

CHAPTER 3: THE VISION

3.1 Balancing the roles of the South Fingal area

The principal objective of this study is to create a strategic vision and framework for the planning and sustainable development of South Fingal to 2011. This provides a rational and flexible strategic plan to manage the growing pressure for development north of the city, in a way that benefits the local population whilst meeting national and regional needs. The “Your Fingal” Draft written statement (Draft Fingal Development Plan (2005-2011)) expresses this vision as:

- **A gateway to Dublin, Fingal and Ireland:** South Fingal is a focus of national transport infrastructure: with the Airport as its key, and the M50 and M1 as two of the nation’s most important road links.
- **A hub of the regional economy** with the dynamic presence of the Airport, but also astride the Dublin – Belfast Economic Corridor, all close to vital development land around Blanchardstown and Swords.
- **A ‘Green Lung’ for the whole of the north side** – the Airport apart, South Fingal has a strong regional spatial and greenspace role for the populations of the urban areas which bound it to the north and south.

3.2 The three key roles

The Study team’s expression of this vision assesses these three roles for the South Fingal area in the following terms.

3.2.1 Gateway to Dublin and Ireland

Dublin Airport dominates South Fingal, and is the gateway into north Dublin and the country as a whole, as well as outward to the rest of the European Union and the wider world. Important national transport routes pass through the area: the M1 motorway linking Dublin to Drogheda and the North; the M50 that forms a ring-road around the City; and the Iarnród Eireann (Irish Rail) rail link that connects coastal towns to Dublin, Drogheda and the North. The link with Dublin Port through the Port Access Tunnel is now under construction; and there are proposals for new rail routes that will pass through South Fingal and provide an alternative to the car for access to the airport.

It is important that the pattern of future development and transport does not inhibit, but positively promotes, the role of existing and proposed transport infrastructure.

3.2.2 Hub of the sub-regional economy

South Fingal forms part of the capital city-region of Ireland. It has high and growing national, regional and local importance. The area is within the most populous and economically developed part of Ireland. The Greater Dublin economy is currently very strong and is forecast to continue to grow in the future, albeit at a slower rate. The city-region’s population is also expected to continue to grow, through natural growth and immigration. The City is already densely developed, and there will be great pressure for further development in the city fringe areas, particularly in South Fingal.

The study area and land adjacent to the city fringe, form the economic hub of the sub-region to the north of Dublin city, which is characterised particularly by the fast-growing development areas around Blanchardstown and Swords, its location astride the Dublin-

Belfast corridor, and the dynamic presence of the airport. Together with Malahide and the centres along the urban fringe, these include major residential, employment and retail facilities. It is one of the strongest economic poles in the country outside central Dublin, a fact which is fundamental to development pressure, both now and in the future.

Furthermore, one of the most important generators of employment within the area is the airport itself. The undoubted development pressure on South Fingal must therefore not be allowed to compromise the operation of the airport and its future development. This is vital not only for transport and transportation purposes, but also to ensure the growth of quality jobs, the scale and quality of which is likely to match those from any other sector.

3.2.3 A “Green Lung” for the whole of the north side

The study area has a strong regional spatial and recreational role. The airport apart, the area is predominantly rural in nature, providing a physical and visual break between the built up areas of Dublin, Swords, Malahide and Blanchardstown. The County Development Plan identifies the potential for recreation, and to act as a ‘green lung’ for the population of north Dublin and Fingal.

The vision for South Fingal is to fulfil these roles in a balanced way.

3.3 Key elements of the vision

The following chapters of this report analyse and explain each of the main planning issues. What the vision means for the major choices about how South Fingal should develop can be summarised as follows:

- **Airport** - Ensuring that the airport can continue to optimise its contribution to Ireland’s economy and society. This requires commitment to specific investments in accordance with an agreed Airport Action Plan. This should reflect - in the long term - a twin parallel runway, two-terminal airport, within a Designated Airport Area (DAA), where airport development considerations take priority.



- **Transport** - Development of a public transport spine linking Dublin centre to the airport and Swords. The link(s) will provide quick and reliable alternatives to the private car, and will be capable of accommodating half of all passenger demand. The interchange between different public transport modes will create nodes with potential for employment-intensive development.
- **Creation of a balanced transport system**, creating a choice of modes - bus, light rail, car, taxi, and possibly heavy rail – for travel to and through the study area, and especially the airport. This will be matched with application and co-ordination of land

use policy to ensure that development is directed to public transport nodes and existing settlements.

- **Land Use** – a predominantly green belt/rural land role for the areas to the east, north and west of the airport, ensuring that they continue their role of separating urban areas, and exploiting its potential for biodiversity, recreation and amenity for the community at large. Development within the area will need to enhance this rural setting, and help create a high quality and attractive environment.
- **Recreation** - Building upon the under-utilised recreational potential of the area. The area is a sub-regional recreational resource, but has the potential for further recreational development through rationalisation, upgrading and enhancement of facilities, particularly in areas that will be served by new public transport links.
- **Housing** - Restriction of new housing development in the area, due to the environmental effects of airport growth. However, in existing settlements that will be affected by the changes (such as St Margaret's), local residents should determine the way in which the settlement should be protected and might adapt to these changes. Improvements to existing dwellings less severely affected by the airport growth will be permitted, but with no intensification of residential use.
- **Tourism/culture** - Promotion of local heritage and leisure attractions, encouraging people to visit and stay in the area, thereby supporting the local economy.