

Economic Delevelopment

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3.1.1 Introduction

County Meath has an unparalleled and unique competitive advantage within Ireland, due to its:

- Strategic location within the fastest growing region in Ireland;
- Proximity to the Dublin Metropolitan Area and its markets;
- Location within the Dublin – Belfast Economic Corridor;
- Highly skilled labour force;
- High quality built and natural environment, and;
- Lower housing costs.



These advantages should offer distinctive economic commercial investment opportunities. Notwithstanding these apparent advantages, Meath is not performing as well as it could as a location for employment generating activities.

The Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area (RPGs) included an assessment of the economic performance of each of the counties in the GDA. An indicator of a county's ability to sustain and support its population is the jobs to labour force ratio, i.e. the number of jobs available within the county relative to the number of persons available to work based on the results of the 2002 Census of Population. The RPGs clearly shows Meath to be under-performing. Meath's jobs to labour force ratio is identified as 0.49, i.e. the labour force is twice that of all existing jobs within the county. The sustainable level is estimated at 0.70 which is a level generally achieved or exceeded by the Dublin Authorities, as well as by Kildare (at 0.67). Wicklow too is closer to achieving a sustainable ratio at 0.59 (as of 2002).

Sustainable development in Meath requires more jobs in the county, i.e. local job creation for the existing and projected resident population.

The implications and natural beneficial effects of achieving an increase in local job creation relate to:

- Compliance with RPG objectives of striving towards a more sustainable jobs to labour force ratio;
- Improved rate base, with associated improvements and increases in financial capital available to provide necessary social and physical infrastructure for the county's burgeoning population;
- Improved quality of life for the county's residential population, with reduced commute times and distances;
- Reduction in traffic congestion, facilitating the release of our road and transport infrastructure capacity for economic activities/users (as opposed to private car commuters); and
- Improved amenity and environment of various towns and villages in the county, which are traversed by busy road networks serving excessive levels of commuting and associated traffic congestion.

This chapter sets out the economic development and employment strategy for County Meath for the Plan period and beyond. The strategy is based on the policy framework set by the National Spatial Strategy (NSS), the Regional Planning Guidelines (RPGs) and the Meath County Development Board Strategy Le Chéile 'An Integrated Strategy for Meath to 2012'.

3.1.2 Context

The National Spatial Strategy

As outlined in previous sections of the County Development Plan, the policy context in respect to Meath is firstly laid out in the National Spatial Strategy (NSS), and thereafter detailed and elaborated upon in the RPGs.

In preparing a national document, which would set out a strategy that would influence and direct development at a strategic level throughout the country, a hierarchy of settlement centres have been identified. The settlement centre's position within this hierarchy assists in determining the nature and scale of future growth to be accommodated therein in order to achieve balanced regional development. Such growth relates to both residential and economic development. The NSS acknowledged that the increasing number of people commuting long distances to work is unsustainable and having a negative effect on the quality of life of the country's population, in particular the working population. Thus, the underpinning aim of the Strategy is to improve the quality of life of all citizens, bringing jobs closer to where people live, improving our environment and building a strong sustainable economic future for our children and ourselves.

The NSS recognised that trends regarding the structure, pattern and location of economic investment related as much to the skill and resource base of an area, as it did to the financial incentives, which may be offered.

To this end, the NSS identifies a number of international trends emerging that have a significant influence on the location of enterprise, including:

- The tendency towards spatial concentrations of technology;
- The attraction of skilled workers and companies to urban areas;
- The growing importance of services which reinforce the role of large centres of population, and;
- The importance of supporting and strengthening the capability and quality of research and development functions at various regional locations in Ireland to sustain a competitive and innovative enterprise sector.

Further, the NSS identifies future trends in enterprise as likely to include the following:

- The majority of new jobs will be created in the service sector;
- The increasing importance for companies in the service sector of locations at or close to major points of consumer demands;
- Local services, health care, leisure and tourism will become even more significant as the population ages and disposable incomes rise;
- The need to allocate additional investment in research design, innovation and development to remain competitive and viable;
- Areas with a strong population base that can support high quality business infrastructure, technological development and innovation will continue to be major attractors, and;
- A range of high quality residential locations will be necessary to attract skilled labour.

Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area

To achieve the NSS objective of matching jobs to where people live, allied to balanced regional development, the Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area (RPGs) set out a strategy to promote the growth of the designated development centres. It is proposed that these centres would become communities in which there is a balance between residential and employment functions.

In relation to Meath, the RPGs provide a quantitative target for the County, requiring an increase in 'local' jobs of approximately 13,000 (by 2010), increasing the total job number in the county from 31,000 to 44,000. Even at that, Meath will remain below the sustainable jobs to labour force ratio (with a 0.57 target for 2010). This jobs target figure is based on growth of residential development in the county slowing down which is contrary to the population and household projections contained in the Settlement Strategy.

The Regional Planning Guidelines identify four main factors that are necessary for the GDA to be successful in attracting inward investment and indigenous industry:

- A high quality economic infrastructure;
- A large and varied labour market;
- Availability of appropriate education infrastructure, and;
- A high quality built environment.

The RPGs recognise that one of the major features in attracting inward investment is providing a critical mass of labour and skills. To this end the strategy has identified a number of primary dynamic clusters. The designation of the clusters recognises the urban dynamism and relationship between the constituent towns. The longer term goal of the Guidelines is that such centres would build up such dynamism and develop a self-sufficient critical mass of complementary towns.

The RPGs identify two dynamic clusters in Meath, the first being Navan, Trim and Kells and the second comprising Dunboyne / Clonee / Pace Corridor, Ashbourne and Dunshaughlin. The RPGs recommend that Planning Authorities in their preparation of Development Plans include objectives that seek to develop these sets of towns as complete and sustainable communities.

It is therefore be an objective of the Council that over a period of time these adjacent sets of towns will become communities complete with a high level of employment activities, high order shopping and a full range of social activities. The Council's strategies are underpinned by policies and objectives, which establish the conditions in these towns to allow the achievement of self-sufficient towns.

Further, and having regard to the inclusion of the Meath as part of the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor, as well as identifying and optimising opportunities presented by reason of existing and proposed strategic infrastructure or established synergy between settlements, the Planning Authority have expanded upon the potential and possibilities of 'dynamic clusters'. These are elaborated upon later in this Strategy.

Le Chéile

As part of Local Government Reform, each Planning Authority, through the County Development Board (CDB) is required to prepare a 10 year strategy for the county. The purpose of such a strategy is to 'facilitate the articulation of a vision for the development of the county' and to 'provide the focus

for co-operation and co-ordination which in turn will enhance the capacity for maximising the effectiveness of spending programmes'. The true value of this strategy is that it provides a framework by which Planning Authorities, et al, can co-ordinate the delivery of services and infrastructure. Le Chéile is Meath's 10 year Strategy in this regard.

The CDB's mission statement is:

To promote the sustainable development of County Meath through an integrated and socially inclusive approach that recognises the economic, social and cultural potential of the population, and the limits and opportunities provided by the county's environmental and other resources.

In preparing the strategy, audits and analysis of the strengths, weakness, opportunities and threats to the county (SWOT analysis) were carried out in respect of social, economic, community facilities and providers, as well as demands relating to same. This information has been utilised and updated as appropriate (through NIRSA and the Central Statistics Office) in devising and defining a profile of the county vis a vis economic development.

The spatial framework, outlined in 'Le Chéile' is consistent with that put forward in the County Development Plan (2001) and Settlement Strategy contained in this County Development Plan (Refer to Section 2.1.7). The key objectives of the County Development Board Strategy in this regard include:

- Co-ordinated provision of economic and social / cultural infrastructure to enable the identified primary development corridors to become the primary growth areas for the County;
- Enhance the productivity and competitiveness of the productive sectors;
- Promote Meath as an attractive location for inward investment in high valued manufacturing sectors and in internationally traded sectors;
- Sustain and increase total employment in the productive sectors, and;
- Promote diversification of the rural economy.

3.1.3 Strategic Policy Context

Le Chéile identified a number of key priorities to 2012. In the area of economic development, these included:

- Effective & efficient service to meet changing population trends;
- Develop Navan as favoured business location for International Services;
- Stimulate growth in high-tech sectors;
- Existence of Port facilities an essential pillar of the continued survival and growth of local industry;
- Employment of people with disabilities;
- Development of the social economy;
- Respond to changing labour market;
- Expansion of JobClub programme to rural areas and promote services to men aged 35 years and over;
- Appropriate increase in rate base having regard to Heritage Town status (Kells & Trim);
- To create full employment in the County;
- To improve standards of living;
- Seek designation of Navan for tax incentives, and
- To encourage the further expansion of sustainable tourism development in Meath.

The Development Plan, where relevant, and further through the Local Area Plan process, should endorse these objectives and proactively assist in the successful resolution of these priorities.

Economic Sector Stakeholders

There are a multitude of state, semi-state, public, private and voluntary bodies and organisations striving to deal with economic development in the County. The Planning Authority through its various strategies, including its development plans and local area plans, must begin to utilise and direct these agencies to assist in achieving a sustainable level of economic development in the county. This requires the development of a synergy and complementarity in the goals and objectives of each of these agencies, and the Planning Authority's own plans must be clear and unambiguous in their objectives and policies.

Le Chéile identifies 15 agencies included in the database, which delivers services within the economic sector in County Meath. Agencies primarily focussed on economic/ enterprise activity include;

- The IDA and Enterprise Ireland, which support enterprise development in manufacturing, food processing and internationally traded services at national and regional level;
- Udarás na Gaeltachta, the regional development agency which supports economic and cultural activity in the Gaeltacht areas of County Meath, and;
- Meath County Enterprise Board, which provides support for micro-enterprises at county and local level.

Tourism enterprise agencies include:

- East Coast and Midlands Regional Tourism Authorities;
- Meath Tourism, which operates at county level, and;
- The county's Chambers of Commerce (together with the Meath Business & Industry Forum of Navan Chamber of Commerce and the Navan Business Education Training Centre).

Meath County Council is also involved in economic activity. FÁS as a training and employment authority provides services that span the social and economic sectors. LEADER and the ADM funded groups have a role in local economic development.

The agriculture economic sector, which is considered in Chapter 6 'Rural Strategy' is served by:

- Teagasc which provides training and support services;
- The Irish Farmers' Association;
- Macra na Feirme;
- The Irish Organic Growers' Association, and;
- By local country markets.

Members of ICOS, the Irish Cooperative Organisations Society, provide significant agricultural services as well as employment in County Meath. Glanbia has the largest presence in the county with trading bases at Athboy and Wilkinstown. At the national level, An Bord Bia and An Bord Glas carry out promotional and marketing functions for the agri-food sector.

3.1.4 Economic Profile of Meath

Over the last decade the County has exhibited dramatic change in terms of residential growth, agricultural reform and associated changes and patterns in the locations, participation levels and

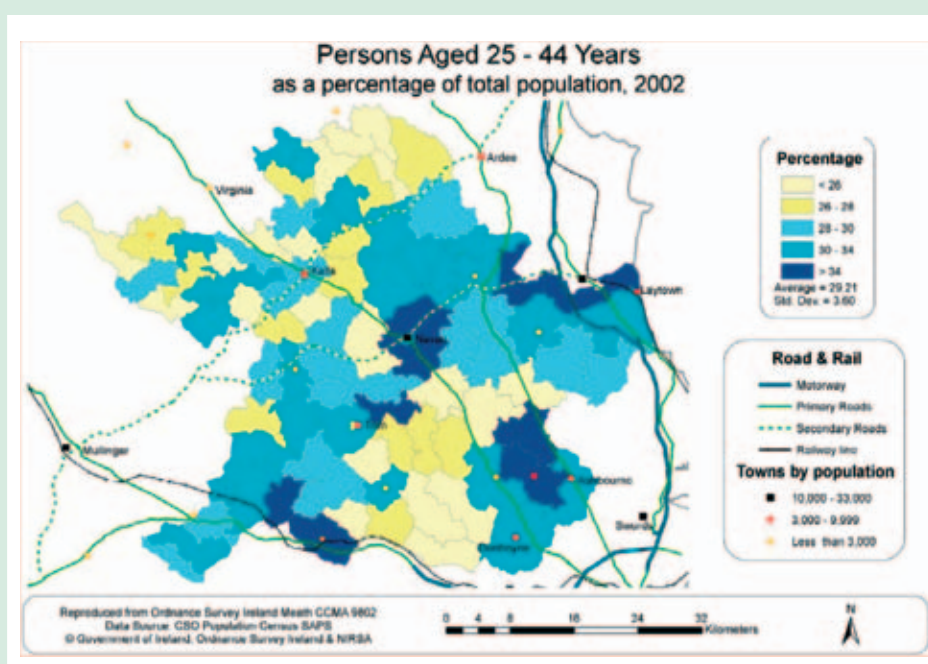
in the individual sectors in which the county's population work. Broadly Meath's profile and key trends include:

- Unforeseen and intense increase in residential population, in particular in the population available to work (25-44 year old cohort);
- Influx of immigrants from Dublin comprising young working professionals locating along commuter belts;
- Increasing employment / participation levels;
- Altering the dominant type of work, being more public administration / office / commercial based as opposed to involvement in local industry or agriculture;
- Local job creation unable to meet or keep pace with residential growth, and;
- Significant and unsustainable commuting patterns.

While Meath's participation rates are generally high, it should also be acknowledged that in isolated rural areas, the highest unemployment levels within the county are being experienced. These include particular parts of the south-west and the north of the County within the Kells Electoral Area, as well as locations north of Slane and within the central districts of the larger urban areas and smaller urban areas such as Slane, Duleek and Laytown.

These imbalances in many instances relate to the fall in activity in the agriculture, forestry and fishing sector, and an increase in other sectors such as commerce, public administration, transport and building & construction. During the period 1996 – 2002, the largest percentage increases occurred in sectors such as commerce (95.4%), public administration (67.5%), transport (60%) and building & construction (50%). The location of these sectors is primarily within Dublin and its immediate environs. While the agriculture, forestry and fishing sector marginally exceeds the national average of employment by sector, it represents a fall of 35% on the corresponding figure from 1996.

Figure 2: Percentage Population within 25-44 Year Old Cohort



The tertiary sector which includes wholesale and retail activities, banking and financial services and real estate and business services increased its share of total employment from 19.4% to 25.9% between 1996 and 2002. The workforce for this sector is very strongly concentrated in the east and south of the County, i.e. along the county's commuter belts. The professional sector which consists of workers in education, health and social professionals, are associated with more urbanised areas, including the commuting districts in the east and south. Those employed in public administration (6% of the total workforce) showed a very clear spatial pattern concentrated on the commuter belt areas in the south-east and north east of the County as well as in the Kells area.

The total service sector accounted for the largest share of the total work force with approximately 66% of the workforce now employed in the fastest growing sector. As can be seen from the above, the distribution of service workers is strongly influenced by accessibility as most services (retailing, business services, personal services and professional services) are provided primarily from nodal centres.

While it is acknowledged that having high participation rates and low levels of unemployment is advantageous to the socio-economic profile, the undeniable disadvantage relating to the County's profile is the level of commuting required. This level of commuting is unsustainable on many fronts, including socially, economically and environmentally



While a person's journey to work time is a factor in determining one's quality of life, it is also a measure of the sustainability of settlements. A further measure of the sustainability of settlements is the job ratio, the total number of jobs divided by labour force. Although the imbalance between jobs and labour force outside of Dublin City is of no surprise, it is the scale of the imbalance in Meath which must be addressed, with Meath's job ratio of 0.49 being the lowest of all the local authority areas in the GDA.

The RPGs recognise that in the short to medium term commuting from the development centres into the metropolitan area will continue and they advocate that as much of this commuting shall be accommodated on public transport corridors. In the longer term the guidelines emphasise the need to reinforce the development of the major Hinterland towns with the aim to increase the jobs to labour force ratio in County Meath to 0.57 by 2010. This would represent an absolute increase of 12,840 in the number of jobs in the County over this period.

To this end, the Planning Authority has taken stock of the county's assets and has already begun a programme of showcasing these, the most recent being its 'Investment Showcase' on 8th March, 2006 in Dublin's CHQ.

3.1.5

County Meath SWOT Analysis

Le Chéile have produced the SWOT Analysis below (Table 9), which highlights the areas and attributes of the county which the Planning Authority must through its economic strategy seek to promote and the weaknesses / threats which must be resolved.

Table 9: Economy of County Meath SWOT Analysis

Meath's Economy			
Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
Extractive industries and mineral deposits.	Environmental effects.	Local/regional construction projects.	Finite resources, International markets.
Excellent agricultural land.	CAP limits on production.	REPS, plus organic production.	Continuity of direct payments.
Large farms with commercial focus.	Concentration of marginal farms in north and west.	Off-farm employment and investment opportunities.	Management of farm waste; Spreading of residue from sewerage treatment plants on farmland.
Opportunities for off-farm work and investments.	Over reliance on traditional industrial sectors.	Navan as county gateway to provide facilities to attract new investments.	Competition from other GDA counties; Delays in provision of key items of infrastructure.
Strong entrepreneurial culture, especially in north west.	Low level of foreign investment.	Settlement strategy in County Development Plan.	Objective 1 status of Drogheda, Dundalk, Cavan and Mullingar.
Tradition of high quality in furniture sector.	Low percentage employed in advanced sectors.	Young, highly skilled labour force.	Automation of labour intensive, traditional industries.
Access to highly skilled labour force.	Low skills content in industry and low level of R & D expenditure and Low Gross Value Added per worker.	Pressures for strategic decentralisation by private sector firms from Dublin.	Absence of appropriate social and physical infrastructure.
Serviced industrial land bank in Navan, etc.; Recent developments in international services.	Absence of flagship industry.	Supply of services and components to larger Dublin based firms.	Competition from serviced locations in other counties
Distinctive tourism attractions of excellent quality.	Tourism over reliant on day visitors.	Spin-offs from growth of Dublin tourism; Increased demand for special interest & activity based tourism, e.g. equestrian, walking, cycling, angling etc.	Unsustainable tourism pressures; Lack of uptake of investment opportunities in tourism development/lack of entrepreneurship.
Third level institutions in neighbouring counties.	No third level centre in county.	Out-reach facility.	Competition for resources.
Agreement on Regional Waste Management Strategy.	Need for more coordination.	Economic advantage for attraction of new investment.	Conflicting positions between different regions, i.e. the lack of consistency between regional boundaries for planning and waste management.

Meath's Economy (continued)			
Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
Attractive place to live – possibility of combining best of rural & urban living.		Use of ICT to assist development in remoter parts; ICT as a vehicle for sharing information about business supports.	Emergence of “old” versus “new” economic areas in county; Inadequate childcare supports preventing more women from participating in workforce.
Proximity to seaports and Dublin airport.	Infrastructure constraints: - quality of roads; - no rail link to Navan; - electricity supply; - ICT lines especially in rural areas, and; - Water supply and sewerage treatment capacity at key locations. Poor quality rural transport.	NDP infrastructure programme.	Delays in provision of key items of infrastructure.
Presence of many support agencies to assist all sectors : Training; Marketing Product – Development; Management & Business Development and Financial assistance.	Lack of knowledge / awareness of these within & outside of the County.	More explicit focus by enterprise support agencies on spatial distribution of projects.	Higher levels of assistance in BMW counties.

Table 10 overleaf assesses relevant criteria which act as attractors to particular investors against the requirements of different uses such as large office, small office and start-up units, light industrial, logistics and heavy industry. The necessity of each of the criteria is assessed against the five employment generating sectors and allocated a figure on a scale where 10 is ‘required’ and 0 is ‘not required’. The matrix assists in determining the most appropriate location for such economic development activities, i.e. whether they should be directed to Large Growth Towns, strategic locations or can be accommodated anywhere in the County.

Table 10: Matrix Assessing Economic Development Uses Against Location Criteria

Location Assessment Criteria	Large Office	Small Office & Start-Ups	Light Industrial	Logistics	Heavy Industrial
Availability of Skilled Labour	10	5	0	0	5
Availability of suitable buildings or sites	10	5	5	10	10
Broadband	10	5	5	5+	5
Motorway Access	5	0	0	10	5
Rail Access	5	0	0	10	5
Port Access	0	0	5	10	5
Airport Access	10	5	0	10	5
Water/Waste Discharge	0	0	5	0	10
Heavy Power	0	0	5	5	10
Gas	0	0	0	0	10
Plot Ratio (space plus building)	0	0	5	10	10
Transport Links: People in/out	10	5	5	0	0
Transport Links: Goods in/out	0	5	5	10	10
Proximity to 3rd Level College	10	10	0	0	5
Attractiveness of site, surroundings & local facilities	10	10	5+	5+	5
Overall Requirement	Large Towns	"Go anywhere"	"Go anywhere"	Strategic Location	Site Specific
Nature of Business	People Intensive	People Intensive	People and Product	Product Intensive with some People Emphasis	Product Intensive

3.1.6 Future Employment, Enterprise & Economic Strategy

The Planning Authority has had regard to the national and regional context, the socio-economic profile and the need to better provide for local job creation subject to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area in devising the Economic Development Strategy.

Goal

To build on and enhance the competitiveness and attractiveness of County Meath in order to make it one of the Country's prime locations for indigenous and foreign economic and employment generating investment.

Strategic Policies

ECON DEVT SP1

To facilitate and encourage the development of designated dynamic clusters (identified in Section 3.1.7 overleaf), such as would allow the creation of a critical mass, in terms of residential population and economic activities, sufficient to sustain the proposed expanded economic sector of such centres.

ECON DEVT SP2

To encourage all forms of economic and employment development throughout the county, in particular within the identified dynamic clusters, at a scale and nature appropriate to the chosen location and subject to normal planning considerations, and the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

ECON DEVT SP 3

To proactively promote County Meath as an investment showcase and encourage appropriate economic and development opportunities within the parameters of the County Meath Development Plan

In seeking to act as a positive force for inward investment, the Planning Authority proposes to remove identified internal county inhibitors to economic development and to assist the development of all economic sectors by the implementation of objectives relating to:

- The provision of adequately zoned and serviced industrial and commercial sites, at high quality locations preferable to industry, within the centres selected for future growth;
- Identification of locations where flexibility within zoning classifications, is feasible and desirable, such as would remove unnecessary technical barriers to the development of particular development types;
- The promotion of a balance between jobs and population within the designated dynamic urban settlement clusters throughout the County;
- The zoning of adequate residentially zoned land with increased land use densities in the catchments of high quality public transport systems and proximate to employment locations, to ensure a critical mass of labour and skills is available to serve employment generating needs;
- The provision of a high quality built and natural environment that is attractive to both investors and to facilitate the projected labour force;
- The provision of the necessary physical infrastructure;
- Encouragement of mixed use settlement forms in which homes and employment are relatively close, and;
- Provision of good educational and research facilities at appropriate locations.

In formulating its policies to promote employment and industry, the Development Plan aims to exploit the County's strategic location and competitive advantages for industrial and commercial activities whilst seeking to safeguard the environment from potential adverse environmental impacts.

POLICIES

ED POL 1	To facilitate economic development and growth of employment in the County through support for the implementation of objectives outlined in the Meath County Development Board Strategy 'Le Chéile' in co-operation with the relevant agencies.
ED POL 2	To promote the clustering of businesses and firms, including those involved in inter-related activities and in high growth, knowledge-intensive and technology-based specialisation.
ED POL 3	To reserve and develop strategic areas within the county that benefit from existing and proposed transport infrastructure and a highly skilled resident population as locations for people and product intensive business.
ED POL 4	To ensure that an adequate quantity and range of land use zoning objectives are available for industry with different requirements.
ED POL 5	The preparation of Local Area Plans and Development Plans for centres located in Dynamic Clusters shall endeavour to match the different mobility needs of businesses with the accessibility of different locations by zoning appropriate lands for people intensive and product intensive uses. In identifying such locations, regard will be had to Table 10 'Matrix Assessing Economic Development Uses Against Location Criteria'.
ED POL 6	To ensure that the appropriate infrastructure including sanitary services, roads, public transport system, energy supply and telecommunications, training infrastructure and housing is provided.
ED POL 7	To encourage the integration of employment locations with other land uses and the transportation network, and in particular, to ensure that employment intensive land uses are located in close proximity to existing and planned strategic routes, where public transport is viable.
ED POL 8	To encourage local or small scale offices in district/neighbourhood centres.
ED POL 9	To ensure that within industrial/business parks that an adequate level of start-up/incubation units are provided.
ED POL 10	To ensure that within small growth towns, as outlined in the County Development Plan settlement hierarchy (see Section 2.1.7), an adequate quantity of zoned and serviced lands for employment generating uses are available to serve the local population.
ED POL 11	To apply a flexible approach to the zoning of lands suitable for entrepreneurial start up business and small scale light industrial and employment generating activities, where it can be demonstrated that the proposed use would have a minimal impact on adjoining uses, primarily residential property.

In addition to the implementation of the policies listed above, it has also become apparent that several factors are seen as an essential prerequisite to attracting and developing new economic and employment development and enhancing the scale and competitiveness of existing firms.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE

ECON DEVT SO 1

To prepare a Thematic Spatial Strategy for industrial development and enterprise which would identify and support the development of areas where significant clusters of power, roads, water and gas could be harnessed to become nationally important areas to accommodate very large scale value added employment while avoiding potential for future environmental and planning conflicts. This process will include the assessment of existing industrial / employment centres outside of established urban areas and consultation with key stakeholders in the area. In the first instance, the east and south east of the County will be examined.

POLICIES

ED POL 12	To maximise the potential of strategic land banks within the county that are rich in infrastructure and skills, in line with policies regarding the creation of Dynamic Clusters.
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ED POL 13	To continue to provide residential choice that attracts a highly skilled and educated resident population/labour force.
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ED POL 14	To develop and strengthen the identity of the County by maximising upon intrinsic assets such as strategic location, high quality environment and built and natural heritage
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ED POL 15	To improve transport and communications connections within the identified dynamic urban clusters and between the county and other counties, in particular the gateways and hubs within the adjoining counties.
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ED POL 16	To ensure that both rural and urban areas play their roles in driving the development of the county in a balanced and sustainable way.
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3.1.7 Dynamic Clusters

While several successful business parks have developed at locations throughout the County including Navan, Trim, Kells, Ashbourne, Dunboyne and Dunshaughlin, the level of economic and employment development has not kept pace with that of residential development with high levels of commuting to the Metropolitan Area.

Recognising that current travel patterns are neither sustainable nor economically beneficial, one of the key aims of the National Spatial Strategy relates to that of bringing jobs closer to where people live. An essential feature of this Plan will therefore be the concentration of new employment development within the existing settlement hierarchy, supported by an established and growing young and highly skilled population.

The largest population increases during the period 1996-2002 were within the hinterlands of Navan, Trim and Kells, an area in the south west located adjacent to the N4, and two distinct areas in the east of the county, Laytown / Bettystown and Dunboyne/Ratoath/Ashbourne. The Planning Authority will therefore focus initially on these areas, endeavouring to provide the framework and an environment which would ultimately foster self-sufficiency within these centres or groupings of centres. To this end, the concept of creating 'dynamic clusters' has been identified as being of most benefit in delivering on the key aim of local job creation. As outlined in Section 3.1.2, the RPGs identified key factors that influence economic / employment-generating investment. These factors inevitably required a 'critical mass', whether that mass be in the form of a labour force itself or a population sufficient to sustain critical ancillary services, such as shops, banks, restaurants, schools, public transport, etc. In most instances, Meath's urban centres are of a scale that would not justify or support the provision or creation of all such services within each individual centre. However, over time, many of these centres form symbiotic relationships with neighbouring centres providing different but complimentary services and uses within each. Thus when taken as a conglomeration, they provide the 'critical mass' necessary to serve and support the economic and employment-generating investment that the county is striving to attract.

Economic Development as with all forms of planned and managed development requires and thrives best when a clear policy and hierarchy of centres for such growth exist. To this end, Meath County Council has identified five dynamic clusters, in to which economic development will be channelled in the first instance. These locations, namely:

- 1) Navan-Trim-Kells;
- 2) Metropolitan Area (Dunboyne / Clonee / Pace Corridor);
- 3) Ashbourne-Dunshaughlin-Ratoath (South-Meath Fringe);
- 4) M1 Corridor (Dublin-Belfast economic corridor), and;
- 5) M4 Corridor (Maynooth, Kilcock, Enfield). (Refer to Map 3.1.)

These locations offer proximity and access to an established and skilled labour force, maximise existing infrastructure (whether road, rail, or sanitary services) and facilitate the most economical provision of enhancements to such infrastructure. Thereafter local and indigenous employment will be located as and where the need exists and to scales appropriate to rural locations.

The Planning Authority must build on this natural synergy and dynamism, which exists between centres, embracing and promoting it. An attractive and valued living and working environment is essential for each 'dynamic cluster' to become the preferred location for established, new and growing businesses. The policies and objectives of this Plan are such as to ensure a broad balance between the provision of a sufficient range of housing, with necessary supporting social and economic functions, in an attractive environment and the provision of land for new employment and economic development.

Table 11: Dynamic Cluster 1 : Navan – Trim – Kells

Dynamic Cluster No. 1:	Navan-Trim & Kells
Objective: To plan and provide a Strategy which would enable Navan-Trim-Kells remain and enhance its position as the county's primary dynamic cluster.	
Action	Mechanism for Delivery
Zone sufficient lands for employment generating activities at suitable locations.	Development Plan process for the individual towns and environs.
Support provision of high quality business / office parks.	Development Plan Design & Technical Guidance / Standards & Implementation through development management / planning applications.
Ensure adequate provision of incubator / start-up units.	Development Plan Design & Technical Guidance/ Standards & Implementation through development management / planning applications.
Facilitate the implementation of the Navan Land Use & Transportation Study (LUTS).	Public Private Partnerships, Local Area Plans, Frameworks Plans & developer led.
Identify, protect and provide a route for Dunboyne-Navan rail line.	Joint Steering / Working Group (Fingal, Meath, Iarnród Éireann, DTO, et al) & Section 48 & 49 Development Contributions.
Promote and provide for the preparation of a Thematic Spatial Strategy for the cluster as a constituent development centre.	In tandem with Development Plan process for the individual towns and environs or as part of the proposed Enterprise & Employment Strategy.
Integration and co-ordination of Planning Authority sections and all service providers.	Develop integrated and complementary strategies - CDB, SPCs, etc.
Promote foreign direct investment within Navan, Trim & Kells.	Work with IDA, in particular in relation to Navan IDA Business Park.
Support and encourage existing businesses.	Work with local Chambers of Commerce, etc. Prepare or facilitate the preparation of coherent and integrated framework plans for existing business parks.
Support adequate childcare provision.	Childcare strategy and implemented on the ground through the development management process.
Develop Navan as a Regional shopping centre and to implement the County Retail Strategy with respect to Navan-Trim-Kells.	Development Plan Process and in particular through the preparation and adoption of LAP1 and LAP2 for Navan, the Backlands LAP in Kells and Trim Town Centre Expansion LAP.
Protect and provide for the Navan-Drogheda Rail Line.	Development Plan and Local Area Plan objectives and development management restrictions.
Enhance social infrastructure provision e.g. housing, health and schools.	Development Plan / Local Area Plan process (phasing of residential development such that social infrastructure provision happens in tandem with support services).
Improve physical and communication linkages between Navan-Trim-Kells.	Work with Public and Private Service providers. Bring influence to bear on national programmes and priorities for capital investment in key strategic infrastructure.
Create a self-sufficient critical mass.	Ensure that adequate lands are zoned for a multiplicity of uses, and that densities are appropriate to the location and services available or likely to be available.
Protect and maximise opportunities presented within Trim and Kells, as Heritage Towns.	Development Plan / Local Area Plan process. Work with Meath Tourist Officer, etc.

Table 12: Dynamic Cluster 2 : Dunboyne / Clonee / Pace Corridor

Dynamic Cluster No. 2:	Dunboyne / Clonee / Pace Corridor & Dublin Metropolitan Area
Objective: To plan and provide a Strategy which would enable Dunboyne / Clonee / Pace Corridor maximise the potential and opportunities associated with its strategic location within the Dublin Metropolitan Area.	
Action	Mechanism for Delivery
Zone sufficient lands for employment generating activities at suitable locations.	Local Area Plan process for Dunboyne / Clonee / Pace Corridor.
Remove obstacles to zoning and development of lands for employment generating activities.	Local Area Plan process for Dunboyne / Clonee / Pace Corridor.
Support provision of high quality business/office parks. Ensure adequate provision of incubator/start-up units.	LAP Design & Technical Guidance/Standards & Implementation through development management/ planning applications.
Provide for improvements in water services.	Prioritisation of dynamic cluster within the 'Water Needs Assessment Programme'; capital funding proposals to DOEHLG, contribution scheme, PPP, etc.
Promote and provide for the preparation of IFPLUTS for Dunboyne/Clonee / Pace Corridor and Thematic Spatial Strategy for the cluster as a constituent development centre.	Integrated Framework Plan for Land Use & Transportation Study, in tandem with Local Area Plan process for the individual towns.
Provide for improvements in the strategic road infrastructure.	Integrated Framework Plan for Land Use & Transportation Study, Prioritisation of dynamic cluster within capital funding proposals to DOEHLG, contribution scheme, etc. PPPs.
Identify, Protect and Provide a route for Dunboyne / Pace to Clonsilla rail line, and ultimately Dunboyne -Navan Rail line.	Joint Steering/Working Group (Fingal, Meath, Iarnród Éireann, DTO, et al) & Section 48 & 49 Development Contributions.
Maximise opportunities afforded by new rail stations at Dunboyne & Pace as locations for economic activities.	Local Area Plan process.
Integration and co-ordination of Planning Authority sections and all service providers.	Develop integrated and complementary strategies. CDB, SPCs, etc.
Promote foreign direct investment within Dunboyne/ Clonee / Pace Corridor.	Work with IDA/Enterprise Board/Private Sector, to identify and establish a business park within this Metropolitan Area, taking advantage of the M3/Pace Interchange.
Support and Encourage Existing businesses.	Work with local chambers of commerce, etc.. Prepare or facilitate the preparation of coherent and integrated framework plans for existing business parks.
Support adequate childcare provision.	Childcare strategy and implemented on the ground through the development management process.
Enhance social infrastructure provision e.g. housing, health and schools.	Local Area Plan process (phasing of residential development such that social infrastructure provision happens in tandem with support services).
Create a self-sufficient critical mass.	Ensure that adequate lands are zoned for a multiplicity of uses, and that densities are appropriate to the location and services available or likely to be available, in particular at existing or proposed public transport nodes.

Table 13: Dynamic Cluster 3 : Ashbourne – Dunshaughlin – Ratoath

Dynamic Cluster No. 3:	Ashbourne – Dunshaughlin - Ratoath
Objective: To plan and provide a Strategy which would enable Ashbourne-Dunshaughlin-Ratoath enhance its position as one of the county's key dynamic clusters.	
Action	Mechanism for Delivery
Zone sufficient lands for employment generating activities at suitable locations.	Local Area Plan process for the individual towns.
Support provision of high quality business / office parks.	Development Plan / LAP Design & Technical Guidance/ Standards & Implementation through development management/planning applications.
Ensure adequate provision of incubator / start-up units.	Development Plan / LAP Design & Technical Guidance / Standards & Implementation through development management / planning applications.
Identify and promote specific and unique roles for Ashbourne, Dunshaughlin and Ratoath, and to assist in marketing, creating critical mass and avoid duplication of necessary infrastructure and services.	Local Area Plan process for the individual towns. Collaboration with Meath County Council Economic Development Officer, Chambers of Commerce, developers of Industrial/Business Parks, etc.
Maximise the advantages of proposed Dunboyne-Clonsilla rail.	Work with public and private transport service providers, etc. Reference to IFPLUTS / Thematic Spatial Strategy.
Promote and provide for the preparation of IFPLUT for Ashbourne, Dunshaughlin and Ratoath and Thematic Spatial Strategy for the cluster as a constituent development centre.	In tandem with Local Area Plan process for the individual towns and environs.
Integration and co-ordination of Planning Authority sections and all service providers.	Develop integrated and complementary strategies. CDB, SPCs, etc.
To carry out an examination of land uses at the existing roundabouts of Rath and Nine-Mile Stone with a view to guiding and managing their future development in partnership with relevant stakeholders including the National Roads Authority. The examination shall be required to be cognisant of the need to safeguard the carrying capacity and current investment in the national roads network.	Local Area Plan process for the individual towns.
Promote foreign direct investment in Ashbourne.	Work with IDA, etc.
Support and encourage existing businesses / Industrial & Business Park, in particular in Ashbourne and Dunshaughlin.	Work with local Chambers of Commerce, etc. Prepare or facilitate the preparation of coherent and integrated framework plans for existing business parks.
Support and provide for enhancement and diversification of existing equine and related industry in Ratoath.	Work with landowners / developers of Fairyhouse and Tatterstalls, etc. and local chambers of commerce, tourist officer and organisations, equine organisation / promoters, etc.
Support adequate childcare provision.	Childcare strategy and implemented on the ground through the development management process.
Develop Ashbourne as a sub-regional shopping centre and to implement the County Retail Strategy with respect to this cluster.	Local Area Plan Process.
To explore employment opportunities in Dunshaughlin by reason of improvements to its transport infrastructure e.g. M3 and possible new rail line as part of the Dunboyne – Navan spur.	RPG Review, Iarnrod Eireann and LAP process.

Enhance social infrastructure provision e.g. housing, health and schools.	Local Area Plan process (phasing of residential development such that social infrastructure provision happens in tandem with support services).
Improve physical and communication linkages between Ashbourne-Dunshaughlin-Ratoath.	Work with public and private service providers Influence and work with central government to prioritise projects which promote our primary growth towns and dynamic clusters.
Create a self-sufficient critical mass ensuring adequate lands are zoned for a multiplicity of uses, and that densities are appropriate to each location.	Local Area Plan Process.

Table 14: Dynamic Cluster 4 : Dublin – Belfast Economic Corridor

Dynamic Cluster No. 4:	Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor/M1 Corridor
Objective: To plan and provide a Strategy which would enable East Meath maximise the potential and opportunities associated with its strategic location within the Dublin Belfast Economic Corridor Area.	
Action	Mechanism for Delivery
Zone sufficient lands for employment generating activities at suitable locations.	Local Area Plan process for Drogheda, East Meath North and South; Delivery of lands at Gormonston for employment generating activities as part of future LAP.
Provide for and encourage the release of lands zoned for employment generating activities, in particular in Gormonston.	Development management process. Work with landowners / developers, Drogheda Port Authority and DoEHLG.
Support provision of high quality business / office parks.	Local Area Plan Design & Technical Guidance / Standards & Implementation through development management / planning applications.
Ensure adequate provision of incubator / start-up units.	Local Area Plan Design & Technical Guidance / Standards & Implementation through development management / planning applications.
Provide for improvements in water services.	Prioritisation of dynamic cluster within the 'Water Needs Assessment Programme', capital funding proposals to DoEHLG, contribution scheme, PPPs, etc.; Explore the possible provision of a WwTP at Gormonston.
Promote and provide for the preparation of IFPLUTS for the East Meath and Drogheda areas and a Thematic Spatial Strategy for the cluster as a constituent development centre.	Integrated Land Use & Transportation Study, in tandem with Local Area Plan process for the individual towns.
Provide for improvements in the strategic road infrastructure, e.g. M1-N1 link road.	Integrated Framework Plan for Land Use & Transportation Study, Prioritisation of dynamic cluster within capital funding proposals to DoEHLG, contribution scheme, PPPs, etc.
Maximise opportunities associated with the existence of a freight and passenger rail line to Dublin and freight line to Navan. (Identify and protect possible future rail stations, park and ride facilities, etc.)	Local Area Plan process. Integrated Land Use & Transportation Study. Work with Iarnród Éireann, DTO, et al & Section 48 & 49 Development Contributions.
Integration and co-ordination of Planning Authority sections and all service providers.	Develop integrated and complementary strategies. CDB, SPCs, etc.
Promote foreign direct investment in Drogheda and Gormonston in particular.	Work with IDA / Enterprise Board / Private Sector, to identify and establish a business park within the adjacent Metropolitan Area, taking advantage of the M1 Motorway.

Support and encourage existing businesses.	Work with local Chambers of Commerce, developers, etc. Prepare or facilitate the preparation of coherent and integrated framework plans for existing business parks.
Support adequate childcare provision.	Childcare strategy and implemented on the ground through the development management process.
Enhance social infrastructure provision e.g. housing, health and schools.	Local Area Plan process (phasing of residential development such that social infrastructure provision happens in tandem with support services).
Identify and protect the county's character and advantages associated with same (greenbelt strategy or equivalent).	Landscape Character Assessment, CDP and LAP process. Integration and co-ordination with adjoining authorities
Create a self-sufficient critical mass i.e. Ensure that adequate lands are zoned for a multiplicity of uses, and that densities are appropriate to the location and services available or likely to be available, in particular at existing or proposed public transport nodes.	Local Area Plan process.

Table 15: Dynamic Cluster 5 : M4 Corridor

Dynamic Cluster No. 5:	M4 Corridor
Objective: To plan and provide a Strategy which would enable south-west Meath maximise the potential and opportunities associated with its strategic location within the M4 Corridor.	
Action	Mechanism for Delivery
Zone sufficient lands for employment generating activities at suitable locations.	Local Area Plan process for Maynooth, Kilcock, Enfield & Kinnegad.
To provide for hi-tech / bio-tech industries in a campus style development linked to NUI Maynooth on lands within Carton Demesne. Maximise opportunities associated with our location comprising and adjacent to a highly skilled and educated labour force and potential jobs pool by reason of our proximity to Maynooth College and hi-tech industries (e.g. Intel).	Facilitate preparation and adoption of Masterplan / Framework Plan for lands within Carton Demesne. The preparation of the Master-plan shall have regard to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area, the preservation of the character of Carton Demesne and the provision of the necessary physical infrastructure. Work with Landowners (in Carton / Moygaddy area), local hi-tech employers / businesses and educators (R&D).
Provide for and encourage the release of lands zoned for employment generating activities.	Development management process. Work with landowners / developers, investors, etc.
Ensure adequate provision of incubator / start-up units.	Local Area Plan Design & Technical Guidance / Standards & Implementation through development management / planning applications.
Provide for improvements in water services.	Local Area Plan Design & Technical Guidance/Standards & Implementation through development management/ planning applications.
Provide for improvements in sanitary services.	Integrated Framework Plan for Land Use & Transportation Study, in tandem with Local Area Plan process for the individual towns or cluster.
Provide for improvements in strategic road infrastructure.	Integrated Framework Plan for Land Use & Transportation Study, in tandem with Local Area Plan process for the individual towns.

Maximise opportunities associated with the existence of a rail line to Dublin (Maynooth-line).	Work with Landowners (in Carton/Moygaddy area), local hi-tech employers/businesses and educators (R&D).
Integration and co-ordination of Planning Authority sections and all service providers.	Develop integrated and complementary strategies. CDB, SPCs, etc.
Support and encourage existing businesses.	Work with local Chambers of Commerce, etc. Prepare or facilitate the preparation of coherent and integrated framework plans for existing business parks.
Support adequate childcare provision.	Childcare strategy and implemented on the ground through the development management process.
Enhance social infrastructure provision e.g. housing, health and schools.	Local Area Plan process (phasing of residential development such that social infrastructure provision happens in tandem with support services).
Identify and protect the county's character and advantages associated with same (greenbelt strategy or equivalent).	Landscape Character Assessment, CDP and LAP process. Integration and co-ordination with adjoining authorities.
Create a self-sufficient critical mass i.e. ensure that adequate lands are zoned for a multiplicity of uses, and that densities are appropriate to the location and services available or likely to be available, in particular at existing or proposed public transport nodes.	Local Area Plan process.

3.1.8 Development at Motorway Interchanges

Much of the recent investment in major road infrastructure in Co. Meath has resulted in the creation of Motorway interchanges (on the M1 and M4 Motorways) with future interchanges proposed as part of the M3 Motorway. Motorway interchanges occur where the local road network feeds into the Motorway network. As such, a number of highly strategic locations have been created and will continue to be created with a resulting pressure from developments that require good access to the National Route network because of the need to transport significant quantities of goods.

Left unregulated development at Motorway Interchanges can have an adverse impact on the carrying capacity of the Motorway itself. Such development can also result in adverse impacts on the costs associated with the provision of other infrastructure including sanitary services and also on the environment and rural landscape. In light of this, the Plan provides for different categories of employment use and include land use zoning objectives that reflect the desirability of such locations. Notwithstanding this, development at Motorway Interchanges will only be located on urban-related interchanges in the interests of protecting the rural landscape. The policy to locate development at Motorway Interchanges adjoining existing urban settlements is consistent with the Council's policy of providing economic and employment development within the designated dynamic urban clusters.



POLICIES

ED POL 17	To identify land at key strategic locations adjoining urban-related Motorway Interchanges only, that is particularly suitable for development that may be required by specific employment and economic sectors.
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ED POL 18	To facilitate the provision of Motorway Service Stations at appropriate Interchange locations in the County subject to normal planning considerations and the undertakings of the National Roads Authority Policy Statement on the Provision of Service Areas and Rest Areas on Motorways and High Quality Dual Carriageways, with the exception of the Blundelstown Interchange having regard to the exceptional value and sensitivity of the landscape surrounding the Hill of Tara.
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OBJECTIVE

ED OBJ 1	To carry out an examination of land uses at existing and proposed Motorway Interchanges throughout the County with a view to guiding and managing their future development in partnership with relevant stakeholders including the relevant adjacent Planning Authorities and National Roads Authority. The examination shall be required to be cognisant of the need to safeguard the carrying capacity and current investment in the national roads network.
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In selecting possible Motorway Interchanges that have the capacity to accommodate appropriate levels of development, consideration will be given to;

- Proximity of the Interchange to existing development growth centres and the primacy of the development growth centre. It is not the intention of the Planning Authority to examine the development potential of Motorway Interchanges removed from development centres e.g. Blundelstown Interchange on the proposed M3. It is considered that such a pepper potting approach would be prejudicial to the proper planning and sustainable development of the County and adversely impact upon the viability, vitality and attractiveness of such centres;
- Economic Development Strategy;
- Proper planning and sustainable development of the area;
- Recommendations of the National Roads Authority;
- Cumulative impact on and maintenance of the carrying capacity and safety of strategic national routes;
- Additional road infrastructure requirements generated;
- Environmental mitigation issues arising from S.I. No. 140 of Environmental Noise Regulations 2006, and;
- Potential costs associated and funding arrangements, which shall be borne by developers.

In this regard, the following Interchanges will be examined:

- | | |
|----------------|--|
| 1. M1 Motorway | Gormanston / Stamullen |
| | Drogheda (Donore & Duleek Rd.) |
| 2. M3 Motorway | Pace Interchange (Dunboyne) & Navan (Athboy Rd. & Kilcarn) |
| 3. M4 Motorway | Enfield, Kilcock, Kinnegad |

3.1.9

Rural Enterprise

The overriding economic development objective seeks to facilitate the provision of adequate land for employment uses, including sites at suitable locations for industrial, enterprise, retail and other small business uses having regard to spatial planning, infrastructural, environmental and transportation requirements and compatibility with adjoining land uses. In addition, policies are included that seek to support and protect the existing economic base and seek to diversify the economy through both inward investments at key growth areas and promotion of agriculture, forestry and tourism-related industries in the rural areas.



With regard to industrial development, such proposals should normally be located within appropriately zoned and serviced industrial or employment generating use lands. It is accepted that there are certain limited categories of enterprise that may have specific locational requirements that can more readily be accommodated outside of industrially zoned lands. Where no other suitable alternative sites for the location of such enterprise use are available in designated areas, the Council will consider employment generating uses in the countryside that primarily serve the adjoining rural community, are sympathetic to the surrounding area and which do not degrade amenity. These small-scale enterprises will generally be family owned and operated businesses and will need to satisfy traffic, public health and amenity and environmental requirements.

Furthermore, there are a limited number of existing industrial estate type developments in the County outside of designated zoned industrial lands. These include Bracetown Business Park, Kells Business Park at Lloyd and Liscarton Industrial Estate, Navan. These industrial locations have been established for a considerable period of time and offer employment opportunities for their rural catchments. It is the intention of the Planning Authority to subsume those locations immediately adjoining Development or Local Area Plan boundaries where possible through the relevant Development Plan or Local Area Plan process. For other locations removed from Development or Local Area Plan boundaries, proposed expansions will be considered on their merits having regard to the other policies contained in this Development Plan and the proposed planning and sustainable development of the area.

POLICIES**ED POL 19**

To normally permit development proposals for the expansion of existing industrial or business enterprises in the countryside where the resultant development is of a size and scale which remains appropriate and which does not negatively impact on the character and amenity of the surrounding area; and the proposal demonstrates that it has taken into account traffic, public health, environmental and amenity considerations and is in accordance with the policies, requirements and guidance contained in this plan.

In all instances, it should be demonstrated that the proposal would not generate traffic of a type and amount inappropriate for the character of the access roads or would require improvements which would affect the character of these roads.

ED POL 20

To permit development proposals for industrial or business enterprises in the countryside only where, the proposed use has locational requirements that can only be accommodated in a rural location and this has been demonstrated to the satisfaction of the Planning Authority, the resultant development is of a size and scale which remains appropriate and which does not negatively impact on the character and amenity of the surrounding area; and the proposal demonstrates that it has taken into account traffic, public health, environmental and amenity considerations and is in accordance with the policies, requirements and guidance contained in this plan.

In all instances, it should be demonstrated that the proposal would not generate traffic of a type and amount inappropriate for the character of the access roads or would require improvements which would affect the character of these roads.

3.2 RETAIL



3.2.1 Introduction

The retail sector provides an important social and economic function within the county in terms of the provision of goods and services to customers, demand for potential local suppliers, local employment and commercial rates generated for the Local Authority. Notwithstanding these obvious benefits, 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, excessive traffic and car-parking generation.

3.2.2 Context

3.2.2.1 Retail Planning Guidelines for Planning Authorities

To assist Planning Authorities in assessing and considering retail development the DoEHLG issued 'Retail Planning Guidelines for Planning Authorities' in 2000. The Retail Planning Guidelines, which came into effect on 1st January 2001, were published as a response to the changing retail environment with the aim of producing an optimal spread of retail development accessible to the widest possible population. Further to changes in the sector and to address over restrictive guidance the amended Retail Planning Guidelines (January 2005) removed the floorspace cap on retail warehouses within the functional areas of the four Dublin Local Authorities and in the other National Spatial Strategy Gateways.

3.2.2.2 Retail Planning Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2001–2011 (GDA Strategy)

The GDA Strategy was published in November 2001 and is designed to ensure that there is a sufficiency of retail floorspace to accord with population and expenditure growth within the Greater Dublin Area and that, consistent with the RPGs, it is located in an 'efficient, equitable and sustainable manner'.

In essence, the GDA Strategy provided the baseline and the strategic principles to be taken through at the county level stage into detailed retail strategies. In preparing the retail strategy for County Meath the following policy influences set down in the GDA Strategy are important:

- The protection of Dublin City Centre;
- Strengthening the role of other centres, particularly 'development centres' in the Hinterland Area and selected nodes in the Metropolitan Area;
- The distribution of new retail floorspace to broadly reflect the distribution of population growth, where market conditions allow;
- The need to reduce the demand for travel and the consequential support for centres well served by local transport services across their catchment areas, and;
- The desire to facilitate a competitive retail industry and to encourage retail innovation

3.2.2.3 Meath County Retail Strategy 2003

As part of the Greater Dublin Area (GDA), the County Council is required to prepare a detailed retail strategy. In response to this, Meath County Council commissioned DTZ Peda Consulting in March 2002 to prepare a Retail Strategy for the County. 'The County Meath Retail Strategy' (CMRS) was adopted as a variation to the previous County Development Plan 2001 and the Navan, Kells and Trim Development Plans in October 2003. The Meath County Retail Strategy has had regard to the GDA Strategy.

The retail policies and proposals that emerged from the County Meath Retail Strategy are required to be incorporated into the statutory Development Plans. The Retail Planning Guidelines state that the matters to be included in all future Development Plans are:

- Confirmation of the retail hierarchy, the role of the centres and the size of the main town centres;
- Definition in the Development Plan of the boundaries of the core shopping area of town centres;
- A broad assessment of the requirement for additional retail floorspace;
- Strategic guidance on the location and scale of retail development;
- Preparation of policies and action initiatives to encourage the improvement of town centres, and;
- Identification of criteria for the assessment of retail developments.

Since the adoption of the MCRS in 2003, there has been a limited amount of large scale retail development within the county with the exception of the extension to Navan Shopping Centre and the Ashbourne Town Centre development. The adopted Retail Hierarchy shown in Table 16 below was a modification to the GDA hierarchy reflecting the previous County Development Plan's Urban Settlement Structure. The changes included the introduction of two tiers within Level 4 centres differentiating between Small Towns and Villages and also identifying the Kilcock and Drogheda environs given their roles within the County.

With the publication of the 'Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area' in July 2004 and referring back to Chapter 2 'Settlement Strategy', it is apparent that whilst on the whole there is an affinity between the county Settlement Hierarchy and the retail hierarchy, there are a number of centres that no longer sit comfortably within their designated Levels, most notably Dunboyne and Enfield.

Given that the aims and strategic policy framework of the adopted MCRS remain relevant and applicable it is considered more appropriate that any adjustments to the Retail Hierarchy should

be made following a detailed assessment of the retail sector as part of Local Area Plan process for individual centres or groupings of centres.

County Retail Hierarchy

Within Meath, the adopted Retail Strategy outlines and promotes the county's hierarchy, as outlined in Table 16.

Table 16 : Meath County Retail Hierarchy

Meath County Retail Hierarchy		
	METROPOLITAN AREA	HINTERLAND AREA
LEVEL 2	Major Town Centre	County Town Centres
		Navan
LEVEL 3	Town and / or District Centres	Sub-County Town Centre
	Dunboyne	Ashbourne, Dunshaughlin, Kells and Trim (noting Drogheda and Kilcock Environs)*
LEVEL 4	Neighbourhood Centres / Small Towns	Local Centres – Small Towns and Villages
	Clonee	<p><i>Tier 1 Small Town Centres:</i> Athboy, Bettystown, Duleek, Enfield, Oldcastle and Ratoath.</p> <p><i>Tier 2 Village Centres</i> Ballivor, Laytown, Longwood, Nobber, Slane, Stamullen & Summerhill.</p>
LEVEL 5	Corner Shops	Smaller Village Centres / Crossroads
		Smaller villages / crossroads – rural shops (post offices, creameries, public houses, petrol filling stations etc.)
<p><i>*Drogheda is a Level 1 Tier 3 centre in the national retail hierarchy and Kilcock is a Level 3 centre in the GDA hierarchy. These designations are specific to the town centres and their roles but their environs will also be areas for retail development. Both are noted within the County Retail Hierarchy as parts of their environs are within the County's boundaries.</i></p>		

The purpose of the Retail Hierarchy is to indicate the role and importance of the various development centres of the county in order to enable the Council to protect each centre's overall vitality and viability whilst allowing each centre to perform its overall function within the county's settlement hierarchy. Identifying key centres which can accommodate major retail floorspace assists the market by bringing certainty and thus improving the county's competitiveness.

The hierarchy provides the means to strengthen each centres role and function, and ensures a good geographical distribution of key centres in the county.

Core Retail Areas and the Sequential Approach

The Core Retail Area is normally defined as the area including and immediate to the 'prime pitch'. This is the area that achieves the highest rentals, best yields, is highest in demand from retailer / operators / developers and investors, is overwhelmingly retail floorspace and has the highest footfall of shoppers. In accordance with the Retail Planning Guidelines, Core Retail Areas have been identified for the main centres as this is where large new retail development will be located

/ promoted. However, for developers / investors or operators, it is also associated with higher acquisition and development costs. Whilst pedestrian footfalls tend to be greater, car access and the provision of car-parking often presents difficulties. For this reason, central sites are not always the first favoured by developers.

To address such conflicts and in order to maintain the town centres primacy in retailing, the RPGs established the 'Sequential Approach' to the determination of retail applications. This essentially recognises the importance of sustaining the retail importance, vitality and viability of town centres. The emphasis in the RPGs, and taken forward from the GDA Strategy, is on town centres, their redevelopment and expansion. Proposals for major retail schemes are required to take cognisance of this as follows;

- In the first instance, the priority should be in locating new retail development within town centres. A site's inability to accommodate a pro-forma type development shall not be seen as lack of availability of a town centre site.
- If town centre locations are not readily available within a reasonable and realistic timescale then edge of centre sites should be looked to. In the RPGs, these are defined as sites that are within 300 – 400 metres of the Core Retail Area.
- Only after options for town centre and edge of centre are exhausted should out of centre locations and sites be considered.

It follows, that in order for the Council to adhere to the Sequential Approach, then the starting point is the definition of the Core Retail Area of the main centres. The main centres are taken to be those that are at the highest levels in the GDA retail hierarchy, namely Level 2 and 3 centres.

The County's Core Retail Areas are:

Navan - consists of the Navan Shopping Centre and Kennedy Road, Trimgate Street, Market Square, the south-western end of Watergate Street and the northern end of Ludlow Street;

Ashbourne – includes the majority of lands zoned to accommodate town centre uses on the east and west side of Frederick Street stretching from the Ashbourne Shopping Centre southwards and incorporating the New Ashbourne Town Centre;

Trim – includes the area reserved for town centre uses surrounding Market Street, Emmet Street and Castle Street (north and south of the Boyne). It also includes the area indicated for town centre expansion west of the existing town centre;

Kells – includes the area zoned for town centre uses surrounding Castle Street, Market Street, John Street, Cross Street, New Market Street, Church Street and Farrell Street. The Kells Shopping Centre located on the north west of Kells town centre on the south side of the Cavan Road is also identified as part of the core retail area. The core area also includes the area indicated for town centre expansion to the west of Farrell Street and Bective Street.



Dunshaughlin – includes the area zoned for town centre and town centre expansion uses from the Arch Bar on the Navan Road, to include all of Main Street inclusive of backlands to the west and east as far as the library on the Dublin Road.

POLICY

ED POL 21

It is the policy of the Planning Authority to define the Core Retail Area of the County's main centres and to adhere to the provisions of the Sequential Approach to retailing and the application of retail thresholds to proposed development in line with the requirements of the Retail Planning Guidelines.

Small Town Centres - As a general rule, Small Town Centres in the County Retail Hierarchy (namely Tier 1 Level 4 centres) are not centres where new large scale retail development is envisaged within the County. Review of the scope and potential of all the Tier 1 Level 4 centres indicates that needs and potential will, on the whole, be able to be met within the heart of each of these centres – Athboy, Bettystown, Duleek, Dunboyne, Dunshaughlin, Oldcastle and Ratoath. This must to be balanced against the proposed growth of these centres over the life of the Development Plan. The future growth and needs of the retail sector, particularly in respect of convenience floorspace, will be addressed and planned for within the Local Area Plan process.

Improving Town Centres

While the Planning Authority aims to reinforce the role of the town centres and succeed in sustaining and enhancing their performance through the adoption of the 'Sequential Approach', creating sustainable, vibrant and commercially viable centres will also require a pro-active approach from the Planning Authority. Notwithstanding market interest in expanding the town centre retail sector, the existence of factors including:

- land assembly issues;
- parking provision;
- poor traffic circulation and congestion, and;
- higher costs associated with land acquisition, design and development etc.

have hindered development in this sector over the recent years. Ensuring quality in the design of retail developments and the public realm will therefore be a priority of the Planning Authority in view of the attraction and profile which good and innovative design brings to a town or village.



To counteract such perceived or real disadvantages, the Planning Authority must ensure that the town centre is an attractive place to locate (for investors) and to shop (for the public) by:

- Identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the town centre through detailed analysis;
- The definition of town centre boundaries by reference to changes in the density of retail frontages;
- Identifying opportunities for improvement and development and re-development opportunities within and adjacent to the town centre;

- Using compulsory powers in the acquisition of development sites, and;
- Preparing a town centre strategy addressing issues such as car parking, traffic circulation, pedestrian safety and design guidance.

POLICIES

ED POL 22	It is the policy of the Planning Authority to encourage and facilitate the enhancement and environmental improvement of the County's main town and village centres and through the Local Area Plan process identify, where appropriate, town centres that require the preparation of town centre strategies.
ED POL 23	To promote the optimal development and future use of potential sites in town and village centres, especially redevelopment of brownfield sites or development comprising infill or backland development in an integrated and planned manner through the Local Area Plan process.

Strategic Guidance on the Location and Scale of Retail Development

The 'Meath County Retail Strategy', provides a strategic policy framework for the spatial distribution of new retail development within the County. The emphasis is on strategic guidance on the location and scale of major retail development. The Strategy does not seek to inhibit small scale retail development in centres around the County, particularly in smaller centres. It should be taken to be implicit in the aims of the Strategy that such developments should be encouraged and facilitated to enhance the sustainability, vitality and viability of smaller centres, including smaller centres in the Retail Hierarchy. The hierarchy sets the framework for the spatial distribution of the quantum of convenience and comparison floorspace. The following provides guidance on how the Retail Strategy defines the distribution of strategic and non-strategic retail floorspace within the Retail Hierarchy. This guidance is also provided in the GDA Strategy:

- Level 1 - Major convenience and comparison;
- Level 2 - Major convenience and comparison;
- Level 3 - Predominantly additional convenience but not excluding comparison, and
- Level 4 - Convenience and tourism related comparison.

Additionally, the Strategy recognises the need to ensure that the local needs, primarily convenience shopping and local services, are met in an equitable, efficient and sustainable way in major existing or new residential areas, in and around, main settlements through the designation of locations for District or Neighbourhood Centres in Development Plans / LAPs.

GOAL

To maximise the potential and opportunities of the retail sector, while protecting the environment of existing and established town centres and retailing the hierarchy in the county.

POLICIES

ED POL 24	To sustain and improve the retail profile and competitiveness of County Meath within the retail economy of the Greater Dublin Area and beyond.
ED POL 25	To address leakage of retail expenditure from the County by providing the means to strengthen the range and quality of the retail offer.
ED POL 26	To ensure an equitable, efficient and sustainable spatial distribution of main centres across the county.
ED POL 27	To confirm a retail hierarchy which assists in defining the County's settlement structure and objectives and provides clear guidance on where major new retail floorspace would be acceptable.
ED POL 28	To ensure that the retail needs of the County's residents are met as fully as possible within Meath, taking due cognisance of the Retail Planning Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area.
ED POL 29	To encourage and facilitate the preservation and enhancement of the retail role of both individual villages and village/settlement clusters around the County.
ED POL 30	To encourage and facilitate the re-use and regeneration of derelict land and buildings for retail uses, with due cognisance to the Sequential Approach.
ED POL 31	To promote and sustain the importance of retailing in the County's tourism economy.
ED POL 32	To encourage and facilitate innovation and diversification in the County's retail profile and offer.
ED POL 33	To provide the criteria for the assessment of retail development proposals.

3.2.3 Retail Strategy

The strategy for retailing in the County is as follows:

- Ensure that there is sufficient retail floorspace in the county and that this floorspace is located in an efficient, equitable and sustainable manner, having regard to the Retail Planning Guidelines and to the Retail Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area;
- Maintain the dominant retailing and County Town Centre functions of Navan;

- Reinforce the role of town centres as places for work, shopping, services and living within the major centres of Navan, Ashbourne, Kells and Trim supported by the identification of a network of district and neighbourhood centres;
- Ensure that the provision of additional retail floorspace relates to the hierarchy of retail centres adopted and is compatible with the scale, character and function of receiving centres;
- Ensure that proposed commercial developments, where appropriate, will incorporate retail, residential, employment and entertainment / cultural and civic uses, and provide adequate support facilities for shoppers and access for people with disabilities;
- Maintain and strengthen the retail character of key shopping areas in existing centres, while protecting and / or improving the amenities of surrounding areas, and;
- Facilitate the provision of retail warehousing, retail parks and discount food stores in the county subject to appropriate protection of centres in the retail hierarchy.

3.2.4 Strategic Policies

3.2.4.1 Primary Growth Town – Navan

The strength and importance of Navan within the County is fundamental to the competitiveness of Meath regionally and against neighbouring counties outside of the GDA. To accord with its role as a major centre within the GDA hierarchy, Navan should continue to be predominantly a comparison shopping based centre although convenience will remain an important element in the overall role and attraction of the town. Given the issues associated with the delivery of town centre retail schemes and retail floorspace as a whole, the guidance whilst well acknowledged, requires the adoption of a flexible rather than a prescriptive approach.

The recent completion of the extension to Navan Shopping Centre has been the single largest retail development within the County over the life time of the previous development plan and has brought with it a number of high street brand names. Notwithstanding this, Navan has a relatively limited range of high street brand name national and international comparison multiples and this is the market sector that it should seek to attract in order to stem the flow of this expenditure from the town and county to other centres. The potential operators will require prime pitch locations at the heart of the town centre. The potential already exists for this to be achieved through greater intensification of development within the town centre and through the redevelopment of the central car parking areas that dominate the heart of the centre. This will ensure that retail and other town centre uses are retained within the town centre rather than dissipated to more peripheral areas which could result in the displacement of the prime shopping focus and impact on the vitality and attraction of the existing core retail area. Achieving consolidation and intensification of retail development and other town centre uses within this area should be a priority over the period of the 'Meath County Retail Strategy' to 2011. It is acknowledged that the achievement of consolidation and intensification objectives has associated traffic, car parking and other transportation issues,



which will need to be addressed in parallel. Nonetheless, these transportation issues must not be allowed to constrain major town centre development as this will effectively result in Navan failing to achieve its potential or sustain its existing competitiveness.

POLICY

ED POL 34	To promote and encourage the major enhancement of retail floorspace, primarily comparison goods, and town centre functions in Navan to sustain its competitiveness and importance as a Primary Growth Centre in the Greater Dublin Area.
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OBJECTIVES

ED OBJ 2	To prepare a vision / Masterplan for the town centre in the context of the identified wider potential expansion area that should form the next phases of development of Navan town centre.
ED OBJ 3	To assess the provision of new retail development in accordance with the sequential test as outlined in Section 3.2.4 and the 'County Meath Retail Strategy'.
ED OBJ 4	To investigate the feasibility and deliverability of the potential of the Riverside Area of Navan as a cultural quarter of the town.
ED OBJ 5	To commission a heritage / tourism interpretation strategy that harnesses the asset and highlights the issues in the deliverability of the product.

3.2.4.2 Sub-County Town Centre – Ashbourne

The rapid growth in population has seen major investment in the retail sector, most markedly in Ashbourne. Over the past 5 years, the town centre of Ashbourne has been totally transformed with many of the biggest names in the retail market opting to locate here. Recognising its importance in the overall settlement hierarchy of the County and welcoming the increasing growth in the retail sector, Ashbourne is classified as a Level 3 Sub-County Town Centre in the GDA retail hierarchy. The quantum, quality and range that both the existing and new town centre offers has resulted in Ashbourne becoming the second largest retail centre in the County after Navan. The Planning Authority recognise that future growth in convenience, comparison and retail warehousing that meets the needs of this area including the Greater South Meath Fringe and local people is an essential requirement in creating a sustainable urban settlement and will in turn reduce the need to travel for a greater range of retail goods, therefore helping to reduce leakage of spend from the south of the County. Similar to industrial development in the area, extant planning permission exists for retail warehousing which the market has been slow to develop. This has now been developed at the time of adoption.

POLICY

ED POL 35	To promote and encourage continued enhancement and expansion of retail floorspace and other commercial development in Ashbourne to encourage its development as a self-sustaining key centre in the south of the County.
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OBJECTIVES

ED OBJ 6	To identify within major new residential areas locations for neighbourhood and district centres to enable convenience needs to be better met locally and thus reduce the need to travel to the town centre for the majority of shopping needs.
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ED OBJ 7	To identify potential edge-of and out-of centre sites for the town's retail warehousing needs within the Local Area Plan Process.
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3.2.4.3 Sub-County Town Centres – Kells and Trim

Kells and Trim are Level 3 Sub-County Town Centres in the GDA retail hierarchy. The regional and county importance of both towns is reinforced in their designations as Sub-County Town Centres within the County Retail Hierarchy. They are predominantly comparison centres with a good number of quality outlets that add to their attraction. However, comparison centres of equivalent size and importance in other counties reveals that there is an under provision of retail floorspace and in particular main food shop floorspace. The two towns are thus under performing for their level in the GDA against other centres at the same level in the hierarchy. They should be more self-sustaining centres with local people only needing to travel to meet their higher order shopping needs.

In order to address this, additional convenience floorspace is required if Kells and Trim are to play an enhanced sub-regional / county role in the shopping patterns of the County. Both need larger format supermarket floorspace that better serves main food shopping needs. The need to secure new convenience floorspace within Trim and Kells town centres is recognised in their respective development plans and LAPs adopted for the relevant town centre expansion areas with sites identified that will enable consolidation and improvement to the range and offer within each of the town centres. Additionally it is acknowledged that the needs of both towns' expanding residential areas plus the potential for delivering retail warehousing cannot be met in either town centre. Having regard to the latter, Meath County Council have varied the Kells Development Plan to permit retail warehousing at an out of centre location on the Cavan Road whilst the identification of suitable sites for Trim will be accommodated in the review of the Kells Development Plan.

Kells and Trim are both nationally and internationally recognised centres of heritage importance. They are also attractive places to visit and have a quality range of supporting tourism infrastructure serving both visitors and local people. There is a need to better harness the asset to the benefit of the



town centres and their attraction through sensitive and appropriate interpretation and marketing. This will increase the tourism attraction and stimulate further investment in their fabric and offer.

POLICY

ED POL 36	To promote and encourage major enhancement and expansion of town centre functions to sustain the competitiveness and importance of Trim and Kells as Sub-County Town Centres and also to ensure that their unique heritage becomes integral to the offer and attraction of both towns.
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OBJECTIVES

ED OBJ 8	To identify within major new residential areas locations for neighbourhood and district centres to enable convenience needs to be better met locally and thus reduce the need to travel to the town centre for the majority of shopping needs.
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ED OBJ 9	To identify potential edge-of and out-of centre sites for retail warehousing floorspace.
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ED OBJ 10	To examine mechanisms that could assist the delivery of key town centre sites. This could include marketing strategies, the potential of Public Private Partnerships which have been adopted in other centres and direct market testing of developers and operators.
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ED OBJ 11	To investigate the preparation of heritage and interpretation strategies that embrace signage, linkages and interpretation.
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3.2.4.4 Drogheda and Kilcock Environs

Drogheda and Kilcock are both important retail centres within the national and GDA hierarchies respectively. The retail planning of these towns and their environs is determined by their respective County and Town Borough Councils including Meath County Council for the parts of the two environs that are within County Meath's jurisdiction. To achieve an integrated approach, it is important that the policies and proposals for the environs that are within Meath are compatible with those of the adjacent Local Planning Authorities. This is particularly important given that the environs of each are areas which will significantly expand in population over the lifetime of the Development Plan. It is important that in particular the convenience and other basic service needs of these new or emerging communities are met locally. Additionally, where the retail needs and potential of either Drogheda or Kilcock cannot be met within town centre or edge of centre locations then, consistent with the 'Sequential Approach' of the RPGs, the environs should also be looked at to assist in meeting these needs.

POLICY

ED POL 37

To work with Louth Local Authorities and Kildare County Council to ensure that the retail needs of the populations in the expanding environs of Drogheda and Kilcock that are located within County Meath are met in a way that is efficient, equitable and sustainable.

OBJECTIVES

ED OBJ 12

To identify within major new residential areas locations for neighbourhood and district centres to enable convenience needs to be better met locally and thus reduce the need to travel to either of the town centres for the majority of shopping needs.

ED OBJ 13

To consult with neighbouring Local Authorities in respect of additional retail potential that could be accommodated within the Meath environs of Drogheda Environs and Kilcock Environs respectively.

3.2.4.5

Level 4 Centres

Meath is predominantly a rural county with local needs being met to differing degrees through a dispersed network of local centres. The GDA Strategy identified these local centres to be Level 4 in the Hinterland Area hierarchy and differentiated between Small Town and Village Centres. Respecting the importance of defining a hierarchy that best reflects the characteristics of different counties and their centres, the GDA Strategy was explicit in leaving the designation of centres within the different levels of the hierarchy to Local Planning Authorities. In the preparation of the County Retail Strategy, some fourteen centres were identified as being within this level of the GDA hierarchy. From a review of each centre against a set of factors that included population size, amount and diversity of retail floorspace and position within the County settlement hierarchy, a two tier Level 4 emerged; Tier 1 being designated as Small Town Centres and Tier 2 being Village Centres.

Small Town Centres – Tier 1 Level 4 Centres (Athboy, Bettystown, Duleek, Enfield, Oldcastle and Ratoath)

In terms of retail floorspace, all the Tier 1 centres listed above had greater amounts than the other Level 4 centres in the County and quantitatively they form the next level under the County's main centres in respect of quantum provision. Within the County's settlement hierarchy all the centres are identified where there will be significant increases in population relative to the baseline populations.

POLICY

ED POL 38

To facilitate and encourage the provision of shops and services that consolidate the strength of Tier 1, Level 4, Small Town Centres to meet the needs of the existing and expanding population.

OBJECTIVES

ED OBJ 14 To create a greater awareness in the market, specifically the convenience sector, of the significant size and potential of the majority of the County's small town centres through the Local Area Plan process.

ED OBJ 15 To identify within expanding new residential areas locations for neighbourhood and district centres to enable convenience needs to be better met locally and thus reduce the need to travel to the town centre for the majority of shopping needs.

Village Centres – Tier 2 Level 4 Centres (Ballivor, Clonee, Longwood, Stamullen, Summerhill, Laytown, Nobber and Slane)

Village centres play an important role in rural community life in the County. In general, they serve smaller catchment areas and have a more limited range and quality of retail floorspace than Small Town Centres. The retail offer within each of these centres is limited and as such the majority of retail needs are met in higher order centres in the County Retail Hierarchy. All of these centres would therefore benefit from an enhancement of their retail floorspace and specifically convenience floorspace in order that the daily needs of the villages and their catchments are better met.

POLICY

ED POL 39 To facilitate the local provision of shops and services in Tier 2 Level 4 Village Centres to meet the needs of existing and expanding populations.

OBJECTIVES

ED OBJ 16 To positively respond to and encourage small scale retail developments in designated Village Centres.

ED OBJ 17 To encourage a partnership approach between the Planning Authority, local businesses and the community to achieve the improvement of Village Centres.

3.2.5 General Strategies

3.2.5.1 Retail Parks and Retail Warehouses

An exception to the overall policy of consolidating and reinforcing the retail function of the town centre is the provision of retail warehousing. This is typified by large single storey buildings specialising in the sale of bulky goods such as carpets, furniture, electrical goods, garden products and DIY items. They are generally associated with surface car parks and ease of servicing, requirements not readily accommodated in a town centre and would represent an inefficient use of serviced and

zoned town centre sites. Retail parks have emerged as agglomerations of retail warehouses, grouped around a common car-park which can reduce the adverse impact of car traffic by facilitating multiple shopping trips. Retail warehousing should be restricted to truly 'bulky goods' and conform to set size thresholds set out in this Development Plan, to avoid any potential damaging material impact on the commercial viability of the town or village centre.

Applicants for retail parks and retail warehousing will be required to provide detail on their target markets in their application for planning permission. Retail parks and warehouses will be discouraged from development in retail town centres identified within the County Retail Hierarchy. Sites will be selected through the Local Area Plan process on edge-of and out-of centre locations within centres that can support such development, namely Level 2 and 3 centres, and in general will be encouraged on a limited number of strategic locations with a specific land use zoning objective to provide for employment and economic development, where the site has good access to a suitable road network and has access to integrated public transport. If the proposed retail warehouse or park will result in the gross retail warehouse floorspace within the specific land use zoning objective being greater than 15,000sq.m., then its impact will be assessed having regard to the primary zoning objective for the area and the impact of the proposal on the vitality and viability of existing retail centres in accordance with the criteria set down in the DoEHLG Retail Planning Guidelines for Planning Authorities, 2005.



POLICIES

ED POL 40	To encourage and facilitate the sustainable development of retail warehousing and retail parks at a limited number of strategic locations within or adjacent to key centres in the County Retail Hierarchy. These will be assessed taking into account the need to protect the centres in the retail hierarchy as a priority and the need to confine their use to the sale of bulky goods.
ED POL 41	Retail warehouse parks should be primarily, but not exclusively, for bulky goods retailing. In all instances, the sale of goods in a retail warehouse park shall be strictly limited to comparison goods and at least 85% of the retail offer shall consist of non durable bulky goods. Where an individual planning application for a retail warehouse park includes unit(s) for other than non durable goods to a maximum of 15% of total gross floor area, it shall be accompanied by an assessment on the impact of the development on the vitality and viability of the town centre, in accordance with the Retail Planning Guidelines.

3.2.5.2 Neighbourhood Centre Strategy

The significant growth of population that has occurred in the County has been facilitated through the construction of a number of large new housing developments which tend to be on the fringe / environs of existing towns and villages. In some cases, the existing retail floorspace in these towns can no longer meet the needs of the increased local population. As a result, provision should be made for new district or neighbourhood centres where large scale residential developments are

planned to take place and the existing retail provision will not be sufficient to cater for the larger population.

Shops in neighbourhood centres perform an important function in suburban areas. They provide a valuable service catering particularly the daily or casual needs of nearby residents or those passing by. Neighbourhood centres encompassing both food stores and important non-food outlets, such as pharmacies, have significant social and economic functions. They offer a particularly important service for those who are less mobile, especially elderly and people with disabilities, families with small children and those without access to a car. In many instances, they provide the only readily accessible shopping facilities for certain sectors of the community.

The protection of existing, and the location of proposed neighbourhood centres, is aimed at ensuring that all residential areas are adequately serviced by local facilities and services, including commercial and communal facilities. In some cases, this will involve the acknowledgement of a commercial node or facility that has emerged to serve the local community whereas in other cases it designates a new area or undeveloped area for this role. The aim is to ensure that the neighbourhood centres will serve catchment areas within approximately 800 – 1,000 metres and reduce the necessity to travel by car to avail of services. The Planning Authority acknowledges that it will not be possible to retrofit such neighbourhood centres in all developed areas of the County but will examine all proposals on their merits. In practice, catchment areas of neighbourhood centres overlap and neighbourhood centres will not be 'self sufficient' but rather will be dependent on adjacent or neighbouring centres for additional facilities (i.e. one may provide a pharmacy and the other a post office or public house).

Neighbourhood Centres will normally comprise elements of the following retail provision; convenience stores and supermarkets (where appropriate), newsagents, pharmacies, butchers, post offices, restaurants, take away, video / DVD rental, laundry, hairdresser, and public houses.

POLICY

ED POL 42	To encourage and facilitate the development of new District and Neighbourhood Centres to meet the needs of new and growing centres of population.
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3.2.5.3 Corner / Local Shops

Local shops located in communities perform an important function in that they satisfy the local retailing requirements of the community. Similar to neighbourhood centres, they play a vital economic and social role in communities and are important for essential day to day needs, with their accessibility to the less mobile sectors of the community of particular importance. They are largely owned and operated by independent traders. Meath County Council recognises their local importance and require that existing local shops should be safeguarded and additional ones proposed in areas where there is a clear deficiency of retail provision.

POLICY

ED POL 43	To retain, encourage and facilitate the retail role of corner shops and small villages around the County.
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3.2.5.4

Petrol Filling Stations

It is acknowledged that petrol filling stations can provide a wide range of retail goods in an associated shop. However, the scale of retail outlets has increased and in some cases threaten to overcome fuel sales as the primary use of the site. The forecourt shops usually provide a wide range of convenience retail goods in associated shops and in some areas provide the same function as the local shop or mini-market. National Retail Guidance indicates that the retail use of a site as a petrol filling station, pending the scale of such convenience store, can adversely impact on traditional retail outlets such as local corner shops. Subsequently 'The Retail Planning Guidelines' state that the size of a shop associated with any petrol filling station should take account of the following factors:



- Large stores tend to attract additional custom which can lead to additional car borne trips primarily for shopping purposes;
- Large numbers of parked cars in station forecourts can cause disruption and queuing for those simply wishing to use the petrol pumps; and
- The preferred location for retailing is in town centres, not isolated sites outside these preferred locations (sequential approach / test).

Notwithstanding the preceding paragraphs, a shop of up to 100m² (net) retail floorspace is considered acceptable when associated with a petrol filling station. Above this threshold, the sequential test approach will be applied. Guidelines on specific requirements of proposals for Petrol Filling Stations are set out in the Guidelines and Standards Section of this Development Plan.

3.2.5.5

Discount Food Stores

Discount food stores of up to 1,500 sq. m. gross have a potential role in extending the choice of retailing particularly for certain sectors of the community. Their customer catchment and retail offer is different to the mainstream superstores and supermarkets and their trade draw will be different. They provide a specialised form of predominantly convenience shopping. This will be relevant when assessing impact, although the effect on neighbourhood centres and other shops should also be considered.

Discount food stores can effectively anchor smaller centres or local neighbourhood centres as well as complementing existing convenience shopping in established Level 3 or 4 centres. Proposals for such developments will be considered in relation to the provisions of the Plan concerning the design, layout and impact of retail developments. Applications for discount food stores must demonstrate that they will not have a significant negative impact on Level 3 or Level 4 centres in the retail hierarchy.

POLICY**ED POL 44**

To facilitate the provision of discount food stores subject to the appropriate protection of Level 3 and 4 centres in the retail hierarchy, and the need to confine their use to the sale of largely convenience goods.

3.2.5.6 Fast Food Outlets / Takeaways

The following factors will be taken into account in the assessment of development proposals for fast food / takeaway outlets:

- The need to retain, protect and strengthen the retail and general variety and multi-use function of the area;
- The adequacy of existing facilities for the sale of hot food to be consumed off the premises in the locality;
- The cumulative effect of the proposed development on the amenities in the area, and;
- The effect of the proposed development on the existing mix of land uses and activities in the area.

3.2.6 Access and Facilities in Shopping Centres

Access requirements for people with disabilities must be incorporated into the design of shops used by the general public. The criteria necessary for people with disabilities is set out in the Building Regulations 1997, Part M and the documents 'Access for the Disabled (Nos. 1 to 3)', published by the National Rehabilitation Board, November 1988 (or as may be amended).

POLICY

ED POL 45	To require adequate provision to be made in new shopping developments for: i) Access and facilities for people with disabilities including car-parking spaces; ii) Secure parking for cyclists, and; iii) Support facilities for shoppers in general and for people with children in particular, with regard to the provision of toilets and other facilities, including baby changing / feeding and crèche facilities.
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3.2.7 Non Retail Uses

In order to protect the retail viability of our towns and villages and maintain the visual character of our streets, it is considered necessary to control the amount of non-retail floorspace at ground level. Corner sites in the main town centres, and district and neighbourhood centres are considered pivotal in creating a sense of vibrancy. The nature of the use of ground floor corner retail units will be required to reflect this in the design of their frontages, the use of the premises, and where feasible their hours of opening. This policy will be operated through the development management process.

POLICY

ED POL 46	To control the provision of non-retail uses at ground floor level in the core retail areas / principle shopping streets of the town and village centres and also within the shopping parades of district and neighbourhood centres.
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3.2.8 Assessment of Retail Developments

Consistent with the GDA Strategy, all applications for significant retail development should be assessed against a range of criteria. As a general rule, the 'County Meath Retail Strategy' recommends the threshold for significance is 1,000 sq. m. (gross) of convenience development and 2,000 sq. m. (gross) of comparison development. If the retail proposal, whether above this threshold or not, accords with the Development Plan policies and proposals in all material respects, it should expect to meet with approval. In accordance with the Retail Planning Guidelines, in such instances, it should not be necessary for the applicant to provide additional supporting background studies. However, the onus is on the applicant to demonstrate convincingly that the proposal does adhere to the Development Plan policies. Where there is a doubt on any aspect of a planning application, the Planning Authority shall require a detailed justification related to any such questionable matter.

The criteria to be determined in the assessment of significant applications relative to their locations will include, inter alia:

- Testing the proposal against the 'Sequential Approach' and that other options have been considered;
- Impact on the town and village centres, including cumulative impact;
- The baseline information and capacity / impact assessment is adequate and is transparent;
- There is a demonstrable need for development;
- The relationship of the application to any Development Plan allocation;
- The development's contribution to town / village / centre improvement;
- The development's contribution to site and / or area regeneration;
- The quality of access by all modes of transport and by foot and bicycle;
- The development's role in improving the competitiveness of the County and sub areas of the County;
- The development's role in sustaining rural communities;
- The extent to which it is relevant to consider the imposition of restrictions on the range of goods permitted for sale.

3.3 TOURISM

3.3.1 Introduction

Meath has much to offer as a tourist destination – in particular its rich heritage, the quality of the rural landscape and its coastline. Meath has a large number of visitor attractions, the most famous being the Brú na Bóinne Visitor Centre which incorporates the internationally recognised megalithic tombs and passage graves at Newgrange, Knowth and Dowth. In marketing terms, Newgrange, Trim Castle and Tara have the highest profile in both the domestic and overseas markets and are very popular destination for day trips by tourists staying in Dublin. Apart from the Boyne Valley, there are a number of high quality visitor attractions based on the county's archaeological and historical heritage. These include Trim Castle Visitor Centre and Kells Heritage Centre. Trim and Kells are both designated heritage towns. Loughcrew, the Royal site of Tara, Tailteann, the Hill of Ward, Christian sites at Slane, Donaghmore, Killeen, Dunsany and Duleek, monastic ruins at Bective and Trim, great 16th and 17th Century stately houses and eight prestigious gardens throughout the county all bear testimony to Meath's rich historic past.



Visitors attracted by outdoor pursuits are well catered for by a large number of approved equestrian centres, four race courses, swimming and kiting along the coast, fourteen golf courses (and a number of new golf courses permitted and under construction), the Boyne towpath, Trim tourist trail, Littlewood Forest, Dalgan Park as well as numerous unmarked walkways, while anglers can fish the Boyne and its tributaries, the Royal Canal, Lough Sheelin and the North Meath lakes.

Other identified strengths include the accessibility of the County in terms of good road and public transport infrastructure and proximity to Dublin, the national airport and to Northern Ireland.

3.3.2 Meath Tourism Strategy

Between 2002 and 2003, the tourism industry changed dramatically both globally and nationally. The effects from September 11, 2001 and SARS and ongoing unrest in Iraq ensured that all tourism operators had to re-visit their approach to tourism management. In September 2003, 'New Horizons for Irish Tourism' was published by the Tourism Policy Review Group established by the Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism. The document recommended urgent and fundamental changes in the policies and actions of both the Government, and the tourism industry itself, if the success of the industry over the previous decade was to be replicated in the future.

Similarly, Meath County Council in association with Meath Tourism commissioned the preparation of the first county tourism strategy entitled 'Ireland's Heritage Capital, Marketing Tourism in Meath, 2005-2010' to coincide with the National recommendations to ensure that County Meath shared in Ireland's future tourism success with the aim of becoming one of the top ten tourism counties in Ireland.

The overall objective of the Meath Tourism Marketing and Development Strategy is to guide the manner which development, inward investment and marketing for the county will be executed in the tourism sector during the period 2005 – 2010. Considerable research was undertaken, on both domestic and international fronts, to determine the strengths and weaknesses associated with tourism facilities in Meath. The findings are outlined in Table 17;

Table 17: Meath Tourism – SWOT Analysis

Meath Tourism Strategy – Product SWOT Analysis			
Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
Wealth of Heritage.	Lack of hotels (particularly 4 and 5 star).	Develop more high end quality accommodation.	M1 – fear of becoming ‘corridor county’.
Access – M1, N2, M3/N3 & M4.	Poor Signage.	Exploitation of water and angling amenities.	Competition with other Counties.
Location to Dublin city centre, airport and ferry-port, and to Northern Ireland.	Lack of family entertainment venues.	Establishment and promotion of new walkways and cycle routes for Meath on a legal and permanent basis to include heritage and other attractions.	Lack of ‘partnership’ working intra-agency in county.
	Lack of weather independent facilities.	Develop ‘tourist character’ in towns.	Lack of inward investment.
	Lack of Irish and cultural experiences.	Attract retail investor.	Lack of interest.
	Lack of internationally renowned festivals.	Offer an Irish cultural experience to exploit Gaeltacht product in Meath.	Coastal attractions.
		Remove cars from beaches.	Car-driving and parking on beach.
		Creating an aesthetic town-centre for ‘Coast’ – with adequate parking.	
		Establish a voluntary festivals committee for the county with a view of finding a fulltime professional to work with festival committees.	

The number of major attractions in the County is considerable and from the research that was undertaken as part of the tourist study, heritage was identified as the county’s main selling point, otherwise known as the Unique Selling Proposition (USP) and subsequently adopted into the Meath Tourism brand.

Tourism makes an important contribution to the economy of County Meath with income derived from tourist activity being distributed across a wide range of economic sectors. Tourism can also be of particular significance in the diversification of the rural economy and in the regeneration of certain towns and villages.

At the same time there is a growing concern about the impact of tourism on the environment and on local communities. Tourism can damage and destroy the assets it seeks to exploit, in particular through excessive visitor numbers, inappropriate development, various types of pollution and other forms of adverse impact. The relationship between tourism and the environment must be managed in a way that tourism continues to support local communities and remains viable in the long term.

GOAL

To promote, encourage and facilitate the development of the tourism industry through sustainable means, including the conservation, protection and enhancement of the built and natural heritage, the protection of sensitive landscapes and cultural and community environments in order to maximise upon the economic benefits arising from the industry.

3.3.3 Tourist Facilities and Infrastructure

The outstanding quality and variety of the natural and built environment in Meath underlies the importance of sustainable tourism development which should not damage the resource or prejudice its future tourist value. Tourists can be attracted by a range of features – high quality landscapes, heritage towns, seaside resorts, archaeological sites and monuments, historic buildings and structures, gardens and landscaped demesnes, industrial heritage and outdoor leisure activities including walking and cycling.



All proposals for tourist development will be judged on their contribution to the tourism industry and the degree to which they contribute to the conservation of the natural, man-made and built heritage. Such developments will need to be acceptable in terms of scale and design of any new building, the level of activity and type of use, and integration into the local environment.

The Planning Authority will endeavour to facilitate new tourist attractions which have regard to the rural character or heritage of the area, such as the opening of historic houses or gardens to the public, farm visits, museums and interpretation centres.

The Planning Authority recognises that in some sensitive landscapes, where development must be carefully managed, there may be a need, exceptionally, for a 'one-off' unique facility to meet a particular tourist need. Such unique proposals will be considered on their merits taking into account need, location, siting and an assessment of environmental impacts. In assessing such proposals regard will be had to the Landscape Character Assessment or other relevant statutory documents for the County.

The promotion and enhancement of existing tourist attractions is seen as significant to the development of tourism in Meath. In assessing the acceptability of any proposal which seeks to consolidate and enhance existing attractions, the balance between the economic benefits and possible environmental costs will be an important consideration.

POLICIES

ED POL 47	To promote the development of tourism in a sustainable manner and encourage the provision of a comprehensive range of tourism facilities, subject to location, siting and design criteria, the protection of environmentally sensitive areas and areas identified as sensitive landscapes and the consideration of other planning factors such as the Landscape Character Assessment.
ED POL 48	To encourage new and high quality investment in the tourism industry in Meath with specific reference to leisure activities (golf, equestrian, walking, cycling, angling, outdoor pursuits and family orientated activities).
ED POL 49	To encourage new and high quality investment in the tourism industry in Meath with specific reference to accommodation in terms of choice, location and quality of product.
ED POL 50	In the development of tourist facilities, regard will be had to the landscape's ability to accommodate such development. In this regard, reference may be made to the Landscape Character Assessment, Chapter 8 and Appendix VI.

OBJECTIVE

ED OBJ 18	To support Meath Tourism in the carrying out a Tourism Needs Analysis of the tourism product in the county and to take into account and implement plans and projects that may be identified.
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3.3.4 Integrated Rural Tourism Complexes

The location of the county in the hinterland of the largest metropolitan area in the state has generated considerable demand for golf course and leisure estate type developments with major complexes developed, under construction or permitted at locations such as Killeen Castle, Oldbridge Estate, Carton Demesne and Balrath House. The Development Plan acknowledges this regional amenity and tourism role for the county. The provision of accommodation of an individual unit nature, either as self contained apartments or houses is acknowledged as being a component of such schemes and for this reason Section 6.7.6 of the Rural Strategy Chapter deals with this matter more specifically.



POLICIES

ED POL 51	To encourage resort type development of former demesnes and estates subject to good planning practice.
ED POL 52	To ensure that the provision of dwellings, which form part of a tourism related development and which will be occupied as permanent places of residence will only be considered favourably in the case of refurbishment and adaptation of a Protected Structure or group of structures within the attendant grounds into a modern day use.

3.3.5 Tourist Accommodation



The important role that towns and villages throughout the county play as tourist centres and the facilities and services they can provide is recognised by the Planning Authority. It is the policy of Meath County Council to seek to improve the overall appearance of the County's towns and villages through Town Renewal Schemes, the Urban and Village Renewal Programme, the Derelict Sites Act, Tidy Towns Initiative, the proposed Local Area Plans / Graig Design Statements and through effective development management and enforcement. The Planning Authority envisages a special role for tourism developments, especially the provision of accommodation, in the revitalisation of towns and villages and shall seek to encourage the location of such developments in these existing centres.

POLICIES

ED POL 53	To direct tourism-based development, where appropriate, into existing settlements where there is adequate infrastructure to service the development and where they can contribute to the maintenance of essential rural services.
ED POL 54	To promote the development of high-quality tourist accommodation, especially hotels and guesthouses.
ED POL 55	To ensure high standards of design and landscaping in all tourism related development, with consideration given to a proposal's potential to impact on its surroundings in terms of scale and intensity and minimise associated visitor management issues. All tourism development should be designed for and take particular consideration of needs of people with disabilities and elderly.

3.3.6 Hotels

The Meath Tourism Strategy identified the lack of hotel bed spaces as one of the key product weaknesses evident from the SWOT analysis, particularly in the 4 and 5 star market. Hotel business

has changed dramatically over the last 5 years as the domestic visitor is now 'time poor and cash conscious' – while the customer wants to take a much higher number of breaks per annum, for shorter periods of time, booked much later which must offer value for money.

While the current hotel base is particularly low, there are plans currently underway to radically increase the number of beds in County Meath with a number of hotels either due to open, under construction or having the benefit of extant planning permission.

The Planning Authority wishes to encourage and retain hotel development in suitable parts of the County, in order to accommodate more visitors locally and to attract visitors in greater numbers.



POLICY

ED POL 56

To encourage and retain hotel development in the County and through the Development Plan and Local Area Plan process and to identify suitable sites for the development of additional hotel and related uses.

3.3.7 Holiday Homes

With the exception of the coastal strip and to a lesser extent, the area surrounding Brú na Bóinne, the County is generally not under significant pressure from second home or holiday home development. It will be the goal of the Planning Authority to harness the development potential and socio-economic benefits of the tourism sector, including that related to holiday home accommodation, whilst ensuring that such development does not prejudice the viability, environmental quality and character of the rural community and village network in the area. The subject is dealt with in more detail in Section 6.7.7 of the Rural Strategy Chapter.

POLICIES

ED POL 57

To encourage new holiday home developments to locate within either established villages or small towns and / or in distinct clusters in rural areas capable of absorbing such developments.

ED POL 58

Strike an effective balance between conserving the character and scale of such urban centres and accommodating new development as part of particular Local Area Plans or Graig Design Statements.

ED POL 59	To encourage proposals to reinstate, conserve and / or replace existing ruinous or disused dwellings for holiday homes subject to normal planning considerations relating to design, safe access the provision of any necessary wastewater disposal facilities.
ED POL 60	To accommodate small scale enterprises, such as the renovation of barns, outhouses or other existing structures and the construction of one or two holiday homes for short term rental (less than 3 months at any one time to any person / family) associated with an existing permanent residence or active farm / agri-tourism enterprise. It shall be a condition of permission that such holiday homes be retained within the ownership of the complex / permanent dwelling and shall not be sold to form a separate permanent residence.
ED POL 61	To accommodate appropriately sited holiday home developments as they arise, subject to normal planning considerations in relation to siting and design in rural area type 'low development pressure area'.

3.3.8 Caravan and Camping Sites

The Planning Authority recognises that the provision of sites for caravans and camping is an important element in the accommodation of holiday makers and the Planning Authority is keen to see the provision of tourist and visitor accommodation for all price ranges and for a variety of lifestyles. However, caravan sites can be visually obtrusive features in the landscape detracting from its scenic quality and amenity and for this reason the Planning Authority will ensure that the design, operation and impact of such tourist and visitor accommodation does not unreasonably affect the amenity of the surrounding landscape.

POLICY

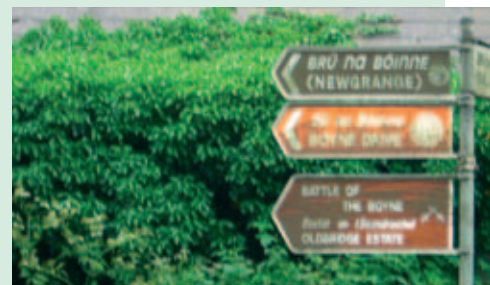
ED POL 62	To consider the provision of caravan and camping sites at suitable locations where they are consistent with the Settlement Strategy for the County and to ensure a high standard of layout, design and amenity in such proposals.
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3.3.9 Tourist Signage

Signage has proven to be one of the most neglected areas in the tourism product for County Meath. Directional, welcoming and interpretative heritage signage are all areas that are poorly serviced in the county.

Meath LEADER II funded the creation of a brand for the county which Meath Tourism have in turn adopted and incorporated into signage at a number of locations within the county. The Unique Selling Proposition (USP) has been unanimously accepted as 'Heritage' from the introduction of the brand which has assisted Meath Tourism catapult the county into the national and international tourism stage. However, the new signage continues to compete with existing and sometimes out

of date signage that can not only confuse and mislead tourists but also fails to capitalise on the overall strengths of the brand name. Integrated and branded 'Welcome Signage' at the entrance to all towns in Meath offers the opportunity to utilise the brand and communicate the core strengths of the county and in particular the town in question. In turn, providing uniform branding to all directional tourist signage will strengthen the promotional and marketing tool of Meath Tourism and also create a favourable impression to those visiting the county.



The road infrastructure in County Meath has changed radically in recent years and this continues to be the case. While this is a sign of progress and makes Meath more accessible, it also offers the opportunity to pass through Meath even quicker with the threat that Meath could become a 'corridor county'. As people travel along the main road arteries of the county, namely the M1, N2, N3 and M4 or stop at a train station in Meath, this may be the only impression of Meath that they currently experience and it is important that the County is marketed and promoted as a tourist destination. This can be achieved in association with the NRA and other relevant agencies through the provision of service signs, heritage signage and attraction signage. Once off the primary routes, the signage must be continue to be clear, concise and easily followed. This should not mean more signs in rural areas as it is considered a proliferation of signage detracts from the rural character. The existing Boyne Drive is an excellent opportunity to showcase the rich heritage that Meath has to offer and encourage tourists to visit the lesser known attractions throughout the entire county. This will in turn help to capitalise on the benefits, such as increased spending and job creation, which additional visitors could bring to more remote areas of the county. However, the existing signage on secondary routes is often confusing and misleading with little interpretative heritage signage at the attractions along the route.

The provision of uniform interpretative heritage signage at locations ranging from National Monuments down to local graveyards of the county offers a further opportunity to promote the county brand. The provision of interpretative signage at the larger attractions can also inform and promote other attractions in the locality that visitors may not be aware of.

POLICIES

ED POL 63	To work with Meath Tourism and other relevant bodies in facilitating the development and erection of standardised and branded signage for tourism facilities and tourist attractions.
ED POL 64	To reinforce County signage through enforcement action against illegal signage.

3.3.10 Festivals

Meath hosts a number of renowned festivals including old street fairs, such as Scurlogstown Olympiad, the Blue Jeans Festival and the Moynalty Steam Threshing festival. It also plays host to the world famous rock venue at Slane Castle. The County contains a number of well known horse racing venues including Fairyhouse, which hosts the world famous Irish Grand National annually, Navan Racecourse, Bellewstown Races and Laytown Strand Races, the only remaining official strand

aces held in Europe. Other on-going events of interest include the O'Carolan Harp and Heritage Festival, the Kells Heritage Festival, Navan Choral Festival and Loughcrew Garden Opera. It will be the policy of the Planning Authority to encourage, promote and assist organisers in holding such events within the County.

POLICY

ED POL 65	To encourage, promote and assist organisers in holding events within the County and where such events require an outdoor event licence ensure that they comply with the provisions of Part XVI of the Planning and Development Acts, 2000 – 2006.
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3.3.11 Walking and Cycling Routes

Public rights of way which contribute generally to the amenities of the county and local areas will be protected and maintained. Cycling routes such as Tain Trail, linking the Rathcroghan area of Roscommon and the Cooley peninsula in Louth will be pursued and developed. Pedestrian walks such as the Royal Canal and Boyne towpath will also be facilitated and conserved. Other routes that arise from time to time will also be supported.

POLICY

ED POL 66	To facilitate the development of a series of walkways and cycleways throughout the County including accompanying signposting.
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3.4 PREVENTION OF MAJOR ACCIDENTS

The Seveso II Directive 96/82/EC as amended by Directive 2003/105/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. The "European Communities (Control of Major Accident Hazards Involving Dangerous Substances) Regulations" S.I No 74 of 2006 transposes this Directive into Irish law. The National Authority for Occupational Safety Health, now renamed as the Health and Safety Authority (HSA) has been designated as the central competent authority for enforcement of these regulations. There are currently no Seveso II sites in Co. Meath.

Unlike the earlier Seveso I Directive (82/501/EEC), Seveso II includes provisions relating to land use planning. Article 12 of the Directive requires member states to ensure that the objectives of preventing major accidents and limiting the consequences of such accidents are taken into account in land use policies and other relevant policies. Section 10(2) of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended sets out a list of mandatory objectives to be included in a development plan. One of these objectives that must be included is the control, having regard to the provision of the Major Accidents Directive and any regulations, under any enactment, giving effect to that Directive, of:

- Siting of new establishments;
- Modification of existing establishments, and;
- Development in the vicinity of such establishments;

for the purposes of reducing the risk, or limiting the consequences, of a major accident.

In establishing whether the Regulations apply to a particular establishment, the primary criteria to be assessed is whether dangerous substances are present in quantities equal to or in excess of those listed in the First Schedule of the Regulations. There are two tiers of industries; lower and upper tiers, depending on the quantity of substances used, handled or stored on site. The regulations require different duties of operators for lower and upper tier establishments.

Lower tier establishments are required:

- To notify the HSA and the local Planning Authority of their existence and provide information in relation to;
 - inventories of dangerous substances;
 - type of activity in operation, and;
 - the surrounding environment of the establishment.
- To take all necessary measures to prevent the occurrence of a major accident and to limit the consequences of any accident for people and the environment;
- To prepare and implement a major accident prevention policy;
- To take action in the event of a major accident, and;
- To maintain a register of notifiable incidents.

The obligations on upper tier establishments include those set out above for lower tier and in addition:

- To produce a Safety Report;
- To prepare an internal emergency plan;
- To provide information to those responsible for off-site emergency plans, and;
- To provide information for the safety of the public.

POLICIES

In relation to the Prevention of Major Accidents (Control of Major Accident Hazards Involving Dangerous Substances) legislation, it is the policy of the Council:

ED POL 67	To comply with the Seveso II Directive in reducing the risk and limiting the potential consequences of major industrial accidents.
ED POL 68	To require planning permission for the modifications of existing establishments where the nature and quantity of dangerous substances handled, used or stored on existing sites is to be altered.

ED POL 69

To ensure that land use policies must take account of the need to maintain appropriate distances between future major accident hazard establishments and residential areas, areas of substantial public use and areas of particular natural sensitivity or interest.

ED POL 70

To have regard to the advice of the Health and Safety Authority when proposals for new SEVESO sites are being considered.

Development Assessment Criteria

In the assessment of planning applications for new development involving hazardous substances, the Council will have regard to:

- The SEVESO Directive and Major Accident Regulations;
- HSA generic land-use planning advice;
- Potential adverse impacts on public health and safety, and;
- The need to maintain appropriate safe distance between residential areas, areas of public use and areas of particular natural sensitivity.