

## CHAPTER 9: HOUSING

### 9.1 Existing Residential Areas

Excluding the airport, the study area is largely rural in character, and is sited between major urban areas with large residential populations. The majority of the area is designated as rural and green belt, characterised by scattered individual dwellings and development clusters, often along main roads; a mix of traditional farm based dwellings; small newer houses; and a few larger dwellings set in grounds. Figure 1 in Appendix 5 shows the main concentrations of residential development within and around the study area.

The largest settlement is **St Margaret's**, on the western edge of the study area. It comprises predominantly scattered housing and farms, with a church, school and village shop/PO. It has not been identified as a Village or Settlement Cluster in the County Development Plan. The proximity of the village to the airport operational area means that the future of St Margaret's needs to be assessed in relation to the effect of the growth of the airport and its access arrangements, the zoning of the designated airport area and the upgrading of the N2.

Twenty five years ago, St Margaret's was a mile and a half (2.4km) from the nearest runway; it is now a few hundred metres from the end of the east/west runway, and if and when a second runway is constructed, it will effectively lie between them.

The village is currently covered by Local Objective 129, which proposes the investigation of the 'delimitation of an area within the area zoned H in the vicinity of St. Margaret's to be proposed for zoning as RVI in co-operation with local community interests and landowners in the area'.

Objective RV1 encompasses the protection and enhancement of the special physical and social character of villages; and the provision/improvement of village facilities to serve local needs.

To the south west of St Margaret's, between the M50 and the southern edge of the airport lands, is the small linear settlement of **Dubber** which, with Baleskin, forms a compact and established hamlet in the agricultural landscape of the South Fingal Fringe. Its planning designation in the new DFDP is "Objective RC" (protect residential amenity and character of settlement clusters, small scale infill for local needs). This seems appropriate, and fits with a logic of retaining a green buffer zone between this settlement and the consolidated commercial development area proposed for the area some 650m. to the east.

The settlement cluster of **Balgriffin** is just outside the south east of the study area. Development is scattered along the length of the R107 road, which forms the eastern boundary of the study area: with most development concentrated near the junction of the N32 and the R107. The main residential area of Balgriffin is defined by Objective A – '*to protect and improve residential amenity in established residential areas*'.

There has been a lot of developer interest shown in the land either side of the R107, particularly at the junction with N32 near Balgriffin. Consideration needs to be given to whether further development should be encouraged in the area.

Outside the boundary of the north east of the study area **Kinsealy** is listed as a Settlement Cluster within the County Development Plan. Associated with the settlement are areas covered by zoning objective RV1 *'to protect and enhance the special physical and social character of rural villages and provide/or improve facilities to serve local needs in accordance the Action Area Plan subject to the provision of social and physical infrastructure'*, objective NC *'to protect, provide and/or improve local/neighbourhood centre facilities'* and objective A *'to protect and improve residential amenity in established residential areas'*

The residential cluster of **Baskin** (Ballymacartle) borders the northern edge of the study area and is zoned as Objective A *'to protect and improve residential amenity in established residential areas'*.

The South Fingal Study area in fact sits within an area with a recent history of very fast growth in housing and population, which is expected to continue. The Regional Report 2004 (Appendix D) reports Fingal's population as growing from 152,766 in 1991, to 167,683 in 1996, and 196,413 in 2002 = a growth of 28%, much the fastest in the Dublin region. Swords itself grew by over 20% 1996-2002, as did Balbriggan and Rush. The 2004 RPG (Table 7.4) projects Fingal's household numbers to grow by a further 33,477 by 2010.

To the east, the growth and urbanisation patterns are relatively stable: **Portmarnock** is a suburban community on the coast, whilst further north is the estuarine town of **Malahide**. The CDP sets out a long term development objective of consolidation of the existing urban form and retention of amenities, rather than expansion. However, around the study area and its immediate hinterland are a number of larger and very fast growing residential areas – the Dublin urban fringe, Swords and Blanchardstown. The **edge of Dublin City** borders the M50 and is zoned predominantly for general industrial development, but also includes part of Santry and designated Action Plan Areas for new residential communities. Dublin City Council's North Fringe Action Area Plan covers an area of over 100 hectares to the east of Malahide Road and provides predominantly for housing; Fingal County Council's Baldoyle and Portmarnock Action Area Plan provides for 40 hectares of residential development and a 97 hectare public park north of Baldoyle and east of the Dublin-Belfast railway line.

The town of **Swords**, which is designated as a major growth centre in the County Development Plan, has a long term target population of 50,000, with large swathes of land to the south, south east and north zoned as Action Plan Areas for new residential communities.

The County Development Plan states that the town of **Blanchardstown** will remain the largest urban settlement in Fingal (target population 100,000), with large areas to the north and west zoned for residential, commercial and industrial development.

## **9.2 Housing Policy**

The National Spatial Strategy (NSS) provides both 'current trends' and 'strong economic growth' based projections for the population of the Greater Dublin Area (GDA). On the basis of current trends, the estimate for the 2020 population of the GDA is around 1.9 million. The economic growth based projection is around 2.2 million. The Regional

Report (p.55) in the Regional Planning Guidelines adopts a figure of “around 1.8 million (which) will offer a sufficient degree of robustness to cater for scenarios where either the NSS is achieved in full or present trends continue.”

According to RPG (p.127 Table 7.4), the household numbers in the GDA are expected to increase from 508,096 in 2002 to 641,600 in 2010. The number of households in Fingal in 2010 is forecast as 94,349: an increase of 33,477 between 2002 and 2010. The allocation of additional housing units to Fingal for the period 2003-2010 is 44,996, representing an ‘excess factor’ of some 11,519 units.

The Council is confident that the housing numbers allocated to Fingal can be delivered. The County Development Plan applies a sequential approach to identifying areas with potential for further residential development: concentrating the main requirement for housing within specific urban areas and accommodating housing for the rural community within identified village and settlement clusters. Only single dwellings, required for agricultural purposes, will be permitted in the Green Belt; and rural areas will be protected from unessential residential development.

### 9.3 Factors Affecting Possible Residential Expansion

There are a number of factors that make the study area unsuitable for further residential development, set out in Table 9.1 and discussed in more detail below:

**Figure 9.1 Constraints to residential development**

<b>AIRCRAFT NOISE</b>	Makes large sections of the study area and its environs unsuitable for residential development
<b>SAFETY ZONES</b>	Restrictions mean that specific areas are directly excluded from further development
<b>AIRPORT GROWTH</b>	Will absorb substantial tracts of land to meet national requirements
<b>RURAL LAND AND GREEN BELT</b>	Vital recreation and buffer zone

**Noise** – noise already affects the residents within the study area, as shown on the existing contour on the County Development Plan map. An analysis of forecast future noise levels will be carried out in the near future, and until this time the level of noise increase cannot be predicted but it would be reasonable to expect significantly higher levels of noise, and therefore environmental impact, on surrounding areas (see Chapter 8).

Aer Rianta’s noise forecasts to 2005 show that they expect the majority of the study area to fall within the 48-57 dB  $L_{Aeq}$  noise contour; the noise level at the high end of the category should not be regarded as a desirable level for development (PPG24); and the areas nearest the runways will reach levels of 66-72 dB  $L_{Aeq}$ , where the guidance recommends that planning permission should not normally be granted. (see chapter 8, 8.1.3–8.1.5). Beyond 2005, the airport will be continuing to grow and the second runway will be developed, so even if progress continues to be made in the introduction of quieter

jet aircraft, there is little prospect of a reduction of this impact, with the possibility of higher levels than shown in the Aer Rianta analysis.

**Safety** – certain areas to the north, east, south and west of the existing and proposed airport runways fall within the current safety zones. The Irish Aviation Authority state that in these areas, proposals for development will be assessed against the safety of aircraft and aircraft navigation.

Consultants ERM, on behalf of the Department of Transport and Department of the Environment and Local Government have produced a draft Public Safety Zones (PSZ) report. The purpose of this is to identify land where risk to the public is greatest and thus to prevent inappropriate uses in such locations. The report identifies an inner and outer PSZ. It is recommended that within these zones, existing development can remain. However, no new development should be permitted in the inner zone. Within the outer zone, it is recommended that some development may be permitted, subject to restrictions. In terms of housing, it is recommended that high-density development (i.e.: defined as 60 persons or more per half hectare in the report) should not be permitted. Outside the PSZ there are no restrictions on development. (see Chapter 5, 5.7).

**Airport**– the emerging premise of this study is that land around the airport should be used for airport-related activities, in order to ensure the long-term viability of airport operation (Chapter 5, Table 5.4 and DFDP pp.43-44). The land around the airport is therefore unsuitable for further residential development. Airport growth may impact on the character of St Margaret's village.

**Rural land** and Green Belt - the majority of land outside the airport area is in rural use, identified in the County Development Plan as an agricultural and horticultural resource, designated as Objective B – to provide for the development of agriculture and rural amenity. The Regional Planning Guidelines stress that further development should be concentrated in development centres and along transport corridors, retaining the separation between built-up and rural areas. The County Development Plan also states a presumption against urban generated one-off rural housing due to increased road and transport costs, increased dependence on the car, a negative effect on existing centres and concern for groundwater protection.

## **9.4 Preferred Scenarios**

### **9.4.1 Should further areas be zoned for residential development?**

We would recommend that no further areas be zoned for residential development within the study area due to the noise, safety, airport related growth and rural policy issues outlined above.

### **9.4.2 What should the planning basis be for St Margaret's?**

The village of St Margaret's will be directly affected by the growth of the airport and the upgrading of the N2. Although the effects will not be immediate, over time the character of the village can be expected to change considerably; it will no longer feel rural as it will be affected by an increase in the noise, air pollution and airport activity generated from the increased number and size of aircraft; a second airport access proposed from the improved N2 which would pass in close proximity to the village (this would increase

passenger and worker movements through and past the village); and the adjacent land being developed for non-rural airport related uses.

**Figure 9.2 St Margaret's Village (copyright OS)**



The village should be designated St Margaret's Special Policy Area. Fingal County Council and Aer Rianta will need to consult the residents of St Margaret's to determine a preferred way forward for the village.

Three possible options for the future of the village are:

1. The village could remain essentially as it is now and be excluded from the designated airport area. As the environmental conditions change Aer Rianta could offer existing residents an agreed form of compensation for the increase in airport noise, pollution and activity, for example double-glazing. No further development would be permitted except for works that enhance the lives of existing residents, such as house extensions. This could include the evaluation of the feasibility of designating the village as Objective RV1.
2. The village should be allowed to grow to incorporate airport related uses. The village could be included within the wider designated airport area, which would alter the character of the settlement over time. However it would allow residents to choose whether to remain in the area and live with the changes in character; or to capitalise on the increase in value and sell their property or land and move elsewhere.
3. The village could be moved elsewhere. This option has been apparently experimented with in the past but proved unsuccessful. The villagers would sell their property and land and move away from the area, either to a designated location or an area of their choice. The village could then either be excluded from the designated airport area and continue to be used for recreational or rural uses, or it

could be included in the designated airport area and be developed for uses that need to be near the airport.

At this stage we envisage that the second option will happen. The village could be included in the designated airport area for ancillary uses. This would allow it to remain in situ, and as the airport expands and the pressure for related development increases the residents would be able to choose whether to:

- Stay and adapt to the changed character of the area with Aer Rianta providing compensation measures such as double glazing, or
- To sell their property/land, allowing the area to be developed for uses that need to be within the area, and are specified in the designated airport area policy.

Whatever the strategy, a focussed careful and specific consultation process will be needed between Fingal County Council, Aer Rianta and the community. Various models can be adopted, and experience elsewhere is reviewed in Appendix 5. The consultation should be separate from (though of course linked to) the wider consultation for the whole of the South Fingal Planning Study.

### **9.4.3 What should be done at Balgriffin?**

There are two key issues at Balgriffin: firstly its proximity to airport activity; and secondly its location within the Green Belt. Although outside the current safety zones, the area is within the flight path of the existing runway and currently falls within an area where noise levels are higher than desirable. As airport activity increases, the noise levels will rise to levels which are likely to make the area unsuitable for further residential development.

The area adjoins the Green Belt, which provides an important separation function between the Dublin North Fringe area and Malahide, and space for recreational facilities. The N32/R107 junction is becoming a focus for development, which is slowly spreading northwards, with the allocation of an industrial zone and the Balgriffin Objective A area.

We would therefore recommend that the existing residential area could continue to be consolidated within the area identified under Objective A, but that outside this area, all further development be related to the separation, agricultural, recreational and urban amenity functions of the Green Belt. There is a substantial area at Belcamp, to the west of Balgriffin and the north of the N32, which has been zoned for housing development (Objective A1). This area will also be affected by the increase in airport noise and activity and should be rezoned for general industry. The new Draft Fingal Development Plan (p.177) states an explicit objective for Balgriffin to retain its identity and provide an “entrance” to Fingal from the south.

### **9.4.4 Should residents be allowed to extend, alter and rebuild existing properties?**

We would suggest that policy should allow existing residents to extend, alter and rebuild existing properties in the normal way. The residents have chosen to live in the area and are now experiencing worsening environmental conditions, and therefore they should be

allowed to carry out works to improve and protect their quality of life, subject of course to the application of all other relevant design and control policies.

Figure 4.1, the Proposals Map does not identify any areas for further residential development. St Margaret's will be designated as St Margaret's Special Policy Area, where further consultation will determine its future growth.

## **9.5 Baleskin**

Figure 4.1 indicates the location of the Government refugee centre at St Margaret's Road, Baleskin.