

# INTRODUCTION, VISION AND STRATEGIC OVERVIEW



DRAFT PLAN FEBRUARY 2022

FINGAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2023-2029

## 1.1 Introduction

**The Fingal Development Plan tells the story of where and how we want Fingal to grow. It draws on our historical heritage and uses our skills and expertise to continue sustainable social, environmental, and economic growth well into the future, with a focus on creating vibrant and resilient communities. This Plan sets out the spatial framework to guide future development within the County with a focus on the places we live, the places we work, the places we visit and the places we do business and how we interact and move between these places while protecting our environment.**

Fingal County Council came into being in 1994 and since then has evolved and progressed, resulting in a unique environment, with distinctive towns and villages, parks and offices, residential streets and squares, industrial and creative spaces. The built environment we see today has shaped not just how our County looks but has had a profound impact on how and where we live, work, visit and do business with each other.

Through this time, Fingal has continued to grow and has experienced rapid development and change. We will continue to grow. Our population is projected to increase by approximately 73,000 by 2031, up from 296,000, as per the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy population projections. In order to meet the needs of our ever-increasing population, we need to build new homes, provide space for these homes as well as supporting social infrastructure, while also attracting new employment opportunities, but also providing space for such employment generating uses.

Dealing with this growth is one of the biggest challenges of the Development Plan, it will put pressure on land, housing, infrastructure and the environment. It also comes as we face other challenges including the lasting impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic, Brexit and its associated uncertainty, climate change and the need to ensure social inclusion for all.

This Plan seeks to put healthy place-making at its heart. A healthy Fingal is about working towards a more sustainable County, where sufficient homes are available for citizens of Fingal and the creation of a more socially integrated and resilient County. This Plan envisages Fingal as an integrated network of vibrant socially and economically successful urban settlements and rural communities, strategic greenbelts and open countryside, supporting and contributing to the economic development of the County and Dublin City Region.

Fingal's strategic location within the Eastern and Midlands Regional Assembly (EMRA), part of the Dublin City Region and within the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor offers significant potential for growth and investment across the County. Fingal has major economic assets, including Dublin Airport, proximity to Dublin City and the Dublin Port via the Dublin Tunnel, including direct access to the national and regional road and rail transport networks in the Country and excellent links to Europe by air and sea. Fingal also has one of the youngest, highly educated and most diverse populations in the state.

Preparation of this Plan has come at a challenging time, as we emerge from the Covid-19 pandemic. The recovery of our economy, rebuilding of our society, renewing of our communities and responding to the wide-ranging challenges we face, will be crucial for the overall development of our County.

The preparation of the Plan is one of the most important functions of the Elected Members. The Plan sets out an overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of the functional area of Fingal over a 6-year period between 2023 and 2029.

This chapter outlines the vision, cross-cutting themes, strategic objectives and an overview of the Plan. The chapter also outlines the context of planning and environmental policy and legislation, in which the Plan has been prepared.

## 1.2 Strategic Vision for Fingal

The Plan is underpinned by a strategic vision intended to guide the sustainable future growth of Fingal. At the core of the vision is healthy placemaking, building cohesive and sustainable communities, where our cultural, natural and built environment is protected. The vision embraces inclusiveness and a high-quality of life for all, through healthy place-making and social justice. An integrated approach will align housing and public transport provision. Human and environmental well-being including climate adaptation underpin this vision.

The strategic vision has been prepared having regard to the National Strategic Outcomes of the National Planning Framework, the Regional Strategic Outcomes of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy, the UN Sustainable Development Goals, *the Fingal Corporate Plan 2019–2024* and the aspirations of the people and stakeholders in Fingal.

### The strategic vision of this Plan seeks that:

Fingal will embrace healthy place-making and economic prosperity through building cohesive and sustainable communities, where our cultural, natural and built environment is protected.

Fingal will continue to be a County of distinctive environmental, historical and cultural assets and local communities, with sustainable development fostering a high-quality of life for those who live, work and visit here. A sustainable future for the County will be based on the interdependence of the themes of economic growth, social progress and environmental quality with the aim of increasing the County's self-reliance and resilience.

This Plan will ensure the continued growth of the County in a sustainable way and ensure the County continues to develop as a series of well-serviced, well-connected towns, villages and communities and a low carbon economy. In working to deliver all of this, we are committed to engaging with stakeholders, including local communities and residents to develop better solutions to the complex challenges we face and provide an improved quality of life for all.

## 1.3 Cross-Cutting Themes

The Plan is underpinned by four key cross cutting themes; climate action, healthy place-making and sustainable development, social inclusion and high-quality design.

### 1.3.1 Climate Action

Climate change is one of the most pressing global challenges facing current and future generations. Our climate is changing rapidly and the effects on the Country and on our lives are becoming more evident. The responses to the effects are wide ranging and have economic, environmental and social costs associated with them.

Human activities are increasingly influencing climate change, spurred on by both the need for climate action and energy security. In addition, the question of renewable energy production has assumed greater importance over the last decade.

Given the importance of climate change, climate action is included as an overarching and cross-cutting theme across this Plan in line with International, National and Regional policies and objectives. Chapter 5 Climate Action details Fingal's position in relation to this key issue, in terms of a policy approach to the transition to a low carbon economy and to Fingal becoming climate resilient, with a strong emphasis on reduction in energy demand and emissions, through a combination of effective mitigation and adaptation responses to climate change.

There has been much commentary on climate change in Ireland over the last twenty years or so and in the last few years the effects have become clearer. Ireland needs to commence the transition to a low carbon economy, with a reduction on reliance on fossil fuels and the unsustainable use of resources. Fingal County Council recognises the need to play its role as a key stakeholder in making the transition to a low carbon economy.

This Plan sets out the future growth for Fingal in Chapter 2 Planning for Growth, with future development concentrated in the existing built footprint of Fingal's towns and villages and urban settlements, in order to achieve compact growth. Developing well-serviced and well-connected communities is a key focus for development within Fingal, with reduced travel distances between home, work, education and services and enhanced active modal share, with an overall reduction in emissions. The integration of land-use and transport planning and aligning policies are key elements of this Plan.

It is recognised that the nature of Fingal's economy, settlement patterns, infrastructure (including roads, electricity networks, water supply and sewer systems), physical geography (e.g. total area, extensive coastline and rivers) and mix of land-use (e.g. horticulture and urban/suburban) presents a unique set of challenges in the response to climate change. The Council through proper planning and promotion of sustainable development, will work towards becoming a low carbon economy. This Plan contains provisions dealing with climate change mitigation and adaptation, in areas such as flood risk management, transportation, surface water, waste management, water services, urban design, energy, natural heritage and Green Infrastructure.

Addressing the risks posed by climate change will require both adaptation and mitigation. Adaptation describes actions that are designed to cope with the consequences of climate change including warmer temperatures, more extreme precipitation events and sea level rise. Mitigation measures are designed to off-set or stop the human-caused drivers of climate change namely emissions of greenhouse gases and land-use change.

Fingal County Council is committed to becoming a more climate resilient place and it is at the core of this Plan. While Chapter 5 Climate Action deals with the issue in detail, this cross-cutting theme underpins this entire Plan, with a selection of policies and objectives throughout, which will contribute to the transition to a climate resilient and low carbon society.

### **1.3.2 Healthy Placemaking and Sustainable Development**

Central to healthy placemaking is the development of sustainable communities, where communities are able to evolve and the needs of today can be facilitated without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Placemaking is a multi-faceted approach to the planning, design and management of new development and public spaces. It is fundamentally about responding to the context of a place, through the understanding of its evolution and history, its functionality, its impacts on those living and working there

as well as how it interacts with the environment. Access to public transport, education, community facilities, leisure, retail, health services and jobs are as important as the aesthetic of a place.

This Plan has a key role to play in enhancing and developing Fingal's inherent sense of place, identity and character, ensuring that our individual communities remain distinctive and ensuring residents have access to a range of accommodation, facilities and environment in which to enjoy an improved higher quality of life. Healthy Placemaking and sustainable communities are at the centre of our thinking in respect of planning, and specifically this Plan, incorporating the key characteristics that make for good placemaking and communities.

Good planning and design also offers opportunities to reduce our use of natural resources by promoting renewable sources of energy. While the current Building Regulations set out standards and deal with issues such as building standards, workmanship, conservation of fuel and energy, and access for people with disabilities, there are other issues which can be addressed through good planning and urban design, i.e. the design and arrangement of buildings can result in the creation of a microclimate, influencing the effects of temperature, sunlight and wind movement. Certain orientations and design can enhance comfort on exposed sites and maximise the potential of daylight and solar gain.

Incorporating energy efficiency into design and construction and where possible alternative energy technologies such as bio-energy, solar energy, heat pumps, heat recovery and wind energy should be encouraged. This can help reduce our reliance on fossil fuels and minimise emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases that contribute to global warming and climate change.

Promoting the use of low embodied energy materials, sustainable building technologies, and reduced resource use in the construction of buildings is an important consideration in the planning and construction of new developments.

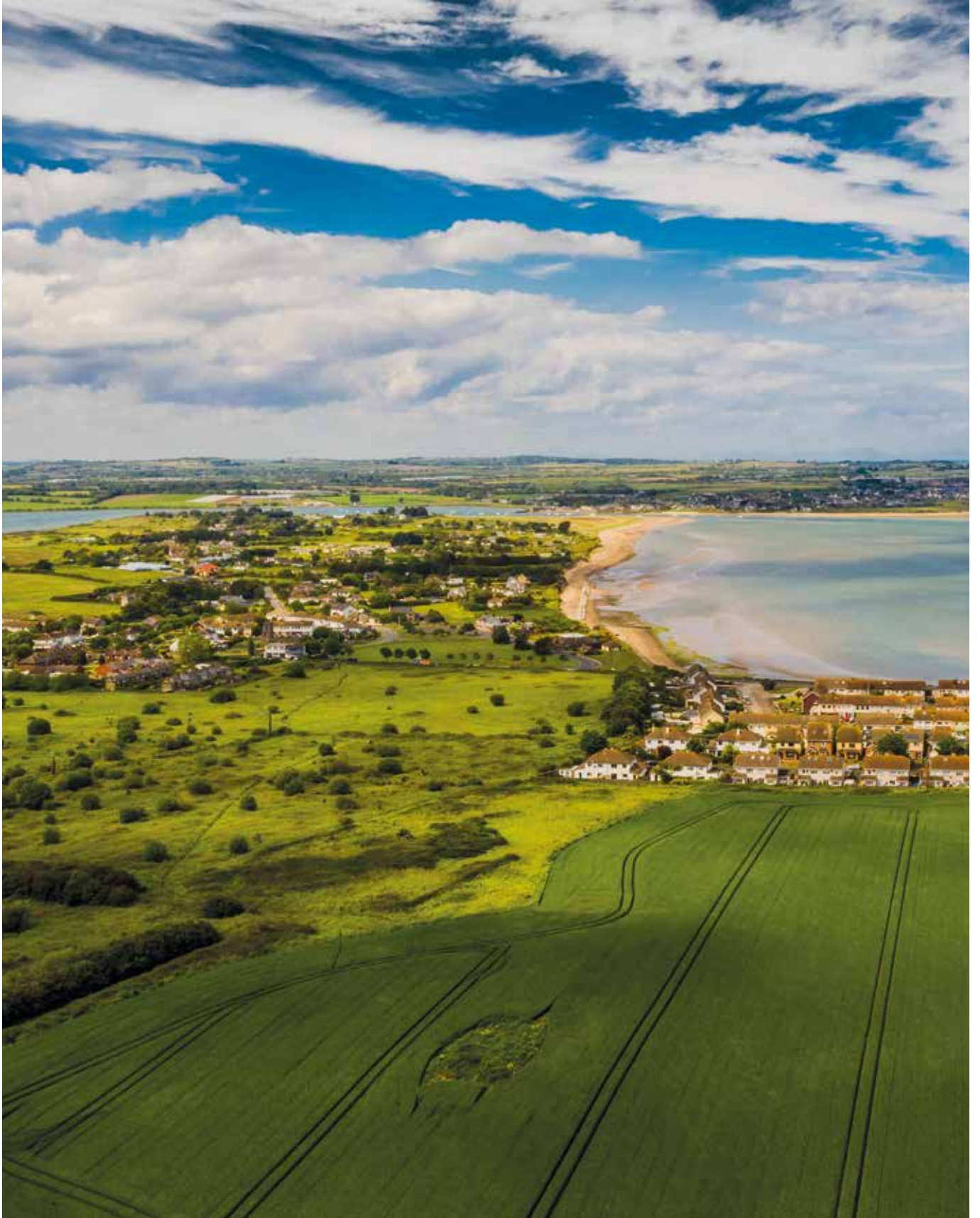
An important element of the sustainable development thread in this Plan is the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Appropriate Assessment (AA). These assessments are required under European legislation and provide a high level of protection to the environment.

This Plan has adopted the principle of healthy placemaking and sustainable development by promoting and encouraging the integration of economic, environmental, social and cultural issues into local policies and programmes.

### **1.3.3 Social Inclusion**

Social inclusion is the process where a series of positive actions are taken to achieve equality of access to goods and services, to assist all individuals to participate in their community and society, to encourage the contribution of all persons to social and cultural life and to be aware of, and to challenge, all forms of discrimination. The ultimate aim of social inclusion is enabling participation in the mainstream of society for all those who desire it. All processes of consultation, policy-making and practice must not just include, but be driven by, the views and needs of excluded groups. Social inclusion is also about the wellbeing of individuals, families, social groups and communities.





Creating a more socially inclusive society by alleviating social exclusion, poverty and deprivation is a major challenge. Steps taken towards this can include the provision of recreational and community infrastructure and improving access to information and resources. Social inclusion is embedded in this Plan with policies in particular focused on aiming to improve access to all groups within society.

While the Development Plan is primarily a spatial land-use plan, it has the potential through its policies and objectives to impact positively on the lives of citizens through facilitating the provision of social and community facilities which are vital to quality of life and wellbeing. Mainstream approaches to planning, design and development may not always meet the needs of minority and marginalised groups and more focused consideration is sometimes required. It is also important to ensure that the needs of different generations and abilities including children, younger people, older persons and those with disabilities are met to the greatest extent possible.

The promotion of inclusive neighbourhoods which cater for all age groups, that accord with the principles of universal design and that offer quality of opportunity and good services to all is a key priority of the Plan. The design of all proposed development should strive to cater for all abilities and age groups including children, older people and people with a range of disabilities.

Social inclusion is a priority that cuts across many of the Council's functions. The Council has been involved in the preparation of several local plans and strategies relevant to social inclusion.

The Development Plan has a role in facilitating initiatives through promoting good placemaking, for example ensuring new developments are designed with good connectivity and permeability for all. Social inclusion continues to be a cross-cutting theme within this Plan, taking cognisance of the *Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP)*, which aims to tackle poverty and social inclusion through local engagement and partnership between disadvantaged individuals, community organisations and public sector organisations.

There is no one blue-print for delivering sustainable communities and it requires different strategies in different areas and societies. All strategies benefit from effective, participative systems of governance and engaging the interest, creativity and energy of all citizens. These give a sense of ownership and encourage pride in local communities, which assists in social cohesion.

The Draft Plan has been proofed to ensure it has a strong social inclusion focus. The Draft Plan aims to ensure that social inclusion continues to underpin all policies and objectives. Implications and challenges for the new Plan include:

- Ensuring that the Council works in partnership with other organisations and agencies to provide a supportive living environment for people from all walks of life and all stages of their lifecycle;
- Seeking new innovative ways of enhancing social inclusion; and
- Ensuring the Plan facilitates initiatives arising from other Council Departments, where appropriate.

It is a strategic objective of this Plan to develop a network of sustainable neighbourhoods which have a range of facilities, a choice of tenure and universally designed adaptable house types, promote social inclusion and integration of all minority communities. Social inclusion is about ensuring that everyone has equal opportunity to participate in and contribute to, community life regardless of their age, ability, nationality, ethnic group, religion or any other of the many characteristics that contribute to diversity in our communities and society.

### 1.3.4 High Quality Design

Good design adds quality to the places in which people live, work and enjoy. Ensuring high-quality design adds value to towns, villages and the countryside and improves people's quality of life. Good design is essential to achieving attractive, high-quality places in which people will live, work and relax.

*The Government Policy on Architecture 2009–2015* (soon to be replaced with *“Places for People: Ireland's National Policy on Architecture”* in early 2022) promotes the importance of good architecture in the creation of quality places. The Council promotes best practice contemporary architecture and the conservation of the County's architectural heritage throughout the Plan.

Facilitating and promoting good design is a cross-cutting theme in this Plan. Good design, in terms of overall layouts and individual buildings is fundamental to placemaking and developing sustainable communities with a “sense of place” and “local distinctiveness”. Placemaking, the process of creating great places and strong communities is essential in attracting and retaining strong enterprise and employment sectors. Placemaking builds the necessary foundation upon which new enterprises can be developed and can grow, creating lasting, sustainable prosperity for local communities. Urban areas with a vital sense of place and high-quality design can take advantage of changes in the way business is done.

Through the local area plans, frameworks and the Development Management processes, the Council promotes a high quality of design and standard of residential developments. In rural areas of the County this Plan seeks to ensure sustainable patterns of development and high quality of design so that these areas remain attractive and retain their rural character. This Plan also sets out a range of objectives aimed at creating well-designed environments for both rural and urban settings. An overarching aim of this Plan is to create and sustain people-friendly places for the benefit of the residents and businesses of Fingal, whilst supporting developers seeking to deliver the highest quality design solutions. Investing in good urban design can create economically successful development that functions well and has a lasting effect into the future.

### 1.3.5 Resilience

Resilience is a principle that also underpins this Plan and is described as *“the ability of a system, community or society exposed to hazards to resist, absorb, accommodate to and recover from the effects of a hazard in a timely and efficient manner, including through the preservation and restoration of its essential basic structures and functions.”* (United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR), 2009).

The key concept of “resilience” underpins this Plan and is built into the strategic policies and recommendations of each of the four cross-cutting themes: sustainable development, climate change, social inclusion and high-quality design.



Challenges for the development of sustainable, well-designed, socially inclusive, attractive places where people will want to live and work include;

- Providing clear guidance and policy direction in identifying criteria and features on what contributes to making a place special;
- Providing design principles to ensure new “greenfield” development creates a sense of place and is integrated into existing communities, it should respect existing features which positively contribute to the local distinctiveness of an area;
- Seeking new ways in which to achieve higher densities and create places where people will want to live and work;
- Encouraging vibrant and attractive towns, villages and neighbourhoods;
- Seeking new ways to provide a supportive living environment for people from all walks of life and all stages of their life cycle;
- Ensuring new buildings are of a high-quality design and adaptable for changing family demands; and
- Ensuring the most appropriate policy tools, such as Local Area Plans and Frameworks are assigned to particular areas to ensure the best policy response is in place to facilitate development in a planned, coordinated and sustainable manner.

## 1.4 Strategic Objectives

This Plan aims to form a coherent development strategy to 2029 and beyond. The strategic vision recognises the potential of Fingal and aligns with the key growth objectives set out in the higher order spatial plans and to take advantage of the strategic assets of the County.

The vision is underpinned by the four cross cutting themes outlined above and a number of interlinked strategic objectives. In achieving a more sustainable and resilient County, the application of the strategic objectives at all levels, from plan-making to any urban or rural project and development management, will help to deliver a better quality of life for all. The objectives which are set out below constitute inter-related and essential elements of a sustainable approach to future development of Fingal. These objectives are imbedded throughout the Plan, cascading from the vision, Core Strategy, policies, objectives and standards through to implementation.

In drafting these strategic objectives, the Council has taken a proactive approach towards development that promotes and facilitates appropriate and sustainable development, that nonetheless:

- Ensures the sustainable use of natural resources;
- Enables us to live within the area's environmental capacity;
- Enables and enhances our resilience to climate change; and,
- Creates a more open, diverse and inclusive society.

Delivering on these strategic objectives will result in an enhanced quality of life for all citizens. The following are the interlinked strategic objectives of this Plan:

1. Transition to an environmentally sustainable carbon neutral economy.
2. Continue the development of a network of well-serviced, well-connected, sustainable neighbourhoods which have a range of facilities, a choice of tenure and universally designed adaptable house types, promote social inclusion and integration of all minority communities.
3. Ensure new residential development is of the highest quality, endorsing the principles of healthy placemaking, enabling life cycle choices and physical, community, recreation and amenity infrastructure are provided in tandem, to create sustainable, healthy, inclusive and resilient communities.
4. Grow Fingal's economy and create opportunity through maximising the potential for development through the promotion and enhancement of the competitive advantages of Fingal, including its strategic location, connectivity and accessibility to international markets, a skilled workforce and a high quality of life.
5. Protect the unique character of Fingal. Support and facilitate revitalisation and consolidation of our towns, urban and rural villages and neighbourhoods, through placemaking and public realm initiatives, which encompasses a multi-faceted approach to planning, design and management.
6. Continue to develop a strategic approach to town centre regeneration through the "Town Centre First" Approach and by utilising existing buildings and unused lands for new development, promote residential occupancy in our rural towns and villages and provide for a mix of uses within these areas. Address vacancy and dereliction to create compact attractive, vibrant and safe environments in which to live, work, visit and invest.
7. Ensure the highest quality of public realm and urban design principles are applied to all new developments, ensuring developments contribute to a positive sense of place and local distinctiveness of an area and facilitate the universal design approach into all developments.
8. Create a competitive environment in which to do business. Promote, support and enable sustainable and economic development, enterprise and employment generation. Focus in particular on areas which are accessible by public and sustainable modes of transport. Enable settlements and rural areas to become self-sustaining through innovation and diversification of the rural economy.
9. Reduce car dependency and promote and facilitate sustainable modes of transport. Prioritise walking, cycling and public transport, while supporting an efficient and effective transport system.
10. Protect, enhance and ensure the sustainable use of Fingal's key infrastructure, including water supplies and wastewater treatment facilities, energy supply including renewables, broadband and transportation.
11. Protect, enhance and connect areas of natural heritage, green infrastructure and open space for the benefits of quality of life, biodiversity, protected species and habitats, while having the potential to facilitate climate change adaptation and flood risk measures.
12. Protect, conserve and enhance the built and cultural heritage of Fingal, through promoting awareness, utilising relevant heritage legislation and ensuring good quality urban design principles are applied to all new developments. The principle that well planned and integrated development enhances the sustainability, attractiveness and quality of an area should be at the centre of any proposal.

## 1.5 Plan Overview

The Fingal Development Plan is an integrated policy framework and must be read as a whole. The placement of the topic chapters and the policies within the chapters is no reflection on their importance or weight and does not represent a hierarchy. This Plan sets out policies and supporting text. These take account of:

- The legal requirements related to the adoption of the Fingal Development Plan;
- Other requirements of national and regional planning policy and guidance (without seeking to repeat these)
- Utilising the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Appropriate Assessment (AA) processes.
- The evidence that underpins the Plan (without seeking to repeat it).

The final Fingal Development Plan 2023–2029 will take account of the submissions received during the consultation process. This Plan will run from 2023–2029. This is the statutory timeframe for any Development Plan in Ireland, however much of the Plan provides a longer-term view of Fingal's development to inform decision making.

## 1.6 Structure of the Plan

This Chief Executive's Draft Plan is set out as follows:

**The Plan – Written Statement:** The Written Statement is the main document of this Plan, setting out an overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of Fingal over a 6 year period to 2029. This volume comprises fourteen chapters of text, policies and objectives for development.

### **Appendices:**

Appendix 1: Fingal Housing Strategy including the Housing Need and Demand Assessment,

Appendix 2: Implementation of Ministerial Guidelines

Appendix 3: Policy Context

Appendix 4: Infrastructure Capacity Assessment

Appendix 5: Record of Protected Structures and ACA's

Appendix 6: Recorded Monuments/Sites and Monuments Record

Appendix 7: Technical Guidance Notes, definitions of different land uses

Appendix 8: Map based Local Objectives

Appendix 9: Dublin Bay Biosphere Reserve Map 2016

Appendix 10: List of townlands to which assessment zone D applies

Appendix 11: FCC SuDS Guidance Document – “Green/Blue Infrastructure for Development”

Appendix 12: Acronyms

**Accompanying Environmental Reports:** This includes the documents informing the preparation of the Plan in accordance with environmental legislation, including a Strategic Environmental Assessment, Natura Impact Report and Strategic Flood Risk Assessment.

**Supplementary Information:** This includes studies and reports which provided evidence and other information for the Plan.

**Sheets:** Sheets 1–13 are the zoning and land use maps, including local objectives. Sheets 14-16 indicate the Green Infrastructure Maps and objectives.

In the event that any conflict or ambiguity arises between the Written Statement and supporting maps, the Written Statement shall take precedence.

## 1.7 Plan Making Process and Requirements

The Plan has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), higher tier international, national and regional level plans, ministerial guidelines and with regard to local level strategies and plans.

The formal process for the preparation of this Draft Plan commenced on 12<sup>th</sup> March 2021, with the publication of the Strategic Issues Paper. During the public consultation period 551 no. written submissions were received and considered in the Chief Executive's Report issued to Elected Members on the 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2021. Preparation of the Draft Plan has been informed by the Chief Executive's Report on written submissions, consultations with members of the public, stakeholders, service providers, Elected Members, Strategic Policy Committees, Statutory Bodies, Government Departments and with the various Directorates of Fingal County Council.

The Chief Executive's Draft Plan was considered by the Elected Members and 917 no. Motions received and debated in a series of meetings between the 18<sup>th</sup> of January and the 10<sup>th</sup> February 2022. The resultant Draft Fingal Development Plan, comprising Stage 2 of the process will now commence a phase of public consultation between the 24<sup>th</sup> of February and 12<sup>th</sup> May 2022. The Planning Authority envisages that the final Plan will be adopted in February 2023 and will come into effect six weeks later.

The following sections set out the context of policy documents, local level strategies and environmental legislation requirements, which have underpinned the preparation of the Draft Plan.

## 1.8 Planning Legislation

This Plan has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended). Section 10(1) provides that the Draft Plan shall set out an overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of the area and shall consist of a written statement and a plan or plans indicating the development objectives for the area. The Act sets out mandatory requirements with respect to the content of the Plan, including objectives for the zoning of land, the provision of infrastructure, the conservation and protection of the environment and the integration of planning and sustainable development with the social, community and cultural requirements of the population.

The Act requires the preparation of a “Core Strategy” for Fingal, which must be consistent, as far as practicable, with the higher tier National and Regional growth objectives, set out under the National Planning Framework and the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Eastern & Midland Region.

In making the Draft Plan, Section 12(11) of the Act states that members shall be restricted to considering the proper planning and sustainable development of the area, the statutory obligations of any Local Authority in the area, and any relevant policies or objectives for the time being of the Government or any Minister of the Government.

## 1.9 Policy Context

The Draft Plan has been prepared in accordance with Project Ireland 2040 and the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Eastern & Midland Region.

As set out in the NPF, sustainability is at the centre of long-term planning. In this regard, Ireland is a signatory to the United Nations' Sustainability Development Goals (SDGs) as set out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development “Transforming our World”.

The seventeen SDGs reflect economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development and set a framework for national level policies and agendas to 2030. There is significant alignment between the SDGs and the NPF's National Strategic Outcomes (NSOs), in areas including climate action, clean energy, sustainable cities and communities, economic growth, reduced inequalities and innovation and infrastructure, education and health. The policy context is set out in Appendix 3.

**Figure 1.1: UN Sustainable Development Goals**





### 1.9.1 Project Ireland 2040

Project Ireland 2040 comprises the National Planning Framework (NPF) and the National Development Plan (NDP). The NPF is the Government's high-level strategic vision for shaping future growth and development in the entire country over a 20 year period. The NPF sets out a targeted pattern of growth for the Eastern and Midlands Region and Dublin City and these growth figures inform the delivery of national policy expressed in the NPF and the delivery of the RSES.

The NPF comprises 10 no. National Strategic Outcomes (NSOs) and 75 no. National Policy Objectives (NPOs). The NSOs and NPOs guide Ireland's economic, environmental and social development at national, regional and local level, including the preparation of the policies and objectives of the Draft Plan.

The NPF has a very clear focus on achieving compact growth and, more specifically, brownfield infill development which translates into encouraging more people, jobs and activity generally within existing built up areas rather than into new greenfield areas (National Policy Objective (NPO) 3b). This growth strategy will allow better use of underutilised serviced land and buildings, including infill and brownfield land, with more high-quality and high-density mixed-use development accompanied by enhanced amenities, education, health and social services; all supported by sustainable mobility.

The NPF acknowledges that rural areas make a major contribution to Ireland's identity and to overall national development in economic, social, cultural and environmental terms. The NPF places a major focus on rural areas in relation to strengthening Ireland's rural fabric and supporting existing communities, planning for the future growth and development of rural areas, supporting job creation, addressing connectivity gaps and better co-ordination of existing investment programmes dealing with social inclusion, rural development and town and village renewal.

The National Development Plan 2018–2027 provides the accompanying investment strategy which aligns with the strategic objectives of the NPF. A review of the National Development Plan was originally planned for 2022 but in June 2020 the Government decided to bring it forward to 2021 in light of Covid-19, in order to enable an infrastructure led economy.

As part of Project Ireland 2040 the revised NDP now sets out the Government's over-arching investment strategy and budget for the period 2021–2030 with a record spending of €165 billion. The NDP will continue to work in parallel with the NPF to ensure that the investment strategy supports spatial planning. The stated aims of the NDP are also to ensure a sustainable and regionally balanced post-pandemic recovery recognising the challenges with population growth (approximately 1 million people between 2016 and 2040), Covid-19, Brexit, housing issues, health and the climate emergency.

The revised NDP is underpinned by the updated Public Spending Code which came into effect in January 2020. The NDP now sets out Departmental allocations to 2025 with the subsequent years to be added on a rolling basis. This is a cross-Departmental plan with linkages between sectors to meet National Strategic Outcomes (NSOs). An example of this is a transport-led housing development approach which will allow for the emergence of sustainable and well-connected communities where active travel is feasible.

Figure 1.2: National Strategic Outcomes of the NPF



### 1.9.2 Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2019–2031

The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly area sets out a strategic plan and investment framework to shape development and manage planning in the Region. The RSES translates the NPF objectives and the growth and settlement strategy at the regional level, ensuring coordination between the NPF and each County Development Plan.

The RSES identifies the region's challenges as the need to sustain economic growth whilst transitioning to a low carbon society and the requirement to align population growth with the location of homes and jobs whilst creating healthy attractive places and an enhanced quality of life. The RSES is underpinned by three cross cutting principles; healthy placemaking, climate action and economic opportunity, which will be incorporated into all facets of our new Development Plan.

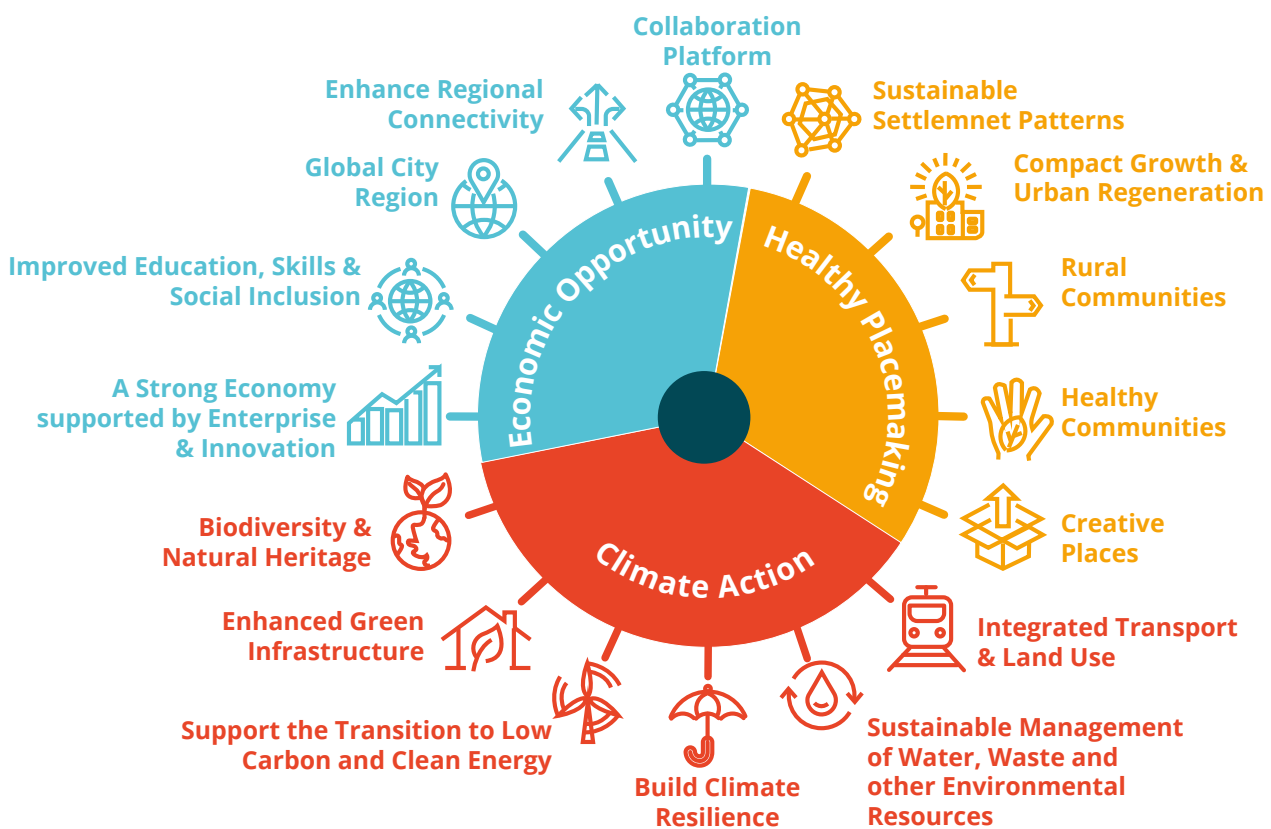
The growth strategy for the Region supports the continued sustainable growth of Dublin and its transition to a low carbon, climate resilient and environmentally sensitive region in accordance with the Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP), which forms part of the RSES.

The MASP directs future growth to identified strategic residential and employment corridors based on their current and future development capacity, their ability to deliver outcomes such as compact development, place making, accessibility to public transport, potential for economic development and a reduced carbon footprint.

The RSES recognises the strategic location of Swords, in proximity to Dublin City, Dublin Airport, the national road network and Metrolink and it is specifically identified as one of three “Key Towns” in the MASP area. These Key Metropolitan Towns have the capacity and future potential to accommodate above average growth in the Region with the requisite investment in employment creation, services, amenities and sustainable transport. Specific Regional Policy Objectives (RPO's) are outlined for Swords.

Also relevant to Fingal is the “Metrolink – LUAS Corridor” linking Swords and Dublin Airport to Dublin City and the “Dublin – Belfast Economic Corridor” which is identified as another strategic connection. This Corridor is the largest economic agglomeration on the island of Ireland, with the cities and towns along the Dublin – Belfast Corridor home to a population of around 2 million people.

**Figure 1.3: Regional Strategic Outcomes of the RSES**



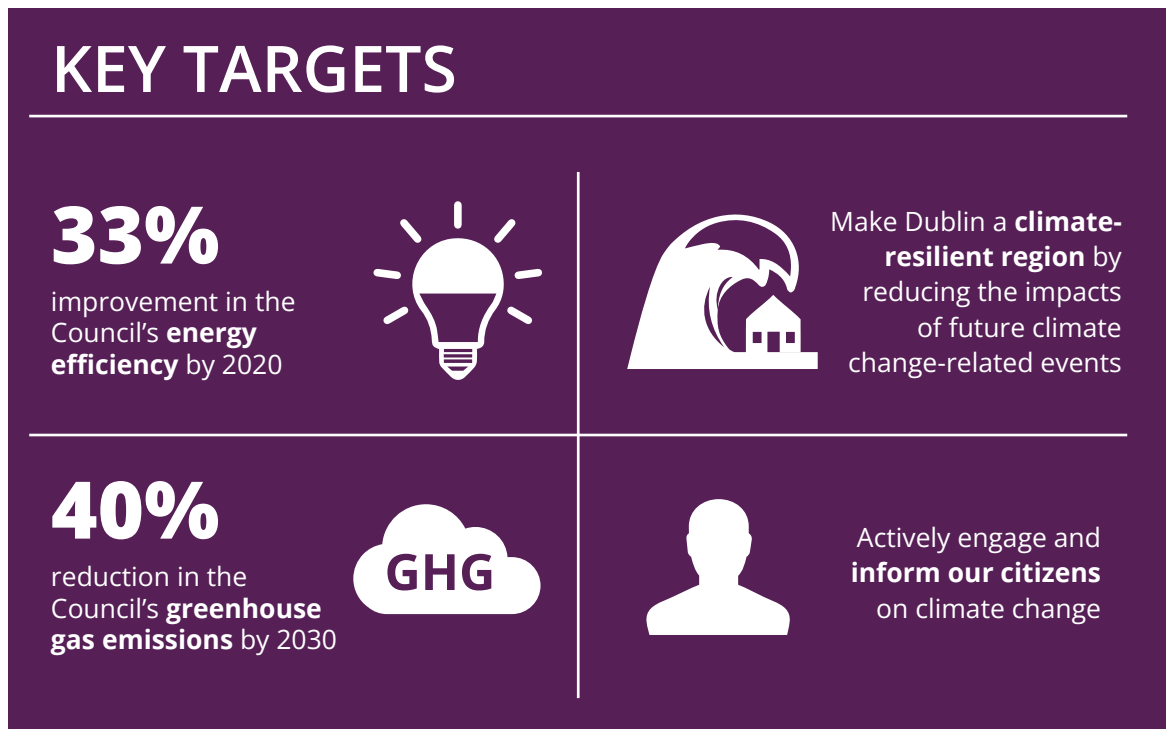
### 1.9.3 National Climate Action Plan 2019–2024

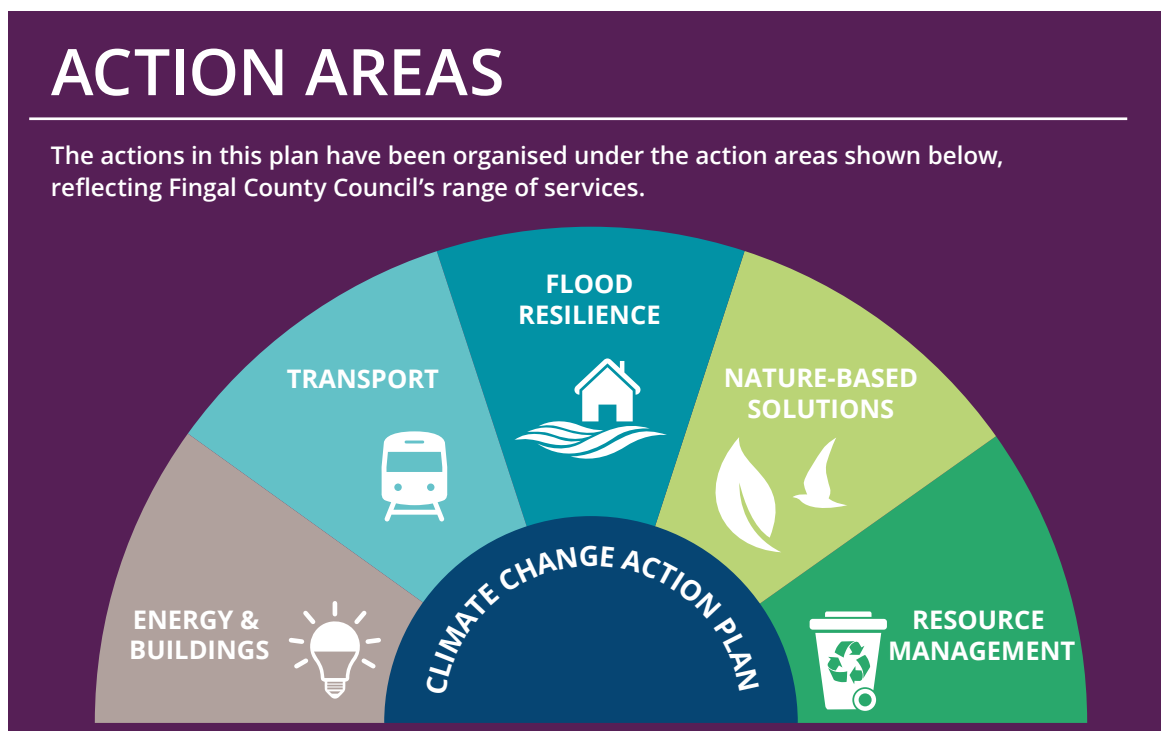
The National Climate Action Plan (CAP) 2019–24 acknowledges the key role that land use and spatial planning can play in ensuring that population growth is managed in a sustainable way, thus reducing our carbon footprint and all aspects of Government policy are underpinned by a commitment to Climate Action. The CAP identifies a set of actions to address the impacts of climate change on Ireland's environment, society, economic and natural resources.

Both the NPF and the RSES establish the importance of addressing climate action and the need to promote sustainable and compact growth and to progress climate change mitigation and adaptation through land use planning. The NPF includes National Strategic Outcome No. 8 to “Transition to a Low Carbon and Climate Resilient Society” and at a regional level, the RSES outlines climate action as one of the three key principles underpinning the Strategy in line with national policy.

Good planning policies, which promote a compact urban form, linking of transportation and land use planning, and the protection and enhancement of biodiversity create climate resilient communities and neighbourhoods. The policies and objectives that result in proper planning and sustainable development are consistent with those that result in a climate resilient society and this is recognised and supported in Fingal's recently adopted Climate Change Action Plan 2019–2024.

Figure 1.4 and 1.5: Source: Fingal County Council Climate Change Action Plan 2019–2024





## 1.9.4 Draft Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2022–2042

The National Transport Authority (NTA) has published for public consultation a draft Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area which seeks to update the current strategy and sets out various proposals for future transport investment for the next 20 years. The new strategy commits fully to the existing transformative public transport projects including BusConnects, DART+ and MetroLink as well as LUAS Finglas, LUAS Lucan, LUAS Poolbeg and LUAS Bray. The draft strategy proposes further extensions to the DART network to extend DART services to Kilcock, Sallins and Wicklow, an extension of the M3 Parkway line to Navan and a range of new stations along the network. The draft strategy also proposes a range of investments across active travel, bus and demand/traffic management measures. Implementation of the full measures set out in the draft strategy aim to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the GDA to a reduction of around 70%.

Within the draft strategy, significant investment is planned for Fingal and particularly as it relates to the corridor connecting Fingal and Dublin City Centre which includes:

- Delivery of MetroLink to Swords and serving Dublin Airport;
- Implementation of the DART Expansion Programme which proposes the provision of high frequency DART services including the electrification of the existing Maynooth and M3 Parkway rail lines and the northern rail line to Drogheda; and
- LUAS Greenline Capacity Enhancement including an extension of LUAS to Finglas.
- Implementation of a Core Bus Network under BusConnects for the Dublin Metropolitan area and throughout the GDA based on bus radial, orbital and regional routes in the GDA.



- Delivery of the metropolitan cycle network set out in the Greater Dublin Area Cycle Network Plan inclusive of key commuter routes and urban greenways on canal, river and coastal corridors.
- Develop a strategic network of regional level bus and rail-based Park and Ride facilities in the GDA at appropriate locations where the national road network meets, or is in close proximity to, high-capacity bus and rail services.

Implementation of demand management measures on the M50 motorway to ensure that it retains sufficient capacity to fulfil its strategic functions, including freight movement.

### **1.9.5 National Marine Planning Framework**

In accordance with EU Directive 2014/89, work is currently underway on a National Marine Spatial Plan. Marine planning will contribute to the effective management of marine activities and more sustainable use of our marine resources. It will enable the Government to set a clear direction for managing our seas, to clarify objectives and priorities, and to direct decision makers, users and stakeholders towards more strategic and efficient use of marine resources. As Fingal is a coastal county the final plan / framework will be of importance to us.

### **1.9.6 Statutory Planning Guidelines (Section 28)**

The Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage can issue Guidelines (under Section 28 of the Planning and Development Act 2000), which Planning Authorities are required to have regard to in carrying out their functions, including in the preparation of their Development Plans

There are several guidelines which have been issued in accordance with Section 28 and these cover a wide range of issues including building height, residential density and design, development management, childcare facilities and environmental assessment and will have implications for specific policies in the Plan.

The most recently published Section 28 Guidelines include Draft Development Plan Guidelines, August 2021 and Housing Supply Target Methodology for Development Planning, December 2020.

## **1.10 Environmental Requirements**

In accordance with European and National legislation, Fingal County Council has carried out a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), an Appropriate Assessment (AA) and Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA), which have informed the preparation of this Draft Plan.

### **1.10.1 Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)**

The preparation of the Fingal County Development Plan 2023–2029 is required to undergo Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in accordance with Directive 2001/42/EC and associated implementing national legislation on the Assessment of the Effects of Certain Plans and Programmes on the Environment. SEA is a process for evaluating, at the earliest appropriate stage, the environmental quality and consequences

of Plans or Programmes. The purpose is to ensure that the environmental consequences of Plans or Programmes are assessed both during their preparation and prior to their adoption. The SEA process is integrated into the preparation of the draft plan and the SEA Environmental Report.

As part of the SEA process, the statutory environmental authorities were informed and consulted through SEA Scoping in relation to the making of the draft plan and the associated SEA. Submissions provided by the environmental authorities have influenced the making of the Draft Plan and have been incorporated into the Environmental Report, which accompanies this Draft Plan.

The Environmental Report sets out policy and guidance in relation to SEA; the findings of consultations; describes the baseline environment; sets environmental objectives; assesses the environmental impact of the plan and proposes appropriate mitigation of potential negative aspects, where required.

The SEA process is supported by a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA). The SFRA provides a strategic assessment of flood risk at a city level, informing land-use planning decisions in the Development Plan.

### **1.10.2 Appropriate Assessment (AA)**

In accordance with the requirements under the EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC), the EU Birds Directive (79/409/EEC) and Section 177 of the Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2010, an Appropriate Assessment of the Draft Fingal Development Plan 2023-2029 has been carried out to determine whether the Draft Plan could have significant effects on European sites, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects.

The Appropriate Assessment of the Draft Plan furthermore assesses whether any such significant effects would adversely affect the integrity of any European sites, in view of the conservation objectives supporting the favourable conservation condition of the Qualifying Interest habitats and species of European sites. In reaching a conclusion in this regard, consideration is given to any mitigation measures necessary to avoid or reduce any potential negative impacts.

The purpose of this process is to determine whether or not a plan requires Appropriate Assessment of the likely significant effects on a European site (Natura 2000 network of European sites of conservation importance). Where it cannot be ruled out beyond scientific doubt, and on a precautionary basis avoiding reliance of mitigation policies or measures, that the plan is likely to have potential for significant effects on a range of European site(s), it is deemed that the plan will require an Appropriate Assessment.

The Appropriate Assessment of the Draft Plan and its proposed policies and objectives (at this time) has been informed by a Natura Impact Report (NIR) that accompanies with the Draft Plan documentation. It has been objectively concluded (at this stage of the plan process) in the NIR, following an examination, analysis and evaluation of the relevant information, including in particular the nature of the predicted impacts associated with the plan that it will not adversely affect the integrity of any European site, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects. However, the iterative process is incomplete.

Following on from the release of the Draft Plan and its accompanying environmental reports, any amendments or material changes that arise from that process will themselves be subject to Appropriate Assessment and incorporated into the Draft Plan before the assessment can be concluded (through the

formal determination of the Competent Authority e.g. the councillors and its statutory adoption thereafter of the Fingal Development Plan 2023–2029.

### **The following will apply to all Plans**

Ensure that plans, including land use plans, will only be adopted, if they either individually or in combination with existing and/ or proposed plans or projects, will not have a significant effect on a European Site, or where such a plan is likely or might have such a significant effect (either alone or in combination), the planning authority will, as required by law, carry out an appropriate assessment as per requirements of Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC of the 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora, as transposed into Irish legislation. Only after having ascertained that the plan will not adversely affect the integrity of any European site, will the planning authority adopt the plan, incorporating any necessary mitigation measures. A plan which could adversely affect the integrity of a European site may only be adopted in exceptional circumstances, as provided for in Article 6(4) of the Habitats Directive as transposed into Irish legislation.

Plans will also be subject to screening for the requirement for environmental assessment, and to environmental assessment if required, in accordance with the provisions of Directive 2001/42/EC on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment (the SEA Directive) as transposed into national legislation.

### **The following will apply to all development proposals**

Ensure that planning permission will only be granted for a development proposal that, either individually or in combination with existing and/or proposed plans or projects, will not have a significant effect on a European site(s), or where such a development proposal is likely or might have such a significant effect (either alone or in combination), the planning authority will, as required by law, carry out an appropriate assessment as per requirements of Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC of the 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora, as transposed into Irish legislation. Only after having ascertained that the development proposal will not adversely affect the integrity of any European site, will the planning authority agree to the development and impose appropriate mitigation measures in the form of planning conditions. A development proposal which could adversely affect the integrity of a European site may only be permitted in exceptional circumstances, as provided for in Article 6(4) of the Habitats Directive as transposed into Irish legislation.

Development proposals will also be subject to screening for the requirement for environmental impact assessment, and to environmental impact assessment if required, in accordance with the provisions of Directive 2011/52/EU on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment as amended by Directive 2014/52/EU (the EIA Directive) as transposed into national legislation.

## 1.11 Fingal County – Socio-Economic Profile

### Introduction

Fingal County is 465 sq. m. in area, hosts a variety of landscapes, enjoys significant economic advantages and is the fastest growing county in Ireland. Fingal is well served by air, sea and national roads and the county has one of the youngest and most diverse populations in the State. Employment in the county increased by 15% between 2011 and 2016. Key economic sectors in the county include tourism, retail & hospitality, information technology & communications, agriculture, public administration and commerce & trade.

### Population Increase and Distribution

Fingal was the third most populous local authority in Ireland (after Dublin City and Cork County) with a total of 296,020 people in 2016. Between 2006 and 2016 the population in Fingal increased by 23.3% or by just over 56,000 people. There was an increase of 7.4% (22,029 persons) between 2011 and 2016. This was considerably higher than the national average growth rate of 3.8% for the same period. The population of Fingal is projected to increase to between 327,000 and 333,000 up to 2026.

The distribution of population varied across Fingal with the highest population per Electoral Division concentrated along the outskirts of Dublin City (particularly in the western areas of Blanchardstown and Castleknock) and along the eastern coast (population is relatively evenly distributed from Howth up to Balbriggan). Naturally there were urban clusters of higher population such as Blanchardstown, Balbriggan and Swords whilst the north-west of Fingal was the least populated area and indicative of the rural transition from north county Dublin towards Louth and Meath. Within Fingal, 92.7% of the population lives within the Aggregate Town Area (ATA) as defined by CSO whilst 7.3% reside in the Aggregate Rural Area (ARA).

### Housing programme

Fingal County Council continues to deliver social housing units and continues to provide housing solutions in accordance with the Rebuilding Ireland Action Plan through a range of delivery mechanisms including construction, Part V, acquisitions, leasing and Housing Assistance Payment Scheme (HAP). The Council has an ambitious construction programme underway with 29 sites across the county with 318 homes delivered in 2020, a further 89 on site, 173 at tendering stage and 72 at planning stage. There were 1,189 offers of housing support in 2020 in Fingal County Council. Since its inception in Fingal County Council in 2017, the HAP team have set up over 2,300 tenancies. Since 1st January 2020, a total of 559 households have exited homelessness through the various means of housing support. Homeless HAP accounts for 390 of these tenancies. There have been 30 Part V dwellings delivered to date this year with a further 70 dwellings nearing completion. Detailed design and the pre-planning process have commenced in relation to 504 discounted purchase, discounted rental and social properties at Church Fields, Dublin 15.

### Socio Economic Trends

#### Population structure and Age profiles

Fingal County Council is the youngest local authority in the State (at 33.8 years) which is 3.7 years lower than the State, 2.2 years lower than the region and 2.5 years lower than Dublin average. Across Fingal, the average male is 33.1 years old, which was slightly younger than the average female at 34.4 years. There were

87,140 persons under 19 years of age with 24,899 children of pre-school age (0–4 years old). A further 39,349 children (13.3% of the population), were of primary school age (5–12 years old) and a further 22,892 (7.7% of the population) were of secondary school age (13–18 years old). 63,488 (21.45%) persons are aged between 45–64 years of age.

### Age Dependency Ratio

The age dependency ratio is the proportion of population in the young (0–14 years) and old (65 years and above) cohorts to the working population cohort (15–64 years). In the case of Fingal, the working cohort of Fingal equates to 66.3% of the population. Within Fingal, approximately 196,372 people are regarded as being of working age, of which this 162,865 (or 55.0% of the total population) are within the prime working age cohorts (25–64 years of age). In contrast, 33.7% of its population is dependent. This comprises 72,613 young persons (i.e. aged 0–14 years) and 27,035 older persons (i.e. aged 65 years and above).

Dependency ratios are used to indicate the balance between the working population and those that are dependent on them. Fingal's dependency (33.7%) is lower than the national average (34.5%) and comparable to the region (33.2%). 31.5% of the population across Dublin was dependent, however the latter was influenced by Dublin City which had a relatively low dependency rate of 28.1%. Fingal demonstrated the second lowest dependency rate of the four local authorities within Dublin.

Fingal has an average density of 646 persons per sq.km. Within Fingal, Blanchardstown and Swords have the highest density levels. Blanchardstown also has one of the highest density levels within EMRA at 4,826 persons per sq.km.

### Labour Force

The highest labour force participation rate in the EMRA is in Fingal. The total labour force in Fingal in 2016 was 149,386 or 66.9%. Fingal has an employment rate of almost 90% of the labour force compared to 87% nationally. According to Census 2016, the total Labour Force at Work in Fingal was 133,971 and this accounts for 89.7% of the total labour force in the Dublin SPA. This increased by 14,695 or 11% over the period from 2011–2016. According to POWSCAR 2016 there was a total of 94,751 jobs with destinations recorded as being within the county.

### Commuting

The 2016 Census found that 47,707 (36.1%) of Fingal residents worked within Fingal. This increased by circa 4,000 since 2011. In 2016 in Fingal 34% (45,179) of the working population commuted to Dublin City for work. This results in a large proportion of the population commuting to work outside of the county. The number leaving the county to work elsewhere (mainly Dublin City) had increased by circa 2,300 since 2011. While the numbers living and working in the county increased over the census periods, those commuting elsewhere to work also increased.

There remains a large dependence on the car as a means of getting to work, school or college within the county. 76,249 persons were recoded as using the car to travel to the above locations. This includes 73,929 using the car to get to their place of work. Bus/minibus/coach was the second most used mode of transport for getting to work. While those walking to work in Fingal amounted to 7,087 persons, 23,536 people walked to school or college in the area.



## Unemployment

The Labour Force Unemployment Rate in Fingal in 2016 was 15,415 (6.9%). As of September 2020, the nationally adjusted unemployment rate was 14.7% due to the Covid-19 pandemic and 10.3% recorded in 2016 in Fingal will more than likely have increased since then.

All of the above has been considered in the preparation of this Draft Plan.

