

Chapter 16 Housing Strategy

16.1 Introduction

16.1.1 General Legislative Background

This chapter sets out County Monaghan's Housing Strategy for the period 2013-2019, and corresponds with the lifetime of the Monaghan County development Plan 2013-2019. It has been prepared under Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2000 - 2010 and in the context of the new core strategy requirement for development plans. In tandem with the new core strategy influence, the specific focus of the Housing Strategy is now placed on the future means of social housing facilitation.

In accordance with the provisions of S.94(1)(e) of the Act, the Strategy has been prepared jointly between Monaghan County Council and the Town Councils of Monaghan, Carrickmacross, Castleblayney, Clones and Ballybay.

16.1.2 Key Themes

The purpose of this chapter is to establish broad housing goals for County Monaghan and to outline a plan of action to ensure that these goals are achieved during the life of this Plan. Existing housing needs of the community are examined, alongside the future need for social and affordable housing, and the means for satisfying these needs in a changed and evolving economic environment.

For the purposes of ensuring consistency with the population targets and housing requirements set out in the Regional Planning Guidelines for the Border Region 2010-2022, the housing demand figures set out in Chapter 3 of the Monaghan County Development Plan 2013-2019 take precedence.

16.1.3 Core Strategy Influence

The Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2010, now places the responsibility for population analysis and projections with the Core Strategy contained in Chapter 3. As a consequence, the Housing Strategy is principally focused on addressing social and affordable housing requirements.

Chapter 3 of this Plan provides a hierarchy of settlements, which caters for balanced and sustainable growth that allows for vibrant rural areas whilst at the same time recognising the need for a strong urban structure, with sufficient critical mass to attract inward investment and act as engines for economic growth.

16.1.4 Urban Housing

In accordance with the findings of the Core Strategy, quality urban housing across the key settlements in the County is imperative so as to adequately accommodate future population growth. The Core Strategy outlines in detail how the settlement hierarchy intends to make provision for housing allocation throughout the County. It also establishes the spatial context for new urban housing, identifying the key growth centres into which new housing development will be directed. The design quality of

such developments shall accord with the relevant policies and objectives set out in the Monaghan County Development Plan, and associated Department of Environment, Community and Local Government (DECLG) Guidelines.

16.1.5 Rural Housing

The Core Strategy acknowledges the vibrancy of the County's established rural areas and the need to accommodate development (with due regard to environmental considerations) that addresses rural housing need in these local communities. To ensure that such development takes place in a sustainable manner, the county has been divided into three development management zones based on the differing rural area types. The rural housing policies outlined in the Core Strategy are intended to safeguard the key objectives to;

- (i) meet the requirements of the immediate local rural community who have a housing need, and to
- (ii) direct urban generated rural housing development into the adjoining towns and villages.

The design quality of rural housing shall accord with the relevant policies and objectives set out in this Plan.

16.1.6 Core Elements of the 2007-2013 Housing Strategy

- A total of 3,780 additional households were anticipated to be needed in the County over the six years of the Strategy.
- The Strategy identified that within the five towns in the County, some 976 hectares of land was zoned for residential use, with the potential to provide 17,270 additional housing units. It also identified that the villages of the County, had the capacity to provide an additional 9,322 housing units on lands contained within their development envelopes.
- It was projected that approximately 20% (770) of the new households would have affordability problems.
- 851 households were on the social housing waiting list at the time.
- The Strategy recommended that 20% of all zoned residential land should be reserved for social and affordable housing purposes. It was estimated that this would generate approx 270 housing units per annum.
- The Housing Strategy envisaged an enhanced role for the voluntary housing sector.
- Part V affordable housing provision has been less than that envisaged by the strategy. Only one affordable house has been provided under Part V thus far over the period of the Strategy.
- Across the five local authorities, 98 social dwellings have been provided thus far under the period of the Strategy via Part V agreements. The voluntary housing sector has also provided a further 31 social housing dwellings.

Social and Affordable Housing

16.2 Social and Affordable Housing

16.2.1 General Context

The provision of an acceptable standard of housing for all is a core aspiration of public policy. The general strategy for realising this aim has been that those who can afford to do so should provide housing for themselves, and those unable to do so from their own resources, should have access to social housing or to income support to secure and to retain private housing. Part V of the Planning & Development Act 2000 required that Housing Strategies must make adequate provision for social and affordable housing. This is particularly important at present due to the scale of the economic downturn and the restricted access to credit.

However, as detailed in the DECLG's *Housing Policy Statement 2011*, the overarching aim of national housing policy is now to enable all households to access good quality housing appropriate to household circumstances in their community of choice. Action in this regard will obviously have to take place against the backdrop of an ever tightening fiscal situation with an emphasis on achieving value for money.

16.2.2 Definitions

This Strategy defines social housing as rented accommodation made available directly by the local authority or by an approved voluntary housing body, or housing provided via the Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS).

Affordable Housing involves the provision of new houses by the local authority in areas where increasing house prices have created an affordability gap. These houses are for sale to eligible purchasers at a price below market value, or via the Shared Ownership / Incremental Purchase Scheme.

16.2.3 Demand

In October 2011 there were 1,297 persons/households on Monaghan Local Authorities social housing waiting lists, as outlined below:

Table 16.1 Social Housing Waiting List Numbers 2011

Authority	Number of Applicants
Monaghan County Council	418
Monaghan Town Council	285
Carrickmacross Town Council	318
Castleblayney Town Council	177
Clones Town Council	99
Total	1,297

The breakdown of applicant type in 2011 is as outlined below;

Table 16.2 Social Housing Applicant Type 2011

Applicant Type	% of Total
Older Persons (+55 years old)	8%
Single Persons (-55 years old)	33%
Small Family Households (2 bed)	34%
Large Family Households (3, 4 or 5 bed)	18%
Households for Persons with Disabilities	6%
Traveller Households	1%

The breakdown of applicant type in 2007 & 2001 is outlined below;

Table 16.3 Social Housing Applicant Type 2007 & 2001

Applicant Type	% of Total 2007	% of Total 2001
Older Persons/Single Applicant	38%	20.8%
Single Parent Households	32%	26%
Two Parent Households	14%	53%
Households for Persons with Disabilities and Accessibility Requirements	13%	0.1%
Traveller Households	3%	0.1%

The information contained in the tables above outlines the Local Authorities' social housing mix requirement between 2001 and 2011. In particular it illustrates the predominant demand for smaller units that are suitable for single persons and smaller families. The comparisons with the 2007 & 2001 data also illustrate how social housing requirements have changed. It should be acknowledged that as this information was obtained from application forms, it may not accurately reflect the true needs, eg. once assessed, an applicant may not be eligible, or an applicant may be on more than one list (such as both the Castleblayney Town Council list and the Monaghan Town Council list, etc.)

The primary statistic is that the current total number of 1,297 is an increase of 413 households, or 47%, on the social housing waiting list since the preparation of the 2007 Strategy.

Table 16.4 Type of Unit Required 2001–2011

Type of Unit Required	2011	2007	2001
1 bedroom units	613	340	167
2 bedroom units	443	380	347
3/4/5 bedroom units	241	164	202
Total	1,297	884	716

In addition to these numbers, persons in private rented accommodation who are receiving rent supplement for more than eighteen months are in general considered to have a long-term housing need. At time of writing, there are 250 additional such persons in the County. It is anticipated that this number may increase in the immediate future as more numbers cross the eighteen month rent supplement threshold.

As a consequence of the economic downturn and the depressed state of the housing market, the demand for Affordable Housing is now low. Monaghan Local Authorities constructed and sold 103 Affordable Houses during the period 2004 to 2011, while only one dwelling was provided and sold under Part V agreements. In addition four dwellings have been constructed recently for the Incremental Purchase Scheme in Carrickmacross. Under this scheme, the buyer pays a below market value price for a new dwelling and in return acquires full ownership and responsibility for maintaining and insuring it. However, given the weighted demand for social housing and the fact that demand under this scheme is relatively low, these houses have been changed from Affordable to Social.

The 'Traveller Accommodation Programme 2009-2013' indicated in mid-2009 that there were 16 households seeking standard social housing; four households seeking accommodation in a rural house; and six families seeking group housing. A further ten households were expected to require standard housing over the period of the programme. These numbers, and future projections, must be considered in the overall Social Housing need.

16.2.4 Supply

The principal supply options available to the Council for dealing with social housing demand are currently;

- Construction of new accommodation
- Purchase of new/second-hand dwellings
- The Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS)
- Long-term leasing via the Social Housing Leasing Initiative
- Accommodation being returned to the Council for re-letting (casual vacancies)
- Provision of social housing in partnership with approved / voluntary housing bodies
- Provision of houses under Part V of the Planning & Development Acts

With regard to construction and purchase, the restrictions on Government expenditure will dictate that the use of alternative social housing supports, such as the Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS) and the Social Housing Leasing Initiative, will predominate. While 22 Social Houses are currently in the process of being constructed in Cloughvalley, Carrickmacross, it is not envisaged that Monaghan Local Authorities will be in a position to construct or purchase more houses in the medium term.

Meeting Needs

16.3 Meeting Needs

The focus in terms of local authority housing support will continue to be on meeting the most acute needs, for those unable to provide for their accommodation from their own resources.

As discussed in paragraph 16.2 above, the financial constraints under which the Councils will be operating in the coming years, will prohibit large capital-funded construction or acquisition programmes. Accordingly, the response to meeting social housing need going forward requires a continued emphasis on shifting towards more flexible delivery mechanisms.

It is anticipated that the following proposed measures will serve to meet Monaghan's Social Housing need over the six year lifetime of the Strategy:

16.3.1 Rental Accommodation Scheme and the Social Housing Leasing Initiative

In the immediate future, the Councils' social housing agenda will focus principally on meeting demand through the Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS) and long-term leasing by way of the Social Housing Leasing Initiative. Indeed, local authority responsibility for meeting the housing needs of long-term rent supplement recipients will undoubtedly continue to increase, given that rent supplement, which was intended as a short-term measure, has in fact become a social housing mechanism on which many households rely on for long periods. This is acknowledged by Government to be unsustainable, neither best serves the interests of the households receiving the support or the Exchequer.

It is anticipated that RAS, and any future amendment of it, will continue to be a central provider. Monaghan Local Authorities currently have an annual target of 100 transfers onto the programme, and this target number will most likely increase as more recipients cross the eighteen month threshold. To date, while considerable interest has been registered in the Social Housing Leasing Initiative (ranging from single dwellings to multi-unit developments), this interest has yet to progress to the completion of any significant long-term leases. On-going discussions with developers are envisaged, and it is hoped that sustained effort in this regard coupled with a change in attitude, especially on the part of funding institutions, will lead to the securing of a number of long-term leases in the future.

16.3.2 Utilisation of Casual Vacancies

It is imperative, given the prevailing build/buy constraints, that the Councils optimise the potential of this resource in terms of swift occupation, and prioritise their maintenance and enhancement. An average of 50 units become available in the County each year and are allocated to applicants on the housing list

16.3.3 Partnership with Approved/Voluntary Housing bodies

It is anticipated that the Voluntary/Approved housing sector will be subject to the similar capital financial restrictions that will curb the Councils own construction and acquisition potential. Such bodies however, have the option of combining private finance with a capital advance leasing facility through the Housing Finance Agency in a way the Council cannot. It is hoped that such innovative capital financing models may provide for new build or other acquisition possibilities. The Council will strive to progress such voluntary schemes and will target disabled persons cases where it is clear that the Council's build/buy and leasing/rental accommodation scheme is unable to cater for the specific accessibility requirements of such clients.

16.3.4 Provision of Houses under Part V

The Government (DECLG's *Housing Policy Statement* 2011) has stated that if a household is capable, through the resources it has available to it, of renting a high quality home in a vibrant community, but lacks the resources necessary to purchase an equivalent home, that household does not need assistance from the State. It is foreseen that Government as part of a review of Part V of the Planning and Development Act, may be standing down all existing Affordable Housing programmes to reflect current affordability conditions.

Notwithstanding this, the implementation of Part V will continue to feature in the Authorities' attempts to meet social housing needs, albeit possibly to a lesser extent than previously anticipated, given the sharp down turn in private house construction. This decline will most likely ensure that the potential Part V provision will be severely restricted in the future. In addition, the ability to provide the necessary capital finance to purchase Part V units for social housing purposes over this time frame is also limited. Given these uncertain economic conditions, provision in this regard is difficult to estimate, but the Councils will utilise the full range of options available to satisfy Part V requirements. The Councils will assess each application on an individual basis, and the actual mechanism used to satisfy the Part V requirement will be the one that best facilitates the development of strong, vibrant, mixed-tenure communities. Where the agreed option is to provide houses, it will be required that the relevant development is substantially complete prior to transfer.

While it is acknowledged that forecasting is difficult, given the increase in social housing need versus the drop-off in construction, compared to that which was envisaged in the previous Housing Strategy, it is a requirement that the 20% figure should continue to be applied.

16.3.5 Traveller Provision

Progress under the Traveller Accommodation Programme 2009-2013 needs to be reviewed and a subsequent programme adopted. With regard to current and future families housed in standard accommodation, better integration will be sought.

Review Procedure

16.4 Review Procedure

Due to the existing volatility in the housing market, it is acknowledged that the assumptions and findings in this document will have to be reviewed as circumstances change.

In this regard it is noted that the Development Plan, and this Housing Strategy which has been incorporated into it, will be reviewed in accordance with sections 15(2) and of the Planning and Developments Act 2000 – 2010, within two years of making the Plan

Objectives & Policy

16.5 Objectives & Policies

Objectives for Housing	
HGO 1	All projects involving the provision of housing shall be considered under policies AAP1-AAP4 contained within Chapter 4, Environment and Heritage, of the Monaghan County Development Plan 2013-2019.
HGO 2	Focus principle supply efforts via the Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS) and the Social Housing Leasing Initiative.
HGO 3	Utilise the Local Authority housing stock to its maximum potential regarding the occupation of casual and long term vacancies.
HGO 4	Optimise budget provision and other possible funding to maintain and/or upgrade housing stock to appropriate standards.
HGO 5	Promote and develop the concept of lifetime adaptable homes and continue to support this principle through the provision of grant aid for eligible elderly and disabled persons.
HGO 6	Continue to develop partnerships with the Voluntary Housing Sector, utilising to the fullest extent its capabilities in social housing acquisition and management, especially regarding applicants with disabilities.
HGO 7	Make advice readily available, via information stations at Local Authority offices, to the public in relation to the range of housing assistance and tenancy options that are, and that become, available. This service shall ensure applicants are aware of the range of options available and the most appropriate option to suit their particular situation. This course of action is considered to be essential in terms of supply meeting demand in the most efficient manner possible re the use of resources.
HGO 8	Review the existing social housing land bank.
HGO 9	Continue to advance potential public projects for Social Housing, from design, through planning, through to tender document stage, to ensure a minimum time delay to the start of construction should finance become available.
HGO 10	Review progress under the Traveller Accommodation Programme 2009-2013 and endeavour to implement the provisions of any subsequent programme as may be adopted by the Council.
HGO 11	The Council will strive to achieve appropriate house type mixes within developments that respond to the changing demographics of persons on the housing list.

Policies for Housing	
HGP 1	All projects relating to the provision of housing shall be considered under policies AAP1-AAP4 contained within Chapter 4, Environment and Heritage, of the Monaghan County Development Plan 2013-2019.
HGP 2	<p>Support the Council's direct and indirect housing provision efforts by requiring that 20% of all land zoned for residential use, or a mix of residential and other land uses, shall be reserved for Social and Affordable Housing purposes in accordance with the requirements of Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2000.</p> <p>This requirement shall be incorporated into any relevant development proposal at an early stage in the development process. The Council will therefore require housing developers to whom the 20% requirement will apply to discuss the likely terms of Part V agreements at pre-planning consultations. Both the Council and the developer would thus have a common understanding of the nature of the likely agreement before detailed designs are prepared for any planning application. Conditions attached to planning permissions will require developers to enter into an agreement with the Council in relation to the provision of Social and Affordable Housing in accordance with the Housing Strategy.</p> <p>A flexible approach will be applied to the negotiation of Part V agreements, which may be met by considering the following methods or by a combination thereof:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transfer of land • Build and transfer of houses • Transfer fully or partially serviced sites • Transfer of other land in the functional area • Build and transfer of houses in the functional area • Transfer of fully or partially serviced sites in the functional area • Payment of a financial contribution • Transfer of land and/or a combination of the others • Leasing of units