

# 4 Housing

**Aim** To ensure that there is adequate land in appropriately zoned locations for residential development; to protect and improve residential amenity in existing residential area; to encourage a quality standard of residential development and public spaces; to provide an appropriate mix of house sizes, types and tenures in order to meet different household needs and to promote balanced and integrated communities.

## 4.1 Background

The Council has a statutory obligation to ensure that sufficient land is zoned for all types of housing to meet the projected housing requirements of Athy over the period of this plan.

The town experienced a substantial increase in house construction with the completion of approximately 700 housing units since the adoption of the previous plan in 2006. Furthermore approximately 460 units have been granted planning permission, construction of which has not yet commenced.

The residential land use pattern in Athy is characterised by a low proportion of residential use within the town centre area and expanding residential development of relatively low density conventional housing developments on the fringes of the town. The type and scale of residential development in Athy is predominately two- storey, semi detached and detached structures. In recent years some apartment schemes have also been developed, such as Harbour View apartments along the Canal.

## 4.2 Strategy

The Development Plan strategy for housing incorporates the policies of the National Spatial Strategy, Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area 2010-2022, the Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas Guidelines and Sustainable Urban Housing

Design Standards for New Apartments (May 2009). The strategy is also informed by the Kildare Local Authorities Housing Strategy 2011-2017 and the Traveller Accommodation Programme 2009-2013.

The strategy for the provision of housing is based on achieving the following aims:

- Provide sufficient zoned land to accommodate the growing population.
- Promote sustainable communities that deliver quality well designed housing.
- Promote residential densities to ensure the efficient use of land at appropriate locations.
- Secure the implementation of the Council's Housing Strategy and Traveller Accommodation Programme.
- Provide for changing housing needs and promote the provision of social and affordable housing and housing for people with particular needs.
- Provide for changing household sizes and promote an appropriate mix of dwelling types, sizes and tenures to facilitate the creation of balanced communities and to counteract social segregation.
- Promote the consolidation of existing built up areas by facilitating good quality appropriate infill development.

## 4.3 Development Capacity

According to Census figures, the population in Athy increased from 5,306 in 1996 to 7,943 in 2006, representing a growth of 50%. The current population of Athy is estimated as 9,950. The Athy Town Development Plan 2012-2018 is to cater for a future population target, of 10,819 as set out in the Draft County Development Plan

2011-2018 (Refer Chapter 2 Core Strategy). This would result in a housing unit target of 1,389 units over the same period. Approximately, 702 units have already been constructed since 2006 which leaves a balance of 687 units to be provided for during the period 2011-2018.

The land availability survey carried out in 2010 indicates that there are approximately 214 hectares of undeveloped zoned land that can be used for residential development in Athy. The available land has a capacity of approximately 4,692 additional residential units which could potentially yield additional population growth of 12,481 persons. Given the excessive availability of zoned residential land in Athy coupled with the high residential unit vacancy rate (145 units competed and vacant in the town)<sup>1</sup>, it is evident that significant overzoning exists within the town boundary. As outlined in Chapter 2 an estimate of approx. 28ha of zoned land is required to meet the needs of the town over the plan period 2012-2018. This is addressed in Chapter 16, Land use Zoning.

**Table 4.1** Population and Capacity of undeveloped lands

ATHY	
Quantum of undeveloped zoned land (Ha)	<b>214 ha</b>
Population capacity of undeveloped land	<b>12,481</b>
Potential units deliverable	<b>4,692</b>
Unit Target 2006-2018	<b>1,389</b>
Units Constructed 2006-2010	<b>702</b>
Committed Units <sup>2</sup>	<b>402</b>

It is the policy of the Council:

- HP1: To ensure that sufficient and suitably located land is zoned to satisfy housing development needs within the period of the Plan and in accordance with population targets for Athy.
  
- HP 2: Where a residential development larger than 5 units is proposed, a detailed phasing programme shall be lodged and agreed with the Planning Authority detailing the construction, phasing and completion of each phase and timeframe of the project.
  
- HP3: To implement the Kildare Local Authorities Housing Strategy 2011-2017 prepared in accordance with the requirements of Part V of the Planning and Development Acts 2000-2010

<sup>1</sup> DoEHLG Survey of Vacant Houses in Housing Developments 2010

<sup>2</sup> Permissions granted for residential units.

HP4: To have regard to the provisions of the Guidelines on “Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas” and the accompanying ‘Urban Design Manual’ in assessing applications for housing development.

#### 4.4 Housing Location and Density

The DoEHLG Guidelines on Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas (2009) outline sustainable approaches to the development of urban areas. These set out national policy of encouraging more sustainable urban development by the avoidance of excessive suburbanisation and the promotion of higher residential densities in appropriate locations.

It is intended that implementation of the guidelines will result in:

- Increased economic use of existing infrastructure and serviced land;
- Reduced need for the development of “greenfield” sites, urban sprawl and ribbon development.
- Reduced need for investment in infrastructure;
- Better access to existing services and facilities;
- More sustainable commuting patterns.

Chapter 16 of this plan sets out objectives for individual zonings in Athy. To maximise the return on public transport investments, it is important that land use planning underpins the efficiency of public transport services by sustainable settlement patterns, including appropriate densities, on lands within existing or planned transport corridors. Higher residential densities will be encouraged at appropriate locations. Generally higher densities will be considered in town centre locations and edge of town centre locations, with medium to lower

densities being considered more appropriate at outer suburban and greenfield sites and outer edge of the urban-rural transition area. It should be noted that densities in excess of the upper limits will be considered on their merits.

##### 4.4.1 Town Centre / Brownfield Sites

There are a number of undeveloped backland sites and brownfield sites within the town centre area where there are significant opportunities for regeneration and appropriate re-development at higher densities. Since the adoption of the 2006 Athy Plan, only a small number of new residential developments have been constructed in the town centre area. This plan seeks to address this by supporting a more sustainable land use pattern.

In order to maximise town centre population growth, higher residential densities will be considered subject to the following safeguards:

- Avoidance of undue adverse impact on the amenities of existing or future adjoining neighbours.
- Good internal space standards of development;
- Recognition of the significant merits of preserving protected structures and their settings and of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the Architectural Conservation Area.
- Compliance with development management standards, including useable private open space.

##### 4.4.2 Public Transport Corridors

Higher residential densities (within walking distance of public transport facilities) can help to sustain the economic viability of such transport modes. Higher densities will be determined on a site by site basis for sites within 500 metres walking distance of the train station, with decreasing densities located a distance away

from such nodes. These densities shall take into account the capacity of transport to cater for such developments.

#### 4.4.3 Infill Residential Development

Potential sites may range from small gap infill, unused or derelict land and backland areas, side gardens of existing houses, up to larger undeveloped sites within an established residential area. A balance has to be struck between the reasonable protection of the amenities and privacy of adjoining dwellings, the protection of established character and the need to provide residential infill.

Proposals for development involving the intensification of residential uses within existing residential areas such as houses in side gardens will generally be permitted where it can be clearly demonstrated that the proposal respects the existing character of the area and would not harm the amenity value of adjoining properties.

It is important that areas designated and developed as public open space shall be maintained as such. Development will not be permitted on designated areas of public open space that form part of a development granted planning permission.

#### 4.4.4 Existing Greenfield Sites

These are defined as greenfield sites on the outer edge of the existing built up areas of Athy Town. There are a number of residential zoned sites located in the town, which fall under this category. It is necessary to make efficient use of these lands in the context of their location and the provision of a variety of housing types. Densities in a range of 30-50 dwellings per hectare will be appropriate and should include a variety of housing types.

#### 4.4.5 Existing Greenfield Sites Outer Edge of Urban – Rural Transition

The emphasis is on achieving successful transition from central areas to areas at the edge of the town. There are a number of residentially zoned sites which fall under this category. Given the transitional nature of such sites, densities in a range of between 20-35 dwellings per hectare will be considered appropriate and should include a variety of housing types.

**Table 4.2** Indicative Residential Densities<sup>3</sup>

Location for new residential development	General density parameters
Town Centre and Brownfield sites	Site specific Higher densities generally promoted e.g. 50 units per Ha
At strategic locations including public transport nodes and town centre area	50 units per Ha
Inner suburban/infill	Site Specific
Outer suburban/Greenfield. Generally new residential zoning area	30-50 units per Ha
Outer edge of urban-rural transition	20-35 units per Ha

**Note:** The density levels considered appropriate in Table 4.2 are indicative only. Applications for residential developments should also have regard to design principles outlined in Chapter 14 Urban Design and Opportunity Areas and to Development Management standards outlined in Chapter 16

<sup>3</sup> Source: Guidance on Appropriate locations for New Residential Development (informed by the DoEHLG Guidelines for Planning Authorities on “Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas, 2009).

It is the policy of the Council:

HP5: To encourage appropriate densities of new housing development in accordance with Government advice set out in the '*Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas*'.

HP6: To encourage higher residential densities in the town centre, on 'brownfield' and infill sites close to existing/potential connections to public transport.

HP7: To ensure that all new urban development especially in and around the town centre is of a high design and supports the achievement of successful urban spaces and sustainable communities.

HP8: To require diversity in the density of development and in the form, size and type of dwelling within residential areas.

HP9: To secure the development of a mix of house types and sizes throughout the town as a whole to meet the needs of the existing and projected likely future population. A statement of mix may be required for multi unit schemes to demonstrate that the needs of the area are provided for within the scheme.

HP10: To require the submission of design statements for residential development in excess of 50 housing units to facilitate the proper evaluation of the proposal relative to key objectives of the Development Plan with regard to the creation of sustainable residential communities.

HP11: To refuse permission for residential development on zoned open green spaces, or on lands which are designated as public space.

HP12: To ensure developments are carried out generally in accordance with the 'Recommendations for Site Development Works for Housing Areas'. (DoEHLG 1998) or as updated or amended.

HP13: To ensure that all open spaces, entrances, pathways and parking areas in new residential developments are designed with reference to "Buildings for Everyone – Inclusion, Access and Use (National Disability Authority, 2002) and any subsequent update.

#### 4.5 High Quality Design of Residential Areas

Sustainable neighbourhoods are areas where an efficient use of land, high quality urban design and effective integration in the provision of physical and social infrastructure combine to create places people want to live in. This Plan seeks to promote high design and construction standards that result in a visually and functionally pleasing environment.

A high quality living environment is vital to the economic and social development and building of sustainable communities. The challenge is to design residential environments that impact positively on quality of life and comprise attractive safe areas with a mix of house types, sizes and design. Good permeability with pedestrian and cycle links to surrounding neighbourhoods, community facilities and open spaces and recreation areas are required for sustainable neighbourhoods.

The following criteria for new housing developments will be considered in the assessment of proposals:

- The need for land to be used economically;
- The capacity of the infrastructure to cater for future population;

- The adequacy of community facilities;
- Appropriate density, high standards of design and appropriate mix of housing;
- Adequate privacy for individual houses, apartments and the protection of existing residential amenity;
- The safety and permeability of proposed layouts;
- Appropriate provision is made for amenity and public open space as an integral part of new development proposals.

Design principles outlined in the Urban Design Manual published by the DoEHLG, together with Urban Design and the Development Management Standards, set out in this Plan should be referenced for the development of residential areas.

#### 4.5.1 Universal Design

High quality design should be guided by the principle of universal design. Universal design is the design of an environment so that it can be accessed, understood and used to the greatest extent possible by all people regardless of their age, size, ability or disability. The proposed design of new residential communities shall consider people's diverse needs and abilities throughout the design process, to design for adaptable environments that meet the needs of all. This universal design approach should be incorporated from the early stage of planning in order to reduce the need for costly and wasteful retrofits over the medium to long term.

#### 4.5.2 Housing Mix

A key aim in the provision of new housing is to encourage diversity rather than uniformity and as far as possible to relate the type of proposed new housing to the varying needs of the population. In all housing proposals an appropriate mix of dwelling types to meet the

needs of categories of households will be encouraged.

The mix of house types proposed in an area should therefore be influenced by a range of factors including:

- Consideration of the nature of the existing housing stock and existing social mix in the area;
- The desirability of providing for mixed communities;
- Provision of a range of housing types and tenures;
- The need to provide a choice of housing, suitable to all age groups and persons at different stages of the life cycle;
- The need to cater for special needs groups such as the elderly, Travellers and disabled and the marketability of different types of housing.

### 4.6 Existing Residential Development

#### 4.6.1 Extensions to Dwellings

The construction of extensions to houses will generally be encouraged as a sustainable use of land. The design and layout of extensions should have regard to the amenities of adjoining properties, particularly as regards sunlight, daylight and privacy. (Refer to Chapter 15 Development Management Standards).

#### 4.6.2 Subdivision of Dwellings

New households in existing, established residential areas may be catered for through the sub-division of large houses on relatively extensive sites. The sub-division of dwellings will generally only be considered for exceptionally large houses on relatively extensive sites in urban areas and subject to adherence to

relevant Development Management standards set out in Chapter 15.

### 4.6.3 Backland Development

The development of backland sites in a coherent and well-designed manner can contribute to enhancing the vibrancy and character of an existing settlement while also contributing to the efficient use of serviced lands. The development of backland sites on an individual basis (i.e. rear garden areas/ individual backlands with no frontage) can conflict with the established pattern and character of development in an area. Backland development will generally only be considered where the proposed development forms part of a comprehensive plan for development of the entire backland area.

### 4.6.4 Family Flat

A 'family' flat refers to a temporary sub-division or extension of a single dwelling unit to accommodate a member of the immediate family for a temporary period (e.g. older parent or other dependent). Where it can be clearly established that there is a valid case, such development will be considered, provided that the proposal does not otherwise detract from the residential amenity of the area. Chapter 15 outlines Development Management Standards for such developments.

It is the policy of the Council:

HP14: To encourage infill housing developments on appropriate sites.

HP15: To facilitate the extension of existing dwelling houses in principle subject to standards outlined in Chapter 15 Development Management Standards.

HP16: To facilitate the development of corner sites or wide side garden locations for infill housing subject to standards outlined in Chapter 15 Development Management Standards.

HP17: To facilitate the provision of a family flat in circumstances where the Planning Authority is satisfied that there is a valid case and where the proposal has regard to the standards in Chapter 15 Development Management Standards.

HP18: To permit backland development generally only where development is carried out in a comprehensive redevelopment of the backland to secure a co-ordinated scheme. Each application will be considered on its merits.

HP19: To facilitate sub-division of dwellings for exceptionally large houses on relatively extensive sites subject to adherence to all relevant Development Management standards set out in Chapter 15.

## 4.7 Apartment Development

"Sustainable Urban Housing, Design Standards for New Apartments" Guidelines, issued by the DoEHLG in 2009, aim to promote sustainable urban housing, by ensuring that the design and layout of new apartments will provide satisfactory accommodation for a variety of household types and sizes. Accordingly, these guidelines provide recommended minimum standards for:

- floor areas for different types of apartments,
- storage spaces,
- sizes for apartment balconies / patios, and
- room dimensions for certain rooms.

Within Athy, the provision of apartment schemes may be considered at appropriate locations and where a significant demand for this type of accommodation is evident. Generally apartments, or retail developments with apartments above, should be located in the town

centre zone. They may also be appropriate close to public transport nodes or as a limited proportion of a general residential scheme. Apartment schemes shall comply with the provisions of Chapter 15 Development Management in terms of layout, design, finish and landscaping.

It is the policy of the Council:

HP20: To restrict apartment developments generally to town centre locations or suitably located sites adjoining public transport connections. Apartments will not be permitted where there is an over concentration of this type of development. Higher density schemes will only be considered where they exhibit a high architectural design standard.

#### 4.8 Housing and Community Facilities

The importance of creating sustainable neighbourhoods, whereby adequate community facilities are available in conjunction with the provision of new housing, is acknowledged. It is an objective of this Development Plan to provide for additional community services where there are existing deficiencies in an area. In applications for large residential developments, the developer shall satisfactorily demonstrate how the proposed increase in population will be accommodated in terms of education provision. In this regard, guidelines from the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government and Department of Education indicate that 12% and 8.5% of a population at any time is assumed to be of primary and secondary going age respectively.

It is the policy of the Council:

HP21: To facilitate and co-operate in the provision of services for the community including, in particular, schools, crèches and other education and childcare facilities in tandem with residential development.

HP22: To require the provision of Childcare Facilities in all new residential developments as appropriate. The indicative standard is one childcare facility, accommodating 20 children, for each 75 dwellings. This standard may be modified in any particular case where there are significant reasons for doing so.

HP23: To seek to ensure 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 and coherent fashion.

HP24: To facilitate the provision of purpose built dwellings for those with special needs, including provision for the needs of the elderly, persons with physical disabilities and persons with learning disabilities and in conjunction with other voluntary bodies and the private sector.

#### 4.9 Housing in the Agricultural Zone

The primary aim for the agricultural zone in Athy is to preserve the existing agricultural use of the areas zoned for this purpose and to prevent urban-generated development which would interfere with the operation of farming/bloodstock or rural resource based enterprise.

The “*Sustainable Rural Housing – Guidelines for Planning Authorities*” (2005), set out principles regarding the siting and design of new dwellings in rural areas, the protection of water quality, the provision of a safe means of access and the conservation of sensitive areas. Within the agricultural zone in Athy, housing will be confined to people with a genuine housing need and who can demonstrate that they comply with categories of local need, outlined below, subject to compliance with normal planning criteria.

(i) Persons engaged full time in agriculture (including commercial bloodstock / horticulture), wishing to build on their own landholding and

who can demonstrate that they have been engaged in farming at that location for a continuous period of over 7 years, prior to making the application.

(ii) Persons who have grown up or spent substantial periods of their lives, (18 years), living in the agricultural zone, as members of the rural community, seeking to build on family landholding or on a site within 5 km of the family home, and currently living in the area.

(iii) Persons who have grown up or spent substantial periods of their lives (18 years) living in the area, who have moved away and who now wish to return to reside near to, or to care for, immediate family members, seeking to build on the family landholding or on a site within 5 km of the original family home. Immediate family members are defined as mother, father, son, daughter, brother, sister or guardian.

(iv) Persons employed full time in farming (agriculture, bloodstock etc) in the locality, within 5 km of the site, where they need to reside close to their employment and have been engaged in such employment, at that location, for a continuous period of over 7 years, prior to making the application.

It is policy of the Council:

HP25: To manage the provision of one off housing in conjunction with the local need criteria as outlined above. Documentary evidence of compliance with the rural housing policy must be submitted as part of the planning application, including a separate statement by the applicant on the need to reside in the area.

HP26: To ensure that, notwithstanding compliance with the Local Need eligibility criteria, applicants comply with all other normal siting and design considerations.

HP27 To protect the physical, environmental, natural and heritage resources of the agricultural zone

HP28 To require that applicants comply with the requirements of 'The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities' published by the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (November 2009).

#### 4.10 Social and Affordable Housing

Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, requires each Local Authority to adopt a Housing Strategy for their administrative area. The Housing Strategy for Kildare Local Authorities 2011-2017 is contained in Appendix 1 of this Plan. It has had regard to national policies and guidelines on residential development and provides an estimate of existing and future need for social and affordable housing throughout the county.

The main purpose of the Housing Strategy is:

- To provide for social and affordable housing requirements within lands zoned for residential use, or a mixture of residential and other uses.
- To ensure that housing is available for persons who have different levels of income by providing housing for a diverse range of housing needs.
- To address the need to counteract undue segregation in housing between persons of different social backgrounds by ensuring that a mixture of house types and sizes is developed to reasonably match the requirements of different categories of households.

The Housing Strategy outlines a 20% requirement for the provision of social and affordable housing. This may be provided in a number of ways:

- The transfer of completed dwellings on the site subject to the planning application.
- The transfer of fully or partially serviced sites on the site subject to the application
- The transfer of a portion of the site which is the subject of the application.
- The payment of a monetary contribution.
- The transfer of serviced sites at another location.
- The transfer of land at another location.
- The transfer of completed dwellings at another location.

An agreement may provide for a combination of any of the above. It shall comply with the strategic objective of counteracting social segregation and facilitating the creation of balanced communities across the entire county. The agreement should also seek to avoid an over concentration of social housing in any particular part of the town. Each proposal will be considered and assessed based on individual merit having regard to the Housing Strategy and in consultation with the Planning Authority.

In accordance with the Planning and Development Acts 2000-2010, an exemption from 'Part V' requirements may be sought from the Council in the case of small housing developments i.e. those of four or fewer houses, or any number of units on land of 0.1 hectares or less.

Athy Town Council conducted an assessment of Housing Need in March 2008. A total of 500 households were considered eligible for local authority accommodation. The current Council housing stock in Athy amounts to 310 units.

## 4.11 Special Needs Housing

Planning for the provision of housing for the population of the town includes providing for the needs of persons with special requirements, such as persons with physical disabilities and learning disabilities. The importance of access to public transport, local community services and facilities is a significant factor for a mobility-impaired person in improving quality of life. House design and compliance with Part M of the Building Regulations has expanded the range of options available to people with a disability. The Council will continue to address particular identified needs through the provision of purpose built, adaptable dwellings, where feasible.

### 4.11.1 Homelessness

The Council will continue to provide an important role alongside voluntary groups and other agencies in the provision of emergency accommodation for the homeless and for those in need of crisis facilities.

### 4.11.2 Elderly

The changing nature of the age profile of Athy requires greater consideration for the housing needs of the elderly. The proportion of the population aged 65 years and over in Athy decreased from 15% in 2002 to 12% in 2006. The national average for the proportion of the population aged 65 years and over was recorded at 11% in 2006. Specific needs of the elderly must be considered relating to access, public transport, and local services, medical care, security and personal safety. In this regard dwellings and other residential facilities catering specifically for older people should be located in close proximity to convenience shops, community facilities and public transport nodes.

For those who wish to continue to live independently, it is important that the opportunity exists to trade down or downsize in the area in which they live (for example to a smaller or single storey dwelling or apartment unit). Refer

to Chapter 10 for further detail in relation to housing and community care for the elderly.

#### 4.11.3 Traveller Accommodation

The Council recognises the distinct culture and lifestyle of the Travelling Community and it will endeavor to provide suitable accommodation for Travellers who are indigenous to the area. The Council will implement measures, as required by law and national policy and in accordance with the Housing Strategy and the Traveller Accommodation Programme 2009 to provide accommodation for members of the Travelling Community.

It is the policy of the Council:

- HP29: To provide adequate accommodation for Travellers in accordance with the Kildare Local Authorities Traveller Accommodation Programme.
- HP30: To facilitate the provision of purpose built dwellings individually and within mixed schemes for those with special needs, including provision for the needs of the elderly, persons with physical disabilities and persons with learning disabilities and in conjunction with other voluntary bodies and the private sector.
- HP31: To provide for and facilitate the provision of accommodation to meet the needs of the elderly and to encourage the provision of a range of housing options for elderly persons in central, convenient and easily accessible locations and to integrate such housing with mainstream housing where possible.
- HP32: To provide and facilitate the provision of accommodation to meet the needs of those with disabilities through the adaptation of appropriate accommodation.

## 4.12 Housing Objectives

It is an objective of the Council:

- HO1: To secure the implementation of the Kildare Local Authorities Housing Strategy 2011-2017.
- HO2: To provide adequate accommodation for Travellers in accordance with the Council's Traveller Accommodation Programme.
- HO3: To promote a high standard of architecture in the design of new housing developments and to encourage a variety of house types, sizes and tenure to cater for the needs of the population and facilitate the creation of balanced communities.