Social & Economic Study of the
Greater Blanchardstown Area

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1.0  President’s message

The Greater Blanchardstown Area has experienced a period of unprecedented economic growth over the last decade. The population has increased dramatically, large amounts of new housing have been built, and employment has grown year-on-year since the early 1990s. The area is now the industrial and commercial hub for County Fingal, with large concentrations of retail, pharmaceutical, IT, distribution and service companies. Even with the slower pace of inward investment nationally, Blanchardstown continues to attract leading international companies to the area, most recently Ebay and PayPal.

Along with this unprecedented growth we have experienced, unsurprisingly, some growing pains - cases where the infrastructure has not kept pace with the increasing demands made of it, instances where public transport provision requires augmentation, areas where new urban development may need to be linked more cohesively to the existing built environment, and so on.

Arguably, the success of Blanchardstown is at least partly the result of long term strategic planning that took place in the late 1960s and early 1970s. For example, the Wright Report of 1967 first proposed the development of four self-sufficient ‘new towns’, including Blanchardstown, to the west of Dublin. It is time for similar planning for the future, taking a long-term view, building on what we have achieved. Some consolidation and reflection is now required to consider and evaluate the progress made in the area to date, to ensure that growth continues to be sustainable, that quality of life issues are taken into account as we grow economically and to ensure that Blanchardstown is an area of opportunity for all sections of society.

In order to guide the development of Blanchardstown and its surrounding areas in a way that will lead to an enhancement of the economic and social environment, the stakeholders in the area must develop a vision for the future, a guideline that can be used to co-ordinate and direct investment in infrastructure, building, retail and industrial growth.

However, before we can make plans for the future, we must have a clear idea of where we stand today. Most existing statistical information and analysis covers a broad section of North Dublin, and even at its most detailed is applicable to County Fingal as a whole. With the growth of the Greater Blanchardstown Area, the time had arrived for a specific, detailed review of the economic, demographic and social make-up of the locality, a review that would provide us with the information needed to plan for maximising its future potential.

This is one of the key roles a Chamber of Commerce plays – acting as an instigator and co-ordinator of discussion on future economic and social development. In late 2002, the Economic Working Group of the Chamber commissioned Dr. Brendan Williams of the Dublin Institute of Technology, Faculty of the Built Environment, to prepare a detailed analysis of the key socio-economic trends for the area and to provide some initial recommendations on where future efforts for economic and social planning should concentrate.
As President of the Chamber of Commerce, it gives me great pleasure to introduce the output from Dr. Williams' analysis, the first major economic report commissioned specifically for the Greater Blanchardstown Area. The report provides us with detailed statistics on the growth experienced in Blanchardstown in the last decade, analysis of major trends such as demographics, employment profiles and educational participation, and projections on likely future trends.

With this information, the key stakeholders in the area - employers, public bodies, representative organisations and non-profit groups - now have the data needed to identify future priorities for applying resources, and the statistical detail needed to make their case to public and private bodies considering investment decisions. The Chamber hopes this report will initiate a rigorous discussion of the future needs for the Greater Blanchardstown Area.

Finally, I would like to thank the members of the Economic Working Group for their time, effort and valuable contributions to the study.

We are also deeply grateful to the sponsors of this report:

- Aer Rianta
- Blanchardstown Area Partnership
- The Blanchardstown Centre
- Westpoint Health & Fitness Club
- Institute of Technology Blanchardstown
- 3COM

Jim Farrayher | President
Blanchardstown Chamber of Commerce
May 2004

In the report, we note the phenomenal growth in the area in terms of population, housing and employment, but we also reference areas, which require further effort, particularly transport infrastructure and social inclusion. The report acknowledges that we have issues to address. However, the problems we have are 'good problems' - how to maintain strong growth and competitiveness, not how to acquire them in the first place. The attractiveness of the area is, in the final analysis, reflected in the population growth, the growth in household formation and the increase in immigrant labour - people want to move to Blanchardstown to live, work and raise their children here. This is a vote of confidence in the area and its future. It is the responsibility of all the key stakeholders and social partners in the area to ensure that this confidence will be justified.
2.0 Executive summary and key findings

The Greater Blanchardstown Area (encompassing Blanchardstown, Castleknock and their immediate environs) has undergone phenomenal growth, with the population doubling since the late 1980s. The area is now entering a period of consolidation, when the rate of growth will slow and the focus will turn to strengthening and deepening the economic progress made so far, and to identifying what kind of future is desired for the area. There is a need to begin preparing a vision and strategy for the Greater Blanchardstown Area.

When preparing a vision of the future, it is important to have an accurate picture of the area today. Specific information has to be available when considering options and identifying priorities for allocation of resources and effort. However, up to this point, there has been no published statistical analysis of data pertaining specifically to the Greater Blanchardstown Area.

In 2001, Fingal County Council published the Fingal County Profile, prepared by the National Institute for Regional and Spatial Analysis. This report, while highly informative, dealt with the entire Fingal Region and was therefore not granular enough to be used as the basis for discussion for the Greater Blanchardstown Area. It also did not include the data from the 2002 Census Results.

Accordingly, in late 2002 the Economic Working Group of the Blanchardstown Chamber of Commerce commissioned a major study of the area. Dr. Brendan Williams of the Dublin Institute of Technology was asked to conduct an analysis of the available statistical and census data, to provide an overview of how the area had developed over the last three decades. From this analysis, we asked Dr. Williams to provide us with some high-level recommendations as to areas on which the major stakeholders (i.e. the Chamber, local employers, representative and non-profit groups and local and state authorities) should focus their energies and resources. This report is the result of Dr. Williams' analysis.

2.1 Purpose
The objectives of the report were to:
→ Analyse and describe the social and economic characteristics of the area
→ Consider the factors affecting the competitiveness of the area
→ Analyse perceptions of the area among local business
→ Conduct a SWOT analysis of the area
→ Provide recommendations for future action to ensure continued sustainable growth

2.2 Context
The present report was undertaken in the context of the overall planning framework at national, regional and county levels. This framework can appear quite complex, but some of the key guidelines include:

National
→ National Development Plan 2002 - 2006
→ New Horizons for Irish Tourism: An Agenda for Action
→ Retail Planning Guidelines for Local Authorities (2000)
→ Childcare Facilities - Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2001)

Regional
→ Regional Planning Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area
→ Strategic Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area (SPGGDA)
→ Dublin Transportation Office Strategy 2000 - 2016

County
→ Fingal Development Plan 1999 - 2004
→ Fingal Development Plan 2005 - 2011 (due next year)
→ Fingal Retail Strategy 2003
→ Consultations and Manager's Report on Fingal Development Plan 2005-2011

Each layer in the hierarchy of strategic and planning guidelines sets the overall parameters for the subsequent layers of planning. It is important that local representative groups in the Greater Blanchardstown Area are familiar with these national, regional and local guidelines for the following reasons:
→ to be aware of national policy priorities such as social inclusion
→ to ensure that local concerns can be coordinated with and integrated into the overall framework
→ to align local priorities with county, metropolitan and national priorities in areas such as education, transport infrastructure or land use
2.0 Executive summary and key findings

- to avoid duplication of existing initiatives where relevant, and to reinforce those initiatives where they reflect the concerns of the Greater Blanchardstown Area.
- to be familiar with specific aspects of the guidelines that pertain directly to Blanchardstown e.g. the sections of the Retail Planning Guidelines that curb further growth in certain types of retail floor-space in the area.

2.3 Methodology

In addition to a review of the relevant strategic and planning guidelines, a comprehensive analysis of statistical and other data was undertaken. The main phase of the study took place between February and October 2003 and the first draft of the final report was prepared for the Chamber at the end of this period. This first phase consisted of:

- A review of secondary sources (as listed in the Bibliography)
- Analysis of census and non-census data, including information made available by the Central Statistics Office up to September 2002
- A survey of representatives of enterprise and agencies in the area, consisting of a series of structured interviews.

The analysis reviewed demographics, labour force and socio-economic trends, as well as focusing on specific topics such as transport and education.

Subsequent census information was released by the CSO between October 2003 and February 2004 - this information was available mainly in aggregate form for Local Authority Areas. An Addendum providing an analysis of this statistical information was prepared in February 2004.

Finally, a second and final Addendum was prepared in March 2004, based on data provided by the CSO which was abstracted from the Small Area Population Statistics (SAPS) from Census 2002. This data provided more 'finely-grained' statistics that referred specifically to Blanchardstown and its environs.

2.4 Statistical highlights of the report

- Population Growth: The population of the GBA stood at 70,027 in 2002, representing a 28% increase on the 1996 population of 54,547 (compared to an 8% increase for Ireland as a whole), and a doubling of the population since 1981. (For comparison, the population of Galway city in 2002 was 66,163 and that of Limerick city was 86,998). This makes Blanchardstown one of the fastest growing areas in Ireland.
- Household Formation: Between 1991 and 2002, the number of households in the Greater Blanchardstown Area increased by 70% (from 12,544 to 21,365)
- Age Profile: The population of the GBA has a very young age profile, with 40% of the population under the age of 25 and 36% of the population aged between 25 and 44.
- Retail Property Value - the Blanchardstown Centre is third in terms of retail property value in Dublin after Grafton and Henry Street respectively, making the centre the most valuable suburban shopping centre in Ireland.
- Employment: 62% of the labour force is classified as at work, 12.4% are students, 11.1% in home duties, 4.1% retired, with 4.8% unemployed
- Transportation: 54.3% of the area's population travels to work, school or college by car, with 16% travelling by bus, 18.3% on foot, 4.5% by train and 2.2% by bicycle.
- Housing: Only 4.4% of the housing stock in the area was built before 1960. 31% of all housing in the area was built between 1996 and 2002.
- Education: In the 2002 Census, 35.5% of the area's population over 15 are recorded as having achieved a third level qualification compared with a corresponding figure of 23.2% in 1991.
2.0 Executive summary and key findings

2.5 Findings of the report

1. Vision for the future of the Greater Blanchardstown Area

As noted above, there are a number of framework guidelines at national, regional and county level specifying overall strategic objectives. Perhaps the most relevant is the Fingal Development Plan 2005-2011, which, while not yet published, is currently in draft stage. While these strategies often have a strong consultative element, there is a danger they will define a ‘top-down’ view of desired objectives as seen by the administrative centre. Local residents, employers and representative bodies should be encouraged to define what their vision is for the Greater Blanchardstown Area over the next ten to twenty years, in order to develop a ‘bottom-up’ view of the strategic objectives and ensure these are input to future local and regional planning initiatives. Localities with strong, co-ordinated visions for the future, who lobby effectively, will be able to expedite the implementation of county and regional plans, such as public transport provision, to the greater benefit of their area.

2. Identity of the Greater Blanchardstown Area

The population of Blanchardstown and its environs has doubled since the early 1980s, with almost a third of the population being added since 1996. Most residents do not yet identify with a distinct local area, or with Fingal as a county. Fingal County Council has begun to take steps to promote a county identity (e.g. through the planned introduction of FL vehicle registration plates). Blanchardstown, with a population greater than that of Galway, should consider developing its own strong identity within Fingal, to develop a community spirit and community loyalty. This can be achieved through a mixture of administrative, marketing and cultural activities. It is recommended that key stakeholders in the area consider an initiative to develop a distinct identity for the Greater Blanchardstown Area.

3. Fingal Development Plan 2005 to 2011

The Chamber of Commerce and other local stakeholders provided submissions to the consultation stage for the upcoming Fingal Development Plan. It is also important that these same stakeholders co-ordinate with the County Council to promote the rapid implementation of the plan as it affects the Greater Blanchardstown Area, particularly those aspects highlighted during the survey of local business i.e. transport, tourism and the development of local amenities.

4. Transport

Transportation and access issues are viewed by economic and business interests as the most pressing issue for continued economic development of the Greater Blanchardstown Area. The various problems have been recognised in the Dublin Transportation Office’s Strategy 2000-2016, and have been raised during the consultation for the upcoming Fingal Development Strategy 2005-2011. The Fingal Development Board “Strategy for Economic, Social and Cultural Development in Fingal” also lists specific actions that the board and various agencies are to take to ensure transport provision is improved. The Local stakeholders should liaise with the Development Board and County Council to focus effort on planned road infrastructure. However, the county council is not a transport service provider, and it is essential that local bodies also work with Bus Átha Cliath, Imamlid Eireann and other transport providers to ensure accelerated implementation of traffic enhancements.

5. Public Transport

Improvements in public transport provision in the Greater Blanchardstown Area, including the upgrading of the existing rail network servicing the southern parts of Blanchardstown and implementation of the Metro proposals are regarded as a high priority by all local businesses. While provided for in principle in the DTO’s strategy, these initiatives have been postponed in the past for a variety of reasons. There are a number of actions identified in the Fingal Development Board’s Strategy to expedite the provision of rail and bus services in the county. Effective local lobbying by stakeholders in the Greater Blanchardstown Area should also be used to support the implementation of this strategy. The objective would be to accelerate the implementation of specific measures that are directly relevant to Blanchardstown, such as the addition of a rail spur serving Clonsilla/Mulhuddart, the development of a public transport hub at Blanchardstown Centre, the provision of bus routes that are currently served by private employer’s own bus services etc. It is recommended that local stakeholders consider an initiative to lobby on public transport issues in a co-ordinated way.

6. Recreation, Leisure and Tourism Support

The survey of local enterprise indicated there is a large potential for promoting tourism to Blanchardstown and its hinterland, promoting local attractions such as golfing, boating and fishing holidays and access to amenities such as the Royal Canal. The survey also indicated there is a significant untapped market for mid-price accommodation, restaurants and bars. It is recommended that local stakeholders work with Fingal Tourism to devise and implement a comprehensive Tourism Strategy for the Greater Blanchardstown Area. It is also recommended that potential investors in tourist and recreational infrastructure be invited to a workshop highlighting the available market and investment opportunities in order to encourage the provision of more amenities such as hotels, restaurants and bars.

7. Consolidation of Urban Development

The consolidation of the existing urban fabric of Blanchardstown, including infill site development, represents the best available approach to the future planning and development of the area. Such infill development should include hotel, restaurant and other amenity-related developments and comprise of mixed-use functions.
2.0 Executive summary and key findings

8. Integrating Modern and Historical Blanchardstown
   The physical relationship between the Blanchardstown Centre and Blanchardstown Village demands significant attention with a stronger pedestrian connection required.

9. Childcare and Schools
   The factors that determine how attractive the area is to potential residents include the issues of childcare and education provision. With the huge growth in population and the large numbers of young children, there will be strong pressure on the local childcare, crèche and primary school places. Local stakeholders should liaise with the Council and the Department of Education and Science to ensure adequate planning is in place for the increasing school population, and to review the childcare provisions of the upcoming Fingal Development Plan 2005-2011.

10. Equality and Diversity
    The 2002 Census indicated that almost 10% of the Greater Blanchardstown Area population is comprised of non-national immigrants. Non-nationals now form a crucial part of the labour-force. The Fingal Development Board’s “Strategy for Economic, Social and Cultural Development in Fingal” identified some specific actions to help address issues of equality and diversity. It is recommended in addition that local stakeholders consider an initiative to bolster ongoing activities that support equality and diversity. As a priority, local stakeholders, working with the Development Board, should take steps to facilitate the non-nationals’ integration into the life of the area, to promote equality and diversity in local workplaces, and to prevent the occurrence of racism and discrimination against ethnic minorities or other vulnerable groups.

11. Development in Adjacent Counties
    Dispersed development in all sectors in adjacent counties is contrary to the Strategic Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area, creates further transportation problems and dilutes the economic potential of Blanchardstown. Local Stakeholders should liaise with Fingal County Council in order to lobby against dispersed development adjacent to the GBA.

12. Social Inclusion
    In the current period of consolidation, local and national bodies that have a direct input into the future development of the Greater Blanchardstown Area should specifically include the objective of achieving balanced economic and social development. Electoral Districts in the GBA that currently have high rates of unemployment and early school leaving, with poor public transport provision, will continue to fall behind other districts unless specific measures are taken to identify the root causes of the social and economic difficulties, and specific actions are taken to address these causes. Addressing these issues is not only desirable from a civic point of view, but will in the long-run have a direct and positive impact on the attractiveness of the area to employers, investors and residents. It is recommended that local stakeholders liaise with Fingal County Council to conduct an assessment of all social inclusion initiatives currently ongoing, to identify any gaps that need to be addressed specifically for the Greater Blanchardstown Area.

13. Social Cohesion and Education
    The rate of early school leaving, at 20.4% in 2002, while improved, is still much too high relative to other urban areas both in Ireland and in Europe. This high rate of early school leaving not only reduces opportunities for individuals, but also has an impact on the attractiveness of the area to prospective employers and inward-investors. With Ireland aiming to become a ‘knowledge economy’, areas such as Blanchardstown will have to identify the reasons local young-people leave school so early, with early intervention at the primary level a major component in any plan to address the problem. It is recommended that local stakeholders consider an initiative to monitor and improve educational retention rates, working with Fingal County Council, the Fingal County Development Board, the Department of Education and Science and the local VEC. The objective will not be to duplicate existing initiatives, such as the Fingal Learning Forum, but to assist in their implementation or augmentation where these directly affect the Blanchardstown area.

2.6 Conclusion
    The Greater Blanchardstown Area has emerged successfully from a decade of phenomenal growth. It is a vibrant area, with a large, young population, a strong economic and industrial base, and excellent local amenities. A survey of local enterprise has indicated that businesses have a very positive view of the Greater Blanchardstown Area, although they have specific concerns in relation to issues such as transport. Because it is such a young area (in terms of population, housing and infrastructure), until now most planning has been prepared by external bodies ‘for’ Blanchardstown rather than ‘by’ local stakeholders.

It is now time to consolidate the growth, and to ensure that a sustainable economic and social environment is created. The next ten to twenty years will see a period when the children born in the area enter the school systems, and when their parents will begin to develop a community. This is now the time for the people, organisations and enterprises of the area to begin defining their vision for the future, rather than having it defined for them. We hope that this analysis, and the initial recommendations, will help to instigate the discussion of this vision at a local level within the Greater Blanchardstown Area.
3.0 History and profile of the area

3.1 Brief history of Greater Blanchardstown

Blanchardstown and Castleknock functioned as small rural villages in County Dublin until the late 1960s. At this time, the only major employer in the vicinity was the James Connolly Memorial Hospital, built during the 1950s. By the early 1970s, a modest amount of suburban housing development had taken place in the immediate vicinity of the two villages, although the adjacent settlements of Mulhuddart and Clonsilla remained rural in nature.

During the 1970s and 1980s, the Greater Blanchardstown Area, consisting of Blanchardstown, Castleknock and a number of adjacent districts, experienced rapid population growth resulting from large-scale private and local authority residential development in the area. This was a direct result of the highly influential Wright Report of 1967, which predicted a population of 1.3 million for Dublin in 1991 and recommended housing the bulk of the expected population increase in four self-sufficient new towns to the west of the built-up area of the city (Wright, 1967). The report was informally adopted by Dublin County Council in their 1972 County Development Plan with some modifications.

The development strategy subsequently led to the inception of three satellite towns for Dublin - Tallaght, Ronanstown (Lucan merged with Clondalkin) and Blanchardstown. Each town was to contain a final population of around 100,000 persons and housing development was to be based upon the ‘neighbourhood unit’ principle, with each unit being composed of its own school and shopping facilities in a self-contained manner for a population of c.5,000 and surrounded by wide expanses of open space in order to separate one unit from another.

Of the three satellite towns, Tallaght was the first to develop and was followed by Blanchardstown. The three ‘towns’ grew in a rapid manner as the 1970s and 1980s progressed but the residential functions were not adequately provided with services or transport infrastructure. The planned ‘towns’ never achieved self-sufficiency (being too close to Dublin city) and became peripheral, poorly planned suburbs. In many cases, large local authority housing schemes in these locations became isolated enclaves of relative deprivation. The expected industrial employment did not materialise to the extent envisaged and Blanchardstown waited until 1996 for its long-planned Town Centre to open. Castleknock, meanwhile, grew rapidly as an upmarket suburb but also lacked many facilities, particularly with respect to public transportation.

During the 1990s the Greater Blanchardstown Area began to achieve its original objective as a major centre in the Dublin Region, enjoying the benefits of the general economic growth during this period. Much of the land zoned for industry and commercial development that lay idle during the 1980s was developed for high-technology industry and the completion of critical transportation infrastructure, including the Blanchardstown Bypass and the MSO link to Dublin Airport, greatly enhanced the accessibility of the area.

The opening of the Blanchardstown Centre in 1996 consolidated the role of the GBA as a major suburban centre and acted as a catalyst for further retail development in the area. The opening of the Blanchardstown Institute of Technology further reinforced the importance of the GBA and added a critical third level educational presence that had been lacking.

Currently, the Greater Blanchardstown Area continues to attract new investment and residential development but at a reduced level compared with the peak of the recent economic cycle. There is a changing focus from growth to the need to maintain the economic competitiveness of the location on a regional, national and international basis.

3.2 Profile of population and economic activity

The Greater Blanchardstown Area (GBA) is defined as an agglomeration of the suburban centres of Blanchardstown and Castleknock and the surrounding districts of Mulhuddart, Corduff, Ballycoolin, Tyrestellown, Damastown, Clonsilla, Carpenterstown and Luttrelstown.

This area is located approximately 10 kilometres Northwest of Dublin City centre within the South-western portion of County Fingal. The area functions essentially as both a residential suburb for Metropolitan Dublin and as a major employment centre within the Greater Dublin Area. For the purposes of this study, Greater Blanchardstown is delineated by a number of EDs (Electoral Divisions) situated between the Dublin City and County Meath boundaries.
3.0 History and profile of the area

Greater Blanchardstown is characterised by large, low density housing estates dating from the 1960s to the present, surrounding the historic villages of Blanchardstown, Castleknock, Mulhuddart and Clonsilla. The focus of Greater Blanchardstown is the Town Centre and surrounding retail parks. The area is bisected by the N3 Dublin to Ballyshannon route and this route roughly divides the area into a primarily residential zone to the south and industrial area to the north. The built-up area of the GBA forms a wedge shape of development extending from the Phoenix Park at the Dublin City Boundary in a North-western direction to the Meath County Boundary. The form of the GBA essentially isolates it from the adjacent suburbs of Finglas/Ashtown and Palmerstown/Lucan and is unique in Dublin, giving the area an increased sense of identity.

The Greater Blanchardstown Area has experienced rapid population and economic growth in recent years, benefiting from the economic boom of the 1990s to transform itself from a physically isolated outer suburb of Dublin into a strong employment and retail centre. The population of the GBA stood at 70,027 in 2002, representing a 28% increase on the 1996 population of 54,547 (CSO, 2003). The distribution of population is uneven throughout the area, with the greatest population resident in the Blakestown Electoral Division (ED), reflecting the developed nature of this particular ED. In contrast, the Tyreestown ED is characterised by the least population due to its largely undeveloped, rural nature. The uneven spread of development in the Area is readily discerned from the varying population densities in the different sections of Blanchardstown. Population density is greatest in the Delwood Electoral District, at 45.5 persons per hectare and is lowest for Abbotstown ED with only 2.2 persons per hectare. The overall density of population and housing in the GBA is relatively low, at 19.8 persons per hectare (see graph below).

**Figure 1 Population of Electoral Divisions in the Greater Blanchardstown Area, 2002**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Electoral Division</th>
<th>Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abbotstown</td>
<td>2,537</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blakestown</td>
<td>24,404</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coolmine</td>
<td>9,202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corduff</td>
<td>4,346</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delwood</td>
<td>4,599</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mulhuddart</td>
<td>1,833</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roselawn</td>
<td>2,043</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tyreestown</td>
<td>1,653</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Castleknock – Knockmaroon</td>
<td>14,859</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Castleknock – Park</td>
<td>4,561</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Greater Blanchardstown Area</strong></td>
<td><strong>70,027</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: DIT analysis of CSO Census 2002 data.
4.0 Population and demographic trends

The population of the Greater Blanchardstown Area totalled just over 70,000 in Census 2002, at 70,027 persons, representing growth of 28% since 1991. Compared to a growth rate of 8% nationally and 6.1% for Dublin it is one of the fastest growing areas in Ireland. To place the size of the GBA in context, the population of Galway city in 2002 was 66,163, the population of Limerick city was 86,998 and the population of Waterford was 46,736.

The current population of the GBA is more than double the population in 1981 and population is currently increasing by circa 4.7% per annum, over 3.5 times the national rate of population increase. The GBA now accounts for 6.2% of the population of the Dublin Region and 36% of the total population of County Fingal.

**Figure 2** Population of Greater Blanchardstown Area, 1981 - 2002

![Graph showing population growth from 1981 to 2002](image)

Source: DIT analysis of CSO Census 2002 data.

The overall population growth of Blanchardstown masks internal population changes which in turn reflect demographic and development patterns. The population of particular EDs (Electoral Divisions) within the GBA has increased at rates substantially in excess of the overall rate, with a 61% increase taking place in the Blakestown ED, a 47% increase in Mulhuddart ED and a 34% increase in the Castleknock-Knockmaroon ED (Source: CSO, 2002).

The rapid population growth is a reflection of the extent of housing construction in these electoral divisions, with substantial development taking place in the Mulhuddart-Clonere (Blakestown ED) and Carpenterstown (Knockmaroon ED) in particular (see Graph below). Of interest in the results of Census 2002 is the notable population decline in the EDs of Roselawn and Castleknock Park, with population losses between 1996 and 2002 of 11.2% and 5.8% respectively. The population losses in these EDs reflects a maturing of the older sections of Greater Blanchardstown Area, with the children of the original house purchasers in these districts reaching house-buying age and moving out of the vicinity. Population loss in such areas will impact on the use of schools and other service facilities and will result in an increase in the age profile of these Electoral Divisions.

**Figure 3** Population change in Greater Blanchardstown Area ED's, 1996 - 2002

![Bar chart showing population change](image)


At current growth rates, population in the Greater Blanchardstown is expected to reach 83,000 by the next Census (2006) and attain 100,000 by 2011. The table below illustrates the projected growth in population in the GBA assuming the continuation of current growth rates.

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4.0 Population and demographic trends

Figure 4 Population projections for Greater Blanchardstown Area, 2002 - 2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Projected Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>116,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>100,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>83,280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>73,340</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002*</td>
<td>70,827</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Actual population recorded in Census 2002

4.1 Employment trends

Data recently released from the CSO indicate that the Greater Blanchardstown Area has greatly benefited from the increase in employment (and corresponding decrease in unemployment) since the previous Census in 1996.

The total labour force in the GBA in 2002 was recorded as 36,574 persons. 62% of the labour force was classified as at work, with 4.8% classified as unemployed, 12.4% classified as students and 11.1% in the home duties category, with only 4.1% classified as retired.

The overall rate of unemployment belies the differences in the unemployment rate within the GBA between the individual Electoral Districts (EDs), which in turn indicates the level of socio-economic disadvantage in parts of the GBA. The Tyrrellstown ED, for example, had the highest unemployment rate in the GBA in 2002, at 23%. The adjoining Muthuddart and Corduff EDs recorded unemployment rates of 17.5% and 16% respectively, indicating that problems of social exclusion, inappropriate skills and low educational attainment have persisted in these areas, despite the overall fall in unemployment since 1996.

At the opposite end of the socio-economic spectrum are the Castleknock Electoral Districts, Knockmaroon and Castleknock Park, which recorded unemployment in 2002 at 4.3% and 4% respectively (BAR, 2003).

In terms of the occupational profile of the Greater Blanchardstown Area, the majority of the population resident in the area were employed in the commerce category (at 33.8%), compared with 24% employed in the same category in 1991. The next largest employment categories are professional services, at 16% and manufacturing at 14.9%. Agriculture employs a negligible percentage of the GBA workforce (0.4% in 2002) reflecting the urban nature of the area.

Figure 5 Occupational structure of the Greater Blanchardstown Area, 1991 - 2002

Source: DIT analysis of CSO Census 2002 data.
5.0 Transportation

Transportation forms a critical element in the economic infrastructure of localities and regions and is strongly linked to almost all other land-use and economic functions. The Greater Blanchardstown Area is served by a number of different transport modes, including aviation, roads, bus services and a railway line. The survey of business perceptions in the Greater Blanchardstown Area identified transportation as the single most important and pressing issue facing the area. It was also highlighted as a major issue during the recent consultation process conducted by Fingal County Council in their preparation of the Fingal Development Plan 2005 - 2011. In this section we review the current infrastructure provision along with planned and proposed projects.

5.1 Transport usage

Transportation was found to be the most important issue among enterprises and institutions in the Greater Blanchardstown Area from the main phase of the study in 2003. In terms of the mode of travel to work, school and college, the majority use private cars (at 54.3%), followed by travel on foot (18.3%), bus (16%), train (4.5%) and bicycle (2.2%).

There have been notable changes in the distance travelled to work, school and college between 1991 and 2002, with the expected increase in distance travelled borne out by 6.6% of GBA residents travelling over 15 miles in 2002 compared to 3.7% in 1991. The majority of GBA residents (31.3%) travel between 5 and 9 miles to work, equating with the distance to the traditional Central Business District in Dublin City Centre and Dublin 4. However, 49.4% travelled between 5 and 9 miles in 1991, indicating a lessening dependence on the traditional Central Business District for employment, which can be explained by an increasing proportion of the GBA population now travelling to a variety of destinations elsewhere in the Greater Dublin Area.

A very interesting and less expected trend is that there has been rapid growth of GBA residents travelling under 4 miles to work which increased from 30% in 1991 to 42.5% in 2002. This trend must reflect the growth of employment opportunities locally in addition to a wider decentralisation of employment during the 1990s. The Census 2002 data is summarised in the graph below:

Note for Figure 7

It must be noted that two differing methodologies were used for collecting traffic data in the vicinity of the N3-M50 interchange. Data from the N3 Blanchardstown Bypass was collected during 2001 using manual counts by a field researcher and data from the M50 was collected from electronic automated traffic counting stations.

![Figure 7 Graph of Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) on the M50](image_url)

Source: CSO SAPS 2002 data

5.2 Road infrastructure

During the initial development phase of the Greater Blanchardstown Area during the 1970s and 1980s, very little road construction took place. Access and distributor roads were built to service the large new housing estates but the through routes in the area remained deficient in alignment and traffic capacity, resulting in traffic congestion, particularly in the vicinity of Blanchardstown Village. The first phase of the M50 C ring motorway, the Western Parkway incorporating the Westlink toll bridge, opened in 1990 and greatly increased the transportation cohesiveness of west Dublin. The main N3 route, which bisects the GBA, was improved to dual carriageway standard in 1991 and the related Clonee bypass opened the following year, resulting in a greatly improved traffic flow in the area. The M50 was extended to Dublin Airport with the opening of the Northern Cross section in 1996, linking the GBA directly to the airport. The improvements due to these road projects, however, have in recent years been eroded by the massive increase in car traffic volumes in the area. Traffic volume data compiled by the National Roads Authority illustrated the scale and extent of the recent growth in car traffic in the GBA. Between 1997 and 2002, the Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) increased by over 60% on the M50 between the West Link toll bridge and the N3 interchange, from 48,490 vehicles in 1997 to almost 78,000 estimated for 2003.
5.0 Transportation

The AADT volume on the N3 Blanchardstown Bypass was measured at 74,000 in 2001 and is estimated to be close to 80,000 for 2003. Traffic volumes are also measured on the M50 immediately north of the M50 interchange and these also have grown rapidly in recent years (see Table 3 and the corresponding graph below).

Table 1 Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) on the M50 immediately South and North of the N3 interchange

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>M50 West-link bridge to N3 junction Counter</th>
<th>M50-N3 junction to N2 junction Counter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>77,822</td>
<td>83,287</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>75,333</td>
<td>80,698</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>72,225</td>
<td>78,442</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>67,751</td>
<td>74,282</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>64,622</td>
<td>69,863</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>58,476</td>
<td>62,132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>48,490</td>
<td>51,535</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: National Roads Authority

5.2.1 Current road projects
The current road construction schemes underway or at proposal stage essentially involve capacity enhancement and improvement to existing routes and new local link routes to alleviate traffic congestion generated by housing development at certain junctions (Dublin Transportation Office, 2001). The most significant road projects for Greater Blanchardstown are outlined below.

5.2.1.1 M50 capacity enhancement
The key road projects for the GBA include the second Westlink Bridge, built as a Public Private partnership arrangement and opened to traffic in September 2003. It is also planned to upgrade the M50 motorway by widening the carriageway to six lanes and enhance the junctions to ensure a free flow of traffic. This proposal was scheduled to be completed by 2006 under the National Development Plan and the DTO strategy but due to the current fiscal environment, it will be delayed to an indeterminate period beyond 2006. The National Roads Authority (NRA) has recently announced that the M50 will be widened between the N4 Liffey Valley and N7 Red Cow junctions by 2007, but the scheduling of widening the remainder of the route remains uncertain. The significance of this delay becomes apparent when it is considered that the Dublin Port Tunnel will be completed in early 2005 and will result in an additional c.10,000 heavy goods vehicles using the M50, adding to existing congestion.

5.2.1.2 Outer ring road
The Outer Ring Road will connect Tallaght to Dublin Airport and will run approximately 3.5 kilometres outside the M50. The route was first proposed in the Strategic Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area (1999) and is designed to relieve traffic pressure on the M50. Construction has begun on the first phase, from Tallaght to Lucan, and is due for completion in 2005. The second stage of the Outer Ring will run from Lucan, cross the Liffey Valley and will traverse Blanchardstown using the existing Blanchardstown Roads North and South (invoking a widening of the existing roads). The route will cross the N2 and will join the existing M1 North of Dublin Airport. The importance of the Outer Ring Road to Blanchardstown is significant, as it will form a second direct road access from the area to Dublin Airport. The route will also relieve pressure on the existing N3/M50 junction, as traffic, in particular heavy goods vehicles, will be able to access the Airport directly from the industrial areas of Damastown and Ballycoolin/Rosemount. The construction schedule of the second phase of the Outer Ring is uncertain, however, and the DTO does not envisage its completion before 2010.
5.0 Transportation

5.2.1.3 M3 Clonoe to Kells motorway

The proposal to upgrade the N3 between Clonoe and Kells to motorway standard has been advanced with the confirmation by An Bord Pleanála of the Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) for the scheme. Construction is expected to commence in 2004 or 2005, depending on funding. Whilst the road project is located outside the Greater Blanchardstown Area, its provision will increase the accessibility of the GBA from the North-west of Ireland.

Table 2: Indicative Road Projects/Proposals in the Greater Blanchardstown Area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scheme</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Link road from Coolmine to Riverwood</td>
<td>Opened June 2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Westlink second bridge</td>
<td>Opened September 2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ratoath Road realignment incl. new roundabouts</td>
<td>Nearing completion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cruisrath Road</td>
<td>Under construction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ongar Distributor Road</td>
<td>Under construction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Link route from Mulhuddart to N2</td>
<td>At proposal stage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M50 widening and capacity enhancement</td>
<td>At proposal stage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dublin Outer Ring Road</td>
<td>- DTO target date of 2006 but likely slippage due to funding difficulties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Southern Stage (Kingswood to Lucan)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- construction commenced 2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Northern Stage (Lucan to Swords)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- scheduled for completion by 2016</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Dublin Transportation Organisation (DTO).

5.3 Bus services

The Greater Blanchardstown Area is served by a number of bus services that operate routes radiating from Dublin city centre, including routes 37, 38, 39 and 70. These bus routes were extended and enhanced over the previous decades in a gradual fashion to service the housing development and population growth in the area. A significant development in the bus service was the introduction of the Quality Bus Corridor (QBC) for the Clonsilla to city centre 39 route. The QBC upgrade involved adding bus lanes to the Navan Road and other sections of the route between Blanchardstown and the city centre and the provision of increased frequency services along this route. Local (internal) bus services are catered for by the 237, 238 and 239 routes, which act to link outlying housing estates to the Blanchardstown Centre. Orbital bus services are represented by the 220 and 76A routes which link Blanchardstown with Ballymun and Tallaght respectively.

(Map: DTO Strategy 2000-2006)
5.0 Transportation

A number of very large companies operating in the GBA operate their own bus services to transport employees to and from their operations. A number of these companies indicated that it would be preferable for Dublin Bus to serve their operations as operating private services are costly.

Data supplied by the DTO indicates that passenger journeys on the Blanchardstown Quality Bus Corridor, have increased since the route 39 QBC was developed. The number of passengers using the bus route 39 before the QBC was installed stood at an average of 20,383 during the morning rush hour (between 7.00am to 9.14am) on weekdays. The corresponding number of passengers using the route in November 2002 was 33,886, representing an increase of 66% on the pre-QBC figure (DTO, 2003).

Simultaneously with the increase in bus passengers using the 39 route following the opening of the QBC was a reduction in car traffic on the route, from an average of 5,963 between 7.00am and 10.00am in 1997 to a corresponding figure if 5,559 in 2002. Thus the volume of car traffic on the route of the Blanchardstown QBC between 1997 and 2002 declined by 6.8%. The average bus journey time on the Blanchardstown QBC during the morning peak during November 2002 was measured by the DTO as 37 minutes from the New River Road to Ormond Quay.

However, the Blanchardstown QBC should be benchmarked against others in the city to evaluate its performance. The best performing QBC is the Stillorgan Road 46A route, which uses the hard shoulders of the N11 Stillorgan Dual Carriageway for bus lanes in both directions. From before the opening of the QBC to November 2002, the number of passengers using this route during morning rush hour increased by 300%, from 9,769 to 39,092. During the same period, the number of cars using the route declined by 33%. The Blanchardstown QBC has resulted in greater usage of buses, but it performs less successfully than the Stillorgan and a number of other QBCs in Dublin.

The following issues regarding bus services were raised during the survey of local businesses:

- Lack of sufficient frequency for certain bus routes, in particular the 38 and 70 routes, which are serving rapidly developing residential areas.
- Lack of a quality orbital bus route, linking the GBA with Dublin Airport, Lucan, Clondalkin and Tallaght areas.
- The current 220 and 76A routes are not satisfactory.
- Bus services for the industrial/business parks need to be improved.
- Bus service schedules should be more closely linked to the production shifts of companies in the area, particularly the routes servicing industrial areas.
- There is a need for more bus shelters, particularly in the vicinity of industrial and business parks.
- New housing development at Ongar/Littlepark requires a dedicated bus service.
- Traffic "pinch points" are compromising the efficiency of the 39 QBC route and are causing delays, in particular the junction at Coolmine road and Cionsilla road.

5.4 Rail infrastructure

Blanchardstown is served by the Dublin to Sligo rail line, which carries both mainline inter-city rail services and the suburban service between Dublin and Maynooth. The suburban rail service was upgraded in the early 1990s with the addition of new rail stations, including Castleknock and Coolmine. Since 2000, the service has been upgraded further, with the doubling of track between Cionsilla and Maynooth permitting an increased frequency of services and the addition of new rolling stock. In addition, the rail stations along the route have been upgraded with the lengthening of platforms, new shelters/ticket kiosks and real-time train arrival message signage.

[Map: DTO Strategy, 2000 - 2016]

Legend:
- Suburban Rail on Surface
- Underground Interconnector
1 Upgrade to 3/4 track from Connolly to North junction
2 Upgrade to twin track and electrification of Maynooth line
3 Upgrade to 3/4 track & electrification of Kildare line
4 Resignalling & platform construction
5 Underground Interconnector
6 Heuston East Well Junction
7 Spar to Navan
8 Level crossing closures

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The catchment of the rail service, however, is reduced by the geographical location of the line, which is situated close to the southern extremity of the GBA. In addition, most of the housing in the catchment area is low density, with the exception of a small number of new schemes in the vicinity of Coolmine/Carpenterstown. The efficiency of the rail line is compromised by the fact that the Blanchardstown centre is over 1.5 kilometres from the nearest station and the Institute of Technology is situated over 3 kilometres from the nearest rail station. Plans exist to develop a spur line to link the Blanchardstown Centre with the rail network, but the timing and exact specification of this proposal is uncertain. The DTO plan to further upgrade the Dublin to Maynooth service between 2003 and 2006, but a full upgrade to DART standard involving electrification is not scheduled to occur until the 2006 to 2010 horizon.

Proposals also exist to extend the rail service to Navan through the provision of a new line (actually the reinstatement of an abandoned line) from Clonsilla to Navan. The significance of this project to Greater Blanchardstown would be the servicing of the new housing areas of Ongar and Hansfield and would open up the possibility of a feeder bus service to Damastown. In addition, the provision of a dedicated rail service to Navan is expected to reduce the growth of car-based commuter traffic on the N3. The DTO schedule of this project was for its implementation by 2010 (DTO, 2001). The Strategic Rail Review (2002), however, did not include this project as a short to medium-term objective.

Note: Except for existing rail stations and planned LUAS Lines A, Band C stops, all other stations are for illustrative purposes only.

(Map: DTO Strategy, 2000-2016)

5.4.1 Dublin METRO

(Map: DTO Strategy, 2000-2016)
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A METRO service is proposed for Dublin, with the spine of the system running from Swords/Dublin Airport to Shanganagh via the city centre. It is proposed to extend the proposed Dublin METRO service to the GBA as part of the second phase of the METRO project, through the provision of an orbital line to connect the city centre with Blanchardstown, Clondalkin and Tallaght. In addition, the METRO would interchange with the Dublin to Maynooth service at Porterstown, with positive implications for developing retail and commercial services at such a location. The provision of a METRO service to the GBA would act as a catalyst for significant commercial and high-density residential development, potentially attracting enterprises that are currently clustered in Dublin city centre. The DTO strategy indicates a construction phase from 2006 to 2010 but due to fiscal difficulties this target is likely to be postponed indefinitely.

5.5 Air access

5.5.1 Dublin Airport

Dublin Airport functions as the principal international gateway to both Dublin and Ireland and is the most important transportation resource for the Greater Blanchardstown Area.

Dublin Airport acts as the largest single employer in County Fingal. It is estimated that in 2001 Dublin Airport directly supported c.14,500 full time jobs and generated €295 million of annual income locally and supported c. 26,000 full-time jobs and generated €904 million for the Greater Dublin Area as a whole.

It is estimated that the Airport will support c. 18,000 full-time jobs and generate €625 million (at 2001 prices) in County Fingal, including the GBA (Aer Rianta, 2003).

The number of scheduled and chartered air services operating from Dublin Airport has increased dramatically in recent years and by autumn 2002, scheduled and chartered airline services offered at least 130 destinations. The Dublin to London air route, in particular, has been identified as the busiest intra-EU air route with over 4.5 million passengers carried annually (Eurostat, 2001). Facilities at Dublin Airport have recently undergone a series of extensions to cater for rapidly increasing passenger traffic, which reached 15.1 million in 2002.

5.5.2 Economic importance of airports

A region cannot be marketed as a centre for establishing major new businesses without an efficient air transport infrastructure (Air Transport Action Group, 1997). Airports tend to act as magnets for various service and industrial enterprises and generate direct economic benefits by providing employment in various activities at the airport and through ancillary services. Indirect and ‘spin-off’ benefits from airports include the local economies of the areas in which the airport employees reside.

5.5.3 Air passenger trends at Dublin Airport

Air passenger traffic growth at Dublin Airport has occurred at a very rapid rate in recent years. The growth in passenger numbers using the airport reflects the deregulation of commercial aviation activity within the EU and the recent surge in economic growth in Ireland. Over the ten year period between 1992 and 2002, passenger traffic volumes at Dublin Airport have increased by 150%, or an almost threefold increase in volume, from 5.8 million passengers per annum in 1992 to almost 15.1 million in 2002. This rate of growth is unprecedented and ranks Dublin Airport one of the fastest growing airport facilities on a global basis. The graph below plots the rate of growth in passenger numbers:

![Graph showing passenger traffic at Dublin Airport, 1972 - 2002](image)

Source: DIT analysis of Aer Rianta Statistics

5.5.4 Future passenger traffic growth at Dublin Airport

Passenger traffic volumes at Dublin Airport have increased by over 11% annually in recent years. If such growth rates continued at a similar level to the 1991 to 2001 period, passenger traffic volumes at Dublin Airport could
5.0 Transportation

attain a level of 20 million by 2006. This rate of growth, however, is unlikely to continue, as many airports which have grown rapidly over a five or ten year period (as has happened in the case of Dublin) have experienced a reduction in the rate of passenger traffic growth subsequent to the period of very rapid growth. Indeed, the annual rate of passenger traffic growth at Dublin Airport declined from 9.9% between 1998 and 1999 to 3.5% between 2000 and 2001. At current rates of growth, passenger numbers are still expected to exceed 20 million by 2008, posing challenges to provide new facilities to keep pace with demand.

5.5.5 Air cargo operations at Dublin Airport
Air freight is a sector which has been enjoying rapid growth rates for the past decade. The vast majority of cargo handling agents are located in the vicinity of Dublin Airport, located in industrial estates near the airport, while an additional number of cargo agents are located along the M50 C-Ring motorway corridor, including the Greater Blanchardstown Area. This spatial pattern of cargo agents suggests that physical proximity to Dublin Airport is a highly important factor in their operations in terms of speed and efficiency. Indeed, there is evidence that logistics operations have developed into a cluster in their own right, servicing adjacent industries.

5.5.6 Air cargo trends at Dublin Airport
Freight traffic at Dublin Airport grew rapidly during the Celtic Tiger boom years of the 1990s, but experienced a decline since 2000. The volume of cargo processed at Dublin Airport during 2002 was estimated to be 116,739 metric tonnes, compared to 115,023 metric tonnes processed in 1992 but representing a decline of 27.8% on the 2000 figure of 115,023 metric tonnes. Even with the decline, there was an 86% growth rate over this ten-year period.

Figure 9 Freight traffic at Dublin Airport, 1972 - 2002


The fact that many large multinational information technology firms located in the Greater Dublin Area during the 1992 to 2002 period was closely linked to the ability of Dublin Airport to respond to the demand for increased air freight. The ability of the airport to meet this demand has been a major factor in the continuation of the location of large foreign firms in the Greater Dublin Area.

5.5.7 Air cargo issues
The Faculty of the Built Environment DIT carried out a survey of users of air freight services in 1999. Most firms interviewed for the 1999 study were relatively satisfied with the current cargo handling operations at Dublin Airport. However, a number of improvements were suggested:

→ Full Boeing 747 capacity was seen as highly desirable, as many firms use containers customised for upper deck 747 storage.
→ Interviewees indicated they would prefer increased dedicated cargo services. Currently, some firms have to fit the schedule of their cargo movements around the schedules of passenger air services.
→ The range of destinations served by the air cargo services directly from Dublin Airport was identified as limited. There is a need for additional direct cargo services to key hub locations in the US and to the US West Coast in particular.

5.5.8 Surface access issues at Dublin Airport
There are two public road access points to Dublin Airport on its eastern side - a T-junction from the old Swords Road and further north, a roundabout linking the National Primary Route N1 and M1 motorway to the airport. The N1/M1 route plays a key role as the Dublin to Belfast road and therefore traffic using this route has increasingly come into conflict with traffic accessing the airport. No rail link currently serves Dublin Airport and the only form of public transport serving the airport are Dublin city buses, with a dedicated direct “Airlink” airport to city centre service which has commenced in recent years and a private “Airbus” service. The only alternatives to the bus services for passengers and airport users are taxis and private cars. The construction of the M50 C-Ring motorway has greatly increased accessibility to the airport from western and southern parts of Greater Dublin, but has also compounded the traffic congestion problem. The recent opening of the M1
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Motorway to Dundalk has relieved pressure on the access roundabout to the airport, although the lack of a dedicated high-speed rail link to the airport remains apparent.

5.5.9 Current development proposals for Dublin Airport
The decade prior to 2003, many aspects of the physical infrastructure of Dublin Airport were upgraded, including:

- The extension of the existing passenger terminal to handle 20 million passengers annually.
- The Pier C boarding area.
- Refurbishment to Pier A and the airside of the Old Terminal.
- Addition of multi-storey and long-term car parks.
- Extension of aircraft aprons.

Major proposed elements of the future expansion of Dublin Airport reflect the necessity to maintain the ability to accommodate further growth in passenger numbers, which are expected to exceed 20 million by the end of the current decade with 30 million passengers projected for 2020. In order to meet expansion requirements, Aer Rianta is preparing a new development programme for Dublin Airport. Major proposed infrastructure developments include:

- Pier D, a low-cost boarding facility for budget air operators which will accommodate 12 aircraft stands and project from the Old Terminal building. Despite receiving planning permission for An Bord Pleanala, the development of Pier D remains uncertain due to proposals for a new terminal.
- A new passenger terminal, the most likely location of which is to the North of the existing terminal, is currently proposed although currently uncertainty exists as to whether the terminal will be operated by Aer Rianta (currently being re-organised) or an independent body.
- The METRO rail link between Dublin Airport and the City Centre. The recent budgetary climate has repeatedly caused the delay of this facility, although new legislation is being proposed by the Department of Transportation that would significantly reduce the time and cost of design and construction of the link.
- The Environmental Impact Statement for a new east-west runway, constructed to the same category as, and parallel to, the existing east-west runway was completed in 2002 and a Planning Application to Fingal County Council for this facility is to proceed this year (2003). It is expected that the new runway will become operational in 2008.

5.6 Transportation - key issues and priorities
Transportation was identified as the most important issue by the companies and institutions interviewed for Phase 1 of the study. Among the major issues were the following:

- Worsening traffic congestion and its effect on journey time reliability, particularly at the M50/N3 interchange and in the vicinity of Blanchardstown Centre and Village. The opening of the Port Tunnel in 2005, coupled with the expected postponement of capacity enhancement to the M50 will result in worsening traffic congestion.
- The lack of an orbital bus service, linking Blanchardstown with the western suburbs of Dublin and Dublin Airport compromises accessibility of the area from relatively adjacent suburbs, particularly Lucan/Palmerstown and Finglas. The implementation of this type of service, therefore, is a priority.
- Internal public transport within the Greater Blanchardstown Area is insufficient. In particular, there is a need to service the industrial areas with an improved service. The possibility of developing a feeder bus service to link rail stations on the Dublin to Maynooth line to major retail and employment centres should also be explored.
- There is a lack of alternative quality road provision between the industrial/business parks and Dublin Airport. Currently, traffic is funnelled onto the already congested N3 and the N3/M50 roundabout. The construction of the second phase of the Outer Ring Road, connecting the GBA to Dublin Airport, should be brought forward to provide relief on the N3 and M50 routes.
6.0 Housing in the Greater Blanchardstown Area

Until the 1990s, when the area experienced significant inward industrial and commercial investment, the Greater Blanchardstown area was overwhelmingly residential in nature. Low-density housing estates developed between the late 1960s and the present, both private and local authority, continue to dominate the physical landscape of the GBA.

6.1 Profile of housing and households
Census 2002 amassed comprehensive data on housing information, which can be analysed at local area level, some of which unfortunately is unavailable until the release of the Housing Report (Volume 13) at the end of April 2004. This information will be vital in discerning the nature of the housing stock in Blanchardstown since the last comprehensive housing data was collected in 1991, when the population of the GBA was less than 70% of its current figure. Despite the limitations caused by the delayed Census 2002 publication schedule, it is still possible to discern housing trends affecting Blanchardstown by examining the available Small Area Population Statistics along with housing construction statistics for County Fingal as a whole, as Blanchardstown accounts for 36% of the total population of Fingal.

6.1.1 Housing profile in Fingal as a whole
Between 1994 and 2002, new housing construction in County Fingal increased by 185%, with 4,308 housing units built in 2002 compared to 1,530 in 1994 (Dept. of Env. and Local Government, 2003). In 2002, new housing output in Fingal accounted for 34% of the total in the four Dublin local authorities and since 1998 new housing construction in Fingal has led the other local authorities in Dublin (see graph on the following page). The greater share in house construction enjoyed by Fingal is largely attributable to its greater amount of land zoned for residential purposes, itself a function of greater availability of open rural land.

The type of housing provided has been changing in recent years with a greater proportion of increased density housing in the apartment and terraced categories coming on stream. In 1996, semi-detached housing dominated housing output in Fingal, accounting for almost 79% of housing built that year. In contrast, apartments and terraced housing accounted for 71% and 3.6% of total housing output in Fingal in 1996. By 2002, the impact of the guidelines on residential density and higher land values are reflected by a dramatically changed nature of housing completion. Apartments and terraced dwellings accounted for 29% and 28% respectively of housing built in Fingal during 2002 with semi-detached housing making up only 33% of completions.

Figure 10 New housing production in the Dublin region, 1994 - 2002

![Graph showing new housing production in the Dublin region, 1994 - 2002.]

Source: DIT Analysis of Dept. of Env. & Loc. Govt. (DeELG) Housing Statistics

Figure 11 New housing production in Fingal by house type, 1994 - 2002

![Graph showing new housing production in Fingal by house type, 1994 - 2002.]

Source: DIT analysis of DeELG Housing Statistics.
6.0 Housing in the Greater Blanchardstown Area

6.1.2 Housing stock in Greater Blanchardstown

The built stock of housing in the Greater Blanchardstown Area is also experiencing significant changes. In 1991, the housing stock of the area was overwhelmingly dominated by conventional housing, either detached, semi-detached or terraced which accounted for 98% of housing in the GBA. Apartments accounted for an almost negligible percentage of housing (0.6% in 1991). Although conventional housing still dominates the GBA today (94.8% in 2002), apartments now account for 4.6% of the housing stock.

The GBA is also marked by housing of recent construction, with only 4.4% of the housing stock in the area built before 1960 and this reflects the recent development of the GBA in comparison to other areas of Dublin. Conversely, the remainder has been built since 1961 with 31% of housing built between 1996 and 2002.

Figure 12 Age profile of the housing stock in the Greater Blanchardstown Area, 1994 - 2002

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre 1960</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961-1960</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961-1980</td>
<td>20.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981-1995</td>
<td>31.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996-2002</td>
<td>30.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: CSO SAPS 2002 data.

6.2 Household characteristics

The number of households in Fingal was recorded in Census 2002 at 60,872, with an average household size of 3.18 persons per dwelling (CSO, 2003). This is slightly above the national average of 2.94 and the Dublin average of 2.86 and can be accounted for by the higher number of young families with children resident in Fingal. Household size has been falling in recent decades, in line with trends in the developed world, and the average household size in Fingal has dropped from 3.83 in 1986 to 3.18 in 2002 (CSO, 2003). Declining household sizes are reflected in an increased number of single person households and married and co-habiting couples with no children. There is much anecdotal evidence to suggest that many young people are now purchasing houses individually prior to marriage and, upon moving to one dwelling, let the vacated dwelling out for investment purposes. A comprehensive analysis of household composition is expected to reveal additional details behind the main trends.

Before detailed household composition data became available for the Greater Blanchardstown Area, the study team had estimated that approximately 22,020 households were established in the GBA, with the growth in households outstripping population growth for the reasons described in the previous paragraph (in fact the estimation was very accurate because, as discussed below, the actual number of households is 21,365). It was estimated that the number of households in the GBA has increased by almost 100% between 1986 and 2002, in comparison to population growth of 63% for the corresponding period (see Table 4 below).

Table 3 Preliminary analysis of population and household trends in the Greater Blanchardstown Area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Households</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>43,055</td>
<td>11,212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>49,284</td>
<td>13,320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>54,547</td>
<td>15,811</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>70,027</td>
<td>22,020</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Growth Rate  62.6%  96.4%

Source: DIT analysis of CSO data.
6.0 Housing in the Greater Blanchardstown Area

6.2.1 Household formation in Greater Blanchardstown
According to the 2002 Census, there are 21,365 households in the Greater Blanchardstown Area, which is in very close agreement with the estimate arrived at by the research team in September 2003, before Small Area Population Statistics (SAPS) data was available. Between 1991 and 2002, the number of households in the GBA increased by 70% (from 12,544 to 21,365) compared to population growth of 42% for the corresponding period, indicating that household growth was almost double that of population. Rapid household growth means that demand for housing in the GBA, as in other areas, will continue to outstrip population growth and thus the steady supply of adequate development land for housing will need to continue in the medium-term.

This growth of households has been accompanied by declining household sizes, from 3.84 persons per household in 1991 to 3.24 in 2002. The average number of persons per household in the GBA, however, remains slightly above that of the State as a whole (at 2.94) which is a function of a greater number of young families with children resident in the area.

Closely linked to falling household sizes has been the significant increase in one and two person households. 13% of households in the GBA consist of one person, an increase compared to 9.8% in 1991. An additional 16% of households comprise of a husband and wife or cohabiting couple in comparison to a corresponding figure of 10.7% in 1991. The majority of households are couples with children, but the proportion of these declined from 60% in 1991 to 43.8% in 2002. Households defined as two or more persons that are non-related, typically consisting of young single persons sharing accommodation, has increased its share of GBA households from 3% in 1991 to 7% in 2002. Households that consist of one mother with children (popularly described as “single mother” households) increased from 7.4% to 8.6% as a proportion of all households between 1991 and 2002.

Figure 13 Compositions of households in the Greater Blanchardstown Area, 1991 & 2002

The overall trend, therefore, is towards smaller households, a declining proportion of traditional nuclear families (couples with children), an increase in single parent households and increasing numbers of single persons sharing a dwelling.

6.3 Housing activity by type of housing tenure

6.3.1 Privately developed housing
Housing construction has led to the development of major parts of the Greater Blanchardstown Area in recent years. Virtually all of the housing stock of the GBA has been developed since 1965, making the area one of the most recent suburbs in Dublin. The location of housing development reflects the location of zoned building land and since 1990, the main areas of house-building activity have been the following locations:

→ Littlepace/Castaneaney/Onagar
→ Carpenterstown/Luttrellstown
→ Tyrrelstown
→ Mulhuddart/Castlecarragh

Housing developers have increasingly switched from developing semi-detached housing laid out on monotonous straight cul-de-sacs to more varied forms of housing, including increased-density schemes with a mixture of apartments, terraced townhouses and more traditional house types. This move away from semi-detached housing is evident in recent housing statistics and is partly a response to recent guidelines to local authorities on housing densities (MacCabe, 2001), the increased cost of development land and the need to capitalise on higher land prices and the changing nature of housing demand.
6.0 Housing in the Greater Blanchardstown Area

6.3.2 Fingal County Council housing strategy 2001-2005

Under Part V of the planning and Development Act 2000, all local authorities must prepare a housing strategy that will identify the need for social and affordable housing and make provision for its inclusion in the development plan. Fingal County Council produced their housing strategy in 2001 and the main provisions relating to the GBA are the following:

→ 16,415 housing units are expected to be developed between 2001 and 2011, representing a population of circa 46,000 accommodated in the ten-year period to 2011. Of these, 1,600, or just under 10% of these houses are to be social housing (Fingal County Council, 2001).

→ An important objective of the housing strategy is to counteract undue social segregation, and this will be achieved by the development of mixed-tenure housing developments incorporating private, social and affordable housing.

→ The maximum set-aside for social and affordable housing in Fingal in 15% of the total development, although this objective may not be reached due to the successful repeal of this aspect of the planning legislation by housing developers in late 2002.

→ Voluntary/Co-operative housing agencies are playing an increasingly important role in providing social housing. In the GBA, locations where voluntary/co-operative housing is being provided include the following locations - Tyrrelstown (NABCO, 100 units); Parslickstown (Respond/Focus Ireland, 100 units); Blanchardstown (Focus Ireland, 100 units and Sonsas, 8 units).

Despite the uncertainties surrounding the successful implementation of mixed-tenure housing schemes under Part V legislation, Fingal County Council have been very proactive and flexible in negotiating with developers to provide social and affordable housing in a number of schemes. The most prominent of mixed-tenure development is the newly completed Castlecarragh scheme where the local authority entered into a Public Private Partnership with Shannon Homes to provide circa 400 shared-ownership and affordable dwellings between 2001 and 2003. In addition, Fingal are involved in developing another 400 units under this scheme in South Tyrrelstown and have recently completed 115 social and affordable units on an in-fill site in the Whitestown/Sheepmoor area.

6.3.3 Issues in relation to housing

→ The underlying trend in housing has been a decrease in average household size, a corresponding increase in the household formation rate and changing demand for housing. Implications of this trend include a need for more housing units in excess of population growth and increased demand for smaller housing units.

→ Despite the early success of a number of PPP schemes to deliver social and affordable housing, it will be more difficult to develop this type of housing in existing residential areas. A particular case in this regard will be Castleknock, where the local authority plans to reserve the full 15% set-aside in new developments for social/affordable housing in an area of high social class status and which has no history of social housing.

→ Housing is perceived as being more affordable in the Greater Blanchardstown Area than in other Dublin locations but high house prices continue to push purchasers out to commuter locations in surrounding counties. Companies based in Blanchardstown indicated that a significant minority of their workforce reside in Meath, North Kildare, Louth and Westmeath.

→ Little data exists in relation to both the volume and quality of private rented accommodation in the Greater Blanchardstown Area. A significant component of the workforce of many international companies, particularly those with customer services divisions, are foreign and transient in nature. This group of foreign workers relies on the private rented sector for housing and may not be able to avail of the choice and quality offered in other locations in Dublin.
7.0 Land-Use and transportation planning policy

This section examines the various land-use planning and development strategies that affect the direct development of the Greater Blanchardstown Area.

7.1 Relevant strategy and policy guidelines

Overall there are seven Planning and Strategy documents relevant to the Greater Blanchardstown Area:

→ Fingal County Council Development Plan 1999-2004
→ Fingal County Council Retail Strategy
→ Fingal County Council Housing Strategy
→ Fingal Development Board Strategy 2002-2011
→ Strategic Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area (SPGGDA)
→ National Spatial Strategy
→ European Spatial Development Perspective

Currently, the Greater Blanchardstown Area falls directly under the remit of three strategy and planning guidelines, namely:

→ The National Spatial Strategy 2002-2020
→ Strategic Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area (SPGGDA)
→ County Fingal Development Plan 1999-2004

These strategies all have a bearing on the future pattern of development within the GBA, with the Fingal Development Plan of particular importance. The role of the GBA as a major centre within Metropolitan Dublin is confirmed in these strategies, with an emphasis on developing the area in a sustainable manner; through the provision of the following:

→ Increased housing densities, located adjacent to high-quality public transportation routes and the introduction of mixed-use development to counteract commuting journeys by private car.
→ Consolidation of Blanchardstown, making the best use of infrastructure already provided for.
→ Re-development of existing brownfield and infill sites.

7.2 Fingal County Council development plan 1999-2004

Under the development plan, which acts as the current plan for County Fingal until the 2005-2011 Plan is introduced in 2004, the Blanchardstown/Castlemnock area is designated under the Urban Development Strategy in addition to other urban areas in the County including Swords, Malahide, Balbriggan and Howth/Sutton. The Development Plan indicates a number of objectives in their Urban Development Strategy, including:

→ To optimise employment opportunities and reduce social exclusion
→ Provide facilities and employment adjacent to housing in order to reduce commuting and other car trips.
→ Concentrate development in specific areas and thus increase the opportunities for the provision of public transport and other non-car transport modes.
→ Provide urban-based alternatives to one-off urban-generated rural housing.
→ To channel development which will generate large numbers of trips (i.e. offices, retail centres, etc.) into locations with good existing or planned public transport access.
→ To site developments which generate large numbers of HGV/goods vehicle trips (i.e. factories, logistics/distribution centres) close to major roads.

7.2.1 Specific development objectives for Blanchardstown / Castlemnock

Under the Fingal County Council Development Plan 1999-2004, the Blanchardstown/Castlemnock area is recognised as the largest urban settlement in County Fingal and its current status will be retained, with the area developing as a social, cultural and local tourism centre. The Development Strategy is thus for Blanchardstown to continue to provide for growth in the county for residential, industrial and commercial development. The Development Plan indicates that the primary area for future development is located to the north of the existing town and it is proposed to retain the ultimate target population of the Blanchardstown/Castlemnock area at 100,000 people (this target figure was first proposed under the Wright Plan for Dublin in 1967).

The Development Plan notes that much of the zoned industrial land in Blanchardstown is committed for development and considers the additional zoning of lands for industrial purposes necessary in order to provide for the general availability of industrial land. The primary development objectives for the Blanchardstown/Castlemnock area are listed below:

→ To encourage the development of a wide range of employment opportunities in Blanchardstown.
→ Improve the physical character and environment of the town.
→ Secure the development of Blanchardstown Town Centre as a major shopping and service centre.
→ Encourage major service employment activities into Blanchardstown.
→ Encourage major office development in the town centre.
7.0 Land-Use and transportation planning policy

- Facilitate and support the development of Blanchardstown Institute of Technology, including the development of a Research and Innovation Centre.
- Retain the individual identity of Blanchardstown by maintaining its physical separation from Lucan, Finglas and Ashdown by the retention and addition of Green Belts.
- Preserve and enhance the character of the villages of Blanchardstown, Castleknock, Clonsilla and Mohuddart.
- Improve the character and environment of Castleknock village for the purpose of it acting as a social, service, recreational and tourist centre whilst at the same time conserving its unique character.
- Facilitate an enhanced rail station and rail services.

7.3 Fingal County development plan 2005-2011

Fingal County Council are currently preparing the next County Development Plan, which will guide physical development in the county for the years 2005 to 2011. In advance of the finalisation of the Draft stage of the forthcoming Development Plan, Fingal County Council and SIAS Ltd, have produced a Land-Use and Transportation Master Plan for the Greater Blanchardstown Area which will form a key input into the development of the 2005-2011 Plan.

7.4 Strategic planning guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area

The Strategic Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area designates Blanchardstown as a major centre within the Metropolitan Area of the GDA. Development, therefore, is to be consolidated through the use of greater housing densities and improved public transport. Blanchardstown is also located on the Dublin to Navan route, designated as a Future Transportation Corridor in the SPG and a National Transport Corridor in the National Spatial Strategy.

Of major importance is the favourable positioning of the Greater Blanchardstown Area adjacent to Dublin Airport and the Dublin to Belfast Economic Corridor, recognised in all of the spatial planning documentation. Blanchardstown is well placed to take advantage of the emerging corridor of economic development between Dublin and Belfast.
8.0 Education in the Greater Blanchardstown Area

Education plays a critical role in the social and economic development of countries and regions. At one level, education is a central driver of economic growth - for example, major employers are attracted to an area that has a pool of educated, skilled workers.

On another level, the management of education provision plays a key role in overall social policy. For example, if an area has a history of high-unemployment and low incomes, one of the tools that can be used to improve future opportunities is to improve access to, and the quality of, education.

8.1 Primary and second-level education

The Greater Blanchardstown Area is served by a number of educational facilities ranging from crèche/play-school level through to a third level institute. Primary and secondary schools range from local community colleges to private schools and church-run schools. The secondary school profile of the GBA reflects the socio-economic environment of the area. In addition, there is evidence that some children in the area attend secondary schools located outside of the study area.

Currently it is estimated that there are 13,350 primary and secondary level students attending 28 schools which are located in the Greater Blanchardstown Area, with 7,711 at primary level (accounting for 58% of the total) and a further 5,635 students standing second-level schools (BAP, 2003). Primary schools on average enrol fewer children than secondary schools, with an average number of 350 children for each primary schools in the GBA, compared to 939 students per secondary school. This pattern indicates that usually more than one primary school “feeds” pupils into each second-level facility and reflects land-use planning strategy which has aimed to serve each defined local population base, or “neighbourhood unit,” with one or more primary schools, which in turn combine to support a secondary institution.

It should be noted that the school population of the GBA does not match the age cohorts of school-going age living in the area, as a number of children resident in the GBA attend school outside the area and, conversely, some children resident outside the GBA attend school in the area.

8.2 Third level education - Institute of Technology Blanchardstown

Third level education in the Greater Blanchardstown Area is provided by the Institute of Technology Blanchardstown (ITB), which opened in 1999 with an investment of €50 million. The development of the Institute is taking place on a phased basis, with a student population of 3,000 projected upon completion of the third phase of development. Currently, the ITB caters for a student body of almost 2000 students, of which 1000 are full-time, 400 are part-time and 384 are completing apprentice trades.

The strategic goals of the institute are:

⇒ To focus attention on meeting the needs of the Greater Blanchardstown Area and its immediate environs through increasing participation in third-level education and training and by developing research, consultancy and other additional activities, which will further enhance its economic development objectives.

⇒ To develop a flexible and innovative approach to course development for the purpose of allowing easier access to courses by both school-leavers and mature students.

⇒ To ensure that mature students and other non-standard applicants constitute a significant percentage of the student population.

⇒ To enter into partnership arrangements with other education providers and industrial and commercial interests to advance the above objectives and, in particular, to provide access routes to third-level education.

The ITB is meeting its strategic objective of providing for the needs of the GBA, with some courses having 80% of student intake either living or working in the local area.

It has been noted that certain districts in the GBA were characterised by low participation rates in third level education and priority has been attached to developing foundation courses and catering to demand from mature students who may not originally have completed second-level education.

8.2.1 Courses and awards

The Institute awards post-graduate and primary Degrees, Diploma, Certificate, and Foundation Certificate courses, as well as supporting post-graduate research. The principal courses provided by the ITB are delivered by the following Schools:

⇒ Informatics and Engineering:
  • Computing
  • Engineering
  • Mechatronics
  • Horticulture
  • Apprentice trades

⇒ Business and Humanities:
  • Business Studies
  • Languages
  • IT
  • Social Care

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8.0 Education in the Greater Blanchardstown Area

8.2.2 Links with local enterprise
The Institute of Technology Blanchardstown operates a number of partnership arrangements with other third-level institutions and locally-based enterprises, including the following:

- The Institute Trainee Programme offers employers an opportunity to address technical skill needs by either up-skilling existing employees or recruiting persons who will acquire a technical qualification through the programme. Both IBM and Intel employees have participated in this programme.
- The Accelerated Technician Programme is designed to address key technician skills of the Irish economy and to offer a mechanism for up-skilling of existing employees.
- The Graduate Diploma in Computing is an innovative new programme to be offered using a blended learning approach consisting of workshops, on-line and self-study materials. This programme is designed for degree holders who want a skills conversion path to an IT environment.
- ITB became a Cisco Regional Academy in 2002 with a view to extending access to this training to more students in the wider Dublin area. A partnership has been created with a number of Colleges of Further Education in the city of Dublin and bordering counties. The partnership now offers industrially certified courses in order to provide access to relevant IT knowledge and skill-sets.
- The M50 Enterprise Platform Programme is run in co-operation with DCU-invent, Nova-UCD, IT Tallaght and Enterprise Ireland.
- Several funded research projects in conjunction with Multinationals, Indigenous firms and State Agencies are underway.
- ITB provides customised training programmes to local industry.
- ITB has developed an Access programme with primary and secondary schools to encourage interest in third-level education at the earliest possible stage.

8.3 Educational attainment in Blanchardstown
In terms of education completed for the entire Fingal area, participation levels show a gradual increase over the period 1991 to 2002 for those who have completed third-level. Figures for Fingal are now above the national average. This may be partly linked to the increased provision of third level places within North Dublin over the period in question at both the Institute of Technology, Blanchardstown and Dublin City University.

Figure 14: Highest level of education in the population over 15 years of age in Fingal, 1991 - 2002

[Bar chart showing education levels]

Source: Analysis of Census 2002
- 1991
- 1996
- 2002

More specifically, the highest level of education attained in the Greater Blanchardstown Area population over 15 years of age has increased markedly in the 11-year period from 1991 to 2002. 35.5% of the GBA population over 15 achieved a third level qualification in 2002 compared to a corresponding figure of 23.2% in 1991.

Figure 15: Highest level of education completed in the Greater Blanchardstown Area, 1991 - 2002

[Bar chart showing education levels]

- 1991
- 2002
8.0 Education in the Greater Blanchardstown Area

Coincidental with the increase in third level graduates has been the decline in the proportion of population with primary education only, from 15.6% in 1991 to 13.0% in 2002 (see graph on previous page). A further 20.4% of the GBA resident population finished school at Junior Certificate level in 2002, a slight decline from the corresponding figure of 23.1% in 1991, but this remains a relatively high percentage. The issue of early school leaving and how to effectively address it should be an area of focus when planning for the future competitiveness and growth of the Blanchardstown Area.

8.3.1 Education and Social Cohesion

In recent years the national education policy emphasis has shifted from the provision of general educational infrastructure towards integrating education with economic development. In tandem with this policy goal, greater emphasis has also been placed on reducing the social inequality of educational opportunity, and to use educational provision to enhance social cohesion. There is a recognition that in order to reduce social segregation in Irish education, early intervention is required to identify children at risk of abandoning the education system, with the attendant difficulties this can create in terms of unemployment and general reduced opportunities, both for the individuals and their communities.

As with all major urban centres in Ireland, one problem identified in previous studies of education in Blanchardstown is the high early school dropout rate for students from areas of socio-economic disadvantage. Research shows that early school leaving is an accurate predictor of future unemployment, social and economic exclusion and the increased likelihood of poverty and relative disadvantage.

To address this problem, local agencies and schools have developed and implemented a number of initiatives to tackle educational disadvantage and prevent early school leaving since the early 1990s (BAP, 2003). These educational support schemes entail a number of interventions at different stages of the educational cycle. Funding for these programmes comes from a variety of sources, including the Northern Area Health Board (NAHB), the Department of Education and Science, the Blanchardstown Area Partnership (BAP), the Gardaí and other agencies. The BAP in particular, has acted to co-ordinate and cross-inform the agencies involved in such schemes. The programmes that are in operation include the following:

→ OASIS Programme
→ Blakestown and Mountview Neighbourhood Youth Project
→ Blakestown and Mountview Youth Initiative
→ WEB (Working to Enhance Blanchardstown)

8.3.2 Opportunities and Challenges in Education

Issues with regards to education in the Greater Blanchardstown Area include the following:

→ The recent introduction of the Institute of Technology into the Greater Blanchardstown Area is a very welcome development. Its rapid growth to date promises an improvement in the educational attainment and skill levels in the area. The development of a number of linkages to local enterprise and other educational institutions, coupled with a programme of fostering research activity and entrepreneurial “spin-off” benefits at such an early stage of development indicates a strategic approach to development that will result in tangible benefits.

→ The rapidly growing population of the area in tandem with the concentration of younger demographic age cohorts in the Greater Blanchardstown Area pose challenges for existing educational facilities to expand to meet increased demand. Planning for the provision of child-care and crèche facilities in particular should take the changing demographics into consideration.

→ Demand for primary school places in particular will be very strong in locations experiencing rapid housing development, including the districts of Ongar, Littlepace, Carpenterstown and Tyrrellstown. Consequent to a rapid growth of primary school-age children in the newer sections of the GBA, declining population in certain older districts will result in falling numbers of school pupils.

→ The introduction of a range of measures to address the problem of early school-leaving and low educational achievement is to be welcomed, although it should be viewed as a beginning. It is imperative, for the problem of early school-leaving and low educational attainment to be successfully addressed, that intervention measures are developed at primary level in order to identify children with learning and other difficulties and to break a cycle of low educational standards and expectations.
The Blanchardstown Centre was planned to act as the primary focus of retail and service facilities for the "new town" of Blanchardstown since the Dublin County Draft Development Plan 1972, which designated Blanchardstown, Tallaght and Clondalkin as three self-sufficient "New Towns". The present site of the centre was designated for that purpose during the 1970s, but due to economic stagnation nationally the area did not develop sufficiently to support a major town centre until the 1990s. The Blanchardstown Centre was developed between 1994 and 1996 by the Green Property Group and opened in October 1996 as the first phase of a wider development of the area. In a regional context, the centre represented the second major regional shopping centre to be built in Ireland, preceded by the Square in Tallaght (1990) and followed by Liffey Valley (1998). The centre serves a wide catchment area extending into Counties Meath, Kildare, Louth and most of suburban Dublin. The accessibility of the centre via the recently improved road network has been critical to its success.

The Blanchardstown Centre contains over 150 retail outlets, with the key anchor units occupied by Dunnes Stores, Roches Stores and Penneys. The shopping centre hosts a mix of "high street" retail outlets that are commonly found in the city centre including a number of high-profile fashion boutiques. Essentially, the centre has made the GBA self-sufficient in retail facilities with the possible exception of highly specialised outlets. A 9-screen multiplex cinema, crèche and an oratory are also located in the centre. The success of the Blanchardstown Shopping Centre is evident from the subsequent development that has taken place in the vicinity. Since 1996, the surrounding sites have been developed for a variety of town centre related uses, including three retail parks, warehousing outlets catering largely to the bulk goods sector, the Dalrochta arts centre and library, the Leisureplex centre, two drive-through fast-food outlets and two bars. A number of office buildings have been developed adjacent to the centre including a landmark 11-storey tower block.

Currently, the centre employs over 4,000 staff with the number predicted to rise to 5,500 in the near future (Blanchardstown Centre, 2002). According to a marketing report prepared in 2002, the centre attracted an estimated 13.4 million persons in 2001-2002, a significant increase from 8.6 million in 1996-1997, the first year of operation. During 2001, the centre attracted 277,500 average weekly shopping visits and an estimated 50,000 visits to the associated retail parks and leisureplex. In terms of property market value, the Blanchardstown Centre was valued at €3,390 per sq. metre, placing it third in terms of retail property value in Dublin after Grafton and Henry Street respectively. This makes the centre the most valuable suburban shopping centre in Ireland.

Since the centre was originally developed, a Penneys outlet has opened and an additional level was added to the south surface car park. Currently, the Red Mall is being extended in a c. 9,300 sq. metre development by Green Property with Marks and Spencer to open their fourth major outlet in Dublin in this development. The Marks and Spencer store will occupy 5,574 sq. metres of space and will contain a food hall and clothing department. It is expected that the Red Mall extension will begin trading in late 2004.

9.1 Transportation issues for the centre

The Blanchardstown Centre acts as the transport focus of the Greater Blanchardstown Area and the local road network is oriented accordingly. A number of radial and local bus routes serve the centre, including the key 39 radial service which operates on a QBC (Quality Bus Corridor), routes 76A, 220, 239, 238, 237 and 270. The centre is positioned to take maximum benefit from the adjacent road network and parking is generous with over 6,500 free parking spaces (Blanchardstown Centre, 2003). The dependency of the centre on the private car as a means of access is reflected by great majority of visitors to the centre (81%) using this mode of transport in 2001. A further 10% of visitors accessed the centre by bus and 9% walked. The high level of car use is evident in the traffic congestion that is common on the perimeter route system at the centre, particularly at weekends. The wide market catchment area of the centre is evidenced by the results of a market survey indicating that 57% of visitors came from North Dublin, 15% from South Dublin, 10% from County Meath, 6% from Counties Kildare and Louth and 12% from other locations.

Figure 16 Visitors to the Blanchardstown Centre by origin

![Diagram of Visitors to the Blanchardstown Centre by origin]

The closest rail station to the centre is almost 2 kilometres to the south, at Coolmine and currently there is no dedicated feeder bus serving the centre from this location.
9.0 The Blanchardstown Centre

9.2 New Fingal County Council civic offices
New civic offices are planned for a site immediately adjacent to the Blanchardstown Centre between the existing Draíocht Arts Centre and the Leisureplex building. It is currently envisaged that these offices will be completed and occupied in 2005. The development will comprise of 16,000 sq. metres of space, 8,800 sq. metres (or half) of which will be commercial office space and the remaining half occupied by Fingal County Council as civic offices to provide an administrative focus for the GBA. The facility will be built in a partnership arrangement between Fingal County Council and a private developer on land owned by the council. The civic offices are intended to strengthen the presence of the County Council in Blanchardstown and approximately 350 staff will be based in the building involved in housing, transportation, water drainage and a legal department. Staff from the planning department will also be located at the civic offices, which will be linked directly to the Blanchardstown Centre.

9.3 Blanchardstown Centre - key issues
→ The Blanchardstown Centre has acted as a catalyst for the further development of the Greater Blanchardstown Area since its inception. Prior to the opening of the centre, the GBA was poorly served by retail facilities and the centre has enabled the area to become self-sufficient in terms of retail choice. The rapid development of the adjacent retail parks is an indication of the success of the core centre and has further reinforced its attraction to shoppers in the Greater Dublin Area and further afield.

→ The sitting of the Library, the Draíocht Arts Centre, Leisureplex, offices and high-density residential developments in the vicinity of the centre has consolidated the location's town centre function for the GBA and this will be further enhanced with the completion of the Fingal County Council civic offices. This outcome was a key objective of the 1972 Dublin County Development Plan and subsequent planning policy.

→ Despite the success of the centre, and in many ways as a direct result, a number of negative consequences, either perceived or real have emerged, including traffic congestion and displacement of retail activity.

→ Traffic congestion on the route system directly serving the centre, in particular, the modal split for visitors to the centre is heavily skewed towards private car usage. It is thought that the congestion generated by traffic has impacted on adjacent areas, including the N3 and M50 routes and Blanchardstown Village. The worsening traffic congestion will have to be addressed, through short-term measures which would explore a range of options including a possible one-way system on the perimeter road, priority bus and taxi lanes and a dedicated feeder bus service to Coolmine and other rail stations to schedule with train timetables. Longer-term solutions will require a re-balancing of the modal split of access, with an increased emphasis placed on high quality bus services, the potential development of a rail spur from the existing Dublin to Maynooth line and the development of a park and ride facility at the centre. The relationship between the centre and the proposed Dublin Metro network, which is planned to serve the GBA, also needs to be examined.

→ The success of the Blanchardstown Centre has almost certainly had an impact on the retail functions in Blanchardstown Village and the older, earlier shopping centres in the area including Roselawn and Superquinn. Research needs to be carried out to determine the relationship between the Blanchardstown Centre and older retail locations. In particular, any research in this regard should identify a strategy for the centre and the older shopping locations to complement, rather than compete, with each other.

→ In a built environment context, the Blanchardstown Centre, despite boasting a wide range of activities, lacks a sense of urban cohesion typically associated with older town centres. The physical relationship between the centre and Blanchardstown village is lacking, and isolates one from the other. The lack of connectivity between the centre and the village may have impacted negatively on the village and further research is required to determine the village/centre relationship. The future direction of development could adopt a more consolidated approach, with a stronger pedestrian connection between the centre and the village. Examples of successful mixed transport and pedestrian consolidation from other similar sized urban areas in Ireland and Europe should be reviewed to see if they can act as potential templates for Blanchardstown.

→ Current retail planning guidelines limit the density of retail development in Blanchardstown and, if a mixed-use urban centre is to be developed in the vicinity of the centre, these will need to be re-appraised.

→ The potential for the Blanchardstown Centre to function as a key public transport node is obvious. In this regard, the issues of providing a park and ride facility and a public transport interchange need to be examined.
10.0 Amenities in the Greater Blanchardstown Area

The Greater Blanchardstown Area, in addition to its economic infrastructure, is served by a number of amenities, including, the National Aquatic Centre (NAC) which is unique in Ireland, a major hospital, and a wide variety of recreational venues, including the Phoenix Park and the Liffey Valley. The principal amenities in the area tend to serve local residents, with the exception of the Phoenix Park, the National Aquatic Centre and the Liffey Valley. There is scope for developing and marketing the GBA as a tourist location, through the development of hotels and restaurants locally, particularly with the imminent re-opening of the Royal Canal from Dublin to the River Shannon.

10.1 National Aquatic Centre and Sports Campus Ireland

The National Aquatic Centre (NAC) was opened in 2003 as part of the proposed Sports Campus Ireland site at Abbotstown and to coincide with the Special Olympics 2003. The NAC represents a major sports and leisure asset to Blanchardstown, as the facility is only one of two in Ireland which features a 50-metre Olympic standard swimming pool, the other being located at the University of Limerick.

The centre functions in a national capacity and includes a leisure pool area in addition to the sporting and training 50-metre pool and diving area. The NAC forms the first phase of the proposed Sports Campus Ireland development at Abbotstown, which was to contain a major new stadium (Stadium Ireland) and other sports facilities. The recent fiscal restraint by Central Government reduced the likelihood of the Sports Campus Ireland project being fully realised, and it was confirmed earlier in 2004 that Lansdowne Road stadium in Ballsbridge would be rebuilt instead of the construction of Stadium Ireland on a green-field site.

10.2 Golf courses

There are 25 golf courses in the general Fingal area (marked with red flags on the map on right), with four of these within easy access of the Greater Blanchardstown Area. These are:

- Westmanstown Golf Club
- Luttrellstown Castle
- Elmgreen Golf Club
- Hollystown Golf Club

10.3 Hotels, restaurants and pubs

Currently three hotels, all of which are located in or adjacent to Castleknock, serve the Greater Blanchardstown Area. Luttrellstown Castle is a period residence and golf club which caters to the upper end of the international tourist market, the Forte Travelodge, on the Navan Road, is a small facility serving road travellers in a budget context. A new hotel The Twelfth Lock has recently opened on the Royal Canal.

The major issue with respect to hotel accommodation is the lack of large hotels with conference facilities catering to business travellers and located adjacent to the Blanchardstown Centre and business parks. During the survey of local enterprise a number of respondents highlighted that business travellers often had to find hotel accommodation in Dublin City Centre and commute to the GBA, which did not help promote the area.

A number of new developments will address this need, including the opening, in 2005, of the Castleknock Hotel and Country Club. This will be a four-star hotel with extensive conference facilities, two restaurants, two bars, an 18 hole golf-course, 20 metre swimming pool and health club. A further major hotel is planned for the Castleknock area for late 2005/2006, Luttrellstown Castle is also planning an extension to its facilities and one other hotel scheme is at planning stage but the current status is unclear.

The Greater Blanchardstown area is also served by a number of pubs and restaurants with most of these being developed in the past decade. There are a variety of restaurants situated in or near Castleknock Village, and a number of new restaurants have opened near the Blanchardstown Centre.
10.0 Amenities in the Greater Blanchardstown Area

10.4 Theatres and cinema

10.4.1 Draiocht
Draiocht is an arts centre based at the Blanchardstown Centre, and it was officially opened in May 2001. Since opening, Draiocht has established itself as a vital part of the expanding cultural life of Dublin 15 and its immediate hinterlands. The multi-purpose venue is used for a broad range of activities, including drama (both professional and community), dance, contemporary visual arts and crafts, multi-media arts activities, classical and traditional music, a programme of activities for families and children, artists in residence schemes, community outreach and education projects. Draiocht also has a Visual Arts Programme. The aim of the programme is to present a broad range of contemporary and modern art practice which includes both the traditional fine arts of painting and sculpture in addition to new media such as digital images, video and photography. Draiocht presents the work of young emerging artists as well as established artists and seeks to include local, national and international artists.

10.4.2 UCI Blanchardstown
The Greater Blanchardstown Area also hosts a 9 screen cinema, based at the Blanchardstown Centre.

10.5 Phoenix Park
The Phoenix Park extends to 710 hectares and is considered to be the largest fully enclosed urban park in Europe. As such, it represents a major recreational asset to the GBA and for Dublin as a whole. A particular strength of the Phoenix Park is the location of several facilities within its boundaries, including the recently upgraded and extended Zoological Gardens, the Peoples Garden, the Furry Glen, the residence of the President of Ireland (Aran an Iachtarain), the headquarters of Ordinance Survey Ireland and the Ashtown Castle visitor centre.

In addition, the park contains the residence of the USA ambassador to Ireland, a number of notable monuments and Cricket, Polo, Football and Hurling grounds. The Phoenix Park also features a number of lakes, streams, ponds and woods that add to its aesthetic value. Immediately adjacent to the Phoenix Park is Farmleigh House, built as a residence for the Guinness family and recently purchased by the Government for the purpose of accommodating visiting foreign dignitaries which is open to the public at selected weekends during the summer months. The Phoenix Park Racecourse, located to the Northwest of the park, was closed in 1990 and a major housing development is to proceed on this land in the near future.

10.6 Liffey Valley
The Liffey Valley area extends westwards from Chapelizod to Lucan and forms the southern boundary of the Greater Blanchardstown Area and is also known popularly as the Strawberry Beds. In tandem with the Phoenix Park, the valley acts to physically separate the GBA from adjacent built-up areas and thus preserves the sense of self-containment of the GBA. This function alone is important from an urban planning perspective, but the valley is also characterised by scenic beauty and has been likened to a scaled-down version of the Vale of Avoca in Wicklow.

The section of the River Liffey that flows through the valley is used for angling and water sports. A number of private houses and pubs are located along the road which acts as the transport spine of the valley. Fingal and South Dublin County Councils have designated the valley as an amenity area, to be preserved from development although the valley is not considered a park in the traditional concept. The West Link bridge traverses the Liffey Valley and in recent years housing development has edged closer to the edge of the valley from the north but the valley itself is protected from development. A major housing development is taking place to the north of Lucan, at Laraghcon, which is situated immediately north of the Valley and was the subject of controversial land rezoning in the early 1990s.

In addition to the Phoenix Park and the Liffey Valley, the Tolka Valley Park provides a local amenity to residents in Mulhuddart and Corduff. The River Tolka has been subject to extensive flooding in recent years and flood alleviation measures are being developed. The Tolka Valley Park acts as the primary public open space serving the mixed-tenure Castlecarragh housing development. The Hartstown Park is located within the Hartstown/Huntstown area and serves local residents.

The Royal Canal is a recreational amenity for walking, boating and fishing and acts as a boundary between Blanchardstown and Castleknock. The canal, once derelict, will shortly re-open to the River Shannon, providing a link for cruising between Dublin and the Midlands.

10.7 Historical monuments
A perception exists that the GBA lacks major historical assets associated with locations such as Dublin City Centre and other historic towns in the region. The GBA, however, contains a number of sites of historical interest that mostly remain undeveloped in terms of tourist access. Such areas of interest include Castleknock Church and Village, Castleknock Castle, Farmleigh House, Ashtown Castle and Blanchardstown Village and Church.
10.0 Amenities in the Greater Blanchardstown Area

10.8 James Connolly Memorial Hospital
The James Connolly Memorial Hospital (JCIMH) was opened in the early 1950s as a facility to treat tuberculosis patients, and its original purpose is reflected in the very low-density nature of the hospital complex, characterised by large grounds and several single-storey outlying buildings. The function of the JCIMH has evolved since the development of the GBA to assume general hospital services and an Accident and Emergency (A&E) department. The hospital is administered by the Northern Area Health Board of the Eastern Regional Health Authority, formerly the Eastern Health Board. The hospital is one of the largest employers in the GBA with circa 1,100 staff and as such represents a major economic asset to the GBA in addition to its critical healthcare role.

The JCIMH serves a catchment of circa 250,000 persons in the North Dublin, Northeast Kildare and South Meath areas and the hospital currently provides c. 400 beds. The hospital is currently undergoing a major redevelopment with the recent opening of major new buildings in a €97 million scheme. The JCIMH redevelopment was part-funded through the disposal of some of its land assets to private developers and a major increased-density housing development is currently being built on former grounds at the western edge of the hospital. The current redevelopment will essentially consolidate the hospital into a land intensive configuration, in line with the other major hospitals in Dublin. The remaining outlying units will be fully disposed by the end of 2004 as part of the redevelopment of the JCIMH into a centralised, modern facility. There are plans to link the JCIMH directly into the National road network through the provision of a new bridge to connect the hospital with the N3 Navan Road although funds are yet to be allocated to this scheme.

10.9 Key Issues in relation to recreational assets
- The opening of the Royal Canal between Dublin and the River Shannon represents an opportunity to market the GBA as a tourist destination. In particular, the canal provides scope for the development of mooring and restaurant/hotel facilities in certain locations.
- Closely linked to the potential of the Royal Canal to act as a tourist “gateway” are the adjacent village cores of Castleknock and Blanchardstown, which could be marketed in conjunction with the canal amenities with the scope of developing tourist facilities including special shopping, accommodation and pub/restaurant amenities. The potential for Blanchardstown village in particular to act as a tourism and entertainment centre in light of the relocation of general retail facilities in recent years to the Blanchardstown Centre merits investigation.
- The lack of hotels in the GBA was identified in the survey completed for this report as an issue to be addressed for the area. The need for adequate conference/meeting facilities as part of a hotel was also emphasised. This need is being addressed with the confirmed and proposed new hotel projects announced for 2005 and 2006.
- The GBA also requires more restaurants and bars, particularly in locations where a “critical mass” of such facilities could strengthen the attractiveness of the GBA in a tourism context.
11.0 SWOT analysis for Greater Blanchardstown

A SWOT Analysis (an analysis of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) is an analytical tool commonly used when preparing long-term organisational strategies.

Strengths and weaknesses generally arise in an organisation's or area's internal environment (present facilities, infrastructure, labour pool etc.) and the opportunities and threats arise in the external environment - these external factors include social, technological, economic, ecological and political (sometimes known as the STEEP factors).

The following sections provide a high-level SWOT analysis based on the information provided in the body of the report. From this SWOT analysis, further recommendations for actions can be developed - e.g. for each Threat, a mitigating action or actions can be identified.

11.1 Strengths

→ Location - GBA is close to Dublin Airport and Port, situated on the M50 route and highly accessible from most of Dublin and Ireland.
→ Contribution of the Institute of Technology Blanchardstown (ITB) to the skills base of the area.
→ Availability of development land for expansion of housing and employment which compares favourably to other parts of Dublin.
→ Availability of skilled Labour Force.
→ The Blanchardstown Centre and its associated facilities (Dráíocht, Leisureplex, Library, etc.)
→ Relative availability and affordability of housing by Dublin standards.
→ No heavy/polluting industry in the area.

11.2 Weaknesses

→ Transport problems - traffic congestion and insufficient public transportation provision (bus and rail).
→ Sense of Identity - the Greater Blanchardstown Area is now equivalent in size to Galway city, but does not have a strong identity among its residents as a unified locality in the way a rural or longer established urban community would have.
→ Urban Cohesion - at the moment, there is a loose linkage between the old village of Blanchardstown and the new Blanchardstown Centre. Visitors regard one as almost entirely separate from the other.
→ Tourism - tourism promotion for the area is uncoordinated, and little advantage is being taken of the unique mix of access to obvious amenities such as the Royal Canal combined with short commutes to the hub of the national road network and a major international airports.

11.3 Opportunities

→ Large development land bank in the Greater Blanchardstown Area - potential for expansion.
→ Reinforcement of the economic clusters in ITC and Pharmaceuticals.
→ Young population - presents opportunities for a large, skilled labour-force and local consumer base for the future.
→ Tourism - there is huge potential for promoting tourism to Blanchardstown and its hinterland, promoting local attractions such as golfing, boating and fishing holidays. The survey indicates there is a significant untapped market for mid-price accommodation, restaurants and bars.
→ Further development of the Small to Medium Enterprise (SME) sector - supports for larger industries.
→ Continuation of upgrading skills and value-added activities - "moving up the value chain."
→ Realising the potential to up-skill disadvantaged youth through educational initiatives - long-term economic benefit to GBA.

11.4 Threats

→ There may be an erosion of the economic competitiveness of the Greater Blanchardstown Area, in tandem with Ireland as a whole, due to increasing costs of transport, office space, high house prices etc.
→ Escalating costs of doing business in Ireland - growth of IT in low-cost countries including India which uses English as a second language.
→ Nationally the electricity supply is close to its maximum capacity and needs to be augmented by more power plants.
→ Over-development of the GBA - leading to worsening congestion.
Economic competitiveness of the Greater Blanchardstown Area

After a period of sustained economic growth nationally, there is now a strong focus on how Ireland can maintain its competitiveness as an open, export-driven economy. A consensus has emerged that in a highly integrated global economy, maintaining Ireland’s competitive position is critical to consolidating the gains made in recent years.

Some of the causes attributed to the recent dramatic expansion of the Irish economy include:

- Favourable corporation tax regime with a facilitative regulatory environment for inward investment
- Large pool of young, educated and flexible labour force
- Ireland as a member of EU permitting unhindered access to key European markets
- Ireland as an English speaking country and the only English speaking member of the euro-zone
- Immigration of large numbers of educated and skilled former emigrants with a high degree of relevant work experience.

Some of the factors perceived to be eroding or threatening Ireland’s economic competitiveness are as follows:

- Ireland is now one of the most expensive economies in the euro zone – partly the result of a prolonged period of inflation at over twice the euro zone average and a reflection of the higher costs of doing business in Ireland which is linked to relatively poor transport infrastructure and house prices which are distorted in an upward fashion
- Rising insurance costs in recent years placed pressure on the profit margins of the Irish SME sector in particular, which lack the fiscal resources of larger companies to absorb extra costs. This situation has stabilised in 2003.
- Poor transportation infrastructure has been a major factor in cost increases, particularly with respect to increased travel times, lost employee productivity through reduced punctuality and increased transportation costs for businesses.
- Pressure from other EU member states for full tax harmonisation with ramifications for Ireland’s low corporation tax rate.
- Recent government funding for research and development activities has grown from a very low level towards a more adequate level in recent years. This amount of funding, however, is coming under increasing pressure as constraints in public finances have emerged, and an interruption in funding in 2002 shook international confidence in commitment to research.
- The historical under-provision of housing with respect to population is reflected in the high level of house prices, particularly in areas offering the greatest economic opportunities, namely Dublin and the other cities. High house prices have deterred continuing immigration and have caused an increase in long-distance commuting as housing demand is exported to areas with lower prices.

The competitive position of the GBA broadly reflects the macroeconomic competitiveness of Ireland as a whole, but with important advantages with respect to location, including:

- Proximity to Dublin Airport, the primary international passenger gateway to Ireland
- Proximity to Dublin Port, the primary gateway for products and materials
- Blanchardstown is adjacent to Dublin City Centre and thus can avail of its facilities (i.e. social, economic, political, educational, recreational and cultural). This advantage is known as “borrowed size.”
- Proximity to the emerging Dublin-Belfast economic corridor
- Location at the axis of the M50 orbital motorway and N3 route
- Proximity to a large and diverse labour market
- Availability of zoned land for industrial, commercial and housing purposes
- Location of the Institute of Technology Blanchardstown

In particular, Blanchardstown has taken advantage of the strong geographical inertia of inward investment in Ireland, due to the deficient state of Irish transport infrastructure. Major industry is reluctant to locate more than one hour’s travel-time from an international airport, with the result that Dublin has experienced a heavy concentration of inward investment and employment growth at the expense of remote rural regions in Ulster and Connaught.

The National Spatial Strategy aims to reverse this trend, but as the forces of economic agglomeration are strong and self-reinforcing in nature, Dublin will continue to attract a disproportionate share of economic activity. The Greater Dublin Area possesses a critical mass of industry, commerce and skilled labour unmatched elsewhere in Ireland. In addition, evidence has emerged that economic clusters have developed in key sectors, including Financial Services, IT and Pharmaceuticals (GEMACA II, 2002).

The Greater Blanchardstown Area has therefore benefited greatly from the Dublin-centric economic growth, particularly with respect to the attraction of major foreign direct investment (FDI) employers into the area. There is a heavy presence of the IT and Pharmaceuticals sectors in the GBA which have developed into a loose cluster of economic activity.
12.0 Economic competitiveness of the Greater Blanchardstown Area

12.1 Threats to competitive position

Despite being in a very strong competitive position in a national context, several factors threaten to erode the competitiveness of the Greater Blanchardstown Area. Some of these factors are national in scope, as discussed previously. Other threats are more local in character, and are outlined below.

→ **Transport Infrastructure**: Transportation difficulties in the area are a concern, as has been noted elsewhere in the report. This affects the cost of transporting goods, as well as lost time due to lengthening commuting times for employees. Foreign locations that can provide superior transport infrastructures will be more competitive.

→ **Public Transport**: The lack of a comprehensive public transport compound the traffic congestion problem. In particular, the lack of regular bus services to the industrial areas and business parks and the lack of sufficient internal bus services have been identified as problems.

→ **Local Rail Provision**: Current plans and schedules for the introduction of the METRO and Luas services to the GBA should be maintained. Any slippage in implementation would impact the competitiveness of the area in the medium to long-term.

→ **Workforce and Skills**: Preparing the local workforce for future skill requirements will be essential for longer-term competitiveness. The opening of the Institute of Technology has had a strong positive impact on local competitiveness. However, there is still a high percentage of local pupils who are leaving the education system at an early age. This problem should be addressed decisively as it will have a major impact on the future competitiveness of the area. A skills requirements analysis should be prepared, forecasting the future needs of the major employment sectors, such as retail and IT.

→ **Rates, Rents and Insurance**: The non-salary costs for enterprise in the area should be monitored and controlled as much as possible. Representative organisations should work with the local authority to keep rates to a minimum, and should lobby government and the insurance industry to control excessive increases in insurance costs. The cost of rents are a factor of available industrial and office space and are falling in real terms at the moment, but local organisations should identify ways in which these costs can be reduced.

→ **Adjacent Localities**: Meath County Council has zoned a large tract of land for industrial/commercial purposes immediately adjacent to the Fingal County boundary, contrary to the Strategic planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area. This proposed development threatens to dilute the economic potential of the Greater Blanchardstown Area. Local organisations, working with the local authority, should investigate if Meath County Council will consider modifying their plans.

→ **Interaction with Local Authorities**: The current goodwill that exists between the various agencies responsible for economic development in the Greater Blanchardstown Area and local businesses (local authority, enterprise agencies, etc.) must be maintained. The facilitative role played by the IDA and Fingal County Council in attracting inward investment should be supported by local stakeholders.

Note that this is a preliminary analysis of the competitive threats for the Greater Blanchardstown Area. In the longer term, a more detailed competitive study should be prepared. As a first step in this detailed analysis, the competition for the Greater Blanchardstown Area should be defined. One definition would be 'similar sized localities in Ireland, Europe and the rest of the world who are competing for the same Foreign Direct Investment, or similar sized localities in Ireland who are competing for the same employers, workforce, retail customers and/or tourists'.

Once it has been made clear who else is competing for which resources, then the competitive threats and competitive advantages of the GBA can be more precisely defined, and corresponding threat mitigation strategies developed.
Bibliography and appendix
13.0 Bibliography and references


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14.0 Appendix A - perceptions of enterprise & services in Greater Blanchardstown

14.1 Introduction
In order to identify the major issues that impact economic development in the Greater Blanchardstown Area, the DIT study team carried out a series of structured personal interviews with representatives of enterprise and agencies in the Greater Blanchardstown Area. Companies interviewed were randomly selected from a database in order to preserve the objectivity of the findings. Enterprises ranged from organisations employing over 1,000 persons to small businesses employing less than 30 staff. In addition, a number of non-enterprise agencies were interviewed as these were significant employers in the area.

The interviewees, who were senior representatives of small and large enterprises in the Greater Blanchardstown Area, believed transportation to be the single most pressing and critical issue affecting their operations. The other issues were important, but the transportation issue dominated all of the interviews. The issues discussed in the interviews have been sub-sectioned into various themes and key issues are presented in a bullet-point format for ease of reading.

14.2 Location of Blanchardstown

14.2.1 Advantages
- Proximity to Dublin Airport
- Situated on M50 and N3 axis - the area is accessible from most of Ireland
- Proximity to City Centre
- Relative proximity to Dublin Port
- Close to major labour pools in Dublin, Meath and Kildare

14.2.2 Disadvantages
- Accessible location of GBA has led to excessive traffic congestion
- Sense that Blanchardstown may be a “victim of its own success”
- Located on the periphery of Dublin
- Sense of physical isolation - lack of an urban “feel” to the area

14.2.3 Transportation and mobility issues
The issues of transportation emerged as the central and most important factor in the economic position of the GBA in the view of those surveyed. All of the interviewees indicated that transportation is a critical function that needs more attention.

In particular, the issues with regards to transportation can be summarised in the following way:
- Traffic congestion at particular locations - the M50/N3 interchange, the vicinity of the Blanchardstown Centre, Main Street in Blanchardstown Village - is viewed as a major and worsening problem. The long tailbacks at the Westlink Toll Bridge on the M50 are also seen as problematic.
- As a direct result of congestion, many employees of businesses in the GBA are using small back roads, unsuitable for significant volumes of traffic, to avoid congestion on the major routes.

14.3 Public transport
- Public Transport in the GBA is inadequate in the view of those surveyed. The unsatisfactory level of public transport provision in the area has been blamed for compounding the traffic congestion problems and restricting the labour force mobility to and from (and within) the Greater Blanchardstown Area.
- Lack of an orbital bus route to connect Swords, North Dublin and Lucan/Lexlip to GBA was highlighted as a problem. Currently, public transport users travelling from the aforementioned locations must travel to and from Dublin City Centre to reach Blanchardstown, increasing journey times and the cost of travel. This situation is acting as a deterrent to working in the GBA for residents of other suburbs.
- The internal public transport system in the GBA is poor. Bus services to the primary industrial/business parks is limited in terms of frequency and connectivity. Currently, many of the larger FDI companies in the area are using private bus services to transport staff, but the SME sector cannot afford such services and their needs are still to be addressed.
- Many companies interviewed believed the bus service to industrial zones needed to reflect the work-shift schedule, which operates in some firms from 5.30 in the morning. The issue of labour force mobility was relatively high on the agenda of the interviewees as this factor affected the availability of labour and their productivity/punctuality.
- The effectiveness of the City Centre to Blanchardstown Quality Bus Corridor (QBC) is compromised by gaps in the provision of bus lanes - particularly between Blanchardstown Village and the Town Centre.
- The lack of bus shelters in the industrial estates was also raised by survey respondents as an issue to be addressed.

14.3.1 Rail services
Interviewees noted that the Dublin to Maynooth ARROW rail service, which serves the GBA, is located at the southern periphery of the area and thus does not maximise its potential usage. Despite recent improvements to the service, including the introduction of new carriages, doubling the track, lengthening station platforms and the addition of real-time information signs, the interviewees felt that more improvements could be made. Among the issues raised were the following:
- The main areas of employment - the industrial zones in the north of the study area and the Blanchardstown Centre - are spatially isolated from the railway line without a feeder bus service between the railway stations and the locations of employment.
- Plans exist for a spur railway line form the existing Dublin to Sligo line to directly serve the Blanchardstown Centre, but the timetable for this proposal is uncertain.
- The proposed rail line for Dublin to Navan has the potential to serve the rapidly growing residential areas of Ongar and Liffissane/Clonsilla. This line could also serve the employment centre at Dunsany using a short-distance feeder bus service. However, the implementation schedule for this project has been indefinitely postponed as it was not included in the short to medium-term plans in the Strategic Rail Review (2003). The Dublin to Navan rail service would link to the Dublin to Sligo line at Clonsilla and was originally recommended in the Strategic Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area (DoE, 1999).

14.3.2 Metro/Luas service
Most of the interviewees were aware that the proposed Dublin Metro service is to serve the GBA but were sceptical of its implementation in the medium-term, particularly in light of the government decision to locate the new National Stadium at Lansdowne Road and cancel Sports Stadium Ireland, planned for Abbotstown. Some interviewees were familiar with plans for a Luas line to serve the area, but again were doubtful of its introduction in the medium-term.

14.4 Road transport
Local roads within the GBA require improvement, according to interviewees. Suggested improvements include the following:
- Increasing the road links from local back roads to the industrial areas (i.e. a link from the Mulhuddart to N2 road, the R121 to
14.0 Appendix A - perceptions of enterprise & services in Greater Blanchardstown

Damestown Industrial Estate). This measure would reduce pressure on the current access points to industrial areas and the MSO/N3 interchange roundabout.

→ A slip road at the MSO/N3 roundabout for traffic bound for Dublin Airport/Belfast - this would provide relief from the current congestion at this traffic-signal controlled junction.

→ The road system around the Blanchardstown Centre was noted by some interviewees as being problematic, particularly with regard to the fact that is on the opposite side of the N3 dual-carriageway from the business parks, thus causing congestion on the interchanges and bridges over the N3 at peak times.

→ Road signage is poor in the GBA and needs to be improved. Road signs need to be installed on the back roads into the area.

→ There is a need for a high quality alternative access route from the GBA to Dublin Airport.

14.5 Labour force issues

Overall, the interviewees were satisfied with the labour market situation in Blanchardstown, noting that the difficult recruitment conditions at the height of the economic boom in 1999/2000 had eased in recent years. Some of those interviewed believed that the relative affordability of housing in the area helped sustain a good local labour pool. Some mentioned the problems of long-distance commuting by some of their staff and the effects of congestion on punctuality, but did not consider these as critical issues. They also noted that there were essentially three types of workers:

→ Highly qualified Irish workers, usually third level graduates and returning emigrants.
→ Low skill service employees (i.e. cleaners, security, shop assistants) that come from the more deprived areas of the GBA.
→ Foreign workers from other EU and non-EU countries, which are transient in nature.

14.5.1 Irish employees

The Irish staff consists of highly skilled graduates central to the functioning of the businesses and mid-skilled employees, particularly in the manufacturing sector. Low-skill staff work in service and ancillary functions providing important support for local business. One interviewee believed that the transportation problems in the GBA was hindering the attraction of workers from other parts of Dublin.

Most staff live either in the GBA itself or surrounding suburbs, with a sizeable minority commuting in from locations in Meath, North Kildare and Louth. One issue of importance is the poor level of public transport service provision, especially the lack of an orbital bus route connecting the GBA with Lucan/Leixlip and Swords and the limited bus service to industrial areas.

Most of the interviewees believed that if the bus service was improved, less staff would commute by car and thus congestion may be eased. The interviewees considered Blanchardstown to be an "excellent" location to capture a large, suitable labour market in north and west Dublin, Meath, North Kildare and further afield.

14.5.2 Non-national employees

Some of the largest FDI companies in Blanchardstown employ foreign workers for their language skills and they operate European marketing and service centres in Ireland. These workers have their own particular requirements and characteristics which include:

→ The transient nature of non-national workers.
→ Their age profile is slightly younger than Irish workers.
→ Foreign workers require private rented accommodation, which can be difficult to find in the GBA (although the supply of apartments is improving).
→ Foreign staff in large companies complain of a lack of city "ambience" in the GBA and travel to Dublin city centre for social activities.
→ The lack of cafes, restaurants, affordable leisure activities and night clubs was noted as a primary criticism by foreign staff.
→ The limited bus service to the industrial estates is also a difficulty as most foreign staff do not own a car.

14.6 Housing issues

Interviewees had mixed views on the issue of housing in Blanchardstown, with some who did not live in the area declining to comment on the issue. There was some consensus, however, on the following:

→ Housing in Blanchardstown is relatively available and affordable by Dublin standards, although it is still expensive.
→ There has been a dramatic increase in housing variety and choice in recent years - several new apartment and townhouse schemes have been developed, enriching the housing fabric of the area.
→ The GBA contains housing that caters for all socio-economic groups - from social housing in Mulhuddart/Corduff to executive housing in Castleknock/Cerpenisterown.
→ There is a shortage of rental accommodation that is affordable for low-paid transient service staff in the area.
→ Much of the housing is located too far from essential services and amenities - many estates are monotonous, vast and isolated.
→ Some employees of firms in the GBA are forced to commute from Meath, Kildare, Louth and further afield due to housing affordability problems, but interviewees did not see this as a central issue for the GBA.

14.7 Amenities/facilities issues

Most interviewees noted the GBA has acquired many key amenities and facilities in recent years, including the Blanchardstown Centre, the Draoiacht Arts Centre, Library, New Gerda Station and the new National Aquatic Centre. In addition, Health Clubs were also mentioned as important leisure facilities. Respondents would like to see increased provision of the following amenities:

→ Hotel and conference facilities.
→ Restaurants and pubs.
→ Cafes and places for employees to walk to lunch within the industrial areas - currently the lack of such places forces workers to travel to the Blanchardstown Centre and adds to traffic congestion.
→ Limited postal service (post boxes) in some industrial estates.
→ Well maintained, quality parks.
→ Night clubs.

14.8 Land-use planning issues

Land-use planning in the GBA was viewed as satisfactory by most interviewees. Some pointed out that often infrastructure, particularly transport and bus services, followed housing development and created problems of traffic congestion and isolation for those who stay at home. Many interviewees believe that the original planning for Blanchardstown, which developed during the 1970s and 1980s, at times lacked vision and coordination. The problems of the large local authority estates, where housing was built and no centres of employment or facilities were provided, was seen as legacy of that period.

Interviewees believed that in recent years the local authority had improved its land-use planning approach. There were a number of recommendations for improvement:

→ There is a need for more integrated, mixed-use development with adequate facilities.
14.0 Appendix A - perceptions of enterprise & services in Greater Blanchardstown

→ Facilities, such as cafes, shops etc. should be more spread throughout the residential and industrial areas in order to reduce dependence on the Blanchardstown Centre.
→ The environment of the GBA needs to be enhanced and abuses monitored. Some urban areas are untidy, suffering from littering and unauthorised dumping. These areas need to be cleared to improve the image for business visitors and local enterprise.

14.9 Use of local supports by companies

Most interviewees indicated that they did not have recourse to local supports as an essential aspect of their operations, although the smaller enterprises noted the importance and usefulness of the Blanchardstown Chamber of Commerce in providing opportunities for businesses networking and educational seminars. A small number of enterprises had employees that had been sourced through local employment schemes.

14.91 Schemes and support programmes

A number of respondents highlighted the importance of continuing Community Employment Schemes and Educational Support Programmes. It is believed that community schemes have an important social function but a number of respondents indicated they believe these initiatives play an important economic role as well. In particular, schemes aimed at reducing early school leaving can, in the medium to long term, contribute to the economic competitiveness of the area through the enhancing of the educational attainment and thus the skill base of the locality.

Likewise, the back to work and community employment schemes, aimed to reducing long-term unemployment, can augment the supply of labour available for employment in a given locality in addition to providing the participants with self-esteem and confidence.

14.10 The Blanchardstown Centre

The Blanchardstown Centre has acted as a catalyst for generating self-sustaining economic growth in the Greater Blanchardstown Area and transforming the area from a peripheral, isolated location in Dublin into a self-sufficient town in its own right.

All of the interviewees considered the centre to be a major asset to the GBA and many respondents attributed the current success of the area to the opening of the centre. A lot of the interviewees emphasised that the centre provided a major boost to confidence in the area, through the provision of employment and its critical role in fostering the self-sufficiency and cohesiveness/consolidation of Blanchardstown. Interviewees noted that the only potential 'drawback' of the centre has been the additional car-based traffic adding to congestion in the vicinity. Issues raised in connection with the Blanchardstown Centre include the following:

→ Major asset and strength of the Greater Blanchardstown Area
→ Opening of the Centre acted as a critical catalyst for further inward investment into GBA and the creation of self-sufficiency in terms of services and retail facilities in the area.
→ The Blanchardstown Centre is the largest single employer in the Greater Blanchardstown Area
→ The Centre is highly accessible and is located within a wide catchment area including most of Dublin, Meath and North Kildare.

14.11 Institute of Technology Blanchardstown

Interviewees viewed the Institute of Technology in a very positive light, indicating that the Institute was a major asset of the GBA and that it represented a great opportunity for the future development of the area. Those interviewed were very optimistic about the future role to be played by the Institute, with regard to upgrading the skill base of the area and supporting local enterprise.

14.12 Relationship with Fingal County Council

Almost all interviewees were positive in their appraisal of Fingal County Council, particularly with respect to the facilitative role the Authority played when large firms were seeking to develop facilities in the area. The ease of obtaining planning permission and essential service infrastructure were mentioned by the larger companies.

The interviewees also believed that Fingal had adopted a much more coherent approach to land-use and transportation planning than in recent years. What criticism there was of the local authority was focused on a perceived over-emphasis on the Swords area - there was a perception amongst the interviewees that the GBA was being neglected as a result.

The need for a local administrative structure governing the Greater Blanchardstown Area, such as a town council or town commission, was raised by some interviewees.
## Appendix B - historical event timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1800s</td>
<td>Blanchardstown and Castletown are described by surveys as small villages situated in the Barony of Castletown to the north west of Dublin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>James Connolly Memorial Hospital opens for the treatment of tuberculosis patients</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960s</td>
<td>First private housing estates are developed around Blanchardstown and Castletown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967</td>
<td>Dublin Regional Advisory Plan (Wright Plan) is published, proposing the creation of four new towns to the west of Dublin, one of which is Blanchardstown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>Dublin County Development Plan is published, informally adopting most of the recommendations of the Wright Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coolmine Community School opens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974</td>
<td>Development of Corduff commences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1977</td>
<td>Development of Hartstown and Huntstown commences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>Yamanouchi begins operations at Damastown - represents the first &quot;new generation&quot; company in the area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990s</td>
<td>Greater Blanchardstown Area experiences economic transformation in tandem with the rest of Ireland during the &quot;Celtic Tiger&quot; boom period. Among major companies to invest in the area are 3Com, Xerox and IBM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>Western Parkway motorway and Westlink toll bridge open, forming the first section of the M50 and linking the GBA with the remainder of West Dublin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>Blanchardstown Bypass is completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>Blanchardstown Town Centre opens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Northern Cross motorway (M50) link to Dublin Airport is completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>Leisureplex and first retail park at the Blanchardstown Centre open</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Institute of Technology Blanchardstown (ITB) opens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000s</td>
<td>First increased density and mixed-tenure housing schemes in the Greater Blanchardstown Area are constructed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Draíocht Arts Centre and public library open at the Blanchardstown Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>National Aquatic Centre opens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Refurbished James Connolly Memorial Hospital opens</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
16.1 Introduction

A major study of the Greater Blanchardstown Area (encompassing Blanchardstown, Castleknock and their immediate environs) was carried out by the Faculty of the Built Environment at DIT Bolton Street on behalf of the Blanchardstown Chamber of Commerce. The major objectives of the study were to discern the social and economic characteristics of the area, the concerns, issues and requirements related to local enterprise and the strengths, opportunities, weaknesses and threats facing the area in the medium to long-term. The study assessed the area in light of an increasingly competitive and globalised world economy where locations must retain a competitive edge with the ability to attract and foster new economic activity and project a positive image with a choice of high quality social, cultural, and environmental amenities.

The main phase of the study took place between February and October 2003 and the final report was prepared at the end of this period. Due to unforeseen delays in the publication of the Census 2002 results, it was decided to concentrate research efforts on the collection of non-Census based data and also include the Census 2002 data up to September 2003. Population and household data, therefore, are included in the main report. This addendum includes additional data of a socio-economic nature for Census 2002 (from October 2003 and February 2004) that is of relevance to the GBA. The full results of Census 2002 were not available until late April 2004.

At the completion date of the statistical addendum (including data released up to 13th February 2004) results were mainly only available in aggregate form for Local Authority Areas (alternatively known as Counties). For the purposes of this study, the relevant data involves statistics for the Fingal area. Where it was possible, data was used for the Aggregate Town Areas, which represents the built-up component of Fingal and of which the Greater Blanchardstown Area forms an integral part.

16.2 Age Profile

The age profile of Fingal, of which the GBA forms an integral part, is distinguished by a greater proportion of the population in the younger age and more economically active groups than the national average. Census 2002 revealed that 23% of the population are aged under 14, 17.3% are aged between 15 and 24 years of age and importantly 34% are aged in the 25 to 44 age group which are the prime group for economic activity and wealth generation. Table 3 below illustrated the comparative demographic profile.

Table 4 Age Profile of Fingal and State Population 2002

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Category</th>
<th>Fingal</th>
<th>National</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-14</td>
<td>22.7%</td>
<td>21.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-24</td>
<td>17.3%</td>
<td>16.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-44</td>
<td>33.6%</td>
<td>30.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-64</td>
<td>20.2%</td>
<td>21.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65+</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
<td>11.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Analysis of Census 2002.

The younger age profile of the population reflects the relatively recent development of the area and has positive consequences for the availability of a labour force in the medium-term.

16.3 Labour force and employment

The level of participation in the labour force in Fingal is substantially higher than the national average and stood at almost 69% in 2002 compared to a national average of 61.3%. This can be explained by a greater proportion of economically active population residing in the area and the trend towards multiple-occupation households.

The unemployment rate in Fingal declined during the 1990s to less than 5% which would traditionally be viewed as tending towards full employment. This period corresponded with rapid national economic expansion with annual GNP growth rates of 8% prevailing in the late 1990s.

16.4 Occupational profile

The employment profile of Fingal provides strong evidence of a movement towards a service-oriented occupational structure. The dominant activity groups are clerical, managerial and government, accounting for 25% of employment in 2002, followed by employment in the professional, technical and health sectors (17.4%). Employment in the manufacturing sector accounts for 9.3% of the total, which forms a smaller part of the employment base than the national average, which stands at 12.6% (see Table 2). Manufacturing activities have become focused on the Western edge of Dublin and are particularly important for growing suburbs such as Blanchardstown. Clusters of IT firms have begun to emerge in this location and it is expected that these sectors will be an important component of the Small Area Statistics to be published later in 2004.

Table 5 Persons aged 15 or over classified by Broad Occupational Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupational Group</th>
<th>Fingal</th>
<th>State</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Farm, Fish, &amp; Forestry</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing Workers</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
<td>12.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerical, Managerial &amp; Govt.</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
<td>17.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Com. &amp; Transport</td>
<td>7.6%</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales &amp; Commerce</td>
<td>16.1%</td>
<td>13.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prof., Tech. &amp; Health</td>
<td>17.4%</td>
<td>16.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Analysis of Census 2002 data
16.5 Educational attainment

In terms of education completed, participation levels show a gradual increase from 1991 to 2002 for those having completed third-level. Figures for Fingal are now above the national average. This may be partly linked to the increased provision of third level places within North Dublin over the period in question at Dublin City University and Institute of Technology, Blanchardstown.

Figure 19: Highest level of education in the population over 15 years of age in Fingal, 1991 - 2002

16.6 Transportation

Interviews with key enterprises and agencies in the GBA revealed that transportation issues were the main concern. Data analysed from Census 2002 indicates that the private car is the preferred mode of travel in the Dublin Region, with 54% of the working population using cars, compared to 48% in 1991. The predominance of cars, combined with a dispersed development pattern, causes significant negative impacts with existing settlements on the periphery of Dublin. Traffic congestion and access difficulties reduce the quality of environment and economic efficiency of such areas. If unchecked, development pressures for dispersed development will have a long-term negative effect on suburban locations. Intensive traffic management and enforcement procedures are required in tandem with significant infrastructure and investment in public transportation.

Figure 20: Means of transport to work in the Dublin region, 1991 and 2002

The use of the bicycle as a preferred form of travel to work declined from 7% in 1991 to 4% in 2002, but the percentage of employees walking to their place of employment increased from 11.4% to 13.4% during the corresponding period.

A perhaps surprising element of the census data is the actual decline in the numbers working either from home or from no fixed location, from 7% in 1991 to just 2.5% in 2002. The steady fall in bus usage is also apparent (from 16% in 1991 to 15.5% in 2002).

A significant future infrastructural proposal for the GBA is the long-term plan to connect the area to the Metro network. The new Metro route form a western "loop" line which would branch from the proposed city centre to Airport route, pass through Blanchardstown centre and route south through Clondalkin and Tallaght before returning to the city centre. The time-scale and commitment to this project are as yet unclear.

17.0 Statistical addendum March 2004

17.1 Introduction

Special permission was required, and obtained, from the Central Statistics Office to acquire the SAPS data from the 2002 Census which were released in early 2004. The CSO were able to delineate the DEs that comprise of the Greater Blanchardstown Area (GBA) and re-aggregate them into a single geographical unit for analysis. This addendum contains data relating to a number of key socio-economic factors driving the development of the area, including the following:

- Demographic Profile
- Employment and Labour Force Profile
- Education
- Migration and Nationality
- Transportation
- Housing and Households

17.2 Demographic profile

The Greater Blanchardstown Area is characterised by a relatively young age profile, with almost 24% of the population aged under 14 in the 2002 Census, compared to 21% for Ireland as a whole. 18.7% of the population of the GBA are aged between 15 to 24 and 36.6% are aged between 25 to 44, the most important age group in terms of economic productivity and house purchase. These figures compare to 16.4% and 30.1% nationally. Very few elderly persons reside in the GBA (only 3.4% of the population are aged over 65) which stands in marked contrast to a figure of 11.2% for the total Irish population.

Despite the younger population of the GBA in national terms, a relatively recent development of the area, the population has experienced a gradual ageing since the 1991 Census. Those aged under 14 fell from 36.8% in 1996 to 23.7% in 2002 and there was a corresponding increase in the proportion aged between 15 to 24, up from 14.2% in 1991 to 18.7% in 2002. This trend indicates a maturing of the GBA population into adulthood and reflects, to a lesser extent, the young age of inward migrants to the area.
17.0 Statistical addendum March 2004

Figure 21 Age profile of the Greater Blanchardstown Area, 1991 and 2002

Source: CSO SAPS 2002 data.

In terms of marital status, the 2002 Census recorded that 45.8% of the population over the age of 15 in the GBA are married and 49% are single, compared to national rates of 47.1% and 42.5% respectively. The lower marriage rate in the GBA is probably linked to its younger age profile. The proportion of the GBA population aged over 15 who are separated/divorced and widowed are 3% and 2.2% respectively.

17.3 Employment and labour force profile

62% of the labour force of the GBA was classified as at work in 2002, with 4.8% classified as unemployed. 12.4% of the labour force were classified as students and 11.1% in the home duties category. Only 4.3% were classified as retired, reflecting a very low proportion of the population aged over 65. In terms of occupational profile, 33.8% of the resident population were employed in the commerce category, compared with 24% in 1991. The next largest employment categories are professional services, at 16% and manufacturing at 14.9%. Agriculture employs a negligible percentage (0.4% in 2002) reflecting the urban nature of the area.

Figure 22 Occupational structure of the Greater Blanchardstown Area, 1991 and 2002

Source: CSO SAPS 2002 data.

17.4 Education

The highest level of education attained in the GBA population over 15 years of age has increased markedly in the 11-year period from 1991 to 2002. 35.5% of the population over 15 achieved a third level qualification in 2002 compared to 23.2% in 1991.

Coincident with the increase in third level graduates has been the decline in the proportion of population with primary education only, from 15.6% in 1991 to 13.0% in 2002. A further 20.4% of the resident population finished school at Junior Certificate level in 2002, a slight decline from 23.1% in 1991, but this remains a relatively high percentage. The issue of early school leaving should be effectively addressed when planning for the future competitiveness and growth of the GBA.

Figure 23 Highest level of education completed in the Greater Blanchardstown Area, 1991 and 2002

Source: CSO SAPS 2002 data.

17.5 Migration and nationality

The 2002 Census recorded that 88.5% of the GBA population are classified as Irish, a further 19% are classified as UK citizens and 9.6% identified as other nationalities. In terms of place of birth, 85% of GBA residents were born in Ireland, 5.4% were born in the UK and the remaining 9.6% were born in other countries. 10.3% of the GBA population had a home address different to their current one in 2002, indicating a significant proportion of the population has recently moved into the GBA. Data from the 1991 and 2002 Censuses, when taken together, indicates that approximately 10% of the population is comprised of non-national immigrants.

17.6 Transportation

Transportation was found to be the most important issue among enterprises and institutions from the main phase of the study in 2003. In terms of the mode of travel to work, school, and college, the majority use private cars (54.3%), followed by on foot (18.3%), bus (16%), train (4.5%) and bicycle (2.2%). There have been notable changes in the distance travelled to work, school and college between 1991 and 2002, with an increase in distance travelled of 8.6% of residents travelled over 15 miles in 2002 compared to 3.7% in 1991. The majority of GBA residents (31.3%) travel between 5 and 9 miles to work, equating with the distance to the traditional Central Business District in Dublin City Centre and Dublin 4. However, 49.4% travelled between 5 and 9 miles in 1991, indicating a lessening dependence on the traditional Central Business District for employment, which can be explained by an increasing proportion of the population now travelling to a variety of destinations elsewhere in the GBA.

A very interesting and less expected trend is that there has been rapid growth of GBA residents travelling under 4 miles to work which increased from 30% in 1991 to 42.5% in 2002. This trend must reflect the growth of employment opportunities locally in addition to a wider decentralisation of employment during the 1990s.

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17.7 Housing and households

According to the 2002 Census, there are 21,365 households in the GBA, which is in very close agreement with the estimate arrived at by the research team in September 2003, before SAPS data was available. Between 1991 and 2002, households in the GBA increased by 7.0% (from 12,544 to 21,365) compared to population growth of 42% for the corresponding period, indicating that households growth was almost double that of population. Rapid household growth means that demand for housing in the GBA, as in other areas, will continue to outstrip population growth and thus the steady supply of adequate development land for housing will need to continue in the medium-term.

This growth of households has been accompanied by declining household sizes, e.g. persons per household in 1991 to 3.24 in 2002. The average number of persons per household in the GBA, however, remains slightly above that of the State as a whole (at 2.94), due to a greater number of young families with children in the area. Closely linked to falling household sizes has been the significant increase in one and two person households, 13% of households consist of one person, compared to 9.8% in 1991. An additional 16% comprise of a husband and wife or cohabiting couple compared to 10.7% in 1991. The majority of households are couples with children, but this proportion has declined from 60% in 1991 to 43.6% in 2002. Households defined as two or more non-related persons, typically young single persons sharing accommodation, has increased in GBA households from 3% in 1991 to 7% in 2002. Households consisting of a mother with children (“single mother” households) increased from 7.4% to 8.6% between 1991 and 2002.

The overall trend, therefore, is towards smaller households, a declining proportion of traditional nuclear families (couples with children), an increase in single parent households and increasing numbers of single persons sharing a dwelling. In tandem with changing household composition, the built stock of housing in the GBA is also experiencing significant changes. In 1991, the housing stock of the area was overwhelmingly dominated by conventional housing, either detached, semi-detached or terraced which accounted for 98% of housing the GBA. Apartments accounted for an almost negligible percentage (0.6% in 1991). Although conventional housing still dominates the GBA today (94.8% in 2002), apartments now account for 4.6% of the housing stock.

The GBA is also marked by housing of recent construction, with only 4.4% of the housing stock in the area built before 1960 and this reflects the recent development of the GBA in comparison to other areas of Dublin. Conversely, the reminder has been built since 1961 with 31% of housing built between 1996 and 2002.

1. It must be noted that two differing methodologies were used for collecting traffic data in the vicinity of the N3-M50 interchange. Data from the N3 Blanchardstown Bypass was collected during 2001 using manual counts by a field researcher and data from the M50 was collected from electronic automated traffic counting stations.
2. This estimation is based on dividing the current (2002) population of the Greater Blanchardstown Area by the current (2002) household size for County Fingal.
3. Data at Small Area level does not classify the nationality of non-Irish or UK citizens. Corresponding figures for 1991 were not available.