

Chapter 5 : Housing Strategy

5 HOUSING STRATEGY

5.1 Executive Summary

Meath County Council's Housing Strategy is prepared in accordance with Part V of the Planning & Development Act, 2000 and Part II of the Planning & Development (Amendment) Act 2002. This Strategy is for the period 2007 – 2012 which is the lifetime of the Development Plan. It replaces the Housing Strategy which was adopted in 2001.

The Planning & Development Act, 2000 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;
- Provide that as a general policy, a specific percentage (not exceeding 20%) of the land zoned in the Development Plan for residential use, or for a mixture of residential and other use, shall be reserved for those in need of social and affordable housing in the area.
- 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;

The main findings and recommendations of the Strategy provides includes the following:

- 21,050 additional housing units will be constructed in the Meath area from January 1st 2007 to December 31st 2012;
- The capacity of serviced (or planned to be serviced) and zoned land for housing is more than adequate to satisfy the overall housing requirement over this period;
- The provision of some 990 social housing units by the Local Authority / Voluntary Housing Sector, with an additional 300 houses arising from casual vacancies arising during the course of the Development Plan;
- The development of some 90 shared ownership / affordable housing units by Meath County Council / Voluntary Housing Sector directly or through Public Private Partnership at various locations throughout Meath;
- A requirement that 20% of units in new eligible residential developments be social / affordable units with a sliding scale in operation between 3% social / 17% affordable and 10% social / 10% affordable having regard to existing concentrations of social housing and the known / potential demand for social and affordable housing in different urban centres.
- This would provide potentially provide an additional 900 social housing units to the Local Authority and 2600 affordable housing units throughout the County.

5.2 Introduction

This chapter sets out the strategies and policies which the Council intends to follow over the period of the 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 Meath, in terms of :

- The Council's established Corporate Housing Plan & Action Plan for Social & Affordable Housing, which determines its own housing activities;
- The broader land use settlement and zoning strategies which have been set out in the preceding Chapter;
- Combining the former to establish 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 are contained in a detailed Background 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.

The Housing Strategy is supported by a detailed Background Working Paper prepared by the Planning Authority in conjunction with Jonathan Blackwell & Associates / Roger Tym & Partners. The Background Working Paper is available for inspection at www.meath.ie.

5.3 Vision

Housing is one of the most important functions undertaken by Local Authorities. Shelter is a basic human need and Meath County Council plays an important role in meeting this need by the direct provision of housing, by assisting persons to meet their own housing needs and by working with Voluntary & Co-operative Housing Associations.

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 Corporate Plan for Meath Local Authorities 2004 - 2009 has the following strategic objective with regard to Housing:

To ensure that all our citizens enjoy an adequate standard of housing accommodation appropriate to their needs and, as far as possible, in a location and tenure of their choice and to provide a responsive and supportive housing service to those in need of assistance.

A supporting strategy seeks

To ensure, through the operation of development plans and public utility services programmes, that sufficient serviced housing land is made available in suitable locations throughout the County.

Social housing is defined as rented accommodation provided either by the local authority, or a voluntary or co-operative housing body whilst affordable housing is defined as owner occupier, or shared ownership housing, provided at a price below market value. Current Housing Policy is set out in "Social Housing - The Way Ahead" which was published in May 1995. The overall aim of housing policy is to enable every household to have available an affordable dwelling of good design, suited to its needs, in a good environment and, as far as possible, at the tenure of its

choice. The general strategy for realising the strategic 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.

5.4 Context

The overall pattern of growth in the number of households constructed and persons resident in County Meath and its constituent authorities has been set out in Chapter 2 'Settlement Strategy'. The Settlement Strategy included a household and population projection for the period of the Development Plan. The Housing Strategy and policies contained therein will seek to realise the Settlement Strategy, aiming in particular to ensure that sufficient zoned and serviced lands are available to provide the projected number of households and facilitate the integrated expansion of Development Centres, which shall include a balance in social composition.

The Housing Strategy may 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 Planning & Development Act 2000, as subsequently amended.

This chapter together with supporting documents forms Meath County Council's Housing Strategy prepared in accordance with Part V of the Planning & Development Act, 2000 and Part II of the Planning & Development (Amendment) Act 2002. This Strategy is for the period 2007 - 2012 which is the lifetime of the Development Plan. It replaces the Housing Strategy which was adopted in 2001 and covered the period 2001 - 2007. The statutory Housing Strategy under Part V of the Planning & Development Act, 2000 shall be adopted by all Local Authorities within the County of Meath, and must form part of their respective Development Plans. Meath County Council is currently reviewing both Kells (2001) and Trim (2002) Development Plans and will incorporate the new County Housing Strategy within their Development Plan reviews. It may be necessary to vary the Navan Development Plan (2003) to have regard to the provisions of the new County Housing Strategy. The strategies and policies set out in this Chapter therefore effectively relate to the functional areas of all Local Authorities within the County of Meath.

The Planning & Development Act, 2000 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;
- Provide that as a general policy, a specific percentage (not exceeding 20%) of the land zoned in the Development Plan for residential use, or for a mixture of residential and other use, shall be reserved for those in need of social and affordable housing in the area.
- 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 the elderly persons and persons with disabilities;
- Counteract undue segregation between persons of different social background;

5.5 Review of the 2001 - 2007 Housing Strategy

The 2001 Housing Strategy set out the quantum of housing to be provided in County Meath for a six year period to 2007, taking account of the population and household size projections up to 2012 contained in the *Strategic Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area*. The Housing Strategy noted that *"the demographic profile of the County is also reforming with its structure becoming older, household sizes dropping and the rate of household formation increasing. Net migration is also a factor nationally and the rate of unemployment change would appear to indicate that Meath is accepting its pro rata share."*

The Strategy contained inter alia the following key findings & recommendations:

- The projections contained in the 2001 Housing Strategy indicated that the population of Co. Meath could grow to 161,000 persons by 2006 and to 180,000 persons by 2011;
- The additional number of households required over the period was distributed over the 2001 – 2006 and 2006 – 2011 periods, based on certain assumptions with regard to falling average occupancy rates per household;
- It was estimated that 21,504 additional households would be provided between 2001 – 2006, an average rate of 3,584 households per annum;
- The number of households to be constructed was projected to rise from 3,620 units in 2001 to a high of 4,444 units in 2005, thereafter falling to 2,225 units per annum between 2006 – 2011;
- The availability of zoned and serviced land was not expected to act as a constraint;
- Between 2001 – 2006, an average of 24% of households were expected to experience affordability difficulties as defined in section 93 (1) of the 2000 Planning & Development Act;
- The projected housing yield from Local Authority Activity (2001 - 2006) would facilitate the provision of 1,100 social houses (including those provided by Voluntary & Co-operative Housing Associations), an additional 180 houses arising from casual vacancies, 110 houses from private sites and 130 Department Affordable Housing, totalling 1,520 units;
- There was 136 acres of housing land available for the delivery of the Local Authorities Social Housing Programme in Co. Meath. For the most part, land availability matched demand patterns and it was suggested that where this was not the case, Part V of the Act would be used to meet the shortfall;
- Meath Local Authorities, as a general policy, reserved the maximum permissible 20% of land zoned for residential, or for a mix of residential and other uses, with up to 5% of such housing provided for social housing and the remaining 15% or more provided for affordable housing. The adequacy or need for the 5% social housing reservation was to be reviewed in the context of the demand for private sites and as a social option;
- All social and affordable housing provided under Part V of the Planning & Development Act 2000 in accordance with the Strategy would be to fulfil those housing needs established under Section 9 of the Housing Act, 1988.

5.6 Progress to Date

House completions in the County have averaged at 3,241 units per annum since the adoption of the 2001 County Development Plan. This compares to a projected average of 3,914 unit per annum contained in the County Meath Housing Strategy 2001.

Year	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	Total
Local Authority Housing						
Completions	164	138	160	99	184	745
Acquisitions	7	4	5	1	1	18
Voluntary & Co-operative						
Completions		90	8	11	0	109
Total						
Completions	164	228	168	110	184	854
Acquisitions	7	4	5	1	1	11

Table 21 : Social Housing Completions 2001 - 2005

The programme of social housing undertaken by the Meath Local Authorities has constructed 745 units and acquired a further 18 units between 2001- 2005. An additional 109 units were provided during the same period by the Voluntary & Co-operative sector.

Location	No. of Local Authority Houses Constructed / Acquired		
Navan	Meath Co. Co.	Navan Town Council.	
	68	67	135
Kells	Meath Co. Co.	Kells Town Council	
	10	22	32
Trim	Meath Co. Co.	Trim Town Council	
	33	10	43
Athboy			42
Dunboyne			28
Oldcastle			28
Dunshaughlin			25
Ballivor			24
Enfield			20
Donore			12
Ratoath			11
Summerhill			10
Laytown			6
Duleek			4
Ashbourne			1
Graigs			13
Rural			4
Total			438

Table 22 : Local Authority House Construction Activity 2003 – 2005

Table 22 provides a breakdown of Local Authority House Construction Activity 2003 – 2005. This demonstrates that Navan has accounted for 31% of all Local Authority Houses constructed during the period, followed by Trim and Athboy each accounting for approximately 10% with Kells accounting for just over 7%.

There were 75 Local Authority and 35 Voluntary & Co-operative dwellings in progress as of 31/12/2005. 57 houses have been delivered on foot of Part V of the Planning & Development Acts 2000 - 2004 up to the end of 2005 with 54 of these houses being affordable units. Agreements have also been entered into with the Housing Authority for a further 55 units, 49 of which are currently at various degrees of construction. Agreements are in place to deliver a projected 110 units for 2006. A further 65 units have been provided by the Local Authorities under the 1999 Affordable Housing Initiative primarily in Navan & Trim with a further 14 units projected for completion in Navan this year.

5.7 Housing Requirements & Supply

In framing a Housing Strategy, the Planning Authority is required to establish both the level of housing need which exists at the commencement of the strategy period and that which is likely to arise during the life of the Strategy.

5.7.1 Accumulated Social Housing Need

The accommodation needs of households who are not in a position to provide housing from their own resources are met through the provision of local authority housing or housing by approved bodies. Housing authorities are required under Section 9 of the Housing Act 1988 to make periodic assessments of the need to provide housing for persons who cannot provide their own accommodation. These assessments are carried out at three yearly intervals and each must indicate the gross need, taking into account all of the social housing options. In the context of a detailed examination of needs in each case, the gross need is then distributed across the various social housing options, resulting in a net need to be met by direct social housing provision. Persons who qualify under the Assessment of Needs are considered for housing in accordance with the adopted Scheme of Letting Priorities.

Table 23 sets out the outcome of the statutory housing assessment within the County carried out on 31st March, 2005. The net social housing need for the County in 2005 was 743 persons, an increase from the 2002 recorded level of 678 applicants. This need may arise from unfitness of the existing dwelling, overcrowding, involuntary sharing, homelessness, and other special needs (including the needs of the elderly and disabled persons). The largest single category of need arises from inability to pay for alternative accommodation – 55.6% of the total in the County as a whole, and 57.5% in the functional area of Meath County Council. This is the largest increase in any category since the last Housing Need Assessment carried out in 2002 in which it was less than 40%. At present, these applicants are housed in the private rented sector supported by Supplementary Allowances to subsidise their rent. 28% of all needs relate to dwelling fitness and occupancy issues with 12% accounted for through special needs, a rate that is similarly reflected in the functional area of Meath County Council.

In terms of household composition, in excess of one third (34.3%) of eligible applicants are one person households although this figure is marginally less for the functional area of Meath County Council at 31.9%. This is reflective of national trends with increasing numbers of people who are opting to live alone. 36% of need is accounted for by families, including single parents, with one child. 15% of families who are deemed eligible have 2 children with 6.9% of families having 3 children. Less than 4% of those eligible have in excess of 4 children which would have to be met with larger dwellings to meet their needs. Although not shown on the Table 23, single parent households with children account for 47.3% of eligible applicants in the functional area of Meath County Council. Measured social housing need now relates to a major extent to inability to pay and / or families with a single parent or single person households.

Category of Applicant	Authority						
	Meath Co.	Co.	Kells T.C.	Navan T.C.	Trim T.C.	County Total	% Breakdown
Grounds of Application							
Cannot meet costs of suitable accommodation	355		26	25	7	413	55.6
Overcrowded	96		8	5	4	113	15.2
Unfit / Unsuitable Accommodation	43		3	21	1	68	9.2
Involuntary Sharing	25		0	0	0	25	3.4
Medical / Compassionate	60		10	6	1	77	10.4
Disabled	5		0	1	0	6	0.8
Travellers	15		1	3	1	20	2.7
Homeless	12		0	2	0	14	1.9
Elderly	6		1	0	0	7	0.9
Total	617		49	63	14	743	100
Household Composition							
One Person	197		22	27	9	255	34.3
Two person families without children	27		1	2	0	30	4
Family with 1 child	225		18	20	4	267	36
Family with 2 children	97		6	9	0	112	15.1
Family with 3 children	46		2	3	0	51	6.9
Family with 4 children	19		0	1	1	21	2.8
Family with 5+ children	6		0	1	0	7	0.9
Total	617		49	63	14	743	100

Table 23 : Statutory Housing Need Assessment by Type, March 2005

5.7.2 Overall Housing Requirements in the Period 2007 – 2013

Housing need over the period 2007 to 2013 will arise from:

- Increase in the number of households³²
- Obsolescence of the existing stock (including existing habitable dwellings that become second homes)
- Additional vacancies required to facilitate movement of persons within the stock of housing

Of these, the first is the most significant in Meath, where the number of households is rising rapidly though the demand for second, holiday and investment homes not used as a principal

³² This embraces the overlapping concepts of housing need and housing demand.

residence is becoming increasingly important. The population projections are set out in Section 2.1.9. The expected increase in the number of persons in the County will give rise to changes in the numbers of households as indicated in Table 24.

Calendar year	At the start of the year			During the year		
	Population	Households	Average household size	Houses completed	Net additional households formed	Population added
2006	155,134	53,094	2.922	3,355	3,020	4,197
2007	159,331	56,114	2.839	3,620	3,222	4,257
2008	163,588	59,335	2.757	3,580	3,150	3,535
2009	167,123	62,486	2.675	3,560	3,097	2,877
2010	170,000	65,583	2.592	3,425	2,946	3,342
2011	173,342	68,528	2.529	3,360	2,856	2,753
2012	176,095	71,384	2.467	3,460	2,906	2,516
2013	178,611	74,291	2.404	3,460	2,872	2,071
2014	180,682	77,163	2.071			

Table 24 : Population & Household Projection for the Plan Period

Table 24 above has already been discussed in the context of the Settlement Strategy. The Planning Authority have projected that the population of the County will increase from 155,134 persons to 180,681 persons between the beginning of 2006 and the end of 2013, which equates to an 8 year period.³³ This would represent an increase in excess of 25,500 persons over the 8 year period or an annual increase of almost 3,200 persons. The number of households would increase by a net total of 24,069 households or by an average of just over 3,000 per annum. The absolute number of houses constructed over the 8 year period is 27,820 which equates to almost 3,500 units per annum. This projection predicts that on average, some 500 houses are constructed per annum, whose construction is not related directly to the growth in the number of households. This may be attributed to increases in headship changes, vacant dwellings, obsolescence and second homes.³⁴ The corresponding rate recorded for the period 1996 – 2002 for Co. Meath was 6% (to relate house completions to net household change). The net effect is that there will be a decreasing impact on population from housing completions.

The average occupancy over the 8 year period is predicted to fall from 2.92 at the beginning of 2006 to 2.34 at the end of 2013. This fall is higher than the rate predicted in the RPG's. The actual number of households to be constructed over the plan period is highly sensitive to average household size. A halving in the rate of reduction in average household size would result in a population of nearly 197,600 in 2013 for the same housing completions. It is therefore safer to project households rather than population.

³³ Whilst the Development Plan itself has a six year lifespan, it is considered pertinent to include the period up to the Development Plan being adopted and the year after the Development Plan expires.

³⁴ The ESRI Mid Term Report suggest that in the period 2007 – 2013 nationally, annual average housing demand will be only slightly down on the present level, but that higher headship and vacancies (second homes) will become increasingly important as a driving force. These contributed 16 % of the demand in the period 1997 to 2002, but will contribute 43% in the period 2007 – 2011. This rate has been amended to take account of the recorded difference between national trends and those experienced in Co. Meath over the same periods.

5.8 Land & Housing Supply

The extent of housing requirements set out below, may be compared to the pattern of housing delivery observed in the recent past.

Year	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005 ³⁵
House Completions	1,422	1,480	2,303	2,553	2,924	3,687	3,550	3,492

Table 25 : Total House Completions 1998 – 2005

House completions have averaged at 3,241 units per annum between 2001 – 2005 but has increased to 3,576 units per annum over the last three years. This represents a doubling of the average number of house completions between 1998 – 2000. A continuation of the present housing delivery performance would provide for an increase in the net number of households of approximately 3,000 units per annum, sufficient for the projected growth scenario for the County.

Detailed tabulations of land availability, when compared with anticipated population growth in each settlement as provided for in Chapter 2 Settlement Strategy show that there is more than sufficient land zoned and serviced (or planned to be serviced) for the projected household and population increase in the aggregate though not necessarily in its distribution. The latter point is applicable in a number of the urban centres in the higher tiers of the Settlement Hierarchy, such as in Dunbooyne / Clonee, Enfield and possibly Drogheda Environs, where additional lands are required within these centres to provide for adequate headroom. In addition, the extent of existing residentially zoned lands will be revised in the context of the individual Local Area Plan or Development Plan review for each centre and does not preclude additional zoning in specific locations where the Planning Authority is satisfied that a clearly established need for such zoning is required. Such an established need can only be justified where the development of such lands for residential purposes would deliver an identified piece of social and / or physical infrastructure in conjunction with such development and may require such lands to be prioritised for development over existing residentially zoned lands.

5.9 Housing Market Trends

Nationally, the market for housing remains buoyant, with the ESRI³⁶ projecting required annual house completions nationally at 75,000 to 2006 and 72,000 thereafter.

There are special factors which will impact on County Meath. Chief amongst these is the demand arising from the expansion of the Capital and the associated growth centres within the County relating to this pattern of expansion. The population growth associated with these developments has already been set out in Chapter 2. Furthermore, a feature of the period ahead is likely to be a growth in the number of second, holiday and investment dwellings completed which will not be used as a principal residence. The ESRI project that this could account for nearly a quarter of all housing completions. This means that the level of house completions in the County of Meath must be set above the projected level of household growth.

Information on average house prices in Meath County has been supplied by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government. It should be noted that for last year, the average price figures were provided solely on the basis of housing transactions completed within the first 9 months of that particular year.

³⁵ No data on house completions for the last quarter of 2005 has been published to date by the DoEHLG. It is assumed that the completions for the third quarter (924 units) are the same as the last quarter.

³⁶ Fitz Gerald et. Al. *Medium Term Review 2005-2012*, ESRI, December 2005 (High Growth Forecast)

Year	County Meath (€)	% Change
1999	156,600	- - -
2000	181,340	+15.8%
2001	193,538	+6.7%
2002	217,860	+12.6%
2003	231,739	+6.4%
2004	255,060	+10.1%
2005*	292,873	+14.8%

Source: Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government

Table 26 : Average House Prices in County Meath (€)

In terms of price movements, for the purposes of the Meath Housing Strategy, a survey was conducted of house price change expectations amongst auctioneers in County Meath, in order to supplement data on anticipated national house price changes. Taken together, the data indicates that a moderation of price increases is expected, with annual rates of increase in the County taken as a whole falling to 4% by 2011, from the current rate of 6.1%.

The Housing Strategy Background Working Paper uses these data sets, together with adjusted county data on projected national *per capita* income changes, to calculate housing affordability for Meath residents in each year to year 2013.

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.

5.9.1 Social & Affordable Housing Requirements

Table 24 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.

Measure	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Household formations (1)	3,222	3,150	3,097	2,946	2,856	2,906
Number of households meeting affordability criteria S 93(1) (2)	945	932	917	845	777	753
(2) as a % of (1)	29.3%	29.6%	29.6%	28.7%	27.2%	25.9%

Table 27 : Summary of Anticipated Social & Affordable Housing Need

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 27 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 27)

Accumulated housing need, other than that which is on the assessment of need of the housing authorities, which will be catered for by the voluntary sector

DEDUCT

Affordable housing freed-up by waiting list clearance ³⁷

Surplus (if any) of programme of direct social and affordable housing provision (or measures in lieu, such as refurbishment) by housing authorities, over accumulated need measured by the assessment of need, available to meet prospective social housing need

Provision of subsidised sites by the Housing Authority to facilitate single affordable housing

Next, In order to fix the percentage 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

DEDUCT

All houses constructed on unzoned lands or on sites which fall below the threshold set by the Act (a target being set of 16 per cent of all housing completions)

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 Background Working Paper prepared in support of this Strategy.

Two options are used to calculate the relevant percentage to be applied³⁸. The average requirements over the life of the strategy under each of the options are set out below. The second option is the percentage required from private developments on zoned land in order to cover the overall social and affordable housing requirements of the County during the period of the Plan.

Option Used	Percentage
Option 1	23.4
Option 2	27.8

Table 28 : Percentage Requirement for Social Affordable Housing

The number of persons meeting affordability criteria for housing shown on Table 28 indicates that on average between 23.4% - 27.8% of persons will experience affordability difficulties in acquiring their own home during the life of the Development Plan. Having regard to the general levels which new houses are being marketed at in certain parts of the County, particularly in the

³⁷ Privately rented housing relinquished by those taking up social housing may be available for social housing purposes

³⁸ **Option 1:** This is the basic calculation which calculates prospective social and affordable housing based on the numbers set out in Table 25, adds the special needs and also the voluntary sector completions (assumed to reflect need) and deducts any surplus from the multi-annual programme after accumulated need has been met. This forms the numerator. The denominator is the expected increase in the number of households, plus voluntary sector completions.

Option 2: Here, 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.

Kells Electoral Area, the open market appears to be catering for the upper levels of the affordability market. Nonetheless, there is a requirement that the maximum requirement of 20% of housing units should be provided to meet social and affordable needs.

5.10 The Housing Strategy

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

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 life of the Development Plan.

To further provide for social and affordable housing through Part V of the Planning & Development Act, 2000, as amended.

To provide directly for social and affordable housing solutions through its own house building programme, assistance to other agencies and individuals, acquisitions of dwellings and other special programmes.

5.10.1 Provision of Zoned & Serviced Land in Development Centres

The overall Settlement Strategy for the County has been set out in Chapter 2 of the Plan.

To recap, the Settlement Strategy provides that

The Council will implement the Settlement Strategy of the Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area by concentrating residential development into the designated Primary Dynamic Clusters of Navan, Kells & Trim, Dunboyne / Clonee, Dunshaughlin & Ashbourne and to the Large Growth Town of Drogheda.

The Council will ensure that all of the Large Growth Towns and Moderate Growth Towns will in so far as practical be self sufficient incorporating employment activities, sufficient retail services and social and community facilities. Residential development will only be permitted if sufficient progress is made in providing employment, retail, social and community facilities within the settlement.

In Small Growth Towns (with the exception of Dunshaughlin, Bettystown - Laytown and Enfield³⁹), and Key Villages, at least one quarter of all new multi house developments, being developments in excess of four houses, shall be for first time owners in the area, who are permanent native residents or within 10 km of the respective centre or those who by virtue of their employment require to live in the urban centre. The remainder of houses in such multiple house developments shall be provided for local growth only. The RPG's indicate that development plans should designate such Small Growth Towns as it considers appropriate having regard to their strategic function and population forecasts. The development of each Small Growth Town is supported by the growth of an adjacent Moderate or Large Growth Town, in terms of large scale employment uses.

In Chapter 4 of this Plan, the Council commits itself to achieving the overall goal of promoting and facilitating the provision of the necessary infrastructure to fully accommodate the demand for development and future population increases in an environmentally sustainable manner. In particular, the Plan aims to deliver and promote a high quality and efficient water supply, drainage and waste management facilities during the life of the Development Plan to accommodate the future sustainable economic and residential growth of the County.

³⁹ All of these settlements are located on or adjacent to existing and proposed public transport corridors.

The Infrastructure Strategy provides that

The Council will advance the water supply and wastewater collection and treatment infrastructural projects by reviewing the Assessment of Water Services Needs in order to accommodate the planned levels of growth expected for the county and to ensure that the necessary projects are included in future Water Services Investment Programmes;

The Council will improve and extend the water supply and wastewater collection and treatment infrastructure to serve the planned levels of growth, during the lifetime of this plan, in order to facilitate development;

In the calculation of housing projections, the Planning Authority had regard to the availability of piped water services in each of the designated urban centres and where existing deficiencies exist, the likely timeframe in which such deficiencies will be overcome, including the use of interim solutions as appropriate. Detailed tabulations of land availability, when compared with anticipated population growth in each settlement as provided for in Chapter 2 Settlement Strategy show that there is more than sufficient land zoned and serviced (or planned to be serviced) for the projected household and population increase with the exception of Dunboyne / Clonee, Enfield and possibly Drogheda Environs, where additional lands are required within these centres to provide for adequate headroom. The preparation of Local Area Plans to replace the existing Detailed Local Objectives & Urban Detail Plans for each will remedy the position in these urban centres.

5.10.2 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 overall housing output. Meath Local 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 Meath Local Authorities Action Plan for Social & Affordable Housing covers the period 2004 – 2008.⁴⁰ With the level of population increases projected for the plan period and the numbers of people unable to afford their own homes increasing, demand for the full range of social housing options will increase. The key objective for capital spending in this plan is to house all valid applicants within a reasonable period of time and in so far as possible in a dwelling and at a location of their choice. This will continue to cater for the numbers joining the waiting lists and reduce the overall numbers. This will also considerably increase the financial resources required. Meath County Council has the capacity to deliver the objectives set out, which has been proven during the last multi annual programme of direct provision.

The Action Plan acknowledges that it is difficult to make an accurate prediction of the potential take of the Part V Affordable Scheme as by the nature of its delivery through the private sector, there is little control the Council can achieve to achieve its delivery. The challenge is to ensure the 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 of limited means. The Council is committed to promoting and facilitating the use of the full range of social housing options, as set out in the following sections.

⁴⁰ The Action Plan for Affordable & Social Housing 2004-2008 is being reviewed at present following a direction to all Local Authorities from the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government.

5.10.3 Provision of New Social Housing by Meath 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 direct housing provision, it is not feasible to set out with confidence the future programme of social housing within Meath. The Meath Local Authorities Action Plan for Social & Affordable Housing (2004 – 2008) indicated that 787 Local Authority direct starts would be provided over the 5 years of the plan, an average of approximately 160 units per annum with a further 235 units being provided by the Voluntary & Co-operative Sector, including 41 provided through Part V. There are currently 75 Local Authority dwellings in progress and 35 being provided by the voluntary and co-operative sector. Starts for 2006 are projected to be 240 units. For the purposes of the Housing Strategy, the Housing Department have projected an average completion rate of 150 dwellings from the Local Authority Multi Annual Programme annually over the period of the Plan with an additional 17 units per annum being provided by Voluntary & Co-operative Housing Associations. The Housing Department are satisfied that this level of provision is reflective of demand, linked to the statutory Housing Need Assessment, and figures in the Development Plan shall be amended following the adoption of subsequent Meath Local Authorities Action Plan for Social & Affordable Housing.

The land bank for social housing comprises some 19.5 hectares including 4 hectares located in graigs. This land bank is not all serviced at present and whilst plans are progressing, such lands may not be available until the latter end of the plan period. The existing land bank in the larger urban centres in the County has been depleted during the course of the house building programme highlighted in Table 22. Based on the likely number of starts in the period 2006 – 2008, additional lands will be required to accommodate social housing development. Land is becoming more difficult to acquire, particularly in Navan and the south east Meath centres, due to the spiralling cost. The greatest demand for social housing is in Navan, Trim, Kells, Ashbourne, Athboy, Bettystown, Dunboyne, Laytown, Oldcastle and Dunshaughlin. The Local Authority have some land available in Navan and Kells although insufficient to meet the demand. The Planning Authority must therefore specify which of the options available under the Planning & Development (Amendment) Act 2002 best meet the requirements of the Meath Local Authorities in the areas of greatest demand as evident in the assessment of housing needs. This must ensure that houses, sites or land are reserved at the location of demand and that appropriate policies are put in place to deliver same.

5.10.4 Housing Acquisition Programme

Each year as part of its Housing Programme, and where it proves economical to do so, the Local Authority acquires dwellings at various locations throughout the County. Again, due to the increasing cost of second hand houses, particularly in the areas of highest need, this option is becoming less attractive, but will be relied on where other options are not available. Acquisitions are expected to be capped at 6 per annum over the duration of the Housing Strategy.

5.10.5 Private Sites Programme

To meet the growing demand and to supplement the traditional housing construction programme, the Meath Local Authorities have continued to operate a scheme for the provision of subsidised sites. It is anticipated that the annual number of dwellings assisted by this scheme will average 15 over the lifetime of this Plan.

5.10.6 Affordable Housing Schemes⁴¹

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. One such tool for the achievement of this aim of the Council is their Affordable Housing Scheme. 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. 65 units have been provided by the Local Authorities under the 1999 Affordable Housing Initiative primarily in Navan & Trim with a further 14 units projected for completion in Navan this year. It is anticipated that an annual average of 15 dwellings will be provided under these schemes between 2007 - 2013 (all Authorities combined).

5.10.7 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 Local Authority 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 50 units 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.

5.10.8 The role of the Voluntary Housing & Co-operative Sector

There are a number of groups currently active in the Voluntary Housing Sector in Meath, with Respond, Cluid, North & East, and B.I.H. being the main groups. There are 11 social housing units proposed by the Voluntary & Co-operative Sector in Meath, which are being delivered through Part V of the Planning & Development Acts 2000 - 2004.⁴² In the first nine months of last year, 35 units had commenced through the Capital Loan & Subsidy Scheme by the Voluntary & Co-operative Sector.

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 continue 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 & 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.

⁴¹ The Affordable Housing Scheme should not be confused with the term “Affordable Housing” as used in Part V of the Planning & Development Act, 2000 as amended. Under the 1999 Affordable Housing Scheme, Local Authorities provide newly built houses at a discounted price on their own lands. A site subsidy of up to €31,800 per house is available from the DoEHLG to assist with affordability. The purchaser can also benefit from a loan of up to 97% of the house price.

⁴² The DoEHLG Quarterly Housing Statistics for Quarter 3, 2005

Specifically, voluntary housing bodies are assisted under the Capital Assistance Scheme with non repayment capital funding and Rental Subsidy Scheme to provide accommodation to meet the special housing needs such as the elderly, people with disabilities, homeless persons and families. Meath Local Authorities recognise the potential role of the voluntary sector in the provision of housing for the special needs categories. Meath County Council will continue to play a key “enabling” and administrative role in the operation of the Capital Funding Schemes in order to assist Voluntary & Co-operative Housing Bodies.

Completions are anticipated to average 17 units per annum over the duration of the Plan. This figure is included as part of the 20% Part V target.

5.10.9 Special Needs Accommodation

This includes the needs of the elderly, the physically disabled and persons with learning disabilities. The majority of the elderly applicants are unable financially to provide a home of their own and to this end, all schemes coming on line by the Local Authority have accommodation provided which suits the needs of elderly residents. 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 cooperative sector. This objective will also be pursued in respect of private house developments. A total of 53 special needs housing units was provided by the Voluntary Sector in the period 2000 – 2003.

5.10.10 Homeless Persons

The 2005 Housing Need Assessment identified 14 persons in need of housing in County Meath. 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. A total of approximately 350 people per annum present themselves to the Local Authorities as Homeless. These people who present themselves to the Local Authority as homeless are either moved into private rented accommodation, referred to refuges, moved into Council housing or sent back to their County of origin, in the main Dublin.

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 Meath Homeless Strategy has been adopted. There is currently no hostel for the Homeless in Meath and having regard to the levels of constant dependence from some of the persons resenting themselves, who because of their alcohol, drug and mental health problems are difficult to house in standard accommodation, it has been deemed necessary to provide hostel accommodation. The Local Authority proposes to provide hostel accommodation for 15 people together with 15 units of long term supported accommodation during the course of the current Social & Affordable Housing Action Plan 2004- 2008. This project is a joint venture with a Voluntary Housing Association.

Meath Women’s Refuge operate a small 4 unit scheme of transitional housing for women with a history of domestic violence. The women occupy the units, paying a rent, for a period of up to 2 years, and then move on either to Council Social housing or into the private sector. Tabor House Trust provides 11 units of transitional housing which operates as a Half Way House to accommodate recovering alcoholics / addicts from residential treatment programmes. They have recently converted a house in Navan to an extended care facility for men in early recovery from addictions. The occupants stay up to a maximum of 9 months and pay a contribution towards their upkeep. Both of these schemes were provided under the Capital Assistance Scheme and there would not appear to be a demand for any further such provision.

5.10.11 Traveller Accommodation

The “Traveller Community” is the community of people who are identified (both by themselves and others) as people with a shared history, culture and traditions, including, historically, a nomadic way of life. The Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998 requires housing authorities, in consultation with Travellers and with the general public, to prepare and adopt a five year Traveller Accommodation Programme by resolution of the Elected Members of the Council, to meet the existing and projected needs of Travellers in their area.

Meath County Council adopted the Traveller Accommodation Programme 2005 – 2008 in February 2005. This was reviewed in 2002. The Programme addresses the accommodation needs of existing roadside families and prospective needs over a five-year period. Meath County Council plans to operate a comprehensive accommodation programme for travellers involving a range of integrated measures to meet their accommodation needs. The Council has included in the plan employment opportunities for young Travellers to break the cycle of long term unemployment and to improve their life chances. There were 20 Traveller Families identified in need of accommodation in the 2005 Assessment.

The accommodation programme includes direct provision of standard local authority housing, Traveller specific accommodation, such as Group Housing, refurbishment of the permanent Caravan Parks as required, loans for replacement of mobile homes, and overnight camping lay-bys. Housing needs to be allocated each year at a rate so that the need for another permanent Caravan park does not arise during the 2005 – 2008 period. 40 houses, 10 transfers / casual vacancies and 5 house purchases will be allocated to the Travelling families between 2005 – 2008. Voluntary Housing Agencies will be required to accommodate Travelling families according to the needs identified by Meath County Council. Bays in the existing permanent caravan parks in Navan and Trim will provide accommodation for families living in caravans. The Social Housing Options will be used to assist Travellers to provide accommodation for themselves where they have the capacity to do so.

Travelling families who reside permanently in Co. Meath for at least six months will be regarded as indigenous. Travelling persons who grew up in Co. Meath who return to the county will be deemed indigenous if they are not included in the Traveller Accommodation Programme of another Local Authority.

5.10.12 Provision Of Social and Affordable Housing

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 5.10.14 below.

5.10.13 Housing Policy

In pursuit of its Housing Strategy, Meath 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.

5.10.14 Planning Permissions & Part V of the Planning & 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.

The Council will require a 20% quota of social / affordable housing to be provided from each housing development within the County, on lands zoned 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 as provided for under the Planning & Development (Amendment) Act 2002. Therefore all residential developments in excess of 4 housing units or any proposed site for residential development in excess of 0.1 hectares is to be subject to the provision of "Social/Affordable" Housing.

The calculations that have been carried out by the Planning Department have indicated that the maximum 20% requirement must be applied across the County. In determining how this figure should be distributed throughout the County, regard must be had to those areas where there are also larger concentrations of existing Social Housing or a greater potential for the development of such housing on lands in the ownership of the Local Authority & Voluntary sector.

Navan accounts for 31.53% of 1st preferences of those included on the Assessment of Needs. The next most popular area as assessed by 1st preferences is Kells (8.5%), followed by Trim (7.5%) & Ashbourne (6.3%). There is also significant demand in Athboy (4.7%), Bettystown (3.5%), Dunboyne (3.4%), Laytown (3.3%), Oldcastle (3.2%) and Dunshaughlin (2.9%). The Local Authorities cannot provide this level of social housing from their diminishing land banks.

It is considered necessary to implement a sliding scale of the ratio of social to affordable housing from the overall 20% reservation based on the level of existing and projected demand over the plan period. A ratio of 10% social and 10% affordable shall apply in Navan, a ratio of 5% social and 15% affordable shall apply in Ashbourne, Kells & Trim and a ratio of 3% social and 17% affordable shall apply to all other centres in the County. The application of this ratio and the need to review the maximum 20% reservation for social and affordable housing shall be re-evaluated on an annual basis following the adoption of the County Development Plan.

5.10.15 Methods of Providing Affordable/Social Housing

The requirement under Part V of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, as amended for Social / Affordable housing in developments may be met by the following methods or by a combination thereof:

- a) The transfer of a portion of the site which is the subject of the planning application to the Council which will enable the Council to provide the appropriate number of units thereon in satisfaction of the requirements of the Strategy
- b) The direct provision of the required number of housing units on completion as determined in accordance with the Strategy, integrated as part of the overall development of a site;
- c) The disposal of a number of fully or partially serviced sites within the site to the Council which will enable the Council to provide the appropriate number of units thereon in satisfaction of the requirements of the Strategy;
- d) The transfer to the Planning Authority of the ownership of any other land within the functional area of the Planning Authority in satisfaction of the requirements of the Strategy;
- e) The building and transfer, on completion, to the ownership of the Planning Authority of houses on land within the functional area of the Planning Authority (as outlined in d) above) in satisfaction of the requirements of the Strategy;
- f) The transfer of a number of fully or partially serviced sites, to the ownership of the Planning Authority on land within the functional area of the Planning Authority (as outlined in d) above) in satisfaction of the requirements of the Strategy;
- g) A payment of such an amount as specified in the agreement to the Planning Authority;
- h) A combination of a transfer of land referred to in paragraph a) and the doing of one or more of the things referred to in the preceding paragraphs; and

- i) A combination of the doing of 2 or more of the options referred to in paragraphs b) to g).

The Council will in reaching agreements under Section 96 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, as amended, have due regard to the Housing Strategy and the Development Plan objectives including different specific objectives in respect of different areas and agreements entered into under the provisions of the Act.

As outlined in the Direct Provision of Social Housing by Meath Local Authorities (Section 5.10.2), the existing Local Authority land bank in the larger urban centres in the County has been depleted during the course of the house building programme highlighted in Table 21. Land is becoming more difficult to acquire, particularly in Navan and the south east Meath centres, due to the spiralling cost. The greatest demand for social housing is in Navan, Trim, Kells, Ashbourne, Athboy, Bettystown, Dunboyne, Laytown, Oldcastle and Dunshaughlin. The Local Authority have some land available in Navan and Kells although insufficient to meet the scale of the demand.

The number of potential options available to developers on foot of the amended legislation affords too much flexibility to developers in Co. Meath satisfying the requirements of the provision of social and affordable housing and does not achieve the objectives of providing social and affordable housing at the locations where the need has been established. It is imperative that the requirements of social and affordable housing are met in a manner which satisfies existing and potential demand in each centre. It is unacceptable to Meath County Council that developers can off load their social and affordable requirements in the areas of greatest need by acquiring land, serviced sites or houses at locations where no such demand exists or where land is significantly cheaper to acquire. The policy approach taken in the Draft County Development Plan specifies the options required by Meath County Council in different development centres depending on known demand. Meath County Council will use the provisions of Part V of the Planning & Development Acts 2000 – 2004 to satisfy the social housing needs in known areas of need.

The preferred option of Meath County Council with regard to the satisfaction of the social housing requirements of this Housing Strategy for conventional housing developments⁴³ in Navan, Trim, Ashbourne, Dunboyne / Clonee, Dunshaughlin, Bettystown, Laytown, Ratoath, and Athboy is

- a) the direct provision of the required number of housing units on completion as determined in accordance with the Strategy, integrated as part of the overall development of a site;
- b) The transfer of a portion of the site which is the subject of the planning application to the Council which will enable the Council to provide the appropriate number of units thereon in satisfaction of the requirements of the Strategy;
- c) The disposal of a number of fully or partially serviced sites within the site to the Council which will enable the Council to provide the appropriate number of units thereon in satisfaction of the requirements of the Strategy;
- d) A combination of the doing of 2 or more of the options referred to in paragraphs a) to c).

The other options provided for under the Planning & Development Acts 2000 - 2004 will only be accepted for apartments that do not have ground floor own door access and under exceptional circumstances for conventional housing developments at the request and prior written agreement of the Local Authority.

⁴³ Conventional housing developments are considered to constitute detached, semi detached and terraced housing but excludes apartments unless they are ground floor or first floor with ground floor own door.

With regard to housing development in all other development centres in the County, Meath County Council will allow the full range of options provided under the Planning & Development Acts 2000 – 2004 to be used in satisfying the social housing requirements of this Housing Strategy. Where the transfer of land, serviced or partially serviced sites or of completed houses at a location other than where the scheme which is being developed, the preferred option of the Local Authority would be within the Electoral Area of the development which is subject to the requirements of Part V.

Where binding arrangements have already been entered into in relation to particular sites for the provision of Social/Affordable housing prior to the adoption of this Strategy, these arrangements shall be acknowledged as being in full satisfaction of requirements for those sites under the Strategy.

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.

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:

- The Development Plan and any relevant Local Area Plan
- The need to ensure the overall coherence of the development to which the planning application relates
- The views of the developer in relation to the impact of the agreement on the proposed development, and
- 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 as part of pre planning 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 following 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.

5.10.16 Meeting the Needs of Persons with Special Requirements

Section 7.5 of the Development Plan deals with Social Inclusion, including groups with specific design / planning needs such as older people, persons with a disability, travellers and ethnic minorities. The section also deals with areas of disadvantage, including the RAPID Programme in operation in Navan. The following section should be read in conjunction with Section 7.5.

5.10.17 Housing Provision for the Elderly

The main emphasis in the Council's housing policy for the elderly is 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.

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.

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 45 m² 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.

5.10.18 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).

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.

5.10.19 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 this Plan.

Policies

General

HS POL 1	To aim to achieve a mix of housing types and sizes in the consideration of individual planning applications for residential development and in development of their own stock.
----------	--

HS POL 2	To encourage the development of mixed and balanced communities so as to avoid areas of social exclusion.
----------	--

HS POL 3	To have regard to the “Social Housing Design Guidelines” (DoEHLG 1999).
----------	---

HS POL 4	To integrate new social housing into the existing social and urban fabric of the County’s settlements.
----------	--

Planning for People with Special Needs

HS POL 5	To recognise the need for people with special needs to enjoy a decent living environment in the County and to support local communities, health authorities and other agencies involved in the provision of facilities to people with special needs;
----------	--

HS POL 6	To support the voluntary sector in the development of housing for people with special needs.
----------	--

HS POL 7	To support the concept of independent living for older people and people with disabilities and ensure where possible that housing for such groups is integrated with mainstream housing in their existing communities. Such housing shall be located close to existing or committed community and convenience retail facilities.
----------	--

HS POL 8	To give priority to improving the accommodation of the elderly who lack the basic amenities of indoor sanitary facilities and to provide for increasing disability.
----------	---

HS POL 9	To pay special attention to the elderly on low incomes in substandard, privately rented accommodation when planning and allocating accommodation for the elderly.
----------	---

HS POL 10	To encourage the provision of adequate small, self contained living units within a complex of facilities for persons with special needs to maintain privacy and independence whilst having the protection of a more sheltered environment. In this regard, sheltered housing shall be located in towns or villages in the interest of sustainability, accessibility, social inclusion and availability of water services.
-----------	---

HS POL 11	To support proposals for day centres for people with special needs within, or close to, town, village and neighbourhood centres, subject to normal planning requirements;
-----------	---

HS POL 12	To permit the suitable extension of an existing dwelling to accommodate the elderly or people with a disability in the family home, subject to normal planning requirements;
-----------	--

Social & Affordable Housing

HS POL 13	To require that 20% of land zoned for residential development or for a mix of residential and other uses, shall be made available for the provision of social and affordable housing. This figure may be modified in line with any revision to the Housing Strategy carried out during the period of the County Development Plan.
-----------	---

HS POL 14	A ratio of 10% social and 10% affordable shall apply in Navan, a ratio of 5% social and 15% affordable shall apply in Ashbourne, Kells & Trim and a ratio of 3% social and 17% affordable shall apply to all other centres in the County.
-----------	---

HS POL 15	To require that developers comply with Part V of the Planning and Development Act though the following options as relevant to the centre in which the development is proposed
-----------	---

For conventional housing developments⁴⁴ in Navan, Trim, Ashbourne, Dunboyne / Clonee, Dunshaughlin, Bettystown, Laytown, Ratoath, and Athboy, the options available to satisfy the requirements of the Housing Strategy above are:

- a) the direct provision of the required number of housing units on completion as determined in accordance with the Strategy, integrated as part of the overall development of a site;
- b). The transfer of a portion of the site which is the subject of the planning application to the Council which will enable the Council to provide the appropriate number of units thereon in satisfaction of the requirements of the Strategy;
- c). The disposal of a number of fully or partially serviced sites within the site to the Council which will enable the Council to provide the appropriate number of units thereon in satisfaction of the requirements of the Strategy;
- d). A combination of the doing of 2 or more of the options referred to in paragraphs a) to c)

The other options provided for under the Planning & Development (Amendment) Act 2002 will only be accepted for apartments that do not have ground floor own door access and under exceptional circumstances for conventional housing developments at the request and prior written agreement of the Local Authority.

With regard to housing development in all other development centres in the County, Meath County Council will allow the full range of options provided under the Planning & Development (Amendment) Act 2002 to be used in satisfying the social housing requirements of this Housing Strategy. Where the transfer of land, serviced or partially serviced sites or of completed houses at a location other than where the scheme which is being developed, the location of

⁴⁴ Conventional housing developments are considered to constitute detached, semi detached and terraced housing but excludes apartments unless they are ground floor or first floor with ground floor own door.

same must be within the Electoral Area of the development which is subject to the requirements of Part V.

HS POL 16 The Rural Settlement Strategy states that in Small Growth Towns (with the exception of Dunshaughlin, Bettystown - Laytown and Enfield⁴⁵), and Key Villages, at least one quarter of all new multi house developments, being developments in excess of four houses, shall be for first time owners in the area, who are permanent native residents or within 10 km of the respective centre or those who by virtue of their employment require to live in the urban centre. The remainder of houses in such multiple house developments shall be provided for local growth only. The reservation of 25% of multiple housing units for local derived needs shall include the 20% reservation for social and affordable housing needs.

Objectives

Planning for People with Special Needs

HS OBJ 1 To undertake an annual review of social housing waiting lists and engage in consultation with local disability groups and organisations to determine the quantity and location of such housing required, and in order to research individual housing requirements.

HS OBJ 2 To provide appropriate accommodation for “Travellers” through the implementation of the “*Traveller Accommodation Programme 2005 - 2008*” and any subsequent Programme adopted during the life of this Development Plan.

HS OBJ 3 To liaise with the Department of Justice, Equality & Law Reform to develop a policy for the provision of short term accommodation for refugees and asylum seekers in Meath and to ensure that the Council’s Action Plan for Social & Affordable Housing includes the long term provision for refugees. 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.

Social & Affordable Housing

HS OBJ 4 To continue to implement the “*Meath Local Authorities Action Plan Social & Affordable Housing 2004 - 2008*” and any subsequent Action Plan adopted during the life of this Development Plan.

HS OBJ 5 To review the Housing Strategy annually and, if required, to review the reservation policy outlined in this Strategy inclusive of the breakdown of social and affordable housing units for different urban centres.

HS OBJ 6 The social housing provision figures contained in the Development Plan shall be amended following the adoption of subsequent Meath Local Authorities Action Plan for Social & Affordable Housing.

HS OBJ 7 To consult frequently in a comprehensive manner with the Voluntary and Co-operative housing sectors through the life of their Development Plan 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

⁴⁵ All of these settlements are located on or adjacent to existing and proposed public transport corridors.

Voluntary and Co-operative Housing Associations that are currently working in Meath or which have expressed an interest in working in the area.

HS OBJ 8 To improve the quality of information exchanged between Meath County Council, the development industry and all other groups with an involvement or stake in the provision of social / affordable housing.

