

5 | Economic Development & Tourism



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5.1 Vision

To build on Bray's distinctive qualities so that it develops a dynamic, regionally competitive economy that creates wealth and provides quality sustainable work opportunities for all the residents of the town and its environs.

5.2 Context

- National Spatial Strategy 2002-2020
- Outlook: The Ten Year Strategic Plan for County Wicklow (Wicklow County Development Board, 2002)
- A Platform for Change: DTO Strategy 2000-2016
- National Development Plan 2000-2006
- The Mid-Term Evaluation of the National Development Plan and Community Support Framework for Ireland, 2000-2006
- Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area, 2004-2016

5.3 Strategy

Bray has a strong and expanding economic base, which is grounded on the town's competitive economic and social infrastructure.

The town's competitive advantages include its strategic and accessible location, in close proximity to Dublin City Centre, a well-developed transportation network, a large resident population and workforce, an IDA business park on the Southern Cross and an attractive urban environment. In addition, the town has a well-established economic base comprising a large number of small to medium size enterprises, a wide range of commercial activities, an increasing number of 'high-tech' industries, and a concentration of manufacturing and warehousing activity in the southern part of the town.

Consistent with figures for the Greater Dublin Area (GDA), most employment in the town is provided in the employers/managers, professional and service sectors. The Council recognises the important contribution that service and office based industry makes to the economy of the town and will seek to provide additional opportunities for the development of these sectors. While not as significant as before, the manufacturing industry will remain an important employment base in the town. However, there will be a need to provide for the replacement of existing manufacturing industry producing commodity goods with high-tech and service industries. Although still important, the economic contribution of the tourist industry has reduced in recent years.

Bray has a labour force that exceeds the jobs available in the town. The pattern of commuting to the city is well established. From the viewpoint of economic and settlement sustainability, it would be highly desirable that more jobs are created in the town.

The priority for economic policy in the GDA is outlined in the 'Regional Planning Guidelines for the GDA, 2004-2016' as follows:

- attracting and developing new high-tech manufacturing and internationally traded services sector inward investment;
- enhancing the scale and competitiveness of indigenous firms;
- expanding the research and technological development capacity of the regional economy as a whole.

To promote the economic development of the town in line with the above policies, it is the strategy of the Council to:

- ensure the provision of adequately zoned and serviced industrial and commercial sites, at high quality locations, which are attractive to industry;
- promote the delivery of a high quality built environment to ensure the attractiveness of the town to employers;
- provide good educational facilities in appropriate locations;
- encourage and foster local enthusiasm, enterprise and initiative;
- support the speedy implementation of key infrastructural projects, especially those in the transport and communications sector;
- encourage mixed use developments, in which jobs and residences are relatively close, thus encouraging short trips and greater use of walk and cycle modes, while discouraging longer trip lengths and dispersed settlement patterns that result in extensive car use;
- develop the town's capacity for tourism, thereby providing additional employment.

5.4 Policy

5.4.1 Economic Development

It is the policy of the Council to facilitate and encourage the economic development of Bray, in co-operation with the relevant authorities, so that it becomes an economic driver for County and regional success. In order to ensure that current employment levels are safeguarded and the creation of new employment is promoted, the Council will facilitate the provision of employment opportunities at appropriate locations in the town centre, local neighbourhood centres and in C and C1 zoned employment areas. The Council will have regard to sustainable land use and travel patterns, and will particularly favour developments that are well served by public transport facilities.

The Council considers that economic development is important in order to raise the quality of life for the people of Bray. A vibrant economy must be created, to produce employment and wealth for the future, if a cohesive, inclusive and just society is to be achieved.

The large-scale development of additional employment opportunities within the town is stifled by the lack of available land within the jurisdiction of the Town Council. In response to this shortfall of land availability, the Council will promote the intensification of existing land uses to provide additional employment, and will work with adjacent local authorities in order to develop opportunities for the provision of suitable sites in the environs of the town, for additional employment opportunities.

The Council will seek to provide a better balance in the ratio between the number of people who both live and work in Bray, and those who reside in the town and commute to other locations outside the jurisdiction.

5.4.2 Office Development

It is the policy of the Council to encourage and facilitate the provision of office development above commercial premises at appropriate locations in town centre (B1 zone), neighbourhood centre (G zone) and G1 zoned areas. Office development will be permitted at appropriate locations within C and C1 zoned Employment areas.

The development of local or small scale offices in neighbourhood centres (G and G1 zoned areas) can reinforce the existing service function of these centres, as well as create new opportunities for local employment in locations that are accessible to residential areas.

The Council will permit office development in appropriate C and C1 zoned Employment locations that are deemed suitable with regard to sustainable traffic and land-use considerations and which are well served by public transport facilities.

The Council will require all planning applications for large-scale offices to include a Mobility Management Plan - refer to Section 12.13 of 'Chapter 12: Development Control Standards and Guidelines'.

5.4.3 Knowledge-Based Industries

It is the policy of the Council to encourage and facilitate the development of knowledge-based industries and to support and strengthen the capability and quality of research and development functions.

The Council recognises that Bray can benefit from the development of a competitive, innovative, knowledge-based economy where there are plentiful employment opportunities and a population equipped to grasp them. Engineering and high technology type businesses, such as those found in ICT and biotechnology can contribute to the town's competitiveness by promoting innovation and improved business practices. The Council will promote developments, which have benefits in terms of inward investment, research and development (R&D), enterprise and the Information Society¹, so that the innovation capacity of the town is promoted.

5.4.4 Bray Enterprise Centre

It is the policy of the Council to facilitate the development of an Enterprise Centre in an appropriate location, on either C or C1 zoned land, or on the Golf Club Lands, in association with other agencies and in the context of local need.

The development of an Enterprise Centre in Bray will provide a valuable facility for the development of economic and community enterprise, and thereby employment opportunities. The centre shall include an on-site childcare facility.

¹ Information Society is the term that is used to capture the increasing contemporary influence of information and communication technologies.

5.4.5 Small and Medium Enterprises

It is the policy of the Council to encourage the use of industrial space for small and medium enterprises. The Council will require the provision of incubator/starter units in all major planning applications on C zoned Employment land.

The provision of small-scale incubator and workshop space increases the capacity of the local economy to spur new enterprise and entrepreneurial activity and ensures a balance in the economic base of the town.

5.4.6 Tourism

It is the policy of the Council to build up Bray's capacity for tourism and to develop the potential of undeveloped resources, so that the town becomes a major tourist destination. The Council will direct appropriate tourism related development to the Seafront and to other suitable locations within the town, subject to the protection of residential amenity and environmental quality.

Tourism makes a positive contribution to the economic and social wellbeing of Bray. The town has a very strong tourism resource base, comprising rich natural and built heritage, primarily associated with the Seafront and Bray Head area of the town. Although historically Bray has been a major tourist destination, the number of long-stay visitors to the town has reduced. Despite this, the town remains an important destination for a large number of day-trippers who travel from Dublin and County Wicklow to enjoy the tourist resources and leisure facilities of the town. In addition, it is important that Bray continues to provide a sufficient amount of short-stay overnight accommodation for the needs of visitors who wish to stay in the town, due to its advantageous location as a 'gateway to the Garden of Ireland' and its accessibility to Dublin city.

In co-operation with the appropriate agencies, the Council will seek to promote Bray as a tourist destination for day-trippers, who come to sample the rich natural and historic heritage of the town through their participation in a wide variety of recreational and leisure activities, such as walking, swimming, fishing, boating, canoeing and visiting amusement arcades. The Council recognises that the Seafront and Bray Head area is the primary focus for tourist activity and will accordingly continue to promote and enhance this area as the primary tourist centre of the town. Specific objectives relating to the development of appropriate tourist based initiatives in the Seafront are outlined in 'Chapter 11: Bray Seafront Area'.

The Council will support the development of other areas, such as the Dargle River, where significant potential for tourism based development exists but has not developed yet, particularly with regard to opportunities for the development of fishing activities.

In order to draw visitors to the retail and commercial centre of the town, the Council will facilitate the development of suitable tourism based facilities in the town centre.

Tourism related development will only be permitted in appropriate locations where the proposed development will not have a detrimental effect on the character, quality and amenity of the natural and built environment.

5.4.7 The Film Industry

It is the policy of the Council to facilitate proposals for the further development of the film industry in Bray.

Bray is an important centre for film making, based largely on the presence of Ardmore Studios. The industry contributes significantly to direct and indirect employment and also contributes to the international image of Bray. The Council will encourage the on-going development of the industry in Bray.