



Ríaltas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

Project Ireland 2040

National Planning Framework

Project Ireland 2040

National Planning Framework

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Foreword

Ireland stands on the cusp of great change. In the next twenty years we will grow by an extra one million people.

This raises a series of important questions for our consideration, the most basic being where will all these people live and work, what kind of quality of life will we each enjoy, and how will a country of almost six million people impact on our communities and on our built and natural environment?

We have a responsibility to answer these questions; we have a responsibility to plan for the changes that we face – to manage our future growth in a planned, productive and sustainable way. This is a challenge certainly, but it is also a great opportunity for a new generation to imagine, and implement, a shared vision for each community on this island.

We have made mistakes in the past and we have allowed the country to sprawl and develop without a coherent plan, and to the detriment of many of our places and our people. After nearly a decade since the financial crisis took hold, some parts of our country are now thriving once again, while others continue to face difficulties. Indeed, many communities faced difficulties long before the recent crisis, precisely because there was no shared vision, there was no plan.

Project Ireland 2040 represents an important shift from previous approaches to long-term planning and investment by Government. It is an approach that joins up ambition for improvement across the different areas of our lives, bringing the various government departments, agencies, State owned enterprises and local authorities together behind a shared set of strategic objectives for rural, regional and urban development.

This document, the *National Planning Framework*, is a planning framework to guide development and investment over the coming years. It does not provide every detail for every part of the country; rather it empowers each region to lead in the planning and development of their communities, containing a set of national objectives and key principles from which more detailed and refined plans will follow.

The companion to this document is the National Development Plan, a ten year strategy for public capital investment of almost €116 Billion. Their joint publication as Project Ireland 2040 is perhaps the most radical break with the past: aligning our investment strategy with our strategic planning documents to, for the first time in the history of our State, create a unified and coherent plan for the country.

We began this journey more than three years ago, and through thousands of submissions from members of the public, and dozens of events and consultation exercises right across the country, we have shaped a shared set of strategic objectives to secure the future prosperity of our country, our regions and our people.

We are therefore delighted to publish the *National Planning Framework* as both a vision and a credible development strategy to shape our national, regional and local spatial development in economic, environmental and social terms to 2040.

Project Ireland 2040 is one vision for one country.

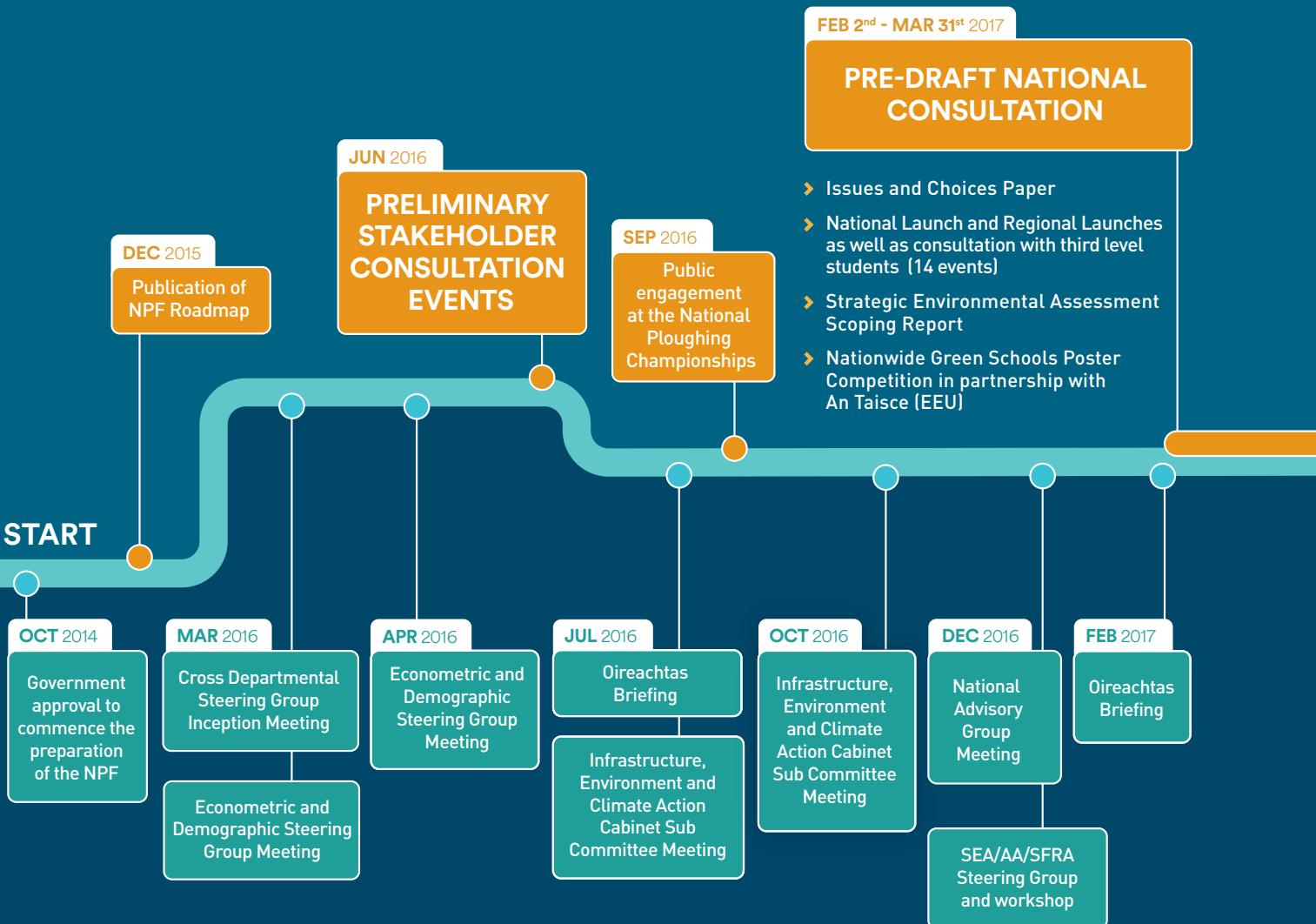


Leo Varadkar TD,
Taoiseach



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Journey to The National Planning Framework



Governance Roadmap

DRAFT PUBLICATION



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CONSULTATION ON THE DRAFT FRAMEWORK

Review of submissions
and further amendments

SEA/AA/SFRA screening
of amendments

FEB 2018

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Regional, Rural
and Gaeltacht
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Sub Committee
Meeting

Infrastructure,
Environment
and Climate
Action Cabinet
Sub Committee
Meeting

Government decision to
align NPF and ten-year
National Investment Plan

Cross
Departmental
Steering Group
Meeting

National Advisory
Group Meeting

Infrastructure,
Environment
and Climate
Action
Sub Committee
Meeting

SEA/AA/SFRA
Steering Group

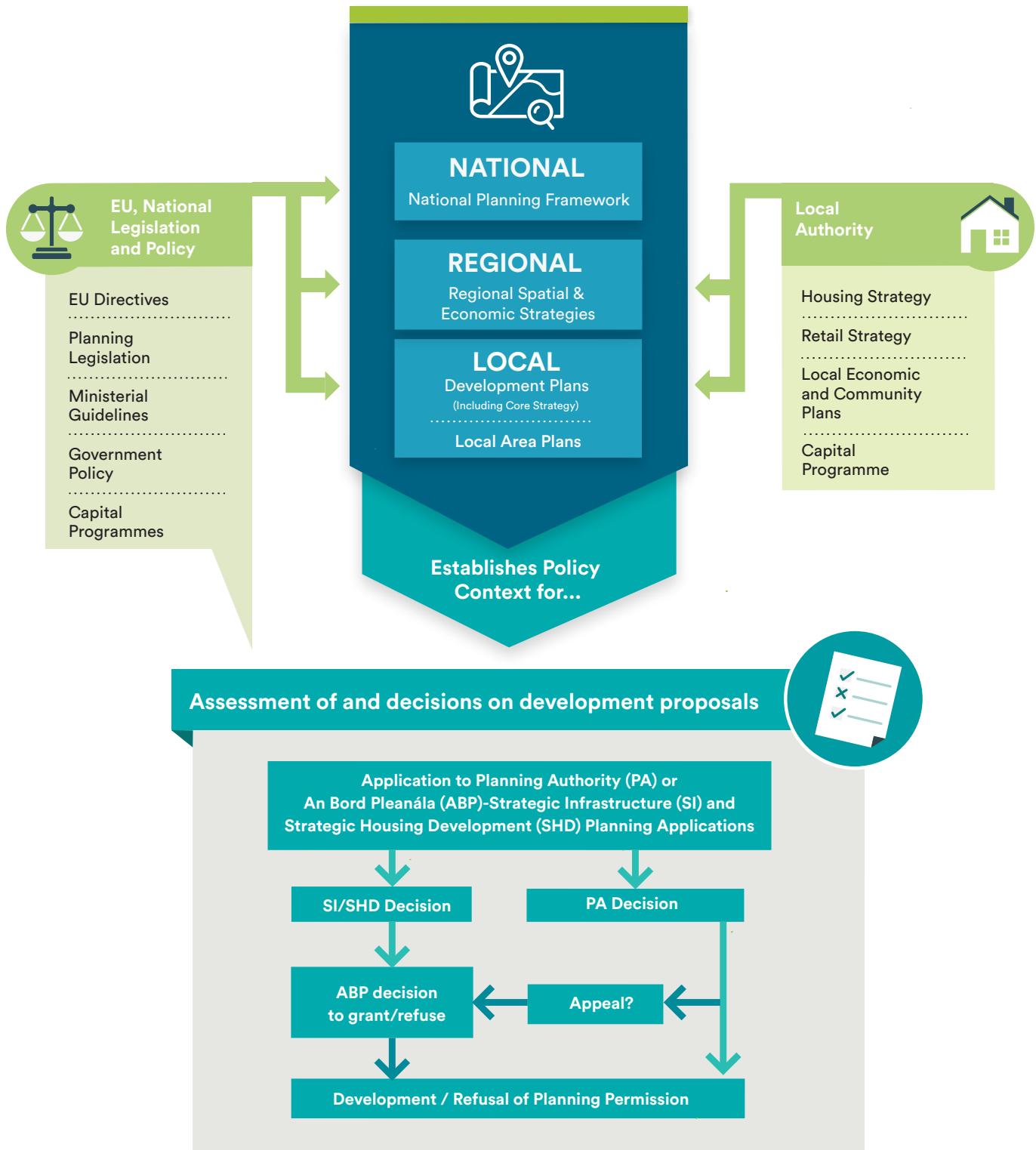
FEB 2018

National Advisory
Group Meeting

Cabinet Meeting

Irish Planning System

An Overview





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.



The Vision

1.1 | Setting out the Vision

The National Planning Framework (NPF) is the Government's high-level strategic plan for shaping the future growth and development of our country out to the year 2040.

It is a framework to guide public and private investment, to create and promote opportunities for our people, and to protect and enhance our environment - from our villages to our cities, and everything around and in between.

By 2040 there will be roughly an extra one million people living in our country¹. This population growth will require hundreds of thousands of new jobs and new homes. If we fail to plan for this growth and for the demands it will place on our built and natural environment, as well as on our social and economic fabric, then we will certainly fail in our responsibility to future generations of Irish men and Irish women. That responsibility is to ensure their prosperity and happiness in an ever changing world.

Given both the scale of the challenge and the time horizon involved, it is by necessity a framework; it cannot determine every detail now, as to do so would limit our flexibility to adapt as circumstances change, as well as our ambition in the face of such change. As a framework document it sets in train a process by which more detailed planning documents must follow: spatial planning, infrastructure planning, social and economic planning. It also outlines certain principles that these plans will have to follow, for example around sustainability, creativity and community.

Too often in the past our policies and actions have sought to elevate one idea over another; they have even in some instances pitted one area against the other. Our ambition is to create a single vision, a shared set of goals for every community across the country. These goals are expressed in this Framework as National Strategic Outcomes (NSOs). They are our shared successes which we believe this plan will deliver.



1.2 | Making the Vision a Reality

We set about achieving our vision by:

- developing a new region-focused strategy for managing growth;
- linking this to a new 10-year investment plan, the Project Ireland 2040 National Development Plan 2018-2027;
- using state lands for certain strategic purposes;
- supporting this with strengthened, more environmentally focused planning at local level; and
- backing the framework up in law with an Independent Office of the Planning Regulator.

A New Strategy for Managing Growth

From an administrative and planning point of view, Ireland is divided into three regions: the Northern and Western, Southern, and Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly areas. We need to manage more balanced growth between these three regions because at the moment Dublin, and to a lesser extent the wider Eastern and Midland area, has witnessed an overconcentration of population, homes and jobs. We cannot let this continue unchecked and so our aim is to see a roughly 50:50 distribution of growth between the Eastern and Midland region, and the Southern and Northern and Western regions, with 75% of the growth to be outside of Dublin and its suburbs.

More balanced growth also means more concentrated growth. We have five cities in Ireland today in terms of population size (>50,000 people): Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Galway and Waterford. In our plan we are targeting these five cities for 50% of overall national growth between them, with Ireland's large and smaller towns, villages and rural areas accommodating the other 50% of growth.

Of course, our five cities are not evenly distributed across our three regions. The Northern and Western region, as well as part of the Midlands, are located beyond the hinterland of cities. As such, Sligo and Athlone fulfil regional roles to a greater extent than elsewhere. Furthermore, our close relationship with Northern Ireland must be taken into account by recognising the key links between Letterkenny and Derry, and Drogheda-Dundalk-Newry.

A major new policy emphasis on renewing and developing existing settlements will be required, rather than continual expansion and sprawl of cities and towns out into the countryside, at the expense of town centres and smaller villages. The target is for at least 40% of all new housing to be delivered within the existing built-up areas of cities, towns and villages on infill and/or brownfield sites. The rest of our homes will continue to be delivered at the edge of settlements and in rural areas.



A New 10-year National Development Plan

The National Planning Framework is published together with a 10-year national investment plan as one vision – Project Ireland 2040, 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. This investment is outlined in the companion document, the National Development Plan (NDP), and details key projects that will make our plans a reality.

As part of this investment, a dedicated €3 Billion Regeneration and Development Fund will be put in place to drive and support the aims of the National Planning Framework, for both urban and rural areas. The Regeneration and Development Fund will support the key principles of strategic growth and renewal across our communities. This will be a competitive fund, whereby regional and local authorities and other agencies may bid to leverage public investment. Two separate rural and urban strands will operate within one overall Fund, meaning places like Newcastle West will not be competing for funding with Limerick City, to give one example.

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 will play a vital role in re-imagining and reshaping those urban areas, providing the homes, places of work and recreation that we need.

In the context of the overall management of the development potential of State lands to support implementation of the National Planning Framework, a new national Regeneration and Development Agency will be established to work with local authorities, public bodies and the business community, harnessing public lands as catalysts to stimulate regeneration and wider investment.

Strengthened and more Environmentally Focused Planning at Local Level

The future planning and development of our communities at local level will be refocused to tackle Ireland’s higher than average carbon-intensity per capita² and enable 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.

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.

Backed by Legislation and an Independent Office of the Planning Regulator

The National Planning Framework will be given full legislative support within the planning system, including regular review and update, to reflect changing circumstances and make adjustments where necessary.

For each of the three regions, the Regional Assemblies will prepare their own strategy in accordance with the Framework set by the NPF. These will be completed by early 2019 and will be known as Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies. County and City Development Plan review cycles will then fall in to line with their respective regional strategies, ensuring that the shared vision is carried through to the local planning level.

The planning legislation underpinning the National Planning Framework will also lead to the creation of a new independent Office of the Planning Regulator (OPR), which will be responsible for monitoring implementation of the NPF.

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



1.3 | Shared Goals – Our National Strategic Outcomes

Our ambition is to create a single vision, a shared set of goals for every community across the country. These goals are expressed in this Framework as National Strategic Outcomes.

They are the shared benefits which we believe this plan will deliver if implemented according to the objectives above.



Compact Growth

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



Enhanced Regional Accessibility

A co-priority is to enhance accessibility between key urban centres of population and their regions. This means ensuring that all regions and urban areas in the country have a high degree of accessibility to Dublin, as well as to each other. Not every route has to look east and so accessibility and connectivity between places like Cork and Limerick, to give one example, and through the Atlantic Economic Corridor to Galway as well as access to the North-West is essential.



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 Economy, supported by Enterprise, Innovation and Skills

This will depend on creating places that can foster enterprise and innovation and attract investment and talent. It can be achieved by building regional economic drivers and by supporting opportunities to diversify and strengthen the rural economy, to leverage the potential of places. Delivering this outcome will require the coordination of growth and place making with investment in world class infrastructure, including digital connectivity, and in skills and talent to support economic competitiveness and enterprise growth.



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 Port of Cork - Ringaskiddy Redevelopment.



Strengthened Rural Economies and 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 and strengthens as a living and working community.



Enhanced Amenities and Heritage

This will ensure that our cities, towns and villages are attractive and can offer a good quality of life. It will require investment in well-designed public realm, which includes public spaces, parks and streets, as well as recreational infrastructure. It also includes amenities in rural areas, such as national and forest parks, activity-based tourism and trails such as greenways, blueways and peatways. This is linked to and must integrate with our built, cultural and natural heritage, which has intrinsic value in defining the character of urban and rural areas and adding to their attractiveness and sense of place.



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.



Sustainable Management of Water, Waste 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.



1.4 | What Happens If We Do Nothing?

Learning from the Past – the 2002 National Spatial Strategy

The National Spatial Strategy (NSS) was published in 2002 as a 20-year spatial plan to guide and direct future development and investment. Much of the focus on the document was 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. National investment didn't follow the plan, and so it was difficult for Government policy to follow it also.

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

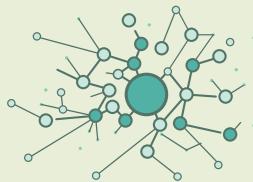


The report of an Expert Group that reviewed the NSS in 2014³ clearly advised that:

- "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".

While Dublin is at the forefront of international competition for mobile, inward investment, the potential of other locations must be harnessed

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.

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.



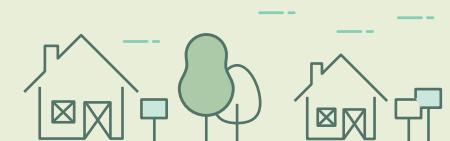
Greater distance between where people live and where people work, notwithstanding changes in technology, as many businesses are increasingly drawn to create the employment opportunities of the future in close proximity in urban areas.



Social disadvantage and inequality perpetuated by geographic location.

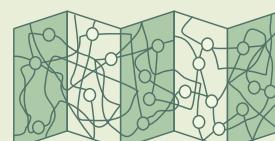


Duplication of new investment in services and infrastructure in rapidly growing areas.



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.



Some Key Facts and Figures

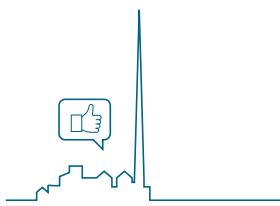


When economic output and stability are measured, Ireland is firmly within the top ten countries in the world, scoring highly in terms of gross domestic product or GDP per capita⁴, human development⁵, democracy⁶ and foreign direct investment⁷ (FDI).

TOP 20

Icons representing quality of life and environmental performance, including a person under an umbrella, a star, and a leaf.

Ireland's comparison ranking in areas such as **quality of life⁸** and **environmental performance⁹** is not quite as high, placing us just within the top twenty countries in the world.



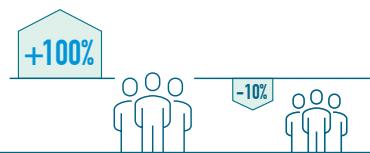
Dublin is ranked outside the top thirty cities in the world for liveability¹⁰.



The ESRI¹¹ projects that the population of Ireland will increase by around one million people or by 20% over 2016 levels, to almost 5.7 million people by 2040.



Demand for school places is set to increase to 2025 and for third-level education places to peak in the years immediately thereafter.



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.

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.



This will give rise to a need for at least an additional half a million new homes by 2040.

New ways of working, new trade partners and new relationships between producers and consumers will continue to transform the business landscape.

1.5 UN Sustainable Development Goals

Sustainability is at the heart of long term planning and the National Planning Framework seeks to ensure that the decisions we take today, meet our own needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. The challenge of creating a more sustainable future for Ireland is a collective responsibility on all of us.

Since 2015, Ireland has been a signatory to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which frame national agendas and policies to 2030. The SDGs build on the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and have a broader agenda that applies to all countries.

There is significant alignment between the UN SDGs and the National Planning Framework's National Strategic Outcomes (NSOs) in areas such as climate action, clean energy, sustainable cities and communities, economic growth, reduced inequalities and innovation and infrastructure, as well as education and health.



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

1 NO POVERTY	2 ZERO HUNGER	3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING
4 QUALITY EDUCATION	5 GENDER EQUALITY	6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION
7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY	8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH	9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE
10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES	11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES	12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION
13 CLIMATE ACTION	14 LIFE BELOW WATER	15 LIFE ON LAND
16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS	17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS	

Source: United Nations

2

A New Way Forward

2.1 | Realising Ambition and Potential

The purpose of the National Planning Framework is to enable all parts of Ireland, whether rural or urban, to successfully accommodate growth and change, by facilitating a shift towards Ireland's regions and cities other than Dublin, while also recognising Dublin's ongoing key role.

Given the variety of rural and urban communities throughout Ireland, each with capacity for growth and development that can significantly influence their surrounding area, this Framework targets as much potential growth in the rest of Ireland, as in the cities.

The NPF is a long-term Framework that sets out how Ireland can move away from the current, 'business as usual' pattern of development. This means that it seeks to disrupt trends that have been apparent for the last fifty years and have accelerated over the past twenty.

Shifting a long term trend will not be achieved overnight or even in a short number of years. It will require careful balance, that on the one hand is clearly focused, while on the other, enables realisation of the widespread ambition and potential that clearly exist throughout the country.

As the largest centres of population, employment and services outside the Capital, the four cities other than Dublin, provide a focus for their regions. However, it will require the combined potential of all four cities to be realised at an unprecedented rate, to create viable alternatives to Dublin, which itself must also continue to accommodate growth.



The NPF is a long-term Framework that sets out how Ireland can move away from the current, 'business as usual' pattern of development.

The four cities and Dublin are geographically distributed, but their influence does not extend to all parts of Ireland, in particular the North-Western and Midland regions. It is critical that those regions also are served by accessible centres of employment and services that can be a focal point for investment and have the widest possible regional influence. On the basis of available evidence, it is apparent that Sligo in the North-West and Athlone in the Midlands, fulfil these roles to a greater extent than elsewhere.

It is also the case that there are significant cross-border interactions focused on key settlement networks, specifically Letterkenny-Derry in the context of the North-West Growth Partnership and Drogheda-Dundalk-Newry in the context of the Dublin-Belfast economic corridor. The growth potential associated with these interrelated networks is also important for regional development.

Notwithstanding these considerations, it is emphasised that a settlement that is not specifically identified or for which specific targets are not set in this national Framework, is by no means precluded from future growth or investment. This must be considered at a regional and local scale, for which statutory planning processes exist, taking account of the general context set by the NPF. This allows for decision-making at regional and local level, which will enable investment to be properly aligned with planning, in order to achieve the National Strategic Outcomes identified.

This means that that an element of future growth must be identified to take place in Ireland's key regional centres and towns, to lead the development of their regions. The amount prioritised will be related to that targeted elsewhere and will have a knock-on impact, but this Framework also enables significant scope for ambition and balanced rural and urban development, supported by matching investment, throughout Ireland's, towns, villages and rural areas.

Choices therefore need to be made to support our regional centres and towns, learning from past experiences where population and development estimates were overstated and could not provide an effective basis for planning and investment in infrastructure and services. The alternative is the situation that had arisen by the end of the 2000's, when there was enough land zoned for a population of 10 million people in Ireland, but not located where required. We cannot continue with such a lack of focus.

In setting out a context for targeting future growth, this Framework does not seek to cap or limit the potential of places. It does, however, provide a common point of reference and co-ordination, based on the latest available evidence, to be applied nationally.

2.2 | Overview of the NPF Strategy

The key 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 outline a new way forward that can channel future growth. The NPF will be aligned with and supported by new and improved investment and governance arrangements. As a strategy, all aspects are to be implemented together and are mutually complementary:

Ireland's Three Regions

- Targeting a level of growth in the country's Northern and Western and Southern Regions combined, to at least match that projected in the East and Midland Region.
- Improving access from the north-west to Dublin and the east and to Cork, Limerick, Galway and Waterford to the south.
- Improving access between Cork, Limerick, Galway and Waterford.
- Recognising the extent to which Sligo in the North-West and Athlone in the Midlands fulfil the role of regional centres.
- Recognising Letterkenny in the context of the North-West Gateway Initiative and Drogheda-Dundalk in the context of the Dublin-Belfast economic corridor as important cross border networks for regional development.
- Enabling, through the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy process for each Regional Assembly area, regional centres of population and employment growth.

Ireland's Capital

- Supporting the future growth and success of Dublin as Ireland's leading global city of scale, 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.
- Addressing infrastructural bottlenecks, improving citizens' quality of life and increasing housing supply in the right locations.

Ireland's Cities

- Supporting ambitious growth targets to enable the 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.
- Enabling the four cities to be regional drivers and to lead in partnership with each other and as partners in regional/inter-regional networks as viable alternatives to Dublin.
- Focusing investment to improve the collective 'offer' within each of the four cities, i.e. infrastructure, quality of life and choice in terms of housing, employment and amenities.

Ireland's Rural Fabric

- Reversing town/village and rural population decline, by encouraging new roles and functions for buildings, streets and sites.
- Supporting the sustainable growth of rural communities, to include development in rural areas.
- Implementing a properly planned local authority-led approach to identifying, meeting and managing the real housing needs arising in countryside areas.
- Improving local connectivity to principal communication (broadband), energy, transport and water networks.
- Promoting new economic opportunities arising from digital connectivity and indigenous innovation and enterprise as well as more traditional natural and resource assets (e.g. food, energy, tourism), underpinned by the quality of life offering.

Compact Growth

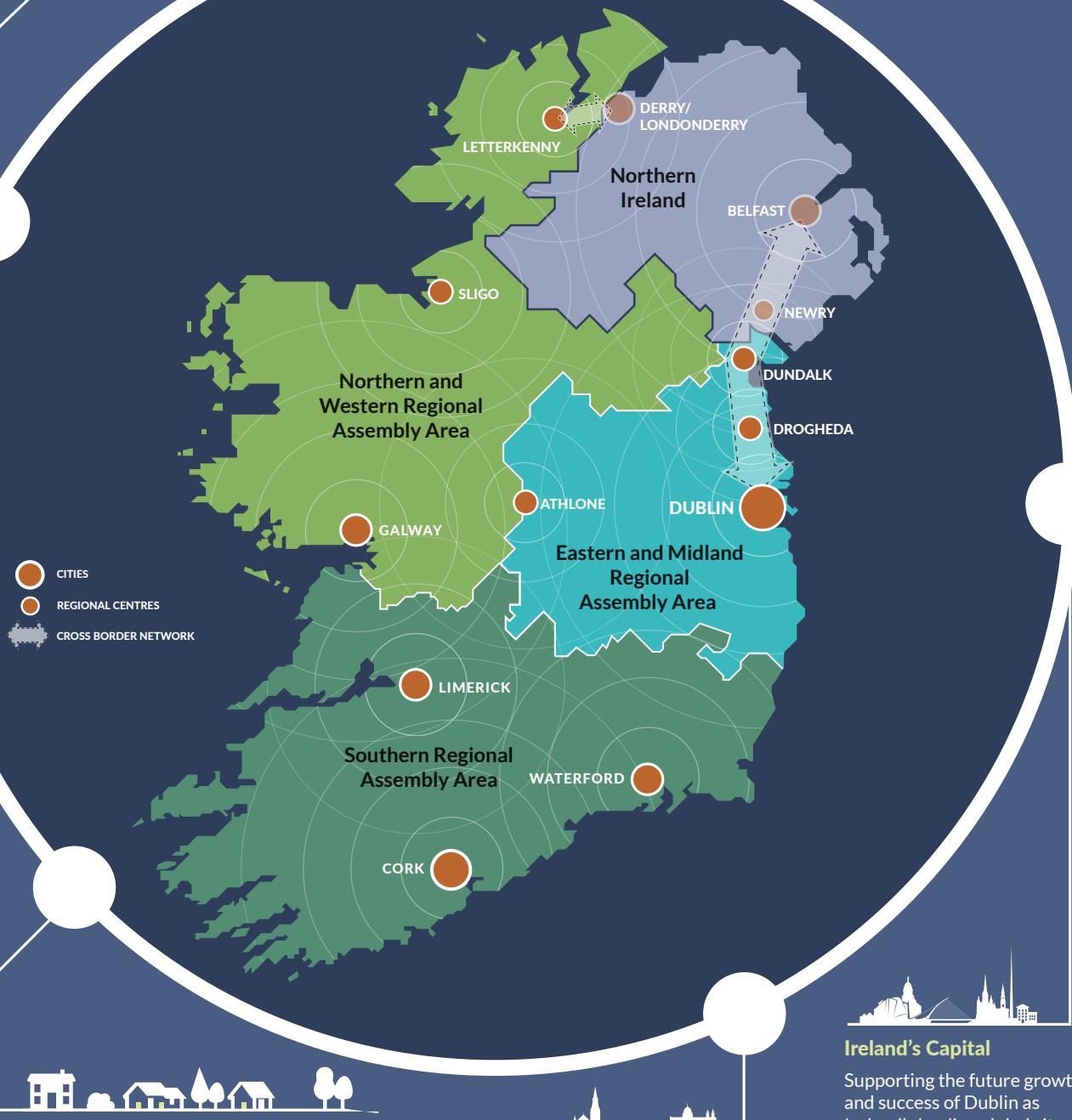
- Targeting a greater proportion (40%) of future housing development to be within and close to the existing 'footprint' of built-up areas.
- Making better use of under-utilised land and buildings, including 'infill', 'brownfield' and publicly owned sites and vacant and under-occupied buildings, with higher housing and jobs densities, better serviced by existing facilities and public transport.
- Supporting both urban regeneration and rural rejuvenation through a €3 Billion Regeneration and Development Fund and the establishment of a National Regeneration and Development Agency.

Ireland's Three Regions

Targeting a level of growth in the country's Northern and Western and Southern Regions combined, to at least match that projected in the Eastern and Midland Region.

Compact Growth

Targeting a greater proportion (40%) of future housing development to be within and close to the existing 'footprint' of built-up areas.



Ireland's Rural Fabric

Reversing town/village and rural population decline, by encouraging new roles and functions for buildings, streets and sites.

Ireland's Capital

Supporting the future growth and success of Dublin as Ireland's leading global city of scale, by better managing Dublin's growth to ensure that more of it can be accommodated within and close to the City.

Ireland's Cities

Supporting ambitious growth targets to enable the 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.



The various policies in this Framework are structured under National Policy Objectives (NPOs). 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. They are highlighted throughout the Document and are listed together in Appendix 1.

Integrating the Environment into Planning for the Future

In developing the National Planning Framework 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 Appraisal (SFRA) have been carried out as part of the preparation of this Framework and the results have been incorporated into the process.

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 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 11.



2.3 | Strategy Development

Projections

Projecting how Ireland's population will grow and change over the next 20 years, based on a demographic and econometric model developed by the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI)¹², is a core element of this Framework. As the projections relate to the longer term, they are indicative of what levels of growth can be expected.

Population projections undertaken for national spatial plans in the past have been accurate in projecting long-term national population growth to within a few percentage points of the actual outcome¹³. Unlike previous projections, based entirely on demographics, the ESRI work undertaken for this Framework also factored in econometric data, including employment, jobs and house prices and modelled the spatial distribution of the projected population.

Initially, the ESRI modelled a continuation of current population and economic trends to 2040, as a 'business as usual' scenario. The ESRI Report indicates that under this scenario, Ireland's population will grow by just under 900,000 people, to almost 5.7 million people by 2040¹⁴. This is the baseline from which potential alternative strategies were developed.



A key factor in any population projection for Ireland is the pattern of migration, which has historically varied as a result of alternating periods of emigration or immigration, influenced by underlying economic conditions. It is clear that an increase in net in-migration to Ireland could have a positive impact on future population growth. While the reverse also applies, the ESRI projected outlook, which is a mid-range scenario, is based on sustained in-migration and economic growth to 2040.

To account for the possibility of higher net in-migration over the period to 2040, an allowance is made in the NPF to enable ambition and flexibility in planning for future growth. This means that full achievement of the targets set out in this Framework would accommodate around 1.1 million additional people in Ireland to 2040, which is approximately 25% more than the ESRI baseline projection. Progress towards these targets will be subject to review and further detail on phasing is set out in Chapter 10.

In setting overall targets for future growth, it is a pattern of development that is being targeted, rather than precise numbers. From a long-term, national perspective, the targeted location, relative scale and proportionality of growth will assist in monitoring and assessing delivery and performance.

Alternative Scenarios

In developing this Framework, three broad questions were considered:

- 1) 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.
- 2) 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.
- 3) ***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.

To test these three questions, a range of options was developed for each. Different combinations of the options were then used to generate alternative future planning scenarios. These scenarios were modelled by the ESRI and potential outcomes assessed. The most realistic, reasonable, viable and implementable option was identified to form the basis of a preferred strategy for the National Planning Framework.

2.4 | Growing Our Regions

A range of options were considered and applied to the three regions established in 2014. These range from 'business as usual', under which a majority of growth would occur in the Eastern and Midland Region if current trends continue, 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.

It is evident from the analysis undertaken, that a regional dominance approach is neither realistic nor implementable given the significance of Dublin and would result in a diminished scale of overall national development.

In accordance with the National Planning Framework vision, 'regional parity' is considered to be a more credible, reasonable and viable alternative 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 at least equate to that projected for the Eastern and Midland Region.

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

National Policy Objective 1a

The projected level of population and employment growth in the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly area will be at least matched by that of the 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 current 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: 490,000 - 540,000 additional people i.e. a population of around 2.85 million;
- Northern and Western Region: 160,000 - 180,000 additional people i.e. a population of just over 1 million;
- Southern Region: 340,000 - 380,000 additional people i.e. a population of almost 2 million.

In similar terms, applying the ESRI projections for around two-thirds of a million additional jobs in Ireland by 2040 and seeking a shift in the pattern away from current trends, means planning for a pattern of:

National Policy Objective 1c

- Eastern and Midland Region: around 320,000 additional people in employment i.e. 1.34 million in total;
- Northern and Western Region: around 115,000 additional people in employment i.e. 450,000 (0.45m) in total;
- Southern Region: around 225,000 additional people in employment i.e. 880,000 (0.875m) in total.

The work undertaken for the National Planning Framework indicates that the key to securing the scale of regional population and employment growth potential above is closely related to how we address the latter two questions in Section 2.2, relating to concentration/dispersal and the physical format for future development.

It is evident from the analysis undertaken, that a regional dominance approach is neither realistic nor implementable given the significance of Dublin and would result in a diminished scale of overall national development.

2.5 | Building 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.

Under ‘business as usual’, a continued focus on growth in and around Dublin and to some extent Cork, Limerick, Galway and Waterford without addressing the 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.

This is not a desirable scenario and in considering alternative options, the two key variables are the scale of concentration of activity and the relative distance, or ease of accessibility, to larger centres of population and employment, i.e. ‘centres of scale’. There are therefore important twin elements of strategy required to address issues of scale and peripherality in Ireland. Both have significant influence on a wider geographic area.

The first, which is 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 and Midlands;
- the significant growth potential of Cork, Limerick, Galway and Waterford separate from Dublin would be realised, while at the same time enhancing and enabling Dublin’s unique role as an international city of scale;
- Ireland’s regions, and in particular the north and west and midlands, would be turned around to better harness their potential for focused investment.

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 and larger regionally distributed centres are replicated and on key east-west and north-south routes;
- A particular focus on improving accessibility and connectivity northwards on the emerging Atlantic Economic Corridor (AEC) network, that links a network of major centres on the western seaboard;
- Improved accessibility and connectivity from surrounding regions, focused on key routes to a number of larger and regionally distributed centres.

To deliver the above means:

National Policy Objective 2a

- A target of half (50%) of future population and employment growth will be focused in the existing five cities and their suburbs¹⁵.

National Policy Objective 2b

- The regional roles of Athlone in the Midlands, Sligo and Letterkenny in the North-West and the Letterkenny-Derry and Drogheada-Dundalk-Newry cross-border networks will be identified and supported in the relevant Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy.

National Policy Objective 2c

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

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

2.6 | Securing Compact and Sustainable Growth

The physical format of urban development in Ireland is one of our greatest national development challenges. Analysis undertaken in the preparation of the National Planning Framework, shows that more than anything else, getting the physical form and location of future development right offers the best prospects for unlocking 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 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;
- That 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 wishing to live, work and invest, and
- A significantly higher carbon footprint than the EU average, in part due to higher transport and energy demand, mostly based on fossil fuels, that has worked against achieving agreed climate action targets.

A preferred approach would be compact development that focuses on reusing previously developed, 'brownfield' land, building up infill sites, which may not have been built on before 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 city to the smallest village, has the potential to make a transformational 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 and recreational opportunities, as well as to walk or cycle more and use the car less.

Along with transport demand, higher densities and shorter travel distances will also reduce energy demand and use. Multi-storey and terraced buildings in close proximity require less energy and make renewables-based systems of energy distribution such as district heating, more feasible.

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

- 1 The 'liveability' or quality of life 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;
- 2 Making the continuous regeneration and development 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;
- 3 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;
- 4 Linking regeneration and redevelopment initiatives** to climate action, to support a reduced carbon footprint through greater energy efficiency and use of renewables.

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 growth based approach¹⁶. Accordingly, subject to implementation of sustainable planning and environmental principles, the National Planning Framework sets the following urban development targets:

National Policy Objective 3a

Deliver at least 40% of all new homes nationally, within the built-up footprint of existing settlements¹⁷.

National Policy Objective 3b

Deliver at least half (50%) of all new homes that are targeted in the five Cities and suburbs of Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Galway and Waterford, within their existing built-up footprints¹⁸.

National Policy Objective 3c

Deliver at least 30% of all new homes that are targeted in settlements other than the five Cities and their suburbs, within their existing built-up footprints¹⁹.



A summary of the key national targets for structuring overall national growth, promoting regional parity, building accessible centres of scale and securing compact and sustainable growth is set out in the table below:

Table 2.1 | The NPF at a Glance: Targeted Pattern of Growth, 2040

National Policy Objective	Eastern and Midland	Southern	Northern and Western
1. Growing Our Regions	+ 490,000 - 540,000 people (2.85m total) +320,000 in employment (1.34m total)	+ 340,000 - 380,000 people (2m total) +225,000 in employment (880,000 total)	+160,000 - 180,000 people (1m total) +115,000 in employment (450,000 total)
2. Building Stronger Regions: Accessible Centres of Scale ²⁰	Dublin City and Suburbs: +235,000 - 290,000 people (at least 1.41 million total) Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy to set out a strategic development framework for the Region, leading with the key role of Athlone in the Midlands and the Drogheda-Dundalk-Newry cross-border network	Cork City and Suburbs: +105,000 - 125,000 people (at least 315,000 total) Limerick City and Suburbs: +50,000 - 55,000 people (at least 145,000 total) Waterford City and Suburbs: +30,000 - 35,000 people (at least 85,000 total) Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy to set out a strategic development framework for the Region	Galway City and Suburbs: +40,000 - 45,000 people (at least 120,000 total) RSES to set out a strategic development framework for the Region, leading with the key role of Sligo in the North-West, Athlone in the Midlands and the Letterkenny-Derry cross-border network
3. Compact, Smart, Sustainable Growth	50% of new city housing within existing Dublin City and suburbs footprint 30% all new housing elsewhere, within existing urban footprints	50% new city housing on within existing Cork, Limerick and Waterford Cities and Suburbs footprints 30% all new housing elsewhere, within existing urban footprints	50% of new city housing within existing Galway City and suburbs footprint 30% all new housing elsewhere, within existing urban footprints



Effective Regional Development

3.1 | Strategic Development of Ireland's Regions

Regional governance and regional development are essential cogs for translating and delivering national policy at a local scale. The three Regional Assemblies are tasked to co-ordinate, promote and support the strategic planning and sustainable development of the regions.

Each of the Regional Assemblies has a leadership role to play in identifying regional policies and coordinating initiatives that support the delivery and implementation of national planning policy. The primary vehicle for this is the preparation and implementation of Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies. These strategies will provide regional level strategic planning and economic policy in support of the implementation of the National Planning Framework and provide a greater level of focus around the National Policy Objectives and National Strategic Outcomes of the NPF.

While each of the three regions is distinct, they do not operate in isolation from each other and there are many complementing and connecting assets shared between regions. For both the Eastern and Midland and the Northern and Western Regions, interaction with Northern Ireland is a critical consideration. Due to the strategic national and regional nature of some development proposals, a consistent policy approach to regional and economic planning will also be important.

This section outlines high level planning and place-making policies and enablers to help shape the strategic development of our regions.

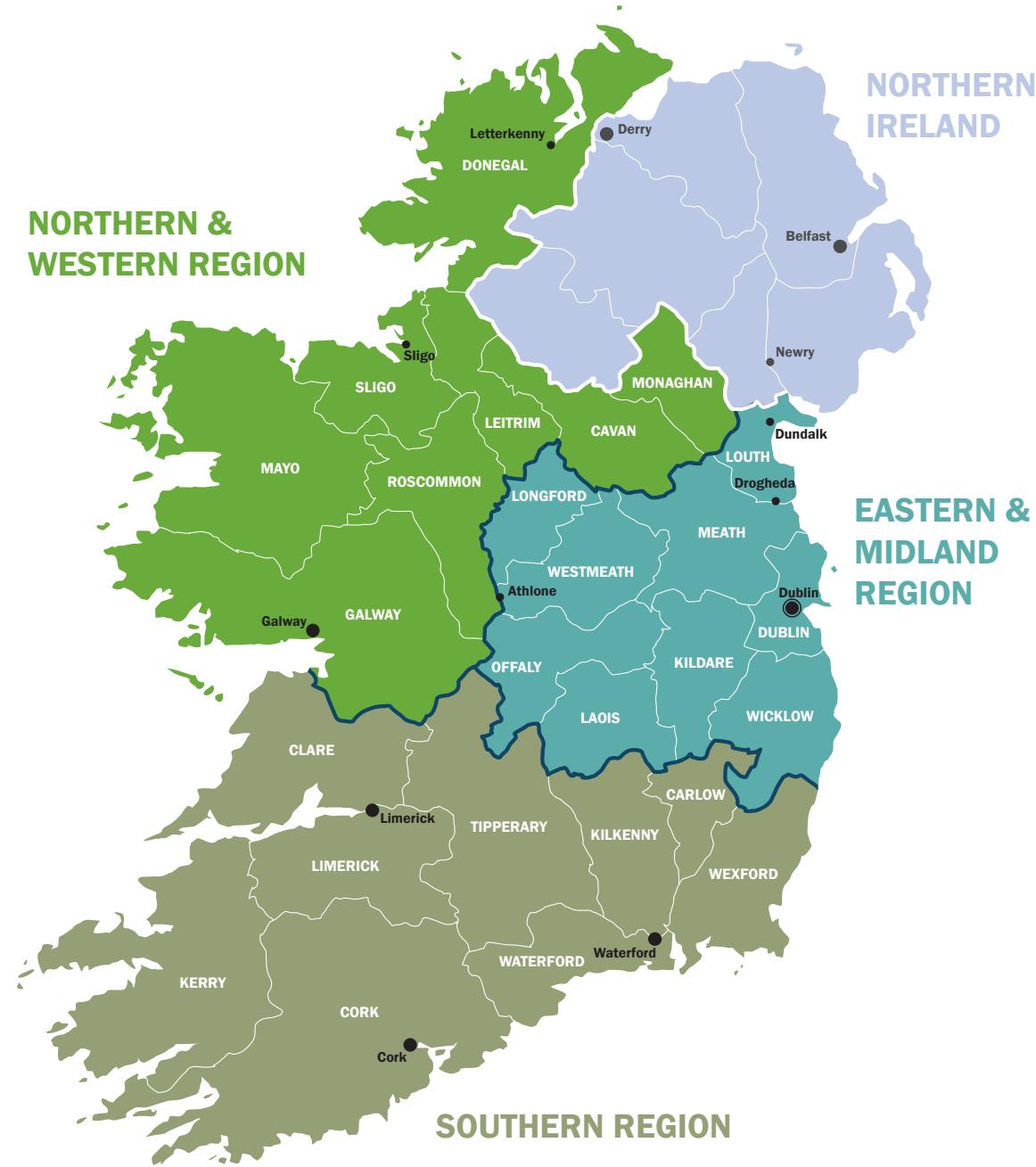
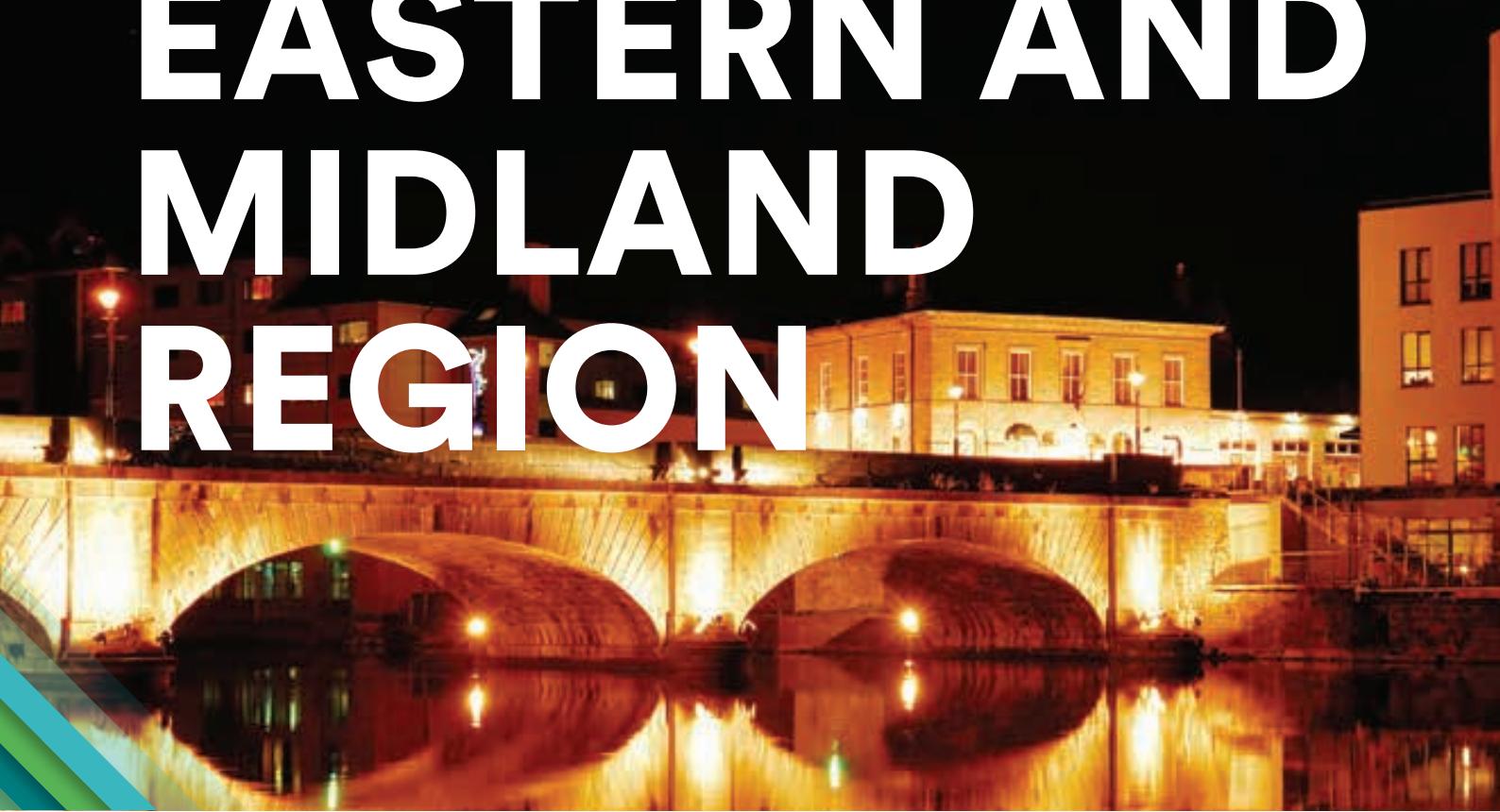


Figure 3.1 | Ireland's Regional Assembly Areas and Northern Ireland

EASTERN AND MIDLAND REGION



3.2 Eastern and Midland Region

The Eastern and Midland part of Ireland will, by 2040, be a Region of around 2.85 million people, at least half a million more than today. The Region's most significant place-making challenge will be to plan and deliver future development in a way that enhances and reinforces its urban and rural structure and moves more towards self-sustaining, rather than commuter driven activity, therefore allowing its various city, metropolitan, town, village and rural components to play to their strengths, while above all, moving away from a sprawl-led development model.

This Region is one of significant contrasts, encompassing Dublin and its wider commuting catchment into surrounding and nearby counties and towns, some of which have grown very rapidly in recent decades to significant scale, particularly where located along motorway and railway corridors. Beyond Dublin and the principal transport corridors, the Region is more rural in character, with variation both within the counties adjoining Dublin and between the Mid-Eastern counties and the Midlands. All counties within this Region together with their main towns are strategically placed in a national context.

One of the most significant spatial development changes in recent years has been driven by the rising economic strength of Dublin, rapidly improving transport connectivity and issues such as housing cost. This has given rise to more intensive interactions between Dublin and various towns along the key road and rail routes, including the Dublin-Belfast corridor and settlements along it that function like a linear urban network, as well as wider rural areas, creating both self-sustaining economic and overspill commuter-driven development.

In the wider Mid-East Region, the rapid growth experienced by many towns in recent decades was mainly driven by housing, rather than jobs-centred development. An integrated approach to the development of these and similar towns is a priority, but playing to local strengths and securing employment opportunities to drive self-sustaining, rather than mainly housing-led development.

The Eastern and Midland part of Ireland will, by 2040, be a Region of around 2.85 million people, at least half a million more than today.



Mid-East

The strategic location of counties Kildare, Meath and Wicklow, proximate to the Capital, has in part, resulted in significant development in a region characterised by the dominance of Dublin. The Mid-East has experienced high levels of population growth in recent decades, at more than twice the national growth rate.

Managing the challenges of future growth is critical to this regional area. A more balanced and sustainable pattern of development, with a greater focus on addressing employment creation, local infrastructure needs and addressing the legacy of rapid growth, must be prioritised. This means that housing development should be primarily based on employment growth, accessibility by sustainable transport modes and quality of life, rather than unsustainable commuting patterns.

Midlands

The Midlands Regional area comprises counties Laois, Longford, Offaly and Westmeath. These counties are not located immediately adjacent to Dublin, but the wider influence of the Metropolitan area has resulted in some settlements in this regional area experiencing substantial population growth at an unsustainable rate, while others have experienced decline.

The location of the Midlands is strategically important, bordering both the Northern and Western, and Southern Regions. Its central location in Ireland can be leveraged to enable significant strategic investment to a greater extent than at present, supported by a sustainable pattern of population growth, with a focus on strategic national employment and infrastructure development, quality of life and a strengthening of the urban cores of the county towns and other principal settlements.

Due to strategic location and scale of population, employment and services, Athlone has an influence that extends to part of all three Regional Assembly areas. Given the importance of regional interdependencies, it will be necessary to prepare a co-ordinated strategy for Athlone at both regional and town level, to ensure that the town and environs has the capacity to grow sustainably and to secure investment, as the key regional centre in the Midlands.

Louth/North-East

While County Louth is located in the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly area, the North-East is a functional area that comprises part of two Regional Assembly areas that also includes most of County Cavan and County Monaghan in the Northern and Western Region. The key driver for this regional area is the Dublin-Belfast cross-border network, focused on Drogheda, Dundalk and Newry.

The significant influence of Dublin and the cross-border network extends to the county towns and other settlements within the north-eastern regional area as well as to Fingal and parts of County Meath. In identifying opportunities for leveraged employment and sustainable population growth, development must be supported by enhanced connectivity, quality of life, strengthened urban cores and more compact housing in urban settlements. This is to protect and manage the strategic capacity of transport infrastructure and to ensure that the distinctiveness of settlements and rural areas is maintained.

It will be necessary to prepare co-ordinated strategies for Dundalk and Drogheda at both regional and town level to ensure that they have the capacity to grow sustainably and secure investment as key centres on the Drogheda-Dundalk-Newry cross-border network.

The Eastern and Midland part of Ireland will, by 2040, be a Region of around 2.85 million people, at least half a million more than today.



Key future planning and development and place-making policy priorities for the Eastern and Midland Region include:

- Enabling the complementary development of large and county towns in the wider Greater Dublin Area and Midland areas on the key strategic and public transport routes in a regionally co-ordinated manner, with an enhanced emphasis on measures to promote self-sustaining economic and employment based development opportunities to match and catch-up on rapid phases of housing delivery in recent years.
- More effective strategic planning and coordination of the future development of nationally and regionally strategic locations at points that straddle boundaries between this and neighbouring regions as in the example of Athlone, which is a focal point for an area reaching into much of this and neighbouring regions in economic and employment, transport, education and public service delivery and retailing terms.
- A focused approach to compact, sequential and sustainable development of the larger urban areas along the Dublin – Belfast economic and transport corridor, along which there are settlements with significant populations such as Dundalk and Drogheda.
- More emphasis on consolidating the development of places that grew rapidly in the past decade or so with large scale commuter driven housing development with a particular focus on addressing local community and amenity facility provision in many of the larger commuter towns through targeted investment under relevant NPF National Strategic Outcomes.
- Preparing and implementing a regional priorities programme, to shape and inform delivery of the Regeneration and Development Initiative. Part of this programme should identify significant ready-to-go city, rural town and village and rural rejuvenation priorities which could harness publicly owned land and other assets that are not being used actively at present such as former healthcare, military, transport and other complexes and combining the potential of such assets with community and wider private and public sector support and investment to bring about the transformation of both urban and rural areas and places in an integrated manner.
- Tourism development and promotional branding to ensure that areas like the Midlands and Lakelands areas are developed and promoted in such a way as to play their full part in tapping the economic potential of regional and rural areas in the region.
- Harnessing the potential of the region in renewable energy terms across the technological spectrum from wind and solar to biomass and, where applicable, wave energy, focusing in particular on the extensive tracts of publicly owned peat extraction areas in order to enable a managed transition of the local economies of such areas in gaining the economic benefits of greener energy.
- Building on the progress made in developing an integrated network of greenways, blueways and peatways, that will support the diversification of rural and regional economies and promote more sustainable forms of travel and activity based recreation utilising canal and former rail and other routes.



Dublin City and Metropolitan Area

Dublin's functional reach extends beyond the four constituent local authorities and as a capital city competes internationally to attract talent and investment.

While Dublin has generally performed well in recent years, key challenges relate to housing affordability, transport and urban amenities/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 and a more compact urban form, facilitated through well designed higher density development.

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).

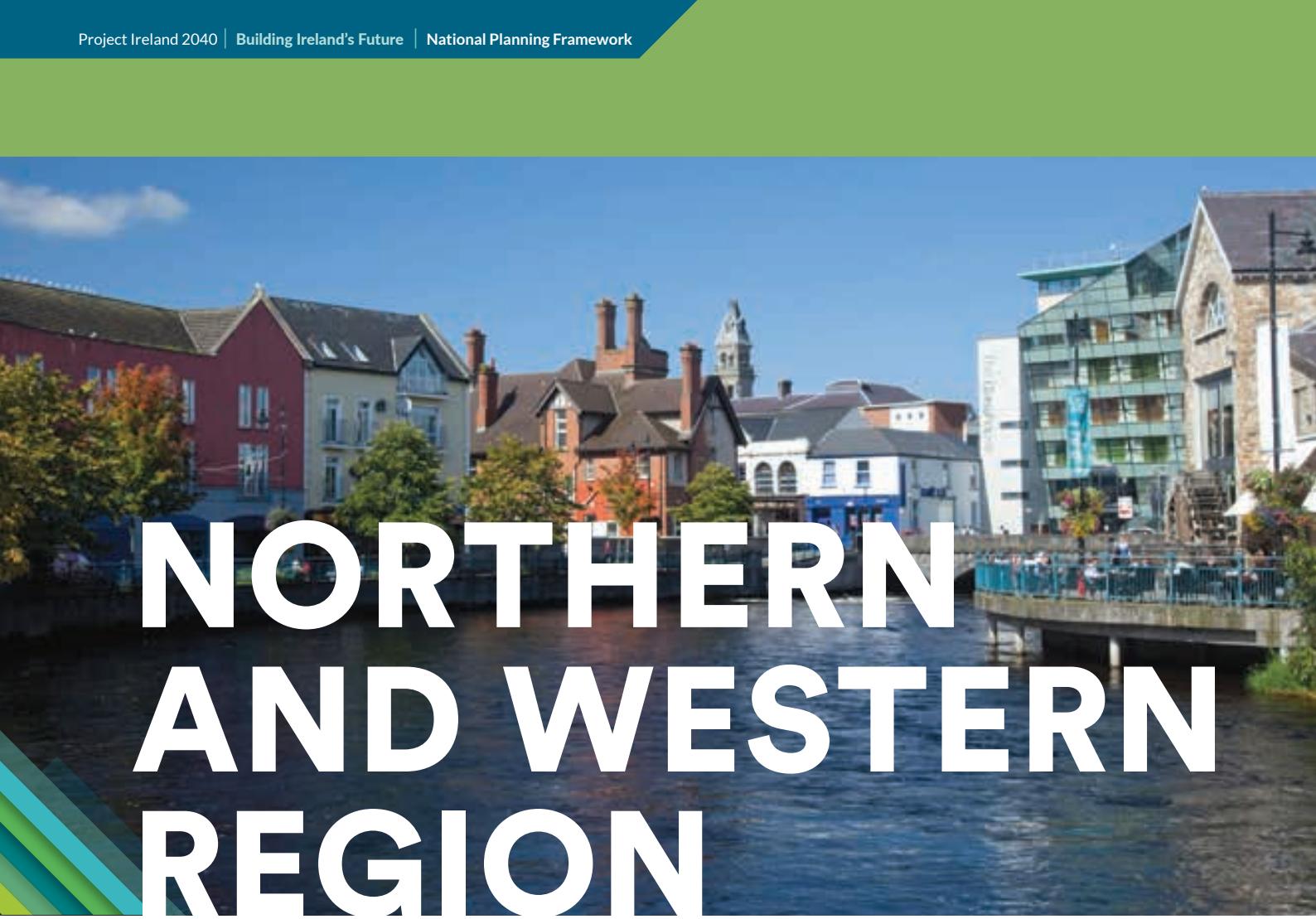
This requires a holistic approach to ensure that residential and employment development is served by transport, infrastructure and amenities. It also means ensuring that smaller scale opportunities for infill and brownfield development are realised.

Dublin's continued performance is critical to Ireland's competitiveness. Improving the strategic infrastructure required to sustain growth will be a key priority as part of the Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP), and will include enhanced airport and port access and capacity, expansion and improvement of the bus, DART and Luas/Metro networks and several national public service delivery projects, such as the Children's Hospital, that will also serve the country as a whole.



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, Clonburris 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 Link, DART expansion and the Luas green line link to Metro Link;
- The development of an improved bus-based system, with better orbital connectivity and integration with other transport networks;
- Ensuring that water supply and waste-water needs are met by new national projects to enhance the city's and the wider Greater Dublin Area'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;
- Improving sustainability in terms of energy, waste management and resource efficiency and water, to include district heating and water conservation.



NORTHERN AND WESTERN REGION

3.3 | Northern and Western Region

The Northern and Western region justifies a particular focus in this Framework. This is due to a historically lower level of urbanisation compared to other regions, proximity to the border and risks posed by Brexit.

The spatial contrast between the five existing cities in Ireland, all south of a line from Dublin to Galway and cities in Northern Ireland such as Belfast and Derry emphasises this underdevelopment and the strategic imperative of building up the strength of this part of the Country.

Such an approach would recognise and build on the facts that the Region contains both the fastest growing city in Ireland over the past 50 years (Galway), as well as places that have far reaching positive effects on their surrounding areas, well beyond what might be suggested by their scale in population terms.

Significant towns such as Sligo function in their areas in a similar manner, but at a different scale to the bigger cities and their regions. Letterkenny, with Derry City and Strabane in Northern Ireland also functions as a cross-border city region.

These city and city-region functions will be supported and enhanced over the lifetime of this Framework through relevant policies and investment but with a strong emphasis on securing a compact-growth development approach.

Through such policies, by 2040, this will be a region of more than 1 million people, 180,000 more than today, with the biggest challenge it faces being the identification and implementation of actions that will build up its urban structure, diversify and strengthen its rural areas as they transition towards a more broadly based mix of economic activities sufficient to underpin long term self-sustaining local communities. This will be complemented by improved accessibility.

Donegal

Donegal is spatially unique within the island of Ireland, due to its extensive coastline and proximate relationship to Northern Ireland. Historically, the North Western part of the island has demonstrated significant resilience in competing within its peripheral environment and is characterised by cross border dependencies, between Donegal and Derry/Strabane, related to employment, education, healthcare and retail activity.

Addressing enhanced connectivity is a priority for this regional area as well as enabling growth and competitiveness to support the strong links that exist between Letterkenny and Northern Ireland. While a co-ordinated strategy exists through the North-West Growth Partnership, there is scope to further reflect this approach in a regional and local spatial planning context to ensure that Letterkenny and environs has the capacity to grow sustainably and secure investment in the context of the cross-border North-West Gateway Initiative.

North-West

As a regional centre, Sligo serves a large hinterland that extends beyond County Sligo into surrounding counties, to include parts of Donegal, Leitrim, Mayo and Roscommon, supported in particular by nearby county towns. Sligo's significance as a centre of employment and services is much greater than its scale in terms of population.

The presence of strong employment sectors such as Pharma and Engineering, Higher Education Institutes (HEIs), cultural institutions and health services indicate latent capacity for Sligo to enhance its regional role. This can be achieved through building critical mass of population and further employment, in tandem with enhanced accessibility and quality of life. Given the importance of regional interdependencies, this must be in partnership with other places and institutions.

For example, the emerging Connacht-Ulster Alliance Technological University (Galway-Mayo IT, IT Sligo and Letterkenny IT) is a collaborative network approach to regional development extending throughout the North-Western Assembly region as a whole. It will be necessary to prepare a co-ordinated strategy for Sligo at both regional and town level to ensure that the Town can grow sustainably and secure investment as a key regional centre.





Cavan-Monaghan/North East

Within the Northern and Western region, most of County Cavan and County Monaghan have a more easterly focus than elsewhere. They comprise part of a North-Eastern functional area that also includes County Louth in the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly area. The key driver for this regional area is the Dublin-Belfast cross-border network, the influence of which, as well as that of the Dublin Metropolitan area, extends into Cavan and Monaghan.

Addressing economic resilience and connectivity will be strategic priorities for this area. The maintenance of seamless cross-border movement for people, goods and services, together with improvements in digital and physical infrastructure will create new opportunities to leverage employment and for sustainable population growth, focused on the county towns. Enhanced connectivity would result in this area being strategically located almost equidistant between the Dublin, Belfast and Derry City regions in terms of time, as well as distance.

West

Counties Galway, Mayo and Roscommon comprise the Western regional area. Galway City exerts a strong influence in much of the southern part of this area and a Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP) will be prepared for the Galway Metropolitan area through the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy process.

Improved north-south connectivity, focused on a network of regional assets such as Higher Education Institutes, the M17 and Ireland West-Knock Airport and a strengthening of the urban and employment structure of the wider North-Western region, will provide new opportunities, to be complemented by enhanced east-west accessibility.

The Atlantic Economic Corridor initiative (see case study) seeks to build on this potential, supported by developments such as the emerging Connacht-Ulster Alliance Technological University (Galway-Mayo IT, IT Sligo and Letterkenny IT). Ireland West-Knock Airport has a significant role in tourism and enterprise development, with potential for further growth taking particular account of its designation as a Strategic Development Zone (SDZ).

County Mayo functions with a high degree of self-containment, focused on several strong centres of employment and services, all of which could accommodate greater population as well as further jobs growth. Much of Roscommon functionally operates as part of the Midland region, focused on Athlone, which is partly located within the County, whereas the northern part of the County is influenced by proximity to Sligo and Leitrim.

Given the importance of regional interdependencies, this will require a co-ordinated approach at both regional and county/town level, to ensure that Athlone and its environs can grow sustainably and secure investment as the key regional centre in the Midlands, extending into parts of Galway and Roscommon.

More broadly for the West, tailoring policy approaches to capitalise on quality of life and sectoral strengths such as agri-food, energy, tourism and the marine, and to incentivise town and village renewal through the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund, will also be important.

Atlantic Economic Corridor

CASE STUDY

The Atlantic Economic Corridor (AEC) is the term applied to a linear network along the Western seaboard, stretching from Kerry to Donegal, which has the potential to act as a key enabler for the regional growth objectives of the National Planning Framework.

The corridor straddles parts of both the Northern and Western Region and the Southern Regions, with the potential to further extend its scope by building on the cross-Border relationship between Letterkenny and Northern Ireland, and into Cork City and County to the south.

The overarching objective of the AEC initiative is to maximise the infrastructure, talent and enterprise assets along the western seaboard and to combine the economic hubs, clusters and catchments of the area to attract investment, improve competitiveness, support

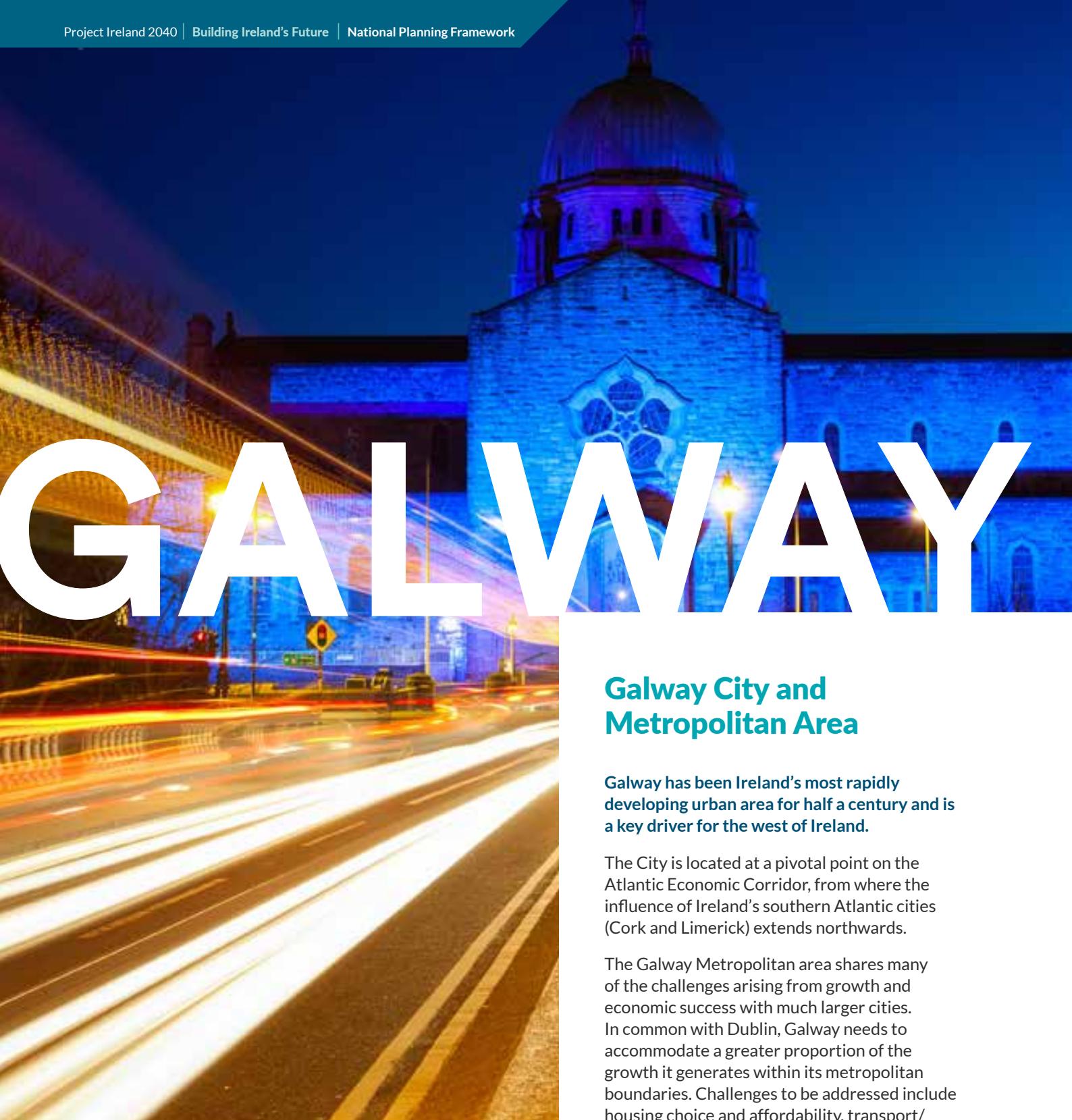
job creation and contribute to an improved quality of life for the people who live there. The lack of high-quality connectivity between the regions within the AEC has been a major impediment to its development as a counter-balance to Dublin and the East coast.

The improvement of regional connectivity along the Western seaboard, linking together the major urban areas to allow the AEC achieve its potential, is a major priority.

The AEC is a collaborative initiative, driven by business representatives and communities and supported by national and local government, State agencies and Third Level Institutions. The Government recognises the contribution which the AEC initiative can make to achieving the objectives of the NPF and will continue to support the development of this initiative.

Key future planning and development and place-making policy priorities for the Northern and Western Region include:

- Developing and implementing a comprehensive and strategic metropolitan area spatial plan for Galway city, to enable its continued strategic development in a transformational and urban rejuvenation focused manner, with a special focus on capitalising on the potential of underutilised and publicly owned and centrally located sites and activating their potential to boost the population and economic output levels of central areas.
- Enhancing the city-region like functions performed by Sligo in line with its statutory development plan, activating the potential for further rejuvenation and renewal of its core and further enhancing its connectivity in a national and regional context to ensure wider accessibility of relevant services and amenities.
- Further implementation of the strategic partnership between the Donegal and Derry local authorities in the context of the further enhancement of the North West Gateway Initiative area, delivering a wide range of economic, infrastructural, community and public service functions in the wider north-west.
- More effective strategic planning and co-ordination of the future development of nationally and regionally strategic places, including points straddling boundaries with neighbouring regions, like Athlone and Letterkenny which are focal points for large geographical areas reaching into much of this and neighbouring regions in economic and employment, transport, education and public service delivery and retailing terms.
- Supporting the emerging and ongoing development, at both local and community levels, of the network of both urban and rural places working together for regional benefit under the Atlantic Economic Corridor initiative, including university and higher education and research alliances, and improved connectivity.
- Integrated planning, management and development of the areas traversed by the Wild Atlantic Way to maximise both the quality and integrity of the visitor experience and the added benefit in economic terms, especially for rural and local communities.
- Supported by the Rural and Urban Regeneration and Development Fund, shaping and informing delivery of city, rural town and village rural rejuvenation priorities, harnessing publicly owned land and other assets that are not being used actively at present, such as former healthcare, military, transport and other complexes and combining the potential of such assets with community and wider private and public sector support and investment, to bring about the transformation of both urban and rural areas in an integrated manner.
- Harnessing the potential of the region in renewable energy terms across the technological spectrum from wind and solar to biomass and wave energy.
- Building on the progress made in developing an integrated network of greenways, blueways and peatways that will support the diversification of rural and regional economies and promote more sustainable forms of travel and activity based recreation utilising canal and other routes.



Galway City and Metropolitan Area

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 a pivotal 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 challenges arising from 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 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 wastewater 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 management and resource efficiency and water, to include district heating and water conservation.



SOUTHERN REGION

3.4 | Southern Region

Key elements of this Region include the three cities and wider city-regions of Cork, Limerick and Waterford and their associated ports and the international airports at Cork and Shannon, a network of large towns, including county towns, many of which provide employment and functional roles much greater than their population scale, an extensive network of smaller towns and villages, many of which play regionally strategic roles, especially in remoter and peninsular parts of the region and a contrasting rural landscape that ranges from the Atlantic seaboard to rich productive agricultural lands and river valleys.

The three city regions, both individually and collectively are a key asset of the region and will play a major role in both driving and accommodating a significant proportion of the additional 380,000 people anticipated in the overall region by 2040, taking its population to almost 2 million people.

The big challenge for this Region in the period to 2040, will be to position its cities as more significantly scaled, while also more compact and attractive, acting as metropolitan drivers for the region as a whole and as effective complements to the economic strength of Dublin. Ensuring a balanced approach in activating and realising much underutilised potential in wider rural towns and dispersed communities will also be a priority.

Mid-West

Counties Clare, Limerick and much of County Tipperary comprise the Mid-Western regional area, focused on Limerick City and the River Shannon estuary, also extending into the northern part of County Kerry. A Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP) will be prepared for the Limerick Metropolitan area, incorporating Shannon, through the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy process.

Although focused on Limerick City and key employment and infrastructure assets at Shannon and Foynes, this regional area is supported by a strong rural economy and a varied network of towns and villages. Shannon Airport has an established role as a key travel and enterprise hub for the region, with potential for further growth.

Future growth will be based on leveraging national and international connectivity, higher education capacity and quality of life to secure strategic investment. This must be underpinned by sustainable employment and housing development, focused on the broader Limerick-Shannon Metropolitan area and a strengthening of the urban cores of the county towns and principal settlements, as well as in rural areas.

South-East

Counties Carlow, Kilkenny, Waterford and Wexford, as well as the southern part of County Tipperary are included in this regional area. Although it has a strong urban structure, much of this area is rural in character and includes some of Ireland's most productive agricultural land.

A Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP) will be prepared for the Waterford Metropolitan area through the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy process. Strategically located between Cork and Dublin, with a network of large towns, the south-east has capacity for improved growth, but has not had a focus sufficient in scale to drive the sustained development of the region as a whole.

Regional opportunities to leverage growth include national and international connectivity, especially via ports proximate to continental Europe, such as Belview and Rosslare-Europort, strengthening HEIs and further balanced employment and housing development in key settlements and county towns. This must be based on infrastructure and quality of life, rather than long distance commuting to Dublin, as is apparent in parts of counties Carlow and Wexford in particular.



South-West

Counties Cork and Kerry and Cork City comprise the South-West regional area. A Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP) for the Cork Metropolitan Area, including Cork Harbour, will be prepared through the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy process. This will also build on work previously undertaken as part of the non-statutory Cork Area Strategic Plan (CASP), addressing both the CASP Study Area and North and West Cork.

Located beyond the Cork City functional area, North and West Cork share similarities with neighbouring County Kerry, being more rural in character, with extensive coastline, supported by a variety of large and small towns. Many of these settlements have a high degree of self-containment, operating as significant local employment and service centres for a large rural hinterland.

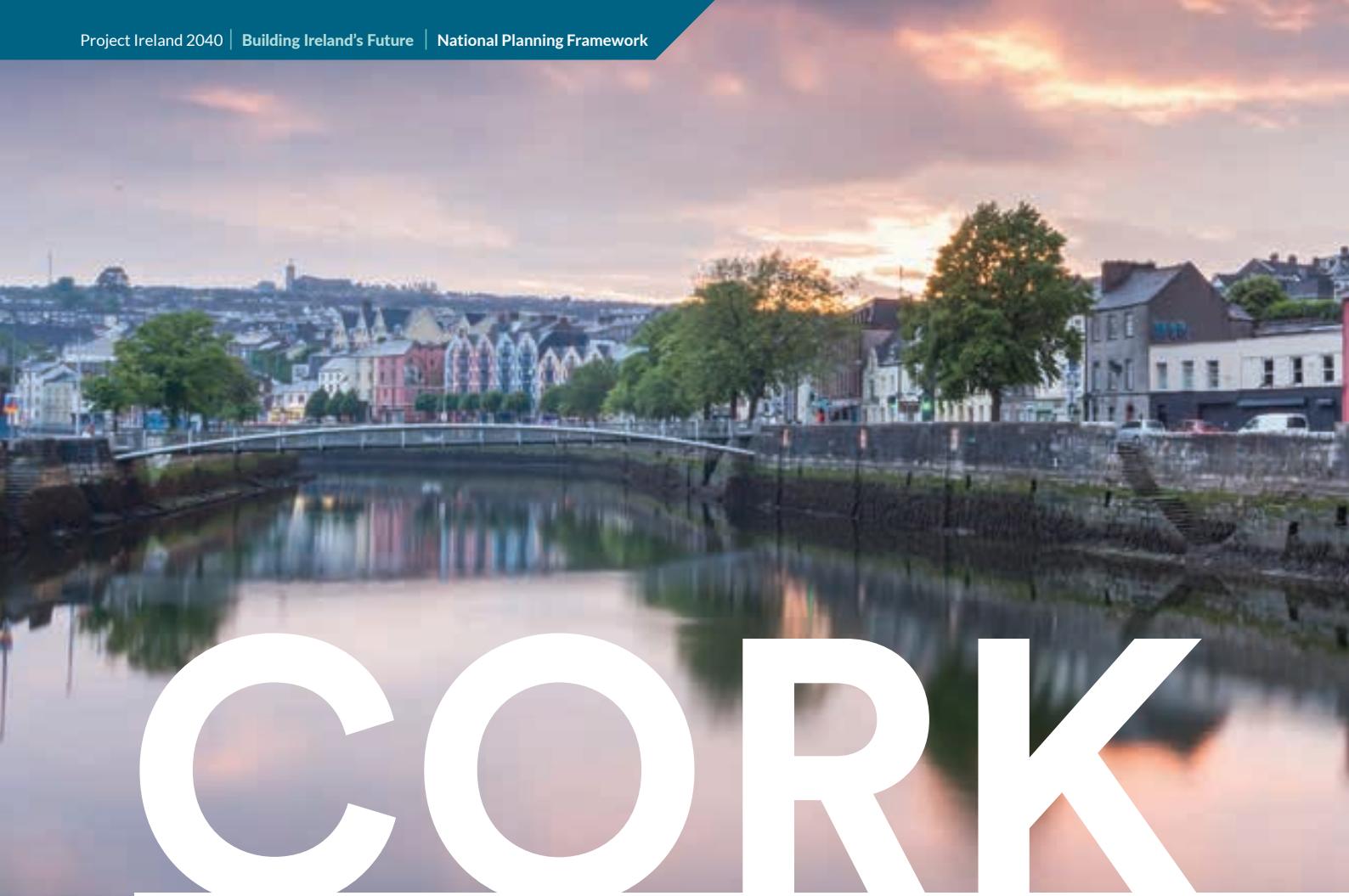
While employment, infrastructure and strengthening small towns and rural communities are priorities throughout this regional area, within the CASP Study Area, there will also be a focus on more balanced and compact, connected growth. This means that housing development should be based on employment growth, higher densities, access to amenities and sustainable transport modes, in order to avoid long-distance commuting patterns and quality of life impacts.

This also applies to the larger towns in this regional area, but elsewhere, in common with other western seaboard counties, tailoring policy approaches to capitalise on quality of life and sectoral strengths such as agri-food, energy, tourism and the marine, and to incentivise town and village renewal through the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund, will also be important.



Key future planning and development and place-making policy priorities for this Region include:

- Developing and implementing comprehensive and strategic metropolitan area spatial plans for Cork, Limerick and Waterford cities that secure long-term transformational and rejuvenation-focused city development, with a special emphasis on capitalising on the potential of underutilised and publicly owned and centrally located sites and activating their potential to boost the population and economic output levels of city centre areas as drivers for wider regions.
- Allied to strategies to deliver more compact urban development in the main cities, to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of transport links between the cities to enable them to function in concert with each other and harness their complementary strengths in an increasingly networked manner.
- Measures to support the integrated development of remoter parts of this region, particularly rural peninsular areas and towns on its western seaboard, including the ongoing investment in the transport and communications area, particularly in the roll-out of the national broadband scheme and further promotion and development of attractions to capitalise on underutilised potential in the tourism and local enterprise areas.
- More emphasis on consolidating the development of places that grew rapidly in the past decade or so with large scale commuter driven housing development with a particular focus on addressing local community and amenity facility provision in many of the larger commuter towns through targeted investment under relevant NPF National Strategic Outcomes.
- Preparing and implementing a regional rejuvenation priorities programme, to shape and inform delivery of the Regeneration and Development Fund and identifying significant ready-to-go city, rural town and village and rural rejuvenation priorities harnessing publicly owned land and other assets that are not being used actively at present, such as former healthcare, military, transport and other complexes and combining the potential of such assets with community and wider private and public sector support and investment to bring about the transformation of both urban and rural areas and places in an integrated manner.
- Integrated planning, management and development of the areas traversed by the Wild Atlantic Way to maximise both the quality and integrity of the visitor experience and the added benefit in economic terms, especially for rural and local communities.
- Harnessing the potential of the region in renewable energy terms across the technological spectrum from wind and solar to biomass and wave energy, focusing in particular on the extensive tracts of publicly owned peat extraction areas in order to enable a managed transition of the local economies of such areas in gaining the economic benefits of greener energy.
- Developing a more integrated network of greenways, blueways and peatways to support the diversification of rural and regional economies and promote more sustainable forms of travel and activity based recreation.



CORK

Cork City and Metropolitan Area

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, Limerick and Waterford. 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.

Further to completion of the Lower Lee Flood Relief Scheme, 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 Cork's water supply and increase waste water treatment capacity;
- Improving sustainability in terms of energy, waste management and resource efficiency and water, to include district heating and water conservation.



Limerick City and Metropolitan Area

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 successes 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.

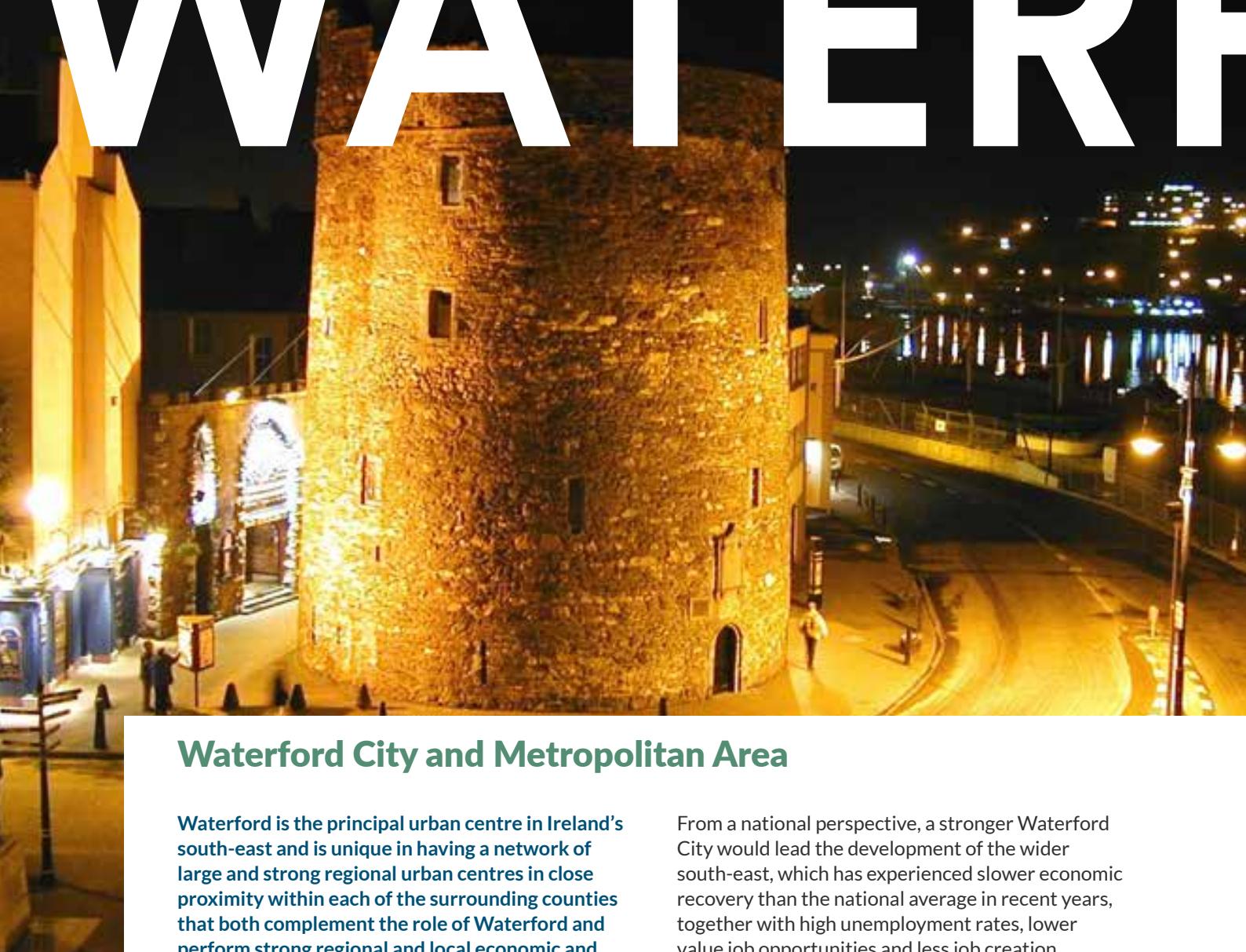
Regional connectivity, especially to Cork and Waterford must also be addressed and average journey times per km need to be improved.



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 Munget;
- 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-Foyne 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 management and resource efficiency and water, to include district heating and water conservation.

WATERFORD



Waterford City and Metropolitan Area

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 the development of 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 well-served by motorway and rail links to Dublin, but requires improved road links to other major urban areas, particularly Cork and Limerick, and also within the region to towns that are not served by motorway. Waterford and the wider south-east region is also served by a regional airport and the Port of Waterford at Belview and Rosslare-Europort, which are geographically close to EU trading partners and will be important in Ireland's response to Brexit, and an Institute of Technology, to form part of a Technological University.

WATERFORD

The key challenge for Waterford is to build scale and enhance urban quality through employment-led growth. The City's existing employment base includes pharma, med-tech and engineering/advanced manufacturing sectors, as well as emerging indigenous enterprises.

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 support 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 management and resource efficiency and water, to include district heating and water conservation.

4

Making Stronger Urban Places

4.1 | Why Urban Places Matter

Through many centuries of growth and change, Ireland's urban areas comprise a rich variety of unique and widely distributed places. At all scales, our cities, towns and villages offer a range of opportunities for community and social interaction, potential for innovation and prosperity and support and enable their surrounding rural areas.

The National Strategic Outcomes in Chapter 1 and the National Policy Objectives in Chapter 2, set a Framework to make our cities, towns and villages the places where many more people choose to live, as well as to work and visit, by 2040.

Accordingly, this Framework aims to enhance people's experience of living and working in and visiting urban places in Ireland. Through the actions and policies set out below, our cities, towns and villages must become more attractive and 'liveable', and offer a quality of life that more people are willing to choose in the years ahead.



Community

Urban settlements are important places for trading goods, services and ideas, for information, learning and innovation, as well as for administration, entertainment, healthcare and worship. They offer choice and opportunity as well as connectivity and community.

Notwithstanding all of this, some parts of our cities and some towns are now 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, skilled labour markets found in urban areas.

In addition to 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 tend to be 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, investment and prosperity.

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 community 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.

The Environment

One of the principal benefits of more compact urban development is that it will reduce harmful impacts on the environment by:

- Reducing land take, preserving agricultural land and habitats;
- Utilising existing infrastructure, buildings and sites and reducing the need to travel long distances, which will reduce energy consumption and carbon emissions;
- Improving the viability of public transport services; and
- Enhancing public health by encouraging and facilitating more active lifestyles by creating a more walkable and cycling friendly urban environment.

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, many have become commuter-focused, but elsewhere there are enterprise opportunities in lieu of more traditional service functions, based on local assets, innovation and quality of life, e.g. servicing an emerging resource sector or a new tourist amenity such as a greenway, supported by improving connectivity.

Sustainable models of urban development can deliver quality and maximise the advantages and opportunities of more compact growth, based on increased population and employment density.

Quality of design is critical for making places attractive and distinctive. Architectural quality and well-designed spaces can help to enhance our urban areas and create desirable places in which people want to live, work or visit and contribute to ongoing quality of life and well-being.

National Policy Objective 6

Regenerate and rejuvenate cities, towns and villages of all types and scale as environmental assets, that can accommodate changing roles and functions, increased residential population and employment activity and enhanced levels of amenity and design quality, in order to sustainably influence and support their surrounding area.



4.2 | Ireland's Urban Structure

Population

The Census of Population 2016 provides a good indication of Ireland's urban structure²¹:

- The Central Statistics Office (CSO) defines a settlement of more than 1,500 people as 'urban'.
- In 2016, there were 200 urban settlements, which together accommodated 3 million people, or 63% of Ireland's population.
- 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 comprised approximately 1.6 million people, or just over one-third (34%) of Ireland's 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.
- Beyond the five cities, a further 1.4 million people, or 29% of Ireland's population, live in towns and villages with at least 1,500 or more people.
- There were 41 Towns with a population of at least 10,000 or more people, home to 16% of Ireland's population.
- Ireland's urban population is larger than ever before and for the first time, 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.
- The overall urban structure remains relatively weak and focused on Dublin and the south and east of Ireland. In particular, Dublin's population equates to that of the next 40 cities and towns combined.
- The Central Statistics Office (CSO) defines a settlement of fewer than 1,500 people as 'rural'.
- In 2016, 37% of Ireland's population lived in settlements of fewer than 1,500 people or in individual houses in rural areas.



The Role of Employment

Population only partly explains Ireland's urban structure and employment, or more specifically, where jobs are located, is also an important factor. A significant proportion, or more than half of Ireland's largest towns measured in terms of population, are located within the Dublin or Cork city regions. Many of these function mainly as commuter settlements, with large resident populations and limited employment.

While there are few large towns in the Northern and Western Region north of Galway City, towns in the North-West and in other areas outside the larger city regions, such as the Midlands, tend to have more significant employment and service functions relative to their regional and local catchment.

Some also have very high ratios of jobs to resident workforce²², which means that they are attracting workers from a wide catchment area. Data for all urban settlements is included as part of Appendix 2.

It is significant that out of a total of 154 settlements in Ireland with fewer than 10,000 people in 2016, 40 of these had a population of more than 5,000, but only twelve had more than 2,500 jobs. On the one hand, this highlights a number of locations where smaller settlements by reason of accessibility, employment and local services, fulfil important roles for a wider area, many as county towns, but on the other, it assists in explaining why the population of this category of town has either declined or stagnated in recent years²³.

A comparable number of larger settlements of more than 10,000 people are characterised by very low ratios of jobs to resident workforce, having around 2,500 jobs or fewer in 2016. All of these are mainly commuter settlements and many have undergone rapid residential expansion in recent decades. This type of commuter-focused residential development is similarly apparent in respect of many smaller towns, located within the larger city regions.

There is also a category of historically larger town, mainly in Leinster, that experienced significant commuter based residential growth during the same period, but not jobs growth, in part due a decline in traditional industrial and process-based employment. These include, for example, Balbriggan, Navan and Portlaoise, Ireland's three fastest growing large towns between 1996 and 2016, where the population has grown rapidly, without equivalent increases in jobs.

In contrast, there are a number of large settlements throughout Ireland, where the ratio of jobs to resident workforce has remained high, due to a more sustainable balance of employment and population growth. There are also some large towns with a good balance of jobs and population in 2016, but generally with a lower ratio of workers to jobs, for a combination of reasons ranging from proximity to larger centres of employment, to some loss of traditional occupations.



4.3 | Planning for Ireland's Urban Growth

The unique and complex nature of Ireland's urban structure suggests the need for a range of complementary strategies in the context of planning for future growth. In order to achieve more balanced and sustainable development, some settlements will need to attract increased population, whereas others will need more jobs, amenities or better transport links.

Some require a combination of these, but all will require a tailored approach, that can be appropriately linked to investment, through the national Rural and Urban Regeneration and Development Fund, that will be put in place as part of the ten-year National Development Plan in support of this Framework:

- As well as focusing on the role of Dublin and the significant potential of Ireland's other four cities, there is a need to strengthen Ireland's overall urban structure, especially in the North-West;

- There is a need to encourage population growth in towns of all sizes that are strong employment and service centres, where potential for sustainable growth exists, also supported by employment growth;
- There is a need to reverse the stagnation or decline of many smaller urban centres, that may include the identification and establishment of new roles and functions and enhancement of local infrastructure and amenities;
- There is a need to address the legacy of rapid unplanned growth in expanded commuter settlements of all sizes, by facilitating amenities and services catch-up, jobs growth and/or improved sustainable transport links to the cities, together with a much slower, more sustainable rate of population growth than in recent decades;
- In more self-contained settlements of all sizes, with a good balance of people and jobs, there is a need to continue balanced population and employment growth.



It is therefore an objective of the National Planning Framework to:

National Policy Objective 7

Apply a tailored approach to urban development, that will be linked to the Rural and Urban Regeneration and Development Fund, with a particular focus on:

- Dublin;
- The four Cities of Cork, Limerick, Galway and Waterford;
- Strengthening Ireland's overall urban structure, particularly in the Northern and Western and Midland Regions, to include the regional centres of Sligo and Letterkenny in the North-West, Athlone in the Midlands and cross-border networks focused on the Letterkenny-Derry North-West Gateway Initiative and Drogheda-Dundalk-Newry on the Dublin-Belfast corridor;
- Encouraging population growth in strong employment and service centres of all sizes, supported by employment growth;
- Reversing the stagnation or decline of many smaller urban centres, by identifying and establishing new roles and functions and enhancement of local infrastructure and amenities;
- Addressing the legacy of rapid unplanned growth, by facilitating amenities and services catch-up, jobs and/or improved sustainable transport links to the cities, together with a slower rate of population growth in recently expanded commuter settlements of all sizes;
- In more self-contained settlements of all sizes, supporting a continuation of balanced population and employment growth.

Ireland's Cities

As a key element of the NPF strategy to grow Ireland's three regions, build more accessible centres of scale and to ensure more compact and sustainable forms of development that will be supported by focused investment, and new governance arrangements, it will be necessary to encourage proportionally higher levels of population growth in Ireland's five 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 urban-focused growth to more fully achieve this role.

The Dublin City and immediately adjoining suburban area should therefore plan to grow at a targeted rate of just above the projected national average to 2040, i.e. by around 20% to 25%²⁴. The planned rate of growth in the Cork City and suburban area should be between two or three times the national average (50% to 60%), over the same period.

Given Dublin's scale, this means planning for at least 235,000 more people in the City and suburbs by 2040. The higher targeted rate of growth for Cork also means planning for significant numbers, i.e. at least 105,000 more people by 2040²⁵.

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 National Planning Framework 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% to 60%, to 2040²⁶.

National Policy Objective 8

To ensure that the targeted pattern of population growth of Ireland's cities to 2040 is in accordance with the targets set out in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 | Ireland 2040: Targeted Pattern of City Population Growth

City	Population 2016	Population Growth to 2040 ²⁷		Minimum Target Population 2040
		% Range	People	
Dublin - City and Suburbs	1,173,000	20-25%	235,000 - 293,000	1,408,000
Cork - City and Suburbs	209,000	50-60%	105,000 - 125,000	314,000
Limerick - City and Suburbs	94,000	50-60%	47,000 - 56,000	141,000
Galway - City and Suburbs	80,000	50-60%	40,000 - 48,000	120,000
Waterford - City and Suburbs	54,000	50-60%	27,000 - 32,000	81,000

Ireland's Towns

There is scope for potential growth in all towns in Ireland. In the context of the National Planning Framework, this will largely be determined by the relevant Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for each Regional Assembly area, also taking into consideration the potential of smaller settlements and rural areas.

National Policy Objectives 2b and 7 recognise the key regional roles of Athlone in the Midlands, Sligo in the North-West, and the Letterkenny-Derry and Drogheda-Dundalk-Newry cross-border networks and will inform the relevant Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies. The extent to which these towns should target future growth will be determined at regional level in the context of this Framework.

While targeted growth in the regional centres and network towns will take the lead in a regional and in the case of Athlone, inter-regional context, this must also be balanced with that targeted elsewhere. In all cases, regional and local planning authorities must consider the varied growth potential of different types of settlement in accordance with National

Policy Objective 7, as well as rural areas, and tailor a strategy to balance this accordingly. It is not expected that all towns, large or small, will each target the same level of growth to 2040 and targets set in accordance with the Framework and the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies will be reviewed based on performance, by 2027. But all towns can and must grow over this period and some will be identified as having capacity for higher than average levels of growth.

In each Regional Assembly area, where it is proposed to target significant growth, i.e. at a rate of 30% or more above 2016 population levels to 2040, in any settlement not identified in Policy 2a or Policy 2b of this Framework, for example where there will be major employment or infrastructure investment, this will be on an agreed basis, aligned with investment in infrastructure and/or the provision of employment, together with supporting amenities and services:



National Policy Objective 9

In each Regional Assembly area, settlements not identified in Policy 2a or 2b of this Framework, may be identified for significant (i.e. 30% or more above 2016 population levels) rates of population growth at regional and local planning stages, provided this is subject to:

- Agreement (regional assembly, metropolitan area and/or local authority as appropriate);
- Balance with strategies for other urban and rural areas (regional assembly, metropolitan area and/or local authority as appropriate), which means that the totality of planned population growth has to be in line with the overall growth target; and
- A co-ordinated strategy that ensures alignment with investment in infrastructure and the provision of employment, together with supporting amenities and services.

While the above planning considerations will generally apply to all urban and rural areas, this specific provision is intended to ensure that in settlements identified for significant population growth, it is aligned with the provision of employment and/or infrastructure and supporting facilities, to ensure a good quality of life for both existing and future residents.

The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies for each Regional Assembly area shall address the potential of towns and their catchments in

conjunction with consideration of growth targets for cities and rural areas. In applying a tailored approach to urban development, that can be linked to the Rural and Urban Regeneration and Development Fund, key considerations further to NPO 7 will include:

- The extent to which a settlement is located inside or outside one of the five defined City-Region catchments and may be characterised as commuter focused or as more self-contained²⁸;
- The scale of employment provision and net commuting flows;
- The extent of local services and amenities provision i.e. administration, education – particularly higher education institutes, health, leisure and retail;
- The extent to which trips may be made by sustainable modes of travel, i.e. walking, cycling or public transport, and the scale of planned investment in such;
- The rate and pace of development from 1996-2016 and the extent to which there are outstanding requirements for infrastructure and amenities;
- Accessibility and influence in a regional or sub-regional context;
- Particular sub-regional interdependencies, for example, where a settlement may be located in relation to a number of nearby settlements and scope for collaboration and complementarity;
- Track record of performance and delivery, as well as ambition and initiative and scope to leverage investment;
- Commitment to achieve compact growth.

4.4 | Planning for Urban Employment Growth

The pattern of urban growth targeted in the National Planning Framework is population and employment led, recognising that firms and enterprise development are drawn to urban locations by market forces such as agglomeration, migration and specialisation that depend on factors such as scale, accessibility, innovation supported by higher education institutions and quality of life.

Projected employment growth in Ireland to 2040, although significant, is 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 NPF strategy is to focus a significant proportion of population growth in Ireland's Cities, while also seeking to improve urban infrastructure and amenities, livability/quality of life and the quality of the built environment. This approach intends 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, in cities and towns generally, 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, metropolitan 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;
- Locations for potential relocation of enterprises that may be better suited to alternative locations and where such a move, if facilitated, would release urban land for more efficient purposes that would be of benefit to the regeneration and development of the urban area as a whole, particularly in metropolitan areas and large towns.



Planning to accommodate strategic employment growth at regional, metropolitan 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.

Locations for potential relocation of enterprises that may be better suited to alternative locations and where such a move, if facilitated, would release urban land for more efficient purposes that would be of benefit to the regeneration and development of the urban area as a whole, particularly in metropolitan areas and large towns.

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 10a

Regional and Local Authorities to identify and quantify locations for strategic employment development in the cities identified in Table 4.1.

National Policy Objective 10b

Regional and Local Authorities to identify and quantify locations for strategic employment development, where suitable, in urban and rural areas generally.

While regional and local plans should seek to anticipate and plan for jobs growth and economic development, new and unexpected opportunities for enterprise development are likely to arise for particular locational reasons, such as local resources, skills, assets, innovation or quality of life. Regional and local planning policies should be sufficiently agile to account for these possibilities, to accommodate valid propositions for enterprise development that may emerge and for which there are strong locational drivers that do not apply to the same extent elsewhere.

In order to facilitate this type of dynamic, employment-led opportunity, while also ensuring that it can be aligned with housing, infrastructure and services provision, the approach to population growth outlined in NPO9 above must be applied as an immediate follow-on measure, commensurate with the scale of enterprise development emerging. It shall be formalised at the regional and/or local planning level at the earliest opportunity.

4.5 Achieving Urban Infill/ Brownfield Development

The National Planning Framework targets a significant proportion of future urban development on infill/brownfield development sites within the built footprint 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 mainly 'greenfield' development and requires a change in outlook. In particular, it requires well-designed, high quality development that can encourage more people, and generate more jobs and activity within existing cities, towns and villages. 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.

National Policy Objective 11

In meeting urban development requirements, there will be a presumption in favour of development that can encourage more people and generate more jobs and activity within existing cities, towns and villages, subject to development meeting appropriate planning standards and achieving targeted growth.

Regeneration and Rejuvenation

Central to delivering the vision in the NPF is a new and more public policy directed approach to the delivery and location of future development, including housing that our economy and society needs over the next decade and beyond.

There are many areas in our cities, towns and villages that contain lands and buildings not developed or used to their full potential. A significant portion of these lands are in public ownership, such as the large city centre areas that were former docks or rail depots or other large areas in key locations (including the city centres of Cork, Galway, Limerick and Waterford) and along new public transport corridors opened up by infrastructure projects such as the Luas Cross City line in Dublin.

Government is committed to a major increase in the public housing programme, delivering 40,000 new homes to 2021 and another 72,000 homes to 2027 under the National Development Plan.

The investment in public housing on local authority and wider State lands will, at one level, be used to drive renewal and rejuvenation, meeting people's housing needs much closer to existing transport, services and amenities, rather than continually sprawling outwards, where both housing and supporting infrastructure must be provided from scratch.

At a time when many people, including those on average incomes, wish to live close to where they work and the services and amenities necessary to enjoy a good quality of life, they struggle to do so because the urban housing market has become constrained. More affordable homes must be provided in our urban areas as part of the creation of mixed-tenure communities.

Through targeted NDP investment in enabling infrastructure and services on publicly owned sites, leveraging the value of the land to provide mixed-tenure developments and providing flexibility on design and density, particularly in our urban cores, we can facilitate more cost-efficient construction and a variety of homes aimed at first-time buyers, within both new housing developments and re-development of existing built-up areas.

It is necessary to ensure that public policy can directly influence the strategic development of housing for the common good. To do this, Government will put in place measures to better manage the supply of development land, to meet housing land requirements, ease pressure on building land and housing costs and to capture gains in land value from the development process for investment in necessary public infrastructure.

There have been notable urban renewal and rejuvenation successes in Ireland. Dublin's Docklands, once one of the most disadvantaged and run-down parts of the City, today accommodates many thousands of people working and living in an attractive and desirable area that has been regenerated to a world class standard. There are many other good examples of urban, town, village and rural renewal.

Learning from our past successes, the Government will establish a National Regeneration and Development Agency, with a remit to:

- Work with local authorities, other public bodies and capital spending departments and agencies;
- Co-ordinate and secure the best use of public lands;
- Co-ordinate and secure investment required within the capital envelopes provided in the Ireland 2040 - National Development Plan;
- Drive the renewal of strategic areas not being utilised to their full potential, (e.g. through CPO and other incentives) from cities and larger towns to opportunities at a smaller scale in rural towns and villages.

As part of the measures to advance brownfield development, the Government will consider how to make State lands available to such a body to kick-start its development role, as well as legislating for enhanced powers of compulsory purchase of privately owned sites, to ensure the necessary physical restructuring and transformation of the places most in need of regeneration can take place more swiftly and more effectively.



National Policy Objective 12

The Government will establish a National Regeneration and Development Agency to work with local authorities, other public bodies and capital spending departments and agencies to co-ordinate and secure the best use of public lands, investment required within the capital envelopes provided in the National Development Plan and to drive the renewal of strategic areas not being utilised to their full potential. The Government will consider how best to make State lands available to such a body to kick-start its development role and to legislate for enhanced compulsory purchase powers to ensure that the necessary transformation of the places most in need of regeneration can take place more swiftly and effectively.

Regeneration and Development Demonstration Project - Portlaoise

Towns like Portlaoise witnessed very rapid expansion of new housing areas and retail centres outside the traditional town core during the early 2000s. Like many other towns that went through similar periods of growth, there is a marked contrast between the type of development that occurred in the historic town core and that which took place in the surrounding ring roads and outlying parking areas.

In regional and rural towns and villages, there are many opportunities to address these legacy issues and turn around their fortunes. There is now a need for a major focus on regenerating original town centre and main street areas and how they relate to the expanded town, with a view to creating more attractive, desirable places that people want to live and spend time in, for work, shopping or recreational purposes.

A Demonstration Project will be initiated on a community- and locally-led urban design and renewal initiative. The national Regeneration and Development Agency, with investment from the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund and wider community and local businesses, will create and deliver a new vision for the centre of Portlaoise, to show how the best quality planning, urban design and implementation can create rejuvenated towns. There will be a particular focus on self-sustaining and community-driven renewal.

Performance-Based Design Standards

Infill and brownfield development is more challenging to deliver than greenfield development for a variety of reasons, including land management but also the challenge of integrating with existing communities, who may have a preference for the status quo to be retained, even if that might reduce opportunities for rejuvenation and drive urban expansion outwards.

To enable brownfield development, planning policies and standards need to be flexible, focusing on design-led and performance-based outcomes, rather than specifying absolute requirements 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 cannot account for the 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 also 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 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 13

In urban areas, planning and related standards, including in particular building height and car parking will be based on performance criteria that seek to achieve well-designed high quality outcomes in order to achieve targeted growth. These standards will be subject to a range of tolerance that enables alternative solutions to be proposed to achieve stated outcomes, provided public safety is not compromised and the environment is suitably protected.

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.

5

Planning for Diverse Rural Places

5.1 | Why Rural Places Matter

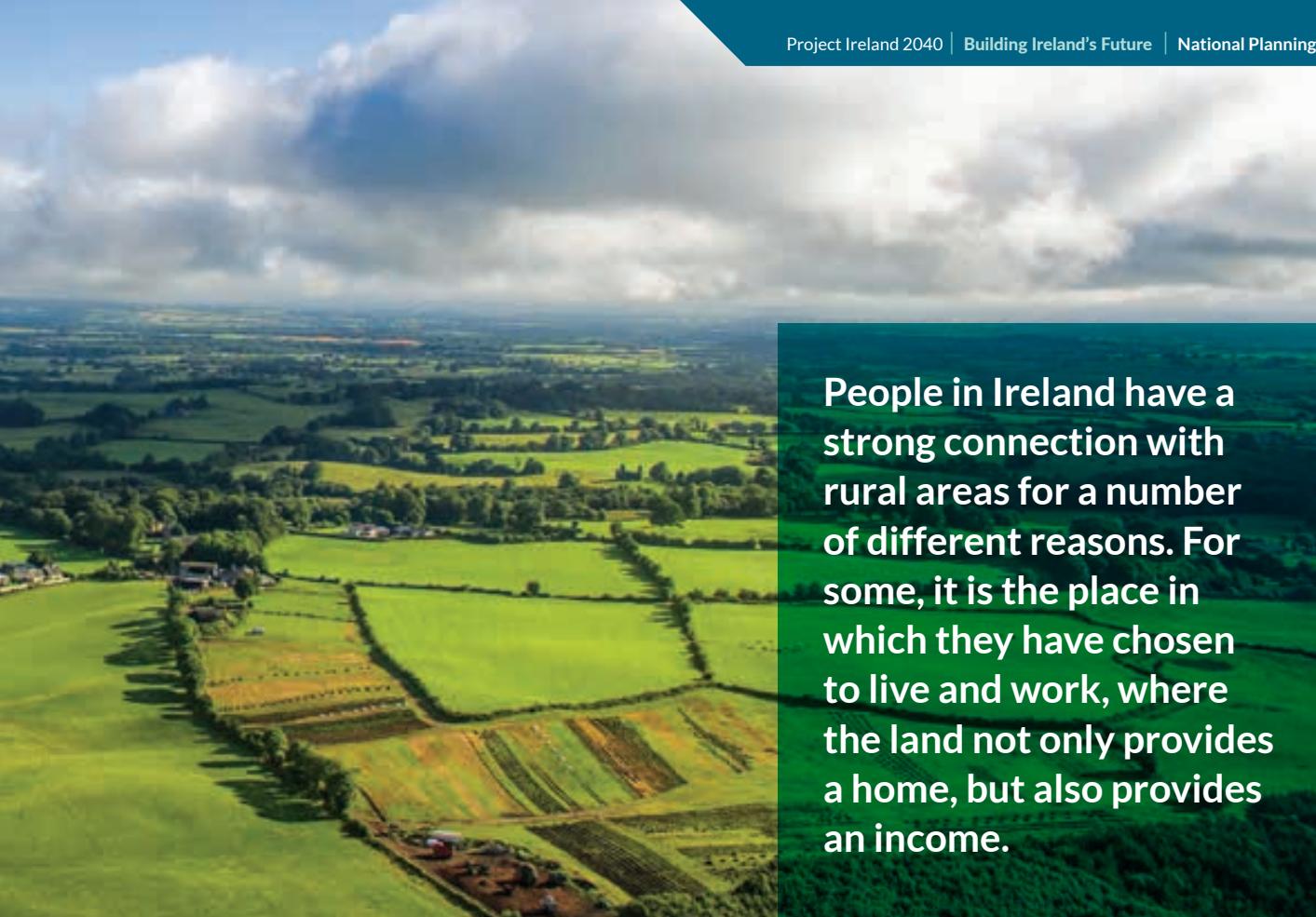
Rural areas make a major contribution to Ireland's identity and to overall national development in economic, social, cultural and environmental terms.

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. Well over a third of Irish people live outside cities and towns and this proportion increases to half of the population, if smaller towns and villages are included.

Rural areas are also a focus for 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. The emergence of new technologies and improved infrastructural connectivity provide opportunities for diversification into new employment sectors and to build on the success of many Irish and foreign-owned companies supporting employment in rural areas.

Accordingly, building on Government policy and the 2017 Action Plan for Rural Development, the National Planning Framework will place a major focus on rural areas in relation to:

- Strengthening Ireland's rural fabric and supporting 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 smaller 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.



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.

5.2 Strengthening Ireland’s Rural Fabric and Supporting Rural Communities

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 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 and services.

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 Gaeltacht²⁹ islands, support settled populations. 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.

As highlighted in the Action Plan for Rural Development, measures and initiatives to improve transport connectivity and rural transport services between rural areas can have a positive impact on the rural community, particularly for older citizens living in more remote areas. The commitment to review rural transport policy to ensure that it meets the needs of rural communities, as part of a wider review of public transport policy, and ongoing engagement with rural communities to assess and implement improvements to existing rural transport routes and develop new routes will further strengthen and support these communities.

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 around half of farm families now depend on off-farm employment, much of which is focused on urban settlements. Alternative land uses such as forestry and renewable energy related development are also becoming more prevalent.

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.

National Policy Objective 14

Protect and promote the sense of place and culture and the quality, character and distinctiveness of the Irish rural landscape that make Ireland's rural areas authentic and attractive as places to live, work and visit. The Action Plan for Rural Development will support this objective up to 2020; thereafter a review of the Action Plan will be undertaken to ensure continued alignment and consistency with the National Policy Objectives of this Framework.



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. Furthermore, 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.

5.3 | Planning for the Future Growth and Development of Rural Areas

Neither all rural areas nor all of the communities that make up the fabric of rural Ireland are identical. Rural areas are also distinct and separate to the urban and outer urban areas that exist in our towns and cities. As a result, they require a different approach to urban or suburban development.

The spatial, social and economic disparities between rural areas are a reflection of the fact that stronger rural areas tend to be located in a geographically advantageous place, and also have the human and social capital to address their needs and respond effectively to emerging opportunities and strategies. Rural communities across Ireland function well beyond their immediate catchments and have a strong interrelationship 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 fewer than 1,500 people, home to around 20% of the population of rural areas³⁰, and individual dwellings in the countryside, which together comprised approximately 37% of the population in 2016³¹. This reflects Ireland's historic rural and village settlement pattern.

However, 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 integrated growth and development of rural areas, settlements with a population of 10,000 people or fewer, may be eligible for investment under either the Rural or Urban Regeneration and Development Fund, subject to the nature of the proposal³².

In support of the overall pattern of rural and small town development in Ireland, this Framework seeks to protect areas that are under strong urban influence from unsustainable over-development on the one hand, and to encourage population to be sustained in more structurally weak areas, that have experienced low growth or decline in recent decades, on the other, while sustaining vibrant rural communities.

National Policy Objective 15

Support the sustainable development of rural areas by encouraging growth and arresting decline in areas that have experienced low population growth or decline in recent decades and by managing the growth of areas that are under strong urban influence to avoid over-development, while sustaining vibrant rural communities.





The qualities 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.

Rural Towns

Rural towns function 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.

There is a distinction between rural areas located within the commuter catchment of the five city regions and large towns and those that are outside commuter catchments. In rural areas accessible to cities and towns, commuter-generated 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 historic vibrancy and vitality of town and village centres. The re-use and regeneration of these buildings are essential catalysts to transforming the capacity and potential of smaller towns and villages in Ireland.

As set out in National Policy Objectives 6 and 7, the National Planning Framework seeks to strengthen and diversify rural towns to be a focus for local housing and employment growth, based on regeneration and development that will include derelict site transformation and new technology, such as low carbon and energy efficiency and digital connectivity.

National Policy Objective 16

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

The qualities 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. This 'sense of place' is also becoming an important factor in attracting foreign direct investment and individual talent to Ireland.

Ireland's built heritage assets are a non-renewable resource that merit being nurtured in a manner appropriate to their significance as an aid to understanding the past, contributing to community well-being and quality of life as well as regional economic development.

Our market towns and 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 re-use of our built heritage, are key factors 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 17

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.

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' for residential development and the provision of services such as waste-water treatment.

National Policy Objective 18a

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 18b

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.

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.



Countryside

The Irish countryside is, and will 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 countryside. Careful planning is required to manage demand in our most accessible countryside around cities and towns, focusing on the elements required to support the sustainable growth of rural economies and rural communities.

It is important to differentiate, on the one hand, between rural areas located within the commuter catchment of the five cities and our largest towns and centres of employment³³ and, on the other hand, rural areas located outside these catchments³⁴.

It will continue to be necessary to demonstrate a functional economic or social requirement for housing need in areas under urban influence, i.e. the commuter catchment of cities and large towns and centres of employment. This will also be subject to siting and design considerations.

A more flexible approach, primarily based on siting and design, will be applied to rural housing in areas that are not subject to urban development pressure. This will assist in sustaining more fragile rural communities and in overall terms, will need to be related to the viability of smaller towns and rural settlements.

This arises because in some locations, almost all recent single housing in the countryside has been developed privately, with social housing provided largely in settlements. In many parts of rural Ireland, where a significant majority of housing output is in the countryside, this has contributed to spatial and social imbalance and the decline in population of smaller settlements. As a result, many key services have closed, in part due to population decline, leaving more marginalised and vulnerable citizens without access to those services.

National Policy Objective 19

Ensure, in providing for the development of rural housing, that a distinction is made between areas under urban influence, i.e. within the commuter catchment of cities and large towns and centres of employment, and elsewhere:

- In rural areas under urban influence, facilitate the provision of single housing in the countryside based on the core consideration of demonstrable economic or social need to live in a rural area and siting and design criteria for rural housing in statutory guidelines and plans, having regard to the viability of smaller towns and rural settlements;
- In rural areas elsewhere, facilitate the provision of single housing in the countryside based on siting and design criteria for rural housing in statutory guidelines and plans, having regard to the viability of smaller towns and rural settlements.

At a local level, the core strategy of county development plans will account for the demand for single housing in the countryside. This will be related to the local authority's 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.

National Policy Objective 20

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

5.4 | Planning and Investment to Support Rural Job Creation

Creating the environment to support job creation in rural areas will be a key enabler to rejuvenating rural towns and villages, sustaining vibrant rural communities and reversing population decline.

Rural areas support a mix of businesses of varying sizes, operating in a wide range of sectors from the traditional, such as agriculture and tourism, to more modern industries such as financial services and creative industries. Rural business also comprises micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), involved in non-traditional agricultural activities. All of these businesses serve a wide range of markets, from local to international level.

Local services sectors, including tourism and small-scale manufacturing, are a significant part of the rural economy and are also important local employers. However, supporting the diversification of the rural economy is essential, not just to create additional jobs in rural areas, but also to maximise the opportunity to link employment to issues such as climate change and managing sustainable land use.

Improved digital connectivity, through the roll-out of the National Broadband Plan, will also open up unprecedented opportunities for businesses in rural areas to offer new services and to reach new markets over the coming years.

Facilitating the development of enterprises and local economies to allow for the creation of a wider variety of employment opportunities will involve capitalising on local assets, including human, natural and cultural, through improved policy coherence to raise the potential of rural areas and contribute to local and regional growth. Opportunities for upskilling, including through blended on-line, part-time or outreach courses, will be important to securing and accessing employment within rural areas.



Ireland's natural resources are some of our greatest assets and through the development of the agriculture, food, forestry, tourism and renewable energy sectors, this will not only sustain rural 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, employment is likely to increase in areas such as agri-tech, ICT, multi-media and creative sectors, tourism, and 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 M&SMEs. Building on diversification and modernisation strategies, improving governance models and supporting innovative food and non-food value chains can help boost economic development, ecosystem services and entrepreneurial innovation.

The development of a strong enterprise culture is central to the economic and societal vibrancy of rural communities. The development of micro enterprises (those with less than 10 employees) is particularly relevant to the sustainability of smaller towns and rural areas. The network of Local Enterprise Offices, established in recent years, offers dedicated supports to businesses operating in this sector.

National Policy Objective 21

Enhance the competitiveness of rural areas by supporting innovation in rural economic development and enterprise through the diversification of the rural economy into new sectors and services, including ICT-based industries and those addressing climate change and sustainability.

Agriculture

The agri-food sector continues to play an integral part in Ireland's economy and is our largest indigenous industry, contributing 173,400 direct jobs and generating 10.4% of merchandise exports in 2016. Agriculture has traditionally been the most important contributor to rural economies and 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.

Much of the economic benefits in the agri-food sector are dispersed throughout the country making it particularly vital to rural areas and economic development generally. Continued development of the agri-food sector will be supported through the implementation of *Food Wise 2025*.

Food Wise 2025 sets out a strategic plan for the development of the agri-food (including seafood) sector over for the period up to 2025 and is the successor to the Food Harvest 2020 strategy. *Food Wise 2025* identifies growth projections for the sector including:

- 85% increase in the value of agri-food exports to €19 billion;
- 70% increase in value added in the agri-food, fisheries and wood products sector to in excess of €13 billion;
- 65% increase in the value of Primary Production to almost €10 billion; and
- 23,000 additional direct jobs in the agri-food sector all along the supply chain from primary production to high valued added product development.

Food Wise 2025 has five cross-cutting themes: sustainability, human capital, market development, competitiveness and innovation. Sustainability is key to the strategy, which states that: "environmental protection and economic competitiveness are equal and complementary – one cannot be achieved at the expense of the other". *Food Wise* also supports technology and processes that result in a more efficient use of resources.



Forestry

The forest industry, comprising the growing, harvesting and processing of forest products makes a significant and increasing contribution to the Irish economy. The direct and indirect contribution to the economy has been calculated at €2.3 billion annually with some 12,000 jobs dependent on the sector in 2012. Timber production currently stands at over 3 million m³ per annum, almost 20% of which is grown on private land.

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 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 bio-economy.

By the end of 2012, forest cover in Ireland had reached almost 732,000 hectares, or 10.5% of total land area. Afforestation levels over the last number of years have averaged 6,100 hectares per annum and annual increases in planting are targeted, to 8,290 ha by 2020. 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.

The development of greenways, blueways and peatways offer a unique alternative means for tourists and visitors to access and enjoy rural Ireland. The development of a strategic national network of these trails is a priority and will support the development of rural communities and job creation in the rural economy, as well as the protection and promotion of natural assets and biodiversity.

Due to the cross-sectoral nature, extensive reach and elements of land take associated with a national greenway, blueway and peatway strategy, the support and buy-in of local communities, landowners, local authorities and State agencies is critical to successful implementation, 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.

Another type of tourism attraction that demonstrates how the potential of all areas can be harnessed, are 'Dark Sky' Parks and Reserves, focused on areas "possessing an exceptional or distinguished quality of starry nights and a nocturnal environment that is specifically protected for its scientific, natural, educational, cultural heritage, and/or public enjoyment".³⁵ This is particularly true of mountainous and peatland areas where there is little or no light pollution, serviced by adjoining rural communities. There are currently two Internationally recognised Dark Sky areas in Ireland, a Park located in County Mayo and a Reserve located in County Kerry.

National Policy Objective 22

Facilitate tourism development and in particular a National Greenways, Blueways and Peatways Strategy, which prioritises projects on the basis of achieving maximum impact and connectivity at national and regional level.

Energy Production

Rural areas have significantly contributed to the energy needs of the country and will continue to do so, having a strong role to play in securing a sustainable renewable energy supply. 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 renewable solutions have been delivered in rural areas over the last number of years, particularly from solar, wind and biomass energy sources.

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 and respecting the needs of people who live in rural areas.

In relation to peatlands, some of Ireland'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 will 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 for, and will develop, many types of economic activities, those activities associated with the bio-economy such as development of new bio-refining technologies represent a competitive advantage. The bio-economy comprises "the production of renewable biological resources - such as crops, forests, fish, animals, and micro-organisms and the conversion of these resources and waste stream residues, by-products or municipal solid waste into value added products, such as food, feed, bio-based products and bioenergy" (European Commission, 2012).

The transition to a more circular economy and bio-economy, where the value of bio-based products, materials and resources is maintained in the economy for as long as possible, and the generation of waste minimised, will provide an essential contribution to our national goal of developing a sustainable, low-carbon, resource efficient and competitive economy.

Aggregates and Minerals

Extractive industries are important for the supply of aggregates and construction materials and minerals to a variety of sectors, for both domestic requirements and for export. The planning process will play a key role in realising the potential of the extractive industries sector by identifying and protecting important reserves of aggregates and minerals from development that might prejudice their utilisation.

Aggregates and minerals extraction will continue to be enabled where this is compatible with the protection of the environment in terms of air and water quality, natural and cultural heritage, the quality of life of residents in the vicinity, and provides for appropriate site rehabilitation.

National Policy Objective 23

Facilitate the development of the rural economy through supporting a sustainable and economically efficient agricultural and food sector, together with forestry, fishing and aquaculture, energy and extractive industries, the bio-economy 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.

Addressing Connectivity

Connectivity in the 21st Century is of fundamental 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 24

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.



5.5 | Rural 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 EU level, the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) has a significant role to play in the development and maintenance of rural Ireland. The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine's €4 Billion Rural Development Programme 2014-2020, funded under CAP, aims to:

- enhance the competitiveness of agriculture through on-farm investment;
- to ensure the sustainable management of natural resources and climate action; and
- to achieve balanced regional development of rural economies and communities.

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.

Through the Department of Rural and Community Development and the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine and other relevant Departments and Agencies, a long-term plan-led mechanism will be established to co-ordinate funding streams available for rural development. This will include the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund arising from the National Development Plan in support of the National Planning Framework and other national strategies that will support regional and local authority development plans and local economic and community plans.

National Policy Objective 25

The Department of Rural and Community Development, the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, and other relevant Departments and Agencies will continue to invest in rural Ireland, including through the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund, and will work together to establish a mechanism to co-ordinate structures for funding rural development to align with other national strategies.

6

People, Homes and Communities

6.1 | 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.

Figure 6.1 | Elements Supporting Quality of Life





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, it reflects the elements in figure 6.1.

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

While the National Planning Framework cannot 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 living environment'. This is why place is intrinsic to achieving good quality of life - the quality of our immediate environment, our ability to access services and amenities, such as education and healthcare, shops and parks, 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..

In making choices about where to live, work and invest, the level of service provision is an essential consideration. Figure 6.2 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 where there is accessibility to these services. Equally, more local service provision is appropriately provided for at a small town or village settlement scale.

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

6.2 | Healthy Communities

Our health and our environment are inextricably linked. Specific health risks that can be influenced by spatial planning include heart disease, respiratory disease, mental health, obesity and injuries. By taking a whole-system approach to addressing the many factors that impact on health and wellbeing and which contribute to health inequalities, and by empowering and enabling individuals and communities to make healthier choices, it will be possible to improve health outcomes, particularly for the next generation of citizens.

Decisions made regarding land use and the built environment, including transportation, affect these health risks in a variety of ways, for example 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, though integrating such policies, where appropriate and at the applicable scale, with planning policy.

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 - 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. generously 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 appealing to a skilled workforce and attracting innovative companies.

National Policy Objective 27

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



Hierarchy of Settlements and Related Infrastructure



Source: Derived from Strategic Investment Board Limited, 2008

6.3 | 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 continue to be a priority.

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, health and transport are four key areas where social inclusion can be improved; for example, through universal design of buildings to deliver greater accessibility for all, or co-location of community facilities and uses to ensure communities are active during the day and into the evening.

The National Planning Framework supports continued progress towards achieving a more inclusive society that supports our citizen's 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 around 13.5% of the population. A significant proportion of the population will experience disability at some stage in their lives, particularly as the population ages.

Many planning-related issues relevant to disabled people are similar to those that affect 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 people with disabilities are of working age, access and proximity to employment are also important.

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.

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. While 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.

Local authorities working with the travelling community will 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, city and county development plans and local area plans.

National Policy Objective 28

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



The Irish Language and the Gaeltacht

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, around 2% of Ireland's population now lives 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 provides an environment where the language can evolve naturally in a modern setting.

The language planning process, prescribed in the Gaeltacht Act 2012, represents the primary driver in support of the Government's commitment to the achievement of the objectives set out in the 20-Year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010-2030. The first stage of the process, which began in 2014, involves the preparation and subsequent implementation of language plans at community level across 26 Gaeltacht Language Planning Areas. It is also proposed to provide statutory recognition to up to 16 Gaeltacht Service Towns, strategically located towns both within and close to Gaeltacht Language Planning Areas and in which public services used by Gaeltacht communities are located.

The Act further provides for the designation as Irish Language Networks of areas outside the Gaeltacht with a critical mass of language-related infrastructure such as naónraí and primary and secondary level Irish medium schools.

It is vitally important for the maintenance of the Irish language as the vernacular of the Gaeltacht and for the promotion of the language outside the Gaeltacht that ongoing supports be provided for the language planning process and that support for the Gaeltacht development authority, Údarás na Gaeltachta, be strengthened.

National Policy Objective 29

Support the implementation of language plans in Gaeltacht Language Planning Areas, Gaeltacht Service Towns and Irish Language Networks.

6.4 | Age Friendly Communities

Older People

ESRI projections indicate that the numbers of people aged over 65 will more than double to 1.3 million people by 2040, making up 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 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.

As more people live longer lives, they will want to stay healthy and independent, live in their own homes and communities.

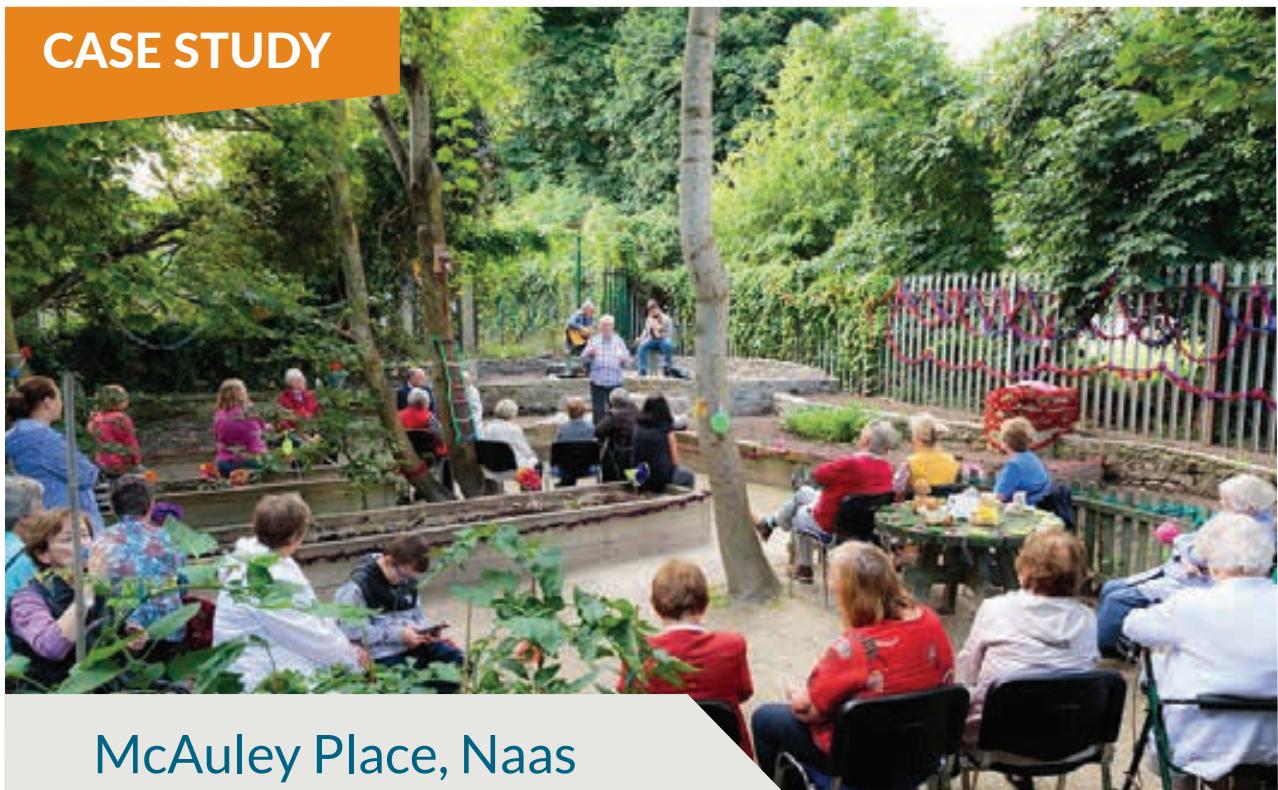
The 'Age Friendly Ireland' Initiative provides leadership and guidance in identifying the needs and opportunities of an ageing population and is embedded within the local government system, which, with support from Government, is best placed to respond to change at a local level.

National Policy Objective 30

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.



CASE STUDY



McAuley Place, Naas

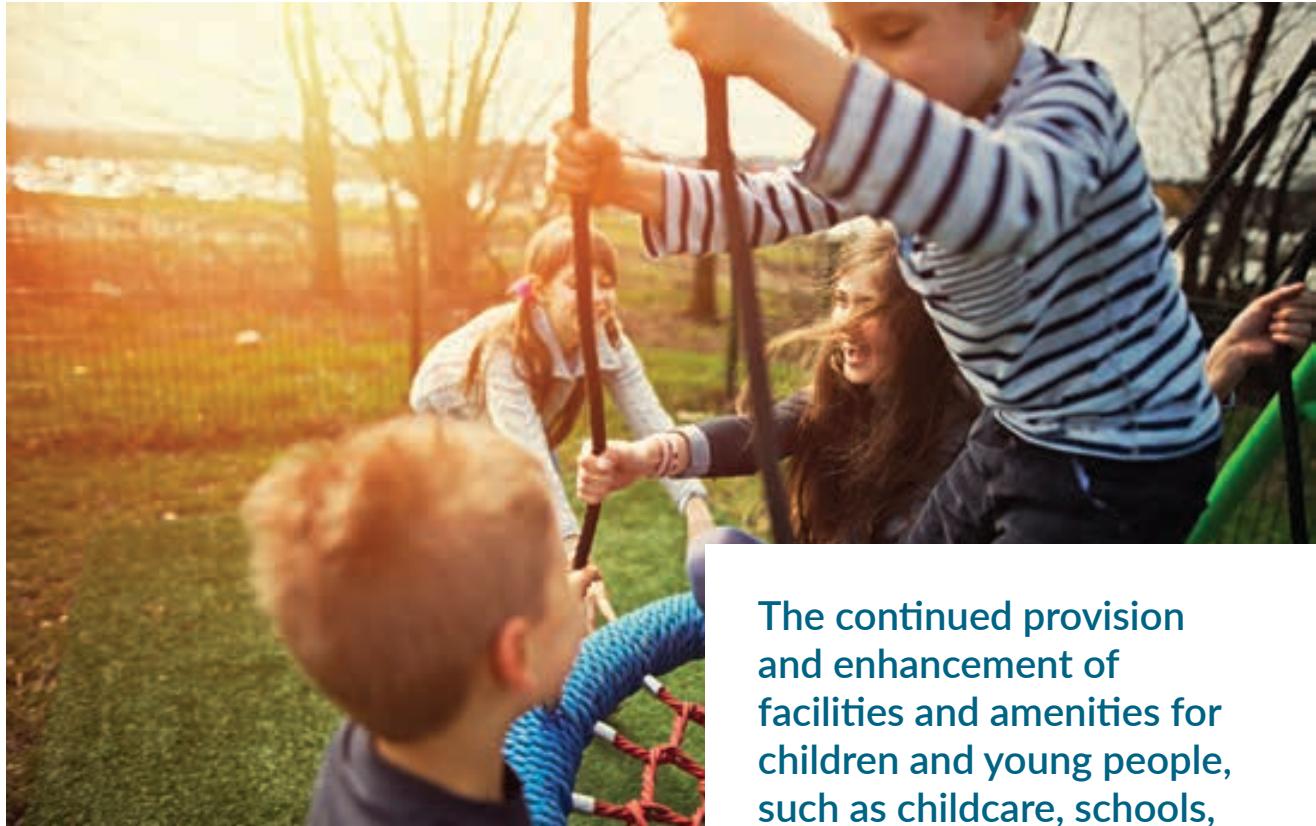
McAuley Place is a diverse and vibrant example of an alternative to institutional residential care for older people.

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 UN 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 soundproof music room.





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 sportsgrounds, 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 or close to the current built-up footprint of 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.

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

According to the UNHCR, children's health, educational advancement and overall well-being are deeply influenced by the quality of housing that 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% of the total population 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' through integrating such policies, where appropriate and at the applicable scale, with planning policy.

6.5 | Childcare, Education and Life Long Learning

Childcare

Access to affordable and high quality childcare is an essential requirement for an equitable society, a thriving economy and sustainable communities and is a critical part of our nation's infrastructure. Childcare provision in Ireland is reaching capacity and new planning approaches and sustained investment will be required, particularly in areas of disadvantage and population growth, to increase capacity and enable existing services to meet regulatory and quality requirements.

Investment in high quality, affordable childcare (including school-age childcare) and in Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) is critical both as an educational support for children, and as a prerequisite of job creation and labour market participation.

The Department of Children and Youth Affairs will work to put in place a more effective childcare planning function, to monitor, analyse and forecast childcare demand and supply in order to identify and plan medium- to long-term capital requirements. This function will take account of demand side factors and the various options for childcare delivery (e.g. centre-based and home-based provision) as well as working with the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government and local authorities through the planning process more generally to ensure effective access to childcare provision as an integral element of the overall development process.



Education

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, having 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.

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 experiencing population decline.

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 and to progress to employment and/or higher education. Provision offers learners the opportunity to up-skill, re-skill and acquire new skills to support career transition and progression.

In the Higher Education 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 childcare, 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 the National Planning Framework will seek to prioritise the alignment of targeted and planned population and employment growth with educational investment:

National Policy Objective 31

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

- A childcare/ECCE planning function, for monitoring, analysis and forecasting of investment needs, including identification of regional priorities;
- The provision of childcare 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 Higher Education facilities, particularly where this will contribute to wider regional development, and
- Programmes for life-long learning, especially in areas of higher education and further education and training where skills gaps are identified.



In the Higher Education 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.

6.6 | 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 32

To target the delivery of 550,000 additional households to 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 - Re-use, 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 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.
- Prioritise the location of new housing provision in existing settlements as a means to maximising 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.
- Tailor the scale and nature of future housing provision to the size and type of settlement where it is planned to be located.
- Integrate housing strategies where settlements straddle boundaries (county and/or regional).
- Utilise 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

Future homes are required to be located where people have the best opportunities to access a high standard quality of life.

In Ireland, the location of housing has 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. It has also hampered effective responses to climate change, compounded 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 33

Prioritise the provision of new homes at locations that can support sustainable development and at an appropriate scale of provision 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, and
- **still be located in our smaller towns, villages and rural areas, including the countryside, but at an appropriate scale** that does not detract from the capacity of our larger towns and cities to deliver homes more sustainably.



Building Resilience in Housing

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.

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 live 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 34

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, villages and the 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

The infill/brownfield targets set out in NPOs 3a, 3b and 3c of this Framework will necessitate a significant and sustained increase in urban housing output and apartment type development in particular, if we are to avoid a continuation of the outward expansion of cities and larger urban areas.

While apartments made up 12% of all occupied households in Ireland and 35% of occupied households in the Dublin City Council area in 2016 (Census data), we are a long way behind European averages in terms of the numbers and proportion of households living in apartments, especially in our cities and larger towns. In many European countries, it is normal to see 40%-60% of households living in apartments.

To more effectively address the challenge of meeting the housing needs of a growing population in our key urban areas, it is clear that we need to build inwards and upwards, rather than outwards. This means that apartments will need to become a more prevalent form of housing, particularly in Ireland's cities.

This is underpinned by on-going population growth, a long-term move towards smaller average household size, an ageing and more diverse population, greater mobility in the labour market and a higher proportion of households in the rented sector.

The economics of apartment construction can be more challenging than that of conventional housing. However, through more effective land management, regeneration and development initiatives, and new planning, regulatory and funding approaches to apartment development, meeting the housing requirements arising in major urban areas for people on a range of incomes a will be a major priority for this Framework and the actions flowing from it.

National Policy Objective 35

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.

Housing Demand

Between 2018 and 2040, an average output of at least 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.

Achieving this level of supply will require increased housing output into the 2020s to deal with a deficit that has built up since 2010. To meet projected population and economic growth as well as increased household formation, annual housing output will need to increase to 30,000 to 35,000 homes per annum in the years to 2027 and will be subject to monitoring and review.

In our cities, the Housing Agency has identified an aggregate need for at least 45,000 new homes in Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Galway and Waterford up to 2020, more than 30,000 of which are required in Dublin City and suburbs. In the longer term to 2040, there will be a need for provision of at least 275,000 new homes in the cities, with half of these located in already built-up areas.



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



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

Currently, 7 out 10 households in the State consist of three people or less, with an average household size of 2.75 people. This is expected to decline to around 2.5 people per household by 2040. 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 households³⁶. 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 increase³⁷. 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.

Affordable Homes

In addition to the significant investment in social housing as outlined in Rebuilding Ireland and the National Development Plan, we also need to ensure that more affordable homes are built for sale or rent, particularly in our cities, towns and villages, enabling people to choose to live within their communities and closer to where they work. This will be facilitated through more proactive land management and coordinated and efficient provision of enabling infrastructure, particularly on local authority and State-owned lands, as well as providing flexibility on

design and density, particularly in our urban cores, to enable more cost-efficient construction and variety of homes aimed at first-time buyers.

Reconciling Future Housing Requirements Effectively

The housing sector is more complex 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 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, programmes and funding initiatives.

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

National Policy Objective 36

New statutory guidelines, supported by wider methodologies and data sources, will be put in place under Section 28 of the Planning and Development 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.

Housing Need Demand Assessment

In order to ensure that the plan-making system is supported by a robust methodology to inform policies and funding initiatives around housing and associated land requirements, a Housing Need Demand Assessment (HNDA) will be developed by each Local Authority to support the preparation of housing strategies and all related housing policy outputs, e.g. city and county development plans, local area plans, traveller accommodation plans etc.

The purpose of the Housing Need Demand Assessment tool is to:

- **Assist local authorities to develop long-term strategic views of housing need across all tenures.**
- **Provide a robust evidence base to support decisions about new housing supply, wider investment and housing related services that inform an overall national housing profile.**
- **Inform policies about the proportion of social and affordable housing required, including the need for different types and sizes of provision.**
- **Provide evidence to inform policies related to the provision of specialist housing and housing related services.**



The HDNA is a database which allows local authorities to run a number of different scenarios to inform key decisions on housing need and supply. HNDAs are designed to give broad, long run estimates of what future housing need might be, rather than precision estimates.

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 market³⁸ rent 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 37

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, and also at a Metropolitan scale, 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 HNDA (DHPLG, 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.



7 Realising our Island and Marine Potential

7.1 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 are inextricably linked to the sea. Our marine environment is a national asset that yields multiple commercial and non-commercial benefits in terms, of, for example, 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 the National Planning Framework and the Marine Spatial Plan. Implementation of the NPF, 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 maritime area.

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 developing maritime planning processes will work alongside each other (see figure 7.1).



This will include 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. Such an approach 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.

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.

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.

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

Figure 7.1 | Common Aims and Areas of Overlap of Terrestrial and Maritime Planning

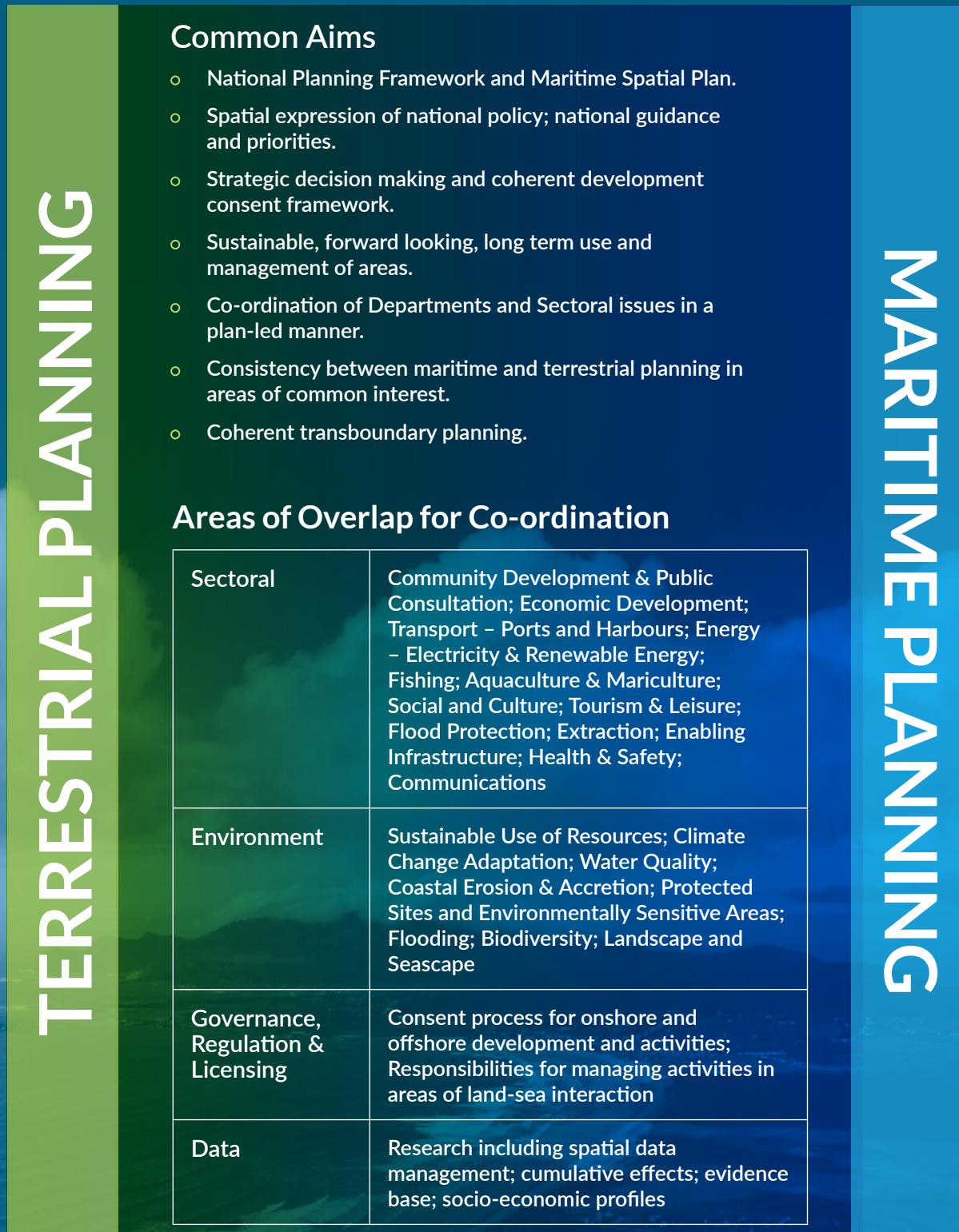


Figure 7.2 | Relationships between Planning Policy and Maritime Policy

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

National Policy Objective 38

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

Sales in the seafood sector are currently valued at €943 million and represent around 5% of total food and beverage exports, with major potential for expansion. Growth opportunities for the seafood sector set out in Food Wise 2025, the Government's strategic plan for the development of the agri-food sector, including seafood, are based on:

- Rising global demand for product with a supply deficit;
- Proximity to productive wild fisheries resource which could be landed in Ireland;
- Potential to increase the level of value added product; and
- Opportunity to achieve strategic advantage in the marine biotechnology field.

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 (e.g. offshore renewables, offshore services, ICT and sensors, biotechnology, aquaculture). In line with HOOW goals, such as doubling GDP from the marine sector by 2030, it is necessary to consider where opportunities exist for growth.

7.2 | Maritime Economy

The maritime economy is a key enabler of effective regional development, especially in remote coastal communities. The maritime sector also has a key role within the economy as an important gateway for the movement of people and freight between Ireland and its trading partners. 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.

The seafood sector plays a critical part in the sustainable development of the economic and social fabric of specific regions and the many small rural communities it serves. The jobs maintained in this sector are very significant as they maintain working populations and communities in remote coastal areas, where there are fewer opportunities for commercial or industrial development. The Irish seafood sector supports the economic viability of many rural coastal communities, directly generating or supporting approximately 11,000 jobs.



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.

Global and national demand for seafood is forecast to 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 fisheries (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. Continued investment in Fishery Harbour Centres is required to enhance and further develop their capacity to optimise the contribution of our marine resources to rural and coastal communities. 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 39

Support the sustainable growth and development of the maritime economy and continue to invest in the seafood sector and our Fishery Harbour Centres, particularly in remote rural coastal communities and islands.

7.3 | 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 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 (i.e. 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 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 and concurrent and subsequent metropolitan area or city/county development plan processes.

National ports policy also recognises the Tier 2 ports of Belview and Rosslare-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.

Strategic plans for relevant Tier 1 and 2 ports and corresponding 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.

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, such as Galway and Drogheda, have an important role for regional employment and services and many smaller harbours serve rural and island communities. In addition to commercial freight, such ports support marine sectors that are dependent of local natural resources, such as fisheries, marine renewable energy, and marine tourism.

National Policy Objective 40

Ensure that the strategic development requirements of Tier 1 and Tier 2 Ports, ports of regional significance and smaller harbours are addressed as part of Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies, metropolitan area and city/county development plans, to ensure the effective growth and sustainable development of the city regions and regional and rural areas.

7.4 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 the 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 patterns of accretion and erosion 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 lower-lying city centre areas during extreme weather events.

National Policy Objective 41a

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

National Policy Objective 41b

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.



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.

7.5 Offshore Renewable Energy

Ireland's territorial waters present major opportunities in the blue economy and offshore renewable energy sectors, which would support our transition to a zero carbon economy.

Under the *Offshore Renewable Energy Development Plan* (OREDP), 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 the potential for renewable generation off the western part of the country, 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 42

To support, within the context of the *Offshore Renewable Energy Development Plan* (OREDP)³⁹ 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 500km² 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.

8

Working with Our Neighbours

8.1 | Ireland and the European Union

Implementation of the National Planning Framework 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 trade and investment links with European, US, Asian and wider world markets. This has resulted in a transformation and rapid transition of our economy in terms of jobs, skills and 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 operating conditions of multinationals. To do this, we will need to position Ireland to be flexible to change and external influences.



How we interact with our nearest neighbours in Northern Ireland, England, Scotland and Wales, will also 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 changes will not be known until after the National Planning Framework is finalised, future iterations and reviews of the NPF 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.

This presents both significant opportunities and challenges, including 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, in the event of a withdrawal of the UK from the EU, that 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.

8.2 | Ireland and Northern Ireland

Around 6.6m 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 around 8 million people.

Notwithstanding the context of Brexit, planning for nearly 1.4 million extra people, 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 shared challenges, including:

- **Managing our growth strategically for long term benefit in terms of economic and social development and environmental quality; and**
- **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 the National Planning Framework 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.

In the context of ongoing North-South cooperation across a wide range of policy areas, there are three key categories of 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 the NPF:

1 Working Together for Economic Advantage

- Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor
- North-West Strategic Growth Partnership
- Cross Border Local Initiatives

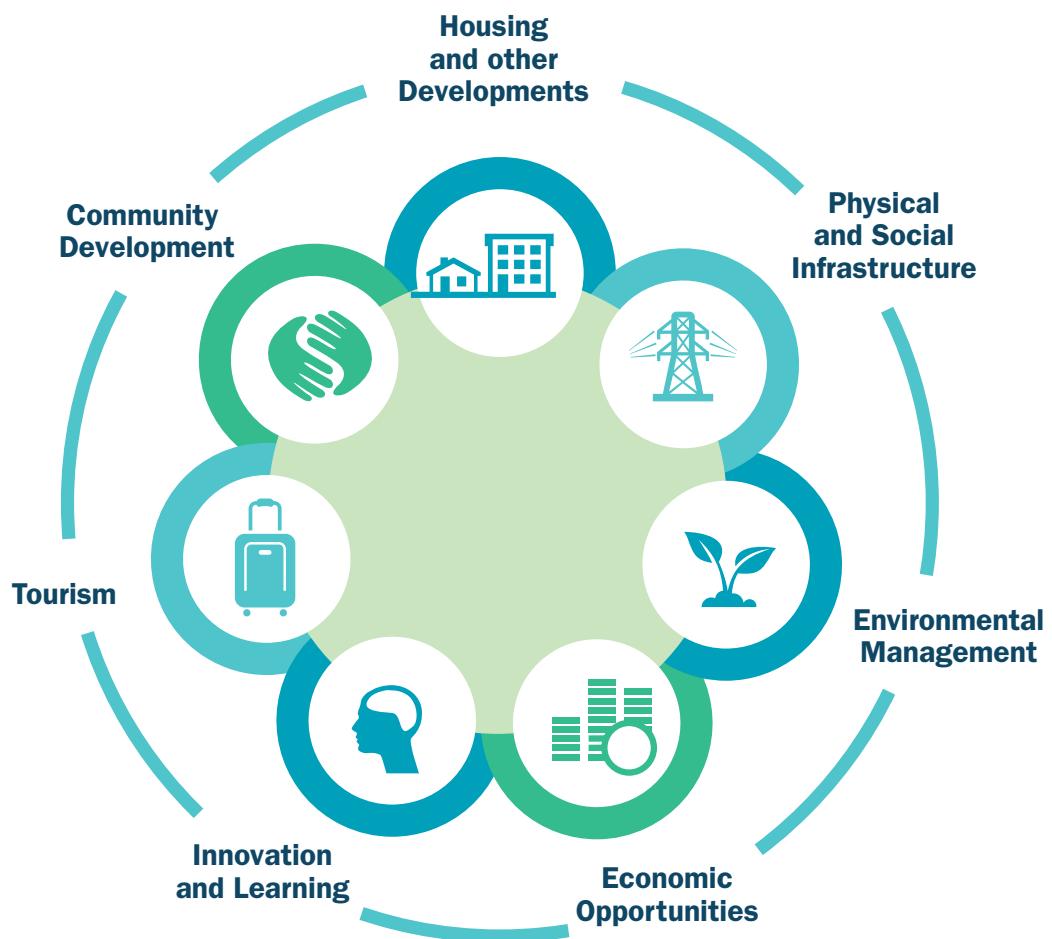
2 Co-ordination of Investment in Infrastructure

- Mobility and accessibility
- Energy
- Communications
- Tourism

3 Managing our Shared Environment Responsibly



Figure 8.1 | Shared Planning Challenges in Ireland and Northern Ireland



National Policy Objective 43

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.

8.3 | 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 and several of the largest towns 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 the National Planning Framework, the Government intends 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 large centres of population and employment along the main economic corridor, including in particular Drogheda and Dundalk;
- 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;
- Examining the feasibility of a high-speed rail connection between Belfast and Dublin and Cork; and
- Protecting distinctive landscapes and rural activities which act as key green spaces and food producing areas between settlements.

National Policy Objective 44

In co-operation with relevant Departments in Northern Ireland, to further support and develop the economic potential of the Dublin-Belfast Corridor and in particular the core Drogheda-Dundalk-Newry network and to promote and enhance its international visibility.

North-West Strategic Growth Partnership

The development of the North-West city region, focused on Derry City, Letterkenny and Strabane, 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 been developed to provide strategic leadership in the development of the region.

The North West Strategic Growth 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; and
- Better co-ordination of public services such as health and education facilities.

National Policy Objective 45

In co-operation with relevant Departments in Northern Ireland, support and 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.

Central Border Area

The National Planning Framework sets out a clear road map for the development of strong urban centres in the North West and along the Dublin-Belfast Corridor. Between these two areas, the central border area is predominantly rural in character, but includes a number of county towns and other settlements that fulfil important regional and cross-border economic and service roles for their wider rural hinterlands.

Significant improvements in digital and physical infrastructure, such as the N2/A5 in particular, subject to the maintenance of seamless cross-border movement for people, goods and services, will create new opportunities, with the central border area strategically connected, located almost equidistant between the Dublin, Belfast and Derry City regions.

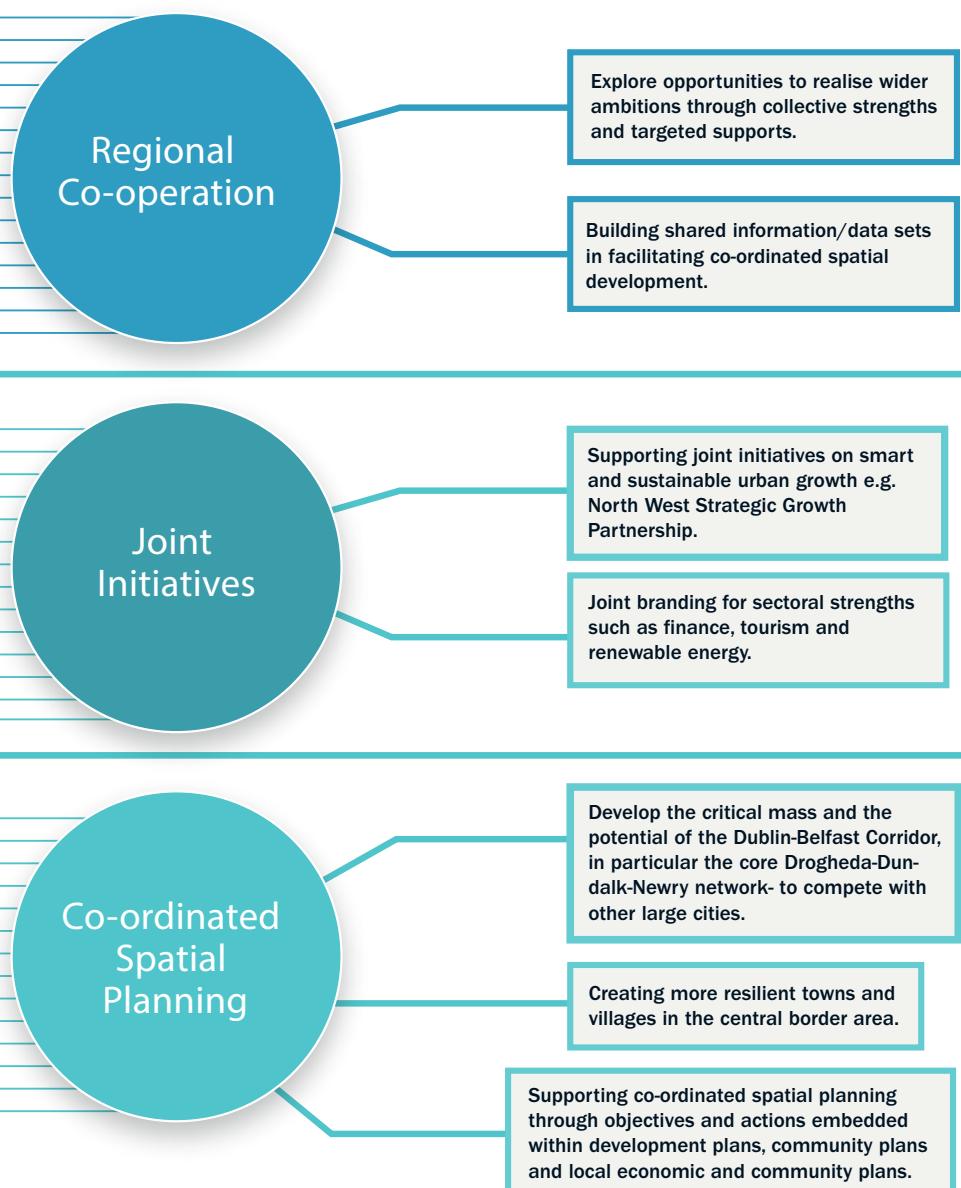
The NPF supports further growth and investment in the county towns in the central border counties and strengthening accessibility from and to the central border area. From a heritage and tourism perspective, the central border area offers unique, rugged backdrops encompassing drumlins, lakelands, upland bogs and forests, incorporating geology, literature, art, pre-Christian and industrial heritage together with a network of smaller towns and villages on both sides of the border.

Cross-Border Local Initiatives

Reconfiguration of local authority and council structures on both sides of the border presents opportunities for collaboration, in particular for areas on the Dublin-Belfast corridor and in central border areas. Building up the economic, infrastructural and developmental ties 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; and
- Co-ordinated spatial planning.

Figure 8.2 | Areas for Cross-Border Local Co-ordination



8.4 | Co-ordination of Investment in Infrastructure

Both the National Planning Framework 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 the NPF, 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, peatways and walking trails will help to harness the potential of the island.

National Policy Objective 46

In co-operation with relevant Departments in Northern Ireland, enhanced transport connectivity between Ireland and Northern Ireland, to include cross-border road and rail, cycling and walking routes, as well as blueways, greenways and peatways.



Energy

Collaboration in the energy sector, driven by the single electricity market and combined with the development of interconnection such as 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 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. 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 the National Planning Framework, 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, 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 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 47

In co-operation with relevant Departments in Northern Ireland, strengthen all-island energy infrastructure and interconnection capacity, including distribution and transmission networks to enhance security of electricity supply.

Communications

In the information age, telecommunications networks play a crucial role in enabling social and economic activity. The development of Project Kelvin, an extensive submarine and terrestrial cable deployment that directly connects Northern Ireland to North America, provides critical telecommunications infrastructure to towns and cities throughout the border region.

Further action to strengthen communications links in an island and border context will support the NPF, 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 48

In co-operation with relevant Departments in Northern Ireland, develop a stable, innovative and secure digital communications and services infrastructure on an all-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 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 area.

There are currently no dedicated long-distance cycling/walking routes which link Northern Ireland and Ireland, although INTERREG V EU funding is assisting with 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 lakeland amenities stretching along the border, literary trails and the historic towns networks are also important not just for tourism but also for a shared built and natural heritage. The enhancement of these places and features is important for regional and local development in the border areas and the network of smaller towns and villages and hidden communities on both sides of the border.

National Policy Objective 49

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



CASE STUDY



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 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.

8.5 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; and
- there are also 37 cross-border groundwater bodies which are shared between the two jurisdictions and require coordinated management.

In supporting environmental responsibilities under the National Planning Framework, 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; and
- Co-ordination of relevant planning policies affecting shared coastal waters and seas..

National Policy Objective 50

In co-operation with relevant Departments in Northern Ireland, ensuring effective management of shared landscapes, heritage, water catchments, habitats, species and trans-boundary issues in relation to environmental policy.

8.6 Ireland 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, such an approach to national planning has become the norm across Europe.

Each of our closest neighbours in the UK has spatial plans for their constituent administrative areas or is in the process of producing new plans. These include the Regional Development Strategy in Northern Ireland, and Planning Frameworks in Scotland, Wales and England.

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 Council⁴⁰ 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 51

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



9

REALISING OUR SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

9.1 | 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.

While the overall quality of our environment is good, this masks some of the threats we now face. 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.

As part of the National Planning Framework, in line with the EU vision of living well, within our limits and in support of environmental policy at European and national level⁴¹, Government will 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.



Managing Waste

Adequate capacity and systems to manage waste in an environmentally safe and sustainable manner.

Protecting, Conserving and Enhancing Our Natural Capital



Sustainable Water Management

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 52

The planning system will be responsive to our national environmental challenges and ensure that development occurs within environmental limits, having regard to the requirements of all relevant environmental legislation and the sustainable management of our natural capital.

9.2 | 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 and 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, waste management, 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. This Framework 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, carpooling and car-sharing.

National Policy Objective 53

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



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.

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 be a competitive low carbon, economy by the year 2050. The National Policy Position⁴² 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 (CO2) emissions of at least 80% (compared to 1990 levels) by 2050 across the electricity generation, built environment and transport sectors; and**
- **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.**

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 land use and to examine how planning policy can help shape national infrastructural decisions.

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 land use and to examine how planning policy can help shape national infrastructural decisions.

In addition, Ireland's forests play an important role in helping with climate change mitigation, through carbon sequestration in forests and the provision of renewable fuels and raw materials. Irish forestry is a major carbon sink and afforestation is the most significant mitigation option that is available to Ireland's land use sector.

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 the National Planning Framework, 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 bio economy.
- **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 to enable better management of urban micro-climates.

National Policy Objective 54

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.

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.

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 recognise that Ireland must reduce greenhouse gas emissions from the energy sector by at least 80% by 2050, compared to 1990 levels, 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; and
- 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 of 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 Development Plan will also facilitate informed decision making in relation to onshore renewable energy infrastructure.

National Policy Objective 55

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

Managing Waste

Ireland has actively improved its waste management systems, but we remain heavily reliant on export markets for the treatment of residual waste, recyclable wastes and hazardous waste. A population increase of around one million people, alongside economic growth to 2040, will increase pressure on waste management capacity, as consumption is still a key driver of waste generation.

While the ultimate aim is to decouple, as much as possible, consumption from waste generation over time, additional investment in waste management infrastructure, and in particular different types of waste treatment, will be required.

In managing our waste needs, the NPF supports circular economy principles that minimise waste going to landfill and maximise waste as a resource. This means that prevention, preparation for reuse, recycling and recovery are prioritised in that order, over the disposal of waste.

National Policy Objective 56

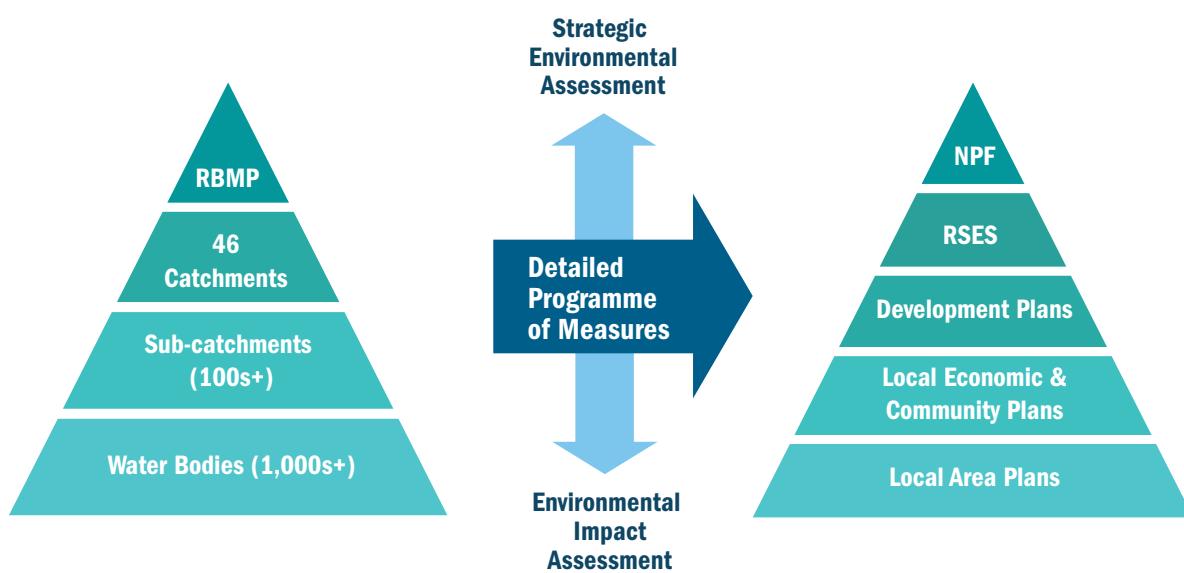
Sustainably manage waste generation, invest in different types of waste treatment and support circular economy principles, prioritising prevention, reuse, recycling and recovery, to support a healthy environment, economy and society.

9.3 | 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 influences effective water management. This includes water service provision, river basin management, landscape, flood risk planning, coastal and marine management and climate change adaptation. Accordingly, statutory development plans must ensure the integration of sustainable water management considerations. The objectives of the National Planning Framework must also be reflected in River Basin Management Plans (RBMPs).

Figure 9.1 | 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 flood risk 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 (rain) flood events and extreme rainfall events. Core objectives include⁴³:

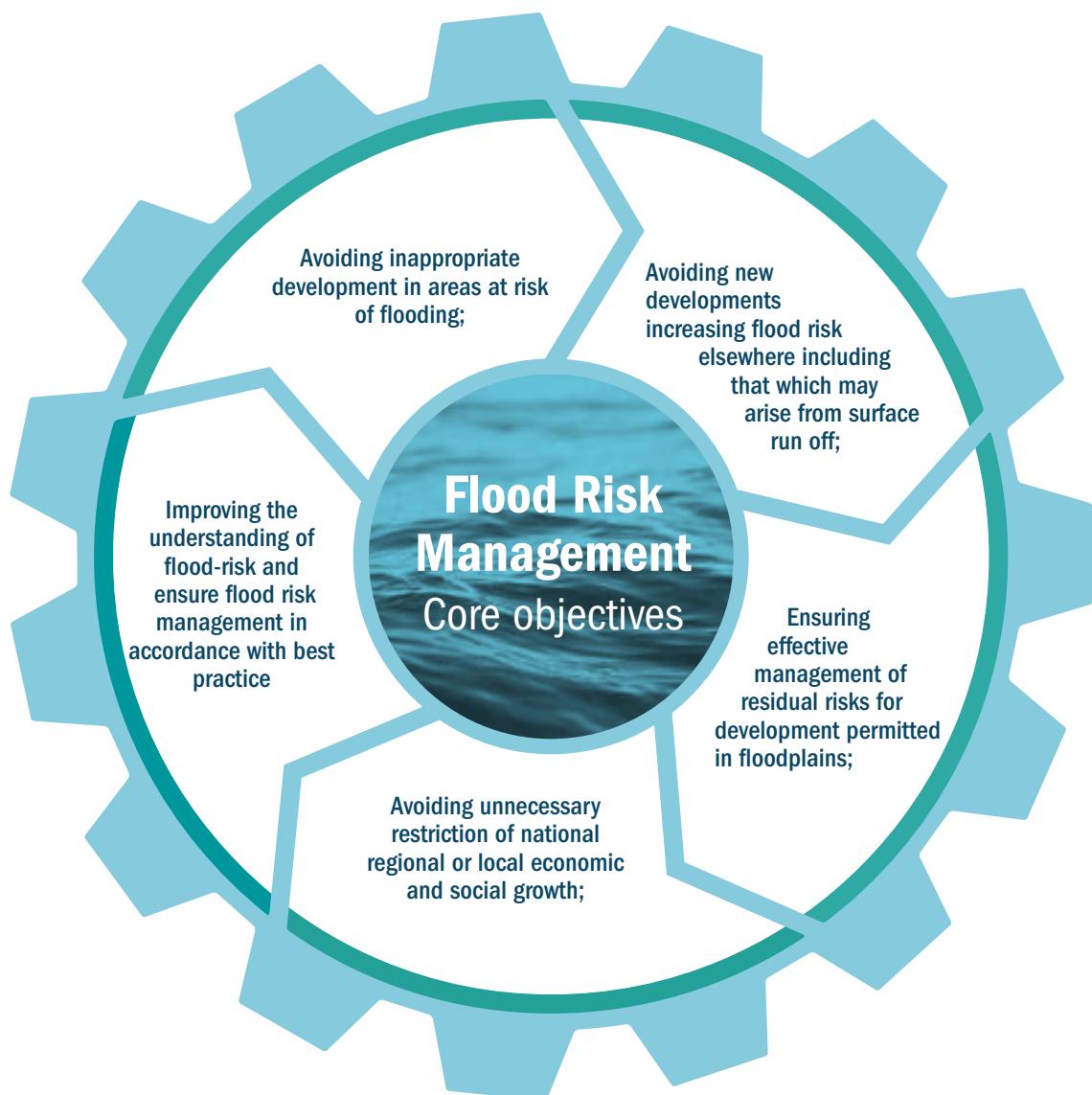
- avoiding inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding;
- avoiding new developments increasing flood risk elsewhere, including that which may arise from surface run off;
- ensuring effective management of residual risks for development permitted in floodplains;
- avoiding unnecessary restriction of national regional or local economic and social growth; and
- improving the understanding of flood-risk and ensure flood risk management in accordance with best practice.

National Policy Objective 57

Enhance water quality and resource management by:

- Ensuring flood risk management informs place-making by avoiding inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding in accordance with The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities.
- Ensuring that River Basin Management Plan objectives are fully considered throughout the physical planning process.
- Integrating sustainable water management solutions, such as Sustainable Urban Drainage (SUDS), non-porous surfacing and green roofs, to create safe places.

Figure 9.2 | Flood Risk Management Core Objectives



Source: The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2009, DEHLG and OPW.

Green Infrastructure

Our environment is an asset that if planned for in the same way as 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 skilled employees and investment to underpin long-term development. Our natural assets are also valuable for carbon capture, which will assist in meeting climate mitigation and adaptation goals and national biodiversity targets.



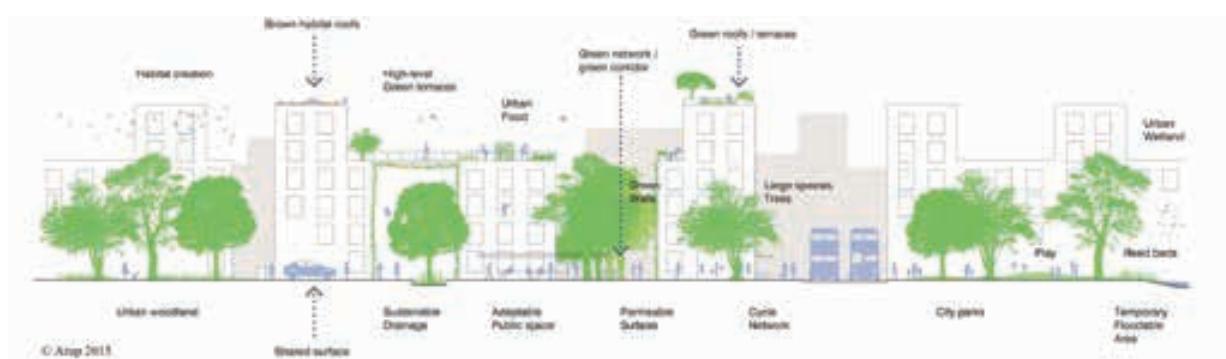
Green infrastructure planning will inform the preparation of regional and metropolitan strategies and city and county development plans by:

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

National Policy Objective 58

Integrated planning for Green Infrastructure and ecosystem services will be incorporated into the preparation of statutory land use plans.

It is also important to consider the interrelationships between biodiversity, natural heritage, landscape and our green spaces.



Example of Green Infrastructure integrated into an urban landscape

Biodiversity

At a national level, certain habitats and species are legally protected within the Natura 2000 network⁴⁴, incorporating Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), with additional Special Protection Areas and Marine SACs. The majority of our habitats that are listed under the Habitats Directive were considered to be of “inadequate” or “bad” conservation status by the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) in 2013, with 9% being in a “favourable” state⁴⁵. Clearly, there is significant scope for improvement.

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 more broadly. 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, including in particular pressures from urbanisation, can have a direct and indirect impact on Ireland’s habitats and species.

National Policy Objective 59

Enhance the conservation status and improve the management of protected areas and protected species by:

- Implementing relevant EU Directives to protect Ireland’s environment and wildlife;
- Integrating policies and objectives for the protection and restoration of biodiversity in statutory development plans;
- Developing and utilising licensing and consent systems to facilitate sustainable activities within Natura 2000 sites;
- Continued research, survey programmes and monitoring of habitats and species.

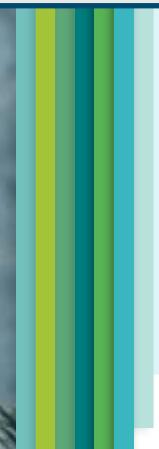
Natural Heritage

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 for their contribution to quality of life and the 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.

National Policy Objective 60

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



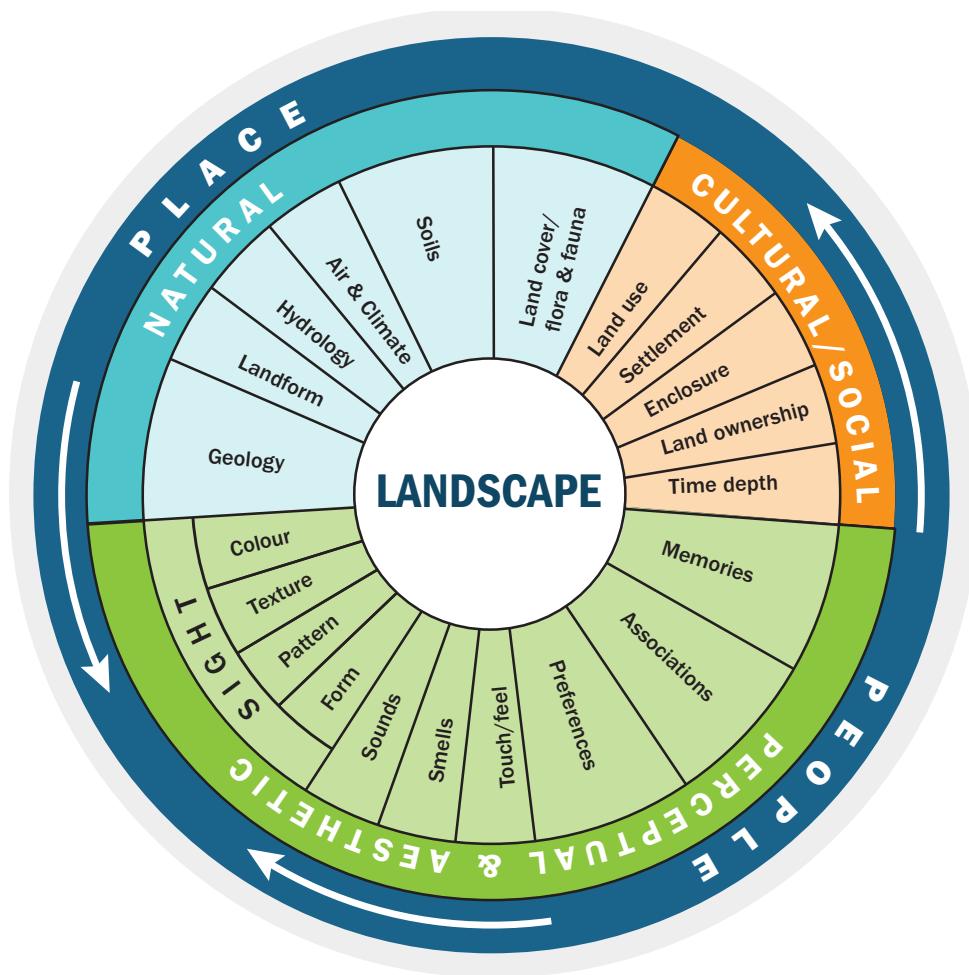
Landscape

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 for Ireland, and a national landscape character assessment, which, when finalised, will provide consistency in how we characterise and connect with the landscape.

National Policy Objective 61

Facilitate landscape protection, management and change through the preparation of a National Landscape Character Map and development of guidance on local landscape character assessments, (including historic landscape characterisation) to ensure a consistent approach to landscape character assessment, particularly across planning and administrative boundaries.

Figure 9.3 | The Landscape Wheel⁴⁶



Green Belts and Green Spaces

Green belts and green spaces in our cities, towns and villages play an integral role as part of the fabric of our settlements, either through their use for community recreation and amenity purposes, supporting biodiversity or as a natural delineation of the settlement itself, forming the interface between urban and rural areas.

Green spaces and parks have a role in determining the quality of life in and sustainability of, our settlements. Green belts adjoining our urban areas also fulfil a strategic purpose, as a potential asset for future, planned development as an urban extension, particularly at a city scale.

National Policy Objective 62

Identify and strengthen the value of greenbelts and green spaces at a regional and city scale, to enable enhanced connectivity to wider strategic networks, prevent coalescence of settlements and to allow for the long-term strategic expansion of urban areas.

Urban waste water treatment plant compliance and remedial actions are therefore a key short term priority. In the longer term, capacity issues will need to be resolved to meet growing demand to 2040 and beyond. At the household level, it will also be necessary 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 63

Ensure the efficient and sustainable use and development of water resources and water services infrastructure in order to manage and conserve water resources in a manner that supports a healthy society, economic development requirements and a cleaner environment.

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, and 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 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.

Air pollution can have negative implications for the health of our citizens and the attractiveness of cities and towns. Measures which seek a reduction in fossil fuel based energy sources will further reduce air pollution. Implementation of this Framework will assist in reducing 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 are also important for air quality in urban areas, as trees naturally remove pollutants from the air and help better manage urban micro-climates.

9.4 Creating a Clean Environment for a Healthy Society

Water Quality

Ireland's rich water resources are of strategic importance and clean water is essential for creating a healthy society and supporting a growing economy. Our drinking water is primarily sourced from our rivers and lakes as well as from groundwater sources. It is essential that we have a resilient water supply to serve the existing population and for the additional 1 million people projected by 2040. Our water bodies are also a resource for leisure activities and for the tourism sector and the vast majority of our bathing waters are of very high quality⁴⁷.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) consider urban waste water to be one of the principal pressures on water quality in Ireland and the treatment and disposal of waste water in an environmentally sound manner is critical for human health. This means that we need to ensure adequate treatment and capacity, storm water overflows operating correctly and that we avoid direct discharges of untreated waste water.

National Policy Objective 64

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, heating systems with zero local emissions, green infrastructure planning and innovative design solutions.

Noise Quality

Noise is unwanted sound but is an inevitable consequence of everyday life, arising 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 forms of development within our settlements, it is important to more proactively manage noise. In addressing these issues the NPF will support:

- **Noise Management and Action Planning**

Measures to avoid, mitigate, and minimise or promote the pro-active management of noise, where it is likely to 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.

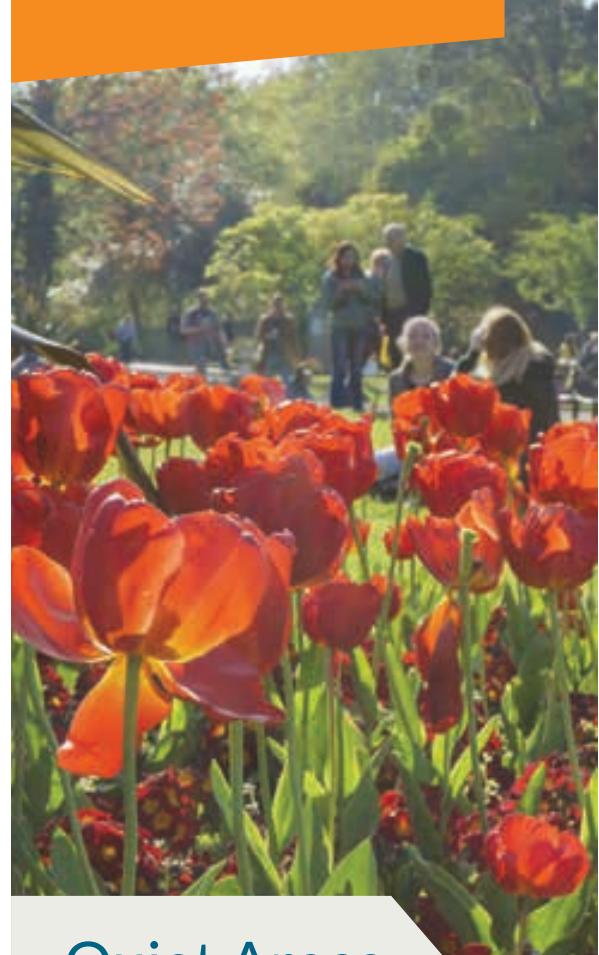
- **Quiet Areas**

The further enjoyment of natural resources, such as our green spaces and sea frontage, through the preservation of low sound levels or a reduction in undesirably high sound levels, is particularly important for providing respite from 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 65

Promote the pro-active management of noise where it is likely to 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.

10

Implementing the National Planning Framework



The success of the National Planning Framework depends on its policy reflection and programme delivery at national, regional and local level. Implementation of the Framework will therefore be combined with streamlined governance arrangements and focused public capital investment priorities.



The National Planning Framework 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.

10.1 | Governance and Oversight

Publication of the National Planning Framework in tandem with and supported by the 10-year National Development Plan as the framework for capital investment to 2027, with both documents having a shared set of National Strategic Outcomes or NSOs, provides a very solid foundation to deliver transformational change over the coming years.

However, investment alone is not sufficient to implement this Framework. It will also require more effective planning and co-ordination processes, to ensure that the NPF shapes the policies and deliverable actions of Government Departments and Agencies, State bodies, local government and infrastructure providers, working in conjunction with communities, civic society, the private sector and neighbouring administrations.

Statutory Provision

The Planning and Development (Amendment) Bill 2016 provides a legislative basis for the National Planning Framework, a monitoring process in relation to its implementation and a statutory requirement for regular reviews and updates into the future, together with the establishment of an independent Office of the Planning Regulator (OPR).

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

Phasing

The National Planning Framework is necessarily a long-term strategy and sets out broad national, regional and city-specific population targets, informed by ESRI research, to secure more effective regional development. Achieving these targets will take time and their implementation will need to be adaptive to the inevitable changes in circumstances and unforeseen events inherent in a long-run Framework approach.

Therefore, in order to facilitate monitoring and review, phased regional population targets to 2026 and 2031 are set out in Table 10.1. By 2027, these may be reviewed, taking account of implementation of this Framework to 2026, based on updated Census data, to inform the next full ten-year cycle of the National Development Plan.

Based on projections, a significant proportion of additional population growth to 2040 is targeted in the periods to 2026 and 2031, which affords considerable ambition and flexibility to be built into Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies, and which in turn will guide and influence city and county development plans and local area plans.

The targeted pattern of half of population growth in the five cities (NPO 2a) will continue to apply, but phasing is not specified for the five cities.

This will be addressed as part of the Metropolitan Strategic Area Plan (MASP) that will be prepared for each city in the context of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies. This is to allow for a transition period, during which time investment to support compact growth and the National Regeneration and Development Agency will assist in opening up greater urban infill capacity.

Table 10.1 | National Planning Framework Phased Population Growth

Region	2026 NPF Targeted Population Growth	2031 NPF Targeted Population Growth	2040 NPF Targeted Population Growth
Eastern and Midland	240,000 - 265,000	335,000 - 375,000	490,000 - 540,000
Northern and Western	65,000 - 75,000	100,000 - 110,000	160,000 - 180,000
Southern	155,000 - 170,000	220,000 - 245,000	340,000 - 380,000
State Total Growth	460,000 - 510,000	655,000 - 730,000	990,000 - 1,100,000
State Total Population	5,220,000 - 5,275,000	5,415,000 - 5,490,000	5,750,000 - 5,860,000



A State-Led Strategic Land Development Agency

Effective land management, particularly in relation to publicly owned lands, will be a key piece of the implementation of this Framework. Government recognises that the State must take a stronger role in strategically managing and enhancing the development potential of its own lands, to deliver on wider public policy and to ensure that overall development needs are met. This includes, but is not exclusive to the provision of housing by the State and other housing providers, for people on a range of incomes.

This means that we need to become more agile and more strategic in managing and developing publicly owned lands, so that development requirements can be met within a smaller physical footprint and provide an economic alternative to long-distance commuting.

There have been successes in the past such as the redevelopment of the former mental health facility in Grangegorman as a new university campus, rejuvenation of run-down areas, such as backlands behind the main streets in many regional towns and the revitalisation of Dublin's Dockland areas.

Experience of previous regeneration projects in cities, towns and rural areas highlights the role that strategic management and co-ordination of public lands has played and will continue to play in strengthening the State's capacity to drive the renewal process. It is also critical to build capacity for development and rejuvenation on an on-going, rather than stop-start, basis and within both urban and rural contexts.

Learning from past experiences, the Government will establish a new public body to work closely with the local government sector, central Government, a range of existing agencies and public bodies and the semi-State sector. As an initial task, this will place a spotlight on how specific landholdings in public ownership can be used to deliver the objectives of the NPF and NDP and to identify a clear and practical sequence of steps needed to take action.

The new body, the National Regeneration and Development Agency, will be established with a clear Government mandate to work with local authorities, relevant Departments and agencies, and the Office of Public Works in identifying an initial tranche of publicly owned or controlled lands in key locations and with both a city and wider regional and rural focus with potential for master-planning and re-purposing for strategic development purposes aligned to the NPF (please also see NPO 12, in Chapter 4).

A key advantage of the National Regeneration and Development Agency will be the creation of a national centre of expertise in strategic master-planning, development and renewal, adding to and complementing existing public sector expertise and with a roving remit to advise the Government and key stakeholders on how to get the best strategic return on the development of the State's land portfolio.

The Government intends that such a body will assist and enable the roles of Government Departments and agencies, local authorities and commercial semi-State companies through new co-ordination and delivery arrangements, which will also link to wider infrastructure funding arrangements through the NDP and strategic investment vehicles like the Irish Strategic Investment Fund (ISIF) and the European Investment Bank (EIB).

There will be a close link between the functions of the Regeneration and Development Agency and strategic planning at metropolitan and other levels and the operation of the Rural and Urban Regeneration and Development Funds.

National Policy Objective 66

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 other major urban areas and in rural towns and villages as a priority, particularly through the establishment of a National Regeneration and Development Agency.

10.2 | The Planning System

Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies

Planning and development issues transcend local authority boundaries. To ensure better co-ordination in planning and development policy matters across boundaries, the local authorities are grouped into three regional assembly areas - Eastern and Midland, Northern and Western, and Southern.

These regional groupings of local authorities will prepare Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (also known as 'RSESS'), provided for under the Local Government Reform Act 2014, to take the high-level framework and principles of the NPF and work out more detail at regional and local authority levels.

Preparation of the strategies involves the relevant local authorities, working together with relevant stakeholders, including the Minister and Department for Housing, Planning and Local Government, the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and other interests, to put in place a regional co-ordination framework for the relevant statutory development plans at local authority level. The co-ordination required will include developing and agreeing a distribution of future population growth at a more detailed and regional level than the NPF, but working broadly within its parameters.

Metropolitan Area Strategic Planning

All five cities in Ireland 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 will be developed to co-ordinate local authority plans at a strategic and regional assembly level, the area of the Assemblies is too broad to be able to sufficiently focus on city and metropolitan issues.

Accordingly, in tandem with and as part of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 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. In line with the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies, the MASP will be provided with statutory underpinning to act as 12-year strategic planning and investment frameworks for the city metropolitan areas, addressing high-level and long-term strategic development issues.

Metropolitan area boundaries are not specified for the five cities in this Framework. This issue will be addressed in the context of ongoing Government consideration to establishing an appropriate level of political and administrative leadership for the governance of Ireland's cities.

However, until such time as central Government determines otherwise, Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies and Metropolitan Area Strategic Plans will be based on:

- In the Dublin area, the metropolitan area identified in the National Transport Authority (NTA) Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area;
- In the Cork area, the metropolitan area, i.e. Metropolitan Cork as identified in the *Cork Area Strategic Plan (CASP)*;
- In the Limerick area, a metropolitan area based on similar labour market catchment considerations to the areas already identified for Dublin and Cork, to be determined by the Regional Assembly, in consultation with the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government and the relevant local authorities, that shall include Shannon Airport and Town;
- In the Galway and Waterford areas, metropolitan areas based on similar labour market catchment considerations to the areas already identified for Dublin and Cork, to be determined by the Regional Assemblies, in consultation with the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government and the relevant local authorities.

Determination of Metropolitan Area boundaries will take account of:

- The functional urban area of the city, i.e. where the existing dense concentration of employment, population, service provision, including transport, education and healthcare, is located;
- Commuting patterns, based on the proportion of resident workers employed in the principal city area and other principal employment locations;
- Geographical features that contribute to delineating/defining the boundary and/or require protection for environmental, amenity or recreational purposes. In seeking to reinforce the functionality of the metropolitan area, this includes examining where natural green belts exist or could be identified to augment the delineation between the metropolitan area and its hinterland; and
- Any existing boundary determined in the preparation of coordinated transport strategies by the National Transport Authority.

Each Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan will set out a clear and concise strategy to:

- Identify the key change parameters for the city in question, i.e. population, employment, housing, retail, travel patterns and key renewal, development and amenity areas;
- Work out a sequence of infrastructure prioritisation, delivery and co-ordination; and
- Deliver compact regeneration and growth.

Subsequent to the publication of this Framework, further guidance will be developed and issued in conjunction with local authorities and their regional assemblies on the MASP element of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies.

National Policy Objective 67

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 Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies.

Given the ambitious levels of growth targeted for the five cities in this Framework, the wider metropolitan area around each will play an important role. In all cases, they are closely linked to or integrated with the nearby city, in terms of transport, employment, housing, amenities and services.

It would be reasonable in the context of a Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan and phasing-in the transition to achieving urban consolidation and brownfield targets, that a proportion of up to 20% of the phased population growth targeted in the principal city and suburban area, could potentially be accommodated in the wider metropolitan area i.e. outside the city and suburbs or contiguous zoned area. This would be in addition to growth identified for the Metropolitan area.

This would be subject to any growth relocated from the city and suburbs comprising compact development, such as infill or a sustainable urban extension, served by high capacity public transport and/or significant employment and amenity provision. The future development of Swords in Fingal, Dublin, in the context of a new Metro line and proximity to Dublin Airport, is an example where this will be applicable.



Cork City



Dublin City



Galway City



Limerick City



Waterford City

This provision will also enable a transition from the current pattern of development. It is expected to be phased and although sequential, will not apply beyond the Metropolitan Area. National Policy Objective 9 will also be applicable.

National Policy Objective 68

A Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan may enable up to 20% of the phased population growth targeted in the principal city and suburban area, to be accommodated in the wider metropolitan area i.e. outside the city and suburbs or contiguous zoned area, in addition to growth identified for the Metropolitan area. This will be subject to:

- *any relocated growth being in the form of compact development, such as infill or a sustainable urban extension;*
- *any relocated growth being served by high capacity public transport and/or related to significant employment provision; and*
- *National Policy Objective 9, as set out in Chapter 4.*

Integrating Spatial and Transport Planning

Planning and transport policies are highly interdependent. Establishment of the National Transport Authority (NTA) in 2009 was intended to deliver 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.

The NTA has responsibility for preparing a Transport Strategy for the GDA, alongside the responsibility for preparing the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy by the Regional Assembly and both must be consistent with each other. The present Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2016-2035 provides a framework for transport infrastructure delivery in the GDA over the next two decades.

The NTA 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 the statutory arrangements that are already in place for transport planning in the Greater Dublin Area to all of Ireland's cities will be undertaken to 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 69

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

Better Strategic Planning for Urban Areas

Measures will be advanced for a greater 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 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.

In order to enhance co-ordination of development more generally in town locations that straddle administrative boundaries, Government will work with the relevant local authorities in developing preparation of joint urban/local area plans, utilising current Local Area Plan (LAP) legislation.

National Policy Objective 70

Provision will be made for urban area plans, based on current local area plan provisions, and joint urban area plans and local area plans will be prepared where a town and environs lie 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 undermines regeneration of existing, but under-occupied and run-down urban areas. These core strategy 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 National Planning Framework and the three Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies, to factor in dwelling vacancy and the balance between development in both urban and rural areas.

National Policy Objective 71

City/county development plan core strategies will be further developed and standardised methodologies introduced to ensure a co-ordinated and balanced approach to future population and housing requirements across urban and rural areas.

Coordinating Land Use Zoning, Infrastructure and Services

This Framework targets significant infill/brownfield growth, especially in cities and large towns. This means that city and county development plans will need to relate these targets to the levels and location of future land-use zoning. Effective implementation will require substantially better linkage between zoning of land and the availability of infrastructure.

A new, standardised methodology will be put in place for core strategies and 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. This is set out in Appendix 3.

National Policy Objective 72a

Planning authorities will be required to apply a standardised, tiered approach to differentiate between i) zoned land that is serviced and ii) zoned land that is serviceable within the life of the plan.

National Policy Objective 72b

When considering zoning lands for development purposes that require investment in service infrastructure, planning authorities will make a reasonable estimate of the full cost of delivery of the specified services and prepare a report, detailing the estimated cost at draft and final plan stages.

National Policy Objective 72c

When considering zoning land for development purposes that cannot be serviced within the life of the relevant plan, such lands should not be zoned for development.

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. This will be supported by updated Statutory Guidelines that will be issued under section 28 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).

National Policy Objective 73a

Guidance will be developed to enable planning authorities to apply an order of priority for development of land, taking account of proper planning and sustainable development, particularly in the case of adjoining interdependent landholdings.

National Policy Objective 73b

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

National Policy Objective 73c

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

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 relates to 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 is also for the provision of a new community centre for Cranmore, creating a positive approach to place-making through social and environmental improvements.

10.3 Public Capital Investment – The National Development Plan and National Strategic Outcomes

There is broad consensus that public infrastructure investment is an important aspect of a competitive location policy, impacting on the cost structure and competitiveness of an economy or region. 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 the National Planning Framework and the accompanying National Development 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 ten-year National Development Plan 2018–2027 published in tandem with this Framework is tangible evidence of Government commitment to supporting the NPF with appropriate investment. This will better influence patterns of development and contribute to wider national objectives in areas such as transport, climate action, water resource management, waste management, communications and energy network roll-out and social infrastructure development in areas such as health, education and community facilities.

National Policy Objective 74

Secure the alignment of the National Planning Framework and the National Development Plan through delivery of the National Strategic Outcomes.

National Strategic Outcomes

As outlined earlier in Chapter 1, implementing the National Planning Framework will be focused on policies, actions and investment to deliver the 10 National Strategic Outcomes set out in more detail below.

National Strategic Outcome 1

Compact Growth



From an urban development perspective, we will need to deliver a greater proportion of residential development within existing built-up areas of our cities, towns and villages and ensuring that, when it comes to choosing a home, there are viable attractive alternatives available to people.

Combined with a focus on infill development, integrated transport and promoting regeneration and revitalisation of urban areas, pursuing a compact growth policy at national, regional and local level will secure a more sustainable future for our settlements and for our communities. To secure the delivery of this objective, two tailored funding mechanisms will be established;

- Urban Regeneration and Development Fund; and
- Rural Regeneration and Development Fund.

The purpose of the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund will be to achieve sustainable growth in Ireland's five cities and other urban centres. 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 of life, 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 for regional growth;
- 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 Rural Regeneration and Development Fund, sustainable growth in Ireland's rural areas, and subject to the nature of the proposal, smaller urban centres (<10,000 population in 2016), will also be eligible for investment 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 and 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 and rural areas;
- 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 support the place-making policies of the National Planning Framework.

National Strategic Outcome 2



Enhanced Regional Accessibility

Building on a more compact approach to urban development requirements, enhancing connectivity between centres of population of scale will support the objectives of National Planning Framework. This will focus initially between Cork and Limerick. Better accessibility between the four cities and to the Northern and Western region will enable unrealised potential to be activated as well as better preparing for 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, including the Galway Ring Road and M8/N25/N40 Dunkettle Junction upgrade (approved) in Cork;

Accessibility to the North-West

- Upgrading access to the North-West border area, utilising existing routes (N2/N14/A5);
- Upgrading northern sections of the N4 and N5 routes and sections of the N3/M3 national primary route;
- Progressive development of the Atlantic Economic Corridor from Galway northwards by upgrading sections of the N17 northwards, where required and upgrading the N15/N13 link.

Public Transport

- To strengthen public transport connectivity between cities and large growth towns in Ireland and Northern Ireland with improved services and reliable journey times.

National Strategic Outcome 3

Strengthened Rural Economies and Communities



Through the 2017 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, are gathering pace.

The Rural Regeneration and Development Fund will, combined with wider urban and village renewal, housing and community development initiatives, 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.

Continued investment in the agri-food sector will underpin sustainable growth as set out in Food Wise 2025 and provide for the development of our Fisheries Harbour Centres and research infrastructure. There is scope for the enhancement of ongoing co-funded EU Programmes that support rural development, seafood development and afforestation.

A strong start has also been made in the development of a national long-distance Greenway/Blueway Network. Such a network, including rural walking, cycling and water-based recreation routes, as well as 'peatways', has 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 Rural Regeneration and Development Fund to enable opportunities to secure the rejuvenation and re-purposing of rural towns and villages weakened by the structural changes in rural economies and settlement patterns;
- Provide a quality nationwide community-based public transport system in rural Ireland which responds to local needs under the Rural Transport Network and similar initiatives;
- Invest 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;
- Invest in greenways, blueways and peatways as part of a nationally coordinated strategy;
- Ongoing investment in the agri-food sector to underpin the sustainable growth of the sector as set out in Food Wise 2025.

National Strategic Outcome 4

Sustainable Mobility



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 Framework objectives.

Dublin and other cities and major urban areas are too heavily dependent on road and private, mainly car-based, transport with the result that our roads are becoming more and more congested. The National Development Plan makes provision for investment in public transport and sustainable mobility solutions to progressively put in place a more sustainable alternative.

For example, major electric rail public transport infrastructure identified in the Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area to 2035, such as the Metro Link and DART Expansion projects as well as the BusConnects investment programme, will keep our capital and other key urban areas competitive.

Our main intercity rail network also plays a key role in offering sustainable travel alternatives, offering the option of travel while working and broadening labour catchments, benefitting the international competitiveness of our major cities. There is further 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.

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:
- 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 Link, 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; and
- 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 5

A Strong Economy Supported by Enterprise, Innovation and Skills



A competitive, innovative and resilient regional enterprise base is essential to provide the jobs and employment opportunities for people to live and prosper in the regions. Achieving the ambitious projected target of an additional 660,000 people at work in the context of increased global uncertainty, Brexit and technological disruption underlines the importance of building competitive regional clusters and generating an uplift in enterprise export competitiveness to secure sustainable jobs and growth.

Specifically, we want to achieve sustainable full employment and to bring unemployment rates down to within one percentage point⁴⁸ of the national average in all regions and achieve regional productivity convergence so all regions are within ten percentage points of the average outside Dublin and international comparators.

We will achieve this through:

- Supporting entrepreneurship and building competitive clusters;
- Sustaining talent and boosting human capital in all regions; and
- Digital and data innovation.

Supporting Entrepreneurialism and Building Competitive Clusters

Supporting entrepreneurialism and building competitive clusterings in key sectors and activities through collaborative actions at regional and local level, by realising a significant uplift in the performance of indigenous enterprises in terms of innovation, export potential and productivity, supporting technology-led start-ups and by attracting further investment to the regions.

- Supporting entrepreneurship and technology-led start-ups and increasing their survival and growth rates, through expanded activities of the Local Enterprise Offices, EI and competitive calls for regional enterprise collaboration initiatives to provide competitive places for enterprise to grow at local level.
- Transforming firms in the regions for long-term success through a focus on productivity, innovation and internationalisation and building competitive regional clusters in manufacturing and services, with an enhanced role for Institutes of Technology in developing 'Technology and Innovation Poles'

- Promoting innovation and its diffusion, through support for firm-level innovation, developing research centres and gateways in key areas of relevance to the regions through SFI and EI, and ensuring our research system in the regions is internationally connected.
- Increasing the competitiveness of the business environment in the regions, through the Regional Action Plans for Jobs, Brexit specific responses for exposed sectors in the regions and regional enterprise competitive funding initiatives through EI and advance property solutions for new investment by IDA Ireland for inward investment and indigenous enterprise.
- Developing challenge-based Disruptive Technologies Initiatives to ensure that we stay at the forefront of technological innovation, market application and commercialisation and can spur the next generation of technology-led enterprises, drawing on R&D activities in the higher education sector and enterprise in the regions.

Sustaining Talent and Boosting Human Capital in all Regions

The development of human capital is central to Ireland's success and our economic and social development. The availability of well-educated, skilled talent is a fundamental driver of national competitiveness at both national and regional level.

The role which the further and higher education systems can play in catalysing and supporting economic and social development in local communities, in regions and nationally is recognised.

Developing talent and skills takes place throughout the life cycle and through a variety of interventions. By providing initial education, skills training and lifelong learning, the skills base is created to attract and sustain employment and improve the attractiveness of places.

In order to future proof our competitiveness, we must develop a skills base that will move Ireland to the forefront of digital and innovative activity. Access to new technologies, knowledge and skills is crucial if Ireland is to develop its value-added segments and knowledge-intensive products and services. Innovation policy, such as Innovation 2020, can also help boost human capital in all regions, provide direct and indirect support for private and public R&D and support collaboration between businesses and higher education to drive applied innovations and their commercialisation and diffusion at regional level.

- The development of skills, talent and innovation capacity is a key strategic pillar for the NPF. Investment in building and sustaining skills, talent and innovation capacity will be prioritised to promote greater competitiveness and increase productivity at both national and regional levels through developing the skills base necessary to fully exploit digital technologies and sustain innovation and through greater alignment of research endeavour and human capital development between the education and enterprise sectors.
- Investment in student accommodation within our universities.
- Competitive research and innovation through the expansion, upgrade and refurbishment of HEI's, support for multi campus technical universities with a strong regional focus and consolidation and modernisation of Further Education and Training (FET) provisions.
- Support regional development through continued investment in Education and Training to increase skills labour and supply on a regional basis.

Digital and Data Innovation

Data innovation is recognised as important for future growth. Harnessing the potential of the data economy can bring considerable benefits in terms of productivity, new services and knowledge creation. It is also recognised that emerging disruptive technology and innovation has the potential to accelerate the delivery of NPF National Strategic Outcomes.

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.

Developing the potential offered by connectivity and digitisation of rural areas and the better use of knowledge, for the benefit of inhabitants and businesses, is important. This can include e-literacy skills, access to e-health and other basic services, innovative solutions for environmental concerns, circular economy application to agricultural waste, promotion of local products supported by technology and ICT, implementing and taking full benefit of smart specialisation agri-food projects, tourism and cultural activities.

- 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 6

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 the Dublin-Belfast corridor, North West, and central border areas are key to open up the potential of the island economy, post Brexit.

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 National Development Plan, is achieved by their compliance with the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies.

The main airports including Dublin, Cork, Shannon and Ireland West - 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, particularly in public transport terms, such as through the Metro Link project in Dublin; and
- 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 and the national hierarchy or tiering of ports 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.

Tier 1 ports account for 80% of national port freight traffic, are located within close proximity to Dublin, Cork and Limerick respectively and their role will be considered in tandem with long-term infrastructural requirements as part of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy and Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan processes detailed above. 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-Foyne Port, including local by-passes; and
- Improving access to Ringaskiddy Port.



National Strategic Outcome 7

Enhanced Amenities and Heritage



Attractive places include a combination of factors, including vitality and diversity of uses, ease of access to amenities and services supported by integrated transport systems and green modes of movement such as pedestrian and cycling facilities. Appealing places are also defined by their character, heritage and sense of community. This includes attractive buildings and street layouts, civic spaces and parks and regeneration of older areas and making places feel safe through active use and design.

Amenities and Heritage

- 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 greenway networks and targeted measures to enhance permeability and connectivity.
- The Rural and Urban Regeneration and Development Funds will support 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.
- We will conserve, manage and present our heritage for its intrinsic value and as a support to economic renewal and sustainable employment.
- Open up our heritage estates to public access, where possible.
- Invest in and enable access to recreational facilities, including trails networks, designed and delivered with a strong emphasis on conservation, allowing the protection and preservation of our most fragile environments and providing a wellbeing benefit for all.



National Strategic Outcome 8

Transition to a Low Carbon and Climate Resilient Society



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. 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 onshore and 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. 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 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 to increase renewable deployment in line with EU targets and national policy objectives out to 2030 and beyond. It is expected that this increase in renewable deployment will lead to a greater diversity of renewable technologies in the mix.
- Reinforce the distribution and transmission network to facilitate planned growth and distribution of a more renewables focused source of energy across 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 EU interconnection options in the longer term to 2040.
- Consideration of carbon neutral electricity generation that would be facilitated through harnessing carbon capture and storage (CCS).
- National Interconnector (Sub-sea Ring around Ireland) 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 9

Sustainable Management of Water and other Environmental Resources



Investment in water services infrastructure is critical to the implementation of the National Development Plan. 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, the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund will 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 need to be considered in settlement strategies.

Water

- Coordinate EU Flood Directive and 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;
- 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 possible number of areas within the country;
- 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 (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 plans⁴⁹. 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; and
- 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

- Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies and the core strategies of MASP and city and county development plans will support national and regional waste policy and efficient use of resources;
- District heating networks will be developed, where technically feasible and cost effective, 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;
- Adequate capacity and systems to manage waste, including municipal and construction and demolition waste in an environmentally safe and sustainable manner and remediation of waste sites to mitigate appropriately the risk to environmental and human health.

National Strategic Outcome 10



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

- Provide additional investment in the schools sector to keep pace with demographic demand and to manage increasing building and site costs so that new and refurbished schools on well-located sites within or close to existing built-up areas, can meet demographic growth and the diverse needs of local populations;
- Expand and consolidate 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 the following:
- The national paediatric model of care and, in particular, construction of the new National Children's Hospital, associated satellite care units and the associated ICT infrastructure required to form Ireland's first digital hospital;
- Implementation of the National Maternity strategy; this includes co-location of the National Maternity Hospital and other standalone maternity hospitals to acute hospital campuses and development, upgrading and remodelling of maternity services infrastructure;
- Building additional capacity designed for maximum effectiveness and targeted at enhancing ambulatory care and elective care, to reflect the scale of population growth and ageing, in line with identified service needs;
- Reconfiguration of acute services within hospital groups;

- Expansion of the Ambulance fleet and expanded ambulance bases to support pre-hospital care and timely access to critical services. As part of this, consideration will need to be given to how access to air support can be improved into the future;
- Implementation of the National Cancer Control Programme, including development of capital infrastructure for the delivery of cancer services, in particular medical oncology day units, aseptic compounding units, radiation oncology and equipment replacement;
- The National Plan for Radiation Oncology (Dublin, Cork and Galway) is essential to delivering on required radiation oncology capacity, with some current facilities nearing the end of their useful life;
- Investment in the designated cancer centres, including facilities, would include a goal of developing at least one comprehensive cancer centre as set out in the National Cancer Strategy launched in 2017.

Healthcare Services in the Community

- Facilitating the transformation of healthcare delivery by investing in ICT infrastructure, to facilitate the flow of information across and within various care settings, and 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; and
 - 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, disability services, palliative care, services for older people, social inclusion and addiction support.

Mental Health – A Vision for Change

- Development of the National Forensic Mental Health Services Hospital and a network of Intensive Care Rehabilitation Units.

- Replacement and provision of additional acute mental health units, residential accommodation and modern facilities for adults and children on a national basis.
- Enhanced infrastructure for community mental health teams.

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.
- Building additional bed capacity for unmet need and demographic pressures for services. Provision of day services for young people leaving school and rehabilitative training, supporting the fit out and refurbishment of existing buildings.

Services for Older People

- Replacement and upgrade of 90 Community Nursing Units and provision of additional step-down and long-stay accommodation.
- Development of community based housing with supports.
- Palliative Care programme.
- Additional capacity through long-term residential care beds to meet demographic needs and additional short-term beds to deliver an improved model of care for older persons.



11

Assessing Environmental Impact

11.1 Environmental Assessment

As part of the preparation of the 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 that 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 NPF.

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”.

Through the SEA, environmental considerations have been integrated into the Framework by:

- **Development and evaluation of 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; and**
- **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 site's Conservation Objectives, as referred to in Article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive.

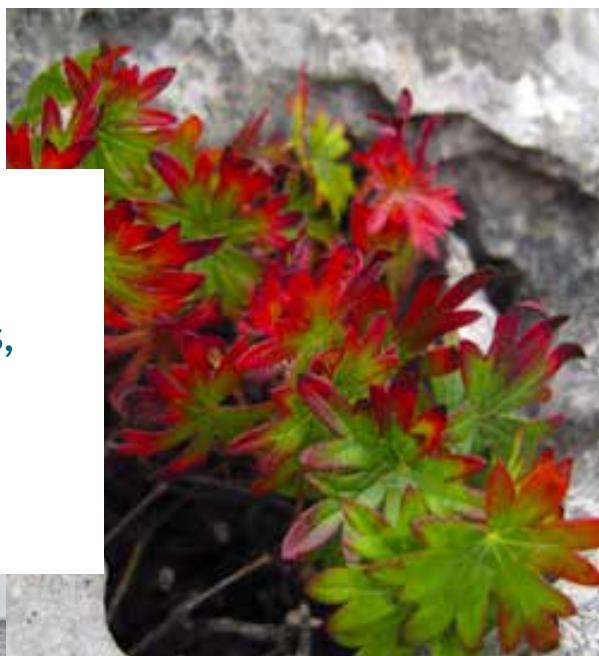
Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora, known as the Habitats Directive, obliges member states to designate Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) to protect and conserve habitats and species of importance in a European Union context. Special Protection Areas (SPAs) are designated under the Conservation of Wild Birds Directive (79/409/EC) 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."

Public authorities are obliged, when exercising their functions, to take appropriate steps to avoid the deterioration of natural habitats

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.



Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA)

Increased flood risk as a result of land use planning has, above all else, been one of the most costly (environmental, social and economic) legacy issues 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 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 of these 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. This key guidance 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 in 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 the National Planning Framework 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 NPF.

These processes have together informed and shaped the development of the Framework. The findings of the SFRA have also directly fed into the SEA Environmental Report and all three documents accompany the 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 the Framework.

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.

11.2 | Integrating Environmental Considerations into the Planning System

The National Planning Framework 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 focused 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 the National Planning Framework, 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.

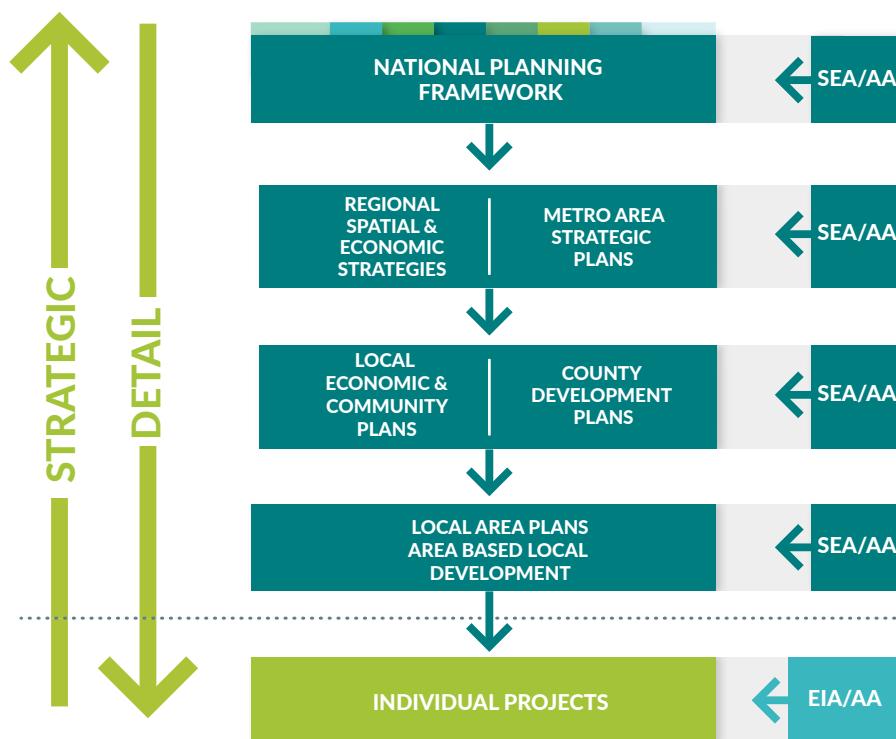
At the project level, all applications for development consents for projects emanating from any policies that may give rise to likely significant effects on the environment will need to be accompanied by one or more of the following, as relevant:

- 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 under the relevant legislation (statutory document).

National Policy Objective 75

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 11.1 | SEA and AA within the Planning Hierarchy of the NPF



Relationships between the National Planning 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 NPF.

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 Adaption 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), which has responsibility for SEA in Northern Ireland, has also been consulted, together with the Northern Ireland Department for Infrastructure, as part of the Framework preparation.

11.3 Alternatives to Business as Usual- A New Way Forward

A key challenge for the National Planning 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 be co-ordinated with infrastructural service provision 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 & 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 focused, managed growth in supporting settlements, thereby improving regional connectivity and services outside of the cities.

The preferred option acknowledges the economic importance of Dublin, while ensuring growth across the regions and in other urban centres. It will help ensure that there are no constraints on the growth of the cities, allowing regional centres to develop and prosper. It will also contribute to preserving a sense of place and improving regional connectivity and services outside of the cities.

11.4 | Summary of Key Findings

The National Planning 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.

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; and 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 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 locations, in particular former 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 the challenge, 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 National Planning Framework. As part of its wider implementation, the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government will develop updated statutory 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 the Framework.

Appendix 1

National Policy Objectives

Chapter 2: A New Way Forward

National Policy Objective 1a

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

National Policy Objective 1b

- Eastern and Midland Region: 490,000 - 540,000 additional people, i.e. a population of around 2.85 million;
- Northern and Western Region: 160,000 - 180,000 additional people, i.e. a population of just over 1 million;
- Southern Region: 340,000 - 380,000 additional people, i.e. a population of almost 2 million.

National Policy Objective 1c

- Eastern and Midland Region: around 320,000 additional people in employment, i.e. 1.34 million in total;
- The Northern and Western Region: around 115,000 additional people in employment, i.e. 450,000 (0.45m) in total;
- The Southern Region: around 225,000 additional people in employment, i.e. 880,000 (0.875m) in total.

National Policy Objective 2a

- A target of half (50%) of future population and employment growth will be focused in the existing five Cities and their suburbs¹⁵.

National Policy Objective 2b

- The regional roles of Athlone in the Midlands, Sligo and Letterkenny in the North-West and the Letterkenny-Derry and Drogheda-Dundalk-Newry cross-border networks will be identified and supported in the relevant Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy.

National Policy Objective 2c

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

National Policy Objective 3a

Deliver at least 40% of all new homes nationally, within the built-up footprint of existing settlements¹⁷.

National Policy Objective 3b

Deliver at least half (50%) of all new homes that are targeted in the five Cities and suburbs of Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Galway and Waterford, within their existing built-up footprints¹⁸.

National Policy Objective 3c

Deliver at least 30% of all new homes that are targeted in settlements other than the five Cities and their suburbs, within their existing built-up footprints¹⁹.

Chapter 4: Making Stronger Urban Places

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.

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, investment and prosperity.

National Policy Objective 6

Regenerate and rejuvenate cities, towns and villages of all types and scale as environmental assets, that can accommodate changing roles and functions, increased residential population and employment activity and enhanced levels of amenity and design quality, in order to sustainably influence and support their surrounding area.

National Policy Objective 7

Apply a tailored approach to urban development, that will be linked to the Rural and Urban Regeneration and Development Fund, with a particular focus on:-

- Dublin;
- the four Cities of Cork, Limerick, Galway and Waterford;
- Strengthening Ireland's overall urban structure, particularly in the Northern and Western and Midland Regions, to include the regional centres of Sligo and Letterkenny in the North-West, Athlone in the Midlands and cross-border networks focused on the Letterkenny-Derry North-West Gateway Initiative and Drogheda-Dundalk-Newry on the Dublin-Belfast corridor;
- Encouraging population growth in strong employment and service centres of all sizes, supported by employment growth;
- Reversing the stagnation or decline of many smaller urban centres, by identifying and establishing new roles and functions and enhancement of local infrastructure and amenities;
- Addressing the legacy of rapid unplanned growth, by facilitating amenities and services catch-up, jobs and/or improved sustainable transport links to the cities, together with a slower rate of population growth in recently expanded commuter settlements of all sizes;
- In more self-contained settlements of all sizes, supporting a continuation of balanced population and employment growth.

National Policy Objective 8

To ensure that the targeted pattern of population growth of Ireland's cities to 2040 is in accordance with the targets set out in Table 4.1.

National Policy Objective 9

In each Regional Assembly area, settlements not identified in Policy 2a or 2b of this Framework, may be identified for significant (i.e. 30% or more above 2016 population levels) rates of population growth at regional and local planning stages, provided this is subject to:

- Agreement (regional assembly, metropolitan area and/or local authority as appropriate);
- Balance with strategies for other urban and rural areas (regional assembly, metropolitan area and/or local authority as appropriate), which means that the totality of planned population growth has to be in line with the overall growth target.; and
- A co-ordinated strategy that ensures alignment with investment in infrastructure and the provision of employment, together with supporting amenities and services.

National Policy Objective 10a

Regional and Local Authorities to identify and quantify locations for strategic employment development in the cities identified in Table 4.1.

National Policy Objective 10b

Regional and Local Authorities to identify and quantify locations for strategic employment development, where suitable, in urban and rural areas generally.

National Policy Objective 11

In meeting urban development requirements, there will be a presumption in favour of development that can encourage more people and generate more jobs and activity within existing cities, towns and villages, subject to development meeting appropriate planning standards and achieving targeted growth.

National Policy Objective 12

The Government will establish a National Regeneration and Development Agency to work with local authorities, other public bodies and capital spending departments and agencies to co-ordinate and secure the best use of public lands, investment required within the capital envelopes provided in the National Development Plan and to drive the renewal of strategic areas not being utilised to their full potential. The Government will consider how best to make State lands available to such a body to kick-start its development role and to legislate for enhanced compulsory purchase powers to ensure that the necessary transformation of the places most in need of regeneration can take place more swiftly and effectively.

National Policy Objective 13

In urban areas, planning and related standards, including in particular building height and car parking will be based on performance criteria that seek to achieve well-designed high quality outcomes in order to achieve targeted growth. These standards will be subject to a range of tolerance that enables alternative solutions to be proposed to achieve stated outcomes, provided public safety is not compromised and the environment is suitably protected.

Chapter 5: Planning for Diverse Rural Places

National Policy Objective 14

Protect and promote the sense of place and culture and the quality, character and distinctiveness of the Irish rural landscape that make Ireland's rural areas authentic and attractive as places to live, work and visit. The Action Plan for Rural Development will support this objective up to 2020; thereafter a review of the Action Plan will be undertaken to ensure continued alignment and consistency with the National Policy Objectives of this Framework.

National Policy Objective 15

Support the sustainable development of rural areas by encouraging growth and arresting decline in areas that have experienced low population growth or decline in recent decades and by managing the growth of areas that are under strong urban influence to avoid over-development, while sustaining vibrant rural communities.

National Policy Objective 16

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

National Policy Objective 17

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.

National Policy Objective 18a

To 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.

National Policy Objective 18b

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.

National Policy Objective 19

Ensure, in providing for the development of rural housing, that a distinction is made between areas under urban influence, i.e. within the commuter catchment of cities and large towns and centres of employment, and elsewhere:

- In rural areas under urban influence, facilitate the provision of single housing in the countryside based on the core consideration of demonstrable economic or social need to live in a rural area and siting and design criteria for rural housing in statutory guidelines and plans, having regard to the viability of smaller towns and rural settlements;
- In rural areas elsewhere, facilitate the provision of single housing in the countryside based on siting and design criteria for rural housing in statutory guidelines and plans, having regard to the viability of smaller towns and rural settlements.

National Policy Objective 20

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

National Policy Objective 21

Enhance the competitiveness of rural areas by supporting innovation in rural economic development and enterprise through the diversification of the rural economy into new sectors and services, including ICT-based industries and those addressing climate change and sustainability.

National Policy Objective 22

Facilitate tourism development and in particular a National Greenways, Blueways and Peatways Strategy, which prioritises projects on the basis of achieving maximum impact and connectivity at national and regional level.

National Policy Objective 23

Facilitate the development of the rural economy through supporting a sustainable and economically efficient agricultural and food sector, together with forestry, fishing and aquaculture, energy and extractive industries, the bio-economy 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.

National Policy Objective 24

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.

National Policy Objective 25

The Department of Rural and Community Development, the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, and other relevant Departments and Agencies will continue to invest in rural Ireland, including through the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund, and will work together to establish a mechanism to co-ordinate structures for funding rural development to align with other national strategies.

Chapter 6: People, Homes and Communities**National Policy Objective 26**

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

National Policy Objective 27

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

National Policy Objective 28

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

National Policy Objective 29

Support the implementation of language plans in Gaeltacht Language Planning Areas, Gaeltacht Service Towns and Irish Language Networks.

National Policy Objective 30

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.

National Policy Objective 31

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

- A childcare/ECCE planning function, for monitoring, analysis and forecasting of investment needs, including identification of regional priorities;
- The provision of childcare 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 Higher Education facilities, particularly where this will contribute to wider regional development, and
- Programmes for life-long learning, especially in areas of higher education and further education and training where skills gaps are identified.

National Policy Objective 32

To target the delivery of 550,000 additional households to 2040

National Policy Objective 33

Prioritise the provision of new homes at locations that can support sustainable development and at an appropriate scale of provision relative to location.

National Policy Objective 34

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

National Policy Objective 35

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

National Policy Objective 36

New statutory guidelines, supported by wider methodologies and data sources, will be put in place under Section 28 of the Planning and Development 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 37

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, and at a Metropolitan scale, 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 HNDA (DHPLG, 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.

Chapter 7: Realising Our Island and Marine Potential

National Policy Objective 38

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

National Policy Objective 39

Support the sustainable growth and development of the maritime economy and continue to invest in the seafood sector and our Fishery Harbour Centres, particularly in remote rural coastal communities and islands.

National Policy Objective 40

Ensure that the strategic development requirements of Tier 1 and Tier 2 Ports, ports of regional significance and smaller harbours are addressed as part of Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies, metropolitan area and city/county development plans, to ensure the effective growth and sustainable development of the city regions and regional and rural areas.

National Policy Objective 41a

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

National Policy Objective 41b

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.

National Policy Objective 42

To support, within the context of the Offshore Renewable Energy Development Plan (OREDP)³⁹ and its successors, the progressive development of Ireland's offshore renewable energy potential, including domestic and international grid connectivity enhancements.

Chapter 8 Working with Our Neighbours**National Policy Objective 43**

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.

National Policy Objective 44

In co-operation with relevant Departments in Northern Ireland, to further support and develop the economic potential of the Dublin-Belfast Corridor and in particular the core Drogheda-Dundalk-Newry network and to promote and enhance its international visibility.

National Policy Objective 45

In co-operation with relevant Departments in Northern Ireland, support and 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.

National Policy Objective 46

In co-operation with relevant Departments in Northern Ireland, enhanced transport connectivity between Ireland and Northern Ireland, to include cross-border road and rail, cycling and walking routes, as well as blueways, greenways and peatways.

National Policy Objective 47

In co-operation with relevant Departments in Northern Ireland, strengthen all-island energy infrastructure and interconnection capacity, including distribution and transmission networks to enhance security of electricity supply.

National Policy Objective 48

In co-operation with relevant Departments in Northern Ireland, develop a stable, innovative and secure digital communications and services infrastructure on an all-island basis.

National Policy Objective 49

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

National Policy Objective 50

In co-operation with relevant Departments in Northern Ireland, ensuring effective management of shared landscapes, heritage, water catchments, habitats, species and trans-boundary issues in relation to environmental policy.

National Policy Objective 51

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

Chapter 9: Realising Our Sustainable Future**National Policy Objective 52**

The planning system will be responsive to our national environmental challenges and ensure that development occurs within environmental limits, having regard to the requirements of all relevant environmental legislation and the sustainable management of our natural capital.

National Policy Objective 53

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

National Planning Objective 54

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.

National Policy Objective 55

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

National Policy Objective 56

Sustainably manage waste generation, invest in different types of waste treatment and support circular economy principles, prioritising prevention, reuse, recycling and recovery, to support a healthy environment, economy and society.

National Policy Objective 57

Enhance water quality and resource management by:

- Ensuring flood risk management informs place-making by avoiding inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding in accordance with The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities;
- Ensuring that River Basin Management Plan objectives are fully considered throughout the physical planning process;
- Integrating sustainable water management solutions, such as Sustainable Urban Drainage (SUDS), non-porous surfacing and green roofs, to create safe places.

National Policy Objective 58

Integrated planning for Green Infrastructure and ecosystem services will be incorporated into the preparation of statutory land use plans.

National Policy Objective 59

Enhance the conservation status and improve the management of protected areas and protected species by:

- Implementing relevant EU Directives to protect Ireland's environment and wildlife;
- Integrating policies and objectives for the protection and restoration of biodiversity in statutory development plans;
- Developing and utilising licensing and consent systems to facilitate sustainable activities within Natura 2000 sites;
- Continued research, survey programmes and monitoring of habitats and species.

National Policy Objective 60

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

National Policy Objective 61

Facilitate landscape protection, management and change through the preparation of a National Landscape Character Map and development of guidance on local landscape character assessments, (including historic landscape characterisation) to ensure a consistent approach to landscape character assessment, particularly across planning and administrative boundaries.

National Policy Objective 62

Identify and strengthen the value of greenbelts and green spaces at a regional and city scale, to enable enhanced connectivity to wider strategic networks, prevent coalescence of settlements and to allow for the long-term strategic expansion of urban areas.

National Policy Objective 63

Ensure the efficient and sustainable use and development of water resources and water services infrastructure in order to manage and conserve water resources in a manner that supports a healthy society, economic development requirements and a cleaner environment.

National Policy Objective 64

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, heating systems with zero local emissions, green infrastructure planning and innovative design solutions.

National Policy Objective 65

Promote the pro-active management of noise where it is likely to 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.

Chapter 10: Implementing the National Planning Framework**National Policy Objective 66**

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 other major urban areas and in rural towns and villages as a priority, particularly through the establishment of a National Regeneration and Development Agency.

National Policy Objective 67

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 Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies.

National Policy Objective 68

A Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan may enable up to 20% of the phased population growth targeted in the principal city and suburban area, to be accommodated in the wider metropolitan area i.e. outside the city and suburbs or contiguous zoned area, in addition to growth identified for the Metropolitan area. This will be subject to:

- any relocated growth being in the form of compact development, such as infill or a sustainable urban extension;
- any relocated growth being served by high capacity public transport and/or related to significant employment provision; and
- National Policy Objective 9, as set out in Chapter 4.

National Policy Objective 69

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

National Policy Objective 70

Provision will be made for urban area plans, based on current local area plan provisions, and joint urban area plans and local area plans will be prepared where a town and environs lie within the combined functional area of more than one local authority.

National Policy Objective 71

City/county development plan core strategies will be further developed and standardised methodologies introduced to ensure a co-ordinated and balanced approach to future population and housing requirements across urban and rural areas.

National Policy Objective 72a

Planning authorities will be required to apply a standardised, tiered approach to differentiate between i) zoned land that is serviced and ii) zoned land that is serviceable within the life of the plan.

National Policy Objective 72b

When considering zoning lands for development purposes that require investment in service infrastructure, planning authorities will make a reasonable estimate of the full cost of delivery of the specified services and prepare a report, detailing the estimated cost at draft and final plan stages.

National Policy Objective 72c

When considering zoning land for development purposes that cannot be serviced within the life of the relevant plan, such lands should not be zoned for development.

National Policy Objective 73a

Guidance will be developed to enable planning authorities to apply an order of priority for development of land, taking account of proper planning and sustainable development, particularly in the case of adjoining interdependent landholdings.

National Policy Objective 73b

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

National Policy Objective 73c

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

National Policy Objective 74

Secure the alignment of the National Planning Framework and the National Development Plan through delivery of the National Strategic Outcomes.

Chapter 11: Assessing Environmental Impact

National Policy Objective 75

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.

Appendix 2

Population and Employment in Urban Settlements in the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly area, Census of Population 2016

Settlement Name	Population 2016	Resident Workers	Total Jobs	Jobs: Resident Workers
Abbeyleix	1,770	645	501	0.777
An Uaimh (Navan)	30,173	12,190	8,970	0.736
Ardee	4,928	1,819	1,706	0.938
Arklow	13,163	4,804	3,040	0.633
Ashbourne	12,679	6,144	1,963	0.319
Athboy	2,445	970	489	0.504
Athlone	21,349	8,240	13,108	1.591
Athy	9,677	3,157	2,147	0.680
Balbriggan	21,722	8,362	3,436	0.411
Ballivor	1,809	647	155	0.240
Ballymahon	1,877	717	586	0.817
Balrothery	2,017	835	148	0.177
Baltinglass	2,137	776	629	0.811
Banagher	1,760	643	520	0.809
Birr	4,370	1,579	1,524	0.965
Blessington	5,520	2,407	1,125	0.467
Bray	32,600	13,835	8,763	0.633
Ceanannas Mar (Kells)	6,135	2,306	1,543	0.669
Celbridge	20,288	9,374	2,339	0.250
Clane	7,280	3,349	1,264	0.377
Clara	3,336	1,155	525	0.455
Clogherhead	2,145	860	150	0.174
Derrinturn	1,602	554	184	0.332
Donabate	7,443	3,418	732	0.214
Drogheda	40,956	16,108	12,361	0.767
Droichead Nua (Newbridge)	22,742	9,634	6,526	0.677
Dublin city and suburbs	1,173,179	524,019	512,449	0.978
Duleek	4,219	1,692	501	0.296
Dunboyne	7,272	3,294	1,211	0.368
Dundalk	39,004	14,178	14,163	0.999
Dunleer	1,822	751	822	1.095
Dunshaughlin	4,035	1,841	998	0.542
Edenderry	7,359	2,738	1,743	0.637
Enfield	3,239	1,423	469	0.330
Enniskerry	1,889	739	241	0.326
Greystones-Delgany	18,140	7,828	2,514	0.321
Kilcock	6,093	2,827	848	0.300
Kilcoole	4,239	1,843	946	0.513
Kilcullen	3,710	1,573	907	0.577
Kildare	8,634	3,520	2,166	0.615

Settlement Name	Population 2016	Resident Workers	Total Jobs	Jobs: Resident Workers
Kill	3,348	1,541	306	0.199
Kinnegad	2,745	1,019	398	0.391
Kinsealy-Drinan	6,643	3,576	652	0.182
Laytown-Bettystown-Mornington- Donacarney	11,872	4,712	772	0.164
Leixlip	15,504	7,166	5,825	0.813
Longford	10,008	3,165	5,050	1.596
Longwood	1,581	675	102	0.151
Lusk	7,786	3,469	570	0.164
Malahide	16,550	7,212	2,259	0.313
Maynooth	14,585	6,295	5,201	0.826
Meathas Truim (Edgeworthstown)	2,072	683	502	0.735
Moate	2,763	1,151	559	0.486
Monasterevan	4,246	1,582	956	0.604
Mountmellick	4,777	1,571	915	0.582
Mountrath	1,774	586	367	0.626
Mullingar	20,928	8,001	8,633	1.079
Naas	21,393	9,806	10,999	1.122
Newcastle	3,093	1,441	310	0.215
Newtownmountkennedy	2,835	1,178	916	0.778
Portarlington	8,368	3,103	1349	0.435
Portlaoise (formerly Maryborough)	22,050	8,438	8,410	0.997
Portmarnock	9,466	4,113	946	0.230
Prosperous	2,333	884	307	0.347
Rathangan	2,611	1,060	448	0.423
Rathcoole	4,351	2,027	897	0.443
Rathdrum	1,663	565	465	0.823
Rathnew	3,370	1,243	575	0.463
Ratoath	9,533	4,260	922	0.216
Rush	9,943	4,316	1,063	0.246
Saggart	3,133	1,579	308	0.195
Sallins	5,849	2,784	418	0.150
Skerries	10,043	4,175	1,433	0.343
Stamullen	3,361	1,497	425	0.284
Swords	39,248	19,531	15,338	0.785
Termonfeckin	1,579	629	204	0.324
Trim	9,194	3,733	2,500	0.670
Tullamore	14,607	5,549	8,259	1.488
Tullyallen	1,547	675	138	0.204
Wicklow	10,584	4,247	2,637	0.621
Settlement Totals/ Average Ratio	1,892,093	822031	706746	0.86

**Population and Employment in Urban Settlements in the
Northern and Western Regional Assembly area, Census of Population 2016**

Settlement Name	Population 2016	Resident Workers	Total Jobs	Jobs: Resident Workers
Athenry	4,445	1,891	1,450	0.767
Baillieborough	2,683	886	715	0.807
Ballaghaderreen	1,808	576	807	1.401
Ballina	10,171	3,534	4,810	1.361
Ballinasloe	6,662	2,205	3,045	1.381
Ballinrobe	2,786	1,112	1,077	0.969
Ballybofey-Stranorlar	4,852	1,530	1,878	1.227
Ballyhaunis	2,366	840	1,226	1.460
Ballyjamesduff	2,661	975	453	0.465
Ballymote	1,549	545	508	0.932
Ballyshannon	2,299	787	875	1.112
Bearna	1,998	859	388	0.452
Boyle	2,568	819	1,049	1.281
Buncrana	6,785	2,327	1,988	0.854
Bundoran	1,963	723	588	0.813
Carndonagh	2,471	791	1,062	1.343
Carrickmacross	5,032	2,076	1,962	0.945
Carrick-On-Shannon	4,062	1,701	2,868	1.686
Castlebar	12,068	4,710	9,045	1.920
Castleblayney	3,607	1,352	1,502	1.111
Castlerea	1,992	674	918	1.362
Cavan	10,914	3,913	5,432	1.388
Claremorris	3,687	1,558	1,411	0.906
Clifden	1,597	594	856	1.441
Clones	1,680	558	415	0.744
Collooney	1,610	671	672	1.001
Cootehill	1,853	700	902	1.289
Donegal	2,618	996	1,673	1.680
Galway city and suburbs	79,934	34,085	44,376	1.302
Gort	2,994	1,212	1,127	0.930
Kingscourt	2,499	999	602	0.603
Letterkenny	19,274	7,669	11,395	1.486
Lifford	1,626	453	766	1.691
Loughrea	5,556	2,295	2,225	0.969
Maigh Cuilinn	1,704	751	398	0.530
Monaghan	7,678	3,208	3,715	1.158
Oranmore	4,990	2,591	1,134	0.438
Roscommon	5,876	2,210	3,917	1.772
Sligo	19,199	6,876	13,024	1.894
Strandhill	1,753	793	281	0.354
Tuam	8,767	3,270	3,700	1.131
Tubbercurry	1,986	692	627	0.906
Virginia	2,648	1,066	640	0.600
Westport	6,198	2,515	4,142	1.647
Settlement Totals/ Average Ratio	281,469	110,588	141,644	1.13

**Population and Employment in Urban Settlements in the
Southern Regional Assembly area, Census of Population 2016**

Settlement Name	Population 2016	Resident Workers	Total Jobs	Jobs: Resident Workers
Abbeyfeale	2,023	673	1,354	2.012
Annacotty	2,930	1,385	846	0.611
Ballina	2,632	1,126	311	0.276
Bandon	6,957	2,868	2,334	0.814
Bantry	2,722	1,005	1,748	1.739
Blarney	2,539	1,039	672	0.647
Bunclody-Carrickduff	1,984	611	646	1.057
Cahir	3,593	1,457	1,219	0.837
Callan	2,475	963	889	0.923
Carlow	24,272	8,934	7,868	0.881
Carrick-on-Suir	5,771	1,935	1,217	0.629
Carrigaline	15,770	6,901	1849	0.268
Carraigtwohill	5,080	2,345	931	0.397
Cashel	4,422	1,670	1,818	1.089
Castlebridge-Blackwater	1,840	748	190	0.254
Castlecomer-Donaglile	1,502	506	424	0.838
Castleconnell	2,107	824	246	0.299
Castleisland	2,486	938	1,351	1.440
Castlemartyr	1,600	669	303	0.453
Clonakilty	4,592	1,840	2,376	1.291
Clonmel	17,140	6,520	7,036	1.079
Cloyne	1,803	742	136	0.183
Cobh	12,800	5,098	1,432	0.281
Cork city and suburbs	208,669	87,354	102,139	1.169
Courtown Harbour-Riverchapel-Ardamine	3,591	1,154	310	0.269
Crosshaven-Churchbay	2,577	1,067	321	0.301
Dingle-Daingean UÃ Chuis	2,050	829	1,313	1.584
Dungarvan	9,227	3,365	3,267	0.971
Dunmanway	1,655	622	758	1.219
Dunmore East	1,808	716	267	0.373
Ennis	25,276	10,373	10,172	0.981
Enniscorthy	11,381	3,725	4,140	1.111
Fermoy	6,585	2,617	2,168	0.828
Fethard	1,545	526	481	0.914
Gorey	9,822	3,648	3,529	0.967
Kanturk	2,350	937	829	0.885
Kenmare	2,376	917	1,003	1.094
Kilkenny	26,512	10,952	13,738	1.254
Killarney	14,504	5,698	7,108	1.247
Killorglin	2,199	922	2,038	2.210
Kilmallock	1,668	537	722	1.345
Kilrush	2,719	802	1,198	1.494
Kinsale	5,281	2,140	1,737	0.812
Limerick city and suburbs	94,192	35,404	44,625	1.260

Settlement Name	Population 2016	Resident Workers	Total Jobs	Jobs: Resident Workers
Listowel	4,820	1,581	2,030	1.284
Macroom	3,765	1,569	1,548	0.987
Mallow	12,459	4,760	3,775	0.793
Midleton	12,496	5,194	3,871	0.745
Millstreet	1,555	682	601	0.881
Mitchelstown	3,740	1,412	1,480	1.048
Muinebeag (Bagenalstown)	2,837	1,010	1,481	1.466
Nenagh	8,968	3,466	4,357	1.257
New Ross	8,040	2,915	3,125	1.072
Newcastle West	6,619	2,611	2,413	0.924
Newmarket-On-Fergus	1,784	804	207	0.257
Newport	1,995	772	331	0.429
Passage West	5,843	2,504	446	0.178
Portlaw	1,742	625	148	0.237
Rathcormac	1,762	795	129	0.162
Rathdrum	1,663	565	465	0.823
Rathluirc (Charleville)	3,919	1,464	2,249	1.536
Roscrea	5,446	1,965	1,798	0.915
Rosslare	1,620	457	354	0.775
Shannon	9,729	4,132	4,484	1.085
Sixmilebridge	2,625	1,168	226	0.193
Skibbereen	2,778	1,058	1,580	1.493
Templemore	1,939	681	1,094	1.606
Thomastown	2445	928	633	0.682
Thurles	7,940	2,832	3,396	1.199
Tipperary	4,979	1,603	2,110	1.316
Tower	3,421	1,472	296	0.201
Tralee	23,691	8,378	12,517	1.494
Tramore	10,381	3,885	1,628	0.419
Tullow	4,673	1,759	1,236	0.703
Waterford city and suburbs	53,504	20,298	24,375	1.201
Wexford	20,188	7,710	11,961	1.551
Youghal	7,963	2,718	1,768	0.650
Settlement Totals/ Average Ratio	812,356	318,875	337,171	1.06

Appendix 3

A Methodology for a Tiered Approach to Land Zoning

The National Planning Framework sets out a two-tier approach to land zoning as follows:

Tier 1: Serviced Zoned Land

This zoning comprises lands that are able to connect to existing development services, i.e. road and footpath access including public lighting, foul sewer drainage, surface water drainage and water supply, for which there is service capacity available, and can therefore accommodate new development.

These lands will generally be positioned within the existing built-up footprint of a settlement or contiguous to existing developed lands. The location and geographical extent of such lands shall be determined by the planning authority at a settlement scale as an integral part of the plan-making process and shall include assessment of available development services.

Inclusion in Tier 1 will generally require the lands to be within the footprint of or spatially sequential within the identified settlement.

Tier 2: Serviceable Zoned Land

This zoning comprises lands that are not currently sufficiently serviced to support new development but have potential to become fully serviced within the life of the plan i.e. the lands are currently constrained due to the need to deliver some or all development services required to support new development, i.e. road or footpath access including lighting, foul sewer drainage, surface water drainage, water supply and/or additional service capacity.

These lands may be positioned within the existing built-up footprint of a settlement, or contiguous to existing developed lands or to tier 1 zoned lands, where required to fulfil the spatially sequential approach to the location of the new development within the identified settlement.

The potential for delivery of the required services and/or capacity to support new development must be identified and specific details provided by the planning authority at the time of publication of both the draft and final development or area plan.

This infrastructural assessment must be aligned with the approved infrastructural investment programme(s) of the relevant delivery agency(ies), for example, Irish Water, or be based on a written commitment by the relevant delivery agency to provide the identified infrastructure within a specified timescale (i.e. within the lifetime of the plan). The planning authority may also commit to the delivery of the required and identified infrastructure in its own infrastructural investment programme (i.e. Budgeted Capital Programme) in order to support certain lands for zoning.

The written infrastructural assessment of the planning authority must:

- a) include a reasonable estimate of the full cost of delivery of the required infrastructure to the identified zoned lands;
- b) Set out (a) above at both the draft plan and final plan stages of the plan making process.

Current development or area plans may include zoned lands that cannot be serviced during the life of a development or area plan by reference to the infrastructural assessment of the planning authority. This means that they cannot be categorised as either Tier 1 lands or Tier 2 lands per the above and therefore are not developable within the plan period. Such lands should not be zoned for development or included within a development plan core strategy for calculation purposes.

Further guidance will be provided in updated Statutory Guidelines that will be issued under s.28 of the Planning & Development Act, 2000 (as amended).

Appendix 4

References

- 1 See section 2.3 for more detail.
- 2 At 12.8 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent per capita in 2013, Ireland's emissions were 45% higher than the EU average of 8.8 tonnes. Source: CSO Environmental Indicators Ireland, 2016.
- 3 The Government decided to review the National Spatial Strategy (NSS) in 2013 and asked an Expert Group, comprising Sean Dorgan - former CEO of the IDA, Dr. Berna Grist, former member of An Bord Pleanála and Professor of Planning at UCD and Jim Mackinnon CBE - former Chief Planner for Scotland, to offer views on how the revised Strategy might be approached.
- 4 IMF, 2016 and World Bank, 2016.
- 5 UN, 2016.
- 6 UN, 2016.
- 7 IBM's Global Locations Trends Report, 2012-2015.
- 8 Economist Intelligence Unit, 2013.
- 9 Environmental Performance Index, 2014.
- 10 Mercer Index, 2017.
- 11 Prospects for Irish Regions and Counties: Scenarios and Implications, Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI), December 2017.
- 12 Prospects for Irish Regions and Counties: Scenarios and Implications, ESRI, December 2017.
- 13 The Buchanan Report, Regional Development in Ireland, 1968, used 1966 data to project to 1986 and the National Spatial Strategy, 2002, used a combination of 1996 and 2002 data to project to 2015 and 2020.
- 14 For comparison purposes, the population of Ireland increased by 1.2 million people between 1991 and 2016.
- 15 The five cities and their suburbs as defined by the CSO in the Census of Population.
- 16 See, for example, Design Perth, Property Council of Australia, 2016 and Analysis of Public Policies that Unintentionally Encourage and Subsidise Urban Sprawl, Victoria Transport Policy Institute/LSE Cities, 2015.
- 17 This means within the existing built-up footprint of all sizes of urban settlement, as defined by the 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.).
- 18 On the basis of National Policy Objective 2a, this effectively targets 25% of all new homes nationally within the five cities and their suburbs as defined by the CSO in the Census of Population.
- 19 On the basis of National Policy Objective 2a, 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.
- 20 Figures generally rounded to nearest 5,000. For more detail, see targeted growth rates set out on Table 4.1 below.
- 21 Appendix 2 identifies population and jobs in all urban settlements in Ireland as defined by the Central Statistics Office (CSO), using data from the Census of Population 2016, and broken down by Regional Assembly area.
- 22 A ratio of 1.0 means that there is one job for every resident worker in a settlement and indicates a balance, although not a match, as some resident workers will be employed elsewhere and vice-versa. Ratios of more than 1.0 indicate a net in-flow of workers and of less than 1.0, a net out-flow. The extent to which the ratio is greater or less than 1.0, is also generally indicative of the extent to which a town has a wider area service and employment role, rather than as a commuter settlement.
- 23 The Census of Population indicates that smaller towns and villages (1,500-10,000 population) 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%.

- 24 For comparison purposes, the rate of population growth in Dublin City and suburbs was just under three-quarters of the national average between 1996 and 2016.
- 25 The rate of population growth in Cork City and suburbs was just over half of the national average between 1996 and 2016.
- 26 The rate of population growth in both Limerick City and suburbs together with Shannon and in Waterford City and suburbs, was around two-thirds of the national average between 1996 and 2016. Of the five cities, only Galway City and suburbs experienced above average population growth during 1996-2016, just over one-quarter (26%) more than the national rate.
- 27 City population growth targets are at the minimum point of the range and are rounded to the nearest 1,000.
- 28 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 been expanding in recent years.
- 29 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.
- 30 343,792 people in Census 2016.
- 31 1,773,408 people in Census 2016.
- 32 Detailed in Chapter 10.
- 33 For guidance, this Framework describes large towns and employment centres as towns with a population of more than 10,000 people or more than 2,500 jobs (see also Appendix 2).
- 34 The standardised EU/OECD definition of a city region is where 15% of the workforce is employed in the principal city area. When this is mapped, it defines a city region commuting catchment, or functional area.
- 35 International Dark Sky Association.
- 36 CSO, Census 2011 (CD523).
- 37 Higher Education Authority.
- 38 Sometimes referred to as 'Intermediate Rent' or 'Mid-Market Rent'.
- 39 The implementation of the mitigation measures for the OREDP should be reviewed to determine status and effectiveness to inform any successor plans.
- 40 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. BIC comprising the governments of the United Kingdom and Ireland, the devolved governments of Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, and the Crown Dependency governments of Guernsey, the Isle of Man and Jersey.
- 41 European State of the Environment Reports, European Environment Agency (EEA) and Ireland's Environment Reports, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).
- 42 In 2014, the Government adopted the National Policy Position on Climate Action and Low Carbon Development.
- 43 The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Planning Guidelines DEHLG 2009.
- 44 The Natura 2000 network is a network of sites under EU Habitats and Birds Directives.
- 45 Source: EPA, Ireland's Environment - An Assessment 2016.
- 46 Source: Natural England.
- 47 93% of identified bathing areas in Ireland met the minimum EU standard, achieving at least "sufficient" water quality status (EPA, 2016). In addition, 83% met the "excellent" or "good" standards.
- 48 As set out in national enterprise policy – Enterprise 2025.
- 49 There are three waste regions in Ireland- Southern, Eastern-Midlands and Connacht-Ulster regions.

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'Energy in Agriculture' 2016 at Gurteen College, Tipperary (Tipperary Energy Agency)
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