1.0 Introduction

This written statement will provide an overview of the development strategy for East Meath. A detailed Local Area Plan for the area will be prepared during the life of this Plan.

The East Meath area consists of Bettystown-Laytown-Mornington East and Donacarney (East Meath). These areas were designated as a single settlement 'Laytown-Bettystown-Mornington-Donacarney' in the census. This designation automatically requires the preparation of a Local Area Plan for this census town.[1]

2.0 Town Context/Character

The East Meath area has experienced considerable population and household growth in the past 20 years. This growth has been driven by a number of factors including the attractive coastal location and expansive beach front, the location of the settlements along a commuter rail line, and the proximity of the settlements to Dublin, Drogheda, the M1, and Dublin Airport. The area has developed as a commuter settlement, with population growth taking place in the absence of any significant employment growth. Social and community infrastructure has also failed to keep pace with the rapid increase in population.

Mornington East is the most northern section of East Meath and consists of a cluster of residential developments accessed off the Coast Road and the Garra Road. This is an established residential area with limited new development in recent years.

The primary location of the most recent growth in East Meath has been in Bettystown where a number of residential developments have been recently completed or close to completion. Bettystown lies in a central location in East Meath between Mornington East and Laytown. In addition to residential land uses, Bettystown is also the principle shopping area in East Meath. The Bettystown Town Centre development has been developed over the past decade. It remains partially complete and is currently underperforming as a Town Centre. This is demonstrated by the high levels of vacancy in the development.

[1] As set out in section 19(1)(b) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended)

Laytown is located to the south of Bettystown and consists of a cluster of residential developments with a small number of local shops to serve these properties. An Aldi food store has been constructed in Laytown. Laytown Rail Station is located on the southern edge of the settlement. Donacarney-Mornington is a village with a limited range of services that is situated between Bettystown-Laytown-Mornington East and Drogheda. The area is residential in character.

Position in Settlement Hierarchy	Self-Sustaining Town
2022 Population	15,642
2016 Population	11,872
Percentage Change 2016-2022	8.60%
Housing stock 2016	4,338
Number of units completed 2016-2019	689
Committed units not yet built	518
Core Strategy Household Allocation 2020-2027[2]	1,306 units
Population Projection 2027	18,780
Resident Workers 2016	4,712

[2] The unbuilt extant units have been included in this allocation

Total Jobs 2016	772
Job – Workforce Ratio 2016	0.36
Education Facilities	16
Community Facilities	14
Architectural Conservation Areas (ACAs)	Laytown Architectural Conservation Area. No Architectural Conservation Areas present in Bettystown or Mornington East.
Protected Structures	61
Zone of Archaeological Potential	There are several National Monument Service Zones of Archaeological Notification within the settlement.
Natura 2000 Sites	There are a number of Natura 2000 sites within and adjacent to the respective settlement boundaries. • The Boyne Estuary SPA located within the northern and eastern portion of Mornington East. • The Boyne Coast and Estuary SAC is situated along the north of Donacarney/ Mornington and to the east of Bettystown.

	• River Boyne & River Blackwater SAC located in close proximity to the west and north west of Donacarney/ Mornington. • The River Nanny Estuary and Shore SPA is located adjacent to the east of Laytown.
Strategic Flood Risk Assessment	Manage flood risk and development in line with approved policies and objectives as set out in Vol. 1 Chapter 6: Infrastructure.
Water Services Infrastructure/Capacity	Water: Donacarney, Mornington, Bettystown, and Laytown are supplied by the East Meath Water Supply Scheme. Capacity is available but there are network constraints. Wastewater: These areas are serviced by the East Coast Sewerage Scheme with wastewater pumped to Drogheda Wastewater treatment plant. Capacity exists but, there are network constraints.
Modal Share Targets for 2026 for Laytown	
Modal Share for Walking	15% (Unchanged from 15% in 2016)
Modal Share for Cycling	3% (Increasing from 1% in 2016)
Modal Share for Bus	19% (Increasing from 7% in 2016)

Modal Share for Rail	7% (Unchanged from 7% in 2016)
Reduction Target for Car Use	53% (Reduction from 15% in 2016)

3.0 Vision

The strategic vision underpins the approach to and guides the future development of East Meath in a sustainable manner, in a way that reflects the existing character and amenities of the area and improves quality of life for the existing and future population. The vision seeks:

"To support and encourage the consolidation of the East Meath settlements and facilitate greater connectivity between the settlements and support the provision of additional social and community infrastructure and improvements to the urban environment, whilst protecting and promoting the tourism sector and reinforcing the role and function of the redefined town centre in Bettystown".

4.0 Development Strategy

The priority for East Meath is to focus on improvements in services, facilities, and infrastructure that will meet the needs of the rapidly expanded population and assist in the creation of a more balanced and sustainable community. Residential growth in the entire area will focus on consolidation and the completion of ongoing developments in order to allow the associated social and community infrastructure to catch up.

It is recognised that the high levels of vacancy and the uncompleted buildings in the Town Centre development are detracting from the local landscape and urban environment, which is detrimental to the coastal setting of the settlement. The Council will therefore support the completion of this development by promoting it as the primary location for commercial and retail development in the area.

In addition to the Town Centre, there is a high level of vacancy along the Coast Road. As part of the Active Land Management Strategy this plan will support the regeneration of vacant and under utilised sites in the urban core of the town.

In recognition of the high levels of vacancy in the Town Centre and the projected additional retail floorspace requirements for the area as set out in the Retail Strategy (c.1,000-1450m² of convenience and 400-500m² of comparison floorspace), it was considered that there was an excess of lands zoned for town centre uses in the area. The lands to the south of the Town Centre have therefore been re-zoned for Mixed Uses. This zoning would facilitate the provision of commercial, employment, and residential uses in this location, which would be complementary to the Town Centre and would an ensure there is an appropriate mix of residential and commercial uses in the urban core of the town.

A key element of the Development Strategy for the area is improvements to the urban streetscape and environment, which will create a greater sense of place and make the area more attractive for investment. This will be delivered through the implementation of the Public Realm Plan for Bettystown-Laytown.

The existing road network has struggled to accommodate the additional traffic movements associated with the population growth over the past decade. The construction of the north-south spine road connecting the R150 at Scoil an Sprioraid Naoimh Primary School to the Eastham Road roundabout will significantly improve vehicular movements and is an infrastructure priority for this Plan.

4.1 Social Infrastructure and Environmental Improvements

In recognition of the importance of the beach to both residents and visitors the Council has recently purchased buildings at the entrance to the beach that are to be developed as a beach management/service building and library. This building shall be a high-quality design that will contribute to the creation of an attractive streetscape along the seafront.

The Council will continue its support for local events on the beach such as the Laytown Races, Kite Surfing, and Beach Volleyball competitions which are important social and community events in the local area.

A Public Realm Plan for Bettystown-Laytown has been prepared. The objective of this plan is to improve urban spaces, give greater priority to walking and cycling, reduce the dominance of the car,

create a more attractive environment that would encourage more people into the town centre and create a greater sense of place.

The Public Realm Plan also seeks to integrate the partially developed Town Centre development with the historic centre of Bettystown. There are presently a number of units vacant in the Town Centre development whilst the Bettystown Court Hotel, which formed part of the development, has been closed since 2011. The lack of activity in this part of the town is detracting from the streetscape and vibrancy of the urban core. Planning permission was recently granted to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for a primary care centre on the upper floors of the existing building, which if implemented, will increase pedestrian footfall and activity in the area. This location is a priority for town centre/ mixed use commercial development or a compatible use that would maximise the central location of the lands.

To the south of Bettystown Town Centre there is a parcel of land identified as Open Space. These lands are within walking distance of the urban core of the town and would have the capacity to accommodate a local sporting club. As part of the strategy of improving facilities in the area, this Plan will support the development of these lands as a sporting facility.

4.2 Employment

The residential expansion of the 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. In addition, there are opportunities to provide co-working facilities in the area that would function as an outreach for city-based employers. Such employment would be vital to improving the jobs ratio and creating a more sustainable settlement and reversing the substantial rates of outbound commuting experienced in this area.

To this end a strategic employment site has been identified on the lands adjacent to the rail station in Laytown. A park and ride facility will form part of the future development of these lands. The designation of a strategic employment site will enable a significant marketing strategy to be launched by the Council's Economic Development Team.

4.3 Movement and Connectivity

The population increase in East Meath over the past 20 years has placed considerable strains on the existing transport infrastructure in the area. In order to ensure a holistic approach is taken to the future growth of the area and to identify the infrastructure investment required to ensure the most efficient movement of people, vehicles, and goods into and around East Meath, it is recommended that a Transport Study for East Meath and South Drogheda is carried out. This would be carried out in consultation with the National Transport Authority and Louth County Council.

The construction of the north-south spine road connecting the R150 at Scoil an Sprioraid Naoimh Primary School to the Eastham Road roundabout is a key piece of infrastructure that will significantly improve traffic flows in the area. The completion of this road will reduce congestion along the Coast Road and improve traffic movements in the town centre. It will also provide opportunities to improve pedestrian and cycling infrastructure and connectivity in the area and will provide access to centrally located lands zoned for town centre and recreational uses.

As part of the sustainable transport strategy for this Plan, the Council will support and facilitate improvements to the pedestrian and cycle network in the area to make these modes of transport a viable alternative to the car.

Whilst the area is well served by a regular bus and commuter rail service, the links between residential areas and Laytown Rail Station need to be enhanced. Lands have therefore been identified for a Park and Ride facility adjacent to Laytown Rail Station. The provision of this facility would promote the use of the rail service and reduce on street parking and improve traffic flows and circulation in the vicinity of the train station. In addition to parking facilities, this Plan recognises the pricing structure of rail fares can influence travel choice and patterns by commuters. This Plan therefore supports a review of the Short Hop Zone pricing structure and advocates the inclusion of Laytown Rail Station in any forthcoming review.[3]

Rail connectivity in East Meath would be significantly improved by the electrification of the suburban rail line from Malahide to Drogheda, which would increase the frequency of services and would also allow for the construction of a rail station at Bettystown as part of these upgrades. A rail station in

[3] See objective MOV OBJ 5 in Chapter 5 ‘Movement’ for further information

Bettystown would be of significant benefit to the local population. Its proximity to residential areas would improve access to rail services for commuters and would therefore encourage more sustainable modes of transport. This Plan supports the provision of an additional rail station in Bettystown.

4.4 Water Services Infrastructure

Water: Donacarney, Mornington, Bettystown, and Laytown are supplied by the East Meath Water Supply Scheme. Capacity is available but there are network constraints. Wastewater: These areas are serviced by the East Coast Sewerage Scheme with wastewater pumped to Drogheda Wastewater treatment plant. Capacity exists but, there are network constraints.

5.0 Town Development Policies and Objectives

As a point of clarity the Policies and Objectives set out below are in addition to those included in the Written Statement in Volume One of the County Development Plan. To avoid repetition Policies and Objectives have only been restated where they have particular relevance to the settlement. These Policies and Objectives should therefore be read in conjunction with the Policies and Objectives and Development Standards in Volume One of the County Development Plan.

Policy

It is the policy of the Council:

BLMD POL 1

To support the growth of East Meath in a manner that allows the town to fulfil its function as a 'Self-Sustaining Town' by facilitating sustainable residential growth and promoting the town as a centre for employment and economic development that maximises the transport links with key settlements in the County and wider Region.

Objectives

It is an objective of the Council:

Settlement and Housing

BLMD OBJ 1

To carefully manage the consolidation of Bettystown-Laytown-Mornington East and Mornington-Donacarney and avoid the coalescence of the settlements.

BLMD OBJ 2

To support the re-use/regeneration of any vacant properties and lands through active land management.

Economy and Employment

BLMD OBJ 3

To provide for the development of industrial, manufacturing, distribution, warehousing, technology, and campus style office-based employment on the western side 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.

BLMD OBJ 4

To identify a suitable location, and support the provision of a co-working facility in East Meath that functions as an outreach hub for city based employers.

Movement

BLMD OBJ 5

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

[4] Bettystown-Laytown-Mornington East-Donacarney-Mornington

BLMD OBJ 6

To facilitate the provision of a new car parking facility at Laytown Train Station in conjunction with the National Transport Authority and Irish Rail (see OBJ 2 on the Land Use Zoning Map).

BLMD 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 (see OBJ 1 on the Land Use Zoning Map).

BLMD OBJ 8

To support the preparation, in association with Louth County Council, of a Transport Study for East Meath and South Drogheda that assesses the capacity of existing roads, walking, and public transport infrastructure in the area and identifies any future investment in this infrastructure required to ensure the sustainable growth and development of this area.

BLMD OBJ 09

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

BLMD OBJ 10

To support the development of the Boyne Greenway from Mornington to Drogheda in conjunction with the NTA, Failte Ireland and all relevant stakeholders, subject to obtaining all relevant assessments and consents. The provision of the Boyne Greenway will be subject to the outcome of the Appropriate Assessment process.

BLMD OBJ 11

To promote more sustainable forms of transport, including the provision of new pedestrian and cycle paths, public lighting and traffic calming measures that would improve connectivity in the East Meath area.

BLMD OBJ 12

To seek to identify any upgrades to the local road network required as part of the development of the Strategic Employment site in Laytown. The provision of these road upgrades will be subject to the outcome of the Appropriate Assessment process.

BLMD OBJ 13

To promote and facilitate the delivery of the schemes identified in the Laytown and Bettystown Walking and Cycling Study Preliminary Scheme Design Report carried out by ARUP in 2014 on behalf of Meath County Council in conjunction with NTA.
Development of these schemes will be subject to the outcome of the Appropriate Assessment process.

Infrastructure

BLMD OBJ 14

To liaise with and support Irish Water to endeavour to provide adequate water services to meet the development needs of Bettystown, Laytown, Mornington East and Donacarney within the Plan period.

BLMD OBJ 15

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

Cultural and Natural Heritage

BLMD OBJ 16

To promote the preservation of individual trees or groups of trees as identified on the land use zoning map and to manage these trees in line with arboricultural best practice.

Social

BLMD OBJ 17

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.

BLMD OBJ 18

To identify and secure a site for the provision of a library to meet the needs of the entire East Meath area, subject to the availability of finance.

BLMD OBJ 19

To identify an appropriate site and support the delivery of a community centre, subject to the availability of funding.

BLMD OBJ 20

To support the completion of the Bettystown Town Centre site and promote it as the primary retailing and commercial sector in the area, with more localised retail provision of an appropriate scale in Donacarney-Mornington and Laytown.

BLMD OBJ 21

To support the implementation of the Laytown, Bettystown, and Mornington Beach Management Plan and the objectives and recommendations therein.

BLMD OBJ 22

To support the delivery of residential and community uses on the A2 zoned lands to the east of Donacarney.

BLMD OBJ 23

To support the development of the lands zoned F1 'Open Space' to the south of Bettystown Town Centre as a sporting facility.