





# **Ireland 2040 Our Plan**

## **Draft National Planning Framework**

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# FOREWORD

With this final stage of public consultation on Ireland 2040 – Our Plan, we come to an important milestone in our country’s history. The Government’s proposed long-term strategic planning framework will guide national, regional and local planning and investment decisions over the next 25 years. Our Plan is a document that every citizen, every community, every organisation should be aware of and engaged in.

As we move towards the centenary of the State’s foundation, we have witnessed profound changes in our country in the last 100 years and the pace of change in recent years and indeed into the future, driven by a range of demographic, technological, ecological, economic and social factors, means that planning for our future is a necessity, not an option. First and foremost, this means planning for a better future for all of our people.

By 2040, we know that Ireland will be home to an additional one million people. We will need at least an extra 600,000 jobs and a half a million additional homes. Twenty years ago, we were a country of 3.5m people; by 2040, that will be approaching 6m people. Together with Northern Ireland, our island will have a population of around 8 million by 2040.

Between now and 2040, our small but dynamic country will have to cope with enormous changes in social, economic, cultural and environmental terms. For example, the number of people over 65 will more than double by then, half the jobs that people will work at in 2040 may not even exist today and we are likely to be facing increased environmental and climate pressures.

Change can present difficulties and challenges but also opportunities. This is why it is critical to plan for our future, preparing for an increasing population in a balanced and coherent way, harnessing the enormous potential of our country and making sure that unforeseen developments and unsustainable practices are addressed.

Ireland 2040 is our opportunity to anticipate and plan in a proactive way for the changes our country is likely to experience over the next generation and which need to be managed properly to avoid the adverse effects that could otherwise occur.

This final draft of the National Planning Framework takes account of the extensive research and analysis undertaken to enable its preparation as well as the views of hundreds of people and organisations that have already contributed extensively at the various drafting stages.

We have already listened to many views and reflected these in our Framework. You now have a further chance to respond, share your views on what it says about Ireland’s future out to 2040 and beyond, and help us to shape Our Plan.



**Leo Varadkar TD,**  
Taoiseach



**Eoghan Murphy TD,**  
Minister for Housing, Planning  
and Local Government



*“In today’s globalised and increasingly competitive economy, quality of place is a key competitive advantage, which is why Ireland’s enterprise policy puts the quality of our urban and rural places at the top of the agenda from a business and enterprise development perspective. Our objective is to ensure that all regions can reach their potential and provide quality jobs for people throughout Ireland. Ireland 2040 now puts in place a strong place-based development strategy for Ireland’s cities, towns and rural fabric, which will furthermore be backed up by 10-year coordinated investment planning in the essential infrastructure that makes our urban and rural fabric work and a successful basis for our country’s development in business, enterprise and innovation terms. Our cross government, cohesive approach will ensure that our implementation actions are mutually reinforcing to deliver our ambitious enterprise policy, Enterprise 2025, and that we can realise our vision for sustainable full employment and improved quality of life for all”.*

**Frances Fitzgerald TD**, Tánaiste and Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation



*“Ireland’s place in the world and our relationships with our nearest neighbours in Northern Ireland, the United Kingdom and the European Union will change and develop in the years ahead, which is why it is crucially important that we plan strategically, taking into account the potential of our dynamic island economy and the opportunities to not only develop, but deepen our linkages with our key trading partners in Europe and the wider global context. Ireland 2040 is a visible expression of a country that knows the headwinds it must address but that is also confident of its future and place in the world.”*

**Simon Coveney TD**, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade



*“The commitment to finalise and publish Ireland 2040 – the National Planning Framework – for public consultation before Government develops a 10-year national plan for investment is visible proof that, having emerged from significant economic challenges, Ireland is now ready to plan with vision and confidence for stronger and more stable national and regional development. The feedback from the public consultation phase will assist in finalising Ireland 2040 so that there is a robust, clear and realistic strategic planning framework for my Departments to progress the appropriate budgetary and investment follow-through, in particular through the 10-year National Investment Plan, which will be published together with the National Planning Framework.”*

**Paschal Donohoe TD**, Minister for Finance, Public Expenditure and Reform



*“Ireland 2040 rightly places an enormous emphasis on conserving and harnessing the distinctiveness of Ireland’s culture and heritage and its islands as an intrinsic part of our country’s place, distinctiveness and therefore how we distinguish ourselves in sustainably developing our regions and our rural fabric in particular. Policy choices and priorities within the National Planning Framework will be shaped and enhanced by our unique Irish character, our affinity with our history, landscape and rich culture and our creative spirit.”*

**Heather Humphries TD**, Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht



*“Ireland 2040 has been developed in a way that takes full account of, and will be a key implementation instrument for, the National Mitigation Plan on climate change and further work on climate change adaptation as we transition to a low carbon economy and society. In addition, the National Planning Framework sets a strategic development context for the roll-out of high speed broadband networks in rural Ireland, energy systems and infrastructure, and the sustainable development of our natural resources.”*

**Denis Naughton TD**, Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment



*“Ireland 2040 reflects rural Ireland and our regions as key elements in the development of our country for the next two decades and beyond. It also focuses on improving the quality of life for communities throughout Ireland, in both urban and rural areas. In this context, Ireland 2040 underpins the Government’s Action Plan for Rural Development which is seeking to maximise the economic and social potential of rural Ireland, as well as the Framework Policy for Local and Community Development which seeks to create vibrant, sustainable and self-determining communities across Ireland. Ireland 2040 will provide a framework to support rural and community development policy for years to come.”*

**Michael Ring TD**, Minister for Rural and Community Development



*“Ireland’s transport sector plays a key societal role for the citizens of Ireland whether they reside in our cities, towns or rural areas. The planning and strategic development policies set out in Ireland 2040 will better support the development of an integrated and sustainable public transport system. Choices about how places are planned and designed and choices about the delivery of transport infrastructure and services are very dependent on each other, and achieving a close linking of the two can be to their mutual benefit and lead to more coherent outcomes for society. The development of our tourism and sports sectors can also be enabled by the planning and strategic development policies set out in Ireland 2040 by enhancing our natural and built environment and making Ireland a more attractive place in which to live and to visit.”*

**Shane Ross TD**, Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport



# IRELAND 2040 - OVERVIEW AND KEY MESSAGES

The National Planning Framework is the Government's plan to cater for the extra one million people that will be living in Ireland, the additional two thirds of a million people working in Ireland and the half a million extra homes needed in Ireland by 2040. The Framework focuses on:

- Growing our regions, their cities, towns and villages and rural fabric.
- Building more accessible urban centres of scale.
- Better outcomes for communities and the environment, through more effective and coordinated planning, investment and delivery.

As a strategic development framework, Ireland 2040 - Our Plan sets the long-term context for our country's physical development and associated progress in economic, social and environmental terms and in an island, European and global context. Ireland 2040 will be followed and underpinned by supporting policies and actions at sectoral, regional and local levels.

## Key Elements of Ireland 2040 are:

### 1 Putting in Place a New National and Regional Development Strategy for Ireland

- In terms of overall population and employment growth and new housing provision, the five cities of Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Galway and Waterford will be targeted to accommodate 50% of overall national growth between them, with Ireland's range of large and smaller towns, villages and rural areas accommodating the other 50%, within a better national infrastructure grid in terms of mobility, communications, energy systems and essential public and community services and facilities.
- A more effective balance of growth between Ireland's three regions – the Northern and Western; Southern; and Eastern and Midland (which includes Dublin), whereby the Northern and Western and Southern Regions combined should grow at broadly comparable rates to the Eastern and Midland, as opposed to a continuation of the current long-term trend whereby the rest of country has lagged behind the increasing rate of population, jobs and housing provision rates in Dublin and the wider Eastern and Midland area.
- There will be a major new policy emphasis on renewing and developing existing built-up areas rather than continual expansion and sprawl of cities and towns out into the countryside, with a target of at least 40% of new housing to be delivered within the existing built-up areas of cities, towns and villages on infill and/or brownfield sites.
- To address rural decline, a significant proportion of national population and economic growth will be targeted at building up the fabric of our network of smaller towns, villages and rural areas with much of that happening by redeveloping derelict and under-utilised lands inside small towns and villages.

## 2 Backed by Legislation and an Independent Office for Planning Regulation

- Ireland 2040 will be given full legislative support within the planning system, including regular review and update, reflecting changing circumstances and in line with city and county development plan review cycles. It introduces more streamlined approaches to zoning land for development in line with infrastructure provision.
- The planning legislation underpinning Ireland 2040 will also lead to the creation of a new independent Office of the Planning Regulator (OPR), which will also be responsible for monitoring implementation of Ireland 2040.
- Ireland's three Regional Assemblies must each prepare a regional strategy in accordance with the Framework set by Ireland 2040. This means that the Ireland 2040 will be followed through, while also enabling greater detail to be addressed, at an appropriate scale.

## 3 Intrinsically Linked to a New 10-year National Investment Plan

- When the Framework is finalised after public consultation, Ireland 2040 will be published alongside a 10-year National Investment Plan, meaning that implementation of the Framework will be fully supported by the Government's investment strategy for public capital investment and investment by the State sector in general.
- A National Smart Growth Initiative will be put in place under the National Investment Plan to drive and support the aims of Ireland 2040, for both urban and rural areas. This will be a competitive, bid-based fund to leverage both public and private investment.
- The Smart Growth fund will support strategic growth and renewal of under-utilised parts of our cities and towns to enable the complete re-imagining and re-purposing of areas in our urban fabric that have become run-down or poorly utilised in terms of accommodating new housing, employment and amenities. It will also support initiatives to facilitate growth in rural towns and communities.

## 4 Supported by Strengthened and more Environmentally Focused Planning at Local Level

- We will introduce more strategic and co-ordinated planning of our cities and large towns across local authority boundaries, including statutorily backed Metropolitan Area Strategic Plans in the five cities of Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Galway and Waterford.
- A new streamlined and integrated planning process will be introduced to more effectively manage our marine areas and land-sea interface to double the economic value we gain from our ocean wealth by 2030, and by more beyond that.
- The future planning and development of our communities at local level will be refocused to tackle Ireland's higher than average (45%) carbon-intensity per capita and enabling a national transition to a competitive low carbon, climate resilient and environmentally sustainable economy by 2050, through harnessing our country's prodigious renewable energy potential and electrification of much of our mobility and energy systems.

## 5 Using State Lands for Strategic Purposes

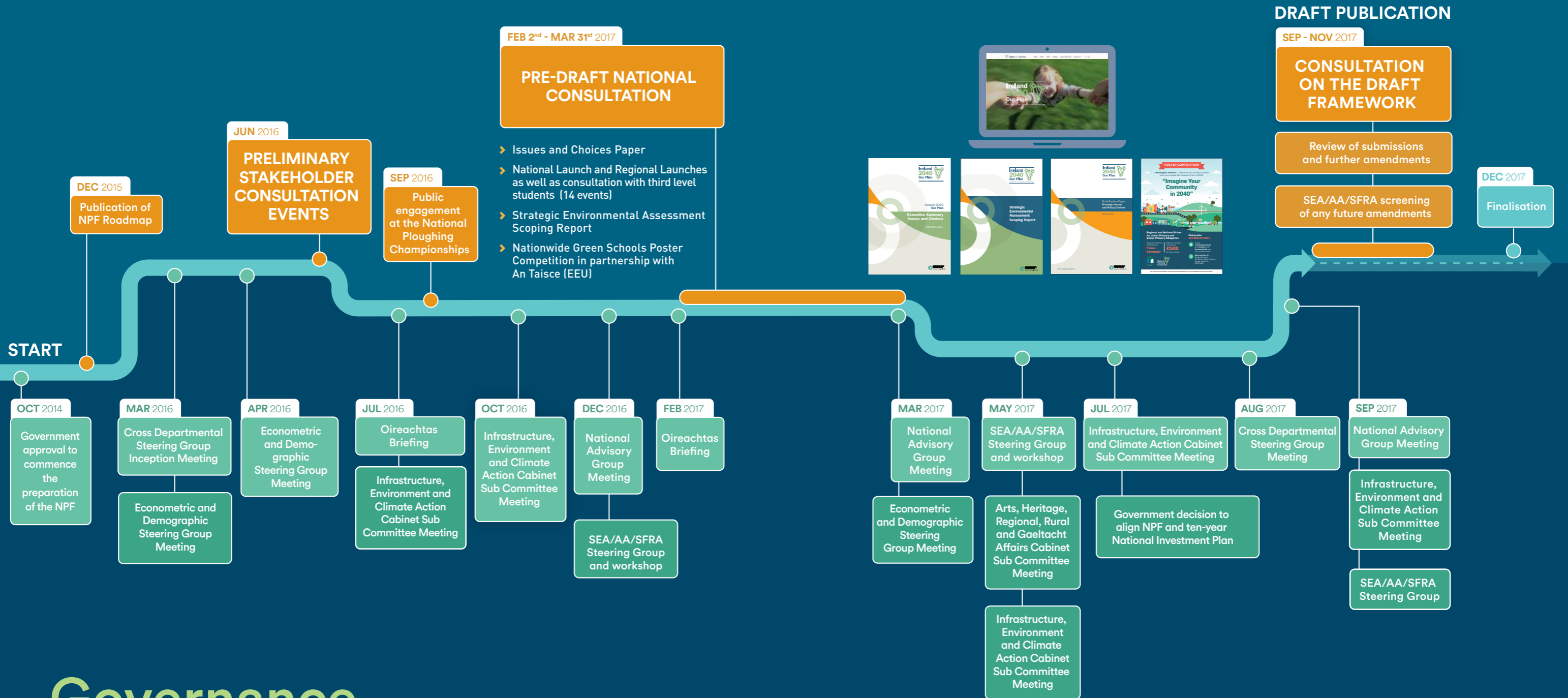
- The State, through local authorities, Government Departments and agencies and State companies, owns key parts of our cities and towns. The development of these lands must play a vital role in re-imagining and reshaping those urban areas, providing the homes, places of work and recreation that we need.
- A review of the overall management of the development potential of State lands to support implementation of Ireland 2040 will be undertaken, to consider the merits of developing new structures, such as a national land development agency to work with local authorities, public bodies and the business community and harnessing public lands as catalysts to stimulate regeneration and wider investment.

# Journey to Draft

## Ireland 2040 – Our Plan

### The National Planning Framework

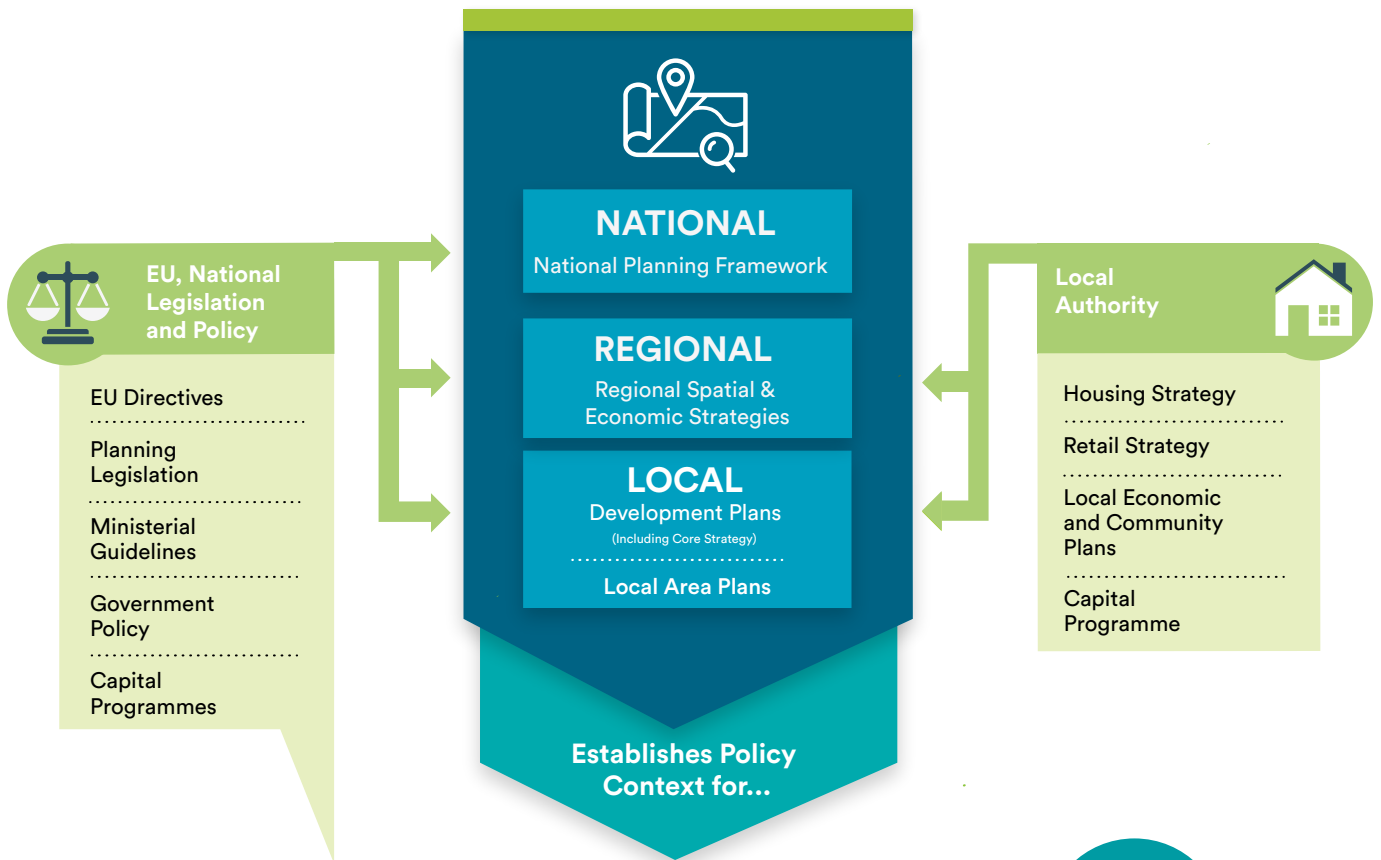
# Next Steps



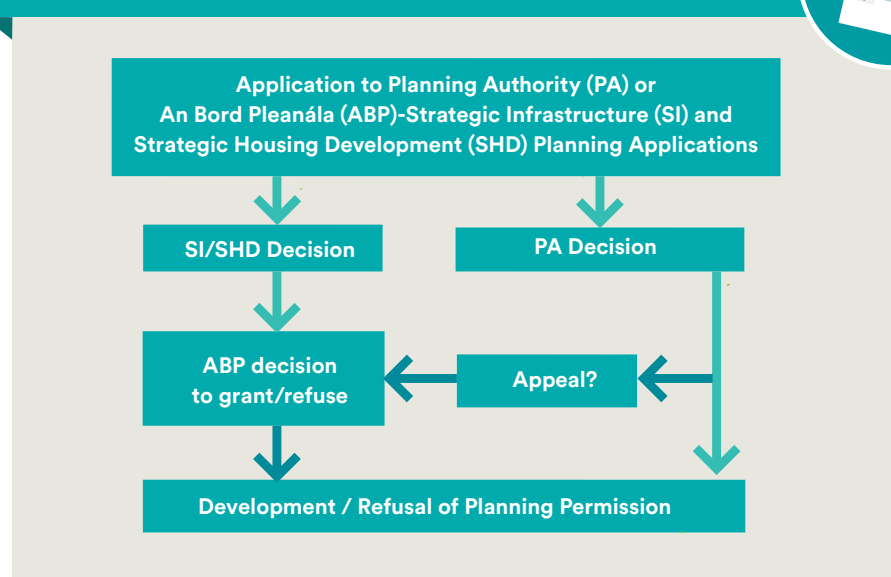
# Governance Roadmap

# Irish Planning System

## An Overview



### Assessment of and decisions on development proposals





**THE WORLD IS  
CHANGING AND  
IRELAND IS  
CHANGING TOO.**

**The best way for our country to address the changes that we will continue to face, is to plan for that change.**

# PREFACE

## PLANNING FOR GLOBAL CHANGE, PLANNING FOR IRELAND'S FUTURE

The world is changing and Ireland is changing too. The best way for our country to address the changes that we will continue to face, is to plan for that change.

In today's globally connected societies and economies, people, goods, capital, knowledge and data are moving more and more quickly between countries, within regions and around our communities. The effects of these changes are reshaping the way in which local communities and regions develop. Technology, driven by science and innovation, is increasingly influencing our way of life.

Climate change is an issue facing the world in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and now, more than at any time before, we are aware of the importance of looking after the physical and natural environment around us and its influence on our long-term health and well-being.

Changing geopolitical circumstances, for example the challenge of Brexit, require governments and institutions to be responsive to new international relations.

Our country is well positioned to deal with change, but it is important for us to better understand and prepare for change, so we can take the opportunity to shape Ireland for our long-term benefit, which is why the Government has prepared Ireland 2040.

This Framework seeks to ensure that in addressing future change, Ireland will continue on a path of economic, environmental and social progress that will improve our prosperity, sustainability and well-being.



## IRELAND'S PLACE IN THE WORLD

In an increasingly connected and globalised world, Ireland's geographic location between the EU and US and more broadly, between East and West, is a strategic advantage. Our status as an open and flexible, trading island nation within the EU and our compact size and agile and inclusive society are further assets.

Although highly globalised<sup>1</sup>, it is Ireland's people and communities, our culture and places that make us authentic and differentiate us from elsewhere. One of our great strengths as a nation is the 'duality' whereby we can enjoy success and be comfortable in the modern, digital world, alongside our distinctly Irish traditions and values.

As an advanced and improving society, we have the capacity to identify what we are doing well and to address areas where we can do things better. International comparison rankings may vary but provide a useful benchmark, especially where there is a clear pattern evident.

When economic output and stability are measured, Ireland is firmly within the top ten countries in the world, scoring highly in terms of gross domestic product or GDP per capita<sup>2</sup>, human development<sup>3</sup>, democracy<sup>4</sup> and foreign direct investment<sup>5</sup> (FDI).

It is important that we maintain and improve this positioning, whilst also recognising that the pattern of Ireland's comparison ranking in areas such as quality of life<sup>6</sup> and environmental performance<sup>7</sup> is not quite as high, placing us just within the top twenty countries in the world. Dublin is ranked outside the top thirty cities in the world for liveability<sup>8</sup>.

In an increasingly competitive global environment, improving on these areas will be required not only to benefit our people and communities, but also to sustain economic performance and maintain competitiveness.

**This Framework seeks to ensure that Ireland's many unique assets can be built upon, with an emphasis on improving economic output and stability as well as quality of life, environmental performance and the liveability of Dublin and our cities, towns and rural areas.**

# CHANGING AND GROWING IRELAND

It is necessary to plan for progress and improvement in a changing world, but also for a changing Ireland. As part of the Ireland 2040 process, the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) continues to prepare future projections in respect of Ireland's population and economy in the years ahead to 2040.

It is clear that our population will increase, but will become, older and also more diverse and will be dependent on a proportionately smaller number of people of working age. A growing and changing society will have different needs.

The ESRI projects that the population of Ireland will increase by almost one million people or by 20% over 2016 levels, to around 5.75 million people by 2040. The population aged over 65 will more than double to 1.3 million, or to 23% of the total, whilst those aged under 15 will decrease by around 10%, with numbers remaining at just below one million in 2040.

This will give rise to a need for an additional half a million new homes by 2040. A fundamental question addressed by this Framework in broad terms is where these homes should be located. Demand for school places is set to increase to 2025 and for third-level education places to peak in the years immediately thereafter.

The ESRI is also projecting an additional 660,000 jobs to 2040. In line with international trends, the ongoing shift to a knowledge economy and the growing role of services will continue to change the nature of work, sustaining demands for a more highly skilled and educated workforce. New ways of working, new trade partners and new relationships between producers and consumers will continue to transform the business landscape.

Much of this means that workers will be required to be more mobile and expect to change job more often over their careers. While the knowledge and digital economy will continue to flourish in urban areas and particularly around centres of scientific and educational excellence, improved connectivity, resource-related opportunities and a different quality of life proposition will give rise to new possibilities more broadly throughout Ireland.

In order to accommodate change and growth, significant investment will be required in transport, energy, communications, water services, health and recreational facilities as well as in housing, education, employment and innovation. Given that investment cannot effectively occur everywhere, development and services must be located where all of Ireland's people can best be served and spatial choices made on that basis.

**This Framework sets out likely future change in Ireland and the spatial pattern required for effective and co-ordinated investment in a range of sectors to best accommodate and support that change.**




# COMMUNITY, LAND AND PLACE

A deeply held and enduring attachment to community, land and place are amongst the hallmarks of being Irish. Collectively, this is part of our make-up and it differentiates us in a changing world. Heritage and identity associated with place operate at many levels, from parish and neighbourhood to city and county. These connections also extend overseas, to links to the Irish diaspora in the UK, the US, EU and the wider world.

In developing Ireland 2040, it is apparent that we have so many authentic communities and places with so much potential that there is no clear justification for the creation of entirely new settlements. It is the case, however, that many of our urban places are in need of improvement, regeneration and revitalisation and that many of our rural places are either at risk from urban-generated overspill, or are suffering from depopulation.

This doesn't mean that we need to start again, elsewhere, but it does mean that we need to accommodate our changing needs in a way that facilitates growth, improvement and regeneration, to bring new life and vitality to places, while avoiding overdevelopment. We also need to identify how we can make that happen.



**This Framework puts in place a strategy for the sustainable development of places in Ireland and how that can be achieved, through planning, investment and implementation.**



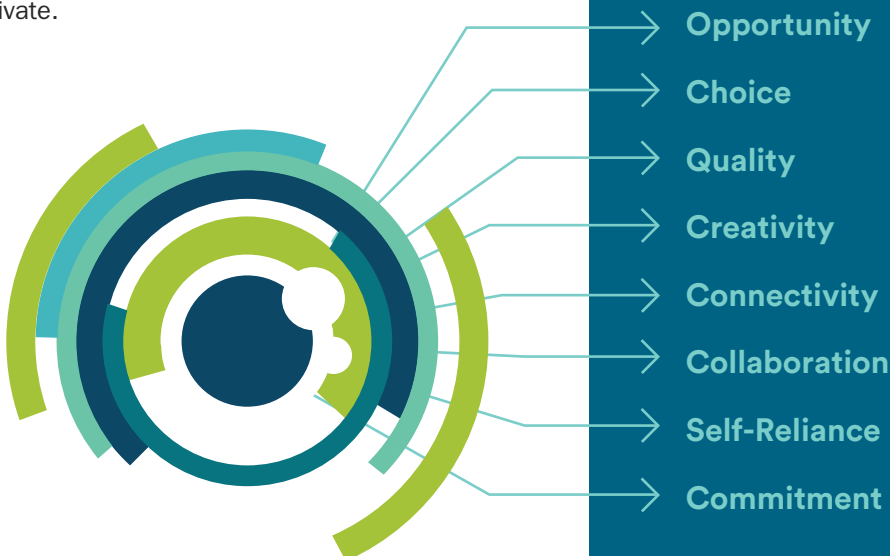
# IRELAND 2040 OUR PLAN AND NATIONAL PLANNING FRAMEWORK

## 1.1 | A Vision for Ireland in 2040

The National Planning Framework - “Ireland 2040 – Our Plan” - will set a new strategic planning and development context for Ireland and all of its regions in the period between now and 2040, setting a high-level framework for the co-ordination of a range of national, regional and local authority policies and activities, planning and investment, both public and private.

### The Vision

The vision for the years ahead to 2040 must be relevant to urban, suburban and rural Ireland. Accordingly, the Ireland 2040 vision is created from building on the values that we share, including:





## Opportunity

A sense of fair play and opportunity for all, which may be described as equality or social inclusion, is critical to ensuring that people are fully engaged with and can have a proper stake in, our society. This requires transparency and trust as well as tolerance, both individually and collectively.

In spatial terms, this means having the opportunity to live a full and meaningful life, irrespective of location. It also means tackling social disadvantage and eliminating significant differences in living standards between different parts of Ireland, as well as maximising opportunities for all of our communities and regions to develop further.

**The vision for Ireland in 2040 is for a fair society with strong social cohesion and converging living standards throughout the country, in which all individuals, businesses, communities and regions have the opportunity to prosper.**

## Choice

The concept of choice underpins how we live our lives today, but the extent to which many of the choices that face us are equal or real, varies greatly. The choices we make that shape our lives, such as where we choose to live, work or study, how we move around or meet our energy needs, are shaped by spatial planning and will together have a cumulative impact on us all.

It's clear that in the years ahead, more choices will be needed to accommodate changes in our society, in response to greater diversity, increased numbers of older people, new ways of working and communicating, meeting competitiveness challenges and in addressing climate change. It will be important for future choices to be genuine and based on trade-offs that can influence behaviour towards more sustainable outcomes.

**The vision for Ireland in 2040 is for more sustainable choices and options for people, businesses and communities that can accommodate and positively influence patterns of living and working.**



## Quality

There is a desire for quality in all aspects of life, from the vibrancy of our communities, through to our education system, the nature of the jobs in our economy and the state of our environment. Quality can be expressed in many different ways, but quality standards that fall short can have serious impacts on the quality of life of individuals and the health and well-being of our society.

The quality of our built and natural environment is critical to Ireland's attractiveness and competitiveness. It influences key sectors such as food production, retail and tourism as well as foreign direct investment. Our future prosperity increasingly depends on the quality of our urban and rural places, how we manage issues such as housing and transport and maintaining our clean, unspoilt image. This ultimately affects the quality of jobs and talent that can be attracted and generated here.

**The vision for Ireland in 2040 is for the highest possible quality of life for our people and communities, underpinned by high quality, well managed built and natural environments.**

## Creativity

Ireland's people are a critical resource and have consistently demonstrated creativity, innovation and agility in national development. We continue to capitalise on our artistic and cultural inheritance, authentic and vibrant places and internationally competitive third-level sector.

This has meant that we have been able to overcome economic setbacks and succeed in a range of modern, high value-added economic spheres as diverse as aviation services, aquaculture, bio-pharma, financial technology, agri-food and medical devices. We also continue to be culturally creative, in areas such as the arts, design and media.

Talent and knowledge and innovation will mark out the high-performing countries of the future. We need to embrace technology, but also to retain our dynamic human skills and ability to adapt, through encouraging entrepreneurship, lifelong learning, and cultural production. This will enable us to maintain competitiveness, generate growth and attract new investment, particularly in the creative and renewable sectors, internationally traded services and in emerging technologies such as 3D printing, artificial intelligence, nanotechnology and robotics, whilst also furthering our artistic traditions.

**The vision for Ireland in 2040 is for a creative, innovative and culturally attuned society, whose people, businesses and communities are equipped to further our national economic output and artistic endeavour.**



## Connectivity

As an island nation we have a critical need to be connected internationally and to each other. This is enabled through physical and digital connectivity and supported by a range of community, commercial and institutional arrangements. From parish to city, our communities and places are functionally connected and it is through these interactions that regional and local growth drivers can be effective.

Connectivity is underpinning our national, regional and local development, as well as Ireland's overall international competitiveness. We have amongst the highest number of airline passengers and kilometres of road network in the world per capita and we rely on our ports for trade. We require transmission systems, cables and pipelines to transport the power, communications and water on which we depend. Smart and sustainable buildings, neighbourhoods and cities will transform how we operate in the years to 2040.

There is an acknowledged need to improve the extent and quality of connectivity in Ireland, for example, through the National Broadband Plan currently being implemented. There is also a requirement to strengthen our electricity transmission grid and to develop more international connections as well as to upgrade Ireland's urban transport, water and waste water systems.

Given Ireland's scale and pattern of development, improvements in connectivity are achievable and are necessary to boost both competitiveness and quality of life. It is a reasonable target for most people to have no more than a 30-minute commute time to work and for most people and goods to have access to international connections within 90 minutes of their home or work base.

**The vision for Ireland in 2040 is for significant improvement in local and international connectivity that underpins the competitiveness and quality of life of our people, businesses, communities and regions.**

## Collaboration

More than just being connected, we also need to operate collaboratively, to draw from our collective strengths and to engage in partnerships with our neighbours, both locally and the wider world. How we are positioned to respond to the opportunities that are likely to arise will depend on our capacity for collaboration at all levels and in engagement with other actors. This is likely to require cities, towns, counties and regions to work together in new or different ways and beyond traditional borders.

As part of this and more broadly, we have unique and evolving relationships with Northern Ireland and the UK and will remain part of the European Union, on all of whom we depend for much of our trade, tourism and social, political and cultural interaction.

**The vision for Ireland in 2040 is for a collaborative society in which our cities, towns, counties and regions engage in new partnerships that benefit people, communities and businesses, both locally and internationally.**

## Self-Reliance

There is a tradition of collective self-reliance in Ireland, known as ‘meitheal’, defined as the ancient and universal appliance of cooperation to social need<sup>9</sup>. Typical examples include a community working together to save crops or the extent of volunteering throughout the country. There are many good contemporary applications of this concept that point the way forward in addressing future change.

This includes how central Government interacts with communities. In setting a framework, it is important to ensure that within the broader ‘top-down’ parameters, there is scope to encourage and support local ‘bottom-up’ action and initiative.

Key areas where we need to develop capacity for new forms of self-reliance include reducing our dependence on imported energy and building a ‘circular economy’. The National Climate Policy Position establishes the fundamental national objective of achieving transition to a competitive, low carbon, climate-resilient and environmentally sustainable economy by 2050. The benefit of making the transition to a low-carbon economy is that a reliable, sustainable and affordable low-carbon energy system would make us a global “go-to” location for enterprises and activities that require energy but without environmental impact.

A circular economy means being more efficient with raw materials, energy, water, space and food by constantly re-using natural resources wherever possible and developing smart product cycles, based on biodegradable and recyclable materials to create less waste and reduce resource consumption.

**The vision for Ireland in 2040 is that our people, communities and businesses have a capacity for sustainable self-reliance based on a strong circular economy and significant progress towards a low carbon, climate-resilient society while remaining an open, competitive and trading economy.**

## Commitment

As a society, we take great pride in our commitment and we celebrate success, especially in a public or international arena, but can be modest in highlighting our ambitions. This is a strength that indicates we value delivery and outcomes and are unlikely to place too much store in claims or promises until they are realised.

From where we are currently positioned, it is clear that we have the capacity and opportunity to engage in planning for more than just meeting our needs to 2040. We can set an ambitious and achievable vision for Ireland and collectively work towards it, through our institutions at all levels of government and associated agencies and through public and private investment, but also through our people, communities and businesses.

Our success will also be measured by the legacy we bestow onto future generations of Irish citizens, who will inherit the outcomes of the choices we make now.

By setting ourselves on an agreed path we can provide clarity, commitment and certainty that reinforce the likelihood of achieving success in implementing the vision for Ireland in 2040.

**The vision for Ireland in 2040 is to commit to being the most successful, advanced, competitive and environmentally sustainable economy and society in Europe.**



## 1.2 | The National Spatial Strategy (NSS) - Lessons Learned

The National Spatial Strategy (NSS) was published in 2002 as a 20-year spatial plan to guide and direct future development and investment. Public understanding of the document focused almost entirely on which cities and towns were designated as ‘gateways’ or ‘hubs’ to drive growth and build scale in their surrounding regions and localities. This gave rise to a perception of ‘winners’ and ‘losers’ that undermined the objectives that the NSS was seeking to achieve.

The NSS was further weakened by proposals regarding decentralisation of the public service in 2004 that had little regard to the Strategy set out and effectively signalled limited adherence at government level, which had subsequent knock-on effects elsewhere.

The NSS was not a statutory plan with legislative backing and while it did substantially influence the 2007-2013 National Development Plan, the subsequent economic crisis from 2008 onwards substantially undermined Ireland’s economic capacity to implement the NSS.

The World Bank in a 2009 Report<sup>10</sup> identified Ireland’s rapid and successful national growth to 2001 as having been accompanied by increasing spatial concentration of economic activity, particularly on the east coast. The Report’s core message is that density of economic activity is the most important dimension for economic development.

The World Bank Report recommended that countries should focus on overall national development to achieve international convergence in economic development and living standards, as was apparent in Ireland until 2001. The Report considered it preferable that spatially balanced growth within a country’s borders should come thereafter, only when overall national convergence has been achieved.

Accordingly, it was appropriate and timely that, once international convergence had been achieved by Ireland in the early 2000s, the NSS was prepared to address the spatial distribution of growth to 2020. The onset of the economic crisis meant that priorities shifted back to a national level, with a critical focus on recovery.

Improving economic conditions again enable the consideration of the spatial distribution of development with the benefit of hindsight in developing and implementing the NSS.

## 1.3 | How the National Planning Framework will be Different

The National Planning Framework will differ from the NSS in that, further to a key planning recommendation of the Mahon tribunal, it will have legislative backing and be placed on a statutory footing. Implementation of the NPF through the planning system will be overseen by the new *Office of the Planning Regulator* which is being established, also on foot of a Mahon tribunal planning recommendation.

Unlike the NSS, the objectives of the NPF will be applied on a regional basis through statutory Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSEs). These are new plans that will address more detail at a regional scale, being prepared by each of the three Regional Assemblies that were established in 2014.

The RSEs must accord with the National Planning Framework and in turn, local authority development plans which address further detailed local matters, such as the zoning of land, must be in accordance with the RSEs.

Critically, the NPF sets the context for a new, ten-year national investment plan from 2018-27. This ensures alignment across government and establishes firm links between the Planning Framework and long-term capital investment. Both the NPF and ten-year National Investment Plan (NIP) are to be published as companion documents and will be subject to evaluation and review.

## 1.4 | What Happens if We do Nothing?

**The report of an Expert Group that reviewed the NSS in 2014 clearly advised that:**

- “While Dublin is at the forefront of international competition for mobile, inward investment, the potential of other locations must be harnessed.
- As the expertise that is needed to compete successfully internationally, together with supporting services and the increasingly important cultural offering, tends to concentrate in major urban centres, each part of Ireland needs to provide the opportunity for focused development.
- Without this focus and concentration, the wider area may suffer potentially irreversible decline, and failure to optimise regional performance will result in unsustainable pressures on Dublin, with national performance suffering as a result.
- The need for greater locational focus is matched by major resource constraints, which means that priority must be given to investments which produce the greatest cultural, economic, environmental or social benefits”.



The analysis of the Expert Group is supported by examination of current development trends and work undertaken by the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) for the NPF in projecting likely future development scenarios to 2040. This suggests that there will be:



**Continuation of sprawling growth** around but mainly outside our cities and larger towns.



**Stagnation of inner city and older suburban areas**, with missed opportunities for the utilisation of existing infrastructure and services.

**Regional cities like Cork, Limerick, Galway and Waterford** growing but not at the pace or scale required to function as realistic alternatives to Dublin.



**An ongoing shift in population and jobs towards the east** and to the counties around Dublin in particular.



**A degraded environment** with, the loss of farmland and habitat to predominantly greenfield development and increased risk of groundwater pollution.



**Greater distance between where people live and where people work**, notwithstanding changes in technology, as many businesses are increasingly drawn to create the employment opportunities of the future in close proximity in urban areas.



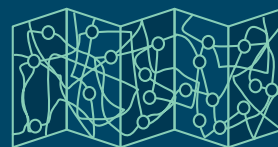
**Social disadvantage and inequality** perpetuated by geographic location.



**Demands for new investment** in services and infrastructure in rapidly growing areas.



**Further decline of rural areas and towns** remote from large urban centres of population.



**Haphazard approaches to planning for infrastructure and climate action**, reacting to trends rather than preparing for a low/no carbon future.

## 1.5 | What Success Looks Like - Objectives and Vision

# HIGH-LEVEL OBJECTIVES

- 1** In addressing future change, Ireland will continue on a path of economic, environmental and social progress that will improve our prosperity, sustainability and well-being.

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- 2** Ensuring that Ireland's many unique assets can be built upon, with an emphasis on improving economic output and stability as well as quality of life, environmental performance and the liveability of Dublin, our cities, towns and rural areas.

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- 3** Setting out likely future change in Ireland and the spatial pattern required for effective and co-ordinated investment in a range of sectors to best accommodate and support that change.

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- 4** Putting in place a strategy for the sustainable development of places in Ireland and how that can be achieved, through planning, investment and implementation.

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# IRELAND 2040 VISION

## 1



**A fair society** with strong social cohesion and converging living standards throughout the country, in which all individuals, businesses, communities and regions have the opportunity to prosper.

## 2



**More and sustainable choices and options** for people, businesses and communities that can positively influence more sustainable patterns of living and working.

## 3



**The highest possible quality of life for our people and communities**, underpinned by high quality, well managed built and natural environments.

## 4



**A creative, innovative and culturally attuned society**, whose people, businesses and communities are equipped to further our national economic output and artistic endeavour.

## 5



**Significant improvement in local and international connectivity** that underpins the competitiveness and quality of life of our people, businesses, communities and regions.

## 6



**A collaborative society** in which our cities, towns, counties and regions engage in new partnerships that benefit people, communities and businesses, both locally and internationally.

## 7



**Sustainable self-reliance** based on a strong circular economy and significant progress towards a low carbon, climate-resilient society while remaining an open, competitive and trading economy.

## 8



**To be the most successful, advanced, competitive and environmentally sustainable economy and society in Europe.**



# A NEW WAY FORWARD

## 2.1 | Ireland 2040 - Principal Elements of Strategy

The biggest issue addressed in this Framework is where best to plan for our growing population and economy.

In doing so, it is necessary to learn from past experiences and set out a new way forward that can channel future growth to drive our longer-term national development objectives and vision.

Critically, Ireland 2040 will be aligned with and supported by new and improved investment and governance arrangements. As a Framework, it will be the reference point for other actors to adhere to and to follow. This includes vertical alignment with national level capital spending and the regional and local tiers of the planning system. It also includes horizontal alignment across government departments

As a strategy, all aspects are to be implemented together and are mutually complementary.

### Integrating the Environment into Planning for the Future

In developing Ireland 2040 there has been a strong recognition of the need to integrate environmental considerations into land use planning in a way that responds to the sensitivities and requirements of the wider natural environment. The delivery of the vision outlined in this Framework will give rise to development and infrastructure which has the potential to impact on the receiving environment.

To ensure that these potential impacts are considered at this strategic level and to signpost the requirements for lower tiers of planning, a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), Appropriate Assessment (AA) and Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) have been carried out as part of the preparation of this Framework and the results have been incorporated into the process to date.



**It is necessary to learn from past experiences and set out a new way forward that can channel future growth to drive our longer-term national development objectives and vision**

These integrated environmental processes have included the development and appraisal of a number of strategic options and the assessment of each of the National Policy Objectives that follow. The assessments are referenced in the accompanying Ireland 2040 SEA Environmental Report, which is published as a separate document together with the Natura Impact Statement and Strategic Flood Risk Appraisal Report. A summary of environmental assessments undertaken is included as Chapter 10.



# ELEMENTS OF THE STRATEGY

## IRELAND'S CITIES

- Supporting ambitious growth targets to enable all four cities of Cork, Limerick, Galway and Waterford to each grow by at least 50% to 2040 and to enhance their significant potential to become cities of scale.
- This means enabling the four cities to grow by more than twice as much to 2040 as they did over the 25 years to 2016.
- Focusing investment to improve the collective 'offer' within each of the four cities, i.e. infrastructure, liveability and choice in terms of housing, employment and amenities.

## COMPACT GROWTH

- Targeting a greater proportion (40%) of future housing development to happen within and close to existing built-up areas.
- Making better use of under-utilised land, including 'infill' and 'brownfield' and publicly owned sites together with higher housing and jobs densities, better serviced by existing facilities and public transport.
- Applying similar principles to smaller towns and villages at a more local scale to tackle decline, encourage new roles and functions and to promote regeneration and revitalisation.
- Supporting both urban and rural compact growth through a 'smart growth' funding initiative and, if required, through subsequent legislative/regulatory measures.

## OUR REGIONS AND RURAL FABRIC

- Targeting a level of growth in the country's Northern and Western and Southern Regions combined to match that projected in the East and Midland Region (which includes Dublin).
- Enabling, through the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) process for each Regional Assembly area, targets for large towns as potential regional growth drivers for their surrounding catchments
- Reversing small town and rural population decline and supporting the sustainable growth of rural communities.
- Incrementally improving access to the north-west from Dublin in the east and from the other cities to the south.
- Incrementally improving access between Ireland's cities separate from Dublin.
- Supporting new economic opportunities based on natural and resource assets as well as those related to quality of life and new technology.

## OUR CAPITAL

- Supporting the continued growth and success of Dublin as Ireland's leading global city of scale and principal economic driver, by better managing Dublin's growth to ensure that more of it can be accommodated within and close to the City.
- Enabling significant population and jobs growth in the Dublin metropolitan area, together with better management of the trend towards overspill into surrounding counties manifesting as unsustainable sprawl.
- Addressing infrastructural bottlenecks, improving citizens' quality of life and increasing housing supply in the right locations.

## 2.2 | Strategy Development

Practical experience and research shows that in an economy and society such as Ireland's, simultaneously fostering economic growth on the one hand and spreading it out smoothly or evenly across a country, is neither realistic nor practical. Nor can large numbers of people be directed to selected locations.

However, it is possible to facilitate more inclusive and integrated growth more broadly, throughout Ireland, that would have the potential to be transformational in the long run through policies that:

- Promote convergence in living standards between places.
- Improve the quality of places and people's experience of living in them.
- Anticipate and influence market forces such as agglomeration and migration.
- Encourage scale and concentration of people and economic activity.
- Promote economic integration between different places.
- Address geographic peripherality through accessibility and connectivity.

The policies in this Framework are prioritised as *National Policy Objectives*. They were developed as a result of extensive analysis and consultation and set a new way forward for regional and local planning and sustainable development policy in Ireland.

Current population and economic trends continued to 2040 were analysed as a 'business as usual' scenario under a demographic and econometric model developed by the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI). This is the baseline from which potential alternative strategies were developed.



**Ireland 2040 is committed to planning for growth in a manner which responds to the sensitivities and requirements of the wider natural environment.**

In developing Ireland 2040, taking on board public consultation, the broad questions considered were:

- The extent to which future development could be better **distributed between the regions** such as they are constituted, i.e. varying levels of growth between the three Regional Assembly areas?

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- Whether or not it would be better to **concentrate or disperse future population, employment and housing development**, ranging from a high proportion of future growth occurring in a small number of centres to a low level of growth in many?

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- What is the best **physical format for future development** - geographically compact focusing on existing built-up areas or spread out beyond the footprint of existing built-up areas?

Potential outcomes were assessed until a realistic, reasonable, viable and implementable option was identified to form the basis of a core strategy for Ireland 2040 - the National Planning Framework.

In setting targets for future growth, it is a pattern of development that is being targeted, rather than precise numbers. At a national level, location, relative scale and proportionality are more important than a numeric allocation of projected future growth. Targeted numbers will assist in monitoring and assessing performance and will provide an indication of the pace and scale of development.

The targeted approach is recursive, which means that it can be applied repeatedly. This also means that it is fair and allows for local aspiration and ambition. The approach enables flexibility at the regional and local levels of the planning hierarchy and for subsequent evaluation and review.





## 2.3 | Growing the Regions - By How Much?

A range of options were considered and applied to the three regions established as part of the local government review process in 2014. These range from ‘business as usual’, under which a slight majority of growth would occur in the Eastern and Midland Region alone, to ‘regional dominance’, whereby the combined Northern and Western and Southern Regional Assembly areas would grow at twice the rate of the Eastern and Midland Region.

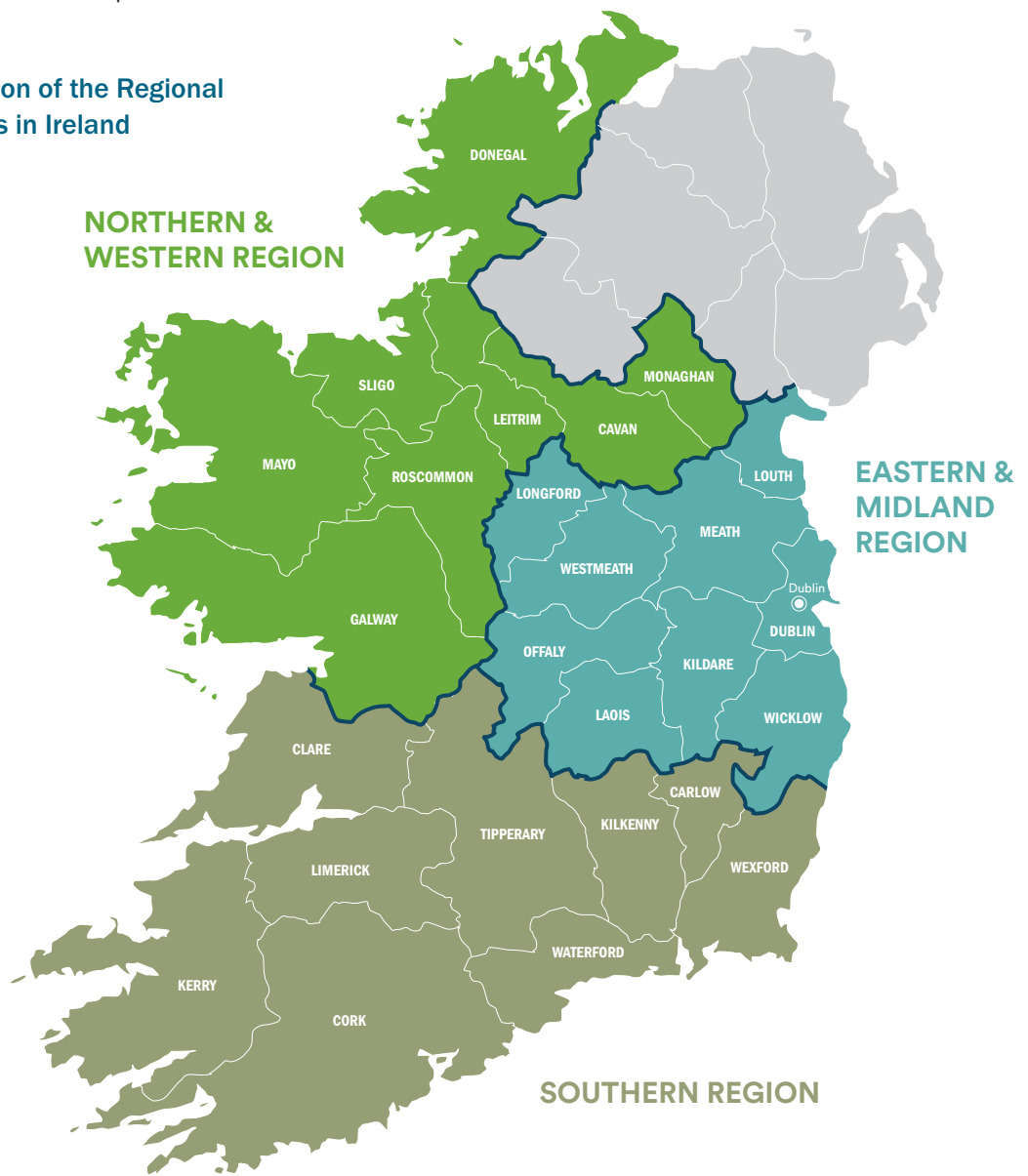
The scale of the embedded and projected growth trajectory of the Eastern and Midland Region combined with the absence of a mechanism to re-direct the majority of growth to the two other Regions combined means that a regional dominance approach is neither realistic nor implementable.

Seeking to grow the Northern and Western and Southern regions significantly more than the Eastern and Midland region would demand some level of constraint on the growth and development of Dublin.

This, together with the comparatively much smaller size of regional cities, could result in diminishing the scale of overall national development.

As part of a progressive policy approach in accordance with the Ireland 2040 objectives and vision, ‘regional parity’ is considered to be a more reasonable and viable alternative targeted scenario, whereby the targeted growth of the Northern and Western and Southern Regional Assembly areas combined would exceed that projected under a ‘business as usual’ scenario and would broadly equate to that projected for the Eastern and Midland Regions.

**Map 2.1 | Configuration of the Regional Assemblies in Ireland**



Accordingly, the Ireland 2040 target in relation to growing our regions is:

#### National Policy Objective 1a

The projected level of population and jobs growth in the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly area would be at least matched by that of Northern and Western and Southern Regional Assembly areas combined.

In terms of Ireland's future population, targeting this pattern is significant because it represents a shift from projected trends. In the context of around one million additional people in Ireland by 2040, it means planning for:

#### National Policy Objective 1b

- Eastern and Midland Region: a targeted 475,000 - 500,000 (0.475-0.5m) additional people, i.e. a population of around 2.8 million;
- Northern and Western Region: a targeted 150,000 - 175,000 (0.15-0.175m) additional people, i.e. a population of around 1 million;
- Southern Region: a targeted 350,000 - 375,000 (0.35-375m) additional people, i.e. a population of almost 2 million.

In similar terms, applying the ESRI projections for up to two-thirds of a million additional jobs in Ireland by 2040 means planning for a pattern of:

#### National Policy Objective 1c

- Eastern and Midland Region: around 330,000 (0.33m) additional jobs, i.e. at least 1.33 million in total;
- The Northern and Western Region: around 110,000 (0.11m) additional jobs, i.e. at least 450,000 (0.45m) in total;
- The Southern Region: around 220,000 (0.22m) additional jobs, i.e. at least 880,000 (0.88m) in total.

The work undertaken for Ireland 2040 indicates that the key to securing the scale of regional population and employment growth potential above is deeply related to how we address the other two questions, relating to concentration/dispersal and the physical format for future development.

## 2.4 | How to Build Stronger Regions - Accessible Centres of Scale

**On a ‘business as usual’ approach, the ESRI projection to 2040 indicates that the highest per capita rates of population and jobs growth are likely to occur in Dublin and the four surrounding counties, as well as Cork and Galway, with almost 40% of additional jobs projected in Dublin alone.**

The lowest per capita rates of projected population and jobs growth would be in the mid-border and north-western Counties, due in part to relative remoteness and an absence of larger cities or urban areas to drive their development.

Under ‘business as usual’, a continued focus on growth in and around Dublin and to some extent the four other cities without addressing specific development challenges facing other regions such as the accessibility and urban structure of the north-west or the economic underperformance of the South-East, would have negative consequences that would further add to growth pressures in the wider Dublin Region and inhibit more peripheral parts of Ireland from realising their full potential.

In considering alternative options, the two key variables are the scale of concentration of activity and the relative distance, or ease of accessibility, to centres of scale. There are therefore important twin elements of strategy required to address issues of scale and peripherality. Both have significant influence on a wider geographic area.

On the one hand, a concerted effort to focus on building internationally, nationally and regionally strong cities and towns could deliver a lot of positive impacts and enhance overall national growth so that:

- future population and jobs growth would be geographically more aligned;
- future jobs growth would be geographically more distributed, but to a limited number of larger and regionally distributed centres, to include the north and west;
- the significant growth potential of the four cities separate from Dublin would be realised, while at the same time enhancing and enabling Dublin’s unique role as an international city of scale;
- the structural weakness of Ireland’s peripheral regions, and in particular the north and west, would be turned around to better harness their potential for focused investment.

On the other hand, the second, complementary element of this twin strategy requires:

- Improved accessibility between centres of scale separate from Dublin, to ensure that levels of service (travel times per km) between the Capital and Ireland’s cities are replicated.
- A particular focus on improving accessibility and connectivity northwards on the emerging Atlantic Economic Corridor (AEC) that links major centres on the western seaboard.
- Improved accessibility and connectivity to peripheral regions, focused on key routes to a number of larger and regionally distributed centres.

**In considering alternative options, the two key variables are the scale of concentration of activity and the relative distance, or ease of accessibility, to centres of scale. There are therefore important twin elements of strategy required to address issues of scale and peripherality.**



To deliver the above means setting the following targets:

#### National Policy Objective 2a

- Population and jobs growth will generally be aligned to occur within the same functional area, whether a city or town catchment or all or part of one or more adjoining local authority area(s), on a coordinated basis through the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) and City and County Development processes.

#### National Policy Objective 2b

- At least half (50%) of future population and jobs growth will be focused in the five Cities and their immediately adjoining suburbs with a target of around two-thirds (66%) to be focused in the cities and their suburbs together with a number of large regionally distributed towns and their environs to be identified through the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) process.

#### National Policy Objective 2c

- Accessibility to the north-west of Ireland and between centres of scale separate from Dublin will be improved, focused on cities and larger regionally distributed centres and on key east-west and north-south routes.

As key elements of strategy, the distribution of future growth between the regions when combined with considerations of scale and accessibility, serve to set a new way forward. However, the question of compact development or sprawl is critical to this new course.

## 2.5 | Should We Build Compact or Sprawling Urban Areas?

The physical format of urban development in Ireland is one of our greatest national development challenges.

Analysis in preparing Ireland 2040 shows that more than anything else, getting the physical form and location of future development right offers the best prospects to unlock regional potential. Presently, the fastest growing areas are at the edges of and outside our cities and towns, meaning:

- a constant process of infrastructure and services catch-up in building new roads, new schools, services and amenities and a struggle to bring jobs and homes together, meaning also that there are remarkably high levels of car dependence and that it is difficult to provide good public transport;
- a gradual process of run-down of city and town centre and established suburban areas as jobs, retail and housing move out, leaving behind declining school enrolments, empty buildings and a lack of sufficient people to create strong and vibrant places, both day and night, and
- most development takes the form of greenfield sprawl that extends the physical footprint of our urban areas, and when it is the principal form of development, works against the creation of attractive, liveable, high quality urban places in which people are increasingly choosing to live, work and invest.

On the other hand, compact or smart development focuses on reusing previously developed, 'brownfield' land, building up infill sites, which may not have been previously developed and either reusing or redeveloping existing sites and buildings.

An increase in the proportion of more compact forms of growth in the development of settlements of all sizes, from the largest cities to the smallest villages, has the potential to make a significant difference. It can bring new life and footfall, contribute to the viability of services, shops and public transport, increase housing supply and enable more people to be closer to employment opportunities, as well as to walk or cycle more and use the car less.

Creating more compact and smarter development in Ireland has been traditionally more difficult to achieve than a continuous process of pushing development outwards towards greenfield locations and requires a continuous focus on three key areas:

- **The 'liveability' of urban places – how people experience living in cities, towns and villages. This includes the quality of the built environment, including the public realm, traffic and parking issues, access to amenities and public transport and a sense of personal safety and well-being.**
- **Making the continuous development and regeneration of existing built up areas as attractive and as viable as greenfield development. This requires greater certainty and cost equalisation as a result of a steady supply of sites and land and investment in infrastructure and amenities through more active land management in urban areas.**
- **Tackling legacies such as concentrations of disadvantage in central urban areas through holistic social as well as physical regeneration and by encouraging more mixed tenure and integrated communities.**

In the long term, meeting Ireland's development needs in housing, employment, services and amenities on mainly greenfield locations will cost at least twice that of a compact/smart growth based approach<sup>11</sup>. Accordingly, subject to implementation of sustainable planning and environmental principles, Ireland 2040 is setting the following urban development targets:

### National Policy Objective 3a

**Deliver at least 40% of all new homes nationally, within the built-up envelope of existing urban settlements<sup>12</sup>**

**National Policy Objective 3b**

At least half (50%) of all new homes in the five Cities and immediately adjoining suburban areas of Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Galway and Waterford would be delivered within the built-up envelope of existing urban settlements<sup>13</sup>

**National Policy Objective 3c**

In areas other than the five City and suburban areas of Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Galway and Waterford, at least 30% of all new homes would be delivered within the built-up envelope of existing urban settlements<sup>14</sup>

A summary of the key national targets for structuring overall national growth, promoting parity between regions, building accessible centres of scale and securing compact, smart and sustainable growth is summarised in the next table.

**Table 2.1 | Ireland 2040 at a Glance: Targeted Pattern of Development through key National Policy Objectives**

<b>National Policy Objective</b>	<b>Eastern and Midland 2040</b>	<b>Southern 2040</b>	<b>Northern and Western 2040</b>
<b>Growing Our Regions</b>	+ 475,000 - 500,000 people (2.8m total) + 330,000 jobs (1.33m total)	+ 350,000 - 375,000 people (2m total) +220,000 jobs (880,000 total)	+150,000 - 175,000 people (1m total) +110,000 jobs (450,000 total)
<b>Building Accessible Centres of Scale<sup>15</sup></b>	Dublin City and Suburbs: +265,000 people  Growth of other towns to be determined by Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSEs) within overall National Framework	Cork City and Suburbs: +115,000 people  Limerick City and Suburbs: +50,000 people  Waterford City and Suburbs: +30,000 people  Growth of other towns to be determined by Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSEs) within overall National Framework	Galway City and Suburbs: Up to +45,000 people  Growth of other towns to be determined by Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSEs) within overall National Framework
<b>Compact Smart Growth</b>	50% new housing on infill/brownfield (Dublin City and Suburbs)  30% new housing on infill/brownfield (elsewhere)	50% new housing on infill/brownfield (Cork, Limerick and Waterford Cities and Suburbs)  30% new housing on infill/brownfield (elsewhere)	50% new housing on infill/brownfield (Galway City and Suburbs)  30% new housing on infill/brownfield (elsewhere)



### 3.1 | Introduction

**Through many centuries of growth and change, Ireland's urban places comprise a rich variety of unique and widely distributed assets. They offer opportunities for community and social interaction and potential for innovation and prosperity and strongly influence their more rural surrounds.**

The National Policy Objectives in Chapter 2 that chart a new way forward for Ireland's future growth and development, require our cities, towns and villages to be places where many more people choose to live, work and visit by 2040.

This means that there is a need to improve people's experience of living, working and visiting urban places in Ireland. They must become more attractive and 'liveable', to offer a quality of life that more people are willing to choose over and above the alternative 'trade-offs' made in recent decades, especially with regard to where to live. There are many reasons for this.



## 3.2 | Why Urban Places Matter

### Social/Community

Urban settlements first existed as places of human or interpersonal exchange and this remains their primary function in a changing world today. They are important places for trading goods, services and ideas, for information, learning and innovation, as well as for administration, entertainment and worship. They offer choice and opportunity as well as connectivity and community.

Cities and towns of all sizes, by their very nature, are the most accessible, easiest to get to places in a given catchment. There are many things that contribute to people's quality of life that can be best provided in urban places. These range from large shops and offices, to public transport, parks, libraries, theatres, hospitals and health centres as well as universities and sports stadia.

Notwithstanding all of this, some parts of our cities and some towns have come to be perceived as unattractive places in which to live, seen as suitable only for certain sectors of society or for certain types of development. In other cases, the edges of cities and smaller towns within commuting distance of larger centres have been overdeveloped at a pace that has overwhelmed existing communities. In combination, this pattern has undermined many of our urban places.

The value and potential of our cities, towns and villages means that there are opportunities to change direction, especially in the context of an ageing population with smaller household size and new patterns of work and lifestyles. In this context, community interaction and support and access to a range of services will be increasingly important. It is therefore an objective of Ireland 2040 to:

#### National Policy Objective 4

Ensure the creation of attractive, liveable, well designed, high quality urban places that are home to diverse and integrated communities that enjoy a high quality of life and well-being.



## Economy/Prosperity

The type of place-making set out above is also critical to economic prosperity as globalisation continues to have a concentrating effect.

Employment trends indicate that increasingly, city regions are the focal point for internationally mobile investment. High-value added services are attracted primarily to urban areas, and cities are competing with other cities internationally.

This means that many sectors, but in particular those related to the information economy and knowledge development, tend to be very place specific. High skilled individuals are attracted together, as firms 'agglomerate' in the larger, denser, more skilled labour markets found in urban areas.

As well as scale and density, this is dependent on the attractiveness of places to highly skilled potential employees as well as having a steady stream of local talent and innovation associated with third level research institutions. International connectivity is also important, where short travel times to an airport with a good choice of destinations is a critical factor.

Domestically trading companies are more distributed and locate where there is a local/ regional demand for their services, but changing global circumstances mean that they too need to be agile to adapt through early innovation. This highlights the need to focus on upskilling and life-long learning throughout the regions, as well as supporting sectoral specialisation that has emerged at different locations.

In an era when the nature of urban places is a critical factor in determining economic growth and regional development, we must ensure that there are a range of quality urban places in which people will choose to live, work and invest.

### National Policy Objective 5

**Develop cities and towns of sufficient scale and quality to compete internationally and to be drivers of national and regional growth and investment.**

## Case Study

### Dublin Docklands

**The Dublin Docklands Development Authority was created by the Dublin Docklands Development Authority Act 1997 to lead a major project of physical, social and economic regeneration in the heart of Dublin.**

The Project extended over 520 hectares, at the core of which were former dockland areas comprising 100 hectares of substantially derelict or low value industrial land. The various communities in the area outside of this core comprised 17,500 people. Although there was a very strong and active sense of community, the area had severe economic and social problems.



The Docklands Project radically changed the whole area, not only through major phases of mixed use property development but also by involving the local and by fostering and investing in educational and other social interventions.

Dublin Docklands is now a world-class city quarter and paragon of sustainable inner city regeneration that continues to make a major contribution to the social and economic prosperity of Dublin and Ireland as a whole.

## Physical/Environmental

One of the principal benefits of a focus on Ireland's urban places as a new way forward for future growth and development is that it will reduce harmful impacts on the environment.

At the most basic level, reduced land take will preserve agricultural land and habitats. Utilising existing infrastructure, buildings and sites and reducing the need to travel long distances will reduce energy consumption and carbon emissions.

More efficient utilisation of existing services and infrastructure will ensure viability and prevent redundancy as well as costly duplication elsewhere. In particular, more people will ensure that public transport services become more viable, especially in larger centres. If urban places of all kinds are perceived to be more attractive and safer, more people will also be encouraged to walk or to cycle.

All or part of many of our cities and towns may be viewed as underutilised assets, with significant potential for intensification and regeneration. This requires consideration of different roles and new functions, but also changed physical formats and enhanced levels of amenity and design.

All scales and types of urban place have an impact on their surrounding area and are integrated with their hinterland to some extent. They are in turn influenced by activity in the wider area, particularly in the case of smaller settlements. Where close to cities or larger towns, they may become commuter-focused, but elsewhere there may be new opportunities e.g. servicing an emerging resource sector or a new tourist amenity such as a greenway.

It is therefore critical that our cities and towns are valued as environmental assets to be improved and regenerated.

### National Policy Objective 6

**Support regeneration of cities, towns and villages of all types and scale in order to accommodate changing roles and functions and enhanced levels of amenity and design in order to exert a positive influence on their surrounding area.**



# Urban

## Metropolitan Region

A city region is the commuter catchment from which at least 15% of the relevant city area workforce is drawn. This will vary from Census to Census, but has generally been expanding in recent years around Ireland's cities;



Source: The Central Statistics Office (CSO)

## City

= settlement with  
population of  
**50,000+** people



**5** cities in Ireland  
(34% of the national  
population - 1.6m  
people in total)



### Dublin's

population equates to that  
of the next 40 cities and  
towns combined.

Dublin

Next 40 largest

### 3.3 | Ireland's Urban Structure

**For the purposes of Ireland 2040, the Census of Population 2016 provides a good indication of Ireland's urban structure. The Central Statistics Office (CSO) defines a settlement of more than 1,500 people as 'urban'. There were 200 such settlements, which together accommodated 63% of the national population, in 2016. These are detailed on CSO Statbank Table E2014.**

The agreed EU/OECD definition of a 'city' is a settlement around a core centre with a population of more than 50,000 people. The five cities of Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Galway and Waterford and their immediate suburbs together comprise approximately 1.6 million people, or just over one-third (34%) of Ireland's national population.

Nearly three-quarters of Ireland's city dwellers are the 1.2 million people, or one-quarter (25%) of the population, who live in Dublin.

Outside of the five cities, there were 41 'large' towns, each with more than 10,000 people and home to a further 16% of the national population, in 2016.



For the first time in Ireland's history, just over half of the population, or nearly 2.4 million people, now live in cities or large towns of at least 10,000 people. However, the overall urban structure remains relatively weak and focused on Dublin and parts of the south and east of Ireland.

Dublin's population equates to that of the next 40 cities and towns combined. Only 7 of Ireland's 41 large towns had a population of more than 25,000 people in 2016 and more than half of the 41 large towns are located within the Dublin or Cork city regions.

There are few large towns in the Northern and Western Region as a whole, with the strongest urban influence north of Galway City being the cross-border North-West City Region focused on Derry City in Northern Ireland.

# Rural

## Large Town

= settlement with population of **10,000+** people

**41** large towns in Ireland  
(16% of the national population)



## Small Town

= settlement with population of less than **10,000** people



**154** smaller towns and villages in Ireland

(13% of the national population)



## Village / Open Countryside

A further **37%** of Ireland's people live in settlements of less than **1,500** people, or in individual houses in rural areas.



It is generally the case that the further these urban places are from a city, the more likely they are to have experienced stagnation or decline in recent years.



The remaining 13% of Ireland's population that is categorised as 'urban' live in 154 smaller towns and villages of less than 10,000 people. Only 40 of these settlements have a population of more than 5,000 people. A further 37% of Ireland's people live in settlements of less than 1,500 people, or in individual houses in rural areas.

Notwithstanding the CSO definition of 'rural', it is considered that most small and medium size towns in Ireland with a population of less than 10,000 people, unless within the immediate or 'metropolitan' catchment of a city, are predominantly rural in character and are addressed in Chapter 4.

It is generally the case that the further these urban places are from a city, the more likely they are to have experienced stagnation or decline in recent years<sup>16</sup>. There are exceptions, including some successful places that are tourism 'hotspots'. While the same level of growth cannot be achieved in all places uniformly, this trend represents not only a significant loss of people, but also of potential and must be addressed. It is therefore an objective of Ireland 2040 to:

### National Policy Objective 7

Strengthen all levels of Ireland's urban structure, with a particular focus on:

- Our Capital, Dublin.
- The four Cities of Cork, Limerick, Galway and Waterford.
- Large towns (>10,000 population) located outside the five city regions<sup>16</sup> and particularly in the northern and western region.
- Small towns (<10,000 population) located outside the five city regions in conjunction with their surrounding rural areas<sup>17</sup>.

### National Policy Objective 7a

To achieve sustainable national growth in urban and rural areas, a National Smart Growth initiative will be put in place to support development and to leverage both public and private investment, as part of the ten year capital investment plan.



### 3.4 | Planning for Ireland's Urban Growth

The ESRI projections on which Ireland 2040 are based, indicate that:

- Population will increase by approximately one million people, or by around 20%.
- The number of jobs will increase by approximately two-thirds of a million people, or around 33%.

In combination, this will require approximately half a million new homes or an increase of around 25%.

**Accordingly, the Ireland 2040 strategy to plan for these anticipated changes is to grow the regions, build centres of scale and ensure more compact and sustainable forms of development that can be supported by investment, fiscal measures and new governance and institutional arrangements.**

To advance this, it is sought to encourage proportionally higher levels of population growth at the locations where it can best be accommodated. This 'proportionate' growth strategy is based on considerations of scale and capacity, accessibility and urban structure.

#### National Policy Objective 8

**Ensure that the targeted pattern of population growth of Ireland's cities and large towns to 2040 is proportionate, in accordance with the targets set out in Table 3.1.**

Table 3.1 | Ireland 2040: Targeted Pattern of City Population Growth

City	Population 2016	Population Growth to 2040 <sup>18</sup>		Target Population 2040
		% Range	People	
<b>Dublin</b> - City and Suburbs	1,173,000	20-25%	264,000	1,437,000
<b>Cork</b> - City and Suburbs	209,000	50-60%	115,000	324,000
<b>Limerick</b> - City and Suburbs	94,000	50-60%	52,000	146,000
<b>Galway</b> - City and Suburbs	80,000	50-60%	44,000	124,000
<b>Waterford</b> - City and Suburbs	54,000	50-60%	29,000	83,000

### 3.5 | Ireland's Cities

Dublin is Ireland's globally competitive city of scale and continues to drive much of the growth of the country as a whole. Cork is emerging as an international centre of scale and is well placed to complement Dublin, but requires significantly accelerated and city-focused growth to more fully achieve this role.

The Dublin City and immediately adjoining suburban area should therefore continue to grow at targeted levels at or just above the projected national average growth to 2040 i.e. around 20-25%. The rate of growth in the Cork City and suburban area should be at least twice that i.e. up to 50%, and up to three times the projected national average i.e. by up to 60%, over the same period.

Given Dublin's scale, this means planning for around 265,000 more people in Dublin by 2040. The higher targeted rate of growth for Cork also means planning for significant numbers, around 115,000 more people in Cork by 2040.

The cities of Limerick, Galway and Waterford are also important drivers of national growth and key regional centres. All have international visibility to some extent and require greater scale. As part of the Ireland 2040 strategy to accelerate the development of and strengthen these Cities, all three should also plan to grow by at least half i.e. by 50% and up to three times projected national average levels i.e. by 60%, to 2040.



**Given Dublin's scale, this means planning for around**

**265,000**

**more people in Dublin by 2040.**

**The higher targeted rate of growth for Cork also means planning for significant numbers, around**

**115,000**

**more people in Cork by 2040.**

### 3.6 | Ireland's Large Regional Towns

There is scope for potential growth in all large towns in Ireland. In the context of Ireland 2040 as a National Framework, this will be determined by the relevant Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for each Regional Assembly area, also taking into consideration the potential of smaller towns and rural areas.

**Within both the Eastern and Midland and Southern Regional Assembly areas, overall targeted population growth for large towns with >10,000 population in 2016 should generally be 20-25%, which is ahead of projected national average growth. The purpose of this is to accommodate focused and proportionate growth while preventing excessive levels of city-generated overspill development in certain locations.**

**In recognition of a significantly weaker urban structure in the north and west of Ireland, overall targeted population growth for large towns with >10,000 population in 2016 within the Northern and Western Regional Assembly area, should generally be 40%, or almost twice projected national average growth.**

In all three Regional Assembly areas, this does not mean that individual settlements cannot develop beyond the generally targeted rate of growth for each area, but it does mean that they all can't, as growth must generally be balanced between them at the regional and local planning stages.

It is appropriate that the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSESs) for each Regional Assembly area address the potential of large towns and their surrounding regional catchments in conjunction with consideration of growth targets for cities and smaller towns and rural areas. In determining future targeted patterns of growth in large towns, key considerations will include:

- Whether a settlement is located inside or outside one of the five defined City-Region catchments.
- The scale of employment provision and net commuting flows.
- Accessibility and influence in a regional context.
- The extent of local services provision i.e. administration; education - particularly third level; health; leisure and retail.
- Particular sub-regional interdependencies, for example, where a settlement may be located in relation to a number of nearby settlements.
- Local ambition, initiative and commitment to achieve compact growth.



### 3.7 | Urban Employment Growth

The pattern of urban growth targeted in Ireland 2040 is population and capacity led, recognising that firms and enterprise development are predominantly drawn to urban locations, driven by market forces such as agglomeration, migration and specialisation that depend on factors such as scale, accessibility, innovation supported by third level institutions and quality of life.

Projected employment growth in Ireland to 2040 although significant, is ultimately subject to our capacity to accommodate it. Sustainable enterprise thrives in supportive business environments that enhance competitiveness and productivity with good supporting infrastructure. There are also critical links between the quality of urban place-making and business investment/job creation. Place-making is identified as a key differentiator in *Enterprise 2025, Ireland's National Enterprise Policy 2015-25*.

The Ireland 2040 strategy is to focus a significant proportion of population growth in Ireland's Cities, while also seeking to improve urban infrastructure, liveability and the quality of the built environment. This approach intended to ensure that we continue to provide an attractive range of enterprise development opportunities in the face of changing employment activity and sectors.

At an urban scale, it is important to identify locations where enterprises can access competitively priced development lands, utilities and commercial properties to the highest standards available internationally. Planning to accommodate strategic employment growth at regional and local level should include consideration of:

- Current employment location, density of workers, land-take and resource/infrastructure dependency, including town centres, business parks, industrial estates and significant single enterprises.
- Locations for expansion of existing enterprises.
- Locations for new enterprises, based on the extent to which they are people intensive (i.e. employees/customers), space extensive (i.e. land), tied to resources, dependent on the availability of different types of infrastructure (e.g. telecoms, power, water, roads, airport, port etc.) or dependent on skills availability.

In addition to the five cities, there are opportunities for other urban areas and in particular well-connected towns that are accessible to a significant population catchment and/or can offer a good quality of life, to accommodate employment growth.



**National Policy Objective 9a**

Regional and Local Authorities will identify and quantify locations for strategic employment growth in the cities identified on Table 3.1.

**National Policy Objective 9b**

Regional and Local Authorities will identify and quantify locations for employment growth, where suitable, in urban areas generally.

### 3.8 | Achieving Urban Infill/ Brownfield Development

**Ireland 2040 targets a significant proportion of future urban development on infill/brownfield development sites within the built envelope of existing urban areas. This is applicable to all scales of settlement, from the largest city, to the smallest village.**

This means encouraging more people, jobs and activity generally within our existing urban areas, rather than new development mainly taking place on the fields outside and requires a change in outlook.

In particular, it requires a presumption in favour of development that encourages more people, jobs and activity within existing urban areas. This is provided that development meets appropriate standards to achieve targeted levels of growth. It also requires active management of land and sites in urban areas.

## Strategic Employment Growth at regional and local level should include consideration of:



**Current employment location, density of workers, land-take and resource/ infrastructure dependency**, including town centres, business parks, industrial estates and significant single enterprises.

**Locations for expansion** of existing enterprises.

**Locations for new enterprises**, based on the extent to which they are people intensive (i.e. employees/ customers), space extensive (i.e. land), tied to resources, dependent on the availability of different types of infrastructure (e.g. telecoms, power, water, roads, airport, port etc.) or dependent on skills availability.

### National Policy Objective 10

**There will be a presumption in favour of development that encourages more people, jobs and activity within existing urban areas, subject to development meeting appropriate planning standards and achieving targeted growth.**

Clearly, the key test is meeting appropriate planning standards, which should be performance-based to ensure well-designed, high quality outcomes, rather than absolute in all cases. Although sometimes necessary to safeguard against poor quality design, planning standards should be flexibly applied in response to well-designed development proposals that can achieve urban infill and brownfield development objectives in settlements of all sizes.

This is in recognition of the fact that many current urban planning standards were devised for application to greenfield development sites and struggle to take account of evolved layers of complexity in existing built-up areas. In particular, general restrictions on building height or universal standards for car parking or garden size may not be applicable in all circumstances in urban areas and should be replaced by performance based criteria appropriate to general location e.g. city/town centre, public transport hub, inner suburban, public transport corridor, outer suburban, town, village etc.

A more dynamic performance-based approach appropriate to urban location type will enable the level of public transport service to improve as more development occurs and vice-versa. There should also generally be no car parking requirement for all new development in or near the centres of the five cities, and a significantly reduced requirement in the inner suburbs of all five.

### National Policy Objective 11

**In urban areas, planning and related standards, including in particular building height and car parking will be based on performance criteria enabling alternative solutions that seek to achieve well-designed high quality and safe outcomes in order to achieve targeted growth and that protect the environment.**

This more dynamic approach will also be applied to urban land use, where the existing character of land use in an urban area may be subject to change. This should generally be as part of an overall area or master plan and/or be suitable for application on an incremental basis. It will also require additional supporting measures. While planning policies will assist in delivering urban infill/brownfield growth targets more active management of land and sites in urban areas, especially publicly owned lands, is also essential.

Active land management measures to support urban infill/brownfield development targets include the ability to assemble sites for development and/or to relocate existing space extensive uses that may be better suited to peripheral 'greenfield' locations. Such measures may also include the capacity to co-ordinate the provision of enabling infrastructure to open up sites for development and/or shared amenities to enhance the 'liveability' of urban areas.

To be effectively applied across the country, this is likely to require some institutional and legislative change. In particular, a national 'development agency' approach would establish a core pool of expertise to drive development in conjunction with local authorities and other stakeholders. It would also be desirable to seek to broaden the applicability of compulsory purchase legislation to enable urban development in certain circumstances.

### National Policy Objective 12

**In urban areas, active land management will be applied to identify a range of opportunities to achieve targeted growth, up to and including the establishment of special purpose vehicles such as a national land development agency and seeking to broaden the applicability of compulsory purchase legislation to enable urban development in certain circumstances, to ensure the development infill and brownfield lands in the most sustainable economic and environmental manner possible.**

### 3.9 | Enabling Growth in Ireland's Cities



**While Dublin is the engine of Ireland's economy and has generally performed well in recent years, key challenges relate to housing affordability, transport, urban amenities and liveability. Dublin needs to accommodate a greater proportion of the growth it generates within its metropolitan boundaries and to offer improved housing choice, transport mobility and quality of life. Dublin also needs to become a greener, more environmentally sustainable city in line with international competitors.**

At a metropolitan scale, this will require focus on a number of large regeneration and redevelopment projects, particularly with regard to underutilised land within the canals and the M50 ring. It will also require significant green-field development, on sites that can be integrated with the existing built-up area of the city and serviced by high capacity public transport, many of which are already designated as Strategic Development Zones (SDZs).

This requires a holistic approach to ensure that residential and employment development is served by transport, infrastructure and amenities. It also means ensuring that smaller scale opportunities for infill and brownfield development are realised.



## Key future growth enablers for Dublin include:

- Identifying a number of ambitious large-scale regeneration areas for the provision of new housing and employment throughout the city and metropolitan area and the measures required to facilitate them as integrated, sustainable development projects.
- Progressing the sustainable development of new greenfield areas for housing, especially those on public transport corridors, such as Adamstown, Cherrywood, Clonburriss and Clongriffin.
- Determining a limited number of accessible locations for significant people-intensive employment to complement the city-centre and docklands areas.
- Enabling enhanced opportunities for existing communities as development and diversification occurs, particularly through employment, learning and education support.
- Relocating less intensive uses outside the M50 ring in particular and from the existing built-up area generally.
- Delivering the key rail projects set out in the Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area including Metro North, DART expansion and the Luas green line link to Metro North.
- The development of an improved bus-based system, with better orbital connectivity and integration with other transport networks.
- Ensuring that water supply and wastewater needs are met by new national projects to enhance Dublin's water supply and increase waste water treatment capacity.
- Improving sustainability in terms of energy, waste and water, to include district heating and water conservation.
- Public realm and urban amenity projects, focused on streets and public spaces, especially in the area between the canals and where linked to social regeneration projects.
- Measures to enhance and better link the existing network of green spaces, including the Phoenix Park and other parks, Dublin Bay and the canals, subject to carrying out a routing study and any necessary environmental assessments.
- Delivery of the metropolitan cycle network set out in the Greater Dublin Area Cycle Network Plan inclusive of key commuter routes and urban greenways on the canal, river and coastal corridors.
- Improving access to Dublin Airport, to include improved public transport access, connections from the road network from the west and north and in the longer term, consideration of heavy rail access to facilitate direct services from the national rail network in the context of potential future electrification.
- Facilitating the growth of Dublin Port through greater efficiency, limited expansion into Dublin Harbour and improved road access, particularly to/from the southern port area.



# CORK

**Cork already performs well as a major urban centre in Ireland and the City has positioned itself as an emerging medium-sized European centre of growth and innovation. Building on this potential is critical to further enhancing Ireland's metropolitan profile.**

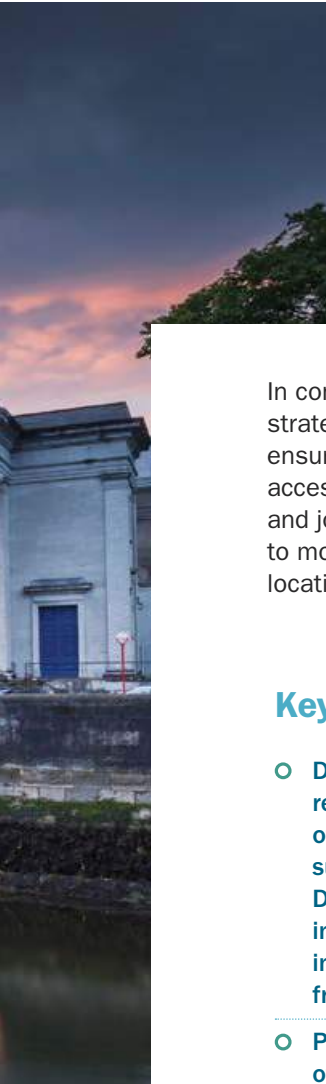
This requires an ambitious vision for Cork, at the heart of which must be an internationally competitive, sustainable urban environment. This means providing housing, transport, amenities and energy systems in a best practice European context.

One of the greatest challenges in achieving significant growth that will move the Cork metropolitan region to the next level is addressing the long term decline of the City's urban population. There is positive evidence of this in the 2016 Census and it will continue to be important to attract additional people and jobs to existing, established parts of the City.

It is also necessary to grow and diversify Cork's employment base. This means creating the conditions to attract and retain talented innovators and entrepreneurs and to be accessible to investors.

A key part of addressing this is an enhanced urban environment, including better housing choice and quality, new employment locations, improved public spaces and enhanced public transport as well as safe and pleasant options for walking and cycling.

It is also necessary to improve regional connectivity in tandem with urban growth strategies for Cork and the other regional cities. Average journey times per km by road from Cork to the Cities of Limerick, Waterford and Galway should be equivalent to those from Dublin. At present, average journey times per km from Cork are up to 30-40% slower per km travelled than from Dublin to the other Cities.



In considering metropolitan area growth strategies for Cork, it is important to ensure that enhancing regional road accessibility doesn't undermine population and jobs growth by displacing development to more dispersed and distant greenfield locations.

Further to completion of the Lower Lee Flood Relief Scheme which is ongoing, the issue of flood management must be addressed as part of any future growth strategy for Cork, particularly in relation to areas of the City adjoining the River Lee.

### Key future growth enablers for Cork include:

- Delivering ambitious large-scale regeneration projects for the provision of new employment, housing and supporting infrastructure in Cork Docklands (City Docks and Tivoli) as integrated, sustainable developments, including relocation of two 'Seveso' sites from the City Docks.
- Progressing the sustainable development of new greenfield areas for housing, especially those on public transport corridors, such as Monard.
- Identifying infill and regeneration opportunities to intensify housing development in inner city and inner suburban areas, supported by public realm and urban amenity projects.
- Enabling enhanced opportunities for existing communities as development and diversification occurs, particularly through employment, learning and education support.
- Development of a new science and innovation park to the west of the City, accessible by public transport.
- The continued expansion of and integration with the City's third level institutions.
- The development of a much enhanced Citywide public transport system to incorporate subject to further analysis, proposals for an east-west corridor from Mahon, through the City Centre to Ballincollig and a north-south corridor with a link to the Airport.
- M8/N25/N40 Dunkettle Junction upgrade (approved) and improved Ringaskiddy Port access.
- Enhanced regional connectivity through improved average journey times by road.
- Improved traffic flow around the City, which subject to assessment could include upgrade of the N40, and/or alternatives which may include enhanced public transport.
- Improved rail journey times to Dublin and consideration of improved onward direct network connections.
- Ensuring that water supply and waste-water needs are met by new national projects to enhance Corks water supply and increase waste water treatment capacity.
- Improving sustainability in terms of energy, waste and water, to include district heating and water conservation.

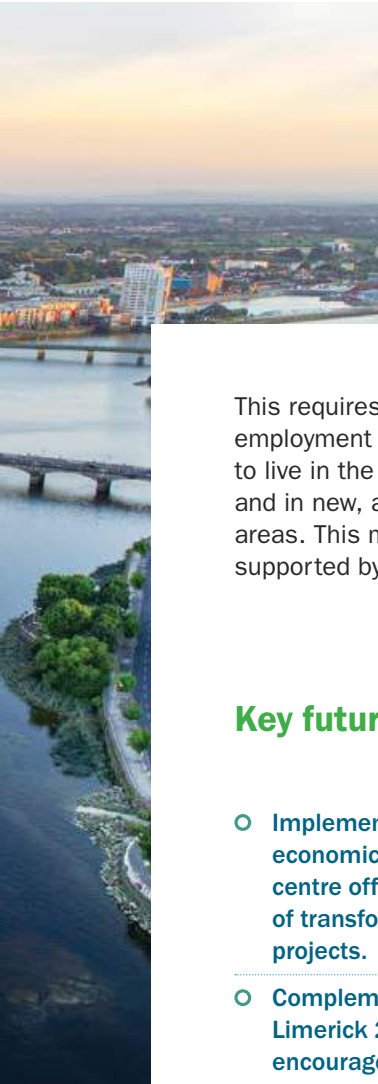


**Limerick is the largest urban centre in Ireland's Mid-West, which is focused on the lower River Shannon catchment. The Region includes Shannon Airport and the port and energy-related facilities of the Shannon estuary, as well as adjoining parts of County Clare and County Tipperary.**

As a well-located regional centre situated mid-way between Cork and Galway on Ireland's Atlantic Economic Corridor and with good connectivity to Dublin, Limerick has the potential to generate and be the focus of significant employment and housing growth.

It is necessary for Limerick to further strengthen its position as the principal focus within the Region and to continue to address the legacy of regional growth having occurred outside the City area. A series of innovative, practical and institutional measures have been put in place to achieve this in recent years and there is evidence of a positive turnaround in terms of both population and employment growth.

Limerick Regeneration, the amalgamation of Limerick City and County and most recently, the Limerick 2030 initiative, have all contributed to enhancing Limerick's growth potential. Working together with the City's third level institutions, Shannon Airport and bodies such as Shannon Development and the Shannon-Foynes Port Company, there is capacity to build on recent success and add to the ambitious vision for Limerick.



This requires growing and diversifying the City's employment base and attracting more people to live in the City, both within the City Centre and in new, accessible green-field development areas. This means improving housing choice, supported by facilities and infrastructure.

Regional connectivity, especially to Cork and Waterford must also be addressed and average journey times per km need to be improved, in a manner that doesn't undermine metropolitan area population and jobs growth.

### Key future growth enablers for Limerick include:

- Implementation of the Limerick 2030 economic strategy to create modern, city centre office accommodation and a series of transformational city centre public realm projects.
- Complementary further development of the Limerick 2030 plan to include measures to encourage significant inner urban residential regeneration and development, to include the City's Georgian Quarter.
- Extending the ambition of the Limerick 2030 plan to include extension of the City Centre towards Limerick Docks.
- Identifying infill and regeneration opportunities to intensify housing and employment development throughout inner suburban areas.
- Enabling enhanced opportunities for existing communities as development and diversification occurs, particularly through employment, learning and education support.
- Progressing the sustainable development of new greenfield areas for housing and the development of supporting public transport and infrastructure, such as at Mungret.
- The continued expansion of the City's third level institutions and integration with the wider City and region.
- Provision of a Citywide public transport network, with enhanced accessibility from the City Centre to the National Technological Park, UL and Shannon Airport.
- Development of a strategic cycleway network with a number of high capacity flagship routes.
- Enhanced road connectivity to Shannon-Foynes Port, including local by-passes.
- Enhanced regional connectivity through improved average journey times by road to Cork and Waterford.
- Ensuring that water supply and waste-water needs are met by new national projects to enhance Limerick's water supply and increase waste water treatment capacity.
- Improving sustainability in terms of energy, waste and water, to include district heating and water conservation.





# GALWAY

**Galway has been Ireland's most rapidly developing urban area for half a century and is a key driver for the west of Ireland.**

The City is located at the point on the Atlantic Economic Corridor from where the influence of Ireland's southern Atlantic cities (Cork and Limerick) extends northwards.

The Galway Metropolitan area shares many of the problems of growth and economic success with much larger cities. In common with Dublin, Galway needs to accommodate a greater proportion of the growth it generates within its metropolitan boundaries. Challenges to be addressed include housing choice and affordability, transport/mobility and urban quality, especially outside the core-city centre area.

Galway needs to both address recent growth legacy issues and build on key strengths, including a world class med-tech cluster, third level institutions embedded within the City, a vibrant arts and cultural scene, year round tourism and an attractive natural setting. All of these factors contribute to a positive national reputation.



### Key future growth enablers for Galway include:

- Delivering a number of regeneration projects for the provision of new development to extend and intensify the City Centre, including the Station, Docks and Headford Road areas.
- Identifying infill and regeneration opportunities to intensify housing and employment development throughout inner suburban areas.
- Progressing the sustainable development of new greenfield areas for housing and the development of supporting public transport and infrastructure, such as at Ardaun.
- Improving access and sustainable transport links to, and integration with, the existing employment areas to the east of the City at Parkmore, Ballybrit and Mervue.
- The continued expansion of the city's third level institutions and integration with the city and region.
- Determining the sustainable future development of the Galway Airport site for employment and/or residential use together with supporting facilities and infrastructure.
- Provision of a Citywide public transport network, with enhanced accessibility between existing and proposed residential areas and the City Centre, third level institutions and the employment areas to the east of the city.
- Public realm and urban amenity projects, focused on streets and public spaces, particularly in support of an extended city centre area and where residential and employment areas can be linked to pedestrian routes.
- Development of a strategic cycleway network with a number of high capacity flagship routes.
- Delivery of the Galway City Ring Road.
- Delivery of the Galway East Main Drainage Waste Water Treatment Plant.
- Ensuring that water supply and waste-water needs are met by new national projects to enhance Galway's water supply and increase waste water treatment capacity.
- Improving sustainability in terms of energy, waste and water, to include district heating and water conservation.

# WATERFORD



**Waterford is the principal urban centre in Ireland's south-east and is unique in having a network of large and strong regional urban centres in close proximity within each of the surrounding counties that both complement the role of Waterford and perform strong regional and local economic and developmental roles for their own areas.**

Given the unique urban composition of the south east and the objective to enable Waterford City to become a regional city of scale, an agreed development strategy is required to build Waterford's population and employment base substantially while enabling surrounding urban centres to perform complementary roles.

From a national perspective, a stronger Waterford City would lead economic recovery for the wider south-east which has experienced slower economic recovery than the national average in recent years, together with high unemployment rates, lower value job opportunities and less job creation.

The City is located between Dublin and Cork and is well-served by motorway and rail links to Dublin, but does require improved road links to other regional cities, and in particular Cork and Limerick, and also within the region to towns that aren't served by motorway. Waterford and the wider south-east region is also served by a regional airport and a number of National Ports Policy Tier 2 ports which are geographically close to EU trading partners, and an Institute of Technology, with proposals to form part of a Technological University.

# ORD

There is capacity to build on all of these strengths while enhancing Waterford's small-city attractiveness and quality of life. This includes capitalising on good and improved connectivity to Dublin and Cork in particular.

Waterford also offers opportunities as a location for back-office functions in areas such as financial or professional services that may wish to avoid larger urban areas. It is also an emerging tourist centre, located on the route from Rosslare to Cork and the South-West and as a destination for cruise traffic.

## Key future growth enablers for Waterford include:

- Delivering the North Quays SDZ regeneration project for integrated, sustainable development together with supporting infrastructure, including a new pedestrian bridge or a pedestrian/public transport bridge over the River Suir.
- Identifying infill and regeneration opportunities to intensify housing and employment development throughout city centre and inner suburban areas.
- Enabling enhanced opportunities for existing communities as development and diversification occurs, particularly through employment, learning and education support.
- Progressing the sustainable development of new greenfield areas for housing and the development of supporting public transport and infrastructure.
- Public realm and urban amenity projects, focused on streets and public spaces, particularly in the city centre and inner urban area in support of urban intensification.
- The development and expansion of the City's third level institution and integration with the City and region.
- Provision of Citywide public transport and strategic cycleway networks.
- Extension of the Deise greenway to link WIT to the City Centre.
- Enhanced regional connectivity through improved average journey times by road to Cork, Limerick and ports within the region.
- Ensuring that water supply and waste-water needs are met by new national projects to enhance Waterford's water supply and increase waste water treatment capacity.
- Improving sustainability in terms of energy, waste and water, to include district heating and water conservation.



# 4 PLANNING FOR DIVERSE RURAL PLACES

## 4.1 | Strengthening Ireland's Rural Fabric

**Rural areas make a major contribution to Ireland's identity and to overall national development in economic, social, cultural and environmental terms.**

Rural areas make a major contribution to Ireland's identity and to overall national development in economic, social, cultural and environmental terms.

Rural areas, including Gaeltacht regions and Ireland's inhabited offshore islands, hold much of Ireland's natural resources, biodiversity, environmental qualities and landscape and contribute in a unique way to Ireland's culture. Rural areas are also a focus for living and working and for recreational activities. The agri-food and tourism sectors, which are particularly important for rural economies, employ in excess of 363,000 people (18% of the national workforce).

Rural Ireland has faced challenges in recent decades, such as the loss of traditional industries and employment, emigration and poor connectivity. However, well over a third of the population of Ireland live outside cities and towns and this proportion increases to half of the population if smaller towns and villages are included. The emergence of new technologies and improved infrastructural connectivity provide opportunities for diversification into new employment sectors.

Accordingly, building on Government policy and action plans on rural development, rural areas will have a major role to play in Ireland 2040 in relation to:

- **Enhancing our unique rural settings and the communities who live there.**
- **Planning for the future growth and development of rural areas, including addressing decline, with a special focus on activating the potential for the renewal and development of small towns and villages.**
- **Putting in place planning and investment policies to support job creation in the rural economy.**
- **Addressing connectivity gaps.**
- **Better co-ordination of existing investment programmes dealing with social inclusion, rural development and town and village renewal.**



There are clearly differences between types of rural areas and rural communities, including scale, accessibility, the influence of neighbouring urban centres, natural resource assets and access to infrastructure.

## 4.2 | Enhancing our Unique Rural Settings and the Communities who live there

People in Ireland have a strong connection with rural areas for a number of different reasons. For some, it is the place in which they have chosen to live and work, where the land not only provides a home, but also provides an income.

There are many examples of vibrant rural communities right across Ireland in towns, villages and the open countryside as well as on our islands. There are clearly differences between types of rural areas and rural communities, including scale, accessibility, the influence of neighbouring urban centres, natural resource assets and access to infrastructure.

Our islands and coastal areas contain some of our most vibrant and culturally distinctive communities with the majority of our inhabited islands lying off the western seaboard of Counties Donegal, Mayo, Galway, Kerry and Cork. They are an integral part of the State's heritage and have a special significance in Irish culture.

While there are many hundreds of small islands off the coast of Ireland, approximately forty, mainly Gaeltacht<sup>19</sup> islands, support settled populations. These communities are distinctive and unique in an Irish context, due to the fragility and isolation of island life.

As a result of their location, they are highly dependent on tourism, agriculture and fishing but equally are adept at self-reliance and have a very strong sense of identity.

Safe and regular access to the offshore islands has been significantly advanced in recent years through passenger and cargo ferry services or new or significantly upgraded pier and landing facilities. This capital investment, in both infrastructure and services, continues to support the sustainability of island communities.

However, rural communities are also facing challenges. These range from urban generated pressures in some locations, to a declining and ageing population, the structure of the economy and lack of access to quality infrastructure and new technologies, in others. In response to some of these challenges, the Action Plan for Rural Development sets out the Government's approach for rural places in Ireland to grow and adapt through supportive measures which encourage innovation and build on the existing strengths of rural communities in Ireland.

Rural communities and particularly those engaged in farming, operate as custodians of the landscape by undertaking agricultural land management at varying scales. However, the viability of many landholdings is such that half of farm families now depend on off-farm income, much of which is focused on urban settlements. Alternative land uses such as forestry and renewable energy related development are also becoming more prevalent.

The authenticity of Ireland's clean, green image is rooted in the landscapes of rural Ireland. In combination with a strong sense of community and place, Ireland's rural areas support the fundamental assets upon which critical sectors such as food production, tourism, amenity activities, bloodstock, energy production and small scale craft manufacturing are based. The enhancement and promotion of these unique and distinct assets are critical to planning for Ireland's future.



### National Policy Objective 13

**Protect and promote the quality, character and distinctiveness of the Irish landscape, the sense of place and culture that make Ireland's rural areas authentic and attractive as places to live, work and visit. The Action Plan for Rural Development up to and including 2021 supports this objective and thereafter a review of the Action Plan for Rural Development is to be undertaken to ensure alignment and consistency with the National Policy Objectives of this Framework.**

 A photograph of a rural town at dusk. The sky is a mix of orange, pink, and purple. In the foreground, there is a street lamp and a large stone wall. The town is built on a hillside, with houses and buildings visible. The street is paved and has a yellow double line.
 

**In combination with a strong sense of community and place, Ireland's rural areas support the fundamental assets upon which critical sectors such as food production, tourism, amenity activities, bloodstock, energy production and small scale craft manufacturing are based.**

## 4.3 | Planning for the Future Growth and Development of Our Rural Fabric

Neither 'rural areas' nor the communities that make up the fabric of rural Ireland are identical. Rural areas are distinctive and separate to the urban and outer urban areas that exist in our towns and cities and as a result should not cater for urban or suburban style development.

Growing spatial, social and economic disparities between rural areas are a reflection of the fact that stronger rural areas are not only located in a geographically advantageous place, but also have the human and social capital to identify their needs and effectively engage with emerging strategies.

Rural communities across Ireland function well beyond their immediate catchments and have a strong inter-relationship with adjacent towns and villages, often beyond county or regional boundaries.

The Central Statistics Office (CSO) defines 'rural' as the areas outside settlements with a population of 1,500 or more people. This includes smaller settlements of less than 1,500 people together with the open countryside and comprised approximately 37% of the population in 2016.

**There are many towns and villages with populations of more than 1,500 people that are intrinsic to sustaining viable rural communities and do not function independent of their rural hinterland. In planning for the future growth and development of rural areas, 'rural' is considered to include towns and villages up to a population of 10,000 people.** This means that around half of Ireland's population lives in areas with a predominantly rural, small town and village settlement pattern.

Outside of the five cities, the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSESs) for each Regional Assembly area will address the potential of towns and their surrounding rural areas in conjunction with consideration of growth targets as set out in Chapter 3.

To address the overall historical pattern of dispersed development in Ireland, protect areas that are under strong urban influence from unsustainable inappropriate over-development and allow for population to be sustained in structurally weak areas, Ireland 2040 sets an overall population growth target of 15% for small towns of less than 10,000 people and rural areas in each of the three Regional Assembly areas to 2040.

This figure forms part of the overall strategy for growth for the country and is to be applied regionally and locally. When combined with other measures, it is intended to arrest both the decline of less accessible rural areas and the rapid growth of more accessible ones.

Small town and rural targets will be applied through the RSES process and locally through county development plans. As with larger towns, an average target does not mean that individual settlements or rural areas cannot exceed the generally targeted rate of growth, it just means that everywhere can't, as growth must be balanced on a regional and county basis.

### National Policy Objective 14

Ensure that the targeted population growth of Ireland's small towns and rural areas to 2040 is proportionate, at a targeted average rate of 15% in each Regional Assembly area, to be applied regionally through the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy process and locally through County Development Plans.





**The quality and character of our national built heritage in rural areas, including towns and villages can add distinctiveness to place making and over time can acquire special interest through its intrinsic quality.**

## 4.4 | Rural Towns

**Rural towns perform as local drivers for their surrounding areas through well-established economic, administrative and social functions. They support clusters of services, have a significant share of homes and jobs, and act as transport hubs for a much wider rural community.**

As set out in National Policy Objectives 6 and 7, Ireland 2040 seeks to strengthen and diversify rural towns to be a focus for local housing and employment growth and regeneration, to include derelict site transformation and new technology, such as low carbon and renewable heat and digital connectivity.

There is a distinction between rural areas located within the commuter catchment of the five city regions or of a large town and those that are outside commuter catchments. In rural areas accessible to cities and towns, urban generated commuter housing has affected the character and cohesion of some locations. In other, less accessible rural areas, it has been challenging to retain and/or develop community and social facilities and local infrastructure as populations decline.

As a consequence of changing settlement patterns in Ireland, building vacancy in rural towns and villages has become increasingly prevalent resulting in the demise of the vibrancy and vitality of historic town and village centres. The reuse and regeneration of these buildings are essential catalysts to transforming the capacity and potential of smaller towns and villages in Ireland.

### National Policy Objective 15

**Target the reversal of rural decline in the core of small towns and villages through sustainable targeted measures that address vacancy and deliver sustainable reuse and regeneration outcomes.**

The quality and character of our national built heritage in rural areas, including towns and villages can add distinctiveness to place making and over time can acquire special interest through its intrinsic quality. Ireland's built heritage assets are a non-renewable resource that merit being nurtured in a manner appropriate to their significance and aid to understanding the past, contributing to community well-being and quality of life as well as regional economic development.

Our market towns and estate villages sit alongside more modern, but equally distinctive settlements that knit modern architecture with the existing historic urban heritage. Investment in our towns and villages through regeneration, public realm improvements and the appropriate adaptation and reuse of our built heritage, acts as a key factor in developing, promoting and investing in a sense of place and aligning the objectives of creating high quality with that of spatial planning.

### National Policy Objective 16

**Enhance, integrate and protect the special physical, social, economic and cultural value of built heritage assets through appropriate and sensitive use now and for future generations.**

In all types of rural settlement, rural town living requires a proportionate and tailored approach to residential development. This means that it is necessary to tailor the scale, design and layout of housing in rural towns to ensure that a suburban or high density urban approach is not applied to a rural setting and that development responds to the character, scale and density of the town.

Opportunities exist to create the conditions to support residential development in rural towns, whether through parking and streetscape improvements, traffic diversions, the provision of small scale urban amenities such as open spaces or playgrounds, the acquisition of key sites and/or the opening up or amalgamation of backlands and the provision of services such as waste-water treatment.

#### National Policy Objective 17a

**Support the proportionate growth of and appropriately designed development in rural towns that will contribute to their regeneration and renewal, including interventions in the public realm, the provision of amenities, the acquisition of sites and the provision of services.**

In rural Ireland many people seek the opportunity to build their own homes, but find it difficult to do so in smaller settlements because of a lack of available sites and services. In order to assist this, **local authorities will be supported in undertaking the necessary land acquisition, site preparation and local infrastructure provision to deliver self-build development options in smaller towns/villages.**

#### National Policy Objective 17b

**Develop a programme for 'new homes in small towns and villages' with local authorities, public infrastructure agencies such as Irish Water and local communities, to provide serviced sites with appropriate infrastructure to attract people to build their own homes and live in small towns and villages.**

This will initially be developed through pilot 'service sites schemes' in order to provide suitable quality housing solutions to meet the needs of people who might otherwise seek to reside in dispersed housing.

**It is necessary to tailor the scale, design and layout of housing in rural towns to ensure that a suburban or high density urban approach is not applied to a rural setting and that development responds to the character, scale and density of the town.**



## 4.5 | Open Countryside

The open countryside is and should continue to be a living and lived in landscape focusing on the requirements of rural economies and rural communities, based on agriculture, forestry, tourism and rural enterprise, while at the same time avoiding ribbon and over-spill development from urban areas and protecting environmental qualities.

It is recognised that there is a continuing need for housing provision for people to live and work in Ireland's rural areas. Careful planning is required to manage demand in our most accessible countryside around cities and towns, focusing on the functional requirements of rural economies and rural communities and in compliance with EU treaties, whereas remoter areas should benefit from a more flexible approach, particularly where it helps to sustain fragile communities.

It is necessary to differentiate between rural areas within the five city regions, which are defined by a commuter catchment of at least 15% of the relevant city area workforce, and those outside the city regions or the hinterland of towns of all sizes.

The standardised EU/OECD definition of 15% should also generally apply to the hinterland of large towns (>10,000), with some local variation possible in relation to ED boundaries. The scale of the hinterland of towns will vary depending on the scale of the settlement and the area under the influence of smaller (>10,000) towns is best determined locally.

### National Policy Objective 18a

**Ensure, in providing for the development of rural housing that a distinction is made between areas under urban influence i.e. areas within the five city regions and the hinterland of towns, and elsewhere and that the standardised EU/OECD definition of a city region shall be applied to identify the urban influence of cities and large towns (>10,000), with influence of smaller (>10,000) towns determined locally.**

In areas under urban influence, it will continue to be necessary to demonstrate a functional economic requirement for housing need.

### National Policy Objective 18b

**In rural areas under urban influence, to facilitate the provision of single housing in the countryside based on the core consideration of demonstrable economic need to live in a rural area and relevant siting criteria for rural housing in statutory guidelines and plans.**

At a local level, it will be necessary for the core strategy of county development plans to account for the demand for single housing in the countryside. This will also be related to the overall Housing Need Demand Assessment (HNDA) that will be required to be undertaken in future planning. Quantifying the need for single housing on an evidence basis will assist in supporting the preparation of a comprehensive housing strategy and associated land use policies.

Almost all recent single housing in the countryside has been developed privately and social housing provision has largely been in cities, towns and villages. In some locations, this has contributed to spatial and social imbalance, whereby key services in smaller settlements have closed due to population decline, leaving more marginalised and vulnerable citizens without access to important services. Housing provision that matches all identified needs will contribute to creating a more cohesive and integrated society.

### National Policy Objective 19

**Project need for single housing in the countryside through the local Housing Need Demand Assessment (HNDA) tool and county development plan core strategy processes.**

**It is recognised that there is a continuing need for housing provision for people to live and work in Ireland's rural areas.**

## 4.6 | Planning and Investment to Support Job Creation

Employment and enterprise in rural areas are influenced directly and indirectly by the degrees to which the Irish economy is integrated with the global marketplace. Rural areas have a mixture of employment types at varying scales. Rural business also comprises small and medium enterprises (SMEs), involved in non-traditional agricultural activities.

Local services sectors, including tourism and small scale manufacturing are a significant part of the rural economy and are also important local employers.

**Supporting the diversification of the rural economy is essential not just to create job opportunities in rural areas but is also an opportunity to link employment to bigger issues such as climate change, managing sustainable land use and sustaining vibrant rural communities.**

Recent research indicates that some of the key challenges facing business development in rural areas, particularly less densely populated areas include access to finance, communication and logistics, access to knowledge and innovation services support.

Facilitating the development of the enterprise and local economy to allow for the creation of a wider variety of employment opportunities will include building on the continued education of those living in rural areas. Capitalising on local assets, including human natural and cultural capital can raise the natural, social, cultural, economic and digital potential of rural areas and help foster policy coherence. Opportunities for upskilling through the presence of further education and training opportunities, as well as the flexible delivery of higher education qualifications (including blended online, part-time or outreach) will be important to securing and accessing employment within rural areas.

Ireland's rural resources are some of our biggest assets and through the development of the agriculture, food, forestry, tourism and renewable energy sectors, the sustainable harnessing of these assets will not only sustain local employment but also contribute to driving the national economy.

Rural areas have significant potential in these sectors and as digital links and opportunities for remote working and new enterprises continue to grow, they will increasingly have the capacity to accommodate employment focused on ICT based industries, multi/media and creative sectors in areas such as agri-tech, tourism, transport and in particular, an added value bio-economy and circular economy. Future employment opportunities in the rural economy require measures to support rural entrepreneurship and also innovative rural SMEs. Building on diversification and modernisation strategies, improving governance models, supporting innovative food and non-food value chains can help boost economic development, ecosystem services and entrepreneurial innovation.

### National Policy Objective 20

**Enhance the competitiveness of rural areas by supporting innovation in rural economic development and enterprise through the sustainable diversification of the rural economy into new sectors and in particular those with a low or zero carbon output.**





## Agriculture

Agriculture has traditionally been the most important contributor to rural economies. While it is now providing less direct employment, it remains important as a significant source of income and both direct and indirect employment. However, it must adapt to the challenges posed by modernisation, restructuring, market development and the increasing importance of environmental issues.

The agri-food sector is one of Ireland's most important indigenous manufacturing industries. Much of the economic benefits in the agri-food sector are dispersed throughout the country making it particularly vital to rural areas and the sector is playing a significant role in economic development.

The continued development of the agri-food sector is to be supported through the implementation of Food Wise 2025 and initiatives to develop the renewable energy sector and financial services in rural Ireland. In addition, there is significant potential in the areas of strategic energy resources that are agri - based, particularly in the areas of bio-energy, bio-technology, anaerobic digestion and combined heat and power.

To avoid competition between various land use options, tailored land management policies may be required to minimise unwarranted competition between land use categories and may prove to be cost effective in dealing with climate change.

**The agri-food sector is one of Ireland's most important indigenous manufacturing industries. Much of the economic benefits in the agri-food sector are dispersed throughout the country making it particularly vital to rural areas and the sector is playing a significant role in economic development.**

## Forestry

As the quality of land is often a determining factor in the land-use decision-making process, lower quality land that currently presents challenges for economic agriculture may represent a resource that might be used for afforestation. It is likely that forest cover will continue to focus on suitable marginal agricultural land which may be easier to convert to afforestation owing to more limited agricultural use.

The afforestation of agricultural land, supported by Government incentives, aims to increase long term timber supply to support the development of a sustainable processing sector and offers significant carbon sequestration potential thereby contributing to national greenhouse gas mitigation targets and the bioeconomy. Increased planting and the attainment of afforestation targets will depend on the availability of land in general and, specifically, a change in land use from agriculture to forestry.



## Tourism

Tourism and agriculture are inextricably linked in rural areas, given that agriculture, in many places, creates and maintains the landscapes upon which tourism trades. The maintenance of access to our landscapes and the creation of new accesses are dependent on maintaining good links with the agricultural sector. Likewise, the built, cultural and natural assets which constitute the ‘raw material’ of the tourism industry are also essential to the ‘production capability’ of the sector. Tourism has the capacity to directly and indirectly sustain communities, create employment and deliver real social benefits for rural Ireland.

## Energy Production

Rural areas have a strong role to play in securing a sustainable renewable energy supply for the country. Historically, rural areas have significantly contributed to the energy needs of the country and continue to do so. In planning Ireland’s future energy landscape and in transitioning to a low carbon economy, the ability to diversify and adapt to new energy technologies is essential. Innovative and novel solutions for renewables have been delivered in rural areas over the last number of years, particularly in the areas of solar, wind and bio mass.

In meeting the challenge of transitioning to a low carbon economy, the location of future national renewable energy generation will, for the most part, need to be accommodated on large tracts of land that are located in a rural setting, while also continuing to protect the integrity of the environment.

In relation to peatlands, some of the country’s cutaway bogs are suitable to facilitate the generation of energy, most notably wind/biomass. **Considering the significant amount of peatlands in the ownership of semi-state bodies, a medium to longer term strategic national land use plan for peatlands in state ownership is to be prepared in order to manage their most appropriate future use, building on the existing National Peatlands Strategy and other national policy related to peatlands conservation and management.**

## Circular Bioeconomy

While rural and coastal areas have the potential to, and will, develop many types of economic activities, those associated with the bioeconomy, such as development of new biorefining technologies, represent a competitive advantage. The bioeconomy comprises “the production of renewable biological resources - such as crops, forests, fish, animals, micro-organisms - and the conversion of these resources and waste streams into value added products, such as food, feed, bio-based products and bioenergy” (European Commission, 2012). The transition to a more circular economy and bioeconomy, where the value of biobased products, materials and resources is maintained in the economy for as long as possible, and the generation of waste minimised, could well provide an essential contribution to the EU and Ireland’s efforts to develop a sustainable, low carbon, resource efficient and competitive economy.

This definition can be extended to include economic activities such as natural capital like rural tourism which is based on amenity landscapes and activities that draw on natural assets including mountains, lakes, coastlines and rivers or non-remunerated activities such as the delivery of ecosystem services e.g. water purification or nutrient cycling. The sector also draws on heritage and cultural assets that are strongly associated with the bioeconomy, i.e. small, remote or close knit communities.

### National Policy Objective 21

**Facilitate the development of the rural economy through supporting a sustainable and economically efficient agricultural and food sector, together with forestry, fishing and aquaculture and diversification into alternative on-farm and off-farm activities, while at the same time noting the importance of maintaining and protecting the natural landscape and built heritage which are vital to rural tourism.**

## 4.7 | Addressing Connectivity

By its very nature, rural Ireland has not benefitted from the same levels of accessibility as cities and larger towns. Reconciling accessibility with the location of people, jobs and services is central to achieving the objectives of Ireland 2040.

Connectivity in the twenty first century is of wider significance as the digital revolution continues to influence how our society and economy function. The provision of high speed digital infrastructure is critical to realising potential employment opportunities and facilitating innovation.

For rural Ireland, broadband is essential enabling infrastructure that affords rural communities the same opportunities to engage with the digital economy as it does to those who live in our cities and towns.

### National Policy Objective 22

Support and facilitate delivery of the National Broadband Plan as a means of developing further opportunities for enterprise, employment, education, innovation and skills development for those who live and work in rural areas.

## Case Study

### Connemara West - Letterfrack

Based in Letterfrack, County Galway and established in 1971, Connemara West plc is a rural community development organisation that has created and delivered innovative rural development initiatives and models targeting a sustainable economic, social and cultural future for North West Connemara.

Since 2010, Connemara West plc has pioneered a unique education-led development model, as part of its overall development strategy for the region which focuses on the independent study abroad sector.

The model expands the total number of United States colleges and students using Ireland as a study abroad destination. High impact educational practices are delivered to the visiting college by leveraging local networks to provide internship, research and service learning opportunities with a variety of local organisations.

Between 2010 and 2017 the number of colleges from the United States visiting Letterfrack through this development model has increased seven fold. This model allows local rural communities to access United States third level expertise, capabilities and services in their own communities, expertise that can contribute to local development processes and outcomes.



Connemara West plc directly employs 29 people on its campus in Letterfrack and including the other organisations, it has helped to create or has invited onto its campus there are over 140 other people employed on the site. The economic returns to the community from Connemara West's activities are significant. However, the impact of Connemara West's activities on local capacity and confidence building to develop evolving strategies for local development has contributed to underpinning the resilience and development of the community.

Complementary to 'harder' infrastructure projects related to transport, energy and communications, the development of greenways and blueways offer a unique alternative means for tourists and visitors to access and enjoy rural Ireland. The development of a strategic national network of Greenways and Blueways is a priority for Ireland 2040.

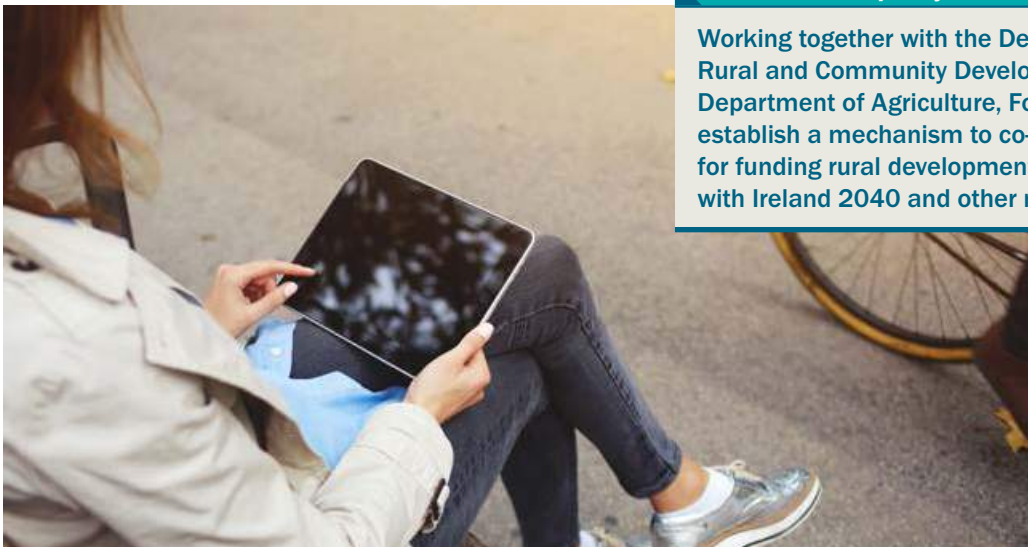
A national network of walking and cycling will support the overall priorities of development of rural communities and job creation in the rural economy as well as the protection and promotion of natural assets and biodiversity. **Building on existing success stories related to greenway and blueway development, particularly in relation to the inland waterways network, is an essential element of progressing a national network.**

Due to the cross-sectoral nature, extensive reach and elements of land take associated with a national Greenways and Blueways Strategy, the support and buy-in of local communities, landowners, local authorities and stage agencies is critical to the successful implementation of a national network, which must also be supported by an investment and co-ordination plan.

Such a network would allow for greater access to more remote parts of the country and presents opportunities for associated tourism development to take place in rural areas.

### National Policy Objective 23

**Facilitate the development of a National Greenways/Blueways Strategy which prioritises projects on the basis of achieving maximum impact and connectivity at national and regional level.**



## 4.8 | Investment Coordination

**Investment coordination, together with research and innovation coordination, is an important issue to prevent duplication of effort and inefficient use of resources.**

Rural Development is a multifaceted policy area and accordingly there are several funding and investment structures that exist to support national, regional and local priorities. At national level there are Town and Village Renewal Schemes and complementary funding in areas such as housing, rural water, transport, broadband and community facilities in addition to other measures such as the Community Enterprise Centre Scheme, the Community Enterprise Initiative Scheme, the Competitive Local Enterprise Office Fund and the Regional Enterprise Fund.

At EU level, the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) has a significant role to play in the development and maintenance of rural Ireland especially in the delivery of public goods such as the protection of water quality, preservation of biodiversity and the achievement of climate change objectives, as well as in the continued community led local development approach to rural development via the LEADER programme.

**Working with the Department of Rural and Community Development and the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, it is necessary to ensure that there is a long-term plan-led mechanism to co-ordinate the various streams of funding for rural development, that can align with Ireland 2040 and other national strategies and support local authority development plans and local economic and community plans.**

### National Policy Objective 24

**Working together with the Department of Rural and Community Development and the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, establish a mechanism to co-ordinate structures for funding rural development that can align with Ireland 2040 and other national strategies.**





# PEOPLE, HOMES AND COMMUNITIES

## 5.1 | Quality of Life and Place

In recent decades Ireland's people have become more educated, outward looking, technologically focused, productive and diverse. This adaptability and change has enabled us to become more prosperous, successful, and resilient as a Nation.

Continued economic success will ensure sustained improvement in living standards and quality of life for all of our citizens. It also provides the best possible platform from which to pursue key social and environmental goals, such as tackling disadvantage and responding to climate change.

As our society changes, our needs and preferences will change, particularly as more of us become older. Quality of life varies depending on people's circumstances, but in general terms, reflects the elements listed in Figure 5.1.

Figure 5.1 | Elements Supporting Quality of Life





How future development in Ireland is planned will continue to be a significant determinant of people's quality of life. Location, place and accessibility influence the quality of life that people enjoy.

Whilst Ireland 2040 cannot completely effect change in all of the dimensions that contribute to quality of life, there are some key elements that it will directly impact on, most importantly the natural and physical environment.

**This is why place is intrinsic to achieving good quality of life - the quality of our immediate environment, our ability to access education and healthcare services, the leisure and social interactions available to us and the prospect of securing employment, all combine to make a real difference to people's lives.**

## 5.2 | Shaping Sustainable Communities

**Communities mean more than housing. People are central to communities in Ireland, whether in an urban or a rural context. Through their leadership, innovation and collaboration, community groups and organisations across the country contribute to shaping a more sustainable future within their immediate locality.**

Enabling communities to lead local projects is an effective way to ensure our villages, towns and cities are fit for the future and create the conditions for people to thrive. Through empowering community groups to come together to tackle issues of local priority and to work in partnership with local authorities and businesses, multiple benefits can be delivered. **Enabling and fostering community leadership at a local level shall continue to be supported at Government level.**

Upgrades to our physical infrastructure can tackle climate change, deliver reliable and efficient transport networks, improve health and wellbeing, secure a healthy natural environment, improve long-term housing supply, maximise employment opportunities, and make our communities safer and more cohesive.

Sustainability is not confined to the physical environment. It also refers to the concept of stable, integrated communities, whose needs are required to be met throughout all life-stages including the provision of childcare, access to education, securing a home and a job, enjoying a quality environment and availing of recreation and amenity facilities.

Meeting the needs of local communities over time demands that places sustainably adapt, changing at a pace that is proportionate to their size. In turn, healthy functional interrelationships with places of different sizes can further develop.

In making choices about where to live, work and invest, the level of service provision is an essential consideration. Diagram 5.2 below broadly indicates the level of service provision that applies to settlements of varying sizes in Ireland. It follows that our cities are where high level service provision is available across a range of sectors and accessibility to these services. Equally, more local service provision is appropriately provided for at a small town or village settlement scale.

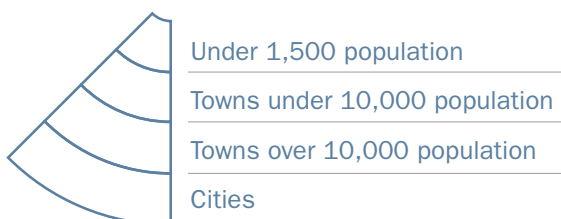
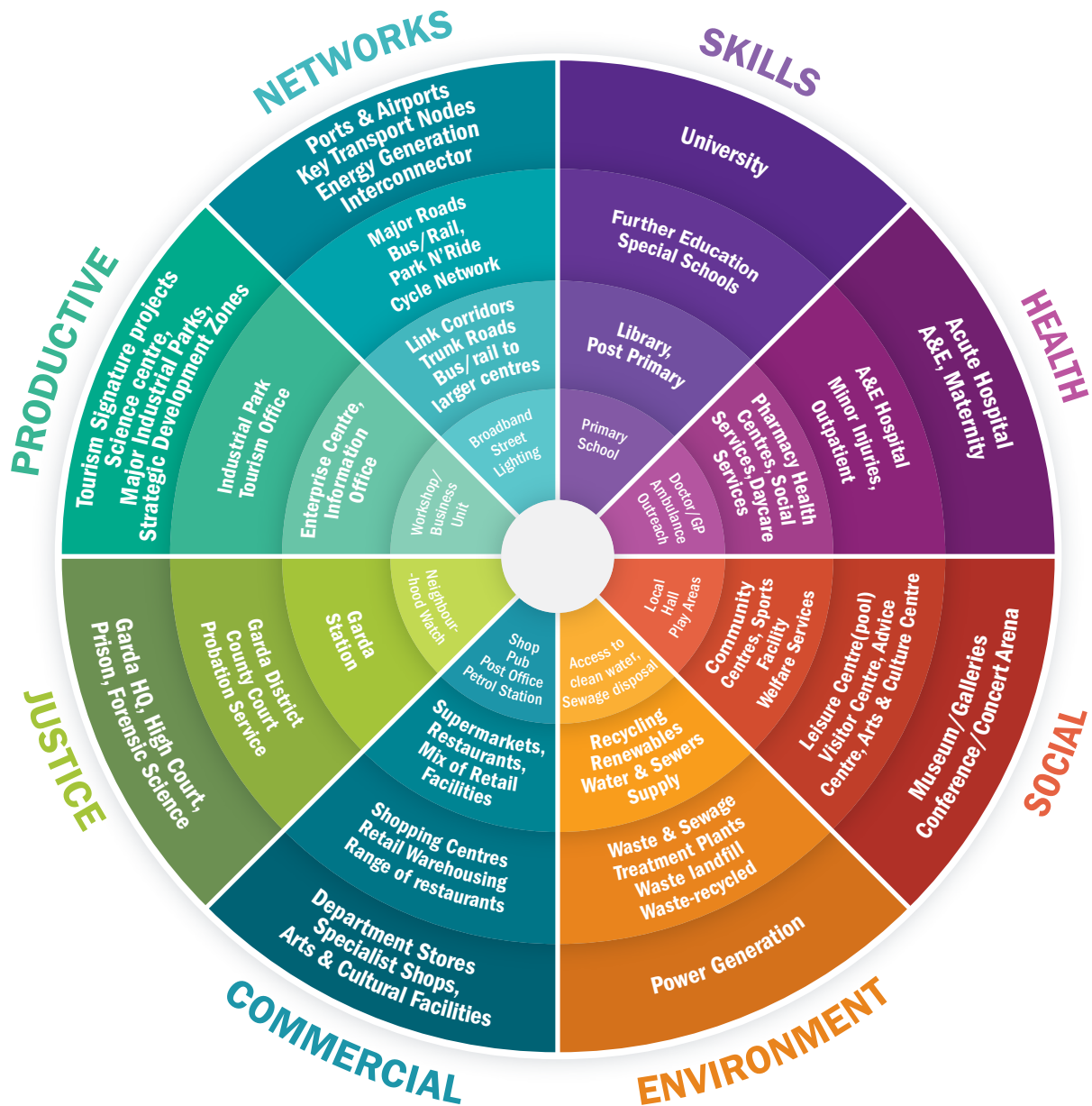
### National Policy Objective 25

**Facilitate the promotion and creation of sustainable community development and support community organisations in their work to provide for a more sustainable future.**



**Enabling and fostering community leadership at a local level shall continue to be supported at Government level.**

# Hierarchy of Settlements and Related Infrastructure



Source: Derived from Strategic Investment Board Limited, 2008

## 5.3 | Healthy Communities

The healthcare environment is one of constant change and the pace of this change in Ireland is increasing all the time driven by a wide number of considerations, including demographics (both the number and profile of people), new models of care and clinical practices, latest healthcare technology developments and increasing patient expectations.

People in Ireland are living longer. This longer life expectancy is a welcome development, however, it also brings challenges as, while for many it implies living longer and continuing to enjoy good health, inevitably an ageing population brings with it a more complex set of clinical and social care needs, as does the impact of chronic disease.

There are currently over 2,500 public healthcare facilities across the country, including acute hospitals, residential care units, primary care centres and various local health facilities, which are used to provide health and social care services in areas as including mental health, disabilities, older people and the national ambulance service.

A large number of these facilities were developed or acquired in previous generations and the system has largely been built up to provide episodic treatment, often for discrete once-off needs. Today however, some three quarters of the health service activity relates to dealing with chronic disease, sometimes multiple chronic diseases, illnesses which of their nature are on-going and therefore require on-going care and substantial co-ordination.

To maintain health and wellbeing and build a better health service a change is needed to some of the operating assumptions on which health policy and the health services were traditionally based. Integrated care is a response to the changed circumstances where healthcare is delivered at the lowest level of complexity, through a health service that is well organised and managed to enable comprehensive care pathways that patients can easily access and service providers can easily deliver.

In this approach it is recognised that the best health outcomes can be achieved by reorienting the model of care towards primary and community care where the majority of people's health needs can be met locally. High quality acute care will always be an important component of integrated healthcare so that emergency and more complex cases are treated safely in the appropriate acute hospital setting supported by the relevant specialist clinical expertise.

Our health and our environment are inextricably linked. Specific health risks influenced by our physical surroundings and their relative quality include heart disease, respiratory disease, mental ill-health, obesity and injuries. Decisions made regarding land use and the built environment including transportation affect these health risks in a variety of ways including through influencing air and water quality, traffic safety, opportunities for physical activity and social interactions as well as access to workplace, education, healthcare and other facilities and services such as food and alcohol outlets.



**National Policy Objective 26**

**Support the objectives of public health policy including Healthy Ireland and the National Physical Activity Plan, through integrating such policies, where appropriate and at the applicable scale, with planning policy.**

Air and water are two of the principal requirements to support life and therefore the quality of each has a strong determining influence on our health. Pollution of either air or water can and does pose a serious threat to health and where our citizens' health may be already compromised; further damage can result from unsafe drinking water or poor air quality.

**It follows that the provision of safe public drinking water and adequate waste water infrastructure as well as reducing polluting emissions are key priority areas that need to be continually managed to ensure healthier outcomes for citizens.**

**National Policy Objective 27**

**Manage the efficient use of water and wastewater resources in a sustainable way that delivers an adequate supply of safe public drinking water to citizens, supports economic growth and preserves our environment.**

The changing nature of society has resulted in greater car dependence and reduced levels of physical activity being undertaken by people over time. Physical design affects people's behaviour at every scale including buildings, communities, villages, towns, cities and regions. The places in which we live, work, and play can affect both our physical and mental well-being.

Communities that are designed in a way that supports physical activity e.g. generous sized footpaths, safe cycle lanes, safe attractive stairways and accessible recreation areas, all encourage residents to make healthy choices and live healthier lives. Countries with extensive cycle infrastructure report higher levels of cycling and lower rates of obesity. Healthy places in turn create economic value by attracting appealing to a skilled workforce and innovative companies.

**National Policy Objective 28**

**Ensure the integration of safe and convenient alternatives to the car into the design of our communities, by integrating physical activity facilities for all ages, particularly prioritising walking and cycling accessibility to both existing and proposed future development, in all settlements.**

Communities that are designed in a way that supports physical activity e.g. generous sized footpaths, safe cycle lanes, safe attractive stairways and accessible recreation areas, all encourage residents to make healthy choices and live healthier lives.



## 5.4 | Age Friendly Communities

ESRI projections indicate that the numbers of people aged over 65 will more than double to almost 1.3 million people by 2040, comprising approximately 23% of the population. This compares to 13.5% in 2016. In addition, it is expected that the population aged over 85 will quadruple. As people get older they are likely to have increasingly complex healthcare needs, with a requirement for services and facilities to support provision of suitable and necessary care.

As more people live longer lives, they will be more active, better educated and actively seeking to be fully engaged with their lives and that of their families. People, as they age, want to stay healthy and independent, live in their own homes and communities and keep to a minimum their use of in-patient and out-patient hospital services.

Government policy is to support older people to live with dignity and independence in their own homes and communities for as long as possible. In providing a more seamless and appropriate continuum of housing choices with appropriate supports for older people and a built environment that is attractive, accessible and safe, older people will be supported and motivated to enjoy more active, healthy and connected lives and to age confidently and comfortably in their community.

This further reinforces the need for well-designed lifetime adaptable infill and brownfield development close to existing services and facilities, supported by universal design and improved urban amenities, including public spaces and parks as well as direct and accessible walking routes. The provision of such accommodation can provide opportunities for older people to downsize from larger houses within their existing communities.

This may be integrated with more supportive communal and specialist care accommodation that will be required by some older people.

The 'Age Friendly Ireland' Initiative provides leadership and guidance in identifying the needs and opportunities of an ageing population and is embedded within the local government system, which, with support from Government, is best placed to respond to change at a local level:

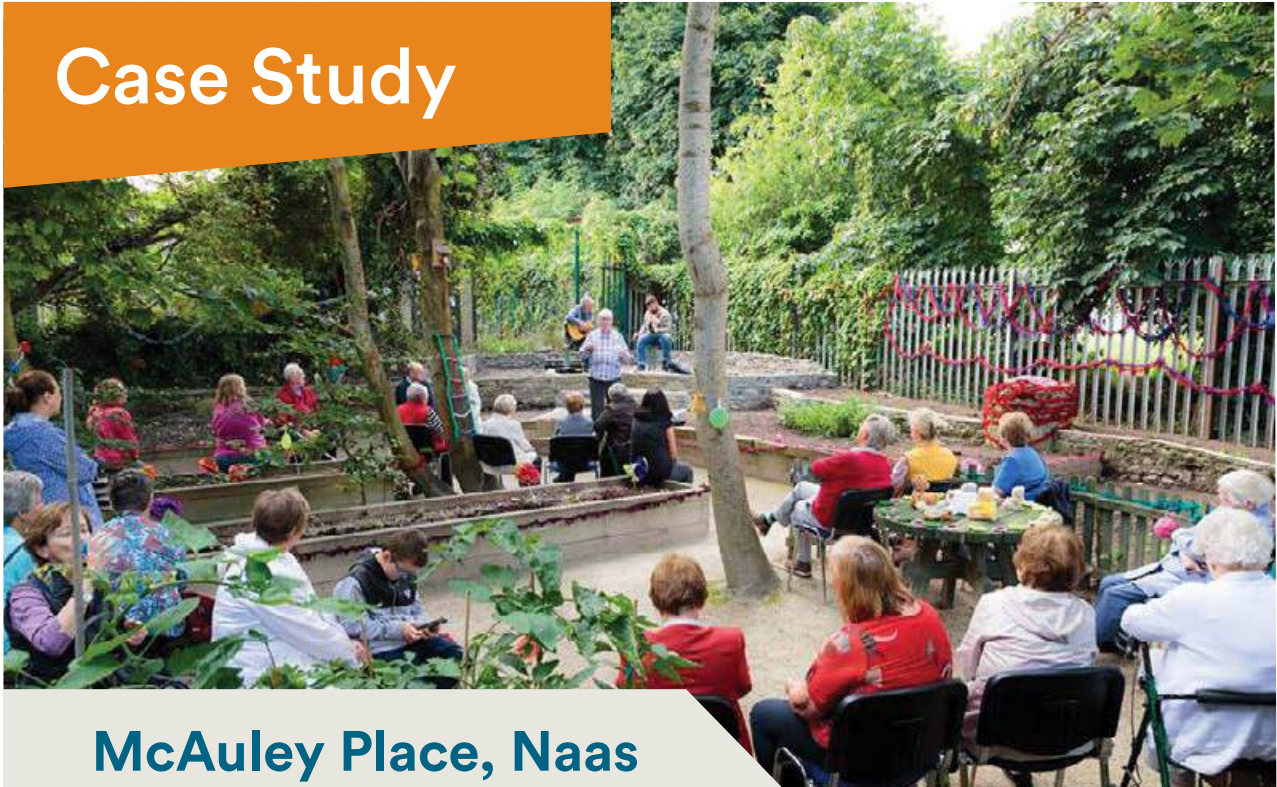
### National Policy Objective 29

**Local planning, housing, transport/accessibility and leisure policies will be developed with a focus on meeting the needs and opportunities of an ageing population along with the inclusion of specific projections supported by clear proposals in respect of ageing communities as part of the core strategy of city and county development plans.**



People, as they age, want to stay healthy and independent, living in their own homes and communities

# Case Study



## McAuley Place, Naas

**McAuley Place is a diverse and vibrant example of an alternative to institutional residential care for older people.**

Located in the former Convent of Mercy in the centre of Naas, County Kildare, McAuley Place was established in 2000 as a community response to the need for independent living for older people. Comprising apartments, tea rooms, Arts and Culture Centre and a Community Centre, McAuley Place offers on-site intergenerational facilities to enable community engagement for residents and locals alike.

From the very early design stage, the development of McAuley Place incorporated the United Nations Principles for Older Persons, aiming to 'maintain the optimum level of well-being'. It was designed to the highest standards to ensure that there would be no sense of institution at McAuley Place and that people would want to move there. Informal support from long-established friends and neighbours is provided to the residents, who are from the local community.

The development places huge emphasis on opportunities for lifelong learning and the arts, ensuring social inclusion for tenants and for the wider community. Local artists can exhibit their work in the lobby, while the Arts and Culture centre is used by the community for music, dance, film and other activities. The Community Centre hosts a wide range of classes, courses, and events, and the building includes a sound-proof music room.





## 5.5 | Diverse and Inclusive Ireland

In moving towards a more diverse society over the last half century, Ireland's population is more varied than ever before comprising a range of ethnicities and nationalities. Coupled with changing societal values that embrace inclusivity for civil marriage rights and family composition, Ireland's progressive efforts and actions to grant equality to all citizens as part of a fair and just society is striking.

However, providing access of opportunity to citizens of Ireland is not a finite exercise particularly where distinct and tailored solutions are required to continually address the needs of our citizens, particularly those who remain vulnerable or marginalised.

Planning affords an opportunity to facilitate and deliver a more socially inclusive society through better integration and greater accessibility at all stages of the life cycle. Housing, education and transport are three key areas where social inclusion can be better achieved. For example, through better universal design of buildings to deliver greater accessibility for all, or co-location of community uses to ensure communities are active during the day and into the evening.

Ireland 2040 supports continued development towards achieving a more progressive and inclusive society that supports our citizens' basic human rights and assists in helping people to gain access to a better quality of life.

### People with Disabilities

There were approximately 650,000 people with a disability in Ireland in 2016, comprising 13.5% of the population. A significant proportion of the population will experience disability at some stage in their lives and as the population ages.

Many planning-related issues relevant to disabled people are similar to those relating to older people, including the need to facilitate independent living, access and mobility in relation to buildings and the environment and full integration with society generally. As many disabled people are of working age, access and proximity to employment are also important.

### The Travelling Community

Travellers are recognised as an ethnic minority. It is estimated that there are approximately 30,000 Irish people who identify themselves as travellers, which is less than 1% of the population. Whilst not all traveller lifestyles are the same, some travellers have particular housing needs, related to economic activity and kinship. There is also a requirement to accommodate nomadism, for at least part of the year in some cases.

There is a need for local authorities working with the travelling community, to continue to address the specific needs of travellers, ensuring that targeted provision is achieved in line with those needs and that this is also incorporated into housing and traveller accommodation strategies, development plans and local area plans.

### National Policy Objective 30

**Plan for a more diverse and socially inclusive society that targets equality of opportunity and a better quality of life to all citizens, through improved integration and greater accessibility in the delivery of sustainable communities and the provision of associated services.**

### Gaeltacht Areas

Gaeilge, the Irish language, is the first official language of Ireland with a rich cultural history and has been afforded significant constitutional and legislative protection by the Irish state since its foundation. **Once widely spoken throughout the island of Ireland, 2% of Ireland's population live in Gaeltacht areas (Census 2016).** The existence of areas where Irish lives as a community language is an important cornerstone in the building of a bilingual society in Ireland, and it provides an environment where the language can evolve naturally in a modern setting.

### National Policy Objective 31

**Facilitate fostering and protecting the Irish language, particularly within Gaeltacht regions.**



## Children and Young People

ESRI projections indicate that the numbers of people aged 15 or under will decline slightly, by around 10%, by 2040, to comprise approximately 17% of the increased population. This compares to 22% of the population in 2016, meaning that the average age of people in Ireland as a whole will increase, but the overall number of young people will not decrease significantly.

The number of people aged 15 or under will continue to increase until the early 2020's and decline only slowly thereafter. This means that the continued provision and enhancement of facilities and amenities for children and young people, such as childcare, schools, playgrounds, parks and sports grounds remains necessary and will need to be maintained at similar levels for the foreseeable future thereafter.

It also means that if a significant proportion of future population growth occurs within the boundary of existing settlements as targeted, it will be possible to maximise the use of existing facilities near where children and young people live.



It will continue to be a requirement that proposals for residential development make provision for children's play in accordance with local development plan policies.

According to the UNHCR children's health, educational advancement and overall well-being are deeply influenced by the quality of housing children live in. Housing is addressed further below.

**When combined with the older population, the dependency ratio (those aged under 16 and those aged over 65) is projected to increase to 65% by 2040, up from 53% in 2016.**

In making high quality places, the NPF seeks to support national policy and objectives for children and young people including 'Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures' though integrating such policies, where appropriate and at the applicable scale, with planning policy.

**The continued provision and enhancement of facilities and amenities for children and young people, such as childcare, schools, playgrounds, parks and sports grounds remains necessary and will need to be maintained at similar levels for the foreseeable future thereafter.**

## 5.6 | Education and Life Long Learning

**Education has been critical to Ireland’s transformation over recent decades. Education, training and life-long learning are key enablers, around which personal fulfilment, a fair society and a successful nation revolve. All are central to sustaining economic success and building strong communities.**

In knowledge-based economies, education underpins growth as it is the main driver of technological innovation and productivity. Accessing a high standard of education is a priority now and in the future and has a major impact on people’s quality of life. A lack of skills and competencies limits access to good jobs and economic prosperity, increases the risk of social exclusion and poverty, and may hinder a full participation in civic and political affairs.

Education has a significant presence in almost every settlement in the country. The provision of early childhood care and education (ECCE) settings, schools, colleges and universities are critical to future growth and development of Ireland. Investment in childcare (including school-age childcare) and in ECCE is critical both as an educational support for children, and as a prerequisite of job creation and labour market participation.

The schools system is experiencing significant pressures in catering for additional student numbers in certain parts of the country where a high level of population growth has occurred, which is projected to continue until at least 2025. Equally, the viability of some schools has been questioned in other parts, as population decline has occurred.

The further education and training sectors have been reformed and consolidated to offer a broad range of flexible high-quality programmes to meet the needs of learners to enable them to develop skills leading to awards of levels 1 to 6 on the National Framework of Qualifications to progress to employment and/or higher education. Further education and training offers learners the opportunity to up-skill, re-skill and acquire new skills to support career transition and progression.

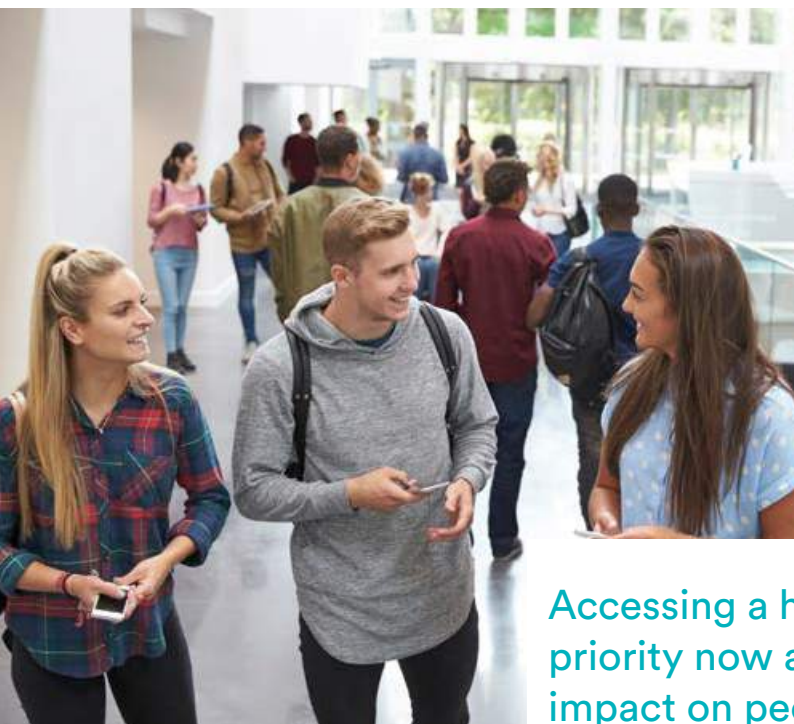
In the third level sector, the development of Technological Universities has the potential to deliver greater opportunity to students in the regions served, to staff working in the institutions, and to the broader local economy and society. By creating institutions of scale and strength, multi-campus technological universities will bring greater social and economic benefits to their regions through a strengthened role in research and innovation and the delivery of a broad range of high quality education and training in each of their campuses.

**Strategic planning of and investment in the provision of education and training are central to reinforcing the delivery of sustainable communities, promoting inclusion and offering choice and accessibility to a high standard of education and employment.** This means that Ireland 2040 will seek to:

### National Policy Objective 32

**Prioritise the alignment of targeted and planned population and employment growth with investment in:**

- The provision of early childhood care and education (ECCE) facilities and new and refurbished schools on well-located sites within or close to existing built-up areas, that meet the diverse needs of local populations.
- The expansion and consolidation of third level facilities at locations where this will contribute to regional development.
- Programmes for life-long learning, especially in areas of higher education and further education and training where skills gaps are identified.



**Accessing a high standard of education is a priority now and in the future and has a major impact on people’s quality of life.**

## 5.7 | Housing

Homes are both the places where we live and the foundation stone from which wider communities and their quality of lives are created. There is a projected total requirement to accommodate 550,000 additional households to 2040.

### National Policy Objective 33

Target the delivery of 550,000 additional households up to 2040 in accordance with the policy objectives of Ireland 2040.

The long term vision for Ireland's housing future aims to balance the provision of good quality housing that meets the needs of a diverse population, in a way that makes our cities, towns, villages and rural areas good places to live now and in the future.

### PRIORITIES AND PRINCIPLES

Nationally, the high level policy priorities in the housing sector to 2040 are as follows:

- Location of Homes - Addressing the long term spatial distribution of housing.
- Building Resilience - Reuse, adaptability and accessibility in our housing stock ensuring integration to deliver vibrant sustainable communities.
- Need and Demand Profile - Charting national housing pressures to 2040.
- Reconciling Future Housing Requirements Effectively - Establishment of a comprehensive evidence base to support and inform housing policies and implementation measures.

### NATIONAL CORE PRINCIPLES ARE SET OUT TO GUIDE THE DELIVERY OF FUTURE HOUSING, AT EVERY LEVEL OF GOVERNANCE:

- Ensure a high standard quality of life offer to future residents as well as environmentally and socially sustainable housing and place-making through integrated planning and consistently excellent design.
- Allow for choice in housing location, type, tenure and accommodation in responding to need.
- The location of new housing provision is to be prioritised in existing settlements as a means to maximising access a better quality of life for people through accessing services, ensuring a more efficient use of land and allowing for greater integration with existing infrastructure.
- The scale and nature of future housing provision is to be tailored to the size and type of settlement where it is planned to be located.
- The integration of housing strategies is required to be undertaken where settlements straddle boundaries (county and/or regional).
- Utilising existing housing stock as a means to meeting future demand.

**The long term vision for Ireland's housing future** aims to balance the provision of good quality housing that meets the needs of a diverse population, in a way that makes our cities, towns, villages and rural areas good places to live now and in the future.

## Location of Homes

Housing location policies will prioritise locations where people have the best opportunities to access a high standard quality of life.

Housing in Ireland has often taken on a dispersed and fragmented character which has led to people living further away from their jobs and often being at a sizeable remove from important services such as education and healthcare. Development sprawl at every settlement level in Ireland has manifested as scattered development, ‘leapfrogging’, continuous suburbs and linear patterns of strip or ribbon development.

This type of development has made it costly and often unfeasible for the state to align and invest in infrastructure delivery where it cannot be justified and compounds issues such as congestion and pollution, increased commuting times and has had an overall negative impact on people’s health and well-being.

### National Policy Objective 34

**Prioritise the provision of new homes at sustainable locations and at an appropriate scale relative to location.**

## Ireland’s future homes will:



- **be located in places that can support sustainable development** - places which support growth, innovation and the efficient provision of infrastructure, are accessible to a range of local services, can encourage the use of public transport, walking and cycling, and help tackle climate change.
- **be delivered in our cities and larger towns** (where large scale housing demand exists), where homes and the appropriate supporting services can be delivered more efficiently and effectively at less cost to the State in the long-run.
- **still be located in our villages, towns and open countryside but at the appropriate scale** that does not detract from the capacity of our larger towns and cities to deliver homes more sustainably.



## Building Resilience in Housing

The Census indicates that there were 183,312 dwellings nationwide (excluding holiday homes and derelict houses) recorded as vacant in 2016, representing just over 9% of total national housing stock. Measures to address vacancy and bring habitable properties back into use will make a significant contribution to addressing overall housing need, particularly in our cities and large towns, where the demand is greatest.

Building stock that is in a state of obsolescence has the potential to offer transformative options for housing and as part of the original fabric of some settlements can serve to further preserve the heritage and cultural identity of a place. **Reuse of existing building stock must be accounted for and considered as part of any evidence basis for housing policy formation and at a local level, this will form part of development plan core strategies.**

### National Policy Objective 35

**Implement measures to reduce vacancy and to progressively target the reduction of the national housing vacancy rate to 5% by 2040 (currently 9.15%).**

Any new home will have to accommodate changing needs over its lifetime. A liveable and adaptable housing development or house is one that is able to respond effectively to these needs without requiring costly and energy intensive alterations. Our population is changing rapidly, with average households becoming both smaller in size and older as an increasing number of people living independently in their later years. The balance between home and work life also places altering demands on our houses as many people choose to work from home.

### National Policy Objective 36

**Support the provision of lifetime adaptable homes that can accommodate the changing needs of a household over time.**

Historically, low density housing development has been a feature of Ireland's housing landscape in cities, towns and the open countryside. To avoid urban sprawl and the pressure that it puts on both the environment and infrastructure demands, increased residential densities are required in our urban areas.

### Well designed and located higher density housing will assist:

- **Fast-growing urban areas** to achieve much needed scale;
- **Medium-sized urban areas** to find a route to quality in a new competitive framework;
- **All urban areas** to increase vibrancy and vitality;
- **Increased efficiency and sustainability** in the use of energy and public infrastructure

### National Policy Objective 37

**Increase residential density in settlements, through a range of measures including reductions in vacancy, re-use of existing buildings, infill development schemes, area or site-based regeneration and increased building heights.**



## Need and Demand Profile

Between 2017 and 2040, approximately 25,000 new homes will need to be provided in Ireland every year to meet people's needs for well-located and affordable housing, with increasing demand to cater for one and two person households. Within this figure, there is a wide range of differing housing needs that will be required to be met. On this basis and in applying the principle of reusing existing stock, the breakdown in required units to 2040 is illustrated in Table 5.1 below.

**Table 5.1 | Breakdown in Projected Housing Requirements to 2040**

Overall number of units projected to 2040 <sup>20</sup>	Dublin City and Suburbs (Net Figure)	Other Cities and Suburbs	Other Large Urban Areas (>10,000)	Small Towns (<10,000) and Rural Areas
550,000	143,000	132,000	99,000	176,000

### Social Housing

The provision by Government of housing supports for those unable to provide for accommodation from within their own resources is a key social policy and it affects a significant proportion of the population. Actions taken by public bodies in relation to social housing can have a considerable impact on the overall housing market and, equally, fiscal or regulatory measures in relation to the housing market can have an effect on the availability of social housing.

Adding more properties to areas that are already dense with social housing, or to areas that are unable to support further population, can create serious problems within communities. Diverse neighbourhoods with a balance of public and private housing create the healthiest communities.

### Changing Family Size

Household size continues to decline. Currently, 7 out of 10 households in the state consist of three people or less. Household sizes in urban areas tend to be smaller than in the suburbs or rural parts of the country. In Dublin city, one, two and three person households comprise 80 percent of all households<sup>21</sup>. Yet, the stock of housing in Ireland is largely comprised of detached and semi-detached houses with three to four bedrooms.

### Students

Demand for student accommodation exacerbates the demand pressures on the available supply of rental accommodation in urban areas in particular. In the years ahead, student accommodation pressures are anticipated to increase<sup>22</sup>. The location of purpose built student accommodation needs to be as proximate as possible to the centre of education, as well as being connected to accessible infrastructure such as walking, cycling and public transport. The national student accommodation strategy supports these objectives.



## Reconciling Future Housing Requirements Effectively

The housing sector is a more complex one since the first local authority Housing Strategies were prepared in the years following the enactment of the Planning and Development Act 2000. In line with commitments under the Government's Action Programme on Housing and Homelessness – Rebuilding Ireland – and building on new initiatives such as the Housing Agency National Statement on Housing Need and Demand, enhanced methodologies and statutory guidelines will be put in place on taking into consideration the varying housing needs that are required to be met, including the housing needs of older people, people with disabilities, the travelling community, social housing generally, families of varying sizes and income levels and students.

Managing the future location, typology and tenure of housing requires a significant robust evidence base and approach to implementation. **More and better housing data at national, regional, county and settlement level is needed to understand housing conditions and the housing needs of people in Ireland, in order to develop informed, cost-effective, policies, programs and funding initiatives.**

Projecting housing requirements more accurately into the future at a Regional (RSES) and local authority development plan level (Core Strategies) will be enabled by the provision of new statutory guidelines to ensure consistency of approach, implementation and monitoring.

### There are a number of key evidence inputs which inform and drive the HNDA model, as follows:

# 1

#### Demographic trends, affordability trends and wider economic trends.

The use of economic forecasting or econometric work underpins this section. Data requirements include household composition/projections, house prices, rents, number of first time buyers (FTBs) and loan to value (LTV) mortgage rates, economic activity and employment rates etc.



# 2

#### Housing Stock Profile Pressures (and existing need) and management issues.

Undertaking a detailed profile of local housing stock and stock pressures, including local authority housing, to identify the main pressures relating to supply and demand, ineffective stock and overall condition as well as priorities for future stock management.

Information is required on dwelling size, dwelling type, dwelling condition and stock pressures (occupancy/under occupancy stock turnover etc).



# 3

#### Estimating Future Housing Need and Demand.

This is broken down into: owner occupation, private sector, below market rent<sup>23</sup> and social rent. Detailed guidance is provided on how to undertake this work, including how and on what evidence to base assumptions on wealth affordability, both in terms of home ownership and the different rental categories.



### National Policy Objective 38

New statutory guidelines, supported by wider methodologies and data sources, will be put in place under Section 28 of the Planning Act to improve the evidence base, effectiveness and consistency of the planning process for housing provision at regional, metropolitan and local authority levels. This will be supported by the provision of standardised requirements by regulation for the recording of planning and housing data by the local authorities in order to provide a consistent and robust evidence base for housing policy formulation.

### National Policy Objective 39

A 'Housing Need Demand Assessment' (HNDA) is to be undertaken for each Local Authority Area in order to correlate and accurately align future housing requirements. The HNDA is:

- to be undertaken by Local Authorities with coordination assistance to be provided by the Regional Assemblies, particularly where inter-county and inter-regional settlement interactions are to be planned for and managed;
- to primarily inform housing policies, housing strategies and associated land use zoning policies as well as assisting in determining where new policy areas or investment programmes are to be developed, and
- to be supported, through the establishment of a coordination and monitoring unit to assist Local Authorities and Regional Assemblies in the development of the HDNA (DHPCLG, Regional Assemblies and the Local Authorities). This will involve developing and coordinating a centralised spatial database for Local Authority Housing data that supports the HNDA being undertaken by Local Authorities.





# 6 Realising our Island and Marine Potential

## 6.1 | Integrated Land and Maritime Planning

As an island nation with sovereign rights over one of the largest marine areas in Europe with a sea: land ratio of 10:1, Ireland's economy, culture and society is inextricably linked to the sea. Our marine environment is a national asset that yields multiple commercial and non-commercial benefits in terms, for example, of seafood, tourism, recreation, renewable energy, cultural heritage, and biodiversity.

Sustainable utilisation of Ireland's marine resources, particularly in the nearshore, is dependent to a significant degree on how we manage our resources on land, and how successfully we can align long-term spatial planning for our terrestrial and marine areas through Ireland 2040 and the Maritime Spatial Plan. Ireland 2040, a principally land-based plan, will evolve in parallel with the EU Directive requirement to develop a national maritime spatial plan by 2021. In developing a Marine Spatial Plan, Ireland will be cognisant of obligations under existing EU law governing activities in our Marine Spatial Plan.

While the extent of the maritime spatial area does not directly apply to those areas covered under the provisions of the Planning and Development Acts, there are many shared aims and overlapping areas of co-ordination and activity. The land use planning and maritime planning processes will work alongside each other (see figure 6.1 on page 92) working also with other national administrations, such as Northern Ireland, regarding trans-boundary issues to ensure a consistent and effective policy and regulatory approach to marine and terrestrial planning. This is essential to harnessing the potential of our oceans and seas to support local communities, sustainably manage our marine resources and provide long-term investment predictability for development and activities in our maritime area.



As an island nation, Ireland's economy is inextricably linked to the sea. Complex relationships between land and maritime activity require coordination of many different sectors and actors. Some sectors and activities can have a presence both on land and in the marine environment that require facilities and infrastructure which traverse both areas. For instance, sea-fishing boats need harbour infrastructure to land their catch, while in some locations waste from land can impede or prevent the ability to realise marine-dependent economic opportunities such as shellfish aquaculture that might otherwise occur, if a healthy marine ecosystem with suitable water quality were present. Similarly, to develop Ireland's vast and sustainable offshore wind and tidal energy resources, land-based planning for the infrastructure needed to capture, store and transmit such energy to consumers will be required.

**Ireland 2040, a principally land-based plan, will evolve in parallel with the EU Directive requirement to develop a national maritime spatial plan by 2021.**

6.1 | Common Aims and Areas of Overlap of Terrestrial and Maritime Planning

TERRESTRIAL PLANNING

MARITIME PLANNING

**Common Aims**

- National Planning Framework and Maritime Spatial Plan.
- Spatial expression of national policy; national guidance and priorities.
- Strategic decision making and coherent development consent framework.
- Sustainable, forward looking, long term use and management of areas.
- Co-ordination of Departments and Sectoral issues in a plan-led manner.
- Consistency between maritime and terrestrial planning in areas of common interest.
- Coherent transboundary planning.

**Areas of Overlap for Co-ordination**

<b>Sectoral</b>	Community Development & Public Consultation; Economic Development; Transport – Ports and Harbours; Energy – Electricity & Renewable Energy; Fishing; Aquaculture & Mariculture; Heritage and Culture; Tourism & Leisure; Flood Protection; Extraction; Enabling Infrastructure; Health & Safety; Communications
<b>Environment</b>	Sustainable Use of Resources; Climate Change Adaptation; Water Quality; Coastal Erosion & Accretion; Protected Sites and Environmentally Sensitive Areas; Flooding; Biodiversity; Landscape and Seascape
<b>Governance, Regulation &amp; Licensing</b>	Consent process for onshore and offshore development and activities; Responsibilities for managing activities in areas of land-sea interaction
<b>Data</b>	Research including spatial data management; cumulative effects; evidence base; socio-economic profiles

Figure 6.2 | Relationships between Planning Policy and Maritime Policy

Planning Policy	Hierarchy	Maritime Policy
<b>National</b>		
National Planning Framework	High Level Aims and Objectives National-Focus	National Maritime Spatial Plan
<b>Regional</b>		
Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies	Policies of Regional Significance and Focus for co-operation and implementation	Regional Based Approach to Maritime Spatial Planning
<b>Local</b>		
City/Council Development Plan and Local Area Plan	Detailed objectives and locally devised approaches	Localised land-sea interaction e.g. coastal management planning, ICZM

**National Policy Objective 40**

Regional and local development plans will take account of and integrate relevant maritime spatial planning issues

**6.2 | Maritime Economy**

The maritime economy is a key enabler of effective regional development, especially in remote coastal communities. Established ocean and coastal sectors include seafood related enterprise such as commercial fishing and aquaculture, products of marine biotechnology and bio discovery, marine tourism, energy exploration and production, maritime transport, shipbuilding and ship leasing.

Harnessing Our Ocean Wealth (HOOW, 2012) sets out the Government's vision, high-level goals and integrated actions to realise our marine potential and includes an integrated enterprise strategy to open up specific emerging market opportunities prepared across development agencies (e.g. offshore renewables, offshore services, ICT and sensors, biotechnology, aquaculture). In line with HOOW goals, such as doubling the GDP from the marine by 2030, we need to consider where these opportunities exist for growth.

Global and national demand for seafood, for example, will continue to grow over the coming decades. Yet with capture fisheries already managed for maximum sustainable yield under the Common Fisheries Policy, satisfying growing

demand is projected to come almost entirely from aquaculture. Ireland's existing aquaculture industry already derives market benefit from the broad recognition around the globe of our relatively pristine waters and the organic and sustainable practices employed by many growers, but the industry remains small relative to its potential.

Spatial planning can enable increased production of aquaculture sustainably such that habitat, water quality, and other marine resources are not compromised. Ireland's inshore (small-scale coastal fisheries) also produce high quality, high value seafood products and are a vital component of the local economies of their coastal communities.

**Ireland already has a number of strategically important Fishery Harbour Centres, as well as essential facilities at a range of smaller ports and harbours around the coastline.** Integrated national planning for the land-based infrastructure required for such aquaculture facilities to operate and succeed is needed to address seafood demand sustainably, while contributing to the achievement of HOOW goals.

**National Policy Objective 41**

Support the growth and development of the maritime economy, particularly in remote coastal communities and islands



Ireland benefits from naturally occurring deep water at ports in the south and south-west, which are capable of receiving the largest ocean going vessels and offer the potential for industrial development that depends currently, or will depend in the future, on deep water berths.

## 6.3 | Ports

**Ireland's port and shipping services play an important role as enablers of economic growth. Irish ports are critical infrastructure for international trade, with over 90% of our international trade moving by sea. Ports also serve as logistics and distribution hubs.**

Port infrastructure involves development on both land and in the marine area (foreshore) and often in proximity to areas of environmental importance and protection and diverse eco-systems. National Ports Policy seeks to facilitate a competitive and effective market for maritime transport services and identifies a tiered approach to port significance.

As an island nation, we depend on the quality and efficiency of our ports to a far greater extent than many of our trading partners. To maintain economic growth, we must be capable of delivering additional port capacity in a timely and predictable manner.

National Ports Policy requires Tier 1 and Tier 2 ports, or ports of national and regional significance, to lead the response in meeting Ireland's future port capacity requirements. There are major redevelopment projects taking place at our Tier 1 ports (Dublin, Cork and Shannon-Foynes) at present. These developments will result in a greater concentration of traffic through these ports, with implications for shore-based and marine-based infrastructure.

The long-term international trend in ports and shipping is toward increased consolidation of resources in order to achieve optimum efficiencies of scale. This has knock-on effects in terms of vessel size, the depths of water required at ports and the type and scale of port hinterland transport connections.

Tier 1 ports are located within close proximity to Dublin, Cork and Limerick respectively and the role of these ports will be considered and addressed in tandem with long-term infrastructural requirements as part of the relevant Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) and any concurrent or subsequent metropolitan area or city/county development plan processes.

Strategic plans for the Tier 1 ports and city growth strategies should align and be consistent with the broader aims and policies for the effective growth and sustainable development of the city regions.

National Ports Policy also recognises the Tier 2 ports of Belview and Europort because of the potential to grow traffic through these ports, their proximity to key trading partners and their strategic transport roles beyond their immediate environs.



## 6.4 Coastal Environment and Planning For Climate Change

Forty per cent of Ireland's population lives within 5km of the coast. Our coast is a place of contrast made up of urban and rural and island coastal communities including all of our major cities and most densely populated parts of the country.

Our coastal areas are also a key driver for Ireland's tourism sector, which the successful branding of the 'Wild Atlantic Way' and internationally recognised location shoots for the film industry have highlighted in recent years. Ireland's coastline is a remarkable but fragile resource that needs to be managed carefully to sustain its character and attributes in physical, environmental quality and biodiversity terms.

**As a result of climate change, sea levels and erosion and accretion patterns are key issues for planning and flood risk assessment, especially in managing the ongoing development of our cities and towns. In the long term, to 2040 and beyond, climate change adaptation responses may entail the consideration of barrage or similar technologies to prevent inundation of more low-lying city centre areas during extreme weather events.**

Ireland benefits from naturally occurring deep water at ports in the south and south-west, which are capable of receiving the largest ocean going vessels and offer the potential for industrial development that depends currently, or will depend in the future, on deep water berths.

Other ports of regional significance and smaller harbours have an important role for employment and services and many are located in peripheral communities. Such ports have important roles to play in marine sectors that are dependent of local natural resources, such as fisheries, marine renewable energy, and marine tourism.

### National Policy Objective 42

Ensure that the strategic development requirements of Tier 1 and Tier 2 Ports are considered and addressed as part of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) and that any concurrent or subsequent metropolitan area or city/county development plans and strategic plans for the Tier 1 and Tier 2 ports are aligned to ensure the effective growth and sustainable development of the city regions.

### National Policy Objective 43a

Ensure that Ireland's coastal resource is managed to sustain its physical character and environmental quality.

### National Policy Objective 43b

In line with the collective aims of national policy regarding climate adaptation, to address the effects of sea level changes and coastal flooding and erosion and to support the implementation of adaptation responses in vulnerable areas.



# 40%



**of Ireland's population lives within 5km of the coast.**

Over the period to 2040, it is likely that technological advances will accelerate the commercial application, development and deployment of a marine renewable energy sector including offshore floating wind farms, tidal turbine devices and wave energy converters.

## 6.5 | Offshore Renewable Energy

Ireland's territorial waters area is 10 times that of its land area and offers major opportunities in the blue economy and offshore renewable energy which would support our transition to a zero carbon economy.

Under the Offshore Renewable Energy Development Plan (OREDPlan), Ireland has set ambitious plans for renewable energy and offshore renewable energy resource development. Over the period to 2040, it is likely that technological advances will accelerate the commercial application, development and deployment of a marine renewable energy sector including offshore floating wind farms, tidal turbine devices and wave energy converters.

The development of offshore renewable energy is critically dependent on the development of enabling infrastructure including grid facilities to bring the energy ashore and connect to major sources of energy demand.

Given potential for renewable generation in the western part of the island, this may necessitate reinforcing the existing transmission network in the west to facilitate the transfer of renewable energy generated to the major demand centres in the east.

With regard to wave energy, the Government has set targets for 500MW of energy generation from wave power to be installed within Irish waters by 2020 and a number of test sites for wave energy are being developed off the west coast.

### National Policy Objective 44

Support, within the context of the Offshore Renewable Energy Development Plan (OREDPlan)<sup>26</sup> and its successors, the progressive development of Ireland's offshore renewable energy potential, including domestic and international grid connectivity enhancements.



# Case Study



## Shannon Estuary: Strategic Integrated Framework Plan

**The Shannon Estuary forms the largest estuarine complex in Ireland, covering an area of 500km<sup>2</sup> of navigable water and extending for 100km from Limerick City to Loop Head in County Clare.**

As a deepwater port, the Shannon Estuary routinely caters for ships up to 200,000 deadweight tonnes. It serves a number of large industrial bulk installations and Shannon Airport has a dedicated fuel terminal. The port of Foynes is located in the southern part of the Estuary, with Limerick city located further to the east.

The Strategic Integrated Framework Plan for the Shannon Estuary was published in November 2013. As an inter-jurisdictional land and marine based plan, it was the outcome of a successful multi-agency collaboration that included Limerick City and County Council, Clare County Council, Kerry County Council, Shannon Development and the Shannon Foynes Port Company as well as other key stakeholders with an interest in the Estuary.





# 7 Working with Our Neighbours

## 7.1 | Ireland and the European Union

The preparation and implementation of Ireland 2040 must take account of and address Ireland's changing position in a European and global context. The world is getting more diverse and more interconnected. Ireland is one of the most globalised economies in the world, with established trading and investment in and from European, US, and Asian markets. This has resulted in a transformation and rapid transition of our economy in terms of jobs, skills, innovation.

For example, Ireland has reaped major benefits from its membership of the European Union. Ireland has also capitalised upon its EU membership as a major investment destination into the EU from both US and wider global contexts because of our strategic position, economic agility, improving infrastructure and an English-speaking business-friendly environment.

Being an open economy means that Ireland is dependent on trade with our major trading partners and exports are a key component of economic growth. We will need to continue to improve the resilience of the economy to deal with potential changes in the global financial environment and interest rates, greater competition for foreign investment, and changes in the operations of multinationals. To do this, we will need to position Ireland to be flexible to change and external influences.

As one of the most open and trade-based economies in the world, how we interact with our nearest neighbours in Northern Ireland, England, Scotland and Wales, our wider European and global context will have a major bearing on our shared prospects for progression and development.



The UK referendum vote on Brexit has commenced a process that has the potential to significantly change the nature of our relationships with our nearest neighbours. While the precise nature of these impacts will not be known until after Ireland 2040 is finalised, future iterations of the National Planning Framework will have the opportunity to take on board their practical ramifications.

In the meantime, a withdrawal of the UK from the European Union would leave Ireland as the principal English-speaking country within the EU<sup>24</sup> with both significant opportunities and challenges to address in a number of areas. These include the potential for increased economic investment into Ireland while at the same time continuing to harness the potential of the island economy and maintaining the trade, infrastructural and many other linkages with our nearest neighbours.

It is likely that, in the event of a withdrawal of the UK from the EU, in transport and energy infrastructure terms for example, Ireland's direct linkages with other EU countries by both air and sea and subsea energy connections may become significantly more important, given their advantages in terms of resilience and ease of movement across internal borders. As a result, ports and airports facilitating faster transit times between Ireland and the EU will need to be effectively connected into our land-based transport systems.

As more becomes known about the overall shape and implications of the Brexit process, implementation of Ireland 2040 will be adjusted to take account, leading ultimately to informing the next review of the National Planning Framework.

## 7.2 | Ireland and Northern Ireland

Around 6.6 million people live on the island of Ireland, 4.75 million people in Ireland (72% of total) and 1.85 million people in Northern Ireland (28% of total) (Census of population 2016/NISRA). By 2040, the island we share will be home to almost 8 million people.

Notwithstanding the context of Brexit, planning for nearly 1.4 million extra people on this island, their homes and places of work and the infrastructure required to support this growth, while at the same time ensuring good outcomes in terms of physical and community development and environmental quality, poses several shared challenges, including:

- **Managing our growth strategically for long-term benefit in terms of economic and social development and environmental quality.**
- **Working together for mutual advantage in areas such as economic development and promotion, co-ordination of social and physical infrastructure provision and environmental management.**

Implementation of Ireland 2040 in tandem with the *Regional Development Strategy (RDS)* for Northern Ireland will assist in addressing these challenges. This collaborative work will be supported by the *Framework for Co-operation on Spatial Strategies* between Ireland and Northern Ireland, which will be updated and reviewed as required.

There are three key areas and for practical co-operation between relevant Departments and local authorities in Ireland and Northern Ireland that will both support, and be supported by, the implementation of Ireland 2040:

### 1 Working Together for Economic Advantage

- (i) Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor
- (ii) North-West Strategic Growth Partnership
- (iii) Cross Border Local Initiatives

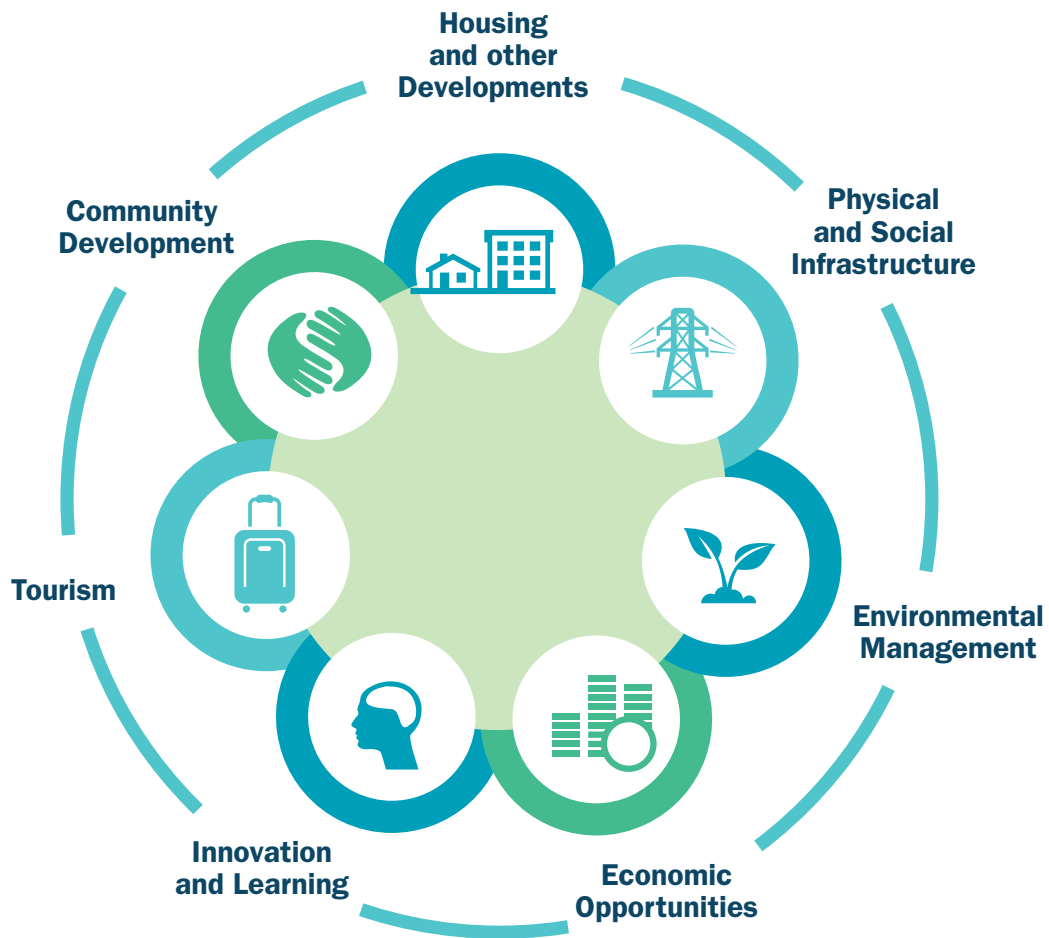
### 2 Co-ordination of Investment in Infrastructure

- (i) Mobility and accessibility
- (ii) Energy
- (iii) Communications
- (iv) Tourism

### 3 Managing our Shared Environment Responsibly



Figure 7.1 | Shared Planning Challenges in Ireland and Northern Ireland

**National Policy Objective 45**

Work with the relevant Departments in Northern Ireland for mutual advantage in areas such as spatial planning, economic development and promotion, co-ordination of social and physical infrastructure provision and environmental protection and management.

## 7.3 | Working Together for Economic Advantage

### Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor

The Dublin to Belfast Corridor is the largest economic agglomeration on the island of Ireland, with the cities and towns along the corridor home to a population of around 2 million people, exclusive of wider catchments. The corridor links the two largest cities on the island by high capacity road and national rail links and plays a critical role in supporting economic growth and competitiveness.

The corridor is also the national entry point to the island through its airports and ports. Three major airports - Dublin Airport, Belfast International Airport and Belfast City Airport - collectively manage over 35 million passengers each year and this is set to continue to rise.

As part of Ireland 2040, the Government wishes to capitalise upon and further support and promote the inherent economic potential of the corridor, building upon existing strengths. To do this, there will be a focus on developing the corridor as a distinct spatial area with international visibility by:

- **Effectively planning and developing existing large designated centres along the main economic corridor.**
- **Improving and protecting key transport corridors** such as the TEN-T network and strategic function of the Dublin to Belfast road network from unnecessary development and sprawl.
- **Protecting distinctive landscapes and rural activities** which act as key green spaces and food producing areas between built-up areas.

#### National Policy Objective 46

**In co-operation with relevant Departments in Northern Ireland, to further support and promote the sustainable economic potential of the Dublin-Belfast Corridor and enhance its international visibility.**

### North-West Strategic Growth Partnership

The development of the North-West City region focused on Derry City is essential to achieving the potential of the North West and maximising its contribution to regional and all-island economic growth. With Government support in Ireland and Northern Ireland, new cross-border collaborative arrangements have recently been developed to provide strategic leadership in the development of the region. The North West Partnership, working with both Governments, local communities and the private sector, promotes regional co-operation on planning, environmental protection and management, public services and infrastructural investment including:

- Building up the critical mass of key urban centres in the wider region.
- Promotion of trade and tourism, innovation, human capital, life-long learning and business development.
- Improving inter-urban transport infrastructure.
- Better co-ordination of public services such as health and education facilities.

#### National Policy Objective 47

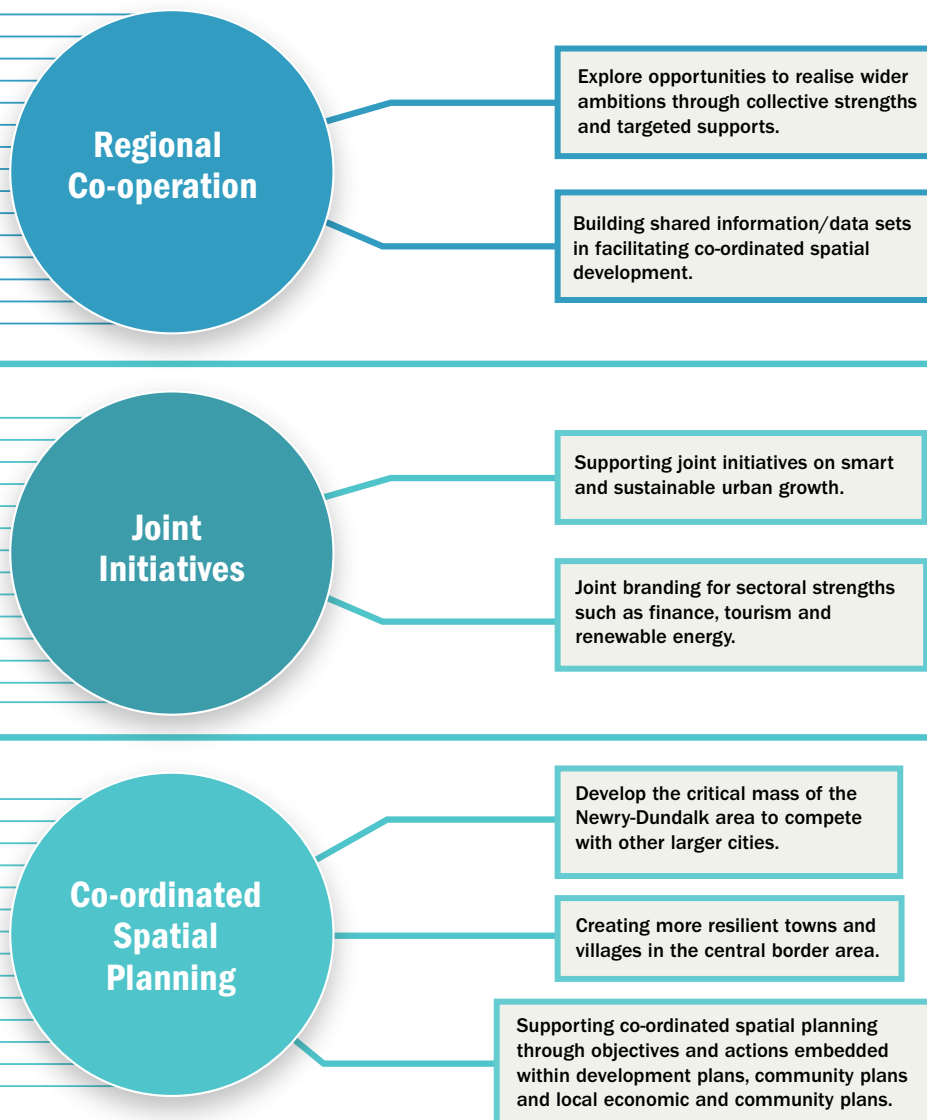
**Promote the development of the North West City Region as interlinked areas of strategic importance in the North-West of Ireland, through collaborative structures and a joined-up approach to spatial planning.**

## Cross Border Local Initiatives

Reconfiguration of local authority and council structures on both sides of the border presents opportunities for collaboration, in particular for the sub-regional areas on the Dublin-Belfast corridor and more central border areas. Building up the economic, infrastructural and developmental ties in these and similar areas will be supported through local leadership and co-operation arrangements such as the co-ordination of statutory planning functions and corresponding infrastructural investment. Three key areas of focus include:

- Regional co-operation arrangements.
- Joint initiatives.
- Co-ordinated spatial planning.

Figure 7.2 | Areas for Cross-Border Local Co-ordination



## 7.4 | Co-ordination of Investment in Infrastructure

Both Ireland 2040 and the Regional Development Strategy for Northern Ireland provide a basis for long-term co-ordination on infrastructure development including transport, energy and communications and social and community infrastructure.

### Transport

While there has been significant investment in transport over the past 20 years, the island's growing population together with the continued growth in tourism numbers and freight traffic will place further demands on transportation infrastructure. Over the life of Ireland 2040, increased transport connectivity, including bus and rail services, between the main cities, to the north-west region and along the border region allied to development and promotion of cross border blueways, greenways and walking trails will harness the potential of the island.

#### National Policy Objective 48

**Support enhanced public transport connectivity between large urban areas in Ireland and Northern Ireland.**

### Energy

Collaboration in the energy sector, driven by the single electricity market and combined with the development of interconnection (the East West Interconnector (EWIC) in Ireland and the Moyle Interconnector in Northern Ireland), has reduced energy prices, enhanced energy systems resilience and diversification away from a near total reliance on fossil fuels and supported the all-island economy.

The need for a new interconnector between the electricity grids of Northern Ireland and Ireland has been identified by the Irish Government and Northern Ireland Executive as a project of common interest, with the southern section of the project already granted permission. Ireland is also working with other countries such as France to explore potential for electricity interconnection and will continue to support relationships with our European neighbours to enhance our international connectivity.

In order to support Ireland 2040, additional electrical grid strengthening will be required for parts of the border, subject to the necessary planning consents, to enhance energy security through further reductions in dependence on fossil fuels moving towards wind, gas with carbon capture and sequestration, biomass and other renewable sources.

In the meantime, the South-North gas pipeline completed in 2006, enhanced East-West interconnection between the island, wider UK and European gas networks and ongoing work to harmonise gas transmission arrangements on the island support our efforts in meeting EU requirements for gas market integration.

Future enhancement of energy security and resilience to support a population of 8 million people will also be supported through progression of further north-south interconnection of electricity grids.

#### National Policy Objective 49

**Strengthen all-island energy infrastructure and interconnection capacity to enhance security of electricity supply.**



## Communications

In the information age, telecommunications networks play a crucial role in enabling social and economic activity. Modern lifestyles also demand services irrespective of location, but their roll-out can pose challenges in peripheral areas.

The development of Project Kelvin, an extensive submarine and terrestrial cable deployment that directly connects Northern Ireland to North America, provides critical telecommunications infrastructure through towns and cities throughout the border region.

Further action to strengthen communications links in an island and border context will support Ireland 2040, such as further enhancement of links between the North American continent and the island of Ireland and Europe, direct access to international backbone data systems and the roll-out of appropriate public policy and investment interventions such as the National Broadband Plan.

### National Policy Objective 50

**Develop a stable, innovative and secure digital communications and services infrastructure on an island basis.**

## Tourism

Both Ireland and Northern Ireland are attracting the same top four markets from visitors outside of domestic markets, with Fáilte Ireland, Tourism Northern Ireland and Tourism Ireland seeking to capture greater international interest by promoting strategic attractions of scale and signature tourist attractions such as the Wild Atlantic Way and the Titanic Quarter in Belfast.

Further opportunities to maximise market exposure exist through co-operation and themed 'branding bundles' including linking the Causeway Coast with the Wild Atlantic Way and the lakelands border region with Ireland's Ancient East brand development of our blueways, such as the Shannon-Erne Blueway and greenways such as the Ulster Canal Greenway also offer potential for an enhanced tourism offering throughout the border areas.

There are currently no dedicated long-distance cycling/walking routes which link Northern Ireland and Ireland, though INTERREG V EU funding is assisting in their development. There is the potential for existing way-marked trails within border areas in Ireland, to link into existing established trails within Northern Ireland.

Natural assets and landscapes such as the uplands (and lakelands) amenities stretching along the border, literary trails and the historic towns' networks are also important not just for tourism but our shared built and natural heritage. The enhancement and enjoyment of these places and features are important for regional and local development in the border areas.

### National Policy Objective 51

**Support the coordination and promotion of all-island tourism initiatives through continued cooperation between the relevant tourism agencies and Tourism Ireland.**





## Case Study

IRELAND NORTHWEST

*gateway  
to growth*

### North West Strategic Growth Partnership

**The North West Strategic Growth Partnership, which held its inaugural meeting in December 2016, is the first of its kind on the island of Ireland and represents a new approach to joined-up government that has the potential to bring about real and positive change for the region.**

Jointly led by Donegal County Council and Derry City and Strabane District Council, the Partnership has been endorsed by both governments through the North South Ministerial Council and is made up of senior government officials from all Government departments in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, working together to collectively resource the region's key priorities for growth and development with a commitment to building a more resilient economy in the North West City Region.

## 7.5 | Managing our Shared Environment Responsibly

National and other administrative boundaries do not reflect the trans-boundary nature of the environment and its stewardship. Catchment-based strategies require management by both jurisdictions and a number of jointly funded North-South Implementation Bodies have roles and responsibilities in these areas in addition to co-ordination through the North South Ministerial Council.

As an example, the EU Water Framework Directive (WFD) requires Member States to coordinate their efforts in relation to international river basin districts. On the island of Ireland:

- Substantial areas lie within cross-border river basins.
- Some waters in each jurisdiction flow into or through the other jurisdiction.
- The rivers and lakes of the island of Ireland are designated as being within a single eco-region (eco-region 17) requiring a high degree of coordination between the authorities in both jurisdictions, to ensure consistent management of the entire aquatic environment.
- All coastal and transitional waters surrounding the island of Ireland are also included in one eco-region (eco-region 1) and their management must be closely coordinated.
- There are also 37 cross-border groundwater bodies which are shared between the two jurisdictions and require coordinated management.

In supporting environmental responsibilities under Ireland 2040, shared action on our shared environment will ensure coordination between the two jurisdictions by:

- Aligning planning policies and river basin catchment management plans for whole river systems under the Water Framework Directive.
- Co-ordination in landscape character assessment including management and marketing of world heritage sites and candidate world heritage sites.
- Protection and enhancement of nationally important habitats including adjoining and cross-border protected sites.
- Co-ordination of relevant planning policies affecting shared coastal waters and seas.

#### National Policy Objective 52

Ensuring effective management of shared landscapes, heritage, water catchments, habitats, species and trans-boundary issues in relation to environmental policy.

## 7.6 | Ireland 2040 and England, Scotland and Wales

Further to the European Spatial Development Perspective in 1999, Ireland was one of the first countries in Europe to publish a national scale spatial plan through the National Spatial Strategy in 2002. Since then, this approach to national planning has become the norm across Europe.

Each of our closest neighbours in the UK have spatial plans for their constituent administrative areas or are in the process of producing new plans including the Regional Development Strategy in Northern Ireland, Planning Frameworks in Scotland, Wales and England and island plans in the Channel Islands (Crown Dependency Governments).

In the face of multiple global challenges, cross-border working is of importance to greater territorial cohesion and highlighting opportunities for future growth and development. At a national level the Irish Government is committed to working with our neighbours on national issues of common interest.

From a national planning perspective, the work of the British-Irish Council<sup>25</sup> provides an important forum through which practical co-operation and information sharing amongst the respective Governments and devolved administrations is helping to co-ordinate development in areas such as spatial planning, infrastructure connectivity, transboundary environmental issues and renewable energy.

#### National Policy Objective 53

In co-operation with the United Kingdom Government and devolved Governments of Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, Ireland will support mutually beneficial development in the areas of spatial and infrastructure planning and other related areas.

In the face of multiple global challenges, cross-border working is of importance to greater territorial cohesion and highlighting opportunities for future growth and development.



# 8 Realising Our Sustainable Future

## 8.1 | Environmental and Sustainability Goals

Ireland's environment and its diverse landscapes form part of our 'green' persona and we have much to be proud of. In particular, we generally have good air quality and we have many rivers and lakes with good quality water.

While the overall quality of our environment is good, this masks some of the threats we now face. Some of the key national environmental challenges include the need to accelerate action on climate change, health risks to drinking water, treating urban waste water, protecting important and vulnerable habitats as well as diminishing wild countryside and dealing with air quality problems in urban areas. It is also important to make space for nature into the future as our population increases.

The manner in which we plan is important for the sustainability of our environment. Our planning system has influence across a wide range of sectors, both directly and indirectly and interacts with many common issues related to effective environmental management including water services, landscape, flood risk planning, protection of designated sites and species, coastal and marine management, climate mitigation and adaptation and land use change.

In line with the EU vision of living well within our limits and in charting environmental policy at European and National level<sup>26</sup>, as part of Ireland 2040, Government will help address our environmental challenges through the following overarching aims:

## Resource Efficiency and Transition to a Low Carbon Economy



### Sustainable Land Management and Resource Efficiency

Adopting the principles of the circular economy to enable more sustainable planning and land use management of our natural resources and assets.



### Low Carbon Economy

Our need to accelerate action on climate change.



### Renewable Energy

Our transition to a low carbon energy future.

## Protecting, Conserving and Enhancing Our Natural Capital



### Sustainable Water Management

Our consideration of flood risk in planning and development management and treating urban waste water.



### Green Infrastructure Planning

Protecting and valuing our important and vulnerable habitats, landscapes, natural heritage and green spaces.

## Creating a Clean Environment for a Healthy Society



### Water Quality

Recognising the links and addressing on-going challenges between development activity, water quality and our health.



### Promoting Cleaner Air

Addressing air quality problems in urban and rural areas through better planning and design.



### Noise Management

Incorporating consistent measures to avoid, mitigate and minimise or promote the pro-active management of noise.

## National Policy Objective 54

That the planning system is responsive to our national environmental challenges and ensures that development occurs within environmental limits having regard to the requirements of all relevant environmental legislation and promotes the sustainable management of our natural capital.

## 8.2 | Resource Efficiency and Transition to a Low Carbon Economy

### Sustainable Land Management and Resource Efficiency

Ireland has experienced a relatively high rate of land use change since the early 1990s. Recent population growth has led to an increase in the extent of dispersed residential and commercial development as well as new infrastructure, which have resulted in pressure on agricultural land, designated nature conservation areas and water quality.

In catering for an additional one million people and a move towards alternative energy sources, increased demand for land is likely to include suitable locations for bioenergy supply, food production, forestry and other land services alongside the need to build more houses, schools and other facilities. **Competition for land resources needs careful management and the nature and rate of land use change indicates where future environmental pressures are likely to arise.**

Ireland is advancing its development as a circular economy and bio economy where the value of all products, materials and resources is maintained for as long as possible and waste is significantly reduced or even eliminated. Further developing the circular economy will require greater efficiency with raw materials, energy, water, space and food by constantly reusing natural resources wherever possible and where smartly-designed products based on alternative plastic feedstock and recyclable materials will form the basis of smart material cycles, in order to create less waste and reduce resource consumption. A recycling rate of 65% has been proposed by the European Commission for 2030 for the Circular Economy Package.

Bio-based material, such as wood, crops or fibres, can be used for a wide range of products and energy uses. Apart from providing an alternative

to fossil-based products, bio-based materials are also renewable, biodegradable and compostable. At the same time, using biological resources requires attention to their lifecycle, environmental impacts and sustainable sourcing. The Circular Economy Package - indicates that in a circular economy, a cascading use of renewable resources should be encouraged together with its innovative potential for new materials, chemicals and processes.

This circular economy approach is also applicable to land use management. Ireland 2040, under chapter three, sets out recycling rates for the reuse of brownfield land by requiring 40% of new housing to be built within infill and brownfield lands and encourages reuse of existing building stock

**The extent to which we prioritise brownfield over greenfield use, encourage the use and reuse of buildings in urban and rural areas and reduce sprawl will all help to increase the efficiency of land use and the pace of soil sealing i.e. the covering of the ground by an impermeable material which can result in soil degradation.** Other examples include co-location of uses and infrastructure such as schools and sports facilities and carpooling to reduce wasted capacity in commutes.

#### National Policy Objective 55

**Support the circular and bio economy through greater efficiency in renewable resources and land management and by reducing the rate of land use change from urban sprawl and new development.**



Ireland is advancing its development as a circular economy where the value of all products, materials and resources is maintained for as long as possible and waste is significantly reduced or even eliminated.

## Climate Action and Planning

The global climate is changing and the changes underway will have consequences for Ireland in the period to 2040 and beyond. It is necessary to address the long term causes of climate change through reducing our greenhouse gas emissions, while adapting to its effects over the short, medium and longer terms.

The Government is committed to a long term climate policy based on the adoption of a series of national plans over the period to 2050, informed by UN and EU policy. This is being progressed through the National Mitigation Plan and the National Climate Change Adaptation Framework, both of which will be updated and reviewed periodically.

In addition to legally binding targets agreed at EU level, it is a national objective for Ireland to transition to a competitive low carbon, economy by the year 2050. The National Policy Position<sup>27</sup> establishes the fundamental national objective of achieving transition to a competitive, low carbon, climate-resilient and environmentally sustainable economy by 2050, guided by a long-term vision based on:

- **an aggregate reduction in carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions of at least 80% (compared to 1990 levels) by 2050 across the electricity generation, built environment and transport sectors.**
- **in parallel, an approach to carbon neutrality in the agriculture and land-use sector, including forestry, which does not compromise capacity for sustainable food production.**

**If Ireland is to make up for lost ground in relation to carbon reduction targets and move towards the objective of a low carbon and climate resilient Ireland by 2050, it is necessary to make choices about how we balance growth with more sustainable approaches to development and to examine how planning policy can help shape national infrastructural decisions.**

Meeting our commitments will require investment and ambitious and effective action across all sectors as well as societal behavioural change.

As an island, it is in our interest to ensure we respond to climate change and its impacts such as sea level change, more frequent and sustained rainfall events and greater vulnerability of low-lying areas to flooding. Our most densely populated areas, including our cities, are potentially vulnerable if we do not take the appropriate steps in flood risk management. Climate change also has significant consequences for food production and biodiversity.

If Ireland is to make up for lost ground in relation to carbon reduction targets and move towards the objective of a low carbon and climate resilient Ireland by 2050, it is necessary to make choices about how we balance growth with more sustainable approaches to development and to examine how planning policy can help shape national infrastructural decisions. The planning process provides an established means through which to implement and integrate climate change objectives, including adaptation, at local level. Planning legislation also requires different levels of the planning process to address climate change.



## Under Ireland 2040, the Government will support:

- **Integrating climate considerations into statutory plans and guidelines** in order to reduce vulnerability to negative effects and avoid inappropriate forms of development in vulnerable areas.
- **More energy efficient development** through the location of housing and employment along public transport corridors, where people can choose to use less energy intensive public transport, rather than being dependent on the car.
- **The roll-out of renewables and protection and enhancement of carbon pools** such as forests, peatlands and permanent grasslands. It is necessary to ensure that climate change continues to be taken into account as a matter of course in planning-related decision making processes.
- The development of sustainable supply chains in the bioeconomy.
- **Grey adaptation** which typically involves technical or engineering-oriented responses to climatic impacts such as the construction of sea walls in response to a sea-level rise.
- **Green adaptation** which seeks to use ecological properties to enhance the resilience of human and natural systems in the face of climate change, such as creation of green spaces and parks in an effort to counteract the urban heat island effect.

### National Policy Objective 56

Reduce our carbon footprint by integrating climate action into the planning system in support of national targets for climate policy mitigation and adaptation objectives as well as targets for greenhouse gas emissions reductions.

## Energy Policy and Planning

Ireland's national energy policy is focused on three pillars: (1) sustainability, (2) security of supply and (3) competitiveness. The Government recognises that Ireland must reduce greenhouse gas emissions at 1990 levels from the energy sector by at least 80% by 2050, while at the same time ensuring security of supply of competitive energy sources to our citizens and businesses.

### Our transition to a low carbon energy future requires:



- A shift from predominantly fossil fuels to predominantly renewable energy sources.
- Increasing efficiency and upgrades to appliances, buildings and systems.
- Decisions around development and deployment of new technologies relating to areas such as wind, smartgrids, electric vehicles, buildings, ocean energy and bio energy.
- Legal and regulatory frameworks to meet demands and challenges in transitioning to a low carbon society.

Increases in population, economic growth, higher levels of food demand, transitioning to a more sustainable energy market and conservation goals will ultimately result in increased competition for suitable land to facilitate these accumulating pressures. Some parts of Ireland are more suitable than others for facilitating particular national sectoral aims by reason of physical factors, environmental sensitivities, land capacity and existing settlement patterns.

In the energy sector, transition to a low carbon economy from renewable sources of energy is an integral part of Ireland's climate change strategy and renewable energies are a means for reducing our reliance on fossil fuels. The forthcoming Renewable Electricity Policy and Development Framework will aim to identify strategic areas for the sustainable development of renewable electricity projects of scale, in a sustainable manner, compatible with environmental and cultural heritage, landscape and amenity considerations. The development of the Wind Energy Guidelines and the Renewable Electricity Plan (both of which are subject to SEA and AA) will also be prioritised to facilitate informed decision making in onshore renewable infrastructure.

#### National Policy Objective 57

**Promote renewable energy generation at appropriate locations within the built and natural environment to meet objectives towards a low carbon economy by 2050.**

**In the energy sector, transition to a low carbon economy from renewable sources of energy is an integral part of Ireland's climate change strategy and renewable energies are a means for reducing our reliance on fossil fuels.**



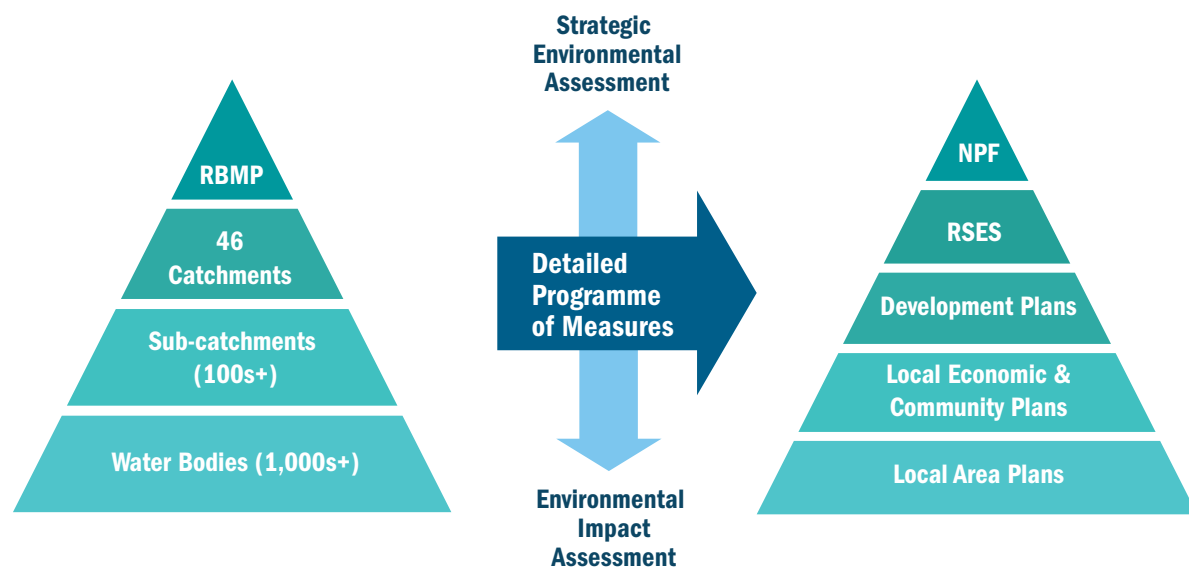
## 8.3 | Protecting Conserving and Enhancing our Natural Capital

### Water Resource Management and Flooding

Planning is critically important to the management of water resources. The planning system both directly and indirectly interacts with issues relevant to effective water management. These include water service provision, river basin management, landscape, flood risk planning, coastal and marine management and climate change adaptation. This underlines the central importance of the planning system to water quality management.

Statutory development plans must ensure the integration of sustainable water management considerations. Equally, the ambitions of Ireland 2040 must be reflected and supported in 'water relevant' plans, such as River Basin Management Plans (RBMPs) and clearly identify areas of mutual benefit where growth and water quality objectives can be mutually supported.

**Figure 8.1 | Hierarchical Structure of RBMP and Planning Policy**



Flooding is a cross-sectoral issue that can affect all aspects of life, and that can be influenced, positively or detrimentally, by actions in many other sectors. Of particular importance is the consideration of potential future flooding environments in the area of planning and development management, and the planning and design of infrastructure.

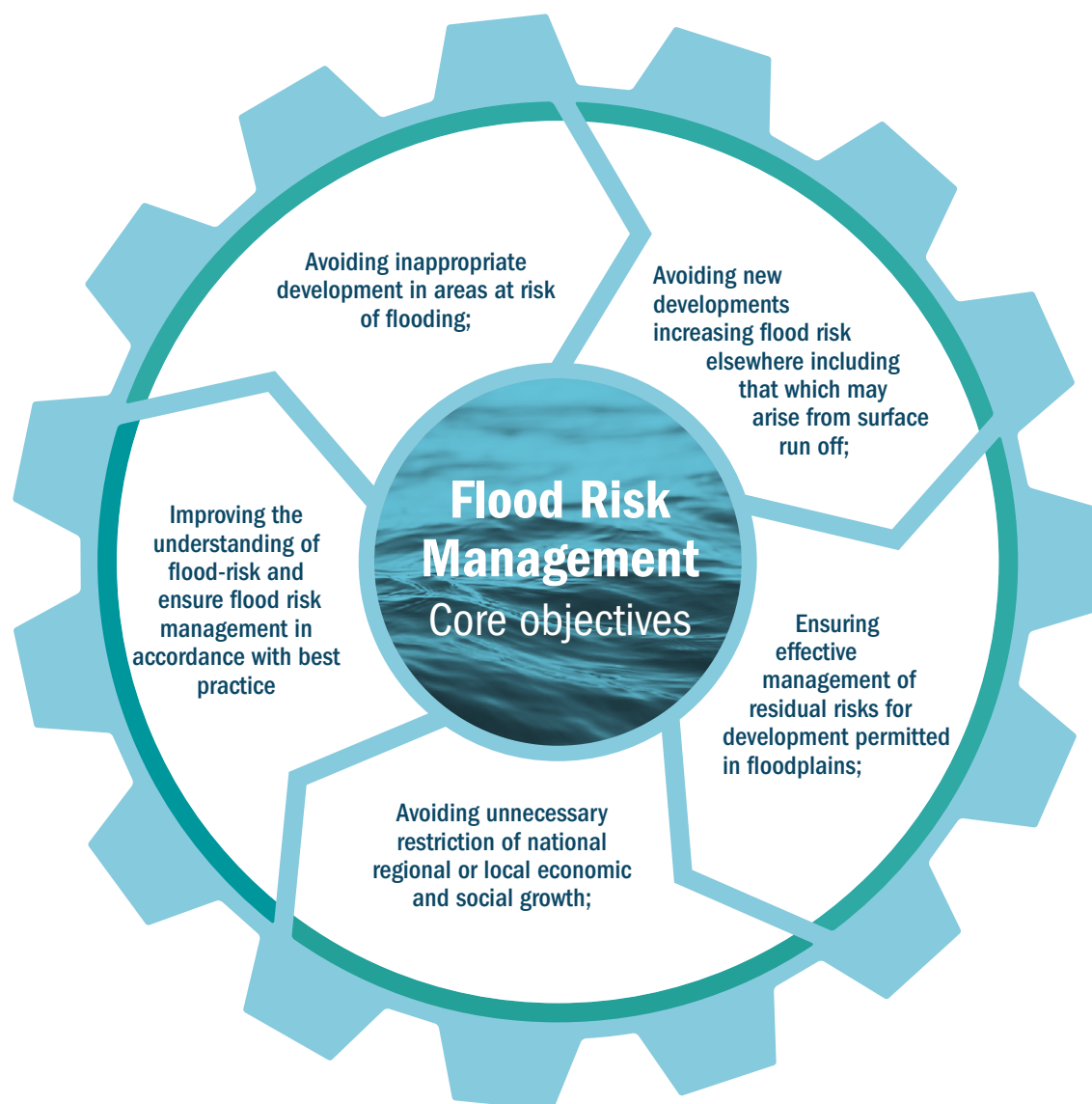
Urbanisation can increase both the rate and volume of runoff from rainfall events and therefore requires urban storm-water drainage systems to manage and reduce the risk from pluvial flood events and extreme rainfall events. Core objectives include<sup>28</sup> :

- **avoiding inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding.**
- **avoiding new developments increasing flood risk elsewhere including that which may arise from surface run off.**
- **ensuring effective management of residual risks for development permitted in floodplains.**

#### National Policy Objective 58

**Ensure flood risk management informs place making by avoiding inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding and integrate sustainable water management solutions (such as SUDS, non-porous surfacing and green roofs) to create safe places in accordance with the Planning System and Flood Risk Assessment Guidelines for Local Authorities.**

Figure 8.2 | Flood Risk Management Core Objectives



Source: The Planning System and Flood risk Management Planning Guidelines DEHLG 2009

# Case Study



## Tipperary Energy Agency

**Tipperary County Council has long recognised the importance of the low carbon energy transition, both to the quality of lives of citizens and the opportunities it brings in terms of rural economic growth and development.**

The partnership approach of Tipperary County Council, Tipperary Energy Agency, Limerick Institute of Technology (LIT), business and communities has resulted in a thriving and innovative energy sector in the County.

Some key achievements and initiatives include:

- The Council has met and exceeded national targets for energy efficiency in public buildings. Tipperary County Council is the owner of the largest solar installation in the country and has switched 90% of its heat use from fossil fuels to renewable combined heat and power.
- The Tipperary Energy Agency (TEA) is internationally recognised, and in particular, is leading research and delivering exemplar community initiatives such as 'Superhomes', 'Better Energy Communities', 'Insulate Tipp' etc.
- Tipperary is home to Cloughjordan eco-village and Templederry community owned wind farm.
- The Council, through a partnership approach with LIT, is committed to research and development to promote the low carbon economy.

## Green Infrastructure, Biodiversity, Natural Heritage and Landscape

### Green Infrastructure

Our environment is an asset that if planned for in the same way we plan for other forms of infrastructure, can provide long term benefits. Nature and green infrastructure provide a range of uses, goods and services and make the best use of land, help manage competing demands and can complement other sectors.

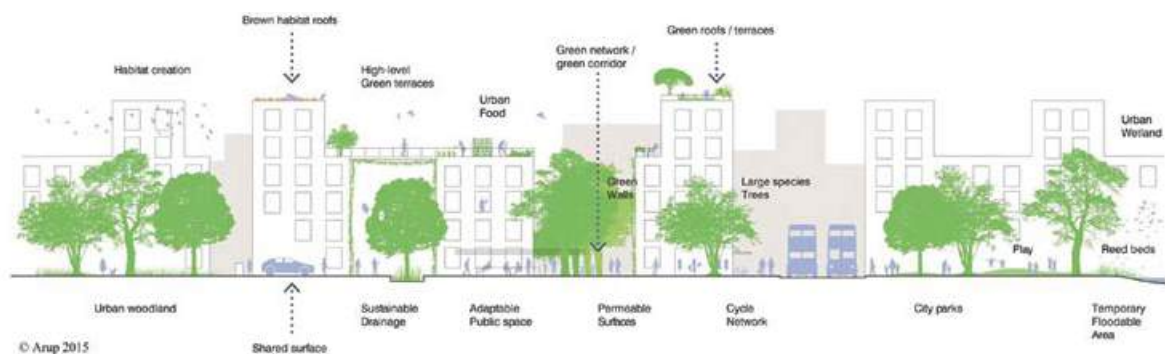
For example, an attractive environment is important for tourism and a vibrant, well planned urban area with good amenities will contribute to attracting the skilled employees and investment to underpin long-term development. Our natural assets are also important for carbon capture - important in meeting climate mitigation and adaptation goals and national biodiversity targets.



### As part of Ireland 2040, Government supports Green infrastructure (GI) planning to inform the preparation of regional and city and county development plans by:

- Assisting in accommodating growth and expansion while retaining the intrinsic value of natural places and natural assets.
- Providing increased certainty in planning by proactively working with and around relevant environmental issues.
- Encouraging more collaborative approaches to plan making by seeking to look at the interactions between future development requirements and the capacity of receiving areas.
- Ensuring that sufficient and well planned green spaces, commensurate in scale to the long term development requirements, are designated in statutory plans.

It is equally important that a holistic view is taken of how best we can make the most effective and sustainable use of our land and what package of measures are best suited. This includes the inter relationships between biodiversity, natural heritage, landscape and our green spaces.



Example of Green Infrastructure integrated into an urban landscape

## Biodiversity

- **Recognising the important role of planning to enhance biodiversity and ensure greater environmental coherence to the planning system.**

At a national level, certain habitats and species are legally protected by within the Natura 2000 network<sup>29</sup>, incorporating the terrestrial series of Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), with additional marine SACs and Special Protection Areas. The majority of our habitats that are listed under the Habitats Directive are considered to be of 'inadequate or bad conservation status', with less than 10% considered to be in a favourable state<sup>30</sup>. As a nation, we therefore need to do more.

The importance of our biodiversity is not restricted to legally protected areas and there are a range of measures in place to protect species and habitats in the wider countryside. In this regard, the Habitats Directive contains obligations to protect certain species wherever they occur, while the Birds Directive contains protections for all birds, and they may only be disturbed or controlled subject to licence or derogation, as appropriate.

The Environmental Impact Assessment Directive also requires that the direct and indirect significant effects of a project on biodiversity, with particular attention to species and habitats protected under the Birds and Habitats Directives are identified, described and assessed as part of the consent process. The diversity of our biological communities is also important for the quality of our water, soils and as a source of food. Land use change and pressures from urbanisation can have a direct and indirect impact on Ireland's habitats and species.

## Natural Heritage

- **Conserve and enhance the rich qualities of natural and cultural heritage of Ireland in a manner appropriate to their significance.**

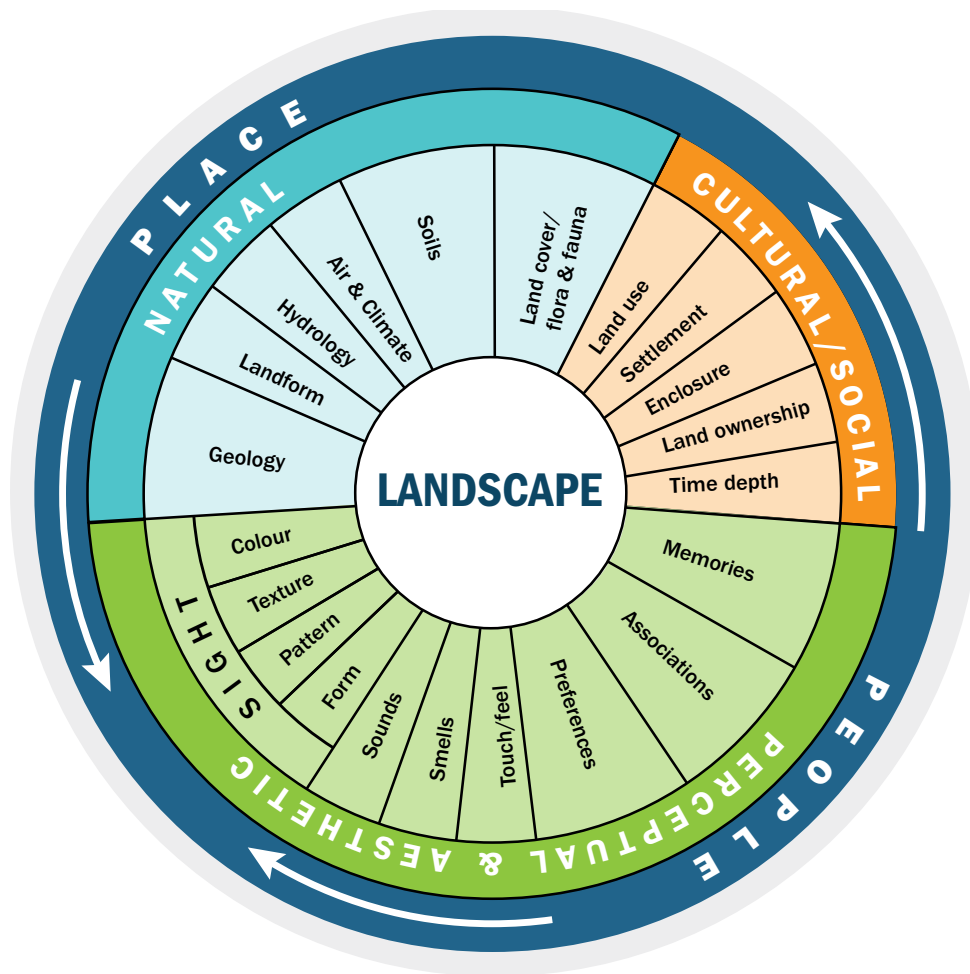
Ireland has an abundance of iconic natural heritage areas such as internationally recognised world heritage sites, turloughs and peatlands. There are many other nationally distinct areas, that are not only a key part of our cultural heritage but also important to our tourism industry and their contribution to 'liveability' and attractiveness of places for economic investment. Our national parks and nature reserves are also key natural assets that offer potential to further optimise the visitor experience of state owned lands through delivery of quality outdoor activity infrastructure and essential ancillary facilities.

## Landscape

- **Support a consistent approach to landscape character assessment.**

Ireland's landscape offers a wealth of natural and cultural assets which support our quality of life and our visitor economy. We have a duty to future generations to use these assets responsibly whilst making our existing infrastructure work harder to deliver more benefits. The protection, management and planning of the landscape is also interconnected with the National Landscape Strategy (NLS) for Ireland, and a national landscape character assessment, which needs to provide consistency in how we characterise and connect with the landscape.



Figure 8.3 | The Landscape Wheel<sup>51</sup>

## Green Belts and Open Spaces

- **Plan for green space to prevent coalescence of settlements and to enhance quality of life.**

As our towns and cities continue to grow, it is essential to consider the green spaces not only as a means which to enhance and nurture the landscape and the wildlife within, but also as a means of preventing coalescence of settlements, providing a link between urban and rural and for leisure and recreation purposes. Well-maintained green spaces can also influence wellbeing, perceptions of personal safety and soften the visual impact of development.

There are also economic effects e.g. urban housing developments that are adjacent to natural amenities such as woodland, parks, waterways and the coastline are more attractive to buyers and this is often reflected in market prices.

### National Policy Objective 59

**Promote the integration of Green Infrastructure (GI) and ecosystem services including landscape, heritage and biodiversity in the preparation of statutory land use plans.**

## 8.4 | Creating a Cleaner Environment for a Healthy Society

### Water Quality

Ireland's rich water resources are of strategic importance to the Irish economy and our growing society. Clean water is essential for creating a healthy society. Our rivers and lakes are the primary source for our drinking water with groundwater sources also important. It is therefore in our interest to make sure we have a resilient water supply for the existing population and the additional 1 million anticipated by 2040. Our water bodies are also a resource for our leisure activities and the tourism sector. However the quality of our bathing waters is varied.

According to the EPA, urban waste water is one of the principal pressures on water quality in Ireland and the treatment and disposal of waste water in an environmentally sound manner is important for human health. This means we need to ensure adequate treatment and capacity, storm water overflows operating correctly and avoiding direct discharges of untreated waste water. **Urban waste water treatment plant compliance and remedial actions are therefore a key short term priority. Longer term, capacity issues will need to be resolved to meet our growing demands up to 2040 and beyond.** At the household level, we also need to be more vigilant to the risks of contamination to private wells as a source of drinking water and failures in domestic waste water treatment systems.

#### National Policy Objective 60

**Sustainably manage the quality of our water resources to support and deliver the growth strategy for Ireland 2040 and a healthy society.**

### Air Quality

Ireland benefits from prevailing weather patterns which typically bring relatively clean south-westerly Atlantic air over the country. Under certain conditions, typical weather patterns can be disrupted, and pollutant emissions build up in the air. These conditions can occur at any time of the year, but the impact on air quality can be particularly severe during winter, when the combination of cold still weather, increased emissions associated with a higher heating demand, particularly from solid fuels, can lead to high concentrations of pollutants with a consequent increased risk to human health.

Pollutants can be produced depending on how we travel, consume goods and heat our homes. In our largest urban areas, air pollution levels can be higher, primarily as a result of exhaust emissions from vehicles and from residential heating emissions. In some rural areas, particularly where there is no access to the gas grid, air quality can be poor during the winter period due to a reliance on solid fuels such as coal, peat and wood for home heating. Port-related activities can also have localised impacts on air quality.

All of this has negative implications for the health of our citizens and the attractiveness of cities and towns. It is anticipated that measures which seek a reduction in fossil fuel based energy sources are likely to further reduce air pollution. As part of Ireland 2040 Our Plan, we will assist in reducing our emissions and help prevent people being exposed to unacceptable levels of pollution by supporting public transport, walking and cycling as more favourable modes of transport to the private car and the promotion of energy efficient buildings and homes and innovative design solutions. The careful planning of green spaces and vegetation is also important for air quality in urban areas. Trees naturally remove pollutants from the air, and help reduce urban heat islands.

#### National Policy Objective 61

**Improve air quality and help prevent people being exposed to unacceptable levels of pollution in our urban and rural areas through integrated land use and spatial planning that supports public transport, walking and cycling as more favourable modes of transport to the private car, the promotion of energy efficient buildings and homes, green infrastructure planning and innovative design solutions.**

**As part of Ireland 2040 Our Plan, we will assist in reducing our emissions and help prevent people being exposed to unacceptable levels of pollution by supporting public transport, walking and cycling as more favourable modes of transport to the private car and the promotion of energy efficient buildings and homes and innovative design solutions.**

## Noise Quality

Noise is unwanted sound but is an inevitable consequence of everyday life, stemming from environmental noise (created by human activity outdoors such as transport, construction and industry), with different tolerance levels varying from person to person. It becomes a problem when it occurs in the incorrect place or at the incorrect time or on a frequent or recurring basis. As we seek to promote more compact and efficient approaches to development within our settlements, as outlined in earlier chapters 2 and 3, it is important that we are proactive in managing noise. In addressing these issues Ireland 2040 will support:

### Noise Management and Action Planning

Measures to avoid, mitigate and minimise or promote the pro-active management of noise are relevant where it would have significant adverse impacts on health and quality of life through strategic noise mapping, Noise Action Plans and suitable planning conditions.

### Noise, Amenity and Privacy

This includes but is not limited to, good acoustic design in new developments, in particular residential development, through a variety of measures such as setbacks and separation between noise sources and receptors, good acoustic design of buildings, building orientation, layout, building materials and noise barriers and buffer zones between various uses and thoroughfares.

### Quiet Areas

The further enjoyment of natural resources, such as our green spaces and sea frontage, through the preservation of low sound levels or the reduction in undesirably high sound levels, particularly important for providing respite from the high levels of urban noise. As part of noise action plans, an extra value placed on these areas, in terms of environmental quality and the consequential positive impact on quality of life and health, due to low sound levels and the absence of noise can assist in achieving this.

#### National Policy Objective 62

**Promote the pro-active management of noise where it would have significant adverse impacts on health and quality of life and support the aims of the Environmental Noise Regulations through national planning guidance and Noise Action Plans.**

## Case Study



### Quiet Areas Dublin City Council

As part of the initiative to manage sound levels around Dublin, the City Council have designated eight Quiet Areas which are to be protected from future increases in environmental noise. These sites were chosen partly because of the sound levels in the areas and partly because they provide some value to the citizens of Dublin. A city centre green space that has lower sound levels than nearby streets can provide a place that offers some tranquility, away from the busy city.






# 9

## Investing in Ireland 2040 - Implementation



### 9.1 | National Strategic Outcomes

The national planning objectives identified throughout Ireland 2040 are underpinned by the vision set out in Chapter 1 and together form the Ireland 2040 Framework. When combined with governance arrangements and aligned with capital investment, collectively, this forms an overall national strategy that will deliver desired outcomes.



Ireland 2040 is a Framework that will be delivered in line with the policies, programmes and day to day activities of government departments and agencies, state bodies, the regional assemblies, local authorities, and infrastructure providers, working in conjunction with communities, civic society, the private sector and neighbouring administrations.

## Implementing the Ireland 2040 Framework will be guided by targeting the following national strategic outcomes:

- **Compact, Smart Growth:** Carefully managing the sustainable growth of compact cities and towns adds value and should create more attractive places for people to live and work in. All our cities and many rural towns contain large 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.
- **Enhanced Regional Accessibility:** Once the core areas in key cities and urban areas have been mobilised, the next priority is to enhance accessibility between key urban centres of population and their regions such as the key cities of Cork and Limerick and through the Atlantic Economic Corridor to Galway as well as access to the larger urban centres in the North-West. Investment in connectivity first without urban consolidation measures will likely worsen the current trends towards sprawl.

- **High-Quality International Connectivity:**

This is crucial for overall international competitiveness and addressing opportunities and challenges from Brexit through investment in our ports and airports in line with sectoral priorities already defined through National Ports Policy and National Aviation Policy and signature projects such as the second runway for Dublin Airport and the Dublin Port Masterplan.

- **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 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.

- **A Strong Digital Economy:** Fast, secure, high capacity and reliable digital connectivity is critical in terms of acting as the economic platform Ireland will use to access markets. Ireland has been a leader in this area for many years and while challenges remain due to the dispersed nature of our population, enhancing Ireland's international and national ICT connectivity remains critically important.

- **Empowered Rural Communities:** Rural areas play a key role in defining our identity, in driving our economy and our high-quality environment and must be a major part of our country's strategic development to 2040. In addition to the natural resource and food sector potential as traditional pillars of the rural economy, improved connectivity, broadband and rural economic development opportunities are emerging which offer the potential to ensure our countryside remains a living and working community.

- **Enhanced Urban Amenity:** This will enable cities, towns and villages to be more attractive and capable of evolving sustainably through investment in public transport networks, enhanced active travel (cycling and walking) networks and better public realm such as streets, public spaces, parks and amenity areas that play a key part in defining the character and attractiveness of urban places.

- **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.



## 9.2 | Governance

- **Sustainable Management of Water and other Environmental Resources:** Ireland has abundant natural and environmental resources such as our water sources that are critical to our environmental and economic well-being into the future. Conserving and enhancing the quality of these resources will also become more important in a crowded and competitive world as well as our capacity to create beneficial uses from products previously considered as waste, creating circular economic benefits.
- **Access to Quality Childcare, Education and Health Services:** Good access to a range of quality education and health services, relative to the scale of a region, city, town, neighbourhood or community is a defining characteristic of attractive, successful and competitive places. Compact, smart growth in urban areas and strong and stable rural communities will enable the enhanced and effective provision of a range of accessible services.

### Strong All-Island Partnership

As an overarching national strategic outcome, co-operation and joint development of cross-border areas, particularly Dublin-Belfast, the North West, and the central border, will be important post Brexit to maximise the potential of the island economy, including initiatives that improve connectivity and the integration of our transport, energy and communications systems as well as measures aimed at sustainably managing and harnessing the natural characteristics of areas as new resources for tourism development and promotion.

National investment planning, the sectoral investment and policy frameworks of departments, agencies and the local government process will be guided by these strategic outcomes in relation to the practical implementation of Ireland 2040.

### Statutory Backing for Ireland 2040 and Establishment of the Office of the Planning Regulator

One of the key differences between the NSS and Ireland 2040 is the statutory backing being put in place to not only underpin the framework and provide for its future review but also put in place new structures to assist implementation. The Planning and Development (Amendment) Bill 2016 will provide a legislative basis for Ireland 2040, its monitoring and review into the future and the establishment of the Office of the Planning Regulator.

This new Office will have an independent monitoring role, advising the Minister, Government and the Oireachtas on the implementation of the Framework under the statutory planning process through Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies, local authority statutory planning processes and the decisions of An Bord Pleanála utilising a new set of indicators to be developed to assist effective monitoring.

### Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies

As a national and strategic document, Ireland 2040 requires further support and implementation at regional level. The three Regional Assemblies are tasked to prepare and adopt their Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSES) subsequent to and in accordance with the Ireland 2040 Framework, which in turn will co-ordinate local authority planning, community and economic development functions. Once the regional strategies are adopted, each regional assembly will be required to put in place effective implementation and monitoring arrangements including through the Office of the Planning Regulator.

### Enhancing Leadership and the Strategic Approach to Local Planning

Realising the ambitious growth strategy for different parts of our country and cities and towns in particular will require new approaches in relation to **(1) Metropolitan Area Planning, (2) planning and development of other large urban areas and (3) reforming the land management and land use zoning and development prioritisation processes.**

## Metropolitan Areas: Building Centres of Scale

The enhanced development of Ireland's five cities is fundamental to the Ireland 2040 Framework, requiring a strongly co-ordinated focus within the metropolitan functional areas on a range of key issues.

Current city and county development plans consider the specific requirements of the relevant local authorities over a six year period. All five cities incorporate more than one local authority area, with the metropolitan area of Dublin covering all or part of the area of seven local authorities.

The multiplicity of plans addressing the individual and specific requirements of local authorities makes co-ordination of strategic development challenging. While the three Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSES) will be developed to co-ordinate local authority plans at a strategic and regional assembly level, the area of the Assemblies is arguably too broad to be able to sufficiently focus on city and metropolitan issues.

Accordingly, in tandem with and as part of the RSES process, arrangements will be put in place to enable the preparation of five co-ordinated metropolitan area strategic plans (MASPs) for the Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Galway and Waterford Metropolitan areas<sup>32</sup>. In line with the RSEs, the MASPs will be provided with statutory underpinning to act as twelve-year strategic planning and investment frameworks for the city metropolitan areas addressing high-level and long-term strategic development issues including:

- physical development patterns and strategic growth areas.
- strategic infrastructure, particularly in the transportation and water services areas.
- large scale regeneration and the location of housing and employment.
- metropolitan scale amenities such as regional parks and walking and cycling networks.

MASPs will align with and inform national-level sectoral investment plans to guide and co-ordinate investment within the metropolitan areas, coordinating land use planning and strategic infrastructure.



Cork City



Dublin City



Galway City



Limerick City



Waterford City

In line with the Action Programme for Local Government Reform “Putting People First” and the Local Government Reform Act 2014, work will also continue reshaping and strengthening local government structures in Cork and Galway, building on new arrangements already established and in force in Limerick and Waterford. Consideration will also be given to establishing an appropriate level of political and administrative leadership for the preparation and oversight of metropolitan area strategic plans with the active participation of relevant regional and local authorities and other stakeholders.

### National Policy Objective 63

**Provision will be made for metropolitan area strategic plans to be prepared for the Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Galway and Waterford Metropolitan areas and in the case of Dublin and Cork, to also address the wider city region, by the appropriate authorities in tandem with and as part of the relevant RSES.**

## Better Strategic Planning for Other Urban Areas

Proposals will be advanced for a stronger urban focus in the Municipal District system within local authorities, enabling a more town-focused configuration to be achieved. This will be done by creating distinct electoral areas based closely on a number of larger urban centres and assigning an enhanced range of local authority functions to those areas. This will include a requirement to make an urban area plan based on current local area plan (LAP) provisions. In tandem with creating stronger cities this will help to build stronger regions and provide a key focus area for Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies.

Some of Ireland’s towns outside the main cities also straddle different local authorities leading to a proliferation of individual plans. In order to enhance the co-ordination of development in such cases, the preparation of joint urban area plans for towns and their environs with a combined population of 15,000 people or more, and joint local area plans for towns and their environs with a combined population of 5,000 people or more, will be required. This necessitates the strengthening of current Local Area Plan (LAP) legislation.

When finalised, joint urban and joint local area plans for combined functional areas will be adopted by each relevant local authority. Enhanced co-operation in the preparation of joint urban/ local area plans will ensure consistent approaches to planning without changes to existing county boundaries.

### National Policy Objective 64

**Provision will be made for urban area plans for larger towns and their environs with a population of more than 15,000 people. Provision will also be made for joint urban area plans and joint local area plans where a town and environs lies within the combined functional area of more than one local authority.**

## Strengthening Local Authority Planning: Plan Making and Core Strategies

Reforms of planning legislation in 2010 introduced a new approach to justifying land use zoning objectives in local authority plans so that enough land is provided for future development but not so much that development becomes difficult to co-ordinate or to undermine the need to regenerate existing but under occupied and run-down urban areas. These reforms have realised major benefits in a more evidence-based and strategic approach to planning.

Further enhancements of the core strategy approach will be put in place to support the implementation of the Ireland 2040 Framework and the three Regional Assembly Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSESs).

This means ensuring that planned future population and housing requirements for cities, large and small towns and rural areas are identified at local planning authority level, factoring in other considerations, such as tackling dwelling vacancy and the balance between development in both urban and rural areas.

Statutory planning guidance will be developed putting in place a standardised methodology for core strategies for application by all planning authorities and will enhance transparency and integrity and the alignment of planning and investment in the planning process into the future.

### National Policy Objective 65

**City/county development plan core strategies shall comprehensively identify, co-ordinate and balance targeted population and housing growth in cities, large and small towns, rural settlements and in the open countryside for the relevant planning authority area and this will be supported by a standardised methodology for the preparation of core strategies.**

## Integrating Spatial and Transport Planning

Choices about how places are planned and designed ('spatial' planning) and choices about the delivery of transport infrastructure and services (transport planning) are very dependent on each other, and achieving a close linking of the two can be to their mutual benefit and lead to more coherent outcomes for society.

This thinking underpins some of the arrangements for the National Transport Authority (NTA), which was first established in 2009, and whose purpose is to bring a more focused and integrated approach to the planning and delivery of integrated transport infrastructure and services both on a national basis generally and especially in the Greater Dublin Area (GDA) where the NTA has a more detailed remit.

Under law, the NTA has responsibility for preparing a Transport Strategy for the GDA, and it is a requirement that there be consistency between the transport strategy and the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the GDA – thus ensuring that spatial planning and transport planning for the area are appropriately aligned. The present Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2016-2035 – which the NTA drew up in fulfilment of this responsibility – now provides a framework for the development of transport infrastructure in the GDA over the next two decades.

The Transport Strategy also provides a clear statement of transport planning policy for the GDA, around which other agencies involved in spatial planning, environmental protection, and delivery of other infrastructure such as housing, water and power, can align their own investment priorities. It is an essential component, along with investment programmes in other sectors, for the orderly development of the Greater Dublin Area over the next 20 years.

The statutory requirement for mutual consistency between the regional spatial and economic strategy and the transport strategy is unique to the GDA and is not a statutory requirement in any other part of the country. However, the NTA has worked successfully on an administrative, non-statutory basis to assist several local authorities across Ireland's cities in preparing transport related strategies or implementing transport related projects.

Extending to all of Ireland's Cities the statutory arrangements that are already in place for transport planning in the Greater Dublin Area, could be a useful measure to build on existing experience and to greatly strengthen the levels of integration between spatial planning and transport planning across the country, to the benefit of the economy and society.

### National Policy Objective 66

**Statutory arrangements between spatial and transport planning in the Greater Dublin Area will be extended to other cities**

## Coordinating Land Use Zoning, Infrastructure and Services

Ireland 2040 targets significant infill/brownfield growth, especially in cities and large towns so getting the development plan right in terms of the levels and location of future land-use zoning objectives will be critical, both in relation to greenfield and infill/brownfield lands. Implementation of Ireland 2040 requires substantially better linkage between zoning of land and the availability of infrastructure.

The new, standardised methodology to be put in place for core strategies will also address issues such as, the differentiation between zoned land that is available for development and zoned land that requires significant further investment in services for infrastructure for development to be realised. The proposed methodology for a tiered approach to land zoning is set out in Appendix 1.

### National Policy Objective 67

**Planning authorities will be required to apply a standardised, tiered approach to differentiate between i) zoned land that is available for development, ii) zoned land that requires further specified investment in basic infrastructural services for development to be realised and iii) zoned land unlikely to be serviced within the life of the relevant plan.**

**When considering zoning land for development purposes that requires further investment in basic infrastructural services, planning authorities will make a reasonable estimate of the full cost of delivery of the specified services and identify the responsible delivery agency(ies);**

**When considering zoning land for development purposes that is unlikely to be serviced within the life of the relevant plan, planning authorities will review the status of such lands.**

## Prioritising Development Lands

There are many other planning considerations relevant to land zoning beyond the provision of basic enabling infrastructure including overall planned levels of growth, location, suitability for the type of development envisaged, availability of and proximity to amenities, schools, shops or employment, accessibility to transport services etc. Weighing up all of these factors together with the availability of infrastructure will assist planning authorities in determining an order of priority to deliver planned growth and development. Appendix 2 sets out a methodology for the prioritisation of development lands.

### National Policy Objective 68

**When zoning land for development, planning authorities will apply a specified standardised approach in establishing an order of priority for development of land taking account of proper planning and sustainable development, and in the case of adjoining interdependent landholdings, evidence of landholder commitment to necessary co-operation to release lands for development.**

**Planning authorities will use compulsory purchase powers to facilitate the delivery of enabling infrastructure to prioritised zoned lands, to accommodate planned growth.**

**Infrastructure delivery agencies will focus on the timely delivery of enabling infrastructure to priority zoned lands in order to deliver planned growth and development.**

- Preparation of masterplans and joint development ventures for a variety of uses including urban regeneration encompassing economic development, housing, community and cultural facilities and amenities.
- Creation of a central repository of essential systems, skills and personnel in the property management, funding, asset management, strategic planning and development realisation potential areas.
- More effective and co-ordinated liaison with local authorities, statutory infrastructure providers and regulatory bodies such as the Environmental Protection Agency to de-risk potential development sites in public ownership that have not realised their development potential whether for reasons relating to environmental matters such as contaminated land, infrastructural deficits or requirements for conservation measures.
- Enhanced access to the necessary funding and economic development model to realise the potential of strategic sites in supporting the implementation of Ireland 2040.
- Recycling of proceeds from strategic land development facilitating acquisition of further regeneration and development sites on a “rolling fund” basis.

### National Policy Objective 69

**A more effective strategic and centrally managed approach will be taken to realise the development potential of the overall portfolio of state owned and/or influenced lands in the five main cities and potentially other major urban areas as a priority.**

## State-Led Strategic Land Development

To support and aid the implementation of Ireland 2040 at Government, departmental, local authority and state agency levels, an examination of the potential to more effectively and centrally manage the overall portfolio of state owned and/or influenced lands in the five main cities and potentially other major urban areas will be undertaken as a priority.

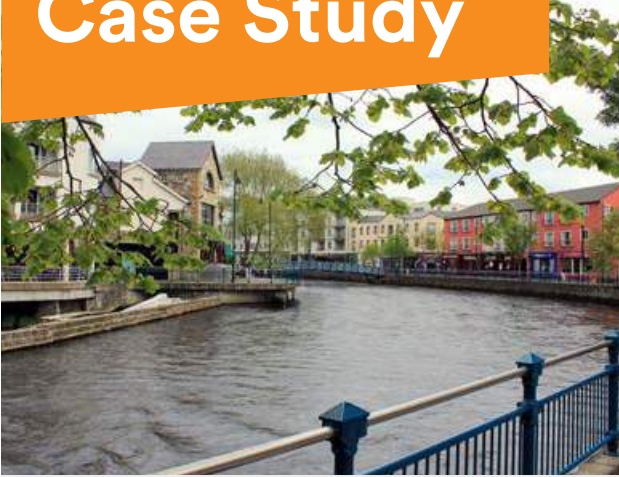
More effective and central management would offer major benefits in enabling effective portfolio based management of the overall publicly owned lands in and around our main cities and other urban areas both working with local authorities, local communities and the private sector including:

### North South Co-Operation

Despite the challenges posed by Brexit, recognising the strong economic, cultural and practical ties between Ireland and its neighbours, both in a north-south and east-west context, subject to the agreement of Governments and institutions, co-operation and interaction through political and administrative structures such as the North-South Ministerial Council and the British-Irish Council will be broadened to include a specific national planning and infrastructure coordination stream of activity.



# Case Study



## ERDF for Sligo

**Sligo County Council, working with the Northern and Western Regional Assembly, secured funding of €2 million for enhancements to O'Connell Street and a community centre at Cranmore through the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF).**

This project encompasses sustainable urban development under the Designated Urban Centres Grants Scheme 2014 – 2020.

The €2 million for Sligo has been spent on street enhancements to O'Connell Street leading to limited vehicular access with pedestrian priority, new widened pavements, new street furniture and landscaping, reduced traffic flow, and shared space for cyclists. The funding also contributed to the provision of a new community centre for Cranmore, creating a positive approach to place-making through social and environmental improvements.

## 9.3 | Ireland 2040 and the National Investment Plan

**Ireland 2040 will strongly inform strategic national investment, including in infrastructure. Government recognises that infrastructure provision is both influenced by and influences spatial development. Infrastructure can be provided in areas where demand already exists or is predicted to increase. Alternatively infrastructure can also be provided in strategic areas in order to encourage development but in general, the higher the density of the population in an area, the easier it is to spread the fixed costs of an infrastructure project and to ensure that delivery of infrastructure is viable.**

A ten-year National Investment Plan for 2018-2027 will support the implementation of Ireland 2040 and the National Strategic Outcomes highlighted.

Government considers such an approach as essential to better influence patterns of development and contribute to wider national objectives in areas such as transport, water resource management, waste management, climate action, communications and energy network roll-out and social infrastructure development in areas such as health, education and community facilities.

There is broad consensus that public infrastructure investment is an important aspect of a competitive location policy, impacting on an economy's or region's cost structure and competitiveness. Research also highlights the scope for public capital investment to influence the regional dispersion of economic activity and influence the rate at which regions accumulate various productive factors, particularly infrastructure.

Analysis undertaken for both Ireland 2040 and the National Investment Plan highlights the risks from not securing an appropriate and effective regional balance in terms of Ireland's future economic development. Unbalanced growth, largely focused in Dublin and the surrounding region creates a significant risk, whereby not achieving the economy's full potential will give rise to a shortfall in Ireland's economic performance with serious and long-lasting consequences for future living standards and the quality of life overall, across all regions of the country.

## The National Investment Plan 2018 - 2027

Building on Recovery, the current Capital Plan, already includes actions to support the social and economic progress of rural and urban communities in all regions. The National Investment Plan builds on the review of the existing Capital Plan reflecting sectoral gaps identified by analysis and research<sup>33</sup>. Taking into account the spatial development outcomes sought by Ireland 2040, the new National Investment Plan will:

Deliver a stable profile of public investment yielding greater certainty to the infrastructure delivery and investment sector.

Strengthen the economy's resilience in terms of key risks, in particular Brexit.

Address existing critical infrastructure deficits.

Invest to maintain the quality and performance of existing public infrastructure.

Support the achievement of critical climate change goals including the recently published National Climate Mitigation Plan.

Secure more effective regional development on an on-going basis.

Reflecting fiscal and budgetary capacity, funding for capital investment is on a trajectory to reach 3% of GNI<sup>34</sup> by 2019. The Fiscal Council have observed that current spending plans to 2021 "return public investment to levels that are comparatively high in the international context". These substantial resources should enable real progress to be made in developing and maintaining national infrastructure.

**From a National Investment Plan perspective, the objectives of Ireland 2040 are fundamental to the achievement of long-term economic, social and environmental sustainability. The National Investment Plan will build from core elements of Ireland 2040 including:**

Addressing the implications of an additional 1 million people and 550,000 new households by 2040, half of which will be in cities.

Provision of 25,000 homes each year, half of which will be in the five cities and half of those on infill/brownfield sites.

Enabling a limited number of large towns that emerge from the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) process as potential regional growth drivers for their surrounding catchments.

Reversing small town and rural population decline.

**The National Investment Plan will also, in support of Ireland 2040, seek to improve the coordination and governance of public investment by initiating processes that:**

Update and reduce the number of standalone sectoral plans.

Establish a central database of proposed projects that have been appraised by sectoral Departments, from which funded projects can be selected by Government.

Implement systems in each sector to track asset quality and identify maintenance needs.

More explicitly align the investment plans of State Owned Enterprises with Government objectives.

# Ireland 2040

## National Strategic Outcomes for the National Investment Plan

National Strategic Outcomes for consideration in developing the National Investment Plan that will support the Ireland 2040 are outlined below. This is an indicative outline at this point. Project selection will require an evidence base identifying the investments that are most likely to yield proportionate benefits and progress towards Ireland 2040 goals.

### National Strategic Outcome

#### Compact, Smart Growth

Taking account of the potential to breathe new life into existing but under-utilised city and town centre areas, two National Smart Growth Initiatives, for both urban and rural applications will be put in place under the National Investment Plan. These funds will incentivise bodies to apply available resource envelopes to projects that follow Ireland 2040 principles.

The purpose of the Smart Growth Urban Initiative will be to achieve sustainable growth in Ireland's five cities and in other urban centres (>1,500 population in accordance with the CSO definition of 'urban'\*). Departments and local authorities will be invited to make joint competitive bids for seed funding that will leverage other public and private investment based on proposals that meet some or all of the following criteria:

- Enable urban infill development that would not otherwise occur.
- Improve 'liveability' and quality enabling greater densities of development to be achieved.
- Encourage economic development and job creation, by creating conditions to attract internationally mobile investment and opportunities for indigenous enterprise growth.
- Building on existing assets and capacity to create critical mass and scale as growth drivers.
- Improve accessibility to and between centres of mass and scale and better integration with their surrounding areas.
- Ensure transition to more sustainable modes of travel (walking, cycling, public transport) and energy consumption (efficiency, renewables) within an urban context.
- Encourage labour mobility to support employment led growth, including affordable housing, education/skills development and improved community and family services including childcare.

Through the Smart Growth Rural Initiative, sustainable growth in Ireland's small towns (<10,000 population in accordance with the wider NPF consideration of 'rural'\*) and rural areas will also be delivered through bid based proposals by Departments and local authorities meeting some or all of the criteria below:

- Enhance the attractiveness, viability and vibrancy of smaller towns and villages in rural areas as a means of achieving more sustainable patterns and forms of development.
- Ensure transition to more sustainable modes of travel (walking, cycling, public transport) and energy consumption (efficiency, renewables) within smaller towns and villages.
- Encourage and attract entrepreneurship and innovation in the context of the rural economy and its continuing sustainable diversification, particularly where low carbon outputs can be achieved.
- Cater for a niche or specialised development that is intrinsically required to be located in a rural setting and has wider benefits for the local rural and regional economy.
- Cross boundary collaboration at county and regional level to achieve more sustainable outcomes for rural communities e.g. applicable to shared settlements, landscapes and amenities as well as lands in state ownership.
- Enhance co-ordination of various funding streams for rural development that supports the place making policies of Ireland 2040.

\* This enables small and medium sized towns of between 1,500 to 10,000 population to be part of either rural or urban Smart Growth proposals, subject to the nature of the proposal being made.

## National Strategic Outcome

## Enhanced Regional Accessibility

Once Smart Growth objectives are being achieved, further development of connectivity between centres of population of scale will support the objectives of Ireland 2040. This will focus initially between Cork and Limerick. Better accessibility between the four cities separate from Dublin and to the Northern and Western region will support the objectives of Ireland 2040. Enhancing accessibility to the North-West will enhance the competitiveness and attractiveness of areas most exposed to the potential impacts from Brexit.

### Inter-Urban Roads

- Maintaining the strategic capacity and safety of the national roads network including planning for future capacity enhancements.
- Improving average journey times targeting an average inter-urban speed of 90kph.
- Enabling more effective traffic management within and around cities and re-allocation of inner city road-space in favour of bus-based public transport services and walking cycling facilities.
- Advancing orbital traffic management solutions examples including the Galway Ring Road and M8/N25/N40 Dunkettle Junction upgrade (approved) in Cork.

### Accessibility to the North-West

- Upgraded access to the North-West border area, utilising existing routes (N2/N14/A5).
- Upgrade northern sections of the N4 route and sections of the N3/M3 national primary route.
- Progressive development of the Atlantic Economic Corridor from Galway northwards by completion of the M17/M18, upgrading sections of the N17 northwards, where required and upgrading the N15/N13 link.



## National Strategic Outcome

### High-Quality International Connectivity

As an island, the effectiveness of our airport and port connections to our nearest neighbours in the UK, the EU and the wider global context is vital to our survival, our competitiveness and our future prospects. Co-operation and joint development of cross-border areas such as in the Dublin-Belfast corridor, North West, and central border areas will be very important post Brexit to open up the potential of the island economy.

The key ports and airports are State owned commercial entities with the capacity to raise their own finance. Hence, the need for Exchequer resourcing of the key strategic projects does not arise. Alignment of their plans with Government objectives including the capital plan, is achieved by their compliance with the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies.

In terms of airport facilities, the main airports including Dublin, Cork, Shannon and Knock, together with smaller regional airports are a key infrastructure for national and regional development.

#### Airports

- The development of additional runway and terminal facilities such as the second runway for Dublin Airport for which planning permission has been approved.
- Enhancing land-side access and particularly in public transport terms such as through the Metro-North project in Dublin.
- Careful land-use management of land side areas to focus on the current and future needs of the airports.

In terms of our port facilities, National Ports Policy recognises the long-term international trend in ports and shipping towards increased consolidation of resources in order to achieve optimum efficiencies of scale. This has knock on effects in terms of vessel size, the depths of water required at ports and the type and scale of port hinterland transport connections.

The approach to ports policy is consistent with the aspirations of planning policy regarding consolidation of resources in order to achieve optimum efficiencies of scale. The Tier 1 status of ports and many of the regionally important ports relate to the national and regionally important cities and towns under Ireland 2040.

Tier 1 ports account for 80% of national port freight traffic, are located within close proximity to Dublin, Cork and Limerick respectively and the role of these ports will be considered in tandem with long-term infrastructural requirements as part of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) and Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASPs) and processes detailed elsewhere in Ireland 2040. For example the long term sustainable development of our ports also requires strategic transport connections. Nationally, the following infrastructure objectives have been identified:

#### Ports

Improve land transport connections to the major ports including:

- Facilitating the growth of Dublin Port through greater efficiency, limited expansion into Dublin Harbour and improved road access, particularly to/from the southern port area.
- Enhancing road connectivity to Shannon-Foynes Port, including local by-passes.

## National Strategic Outcome

### Sustainable Mobility

Dublin is the city that puts Ireland on the international map more than any other city on the island, but it is heavily dependent on road transport that is becoming congested. Major electric rail public transport infrastructure identified in the Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area to 2035 such as the Metro North and DART Expansion projects as well as the BusConnects investment programme are key national developments that will keep our capital internationally competitive.

Our main intercity rail network also plays a key role in offering sustainable travel alternatives, the option of travel while working and broadening labour catchments to the benefit of the international competitiveness of the islands major cities. There is potential to develop the existing good quality rail links between Dublin and Belfast and Cork into an island rail spine through line speed and service enhancements.

The provision of a well-functioning, integrated public transport system, enhancing competitiveness, sustaining economic progress and enabling sustainable mobility choices for citizens supports the overall objectives of Ireland 2040.

#### Public Transport

- Expand attractive public transport alternatives to car transport to reduce congestion and emissions and enable the transport sector to cater for the demands associated with longer term population and employment growth in a sustainable manner through the following measures.
- To strengthen public transport connectivity between cities and large growth towns in Ireland and Northern Ireland with improved services and reliable journey times.
- Deliver the key public transport objectives of the Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2016-2035 by investing in projects such as New Metro North, DART Expansion Programme, BusConnects in Dublin and key bus based projects in the other cities and towns.
- Provide public transport infrastructure and services to meet the needs of smaller towns, villages and rural areas.
- Develop a comprehensive network of safe cycling routes in metropolitan areas to address travel needs and to provide similar facilities in towns and villages where appropriate.



## National Strategic Outcome

### A Strong Digital Economy

In the short term, opportunities provided by access to high quality broadband services will be fully exploited through the roll-out of the state intervention segment of the National Broadband Plan, delivering a step change in digital connectivity and ensuring that coverage extends to remoter areas including villages, rural areas and islands.

In addition, Ireland is very attractive in terms of international digital connectivity, climatic factors and current and future renewable energy sources for the development of international digital infrastructures, such as data centres. This sector underpins Ireland's international position as a location for ICT and creates added benefits in relation to establishing a threshold of demand for sustained development of renewable energy sources. There is also greater scope to recycle waste heat from data centres for productive use, which may be off-site.

#### Communications

- Implementation of the National Broadband Plan.
- Enhancing international fibre communications links including full interconnection between the fibre networks in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.
- Promotion of Ireland as a sustainable international destination for ICT infrastructures such as data centres and associated economic activities.
- Promoting our cities as demonstrators of 5G information and communications technology.

## National Strategic Outcome

### Empowered Rural Communities

Through the Action Plan for Rural Development, resourced schemes and policies to drive the development and diversification of the rural economy such as the national broadband scheme mentioned above, are gathering pace.

The rural dimension to the smart growth initiative will, combined with wider urban and village renewal, housing and community development initiatives, seek to create a virtuous cycle of progressive planning for, investment in and economic diversification of our rural towns and villages, re-purposing them to meet the challenges of the future.

A strong start has also been made in the development of a national long-distance Greenway/Blueway Network. Such a network, including rural walking and cycling and water based recreation routes, have demonstrated major potential to bring new life to regional and rural locations through the "win-win" scenario of increased tourism activity and healthier travel.

Developing this network further will diversify our rural economy by embracing the potential for a major expansion in the demand for activity based tourism.

#### Rural Development

- Implementation of the actions outlined in the Action Plan for Rural Development.
- Progressive development of rural broadband under the National Broadband Plan.
- Implementation of a targeted smart growth initiative to enable opportunities to secure the regeneration and re-purposing of rural towns and villages weakened by the structural changes in rural economies and settlement patterns.
- Investment in maintaining regional and local roads and strategic road improvement projects in rural areas to ensure access to critical services such as education, healthcare and employment.
- Investment in greenways and blueways as part of a nationally coordinated strategy.
- Ongoing support through a well-funded Common Agricultural Policy for the Agri-Food sector.

## National Strategic Outcome

## Enhanced Urban Amenity

Recent census results show major increases in the proportions of people travelling by bicycle and walking where investment is made in enhanced active travel pedestrian and cycle facilities and streets are made safer and more attractive in terms of public spaces and networks of parks and amenities.

### Green Networks and Infrastructure

- Metropolitan Area Strategic Plans will be required to include a metropolitan parks and amenity strategy.
- Implementation of planning and transport Strategies for the five cities and other urban areas will be progressed with a major focus on improving walking and cycling routes including continuous urban greenway networks and targeted measures to enhance permeability and connectivity.
- Smart Growth initiatives will seek to encourage transformational public realm initiatives to give city and town centre areas back to citizens, encouraging greater city and town centre living, enhanced recreational spaces and attractiveness from a cultural, tourism and promotional perspective.
- Strategies to further support urban active travel will be developed and implemented.





## National Strategic Outcome

### Transition to Sustainable Energy

New energy systems and transmission grids will be necessary for a more distributed, more 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. State owned commercial enterprises are significant players in the energy market, which is subject to an EU regulatory framework. Promotion of renewable energy is supported by policy in the form of a public service obligation levy.

The diversification of our energy production systems away from fossil fuels and towards green energy such as wind, wave, solar and biomass, together with smart energy systems and the conversion of the built environment into both generator/consumer of energy and the electrification of transport fleets will require the progressive and strategic development of a different form of energy grid.

The development of on-shore and off-shore renewable energy is critically dependent on the development of enabling infrastructure including grid facilities to bring the energy ashore and connect to major sources of energy demand. We also need to ensure more geographically focused renewables investment to minimise the amount of additional grid investment required, for example through co-location of renewables and grid connections.

Ireland benefits from interconnection with the UK gas pipeline network and while there are two gas pipelines with two separate entry points into the island of Ireland, both pipelines are connected through a single facility in Moffat, Scotland.

In addition, our gas storage capacity is limited, which poses a significant security of supply risk and constrains smoothing of seasonal fluctuation in gas prices.

#### Green Energy

- Deliver 40% of our electricity needs from renewable sources by 2020 with a strategic aim of in excess of 50% by 2030 and more by 2040 and beyond using wind, wave, solar, biomass and hydro sources.
- Reinforce the transmission network to facilitate planned growth and the transfer of renewable energy generated to the major demand centres.
- Strengthen energy security and resilience to support an island population of 8 million people through effective north-south electricity grid interconnection as well as exploring other interconnection options in the longer term to 2040 such as the 'Celtic Interconnector' with France.
- Consideration of carbon neutral electricity generation that would be facilitated through harnessing carbon capture and storage (CCS), using the Kinsale Head Gas Field.
- National Interconnector (Sub-sea Ring around Ireland (provides connection to EU via the proposed Celtic Interconnector) or other solutions offer the potential to connect Ireland to the EU electricity grid System.
- Roll out of the National Smart Grid Plan enabling new connections, grid balancing, energy management and micro grid development.

## National Strategic Outcome

### Sustainable Management of Water and other Environmental Resources

Investment in water services infrastructure is critical to the implementation of Ireland 2040. The current *Water Services Strategic Plan* by Irish Water will be updated in the light of the policies in the National Planning Framework addressing the requirements of future development while also addressing environmental requirements such as obligations under EU Water Framework Directive-mandated River Basin Management Plans.

Many smaller towns and villages do not benefit from public water service networks either in terms of water supply or wastewater treatment. While the Water Services Strategic Plan is beginning a new plan-led and collaborative investment approach, to support sustainable growth in rural towns and villages, further smart-growth initiatives will be needed to bring together the combined potential of all relevant stakeholders in putting in place sustainable water services solutions to enable smaller towns and villages to progress and develop sustainably.

Climate change will also have significant future effects on the availability of water sources and on the capacity of water bodies to assimilate wastewater discharges through lower water levels in rivers and lakes in longer and drier summer periods. The impact of climate change on the water cycle and the resultant impact on water services and flooding therefore needs to be considered in settlement strategies as climate change may have a significant impact on the availability of water sources and on the capacity of water bodies to assimilate wastewater discharges.

#### Water

- Coordinate EU Flood Directive and Water Framework Directive Water Framework Directive implementation and statutory plans across the planning hierarchy, including national guidance on the relationship between the planning system and river basin management. Local authorities, DHPLG, OPW and other relevant Departments and agencies working together to implement the recommendations of the CFRAM programme will ensure that flood risk management policies and infrastructure are progressively implemented.
- Eliminate untreated discharges from settlements in the short term, while planning strategically for long term growth in tandem with Ireland 2040.
- Development of a new rural settlement investment approach coordinating Irish Water, local authority, developer and community led solutions to ensuring that sustainable water services solutions are progressively implemented.

- A new long term water supply source for the Eastern and Midland Region, which includes the Dublin Water Supply Area (DWSA), is needed by the mid-2020s, to provide for projected growth up to 2050 and contribute to resilience and security of supply for the region. This requires infrastructure provision to be guided and prioritised in a manner that can benefit the greatest number of areas within the country possible.
- Implement the Greater Dublin Strategic Drainage Study, through enlarging capacity in existing wastewater treatment plants (Ringsend) and providing a new treatment plant in North County Dublin - known as the Greater Dublin Drainage Project (GDD) Project.
- Improve storm water infrastructure to improve sustainable drainage and reduce the risk of flooding in the urban environment.
- Increase compliance with the requirements of the Urban WW Directive from 39% today to 90% by the end of 2021, to 99% by 2027 and to 100% by 2040.
- Reduce leakage, minimising demand for capital investment.

#### Effective Waste Management

Waste planning in Ireland is primarily informed by national waste management policies and regional waste management plans<sup>35</sup>. Planning for waste treatment requirements to 2040 will require:

- Additional sewage sludge treatment capacity and a standardised approach to managing waste water sludge and including options for the extraction of energy and other resources.
- Biological treatment and increased uptake in anaerobic digestion with safe outlets for bio stabilised residual waste.
- Waste to energy facilities which treat the residual waste that cannot be recycled in a sustainable way delivering benefits such as electricity and heat production.

#### Waste

- RSEs and the core strategies of MASPs and city and county plans will support national and regional waste policy and efficient use of resources.
- District heating networks will be developed where technically feasible to assist in meeting renewable heat targets and reduce Ireland's GHG emissions.
- Development of necessary and appropriate hazardous waste management facilities to avoid the need for treatment elsewhere.

## National Strategic Outcome

### Access to Quality Childcare, Education and Health Services

Our childcare, education and health systems will need to plan ahead in order to meet the implications of an additional one million people by 2040.

#### Education

The provision of early childhood care and education (ECCE) settings, schools, colleges and universities will be critical in the spatial development of cities and regions. They will impact on individual and community development, quality of life, social cohesion, availability of amenities and will be important influencing factors in the areas of research and innovation, inward investment and access to labour markets.

Given changes in future patterns of labour market participation, there will be a need for increased analysis of capital requirements to support investment in childcare in particular.

Strategic planning of and investment in the provision of childcare, education and training remains central to reinforcing the delivery of sustainable communities, promoting inclusion and offering choice and accessibility to a high standard of education and employment. Planning for childcare, education and training infrastructure to meet increasing demand can be more effectively dealt with in the context of cross-government cooperation through a National Framework supported by strategic investment:

#### Education

- The provision of additional investment in the schools sector is required to keep pace with demographic demand and to manage increasing building and site costs. Provision of new and refurbished schools on well-located sites within or close to existing built-up areas, to meet demographic growth and the diverse needs of local populations.
- The expansion and consolidation of third level facilities at locations where this will further strengthen the capacity of those institutions to deliver the talent necessary to drive economic and social development in the regions. The consolidation of the DIT campus at Grangegorman is a critical flagship infrastructural project for the higher education sector.

- Investment in higher and further education and training will be a key driver of Ireland's competitiveness. The development of programmes for life-long learning, especially in areas of education and training where skills gaps are identified by employers and the further and higher education and training system working together through Regional Skills Fora in responding to the skills needs of their regions.

#### Health

The development of new healthcare facilities requires that consideration be given to the location, number, profile and needs of the population to ensure access to the most appropriate care, while also ensuring quality of care, particularly in relation to more complex acute hospital services.

Nationally, the following are identified:

#### Acute Hospital Services

Delivering improved acute hospital services through the implementation of strategies and policies such as the National Maternity Strategy and the National Cancer Control Programme, and a wide range of programmes and projects including:

- Paediatric strategy to provide a national paediatric healthcare service through the construction of the new National Children's Hospital and associated satellite care units.
- Maternity strategy including co-location of the National Maternity Hospital and other standalone maternity hospitals to acute hospital campuses.
- Building additional capacity in line with identified service needs.
- Reconfiguration of acute services within hospital groups.
- Expansion of the Ambulance fleet and expanded ambulance bases.
- National Cancer Control Programme – provision of oncology day units on a national basis.

### Healthcare Services in the Community

Facilitating the transformation of healthcare delivery by increasing the capacity of primary care, including:

- Provision of primary care centres on a national basis to match population changes including new builds and refurbishments of existing buildings.
- Expansion of community diagnostics and minor surgery.

### Integrated Health and Social Care Services

Facilitate the transition of people across services, providing multi-disciplinary care at the lowest level of complexity close to where people live. Focus on improving access to primary and community care services, including:

Mental Health – A Vision for Change

- Development of the National Forensic Mental Health Services Hospital.
- Replacement and provision of additional Mental Health Units, Residential accommodation on a national basis.

### Disability services

- Redevelopment of the National Rehabilitation Hospital and establishment of Disability Rehabilitation Centres across the country.
- Provision of Day Hospitals/Day care centres as part of Neuro strategy.
- Reconfiguration of existing residential care facilities and support people with disabilities to live more independently away from congregated settings.

### Services for Older People

- Replacement and upgrade of 90 Community Nursing Units and provision of additional step-down and long-stay accommodation.





# 10 Assessing Environmental Impact

## 10.1 | Introduction

As part of the preparation of the Draft Ireland 2040 - National Planning Framework, a number of environmental assessments have been carried out. These include a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), an Appropriate Assessment (AA) and also a Strategic Flood Risk Appraisal (SFRA).

These assessments have been undertaken so the high-level impact of the proposed National Policy Objectives and National Strategic Outcomes on the environment can be evaluated and used to inform the direction of the National Planning Framework.

This is to ensure that the growth strategy and national objectives and outcomes respond to the sensitivities and requirements of the wider natural environment i.e. the likely environmental consequences of decisions regarding the future accommodation of growth and development and how negative effects can be reduced, offset or avoided.

This is to ensure that the growth strategy and national objectives and outcomes respond to the sensitivities and requirements of the wider natural environment



## Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

The purpose of the SEA is to evaluate at an early stage, the range of environmental consequences that may occur as a result of implementing the NPF and to give interested parties an opportunity to comment upon the perceived or actual environmental impacts of the proposal.

The European Directive (2001/42/EC) on the Assessment of the Effects of Certain Plans and Programmes on the Environment (the SEA Directive), was transposed into national legislation in Ireland by the European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004 (S.I. 435/2004) and the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004 (S.I. 436/2004), as amended.

As documented in the directive, the purpose of SEA is “to provide for a high level of protection of the environment and to contribute to the integration of environmental considerations in the preparation and adoption of plans and programmes with a view to promoting sustainable development”.

Environmental considerations have been integrated into the Framework by the SEA through:

- **Development and evaluation of the alternatives.**
- **Assessment and refinement of National Policy Objectives (NPOs) and National Strategic Outcomes (NSOs).**
- **Recommendation of mitigation measures to address the potential impacts arising from the alternatives, NPOs and NSOs considered.**
- **Additional supporting text to strengthen the commitments in the NPF to protection of the environment.**

## Appropriate Assessment (AA)

Appropriate Assessment (AA) is a process for undertaking a comprehensive ecological impact assessment of a plan or project, examining its implications, on its own or in-combination with other plans and projects, on one or more European Sites in view of the sites' Conservation Objectives, as referred to in Article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive.

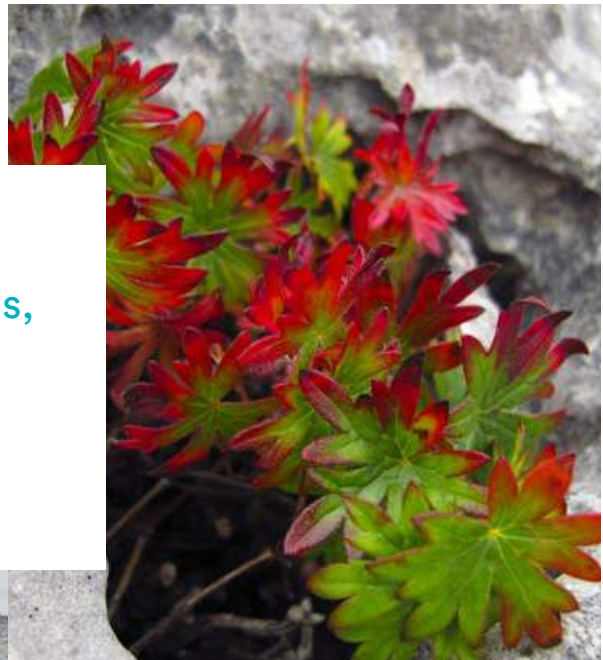
Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora, known as the Habitats Directive, obliges member states to designate Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) to protect and conserve habitats and species of importance in a European Union context. Special Protection Areas (SPAs) are designated under the Conservation of Wild Birds Directive (79/409/ECC) as codified by Directive 2009/147/EC.

Article 6 is one of the most important articles of the Habitats Directive in determining the relationship between conservation and site use. Article 6(3) requires that "Any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the conservation of a site but likely to have a significant effect thereon, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, shall be subject to Appropriate Assessment (AA) of its implications for the site in view of the site's conservation objectives."

The Habitats Directive has been transposed into Irish law by the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) and the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (as amended). In the context of the draft NPF, the governing legislation is principally Regulation 27 of the Birds and Natural Habitats Regulations 2011 which sets out the duties of public authorities relating to nature conservation.

Public authorities are obliged, when exercising their functions, to take appropriate steps to avoid the deterioration of natural habitats and the habitats of species in European Sites, as well as disturbance of species for which a site has been designated insofar as this disturbance could be significant in relation to the objectives of the Habitats Directive. A Natura Impact Statement (NIS) has been prepared in support of the AA process having regard for the legislative requirements of EU and national law.

**Public authorities are obliged, when exercising their functions, to take appropriate steps to avoid the deterioration of natural habitats**



## Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA)

Increased flood risk as a result of land use planning has, above all else has been one of the most costly (environmental, social and economic) legacy issue of previous national, regional and local land use decisions. The policy objectives and outcomes identified in the NPF will both assist the legacy issue and future proof future plans such as the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies and County Development Plans developed under the NPF.

The objective of SFRA is to ensure planning policy takes account of flood risk in catering for future growth and can address planning and infrastructural needs required to facilitate projected growth.

The decisions taken now in the NPF will both assist in addressing legacy issues and future proof new plans. The National Flood Policy of 2004 and the EU Floods Directive have been key drivers in how Ireland manages flood risk. The Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management (CFRAM) programme was developed in response to the requirements those drivers and has both provided a comprehensive assessment of high flood risk areas and proposed plans to mitigate and reduce flood risk in Ireland. In parallel to the CFRAM programme, and to mitigate further inappropriate development in areas of high flood risk, the Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines were published in 2009.

The Flood Risk Guidelines are core to the development of the SFRA as this key document introduces comprehensive mechanisms for the integration of land use and Infrastructure planning with flood risk management best practice. The Guidelines introduce the concept of the 'sequential approach', whereby, at all levels of the planning process, the principle of avoiding areas of high flood risk is the first consideration, and should this not be practical, then the consideration of an alternative, less vulnerable land use should be proposed. Where avoidance or substitution is not possible, then a robust justification must be made, accompanied by sustainable mitigation measures, to ensure proposed development will not increase flood risk both for the present day scenario or in the future, considering fully the predicted effects of climate change.

## Overlap of the SEA, AA and SFRA with the Ireland 2040 Framework

The Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of Ireland 2040 has been undertaken concurrently with the preparation of the Appropriate Assessment (AA) Natura Impact Statement (NIS). There is a degree of overlap between the requirements of the SEA and AA and in accordance with best practice, there was an integrated process of data sharing, including sharing of baseline data and mapping of European Sites, sharing of potential ecological effects of the NPF on European Sites and clarification on more technical aspects of the Ireland 2040 Framework. These processes have together informed and shaped the development of the Framework. The findings of the SFRA have also directly fed into SEA Environmental Report and all three documents accompany the draft NPF.

It is also noted that there are issues relevant to the Habitats Directive that are not strictly related to AA. In these cases, the issues have been brought forward to the biodiversity, flora and fauna sections of the SEA and have been addressed in that context as part of the wider environmental assessments informing Ireland 2040.

The NPF also provides an assessment of all types of flood risk within a national context and the assessment undertaken as part of the SEA process has had regard to the impacts identified in the SFRA.

In preparing the NPF, an Environmental Sensitivity Mapping (ESM) tool was used in the SEA and environmental assessments. ESM is a method for identifying at a strategic level, environmentally sensitive areas and to help inform cumulative and in-combination effects on the environment. It also provides a visual overview of the relative sensitivity of areas, particularly where they overlap, in order to provide a more strategic and informed approach to planning.



## 10.2 | Integrating Environmental Considerations into the Planning System

The NPF is a strategic framework document which will be supported by a robust tiering of regional and local level plans within an overall hierarchy. As detail is developed down through the hierarchy, further opportunity for focussed assessment will be required to inform decision making at a level of granularity which cannot be undertaken at the national scale.

It is therefore important that where other strategies and plans undergo review or changes to reflect the national policy objectives and outcomes of Ireland 2040, they should also consider any relevant environmental requirements. All investigative and feasibility studies to be carried out to support decision making in relation to this Framework should also include an environmental appraisal which considers the potential effects on the wider environment, including specifically the Natura 2000 Network.

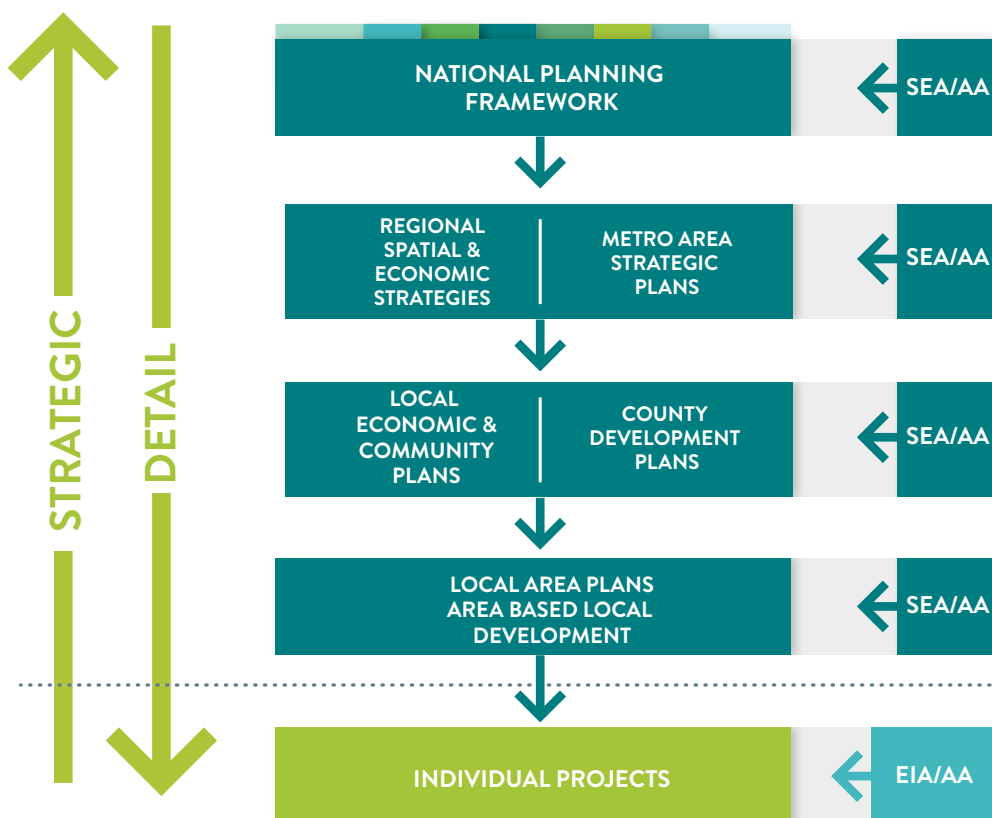
At the project level, all applications for development consents for projects emanating from any policies that may give rise to likely significant effects on the environment will need to be accompanied by one or more of the following, as relevant:

- An Ecological Impact Assessment Report.
- Environmental Report.
- An Environmental Impact Assessment Report if deemed necessary under the relevant legislation (statutory document).
- Natura Impact Statement if deemed necessary if deemed necessary under the relevant legislation (statutory document).

### National Policy Objective 70

Ensure that all plans, projects and activities requiring consent arising from the National Planning Framework are subject to the relevant environmental assessment requirements including SEA, EIA and AA as appropriate.

Figure 10.1 | SEA and AA within the Planning Hierarchy of the NPF



## Relationships between the draft Ireland 2040 Framework and other plans/programmes

Key policy areas such as maritime and land use spatial planning, climate change, renewable energy, flooding, agriculture, water and wastewater services, waste, and conservation have been explored in terms of relationships and interactions with the Ireland 2040 Framework.

For example, the SFRA for the Framework reinforces the key concepts of the precautionary principle and the sequential approach, and the connection with the National Climate Change Adaptation Strategy and the EU Water Framework Directive.

In recognition of the potential for transboundary effects with Northern Ireland, through coordinated spatial planning, the Northern Ireland Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) with responsibility for SEA in Northern Ireland, has also been consulted together with the Northern Ireland Department for Infrastructure as part of the Framework preparation.

### 10.3 Alternatives to Business as Usual- A New Way Forward

A key challenge for the Ireland 2040 Framework has been to explore alternatives that can accommodate projected growth in the most optimal and sustainable manner that would achieve Ireland's economic, social and environmental requirements.

Given that the NPF is a high level framework, it has been important that options are strategic in nature and reside with the legal competence of the plan-making authority, in this instance the DHPLG, but also assisted and supported across government.

In addition, a key consideration has been to determine if the options or combination of options would be realistic (i.e. able to achieve the Framework's objectives), reasonable (i.e. based on socio-economic evidence), viable (technically and financially feasible) and implementable (realisable within the NPF's timeframe and resources).

Six 'macro-spatial' options were considered as potential directions for the development of the NPF and each option has been assessed in relation to the environmental receptors. In summary, under the Business as Usual (BAU) scenario, development would be uncoordinated, perpetuate urban sprawl and would be negative in relation to Material Assets (MA). There would be no focused plan for development which would not follow infrastructural service provisions and as such there is potential for negative impacts across the environmental receptors through emissions and pollution to the natural environment. Uncoordinated urban sprawl would lead to increased over-reliance on the private motor vehicle and reduce justification for the provision of public transport services which would potentially have indirect negative impacts on Air Quality (AQ).

In addition to BAU, options one to five all note the need for sequential provision of infrastructure and a level of infill development, some of which will be brownfield, of between 30-50% within the existing settlement area. The principal differences identified between Options 1 to 5 relate to the regional and settlement strategy approach.

The preferred option is considered to be Option 2 – Regional Effectiveness and Settlement Diversity. This alternative is likely to achieve the maximum overall gain in relation to the Strategic Environmental Objectives (SEOs) in terms of maximising use of public transport thereby reducing transport related emissions, in tandem with facilitating higher densities in city areas, and focussed managed growth in supporting settlements, thereby improving regional connectivity and services outside of the cities.

The preferred option acknowledges the economic importance of the Dublin whilst ensuring growth across the regions and in other urban centres. It will help ensure that there are no constraints in the growth of the cities allowing regional centres develop and prosper. It will also contribute to preserving sense of place and improving regional connectivity and services outside of the cities.

## 10.4 | Summary of Key Findings

The Ireland 2040 Framework has highlighted the shortcomings of Business As Usual compared to the benefits of a new way forward. From an environmental perspective, the range of alternatives, including the preferred growth strategy, set out in this Framework, are broadly positive, as they set out a strategy for the sustainable development of places in Ireland and how that can be achieved. The preferred strategy is therefore considered optimal.

In considering the broad direction for the framework the 'macro-spatial' growth approach has been considered and the preferred approach is characterised as one displaying:

- **Regional parity for the EMRA in relation to the NWRA and SRA combined.**
- **Regional concentration towards cities and potential for some regionally important larger settlements.**
- **A focus on contained growth and reduced sprawl by targeting infill lands, some of which will be brownfield sites, in existing built-up areas.**
- **Sequential provision of infrastructure with some strategic investment outcomes identified.**

The NPF growth strategy is supported by a series of National Policy Objectives and National Strategic Outcomes. These objectives and outcomes promote coordinated spatial planning, sustainable use of resources, protection of the environment and the Natura 2000 network ensuring that environmental considerations have been integrated into the draft NPF. As the framework is focused at a national and strategic level the potential is generally not for direct or location impacts, but rather indirect impacts arising from the potential for development arising out of the various national policy objectives and outcomes.

As part of an assessment of the draft Ireland 2040 Framework, the SEA Environmental Report, AA Natura Impact Statement and Strategic Flood Risk

Assessment, have proposed mitigation measures and text alterations to the draft Framework and those NPOs/NSOs which have been identified as having potential impacts on the receiving environment.

These include appropriate siting of key development areas; contamination issues relating to brownfield development; carrying capacity of development lands in the wider environment; and increased disturbance in sensitive habitats as a result of redevelopment and / or intensification. In recognising these issues the Framework has responded with new and revised policies, outcomes and commitments to protect the environment.

Much of the potential for impact to the environment can be avoided by the careful siting of development and infrastructure. In other cases a robust site selection process will be important to avoid impacts on European Sites in particular and on the wider receiving environment.

For example, a number of the areas, in particular in dockland and port areas, have been identified as having potential for infill and brownfield development in order to prevent urban sprawl and the loss of greenfield lands. It is therefore important for Regional Assemblies, Local Authorities and other agencies to identify these lands and to establish the scale and nature of challenges, particularly with regard to environmental impact, to ensure appropriate outcomes to facilitate delivery of the Framework infill targets as part of a wider contained growth strategy.

Avoidance of unnecessary impacts is the preferred mitigation strategy for the Framework. As part of future guidance, the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government will develop and where relevant, update planning guidelines to assist planning authorities in making sustainable planning decisions which fully integrate the relevant environmental requirements and support the delivery of National Policy Objectives of Ireland 2040.

## Appendix 1

# A Methodology for a Tiered Approach to Land Zoning

Ireland 2040 sets out a tiered approach to land zoning, whereby:

### Tier 1 Zoned Land

There are basic development services i.e. road and footpath access including lighting, drainage connectivity (foul and surface water systems) and water supply available, all of which have capacity to accommodate development to some extent, at the boundary of the zoned lands. This means that a planning application for development can be considered.

In a situation where a contiguous block of zoned land is within tier 1, but one or more sites or landholding(s) effectively control(s) access to services from other sites or landholdings in the overall block of zoned land, they may be described as the Tier 1 'critical landholding' i.e. the first, second, third etc. critical landholding as appropriate. Sites other than the first critical landholding are categorised as tier 1a.

It would normally be expected that subject to planning authority direction, adjoining tier 1/ tier 1a landholders would co-operate to deliver development services on a pro-rata basis relative to development yield and other relevant considerations, including the scale of infrastructure required and whether there will be any state contribution. The latter may arise where there are public benefits arising from the provision of services in addition to those accruing to the landholders.

### Tier 2 Zoned Land

Land can be serviced within the six-year life of a development or area plan, but is constrained due to the need to deliver some or all basic development services to the boundary of the zoned lands i.e. road or footpath access including lighting, drainage connectivity (foul or surface water systems) or water supply and/or additional service capacity. This means that a planning application for development may be considered during the life of a development or area plan.

Such services and/or capacity and the responsible delivery agency(ies) must be identified at the time of publication of both the draft and final development or area plan and a reasonable estimate of the full cost of delivery to the zoned lands set out in both the draft and final development or area plan, irrespective of whether the estimated total cost fully applies to the zoned lands or not.

It is desirable but not mandatory that a plan or programme for such service delivery would exist at the time of zoning.

Any contiguous tier 2 landholdings that are dependent on one or more critical adjoining sites for access to services that require upgrading, are categorised as Tier 2a.

### Tier 3 Zoned Land

Land is unlikely to be or can't be serviced during the six-year life of a development or area plan. This means that a planning application for development is unlikely to or cannot be considered during the life of a development or area plan.

Such lands may form part of a long term strategic land reserve, but should not be included within a development plan core strategy for calculation purposes. The status of any such lands should be reconsidered, however, especially where there are adequate tier 1 and tier 2 lands available to meet targeted development objectives.

This approach should be applied to all lands that were previously zoned for development and remain zoned but undeveloped when a development or area plan is being reviewed. Any non-development service constraints on zoned land, such as for example, requirements for schools, parks or community facilities arising from statutory planning processes, would mean that lands should be considered tier 2b.

## Appendix 2

# A Methodology for the Prioritisation of Development Lands

Ireland 2040 sets out a categorised approach to prioritising development lands whereby:

A proportion of zoned lands should be identified as a high priority for development, with two further categories of priority specified thereafter.

In order to facilitate flexibility and choice, an additional land factor, known as 'headroom' is normally applied to land zoning at a rate of 50% over and above the planned six-year land requirement, i.e. to ensure sufficient land for nine years.

On this basis, it is considered reasonable to target that 50% of the planned six year requirement should be priority 1 and the other 50% priority 2. The additional three years or 50% 'headroom' is priority 3.

This means that one-third, or 33% of total zoned lands should generally be identified as Priority 1. Whilst Priority 1 zoned lands should ideally be tier 1 'ready to go' sites not dependent on any other landholding, it is likely that a proportion of these will also be tier 1a, 2, 2a or 2b lands.

This is a matter for planning authorities to weigh up, based on proper planning considerations, and having regard to landholder commitment to co-operation in respect of tier 1a or 2a lands.

In some situations it may be that the provision of development services to tier 2 lands may be more feasible and cost-effective than intervention in respect of tier 1a lands, especially if there is evidence of formal landholder agreement in respect of suitable 2a lands.

This approach should also be applied to all lands that were previously zoned for development and remain zoned but undeveloped when a development or area plan is being reviewed.

Where a situation does arise in respect of high priority zoned lands whereby agreement can't be reached between adjoining landholders on tier 1/1a or tier 2/2a lands and/or where it is necessary to facilitate the delivery of enabling development services to tier 2 zoned lands, local authorities are encouraged to use compulsory purchase powers.

In such cases local authorities will be supported to recover the cost of delivery, less any public benefit, from landholders on development of the benefitting landholding or from the responsible delivery agency(ies). In turn, delivery agencies will be required to focus on priority lands that deliver planned levels of growth and development.

## Appendix 3

# References

- 1 In 2014, Ireland was ranked the most globalised country in the world (KOF *Index of Globalisation* 2014);
- 2 IMF, 2016 and World Bank, 2016;
- 3 UN, 2016;
- 4 UN, 2016;
- 5 IBM's *Global Locations Trends Report, 2012-2015*;
- 6 Economist Intelligence Unit, 2013;
- 7 Environmental Performance Index, 2014;
- 8 Mercer Index, 2017;
- 9 The Mary Robinson Centre;
- 10 World Bank, *World Development Report 2009, Reshaping Economic Geography*;
- 11 See, for example, *Design Perth*, Property Council of Australia, 2016 and *Analysis of Public Policies That Unintentionally Encourage and Subsidize Urban Sprawl*, Victoria Transport Policy Institute/LSE Cities. On behalf of the Global Commission on the Economy and Climate for the New Climate Economy Cities Program, 2015;
- 12 This means within the existing built-up envelope of all sizes of urban settlement, as defined by the Central Statistics Office (CSO) in line with UN criteria i.e. having a minimum of 50 occupied dwellings, with a maximum distance between any dwelling and the building closest to it of 100 metres, and where there is evidence of an urban centre (shop, school etc.);
- 13 On the basis of National Policy Objective 2b, this effectively targets 25% of all new homes nationally;
- 14 On the basis of National Policy Objective 2b, this effectively targets 15% of all new homes nationally. Individual or scheme homes delivered outside the CSO defined urban settlement boundary are classed as 'greenfield';
- 15 Figures rounded to nearest 5,000. For more detail, see targeted growth rates set out on Table 3.1;
- 16 The Census of Population 2016 indicates that small towns and villages (<10,000 population) aggregated together, experienced less than half the national average rate of population growth between 2011 and 2016. Those with more than 5,000 people had a combined net loss of population during that time, when the national population grew by almost 4%;
- 17 The standardised EU/OECD definition of a city region is the commuter catchment from which at least 15% of the relevant city area workforce is drawn. This will vary from Census to Census, but has generally been expanding in recent years around Ireland's cities;
- 18 Urban population growth targets are based on the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) projected growth rate to 2040, are at the midpoint of the range and are rounded to the nearest 1,000. The maximum point is approximately 20% higher than the minimum point to allow for flexibility and the possibility that targets may not be achieved at all locations. The initial focus is on the midpoint and will be subject to future review;
- 19 The term 'Gaeltacht' is used to denote those areas in Ireland where the Irish language is, or was until the recent past, the main spoken language of a substantial number of the local population;
- 20 This figure broadly reflects the overall housing requirement to 2040 related to an additional population of one million people based on a household occupancy rate of 2.5 taking account of obsolescence;
- 21 Central Statistics Office, *Census of Population 2011* (Table CD523);
- 22 Higher Education Authority;
- 23 Sometimes referred to as 'Intermediate Rent' or 'Mid-Market Rent';
- 24 In terms of percentage of people who speak English as a mother tongue or foreign language in each European country;
- 25 The British-Irish Council (BIC) was established as part of The Belfast/Good Friday Agreement of 1998 (Strand Three), to promote the harmonious and mutually beneficial development of the totality of relationships among the peoples of these islands;
- 26 European State of the Environment Report, 2015, European Environment Agency (EEA) and *Ireland's Environment: An Assessment Report, 2016*, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA);
- 27 The Government adopted the National Policy Position on Climate Action and Low Carbon Development in 2014;
- 28 *The Planning System and Flood Risk Management*, Guidelines for Planning Authorities, DEHLG, 2009;
- 29 The Natura 2000 network is a network of sites under EU Habitats and Birds Directives;
- 30 Source: Environmental Protection Agency (EPA);
- 31 Source: Natural England;
- 32 In Dublin this equates to the metropolitan area identified in the *National Transport Authority (NTA) Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area* and in Cork, to the metropolitan area identified in the *Cork Area Strategic Plan (CASP) boundary* unless otherwise agreed with the DHPLG. Similar metropolitan areas are to be identified for the other cities and agreed;
- 33 Undertaken by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and the Irish Government Economic and Evaluation Service (IGEES);
- 34 Gross National Income;
- 35 There are three waste regions in Ireland: Connacht-Ulster; Eastern-Midland; and Southern.

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