

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

1.0 Introduction

The Meath County Development Plan 2020-2026 sets out the policies and objectives and the overall strategy for the development of the County over the plan period 2020-2026. The Plan is being prepared at a time when the national economy has emerged from a sustained period of contraction and is showing strong signs of continued growth. Unemployment rates have fallen to their lowest rates since 2008. Consumer confidence is improving, and economic forecasts are positive for the future. Despite the foregoing positive signs, concern and uncertainty regarding the potential economic impact of Brexit has been a key 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 growth recovery by promoting sustainable development and facilitating stable economic growth thus delivering long term benefits for the citizens of the county.

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 195,044¹ 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,

¹ 2016 Census

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 Draft 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 Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy.

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 1.5.2 below.

In accordance with European and National legislation, the Council carried out a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and an Appropriate Assessment (AA) under the Habitats Directive, which informed the preparation of this Development Plan. These assessments are undertaken in order 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 Draft 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, 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 guidelines³. 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

The review process of the Meath County Development Plan officially commenced on 14th December 2016. The first stage was the Pre Draft Consultation Phase. A Strategic Issues Paper was prepared for the purpose of raising awareness of the nature of both the Development Plan and the review process itself. Submissions were accepted from the public during the Pre Draft Consultation Phase which ran from the 14th December 2016 to 17th February 2017. Preliminary consultations also took place with relevant stakeholders including; providers of energy, telecommunications, transport, education, etc., the Elected Members

² European Directive 2001/42/EC

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

of Meath County Council, the Planning and Economic Development Strategic Policy Committee and all Meath County Council Departments. Six public events were held during this period and a total of 282 submissions were received.

A report by the Chief Executive was prepared detailing the outcome of the Pre Draft Consultation phase in accordance with Section 11(4) of the Planning and Development Acts 2000 (as amended). On the 23rd February 2017, the Strategic Policy Committee for Planning gave policy guidance in relation to the Development Plan with particular reference to broadband provision, supporting community groups and the promotion of “live-work” community models of development.

Directions were given by the Elected Members regarding the preparation of the Draft Development Plan on the 24th April 2017.

1.4 Preparation of Draft 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 appendices to this Plan. Primarily the Development Plan is required to comply 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

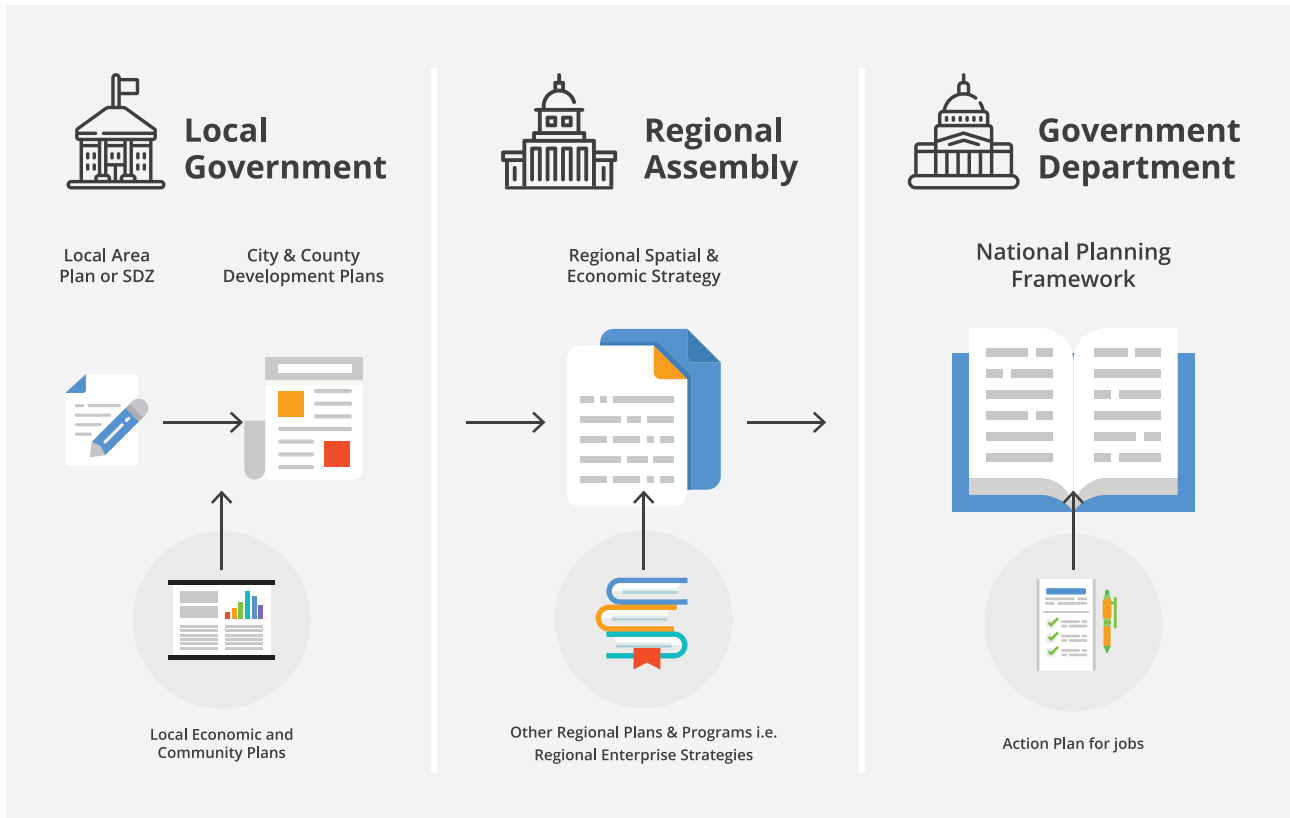
Development Acts 2000, as amended, Development Plans must be consistent, as far as is practicable, with national plans, policies or strategies that the Minister for the Housing, Planning and Local Government determines relate to proper planning and sustainable development. The Minister can issue guidelines 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.



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 and Western and Southern Regions⁴. 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 6 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 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.

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

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

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 RSES economic policies are strongly aligned with the policy direction of the Meath Economic Strategy including 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 2015-2019

The Meath County Council Corporate Plan 2015-2019 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 development, deliver efficient and good value services, and represent the people and communities of County Meath, as effectively and accountably as possible'*.

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

1. Deliver excellent services
2. Lead economic development
3. Build strong influential partnerships
4. Engage the larger community
5. Nurture a staff excellence culture
6. Develop system and process capability

These objectives and those of the Meath Local Economic and Community Plan 2016-2021, 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. The review process for the Corporate Plan has recently commenced.

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.

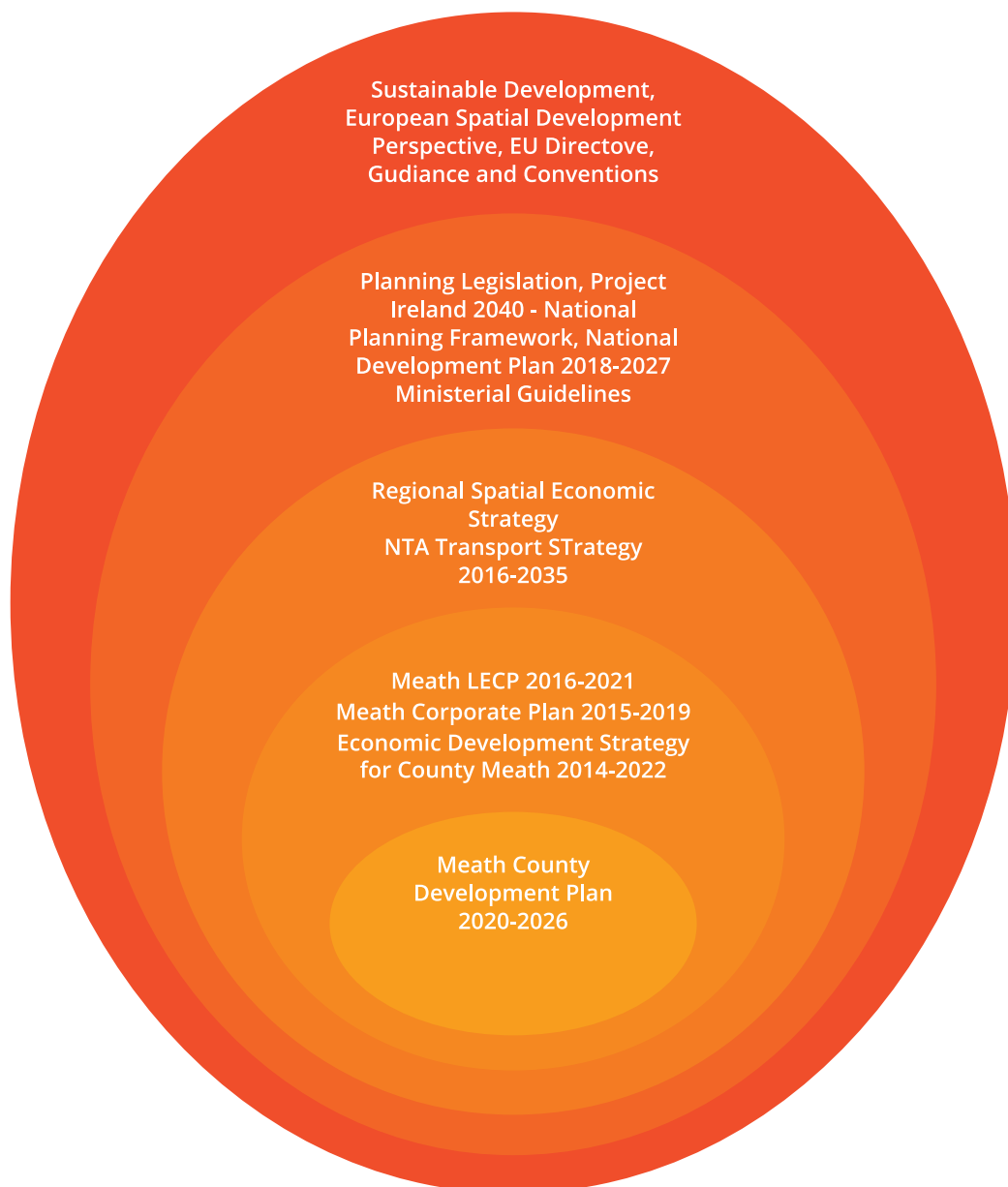


Figure 1.1: Strategic policy influences on the preparation of the Meath County Development Plan 2020-2026

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 reference those areas with the highest incidence of outbound commuting combined with high quality skill set profile.

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 is to facilitate an approach to the marketing of the sites which was adopted with the sites designated in the Economic Strategy. This focus is required to stimulate development on these lands.

These additional Strategic Sites are as follows:

- Trim Rd lands, Navan (identified as white lands (the subject of a current variation to the Navan Development Plan) and additional lands to the north;
- Maynooth Environs (employment land);
- Ratoath, lands between the existing built up area of Ratoath and 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 2020-2026

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 Appendices, Glossary.

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,

⁵ 2016 POWSCAR data

⁶ July 2019

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
Gormanstown
Kentstown
Kilbride
Stamullen

KELLS MUNICIPAL DISTRICT

Athboy
Baile Gibb
Carlanstown
Carnaross
Crossakiel
Drumconrath
Kells
Kilmainhamwood
Moynalty
Nobber

Oldcastle

Rathcairn

LAYTOWN/BETTYSTOWN MUNICIPAL DISTRICT

Bettystown/Laytown/Mornington/Donacarne

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

Kilbride

Kildalkey

Longwood

Rathmolyon

Summerhill
Trim

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

Settlement Hierarchy
Key Transportation Corridors, Nodes & Network
Rail Reservation Maps
Road Upgrades National & Regional
Access to National Roads – Exceptional Circumstances
Bru Na Boinne World Heritage Site
Architectural Conservation Areas
Natural Heritage Designations (Natura 2000)
Public Rights of Way
Views and Prospects Maps
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 and Consultation Distances

Finally the Appendices will 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 Draft Plan.

1.5.1 Existing Suite of Local Area Plans

A Local Area Plan is currently in place for the following settlement centres: Ashbourne, Bettystown/Laytown/Mornington East/Donacarney, Dunshaughlin, Dunboyne, Ratoath and the Southern Environs of Drogheda.

A written statement and land use zoning objectives map to establish a framework for interalia 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 centre.

1.6 Interpretation

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

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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 2020-2026.
- The County refers to County Meath.