

# National Spatial Strategy for Ireland

2002 - 2020

People, Places and Potential



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## MESSAGE FROM THE TAOISEACH

Ireland has experienced enormous change in its recent history. We have developed into a vibrant modern economy, with a growing, well-educated population; and we enjoy the fourth highest level of Gross Domestic Product per head in the European Union.

But in common with many successful economies, Ireland's development has also been marked by spatial imbalance. The Greater Dublin Area is facing problems of congestion, while a number of regions suffer from under-utilisation of their potential and resources.

The Government determined when launching the National Development Plan in 1999 that more balanced regional development should be a priority for the country. This National Spatial Strategy, which has been assisted by wide public consultation, is our considered and systematic response to this commitment to promote balanced regional development.

The National Spatial Strategy will bring

- a better spread of job opportunities
- a better quality of life for all, and
- better places to live in.

The National Spatial Strategy is a 20-year strategy designed to enable every place in the country to reach its potential, no matter what its size or location. It recognises that the various regions of the country have different roles. It seeks to organise and co-ordinate these roles in a complementary, win win way. It is about making regions competitive according to their strengths and not against one another; about ensuring a high quality urban environment, as well as vibrant rural areas.

In order to achieve more balanced regional development, a greater share of economic activity must take place outside the Greater Dublin Area. To achieve that the National Spatial Strategy sets out a framework for gateways, hubs and other urban and rural areas to act together. This framework will open up new opportunities in the regions and give people greater choice in relation to where they work and live.

The National Spatial Strategy will enable all sectors of the economy to plan future investment in a better-informed way. This more coherent planning will benefit all of us. The Government will ensure that its own policies are implemented in a manner that is consistent with the National Spatial Strategy. Regional and local authorities, along with the State agencies, also have major roles to play in implementing the Strategy. Continuing public participation and support will be key to ensuring the success of the National Spatial Strategy, just as this has assisted its preparation.

At the start of the 21st century, the National Spatial Strategy gives us a strategic vision for the spatial development of Ireland so that we can continue to develop economically, while ensuring a high quality of life for all of our people.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bertie Ahern'.

Bertie Ahern, T.D.,  
Taoiseach





## FOREWORD BY THE MINISTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

This National Spatial Strategy (NSS) sets out an ambitious but realistic vision for the future development of Ireland. It is the outcome of extensive public consultations as well as teamwork between public authorities.

We have also had the benefit of advice from a panel of national and international experts, whose assistance I gratefully acknowledge.

Ireland's development over the past decade has been remarkable. This performance gives us the confidence to plan for the next 20 years, so that development will have a better spatial distribution and balance, and people throughout the country will have a choice of high quality job opportunities, housing and leisure activities.

This can only be achieved by increasing economic activity in all regions. The NSS is an integrated package which recognises that to be successful, and achieve more balanced regional development, we need a range of measures that act at the international, national, regional, county and local level.

These actions must be at the appropriate scale. Dublin is our capital and our main player internationally. The NSS will ensure its continued competitiveness.

Gateways, both existing and new, offer the opportunity for developing national and regional scale activities to provide additional choices to Dublin. Hubs will provide regional and county scale opportunities. County towns and other urban areas with their surrounding rural areas provide opportunities to meet county and local scale needs. All areas will have the opportunity to contribute to the creation of a more prosperous Ireland. And it will be through the combined operation of all the elements of the NSS that we will realise balanced regional development.

Sustainable development is at the heart of the NSS. We need to make best use of natural resources, bring jobs closer to where people live, and ensure a high quality natural and built environment.

The NSS provides the framework for all sectors of society, national government, regional and local authorities, State agencies and all of the other social partners, whether employer, trade union or community and voluntary, to come together to achieve a better Ireland.

As Minister for the Environment and Local Government, I will have overall responsibility for leading implementation of the NSS. I pledge my full commitment and that of my Department to this task.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Martin Cullen'. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Martin Cullen, T.D.,  
Minister for the Environment and  
Local Government

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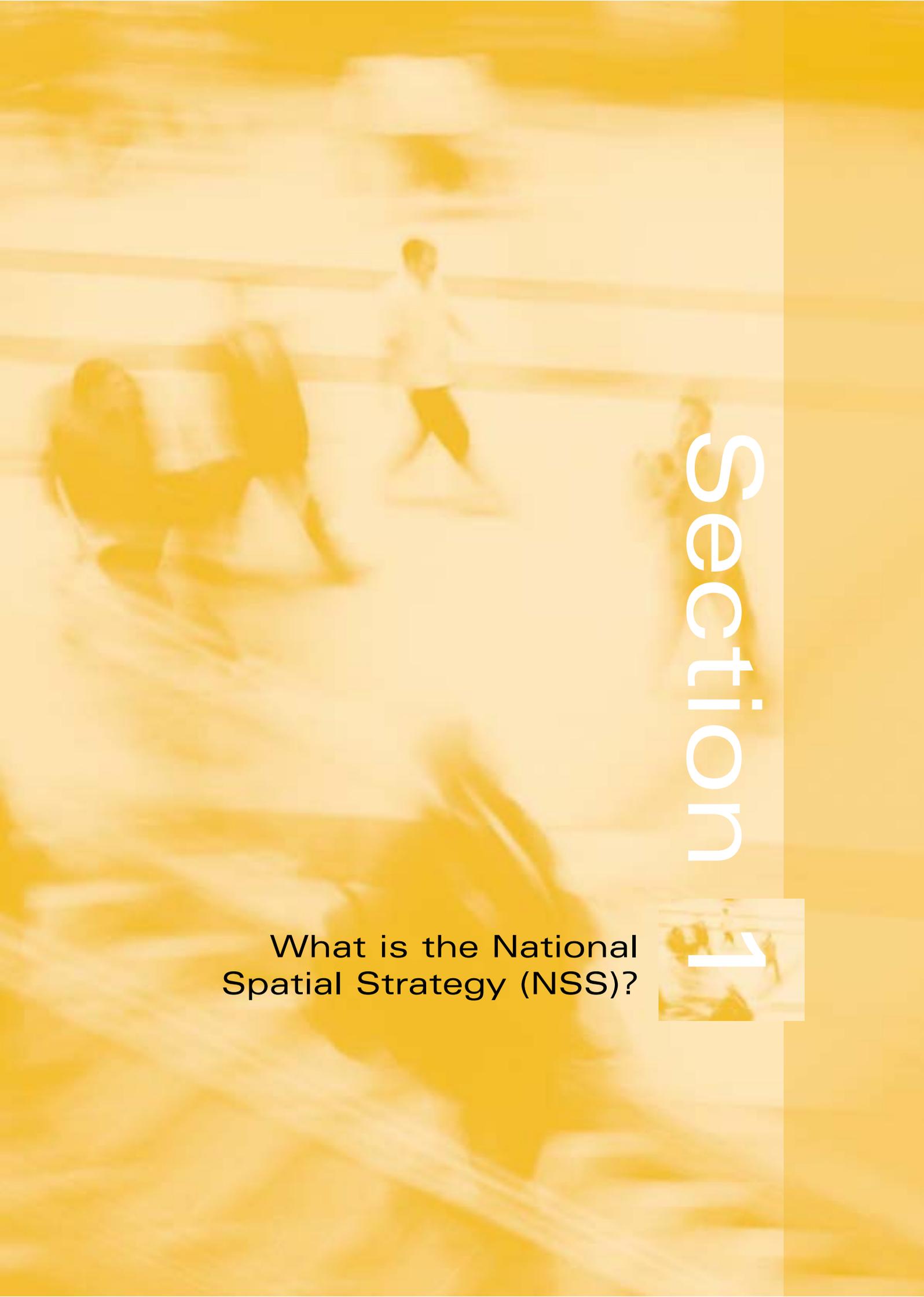
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# Section 1

**What is the National  
Spatial Strategy (NSS)?**

## Main Points

- This Strategy is a twenty-year planning framework designed to deliver more balanced social, economic and physical development between regions.
- Ireland's economic success in recent years has been accompanied by spatial patterns of development which have seen employment opportunities becoming more concentrated in some areas, while economic weaknesses remain in others.
- A commitment to prepare a spatial strategy to plan at national level for the country's future spatial development was included in the National Development Plan 2000-2006.
- Balanced regional development requires that the full potential of each region to contribute to the overall performance of the State be developed – on a sustainable economic, social and environmental basis.
- The Strategy sets out how all areas of the country will have the opportunity to develop to their potential.
- The Strategy will provide strategic planning guidance for a range of Government policies and regional and local plans.
- In conjunction with the Regional Development Strategy for Northern Ireland, Shaping our Future, the NSS addresses spatial issues for the island of Ireland as a whole.
- The rate at which the NSS can be implemented will be subject to overall macro-economic and budgetary considerations.

## 1.1 Purpose of the NSS

This National Spatial Strategy for Ireland (NSS) is a twenty year planning framework designed to achieve a better balance of social, economic, physical development and population growth between regions. Its focus is on people, on places and on building communities. Through closer matching of where people live with where they work, different parts of Ireland will for the future be able to sustain

- a better quality of life for people
- a strong, competitive economic position and
- an environment of the highest quality.

This Strategy is

- national – it provides a national framework to guide policies, programmes and investment
- spatial – it is concerned with the location of people, their work and other activities and with how different places relate to each other
- strategic – it offers a broad, long-term, comprehensive twenty-year view for achieving more balanced patterns of development.

The remarkable economic, social and physical progress of recent years has established a platform upon which policies can be put in place to ensure that more balanced development is achieved, within a well-planned spatial structure of attractive, competitive and innovative places.

The overall approach taken by the NSS to achieving balanced regional development is as follows:

### **(i) Economic role of Dublin and of other regions**

Much of Ireland's recent prosperity has been generated in the Greater Dublin Area (GDA)<sup>1</sup>. The performance of the GDA will remain pivotal to the overall economic well being of Ireland. However, Ireland also needs to build up other places and areas to be similarly strong on a national and international scale — generating benefits closer to where people live.

### **(ii) Quality of Life**

Unbalanced development is affecting quality of life. It is, for example, leading to more long-distance commuting due to the strong economic performance of some areas and the comparative weakness of others. Long distance commuting and residential development located at greater and greater distance from where people work, are not sustainable in the longer-term — economically, socially or environmentally. More balanced regional development is the answer but this must also be supported by appropriate local land use policies.

### **(iii) Settlement**

Ireland's growing population provides a foundation on which a thriving economy can continue to be built into the future. That population increase can be accommodated within existing settlements, including cities, towns and villages, while the economic and social strengths and resources of rural areas are also promoted. Completely new cities or towns are not required.

### **(iv) Planning**

Ireland needs to renew, consolidate and develop its existing cities, towns and villages – i.e. keeping them as physically compact and public transport friendly as possible and minimising urban sprawl, while also achieving a high quality of design in new development and refurbishment. Urban land needs to be used carefully, sensitively and efficiently – with the aim of reducing dereliction and under-utilisation. Where greenfield development is necessary it should take place through the logical extension of existing cities, towns and villages.

### **(v) Implementation**

Policies and programmes will be consistent with the NSS where they seek to enhance and build up economic and social activity within the national framework provided by the Strategy. Policies based on an unstructured, scattered approach to public investment and the promotion of economic activity would not be consistent with the NSS.

In essence, balanced regional development means

*Developing the full potential of each area to contribute to the optimal performance of the State as a whole – economically, socially and environmentally.*

The key concepts for this process are set out in Box 1.1.

---

<sup>1</sup> This refers to the area including Dublin City and all of the Counties of Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown, Fingal, Kildare, Meath, South Dublin and Wicklow.

## Box 1.1

### Key Concepts

- The key concepts are potential, critical mass, gateways, hubs, complementary roles and linkages.
- Potential is the capacity that an area possesses, or could in future possess, for development, arising from its endowment of natural resources, population, labour, its economic and social capital, infrastructure and its location relative to markets.
- Critical mass relates to size and concentration of population that enables a range of services and facilities to be supported. This in turn can attract and support higher levels of economic activity and improved quality of life.
- Gateways have a strategic location, nationally and relative to their surrounding areas, and provide national scale social, economic infrastructure and support services. Further development of the five existing gateways at Dublin, Cork, Limerick/Shannon, Galway and Waterford is a key component of the NSS.
- In addition a small number of other large towns which have the potential capacity to become gateways and lead development in their regions will play a key role in achieving more balanced regional development.
- Hubs. A number of towns will act as hubs, supporting the national and international role of the gateways and in turn energising smaller towns and rural areas within their sphere of influence.
- Complementary roles for other towns, villages and rural areas; various medium-sized towns in each region will act as 'local capitals' providing a range of services and opportunities for employment. Within the spatial framework proposed by the NSS, rural potential will draw upon local economic strengths, supported by a stronger structure of smaller towns and villages as a focus for economic and social activity and residential development.
- Linkages in terms of good transport, communications and energy networks are vitally important to enable places and areas to play to their strengths.

## 1.2 Role of the NSS

In this Strategy the Government is spelling out the basis on which all areas of the country will have the opportunity to develop to their potential within a national spatial planning framework for the period up to 2020.

The Strategy will

- support a better balance of activity and development between areas experiencing rapid development and congestion and areas that are economically under-utilised
- guide Government departments and agencies in formulating and implementing policies and public investment decisions which have a strong spatial dimension or which may otherwise be affected by spatial considerations
- set a national context for spatial planning to inform regional planning guidelines and strategies and county and city development plans and strategies
- provide a framework, in conjunction with the Regional Development Strategy for Northern Ireland, *Shaping our Future*, for the spatial dimension of the development of an all-island economy
- inform strategic investment, transport and other infrastructure policy decisions, for both the public and private sector; it will also help to shape future National Development Plans and other investment plans

- promote certain strategically located places as part of an all-Ireland network which will energise the potential of urban and rural areas
- support spatially balanced provision of key social and economic infrastructure, with a particular focus on this network of strategically located places
- set out general principles of good spatial planning practice to help to develop ways in which the location of people and employment and the use of environmental resources can best serve national competitiveness, sustainability and a high quality of life
- be complemented by relevant plans and strategies of other public bodies.

## 1.3 Sustainable Development Policy Framework for the National Spatial Strategy

Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of this generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. The concept captures the important ideas that development

- has economic, social and environmental dimensions which together can contribute to a better quality of life
- will only be sustainable if a balance is achieved between these three dimensions
- should allow future generations to enjoy a quality of life at least as high as our own
- should respect our responsibilities to the wider international community.

Sustainable development is more than an environmental concept, although it includes that important element. It also requires a combination of a dynamic economy with social inclusion, giving opportunities for all in a high quality environment. The World Summit on Sustainable Development held in Johannesburg in September 2002 and the national report for the Summit, *Making Ireland's Development Sustainable*, have underscored the international and domestic commitment to sustainable development. The NSS, through its focus on economic, social and environmental issues and on the inter-linkages between them, is a key policy instrument in the pursuit of sustainable development.

From the point of view of strategic spatial planning, sustainable development will, among other things, mean:

- maximising access to and encouraging use of public transport, cycling and walking
- developing sustainable urban and rural settlement patterns and communities to reduce distance from employment, services and leisure facilities and to make better use of existing and future investments in public services, including public transport
- promoting cost-effective provision of public services like roads, drainage, waste management facilities, lighting, public amenities and schools
- contributing to the evolution of socially integrated communities in both urban and rural areas
- minimising the consumption of non-renewable resources like soils, groundwater and agricultural land
- avoiding adverse impacts on environmental features such as landscapes, habitats and protected species, river catchments, the maritime environment and the cultural heritage
- ensuring that construction design is of a high quality and appropriate to the scale and context of its surroundings.

## 1.4 Economic, Budgetary and Regulatory Context for the National Spatial Strategy

The National Spatial Strategy will be implemented within an integrated and sustainable macro-economic and budgetary framework. Investment funded by the Exchequer on foot of the NSS will need a sufficient level of economic growth to generate the required resources. In particular, the level of investment in infrastructure will be governed both by reference to the overall budgetary situation and the priorities arising from the Strategy.

Implementation of the Strategy will also recognise the constraints imposed on budgetary policy by the terms of the EU Stability and Growth Pact. The Pact requires that Government budgetary positions should be close to balance or in surplus over the medium term. Implementation will also take account of other pressures on the public finances.

It is also important to recognise that there are non-budgetary constraints on the role of the State in implementing the Strategy. Many sectors of the economy have been, or are being, liberalised and are no longer under direct State control. EU legislation, particularly in relation to State Aids, places constraints on State intervention. Many sectors of the economy are also now subject to independent regulation.

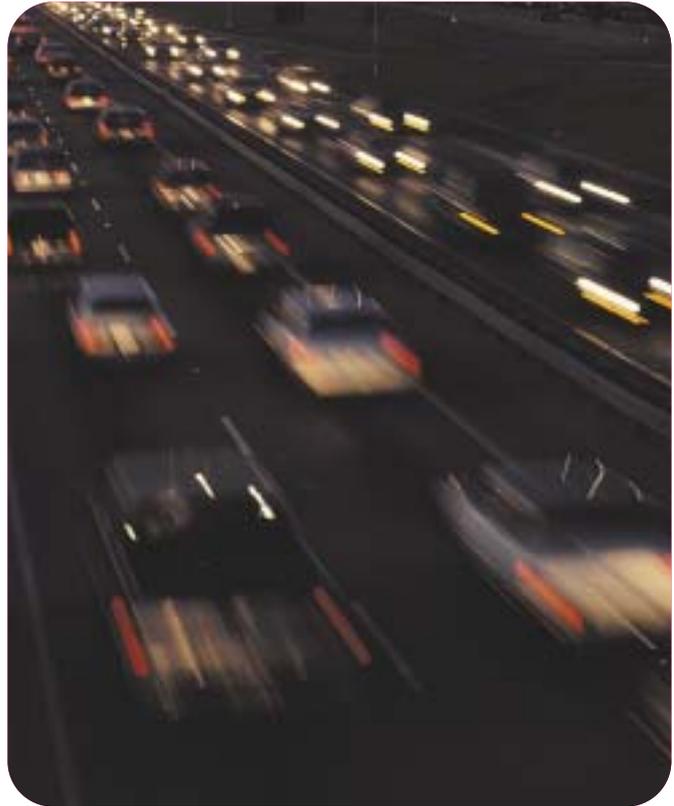
## 1.5 Reasons for a National Spatial Strategy

Strengthening and restructuring of the Irish economy gathered pace during the late 1980s and accelerated during the 1990s. By the end of that decade, a major transformation had taken place. Unemployment rates fell dramatically from a level of 14% in 1994 to less than 4% in 2000. The numbers at work grew by 500,000 from a base of 1 million in 1990. While average per capita income and output moved towards and even beyond EU averages, disparities between and within regions in Ireland remained. Net migration of people into the country, at unprecedented levels, replaced decades of emigration.

There were many reasons for this transformation. For the NSS the most important outcome has been the emergence of a new socio-economic geography, shown by new spatial patterns of development. The strength of the larger urban areas such as Dublin, Cork, Limerick/Shannon, Galway and Waterford and the preference of foreign direct and other investment to locate in or near such areas, has tended to accelerate the development of these cities and their associated regions. Within this, regional specialisation has emerged, such as the concentration of pharmaceutical and chemical companies in the Cork City area, information and communications technology in the Mid-West, food in the North East and health care and medical devices in the Midlands.

During the latter part of the 1990s, the performance of Dublin has been particularly significant in sectors such as internationally traded services, to the point where 77% of national employment in this sector is now located within the Greater Dublin Area. These levels of employment growth have also influenced development patterns such as house building in and well beyond the Greater Dublin Area, as investment and population have gravitated towards the eastern parts of Ireland.

Employment growth has occurred throughout the country, but has been stronger in some regions than in others. Employment opportunities have tended to become more concentrated in certain parts, with a consequent influence on where more and more people live. While all of the investment attracted or generated has been vital to overall national economic success, economic disparities between different parts of the country remain. There are increasing contrasts between areas encountering congestion due to a concentration of economic activity, and areas experiencing under-utilisation, because of a lack of competitive and balancing locations for economic activity.



Addressing these contrasts is a key concern for this Strategy. This concern is shared by Government and key agencies, the social partners, regional and local bodies. Unbalanced spatial development is also a key concern of EU policy.

In particular there is a realisation that

- Ireland's future socio-economic and physical structure will differ from its past structure
- this structure will be strongly influenced by the impact of European and global economic, technological, trade and investment trends on the open Irish economy
- a strategic, concerted and comprehensive spatial response is needed.

There have been a number of reports<sup>2</sup> in recent years that supported the need for strategic, national spatial frameworks like the NSS. These reports have emanated from:

- government departments, through policy documents such as *Sustainable Development: a Strategy for Ireland (1997)* and the *White Paper on Rural Development (1999)*
- the Economic and Social Research Institute
- the National Economic and Social Council
- Forfás.

The need for the NSS was formally recognised by the Government with the publication of the 2000-2006 National Development Plan (NDP).

The Government's objective for regional policy set out in the NDP is

*To achieve more balanced regional development in order to reduce the disparities between and within the two Regions (Border, Midlands and West and South and East) and to develop the potential of both to contribute to the greatest possible extent to the continuing prosperity of the country. Policies to secure such development must be advanced in parallel with policies to ensure that this development is sustainable with full regard to quality of life, social cohesion, and conservation of the environment and the natural and cultural heritage.* (paragraph 3.19 of NDP)

Under the NDP, the NSS is mandated to

- identify broad spatial development patterns for areas, and
- set down indicative policies in relation to the location of industrial development, residential development, services, rural development, tourism and heritage.

In addition to initiating the process of preparing the NSS, the NDP 2000-2006 identified the five main cities, Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Galway and Waterford, as 'Gateways', or engines of regional and national growth. The NDP set the NSS the task of further developing the Government's approach to achieving more balanced regional development, including the identification of a limited number of additional gateways. Appendix I outlines the approach taken to preparing the NSS and the outcome of the consultation process which assisted its preparation.

<sup>2</sup> *European Spatial Development Perspective* (Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 1999); *Sustainable Development: a Strategy for Ireland* (Department of the Environment and Local Government, April 1997); *Ensuring the Future - A Strategy for Rural Development in Ireland: A White Paper on Rural Development* (Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, August 1999); *National Investment Priorities For The Period 2000-2006* (Dublin: Economic and Social Research Institute, Policy Research Series No. 33, 1999); *Opportunities, Challenges and Capacities for Choice* (National Economic and Social Council Paper 105, 1999); *Shaping Our Future: A Strategy for Enterprise in Ireland in the 21st Century* (Forfás, May 1996).



The background features a light blue architectural drawing of a building facade. A prominent feature is a large, circular opening or archway in the lower-left quadrant. Above and to the right of this opening is a grid of windows, with some windows appearing to have decorative elements or shutters. The drawing is rendered in a sketchy, line-art style. The overall color palette is a range of light blues, from pale to a slightly darker shade.

# Section 2

**Ireland's Changing  
Spatial Structure**

## Main Points

- The spatial structure of Ireland is strongly influenced by the location of investment, which in turn influences where people work and live.
- The structure and patterns of employment in many sectors of the economy are changing, with future investment likely to depend increasingly on the strengths, facilities, talents and skills which areas can offer.
- The State has a population of 3.9 million, of which about 1.5 million live in the Greater Dublin Area.
- The Greater Dublin Area has experienced rapid development. This has driven much of the country's economic success. However, the form of that development has created acute pressures in areas like housing supply and traffic congestion.
- The successful aspects of the Greater Dublin Area's development need to be emulated in other areas to deliver a more even distribution of successful economic development. The growing strengths of Cork, Limerick/Shannon, Galway and Waterford suggest that the co-ordinated development of these cities has the potential to offer a counterweight to the pull eastwards on the island.
- Declining farm-based employment, and associated changes in rural areas, highlight the need for tailored policies to develop alternative employment in natural resources, tourism, enterprise and local services, as well as improved access to employment in or near urban areas.
- Without an NSS, three quarters of the country's projected population increase of half a million people, or possibly significantly higher than that, over the next twenty years is likely to happen in or near the Greater Dublin Area, making congestion even more difficult to deal with. At the same time, many other parts of the country would remain less developed.
- The NSS provides an alternative to this by promoting the development of the potential of all regions through identifying and prioritising policies that must be put in place to attract and generate investment and jobs and encourage more people to live in every region. As this happens, the rate at which the Greater Dublin Area is increasing its national share of population will lessen. Other regions' share will start to increase.
- As the pace of regional development accelerates, particular additional requirements for housing will arise in certain areas.

## 2.1 Ireland - the Global and All-island Contexts

### 2.1.1 Ireland in the European and Global Economies

It is likely, subject to trends in the global economy, that the recent exceptionally dynamic phase of expansion in Ireland will be followed by growth patterns more comparable with those of other mature economies. Maintaining these patterns will require prudent macroeconomic, budgetary and other strategies (ESRI Medium Term Review 2000 – 2005).

The structure and pattern of employment will continue to be influenced by changing global and European trends. Employment in some of the more traditional sectors in which Ireland is no longer competitive will continue to fall-off. Enterprise will need to continue to shift into more knowledge intensive sectors.

Efficient movement of people and goods, coupled with effective energy and communications networks, waste management facilities and other services will be essential to bring out the innate potential of places and promote balanced regional development. This will require spatial co-ordination to maximise the benefits.

Agriculture will continue to be an important component of the economy. Advancing technology and farm consolidation will increase output and continue to reduce agriculturally based employment. The challenge will be to support agriculture and at the same time find alternative employment in or close to rural areas to sustain rural communities.

Marine and natural resources, including inland fisheries, sea fisheries, aquaculture, forestry and mining, have an important role to play in providing sustainable alternative sources of employment in rural areas. For example, forestry will expand in line with Government policy to increase forest cover from 9% of the land area at present to 17% by 2030. This expansion will provide the basis for sustainable additional employment in forestry and forestry related industries.

Ireland must continue to trade on its 'green' image, a mark of quality, which is attractive not only for tourism, but for all investment. Protecting this environmental quality will be crucial.

In the context of current European and world economic development trends, strong indigenous growth will be sustained, and mobile international investment will be attracted, to an increasing extent, by factors such as

- stable macroeconomic and budgetary policies
- a business friendly and efficient operating environment
- excellent quality of life
- extensive educational opportunity in a life long learning sense
- good quality physical infrastructure
- a high quality environment
- reliable access to energy.

Financial incentives and grants will have less influence than in the past on the choice of locations for investment.

Business is likely to align itself closely with local strengths, facilities, talents and skills. This can be facilitated in important ways through good links between business and third level institutions. Clusters of similar or interrelated overseas and Irish-owned businesses will tend to form and consolidate in particular geographic areas because of the advantages available locally and the resulting synergies. Spatial policy must take account of this if it is to broaden the range of locations in which business can be done successfully in Ireland.

The ability of Greater Dublin and some other areas to attract large-scale inward investment is clearly associated with their perceived advantages of being significant urban areas with international transport connections, third-level institutions and other educational and research facilities, business services, cultural and entertainment facilities.

To achieve balanced regional development, the challenge in generating indigenous investment and in winning internationally competitive mobile investment will be to ensure that access to such advantages is offered at a wider range of attractive locations. This requires the targeted assembly at strategic locations, at the required scale, of the factors critical for success.

Ireland's spatial context is closely related to the wider global context. Throughout the world, regions of international economic importance have emerged based on agglomerations of strong enterprise activity, innovation and the assembly of factors critical to economic success. Within the EU, the strongest region of global economic importance is the area encompassing London, Paris, Amsterdam/Rotterdam and Frankfurt.

Effective connections to and from this region and to wider world are essential, if Ireland is to remain in a position to capitalise on its proximity in terms of contributing to and benefiting from a competitive EU economy. Figure 2.1 illustrates Ireland's international spatial context in broad terms.

## 2.1.2 North-South Relations

The establishment of the North/South Ministerial Council, the six North/South Implementation Bodies and the identification of areas of co-operation provided an opportunity for North/South economic activity to realise its full potential and for the mutual benefits of strategic co-operation to be fully explored for the first time. Both the Regional Development Strategy for Northern Ireland 2025, *Shaping Our Future*, and the NSS provide planning frameworks that enhance the potential for such joint strategic co-operation.

A report on enhancing competitiveness in the all-Island economy, commissioned by the North/South Ministerial Council, highlighted the challenges, including long-standing regional imbalances and disadvantaged border regions, facing both economies. The report advocated strategic economic co-operation to take advantage of economies of scale and facilitate the adoption of co-ordinated approaches to capital and infrastructure investment.

Trade between the two economies has grown significantly in recent years. However, there are barriers that need to be addressed including

- greater regulatory harmonisation
- exploiting of potential synergies in education and training provision and in research and development
- improving the existing knowledge base in order to facilitate the development of appropriate policy initiatives, and
- monitoring and evaluation of existing policy.

Labour mobility is one of the keys to economic development both in Ireland and at European level. The North/South Ministerial Council Study of Obstacles to Cross-Border Mobility on the Island of Ireland identified four main categories of barriers - regulatory, administrative, infrastructure and information. The advancement of this labour mobility agenda is an example of the range of possibilities for future North/South economic co-operation.

The institutional arrangements provided for in the Good Friday Agreement provide a framework for enhanced co-operation on the island of Ireland to the mutual advantage of both North and South. The key areas where such co-operation can be of most benefit are being identified. The challenge for the future is to harness the potential synergies and to work together to overcome the barriers to fulfilling our social and economic potential.

Co-operation and co-ordination of spatial strategies North and South will be progressed as far as possible having regard to the prevailing circumstances.

## 2.2 Key Development Trends Within Ireland

To identify a basis for future spatial policy in Ireland, it is useful to understand how Ireland's economic and spatial development patterns have been evolving over the past ten to fifteen years and how these patterns are likely to evolve in the future, unless good spatial policies are adopted. Extensive research was carried out for this purpose. The relevant reports may be found at [www.irishspatialstrategy.ie](http://www.irishspatialstrategy.ie). This section presents a brief overview of development trends and the reasons behind them.

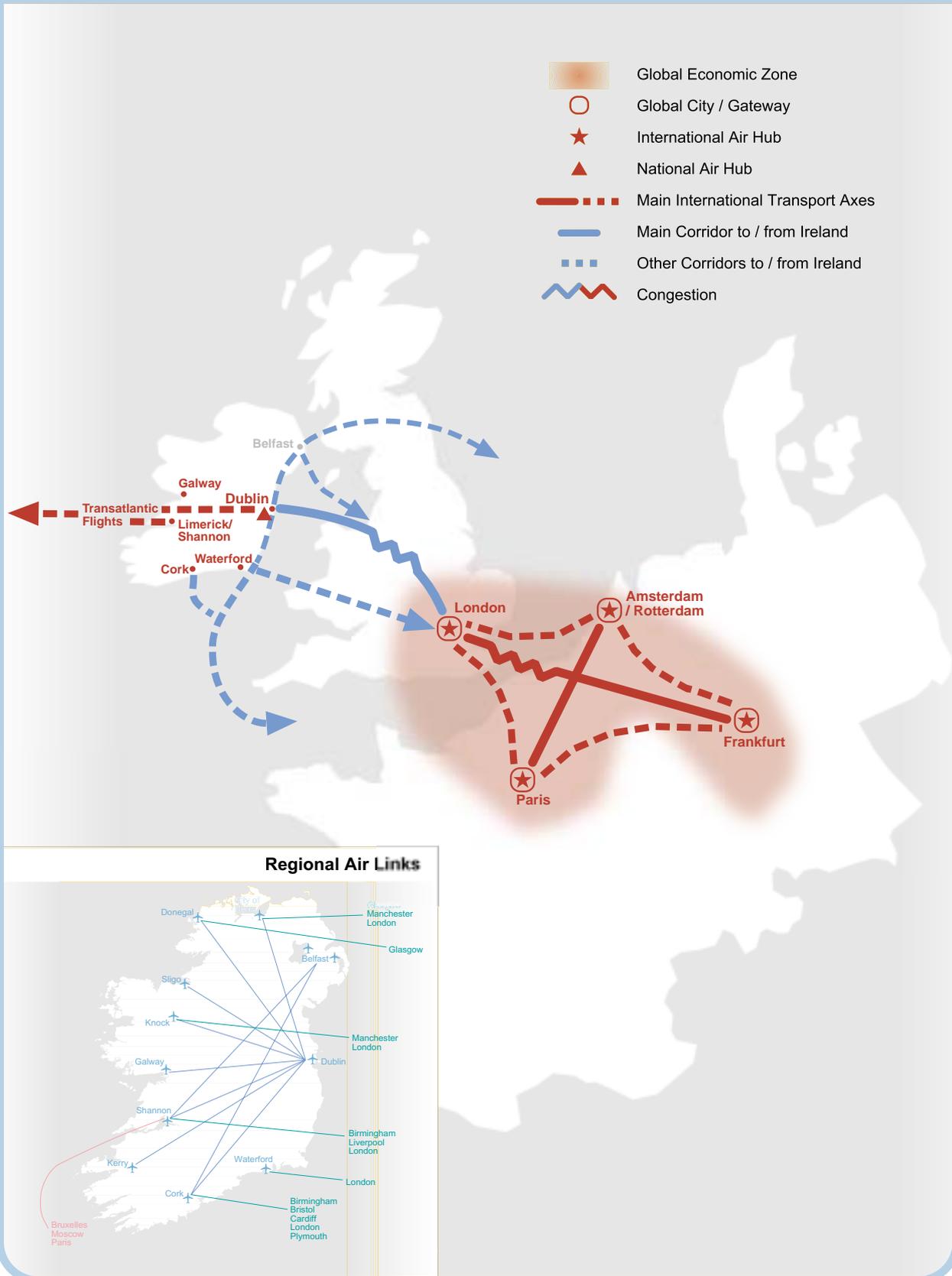
The island of Ireland is relatively small in European and world terms. Since accession to the European Union in 1973, the Irish economy has become highly integrated into European and global markets, with profound impacts on national development and economic progress.

The island has an overall population of 5.6 million, of which 3.9<sup>3</sup> million live in the State. The State is characterised spatially by a relatively dispersed population with about 58% living in urban areas with a population of more than 1,500, and about 42% living in rural areas (based on 1996 census). Dublin City and suburbs<sup>4</sup> (2002 population estimated at between 1 and 1.1 million) is very much larger in population than any other city in the State.

<sup>3</sup> 2002 Census Preliminary Report

<sup>4</sup> This refers to the census enumeration area, which includes Tallaght, Lucan, Clondalkin and Blanchardstown but not Swords, Portmarnock, Malahide or Bray.

**Figure 2.1** Ireland - International Spatial Context



But Dublin is medium sized in European terms and relatively small in global terms compared with cities like London, New York and Tokyo.

In addition, the total combined population of the cities and suburbs of Cork, Limerick, Galway and Waterford in 1996 was 38% of the population of Dublin city and suburbs. Irish towns in the next tier below these cities, i.e. those in the 10,000 to 40,000 population category, are generally concentrated in the East and South East, with many of these being quite close to Dublin. In more western areas there are only four towns in the 10,000 to 40,000 category. Towns below 10,000 population and especially below 5,000 in population are more evenly spread. (see Figure 2.2)

The following are the most notable recent trends in this spatial structure.

The Greater Dublin Area (GDA) has experienced rapid development, which has driven much of the country's economic success in recent years and delivered vital national benefits.

The performance of the GDA is pivotal to the overall economic well-being of Ireland. Looking at the value of the goods and services produced in terms of the economic indicator known as Gross Value Added (GVA)<sup>5</sup>, Dublin City and the surrounding three Dublin counties accounted for 38.9% of the national total in 1999. Combining the total for Dublin with Meath, Kildare and Wicklow, the GVA of the Greater Dublin Area represented 47.9% of the national total in 1999.

However, the pace and form of growth in the GDA has resulted in a particularly heavy burden of development pressures, such as housing supply difficulties and traffic congestion, on the city and its surrounding area.

There is strong evidence that Dublin is becoming a 'Dispersed City' demonstrated by the fact that the hi-tech industries located around the city's edges are drawing their workforces from places up to and beyond 80 kilometres away, but within about an hour's drive of peoples' workplaces. New hotels, major industrial parks, technology campuses, out-of-town shopping centres, suburban business and office parks, improved roads, relatively low road fuel prices, higher car ownership and availability and use of certain commuter train services have created an increasingly dispersed form of growth in the GDA and beyond.

Significant population growth has taken place in the GDA over the last ten years. The 2002 Census Preliminary Report indicates that the population of the GDA in 2002 stood at just over 1.5 million, an increase of over 185,000 in the eleven years since 1991 when the GDA's population was 1.35 million. Continuing population growth in the GDA into the future will require planning and infrastructure responses based on a strategic approach that seeks to manage population growth more effectively.

Many other parts of the country have also advanced economically, but the rate of growth has not been as high as experienced in the GDA. These areas have yet to achieve self-sustaining growth, by offering competitive and sustainable locations for large-scale economic activity. There is a need to emulate the competitiveness that the Dublin area has achieved in other parts of the country in order to deliver a better spatial distribution of national economic and social development.

There has been significant, positive development along the Dublin-Belfast economic corridor, assisted by improvements in transport and communications and growing confidence in long term investments North and South. While this is very welcome, it is tending to reinforce the eastwards pull of the spatial distribution of development and population on the whole island of Ireland. This North/South dynamic needs to be sustained but, at the same time, strategically and spatially counterbalanced.

The growing strength of the other existing Gateway cities of Cork, Limerick/Shannon, Galway and Waterford suggest that there is potential for seeking their concerted and co-ordinated development as a counterweight to the pull eastwards on the island. In the longer term, the dynamics of certain other cities and towns, particularly in the Northwest, point to ways in which this counterweight could be strengthened further.

<sup>5</sup> Gross Value Added at basic prices is a measure of the value of the goods and services produced in a region (less the materials and services used which come from outside the region) priced at the value which the producers received minus any taxes payable and plus any subsidies received as a consequence of production or sale.

## Figure 2.2 Cities and Towns on the Island of Ireland

Over 40,000 Population



10,000 - 39,999 Population



5,000 - 9,999 Population



3,000 - 4,999 Population



Source : Census of Population 1996

In rural areas, the pattern of change has varied. These variations have depended on interaction between

- the changing role and re-structuring of agriculture
- the degree to which the rural economy is diversifying
- nearness to or remoteness from major urban areas, and
- an area's possession of natural resources, including high amenity landscapes.

The nature of rural change points to the need for tailor-made responses to the various development issues facing different types of rural areas.

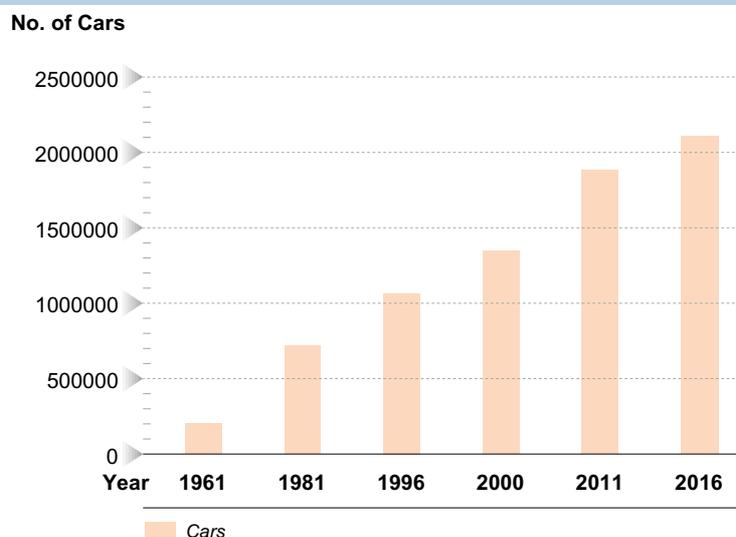
Current and continuing investment in Ireland's road and public transport systems under the National Development Plan will enhance potential for regional development. To further enhance this potential in the future on an all-island basis, more emphasis will need to be placed on developing an improved network of road and public transport linkages. Building on the completion of the radial routes to and from Dublin, Ireland's road network, public transport system and international access points, such as ports and airports, will remain key components around which development will need to be structured.

Current trends in spatial development are likely to adversely affect more and more people's quality of life, the quality of the physical environment and overall national economic competitiveness. Some of these trends will add to regional and global environmental problems. For example, the manner in which some major urban areas, particularly Dublin, are tending to develop is making the provision of necessary infrastructure such as public transport expensive and difficult. Coupled with this, the manner in which major economic development is tending to concentrate in the Greater Dublin Area means that the potential of other areas is systematically under-realised, particularly that of some of the regional cities.

The NSS research indicates that some of the consequences of current trends could become even more significant, in the light of the following projections.

- The population of the State is growing. It is likely to increase by over half a million over the next 20 years, with a possibility that the population could rise by a significantly higher figure than that.

**Figure 2.3**  
Projected Growth in Car Ownership



Source: Spatial Planning Unit Research Report No.17 - Transport Demand

- On the basis of recent trends, up to four-fifths of the population growth in the State could take place in or in areas adjoining the Greater Dublin Area over the next twenty years. With the exception of the West region, whose share of the national population could remain broadly static, all other regions would experience further decline in their shares of the national population.

- The number of cars using our roads could double over the period 1996 - 2016. (see Figure 2.3)

- In relative terms, use of sustainable transport modes like walking, cycling and public transport is falling and could continue to fall. (see Figure 2.4)

- A substantial amount of new house building is taking place outside urban areas. In many cases this tends to place greater distance between people and their work, increases dependence on the car, limits the effectiveness of public investment in providing utilities and services and threatens the quality of the rural environment in some areas.

## 2.3 Successful Regional Development in Today's Europe

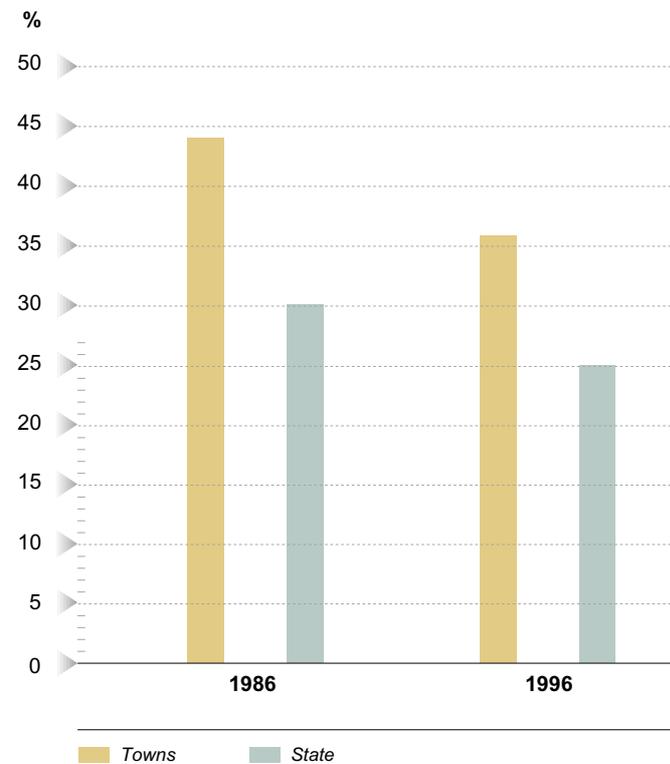
Today's processes of economic integration and globalisation suggest that regions have an economic potential at the national or international level that can be substantially developed. However, this can only happen if various strategic components within such areas, like cities, large towns and associated rural areas, collaborate more closely on jointly promoted and mutually beneficial strategies for development. As a consequence, it is increasingly recognised that through mutually beneficial co-operation, an 'added value' can be realised for regions over and above what would happen if individual places go separate ways in their promotion and development.

At a European level, this type of regional and spatial planning has taken three forms:

- urban clusters of neighbouring cities, in many cases across borders, entering into strategic alliances and enlarging their economic advantages and strengths to the benefit of their joint territories e.g. Copenhagen-Malmö
- urban networks between more distant cities or towns co-operating on economic, social or cultural issues
- urban - rural partnerships which recognise that urban and rural areas are dependent on each other. This is based on the complex flows of people and services between urban and rural areas and the internationally acknowledged fact that cities and towns in more rural parts of a country will play an ever more important role in the development of rural areas.

### Figure 2.4

Trends in % of population travelling by Public Transport, Cycling and by Foot



Source: Census of Population

Many of these projections and trends indicate that the geographical or spatial distribution of future economic progress could continue to be unbalanced. The consequences of this — for example even greater congestion in some places — could adversely affect our international competitiveness by lessening the attractiveness of areas for business and workers.

## 2.4 Current and Future Population – Main Issues

The key issues relating to Ireland's current and future population distribution for the NSS are

- The role of population growth in achieving balanced regional development
- The levels of overall national population that need to be planned for
- The implications of recent population trends for the approach to be taken by the NSS
- The population share of the Greater Dublin Area
- The degree to which current population trends can be altered.

### 2.4.1 Population Growth and Balanced Regional Development

A strong economy — nationally, regionally and locally — establishes conditions that help to sustain and expand employment and population levels. A growing population is in turn a key asset that can be harnessed in working towards balanced regional development.

The 2002 census preliminary report shows population growth being driven by the natural rate of increase, but also by significant net migration into Ireland. Net migration has been driven by economic growth, and the consequent demands for labour and skills in a rapidly developing economy.

Balanced regional development will require the creation of the dynamic and competitive economic and other conditions. These conditions will support the ability of areas and places to retain their existing population and cater for increasing population. Balanced regional development also depends on building up a strong urban structure to give areas the economic strength to support a more balanced distribution of population growth across the country.

This Strategy addresses the strategic planning necessary to support more even patterns of population growth. It does not envisage or propose large-scale movements of population from one part of the country to another.

Good spatial planning at regional and local levels is also essential to ensure that where population growth occurs, the consequent needs and demands in terms of affordable and good quality housing, ancillary social facilities, efficient transport and proper amenities are effectively responded to.

### 2.4.2 Planning for Ireland's Future Population

In 2002, the population of the State was approximately 3.9 million people. In projecting population levels forward over the next 20 years, assumptions regarding demographic (fertility rates, mortality rates and migration) trends<sup>6</sup> must be made, while the potential effects of economic performance also have to be taken into account.

Using assumptions in this regard, two broad types of projections were prepared as part of the initial research for the NSS. The first type of projections — "current trends scenarios" — were based on indications of likely demographic trends. The second type — "economic growth scenarios" — were based on expansion in employment levels over the period of the Strategy.

<sup>6</sup> The NSS projections were based on the 1996 census. See also Appendix 11 regarding the assumptions and methodology used in making projections.

The projections based on current demographic trends indicated that the population of the State could rise to 4.4 million over the next 20 years. See Table 2.4.2 (a) below.

**Table 2.4.2a** Population projections based on current trends

Year	1996	2000	2010	2015	2020
Population	3,626,087	3,787,000	4,157,000	4,286,000	4,391,000

The results in table 2.4.2 (a) were derived from assumed demographic trends in mortality, fertility and international migration. The assumptions made in relation to mortality, fertility and international migration are summarised in Appendix 11.

There are indications that recent growth in the population supported by rapid economic growth has proven to be somewhat faster than was anticipated by the projections based on current demographic trends. If, therefore, the economic and demographic momentum established since 1996 is sustained in the long-term, the value of basing this strategic planning framework solely on population projections based on current demographic trends would be questionable.

The economic growth based projections required an indication of the possible effects on population of sustained economic and employment growth. Accordingly, the employment forecasts for basic manufacturing and traded services to the year 2015, set out in the ESRI Medium Term Review 1999-2005, with further extrapolation of these forecasts to the year 2020, were built into the NSS population projection model. As shown in table 2.4.2 (b) below, this produced significantly higher results than the projections based solely on current demographic trends.

**Table 2.4.2b** Population projections based on strong economic growth

Year	1996	2000	2010	2015	2020
Population	3,626,087	3,787,000	4,508,000	4,766,000	5,013,000

However, current economic conditions which have shown a sharp reduction in recent high rates of economic growth, suggest that the high growth population scenarios set out in the above table must be approached with caution.

Looking forward over the next 20 years and bearing in mind the continuing impact of the momentum created by Ireland's strongly growing economy of recent years, it is likely, as the above projections show, that Ireland's national population over the next 20 years will rise to at least 4.4 million. There is a possibility that it could rise significantly beyond that level, subject to an upper limit of around 5 million. However, it would appear at present, in the light of current economic conditions, that the lower projection of 4.4 million is the more likely one.

This Strategy is not about setting a population target as such for 2020. However, it is important to be satisfied that this 20-year spatial framework is sufficiently robust to deal with population growth that could vary depending on demographic and economic/employment growth trends. The spatial framework set out under this Strategy has the capacity to cater for Ireland's population whether it grows over the next 20 years to the lower projection of 4.4 or to the higher figure of 5 million.

Estimates of regional populations and household distributions for 2020 are given later in this section of the Strategy on the basis of both types of population projections carried out in preparing the NSS.

One of the primary means of implementing the NSS will be through the making of regional planning guidelines under section 21 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000. These guidelines cover a period of 12 years and in general will

be reviewed every 6 years. Within the overall framework of the NSS therefore, and taking account of the range of population sizes which the different types of projections produced, the regional guidelines will require that current population trends be analysed further. Such guidelines can then adapt to the pace at which development is likely to take place over the short to medium term. The short to medium term forecasting necessary for the purposes of regional planning guidelines will, therefore, enable longer term and short term forecasting to be reconciled.

The overall approach taken allows for planning frameworks at national, regional and local levels that are sufficiently robust and realistic to cater for different levels and rates of development depending on prevailing economic circumstances.

Ireland's population in 2020 will still be relatively small by international standards. However, the proportionate level of increase from the current base of 3.9 million in 2002, will be significant and represents a major challenge for strategic and local planning.

### 2.4.3 Population Trends: Implications for the NSS

Looking back over census of population results of the past 20 or 30 years, certain broad conclusions are clear

- The proportion of the country's population living in or near the Greater Dublin Area has steadily increased
- There have been some strong points of growth in the other regions, most notably associated with the main cities
- The proportion of persons living in rural areas has been falling, particularly so in remoter areas and areas with few towns.

The 2002 census confirmed that these particular trends are continuing, but with some variations

- All parts of the country experienced population growth, with migration into Ireland emerging as a strong driver of growth in some parts, while in other parts it was natural increase rather than migration which was responsible for the population increase
- The majority of national population growth in absolute terms (62%) took place in the Leinster area
- Within the Greater Dublin Area, population growth happened at a faster rate in the Mid-East Region, than in the Dublin Region
- Increases in population in Westmeath, Wexford, Laois, Louth and Carlow confirm a widening of the Dublin commuter belt, well beyond the Greater Dublin Area, as defined for the purposes of the Strategic Planning Guidelines for this Area
- The cities and some large towns in various parts of the regions also grew, suggesting that these have attained a threshold of development that has sustained economic growth
- While some remoter rural areas continued to experience population decline, there was strong population growth in rural areas adjacent to the main cities, in other large and medium sized towns and in some rural parts of the country that are diversifying in economic terms.

Looking at the recent trends in population growth and distribution, a number of common elements suggest the approach that needs to be taken if balanced regional development is to be achieved.

- (1) Areas experiencing population growth share one key common characteristic. They have a strong urban structure, or a strong urban element within or associated with them. This has helped them to attain a critical mass in terms of population, which supports investment in necessary infrastructure, attracts or generates employment and sustains investment and development not only in the urban centre itself, but also in the wider rural hinterland. Movement of people to the areas where the investment and jobs are generated, or can be drawn to, as well as natural population increase, reinforces these areas' population base and fuels further population growth.

(2) Towns with populations in excess of 5,000 appear to have the ability to retain their populations and in some cases have shown significant growth. A more detailed discussion on the trends in this regard over the period 1966 to 1996 is contained in Appendix III.

(3) There is an increasing tendency for population growth adjacent to the Greater Dublin Area to occur at locations with access to the road and rail transport corridors radiating from Dublin to the regions. This pattern is replicated to some extent in the environs of other cities such as Galway and major towns around the country.

#### 2.4.4 The Greater Dublin Area

In 2002, the Greater Dublin Area (GDA) accounts for just over 1.5 million people. This represents some 39.2% of the total population of the State. That proportion has been steadily increasing over time. Table 2.4.3 summarises the situation.

**Table 2.4.3** Share of National Population in the GDA

Year	1971	1981	1991	1996	2002
% Share	35.7	37.5	37.7	38.3	39.2

Over the next two decades current trends indicate that without spatial policy, much of the possible national population increase could happen in, or in the counties adjoining, the Greater Dublin Area. The NSS current demographic trends based projections suggest a population in the GDA of 1.9 million by 2020, out of a national population of 4.4 million. The NSS economic growth projections suggest 2.2 million by 2020, out of a national population of 5 million. Both sets of projections estimate that without spatial policy, the GDA's population expressed as a percentage of national population will rise from its current level of around 39% to a proportion of up to 45% or 46% by 2020.

However, the 2002 census shows lower population growth in the GDA between 1996 and 2002 than was expected. While it is difficult on the basis of preliminary census results to be definitive about why this happened, it is possible that previous restrictions in housing supply, now being overcome, may have curtailed population growth in Dublin. This may have been due to certain inter-related issues i.e.

- restrictions in the supply of housing in Dublin compared with good supply of more affordable housing in counties outside Dublin
- demand not matching supply, resulting in upward pressure on prices in the Dublin area
- housing at greater distances from Dublin, becoming more affordable for people working in or near Dublin.

As housing demand and supply come into equilibrium, due to local authority housing strategies and increased residential densities, a pattern of stronger population growth in the Greater Dublin Area is likely to re-assert itself.

Population growth within, and in many areas adjoining, the Greater Dublin Area is being driven primarily by the dynamics of natural increase and high in-migration combined with a very high proportion of new jobs and investment continuing to be attracted to the Dublin area. The question that arises, however, is whether the objective of balanced regional development would be better served if more growth in population could be encouraged in other regions, while still nurturing and sustaining the successful dynamic achieved in Dublin.

### 2.4.5 Changing Current Trends.

Promoting real regional growth will entail a quantum shift in the capabilities of regional locations to become engines of growth at the national scale. The scale of the task confronting Ireland in trying to change current trends should not be underestimated. Economic opportunities outside the Greater Dublin Area would have to flourish at unprecedented levels to allow regional locations to grow faster than the GDA, make up ground and alter the scenario in which the Greater Dublin Area's share of the national population is likely to continue to increase. Substantial job creation will also continue to be required within the GDA itself both to offer employment to that area's own naturally growing population and respond to the natural process of economic restructuring that happens as traditionally strong sectors decline.

To stabilise the Greater Dublin Area's share of national population at its current level, around 75% of the jobs growth likely to take place in that Area in the manufacturing and key services sectors over the next 5 years, would have to take place instead in other regions.<sup>7</sup>

Such a scenario is clearly unrealistic for a number of reasons. Firstly, it pre-supposes that all investment is mobile, which is not the case. Secondly, this rate of growth would be extremely difficult to create in the regions, given their current levels of development. Thirdly and perhaps most importantly, diversion of this level of employment growth away from the Greater Dublin Area could damage the successful dynamic achieved in the GDA which is of vital national importance. In many cases, the choice for mobile international investment would then lie between locating in the Dublin area or elsewhere in the world.



For these reasons, maintaining the Greater Dublin Area's share of the national population at its current level of around 40%, or indeed reducing that share, is not a realistic objective. However, recalling the analysis in sections 2.2 and 2.4, it is equally unsustainable that an undue weight of future population growth in the State should take place in or adjoining the GDA.

The process of enhancing the competitiveness of areas through implementing the NSS will take time. It is likely therefore that the Greater Dublin Area's share of the State's population will continue to grow for some time. However, with the support of the NSS, this will happen at a slower rate than would otherwise be the case if Ireland had no spatial policy to enhance regional competitiveness. Such a scenario would see the GDA's percentage share rising into the low 40s and then starting to level off. As previously indicated, if regional competitiveness is not enhanced, it is possible that up to four-fifths of future population growth could take place in the Greater Dublin Area, bringing its share of national population into the mid 40s. This in itself could create the momentum for a continuing increase in this share beyond the 20 years covered by the NSS.

The fundamental approach of the NSS is to encourage greater spatial balance by strengthening areas and places in a structured way, rather than seeking to stop growth in Dublin. Ireland, therefore, needs to get to the position where a wider range of locations is seen as similarly attractive. The shifts in population growth resulting from the NSS may appear modest.

<sup>7</sup> See Appendix II.

However over time, as the process of implementing the NSS continues and regional development intensifies, the tendency for the Greater Dublin Area to increase its share of the national population will level off. In that situation the population of Ireland's various regions would continue to grow, but more in step with one another.

Essentially therefore, the most realistic objective for the NSS is to seek to establish a position in which the regional components of the country grow at a broadly similar pace, rather than seeking unrealistic shifts between regions in their proportionate shares of population. The process of levelling off will be likely to occur over a period beyond the current NSS timeframe of 20 years and will need to be underpinned by the continued implementation of appropriate spatial policies and investments by the public and private sectors.

Given the timeframe within which the NSS is to be implemented, it is possible only to give an outline indication of what more balanced population would mean for different regions. Rather than interpreting these as prescriptive targets, the following discussion and tables should be seen as an indication of the lower and upper limits of a range of possible regional populations. These estimates form a background horizon for the shorter-term and more detailed forecasting required for the purposes of regional planning guidelines and other planning at local level.

#### 2.4.6 Current Regional Population Distribution

Population distribution, based on 1996 data, includes seven broad regional components (2002 figures where available are inserted in italics)

- Around 1.4 million in the Greater Dublin Area (*1,535m*) of which 1 million lived in Dublin city and suburbs
- Around 540,000 (*581,000*) in the South West Region of which 325,000 lived in Cork city and its hinterland
- Around 407,000 (*432,000*) in the Border Region of which 30,000 lived in Dundalk, 18,500 in Sligo, and 12,000 in Letterkenny
- Around 352,000 (*380,000*) in the West Region of which 127,000 were located in Galway city and its hinterland
- Around 391,000 (*424,000*) in the South East region of which 111,000 were located in Waterford city and its hinterland
- Around 317,000 (*340,000*) in the Mid West region of which 214,000 were located in Limerick city and its hinterland
- Around 206,000 (*226,000*) in the Midland Region of which a combined population of 54,000 resided in the towns of Athlone, Mullingar, Tullamore, Longford and Portlaoise.

#### 2.4.7 Future Regional Population Distribution

Starting with the current trends based NSS projection of 4.4 million by 2020, the regional breakdown was estimated as follows

- around 1.9 million in the Greater Dublin Area
- around 590,000 in the South West Region of which over 360,000 could live in Cork city and its hinterland
- around 390,000 in the Border Region
- around 445,000 in the West Region of which almost 180,000 could be located in Galway city and its hinterland
- around 440,000 in the South East Region of which 138,000 could be located in Waterford city and its hinterland
- around 370,000 in the Mid West Region of which 260,000 could be located in Limerick city and its hinterland
- around 210,000 in the Midlands Region.

The 2002 census preliminary report figures for the Border (432,386 persons) and Midlands (225,588 persons) regions exceeded the NSS current trends based population projections for 2020. In contrast to this, lower than expected population growth occurred in the Greater Dublin Area. Section 2.4.4 above outlines possible factors contributing to these results. Regional population projections will need to be reviewed when the full results of the 2002 Census are published in mid 2003.

Taking the NSS economic growth type projections of a national population of around 5 million by 2020, the regional breakdown was estimated as follows

- around 2.2 million in the Greater Dublin Area
- around 740,000 in the South West Region of which up to 450,000 could live in Cork city and its hinterland
- around 460,000 in the Border Region
- around 460,000 in the West Region of which almost 200,000 could be located in Galway city and its hinterland
- around 480,000 in the South East Region of which 164,000 could be located in Waterford city and its hinterland
- around 410,000 in the Mid West Region of which 280,000 could be located in Limerick city and its hinterland
- around 280,000 in the Midlands Region.

The foregoing projections are illustrative in nature and depend on assumptions which may or may not remain valid. As the preliminary results of the 2002 Census have shown in relation to certain regions, the actual population level reached can vary considerably from that previously projected. However, for the purposes of this Strategy, the main conclusion to be drawn from the projections is that implementation of the NSS will yield higher regional population growth than would be the case without a spatial policy framework.

Not all of the population growth will be contained in the main cities. There is potential for growth in other areas, provided this is supported by the promotion of an urban structure of appropriate scale and strength. Growth prospects for rural areas will be assisted by the degree to which settlements, including villages, smaller and larger towns can be strengthened to accommodate, sustain and drive various types and levels of development including residential, employment and commercial activities.

## 2.5 Household Formation and Housing Demand

Access to high quality and affordable housing in the right locations is an important spatial planning issue because of its quality of life, economic and environmental dimensions. Tracking trends in the rate of household formation provides indications of likely levels of housing demand into the future. Identifying future levels of housing demand also ensures that preparations can be made for the services and amenities needed to support future housing development. The issue of future housing demand is therefore an important one for the NSS.

In 2000, it was estimated that the number of households in the State was about 1.25 million. Taking the NSS current trends based projections referred to in Section 2.4.2, the number of households in 2020 is estimated at about 1.9 million, whereas on the basis of the NSS economic growth based projections the estimate is about 2.1 million households in the State by 2020.

Progress in achieving a better balance of regional development will give rise to greater increases in population in different parts of the country than would occur under existing trends. Such progress will also lead to additional demands for housing in different areas. These potential additional demands need to be considered carefully from a planning perspective.

The variables involved in setting out future housing requirements for different areas over the 20 years covered by the NSS make precise predictions difficult. However, there are a number of key trends that will influence future demand for housing.

In 2001 there were approximately 340 houses for every one thousand people in Ireland. In 2000 the EU average stood at around 450 houses per one thousand people. Housing provision in Ireland has some way to go therefore, to converge with EU standards.

Record levels of housing output have been achieved in Ireland over the past 7 years. These levels of output must be viewed against a historically small housing stock in relation to population. The proportion of houses being built in Ireland relative to our population is the highest in the EU at 13.5 houses per thousand persons.

Housing output reached a new record in 2001 at 52,602 units nationally and has more than doubled since 1993.

Between 1996 and 2002, there was an estimated increase of 8% in the population, with a 13.9% increase in the key household formation 25-34 age group between 1996 and 2001.

The average household size declined from 3.28 in 1991 to 3.14 in 1996, 3.04 in 1999 and to 2.97 in 2002 (CSO Quarterly National Household Survey). The average household size is expected to converge rapidly towards the current EU average of 2.63 by 2011, with a significant increase in the number of single person households.

The number of people in the main household formation age group is expected to rise by 141,000 by 2006, an increase of 27%.

It is also the case that demand for housing will be affected by future levels of economic growth, inflation, interest rates, disposable incomes and employment levels.

As the pace of regional development accelerates, this will create additional requirements for housing in the regions outside Dublin. These requirements will be particularly pronounced in the gateways, hubs and other strategic centres such as the county towns.

Within regions there will be marked variations in housing requirements with demand being larger, for example, where there are particular concentrations of population, such as the cities and larger towns. As and when county development plans and housing strategies are reviewed to take account of the spatial structure of the NSS, provision of an effective supply of high-quality and affordable housing in existing settlements will be a priority, particularly in the gateways and hubs identified in this strategy.

The Strategy gives an indication of the range of possible growth in housing demand over a 20 year time horizon. This provides a context for the making of regional and local plans and strategies. Under the Planning and Development Act, 2000 local authorities are required to ensure that sufficient land is zoned for housing over the period of their development plans. Local authorities in responding to additional housing needs must do so in a way that supports good planning practice. Such practice would include strengthening and sustaining existing settlements by focusing on their centres and then moving outwards as necessary in a planned way by identifying new development opportunities. Good planning practice must ensure the development of land for housing and other uses in pace with the provision of the necessary amenities and services.

The recently adopted housing strategies prepared by local authorities will provide sufficiently for housing demand during the initial years of implementing the NSS. However, as the process of achieving balanced regional development takes place, regional planning guidelines and strategies will need to be prepared or up-dated in good time to take account of the anticipated outcomes of the NSS. The further articulation at regional and local level of the NSS proposals through mechanisms such as Regional Planning Guidelines, will present opportunities to tease out housing demand in more detail to take account of regional and local circumstances.

The following tables work from the estimates of regional population outlined in paragraph 2.4.7 and break down the distribution of households by region.

## Table 2.5 Regional Household Distribution Estimates

Region	1996 Households <sup>8</sup>	2020 Households Current Demographic Trends	2020 Households Economic Growth
GDA	436,000	839,000	916,000
Southwest	170,000	254,000	305,000
Border	127,000	175,000	196,000
West	110,000	183,000	184,000
Southeast	120,000	188,000	198,000
Midwest	98,000	160,000	169,000
Midlands	62,000	90,000	113,000
Total <sup>9</sup>	Circa 1.123 million	Circa 1.889 million	Circa 2.083 million

The additional numbers of households in 2020 over the 1996 figure in both of the NSS projections, represent very significant increases in all areas.

The overall approach of the NSS is to seek to accommodate these levels of housing need within existing settlement structures rather than seeking to establish new cities or towns. This Strategy is not proposing the development of new settlements, given the substantial scope for development within existing settlement structures.

The levels of increased demand for housing pose two key challenges

- ensuring that future development takes place in a way which avoids urban sprawl, achieves high standards of urban design quality and promotes more compact and public transport friendly urban areas and therefore maximises peoples' quality of life and the sustainability of future development
- harnessing these levels of growth and development to build up the urban structure in areas such as the West and Border regions, and thus sustaining current investment in jobs and services and creating the conditions that support opportunities for new investment.

Unmanaged, the projected growth in housing demand could lead to more urban sprawl and miss the opportunity to develop Ireland's urban structure in a more balanced way. This structure needs to be developed to a scale that will drive development within the wider regions and the urban and rural areas associated with strategically located centres

The strategic spatial structure provided for in the NSS will facilitate a managed and planned response to future housing demand.

## 2.6 How to Strengthen Areas and Places

Achieving competitiveness at national, regional and local levels, in an open and globally integrated economy such as Ireland's, is central to balanced regional development. Future living standards and capacity for progress will be determined by Ireland's ability to trade successfully in international markets and to capture an adequate share of mobile investment with its associated high-productivity jobs. Regions must be competitive – in terms of the factors that generate and win investment and underpin sustainable economic activity – if the objective of more balanced regional development is to be progressed.

<sup>8</sup> 2002 figures not available until mid 2003.

<sup>9</sup> Differences in totals represent rounding of estimates.

The availability of a critical mass of labour and skills, underpinned by high quality business infrastructure is central to achieving competitiveness. This strategy for more balanced regional development must focus much effort on complementing the areas that are attracting or generating substantial investment by fostering critical mass at the small number of additional locations where this is feasible. Given that resources are not unlimited, attempts to create the requisite competitiveness on a widely dispersed basis would undermine Ireland's capacity to exploit the potential of centres where critical mass exists or can be promoted. Without having this at the heart of the NSS balanced regional development will not succeed.

International and domestic research and experience confirms that certain conditions must apply to support the increased economic activity and regional competitiveness which will be needed if more spatially balanced patterns of development are to evolve in Ireland over the next twenty years.

These conditions can be described as follows:

There is a need for a critical mass of population, a range of skills, an innovation capacity, as well as business and transport linkages in an environment attractive to people. This provides a competitive, sustainable and strong platform for business development responsive to domestic and world economic forces.

The potential for development of economic activity at the regional level must be driven by advantages derived from exchange of information, collaboration, innovation, adoption of best practices and mobilisation of finance and skills. Collectively this can be termed entrepreneurship. This establishes a forward dynamic that promotes diversification and sustains competitiveness and progress in regional development thus reducing disparities between areas.

Strong cities and towns are needed to support a competitive business environment, working in partnership with strong rural areas and ensuring an effective supply of employment opportunities and services. This enables areas to hold on to existing population, both urban and rural, and attract more people.

There are a number of specific elements within these factors, whose assembly at strategic locations in a targeted way, is vital to foster a wide range of enterprise activity and employment creation. These include

- integrated strategies for physical, economic and social development and environmental protection, to guide and promote sustainable development, particularly with regard to planning, land use and transportation
- sufficient numbers of people in the city or town and the wider area to which the urban area relates
- regional or national centres of learning
- clustering of businesses and firms, including those involved in inter-related activities and in high-growth, knowledge-intensive and technology-based specialisation
- a focal point for national, regional and local road and public transport systems, with good access to the national road and rail network and access to airports, with a range of well-timed and appropriate services facilitating business activity, and deepwater ports
- effective urban transport systems, including facilities for pedestrians and cyclists
- reliable, secure and cost-competitive energy supply
- effective telecommunications, including broadband
- access to healthcare facilities and facilities for persons with special needs
- regional cultural venues such as theatres/galleries/ arts and sports centres
- a high quality built environment, including parks, green spaces and other amenities
- adequate zoned and serviced land banks for uses such as residential and industrial development
- water supply, wastewater disposal systems, an environment capable of accommodating current water services requirements and major additional requirements into the future, and
- effective waste management structures and facilities
- the vision and enthusiasm of the key bodies and interest groups locally to move forward together.

A shift towards more balanced patterns of development will be achieved by meeting these requirements at the appropriate standard and scale to support significant industrial, enterprise and traded services development, at a limited number of key strategic locations. Cities and towns, linked to a wider network of urban and rural areas, must be central elements of any strategy that aims to extend the number of areas successfully attracting or generating investment and bring about more spatially balanced patterns of population, employment and economic output.

Attempting to assemble these elements at entirely new locations would involve unprecedented and unsustainable levels of investment and would undermine the capabilities of existing towns and previous investment in them. New cities or towns also often take considerable time to establish the strong community and entrepreneurial spirit needed to underpin their future. For these reasons, the NSS emphasises the importance of capitalising upon the strengths of and investment in Ireland's existing major urban areas.

National and international evidence also demonstrates that rural areas have a vital contribution to make to the achievement of balanced regional development. This involves utilising and developing the economic resources of rural areas, particularly in agriculture and food, marine, tourism, forestry, renewable energy, enterprise and local services, while at the same time capitalising on and drawing strength from vibrant neighbouring urban areas. In this way rural and urban areas are seen as working in partnership, rather than competing with each other. This urban – rural partnership model is in line with the approach taken in the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP).

Smaller towns and villages also have much potential that can be capitalised on. This is compatible with promoting critical mass at nationally and internationally competitive urban areas, if these urban areas are linked to the smaller centres and rural areas through physical connections such as good communications, energy, roads or public transport networks and through innovation, enterprise promotion and business links. The strengths of the smaller towns and villages lie in their capacity to accommodate employment, residential and other functions on the basis of their comparative advantage in terms of lower costs and a quality of life which is attractive to many people.

There are also rural areas that are particularly remote or with structural disadvantages that require strategic, targeted measures to support rural population growth. Targeted measures for these areas, specific to local circumstances, are compatible with the overall thrust of the NSS, given the role the Strategy recognises for continuing rural settlement and development.



# Section 3

Ireland -  
Future Spatial Structure

## Main Points

- The NSS supports Dublin's pivotal role in national economic success. It is essential for balanced regional development that the performance of the Greater Dublin Area be built upon and physically consolidated.
- Strengthening the critical mass of the existing gateways of Cork, Limerick/Shannon, Galway and Waterford, to complement Dublin's successful national spatial role offers the most immediate prospects of establishing more balanced patterns of development over the next few years.
- Four new national level gateways are identified: Dundalk, Sligo, and two "linked" gateways Letterkenny/(Derry), and Athlone/Tullamore/Mullingar. A linked gateway is one in which two or more strong towns work in partnership to promote economic and social development in their region.
- The NSS identifies nine strategically located medium sized hubs. These will support and be supported by the gateways and will link out to wider rural areas. The hubs identified include Cavan, Ennis, Kilkenny, Mallow, Monaghan, Tuam and Wexford. In a similar way to the linked gateways the NSS also proposes that Ballina/Castlebar and Tralee/Killarney act as linked hubs working together to promote regional development in their areas.
- The NSS recognises that many other county and larger sized towns in Ireland are critical elements in the structure for realising balanced regional development, acting as a focus for strengthening their own areas.
- The NSS outlines measures through which rural potential can be developed, building upon local strengths in tourism, agriculture, enterprise, local services, land and marine based natural resources, with rural towns and villages assuming increasing importance as a focus for local investment, economic activity and housing development.
- The NSS proposes that the national spatial structure be supported by a national transport framework, providing an improved network of roads and public transport services, enhancing access and connections throughout the country. This framework will be internationally connected through key points such as airports and ports with links to Northern Ireland, the UK, EU and the broader global economy. The spatial considerations for planning other key areas of infrastructure such as energy and communications are also covered.

## 3.1 Introduction

This Strategy sets out how Ireland can be spatially structured and developed over the next twenty years in a way that is internationally competitive, socially cohesive and environmentally sustainable. The elements of policy and actions that need to be put in place to achieve this are now set out.

By targeting strategic centres with the potential to be drivers of development at national level and within their own regions, and by including county towns, smaller towns, villages and rural areas in this process, a dynamic urban and rural structure can be achieved.

This will lead to

- a strong and internationally competitive Greater Dublin Area driving both its own economy and national development
- strategically placed, national scale urban areas, acting as gateways, which individually and in combination will be key elements for delivering a more spatially balanced Ireland and driving development in their own regions
- strategic medium to larger sized towns as hubs linked to the gateways, in turn reaching out to more rural parts
- a strengthened county and large to medium sized town structure
- diversified and vibrant rural communities, which contribute to and benefit from the development of larger centres such as gateways and hubs.

For these different elements of the structure, the relevant spatial policies of the NSS can be summarised as follows:

<b>More efficient Greater Dublin Area</b>	The Greater Dublin Area's vital national role is secured in terms of improved mobility, urban design quality, social mix, international and regional connections.
<b>Strong gateways in other regions</b>	Balanced national growth and development are secured with the support of a small number of nationally significant centres, whose location and scale support the achievement of the type of critical mass necessary to sustain strong levels of job growth in the regions.
<b>Hubs</b>	Balanced patterns of growth are supported by towns that link the capabilities of the gateways to other areas.
<b>County and other town structure</b>	Balanced patterns of growth are supported by towns that capitalise on local and regional roles and are also linked to the roles of the gateways and development hubs.
<b>Vibrant and diversified rural Areas</b>	Rural areas benefit from enhanced local employment options and from development of their resource potential.

The main characteristics of Gateways and Hubs are shown in Figure 3.1.

## Figure 3.1 Gateways and Hubs - Characteristics

Gateways	Hubs
(1) A large urban population (of the order of 100,000 and above) set in a large urban and rural hinterland.	(1) A significant urban population in the range of 20,000 – 40,000 set in an associated rural hinterland
(2) Wide ranges of primary/secondary education facilities and national or regional third level centres of learning.	(2) Primary and secondary education facilities with the option of third level or outreach facilities.
(3) Large clusters of national/ international scale enterprises, including those involved in advanced sectors.	(3) A mix of local, medium sized and larger businesses serving local, regional and national/international markets.
(4) A focal point in transportation and communications terms: (a) on the national roads and rail networks (b) within 1 hour of an airport either with international access or linking to one with such access (c) adequate, reliable, cost effective and efficient access to port facilities (d) effective, competitive broadband access.	(4) An important local node in transportation and communication terms: (a) on the national road and rail or bus networks, (b) with access to a national or regional airport (c) having adequate, reliable, cost effective and efficient access to port facilities (d) with effective and competitive broadband access.
(5) Integrated public transport with facilities for pedestrians and cyclists.	(5) Effective local transport system with facilities for pedestrians and cyclists.
(6) Regional hospital/specialised care.	(6) Local and/or regional hospital.
(7) City level range of theatres, arts and sports centres and public spaces/parks. Cultural and entertainment quarters.	(7) Wide range of amenity, sporting and cultural facilities including public spaces and parks.
(8) City-scale water and waste management services.	(8) Effective water services and waste management arrangements.
(9) Integrated Land-Use and Transport planning frameworks.	(9) Strategies for physical, social and economic development.
(10) Phased zoning and servicing of land-banks in anticipation of needs associated with growth.	(10) Phased zoning and servicing of land - banks in anticipation of needs associated with growth.
(11) Strategic Development Zones	(11) Industrial and local business parks.

Substantial progress towards balanced regional development also requires strong policy responses in relation to accessibility, opportunities for participation and environmental quality issues, which can broadly be summarised as follows:

<b>Enhanced Accessibility</b>	For urban and rural areas, through an interconnected mesh of efficient and integrated road or rail transport systems, energy and communication grids — all designed to converge at nationally strategic locations.
<b>More Opportunities for Participation</b>	This will come about through building critical mass within regions to a level that supports investment in education, health, amenities and social facilities that will enable people to benefit from the opportunities arising from development of a region's potential.
<b>Environmental Quality</b>	It is important to recognise that a high quality environment is a prerequisite for economic success, social cohesion and sustainable development.

Through these policy responses substantial progress can be made over the next twenty years in a way that:

- sustains areas which are growing but lessens development pressures within them
- promotes real regional growth in population and output terms
- achieves greater convergence in terms of income and output between different areas.

## 3.2 Looking Strategically at the Future.

Achieving a dynamic urban and rural structure will involve working with and building upon the strengths of different places.

Dublin as the capital city plays a vital national role. But it needs effective strategic planning and better management of the strong development pressures within it to secure and consolidate that role for the future.

Increasing interaction is emerging between Dublin and Belfast. This is a significant asset, in line with the European wide trend of increased co-operation between cities to enhance competitiveness. The interaction has major potential benefits for the whole of the island of Ireland. The growing strength of Dublin and Belfast at either end of an emerging economic corridor also points, however, to the need to secure and enhance the roles of towns strategically placed between these two major centres.

The existing gateways of Cork, Galway, Limerick and Waterford are strategically located in different parts of the country. They have considerable potential for further development and expansion to achieve more balanced regional development.

Derry has been identified in the Regional Development Strategy for Northern Ireland as a Regional City for the North West, including Donegal.

There is evidence of growing interaction between Cork and Limerick and also between Waterford and Cork and between Limerick and Galway. This interaction suggests future possibilities for combining the complementary strengths of these cities and expanding such interaction to achieve a critical mass strong enough to balance the type of critical mass that has been achieved by Dublin.

Cork, Derry, Galway, Limerick and Waterford are located geographically on an arc running from Derry in the North West to Waterford in the South East. Certain other strategically located large towns have the potential capacity to act in conjunction with the existing gateways in delivering the scale of development necessary to complement the economic strength of the cities and towns along the east coast.

Further west there are a number of strategically placed county towns that act as capitals for their own extensive hinterlands, occupy important positions on transport networks and offer a wide range of services to the local population. These places are located within an environment of renowned natural and cultural heritage that is increasingly supporting the economic vitality of these areas. The revitalisation of these areas will need to be sustained by actively pursuing development possibilities, without compromising the quality of the natural and cultural heritage.

A number of medium-sized, neighbouring towns in the Midlands have significant numbers of long-distance commuters working in Dublin. These towns do not have the critical mass to compete with the larger cities on an economic basis. However, by capitalizing on their location and by combining their strengths to work jointly, they could build the critical mass needed to compete for investment.

The evolving all island and EU economic co-operation context points to the need to look to enhancing the role of certain towns located in the border area in the interests of more effective spatial co-operation North and South.

The following section outlines the actions required and the particular places to be assigned specific strategic national roles.

## 3.3 Acting Nationally and Strategically

### 3.3.1 Consolidating the Greater Dublin Area

It is essential to the NSS that the performance of the economy of the Greater Dublin Area (GDA) and surrounding counties is built upon so that its success, competitiveness and national role are sustained into the future.

Dublin will continue to grow in population and output terms. However, it is not desirable for the city to continue to spread physically into surrounding counties. The physical **consolidation** of Dublin, supported by effective land use policies for the urban area itself, is an essential requirement for a competitive Dublin. Consolidation is also required for the public transport system to function effectively. In turn, investment in public transport will assist in promoting a more efficient and competitive Greater Dublin Area.

In order to achieve this physical consolidation, the existing and proposed new bodies responsible for strategic planning in the Greater Dublin Area must, particularly in the context of reviews of the current Strategic Planning Guidelines for the Area, take the following actions.

#### A. In the Metropolitan Area<sup>10</sup>

Carry out a comprehensive and systematic audit of all vacant, derelict and underused land to establish its capacity to accommodate housing and other suitable uses. Such an audit should be focused in particular on areas in or close to public transport corridors and areas with under-utilised physical and social infrastructure (e.g. schools).

Where appropriate, local authorities should be pro-active in using their existing powers (such as those under the Derelict Sites Act, 1991) to facilitate the assembly of fragmented sites and to encourage the relocation to more suitable sites where there is inappropriate land use within city/district centres.

<sup>10</sup> The metropolitan area was defined for the purposes of the Greater Dublin Area Strategic Planning Guidelines as all of Dublin County Borough, Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown, South Dublin and certain DEs in Fingal, Kildare and Wicklow.

Ensure the effective use of the existing housing stock e.g. by vigorously promoting ‘Living over the Shop’ schemes and by seeking opportunities for infill housing in older suburbs which are losing population due to declining household sizes. In particular, the provision of smaller units for older households within settled neighbourhoods could free up family-sized houses.

Encourage the preparation of urban design plans in renewal areas, to establish a framework for buildings and public spaces which can be readily understood by developers and existing communities. Intensification can be achieved without compromising amenity.

Examine the potential of declining industrial and warehouse estates for re-development for new economic activity.

## **B. In the Hinterland Area**

Concentrate development in strong towns with capacity for growth on well-served public transport corridors, such as Navan, Naas, Newbridge, Kilcullen, Arklow, Drogheda and Balbriggan.

Develop and implement Integrated Framework Plans for land use and transportation in such development centres.

With further improvements to its amenities and quality of life attractions, Dublin can maintain and improve its European and world competitiveness in attracting investment and encouraging people to live in the city area itself.

The continuing health of the Dublin is critically dependent on

- creating an efficient and high quality system of public transport connections within the Dublin area to improve access to employment, education, services and amenities
- good international access particularly through Dublin Airport and Dublin Port
- good transport and telecommunications connections with other national gateways
- efficient and cost effective water services and waste management infrastructure
- concentrating employment intensive activities close to public transport corridors and road transport intensive activities close to the strategic road network
- continuing investment in and development of Dublin’s ability to innovate in education, research and development through its third level educational institutions and effective linkages with industry
- maintaining the distinction between the city and town components within the Greater Dublin Area as envisaged by the Strategic Planning Guidelines for the area, which focus on the metropolitan area, the hinterland and a number of other strategically placed towns as primary or secondary development centres within the hinterland
- protecting Dublin’s outstanding natural setting – Dublin Bay, the Dublin and Wicklow Mountains, surrounding rural hinterlands, river valleys like the Boyne and Liffey, and physical amenities such as parks
- investing in the quality of life attractions of the city and its surrounding centres, particularly in terms of education at primary and secondary level, healthcare, childcare, cultural and entertainment facilities
- eliminating areas of social deprivation and ensuring integrated development of areas in the future.

In a wider context, the spatial considerations for the areas adjoining and beyond the GDA have suggested the following responses.

Recognising the potential and scale of the urban centres in Dundalk, Newry and Drogheda, there is a case for further strengthening the central portion of the Dublin-Belfast corridor in order to give that corridor greater economic integrity.

To this end, Dundalk, with its increasing size and scale of activities, has the capacity to develop as a gateway within the Dublin-Belfast corridor. This gateway will also support a wider border area extending westwards from Dundalk. Developing Dundalk as a gateway would utilise its strategic location between Dublin and Belfast to underpin cross-border co-operation, particularly with neighbouring Newry.

Building up the transport and business links between Dundalk and Newry would offer a scale of development and critical mass that can help drive development throughout the eastern part of the border region.

The future role of towns such as Navan, Naas and Wicklow needs to take account not just of their relationship with Dublin, but also their function in the development and servicing of their own catchment areas and their relationship with other adjoining regions. Achieving the objectives of the NSS for balanced regional development means developing new gateways and hubs at strategic locations in other regions. This has implications for decisions on the ultimate size of towns in the Greater Dublin Area.

While Drogheda is an inherent part of the Border region its development is strongly influenced by its relative proximity to Dublin. In seeking to develop the potential future role of Drogheda, therefore, account must also be taken of

- Drogheda's relationship with its own catchment
- its role within the Border region
- its role as a significant port
- its role in the spatial development of the Greater Dublin Area having regard to the town's close functional and physical links with the area.

Housing pressures in the Greater Dublin Area and the improvements in the road and rail network radiating from Dublin, have encouraged extensive commuter based development at some considerable distance from the Greater Dublin Area. As a by-product of unbalanced spatial development, this long distance commuter based development is generally unsustainable. Building up critical mass in other regions, to complement Dublin is central to countering this trend.

In the southern and eastern parts of the Midlands adjacent to the Greater Dublin Area there are a number of strong county towns that are experiencing extensive commuter-based development e.g. Portlaoise and Carlow. These towns must be developed in terms of their economic self-sufficiency to minimise the need for commuting and support the development of surrounding areas. To do this they need to sustain a good employment base and a wide range of shopping facilities and social infrastructure.

### 3.3.2 Strengthening the South, South East, West and North West

To emulate the economic success achieved in Dublin, Ireland needs to **strengthen** the dynamic, emerging critical mass of the existing gateways in the South East, South and West and develop gateways at other strategic locations. This will allow substantial new investment to be generated in and attracted to the regions and will complement the successful national spatial role of Dublin.

All of the gateways outside Dublin — existing and new — will have to grow by a considerable factor to do this. Some centres are at a greater level of preparedness for this than others.

Of the regional cities, Cork has the most immediate potential to be developed to the national level scale required to complement Dublin. The Cork Area Strategic Plan (CASP) sets a positive agenda for proceeding in this direction, given the emphasis in it on enhancing Cork's capabilities as a metropolitan, business friendly, public transport based and physically attractive city.

In the Mid-West, Limerick/Shannon needs to be strengthened — within the terms of the Land Use and Transportation Strategy now being developed. This will provide a platform for capitalising on the strategic location of this gateway, where a number of road and rail transport corridors converge, there is an international airport at Shannon and ports in the Shannon estuary.

Another of the existing designated gateways, Galway, also needs to be strengthened further on the basis of the Land Use and Transportation Strategy now being developed for the city.

In the South East, there is substantial potential for the enhancement of critical mass through the further expansion of the existing designated gateway of Waterford, including the port at Belview. This could be supported by improved connections from Waterford to towns in the surrounding counties and from Waterford to cities such as Dublin, Cork and Limerick. This points to the potential, over the life of the NSS, to further strengthen the position of Waterford in support of its role as a strong driver of regional development.

However, not even Cork, the largest of the existing gateways, will approach the scale of development and critical mass of the Dublin area for the foreseeable future. The critical mass of the Dublin area is reinforced by its transport connections to surrounding areas and centres. A strategic approach to achieving similar critical mass, based on the complementary attractions of cities that are relatively close to each other, is required to emulate the scale and critical mass of the Dublin area.

Limerick and Cork are 100 kilometres apart. Between them, these cities and their associated regions could have a future population of almost 700,000, two universities, access to two international airports and port facilities and a large range of world-class employers. Actual travel time and reliability are more important than distance. Therefore, the ability to travel between Cork and Limerick in about an hour by road or rail would result in both centres being seen to have shared strengths in their attractiveness for investment and enterprise. For this sharing of strengths to become real, greater emphasis will have to be placed on improving journey times and journey time reliability between Cork and Limerick in terms of the roads and public transport networks. However improving physical connections is not enough. Both areas will need to plan and act in a complementary way.

Similarly if roads and public transport connections between Waterford and Cork and between Limerick/Shannon and Galway were appropriately enhanced, the attractions of each gateway could also be seen in an increasingly shared sense. In time this could also provide a basis for the improvement of onward connections, through road and public transport networks, to Sligo and Derry and other points in between.

Building on the complementary strengths of Cork and Limerick/Shannon and adding to this the strengths of Galway and Waterford, would further enhance the critical mass of these four cities and their hinterlands. Between them, they could have a combined population of over 1,000,000 people in the longer term. Looked at in combination, these cities would be supported by international airports, three Universities, the Waterford Institute of Technology and other third level institutions, giving them greater national and international capacity and supporting their potential for development.

The best prospects for establishing critical mass of the type and scale capable of competing with that of the Greater Dublin Area point to developing Cork, Galway, Limerick/Shannon and Waterford as an increasingly inter-connected and developed network of co-operating and complementary cities. Models for activating such multi-centred or polycentric development approaches are evolving in other countries in Europe. (A Danish example showing how this type of co-operative approaches works is outlined in Appendix IV).

Complementing the economic performance of Dublin and the East in a national context will therefore depend on

- expanding the critical mass of individual cities
- combining the powers of attraction of these cities, particularly by enhancing the performance of physical connections between them.

Additional gateways, particularly in the West and North West, where the urban structure is weakest, must be developed. In identifying new gateways, a number of key factors must be taken into account including strategic location, capacity for substantial development, an existing business and innovation dynamic and existing or potential transport linkages.

Critical mass in the West and North West can be strengthened by developing Sligo as a gateway to capitalise on its strategic location and enliven its associated hinterland. Building up the national role and scale of Sligo will require, as a first step, the development of a planning, land use and transportation framework. This will provide a focus around which local authorities, business and community interests can reach consensus on the future development of Sligo and utilise its substantial physical capacity for development, while safeguarding its outstanding natural setting.

Further north there is a strong dynamic at present in the relationship between Letterkenny and Derry. Shaping our Future, the Regional Development Strategy for Northern Ireland, which was adopted by the Northern Ireland Assembly, identifies Derry as a major regional city for the North West, including Donegal. The development of Letterkenny/Derry as a linked gateway will enhance this relationship and strengthen the North West. Letterkenny will be further developed in association with Derry in a way that ensures both continue to be effectively linked, have complementary strengths and, in essence, work together as a gateway for the North West.

The links and interactions between the existing and new gateways mentioned and the process of energising areas associated with these gateways, will be complemented and strengthened further by the development of certain medium-sized towns as hubs. These hubs are Mallow, strategically located between Cork and Limerick, Ennis between Limerick and Galway and Tuam to the north of Galway. Each of these towns is well positioned to act as a strong market and service centre for an extensive rural hinterland while interacting with its neighbouring gateway. The improvement of physical and other connections between the gateways and hubs will ensure that the capabilities and critical mass of the gateways can be used more effectively to the benefit of the gateway itself, the hub and other towns and related villages and rural areas.

### 3.3.3 Reinforcing Central Parts of Ireland and the South East

The existing critical mass on the east coast and the strengthening critical mass in the South East, South, West and North West of the country present a spatial challenge, but also a strategic opportunity for the Midlands and parts of the South East. Historically, competition between towns in the Midlands allied to their relatively small size, has fragmented critical mass and thereby reduced the powers of attraction or 'pull' factors of the region. As other cities in the country continue to grow, the critical mass of the Midlands and its pull factors will need **reinforcement** to support indigenous growth and attract investment.

East-West connections are being substantially upgraded under the NDP. There are a number of strategically placed, medium and similar sized towns in this region, which have significant attractions for investment. These attractions include the Institute of Technology in Athlone, the major hospitals in Ballinasloe, Tullamore, Mullingar and Portlaoise and the location on strategic transport corridors of Athlone and Portlaoise.

The strategic approach of the NSS is to improve access to the wide range of attractions in the Midlands so that through the integrated network of towns it will possess the advantages of a dynamic region containing a large city. This will be achieved by the development of Athlone, Mullingar and Tullamore as a linked gateway using their complementary capabilities. To ensure the effectiveness of this new gateway in energising the Midlands, north-south transport links within the region must be strengthened to complement east-west links.

Further south, there are clear economic and other relationships within the South East. Kilkenny has a potential role in conjunction with Waterford City, indicated by the deepening economic relationship between south Kilkenny and Waterford City. Kilkenny has developed highly successful tourism, based on the built heritage of the city, the heritage and scenic attractiveness of other towns and rural parts of the county and improved accessibility to Dublin. These environmental and heritage resources, plus tourism success and the general quality of life in Kilkenny, are yielding dividends in terms of attracting investment.

Wexford too, with its cultural and built heritage, has a pivotal role in the South East, in conjunction with Waterford City, given its importance for its own hinterland and its relationship with Rosslare Port.

Factors such as

- the proposed development of the Waterford to Dublin national primary road under the National Development Plan,
- the N25 connecting Wexford to Cork through Waterford,
- the port facilities at Rosslare, Belview and New Ross,

present an opportunity to promote both Wexford and Kilkenny as hubs, in conjunction with the existing gateway at Waterford. The growth of a Waterford/Wexford/Kilkenny triangle of strength needs to be supported by a co-ordinated and integrated approach that builds on their complementary strengths. Other towns in the South East and in the southern part of the Midlands, with their additional capabilities, also have a role to play.

### 3.3.4 Revitalisation in the West and South West

The research carried out for the NSS into rural and urban trends and economic performance has identified certain areas — primarily along the coast in parts of Cork, Kerry, Clare and Galway — that have been experiencing economic growth and **revitalisation** based on the diversification of an economy previously centred on agriculture. The new growth is linked to the recognition and development of economic potential based on tourism, marine and natural resources and certain types of enterprise development. This is derived ultimately from outstanding natural settings and a quality of life that attracts people with a variety of skills. Certain medium sized towns are playing a particularly important role in attracting people and enterprise to these areas.

This is a process that can be harnessed further in the areas already diversifying and extended to other areas in Mayo, Sligo, Leitrim and Donegal. The critical factor is underpinning the sustainable development of strategically placed medium-sized towns to reinforce dynamic rural economies. These economies will be based on the sustainable use of natural resources such as scenic landscapes for tourism, the sea for fisheries and marine-based aquaculture, the land for agriculture, forestry, inland aquaculture (in rivers and lakes) and renewable energy. Appropriate investment in enterprise and local services will also be required to sustain these economies.

To support the **revitalisation** of areas in the South West, Tralee and Killarney will act as linked hubs. This will capitalise on the combined capacities of both towns, such as those in third-level education, developing links between industry and centres of learning, surface and air transport links and key natural resources such as scenic landscape.

In a similar way, Castlebar and Ballina will act as linked hubs based on their strategic location, the large area that they serve and their relative proximity to Galway and Sligo. Attributes such as the Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology, road and rail infrastructure, access through Knock Airport and a tourism resource based on landscape, natural wilderness, the islands and angling will support this role.

For the linked hubs to function effectively, improved local linkages will be required through road network and bus-based public transport options, improved energy, and telecommunications and all co-ordinated through the integrated planning frameworks discussed in more detail in Section 6.

The process of revitalisation in parts of the South and West coastal areas is supported by the successful development of a number of relatively small towns. Associated with these towns is a growing tourism sector, a lively and attractive small town environment and spin-off employment creation in other enterprises and local services. This process is particularly evident in and around towns such as Clonakilty, Kenmare, Dingle, Clifden and Westport. A factor common to these and similar towns is that their small scale, combined with their attractiveness and setting, has been central to their promotion and development.

To protect the economic vitality of such towns into the future, to their own benefit and that of the wider areas around them, it will be essential to sensitively balance future development options against the need to maintain those attributes that made these towns attractive in the first place. Achieving this balance will be particularly important in the case of residential development, including second homes, retail development and the treatment of their environs, setting and approaches.

### 3.3.5 Co-operating in an All-Island Context

In the past, the border areas have often been perceived to be 'peripheral'. However, within an all-island economic and spatial perspective, a different view emerges of the potential of such areas and how **co-operation** across political boundaries can help to realise this potential.

In border areas, and in a developing all-island economy, there is a renewed emphasis on co-operation for economic advantage between the State and Northern Ireland across a range of activities. The Dublin-Belfast Corridor and the Letterkenny/Derry gateway present two opportunities for large-scale co-operation. Proposals in respect of these have been set out earlier.

With changing circumstances, advantage can also be derived from viewing the central part of the border area as a 'crossroads' between Dublin, Belfast, Derry, the Midlands and other strategic locations such as Sligo. Given its position on the N2 strategic road corridor, its position vis-a-vis towns in Northern Ireland whose cross-border links are strengthening, and opportunities for cross-border tourism, there is a particular role for Monaghan as a hub. This role will complement that of Dundalk as a gateway and will capitalise on Monaghan's midway position on the Dublin-Derry N2 route and its substantial capacity for development.

Cavan will also act as a hub given its central location in the border area, its position on the N3 corridor, its strategic position vis-a-vis a large surrounding mainly rural hinterland and the development dynamic it has sustained in recent years. Cavan's role as a hub will build on its performance as a strategically placed county town as well as its energising role for its wider rural hinterland.

The positions of Dundalk as a gateway, with Monaghan and Cavan as hubs, within the central and eastern parts of the border, close to other towns in Northern Ireland with which economic and transport links are strengthening, will energise the potential arising from increased cross-border **co-operation**. Together these towns will drive the development of the central and eastern parts of the border area in sectors including enterprise, tourism and food as well as encouraging potential new cross-border linkages such as inland waterways.

Cross boundary co-operation in other areas, notably in the South East, arises from the need for effective transportation links to trading partners in the UK, the European Union and world wide. This points to a strategic role for ports along the south-east coast that are connected to the rest of Ireland's transport grid in the form of an enhanced strategic transport corridor. Strengthening the southern sea corridor to the UK and mainland Europe is discussed in Sections 3.4 and 3.5. For the South East, a strengthened southern sea corridor through Wales to the UK Channel ports would present economic opportunities for co-operation, with South Wales in particular, that could include tourism initiatives based on shared elements of historical heritage for example.



## 3.4 Gateways and Hubs – Overall Approach to Identification

This Strategy addresses the contrast between rapid development in the east of the country and slower rates of development in other regions. To redress this imbalance, the Strategy identifies gateways and hubs that have the capacity to support the stronger urban-rural structure needed to drive the development of these other regions.

To promote the strong urban-rural structure needed in the rest of the country to complement development in the east, this Strategy builds on the strengths of the existing gateways within a network of strong cities and towns and their associated hinterlands. Building on these existing strengths, and the need to redress the weaker urban structure to the West and North West, led to the conclusion that a range of gateways and hubs on an arc reaching from Waterford to Derry must become a primary driver of more balanced regional development.

Some of the current characteristics of the new gateways and hubs identified to play key roles in achieving balanced regional development under this Strategy are summarised in Appendix V.

### 3.4.1 Gateways and Hubs – Population Implications

The development of the gateways as national and regional engines of growth and the complementary role of hubs will establish a spatial structure capable over time of changing the development trends described in Section 2.

To assist the local authorities responsible for forward strategic planning in relation to gateways and hubs, the following paragraphs outline possible population scenarios to be taken into account in the exercise of these planning functions. The scenarios take account of the different bases for growth from which the gateways and hubs are starting. On-going monitoring of current population and development trends by regional and local authorities will be needed to provide the basis for more detailed regional and local planning which responds to the pace at which population growth and development is likely to take place over the short to medium term.

#### Gateways

The following table shows the population of each existing gateway and its surrounding catchment in 1996. The table also gives an estimate of these populations in 2002 based on the preliminary census report and shows possible populations for 2020, under both the current demographic trends and economic growth scenarios from which the population projections set out in Section 2 were derived.

Gateway and surrounding catchment	1996 Population	2002 Population	2020 Population Current Trends	2020 Population Economic Growth
GDA	1.4 million	1.535 million <sup>11</sup>	1.938 million	2.2 million
Cork <sup>12</sup>	325,000	350,000	360,000	454,000
Limerick	214,000	236,000	260,000	284,000
Galway	127,000	146,000	181,000	192,000
Waterford	111,000	119,000	138,000	164,000

<sup>11</sup> Actual result based on preliminary report of 2002 census.

<sup>12</sup> Figures for Cork, Limerick, Galway and Waterford relate to city and surrounding catchments as defined in local land use and transport strategies and are therefore greater than figures for cities and suburbs alone. These catchments were defined as areas within which significant numbers of persons journeyed to the city in question for work from surrounding areas. In the cases of Cork, Limerick and Galway, the catchments include Mallow, Ennis and Tuam respectively.

In relation to the new gateways

- Letterkenny and its environs had a population of around 12,000 persons in 1996 which rose to an estimated 14,100 in 2002. Derry's population in 2001 was estimated at 85,000 persons.
- Sligo and its environs had a population of 18,509 in 1996 which rose to an estimated 19,400 persons in 2002.
- Dundalk and its environs had a population of 30,200 persons in 1996 which rose to an estimated 32,300 persons in 2002.
- Athlone, Mullingar and Tullamore and their environs, had populations in 1996 of 15,500, 12,500 and 10,000 respectively in 1996. These rose to an estimated 16,400, 15,500 and 11,100 persons in 2002, giving them a combined current population of 43,000 persons.

Taking account of the differing present populations of the new gateways and differing local circumstances, e.g. location and population of surrounding areas, these new gateways will grow at different rates and to different levels depending on the population and economic base they are working from.

Given the existing and potential performance and growth of the existing gateways as drivers of development in their regions and in the national economy, it is clear the new gateways identified in the NSS will also need to grow substantially if they are to play a similar role. In essence, the new gateways over the years to 2020 and beyond need to grow to the current population levels of cities such as Waterford or Galway.

## Hubs

The hubs identified in this Strategy differ substantially in terms of their current size, location and development context. Some are strong county towns, others are large towns closely linked to nearby gateways. Taking into account the differing present populations of the hubs as well as differing local circumstances, the hubs will also grow at different rates and to different levels depending on their present population and their wider spatial context.

### Present Populations

- The populations of Ballina and Castlebar were 8,800 and 8,500 respectively in 1996 rising to an estimated 9,300 and 10,100 persons respectively in 2002
- The population of Cavan was around 5,600 in 1996 rising to an estimated 6,000 in 2002
- The population of Ennis was 17,700 in 1996 rising to an estimated 21,800 in 2002
- The population of Kilkenny was 18,700 in 1996 rising to an estimated 20,600 in 2002
- The population of Mallow was 7,800 in 1996 rising to an estimated 9,800 persons in 2002. The Cork Area Strategic Plan envisages a population of around 17,000 for Mallow by 2016
- The population of Monaghan was around 5,800 in 1996 rising to an estimated 7,000 persons in 2002
- The populations of Tralee and Killarney were around 20,000 and 12,000 respectively in 1996, rising to an estimated 25,800 and 16,000 respectively in 2002
- The population of Tuam was around 5,600 in 1996 rising to an estimated 7,200 in 2002. The draft Galway Planning and Transportation Study envisages a population in Tuam of up to 13,000 by 2016
- The population of Wexford was around 15,900 persons in 1996 rising to an estimated 20,000 persons in 2002.

In terms of their current populations, the hubs fall into two broad categories

- Towns with a population considerably less than 10,000, i.e Cavan, Monaghan and Tuam
- Towns with a population close to 10,000 ranging up to 25,000, as is the case with the other hubs.

Looking to the period to 2020 and beyond the hubs will need to grow substantially. The size of the hubs as they grow, will, however, vary by virtue of the population base they start from in 2002, their potential for development and their spatial context. To act in their roles as hubs and taking account of local circumstances, towns which are as of now substantially below 10,000 would need to grow to a population range of 15,000 – 20,000 persons in the years to 2020 and beyond. Hubs or linked hubs already at or above 10,000 would need to grow to a population of 30,000 persons or more in the years to 2020 and beyond.

It should be noted that the suggested population levels for gateways and hubs are indications of the levels to which these will need to grow to fulfil the functions envisaged for them under this Strategy. The rate at which growth can actually take place will vary depending on a wide range of factors relating to economic and population growth and local circumstances. The indicative population levels will not necessarily be attained therefore in the period up to 2020 covered by this Strategy and may not happen for a considerable period after that.

In terms of the future growth in the population of gateways and hubs and ongoing development requirements, it will be vital that the provision of key services is linked to current development trends. However, it will also be necessary to ensure that appropriate local strategies are in place to take account of the ultimate population horizons for the gateways and hubs.

## 3.5 Spatial Policies for Rural Areas

Under the 1999 White Paper on Rural Development, the Government is committed to ‘ensuring the economic and social well-being of rural communities, by providing the conditions for a meaningful and fulfilling life for all people living in rural areas’.<sup>13</sup>

As acknowledged in the White Paper, urban and rural areas are intrinsically interdependent due to complex flows of people and services and the growing international trend of cities and towns in or near more rural parts of a country playing important roles in the development of rural areas. It follows that the strong, spatially balanced urban structure described in the previous section, must now be matched by specific strategies for rural areas and strengthened rural communities.

This Strategy sets out in broad terms how rural areas will support and drive the attainment of more balanced regional development. This will assist the development of strategies complementary to the NSS at regional and local level.

There are two aspects to this

- defining important policy areas
- identifying different types of rural areas and the need for differing responses appropriate to local circumstances.

### 3.5.1 Strengthening the Rural Economy

Traditional rural based sectors of employment in agriculture, forestry and fishing will continue to have key roles as a base for strong and diversified rural economies. Efficient agricultural, marine and natural resource sectors, together with significant and developing sectors such as tourism, enterprise, local services and other sources of off-farm employment, will be the mainstays of a strong rural economy. However the mix and concentration in any one of these sectors will vary according to the potential of different places. This calls for tailored responses to the particular issues in various types of places.

<sup>13</sup> *Ensuring the Future – A Strategy for Rural Development in Ireland: A White Paper on Rural Development* (Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, August 1999), p. vi.

It will be necessary to

*Secure agriculture*, where it has the capacity to remain strong and viable, by maintaining the maximum possible number of family farms, while at the same time ensuring that smaller farmers have the opportunity to supplement their farm income through off-farm work.

*Diversify rural employment* options and stabilise population through

- *resource based development* in sectors such as forestry, marine and natural resources, enterprise and local services
- *tourism development* through quality market-responsive products, enhanced access and co-ordinated promotion of a tourism product, which offers a range of complementary visitor experiences
- *protecting* landscape, water resources and habitats.

Rural areas with particular *cultural identities*, associated for instance with language as in the case of the Gaeltacht, or the islands and other areas of significant cultural heritage, can act as magnets for people and for certain types and levels of investment. These cultural identities can make a significant contribution therefore to underpinning the rural economy, stabilising populations and strengthening communities. Conservation of identity needs to be considered in ways that allow development to take place, while at the same time protecting the area's heritage resources. The Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, in conjunction with Údarás Na Gaeltachta, the Western Development Commission and local authorities will continue to play an important role in strengthening infrastructure and promoting enterprise in Gaeltacht areas.

### 3.5.2 Strengthening Communities

In 1996, 42% of the State's population resided in rural areas i.e. outside urban areas of 1,500 or more people. The proportion of people living in rural areas has been declining, particularly where agriculturally based employment is contracting and where critical mass is too weak to attract or support alternative sources of employment. The strength and integrity of many rural communities is under stress as a result. New approaches to underpin the future vitality of rural communities are essential.

If Ireland is to retain a substantial proportion of its population in rural areas, vibrant, living communities and the services they require will need to be supported. Ways have to be sought in which these communities can be secured and strengthened. Two main types of responses are proposed.

*Settlement policies* are needed that take into account varying rural development contexts. Policies are needed for areas with declining populations as well as policies to deal with areas in which there are overspill issues associated with proximity to urban centres. Additional guidance on this issue is set out in Section 5.3.

*Enhanced accessibility* must be linked with integrated settlement policy to revitalise rural communities.

### 3.5.3 Strengthening Environmental Qualities

Rural areas contain some of the most important national resources in terms of the natural environment and landscape as well as highly important elements of natural heritage. The sensitive development and conservation of these resources and heritage is essential to the underpinning of strengthened rural economies and the national economy itself. The resources include:

- *agricultural land* for high quality food production
- *water resources* of high quality, in rivers and lakes, in groundwater and off shore
- *forestry*, which yields economically valuable timber and timber products, and which also makes a contribution to reducing global warming
- a world-renowned *landscape*, the attractiveness and integrity of which are central to Ireland's tourism industry.

### 3.5.4 Types of Rural Areas

Box 3.1 describes five broad rural area types and suggests a range of policy responses to be developed in more detail at regional and local levels. See also Figure 3.1 which illustrates indicatively the location of the five area types.

Policy responses for rural areas in relation to housing, economic development and the environment are set out in Section 5.

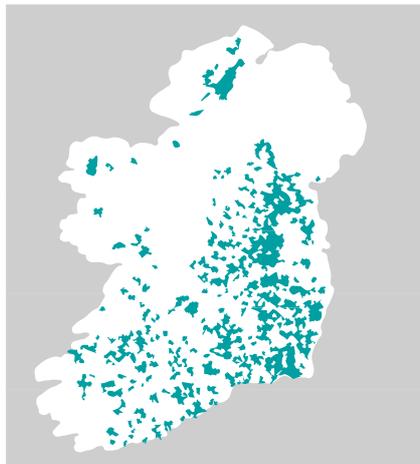
The State's response to the process of economic restructuring in rural areas is multi-faceted. It embraces investment programmes such as the NDP, as well as specific, targeted mechanisms to promote development or encourage investment, such as the CLAR programme and the Upper Shannon Renewal Scheme.

Given the multi-faceted nature of the State's response to rural restructuring, local authorities and local development agencies need to develop spatial frameworks for rural areas, which allow for targeting to ensure that the range of development programmes available are co-ordinated to maximise benefits. Examples of these programmes include urban and village renewal schemes, water services infrastructure programmes and measures to strengthen the tourism sector. Focusing and co-ordinating these different programmes will increase the resulting benefits.

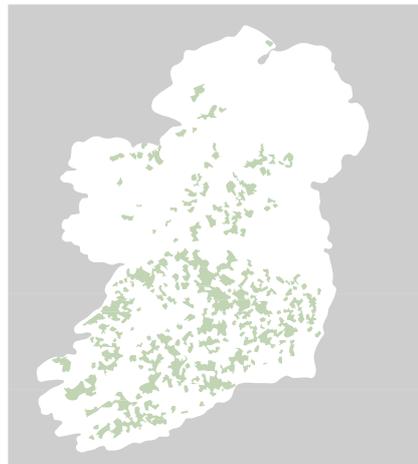
#### Box 3.1 Rural Area Types and Policy Responses

Rural Area Type and Description	Rural Area Policy Responses
<p><b>(1) Areas that are Strong</b>  <i>Mainly in the South and East where agriculture will remain strong, but where pressure for development is high and some rural settlements are under stress.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support agriculture by maintaining the integrity of viable farming areas.</li> <li>• Strengthen rural villages and small towns by making them attractive to residential and employment-related development.</li> <li>• Reduce urban sprawl through a renewed emphasis on appropriate in-fill development.</li> </ul>
<p><b>(2) Areas that are Changing</b>  <i>Including many parts of the Midlands, the Border, the South and West where population and agricultural employment have started to decline and where replacement employment is required.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support communities where the viability of agriculture is under stress through promoting diversification in enterprise, local services and tourism.</li> </ul>
<p><b>(3) Areas that are Weak</b>  <i>Including more western parts of the Midlands, certain parts of the Border and mainly inland areas in the West, where population decline has been significant.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build up rural communities through spatially targeted and integrated measures.</li> <li>• Develop new rural tourism resources such as inland waterways.</li> </ul>
<p><b>(4) Areas that are Remote</b>  <i>Including parts of the west coast and the islands.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote marine and natural resource based development.</li> <li>• Overcome distance barriers with the support of technology.</li> </ul>
<p><b>(5) Areas that are Culturally Distinct</b>  <i>Including parts of the west coast and the Gaeltacht which have a distinctive cultural heritage.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhance accessibility.</li> <li>• Strengthen existing settlements.</li> <li>• Conserve cultural identity.</li> </ul>

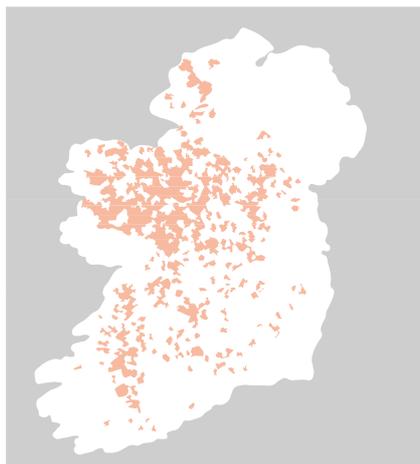
## Figure 3.1 Rural Area Types



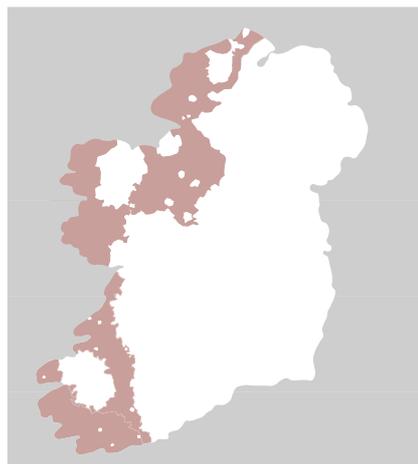
1. Areas that are Strong



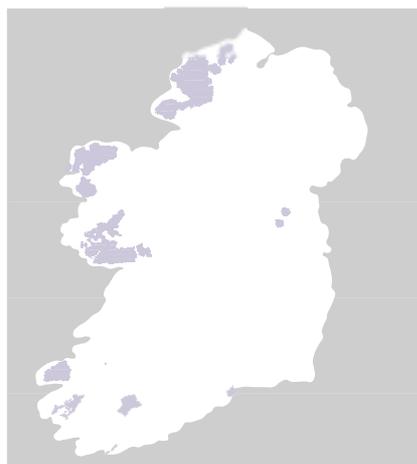
2. Areas that are Changing



3. Areas that are Weak



4. Areas that are Remote



5. Areas that are Culturally Distinctive

## 3.6 Summary of Strategic National Roles

The strategic roles which cities, towns, villages, communities and rural areas will have in delivering a more spatially balanced Ireland can be summarised as follows

- **consolidating** the Greater Dublin Area
- **strengthening** the South, South East, West and North West to complement Dublin
- **revitalising** the West and South West
- **reinforcing** central parts of Ireland and the South East
- **co-operating** in an all-island context.

### Box 3.2 Consolidating: Key Considerations

- Effective integration of land use and transportation policy within the spatial structure of the Greater Dublin Area.
- Facilitating the national roles of Dublin Airport and Dublin Port.
- Supporting the city region's capacity for innovation.
- Facilitating ease of movement of people and goods within the Greater Dublin Area.
- Maintaining a high quality environment within the area.
- Clarifying the role of other urban areas within and at or near the edges of the Greater Dublin Area.

### Box 3.3 Strengthening: Key Considerations

- Implementation of the planning, land-use and transportation strategy which has been adopted for the development of the designated gateway, Cork.
- Preparation, adoption and implementation of appropriate strategies for the other three designated gateways, Galway, Limerick and Waterford.
- Exploiting opportunities for the Cork, Galway, Limerick and Waterford gateways to be better linked to act together to provide a critical mass that balances that of Dublin.
- Sligo and Letterkenny/Derry acting as gateways.
- Mallow, Ennis and Tuam acting as hubs in association with Cork, Limerick and Galway respectively.

### Box 3.4 Revitalising: Key Considerations

- Exploiting opportunities to realise the potential of medium-sized towns as hubs, i.e. Tralee/Killarney and Castlebar/Ballina.
- Improvement of transportation, communication and energy links to the rest of the country, especially to and from nearby gateways.
- Enhancing access to social and other services and improving quality of life.
- Establishing a spatial framework for the development and conservation of key marine and natural resources that underpin economic and quality of life attractions.

## Box 3.5 Reinforcing: Key Considerations

- Creation of the critical mass necessary to enhance the powers of attraction of the Midlands linked gateway (Athlone-Mullingar-Tullamore).
- Improved collaboration and joint promotion of towns.
- Capitalising on the advantages of the Midlands in terms of its central location.

## Box 3.6 Co-operating: Key Considerations

- Supporting the development of the all-island economic and spatial context by improved north-south interaction, with towns such as Dundalk, Cavan, Monaghan, Sligo and Letterkenny performing enhanced spatial roles to deliver this.
- Capitalising on the emerging role of central parts of the border area as a 'crossroads' between centres of strength north and south of the border.
- Shared environmental and cultural heritage, such as landscape and inland waterways, with potential to support economic development in sectors such as tourism.

Maps 1 and 2 show the location of the gateways and hubs. They illustrate the relationships between the gateways and hubs and the strategic spatial roles mentioned. Identifying the strategic spatial roles of various parts of the country has the added value of

- (1) underlining the spatial aims that areas share in regional policy terms
- (2) illustrating how different urban and rural parts of the country will relate to particular centres of strength and critical mass.

The above boxes summarise key considerations in spatial policy as they apply to the different strategic spatial roles.

## 3.7 Key Infrastructure

Achieving spatial balance by developing the potential of areas will depend on enhancing capacity for the movement of people, goods, energy and information between different places. Improvements in terms of time and cost, can reduce the disadvantages of distance.

Physical networks of infrastructure such as roads, public transport, energy and communications are of particular relevance to the NSS, since they themselves have a spatial impact and also influence the location, timing and extent of development.

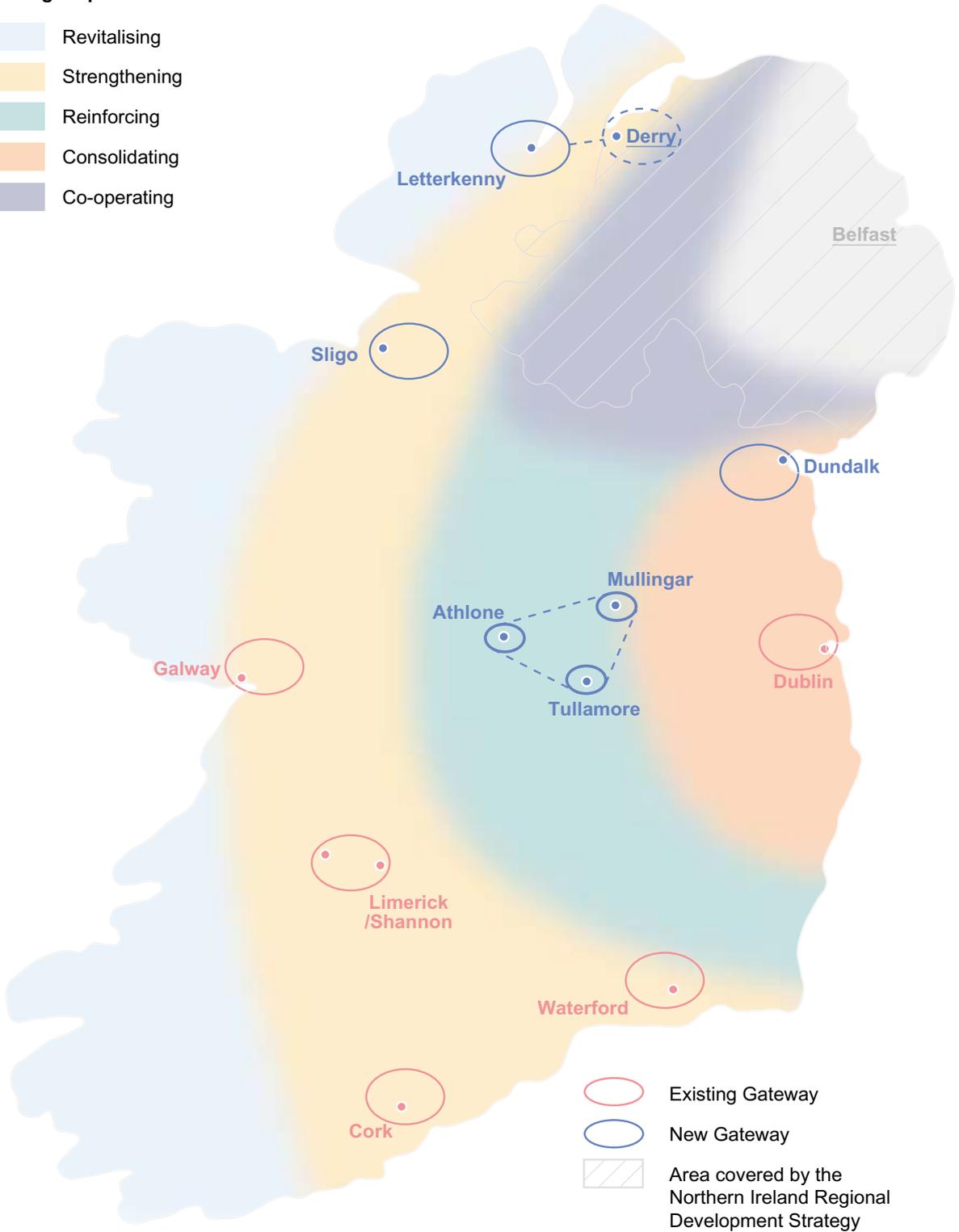
Other economic infrastructure, such as water services and waste, and social infrastructure, such as schools and hospitals, relate to particular locations and are also needed to support balanced regional development. Waste management is a particular current priority. Efficient, effective and cost competitive waste management facilities are essential if industrial and enterprise activity is to thrive and develop in a balanced way across Ireland.

A feature of the most mature and successful economies is that they possess highly developed, well-integrated infrastructure that supports movement, i.e. public and private transport, and energy and communications networks. This infrastructure converges at strategic points to drive dynamic and sustainable development.

# Map 1 Gateways

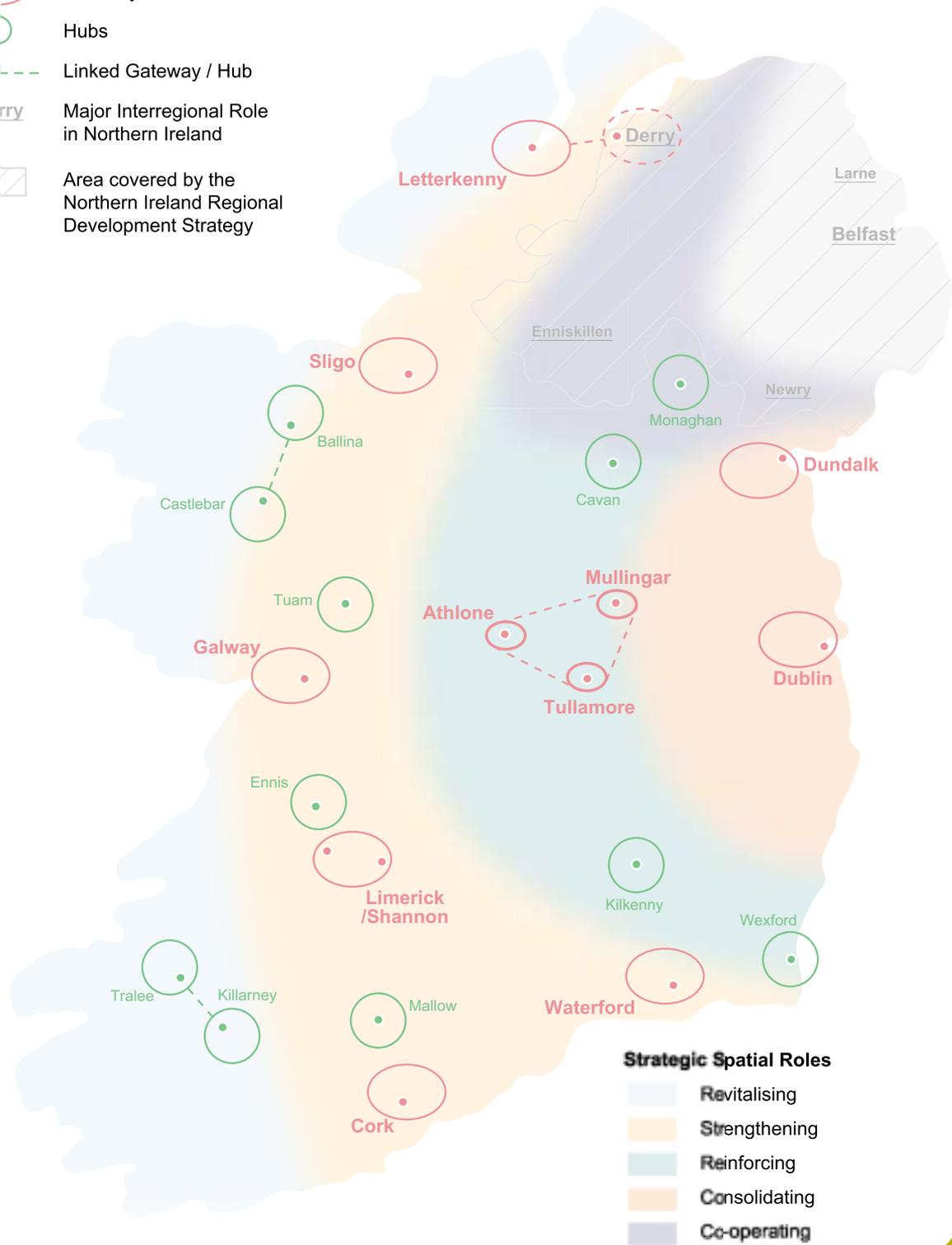
## Strategic Spatial Roles

- Revitalising
- Strengthening
- Reinforcing
- Consolidating
- Co-operating



# Map 2 Gateways & Hubs

-  Gateways
-  Hubs
-  Linked Gateway / Hub
- Derry Major Interregional Role in Northern Ireland
-  Area covered by the Northern Ireland Regional Development Strategy



However, these integrated networks of transport, energy and communications have developed gradually over time. The objective for Ireland is to build on the substantial progress already made and establish frameworks for the development of enhanced transport, energy and communications networks over the next twenty years, bearing in mind that these networks will be serving the country over the decades beyond 2020. These frameworks should remain responsive to the changing geography of Ireland in developmental terms. In the case of transport, this can be assisted by, for example, retaining alignments, such as disused rail lines, for possible future use. It can also be supported by keeping open for consideration, strategic investments warranted by new development patterns, population growth and other national considerations.

Prevailing macro-economic and budgetary conditions will influence the rate at which progress is made in delivering these networks. Strategic planning and co-ordination of both state and private sector infrastructure will be essential to underpin the effectiveness of any initiatives to deliver elements of the different networks. These considerations apply to national programmes, the plans of individual state agencies and those of the private sector.

Networks of physical infrastructure have three key elements

- transport – including roads, public transport (rail and bus), air and sea
- energy – including electricity and gas transmission/distribution
- communications – including broadband access and telecommunications generally.

### 3.7.1 Transport

To support balanced regional development, Ireland's transport networks must

- build on Ireland's radial transport system of main roads and rail lines connecting Dublin to other regions, by developing an improved mesh or network of roads and public transport services
- ensure, through building up the capacity and effectiveness of Ireland's public transport networks, that increases in energy demand and emissions of CO<sub>2</sub> arising from the demand for movement are minimised
- allow internal transport networks to enhance international access to all parts of the country, by facilitating effective interchange possibilities between the national transport network and international airports and sea ports.
- address congestion in major urban areas by increasing the use of public transport.

Decisions on land use and development must take account of the existing public transport networks or support the emergence and development of new or augmented networks.

In summary, Ireland's future transport network can be viewed in terms of

- **strategic radial corridors**
- **strategic linking corridors**
- **strategic international access points.**

Map 3 illustrates the corridors and access points described below. It is important to emphasise that these corridors and their descriptions are strategic and conceptual in character. The details of infrastructure development will flow from sectoral strategies guided by the provisions of the NSS.

#### Strategic Radial Corridors

**Corridor to the North** – good quality road and public transport connections between Dublin and Belfast and international access through ports and airports, and onwards to other parts of the island through the corridors listed below.

**Corridor to the South West** – good quality road and public transport connections between Dublin and Cork, improved road access to Cork Port and Airport.

**Corridor to the Mid West** – good quality road and public transport connections between Dublin and Limerick (including access to Shannon Airport) and to the Shannon Estuary Ports.

**Corridors to the North West (x2)** – good quality road and public transport connections between Dublin and Derry, Letterkenny and the North West and improved rail services between Dublin and Derry (via the Dublin-Belfast line).

**Corridors to the West (x3)** – good quality road and public transport connections between Dublin, Galway, Mayo and Sligo.

**Corridors to the South East (x2)** – good quality road and public transport connections between Dublin and the South East, including Waterford City as gateway for the region.

## Linking Corridors

**Western Corridor** – providing for improved road and Dublin transport connections between gateways and hubs from Cork to Derry (via Limerick, Galway and Sligo) and particularly between Cork and Galway (via Limerick).

**Southern and South Eastern International Access** – providing international access by sea and air for gateways and hubs and other areas along the western arc. This includes utilising Shannon Airport, Cork Airport, the Shannon Estuary, Southern and South Eastern Ports combined with good quality access to these ports and airports by appropriate road and public transport links.

**North Western International Access** – providing road access internationally to and from gateways, hubs and other areas in the vicinity of the Border.

**Central Spine** – linking the east/west radial transport corridors by road and bus-based public transport through the Midlands, on a north/south axis through Dundalk, Athlone/Mullingar/Tullamore, Portlaoise to Rosslare. This will offer more direct access to ports such as Drogheda, Belview and Rosslare. It will also enhance connections between gateways and different regions reducing the necessity for transit through Dublin (e.g. the journey by road from Belfast to Cork). It will also improve connections between urban centres in the Midlands and facilitate the combining of their strengths.

Map 3 indicates how Ireland's spatial structure, including the gateways and hubs, will be supported by the strategic transport framework. The gateways and hubs are located at strategic points in the transportation framework.

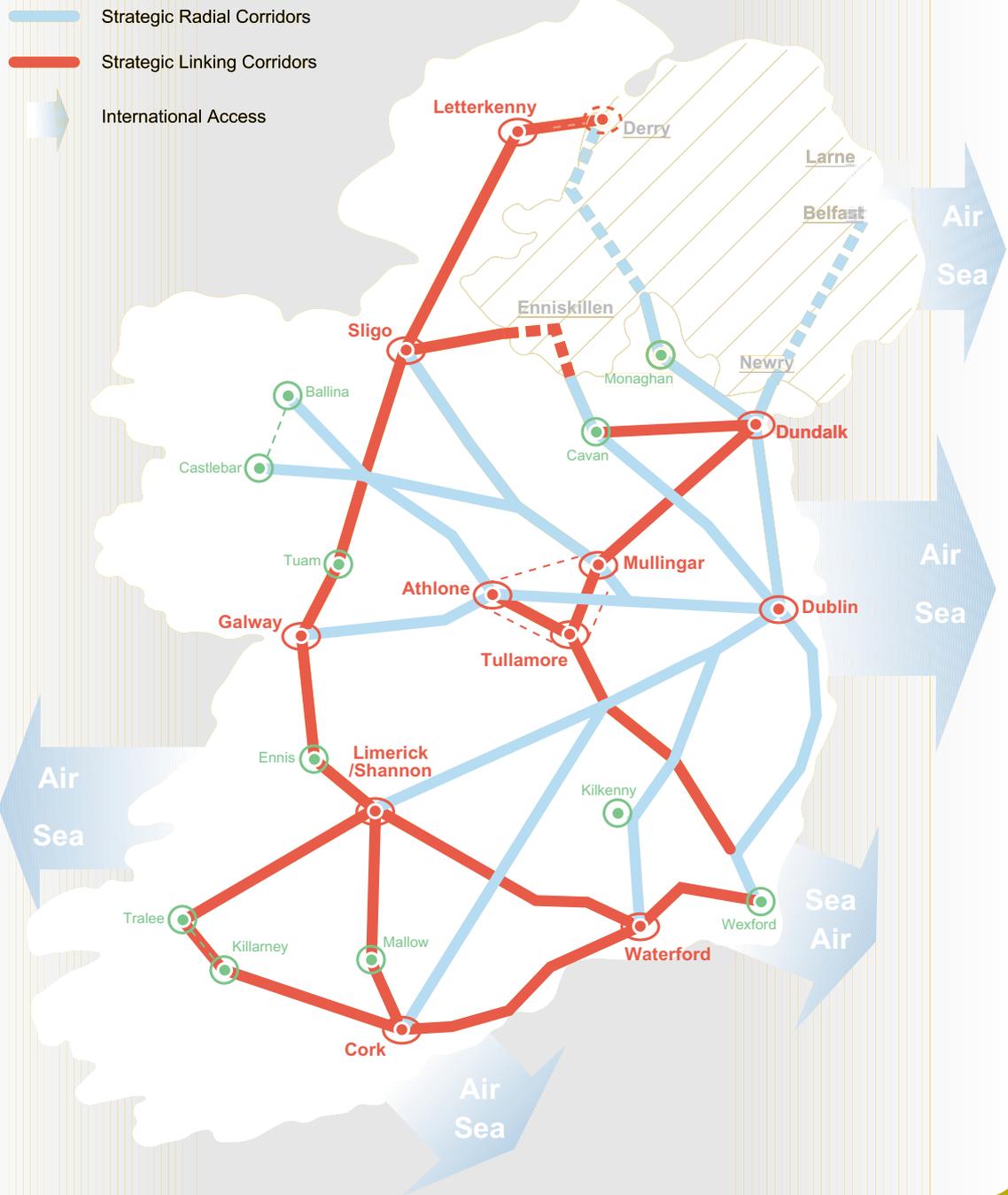
In addition to that, Portlaoise is located near the intersection of the Dublin-Cork/Limerick (N7/N8) roads, the cross-country Mayo/Athlone/Rosslare (N80) road and three strategic rail corridors. This suggests a role for Portlaoise as a key national transport node with the capacity to develop related economic and logistics activities. Wexford also occupies a strategic location where transport corridors from various parts of the country converge on the short sea crossing to the UK as well as to links by sea to the continent. This suggests a role for Wexford as a key national transport node with related supporting activities.

The implications of the strategic transport framework for the different transport modes are

### Roads network

- Implementation of the road investment programme under the NDP is a key element in enhancing regional accessibility and thereby underpinning better regional development
- Achieving more spatially balanced patterns of development suggests that improved interaction between the gateways will be required, through enhanced road links between particular cities and towns, with a primary initial focus on Cork, Galway, Limerick and Waterford
- Regional roads will play a key role in linking the main national transport corridors to wider rural areas and smaller towns and villages within these areas and will need to be supported in this role
- Improvement will be needed in the quality of connections between cities and towns which are developing as linked-centre gateways or development hubs

# Map 3 National Transport Framework



### Public transport network

- It will be important to ensure that rail continues to offer realistic alternatives to road travel on the key inter-city routes — Dublin-Belfast and Dublin-Cork/Galway/Limerick/Waterford.
- Better interconnection between Cork and Galway (via Limerick) would facilitate ease of interaction and enhancement of critical mass
- Services to other gateways and hubs should be enhanced
- Cities and large towns, particularly the gateways and hubs, require well-developed and effective internal public transport networks. Outside the Greater Dublin Area, bus services will be the principal means of providing such networks. However if it is to provide an attractive and viable alternative to private car commuting, public transport must be supported by effective, on-street bus priority measures, appropriate demand management measures and complementary land use policy and practice
- Encouraging the development of strong towns and villages will enhance the viability of rural public transport options such as local bus networks. Rural transport policy is being developed by the Department of Transport, with the support of other Departments and the Public Transport Partnership Forum
- New arrangements for the procurement and regulation of bus services outside the Greater Dublin Area will be decided following the completion of consultations on the consultancy study, *Regulation of Bus Services outside the Greater Dublin Area*.

### Goods transport

- Adopting a new approach to freight transport and goods distribution based on planning that takes into account the way in which the various links, such as road, rail and ports in the goods supply chain are interdependent
- Implementing effective goods distribution strategies in major urban areas
- Determining the future role of rail freight in the Irish economy in the light of the Strategic Rail Review.

## International Access

For Ireland to have a globally competitive but regionally integrated economy, effective connections to the world are vital. Ireland needs good

- national and regional airports and associated air services
- sea ports and associated shipping services.

The economies of scale needed to support effective international access require a focused approach. This will support access from the regions, by ensuring that connections to and interchanges at nationally strategic access points are quick, straightforward and reliable.

In relation to air access, a critical mass of population is required within an airport's catchment to support a range of services to and from a wide choice of destinations. A number of key points arise from this.

In Ireland, Dublin Airport serves the city, region and country and offers the greatest number of international connections. It has direct links to nearly all of the main cities in Europe and a limited number of key routes to the United States. In 2001 a total of seventy airlines served 122 international destinations from Dublin Airport. Expanding the level of services available from Dublin Airport to an even wider range of destinations is essential in the interests of underpinning Ireland's future international competitiveness. However, in a liberalised aviation market, route planning decisions of airlines depend primarily on the anticipated level of demand. The national and regional benefits of expanded services from Dublin Airport can be enhanced through improved connections with (i) the integrated public transport network proposed by the Dublin Transportation Office in *A Platform for Change*, (ii) the national roads network and (iii) regional airports.

Shannon and Cork airports are strategically located, close to significant population bases and serve particular functions. These airports will continue to have an important role in the future by facilitating linkages to as many commercially viable international destinations as possible, as well as linkages to Dublin. In the case of each of these airports, expanding its range of air services will also require an enhancement of the population base they serve. This will also require effective public and private transport connections, in order to bring additional large centres of population within approximately one hour's travel time or less of the airport.

While recognising the transatlantic role of Shannon Airport, its strategic location between Limerick and Galway also suggests an enhanced role for it in serving a wide catchment in the West with a growing population base, through new, commercially viable services to the UK and mainland Europe. This will require improved access to the airport, particularly in public transport terms, through measures such as reducing the travel time from Galway to Shannon. These measures also include consideration by the Strategic Rail Review of the potential for linking Shannon, through the national rail network, to cities such as Cork, Limerick, Galway and Waterford.

Some regional airports have limited direct international connections on a commercial basis, some have links to Dublin Airport in a 'hub and spoke' arrangement, or offer local access in remoter areas for passengers and airfreight.

For sea access, transit between Ireland and other countries passes principally through four main bands of routes which contain one or more ports. These are

- the *Central* band – to and from Dublin/Dun Laoghaire/Drogheda
- the *Northern* band – to and from Belfast/Larne/Warrenpoint/Greenore/Derry
- the *Southern/South Eastern* band – to and from Cork/Waterford/New Ross and Rosslare
- the *Western* band – to and from the Shannon Estuary and Galway.

(See Map 3)

The spatial structure outlined in the NSS raises a number of key points in relation to the future roles of these bands and their ports.

Dublin Port is vital to the national economy and that of Dublin itself and adjoining regions. However the port faces a shortage of capacity, giving rise to its need for more land to accommodate its expanding activities. A possible solution to this, in the medium to longer term, and of benefit to both the port itself and the city, might lie in promoting alternative locations for some current and future Dublin port activities, such as the transit and storage of petrochemicals, bulk goods and cars. More port business to and from various parts of the country through other nationally strategic ports could be encouraged. This may in some cases require substantial investment in facilities at alternative ports.

Developing shipping facilities additional to those at Dublin Port will need to be supported by improved access so that transit times and costs are competitive with those available from Dublin. This will encourage shippers to invest in services. The use of the linking corridors set out in the transportation framework would promote the ports in the northern and southern/south-eastern international access bands thus relieving congestion at Dublin Port.

The export-oriented nature of the Irish economy is highly dependent on effective access to foreign markets. Therefore it is important to maintain a wider international perspective in order to identify critical interventions abroad that would improve Ireland's onward connections and thus reduce the time and cost of moving people and goods between Ireland and the EU. Initiatives in this regard will be undertaken through trans-national collaboration within the EU context.

A priority already apparent is the need for up-grading of alternative corridor links to and through Great Britain and to the European mainland in order to avoid the congestion and bottlenecks on the main corridor link from Ireland to the UK and Europe shown in Figure 2.1.

### 3.7.2 Energy

Reliable and effective energy systems, such as gas and electricity to power industry and services, are key prerequisites for effective regional development. Ireland's electricity and gas networks are evolving in an integrated way, serving the whole island, while focusing on strategic locations.

Prime considerations in terms of spatial policies relating to energy include

- developing energy infrastructure on an all-island basis to the practical and mutual benefit of both the Republic and Northern Ireland
- strengthening energy networks in the West, North West, Border and North Eastern areas in particular
- enhancing both the robustness and choice of energy supplies across the regions, through improvements to the national grids for electricity and gas.

There may also be potential for streamlining infrastructure co-ordination, planning and delivery, for example by combining the provision of different types of infrastructure in one physical corridor, where appropriate and feasible.

#### *Electricity*

National economic growth has led to peak demand for electricity increasing from 2460 megawatts in 1990/1 to 3800 in 2000/1 and this is growing at a rate of between five to six percent per annum.

In addition, the electricity market in Ireland has been opened up to competition under the EU liberalisation programme. This permits new generation plants, which may not be owned by the ESB, to connect to the electricity network – to transport power from wherever it is produced to where there is a demand for it.



The trend of growing demand in a liberalised market environment raises spatial planning issues in relation to

- priorities for reinforcing the transmission and distribution networks
- locations where additional new loads and generation can be accommodated
- good local planning practice.

In relation to the transmission and distribution networks, a major programme of work is underway to reinforce the national grid in order to meet international supply standards and to take account of rising demand. Key elements of this programme to 2007/2008 will be

- upgrading existing lines
- installation and/or upgrading of transformer stations
- new lines.

A particular emphasis is being placed on the reinforcement of the grid in western counties. Accelerated growth in the Border, Midlands and West (BMW) region also suggests that in addition to the above programme, power corridors will need to be considered to augment the capacity of the grid in Galway/Mayo/Sligo and along a corridor from Dublin to Dundalk.

See Fig 3.2 and Fig 3.3

It is vital that this investment programme is integrated with planning policy at regional and local level, particularly through ensuring that the written statements in county and city development plans support the timely commissioning of transmission infrastructure.

In relation to the generation of electricity, expansion of capacity is in hand with two major new plants scheduled to come on stream in the Dublin area by 2002/3. However, there will be a need for significant additional generating capacity in the next few years.. The indications are that the Cork and Limerick City areas represent the most readily suitable points from a grid infrastructure perspective, to accommodate 100 MW new generation capacity. Fig 3.4 shows other areas where new generation capacity can be accommodated in terms of grid capacity.

In relation to the relationship between local planning and electricity network planning, important points to consider include

- the need to address electricity infrastructure in county development and local plans to facilitate national, regional and local economic progress
- the need to liaise with the operators of the transmission and distribution grids, particularly in the environs of towns, to ensure the continued availability of corridors for overhead cables and continuity of supply for existing and new users of electricity.

## Gas

Bord Gais is currently involved in a substantial investment programme designed to augment the existing natural gas transmission network, (which runs between Limerick, Cork, Dublin and Dundalk), with the new 'Pipelines to the West'. This will create a ringmain and will for the first time allow Galway, Ballinasloe, Tullamore, Mullingar and Athlone to be connected to the gas network. Bord Gais is also building a second inter-connector between Ireland and the UK, which will secure sufficient gas supplies to Ireland for the foreseeable future.

Bord Gais has also been licensed in Northern Ireland to construct new pipelines from Belfast to Derry and from Gormanston, County Meath to Antrim. This project will involve grant aid including exchequer support by the Irish Government. The Government also decided in 2001 that in principle, and subject to a more detailed analysis, the gas network should be extended to Letterkenny from Derry and to Sligo via a spur from the Mayo/Galway pipeline, which is planned to connect the Corrib field to the gas network. Figure 3.5 illustrates the gas network in terms of existing and proposed pipelines, excluding local and industry spurs.

Figure 3.2 Electricity Network 2001

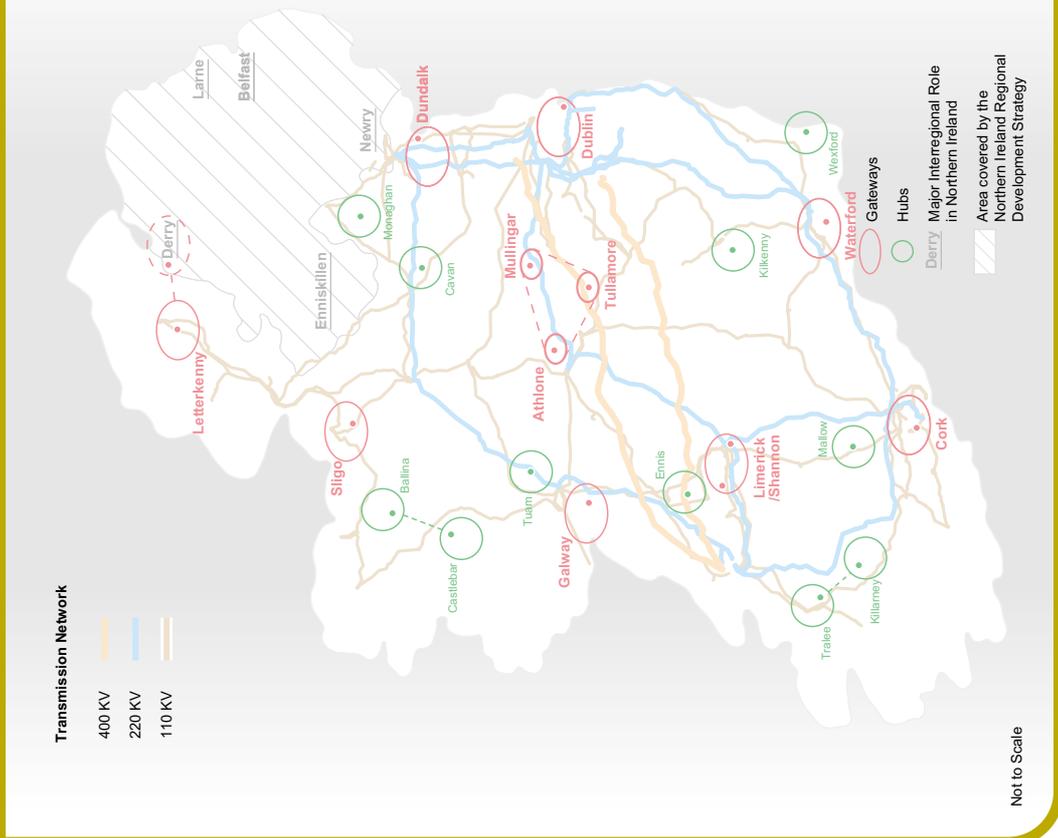
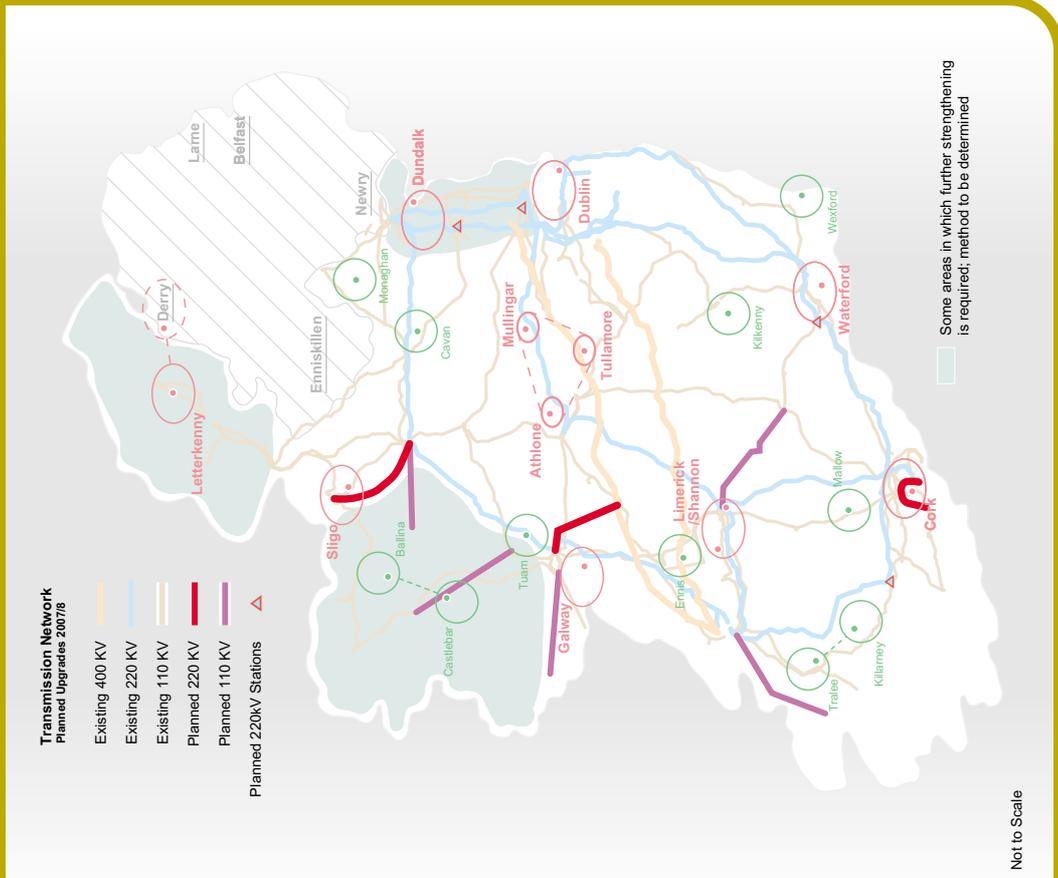


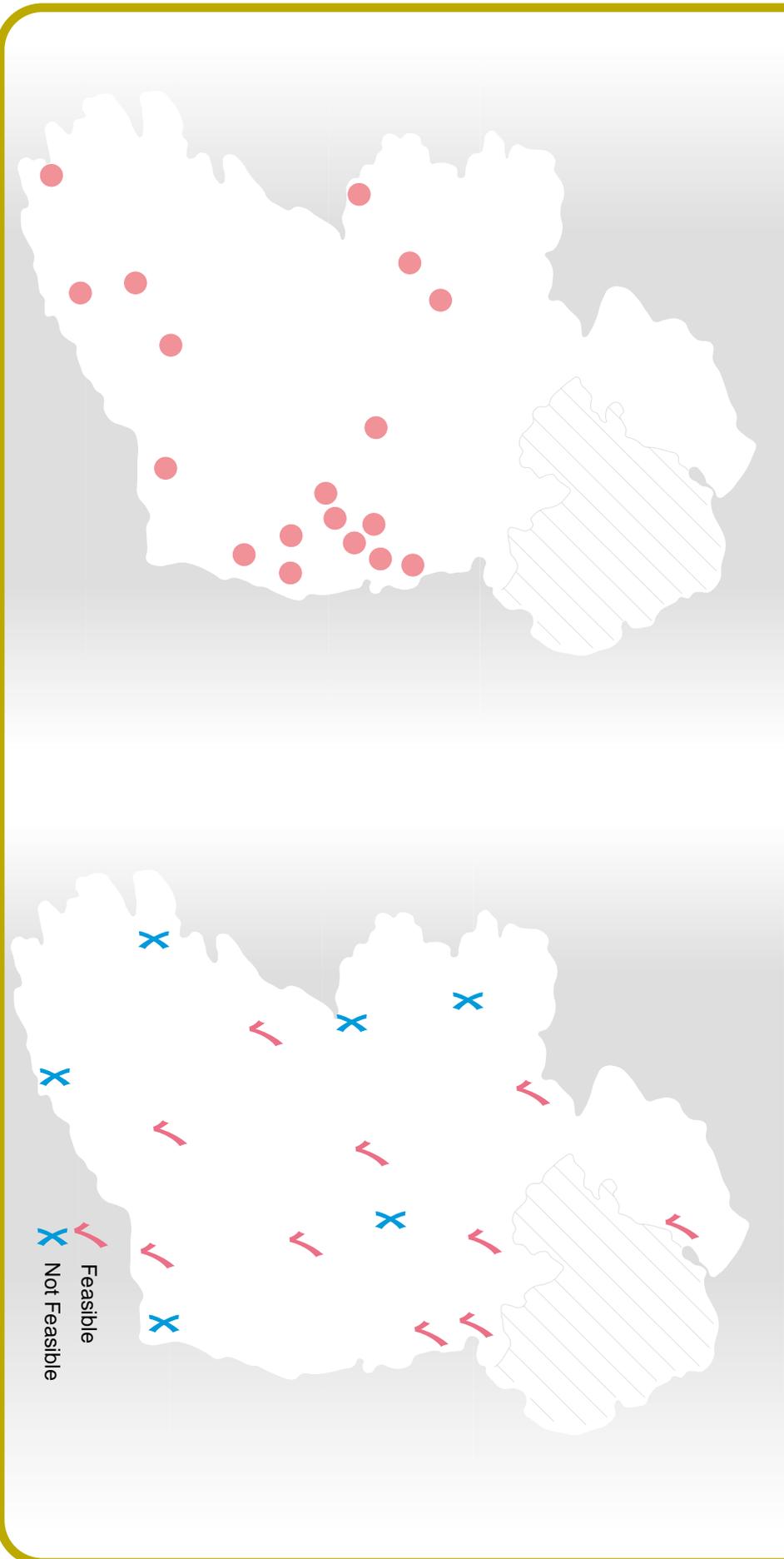
Figure 3.3 Electricity Network Strengthening



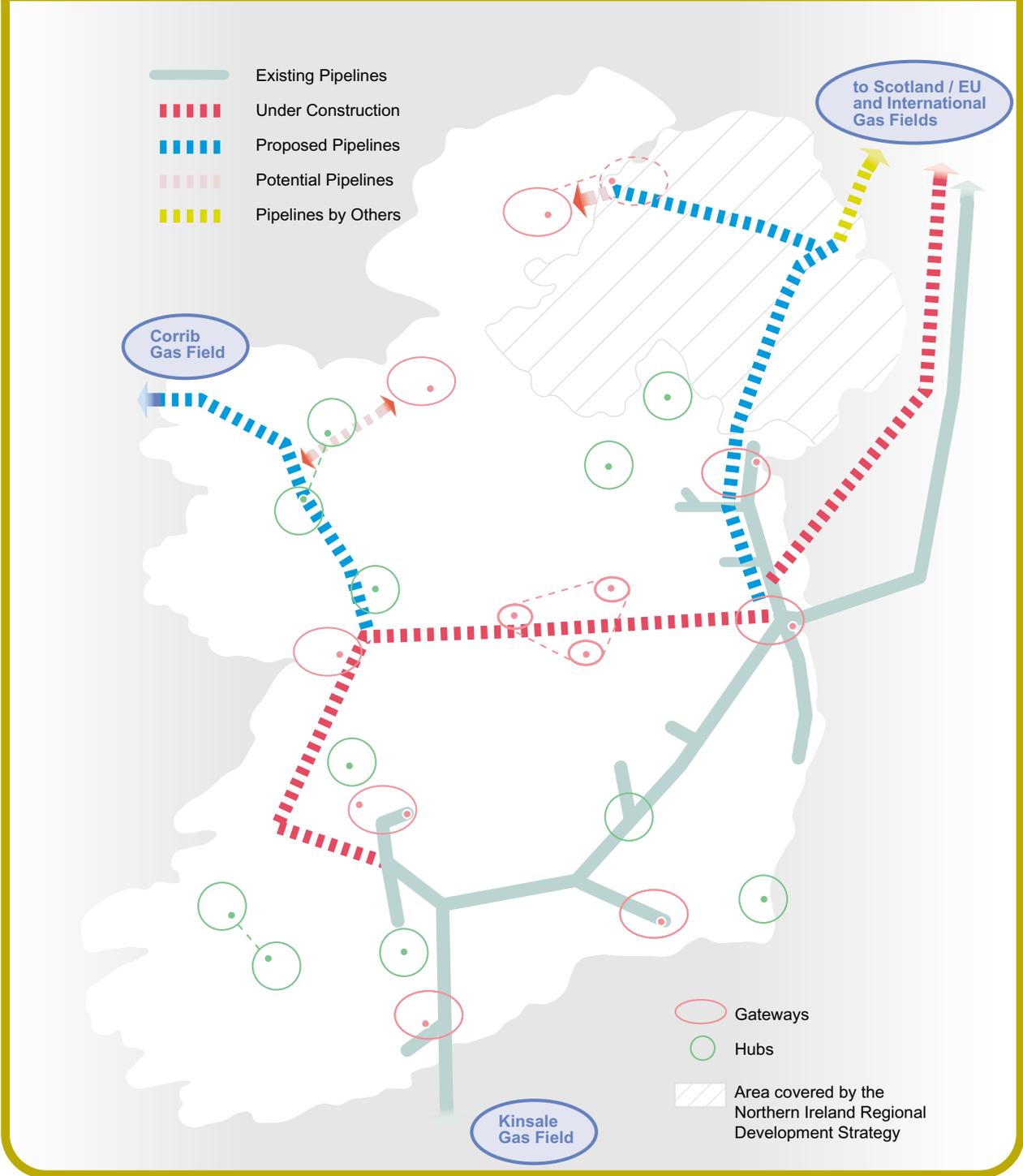
## Figure 3.4 Electricity Improvements & Opportunities

New Interface Stations  
between Transmission and Distribution Systems

Capacity for  
100 MW Generation at 110 KV Stations in 2004/5



# Figure 3.5 Gas Pipelines



The net effect of these planned and envisaged developments is that the spatial framework of gateways, hubs and other elements of the urban-rural structure outlined earlier in this section will, broadly speaking, benefit from an extensive gas pipeline network interconnected with both domestic and international gas supplies.

### 3.7.3 Communications

Opportunities based on the knowledge economy e.g. software development, web hosting, digital media content development, call centres, data processing and storage, on-line working opportunities and design functions, are playing an increasingly important role in the Irish economy. A modern high-speed, low cost communications and broadband network is essential as an enabler of economic activity in this sector and in a range of other arenas. In a liberalised market the primary responsibility for the provision of this infrastructure resides with the private sector communications service providers.

Ireland's communications infrastructure includes international connections that position the country as a bridge between the USA and Europe to which access is available at relatively low cost. Internal high-speed links between the main cities and towns generally follow the road and rail networks radiating from Dublin. Under the National Development Plan measures are in place seeking to engage as many actors as possible, including local and regional authorities and local communities, in enhancing these links. These programmes complement and support the National Spatial Strategy. The provision of low cost, high quality access to broadband and similar technologies will be highly influenced in the future by their combination with other critical elements such as population base, transport facilities, innovation capacity and quality of life.

Effective communications infrastructure will help to attract investment in intellectual and physical capital into regions. However, communications infrastructure on its own will not be sufficient to overcome other major structural weaknesses in a given region. Accordingly, approaches to communications infrastructure should be co-ordinated and timed to reinforce the impact of other infrastructural and social investments. Where possible the rollout of advanced communications infrastructure in the regions needs to be co-ordinated with the rollout of other infrastructure and vice versa.

Since the liberalisation of the telecommunications market telecommunications policy has followed two broad strands. Firstly to develop a fully competitive market to support required investment by the private sector; and secondly to pump prime the required investment through the use of public funds where the required infrastructure and services will not be delivered quickly enough by the market.

It is desirable that affordable 'always-on' broadband infrastructure and services for business and citizens be widely available within three years. To achieve this it will be necessary to promote the utilisation of a range of existing technologies at broadband speeds appropriate to specific categories of service and customer. In particular, more widespread availability of Digital Subscriber Line (DSL) services using existing copper wire networks is required. The Government's objective is that Ireland be in the top 10% of OECD countries in terms of the national and regional broadband connectivity within three years. In the medium term, it is expected that broadband speeds of 5 megabits per second to the home and more than that for business will become minimum standards. It is the Government's objective that Ireland be the first country in Europe to make this level of broadband service widely available.

As already indicated the provision of broadband telecommunications is the responsibility in the first instance, of the private sector. Any State involvement in this area is confined to the provision of seed capital. Actions undertaken to meet the Government's three year objective will ensure that any infrastructure put in place is capable of being upgraded to meet the longer term targets.

## 3.8 Strategic Infrastructure Priorities

The objectives of the Spatial Strategy are dependent on developing strategic centres with enhanced roles and prioritising the provision of various forms of physical and social infrastructure in support of those enhanced roles. To achieve this, targeted policies and supports will be required. A targeted approach has two important benefits

- It offers clarity to the private sector in terms of identifying future development and commercial opportunities, including those involving Private Public Partnerships
- It provides a spatial framework within which public investment programmes can be organised to achieve more balanced regional development.

In certain exceptional circumstances, where the NSS is proposing accelerated regional growth, there may be a category of infrastructure whose provision is particularly critical to supporting the growth of, for example, a new gateway and its associated region.

In such circumstances, it may be necessary to consider, over the 20-year horizon to which the NSS relates, the advance provision of key infrastructure ahead of actual need. This might apply in the following circumstances

- substantial growth is anticipated and a quantum shift is required in providing infrastructure such as energy, communications and transport
- the private sector clearly does not have the capacity to provide the particular infrastructure
- the provision of such infrastructure would strongly support the spatial objectives of the NSS.

Prioritisation of resource provision will also need to take account of experience of the cost effectiveness and value for money aspects of the different modes and types of infrastructure, with an emphasis where appropriate on the role of the private sector in the delivery of infrastructure.

The development of Public Private Partnerships on a value for money basis will be an important option to assist the implementation of the NSS, through the provision of essential infrastructure and quality public services.

Local planning and local strategies will identify particular local investment priorities. The following paragraphs outline strategic infrastructure investment priorities at the national level that flow from the spatial framework set out in the NSS.

### 3.8.1 Transport

*Potential of existing gateways:* In Dublin the *Strategic Planning Guidelines* and *Platform for Change* provide frameworks for spatial development and linked transportation provision, which is in the process of being implemented through the NDP. Similar frameworks have been adopted in Cork and are being developed in Limerick, Waterford and Galway. The implementation of such strategies, particularly in terms of public transport investment, will represent a key step towards enhancement of critical mass and unlocking the potential of these cities and their surrounding areas of influence.

*The radial corridors:* The NDP provides for the completion of the main road inter-urban links. Beyond this the priorities should be

- improved integration of the Letterkenny/Derry Gateway into an all-island transportation framework
- improved access to Sligo that builds on recent investment in road and rail routes
- improved access to Mayo in a manner that ensures effective integration between investment in infrastructure and location of key towns.

*The linking corridors:* To achieve balanced regional development, the existing and proposed gateways will require an improved level of public and private transport connections between them. The priorities in this regard are

- improved connections between Cork, Galway, Limerick and Waterford,
- enhanced North/South road linkages through the Midlands.

*International access:* To ensure Ireland remains effectively linked to international markets, the existing and proposed gateways will require good quality links via nationally strategic ports and airports. The priorities in this regard include

- enhancing the role of Dublin, Cork and Shannon airports as international airports through efficient terminal facilities and effective land-side access by road and public transport
- promoting alternative corridors to ports in Northern Ireland, the Shannon Estuary, on the east coast and in the south east, as an additional option to the central corridor port of Dublin.

### 3.8.2 Energy

The considerations previously outlined see Ireland's future electricity and gas distribution networks integrated on an all-island basis which underpins and drives regional development. Priorities in this regard are

- improving reliability of electricity supply in western, north western, border and north eastern parts of the country through enhanced access to the national grid e.g. securing progress on the proposed national grid link from Galway to Sligo
- strengthening the electricity supply networks to and within the proposed gateways and hubs
- strategic strengthening of the electricity grid serving particular clusters of employment related demand in peripheral areas, e.g. in West Donegal
- better integration between the electricity grid in Northern Ireland and Donegal
- subject to appropriate commercial evaluation, extending the gas network to support the development of the existing and proposed gateways and hubs, including, where necessary, appropriate advance investment to meet anticipated demand arising from planned-for growth in these centres.

### 3.8.3 Communications

The Government's programme to address deficiencies in Regional Broadband Networks takes account of

- the importance of advanced communications infrastructure for an information based society in terms of regional accessibility and as a key support for business, education and research
- the need for clustering of potential customers of information technology infrastructure to provide a basis on which market providers of such infrastructure can respond to demand resulting from effective spatial policies.

The priorities, in line with the NSS are as follows.

Support for 19 local authority-led infrastructure projects and a national PPP-type process to create a management entity to operate these networks. Any extension of the programmes beyond the 19 cases may be considered when the 19 projects have been evaluated and the Government has decided on possible future directions in this area.

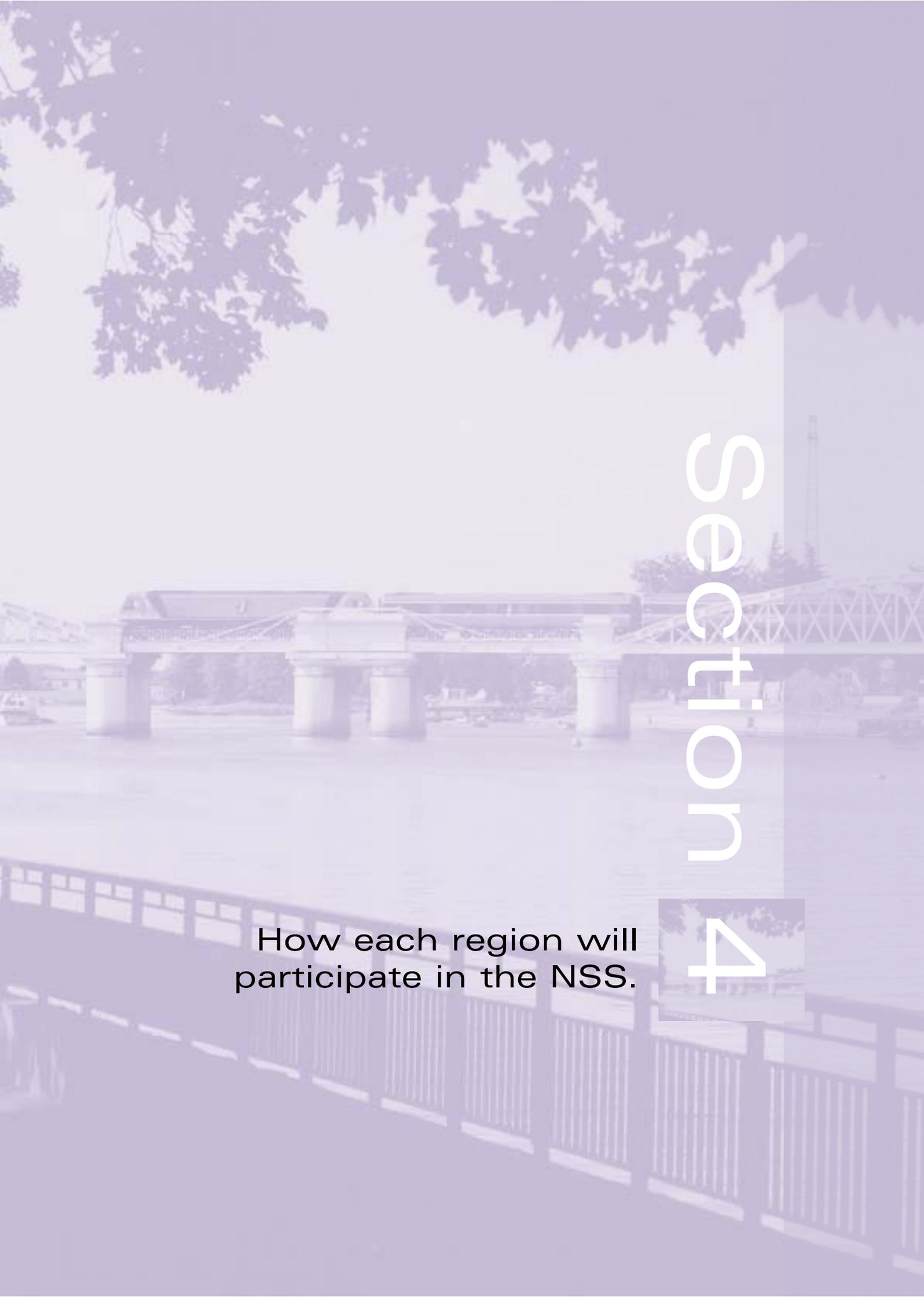
The precise technology investment will depend on local market circumstances and projected demand. The first phase towns and cities will involve a fibre optic network deployment. In many of the towns to be included in subsequent phases fibre optic cable may also be the appropriate solution. Wireless or DSL technologies may be the most appropriate solution in other cases. These networks will be managed on an open-access basis by an operator-neutral Public Private Partnership.

The Government will continue to support investment in the national communications research network with a view to promoting high-speed communications linking all institutes of education and research in the State and connecting them, in turn, to major international research networks.

The Government will also continue with a programme of focussed investment to leverage private sector investment in the deployment of advanced broadband technologies and services in the regions.

It will also be important to ensure that regulation of the communications market works to maximise the incentives for private investment. There is a need to provide a balance of demand and supply side incentives where appropriate, and to focus support on areas

- where private capital will not be displaced
- where the deployment of alternative technologies will not be disincentivised
- where the objectives of the investment can be clearly identified, targeted and delivered.



# Section

# 4

How each region will participate in the NSS.

### Main Points:

- The National Spatial Strategy will be supported by regional planning guidelines, integrated planning frameworks, county and city development plans and strategies, all of which will be aimed at extending the impact of the NSS at regional and local levels.
- This section outlines how the process of balanced regional development will unfold in each region within the national structure set out in the Strategy.
- Balanced regional development will depend on certain critical factors. The regional dimension to the NSS is presented here with particular reference to those factors, plus the roles of county and larger towns, other towns, and rural areas and their relationship with the gateways and hubs.
- The various roles of different urban and rural areas in the eight Regional Authority areas are described.

## 4.1 Introduction

Section 3 sets out at a broad, national level a spatial structure on the basis of which more balanced regional development can be achieved in Ireland. Gateways, hubs, other towns, villages and rural areas all have complementary roles within that structure in achieving the aim of balanced regional development.

To assist this process the regional approach to spatial planning policy to be developed further by regional and local authorities, is now described in summary form.

There are four main messages for the regional approach to spatial planning.

- (1) **Frameworks for spatial planning of cities around the country and their catchments must be developed and implemented.** This involves addressing the planning issues for metropolitan and hinterland areas of cities in an integrated way. Cities and surrounding counties must put in place sustainable and public transport-centred settlement and development strategies within the planning system to support continued progress and competitiveness into the future.
- (2) **The county town and large town structure must be strengthened.** This will be achieved through regional and county level settlement and planning policies. These should support the towns, as both generators of business activity and delivery points for the key services that people need if they are to continue living in or be drawn to a particular area.
- (3) **A renewed emphasis is needed on the potential role of the small town and village structure.** This can be achieved through public and private investment in essential services such as water services and the use of local authority powers to tackle blockages in the supply of development land. It will also be important to improve the attractiveness of towns and villages through community and other activities such as urban and village renewal schemes and urban design initiatives by local authorities.
- (4) **Key rural assets must be protected and the local potential of rural areas developed.** This will be achieved through identifying, conserving and developing on a sustainable basis the various types and combinations of economic strengths of rural areas, with the support of appropriate levels of infrastructure provision. Their potential for economic activity, such as natural resource, local enterprise and tourism related development, and qualities that underpin such activity such as a clean and attractive environment will be central to this process.

The spatial elements in the regions that will partner and benefit from the gateways and hubs in achieving balanced regional development include

- county towns and larger towns with a population of 5000 and over
- other towns particularly in the 1500-5000 population band
- smaller towns, villages and rural areas.

This section of the NSS outlines how the national spatial structure relates to each region, including its towns and rural areas. The Strategy deals with development at regional and local level in a broad manner. Further and more detailed planning will be needed to elaborate the suggested approach through regional planning guidelines, county/city development plans and development strategies. These guidelines, plans and strategies will need to take account of the fact that different areas have characteristics and interests in common and share inter-relationships in the way they function economically and socially.

This section addresses each regional authority area by

- Setting out in summary form spatial policies for the region consistent with this Strategy
- Providing a map of the region illustrating how these policies apply in different areas.

The maps demonstrate how national level elements of this Strategy such as the gateways, hubs and transport framework link to the potential role of regional and local elements, including other towns, villages and rural areas.

The maps share a number of common characteristics

- (1) The various parts of the urban hierarchy from the largest cities and towns to urban centres with a population of around 1000 are shown. Along parts of the west coast, the maps also show certain smaller towns under 1000 population. These are located in areas with a weak urban structure. These towns need to be supported by local authorities in the important local roles they play as points at which wider communities access local services and employment.
- (2) Other important elements of physical infrastructure are identified such as ports, airports and in remoter western parts, the principal road corridors that provide essential access to these areas.
- (3) Towns representing urban strengthening opportunities are shown. These towns, located on important economic and transport corridors or in important locations and with a capacity to grow, must become a focus for the settlement policies of local authorities as incorporated in county development plans.
- (4) For rural areas four broad spatial policy priorities for regional and local authorities, relevant government departments and agencies and other bodies such as the city and county development boards are illustrated.

*Areas with strategic rural assets within a metropolitan hinterland.*

Regional and local authorities in these areas should develop and implement frameworks for spatial planning in the cities and catchments referred to earlier in this section through the regional planning guideline process as well as local land use and transport strategies.

*Village strengthening and rural area opportunities*

In these areas local authorities should examine closely and activate the potential for new residential, commercial and local employment related development within the structure of small towns and villages. This is of central importance to the economic restructuring of rural areas. Local authorities should use their local knowledge, resources and legal powers under the planning and derelict sites legislation to encourage and facilitate development, supported at national level by various mechanisms such as the urban and village renewal schemes.

### *Rural areas with strong potential for diversification*

In these areas, there is potential for rural diversification based around a possible mix of activities drawn from amongst the tourism, forestry, enterprise and marine sectors. Identifying such potential and activating it needs to be a focus in these areas for local communities and business groups supported by bodies such as the County Development and County Enterprise Boards and relevant government departments and agencies.

### *Diversifying areas*

There are areas, along the west coast particularly, that have been successfully diversifying in recent years. The restructuring of their economies has been based on growing a variety of economic activities. These economies had traditionally been largely dependent on the agricultural sector. On the basis of the 2002 census results, many of these areas have shown increases in population since 1996. However, local authorities should now carefully manage and sustain this diversification process in the future by focusing on conserving the attractiveness of both the landscape and townscape of the areas that supported the diversification process in the first place. Local authorities can perform this role through the planning system through a focus on ensuring that new development is of the highest quality in terms of design and location.

## 4.2 The Border Region

The physical nature of the border region, and location of roads and communications links, suggests that there are three broad areas to be considered in a more detailed manner within the national structure outlined in Section 3.

These three broad areas are

- the north western part of the border region, mainly Donegal
- the western part, mainly Sligo and Leitrim
- the central and eastern parts, Cavan, Monaghan and Louth

In this context the factors critical to the border region's full participation in balanced regional development include the strengthened roles and contribution of Letterkenny/Derry, Sligo and Dundalk, as new gateways to drive development through enhanced critical mass, accessibility and capacity for development.

Other towns, villages and rural areas will need to develop roles complementary to those of the gateways to ensure that a wider area will benefit from the critical mass in the region provided by the gateways. These other towns, including small towns along the west coast, inland county and larger towns and rural areas in the region are varied in nature and in the development issues they face. Some rural areas are diversifying into tourism and small and medium enterprise/natural resource development, while others have considerable potential for diversification and growth.

### County Towns and towns over 5,000 population

Sligo, Letterkenny and Dundalk as gateways will be supported by Monaghan and Cavan as hubs. Monaghan will build on its strategic location between Dublin and Derry on the N2, its links to Armagh and its capacity for growth. Cavan occupies a strategic location on the N3 leading on to Enniskillen, with the town itself also supporting an extensive hinterland. Other county towns, like Carrick-on-Shannon, perform regionally strategic residential, employment, administrative and other service functions.

Fostering and developing these roles will be important to complement the functions of gateways and hubs. Drogheda has much potential for development given its scale, established enterprise base, communications and business and other links with the Greater Dublin Area.



## Towns 1,500-5,000 population

In more western parts of the border, there are a number of towns in this category running from north of Sligo to Letterkenny and beyond, including Bundoran, Ballyshannon, Donegal, Ballybofey, Buncrana and Carndonagh. These centres have built up important functions in a variety of areas including tourism, retailing and employment in a variety of enterprises. The national transport framework envisaged by the NSS will support the development of such functions in the future through enhanced accessibility. Matching these improvements through quality development, physical attractiveness and joint promotion and marketing will be vital to developing these functions in the future.

In more eastern parts of the border region, towns such as Castleblaney, Carrickmacross and Ardee can promote themselves more effectively in the context of the strength of Dundalk and Monaghan. Cootehill and Baileborough perform important retailing, service and employment functions for local hinterlands. These functions can be enhanced through the regional road networks and links to larger urban centres in the area such as Cavan.

## Villages and rural areas

In more western parts of the Border region, notably in coastal Donegal, strong tourism, natural resources and small to medium enterprise sectors have been established. Developed on a sustainable basis into the future, these have the capacity to assure the vitality of this area. Priorities here will include high quality development, while protecting the landscape.

In other parts of the Border region, notably Sligo/Leitrim and through northern parts of Cavan and Monaghan, tourism assets in natural and cultural heritage and inland waterways have much potential for development, with a particular emphasis on towns such as Manorhamilton, Drumshanbo, Ballinamore, Ballyconnell and Belturbet.

In the more eastern parts of the region, which are in the journey to work catchments of larger urban and metropolitan areas, rural villages can play enhanced residential and service functions as an alternative to uncoordinated residential development. Investment in local services will be necessary to enhance capacity for new housing and other functions. Map 4 also identifies villages in remoter areas where the urban structure is weak. Such centres play a key role in delivering services and supporting employment in physically remote and peripheral areas. This role should be acknowledged and supported in relevant county and regional strategies through improvements in accessibility and through supporting opportunities for development.

# 4.3 The Dublin and Mid East Regions

The Dublin and the Mid East regions (the Greater Dublin Area) are considered jointly in this section because of their strong functional interrelationship and the fact that Strategic Planning Guidelines for the two regions are already in place.

Enhancing the competitiveness of the Greater Dublin Area (GDA), so that it continues to perform at the international level as a driver of national development, means physically consolidating the growth of the metropolitan area i.e. Dublin City and suburbs. At the same time, development in the hinterland of the metropolitan area is to be concentrated in strategically placed, strong and dynamic urban centres i.e. the 'Primary Development Centres' identified in the Strategic Planning Guidelines. These development centres have a unique role in Irish terms, given the scale of the Dublin City region and the need for internal balance between the city and its surrounding counties.

## County towns and towns over 5,000 population

There are a large number of towns of this size in the GDA, located mostly on the main transport corridors radiating from Dublin. The Strategic Planning Guidelines identify towns such as Navan, Balbriggan, Naas/Newbridge/Kilcullen and Wicklow as 'Primary Development Centres'. In the context of the NSS, however, the future roles of primary development centres such as these must take account of wider considerations, in addition to their relationship to Dublin. Issues that arise in this regard include the question of how such centres can energise their own catchments and their relationships with areas in the neighbouring regions of the Border, Midlands and South East.



The Primary Development Centres need to aim at a population level that supports self sustaining growth, but which does not undermine the promotion of critical mass in other regions. This suggests an ultimate population horizon of up to 40,000 people for the primary development centres. In addition, Drogheda's close functional and physical links with the GDA highlights a need to consider its role in the spatial development of the GDA when reviewing the Strategic Planning Guidelines for the GDA.

### Towns 1,500-5,000 population

Towns of this scale in the GDA are also generally located on or near the transportation corridors radiating from Dublin and are relatively close to the larger urban areas. While the primary development centres will be the main focus for responding to future growth in the GDA hinterland, these smaller towns cater for local growth in residential, employment and service functions through enhancing the built environment, water services, public transport links and capacity for development in these centres. Accommodating such additional functions must however be balanced with protecting the character and quality of these towns.

### Villages and rural areas

Rural areas in the Dublin and Mid East regions vary substantially from strong agricultural areas, (including villages close to the main urban areas experiencing strong pressure for development), to areas of declining or marginal agriculture and falling populations, particularly in north Meath and south west Wicklow.

In relation to the strong agricultural areas, new development in villages must take account of and respect the established character of these villages. Outside the villages, strategic national food production areas also have amenity and environmental value in terms of water reserves, providing 'green lungs' for surrounding urban areas and valuable eco-systems.

Development of urban generated housing in such areas, which can be accommodated in nearby urban areas, should be minimised. Through county development plan policies, county development board strategies, tourism marketing initiatives and local efforts such as tidy towns and village improvements, the attributes of these rural areas should be harnessed to attract visitors and local business and generate local employment opportunities.

Parts of the Mid East region which are more distant from the larger urban areas have experienced population decline or stagnation. This can be reversed through a focus on boosting the development capacity of smaller villages and rural towns. This can be supported by local authority and private investment in water services to release development land. It also involves encouraging appropriately scaled new development that reinforces the character of these towns and villages and supports local service, retail and employment functions. County development plans have a key role in this process.

## 4.4 The Midlands Region

Enhancing the level of critical mass in the Midlands region (Counties Laois, Offaly, Westmeath and Longford), by combining the complementary strengths of Athlone, Mullingar and Tullamore as a gateway at the heart of the region, is essential to boosting the region's overall economic strength. It will also be important to build on the central location of the Midlands and the key towns at the intersection of national road and rail routes, the attractiveness of the village structure in the Midlands and the natural and other resources of more rural areas. The gateway in the region will help to position other areas to benefit from the strength of that gateway, but those other areas will need to put plans in place to ensure that this happens.

### County towns and towns over 5,000 population

In support of the gateway role of Athlone, Mullingar and Tullamore, other county and large towns such as Portlaoise and Longford, which are strategically placed on national road and rail links, can be enhanced in competitive terms to drive development at the county level.



High urban design quality, effective water services and clear local development frameworks will be necessary to ensure this. Portlaoise, additionally, has strong national development potential as a transport hub and distribution centre or inland 'port' given its location on several national road and rail routes.

### Towns 1,500-5,000 population

Smaller towns in the Midlands such as Portarlington and Mountmellick in Laois and Clara and Birr in Offaly can be enhanced through physical and townscape improvements, water services, facilities for smaller enterprises and enhancements to road and bus networks. This will offer an attractive environment for residential, employment, retailing and service functions. Birr, in particular, with its built heritage and links to the Mid West region, has the potential to become a significant tourism centre and one which further develops small enterprises in a high quality environment.

### Villages and rural areas

The historically strong agriculture and natural resources sector, such as peat extraction and energy production, has supported an extensive village structure throughout the Midlands. This structure, with its established residential, service and employment functions, can be supported by necessary investment in key services. Demand for housing within easy reach of larger towns can be harnessed positively to strengthen the residential and other functions of smaller towns. This can be achieved by enabling villages to attract residential and other developments through availability of land and capacity of services.

Additionally, the Midlands has a number of unspoilt landscapes and inland waterway networks that have the advantage of proximity to urban areas such as Dublin. There is therefore considerable future potential to complement the agricultural sector in the Midlands with additional tourism and recreational activity. In addition, many worked-out bogs in the Midlands are highly suited to wind energy development at a significant enough scale to support ancillary manufacturing, servicing and development activities helping to position Ireland as an innovator in wind farm technology.

## 4.5 The Mid West Region

The contribution to balanced regional development of the Mid-West (Counties Clare, Limerick and North Tipperary) will require the enhancement of the performance of the Limerick-Shannon gateway at the national/international level. This is needed to lever additional investment for the overall region, through its critical mass, strategic location, capacity for innovation and development and connections within the national transport framework. Limerick-Shannon will be supported by Ennis as a hub, taking advantage of the latter's relationship with the Limerick-Shannon gateway and its strategic location between Limerick and Galway. Other towns and rural areas should be supported in developing complementary roles which avail of the spin-off benefits which the performance of the Limerick-Shannon gateway will bring to the region.

### County towns and towns over 5,000 population

Towns such as Nenagh, Thurles and Newcastlewest need appropriate policies and actions to support their roles as drivers of development at the county level. Examples include policies or actions to achieve good urban design and environmental quality, water services and effective linkages to the gateway in the region. These and other actions will serve to ensure that employment, housing, retailing and other functions attracted to the region by the gateway, will also have other attractive options to consider for location of all or parts of their operations in the region.

### Towns 1,500-5,000 population

Opportunities are emerging for towns like Abbeyfeale, Kilrush, Rathkeale, Roscrea and Templemore to improve their base for enterprise, residential and other functions within the county structure, in partnership with larger towns. Water services, land availability and urban renewal initiatives are among the keys to supporting development in towns such as these.

### Villages and rural areas

In aiming to achieve a greater spread of economic and spatial development, it is possible to identify the following broad areas of opportunity in the Mid West.

The success of established tourism areas, such as those along the west coast of Clare and the Lough Derg area, can be sustained through effective management and the sustainable development of assets such as the natural and cultural heritage.

The potential of more rural parts of south county Limerick and north Tipperary, particularly previously strong agricultural areas experiencing population decline due to agricultural restructuring, can be developed. This will be supported through service programmes for villages to attract residential, local enterprise and other functions.

Physical access can be enhanced and the potential of underdeveloped areas can be developed in tourism and other areas particularly in upland or estuarine areas such as west Limerick and the Shannon Estuary, east Clare uplands and lakes and the Silvermines area.

## 4.6 The South East Region

In the South East region (Counties Carlow, Kilkenny, Tipperary South, Waterford and Wexford) critical mass will be enhanced through Waterford performing as a gateway, supported by Kilkenny and Wexford as hubs. These three together form a nationally strategic 'growth triangle'.

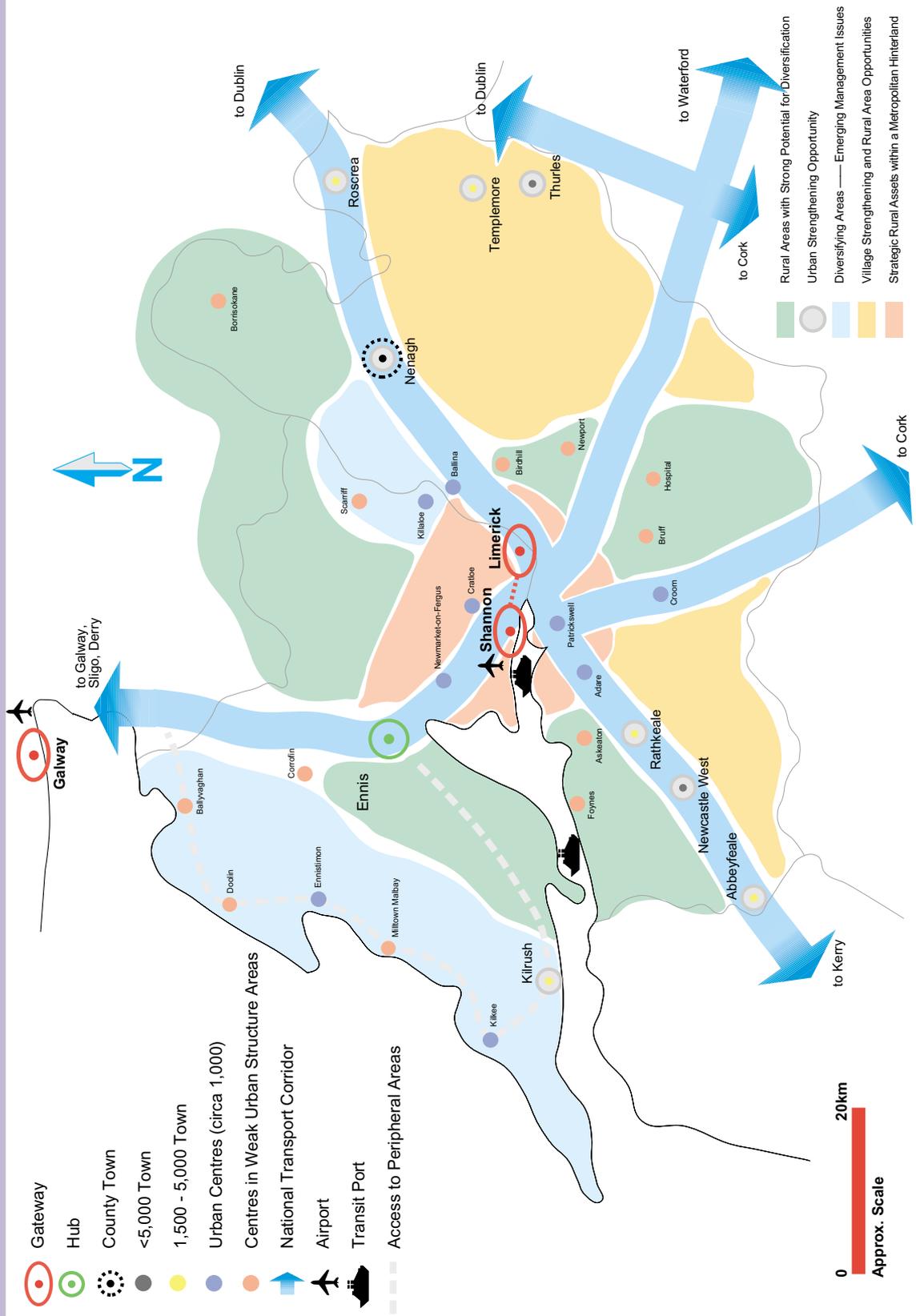
Waterford, Kilkenny and Wexford will drive regional growth by providing a large and skilled population base, substantial capacity for additional residential and employment related functions and an improving transport network. County towns, other towns, villages and more rural areas should be positioned to support the full realisation of the potential for economic development throughout the region, with a particular emphasis on complementing the gateway and hub approach.

### County towns and towns over 5,000 population

The critical mass of Waterford as a gateway, supported by Kilkenny and Wexford as hubs, will be complemented by development in surrounding and adjacent towns. The extensive network of county towns and other large towns in the South East provides a key resource, which, combined with the gateway and hub approach, provides a strong platform for balanced development throughout the region.

Towns such as Clonmel and Carrick-on-Suir in South Tipperary, Dungarvan and Tramore in Waterford, Carlow town, New Ross and Enniscorthy in Wexford provide good bases for population and services which will attract investment and employment activities additional to those that need to be located in or near a gateway. There are development opportunities for Clonmel and Carrick-on-Suir, placed strategically between Waterford and Limerick/Shannon, Dungarvan between Waterford and Cork, Carlow between Kilkenny and Dublin and New Ross and Enniscorthy between Wexford and Kilkenny.

# Map 7 Mid West Region



## Towns 1,500-5000 population

Towns such as Tipperary town, Cahir and Cashel in South Tipperary, Thomastown in Kilkenny, Bagenalstown and Tullow in Carlow and Gorey in Wexford traditionally served a prosperous agricultural hinterland that generally endowed them with townscapes of high visual quality, compact form and a rich built heritage. Today, although farm-based employment is falling, the quality of life attractions and scale of these towns form strong attractions for residential, small and medium enterprise development.

These strengths should be capitalised on by local authorities through local planning and development promotion activities, with the support of urban renewal and other improvement initiatives, improvements to water services and improved capacity for development through, for example, better access to back-land areas. In this way these smaller towns can offer a distinctive alternative for people attracted to the quality of life such towns can offer.

## Villages and rural areas

A characteristic of the spatial structure of the South East is the extensive network of villages throughout the region which has developed with the support of a traditionally prosperous agricultural base.

The traditional stability and prosperity of both the villages and their associated rural areas in the South East should be addressed, in the context of falling farm-based employment. This can be done within the county development plan process and through initiatives that enhance the attractiveness of villages as residential areas and locations for other functions drawn to the region both by the Waterford gateway and the extensive network of larger urban centres throughout the region. Such initiatives could include local infrastructure servicing programmes either by local authorities or in partnership with the private sector, the acquisition of key sites that unlock potential for back-land development and complementary policies to encourage people to live in villages.

Many of the more rural areas of the South East have the capacity to augment their established agricultural strength through specialist tourism attractions, taking advantage of planned enhancements to the national road and public transport links between the South east and other parts of the country. This process of adding additional types of economic activity in rural areas will be based on the region's extensive and attractive coastline, river valleys and uplands. For example, the Slaney, Barrow, Nore and Suir valleys encompass both attractive landscapes and towns at strategic bridging points with extensive built heritage. There are similar opportunities along the Wexford-Waterford coastline. Collectively, the tourism attractions of these areas provide a basis for local, regional and national packaging and promotional activities.

## 4.7 The South West Region

The South West (Counties Cork and Kerry) will contribute to balanced regional development through acting as a national/international gateway, supported by the Mallow hub at a pivotal location between Cork and Limerick. Cork will build on its substantial and established economic base to lever investment into the South West region. It will do this with the support of its scale of population, its third level institutions and the substantial capacity for growth identified in the Cork Area Strategic Plan (CASP). Implementation of CASP is important to secure the objectives of the NSS. Appropriate implementation structures supported by the local authorities and State agencies will be needed to drive this strategic plan forward.

Enhancing the contribution of the South West to balanced regional development will also be critically dependent on the development of Kerry. This will be driven by combining the complementary strengths of Tralee and Killarney as a hub and building on their track record and established residential, employment, retailing, education, transport and services functions.

Other components of the South West region at the county and inter-county level will complement the gateway and hubs in developing the potential of the Cork and Kerry areas.



## County Towns and towns over 5,000 population

Tralee, Killarney and Mallow, as hubs, will perform important roles within the national structure at the regional and county level. Improvements in regional accessibility through roads, advanced communications infrastructure and public transport links are key supporting factors. Other critical factors are enhanced physical qualities, townscape and improved local services. Towns close to Cork City, such as Midleton, Youghal, Cobh and Carrigaline, need to be promoted and developed as self-sustaining towns. They will benefit from proximity to Cork and at the same time build up their employment and services functions through the implementation of the Cork Area Strategic Plan, in particular through enhancing their road, rail and bus links to Cork City.

## Towns 1,500-5,000 population

Within the South West region, there are medium sized towns that play important economic and service functions along remoter parts of the coastline, such as Dingle, Cahersiveen, Kenmare, Castletownbere, Bantry and Skibbereen. Accessibility and effective local planning frameworks and initiatives to release capacity in terms of land and services for sustainable growth are critical factors in activating the potential of such centres in their important county roles.

In more inland parts, towns such as Listowel, Kanturk, Charleville, Mitchelstown and Fermoy have historically developed to serve strong rural and agricultural hinterlands. Capitalising on the location and attractions of such centres on or near important transport corridors, will become an important part of diversifying these towns as their reliance on traditional economic activities lessens. In partnership with Cork as a gateway, centres such as Bandon and Clonakilty with their own unique settings and urban design qualities can perform effectively in local employment, retailing, residential and service functions.

## Villages and rural areas

In the South West region there are contrasts in the development issues facing smaller towns and rural areas. In more western parts of Kerry and parts of west Cork, a dynamic and nationally important tourism product has been developed which will require effective management and sustainable development of the natural and cultural heritage to sustain it for the future. In the journey to work catchment of Cork and Tralee/Killarney, rural areas are under considerable pressure for individual residential development. Improving services in villages and smaller towns to accommodate sustainable growth and promote a co-ordinated approach to services provision is a potential way forward. In parts of west Cork, such as the Beara peninsula and the uplands on the Cork/Kerry border, there are areas of high environmental quality and improving accessibility that have significant potential for increased development in the tourism, natural resources (forestry and fisheries) areas. There is also potential for small to medium enterprises in, for example, Gaeltacht areas.

# 4.8 The West Region

Building on the dynamic role of Galway as a gateway and expanding its influence in promoting economic activity will be at the heart of extending balanced regional development to the West region (Counties Galway, Mayo and Roscommon). The support of the additional potential of Castlebar and Ballina in County Mayo and Tuam in County Galway as hubs will also be crucial.

Galway, with its population catchment, quality of life attractions, transport connections and capacity to innovate with the support of its third level institutions, will continue to play the critical role which has been essential in activating the potential of the region. The challenge now is to sustain and broaden this role to strengthen other areas. In seeking to enhance the role of Galway recognition must be given to the need to strengthen and protect the linguistic and cultural heritage of the Galway Gaeltacht.



The contribution that is being made by other towns and rural areas should be strengthened in a way that harnesses local resources and potential in a sustainable manner, while recognising the issue of peripherality in the West. This will ensure that a wider area will benefit from the presence of critical mass in the region.

### County towns and towns over 5,000 population

Castlebar, Ballina and Tuam, as hubs, will perform important roles within the national structure at the regional and county level. Critical factors will include improvements in regional accessibility through advanced communications infrastructure, by road and public transport and through the regional airport at Knock. These critical factors also include the enhanced townscape and local services necessary to underpin capacity for development. In the wider western region Roscommon and Ballinasloe have strong functional links with parts of the Midlands region, particularly Athlone. Roscommon and Ballinasloe will benefit from the Galway and Midlands gateways by virtue of their location on national transport routes and their quality of life and cost advantages in the housing and employment areas. Linking the Midlands gateway with Castlebar/Ballina through upgraded road, public transport and communications links also has the potential to benefit a number of other towns, including Roscommon, Castlerea, Ballyhaunis and Claremorris.

### Towns 1,500-5,000 population

Towns such as Westport and Claremorris in Mayo, Ballaghaderreen, Boyle and Castlerea in Roscommon and Athenry and Loughrea in Galway present opportunities for development and expansion through effective promotion and marketing in association with larger towns, hubs and gateways. An example already apparent is that of Westport, which has used its physical attractiveness and heritage conservation as a strong selling point, while ensuring that key infrastructure is in place, notably in water services and communications.

### Villages and rural areas

In the West region, within the national structure set out in the NSS, the broad components which strategic planning should address include the following.

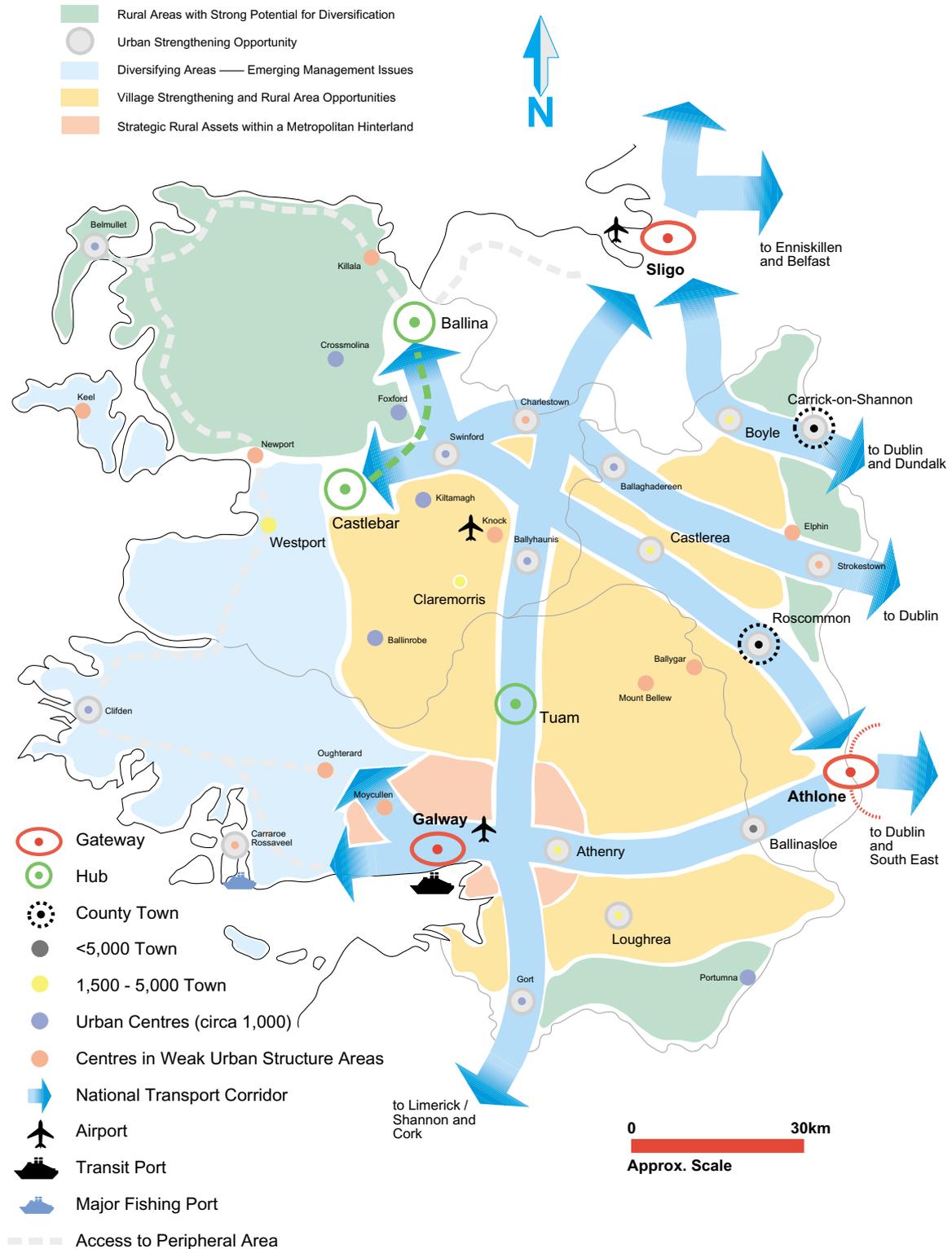
Areas along the west coast, notably in Connemara, and parts of the Mayo/Galway border have been successfully diversifying through a mix of tourism and natural resource development (particularly in forestry and fisheries) and small and medium enterprises. This process has been supported by the work of the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs and Údarás na Gaeltachta. The management and extension of this process in a sustainable manner will be essential in ensuring that regional development reaches out to other communities.

Map 10 identifies towns and villages in remoter areas where the urban structure overall is weak. Such towns and villages play a key role in delivering services and supporting employment in physically remote and peripheral areas. This role must be acknowledged and supported in relevant county and regional strategies, through promoting improvements in accessibility and supporting opportunities for development. Towns such as Clifden, Belmullet and Carraroe will in particular have a vital role in establishing local employment and services functions to drive the process described above.

Many parts of the journey to work catchments of cities and towns such as Galway, Athlone, Castlebar and also areas such as south Mayo and east Galway contain rural areas under considerable pressure for development. Through servicing and development initiatives and pro-active planning, the gateways and hubs can support development in smaller villages in particular where the necessary infrastructure enhancements are provided either through public or private efforts.

Parts of west and north Mayo and eastern parts of Galway and Roscommon in the Shannon catchment, have significant natural and cultural heritage attractions such as landscape, inland waterways and historical artefacts. Priorities for development here include identifying key assets and presenting or assembling a quality package – e.g. enhancing hotel facilities in north west Mayo, improving regional road access and improving awareness through marketing. County development plans and the plans of development agencies should become the instruments for identifying such

# Map 10 West Region



development opportunities and subsequent development priorities. In this way, broader areas will experience the process of rural diversification already underway in some parts of Galway and Mayo. With the necessary marketing and development, these areas will benefit from the strength brought to the region by gateways and hubs.



# Section 5

Location of Development:  
Policies



### Main Points:

- To assist the framing of the plans and strategies of national, regional, and local bodies, the NSS sets out indicative policies in relation to the location of employment related and residential development, rural development, access to services and environmental quality.
- The NSS framework takes account of the various factors influencing the location of enterprise – the key driver of spatial patterns of development. The NSS outlines specific supportive measures that need to be considered, including the development of strategic reserves of land, access to streamlined planning processes where appropriate, improved capacity for innovation, research and development, effective spatial and transportation frameworks and access to international markets.
- The NSS outlines the spatial responses needed to maximise the potential of the tourism sector to support balanced regional development.
- The agriculture, food, forestry, fishing and aquaculture sectors and other activities in the natural resource sector have a key role to play as a primary economic basis for vibrant and diversified rural communities and the retention of the rural population.
- Housing: In planning for the 500,000 additional dwellings estimated to be needed over the next ten years, the NSS gives local authorities clear indications of where major demands are likely to arise, particularly in strengthening gateways and hubs.
- The NSS emphasises the importance, particularly in urban areas, of combining the location of housing with good transport facilities; and the need to ensure that housing requirements are matched by the supply of zoned and serviced land.
- In relation to housing in rural areas, the NSS provides guidance on the different policy responses appropriate to different circumstances.
- The NSS addresses policies to enhance quality of life issues in different types of areas.
- The NSS will be implemented within a framework of strong and ambitious policies for protection of the environment and policies for integrating environmental considerations into sectoral policies.

## 5.1 Introduction

The national strategic approach to Ireland's development over the next twenty years presented in Section 3, set out the ways in which various places will develop in the context of strategic roles that will enable different areas to play to their strengths. In addition, a broad framework outlining how more effective movement within, to and from the country could be achieved has been outlined.

To assist in addressing the spatial aspects of the plans and strategies of various national, regional, and local bodies, this section of the Strategy sets out indicative policies in relation to the spatial issues for key development sectors.

These policies relate to

- the location of employment-related development
- the location of residential development
- spatial aspects of rural development
- how people access services
- how people can continue to enjoy a high quality environment.

## 5.2 Economic Development

### 5.2.1 The NSS and Enterprise Development

#### Introduction

As confirmed by the NSS research, the performance of areas in terms of enterprise, has been spatially uneven, with the bulk of employment growth occurring in the South and East Region. This Strategy will build upon the advantages that this region possesses, but it also establishes a spatial framework to guide future investment priorities for enterprise development in the Border, Midlands and Western Region (BMW).

#### Spatial Patterns of Enterprise Activity

The characteristics, location, concentration and distribution of future economic activity will have a crucial bearing on the achievement of more balanced spatial development.

In general, foreign-owned companies display a preference for locations in or near large urban areas that provide labour force, skills, infrastructure and business and social networks. In contrast, the existing base of Irish-owned firms is distributed more widely. Outside Dublin eighty percent of Enterprise Ireland's indigenous clients are located in towns of less than 30,000 population and thirty-five percent in towns of less than 3,000. This latter pattern reflects the presence of entrepreneurship at a wide variety of locations and at varying levels. It also reflects the powerful influence of family and community ties on the location of indigenous enterprises which have been formed or are developing.

#### Emerging clusters of economic activity

The NSS provides a framework that takes account of a range of factors influencing the location of enterprise. International trends in business location will also have a significant influence. These trends include:

- the tendency towards spatial concentrations of technology intensive companies in electronics, chemicals and pharmaceuticals, medical products and software
- the attraction of companies and skilled workers toward urban areas
- the growing importance of services which have reinforced the role of large centres of population.

In Ireland, the clustering of economic activities has been especially evident along the eastern seaboard, particularly in the Greater Dublin Area. This is also true of Cork, Limerick/Shannon and Galway. The research undertaken for the NSS confirms therefore that Ireland's existing and emerging city-regions are critical sources of economic dynamism within the Irish economy and should be nurtured and built upon for the benefit of all. In particular, they represent important resources for the future development and expansion of the enterprise sector.

#### Other recent enterprise trends

In addition to increases in employment, the enterprise base in Ireland has experienced other significant changes over the last decade. These include the emergence of a sophisticated and internationally competitive software sector comprising Irish and foreign-owned companies. Seven of the world's top ten software companies now operate in this country. Foreign-owned companies have increasingly been allocating design and development responsibilities to their Irish affiliates. This underscores the importance of supporting and strengthening the capability and quality of research and development functions at various regional locations in Ireland to sustain a competitive and innovative enterprise sector.

While extremely strong inflows of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) have been a major contributor to growth over the last decade, indigenous industry has also undergone substantial structural re-positioning, by building new areas of competence to avail of major new business opportunities. This has included an increasing number of Irish-owned companies investing overseas, especially in the services sector in the United States. This trend is likely to continue over time and could result in the emergence of an expanded group of Irish-based, possibly Irish-owned, multinationals using overseas locations to develop markets, skills, technology and earnings, giving rise to a greater need for effective international linkages between Irish-based companies and their overseas operations.

Particular growth sectors for industry in the 1990s included the high-technology sectors of software, financial services and electronics. Balanced against this growth, low technology sectors, which tend to be open to competition from lower cost countries, have experienced decline. In addition, some sectors are undergoing considerable internal restructuring through the introduction of new technology and processes. This results in a dynamic within the indigenous sector of job gains arising from the exploitation of new market opportunities and job losses as new technology and processes are introduced. Investment in training and skill formation is an important feature of the movement to a high value-added economy.

A major characteristic of the enterprise sector in Ireland has been its improved productivity performance. Over the next two decades and beyond, sustaining an acceptable level of economic growth, and the associated benefits in terms of income and employment opportunities, will require a strong productivity performance. Given expected long-term demographic changes in the ageing of the population, labour force growth is expected to contribute a smaller proportion of total productivity growth than it has in the past. As a result, innovation, embracing and harnessing technological change, together with efficient and competitive infrastructure, will become the key requirements for continued productivity improvement.

### **Future trends in enterprise development**

Future trends are likely to include the following.

The majority of new jobs will continue to be created in services rather than manufacturing, with an increasing number of new start-up enterprises operating in the services sector.

The increasing importance of companies in the services sector will have spatial effects in the form of their preference for locations at or close to major points of consumer demand and end clients, plus their requirements for infrastructure to trade in products and services which have a high information content.

Local services, health care, leisure and tourism will become even more significant as the population ages and disposable incomes rise in the high productivity and traded sectors.

To remain competitive and viable, companies will need to increase the technological content of their products and services by allocating additional investment to research, design, innovation and development.

Skills related to technological and organisational development and innovation will become more significant requirements for business enterprises.

Regions with a strong population base that can support high quality business infrastructure, technological development and innovation will continue to be major attractions.

Foreign Direct Investment will remain a significant structural feature of the Irish economy, although the character of the projects attracted to Ireland will change over time in response to changes in the advantages offered by Ireland and the evolution of the multinational firms and industries operating here.

A range of high quality locations will be necessary to present opportunities for business to attract skilled labour from abroad to support operations in Ireland.

Effective physical and electronic access to customers, suppliers and other sources of information will remain a critical requirement for business success.

The overall shape, size, performance and spatial distribution of the enterprise sector will be heavily influenced by public policy decisions at home and in the EU. The following will be especially significant

- national, regional and local spatial planning that offers clarity and certainty
- a high quality environment
- affordable housing supply
- the timely and cost effective provision of infrastructure, particularly transportation and energy
- taxation, competition, planning and environmental legislation.

### **What is needed for Enterprise to support Balanced Regional Development?**

The central importance to balanced regional development of promoting critical mass at key, strategic locations has been emphasised previously. In these circumstances, it will be essential to develop and nurture a strong enterprise base supported by the critical mass provided by the gateways and hubs. Establishing and developing this critical mass and enterprise base will also demand a focus on supporting infrastructure investment.

In addition to the general approach to building up the spatial structure set out in the NSS, the following factors should be borne in mind in developing more detailed spatial policies to support enterprise development.

Policy must recognise the different locational requirements of enterprise activity in various parts of the country. Targeted strategies must seek to strengthen a wider range of areas, without damaging areas that are already performing strongly.

The inherent advantages of the South and East (S&E) region in its overall contribution to national economic development must be consolidated and, at the same time, the relative deficit of demographic, settlement and productive resources which is limiting the development potential of the Border, Midlands and West (BMW) region must be addressed.

The spatial framework of the NSS, including the gateways and hubs must be supported by Government policy and private sector investment, to underpin the evolution of the enterprise sector in these two regions.

The role of the state development agencies,<sup>14</sup> fostering and attracting private investment in the regions, will be pivotal in supporting the spatial structure outlined in the NSS.

### **The Role of the Development Agencies**

Over the next decade and beyond, in line with international trends towards major growth in the services and technology areas and Ireland's growing competitiveness in these areas, the development agencies will be targeting more innovative, technology-intensive, high value-added activities and start-ups. Spatial clusters of international excellence are emerging in Ireland, particularly focused around the city regions and other strategic locations. Accordingly this Strategy, with the support of the agencies, seeks to strengthen these areas and increase their number by supporting the formation of self-sustaining clusters of economic activity in line with the national spatial structure that the NSS has established.

The establishment and strengthening of such clusters will require the support of high quality education, skills and research, together with physical infrastructure. These supporting investments will only be effective in a globally competitive market if they are spatially co-ordinated and targeted at strategic locations. The development agencies will work towards supporting the development of the spatial structure of gateways and hubs to attract significant levels of enterprise investment and support innovation and entrepreneurship.

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<sup>14</sup> These include IDA Ireland, Enterprise Ireland, Shannon Development and Údarás Na Gaeltachta

The indigenous internationally trading enterprise base is widely distributed. Nonetheless, Enterprise Ireland's strategies incorporate specific spatial elements which link the development of companies in key new sectors such as informatics, e-Business, digital media and health sciences to a small number of centres where there is a third level education presence. Similarly, IDA Ireland will continue to target cities and towns with the potential to develop their advantages in terms of the existing enterprise base or economic, social or innovation infrastructure. Developing competitive advantage associated with such cities and towns supports the creation of an internationally competitive position in new and emerging services activities, the pharmaceutical and chemical sectors, information and communications technology, bio-pharmaceuticals, medical devices and engineering.

This approach is and will continue to be supported by a substantive IDA presence in strategic centres. As a first step in enhancing its support for regional development, the IDA's offices in Sligo, Athlone and Waterford were significantly strengthened during 2001, complementing the already established positions in Cork, Limerick, Galway, Letterkenny, Dundalk and Dublin.

The NSS, with the support of the development agencies for the indigenous sector will have a vital role to play in ensuring that the potential of smaller towns in the regions is developed. Enterprise Ireland's vision for regional development is concerned with *'the creation of an environment for business regionally in which competitive capability is developed and sustained within companies, high growth start-up business is encouraged and innovation flourishes'*.

The widely distributed and strong characteristics of existing indigenous enterprise will play an important role in achieving balanced regional development. This will be enabled through the agencies embedding and building on the existing enterprise base with a particular focus on innovation. Identifying and encouraging new start-up companies with strong growth potential will remain a key priority. New opportunities will continue to be identified for economic development in the regions, including expansion investments by Dublin-based companies.

In addition, there are a number of policy priorities that will flow from the approach set out in this Strategy through the industrial development agencies in a way which is responsive to international enterprise trends and to the specific brief of the agencies. These priorities include the following.

Strategic reserves of lands for enterprise development should continue to be developed, aligned with the spatial structure outlined in Section 3. These should provide high quality setting and location, easy access to key infrastructure such as transport, energy, water services and communications and be well integrated with the spatial structure of adjoining urban areas and their educational facilities.

Locations in or close to the gateways should also, where appropriate, have access to streamlined planning processes such as the Strategic Development Zone mechanism under the Planning and Development Act 2000.

National and regional capacity for innovation, research and development must be bolstered, focusing on the quality of third level education and research facilities as well as encouraging the emergence of particular centres of excellence. Again the spatial structure outlined in Section 3 will be the focus for such efforts, with a particular emphasis on the development of existing educational facilities and enhancing the innovative capacity of facilities in the South East, Midlands and North West.

It will be important to ensure that regions have the required access to international markets for goods, services and labour mobility. The capacity to attract mobile investment will be supported by the strategic development of infrastructure such as telecommunications, energy networks, regional air and sea port services.

The necessary key infrastructures for the gateways and hubs, including reliable energy networks, waste management facilities and advanced broadband telecommunications must be co-ordinated.

Ireland must realise the potential for significant economic development opportunities through effective cross-border co-operation between large cities or towns such as Derry-Letterkenny, Monaghan-Armagh, Cavan-Enniskillen and Dundalk-Newry and through further enhancing the emerging Dublin-Belfast economic corridor.

Ireland must also build an 'information based society' through rapid changeover to e-business throughout the public and private sectors.

From an enterprise perspective, implementing the NSS represents a major opportunity for a better distribution of competitive enterprise activity across the State.

### 5.2.2 Employment in Tourism

Expenditure by tourists to Ireland (including receipts paid to Irish carriers by foreign residents) was estimated to be worth almost €3.9 billion in 2001. Tourism supported 150,000 jobs (or job equivalents) in 2000. Of the estimated 1,741, 000 people at work in Ireland, tourism spend supported one in twelve jobs in 2001. It has been estimated that over fifty-one jobs are supported for every million pounds of out-of-state tourism expenditure and thirty-six jobs for every million pounds of domestic tourism expenditure.

Tourism is characterised by the fact that consumption takes place where the service is provided. Also significant is the fact that tourism activity is focused in some cases on areas with an otherwise weak economic base. As a result it can have a positive influence on regional development.

Looking to the location of tourism activity, it is possible to distinguish between different parts of the country in terms of their current level of tourism development and its potential into the future. Factors that drive this include

- The tourism resource base in an area – including natural resources like climate, topography, cultural and entertainment facilities and shops. When highly developed, the tourism resource base achieves a critical mass that supports its further development.
- Access – in terms of ease of and cost-effective international access via ports and airports, local access through road and rail/bus networks and information about attractions and facilities.
- Visitor preferences – current preferences in holiday experiences and how this alters over time.

The interaction between these and other factors has led to the emergence of three broad types of area.

- (1) *Established tourism areas* such as Dublin, parts of the West like Galway, the Mid West region, Cork and Kerry. These areas frequently contain premier international tourism destinations ranging from cities themselves such as Dublin and Galway to the highly developed 'tourism districts' in parts of County Kerry, the Mid West and other areas.
- (2) *Developing tourism areas* such as other parts of the West coast, high amenity areas close to the main cities and certain inland areas associated with water based recreation where tourism is beginning to have a significant impact.
- (3) *Undeveloped tourism areas* such as inland river valleys, many parts of the canal network like the Royal and Grand Canals, where significant potential for tourism based development exists but has not developed as yet.

In each of these areas, specific spatial responses are needed to maximise the potential contribution of the tourism sector to balanced regional development, while protecting the assets which make these areas attractive for visitors.

In established tourism areas, rather than seeking a diversion of activity from already strong tourism areas, an effective spatial response will address infrastructural bottlenecks and promote off-season activity to spread demand.

For developing tourism areas, the appropriate spatial response is to augment the already successful areas by building up their capacity for tourism. This would broaden the number of places where strong tourism occurs in Ireland, with consequent regional benefit. Westport is a good example of how this has happened in recent years.

Undeveloped tourism areas frequently offer a different type of resource base, such as inland waterways or built heritage as opposed to the dramatic landscapes of the West.

The appropriate spatial response to developing the potential of such areas is to look to strategic opportunities in tourism niches. This will seek to build upon locations with potential such as the Midlands or Border, which, in the context of NDP funded improvements to transport infrastructure, will be more accessible from major centres of population and tourism demand than in the past.

There are strategic tourism development opportunities that arise from the varying types of potential in different areas. Examples of these are set out in Box 5.1.

## Box 5.1

### Strategic Tourism Opportunities

1. New Tourism Centres – opportunities to facilitate the emergence of new tourism centres in some of the less developed tourism areas, based on new major visitor attractions which have potential to develop a critical mass of visitor numbers with a strong overseas component.
2. Additional Short-Break Urban Destinations – opportunities related to expanding the number of cities, e.g., Cork, Limerick, Waterford, which can thrive as short-break urban destinations in themselves, building on their attractive settings and developing the presentation of their built heritage, general quality of appearance, cultural scene and hospitality base.
3. Heritage and Natural Landscapes – opportunities to realise the potential contained in the landscape, habitats and culture of some of the least developed tourism areas, particularly but not exclusively in the West and North West – Mayo, Sligo, Donegal – through facilitating better access and developing appropriate special interest activities.
4. Inland Waterway Circuits – opportunities to develop tourism possibilities by linking waterways and creating tourism circuits linking urban settlements and waterways in the Border and Midlands areas; and also to develop the potential of the river valleys of the South East.
5. Tourism Clusters – opportunities to develop a number of tourism clusters based primarily on existing attractions and facilities within a coherent geographic area by appropriate linking, upgrading and packaging.
6. Urban Generated Rural Recreation – opportunities related to the presence of attractive landscapes close to major urban areas such as Dublin, Cork Limerick, Derry and Waterford where weekend type leisure activity could become a significant driver of year round tourism activity.

### 5.2.3 Employment in Agriculture, Marine and Natural Resources

Agriculture and food production, forestry, fishing, aquaculture and related industries and natural resource development all have a key role to play as primary economic bases for vibrant and diversified communities in rural areas and the retention of the rural population.

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

An economically efficient agricultural and food sector, together with forestry, fishing and aquaculture and diversification into alternative on-farm and off-farm activities, are essential components of the development of the rural economy. No one economic sector offers all the solutions to the challenges in rural areas. Instead, the response lies in different packages of measures to tap the potential that rural areas possess.

In the agricultural and food sectors themselves, issues relevant to spatial policy include

- facilitating farm based diversification and alternative enterprises such as organic foods, rural tourism or small and medium enterprises
- promoting research and development linkages between centres of innovation and food producers to establish excellence in particular areas of the country such as dairy products in West Cork for example. This can have associated tourism benefits as well
- recognition of the role of farmers as custodians of the natural resources of the countryside and support for this role.

Developments in marine and natural resource sectors offer significant advantages for stable, long-term economic activity in rural areas, providing work for which many of the skills required are available locally.

The acceleration of forestry development has seen a noticeable change in rural landscapes which will continue in coming years under the momentum of Ireland's forestry programme. With effective management, based on coherent policy guidelines, this change can be a positive force by

- harnessing the national potential for producing forestry products, including the use of under-utilised agricultural lands, the adding of value to timber products in Ireland and further developing regional specialisations such as the furniture sector in the North East
- promoting forestry to address concerns regarding greenhouse gas emissions
- fostering rural tourism development through forests as attractions, rights of way for long distance walking promoting the positive dimensions of the rural landscape by encouraging diversity of species and sensitive landscaping
- contributing positively to the forestry and forestry products sector through the county development plan process by identifying areas suitable for and sensitive to afforestation
- recognising the potential for forestry to contribute to integrated development by complementing other land uses e.g. by providing leisure amenities.

The sustainable development of the marine and natural resources sectors has a key role to play in supporting and advancing the economic well being of rural and coastal areas. It is of particular importance for peripheral coastal communities. The following spatial issues arise.

Coastal infrastructure, commensurate with the needs of the seafood and marine leisure sectors, at strategic ports and other key locations of particular importance for local economies must be developed.

An appropriate balance must be struck between the wide range of economic, leisure and amenity activities and uses in coastal and island areas.

Access infrastructure appropriate to the requirements of these sectors and the areas in which they operate is needed.

Inland fisheries resources must be supported through effective catchment management and planning, embracing all key factors and with effective integration of inland fisheries considerations and land use planning.

## 5.3 Housing

Good quality accommodation is a fundamental human need. Ensuring as close a match as possible between the national housing stock and the requirements of a growing and changing national population is essential, to avoid barriers to Ireland's continuing economic growth, competitiveness and social development.

In relation to housing, four public policy priority areas are highlighted in the National Development Plan

- the need to implement a strategic spatial framework for Ireland
- integrating the location of housing with the location of good transport facilities, particularly public transport
- zoning and servicing of residential lands to ensure a good supply of land relative to development needs
- provision to meet social and affordable housing requirements.



The four policy priority areas outlined above have important implications for the NSS.

The NSS, especially in the development of gateways and hubs, identifies for local authorities where major future housing needs are likely to arise. This will allow for timely, comprehensive and sustainable planning responses that integrate housing provision with employment, services, transport and the local environment.

Through combining the location of housing, employment and other services with good transport facilities, especially public transport, more effective and sustainable mobility within Ireland will be achievable.

Housing availability requires close monitoring to ensure that, within agreed spatial frameworks, whether at national, regional or local levels, housing requirements are matched by the supply of zoned and serviced land.

The development of socially balanced communities can be supported through catering for social and affordable and other housing market needs in an integrated way.

It has been estimated that it will be necessary to provide some 500,000 additional dwellings to meet likely demand in the period up to 2010. Ireland's housing stock per thousand of population is the lowest in the EU at 327 housing units per thousand population as compared to 435 per thousand in the UK and a European average of 450 per thousand. Provision of 500,000 dwellings over the next decade would bring the Irish housing stock to around 400 units per thousand population. Over the following ten years of the life of the NSS, it is reasonable to assume that convergence towards the EU average would continue, leading to further substantial housing demand, especially as average household sizes in Ireland also move towards EU averages.

The optimum choice of locations for housing, from a spatial planning point of view, has many dimensions, depending on urban or rural context, the quality of the living environment, transport and social balance. The following is an overview of housing location considerations in the NSS context.

### 5.3.1 Housing Location in Urban Areas

Local authorities, under the provisions of Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2000, are obliged to prepare detailed estimates of housing demand for all sectors – private, social and affordable housing – through the preparation of housing strategies as part of the development plan process. It is vitally important that both housing strategies and development plans take account of the spatial framework provided by the NSS as set out in Section 3 and the considerations relating to the location of different activities set out in this Section.

In addition, it will be critical to provide for an adequate supply of land in line with assessments of housing land needs, through the development plan system. Such provision will require

- strategic reservation of land through the development plan process, coupled with ensuring timely and sequential release of land, to avoid delays in the availability and servicing of land on the one hand and premature release of zoned land on the other
- broad evaluation frameworks such as that suggested in Box 5.2 as an aid to the most appropriate spatial locations for housing land.

#### Box 5.2

##### Housing Location in Urban Areas

##### Evaluation Considerations

The Asset Test	Are there existing community resources, such as schools etc, with spare capacity?
The Carrying Capacity Test	Is the environmental setting capable of absorbing development in terms of drainage etc?
The Transport Test	Is there potential for reinforcing usage of public transport, walking and cycling?
The Economic Development Test	Is there potential to ensure integration between the location of housing and employment?
The Character Test	Will the proposal reinforce a sense of place and character?
The Community Test	Will the proposal reinforce the integrity and vitality of the local community and services that can be provided?
The Integration Test	Will the proposal aid an integrated approach to catering for the housing needs of all sections of society?

Sustainable provision of housing in urban areas also involves

- Concentration of development in locations where it is possible to integrate employment, community services, retailing and public transport
- Mixed-use and well-designed higher density development, particularly near town centres and public transport nodes like railway stations. Further advice on this issue is provided in the Department of the Environment and Local Government's Guidelines on Residential Density
- The efficient use of land by consolidating existing settlements, focusing in particular on development capacity within central urban areas through re-use of under-utilised land and buildings as a priority, rather than extending green field development. See the suggestions in this regard in Box 5.3 below.

- Ensuring that new housing development in or at the edges of villages and small towns is of a quality of design, character, scale and layout that is well related to the character and form of the village or small town in question at its particular stage of development.
- Avoiding environmentally sensitive areas in developing proposals for major extensions to built-up areas.
- Placing a high degree of emphasis on creating living environments of the highest quality through attention to detail in urban design, integration of amenities, facilities for children, older persons and sections of the community with special needs.

## Box 5.3 Urban Consolidation Priorities

1: Identify Opportunities for Re-Use	Through the development plan process, identify under-utilised, derelict or undeveloped lands within towns and villages.
2: Realise Options for Re-Use	Realise identified opportunities using, for example, the Derelict Sites Act and acquisition of key sites.
3: Identify Extension Options	Where sufficient development opportunities within the urban area are not available, consider appropriate extension options to the village or town.
4: Realise Extension Options	Follow up on options for extensions to the built up area using the tests in Box 5.2.

Towns and villages in some areas are declining in population, resulting in under-utilisation of serviced land, dereliction and consequent impacts on the quality of places. This cycle can be broken by a more positive approach to urban consolidation through the housing strategy process. In particular, such strategies should consider

- realistic targets for the location of housing within existing built up areas of villages, towns and cities
- policies to support the achievement of such targets, including interventions designed to ensure the availability of under-utilised or derelict land in urban areas through the use of the various local authority powers referred to in Box 5.3 above
- evaluation of progress to inform review of future strategies.

Socially diverse local communities located in well-planned development can foster a sense of place, pride, security and neighbourliness. It is important that new housing development secures a good social mix. Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2000 provides mechanisms to assist the achievement of this objective.

Housing strategies are the prime vehicle for better integration at local level and in particular for

- assessing the range of housing needs
- matching housing needs with supply and identifying necessary measures such as aids to affordability where local circumstances require this
- meeting particular housing needs such as those of smaller households, vulnerable sections of society and the Travelling community.

Within the above considerations, it will be vital to ensure the highest standards of design and layout by availing of professional design advice and supervision to create a high quality living environment.

### 5.3.2 Housing Location in Rural Areas

In Ireland, there is a long tradition of people living in rural areas. This Strategy, in seeking to achieve balanced regional development, supports sustainable rural settlement.

Rural settlement issues are complex and varied. Different forms of rural settlement have evolved over time through the interaction of economic, social and environmental forces.

This section of the National Spatial Strategy sets out a spatial planning framework to support sustainable rural settlement, taking account of the different forms of settlement that have evolved. The on-going process of evolution and change in rural settlement must be directed in ways that are sustainable economically, socially and environmentally.

As set out elsewhere in this Strategy, balanced regional development is to be promoted by creating economic and social opportunities at a wider range of locations. A key driver of this process will be the strengthening of the structure of cities and towns within regions to increase job opportunities and services, thereby providing additional locations for economic development. These cities and towns will in turn strengthen their own catchments.

In addition, achievement of balanced regional development depends on a high quality environment that sustains the competitiveness of rural based economic sectors and complements strong cities and towns.

#### Rural Settlement and Housing Framework

At an overall level, the sustainable rural settlement policy framework has four broad objectives

- (1) To sustain and renew established rural communities and the existing stock of investment in a way that responds to the various spatial, structural and economic changes taking place, while protecting the important assets rural areas possess
- (2) To strengthen the established structure of villages and smaller settlements both to assist local economies and to accommodate additional population in a way that supports the viability of public transport and local infrastructure and services such as schools and water services
- (3) To ensure that key assets in rural areas such as water quality, the natural and cultural heritage and the quality of the landscape are protected to support quality of life and economic vitality
- (4) To ensure that rural settlement policies take account of and are appropriate to local circumstances.

Within the overall objectives of this policy framework, more detailed rural settlement policies in regional planning guidelines, county development plans and in local plans need to take account of

- the specific character of rural housing demands in the area concerned
- the characteristics of the rural area and economy concerned, which will vary between areas and regions.

#### Rural Housing Demand Issues

Demands for housing in rural areas arise in different circumstances. In many cases, housing needs relate to people who are an established part of the rural community and who either work in rural areas or in nearby urban areas. In other cases, people living and working in towns and cities may seek to live in rural areas close to towns and commute daily to work. Some may have roots in these areas, others may have no connection with the land but seek a rural lifestyle. In recent years, increasing affluence, car ownership, improved building technology, personal mobility and urban house prices have extended the range of locations being targeted for residential development. In many cases, locations chosen are considerable distances from where people work, reinforcing travel patterns that are dependent on car based commuting.

Taking the above into account, it is normal in policy terms to distinguish between

- Housing needed in rural areas within the established rural community by people working in rural areas or in nearby urban areas (rural generated housing)
- Housing in rural locations sought by people living and working in urban areas, including second homes (urban generated housing).

Development plan policies must be tailored to address the different development issues that arise in relation to these two different categories of housing demand.

Rural generated housing needs arise for people who are an intrinsic part of the rural community by way of background or the fact that they work full-time or part-time in rural areas. As a general principle, subject to good planning practice in matters of location, siting, design and the protection of environmentally sensitive areas and areas of high landscape value, rural generated housing needs should be accommodated in the areas where they arise. In addition, measures should be adopted by planning authorities that ensure that the provision of new housing is targeted to meet rural housing needs. This might include permitting new housing in rural areas subject to conditions that such housing be occupied by established members of the rural community.

With regard to urban generated housing in the open countryside, development driven by urban areas should take place, as a general principle, within the built up areas and on lands identified, through the development plan process, for integrated, serviced and sustainable development. However, it is acknowledged that some persons from urban areas seek a rural lifestyle with the option of working in and travelling to and from, nearby larger cities and towns. Smaller towns and villages have a key role in catering for these types of housing demand in a sustainable manner. A balance must be struck between encouraging appropriate residential development in villages and towns and ensuring that such development is of a design, layout, character and scale which fits well with the town or village involved and presents a high quality living environment. In addition, supporting public transport and reducing dependency on car based commuting should be priorities.

Achieving the right balance between encouraging development in towns and villages and the scale and nature of such development will vary from area to area depending on the existing character and scale of the town or village and the demand for housing in the area. Local authorities should encourage development of towns and villages through setting out clear policies in their development plans and in other local plans where appropriate. These plans should be supported where possible by measures such as the provision of appropriate services and sites. This would help to reduce the pressure for urban related development in the open countryside.

### Issues in differing types of rural areas

Section 3.3 of this Strategy identified a diversity of rural area types in Ireland. The different circumstances in these areas require different responses. Some rural areas, for example, are close to cities and large towns and are subject to growing pressure for single housing development in the open countryside to cater for people living in such urban areas. Others are more remote, with falling population, but in some cases are subject to pressure for the provision of second homes.

The broad types of different areas are

- rural areas under strong urban influences
- areas with a traditionally strong agricultural base
- structurally weak areas
- areas in which there are distinctive settlement patterns.

The types of housing demand that arise and the dynamics at work in these different types of areas suggest the following responses.

### **Housing in rural areas under strong urban influences**

In rural areas within commuting range of cities and larger towns development of urban generated housing in the open countryside is increasing rapidly. The extent of the commuting catchment varies from town to town, with the larger cities and towns tending to have the more extensive catchments.

There are various reasons behind the trends evident in these areas, including housing affordability, perceptions regarding quality of life in urban areas and inadequate support for sustainable urban development under past land use policies.

If present trends continue at their current scale, there will be an increasing environmental impact, in terms of additional car dependent commuting and on the character of the rural areas concerned, that will tend to undermine the viability of normal farming activities in those areas. Such development can also make the identification of routes and locations for the infrastructure needed to cater for national, regional and local development more difficult, thus undermining its economic viability.

To deal with these residential development trends, development plans must include measures to improve the attractiveness of towns and villages, with a view to promoting improved housing supply, affordability and design quality in those towns and villages. As stated above in relation to urban generated housing, development driven by cities and larger towns should take place within their built up areas or on lands identified, through the development plan process, for integrated, serviced and sustainable development. Well-planned development that extends urban areas to cater for new residential, commercial or other development, should not be prejudiced by prior, uncoordinated and ad hoc development of an excessive number of single houses.

As part of the response to the housing needs of a growing population, local authorities need to ensure that where new development is proposed in smaller towns and villages, this is of a design, character and scale that is in keeping with its context. This can be achieved by preparing detailed local plans and design frameworks, to ensure that new development adds to a village or town in urban design terms and that the settlement in question grows in an orderly and planned fashion. This is particularly relevant to smaller towns and villages close to the cities and main towns that are experiencing rapid growth.

Additionally, such development should aim to promote a high quality living environment and enhanced public transport usage, in preference to increasing reliance on car based commuting. Development plans should focus in particular on development possibilities in smaller towns and villages with ready access to public transport networks. Development plans also need to identify policies for ensuring the development in these towns of the economic and social infrastructure needed to support employment options and residential development.

### **Housing in rural areas with a traditionally strong agricultural base**

Many parts of the Midlands, the Border, the South East, the South and South West, traditionally have had a strong agricultural base that gave rise to an extensive network of smaller rural towns, villages and other settlements. This network of smaller towns and villages represents an important resource with much potential for additional development and population. Again, such smaller settlements would cater for the preference of people for a rural based lifestyle, while working in nearby areas, taking pressure off development in the open countryside. Additional development would help to support the viability of various services. However, the potential for development in smaller towns and villages needs to be unlocked with the support of public and private investment in essential infrastructure to enhance their attractiveness.

County development plans therefore need to recognise the resource that is the rural village and small town. Such plans should promote policies that incorporate a presumption in favour of appropriate development in villages and small towns, together with specific and practical measures in terms of providing serviced land and improved amenities that support and encourage the development of these towns and villages.

### **Residential development in structurally weak rural areas**

The weaker agricultural base and the weak urban structure in other parts of the Border, Midlands and in the West have led to population and economic decline. These areas are generally distant from major urban areas and the associated pressure for residential development. In general, any demand for permanent residential development in these areas should be accommodated as it arises, subject to good practice in matters such as design, location and protection of landscape and environmentally sensitive areas.

The long-term answer to strengthening structurally weak areas requires the strengthening of the structure of villages and towns in these areas. This process can be supported through the provision of services and encouraging investment in tourism supports, such as restaurant facilities and visitor accommodation, that harness in a sustainable way the potential of important local resources, such as the natural and cultural heritage, attractive landscapes and inland waterways. County development plans and county strategies should therefore contain policies of reinforcing weaker settlements to create more attractive conditions to support investment in rural development opportunities. Measures to be considered include public and private investment in the provision of water services, in-fill and new development opportunities, design frameworks and the provision of sites in villages and smaller towns.

### **Catering for housing development in areas with distinctive settlement patterns**

In some western seaboard areas, notably in Donegal, Mayo, Galway, Clare, Kerry and West Cork, distinctive settlement patterns have evolved in the form of small clusters of housing. There is a need to recognise this distinctiveness, while at the same time protecting valuable landscape resources and reinforcing rural communities. This can be achieved by seeking to address, within the development plan process, the extent to which existing clusters can be strengthened through appropriately scaled ‘in-fill’ development and avoiding linear or ribbon development. At the same time, it will be important to safeguard key resources, such as landscape and habitats.

### **Second Homes and Holiday Home Development**

Some scenic areas of the country, particularly in coastal and lakeside locations, are experiencing development pressures arising from the growing trend of building second homes and developing holiday home accommodation. This process is being driven by the increasing affluence of Irish people, the needs of the domestic tourism industry and the increasing levels of leisure time available.



Well-located and appropriately scaled second-home and holiday home development can act as a revitalising force in economic terms, particularly in areas that are structurally weak, but an emphasis is needed on clustering such tourism driven development in or adjoining small towns and villages.

Second home and holiday home type development can raise concerns regarding long-term sustainability, effects on the affordability of housing in rural areas for permanent rural dwellers and the incremental effect on the character of some smaller towns and villages where large-scale holiday home type development has taken place. In addressing this issue, development plans need to seek a balance between supporting a well-diversified rural economy and the protection of the environmental assets that attract visitors to an area.

Measures to be considered include

- integrated framework plans for rural development which identify locations for appropriate and sustainable development opportunities
- supporting affordability for rural dwellers in the context of housing strategies under Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2000
- integrated village and town plans that identify reasonable development needs for permanent as well as second homes or holiday homes, in balance with each other
- careful consideration of development proposals in environmentally or visually vulnerable areas, including areas of cultural heritage, landscape and local amenity value.

### Further rural housing policy development

Like other developments, rural housing can raise difficult land use issues that must be managed to ensure the proper planning and sustainable development of the country. This Strategy sets out key framework considerations. Further detailed rural settlement policies relevant to the specific circumstances of rural settlement land use for different parts of the country will have to be worked out as part of the regional guidelines and development plan process, having regard to the broad principles set out in this Strategy. The essential aim of this Strategy's overall framework is to ensure that the economic, social and environmental assets of rural Ireland are protected in the interests of the vital contribution they can make to achieving balanced regional development.

The Department of the Environment and Local Government will continue to monitor the progress of rural settlement policies. The Department will issue planning guidelines on rural housing to promote best practice, following public consultation.

## 5.4 Enhancing Quality of Life

### 5.4.1 Quality of Life Considerations in Different Areas

There can be a tendency, in considering ways of promoting more balanced development, to emphasise physical infrastructure such as roads, public transport, water services, energy and telecommunications. However, extensive studies in Ireland and abroad show clearly that infrastructure on its own does not deliver balanced development. There are many other economic and social factors that also influence spatial development. The social factors include

- the size and age profile of the country's population
- people's preferences in terms of quality of life (which vary according to age and background)
- education and health provision.

There are relationships between people's preferences, the location of social infrastructure (such as schools, third-level institutions, healthcare, sporting and cultural facilities) and the location of jobs and physical infrastructure. In combination these relationships drive patterns of movement and settlement in the population.

Discernible trends in Ireland include

- the attraction of major cities and other larger urban areas for younger people
- the appeal of certain medium sized towns
- the difficulty in maintaining social facilities in some rural areas
- the difficulty with accessibility to services and facilities in remoter rural areas.

The quality of life in the places to which different people are attracted has an important influence on the development of policies aimed at regional balance. In a spatial sense policy issues arise in relation to the following broad types of areas

- larger urban areas
- medium-sized urban areas
- rural areas.

### 5.4.2 Larger Urban Areas

Internationally mobile labour with ‘in-demand’ skills has particular preferences. People in this category are often attracted to cities and larger towns, where there is a vibrant social and cultural life, coupled with broad employment opportunities and a wide range of services including education, healthcare and childcare facilities, transport systems and ready access to entertainment and amenity facilities. In Ireland, certain cities and towns have developed strong economies around their power. The elements that contribute to the attractiveness of such places include

- a thriving, human-scale, cultural and social environment, concentrated around distinctive street patterns, mixes of restaurants, cafés, bars and attractive shops
- a high quality physical setting in terms of sensitive conservation of heritage buildings, contemporary architecture, street paving, formal and high quality public spaces and parks
- pedestrian friendly zones.

If balanced regional development is to work, the spatial structure outlined in Section 3 must be supported by policies aimed at enhancing the attractiveness of areas for people. Physical and cultural liveliness will be required to ensure that there is a combination of attractive social and cultural facilities for both people and business. The following are examples at the gateway level

- the potential of the central parts of Cork City to thrive around a rejuvenation of the docks precinct as suggested in the Cork Area Strategic Plan (CASP), combined with other distinctive historic, retailing or university districts
- the possibilities for enhancing the central part of Limerick as a human-scale, traffic restricted district embracing the city’s historical and cultural heritage, thus complementing Limerick’s proven capacity for innovation and technological prowess
- opportunities for consolidating Waterford City around the River Suir, with particular emphasis on the possibilities for developing the North Docks precinct
- building on the appeal of waterways in the vicinity of the linked centre gateway for the Midlands, to spearhead the emergence of cultural and socially attractive districts on the lines of those already achieved in places like Athlone with the support of recent urban renewal initiatives
- building on the progress made to date in enhancing the physical fabric and improving cultural and leisure amenities in Sligo and Dundalk.

Progress towards more successful and attractive larger urban areas will continue to require targeted, area-based measures. These must continue to tackle areas of disadvantage, in the inner city areas and in major concentrations of social housing development on the periphery of cities and towns. In a spatial sense, the aims of such targeted measures must include the achievement of more cohesive and integrated local urban communities. The National Anti-Poverty Strategy sets out measures needed to assist in achieving this objective.

The issue of innovation is central to more spatially balanced forms of development. In the increasingly knowledge-based business environment, capacity for innovation will be the effective determinant of attractiveness from a business perspective. Bearing in mind the spatial distribution of third level educational facilities in Ireland, certain strategic considerations arise for the future.

The effectiveness of education, research and development services provided by third level facilities for the business community is critically important. The potential contributions of third level institutions, through innovation capacity and business linkages, suggests that there is a need to enhance their roles in support of business development.

There is also a need to look to co-ordinated, integrated and complementary development policies for third-level institutions in Cork, Galway, Limerick and Waterford to support the urban networking options described in Section 3.

### 5.4.3 Medium Sized Towns

Many people are attached to a more rural way of life, with its emphasis on the importance of community. Places that offer a good range of services, such as a choice of primary and secondary schooling, retailing, employment, social and sporting facilities and access to national transport networks, are also appealing. Throughout most of the country, there is a reasonable distribution of medium sized towns that combine a largely rural setting with a good range of services. Such towns can have significant power to attract.

However, to thrive and develop into the future, such towns may need to look to emerging possibilities to act as networks offering a range of services similar to those in larger towns. This approach would benefit these towns themselves and their rural hinterlands. Rather than attempting to replicate a similar level of service in every town, the future development of facilities such as schools, hospitals, sports facilities and cultural centres might be based around the development of excellence in different towns. These towns could be linked through improved transport facilities and information, thus pooling resources and establishing a range of services similar to those in larger towns.

Within medium-sized towns, the sensitive conservation and use of heritage buildings and the physical quality of public areas such as footpaths, amenity areas and their security also make an important contribution to quality of life.

### 5.4.4 Services in Rural Areas

In more rural parts, it is not possible to make every type of service provided in a larger town available in the immediate locality. However for many people, a high quality natural environment, with the strong sense of community that exists in many parts of small town/rural Ireland is preferred to the immediate availability of the facilities provided in larger towns.

How best to protect and enhance these aspects of rural life, while at the same improving access to social and cultural facilities, is an important aspect of the NSS.

As described elsewhere in this Strategy, rural areas have undergone and will continue to experience a process of structural change. The declining numbers of people involved in agriculture has affected the viability of many services. Acknowledging the structural changes underway, the challenge is to find a way of supporting the future establishment of viable networks of rural services, from post-offices, to banks, childcare facilities, shops and rural public transport.

For such viable networks to flourish and sustain a rural way of life, rural settlements will play a key role. Many small towns and villages find it difficult to sustain local services and smaller scale development possibilities. However, policies designed to consolidate the small town or village, with the support for example of small housing developments and local enterprise units, would assist in sustaining them and their store of social and other services into the future.

The following are additional dimensions to rural quality of life.

In rural areas close to the larger urban centres, or close to road and public transport networks such as railways, strengthened rural settlement supports the development of rural public transport options. These would have the added benefit of enhancing access to local towns providing healthcare and education facilities, retailing etc.

In remoter rural areas, where access can be particularly difficult, there are special access issues that require consideration and which are beyond the scope of the spatial principles which can be laid out in this Strategy. For example, outreach facilities in the healthcare area or tailored physical access options for emergency needs are issues to be dealt with in the context of the development of the relevant sectoral policies.

#### 5.4.5 A Hierarchy of Access to Social Infrastructure

The enhancement of quality of life, through integrating the provision of social infrastructure with policies that affect where people live and work, is dependent on the fact that different types of infrastructure are appropriate to different points within the urban and rural structure.

For example, if hospitals or third level educational establishments are to support specialist, high-quality functions, they need to attain a certain threshold of size. Given this, such functions will tend to develop in larger settlements. For smaller communities to function well, there is a need to sustain strong community infrastructures, such as a multi-purpose hall, primary school, post office and local shop or pub.

Figure 5.1, based on a model provided by South Tipperary County Development Board, illustrates the foregoing by outlining the patterns of service provision that are likely to be appropriate at different levels ranging from the village to small town, county town and city levels.

A number of policy issues arise from this, which will help to inform the development plans of local authorities in particular.

There is a strong relationship between settlement size and the levels of service that can be supported. However, through good quality roads, public transport, information about services and appropriate outreach provision of services, improved accessibility can be secured to a wider range of services.

County development plans need to address the issue of settlement structure and service integration at a strategic level for their areas, by addressing gaps where these exist. Examples would include

- establishing a network of local centres, district centres and a county centre, supporting the planning of the appropriate levels of service to be promoted at different levels in the hierarchy of towns
- identifying particular villages to be strengthened in response to particular needs of the rural community
- establishing urban and rural networks by reference to the availability of, or prospects for developing rural public transport options
- integrating policies dealing with where people live and work with appropriate environmental considerations such as the availability of good quality water services.

## 5.5 Environmental Quality

The environment encompasses the natural and cultural heritage. This gives the environment two defining attributes:

- it is part of our national endowment
- its form and characteristics derive from both natural and human processes.

These processes have continued to interact in Ireland for thousands of years. This is most visibly evident in landscapes that are the product of interaction between natural and human processes.



As both of these processes are dynamic, the environment is continually changing. Policies must recognise this dynamism and seek to work with and creatively direct change rather than aim to maintain a static state of the environment.

The quality and character of Ireland's environment make a major contribution to national identity and to the green image of the country. This is an image defined in part by the outstanding and large-scale features of mountains, lakes, rivers, bogs and sea — particularly in the landscapes of places like Kerry, Connemara, Donegal and the Burren.

In addition, the multitude of other elements that combine to make the face of Ireland — clean water, biological diversity, historic buildings and structures — make an important contribution to the totality of the picture.

Ireland's national aims for achieving sustainable development point to three policy issues relating to the environment:

- an international responsibility to present and future generations which combines the concepts of sustainability and good stewardship
- the role of the environment in economic development
- the role of the environment in contributing to the quality of life of people.

International responsibility recognises that Ireland's natural and cultural environment is part of a shared European and world inheritance. The various components of that environment have to be safeguarded for their own intrinsic values. Any loss of part of this is a diminution of the riches of the world.

In addition to the idea of sharing, there is the idea of inter-relatedness. How we use our environment and its resources can have impacts upon the rest of the world. The use of fossil fuels and their contribution to global warming is a prime example of such environmental interaction.

In economic development, the environment provides a resource base that supports a wide range of activities that includes agriculture, forestry, fishing, aquaculture, mineral use, energy use, industry, services and tourism.

For these activities, the aim should be to ensure that the resources are used in sustainable ways that put as much emphasis as possible on their renewability.

More generally, the environment also has an economic role in adding to the attractions of the country, and of different places within the country, for enterprise and people. This is part of the social role through which the environment contributes to the quality of life of people. There are different spatial dimensions to this — from the immediate surroundings of a home to the wider settings of neighbourhood and town, to countryside and coast. The benefits can vary from active recreational uses to passive use in terms of viewing scenic landscapes. These benefits depend on appropriate accessibility for people to the different experiences offered by the environment.

The NSS does not replace or re-state environmental policies generally. However, development arising from the NSS will be implemented within the framework of strong and ambitious policies for the protection of the environment and policies to integrate environmental considerations into sectoral policies. Policy and action in this regard will focus, on limitations on greenhouse gas emissions in the context of the *National Climate Change Strategy* (2000), measures to support sustainable agriculture, and initiatives to address the impact of transport on the environment.

The NSS recognises that the environment is a prime ingredient of the potential of the country as a whole, and of different areas within the country. Looking at the environment in this way not only points to the developmental possibilities which it offers, but also to the fact that it is a potential that can be eroded if it is not managed carefully.

The EU Directive on Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) will play an important role in ensuring that environmental issues are integrated into the implementation of the NSS. SEA requires assessment of the likely significant environmental effects of plans and programmes prior to their adoption. From July 2004<sup>15</sup>, regional planning

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<sup>15</sup> Transposition of the Directive into National Law is required by that date.

guidelines and city and county development plans which will support the implementation of this Strategy will undergo Strategic Environmental Assessment.

The environment is of prime importance in enhancing Ireland's competitiveness in the global market place. The spatial dimensions of this within Ireland are set out below under three headings derived from the broad strategic spatial roles for different parts of the country identified earlier in this Strategy. These dimensions are set out as considerations to be addressed in regional guidelines and strategies, with a view to their more detailed expression and delivery at county and local levels.

### Within the Consolidating and Strengthening Areas

In the **Consolidating** and **Strengthening** areas there are gateways, hubs and other large towns, together with extensive rural areas under strong urban influence. For large parts of these areas, the prime consideration from an environmental point of view is to maintain the distinction between the cities, the towns and the countryside, to prevent the further erosion of the respective advantages of both rural and urban areas. This can be expressed as putting in place, through regional and county level plans and strategies, a *Green Structure*, the objectives of which would be

- to prevent urban sprawl
- to reduce the loss of agricultural and other land to urban uses
- to protect rural identity and reduce disruption to farming by keeping rural-urban distinctions as clear as possible
- to create a green setting for cities and towns which will provide people with opportunities for outdoor recreation within easy reach
- to conserve and, where appropriate and possible, enhance biodiversity
- to protect buildings, structures and other physical elements of the cultural heritage.

The built environment provides the surroundings for the activities of the inhabitants of towns and cities. Its character and quality can provide an inspiration and a basis for cultural and social activities. These can act as a resource in developing tourism and attracting enterprise and labour. The urban heritage of our cities and towns is a particularly important environmental and economic resource that requires care and management. It is also a resource that each generation should add to through high quality architectural and urban design.

### Within the Reinforcing and Co-operating Areas

The **Reinforcing** and **Co-operating** areas are characterised, in general terms, by medium to small towns and rural areas associated with a changing or weak agricultural base. There are, of course, a variety of environmental conditions within these broad areas and the different circumstances call for particular responses. Overall, the following are the prime considerations.

Residential development should be encouraged in small towns and villages, thus supporting the economic provision of infrastructure.

Land on the better mineral soils, which may cease to be used for agriculture should be developed, where appropriate, for forestry. Examples of such areas are East Leitrim, East Mayo, Roscommon and North Galway. This would increase economic opportunities based on timber production, improve biodiversity and enhance the attractiveness of the countryside for tourism and recreation. In some areas the production of trees for biomass would be an appropriate option.

In areas of poor soils, including cutaway bog, favourable opportunities for the extensive development of wind power exist. The potential for this is particularly enhanced in areas that are close to main electricity transmission lines.

In areas where there is intensive agriculture, either on poorly drained land (such as Cavan and Monaghan) or on better land (such as North Cork and the Golden Vale), there is a potential for the alternative use of agricultural wastes for electricity generation. This would provide renewable energy and protect water quality by reducing the amount of slurry spreading.

Biomass and forestry by-products can be promoted as renewable fuel sources.

Water is a strong environmental component of these areas, for example, the river Shannon and its lakes. There are other river systems, lakes and canals that, with the Shannon system, provide a network for inland travel by water from Wexford to Donegal. The recreational and tourism potential of this water in all its aspects can support the reinforcement of this area and underpin the attractiveness of the Athlone/Tullamore/Mullingar gateway in particular.

### Within the Revitalising Area

The **Revitalising** area is characterised by remoteness from the largest centres of population in the country and the relatively poor quality of the agricultural land. However, its environment includes outstanding mountain, lake and coastal scenery and rich flora and fauna.

The prime consideration for this area is recognising that its resource potential lies in the sheer quality of its environment, and that in its economic development this quality can help to compensate for the disadvantages of remoteness. However, if environmental quality deteriorates then the potential of this area is eroded.

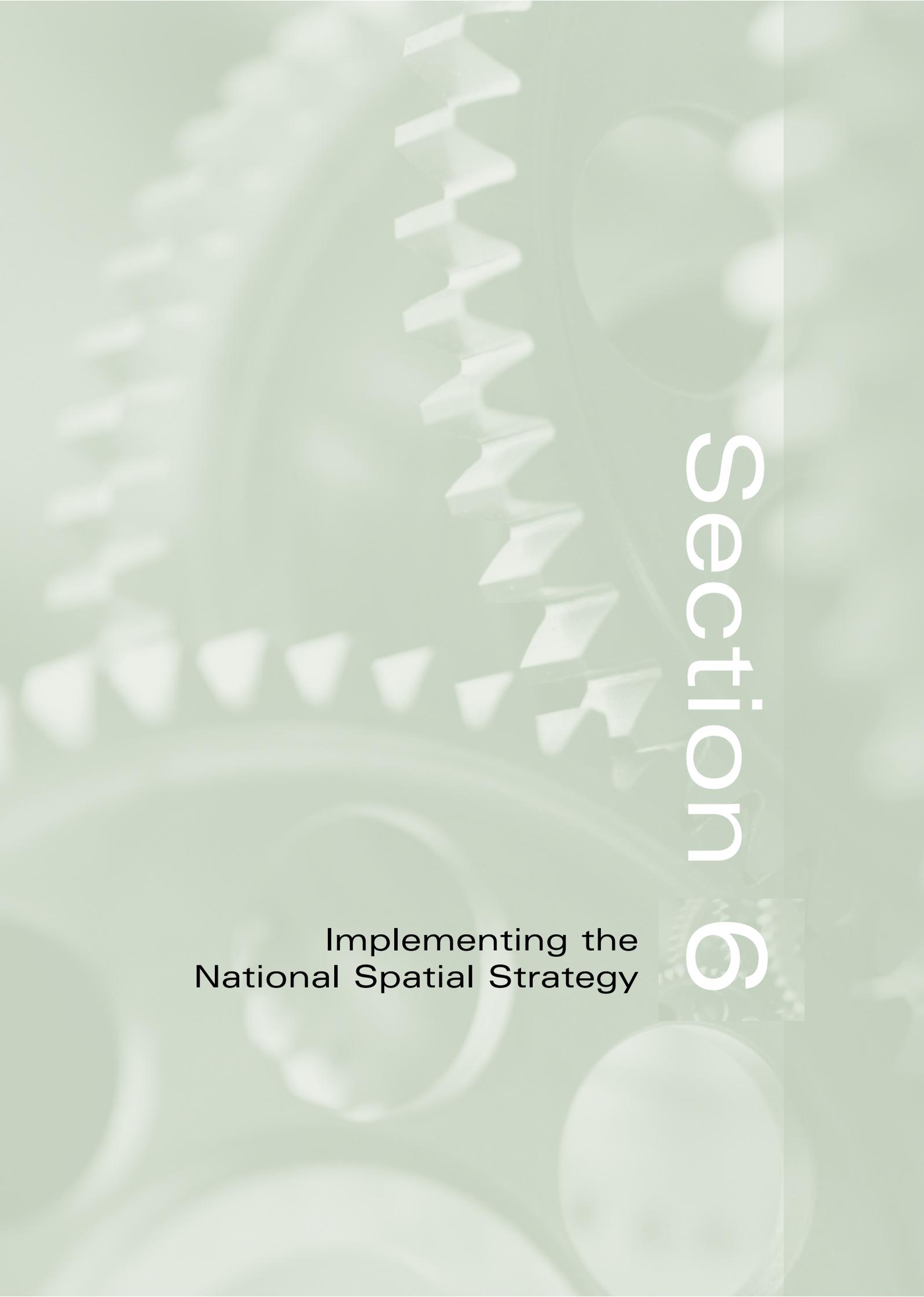
The economic realisation of this resource potential will rest on

- a discriminating tourism product, where visitors are attracted by the qualities of landscape, biodiversity, cultural heritage and a range of outdoor recreational opportunities
- attracting enterprises and people with a range of expertise and skills for whom living in smaller towns and villages provides the quality of life which they seek
- advanced communications infrastructure which can extend the range of economic activities undertaken.

The process of economic diversification is already underway in some places and can be intensified and extended.

The increased realisation of this resource potential calls for the wise management of all environmental resources in the form of landscape policies, settlement policies, biodiversity and conservation of the cultural heritage.

Coastal areas provide a scenically attractive environment that is biologically highly productive and diverse. At the same time, this environment accommodates a wide range of economic activities and recreational uses. Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) provides a holistic approach to the interactions between sectors, agencies and legal codes. The articulation of an integrated coastal zone management strategy will be taken forward by the Government Departments concerned, drawing on EU recommendations on the implementation of ICZM and national and international ICZM research and experience.



# Section 6

Implementing the  
National Spatial Strategy

### Main Points:

- Structures and mechanisms are being put in place to ensure that the NSS will influence the spatial aspects of public sector planning, policies and programmes, including future decisions on investment priorities.
- The Minister for the Environment and Local Government will lead the Strategy's implementation.
- The support of regional and local authorities will be engaged through the preparation and adoption of statutory regional planning guidelines.
- Integrated planning frameworks will be put in place to set the foundations for the process of strengthening, consolidating and developing new and existing gateways and hubs.
- A communications strategy to promote support for and provide information on the NSS, and a Monitoring Committee representative of key interest groups, will be put in place.
- Implementation of the National Spatial Strategy will fall into three phases.
  - (1) 2003: The foundations for implementing the NSS will be laid.
  - (2) 2003-2006: The process of mobilising local interests and integrating the NSS approach into various plans and programmes will be completed.
  - (3) Post 2006: The implementation process continues with the benefits of the Strategy in regional development terms becoming increasingly apparent.

The activities of many organisations in the public and private sector whose policies, programmes and decisions significantly influence spatial development must be integrated in order to achieve the NSS objective of more balanced regional development.

These organisations include

- Government, including government departments
- agencies of Government, particularly those involved with development promotion and physical or social infrastructure provision, i.e. the enterprise development agencies, National Roads Authority, Higher Education Authority etc
- regional assemblies, regional and local authorities and city and county development boards (CDBs)
- the private sector, including infrastructure providers in that sector.

Integrating the activities of the various organisations will require

- the establishment of a clear driving force at Government level to bring those involved together to implement the NSS
- integration of the policy approach of the NSS into the plans and programmes of various public bodies, giving them clear targets and responsibilities
- the development of reliable systems of monitoring, communication and support to underpin the implementation process
- early preparation of regional planning guidelines which will be crucial in ensuring the implementation of the Strategy.

Plans setting out the actions needed to deliver more balanced regional development must be agreed and they must specify what needs to be done, when it must be done and who will do it.

## 6.1 What Must be Done

There are a number of overall priorities in implementing the NSS.

- (1) Implementation of the current National Development Plan will be a key step towards balanced regional development.
- (2) The gateways identified in the National Development Plan have an established dynamic that is driving development in their associated regions and needs to be supported. The land use and transport frameworks that have been put in place in Cork and that are being put in place in the other gateways of Galway, Limerick and Waterford must be implemented.
- (3) Partnerships between local and national government and the private sector should be established to facilitate planning for the future roles of the new gateways proposed by the NSS.
- (4) Local and regional authorities have a key role, with the support of government and the private sector, in activating the roles identified for hubs, other towns, villages and rural areas in achieving balanced regional development. They must arrange for the timely preparation and implementation of regional guidelines, development plans and integrated spatial planning frameworks that are consistent with the NSS.

Taking these overall priorities, the specific actions that need to be put in train arising from the Government's decision to implement the NSS are set out below.

### 6.1.1 Establishing a Driving Force

Establishing a driving force behind the NSS means (a) Government underpinning its status and mandating its full implementation, (b) embedding it in the programmes of all relevant departments and agencies, and (c) assigning clear responsibility for supporting its delivery. Specifically, the Government has made the following decisions.

- Relevant public sector policies and programmes will have to be consistent with the NSS and will be required to demonstrate such consistency.
- The Cabinet Sub-Committee on Housing, Infrastructure and Public Private Partnerships will monitor the implementation of the NSS.
- Government departments and agencies will put structures and mechanisms in place to support the NSS and ensure it is embedded in their policies and programmes. They will report to the Cabinet Sub-Committee as required.
- The Minister for the Environment and Local Government will be responsible for leading the implementation of the NSS, through establishing and supporting the necessary interaction, monitoring and other mechanisms to ensure consistency between the NSS and the spatial aspects of relevant public policies and programmes.
- The Department of the Environment and Local Government will establish a Committee representing all relevant departments to support implementation of the NSS.
- The Department of the Environment and Local Government will establish a clearly identifiable contact point for other departments, agencies and the private sector to access information regarding this Strategy and to service the implementation process.
- The NSS will be given any statutory support it requires. The Minister for the Environment and Local Government will, therefore, consider the need for legislative provisions to support the NSS itself, to require consistency between the NSS and other relevant plans and programmes, and to supplement current provisions in planning legislation. As a first step, the provisions of the Planning and Development Act 2000 will require that this Strategy be integrated with regional planning guidelines and county and city development plans.

- Regional and local authorities will be required to implement the NSS, especially through regional planning guidelines and local development plans and strategies, which will have to be consistent with the NSS and will be required to demonstrate such consistency.

These measures reflect the strong commitment by Government to the NSS. This commitment, together with the greater certainty of direction provided by the Strategy, establishes a basis for the private sector to participate fully in achieving the objectives of the Strategy and to respond to it in bringing forward its own investment proposals.

### 6.1.2 Integration with Other Plans, Policies and Programmes

To support and develop the approach set out in the NSS, the following actions will be taken.

Government departments and agencies will establish mechanisms to ensure and demonstrate that their policies and plans are consistent with the NSS.

Regional authorities will immediately commence the preparation of regional planning guidelines under the Planning and Development Act 2000 to give effect to the NSS at regional level. These guidelines will draw on relevant local plans and strategies such as city and county development board strategies. This will offer an opportunity for further consultations with all relevant parties as to the basis on which NSS policies are elaborated at regional level. The Department of the Environment and Local Government will support regional authorities in this work.

Implementation of the NSS will be an important factor in the prioritisation by Government of capital investment, and in allocations by Ministers of the sectoral levels of investment decided on by the Government.

The NSS will be a key input into the 2003 mid-term review of the National Development Plan, focusing in particular on the development of the identified gateways. The NSS will also be a key element in the identification of investment priorities in the post-NDP period and in the development of any future investment frameworks.

Integrated spatial planning frameworks, including land-use and transportation elements, will be prepared and adopted by the local authorities or combinations of authorities responsible for the development of new gateways and hubs. Integrated spatial planning frameworks for existing gateways that are in the course of preparation will be completed and adopted.

The Government will take full account of the NSS in moving forward the progressive decentralisation of Government offices and agencies.

The Department of the Environment and Local Government will co-ordinate and pursue the cross-border spatial co-operation aspects of the Strategy's implementation. Relevant departments and agencies will pursue the implementation of these cross-border aspects within the co-ordination context provided by the Department of the Environment and Local Government.

The test for consistency between relevant plans and programmes and the NSS will rest on the extent to which they support and foster balanced spatial development. This includes the achievement of critical mass in the gateways and hubs to lead the drive towards more balanced development.

### 6.1.3 National Spatial Data Infrastructure

A National Spatial Data Infrastructure (NSDI) is generally recognised to consist of the technology, policies, standards, human resources and related activities necessary to acquire, process, distribute, use, maintain and preserve spatial data. The Government has committed to developing a National Spatial Data Infrastructure in its *New Connections Action Plan on the Information Society* (section 3.2.10).

The benefits of an NSDI are seen as being

Facilitating the efficient collection, sharing and dissemination of spatial data amongst all levels of government institutions, as well as the public and private sectors, to address issues affecting the State's physical, economic and social well-being.

Improving the quality of spatial data through ensuring a co-ordinated approach for developing spatial data standards applying to collecting, maintaining, distributing, using and preserving data.

Enabling cost effective public and private policy development, management and operations through the use of consistent standards.

The establishment of the National Spatial Data Infrastructure will support the implementation of this Strategy by enhancing the collection, availability and usability of spatial information.

#### 6.1.4 Role of Regional and Local Authorities

This Strategy sets out an overall national spatial framework. In addition to providing a framework for the actions of government, its agencies and the private sector, the key to its implementation lies in the actions of regional and local authorities. Successful local implementation will depend on the putting in place by these authorities of the necessary planning guidelines, development plans and local plans, including joint plans where appropriate, based on the legislative provisions contained in the Planning and Development Act 2000. These guidelines and plans must support the NSS in a way that is consistent with the Strategy and demonstrates such consistency.

#### 6.1.5 Communications

A communications strategy to promote support for the NSS, provide information on progress in its implementation and promote participation by public bodies, interest groups and the general public in achieving the objectives of the NSS, will be developed and implemented by the Department of the Environment and Local Government.

#### 6.1.6 Consultation, Participation and Monitoring

A Monitoring Committee representative of key interests, including government departments and state agencies, the social partners, the private sector, regional and local authorities and other relevant bodies, will be put in place by the Department of the Environment and Local Government. This committee will facilitate consultation with and participation of relevant interests in monitoring progress on the implementation of the Strategy.



Monitoring arrangements for the NSS and appropriate performance indicators will be developed by the Department of the Environment and Local Government in consultation with relevant bodies such as the NDP/CSF Evaluation Unit of the Department of Finance, CSO, ESRI, NESC and Forfás. Periodic reports to Government will be prepared in relation to progress being made in the implementation of the NSS.

## 6.2 A Timetable for implementation

The NSS provides a robust and realistic framework for achieving balanced regional development. Initiating and consolidating the implementation of the National Spatial Strategy will fall into three phases.

**(1) 2003.** The foundations for implementing the NSS will be laid. This will include

- mobilising regional and local authorities and county/city development boards to support and implement the spatial policies and the spatial structure of the NSS, especially through the preparation of regional planning guidelines
- Departments and agencies taking the necessary action to reflect the NSS approach within the spatial aspects of their own plans and programmes
- deciding if further legislation to support the NSS is needed and if so enacting this legislation
- inputting to the mid-term review of the National Development Plan, with a particular focus on the development of the identified gateways.

**(2) 2003-2006.** The process of integrating the NSS approach into other plans and programmes will be completed, as will the process of mobilising local interests to work with and develop the NSS approach. In particular, this will include

- adopting and promoting integrated spatial development frameworks for the gateways, and local development frameworks for the hubs, to address socio-economic and physical development within the NSS timeframe
- identifying the types of policy priorities and supports necessary to sustain progress towards balanced regional development in the period following the current NDP.

**(3) Post 2006.** The spatial policy approach set out in the NSS will by this time be firmly rooted as a result of the measures put in place in the previous phases. The process of implementation will continue, with the benefits of the NSS becoming increasingly apparent and real, particularly as the Strategy comes to have a major influence on future planning and investment strategies.

## 6.3 Statutory Support

The Government is committed to ensuring that the NSS has any statutory support it requires. The Department of the Environment and Local Government will, therefore, consider the form of statutory support required to ensure that the NSS is fully reflected in relevant plans and programmes of government departments, agencies, regional and local authorities. In considering this, account will be taken of the existing statutory provisions relating to the planning functions of regional and local authorities.

Under current provisions, the Planning and Development Act 2000 provides that county and city development plans will in so far as is practicable, be consistent with such national plans, policies or strategies as the Minister for the Environment and Local Government determines relate to proper planning and sustainable development. A planning authority must also have regard to any current regional planning guidelines when making and adopting a development plan. The Act also provides that a local area plan must be consistent with the relevant city or county development plan.

With regard to regional planning guidelines, the Act gives regional authorities specific powers to prepare regional planning guidelines. It lists issues which guidelines may cover and provides that, when making guidelines, regional authorities must, take account of any relevant policies or objectives of the Government or a Minister of the Government.

Such policies or objectives include any national plans, policies or strategies specified by the Minister for the Environment and Local Government to be of relevance to the determination of strategic planning policies. As a first step, pending consideration of the need for any further legislative provisions, the Minister for the Environment and Local Government will apply the provisions in the Planning and Development Act 2000 to

- specify that regional authorities in making regional planning guidelines must take account of the National Spatial Strategy
- determine that city and county development plans must, as far as is practicable, be consistent with the National Spatial Strategy.

The NSS is a long-term framework. It will take some time to ensure that other plans and strategies are aligned with its overall direction. However, as current plans and strategies of public bodies come up for review and as new plans or strategies are embarked upon, they must take full account of the provisions of the NSS.

The Strategic Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area were prepared in 1999 before the NSS. The adoption of the NSS means that a review of these Strategic Planning Guidelines must now be undertaken to consider any adjustments necessary to ensure that they are in line with this overarching framework for national spatial development. That review should also evaluate the implementation of the existing guidelines and assess how effective they have been in achieving their stated objectives.

## 6.4 Gateways and Hubs – What Happens Next

The NSS is a call for action by all relevant stakeholders to work in partnership and with enthusiasm to achieve an enhanced role for gateways, hubs and their broader regions. The focus for immediate action must lie in establishing consensus on integrated spatial frameworks for land use, planning, urban design, transport and public service delivery. Such frameworks should allocate specific roles to existing agencies for delivering the aspects of the framework for which they are responsible. Local authorities have primary responsibility for driving the preparation of these frameworks and translating their provisions into statutory development plans that will guide the development process through the planning system.

The strategies should focus on the practical realisation of the gateway or hub. In some cases, more than one local authority may be involved. However, provision has been made in the Planning and Development Act 2000 and in the Local Government Act 2001 for the preparation of joint plans and the use of joint committees between adjacent local authorities to address cross boundary issues, including transportation issues. Regional authorities, in co-operation with the local authorities and city and county development boards in different areas, also have a role to play. An illustration of the key steps to be taken to realise the vision for any particular gateway or hub would include

- mobilisation of the appropriate civic, business and community interests to establish a consensus on the objectives for the gateway or hub and future development issues
- production of the appropriate strategies to guide development under a variety of headings including planning, land-use and transport, urban design frameworks, and business plans
- identification and commitment to key actions, engagement of agencies responsible and agreement on timescales for implementation.

The development and implementation of future national investment proposals will provide opportunities for local authorities and other partners, such as the private sector and local interest groups, to mobilise around the NSS proposals relating to the development of the gateways and hubs. The process of mobilisation will be critical to establish local consensus and commitment to the integrated spatial planning frameworks for the gateways and hubs.

## Facilitating Urban Networks

To support the effective functioning of two or three towns as a linked gateway or hub, the relevant local authorities at the county and town level with functions in relation to the town will need to collaborate. This will require the integration of their development strategies as they relate to the towns concerned and their surrounding catchment areas to achieve the critical mass needed to drive national and regional development.

The initial focus should be on developing strategies for the complementary development of the towns in the network. These strategies should be developed in partnership between the relevant local authorities supported by the city and county development boards, other agencies as well as business and community interests. The strategies for urban networks should focus on harnessing and extending the strengths of the towns involved, their individual and complementary capabilities and their potential for economic development. The following approach should be used.

Joint development groups of a manageable size should be established between the relevant local, regional and government bodies, in partnership with local elected representatives and community interests.

The development frameworks for the urban network should be prepared on a partnership basis to

- identify the particular strengths and weaknesses of individual towns
- allocate particular development roles to particular towns in terms of employment, housing, entertainment, education, culture and heritage etc
- develop policy for appropriate land uses in the areas between towns taking account of the housing and green structure policies set out in Section 5
- prepare proposals for the complementary physical, economic and social development of the individual towns taking account of their identified roles
- identify the key actions, agencies responsible and timescales for implementation
- prepare proposals for the augmentation of physical and other connections between individual towns and throughout the area concerned, taking account of practical, operational and spatial considerations
- adjust or review local development plans as necessary

The feasibility of putting financial and other arrangements in place which offer real incentives for the relevant authorities to work in partnership for mutual benefit should be explored by those authorities.



The Department of the Environment and Local Government will provide advice and guidance to support the relevant towns in implementing this urban network type model in the Irish context.

## 6.5 Strategies at Regional and City/County Level

### Regional Strategies

Under the Regional Authorities Establishment Order 1993, regional authorities are required to prepare regional reports every five years covering

- a review of the overall development requirements of their regions
- a review of the development plans of local authorities in the region and, where relevant, the development plans of local authorities in adjoining regions
- a review of the provision of public services in, or relating to, or affecting the region.

The regional reports address, from a regional viewpoint, many of the issues which the National Spatial Strategy addresses from a national standpoint. Regional reports were first published in 1996, with the next round due for publication in 2001. The regional reports due in 2001 were postponed, to enable them to take account in particular of the National Spatial Strategy and the strategies for economic, social and cultural development which have been prepared by county and city development boards.

Preparation of regional planning guidelines in 2003, consistent with the NSS, in tandem with new regional reports, should be seen as part of a single process. This provides an opportunity for the regional authorities to draw up the reports and guidelines, taking into account the socio-economic context emerging from the County and City Development Board strategies.

The Government has decided that responsibility for putting in place the regional frameworks necessary to support the implementation of the National Spatial Strategy as it relates to the Greater Dublin Area will rest with the proposed new body for co-ordinating land use and transport in the area. Pending the establishment of the new body, responsibility will lie with the current structures for strategic land use and transport in the Greater Dublin Area.

### The Role of Regional Assemblies

The regional assemblies have a clear mandate with regard to the implementation of the National Development Plan, management of regional Operational Programmes and the co-ordination of regional development policy. The assemblies will provide any support they can to regional authorities in the preparation of regional planning guidelines. The monitoring committees of the regional assemblies will take account of the NSS in their co-ordination role and, in particular, in their mid-term evaluation of the NDP in 2003.

### Plans and Strategies at City and County levels

The emphasis in the arrangements for delivering the NSS is on building upon existing structures rather than creating new agencies.

City and county development plans and strategies are a key point of contact between the NSS at the national level and issues at local level. This reflects the cross-cutting nature of the NSS itself. It also reflects the fact that the City and County Development Boards are integrating the activities of organisations, groups and agencies concerned with socio-economic and other development at the local level. In addition, there is much potential for the co-ordination of the CDB function with the forward planning functions of local authorities under planning legislation. In particular close co-ordination is necessary between city and county development plans setting out the physical development framework, and CDB strategies establishing the socio-economic context.



# Section

# 7

Conclusion

The remarkable transformation of the Irish economy in the last decade came about because certain crucial strategic, long term and farsighted policies were put in place. These included, for example, the decision to invest heavily in the education system; the introduction of free secondary education and school transport in the 1960s; the movement towards a more open economic model and EU membership in the 1970s and the social partnership approach adopted in the 1990s. These supported other factors such as the expansion of the technology and services sector in Ireland.

Common to all of these individual policy ventures was a sense of knowing what needed to be done and taking a long-term view in terms of achieving it. A longer-term visionary approach is the hallmark of a mature, stable and dynamic country that can sustain good long-term economic prospects. In this context, continual vigilance and responsiveness to changing global and national trends will be required to maintain Ireland's recent success. The NSS is part of the many responses that will be required into the future to achieve

- continuing national economic and employment growth
- consolidation and improvement of Ireland's international competitiveness
- balanced regional development
- social inclusion
- strong policies for environmental protection.

These policies will need to be formulated and implemented in an integrated way to support the objective of sustainable development.

The National Spatial Strategy adds a spatial dimension to these priority policies. A realistic yet ambitious framework is now in place to be used and developed by the various partners in progressing towards the national objective of balanced regional development.



# A paper on judices

# Appendix I:

## Preparation of the NSS and Response to Public Consultation

From the outset, the approach taken to the *process* of preparing the NSS has been aimed at building ownership and wide consensus around the *product* i.e. the NSS itself. In particular, there has been an emphasis on

- promoting a high level of public awareness and consensus on the NSS and on the new directions it is setting
- building support for mutually beneficial policies between relevant government departments, agencies etc.
- basing the measures proposed on a strong analytic base.

In response to this, the defining features in the process of preparing the NSS have been

- **consultative**, across a wide spectrum involving the social partners, local and regional authorities and many different interest groups both North and South
- **cross-departmental**, through a Steering Group representative of the relevant government departments
- **analytical**, in terms of extensive new spatial analysis at national level into why Ireland is developing in the way it is, drawing also on a range of national and international research and expertise in this area.

The outcome of this approach is a high level of awareness and understanding of the strategic choices that need to be made. This awareness has been strengthened through

- an initial consultation phase on what the NSS should address
- presentations of key research findings and discussion of strategic issues at national and regional events, to which a wide range of representative interests were invited
- interactions with government departments, agencies, and key social and economic interests.

The consultation process culminated in the publication in September 2001 of the NSS Public Consultation Paper, *Indications for the Way Ahead*. In that document the broad elements of a suggested NSS framework were set out. A wide range of submissions were received from social partners, local and regional authorities, infrastructure providers, public and private, various interest groups and the general public. Below is a summary analysis of the responses received and a list of the organisations and individuals who made responses.

In overall terms, while many different issues were raised, most responses supported the broad elements of the emerging NSS framework. Many of the detailed suggestions offered have been incorporated in this Strategy.

Two hundred and fifty-nine submissions were received in response to the Public Consultation paper 'Indications for the Way Ahead'. The list of organisations and individuals who made submissions in response to the consultation paper is at the end of this Appendix.

Within the consultation document four specific questions were put forward i.e

### Question 1

*Do the guiding vision and principles set out in section 1 of the consultation paper represent a basis for balanced spatial development to which you can subscribe?*

### Question 2

*Does viewing Ireland in terms of Functional Areas, as set out in this consultation paper, each of which has different characteristics and within each of which different issues arise, provide a useful explanation for the basis on which the country functions spatially?*

As a consequence, is it a valid proposition that different kinds of responses will be needed in different areas to achieve more balanced regional development?

**Question 3**

*Will the development of Functional Areas be best served by a spatial planning approach that seeks to energise them by focusing on the strengths of a limited number of places in a way which, at the same time, allows all parts of Functional Areas to realise their potential?*

**Question 4**

*Is the range of indications for finalising the form and detail of the National Spatial Strategy appropriate and comprehensive?*

While a significant number of submissions structured their responses in line with these questions, others commented on different aspects. It has been possible to evaluate, through the direct and indirect responses to these questions, the level of support for the suggested approaches and guiding principles set out for the preparation of the NSS. The variations in the responses to these questions have been set out on the attached table.

**Table 1**

Question No	Q1	Q2	Q2a	Q3	Q4
<b>% of submissions responding to this question</b>	55.15%	56.42%	32.35%	48.74%	33.62%
<b>Of which the following % answered:-</b>					
Yes	50.00%	25.20%	60.00%	38.02%	25.70%
Yes with comment / Reservation	39.00%	45.82%	32.00%	44.28%	53.82%
No	11.00%	28.98%	8.00%	17.70%	20.48%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

A number of main themes emerged in the submissions, which are presented here, together with the main concerns raised. The percentage of submissions commenting on each of the themes is set out below

**Table 2**

Issues / Topics	% Commenting
Gateways, Critical Mass and Potential Implementation	62.04
Functional Areas	58.15
Balanced Regional Development	45.72
Rural Areas	43.94
The Role of Dublin	42.65
Regional or Local issues	42.24
Quality of life	26.71
Cross Border issues	25.03
Identified Key Infrastructure	14.19
Various other single issues	11.16
	41.83

The main themes and concerns raised in the submission were as follows.

### Balanced Regional Development

Most submissions displayed a considerable degree of consensus on the broad thrust of the approach set out in the final public consultation paper, as the best means of achieving balanced regional development. The polycentric model referred to in the consultation paper as being appropriate in certain areas was broadly welcomed. The following are some of the main concerns expressed.

- Each region has its own uniqueness and this should be recognised.
- One of the objectives of the NSS should be to shift current gravitational forces in Ireland westwards.
- Decentralisation as a mechanism for promoting development was relevant to the NSS.
- The NSS must recognise that spatial balance is also required internally within regions.
- Peripheral areas may lose out and a targeted approach should be adopted towards them.
- The focus should be on building sustainable communities not just bringing the jobs closer to where people live.

### Gateways, Critical Mass and Potential

It was emphasised that the basis for selecting gateways needs to be transparent. It was agreed that different locations must become attractive with the right ingredients linked to critical mass and potential. There was broad agreement that to create critical mass to counterbalance Dublin, it is vital that the linkages between Galway, Limerick, Cork and Waterford be improved.

The following are some of the main concerns expressed.

- Care must be taken not to disturb the existing potential within regions.
- Speed in achieving critical mass is crucial.
- If centres too close to Cork/ Dublin are selected as gateways/hubs, they will simply become commuter towns.
- Gateway towns may receive benefits to the detriment of other towns/ rural areas.

### Functional Areas

There was some support, but also some reservations on the usefulness of 'functional areas' as set out in the consultation paper. Some submissions emphasised that the functional areas need to be seen as a starting point for planning purposes and not an end result in themselves in terms of areas with new administrative boundaries etc. It was suggested that planning for the functional areas should be operationalised through existing structures/institutions at local/regional level, if they are to be an effective tool in assisting the delivery of balanced regional development. Particular difficulties with the functional area concept were raised in some parts of the Midlands and South East.

The following are some of the main concerns expressed.

- Focussing on strengths in a limited number of places on a functional area basis may prevent other places from reaching their potential.
- Some people do not identify with functional areas.
- Functional areas as set out in the consultation paper do not in all cases relate to existing spatial linkages.
- Local and natural resources are not highlighted in the functional areas approach.
- Cross-border interaction in terms of functional areas does not receive enough emphasis.

## Rural Areas

Suggestions were made on the need to refer to generic models for rural development as part of the NSS. It was emphasised that the development of national secondary routes may be critical for development of small to medium sized towns. Many submissions emphasised that the future of agriculture and issues of rural depopulation need to be addressed.

The following were some of the main concerns raised on this topic.

- All people living in rural areas were being associated with agriculture.
- The needs of rural dwellers who are not involved in agriculture need to be addressed.
- More people would be able to live in rural areas if the water and sewerage deficiencies were addressed.
- The 'real' cost of one-off urban generated housing in rural areas includes a) consequential difficulties which can arise in establishing routes or finding locations for new infrastructure needed to support development potential, and b) its implications for the protection of the countryside.
- Rural housing was seen as the main threat to the success of the NSS and the most important spatial issue facing the Government.
- Gateway development must not be at the expense of rural areas. There must be simultaneous investment in the Gateways and the rural areas.
- The NSS should not be urban focused. Rural environment/traditional settlement patterns must be preserved to maintain the tourism value of the country.
- There must be a strategic expansion of rural villages and towns; people should be encouraged to live in rural areas.
- Quality of life in rural areas should be maintained and promoted.
- Rural enterprise must be encouraged.
- Rural areas around Dublin must be protected.
- Additional research should be carried out to examine the rural areas/small towns/gateways relationship.

## Quality of Life

A number of submissions suggested the need for greater emphasis on 'Quality of life' issues.

The following were some of the main concerns.

- NSS seems to be encouraging urban living where quality of life is seen by some as lower than in rural areas.
- More emphasis is required on the benefits and quality of life available in rural areas.
- Social, cultural, recreational and community issues should receive more attention in the NSS.
- There seems to be a belief that economic growth and competitiveness are fundamental to all our personal and environmental goals.
- Congestion, commuting, environmental depletion etc., threaten quality of life in many parts of the country.
- The NSS should focus on social and cultural goals as much as on economic goals and create sustainable communities.
- Issues of social inclusion and poverty need to be taken into account in the NSS.

## Implementation

There was agreement on the need for a body to be responsible for managing the implementation the NSS. Co-ordination/integration at inter-ministerial level was seen as necessary. Delivery of the level of infrastructure necessary to make it work was considered essential.

The following were some of the main concerns.

- There is a need for prudent advanced provision of not only hard infrastructure, but also community and social facilities.
- Plan preparation must be co-ordinated — NSS, regional, local. There is a need to place the NSS in a hierarchy of plans.
- It is now time for making hard decisions.
- More information is required on timeframe, targets etc. Specific mechanisms for implementation must be set out.
- All regions should be co-ordinated by a supervisory body to ensure that they are working together as well as competing.
- Implementation must be mandatory. The NSS must have full statutory support.
- Implementation must be robustly monitored. The NSS should be reviewed regularly.
- Regional authorities are best placed to carry out the implementation of the NSS.
- The NSS must identify spatial objectives for population resettlement, select policy instruments, and allocate investment.

### The Role of Dublin

The national importance of Dublin was recognised but it was accepted that there is also a need for a counterbalance to Dublin.

The following were some of the main concerns.

- Dublin will grow but its footprint should be curtailed e.g. the Midlands should not become a dormitory for Dublin based workers.
- Expansion of Dublin has led to loss of quality of life for many residents.
- Dublin must remain competitive, in the interest of national competitiveness.
- Outer (mid-east) counties should not be subsumed into a greater Dublin urban sprawl.
- There will be a need for different strategies related to the Dublin and Mid East regions.
- There is a need to divert traffic out of Dublin Port to other ports on the east and south east coasts.
- The growth of Dublin should be limited until its infrastructure can cope.
- The IDA should as a priority redirect investment from Dublin.
- Not all parts of Dublin area share the benefits of Dublin's international linkages.
- Dublin competes as a European city, not just as an Irish one and should be given special attention in light of this.
- The Strategic Planning Guidelines need to be complied with, to facilitate infrastructural improvements in the Greater Dublin area.
- Some areas in Dublin are still experiencing severe deprivation.

### Key Infrastructure

There was general agreement that appropriate infrastructure may need to be provided ahead of actual need, in order to change existing imbalances.

The following were some of the main points raised on this topic.

- The Dublin-Belfast corridor is central to economic growth.
- The development of the Western Corridor should be prioritised.
- Knock Airport should be developed as an industrial hub for East Mayo.
- There is a need for one hour or less access to airports from gateways/hubs.

- Rail access to Shannon Airport is required.
- A capital infrastructure programme must be put in place to combat the peripherality of the BMW region.
- A marine/ waterways resource policy is needed.
- Access roads are crucial to balanced regional development.
- The regional airports should be protected – they are key resources in facilitating balanced regional development. Shannon Airport is considered essential for balanced regional development in the Mid West and West. Regional airports should be more fully utilised.
- Development of the Shannon Estuary is important for West and Mid West areas.
- A Derry-Sligo-Galway-Limerick-Cork-Rosslare rail link (Western Strategic Rail Link) would greatly benefit the country.
- Upgrades are needed in electricity, water and broadband telecommunications infrastructure. Wind power in the West should be harnessed to greater effect.

#### Other Regional / Local issues

The following were some of the issues raised in submissions.

- Good linkage is needed between towns if the polycentric model is to work.
- Investment in north-south linkages in the Midlands and also in national secondary routes is crucial.
- Provision of education at degree and higher levels is an issue and also a barrier to inward investment.
- Waterford City should be recognised as the capital of the South East Region, having regard to its designation as a gateway.
- Shannon Airport and its status within the national context is significantly important not only for Mid West region but also the whole western seaboard.
- In some cases no shared vision for the development of cities exists at present between the relevant city councils and county councils.
- Gaeltacht areas and the islands need special consideration.

## Submissions Received in Response to Indications for the Way Ahead October-November 2001

### A

Allen, Bernard TD  
An Bord Pleanála  
An Taisce  
An Taisce – Galway Association  
Arigna LEADER Group  
Athlone Chamber of Commerce  
Athlone Urban District Council

### B

Ballina Chamber of Commerce  
Ballinamore Area Community Council Ltd.  
Biddlecombe, Bob, Dublin 7  
BMW Regional Assembly  
Bohan, Cormac, Drogheda  
Border Regional Authority  
Bowen Walsh, Peter, Co. Sligo  
Brogan, MIPI, Jim, Planning & Development Consultant  
for Forabby Ltd  
Bryan, Maurice, Rathfarnham

### C

Carlow Chamber of Commerce  
Carlow County Council  
Carlow County Development Board  
Carlow IT  
Carr, Cllr. T., Mayor of Wexford  
Castlebar UDC  
Caulfield, James, Barntown, Co. Wexford  
Cavan County Council  
Charleville Chamber of Commerce  
Clare County Council  
Clare County Development Board  
Claremorris & District IRD Co. Ltd.  
Comhairle (Citizen Information Centres)  
Comhar Iorrais Teoranta, Belmullet  
Comhdháil Oileain na hÉireann  
Community Workers Co-op  
Conaty, Patrick J, Cavan UDC  
Connacht Gold Co-op  
Construction Industry Federation  
Construction Industry Federation, Carlow/Kilkenny branch  
Coogan, Caryn, Co. Wexford  
Corby, William, Tipperary  
CORI  
Cork City Development Board  
Cork Corporation  
Cork County Council  
Cork County Development Board  
Council for the West  
Council of Directors of Institutes of Technology  
County Carlow Chamber of Commerce  
Cuffe, GK, Ballysadare, Co. Sligo

Cumas Partnership  
Cunnane, Stratton, Reynolds (John Crean on behalf of  
established clients)

### D

Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht & the Islands  
Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment  
Department of Foreign Affairs  
Department of the Marine and Natural Resources  
Department of Tourism, Sport and Recreation  
Derry City Council  
Derry City Partnership Board  
DIT – Joint submission with University of Ulster,  
Jordanstown  
Donegal County Council and CDB  
Drogheda Chamber of Commerce  
Dublin Chamber of Commerce  
Dublin City Business (DCCBA LTD)  
Dublin City University  
Dublin Corporation  
Dublin Regional Authority  
Dublin Transportation Office (DTO)  
Dúchas  
Dun Laoghaire Rathdown  
Dun Laoghaire Rathdown Planning Authority  
Dundalk Chamber of Commerce  
Dundalk South West Development Co. Ltd  
Dundalk Urban District Council  
Dunne, Mary C. Tullamore

### E

East Clare Walking Holidays  
East Coast and Midlands Tourism  
East Mayo Enterprise Group  
Eastern Regional Fisheries Board  
Economic and Social Research Institute  
EIRGRID (ESB National Grid)  
Electricity Supply Board  
Enterprise Connacht/Ulster  
Enterprise Ireland  
Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

### F

Faculty of the Built Environment, DIT (Dr Brendan  
Williams)  
Fahey, Frank TD  
Fermanagh District Council  
Fingal County Council  
Fitzgerald, John, Co. Kilkenny  
Flanagan, Charles TD, Portlaoise  
Flavin, Nicholas AP, Co. Laois  
Fleming, Sean TD  
Forfás, Enterprise Ireland, IDA Údarás, joint submission  
Foyle Development Organisation

## G

GAA (Cunnane, Stratton Reynolds)  
Gallagher, John, Tubbercurry, Co. Sligo.  
Galway Chamber of Commerce and Industry  
Galway City Community Forum  
Galway City Development Board  
Galway Corporation  
Galway County Council  
Galway County Development Board  
General Council of County Councils  
Great Southern Trail (Co. Limerick)  
Green Party (Cllr. Ciaran Cuffe TD)  
Grehan, Peter A, Caherdaniel, Co. Kerry  
Gweedore Chamber of Commerce

## H

Hazelhatch village (Property Developers)  
Heine, Christine, Dowra, Co. Leitrim  
Heine, Dr Roland, Dowra, Co. Leitrim  
Heritage Council  
Hilliard, Fergus, (Westmeath Examiner Ltd).  
Hoey and Denning Solicitors, Tullamore  
Hughes, Brian P, Chartered Surveyor, Blackrock, Co. Dublin

## I

IBEC  
IBEC Dublin Region  
IBEC Kerry Branch  
IBEC Mid West  
IBEC North West  
IBEC South East  
ICMSA  
IHBA  
Institute of Geologists of Ireland  
Institution of Engineers of Ireland  
Ireland West Tourism  
Irish Academy of Engineering  
Irish Concrete Federation  
Irish Farmers' Association  
Irish Landscape Institute  
Irish Planning Institute  
Irish Rural Link  
Irish Tourist Industry Confederation  
Irish Wheelchair Association  
Irish Wildlife Trust ( Waterford Branch)

## J

JSL Group, Building and Civil Eng, Galway

## K

Keaveney, Cecilia TD  
Keeve, John, Co. Donegal  
Keilthy, Liam, (Park Rite Ltd.)  
Kerry County Council  
Kerry County Development Board  
Kilbeggan Grand Canal Harbour Restoration  
Kildare County Council

Kildare Meath Wicklow Planning Alliance  
Kildare North Labour Party  
Kilkenny County Council  
Killeen, Tony TD  
Kiltimagh IRD Ltd

## L

Labour Party (Eamon Gilmore TD)  
Laois Chamber of Commerce  
Laois County Council  
Leitrim County Council  
Lennon, Seamus (by email)  
Limerick Chamber of Commerce  
Limerick Corporation  
Limerick County Council  
Limerick County Development Board  
Líonra (3rd Level in BMW)  
Longford County Council, incl. CDB and Community Forum  
Louth County Council

## M

Mac Gabhann, Cathal, Bearnna, Gaillimh  
Mayo County Council  
Mayo County Development Board  
McCann, Brendan, Waterford Green Party, Earthwatch  
McEvoy, Cllr. Tony, Clane, Co. Kildare  
McGinley, John , Nenagh  
McHugh, Cllr Declan, Donegal County Council  
McMullin, Catherine, Killorglin (member of Kerry branch of An Taisce)  
Meath County Council  
Meath County Development Board  
Mid East Regional Authority  
Mid South Roscommon Rural Development Company  
Mid West Regional Authority  
Midland Health Board  
Monaghan Chamber of Commerce  
Monaghan County Council  
Moroney, Eoin, Dublin 7  
Muintir na Tíre  
Mulholland, Pat, Dundalk, Co. Louth  
Murray O'Laoire Architects

## N

N7 Residents Association (N7RA)  
Navan Chamber of Commerce  
Navratil, Ian J, Midleton  
New City for the West Company Ltd.  
Newbridge Chamber of Commerce  
North Roscommon Community Forum  
North West Chambers of Commerce Initiative  
North West Region Cross Border Group  
North West Tourism  
North Western Health Board  
National Roads Authority (NRA)

## O

O'Sullivan and Co. Ltd., M.C., Consulting Engineers  
O'Dwyer, Alan, Cahir, Co. Tipperary  
O'Neill, C.M., Kingscourt, Co. Cavan  
Offaly County Council  
Offaly County Development Board  
Offaly Historical and Archaeological Society  
Office of Director of Telecommunications Regulator  
Office of the Strategic Planning Guidelines for the  
Greater Dublin Area  
Organic Education Centre, Drumcollogher, Co. Limerick

## P

PLANET , the Partnerships Network  
Port of Cork

## R

Rafferty, Joe, Roundstone, Co. Galway  
Reid, Cllr. P, Ballybofey  
RGDATA  
Roscommon County Council and  
County Development Board  
Roscrea Economic Implementation Committee/ Chamber  
of Commerce  
Royal Institute of Architects of Ireland  
Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) — Irish Branch  
Southern Section

## S

Shannon Development  
Shannon Rail Access Steering Committee  
Sinn Fein, New Ross  
Sligo Corp., Co. Council., Chamber of Commerce and CDB  
joint submission  
Society of Chartered Surveyors  
South County Dublin Development Board  
South Dublin County Council  
South East Regional Authority  
South East Tourism  
South Kerry Development Partnership Ltd  
South West Regional Authority  
Southern and Eastern Regional Assembly  
Southern Health Board

Southern Regional Fisheries Board  
Spellman, Helen, Galway City  
SRC Townlands Committee, New Ross  
Strategy Waterford

## T

Tagoat Community Council, Co. Wexford  
Tallaght Partnership  
Teagasc  
Tesco Ireland Ltd  
Thurles Chamber of Commerce  
North Tipperary County Council/ North Tipperary County  
Development Board  
Tipperary South Riding County Council  
Tralee UDC  
Treasury Holdings Limited  
Tullamore Chamber of Commerce

## U

Údarás na Gaeltachta

## W

Ward, Gerald, Naas.  
Waterford Chamber of Commerce  
Waterford City Development Board  
Waterford Corporation  
Waterford County Council  
Waterford Institute of Technology  
West Regional Authority  
WESTBIC (Business centre for West and North West)  
Western Development Commission  
Western Health Board  
Westmeath County Council  
Westport Chamber of Commerce  
Westport UDC  
Wexford Area Partnership  
Wexford Corporation  
Wexford County Council  
Wexford County Enterprise Board  
Whitney, Warren, TCD  
Wood, Cllr. Tom, Cashel UDC

**Total number of submissions = 259**

# Appendix II:

## Population Distribution and Housing Demand Projections:

### Introduction

This Appendix outlines the assumptions and approach used in the overall population and household projection data presented in section 2 of the NSS. The Appendix also focuses on the assumptions underlying the economic growth driven projections that were prepared in the initial research for the purposes of the NSS.

### Overall Projection Methodology and Assumptions

#### Methodology

The projection method used is cohort survival, using, as the starting point, CSO estimates of regional population by age and sex for each planning region in April 2000. Projection is by five year cohort, for five year intervals.

This Appendix summarises the assumptions used. The methodology as well as the assumptions used for projection of population, households and workforce, are described in the full population report which is available at [www.irishspatialstrategy.ie](http://www.irishspatialstrategy.ie)

The population projections yielded two broad sets of results:

- (1) Two current trends scenarios (CTS) based on current population trends continuing into the future without spatial policy trying to influence them. The scenarios differ by virtue of varying assumptions regarding fertility and mortality.
- (2) Two economic growth scenarios (EGS) based on extra economic activity and therefore population growth occurring in the regions outside Dublin. The projections contained in Section 2 are from the second of these economic growth scenarios.

#### Mortality

The mortality assumptions used in the NSS projections follow those of the CSO Population and Labour Force Projections 2001-2031<sup>16</sup>, with no regional differential.

#### Fertility assumptions

The NSS population model operates on age specific fertility rates applied to all women irrespective of marital status, with no differentiation between fertility of migrant and non-migrant women.

- The CSO F1 fertility assumption is for a Total Fertility Rate (TFR) of 2.0 to be maintained through to 2031. This is the assumption adopted in the current trends Scenario 1. The ESRI<sup>17</sup> suggest that the TFR will fall to the EU average and stabilise at 1.8 over the next decade. Current Trends Scenario 2 is based on the CSO F2 assumption, which calls for a decrease after 2001 to reach 1.75 by 2011 and remaining constant thereafter. For the Economic Growth Scenarios, the CSO F1 assumption is used.
- Differentials in the Total Fertility Rates between the regions in 1996 were diminished through the projection period, and eliminated by 2033. This is a response to increasing uncertainty with the passage of time.
- The share of births between cohorts was held steady for each region.

<sup>16</sup> Central Statistics Office, Population and Labour Force Statistics 2001-2031, Dublin, Stationery Office, July 1999.

<sup>17</sup> Duffy, Fitzgerald, Kearney and Smyth Medium Term Review 1999-2005 ESRI, October 1999

## Migration Assumptions

Migration has been dealt with in the following way.

Four separate migration streams have been identified for each region.

- Gross international in-migration to the region from outside the State<sup>18</sup>
- Gross international out-migration from the region, to outside the State
- Gross internal in-migration to the region, from elsewhere in the State, differentiating each sending region separately
- Gross internal out-migration from the region, to elsewhere in the State, differentiating each receiving region separately.

These flows are dis-aggregated by age and sex. The model is an integrated one, where all regional outcomes are inter-dependent. This has been achieved by allocating shares of international migration to each region and creating a single matrix of all inter-regional migration flows.

**International in-migration and out-migration** has been varied at national level, with the current trends projections following the 1999 CSO M1 assumption<sup>19</sup>. The regional shares are kept constant for the current trends projections. The shares used are based on Quarterly National Household Survey (QNHS) data for the period 1992-99. The age structure of external migrants has not been varied, either between regions or over time.

For the economic growth scenarios, international out-migration is retained at CSO M1 levels nationally, and regional shares are as set out above. International in-migrants in each region are varied to match projected employment growth, by a process of iteration, as described in the final report referred to earlier.

For both current trends and economic growth scenarios, **internal migration flows** were calculated by applying the shares of gross in and out flows experienced by each region in the year 1995-96 (from the Census of Population), to the total internal migration assumed in each projection period, separately for males and females. The total flows have been assumed to be constant for the purposes of the current trends projection. The age structure of migrants has also been assumed to remain unchanged for these projections.

Because all movements internal to the State must balance exactly in each cohort, only in-migrant age structures were used in the calculation process. The relevant in-migrant age structure for males or females for a particular region was used to calculate the age structure of movement to that region from every other region. The implicit assumption in this approach is that in-migrant age structures for any region do not vary with the region of origin of the migrant.

## Participation rates (for workforce projections)

In order to project the workforce, age specific participation rates<sup>20</sup> for males and females, were applied to the projections of population.

Variations in female participation rates depend less on marital status, than on whether the woman has young dependent children or not. For this reason, the CSO methodology of projecting participation rates was not followed. Instead, the ESRI Medium Term Review target rates for males and females by five-year age cohorts for 2011 were assumed to apply in 2010. In addition a steady movement towards these rates was assumed from a base in 2000, using participation rates available at State level from the QNHS for this date.

<sup>18</sup> International migration includes migration between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland.

<sup>19</sup> International in-migration set at 40,000 per annum in the period 2000-2005; 35,000 in 2005-2010; and 25,000 thereafter. Out-migration is set at 25,000 p.a. in the period 2000-2005; 25,000 in 2005-2010; and 20,000 thereafter.

<sup>20</sup> The (labour force) participation rate for a given cohort is the proportion of that cohort who are in the labour force.

This trend has been continued beyond 2011, though capped where appropriate, using international experience.

For projection purposes, the observed regional rate differentials are maintained throughout the projection period.

#### *Headship rates (for household projections)*

Age specific headship rates<sup>21</sup> are projected (combining males and females) and applied to the relevant age cohorts in order to estimate the number of households. Headship rates at national level had been calculated prior to calibration, by applying the ESRI 2011 rates to the year 2010 and assuming a steady growth in the rates in each age group between 1996 and 2010.

The 2011 rates were then adjusted such that the total households in 2000 agreed with the QNHS estimates on their growth path through that year. A standard adjustment was made to all age groups, with the exception of the 15-24 age groups, which were more heavily weighted in their growth.

**Regional rates** were adjusted to agree with QNHS data for 2000 households by varying the relationship between regional and national rates in each age group for each region separately. For example, the rate in each age group in Dublin, was reduced by 5.4%, in order to make the 2000 households obtained by application of headship rates, agree with the QNHS estimate of Dublin households in 2000.

#### *Projection procedures for the Main Cities*

Much of the projection procedure for the main cities mirrors that adopted for the regions.

**Fertility rates, headship rates and participation rates** are assumed to be as for the region in which the city lies.

**Migration flows** are derived as proportions of flows applied to the region in which the city is located. These proportions may be varied through time. This then provides estimates of the residual area of the region by deduction.

In all scenarios, the gross internal out-migration flows to the cities are assumed to reflect the size of the city population in the region, in 1996.

Also in each scenario, international in-migration is set such that in every quinquennial period of the projection, the growth in the share of the regional population accounted for by the main city in that region, reflects the growth experienced in the period 1991-96. Thus if a city increased its share of regional population by one percentage point in 1991-1996, it is assumed to increase it by a further percentage point in every subsequent five year period.

*It should be stressed that the projections for the main cities should be regarded as broadly illustrative, since detailed Census and QNHS data are not available for the purpose of estimating gross migration flows. Studies have recently been completed or are under way, in all four cities outside Dublin that may be of assistance in further refining these projections.*

The projection process has been approached on the basis that taking account of past trends, cities are likely to experience an increasing share of regional population. Once the total population has been determined in this way, the model arrives at workforce and households as for the regions.

#### *Employment projections for the economic growth scenarios projections*

In order to provide a basis for projecting population on an economic growth scenario basis, estimates are required of employment at each period to 2020.

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<sup>21</sup> The headship rate for a given cohort is the proportion of that cohort who are heads of household.

The starting data were the 1996 Census breakdowns by industry of the working population resident in each region. It was assumed that these were equivalent to the regional employment structures – i.e. that the effects of commuting were negligible at the regional level. To preserve this assumption it was necessary to combine the Dublin and Mid-East Regions into a single Greater Dublin Region.

A distinction is made between non-basic industries that are dependent on the local (that is, regional) population – such as bakeries, local newspapers and other local services and basic industries that produce for wider markets, national and international such as in the manufacturing and internationally traded services areas.

For the State as a whole, the projections were based on industry-specific growth rates derived from the *ESRI Mid-Term Review 1995-2005*.<sup>22</sup>

Projected growth rates for each basic sector at national level were applied to the regional employment base in the sector. A simple model that related non-basic employment to the regional population was then used to resolve levels of employment and migration in each quinquennial period by iteration.

*Methodology for the derivation of "NSS Economic Growth projections in section 2.4.7"*

The economic growth type population projections in Section 2.4.7 illustrate the potential effect of increased levels of economic activity and therefore population growth occurring in the regions as a result of implementation of the NSS. The projections used in the section referred to above assume that a proportion of employment growth projected to take place in the Greater Dublin Area, would instead take place in the regions as a result of the implementation of the NSS and the enhanced critical mass of strategic centres such as the Gateways.

Table 1 below shows the extent to which projected employment increases in basic sectors, which might otherwise have occurred in the Greater Dublin Area were assumed to take place instead in the regions in the context of implementing the NSS.

*Table 1: Percentage of future projected new basic sector employment in GDA assumed to take place instead in the regions*

2000-2005	2005-2010	2010-2015	2015-2020
24	16	16	16

It must be emphasised that the model is illustrative in terms of broadly defining the quantum of extra economic activity that would have to take place in the regions to achieve more balanced patterns of population growth and other forms of development such as housing provision.

Built into the model are the impacts of commuting on the overall distribution of population. In the other scenarios, it is assumed that there are no cross-regional journey to work flows.

Whilst this is a reasonable assumption for most regions, the faster growth and greater pressure which arises from this scenario, indicates that some provision should be made for persons resident in the Border, Midland and South-eastern regions, who are living in these regions but commuting to Dublin daily.

The total increase in the number of commuters as assumed to be 1,000 per annum or 20,000 over the twenty year period. They are assumed to be all in the basic sectors. These jobs are regarded as having been transferred to the Border region (40%), the Midland Region (40%) and the South East Region (20%), in order to simulate the spin-off impact through household expenditure etc. The 20,000 basic jobs must then be added back into the Dublin and Mid-east region over the period for the purpose of calculating the level of employment growth required in the regions.

<sup>22</sup> In overall terms the ESRI 1999 to 2005 Review anticipated that total employment levels would reach 1.548 million in 2000 and 1.749 million in 2005 as compared with 1.134 million in 1990. Growth in employment was expected to continue more slowly over the next decade, with an additional 430,000 people expected at work by 2010 as compared with 1998. In the Review the Irish economy was expected grow at around 5% a year over 2000 to 2005, 4.3% a year over 2005 to 2010 and to revert to a "more normal" European growth rate of 3.2% after 2010

# Appendix III:

## Population Trends in Towns in Ireland With Populations Greater than 5,000.

In 1966 there were a total of thirty-three cities or towns with populations in excess of 5,000. This had increased to fifty-eight by the 1996 Census. The breakdown of the number of towns by size is set out in the table below.

Table 1: Number of towns over 5000 population in 1966-1996

	1966	1971	1996
Towns with Pop. greater than 5,000 but less than 10,000	19	23	28
Towns with Pop. greater than 10,000 but less than 25,000	9	10	22
Towns with Pop. greater than 25,000.	5	5	8
<b>Total number of Towns with a population greater than 5,000</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>58</b>

Of the twenty-eight towns and cities with populations in excess of 5,000 in 1966, only two (Thurles and Ballinasloe) showed a minor reduction in population by 1996. These two towns, however, remained in the category of towns with over 5,000 population.

Within these twenty-eight towns, there have been some significant changes in population size of towns relative to each other, with Thurles for example changing from fifteenth largest to twenty-fifth largest and Newbridge changing from twenty-sixth to eleventh largest. The other centres whose rank order position in population size, fell in relative terms, are Enniscorthy, Cobh and Ballinasloe, while Navan and Portlaoise have risen significantly in population rank order relative to other towns. The influence of the growth of Dublin on those towns showing the most growth in population is clear, both within the original twenty-eight and the additional twenty-five centres which have emerged between 1966 and 1996.

The trends indicate that urban centres with a population of at least 5,000 appear to have the ability to retain their populations and to enjoy significant growth in many cases. Tables 2 and 3 attached list all of the towns with a population of more than 5,000 in 1966, 1971 and 1996, with the exception of Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Galway and Waterford.

## Table 2 Towns by Order of Size 1996

No.	County	Town	1996
1	Louth	Dundalk	30,195
2	Wicklow	Bray	27,923
3	Louth	Drogheda	25,282
4	Fingal	Co. Swords	22,314
5	Kerry	Tralee	19,950
6	Kilkenny	Kilkenny	18,696
7	Sligo	Sligo	18,509
8	Clare	Ennis	17,726
9	TipperaryS	Clonmel	16,182
10	Wexford	Wexford	15,862
11	Westmeath	Athlone	15,544
12	Cork	Douglas	14,543
13	Kildare	Naas	14,074
14	Cork	Ballincollig	13,760
15	Fingal	Co. Malahide	13,539
16	Kildare	Leixlip	13,451
17	Kildare	Newbridge	13,363
18	Meath	Navan	12,810
19	Westmeath	Mullingar	12,492
20	Kildare	Celbridge	12,289
21	Kerry	Killarney	12,011
22	Donegal	Letterkenny	11,996
23	Carlow	Carlow	11,721
24	Wicklow	Greystones	11,296
25	Offaly	Tullamore	10,039
26	Laois	Portlaoise	9,474
27	Fingal	Portmarnock	9,145

## Towns with population >5,000

No.	County	Town	1996
28	Mayo	Ballina	8,762
29	Wicklow	Arklow	8,557
30	Mayo	Castlebar	8,532
31	Kildare	Maynooth	8,528
32	Fingal	Balbrigan	8,473
33	Cork	Cobh	8,459
34	Clare	Shannon	7,939
35	Cork	Carrigaline	7,824
36	Cork	Mallow	7,768
37	Wexford	Enniscorthy	7,640
38	Fingal	Skerries	7,339
39	Wicklow	Wicklow	7,290
40	Waterford	Dungarvan	7,175
41	Longford	Longford	6,984
42	Tipperary N	Thurles	6,939
43	Waterford	Tramore	6,536
44	Cork	Midleton	6,209
45	Wexford	New Ross	6,147
46	Cork	Youghal	5,943
47	Tipperary N	Nenagh	5,913
48	Monaghan	Monaghan	5,842
49	Galway	Balinasloe	5,723
50	Cavan	Cavan	5,623
51	Fingal	Rush	5,429
52	Kildare	Athy	5,306
53	Tipperary S	Carrick on Suir	5,217

Note: Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Galway and Waterford are not included

### Table 3 Towns by Order of Size 1971

No.	County	Town	1971
1	Louth	Dundalk	23816
2	Louth	Drogheda	19889
3	Wicklow	Bray	15501
4	Sligo	Sligo	14456
5	Kilkenny	Kilkenny	13306
6	Wexford	Wexford	13293
7	Kerry	Tralee	13263
8	Tipperary S	Clonmel	12164
9	Westmeath	Athlone	11342
10	Clare	Ennis	10840
11	Carlow	Carlow	9588
12	Westmeath	Mullingar	9175
13	Kerry	Killarney	7541
14	Offaly	Tullamore	7474
15	Cork	Cobh	7141
16	Tipperary N	Thurles	7114
17	Wicklow	Arklow	6948
18	Meath	Navan	6665
19	Wexford	Enniscorthy	6642
20	Cork	Mallow	6506
21	Mayo	Castlebar	6476
22	Laois	Portlaoise	6470
23	Kildare	Newbridge	6444
24	Mayo	Ballina	6369
25	Galway	Balinasloe	5969
26	Cork	Youghal	5626
27	Waterford	Dungarvan	5583
28	Monaghan	Monaghan	5256
29	Donegal	Letterkenny	5207
30	Tipperary N	Nenagh	5173
31	Wexford	New Ross	5153
32	Kildare	Naas	5078
33	Tipperary S	Carrick on Suir	5006

### Towns by Order of Size 1966

No.	County	Town	1966
1	Louth	Dundalk	21876
2	Louth	Drogheda	17992
3	Sligo	Sligo	13698
4	Wicklow	Bray	13580
5	Wexford	Wexford	12627
6	Kilkenny	Kilkenny	12351
7	Kerry	Tralee	12171
8	Tipperary S	Clonmel	11376
9	Westmeath	Athlone	10817
10	Carlow	Carlow	9321
11	Clare	Ennis	9181
12	Westmeath	Mullingar	8467
13	Kerry	Killarney	7150
14	Offaly	Tullamore	7147
15	Tipperary N	Thurles	7000
16	Cork	Cobh	6768
17	Wexford	Enniscorthy	6501
18	Mayo	Ballina	6378
19	Wicklow	Arklow	6083
20	Meath	Navan	5997
21	Mayo	Castlebar	5991
22	Cork	Mallow	5987
23	Laois	Portlaoise	5927
24	Galway	Balinasloe	5828
25	Waterford	Dungarvan	5380
26	Kildare	Newbridge	5285
27	Cork	Youghal	5221
28	Monaghan	Monaghan	5019

Note: Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Galway and Waterford are not included

# Appendix IV:

## Polycentric Development Models in Europe

Polycentric development involves linking and integrating the development of a number of urban centres in a way that combines their strengths in terms of infrastructure co-ordination, business promotion, innovation and cultural ties.

Various approaches to polycentric development are evolving across the EU. Some of these approaches are at the major city level and are not particularly relevant to the Irish experience. Elements of emerging co-operation between networks of larger and smaller towns are more relevant.

The Danish experience is of particular interest from an Irish point of view. Notwithstanding the obvious geographical and topographical differences between Denmark and Ireland, there are many parallels between the countries in terms of spatial structure for instance,

- Denmark's national population is around 5 million people
- the population of its capital Copenhagen is around 1 million people
- Copenhagen occupies a dominant position within the urban hierarchy.

The overall basis for regional development in Denmark includes a key role for urban centres at strategic locations acting as national 'locomotives' of regional growth — embracing a positive partnership between town and country and which recognises the strengths of both cities and diversified rural districts.

It is recognised in Denmark that local identities and qualities are very important for competitiveness and economic and social progress, and that spatial planning has a strong role to play in organising and enhancing these characteristics.

In searching for a new national level centre on Jutland, the mainland part of Denmark, it was realised that no individual centre there had the characteristics to perform effectively at the national-international level. Nonetheless, a group of municipalities came together in what has become known as the 'Triangle Region' to jointly promote and develop their area as a polycentric national centre.

The Triangle Region was established in 1993 as a collaboration between eight municipalities<sup>23</sup> comprising 225,000 people over a 60 km radius at a strategic location within Denmark's national transport structure. The municipalities range in population from 60,000 to less than 5,000.

In 2000, the region was identified as a new national centre by the Danish Government and this has positive implications for the type of activities and functions being supported by Government in various areas such as transport, education etc.

The principal areas of co-operation principally include:

*Industrial development* – including a transport forum, the IT club, business magazine, exhibitions and training courses.

*International marketing* – including co-operation between business development offices, seminars and promotion.

*Urban development* – including representation in relation to regional and national planning issues and public transport.

*Culture, sport and recreation* – including cultural events, development of multi-use arenas and stadia.

*Education* – including education fairs and collaborative projects with the University of Southern Denmark.

*Other areas* including waste management, joint purchasing etc.

<sup>23</sup> Denmark has three layers of administration, (1) Central government, (2) counties, that are effectively the regions and which include both urban and rural areas and (3) municipalities which are responsible for either one or a number of urban areas and associated rural areas. (2) and (3) are financed through local taxes on income and property and are responsible for a wide range of functions including health care and education.

There are some key lessons from the Triangle Region experience for the polycentric models suggested in the NSS.

- *How it has been described:* The eight municipalities see themselves collectively as Denmark's largest 'Open Green City', with each town having its own special character and function as either a large or small centre but within an overall urban community. The municipalities are linked by a shared interest in developing prosperity and welfare, while enhancing the environment and quality of life in the region. There is lively traffic between the towns – both in trade and in the use of each other's cultural and educational institutions.
- *Process:* The Triangle Region is seen more as a process of interaction, sharing of resources, marketing etc than a de facto city. This suggests the need to promote multi-centred gateways as exercises in collaboration and joint marketing initially, building towards collaborative planning eventually over say a three to five year time period. The Danish mechanism for doing this is outlined below.
  - *Annual Conference:* All town councillors in the eight municipalities take part in an annual conference to debate selected themes and present projects and ideas for the future. The conference provides councillors with the opportunity to identify strategic issues and discuss strategies and plans to deal with these issues.
  - *Expanded Mayoral Meetings:* Four expanded mayoral meetings are held each year. The participants are the eight mayors and two town councillors from each municipality. The participants' tasks include preparing proposals for action plans and strategies for consideration by the town councils as well as proposals for new projects and other functions.
  - *Management:* The chief executives of the municipalities are members of the Triangle Region Management Board and each member of the board is responsible for one of the Triangle Regions activities. The board appoints key leaders for work and project groups as well as co-ordinating and supervising day to day activities in the Triangle Region.
  - *Secretariat:* The Triangle Region collaboration is serviced by a secretariat responsible for the day to day administration of current projects and initiatives. The secretariat prepares for the annual conference, and mayoral meetings. The secretariat also undertakes the practical implementation of decisions, manages financial matters and provides secretarial support to the Management Board, the expanded mayoral meetings and an International Marketing Director.
- *Inter town competition:* Within the Triangle Region, individual urban centres continue to promote themselves locally for available inward investment. However this is balanced by collaborating on promotion of the region, e.g. through lobbying central Government and marketing. Through an industrial council, the larger municipalities have industrial intelligence systems and brief themselves on business trends through registers of local business, interactions with businesses and commercial groups etc. Some specialisation of functions is happening in public services.
- *Improving Urban-Rural Relationships:* There is much emphasis in municipal plans (which encompass urban as well as rural areas) in presenting a clear picture of the development issues and opportunities for urban and rural areas in an integrated way.
- *Role of Transport:* This is a critical area. The location of the Triangle Region has some parallels with the Midlands of Ireland. It is located at an intersection of North-South and East-West road and rail routes. Local and inter-city rail services are integrated so that every thirty minutes or so, there are trains to all centres. The maximum time it takes to travel from one centre to another is about 40 minutes. A central railfreight distribution hub that facilitates road-rail vehicle interchange has been provided. This is now attracting various employment activities that are locating centrally within the region's population catchment.

- *Finance:* Municipalities are broadly financially self-supporting. This means two things - (1) They have the capacity to support local planning through acquiring land, framing local plans and supervising development. (2) Their strength and autonomy at the local level sometimes means that it can be time consuming to effect major initiatives at a central level.

# Appendix V:

## Selection Rationale for Identified Towns

### 1: Gateways

#### *Sligo*

Sligo was selected as a gateway because of its strategic location in the North West, its physical and infrastructural capacity to develop substantially in the future and its stock of the critical factors such as water services, education and healthcare, necessary to support Gateway functions. Sligo's spatial position means it is capable of energising a wider area encompassing parts of Mayo, Leitrim, Donegal and Sligo county itself as well as capitalising on emerging cross-border co-operation, while being part of a broader corridor of cities spanning from Cork to Derry.

#### *Letterkenny-Derry*

Derry is the fourth largest city on the island. Given its size, location and functions, Derry has been identified as a major regional city for the North-west including Donegal in "Shaping our Future" the Regional Development Strategy for Northern Ireland. Derry's role has been reciprocated in the NSS in that Letterkenny has been identified as having a spatial and developmental function that could be co-ordinated with that of Derry to enhance critical mass and energise the wider Donegal and North-western areas. Letterkenny is a significant centre in its own right, as the focal point of transport networks in Donegal, having substantial capacity for development, good education (with Letterkenny Institute of Technology) and healthcare facilities as well as good connections to Derry, itself an important transport hub.

#### *Dundalk*

Dundalk is one of the largest towns in Ireland and occupies a strategic position between Dublin and Belfast, proximate to the border with Northern Ireland. Dundalk is on nationally strategic road and rail links and is well positioned spatially to energise eastern parts of the Border area. Dundalk has substantial capacity for development in land and services terms and contains important facilities such as the Institute of Technology. Taking account of these strengths and the issue of ensuring development within the Dublin-Belfast corridor as well as at either end, Dundalk is a logical choice as a gateway.

#### *Athlone/Mullingar/Tullamore*

Critical mass is central to delivering balanced regional development. In the Midlands, no individual centre would be likely to develop to the required scale and critical mass on its own in population or infrastructure terms. Echoing recent experience at EU level, co-operative networks between urban centres reasonably close to one another pointed towards similar opportunities in the Midlands.

Athlone, Mullingar and Tullamore are reasonably proximate to one another, strategically located on east-west road rail energy and communications links, contain complementary infrastructure and individually and collectively, have substantial capacity for development in services terms. For example, Athlone contains the Institute of Technology, a range of employers and important retail functions. Mullingar and Tullamore have important healthcare and retail functions.

Improved accessibility to these facilities would enable them to be shared better and would allow the region to be seen as having the type of infrastructure and critical mass comparable to a larger urban centre.

## 2: Hubs

### *Castlebar-Ballina*

These towns are strategically located in the West. The centres also contain complementary functions and capabilities that point towards a capacity to develop and energise wider areas through integrated and co-ordinated development. Castlebar has important healthcare, education (through the Galway/Mayo Institute of Technology) retailing and administrative functions, while Ballina has important employment and tourism functions and a substantial capacity for development. With enhanced physical links between these centres in terms of transport and communications, Castlebar-Ballina will perform an important spatial function in the NSS context.

### *Cavan*

Cavan is strategically located on the N3 route between Dublin, the Midlands gateway of Athlone / Tullamore / Mullingar, the Sligo gateway and Monaghan as a hub. Cavan also occupies a strategic position within a large, predominantly rural hinterland, as well as being proximate to the border and other major towns in Northern Ireland such as Enniskillen. Cavan performs important administrative, retailing and employment functions for its substantial catchment.

### *Ennis*

Ennis is closely related in economic and other terms with the Mid West and Limerick and Shannon particularly. Its development, based on a large and growing population base, location on the national roads and rail networks adjacent to Shannon Airport, and its capacity for growth all suggest a nationally strategic role, as part of improving interaction and sharing of strengths between western cities. Ennis is also strategic regionally and locally as a hub within its own catchment in terms of transport, retailing, employment, education and administration functions.

### *Kilkenny*

Kilkenny is a centre with a substantial population base, a highly successful tourism sector, improving accessibility due to a location on the national road and rail networks with links to an international seaport, and a strategic location between Dublin and Waterford. Kilkenny also has substantial capacity for development in land and water services terms and is a centre with both the critical mass and distance from Dublin to be capable of being successful in sustaining itself in employment terms, thereby resisting the tendency towards commuter driven development.

### *Mallow*

Mallow occupies a strategic spatial position at the meeting point of the Cork – Limerick and Tralee – Waterford/Rosslare road and rail routes. Mallow's location outside the suburbs of Cork coupled to its function as a hub will strengthen Cork – Limerick interaction and energise its own catchment within north Cork, an area undergoing structural economic change driven by falling farm based employment. It is a large town with a good population base, a substantial capacity for development in water services and land terms and has developing public transport links to Cork.

### *Monaghan*

Monaghan is strategic spatially in the border context because of its location on the Dublin - Derry axis. It is strategically located on the N2 Dublin-Derry road, will be proximate to the Dundalk Gateway and has improving interaction with substantial urban centres in Northern Ireland such as Armagh. Monaghan performs important employment, retailing and administrative functions and has substantial capacity for development in land and water services terms.

### *Tuam*

Tuam will both assist in building links and interactions between the existing gateway of Galway City and the new gateway at Sligo and energise its own substantial catchment in County Galway. Tuam will perform this role through its position in the area's urban structure in terms of population, strategic location on the N17 and regional road networks as well as energy and communication links, its substantial capacity for development and local employment and service functions.

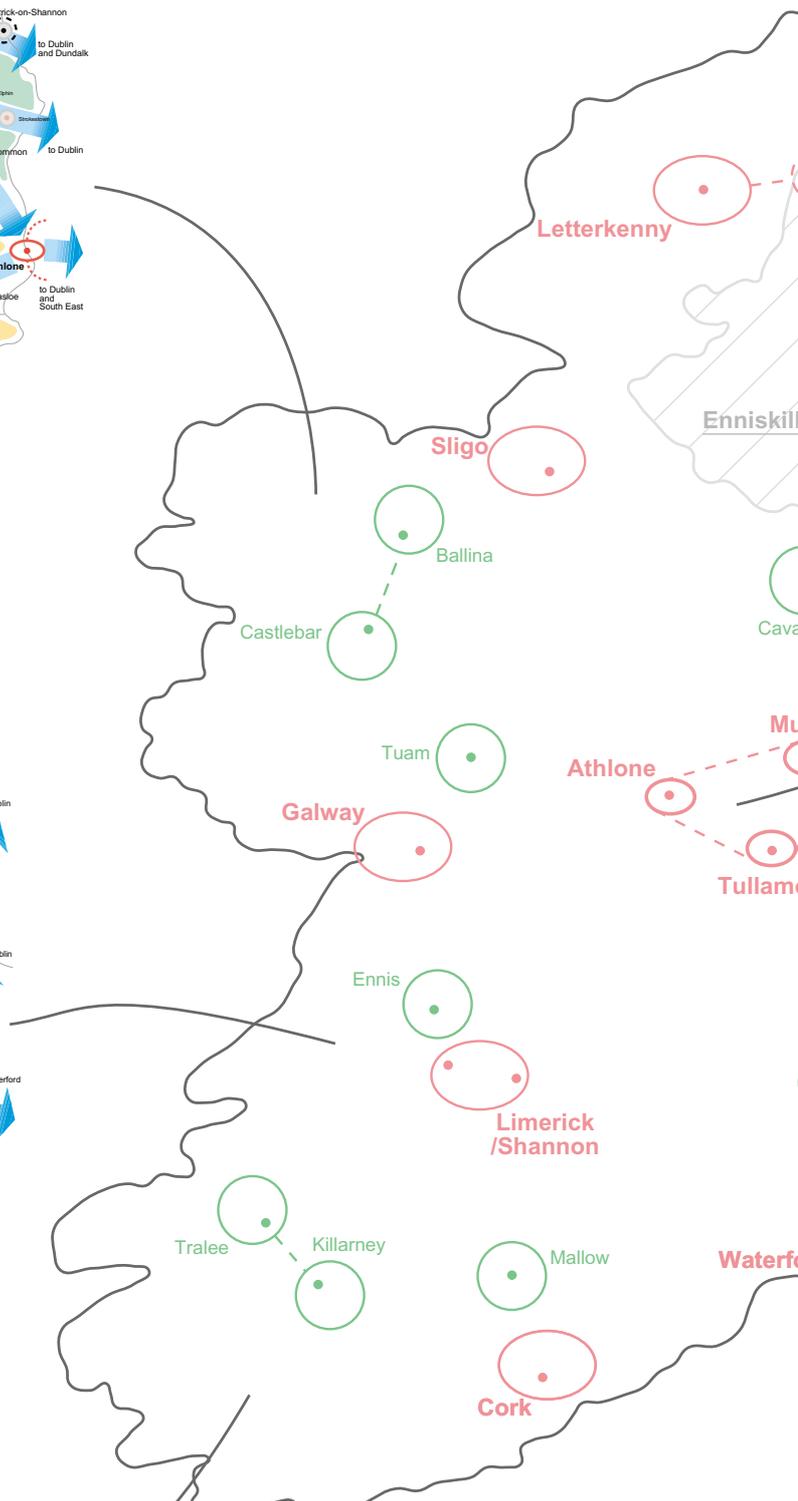
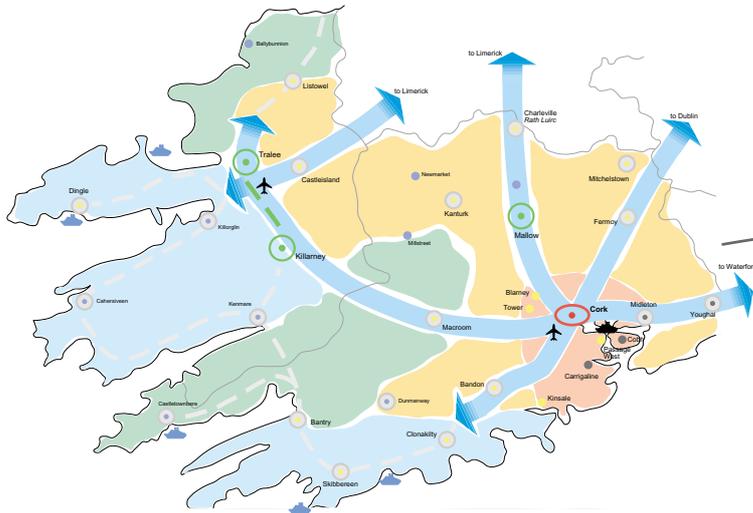
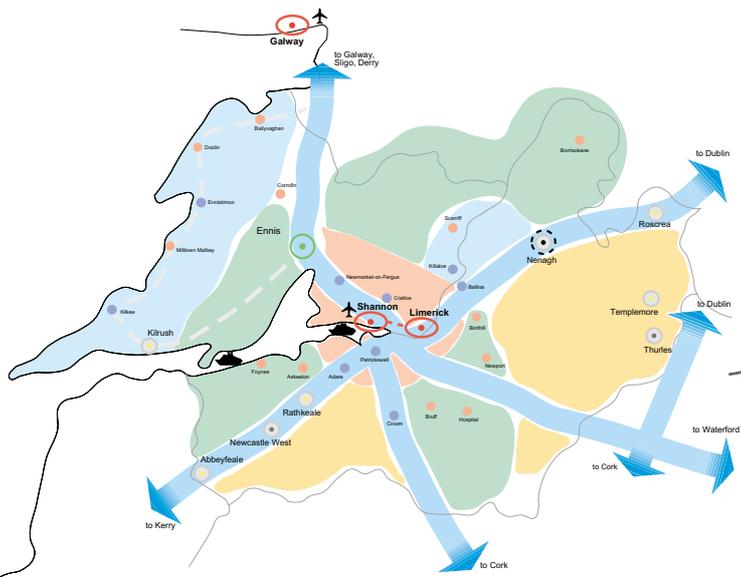
### *Tralee/Killarney*

Tralee and Killarney are adjacent towns that have complementary strengths. Tralee is a town with a substantial population base, location on the national road and rail networks, a developing tourism base, substantial water services and land for development and important employment, retailing and administrative functions. Killarney is a nationally strategic tourism centre with important retailing and employment functions and is also on the national road and rail networks. Through integrated and co-ordinated development, these strengths can be combined resulting in enhanced critical mass and enhanced potential for development in a regional and local sense energising the wider County Kerry area.

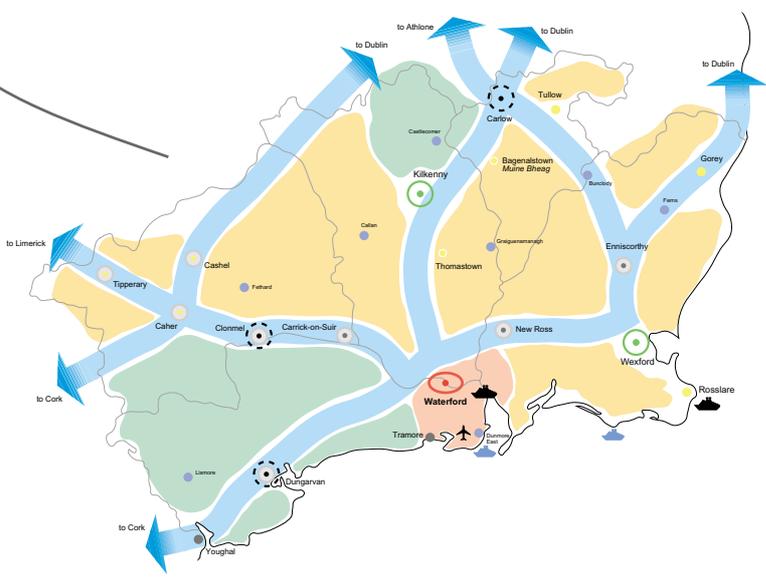
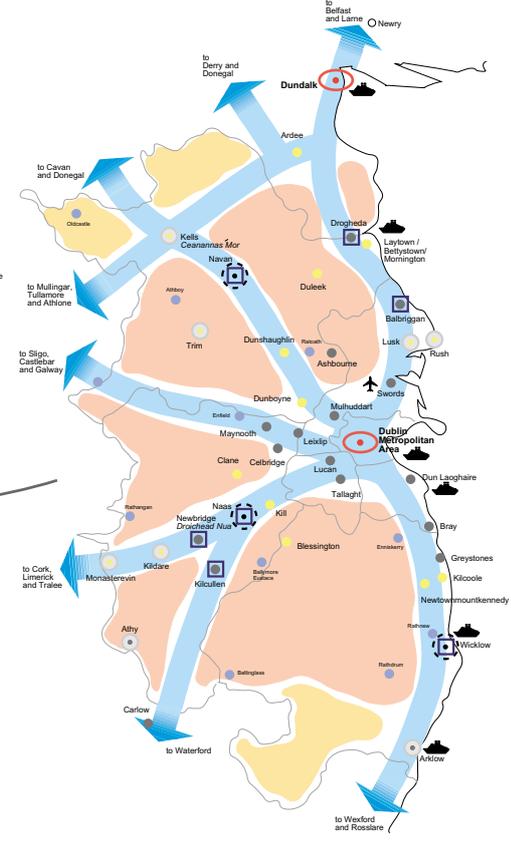
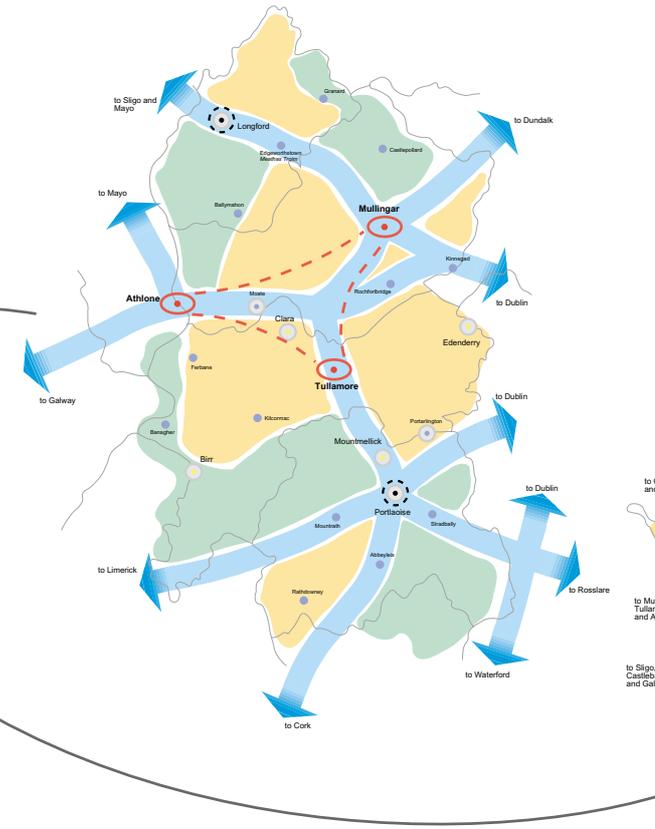
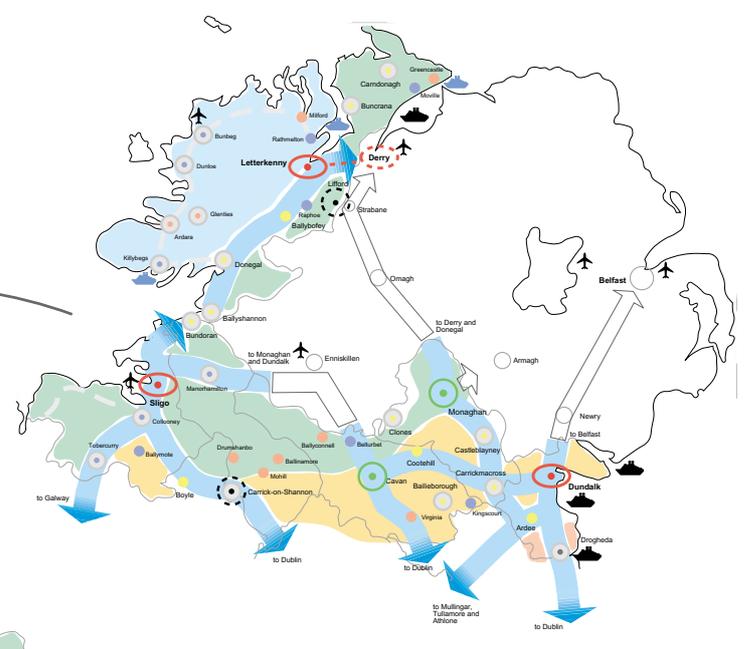
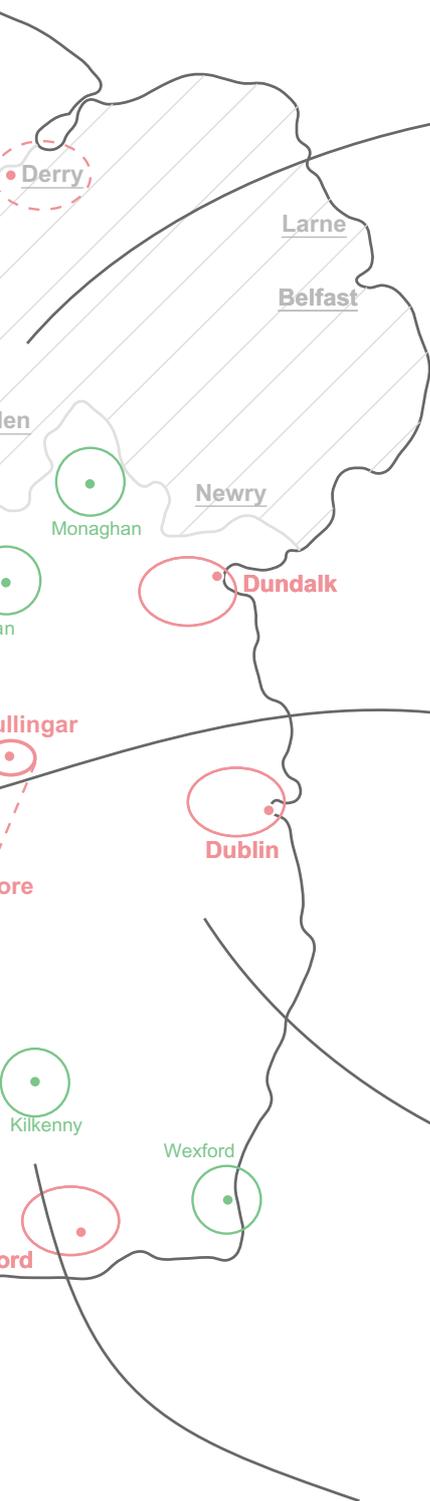
### *Wexford*

Wexford is strategically located in the Southeast, close to Rosslare Port and on the national road and rail networks. These strengths are also combined with its substantial capacity for development and Wexford's various employment, retailing, services and administrative functions. Wexford as a hub has an important spatial role in establishing a "triangle of strength" based around Waterford as a Gateway and Kilkenny as another hub with Wexford. This area will substantially strengthen and energise the Southeast and ensure it plays a full part in the Government's objective for balanced regional development.

# Composite Map



- Gateways
- Hubs
- - - / - - - Linked Gateway / Hub
- Derry Major Interregional Role in Northern Ireland
- Area covered by the Northern Ireland Regional Development Strategy



## Notes

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