4 Housing and Community Facilities

4.1 Housing

Building strong, inclusive communities is a key element in achieving sustainable development objectives. Sustainable communities require not only economic development, but also provision of and access to education, health and community support services, amenities and leisure services and a good quality built environment.

The Councils’ role is to formulate a plan for housing, consider planning applications for private housing, ensure that sufficient lands are zoned to meet the projected housing demand and provide houses or facilitate the provision of social and affordable housing for those unable to house themselves. The Councils are both the housing authority and the planning authority. In these roles they have the capacity to influence the supply, location and scale of new housing within its functional area.

The Councils’ core objective in relation to the provision of housing is to ensure that every household has accommodation suitable to their needs, located in a suitable environment, at a price or rent it can afford.

4.2 Housing Strategy

Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2000 requires that housing strategies be drawn up by planning authorities and integrated into their development plans.

The housing strategy shall:

(a) include an estimate of, and provision for, the existing need and the likely future need for housing in the area covered by the development plan. The Planning Authority shall ensure that sufficient and suitable land is zoned in its development plan for residential use (or for a mixture of residential and other uses), to meet the requirements of the housing strategy and to ensure that a scarcity of such land does not occur at any time during the period of the development plan.

(b) take into account the need to ensure that housing is available for persons who have different levels of income, and in particular for those in need of social or affordable housing in the area. A housing strategy shall therefore provide that as a general policy a specified percentage, not being more than 20% of the land zoned in the development plan for residential use, or for a mixture of residential and other uses, shall be reserved for social and/or affordable housing.

(c) ensure that a mixture of house types and sizes is developed to reasonably match the requirements of the different categories of households, as may be determined by the Planning Authority, including the special requirements of elderly persons and persons with disabilities.

(d) counteract undue segregation in housing between persons of different social backgrounds. The Planning Authority may indicate in respect of any residential area that there is no requirement for social/affordable housing in respect of that area, or that a lower percentage than that specified in the housing strategy may instead be required.
The needs of various groups, including the homeless, travellers and the elderly are addressed as part of the Housing Strategy.

A Housing Strategy has been prepared for the period 2008-2014 for both Kilkenny Borough and County Councils. This Strategy is incorporated into the Development Plan in Appendix B.

The principal features to emerge from the analysis presented in this housing strategy are as follows:

- A total of 7,038 new households are expected to be formed in County Kilkenny during the period 2008 to 2014.
- The existing local authority waiting list is c.1,200.\(^1\)
- Over the period of the strategy 20% of land zoned for residential or a mix of residential and other land uses will be reserved for social and affordable housing.
- Kilkenny has been particularly affected by issues related to housing affordability over the period of the previous housing strategy due to relatively low per-capita disposable income, rising number of household formations and other demand factors affecting household formations.
- The availability of zoned land is not expected to act as a constraint over the course of the Development Plan 2008 – 2014.

**POLICY**

- **It is an objective of the Councils to implement the housing strategy contained in Appendix B of the Draft Development Plan.**
- **To require 20% of the land zoned for residential use, or for a mixture of residential and other uses, be made available for the provision of social and affordable housing.**

It is the view of the Planning Department that the requirements of Part V of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 in relation to any particular site should be incorporated into any development proposal at an early stage in the development process. The Councils will therefore require housing developers to whom the 20% requirement will apply, to discuss the likely terms of Part V agreements at pre-planning consultations. Both the Councils and the developer would thus have a common understanding of the nature of the likely agreement before detailed designs are prepared for any planning application.

\(^1\)Of the 1,200 on the waiting list, it is estimated that approximately 400 are on the list solely to secure rent supplement and openly state they do not wish to be considered for housing.
Conditions attached to planning permissions for residential development will require developers to enter into an agreement with the Councils in relation to the provision of social and affordable housing in accordance with the housing strategy.

The various options for compliance are set down in the Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2002. The following preferred options are available to satisfy the requirements of the housing strategy, in decreasing order of preference –

- The transfer of the required number of completed dwellings on the site,
- The transfer of a portion of the site subject to the planning application,
- The transfer of completed dwellings elsewhere,
- The transfer of fully or partially serviced sites on the site which will enable the Council to provide the appropriate number of units thereon,
- The transfer of serviced sites at another location,
- The transfer of land at another location,
- The payment of a monetary contribution.

An agreement may provide for a combination of the above.

The Councils will continue to meet social and affordable housing needs in the city and environs in a balanced way avoiding over-concentration in any one particular area. The Councils in its house-building programme will place an emphasis on well-designed and integrated schemes appropriate to the scale and character of the area.

The Councils recognise the important role played by the voluntary sector in meeting social housing need and will support and facilitate the expansion of that role.

The Councils will seek to meet the increased demand for social and affordable housing in a number of ways as a housing authority through,

- Affordable housing/joint venture schemes,
- the local authority’s house building programme,
- the sale of sites scheme,
- the Voluntary Housing Sector and the Rental subsidy scheme,
- the capital assistance scheme,
- the disabled persons grant,
- the essential repairs grant and other measures, and
- the Homeless Forum initiative.

**POLICY**

- To provide the necessary infrastructural investment to facilitate the overall level of housing output required to meet the current and anticipated levels of demand in a planned coherent fashion.
- To zone adequate amounts of land for housing to provide a locational choice and allow for the probability that not all zoned land will be made available for development.
• To strive for the highest quality built environment when assessing development proposals.
• To encourage economy and efficiency in the use of land and services.
• To promote a high standard of architecture in the siting and design of new housing developments.
• To encourage a variety of house types, sizes and tenure in individual schemes and to encourage variety, interest and social mix in private and social housing developments.
• To ensure that the Council’s housing policy and objectives are linked with employment, environmental, and infrastructural policies and objectives with the aim of improving the quality of life and the attractiveness of the county’s towns, villages and open countryside.
• To assist and facilitate state and community bodies in the development of a Traveller horse project in the county.

4.3 Residential Development

4.3.1 Housing Protection Areas
The 1994 Development Plan identified a number of Housing Protection Areas in the city within which any change of use from residential units would be strictly resisted. To ensure a vibrant city centre, it is essential to maintain and facilitate an increase in its residential population. Therefore these housing protection areas will be maintained, and are illustrated in Figure 4.1.

Policy
• To strictly resist the change of use of residential units in the designated ‘Housing Protection Areas’.

4.3.2 Quality in Design
In continuing to increase the number of houses the Councils must ensure that they achieve quality in terms of neighbourhoods and homes, and choice in terms of location and the tenures available.

Quality in this context means the development of sustainable, integrated neighbourhoods which are much less car dependent and are more easily served by public transport. Additional features of sustainable neighbourhoods include:

• compact, energy efficient and high quality urban development;
• accessibility via public transport networks and also meeting the needs of the pedestrian and cyclist; and
• provision of a good range of amenities and services within easy and safe walking distance of homes.
The provision of additional housing throughout the city offers an opportunity to deliver new development of the highest physical and environmental quality that contributes to the achievement of more sustainable communities and balanced regional development.

The sustainability of communities is dependant on a balanced pace of development. Any development must reflect its context, and associated infrastructure must be provided to ensure that a coherent sense of place and sense of community is preserved. This approach will ensure any new development will respect the scale and character of the settlement.

Over the period of the previous Development Plan the Council prepared two Local Area Plans for the Western Environs and the City Centre. During the evolution of that process, policies and objectives were devised to include linking the development of new housing with the provision of essential supporting physical and social infrastructure and services. Within each Local Area Plan, guidance is given on the achievement of high quality urban design appropriate to the particular settlement coupled with the development of a compact and sustainable settlement.

The appropriate residential density in any particular location will be determined by the following:

i) The extent to which the design and layout follows a coherent design brief resulting in a high quality residential environment;

ii) Compliance with qualitative and quantitative criteria set out in the subsequent Development Management Section;

iii) Proximity to points of access to the public transport network;

iv) Existing topographical, landscape or other features on the site, and;

v) The capacity of the infrastructure, including social and community facilities, to absorb the demands created by the development.

The choice as to the level of residential density appropriate to a given area cannot therefore be considered in simple arithmetic terms for all development sites as a single numerical value. Rather, the identification of a given density and the question of its appropriateness should be determined by spatial planning and architectural design criteria, determined by the context of a given site and the relationship to the overall proper planning and sustainable development of that centre.

It follows from this approach that there will be no set minimum or maximum density specified in the Plan. The emphasis will be on providing quality housing environments based on innovation and a design-led approach.

POLICY

- Emphasise quality, innovation and a design-led approach in all housing development with proposals appropriate to each site and location.
4.4 Community Facilities
Community facilities are essential to the well-being and functioning of populated areas. These facilities include health clinics, hospitals, schools, churches, shopping facilities, libraries, community halls, burial grounds etc.

The primary role of the Planning Authority is to reserve sufficient lands within the settlement centres to meet likely future demands for community infrastructure. A recurring problem with respect to the provision of this infrastructure is its timely provision in conjunction with new housing. The Local Area Plans will seek to resolve this current problem by linking the provision of community facilities to increases in residential population within large residential areas by means of phasing arrangements.

The preferred option for the Planning Authority is for new and existing buildings to facilitate and provide for a range of compatible community uses. The Planning Authority will investigate opportunities for multi-purpose use to ensure that communities are best served without duplication of effort. It is important that the greatest possible use of a building is made, thereby providing community and leisure facilities close to the areas where they are needed.

Policy:

- Reserve sites for community facilities as appropriate and to seek to remedy deficiencies in existing developed areas.
- Link the provision of community facilities to increases in residential population through phasing arrangements in the Local Area Plans to ensure the timely provision of facilities.
- Locate community facilities within existing settlements and where population levels warrant a particular service.
- Liaise with community groups and to assist community initiatives subject to the availability of resources.
- To ensure that, where practicable, community, recreational and open space facilities are clustered, with the community facilities being located in local centres or combined with school facilities as appropriate. Community facilities should be located close to or within walking distance of housing, accessible to all sectors of the community and facilitate multi-use functions through their design and layout.

4.5 Education

4.5.1 Childcare Facilities
The provision of childcare facilities is recognised as a strategic piece of social infrastructure required to enable people to participate more fully in society, particularly in accessing employment, education and social networks. National policy on childcare facilities is set out in Childcare Facilities Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2001). Government policy on childcare is to increase the number of childcare places and facilities available and to improve the quality of childcare services for the community.
New residential areas have been identified as an important location for the provision of childcare facilities and it is considered that provision should be made for purpose built, easily accessible facilities in new developments of 75 dwellings or more.

A County Childcare Strategy has been prepared by Kilkenny County Childcare Committee. This provides the over-arching policy framework for the provision of childcare in the county. The Councils are working with Kilkenny County Childcare Committee, through its role on the CDB, to improve the quality, provision and affordability of childcare in the county.

Policy:

- Facilitate the provision of childcare facilities in a sustainable manner in appropriate locations which include the following: larger new housing estates, industrial estates and business parks, in the vicinity of schools, neighbourhood and district centres and adjacent to public transport facilities.
- To require the provision of appropriate purpose built childcare facilities in association with proposals for new residential development of more than 75 dwelling units. Where appropriate the Councils will operate this requirement in a flexible manner and will encourage and facilitate cooperation between developers to jointly provide facilities, having regard to the Kilkenny County Childcare Strategy.
- In so far as possible, the provision of childcare facilities should be adjacent to, or co-located with, other facilities required for other community use.
- To assess, in conjunction with the Kilkenny County Childcare Committee and the County Development Board, the continuing needs around childcare and related facilities and review progress on the provision of same during the period of this Plan.

4.5.2 Primary and Post Primary Schools

Where new schools are required, they should be located close to, or within the main residential areas so that as many children/students as possible can walk or cycle to school. The opportunity should be taken to locate the schools so that they naturally contribute to the development of a sense of community in new neighbourhoods. Where possible, these schools should be served by a dedicated and safe footpath and cycle-way network.

4.5.2.1 Dual Use of School Buildings

School and other educational premises represent a valuable resource in terms of land and buildings, which generally is only used on a partial basis. The dual use of educational facilities, where it does not conflict with the delivery of the education service (i.e. outside school hours and during school holidays) can contribute to meeting the wider needs of the community, by helping to satisfy demand for a variety of activities. The DoEHLG Guidelines on Childcare Facilities recommend the use of school premises to cater for after school care and school authorities are encouraged to examine how they can help address this demand.
Where lands and buildings can be beneficially used by the community, the Councils will promote such uses subject to available resources. Where new schools are proposed and indeed other community facilities, opportunities will be sought to ensure that they are designed in such a way as to facilitate dual use from the onset.

4.6 Social Capital

Social Capital may be defined as that which accrues to a person or group as a result of their active participation in the life of their communities. For example, social capital is said to be gained from neighbourliness, local area networking or volunteering. Something as simple as being known to the local shop-keeper, chemist or publican is said to have benefits for the well-being of individuals within the social capital debate.

Kilkenny local authorities are committed to the Agenda 21 process of building partnerships between local authorities and other sectors to develop and implement local policies for the development of sustainable communities. This commitment involves a wide range of public consultation in the actions taken by the local authority from plan making and policy formulation to implementation of specific projects such as playgrounds.

In 2002 the County Development Board Strategy for Economic, Social & Cultural Development 2002-2012 was prepared. The main representation for the voluntary sector is through the Community and Voluntary Forum which is the mechanism for supporting a collective voice for the community and voluntary sector. There is representation on a number of structures in the county in order to inform policy, such as the County Development Board itself and its subcommittees (including SIM – Social Inclusion Measures subgroup), Strategic Policy Committees and Expanded Area Committees.

It is through these measures that the local authorities will seek to build social capital within the county.

POLICY

- To make Kilkenny an attractive place to live and work by building strong, inclusive communities that have a sense of place and belonging, with adequate provision of and access to services and facilities to meet the needs of the city’s growing population.
- To work with other relevant organisations, through the County Development Board, to facilitate the provision of public and social services in areas of identified need throughout the city.
- To work with the County Development Board and its sub-structures, to advance social inclusion and development by developing the co-ordinated delivery of services and facilities in the city.
- To promote the development of social capital by providing opportunities for interaction, participation and the co-ordinated provision of public services.

4.7 RAPID programme

The RAPID (Revitalising Areas by Planning, Investment and Development) Programme is a focused initiative designed to prioritise and target government expenditure, over a
number of departments, on the most concentrated centres of disadvantage. RAPID is about prioritising in a coherent, targeted and accelerated way, new and improved services and infrastructural investment to the communities living in RAPID areas. The RAPID process co-ordinated by the Kilkenny Local Authorities in partnership with existing agencies and community groups continues to work towards identifying real needs through community participation. RAPID is funded under the National Development Plan 2007-2013.

Areas selected under the RAPID programme for Kilkenny include: Hebron Park, Loughboy, Bishop Birch Place, Ossory Park, De La Salle Place, Newpark Close, O'Loughlin Court, Millennium Court, St. Mary’s Avenue, New Park Lower, New Orchard, Pococke Valley, The Butts, St. Canice’s, McCauley Place, and St. Catherine’s.

Since the programme’s inception a total over eighty projects have been endorsed by the RAPID Area Implementation Team. These include the provision of a Youth worker in the Eastern Environs, the provision of funding for a development worker and extension of the Hebron Park community facility in the Eastern Environs, the implementation of a number of estate enhancement and traffic calming works, the provision of resources for three city playgrounds (Garringreen, Newpark Close and the Butts) and two multi-purpose play areas one to be located in Garringreen and the second to be located in Newpark Close.

The RAPID Strategic Plan 2006-2013 is a follow up from the 2003-2006 RAPID Strategic Plan. The Strategic Plan was completed following extensive consultation with the identified RAPID areas in Kilkenny. The 2006-2013 Plan focuses on larger scale projects with emphasis on the eastern environs and on neighbourhood regeneration. The Kilkenny RAPID Strategic Plan is a working/flexible document building on existing structures striving to target the most disadvantaged people in the city.

POLICY
To implement the RAPID Strategic Plan 2006-2013 in conjunction with the local communities.

ACTIONS
• To provide two multi-purpose play areas in Garringreen and Newpark Close during the lifetime of this plan.
• To extend the Hebron Park community facility in the Eastern Environs

4.8 Library Service
Kilkenny County Library Service is commencing the process of creating a five-year Development Plan. It will include a review of existing services and provisions and consultation with various stakeholders, together with recommendations for future programming. The overall process will take twelve to eighteen months.

Within this new Development Plan there will be an emphasis on providing equality of access for all the residents of County Kilkenny. This will consolidate the work that has been done to ensure equality for people with disabilities in access to, and participation in, the public library service. The plan will also give recognition to the fact that Kilkenny is now home to many people of different nationalities and cultures, be they refugees,
asylum seekers or immigrants. It will therefore include measures such as the introduction of the World book collection in 2006 for our borrowers at the City Library.

Staff have committed to the adjustment of opening hours and services that best meets the needs of the public. The various branches are now being used as access points for public services.

The Internet has greatly improved access to information. However all sectors have not benefited in particular people in the older age cohorts. The library staff are now engaged in initiatives targeted at these sectors.

**POLICY**
- To continue to improve the library service for all.

**ACTION**
- To provide a new Library for the City to be located at County Hall, which will replace the existing Carnegie Library.

### 4.9 Health

Healthcare and medical facilities are provided by public, private and voluntary agencies within County Kilkenny. The Health Service Executive – South Eastern Area (previously South Eastern Health Board) is the primary organisation responsible for the delivery of health care and personal social services to the people of Kilkenny.

St. Luke’s Hospital and Lourdes Orthopaedic Hospital, Kilcreene are the acute hospitals in Kilkenny. The residents of the county also have access to hospitals in the surrounding counties such as Waterford Regional Hospital.

With the scale of increase in population, it is to be expected that there will be a demand for more healthcare and medical facilities within the county to cater for the resident population.

The primary role of the Planning Authority with regard to health care is to ensure that there is an adequate policy framework in place inclusive of the reservation of lands should additional services be required and that the health care facilities would be permitted subject to good planning practice. Future provision should be planned and implemented in concert with residential development, especially where this is undertaken in the context of Local Area Plans. The Planning Authority will reserve sites within development centres for health care facilities in consultation with the HSE.

St. Canice’s Hospital and its grounds comprise a significant landbank within the city. At present it contains the offices of the Health Service Executive – South Eastern Area, Lacken Pitch and Putt club, and the original hospital and outbuildings.

**POLICY**
- To facilitate the development by the Health Service Executive - South Eastern Area of a comprehensive range of health and social care services and in particular services for the elderly including the development of community, hospital, community nursing and day care services throughout the City and Environs.
• To co-ordinate with the Health Service Executive – South Eastern Area and other interested parties in the preparation of a Masterplan for the grounds of St Canice’s hospital in order to determine the optimal land uses for the area.

4.9.1 Nursing Homes

In the light of an increasing ageing population, investment in developing a range of facilities for the elderly, including nursing units, has been facilitated under the National Development Plan.

POLICY

• To ensure that adequate land and services are available for the provision of all types of facilities for the elderly including nursing homes/retirement centre both public and private and the improvement, expansion and establishment of health services generally such as extended nursing care, day care and respite care.