

Meath County Development Plan 2013 - 2019

Strategic Issues Paper



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Keeping you involved in the future of Meath

Strategic Issues Paper

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Population, Settlement & Housing

Economic Development & Employment

Urban & Architectural Design

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Environment

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Have your say...

INTRODUCTION

What is a Development Plan?

A development plan is a document which details the overall strategy of the council for the proper planning and sustainable development of an area and generally consists of a written statement and accompanying maps. The plan usually includes the broad aims of the council for specific topics, e.g. housing, infrastructure, community facilities which are reinforced by more detailed policies and objectives. A policy is an agreed position on a particular issue while an objective is a specific action or project which the Council intends to accomplish over the lifetime of the plan. For example, it could be an aim of a development plan to support the provision of social infrastructure in the county. This could be accompanied by a policy to expand the range of library facilities and an objective to provide a mobile library to serve a particular area.

According to planning legislation, there are a number of topics which the development plan objectives must address. These include¹:

- Zoning of land uses
- Provision of infrastructure.
- Conservation and protection of the environment.
- The encouragement of 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.
- The promotion of compliance with environmental standards and objectives established—
 - (i) for bodies of surface water, by the European Communities (Surface Waters) Regulations 2009;
 - (ii) for groundwater, by the European Communities (Groundwater) Regulations 2010; which standards and objectives are included in river basin management plans.
- The integration of social, community and cultural requirements with the planning and sustainable development of the area.
- The preservation of the character of the landscape including views and prospects and the amenities of places and features of natural beauty or interest.
- The protection of structures of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest.
- Preservation of the character of Architectural Conservation Areas.
- Renewal and development of areas in need of regeneration.
- Provision of Traveller accommodation.
- Preservation, improvement and extension of amenities and recreational amenities.
- Control of development for the purposes of reducing the risk or limiting the consequences of a major accident (having regard to the Major Accidents Directive).
- Services for the community including, in particular, schools, crèches and other education

¹ See Planning and Development Act 2000-2010 for full text.

and childcare facilities.

- Protection of the linguistic and cultural heritage of the Gaeltacht.
- The promotion of sustainable settlement and transportation strategies in urban and rural areas, in particular, having regard to location, layout and design of new development.
- The preservation of public rights of way which give access to seashore, mountain, lakeshore, riverbank or other place of natural beauty or recreational utility.
- Landscape, in accordance with relevant policies or objectives of the Government or any Minister of the Government.

The planning legislation also lists topics which development plans may address if considered necessary. These includes issues such as regulating development in areas at risk of flooding, the design of structures, reservation of lands for burial grounds, reserving land as open spaces (see Schedule 1 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended)). A development plan must also include a core strategy, which is discussed below, and a statement showing that the development objectives in the plan are consistent, as far as practicable, with the conservation and protection of the environment.

Why is it important?

The Meath County Development Plan will provide the main public statement of planning policies and objectives at county level. The policies and objectives can be critical in determining the appropriate location and form of different types of development as the development plan is one of the factors against which planning applications are assessed. This could be for developments as diverse as a domestic extension, a large scale shopping centre or a quarry.

The objectives of the development plan are also used by Meath County Council to guide its activities. For example, the plan indicates the priorities for investment in road schemes, water supply and waste water treatment facilities and council run services such as housing, the fire service and libraries.

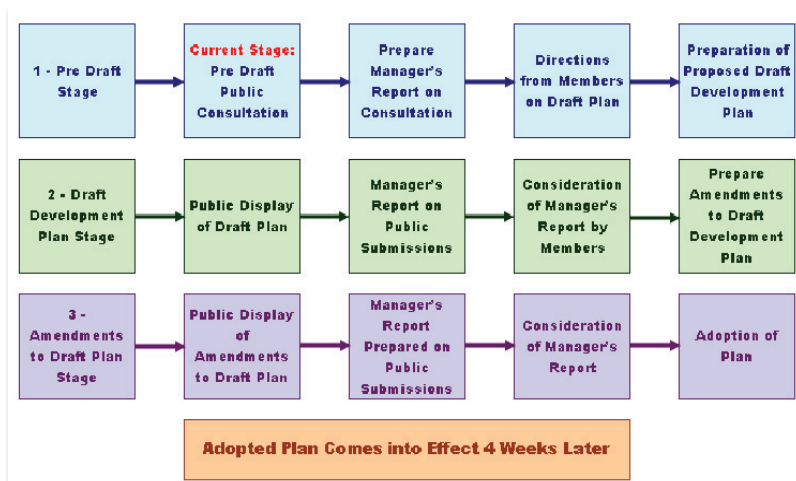
Similar to other corporate documents such as the Corporate Plan, it will indicate priority areas for action by the Council such as focusing on attracting employment into the County. This can guide the activities of the various sections of the council.

The next County Development Plan will be a key document for setting out a vision for how Meath should develop over the years 2013-2019. It is important that all groups and individuals who have an interest in the county and what happens in the county have their views heard.

Development Plan Review Process

A development plan is in force for a period of 6 years. The process of reviewing the development plan must begin 4 years after the making of the last development plan. The current Meath County Development Plan was adopted on 2nd March 2007 therefore the review process is now commencing.

The process starts with a period of public consultation inviting submissions on strategic issues: policies and objectives which would deliver an overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of the county. As stated in legislation, requests or proposals for zoning of particular land for any purpose will not be considered at this stage. Children or groups representing the interests of



children may make submissions. The review process lasts approximately two years. In addition to this stage of consultation, there will also be an opportunity to comment on the draft development plan and on any amendments that may be made to it.

The Issues Paper

The purpose of this issues paper is to describe some of the characteristics and features of the county, recent trends in development and likely influences on the development plan. It is intended to stimulate debate and to encourage people to think about County Meath, what it represents and means to them, what are the important subjects that the next development plan should address and what are suitable policies and objectives that could be included in the plan. The paper is not exhaustive in terms of questions or issues raised, but is designed to act as a starting point.

How to Make a Submission

Submissions can be made from 2nd March to 29th April 2011. Submissions can be lodged with the council in a number of ways as detailed below. Please make your submission by one medium only i.e. hard copy or electronic, and include your name and address on a separate page to the content of your submission. This is to assist Meath County Council in complying with the provisions of the Data Protection Act.

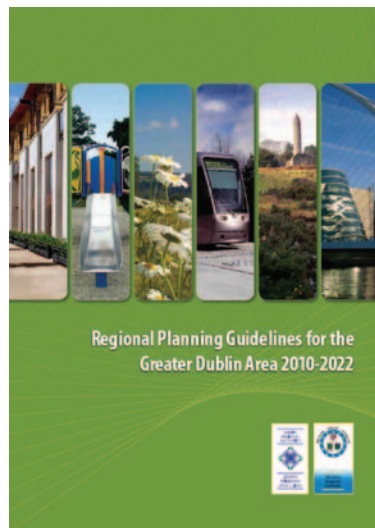
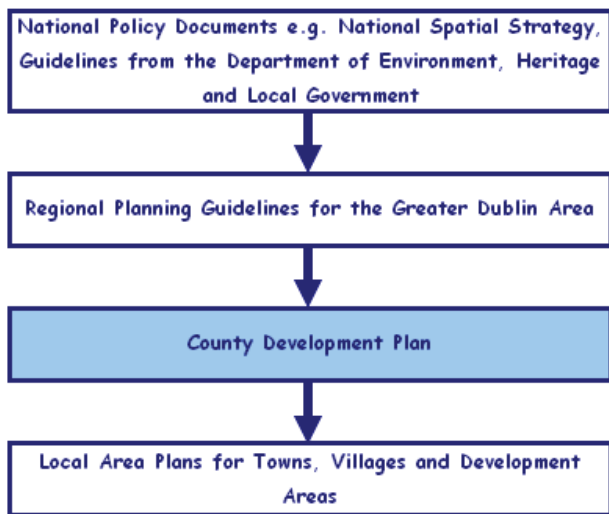
- Email: countydevelopmentplan@meathcoco.ie
- Through our website: www.countydevelopmentplan.meath.ie
- Post: County Development Plan Review, Forward Planning Section, Meath County Council Planning and Community Department, Abbey Rd, Navan, Co. Meath.

**The deadline for receipt of all submissions is
3.30pm on 29th April 2011
Submissions received after this date will not be accepted.**

STRATEGIC PLANNING CONTEXT

A development plan is a strategic planning document in itself at the county level. However it sits within a tier of planning and other strategic documents at national, regional and local level. There are a number of documents with which the development plan must comply according to legislation. In terms of spatial planning (which focuses on physical space), the two key strategic documents are the National Spatial Strategy and the Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area. The development plan must, by law, be consistent with these two documents.

The National Spatial Strategy (NSS) 2002-2022 is a 20-year planning framework which aims to achieve a better balance of social, economic and physical development between the regions of the country. It contains guidance on urban and rural development, housing, economic development and environmental and quality of life considerations.



The Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area 2010-2022 are a critical input in the Development Plan preparation process. The aim of the Guidelines is to direct the future growth of the Greater Dublin Area (comprising of counties Meath, Kildare, Wicklow, Dublin City, Fingal, South Dublin and Dun Laoghaire Rathdown) over the medium to long term and to implement the strategic planning framework set out in the NSS. They set out a detailed strategy in respect of economic development, settlement patterns, population projections and

housing, rural development, infrastructure and social development, heritage and social development.

The settlement hierarchy set out in the Guidelines is detailed in this table

Settlement Type	Centres in Meath
Large Growth Town I	Navan, Drogheda Environs
Large Growth Town II	Dunboyne
Moderate Sustainable Growth Towns	Ashbourne, Kells, Trim, Dunshaughlin*
Small Towns	To be defined in development plan
Villages	

* Dunshaughlin will become a Moderate Sustainable Growth Town following the granting of permission for a railway order for the Navan Rail Line Phase II, including a station at the town.

In terms of sectoral documents, the County Development Plan must be consistent with the transport strategy for the Greater Dublin Area produced by the Dublin Transport Authority. This strategy is currently on display. In addition, the development plan must also be consistent with national plans, policies or strategies that the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government has determined relate to proper planning and sustainable development. These include, for example, the National Cycling Policy Framework 2009-2020, National Climate Change Strategy 2007-2012, Smarter Travel – A Sustainable Travel Future 2009-2012.

There are also a range of guidelines that have been issued by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government that the Planning Authority has to have regard to in the making of the Development Plan. These address issues such as sustainable rural housing, retail planning, quarries and ancillary activities, architectural heritage protection and sustainable residential development in urban areas.

What is a Core Strategy

In addition to the mandatory objectives mentioned previously, the next Development Plan must also include a core strategy. The purpose of the core strategy is to set out a medium to longer term quantitatively based strategy for the development of the plan area and to demonstrate that the Development Plan and its objectives are consistent with the National Spatial Strategy and Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area. The key elements of the core strategy will include:

- The hierarchy of towns and villages in the county. This will be as per the hierarchy set out in the Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area previously illustrated with towns at the level of Small Town and Villages to be assigned by the Development Plan.
- The projected population of towns and the rural area. The population projections used will be those set out in the Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area.
- The residential zoned land available and the number of units that are to be included in the area including how the zoning proposals accord with national policy that development of land shall take place on a phased basis.
- Demonstrating that objectives relating to retail development have regard to the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government “Retail Planning Guidelines for Planning Authorities”.
- Information on national roads and inter-urban and commuter rail routes.
- Information on rural areas.

This information will be represented graphically as well as in the written text of the plan.

Vision for County Meath

The vision statement for Meath set out in the existing Meath County Development Plan is *“To plan for and support the sustainable development of County Meath as an excellent place to invest in, to visit and to live in, renowned for the quality of its natural and built environment, culture and the strength and viability of its communities.”*

The Meath Local Authorities Corporate Plan 2009-2014 guides the actions of the authorities and sets out the strategic framework in which Meath Local Authorities will operate over the period. It states that the vision that the Authorities have of the county

is of one which *“is recognized locally, nationally and internationally as an excellent place to invest in, to visit and to live in, renowned for the quality of its employment opportunities, heritage, culture and the strength and viability of its communities.”*

It is envisaged that the next County Development Plan will contain a vision statement which will set out the overall aim for the county over the lifetime of the plan.



CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS

- What kind of County would you like to see Meath being in 2019?
- What critical elements or attributes would need to be in place to make the county what you want it to be?
- What do you see are the main barriers that are preventing this happening?
- What needs to be done to remove these barriers?
- What issues do you think the vision statement of the County Development Plan 2013-2019 should address?
- What do you think of the vision statements in the existing County Development Plan and Corporate Plan? Do you think that they would be applicable to the development of the county during the period 2013-2019? Do they need to be altered? If so, in what way?

POPULATION, SETTLEMENT AND HOUSING

The population of County Meath was 162,831 persons in the 2006 census, an increase of 21.5% over the 2002 figure. This was an exceptionally high level of growth, exceeded only by County Fingal which had a growth rate of 22.2%. It was reflected in high levels of population increase in some Electoral Divisions (ED) in the county, e.g. Navan Rural which recorded the second highest population increase in an ED in the country in terms of overall population numbers. A number of other EDs recorded substantial increases in population. However, the level of growth has not been equal across the county and there was significant variation in terms of percentage change with some EDs experiencing a decline in population.

Highest & lowest Rates of Growth in Meath Electoral Divisions 2002-2006

Electoral Division	% change in population 2002-2006
Kildalky	72
St. Mary's (part)(Drogheda Environs)	66
Stamullin	65
Newtown (Kells Area)	60
Innfield	59
Rahinstown	-4
Carricleck	-8
Maperath	-11
Mellifont	-13
Ceannanus Mór (Kells) Urban	-13

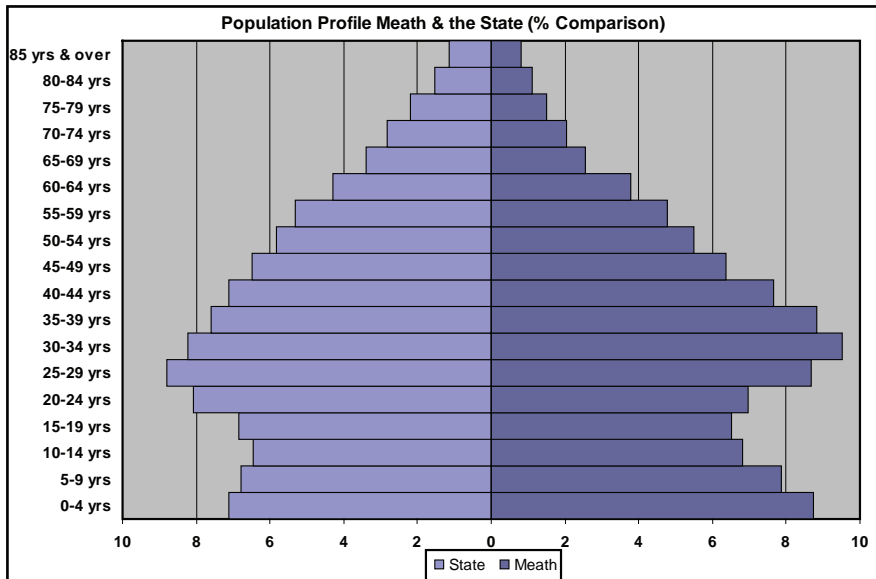
In respect of the towns in the County, there were also large differences in growth rates. Those towns within commuting distance of Dublin in particular witnessed substantial increases in percentage change in population. Such rapid and high rates of growth has had knock on effects for the provision of adequate resources such as schools,

shops, and community and recreational facilities to serve new and existing residents.

Towns with the highest percentage increase in population 2002-2006

	% change 2002-2006
Clonee Village	478
Kildalkey	278
Stamullen	219
Kentstown	157
Environs of Drogheda	124
Donore	118
Enfield	102
Ratoath	91
Longwood	83
Laytown-Bettystown-Mornington	60

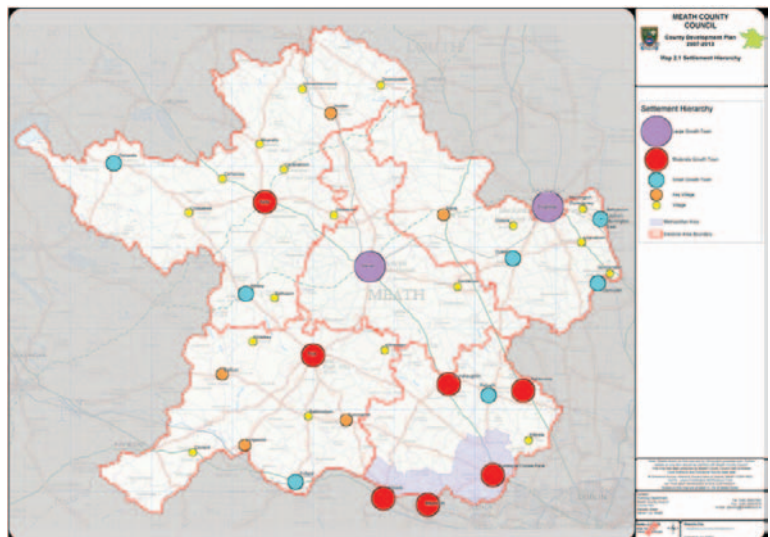
The next census is being carried out on 10th April 2011. According to the Central Statistics Office, preliminary population data will be published within 3 months of census day which should provide updated information on population change in the county. The population distribution in Meath in 2006 was notable for being comparatively youthful. For example, Ratoath had the highest proportion of people in the age range 0-14 years nationally at 32%. This has implications for the type of services required presently and in future years e.g. in terms of demand for school places, health services and employment opportunities.



Settlement

The Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area include a population target for Meath of 195,898 people in 2016 and 210,260 people in 2022. This equates to a housing unit allocation of approximately 34,200 housing units over the period 2006-2022. The updated County Development Plan will have to determine how and where to accommodate this additional population.

The existing Meath Development Plan contains a settlement strategy. This provides guidance on where new development should take place including settlements of all sizes and the countryside. A key element of the settlement strategy is the hierarchy of towns, which sets out the role of the various towns and villages in the county and the services that should be provided in the various categories of urban centre. According to the current settlement hierarchy, Navan, Dunboyne/Clonee/Pace and the Drogheda environs are the major growth centres in Meath.



The next County Development Plan will contain a revised settlement strategy. This will be strongly influenced by the Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area (RPGs) as the County Development Plan legally must be consistent with the Guidelines. The RPGs include a settlement hierarchy for the larger towns in the county which are Navan, Drogheda Environs, Dunboyne, Kells, Trim, Dunshaughlin and Ashbourne. Other towns must be designated in the County Development Plan.

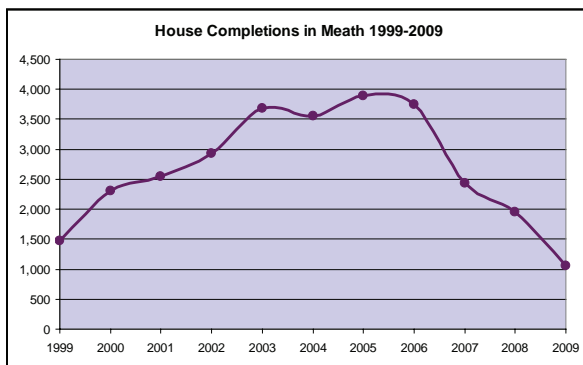
The settlement strategy will also outline in detail the distribution of future housing units across the county including urban centres and the rural area. The RPGs require that a minimum of 11% of population growth in over the lifetime of the plan must be directed towards the Metropolitan Area of the county. This area includes Clonee and Dunboyne and rural areas adjoining Kilcock and Maynooth. According to the current local area plan for Dunboyne/Clonee/Pace, Clonee has a more limited role in terms of providing residential development compared to Dunboyne and it is expected that this position would be retained in the next County Development Plan. Outside of the Metropolitan Area, the majority of the remaining population should be directed towards the towns of Navan and in the Drogheda Environs. However all towns and the rural area will need to be assigned a projected housing allocation.



Housing

The growth in population in Meath recorded in the 2006 Census was matched by an increase in the quantity of house completions, which has declined sharply of late. The type and form of housing available in the county area needs to match the requirements of the population. Average household size in Meath has fallen in recent years, from 3.6 in 1991 to 2.99 in 2006, with a greater proportion of households comprising 1 or 2 people. This suggests that a range of house sizes is required that can accommodate the various households. In addition to house size, future housing accommodation needs to be able to accommodate all sectors of society, and include provision for groups such as elderly persons or those with a disability, be it physical or intellectual. Social and affordable housing has been traditionally provided by Meath Local Authorities; through the building of housing by the authorities or the transfer of units from private housing schemes under the provisions of planning legislation. More recently, the voluntary housing sector (e.g. co-operative associations, community associations and voluntary housing associations) has been strongly involved in this area.

No. persons in household	1991 (%)	2006 (%)
1	15	17
2	20	28
3	15	19
4	19	19
5	15	11
6 or more	16	6



The County Development Plan will contain a new housing strategy which will set out an overall framework for the supply of land to meet the housing needs arising in the county. It will address issues such as housing affordability, future need and availability of zoned land for housing, provision of social and affordable housing and housing mix.

The development of housing introduces the challenge of how to effectively integrate new residents into existing communities. Success in this can be affected by the pace of development, the quantity of development and the need to ensure supporting community facilities are available. The preparation of the next County Development Plan is an opportunity to review how planning can encourage the expansion of communities rather than solely the development of housing.

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS

- Are the recent trends in population distribution across the county sustainable?
- Should the policy of the next County Development Plan encourage changes in population distribution? If so, in what way?
- What should influence the pattern of development in the county during the period 2013-2019?
- What factors do you think should guide the placing of towns in the settlement hierarchy?
- What criteria do you think should be used to determine how housing is distributed across the County?
- What do you think are the main areas that should accommodate future population growth?
- How should housing be allocated between urban and rural areas?
- How can we ensure that housing development occurs at the same pace as supporting services?
- Do you think that housing development in the County is meeting the requirements of all types of households?
- Do you think there are any sectors of society whose needs have been overlooked in housing provision?
- How best can housing for persons with specific needs be provided?
- What do you think is the best way of delivering social and affordable housing?
- How can new housing be integrated effectively into towns and existing communities?

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND EMPLOYMENT

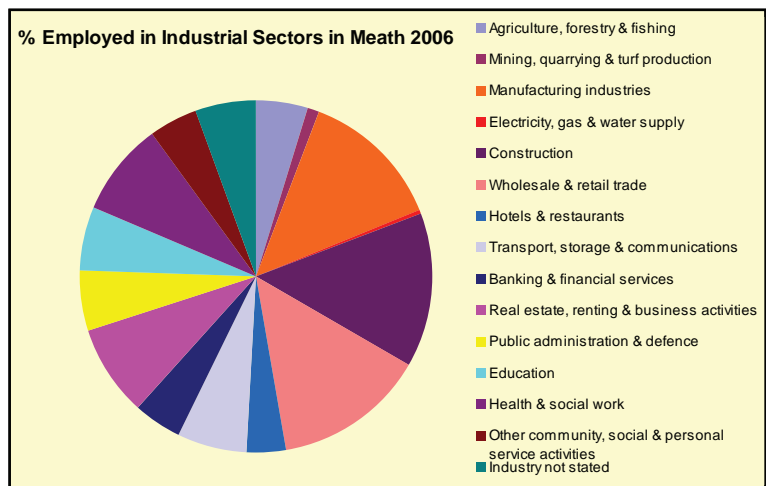
County Meath has a strategic location which makes it an ideal place for economic development and investment. The recent investments in road infrastructure including the M3 and M4 motorway and the presence of the M1 motorway passing through the county, have given it unparalleled access to the markets of the Greater Dublin Area and the rest of the country, while its proximity to Dublin airport and Dublin, Drogheda and Dundalk ports facilitate easy access to international markets and suppliers. Meath has a youthful population with a substantial cohort of working age which represents a significant resource for prospective employers.

Over the last number of years County Meath has developed more as a commuter centre rather than an employment centre. According to the 2006 Census, 23% of Meath workers travelled between 25 - 49 kilometres to get to work, compared to 10% of the state as a whole while 12% travelled 50 kilometres and over compared to 5% in the State. These long distance journeys are predominantly being carried out by car with 70% of people travelling to work in this type of transport. This raises issues regarding the accessibility of jobs for those without a car.

Meath recorded an unemployment rate of 5.6% in the 2006 Census. This figure is likely to have substantially increased since then, particularly given the large proportion of the workforce engaged in construction and the decline in this sector. The numbers signing on the live register in Meath increased from 3,038 at the end of 2006 to 12,016 at the end of 2010. The live register does not record unemployment per se, as it includes part-time workers, seasonal and casual workers entitled to

Jobseekers Benefit or Allowance. However, it is indicative of the increased number of people seeking state assistance. In light of the changing nature of employment in Meath, there are significant challenges ahead in planning for economic development: in sustaining the existing jobs in the county; in identifying future employment

sectors and opportunities for inward investment; in ensuring that the needs of employers and employees are met in order to facilitate future growth; and in ensuring that economic development is consistent with sustainable development.



The role of the Council in economic development includes facilitating the provision of necessary infrastructure, facilitate the implementation of appropriate urban and rural economic development initiatives and the zoning of lands for industrial and commercial development. Meath County Council also works to promote County Meath as a potential location for economic development and liaises with other relevant organisations to achieve this. The establishment of an Economic Development and Innovation Unit within the Council has been a key component in the Council's strategy to facilitate and encourage business investment in the county.

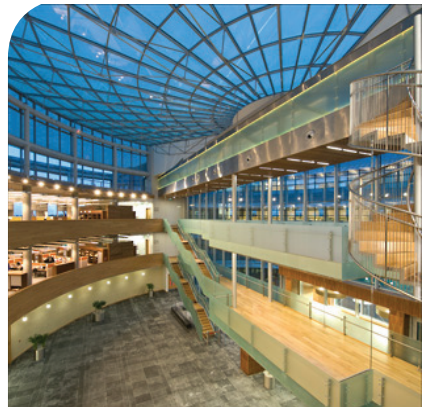
CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS

- What are Meath's key drivers, strengths or competitive advantages which can be harnessed to increase employment growth within the county?
- How can Meath be promoted in attracting inward investment in employment and enterprise?
- How can spatial planning facilitate this?
- How do we ensure that policies in relation to economic development complement and comply with policies in respect of significant issues such as urban and rural development, the integration of land use and transport, conservation etc?
- How can commuter distances to work on a daily basis be shortened?
- What alternatives do you believe can reduce long commutes to work?
- How can a range of employment opportunities be provided locally so as to reduce the dependency on the car as a means of accessing jobs?

Enterprise and Commercial Development

The economic strategy in the next County Development Plan will need to include a spatial approach to enterprise and commercial development. The contents of the Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area will be relevant to this. The Guidelines identify Navan and the Drogheda Environs as the major economic centres of the county with Ashbourne, Dunboyne, Kells and Trim having a supporting role. The Regional Planning Guidelines also identify the M1 economic corridor noting that economic strategies should recognise the role of this corridor in stimulating investment opportunities.

The potential to strengthen the connection between education, innovation and enterprise is now recognised and there may be opportunities to build on links in this area in the county, for example through linkages with NUI Maynooth. In addition, the ability to facilitate and encourage a range of industries in the county such as large scale manufacturing, start up and incubator facilities, science and technology plants, office based enterprises and employee intensive services such as telesales, will need to be examined in preparing the strategy.



Industrial and commercial developments can be imposing in scale and visually dominant in towns and rural areas. There is a need to consider how to integrate these developments into their setting effectively so that they do not detract from the character of an area and mitigate against other industries such as tourism or affect residential amenities.



CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS

- How should the Development Plan distribute commercial and industrial development, including small scale industrial projects, start-up units, etc throughout the county?
- How can the development and growth of indigenous/local enterprise in the County be facilitated?
- How do we make industrial estates and commercial enterprises attractive in terms of design, layout etc?

Proposed Port at Bremore

Drogheda Port Company proposes to develop a new deepwater port, logistics centre and business park at Gormonston, Co. Meath. The proposed port would have the deepest berths on the east coast of Ireland, 24 hour marine access with facilities to accommodate new short sea shipping services to the United Kingdom, Europe, Scandinavia and the Baltic states, to include Lo-Lo (lift on-lift off), Ro-Ro (roll on-roll off) and passenger traffic. This would be a significant infrastructural and commercial proposal with substantial implications for the local area and the county. The next County Development Plan would need to provide an appropriate policy framework for the assessment of such a project, taking into account, in particular, the environmental and ecological impacts, the need for strategic environmental assessment and appropriate assessment, the potential impact of associated commercial development on urban centres in the county and implications for the integration of land use and transport.



CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS

- What issues do you think policy in respect of port facilities should address?
- How best can the County Development Plan incorporate sustainability considerations in the development of port facilities?
- What sort of ancillary facilities do you consider would be acceptable adjacent to port developments?
- How can the natural amenities, built and natural heritage and residential amenities be protected from potential negative impacts of port development?

Retail

The retail sector provides an important social and economic function within Meath in terms of serving residents, visitors and businesses, creating demand for potential local suppliers and creating local employment. In particular, local shops in both urban and rural areas can have a vital role in the community, especially for those who do not have access to a car. Conversely, retailing is also associated with some disadvantages when located inappropriately including having an adverse impact on the vitality and viability of established town centres, detracting from the environmental quality of a town centre and under-utilising investment in existing services and infrastructure and generating excessive traffic and car-parking demands.

The retail policies of the next County Development Plan must have regard to the 'Retail Planning Guidelines for Planning Authorities' produced by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government. A retail strategy has also been prepared for the Greater Dublin Area covering the period 2008-2014. This indicated that in 2007 County Meath experienced 40% leakage of retail expenditure to other counties. A challenge will be to reduce this figure; improving the range of shops in the county and encouraging people to shop locally which would keep money within the local economy and protect local jobs.



CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS

- What are your views on retailing in the County?
- Are improvements necessary in the provision of retail services in your area? If so, what kind of improvements?
- What are your views on out-of-town shopping?
- How can smaller scale local shops be protected?

Tourism

The location of county Meath close to Dublin airport increases its accessibility to visitors from abroad while the recent improvements in transport links to the rest of the country increase convenience for visitors touring Ireland and domestic tourists. Meath is Ireland's Heritage Capital and benefits from rich and varied natural environment and heritage resources. These include internationally renowned rural landscapes such as Newgrange, coastal areas and historic and heritage towns such as Slane, Trim, and Kells. A number of recent hotel developments have increased the number of bed spaces in the county while leisure facilities and events ranging from golf courses to horse racing contribute to broadening the tourist offer. Much of the raw material for a strong tourist market is present in Meath; the challenge for the next County Development Plan is how best to mobilise the tourism sector, capitalising on the resources of the county while protecting them from harm and overdevelopment.



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CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS

- What can Meath do to attract more domestic and overseas visitors?
- Is there a need for more tourism facilities e.g. accommodation, touring caravan parks, campsites, activities restaurants?
- How do we ensure that policies in relation to tourism complement and comply with those relating to conservation, rural development etc?
- How can outdoor recreation in the countryside e.g. hill walking, cycling, rambling and angling be encouraged without impeding other forms of rural development such as agriculture or quarrying?
- How can a balance be achieved between protecting the natural landscapes of Meath as a resource for tourism and residents of the county whilst accommodating development necessary to sustain the rural community?

URBAN AND ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN

Urban Design

Part of the challenge in facilitating development in towns and villages in Meath is in assimilating new buildings, roads and other infrastructure into the urban environment without detracting from the character of the area. In addition, the quality of the built environment can affect the quality of life and health of residents of an area, for example by enabling people to walk or cycle through providing safe and direct footpath and cycleway routes or by designing in spaces for play areas in residential schemes. The planning process and in particular the development control process gives the planning authority an active role in the creation of the built environment and a means of encouraging a high standard of design.

Urban design is concerned with the the relationships of buildings to one another and to the spaces around them. Good urban design includes:

- Respecting the existing character.
- Creating a clear distinction between public and private spaces and ensuring that public areas are suitably supervised by adjoining buildings.
- Ensuring that an area is easy to navigate and is permeable.
- Facilitating diversity in terms of uses and appearance.
- Facilitating longevity, by designing streets and buildings that can be adapted to a variety of uses during their lifetime.
- Encouraging visual identity and interest and discourage functional anonymity.

The Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government have produced guidelines on Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas which includes a best practice urban design manual.

Architectural Design

Well designed buildings are those which enhance their setting, either urban or rural, and which include longevity, adaptability and efficiency in their attributes. The architectural design of a structure should be appropriate to its context whether that is the rural environment of an agricultural building, a suburban setting for a housing estate or a town centre commercial building.

Meath County Council has prepared design guidelines for houses in the countryside which were adopted as a variation to the Meath County Development Plan 2007 – 2013. These provide advice to prospective applicants on site selection and layout and building form





and design. The current plan also contains advice on the design of agricultural buildings. Many of the individual Local Area Plans and Development Plan prepared for the towns and villages in Meath contain guidance on design in urban areas. The preparation of the Development Plan provides an opportunity to consider the need for guidance in this area on a county wide basis.

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS

- How can the Development Plan encourage good design and layouts in our settlements?
- What do you consider the main issues to be relating to the built environment, quality of design of buildings, public open spaces?
- How can the Development Plan promote improvement in the quality of the built environment?
- How can the Development Plan ensure that development is appropriate to its location?
- What kind of guidance should the Development Plan contain in terms of urban design?
- What kind of guidance should the Development Plan contain in respect of building design in rural areas?
- What type of advice should be provided in the Development Plan in respect of building design in urban areas?

PHYSICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

The provision of water, wastewater, waste management, energy and telecommunication infrastructure is fundamental to ensure the continued sustainable development of the county. Meath has experienced unprecedented growth in recent years which has greatly increased the demand for water supply, drainage, waste management, telecommunications and energy.

Water Services (Drinking Water & Wastewater)

A number of EU, DoEHLG, Office of Public Works and Environmental Protection Agency documents have been published in recent years which will have a significant impact on the development and delivery of water services in County Meath.

The main documents are:

- European Communities (Drinking Water) (No. 2) Regulations, 2007
- EU Water Framework Directive
- Waste Water Discharge Licences
- Strategic Water Plans
- Greater Dublin Strategic Drainage Study (GDSDS)
- Sustainable urban Drainage Systems (SuDS)
- The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities

Meath Local Authorities Water Services Programme 2010-2012 identifies where water and waste water should be provided and/or improved. The Council has progressed the delivery of a number of water services projects since the adoption of the current development plan through the ongoing implementation of the Water Services Investment Programme. Such projects include the Summerhill Water Supply Scheme, Navan AC Watermains Replacement Scheme–Phase 2, Trim Water Treatment Plant Augmentation, Navan and Mid Meath Water Supply Scheme Contracts 2 and 3 and the Rath Augmentation and Dunshaughlin Water Supply Scheme.

Water Supply

The total water supply distribution input for County Meath is approximately 49Ml/day.

The East Meath, Drogheda and South Louth water supply scheme will cater for the water services needs of East Meath, Drogheda and South Louth up to at least the year 2030. This will include the development of substantial ground water sources in the East Meath Area to meet the projected water supply needs of East Meath and the Meath Environs of Drogheda. The scheme is proposed on a phased basis



and will reduce Meath County Council's reliance for water on Louth Local Authorities. Phase 1 of the Kiltrough Augmentation Scheme has been completed and is providing an additional 3ML/day from boreholes at Kiltrough water tower. Meath is dependant on Fingal County Council for public water supply at Dunboyne/Clonee and Kilcloon.

The two existing water treatment plants serving Navan and environs are nearing capacity and there is limited scope to produce additional water from these plants. To meet the future water demands of Navan and environs, the Navan and Mid Meath water supply scheme upgrade is being implemented on a phased basis. Meath County Council hope to have a new water treatment plant operational by the end of 2016. In the meantime, water supply is a constraint to significant further development in Navan. The Ballivor and Longwood Water Supply Schemes are nearing capacity. Meath County Council is exploring a number of options to augment these supplies. However neither Ballivor nor Longwood are included in the current 2010-2012 Water Services Investment Programme.

The water supply to Kells is from the Kells/Oldcastle Water Supply Scheme. An upgrade to the Lough Bane water treatment facility, which serves Kells, is included in the current Water Services Investment Programme 2010-2012. The upgrade will include filtration of the water supply from Lough Bane to reduce the risk of cryptosporidium. However, no increased capacity will be provided and there is a limited amount of spare capacity in the Kells/Oldcastle water supply scheme.



There is limited capacity in most of the remainder of the public water supply schemes in the county (which serve areas including Athboy, Trim, Clonard, Enfield, Slane, Nobber, Moynalty), when existing demands together with permitted developments have been connected, for significant further development. These schemes are reviewed on an ongoing basis, in conjunction with the zoning of lands in these areas, to identify the required additional capacities and the timely delivery of augmentation to the schemes to meet the phased development of zoned lands.

Water Conservation through active leakage control, demand management and pressure management has played and will continue to play a major role in reducing the demand for potable water, thus facilitating additional developments and improving the level of service to existing developments in the county through the existing watermains networks. Meath County Council has a dedicated Water Conservation Unit which is tasked with reducing leakage and wastage from the water supply system in the interests of achieving efficiency and sustainability.

Wastewater Treatment

As with the water supply situation, there is limited capacity in most of the remainder of the waste water schemes in the county for significant further development, when existing demands together with permitted developments have been connected. These schemes are reviewed on an ongoing basis, in conjunction with the zoning of lands

in these areas, to identify the required additional capacities and the timely delivery of augmentation to the schemes to meet the phased development of zoned lands.

The Water Services Investment Programme identifies waste water schemes to receive investment to facilitate upgrade and improvement. The Council has progressed the delivery of a number of water services projects including the Dunshaughlin Sewerage Scheme, Kilcarn Johnstown Sewer Improvement Works Scheme, Ashbourne/ Ratoath/Kilbride Sewerage Scheme, Oldcastle Sewerage Scheme,

Ballivor Sewerage Scheme, Longwood Sewerage Scheme and Meath Grouped Towns & Villages Sewerage Scheme which included the upgrading of sewer networks and Waste Water Treatment Works (WWTWs) in 8 towns and villages in the county.

The largest waste water treatment plants (WWTPs) are located at Navan, Trim, Dunshaughlin and Kells. The largest municipal wastewater treatment plant in County Meath is located at Ferganstown and serves the town of Navan and its environs. The plant has an EPA licensed capacity of 50,000pe and was designed to accommodate expansion to 60,000pe if the need arises. As per the Annual Environmental Report of February 2009 (produced by Meath County Council) it is estimated that the total pe loading in 2014 will be 39,743 pe.

The Trim WWTW has a design capacity of 12,000pe. The predicted loading in 2015 is estimated to be 9,683pe. An upgrade scheme is at planning stage for the Kells waste water treatment plant under the current 2010-2012 Water Services Investment Programme. It is expected to be at least 2016 before this scheme is realised. In the meantime, there is limited available capacity at the Kells WWTW which is a constraint to significant further development in Kells.

The existing Oldcastle WWTW is at capacity. However a new plant is proposed with construction due to commence in Autumn 2011. The Duleek WWTP, Athboy WWTP and Summerhill WWTPS are currently at construction stage and are nearing completion. The Kentstown wastewater treatment plant is nearing capacity. An expansion of the plant is required to facilitate significant further development but is not included in the current Water Services Investment Programme 2010-2012.

The wastewater from Julianstown, Laytown, Bettystown, Mornington and Donacarney discharges to the Drogheda Borough Council WWTW at Marsh Road for treatment. There is limited available capacity to facilitate significant further development in these areas. The wastewater from Dunboyne, Clonee, Ashbourne and Ratoath discharges to the Fingal sewer network which subsequently discharges to the Ringsend WWTW for treatment. There are capacity constraints in the sewer networks conveying to Ringsend WWTW and also at the Ringsend WWTW. This has implications for the scale of development that can be accommodated.

Enfield/Johnstownbridge WWTW has a design capacity of 3,500pe and has available spare capacity to facilitate a limited amount of additional development.

Surface Water

Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) are effective technologies which aim to reduce flood risk, improve water quality and enhance biodiversity and amenity. The objective of SuDS in new developments is to replicate, as closely as possible, the surface water drainage regime to the predevelopment 'greenfield' situation. The surface water runoff rate from the

developed site must be limited to the 'greenfield' runoff rate to reduce the risk of flooding.

It is the current policy of Meath County Council that all large-scale developments in the designated settlements incorporate Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems as part of development proposals. The Council is currently investing through the Water Services Investment Programme to separate foul and storm drainage on old networks.

Telecommunications

It is recognised that development and investment in telecommunications infrastructure is of major importance to the county. The availability, quality and price of same are important and crucial to competitiveness. Broadband infrastructure is an area which needs development and ongoing investment particularly in rural areas. Antennae and telecommunications masts are of major importance however their siting is a fundamental planning consideration.

Energy

The supply of energy (gas and electricity) and the continued development of these networks is an important factor in the provision and location of employment. The Council promotes renewable energy options such as wind and hydro developments.

Waste Management

County Meath forms part of the North-East Region waste management area for waste policy. The Waste Management Plan 2005-2010 sets out regional objectives including waste prevention and minimisation, improved infrastructure for recycling and recovery of waste through the waste hierarchy. There are civic amenity centres at Navan, Trim, Kells and Dunboyne and there are 35 bring banks located throughout the County.

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS

- How can we make sure that we have water and drainage systems that cope with future growth?
- How can we encourage water and energy conservation?
- Are we doing enough to prevent development areas from flooding?
- How can the Development Plan ensure that Meath is adequately serviced in terms of telecommunications infrastructure, including broadband?
- Are there adequate recycling facilities in the County and in your opinion where should these facilities be located?
- What measures can we use to reduce waste and increase reuse and recycling?
- Should we promote renewable energy? If so how should we do this?

TRANSPORTATION

A multi-modal transport network is vital for the County to ensure accessibility, improve connectivity and economic and industrial competitiveness and success. The provision of transportation infrastructure including road and rail together with public transport projects must be integrated with a sustainable settlement strategy.

Integrated Spatial Planning and Transportation

Greener transport and integrating land use and transport are measures identified and outlined in various Government policies such as 'Transport 21', 'Smarter Travel' (2009-2020) and 'A Platform for Change'. 'A Platform for Change' is currently under review and will be replaced by the National Transport Authority's (NTA) Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area (GDA), '2030vision' when published. Within the Greater Dublin Area, the NTA's role is the preparation and regular review of a transportation strategy, financing the construction of public transport infrastructure and promoting an integrated public transport network. 'Smarter Travel, A Sustainable Transport Future', is the transport policy for Ireland for the period 2009-2020. Smarter Travel is a national document/policy that encourages people to use a more sustainable mode of transport and places an emphasis on the provision of public transport. Smarter Travel aims to help people make the change from cars to healthier and more sustainable ways of commuting. To support the Governments Sustainable Travel Policy Smarter Travel, a national competition was established to deliver outstanding and innovative examples of sustainable travel in urban and rural areas. Navan is one of 11 areas short listed to progress to Stage 2 of the Smarter Travel Areas Competition. The 11 areas are now competing for funding of up to €50 million over 5 years which could potentially transform each town into world class Smarter Travel areas.

Rail

As part of the Government's Transport 21 Programme the first phase of the proposed railway linking Navan to Dublin opened in September 2010. Over 25 trains per day run between the new M3 Parkway station and Dublin City Centre. Currently Iarnród Éireann is working on a detailed design to extend the existing line from the M3 Parkway station to Navan. The proposed extension will consist of 34km of railway line. Stations will be located at Dunshaughlin, Kilmessan, Navan town centre and a further station on the northern edge of Navan. The proposed development has the potential to offer these growing towns and their hinterlands direct, fast, environmentally friendly access to Dublin city centre. It is anticipated that an application for a Railway Order will be submitted to An Bord Pleanála by the end of March 2011. Other train services serving the county to Dublin are available at Laytown (east Meath), Enfield and Gormanstown. Car parking upgrades providing for additional car parking provision have been carried out in recent years at the Enfield and Gormanstown train stations.



Walking & Cycling

Walking and cycling are the most sustainable modes of transport and are an essential part of any integrated transport system. Therefore catering for needs of pedestrians and cyclists are very important with increased provision of cycle lanes and safer facilities for pedestrians imperative. 'Smarter Travel, A Sustainable Transport Future' policy document and the 'National Walking and Cycle Policy Framework' put forward proposals

to address the needs of walkers and cyclists. It is noteworthy that the National Cycle Policy Framework was published in April 2009.

Roads

There have been major improvements in the road network in the county since the adoption of the current County Development Plan, 2007-2013. The most significant road completion is the M3 Motorway which runs from Clonee to north of Kells providing bypasses of Dunboyne, Dunshaughlin, Navan and Kells. The opening of the M3 Motorway in 2010 has the potential to transform the town centres of Navan, Kells and Dunshaughlin and improve significantly the opportunities for enhancement in the bus, cycle and pedestrian networks.



Phase 2A and 2B of the Navan Inner Relief Road have been completed in recent years. Numerous regional road improvement works have also been completed and in particular the R161 (Navan to Trim), the R158 (Trim-Summerhill-Kilcock), R150 (Duleek-Julianstown), R153 (Navan-Forfas Road), and the R150 (Duleek-Julianstown), which are of critical importance in linking the County with adjoining counties and strategic routes. Surface restoration and resurfacing works was carried out on various sections of the regional road in the past few years.

Park and Ride

Park and ride facilities encourage car commuters to transfer to public transport. Park and ride facilities have been provided at Dunboyne train station and Pace Interchange. Phase II of the Navan-Dublin rail line proposes stations at Dunshaughlin, Kilmessan and Navan.

Car Parking

Car parking is an essential element of overall land use and transportation policy across the towns and villages in the County. The supply and management of parking is central to the management of transport demand and has a critical influence on mode choice for all journey purposes. Car parking standards are usually applied with varying degrees of constraint, on the basis of defined locational factors such as centrality and public transport accessibility.

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS

- How can we provide for better coordination and integration between land uses and transport facilities to achieve sustainable development?
- Is public transport provision adequate in County Meath and what improvements could be made?
- What would encourage you to use walking and cycling as a means of transport?
- How can the safety of vulnerable road users (cyclists and pedestrians) be improved?
- Is there enough park and ride facilities in the county?
- Are the park and ride facilities strategically located?
- Should car parking standards for new developments reflect the need to reduce car dependency?

RURAL DEVELOPMENT

The rural landscape of Meath is renowned for its scenic river valleys, rolling farmland, and network of mature trees and hedgerows. The area boasts tranquil rural scenery and provides numerous recreational and tourist activities. Rural Meath is home to well developed agriculture and equine industries, centres of local food production, and several established villages that are close to major centres of population. Rural Meath has experienced significant demand for the expansion of urban areas over the past ten years. The continued demand to accommodate projected population growth while protecting our rural and natural environment to support appropriate rural activities and enterprises is a key consideration for the Development Plan.

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 Co. Meath. While it is now providing less employment, it still remains important as a significant source of income and employment in rural areas. To sustain rural communities, farm diversification and new employment opportunities will be required. In recent years there has been 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 could be sectors with opportunities for growth.

Bloodstock

Meath is the country's second most important centre for the bloodstock industry after Co. Kildare. The equine industry is important economically and culturally. According to the 'Directory of the Turf' there are 54 stud farms in Meath. Fairyhouse Racecourse, Navan Racecourse and Tatterstalls Bloodstock Auctioneers are highly prominent enterprises in this area. Bloodstock generates employment across many spectrums directly but also through other associated enterprises and sectors such as tourism.



Forestry

At a national level, forestry accounts for approximately 10% of land cover. However Co. Meath has one of the lowest ratios of planted areas in the State. Forestry plays an important role in supporting rural employment and it is important that forests are developed in a sustainable manner while protecting the environment. Forest Management Plans are in place for Nobber, Navan, Kells and Summerhill in Meath.

Rural Enterprise

The Planning Authority aims to facilitate where appropriate agricultural diversification into agri-businesses such as organic foods and small to medium sized enterprises subject to the proper planning and development considerations. Rural areas and farms need to be versatile and open to change, and innovation and entrepreneurship appropriate to the rural area is encouraged. To promote rural enterprise, improvement

is needed in information technology services and in particular the provision of broadband. The Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area identify the green economy as having particular potential for expansion in rural areas.

Rural Tourism

The Planning Authority endeavours to promote rural tourism while at the same time ensuring that such development does not prejudice the viability, environmental quality and character of the rural community and village network, in line with the diversification of the rural economy.

Rural Housing

The current Meath County Development Plan 2007-2013 recognises the important role people living in rural areas play in supporting a dynamic rural economy and social structure. The rural settlement policy of the County Development Plan seeks to channel housing development in rural areas into gaiaigs and other designated development centres and to ensure that individual housing developments in rural areas are functionally and socially linked to the rural areas in which they were proposed. This approach is a fundamental principle of regional and national planning policy documents. Meath County Council published 'Meath Rural House Design Guide' in December 2009 in order to positively encourage the application of good siting and design principals to new single house development in the countryside.

Rural housing continues to pose a number of challenges for rural Meath which will be examined as part of the Development Plan review including; managing the environmental impact of rural homes, protection of the natural features of the area, and ensuring the economic and social vibrancy of rural villages.

Quarries

The extractive industry is an important resource to the economy of the County which needs to be managed in a sustainable manner. The operation of quarries can lead to conflict with wider environmental considerations. It is important to protect aggregate resource areas but also to ensure that their development does not unduly impinge the visual amenity or environmental quality of the area.

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS

- What is your vision for your rural community and how do you think it should be achieved?
- What services and type of development is required in your rural area to support the community?
- How can these services be provided?
- What should the Development Plan do to support agriculture and the equine industry?
- What type of enterprises do you think should be located in rural areas?
- How do we make sure rural businesses have a future?

- What type of infrastructure do you think is required to support enterprise and economic development in rural areas?
- How can tourism be promoted in rural Meath?
- Why do people want to live in rural Meath?
- How do we get well-designed rural homes?
- How do we make sure our rural villages are centres of economic and social activity?
- What level of rural housing is sustainable in Meath?
- How can the aggregate sector be developed in a manner that is sustainable and least damaging to the environment?

COMMUNITY, RECREATION & OPEN SPACE

Community facilities are vital to the life of Meath. Such facilities range from schools, libraries, childcare facilities, community centres, health centres, facilities for the elderly, facilities for persons with disabilities, arts and culture and open spaces etc. The rapid rate of population growth in recent years has put pressure on essential community infrastructure and it is critical that the future social needs of the county are addressed.

Arts and Culture

Meath County Council Arts Service aims to increase access to, awareness of and participation in the arts by all sectors of the community whilst recognising the importance of the arts in areas of personal development, community development, employment and tourism.

Libraries

There are currently 12 branch libraries in Meath. There were 22,589 library memberships in Meath (2009 Service Indicators). It is intended to carry out a review of the Library Development Plan (2005-2009) coinciding with the National Plan 'Branching Out-Future Directions, 2008-2012' in the near future.

Childcare

At present there are 215 childcare providers located throughout County Meath. The Meath County Childcare Committee supports schemes and community facilities together with education and training.

Education

The provision of schools is the direct responsibility of the Department of Education and Skills. However, the Local Authority plays a key role in the delivery of new schools and 'The Code of Practice on the Provision of Schools and the Planning System' is an important document in this regard.

Healthcare

Healthcare and medical facilities provided in the county are primarily the responsibility of the Health Service Executive - Dublin North East, though a number of healthcare services are also provided by the voluntary and private sectors. There is a range of health services provided by the HSE at Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital, Drogheda. Limited services are also provided at Our Lady's Navan. Navan has been recently selected for the location of the New Regional Hospital for the North East Region. 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.

It is the role of the Planning Authority in healthcare provision to ensure that sufficient lands are reserved in the Development Plan to accommodate the development of adequate healthcare facilities to serve the County.

Fire Service

There are seven fire stations located throughout the County at Navan, Trim, Kells, Oldcastle, Nobber, Dunshaughlin and Ashbourne. A Strategic Plan 2009-2014, Fire & Rescue Service (Meath) has recently been adopted which outlines 39 recommendations.

Open Space and Recreation

Meath has a range of high quality open space, recreational and community facilities provided by the public. Open space forms an important part of the network of green spaces around us, often referred to as 'Green Infrastructure'. The provision of good quality open spaces and recreation facilities are a key part of sustainable communities, and contribute to the quality of life and personal health and well being. Facilities can range from open space in a housing estate to a purpose built sports facility. There is a continued need for additional facilities and improvements to existing resources to meet the needs of existing and future populations. The Local Authority is also supportive of private companies or community groups/clubs in the provision of facilities.



Social Inclusion

Meath Local Authorities have developed an 'Accessibility Implementation Plan 2008-2015', and the objective of the Plan is to ensure that people with disabilities can access the same level of services as all customers, where practical and appropriate. The Meath Care Portal is a website which has been set up by Meath Local Authorities to provide a one stop resource for people with disabilities, for older people and for caregivers. This website provides access to information about relevant organisations, online services, financial and health information.

Cultúr is a group working on issues in relation to migration and integration in Co. Meath and Ireland. Meath County Council is strongly supportive of the work of Cultúr through representation on their board of management, provision of funding in respect of their work programme and facilitating linkages through Meath Social Inclusion Measures Group. The Meath Local Sports Partnership has also adopted a "Strategic Plan" (2007-2012) and "Disability in Sport- Strategic Plan" (2009-2012).

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS

- Are there adequate schools in your area and are they easily accessible to the people that they serve?
- How can we ensure that provision is made to facilitate current and future educational requirements?
- How can we encourage the multi use of existing school and community buildings?
- Are there adequate health and childcare facilities in your area, accessible to the people that they serve?
- How best can community buildings be delivered in this challenging economic climate?
- Is there an adequate quantity and quality of community, play, open space and recreational facilities in your area?
- Are the current standards for public open space provision associated with new developments appropriate?
- Should allotment sites be provided throughout the County?
- Are the needs of different cultural, ethnic, youth, elderly and disabled groups being accommodated in our community?

ENVIRONMENT

The protection of the environment is a key priority at international, national and local level. The County Development Plan must strike a balance in terms of land use and development and the protection of our environment.

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

Meath County Council is legally required to carry out a Strategic Environmental Assessment of the County Development Plan 2013-2019. This process ensures a high level of protection of the environment and contributes to the integration of environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of the plan with a view to promoting sustainable development.

This assessment will commence jointly with the review process of the County Development Plan and the report will be published in conjunction with the Draft Development Plan.

Habitats Directive

The development plan will also be subject to appropriate assessment, as required by the European Habitats Directive. Appropriate assessment is a focused and detailed impact assessment of the implications of the plan, alone and in combination with other plans and projects, on the integrity of Natura 2000 sites in view of the conservation objectives of the sites. Natura 2000 sites consist of Special Protection Areas (SPAs) or Special Areas of Conservation (SACs). SPAs are largely concerned with protecting bird species while SACs relate to habitats and wildlife. Within Meath there are 8 SAC sites and 3 SPA sites. The process of appropriate assessment will be ongoing throughout the preparation of the plan with reports published in conjunction with the draft Plan.

Climate Change

Climate Change is a global issue and is the most significant environmental challenge facing us today. At a national level, the Government have published “The National Climate Change Strategy 2007-2012”, which highlights climate change as an important challenge and policy issues that need addressing.

At a local level, Meath Local Authorities have published a “Climate Change Strategy and Energy Management Action Plan 2011-2012” which outlines that we “Think Globally, Act Locally”. This strategy aims to adapt behaviour to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, increase energy efficiency, and promote sustainable development.

Flooding

Flooding is a natural process that can happen at any time in a wide variety of locations. Climate Change is expected to increase the frequency and severity of flooding. Development can also exacerbate the problems of flooding by accelerating and increasing surface water run off, altering watercourses and removing flood plains.

The EU Floods Directive and the ‘Planning System and Flood Risk Management, Guidelines for Planning Authorities’ (Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government/OPW 2009) are of major importance and Planning Authorities must implement these Guidelines in ensuring that, where relevant, flood risk is a key consideration in forward planning in preparing development plans.

Hydrological studies of a number of watercourses in the county have been undertaken by Meath County Council in recent years, in partnership with the OPW and Fingal County Council, to identify potential flood risks and measures to reduce the risks. These include:

- FEMFRAMS (Fingal East Meath Flood Risk Assessment Management Study) - on going
- River Tolka Flooding Study
- Mornington District Surface Water & Flood Protection Scheme
- Kells Stormwater Drainage Study
- Swan River Flood Risk Assessment



Water Framework Directive

The EU Water Framework Directive came into force in 2003 and applies to all water bodies and requires that we manage our water systems and protect water quality. The aim is to ensure that all natural waters (including rivers, lakes, estuaries, coastal waters and groundwater) achieve “good ecological” status by 2015. The Water Framework Directive will be implemented in Ireland, through River Basin Districts and River Basin Management Plans which have been prepared for each of these districts. The Development Plan is also a means for implementing the objectives of these plans.

Renewable Energy

The county has the potential to develop and generate alternative energy sources such as wind, solar and geothermal. Subject to proper planning considerations, the Council will adopt a positive approach to renewable energy developments.

Seveso Sites

There is one seveso site in Meath- the Grassland Fertilisers Limited site in Slane. This site has a consultation distance of 700 metres. There are 7 other sites located outside Meath but whose consultation distance extends into the county or whose consultation distance overlaps with the consultation distance of adjoining sites which extend into the county.

The Seveso II Directive 96/82/EC is concerned with the prevention of major accidents that involve dangerous substances and the limitation of their consequences for humans and the environment. It applies to establishments where dangerous substances are produced, used, handled or stored.

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS

- What in your view are the main environmental issues facing the County?
- How can the Development Plan address issues such as Climate Change?
- How can the Council manage pressure for development in areas at risk of flooding?
- How can the Development Plan contribute to improving and protecting the water quality of our rivers, lakes and sea?
- What methods should the Local Authority encourage to maximise renewable energy provision, both for developments and individual homes?

HERITAGE AND CONSERVATION

Over the millennia Meath's physical environment has moulded its natural and cultural heritage to give the county its identity.

Natural Heritage – Landscape and Biodiversity

High quality landscapes are directly linked to a successful economy, underpin the tourism industry and can deliver economic, social and environmental benefits. In 2002 Ireland ratified the European Landscape Convention which aims to promote the protection, management and planning of all landscapes. The Meath Landscape Character Assessment details how combinations of geology, landform, soils, vegetation, land use, field patterns and human settlement create character and local distinctiveness.

Biodiversity means the variety of all living things and we depend on it to provide clean air and water, healthy soils, food, building materials, and medicines. Meath County Council has adopted and is implementing its first County Biodiversity Action Plan 2008-2012 which provides a framework for the conservation of biodiversity and natural heritage at a local level.

A living network of high quality green spaces, water and natural heritage features can be termed our 'green infrastructure'. It should be designed and managed as a multifunctional resource capable of delivering a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities. The Development Plan can play a key role in developing a green infrastructure network.

Archaeological and Architectural Heritage

The history and customs of past generations can be traced through the rich legacy of archaeological sites, monuments and complexes imprinted on the Meath landscape. All archaeological monuments which are listed in the Record of Monuments and Places are protected under the National Monuments Acts. Many sites still remain hidden beneath the surface but new advances in technology are aiding their discovery.

County Meath has a wealth of architectural heritage including country houses and demesnes, planned towns, industrial heritage, churches, farmsteads and vernacular buildings. The council has a legal responsibility to include a Record of Protected Structures (RPS) in the Development Plan. There are 1,064 Protected Structures currently registered on the RPS. There are 17 Architectural Conservation Areas designated in the current development plan.

Our built heritage is an important resource that must be passed on to future generations. Sites such as the UNESCO World Heritage Site at Brú na Boinne, Tara, Loughcrew, the Battle of the Boyne and Trim Castle attract hundreds of thousands of cultural tourists each year.



CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS

- How can we increase awareness, understanding and access to the heritage of county Meath?
- How can we enhance heritage assets and local distinctiveness within our towns and villages?
- How can we manage change to maintain the quality, character and amenity value of our landscapes? Should we identify and protect areas of special landscape quality?
- Should we develop a strategy for managing our green infrastructure i.e. network of green spaces and natural heritage?
- How can we enhance natural heritage and biodiversity outside protected sites?
- Do you think we should identify and protect sites of geological interest in the county?
- Are the existing boundaries of Architectural Conservation Areas adequate to protect these areas or should they be revised? How can these areas be managed and enhanced?
- Are there buildings or other structures we should be adding to the Record?
- Are there other policies we could put in place to ensure the survival of our built heritage?
- How can we encourage the re-use of redundant or derelict buildings?
- How can we conserve Meath's industrial heritage?
- How can we promote, understand and manage the Brú na Bóinne UNESCO World Heritage Site?

HAVE YOUR SAY IN THE MEATH COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2013-2019

Send your Submissions/Observations to:
County Development Plan Review
Forward Planning Section,
Meath County Council,
Abbey Road,
Navan,
County Meath.

Or
countydevelopmentplan@meathcoco.ie

DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSIONS 3.30pm on 29th April 2011

Meath County Development Plan 2013-2019



Keeping you involved in the future of Meath

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