

Similar spatial considerations are set out for other key areas of infrastructure such as energy and communications. In particular, the gateways must be a focus for the type of public and private investment needed to give them the capacity to drive national and regional development.

How will the Strategy work?

To achieve its objectives the Strategy will have to be driven forward. Structures and mechanisms to integrate the Strategy into planning and activities at government, departmental, state agency, regional and local levels are being put in place. The purpose of this is to ensure that it shapes the spatial aspects of public sector planning, policies and programmes.

The Minister for the Environment and Local Government will lead the Strategy's implementation. The Strategy will also be rolled out through regional and local authorities, starting with the preparation and adoption of regional planning guidelines.

Integrated planning frameworks will be put in place to set the foundations for the process of strengthening, consolidating and developing new and existing gateways and hubs.

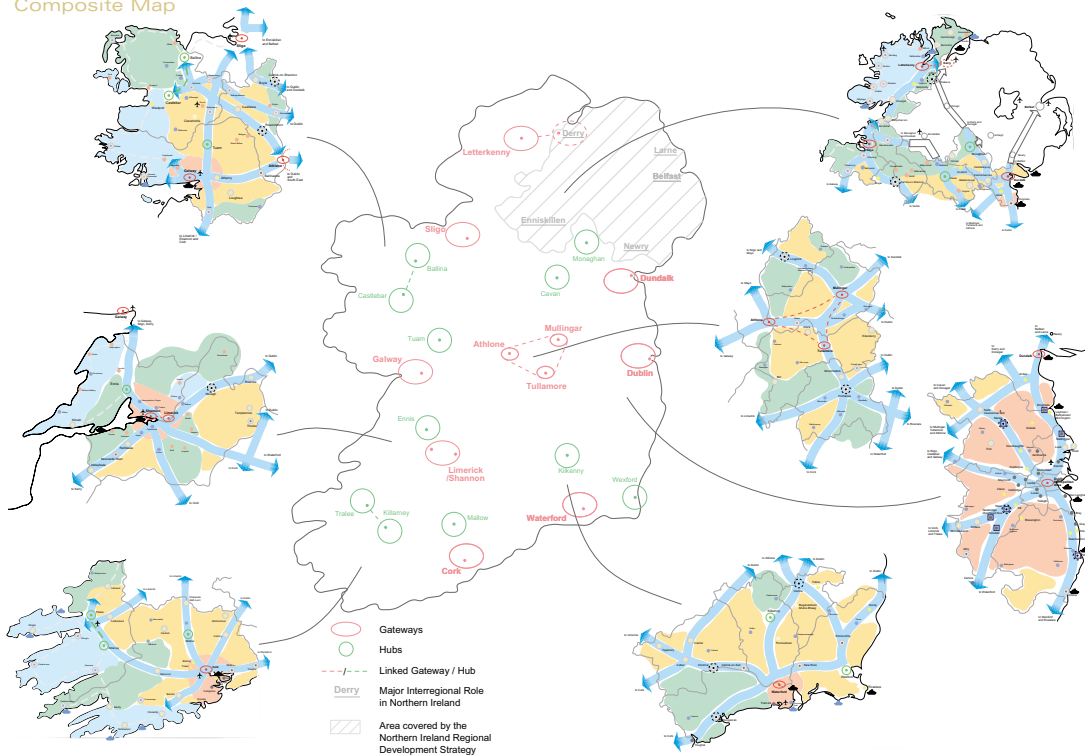
Implementation of the National Spatial Strategy will fall into three phases.

2003: The foundations for implementing the NSS will be laid. The NSS will be a key input to the 2003 mid-term review of the National Development Plan.

2003-2006: The process of mobilising local interests and integrating the NSS approach into various plans and programmes will be completed.

Post 2006: The implementation process will continue with the benefits of the Strategy in regional development terms becoming increasingly apparent.

Composite Map



Finding out more

Copies of the Strategy have been sent to all libraries and local authorities in the country. It can be purchased from the **Government Sales Office, Sun Alliance House, Molesworth Street, Dublin 2.**

The Strategy and previous background papers are also available on the internet at www.irishspatialstrategy.ie

The Strategy can be downloaded free of charge.

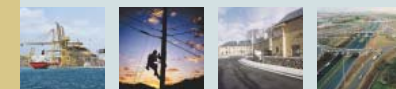
Copies of this guide are available from the **Department of the Environment and Local Government, Spatial Planning Unit, Custom House, Dublin 1, Tel: (01) 888 2000 or LoCall: 1890 20 20 21.**

The National Spatial Strategy

2002 - 2020

People, Places and Potential

PLACES TO LIVE GOOD PLANNING WILL BE ESSENTIAL TO MANAGE IRELAND'S GROWING POPULATION AND SIMULTANEOUSLY SUPPORT A BALANCED ECONOMY AND A HIGH QUALITY OF LIFE. PLACES TO WORK JOBS AND PEOPLE CAN BE BROUGHT CLOSER BUT ONLY WITHIN A STRONGER STRUCTURE OF CITIES, TOWNS AND RURAL AREAS. PEOPLES QUALITY OF LIFE QUALITY OF LIFE IS INCREASINGLY IMPORTANT, NOT ONLY TO PEOPLE BUT THE COMPETITIVENESS OF PLACES AND GOOD PLANNING IS A KEY INSTRUMENT TO DELIVER THIS. GOOD PLANNING BRINGS PEOPLE AND JOBS OTHER ACTIVITIES CLOSER - WITHIN A STRUCTURE OF STRENGTHENED CITIES, ENABLING RURAL AREAS TO PLAY TO THEIR STRENGTHS. EFFICIENT TRANSPORT - PUBLIC AND PRIVATE. GETTING THINGS DONE THE IMPORTANCE OF HAVING GOOD AND INTEGRATED PLANS AT NATIONAL REGIONAL AND LOCAL LEVELS AND COMMUNICATION BETWEEN PUBLIC, LOCAL AUTHORITIES, DEPARTMENTS AND AGENCIES AND THE PRIVATE SECTOR.



Summary Guide

Designed: www.eldog.ie



Unbalanced development will continue unless we change

The pace of development in Ireland over the last decade has been remarkable. But progress has been uneven, with some areas developing faster than others. This has led to rapid development and congestion in some places, but underdevelopment in others. Patterns of unbalanced development could continue and worsen, posing increasing threats to the competitiveness of Ireland's economy, the quality of our environment and most of all, the quality of people's lives.

The National Spatial Strategy offers a new approach to planning for the future development of the country at national, regional and local level.

A commitment to act

The National Spatial Strategy is a 20-year planning framework for all parts of Ireland. It aims to achieve a better balance of social, economic and physical development between regions. Its focus is on the relationship between people and the places where they live and work. The Strategy seeks ways to unlock potential for progress, growth and development in a more balanced way across Ireland, supported by more effective planning.

Balanced regional development is fundamental to the programme for Government. The commitment to prepare the spatial strategy was included in the National Development Plan 2000 – 2006.

Spatial explained

The word "spatial" sounds abstract but relates to something very familiar – the area or space around us. Spatial planning is about the physical space we occupy - the space our houses are built on, space in urban and rural areas, the space in which our workplaces are located and the space taken up by roads, infrastructure and amenities.

Spatial planning seeks to plan more coherently for the use of those spaces to make Ireland's economy stronger, our environment better and peoples' lives easier. For example, bringing together the location of houses, amenities, shops, employment and transport in a given area and in the right way can dramatically enhance people's access to the services they need. It also enhances the attractiveness of the area for investment, business activity and progress.

Relevant trends

- The State's population is growing; we need to start planning strategically now for a population that is likely to increase by half a million over the next 20 years, with a possibility that it could rise by significantly more than that
- On current trends, over three quarters of the State's population growth could take place in, or in areas adjoining, the greater Dublin area
- The number of cars using our roads could double
- Commuting distances are increasing.

These trends indicate that the distribution of economic progress could continue to be unbalanced with major consequences for the economy, the environment and people's quality of life. Greater distance between people and their work, greater reliance on the private car as the main means of transport, more time spent in the car and less time for leisure and other activities all impact negatively on quality of life. Effective spatial planning will set Ireland on a different path.

Core messages of the NSS

The NSS has five core messages:

– *A wider range of work opportunities:* - The greater Dublin area has had a key role in Ireland's growing prosperity. But instead of trying to stop Dublin's growth and risk damaging Ireland's development as a whole, we need to sustain Dublin's role as an engine of the economy. At the same time we must strengthen the drawing power of other areas to emulate the economic role of Dublin and achieve a better spread of investment and work opportunities across the country. In this way the NSS can deliver better quality of life by bringing people, jobs and services closer to each other.

– *A better quality of life:* - Quality of life is increasingly important to people. It adds to the attractiveness and competitiveness of places. People want to spend less time travelling long distances or in traffic and more time at home with their families or enjoying leisure activities.

– *Better places to live in:* - The NSS is a national planning framework which aims to ensure that our cities, towns and rural areas develop in a way that meets the economic and social needs of our growing population, while we protect the environment for our own and future generations.

– *Effective Urban and Rural Planning:* - We need to rewire, consolidate and develop Ireland's cities and towns, keeping them as physically compact and public transport friendly as possible, while seeking to achieve the highest quality of design in new development and refurbishment. In addition to that, the NSS seeks to sustain, support and renew rural communities.

– *Getting things done:* - If the strategy is to work, county and city development plans of local authorities, regional planning guidelines and the plans of state agencies and infrastructure providers must be consistent with the spatial strategy. Measures are being put in place to achieve this.

Who will benefit from the NSS

– *The Nation:* - The NSS is a broad framework for use in the planning of investment by the public and private sectors. This will help to inform the future planning and the day-to-day activities of public and private agencies. That includes the plans and activities of those involved in providing infrastructure such as roads, public transport, energy and communications links. A clear national level framework for spatial development will help the international marketing of Ireland for investment. It builds up the confidence of investors in the future prospects of various parts of Ireland.

– *The Regions:* - The NSS will enable every part of the country to grow to its potential. The Strategy seeks to enhance the performance of strategically placed engines of growth or "gateways". This will create the conditions – by drawing together people, business activity, services, infrastructure and amenities – necessary to drive economic growth and contribute to more balanced patterns of development across Ireland. Other towns, villages and rural areas will draw strength from, contribute to and complement the gateways.

– *Local areas:* - Establishing "engines of growth" regionally must be partnered by strengthening the structure and roles of other towns and rural areas, if balanced regional development is to be achieved. This means two things:

- (1) strengthening the county town and other town structure
and
- (2) ensuring that the strengths and resources of rural areas in the agricultural, enterprise, tourism, local services and other sectors are harnessed and developed to offer a viable future for rural people.

What's in the NSS

The National Development Plan identified Dublin, Cork, Limerick/Shannon, Galway and Waterford as existing gateways. The NSS affirms that we must continue to support and encourage the development of these cities as engines of growth. Building on the growing strength of Cork, Limerick/Shannon, Galway and Waterford, offers the most immediate prospects of making a strong start to the process of achieving more balanced regional development.

New Gateways

Four new national level gateways are identified. The new gateways include Dundalk and Sligo. In addition, Letterkenny/(Derry), and Athlone/Tullamore/Mullingar, will act as "linked" gateways. A linked gateway requires two or more strong towns to work in partnership to promote economic and social development in their region. The new gateways will require a high standard of infrastructure and services to fulfil their national level role.

Hubs

The NSS identifies nine, strategically located, medium sized hubs. These will support and be supported by the gateways and will link out to wider rural areas. The hubs identified include Cavan, Ennis, Kilkenny, Mallow, Monaghan, Tuam and Wexford. In a similar way to the linked gateways the NSS also proposes that Ballina and Castlebar and Tralee and Killarney act as linked hubs working together to promote regional development in their areas.

Other Towns

Many other county and larger sized towns in Ireland are critical elements in the structure for realising balanced regional development, acting as a focus for strengthening their own local areas.

The role of gateways acting at the national level, together with hubs acting at the regional and county levels needs to be partnered by the county towns and other larger towns as a focus for business, residential, service and amenity functions.

Rural areas

Many rural areas are undergoing profound changes due, for example, to the economic restructuring of agriculture or to the influence of nearby urban areas. The NSS outlines measures through which rural potential and alternative employment can be developed. These measures build upon local strengths in agriculture, enterprise, tourism, local services, land and marine based natural resources.

The NSS also identifies an important need to support the role of rural towns and villages at the local level, as a focus for investment, economic activity and housing development, which will at the same time support the vitality of wider rural areas. This creates the option of alternative employment for people who may have been employed full time in agriculture in the past, enabling them to remain in rural areas, but with access to employment in nearby towns and villages.

Transport and infrastructure framework

Unlike National Development Plans, the NSS is not an infrastructural investment plan. However, the NSS is a planning framework supporting the co-ordination of investment to under-pin the future development of the new spatial structure.

For example, the national spatial structure will be supported by a national transport framework to facilitate planning for an improved network of roads and public transport services, enhancing access and connections throughout the country. This framework will be internationally connected through key points such as airports and ports with links to Northern Ireland, the UK, EU and the wider global economy.