



chapter | 6

assessment criteria

## 6. ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

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*The options and alternatives will be assessed in relation to the following criteria:*

*Facilitation of Public Transport*  
*Balance of Public and Private Transport*  
*Reduction in the Need to Travel*  
*Utilisation of Existing Capacity*  
*Use of Under-utilised Land*  
*Facilitation of Economic Activities*  
*Facilitation of Higher Residential Densities*  
*Facilitation of Mixed Uses*  
*Equity and Affordability*  
*Urban/Rural Demarcation*  
*Conservation of High Quality Agricultural Land*  
*Protection of Heritage and Amenity*  
*Regional Balance*  
*Relative Cost*

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The rational and systematic assessment of options for the future planning and development of the Greater Dublin Area requires the formulation of a set of criteria against which the potential performance of the options can be judged.

In recent times, the selection of criteria for the assessment of projects has extended beyond the traditional considerations of physical feasibility, cost and general impacts on environment and heritage, to more detailed considerations, many of them related to the concept of sustainability. Increasingly, these wider considerations are also being applied to strategies and programmes, though the methods and techniques for such assessment are not fully developed.

The assessment of options for the physical planning of the Greater Dublin Area has had regard to these wider considerations, which are inter-related. Thus, the facilitation of higher development densities must be related not only to considerations of sustainability but also to considerations of acceptability, environmental impact and economic feasibility.

The balance of these considerations will be important. Clearly, it must be physically possible to implement the preferred strategy for the development of the Greater Dublin Area, whilst there are cost ceilings beyond which it would be impossible to go. Similarly, there are certain environmental impacts that would be totally unacceptable. Within this balance, the consideration of sustainability is of particular importance.

### Acceptability

Physical planning is both a political and technical process. The adoption and application of the Strategic Planning Guidelines will, ultimately, be a political decision. This, in turn, implies a need for significant public acceptability of the Guidelines, and the strategy on which they are based.

It follows then, that an approach that would be acceptable to a minority of the population may not be as readily acceptable to the majority. This is not to argue that the future planning of the Greater Dublin Area should be determined by the current views of the majority of people.



Nevertheless, it is important to bear in mind the need for acceptability in considering the criteria by which the options should be assessed. At the end of the day, a technically perfect strategy (if such exists) that is unacceptable, and will therefore not be implemented, is of less value to the Greater Dublin Area than a less perfect strategy that is acceptable and will be implemented.

## ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

The following criteria have been used in the assessment of the strategic models and options described in the following two chapters.

### Facilitation of Public Transport

Many of the submissions made during the preparation of this report emphasised the need for a significantly enhanced public transport system in the Greater Dublin Area. The forms of development recommended in the Myles Wright Report, which formed the basis for strategic planning in the Greater Dublin Area from the late 1960's onwards, were largely based on greater levels of private car ownership and usage. Until recently, these forms of development were the norm and they still remain significant in many parts of the Greater Dublin Area.

However, it is now recognised that ever-increasing use of the private car cannot be sustained in urban areas and, even with significant road improvements, the existing pattern of traffic congestion is likely to continue. It is also apparent that certain forms of development, such as low density housing arranged in long cul-de-sacs on estates, does not permit for the development of public transport, on both layout and density grounds. In addition, a significant proportion of the existing population, including large sections of the community that are disadvantaged in other ways, do not have access to a private car.

It is clear that, in these circumstances and bearing in mind the principles of sustainable development now adopted by government, a development strategy for the Greater Dublin Area must facilitate the provision of an adequate public transport system.

### Balance of Public and Private Transport

Notwithstanding the need to facilitate public transport, it has to be recognised that the private car will continue to play an important role in the future. This is especially so in the Hinterland Area, where the pattern and density of settlement and development limits the potential for public transport. It is also important to recognise the significance of the road system for the transportation of goods.

### Reduction in the Need to Travel

A fundamental principle of sustainable development is to seek for a reduction in the growth in demand for travel, with consequent savings in energy consumption and environmental emissions. It also reduces demand on the transportation system and releases time for alternative activities.

Traditionally, planning policies have sought to reduce the need to travel by creating self-contained communities, within which people work, socialise and recreate. Good planning practice has, therefore, been to locate places of work, shopping provision and social facilities within easy reach of residential areas.

Within metropolitan areas, it is more difficult to achieve this ideal, because of the extent and complexity of economic and social activities. Nevertheless, the achievement of this principle underlies the concept of the precinct or district which characterises many large metropolitan areas.

Current career and employment patterns militate against the achievement of this objective. It is now less common for people to pursue a career in a single employment or at a particular location. It is increasingly the pattern for individuals to change employment on a number of occasions during a career.

Moreover, it is now common for all adults in a household to be in employment. Consequently, it is increasingly unlikely that all will have employment in the local area.

The selection of a place to live is made on many grounds, including economic, social and family factors in addition to proximity to place of work.

The potential development of teleworking, if it is to be realised, could effectively co-locate place of employment with place of residence and further erode the need to locate areas of employment close to residential areas.

Nevertheless, the objective of seeking to reduce the need to travel must remain a central aim of any sustainable development strategy in relation to both:

- journeys to work; and
- journeys for shopping, social activities, etc.

Each strategic model and option has, therefore, been assessed with regard to its impact on the objective of reducing the growth in transport demand for journeys related to employment and for shopping and other social activities.

### Utilisation of Existing Capacity

The dictates of good planning will seek to utilise available capacity in all relevant systems, in so far as these are compatible with the overall strategy.

### Zoned Lands

As indicated in Chapter 4, there are extensive areas of residentially zoned lands throughout the Greater Dublin Area, almost sufficient to meet the demand arising from the natural growth scenario and to accommodate 67% of the anticipated demand arising from the high in-migration scenario.

Existing zoned lands, including both residential and employment uses, represent a resource, especially where they are serviced or can be readily serviced in the short to medium term. It, therefore, makes sense to utilise these lands as far as possible.

However, the location of existing zoned lands, both residential and employment-related, will not always accord with the underlying rationale of the individual strategic models and options.

The extent to which existing zoned lands can be utilised is a criterion for the consideration of alternatives.



## Sanitary Services

The existing water supply system served by Ballymore Eustace, Vartry and Leixlip is operating over design capacity. The anticipated level of population growth in the Greater Dublin Area will require the expansion of existing sources in addition to the current conservation programme. Outside of the Liffey catchment there is great potential for additional water supplies especially from the Boyne and the Barrow.

Wastewater treatment works, on the other hand, have or will have sufficient capacity to satisfy present and future demand, provided that all of the planned projects are implemented.

The Guidelines should seek to utilise capacity in the existing and planned water supply and wastewater systems, but it will also be necessary to commence planning of additional provision. The extent to which spare capacity can be utilised is a criterion for the assessment of the strategic models and options.

## Transport

A transportation system, comprising both road facilities and road and rail based public transport, is an element of each of the strategic models and options. There is very limited capacity in the current system, especially in terms of public transport. Planned improvements will increase that capacity significantly, although some proposals, such as LUAS, have limited scope to facilitate additional development.

The extent to which a strategic option or model utilises spare capacity in the existing and planned transport infrastructure is a criterion in their assessment.

## Use of Under-Utilised Land

Throughout the Greater Dublin Area, there are areas of developed land that are not beneficially utilised or are under-utilised. These include brownfield sites, institutional lands and areas of existing residential development with low levels of occupancy.

### Brownfield Sites and Institutional Lands

The greatest extent of brownfield land occurs in the Docklands area of Dublin city. The development of this area is being undertaken in the context of the Dublin Docklands Development Plan, which envisages an additional population of about 25,000 (or about 10,000 households) in the area. Clearly the strategy should incorporate this objective.

Many areas of institutional land throughout the Greater Dublin Area have been developed in recent years, primarily for housing. The extent to which further institutional lands can be developed has generally been addressed in the development plans and the zoning objectives in the plans reflect this. Where additional lands are required to be zoned to meet the needs of the strategy, each local authority can consider how appropriate it is to utilise institutional lands to meet part of the requirement.

### Low Density Residential Areas

Throughout the Greater Dublin Area, and especially within the built-up area of Dublin, there are extensive areas of low density housing, developed at various periods, that facilitated the use of the private car. Some of these areas, together with older residential areas built before the widespread use of the private car are also characterised by relatively low levels of occupation.

These areas represent an under-utilised resource, both in terms of land and housing units. The strategic models and options were, therefore, assessed for their potential to address these issues.

### Facilitation of Economic Activities

Economic activities, and hence employment, tend to locate at places that offer a specific economic advantage. Development strategies can create the conditions for the facilitation of economic activities, for example by concentrating future development into locations well-served by economic infrastructure.

The facilitation of economic activities is an important criterion for the assessment of strategic models and options.

### Facilitation of Higher Residential Densities

Development densities have been discussed in Chapter 5. The Guidelines need to reflect the direction of current policy towards higher development densities at appropriate locations. The facilitation of higher residential densities at appropriate locations is, therefore, a criterion in the assessment of the strategic models and options.

### Facilitation of Mixed Uses

Mixed land uses (a variety of land uses permitted in an area, as opposed to single uses) are seen as contributing to the creation of sustainable forms of settlement. This is because residents are given the facilities that allow them to shop, recreate and work in the same area where they live. Such a mixture of uses reduces the need to travel to avail of services and employment and also helps create a sense of community.

The extent to which a strategic model or option facilitates the development of mixed uses is a criterion in their assessment.

### Equity and Affordability

#### Integration of Socially Excluded

One of the main indicators of social disadvantage is unemployment. Unemployment in the Greater Dublin Area was 11.9% in 1997 (this compares favourably with the state as a whole). However, this is not distributed evenly throughout the area, the Dublin Region having an unemployment rate that is almost 4% higher than the Mid-East Region.

Levels of disadvantage are also related to the immediate living environment and social and environmental status of particular residential areas. These socially disadvantaged communities tend to be concentrated within specific locations, which increases the difficulties of the communities.

The integration of communities that are excluded, either socially or economically, from the mainstream of economic development is complex, and one that requires a range of initiatives that extends beyond the realm of physical planning. Nevertheless, strategic development models and options that seek for integrated communities and that facilitate public transport can benefit the socially excluded.



## Affordability

The extent of sustained economic growth coupled with rapid growth in incomes and employment, demographic changes and low interest rates have all contributed to the escalation in house prices which has been evident over the last few years. Concern over the rate of increases in house prices led to the commissioning of the Bacon Report in 1998. As a result of the Bacon Report the government introduced a number of mainly fiscal measures to tackle this problem.

Along with ensuring that there is sufficient housing stock to cater for future demands it will also be necessary to provide affordable as well as social housing. At present, there are significant numbers of mainly young people who desire to form households, but who cannot afford 'starter homes', because of the level of current house prices. The provision of lower-cost housing is required to address this need.

Planning on its own cannot tackle the issue of rising house prices but the strategic development models and options that seek for mixed uses and a variety of housing stock may go some way to offering some choice in the house type and prices over and above that which is currently on offer.

## Urban/Rural Demarcation

The existing built-up area of Dublin includes Dublin city centre and its suburbs which extends beyond Dun Laoghaire to the south, to the Airport in the north and as far as Leixlip in the west. With the current pressure for housing and the high prices of land, especially in the Dublin Region, residential development is being forced into what would once have been considered rural areas. Such large scale residential development is altering the character of these areas.

This continuing spread of development is pushing the boundary of the built up area further out and diffusing the distinction between urban and rural areas.

The problem of defining the demarcation between urban and rural areas is not confined only to the built up area of Dublin. In rural areas there is growing demand for housing in the countryside, much of which is generated by people working in nearby cities and towns. Such housing is unsustainable - it increases private transport, is problematic in terms of servicing and can have a negative impact on the society of the town.

The extent to which a strategic model provides a clear demarcation between urban and rural areas and its ability to facilitate development into and near existing developed areas is a criterion in their assessment.

## Conservation of High Quality Agricultural Land

The Greater Dublin Area contains significant areas of good agricultural land. Parts of Fingal, Kildare and Meath, in particular, contain agricultural lands of high quality and productivity including an established market garden area. Kildare has extensive lands suited to the bloodstock industry.

Whilst over-production in the agricultural sector has reduced the strategic value of these lands for production in the short term, it nevertheless represents an important long term resource. Good planning policy dictates that areas of land that have high value for alternative uses are protected from development wherever possible. Use of the

land for built development must be balanced against the long term value of the land for agricultural production.

The conservation of high quality agricultural land is, therefore, a criterion in the assessment of the strategic models and options.

### Protection of Heritage and Amenity

Within the Greater Dublin Area there are a significant number of areas designated as having nature conservation value (SPA, SAC, NHA, SAAO) together with many archaeological and historical features of heritage value. Possible development pressures on such locations need to be identified and controlled if areas of heritage are to be preserved.

Good planning practice requires that development should not impinge on any designated area of nature conservation significance and that any strategic model or option should have regard to the requirements of conservation over the wider area.

### Regional Balance

There are two issues that have to be considered in terms of regional balance:

- development of the Greater Dublin Area relative to the rest of the country; and
- balanced development within the Greater Dublin Area.

The brief for the Guidelines does not extend to considering in detail the desirability of seeking to achieve a more balanced regional development within the country, or the methods by which this might be achieved.

It is desirable from a social viewpoint that development be reasonably spread to appropriate urban locations throughout the Greater Dublin Area, so as to benefit the greatest number of people, consistent with the requirements of sustainability. Similarly, there should be a fair distribution of the disbenefits arising from the overall development of the Greater Dublin Area.

Therefore, new employment-generating activities and residential development should be reasonably spread throughout the Greater Dublin Area, with each urban area receiving a fair share of both employment and housing. The lack of employment near some of the new residential developments has resulted in large movements of people daily, by private transport, for work and recreation purposes. The co-location of residential development and employment generating activities might, in some cases, reduce the need to travel and will help to create sustainable settlements.

The extent to which the strategic models and options facilitate balanced regional development is a criterion used in assessing the options.

### Relative Cost

Regardless of which strategic option is selected, there will be significant costs involved. Those options which seek to utilise existing capacity in sanitary services infrastructure and public transport and which reduce the need for additional projects will naturally be less expensive than those that require considerable new infrastructure to cater for development.



Options based on public transport, which will require high initial investment to secure the necessary infrastructure, may appear to be more expensive than those options based on private transport, where investment is more fragmented. However, such assessment must also take account of social and environmental costs and benefits.

