

## **Appendix 5.**

### **County Housing Strategy**

(Taken from Chapter 4 of the Wicklow County Development Plan 2004-2010)

## 1. Introduction

This chapter sets out the strategies and policies which the Council\* intends to follow over the period of this Development Plan, in order to realise the vision and corporate aims of the Council in the area of housing provision and to fulfil its statutory obligations.

The Chapter firstly establishes the context of housing in Wicklow, in terms of:

- The Council's established Corporate Housing Plan, which determines its own housing activities;
- The broader land use settlement and zoning strategies which have been set out in Chapter 3, and;
- Linking these two, the framework for the County Housing Strategy.

Secondly, the Chapter summarises calculations of housing demand and supply, including the supply of serviced zoned land, which have been made in a detailed Working Paper which supports this Plan. The overall requirement for social and affordable housing is presented.

Thirdly, strategies to ensure the supply of adequate land for housing and necessary construction of social and affordable housing, are set out .

Finally, policies which the Council will apply in pursuit of this strategy and other relevant housing aims, are stated.

This Chapter, together with supporting documents, forms The Council's Housing Strategy under Section V of the Planning and Development Act 2000, for the period 2004-2010, and replaces the existing Strategy adopted for the period 2001-2005. The statutory Housing Strategy under Part V of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, shall be adopted by all Local Authorities within the County of Wicklow, and must form part of their Development Plan. The strategies and policies set out in this Chapter therefore effectively relate to the functional areas of all Local Authorities within the County of Wicklow.

## 2. Vision

To ensure that, insofar as the resources and the remit of the Council permit, suitable accommodation is available for each household within the County, in an appropriate location and at a price or rent that they can afford; and to promote the development of stable and sustainable communities through policies relating to the location, scale, character and tenure of dwellings built.

\* In accordance with Section 94 (1) of the Act, this Housing Strategy has been prepared as a joint collective strategy between Wicklow County Council, Wicklow Town Council, Arklow Town Council and Bray Town Council. Reference to "The Council" throughout this Chapter should be read as reference to the four Planning Authorities in the County unless otherwise stated.

## 3. Context

### 3.1 – CORPORATE PLAN FOR HOUSING

In accordance with its statutory requirements, the Council will endeavour to meet the needs of those requiring accommodation through its own house building programme and a range of social housing options. The general strategy for realising the overall objective is that those who can afford to do so should provide housing for themselves, through the range of options available to them, and that those unable to do so would have access to social housing provided by the Local Authority.

In order to meet this challenge, strategies have been identified and enshrined in the Council's Corporate Plan which effectively charts the direction the programme will take. These strategies are to:

1. Implement the Housing Strategy formulated under Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2000.
2. Promote Social Housing Options
3. Promote the role of the voluntary Housing Sector
4. Maintain all Council housing stock
5. Regulate the private rented accommodation sector
6. Adopt and implement the Action Plan for Homelessness
7. Implement the Traveller Accommodation Plan
8. Promote Good Estate Management Practices.

Further details of these are set out in the Corporate Plan and are referenced where relevant in this Chapter. Strategies and policies adopted in this Chapter are consistent with the provisions of the Corporate Plan for Housing.

### 3.2 – COUNTY SETTLEMENT STRATEGY

The overall pattern of growth in the number of persons resident in the County of Wicklow and its constituent authorities, has been set out in Chapter 3, which also provides a projection of the likely population in 2010. Chapter 3 also sets out the settlement strategy for the County, within the parameters of the Strategic Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area, and the National Spatial Strategy.

Housing strategy and policy will undergird the vision and strategies presented in Chapter 3, aiming in particular to ensure that sufficient land and houses are available to facilitate the integrated expansion of Development Centres, that these settlements are balanced in their social composition and that they are grown in accordance with available infrastructure.

### 3.3 – COUNTY HOUSING STRATEGY

**Statutory Requirements:** The preparation of a Housing Strategy is a requirement under the Planning and Development Act 2000, Part V and Part II of the Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2002. This chapter of the Development Plan sets out Wicklow's Housing Strategy for the period 2004 – 2010,

which is the lifetime of the Development Plan.

The Housing Strategy must include an analysis of demand and supply for the different sectors of the housing market, forecast future needs and shortfalls, and propose objectives to balance demand with supply in a sustainable manner. The procedures for the preparation of a Housing Strategy are set down in the Act.

In particular, the Act specifies that the Housing Strategy will:-

- Estimate the existing and likely future need for housing in the area, and ensure that sufficient zoned and serviced land is made available to meet such needs.
- Ensure that a mixture of house types and sizes is provided to meet the needs of different categories of households, including the special requirements of elderly persons and persons with disabilities.
- Counteract undue segregation between persons of different social background.
- Provide that as a general policy a specific % (not exceeding 20%) of the land zoned in the Development Plan for residential use, or for a mixture of residential and other uses, shall be reserved for those in need of social or affordable housing in the area.

Thus the Housing Strategy encompasses both the role of the Authority as the provider of social and special housing and its broader land use planning responsibilities.

The Council adopted its previous Housing Strategy in 2001. The Planning and Development Act 2000 requires that a report on progress achieved be given to the Council two years after the making of the housing strategy and:

“Where the report indicates that new or revised housing needs have been identified, the Manager may recommend that the housing strategy be varied accordingly”.

This Housing Strategy replaces the previous strategy which was prepared for the period 2001 to 2005 and its provisions have been framed in the light of the review of the previous Strategy, which is summarised below.

## REVIEW OF THE 2001-2005 HOUSING STRATEGY AND PROPOSED AMENDMENTS

**Elements of the 2001 Strategy:** The 2001 Strategy set out the quantum of housing to be provided in County Wicklow, taking into consideration the population and household size projections of the Strategic Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area.

- It estimated that 1371 units per annum would be required in the period to 2005.
- If required private developers, with certain exceptions, to set aside 20% of sites for social/affordable housing.
- It proposed a programme of social housing by which the housing authorities would facilitate the provision of a total of 1,238 dwellings directly over the period 2001 to 2005. The voluntary and co-operative sector would provide a further 268 dwellings.

- It further provided that all social housing provided under Part V of the Planning & Development Act 2000 in accordance with this strategy should be allocated to persons on the Waiting List for that allocation area in accordance with the Council's Scheme of Letting Priorities.
- Moreover, it provided that affordable housing provided under Part V of the Act in accordance with the terms of The Housing Strategy all should be allocated in accordance with a Scheme of Priorities for affordable housing as adopted by the Council.

## PROGRESS TO DATE

- House completions in the County have averaged nearly 2,000 units per annum since the adoption of the 2001 Strategy.
- The programme of social housing has provided 309 new units per annum to the end of March 2003. There have been 70 acquisitions. There are 150 Local Authority and 30 voluntary and co-operative sector dwellings in progress.
- Seventeen social and six affordable houses have so far been agreed in principle under Part V. While this number might seem small it is attributable to a large extent, to the lead in time required between development inception and build.

## VARIATIONS PROPOSED: SUMMARY

In the light of the above, and using updated analysis of requirements, the Housing Strategy 2004-2010:

- Increases the required overall level of housing delivery for the period to 2005 and beyond.
- Varies the mechanisms for affordable housing delivery in accordance with the Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2002
- Maintains the 20% rule for affordable housing within new housing developments, based on the calculations contained in the Housing Working Paper which supports this Plan.

## 4. Housing Demand and Supply

In framing a Housing Strategy, the Authority is required to establish both the level of social housing need which exists at the commencement of the strategy period and the overall and particular housing requirements which are likely to arise during the currency of the Strategy.

### 4.1 – ACCUMULATED SOCIAL HOUSING NEED

Table 4.1 sets out the assessed overall social housing need within the County in 2002, as measured by housing waiting lists. This need may arise from: inability to pay for alternative accommodation, unfitness of the existing dwelling; overcrowding; involuntary sharing; homelessness; and other special needs (including the needs of the elderly, disabled and persons with

learning disability), as well as homelessness and housing needs of the Traveller community.

Table 4.1: Social Housing need by type, 2002

Category of applicant	Authority					County Total	% breakdown
	Wicklow Co Co	Arklow	Bray	Wicklow	County Total		
<b>Grounds of application</b>							
• Cannot meet costs of suitable accommodation	332	187	196	49	764	46%	
• Overcrowded/unfit accommodation or involuntary sharing	189	32	205	38	464	28%	
• Special needs	64	22	119	153	358	22%	
• Travellers	25	1	6	9	41	2%	
• Homeless	6	-	32	-	38	2%	
<b>Household Composition</b>							100%
• Single parent and children	227	92	253	18	590	35%	
• Two person families with children	169	17	98	147	431	26%	
• Single person households	126	106	166	11	409	25%	
• Two person families without children	94	27	41	73	235	14%	
<b>Total</b>	<b>616</b>	<b>242</b>	<b>558</b>	<b>249</b>	<b>1,665</b>	<b>100%</b>	

Source: Wicklow Housing Authorities' Returns to the DoEHLG, March 2002

#### Grounds of application:

- The largest single category of need arises from inability to pay for alternative accommodation – 46% of the total in the County as a whole, but 54% in the functional area of Wicklow County Council. About a quarter of all needs relate to dwelling fitness and occupancy issues and another quarter from special needs – though this amounts to just 10% in the functional area of Wicklow County Council.

#### Household Composition

- In terms of household composition, approximately a third of all applicants are single parents and two person families with children. Single persons each account for a quarter.
- Measured social housing need in the County now therefore relates to a major extent to inability to pay and/or single parenthood
- Thirty-nine % of need involves households without children (one person or two person households)
- Special needs account for approaching a quarter of all need, (including 16% medical and compassionate grounds and 4% elderly persons)

## 4.2 – HOUSING REQUIREMENTS IN THE PERIOD 2004-2010

Housing need over the period 2004 to 2010 will arise from:

1. Increase in the number of households<sup>3</sup>
2. Obsolescence of the existing stock (including existing habitable dwellings that become second homes)
3. Additional houses required to facilitate movement of persons within the stock of housing<sup>4</sup>

Of these, the first is the most significant in Wicklow, where the number of households is rising rapidly. Population projections are set out elsewhere in Chapter 3. The expected increase in the number of persons in the County will give rise to changes in the numbers of households as indicated in Tables 4.2 and 4.3.

In addition, calculations for the period 1996 to 2002, for the County of Wicklow, show that there were, on average, some 440 houses completed each year, whose construction could not be related directly to the growth in the number of households. If these houses were accounted for entirely by obsolescence of the existing stock of housing, it would indicate an annual attrition to the housing stock of about 1.3%. This is a high figure, given the vintage of the stock, and indicates that, in fact, a significant proportion of this figure of 440 houses is accounted for, not by structural or locational obsolescence, road widening and other demolitions, but conversion of existing habitable dwellings to second and holiday homes and the construction of new such homes. Up to half of the total figure may be accounted for in this way.

Table 4.2: Projected population and households 2002 to 2010: Low Growth Scenario (Projected County Population of 134,095 in 2010)

Year	Population	Household Numbers	Average Household Size (*ratio of total population to private households)
2002	114,676	36,975	3.10
2003	117,103	38,046	3.08
2004	119,531	39,116	3.06
2005	121,958	40,187	3.03
2006	124,386	41,257	3.01
2007	126,813	42,328	3.00
2008	129,240	43,515	2.97
2009	131,668	44,633	2.95
2010	134,095	45,766	2.93

Source: Wicklow County Council

<sup>3</sup> This embraces the overlapping concepts of housing need and housing demand

<sup>4</sup> This refers to houses that are between occupiers at a given point in time, typically for a short period of time.

Table 4.3: Projected population and households 2002 to 2010: High Growth Scenario (Projected County Population of 146,202 in 2010)

Year	Population	Household Numbers	Average Household Size (*ratio of total population to private households)
2002	114,676	36,975	3.10
2003	118,617	38,498	3.08
2004	122,558	40,022	3.06
2005	126,498	41,545	3.04
2006	130,439	43,069	3.03
2007	134,380	44,592	3.01
2008	138,321	46,573	2.97
2009	142,261	48,224	2.95
2010	146,202	49,898	2.93

Source: Wicklow County Council

Additional dwellings to facilitate movement within the stock (see 4.2 above), may be factored into the overall requirement by adding between 3 and 5% to the growth in the number of households

### 4.3 – LAND AND HOUSING SUPPLY

**Housing Supply:** The extent of housing requirements set out above, may be compared to the pattern of housing delivery observed in the recent past (Table 4.4).

Table 4.4: Housing completions, County Wicklow

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
1,168	1,147	1,335	1,294	1,484	1,914	2,002

Source: DoEHLG: Quarterly Bulletin of Housing Statistics

Housing completions in the County as a whole have averaged in the region of 1,500 over the last five years and 1,800 over the last three.

Assuming that obsolescence and second home construction remain at prevailing levels, and allowing for the required increase in dwellings to facilitate movement within the stock, it may be expected that a continuation of the present housing delivery performance would provide for an annual increase in the net number of households of between 1,000 and 1,250 – sufficient for the low, but not the high, growth scenario for the County.

**Land Availability:** Table 4.5 summarises the land availability position within the County as at September 2003. Detailed tabulations of land availability by settlement are contained in the working paper prepared in support of the Housing Strategy.

Table 4.5: Capacity of Housing Lands in County Wicklow

Type of Settlement and services status	Hectares	Assumed average density	Housing capacity
<b>Major Growth Centres</b>			
Zoned lands to be serviced			
in plan period	828.2	24.7	20,383
Other zoned lands	50.0	2.5	125
<b>Secondary Growth Centres</b>			
Zoned lands to be serviced			
in plan period	189.7	20.0	3,794
Other zoned lands	41.7	20.0	834
Land in villages	129.0	2.5	323
Total	1,238.6	20.5	25,458

Source: Wicklow County Council Planning Section

Detailed tabulations of land availability, when compared with anticipated population growth in each settlement (Chapter 3) show that there is sufficient land zoned and serviced (or planned to be serviced) in all major growth centres with the exception of \*Bray, Blessington and Baltinglass. Local Area Plans will be prepared for these towns in order to zone required lands and make provision for servicing. A plan will also be prepared for Rathdrum. There are also small shortfalls in the secondary centres of Aughrim, Avoca, Newcastle and Shillelagh. In Aughrim, the water supply scheme is at the design stage and wastewater was recently upgraded. Shillelagh is served by Tinahely Regional Water Supply Scheme and wastewater treatment has now been upgraded. It should be noted that the 2010 populations for the towns are indicative populations; it is not expected that all the towns will reach these indicative populations. Also the density assumption that has been made is a modest one – 30 in Bray and Arklow, 25 in Wicklow and Greystones, and 20 elsewhere.

### 4.4 – HOUSING MARKET TRENDS

Nationally, the market for housing remains buoyant, with the ESRI<sup>5</sup> projecting required annual house completions nationally at 49,000 to 2006 and 42,000 thereafter. However, new house prices relative to personal disposable income, peaked in the year 2000. The ESRI suggest that new house prices are likely to fall moderately in real terms over the period of the Strategy.

Nevertheless, there are special factors which are likely to impact on the County. Chief amongst these is the demand arising from the growth of the Dublin region and the associated growth centres within the County. A further factor is the growth of second homes.

For the purpose of this Strategy, therefore, a survey was conducted of house price change expectations amongst auctioneers in County Wicklow, in order to supplement data on anticipated national house price changes.

Taken together, national and local data indicate that a moderation of price increases is expected, with annual rates of increase in the County taken as a whole falling to 4% by 2007.

<sup>5</sup> Bergin et al. *Medium Term Review 2003-2010*, ESRI, July 2003

\*Given the shortfall in available land within the confines of Bray TC

A Local Area Plan will be prepared for the Environs of Bray to accommodate the needs of the settlement

The background working paper uses these data, together with locally adjusted data on projected national per capita income changes, to calculate housing affordability for Wicklow residents in each year to year 2010.

The following section summarises the results of these calculations and sets out the implications for the provision of social and affordable housing within the County.

## 4.5 – SOCIAL AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING REQUIREMENTS

Table 4.6 below summarises the position with regard to the annual rate of household formation and the numbers of households from these new formations who will meet the affordability criteria set out in Section 93(1) of the Planning and Development Act 2000, based on projections of changes in house prices and personal incomes.

Table 4.6:  
Summary of Anticipated Social & Affordable Housing Need

Measure	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
<b>LOW</b>							
Household formations (1)	1070	1071	1070	1071	1187	1118	1133
Number of households meeting affordability criteria							
S 93(1) (2)	477	479	473	459	491	450	441
(2) as a % of (1)	44%	44%	44%	43%	41%	40%	39%
<b>HIGH</b>							
Household formations (1)	1524	1523	1524	1523	1981	1651	1674
Number of households meeting affordability criteria							
S 93(1) (2)	679	682	675	654	823	663	652
(2) as a % of (1)	44%	44%	44%	42%	41%	40%	38%

Source: Wicklow County Council

Requirement for social and affordable housing in private developments:

In order to calculate the total requirement for social and affordable housing, the data presented in Table 4.6 must be adjusted and supplemented in ways which are set out below.

Firstly, the absolute numeric target for provision of social and affordable housing by private developers, is derived as follows:

### ADD

- Number of new households requiring affordable or social housing (Table 4.6)
- Special needs cases not included in the social housing register <sup>6</sup>
- All other cases being catered for by the voluntary sector

### DEDUCT

- Affordable housing freed-up by waiting list clearance <sup>7</sup>
- Surplus (if any) of programme of direct social and affordable housing provision by housing authorities, over accumulated need measured by the waiting list, available to meet prospective social housing need (see section 4.3)
- Provision of subsidised sites by the Housing Authority to facilitate single affordable housing

Next, In order to fix the % allocation on each private sector site, the net amount derived above is DIVIDED BY:

### ADD

- Total number of new households to be formed over the period (including those requiring social and affordable housing)
- Housing association projected completions – total

### LESS (optional)

- All houses constructed on unzoned lands or on sites which fall below the threshold set by the Act

This equation may be established on a year-to-year basis, but for the purposes of this strategy, an average has been derived for the whole period of the Plan and is to be applied in every year of the Plan.

The calculations are set out in the Working Paper prepared in support of this Strategy.

Two options are used to calculate the relevant % to be applied<sup>8</sup>. The average requirements over the life of the strategy under each of the options are set out below.

Table 4.7 % Requirement for Social Affordable Housing

Option Used	Population growth assumption	
	Low	High
Option 1	44.2	43.6
Option 2	53.1	52.2

<sup>6</sup> It should be noted that the accumulated social housing need which will not be dealt with by the voluntary sector is excluded from the overall calculation of need, since it is assumed to be dealt with by the Local Authority on sites already acquired, through its own building or acquisition programme.

<sup>7</sup> Privately rented housing relinquished by those taking up social housing may be available for social housing purposes

<sup>8</sup> Option 1 is the basic calculation as set out in the text. In Option 2, the figures are amended to take account of construction on non-zoned land and sites below the threshold. These are deducted from the denominator, since they reduce the base to which the number of affordable houses must be added. At the same time, the number of local authority free or subsidised sites provided at such locations is deducted from the numerator, since this is a reduction in the required affordable housing solutions on zoned land above the threshold of affordable provision.

## 5. The Housing Strategy

The housing strategy to be employed by the Council over the period of this Plan comprises three elements:

1. To ensure that sufficient zoned and serviced land is available in designated development centres and other settlements within the County to accommodate the estimated housing requirements of such settlements during the currency of the Plan.
2. To further provide for social and affordable housing through Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2000.
3. To provide directly for social and affordable housing solutions through its own house building programme, assistance to other agencies and individuals, acquisition of dwellings and other special programmes.

### 5.1 – PROVISION OF ZONED AND SERVICED LAND IN DEVELOPMENT CENTRES

The overall settlement strategy for the County has been set out in Chapter 3 of the Plan.

- Policy SS1 states that within the Metropolitan area of the County, the Council will encourage housing, industry and other development to locate on suitably zoned lands or in existing towns and villages that have a basic social, community and physical infrastructure.
- Policy SS2 states that in the Hinterland area, the Council will concentrate development in the designated Primary Development Centre of Wicklow Town & Environs and the Secondary Development Centre of Arklow & Environs.

In Chapter 9 of this Plan, the Council commits itself to encourage and facilitate the provision of necessary infrastructure to fully accommodate this population and achieve a balanced economy, social and sustained environment. In particular, the Plan aims to deliver and promote a high quality and efficient water supply, drainage and waste management facilities during the Plan period, which will ensure the long term environmental, social and economic development of the County.

- Policy W1 states that the Council will provide public water supply to towns, villages and rural areas in accordance with the Council's "Water Services Investment Programme" and those identified in Schedule 9.1 in Chapter 9.
- Policy WSI states that the Council will provide satisfactory wastewater treatment and ancillary works to all towns and villages in the county to serve existing and future populations in accordance with the Wicklow Settlement Strategy and Hierarchy, in accordance with the Water Framework Directive 2000, Water Services Investment Programme and those identified in Schedule 9.3 in Chapter 9.
- Section 6.2.2 of Chapter 9 indicates that the Council will require developments to connect to public piped infrastructure where public infrastructure services are adequate or where they will be improved in the future, but that where public treatment capacity is currently not adequate and where upgraded capacity is proposed, the Council will consider the provision of suitable wastewater

treatment plants for housing developments prior to the upgrade.

Calculations made in the Housing Working Paper indicates that the existing zoned serviced land, proposed zoning provisions and associated servicing commitments of the Council are sufficient to cater for housing requirements in each of the designated settlement centres with the exceptions of in particular Baltinglass, Blessington, Bray (environs) where Local Area Plans will be prepared to remedy the position.

### 5.2 – DIRECT PROVISION OF SOCIAL HOUSING INCLUDING SPECIAL NEEDS

It is recognised that there will continue to be a need for social and affordable housing irrespective of the level of overall housing output. Wicklow Housing Authorities will continue to endeavour to meet the needs of households through a range of social housing options, including its own direct house building programme and assistance to other agencies.

The Council's Strategic Statement identified the following in relation to its housing responsibility:

"To provide and assist in the provision of suitable, quality and cost-effective accommodation to satisfy the needs of people who are unable to provide housing accommodation for themselves".

The challenge is to ensure delivery of this programme and achievement of the maximum amount of social and affordable housing, thereby providing a quicker and more affordable access to housing for people on limited means. Achieving this will require the Local Authorities to play a wider promotional role, which will also necessitate an enhanced contribution from the voluntary sector.

The Council is committed to promoting and facilitating the use of the full range of social housing options, as set out below.

#### Provision of New Social Housing by Wicklow Housing Authorities

In the absence of a rolling multi-annual housing programme, and given the dependence of the Local Authority on central government funding for housing provision, it is not feasible to set out with confidence the future programme of social housing within Wicklow. There are currently 150 Local Authority dwellings in progress, and 30 being provided by the voluntary and co-operative sector. Starts for 2004 are projected to be 520. Completions are assumed to average 130 dwellings, annually, over the period of the Plan. Within the functional area of the County Council, housing schemes have recently been completed or are in progress in Aughrim, Avoca, Ballinacash, Baltinglass, Bardarrig, Blessington, Carnew, Dunlavin, Kilcoole, Newtownmountkenedy, Rathnew, Rathnew, Roundwood, Stratford and Tinahely.

The land bank for social housing comprises some 52 hectares. Based on the likely number of starts in the period 2005 to 2008, additional lands may be sought to accommodate social housing development in North, East and West Wicklow.

**Housing Acquisition Programme:** Each year as part of its Housing Programme, and where it proves economical to do so, the Council acquires dwellings at various locations throughout the County. To date only former Council houses have been acquired. Acquisitions are expected to be capped at 10 per annum over the duration of the Plan.

**Private Sites Programme:** To meet the growing demand and to supplement the traditional housing construction programme, the Wicklow Housing Authorities have continued to operate a scheme for the provision of subsidised sites. Bray Town Council has provided sites at Ballywaltrim. Wicklow Town Council has provided sites on Greenhill Road. Wicklow County Council has provided sites at Ashford, Auhrim, Dunlavin, Enniskerry, Greystones, Kilcoole, Kilmacanogue, Rathdrum, Shillelagh and Tinahely. It is now Council policy to provide private sites only in the south and west of the county, having regard to the cost and availability of lands, most economical and sustainable use of lands and the current housing list. It is anticipated that the annual number of dwellings assisted by this scheme will average 50 over the lifetime of this Plan (in all the housing authorities together). In areas other than the south and west, the Council will continue to provide a mix of social and affordable housing to ensure the best use of lands available while at the same time promoting and encouraging social integration.

**Affordable Housing Schemes<sup>9</sup>:** One such vehicle for the achievement of this aim is the Council's own affordable housing schemes.

Within the County Council area, under this scheme the Council provides new houses, at cost price and low interest rates, on land owned by them, to persons qualifying under the terms of the scheme. Some 147 such houses were provided in 2003 and a further 61 are being developed. Schemes completed or currently being developed are at Auhrim; Avoca; Ballinaclesh; Ballyhara; Baltinglass; Blessington; Kilcoole; Rathnew and Tinahely. Wicklow Town Council presently has proposals to develop a scheme for social and affordable housing for up to 202 units at Ballyguile on the western edge of the town. Arklow Town Council also has proposals for three affordable housing schemes in their area. Bray is unlikely to develop much affordable housing because of the extremely high price of land in the town. This often renders the provision of affordable housing too expensive for those in housing need.

Wicklow County Council will also continue to advance its house acquisitions from new private developments as part of the policy objective of this Plan that 20% of proposed residential units on unzoned land are dedicated as social/affordable housing. Houses acquired by the Council under this objective are sold to eligible applicants using the criteria of the Affordable housing Scheme. Site subsidies are sought from the Department of the

Environment and Local Government in order to make the sale price of the dwelling more affordable. Ten such dwellings have been acquired to date.

It is anticipated that an annual average of 50 dwellings will be provided under these schemes between 2004 and 2010 (all Authorities combined).

**Policy HI:** To ensure that 20% of any land developed for residential use, or for a mixture of residential and other uses, shall be made available for the provision of social/affordable housing on unzoned lands.

**Other Social Housing Options:** A number of other schemes are available to eligible candidates, including:

- Shared Ownership Scheme
- Traditional housing loans
- Mortgage Allowance Scheme.
- Extensions to council houses
- Essential Repairs Grants
- Improvement Works in Lieu of Local Authority Housing
- Tenant Purchase Scheme

A contribution to the stock of available social housing is also made through returns to stock, where a vacancy has arisen because the previous occupant is now housed in a dwelling obtained on the open purchase or rental market.

An annual contribution of 20 is estimated for all Authorities combined over the lifetime of the plan, covering the net returns to stock as defined above as well as the budgetary impact of tenant purchase.

**The Role of the Voluntary Housing and Co-operative Sector:** There are nine groups currently active in the Voluntary Housing Sector in Wicklow: Bray Womens Refuge, Sunbeam House Service, St. Vincent de Paul, Ardee Cheshire Homes, Peacehaven Trust, Newgrove Housing Association, Kare, Suaimhneas and Respond. There are various schemes at different stages from planning to consideration, to Department of Environment & Local Government approval received, to under-construction.

The role of the voluntary housing sector (voluntary housing associations, co-operative associations, and community associations) will be actively promoted by the Council and is expected to feature strongly over the course of the Development Plan. This Housing Strategy has been based on the expectation that through the implementation of Part V of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, Planning Authorities can work more closely with the voluntary housing sector to expand significantly their contribution to construction capacity across the country. This expectation of an enhanced role for the voluntary housing sector is in turn based on a belief that the sector has remained somewhat under-developed to date.

Specifically, voluntary housing bodies are assisted under the Capital Assistance Scheme with non repayment capital funding

<sup>9</sup> The Affordable Housing Scheme should not be confused with the term "Affordable Housing" as used in Part V of the Planning & Development Act 2000.



and Rental Subsidy Scheme to provide accommodation to meet the special housing needs such as those of the elderly, people with disabilities, homeless persons or small families. Wicklow Local Authorities recognise the potential role of the voluntary sector in the provision of housing for the special needs categories. Wicklow County Council will continue to play a key “enabling” and administrative role in the operation of the Capital Funding Schemes in order to assist approved Voluntary Housing Bodies.

Completions are anticipated to average 30 units per annum over the duration of the Plan. This figure is included as part of the 20% Part V target.

#### **Revitalisation of existing areas of social housing:**

- Housing Estate Management. To date 15 Residents Associations have been established or re-organised through the office of the Council's Estate Development Officer.
- The R.A.P.I.D. Programme (Revitalise Areas by Planning Investment & Development) has been in operation since late 2001 and 45 areas nationally have been designated under this programme. Wicklow County Council have responsibility for the implementation of the RAPID Programme and have employed a local Co-ordinator. Bray is the only town in County Wicklow that has been designated under this programme. In Bray five local authority housing estates have been included in the RAPID Programme, they include the following, Fassaroe, Oldcourt, Ballywaltrim Heights, Kilbride Grove and Ard Na Greine/Heatherwood/White Oaks/Deerpark/Cois Sleibhe. An Area Implementation Team (AIT) was established, it draws its membership from statutory agencies, community representatives and community organisations. The AIT has responsibility to implement the RAPID strategy at local level. The AIT has produced the Bray RAPID Programme Baseline Action Plan which was submitted to central Government in December 2001

**Special needs Accommodation:** This includes the needs of the elderly, the physically disabled and persons with learning disabilities.

Purpose built dwellings will continue to be provided for these persons in accordance with need, either as part of the local authority housing programme or through the voluntary and co-operative sector. This objective will also be pursued in respect of private house developments.

**Homeless Persons:** The most recent data indicate 29 homeless persons in need of housing in County Wicklow. These figures are based on the homeless that have presented themselves to the Council. The true figure is higher, but unknown. The hidden homeless include those sleeping rough or accommodated in hostels or hospitals.

The needs of homeless persons are wide ranging. Services required include initial accommodation, but also settlement and outreach services, health, education and training and social welfare services.

A Wicklow Homeless Strategy has been adopted. Under it, the local authority is responsible for the accommodation needs of the homeless, and the Health Board is responsible for care and welfare needs of these people.

The role of the Homeless Forum, established as part of the strategy, is to oversee the implementation of the Action Plan in the County. This Forum reports to the Housing and Corporate Estate Strategic Policy Committee.

**Traveller Accommodation:** The Traveller Accommodation Act, 1998 requires housing authorities in consultation with Travellers and the general public to prepare and adopt a five year construction programme to meet the existing and projected accommodation needs of Travellers in their area. The Council is committed to implementing the above programme.

Wicklow County Council adopted the Traveller Accommodation Programme 2000 – 2004 in February 2000. This was reviewed in 2002. The Programme addresses the accommodation needs of existing roadside families and prospective needs over a five-year period.

In order to deal adequately with illegal camping throughout the County, the Council will have an ongoing programme of providing suitable accommodation for Travellers through the following measures:

- Standard Housing: A number of travelling families presently camped on the roadside are suitable for standard type housing. This option has to date provided the most units of accommodation for Travellers throughout the County.
- Single-Site House/Halt: While it may not be feasible to provide a single site house at a particular location it may be possible to provide a single halt. The Single-site House/Halt is the preferred option of most roadside families in the County. Many of them look upon this as the ideal type of accommodation but it is difficult to find and is an expensive option. Single-Site Housing/Halt is better suited to families who have spent a long time on the roadside and who would find it difficult to make the transition to standard housing.
- Permanent Halting Sites: There are two permanent halting sites in the County at Silverbridge and Ballintreskin. Silverbridge can accommodate five families while Ballintreskin can accommodate eight. There are no vacancies in either halting site at present. Halting site accommodation is considered to be transitional accommodation by most families with group housing or standard housing their ultimate ambition.
- Transient Halting Sites: There are currently no transient sites in County Wicklow. As a result many families of a semi-indigenous nature, some of whom are related to County Wicklow indigenous families, move into the County temporarily. Such families generally end up parking illegally on public or private property and due to the unsuitable location and lack of sanitary facilities; traffic and health hazards are created. The Council will continue to seek a suitable site for such a facility.

- Social rented houses for members of the settled community, for whom it is considered the only appropriate housing situation, but not to exceed 5% of new social rented housing in any area.
- Group Housing Schemes: This is a housing scheme of two or more housing units built together for Traveller families. Work has been completed on a Group Housing Scheme for Travellers in Kilcoole. This comprises six units as part of an overall housing development on a site adjacent to the temporary halting site. A four-unit scheme has also been completed at Rathnew.
- Loan Scheme for Purchase of Caravans: Some twenty families have been assisted under this scheme since 2001 and the Council will continue to make payments available to suitable applicants.
- Social rented houses for members of the traveller community for whom it is considered the only appropriate housing solution, but not to exceed 10% of new traveller social rented housing in any year.

In total, the 2002 review identified a current need for 54 units of accommodation with a projected future need of over 20 over the remaining lifetime of the Plan.

A building programme with an initial target of 20 units per year will be embarked upon and will be subject to annual review in light of progress made in the preceding year.

**Asylum Seekers:** The Local Authority has facilitated the provision of emergency accommodation for asylum seekers as part of the process of reception, dispersal and direct provision for asylum seekers in Ireland. There are currently three properties in which asylum seekers are housed – in Wicklow, Baltinglass and Rathdrum. Expenditure under this heading is 100% recoupable from the Department of the Environment and Local Government

### **5.3 – PROVISION OF SOCIAL AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING THROUGH PART V OF THE PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT ACT 2000**

In addition to the direct provision of social and affordable housing, and assistance to voluntary housing agencies for such direct provision, the Council proposes vigorously to pursue the provisions of Part V of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, in order to facilitate the provision of such housing alongside private sector developments throughout the County. The policy for implementation of the Part V provisions is set out in Section 6.1 below.

## **6. Housing Policy**

In pursuit of its Housing Strategy, Wicklow County Council will, in the execution of its own programmes as well as in considering the planning applications and programmes of other agencies, developers and individuals, apply the policies and guidelines set out in this section.

### **6.1 – PLANNING PERMISSIONS AND PART V OF THE PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT ACT, 2000**

Section 96 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 provides that the objectives of the Housing Strategy in relation to social and affordable housing shall be implemented by means of conditions attached to planning permissions for residential development.

**Policy H2:** The Council will require a 20% quota of social/affordable housing to be provided from each housing development within the County, on zoned lands for residential use or mixture of residential and other uses. This requirement will be included as a condition of development, with the exception of an application for development of 4 or less houses, or for housing on land of 0.1 hectares or less.

The Council will operate Part V of the Act in a way that encourages and facilitates a level of supply, which will meet the demands of all sectors of the market. It would frustrate the objectives of the Housing Strategy if its implementation were to result in any undue slow-down, interruption of housing supply, or disruption of the housing market.

Conditions attached to planning permissions for residential development to which the 20% social/affordable quota applies will require developers to enter into an agreement with the Council to transfer to the Council either:

- a) Twenty per cent of the land of the site, or
- b) Twenty per cent of the floor area of the housing units, or
- c) A number of fully or partially serviced housing sites to the Council at an agreed cost, or
- d) The provision of (a), (b) or (c) above at another area within Wicklow

The ratio of social to affordable houses to be provided, shall be assessed on a case by case basis, having regard to local housing needs, but at all times the 20% requirement shall be met.

In so far as it is known at the time of the agreement, the Council will indicate to the developer its intentions in relation to the provision of social/affordable housing, including a description of the proposed houses, on the land or sites to be transferred, where such lands form part or parts of the lands which are subject to the application for permission as is, or are specified by the agreement as being parts required to be reserved for the provision of housing.

The Council, in making such agreements, will have regard to:

1. The Development Plan and any relevant local area plan
2. The need to ensure the overall coherence of the development to which the planning application relates
3. The views of the developer in relation to the impact of the agreement on the proposed development, and
4. The need for social integration.

The Council's Planning & Housing Sections will encourage housing developers to whom the 20% quota will apply to discuss the likely terms of the Part V agreements at such consultations. Both the Council and the developer shall thus have a common understanding of the nature of the likely agreement before a decision to grant planning permission is made.

It will be the Council's objective to finalise the agreement within two months at the latest of the grant of permission, in order to avoid delaying the start of Housing Development. All social housing provided under Part V of the Planning & Development Act 2000 in accordance with this strategy shall be allocated to persons on the Waiting List for that allocation area in accordance with the Council's Scheme of Letting Priorities. All Affordable housing provided under Part V of the Act in accordance with the terms of this Housing Strategy shall be allocated in accordance with a Scheme of Priorities for affordable housing as adopted by the Council.

## 6.2 – MEETING THE NEEDS OF PERSONS WITH SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS

In implementing the strategies for meeting special housing need set out in section 4.5, the following policies and guidelines will be applied:

**Housing Provision for the Elderly:** The main emphasis in the Council's housing policy for the elderly should be to enable elderly people to choose between adapting their homes for the increasing disabilities of old age or to move to accommodation more suited to their needs.

**Policy H3:** Priority will be given to improving the accommodation of the elderly who lack the basic amenities of indoor sanitary facilities and to provide for increasing disability.

**Policy H4:** Special attention will be given to the elderly on low incomes in substandard, privately rented accommodation when planning and allocating accommodation for the elderly.

**Policy H5:** Wherever possible, elderly people will be housed in the vicinity of their own area. Where this is not practicable dependent elderly people in isolated rural areas shall be housed in more suitable accommodation in nearby villages and towns.

The Council will examine the possibility of introducing a scheme that would facilitate elderly people transferring their homes to the Council in exchange for more suitable accommodation.

**The Housing Needs of People with Disabilities:** Social and affordable housing, for people with disabilities, is required with respect to appropriate crisis units, sheltered and supported housing, and independent living options. A range of housing options are required to facilitate this category of need. Such housing should not be segregated from the general population; rather it should be integrated within housing estates and between estates and in towns and villages.

Importantly, where possible, such housing should meet the following requirements:

- Location – be accessible to public transport
- Access – pedestrian safety and ease of access should be catered for by ensuring that pavements are dished and best access practice is adhered to.
- Accessible design – should suit the requirements of individual tenants and therefore requires direct and on-going consultation with the prospective tenant (with respect to size, design and accessories).

**Policy H6:** An annual review of social housing waiting lists and consultation with local disability groups and organisations will be undertaken to determine the % of such housing required, and in order to research individual housing requirements.

With regards to private housing, at present, the Council has a Disabled Persons Grant in place to assist private homeowners and enable any necessary/reasonable adaptations to a house to accommodate the specific needs and requirements of a disabled person resident.

**Policy H7:** The Council will seek ways to streamline the processing of all Disabled Persons Grants in partnership with the relevant Health Authority.

**Elderly Persons:** It is estimated that the number of people over the age of 65 will increase from the current 11.1% of the national population to 18.2% by 2016. This reflects the ageing population of the State, which is also a worldwide phenomenon.

Key housing issues that should be taken into consideration in the provision of housing for older persons are:

- Location – accessible to local retail facilities and public transport, and not be located on steep gradients.
- Accessible design – should meet the requirements of both the disabled elderly and the non-disabled elderly i.e. single storey and double storey housing appropriate on a case-by-case basis. Part M of the Building Regulations, 2001 provides mandatory instructions that all new housing (private, affordable and social) greater than 45m<sup>2</sup> must be designed to enable adaptable/lifelong housing at a later date if necessary. The ground floor of all homes must contain a bathroom and be designed such that it is adaptable to accommodate a person with a physical disability.

Such measures will result in older persons being able to adapt their home if required and avoid the disruption of a move.

**Refugees:** Persons who have been granted refugee status have automatic rights to apply and be assessed for local authority housing.

**Policy H8:** Consideration will be given, in the provision of housing for refugees, to household size and structure and the need for access to social supports in terms of language, education, employment.

### **6.3 – COUNTERING SOCIAL SEGREGATION**

Section 94 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 states that a Housing Strategy shall take into account the need, inter alia, to counteract undue segregation in housing between persons of different social backgrounds.

**Policy H9:** It will be the Council's policy to encourage the development of mixed and balanced communities so as to avoid areas of social exclusion.

### **6.4 – PROMOTING THE ROLE OF HOUSING AGENCIES**

The voluntary housing sector represents a potentially valuable resource within the County.

**Policy H10:** Wicklow County Council will consult comprehensively with the voluntary housing sector through the life of their Development Plans in order to identify and agree opportunities for their participation in the construction of social and affordable houses. This consultation will initially focus on the voluntary housing associations that are currently working in Wicklow or which have expressed an interest in working in the area.

### **6.5 – HOUSING ESTATE DESIGN, HOUSING MIX & HOUSING TYPES**

The nature of social housing has changed considerably in recent years. This has occurred in a context of rapid economic, social and demographic change. The pattern of need has become more diverse and is characterised by different household types with specific housing requirements. These include not only the traditional family unit but lone parents, homeless persons, elderly persons, travellers, and the Disabled. It is therefore felt that the design of social/affordable housing is paramount and specific design features, requirements and standards have been highlighted in Section 7.5 of Chapter 5 of this Plan.







Wicklow Town Council

