

# SINGLE RURAL HOUSES



**This guide refers to the development of single houses in the countryside outside of any town or village. It is designed to assist potential applicants, architects and planning agents in the preparation of a planning application for a one off dwelling in the countryside. In particular, it is designed to advise the person concerned of the procedures involved in the assessment of a planning application and the issues that may have a bearing on the decision of the Planning Authority.**

**It is not intended to be a complete and legal interpretation of all policies of the Council as set out in the County Development Plan or of the Planning Acts and associated regulations.**

**Applicants should always seek the advice of a suitably qualified professional in the preparation of any planning application.**

This guide is provided in conjunction with Chapter 6 of the County Development Plan, which outlines the development strategies, objectives and standards for rural development and housing in Co. Wicklow.

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### **Compliance with the Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines as incorporated in the current Wicklow County Development Plan (2010-2016)**

The need for residential development to house those who are indigenous to and/or have a bona fide necessity to live in the rural area is recognised by Wicklow County Council and provision for same has been provided for in the policies and objectives of the Wicklow County Development Plan (2010-2016)

In accordance with the policies outlined under the County Development Plan, residential development will be considered in the countryside but only when it is for the provision of a necessary dwelling.

Objective RH14<sup>1</sup> of the County Development Plan sets out the circumstances under which residential development will be considered in the rural areas of County Wicklow. In general terms, if you wish build in the rural area you will have to demonstrate that:

a) You have strong linkages to the area in which you want to build. This will usually mean either a strong family linkage or a need to live in the area because of your employment. It should be noted that being employed in the rural area is not sufficient to demonstrate a 'need' to reside there, so for example; a person whose principle occupation is in agriculture and who owns and farms substantial lands in the immediate vicinity of the site may have a need to reside in that rural area but an employee working on the same land holding may not.

b) You are in 'need' of a dwelling in the rural area. If you currently own or have previously owned your own home, you will generally not be considered eligible for a new rural dwelling. However, there are exceptions to this rule and all circumstances will be taken into consideration

**As a minimum the following information / documentation should be submitted to support your application:**

**Details of your links with the particular rural area in which you wish to build**

**A copy of your long birth certificate**

**School Records. Such records should confirm your place of residence at the time of school attendance**

**Documentation to verify your place of residence over the last 10 years, such as, bank records, P60's, utility bills (which should be appropriate redacted) etc**

**A tax certificate confirming that you (and your partner where relevant) have never claimed mortgage interest relief (in order to demonstrate that you are a first time home owner)**

**Details of any residential property currently or previously owned by you (and/or your partner where relevant) and details of why this property does not suit your current housing needs.**

**Details of any previous planning permissions granted to you (and/or your partner where relevant) for residential development.**

**A map showing:**

- ✓ The location of your family home
- ✓ Your current residence (if different from above),
- ✓ All lands within your family ownership
- ✓ The location of relative's dwellings or holdings in the area

<sup>1</sup> This objective is set out in full in Chapter 6 of the Wicklow County Development Plan.

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## **Please note:**

The above is not a definitive list and you are advised to submit sufficient information / documentation which clearly outlines your particular circumstances and your particular need to reside in the rural area.

Failure to submit sufficient information/documentation to demonstrate that you would qualify for special consideration to build in the rural area may prolong the assessment of your application or may result in an unfavourable decision.

## **Choosing a Site:**

### **Location:**

Before you focus on the type of house you wish to build and even before you decide on the specific site you wish to build on, you must first have an understanding of the landscape in which you wish to build.

In particular, you should identify:

- The landscape classification
- Whether or not the lands are subject to any local, national or European designation
- The location of any protected views or prospects in the vicinity<sup>2</sup>

### **Site Selection:**

Once you have an understanding of the type of landscape in which you wish to build you can proceed to select your application site. In order to ensure a successful planning application, it is vital

to choose a site that is appropriate for development. All new developments will be required to be sited in such a way that they blend into the landscape and do not form overly visible or strident features in the landscape.

In general, sheltered, low lying sites which benefit from mature screening are considered to be the most successful. Another advantage of such sites is that they are sheltered from the wind and thus incur less heat loss in winter, resulting in lower energy costs.

### Key Considerations:

- ✓ Choose a site with identifiable and well established boundaries which separate the site naturally from its surroundings
- ✓ Use or retain existing trees, buildings, slopes and other natural features to provide shelter
- ✓ Position buildings along the contours of the site

### What to avoid:

- ✗ Open field, elevated or exposed locations
- ✗ Ribbon Development<sup>3</sup>

## **Points to Note:**

- The onus is on the applicant to satisfy the Planning Authority that the most appropriate location and site have been chosen
- If the correct location and siting is not achieved, a well designed building accompanied by ambitious landscaping proposals, is unlikely to be successful.

<sup>2</sup> Please refer to Chapter 17 (Natural Environment) of the Wicklow County Development Plan for further guidance / information.

<sup>3</sup> Ribbon Development - where 5 or more houses exist on any one side of a given 250 metres of road frontage.

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## Visual Impact Assessment:

It is a requirement of the Current Wicklow County Development Plan that applications for permission in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty shall be accompanied by a Visual Impact Assessment (VIA) which should include, inter alia:

- An evaluation of the visibility and the prominence of the proposed development in its immediate environs and in the wider landscape,
- A series of photos or photomontages of the site / development from clearly identified vantage points.
- An evaluation of impacts on any listed views / prospects and an assessment of vegetation / land cover type in the area (with particular regard to commercial forestry plantations which may be felled thus altering character / visibility).

## House Design

It is important that the design of new houses in the countryside is sympathetic to the area in which they are located and that they reflect traditional rural house design.

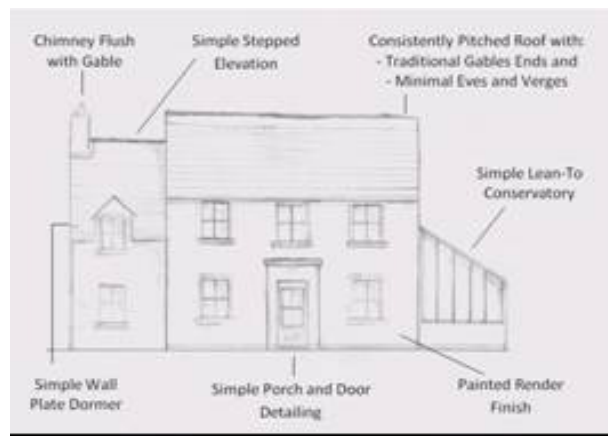
A contemporary interpretation of traditional design is encouraged on suitable sites where the dwelling can be well integrated into the landscape. In rural areas simplicity is key. A simple well proportioned and balanced design will be easier to assimilate into the landscape and will last the test of time. It is important to note however that simple design does not mean that you will be unable to individualise your dwelling or adapt it to suit a modern lifestyle.

Unfortunately, there are examples of inappropriate house design in the rural area. In order to ensure that poor design proposals are not replicated it is advisable not to copy a neighbours design or to

simply choose a formulaic design from a pattern book. Choosing an inappropriate design may result in a request for new or amended drawings which can cause significant delays and increased costs. This can be avoided when greater attention is given to selecting the most suitable site, designing the dwelling to suit the application site and not trying to retro fit a certain house design seen elsewhere into your site

## Good Rural Design: Key Characteristics

- ✓ Simplicity of form,
- ✓ Well proportioned / balanced
- ✓ Traditional roof profile with minimal eaves and verges
- ✓ Little or no modelling to the front elevation
- ✓ Roof Pitch 35° - 45°
- ✓ Chimney located on through and across the ridge or flush with gable
- ✓ Vertical emphasis to windows and doors
- ✓ Use of local materials and construction methods



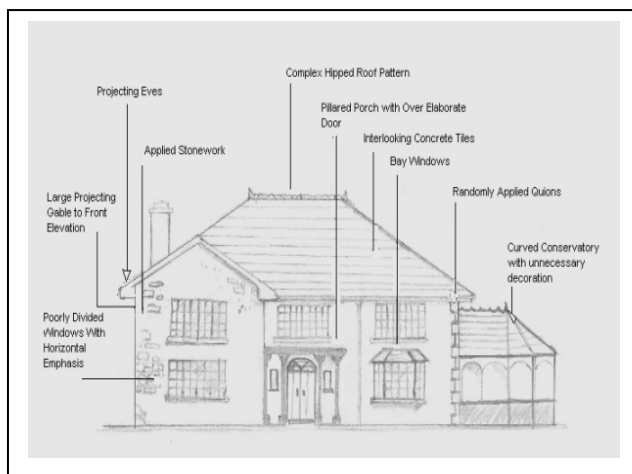
## Characteristics to Avoid:

- ✗ Complexity of shape
- ✗ Poorly proportioned
- ✗ Excessive scale relative to site size e.g. length and height
- ✗ Low pitched roofs, complicated roof shapes



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- ✘ Projections to the front elevation: inappropriate bay windows or dominant gables projections
- ✘ Mix of design styles
- ✘ Complex mix of window style and shape
- ✘ The use of overcomplicated, over fussy design features
- ✘ Inappropriate use of building materials
- ✘ Top Heavy Single storey dwelling



## Landscaping

Landscaping should be used to soften the impact of the proposed development and aid its assimilation into the landscape in a natural manner. Appropriate planting of native species<sup>4</sup> with the use of suitable earth mounds at strategic vantage points may be used to buffer the development. Your proposed scheme should identify the number, location and species of trees to be planted.

- ✘ Avoid overambitious landscaping schemes that can be difficult to implement and can be very costly

## Garages

Where proposed, a garage should:

- ▶ Not detract from but rather complement the proposed / existing dwelling. In particular the design of the roof and external finishes should reflect that of the dwelling
- ▶ Be sensitively located on site. Locating the garage to the rear of the house in an informal cluster (rather than to the side) can ensure that the garage is not adding excessively to the bulk and scale of the dwelling
- ▶ Be modest in size, a good rule of thumb is to keep the garage below 40sqm

## Entrance Design:

One of the most important, but often overlooked elements in the overall design and layout of rural development is the entrance, as it literally forms the gateway that presents your dwelling to the public road.

One of the best ways to successfully integrate your new dwelling into the landscape is to retain, in so far as possible, the existing roadside boundary ditch, hedge or stone walls. Where the removal of the existing roadside boundary is necessary to facilitate a vehicular entrance or to provide adequate sightlines it should always be re-positioned and reinstated on site at the appropriate set back position, by reusing or replicating the original materials and landscaping. This can be done very effectively and it maintains the rural character of an area.

<sup>4</sup> Appendix 1 of this Guide provides a list of native trees and shrubs that should be used within your landscaping scheme

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## **Key Considerations:**

- ✓ The location of the vehicular entrance, driveway and associated car-parking areas should be sensitively and discretely sited using existing contours to avoid scarring of the landscape.
- ✓ The location of the entrance and driveway should be offset from the location of the dwelling so as to retain the roadside boundary to the front of the dwelling
- ✓ The existing ditch, hedge or sod/stone wall should be strengthened or repaired where required.

## **What to Avoid:**

- ✗ A formal rigid pattern, where the driveway dissects the site midway with an expanse of car-parking to the front of the house.
- ✗ The use of ranch style timber post and rail fencing and the planting of non-indigenous hedging
- ✗ The construction of masonry block walls or 'crazy paving type stone cladding
- ✗ Elaborate gate posts and gates
- ✗ The extensive use of hard surface areas

## *Example of Inappropriate Roadside Boundaries*



A new house will usually require a new entrance onto the public road. All entrances must attain an acceptable degree of safety. In particular adequate 'sight distances' must be available / achievable at the entrance. The term 'sight distance' refers to both the ability to see clearly up and down the road at the proposed entrance when exiting and also the ability to see cars approaching when turning right into the entrance, or similarly to be seen by approaching traffic.

When making a planning application, it will be necessary for you to clearly show the sight distance proposed and state how it complies with the normal engineering standards. In this regard sight distance should be measured having regard to the provisions of the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges Technical Document 41-42/09 Table 7/1. Where the provision of adequate sight distance requires works outside the site, it will be necessary for you to submit evidence e.g. certificate from a Solicitor, that you have sufficient control of the lands or permission from the landowner to carry out the proposals detailed on the submitted drawings.

Where there is a slope into the site from the road, it would be necessary to supply details of levels in order to show that the gradient will not be too steep. In general, the gradient for the first 6m off the road should not exceed 1:40 with a slope of not more than 1:10 thereafter.

Where the site is above the public road, details of measures to prevent surface water flowing out onto the public road will be required

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## Services:

### Water supply

All new developments will be required to connect to public water supplies where services are available or where they will be provided in the near future. All connections to the public water supply shall have to be agreed with Irish Water.

Where a connection to an existing public water supply is not possible, or the existing supply system does not have sufficient capacity, the provision of a private water supply will be permitted where it can be demonstrated that the proposed water supply meets the standards set out in EU and national legislation and guidance, would not be prejudicial to public health or would not impact on the source or yield of an existing supply, particularly a public supply.

### Wastewater Treatment

Proposals for on-site effluent disposals systems must comply with the provisions of Wicklow County Council's Policy for Wastewater Treatment & Disposal Systems for Single Houses (PE ≤ 10), (this policy document is available at [www.wicklow.ie/planning/development management/ planning application pack](http://www.wicklow.ie/planning/development%20management/planning%20application%20pack)), current EPA guidelines i.e. 'Wastewater Treatment and Disposal Systems Serving Single Houses (p.e. ≤ 10), Code of Practice, published by E.P.A 200 and the Wicklow Groundwater Protection Scheme 2003, Any application for permission must be accompanied by all necessary site tests and details of other systems / wells in the area.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### 1. Can I build with someone else's permission?

*A. Permission attaches to the land rather than to the person, but there may be conditions on the permission about who can occupy the house. If you wish to take over someone else's permission, you should write to the Planning Authority for its agreement to the transfer*

### 2. What is a Section 47 agreement?

*A. This is an agreement restricting the use of land or buildings. In the case of rural houses, it is the policy of Wicklow County Council that when permission is granted, the use of the house shall be restricted to the person receiving the permission, or to other persons that the Planning Authority may agree to in writing (see Q1 above) for a period of 7 years*

### 3. Can I sell a house with a section 47 agreement?

*A. You may sell your house at any time but the Section 47 agreement will restrict who will be allowed to live in the house. In order to ensure that the purchaser is eligible to live in the house, the purchaser's details should be submitted to the Planning Authority for written approval prior to the sale*

### 4. Can I renovate a derelict house in a rural area?

*A. In some circumstances this is possible. There is a separate pre-planning guide (No. 2) covering such developments*

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**5. Can I demolish my existing house and build a new one elsewhere on my land?**

*A. In some circumstances this is possible. There is a separate pre-planning guide (No. 2) covering such developments*

**6. Can I hand my existing house over to my son / daughter and get permission for a new house for myself?**

*A. If you are both eligible for permission in the rural area, the only additional requirement is that you enter a Section 47 restriction on both of the properties for a period of 7 years. You should also bear in mind that your son / daughter is unlikely to be considered eligible for his/her own permission in the future should he/she decide to sell the existing home*

## Useful References:

**Wicklow County Development Plan 2010-2016**

(this may be obtained from any office of Wicklow County Council or may be viewed on line at [Wicklow.ie](http://Wicklow.ie)

**The Cork Rural Design Guide**

Published by Cork County Council, this is a comprehensive guide to building a new house in the countryside. It is available to view at [www.cork.ie](http://www.cork.ie)

**Planning Guidance Leaflets**

The Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government have published a series of leaflets which provide guidance on all aspects of the planning system, including

PL1 – A guide to Planning Permission

PL2 – Making A Planning Application

PL4 – Building a House the Planning Issues

These leaflets are available to view on line at [www.environ.ie](http://www.environ.ie)



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## Appendix 1 – Native Trees and Shrubs

Common Name	Latin name	Height (max)	Suitable for public open spaces	Suitable for streets and confined spaces	Suitable for tubs, containers, raised beds etc.	Guide to planting: see key below
Alder	<i>Alnus Glutinosa</i>	22m	Yes	No	Yes	ADPS
Alder buckthorn	<i>Frangula alnus</i>	6m	Yes	No	Yes	D
Arbutus (Strawberry tree)	<i>Arbutus unedo</i>	8m	Yes	No	Yes	Not frost hardy
Ash	<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>	28m	Yes	No	No	ADIPS
Aspen	<i>Populus tremula</i>	24m	Yes	No	No	DPSV Not close to Buildings or any services
Bramble	<i>Rubus fruticosus</i>	2m	No	No	No	C/H note: tends to be invasive
Broom	<i>Cytisus scoparius</i>	2m	Yes	No	Yes	*
Burnet rose	<i>Rosa pimpinellifolia</i>	2m	Yes	No	Yes, but vigorous	C/H
Common (or European) gorse	<i>Ulex europeus</i>	2.5m	Yes	No	In a rural setting	HV
Crab apple	<i>Malus sylvestris</i>	6m	Yes	No	No	AHIP
Dog rose	<i>Rosa canina</i>	2m	Yes	No	Yes. Vigorous	C/H
Downy birch	<i>Betula pubescens</i>	18m	Yes	Yes	Yes	ADIP
Elder	<i>Sambucus nigra</i>	6m	In hedge	No	No	V
Guelder rose	<i>Viburnum opulus</i>	4.5m	Yes	No	No	DH
Hawthorn	<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>	9m	Yes	Yes	Yes	AHIPS
Hazel	<i>Corylus avellana</i>	6m	Yes	No	No	AHS
Holly	<i>Ilex aquifolium</i>	15m	Yes	Yes	Yes	AHPS
Honeysuckle	<i>Lonicera periclymenum</i>	climber	Yes	On walls	No	C
Ivy	<i>Hedera helix</i>	climber	Yes	Yes	Yes	C

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Juniper	Juniperus communis	6m	Yes	No	No	S
Pedunculate Oak	Quercus robur	30m	Yes	No	No	AI only suitable for large spaces
Privet	Ligustrum Vulgare	3m	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Rowan or Mountain Ash	Sorbus aucuparia	9m	Yes	Yes	Yes	ADHIP
Scots pine	Pinus sylvestris	24m	Yes	No	No	AI
Sessile Oak	Quercus petraea	30m	Yes	No	No	AI only suitable for large spaces
Silver birch	Betula pendula	18m	Yes	Yes	Yes	ADIP
Sloe, blackthorn	Prunus spinosa	3m	Yes	No	No	AHPV
Spindle	Euonymus europaeus	7.5m	Yes	No	No	H
Western (or mountain) gorse	Ulex gallii	1.5m	Yes	Yes	Yes	*
Whitebeam spp.	Sorbus aria	12m	Yes	Yes	Yes	IPS
Wild cherry	Prunus avium	15m	Yes	Yes	Yes	AHI
Willow spp.	Salix spp.	6m	Some	No	No	V Not suitable near buildings or services
Wych elm	Ulmus glabra	30m	Yes	No	No	PS
Yew	Taxus baccata	14m	Yes	Yes	Yes	AIPS

**A – Grows in a wide variety of soils,**  
**C – Climber, H – Suitable for hedging,**  
**I – Suitable as an individual tree,**  
**D – Tolerates or prefers damp conditions,**  
**P – Tolerates smoke or pollution,**  
**S – Tolerates shade,**  
**V – Invasive,**  
**\* – Tolerates dry conditions**

**For hedging: spindle, holly, hazel, hawthorn, guelder rose, gorse, blackthorn and crab apple would all be suitable natives**