
Chapter 2

Policy Context and Need for the Project

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2. POLICY CONTEXT AND NEED FOR THE PROJECT

2.1 Introduction

This chapter of the EIAR addresses the policy context and the need for the proposed DART+ West project. The purpose of this chapter is to provide an overview of the relevant planning policy context, for the proposed project. This chapter also sets out the need for the project and the project objectives. The chapter is presented as follows:

- Background and project history (Section 2.2).
- Policy context (European, national, regional and local) (Section 2.3).
- Project need and strategic fit (Section 2.4).
- DART+ Programme objectives (Section 2.5).
- DART+ West project objectives (Section 2.6).

In addition, a separate Planning Report (see the Supporting Documents accompanying this RO application) has been prepared and included as part of the Railway Order application package. The Planning Report is a non-statutory document and sets out the proposed project's compliance with the key planning policy outlined within this chapter.

2.2 Background and project history

The publication of the 'A Platform for Change - An Integrated Transportation Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2000-2016' in 2001 (Dublin Transportation Office, 2001) set out the vision of an integrated multimodal transportation strategy for the Dublin area. It was here where the benefit of using heavy rail as the spine of an integrated public transport scheme was formalised. The Strategy has two interdependent elements:

- Infrastructure and service improvements: To increase the supply of transport, including a substantial expansion of the public transport network, some strategic road construction and traffic management.
- Demand management: To reduce the growth in travel through the application of land use and other policies while maintaining economic progress. To encourage a transfer of trips, especially at peak periods, from the private car to more sustainable modes of transport (such as public transport, cycling and walking).

The Strategy emphasises that for these two elements to be effective, they are to be implemented together in a coherent manner and therefore deliver a sustainable metropolitan area. Since 2001, Iarnród Éireann has progressed railway improvement projects in accordance with transportation strategy and the guiding National Development Plans.

Iarnród Éireann's previous priority was to deliver, as early as possible, the DART Underground tunnel link beneath the city centre. This was fundamental to increasing capacity on the radial routes. Design and planning for DART Underground was progressed and a Railway Order was approved by An Bord Pleanála in December 2011 and confirmed by the High Court in March 2014.

However, in September 2015 the Government deferred authorisation for construction of DART Underground and instructed Iarnród Éireann to examine alternative designs that would deliver a lower cost technical solution, whilst retaining the required rail connectivity for the DART+ Programme. Between September 2015 and the publication of the National Development Plan 2018-2027 (NDP) in February 2018, IÉ and the NTA worked collaboratively in the assessment of lower cost technical solutions. A number of studies were undertaken including Transport Assessments including the Maynooth Line Transport Study (2019), the DART Expansion Rail Electrification Assessment (2019), the DART Underground Western Tie-In Study (2017) and Tunnel Configuration Study for new Metro North and DART Underground (NTA/IE/TII 2017).

The outcome of these studies influenced the formulation of the National Development Plan (2018-2027) which was published in February 2018 and was integrated in the longer-term National Planning Framework under Project Ireland 2040. The National Development Plan (2018-2027) recommended that the DART+ Programme (previously termed DART Expansion) should proceed to deliver priority elements including investment in new train fleet, provision of new infrastructure and electrification of existing lines. The Plan indicates that the focus should be on non-underground tunnel elements of the programme using existing tracks (i.e., using the Phoenix Park Tunnel branch line). On the 4th October 2021, the National Development Plan (2021-2030) was published in which the DART+ Programme is considered as the cornerstone of rail investment within the lifetime of Project Ireland 2040. The NDP is discussed further below.

2.3 Policy context

The DART+ Programme is central to the delivery of planning and transportation policy objectives at EU, national, regional and local level. The policy hierarchy and some of the relevant policy documents are listed in Table 2-1. This chapter presents the high-level review of the relevant policy documents that have been undertaken in view of the proposed project.

Table 2-1 Planning and Policy documents

EU Level
EU White Paper on Transport: Roadmap to a single European Transport Area - Towards a competitive and resource efficient transport system
European Green Deal
National Level
Project Ireland 2040: National Planning Framework – Ireland, Our Plan 2040, and; National Development Plan 2021-2030-2027
National Sustainable Mobility Policy (2022)
National Investment Framework for Transport in Ireland (2021)
Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021
The Climate Action Plan 2021
The White Paper: Ireland’s Transition to a Low Carbon Energy Future 2015-2030
Regional Level
Eastern and Midland Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2019-2031
Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2016-2035 & Draft Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2022-2042
Integrated Implementation Plan 2019-2024
Greater Dublin Area Cycle Network Plan
Rail Policy
2030 Rail Network Strategy Review
Iarnród Éireann Strategy 2027
Local Level
Dublin City Development Plan 2016–2022; and Draft Dublin City Development Plan 2022-2028
North Lotts and Grand Canal Dock SDZ Planning Scheme 2014
Ashtown-Pelletstown Local Area Plan 2014
Fingal Development Plan 2017 – 2023; and Draft Fingal Development Plan 2023 - 2029
Hansfield Strategic Development Zone Planning Scheme 2006
Barnhill Local Area Plan 2018

Kelystown Local Area Plan 2021
Kildare County Development Plan 2017 – 2023; and Draft County Development Plan 2023-2029
Leixlip Local Area Plan 2020-2023
Maynooth Local Area Plan 2013-2019
Kilcock Local Area Plan 2015-2021
Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027
Dunboyne, Clonee & Pace Local Area Plan 2009 - 2015

2.3.1 European policy

The EU is striving to achieve a climate neutral European continent by the year 2050. This commitment is evidenced in the Paris Agreement, an international legally binding agreement to address climate change and subsequently tackle carbon emissions. To achieve climate neutrality, policies such as the European Green Deal and The White Paper were enacted to hasten the transition to a low carbon economy. The decoupling of economic progression and heavy resource use is crucial to this green transition.

2.3.1.1 **EU White Paper on Transport: Roadmap to a single European Transport Area - Towards a competitive and resource efficient transport system**

In 2011, the European Commission adopted the White Paper Roadmap to a Single European Transport Area - Towards a competitive and resource efficient transport system in the context of the Union's 2020 growth strategy. The vision of the White Paper spans four decades, up to 2050, but also sets earlier goals for 2020 and 2030. The Commission's vision for a competitive and sustainable transport system involves transport that uses cleaner energy, better exploitation of modern infrastructure and a reduction in its negative impact on the environment.

The strategy defines ten goals designed to guide actions and measure progress to achieve a 60% reduction in CO₂ emissions and comparable reduction in oil dependency. Goals to which the DART+ Programme is aligned:

- *1. Halve the use of 'conventionally fuelled' cars in urban transport by 2030; phase them out in cities by 2050; achieve essentially CO₂ free city logistics in major urban centres by 2030.*
- *4. By 2050, complete a European high-speed rail network. Triple the length of the existing high-speed rail network by 2030 and maintain a dense railway network in all Member States. By 2050 the majority of medium-distance passenger transport should go by rail.*

2.3.1.2 **European Green Deal**

The European Green deal addresses the task of transforming the European economy from a holistic perspective whereby, essential facets of modern life such as reliable and efficient infrastructure must be made more climate friendly. Transport in the EU contributes roughly 5% to the EU GDP and currently, transport emissions represent around 25% of the EU's total greenhouse gas emissions. While being critical, transport must adapt to become far more efficient in its resource use as per the 2030 climate & energy framework. The EU aims to reduce the transport related emissions by 90% from 1990 levels by the year 2050. The intermediary target of a 55% reduction by the year 2030 was also set. Such vast targets require strategic choices when it comes to transport.

High speed rail is one of the most environmentally positive choices with regards to public transport. This is true particularly, considering the EU's Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy which targets transport and mobility under three key objectives.

- Sustainable mobility.
- Smart mobility.
- Resilient mobility.

The mobility strategy will, while designing policies, consider the environmental impact of development. To achieve sustainable mobility, three key perspectives will be evident in EU policies enacted to achieve sustainable mobility. The first is the reduction of fossil fuel dependence, the second is making alternative choices available such as high-speed rail in this instance. The EU aims to double the traffic on high-speed rail by 2030 and to double the freight traffic on rail by 2050. The final consideration is that policy will be enacted so that the pricing of transport will reflect the environmental impact associated with the respective mode chosen.

2.3.2 National policy

2.3.2.1 Project Ireland 2040

Project Ireland 2040 was launched in February 2018 and comprises the National Planning Framework, Our Plan 2040, the National Development Plan 2021 – 2030. Project 2040 is a long-term overarching strategy which aligns investment decisions with a clearly defined development strategy and ten National Strategic Outcomes (NSO), as shown in Figure 2-1.

The NPF together with the NDP sets the context for each of the three regional assemblies to develop their Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSEs) taking account of and co-ordinating local authority Development Plans in a consistent manner to ensure national regional and local plans align with each other.

2.3.2.1.1 National Planning Framework 2040

The NPF guides development and the exchequer investment up to 2040. It is a blueprint to guide public and private investments to promote and enhance opportunities and infrastructure for an increasing population and sets out the development principles that subsequent plans must follow.

The NPF predicts and plans for a population increase of one million people from 2016 figures, bringing the total population to 5.7 million by 2040. It is estimated that 2.85 million people will be located within the Eastern and Midlands region. Planning for and delivering sustainable mobility projects is a key objective of the NPF and will help create a more integrated public transport system, enhance competitiveness, sustain economic progress and enable sustainable mobility choices for citizens.

There are ten National Strategic Outcomes (NSOs) identified within the framework, See Figure 2-1. **NSO 4: Sustainable Mobility** is identified as being central to enhancing competitiveness, sustaining economic progress and enabling mobility choices for citizens. NSO4 is supported by the delivery of the DART+ Programme whereby, the Framework aims to expand the range of public transport services available and to reduce congestion and emissions. NSO 4 also commits to invest in key transport projects such as the DART+ Programme, BusConnects and MetroLink.

The DART+ Programme will also support other NSOs identified within the Framework such as **NSO 1, Compact Growth** and **NSO 8, Transition to a Low Carbon and Climate Resilient Society**. NSO 1 identifies the need to deliver a greater proportion of residential development within existing built-up areas and the role that an integrated transport network will play in the regeneration and revitalization of urban areas while NSO 8 includes the electrification of transport fleets as a requirement to support a move away from polluting and carbon intensive propulsion systems.



Figure 2-1 National Strategic Outcomes

The delivery of the DART+ programme is identified as a 'key future growth enabler of Dublin' along with the other rail projects set out in the Transport Strategy for the GDA including Metrolink, and Luas green link to Metro Link. Delivery of the metropolitan cycle network and BusConnects project are also identified as enablers and will interact positively with DART+ West project.

2.3.2.1.2 National Development Plan 2021 – 2030

National Development Plan 2021–2030 (NDP) published in 2021 sets out the Government's over-arching investment strategy and budget for the period 2021-2030. It is an ambitious plan that balances the significant demand for public investment across all sectors and regions of Ireland with a major focus on improving the delivery of infrastructure projects to ensure speed of delivery and value for money.

Public investment plays a significant role in addressing the opportunities and challenges faced by Ireland over the coming years such as Covid 19, Brexit, housing, health, climate action and population growth.

The NDP supports the delivery of Project Ireland 2040 through public capital investment over the next ten years and guides national, regional and local planning and investment decisions in Ireland. The NDP provides government departments with greater visibility of their investment capacity over the term. The NDP caters for an increase in population of over 1 million people by 2040 and identifies €165 billion for investment in capital projects targeted at enhancing regional development and driving economic growth. For the first time in Ireland, climate and environmental assessment of the NDP measures have been undertaken

The NDP identifies the DART+ Programme as the cornerstone of rail investment within the lifetime of Project Ireland 2040 and represents the single biggest investment in the Irish rail network. The programme comprising a number of infrastructural projects, namely: DART+ West, DART+ South West, DART+ Coastal North to Drogheda via Balbriggan, and DART+ Coastal South. It also includes the expansion and modernisation of the rail fleet, including both battery-electric multiple units (BEMUs) and electric multiple units (EMUs). At the time of the NDP publication, a Preliminary Business Case had been submitted for analysis and approved by the Government in as required under the *Public Spending Code* allowing the proposed project to move into the Railway Order application process.

DART+ programme will alleviate some of the constraints on the Dublin City Centre rail network and provide for additional intercity rail services. The NDP supports NSO 4, Sustainable Mobility and outlines the importance of investing in high quality sustainable mobility (active travel and public transport) networks if the NPF population growth targets are to be supported sustainably. It is recognised that the investment in high-quality sustainable mobility will improve citizens’ quality of life, support Ireland’s transition to a low carbon society and enhance the country’s economic competitiveness. The NDP also highlights that the improved and expanded sustainable mobility services and infrastructure can also act as an enabler of the NPF’s commitment toward compact growth of the cities, towns and villages within their existing urban footprint.

2.3.2.2 National Sustainable Mobility Policy

The Department of Transport’s National Sustainable Mobility Policy (NSMP) sets out a strategic framework to 2030 for active travel and public transport to support Ireland’s overall requirement to achieve a 51% reduction in carbon emissions by the end of this decade, targeting at least 500,000 additional daily active travel and public transport journeys by 2030.

The NSMP has been developed to align with and complement other international, European and national policies and frameworks, such as the UN Sustainable Development Goals, Paris Agreement, European Green Deal, EU Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy and National Planning Framework.

The policy is guided by three key principles, which are underpinned by 10 high level goals as detailed in Table 2-2 below.

Table 2-2 Principles and Goals

Principles	Goals
Safe and Green Mobility	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improve mobility safety 2. Decarbonise public transport 3. Expand availability of sustainable mobility in metropolitan areas. 4. Expand availability of sustainable mobility in regional and rural areas. 5. Encourage people to choose sustainable mobility over the private car
People Focused Mobility	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Take a whole of journey approach to mobility, promoting inclusive access for all. 7. Design infrastructure according to Universal Design Principles and the Hierarchy of Road Users model. 8. Promote sustainable mobility through research and citizen engagement
Better Integrated Mobility	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 9. Better integrate land use and transport planning at all levels. 10. Promote smart and integrated mobility through innovative technologies and development of appropriate regulation.

The DART+ West project supports the principles and goals outlined in the NSMP, removing at-grade level crossings from the rail and road network, whilst increasing the service capacity of the commuter rail services improving the safety of all mobility options and supporting the Safe Routes to School Programme.

The DART+ programme is identified as a key focus for the Greater Dublin Area, by expanding the electric and battery electric fleet and rail network, with electrified services from 50 km to 150 km by 2030. The DART+ programme also expands and improves public transport services through improved railway infrastructure which is fundamental to achieving the target of an additional 500,000 daily active travel and public transport journeys by 2030.

The principles and goals of the National Sustainable Mobility Policy align with and support the DART+ West project.

2.3.2.3 National Investment Framework for Transport in Ireland (2021)

In December 2021, the Department of Transport published the National Investment Framework for Transport in Ireland (NIFTI) which replaces the Strategic Investment Framework for Land Transport (SFILT) following

the launch of Project Ireland 2040 in February 2018. NIFTI provides a framework to guide transport investment and deliver the infrastructure and services, aligning with the NPF and its National Strategic Outcomes (NSOs) to provide a consistent approach to investment across Government. Through the transport investment priorities identified it will contribute to Ireland’s decarbonisation efforts, support vibrant and successful communities, deliver high performing transport systems, and promote a strong and balanced economy.

As part of the future network analysis completed to support investment priorities, NIFTI identifies consistent congestion as an issue in the five major cities in the country: Dublin, Cork, Galway, Limerick, and Waterford. It supports the development of new urban infrastructure supply across the five cities including the development of BusConnects and comprehensive cycle networks, while Dublin will also see heavy rail improvements in the form of DART+ and MetroLink among other things. The continued support of the DART+ Programme demonstrates the substantial investment in sustainable mobility being delivered under the National Development Plan 2021-2030.

The future network analysis undertaken to inform NIFTI has reiterated the importance of the DART+ Programme for the GDA as it will address existing congestion issues, cater for rising travel demand, and support sustainable public transport options across the GDA. The DART+ Programme will also encourage compact growth, transport-orientated development (TOD) and the decarbonisation of the sector to include the purchasing of electric powered trains. The proposed project also supports improvements and maximisation of existing transport infrastructure assets.

To address the transport challenges, NIFTI establishes four investment priorities namely:

1. Decarbonisation.
2. Protection and Renewal.
3. Mobility of People and Goods in Urban Areas.
4. Enhanced Regional and Rural Connectivity.

Projects must align with these priorities to be considered for funding. Moreover, as the NSOs are embedded in NIFTI future investment made in accordance with the priorities will support the delivery of the National Planning Framework over the coming decades. The DART+ Programme is fully aligned with these priorities and is supported under NIFTI. NIFTI investment priorities are outlined in Figure 2-2.



Figure 2-2 National Investment Framework for Transport in Ireland – Investment Priorities

NIFTI identifies a modal hierarchy or hierarchy of travel modes that will be encouraged when investments or other interventions are being considered. The modal hierarchy is illustrated in Figure 2-3 below, it clearly identifies the dominance of first supporting active travel, then sustainable travel modes and the last option being private vehicles. This hierarchy of investments will enable and support multiple NSOs contained in the NPF and will also support decarbonising the transport sector and delivering on the principles of compact

growth. It is well documented that a significant shift is need in Ireland from low-occupancy private vehicles to active and more sustainable travel modes particularly to support our cities, towns and urban centres. NIFTI acknowledges that the private car will remain, but investment and integrated planning must support this hierarchy. The DART+ Programme is fully supported by NIFTI.



Figure 2-3 NIFTI modal hierarchy

2.3.2.4 Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021

In July 2021, the Government signed the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021 into law. This Act provides a governance framework setting out how Ireland will transition to 'Net Zero' and achieve a climate neutral economy by no later than 2050.

The key features of the Act are:

- Placing on a statutory basis a 'national climate objective', which commits to pursue and achieve, the transition to a climate resilient, biodiversity-rich, environmentally sustainable and climate- neutral economy, by no later than 2050.
- Carbon budgets including a provision for setting sectoral targets.
- Actions for each sector to be included in an annually revised Climate Action Plan.
- Strengthened role for the Climate Change Advisory Council.
- New oversight and accountability by the Oireachtas.
- Public Bodies will be obliged to perform their functions in a manner consistent with national climate plans and strategies and furthering the achievement of the national climate objective.

Transport is one of the key sectors in which substantial improvements are required in order for Ireland to achieve a climate neutral economy by no later than 2050. The DART+ Programme will contribute to achieving this objective.

2.3.2.5 The Climate Action Plan 2021

The Climate Action Plan 2021 provides a detailed plan for taking action to achieve the Government commitment to reduce the overall greenhouse gas emissions by 51% by 2030 and includes the detailed actions to reach net-zero emissions by no later than 2050, (committed to in the Programme for Government and the 'Climate Act 2021'). The commitments make Ireland one of the most ambitious countries in the world on climate action and emissions reduction and the scale of the challenge will require effort across all sectors of government and the public in order to deliver on these commitments.

The Action plan will work towards providing a cleaner, greener economy and society; and works towards resilience and adaptation from the devastating consequences of climate change. It also represents significant

opportunity to create new jobs and grow businesses in areas like offshore wind; cutting-edge agriculture; and retrofitting, making our homes warmer and safer.

The Plan lists the actions needed to deliver on our climate targets and sets indicative ranges of emissions reductions for each sector of the economy. It will be updated annually, to ensure alignment with the legally binding economy-wide carbon budgets and sectoral ceilings.

Of most relevance to the DART+ West project actions across transport targets, decarbonisation, land use integration and citizen engagement and participation. **Transport targets:**

To meet the required level of emissions reduction, by 2030 we will:

- Provide for an additional 500,000 daily public transport and active travel journeys
- Develop the required infrastructural, regulatory, engagement, planning, innovation and financial supports for improved system, travel, vehicle and demand efficiencies
- Increase the fleet of EVs and low emitting vehicles (LEVs) on the road to 945,000, comprising of:
 - 845,000 electric passenger cars
 - 95,000 electric vans
 - 3,500 low emitting trucks
 - 1,500 electric buses
 - an expanded electrified rail network
- Raise the blend proportion of biofuels to B20 in diesel and E10 in petrol
- Reduce ICE kilometres by c. 10% compared to present day levels
- Undertake a programme of work which will review progress and further refine measures that will seek to deliver the additional c. 0.9 MtCO₂ reduction by 2030 in a fair and equitable manner

Measures to deliver targets include: Expanding sustainable mobility options to provide meaningful alternatives to everyday private car journeys is necessary to reduce transport emissions. Continued and enhanced investment in our walking, cycling and public transport infrastructure and services across the country is required on a scale not previously seen. The plan commits to delivering an additional 500,000 daily sustainable journeys by 2030 (c. 14% increase on current levels) through the implementation of major transport projects such as:

- Expanding rail services and infrastructure in, and around, major urban centres i.e. DART+ Programme.
- BusConnects.
- Connecting Ireland.
- A significant increase in walking and cycling investments.

Specifically, **Action 240:** Commence delivery of DART+ Programme and continue heavy rail fleet investment.

Decarbonisation of the transport sector: Decarbonisation of public sector transport emissions from transport account for about 30% of the public sector's overall GHG emissions, the second largest portion after buildings. Increased use of electric vehicles (EVs) by the public sector will help to demonstrate their value to wider society, improve urban air quality, and reduce noise pollution, supporting sustainable urban communities in line with the National Planning Framework. As part of the actions the plans states will

- Transition the rail fleet towards an electric model, increasing the length of electrified rail network from 50 kilometres to 150 kilometres by 2030, including the DART+ project which will extend DART services to Drogheda in the north; Maynooth in the west; Hazelhatch in the southwest; and Greystones in the southeast.

- We will accelerate the removal of obstacles to decarbonisation of our transport fleet, proactively addressing technical and regulatory barriers.

Energy transition: Among the most important measures of the Action Plan is to dramatically increase the proportion of renewable electricity to up to 80% by 2030. This includes an increased target of up to 5 Gigawatts of offshore wind energy. This target is needed not only to reduce fossil fuel reliance and reduce associated emissions but is also necessary to support the electrification of our transport sector including the electrification of the DART+ West

Citizen engagement and behaviour change: The Climate Action Plan will result in reducing our dependence on imported fossil fuels, and power comes from our own indigenous renewable resources including wind and solar providing not only a cleaner environment but also economic development. It will be important that society adapts and makes the necessary changes in lifestyle and consumption patterns and are supported by the Government through education, financial incentives and physical infrastructure design that supports easy, low carbon, healthier options such as active travel. Walking and cycling will see significant investment in the coming years making it safer and more attractive to the public. Public transport integration with active modes as well as electrification will bring many benefits to communities and tackling transport emissions. Public transport improvements such as DART+ project will result in a more efficient, cleaner, more frequent and reliable service with reduced noise, air and greenhouse gas emissions. The improvements in public transport and active modes will also support a just transition and provide benefits to all the economy, society and the environment.

2.3.2.6 The White Paper: Ireland's Transition to a Low Carbon Energy Future 2015-2030

The White Paper 'Ireland's Transition to a Low Carbon Energy Future 2015-2030' provides a framework to guide policy and the actions that Government intends to take in the energy sector from now up to 2030 transforming Ireland's fossil fuel-based energy sector into a clean, low carbon system. The White Paper comprises of an energy policy update and provides the framework to guide the national policy. The Paper considers European and International climate change objectives and agreements. The actions that support the proposed project are: "*Support initiatives to improve the energy efficiency of the rail network*" (pg. 66) and "*Support further rail electrification*" (pg.67).

2.3.3 Regional policy

2.3.3.1 Eastern and Midland Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2019-2031

The Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly (EMRA) produced the Eastern and Midland Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2019-2031 (EM RSES), a strategic plan and investment framework and provides regional policy objectives for the Midlands, Eastern and Dublin region. The RSES addresses the implementation of Project Ireland 2040 at the regional level. It considers spatial and economic factors which relate to the future of the region and ensures that employment opportunities, services, ease of travel and the overall wellbeing of citizens is being addressed.

Throughout the strategy there are 3 cross cutting key principles; Healthy Placemaking, Climate Action and Economic Opportunity, all of which are supported by the DART+ West project. The Strategy highlights the DART+ and its role in the consolidation of Dublin City and the regeneration of locations such as Dublin Docklands and Poolbeg. Along the North-West corridor, the DART+ West to Maynooth will enhance rail services along the Dublin – Sligo line. The RSES also emphasizes the role of DART+ in increasing capacity to support the ongoing development of lands adjacent to the line at Leixlip and Maynooth and support the further development of compact sustainable development in existing urban centres.

Maynooth is a key town in the GDA and an economic driver for North Kildare. The delivery of the DART+ West project is identified as a 'enabling infrastructure' for the future sustainable development of Maynooth which is also included in the Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP).

Policy Objective **RPO 8.8**: “The RSES supports delivery of the rail projects set out in Table 8.2, subject to the outcome of appropriate environmental assessment and the planning process”.

The DART+ Programme is listed as one of the rail projects in Table 8.2: “DART Expansion Programme - new infrastructure and electrification of existing lines, including provision of electrified services to Drogheda or further north on the Northern Line, Celbridge-Hazelhatch or further south on the Kildare Line, Maynooth and M3 Parkway on the Maynooth/ Sligo Line, while continuing to provide DART services on the South-Eastern Line as far south as Greystones”.

The Strategy highlights the importance of provision of enabling infrastructure for growth in Maynooth, identifying that the “DART+ project and proposed electrification of the rail line to Maynooth represents a significant opportunity for sequential growth in Maynooth”. The DART+ West project also supports climate action and economic development across the region.

2.3.3.1.1 Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP)

Chapter 5 of the EM RSES details the Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP) for Dublin. The MASP is an integrated land use and transportation strategy for the Dublin Metropolitan Area that sets out;

- **A Vision** for the future growth of the metropolitan area and key growth enablers, identifying strategic corridors based on their capacity to achieve compact sustainable and sequential growth along key public transport corridors, existing and planned.
- **Large scale strategic residential, employment and regeneration development opportunities** and any infrastructure deficits or constraints that need to be addressed.
- **A sequence of infrastructure priorities** to promote greater co-ordination between local authorities, public transport and infrastructure.

The plan requires the development of the Dublin MASP and include the management of sustainable and compact growth of Dublin metropolitan areas and better use of underutilised lands.

The Vision for MASP is to “build on our strengths to become a smart, climate resilient and global city region, expanding access to social and economic opportunities and improved housing choice, travel options and quality of life for people who live, work, study in or visit the metropolitan area.” This vision is underpinned by a spatial framework which supports the overall settlement strategy of the EMRA and sequential development of the metropolitan area which include focusing on the consolidation of Dublin City and suburbs and key towns including Maynooth and the planned development of Dunboyne and Leixlip which will be served by the DART+ West project.

One of the **Guiding Principles** to achieve this vision is;

‘Integrated Transport and Land use: To focus growth along existing and proposed high quality public transport corridors and nodes on the expanding public transport network and to support the delivery and integration of ‘BusConnects’, DART expansion and LUAS extension programmes, and Metro Link, while maintaining the capacity and safety of strategic transport networks.

Regional Policy objective for Sustainable Transport includes:

RPO 5.2 Support the delivery of key sustainable transport projects including Metrolink, DART and LUAS expansion programmes, BusConnects and the Greater Dublin Metropolitan Cycle Network and ensure that future development maximises the efficiency and protects the strategic capacity of the metropolitan area transport network, existing and planned.

RPO 5.3: Future development in the Dublin Metropolitan Area shall be planned and designed in a manner that facilitates sustainable travel patterns, with a particular focus on increasing the share of active modes (walking and cycling) and public transport use and creating a safe attractive street environment for pedestrians and cyclists.

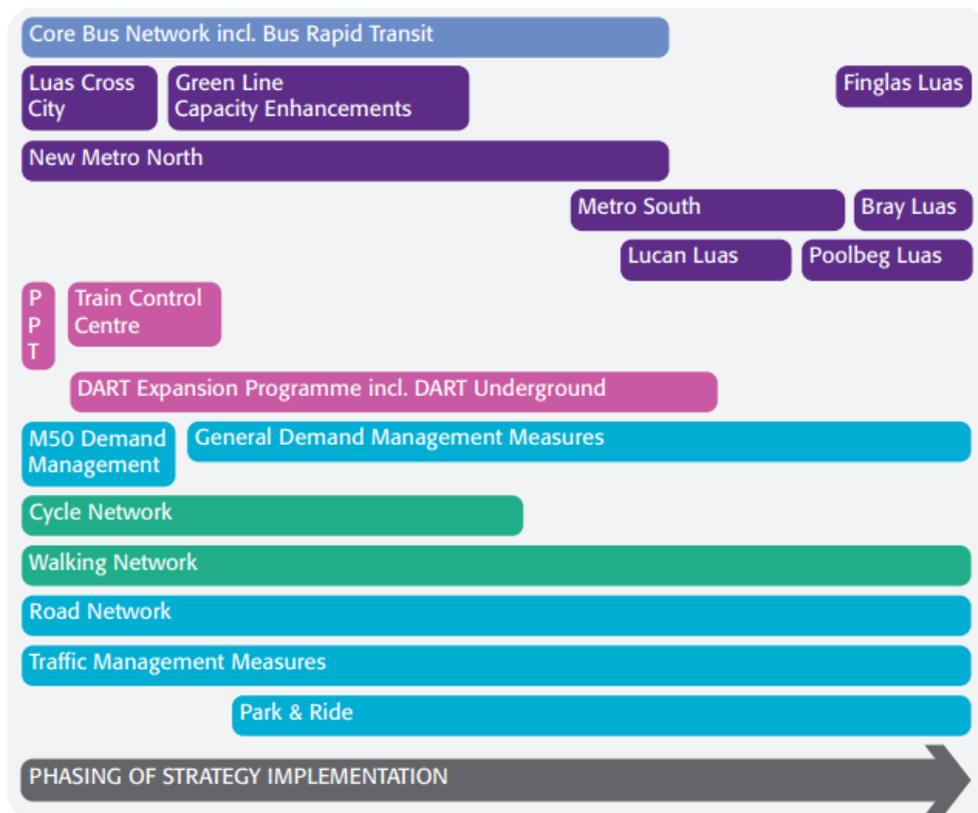
The DART+ West project aligns with the Vision and regional policy objectives for MASP. It will support sustainable transport objectives and enabling infrastructure for key locations prioritised for future population and economic development including Dublin City centre and suburbs, Maynooth, Leixlip and Dunboyne.

2.3.3.1.2 Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2016-2035

The National Transport Authority (NTA) developed the Transport Strategy for the GDA with the purpose of contributing “to the economic, social and cultural progress of the GDA by providing for the efficient, effective and sustainable movement of people and goods.”

The Strategy provides a framework for the planning and delivery of transport infrastructure and services in the Greater Dublin Area (GDA) over the next two decades up to 2035. It also set outs the transport planning policy around which other agencies involved in land use planning, environmental protection, and delivery of other infrastructure such as housing, water and power, can align their investment priorities. It is, therefore, an essential component, along with investment programmes in other sectors, for the orderly development of the Greater Dublin Area over the next 20 years. It builds on previous strategies and is required to be reviewed every 6 years which is currently underway (see section below). The Strategy identifies current trends and challenges including addressing the continued dominance of the private car in the GDA which is in contrast to the situation pertaining to the city centre where less than 1 in 4 people drive to work. It also highlights that public transport numbers are increasing including those on DART and will continue as population growth is expected to increase. Figure 2-4 indicates the phasing of the strategy implementation.

The Strategy sets out infrastructure proposals by mode share as follows: Heavy rail, light rail, bus, cycling, walking and road infrastructure. The Strategy also address the issues of freight movement, parking provision, the provision of park & ride sites and transport demand management and addresses the importance of integrated transport and land use planning as well as behaviour change.



*PPT – Phoenix Park Tunnel

Figure 2-4 Phasing of the Strategy Implementation

It includes infrastructure proposals for heavy rail (DART and Commuter), light rail, bus, cycling, walking and roads as shown below. Some of the heavy rail proposals are identified in Figure 2-5 below.



Figure 2-5 Multi modal Transport Strategy for Greater Dublin Area and heavy rail

In developing the Strategy, the NTA have considered alternative options for the provision of transport services along the six radial corridors into Dublin City and found heavy rail to be the most appropriate solution to meet the transport needs of the high-density population centres across several of the corridors identified.

The Strategy recognises the many benefits metropolitan rail services would bring to areas due to increased use of the existing asset of the Maynooth Line stating it *“would have many advantages, particularly in the context of development at locations such as Hansfield and Pelletstown. As such, it is proposed to extend DART to Maynooth by electrifying this line and by removing the level crossings.”*

Some of the Heavy Rail Infrastructure provision identified in the Strategy includes the following:

- *“Implement the DART Expansion Programme, which will provide DART services as far north as Drogheda; to Hazelhatch on the Kildare Line (including a tunnel connection from the Kildare Line to link with the Northern / South-Eastern Line); to Maynooth in the west and to the M3 Parkway.”*
- *Develop a new train control centre to manage the operation of the rail network.*
- *Construct additional train stations in developing areas with sufficient demand.*
- *Implement a programme of station upgrades and enhancement.*
- *Ensure an appropriate level of train fleet, of an appropriate standard, to operate on the rail network.*

The Strategy also outlines its objectives for Transport Services and Integration, including bus and rail services, in relation to the rail service, the Strategy proposes the following:

- *The DART services will operate to a high frequency with adequate capacity to cater for the passenger demand. It is anticipated that DART services in the city centre section of the network will operate to a regular ten-minute service frequency in the peak hours from 2016 and will transition to a five minute service frequency following the completion of the DART Expansion Programme.*

The DART+ West project supports the delivery of the Transport Strategy for the GDA.

The GDA Transport strategy includes many provisions/intentions to address transportation issues identified across all modes some of these are provisions are described below.

Walking

Section 5.7 of the Strategy sets out provisions for walking, some of the most relevant provisions for the DART+ West project include the following:

- *Provide a safer, more comfortable and more convenient walking environment for those with mobility, visual and hearing impairments, and for those using buggies and prams.*
- *Revise road junction layouts, where appropriate, to provide dedicated pedestrian crossings, reduce pedestrian crossing distances, provide more direct pedestrian routes, and reduce the speed of turning traffic.*
- *Ensure that permeability and accessibility of public transport stops and stations for local communities is maintained and enhanced.*

Regional and Local Roads

Section 5.8.2 of the Strategy sets out provisions for Regional and Local Roads, some of the most relevant provisions for the DART+ West project include the following:

- *Regional and Local Roads: Enhance orbital movement, outside of the M50 C-Ring, between the N3, the N4 and N7 national roads, by the widening of existing roads and the development of new road links.*
- *Regional and Local Roads: Develop appropriate road links to service development areas.*
- *Regional and Local Roads: Enhance pedestrian and cycle safety through the provision of safer road junctions, improved pedestrian crossing facilities and the incorporation of appropriate cycle measures including signalised crossings where necessary.*

Principles of Road Development

Section 5.8.2 of the Strategy sets out provisions for Principles of Road Development some of the most relevant provisions for the DART+ West project include the following:

- *There will be no significant increase in road capacity for private vehicles on radial roads inside the M50 motorway.*
- *That the road scheme, other than a motorway or an express road proposal, will be designed to provide safe and appropriate arrangements to facilitate walking, cycling and public transport provision.*

The DART+ West project is included as a key heavy rail project in the Transport Strategy for the GDA that will support climate resilient, compact sustainable development of the GDA. It supports the delivery of frequent and reliable services to the Maynooth, M3 Parkway and city centre lines as well as supporting active transport modes (walking and cycling). It will also support integrated transport and land use planning, and with the planned improvement in the fleet and increase in services it will support behaviour changes due to the provision of viable over the private car.

2.3.3.1.3 Draft Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2022-2042

The draft Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2022-2042, developed by the National Transport Authority (NTA) in 2021 is currently at public consultation stage. The Strategy reviews and builds on the previous Strategy and once finalised will replace 2016- 2035 Strategy (discussed in the previous section). The Strategy addresses the transportation requirements to support the continued co-ordinated development within the counties of Dublin, Meath, Kildare and Wicklow. Major projects provided for in the Strategy include:

- *Luas Cross City.*
- *The reopening of the Phoenix Park Tunnel Rail Line.*
- *The on-going roll out of cycle tracks and greenways.*
- *Metrolink; DART+ Programme.*
- *Investment in bus priority and bus service improvements – BusConnects Dublin.*

- *M7 Naas to Newbridge widening, Osberstown Interchange and Sallins Bypass.*

With regards to the DART+ Programme, the Strategy includes the following measures:

Measure RAIL1 – DART+ *“The DART+ Programme will be implemented, providing electrified services to Drogheda in the north and Maynooth plus Celbridge in the west, in addition to an enhanced level of service to Greystones. The programme will include additional fleet, aligned with higher passenger demand, and a higher frequency of service on all lines”.*

Measure RAIL7 – Station Upgrades *“The NTA, in conjunction with Irish Rail, will upgrade, refurbish and maintain train stations across the GDA to ensure that they are of an appropriate standard and provide a good quality experience for passengers”.*

Measure RAIL6 – New Rail Stations *“The NTA, in conjunction with Irish Rail, will develop new rail stations at Cabra, Glasnevin, Heuston West, Kylemore, Woodbrook, west of Sallins, west of Louisa Bridge and west of Maynooth. Kishoge station will also open in the short term as development of the Clonburris SDZ is realised. Other stations will be considered where development patterns support such provision”.*

Measure CYC8 – Bikes on Public Transport *“The NTA will facilitate the carriage of standard bicycles on all newly acquired (during this strategy period) DART, Commuter and Intercity rail carriages operating in the Greater Dublin Area at all times”.*

In relation to the road network, the proposed DART+ West project will also facilitate the implementation of the following measures:

Measure ROAD1 – Principles of Road Development

“1. That there will be no significant increase in capacity for private car trips on radial roads within the Metropolitan Area, except where re-alignments or junction changes are necessary for safety reasons;

4. That road schemes, other than a motorway or protected road, will be designed will be designed to provide safe and appropriate arrangements to facilitate walking, cycling and public transport provision, including as applicable, the delivery of walking and cycling facilities off line where this is considered to be a more attractive solution for these modes;”

Measure ROAD9 – Regional and Local Roads Policy

“5. Enhance pedestrian and cycle safety through the provision of safer road junctions, improved pedestrian crossing facilities and the incorporation of appropriate cycle measures including signalised crossings where necessary; and

“6. Implement various junction improvements, realignments and local reconfigurations on the regional and local road network to address safety deficiencies and/or support integrated transport proposals catering for all road users”

The DART+ West project is still a cornerstone of the GDA transport Strategy and will supports the achievement of various measures including those identified above.

2.3.3.2 Integrated Implementation Plan 2019-2024

Following the approval of a transport strategy for the region by the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, is required to prepare an integrated implementation plan covering a six-year period. The Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2016-2035 was approved in February 2016. The preparation of the Integrated Implementation Plan was aligned with the Government’s review of capital spending which commenced in 2016 and culminated with the publication of the National Development Plan 2018-2027 in February 2018.

The NTA's Integrated Implementation Plan (IIP) 2019-2024 supports the delivery of the Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2016-2035 and is aligned with the objectives of the NDP (both now updated). It sets out the central infrastructure investment programme and overall funding provision over the six-year period. It identifies the key investment areas with respect to bus, light rail, heavy rail and integration and sustainable transport investment.

The IIP provides further detail on the sequencing and allocation of the €4.6bn available to the NTA across Bus, Light Rail, Metro and Heavy Rail projects up to 2024. It also notes that the "integrated rail network will provide a core, high-capacity transit system for the region and will deliver a very substantial increase in peak-hour capacity on all lines from Drogheda, Maynooth, Celbridge/Hazelhatch and Greystones".

The objectives of rail investment in the IIP are to:

- Implement key elements of the DART + programme.
- Eliminate the current signalling restrictions in the city centre through the completion of the City Centre Re-signalling project.
- Protect the safety and reliability of the GDA railway system through investment in upgrading of train control and monitoring systems.
- Continue investment in a level crossing closure programme.
- Enhance customer information systems and ticketing systems.
- Continue the upgrading and enhancement, including accessibility, of train stations in the GDA.

The investment programme and overall funding provision of the Implementation Plan align with and support the DART+ West project.

2.3.3.3 Greater Dublin Cycle Network Plan

The NTA published the Greater Dublin Area Cycle Network Plan in 2013. The Plan consists of the Urban Network, Inter-Urban Network and Green Route Network for each of the seven Local Authority areas comprising the Greater Dublin Area (GDA). The Plan sets out a 10-year strategy to expand the urban cycle network from 500 km to 2,480 km. The overarching objective of the NCPF is that 10% of all trips in Ireland will be made by bike by 2020.

The network will consist of a series of primary, secondary and feeder routes as well as greenways routes. These routes will comprise of a mix of cycle tracks and lanes, cycleways and infrastructure-free cycle routes in low traffic environments. To compliment the investment in the cycle network, the cycle network plans also provide for:

- *The expansion of the bike share scheme in Dublin City and the introduction of similar schemes across the Greater Dublin Area.*
- *The implementation of a comprehensive cycle route signage programme in conjunction with the development of the cycle network.*

The proposed network of primary, secondary and greenway routes that will help support cycling in the vicinity of the study area is shown in Figure 2-6.

It includes the development of the Royal Canal Greenway route. The Maynooth/Sligo rail line is immediately parallel to the Royal Canal extending from Dublin city centre to Maynooth. The canal towpath is paved from North Strand Road as far as Ashtown, with good quality gravel surface from there to Blanchardstown. This path is in use by cyclists as a de facto cycleway at present. A number of design studies are underway to develop a high-quality cycle track along the canal westward to Maynooth, as the Royal Canal Urban Greenway (RCUG) preferred route was presented at the Non-Statutory Public Consultation held in July 2021. The DART+ West project and the proposed greenway will complement each other in terms of connectivity and transport integration. Ongoing liaison between Fingal County Council and the RCUG design team and Iarnród Éireann has taken place in relation to the interfaces between the proposed projects.

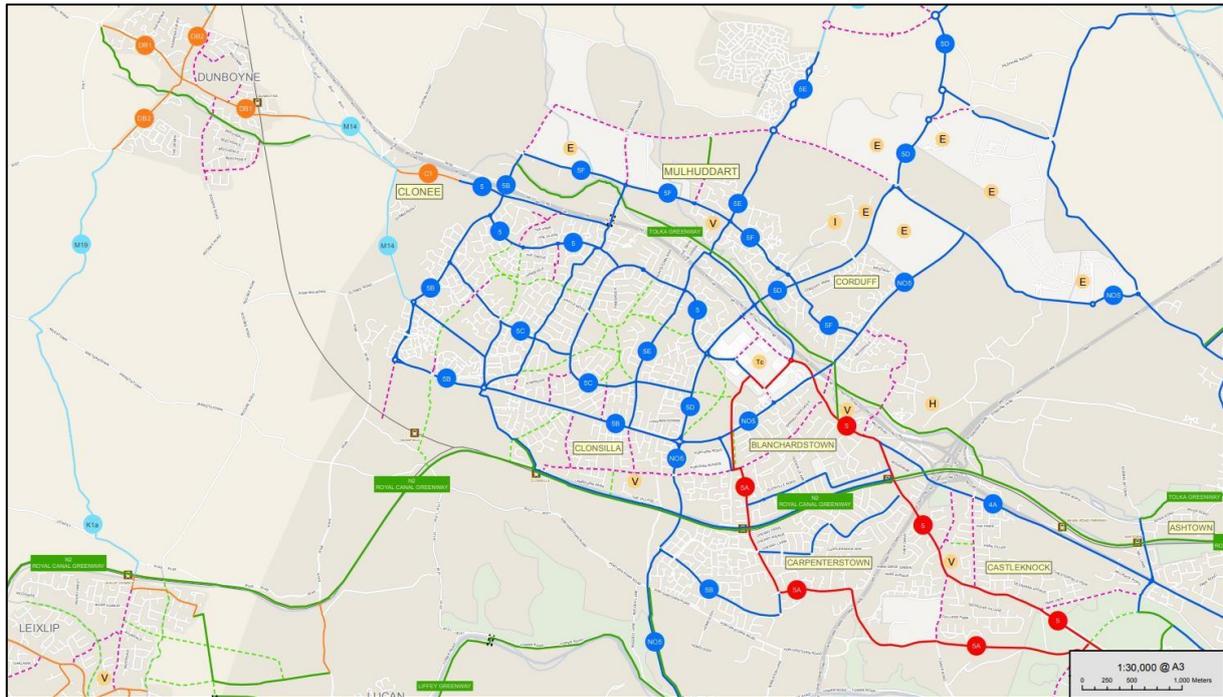


Figure 2-6 Greater Dublin Area Cycle Network Plan (part of)

2.3.4 Rail Policy

2.3.4.1 2030 Rail Network Strategy Review

In 2011, Iarnród Éireann carried out a review of future development requirements of the Iarnród Éireann InterCity Network (ICN) and regional services. It sets out a broad strategic goal for the rail network to “provide safe, accessible and integrated rail services that contribute to sustainable economic and regional development in an efficient manner.”

The review states that the Dublin – Sligo corridor “carries significant traffic from the commuter areas within the Greater Dublin Area”. The proposed development aims to electrify a portion of this corridor from Dublin to Maynooth.

In terms of the distribution of passenger demand across the various routes, the Strategy review indicates that in 2011 the number and distribution of passengers using intercity and outer-suburban rail services on the Dublin to Maynooth line were the second highest after the Dublin to Drogheda route at 4,147,000 (19.3%) and 5,768,000 accounting for 26.9% of the overall passenger demand respectively. This passenger demand on the Dublin to Maynooth line emphasise the need to increase the capacity and the frequency of rail services to Maynooth which will be facilitated by the proposed DART+ West project.

All-Island Strategic Rail Review – Public Consultation

In November 2021 an All-Island Strategic Rail Review consultation paper was launched and will focus on delivering 6 goals namely:

- Contribute to decarbonisation.
- Improve all island connectivity between major cities.
- Enhance regional and rural accessibility.
- Encourage sustainable mobility.
- Foster economic activity.
- Achieve economic and financial feasibility.

The Review expands on the commitment under the New Decade, New Approach agreement to examine the feasibility of a high/higher speed rail link between Belfast, Dublin and Cork and will look at ways to improve our current rail infrastructure, including the feasibility of high/higher speeds and electrification, better connections to the North-West, and role of rail in the efficient movement of goods.

2.3.4.2 Iarnród Éireann Strategy 2027

ÍÉ prepared the 2017 Strategy for its national railway network. The Strategy will aid ÍÉ to deliver high-capacity sustainable public transport solutions to cater for the increase in travel resulting from the anticipated population and employment growth, and to facilitate Ireland in improving sustainable mobility options and reduce carbon emissions from the transport sector.

The Strategy identifies the DART+ Programme as a priority investment project and highlights that the services along the DART line *“have all experienced significant passenger growth over recent years with overcrowding increasingly experienced by customers on some peak services, especially on the Maynooth Line”*. The Strategy notes that the DART+ programme will benefit the Intercity outer GDA services by increasing the capacity along the core rail corridors in the GDA. In the case of the DART+ West Project, the Strategy states that the Dublin-Sligo Intercity service will benefit from increase in reliability and journey times for rail users and increase in services *“to two-hourly all day with hourly peak services”* for the Dublin to Maynooth section of the rail corridor.

2.3.5 Local planning policy

2.3.5.1 Dublin City Development Plan 2016-2022

The Dublin City Development Plan (CDP) provides an integrated, coherent spatial framework to ensure Dublin City is developed in an inclusive way which improves the quality of life for its citizens, while also being a more attractive place to visit and work.

Dublin City Development Plan’s core strategy has been developed in line with the national and regional policy objectives set out in the National Spatial Strategy (NSS), the Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area (RPGs) and the and the government’s Smarter Travel – A Sustainable Transport Future 2009–2020.

The RPGs have incorporated the national and regional population targets set out in the NSS to county level. There is a requirement of the County Development to be consistent with these population targets, however it is acknowledged that they may not be met within the indicated timeframe.

The RPGs targets a population growth of approx. 60,000 persons from 2016 to 2022 to occur in Dublin City. In relation to housing, the RPGs target an increase in Dublin City’s housing stock by approx. 29,500 residential units for the 2016 – 2022 period in order to accommodate long-term sustainable growth. To address the RPGs housing target, the Dublin City DP aims to encourage *“infill and brownfield development; regeneration and renewal of the inner city; redevelopment of strategic regeneration areas; and the encouragement of development at higher densities, especially in public transport catchments”*. The plan aims to achieve this development through zoning land under ‘Z1- Sustainable Residential Neighbourhoods’ and ‘Z2- Residential Neighbourhoods (Conservation Areas)’ which will be subject to local area plans and masterplans.

The Dublin CDP provides an integrated, coherent spatial framework to ensure Dublin City is developed in an inclusive way which improves the quality of life for its citizens, while also being a more attractive place to visit and work. The areas relevant to the DART+ West project includes the areas between the Docklands extending east towards the Ashtown level crossing.

The main policies and objectives stated in the Development Plan which are of specific relevance to the DART+ Programme:

Policy MT1: To support the sustainability principles set out in The National Transport Authority's Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area

Policy MT4: To promote and facilitate the provision of Metro, all heavy elements of the DART Expansion Programme including DART Underground (rail interconnector), the electrification of existing lines, the expansion of Luas, and improvements to the bus network in order to achieve strategic transport objectives.

Policy MT3: To support and facilitate the development of an integrated public transport network with efficient interchange between transport modes, serving the existing and future needs of the city in association with relevant transport providers, agencies and stakeholders.

Policy MTO5: (i) To facilitate and support measures proposed by transport agencies to enhance capacity on existing public transport lines and services, to provide/improve interchange facilities and provide new infrastructure.

Policy MT6: (i) To work with Iarnród Éireann, the NTA, Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) and other operators to progress a coordinated approach to improving the rail network, integrated with other public transport modes to ensure maximum public benefit and promoting sustainable transport and improved connectivity.

Policy MT6: (ii) Subject to a station layout assessment, to promote the re-instatement of station entrance at Amiens Street/Buckingham Street Junction.

The current Dublin City Development Plan is currently under review. A central policy tenant in the forthcoming plan will be Transit Oriented Development (TOD) which DART+ West would support.

2.3.5.1.1 North Lotts and Grand Canal SDZ Planning Scheme 2014

Dublin City Council successfully prepared and adopted a SDZ Scheme for the Docklands area of North Lotts and Grand Canal Dock in 2014. The Docklands Station is located within the SDZ. The main objectives within the North Lotts and Grand Dock SDZ that support the DART+ Programme include:

MV1: To continue to promote the modal shift from private car use towards increased use of more sustainable forms of transport such as cycling, walking and public transport and to implement the initiatives contained in the Government's 'Smarter Travel, A Sustainable Transport Future 2009-2020'

MV2: To support and facilitate the development of an integrated public transport network with efficient interchange between transport nodes, to serve the existing and future needs of all ages in association with relevant transport providers, agencies and stakeholders and to facilitate the integration of walking and cycling with public transport.

MV10: To promote best practice mobility management and travel planning to balance car use to capacity and provide for necessary mobility via sustainable transport nodes.

MV16: To support and facilitate the reservation strip as shown in City Blocks 2 & 7 for the provision of the DART Underground Station. All proposals within the zone of influences will demonstrate to IE how the proposal relates to the DART Underground design. In the interim period until DART underground is in place, temporary uses and/or pavilion structures will be considered on a short-term basis, subject with the DART Underground Office.

CD14: To promote the development of street infrastructure, walking and cycling routes and public transport routes to enhance connections between residential areas and the community facilities that exist in the wider neighbourhood.

Section 4.4.4.1 of the North Lotts and Grand Dock SDZ states ‘works for the provision of new public transport, or in the furtherance of existing or permitted public transport, shall be considered on their merits, in accordance with the policies and objectives of the Dublin City Development Plan’.

The above objectives are supported by the proposed DART+ West project.

2.3.5.1.2 Ashtown - Pelletstown Local Area Plan (January 2014)

The Ashtown - Pelletstown Local Area Plan (LAP) relates to the lands positioned south of the River Tolka and North of the Royal Canal within the administrative boundary of Dublin City Council. The lands of the LAP are immediately north of the existing Ashtown level crossing and train station.

The vision for Ashtown-Pelletstown LAP area is “*The creation of a sustainable living and working environment with a strong urban identity, anchored by mixed-use supporting hubs and benefitting from both good permeability and quality public transport options. The area shall be characterised by a vibrant social mix, reflected in a variety of housing options and community facilities/amenities, well integrated with the wider city via improved infrastructure and green infrastructure*”.

The LAP Objectives that support to this study and have been taken into account in the DART+ West project are:

MA1: *To improve accessibility throughout the plan area, facilitate the completion of hierarchical road infrastructure network, and encourage links to existing and proposed public transport nodes both within and beyond the LAP boundary.*

MA3: *To promote increased cycling and pedestrian activity through the development of a network of routes that connect to public transport routes, centres of employment, amenities and community and retail destinations.*

MA07: *To encourage and facilitate, in cooperation with Fingal County Council and Iarnród Éireann, the replacement of the existing manually operated rail level crossing at Ashtown Road, with suitably designed alternative. The eventual design shall have regard to both existing and proposed developments in the immediate vicinity of the plan area and provide for high quality pedestrian and cycle facilities linking with existing and proposed pedestrian cycle networks both within and surrounding the LAP area.*

2.3.5.2 Draft Dublin City Development Plan 2022-2028

At the time of writing, the draft Dublin City Development Plan 2022-2028 is under preparation and published for public consultation on 25th November 2021 until the 14th of February 2022. The main policies and objectives relevant to the DART+ Programme are as follows:

Policy SMT20: *To support the expeditious delivery of key sustainable transport projects including Metrolink, Bus Connects, DART+ and LUAS expansion programme so as to provide an integrated public transport network with efficient interchange between transport modes, serving the existing and future needs of the city and region.*

Policy SMT13: *To manage city centre road-space to best address the needs of pedestrians and cyclists, public transport, shared modes and the private car, in particular, where there are intersections between DART, LUAS and Metrolink and with the existing and proposed bus network.*

SMT015: *(ii) To promote and seek provision of additional stations as part of the DART+ projects in consultation with Iarnród Éireann/Irish Rail.*

SMT01: *To achieve and monitor a transition to more sustainable travel modes including walking, cycling and public transport over the lifetime of the development plan, in line with the city mode share targets of 26%*

walking / cycling / micro mobility; 57% public transport (bus / rail / LUAS); and 17% private (car / van / HGV / motorcycle).

SMT21: (i) To work with Iarnród Éireann/Irish Rail, the NTA, TII and other operators to progress a coordinated approach to improving the rail network, integrated with other public transport modes to ensure maximum public benefit and promoting sustainable transport and improved connectivity. (ii) To facilitate the needs of freight transport in accordance with the NTA's Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2016 – 2035 and forthcoming review.

2.3.5.3 Fingal Development Plan 2017-2023

The Fingal Development Plan (FDP) 2017-2023 policy remit in the context of this project includes the areas from the Ashtown level crossing west to Leixlip. Fingal Development Plan's core strategy has been developed in line with the national and regional policy objectives set out in the National Spatial Strategy (NSS) and the Regional Planning Guidelines (RPGs) for the Greater Dublin Area. There is a requirements of the County Development Plan to be consistent with these population targets, however it is acknowledged that they may not be met within the indicated timeframe.

The RPGs population targets for Fingal projects a population growth of 35,293 persons from 2016 to 2022. A share of 19.8% of Dublin's housing is targeted to be provided in Fingal between the 2016 to 2022 period. This target means an increase in Fingal's housing stock from 105,392 units in 2015 to 145,340 units (estimated) in 2023, this would require the construction of 39,948 new housing units in Fingal between 2016 and 2023. To address the RPGs housing target, Fingal DP has zoned lands for residential / mixed-use development, some of which are subject to more detailed local area plans (LAPs) and masterplans.

Fingal DP recognises that a “safe, efficient, effective and sustainable transportation system” is key to the future economic, social and physical development of Fingal.

Relevant aims of the FDP relating to transport are as follows:

- *Incorporating sustainable development, climate change mitigation and adaptation, social inclusion, high quality design and resilience are fundamental principles that underpin the Development Plan.*
- *To promote an appropriate balance of development across the County, by developing a hierarchy of high quality, vibrant urban centres and clearly delineated areas of growth, and favouring expansion in areas nearest to existing or planned public transport nodes.*
- *To promote and facilitate movement to, from, and within the County of Fingal, by integrating land use with a high quality, sustainable transport system that prioritises walking, cycling and public transport.*
- *To provide an appropriate level of safe road infrastructure and traffic management, in particular to support commercial and industrial activity and new development.*
- *To work with all relevant stakeholders to seek a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from transport.*

The integration of land use with public transport, specifically near high capacity public transport such as DART, offers and promotes a sustainable mode of commuting by ensuring that areas where people live are either close to, or are connected by public transport to their places of work or education. This strategy allows for the construction of high-density developments which will be appealing to the public as places to live in due to their proximity to transport corridors. This in turn has a financially beneficial effect on the service by increasing its patronage.

The delivery of the **DART+ Programme** is recognised as a strategic aim of the FDP, key policies include:

Improving transport within Fingal is recognised as key to the future economic, social and physical development of Fingal. The Fingal Development Plan supports the project through the following objectives:

MT30: *Support Iarnród Éireann and the NTA in implementing the DART+ Programme, including the extension of the DART line to Balbriggan, the design and planning for the expansion of DART services to Maynooth and the redesign of the DART Underground.*

MT31: *Design and implement measures, having regard to potential environmental impacts, to mitigate the increased congestion on the local road network caused by more frequent closures of the existing level crossings on the Maynooth Line. Ensure that well in advance of any such measures being taken, extensive direct consultation is undertaken with local communities and residents who would be directly impacted by such measures.*

MT28: *Facilitate, encourage and promote high quality interchange facilities at public transport nodes throughout the County.*

Strategic Aim 15: *Seek the development of a high-quality public transport system throughout the County and linking to adjoining counties, including the development of the indicative route for New Metro North and Light Rail Corridor, improvements to railway infrastructure including the DART Expansion Programme, Quality Bus Corridors (QBCs) and Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) systems, together with enhanced facilities for walking and cycling.*

The land use zoning objectives specific for the Ashtown, Coolmine, Porterstown, Clonsilla and Barberstown level crossings are mapped on Sheet 13, Blanchardstown South and detailed in the Planning Report (see the Supporting Documents accompanying this RO application).

2.3.5.3.1 Hansfield Strategic Development Zone Planning Scheme 2006

The Hansfield Strategic Development Zone (SDZ) Planning Scheme comprises approximately 80.74 hectares of land in south west Blanchardstown close to the county boundary with County Meath. The SDZ Planning Scheme was approved by An Bord Pleanála in April 2006 and a number of residential units are occupied. The site is currently active with residential units under construction namely in Zones 1, 2, 4 & 6.

The Transport Strategy for the SDZ included the opening of the old Navan Line. The first phase of the proposed railway linking Navan to Dublin opened in September 2010. Over 25 trains each way per day now run between the new M3 Parkway Station, Dunboyne and Dublin city centre. Part of the strategic infrastructure within the SDZ was to provide a new train station within the SDZ lands, and Hansfield train station was opened in 2013.

In addition, pedestrian/cyclist connection to Clonsilla Train Station will be provided as part of the SDZ strategy. Figure 2-7 illustrates the extent of the SDZ lands. The Hansfield SDZ lands are adjacent to the Barnhill LAP area.

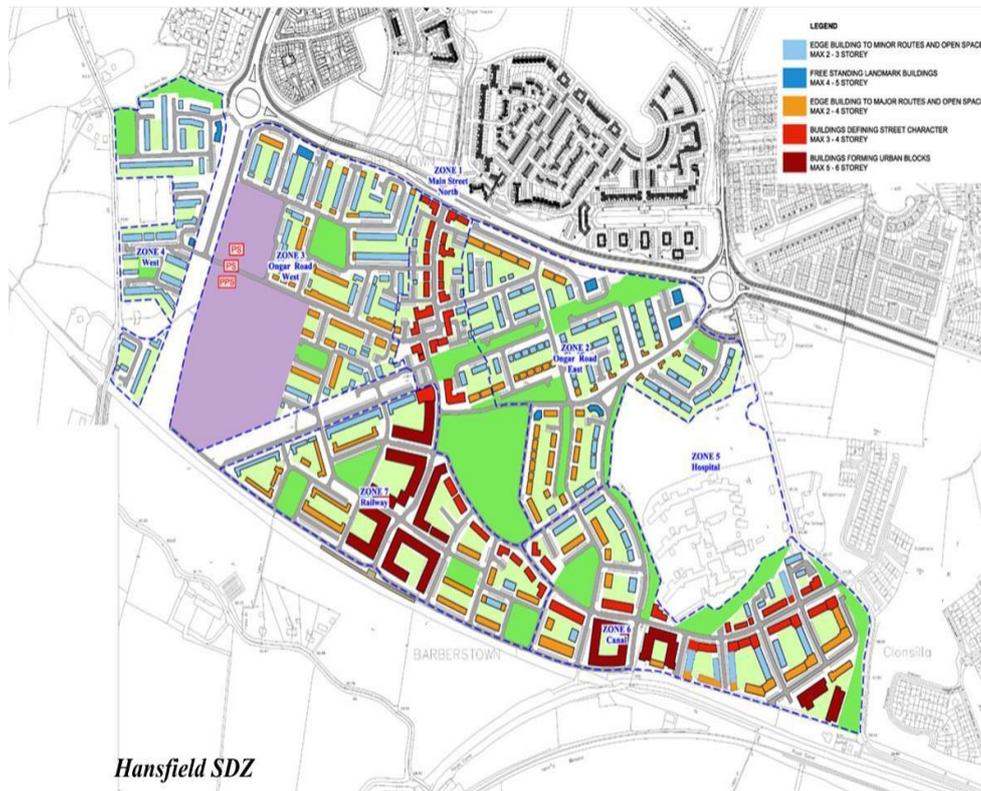


Figure 2-7 Hansfield Strategic Development Zone Boundary Area

2.3.5.3.2 Barnhill Local Area Plan 2018

The Barnhill LAP comprises 45.64 hectares of greenfield lands, illustrated in Figure 2-8. The zoned lands are located approximately 3km southwest (as the crow flies) from Blanchardstown Town Centre, situated directly south of the Dunboyne to Clonsilla rail Line to the south, the Royal Canal and the Dublin - Maynooth Railway Line to the west, and the R149 (Clonee to Leixlip) to the east.

The LAP Vision for Barnhill is to create a place to live that is *appealing, distinctive and sustainable, maximising the opportunities provided by the surrounding natural environment for biodiversity and improved amenities*. It is envisaged that Barnhill will develop as a sustainable community comprised of new homes, community, leisure and educational facilities based around an identifiable and accessible new local centre which will form the heart of the area.

Fingal County Council published the Barnhill LAP in October 2018. The following key objectives have been identified within the Fingal County DP 2017-2023 for the LAP:

Social Inclusion Objective SI1 “*Deliver between circa 950-1150 new dwellings and associated amenity and educational facilities on the LAP lands, to help meet existing and future housing needs and to create a sustainable and socially inclusive mixed-use community*”.

High Quality Design Objective HQD3 “*Create a sustainable mixed-use centre for Barnhill which meets local needs by providing an appropriate range of retail, commercial, leisure and residential uses and establishes a distinctive sense of place and heart for the community*”.

The key Movement and Transport Strategy objectives are listed below:

Objective MT1 “*Improve accessibility throughout the plan area, through the completion of a hierarchical road infrastructure network to serve the development, and encourage links to existing and proposed public transport nodes both within and beyond the LAP boundary*”.

Objective MT3 “Promote increased cycling and pedestrian activity within the development through a network of routes that connect to public transport routes, centres of employment, amenities, and community and retail destinations.”

Objective MT4 “Implement an integrated and sustainable movement and transport strategy for Barnhill which supports the effective management of sustainable travel patterns across the site with good connections to the greater Blanchardstown network.”

Objective MT6 “Prioritise sustainable modes of transport including walking, cycling and public transport and reduce the reliance on the use of private cars within Barnhill.”

In order to provide for a coherent sustainable movement and transport strategy, and to maximise development capacity within the LAP lands, it is required to deliver the necessary extension of the Ongar-Barnhill Road with provision of a new bridge over the Dunboyne (Pace) – Clonsilla rail line and provision of a new junction with the existing road network. This will connect the Ongar Road to the existing Clonee-Lucan Road (R149).



Figure 2-8 Barnhill LAP Movement Network

2.3.5.3.3 Kellystown Local Area Plan 2021

The Kellystown LAP was approved by Fingal County Council in January 2021. The Kellystown lands, outlined in Figure 2-9, are bound by the Royal Canal to the north and the Dublin-Maynooth Railway Line to the south, Diswellstown Road to the east and Clonsilla Road (R121) to the west.

The LAP lands comprise approximately 56.4 ha (0.4 ha occupied by roads) and will provide a statutory framework for the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

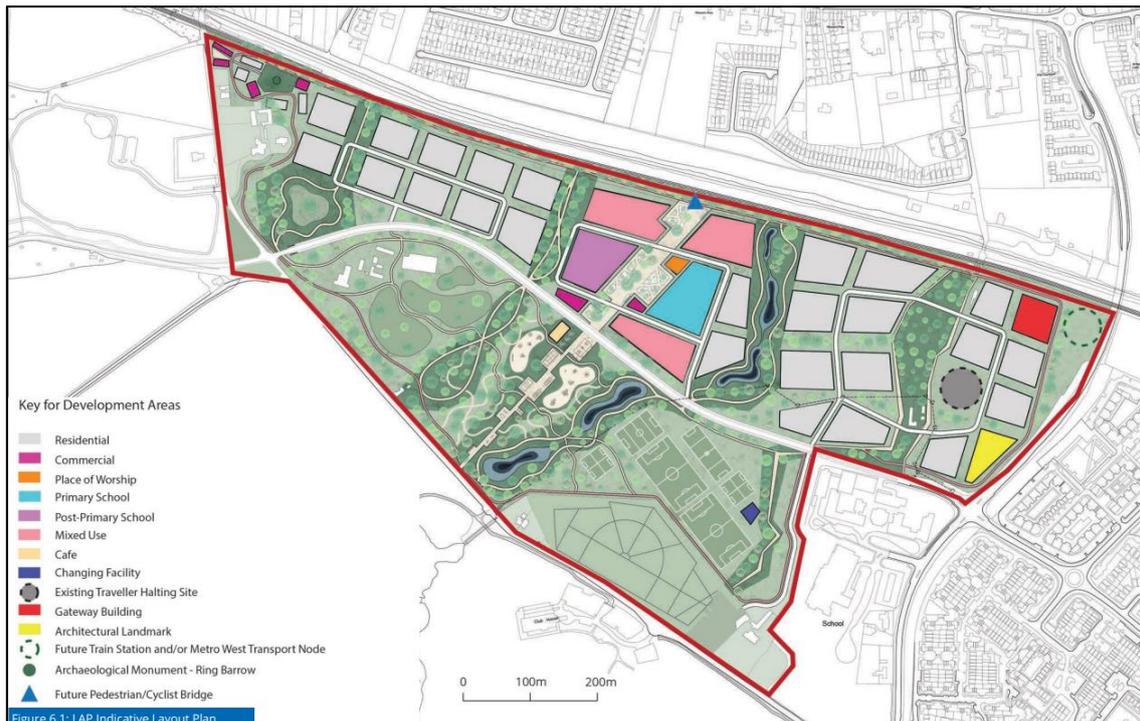


Figure 2-9 Kellystown LAP Indicative Layout Plan (Source: Kellystown LAP 2021)

The LAP makes reference to the DART+ West proposals and recognises the intention to close Clonsilla and Porterstown level crossings.

The LAP states “*With respect to Development Plan Objective 137 (To preserve the existing vehicular right of way at Old Porterstown Road level crossing), the findings of the Maynooth Line Transport Study report have concluded that there is no need to retain a vehicular right of way at this location. The Kellystown Draft LAP continues to support Objective 137 of the Fingal Development Plan.*”

The LAP supports the DART+ West project and investment in sustainable public transport, active travel, high quality sustainable urban developments and increased levels of pedestrian and cyclist movement within and around the area that will be supported by the project.

The general guiding principles for the development of lands within the Kellystown LAP include, but are not limited to the following:

Objective 6.2 “*Provide high quality housing having regard to the Planning Guidelines on Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas, the Fingal Development Plan development standards and the design principles as set out in this LAP*”.

Objective 6.4 “*Provide high quality development at appropriate densities in close proximity to Clonsilla Rail Station in order to maximise the benefits of investment in rail infrastructure*”.

Objective 6.12 “*Align pedestrian and cycle links to capture views to local features (natural and built) and incorporate opportunities for overlooking and passive surveillance insofar as possible*”.

Objective 6.13 “*Create safe and attractive pedestrian and cycle routes with high levels of legibility and permeability connecting the lands to local amenities and the adjoining areas of Clonsilla and Carpenterstown*”.

2.3.5.4 Draft Fingal County Development Plan 2023 – 2029

At the time of writing, the Draft Fingal Development Plan 2023-2029 was prepared and published for public consultation on 24th of February 2022.

The main policies and objectives relevant to the DART+ Programme are as follows:

- **Policy CMP18 – Public Transport:** Support the provision of a high-quality public transportation system that is accessible to all to serve the needs of the County and to enable a significant shift from car-based travel to public transport.
- **Policy CMP20 – Public Transport Interchange:** Support and facilitate the provision of high-quality transport interchanges within the transport network in order to facilitate seamless transition between different transport modes and to maximise the movement of people by sustainable modes.
- **Objective CMO22 – Enabling Public Transport Projects:** Support the delivery of key sustainable transport projects including MetroLink, BusConnects, DART+ and LUAS expansion programme so as to provide an integrated public transport network with efficient interchange between transport modes to serve needs of the County and the mid-east region in collaboration with the NTA, TII and Irish Rail and other relevant stakeholders.
- **Objective CMO23:** Support NTA and other stakeholders in implementing the NTA Strategy including MetroLink, BusConnects, DART +, LUAS and the GDA Cycle Network.
- **Objective CMO24:** Ensure that appropriate measures are put in place to mitigate the impacts of level crossing closures on the Maynooth rail line including protection measures for public transport and increased priority for cycling and walking.

2.3.5.5 Kildare County Development Plan 2017-2023

The Kildare County Development Plan (KCDP) sets out an overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of the functional area of County Kildare, over the period 2017-2023 and beyond. In the context of the DART+ Programme the KCDP relates to the areas from Leixlip extending west to the proposed depot west of Maynooth.

The key policies of the plan of relevance to the DART+ Programme are as follows:

MT 1: *Promote the sustainable development of the county through the creation of an appropriately phased integrated transport network that services the needs of communities and businesses.*

PTO 7: *Promote and support the upgrading of the Maynooth rail line and the Kildare rail line, in accordance with the Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2016-2035 and in co-operation with the NTA.*

Other policies and objectives which are of specific relevance to the DART+ Programme include:

- **MT 2:** *Support sustainable modes of transport by spatially arranging activities around existing and planned high quality public transport systems.*
- **MT3:** *Influence people's travel behaviour and choices towards more sustainable options by working closely with relevant organisations in improving and accessing public transport facilities.*
- **PT 1:** *Promote the sustainable development of the county by supporting and guiding national agencies including the National Transport Authority in delivering major improvements to the public transport network and to encourage public transport providers to provide an attractive and convenient alternative to the car.*
- **PT 2:** *Generate additional demand for public transport services by strengthening development around existing and planned high capacity transport routes and interchanges throughout the county.*
- **PTO 3:** *Support the delivery of the NTA's Greater Dublin Area Transport Strategy (2016-2035) in Kildare.*
- **PTO 5:** *Investigate, in co-operation with Irish Rail and the National Transport Authority, the provision of new railway stations in the county and the upgrading/relocation of existing stations, to rectify existing constraints in the network.*

2.3.5.5.1 Leixlip Local Area Plan 2020-2023

The existing Blakestown level crossing is located within the boundary of the Leixlip Local Area Plan. The LAP supports the proposed DART+ Programme through objective **MT2.2** "To support and facilitate the delivery of

electrification and upgrading of the Dublin – Sligo rail line from Connolly Station to Maynooth, including improvements to Cope Bridge.” and recognises the requirement for the removal of level crossings and re-signalling works.

Section 8.2 of the LAP (Public Transport) states “The DART Expansion Programme is a key project in the delivery of an integrated rail transport network for the Dublin region and includes the electrification of the Dublin-Sligo rail line from Connolly Station to Maynooth, together with the removal of level crossings and re-signalling”. It recognises that the realisation of this project will improve the number and frequency of train services in addition to improving journey times.

2.3.5.5.2 Maynooth Local Area Plan 2020-2023

The existing Maynooth train station is located within the development boundary of Meath LAP 2020-2023. Relevant policies include:

PT 1 To ensure where possible, that all public transport is accessible to the disabled.

PT 4 To provide greater opportunities for modal shift to public transport through the appropriate management of development particularly in the Canal Harbour area and pertaining to bus and train station facilities.

The project is consistent with and supports the long-term realisation of objectives contained in the LAP.

2.3.5.5.3 Kilcock Local Area Plan 2015-2021

The Kilcock Local Area Plan development boundary is located out of the development boundary immediately west of the proposed Depot location. The main policy and objectives stated in the LAP which would be applicable to the DART+ Programme include:

- **MT1:** To support the sustainability principles set out in the National Spatial Strategy, The Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area, Government’s ‘Smarter Travel, A Sustainable Transport Future 2009-2020’ and the National Transport Authority’s ‘A Platform for Change’, the Integrated Implementation Plan for Transport in the GDA and the Authorities Draft Transportation Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area (2011-2030) and to ensure that land use and zoning are fully integrated with the provision and development of a comprehensive, sustainable and efficient transportation network that accommodates the movement needs of Kilcock and the region.
- **MTO2:** To maximise the use of public transport infrastructure, walking and cycling and minimise car dependence.

2.3.5.6 Draft Kildare County Development Plan 2023-2029

At the time of writing, the draft Kildare County Development Plan 2023 – 2029 was prepared and published for public display on 14th of March 2022. The main policies and objectives relevant to the DART+ Programme are as follows:

TM P1: Promote sustainable development through facilitating movement to, from, and within the County that is accessible to all and prioritises walking, cycling and public transport.

TM P3: Promote the sustainable development of the county by supporting and guiding national agencies in delivering major improvements to the public transport network and to encourage a shift from car-based travel to public transport that is accessible for all, regardless of age, physical mobility, or social disadvantage.

TM O9: Facilitate and secure the delivery/implementation of the public transport projects that relate to County Kildare as identified within the Integrated Implementation Plan (2019-2024), (or any superseding document), including the DART+ programme (Including DART+ West and DART+ South West), BusConnects and the light rail investments.

TM O44: support the electrification of intercity routes.

2.3.5.7 Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027

The Meath County Development Plan (MCDP) 2021- 2027 was adopted on the 3rd of November 2021. Meath County Development Plan's core strategy has been developed in line with the national and regional policy objectives set out in the National Planning Framework (NPF) and the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Eastern and Midland Region.

The Core Strategy Vision of the Meath CDP is:

"To continue to support the creation of socio-economically progressive vibrant, dynamic, and healthy communities throughout the County and ensure that future growth is based on the principles of sustainable development that delivers a high-quality living and working environment that meets the needs of all residents, in accordance with National and Regional Guidance."

The objectives of the Meath Core Strategy are as follows:

- *"To demonstrate how the Meath County Development Plan is consistent with national and regional planning strategies, guidelines and policies including national and regional population projections.*
- *To provide the policy framework for the settlement strategy and Local Area Plans, particularly in relation to land use zoning and population distribution. Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027 Chapter 2.*
- *To ensure the co-ordination of infrastructural investment with settlements identified for future growth.*
- *To facilitate the population growth of Meath up to a projected population of 228,300 in the plan period and ensure the distribution of this population is targeted towards the growth centres identified in the RSES".*

To meet the population targets in County Meath, it is projected that approx. 91,320 residential units will need to be provided over an 11-year period, between 2016 and 2027. The Plan recognises that the County's future population should be managed in a way as to achieve compact growth. Analysis of land use was carried out as part of the Plan which showed that 31% of the total household allocation can be delivered on infill and brownfield lands, with the remaining percentage being delivered on greenfield land.

The relevant policies for DART+ West contained in the Plan include the following:

ED OBJ 10 *"In accordance with RPO 4.33 of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy, to support the continued development of Maynooth, co-ordinated with the delivery of strategic infrastructure including pedestrian and cycle linkages within the town and to the Royal Canal Greenway, DART expansion and road linkages forming part of the Maynooth Outer Orbital Route in a manner which supports future development and population growth and builds on synergies with Maynooth University promoting a knowledge-based economy".*

MOV OBJ 4 *"To improve, in conjunction with the NTA and Irish Rail, facilities at existing stations".*

MOV OBG6 *"To facilitate and encourage the upgrading of existing railway stations, and protect, as required, lands necessary for the upgrading of existing railway lines or stations or the provision of new railway stations throughout the County".*

The Plan also recognises the higher-level planning and transportation policy remit (e.g., Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2019-2031), and references support for these policies (RPO 8.8) that relate to the delivery of this project which states: *"The RSES supports delivery of the rail projects set out in Table 8.2, subject to the outcome of appropriate environmental assessment and the planning process."*

These projects include:

- Re-appraisal of the extension of the Dunboyne/M3 Parkway line to Navan during the Mid Term Review of the GDA Transport Strategy;

- Dart expansion Programme - new infrastructure and electrification of existing lines, including provision of electrified services to Drogheda, Maynooth and M3 Parkway on the Maynooth/Sligo Line.

It goes on to state that the “*Plan supports the prioritisation of these projects and will continue to support TII in the roll out of rail improvements and upgrades throughout the County.*”

MCDP recognises that the NTA’s Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area (GDA) provides a framework for the planning and delivery of transport infrastructure and services over the period 2016 - 2035.

The proposed development is consistent with and supports the Meath County DP 2021-2027.

2.3.5.7.1 Dunboyne Clonee Pace LAP 2009-2015

The existing PACE M3 Parkway Train station is located within the development boundary of the Dunboyne Clonee Pace LAP. Relevant policies include:

MOV POL 4 *To facilitate and protect the operation of the railway in conjunction with Iarnród Éireann/CIE. To protect the Pace–Navan extension of the railway corridor from inappropriate development where all planning applications lodged within the route reservation corridor or which may impact on the future railway will be referred to Iarnród Éireann/CIE for comment.*

MOV POL 6 *To facilitate the development of Park & Rides as set out in the Railway Order NA0001 at Dunboyne Station & Pace Interchange.*

2.4 Project need and strategic fit

The rail network in Ireland and more particularly in the Dublin Metropolitan area is a 19th century legacy, which represent a significant national asset in that it provides high-capacity public transport corridors into and through the city centre. The expansion of the heavy rail network has been a key long-term objective of CIÉ, Iarnród Éireann and statutory transport plans for a significant period. The expansion of the heavy rail network has been stop-start in nature and influenced by available Exchequer funding. The commissioning of the DART in the 1980’s is a huge public transport success. Subsequent funding has been provided in the 1990’s and early 2000’s to improve the rail network and increase capacity. However, due to the national economic downturn in 2008, capital investment was significantly constrained.

Project Ireland 2040 comprises the National Planning Framework 2040 (NPF) and the supporting investment package contained in the National Development Plan. The National Development Plan recommended that the DART+ Programme (previously termed DART Expansion) should proceed to deliver priority elements including investment in new train fleet, provision of new infrastructure and electrification of existing lines.

The NPF and NDP state that the focus should be on non-underground tunnel elements of the programme using existing tracks (i.e., using the Phoenix Park Tunnel branch line). On the 4th October 2021, the National Development Plan 2021-2030 was published in which the DART+ Programme is considered as the “*cornerstone of rail investment*” within the lifetime of Project Ireland 2040.

Advancement of priority elements of DART+ Programme is now approved in principle under the National Development Plan 2021-2030 and DART+ West will be the first of the DART+ Programme packages that will be lodged with An Bord Pleanála for the approval of a Railway Order application.

The requirement for increased capacity through the implementation of the DART+ Programme and specifically the DART+ West project, is multifaceted and will be transformative for the GDA transport landscape. The delivery of the proposed DART+ West project will enhance heavy rail infrastructure and will similarly contribute to the incremental transformation of the national heavy rail network. At an international level, the DART+

Programme supports Ireland's commitment to fulfil its obligation as an EU member state, regarding both the greenhouse gas emission reduction targets and the improved functionality of heavy rail services and integrated land use planning with sustainable mobility. DART+ West is a cornerstone transport project and will assist with supporting both the European Green Deal, and the Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy and climate action commitments.

Notwithstanding the benefits of improving sustainable transport options, the project is fundamental to supporting the economic and social growth that has been highlighted by the National Planning Framework and county development plans. The DART + West project will facilitate multi-modal journeys through the improved integration with other modes including LUAS, the proposed MetroLink, proposed BusConnects, proposed LUAS Finglas, the Royal Canal Greenway and other sustainable mobility infrastructure. The DART+ West is aligned with the implementation of Project Ireland 2040 and the National Planning Framework.

All existing stations on the railway corridor between Connolly Station and Spencer Dock Station to Maynooth Station and M3 Parkway Station will be catered for by more sustainable electrical rail network allowing a shift towards a low carbon emission passenger service through the introduction of a modernised electrified fleet. The improved frequency and quality of service will provide a viable transport alternative to existing and future communities along the route and support a modal shift to help support a climate resilient low carbon economy.

2.5 DART+ Programme objectives

DART+ Programme is a transformative programme of projects that aims to modernise and improve existing rail services in the Greater Dublin Area (GDA). It will see the DART network grow from its current 50 km in length to over 150 km.

The DART+ Programme's primary objective is to support urban compact growth and contribute to reducing transport congestion and emissions in the Dublin region by enhancing the heavy rail network between Dublin City Centre and the areas of Drogheda, Maynooth, Dunboyne, Celbridge and Greystones. It will provide a sustainable, electrified, reliable and more frequent rail service, improving capacity along these corridors.

Sub-objectives of the DART+ Programme include:

- Cater for existing heavy rail travel demand and support long-term patronage growth along established rail corridors in the Greater Dublin Area through the provision of a higher frequency, higher capacity, electrified heavy rail service which supports sustainable economic development and population growth.
- Improve accessibility to jobs, education and other social and economic opportunities through the provision of improved inter-rail and inter-modal connectivity and integration with other public transport services.
- Enable further urban compact growth along existing rail corridors, unlock regeneration opportunities and more effective use of land in the Greater Dublin Area, for present and future generations, through the provision of a higher capacity heavy rail network.
- Deliver an efficient, sustainable, low carbon and climate resilient heavy rail network, which contributes to a reduction in congestion on the road network in the Greater Dublin Area and which supports the advancement of Ireland's transition to a low emissions transport system and delivery of Ireland's emission reduction targets.
- Provide a higher standard of customer experience including provision of clean, safe, modern vehicles and a reliable and punctual service with regulated and integrated fares

2.6 DART+ West project objectives

The primary objective of the DART+ West project is to increase the carrying capacity on the project route corridor between City Centre and Maynooth/M3 Parkway and support the rapid transition required to deliver on a low carbon climate resilient transport system.

Sub-objectives include:

- To deliver higher frequency, higher capacity, reliable, electrified rail service along the project route corridor to enable the provision of DART services between City Centre and Maynooth Station / M3 Parkway Station.
- To deliver solutions to meet the Train Service Specification.
- To deliver a sustainable, low carbon and climate resilient design solution including making the maximum use of existing railway infrastructure together with targeted interventions to remove capacity constraints.
- To identify cost effective solutions from a capital, operations and maintenance perspective.
- To minimise adverse impacts on existing rail services, road users and landowners associated with the construction, operation and maintenance of the proposed development.
- To minimise adverse impacts on the natural and built environment associated with the construction, operation and maintenance of the proposed development.
- To deliver a sustainable, low carbon and climate resilient design solution including making use of existing infrastructure where possible with targeted improvement works.
- To deliver an improved customer experience and service for customers along the project corridors.

The requirements for the DART+ West project comprise technical and functional attributes associated with DART+ Programme requirements and the unique characteristics associated with the location and characteristics of the proposed development. These requirements include:

- To design in accordance with IÉ Standards and relevant national and EU standards and guidelines.
- Designs shall comply with the Minimum Employer's Functional Requirements and meet the Train Service Specification.
- Electrification of the line with overhead apparatus.
- Provision of an appropriate number of substations to support the electrification.
- Closure of existing level crossings and provision of appropriate alternative access.
- Improve safety for all users by separating the road and rail interface.
- Implement the necessary infrastructure changes to achieve the clearances required for electrification at bridges and structures
- Implement the safety improvements consequent on the introduction of electrification.
- Provision of new fleet maintenance depot for DART vehicles.
- Provide enhanced passenger interchange with existing public transport at Connolly and in the north Docklands area.
- Take cognisance of the planned sustainable transport programmes and projects.
- Allow for continued movements of freight traffic.
- Provide signalling and telecoms systems to support the proposed development.

2.7 References

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