

SECTION 6

POLICY

This section of the housing report outlines the policy issues that will need to be considered as part of the Housing Strategy for North Tipperary. The policy recommendations will be divided into three key areas:

- A Spatial Strategy for North Tipperary
- Social and Affordable Housing Strategy
- The Needs of Special Interest Groups.

Each of these areas will be dealt with individually.

6.1 Spatial Strategy for North Tipperary

The spatial strategy refers to the geographic distribution of housing in North Tipperary. It is necessary to define this in the context of the housing strategy because the act requires that adequate land is available for housing in the county and more specifically for social and affordable housing.

In addressing this issue regard must be had to National Policy as well as local need. National policy as outlined in Government White Papers and circulars, requires that issues of sustainability be taken into account when Local Authorities are considering their housing policies. The concept of sustainability is not clearly defined in operational terms in the Planning Acts. However, it is clear that it includes considerations of a social, economic and environmental nature. This policy will facilitate the maintenance of viable communities while ensuring that environmental impacts are minimised.

Environmental impacts can arise from:

- Encouragement of excessive travel with consequential impacts on greenhouse gas emissions
- Impacts on ground and surface water

- Landscape impacts
- Ecological and conservation impacts
- Heritage impacts
- Poor use of scarce service resources

Social impacts can arise from:

- The loss of population and declining communities.
- The loss of local social and community services and cohesiveness.
- The loss of local commercial services.

In the context of these considerations the housing policies will seek to achieve a balance between the needs of communities, and particularly rural communities, and the needs of the environment.

6.1.2 Balanced Development Rural and Urban

In order to estimate the number of houses that should be located in the rural⁷ areas of the county, some criteria must be established that will provide a suitable guide. These criteria will be needs rather than supply driven and that they should relate in some sense to the need to sustain rural communities.

In order to sustain rural communities a certain level of population needs to be retained within them. As household sizes decline, a greater number of households will be needed in order to maintain these communities at viable population levels.

It can be seen from the analysis in Chapter 3 that natural growth in population in North Tipperary would amount to an average increase in household numbers of 330 per year. This figure reflects the natural growth in population in the County excluding immigration. Considering that currently 55% of the population reside in rural areas this

⁷ In this context by Rural we mean areas outside the residential centres listed in table 6.1

would amount to a proportionate allocation of 182 residential units to rural areas per annum.

The overall build in the County is anticipated to reach 851 per year over the coming five years. It is proposed that 25% of new houses (213 units) be built in Rural areas. This will be sufficient for housing for the local population with an allowance of one in six houses for in-migration.

Once 213 units have been allocated to rural communities the remaining 638 houses must be distributed among the towns. Table 6.1 lists the principal towns and villages (in terms of size) in North Tipperary. One method of allocating housing is on the basis of direct proportionality to the settlements size at the time of the last census in 1996.

Table 6.1 Yearly Housing Allocation to Towns and Villages

	1996 Population	Proportion of Urban Population	Proportion of Housing Allocation
Thurles U.D.	6,603	25.15	160
Nenagh U.D.	5,645	21.5	137
Roscrea	4,170	15.88	101
Templemore U.D.	2,115	8.06	51
Newport	873	3.33	21
Borrisokane	850	3.24	21
Birr Environs / Offaly	838	3.19	20
Ballina	598	2.28	15
Borrisoleigh	564	2.15	14
Littleton	544	2.07	13
Cloughjordan	447	1.7	11
Holycross / Tipp SR	447	1.7	11
Portroe	411	1.57	10
Toomevara	362	1.38	9
Thurles Environs	336	1.28	8
Twomileborris	325	1.24	8
Templetuohy	293	1.12	7
Nenagh Environs	268	1.02	7
Puckaun	235	0.9	6
Silvermines	202	0.77	5

	1996 Population	Proportion of Urban Population	Proportion of Housing Allocation
Templemore Environs	129	0.49	3
Settlement Total	26,255		638
Rural Total	31,766		213
Tipperary NR Total	58,021		851

6.1.3 Areas influenced by Limerick

Throughout the report it is apparent that much of the in-migration and the proposed development in the county is focused on the southwest because of its proximity to Limerick. Local Area Plans will be drawn up for Newport, Ballina, Nenagh and its Environs. These plans will set appropriate limits for growth within these centres but will have regard to the in-migration demand to which they give rise.

6.1.4 Land Zoning for Residential Purposes

As mentioned earlier one of the requirements of the act is to ensure that there is sufficient land available for development. In the previous section housing was allocated to various settlements, these settlements must therefore be zoned for the purpose of residential or mixed use. Many of the areas mentioned in section 6.1.2 have not previously had land zoned. This is true of all the smaller towns and villages. However there are particular issues to be addressed in relation to rural clusters.

- ***Rural Community Unit***

In deciding on community viability a decision must also be made on what is an appropriate community unit for these purposes. This is particularly important in the context of rural communities in that in order to achieve an allocation of Social and Affordable housing, land will need to be zoned for residential/mixed use for it to come under the terms of the act.

The Parish will be used as the basic unit for the purposes of this policy. It is the historic basis for community service provision, is a community unit that has a social relevance and is of sufficient size to permit a range of services to be provided.

Using the Parish as the basic policy unit, a decision must be made as to how many houses should be allocated to rural parishes and on where within those Parishes development should be permitted.

Where a Parish contains a settlement of significance, an area should be designated and zoned for residential purposes within that settlement. 25% of the Rural allocation will be in such settlements and the remaining 75% be once off rural dwellings.

A plan will need to be drawn up for each of the rural settlements to be included under this strategy. The minimum requirements of the plans will be to designate an area for residential or mixed use. They will make recommendations as to options in servicing the land, and will include policies regarding the provision of group sewage schemes and new technologies such as reed and willow beds treatment as well as conventional treatment.

It is acknowledged that Housing in itself is only one part in the overall development of rural communities and where possible, as part of this process, integrated area development plans should be compiled in partnership with the local community at parish level.

- Zoning in Urban Areas

Based on Table 6.2 where the yearly allocation of housing was outlined it is necessary to determine the amount of land needed for the provision of the strategy. The Guidelines for Residential Densities published by the Department of the Environment indicate that in Urban Greenfield sites a minimum of 35 dwellings per hectare should be encouraged, this has been applied to the three main urban centres. A density of 20 dwellings per hectare has been applied to the smaller towns and villages, while densities of 5 units per hectare are used in the rural areas. This complies with the clause in the guidelines that states that, *'densities of less than 20 units per hectare may be considered as an alternative to the provision of one-off rural housing'*.

Table 6.2 Land Requirements for Strategy

	Yearly Allocation	Total Allocation 2001-2006	Land Requirements (ha)
Thurles U.D.	160	802	23
Nenagh U.D.	137	686	20
Roscrea	101	507	14
Templemore U.D.	51	257	13
Newport	21	106	5
Borrisokane	21	103	5
Birr Environs / Offaly	20	102	5
Ballina	15	73	4
Borrisoleigh	14	69	3
Littleton	13	66	3
Cloughjordan	11	54	3
Holycross / Tipp SR	11	54	3
Portroe	10	50	3
Toomevara	9	44	2
Thurles Environs	8	41	2
Twomileborris	8	40	2
Templetuohy	7	36	2
Nenagh Environs	7	33	2
Puckaun	6	29	1
Silvermines	5	25	1
Templemore Environs	3	16	1
Rural Settlements	53	266	54

While this is the amount of land that will cater for the provision of housing over the next five years, it is not suggested that this should be the area zoned for those purposes. There are many factors that give rise to distortions in the supply of land to the building market and land in excess of the minimum is normally zoned and serviced in order to ensure ease of supply and to reduce the pressure on land and therefore its price. Given the demand for in-migration in certain parts of the county in particular, it is clear that a shortage of supply may well lead to distortions in the market and significant price increases in the short-term. The amount of land zoned for residential and/or mixed development will, therefore be a factor of between 2.5 and 3 times that identified as the minimum necessary

to accommodate the allocated housing, with a factor greater than that being considered for those settlements that are within the zone of influence of the Limerick area.

The Local Authorities will carry out an audit of their own land bank to determine its suitability with reference to the provision of Social and Affordable Housing.

6.2 Social and Affordable Housing

The local Authorities are under an obligation to provide housing for those that are not in a position to provide housing for themselves. This housing can be provided using a number of different resources.

In framing this policy, there are a number of issues regarding the provision of social housing which need consideration. These issues relate to the means through which houses might be provided and the design and distribution of housing within particular areas

6.2.1 Means of Provision of Social and Affordable Housing (Acquisition)

Housing can be provided by, the purchase by local authorities of housing for social purposes, direct provision of housing by local authorities, or by making of arrangements with private developers for the provision of housing. Each of these approaches is most appropriate in specific circumstances. The policy of the Local Authorities will be to use a mixture of all of these mechanisms in the provision of social housing.

In this context, it will be the policy of the Local Authorities, as required under Section 95 of the Local Government (Planning and Development) Act, 2001, that 20 per cent of land zoned for residential use, or for a mixture of residential and other uses, shall be reserved for the provision of housing for the purposes of either or both:

- (i) housing for persons referred to in Section 9(2) of the Housing Act, 1988;
- (ii) affordable housing (as defined at Section 93 of the Planning Act, 2000).

Where developments solely provide for the accommodation of special needs groups, the elderly or students there will be no requirement for the provision of land for social and affordable housing.

Conditions attached to planning permissions for residential development to which the proportion of social and affordable housing quota applies will require applicants to enter into an agreement with the planning authority. Such agreements will provide options for site transfer as set out in the legislation. For example, a developer can transfer ownership of up to 20% of the site to the relevant Local Authority, or may build accommodation units and transfer them to eligible persons nominated by the Local Authority at an agreed cost. Alternatively, fully or partially serviced residential sites can be transferred into the ownership of the Local authority for an agreed cost.

If, at the time of making the agreement the Local Authority is aware of the information, it will indicate to the developer the details of the number of social and affordable to be provided and a description of the proposed units. In considering these issues the Local Authority will have full regard to:

- The policies contained in the Development Plan and any relevant Local Area Plans;
- The need to counteract social segregation;
- The need to ensure the overall coherence of the development;
- The views of the developer with regard to the impact of the agreement on the proposed development.

6.2.2 Means of provision of Social and Affordable Housing (Sectors)

The Local Authorities will seek to provide affordable housing where possible to those persons meeting the eligibility criteria set out in the Planning and Development Act, 2000. The Local Authorities will set up an affordable housing waiting list to enable them to assess demand for this type of housing. The assessment of persons on this list will comply with the criteria for eligibility set out in the Planning and Development Act, 2000.

- Voluntary Sector

The North Tipperary Local Authorities recognise the important and complimentary role to be played by the Voluntary Sector in the provision of social and affordable accommodation. The Local Authorities will continue to work closely with associations and will take a proactive role in the inclusion of such organisations in the provision of housing and accommodation. Particular support will be given to community based organisations.

Given the rural nature of the County, the voluntary sector will have an increasingly central role to play in both local development and housing supply. In light of the threat posed by rural depopulation and the likelihood that rural developments in the County will fall below the threshold requiring the designation of a portion of a site for social and affordable housing. The onus to meet these demands in rural areas will remain with the Local Authorities and the voluntary housing sector.

The Local Authorities will provide support to local groups in setting up and establishing themselves in an inclusive and proactive way. There will be continued technical support to groups during the planning stages and ongoing support in networking and training.

The Local Authorities will also liaise with the larger national associations in providing urban schemes and in providing training and support to the community based groups.

- Private Rented Sector

The Local Authorities recognises the key role played by the Private rented sector in providing both short and long-term accommodation in the County. The Local Authority will strive to ensure the development of a healthy and vibrant private rented sector that can provide alternative tenure options for those who do not wish to purchase properties. A database of private rented accommodation will be collected and The Local Authorities will work with the Mid Western Health Board and The Department of Social Community and Family Affairs to streamline support to those in rented accommodation.

Subject to Government decisions in relation to a forthcoming report of a planning Group addressing the housing needs of a greater proportion of households who would otherwise be assisted under the Supplementary Welfare allowance scheme. This strategy may require adjustment of estimates relating to social housing requirements. The Government's "Action on Housing" indicated that more supply based approaches to rental assistance would be pursued. It is envisaged that new arrangements will be developed, in partnership with the private sector, to procure rental accommodation, which would be available on a long term basis to help address the needs of eligible households not accommodated through other housing options. More specific proposals in this report are likely to be developed in the context of the planning group report.

- *Estate Management*

The North Tipperary Local Authorities will ensure that effective estate management arrangements are put in place for integrated developments provided under Part V agreements. Estate management services will form an integral part of the agreement negotiated between the planning authority and the developer.

Appropriate support will be provided to existing and newly formed community based estate management groups. Estate management training will be conducted on a regular basis.

Where a housing scheme is not likely to be taken in charge by the council, it will be a requirement of the Planning Authority that an Estate Management Company be formed to manage and maintain the estate. It will further be a requirement of the Planning Authority that all purchasers of housing units within such estate will be required to take shares in the Management Company and that owners and occupiers of housing units will be required to comply with the requirements of such company's rules.

6.2.2 Means of provision of Social and Affordable Housing (Home Ownership)

There are a number of options in relation to the nature of tenancy/ownership is managed in Social and Affordable housing. The role of the shared ownership and site purchase schemes will be developed as they have the potential to meet the needs of approximately

half of those on the housing list. These will be preferential options and will be used in conjunction with other supports such as the Rental Subsidy and Capital Assistance Grants.

There will be a considerable number of people who will not be in a position to benefit from these schemes and in these cases appropriate Voluntary Community based housing may be the preferred option. However it is anticipated that there will be a significant number of people for whom Local Authority provided rented social housing would be the only viable option.

6.2.2 *Distribution of Housing Mix*

There are a number of criteria that the Local Authorities will apply when allocation the mix of social/affordable and private housing to new developments.

- Due consideration will need to be given to the existing levels of social and affordable housing within the community. It is important that a balance of housing type of be maintained not only within the wider community.
- The social and affordable mix should be based on the local need as reflected in the numbers on the affordable housing list and the special housing needs list as maintained by the local authority.
- The allocation of the social and affordable mix will make due allowance for the nature of the development being proposed and the nature of any future developments in the area known to the Local Authority.
- The proportion of social and affordable may also be varied so that development will be encouraged in certain areas.

6.2.3 *House Types*

It will be an objective of the Local Authorities to ensure that a mixture of house types and sizes are provided in each residential development. House design and layout should reflect the requirements of different categories of households within the County –

particularly those special needs and requirements of elderly persons and persons with disabilities.

Careful consideration will be given to best practice in relation to Energy conservation.

6.3 Special Housing Needs

6.3.1 *Housing For older People*

Housing for older people shall be provided with the following recommendations:

The Local Authority should ensure local provision of housing where possible.

A social mix will be encouraged by promoting integrated housing for the elderly within developments. An allocation of units suitable for older people will be included in all substantial mixed developments, this allocation will be appropriate to local need. These units will be a mix of single, two-bedroom, and, where appropriate, three-bedroom units to cater for a variety of elderly households and provide space for the accommodation of a carer where necessary.

Consideration will be made at the planning stage for access to services however the Local Authority will continue to co-ordinate with other agencies in ensuring access to services for older people in rural areas and the development of shared facilities will be considered where appropriate.

It is anticipated that the voluntary and Co-operative housing sector will play a significant role in housing provision to older people.

6.3.2 *People with Disabilities*

The provisions of Part M of the Building Regulations provide for independent accessibility in all housing.

It will also be the policy of the Local Authorities that an agreed percentage of social and affordable housing will be wheelchair accessible or adaptable for wheelchair use at reasonable cost, this percentage will be agreed based on local need.

A list of special needs relating to disability in North Tipperary will be drawn up in co-operation with The Mid Western Health Board and disability groups. A schedule of the design implications of various physical and mental disabilities can then be drawn up and used as a means to plan and allocate appropriate housing types. It is anticipated that the voluntary and Co-operative housing sector will play a significant role in housing provision for people with disabilities.

6.3.3. Travellers

In accordance with the Traveller Accommodation Programme the following measures will be taken:

The local authority will provide Permanent type Accommodation to the counties indigenous families by the provision of:

- Standard Local Authority Housing
- Group Housing
- Serviced Sites
- Combination of Group Housing and Serviced Sites.
- The purchase of suitable rural housing
- Facilitate options like the shared ownership scheme.

The Local Authorities will where appropriate, provide limited facilities on a temporary basis for indigenous families pending their appointment to permanent accommodation.

Emergency accommodation will continue to be provided by the Local Authorities where the need arises.

The Local Authorities recognise the need for back up Training and Support especially for families at initial stages of accommodation where integration is crucial, and while travelling families are adjusting to a settled lifestyle

6.3.4. Refugees and Asylum Seekers

The Local Authorities will monitor the impact of the increasing number of asylum seekers and refugees on the accommodation market and will work with the voluntary sector and public bodies – such as the Mid Western Health Board, to ensure the social integration of these minority groups. Furthermore, the Local Authorities will, upon the identification of specialised demand and accommodation requirements, work with the appropriate bodies in meeting and providing for this demand through the implementation of the policies contained in this Housing Strategy.

6.3.5 Homelessness

The provision of accommodation for the homeless in North Tipperary will be in accordance with the recommendations outlined in the Strategy Statement compiled by the Local Authority.

Conclusion

The spatial Strategy will promote the development of Rural and Urban centres in a balanced and sustainable way. 25% of new housing will be allocated to rural areas with 52% and 23% going to the four main urban centres and smaller towns and villages respectively. Land will be zoned and service plans will be drawn up for the development of rural clusters based in current parish settlements.

As a general policy, 20 per cent of the land zoned for residential use, or for a mixture of residential and other uses, shall be reserved under Part V of the Planning and Development Act, 2000.

The mix of social and affordable housing will be based on 20% of development land being allocated in accordance with the act. The mix of social/affordable and private housing in any development will be made on the basis of criteria that seek to promote sustainable development and encourage social integration.

Careful consideration will be given to various categories of special housing need and there will be support given to the voluntary housing sector and local community groups in order to increase their capacity to address local housing needs.