grant of permission in accordance with Section 48 of the Planning and Development Act, as amended);
- Details of site services including wheel wash, site office, security welfare facilities quarantine areas and weighbridges;
- Phasing programme for reclamation with accurate drawings showing the development in layout and sections through the phases to completion;
- Impact on existing local communities with regard to but not limited to noise, dust, emissions.

Section 7 – Community Development Standards

11.7.1 Community Development

11.7.2 Sheltered Accommodation/Step Down Housing, Residential Care Homes, Retirement Homes, Nursing Homes, Retirement Villages

The Council recognises that the provision of care for the elderly and other vulnerable people in our community is an essential requirement particularly in the context of changing national demographics. A range of accommodation options fall within this sector including: step down housing which supports independent living as support services are available in a complex arrangement, nursing homes, retirement homes etc. (Please refer to Chapter 7 Community Building for further details).

Nursing homes, residential and retirement homes and retirement villages should be located in towns and villages for reasons of sustainability, accessibility and proximity to services. There is a presumption against this type of development in the open countryside for reasons relating to sustainability, poor accessibility and lack of public transport, social exclusion and isolation.

DM POL 24: To require that residential care homes, retirement homes, nursing homes, retirement villages and sheltered accommodation/step down housing be located in towns and villages for reasons of sustainability, accessibility, social inclusion, and proximity to the availability of services, except where a demonstrated need to locate in a rural environment because of the nature of the care required can be clearly established.

DM OBJ 66: Reduced open space standards may be acceptable for the following development types: residential care homes, retirement homes, nursing homes, retirement villages and sheltered accommodation only in cases where it is clearly demonstrated with a

supporting evidence base that it is appropriate by having regard to the specific open space needs of residents and only where suitable accessible public open space is available as part of the development.

DM OBJ 67: Planning applications for the change of use of a residential dwelling or other building to nursing home, residential care home, or for the construction of new residential care homes, retirement homes, nursing homes, retirement villages or sheltered accommodation/step down housing, shall be assessed for compliance with the following criteria:

- The Health Act 2007 (Care and Welfare of Residents in Designated Centres for Older People) (Amendment) Regulations 2010 (or any such other relevant standards and legislation that may be enacted);
- The National Quality Standards for Residential Care Settings for Older People in Ireland, 2009;
- Sustainability is the location served by good public transport links, pedestrian and cycle facilities, close to local services and facilities;
- Suitability of the size and scale of the proposal having regard to the site constraints and the area in which it is located;
- The degree to which the residential amenity of surrounding properties is protected;
- The requirement for a high standard of design and external finishes;
- The adequacy of off-street car parking;
- High quality open space proposals with comprehensive landscaping plans prepared by a fully qualified landscape professional;
- Availability of services.
- It is essential that adequate and suitable open space area and other facilities are provided for residential care homes, retirement homes, nursing homes, retirement villages and sheltered accommodation. It is recognised that reduced quantitative standards may be appropriate in some cases due to the level of care that is provided or by virtue of the location of the facility. Planning applications for such development should include detailed open space and landscaping plans that take account of the location of the facility, the availability/ suitability of existing open space and the needs of the residents of the facility.

11.7.3 Childcare

There is a continuing demand for suitable high-quality childcare facilities in the County, (Refer to Chapter 7 Community Building for the grounding policies in respect of childcare development).

Applicants are encouraged to seek the advice and support of the County's Childcare Committee, Tusla, HSE and other relevant bodies in the design and layout of proposed childcare facilities prior to the submission of a planning application.

DM POL 25: To facilitate the provision of childcare facilities in appropriate locations as set out in accordance with the provisions of the DoEHLG 'Childcare Facilities Guidelines for Planning Authorities' (2001).

DM POL 26: Development of childcare facilities at the following locations will normally be encouraged;

- Areas of concentrated employment and business parks;
- Within new and existing residential developments;
- Neighbourhood Centres;
- Large retail developments;
- Schools or major educational facilities;
- Adjacent to public transportation; and
- Villages and Rural Nodes.
-

DM OBJ 68: Planning applications for childcare facilities shall be assessed for compliance with the following criteria:

- Suitability of the site for the type and size of facility proposed.
- Impact on residential amenity of surrounding residential development;
- Adequate availability of indoor and outdoor play space;
- Convenience to public transport nodes, pedestrian and cycling facilities;
- Local traffic conditions;
- Safe access and sufficient convenient off-street car parking and/or suitable drop-off and collection points for customers and staff;
- Number of such facilities in the area. In this regard, the applicant shall submit a map showing the locations of childcare facilities within the vicinity of the subject site and demonstrate the need for an additional facility at that location.

DM OBJ 69: All applications for childcare facilities shall comprehensively set out the following as part of a pre-application discussion and/or planning application proposal:

- The type of childcare facility proposed – Full day care; sessional service including playgroups, preschools and Montessori; Child minding;

- No. of children;
- No. of employees;
- Proposed hours of operation;
- Car-parking provision; (please refer to Section 11.9.1)
- Location of secure external play area including secure site boundaries.

DM OBJ 70: In the case of proposals within an existing dwelling the Council will consider whether there is sufficient private open space remaining for the enjoyment of the occupant of the dwelling. The potential impact on the residential amenities of adjoining residences will also be considered. In such cases a significant residential component shall be retained.

11.7.4 Education

The Council will be guided by the Department of Education and Skills as to the need for new educational facilities or expansion of facilities at existing schools (Please refer to Chapter 7 Community Building for grounding policies in respect of educational facilities).
All sites for schools shall comply with the requirements of the following:

- 'The Provision of Schools and the Planning System A Code of Practice for Planning Authorities', 2008, or any update thereof;
- Technical guidance document TGD025 (or any such updated document) in respect of primary schools;
- Technical guidance document TGD 027 (or any such updated document) in respect of post primary schools.

DM OBJ 71: Assessing planning applications for new schools and/or redevelopment/extensions of existing schools, the Planning Authority will have regard to the following:

- Site location, proximity of school to catchment area, size of site relative to outdoor space requirements and the future needs of the school (i.e. sufficient space provided for future expansion).
- Public transport availability.
- Traffic and transport impact, good, safe accessible pedestrian and cyclist routes to and from the school from nearby residential and commercial areas.
- Provision of safe and adequate set down facilities for buses.
- Provision of adequate, secure, covered cycle facilities.
- Provision of safe access and adequate car parking and set down areas to facilitate

drop off/pick up.

- Adequate signage, lighting and boundary treatments.
- Impact on local amenities.
- Out of school hours uses.

DM OBJ 72: Temporary classrooms will be assessed on a case-by-case basis and will generally be accepted for a temporary period not exceeding five years and such classrooms should not interfere with onsite car/cycle parking spaces or unduly impact the usability of outdoor play/sports facilities. Any such proposal shall be accompanied by a timeline for the construction of permanent facilities.

DM OBJ 73: Dual function of sports facilities/halls etc, outside of school hours will be encouraged where the use of such facilities will be of a benefit to the wider community, however, any outside hours usage of the school should not be to the detriment of adjoining residential amenities.

DM OBJ 74: To require that all planning applications for new schools are accompanied by a Mobility Management Plan. Existing schools seeking permission to expand will also be required to provide a Mobility Management Plan.

11.7.5 Places of Worship

The pattern of religious practice is becoming increasingly diverse in County Meath arising in part from the significant in migration into the County. This Development Plan supports proposals for the regular use of a building as a place of worship or religious instruction in the context of the land use zoning of the site and the amenities of the area.

DM OBJ 75: To require that details in relation to the capacity of the facility (seating capacity), hours of operation and a traffic assessment (including details of the proposed parking provision) accompany any pre-application discussion and/or planning application proposal.

11.7.6 Allotments

All proposals for allotment development shall be assessed against the following criteria;

- Site location - the suitability of the site comparable to the location of the population served;
- Sites in or at the edge of the settlements are more preferable;
- The adequacy of the public road network serving the site and car parking provision; and
- The adequacy of water supplies.

Section 8 – Energy Development Standards

11.8.1 Energy Development

The Council encourages and facilitates early pre-application discussions on these projects. Refer to Chapter, 6 Infrastructure which contains the grounding policies and objectives relevant to energy related development.
Refer to Section 11.2.5, Strategic Infrastructure Development as the proposal may fall within a category of development which constitutes a SID.

DM POL 27: To encourage renewable development proposals which contribute positively to reducing energy consumption and carbon footprint.

DM OBJ 76: In the assessment of individual energy development proposals, the Council will take the following criteria into account:

- The proper planning and sustainable development of the area;
- The environmental and social impacts of the proposed development;
- Traffic impacts including details of haul routes;
- Impact of the development on the landscape, (please refer to Appendix 5 Landscape Character Assessment);
- Impact on protected Views and Prospects, (please refer to Appendix 10 Protected Views and Prospects);

- Impact on public rights of way and walking routes, (please refer to Appendix 12 Public Rights of Way);
- Connection to the National Grid (where applicable);
- Mitigation features, where impacts are inevitable;
- Protection of designated areas - NHAs, SPAs and SACs, areas of archaeological potential and scenic importance;
- proximity to structures that are listed for protection, national monuments, etc. (Please refer to Chapter 8 Cultural Heritage, Natural Heritage, Landscape and Green Infrastructure and Appendices 6-9 inclusive for further details);
- Cumulative Impact of proposal.

11.8.2 Solar Energy

There are a variety of solar technologies available in the form of roof-top domestic, roof-top commercial, large-scale land based solar developments (where solar cells are mounted to supply energy to the grid) and solar energy storage facilities. There are a significant number of solar farm planning applications in the system nationally. Section 28 Guidance is awaited from the Department of Housing and Planning to assist in the assessment of this development type.

DM OBJ 77: In the assessment of individual proposals, the Council will require the following to be submitted as part of any planning application:

- Glint & Glare Assessment
- Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP)
- Biodiversity Management Plan
- Public Consultation details
- Noise Assessment
- Socio-Economic Assessment
- EIA Screening
- Ecology Assessment
- Archaeology Assessment
- Traffic & Transport Assessment
- Landscape and Visual Assessment
- Hydrology Appraisal/Flood Risk Assessment

- Decommissioning/Restoration Plan

11.8.3 Wind Energy

The Council require that any pre-application discussion and/or planning application proposal for wind farm development sets out how the project complies with DM POL 27 and DM OBJ 76. The Council will support appropriate innovative designs for wind farms. Topographical enclosures and extensive areas of degraded or previously developed lands should be identified for wind farm development to help minimise visual impacts and to harmonise wind turbines with the landscape. In general, matt finishes and neutral colours for turbines and structures are required. All planning applications shall be accompanied by detailed proposals for the restoration of the site after removal of the turbines and associated infrastructure including access roads. Adequate financial security will be required to ensure site restoration and removal of the wind farm.

DM POL 28: To require compliance with the Wind Energy Development Guidelines, (2006) and Circular PL20-13, and any updates thereof. Any proposal shall be supported by both a technical and an environmental statement prepared to an acceptable standard which sets out how the proposal complies with the Guidelines.

DM OBJ 78: To require that any pre-application discussion and/or planning application proposal for wind farm development sets out how the project complies with DM POL 28.
DM OBJ 79: Topographical enclosures and extensive areas of degraded or previously developed lands should be identified for wind farm development to help minimise visual impacts and to harmonise wind turbines with the landscape.

DM OBJ 80: In general, matt finishes and neutral colours for turbines and structures are required.

DM OBJ 81: The Council will support appropriate innovative designs for wind farms.

DM OBJ 82: All planning applications shall be accompanied by detailed proposals for the restoration of the site after removal of the turbines and associated infrastructure

including access roads. Adequate financial security will be required to ensure site restoration and removal of the wind farm.

11.8.4 Energy Networks

In the assessment of individual proposals, the Council will take the criteria outlined in section 11.8.1 (Energy Development) into account.

11.8.5 Telecommunications and Broadband

High quality communications and information technology networks are critical for the continued implementation of the Economic Strategy. Please refer to Chapter 6 for grounding policies for telecommunications and broadband.

DM POL 29: To require compliance with the requirements of the "*Telecommunications Antennae and Support Structures – Guidelines for Planning Authorities*" July 1996, except where they conflict with Circular Letter PL 07/12 which shall take precedence, and any subsequent revisions or expanded guidelines in this area.

DM OBJ 83: To encourage the location of telecommunications structures at appropriate location within the County, subject to environmental considerations.

DM OBJ 84: To require the co-location of antennae on existing support structures and where this is not feasible require documentary evidence as to the non-availability of this option in proposals for new structures.

DM OBJ 85: To avoid the location of structures in sensitive landscapes, in nature conservation areas, in highly sensitive landscapes and where views are to be preserved. (Please refer to Chapter 8 Cultural Heritage, Natural Heritage, Landscape and Green Infrastructure and Appendices 6-9 inclusive for further details).

DM OBJ 86: To generally discourage the use of wires or other devices affixed to the facade of buildings in town and village centres.

DM OBJ 87: To encourage the development of open access networks in all developments.

11.8.6 Anaerobic Digesters

Anaerobic Digesters are widely used in the agricultural sector in the form of small on-farm digesters producing biogas to heat farmhouses and other farm buildings.

An Anaerobic Digestion plant typically comprises of:

- a digester tank;
- buildings to house ancillary equipment such as a generator;
- a biogas storage tank;
- a flare stack (3-10m in height); and
- associated pipework.

Plants can vary in scale from small schemes treating the waste from an individual farm through medium-sized centralised facilities dealing with wastes from several farms (potentially supplemented by crops such as maize grown specifically to feed the digester) to sizeable industrial AD plants handling large quantities of municipal solid waste. In the case of small plants, it is likely that the plant can be accommodated within the vicinity of existing farm buildings. Some forms of biomass produce digestate and other end products which must be disposed of.

Siting is a key consideration when assessing proposals for Anaerobic Digesters. The development of a bio energy project regardless of scale has development implications on the environs in which it will be situated. The development impacts which may be exacerbated by an improperly sited bio energy project. Key considerations include:

- Visual Impact;
- External Finishes;
- Sky lining;
- Residential Amenity;
- Transport;
- Road Capacity / Site Entrance;
- Light Pollution;
- Noise Pollution; and
- Air Pollution.

DM OBJ 88: To seek to facilitate the development of alternative energy sources where such proposals are consistent with landscape preservation, the protection of natural habitats, the protection of visual and residential amenities and Development Plan policy and the principles of proper planning and sustainable development.

Section 9 – Parking Standards

11.9.1 Parking Standards

One of the cross-cutting themes of the Development Plan is to encourage a shift to more sustainable forms of transport. The provision of sufficient car parking is important particularly in areas of the County which are currently poorly served by public transport networks. Therefore, the rationale for the application of car parking standards is to ensure that consideration is given to the accommodation of vehicles in assessing development proposals while being mindful of the need to promote a shift towards more sustainable forms of transport.

DM OBJ 89: Car parking shall be provided in accordance with Table 11.2 and associated guidance notes.

Table 11.2 Car Parking

Land Use – Residential	Car Spaces
Dwellings/Apartments	**Accessible locations[3]:** Maximum of 1.5 spaces per dwelling/unit **Intermediate and peripheral locations:** Maximum should be 2 per dwelling/unit
Hotel Accommodation (excluding bars, functions rooms, etc.)	1 per bedroom
B&B / Guesthouse	1 per bedroom

[3] Accessible, intermediate and peripheral locations are defined in the Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlements Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2024.

Hostel Accommodation	1 per bedroom or 1 per 10 beds
Self-Catering Accommodation **Caravan/Mobile Home Parks**	1 per unit
Institutions	1 per employee
Student Accommodation	To be determined on a case by case basis
Land Use – Employment	
Manufacturing Industry	1 per 50 sq.m. gross floor area
Warehousing	1 per 100 sq.m. gross floor area
Offices	1 per 25 sq.m. gross floor area. Where the floor area exceeds 1,500 sq.m. gross floor area, 1 space per 50sq.m. gross floor area.
Data Centres	1 per 300 sq.m. gross floor area

Land Use – Commercial	
Food Retail	1 per 20 sq.m. gross floor area. Where the floor area exceeds 1,000 sq.m. gross floor area, 1 space per 14 sq.m. gross floor area. *Provision should be made for taxi drop off spaces.

Non-Food Retail	1 per 20 sq.m. gross floor area.
Retail Warehousing	1 per 20 sq.m. gross floor area
Cash and Carry	1 per 50 sq.m. gross floor area
Banks	1 per 20 sq.m. gross floor area
Restaurants	1 per 5 sq.m dining area
Bars, Night Clubs, Lounges, Function Rooms incl. such spaces in hotels	1 per 4 sq.m. of public area
Vehicle Service Station	4 per fuel pump provided
Retail Outlets within Vehicle Service Garages	1 per 10 sq. m of net floor area. 1 HGV parking space per 30sq.m. net floor area is required where food is served on the premises.
Land Use - Health and Education Facilities	
Hospitals	1 per bed
Surgeries	2 per consulting room
Nursing Homes	1 per 3 beds and one space per employee

Schools	3 per classroom plus dedicated pick up/set down area within site boundary
Colleges/Third Level Institutions	To be determined by the Planning Authority.
Land Use - Community Facilities	
Places of Public Worship	1 per 4 seats
Libraries	1 per 20 sq.m. gross floor area
Cultural buildings	To be determined by the Planning Authority
Crèches	1 per employee & dedicated set down area and 1 per 4 children plus dedicated set down area
Cinemas/Theatre	1 per 3 seats. Where gross floor area exceeds 1000 sq.m., 1 space per 5 seats.
Funeral Homes	1 per 5 sq. m. gross floor area
Community Centres	1 per 5 sq. m. gross floor area
Allotments	1 space per plot
Land Use - Sports Facilities	

Sport Clubs-including swimming pools, tennis courts, gyms, fitness studios, etc.	2 per court, 5 per 100 sq.m.
Golf / Pitch & Putt courses	3 per hole
Golf Driving Ranges	1 per 2m of base line/per trap whichever is less
Bowling Alleys	5 per lane
Stadia	To be determined by the Planning Authority
Playing fields	15 spaces per pitch

Guidance Notes

- Where parking is permitted in the view of the general public, adequate soft landscaping shall be provided to soften the appearance of hard surfaced areas;
- Parking areas shall be reserved solely for the parking of vehicles and should not be used for the storage of materials or goods associated with the development, nor for the parking of goods or other heavy vehicles;
- The standards set out in Table 11.2 shall apply to all new developments, be it new construction or a new extension or a material change of use of existing buildings;
- The Council will encourage and facilitate innovative design solutions for medium to high density residential schemes where substantial compliance with normal development management considerations can be demonstrated (Refer to DM OBJ 12);
- Accessible car parking spaces shall be provided at a minimum rate of 5% of the total number of spaces, for developments requiring more than 10 car parking spaces, with the minimum provision being one space (unless the nature of the development requires otherwise). Such spaces shall be proximate to the entry points of buildings and comply with the requirements of the Building Regulations;
- Age Friendly car parking spaces should generally be provided, where possible, in all developments; These parking spaces should be provided as close as reasonably possible to building entrance points and should be allocated, sign posted and appropriately managed and shall be in accordance with the National Age Friendly Parking Space Guide, latest edition;
- In the case of any specific uses not listed in the above table, the Council will specify its requirements in relation to parking;
- The above car parking standards shall be applied at the discretion of the Council in the County's rural towns and villages having regard to the availability and adequacy of on street parking, existing or proposed off street parking to serve the development and the status of the town/village within the settlement hierarchy of the County;
- Residential car parking can be reduced at the discretion of the Council, where development is proposed in areas with good access to services and strong public transport links;
- Non-residential car parking standards are set down as "maxima" standards;
- Adequate car parking bays should be provided within the confines of the public areas of residential areas to address public needs; and
- All parking areas shall be clearly demarcated and numbered with indelible paint which shall be permanently maintained to the satisfaction of the Planning Authority.

DM OBJ 90: The dimension of parking bays shall comply with Table 11.3.

Table 11.3 Car Parking Bays

Parking dimensions (Perpendicular to Kerb) **Where space is adjacent to a wall or other obstruction**	5.0m x 2.5m 5.0m x 2.75m
Parking dimensions (Parallel to Kerb)	6.0m x 2.5m
Accessible Parking Bay to comply with Building Regulations.	5.0m x 2.5m + 1.2m to the sides and rear of each space
Loading Bay	6.0m x 3.0m
Circulation Aisles	6.0m in width

DM OBJ 91: Car parking provision shall normally be provided within the curtilage of the development site. Where, in the opinion of the Council, it would be impracticable for individual developers to provide for on-site parking, a contribution may be required.

DM OBJ 92: Loading bays shall be located and designed to prevent any obstructions to traffic circulation and to accommodate vehicular manoeuvring on site.

DM OBJ 93: New residential development should take account of the following regarding car parking:

- Vehicular parking for detached and semi-detached housing should be within the curtilage of the house;
- Vehicular parking for apartments, where appropriate, should generally be at basement level. Where this is not possible, parking for apartments and terraced housing should be in small scale informal groups overlooked by residential units;
- The visual impact of large areas of parking should be reduced by the use of screen

planting, low walls and the use of different textured or coloured paving for car parking bays;

- Consideration needs to be given to parking for visitors and people with disabilities; and
- Provision of EV Charging points.

11.9.2 EV Charging Points

The Climate Action Plan, 2019 acknowledges that the pricing structure for EV vehicles is a major factor in consumers decision making. However, the Plan also acknowledges the importance of *'ensuring the EV Charging network underpins public confidence*.' The Council will encourage the provision of EV charging points in all developments for future proofing.

DM OBJ 94: All car parks shall include the provision of necessary wiring and ducting to be capable of accommodating future Electric Vehicle charging points, at a rate of 20% of total space numbers.

DM OBJ 95: In any car park in excess of 20 spaces where public access is available, four fully functional charging points for Electric Vehicles shall be provided in accordance with IEC 61851 Standard for Electric Vehicle Conductive Charging Systems.

11.9.3 Cycling Parking

The Council will require an appropriate amount of cycle parking facilities to be provided with new development. Cycle parking areas should be designed so that cyclists feel safe and be easily accessible. Unnecessarily long access routes with poor passive security or slopes that can become hazardous in winter weather should be avoided. Cycle storage facilities should be provided in a dedicated facility of permanent construction, within the building footprint or, where not feasible, within an adjacent or adjoining purpose built structure of permanent construction. It is best practice that either cycle cage/compound or preferably locker facilities are provided. An acceptable quality of cycle storage requires a management plan that ensures the effective security (including any proposals for electronic access or CCTV), operation and maintenance of cycle parking. Details of the provision of and access to cycle storage facilities should be submitted at planning application stage.

DM OBJ 96: To require the provision of cycle parking facilities in accordance with the Design Standards for New Apartments 2023, the Sustainable Residential

Development and Compact Settlements Guidelines 2024 and Table 11.4 Cycle Parking Standards.

DM OBJ 97: Cycle parking facilities shall be conveniently located, secure, easy to use, adequately lit and well sign posted. All long-term (more than three hours) cycle racks shall be protected from the weather.

DM OBJ 98: To establish and implement Cycle Parking Standards for new developments in the County.

DM OBJ 99: In residential developments without private gardens or wholly dependent on balconies for private open space, covered secure bicycle stands should be provided in private communal areas.

DM OBJ 100: All cycle facilities in multi-storey car parks shall be at ground floor level and segregated from vehicle traffic. Cyclists shall also have designated entry and exit routes at car parks.

Table 11.4 Cycle Parking Standards

Type of Development	**Cycle Parking Standard**
Apartments	Minimum of 1 private secure bicycle space per bedroom (note – design should not require bicycle access via living area) 1 visitor bicycle space per two housing units Please refer to SPPR 4 of the 'Sustainable Residential and Compact Settlements Guidelines' (2024) for further requirements.
Shops	1 space for every 10 car spaces or 1 space per till/checkout, whichever is greater

Offices	10% of employee numbers subject to minimum of 10 bicycle places or one bike space for every car space, whichever is the greatest.
Schools (Rural schools will be assessed on a case by case basis)	25% of pupil registration numbers/minimum of 10 spaces. Consider separate teacher/employee parking.
Other developments	1 bike space per car space, or 10% of employee numbers in general

Off Street car parks (including Multi-Storey Car Parks) Park and Ride locations	10% of total car spaces/minimum provision of 50 spaces Consider sheltered parking at P+R
On-street (public)	Minimum of 5-10 spaces depending on expected level of usage
Public Transport pick up points/interchanges	2.5% of number of daily boarders at that point/station, minimum of 10 bicycle spaces
Events	5% of forecast attendees

11.9.4 Taxi Services

Accessible taxi services are important in providing a demand responsive 24-hour door-to-door service.

DM OBJ 101: Planning applications for significant commercial, industrial and other developments shall demonstrate the provision of adequate drop-off and set-down areas for taxi services.

DM OBJ 102: To require the provision of facilities for taxis in all new supermarket and neighbourhood development proposals.

Section 10 – Advertising Standards

11.10.1 Advertising

Advertising structures are an accepted and necessary part of commercial activity and are essential for way finding.

DM POL 30: To permit only advertisements which enhance the appearance and vitality of an area and make a positive contribution to the streetscape.

DM OBJ 103: The following signage types will be discouraged

- Signs which advertise general products or services
- Animated, moving, flashing, rotating or sound-emitting signs
- Billboards
- Roof mounted signs or signs which project above the ridge height of the building
- Internally illuminated awnings
- Changeable message signs
- Pole mounted signs
- Wall signs
- Free standing signs

DM OBJ 104: In assessing advertising signage, the Council will consider the following criteria:

- The size and scale of signs which should not conflict with existing structures in the vicinity.
- The potential impacts on the streetscape of the proposal
- Large scale commercial advertisement structures are not acceptable on or near Protected Structures, Architectural Conservation Areas (please refer to Map 8.3), in public parks and in areas of high amenity.
- Signs should not interfere with windows or other façade features or project above the skyline.

DM OBJ 105: Advertisement structures will not be permitted where they give rise to a potential traffic hazard. In accordance with the Spatial Planning and National Roads and the Guidelines on the provision of Tourism and Leisure Signage on National Roads (2011), advertisement structures will not be permitted at roundabouts, at traffic signalised junctions, at locations where they obstruct sight lines, compete with other traffic signs, give rise to confusion for road users or endanger traffic safety.

DM OBJ 106: Applications for advertisement structures along national routes and along approach roads to towns and villages will generally not be permitted except for tourist attractions of national or regional importance which utilise the approved designated

signage.

DM OBJ 107: The number of advertisement structures for any one premises shall be kept to a minimum and will generally be restricted to a maximum of two in the local area. In exceptional cases this maximum may be exceeded at the discretion of the Council.

DM OBJ 108: The use of electronic variable messaging signs commonly known as "VMS signs", shall be reserved strictly for use in roadwork activities, hazard information and or as part of an approved event traffic management plan. Advanced written consent of the Council will be required prior to installation and usage of such signage.

DM OBJ 109: In urban centres, where public realm strategies have been prepared the Council reserve the right to de-exempt any signage in the interests of visual amenity in these areas.

11.10.2 Advertising Hoardings

Advertising hoardings, including tri-vision and three-dimensional signs, if inappropriately located can constitute one of the most obtrusive elements of all forms of outdoor advertisement. They rely for their impact on size, scale and location and are thus usually detrimental to the character of the area in which they are situated and, in some cases, contribute to a traffic hazard. However, they can help to screen derelict or obsolete sites awaiting re-development, in certain circumstances.

The practice of parking trailers or other mobile objects bearing advertisements in fields adjoining roads has become a feature of Irish roads over the past number of years. Such advertisements can be harmful to the visual amenities of the area, represent a traffic hazard by virtue of distracting motorists and could have impacts on biodiversity. Where such advertisements do not have the benefit of planning permission, the Council shall take appropriate enforcement action. The potential negative impacts of such development shall also be taken into account in assessing applications for such development.

DM OBJ 110: Outdoor advertising hoardings shall not be permitted where it would detract from the visual quality of the setting of Protected Structures. In all other cases, planning applications for such development will be considered on the basis of the visual impact of the proposed advertising hoarding and the potential for a traffic hazard arising from same will be imperative. The number and scale of hoardings in the vicinity of the site

will be a material consideration.

Section 11 – Development Contributions

11.11.1 Development Contributions

Section 48 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) allows the Planning Authority when granting planning permission to include conditions requiring the payment of a financial contribution in respect of public infrastructure and facilities benefitting development in the area of the planning authority and that is provided, or that it is intended will be provided, by or on behalf of a local authority. The current Meath County Development Contributions Scheme 2016 – 2021 (as amended) sets out the contributions applicable to development. The scheme should be consulted in advance of the making of a planning application. There are three types of development contributions; General, Special and Supplementary.

11.11.2 General Development Contributions

These contributions apply in respect of public infrastructure and facilities provided by or on behalf of the Planning Authority that benefit development in its functional area, as noted above. Section 48 (1) of the Act outlines that a Planning Authority when making a grant of permission, may include a condition requiring the payment of a contribution in respect of public infrastructure and facilities such as open spaces, community and recreational facilities and amenities and landscaping works; infrastructure to facilitate public transport, cycle and pedestrian facilities; refurbishment, upgrading, enlargement or replacement of roads and surface water drainage infrastructure.

11.11.3 Special Development Contributions

In circumstances where additional specific infrastructure for an area is required, the Council may attach a special contribution.

Developers may also be required to carry out works at their own expense to facilitate their development and this would be specified as a condition of the planning permission.

11.11.4 Supplementary Development Contributions

Under Section 49 of the Act, a Planning Authority may, when granting permission include conditions requiring the payment of a contribution in respect of any public infrastructure service or project specified in a "Supplementary Development Contribution Scheme" that will benefit the development to which the planning permission relates.

The Council has adopted Supplementary Development Contribution Schemes for the following projects;

- Navan- Dublin Rail Line
- Kells Backlands.

These schemes remain active. The Council will consider the need for additional contribution schemes over the plan period.

Section 12 – Dublin Airport Noise Zones

11.12.1 Development in Proximity to Approach Zones/Noise Zones of Airports and Airfields

Public Safety Zones, Approach zones of Dublin Airports, and noise zones associated with airport flight operations are illustrated on Map 5.4.1 & 5.4.2. In the assessment of development within these zones, regard shall be had to the relevant policy documents, implications of same and consultation shall take place with the relevant authorities. Please refer to Chapter 5 Movement for further detail.

DM POL 31: To manage noise sensitive development in Noise Zone B and Noise Zone C, where aircraft noise may give rise to annoyance and sleep disturbance, and to ensure, where appropriate, noise insulation is incorporated within the development.

DM POL 32:

a. To require that single residential units (urban and rural) or extensions to same are provided with noise insulation of an appropriate standard having regard to its location within a Noise Zone B or Noise Zone C.
b. To require non-residential noise sensitive uses or multiple residential developments within Noise B or Noise Zone C include where appropriate, a noise impact assessment

which clearly demonstrates that relevant internal noise guidelines will be met in order to protect the amenity of future occupants.

DM OBJ 111: Development should be restricted which would give rise to conflicts with aircraft movements on environmental or safety grounds on lands in the vicinity of Dublin Airport and on the main flight paths serving Dublin Airport.

Section 13 – Seveso Sites

11.13.1 Seveso Sites

The Seveso III Directive, 2012/18/EU came into force in Ireland on 1st June 2015 replacing the Seveso II Directive, 96/82/EC. The Seveso III (Directive 2012/18/EU) was adopted taking into account, amongst other factors, the changes in EU legislation on the classification of chemicals and the increased rights for the public to access information and justice.
This Directive is aimed at the prevention of major accidents involving dangerous substances. However, as accidents may nevertheless occur, it also aims at limiting the consequences of such accidents not only for human health but also for the environment.

The Directive covers establishments where dangerous substances may be present (e.g. during processing or storage) in quantities above a certain threshold. Excluded from the Directive are certain industrial activities which are subject to other legislation providing a similar level of protection (e.g. nuclear establishments or the transport of dangerous substances).

Depending on the amount of dangerous substances present, establishments are categorised in lower and upper tier establishments, the latter are subject to more stringent requirements.

The Chemicals Act (Control of Major Accident Hazards involving Dangerous Substances) Regulations 2015 (S.I. No. 209 of 2015) (the “COMAH Regulations”), implement the Seveso III Directive (2012/18/EU). The purpose of the COMAH Regulations is to lay down rules for the prevention of major accidents involving dangerous substances, and to seek to limit as far as possible the consequences for human health and the environment of such accidents, with the overall objective of providing a high level of protection in a consistent and effective

manner.

The intention is to achieve this through tiered controls on the operators of the establishments subject to the Regulations - the larger the quantities of dangerous substances present at an establishment, the more onerous the duties on the operator. The European Communities (Control of Major Accident Hazards Involving Dangerous Substances) Regulations 2006 and the European Union (Control of Major Accident Hazards Involving Dangerous Substances) (Amendment) Regulations 2013, which implemented the Seveso II Directive (96/82/EC), have been revoked by the European Union (Control of Major Accident Hazards Involving Dangerous Substances) (Revocation) Regulations 2015 (S.I. No. 208 of 2015) and replaced by the COMAH Regulations.

Part 7 of the COMAH regulations 2015 provides that appropriate consultation procedures must be put in place to ensure that before decisions are taken, technical advice is available to Planning Authorities in respect of:

a. the siting and development of new establishments;
b. modifications to establishments of the type described in Regulation 12(1);
c. new developments including transport routes, locations of public use and residential areas in the vicinity of establishments, where the siting, modifications or developments may be the source of, or increase the risk or consequences of, a major accident;

Such technical advice will be taken into account in the consideration of applications for planning permission.

The Central Competent Authority in the case of planning advice is the Health and Safety Authority ("HSA"). The HSA are also obliged to provide the Planning Authority with information to assist in the long-term planning of the County in order to:

a. maintain appropriate safety distances between establishments covered by these Regulations and residential areas, buildings and areas of public use, recreational areas, and, as far as possible, major transport routes;
b. protect areas of particular natural sensitivity or interest in the vicinity of establishments, where appropriate, through appropriate safety distances or other relevant measures; and;

c. for the operator to take additional technical measures, in the case of existing establishments, in accordance with Regulation 7, so as not to increase the risks to human health and the environment.

Table 11.5: List of Seveso Sites in County Meath or Sites where Consultation Distances extend into the County, these are illustrated on Map 11.1.

Map 11.1	Name of Company	Seveso Location	Seveso Tier	Consultation Radius Distance from Facility	County
Site 1	**Boliden Tara Mines DAC**	Knockumber Road, Navan, Co. Meath	Upper Tier	1,000 metres	Meath
Site 2	**Xtratherm Limited**	Liscarton Industrial Estate, Kells Road, Navan	Lower Tier Site	1000 metres	Meath
Site 3	**Grassland Fertilizers Limited**	The Pound Slane Road	Lower Tier Site	700 metres	Meath
Site 4	**Flogas Ire. Ltd**	Marsh Drogheda Road	Upper Tier Site	600 metres	Louth
Site 5	**Irish Industrial Explosives Limited**	Clonagh, Enfield	Upper Tier Site	1000 metres	Kildare

Site 6	**Clarochem Ireland Ltd**	Damastown, Mullhuddart	Lower Tier Site	1000 metres	Fingal
Site 7	**Chemco (Ireland) Limited (t/a Chemsource Logistics)**	Macetown North Damastown Industrial Estate, Mulhuddart	Upper Tier Site	1,000 metres	Fingal
Site 8	**Aestellas Ireland Co. Ltd**	Damastown Industr Mullhuddart Park	Lower Tier Site	1,000 metres	Fingal
Site 9	**Guerbet Ireland ULC**	Damastown Industrial Mullhuddart Estate	Upper Tier Site	1,000 metres	Fingal

At present there are 3 no. Seveso III sites in the County. In addition, there are 6 no. Seveso III sites in neighbouring counties Louth, Fingal and Kildare where the 'Seveso Consultation Distance' extends into the County or whose consultation distance overlaps with the consultation distance of adjoining sites which extend into the County.

DM POL 33: To comply with the Seveso III Directive in reducing the risk and limiting the potential consequences of major industrial accidents.

DM POL 34: To permit new Seveso development only in low risk locations within acceptable distances from vulnerable residential, retail and commercial development.

DM POL 35: To ensure that land use policies take account of the need to maintain appropriate distances between future major accident hazard establishments and residential areas, areas of substantial public use and of particular natural sensitivity or interest.

DM POL 36: To have regard to the advice of the Health & Safety Authority when proposals for new SEVESO sites are being considered or modifications to existing Seveso sites are being considered.

DM POL 37: To have regard to the advice of the Health & Safety Authority when proposals for development within the consultation zone of a SEVESO site are being considered.

DM OBJ 112: To have regard to the provision of the 'Major Accident Directive' (Seveso III) (European Council Directive 2012/18/EU) and in consultation with the HSA impose restrictions, on developments adjoining or within proximity of a Seveso site. The extent of restrictions on development will be dependent on the type of risk present and the quantity and form of the dangerous substance present or likely to be present.

Section 14 - Land Use Zoning Objectives

11.14.1 Introduction

This section sets out the general land use and zoning policies and objectives of this Plan. These zoning policies primarily relate to urban areas. The zoning strategy for the County is based on the following principles:

- To ensure that sufficient lands are zoned to allow the aims of the Core Strategy to be realised.
- The consolidation of development in established settlements that identifies opportunities for the redevelopment of under-utilised infill and brownfield lands in order to add vitality to existing settlements and to ensure the efficient use of urban lands.

- To support the intensification of development in centres in the upper tiers of the settlement hierarchy adjacent or close to public transport nodes and corridors to maximise the use of public transport, minimise trip generation and distribution and to promote sustainable development.
- To support the creation of compact settlements by following the sequential approach in the identification of lands for development.
- To promote particular classes of use in appropriate locations and to provide certainty to the public and in particular communities and investors.
- To promote and support economic development and employment generation in suitable locations.
- To promote and support 'live work' communities in suitable locations.
- To only consider lands for zoning if there is a likelihood that these lands can be accessed and serviced within the life of the Plan.
- To protect and promote our rural areas and rural nodes for a range of appropriate
- uses acknowledging, biodiversity, the rural landscape, and the built and cultural heritage.

11.14.2 Permissible and Non-Permissible Uses

This section provides guidance on the various uses that are considered acceptable in principle in each of the zoning objectives. Uses other than the primary use for which an area is zoned may be permitted provided the use is not in conflict with the zoning objective or any other policies and objectives in the Plan.

Any use not listed in the permissible or open for consideration categories is deemed not to be acceptable in principle. Such uses will be considered on their individual merits and will only be permitted if they enhance, complement, are ancillary to, or neutral to the zoning objective.
There are instances across the County of established uses that do not conform to the zoning objective for the particular location. Any proposals for the expansion, improvement, or alteration of such uses will be considered on their individual merits.

The guidance provided in this section is not intended to replace the normal planning process. An indication that a proposal would be 'permissible' within a particular land use

zoning objective should in no way be taken to imply a grant of permission, or indeed that a planning application may necessarily be successful.

Individual applications are a matter for the Council to decide upon, taking into consideration the wider policies and objectives that pertain to statutory land use planning including Development Plan Standards, Ministerial Guidance, and the merits of individual proposals.

11.14.3 Permissible Uses

A “permissible use” is one which is generally acceptable in principle in the relevant zone, but which is subject to normal planning consideration, including policies and objectives outlined in the Plan.

11.14.4 Open for Consideration Uses

An “open for consideration use” is one which may be permitted where the Council is satisfied that the proposed development would be compatible with the overall policies and objectives for the zone, would not have undesirable effects on any permitted uses, and would otherwise be consistent with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

11.14.5 Relaxation of Zoning Objectives for Protected Structures

The Council actively encourages and supports uses which are compatible with the character of Protected Structures. In certain limited cases, to ensure the long-term viability of a Protected Structure, it may be considered appropriate not to stringently apply generic zoning restrictions, including site development standards, provided the Protected Structure is being restored to the highest standard, the special interest, character and setting of the building is protected and the use and development is consistent with conservation policies and the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

11.14.6 Land Use Zoning Categories

This section sets out the details of each of the zoning categories, including the specific zoning objective and permissible uses and uses open for consideration.

For clarification purposes the definition of the following uses included in these categories are as follows:

- A Convenience outlet is a single level store selling food and other convenience items with a net sales area of not more than 200m².
- A Health Care Centre is a standalone premise (i.e. not connected with a dwelling) generally with multiple consulting rooms which may cover a variety of health disciplines.
- A Healthcare Practitioner is a practice operated by the owner/occupier of a dwelling and which is ancillary to the primary use of the dwelling as a normal place of residence.
- Home based economic activities are small scale commercial and professional activities carried out by the owner/occupier of the property that is ancillary to the main use of the property as residential accommodation.
- A Supermarket is a single level, self-service store selling mainly food, with a net retail floorspace less than 2,500m².
- A Superstore is generally a single level, self-service store selling mainly food, or food and some non-food goods, with at least 2,500m² net retail floorspace but not greater than 5,000m² net retail floorspace and with integrated or shared parking.
- A Shop is a comparison retail outlet excluding retail warehouse units.
- Sheltered Housing: The Irish Council for Social Housing define sheltered housing as schemes with onsite communal facilities for assisted independent living. Sheltered housing schemes usually have an on-site warden, may include care supports such as the provision of meals and assistance with personal hygiene, and on site facilities can include recreation areas, alarm systems, and a laundry.
- Utilities comprise of water, wastewater, electricity, telecommunications, transport infrastructure.

Zoning Category

A1 Existing Residential

Objective: To protect and enhance the amenity and character of existing residential communities

Guidance

Lands identified as 'Existing Residential' are established residential areas. Development proposals on these lands primarily consist of infill developments and the extension and refurbishment of existing properties. The principle of such proposals is normally acceptable subject to the amenities of surrounding properties being protected and the use, scale, character and design of any development respecting the character of the area.

Permitted Uses

Residential, Sheltered Housing, B & B / Guest House, Community Facility / Centre, Home Based Economic Activities, Utilities.

Open for Consideration Uses

Bring Banks, Convenience Outlet, Childcare Facility, Halting Site, Healthcare Practitioner, Leisure / Recreation / Sports Facilities, Bar, Retirement Home / Residential Institution / Retirement Village, and Veterinary Surgery.

Zoning Category

A2 New Residential

Objective: To provide for new residential communities with ancillary community facilities, neighbourhood facilities as considered appropriate.

Guidance

This is the primary zone to accommodate new residential development.

Whilst residential zoned lands are primarily intended for residential accommodation, these lands may also include other uses that would support the establishment of residential communities. This could include community, recreational and local shopping facilities. These facilities must be at an appropriate scale and cannot interfere with the primary residential use of the land. The detail of ancillary uses to be provided as part of a residential development shall form part of pre-application discussions in respect of any planning proposal unless otherwise indicated in Volume 2 of the Development Plan.

Individual convenience stores in neighbourhood centres on A2 zoned lands should generally not exceed 1,000m² net retail floorspace unless otherwise identified in a Local Area Plan.

In order to protect the built heritage in the County sensitivity should be given to the design of any residential development within the grounds of or in proximity to any protected structures (Please refer to Appendix 6).

Permitted Uses

Residential / Sheltered Housing, B & B / Guest House, Bring Banks, Community Facility / Centre, Childcare Facility, Convenience Outlet, Children Play / Adventure Centre, Education (Primary or Second Level), Halting Site / Group Housing, Home Based Economic Activities, Leisure / Recreation / Sports Facilities, Retirement Home / Residential Institution / Retirement Village, Utilities.

Open for Consideration Uses

Betting Office, Caravan Park, Cultural Facility, Education (Third Level), Enterprise Centre, Health Centre, Healthcare Practitioner, Hotel / Motel / Hostel, Offices <100m (not for visiting members of the public), Place of Public Worship, Bar/ Restaurant / Café, Take-Away / Fast Food Outlet, Veterinary Surgery.

Zoning Category

B1 Commercial/Town or Village Centre

Objective: To protect, provide for and/or improve town and village centre facilities and uses

Guidance

Town and Village centres are characterised by a concentration of shops, services, meeting points, and places of employment. Centres in the upper tier of the settlement hierarchy have a more comprehensive range of shops and services than smaller settlements.
The majority of new commercial and retail uses will be accommodated on B1 lands in towns and villages. Whilst the principle of a retail outlet on town/village centre lands is acceptable in principle, the size and scale of any such development should be reflective of the role and function of the town and village in the settlement hierarchy. Such developments will be assessed against the relevant policies and objectives in the Retail Strategy in Appendix 4, retail policy in Chapter 4 of this Plan, the DECLG 'Guidelines for Planning Authorities Retail Planning' (2012) and Section 6 of this Chapter.

The primary land use in B1 zones is employment generating, service and retail provision. In order to achieve balanced development and create vibrant urban communities, residential use can also be considered on these lands. In order to ensure the delivery of commercial uses commensurate with the status of the settlement while also encouraging increased residential occupancy within our towns, the percentage of residential development in B1 zones shall generally not exceed 50% of the quantum of a development site in any development proposal in Key Towns, Self- sustaining Growth Towns, Self-Sustaining Towns. Exceptions may be facilitated on a case by case basis where a clear evidence base has been demonstrated. Where an applicant proposes a high percentage of residential uses on B1 zoned

land, it must be demonstrated;

a) that such development proposals have regard to the Asset Test set out in Section 9.3 Housing and Regeneration and Appendix A of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Eastern and Midland Region 2019-2031.
b) that there are substantial commercial vacancies in the area and that there is no demand or need for additional commercial uses.

Permitted Uses

B & B / Guest House, Bank / Financial Institution, Betting Office, Bring Banks, Cinema, Community Facility / Centre, Conference/Event Centre, Convenience Outlet, Childcare Facility, Children Play / Adventure Centre, Cultural Facility, Night Club, Education (Primary or Second Level), Education (Third Level), Funeral Home, Health Centre, Healthcare Practitioner, Home Based Economic Activities, Hotel / Motel / Hostel, Leisure / Recreation / Sports Facilities, Research & Development, Offices <100m², Offices 100 to 1,000m², Offices >1,000m², Place of Public Worship, Public House, Residential / Sheltered Housing, Restaurant / Café, Supermarket / Superstore, Shop, Take-Away / Fast Food Outlet, Telecommunication Structures, Veterinary Surgery, utilities.

Open for Consideration Uses

Amusement Arcade, Car Park (incl. Park and Ride), Enterprise Centre, Garden Centre, Hospital, Motor Sales / Repair, Plant & Tool Hire, Factory Outlet Stores, Retirement Home / Residential Institution / Retirement Village, Science & Technology Based Enterprise.

Zoning Category

B2 Retail Warehouse Park

Objective: To provide for the development of a retail warehouse park

Guidance

The objective of B2 zones is to provide for the development of retail warehouse parks.

Permitted Uses

Cinema, Factory Outlet Stores, Leisure / Recreation / Sports Facilities, Retail Warehouse, Telecommunication Structures, Service Stations, Utilities.

Open for Consideration Uses

Bring Banks, Childcare Facility, Children Play / Adventure Centre, Drive Through Restaurant, Enterprise Centre, Garden Centre, Research & Development, Motor Sales / Repair, Offices Uses (where the services are not principally for visiting members of the public), Restaurant / Café, Take-Away / Fast Food Outlet, Science & Technology Based Enterprise, Wholesale Warehousing / Cash and Carry

Zoning Category

C1 Mixed Use

Objective: To provide for and facilitate mixed residential and employment generating uses

Guidance

Lands identified for mixed use development are only appropriate in higher tier settlements. The objective on these lands is to provide opportunities for high-density mixed-use employment generating activities that also accommodate appropriate levels of residential development thereby facilitating the creation of functional 'live work' communities. These areas are generally located in proximity to high frequency public transport corridors. Where a residential component is proposed, the percentage of residential development in C1 zones shall generally not exceed 70% of the quantum of a development site. Exceptions may be facilitated on a case by case basis where a clear evidence base has been demonstrated. Where an applicant proposes a high percentage of residential uses on C1 zoned land, it must be demonstrated;

a) that such development proposals have regard to the Asset Test set out in Section 9.3 Housing and Regeneration and Appendix A of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Eastern and Midland Region 2019-2031.
b) that there are substantial commercial vacancies in the area and that there is no demand or need for additional commercial uses.

Permitted Uses

B & B / Guest House, Bring Banks, Childcare Facility, Children Play / Adventure Centre, Community Facility / Centre, Convenience Outlet, Cultural Facility, Education (Primary or Second Level), Education (Third Level), Enterprise Centre, Health Centre, Healthcare Practitioner, Home Based Economic Activities, Hotel / Motel / Hostel, Offices <100m² Offices 100 to 1,00m², Offices >1,000m², Service Station, Place of Public Worship, Pub, Residential / Sheltered Housing, Restaurant / Café, Utilities.

Open for Consideration Uses

Betting Office, Car Park (incl. Park and Ride), Cinema, Conference/Event Centre, Dance Hall / Night Club, Drive Through Restaurant, Funeral Home, Garden Centre, Hospital, Industry –

Light, Leisure / Recreation / Sports Facilities, Motor Sales / Repair, Offices >1,000m², Plant & Tool Hire, Research & Development, Retirement Home / Residential Institution/Retirement Village, Science & Technology Based Enterprise, Shop, Supermarket, Take-Away / Fast Food Outlet, Telecommunication Structures, Veterinary Surgery, Wholesale Warehousing / Cash and Carry.

Zoning Category

D1 Tourism

Objective: To provide for appropriate and sustainable visitor and tourist facilities and associated uses

Guidance

D1 zones have been identified to provide for tourism type uses such as accommodation, and entertainment.

Permitted Uses

B & B / Guest House, Caravan Park, Children Play / Adventure Centre, Community Facility / Centre, Conference/Event Centre, Medical & related uses, Craft Centre / Craft Shop, Cultural Facility, Hotel / Motel / Hostel, Leisure / Recreation / Sports Facilities, Restaurant / Café, Water Services / Public Services.

Open for Consideration Uses

Amusement Arcade, Cinema, Convenience Outlet, Childcare Facility, Cultural Facility, Dance Hall / Night Club, Offices <100m², Public House, Shop, niche type commercial supports, Telecommunication Structures, bona fide ancillary tourism residential, holiday home.

Zoning Category

E1 Strategic Employment Zones (High Technology Uses)

Objective: To facilitate opportunities for high end technology/manufacturing and major campus style office-based employment within high quality and accessible locations

Guidance

E1 zones facilitate opportunities for high end, high value-added businesses and corporate headquarters. This adheres to the concept of 4th Generation Science & Technology Parks. It is envisaged that such locations are suitable for high density employment generating activity with associated commercial development located adjacent to or in close proximity to high frequency public transport corridors. This will apply to suitable lands in Navan, Drogheda, Dunboyne, Maynooth Environs, Kells, Trim, Ashbourne, Enfield and Laytown.

Permitted Uses

Bio Technology Manufacturing, Call Centres, Childcare Facility, Convenience Outlet, Cafe, Leisure facilities, Data Centres, Green / Clean Light Industries, Education (third level), High Technology Manufacturing, Information Communication Technologies, International and National Traded Services, Knowledge Based Economic Development, Offices 100 to 1,000m², Offices >1,000m², Medical and Related Uses (includes hospital), Research & Development, Science & Technology Based Enterprise, Telecommunication Structures, Utilities, Public Park.

Open for Consideration Uses

Conference/Event Centre, Education, Enterprise / Training Centre, Hotel / Aparthotel, Industry – Light, Transport Depot/Logistics, Warehousing.

Uses which are 'open for consideration' or not identified as 'permitted' under the E1 zoning objective will only be considered where they do not compromise the objective of the overall zoning objective of E1 lands, as a strategic employment zone for high technology uses

Zoning Category

E2 General Enterprise and Employment

Objective: To provide for the creation of enterprise and facilitate opportunities for employment through industrial, manufacturing, distribution, warehousing and other

general employment/enterprise uses in a good quality physical environment.

Guidance

E2 lands constitute an important land bank for employment use which must be protected. The development of E2 lands seek to provide for the creation and production of enterprise and facilitate opportunities for industrial, manufacturing, distribution, warehousing and other general employment / enterprise uses in a good quality physical environment.

Permitted Uses

Bring Banks, Builder's Providers, Childcare Facility, Car Park (incl. Park and Ride), CHP / Waste to Energy Facilities, Domestic Fuel Depot, Energy Installation, Enterprise & Business Start Ups, Enterprise / Training Centre, Data Centres, Factory Shop, Furniture Showroom (only where product displayed is manufactured on site), Go Kart Track, Industry – General, Industry – Light, Heavy Vehicle Park, Logistics, Mart / Co-op, Motor Repair / Servicing, Plant & Tool Hire, Recycling Facility (Civic & Amenity), Science & Technology Based Enterprise, Telecommunication Structures, Transport Depot, Warehousing, Utilities.

Open for Consideration Uses

Abattoir, Car Dismantler / Scrap Yard, Construction & Demolition Waste Recycling Facility, Garden Centre, Leisure Facilities, Motor Sales, Offices 100 – 1,000 sqm (uses where the services are not principally for visiting members of the public), Service Station, Restaurant / Café, Veterinary Surgery, Waste Recycling / Transfer / Sorting Centre, Wholesale Warehousing / Cash and Carry.

Uses which are 'open for consideration' or not identified as 'permitted' under the E2 zoning objective will only be considered where they do not compromise the objective of the overall zoning objective of E2 lands, for general enterprise and employment uses.

Zoning Category

E3 Warehousing and Distribution

Objective: To facilitate logistics, warehousing, distribution and supply chain management inclusive of related industry facilities which require good access to the major road network.

Permitted Uses

Bring Banks, Childcare Facility, Car Park (incl. Park and Ride), CHP / Waste to Energy Facilities, Data Centres, Distribution & Supply Chain Management, Domestic Fuel Depot, Energy Installation, Fuel Depot, Heavy Vehicle Park, Logistics, Plant Storage, Recycling Facility (Civic & Amenity), Telecommunication Storage Depot, Transport Depot, Warehousing, Water Services / Public Services, Wholesale Warehousing / Cash and Carry, Utilities.

Open for Consideration Uses

Enterprise & Business Start Ups, Enterprise/Training Centre, Garden Centre, Industry – Light, Petrol Station, Restaurant / Café, Waste Recycling / Transfer / Sorting Centre.

Uses which are 'open for consideration' or not identified as 'permitted' under the E3 zoning objective will only be considered where they do not compromise the objective of the overall zoning objective of E3 lands, for general enterprise and employment uses.

Zoning Category

F1 Open Space

Objective: To provide for and improve open spaces for active and passive recreational amenities

Guidance

The Planning Authority will consider development proposals for utility development and transportation infrastructure on F1 Open Space zoned land on a case by case basis subject to the works being ancillary to and necessary for the appropriate development of adjacent lands. In all instances the integrity of the open space land as an amenity area shall not be significantly reduced.

Permitted Uses

Car Park for Recreational Purposes, Craft Centre / Craft Shop, Community Facility / Centre, Cultural Facility, Cycleways / Greenways / Trail Development, Leisure / Recreation / Sports Facilities, Playing Pitches, Playgrounds, Utilities.

Open for Consideration Uses

Allotments, Bring Banks, Childcare Facility, Place of Public Worship, vehicular/cyclist/pedestrian access to zoned lands where appropriate.

Zoning Category

G1 Community Infrastructure

Objective: To provide for necessary community, social, and educational facilities

Permitted Uses

Allotments, Car Park (incl. Park and Ride), Cemetery/Crematorium, Children Play / Adventure Centre, Childcare Facility, Community Facility / Centre, Cultural Facility, Education, Health Centre, Hospital, Leisure / Recreation / Sports Facilities, Place of Public Worship, Playing Pitches, Playgrounds, Recycling Facility (Civic & Amenity), Utilities.

Open for Consideration Uses

Bring Banks, Funeral Home, Gymnasium, Halting Site / Group Housing, Healthcare Practitioner, Residential / Sheltered Housing, Restaurant / Café, Retirement Home / Residential Institution / Retirement Village, Telecommunication Structures.

Zoning Category

H1 High Amenity

Objective: To protect and improve areas of high amenity

Permitted Uses

Cycleways / Greenways / Trail Development, Land & Water Based Recreational Activities Open Space, Cultural Activities.

Open for Consideration Uses

Kiosk, Restaurant, Tea Room, Sensitive re-use of existing structures

Zoning Category

R1 Rail Corridor

Objective: To provide for a strategic rail corridor and associated physical infrastructure

Guidance

The RSES includes an objective supporting the implementation of the extension of the rail from Dunboyne to Navan. The protection of the designed route of the extension of the Clonsilla to Parkway rail line to Navan differs from most of the land use zoning objectives included in this Development Plan. It has a single purpose use which is to protect the designed route from development which would compromise its future delivery. It is not necessary to therefore identify the suitability or otherwise of individual uses on said lands as the intention of Meath County Council is clear.

Zoning Category

WL White Lands

Objective: To protect strategic lands from inappropriate forms of development which would impede the orderly expansion of a strategic urban centre

Guidance

White Lands are located in Navan, South Drogheda, East Meath, Kilmessan, Enfield and Ratoath. These are strategic lands and their designation is to allow for a long term, integrated approach to be the taken to the expansion of an urban area. It is not generally envisaged that development proposals will be brought forward during the life of this Development Plan for such lands. No indication is therefore generally offered regarding the suitability or otherwise of individual uses on said lands within this Development Plan. Should the Planning Authority be satisfied that a project proposed for lands with a white land designation would assist with the implementation of the Economic Strategy and education provision, these lands can be released for employment creating development during the plan period in accordance with the Economic Strategy. White Lands should only be released where it would lead to significant employment creation, education provision or which cannot reasonably be accommodated on other employment zoned land.

Zoning Category

TU Transport and Utility Infrastructure

Objective: To provide for essential transport and public utilities and infrastructure including rail stations, park and ride facilities, water and waste water infrastructure,

electricity, gas, and telecommunications infrastructure.

Guidance

Guidance: These lands have been identified to provide for essential public infrastructure. The nature of these facilities is such that the use of the lands is dedicated to the provision and maintenance of this infrastructure. It is acknowledged however that there are instances where additional uses may be appropriate. This would primarily relate to rail stations and park and ride facilities close to or within town centres where additional commercial uses may be acceptable. Applications for a commercial/mixed use on such lands will be assessed on a case by case basis and will be required to demonstrate that such a use would be compatible to the location and would not undermine the primary use of the land which is to provide essential infrastructure and services.

Zoning Category

RA Rural Areas

Objective: To protect and promote in a balanced way, the development of agriculture, forestry and sustainable rural-related enterprise, community facilities, biodiversity, the rural landscape, and the built and cultural heritage.

Guidance

The primary objective is to protect and promote the value and future sustainability of rural areas. Agriculture, forestry, tourism and rural related resource enterprises will be employed for the benefit of the local and wider population. A balanced approach involving the protection and promotion of rural biodiversity, promotion of the integrity of the landscape, and enhancement of the built and cultural heritage will be adopted.

Permitted Uses

Agriculture, Agricultural Buildings, Agri-Tourism, Boarding Kennels (Where the use is ancillary to the use of the dwelling as a main residence), Burial Grounds, Extractive Industry/Quarrying, Equestrian, Farm Shop (Only where the bulk of the produce is produced on the farm), Forestry related activities, Horticulture, Caravan and Camping Park (No static mobile homes or permanent structure unless ancillary to the operation of the campsite shall be permitted), Golf Course, Open Space, Research and Development (Rural related research

and development only), Residential (Subject to compliance with the Rural Settlement Strategy), Restaurant/Café (Only where ancillary to tourism uses or conversion of protected or vernacular structures), Sustainable Energy Installations, Utility Structures.

Open for Consideration Uses

Community Facility, Cultural Facility, Education, Garden Centre, Micro Businesses (Refer to the Economic Chapter), Playing Fields, Recreational Facility, Sports Club, Telecommunication Structures, Workshop (only where ancillary to an existing dwelling where it is demonstrated that the proposed activity is carried out by a resident of the dwelling, with no visiting members of the public), Veterinary Clinic.

Zoning Category

RN Rural Nodes

Objective: To provide for small-scale infill development including community facilities and supporting services serving local needs while maintaining the rural nature of the node.

Guidance

Rural Nodes are intended to provide a viable alternative to settlement in the open countryside and to support small –scale infill development by providing the rural community with an opportunity to choose more rural-style housing than is provided within villages and towns. Rural nodes are to develop as local centres for rural catchments, with growth appropriate to cater for local demand, by facilitating the development of small scale and home-based enterprise among members of the rural community.

Permitted Uses

Agri-Tourism, Artisan Retail, Burial Grounds, Community Facility, Cultural Facility, Childcare Facilities, Education, Farm Shop (only where the bulk of the produce is produced on the farm), Guest House (where the use is ancillary to the use of the dwelling as a main residence), Health Practitioner, Open Space, Park/Playground, Playing Fields, Public House, Recreational Facility/Sports Club, Residential (subject to compliance with the Rural Settlement Strategy), Retail – Local, Restaurant/Café (only where ancillary to tourism uses or conversion of protected or vernacular structures), , Sustainable Energy Installations, Utility Structures, Veterinary Clinic.

Open for Consideration Uses

Agricultural Buildings, Boarding Kennels (where the use is ancillary to the use of the dwelling as a main residence), Caravan and Camping Park (no static mobile homes or permanent structure), Golf Course, Micro- businesses, Place of Worship, Research and Development (rural related research and development only), Workshop (only where ancillary to an existing dwelling where it is demonstrated that the proposed activity is carried out by a resident of the dwelling with no visiting members of the public)

11.15 Masterplans

The following is a list of the Masterplans within each settlement in the county. The previous reference number is detailed along with the new Masterplan reference number. In total there are 38 Masterplans.

Settlement	Draft Plan MP Reference	New Reference	Address/Location
Navan	MP 1	MP 1	Abbeylands/Blackcastle Demense, north or the River Blackwater and the R147, east of the N51 at the bottom of Flower Hill, includes Elliott's Mill
Navan	MP 2	MP 2	Abbeyland South, north of R147, includes Balmoral Industrial Estate
Navan	MP 3	MP 3	Abbeylands, located between Blackwater Public Park and former Kingscourt Rail Line

Navan	MP 4	MP 4	Clonmaggaden, north of link road between Proudstown Road and Ratholdron Road and south of Kilsaran Lane
Navan	MP 5	MP 5	Blackcastle Demesne, area surrounding Blackcastle House, north of the River Boyne
Navan	MP 6	MP 6	Townparks, located between Carriage Road, Trim Road and Dan Shaw Road
Navan	MP 7	MP 7	Townparks/Robinrath, located between Athboy Road and M3 north link road, north of Mullaghboy Industrial Estate
Navan	MP 8	MP 8	Balreask Old/Limekilnhill, between Trim Road and former Navan-Dublin Rail line
Navan	MP 9	MP 9	Pairc Tailteann Lands
Navan	MP 10	MP 10	Balreask Old, lands between Trim Road, Borallion Road and former Navan-Dublin Rail line

Navan	MP 11	MP 11	Nevinstown/Windtown, south of Ratholdron Road and north of River Boyne
Navan	MP 12	MP 12	Athlumney, Alexander Reid, Bailis, Farganstown and Ballymacon, between Kentstown Road and Navan-Drogheda Rail line
Navan	MP 13	MP 13	Balreask Old, lands between Trim Road and Commons Road
Drogheda Environs	MP1	MP14	Colpe, lands to the north of Mill Road and south of Marsh Road
Drogheda Environs	MP2	MP15	Bryanstown, lands served by Bryanstown and Beymore Roads
Maynooth Environs	MP 1	MP16	Moygaddy Lands
Maynooth Environs	MP 2	MP17	Carton Demesne lands
Ashbourne	MP 1	MP18	Milltown, south of Ashbourne, off the N2

Ashbourne	MP 2	MP19	Rath, to north of Ashbourne, off the N2
Ashbourne	MP 3	MP20	Donaghmore/Milltown, south of Ashbourne, west of the N2 and north of the R125
Ashbourne	MP4	MP21	Future public park lands
Dunboyne Clonee	MP 1	MP22	Dunboyne North
Dunboyne - Clonee	MP 2	MP23	Bracetown/Gunnocks
Dunboyne - Clonee	MP 3	MP24	Pace, between Piercetown and Bracetown, east of the M3 Motorway.
Kells	MP 1	MP25	The Backlands
Kells	MP 2	MP26	The Frontlands
Kells	MP 3	MP27	East of Kells Business Park
Kells	MP 4	MP28	Headfort Demesne, south of R147
Trim	MP 1	MP29	Newtown, lands between Navan and Dublin Roads

Trim	MP 2	MP30	Former Potterton Cattles Sales, lands between Kinnegad and Longwood Roads
Trim	new MP	MP31	Lands to the west of Trim which include the OPW building and buildings which front onto Emmet Street
Enfield	MP 1	MP32	Johnstown, lands to the north of R148
Ratoath	MP 1	MP33	Fairyhouse/Tattersalls and lands to the north
Ratoath	MP 2	MP34	Commons/Ratoath, southwest of Ratoath
Ratoath	MP 3	MP35	Jamestown, east of Ratoath, served by RORR
Ratoath	MP 4	MP36	Ratoath, lands east of Ratoath, north of R125
Ratoath	MP 5	MP37	Commons, south of Ratoath
Oldcastle	MP1	MP38	To the rear of Cavan Street and Cogan Street