



# Chapter 3

## Housing

*“To facilitate the provision of a high quality, suitable mix of adaptable, lifetime housing that meets the needs of all residents in the County; based on the principles of place making, compact growth, and healthy, sustainable communities where housing is close to services and where sustainable modes of transport can be facilitated.”*



## 3 HOUSING

### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will set out the strategy for the provision of housing in urban and rural parts of the County during the life of this Plan. It will focus on creating places where people want to live and delivering well designed and located housing that is adaptable and resilient to the impacts of climate change and capable of meeting the current and future housing needs of the County. It will also take account of the national and regional policy focus of achieving compact growth and will consider the role of building height in achieving higher residential densities in the Regional Growth Centres of Drogheda and Dundalk.

### 3.2 RECENT TRENDS IN HOUSING

The effects of the global financial crisis in 2008 and the recession that followed are still evident in the residential sector, with demand for housing continuing to outstrip supply. This is due to a prolonged period of inactivity in residential construction which saw the number of housing units completed go from record highs in 2006 to record lows in the period 2008-2013. As the economy began to recover from 2014, the level of activity in residential construction began to increase, albeit from a relatively low base. Associated with the economic recovery is the increased demand for housing with inward migration increasing as employment opportunities improve. This placed additional pressures on an already dysfunctional housing market, resulting in record increases in rent and unprecedented levels of homelessness across the country.

At the time of writing this Plan the country was emerging from an unprecedented lockdown in attempts to slow down the spread of the coronavirus (Covid-19).

This lockdown resulted in disruption to almost all sectors of the economy. The economic impact of this lockdown on the national and global economy is unclear.

This uncertainty and disruption in the economy may have significant impacts on the housing market, including a decrease in the number of residential units completed. This is dependent on a number of factors including the extent of the disruption, the speed of any recovery, the impact on household incomes, and international investment into the country.

#### 3.2.1 Legislative Changes and Policy Response

The response to the housing shortage has been co-ordinated by the government at a national level through the introduction of legislation and policy initiatives that aim to increase the output of housing. Consequently, there has been significant new legislative provision since the adoption of the last plan.

The following pieces of legislation were enacted as part of the response to the housing shortage:

- The *Urban Regeneration and Housing Act 2015* included changes to Part V of the *Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended)*, with the affordable housing requirement being removed and the social housing obligation being lowered from 20% to 10% for developments of 10 or more units. Provision was included for the introduction of a Vacant Site Levy.

- *Section 24A of the Residential Tenancies Act 2004 (as amended)* sets out the requirements for designating a Rent Pressure Zone. At the time of writing, all Local Electoral Areas in Louth with the exception of Clogher were designated as a Rent Pressure Zone.
- *Section 38 of the Residential Tenancies (Amendment) Act 2019* sets out the legislative requirements for a person who intends to let their property for short-term letting purposes if the property is located within a Rent Pressure Zone.
- *Section 3 of the Planning and Development Residential Tenancies Act 2016* introduced, for a limited period, arrangements for fast track planning applications for Strategic Housing Developments (SHDs) of 100 or more housing units, student accommodation of 200 or more bed spaces, or shared accommodation of 200 or more bed spaces, to be made directly to An Bord Pleanála for determination.

The Housing Action Plan ‘Rebuilding Ireland – An Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness’ published in 2016 sets out a strategy for dealing with the housing shortage at a national level.



It was a multi-annual plan that sought to increase the overall supply of housing to 25,000 units per annum by 2021. Accelerating the delivery of housing for the private, social and rented sectors was the core objective of Rebuilding Ireland.

Supporting measures included a €6 billion fund that was intended to deliver an additional 50,000 social housing units by 2021.

Examples of developments supported by this fund in the County include Ravel Grange in Dunleer and Castleguard in Ardee.

### **Housing for All - A New Housing Plan for Ireland published in 2021.**

‘Housing for All - A New Housing Plan for Ireland’ is the government’s housing plan to 2030, this Plan supports the implementation of the action plan and the Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlements Guidelines (DHLGH, 2024) with the aim of providing a diverse and innovative mix of housing that can facilitate compact housing and provide greater housing choice.

In order to create a balanced community and to aid social integration, it is important that residential developments provide for a mix of house types, tenures and sizes to cater for the entire community. This includes social, private, affordable and specialist housing including housing for students, refugees and beneficiaries of temporary protection.

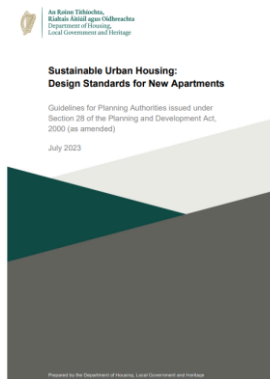
A €200 million Local Infrastructure Housing Activation Fund (LIHAF) has been allocated to Local Authorities to provide enabling infrastructure for the release of large tracts of strategically located residential lands for the delivery of housing.

The Council was successful in its LIHAF funding application for the Mount Avenue Road upgrade in Dundalk, which will support an initial development of 200 homes with a potential for up to 1,200 units on the wider lands and the upgrade of a road at Newtown in Drogheda which will support the delivery of up to 700 residential units in the long term.

The Land Development Agency was established in 2018. It is a commercial, state-sponsored body that will coordinate land within State control and identify any under-utilised lands with the potential for regeneration and residential development. In the longer term it is envisaged that the Agency will assemble strategic land banks from a mix of public and private lands which will bring long term stability to the housing market.

In addition to legislative changes and policy initiatives there has been new and updated planning guidance published.

*The Design Standards for New Apartments* published in 2023 are an update of the 2018 guidelines.



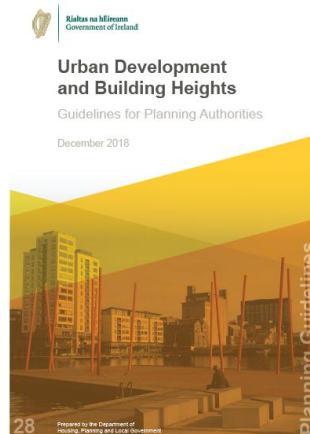
These guidelines acknowledge that apartment developments will play a significant role in securing more compact and sustainable towns and cities and that they must be an attractive and desirable housing option if compact growth is to be achieved. The guidelines focus on:

- Enabling a mix of apartment types that better reflects contemporary household formation and demand patterns;
- Making better provision for building refurbishment and small scale urban infill schemes;
- The ‘build to rent’ and ‘shared accommodation’ sectors; and

- Removing requirements for car parking in certain circumstances where there are better mobility solutions and to reduce costs.

*The Urban Development and Building Heights Guidelines* published in 2018, are closely aligned with the national strategic outcomes and objectives in the National Planning Framework, which support higher densities and more compact urban growth. These Guidelines support increased building heights in appropriate urban locations.

The housing policy in this Plan has taken account of the updated legislation and policy response and guidance provided at a national level.



### 3.3 HOUSING SUPPLY IN LOUTH

There has been a steady increase in the supply of housing in the County since 2015. This increased supply is concentrated in the urban settlements of Drogheda, Dundalk, Ardee and Dunleer. In the open countryside the construction and demand for one off housing remains high.

### 3.4 HOUSING STRATEGY

In accordance with the requirements of Section 94 of the *Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended)*, a Housing Strategy has been prepared for this Plan.

The purpose of a Housing Strategy is to ensure that provision is made for the housing requirements of the existing and future population of the County.

National Policy Objective 37 of the National Planning Framework (NPF), requires each Local Authority to develop a Housing Need Demand Assessment (HNDA), which must underpin and support the preparation of housing strategies and all related housing policy outputs.

A detailed analysis of socio-economic data was used to create a robust, evidence based baseline that informed the policy framework for household growth during the plan period.

It is anticipated that the HNDA carried out as part of the Housing Strategy in this Plan will enhance how acute and unmet demand for housing is identified before it arises.

It provides a robust assessment of regional and localised influences, such as population and migration in quantifying needs and demands. The analysis of the socio-economic data provided the baseline for projecting future household tenure and size during the lifetime of the Plan.

Further details are set out in Section 4.0 of the Housing Strategy ‘Housing Needs’ (Volume 3, Appendix 3).

The Housing Strategy has determined that 1,949 households will not qualify for a mortgage during the plan period.

It has also been determined that these 1,949 households will not meet the affordability criteria for private rental. These households are considered to require social and affordable housing. This equates to 29.1% of the additional anticipated households during the plan period.

Full details of the Housing Strategy are set out in Volume 3, Appendix 3.

Policy Objective	
<b>HOU 1</b>	To secure the implementation of the <i>Louth Housing Strategy 2021-2027</i> .

Policy Objective	
<b>HOU 2</b>	To support the delivery of social housing in Louth in accordance with the Council’s Social Housing Delivery Programme and Government Policy as set out in ‘ <i>Housing for All - A New Housing Plan for Ireland</i> ’.

Policy Objective	
<b>HOU 3</b>	To apply a social and affordable housing requirement, in accordance with the requirements of Part V of the <i>Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended)</i> .

Policy Objective	
<b>HOU 4</b>	To facilitate the development of emergency accommodation, including hostels for homeless individuals and families, in a balanced way throughout the County but based on needs in particular areas.

Policy Objective	
<b>HOU 5</b>	To review the Housing Strategy as part of the mandatory Two-Year Development Plan review.

Policy Objective	
<b>HOU 6</b>	To monitor and maintain a record of residential development permitted in settlements designated under the settlement hierarchy and development permitted in rural nodes and the open countryside for compliance with the objectives of the Core Strategy and in accordance with any Departmental guidance published around the establishment of a HNDA coordination and monitoring unit and related implementation of a centralised spatial database for Local Authority Housing.

Policy Objective	
<b>HOU 7</b>	To support the ongoing monitoring and review of the HNDA in accordance with any guidance on HNDA methodology issued by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

### 3.5 VACANT SITE LEVY

As part of the government strategy to incentivise the use and development of vacant and under-utilised lands as a means of supporting economic development in urban areas, a Vacant Site Levy was introduced. The legislation for this levy is set out in the *Urban Regeneration and Housing Act 2015*.

The intention of the Vacant Site Levy is to function as a site activation tool that incentivises the development of vacant or idle sites that will allow the Council to engage in a strategy of active land management. This Levy will assist in the implementation of the Development Plan strategy of supporting compact growth, the regeneration of under-utilised lands in urban areas and meeting the housing needs of the County.

The levy is applicable to residential and regeneration lands, which are defined as follows:

- Residential lands means lands zoned for use solely or primarily for residential purposes in accordance with Section 10(2)(a) of the *Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended)*; and

- Regeneration land means lands identified for renewal or regeneration in accordance with Section 10(2)(h) of the *Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended)*.

#### 3.5.1 Lands Identified for Residential Use

The following land use zonings are applicable to the residential category of the Vacant Site Levy:

- A1 Existing Residential;
- A2 New Residential Phase 1;
- B1 Town or Village Centre; and
- C1 Mixed Use.

#### 3.5.2 Lands Identified for Regeneration

The lands identified with a 'D1 Regeneration' zoning objective are applicable to the regeneration category of the vacant site levy.

### 3.5.3 Implementation of the Vacant Site Levy

As part of the active land management strategy for the County, the Council will establish a Vacant Site Register, by identifying sites which are vacant and meet the requirements of the *Urban Regeneration and Housing Act (as amended)*. This Register will be monitored and reviewed by the Council on a regular basis. Section 16 of the *Urban Regeneration and Housing Act 2015 (as amended)* sets out the levy due, which is equal to 7% of the market value of the site for 2019 and subsequent years (unless otherwise revised).

Policy Objective	
<b>HOU 8</b>	To promote the sustainable development of vacant residential and regeneration sites in all development centres in the County, as appropriate, in accordance with the requirements of the <i>Urban Regeneration and Housing Act 2015 (as amended)</i> .

Policy Objective	
<b>HOU 9</b>	To promote through active land management, the sustainable development of vacant and under-utilised lands throughout the Plan area.

### 3.5.4 Regeneration Areas

In recognition of the need to promote and facilitate compact growth and the consolidation of development in urban areas, this Plan has identified lands on which regeneration proposals will be supported. Such regeneration projects will assist in the creation of more sustainable neighbourhoods and communities through enhancements to the public realm and built environment which will make the areas more attractive for economic investment. These regeneration areas are set out in Table 3.1.

Policy Objective	
<b>HOU 10</b>	To support and facilitate investment in areas and lands in the County identified for regeneration including those as set out on the Land Use Zoning Maps and to collaborate with landowners and stakeholders in the development of these lands.

**Table 3.1: Lands/Areas identified for Regeneration in Louth**

Settlement	General Location	Overview
<b>Drogheda</b>	Docklands Area	An extensive area of lands to the north and south of the River Boyne with potential for a new urban quarter. Drogheda Docklands Area Plan was published in 2007.
<b>Drogheda</b>	Westgate Area	An area to the west of the town centre characterised by a high level of underutilised buildings and vacant lands with potential for a mixed use development including commercial and residential uses. The Westgate Vision was published in 2018.

Settlement	General Location	Overview
Drogheda	Former Quarry	A former quarry located in the northern part of the town with potential for tourism, recreation and residential uses.
Dundalk	Carroll Village	The land includes the former Carroll Village Shopping Centre and a large surface car park with a total area of 2 hectares. The site is suitable for a mixed use development including commercial, retail and residential uses.
Dundalk	Longwalk Shopping Centre	The existing Longwalk Shopping Centre is located immediately south of the former Carroll Village Shopping Centre. The shopping centre has declined significantly in recent years. Tesco remains the anchor tenant within the centre. The former Toymaster building to the north-east of the centre is included within this regeneration area. There is a potential for this area to be redeveloped for retail and associated mixed uses.
Dundalk	St. Nicholas Quarter	This area of the town has experienced high levels of vacancy, ad-hoc development and dereliction. The area has the potential to be rejuvenated and developed as an urban quarter along Bridge Street, Northgate Street, and Linenhall Street.
Ardee	Former Bakery Site	This site is the former Ardee Bakery and is located on the eastern side of Castle Street. The building is a Protected Structure of notable design with significant development potential for a range of uses.

### 3.6 SUSTAINABLE NEIGHBOURHOODS AND COMMUNITIES

The way we experience our towns and villages is through local neighbourhoods – where we live, work, spend our free time and socialise. It is within these neighbourhoods that communities develop. As we strive to create more compact settlements and facilitate population growth in a consolidated urban environment, it is critical that such growth provides for the creation of sustainable, healthier neighbourhoods and communities. This can be achieved by:

- Connecting residential, employment, commercial and recreational areas with footpaths, cycle paths and public transport;
- Promoting wellbeing and an active lifestyle in the local community;
- Engagement with the local community and promoting sustainable practices such as energy and water conservation and waste reduction;
- Promoting social integration that supports the creation of mixed tenure communities where there is an appropriate mix of housing to meet the needs of the entire community; and

- Creating safe, accessible neighbourhoods that encourage more social interaction and outdoor activities.

This Plan seeks to support the continued development of sustainable neighbourhoods and communities throughout the County. It will facilitate employment creation and economic investment in locations that would reduce journey times to work.

It will promote healthy living by encouraging compact growth and the development of infill and brownfield sites in preference to edge of centre greenfield locations, and promote quality residential developments with a suitable mix of housing in proximity to local services and community and recreational facilities.

Policy Objective	
<b>HOU 11</b>	To continue to support the creation of sustainable communities throughout the County for people across all the life stages by facilitating the creation of attractive neighbourhoods where there are strong links and connections to local services, community facilities and employment areas and where walking, cycling, and public transport is prioritised.

### 3.7 TOWN CENTRE LIVING

The traditional role of the town centre was to meet the retail needs of the local community. Changing consumer habits, continued competition from out of town shopping and the increasing presence of online retailing is resulting in town centres facing unprecedented challenges, resulting in a decrease in footfall and an increase in vacancy.

Taking account of the changing retail environment, a new approach is required to assist in revitalising town centres.

This Plan will support a multi-dimensional approach to re-energising and returning the vibrancy to town centres.

This includes support for different business uses that will allow town centres to become multi-functional destinations providing services, leisure, cultural, civic and residential uses.

Part of this multi-dimensional strategy is to bring people back to the town centre by facilitating town centre living. This will include the re-use or adaptation of vacant and under-utilised buildings.

Residential development may be considered at ground floor level in certain circumstances, or locations where there has been a sustained level of vacancy over a prolonged period. This will normally be on lands outside the Core Retail Area of town centres.

The provision of such accommodation will only be facilitated in circumstances where it is demonstrated that the development would complement the role of the town centre as a 'destination' for commercial, social or cultural activities.

Policy Objective	
<b>HOU 12</b>	To encourage and support a range of appropriate uses in town and village centres that will assist in the regeneration of vacant and under-utilised buildings and land and will re-energise the town and village centres, subject to a high standard of development being achieved.

### 3.8 HOUSING FOR OLDER PERSONS

With people living longer and the proportion of older persons in the population projected to increase, it is important that there is a suitable choice of accommodation for older persons that will allow them to live independently for longer and remain part of the community. The Council has been proactive in its support for older persons and has published *'The Louth Age Friendly Strategy'*, which seeks to strengthen the wellbeing of older persons within their communities.

At a national level the Government recognises the evolving needs of older persons, who should be encouraged and supported to live independently for as long as possible.

The Policy Statement *'Housing Options for Our Ageing Population'* published by the Government in 2020 identifies the need to plan ahead to meet the needs of an ageing population.

This Policy Statement has identified 6 principles for Housing for our Ageing population as follows:

**Ageing in Place:** Housing should be located close to amenities and services to enhance independence;

**Supporting Urban Renewal:** The provision of quality urban centres with a choice of housing tenures will support ageing in place and will allow older persons to choose housing options appropriate to their needs;

**Promoting Sustainable Lifetime Housing:** Accommodation should be adaptable and accessible to meet the changing housing and health requirements of people as they get older;

**Using Assistive Technology:** Accommodation should be designed to facilitate the installation of smart technology to facilitate assistive technologies such as TeleCare, TeleHealth, and Remote Monitoring, in order to provide a sense of security and connectivity for older persons living alone;

**Staying Socially Connected:** Accommodation should be located in areas where social supports are available, and where there are opportunities to integrate and connect with the local community; and

**Working Together:** It is essential that all stakeholders work together to develop appropriate housing options and choice for people as they age.

This Plan will support the implementation of these principles in order to ensure housing for older persons is appropriately located to allow people to retain their independence and remain part of the community as they get older.

As part of the strategy of consolidation and compact growth, there will be opportunities for the redevelopment of infill and brownfield land in central areas of towns and villages. Such lands may be suitable for accommodation for older persons

In larger developments, consideration should be given to providing single storey units. This would give older persons living in larger houses the choice to 'rightsize' if they desire.

Further details on housing options for older persons are set out in Chapter 4 'Social and Community'.

Policy Objective	
<b>HOU 13</b>	To support the implementation of the Policy Statement ' <i>Housing Options for Our Ageing Population</i> ' and the provision of independent and/or assisted living for older persons such as purpose built accommodation, the adaptation of existing properties, and opportunities for older persons to avail of 'rightsizing' within their community at locations that are proximate to existing services and amenities including pedestrian paths, local shops, parks and public transport.

### 3.9 SPECIALIST HOUSING

The provision of appropriate housing for people with disabilities or mental health issues, including specialist and supported housing, is crucial to helping them live safe and independent lives.

Location is key when considering housing for people with disabilities.

Access to public transport, local community services and facilities are significant factors in improving quality of life.

In terms of housing design, compliance with Part M of the Building Regulations expands options available to people with a disability.

The Council will support development which will provide respite and/or residential care at appropriate locations in the County, which should be designed and constructed in accordance with the principles of universal design.

In all cases, development must be in accordance with the principles of universal design and the National Disability Authority's '*Building for Everyone: A Universal Approach*' (2012) publication and shall have regard to the Government's '*National Disability Strategy*' (2004) and '*National Disability Strategy Implementation Plan 2013-2015*'. In 2016 the Council published a strategy for Housing Persons with a Disability.

This Strategy seeks to facilitate access for people with disabilities to the appropriate range of housing and support services and to deliver this housing in the mainstream housing environment.

Policy Objective	
<b>HOU 14</b>	To support the provision of independent and/or assisted living for people with disabilities or mental health issues such as purpose built accommodation or the adaptation of existing properties.

### 3.10 TRAVELLER ACCOMMODATION

The *Louth County Council Traveller Accommodation Programme 2019-2024* sets out the Council's policy in relation to Traveller Accommodation. There are a full range of housing options available in the provision of accommodation for Traveller's including; standard social housing, traveller halting site accommodation, private house ownership and private rented accommodation, with the support of the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP).

The Programme includes proposals to carry out refurbishments and energy upgrades to existing traveller group housing schemes in Drogheda and Dundalk. It is also proposed to progress four group housing schemes in Dundalk during the life of the Programme.

With regard to halting sites there was a major refurbishment to the Woodland Park halting site in Dundalk. It is envisaged that the need for halting site accommodation will be met through re-letting of the existing bays.

The requirement for a halting site in Drogheda will be reviewed during the life of the Programme.

Policy Objective	
<b>HOU 15</b>	To secure the implementation of the <i>Louth County Council Traveller Accommodation Programme 2019-2024</i> and any subsequent programme prepared during the life of this Plan.

### 3.11 DENSITIES

As part of the strategy of securing more compact growth and consolidating development in central locations there will be a greater focus on delivering developments at a higher density.

Such an approach would make more effective use of land, would increase the critical mass of population in the urban core of settlements and maximise the return on infrastructure investment.

Depending on the built form of a development, different densities can be achieved. This can include apartment developments in courtyards or single/multiple blocks, terraces consisting of standard housing or apartments and duplex units and detached and semi-detached units.

When identifying the potential density of a site, consideration must be given to the surrounding context and how the development would relate to the existing built form and character of its location.

One of the key elements of making a high density development an attractive place to live, is in the quality of the internal design such as the amount of daylight the accommodation receives and the external space on which the building(s) is located i.e. the quality of the public realm. The quality of the open space is also a critical aspect.

The densities in this Plan are informed by national and regional policy and the *Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlements Guidelines for Planning Authorities (DHLGH, 2024)*, which requires higher density developments in centrally located areas, large urban areas and along public transport corridors. These Guidelines provide a tiered approach for the delivery of sustainable and compact densities. Utilising dwellings per hectare is the primary measure for residential density. Other factors recommended for consideration in the Guidelines include accessibility to public transport as well as potential impacts on local character, amenity and the natural environment.

The primary considerations will be the quality of the residential environment that will be created. The recommended density of residential developments in the County is detailed in Table 3.2.

In the Self-Sustaining Towns and Small Towns and Villages, the density of development will be reflective of the character of the settlement and the existing pattern of development in the area.

Whilst all developments should strive to achieve the recommended densities, it is acknowledged that there will be cases where there are specific constraints (such as topography) that will restrict the scale of development that can be delivered. In such cases a lower density than that prescribed may be considered acceptable.

**Table 3.2: Recommended Densities in Higher Tier Settlements**

Settlement Category	Recommended Minimum Density per Hectare	
	Town Centre	Edge of Settlement
<b>Regional Growth Centres Dundalk and Drogheda</b>	50	35
<b>Self-Sustaining Growth Town Ardee and Dunleer</b>	35	25

Policy Objective	
<b>HOU 16</b>	To promote development that facilitates a higher, sustainable density that supports compact growth and the consolidation of urban areas, which will be appropriate to the local context and enhance the local environment in which it is located.

### 3.12 BUILDINGS OF HEIGHT

In the right location higher buildings can raise the profile of an area, signal change, support regeneration and create local employment opportunities.

National and Regional policy supports compact growth and consolidating and strengthening the existing built up areas of settlements.

It is envisaged that this will be achieved by increasing the building height and density of residential development in urban settlements.

The traditional height of buildings in Louth consists of low rise buildings. In the town centre areas of Drogheda and Dundalk buildings are generally 2-3 storeys high. However, in recent years, a number of taller buildings have been developed for commercial and residential uses.

This Plan will support increased building heights particularly in Drogheda and Dundalk, signifying their importance as regional growth centres.

When identifying a potential location for higher buildings the following principles and criteria shall be taken into account:

**Location:** Higher buildings will normally be located in central areas of towns close to public transport, in strategic locations at the entrance to towns or on strategic lands on the approach road to the town centre.

The local area shall have the social and physical infrastructure to accommodate the increased levels of activity.

**Strengthened Legibility:** Higher buildings shall be a positive landmark in the streetscape and shall respect and respond to the character of the area.

**Strengthen the Sense of Place:** Higher buildings have an important role in shaping the perceptions of an area. If they are poorly designed or located in the wrong area they can create a negative image for an area.

**Promote Quality Design:** Higher buildings must make a positive and lasting contribution to their location.

**Protect and Enhance the Existing Streetscape and Heritage:** It is important that higher buildings do not disrupt or negatively impact on the historic areas of towns or intrude on important views. They should only be located in places that would enhance the character of an area.

### Policy Objective

<b>HOU 17</b>	To support increased building heights in appropriate locations in the Regional Growth Centres of Drogheda and Dundalk.
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## 3.13 PRINCIPLES FOR QUALITY DESIGN AND LAYOUT

A well-designed development can add value to the local environment by creating a sense of wellbeing and community, improving the quality of the built environment and promoting active and healthy lifestyles. There are various guidelines that have been published which provide a policy foundation for the design of residential developments and neighbourhoods. These include:

- The policy statement Delivering Homes Sustaining Communities and associated guidelines Quality Housing for Sustainable Communities (published in 2007) and
- Urban Development and Building Height Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2018;
- Sustainable Urban Housing Design Standards for New Apartment Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2023; and
- Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlements Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2024 and any associated Design Manual.



A full list of the guidance documents relating to residential developments is available in Section 13.8 'Housing in Urban Areas' of the Development Management Guidelines in Chapter 13.

### 3.13.1 Placemaking

Placemaking is a design approach that can add value to a development. This takes account of the location, character, topography, history and any other issues that have shaped the area in which a development is located. It is a broad concept that brings together a range of interrelated disciplines including planning, architecture, landscape architecture, engineering and infrastructure, ecology, economics and social work.

The RSES sets out a series of Guiding Principles for 'Healthy Placemaking' which includes multi-functional open spaces, connectivity between schools, workplaces, and residential areas, and giving priority to walking, cycling and accessibility. This Plan will seek to implement these Guiding Principles, which are set out in further detail in Section 9.4 of the RSES.

Some of the key principles of placemaking include the creation of neighbourhoods where people can fulfil their daily needs and feel safe. The most successful neighbourhoods are well-connected, multi-functional and tend to have a wide variety of things to do in them.

They have attractive streets and spaces that are safe, secure and easy to navigate. These principles assist in creating a sense of community and identity and make places more attractive to live, due to the vibrancy and quality of life associated with such places and neighbourhoods.

## Policy Objective

<b>HOU 18</b>	To promote and facilitate the sustainable development of a high quality built environment where there is a distinctive sense of place in attractive streets, spaces, and neighbourhoods that are accessible and safe places for all members of the community to meet and socialise.
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### 3.14 CREATING A WELL DESIGNED PLACE

In achieving a well-designed place there are a range of factors that need to be considered, including:

- i. **Layout:** The layout of a development sets out its arrangement, the distribution of uses, and how the buildings, streets and open spaces connect to one another. The layout should be functional and be designed to promote social interaction where people are encouraged to walk, cycle and utilise areas of open space.

This can be achieved by creating an active frontage where buildings front onto streets and open spaces and by positioning open spaces in accessible and centrally located areas. In larger developments, a well-designed layout should be able to accommodate a range of uses including residential, community, educational, commercial and employment related uses.

In such a mixed use scheme, the layout should ensure that the location of the various land uses would minimise the requirement to travel by car, whilst also protecting the amenity of residential neighbourhoods and creating a safe and secure environment where children can play and neighbours can interact. The limited use of vehicular cul-de-sacs may be considered in residential developments where there is a particular concern regarding through traffic or challenges in creating an inclusive, safe, and secure living environment.

This will only be considered where their use would not dominate such layouts. On larger and/or irregular blocks short cul-de-sacs may also be used for midblock penetration to serve a small number of dwellings and to enable more compact /efficient forms of development.

- ii. **Form, Scale and Mass:** The form of a building refers to its three-dimensional shape, which is dependent on its size, height and bulk/volume. The mass of a building combines with its shape and bulk and refers to the actual size of a building, or its size relative to its local context. It is directly related to the visual impact of a building.

The scale of a building refers to its height, width and length in relation to its surroundings. It can relate to the size of a building in the context of its surrounding area or the relationship between different parts of a building, which are known as its proportions. The scale of a building can affect how the space around it can be used and experienced.

- iii. **Visual Appearance:** The appearance of a building refers to its design aspects which determine the visual impact it has both in isolation and in the surrounding environment. This includes the style of the building, and its scale, proportions and finishes.

- iv. **Hard and Soft Landscaping:** Hard landscaping includes surfacing, boundary treatments, street furniture and play equipment while soft landscaping includes trees, shrubs, grassed areas and other planting. These are important features in determining how a building or development integrates with the surrounding environment.
- v. **Finishes:** The finishes to a building or space can affect the overall design quality of a development and can influence the relationship between the building or space and what is around it. The finishes should be appropriate for the location, be durable and attractive, and facilitate the integration of the building or development into the local landscape.
- vi. **10-minute Neighbourhood:** Promote the 10-minute neighbourhood concept which is centred on the premise that people should be able to meet most of their needs within a short walking or cycling distance to their homes. This concept is an example of integrated land use and transportation planning and, if successfully implemented, would assist in the creation of a sustainable community and reduce dependence on the private car. It is closely aligned with the creation of a compact settlement.

**Policy Objective**

<b>HOU 19</b>	To develop sustainable and successful neighbourhoods through the consolidation and redevelopment of built-up areas and promote new compact mixed-use urban and rural villages served by public transport and green infrastructure.
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**Policy Objective**

<b>HOU 20</b>	To enhance and develop the fabric of existing urban and rural settlements in accordance with the principles of good urban design including the promotion of high quality well-designed visually attractive main entries into our towns and villages.
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**Policy Objective**

<b>HOU 21</b>	To require a design led approach to be taken to sustainable residential development in accordance with the Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlement Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2024) and any associated Design Manual, to ensure the creation of quality, attractive, and well connected residential areas and neighbourhoods.
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**Policy Objective**

<b>HOU 22</b>	To ensure that new residential developments are consistent, in so far as practicable, with the <i>'Guidelines on Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas'</i> in creating attractive, sustainable, climate resilient and healthy communities.
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**Policy Objective**

<b>HOU 23</b>	To require residential developments to prioritise and facilitate walking, cycling, and public transport and to include provision for links and connections to existing facilities and public transport nodes in the wider neighbourhood.
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**Policy Objective**

<b>HOU 24</b>	To require the layout of residential developments to take account of the <i>Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (2019)</i> in the provision of pedestrian and cycling infrastructure and crossing points and the design of estate roads and junctions.
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**Policy Objective**

<b>HOU 25</b>	To require the provision of high quality areas of public open space in new residential developments that are functional spaces, centrally located, and passively overlooked.
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**Policy Objective**

<b>HOU 26</b>	All new residential and single house developments shall be designed and constructed in accordance with the Development Management Guidelines set out in Chapter 13 of this Plan.
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**Policy Objective**

<b>HOU 27</b>	To promote the concept of a '10-minute neighbourhood', where high quality housing and well-designed, safe and inclusive public spaces served by local services, amenities and sustainable modes of transport are available.
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### 3.15 DWELLING MIX AND ADAPTABLE HOMES

It is important for new residential areas to include an appropriate mix of house types to meet the needs of all tenures and age groups including families, persons living alone and older persons. This will provide choice for people and will support the creation of a balanced, sustainable community.

The provision of a range of housing types and sizes in the County will become more important, as trends show a decline in family housing and an increase in older and single person households.

New homes should be designed so that they are adaptable and can be altered to meet the needs of residents through different stages of life.

The application of the 'Universal Design' concept at the design and construction stage of a development can be a cost effective way of future proofing a home and incorporating sustainable designs and smart technologies that will allow people to live independently for longer.

In larger housing developments of 100 residential units or more provisions shall be made for single storey properties to broaden the choice of accommodation available.

Policy Objective	
<b>HOU 28</b>	To require the provision of an appropriate mix of house types and sizes in residential developments throughout the County that would meet the needs of the population and support the creation of balanced and inclusive communities.
Policy Objective	
<b>HOU 29</b>	To require the provision of single storey properties in residential developments in excess of 100 units at a rate of at least 1% single storey units per 100 residential units unless it can be demonstrated by evidence based research carried out by an appropriately qualified professional that there is no demand for this type of accommodation.
Policy Objective	
<b>HOU 30</b>	To encourage innovation in design that delivers buildings of a high quality that positively contribute to the built environment and local streetscape.
Policy Objective	
<b>HOU 31</b>	To seek that all new residential developments in excess of 20 residential units provide for a minimum of 30% universally designed units in accordance with the requirements of <i>'Building for Everyone: A Universal Design Approach'</i> published by the Centre for Excellence in Universal Design.
Policy Objective	
<b>HOU 32</b>	To encourage building design and layout that maximises daylight and natural ventilation and incorporates energy efficiency and conservation measures that will improve the environmental performance of buildings in line with best practice.
Policy Objective	
<b>HOU 33</b>	To actively support proposals that encourage town centre living such as converting upper floors of buildings (above ground floor) into residential use in order to revitalise the social and physical fabric of urban centres in the County and to facilitate a relaxation of development standards for such projects subject to the provision of good quality accommodation.

## 3.16 OTHER RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENTS IN URBAN AREAS

### 3.16.1 Infill, Corner and Backland Sites

The development of underutilised infill, corner and backland sites in existing residential areas is generally encouraged. A balance is needed, between the protection of amenities, privacy, the established character of the area and new residential infill.

The use of contemporary and innovative design solutions will be considered for this type of development.

Policy Objective	
<b>HOU 34</b>	To encourage and promote the development of underutilised infill, corner and backland sites in existing urban areas subject to the character of the area and environment being protected.

Policy Objective	
<b>HOU 35</b>	To promote the use of contemporary and innovative design solutions subject to the design respecting the character and architectural heritage of the area.

### 3.16.2 Extensions to Dwellings

The need for people to extend and renovate their dwellings is recognised and acknowledged.

Extensions of appropriate scale will be considered favourably where they do not have a negative impact on adjoining properties or on the nature of the surrounding area.

Policy Objective	
<b>HOU 36</b>	To encourage sensitively designed extensions to existing dwellings which do not negatively impact on the environment, residential amenities, surrounding properties, or the local streetscape and are climate resilient.

### 3.16.3 Student Accommodation

Dundalk Institute of Technology (DkIT) is the most significant third level institution in County Louth. Drogheda Institute of Further Education (DIFE) located in Moneymore also provides many training courses and programmes. The Lourdes Hospital is also a major training hospital in close proximity to DIFE. In considering planning applications for student accommodation the Council will have regard to the *'Guidelines on Residential Developments for 3<sup>rd</sup> Level Students'* updated in 2020 (particularly in relation to location and design).

Policy Objective	
<b>HOU 37</b>	To support the provision of accommodation for third level students on the campus of third level institutions or at other appropriate locations with access to high quality cycling and walking linkages and public transport that are proximate to centres of third level education.

## 3.17 HOUSING IN THE OPEN COUNTRYSIDE

The open countryside in Louth is a valuable resource to the County and wider Region. The scenic landscape and the local amenities are an important source of enjoyment and the farmland produces high quality agricultural produce. The quality of life associated with rural living means there is a high demand for housing in the open countryside.

This is presenting challenges for the long term sustainability of rural areas as the landscape is being gradually eroded and farmland is slowly being depleted.

This Plan recognises the importance of rural life and the rural economy to the County and will strive to support the continued growth and development of rural areas.

It is important that a balance is achieved that will allow the countryside to be preserved for future generations whilst also facilitating the growth of the rural economy and rural communities.



### 3.17.1 Rural Housing and Climate Change

In achieving a balance of supporting rural communities and protecting the countryside, consideration must be given to the impact of the pattern of development associated with one off housing on the climate and environment. The sporadic nature of one off housing results in an over-dependence on the car, with limited opportunities for people to walk or cycle due to the distance between homes and school, work or local services. The proliferation of individual septic tanks and waste water treatment systems is also impacting on soil and water quality.

As we strive to mitigate against the impacts of climate change, it is important that future development patterns reduce our carbon footprint, protect our environment and promote more sustainable ways of living.

### 3.17.2 Policy Context

The policy for single housing in the countryside in this Plan has been guided by national and regional policy, a summary of which is set out as follows:

**The National Planning Framework (NPF)** acknowledges the contribution of rural areas to the economic, social and cultural development of the country. It seeks to strengthen rural communities, improve connectivity and address decline by focusing on the potential for the renewal and development of smaller towns and villages.



The document identifies a link between the spatial imbalance created by one off housing and the impact this has had on the decline of smaller settlements and the level of services available. There is therefore a strong emphasis on revitalising towns and villages and focusing local housing and employment growth in these locations.

The NPF developed an evidence based approach to the identification of rural areas under pressure for development, by including a definition of the functional urban area or commuter catchment around a city or large town<sup>1</sup>. Any rural areas located within the commuter catchment of a city or large town are considered to be areas under urban influence. Applications for one off rural dwellings in these locations are to be considered with regard to an economic or social need to live in the rural area, siting and design criteria and the viability of smaller towns and rural settlements<sup>2</sup>.

**Regional Spatial Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Eastern and Midland Region 2019-2031** recognises that in planning for rural areas, a balance is required between managing urban generated demand and supporting the sustainable growth of rural communities and economies.

The Strategy highlights the significant levels of growth experienced in rural areas close to large urban settlements and the need to manage the level of growth in these locations.

There is an acknowledgement that support for housing and population growth within rural towns and villages would provide a viable alternative to one-off rural housing. This is confirmed in the policy objective supporting the development of a ‘New Homes in Small Towns and Villages’ initiative in Development Plans included in the Strategy<sup>3</sup>.

**Sustainable Rural Housing, Guidelines for Planning Authorities**, published in 2005, advocate that Planning Authorities should take an analytical and plan led approach to enable Development Plans to respond to the challenges facing rural areas. They require the needs of rural communities to be identified in the development plan process and that residential development

is accommodated at appropriate locations necessary to sustain rural communities. The Guidelines require the Council to identify the different types of rural areas within the County, depending on the pressure the area is under for development.

There is also an emphasis on ensuring the planning system guides development to the right locations thereby protecting natural habitats such as environmentally sensitive areas and important scenic landscapes.

In 2017, the DECLG issued a Circular Letter PL 2/2017 indicating that the Guidelines are currently being reviewed to take account of the ‘Flemish Decree Case’ by the European Court of Justice and the updated policy approach to rural development set out in the National Planning Framework. At the time of writing the updated guidelines had not been published.

### 3.17.3 Identifying Rural Area Types

As part of the information gathering and evidence base on which this Plan has been prepared, an analysis of the level of development in rural areas in the County was carried out. This included:

- The use of POWSCAR<sup>4</sup> data from Census 2016 to identify where people in rural areas are working;
- An analysis of census data to examine population and housing levels, and vacancy in rural areas;
- An analysis of CSO ‘New Dwelling Completions’ data to identify the number of new dwellings completed in rural areas ;and
- An identification of areas and landscapes that are environmentally sensitive or of high scenic value.

In the analysis of the POWSCAR data, it was evident that there is a strong relationship between large urban centres and the rural areas with high volumes of commuting to Drogheda, Dundalk and the Dublin Metropolitan Area.

This analysis is consistent with the approach taken in the NPF and RSES, where the 'Functional Urban Area' (FUA) or commuter catchment of cities and large urban centres was identified<sup>5</sup>.

Following a detailed analysis of the information gathered it was concluded that the entire county is 'under strong urban influence'.

This is due to a number of factors including the following:

- The high rate of outbound commuting from rural areas in Louth to the Dublin Metropolitan Area and the Regional Growth Centres of Drogheda and Dundalk for employment;
- Recent and historic levels of one off housing in rural parts of the County;
- Pressure on infrastructure in rural areas such as local roads; and
- Pressure on rural areas of high scenic quality and environmental sensitivity.

In addition to being under pressure from urban generated development, there are parts of the County that are environmentally sensitive areas due to their high scenic quality and cultural value. It is important that development in these locations is carefully managed in order to preserve these sensitive landscapes.

These locations are as follows:

- **Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty:**
  - Carlingford and Feede Mountains, and
  - Clogherhead and Port Oriel.

- **Areas of High Scenic Quality:**
  - Feede Mountains and Cooley Area;
  - Monasterboice;
  - Boyne Valley/King Williams Glen;
  - Collon Uplands;
  - Dunany and
  - Ardee Bog.
- **Areas of Cultural Value:**
  - The UNESCO World Heritage Site of Brú na Bóinne;
  - The Tentative World Heritage Site of Monasterboice; and
  - The Battle of the Boyne Battlefield Site.

Further details on the importance of these landscapes can be found in Chapter 8 Natural Heritage, Biodiversity, and Green Infrastructure, and Chapter 9 Built Heritage and Culture.

Taking this into account, two Rural Policy Zones have been identified in the County as follows:

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<sup>1</sup> This definition is based on the EU/OECD definition of a city region which is where 15% of the principle workforce is employed in the principle city area.

<sup>2</sup> This criteria is set out in National Policy Objective 19 of the National Planning Framework.

<sup>3</sup> Regional Policy Objective 4.78

<sup>4</sup> Place of Work, School or College – Census of Anonymised Records.

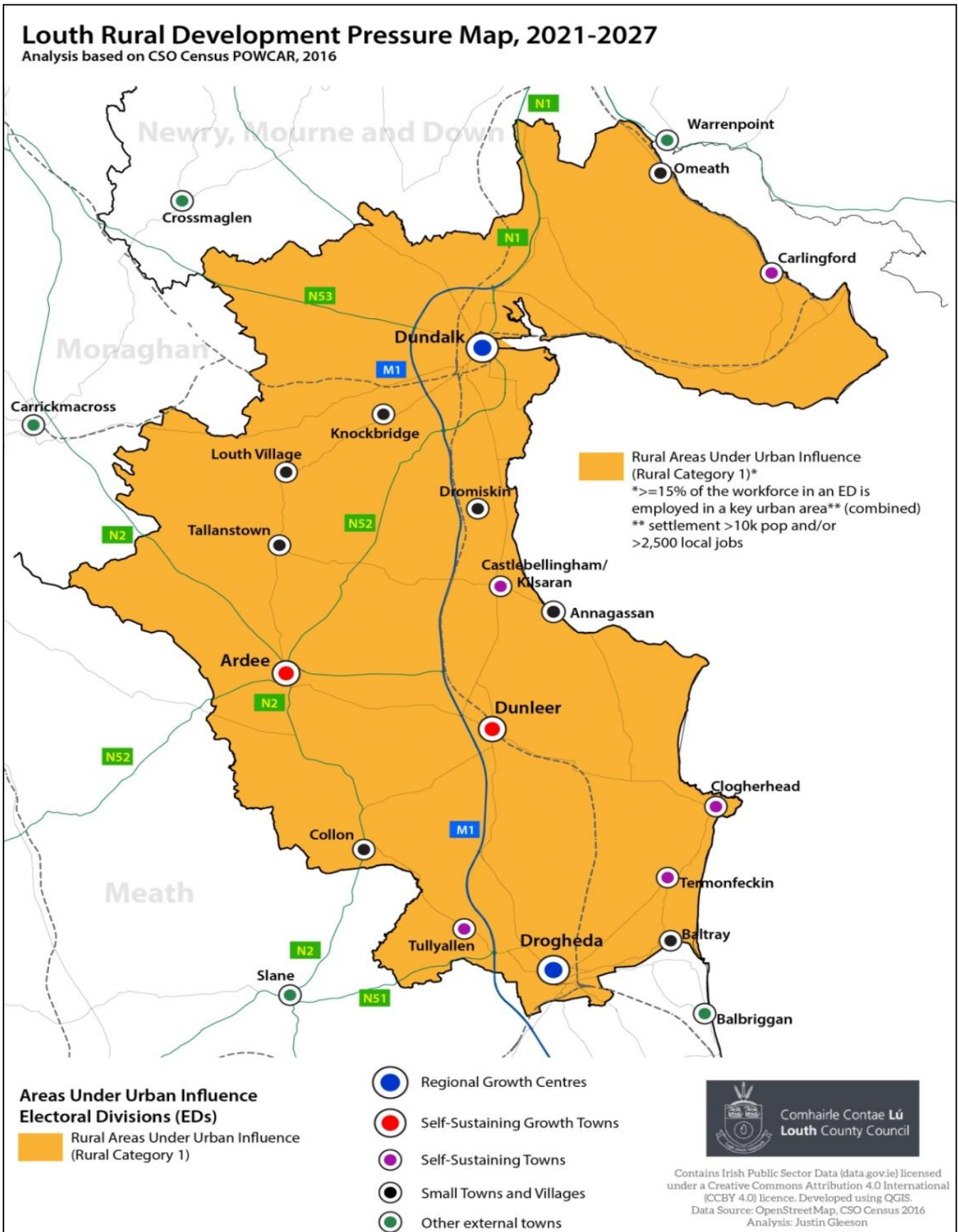
<sup>5</sup> Based on the OECD definition of a 'Functional Urban Area' if more than 15% of the resident population from an Electoral District travel to a city/large urban centre to work they are considered to be within the 'Functional Urban Area' or commuter catchment of that settlement.

**Table 3.3: Rural Policy Zones**

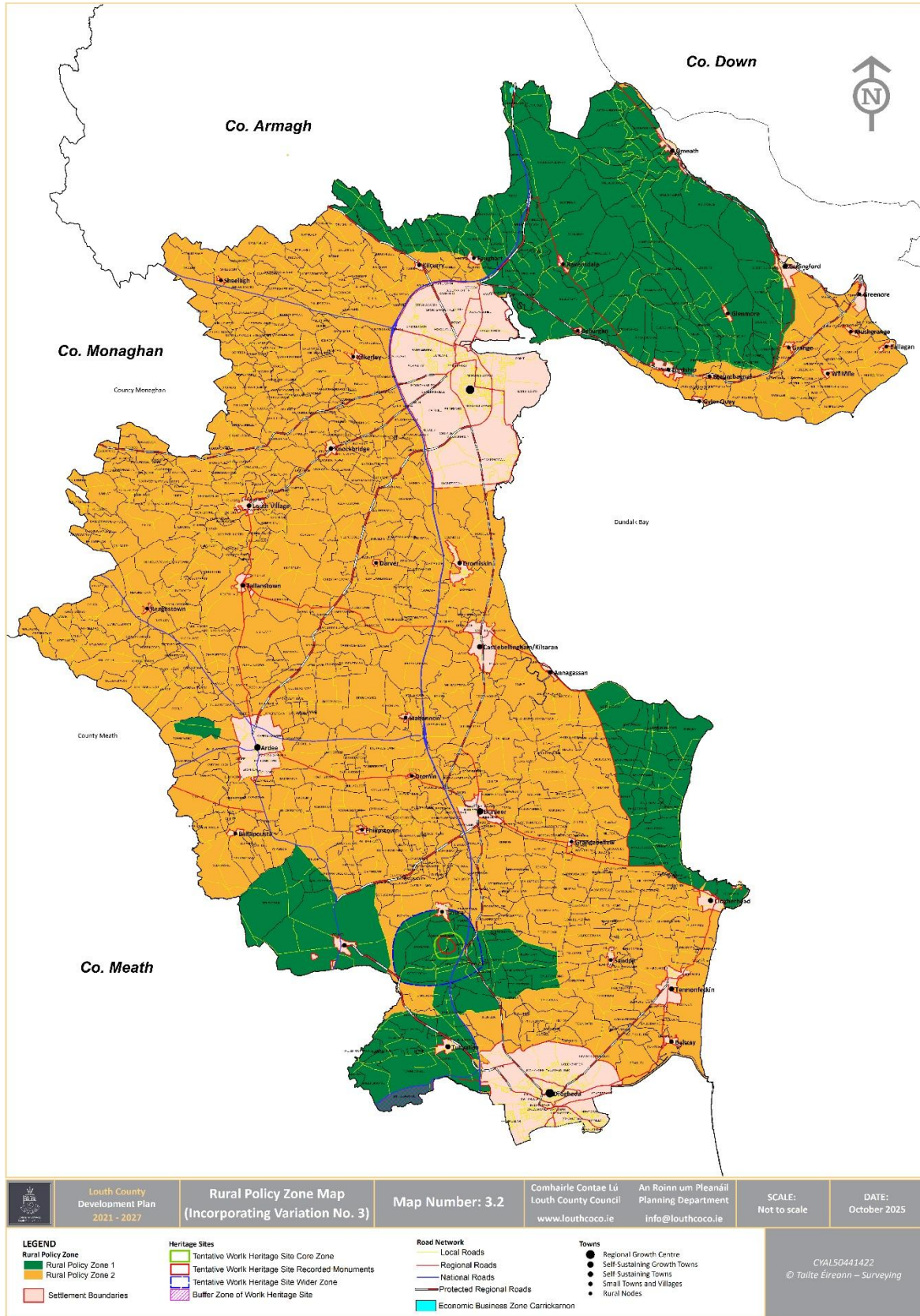
Policy Zone	Description
<b>Rural Policy Zone 1</b>	Area under strong urban influence and of significant landscape value
<b>Rural Policy Zone 2</b>	Area under strong urban influence

The extent of these policy zones are set out in Map 3.2.

Map 3.1: Louth Rural Development Pressure Map 2021-2027



Map 3.2: Rural Policy Zones in County Louth



### 3.17.4 Rural Generated Housing Need

This section sets out the policy for rural housing in the open countryside, which is defined as all areas outside the development boundary of settlements in Levels 1-5 identified in the settlement hierarchy in Table 2.4. It recognises the importance of facilitating people with a strong economic or social link to their local rural area, in strengthening the rural community. There is a specific qualifying criteria for each of the Rural Policy Zones that is set out in Tables 3.4 and 3.5.

Applicants will be required to demonstrate to the Planning Authority that they qualify with one of the criteria in the relevant Rural Policy Zone.

For clarification any persons from Rural Policy Zone 1 who are native residents of the area and have demonstrated a rural housing need but are not engaged in full time agricultural activities will be deemed to qualify to build on a suitably located site in Rural Policy Zone 2. The application site shall not normally be a distance of more than 6kms from the qualifying family residence.

#### **Local Rural Area:**

The radius of 6km from the qualifying family residence. Where the qualifying area is reduced by reason of its location, for example proximity to the coast, county boundaries, or development zone boundaries, the 6km radius may be extended to include an area equivalent to the area lost.

#### **Qualifying Landowner:**

A person who owns a landholding of at least 1.5 hectares and has owned the land for a minimum of 15 years.

*Table 3.4: Local Housing Need Qualifying Criteria in Rural Policy Zone 1*

#### Qualifying Criteria Rural Policy Zone 1 – Area Under Strong Urban Influence and of Significant Landscape Value

1. Persons engaged in full time agriculture. This includes livestock, poultry, dairy, and tillage farming, bloodstock and equine related activities, forestry, and horticulture. The nature of the agriculture activity shall, by reference to the landholding, livestock numbers, or intensity of the use of the land, be sufficient to support full time or significant part time occupation. Depending on the activity the documentation available will vary however the onus will be on the applicant to demonstrate the viability of the enterprise. Information to be provided shall include:
  - The size of the landholding;
  - The nature of the operations;
  - Buildings and storage associated with the operations;
  - Number of persons employed;
  - Livestock numbers (if applicable);
  - Participation in government schemes/ programmes e.g. Bord Bia Quality Assurance, Basic Payment Scheme (BPS), GLAS, or any similar/updated programmes or schemes;
  - Any other information that would support the application.

**Qualifying Criteria Rural Policy Zone 1 –  
Area Under Strong Urban Influence and of Significant Landscape Value**

**Or**

2. A son or daughter of a landowner (see definition above) who is/are seeking to build a first home for permanent occupation. A qualifying landowner is defined as a person who owns a landholding of at least 1.5 hectares and has owned the land for a minimum of 15 years. Any applicant under this category must demonstrate a rural housing need and have a demonstrable social or an economic need to live in the area and shall not have previously owned a dwelling. No more than three houses (exclusive of the family home) shall be permitted on the landholding. Any application will be subject to the appropriate siting and consideration of proper planning and sustainable development.

**Or**

3. A person who has an established business which is intrinsically reliant on being located in Rural Policy Zone 1 and consequently requires them to reside in Rural Policy Zone 1 of the rural area. The nature of the operations of the business shall be specific to this rural area being cognisant of the need to protect the high amenity value of the landscape. Any application shall demonstrate the viability of the business and clearly set out the nature of activities associated with the business and why it requires the owner to reside in the vicinity.

**Or**

4. Persons who are required to live in the rural area of Rural Policy Zone 1, for exceptional health reasons. The person will be required to have demonstrable economic or social ties to the area in the first instance to be considered under this category. Any application shall be accompanied by a medical consultant's report and recommendation outlining the reasons why it is necessary for the applicant to live in a rural area. The application shall also demonstrate why the existing home of the family member cannot be adapted to meet the needs of the applicant.

**Or**

5. Residents who have demonstrable social ties to the area and are providing care for an elderly person(s) or a person(s) with a disability who lives in an isolated rural area and who does not have any able bodied person residing with them. Any application shall demonstrate why the existing property cannot be extended or modified to provide residential accommodation for the carer. One house only will be allowed on this basis and the site must be adjacent to the dwelling in which the elderly person(s) or person(s) with the disability resides.

**Or**

6. A person who has been a resident for at least 10 years that previously owned a home and is no longer in possession of that home due to the home having been disposed of following legal separation / divorce / repossession and can demonstrate a social or economic need for a new home in the rural area.

*Table 3.5: Local Housing Need Qualifying Criteria in Rural Policy Zone 2*

**Qualifying Criteria Rural Policy Zone 2 –  
Area Under Strong Urban Influence**

1. Persons engaged in full time agriculture. This includes livestock, poultry, dairy, and tillage farming, bloodstock and equine related activities, forestry, and horticulture. The nature of the agriculture activity shall, by reference to the landholding, livestock numbers, or intensity of the use of the land, be sufficient to support full time or significant part time occupation. Depending on the activity the documentation available will vary however the onus will be on the applicant to demonstrate the viability of the enterprise. Information to be provided shall include:
  - The size of the landholding
  - The nature of the operations
  - Buildings and storage associated with the operations
  - Number of persons employed
  - Livestock numbers (if applicable)
    - i. Participation in government schemes/ programmes e.g. Bord Bia Quality Assurance, Basic Payment Scheme (BPS), GLAS, or any similar or replacement programmes or schemes.
    - ii. Any other information that would support the application.

**Or**

2. A person whose business requires them to reside in the rural area. The nature of the operations of the business shall be specific to the rural area. Any application shall demonstrate the viability of the business and clearly set out the nature of activities associated with the business and why it requires the owner to reside in the vicinity.

**Or**

3. Landowners including their sons and daughters who have demonstrable social or economic ties to the area where they are seeking to build their home. Demonstrable social or economic ties will normally be someone who has resided in the rural area of Louth for at least 18 years prior to any application for planning permission. Any applicant under this category must demonstrate a rural housing need and shall not own or have sold a residential property in the County for a minimum of 10 years prior to making an application.

**Or**

4. A person who is seeking to build their first house in the area and has a demonstrable economic or social requirement to live in that area. Social requirements will be someone who has resided in the rural area of Louth for at least 18 years prior to any application for planning permission. Any applicant under this category must demonstrate a rural housing need and shall not own or have sold a residential property in the County prior to making an application.

**Qualifying Criteria Rural Policy Zone 2 –  
Area Under Strong Urban Influence**

**Or**

5. An emigrant who was resident of the area (previously resided in the area for at least 18 years in total) and wishes to return to the area to live. The applicant shall not own or have sold a residential property in the County for a minimum of 10 years prior to making an application.

**Or**

6. Persons who are required to live in a rural area, for exceptional health reasons. Any application shall be accompanied by a medical consultant's report and recommendation outlining the reasons why it is necessary for the applicant to live in a rural area. The application shall also demonstrate why the existing home of the family member cannot be adapted to meet the needs of the applicant.

**Or**

7. Residents who have demonstrable social ties to the area and are providing care for an elderly person(s) or a person(s) with a disability who lives in an isolated rural area and who does not have any able bodied person residing with them. Any application shall demonstrate why the existing property cannot be extended or modified to provide residential accommodation for the carer. One house only will be allowed on this basis and the site must be adjacent to the dwelling in which the elderly person(s) or person(s) with the disability resides.

**Or**

8. A person who has been a resident for at least 10 years that previously owned a home and is no longer in possession of that home due to the home having been disposed of following legal separation / divorce / repossession and can demonstrate a social or economic need for a new home in the rural area.

### **3.17.5 Strengthening Rural Communities by Supporting the Rejuvenation of Small Towns and Villages**

The NPF and RSES recognise the importance of towns and villages in creating a vibrant and sustainable rural community. Throughout the County there is evidence of decline in rural towns and villages which has resulted in a reduction of services and a loss of vitality in the community. This Plan recognises the importance of striking a balance between facilitating residential development in the open countryside and reinvigorating towns and villages. It therefore supports the implementation of a ‘*New Homes in Small Towns and Villages*’ initiative which will involve Local Authorities, Irish Water, and local communities working closely to provide serviced sites in towns and villages.

If successfully implemented, this would provide a platform for the creation of sustainable rural communities, whereby an increase in population in towns and villages would increase the critical mass, create greater demand for services and establish a catchment population for local businesses. In developing these serviced sites the Council will also encourage close collaboration between other infrastructure providers including electricity, telecommunications and broadband providers.

### **3.17.6 Development in Level 5 Settlements – Rural Nodes**

There are 24 Level 5 Settlements in the County. These rural nodes consist of a cluster of houses and a limited level of services. Some of these nodes are served by public mains water and/or waste water supply, whilst there are others that are unserved.

There is capacity in these rural nodes to accommodate a small level of growth, with the capacity to accommodate growth dependent on the size of the settlement.

Any applicants applying to build a new dwelling in a Level 5 Rural Node will be required to demonstrate a rural housing need in accordance with the rural housing policy set out in Table 3.5 of this Plan. A person living in a Level 5 Rural Node and considered to qualify under Table 3.5 is considered eligible to build a dwelling in any Level 5 Rural Node.

The design and layout of any dwelling or development will have regard to the existing pattern of development in the settlement.

### **3.17.7 Capacity of Areas to Absorb Further Development**

As part of the management of development in the countryside, consideration will be given to the ability of an area to absorb further development of one off housing. Whilst this Plan recognises the importance of supporting rural communities, there is also a requirement to protect the landscape and countryside for future generations. In this regard, if it is considered that an area is becoming over developed due to the proliferation of one off housing and the local infrastructure does not have the capacity to accommodate further development, it is unlikely that planning permission will be granted.

Further details on the criteria, and considerations for the siting and design of one off rural dwellings, is set out in Section 13.9 and Section 13.9.4 of the Development Management Guidelines in Chapter 13.

**Policy Objective**

<b>HOU 38</b>	To discourage urban generated housing in rural areas and direct proposals for such housing to the towns and villages in Settlement Levels 1-4 in the County as set out in the Settlement Hierarchy in Table 2.4.
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**Policy Objective**

<b>HOU 39</b>	To support the growth and development of rural communities in the County by strengthening the role of rural towns and villages and facilitating development that would rejuvenate these settlements and make them an attractive location in which to live.
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**Policy Objective**

<b>HOU 40</b>	To reserve as decarbonisation zones, agricultural, open space, or recreational use, lands immediately surrounding or in the immediate vicinity of the development boundary of towns and villages in the County in order to prevent sprawl and a linear pattern of development, and to ensure there is a distinction between built up areas and the open countryside.
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**Policy Objective**

<b>HOU 41</b>	To support the development of a ' <i>New Homes in Small Towns and Villages</i> ' initiative in consultation with Irish Water, local communities, and other stakeholders in the provision of services and serviced sites to create 'build your own home' opportunities within the existing footprint of rural settlements.
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**Policy Objective**

<b>HOU 42</b>	To recognise the sensitive scenic and culturally important landscape in Rural Policy Zone 1 which includes Carlingford Lough and Mountains, part of the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Brú na Bóinne, the Tentative World Heritage Site of Monasterboice, and the Battle of the Boyne Battlefield Site, and the need to carefully manage development in these areas whilst recognising the existing communities in these areas.
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**Policy Objective**

<b>HOU 43</b>	To manage the development of rural housing in the open countryside by requiring applicants to demonstrate compliance with the Local Needs Qualifying Criteria relative to the Rural Policy Zone set out in Tables 3.4 and 3.5.
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**Policy Objective**

<b>HOU 44</b>	To manage the development of rural housing in the open countryside by requiring that any new or replacement dwelling is appropriately designed and located so it integrates into the local landscape and does not negatively impact or erode the rural character of the area in which it would be located.
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**Policy Objective**

<b>HOU 45</b>	To manage the development of new housing in Level 5 settlements by requiring applicants of new dwellings to demonstrate compliance with the Local Needs Qualifying Criteria as set out in Table 3.5.
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Policy Objective	
<b>HOU 46</b>	To attach an occupancy condition of 7 years in the form of a Section 47 agreement in respect of all planning permissions for new dwellings in rural areas and Level 5 Settlements restricting the use of the dwelling to the applicant, or to those persons who fulfil the criteria set out in Tables 3.4 and 3.5.

Policy Objective	
<b>HOU 47</b>	To apply a presumption against granting planning permission for a rural one off dwelling in Rural Policy Zone 1 where there is an alternative site available on family lands in Rural Policy Zone 2.

Policy Objective	
<b>HOU 48</b>	To restrict residential development on a landholding, where there is a history of development through the speculative sale or development of sites, notwithstanding the applicant's compliance with the local need criteria.

Policy Objective	
<b>HOU 49</b>	To require applications for one off rural housing to comply with the standards and criteria set out in Section 13.9 of Chapter 13 Development Management Guidelines 'Housing in the Open Countryside' or Section 13.19.9 if the site is located within the Brú na Bóinne UNESCO World Heritage Site, the Tentative World Heritage Site of Monasterboice, or the Battle of the Boyne Sites.

### 3.18 VERNACULAR DWELLINGS/ BUILDINGS

Traditional vernacular dwellings make an important contribution to the character of the rural landscape in the County. The Council will encourage the preservation of vernacular dwellings through careful restoration and adaptation over their demolition and replacement.

The Council will also encourage the restoration or adaptation of vernacular buildings such as former schoolhouses, churches and traditional farm outbuildings.

Any applicant proposing to restore, renovate or adapt a vernacular building for residential use will not be required to demonstrate a rural housing need in accordance with Section 3.17.4.

Sections 13.9.11 and 13.9.12 provide further information on the design criteria for the restoration of vernacular dwellings and buildings.

Policy Objective	
<b>HOU 50</b>	To encourage the sensitive refurbishment of existing vernacular dwellings and buildings and to generally resist the demolition and replacement of these buildings in order to protect the traditional building and housing stock and preserve the built heritage in the rural parts of the County.

**Policy Objective**

<b>HOU 51</b>	To require applications for refurbishment of vernacular dwellings/buildings to comply with the standards and criteria set out in section 13.9.12 of Chapter 13 Development Management Guidelines which relates to the 'Refurbishment of Existing Vernacular Dwellings and Buildings.'
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**3.19 REPLACEMENT DWELLINGS**

Whilst there is a general presumption in favour of retaining and refurbishing existing dwellings, particularly traditional vernacular dwellings that are part of the traditional housing stock and important features in the rural landscape, there will be instances where the replacement of existing dwellings may be acceptable.

Permission for the replacement of a vernacular dwelling will only be considered where it is demonstrated the subject vernacular dwelling is not reasonably capable of being made structurally sound or otherwise improved.

Any applicant proposing to replace an existing dwelling in residential use will not be required to demonstrate a rural housing need in accordance with Section 3.17.4, subject to the dwelling to be replaced fulfilling the criteria for a replacement dwelling. Section 13.9.13 provides further information on the design criteria for replacement dwellings.

**Policy Objective**

<b>HOU 52</b>	To ensure the design, scale, and layout of any replacement dwelling does not have a visual impact significantly greater than the dwelling to be replaced.
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**Policy Objective**

<b>HOU 53</b>	To require applications for replacement dwellings to comply with the standards and criteria set out in Section 13.9.13 of Chapter 13 Development Management Guidelines 'Replacement Dwellings'.
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