



THEME 1: PEOPLE AND PLACE



Introduction:

A central question for the new Fingal Development Plan 2023-2029 is how the county will grow and develop into the future? This includes Fingal's large urban centres, its county towns, rural and urban villages and its countryside. The new Development Plan will seek to enhance the quality of life for all residents and provide a framework for directing future investment to appropriate locations. This will ensure that well-serviced and well-connected places are created. It is important that a balance between compact sustainable growth at appropriate densities and the provision of high-quality new housing served by enhanced public spaces and community infrastructure is achieved. The new Plan will build on the success of the past and on the Core Strategy of the current Development Plan. The intent will be to enhance quality of life for all by expanding Fingal's green infrastructural networks, providing resilience by enhanced sustainable transport connections and by focusing investment into the creation of successful public realms and community infrastructure, all of which will ensure the county remains a high-quality location in which to live, work and do business.

Background and Context:

Population and Socio-Economic Profile

As outlined earlier in this paper, the 2016 census indicates that Fingal has a population of 296,020 people. This is an increase of c. 22,000 since the 2011 census, or an increase of almost 8% over this 5-year period. The current population represents an increase of 23% since the 2006 census figures. Population growth over the inter-censal period 2011-2016 demonstrates that 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 coastal corridor. Urban clusters of higher population occur in areas such as Blanchardstown, Balbriggan and Swords whilst the north-west of Fingal is the least populated area and indicative of its rural location.

The population profile of Fingal provides a clear indication of housing requirements within the county as well as the anticipated demand for key social infrastructure such as schools, childcare, community amenities and facilities for the elderly.

What is the Core Strategy:

The Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2010 introduced the requirement for an evidence based 'Core Strategy' to be included in all County Development Plans. The key purpose of the Core Strategy is to ensure that an appropriate amount of land is reserved in the right locations to meet housing and population targets. This is done through the articulation of a medium to long term quantitative strategy for the spatial development of the area which must be consistent with national and regional policy objectives set out in the National Planning Framework (NPF) and the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly.

In essence, the Core Strategy must ensure that an appropriate quantum of zoned land is available and provided at the right locations within the county to ensure that new homes can be built with supporting services and facilities provided to serve them. In effect, the Core Strategy forms the basis for all development within the county extending from higher order plans such as the Development Plan through to Local Area Plans and Urban Framework Plans.

Settlement Strategy

Dublin City and Suburbs

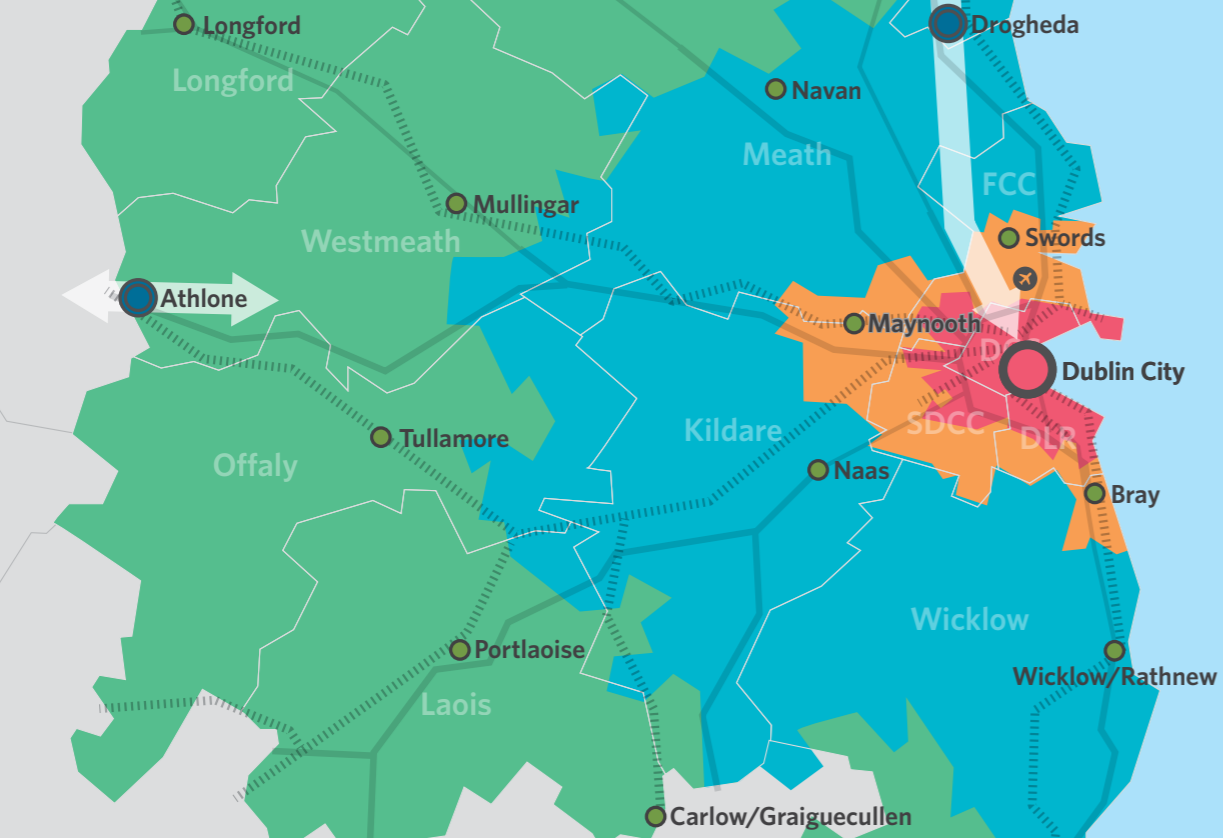
Support the consolidation and re-intensification of infill/brownfield sites to provide high density and people intensive uses within the existing built up area and ensure that the development of future development areas is co-ordinated with the delivery of key water and public transport infrastructure.

Regional Growth Centres

Support significant population and economic growth to drive effective regional development, with a vision for Athlone to act as a lead town for the Midlands growing to around 30,000 by 2031. The vision for Drogheda and Dundalk is for both to reach a target population in the region of 50,000 by 2031.

Key Towns

Provide for the sustainable, compact, sequential growth and urban regeneration in the town core of identified Key Towns by consolidating the built footprint through a focus on regeneration and development of identified Key Town centre infill / brownfield sites.



Self-Sustaining Growth Towns

Settlements with strong service and employment functions may have the capacity to support a level of commensurate population and employment growth to become more self-sustaining, in line with their capacity of public transport, services and infrastructure, to be determined by local authorities.

Self-Sustaining Towns

Some settlements, particularly those that have undergone rapid residential expansion will require targeted investment in local employment and services to grow at a more sustainable level appropriate to their position in the hierarchy, to be determined by local authorities.

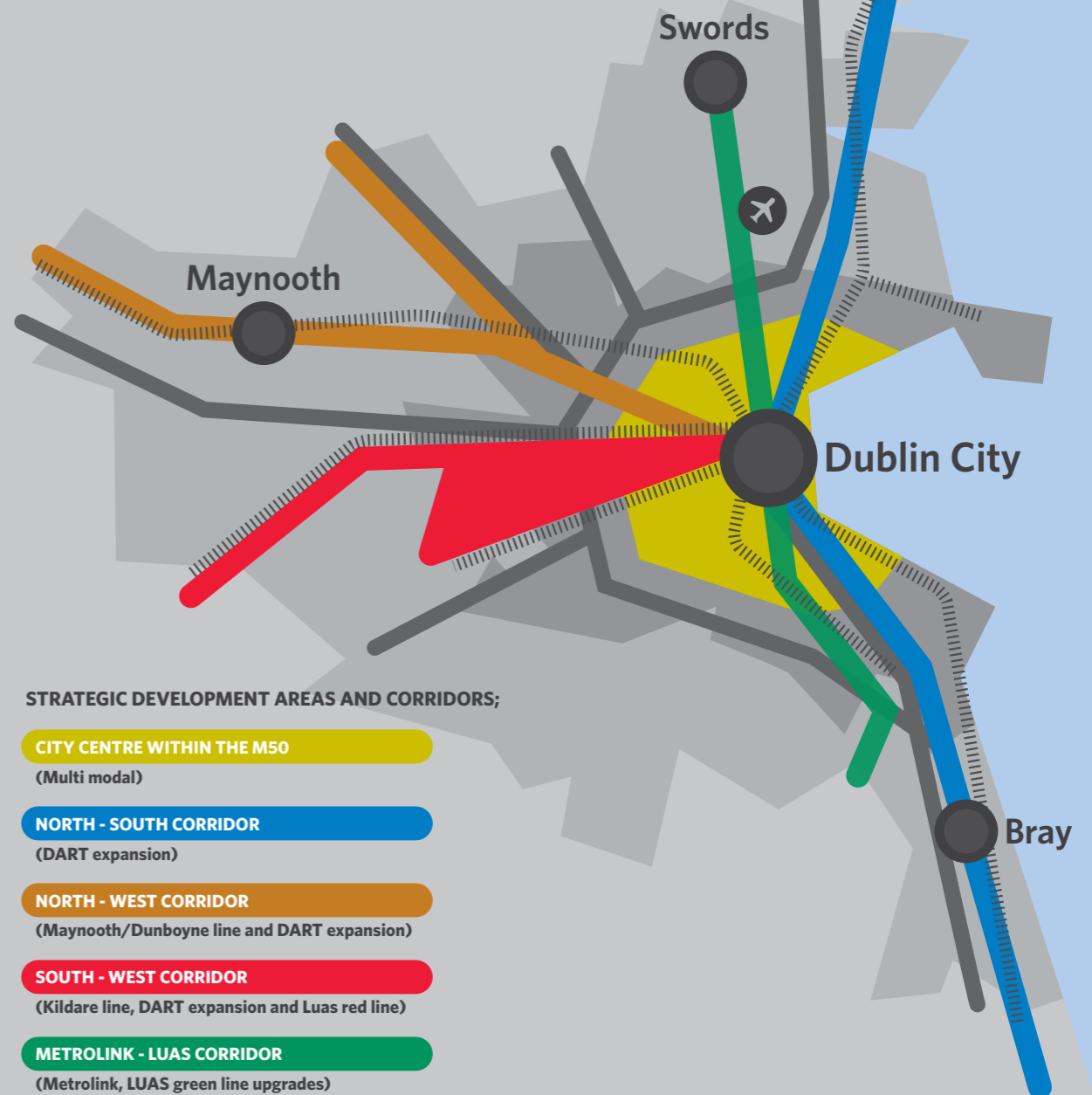
Rural Places

Support the sustainable growth of rural areas by promoting the revitalisation of rural towns and villages, including ready to go regeneration projects coupled with investment where required in local employment and services and targeted rural housing policies, to be determined by local authorities.

- Dublin City & Suburbs
- Metropolitan Area
- Dublin-Belfast Corridor
- Regional Growth Centres
- Core Region
- Key road
- Key Towns
- Gateway Region
- Rail

Under the Core Strategy of the current Plan, a Settlement Hierarchy for the county has been established. The Fingal Settlement Hierarchy embraces the strategic approach advocated by the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy to support the continued growth of Dublin as our economic engine. The Hierarchy seeks to deliver sustainable growth of the Metropolitan Area through the Dublin Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan and to develop a number of key complementary growth settlements of sufficient scale to be drivers of regional growth.

Dublin Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan



Furthermore, the regeneration of our cities, towns and villages by making better use of under-used land and buildings within the existing built-up urban footprint will drive the delivery of quality housing and employment choices.

At its core, the Plan envisages that the future development and growth of Fingal will take place in accordance with an overarching hierarchy of settlement centres. Each identified settlement centre will accommodate an agreed quantum of future development appropriate to its respective position in the hierarchy.

The Housing and Planning Divisions of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH) jointly engaged the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) to undertake independent research into structural housing demand in Ireland to 2040. The findings of the ESRI work were published as a research paper on Structural Housing Demand at County Level on 14th December 2020. This research provides a robust, up-to-date and independently developed housing demand projection, which will help inform policy and investment with regard to housing during the new Development Plan period. The ESRI work is particularly important, as it provides an integrated model of housing demand that takes into account demographic, economic and housing market factors, including inter-county migration and will assist in informing the development of the new Core Strategy.

Housing Delivery

Since the adoption of the current Development Plan in early 2017, activity in the housing sector in Fingal has been growing in a positive manner and at the end of 2020, there are 74 active sites with 2,339 homes under construction. In 2020 1,640 homes were completed and occupied, notwithstanding the Covid-19 shutdown during the year. The bulk of this construction activity is taking place in the 'Dublin City and Suburbs', and 'Metropolitan' area and is in locations with a framework for growth.

Fingal has employed a number of policy responses to facilitate housing development, namely the adoption of Local Area Plans and Masterplans across the county. Hansfield Strategic Development Zone (SDZ) in Dublin 15 continues to work as a successful policy tool with over 1,100 homes occupied to date on the SDZ lands since the inception of the scheme. The LAP's and Masterplans provide a framework for development of larger zoned sites. These set out the county's priorities for growth and provide development frameworks and phasing arrangements to ensure the delivery of the required social and physical infrastructure in an appropriate manner. In addition, the preparation of these Plans has involved significant local consultation and the engagement of Elected Members and give a degree of certainty to those involved in the development of their areas.

This policy response has shown to be successful to date with the main areas of construction activity, i.e. Hansfield, Blanchardstown, Swords, Baldoyle, Portmarnock, Donabate and Santry being areas which benefit from existing development frameworks such as SDZ, Local Area Plans and Masterplans. These areas also correspond to locations where Strategic Housing Development (SHD) activity is taking place. This clearly shows how the development of Fingal is in line with the National and Regional policy regarding consolidation of development within Dublin City and Suburbs, and within the development boundary of existing towns and urban areas and along public transport corridors.

Over the last 5 years, an average of 2,205 homes have been under construction in Fingal each year in locations such as Blanchardstown, Swords, Santry/Northwood, Finglas, Portmarnock, Malahide, Baldoyle, Donabate and Balbriggan. Housing delivery within the Metropolitan Area and to some extent, towns in the Core Area indicate that Fingal is well positioned to facilitate appropriate housing in the right locations.

Housing Task Force returns to the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage show a steady supply of housing since the adoption of the current Development Plan. The number of units completed and occupied since 2016 and the number of units under construction are shown on the next page:

Year	Units completed and occupied	Under construction
2016	1026	1767
2017	1378	2200
2018	1830	2527
2019	1805	2192
2020	1640	2339

Key Issues Going Forward

What does this mean for the future growth of Fingal?

As the population of the county continues to grow as evidenced by the Central Statistics Office records, it is essential that an adequate supply and a range of housing types, sizes and tenures are available to meet the needs of a growing population. In line with national and regional policy, the new Development Plan must identify appropriate locations to accommodate compact growth and to consolidate development, particularly in locations close to high capacity public transport nodes and in existing settlements where vacant or brown field sites offer potential for re-development. Such consolidation must be achieved in tandem with a renewed focus on designing high quality neighbourhoods served by well-designed outdoor spaces and multi-use areas.

Since the publication of the 2017-2023 Fingal Development Plan, national and regional planning policy as well as Ministerial Guidance such as 'Urban Development and Building Heights - Guidelines for Planning Authorities' published in December 2018 have placed increased emphasis on the need to ensure the sustainable use of land and in particular, the achievement of compact growth and appropriate densities. This focus is underpinned by the National Planning Framework which promotes the compact development approach with increased focus on re-using previously developed, 'brownfield' land, the use of in-fill sites which may not have been built on before and either reusing or redeveloping existing sites and buildings.

The National Planning Framework argues that an increase in the proportion of more compact forms of growth in the development of settlements of all sizes, from large cities to small villages, has the potential to make a transformational difference. It can bring new life and footfall, contribute to the viability of services, shops and public transport, increase housing supply and enable more people to be closer to employment and recreational opportunities, as well as to walk or cycle more and use the car less. Along with transport demand, higher densities and shorter travel distances will also reduce energy demand and use.

The concept of Urban Resilience is one which has gained significant momentum in recent times and is a measurable benefit of compact urban development. UN Habitat – For a Better Urban Future defines urban resilience as the '*measurable ability of any urban system with its inhabitants to maintain continuity through all shocks and stresses while positively adapting and transforming towards sustainability*'.

Compact settlement strategies promote higher residential density with mixed land uses based on efficient mobility and has an urban layout and form which encourages walking and cycling, maximises energy consumption and reduces negative environmental impacts. The benefits of well-planned compact settlements also include shorter commute times, cleaner air, and reduced fossil fuel consumption. This has important implications for tackling climate change and taking proactive steps in securing more sustainable power and energy sources. Building resilience into our urban and rural settlements will be a key requirement of the new Plan.

Rural Fingal

Rural Fingal, comprising high quality agricultural lands, vibrant towns and villages, together with a host of natural amenities is a key resource of the county. It is home to a diverse range of uses including agriculture, food production, horticulture, agri-food businesses, equine industries and agri-tourism enterprises. These uses are supported by numerous towns and villages, providing important local services and contributing to the vibrancy and sense of place with strong local communities and generational ties. How Fingal's rural areas, its settlements and amenities grow and develop into the future will be an important consideration of the next Development Plan. In order to safeguard this important resource, we need to strike a balance between strengthening rural communities and protecting against over-development.

The growth of rural towns and villages must be carried out in a sustainable manner, sensitive to existing building stock and heritage, ensuring a strong sense of place is maintained. Housing in the countryside should be accommodated only where genuine rural housing requirements are established, with urban generated development directed to established settlements.

Recreation and Community Facilities

In tandem with the achievement of compact growth is the delivery of high quality public open spaces. The new Development Plan will build on and further enhance Fingal's network of high-quality recreational spaces which range from regionally important public demesnes to smaller pocket and local neighbourhood parks. In recent times and with the arrival of Covid-19 restrictions, the importance of our outdoor parks for exercise and for the enjoyment of nature has increased exponentially. The availability of good quality, highly accessible public spaces in close proximity to our homes is a vital local resource and an important element in the establishment of successful neighbourhoods and in fostering a sense of place. There have been significant achievements in Fingal in terms of recreational amenities with notable examples including the delivery of The Green Malahide redevelopment, the Baldoyle to Portmarnock Greenway, Reconstruction of the looped paths on Howth Head, Skateparks and Playgrounds in Balbriggan, Lusk and Skerries as well as the restoration of the Shackleton Gardens in Clonsilla.

Going forward, there is a need to identify where a deficit of amenities and recreational facilities exist and how such communities may be better served. Opportunities also exist to re-imagine and redevelop underutilised areas of existing green infrastructure and public open space in the context of increasing public demand for and appreciation of high-quality outdoor amenities.

Equally, the provision of community services and facilitation of a range of social infrastructure in the correct locations will be important in realising the sustainable growth of our settlements and in limiting the need for unnecessary travel. This includes the identification of appropriate sites for schools, libraries, community facilities, as well as the inclusion of appropriate objectives within the Development Plan to secure the delivery of childcare facilities and other supports for children and families.

Sustainable Placemaking

With significant population growth forecast, the Fingal Development Plan must consider how best to plan for new and expanding communities in its rural and urban settlements. It will be important in seeking to ensure the compact growth of our county, that a balance is achieved between the densification of the built environment and the achievement of high-quality and resilient public realm and open spaces, well-designed neighbourhoods and good urban design while ensuring that Fingal's important heritage and rural areas are preserved and safeguarded. Successful placemaking is a multi-faceted approach to planning, designing and the operation of areas of public open space and where successful, can create a strong identity as well as promote, health, happiness and well-being. It will be important in the Development Plan review that we as a community identify how we would like our new public spaces to develop, the features they should contain and the functions they should perform.



Impact Of Covid-19

The world has been transformed by the arrival of the coronavirus pandemic which has brought about one of the worst public health crisis in recent times. The UN Habitat World Cities Report 2020 shows that the intrinsic value of sustainable urbanisation can and should be harnessed for the wellbeing of all. The value of urbanisation from an economic, social and environmental perspective, is evidenced and affirms that well-planned, designed and managed urban areas create value that can be used to build resilient urban centres and improve the quality of life of all residents. Key to this is convenient access to high quality public open spaces and provision of well-planned and managed green infrastructure.

As our own local communities move out of enforced lockdowns and restrictions, our experiences of working, enjoyment of nature, socialising and the importance of local neighbourhoods and environments has taken on a renewed focus. Digitalisation and the importance of social media platforms has grown significantly over this period with more people working and communicating from home. New opportunities are presented in terms of re-thinking centralised office space, an acceptance of working from home, diminished commuting times, requirements for shared community hubs to facilitate remote working, and the increased importance of the role of the neighbourhood and availability of local services.

Sustainable transport has also come to the fore, particularly the significant growth in the numbers of people engaging in cycling for health, leisure and as a viable transport option. This is increasingly apparent in the use of our existing and newly opened greenways and cycle infrastructure and highlights the importance of ensuring increased connectivity in our cycling networks.

Choice of Housing Mix and Tenure and Affordability

The Housing Strategy is an evidence-based allocation of zoned land to meet projected housing needs for future growth in order to deliver housing in the appropriate locations. This includes consideration of a mix of housing sizes, types and the requirement of socio-economic groupings. Meeting the housing needs of the county as it grows is essential in ensuring sustainable communities are developed and expanded and that all sectors of society are catered for. This will include the needs of the elderly, Traveller accommodation, affordable housing options and those with mobility concerns. Under the National Planning Framework and the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy each Local Authority must undertake Housing Need and Demand Assessment (HNDA). The results of the HNDA, which will be performed on a regional basis, will inform the policies and objectives of the new Development Plan in such areas as housing location, tenure, mix of housing and typologies (apartments, sheltered housing, housing for the elderly etc). This in turn will help to inform the provision of sufficient land supply to meet housing demand going forward.

The Plan will also need to consider how approved housing bodies and other sectoral agencies can be supported in the provision of a greater diversity of housing type and tenure including social and affordable housing and examine models of low-cost rental and affordable home ownership.

Fingal County Council has recently appointed a developer to deliver the first affordable housing scheme in the county in 11 years at Dun Emer, Lusk. Ó Cualann Cohousing Alliance will oversee the construction of 51 homes, of which 39 will be affordable and 12 will be social housing.

The affordable homes will be available to eligible first-time purchases at prices that will be around 25% below their market value. This is the first step towards the realisation of an affordable housing scheme in Fingal. Fingal County Council understands the importance of this project in terms of overall housing delivery and we will continue to work on plans to develop more affordable housing in Church Fields in Dublin 15, Cappagh in Dublin 11, Ballymastone in Donabate, and Hacketstown in Skerries.



Achievements of the Fingal Development Plan 2017-2023

At a strategic level, Fingal County Council continues to integrate land use and transportation to achieve sustainable development through the progression of a number of Local Area Plans, Urban Framework Plans and Masterplans in line with national and regional policy objectives. Higher density development is taking place within planned frameworks along transport corridors and these areas continue to consolidate. Current land use policy has also been developed in anticipation of planned strategic public transport investments that will directly benefit Fingal such as MetroLink, BusConnects, LUAS and DART expansion.

In the period since the adoption of the 2017-2023 Fingal Development Plan, there has been a significant increase in the delivery of new housing within the county as outlined.

There has been significant investment in social infrastructure including in the provision and expansion of services such as healthcare, education, community facilities, libraries, recreational facilities, public parks, heritage restoration projects and playgrounds.

Significant progress is being made in terms of the planning and development of walking and cycling infrastructure within Fingal based on the NTA's cycle network for the county. This includes the delivery of the Baldoye to Portmarnock greenway which will link to the 6km Broadmeadow Greenway connecting the key recreational destinations of Malahide and Newbridge Demesne Regional Parks. This scheme was permitted by An Bord Pleanála in May 2020 and will form part of the Fingal Coastal Way.

In addition:

- A number of Local Area Plans and Masterplans have been adopted including strategically important plans such as the Dublin Airport LAP 2020 and the Swords Masterplans (Barrysparks and Crowcastle, Fosterstown and Estuary West). Local Area Plans have also been adopted for Rivermeade (2018) Barnhill (2019) Kinsaley (2019) and Kellystown (2021) which will facilitate residential development together with appropriate levels of community and supporting facilities in these key existing and emerging settlements. Urban Framework Plans have also been prepared for Rush while partnership initiatives such as Our Balbriggan 2019-2025 have been launched.
- Fingal County Council has completed and commenced a number of housing schemes and community developments including at Rathbeale Road, Rowlestown, Castlelands and Church Road. New community facilities include Luttrellstown Community Centre, restoration of the Casino in Malahide as well as Phase II Swords Castle.
- New Park facilities including the first phase of the Rogerstown Park, Rush as well as the commencement of major restoration works at Shackleton Gardens, Clonsilla and the delivery of new playgrounds at Skerries Town Park, Lusk Village, Glebe Park Balrothery and Balbriggan and Skerries skateparks.





KEY QUESTIONS

- How should the new Fingal Development Plan promote compact growth within its settlements in line with the national and regional guidance?
- Where should new housing be provided to accommodate demand without contributing to urban sprawl and ensuring consolidated sustainable growth?
- How should the Fingal Development Plan promote resilience (i.e. an ability to respond to change including climate change) in our urban and rural centres?
- How can we achieve vibrant towns and villages, while facilitating genuine rural housing?
- What types of homes are required to meet future demand? How should the new Plan ensure housing choice for all residents?
- How should the Development Plan ensure the provision of social and community infrastructure (e.g. Schools, creches, community & sports centres etc.) in new residential areas?
- How should the Development Plan ensure that roads and streets in housing areas contribute to making them a good place to live?
- Which public open spaces do you love and why? What types of new public spaces should be provided?
- What improvements to the provision of parks and open spaces should be included in the Development Plan?
- What improvements to the provision of sports and play facilities should be included in the Development Plan?
- What outdoor facilities for adults (including older citizens) should be planned for in the Development Plan?
- How has your experience of Covid 19 altered your view of your public spaces and facilities? Do you have any ideas on how they should develop into the future?
- How should the new Development Plan ensure that the outdoor spaces provided improve the Health & Wellbeing and a sense of Community for the citizens of Fingal?
- How should the new Fingal Development Plan support new ways of working? Is there a requirement to provide work hubs within the community?
- Should there be increased emphasis on universal design and improved accessibility?

