



Chapter 10 Housing Strategy

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10.1 Aim, Context and Review

Aim

To set out in the development plan a strategy for the purposes of ensuring that the housing needs of the existing and future population of the area are met.

Context

Part V of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 as amended requires that planning authorities must prepare housing strategies and integrate them into their development plans. In addition, the Act makes communities needs for social and affordable housing a material planning consideration which must be taken into account when formulating development plan policies, preparing a Housing Strategy and deciding on planning applications or appeals. The first Housing Strategy for the city was prepared for the period of 2001-2004 and incorporated into the 1999 City Development Plan by variation in 2001.

It is acknowledged that many aspects in determining the need for housing are based on estimates and assumptions. This is a particularly difficult task when attempting to determine the estimation of house prices and hence affordability for such a long period ahead. However this aspect has been addressed as best as possible in this strategy using the guidelines in A Model Housing Strategy and a step – by step Guide December 2000 DOEHLG.

Two years after the adoption of the development plan incorporating the Housing Strategy, the City Manager will prepare a report for the elected members which shall include a review of the progress in implementing the Housing Strategy. A report will also be prepared if there has been a change in the housing market or in the regulations made by the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, under the Act, which significantly affect the Housing Strategy.

More details regarding the legislative basis and policy context for preparing housing strategies is contained in Appendix 3. In addition the details of demand and supply of housing are also contained in Appendix 3. The key conclusions derived from this research are outlined in this chapter. These have consequently informed the policy statements which will be used in the development control process to secure the goals of the Housing Strategy.

Review of the Housing Strategy 2001- 2004

The Act requires that a development plan set out the Housing Strategy for the purposes of ensuring that the housing needs of the existing and future population of the area are provided for. The strategy for 2005-2011 will supersede the previous strategy prepared for 2001-2004.

There are contrasts between this and the previous strategy. The 2002 census has been published giving a stronger basis for estimations in this strategy than was available in 2001. However the current strategy spans a much longer period up to 2011, which affects the ability to give very accurate predictions. The unpredictable nature of house/land prices which are critical parameters in assessing the features of demand and supply also contribute to these difficulties. The organisational aspects associated with local authority social housing programmes, unpredictability regarding acquisition of land and government funding and the short term nature (4 years programmes) all contribute to making it difficult to make assumptions as far as 2011.

In this regard the legal requirement to review the Housing Strategy every two years will afford opportunities to address any significant inconsistencies and also to react to major changes that might occur in the housing market.

However with regard to the 2001– 2004 strategy it is noted that the estimated figures for the new household formations were very accurate. What is notable is that the number of house completions in 2001/2002 outstripped the new household formations by a substantial amount. The statistics available to date also indicate a buoyant house construction period. Additional demand for housing over and above household formation has been an established pattern. This can arise from a number of factors such as demand for holiday lettings, obsolescence and the timing of delivery of housing onto the housing market. Figures for grants of planning permissions indicate that sufficient lands were zoned and permissions granted to meet the demands of the housing market.



The house types in recent years have become much more mixed with a significant increase in apartment construction, which in the last three years has constituted almost 50% of the build. This would reflect and match the increasing trend towards smaller household sizes.

Certain conditions within the city affected the poor delivery of housing units under Part V prior to this. These can be summarised as follows; concerns from the construction industry, a backlog of undeveloped grants of permission and a hold off on applications until new anticipated legislation was effected (December 2002). The general exemption of site size of less than 0.2 hectares was also a factor. The new legislation, which included the reduction in the size threshold of exempted development from 0.2 hectares to 0.1 hectares and the removal of the withering clause enabled more housing to be constructed. It also broadened the number of options, which could be invoked to satisfy the Housing Strategy requirements. It has been the experience of the Council that the introduction of these broader options has been to the benefit of the delivery of social and affordable housing.

The delivery of social and affordable housing from Part V has begun to gain momentum. By the end of 2004 three land transfers involving a total of 1.9 hectares (4.61 acres) have been agreed with landowners. In addition, the planning authority has concluded final agreements in relation to the transfer of 50 units with a further 69 units under negotiation. In total eleven agreements have also been reached, where a financial contribution was deemed acceptable. These cases generally were where units on the application site were deemed unaffordable to the Council or where the proposed development were exclusively for student accommodation. As can be seen therefore, the momentum in terms of Part V of the Planning & Development Act, 2000, as amended, is gaining and every effort is being made by the Council to ensure it's successful implementation.





10.2 Key Conclusions from Housing Demand and Supply Analysis

Housing Demand

Key Conclusion 1

- Demand for housing in Galway City is increasing with an estimated 3,919 new households forming in the years 2005 to 2011.
- Approximately 130 hectares of suitably zoned and serviced land will be required to accommodate the development of these houses, using a conservative density of 30 units per hectares.

Key Conclusion 2

- For new household formations in the years 2005-2011, a total of 2,106 (53%) will be unable to purchase housing on the open market.

Key Conclusion 3

- There will be a substantial demand for affordable housing in the city in future years, in addition to the existing built up demand for affordable housing.
- The demand for social housing in the city has remained high with the more commonly stated reason for applying for Council housing being “not reasonably able to meet the cost of the accommodation they are occupying or to obtain suitable accommodation”. The number of applicants in this category had more than doubled in the period March 1996 to June 2001 and has subsequently increased by an additional 13% up to a total of 71% of the housing waiting list in 2004.
- The income profile of households on the waiting list indicates that of these, at least 75% would not be able to avail of affordable housing.

Housing Supply

Key Conclusion 1

- There is sufficient zoned land to facilitate the development of accommodation units that provides for both existing demand and the estimated 3,919 new households in the period 2005-2011. Should house building exceed the number of new households forming by 20% as past trends have shown, the zoned lands will be able to accommodate this extra demand.
- Investment in infrastructure will be critical to ensure the provision of sufficient zoned and serviced lands for residential development.

Key Conclusion 2

- Based on the construction of an average of 1,500 housing units per year in recent years, the construction industry has the capacity to meet the demands of new households that is 3,919 new household formations in the years 2005-2011.

Key Conclusion 3

- Planning permission for the development of 2,526 residential units exists (September 2004). There were currently applications for 566 units before the Council for decision (September 2004). It is considered that these if granted will contribute significantly to meeting the estimated demand between the years 2005 – 2011 (3,919).

Key Conclusion 4

- It is anticipated that Part V housing will yield approximately 180 housing units annually or the equivalent in land or money.
- In addition to the Part V units, the Council will commence 1,150 units by direct build in the period 2004-2008.
- In addition the Council will engage with developers to secure further units through the use of turnkey developments.

Key Conclusion 5

- The maximum of 20%, as provided for in Part V of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, as amended, of land zoned for residential purposes or for a mix of residential and other purposes, will be required for the provision of social and affordable housing units in Galway City in the period 2005-2011.

Key Conclusion 6

- A baseline ratio of 1:1 for the provision of social and affordable housing will be desirable to achieve a better social mix of housing than what already exists.

Key Conclusion 7

- Variations from the base line ratio would be beneficial in the Westside, Ballinfoile and Ballybaan I.A.P. areas. In these designated areas the 20% provision will be assigned to affordable housing only in order to encourage home ownership and greater social balance.

10.3 Housing Policy and Implementation

The following policies are derived from the foregoing conclusions. These policy statements will be used in the development control process to secure the goals of the Housing Strategy.

Policy no.10.1 Land Requirements for the Provision of Social and Affordable Housing

- Require as provided for under Section 95 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 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):
 - Housing for persons referred to in Section 9 (2) of the Housing Act, 1988,
 - Affordable housing (as defined at Section 93 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000).

This policy will apply to all applications for the development of more than 4 residential units or residential development on land of more than 0.1 hectares on lands zoned for residential use or for a mixture of residential and other uses. This includes land zoning where the objectives are not specifically for residential use but where housing can be accommodated for example CC and some CI/CF zonings. Where an application relates to the development of houses on part of a 'mixed use' development, this requirement shall relate to all of the residential element of the proposed development.

This policy will be implemented following consultation with the applicant and having regard to their proposals for meeting the requirements of the strategy and by the attachment of conditions to planning permissions for residential developments on lands zoned for residential use or a mixture of residential development and other uses.





Policy no. 10.2 The Ratio of Social and Affordable Required

- Apply a ratio of 1:1 for the provision of social and affordable housing. In this regard, the development of shared ownership units are considered as social housing where they are being provided for applicants on the local authority housing waiting list or existing local authority tenants.
- Allocate the 20% provision for affordable housing only, in these designated I.A.P. areas. This is in accordance with the provisions of the Integrated Area Plans for Westside, Ballinfolle, and Ballybane, where the Council aims to increase the proportion of the housing stock that is in owner occupation in these areas and encourage greater social balance.
- Where developments solely provide for the accommodation of special needs groups, there may be no requirement for the provision of land/other for social and affordable housing.
- With regard to the ratio 1:1 for the provision of social and affordable housing, Galway City Council will give consideration to innovative home ownership schemes resulting in the provision of housing to applicants on the affordable and social housing waiting list.

Policy no. 10.3 Consultation with Developers

- Ensure the development of social and affordable housing units is carried out in consultation with the applicant/developer.
- Where applicable and possible, the Council will retain the services of the contractor working on a subject site to develop units of social and affordable housing on their behalf subject to price and quality.

The Planning and Development (Amendment) Act, 2002 has provided for a number of alternative options to satisfy the requirements to reserve lands under section 94 (4) (A) of the main Act for social and affordable housing. In consideration of these options it will be the preference of the Council in general and subject to agreement, to require the developer to build units of accommodation and transfer them into the ownership of the Council or persons nominated by the Council, at an agreed cost. It is considered that this is the best option to effectively and efficiently achieve the objectives of the Housing Strategy, would constitute the best use of resources and will counteract undue social segregation.

The range of other options available under the amending legislation, including the transfer of fully or partially serviced residential sites, the transfer of suitable alternate land, the payment of an amount to the Council or a combination of some or all of the foregoing will be of a lesser priority. These additional options may be examined where the attributes of the site render it impractical to pursue the preference of the Council. These may arise in cases where the unit cost is excessive owing to existing land value cost, because of the type of units proposed, or where the units proposed do not meet the housing needs of persons on the housing (social/affordable) waiting lists or voluntary group housing needs. Where a financial contribution is the accepted option this will be ring-fenced and used only by the Council in its functions under Part V and/or functions in the provision of housing under the Housing Acts.

The transfer to the planning authority of the ownership of the land shall be the default option if no agreement is reached between the Council and the applicant/developer. In this instance the applicant/developer will be required to transfer 20% of the land, which is the subject of the application for permission, into the ownership of the Council for an agreed cost.



House Types and Sizes

Policy no. 10.4 House Types and Sizes

- Ensure that an appropriate mixture of house types and sizes are provided in residential development to cater for different sectors of the housing market, in particular discourage an excessive amounts of small one bed units in housing schemes.

Policy no. 10.5 Special Needs Accommodation

- Ensure the provision of accommodation for the elderly. 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.
- In the location of such facilities the Council is aware of the importance of social mix and accommodation of the elderly in communities and areas with which they are familiar. The provision of elderly housing in close proximity to shops, churches, public transport and community facilities will be encouraged.
- Liase, encourage and facilitate the voluntary and co-operative housing sector in the provision of dwelling units for the elderly.

Policy no. 10.6 Alternative Accommodation for 'Empty Nesters'

- Ensure that the Council's housing stock is not under utilised. In this regard the Council will encourage and facilitate Council tenants where feasible to relinquish their tenancy in larger units in return for more appropriate accommodation.

Policy no. 10.7 Accommodation for Persons with Special Needs

- Require the reservation of units for the disabled in consultation with the voluntary sector, where there exists a clear need for such accommodation.

Policy no. 10.8 Homeless / Crisis Accommodation

- Continue to work with the voluntary and public sector in the provision of emergency and crisis accommodation for the homeless at suitable locations throughout the city. In this regard, the Council will have regard to the deliberations and actions of the Homeless Forum and the provisions of the Homeless Strategy.

Policy no. 10.9 Travelling Community

- Implement and monitor the operation of the Traveller Accommodation programme 2000-2005 and subsequent plans. The Council will meet its obligations regarding the provision of adequate and suitable accommodation for the Travelling community through consultation with Travellers, the general public, and the local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee. The Council will continue to meet its targets for the completion of Traveller specific accommodation as outlined in the programme and subsequent plans.





Policy no. 10.10 Requirements of Refugees

- Work in conjunction with other statutory and voluntary bodies to encourage social integration of minority groups into Galway Community.

Policy no. 10.11 Requirements of Asylum Seekers

- Take account of the accommodation needs of Asylum Seekers.

Policy no. 10.12 Supply of Affordable Housing

- Review the affordable housing waiting list annually where it has been established in accordance with the requirements of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 and DOEHLG guidelines in order to ensure that it reflect the most relevant elements of demand and to facilitate the planning of the housing programmes. This assessment will take account of the locational preference of households, insofar as possible, and their accommodation requirements.

Policy no. 10.13 Role of the Voluntary Sector in the Provision of Social Housing

- Continue to work closely with approved housing associations and take a proactive role in the inclusion of such organisations in the provision of suitable housing accommodation.
- Provide social housing to special category groups in consultation with the relevant voluntary sector organisations.

Policy no. 10.14 The Role of the Private Rented Sector in Galway City

- Encourage the development of a high quality private rented sector, which can provide alternative tenure options for those who do not wish to purchase properties.
- Engage with the private rented sector to secure long term accommodation options for those who meet the criteria of the Rental Accommodation Scheme.



The Maintenance and Management of Social Housing

The Council undertakes a programme of maintenance works and where necessary, the renovation of existing social housing stock. The Council recently completed a detailed audit of its existing housing stock comprising an examination of in excess of 800 units. The findings of this survey have informed maintenance and management programmes and will continue to inform similar future works.

Policy no. 10.15 Maintenance and Management of Social Housing

- Fulfil responsibilities as landlords of social housing units in all schemes including mixed schemes consisting of private and social units.
- Ensure the implementation of proper management regimes for all property under its control in co-operation and with the participation of all tenants.
- Continue to improve and build on the estate management structures currently in place through the encouragement of tenant participation and the development of innovative management initiatives.

Housing Strategy Review

Two years after the adoption of this development plan 2005-2011, the City Manager will prepare a report for the elected members which shall include a review of the progress achieved in implementing the Housing Strategy adopted in conjunction with this plan.

Notwithstanding the review, the City Manager will also prepare a report for the members if he considers that there has been a major change in the housing market or if there is a change in the regulations made by the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, under the Act, which significantly affects the housing strategy.

Policy no. 10.16 Future Housing Strategies

- Monitor the implementation of the Housing Strategy and ensure sufficient and appropriate data is gathered for the preparation of future strategies, in liaison with the relevant bodies.

