

## Chapter 6 Housing

### Introduction

The Housing Policy of Limerick City Council seeks to achieve mixed, balanced and self-sustaining communities. The City Council aims to facilitate the provision of high quality housing for both the private and public sectors.

*The overall objectives are as follows:*

- To implement the Joint Housing Strategy in partnership with Limerick County Council.
- To ensure that sufficient land is zoned to meet the housing requirements for the City's population during the lifetime of the Development Plan.
- To ensure that a good mix of both housing and apartment types and sizes is provided to meet the needs of the likely future population.
- To encourage the development of sustainable residential neighbourhoods and the provision of high quality accommodation.
- To promote increased residential density where appropriate to do so.
- To maximise the use of existing local authority stock and will continue to implement its multi-annual programme for the provision of rented units.
- To support the voluntary sector to develop housing for special needs.
- To require 20% of land zoned for residential use or a mixture of residential and other uses, subject to certain exemptions, shall be reserved for the purpose of the provision of social and affordable housing.
- To support the implementation of the Traveller Accommodation programmes.
- 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.

### Policy Context

The Housing Act, 1966, as amended, together with the Housing Travellers Accommodation Act, 1998 and more recently Part V of the Planning & Development Act 2000 (As amended), provides the legal basis upon which the City Council is charged with the responsibility to facilitate housing for the homeless, assess and plan accommodation needs for the Travelling Community, and prepare housing strategies for the development of integrated and sustainable development policies to provide affordable housing for all.

The '*National Development Plan, 2007-2013*' sets aside €21.2 billion to meet the housing needs of some 140,000 new households. Maintaining the impetus for the delivery of housing as an affordable process to meet demand remains at the centre of housing policy.

The '*Regional Planning Guidelines*', 2010 will set out the planning framework for the development of the region to 2022. These guidelines incorporate the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government population targets for the region which envisages the population of Limerick City to grow to 86,990 by 2022. In line with projected growth in population employment and housing provision within the Limerick Metropolitan Area there will need to respond in a very proactive manner to ensure that the growth can be secured.

The '*Mid-West Area Strategic Plan*' (MWASP) will set out the strategic infrastructural requirements to meet the needs of the region and Limerick as the Gateway of the region. This strategy is due to be completed in late 2010.

*'Delivering Homes, Sustaining Communities'*, 2007 presents a vision of the future of housing. The clear aim is to achieve a step change in the provision of housing support to obtain more effective delivery in ways that ensure that individuals in need of support are offered options tailored to their needs.

*'Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas - Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2008'*. The aim of these guidelines is to set out the key planning principles which should be reflected in development plans and local area plans, to guide the preparation and assessment of planning applications for residential development in urban areas. *'Urban Design Manual - A Best Practice Guide'*, 2008 (DOEHLG). This guide seeks to introduce the core principles of urban design and sustainability insofar as they relate to residential development.

### **Regeneration**

The regeneration of 3 of the larger areas of social housing in the City namely, Moyross, Southill/Ballinacurra and St. Mary's Park has commenced under the direction of the regeneration agencies. The delivery of a much stronger social mix is paramount to the success and sustainability of these areas. Such a mix has to be greater than just mixed tenure, it is essential that over the period of the Plan that these areas achieve a population that has a greater level of income than at present. This will be achieved by the development of private/affordable housing, the expansion of home-ownership within the existing community and more importantly improving the life chances of the current child population through education and job opportunities which clearly highlight the sheer importance of Social Regeneration. The achievement of a stronger social mix in the newly regenerated communities is a crucial objective of the programme.

*Within this context the general objectives for housing provision in the City are as follows:*

- To develop and deliver effective public housing policy.
- To increase the availability of affordable, social and private housing, and to ensure the adequate provision of residential zoned land for all.
- To enhance the support network in the provision of social housing.
- To promote integration and reduce social segregation in housing development.
- To develop an effective system for the management of Local Authority housing stock
- To promote sustainable housing developments and provide appropriate residential development.
- To promote high quality living environments and the protection of the character of residential neighbourhoods.
- To support the RAPID initiatives.
- To facilitate the accommodation of the 'Homeless'.
- To facilitate the provision of appropriate facilities and accommodation for the 'Travelling' community.
- To secure the objectives of the regeneration programme.

### **Housing Strategy**

Limerick City Council, Limerick County Council and Clare County Council have together commenced the preparation of a joint *Housing Strategy*. The Planning & Development Act 2000-2008 (as amended) requires each Planning Authority to include the provisions of its Housing Strategy in its Development Plan. The Planning Authority must also ensure that sufficient and suitable land is zoned in the plan to meet the requirements of the Strategy. Another requirement of the Act is to include in the Development Plan objectives for securing implementation of the Housing Strategy, taking into account:

- The existing and likely future need for social and affordable housing;

- The need to ensure that housing is available for persons who have different levels of income;
- The need to ensure that a mixture of house types and sizes is developed to reasonably match the requirements of different categories of households;
- The need to counteract undue segregation in housing between persons of different social backgrounds.

A key objective of the joint *Housing Strategy* is to support the regeneration process by ensuring an equitable distribution of social housing across the metropolitan area.

*On completion of the Housing Strategy, it shall be incorporated into the City Development Plan.*

**Policy H.1**

*It is the policy of Limerick City Council to prepare and implement the Joint Housing Strategy in partnership with the Limerick and Clare County Councils.*

**Housing Supply**

Chapter 2 of this Draft Plan, set out the strategic context within which this development plan is framed. The proposed population target increase of 15,758 in 2016 will generate a housing demand of 5,628 units over the lifetime of the plan (based on 2.8 persons per household). The existing undeveloped residential land bank within the City is 172.27 hectares which is capable of providing 6,891 units. Additional capacity has been identified in the regeneration areas of 3,400 additional units provides a capacity of 10,291 dwellings. Further capacity is also identified in the Docklands (2,500 units) and other smaller areas in City. This analysis indicate that there is sufficient land to meet the housing need for the lifetime of the plan and that with 60% of the population target (for the plan period) capable of being met by the regeneration programme, the development plan is in accordance with National Policy in respect of supporting the regeneration programme. These figures ignore brown field site redevelopment in the City Centre and in some suburban areas

**Policy H.2**

*It is the policy of Limerick City Council to ensure that sufficient land is zoned to meet the housing requirements of the City over the lifetime of the Plan.*

**Housing Mix - Balanced Communities**

The provision of a range of housing types and sizes in the City will increase in importance as trends show a decline in family housing and an increase in elderly and single person households. Many of the new households forming in the City during the period of this Development Plan will be below the current average size and will often consist of two persons. The overall aim is to have a sustainable balance of housing types and tenure in the City which reflects the changing household composition and is responsive to local context. Limerick City Council aims to ensure that all housing developments including apartment developments contain an acceptable proportion of large units and that houses are capable of being easily extended to ensure that such developments are sustainable in the long term and provide suitable viable long term options for families.

Providing a good mix of house types can create neighbourhoods for people of different ages and lifestyles. Encouraging good housing mix also allows people the choice and opportunity to remain in a given area while availing of accommodation that caters to their changing needs at a particular stage of their life. This can establish a strong sense of community and allow for increased social inclusion.

### **Policy H.3**

*It is the policy of Limerick City Council to encourage the establishment of sustainable residential communities by ensuring that a mix of housing and apartment types, sizes and tenures is provided within the City.*

### **Housing Density**

The question of density plays an important part in ensuring that the best use is made of land intended for development. The Government issued guidance to Planning Authorities in 2008 'Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas', accompanied by an adopted companion document entitled 'Urban Design Manual'. Due regard shall be given to these standards and recommendations. Through the application of the revised and updated guidelines, Limerick City Council will strive to ensure the provision of better quality housing. In tandem with this, and given the limited availability of land within the City boundary and the decreasing household size, the Council will also seek to promote higher density developments at suitable locations. Consideration for higher densities in tandem with protecting the existing residential amenity shall apply.

### **Policy H.4**

*It is the policy of Limerick City Council to have regard to the policies and objectives of the following Strategies and Plans:*

- *Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas (DOEHLG 2008)*
- *Urban Design Manual - A Best Practice Guide (DOEHLG 2008)*
- *Quality Housing for Sustainable Communities (DOEHLG 2007).*

### **Policy H.5**

*It is the policy of Limerick City Council to promote increased density where appropriate to do so, having regard to the existing or proposed public transport provision and proximity to the City Centre.*

### **Policy H.6**

*It is the policy of Limerick City Council to ensure a balance between the reasonable protection of existing residential amenities, the established character of the area, and the need to provide for sustainable residential development.*

### **Enhancement of the Support Network for the Provision of Social Housing**

The City Council is one of a number of agencies, including inter alia, the Paul Partnership, the Mid-Western Health Service Executive, Voluntary Housing Associations and the private sector, which is responsible for the provision of social housing. Provision of social housing by the various voluntary sector agencies has become a key element of social housing provision, especially for special housing needs. The voluntary housing agencies have shown considerable skill in managing for the needs of those with special needs, through the design and provision of purpose built accommodation, often with community support facilities such as communal dining facilities, health facilities and childcare facilities. The funding provision for the voluntary and co-operative schemes has been increased significantly over the last number of years. The progress made to date in developing the sector needs to continue. The role of the voluntary sector in providing social housing will continue to be facilitated and encouraged. The City Council is ideally positioned to provide a support network to facilitate the co-ordinated delivery and management of such accommodation.

#### **Policy H.7**

*It is the policy of Limerick City Council to encourage and promote the development of joint venture housing schemes with private developers and voluntary housing associations to provide sites or residential units on lands acquired either as part of its overall housing programme or in connection with the clearance of derelict sites and obsolete areas.*

#### **Policy H.8**

*It is the policy of Limerick City Council to facilitate the voluntary sector in the provision of social housing, especially for those with special needs.*

#### **Policy H.9**

*It is the policy of Limerick City Council to implement the recommendations of ~~'Managing in Partnership - The City Estates Management Strategy'~~ 'Good Practice in Housing Management: Guidelines for local Authorities, 2007' and to evaluate its success on an annual basis in conjunction with the associated agencies tasked with the provision of Social Housing.*

#### **Reduction of Social Segregation in Housing Developments**

The Planning & Development Act 2000, makes provision for the avoidance of “undue social segregation” as follows: “In order to counteract undue segregation in housing between persons of different social backgrounds, the Planning Authority may indicate in respect of any particular area referred to in paragraph (c) that there is no requirement for housing referred to in Section 94(4) in respect of that area, or than a lower percentage than that specified in the housing strategy may be required”.

The joint *Housing Strategy* will present policies in respect of addressing this requirement.

#### **Developing Effective Management of Housing Stock**

It is the responsibility of the City Council in terms of the City Development Board *'Strategy for Economic, Social, and Cultural Development'* to provide ongoing management systems for the effective management of the Local Authority's Housing stock. The effective management of the housing stock is critical in ensuring undue social segregation and the development of sustainable communities.

#### **Policy H.10**

*It is the policy of Limerick City Council to provide support for existing resident and voluntary group organisations through the implementation of the 'Management in Partnership- the City Estates Management Strategy'. Such assistance to include housing management and tenancy training courses, the development of residents charters, and the provision of rental and financial incentives to further the maintenance of housing estates.*

#### **Other Housing Needs**

There is a requirement that the need for those with special housing needs be met.

#### **The Elderly**

The changing demographics and the aging of the Nation's population pose strategic challenges for society in general, and more especially for the development of responsive health and social policies. As a key social policy area, housing is a function that needs to adapt in order to meet changing needs in terms of the growing numbers of older people.

#### **Policy H.11**

*It is the policy of Limerick City Council to continue to support the concept of independent living for older people through the provision of specific purpose-built accommodation.*

### **Accommodation for Persons with Special Needs**

The City Council has a role in ensuring that housing options are developed for persons with special needs. Where the housing needs of such persons are identified and they are included on the Housing List, these needs can be met primarily by direct facilitating provision of housing by the Voluntary Sector under the Capital Assistance Scheme.

#### **Policy H.12**

*It is the policy of Limerick City Council to meet the housing needs of persons with special needs both by direct provision of accommodation and by facilitating the provision of housing by the Voluntary Sector.*

In line with national policy, the City Council has for many years implemented a Disabled Persons Grant Scheme to provide financial assistance in carrying works to render dwellings more suitable to meet the needs of disabled occupants.

#### **Policy H.13**

*It is the policy of Limerick City Council to continue to implement the Disabled Persons Grant Scheme to provide the means for disabled persons to carry out adaptations to their dwellings to better meet their accommodation needs.*

### **Accommodation for the Homeless**

A 'National Strategy for the Homelessness' was published in 2008. This aims to reflect the recommendations of the 'Fitzpatrick Review' into the implementation of the integrated strategies in place nationally since 2002 and combining the Integrated Strategy with the Preventative Strategy in a single homeless policy document. The Local Homeless Action Plan guiding the provision of homeless accommodation and services in the Limerick area will reflect Government policy and the commitment contained in 'Towards 2016' to end long-term occupation of emergency accommodation by 2010. Limerick City adopted a 'Strategy and Action Plans for Service Delivery to the Homeless' in 2001, and in partnership with the Mid-Western Health Service Executive established a Homeless Persons Centre, and provides funding to a number of voluntary service providers and voluntary housing associations in the City.

#### **Policy H.14**

*It is the policy of Limerick City Council to continue the 'Strategy & Action Plan for Service Delivery to the Homeless' in Limerick City in partnership with the Mid-Western Health Service Executive or their successor, and the Limerick City Homeless federation.*

#### **Policy H.15**

*It is the policy of Limerick City Council to provide assistance to the voluntary sector for the effective management of Homeless Accommodation and facilities.*

### **Travellers Accommodation**

It is a requirement of the Housing (Travellers Accommodation) Act, 2000, that the City is charged with the responsibility for the assessment and planning of the accommodation needs of the Travelling community of the City. A five-year accommodation programme has been adopted as is to be implemented during the period of the programme. The City Council will continue to meet its targets for the completion of Traveller specific accommodation as outlined in the programme and in subsequent plans.

**Policy H.16**

*It is the policy of Limerick City Council to implement the '5 years Traveller's Accommodation Programme' to meet the needs of the local community.*

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