

# 21

# Spatial Planning and National Roads

Guidelines for Planning Authorities

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Comhshaol, Pobal agus Rialtas Áitiúil  
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## Ministers' Foreword

Ireland's national roads network has been transformed in recent years as a result of sustained high levels of investment on behalf of the taxpayer. The benefits of such investment have become clearly evident around the country in terms of reducing travel times, improving road safety, offering sustainable travel options and reducing congestion.

Investment in transport generally and roads in particular improves the connections between places, whether urban or rural. Cities, towns and rural areas are therefore benefiting from ongoing investment that also enables proper planning and sustainable development in support of the aims and objectives of the National Spatial Strategy, Regional Planning Guidelines and local plans.

Improved transport infrastructure between cities, towns and rural areas enables planning authorities to refocus on the importance of city and town centres and other strategic locations identified in the National Spatial Strategy and Regional Planning Guidelines and plans at local level and in a plan-led manner in overall terms.

In delivering a plan-led approach, the key message of these guidelines is that investment in the capacity of national roads must be protected through appropriate policies and local planning and collaboration between planning authorities and the National Roads Authority.

On the other hand, these guidelines are not designed to prevent investment and development at locations on or in the vicinity of national roads – rather that development is guided to the most appropriate locations by ensuring that transport and land-use planning considerations are taken into account at the development plan stage.

The views of the public and the various bodies who made submissions on the consultation draft of these guidelines have been considered in the finalisation of this document.



*Phil Hogan*

Phil Hogan T.D.,  
Minister for Environment,  
Community and  
Local Government



*Jan O'Sullivan*

Jan O'Sullivan T.D.,  
Minister for Housing and  
Planning



*Leo Varadkar*

Leo Varadkar, T.D.,  
Minister for Transport,  
Tourism and Sport



*Alan Kelly*

Alan Kelly, T.D.,  
Minister for Public and  
Commuter Transport

R136  
Baile Eoin  
BALLYOWEN  
Baile Ánann  
CAN

*Oth Cliath*  
DUBLIN  
*Baile Phámar*  
PALMERSTON  
M50  
N4



# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### Key Messages

- These guidelines have been prepared in the context of the delivery of the National Spatial Strategy and actions identified in Smarter Travel, A Sustainable Transport Future, A New Transport Policy for Ireland 2009-2020.
- The guidelines set out planning policy considerations relating to development affecting national roads (including motorways, national primary and national secondary roads) outside the 50/60 kmh speed limit zones for cities, towns and villages.
- These guidelines have been developed by following a number of key principles and aim to facilitate a well-informed, integrated and consistent approach that affords maximum support for the goal of achieving and maintaining a safe and efficient network of national roads in the broader context of sustainable development strategies, thereby facilitating continued economic growth and development throughout the country.

### 1.1 Purpose of the Guidelines

These guidelines set out planning policy considerations relating to development affecting national primary and secondary roads, including motorways and associated junctions, outside the 50-60 kmh speed limit zones for cities, towns and villages.

The guidelines replace the document, *Policy and Planning Framework for Roads*, published by the Department in 1985, supplement other policy guidance on roads related matters in other Ministerial guidelines in relation to retail planning and sustainable rural housing and replace the National Roads Authority policy statement on national roads published in May 2006

The guidelines, which have been prepared in consultation with representatives from local authorities, the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport, and the National Roads Authority, will assist road and planning authorities, the National Roads Authority, National Transport Authority and providers of public transport in relation to their involvement in the overall planning process.

The guidelines are of practical value to landowners/ developers making submissions on development plans/local area plans, applicants for planning permission, their agents and the wider public who interact with the planning process with respect to roads and transportation issues generally.

In this document, the Planning and Development Acts 2000 to 2010 are generally referred to throughout as “the Planning Act” or “the Act”, as appropriate, while the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 to 2010 are referred to as “the Planning and Development Regulations”.

## 1.2 Status of the Guidelines

The Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government has issued these guidelines under section 28 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended). Planning authorities and An Bord Pleanála are required to have regard to the guidelines in the performance of their functions under the Planning Acts.

## 1.3 Function of National Roads

National roads play a key role within Ireland’s overall transport system and in the country’s economic, social and physical development. The primary purpose of the national road network is to provide strategic transport links between the main centres of population and employment, including key international gateways such as the main ports and airports, and to provide access between all regions.

A modern economy requires a world-class road transport network that is sustainable from an economic, social and environmental perspective. Better national roads improve access to the regions, enhancing their attractiveness for inward investment and new employment opportunities and contribute to enhanced competitiveness by reducing transport costs.

The Government places a high degree of importance on the provision and enhancement of Ireland’s transport infrastructure systems. Considerable investment has been provided by Government to transform the network of national roads to the highest international standards particularly through the completion of major inter-urban corridors between Dublin and the National Spatial Strategy Gateways and between the Republic and Northern Ireland along the Dublin – Belfast corridor. Having made this investment and with future investment being focused on public transport, it is therefore important that the efficiency, capacity and safety of the national road network is maintained.

However in recent years, increasing population and car ownership rates, changes in lifestyle and employment, and improvements in the quality of the road network have

also contributed to the unsustainable outward expansion of urban areas. New retail and employment developments tend to be attracted to motorways and national road corridors, particularly junctions and can lead to dispersed and car dependent forms of development.

Such patterns of development are uneconomic and also lead to increases in trip distance making it difficult to develop attractive public transport, cycling and walking networks while also having serious implications for the viability and sustainability of town and city centres. Government policy no longer proposes to cater for the type of unlimited road traffic growth driven by the scenario outlined above. Smarter Travel: A New Transport Policy for Ireland 2009 - 2020 sets out Government policy objectives with respect to promoting a significant modal shift from private transport to public transport and sustainable transport modes over the period up to 2020.

#### **1.4 Strategic Traffic**

Strategic traffic, in the context of national roads, primarily comprises major inter-urban and inter-regional traffic, whether HGV, car, public transport bus services or other public service vehicles, which contributes to socio-economic development, the transportation of goods and products, especially traffic to/from the main ports and airports, both freight and passenger related.

In particular, any local transport function of national road bypasses and relief roads in respect of the urban areas they pass through is, and must continue to be, secondary to the role of these roads in catering for strategic traffic. Therefore, the planning system must ensure that the strategic traffic function of national roads is maintained by limiting the extent of development that would give rise to the generation of short trip traffic on national roads or alternatively by ensuring that the trip demand from future development will primarily be catered for on the non-national network.

Accordingly, there is an onus on developers, and local authorities in their role as planning and road authorities, to devise and implement local transport solutions for traffic/trip demand generated by local development so that the latter requirements can be catered for in a manner that is complementary to and consistent with the strategic transport function of the national road network.

## 1.5 Key Principles

Taking account of the above, the following **key principles** have guided the development of these guidelines:

***Land-use and transportation policies are highly interdependent:*** Integrated development and implementation of planning and land-use policies is vital in minimising the need for travel. Where such need for travel arises it is important that it primarily be catered for by usage of public transport, walking and cycling outlined in the Government's Smarter Travel - A Sustainable Transport Future: A New Transport Policy for Ireland 2009-2020, while maintaining the efficiency and intended strategic transport function of national roads.

***Proper planning is central to ensuring road safety:*** The creation of new accesses to and intensification of existing accesses to national roads gives rise to the generation of additional turning movements that introduce additional safety risks<sup>1</sup> to road users. Therefore, from a road safety perspective, planning authorities, the NRA, road authorities and the Road Safety Authority must guard against a proliferation of roadside developments accessing national roads to which speed limits greater than 50-60 kmh apply as part of the overall effort to reduce road fatalities and injuries.

***Development should be plan-led:*** The planning process for national roads has taken account of appropriate future development patterns and requirements, including the implications of the National Spatial Strategy and Regional Planning Guidelines, as the NRA has adopted a 20 year design horizon as a basis for traffic capacity requirements. Accordingly, in preparing development and local area plans, planning authorities must assess the trip generation aspects of any land use zoning objectives and how such trip generation is to be catered for, promoting the use of sustainable modes, while protecting the strategic function of the national roads network.

***Development Management is the key to Plan Implementation:*** Future development should be guided by development plans and local area plans prepared in line with these guidelines and such development should achieve high standards in relation to traffic management and design quality.

***Planning Authorities and the National Roads Authority and other public transport bodies must work closely together:*** It is vital that, in the course of preparing plans and assessing planning applications, the relevant planning authority, the National Roads Authority and other statutory bodies with responsibility for transport services and road infrastructure provision work closely together to ensure that future development is guided to suitable locations.

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<sup>1</sup> For example, an analysis of road accident data indicates that approx. 30% (12,747 collisions) of all injury

## 1.6 Regional and Local Roads

These guidelines are focused on planning and the network of national roads. National roads, as well as regional and local roads, are classified under Section 10 of the Roads Act 1993, as amended. Planning authorities are also strongly recommended to identify, as part of the development plan process, those stretches of non-national roads outside the 50-60 kmh speed limit zones where it would be appropriate to apply these guidelines and, in doing so, they should take the following matters into account.

Some non-national roads are essentially urban roads that are designed to complement and integrate with the national road and public transport systems and facilitate orderly urban development. Other non-national roads, especially the regional road network, provide essential links between the various Gateways and Hubs identified in the National Spatial Strategy and their rural hinterlands. In many cases, investment has improved the alignment, surface and safety of major stretches of regional roads, which carry significant volumes of traffic, especially those outside the 50-60 kmh speed limits for cities, towns and villages. For the future, the protection of such capacity and preservation of enhanced safety standards will be important in ensuring that such regional roads can continue to perform important local and regional transportation functions.



# Chapter 2

## Development Planning and Roads

### Key Messages

- Development plans must include measurable objectives for securing more compact development that reduces overall demand for transport and encourages modal shift towards sustainable travel modes.
- Development plans must include policies which seek to maintain and protect the safety, capacity and efficiency of national roads and associated junctions, avoiding the creation of new accesses and the intensification of existing accesses to national roads where a speed limit greater than 50 kmh applies.
- Planning authorities and the NRA must work together during the early stages of plan preparation to identify any areas where a less restrictive approach may apply.
- Development plans must include clear policies and objectives with regard to planning and reservation of new routes and/or upgrades.
- Planning authorities should consult at a very early stage with transport infrastructure providers (including the NRA) and, in the Greater Dublin area, with the National Transport Authority.

### 2.1 Role of the Development Plan

The development plan sets the policy framework to deliver proper planning and sustainable development. However, new development may generate additional demand for travel and the road traffic element of such demand may create adverse effects by:

- reducing average vehicle speeds, increasing journey times;
- increasing the number of road accidents;
- accelerating the need to upgrade the road network;
- complicating or compromising future plans to upgrade a road; and/or
- creating environmental and social effects, such as noise and air pollution, including increasing greenhouse gas emissions and increased oil dependence.

Alternatively, plans that promote compact urban development and brownfield regeneration in line with the Government's Smarter Travel strategy will minimise the need for travel and where such need does arise, will encourage a switch towards sustainable modes such as walking, cycling and public transport.

Therefore, the transport implications of development and local area plans must be considered as an integral element of the statutory development planning process. This should be done in consultation with the appropriate statutory bodies such as the NRA and NTA and transport providers.

## 2.2 Preparing Plans – Consultation

Planning authorities are required, under section 11(3)(c) of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, to consult with the NRA so as to ascertain plans in respect of national roads in their areas. This provides a valuable mechanism whereby potential routes for new national roads or planned improvements to existing roads can be notified to planning authorities and appropriate provision made in development plans to facilitate the future delivery of the road schemes concerned.

Section 22 of the Roads Act, 1993, enables the National Roads Authority to make recommendations to a planning authority regarding the content of that authority's development plan or variation thereto and the planning authority is obliged to consider any recommendation made.

Aspects that the NRA should draw to the attention of the planning authority from a national roads perspective might include the approach to land use zoning objectives, that may have implications for access to national roads and for the traffic carrying capacity and operational efficiency of such roads, including junctions, as well as cost implications for planned new roads or existing road upgrades as a consequence of increased land values linked to zoning and/or development objectives. In making recommendations on draft development plans or local area plans, or any proposed amendment or variation to these plans, the NRA will be guided by the policies and recommendations contained in these guidelines.

In making development plans, local area plans or non-statutory plans affecting national roads, planning authorities and the NRA must engage in formal consultation, thereby helping to avoid difficulties at the development management stage.

Within the Greater Dublin Area (GDA), the National Transport Authority also has a significant role in the planning, delivery and management of existing and new road infrastructure, through, inter alia, the preparation of:

- a strategic transport plan;
- an integrated implementation plan;
- a transport traffic management plan; and
- traffic management guidelines.

Under the provisions of Section 9 (6A) of the Planning Act, each planning authority within the GDA shall ensure that its development plan is consistent with the NTA transport strategy. Accordingly, statutory and non-statutory consultation with the NTA and the NRA is also essential for planning authorities in the GDA in ensuring that their plans are consistent with these guidelines.

Planning authorities must also ensure that they consult with the NRA in preparing any local area plans or other non-statutory plans where there may be material implications for national roads.

### 2.3 General Content of Development Plans

Development plan policies must take account of relevant policies and programmes, including investment programmes, of Government and infrastructure delivery agencies. Planning authorities must, accordingly, ensure that consultation takes place with relevant national organisations (e.g. the National Roads Authority, CIE and, where appropriate, the National Transport Authority and the Railway Procurement Agency (RPA)), as well as private bus operators at an early stage in the process of preparing plans. Such consultation should establish what plans there are for the provision or upgrade of transport infrastructure and services. Objectives concerning these plans, including reservations of corridors where project planning has advanced sufficiently, should be incorporated in development plans and local area plans.

Achieving the objectives of development plans will often rely on the provision of infrastructure by State agencies such as CIE, the NRA, NTA, and RPA, and others such as private bus operators. Recognising that the investments of State agencies such as those mentioned above must take place within budgetary allocations and the overall national budgetary and fiscal framework, a targeted approach is vital whereby development plan objectives are realistic and can, with a high degree of confidence, be serviced within a reasonable time period by investments being planned at national level, complemented, as appropriate, by locally funded initiatives, including infrastructure proposals. In this way, planning authorities and State transport providers, working together, can avoid difficulties arising later in the development management process.

In particular, the approach to preparing development plans as recommended in the Department's *Development Plans Guidelines* (2007), should include the elements contained in Box 2.3 below, and be consistent with other guidance, as updated, contained in the *Retail Planning Guidelines* (2005) and *Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines for Planning Authorities* (2005) and any other relevant parts of other planning guidelines.

### Box 2.3 Overall Recommended Content for Development Plans and Local Area Plans

- Policies and objectives to:
  - reflect the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport's Smarter Travel : A New Transport Policy for Ireland 2009-2020;
  - protect the capacity, efficiency and safety of national roads and associated junctions;
  - ensure that transport and settlement patterns mutually support each other;
  - minimise the need for travel and reduce the length of journeys by maximising the proximity of people, business and the services they require;
  - encourage walking, cycling and public transport, including, where future investment in sustainable modes is planned and committed, setting specific targets to increase the % share of persons travelling by these modes;
  - promote greater investment in, and usage of, public transport modes, such as rail and bus networks, with the support of complementary land use policies;
  - protect emerging or preferred routes notified by the NRA in relation to future national road schemes and land requirements for future road upgrades; and
  - ensure that zoning strategies are consistent with value for money considerations applying to the provision of public infrastructure, including roads, and public transport.
- An outline of the key transport corridors, nodes and networks, including public transport networks such as bus networks in any Core Strategy, (accompanied by a diagrammatic illustration).
- Development standards in accordance with the *Traffic Management Guidelines* 2003, NTA related publications and where relevant, as in the case of major national road junctions etc., the NRA's Design Manual for Roads and Bridges, as well as guidance on road safety audits and the NRA's traffic and transport assessment (TTA) procedures.

Written statements and maps of plans will normally demonstrate the roads hierarchy within the functional area of the planning authority concerned, including connections to adjoining areas.

At a more detailed level, development and local area plans should also contain objectives relating to:

- promotion of patterns of land use change that minimise adverse transport effects, including those on the national road network, by reducing journey distances and enabling travel choice;

- provisions, including zoning and standards, which ensure that land uses in the vicinity of the network are compatible with the safe and efficient operation of national roads and associated junctions;
- ensuring high standards of safety for road users;
- protection of the identified preferred route corridors for future national road schemes; and
- policies and objectives that require developers to avoid, remedy or mitigate the adverse effects of their development on transport systems and/or infrastructure, including national roads, and provide mechanisms requiring developers to make reasonable contributions towards the costs of any required mitigation, alterations or capacity enhancement works to transport systems and/or infrastructure.

## 2.4 Approach to Plan Preparation

Where a development plan or local area plan proposes development to take place on zoned lands adjacent to national roads which could affect the operation and capacity of such roads, the planning authority must prepare its plans in such a way that demonstrates that such roads can continue to perform their strategic transport function into the future by:

- protecting undeveloped lands adjoining national roads and junctions from development so as to cater for potential capacity and safety enhancements (in consultation with and subject to the agreement of the NRA);
- ensuring, where appropriate, and taking account of these Guidelines, that capacity enhancements and/or traffic management measures can be put in place to facilitate new development around national roads and associated junctions, together with enhancement funding mechanisms, and
- improving operational efficiency of the non-national road and transportation infrastructure – e.g. where appropriate, promoting new non-national road networks and alternative transport/travel modes.

Planning authorities must therefore develop an evidence-based approach to planning policy and undertake detailed transport modelling, as necessary. The NRA and NTA can assist the process by data exchange and assisting with the development of assumptions.

Key steps in undertaking such an evidence-based approach for development frameworks are set out in box 2.4.

### Box 2.4 Key Steps for Building an Evidence-Based Approach

- Step 1: Identifying and consulting with the key stakeholders in developing an integrated approach<sup>2</sup>;
- Step 2: Confirmation of the national and /or higher level policy context for the development plan proposals;
- Step 3: Developing evidence based tools such as traffic models, including agreement between stakeholders in relation to acceptable data and assumptions;
- Step 4: Identification of demand management and mitigation measures to minimise the transport impact of the plan;
- Step 5: Identification of any infrastructural enhancements required and phasing;
- Step 6: Agreement between stakeholders on a delivery strategy including funding arrangements.

## 2.5 Required Development Plan Policy on Access to National Roads

With regard to access to national roads, all development plans and any relevant local area plans must implement the policy approaches outlined below.

### *Lands adjoining National Roads to which speed limits greater than 60 kmh apply:*

The policy of the planning authority will be to avoid the creation of any additional access point from new development or the generation of increased traffic from existing accesses to national roads to which speed limits greater than 60 kmh apply. This provision applies to all categories of development, including individual houses in rural areas, regardless of the housing circumstances of the applicant.

**Transitional Zones:** Where the plan area incorporates sections of national roads on the approaches to or exit from urban centres that are subject to a speed limit of 60 kmh before a lower 50 kmh limit is encountered – otherwise known as transitional zones - the plan may provide for a limited level of direct access to facilitate orderly urban development. Any such proposal must, however, be subject to a road safety audit carried out in accordance with the NRA's requirements and a proliferation of such entrances, which would lead to a diminution in the role of such zones, must be avoided.

**Lands adjoining National Roads within 50 kmh speed limits:** Access to national roads will be considered by planning authorities in accordance with normal road safety, traffic management and urban design criteria for built up areas.

<sup>2</sup> May include various sections of the local authority, adjoining local authorities, the NRA, the Department of the Environment Community and Local Government, the National Transport Authority, public transport providers etc.

## 2.6 Exceptional Circumstances

Notwithstanding the provisions of Section 2.5 above, planning authorities may identify stretches of national roads where a less restrictive approach may be applied, but only as part of the process of reviewing or varying the relevant development plan and having consulted and taken on board the advice of the NRA and having followed the approach outlined below.

### (1) Developments of National and Regional Strategic Importance

A less restrictive approach may be adopted in the case of developments of national and regional strategic importance which by their nature are most appropriately located outside urban areas, and where the locations concerned have specific characteristics that make them particularly suitable for the developments proposed. Such proposals must be in accordance with the National Spatial Strategy, Regional Planning Guidelines and other Guidelines issued by the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government under the provisions of section 28 of the Planning Acts.

In considering whether exceptional circumstances arise in the development plan and local area plan context, the planning authority and the NRA should take the following matters into account:

- (1) the relevance and appropriateness of proposed development in supporting the aims and objectives of the National Spatial Strategy and Regional Planning Guidelines;
- (2) the requirements of other planning guidelines issued under section 28 of the Act including the Retail Planning Guidelines (2005), which include a general presumption against large retail centres being located adjacent or close to existing, new or planned national roads, including motorways;
- (3) the nature of proposed development and the volume of traffic to be generated by it,
- (4) any implications for the safety, capacity and efficient operation of national roads;
- (5) any plans for future upgrades of national roads and other transport infrastructure/services;
- (6) the suitability of the location compared to alternative locations;
- (7) the pattern of existing development in the area;
- (8) satisfactory details of the proposed demand management measures;
- (9) acceptable funding and delivery proposals for any road improvements required, and,
- (10) the precedent that could be created for cumulative development in the area and the potential implications for the national road network.

## (2) Lightly-trafficked Sections of National Secondary Routes

A less restrictive approach may also apply to areas where additional development may require new accesses to certain lightly-trafficked sections of national secondary routes. Such areas would be confined to lightly trafficked national secondary roads serving structurally weak and remote communities where a balance needs to be struck between the important transport functions of such roads and supporting the social and economic development of these areas. In such areas, policies in development plans permitting new accesses to national secondary roads may be considered acceptable where the following criteria apply:

- Traffic volumes are low and are forecast to remain below 3,000 AADT (as verified by the NRA) for the next 20 years;
- There is no suitable alternative non-national public road access available;
- The development otherwise accords with the development plan, and
- Safety issues and considerations can be adequately addressed in accordance with the NRA's Design Manual for Roads and Bridges.

Where planning authorities wish to identify an area/national road where the foregoing less restrictive approaches could apply in a development plan or local area plan they must:

- (a) Consult with the NRA at the earliest practicable stage in reviewing the development plan on the identification of areas and developments that the planning authority considers represent exceptional circumstances, taking the criteria above and below into account; and
- (b) Ensure that any submissions from the NRA have been fully and properly considered within the process of preparing the plan.



## 2.7 Development at National Road Interchanges or Junctions

Interchanges/junctions are especially important elements of national roads infrastructure that development plans and local area plans must take account of and carefully manage.

The location and capacity of interchanges/junctions on national roads are determined during the road planning process, in consultation with local authorities, taking account of a range of factors including anticipated inter-urban and inter-regional traffic volumes over a design horizon of at least 20 years. A key objective of the approach to road planning is to achieve a satisfactory level of service for road users and to protect and maintain that service over the design period applying to the mainline road and associated interchanges.

Therefore, planning authorities must exercise particular care in their assessment of development/local area plan proposals relating to the development objectives and/or zoning of locations at or close to interchanges where such development could generate significant additional traffic with potential to impact on the national road. They must make sure that such development which is consistent with planning policies can be catered for by the design assumptions underpinning such junctions and interchanges, thereby avoiding potentially compromising the capacity and efficiency of the national road/associated junctions and possibly leading to the premature and unacceptable reduction in the level of service available to road users.

However, in certain circumstances, additional junctions, or enhancements to existing junctions on national roads, may become necessary to service development needs of national and strategic importance or in cases where a proposed development is demonstrated by the planning authority to be more appropriately located proximate to such junctions. In such circumstances, the NRA will support such capacity enhancements and development proposals where all of the following criteria are met:

- Demonstration of the need for additional connectivity by reference to policy considerations such as the National Spatial Strategy, Regional Planning Guidelines and in the Greater Dublin Area, the National Transport Authority's transport strategy.
- Consistency between the relevant development plan and the relevant plans and strategies mentioned above;
- Early identification, through the plan-making process, of appropriate strategic land uses, which will benefit from high quality access, such as nationally or regionally important employment clusters or intermodal transfer facilities (but excluding retail and residential development);

- Demonstration that all other options for servicing the development needs and, in particular, the regional and local roads network and the use of public transport solutions, have been examined and exploited to the fullest extent practicable;
- Demonstration that the additional traffic loading can be satisfactorily accommodated at the junction concerned and on the national road network;
- Ensuring that the proposed development will not give rise to an undesirable precedent for further traffic generating development at or in the vicinity of the proposed development;
- Demonstration that design complies with NRA Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB) standards;
- Satisfactory details of the proposed demand management measures; and
- Acceptable funding and delivery proposals for any required improvements.

It should be noted that the Roads Act, 1993, as amended, prohibits the granting of planning permission for any development of land entailing direct access to / from motorways.



## 2.8 Service Areas

The presence of long sections of motorways and high quality dual carriageways on the network of national roads and EU work time requirements under Directive 2002/15/EC and Regulation SI 561/2006, support the provision of service areas for

road users who wish to rest during longer journeys and/or avail of fuel, toilet and food facilities. These facilities may come in the formats outlined below.

***On-line Motorway Service Areas:*** The NRA is directly involved in securing on-line motorway service areas in accordance with the provisions of the Roads Act 1993, as amended. As part of these arrangements, the NRA seeks to acquire the necessary lands and to obtain relevant statutory approvals. The intention to provide these on-line service areas should be catered for in relevant development plans.

NRA on-line motorway service areas incorporate extensive parking and also facilities that cater specifically for the refuelling, refreshment and toilet needs of drivers and passengers. No provision is made for hotel or other accommodation facilities, nor extensive retail outlets. The Authority's service areas are designed to discourage infrastructure from becoming destinations in their own right.

Proposals for service areas on motorways may only be brought forward by local authorities/NRA and, as a consequence, private developers may not independently provide on-line motorway service area facilities alongside such roads.

***Off-line Motorway Service Areas at National Road Junctions:*** In the preparation of their plans, planning authorities may consider policies for the provision for off-line motorway service area facilities with reference to the requirements and advice included in the most up-to-date NRA guidance on the location and layout of the NRA's service areas and also similar type existing or planned privately promoted service facilities within existing towns/settlements and located in the general environs of the relevant road corridor.

A proliferation of private off-line service area facilities at national road junctions should be avoided. It is therefore important that a coordinated approach between planning authorities should be undertaken in consultation with the NRA as part of the drafting of development plans.

In addition, facilities proposed for inclusion in service areas should be of a type that avoids the attraction of short, local trips, a class of traffic that is inconsistent with the primary intended role for motorways and other national roads and associated junctions in catering for strategic long-distance inter-urban and inter-regional traffic. Furthermore, to permit a service area to become a destination for local customers would be contrary to Government planning policy on retail and town centres as set out in Retail Planning Guidelines 2005. The consequence of this would be to threaten the viability of businesses in cities, towns or other local centres.

*Roadside Service Facilities at Non-Motorway National Roads and Junctions:* A proliferation of service area facilities along rural sections of national roads and/or associated junctions, where the maximum speed limit applies, would create significant safety risks and affect the level of service available to road users, as well as impact on the viability and vitality of existing urban settlements. In general sufficient road side facilities exist on non-motorway national road network, which also passes through or is in close proximity to a significant number of urban towns and villages where such facilities can be provided for in a sustainable manner.



## 2.9 Protection of Alignments for Future National Road Projects

In the case of future roads development involving plans for new roads or upgrades of existing roads, overall policies and priorities are determined by Government, e.g. in the NDP and other relevant official policies, and are delivered by the NRA in conjunction with local authorities.

In line with international practice, the NRA adopts a 20 year design horizon as the basis for capacity design requirements in order to optimise the economic return on the investment, and take account of local authority supplied estimates regarding future population and development patterns, local trends and the aims of achieving compact sustainable urban development. In planning future new routes, the NRA will work with planning authorities in basing new design on robust and reasonable assumptions with regard to future development and the extent to which, if any, traffic generated by such development should appropriately be catered for on the national road network.

At the earliest stages of national road design, and especially in the case of new national roads in greenfield situations, planning authorities in consultation with the NRA will also consider implications of the phased development in supporting local transportation infrastructure.

A development or local area plan should identify any land required for future national road projects including objectives that:

- retain required lands free from development; and
- ensure that measures are put in place so that any adjacent development of sensitive uses, such as housing, schools and nursing homes, are compatible with the construction and long-term operation of the road.

Development objectives, including the zoning of land, must not compromise the route selection process, particularly in circumstances where road scheme planning is underway and potential route corridors or upgrades have been identified and brought to the attention of the planning authority. Inappropriate zonings are



contrary to the broader public interest concerning the achievement of value for money for the taxpayer and can significantly increase the cost of land to be acquired for national road schemes. Such zoning decisions could make the road project uneconomic, potentially leading to significant material alterations to the project or even the abandonment of the scheme as well as negating the planning work undertaken and the investment made in the proposed road scheme.

### 2.10 Providing for Public Transport

The CSO Transport Omnibus 2008 document sets out total vehicle kilometres travelled by national fleet and vehicle type (2000 – 2008). For the category of “buses and coaches” the figure for 2008 is 276 million kilometres. In 2010 approximately 79.6 million passengers travelled by scheduled bus services provided by Bus Éireann, the majority of which fully or partly use the network of national roads. (Bus Éireann Annual Report and Financial Statements 2010). By comparison, rail accounted for 38.2 million passengers’ journeys across the full range of Iarnród Éireann services (CIE Annual Report 2010). There are also a wide range of private bus operations that rely extensively on national roads, especially long distance inter-urban bus services linking the main centres of populations and key destinations such as airports and ports.

Bus services operating on the national road network constitute a very significant part of the overall public transport system. Effective provision for public transport modes on the road network is an important consideration in road planning. This could entail providing appropriate capacity to cater for road-based public transport or by incorporating specific public transport measures to ensure that the journey times of public transport vehicles are maintained notwithstanding other traffic conditions, such as bus priority and management strategies which give preference to public transport at appropriate locations.

While the operation and funding of public transport facilities is outside the normal remit of local authorities and the NRA, subject to appropriate consultation and where the provision of such facilities is not to the detriment of the operation and safety of the national road infrastructure concerned, national roads infrastructure can support a shift towards more sustainable transport modes through measures such as the provision of high quality and well signposted access to plan-led park and ride facilities and the provision of convenient access to and from town and village centres for pick-up and drop-off of bus passengers.

## 2.11 Development Plans, Local Area Plans and Speed Limits

The Road Traffic Act 2004 provides the legislative basis for setting speed limits including the application of default speed limits for the designated road types and the procedures for the setting of special speed limits. In the case of national roads, section 9(7) of the Road Traffic Act requires local authorities to obtain NRA consent before making bye-laws introducing or revising speed limits on national roads. Decisions on the applicable speed limit and the area to which it should apply are determined by road traffic and road safety considerations. Planning authorities should ensure that their planning functions take cognisance of the speed limits regime.



## 2.12 Development Management Standards

The development management standards section of development plans must require that significant development proposals be accompanied by traffic and transport assessments (TTA) and/or road safety audits and refer to the NRA's Design Manual for Roads and Bridges and to the Traffic Management Guidelines prepared by the then Department of Transport and the Department of the Environment and Local Government together with the DTO (see section 3.4).

### 2.13 Land Use and Transportation Planning Checklist

The following checklist is a useful tool in ensuring that strategic spatial planning and transportation considerations are integral to development plans and local area plans.

#### Box 2.13 Land Use and Transportation Planning Checklist

##### General

1. Will the plan encourage sustainable land use and transport infrastructure development while also allowing the transport network to function as effectively as possible?
2. Is the plan consistent with the National Spatial Strategy, Smarter Travel, Regional Planning Guidelines and other relevant official policy documents?
3. Will the plan protect existing and any proposed national roads and the wider transport network from adverse direct and indirect effects of development provided for by the plan?
4. Does the plan provide for future transport infrastructure development, including upgrades to existing routes and junctions and the cumulative impact of existing and permitted development?

##### Modal Shift

5. Will implementation of the plan reduce car dependency and encourage a shift towards use of other transport options including measures to support the achievement of the Government's targets for modal split under the Smarter Travel strategy?
6. Does the plan make provision for integration of transport networks? Has provision for public transport networks needed now or in the future (e.g. rail extensions) been considered?

##### Access

7. Will the plan ensure the provision of suitable non-national roads to provide access to areas of land where new development is proposed and to connect development generated traffic to the non-national road network and public transport system?
8. Are the policies and methods for managing access included in the planning document consistent with maintaining high levels of safety and road function?

##### Environmental Effects

9. Have environmental sensitivity issues (noise, air pollution, greenhouse gases, congestion, etc.) been adequately addressed so that the future operation of the transport system can be sustained and amenities protected?

10. Are there appropriate objectives concerning impact mitigation measures, such as noise barriers, set back landscaping and/or buffer zones between areas of land where development is proposed and existing and proposed national roads, the cost of which should be borne by the developer?

**Funding and Delivery Mechanisms**

11. Are there appropriate phasing and funding policies and mechanisms in place to ensure that developers pay for mitigation of the adverse effects of their developments on transport infrastructure?



# Chapter 3

## Development Management and Roads

### Key Messages

- Development Management is the key to plan implementation.
- Planning authorities should put in place effective mechanisms to refer all planning applications on, or with the potential to affect, national roads to the NRA and also in the Greater Dublin Area to the NTA in accordance with the Planning and Development Regulations.
- Traffic and Transport Assessments (TTA) and Road Safety Audits (RSA) should be used in preparing planning applications for major development affecting national roads.
- Assessment of development proposals must take into account broader planning and development policy as well as engineering criteria, road safety and the environmental effects of national roads.
- Control of roadside and adjoining signage and lighting is an important contributor towards achieving enhanced road safety and planning authorities should use their regulatory and enforcement powers accordingly.
- Development proposals requiring physical works on the national roads network should include making provision for the payment of the appropriate development contributions in line with the requirements of planning legislation and local authority development contribution schemes.

### 3.1 Development Management is the Key to Plan Implementation

As already stated, local authority development and local area plans play a vital role in the achievement of proper planning and sustainable development while also protecting the efficiency, capacity and safety of national roads. This chapter provides advice with respect to tools to support this plan-led development management process.

### 3.2 Development Applications and National Roads

The Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended, require that valid planning applications are referred to the National Roads Authority where:

- *the development consists of or comprises the formation, laying out or material widening of an access to a national road (as defined in Section 2(1) of the Roads Act, 1993 (No. 14 of 1993)), or,*
- *The development might give rise to a significant increase in the volume of traffic using a national road.*

The Regulations enable the NRA to make submissions or observations to the planning authority in respect of planning applications notified to it. Article 28(2) of the Regulations states that any submission or observation made by a prescribed body in relation to an application should be considered by planning authorities before a decision is made. The NRA is also prescribed to be consulted under similar criteria for local authority developments, the preparation of Strategic Development Zone schemes (SDZ), strategic infrastructure, State development, electricity transmission lines and strategic gas infrastructure.

The network of national roads may be adversely affected by a proposed development even in circumstances where direct access is not required to the network as a consequence of the volume of traffic to be generated. Planning authorities should liaise with the NRA in developing mechanisms to help identify applications that could have potential implications for national roads and which should, accordingly, be referred to the NRA for consideration.

The planning guidelines on development management issued by the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government in June 2007 contain best practice guidance on how applicants, planning authorities and other agencies, should work together in ensuring that planning applications have regard to the applicable planning policy context and contain all the relevant information that planning authorities and An Bord Pleanála need to properly assess them.



### 3.3 Development Standards

Where a development proposal involves physical changes to a national road, the planning authority should ensure that developers prepare their proposals in line with applicable design standards, i.e. the NRA *Design Manual for Roads and Bridges*. Such standards should be flagged in any pre-planning consultation discussions. Such development applications must be subjected to road safety audits of the type recommended in the NRA's *Design Manual for Roads and Bridges*.

### 3.4 Traffic and Transport Assessment (TTA)

Development proposals may generate significant additional trips/travel, including road traffic, with potentially significant implications for national and non-national roads. This could, in some circumstances, necessitate changes to the road and/or junction layout in order to address capacity and road safety concerns and maintain a satisfactory level of service for road users. Large-scale development may also have significant implications for public transport services. Proposals should include ways to reduce the traffic impact of the development.

Traffic and Transport Assessment (TTA) is a methodology used to assess the transport impacts of a proposed development, incorporating any subsequent measures necessary to ensure roads and junctions and other transport infrastructure in the vicinity of the development remain fit for purpose and encourage a shift towards sustainable travel modes. TTAs are recognised internationally as a useful tool for assessing impacts of larger and/or more complex development proposals, and can be a valuable tool in the development management process. In 2003, the then Department of the Environment and Local Government and the Department of Transport together with the Dublin Transportation Office published Traffic Management Guidelines, which outline the approach to Traffic and Transport Assessment. The NRA has also prepared Traffic and Transport Assessment (TTA) Guidelines 2007 (available at [www.nra.ie](http://www.nra.ie)) to supplement this document as it relates to national roads.

The TTA Guidelines seek to promote best practice for the preparation of Traffic and Transport Assessments and explain the relevance of TTA in the planning process. The Guidelines will be updated over time in light of experience as practice evolves regarding the integration of transportation and land use planning.

Planning authorities, guided by the documents mentioned above, should advise prospective applicants for planning permission of the need for such an assessment to accompany larger planning applications, taking account of the nature, scale and location of the proposed development, its potential to generate additional trips/travel and the criteria contained in the documents concerned.

In summary, the NRA TTA Guidelines indicate the following:

- Early discussion of proposals between the developer and the relevant staff of the local authority (planning, roads) is essential in identifying the need for and extent of any traffic and transport assessments to expedite the overall planning process.
- Advisory and sub-threshold criteria concerning a requirement to prepare a TTA as part of the planning application for proposals which may affect national roads (including those which impact on junctions).
- The importance of scoping, as a precursor to the preparation of a TTA, at the pre-planning consultation stage between prospective applicants and planning authority staff. Detailed guidance on how to conduct scoping is provided in the NRA's Guidelines.
- The TTA should be written as an impartial assessment of the traffic impacts of the proposed development and it should not be seen to be a "best case" promotion of the development. All impacts, whether positive or negative, should be recorded.
- The level of detail included within the TTA should be sufficient to enable the planning authority and those making observations on the proposed development to follow all stages of the assessment process, to know what assumptions have been made and to arrive at a similar set of results and conclusions.
- The TTA should assist the developer and local planning authority in deciding if any adverse traffic impact identified is significant enough to require revision of the development proposal or whether the proposed response measures are sufficient to mitigate the impact of the development on the road network to acceptable levels. This is the fundamental test and is often regarded as the main purpose of a Traffic and Transport Assessment as related to road infrastructural considerations.



### 3.5 Demand Management

Where appropriate, and taking account of the findings of Traffic and Transport Assessments, applicants should prepare and submit proposals that will minimise the traffic generated by their development through the preparation and implementation of travel plans/mobility management plans, including measures such as integration with public transport, promotion of car sharing/pooling, parking pricing and control, and the encouragement of cycling and walking by the provision of cycling and walking routes and secure cycle parking. The Greater Dublin Travel Demand Management Study and the NRA's National Roads Traffic Management Study provide a valuable reference for such actions. There is a need to assess the performance of demand management measures over time in order to ensure that such measures are taking effect in the long term.

### 3.6 Road Safety Audits

Planning authorities should generally require that planning applications, involving a new access to a national road or significant changes to an existing access, are accompanied by a road safety audit to aid the identification of any appropriate measures required to maintain safety standards. The planning authority may, however, decide to dispense with the requirement for a road safety audit in the case of applications for an individual dwelling proposal in the case of lightly-trafficked sections of national secondary routes – described under the heading "Exceptional Circumstances" above. Guidance for the preparation of road safety audits is included in the NRA Design Manual for Roads and Bridges.

### 3.7 Avoiding Adverse Impacts from Existing and Future Roads

National roads can potentially produce significant adverse effects that extend beyond the roads concerned, such as:

- traffic noise and vibration;
- vehicle generated emissions, including greenhouse gas emissions;
- lighting/glare;
- dust and non-point source pollution e.g. storm water run-off, spray-drift and litter; and
- visual impact.

Planning authorities should engage with applicants and their agents to address, as an integral element of their development proposals, potential negative impacts arising from existing or planned national roads. This could include mitigating impacts through appropriate design of buildings, landscaping features and site layout as part of the development proposal.

The Environmental Noise Regulations, 2006 (S.I. No. 140 of 2006) should be taken into account within the development plan and development management processes, as well as relevant noise maps and noise action plans prepared under the Regulations for specific roads.

The Regulations apply to national and non-national roads with traffic volumes above a prescribed level. Accordingly, all proposals in respect to noise sensitive developments within the zone of influence of such existing or of planned new roads should identify and implement, where appropriate, mitigation measures in relation to noise and other effects listed above. The costs of implementing the mitigation measures concerned should be borne by the developer.

With regard to lighting, while such facilities help to promote security and personal safety, advertise commercial enterprises, permit outdoor working and sports activities and highlight features of interest, artificial lighting that is poorly designed, installed or maintained can create adverse safety effects on road users by misleading the driver as to the road alignment, obscuring road signs or markings and/or distracting drivers' attention. This is also a particular concern for developments on roads which run parallel to the national road network.;

Inappropriate building design or materials can also reflect light in a manner that may result in adverse effects on safety. The use of highly reflective building surfaces, such as glass, in situations where they are likely to reflect car headlights can impair drivers' vision and cause distraction and thus create confusion and have adverse effects on road safety.

### 3.8 Signage

On national roads, the erection of signage needs to be tightly regulated for road safety and environmental reasons<sup>3</sup>. Planning authorities must avoid proliferation of roadside signage, especially outside the 50-60 kmh speed limit areas in a manner that would reduce the effectiveness of essential signage such as directional and other authorised road traffic signs, create visual clutter and distractions for road users and/or reduce visibility at junctions, interchanges and bends.

In particular, the practice of random parking of large truck trailers on lands visible from the public road as a form of advertising hoarding and/or the sale of cars on the roadside should be regarded by planning authorities as forms of unauthorised development. Enforcement mechanisms are available under existing statutory codes and should be

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<sup>3</sup> In the case of planning legislation, planning permission under section 34 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 is required for signage on private property, while advertisement structures are also covered by a licence issued under section 254.

used as necessary under such planning legislation and other legislative codes taking account of the road safety, planning and environmental impacts of such practices.

Advice and guidance in respect of signage on national roads concerning major tourist and leisure features and facilities has been outlined in the *NRA's Policy on the Provision of Tourist & Leisure Signage on National Roads (March 2011)* which is available to download from the publications section of the NRA's website – [www.nra.ie/Publications/NRAPolicyDocuments](http://www.nra.ie/Publications/NRAPolicyDocuments).

### 3.9 Development Contributions.

Given the scale of public investment in transport in general and roads in particular, planning authorities should ensure that they implement the provisions as set out under sections 48 and 49 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 in relation to the payment of financial contributions by developers towards the cost of providing or upgrading public infrastructure in circumstances where the works concerned are necessitated by development.

Where a development which is the subject of a planning application will impact on a national road or an area served by such a road is acceptable in principle and the additional traffic to be generated by the proposed development requires the upgrading of the roads concerned, the costs of appropriate upgrades should be met by the developer. A condition in this regard should be imposed as part of any approval to be issued by the planning authority in respect of such development.

As stated in Section 1.4, trip generation implications from development frameworks should be assessed and appropriate responses identified in development and local area plans to cater for these trips. Ideally, the required transport infrastructure will be in place before the traffic effects of a new development occur. However, developers may encounter difficulty in putting the necessary funding for the required transport infrastructure in place at least until part of the development has been completed. To deal with this issue, larger developments may need to be phased, such that development below a certain threshold can be undertaken with limited mitigation. Development beyond that threshold level should only be permitted once the required transport infrastructure is in place.

Where a succession of small to medium scale developments will cumulatively have a significant adverse effect on the national road network, it can be difficult to identify the point in time when improvements will be required, or the proportion of the costs that should be attributed to each development. The complexities of these situations should be examined and resolved, where possible, by the NRA and the relevant local authority.



# Chapter 4

## Implementation

### 4.1 Introduction

Implementation of these guidelines by planning authorities, the National Transport Authority, the National Roads Authority and An Bord Pleanála will ensure that the State's considerable investment in national roads is harnessed in a manner that is sustainable in economic, social and environmental terms. The particular roles and responsibilities of Government Departments and agencies, planning authorities, including An Bord Pleanála, and applicants and their agents are set out below.

### 4.2 Government Departments

The Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government will continue to work proactively with planning authorities in both facilitating strategically focused and plan-led development, and in commenting on local authority development plans and local area plans to ensure that they are implementing these guidelines.

The Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport will continue to provide an overall regulatory framework for roads and transport related activity. It will also continue to provide investment in both national and non-national roads, as well as public transport infrastructure and services in line with the availability of public funds.

### 4.3 National Transport Authority (NTA) and the National Roads Authority (NRA)

The NTA<sup>4</sup> and NRA will actively work with planning authorities in developing their plans at city and county level and, where appropriate, at local plan level. The NTA and NRA will comment on draft plans and development proposals as appropriate and participate in such modelling or technical analysis exercises undertaken by local authorities as may be necessary to ensure that new development takes account of the capacity of the national roads network.

### 4.4 Planning Authorities and An Bord Pleanála

Planning authorities will implement the strategic principles outlined in Chapter 1 and overall development planning and development management methodologies in Chapters 2 and 3, respectively, in relation to all of their development planning functions under the prevailing planning legislation, including, in particular, objectives on access to national roads.

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<sup>4</sup> In the case of plans in the Greater Dublin Area

An Bord Pleanála will apply these guidelines in considering appeals made to the Bord and/or applications made to the Bord under the provisions of the Strategic Infrastructure Act, 2006.

#### **4.5 Applicants and Agents**

Applicants and their agents, in bringing forward proposals for development that could impact on the national roads network, must develop their proposals in line with the provisions of the NSS, regional planning guidelines, local authority plans and these guidelines.

