



# Introduction and Strategic Context

## Chapter 1

**CHAPTER 1**

**INTRODUCTION AND STRATEGIC CONTEXT**



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## CHAPTER 1

# INTRODUCTION AND STRATEGIC CONTEXT

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## THE DRAFT DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The Draft Fingal Development Plan 2017-2023 sets out the Council's proposed policies and objectives for the development of the County over the Plan period. The Plan seeks to develop and improve, in a sustainable manner, the social, economic, environmental and cultural assets of the County.

The administrative area of Fingal covers over 450 square kilometres and includes 88km of scenic coastline. The County stretches from the River Liffey and the Dublin City boundary in the south to the Meath boundary north of Balbriggan, and eastwards from the coast to the Meath and Kildare boundaries in the west. Fingal has the youngest population in the State (273,991 persons in 2011 Census), which is a key characteristic of the County as it accommodates an expanding Dublin population.

The County has a diverse character including both urban and rural areas, the coast, river valleys and upland areas. The main urban areas include Swords, Blanchardstown, Balbriggan, Skerries, Lusk, Rush, Donabate, Malahide, Portmarnock, Baldoyle, Sutton, Howth, Balgriffin, Belcamp, Santry, Charlestown and Meakstown. The remainder of the County is rural in character and includes the villages of Balscaddan, Naul, Garristown, Oldtown, Ballyboghil, Rowlestown, Rivermeade, Coolquay and Kinsaley.

### 1.1 Preliminary Consultation Process for the Draft Fingal Development Plan 2017-2023

A review of the current Fingal Development Plan 2011-2017 and the preparation of a new plan, to cover the period 2017-2023, is required not later than four years after the making of a Development Plan under Section 11 (1) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).

The prescribed process gives a 99 week period in which to make the Development Plan. The Planning and Development Act 2000 provides for an additional period of time in the event that a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) or Appropriate Assessment (AA) is required for any material amendment. The Act provides for three periods of public consultation.



The preliminary consultation process included the following:

- The formal review process commenced on 20th March 2015 with a preliminary consultation period held from 20th March 2015 to 15th May 2015. Background issues papers were prepared which were strategic in nature and these were circulated by the Planning Authority for the purpose of raising awareness of the various issues, including settlement strategy, placemaking and communities, infrastructure and movement, economic development, green infrastructure and natural and cultural heritage. A Pre-Draft Booklet entitled *'Fingal Development Plan 2017-2023 – Be Part of It'*, (published in both English and Irish) was delivered to all households in March / April 2015.
- On 20th March 2015, an advertisement was placed in the Irish Times announcing the commencement of the review of the Fingal Development Plan. The Council also wrote to all prescribed bodies informing them of the review and invited submissions and observations. Press releases were sent to all local and national newspapers in March, April and September 2015. Articles were published in the Fingal Independent, North County Leader, Swords Gazette, Blanchardstown Gazette and the Northside People East in April 2015 advertising the Development Plan review process and public meetings.
- Submissions on strategic issues were invited and a number of workshop meetings were held in April and May 2015, with members of the public, local community and business groups, stakeholders and prescribed bodies invited to attend. Four Public Consultation Evenings were held as follows:
  - Portmarnock / Malahide / Howth and East Fingal (Marine Hotel, Sutton, 14th April 2015)
  - Swords and Central Fingal (Carnegie Court Hotel, Swords, 21st April 2015)
  - Balbriggan and North Fingal (Bracken Court Hotel, Balbriggan, 23rd April 2015)
  - Blanchardstown and West Fingal (Civic Offices, Blanchardstown, 28th April 2015)

Three stakeholder meetings were held in April and May 2015 for Business stakeholders, Community, Voluntary, Environment and Public and State bodies.

In excess of **2,380 individual views and opinions were expressed** at these meetings. A total of **325 submissions were received** in this preliminary consultation period.

- The Council engaged in an extensive consultation process through various mediums including published newspaper notices, website updates, local libraries, and information displays at Council offices at Blanchardstown and Swords. Details of the Plan Review, together with other relevant documents including the Background Issues Papers were published on the Council's website. Furthermore, the facility of making submissions via the web was offered. Social media was also used to disseminate information through Twitter and Facebook, along with more traditional posters in public areas to promote awareness of, and participation in the process.
- A Chief Executive's Report (CE Report) was prepared (in accordance with Section 11(4)(a) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended)), which was circulated to elected members for consideration in July 2015. The views of the members of the public who attended the public consultation workshop evenings and the representatives who attended the stakeholder, prescribed bodies, community and business group meetings also contributed to the preparation of the CE Report.
- The Members considered the CE Report at two meetings on 4th and 11th September 2015 and directed the Chief Executive to prepare the Draft Development Plan.

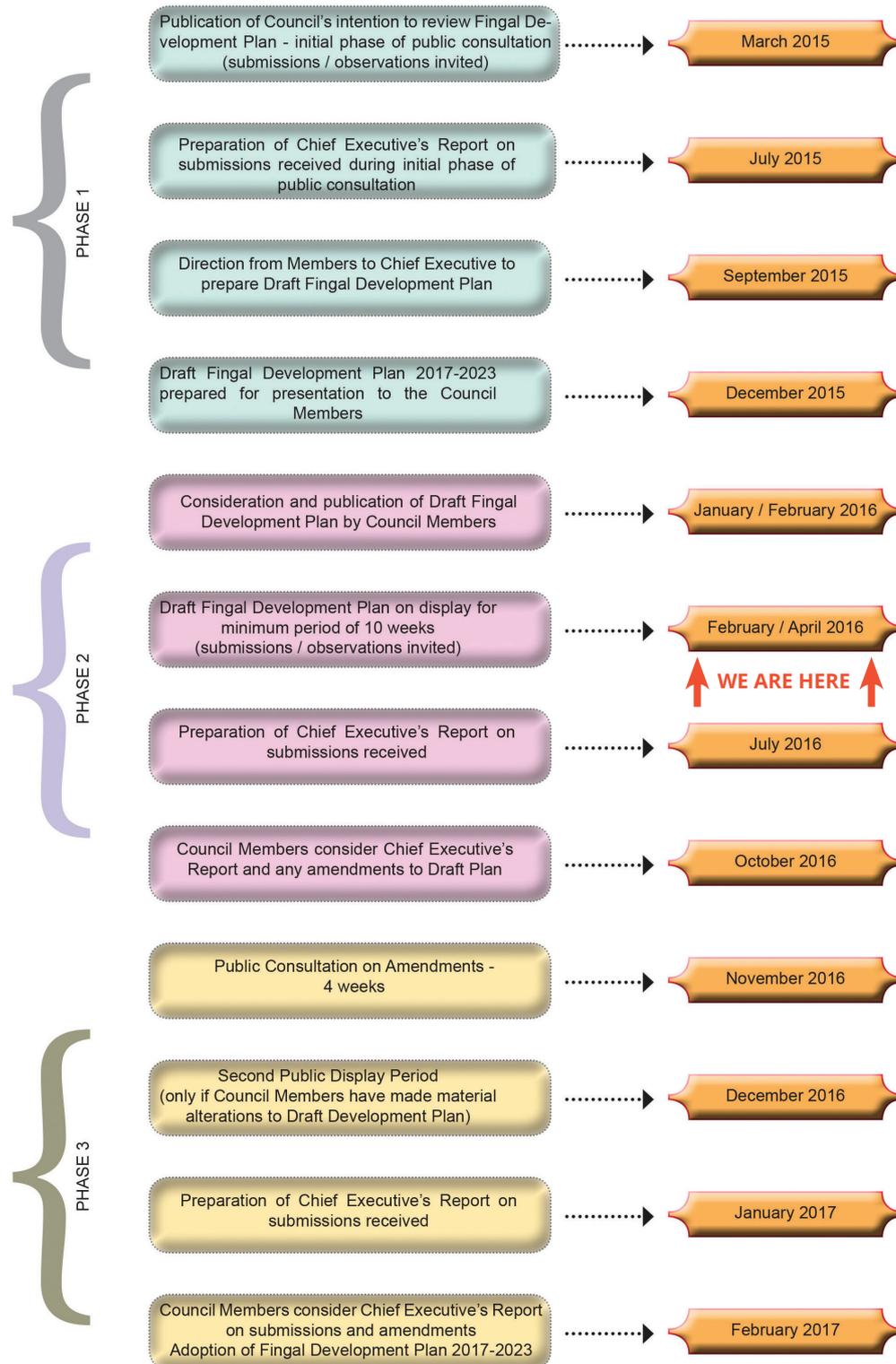


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This preliminary consultation process allowed for public involvement at an early stage in the preparation of the Plan, providing all stakeholders with an interest in the development of the County, including residents, service providers, visitors and investors, to have their say in the making of the new Fingal Development Plan 2017-2023.

Figure 1.1 illustrates the Development Plan review process and the indicative timescale.

**Figure 1.1: Development Plan Review Process and Indicative Timescale**



## 1.2 Legislative Background to the Fingal Development Plan 2017-2023

This Draft Plan has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the *Planning and Development Act 2000* (as amended). These Acts set out mandatory requirements for inclusion in a Development Plan. These consist of, inter alia, objectives for the zoning of land, the provision of infrastructure, the conservation and protection of the environment, and the integration of the planning and sustainable development with the social, community and cultural requirements of the area and its population. It also includes the requirement to prepare a 'core strategy' for the County, which must be consistent, as far as practicable, with National and Regional development objectives as set out in the *National Spatial Strategy (NSS)* and *Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area (RPGs)*.

In accordance with European and National legislation, the Council carried out a *Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)* and an *Appropriate Assessment (AA)* under the Habitats Directive, which informed the preparation of this Draft Development Plan. These assessments are undertaken so the impact of the proposed Draft Plan objectives on the environment can be evaluated, and used to inform the direction of the Draft Plan to ensure that our built environment responds to the sensitivities and requirements of the wider natural environment.

### Strategic Environmental Assessment

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Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), as required under the *Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004*, was carried out as part of the preparation of this Draft Plan. SEA is the process by which environmental considerations are integrated into the preparation of plans and programmes. The results of the SEA process have been fully incorporated into the preparation and making of this Draft Plan. The resulting Environmental Report has been published as a separate document in conjunction with this Draft Plan.

### Strategic Flood Risk Assessment

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A Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) was undertaken for the plan area having regard to the Ministerial planning guidelines on *The Planning System and Flood Risk Management*. Flood Risk Assessment was integrated into the SEA process. The Strategic Flood Risk Assessment has been published as a separate document in conjunction with this draft Plan.

### Appropriate Assessment

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The EU Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the *Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora*, better known as 'The Habitats Directive', provides legal protection for habitats and species of European importance, through the establishment and conservation of an EU-wide network of sites known as European (Natura 2000) sites. These are candidate *Special Areas of Conservation (cSAC)* designated under the *Habitats Directive and Special Protection Areas (SPAs)* designated under the *Conservation of Wild Birds Directive (79/409/EEC)*. Article 6(3) establishes the requirement for Appropriate Assessment (AA) of plans and projects likely to affect European (Natura 2000) sites. An Appropriate Assessment was conducted as part of the preparation of this Draft Plan. A Natura Impact Report has been published as a separate document in conjunction with this Draft Plan.



## Ministerial Guidelines

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Ministerial Guidelines issued to Planning Authorities regarding their functions under the Planning Acts have been considered in the making of this Plan and have been implemented in the various chapters, in accordance with Section 28 of the *Planning and Development Act 2000* (as amended).

### 1.3 Form and Contents of the Fingal Development Plan

The Draft Fingal Development Plan 2017 – 2023 has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the *Planning and Development Act 2000* (as amended). This Plan replaces the Fingal Development Plan 2011 – 2017 and consists of a Written Statement, Maps and Appendices.

The Written Statement is divided into 12 separate chapters with Chapters 1 and 2 setting out the vision, strategic context, aims, goals and the settlement and core strategies for the County. Chapters 3 to 10 set out the policies, objectives and actions required under a range of topics including placemaking and communities, green infrastructure, economic development, infrastructure and movement, urban and rural Fingal, and natural and cultural heritage. Chapters 11 and 12 set out the land use zoning policies and development management standards for the County.

- **Chapter 1: Introduction and Strategic Context**
- **Chapter 2: Core Strategy and Settlement Strategy**
- **Chapter 3: Placemaking**
- **Chapter 4: Urban Fingal**
- **Chapter 5: Rural Fingal**
- **Chapter 6: Economic Development**
- **Chapter 7: Infrastructure and Movement**
- **Chapter 8: Green Infrastructure**
- **Chapter 9: Natural Heritage**
- **Chapter 10: Cultural Heritage**
- **Chapter 11: Land Use Zoning Objectives**
- **Chapter 12: Development Management Standards**

The **Appendices** include the Council's Housing Strategy, the Record of Protected Structures and Recorded Monuments, Technical Guidance Notes for Use Classes, a statement detailing implementation of Ministerial Guidelines, and Map Based Local Objectives (to be read in conjunction with the Development Plan Maps).

The **Maps** provide a graphic representation of the proposals of the Plan indicating land use zoning and other objectives of the Council. They do not purport to be accurate survey maps from which site dimensions or other survey data can be determined.

Should any conflict arise between the Written Statement and the Maps, the Written Statement shall prevail. Should any conflict arise between the print and electronic version of the Plan the print version shall prevail.



The Maps included are:

- |                                  |                                    |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| • Sheet 1: County Strategy/Index | • Sheet 9: Malahide/Portmarnock    |
| • Sheet 2: Fingal North          | • Sheet 10: Baldoyle/Howth         |
| • Sheet 3: Fingal Central        | • Sheet 11: Fingal South           |
| • Sheet 4: Balbriggan            | • Sheet 12: Blanchardstown North   |
| • Sheet 5: Skerries              | • Sheet 13: Blanchardstown South   |
| • Sheet 6: Lusk & Rush           | • Sheet 14: Green Infrastructure 1 |
| • Sheet 7: Donabate/Portrane     | • Sheet 15: Green Infrastructure 2 |
| • Sheet 8: Swords                | • Sheet 16: Green Infrastructure 3 |

The policies of the Draft Plan will be further developed at a local level through the preparation of Local Area Plans, Masterplans, Urban Framework Plans and Public Realm Strategies.

## 1.4 Strategic Vision

The Development Plan presents an opportunity to shape the future growth of Fingal to plan for and support the sustainable long term development of the County. The Plan aims to build on our previous successes and to strengthen our strategic advantage as a County, to ensure that we utilise the strengths of our citizens, communities, built and natural heritage, infrastructure and tourism to their full potential.

The Strategic Vision for the County is to:

- Consolidate urban areas to provide a vibrant, attractive environment for living and working, facilitating efficient movement by sustainable modes of transport throughout the County.
- Create a high quality built environment integrating the conservation of Fingal's built heritage with best practice modern architecture and urban design.
- Support and protect Fingal's attractive rural villages and countryside which support agriculture, horticulture, recreation and tourism. Promote vibrant rural villages with a mix of uses, through the creation of a dynamic framework which involves people living, working, and interacting for social and community reasons.
- Ensure consistency with the Council's Core, Settlement and Housing Strategies to provide high quality housing of a sufficient scale and mix, located in optimum locations and aligned with adequate infrastructure, services and amenities.
- Direct rural generated housing demand to villages and rural clusters and promote the re-use and rehabilitation of existing housing stock in rural areas in preference to new build in order to preserve and enhance the distinct character of rural Fingal.
- Make better use of key resources such as land, water, energy, waste and transportation infrastructure.



- Create a competitive business environment supporting economic development, job creation and prosperity for all.
- Reduce climate change through settlement and travel patterns and reduced use of non-renewable resources.
- Protect Green Infrastructure and enhance Fingal's natural resources of clean water, biodiversity, nature conservation areas, landscape, coastline, greenbelts, parks and open spaces, and agricultural land.
- Improve on key social, cultural, economic and environmental indicators.
- Promote active and healthy lifestyles through increased opportunities for walking, cycling and active sport and recreation.
- Make Fingal an attractive and vibrant place to live, work and visit.
- Encourage inclusive and active sustainable communities based around a strong network of community facilities.

## 1.5 Main Aims of the Development Plan

The Draft Fingal Development Plan 2017-2023 aims to:

1. Plan for and support the sustainable long-term development of Fingal as an integrated network of vibrant socially and economically successful urban settlements and rural communities, strategic green belts and open countryside, supporting and contributing to the economic development of the County and of the Dublin City Region.
2. Provide for the future wellbeing of the residents of the County by:
  - Supporting economic activity and increasing employment opportunities.
  - Protecting and improving the quality of the built and natural environments.
  - Ensuring the provision of adequate housing, necessary infrastructure and community facilities.
  - Promoting and improving quality of life and public health.
  - Build on the progress made in the County following the conclusion of the previous development plan.
3. Incorporate sustainable development, climate change mitigation and adaptation, social inclusion, high quality design and resilience as fundamental principles, cross cutting and underpinning the Draft Plan.
4. Promote an appropriate balance of development across the County, by developing a hierarchy of high quality, vibrant urban centres and clearly delineated areas of growth, and favouring expansion in areas nearest to existing or planned public transport nodes.



5. Ensure an adequate supply of zoned lands to meet forecasted and anticipated economic and social needs, while avoiding an oversupply which would lead to fragmented development, dissipated infrastructural provision and urban sprawl.
6. Foster the development of socially and economically balanced sustainable communities.
7. Facilitate the actions and implementation of the Local Economic and Community Plan, as appropriate.
8. Facilitate the potential for growth in tourism by implementing the *Fingal Tourism Strategy 2015-2018*, as appropriate.
9. Continue to influence regional and national planning and development policies in the interest of the County.
10. Co-operate with the Eastern and Midlands Regional Assembly, Local Authorities and other stakeholders in meeting the needs and development requirements of the County and the GDA in accordance with the *National Spatial Strategy* and the *Regional Planning Guidelines for the GDA* and any successor policy documents.
11. Facilitate and encourage innovation in order to drive sustainable development, protecting against potential negative impacts.

## 1.6 Strategic Policy

The Strategic Policy will deliver on the Main Aims by seeking to:

1. Promote sustainable development by providing for the integration of economic, environmental, social and cultural issues into Development Plan policies and objectives, utilising to that end the **Strategic Environmental Assessment** (SEA) and **Appropriate Assessment** (AA) processes.
2. Contribute to the creation of a more **socially inclusive, equal and culturally diverse society** by providing for appropriate community infrastructure, quality public realm and improving access to information and resources. Seek new innovative ways of enhancing **social inclusion** and ensure the Plan can facilitate initiatives arising from the *Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP)*, where appropriate.
3. Add quality to the places where Fingal's communities live, work and recreate by integrating **high quality design** into every aspect of the Plan promoting adaptable residential buildings and ensuring developments contribute to a positive sense of place and local distinctiveness of an area.
4. Promote and facilitate the long-term consolidation and growth of the **County town of Swords** as provided for in the Swords Strategic Vision 2035.
5. Consolidate the growth of the major centres of **Blanchardstown and Balbriggan** by encouraging infill development and intensification of development within appropriate locations.



6. Consolidate development and protect the unique identities of the settlements of **Howth, Sutton, Baldoyle, Portmarnock, Malahide, Donabate, Lusk, Rush and Skerries**.
7. Develop a strategy to promote and deliver an enhanced identity and link with Fingal for the wider communities of **Santry, Ballymun, Meakstown/Charlestown, Finglas and Lanesborough**.
8. Promote the **vibrancy of town centres** by providing for a mix of uses, including cultural and community uses and upper floor residential, as appropriate.
9. Safeguard the current and future operational, safety, and technical requirements of **Dublin Airport** and provide for its ongoing development within a sustainable development framework of a Local Area Plan. The plan shall take account of any potential impact on local communities and shall have regard to any wider environmental issues.
10. Promote **enterprise and employment** throughout the County, particularly in the growth centres of Swords, Blanchardstown, Balbriggan and work with the Dublin Local Authorities to promote the Dublin City Region as an engine for economic growth for the Region and the country.
11. Protect, maintain and enhance the **natural and built heritage** of the County, particularly the coastal areas which are of such importance to residents of and visitors to the Dublin region.
12. Safeguard the **'green agricultural'** identity of North Fingal, promoting the rural character of the County and supporting the agricultural and horticultural production sectors.
13. Provide viable housing alternatives for the **rural community** through the promotion of controlled growth of the rural villages and clusters balanced with careful restriction of residential development in the countryside and recognising the unique value of the rural communities in Fingal.
14. Strengthen and consolidate **greenbelts** around key settlements.
15. Seek the development of a **high quality public transport system** throughout the County and linking to adjoining counties, including the development of the proposed new Metro North and Metro West, improvements to railway infrastructure including the DART Expansion Programme, QBCs and BRT systems, together with enhanced facilities for walking and cycling.
16. Promote, improve and develop a well-connected **national, regional and local road and public transport infrastructure system**, geared to meet the needs of the County and the Region, and providing for all road users, prioritising walking, cycling and public transport.
17. Work with Irish Water to secure the timely provision of **water supply and drainage infrastructure** necessary to end polluting discharges to waterbodies, comply with existing licences and Irish and EU law, and facilitate the sustainable development of the County and the Region.



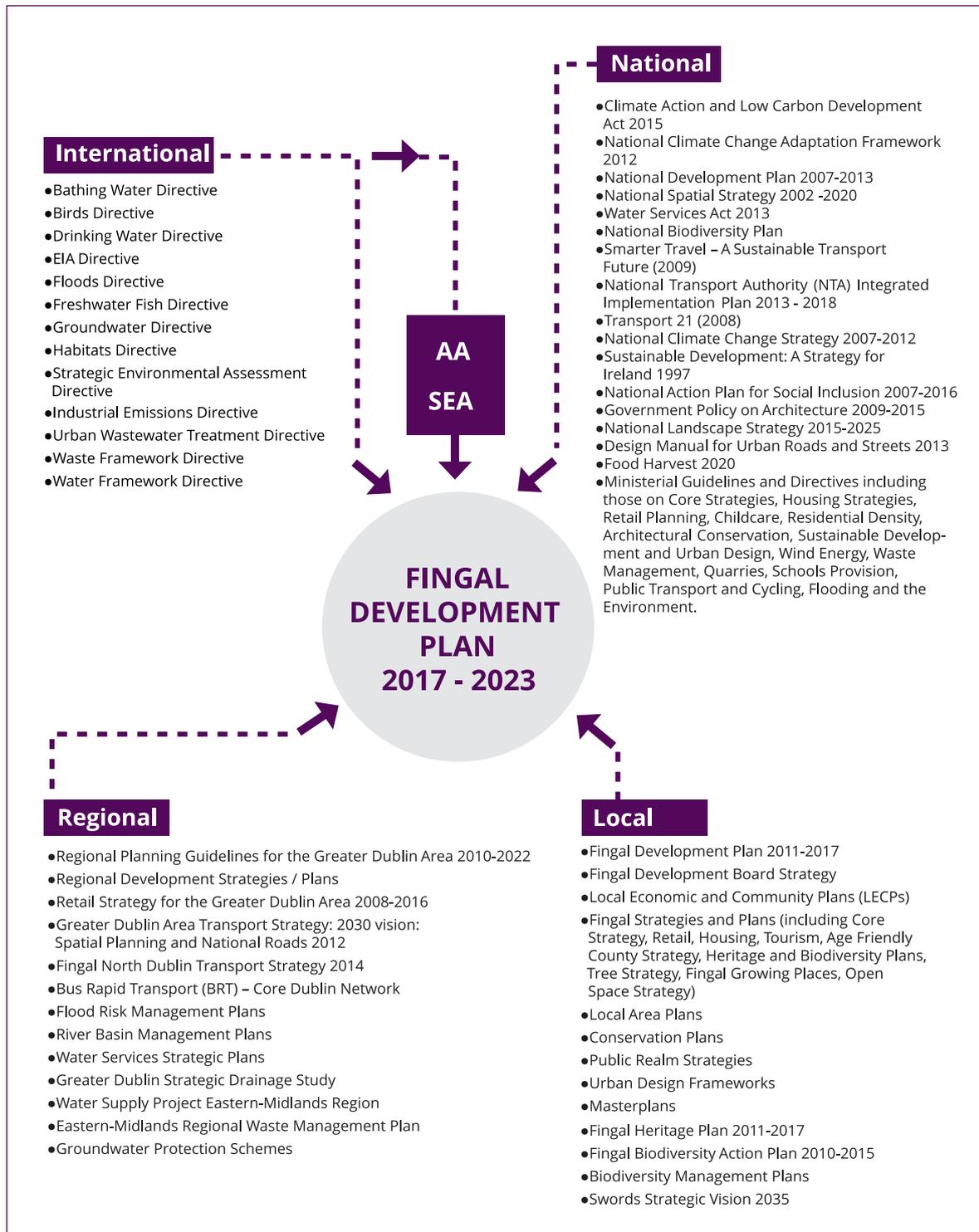
18. Secure the timely provision of infrastructure essential to the sustainable development of the County, in particular in areas of **resource and waste management, energy supply, renewable energy generation and ICT.**
19. Ensure the timely provision of **community infrastructure** including schools, recreational, sport facilities and emergency services, commensurate with the number of housing units proposed for construction on lands zoned for residential development.
20. Ensure new developments have regard to the requirements of the **Flood Risk Guidelines.**
21. Promote, drive and facilitate the transition in the future to an entirely **renewable energy supply.**
22. Minimise the County's contribution to **climate change**, and adapt to the effects of climate change, with particular reference to the areas of land use, energy, transport, water resources, flooding, waste management and biodiversity, and maximising the provision of green infrastructure including the provision of trees and soft landscaping solutions.
23. Promote and maximise the benefits of quality of life, public health and biodiversity arising from implementation of policies **promoting climate change adaption and mitigation.**
24. Encourage innovation and facilitate the development of pilot schemes that **support climate change mitigation and adaption.**
25. Prepare a **Sustainable Energy Strategy for the County** in consultation with relevant stakeholders and interest groups setting out strategies, policies and actions to facilitate a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions and the harvesting of renewable energy resources most appropriate to the County.



## 1.7 Current Context

In preparing the Draft Plan, regard has been taken of international, national, regional and local policy documents outlined in Fig. 1.2. The Plan's overall aims and strategic direction, including the settlement strategy of consolidated development, maximising efficient use of land and integrating land-use and transportation, was conceived from consideration of these documents.

Figure 1.2 International, national, region and local context in preparing the Fingal Development Plan



## 1.8 Cross Cutting Themes

The Draft Plan is underpinned by the principles of sustainable development, climate change adaptation, social inclusion and high quality design.

### **Sustainable Development (derived from the Aalborg Charter of European Cities and Towns towards Sustainability)**

Our present lifestyle, in particular our patterns of division of labour and functions, land-use, transport, industrial production, agriculture, consumption, and leisure activities, and hence our standard of living, make us essentially responsible for many environmental problems humankind is facing. Present levels of resource consumption in the industrialized countries cannot be achieved by all people currently living, much less by future generations, without destroying the natural capital.

Sustainable human life on this globe cannot be achieved without sustainable local communities. Local government is close to where environmental problems are perceived and closest to the citizens and shares responsibility with governments at all levels for the well-being of humankind and nature. Fingal County Council is therefore a key player in the process of changing lifestyles, production, consumption and spatial patterns. The Council shall integrate the principles of sustainability in all policies and this will inform all actions of the Council for the period of the Plan.

Environmental sustainability demands from us that the rate at which we consume renewable material, water and energy resources does not exceed the rate at which the natural systems can replenish them, and that the rate at which we consume non-renewable resources does not exceed the rate at which sustainable renewable resources are replaced. Environmental sustainability also means that the rate of emitted pollutants does not exceed the capacity of the air, water, and soil to absorb and process them.

Furthermore, environmental sustainability entails the maintenance of biodiversity; human health; as well as air, water, and soil qualities at standards sufficient to sustain human life and well-being, as well as animal and plant life, for all time. Land use policy and controls are central to the achievement of sustainability at a local level.

Central to 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.

The Development 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 their desired lifestyle.



Placemaking and sustainable communities should be at the centre of our thinking in respect of planning, and specifically the Draft 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 the Fingal Development Plan 2017–2023 is the SEA and AA. As detailed above these assessments are required under European legislation and provide a high level of protection to the environment.

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

## Climate Change

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Climate Change is one of four cross-cutting themes in this Development Plan. The Council recognises that climate change is an over-riding challenge facing us locally arising from the global challenge of climate change. The EU and Ireland has already committed to mitigation policies which are designed to reduce carbon emissions and include regulations on matters such as car efficiency and building regulations. In addressing and responding to this challenge, Fingal will be required to both adapt to and mitigate for climate change by reducing emissions and unsustainable energy consumption.

In December 2015 the *Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015* was enacted. The Act establishes the national objective of transitioning to a low carbon, climate resilient and environmentally sustainable economy in the period up to and including the year 2050. The main provisions of the Act include the preparation of five-yearly National Low Carbon Transition and Mitigation Plans, or National Mitigation Plans. These Plans are required to outline the ways by which national greenhouse gas emissions will be reduced, in line with both existing EU legislative requirements and wider international commitments.



As the majority of the country's greenhouse gas emissions emanate from agriculture, transport, energy and the built environment, the DoECLG anticipates that it is in these sectors that most mitigation effort will be required. The requirements of the Act have implications for Planning Authorities and the ways in which climate change considerations will become increasingly important in their land use plans, in particular, their Development Plans.

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 offset or stop the human-caused drivers of climate change; namely emissions of greenhouse gases and land-use change.

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, promoting sustainable development, will work towards reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The Draft Plan 2017-2023 contains provisions dealing with climate change mitigation and adaptation throughout the Plan, in areas such as flood risk management, transportation, surface water, waste management, water services, urban design, energy, natural heritage and green infrastructure. It is an objective of this Plan that Fingal County Council will develop a Sustainable Energy Strategy to include policies and actions that will address climate change and maximize the harvesting of renewable energy at a local level. The Council will also develop a Sector Adaptation Plan for Fingal in line with the forthcoming National Adaptation Framework for Climate Change, recommendations of the Conference of Parties (COP) 21 Paris Conference and in line with the forthcoming legislation and guidelines to be produced by the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government, when appropriate.

The Council will also investigate joining the *Covenant of Mayors*, which supports Local Authorities by providing them with the recognition, resources and networking opportunities necessary to take their energy and climate commitments to the next level. Fingal supports the international co-operation of Local Authorities facing the challenge of climate change mitigation and adaptation.

## 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 the Draft Development Plan with policies in particular focused on aiming to improve access to all groups within society.



## INTRODUCTION AND STRATEGIC CONTEXT

The Council is committed to developing a more socially inclusive society and promoting participation and access for all. The *National Development Plan 2007-2013*, the *National Anti-Poverty Strategy 1997, Building An Inclusive Society 2002*, the *National Action Plan Social Inclusion 2007-2016* and *Towards 2016* are the national documents informing the development of a socially inclusive Fingal. A profile of poverty and social exclusion in Fingal has been developed by the Council's Social Inclusion Unit (SIU).

Target populations for the profile were identified, which include:

- Children and young people
- Single parent families
- Unemployed people
- Travellers
- New ethnic communities
- People with disabilities
- Older adults

In 2011 the Fingal Development Board and the Council jointly signed the Dublin Declaration on *Age Friendly Cities and Communities*, a World Health Organisation (WHO) Initiative. The *Fingal Age Friendly County Strategy* was launched in 2011, which identifies the key issues for older people in Fingal. In 2013 the Council, in association with Age Friendly Ireland selected Skerries as the town in which to pilot the Age Friendly Town process in Fingal, with the outcome being an Action Plan for the town.

The *Local Government Reform Act 2014* has resulted in the restructuring of all Community and Voluntary forums nationally and the new Public Participation Network (PPN) will be the link through which Local Authorities connect and engage with the community, social inclusion and environmental sectors countrywide, for consultation and information sharing.

Fingal Community Network is the local Public Participation Network and is Fingal's new framework for public engagement. It brings together all groups and organisations working on a community and voluntary basis in Fingal and it will provide the structure to facilitate the two way flow of information between the Local Authority and Community, Voluntary and Environmental groups. The network will enable residents of Fingal and community organisations to influence plans and policies for the future development of the County.

The Draft Development Plan has a role in facilitating such initiatives through promoting good placemaking, for example ensuring new developments are designed with good connectivity and permeability for all. Social inclusion will continue to be a cross cutting theme within the Draft Development 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.

The recent *Planning Policy Statement 2015* from the DoECLG affirms that the planning process should be conducted in a manner that affords a high level of confidence, where people have the opportunity to participate at both the strategic plan making process, and individual planning applications. 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 Development Plan has been proofed to ensure it has a strong social inclusion focus, with particular regard to the identified target populations and the disadvantaged areas of the County. 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 the SICAP, where appropriate.

## 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 urban design is essential to achieving attractive, high quality places in which people will live, work and relax.

The *Government Policy on Architecture 2009-2015* 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 the Development 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 Plan, Masterplan and Development Management processes, the Council promotes a high quality of design and standard of residential development. In rural areas of the County the Draft Development Plan seeks to ensure sustainable patterns of development and high quality of design so that these areas remain attractive and retain their rural character. The Draft Plan sets out a range of objectives aimed at creating well designed environments for both rural and urban settings. An overarching aim of the Draft 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.



## Resilience

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Resilience is a principle that also underpins the Draft Development 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 the Development 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;

- 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 Masterplans are assigned to particular areas to ensure the best policy response is in place to facilitate development in a planned, coordinated and sustainable manner.

## 1.9 Population Overview

### Demographic Trends

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Fingal's population in the 2011 Census was 273,991 persons, which is 21.5% of the total Dublin population. Fingal's share of the Dublin population has risen steadily since 1986, when it was just 14%. The population of Fingal is expected to rise to over 303,000 by 2016 and to further increase during the Development Plan period to 2023.

Figures 1.3 and 1.4 below illustrate a demographic comparison of the profiles of Fingal and the State.

The high proportion of people of working age also accounts for the significant levels of commuting within and outside of the County. The young population also has implications for household size within Fingal, whereby the household size may not follow the predicted downward trends as quickly as the other Dublin counties, given the young age cohort within the County. This is an important consideration when considering future housing need and the Settlement Strategy (Chapter 2) sets the direction for the future growth in Fingal.



Figure 1.3: Fingal's Population Profile 2011

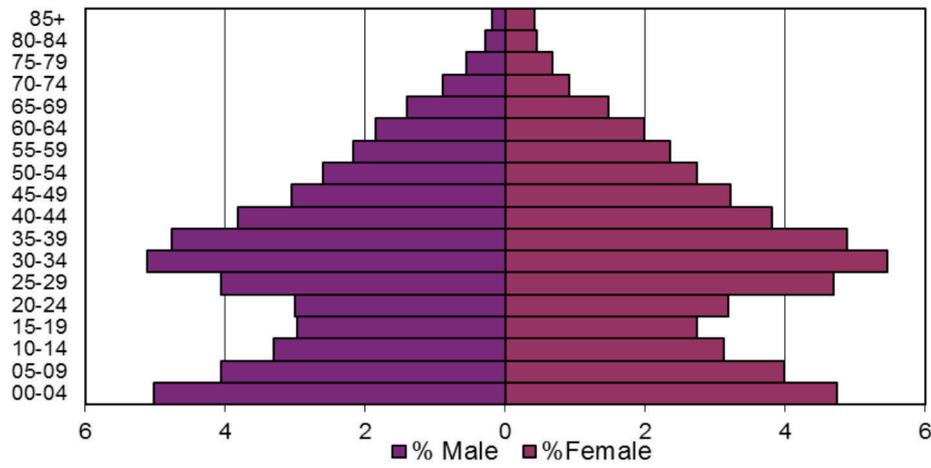
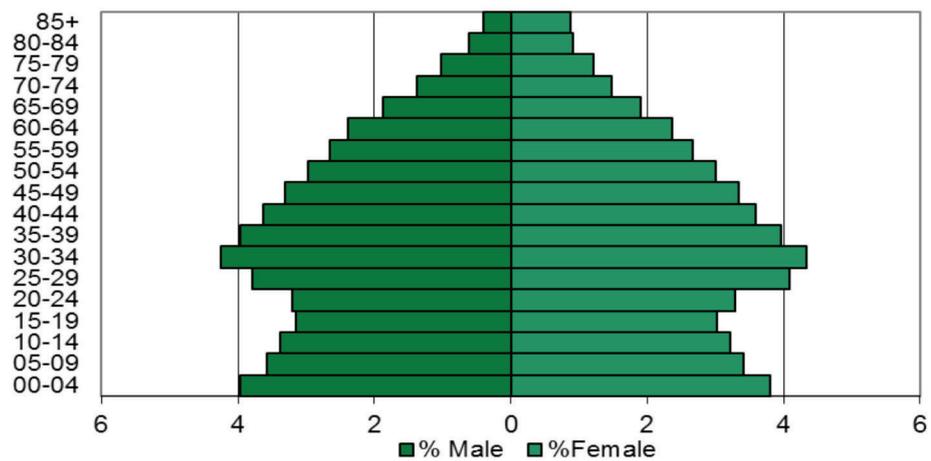


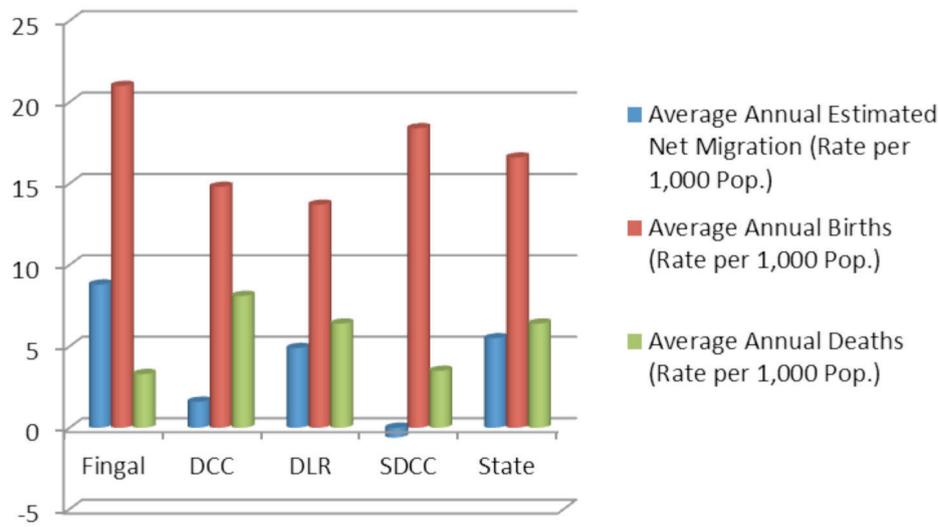
Figure 1.4: State's Population Profile 2011



The 2011 Census indicated a continuing high growth rate in Fingal in spite of the slowdown in the economy and housebuilding in particular. This growth was due primarily to the high birth rate in the County and to the relatively low death rate. Immigration was also a factor although it is likely that much of this took place between 2006 and 2008. Figure 1.5 illustrates the Components of Population Change and provides a comparison between Fingal, the other Dublin counties (Dublin City Council, Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown, South Dublin) and the State.



Figure 1.5: Components of Population Change



## 1.10 Economic Overview

Fingal is the chosen location for a large variety of businesses across all the main sectors of economic activity. The County is home to a diverse range of employers, varying in scale from major multi-national companies to indigenous small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) and small local business start-ups. There has been a steady rise in the number of businesses created in the County since 2011, with 5,876<sup>1</sup> recorded in 2014.

The strength and diversity of Fingal’s local economy is evident as it features all the key economic sectors identified within the national economy. The County performs strongly in the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) sector, with leading companies such as Synopsys, IBM, PayPal and Symantec represented in the Blanchardstown area. Similarly, the Pharmaceutical/Healthcare sector is well established in Fingal by companies such as Bristol Myers-Squibb, Organon and Mylan. The Aviation sector is a major employer and includes Aer Lingus, Dublin Airport Authority, Cityjet, Servisair and Ryanair. The Agri Food Sector, a key employment sector for rural communities, includes enterprises such as Keelings, Country Crest, Sam Dennigan and Donnellys. The Retail Sector is also an important source of employment with regionally significant shopping centres in Blanchardstown and Swords, retail warehousing and retailers with a national-draw such as Ikea<sup>2</sup>. Fingal also has a significant public service employment base represented by key employers such as Fingal County Council, Connolly Hospital and the Institute of Technology Blanchardstown.

There are a number of employment generating land use zonings in the Draft Plan that will facilitate business, enterprise and job creation over the coming Draft Plan period. These zonings, ranging from general employment to high technology, heavy industry, metro economic corridor, warehousing and distribution, food park and rural business, allow for enterprise and employment growth opportunities across the various economic sectors. There is a sizeable

<sup>1</sup> Corporate Plan 2015-2019, Fingal County Council, March 2015, Table 1 Rateable Businesses, pg 5.

<sup>2</sup> Economic Development Strategy 2014-2017, Fingal County Council, Table 2: Top 25 Commercial Employers in Fingal, pg 6.



quantum of employment zoned lands at optimum locations throughout the County. The Council, however recognizes that a balance needs to be achieved between new employment development and the ongoing need to protect and enhance the County's natural and built environments.

The policy context for the economic development of the County has been reformed in recent years, as the Government document '*Putting People First Action Programme for Effective Local Government*' (2012) envisages a clearer and enhanced role for local government in the area of economic development. The Council is required to adopt an integrated **Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP)**, which must be consistent with National and Regional spatial policy and the Fingal Development Plan. The Fingal LECP was approved by the Council in December 2015.

There are a number of key challenges ahead in planning for economic growth across the County and the Plan policies need to respond to the challenges of a changing economy.

### Key Economic Challenges

- **Transport infrastructure** – To ensure that employment generating lands are easily accessible by good quality public transport networks, in particular that there is an accessible public transport system to serve Swords and the Airport.
- **Commuting patterns to work** – The majority of Fingal's citizens' travel outside the County to work.
- **Skills matched to employment** – In almost all economic sectors in Fingal there is a surplus supply of labour to local jobs which influences the need to travel out of the County for work. Fingal also has a high skills profile, and the issue of skills matching is one for the long-term economic planning of the County. Future sustainability would be more easily secured if local skills and sectoral employment opportunities were more closely aligned.
- **Unemployment** – The unemployment rate (calculated by expressing the unemployed as a percentage of people of working age) varies from 37% in parts of the County to less than 1% in other parts.
- **Water supply and drainage issues** - Fingal need to work closely with Irish Water to ensure that adequate provision of infrastructure is provided to ensure that wastewater and water services will not be a limiting factor in achieving forecasted growth targets in the future.
- **Vacancy Rates** - In terms of retail and industrial businesses within Fingal the vacancy rate is estimated to be at 12.6% (at the end of 2014), with measures required to incentivise owners of unoccupied commercial property to utilise them.

### Key Economic Strengths and Opportunities

Alongside key economic challenges, Fingal has considerable strengths and opportunities, which place it in a unique position to encourage and foster enterprise and employment opportunities. Fingal shall continue to take advantage of its location within the newly formed Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly to maximise economic development and strengthen the growth



centres of Swords, Blanchardstown and Balbriggan, which are the County's primary locations for growth.

- **Recent economic improvements** – Since the adoption of the Development Plan in 2011, there have been a number of major job announcements in Fingal and a general upturn in the local and national economy.
- **Strong economic base** – Fingal's local economy is strong and diverse featuring all the key economic sectors identified within the national economy. These include: Green Economy (with a focus on Clean Technology); Financial Services; Information and Communications Technology (ICT); Research, Development and Innovation; Manufacturing (including Bio-Pharmaceuticals); Aviation Services; Retail; Tourism; Agri Food; and Marine. Opportunities for enterprise generation and employment growth are identified in each sector for the coming Draft Plan period.
- **Employment lands** – Fingal has an optimum quantum of employment zoned lands provided at appropriate locations throughout the County. A wide variety of zonings are provided for to cater for employment opportunities across economic sectors through high technology, general enterprise and employment, food industry, heavy industry, mixed use employment, rural related business, retail warehousing, warehousing and distribution and airport related development.
- **Strategic location** - Fingal is strategically located in the EMRA, proximate to Dublin City, Dublin Airport, the M50, the M1 and the Port Tunnel which all provide access to national and international markets and make Fingal an attractive location for Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and indigenous industry.
- **Transportation linkages** - Dublin Airport, Dublin Port, M1 and M50 Motorways (which link to the M2, M3, M4, M7 and M8) all provide strong linkages from Fingal to national and international markets, with Dublin Airport being the largest employer in the County. Fingal is extremely well-connected to provide increased opportunity for economic development.
- **High quality physical environment** - Fingal has a high quality natural and built environment which is considered to be a key factor in attracting employers and highly skilled employees.
- **Demographic profile** - Fingal is characterised by a high proportion of young people and families in relation to the rest of the country, which require that a mix of employment opportunities are created, that a diverse range of third level education offer is available, and that retailing requirements for children and young families are met.
- **Tourism Potential** - With a strong, attractive, rural and coastal environment, the County is ideally positioned to be attractive to potential employers and employees. Fingal has a wealth of both natural and man-made features and amenities which attract tourists to the County. Dublin is forecast to continue to attract an increasing share of an expanding tourism demand for Ireland. Fingal, as an integral component of the Greater Dublin tourism destination, is well positioned to benefit from this tourism growth. The opportunity for Fingal now is to compete for a share of growing visitor numbers to Dublin and its environs, which is projected to deliver a doubling of tourism expenditure in the Greater Dublin area to €2.5 billion by 2020 and the creation of almost 20,000 new jobs<sup>3</sup>.



## 1.11 Environmental Overview

Fingal has a rich variety of environmental and heritage resources. These include the coast, countryside, rivers, amenity lands, and rich archaeological and architectural heritage found throughout the County. The coast is an area of high landscape quality and sensitivity as well as being an important recreational resource. It is also the County's most important biodiversity resource and is home to a rich variety of wildlife including internationally important numbers of birds and a variety of other plants and animals. In particular there are European (Natura 2000) sites all along the coast which the Council must protect pursuant to the requirements of the Habitats and Birds Directives. There are Special Amenity Areas at Howth and Liffey Valley and the Dublin Bay Biosphere Reserve in Fingal.

The countryside, as well as being important for agriculture and horticulture, is important for its varied and high-quality landscape and wildlife resources which are an increasingly important amenity for the County's growing population. The countryside also provides a setting for the County's towns and villages with their distinctive and rich built heritage.

The County is traversed by a number of large rivers including the Liffey, Tolka, Ward, Broadmeadow, and Delvin which are important fisheries and wildlife resources as well as being important for the ongoing provision of water services and for the management of flood risk. The achievement of "good-status" for all waters in line with the aims of the *Water Framework Directive* is a key environmental goal and requirement. Parks and open-spaces are also important resources for people and provide for active and passive recreation and for the conservation of important heritage assets including the historic parkland demesnes of Malahide Castle, Ardgillan Castle and Newbridge House. The County also has an obligation to respond now to the future challenges of climate change through growth and development which will reduce the need for energy use, support sustainable modes of transport and reduce the County's carbon footprint.

A number of key environmental challenges can be identified for Fingal:

- Protecting the ecological integrity of European (Natura 2000) sites, the Special Amenity Areas and the Dublin Bay Biosphere Reserve, while allowing for ongoing growth and development.
- Providing for growth and development which reduces energy consumption, promotes sustainable modes of transport and reduces car-dependency.
- Management of the coastline including the management of flood risk and dune conservation measures will be increasingly important in response to the impacts of predicted climate change and increased population pressure.
- Maintenance and improvement of the environmental and ecological quality of Fingal's watercourses and coastal waters pursuant to the requirements of the *Water Framework Directive*.
- Management of flood risk along the County's watercourses taking account of climate change predictions.
- Facilitating the provision of waste water treatment systems in order to ensure compliance with the requirements of the *Water Framework Directive* and to facilitate sustainable development in the County.
- Protection, enhancement and promotion of the County's rich archaeological and architectural heritage.

<sup>3</sup> Grow Dublin Taskforce : 'Destination Dublin – A Collective Strategy for Growth to 2020'



## INTRODUCTION AND STRATEGIC CONTEXT

- Management of the County's varied landscapes so that change maintains and enhances landscapes of high-quality and improves landscapes.
- Ongoing provision of high-quality accessible parks and open spaces for our growing population.

When combined environmental and heritage resources in the County can be described as the County's "Green Infrastructure", a vital resource for the future, which plays a key role in sustaining environmental quality, in providing recreational and health benefits for people, in attracting economic investment, tourism, jobs and in making Fingal a more attractive place to live. The Draft Development Plan identifies green infrastructure as a key strategic asset for the County and includes policies for the protection, creation and management of this resource in an integrated manner by focusing on key themes such as Biodiversity; Parks, Open Space and Recreation; Landscape; Sustainable Water Management and Archaeological and Architectural Heritage. In seeking to further develop the green infrastructure approach there is a particular need to increase investment in green infrastructure projects and places.



### Fulfilling the Requirements of the Habitats Directive

The Habitats Directive places strict legal obligations on member states to ensure the protection, conservation and management of the habitats and species of interest in all European (Natura 2000) sites. Plans and projects must be screened for Appropriate Assessment (AA) and full AA must be carried out unless it can be established through screening that the plan or project in question will not have a significant effect on any European (Natura 2000) site. It is therefore important to establish at the earliest stage in plan making or project planning whether AA is required (through screening) and the likely implications of AA for the plan or project in question.



