

Implementing the National Spatial Strategy

Preparing Regional Planning Guidelines

Guidance Notes

February 2003



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Overview

The National Spatial Strategy provides a national level strategic planning framework for the country over the next twenty years. To support the implementation of the NSS as a “big picture” framework for achieving the Government’s objective of more balanced regional development effective planning strategies are needed at regional level. Spatial planning at the regional level must work within the overall approach taken in the NSS, while providing more detail and establishing a development and spatial framework that can be used to strengthen local authority development plans and other planning strategies at county, city and local level.

Implementing the NSS now requires that “Regional Planning Guidelines” be put in place across the country and that the Strategic Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area be reviewed. Regional planning guidelines will also need to encompass a socio-economic vision and context for more detailed planning guidance. These guidelines will take the form of a single document and will act as a regional framework for the development plans at city, county and through the county or city plan, other local plans as well. These guidance notes are intended to inform the process of preparing the guidelines and the format of the product at the end of the process – regional planning guidelines.

The guidance notes have four important messages:

- (1) There is a need to move quickly to put in place policies to translate the overall national approach of NSS into policies at regional and local levels. The objective is to prepare regional planning guidelines, through an inclusive and well managed approach, with a target completion date of end of 1st quarter 2004. This will only be possible through effective co-operation between regional and local authorities.
- (2) The NSS sets out the policies on spatial planning adopted by the Government at national level. Regional planning guidelines will need to work within the national framework of gateways, hubs, other towns and rural areas, while providing more detailed regional level guidance, assisting planning authorities in framing county and city development plans.
- (3) Spatial planning at the regional level provides an opportunity to tease out development requirements into the future. However, this must be done in a way

that is reasonable, realistic, strategically focused and that is clear on the policy choices that must be made to support such requirements.

- (4) In line with the approach taken by the NSS, Regional Planning Guidelines need to be supported by a broad socio-economic context for the region. The regional planning guidelines in turn need to encompass the vision and strategy for the region in economic and social terms.

Section 1: Introduction and Background

1.1: Purpose of Guidance Notes.

This document is designed to support a new strategic planning task – the preparation of Regional Planning Guidelines to give effect to and support implementation of the National Spatial Strategy.

The guidance notes are aimed at Regional and Local Authorities as partners in this new strategic planning task. The document outlines a framework for the overall process focusing on procedural matters and on the outputs required within and at the end of the process. This includes an indicative “template” for the guidelines document.

The objective of the guidance is therefore to assist Regional and Local Authorities in the major task of preparing Regional Planning Guidelines. The intention in issuing this guidance is to support the creation of a development vision built on consensus and ownership at regional level, linked to the NSS, while outlining the challenges to be faced and how those challenges will be addressed.

A strong development vision at regional level will provide a strengthened context for development plans at city and county level by highlighting areas where co-operation can yield both greater benefits for individual authorities and support the achievement of balanced regional development as envisaged by the National Spatial Strategy.

1.2: Status of Guidance Notes.

In preparing these guidance notes every effort has been made to avoid being overly prescriptive in a situation where local distinctiveness must be taken into account and where flexibility is required. These notes have been drafted to ensure that Regional Planning Guidelines strike an effective balance between being overly general on the one hand, and overly-prescriptive on the other. Regional Planning Guidelines need to provide a strategic context, at the regional level, for individual county and city development plans. These notes will be updated in the future as necessary in the light of experience gained in the initial round of preparing regional planning guidelines.

These guidance notes are not formal Guidelines as provided for under Section 25(5) of the Planning and Development Act 2000. The notes however suggest a common approach to be taken in preparing regional planning guidelines, to ensure that these follow a recognisable common format and reach a minimum standard. Specific parts of the guidance notes, especially those in Chapters 3 (Process) and 4 (The Guidelines) are intended to be closely followed.

As a general principle, it is expected that Regional and Local Authorities would follow the approach set out in these guidance notes to ensure consistency in the overall approach taken in different regions.

1.3: Structure of Guidance Notes.

These guidance notes are divided into four principal sections:

- Section 2: “Requirements of Overall Approach” outlines the overall objectives for the process and what the key outputs within and at the end of the process are expected to be.
- Section 3: “Process” outlines how the guidelines should be prepared.
- Section 4: “The Guidelines” describes some of the themes the guidelines will need to address including an indicative outline of what the guidelines should contain.
- Section 5: “Implementation” outlines how the guidelines will be implemented, particularly by reference to their interface with planning authorities and development plans at the county and city levels.

A series of appendices provides more detailed information on particular areas such as the legal provisions of Chapter III of the Planning and Development Act 2000.

1.4: Regional Planning Guidelines – Status and Role.

Appendix 1 summarises the main legal provisions of the Planning and Development Act 2000 in respect of the status and content of Regional Planning Guidelines, the procedure for making guidelines and the role of regional and local authorities in these areas.

The broad provisions of the Act can be summarised as follows:

- (1) Regional Authorities are ultimately responsible for the preparation and adoption of regional planning guidelines drawing upon support and inputs at local authority level.
- (2) Consultation is a key element of the process from an initial stage, with a view to ensuring the development of a framework for the region that constituent local authorities can support and that is consistent with the approach of the NSS.
- (3) Regional planning guidelines aim to establish a strategic planning framework for the development of the region in question addressing specified development issues.
- (4) Government policy must be taken into account in evolving regional guidelines as well as other specified issues such as the particular needs of the Gaeltacht and the need to provide information on likely effects on the environment of implementing the guidelines.

It is important to be clear on the overall purpose and role of regional planning guidelines. As a strategic framework for the region, regional guidelines should avoid areas of policy detail more appropriate to the city, county or local plan levels. Nonetheless, the framework should not be so broad as to create subsequent difficulties for local authorities in interpreting the framework or key policy aspects. It will be vital for the guidelines to be both clear and have a strategic regional outlook.

The process of developing a strategic planning framework at the regional level is dependent on having a socio-economic context or terms of reference for more detailed planning policies. Such a context sets the high level social and economic goals that physical planning policies are aimed to achieve.

Under *Article 14(g)* of the Regional Authorities' Establishment Order 1993, Regional Authorities are required to prepare "**regional reports**" covering the following:

- a review of the overall needs and development requirements of the region;
- a review of the development plans of local authorities in the region and where relevant, the development plans of local authorities in adjoining regions, with particular regard to the consistency between plans and the overall development requirements of the region;
- a review of the provision of public services in or relating to or affecting the region and other matters.

Article 14(g) of the Order requires a regional authority to produce a regional report every five years. The first reports were published in 1996. However, the next reports were postponed to enable account to be taken of the County/City Development Boards (CDB) Strategies and the National Spatial Strategy (NSS). Regional authorities are now being requested to produce a regional strategy instead of a regional report.

There is a good deal of potential overlap between aspects of regional planning guidelines and the task involved in preparing a regional report/regional strategy. Overlaps could arise particularly in the areas of research and analysis on matters such as population, development patterns, reviewing development and examining economic performance.

The regional strategy is intended to take a strategic overview of the development of the region, how it is progressing and what the strategic priorities are in policy and developmental terms.

Regional planning guidelines deal with many of the practical manifestations of the overall strategic policy and development priorities, e.g. how many houses will be needed in the region, how can settlement and transport be integrated. The provisions of the 2000 Planning and Development Act require regional guidelines to act as a planning framework. Such a framework needs to be set within a robust and appropriate set of broad strategic policy and development objectives. It makes sense

therefore to draw the two processes together by preparing regional planning guidelines within the legislative framework of the Planning and Development Act, but incorporating within these guidelines a broad developmental context for the region.

These guidance notes show how both processes are to be integrated in preparing a single document for each region – ***“Regional Planning Guidelines”***. The final document will contain two distinct components:

- Part A – the Strategy element: a synthesis of the “big picture” socio-economic development issues and opportunities in the region; and how these are to be addressed, building on previous exercises, such as the city and county development board strategies in the region, existing development plans, and preparatory work for the National Development Plan 2000-2006 mid-term review and the NSS.
- Part B – the Regional Planning Guideline element: to provide more detailed guidance for development plans at county and city level as well as land use and transportation strategies. This guidance will involve setting out broad physical planning frameworks in areas such as settlement and transport to addressing the “big picture” development issues in the region.

Section 2: Requirements for Overall Approach

2.1: Key parameters

There are a number of key parameters to be borne in mind in terms of preparing the strategy and guideline elements of regional planning guidelines.

The guidelines will provide:

- strategic planning frameworks for the region to which they relate that integrate the approach taken in the NSS and broad socio-economic goals at the regional level with physical planning policies to progress these goals.
- a broad framework setting agreed overall objectives, targets and indicators for the region, which also identifies the agencies responsible for (and their role in delivering) these objectives.
- policies for which individual planning authorities will ultimately be responsible for implementation through their development plans and local plans. It is therefore vital to build consensus and secure political ownership by elected members in the process of preparing guidelines in order to establish a vision for the region that is shared by its constituent local authorities and forms the basis for a 20 year planning framework.

Individual planning authorities will continue to prepare and deliver their own more detailed plans at the county, city and local plan levels, focused on their particular issues and areas. However, the local authorities in each region will be expected to support the development of a shared vision for the region which they in turn will reflect in their more detailed plans at county, city or sub county level.

The regional planning guidelines must take account of the future development of the region for the period of the National Spatial Strategy – the period up to 2020.

Special efforts should be made to facilitate and structure public and institutional consultation to the widest degree practicable. The support of regional assemblies can also be called upon as appropriate.

2.2: Key outputs

It is envisaged that the guidelines will be prepared and adopted over the period to the end of the 1st quarter 2004. Work schedules and other arrangements need to be put in place on the basis of this timeframe.

A number of outputs will be required in the process of preparing the guidelines.

- (1) An analysis will need to be carried out to determine the “big picture” regional development elements of the guidelines.
- (2) There will be a need for discussion papers to support consultation with local authorities and agencies in the region as well as with the wider public. For example, it is desirable that a notice published pursuant to Section 24(2) of the Act by a regional authority stating its intention to make regional planning guidelines should indicate that a broad issues paper or other similar document is available to assist those wishing to make submissions. Such a document would be clear on the terms of reference for regional planning guidelines, should summarise the main issues likely to arise, and generally provide a vehicle for structuring debate.
- (3) There will be a need for robust analysis and justification for proposed policies relating, for example, to housing issues on the demand and supply sides, together with infrastructural and transportation issues in the context of preparing a regional settlement strategy. This will be particularly relevant in the consideration of the effects of the proposed settlement strategy on the environment.
- (4) Appropriate mechanisms such as steering and technical groups, both at regional and sub-regional level will need to be put in place to ensure the development of a vision for the region that is shared by constituent authorities and bodies and the wider public.
- (5) Regional authorities will be ultimately responsible for all of the above, working in partnership with the local authorities and will need to harness the expertise and local insights of these authorities.

2.3: Links to other plans and programmes

When making regional planning guidelines, regional authorities must take account of the proper planning and sustainable development of the whole of the region to which the guidelines relate, the statutory obligations of any local authority in the region and any relevant policies or objectives of the Government. Relevant Government policies and objectives can fall into a number of categories:

- key established policies including *inter alia* the National Development Plan and Operational Programmes supported by the NDP, the National Spatial Strategy, the White Paper on Rural Development, the National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS), the National Sustainable Development Strategy, National Equality Policy, and Information Society Policy, National Roads Programme, national policies on the conservation of the natural and cultural heritage, water quality policies;
- new and emerging policies and programmes including policy areas which are continuing to develop such as national partnership agreements.

Section 3: Process

Section 2 outlined the purpose, nature and scope of the regional planning guidelines. This Section deals with the steps necessary to prepare the guidelines.

3.1: Key Principles

A number of principles should be borne in mind in the process of preparing regional planning guidelines:

- a need to acknowledge the **distinct features** and situation of each County/City;
- acceptance and promotion of **proper planning and sustainable development** principles;
- **transparency and accountability** with regard to the process;
- **participation and inclusion**, ensuring that the views of all relevant interests are considered and that participation is facilitated;
- decision-making should be based on **consensus**;
- responsibility and ownership of the process should be **shared**;
- work on the guidelines should be **team-based**;
- an understanding of **sub County/City** issues/concerns;
- understanding and incorporation of issues in **adjoining regions** that impact on the region in question;
- role of the region in **the national and international context**.

3.2: Key questions that must be resolved

The work of the regional authority and its local authority partners in preparing regional guidelines will have to answer four basic questions for the region:

- (1) *What are the “big picture” development issues and opportunities in the region today?* This will evolve from an understanding of the makeup of the area in social, economic, physical and developmental terms, key drivers in this makeup and what are the overarching trends. Addressing this question will also involve distilling the small number of main issues the region faces in the future as a result of this analysis.

- (2) *What is a realistic and robust vision of the region in the future?*¹ Taking the NSS as a starting point and having regard to the relevant CDB strategies, addressing this question will involve outlining a number of elements in robust and realistic terms. These elements include the future makeup of the region, its core strengths into the future, how these strengths can be built upon, in terms of what the region can do for itself and how it can be supported at national level.

- (3) *What is the preferred strategy to realise the vision?* The responses to the initial questions will outline the present and future scenarios for the region. Addressing question (3) means teasing out how progression from (1) to (2) above will be achieved. This will mean charting out potential development paths and options, the issues that arise in response, together with roles and responsibilities. In addressing this question, it will be important to introduce an element of sensitivity analysis to take account of how responsive a preferred strategy is to changing circumstances – e.g. limitations on financial supports likely to be available for infrastructural investment.

- (4) *What are the implementation mechanisms?* When the preferred strategy is clear, it will be necessary to identify and sign off on the roles and responsibilities that will arise in implementing it including responsibilities of the local authorities and including specification of particular milestones to indicate the progress being made.

These four broad questions can be broken down into more specific issues, which regional authorities can analyse, drawing where appropriate on similar analyses at the city or county level by local authorities and the CDB's.

Figure 1 below details an illustrative list of such issues.

¹ Taking into account what is known in terms of trends, issues, capabilities in the region and beyond.

Figure 1: Key Questions and Sub-Issues	
Key Questions	Sub-Issues
1 “The big picture issues”	What is the region’s spatial structure and population makeup? Where do people live and work? What drives the economy? What are the key social features? What services are available and from whom? What are the region’ s strengths and weaknesses? What does the NSS mean for the region?
2 “A realistic and robust vision”	What realistic expectations and vision are there for the region in 2009, 2015, 2021? How will it be different than it is today? What will be the role of the NSS? How will the economic structure change? How should policies in the region respond to likely external change?
3 “A preferred strategy”	What are the various development options available? What strategy is being pursued now? How might a new one differ? What are the implications for settlement? Can different economic choices be made, e.g. for inward investment? Small Medium Enterprises (SMEs)? Do the choices differ between areas within the county/city/rural/urban? Are the choices realistic? How does the preferred strategy fit with those for adjoining regions?
4 “Implementation”	Can responsibilities and milestones be quantified, particularly within development plans? How will implementation of the guidelines be ultimately evaluated?

3.3: A step by step approach

The key questions have been outlined above. Asking the key questions is only the starting point. Responding to them will require a thorough, systematic approach. The following is a recommended step by step approach. Figure 2 teases out in more detail some of the tasks within each step. Figure 3 details the indicative timeframe each step is anticipated to take.

Figure 2: Regional Planning Guidelines – Steps

<p>Step 1: Process initiation</p>	<p>The Regional Authority (RA) formally agrees to prepare guidelines and consults the Planning Authorities (PA s) within the region to agree on the necessary arrangements for making regional planning guidelines (RPG's). The RA meets to discuss the broad aims, format and timetable for the process, including the research and consultation elements.</p> <p>Outputs:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Appointment of Project Manager and staff (+ recruitment of consultants, if any) 2. Agreed committees, expert groups etc. 3. Agreed work programme 4. Agreed allocation of costs
<p>Step 2: Initial Issues Paper and public consultation</p>	<p>The Project Team collates relevant national, regional and local plans and policies, and readily available research material such as NSS reports etc and drafts a short initial Issues Paper for the RA. The aim should be to define the main issues RPG's should address.</p> <p>Outputs: RA publishes Issues Paper and notice of its intention to prepare RPGs, and invites submissions</p>
<p>Step 3: Goal-setting and research phase</p>	<p>During the 8-week initial consultation phase, the RA begins to draft a set of strategic planning goals for the region, whilst the Project Team carries out detailed research into the main issues. Both the overall goals and the research priorities are refined in the light of submissions received.</p> <p>Outputs:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Set of strategic goals agreed by the RA 2. Series of research papers on all key issues
<p>Step 4: Development of regional strategy</p>	<p>The Project Team drafts Part A (Regional Strategy) for the approval of the RA</p> <p>Output: Completion of regional strategy (Part A of the overall document)</p>
<p>Step 5: Identification and evaluation of RPG options</p>	<p>Various development options for achieving the strategic goals for the region are identified and systematically evaluated (including environmental assessment – see section 3.10). Having considered the results of the evaluation, the RA, in consultation with the relevant PA s, selects a preferred option, which is then worked up into draft RPGs.</p> <p>Outputs:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Set of regional development options 2. Evaluation of such options, and selection of preferred option 3. Draft regional planning guidelines
<p>Step 6: Public consultation on the draft RPGs</p>	<p>Outputs:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. RA sends copies of draft RPGs to the prescribed bodies 2. RA puts draft guidelines on public display for 10 weeks and invites written submissions
<p>Step 7: Consideration of submissions</p>	<p>The Project Team collates and analyses the submissions from the public and prescribed bodies, and submits its recommendations on any changes to the draft RPGs to the RA. The RA considers the submissions and the responses, and decides whether to modify the draft guidelines.</p> <p>Output: Report from the Project Team on the submissions</p>
<p>Step 8: Making the RPGs</p>	<p>The RA, following consultation with the PAs, makes the guidelines, and publishes notices in newspapers of the fact.</p> <p>Output: Regional planning guidelines (incorporating the regional strategy)</p>
<p>Step 9: Implementation and monitoring</p>	<p>The PA's consider the need to vary or review their development plans in the light of the RPGs, and decide on other implementation measures. The RA establishes procedures for monitoring implementation (and subsequent review) of the RPGs.</p>

Steps 1-2 should answer question 1 in paragraph 3.2 above.

Step 4 should answer question 2 and concludes the Regional Strategy element of the overall process.

Steps 4-8 should address question 3.

Steps 8 and 9 should address questions 3 and 4 and conclude the process in so far as the document is concerned but will also kick off an ongoing process of implementation and monitoring.

Figure 3: Indicative Timeframes in preparing Regional Planning Guidelines

Step (See Figure 3.3)	Time required for each step	Cumulative total (time elapsed since start)
1	6 weeks	6 weeks
2	2 – 4 weeks to prepare initial Issues Paper 8 weeks (statutory) for initial public consultation	16 – 18 weeks
3	10 weeks (of which the first 8 would overlap with the initial consultation phase)	26 – 28 weeks
4	4 weeks	30 – 32 weeks
5	8 weeks	38 – 40 weeks
6	10 weeks (statutory)	48 – 50 weeks
7	6 – 8 weeks (depending on the volume and complexity of submissions received)	54 – 58 weeks
8	(end of process)	(54 – 58 weeks)

Project Milestones

To prepare regional planning guidelines by the end of March 2004, it will be necessary to have completed particular steps outlined in figure 3 above by certain dates. The key steps include publishing the initial issues paper in step 2 and publishing the draft guidelines in step 6. Ideally, assuming a general start up of the regional planning guideline process by the end of February 2003, with step 1 taking March 2003, the issues paper should be ready for circulation at the end of April/early May 2003. Similarly, regional authorities should aim to put the draft guidelines on display on or about the end of December 2003 – early January 2004.

Differing circumstances in each of the regions will necessitate interpreting the time-scales in figure 3 in a flexible manner. It may be possible to carry out some of the workloads in different steps in parallel e.g. by bringing forward background research work while the initial issues paper is on public display.

3.4: Project management

Regional planning guidelines are being prepared throughout the country for the first time (except in the Greater Dublin Area, where the Strategic Planning Guidelines published in 1999 will be reviewed). A significant amount of national, regional and local data will have to be collected and analysed. The process will involve public consultation, together with ongoing liaison with a wide range of public and private sector bodies and voluntary organisations. Presentations will have to be made to regional and local authority meetings, and a communications strategy implemented to ensure that local people are kept informed of the issues and progress in making the guidelines. Finally, the Guidelines must be written and illustrated in a manner that is clear, coherent and in conformity with statutory and national policy requirements.

All of this underlines the need for good project management of the process from start to finish. Within the framework provided by these guidance notes and regulations made under Section 25(3) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 it is a matter for each regional authority to arrange, in consultation with the relevant planning authorities, its own organisational and staffing resource requirements. It is strongly recommended that consideration be given to appointing a project manager who will be answerable to the authority for delivery of the project within an agreed time-scale. The project manager will be expected to focus exclusively on the regional planning guideline process. Such a person is likely to come from a senior position in the regional or local authorities concerned. The person involved will need to command the confidence of both elected members and local authority managers, and will need to have the requisite experience and personal skills to oversee the complex process described above.

In the Greater Dublin Area, such a project management function is performed by the “Technical Director” for the Strategic Planning Guidelines.

Day-to-day functions of the project manager would include:

- Management of administrative and technical staff assigned to the project
- Overall responsibility for maintenance of IT systems, databases, correspondence, etc.

- Recruitment, briefing and payment of consultants (if any)
- Day-to-day liaison with elected members, local authorities, Government Departments, State agencies, etc.
- “Quality control” of research reports, and major input to the drafting of all reports to the Regional Authority, including the text of the draft guidelines
- Liaison with adjacent regional authorities.

Effective project management is also dependent on proper support. It is therefore also recommended that the project manager should be supported at an operational level within both the regional authority and local authority structures.

The support at regional authority level is described in the next section. Support at local authority level should take the form of a technical liaison group drawn from officers of the local authority in the relevant areas and at senior level feeding in to the regional planning guideline project manager. To co-ordinate this process of inputs, each local authority should nominate a single senior officer to act as the designated “day to day” contact point between the project manager and the local authorities and make the necessary resources available to facilitate interaction.

3.5: Steering Arrangements

There will be a need for a steering committee under the auspices of the regional authority with executive responsibility for managing the delivery of the regional guidelines. It is envisaged that this committee would meet at monthly intervals. The project manager responsible for the day to day production of the guidelines and outputs described in section 3.3 would report to the steering committee.

The steering committee will be comprised of:

- The chairperson of the regional authority.
- The director of the regional authority.
- The project manager.
- The county or city manager for each planning authority in the region.
- A representative of the Department of the Environment and Local Government.
- A representative of the Department of Transport.
- A representative of the State development agencies in the region nominated by Forfas in consultation with the regional authority.

It will also be necessary to put together a small working group of no more than about five members, to support the project manager on day to day issues. The composition of this working group will be a matter for the steering committee to decide. The working group's membership may be drawn from the steering committee or may include other appropriate personnel e.g. Directors of Service for planning and development or other senior planning officials and Directors of Service for Community and Enterprise.

Provision should be made for interaction and liaison between the steering committee and the working group to review progress and debate particular issues of a procedural or strategic planning nature that may arise.

The steering committee will also need to be supported by "technical committees" assembled to consider specific technical issues. The membership of such committees should be drawn from the relevant planning authorities and public bodies.

To exchange best practice at an overall level between regions, the Department of the Environment and Local Government, together with regional and local authorities will maintain an ad-hoc co-ordinating group to meet at quarterly intervals or at other times as necessary.

This group will comprise of:

- (i) Regional Authority Directors
- (ii) The designated local authority manager for each region
- (iii) Relevant DOELG officials.

The group will monitor and review progress in the preparation of regional planning guidelines with a view to exchanging information on best practice and expediting the overall process. It is also envisaged that from time to time in relation to broad strategic issues, this group, or a representative sub-group, will liaise with the Inter-departmental Committee being set up to support the implementation of the NSS to address particular issues such as infrastructure investment programmes.

3.6: Achieving consensus

Overall responsibility for overseeing the preparation of, and making, regional planning guidelines is vested in the members of the regional authority, in the same way as members of local authorities have responsibility for development plans and local area plans.

It is vitally important, therefore, that the statutory and policy framework within which regional authority members must exercise this responsibility is clearly explained to them at the outset of the process. While it is a matter for each authority to order its business, it is essential that each member of the authority is fully briefed on all relevant issues, policy and research papers, and submissions received following public consultation. This will be essential to facilitate members of the regional authority in making an informed decision on the regional planning guidelines.

The final stages of the process will involve integrating many different considerations. Appropriate consultative arrangements will need to be in place between regional and local authorities to facilitate the development of draft regional guidelines to be adopted by the members of the regional authority as statutory guidelines.

If the adopted regional guidelines are to be as effective as possible in providing the regional context for city, county and local development plans and land-use and transportation strategies, such guidelines must be based on an agreed strategic vision for the region, clearly and rationally explained. The strength and clarity of such a regional strategy will depend on the ability of the members of the authority to arrive at a consensus view on the major issues facing the region as a whole, in the light of national policy set out in the NSS.

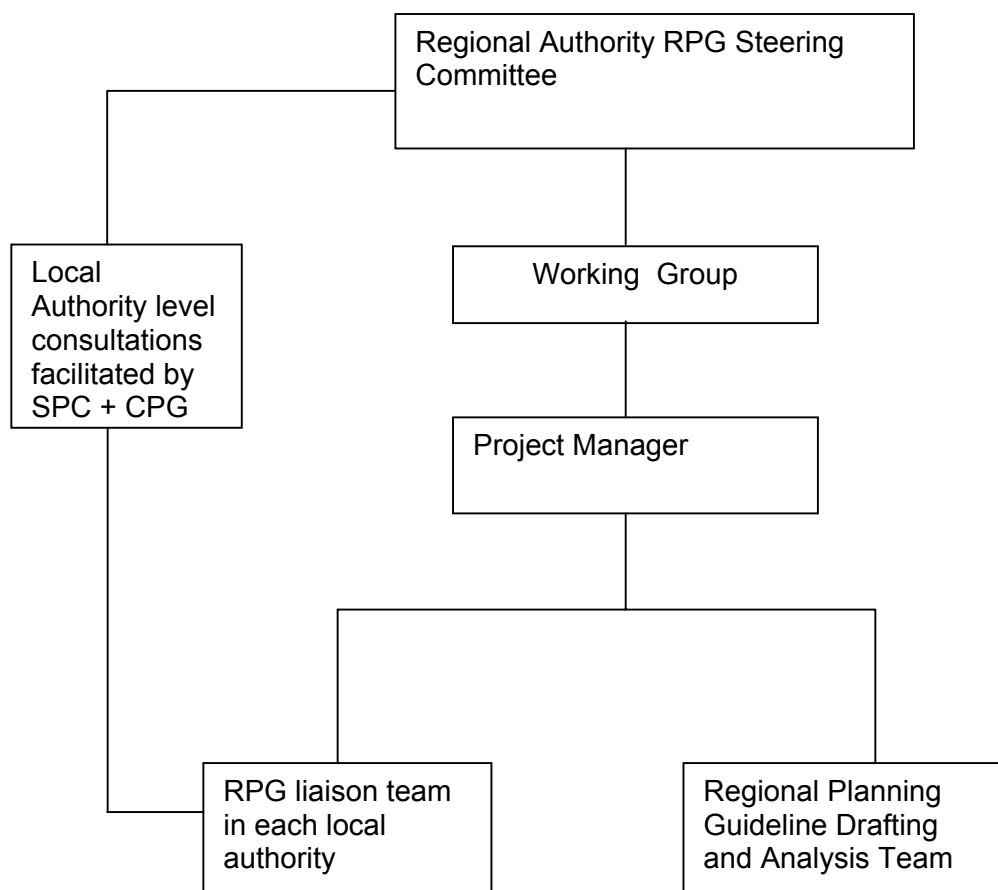
The chairperson of the authority, its director, the designated manager in the region and the project manager for the process each have key roles in supporting the development of a consensus based approach.

Furthermore, the strategic vision for the region needs to be developed on a shared basis with all of the planning authorities in the region. While the regional planning guidelines, when adopted, will have statutory backing, their effective implementation will be greatly facilitated if the overall approach they adopt is supported by local authority members.

Strategic Policy Committees and Corporate Policy Groups in local authorities will serve as an important link between regional and local authorities during preparation of the regional planning guidelines. It is therefore recommended that the Strategic Policy Committee with responsibility for development and planning in each planning authority and the Corporate Policy Group should be availed of to provide a mechanism for debate on position papers generated in the course of preparing the guidelines and other matters. The overall aim of this is to ensure that local authority members are regularly briefed and up-dated on the progress in developing guidelines and have opportunities of making inputs at the appropriate times.

Figure 4 outlines how the different elements involved in the preparation of the guidelines will fit together.

Figure 4: Suggested RPG Organisational Structure²



² It is envisaged that this structure will need to be modified in individual circumstances, e.g. in the Greater Dublin Area where the Dublin and Mid East Regional Authorities will jointly review the Strategic Planning Guidelines.

3.7: Public Consultation

Regional planning guidelines provide a strategic planning framework for the development of the region and its constituent areas at the county, city and local levels. It is important therefore that every opportunity is taken to ensure both public awareness of the process of preparing regional guidelines and to demonstrate responsiveness in that process to the views of the general public.

It is envisaged that in addition to more formal consultative arrangements between regional authorities, local authorities and other bodies as described at sections 3.4 and 3.5 above, a communications strategy should be agreed at the outset of the process to build public awareness and ownership of the process.

Formal interaction with the public is required at two stages.

- (1) A formal notice to be published pursuant to section 24(1) of the Act specifying the matters to be considered in the guidelines and inviting submissions.
- (2) A formal notice to be published pursuant to section 24(4) of the Act outlining that the draft of the regional planning guidelines have been made, specifying where the draft guidelines can be obtained or viewed and inviting submissions on the draft.

In addition to the above, every effort should be made to facilitate public input into the process on the broadest basis practicable, bearing in mind the need to strike a balance between the time available and taking an inclusive approach to all groups or individuals who have a contribution to make. Facilitating such inputs may involve interactive websites containing information sheets and copies of position papers and structured interaction with key bodies such as the County and City Development Boards, state agencies and the social partners.

3.8: Arrangements in the Greater Dublin Area

The Strategic Planning Guidelines (SPGs) for the Greater Dublin Area (GDA) were published in March 1999 by the seven city and county councils within the GDA and by the Department, in conjunction with the Dublin and Mid-East Regional Authorities. Under section 21(4) of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, the SPGs are deemed to have the effect of regional planning guidelines as if made under Part II of the Act.

The National Spatial Strategy states that regional authorities will immediately commence the preparation of regional planning guidelines under the Act to give effect to the NSS at regional level. Section 27(1) of the Act requires planning authorities to have regard to any regional planning guidelines in force for its area when making and adopting a development plan.

The Strategic Planning Guidelines were drawn up in 1999 for the GDA as a whole because it was recognised that land use and transportation planning should be integrated within a coherent strategy to guide the future planning of both land use and transportation in the Greater Dublin Area.

Similarly, whilst the original Dublin Transportation Initiative, published in 1995, comprised the “journey to work” area for Dublin, covering only parts of Cos. Meath, Kildare and Wicklow, the DTO Strategy 2000 –2016 (“A Platform for Change”) was extended to include the entire GDA. This enlarged study area reflects the increasing influence of Dublin on the surrounding counties, the extended journey to work patterns and the expansion of employment opportunities to these areas. It is also the same area as that covered by the Strategic Planning Guidelines.”

The NSS, in setting out a regional approach to spatial planning policy to be developed further by regional and local authorities, stated that:

“The Dublin and Mid-East regions (the GDA) are considered jointly in this section because of their strong functional relationship and the fact that Strategic Planning Guidelines for the two regions are already in place.”

It is clear, therefore, that land use and transportation planning for the two regions should be carried out on the basis of the GDA as a whole and by the Dublin and Mid East Regional Authorities on a joint basis.

It is also clear that the review of the strategic planning guidelines should now encompass a joint vision for the Greater Dublin Areas socio-economic development to be developed and shared by both the Dublin and Mid East Regional Authorities. That vision should take account of the distinct urban and rural components of the Area. The new document should include both Part A (the strategy element) and Part B (the regional planning guidelines element) – see paragraph 1.4 above.

In terms of steering and other procedural points, the following should be noted:

- Consideration should be given to any adjustments needed in relation to the existing steering committee to bring the arrangements for the GDA into line with those applicable elsewhere.
- The steering committee should be a joint Dublin and Mid East Regional Authority committee.
- Consideration should be given to using the existing technical group as the working group to support the day to day work of the existing SPG Technical Director in preparing draft material including the guidelines themselves.
- The SPG steering committee should meet on a monthly basis focusing on broad issues that require debate and clarification.
- Given the central importance of addressing strategic land use and transportation issues within the GDA, consideration should be given to including a representative of the Dublin Transportation Office and the Department of Transport on the Technical Working Group.
- Arrangements should be made for the Strategic Policy Committees for planning and development in the seven local authorities that make up the Greater Dublin to contribute to the process of reviewing the Strategic Planning Guidelines as facilitated by the Dublin and Mid East Regional Authorities.

The regional authorities may also wish to consider the appointment on a joint basis of other groups of an advisory nature to assist the process, such as relevant experts on urban development issues etc.

3.9: Taking account of issues outside a Region

Issues that arise outside a particular regional authority area but that affect development in that region must be taken into account in the preparation of regional guidelines and consultative mechanisms need to be put in place to facilitate this.

All regional authorities should put in place a consultative mechanism with any regional authority area they adjoin. This should be activated particularly when development options and the assessment of options are considered in steps 5 and 8 discussed in section 3.3 above.

In addition to the above, some regions will need to put in place ongoing consultative arrangements where the issue of overlapping issues is more acute. Examples here include consideration of the role of Drogheda (part of the Border region) in the context of the review of the Strategic Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area. Another example would be consideration of the parts of the environs of Athlone in Co Roscommon (part of the Western Region) as part of preparing regional planning guidelines for the Midlands. In addition, to progress the concept of the gateways of Cork, Galway, Limerick/Shannon and Waterford acting in partnership to promote critical mass, the regional planning guidelines for the relevant regions might contain co-ordinated proposals to progress this matter - prepared on a consultative basis.

Instances will also arise where other external issues need to be taken into account. Examples include the interrelationship between the Regional Development Strategy for Northern Ireland “Shaping our Future” and regional planning guidelines for the Border Region. Other examples include potential transboundary co-operation between the South-East region and South Wales and consideration of the Dublin – Belfast corridor in the context of reviewing the Strategic Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area.

In this regard it will be a matter for the regional authority concerned to put in place any liaison mechanisms with the support of the Department of the Environment and Local Government.

3.10: Gaeltacht Issues

Regional Authorities are reminded, when making regional planning guidelines which affect the Gaeltacht, of the need, as provided for by Section 23(4)(b) of the Act, to take into account protection of the linguistic and cultural heritage of these areas.

3.11: Environment and Sustainability

Section 23(3) of the 2000 Act requires that regional planning guidelines shall contain information on the likely significant effects on the environment of implementing the guidelines (similar provisions apply to development plans and local area plans).

This provision anticipated the introduction of the EU Directive on Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). The Directive was subsequently adopted in June 2001 and will come into force in July 2004. The Directive will not apply to the preparation of the first round of regional guidelines (including the review of the 1999 Strategic Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area). However, regional authorities are encouraged to adopt the spirit of the Directive in giving effect to the requirement in section 23(3) of the 2000 Act. It is suggested that a separate chapter should be prepared on information on the likely significant effects on the environment. Insofar as is practicable, the Directive's requirement in relation to the content of the "environmental report" should be followed. There are two broad intentions of the SEA Directive:

- (1) Firstly to ensure that environmental considerations are explicitly taken into account at the formative stage in plan preparation and,
- (2) Secondly that environmental bodies and the general public should be afforded an opportunity to comment on these environmental considerations as well as on the draft plan.

Taking the first point above and looking back at the steps described in section 3.3, ways in which environmental and sustainability measures can be integrated into the process will include:

- **In Steps 2 and 3:** To include sustainability as a core element of the approach in preparing RPG's, to include reports of environmental bodies in the synthesis of existing analyses, and to include a broad outline of the current state of the environment in the initial position paper.

- **In Step 4:** To include environmental objectives of relevance to the regional planning guidelines such as air and water quality, waste management, energy utilisation and transportation in the goal setting phase.
- **In Step 5:** The evolution and assessment of development options for the region must take account of the likely significant effects on the environment and seek to minimise any adverse effects. This step should therefore include an assessment of the individual and emerging preferred development option or options with key environmental, sustainable development and physical planning considerations, objectives and criteria at national, regional and local levels. For example, this will involve examining the relationship between various development options and aspects of the natural and cultural heritage such as statutory Nature Reserves, National Parks, Natural Heritage Areas, Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas, Heritage Sites, sensitive landscapes, coastlines and areas of important recreational amenity. The above activities should be encompassed in a separate chapter to be prepared as part of the eventual published regional planning guidelines.
- **In Step 6:** The chapter on likely significant effects on the environment should be displayed as part of the documentation subject to public consultation.
- **In Step 7:** Consideration of submissions should also be conducted in the context of environmental concerns and objectives as in earlier steps.
- **In Steps 8 and 9:** Environmental/sustainable development targets/objectives should be incorporated into the process for making Regional Planning Guidelines and the process of monitoring and implementation thereafter.

While the chapter on the likely significant effects on the environment of draft guidelines will not be as detailed as an environmental impact statement for a specific development, the broad headings in relation to environmental impacts are similar. The headings will include impacts on human beings, fauna, flora, soil, water, air, climate, material assets, cultural heritage, landscape, and the interrelationship between these factors.

The Department will publish technical guidance on SEA in late 2003 in advance of the Directive coming into force. In the interim, regional authorities should identify the likely significant impacts of key strategic elements of their draft guidelines (e.g. in relation to regional settlement strategy) under each of the above headings. A matrix could be created showing key regional objectives on one axis, and environmental

topics (human beings, fauna, etc.) on the other. Likely significant impacts can be broadly assessed as being beneficial, neutral, or adverse. Where potential significant adverse impacts are identified, consideration needs to be given to modifying the relevant planning objective, where possible; if that is not feasible, mitigation measures should be proposed.

The environmental assessment should conclude with a statement as to why the broad strategy underlying the draft regional guidelines has been selected as being the best option in terms of the proper planning and sustainable development of the region.

3.12: Making of Regional Planning Guidelines – Legal Requirements

The main legal requirements in the process of preparing and making regional planning guidelines are summarised in Appendix One. Some broad overall points should be noted:

- The making of Regional Planning Guidelines is reserved to members of the Regional Authority (or two or more Authorities acting jointly, as the case may be).
- Members must receive a copy of all written submissions received following the display of the draft Guidelines. It would be helpful in this connection for the Project Manager to:
 - a) List the various submissions;
 - b) Summarise the main issues raised; and
 - c) State the recommendations of any committee(s) established to consider the submissions.
- Any proposed modifications to the draft guidelines should be checked against the document as a whole, to avoid potential ambiguity or conflict.
- Notification of the making of the Guidelines should be published in regional as well as national newspapers.

Section 4: The Guidelines

4.1: Core Features

At the end of the process, regional planning guidelines, incorporating a clear development strategy for the region must be published as one document for each region.

The core features of the document will include:

- being **well presented, readable and easily followed**;
- containing a series of **chapters, with clearly defined and headed sections and subsections**;
- being **publicly available** on the widest basis practicable;
- adequately **reflecting the comprehensive, detailed and extensive analysis and consultation** which will underlie it without becoming overly long, particularly in presenting the development framework for the region and specific actions that arise in this context;
- **achieving a balance** between presenting a comprehensive analysis and a clear message so that the document is concise, readable and with supporting material being appended;
- being published in hard copy, but also electronically (if possible, to be available on the internet);
- **using maps and charts** where possible that illustrate basic features, facts and analysis - in particular where these are central to the choice of subsequently selected development strategy options;
- containing **clear intra and interregional elements** that identify the key elements of the guidelines that apply within regions and those that relate to interrelationships with other regions;
- containing **clear recommendations** that flow from any policy statements providing a focus for policies at development plan and other areas such as transport, to work with and develop.

4.2: Structure of Guidelines

Regional planning guidelines will need to address the issues specific to each region. Therefore only an indicative outline of the structure of the eventual document can be provided in these guidance notes.

The structure should consist of an overview of the guidelines followed by two main parts, each containing a number of sections, the titles of which are suggested below:

- **Overview:** comprising of a summary of the main messages within the document

Part A: An overall development strategy for the Region

- Section 1: Context and Aims
 - Link to NSS
 - Outline of approach taken
 - Summary of what the document aims to achieve
- Section 2: The Region Today – Main Development Issues
 - The key issues relevant to strategic planning and socio-economic and physical planning in terms of broad trends, housing, employment, provision of services, accessibility, environmental issues, social and cultural development.
- Section 3: The Development Strategy – Goals and Objectives
 - Overall goals for the region including more detailed objectives in terms of
 - How to develop the strengths of the region.
 - How to implement the NSS
 - How other towns and villages and rural areas will fit with the NSS

Part B: Strategic Planning Guidelines for the Region

- Section 4: The role and scope of the Planning Guidelines
 - The development plan as a catalyst for sustainable development
 - Issues to be addressed
 - Development Principles

- Section 5: Strategic Development Options and Scenarios
- Section 6: Assessment of Options(Including Environmental Assessment)
- Section 7: Recommended Option
 - Outline of implications for county/city development plans.
- Section 8: Next Steps

A further development of this structure is contained in Appendix Three.

4.3: Overview of Contents

The central objective of regional planning guidelines is to provide a long-term strategic planning framework for the development of the region. “Strategic” refers to those policy directions which transcend the boundaries of individual planning authorities, and which relate to the role of the region in delivering the National Spatial Strategy. These strategic policies will in turn be translated into development plans. It is important, in order to retain a strategic focus, that regional guidelines should not become involved in detailed issues which are properly the concern of such development plans and of the local authorities. The aim should be to provide the essential regional context – and no more – for local development plans and strategies.

It therefore follows that regional guidelines need to be of practical use to local authorities in exercising their development plan functions. Being of practical use includes both pointing the way in which development plans at more local levels can serve strategic objectives to benefit local areas, such as supporting public transport investment or enterprise development, as well as assisting in outlining the scale of future development requirements.

It is important to recall however, that outlining future requirements, in terms of future population and issues arising in the housing, transportation and other infrastructural areas, needs to be done in a way that is compatible with the strategic outlook of

regional planning guidelines. It would be unduly prescriptive to identify particular levels of needs in specific places. That is the job of the development plan process.

The role of regional planning guidelines is to determine overall orders of magnitude, the roles of different types and scales of cities and towns and the roles of different types of rural areas into the future.

With a robust and realistic policy framework in place at regional level, it is also to be anticipated that regional planning guidelines will provide a clearer basis for interaction with national level organisations such as government departments and agencies. An example of such interaction would be in the transport area where explicit support for a particular settlement strategy in the context of regional planning guidelines with further support at the county/city level will support a strong case for public transport investment.

In addition to the above, the strategic planning framework to be provided by the regional guidelines and to be contained in Part 2 of the indicative structure will comprise of a number of core elements:

4.3.1: Estimates of future population and household levels:

Section 2 of the NSS sets out the regional breakdown of population distribution in 2002, and estimates of the regional breakdown in 2020 based on (a) current demographic trends, and (b) economic growth projections. The 2002 Census preliminary report figures for the Border and Midlands regions exceeded the NSS "current demographic trends" population projections for 2020. In contrast, lower than expected growth occurred in the Greater Dublin Area. Regional population projections will therefore need to be reviewed when the full results of the 2002 census are published in mid 2003.

While both sets of projections are illustrative in nature, the main conclusion to be drawn from them is that implementation of the NSS will yield higher regional population growth than would be the case without a spatial policy framework. As the pace of regional development accelerates, this will also create additional requirements for housing in the regions outside Dublin. These requirements will be particularly pronounced in the Gateways, Hubs and other strategic centres such as the county towns.

Table 2.5 in the NSS contains regional household distribution estimates for 2020 based on the two sets of population projections. These estimates provide the long-term context for the preparation of regional planning guidelines, because it is essential that local development plans provide adequate zoned land to meet likely future demands.

When the 2002 census results become available, Regional Authorities should work forward from the NSS estimates with those results to determine broad needs over the lifetime of the regional planning guidelines. These projections should be preferably structured in terms of short range – ie 6-12 year forecasts to fit in with development plan timeframes and longer-term forecasts for the 2020 horizon.

Section 3.4 of the NSS contains population projections for the Gateways and their surrounding catchments for 2020 and beyond.

It should be noted that the suggested population levels for Gateways and Hubs are indications of the levels to which these will need to grow to fulfil the functions envisaged for them under the NSS. The rate at which growth can actually take place will vary depending on a wide range of factors relating to population and economic growth and local circumstances. The indicative population levels will not necessarily be attained therefore in the period up to 2020. It is important that regional planning guidelines should take a realistic approach to the growth levels likely to be achieved, as a basis for planning to support infrastructural investment within each region.

4.3.2: Strategic Regional Development Land Requirements:

When the NSS regional population distribution estimates are updated in the light of the detailed returns from the 2002 Census, more up-to-date projections of future household formation should be prepared for each region covering the 2020 horizon of the regional planning guidelines. These projections should be preferably structured in terms of short range – ie 6-12 year forecasts to fit in with development plan timeframes and longer-term forecasts for the 2020 horizon. These projections are needed as a basis for providing a regional strategic context for city and county housing strategies.

It is of crucial importance to the successful implementation of the NSS that adequate and timely provision is made for zoned and serviced land in each region to meet the

anticipated additional growth levels envisaged in the NSS. However, the timely provision of development land must also be balanced against over-zoning and premature development giving rise to excessive demands for public infrastructure. When translating estimated demand for new housing to meet the growth in household numbers over the lifetime of the regional planning guidelines, regard should be had to the minimum residential density levels recommended in the Department's guidelines for planning authorities (1999). These densities will promote patterns of sustainable development by encouraging consolidation of existing cities and towns and by facilitating efficient use of public transport.

Section 5 of the NSS provides additional guidance in relation to the provision of housing land, in line with assessment of housing needs, within urban areas. In particular, Box 5.2 sets out a broad evaluation framework when considering the location of housing lands in urban areas.

4.3.3: Recommended regional settlement strategy:

This strategy will ideally have a broad-brush approach containing interrelated urban and rural elements.

The regional maps in Section 4 of the NSS provide the starting point for each region. These diagrammatic maps show Gateways, Hubs, county towns and smaller towns, together with national transport corridors and access routes to peripheral areas. Locations for urban strengthening opportunities are shown, and the role of different cities and towns within each region is outlined.

The regional planning guidelines will need to work within this approach and extend it, focusing particularly on the broad regional roles of towns other than the Gateways and Hubs. Also of relevance will be how their development will support the development of the region, how this can be progressed and how they fit with the Gateways and Hubs.

One of the fundamental tenets of the NSS is the intrinsic interdependence of urban and rural areas supported by complex flows of people and services. It follows that a strong, spatially-balanced urban structure must be matched by specific strategies for rural areas and strengthened rural communities, which are set out in broad, overall terms in Sections 3.5 and 5.3 of the NSS.

Regional planning guidelines should therefore consider carefully the characteristics of the broad types of rural areas and the rural economy within their region. Particular attention should be paid to NSS policy in relation to rural housing need and demand issues.

The NSS provides the essential building blocks for devising regional settlement strategies. However, there are other important sources include any existing regional plans or studies (such as the Cork Area Strategic Plan 2001-2020), integrated land-use and transportation plans in Gateways and Hubs, and regional retail planning strategies.

4.3.4: Supporting the Regional Enterprise Agenda:

Section 5.2 of the NSS relates to economic development and spatial patterns of enterprise activity. Future trends in enterprise development are discussed, as is the role of the development agencies. It is important that these agencies play a formative role in shaping regional employment strategies, which translate the national approach put forward in the NSS.

The widely distributed and strong characteristics of existing indigenous enterprise will play an important role in achieving balanced regional development. This will be enabled through the agencies embedding and building on the existing enterprise base with a particular focus on innovation. Identifying and encouraging new start-up companies with strong growth potential will remain a key priority. New opportunities will continue to be identified for economic development in the regions, including expansion investments by Dublin-based companies.

Strategic reserves of lands for enterprise development should continue to be developed. These should provide high quality setting and location, easy access to key infrastructure such as transport, energy, water services and communications, well integrated with the spatial structure of adjoining urban areas and their educational facilities.

Locations in or close to the Gateways should also, where appropriate, have access to streamlined planning processes such as the Strategic Development Zone mechanism under the 2000 Planning and Development Act.

National and regional capacity for innovation, research and development must be bolstered, focusing on the quality of third level education and research facilities as well as encouraging the emergence of particular centres of excellence.

It will be important to ensure that regions have the required access to international markets for goods, services and labour mobility, and have the capacity to attract mobile investment, with the support of the strategic development of infrastructure such as telecommunications, energy networks, regional air and sea port services.

The necessary key infrastructures for the Gateways and Hubs, including reliable energy networks, waste management facilities, and advanced broadband telecommunications must be co-ordinated.

Regional planning guidelines can act as a catalyst to harness potential for significant economic development opportunities through effective cross-border co-operation between large cities or towns such as Derry-Letterkenny, Monaghan-Armagh, Cavan-Enniskillen and Dundalk-Newry and through further enhancing the emerging Dublin-Belfast economic corridor.

Section 5 of the NSS also discusses employment in tourism, and in agriculture, marine and natural resources.

4.3.5: A regional transportation framework:

Section 2.6 of the NSS deals with strengthening areas and places. Among the factors needed to support increased economic activity and regional competitiveness are:

- Integrated land use and transportation strategies
- A focal point for national, regional and local road and public transport systems, with good access to the national road and rail network and access to airports and deepwater ports
- Effective urban transport systems, including facilities for pedestrians and cyclists.

Map 3 in the NSS (“National transport framework”) shows strategic radial and linking corridors, together with international access routes. These transport corridors are shown in more detail in the regional maps in section 4 of the NSS, and should be

incorporated in regional planning guidelines. Furthermore, the regional guidelines need to address how these link to all parts of the regions in terms of roads and other links that perform important intra-regional roles.

In addition, there is a pivotal role for regional planning guidelines to provide a policy context at regional level that will support implementation of aspects of the national transport framework. For example, the issue of enhanced rail access between Galway and Cork examined in the context of the emerging Strategic Rail Review is contingent on putting in place a development strategy that supports investment by encouraging the development of compact and sustainable urban settlements along the rail corridor.

Regard should be had to the conclusions of current integrated land use and transportation plans and draft plans for urban areas. This Department will shortly issue technical guidance on the preparation and implementation of integrated frameworks for Gateways and Hubs.

4.3.6: Recommended infrastructure strategy:

Sections 3.7 and 3.8 of the NSS deal with key infrastructure. Physical networks of infrastructure such as roads, public transport, energy and communications are of particular relevance to the NSS, since they themselves have a spatial impact and also influence the location, timing and extent of development. Other economic infrastructure, such as water services and waste, and social infrastructure, relate to particular locations and is also needed to support balanced regional development.

Strategic infrastructure priorities are listed in section 3.8, and should be examined within the process of preparing regional planning guidelines. It may also be necessary for any maps prepared to highlight strategic infrastructure corridors for the provision of electricity transmission, gas pipelines, telecommunications or other strategic requirements that can then be incorporated into development plans at more local levels.

4.4: Presentation

The guidelines must be drafted, considered, adopted, published and acted on. The following are some practical guidelines to help ensure quality and good general presentation:

- **succinctness:** the Strategy should not be a detailed record of the process outlined in Section 3. It should be a distillation of the key points that have emerged from the process. Only include information relevant to the final development framework;
- **early contents page:** specify the structure in as much detail as possible as early as possible. Drawing up a Contents Page early on (based on Figure 4.1) is a useful discipline, and a means of getting agreement about what the Strategy document should contain. It should be considered as part of Step 1 in the preparatory process;
- **simple language:** write in simple short sentences and avoid unnecessary jargon;
- **length:** don't be either overly short or overly long
- **central editing:** use a small central editing team
- **editing:** while many people will contribute to the drafting process, it is highly advisable for the project manager to act as or appoint an agreed and acceptable "editor-in-chief". The editor in chief should not have to write everything but should collate material drawn from a variety of sources, reflect what has already been agreed, probe what is still unclear and finally put it all into a common style.

4.5: Imagery

Use of charts, diagrams and maps will be an essential feature of the guidelines. This is especially so with documents that must act as "big picture" spatial frameworks. Such "pictures" are often a good substitute or companion for words. The term "infographics" refers to the use of simple pictorial diagrams that get across information.

Each regional planning guideline document should end up with a single overall strategy map that summarises the key elements of the guidelines such as the urban structure, rural policies, transport networks and links to other regions and areas. An example of such a map is the strategy map for the Strategic Planning Guidelines for

the Greater Dublin Area. Other examples include the regional maps in the National Spatial Strategy.

Charts and background maps also help to break up overly long sections of text. Practical suggestions are:

- charts, diagrams and maps should genuinely make text clearer or shorter. If they do not, or if they themselves require extensive explanation, they are not helpful;
- make sure diagrams are directly relevant rather than just interesting;
- the final choice of all visual aids is best left until late in the preparatory process, when lines of argument have already been thrashed out.

Section 5: Implementation

5.1: Regional Guidelines and the Development Plan Process

Section 27 of the 2000 Act requires planning authorities, following the making of regional planning guidelines for their area, to review the existing development plan and consider whether any variation is necessary in order to achieve the objectives of the RPGs.

Regional authorities should consider the possibility of retaining the Steering Committee (or similar) to monitor implementation of the RPGs within the region, and also to prepare the ground for subsequent reviews of the guidelines. It is envisaged, for example, that the director of each regional authority could prepare an annual update report for consideration by the Steering Committee and by the authority.

5.2: Supporting Implementation

How implementation happens in a given region will depend on local circumstances. However implementation will be assisted if:

- a conscious attempt is made by the regional authority to **“get out and promote”** the guidelines: The written document is on the one hand the culmination of one process and on the other hand the start of another; As soon as the guidelines are agreed, prepared and published, someone, e.g. the Director, must go out and about to explain, to remind, to give feedback, and to win over key agencies and organisations to its implementation;
- the document **“has clear targets and result areas”** including identifying, in partnership with the local authorities and other agencies such as providers of public transport or promoters of economic development, who is responsible for progressing these targets and when. This might be organised around an annual implementation programme focused on an annual implementation report;
- **“there is a clear future role for Working Groups etc”**: Groups which have existed during the preparatory process should not necessarily be disbanded as soon as the preparatory process ends. They may be suitable candidates to be reconstituted into ongoing sub-groups, committees etc.

5.3: Monitoring and Evaluation

Regional planning guidelines should address arrangements and systems for monitoring and evaluation.

- **Monitoring** refers to the regular tracking of activity and immediate outputs on a reasonably short-term basis, and addressing the question of whether agreed activities and commitments being carried out?
- **Evaluation** refers to identifying impact, including longer-term impact.

Regional Authorities should consider preparing:

- six monthly monitoring reports by the Regional Directors to review progress against key result areas, and inform:
- annual Implementation Programmes;

5.4: Importance of Strategic Approach

The impact of regional planning guidelines will crucially depend on the extent to which a balance is achieved between deriving a vision for the region that constituent local authorities can share, but that also represents an opportunity for progress and positive change. Establishing that policies and actions are changing to implement the regional planning guidelines will be an important aspect of monitoring the implementation process. Signs to look out for are:

- evidence of increased local authority co-operation, e.g. use of each other's services/facilities, presence on each other's committees, carrying out of joint projects;
- evidence of individual bodies' objectives at local authority and other regional and or national levels, e.g, Government Departments and agencies reflecting the wider vision for the region;
- evidence of new thinking and different choices being made, e.g. member organisations doing different things, or doing some things differently, because of what the regional strategy and planning guidelines have said.

Appendix One: Outline of statutory provisions for Regional Planning Guidelines

The provisions referred to are contained in the Planning and Development Act 2000 (Number 30 of 2000).

Section 21: The power to make regional planning guidelines is vested in regional authorities, which have certain discretion in making the necessary arrangements. The Strategic Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area, which were published in 1999, are given statutory recognition.

Section 22: Regional authorities commence the process by consulting with the planning authorities within the region to agree on the necessary arrangements for making the guidelines; planning authorities are required to assist in making such arrangements, which may include the provision of financial assistance, the services of staff and the provision of accommodation, where necessary. (See also Section 25, below).

Section 23: The objective of the regional planning guidelines shall be to provide a long-term (12-20 years) strategic planning framework for the development of the region. Issues to be addressed (see below for details), in accordance with the principles of proper planning and sustainable development, include:

- Projected population trends, and settlement and housing strategies
- Economic and employment trends
- Location of industrial and commercial development
- Transportation, including public transportation
- Water supply and waste water facilities
- Energy and communications networks
- Provision of educational, healthcare, retail and other community facilities
- Preservation and protection of the environment and its amenities.

Regional planning guidelines shall contain information on the likely significant effects on the environment of implementing the guidelines (see below).

Regional authorities, when making regional guidelines, must take account of Government policies.

When making guidelines which affect the Gaeltacht, the regional authority shall have regard to the need to protect the linguistic and cultural heritage of the Gaeltacht.

Section 24: Once the necessary arrangements have been agreed with the relevant planning authorities, the regional authority publishes notice of its intention to make regional planning guidelines, indicating the likely issues, and invites written submissions (at least 8 weeks must be allowed). Having considered submissions received, the authority prepares draft guidelines, which are sent to prescribed bodies and put on public display (for at least 10 weeks).

Following consideration of submissions from prescribed bodies and the public, the authority makes the guidelines subject to any modifications considered necessary, and publishes notification of this fact. Copies must be made available for public inspection.

Section 25: When agreeing arrangements between the regional authority and the relevant planning authorities, matters to be considered shall include the establishment of committees to oversee preparation of the guidelines, and the membership and role of such committees. The making of the guidelines is reserved to members of the regional authority, however, following consideration of any reports received from the committees.

Section 26: Regional guidelines must be reviewed after 6 years.

Section 27: A planning authority shall have regard to any regional guidelines in force for its area when making and adopting a development plan (provided the guidelines are not more than 6 years old). The Minister may direct planning authorities to comply with regional guidelines. (The Minister is also given power under various sections to make regulations or to issue guidelines in relation to regional planning guidelines).

Following the making of regional planning guidelines, planning authorities must review existing development plans and consider whether a variation is needed to bring them in line with the guidelines.

Appendix Two: Regional Strategies

1.4: Regional Strategies – Status and Role.

Reference has been earlier in this document to a “*Regional Strategy*” element of *Regional Planning Guidelines*. What is meant by this?

Since the Regional Reports were published in 1996, a considerable number of important and relevant developments have occurred which impact to varying degrees on the Regional Authorities and on their Regional Strategies. Many of these are reactions to the major economic change brought about by rapid economic growth since the mid 1990s, growth which was largely unanticipated even at the time of preparation of the previous Regional Reports viz:

- the country has been split into the two new NUTS II regions and the new Regional Assemblies established – as groupings of NUTS III regions, i.e. Border Midlands and Western, and Southern & Eastern, against the backdrop of the National Development Plan.
- the County and City Development Boards have been established and have each recently prepared a Strategy for Economic, Social and Cultural Development of their county/city;
- the National Spatial Strategy (NSS) has been published.
- Chapter III of the Planning and Development Act 2000 provides a mechanism for preparing long-term strategic planning frameworks by regional authorities for their areas to be titled “Regional Planning Guidelines”
- a series of other regional and county-level planning exercises have been undertaken. This includes county/city housing strategies, regional waste management plans and retail strategies.

These developments must all be taken into account in preparing the Regional Authorities’ Regional Strategies and in the case of the Dublin and Mid-East Regional Authorities, the Consultation Paper *New Institutional Arrangements for Land Use and Transport in the Greater Dublin Area*.

The key element in the above from this guidance document’s perspective are the parallels between Regional Strategies and Regional Planning Guidelines. There is a

considerable potential for overlap between the focus of both regional strategies and regional guidelines. It is essential, in the interests of coherence and the avoidance of duplication, that a single document should incorporate a combination of both processes. There is much to be gained from avoiding such overlap, particularly in terms of work required, and strengthening the regional planning guideline process by feeding in a robust socio-economic context from the Regional Strategies.

Avoiding overlaps.

This guidance document provides a framework to avoid a situation where work necessary in preparing regional planning guidelines does not duplicate work in other areas. The following table outlines the common and distinguishing areas between regional strategies and regional planning guidelines.

It should be noted that while an RS and RPG share some common purposes, they each have specific objectives, as follows:

(a) Specific purposes of RS:

- To contribute to the regional authority's general function of promoting co-ordination of public services in the region
- Monitoring the delivery of EU Structural Funds
- Making proposals to the national and NUTS II authorities.

(b) Specific purposes of RPGs:

- To provide a long-term strategic planning framework (between 12 and 20 years) for the development of the region
- To translate national planning policies – particularly the National Spatial Strategy – at regional level
- The focus is on the proper planning and sustainable development of the region.

(c) Common purposes:

- Review of current socio-economic, demographic, etc. trends
- Review of development plans and CDB strategies
- Framework for planning for regional infrastructural provision.

Appendix Three: Contents of Regional Planning Guidelines

This appendix amplifies the broad structural outline of regional planning guidelines suggested in section four of these guidance notes. The intent here is not to set out a prescriptive list of headings that must be followed rigidly, but to suggest headings that can be drawn from in dealing with the specific issues that will arise in each region.

The Overview Section

Compiling a large amount of data, analysis, issues, options and strategic policies can sometimes mean that the essential messages of a document are hard to find. An overview section should concentrate on:

- What are the main messages of the document? e.g.
- What are the top three-five development issues in the region today?
- What can the planning system do about this?
- In what ways will the region be different as a result of implementing the guidelines?
- What are the key steps to be taken and by whom?

Part A: The Strategy Section

This section of the overall regional planning guideline document should demonstrate the rationale in broad social, economic, environmental and cultural terms, for the approach taken in the planning guidelines in Part B. It should build on relevant analyses, research and strategies already carried out in respect of the region as a whole or its constituent counties and cities.

Section 1 should outline the overall backdrop regional planning guidelines are set against. The section should also describe overarching national policy contexts such as the National Spatial Strategy, Government policy on Sustainable Development and describe the types of issues regional planning guidelines will address. These might include matters such as:

- Regional Planning Guidelines as a framework for local authority development plans
- Enhancing the strategic dimension to planning at regional and local levels to extend the approach taken by the national spatial strategy.
- Putting the overall planning system in its proper context, that is understanding wider processes of change and identifying how our physical surroundings can be optimised to meet broader socio-cultural, economic and environmental objectives.
- Setting out the planning policies that will support meeting future needs in ways that are sustainable in an environmental and financial sense. These needs will arise in a variety of areas encompassing housing, social and physical infrastructure, employment, strengthening urban centres and coping with changes in rural areas.

Section 2, which essentially profiles the region as it currently stands should chart the main factors that will affect the development of the region in the future, in socio-cultural, economic, physical and policy terms. This section should aim to answer questions in so far as they relate to the subject matter of regional planning guidelines such as:

- What are the main continuities in the development of the region?
- What are the major trends?
- What are the most important processes of change?
- What are the drivers of these changes?
- How are these drivers amenable to change by the planning system?
- What other factors can affect the drivers of change?

Section 2 should present a summary of the key issues in the region, relevant to strategic socio-economic and physical planning and outline the strategic questions the regional guidelines will address. These might include matters such as:

- Responding to varied development contexts such as sustainable planning for high growth areas and promoting weaker areas.
- How to develop the strengths of the region.
- How to work with and implement the National Spatial Strategy
- Supporting a strong development plan structure to drive the region forward.
- Rural development frameworks.

- Accommodating the enterprise sector.
- Aligning transportation and land-use planning.

Section 3 will outline the strategic and high level goals for the guidelines from the perspectives of proper planning and sustainable development, promoting socio-economic and cultural development and sustaining and enhancing environmental qualities. These goals and objectives will draw from matters such as:

- | | |
|--|---|
| • Supporting the National Spatial Strategy | • Social Infrastructure |
| • Socio-Economic development | • Restructuring of Rural Areas |
| • Economy and Employment | • Significance and role of particular urban centres e.g. Gateways |
| • Housing | • Cultural Development |
| • Land Use and Settlement Patterns | • Provision of and access to services |
| • Transportation | • Public transport initiatives` |
| • Water Services Infrastructure | • Natural and cultural heritage. |
| • Waste Management Infrastructure | |

The process of drafting these goals and objectives should attempt to embrace the goals and objectives in the form of an overall “vision statement” that is meaningful, realistic and that will be of use in evaluations of development options later on in the regional planning guidelines.

Part B: Strategic Planning Guidelines for the Region

Part B of the regional planning guideline document will mark a progression from a broad-brush approach to a more specific approach aimed at informing the development plan process.

Section 4 should outline the scope and intent of the regional planning guidelines as a framework, that will, through the development plans, act as a catalyst for sustainable development. This process will then deliver on the overall vision for the region set out in Part A. It might be useful to present an overview of the context the regional guidelines will be dealing with such as:

- The scale of growth anticipated in the region as derived from an analysis of economic prospects, housing requirements and catering for future employment trends and other relevant factors;
- The capacity to accommodate growth as determined by an analysis of land availability, water services and other infrastructural capacity, environmental considerations, transport considerations and other relevant factors.

This section should then present a series of “Proper Planning and Sustainable Development Principles” as relevant to the specific circumstances of each region. These principles also need to be consistent with the approach of the NSS and should flow from the overall goals, objectives and vision for the region presented in Part A and referred to above.

Such principles will, *inter alia*, normally be drawn from the matters outlined below:

Box 1: Suggested Themes for Development Principles

Achieving critical mass to support balanced regional development.	Access to social and cultural infrastructure
Facilitating public transport	Consistency with the wider policy context
Utilising existing capacities	A reasonable approach to strategic planning.
Supporting the enterprise sector	Use of under utilised lands
Facilitating mixed uses	Ensuring timely housing supply
Conserving productive land	Housing affordability
Conservation of the Natural and Cultural Heritage	Natural resource protection and sustainable development
Urban – rural balance	Reducing the need for travel.
Promoting a strong settlement hierarchy	Relative cost of projects
	Urban and rural identity
	Supporting efficient use of residential land

Section 5 takes the scale and nature of future development to be catered for by the regional planning guidelines and presents a small number of different forms in which this development could conceivably proceed. These forms might include approaches based *inter alia* on:

- Continuation of current trends,
- Development roles for different types of urban centres
- Urban and rural balance.

Essentially, this section should try to present different “Strategic Options” in which to envisage the development of the region in the future depending on different policy emphases, different rates of growth and different development scenarios.

Section 6 should assess the strategic options identified in section 5 by reference to (i) the strategic goals and objectives and the development principles referred to earlier. There are a variety of assessment mechanisms available to perform this task. At the end of this section, an emerging preferred option should emerge which will be either one of the strategic options or a combination of two or more options.

The assessment of options must also be integrated with the approach to environmental appraisal contained in these guidance notes.

Section 7 will present the selected option and detail its implications in terms of population, housing, transportation, social and physical infrastructure, natural and cultural heritage and economic development. Close attention should also be paid to

including more detailed recommendations that flow from the strategy as an integral part of this section and the strategy itself.

It will also be necessary to include a single map that summarises the strategy and its overall approach. Examples in this regard include the strategy map for the Strategic Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area and the Regional maps in the National Spatial Strategy.

Section 8, concentrating on implementation, monitoring and review actions should ideally set out a template, including a timeframe for integrating the approach of the regional planning guidelines with the development plan processes of the local authorities. The section should also contain detail on supporting actions at government and private sector levels.

Finally, it will normally be useful to prepare technical appendices as a separate document giving access to key background analyses and inputs such as from public consultation exercises.