

## 2 | Overall Strategy



### 2.1.1 Vision

It is the Vision of Bray Town Council to provide in full for the development needs of Bray in accordance with the principle of sustainable development, so that Bray becomes a thriving community, sustaining a high quality of life for all, while its valuable environment and heritage is safeguarded.

## 2.1 Strategic Vision and Policy Objectives for the Bray Development Plan

The Strategic Vision and Strategic Policy Objectives of the Bray Development Plan (2005-2011) provide the overall strategy of Bray Town Council for the proper planning and sustainable development of Bray for the period up to 2011. The Vision and Policy Objectives are framed within the demographic, socio-economic, and strategic and local planning contexts within which the town's future development is mapped out.

### 2.1.2 Strategic Policy Objectives

It is the policy of Bray Town Council to:

- promote Bray as a regional centre of economic, social, cultural and ecological growth;
- ensure an adequate supply of zoned and serviced land is provided, to meet anticipated development needs;
- consolidate the urban form of the town through:
  - promoting the use of under-utilised physical and social infrastructure via the redevelopment of brownfield and derelict sites;
  - promoting a more intensive use of existing residential, community and industrial stock, via the promotion of increased densities, 'Living Over The Shop' (LOTS), infill housing and development of employment zoned areas;
  - regeneration of declining residential and industrial areas.
- improve the economic competitiveness of Bray through:
  - increasing the quantity and quality of retail development, particularly within the town centre;
  - facilitating the expansion and diversification of the existing employment base via the development of industry, commerce and other economic activity.
- retain the town's population through providing a sufficient amount of affordable residential units in the town, and facilitating the development of infrastructure, services, employment and social opportunities to meet the needs of the population;
- improve the image and attractiveness of Bray Town Centre through improving the appearance, amenity, accessibility and shopping environment;
- reduce the demand for travel and support the development of sustainable modes of transport;
- promote sustainable land use and transportation objectives through promoting the development of neighbourhood centres and mixed use developments, and through increasing accessibility to public transportation and integration between transport modes;
- provide for the orderly and timely provision of public infrastructure and facilities, including transportation and roads, water and sewerage, and community and recreational facilities;

- further develop the tourism and recreational potential of the town;
- preserve and enhance the natural, architectural and archaeological heritage of the town;
- improve the natural and built environment of the town;
- protect and enhance the quality of residential amenity;
- promote a more inclusive and fairer society;
- the Council, in consultation with the Office of Public Works, will identify those areas of the town prone to flooding which must be reserved for flood protection. Only developments which are consistent with that function will be permitted in these areas.

## 2.2 Demographic and Socio-Economic Context

### 2.2.1 Population

As evidenced by Table 2.1, the population of Bray and its environs has increased significantly since the 1960s. In 2002, the population within the boundaries of Bray Town Council reached 26,244 and the population of the town's environs within the counties of Wicklow and Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown reached 4,707. Since 1996, the environs have witnessed enormous population growth, while the growth within the jurisdiction of Bray Town Council has remained relatively muted. It is projected that the population of both the town and its environs will continue to grow. However due to the lack of available greenfield sites within the boundaries of the Town Council, it is likely that population growth in the environs will continue at a faster rate. Indicative figures estimate that the population of the Town Council area will reach 31,000 by the year 2016.

Table 2.1: Population change in Bray and environs, 1961-2002

	Bray Town Council	Environs*	Total	% Change in Town Council	% Change in Environs
1961	11,688	927	12,615	N/A	N/A
1966	12,699	969	13,902	+8.6	+4.5
1971	14,467	1,374	15,841	+13.9	+41.7
1979**	21,773	389	22,162	+50.5	-71.7
1981	22,853	612	23,358	+5.0	+29.8
1986	24,686	1,417	26,103	+8.0	+131.5
1991	25,096	1,857	26,953	+1.7	+46.8
1996	25,252	2,671	27,923	+0.6	+43.8
2002	26,244	4,707	30,951	+3.9	+76.2

\*Environs comprise parts of the census districts in Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown and Wicklow County.

\*\*Boundary extension

### 2.2.2 Age and Sex

The 2002 census results on the age and sex structure of the town's population indicate that there are slightly more females than males in the town. In addition, the town is witnessing other demographic changes, such as a reduction in the birth rate, an aging population and a reduction in the amount of elderly people residing in the town.

## 2.2.3 Household Structure and Size

Between 1996 and 2002, the number of private households in the town and its environs increased by 1,276 or 14.7%. The figures provided in Table 2.2 indicate that there is a wide variety of different forms of household composition in the town, ranging from one person households, which increased in numbers by 7.4% since 1996, to households comprising two or more family units, which increased by 43.6% during the same period. The figures indicate that there is a growing demand for a variety of different types of residential accommodation, to meet the needs of the wide array of household compositions within the town.

**Table 2.2: Private Household Composition in Bray and environs, 1996-2002**

Household Composition	Number of Households		Change 1996-2002 %
	1996	2002	
One person	1,679	1,804	+7.4
Couple*	1,317	1,619	+22.9
Couple* with children	3,524	3,968	+12.6
Couple* with other persons	115	140	+21.7
Couple* with children and other persons	446	404	-9.4
Lone parent with children	927	1,192	+28.6
Lone parent with children and other persons	168	197	+17.3
Two or more family units	39	56	+43.6
Non-family households	451	562	+24.6
TOTAL	8,666	9,942	+14.7

\*Includes both married and co-habiting couples. Source: Census 2002

Household sizes have dropped significantly in recent years. At present the average household size in Bray is 3.02. Under the 'Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area 2004-2016', household size is projected to decrease to 2.5 by 2016.

## 2.2.4 Employment

The 2002 Census provides figures on the total number of persons, inside and outside the labour force. The labour force consists of persons who are at work, unemployed or seeking regular work for the first time. Those outside the labour force consist mainly of students, persons looking after the home/family and retired persons.

The Census figures for Bray indicate that there are a total of 14,485 persons in the labour force, of which 92% of these are at work. As indicated on Table 2.3, the vast majority of employment in the town is provided in the employers/managers, professional and service sectors.

7.3% of people in the labour force are unemployed. This compares with an overall unemployment rate of 8.8% for the State (these figures are based on 'the principle economic status category' method of calculation).

Table 2.3 Employment in Bray, classified by Sector, 2002

Sector	Percent
Managerial, Professional and Services	74.9
Industry	17.3
Agriculture	0.2
Other	7.6

Source: Census 2002

## 2.3 Strategic Planning Context

The spatial pattern of development in Bray must conform to the strategies outlined in the ‘National Spatial Strategy’ (2002) and the ‘Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area, 2004-2016’. All forms of development must conform with the principles of sustainable development.

### 2.3.1 National Spatial Strategy

The strategic vision for the spatial development of Ireland for the forthcoming twenty years is outlined in the ‘National Spatial Strategy (NSS)’. This Strategy aims to achieve balanced regional development over the country of Ireland within the period up to 2020, in a way that is internationally competitive, socially cohesive and environmentally sustainable.

Under the Strategy, Bray is located within the metropolitan area of the Greater Dublin Area (GDA). The strategic national role of the GDA is to consolidate its area. To facilitate this physical consolidation, the following actions are required:

- Provision of housing and other suitable uses on vacant, derelict and under-utilised land, particularly on areas in or close to public transport corridors and areas with under-utilised physical and social infrastructure.
- Use of the Derelict Sites Act (1991) to assemble fragmented sites and to encourage the relocation to more suitable sites where there is inappropriate land use.
- Ensure the effective use of the existing housing stock, for example by promoting ‘Living over the Shop’ schemes and by seeking opportunities for infill housing.
- Prepare urban design plans in renewal areas, to establish a framework for buildings and public spaces.
- Examine the potential of declining industrial and warehouse estates for re-development for new economic activity.

## 2.3.2 Regional Planning Guidelines, Greater Dublin Area, 2004-2016

It is a policy of the Council to facilitate the implementation of the ‘Regional Planning Guidelines, Greater Dublin Area, 2004-2016’.

The core principles for the sustainable development of the GDA, as established in the NSS, are incorporated in the ‘Regional Planning Guidelines, Greater Dublin Area, 2004-2016’. These Guidelines provide a long-term strategic planning framework for the development of the Greater Dublin Area. Under these Guidelines, the strategic vision for the future development of the GDA is used as a primary starting point:

“The City-Region is to excel as an international competitor where all areas located within the Greater Dublin Area collectively contribute to its success and in turn draw their individual strengths from the City-Region.”

The settlement strategy for the Greater Dublin Area includes a strategy for the Metropolitan area, in which Bray is located, and the Hinterland area. As outlined in the Guidelines “development within the Metropolitan Area will be consolidated, with a much-enhanced multi-modal transport system. Outside Dublin City Centre, towns will be consolidated with an increase in overall residential development densities particularly in proximity to public transport corridors.”

Under the Guidelines Bray is designated a ‘Metropolitan Consolidation Town’, which will be a main growth area within the Metropolitan Area. The Guidelines advise that these towns should be developed to a relatively large scale as part of the strategy for the Metropolitan Area involving its consolidation. Table 2.4 indicates the size of catchments for services and employment appropriate to Metropolitan Consolidation Towns, such as Bray.

**Table 2.4: Settlement Hierarchy for Metropolitan Consolidation Towns (RPG, 2004)**

Population Range	Accessibility	Typical distance from higher-level settlement	Economic Function
40,000 to 100,000	Quality Bus Corridors/ Rail/ Major radial routes	Close to City Centre	Main attractor for major investment. Strong international marketing.

Under the Guidelines, Greystones has been designated a ‘Large Growth Town’. Due to the strong inter-urban relationship and dynamism that exists between the towns of Bray and Greystones, they constitute a ‘Primary Dynamic Cluster’. The longer-term goal of the Guidelines is that the cluster should build in a mutually dependent way, so that the amenities and economies of the whole cluster are greater than the sum of the parts.

In summary, the development approach put forth in the Guidelines, as relevant to Bray, is one which calls for an increase in overall residential densities with a high priority on the creation of elegant and exciting urban places. The approach also includes the location of quality employment, residential developments and amenities in proximity to each other in order to reduce the need to travel and the dependence on private transport. The Guidelines emphasise the need to provide adequate transportation and services infrastructure; social, community and cultural facilities; and to ensure the preservation and protection of the environment and its amenities, including the archaeological, architectural and natural heritage.

### 2.3.3 Sustainable Development

It is important to note that all planning and development is obliged to conform to principles of sustainable development, as outlined in documents such as ‘Sustainable Development: A Strategy for Ireland’ (DoE, 1997) and ‘Making Ireland’s Development Sustainable’ (DoELG, 2002). Sustainable development has been defined as development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. In essence, it is about present and future generations all over the world being afforded the opportunity to enjoy economic prosperity, social progress and a high quality environment. Sustainable development must encompass economic and social development, along with environmental protection, in an integrated manner and on the basis that it is a process in which these three objectives are addressed on an equal footing and are mutually reinforcing. Citizen participation is a key factor in the achievement of these goals. In applying these principles, the quality of life of present and future generations can be improved by:

- keeping the economy competitive in a rapidly changing world;
- providing a strong basis for further economic prosperity;
- pursuing greater eco-efficiency;
- bringing about a fairer and more inclusive Ireland;
- promoting and securing a high quality environment;
- contributing to sustainable development at the global level.

These measures must be embedded in strategic land use and social, economic and environmental development policies.

From the point of view of strategic spatial planning, sustainable development will, among other things mean:

- maximising access to and encouraging the use of public transport, cycling and walking;
- developing sustainable urban and rural settlement patterns and communities to reduce distance from employment, services and leisure facilities and to make better use of existing and future investments in public services, including public transport;
- promoting cost-effective provision of public services like roads, drainage, waste management facilities, lighting, public amenities and schools;
- contributing to the evolution of socially integrated communities in both urban and rural areas;
- minimising the consumption of non-renewable resources like soils, groundwater and agricultural land;
- avoiding adverse impacts on environmental features such as landscapes, habitats and protected species, river catchments, the maritime environment and cultural heritage;
- ensuring that construction design is of a high quality and appropriate to the scale and context of its surroundings.

## 2.4 Local Planning Context

### 2.4.1 Factors Impacting on Development

Identification of the main strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats that are impacting on Bray's current and future development is vital in order to establish the local context within which the Plan is prepared.

#### Strengths

- Bray is located in the metropolitan area of the GDA and thereby yields benefits in terms of its enhanced economic competitiveness and from its proximity to a variety of infrastructural, social and cultural facilities that are available in the Dublin area. In addition, it is the largest town in County Wicklow and it is the principal service centre for the north of the county.
- The town is easily accessible to Dublin and County Wicklow by good transportation links and services, in the form of the N11/M11, DART, Dublin Bus and Bus Eireann services.
- The community/voluntary sector in the town is active and strong, comprising a multitude of community and voluntary groups. Volunteering benefits civil society as an expression of active citizenship.
- The area comprising Bray Head, the Seafront and the Esplanade is rich in natural and architectural heritage. The area provides an important economic, recreational, natural and historic amenity, which is enjoyed by residents and visitors alike.
- The town and its environs have a large population of 31,000, which is projected to continue increasing in the forthcoming years. This large population ensures the future provision of services and facilities within the town.
- The town is well served by a wide variety of leisure and recreation facilities, such as the Mermaid Centre, Bray Cineplex, the Leisure Bowl, National Sealife Centre, Star Leisure Complex, Peoples Park, Ballywaltrim Recreation area and the River Dargle. In addition, the future development of the Bray Swimming Pool will significantly improve the range and quality of public leisure facilities.
- The presence of Ardmore Studios means that Bray is an important centre for film-making.

#### Weaknesses

- There is an insufficient supply of houses to match demand. This has resulted in upward pressure on house prices, forcing the house-buying public to locate outside the town.
- Bray is designated a Major Town Centre in the GDA, however the quantum and quality of the town's retail floorspace lags significantly behind other Major Town Centres. Unless this problem is addressed, the leakage of comparison expenditure<sup>1</sup> from the town will continue.
- There is a lack of employment opportunities in the town to cater for the needs of the Bray and North Wicklow community.
- The future development of the town is physically constrained by the lack of green field sites available in the town and by the pattern of the town's existing urban form and buildings.
- Increased car use, a lack of routes across the river, and a shortfall of car parking facilities has resulted in traffic congestion.

<sup>1</sup> Comparison goods include items such as clothing, footwear, furniture, household equipment, medical and pharmaceutical products and educational and recreational equipment and accessories.

## Opportunities

- As the functional urban area of the town extends significantly beyond the existing boundaries of the Town Council, into the jurisdictions of Wicklow and Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown County Councils, the opportunity exists to extend the planning and administrative boundaries of the Town Council. This would enable the land use and infrastructure planning of Bray's functional area to be dealt with in a more integrated, strategic and holistic manner.
- The impending development of the Golf Club Lands and Florentine Centre will contribute enormously to the success of the town. In particular, the development of the Golf Club Lands will yield significant benefits for the town in terms of alleviating the enormous housing pressure within the town and in facilitating the provision of expanded employment, retail, leisure, social and cultural opportunities for the town's residents.
- The opportunity exists to unlock the development potential of under-utilised sites around the town, such as the Herbert Road car park and the Health Centre on the Killarney Road.
- Greater consideration could be given to the needs of disabled and elderly people during the design and planning of the built environment.
- The opportunity exists to realise the full amenity and development potential of the Seafront, harbour and river areas of the town, so that full benefit is gained from these important, yet under-utilised assets.
- The general appearance of the town centre could be improved through quality urban design and landscaping. This would enhance the vitality and viability of the area.
- In order to solve the waste management crisis currently affecting the town, the opportunity exists to improve recycling facilities and to encourage the greater uptake of recycling practices among the town's residents.
- The water quality of the beach and harbour area should be improved and the Council should aim to secure a Blue Flag.
- The image of the town can be improved. This would translate in economic and social gains for the town.
- The opportunity exists to improve the permeability of the town through improving links, for example, between residential areas and commercial/employment/leisure facilities. This would enhance the permeability and legibility of the urban living environment.
- The opportunity exists to incorporate a land use element of retail warehousing in suitable locations within the town.
- The opportunity exists to provide employment facilities to cater for the employment needs of the Bray and North Wicklow communities.

## Threats

- Rapid population growth has resulted in increased pressure on existing physical and social infrastructure. The strain being experienced by the town may stunt its long-term social, economic and cultural development.
- Historically, the economy of the Seafront area is dependent on tourist trade. In recent years, the amount of long-stay tourists visiting the town has reduced and this has negatively impacted on the viability of the hotel industry. Unless the area faces up to the challenge confronting it, the future vitality and viability of the area is put at risk.
- The uncertain economic outlook facing the nation has far reaching implications for the future development of the town. Development progress will be retarded if the national economy experiences a down turn.
- The administrative boundaries of the town do not reflect the functional area which the town realistically services. This impedes the ability of Bray Town Council to plan the future development of the town in a holistic and strategic manner.

In essence, the points raised in the above analysis indicate that although the town has numerous strengths, largely associated with its location within the GDA, its large and growing population and its abundance of rich natural and built heritage, the town is suffering from a number of problems that have surfaced in recent years as a result of the economic and population growth which the GDA has experienced. These main problems include a lack of affordable residential accommodation, increased traffic congestion, and increased pressure on social and physical infrastructure. Other problems that are particular to Bray relate to the continued leakage of retail revenue as shoppers continue to travel outside the town for comparison goods and the relative failure of the town's tourist industry to attract enough long-stay tourists to make the hotel industry viable. Addressing these problems, which are stunting the sustainable development of the town are key determining factors in the formulation of policies in the Development Plan.

### 2.4.2 Town Function and Role

The role of Bray in the context of the broad settlement structure for the GDA is considered, with the following conclusions:

- Its location within the metropolitan area of the GDA means that it is a centre of regional importance. This means that the town must consolidate its future development in a way that accommodates the further development of business, residential accommodation and the provision of services.
- Bray is the administrative, retail/commercial, educational and transportation hub of County Wicklow. The town is ranked in a position of primary importance at the top of the County Wicklow Settlement Hierarchy as a 'Metropolitan Area Settlement'.
- Bray is a large residential centre, providing a commuting base for a large number of workers who travel to Dublin for employment.
- Bray is an important employment centre, providing a valuable local and sub-regional source of employment.
- Bray is a seaside and tourist town, and a centre for leisure and recreational activities.
- Bray is a heritage town, rich in natural and built heritage.
- Bray provides a gateway to the County of Wicklow.