

# Strategic Planning Guidelines

for the Greater **D u b l i n** Area

Directions for Land Use and  
Transportation in the Dublin  
and Mid-East Regions for the  
New Millennium

STRATEGIC PLANNING GUIDELINES  
for the  
GREATER DUBLIN AREA

Prepared for

Dublin Corporation  
Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council  
Fingal County Council  
Kildare County Council  
Meath County Council  
South Dublin County Council  
Wicklow County Council

and the

Department of the Environment and Local Government  
in conjunction with

Dublin Regional Authority  
Mid-East Regional Authority

by a consortium of consultants comprising:

**Brady Shipman Martin**  
Planning Consultants

**Kirk McClure Morton**  
Consulting Engineers

**Fitzpatrick Associates**  
Economic Consultants

**Colin Buchanan and Partners**  
Transportation Consultants

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# Executive Summary

The Dublin and Mid-East Regions, comprising Dublin City and the counties of Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown, Fingal, Kildare, Meath, South Dublin and Wicklow, are experiencing an unprecedented rate of growth which is reflected in the level of development and building activity and in the demand for developable land. It is against this background that the Government decided that Strategic Planning Guidelines should be prepared for the Greater Dublin Area, which is comprised of the Dublin and Mid-East Regions.

The principal objective of the Guidelines is to put in place a broad planning framework for the area, which will provide an overall strategic context for the Development Plans of each local authority. The Guidelines also provide a framework for future investment in sanitary services, transportation and other infrastructure.

## VISION FOR THE GREATER DUBLIN AREA

The Greater Dublin Area, as the capital city-region of the country, should reflect the growing international role and significance of Ireland. It should be an area that can be promoted, nationally and internationally, as a pleasant place in which to live or to visit, with a high quality of both natural and built environment. The area should facilitate the further development of business through the availability of land for development and the adequate provision of all of the necessary services. In particular, the transportation system of the area should allow for good access into and through the area. The area should offer residents and visitors a high quality of life, with excellent opportunities for education and recreation.

Dublin, through its port and airport, will continue to be a very important entry point to the country as a whole and a gateway to the European Union and the rest of the world. The development of a broad economic base, balancing the further development of Dublin itself with the development of other centres in the area, will be critical to realising its potential as a major urban economic centre. This will be achieved through balancing economic development with the requirement for environmental sustainability.

The Dublin and Mid-East Regions will continue to be attractive and vibrant locations for industry, commerce, recreation and tourism and will be a major focus for economic growth within the country.

In the future, the Greater Dublin Area will have a much improved transportation system, with a better balance between public and private transport. A sustainable settlement strategy will offer choice in terms of residential and employment location and create a clearer demarcation between urban and rural areas.

## ANTICIPATED LEVELS OF GROWTH

At the time of the 1996 Census, the Greater Dublin Area had a population of 1.4 million, accommodated in over 450,000 households.

Since 1996, there has been net in-migration to the country, a significant proportion of which is to the Greater Dublin Area. This in-migration has been fuelled by the buoyant economy.

Continued good economic conditions are forecast for the Greater Dublin Area though at reduced rates of growth as compared to recent years. Under these circumstances, the population of the area will grow through both natural increase and continued in-migration. It is anticipated that the population of the Greater Dublin Area could be 1.65 million by the year 2011. Even if economic growth slows down, this level of population is likely to be achieved shortly thereafter.

In terms of planning, the anticipated growth in households, and hence demand for houses, will be more significant than the increase in population. The demand for additional housing arises not only from increasing population but also from a strong trend towards higher levels of household formation and smaller household size. These trends, which reflect changing social circumstances such as greater independence of young people and the break-up of families, are evident in almost every European country, and will occur even if population growth slows down.

In 1996, the average household size in the Greater Dublin Area was 3.1, having fallen from 3.4 in 1991. It is anticipated that average household size could fall to 2.5 by the year 2011, though there will be significant differences between the different local authority areas.

The number of households in the Greater Dublin Area could increase from 450,000 in 1996 to 660,000 in 2011. To meet this need, the number of houses in the Greater Dublin Area would need to increase by almost 50%, representing a major challenge to the local authorities and other development agencies, as well as to the construction industry.

The forecast growth in the economy will also affect employment. It is estimated that the number employed in the Greater Dublin Area will increase by 210,000 to 770,000 in 2011. The largest increases will be in the commercial, business and professional services sectors.

## ACCOMMODATING GROWTH

To accommodate these high levels of growth the Greater Dublin Area will require:

- **Residential Land.** Currently zoned, though not necessarily serviced, residential land could accommodate about two-thirds of the anticipated growth in household numbers up to 2011. Additional lands will require to be zoned, especially in the period after 2006, both to accommodate the remainder of the growth and to allow for land that might not be released for development. A portion of future growth will be accommodated through re-development, infill and intensification of use in existing urban areas.
- **Land for Employment Uses.** Whilst considerable areas of land are zoned for industrial and other employment uses, there will be need for additional land for these activities at suitable locations throughout the Greater Dublin Area.
- **Water.** Existing water supplies will require to be augmented, especially those serving the built-up area of Dublin and its environs. There is potential for additional water supplies from the River Boyne and River Barrow.

- **Wastewater Treatment.** Provided the range of schemes currently proposed and/or in planning are implemented, there should be sufficient capacity to accommodate the anticipated growth in future population and industrial activity. The assimilative capacity of the Liffey is likely to be reached during the period covered by the Guidelines, but there is capacity available in the Boyne and Barrow and along the coast.
- **Wastewater Collection.** Some of the existing sewerage infrastructure, especially in urban areas, is in poor condition and will require replacement. The capacity of major trunk sewers serving South Dublin and parts of Fingal also requires examination and possible augmentation, whilst the implementation of the North Fringe Sewer is essential.
- **Improved Transportation System.** The existing transportation system of the Greater Dublin Area, including both public and private transport, is subject to very heavy pressure. It is necessary to implement measures to alleviate the existing difficulties, many of which are in planning or under construction, as well as a range of measures to facilitate future development.

## PRINCIPLES GUIDING STRATEGY

The strategy embraces the principles of sustainable development, as set out in the National Sustainable Development Strategy adopted by government, and conforms to the direction of emerging policy in Europe emanating from the European Spatial Development Perspective.

The adoption of the principles of sustainability implies that the preferred strategy must reduce growth in the demand for transport, especially private transport. This can be achieved by the development of a public transport system that is sufficiently attractive and efficient to provide a real alternative to the private car. The future form of development should reduce urban sprawl and create a clearer distinction between urban and rural areas.

The population, household and employment scenarios used to determine the future scale and distribution of development must allow for the on-going expansion of the economy. It is prudent to plan for these high levels of growth to ensure that sufficient land and housing units will be available to cater for future demand. However, it is also essential that the Strategic Planning Guidelines are sufficiently flexible to adapt to changing economic circumstances and consequent changes in levels of population and household growth.

## TRANSPORTATION CORRIDORS

Within the Greater Dublin Area, a number of transportation corridors can be identified, within which there is both good road access (motorway or dual carriageway) together with passenger rail. There are also two potential corridors. The Dublin-Navan road is designated for upgrading to dual carriageway standard, but there is at present only indirect, freight rail access to the town. Athy is on a rail line, but there are no current plans for major road improvements.

## DIFFERENT OPTIONS AND ALTERNATIVES EXAMINED

A range of alternative models and options for the accommodation of the expected levels of growth was examined and the assessment of these provided the basis for the formulation of the recommended strategy. The development of new towns on greenfield sites was deemed inappropriate as they would require high levels of 'up-front' investment and are dependent on achieving target population levels within a short time. A wide dispersion of development was also rejected, as creating high levels of travel and not conforming to the principles of sustainability.

It was found that models based on concentration and/or consolidation best met the criteria for sustainability and flexibility. The results of this assessment supported a strategy based on the principles of sustainable development and incorporating a well-developed public transport system.

## DISTINCTION OF METROPOLITAN AND HINTERLAND AREAS

Within the Greater Dublin Area, a distinction can be made between the existing built-up area of Dublin and its immediate environs, called the Metropolitan Area in the Guidelines, and a Hinterland Area with extensive areas of countryside and a range of towns of various sizes. The principal issues in the Metropolitan Area relate to pressure arising from rapid and intensive development, such as severe traffic congestion, whilst an important issue in the Hinterland Area is the spill-over of development pressures from the built-up area of Dublin.

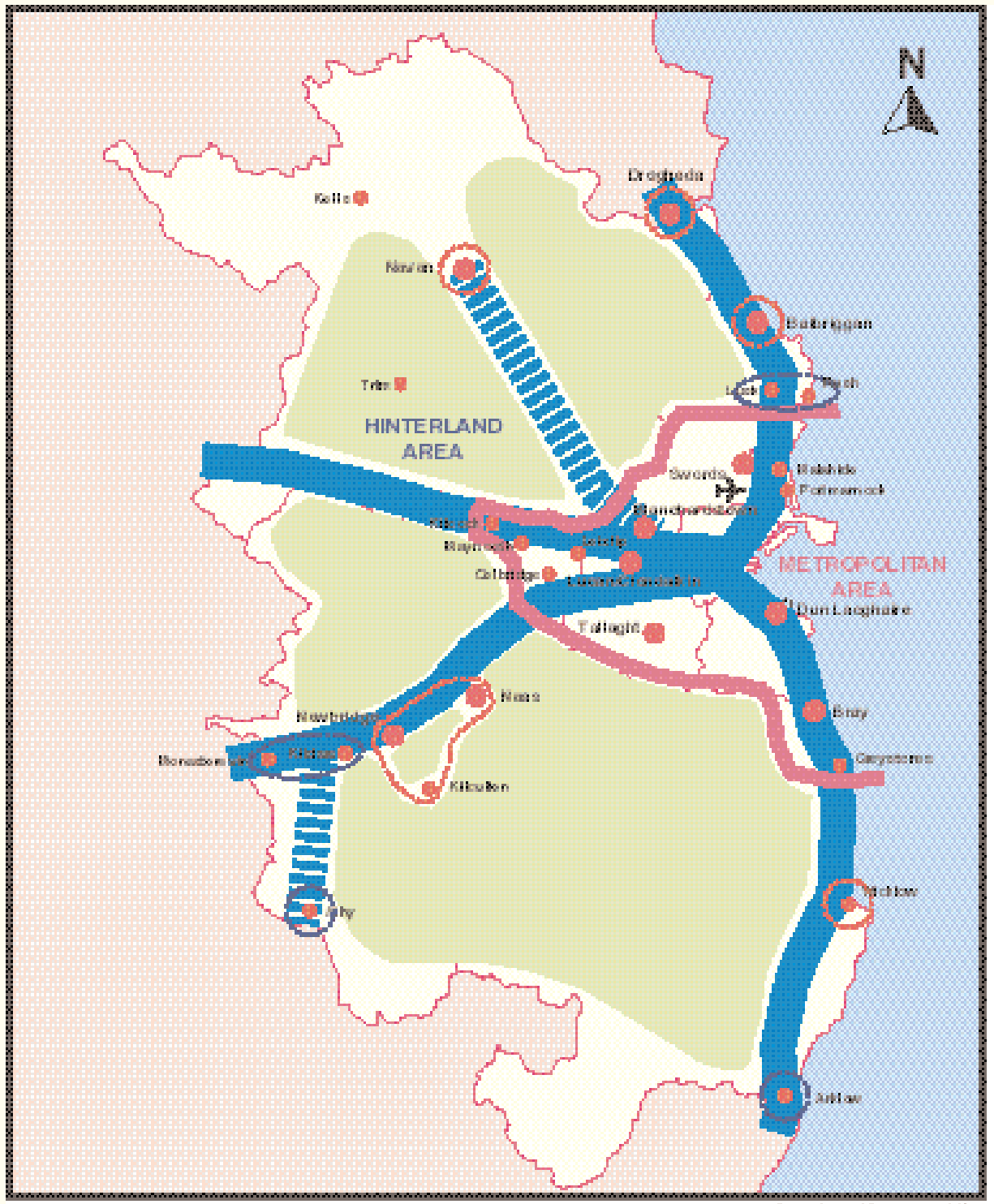
## OVERALL STRATEGY

Separate development strategies for the Metropolitan Area and the Hinterland Area are proposed (see below for the key points affecting each area). In both areas the strategy seeks for, and facilitates, a better balance between public and private transport. This will require the consolidation of future growth into a limited number of locations.

It is proposed to consolidate the Metropolitan Area in line with the principles of sustainable development. The consolidation of the Metropolitan Area will allow it to accommodate a greater population than at present. The growth of the Metropolitan Area will be balanced by the concentration of development into major centres in the Hinterland (see Map 2 - Overall Strategy).

These 'development centres' will be located on existing or future transportation corridors at Naas-Newbridge-Kilcullen, Navan, Balbriggan and Wicklow, with additional secondary centres at Arklow, Athy, Kildare-Monasterevin and Rush-Lusk. The 'development centres' will be separated from each other and from the Metropolitan Area by 'Strategic Green Belts'.

It is intended that these 'development centres' will develop, in the longer-term, as self-sufficient towns, with only limited commuting to the Metropolitan Area. This will involve the development of a strong employment and service base in each of the 'development centres'.



- Transportation Corridor
- Future Transportation Corridor
- Boundary of Metropolitan Area
- Primary Development Centre
- Secondary Development Centre
- Strategic Green Belt

**MAP 2 OVERALL STRATEGY**

Development outside the Metropolitan Area and the identified 'development centres' in the Hinterland Area should be primarily to meet local, rather than regional, needs. Sporadic and dispersed development is regarded as unsustainable and should be subject to strict control.

Future employment will be located in existing employment centres. Additional employment centres will also be required and will be given to locations served by adequate public transportation. Retail provision for food and similar goods will be distributed throughout the Greater Dublin Area, whilst comparison goods shopping will be located in the city centre and at selected nodes in the Metropolitan Area and in the 'development centres' in the Hinterland Area.

### Efficient public transport system

Key elements of a sustainable approach to future development include a reduction in the growth in demand for transport and increased emphasis on transportation alternatives to the private car. A strategy that promotes increased usage of the private car is not sustainable, and existing problems in the Greater Dublin Area indicate the consequences of following such a path.

Future development must, therefore, be based around public transport, with enhanced opportunities for walking and cycling. Nevertheless, use of the private car will still be important, especially in rural areas, and further improvements to the road system will be necessary.

The major transportation schemes currently in progress or planning are primarily intended to address existing shortcomings and will provide only limited capacity for large-scale growth in the future. It is, therefore, necessary to implement both the schemes necessary to address existing needs and schemes required to facilitate future development.

## STRATEGY FOR THE METROPOLITAN AREA - KEY POINTS

### Population and Households

- The population of the Metropolitan Area is projected to increase from 1.1 million in 1996 to 1.25 million in 2011, an increase of 12.5%.
- The number of households is set to increase at a greater rate than population. If the high in-migration scenario is realised and household sizes continue to fall there could be an increase of nearly 152,000 households over the lifetime of the Guidelines.

### Employment

- Existing employment centres, including Dublin city centre, Blanchardstown, Leixlip, Swords and Tallaght, will continue to expand.
- Additional employment centres will also be required and, where possible, these should be located so as to spread the benefits of employment and reduce the need to travel.

## Commercial and Retail

- Dublin City Centre will retain its dominant position as the main retail centre in the Greater Dublin Area.
- The further development of comparison goods outlets should be located at suitable and accessible sites, but not on the National Road network.
- Priority should be given to sites located on public transport routes.

## Transport

- One of the principal reasons for developing the Metropolitan Area is to achieve an overall reduction in the growth in demand for travel and the facilitation of public transport.
- The overall objective is to develop an integrated network of public transport throughout the Metropolitan Area.

## Sanitary Services

- Improvements to the overall water supply and to waste water collection will be required.
- Projected population levels will require additional trunk sewer capacity.

## Social, Educational and Recreational Infrastructure

- Future facilities should be located at sites that are well served by public transport.
- Adequate recreational facilities should be available in conjunction with, or ahead of, new housing development.

## STRATEGY FOR THE HINTERLAND AREA - KEY POINTS

### Population and Households

- The population of the Hinterland area is projected to increase by 36%, from 296,000 in 1996 to 402,000 in 2011.
- The total number of households could increase by over 73%, to about 63,000 over the period up to 2011.

### Employment

- The majority of future employment will be encouraged into the primary 'development centres' (Navan, Balbriggan, Wicklow and the Naas-Newbridge-Kilcullen area). This will ensure that each town has a range of employment and service activities to complement residential development.

### Commercial and Retail

- There should be a wide distribution of convenience goods outlets at town centre locations accessible by public transport and also with adequate car parking.

- This will be complemented by the provision of a good range of comparison goods outlets at town centre sites in the primary ‘development centres’.
- A number of retail warehouse developments will be facilitated in the ‘development centres’ when these grow sufficiently to justify such development.

### Transport

- The existing and potential transportation corridors will be strengthened so as to improve links with the Metropolitan Area.
- Suitable bus-based public transport services will be required in the ‘development centres’.

### Sanitary Services

- Additional water supplies to parts of the Hinterland Area, especially in those areas currently dependent on supply from the River Liffey, will be required.
- The provision of improved future water supplies to the north Fingal area is necessary.

### Social, Educational and Recreational Infrastructure

- The future provision of major education and healthcare facilities should be located at the ‘development centres’.
- Provision should be made for local and regional scale parks.

### Strategic Green Belt Areas

- Strategic Green Belt areas should be identified in the appropriate development plans to protect areas outside the ‘development centres’ from excessive development.

### The Way Forward

The Strategic Planning Guidelines will have a life span of 12 years and will shape the development of the Greater Dublin Area into the next century. It is essential that the Guidelines are monitored and reviewed on a continuous basis. This will allow the Guidelines to adapt to changing economic and social conditions. A structure will need to be established for this monitoring.

As of January 1999, six of the seven local authorities in the Greater Dublin Area were in the process of adopting, or have adopted, new Development Plans (Meath County Council has yet to start its development plan review). These plans require to be reappraised in the context of the Guidelines and reviewed, if necessary, to ensure their compliance with the overall strategy for the Greater Dublin Area.

The Guidelines have identified a number of infrastructural projects that are required for the implementation of the strategy. Some of these projects are committed or at an advanced stage of planning. Others, however, will require additional study, which should be undertaken as a matter of priority, as lead-in times for major infrastructure projects can be lengthy.