

Meath County Council are delighted to engage in this public consultation process in relation to the review of the Meath County Development Plan 2007-2013 and the preparation of the next County Development Plan which will set out an overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of the county over the 6-year period from 2013-2019.

We would be most grateful to receive your views or those of any groups or organisations you represent. 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: <http://countydevelopmentplan.meath.ie/>
- Post: County Development 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

The Council would like to thank you in advance for your participation in this important planning process which will determine how Meath will grow into the future.

PLANNING AND COMMUNITY DEPARTMENT, MEATH COUNTY COUNCIL
MARCH 2011

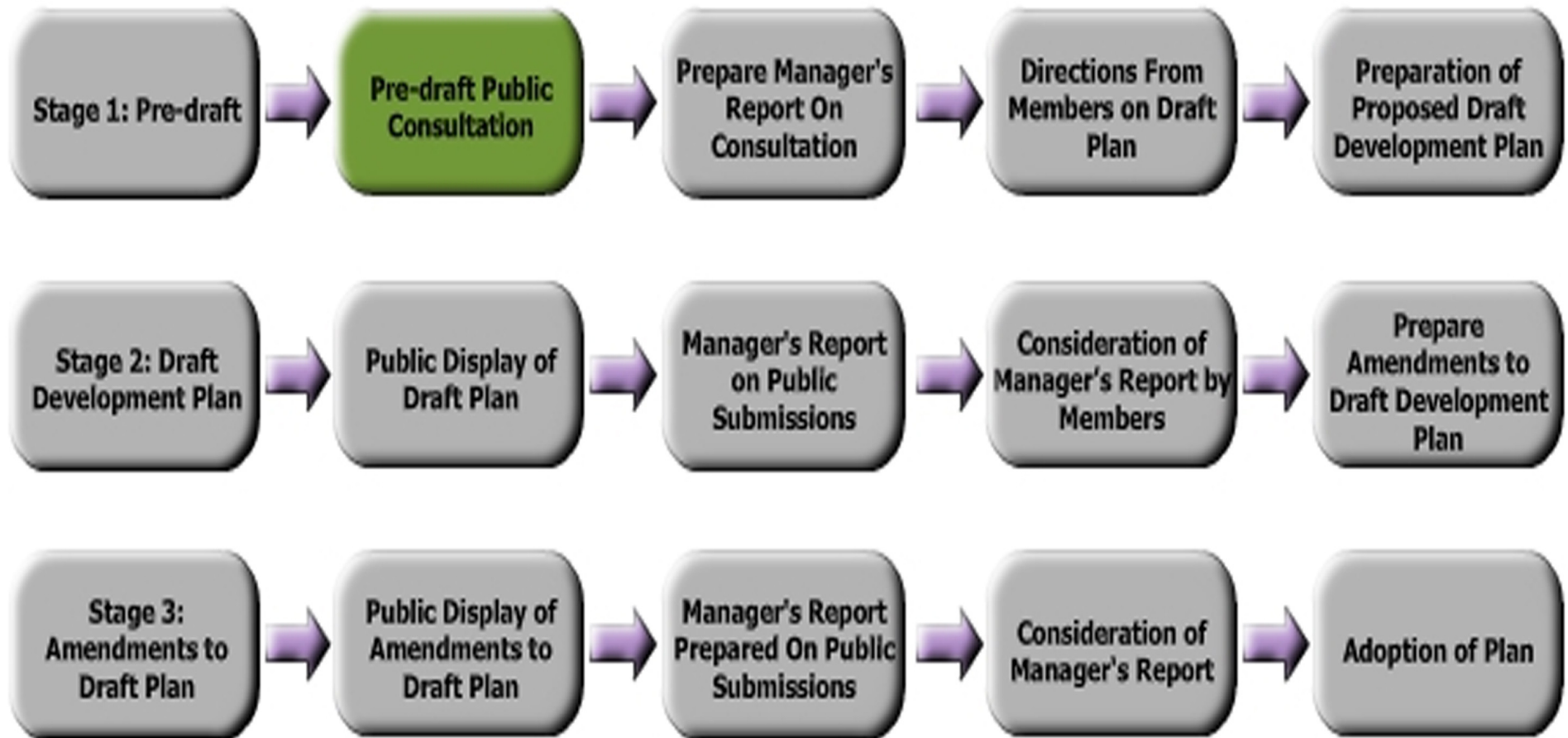
What is a Development Plan?

- 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.

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.

Development Plan Process



Adopted Plan Comes Into Effect 4 Weeks Later

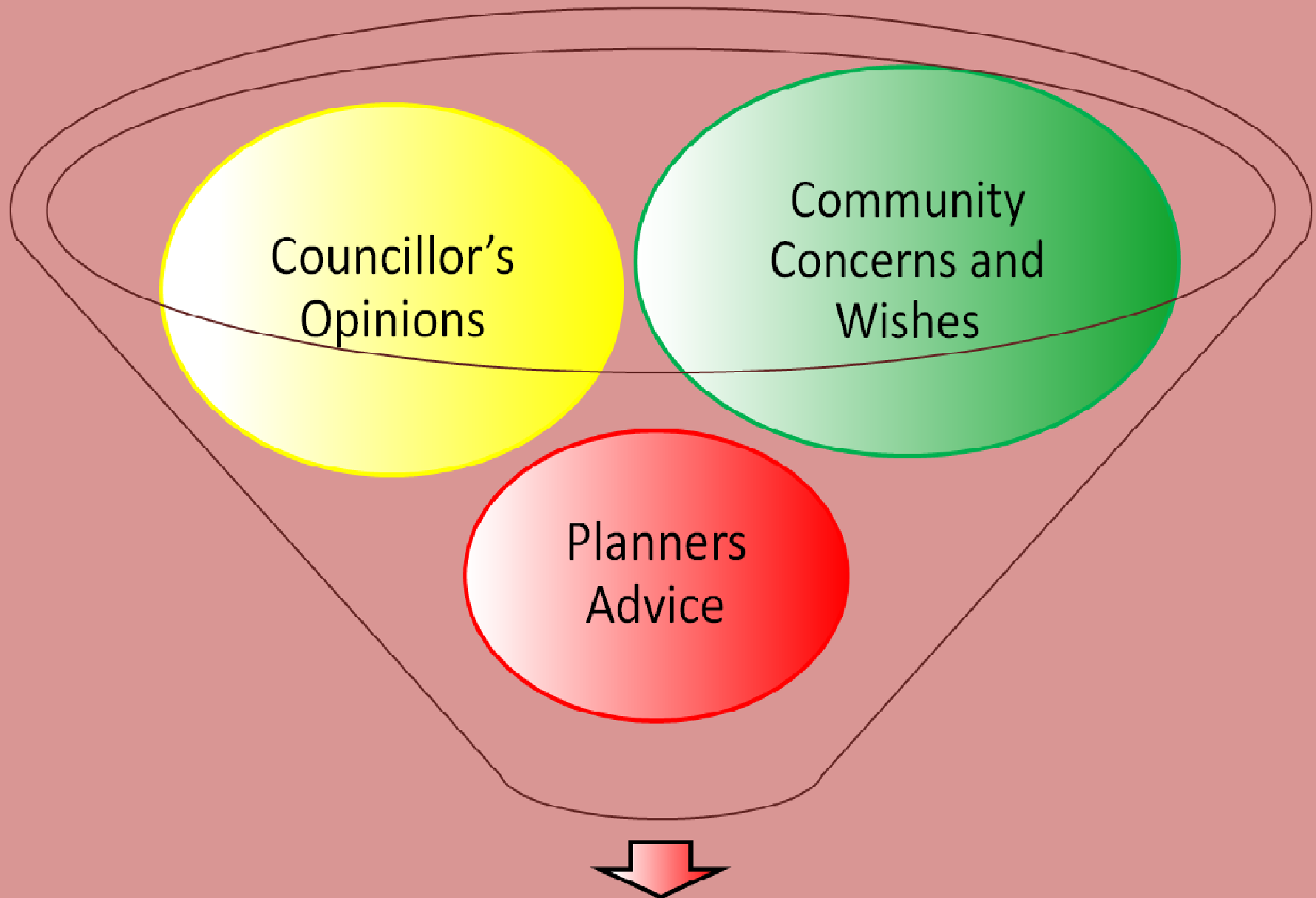
The Issues Paper

The purpose of the 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.

The paper is available for inspection at all Meath County Council libraries, area offices and the Planning and Community Department and at <http://countydevelopmentplan.meath.ie/>



Who is involved in making the Plan?



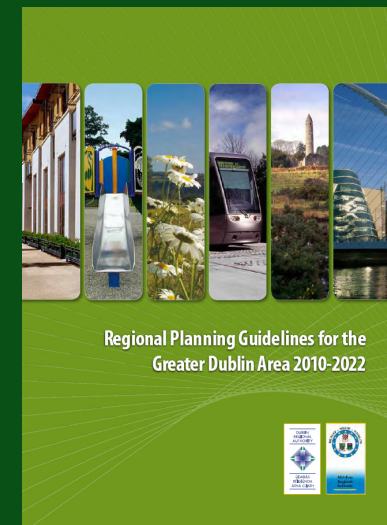
Strategic Planning Context

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 Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area 2010-2016 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, heritage and social development.



Policy Context

National Policy Documents e.g. National Spatial Strategy,
Guidelines from the Department of Environment, Heritage
and Local Government



Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area



County Development Plan



Local Area Plans for Towns, Villages and Development
Areas

Development Plan Mandatory Content

A development plan must by law address a number of mandatory objectives and include a core strategy.

The mandatory objectives relate to issues including zoning, infrastructure, conservation and protection of the environment and compliance with environmental standards, landscape and landscape features, the protection of structures of special interest, preservation of Architectural Conservation Areas, renewal of areas in need of regeneration, provision of Traveller accommodation, amenities and recreational amenities, community services, protection of Gaeltacht heritage, promotion of sustainable settlement and transportation strategies, preservation of certain public rights of way, control of development to reduce the risk or limit the consequences of a major accident and the integration of social, community and cultural requirements with the planning and sustainable development of the area.

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 largely as per the hierarchy set out in the Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area.
- 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.

The core strategy 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 2007-2013 is as follows:

“To plan for and support the sustainable development of Co. 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.”

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%.

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.

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 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 next County Development Plan will contain a revised settlement strategy.



Economic Development and Employment



- County Meath has a strategic location which makes it an ideal place for economic development and investment.
 - Road Infrastructure including the M3, M4 and the presence of the M1 motorway passing through the county, have given Meath access to the markets of the Greater Dublin Area and the rest of the Country.
 - Proximity to Dublin airport and Dublin, Drogheda and Dundalk ports facilitate easy access to international markets and suppliers.
- 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.
- 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, facilitating 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.



Economic Development and Employment Cont.'d

- Port Development

Drogheda Port Company proposes to develop a new deepwater port, logistics centre and business park at Gormanston, Co. Meath. 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.

- Tourism

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.

- Retail Strategy

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. A challenge of the new Development Plan will be to reduce retail leakage; 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.



Urban and Architectural 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.

The quality of the built environment can affect the quality of life and health of residents of an area

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 discouraging 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.

Meath County Council has prepared design guidelines for houses in the countryside. 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 for agricultural buildings.



Infrastructure



The provision of water, wastewater, waste management and energy and telecommunications infrastructure is fundamental in ensuring the continued sustainable development of the county. Unprecedented growth has greatly increased the demand on critical infrastructure.

Water Supply: The total water supply distribution input for County Meath is approximately 49MI/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. The scheme is proposed on a phased basis and Phase 1 of the Kiltrough Augmentation Scheme has been completed

There is limited capacity at a number of plants around the county, therefore water conservation measures are essential.

Wastewater: The largest waste water treatment plants are located at Navan, Trim, Dunshaughlin and Kells . Upgrades and improvements are underway at the Dunshaughlin Sewerage Scheme, Kilcarn Johnstown Sewer Improvement Works Scheme, Ashbourne/ Ratoath/ Kilbride Sewerage Scheme and Oldcastle Sewerage Scheme.

There is limited capacity in most of the wastewater schemes in the county for significant further development, when existing demands together with permitted developments have been connected.

Telecommunications: It is recognised that development and investment in telecommunications infrastructure is of major importance to the county, and the availability, price and quality of same is important and crucial to competitiveness.

Waste Management: County Meath forms part of the North-East Region waste management area for waste policy. There are civic amenity centres at Navan, Trim, Kells and Dunboyne and there are 35 bring banks located throughout the County.



Transportation



A multi-modal transport network is vital to ensure accessibility, improve connectivity and economic competitiveness and success.

The importance of walking and cycling is an essential part of any integrated transport system.

Greener transport and integrating land use and transport are measures identified in various Government policies such as 'Transport 21', 'Smarter Travel' (2009-2020), 'A Platform for Change' and the National Transport Authority's draft 'Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2011-2030'.

Rail & Road Improvements

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 significantly improve the opportunities for enhancement of the bus, cycle and pedestrian networks.

Phase 2A& 2B of the Navan Inner Relief Road have been completed in recent years. Numerous regional road improvement works have also been completed, 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.

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.



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.

The challenge facing the Local Authority is how to encourage the continued development of the rural area without compromising the physical, environmental, natural and heritage resources of the county.

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.

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 Tattersalls Bloodstock Auctioneers are highly prominent enterprises in this area.

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 gaugs 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.

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.

The Local Authority play an important role in ensuring that sufficient lands are reserved to accommodate the development of adequate healthcare and educational facilities.

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.

The provision of good quality open space and recreation facilities to an individuals' quality of life and personal health are important and are a key part of sustainable communities.

Meath Local Authorities have developed an 'Accessibility Implementation Plan 2008-2015' and the objective of this plan is to ensure that people with disabilities can access the same level of services as all customers, where practical and appropriate.

Examples of current social facilities in the County are:

- There are currently 12 branch libraries in Meath. There were 22,589 library memberships in Meath (2009 Service Indicators).
- At present there are 215 childcare providers located throughout County Meath.
- There are seven fire stations located throughout the County at Navan, Trim, Kells, Oldcastle, Nobber, Dunshaughlin and Ashbourne.



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.

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 our behaviour to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions, increase our energy efficiency and promote sustainable development.

Meath County Council is legally required to carry out a Strategic Environmental Assessment of the County Development Plan 2013-2019 and it will also be subject to appropriate assessment as required by the European Habitats Directive.

The EU Water Framework Directive came into force in 2003 and applies to all water bodies. It 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.

In terms of 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.

Heritage and Conservation

Over the millennia Meath's physical environment has moulded its natural and cultural heritage to give the county its identity. High quality landscapes are directly linked to a successful economy, underpin the tourism industry and can deliver economic, social and environmental benefits.

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.

All archaeological monuments which are listed in the Record of Monuments and Places are protected under the National Monuments Acts.

There are 17 Architectural Conservation Areas designated in the current development plan.

There are 1,064 Protected Structures currently registered on the Record of Protected Structures which is part of the Meath County 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.



THE NEXT STEPS

- Submissions are invited from the members of the public and prescribed stakeholders up until 3.30pm Monday 29th April, 2011.
- The Manager will prepare a report on any submissions received during this period and will submit this report to the elected members for their consideration.
- The members may issue directions to the Manager regarding the preparation of the draft Development Plan.
- Preparation of the draft County Development Plan 2013-2019 will then commence.
- The draft development plan will be placed on public display and there will be another opportunity for the public to make submissions during this time.