

CHAPTER 4 - HOUSING

4.1 Introduction

One of the principal functions of a development plan is to put in place a framework for the delivery of new housing and this is set out in both the 'Core Strategy' and the objectives set out in this chapter. It is aim of this framework to ensure that:

- residential amenity enjoyed by existing communities is preserved and enhanced;
- new housing development is encouraged and facilitated, in the correct locations;
- adequate zoned and serviced land is available in these locations to achieve the growth required;
- in areas where new housing is to be allowed on unzoned lands (e.g. in villages and in the open countryside) the policies and objectives for such development are clearly articulated;
- a range of house types and tenures are delivered, to cater for all in society; and
- new housing development is of the highest quality

4.2 Wicklow County Housing Strategy

The preparation of a Housing Strategy is a requirement under the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended). Part V of the Act requires that each Planning Authority shall include in any development plan it makes a strategy for the purpose of ensuring that the proper planning and sustainable development of the area of the development plan provides for the housing of the existing and future population of the area in the manner set out in the strategy. 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 housing is available for persons who have different levels of income;
- ensure that a mixture of house types and sizes is developed to reasonably match the requirements of the different categories of households, including the special requirements of elderly persons and persons with disabilities;
- counteract undue segregation between persons of different social backgrounds; and
- provide that as a general policy a specific % (not exceeding 10%) 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 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 Housing Strategy for the 2016-2022 period is included as an Appendix to this plan.

While the Housing Strategy has found that there is rationale for seeking 10% of eligible residential development be reserved for social housing during the strategy period of 2016-2022, this only addresses social housing needs that will arise during the 2016-2022 period and does not take into account the considerable demand for such housing that has built up over the currency of the previous strategy. It is also clear that the combination of the Council's own construction programme (which is severely curtailed at

present) and Part V will only cater for a proportion of the population experiencing affordability problems in the County.

The Council must continue to utilise all policy avenues open to it and any new schemes that become available to ensure the greatest delivery of social housing possible and to ensure a regionally equitable balance of housing delivery.

4.3 Key Housing Principles

4.3.1 Sustainable Communities

Well-designed homes in the right locations are fundamental to building strong, sustainable communities. It is essential that the residents of Wicklow are provided high quality places to live which:

- deliver a quality of life which residents are entitled to expect, in terms of amenity, safety and convenience;
- prioritise walking, cycling and public transport, and minimise the need to use cars;
- provide a good range of community and support facilities, where and when they are needed and that are easily accessible;
- present an attractive, well-maintained appearance, with a distinct sense of place and a quality public realm that is easily maintained;
- are easy to access for all and to find one's way around;
- promote the efficient use of land and of energy, and minimise greenhouse gas emissions;
- provide a mix of land uses to minimise transport demand;
- promote social integration and provide accommodation for a diverse range of household types and age groups;
- enhance and protect the green infrastructure and biodiversity; and
- enhance and protect the built and natural heritage.

4.3.2 Zoning

New housing development shall be required to locate on suitably zoned / designated land in settlements.

The priority for new residential development shall be in the designated 'town' and 'village' / 'neighbourhood centres' or 'primary zone' in settlements with development plans, or in the historic centre of large and small villages, through densification of the existing built up area, re-use of derelict or brownfield sites, infill and backland development. In doing so, particular cognisance must be taken of respecting the existing built fabric and residential amenities enjoyed by existing residents, and maintaining existing parks and other open areas within settlements.

In acknowledgement of the challenges presented by such sites, new housing development shall also be permitted on greenfield lands that are zoned / designated for housing.

The zoning / designation of greenfield land for new housing shall adhere to the following principles:

- Application of the 'sequential approach' whereby zoning extends outwards from centres, contiguous to the existing built up part of the settlement;
- promotion of the concept of 'walkable' neighbourhoods, whereby undeveloped lands within 10 minutes walking distance of the settlement centre and 5 minutes walking distance of any neighbourhood / village centres are prioritized;
- promotion of a sustainable land use and transportation pattern, whereby undeveloped lands that are accessible to public transport routes are considered most suitable for development. In this

regard, undeveloped land within 1 km of any rail or light rail stop or 500m of bus routes will be prioritized;

- lands already or easily serviced by a gravity fed water supply system and waste water collection system will be prioritized;
- cognisance will be taken of the need to provide upmost protection to the environment and heritage, particularly of designated sites, features and buildings;
- the need to maintain the rural greenbelt between towns; and
- promotion of the development of lands adjacent to existing or planned community and social infrastructure, such as schools and open space sites/zones.

4.3.3 Phasing

Notwithstanding the zoning / designation of any land for residential purposes, the development management process shall monitor and implement the population targets for each settlement as set out in the Core Strategy and shall phase and restrict, where necessary, the granting of residential planning permissions to ensure these targets are not exceeded.

The development of zoned / designated land should generally be phased in accordance with the sequential approach:

- Development shall extend outwards from centres with undeveloped land closest to the centres and public transport routes being given preference, i.e. 'leapfrogging' to peripheral areas shall be resisted;
- a strong emphasis shall be placed on encouraging infill opportunities and better use of under-utilised lands; and
- areas to be developed shall be contiguous to existing developed areas.

Only in exceptional circumstances should the above principles be contravened, for example, where a barrier to development is involved. Any exceptions must be clearly justified by local circumstances and such justification must be set out in any planning application proposal.

4.3.4 Densities

It is an objective of the Council to encourage higher residential densities at suitable locations, particularly close to existing or proposed major public transport corridors and nodes, and in proximity to major centres of activity such as town and neighbourhood centres.

Maximum densities will normally be ascribed to each parcel of zoned / designated residential land in the relevant local plan. Densities are crafted following an assessment of the capacity and characteristics of the land in question, in the interests of providing the most compact and sustainable form of development. In order to achieve the housing growth targets set out in the Core Strategy, it is important that maximum densities are achieved, except where insurmountable impediments arise.

In existing residential areas, infill development shall generally be at a density that respects the established character of the area in which it is located, subject to the protection of the residential amenity of adjoining properties.

Apartments generally will only be permitted within the designated centres in settlements (i.e. designated town, village or neighborhood centres), on mixed use designated lands (that are suitable for residential uses as part of the mix component) or within 10 minutes walking distance of a train or light rail station.

4.3.5 Rural Housing

As set out in Chapter 3 of this plan, rural housing in County Wicklow requires to be managed, to protect the County's pristine landscapes and natural resources, to avoid urban generated rural housing and to ensure the needs of those with a bona fide necessity to live in the rural area are facilitated.

4.3.6 Design of New Developments

This plan is accompanied by a **Development and Design Standards** document which sets out Wicklow County Council's requirements with respect to the design standards for new housing developments. All new housing developments will be assessed against the achievement of these key design factors set out in this guide, and in particular, will be required to address the following issues:

- 1) Context: How does the development respond to its surroundings?
- 2) Connections: How well is the new development / site / neighbourhood connected?
- 3) Inclusivity: How easily can people use and access the development?
- 4) Variety: How does the development promote a good mix of activities?
- 5) Efficiency: How does the development make appropriate use of resources, including land?
- 6) Distinctiveness: How do the proposals create a sense of place?
- 7) Layout: How does the proposal create people-friendly streets and spaces?
- 8) Public realm: How safe, secure and enjoyable are the public areas?
- 9) Adaptability: How will the buildings cope with change?
- 10) Privacy / amenity: How do the buildings provide a high quality amenity?
- 11) Parking: How will the parking be secure and attractive?
- 12) Detailed design: How well thought through is the building and landscape design?

4.4 Housing Objectives

General

HD1 New housing development shall be required to locate on suitably zoned or designated land in settlements, and will only be considered in the open countryside when it is for the provision of a rural dwelling to those with a housing, social or economic need to live in the open countryside.

Design

HD2 New housing development, above all other criteria, shall enhance and improve the residential amenity of any location, shall provide for the highest possible standard of living of occupants and in particular, shall not reduce to an unacceptable degree the level of amenity enjoyed by existing residents in the area.

HD3 All new housing developments (including single and rural houses) shall achieve the highest quality of layout and design, in accordance with the standards set out in the **Development and Design Standards** document appended to this plan, which includes a **Wicklow Single Rural Houses Design Guide**.

Social Housing

HD4 To implement the provisions of the **Wicklow Housing Strategy** and in particular, to require that 10% of all zoned land developed for residential use, or for a mixture of residential and other uses, shall be devoted to social housing.

Density

HD5 In order to make best use of land resources and services, unless there are cogent reasons to the contrary, new residential development shall be expected to aim for the highest density indicated for the lands¹. The Council reserves the right to refuse permission for any development that is not consistent with this principle.

Sequence / Phasing of Housing

HD6 Notwithstanding the zoning / designation of land for residential purposes, the Development Management process shall monitor and implement the population targets of this plan and shall phase and restrict, where necessary, the granting of residential planning permissions to ensure these targets are not exceeded

HD7 The development of zoned land should generally be phased in accordance with the sequential approach as set out in this chapter. The Council reserves the right to refuse permission for any development that is not consistent with these principles.

HD8 Housing development shall be managed and phased to ensure that infrastructure and in particular, community infrastructure, is provided to match the need of new residents. Where specified by the Planning Authority, new significant residential or mixed use development² proposals, may be required to provide a social and community facility/facilities as part of the proposed development or the developer may be required to carry out a social infrastructure audit, to determine if social and community facilities in the area are sufficient to provide for the needs of the future residents. Where deficiencies are identified, proposals will be required to either rectify the deficiency, or suitably restrict or phase the development in accordance with the capacity of existing or planned services.

Existing Residential Areas

HD9 In areas zoned / designated 'existing residential', house improvements, alterations and extensions and appropriate infill residential development in accordance with principles of good design and protection of existing residential amenity will normally be permitted (other than on lands permitted or designated as open space, see Objective HD11 below). While new developments shall have regard to the protection of the residential and architectural amenities of houses in the immediate environs, alternative and contemporary designs shall be encouraged (including alternative materials, heights and building forms), to provide for visual diversity.

HD10 In existing residential areas, infill development shall generally be at a density that respects the established character of the area in which it is located, subject to the protection of the residential amenity of adjoining properties. However, where previously unserved, low density housing areas become served by mains water services, consideration will be given to densities above the prevailing density, subject to adherence to normal siting and design criteria.

¹ Unless specific in the relevant local plan, the density objective for any particular lands shall be drawn for the principles set out in the **Development and Design Standards** appended to this plan.

² This is determined to be any proposed development in: (a) settlement Levels 1 to 4 of 150+ residential units, (b) settlement Level 5 of 75+ residential units and (c) settlement Level 6 of 30+ residential units.

HD11 In existing residential areas, the areas of open space permitted, designated or dedicated solely to the use of the residents will normally be zoned 'RE' as they form an intrinsic part of the overall residential development; however new housing or other non-community related uses will not normally be permitted on such lands.

Protection of Residential Amenity in Transitional Areas

HD12 While the zoning objectives indicate the different uses permitted in principle in each zone it is important to avoid abrupt transitions in scale and use at the boundary of adjoining land use zones. In these areas it is necessary to avoid developments that would be detrimental to amenity. In zones abutting residential areas, particular attention will be paid to the use, scale, density and appearance of development proposals and to landscaping and screening proposals in order to protect the amenities of residential properties.

Unit Types / Sizes / Locations

HD13 Apartments generally will only be permitted within the designated centres in settlements (i.e. designated town, village or neighborhood centres), on mixed use designated lands (that are suitable for residential uses as part of the mix component) or within 10 minutes walking distance of a train or light rail station.

HD14 New apartment developments dependent on access through existing established areas of predominantly single family homes will generally not be permitted.

HD15 Within medium to large scale housing developments, a range of unit types / sizes shall be provided, including bungalows (this requirement does not apply to apartment only developments).

HD16 Temporary residential structures (e.g. mobile homes, caravans, cabins, portacabins etc) form a haphazard and substandard form of residential accommodation and generally have poor aesthetic value and can detract from the overall appearance of an area. Therefore permission will generally not be granted for such structures.

Housing Formats

HD17 The maximum size of any single 'housing estate' shall be 200 units and developments that include more than 200 units should be broken into a number of smaller 'estates', which shall be differentiated from each other by the use of materially different design themes.

HD18 The development of 'serviced sites', where site purchasers have the option of designing their own home, shall be particularly encouraged on zoned / designated housing land.

Urban Regeneration & Housing

HD19 In many settlements in the County, there are sites and areas in need of development and renewal, in order to prevent:

- a. adverse effects on existing amenities in such areas, in particular as a result of the ruinous or neglected condition of any land,
- b. urban blight and decay,
- c. anti-social behaviour, or
- d. a shortage of habitable houses or of land suitable for residential use or a mixture of residential and other uses

It is an objective of this plan to encourage and facilitate the appropriate development of such sites / lands and all available tools and mechanisms, including the Vacant Site levy, may be utilised to stimulate such development.

In this regard, it is considered that all lands zoned 'Town Centre' in this plan (this refers to Level 5 settlements) as well as the following zones in larger towns (with stand alone plans) may include sites that are in need of renewal and regeneration, and these areas will be examined in detail to determine if there are sites where the Vacant Site Levy should be applied.

Settlement	Zones ³
Bray and Environs	TC, SF, GTH
Wicklow Town and Rathnew	TC, VC, PT, MU
Arklow Town and Environs	TC, WZ
Greystones, Delgany and Kilcoole	TC, VC
Newtownmountkennedy	TC
Blessington	TC
Rathdrum	TC, C

All lands zoned for residential development, including all lands zoned RE, R20, R15, R10 in this plan (this refers to Level 5 settlements), as well as the following residential zones in larger towns, are considered to be lands that may be in need of new development in order to ensure there is no shortage of housing, and these zones will be examined in detail in order to determine if there are sites where the Vacant Site Levy should be applied.

Settlement	Zones ⁹
Bray and Environs	RE1, R1, R2, R3, MU (where the predominate use provided for is residential)
Wicklow Town and Rathnew	RE, R1, R2, R3, R4
Arklow Town and Environs	RE, R1, R2, R3, R4, AA (where the predominate use provided for is residential)
Greystones, Delgany and Kilcoole	RE, R22, R17, R15, R10, R5, R2.5, R (Special), MU (where the predominate use provided for is residential)
Newtownmountkennedy	RE, R1, R2, R3
Blessington	RE, R1, R2
Rathdrum	R1, R2, R3, R4, RIV

³ or other such zoning codes as may replace these, during the making of future local plans

Housing in Rural Settlements / Areas (Levels 6-10 in County Settlement Hierarchy)

HD20 Urban generated housing shall not be permitted in the rural areas of the County, other than in rural settlements that have been deemed suitable to absorb an element of urban generated development (see objective HD19).

HD21 To implement the following housing occupancy controls for each Level, as set out in the Settlement Strategy:

Level 6 Rural Towns

Multi-house development

75% no restriction

25% Applicant / purchaser of any new home must be either a resident for at least 3 years duration in County Wicklow or in permanent employment for at least 3 years duration in County Wicklow prior to making of application / purchase of new house

Single house development

Applicant / purchaser of any new home must be either a resident for at least 3 years duration in County Wicklow or in permanent employment for at least 3 years duration in County Wicklow prior to making of application / purchase of new house

Level 7 Large Villages

Multi-house development

50% no restriction

50% Applicant / purchaser of any new home must be either:

- a resident for at least 3 years duration in County Wicklow or
- in permanent employment for at least 3 years duration in County Wicklow,

of within 30km of the large village in question prior to making of application / purchase of new house.

Single house

100% Applicant / purchaser of any new home must be either:

- a resident for at least 3 years duration in County Wicklow or
- in permanent employment for at least 3 years duration in County Wicklow,

of within 30km of the large village in question prior to making of application / purchase of new house.

Level 8 Small Villages

Multi-house development

50% Applicant / purchaser of any new home must be either:

- a resident for at least 3 years duration in County Wicklow or
- in permanent employment for at least 3 years duration in County Wicklow,

of within 30km of the small village in question prior to making of application / purchase of new house.

50% Applicant / purchaser of any new home must be either:

- a resident for at least 5 years duration in County Wicklow or
- in permanent employment for at least 5 years duration in County Wicklow,

of within 15km of the small village in question prior to making of application / purchase of new house.

Single house

100% Applicant / purchaser of any new home must be either:

- a resident for at least 5 years duration in County Wicklow or
- in permanent employment for at least 5 years duration in County Wicklow,

of within 15km of the small village in question prior to making of application / purchase of new house.

Level 9 Rural Clusters

Multi-house development

Not permitted

Single house

Applicant / purchaser of any new home must

- (a) be a resident for at least 10 years duration in County Wicklow of a settlement / area designated as Level 7-10 in the County settlement hierarchy that is within 10km of the rural cluster in question prior to making of application / purchase of new house.
- (b) demonstrate a proven need for housing, for example:
 - first time home owners;
 - someone that previously owned a home and is no longer in possession of that home as it had to be disposed following legal separation / divorce, the transfer of a home attached to a farm to a family member or the past sale of a home following emigration.

Level 10 Open countryside

Objective H23 applies.

HD22 Where permission is sought for residential development in a settlement with occupancy controls (Levels 6-9), the applicant will be required to show compliance with objectives for that settlement set out in this plan and to lodge with the Land Registry a burden on the property, in the form of a Section 47 agreement, restricting the use of the dwelling(s) for a period of 7 years in accordance with the relevant objective.

Housing in the Open Countryside

HD23 Residential development will be considered in the open countryside only when it is for those with a definable social or economic need to live in the open countryside.

Residential development will be considered in the countryside in the following circumstances:

1. A permanent native resident seeking to build a house for his / her own family and not as speculation. A permanent native resident shall be a person who has resided in a rural area in County Wicklow for at least 10 years in total (including permanent native residents of levels 8 and 9), or resided in the rural area for at least 10 years in total prior to the application for planning permission.

2. A son or daughter, or niece/nephew considered to merit the same position as a son/daughter within the law (i.e. when the uncle/aunt has no children of his/her own), of a permanent native resident of a rural area, who can demonstrate a definable social or economic need to live in the area in which the proposal relates and not as speculation.
3. A son or daughter, or niece/nephew considered to merit the same position as a son/daughter within the law (i.e. when the uncle/aunt has no children of his/her own), of a permanent native resident of a rural area, whose place of employment is outside of the immediate environs of the local rural area to which the application relates and who can demonstrate a definable social or economic need to live in the area to which the proposal relates and not as speculation.
4. Replacing a farm dwelling for the needs of a farming family, not as speculation. If suitable the old dwelling may be let for short term tourist letting and this shall be tied to the existing owner of the new farm dwelling were it is considered appropriate and subject to the proper planning and development of the area.
5. A person whose principal occupation is in agriculture and can demonstrate that the nature of the agricultural employment is sufficient to support full time or significant part time occupation.
6. An immediate family member (i.e. son or daughter) of a person described in 5, who is occupied in agriculture and can demonstrate that the nature of the agricultural employment is sufficient to support full time or significant part time occupation.
7. A person whose principal occupation is in a rural resource based activity (i.e. agriculture, forestry, mariculture, agri-tourism etc.) can demonstrate a need to live in a rural area in order to carry out their occupation. The Planning Authority will strictly require any applicant to show that there is a particular aspect or characteristic of their employment that requires them to live in that rural area, as opposed to a local settlement.
8. A close relative who has inherited, either as a gift or on death, an agricultural holding or site for his/her own purposes and not for speculation and who can demonstrate a definable social and / or economic need to live in the area to which the proposal relates.
9. The son or daughter of a landowner who has inherited a site for the purpose of building a one off rural house and where the land has been in family ownership as at 11th October 2004 for at least 10 years prior to the application for planning permission and not as speculation.
10. An emigrant who qualifies a permanent native resident, returning to a rural area in County Wicklow, seeking to build a house for his/her own use not as speculation.
11. Persons whose work is intrinsically linked to the rural area and who can prove a definable social or economic need to live in the rural area
12. A permanent native resident that previously owned a home and is no longer in possession of that home (for example their previous home having been disposed of following legal separation / divorce / repossession, the transfer of a home attached to a farm to a family member or the past sale of a home following emigration) and can demonstrate a social or economic need for a new home in the rural area.
13. Permanent native residents of moderate and small growth towns, seeking to build a house in their native town or village within the 60kph / 40mph speed limit on the non national radial roads, for their own use and not as speculation as of 11th October 2004.
14. A person whose business requires them to reside in the rural area and who can demonstrate the adequacy of the business proposals and the capacity of the business to support them full time.
15. Permanent native residents of the rural area who require a new purpose built specially adapted house due to a verified medical condition and who can show that their existing home cannot be adapted to meet their particular needs.
16. Persons who were permanent native residents of a rural area but due to the expansion of an adjacent town / village, the family home place is now located within the development boundary of the town / village.

In the event of conflict of any other settlement strategy objective / Landscape Zones and categories, a person who qualifies under policy HD23 their needs shall be supreme, except where the proposed development would be a likely traffic hazard or public health hazard.

With regard to the preservation of views and prospects, due consideration shall be given to those listed within the area of the National Park; and with respect to all other areas, to generally regard the amenity matters, but not to the exclusion of social and economic matters. The protection and conservation of views and prospects should not give rise to the prohibition of development, but development should be designed and located to minimise impact

HD24 Where permission is granted for a single rural house, the applicant will be required to lodge with the Land Registry a burden on the property, in the form of a Section 47 agreement, restricting the use of the dwelling for a period of 7 years to the applicant, or to those persons who fulfil the criteria set out in Objective HD23 or to other such persons as the Planning Authority may agree to in writing.

HD25 The conversion or reinstatement of non-residential or abandoned residential buildings back to residential use in the rural areas will be supported where the proposed development meets the following criteria:

- the original walls must be substantially intact – rebuilding of structures of a ruinous nature will not be considered;
- buildings must be of local, visual, architectural or historical interest;
- buildings must be capable of undergoing conversion / rebuilding and their original appearance must be substantially retained. (A structural survey by a qualified engineer will be required with any planning application); and
- works must be executed in a sensitive manner and retain architecturally important features wherever possible and make use of traditional and complementary materials, techniques and specifications.