

Review and Update, April 2000

Strategic Planning Guidelines

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

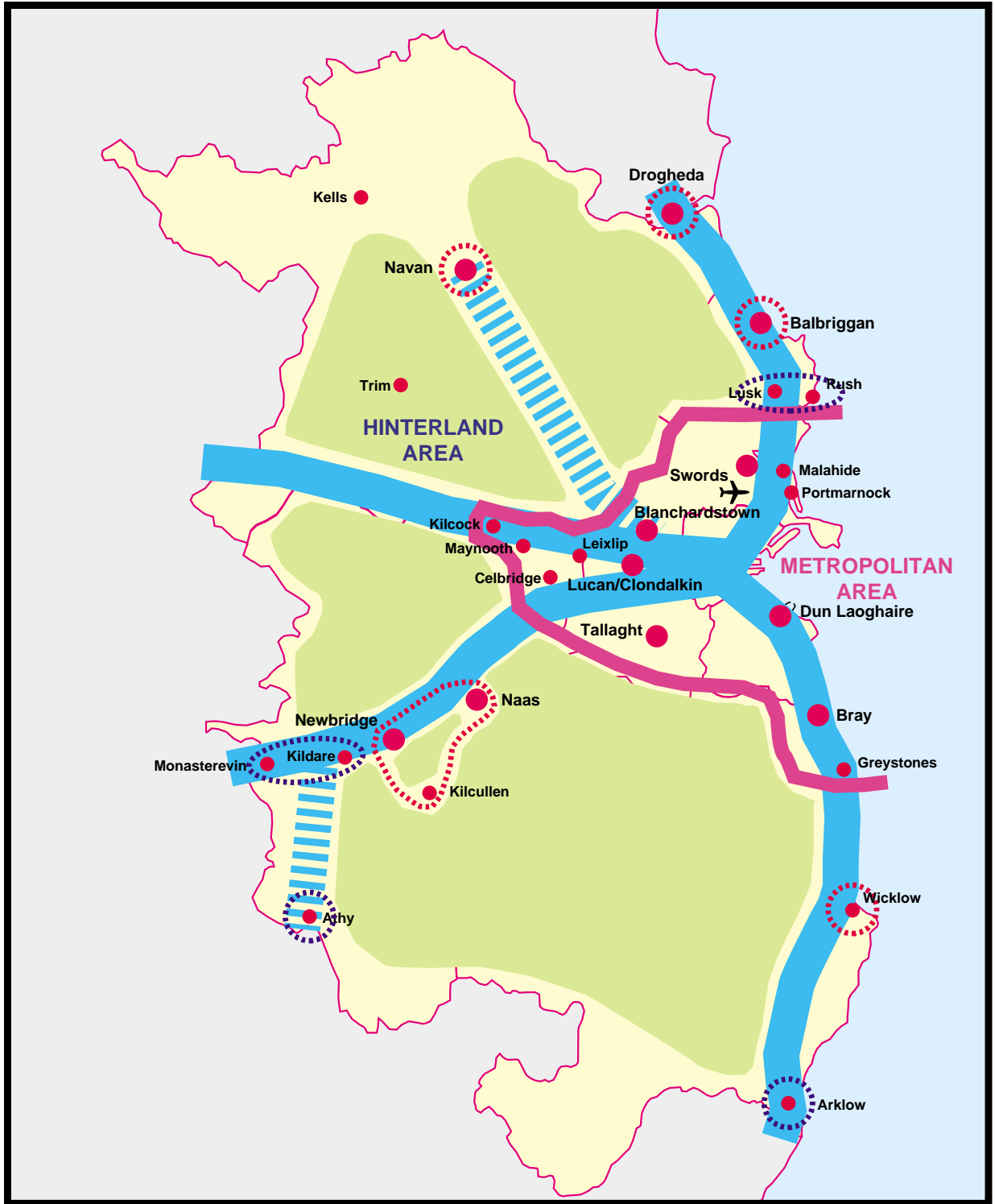


Strategic Planning Guidelines

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

Review and Update, April 2000

Brady Shipman Martin in association with Kirk McClure Morton



BRADY SHIPMAN MARTIN



STRATEGIC PLANNING GUIDELINES

for the
GREATER DUBLIN AREA

Review and Update, April 2000

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

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SUMMARY CONCLUSIONS

- National population and labour force projections, prepared by the Central Statistics Office, indicate that the Greater Dublin Area is growing more rapidly than envisaged in the Strategic Planning Guidelines. It is, therefore necessary to revise upwards the population, household and employment figures given in the guidelines. The population of 1.65 million envisaged for 2011 could now be reached by 2006.
- There is broadly enough residentially zoned land to accommodate the estimated housing requirements at least up to 2006, though some additional, zoned land may be required at appropriate locations in the Metropolitan Area and the Development Centres to compensate for currently zoned land that may not be released for development.
- Additional lands will require to be zoned for employment uses at locations that can be well served by public transport.
- Over 30,000 housing units are under construction, have been granted permission or are on appeal in the Greater Dublin Area.
- Housing completions in the Greater Dublin Area in 1999 increased modestly over the previous year, but the current rates of completion are not adequate to meet demand. Over 20,000 housing units would require to be completed each year if estimated demand was to be met by 2006.
- The higher level of population, household and employment growth now envisaged further strengthens the need to implement the strategy of consolidation, with its associated emphasis on public transport. This is the only way forward. The alternative would be unsustainable and unacceptable sprawl, accompanied by intolerable traffic congestion.
- Considerable progress has been made over the last year in relation to the provision of the necessary infrastructure to facilitate and service anticipated growth. However, the lengthy lead-in times for major infrastructure means that the benefits of many of these proposals will not be seen for some time.
- It is now especially important that a commitment be made to the location and character of the fixed elements of the public transport system, as these will determine the detailed location of future land uses and will reduce the pressure for sprawl.
- The set of Development Plans in the Greater Dublin Area will require to be reviewed, not only to incorporate the strategy contained in the guidelines, but also to take account of other requirements, such as the current Planning and Development Bill, when it becomes law.
- The Strategic Planning Guidelines will continue to be monitored and reviewed.

1 INTRODUCTION

In March 1999, the Minister for the Environment and Local Government launched the Strategic Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area. This important document sets out an integrated land-use and transportation framework for the sustainable development of the Greater Dublin Area, comprising the Dublin and Mid-East Regions.

The publication of the Guidelines marked an important step in an on-going process, embracing land-use and transportation planning, together with continuous monitoring and review. The emphasis on the need for review and on the necessity for close co-operation between all of the parties involved, including central government, local authorities and state agencies, distinguishes the Strategic Planning Guidelines from previous plans for the Greater Dublin Area.

The process has continued during the year since the launch of the Guidelines and has included:

- Monitoring and review by the Steering Committee, Technical Working Group and the Local and Regional Authority Members Committee, originally established to direct the preparation of the Guidelines but extended as review bodies.
- Broadening of the Steering Committee through the inclusion of additional representation of transportation interests.
- Appointment of executive to assist the Steering Committee and the Technical Working Group in the review process.
- Provision of technical assistance to the Steering Committee and the Technical Working Group by Brady Shipman Martin, the lead consultants in the preparation of the Guidelines, assisted by Kirk McClure Morton, consulting engineers.

The Planning and Development Bill, 1999 proposes to give statutory recognition to the Strategic Planning Guidelines, stating that planning authorities '*shall have regard to any regional planning guidelines in force for its area when making and adopting a development plan*' (Sec. 27(1)).

In addition, the Strategic Planning Guidelines have been accepted as the basis for the planning of the Greater Dublin Area by all of the relevant government departments and agencies. The Guidelines will also form an important input to the National Spatial Strategy, currently in preparation.

The Strategic Planning Guidelines included a recommendation that a short annual report be published to inform the public of progress with the strategy (page 110). This document is intended to meet that requirement.

KEY ELEMENTS OF THE GUIDELINES

Key elements of the Strategic Planning Guidelines include:

- Incorporation of the principles of sustainable development as established in the National Sustainable Development Strategy adopted by government.
- Increased emphasis on the concentration of future development into the Metropolitan Area and into designated Development Centres, located on transportation corridors in the Hinterland Area.
- The growth of the designated Development Centres, over time, to become communities in which residential and employment functions will be balanced and which will be the principal service centres for the Hinterland Area. It is recognised in the Guidelines that, in the short to medium term, commuting from the Development Centres into the Metropolitan Area will continue and the strategy is to accommodate as much of this commuting as possible on public transport.
- Extensive strategic green belt areas, within which development will be encouraged to meet local needs but not needs arising from commuting.
- The facilitation of transport modes alternative to the private car, including a greatly enhanced 'mesh' of public transport in the Metropolitan Area and good public transport links between the Development Centres and the Metropolitan Area to reduce commuting by car and to better integrate these centres into the overall economy of the Greater Dublin Area.

2

THE SCALE OF FUTURE GROWTH

POPULATION GROWING MORE RAPIDLY THAN ORIGINALLY ESTIMATED

The levels of future growth in the Greater Dublin Area envisaged in the Strategic Planning Guidelines are unprecedented and challenging. This is especially true of household numbers, which the Guidelines estimate will increase from 450,000 in 1996 to 660,000 in 2011, driven by a buoyant economy, immigration, the age structure of the population and the trend towards significantly smaller household size that is evident in all developed countries.

The estimates given in the Strategic Planning Guidelines were based on the best information available at the time, together with an optimistic view of future economic performance. Nevertheless, a review of the population and household estimates, based on the publication of national Population and Labour Force Projections by the Central Statistics Office (CSO) in July 1999, requires an upward revision of the levels of growth.

Whilst the CSO projections do not include a regional breakdown, it is clear that the population of the Greater Dublin Area is growing more rapidly than previously anticipated and that the estimates given for 2001 and 2006 are likely to be significantly exceeded.

For 2001, the population of the Greater Dublin Area is likely to be in the order of 1.53 million (about 2.9% higher than estimated in the Guidelines), whilst for 2006, the population could be in the region of 1.65 million (about 4.9% higher than estimated).

The likely population levels in 2011 are more difficult to estimate, but if the trends underlying the national population projections continue and the Greater Dublin Area continues to increase its share of the national population, there could be over 1.76 million in the area by that date.

Table 2.1 Revised Population and Household Estimates for Greater Dublin Area

	SPG Population	Revised Population	SPG Households	Revised Households
1996 (actual)	1,405,671	1,405,671	446,251	446,251
2001	1,491,000	1,533,600	507,000	521,600
2006	1,575,000	1,652,710	579,000	607,600
2011	1,650,000	1,764,420	661,000	705,800

Source: Strategic Planning Guidelines; High In-migration. Revised estimates based on National Population and Labour Force Projections, Central Statistics Office, July 1999.

Note: Revised household estimates are based on average household size predicted in Strategic Planning Guidelines as 2.94 in 2001, 2.72 in 2006 and 2.50 in 2011.

Clearly, the situation has to be monitored closely and the outcome of the Census of Population in 2001 will be particularly important in this regard. A difficulty at the present time is that trends derived from the period before 1996 are of limited value and consideration may be required of the need to take an interim census at an appropriate date within the 5-year inter-censal period.

HIGHER HOUSEHOLD NUMBERS

The higher levels of population now anticipated will see a corresponding increase in the numbers of households in the Greater Dublin Area. The actual rate of household formation is dependent on a range of factors, including the size and age structure of the population, economic circumstances and the supply and availability of housing. This, together with the absence of any statistical data on current trends in average household size, makes it difficult to quantify the future demand for housing, except to say that it will be greater than anticipated in the Strategic Planning Guidelines.

However, if average household size in the Greater Dublin Area in 2006 remains as predicted in the Guidelines, at 2.72, there could be an additional 28,600 households in the area, over and above the total of 579,000 estimated in the Guidelines. Should average household size fall below that level, there would be a marked increase in the number of households.

Clearly, this level of growth poses a major challenge for the provision of adequate infrastructure and sufficient housing units to meet the likely demand.

LABOUR FORCE GROWTH

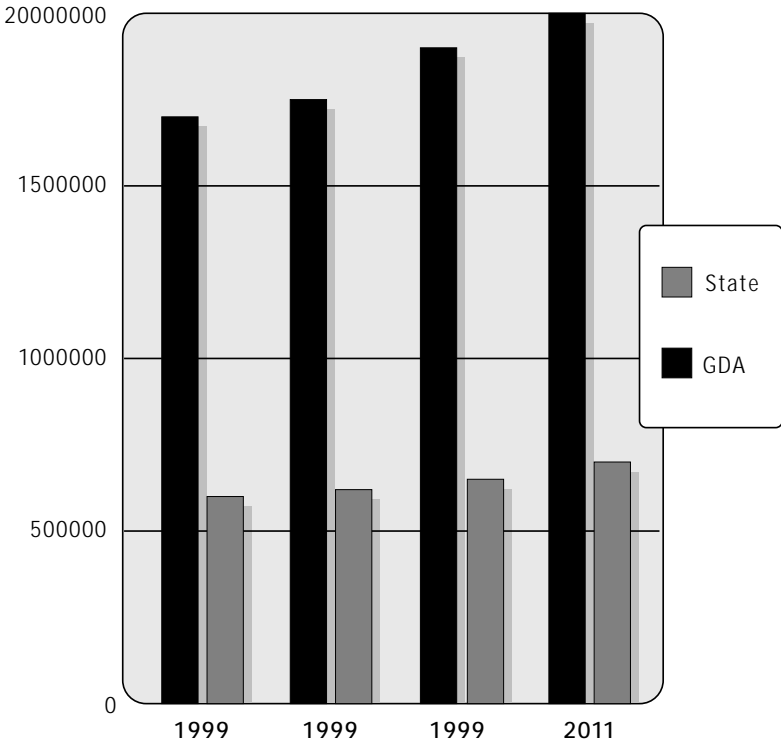
The Strategic Planning Guidelines predicted that the numbers employed in the Greater Dublin Area in 2010 would be about 770,000. However, the CSO estimates that the labour force of the Greater Dublin Area totalled 701,000 in early 1999. Of this, about 95% or 667,000 were in employment, which means that nearly half of the growth in jobs predicted in the Guidelines had already occurred by early 1999.

Based on the national Population and Labour Force Projections, prepared by the CSO, it is estimated that the labour force of the Greater Dublin Area will be almost 740,000 by 2001 and over 805,000 by 2006, provided the area retains its current share of the national figure. If 95% of the labour force were in employment, the numbers at work would be 702,000 in 2001 and 765,000 in 2006.

The number of jobs in the Greater Dublin Area is thus likely to significantly exceed the level predicted in the Guidelines. This, in turn, will place considerable pressure on existing lands zoned for employment uses and it may be necessary to zone additional lands for these purposes, even in the short term.

Reliable data on place of employment would be extremely beneficial in the planning of the Greater Dublin Area and consideration should be given to obtaining this in future Census of Population

ESTIMATED LABOUR FORCE 1999 - 2011



3 THE CAPACITY TO ACCOMMODATE GROWTH

CAPACITY TO PROVIDE FOR FUTURE HOUSING DEMAND

Information provided by the local authorities to the Department of the Environment and Local Government shows that there is capacity on residentially zoned land (either currently serviced or likely to be serviced) in the Greater Dublin Area to accommodate over 158,000 housing units over the next 6 years. This figure excludes houses currently under construction or on appeal.

Table 3.1 Summary of Housing Capacity, Greater Dublin Area (December 1999)

	A	B	C1	C2	D	E
Dublin CB	1,582	1,776	3,029	498	2,532	21,655
Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown	1,381	2,453	1,273	141	2,000	13,301
Fingal	2,714	4,422	5,052	1,852	17,000	52,773
South Dublin	1,500	5,000	1000	0	12,000	31,500
Dublin Region	7,177	13,651	10,354	2,491	33,532	119,229
Kildare	1,099	1,933	2,664	290	1,280	16,107
Meath	2,128	3,069	5,462	300	1,098	14,419
Wicklow	677	288	1,445	100	960	8,651
Mid-East Region	3,904	5,290	9,571	690	3,338	39,177
Greater Dublin Area	11,081	18,941	19,925	3,181	36,870	158,406

Source: Housing Supply Unit, Department of the Environment and Local Government (based on local authority returns).

Note: All figures refer to housing units and are provisional.

A = Under construction.

B = Planning permission granted.

C1 = Awaiting local authority decision.

C2 = On appeal.

D = Pre-planning discussions.

E = Capacity of zoned, undeveloped land, currently serviced or likely to be serviced within 6 years.

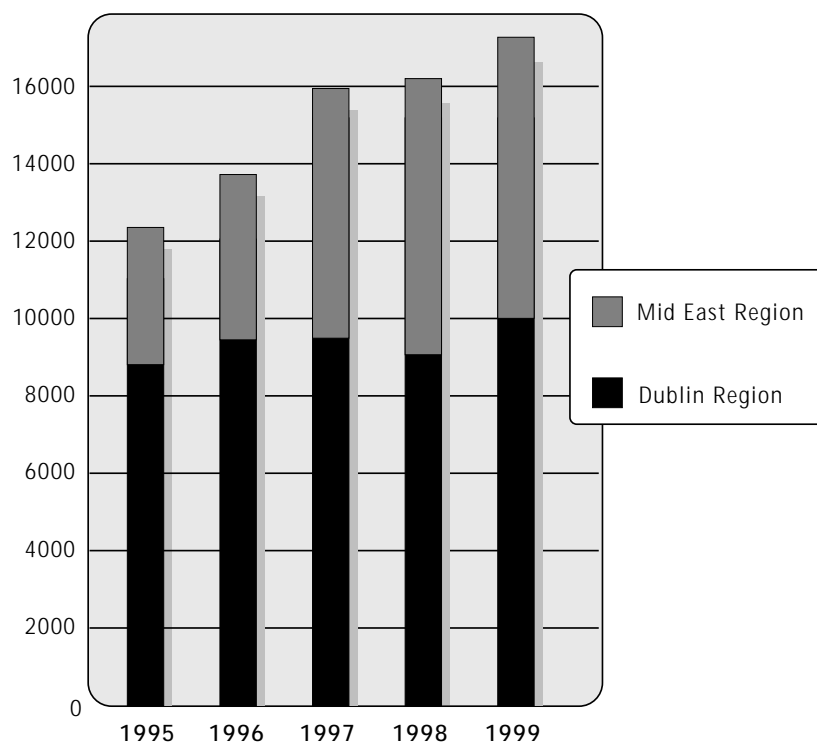
If all of this available land is developed, the supply of housing will be adequate to meet the demand arising from the higher population levels now predicted for 2006, even if average household size across the Greater Dublin Area was to drop to 2.60, rather than the 2.72 predicted in the Guidelines.

However, it will be necessary for the construction industry in the Greater Dublin Area to expand its output to about 20,000 units per year to meet this demand. According to government statistics, house completions, including apartments, in the Greater Dublin Area have been increasing, but are still some way off this target.

Department of the Environment and Local Government statistics show that, in 1999, house completions in the Greater Dublin Area totalled 15,228. This was a 7% increase over the numbers completed in 1998 and a 23% increase over 1995.

The information provided by the local authorities shows that 11,081 units were under construction, whilst there was planning permission for an additional 18,941 units. Nearly 20,000 units were awaiting local authority decision, whilst 3,181 units were on appeal. The local authorities reported that pre-planning discussions were in progress in relation to almost 37,000 additional housing units.

NEW HOUSE COMPLETIONS IN THE GDA 1995 - 99



The availability of residentially zoned land, serviced or about to be serviced, is not a major constraint on the supply of housing in the Greater Dublin Area, at least in the period up to 2006. Moreover, if outstanding planning permissions are taken up and the majority of housing applications currently before An Bord Pleanála are granted permission, a significant amount of new housing could become available over the next 18-24 months, particularly in the Dublin Region. However, the actual supply will depend on the capacity of the industry to respond to the need for higher numbers of completions whilst, at the same time, adapting to the changes required in techniques and quality arising from higher density development.

The overall capacity of residentially zoned land to meet future housing demand, up to 2006, masks differences in supply of land within the Greater Dublin Area and the need to ensure that sufficient land is available to compensate for zoned lands that are not released for development. It may, therefore, be necessary to zone some additional lands for residential use, at appropriate locations on the public transportation network.

MAJOR GROWTH OF COUNTIES ADJOINING GREATER DUBLIN AREA

The share of national completions represented by the Greater Dublin Area has fallen from 41% in 1995 to 33% in 1999. To some extent, this reflects the longer lead-in time for the provision of housing in the Greater Dublin Area. Moreover, in excess of 30,000 housing units are under construction, have been granted permission or are on appeal in the Greater Dublin Area and the house completion performance of the area may thus be expected to improve within the next two to three years.

There has been a marked increase in the numbers of houses completed in the counties adjoining the Greater Dublin Area and anecdotal evidence suggests that many of these housing units are occupied by commuters into the Dublin area, facilitated by the rapidly improving road network. Housing completions in these adjoining counties increased by 32% between 1998 and 1999, as compared with 7% in the Greater Dublin Area.

A fundamental principle underlying the Strategic Planning Guidelines is that long distance commuting, especially by the private car, is unsustainable. Thus, the rapid growth of the surrounding counties, in so far as this is servicing the demand for housing in the Greater Dublin Area, is of considerable concern. On the other hand, if the growth is servicing the development of local employment, it must be seen as positive.

LOCATION OF ADDITIONAL GROWTH

It is recognised that the momentum of the existing patterns of development, based largely on use of the private car as the principal means of transportation, will take time to wind down and be replaced by the more sustainable patterns promoted in the Strategic Planning Guidelines. However, the increased levels of population and households now envisaged make the commitment to the strategy even more pressing and necessary. If the increased pressure arising from the higher levels of population is accommodated in broad accordance with the strategy, it will strengthen the overall approach and establish the new patterns more quickly.

If, however, the accommodation of the increased population is allowed to follow current patterns, it will undermine the strategy and make it very difficult to effectively establish the new patterns of consolidation. There is also a consequent danger of undermining the very large imminent investment in public transport.

There is adequate residentially zoned land to accommodate the higher levels of growth up to 2006 and beyond. It will be necessary to ensure that this land is serviced in time to meet the demand for housing and it may also be necessary to zone some additional lands, especially at locations with good public transport access, in the short to medium term, so as to ensure that adequate, serviced land is available at appropriate locations.

The location of additional lands for employment uses will be critical. It presents an opportunity to strengthen the overall strategy through the zoning of appropriate lands in the Development Centres and at nodes on the existing and future fixed public transportation network. It will be particularly important to strengthen the Development Centres so as to provide opportunities for employment in the locality and hence reduce the incidence of commuting.

In overall terms, the approach should be to accommodate population, household and employment growth in line with the Strategic Planning Guidelines, that is, within the Metropolitan Area and the designated Development Centres. There is capacity to do this. New population and household forecasts should be prepared on the basis of the Census of Population in 2001, when current trends can be definitively quantified. If necessary, the overall strategy can then be reviewed and amended.

THE CRITICAL IMPORTANCE OF TRANSPORTATION

A key element of the Strategic Planning Guidelines is the development of a much enhanced public transport system. This embraces:

- The creation of a 'mesh' of public transport in the Metropolitan Area, combining radial and orbital routes.
- The provision of good public transport links between the Development Centres in the Hinterland Area and the Metropolitan Area.
- The development of local services in the Development Centres.

The most challenging of these is the development of a 'mesh' of public transport in the Metropolitan Area. The broad principle of according priority to public transport in Dublin is acknowledged in the National Development Plan, which includes proposals for a range of projects, actions and measures in this regard. This priority is further underlined in the statement in the plan that *'Within the C-ring, the policy is for no significant increase in radial road capacity'*.

Coras Iompair Eireann has commissioned a Dublin Suburban Rail Strategic Review and a Bus Network Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area to examine the relevant aspects of

the transportation system and to make recommendations in the context of the Strategic Planning Guidelines. These studies provide inputs to the updated Dublin Transportation Initiative, which is due shortly.

The Strategic Planning Guidelines have established the broad land-use framework for the Greater Dublin Area, together with the objective of aligning future land-uses with the public transport system. The key significance of the public transport system cannot be over-emphasised and the Residential Density Guidelines further support the concentration of development at nodes on the system.

The fixed elements of the public transport system, heavy rail lines, light rail lines and Quality Bus Corridors, are major determinants in the detailed location of land-uses and already there is considerable pressure to develop housing along the existing rail lines. The next critical step in the planning of the Greater Dublin Area is to take decisions on the location and character of the future fixed transportation infrastructure. A commitment to a future transportation system will, in itself, draw development into the rail and strategic bus corridors and will reduce pressure for on-going urban sprawl, dependent on the private car as the principal means of transport. It will also allow new areas zoned for residential and employment land-uses to be matched closely to the public transportation system.

The Dublin Transportation Office is currently preparing an updated Dublin Transportation Initiative strategy, based on the strategy contained in the Strategic Planning Guidelines and with inputs from other studies, including those commissioned by CIE. This updated strategy will be published soon and is likely to contain a wide range of proposals and measures to provide a greatly enhanced public transport system for the Greater Dublin Area, in line with the vision given in the Guidelines.

Decisions on the location and nature of the future fixed transportation infrastructure, especially the public transport infrastructure, are critical to the formulation of detailed land-use policies and objectives. Whilst it is recognised that the decisions are long-term, with implications for the future shape and direction of the Greater Dublin Area for a century or more, and that the measures will also be very expensive, there is a considerable urgency in this regard. What is required is to agree on the location and nature of the system. The implementation of the system can then be brought forward or retarded in accordance with economic circumstances.

The development of new and/or improved public transport links from the Development Centres to the Metropolitan Area will form part of the overall transportation strategy now being developed.

Within the Development Centres, town bus services are now operating in Naas, Newbridge and Navan and these can form the core of a system to be developed in parallel with the growth of the towns.

REQUIREMENT TO IMPROVE OTHER INFRASTRUCTURE

The increased levels of population and households now envisaged for the Greater Dublin Area, together with the higher levels of employment, will place even greater pressure on all aspects of infrastructure than was anticipated in the Strategic Planning Guidelines.

Water Supply

Whilst the Water Conservation Project is progressing satisfactorily and is achieving encouraging savings in water and approval has been given to increase capacity at Ballymore Eustace, the water supply situation in the period out to 2011 remains difficult. Supplies from the Liffey are clearly limited and the examination of new resources is thus extremely important. The Department of the Environment and Local Government has agreed to implement studies on the feasibility of abstraction and treatment of water from the River Barrow, as well as groundwater abstraction in Kildare and Fingal.

The need to consider longer-term sources of water for the Greater Dublin Area remains an important issue. Given the long lead-in times for the implementation of major water supply projects, it is essential that the initial studies commence as soon as possible.

Wastewater

Progress in the implementation of new and improved wastewater treatment facilities is continuing, with on-going work at Ringsend and Osberstown. Contractors have been appointed for the plant at Swords, as well as consultants for other plants in Fingal and Wicklow. A treatment option study for Shanganagh is under way. The study on the North Fringe Sewer is well advanced.

Nevertheless, it is important that the rate of progress be accelerated and additional studies commissioned to ascertain the overall requirements for wastewater collection and treatment arising from the revised population estimates. Concern has been raised about the environmental capacity of the Liffey, especially in Co. Kildare.

Storm Water

There has been progress in dealing with storm water issues affecting a number of locations in the Greater Dublin Area. In the past year, consultants have been appointed to prepare a Drainage Area Plan for the Dodder Valley and there is a similar proposal in Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown to separate foul and storm water in sewerage in order to increase capacity and reduce pumping to Ringsend. Storm attenuation measures are being incorporated in many new developments. However, problems still exist and the on-going urbanisation of the Greater Dublin Area will require that additional attention be paid to this issue in the future.

Solid Waste

Solid waste management and disposal are major issues in the Greater Dublin Area. The higher levels of growth now predicted will exacerbate the current deficiencies and increase the levels of waste arising. There is a need to review existing plans in the light of the higher growth levels, undertaking a detailed analysis to include such factors as capture rates, participation rates, technology and system constraints, growth rates, contractual arrangements and procurement options. This is urgent given the need to identify new initiatives for the reduction and disposal of waste, which are deliverable, achievable, and sustainable, in order to meet not only legislative and policy targets, but also the needs of the Greater Dublin Area.

Electricity

Demand for electricity is growing rapidly in the Greater Dublin Area, reflecting both the increased population and the buoyant economy, and there is now recognition that electricity supply and its transmission may be a problem from the winter of 2001-2 onwards. A number of generation stations have been proposed to meet this increasing demand and planning permission has been granted for some of these. However, it is essential that at least one of the proposals proceed and electricity transmission infrastructure be strengthened as soon as possible, if additional supplies are to be available to meet the demand.

Gas

The development of the economy, together with population growth, is placing pressure on the natural gas system and concern has been expressed about the capacity of the system, particularly in the short-term. Kinsale Gas is due to run out in the next few years. Measures proposed to increase capacity and distribution include, the potential development of the Corrib field, a further interconnector to Scotland via Northern Ireland ensuring security of supply, a pipeline linking Belfast to Dublin and the extension of the network to major centres within the country not already served.

Information Technology

The floatation of Eircom has provided additional funding needed to upgrade the network and there have also been significant investments by other operators. The acquisition of CableLink by NTL will see the upgrading of the fibre network to cater for data in the next few years.

Education

Rapid population growth in those parts of the Greater Dublin Area that have seen extensive housing development in recent years is already placing considerable strain on existing educational facilities, including primary and secondary schools. The increased levels of population will further increase pressure on these facilities and on third-level institutions. It is important that planning for adequate educational infrastructure be undertaken ahead of the construction of housing.

4

THE DEVELOPMENT PLANS

The set of Development Plans in the Greater Dublin Area will require to be reviewed to take account of a range of considerations, including the Planning and Development Bill 1999, when it becomes law, the Strategic Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area and various guidelines issued by the Minister for the Environment and Local Government, such as the guidelines on residential density and the draft retail guidelines.

In reviewing the Development Plans, each local authority should:

- Include a statement setting out the relationship of the Development Plan strategy to the Strategic Planning Guidelines.
- Support the concentration of development into the Metropolitan Area and the designated Development Centres in the Hinterland Area
- Include a clear statement, in text and map form, of the strategy underlying the Development Plan.
- Include a quantitative summary of zoned lands and development capacities.
- Place greater emphasis on the provision of public transport and include reservations for public transport measures, such as rail lines.
- Have stronger policy statements, reducing the potential for conflicting interpretations of policy.
- Clarify the terminology used, especially in relation to growth centres and mixed use zoning objectives.

Particular attention will be needed to address the issues affecting settlements close to the boundary of the Metropolitan Area but not designated as Development Centres. There is considerable current pressure for the development of these centres and their future role and size needs to be clarified.

Revised plans for the designated Development Centres, to take account of the level of growth now anticipated at these locations, are also necessary. Some of these are currently under way, but it will be important to plan for groups of towns such as Naas-Newbridge-Kilcullen, as a unit rather than as individual centres.

When the fixed elements of the public transport infrastructure are agreed, it would be useful to integrate the transportation network with land-use objectives at a greater level of detail than set out in the Strategic Planning Guidelines, but at a broader level than in the Development Plans. This will require a review of the location of existing and potential future land-uses and can be achieved through co-operative action by the

relevant Planning Authorities.

A related issue, which is currently being examined, is the future role of settlements in the transportation corridors, especially those not designated as Development Centres. Following agreement on the fixed elements of the public transport infrastructure, the future size and role of these settlements needs to be reconsidered, particularly with regard to the optimum use of the transportation infrastructure, especially rail lines, and in the context of the higher population estimates.

5

CONCLUSIONS

The Strategic Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area were produced against a background of unprecedented growth and development in the Dublin and Mid-East Regions. The best estimates available at the time were used to assess future population and household numbers and the resultant analysis shows that the Greater Dublin Area faces a major challenge in accommodating and servicing future growth. The more recent population and labour force projections, prepared by the CSO, show that the challenge is significantly greater than anticipated.

In contrast to the high growth estimates for population, household and employment is the declining performance of the Greater Dublin Area in terms of house completions, relative to the rest of the country. This gap is contributing to the rise in house prices and underlines the need provide significant levels of housing in the area over the next few years. Almost 33,000 housing units are under construction, have been granted permission or are on appeal in the Greater Dublin Area. However, the actual supply of housing is dependent on the capacity of the construction industry and especially on its ability to deliver high quality housing at higher densities than traditionally provided.

There is broadly enough zoned land to accommodate the housing requirement up to 2006. However, some additional land may require to be zoned to facilitate the increased output of housing and there will be a need to ensure that adequate zoned land for employment uses is available. This presents an opportunity to consolidate the strategy, by locating these additional zoned lands at appropriate places, well served by existing and future public transport, within the Metropolitan Area, in the designated Development Centres in the Hinterland Area and possibly at other locations along rail lines.

The gap between population growth and the provision of housing has implications for the rate of household formation and average household size. There are currently no data available to provide guidance on trends in this area and there is an urgent need to investigate the situation, even ahead of the Census of Population in 2001.

The higher levels of population, household and employment growth now envisaged for the Greater Dublin Area further strengthens the need to implement the strategy of consolidation, with its associated emphasis on public transport, contained in the Guidelines. This is the only way forward. The alternative would be unsustainable and unacceptable sprawl, accompanied by intolerable traffic congestion.

To facilitate the provision of adequate housing numbers, it is essential that progress in the implementation of the requisite transportation, sanitary services and energy infrastructure be accelerated. There has been considerable progress in relation to the provision of infrastructure during the past year, but it must also be recognised that the provision of major infrastructure requires lengthy lead-in times.

It is now especially important that a commitment be made to the location and character of the fixed elements of the public transport system, as these will determine the detailed location of future land uses and will reduce the pressure for sprawl. The updated DTI strategy will be particularly significant in this regard.

The set of Development Plans in the Greater Dublin Area will require to be reviewed, not only to incorporate the strategy contained in the Guidelines, but also to take account of other requirements, such as the current Planning and Development Bill, when it becomes law. The reviews should also take account of the current assessment of settlements in the transportation corridors, the assessment of settlements close to the boundary of the Metropolitan Area and the general review of land-uses following agreement on the location of the fixed transportation infrastructure.

The Strategic Planning Guidelines will continue to be monitored and reviewed. A detailed review should be undertaken following publication of the results of the Census of Population in 2001, when additional information will be available to allow for a thorough analysis of current trends. The review might include the preparation of revised population projections.