



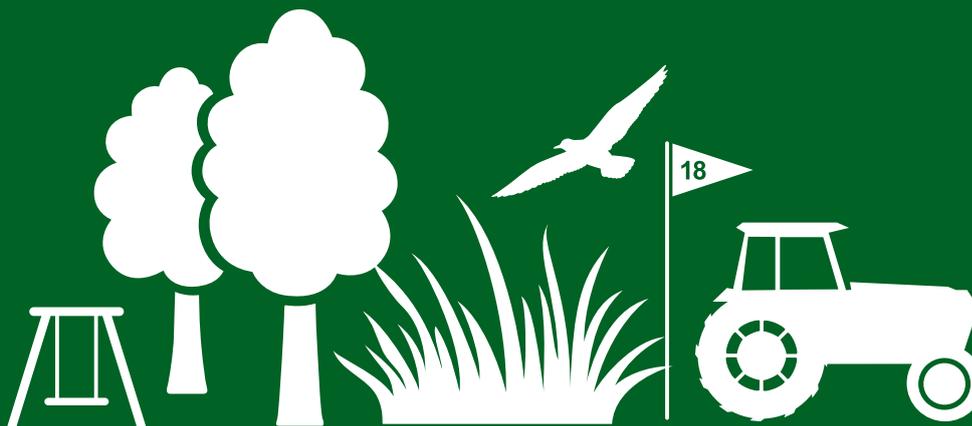
# Green Infrastructure

## Chapter 8

## CHAPTER 8 GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE



8.1	Background	289
8.2	Fingal's Green Infrastructure	290
8.3	Green Infrastructure - A Strategy for Fingal	293
8.4	Green Infrastructure and Planning	294
8.5	Green Infrastructure Objectives for Local Area Plans and Development Proposals	295



## CHAPTER 8

# GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

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### 8.1 Background

Fingal has experienced rapid urban expansion over the last 20 years with accelerated development in the major towns of Swords, Blanchardstown and Balbriggan, and increased development in smaller settlements across the county and along the coast.

To the south, in the areas which adjoin Dublin City, Fingal has one of the more significant enterprise and employment areas in Ireland, including Dublin Airport, international IT and pharmaceutical companies and a wide range of indigenous enterprises. The north of the county is primarily rural and coastal. It is intensively farmed and is one of the most important food producing regions in Ireland, producing 47% of the national vegetable output and 37% of protected fruits, vegetables and nursery plants. Several national and international food companies have developed out of this long standing horticultural tradition. Fingal also has a wealth of natural and cultural assets including the countryside, coast and islands, monuments and historic houses which are important in defining the character of the county and in providing amenities for residents and for the growing tourism sector. The county has nationally and internationally important biodiversity resources especially along the coast where there are many Natura 2000 sites which host a range of important habitats and species.

A key challenge for Fingal is to manage growth so that the county's agricultural production capacity is maintained as urban expansion continues and in a way which protects the county's natural and cultural resources for the future.

Addressing this challenge means recognising that as a society and economy we depend on nature and natural systems and that we need to sustain this 'natural capital' because it provides us with a multitude of benefits (including food, clean water, clean air and raw materials) and functions (such as temperature regulation and flood control). Internationally there has been a growing recognition that natural capital is in decline and that this will undermine future wellbeing and prosperity. Natural capital is contained in networks of land and water including farmland, the coast, parks, open space, rivers, floodplains, wetlands, woodlands, and nature conservation areas.

This resource can also be considered to be a form of infrastructure - which we call green infrastructure - which performs key functions for our communities. For example, our parks and open space promote health and well-being and make Fingal a better place to live in. Green infrastructure also enhances opportunities for recreation and tourism, sustains our food industry and encourages new businesses to invest in the county. It is also increasingly being recognised that green infrastructure is a vital component in building resilient communities capable of adapting to the consequences of climate change.

In recent years the theory and application of green infrastructure has advanced greatly and green infrastructure is now advocated widely in the USA, UK, in Europe and beyond. At EU level the *Biodiversity Strategy* recognises green infrastructure as an innovative approach to the maintenance of biodiversity and ecosystem services in the wider landscape. In 2013 the Commission published a *Green Infrastructure Strategy* which advocates the use of green



infrastructure approaches in spatial planning and seeks to enable investment in green infrastructure to be mobilised. The *Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area 2010-2022* advocate the development of a green infrastructure approach at all levels in the planning system and the preparation of Green Infrastructure Strategies at County/City level. Green infrastructure can also play a key role in meeting the growing and increasingly complex and inter-related demands of EU environmental legislation including the Habitats, Birds, Floods, Water Framework, Marine Strategy Framework, Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Environmental Liability Directives. The need for compliance with these legislative requirements is clearly reflected in the recent *Planning Policy Statement* published by the Government.

### Statement of Policy

- Ensure that areas and networks of green infrastructure are identified, protected, enhanced, managed and created to provide a wide range of environmental, social and economic benefits to communities.

## 8.2 Fingal's Green Infrastructure

The Council has identified a number of key Green Infrastructure themes. These are:

- Biodiversity
- Parks, Open Space and Recreation
- Sustainable Water Management
- Archaeological and Architectural Heritage
- Landscape.

Under each of these headings the Council has identified and mapped the key elements of the County's strategic green infrastructure on the Development Plan maps, under each of the five GI themes. These are as follows:



## Biodiversity

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- Designated Shellfish Waters
- Fingal Ecological Network including the following:
  - Core Biodiversity Conservation Areas: Ramsar sites, Natura 2000 sites (SACs and SPAs), NHAs, Statutory Nature Reserves, Refuges for Fauna, Annex I habitats outside designated sites, habitats of protected or rare flora
  - Ecological Buffer Zones
  - Nature Development Areas
  - River Corridors along major Rivers.
- Areas within 100m of erodible coastline



## Parks, Open Space and Recreation

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- Lands zoned open space and/or in use as public open space

## Sustainable Water Management

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- Watercourses including rivers and streams
- Riverine floodplains
- Coastal areas liable to flooding

## Archaeological and Architectural Heritage

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- Sites and Monuments on the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP)
- Buildings and other structures on the Record of Protected Structures (RPS)
- Architectural Conservation Areas (ACAs)
- Historic Graveyards



## Landscape

- Special Amenity Areas on Howth Head and the Liffey Valley
- High Amenity Areas
- Highly Sensitive Landscapes
- County Geological Sites
- Public Beaches

Key proposals for the management of existing green infrastructure and provision of new green infrastructure as part of the Development Plan have also been highlighted in the objectives below and on the Development Plan maps. In achieving green infrastructure objectives greenbelt zoned lands offer opportunities for the location of new facilities including parks, nature conservation areas, sustainable walking and cycling routes.

### Objective GI01

Create an integrated and coherent green infrastructure for the County by requiring the retention of substantial networks of green space in urban, urban fringe and adjacent countryside areas to serve the needs of communities now and in the future including the need to adapt to climate change.

### Objective GI02

Develop the green infrastructure network to ensure the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity, including the protection of European Sites, the provision of accessible parks, open spaces and recreational facilities (including allotments and community gardens), the sustainable management of water, the maintenance of landscape character including historic landscape character and the protection and enhancement of the architectural and archaeological heritage.

### Objective GI03

Seek a net gain in green infrastructure through the protection and enhancement of existing assets, through the provision of new green infrastructure as an integral part of the planning process, and by taking forward priority projects including those indicated on the Development Plan green infrastructure maps during the lifetime of the Development Plan.

### Objective GI04

Seek to increase investment in green infrastructure provision and maintenance by accessing relevant EU funding mechanisms and national funding opportunities including tourism related funding.

### Objective GI05

Resist development that would fragment or prejudice the County's strategic green infrastructure network.

### Objective GI06

Ensure green infrastructure protection and provision promotes pedestrian access, cycling, and public transport in preference to the car, as appropriate.

### Objective GI07

Integrate the provision of green infrastructure with infrastructure provision and replacement, including walking and cycling routes, as appropriate, while protecting biodiversity and other landscape resources.



**Objective GI08**

Increase public awareness in relation to Green Infrastructure in Fingal and its importance for communities and the local economy by publishing information and holding seminars and events.

**8.3 Green Infrastructure – A Strategy for Fingal**

It is the Council's intention to develop a Green Infrastructure Strategy for the County in consultation with all key stakeholders and with the public during the lifetime of the Development Plan. The Strategy will identify key green infrastructure aims and objectives for Fingal taking account of the priority projects identified in this Development Plan and it will provide for the delivery of these projects including the provision of appropriate funding mechanisms.

**Objective GI09**

Develop and implement a Green Infrastructure Strategy for Fingal in partnership with key stakeholders and the public.

**Objective GI10**

Ensure the Green Infrastructure Strategy for Fingal protects existing green infrastructure resources and plans for future green infrastructure provision which addresses the five main themes identified in this Plan, namely:

- Biodiversity
- Parks, Open Space and Recreation
- Sustainable Water Management
- Archaeological and Architectural Heritage
- Landscape.

**Objective GI11**

Ensure the Green Infrastructure Strategy for Fingal reflects a long-term perspective, including the need to adapt to climate change.

**Objective GI12**

Ensure the Green Infrastructure Strategy for Fingal protects the County's natural coastal defences, such as beaches, sand dunes, salt marshes and estuary lands, and promotes the use of soft engineering techniques as an alternative to hard coastal defence works wherever possible.

**Objective GI13**

Ensure the Green Infrastructure Strategy for Fingal safeguards important agricultural and horticultural lands in the county.

**Objective GI14**

Ensure the protection of European Sites is central to Fingal County Council's Green Infrastructure Strategy.

**Objective GI15**

Set targets in the Green Infrastructure Strategy for the provision of different green infrastructure elements in urban areas, such as trees in urban areas and green roofs in town centres, so that a net gain in green infrastructure is achieved over the lifetime of this development plan.



**Objective G16**

Ensure the Green Infrastructure Strategy connects and integrates existing and new communities through appropriate planning, ongoing management and governance.

**8.4 Green Infrastructure and Planning**

A key objective of green infrastructure planning is that green infrastructure management and provision is integrated with plans for growth and development. The preparation of local area plans provides a key opportunity for the protection, management, enhancement and provision of green infrastructure which is fully integrated with new development. All local area plans will be required to provide for green infrastructure which addresses the objectives for the five GI themes identified above.

**Objective G17**

Require all Local Area Plans to protect, enhance, provide and manage green infrastructure in an integrated and coherent manner addressing the five GI themes set out in the Development Plan – Biodiversity, Parks, Open Space and Recreation, Sustainable Water Management, Archaeological and Architectural Heritage, and Landscape.

**Objective G18**

Set targets for the provision of green infrastructure elements such as trees and green roofs as part of the preparation of Local Area Plans.

All proposals for development must take account of the County's strategic green infrastructure resources and ensure that these are protected, managed and enhanced as new development takes place. In addition, proposals for development must seek to provide for the protection and provision of green infrastructure which addresses the five GI themes identified in the Development Plan in a coherent and integrated manner. In practical terms this means that project proponents should seek to integrate their proposals to the maximum extent under the different headings where possible and appropriate. Key objectives in this regard are highlighted under each theme below. Applicants should also consult the relevant chapters in the Development Plan for further detailed information on each theme as indicated. For major developments a green infrastructure plan will be required as an integral part of proposals for development.

**Objective G19**

Require all new development to contribute to the protection and enhancement of existing green infrastructure and the delivery of new green infrastructure, as appropriate.

**Objective G20**

Require all new development to address the protection and provision of green infrastructure for the five GI themes set out in the Development Plan (Biodiversity, Parks, Open Space and Recreation, Sustainable Water Management, Archaeological and Architectural Heritage, and Landscape) in a coherent and integrated manner.



**Objective GI21**

Require all proposals for large scale development such as road or drainage schemes, wind farms, housing estates, industrial parks or shopping centres to submit a green infrastructure plan as an integral part of a planning application.

**Objective GI22**

Investigate the development decision-support tools based on existing models, such as the Seattle Green Factor, to assist in the integration of different green infrastructure elements into development proposals.

## 8.5 Green Infrastructure Objectives for Local Area Plans and Development Proposals

### Biodiversity Theme

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*See also Chapter 9, Natural Heritage*

**Objective GI23**

Ensure biodiversity conservation and/or enhancement measures, as appropriate, are included in all proposals for large scale development such as road or drainage schemes, wind farms, housing estates, industrial parks or shopping centres.

**Objective GI24**

Integrate provision for biodiversity with public open space provision and sustainable water management measures (including SuDS) where possible and appropriate.

### Parks, Open Space and Recreation Theme

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*See also Chapter 3, Placemaking*

**Objective GI25**

Maximise the use and potential of existing parks, open space and recreational provision, both passive and active, by integrating existing facilities with proposals for new development and by seeking to upgrade existing facilities where appropriate.

**Objective GI26**

Provide a range of accessible new parks, open spaces and recreational facilities accommodating a wide variety of uses (both passive and active), use intensities and interests.

**Objective GI27**

Provide attractive and safe routes linking key green space sites, parks and open spaces and other foci such as cultural sites and heritage assets as an integral part of new green infrastructure provision, where appropriate and feasible.

**Objective GI28**

Provide opportunities for food production through allotments, community gardens and permaculture food forests in new green infrastructure proposals where appropriate.



**Objective G29**

Develop a Cycle/ Pedestrian Network Strategy for Fingal that encompasses the Fingal Way and other proposed routes which will be Screened for Appropriate Assessment and Strategic Environmental Assessment.

**Sustainable Water Management Theme**

*See also Chapter 7, Infrastructure and Movement*

**Objective G130**

Ensure the provision of new green infrastructure addresses the requirements of functional flood storage, the sustainable management of coastal erosion, and links with provision for biodiversity, Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) and provision for parks and open space wherever possible and appropriate.

**Objective G131**

Seek the creation of new wetlands and/or enhancement of existing wetlands through provision for Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS).

**Objective G132**

Seek the provision of green roofs and green walls as an integrated part of SuDS and which provide benefits for biodiversity, wherever possible.

**Archaeological and Architectural Heritage Theme**

*See also Chapter 10, Cultural Heritage*

**Objective G133**

Ensure, wherever possible and appropriate, that elements of the archaeological and architectural heritage are fully integrated into proposals for new developments at the project design stage.

**Objective G134**

Seek to provide and/or enhance access to archaeological and architectural heritage assets in a sustainable manner, where appropriate, thus facilitating opportunities for education and understanding.

**Landscape Theme**

*See also Chapter 9, Natural Heritage*

**Objective G135**

Ensure green infrastructure provision responds to and reflects landscape character including historic landscape character, conserving, enhancing and augmenting the existing landscapes and townscapes of Fingal which contribute to a distinctive sense of place.

