



Public Consultation No.2

Annex 2.1: Option Selection Policy Context



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1. POLICY CONTEXT

The following sections of this report provide an overview of the strategic fit of the DART+ Programme and DART+ Coastal North project in relation to European, national, regional, and local policy. Reference should also be made to Annex 2.2: Useful Links which contains links to relevant supporting policies and documents.

It should be noted that policy documents are regularly under review and go through periodic updating. The analysis of each document will be updated if revisions or adoption occurs during the Railway Order Process.

1.1 International Policy

United Nations 2030 Agenda (United Nations, 2015)

In September 2015, Transforming Our World, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (the 2030 Agenda) was adopted by all 193 Member States of the United Nations (UN). The 2030 Agenda aims to deliver a more sustainable, prosperous, and peaceful future for the entire world, and sets out a framework for how to achieve this by 2030. This framework is made up of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which cover the social, economic, and environmental requirements for a sustainable future.



Figure 1-1: Sustainable Development Goals, Source: un.org

Sustainable Development Goals 9 and 11 are the most directly relevant to the proposed Project:

Goal 9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation.

Target 9.1: *Develop quality, reliable, sustainable, and resilient infrastructure, including regional and trans-border infrastructure, to support economic development and human wellbeing, with a focus on affordable and equitable access for all.*

Goal 11: *Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable*

Target 11.2: *By 2030, provide access to safe, affordable, accessible, and sustainable transport systems for all, improving road safety, notably by expanding public transport, with special attention to the needs of those in vulnerable situations, women, children, persons with disabilities and older persons.*

The DART+ Programme including the DART+ Coastal North project is supported by the goals and targets set out in the relevant SDGs. It will enable more efficient, safe and integrated sustainable transport movement. In Ireland, the SDGs are being implemented through the National Implementation Plan 2022-2024, which is in direct response to the 2030 Agenda. It provides a whole-of-government approach to implement the 17 SDGs.

1.2 European Policy

Trans-European Network for Transport

The Trans-European Network for Transport (TEN-T) is a European Union policy directed towards the implementation and development of a Europe-wide network of roads, railway lines, inland waterways, maritime shipping routes, ports, airports and rail-road terminals. The network consists of two layers:

The Comprehensive Network: Covering all EU regions.

The Core Network: A subset of the Comprehensive Network. This consists of the strategically most important connections, linking the most important nodes.

The objective of TEN-T is to close gaps, remove bottlenecks and eliminate technical barriers that exist between transport networks of EU Member States, strengthening the social, economic and territorial cohesion of the Union and contributing to the creation of a single European transport area. Under the TEN-T Regulation (EU) No 1315/2013, the Core Network is due to be completed by 31 December 2030, while the Comprehensive Network is due to be completed by 31 December 2050.

The aim of the EU's Transport Policy is to promote a mobility that is efficient, safe, secure and environmentally friendly. Congestion is not just a nuisance for road users, it also results in an enormous waste of fuel and reduces productivity. Many manufacturing processes depend on just-in-time deliveries and free flow transport for efficient production. Congestion costs the EU economy more than 1% of GDP – in other words, more than the EU budget. To reduce this, the EU needs more efficient transport and logistics, better infrastructure and the ability to optimise capacity use. The EU Commission also recognises that Europe needs transport which is cleaner and less dependent on oil. Moving towards low-carbon and more energy efficient transport, as well as developing more efficient urban and intermodal transport solutions are essential alternatives to developing a more environmentally friendly transport policy.

Regulation (EU) No 1315/2013 sets out the requirements for rail infrastructure that form part of the TEN-T infrastructure network, both Core (2030) and Comprehensive (2050), and states under Article 12(2)(d), the following:

“Member States shall ensure that the railway infrastructure:

(d) *save in the case of isolated networks, is fully electrified as regards line tracks and, to the extent necessary for electric train operations, as regards sidings;*”

The DART+ Programme including the DART+ Coastal North project is consistent with the objectives of the Trans-European Network for Transport. It will involve the creation of a rail mode transport which is cleaner and less dependent on oil, and more energy efficient. It will allow for more efficient transportation along the east coast of Ireland, and encourage greater use of public transportation, reducing the dependency on car-based commuting.

Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy

The Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy (European Commission 2020) sets out a number of goals as to how people will move within and between cities in the future. It has identified 82 initiatives which have been categorised into 10 ‘flagships’.

The flagship relevant to the DART+ Coastal North project is *‘Flagship 3 – Making interurban and urban mobility more sustainable and healthy - for instance by doubling high-speed rail traffic and developing extra cycling infrastructure over the next 10 years.’*

The DART+ Coastal North project complies with this strategy as it ensures sustainable alignment in urban areas for planned growth with investment in infrastructure and the provision of employment, together with supporting amenities and services.

European Union (EU) Green Deal 2019

The EU Green Deal (European Commission 2019) sets out key policies aimed at cutting emissions and preserving the natural environment. It commits the EU to become climate neutral by 2050, with a reduction of between 50 to 55% in emissions by 2030 when compared to 1990 levels. By focusing on transport, buildings, and energy, the European Green Deal (EGD) is setting out a process to help everybody work together and try and move in the same direction.

A key component of the EU’s Green Deal roadmap to transforming the EU’s economy for a sustainable future is *‘accelerating the shift to sustainable and smart mobility’*. It seeks to reduce the transport sectors greenhouse gas emissions by 90% by 2050.

The DART+ Coastal North project complies with this policy, in particular by reducing the greenhouse gas emissions produced by transport through the transition away from private cars to more sustainable public transport options.

1.3 National Policy

Project Ireland 2040: National Planning Framework

The National Planning Framework (NPF) is the Government’s high-level strategic plan for shaping the future growth and development of the country by 2040. It is a framework to guide public and private investment, to create and promote opportunities to protect and enhance the environment.

National Planning Framework and its National Strategic Outcomes and Priorities of the National Development Plan



Figure 1-2: National Strategic Outcomes Source: Project Ireland 2040

There are 10 “National Strategic Outcomes” several of which are relevant to the proposed development:

“Compact Growth

Carefully managing the sustainable growth of compact cities, towns and villages will add value and create more attractive places in which people can live and work. All our urban settlements contain many potential development areas, centrally located and frequently publicly owned, that are suitable and capable of re-use to provide housing, jobs, amenities and services, but which need a streamlined and co-ordinated approach to their development, with investment in enabling infrastructure and supporting amenities, to realise their potential. Activating these strategic areas and achieving effective density and consolidation, rather than more sprawl of urban development, is a top priority.”

The DART+ Coastal North project will, by providing a more efficient public transport infrastructure, make urban areas and zoned lands along the route, more attractive areas in which to live and work in.

“Sustainable Mobility

In line with Ireland’s Climate Change mitigation plan, we need to progressively electrify our mobility systems moving away from polluting and carbon intensive propulsion systems to new technologies such as electric vehicles and the introduction of electric and hybrid traction systems for public transport fleets, such that by 2040 our cities and towns will enjoy a cleaner, quieter environment free of combustion engine driven transport systems.”

The DART+ Coastal North project is entirely consistent with this Strategic Outcome in terms of the provision of the electrification of part of a busy public transportation route along the east coast of Ireland.

“Transition to a Low Carbon and Climate Resilient Society:

The National Climate Policy Position establishes the national objective of achieving transition to a competitive, low carbon, climate-resilient and environmentally sustainable economy by 2050. This objective will shape investment choices over the coming decades in line with the National Mitigation Plan and the National Adaptation Framework. New energy systems and transmission grids will be necessary for a more distributed, renewables-focused energy generation system, harnessing both the considerable on-shore and off-shore potential from energy sources such as wind, wave and solar and connecting the richest sources of that energy to the major sources of demand.”

The DART+ Coastal North project will encourage less car-based travel and will comply with the objective to reduce carbon emissions in the country.

One of the key growth enablers for the Dublin Region is identified as:

“Delivering the key rail projects set out in the Transport Strategy for the GDA including Metro Link, DART expansion and the Luas green line link to Metro Link.”

The DART+ Coastal project will contribute to the achievements of these outcomes and objectives. As outlined above, it will lead to more compact, railway-based growth along the railway line. It will encourage more sustainable commuting and contribute to a lower carbon environment. It will enhance the growth of the GDA in a more sustainable approach than one based on car transport. It

is likely to alleviate pressure on Dublin City and create additional areas in the GDA along the route in which people can live and work.

National Development Plan 2021-2030

The current National Development Plan (NDP) sets out the ten-year capital ceilings which will support economic, social, environmental and cultural development across Ireland, incorporating a total public investment of €165 billion from 2021-2030. It takes account of the Covid-19 crisis and related recovery plans, to ensure alignment with the new Programme for Government, to strengthen the alignment with the NPF and to enhance the link with the new Climate Action Plan and other sectoral policies.

To deliver the National Strategic Outcomes set out in the NPF, the NDP identifies the following relevant Strategic Investment Priorities and actions. Note that ‘DART+ Expansion Programme’ refers to the DART+ Programme.

Table 1-1: NDP Strategic Investment Priorities and actions

National Planning Framework NSO	NDP Strategic Investment Priority	NDP reference to DART+ Programme
NSO 2: Enhanced Regional Accessibility	Public Transport	<i>“Investment in the DART+ programme will address some of the constraints on the Dublin City Centre rail network and provide for additional services for intercity rail services.”</i>
NSO 4: Sustainable Mobility	DART+ Programme	<i>“The DART+ programme will be a cornerstone of rail investment within the lifetime of Project Ireland 2040 and represents the single biggest investment in the Irish rail network.”</i>
NSO 8: Transition to a Climate-Neutral and Climate Resilient Society	An additional 500,000 sustainable mobility journeys per day by 2030. Comprehensive integrated public transport network for Ireland’s cities connecting more people to more places.	<i>“Delivering priority public transport programmes including BusConnects, DART+ Expansion Programme and MetroLink so that increased transport demand is met by greener public transport.”</i>

Strategic Investment Priorities have been influenced by the national objective of transitioning by 2050 to a competitive, low-carbon, climate-resilient and environmentally sustainable economy and society. As identified above, the DART+ Coastal North project will contribute to achieving these objectives.

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 1-2** below.

Table 1-2: NSMP 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+ Programme is highlighted within the NSMP as being an important element for supporting Safe and Green Mobility. A key focus is the expansion of electrification and additional electric and battery-electric fleet for services to Drogheda.

The DART+ Coastal North project is in compliance with the NSMP, and supports the goals through expansion of the electrified network to Drogheda. The DART+ Coastal North project will decarbonise public transport, promote the use of and expand the availability of sustainable mobility.

National Investment Framework for Transport in Ireland (December 2021)

The Department of Transport has prepared and finalised the National Investment Framework for Transport in Ireland (NIFTI). NIFTI is the Department of Transport’s high-level strategic framework to support the consideration and prioritisation of future investment in land transport. It represents the Department’s contribution to Project Ireland 2040, Government’s long-term, overarching strategy to make Ireland a better country for all and to build a more sustainable future. NIFTI has been

developed to ensure sectoral investment is aligned with the National Planning Framework (NPF) and supports the delivery of the ten National Strategic Outcomes (NSOs).

As part of NIFTI, a wide range of supporting analysis has been conducted to identify key transport challenges, needs and constraints, both today and in the future. This analysis can be divided into three broad categories: context and background, the existing land transport network, and the future land transport network.

The NIFTI states:

“The right transport investment helps to deliver high-quality travel and supports positive outcomes for society, the environment and the economy. However, these outcomes do not happen by chance. It is important to have in place a framework to guide transport investment and deliver the infrastructure and services we need. That is the purpose of NIFTI.

New transport investments will have to demonstrate their alignment with NIFTI. By extension, this will ensure that investment is aligned with the NPF and its National Strategic Outcomes, resulting in a consistent approach to investment across Government, with transport supporting our growth and development goals. In this way, NIFTI will ensure that transport enables the NPF.”

The NIFTI notes that the NDP identifies DART+ as one of the infrastructure projects required in the next decade.

In order to address the challenges identified in the supporting analysis, NIFTI establishes four Investment Priorities: Decarbonisation, Protection and Renewal, Mobility of People and Goods in Urban Areas, and Enhanced Regional and Rural Connectivity. Future transport projects must align with these priorities to be considered for funding. Moreover, as the National Strategic Outcomes 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 + Coastal North project will comply with the Investment Priorities. It will assist in the decarbonisation of the transport system. It will help in the protection of the environment. It will improve the mobility of people in a sustainable manner. Finally, it will improve regional connectivity between Dublin, Meath and Louth.

Department of Transport: Statement of Strategy 2021-2023

The Statement of Strategy does not refer to specific projects. However, there are a number of objectives outlined in the Strategic Approach that are relevant to the DART + Coastal North project development:

“Aligned with the National Planning Framework and the National Economic Plan we will maintain and develop high quality sustainable road, public transport and active travel networks to enable economic activity, essential services and social connections between and within our cities, regions and communities.

We will encourage and support transport networks and services that are environmentally, economically and socially sustainable, in line with the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

We will prioritise the decarbonisation of transport and low carbon technology in line with the EU Green Deal and ambitious government policies.

We will continue to invest in active travel and in our public transport networks, greenways and alternative technologies.”

Building on Recovery: Infrastructure and Capital Investment 2016-2021

This Capital Plan published by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform presents the Government’s €42 billion framework for infrastructure investment in Ireland over the period 2016 to 2021, including a €27 billion multi-annual Exchequer Capital Investment Plan.

The €27 billion Exchequer component of the Capital Plan, supplemented by a new €500 million phase of the PPP programme, is primarily targeted at addressing priority needs in transport, education, housing and health care. The sectoral share on transport is 29%.

The Plan states:

“High-quality infrastructure is an important element of a modern society and economy. It strengthens economic growth through enhancing efficiency, productivity and competitiveness. Investment in infrastructure also underpins social cohesion through providing the facilities for vital services to people in the form of schools, public transport, healthcare and housing. This Capital Plan reflects the Government’s commitment to supporting strong and sustainable economic growth and raising welfare and living standards for all.”

With regard to transport, the plan states:

“As well as population growth, rising economic activity is the main driver of demand for transport. Total road kilometres travelled and annual bus journeys have shown recent increases as the economy improves but remain below pre-crisis peaks; the challenge here is to maintain and safeguard investments and look at measures to address congestion in urban areas as growth places demands on transport infrastructure.”

The plan recognises that it is essential for road, rail and public transport networks to be developed and maintained to the standard required to ensure the safe and efficient movement of people and freight. A €9.6 billion capital investment for transport will be provided over seven years, including €3.618 billion in Public Transport.

The plan states:

“The first phase of a multi-phase DART expansion programme will also begin, with the extension of the DART line to Balbriggan....”

The DART+ Coastal North project is part of the overall strategy of improved public transport in Ireland, along the east coast in particular.

Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021

The Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021 (Government of Ireland 2021) sets out the central objective relating to emission reductions. It legally binds Ireland to have net-zero emissions no later than 2050 and to a 51% reduction in emissions by the end of the decade (2030), against a base of 2018 emissions. The Act sets out the following:

‘The first two carbon budgets proposed by the Advisory Council shall provide for a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions such that the total amount of annual greenhouse gas emissions in the

year ending on 31 December 2030 is 51 per cent less than the annual greenhouse gas emissions reported for the year ending on 31 December 2018, as set out in the national greenhouse gas emissions inventory prepared by the Agency.'

The DART+ Coastal North project would deliver infrastructure which will support a shift towards sustainable transport options that will in turn support the targets set out in the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021.

Climate Action Plan 2023

Climate Action Plan 2023 is the second annual update to Ireland's Climate Action Plan 2019. The plan implements the carbon budgets and sectoral emissions ceilings and sets a roadmap for taking decisive action to halve emissions by 2030 and reach net zero no later than 2050, as committed to in the Programme for Government.

The Plan sets out a detailed sectoral roadmap designed to deliver a 51% reduction in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 2030. The previous Climate Action Plan 2021 targets have also been revised to reflect a higher level of ambition, including a 20% reduction in total vehicle kilometres, a reduction in fuel usage, and significant increases to sustainable transport trips and modal share.

An action identified to reduce emissions in the transport sector is:

"The proposed pathway in transport focuses on reducing the use of private passenger cars, a modal shift to transport modes with lower energy consumption (e.g., public transport, walking and cycling) while accelerating the electrification of road transport (e.g., increased use of electric and low-emission vehicles) and increasing biofuel blend rates."

To meet the required level of emissions reduction, by 2030 the Plan sets out a number of targets, several of which are relevant to enabling increased sustainable transport behaviours:

"Prioritise and accelerate delivery of NTA Connecting Ireland and new town services, via conventional and non-conventional modes of public transport services"

"Identify pathway to appropriate decarbonisation of interurban rail services, informed by Strategic Rail Review"

"Review financial incentives to further the transition of vehicle fleets, considering actions to support and deliver a just and equitable EV transition"

Most significantly, Action TR/23/37 is directly relevant to this project:

"Advance DART+ Programme"

The DART+ Coastal North project is in compliance with, and will contribute towards, the targets identified in the Climate Action Plan. It will help reduce GHG emissions by:

- The provision of a more efficient public transport route, thereby encouraging a modal shift towards public transportation;
- It will become part of the electrified rail network in Ireland.

The DART+ Coastal North project is part of the DART+ Programme which is identified as a specific action in the plan.

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 is a statement of Government policy in the energy sector. It sets out an energy policy framework up to 2030 and outlines a transition to a low carbon energy system for Ireland by 2050. The White Paper comprises of an energy policy update and provides the framework to guide national policy. The Paper considers European and International climate change objectives and agreements. The actions that support the proposed project are, inter alia:

“To support energy efficient and renewable transport, we will: ...

- *...support transport modal shift through better alignment of land use and transport planning and a continuation of smarter travel programmes administered by the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport....*
- *...support the introduction of a suite of initiatives to improve the energy efficiency of the rail network...*
- *...support further rail electrification...”*

The DART+ Coastal North project will support and facilitate the shift to energy efficient and renewable transport through encouraging modal shift towards lower energy intensive public transport, to support Ireland’s climate ambitions and increase resilience to future climate change.

1.4 Regional Policy

Eastern & Midland Regional Assembly, Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2019-2031

A Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) is a strategic plan which identifies regional assets, opportunities and pressures and provides appropriate policy responses in the form of Regional Policy Objectives. At this strategic level it provides a framework for investment to better manage spatial planning and economic development throughout the Region.

The principal statutory purpose of the RSES is to support the implementation of Project Ireland 2040 and the economic policies and objectives of the Government by providing a long-term strategic planning and economic framework for the development of the Region. The RSES is required under the Planning and Development Act 2000 to address employment, retail, housing, transport, water services, energy and communications, waste management, education, health, sports and community facilities, environment and heritage, landscape, sustainable development and climate change.

The RSES sets out sixteen Regional Strategic Outcomes, three of which are relevant to the DART + Coastal North project:

“Sustainable Settlement Patterns

Better manage the sustainable and compact growth of Dublin as a city of international scale and develop Athlone, Dundalk, Drogheda and a number of key complementary growth settlements of sufficient scale to be drivers of regional growth. (NSO 1, 7, 10)”

The DART+ Coastal North project will assist in the development of urban settlements along the Northern Line rail network, and also Drogheda as a destination in which to live and work in.

“Compact Growth and Urban Regeneration

Promote the regeneration of our cities, towns and villages by making better use of under-used land and buildings within the existing built-up urban footprint and to drive the delivery of quality housing and employment choice for the Region's citizens. (NSO 1)"

The DART+ Coastal North project will encourage the development of underutilised zoned lands along the Northern Line rail network via provision of a more efficient public transport route.

"Integrated Transport and Land Use

Promote best use of Transport Infrastructure, existing and planned, and promote sustainable and active modes of travel to ensure the proper integration of transportation and land use planning. (NSO 2, 6, 8,9)"

The DART+ Coastal North project will assist in achieving a more balanced approach to the integration of transportation and development, both in terms of employment and residential locations. It will make locations along the Northern Line rail network more favourable for both employers and residents.

The 'DART Expansion' – the previous name for the DART+ Programme - is heavily referenced and supported in the document, including in relation to the development of the Dublin Metropolitan Area, and Drogheda.

Regional Policy Objective 5.2 states:

"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."

Regional Policy Objective 8.8: supports delivery of the rail projects set out in Table 8.2, subject to the outcome of appropriate environmental assessment and the planning process.

One of the projects set out in Table 8.2 is:

"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."

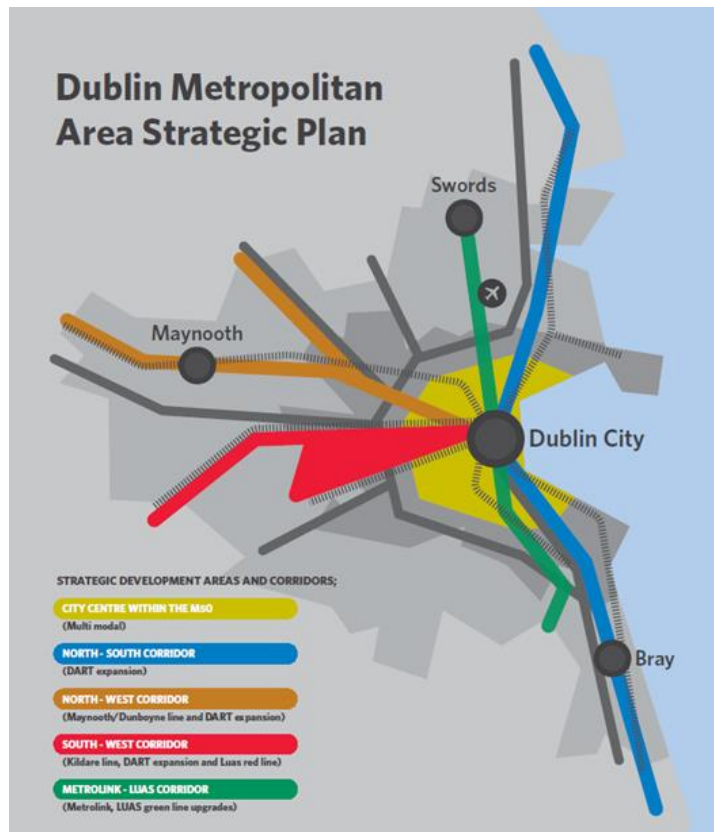


Figure 1-3: Dublin Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan Source: Eastern and Midland Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy 2019-20311

Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2022-2028

The Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2022-2042, developed by the National Transport Authority (NTA) in 2021 was published in January 2023 and replaces the previous framework, titled the Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2016- 2035, which was approved by the then Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport in 2016. 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.

¹ Note that the of DART+ Coastal North project is part of the north-south corridor indicated in blue on this graphic

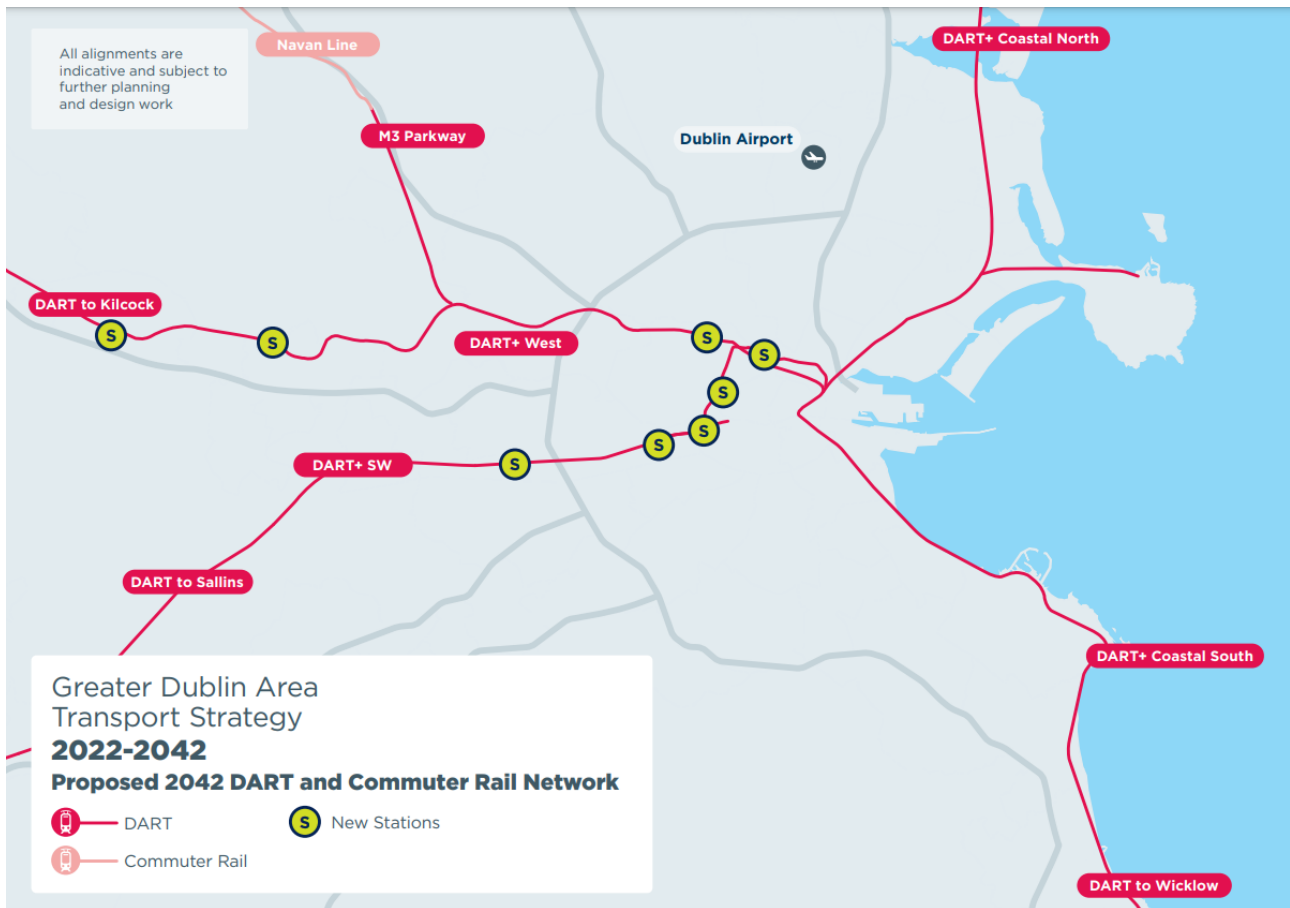


Figure 1-4: Proposed 2042 DART and Commuter Rail Network Source: Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2022-2042

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 RAIL – Regional and Intercity Services The NTA will continue to work with Irish Rail to improve regional and intercity services which will benefit connectivity within and to the GDA.

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.

The DART+ Coastal North project is in accordance with all objectives of the Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area and will support the achievement of various measures including those identified above.

Integrated Implementation Plan 2019-2024

Following the approval of a transport strategy for the region by the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport an integrated implementation plan is prepared, 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+ Coastal North project, particularly in implementing the DART+ Programme, and improving safety and reliability.

1.5 Local Policy

Dublin City Development Plan 2022-2028

The Dublin City Development Plan 2022-2028 was adopted by Dublin City Council on 2nd December 2022 and came in to effect on 14th December 2022. The Plan sets out how the city will develop to meet the needs of all residents, workers and visitors. The policies and objectives:

- guide growth and development,
- provide a strategy to achieve proper planning, and
- show how sustainable development will be achieved, meeting our needs now without compromise to future generations needs.

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

Policy QHSN11: 15-Minute City To promote the realisation of the 15-minute city which provides for liveable, sustainable urban neighbourhoods and villages throughout the city that deliver healthy placemaking, high quality housing and well designed, intergenerational and accessible, safe and inclusive public spaces served by local services, amenities, sports facilities and sustainable modes of public and accessible transport where feasible.

Policy QHSN12: Neighbourhood Development To encourage neighbourhood development which protects and enhances the quality of our built environment and supports public health and community wellbeing. Promote developments which:

- *encourage sustainable and low carbon transport modes through the promotion of alternative modes and ‘walkable communities’ whereby a range of facilities and services will be accessible within short walking or cycling distance;*

Policy SMT1: Modal Shift and Compact Growth To continue to promote modal shift from private car use towards increased use of more sustainable forms of transport such as active mobility and public transport, and to work with the National Transport Authority (NTA), Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) and other transport agencies in progressing an integrated set of transport objectives to achieve compact growth.

Objective SMTO1: Transition to More Sustainable Travel Modes 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).

Policy SMT13: Urban Villages and the 15-Minute City To support the role of the urban villages in contributing to the 15-minute city through improvement of connectivity in particular for active travel and facilitating the delivery of public transport infrastructure and services, and public realm enhancement.

Policy SMT14: City Centre Road Space 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.

Policy SMT22: Key Sustainable Transport Projects To support the expeditious delivery of key sustainable transport projects 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 and to support the integration of existing public transport infrastructure with other transport modes. In particular the following projects subject to environmental requirements and appropriate planning consents being obtained:

- *DART+*
- *Metrolink from Charlemount to Swords*
- *BusConnects Core Bus Corridor projects*
- *Delivery of Luas to Finglas*
- *Progress and delivery of Luas to Poolbeg and Lucan*

Policy SMT23: The Rail Network and Freight Transport (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 and support the needs of freight transport in accordance with the NTA’s Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2022 – 2042 and enhance the capacity on existing rail lines and services to provide improved facilities promoting the principles of sustainable transport to cater for the movement of freight by rail. (iii) To support the outcomes of the Iarnród Éireann/Irish Rail Freight 2040 Strategy.

Zoning Objectives

The railway and stations are unzoned lands (technically known as “white land”).

The railway line goes through or is adjacent to the following zoning objectives:

Z1 - Sustainable Residential Neighbourhoods

Z2 - Residential Neighbourhoods (Conservation Areas)

Z3 - Neighbourhood Centres

Z4 - District Centres (incorporating Key District Centres)

Z6 - Employment/Enterprise

Z9 - Amenity/Open Space Lands/Green Network

Z14 - Strategic Development and Regeneration Areas (SDRAs)

The DART+ Coastal North project will not contravene any of these zoning objectives.

Protected Structures

There is only one protected structure identified in Dublin City Council jurisdiction along the DART+ Coastal North route:

Ref: 880; Railway Bridge, Clontarf Road, Dublin 3: “twin-arch cutstone railway bridge inclusive of stone embankment walls”.

Any works associated with the DART + North Coastal project that may affect this bridge will have to be carefully assessed.

Amenity Designations

There are designated conservation areas associated with the Tolka River, Santry River and a parkland area north of the St. Donagh Road in Kilbarrack. The DART+ Coastal North project either adjoins or oversails these conservation areas, however works associated with the project are unlikely to affect these designations.

Clongriffin-Belmayne Local Area Plan (LAP)

Clongriffin-Belmayne Local Area Plan was published in 2012 and extended until December 2022. The vision of the plan is to facilitate the development of a highly sustainable, mixed use urban neighbourhood with a distinct identity based around high quality public transport nodes.

The LAP areas are located on the northern border of Dublin City Council and are primarily zoned Z14, the objective of which is “to seek the social, economic and physical development and/or rejuvenation of an area with mixed use of which residential and “Z6” (enterprise and employment) would be the predominant uses”.

The main goal of the plan in relation to movement and transport is:

“To promote ease of movement within and access to the area by incorporating a high quality, integrated transport network through improvements to the existing road, rail and public transport network, together with improved cycling and pedestrian facilities within the local area.”

The key aims of the Movement and Transport Section of relevance are:

“To improve accessibility and maximise the use of public transport.

Cater not only for travel demand but also for reductions in congestion and pollution.

Place a stronger emphasis on sustainable forms of transport such as walking, cycling and public transport, particularly for short trips.”

Objective MT05 is also relevant:

“To liaise with Irish Rail and promote greater frequency and enhanced services at Clongriffin Rail Station for commuters as the area continues to grow.”

Clongriffin railway station is recognised as a key development node with additional height and densities permitted in proximity to the station.

The DART+ Coastal North project, including the rail enhancements at Clongriffin railway station, complements the aims and objectives of the LAP enabling the development of a sustainable, mixed use urban quarter adjoining a high-quality public transport node.

There are no policies, objectives or designated areas related to the natural or built environment that would be impacted by the DART+ Coastal North project.

Fingal Development Plan 2023-2029

The Fingal Development Plan 2023-2029 sets out the spatial framework to guide future development within the County with a focus on the places people live, work, visit and do business, and how people interact and move between these places while protecting the environment. The Plan is underpinned by a strategic vision intended to guide the sustainable future growth of Fingal. At the core of the vision is healthy placemaking, building cohesive and sustainable communities, where cultural, natural and built environment is protected.

The Strategic Vision for the plan contains a number of strategic objectives, the following of which are relevant:

“9. Reduce car dependency and promote and facilitate sustainable modes of transport. Prioritise walking, cycling and public transport, while supporting an efficient and effective transport system.

10. Protect, enhance and ensure the sustainable use of Fingal’s key infrastructure, including water supplies and wastewater treatment facilities, energy supply including renewables, broadband and transportation.”

The following policies and objectives relating to connectivity and movement are specifically relevant:

“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.

Objective CMO23 – 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 CMO24 – NTA Strategy.

Support NTA and other stakeholders in implementing the NTA Strategy including MetroLink, BusConnects, DART +, LUAS and the GDA Cycle Network.”

On reflecting upon the impacts of Brexit and Covid-19, the following employment and economic opportunities are identified:

“Infrastructure provision will be a key factor for the economic development of the County and the prospective MetroLink, BusConnects and DART+ projects will bring significant economic benefits to Fingal. Transport and infrastructure interventions are expected to facilitate the modal shift in alignment with the policy hierarchy and national, regional and local objectives such that they encourage sustainable ways of improving Fingal’s integration, connectivity and the movement of workers.”

Strategic employment aims also highlight the following:

“North Fringe – Baldoyle-Stapolin – The DART Expansion Programme will support ongoing large-scale urban expansion of the North Fringe lands. Employment generators in these areas include mixed-use districts with retail and service provision.”

Zoning Objectives

The railway and stations are unzoned (technically known as “white land”). The rail line goes through or is adjacent to the following zoning objectives:

CI - Community Infrastructure

GB - Greenbelt

GE - General Employment

HA - High Amenity

LC - Local Centre

MC – Major Town Centre

MRE - Metro and Rail Economic Corridor

OS - Open Space

RA - Residential Area

RS - Residential

RU - Rural

TC - Town And District Centre

The DART+ Coastal North project will not contravene any of these zoning objectives. However, careful design will have to be considered in relation to the more sensitive zoning objectives such as High Amenity lands.

Protected Structures

There are a significant number of protected structures on or adjoining the railway and stations. These are detailed in the Constraints Report (Annex 3.1 of the Options Selection Report). Any works associated with the DART+ Coastal North project that may affect protected structures will have to be carefully assessed.

Site Specific Objectives

There are a number of Indicative Cycle/Pedestrian Routes adjoining the existing railway line including:

- Howth Junction north to Grange Road.
- Sutton Station east to Howth Station.
- Malahide Estuary north across Malahide Railway Viaduct.
- From Donabate north across the Rogerstown Viaduct.
- Baldoyle to Portmarnock Greenway.

Local Objectives

2: *Promote, and facilitate a pedestrian over-bridge as part of an attractive walkway along Tanner's Water Lane to the proposed coastal path linking to the town centre.*

34: *Completion of the Broadmeadow Way between Malahide and Donabate to be prioritised during the lifetime of this Development Plan.*

51: *Provide for a walkway and cycleway across the rail line to Malahide Community School.*

88: *Promote the improvement of access to Howth Junction Rail Station.*

The design of the DART+ Coastal North project will continue to take these objectives into account.

Baldoyle-Stapolin LAP

Baldoyle-Stapolin LAP was adopted in 2013 and extended to May 2023. The LAP lands are located on the southern boundary of Fingal County Council where they meet the administrative area of Dublin City Council along the Dublin – Belfast railway. To the west of the railway lies the developing mixed-use area of Clongriffin within Dublin City Council's wider North Fringe Area encompassing Northern Cross / Clare Hall / Belmayne to Clongriffin. This, along with Baldoyle Stapolin, is one of Dublin's larger new development areas and, when completed, is envisaged to have up to 10,000 new homes as well as new retail and commercial areas. The Plan lands comprise the site of the former Baldoyle Racecourse and Stapolin House.

The vision for Baldoyle-Stapolin is to create a place to live that is appealing, distinctive and sustainable, with minimal impact on the surrounding environment and the coast. It is envisaged that Baldoyle-Stapolin will develop as a sustainable community comprised of new homes, community, leisure and educational facilities based around an identifiable and accessible new village centre which will form the heart of the area.

With a range of different sizes and types of homes, as well as integrated amenities and excellent public transport, this will be a fledgling neighbourhood with a varied social mix and will embody the principles of sustainability, sustainable communities and inclusiveness.

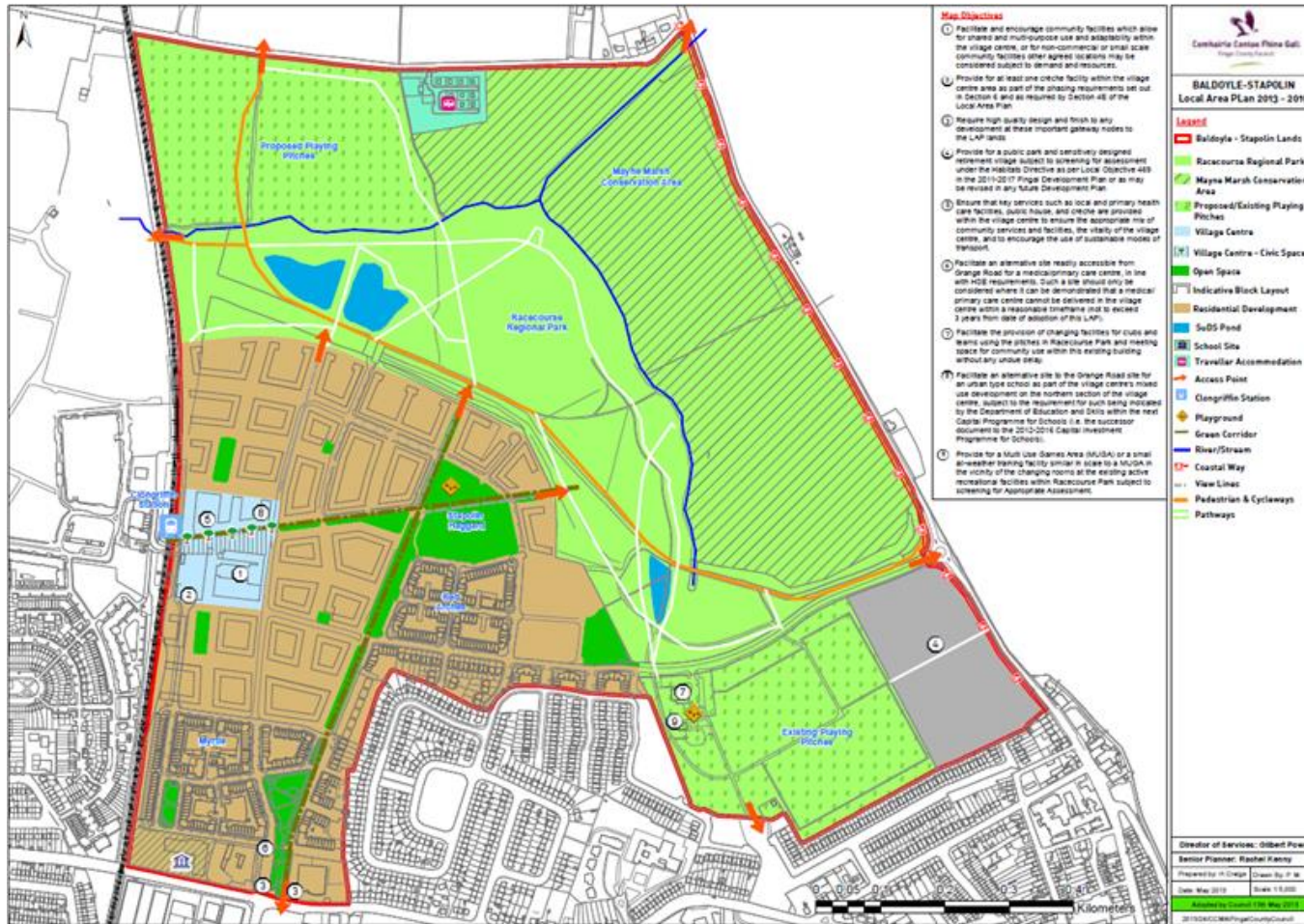


Figure 1-5: Baldoyle-Strapolin LAP Map 2013-2019 Source: Baldoyle-Strapolin Local Area Plan

Zoning is provided for between 800-1100 new dwellings and a new village centre. The latter is defined as a sustainable mixed-use centre for Baldoyle-Stapolin which meets local needs by providing a range of retail, commercial, leisure and residential uses and establishes a distinctive sense of place and heart for the community.

The village centre is located directly adjacent to Clongriffin Station.

Objective GI 16 states:

“Create new green links to connect publicly accessible open spaces to main destination points, such as the DART station, bus stops, village centre, proposed school, health facilities and other publicly accessible open spaces including Racecourse Park.”

The DART+ Coastal North project will help realise that the vision and objectives of the Plan. It will provide a better service to the area, thereby encouraging the full development of the village and greater usage of the DART, leading to a more sustainable community.

There are no policies, objectives or designated areas related to the natural or built environment that would be impacted by the DART+ Coastal North project. However, one recommended road improvement may be relevant to the design of the project:

“Baldoyle Public Transport Bridge: An extension of Red Arches Road and bridge over the rail line at Clongriffin DART station and connection with the east-west link of Clongriffin Main Street to accommodate buses, pedestrians and cyclists.”

Portmarnock South Local Area Plan 2013

The Portmarnock South Local Area Plan 2013 was adopted by the Council in July 2013 and was extended up to July 2023. The Portmarnock South LAP comprises a land area of circa 86 hectares of which 40.36 hectares are zoned as residential. The majority of the remainder of the lands are zoned off for open space and amenities. The lands are directly to the south-east of Portmarnock DART station.

The main purpose of the Portmarnock South LAP 2013 is to set out a framework for the development of the lands to provide for a sustainable residential community within close proximity to a high quality public transport corridor while recognising the environmental sensitivities of the site.

The vision for Portmarnock South is to develop a high-quality urban environment with a unique sense of place, maximising and respecting the opportunities presented by the area’s natural assets and coastal location adjoining Baldoyle Bay and recognising its high level of accessibility to Portmarnock DART station.

Objective TM 1 is relevant:

“Ensure that future planning applications and development of the plan lands are designed to have regard to Iarnród Éireann future rail improvement proposals.”

Portmarnock train station is a crucial element in contributing to sustainable development. The entire residential plan lands are within walking distance of the train station. The plan lands could not be developed without the proximity to the DART station.

The DART+ Coastal North project will contribute to the sustainable development of these lands.

There are no policies, objectives or designated areas related to the natural or built environment that would be impacted by the DART+ Coastal North project.

Donabate LAP 2016

The Donabate LAP 2013 was adopted by the Council in March 2016 and was extended up to July 2026. The LAP comprises approx. 138 hectares (340 acres) of land in four separate parcels. The LAP seeks to establish a framework for the planned, co-ordinated and sustainable development of these lands supported by an overriding Vision Statement and supported by four Strategic Aims. The adopted Vision Statement seeks, inter alia, to:

“Provide for the structured development of the identified new residential areas of Donabate such that they integrate into the established village and support the continued growth of a vibrant and attractive town for existing and future residents. New development will be accompanied by the required community, educational, transport, drainage and recreational infrastructure to ensure the protection and enhancement of local amenities and the continued growth of local services in Donabate”.

The LAP notes that the NTA has requested that Irish Rail progress the planning for the extension of the DART rail service along the northern rail line, to include Donabate.

Objective 3.2 is relevant in this regard.

“Support the NTA’s proposed electrification of the Northern Line from Malahide to Balbriggan to allow an extension of DART services to Balbriggan.”

The majority of the lands zoned in the LAP are within 1000m of Donabate railway station. The DART+ Coastal North project will help to facilitate the development of these lands in a sustainable manner.

There are no policies, objectives or designated areas related to the natural or built environment that would be impacted by the DART+ Coastal North project.

Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027

The Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027 was adopted on 22nd September 2021 and came into effect on 3rd November 2021.

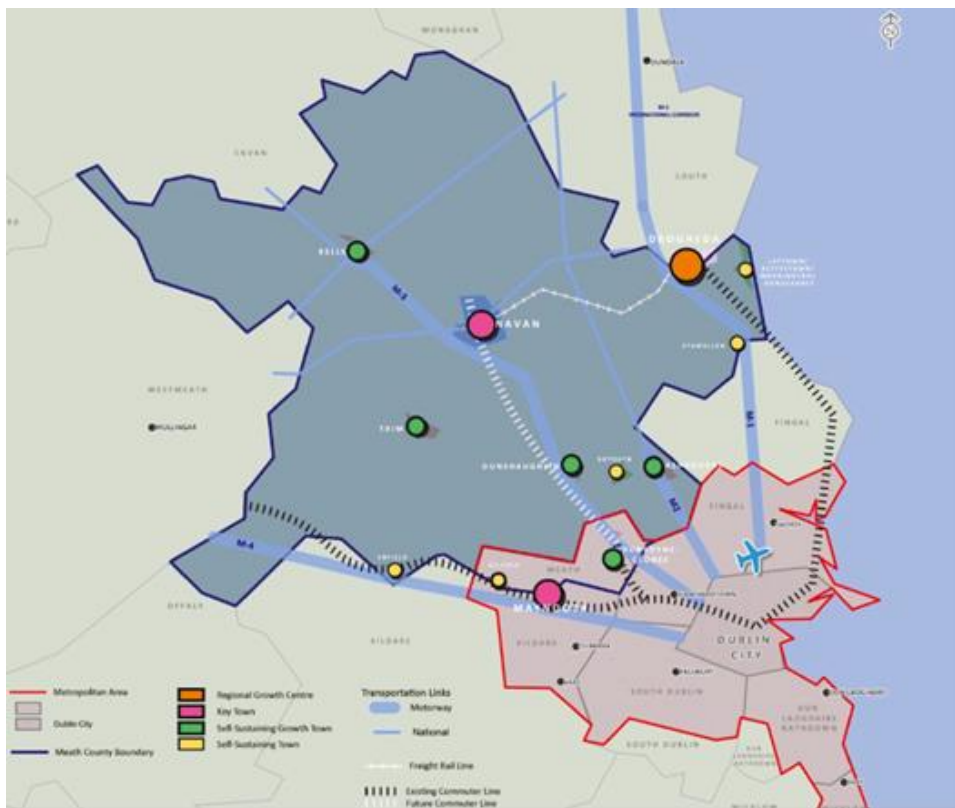


Figure 1-6: Core Strategy Map Source Meath Development Plan 2021-2027

It is a strategic aim of the Development Plan to create attractive efficient compact settlements which reduce the need to travel and improve the quality of life for inhabitants.

The following policies and objectives in the Draft Development Plan of specific relevance to the DART+ Coastal North project include:

“MOV POL 1: To support and facilitate the integration of land use with transportation infrastructure, through the development of sustainable compact settlements which are well served by public transport, in line with the guiding principles outlined in RPO 8.1 of the EMRA RSES 2019-2031

MOV POL 3: To promote sustainable land use planning measures which facilitate transportation efficiency, economic returns on transport investment, minimisation of environmental impacts and a general shift towards the greater use of public transportation throughout the County.

The DART+ Coastal North project complies with the strategic vision and the specific policies of the Development Plan.

Zoning Objectives

The railway line goes though or is adjacent to the following zoning objectives:

A1 - Existing Residential

A2 - New Residential

B1 - Commercial Town or Village Centre

E1/E2 - Strategic Employment Zones (High Technology Uses) / General Enterprise & Employment

F1 - Open Space

G1 - Community Infrastructure

RA - Rural Area

TU - Transport and Utilities

WL - White Lands (To protect strategic lands from inappropriate forms of development which would impede the orderly expansion of a strategic urban centre.)

Protected Structures

There are a number of protected structures on or adjoining the railway and stations as detailed in the Constraints Report (Annex 3.1 of the Options Selection Report). Any works associated with the DART+ Coastal North project that may affect protected structures will have to be carefully assessed.

East Meath LAP 2014-2020

This LAP has been prepared to provide a statutory framework for the future growth and development of Bettystown-Laytown-Mornington East-Donacarne-Mornington. The purpose of the LAP is to guide future development within these towns and villages in a sustainable and equitable manner and to inform members of the public, the local community, stakeholders and developers of the policies and objectives that will shape development within the plan area.

The Plan identifies lands adjacent to Laytown Railway station as being suitable for employment uses together with park and ride facilities.

The following policies in the LAP of specific relevance to the DART+ Coastal North project include:

TD POL 12: To develop the east coast rail line as a valuable tourist resource creating ease of access from North and South to a variety of attractions and recreational activities associated with the coastline.

TM POL 13: To support the improvement of existing rail transport infrastructure including the existing Dublin – Drogheda rail service which serves the urban settlement of Laytown and Gormanstown and to seek to have the proposed electrification of this rail line extended to Drogheda.”

The DART+ Coastal North project is consistent with the policies of the LAP, in particular with regard to the development of lands adjacent to Laytown railway station. The proposed development will specifically comply with the two policies outlined above in terms of developing the “east coast rail line” and the electrification of this rail line extended to Drogheda.

There are no policies, objectives or designated areas related to the natural or built environment that would be impacted by the DART+ Coastal North project.

Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027

The Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027 was adopted on 30th September 2021. The Plan came into effect on 11th November 2021. The Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027 has

superseded the Drogheda Borough Council Development Plan 2011-2017 and the North Drogheda and Environs Local Area Plan.

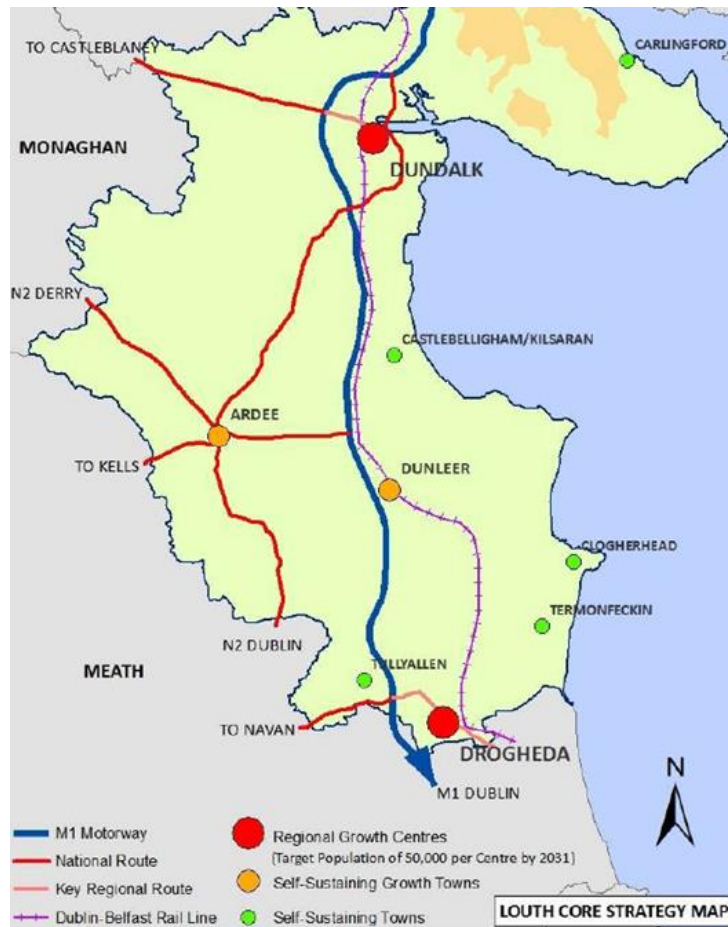


Figure 1-7: Louth Core Strategy Map Source: Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027

A key priority of the plan is to promote the continued sustainable and compact growth of the town as a regional driver of city scale with a target population of 50,000 by 2031. This will be supported by objectives to regenerate the town centre, promote compact growth in the town’s hinterlands and enhance the role of Drogheda as a self-sustaining strategic employment centre on the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor.

The Plan states the following in relation to Drogheda:

“The goal of achieving compact growth will require improved accessibility, sustainable mobility and the requisite infrastructure to enable Drogheda to grow as a Regional Growth Centre (RGC). The town will benefit from the extension of the DART service and improvements will be required to MacBride station relating to accessibility.”

The plan recognises that the “DART Expansion Programme” is an important growth enabler for Drogheda as it would improve the connectivity to Dublin due to the increased frequency of services, making the town more accessible and attractive for economic investment and employment generating development.

The following policies and objectives in the plan are relevant:

“SS13: To support investment in public and sustainable transport infrastructure and services in Drogheda including the progression of the DART Expansion Programme which includes the electrification of the rail line and the extension of DART services to Drogheda

MOV 2: To facilitate the integration of land use with sustainable transportation infrastructure in accordance with the requirements of RPO 8.1 in the RSES by supporting the creation of a critical mass of population and employment related development that would maximise investment in public transport infrastructure and create compact, sustainable settlements.

MOV 12: To support the DART Expansion Programme including new infrastructure and the electrification of existing lines along the northern rail line to Drogheda.”

The DART+ Coastal North project supports the overall vision in the Plan, particularly in relation to the development of Drogheda as a Regional Growth Centre.

Zoning Objectives

The rail line goes through or is adjacent to the following zoning objectives:

A1 - Existing Residential

A2 - New Residential

J1 - Transportation Development Hub

The DART+ Coastal North project will not contravene any of these zoning objectives.

Protected Structures

There are a number of protected structures in or adjoining the Drogheda railway station as detailed in the Constraints Report (Annex 3.1 of the Options Selection Report). Any works associated with the DART+ Coastal North project that may affect protected structures will have to be carefully assessed.

1.6 Conclusion

This document sets out the policy context for the proposed DART+ Coastal North project, which forms part of the DART+ Programme. It sets out the policy framework, from a European, national, regional and local perspective and how the proposed project aligns with this policy framework. It is evident from the relevant policies included herein, that the DART+ Coastal North project aligns with, and is in accordance with, such policy.