

Chapter 5

Residential and Community Facilities

5.1 Introduction

During the years of the economic boom in Ireland, County Louth experienced considerable pressure for residential development. During this period, much of County Louth effectively became part of a functional urban region centred on the Greater Dublin Area which by 2006 accounted for almost half



of the State's population. Also during the period, both road and public transport links between County Louth and the capital were greatly improved. This contributed in part to the growth in population in the county of 17.1% between 1996 and 2006 and by an increase of 8.9% between the period 2002 and 2006. Population growth within the county was boosted by in migration of just under 10% during this period.

Central Statistics Office population projections carried out over the period of the previous plan have indicated an implied assumption that significant population increases will continue for the foreseeable future. Whilst this could be a likely scenario, it should be noted that the increase in population should not be taken as a given. This Plan adopts a more precautionary approach to population growth. Historical experience has clearly illustrated that where an unstable or negative global economic climate is prevailing, as is likely during the period of the Plan, population levels can dramatically fluctuate. There is a risk that population and employment levels will decline due to the economic downturn.

This chapter contains the council's policy in respect of housing needs and development up to 2015, including details and policies in respect of community and other infrastructure required to support existing and new residential communities.

5.2 Louth Housing Strategy

Under *Section 96 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000* and the *Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2002*, each local authority is required to prepare a housing strategy. The aims of the housing strategy are to:

- Ensure that sufficient land is zoned and serviced to meet the housing needs of all sectors of the population, both existing and anticipated.
- Establish the amount of land required under Part V for social and affordable housing.
- Ensure that there is a range of housing types and sizes available to meet the housing needs of the community.
- Avoid social exclusion.

The *Louth Housing Strategy* is currently under review in tandem the Plan. However, until updated figures are available, the interim review of the *County Housing Strategy* undertaken in 2007 is referred to below. It provides projected housing requirements up to 2013 and 2015. This review projected a net increase of 3,505 in the number of households within the county up to 2009 and an increase of an additional 6,824 up to 2015. Based on a population projection of 130,031 by 2015, which is consistent with the population projection for County Louth contained in chapter 1 of the Plan, there will be an annual requirement for 1,137 residential units up to 2015. However it should be noted that this review was carried out prior to the current economic downturn and therefore the above projections may require downwards adjustment.

The settlement strategy detailed in this Plan seeks to determine where the majority of these additional units should be best located. There are however other factors including local housing requirements and market forces that are likely to influence the delivery and location of new residential units over the Plan period. The strategy has also identified that, given the amount of land already zoned for residential development within the towns and villages of the county, sufficient land is available for residential purposes to adequately accommodate anticipated increases in population. Whereas there is more than adequate land zoned for residential purposes not all of it is serviced. It is estimated that an additional 155 hectares need to be serviced by 2013.

Under *Part V of the Planning and Development Act, 2000* as amended by the *Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2002*, the provisions of the *Louth Housing Strategy* shall apply to relevant housing development taking place in the Plan area. Therefore the provisions of Part V will apply to housing developments on all sites in excess of 0.1 hectares or more than 4 houses where the lands are zoned residential or mixed use where residential is included. The housing strategy requires the transfer of completed houses, serviced sites, 20% of the site area or other land within the functional area of the planning authority or a payment of an amount of money for the purposes of social and affordable housing in accordance with the agreement between the developer and the council as provided for in the Act.

The number of units delivered under Part V up to the end of 2008 and the potential number of units for which agreements are in place for housing developments currently under construction are contained in table 5.1.

Table 5.1: Part V Social and Affordable Housing

	Social	Affordable	Total
Units provided	20	37	57
Potential Part V (Schemes under construction)	217	287	504

5.2.1 Residential Mix

Part V of the Act and the housing strategy require that there is a range of unit sizes and types to meet the varied housing needs of all sections of the community. This is also necessary to avoid large homogenous housing developments occupied predominantly by a single socio-economic group. In particular, the provision of increased numbers of units for one or two persons, starter homes, affordable housing and units designed or capable of easy adaptation for older people, people with disabilities and people with specific housing requirements will be encouraged. The *Louth Housing Strategy* requires that, except where specifically exempted, residential developments covered by Part V will have a mix of unit type and sizes in accordance with table 5.2 below.

Table 5.2: Residential Mix

House Type	Percentage of units to be provided.
1 bedroom and 2 bedroom	Not less than 21% (Not greater than 15% of the 21% will be 1 bed)
3 bedroom	Not less than 35%
4 bedroom plus	Not less than 14%

Where a mix of conventional housing and apartment developments are proposed, care should be taken to ensure that the houses and apartments are complimentary to each other in terms of the design, proportions and materials used.

Policy

- RES 1** To apply the provisions of Part V and the *Louth Housing Strategy* and to secure the provision of 20% of the units or site area for the purposes of social and affordable housing or otherwise in accordance with the means of compliance as set out in the *Planning Acts*.
- RES 2** To secure greater social integration and preservation of family and community ties through the provision of an appropriate mix of house type within residential areas in accordance with the provisions of the *Louth Housing Strategy* as detailed in table 5.2.

5.3 Social Housing

5.3.1 Housing Programme

The council maintains a rented stock of 843 housing units. This is a significant increase from 498 units in 2003 and is a direct result of the accelerated building programme delivered by the council during this period. The Housing Needs Assessment completed in March 2008 revealed that 644 applicants are in need of housing compared to 276 in 2002. Of the 644 applicants on the housing list, the majority 371 were single people, 155 were single parents with children and some 118 couples with children.

Building programmes by the local authority are based on an allocation of new home starts from the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government on a four year multi-annual programme basis. The *Housing Action Plan 2008 –2012* sets out a social housing delivery program over that period including capital allocation. It is subject to the prevailing budgetary situation at the time.

5.3.2 Affordable Housing Scheme

Under the *Affordable Housing Scheme 1999*, local authorities are directly involved in the provision of affordable housing units on council land. A total of 69 houses have been provided by the council under this scheme up to February 2009. It is anticipated that a further forty-one units will be added by the end of 2009. Beyond that no definite proposals are in the pipeline although the *Housing Action Plan* has a target of twenty for 2010.



5.3.3 Rental Accommodation Scheme

The *Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS)* is an initiative introduced to cater for the accommodation needs of people who are in receipt of rent supplement for more than eighteen months and who have a long-term housing need. In Louth at present there are approximately 1500 people in receipt of rent supplement of which approximately 740 are in receipt for a period in excess of eighteen months. The scheme is being administered by local authorities and is intended to provide an additional source of good quality rented accommodation for eligible persons and to enhance the response of local authorities to meet long-term housing need.

5.3.4 Social Housing Investment Programme 2009

In February 2009, the government issued the *Social Housing Investment Programme – Licensing Arrangements 2009*. This scheme provides for local authorities to lease dwellings for periods of 10 to 20 years from private developers and to rent houses so leased to qualifying applicants instead of the construction of new local authority housing.

5.3.5 Voluntary Housing and Co-operative Sector

A number of voluntary housing organisations contribute to the social housing stock within the county. The council recognises the valuable contribution made by the voluntary housing sector and will continue to co-operate with such groups in the delivery of housing units in the county.

Table 5.3: Voluntary Housing Output

Housing Association	Location	Units
Foscadh Housing Association	Collon	8
North and East Housing Association	Tullyallen	11
Grange and District Housing Association	Carlingford	12
St. John of God	Ardee	2

Policy

- RES 3** To implement the council's *Housing Action Plan*.
- RES 4** To implement the *Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS)* and the *Social Housing Investment Programme 2009*
- RES 5** To facilitate and co-operate with the voluntary housing and co-operative sector in the provision of social and affordable housing.

5.3.6 Traveller Accommodation

The council is currently reviewing its *Traveller Accommodation Programme* for the period 2009-2013, in accordance with the requirements of the *Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act, 1998*. There are currently no roadside travellers requiring accommodation in County Louth. The current programme envisages that accommodation needs can be met through standard local authority housing.

Policy

- RES 6** To meet accommodation needs of travellers by way of standard local authority housing.

5.4 Residential Development

The Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government has recently published a number of guidelines in relation to residential developments. These include the following - *Delivering Homes*, *Sustaining Communities*, *Sustainable Urban Design Guidelines—Standards for Apartments 2007*, *Quality Housing for Sustainable Communities* and the *Guidelines on Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas* and its accompanying *Urban Design Manual*.

The council will require that all residential developments comply with the Department's guidelines in addition to development management assessment criteria as set out below.



In particular, the council considers that the twelve assessment criteria grouped under the headings neighbourhood, site and buildings as detailed in the *Urban Design Manual* are valuable as a guide to development and should be adhered to. These are set out in table 5.4.

Table 5.4: Assessment Criteria Urban Design Guidance

Scale	Policy Issue	Objectives
Neighbourhood Area	1. Context	To promote places that are locally distinctive having regard to their setting and context.
	2. Connectivity	To promote places that allow for ease of movement, permeability and integration.
	3. Inclusively	To promote places that are accessible to all in terms of social integration, provide physical access to all and respond to local needs.
	4. Variety	To promote places that contain a mixture of viable uses and are able to respond to local needs.
Site	5. Efficiency	To promote places that make efficient use of land and are designed to respond to the challenge of climate change.
	6. Distinctiveness	To promote places that build upon existing site assets, have a clear identity, are legible and easy to navigate.
	7. Layout	To promote places with layouts, streets and spaces that are people friendly.
	8. Public realm	To promote public spaces that have vitality, are safe and secure, attractive and accessible to all.
Building	9. Adaptability	To promote places that are designed to be adaptable through time.
	10. Privacy and amenity	To promote the design of buildings that provide good standards of privacy and amenity.
	11. Parking	To promote the integration of car parking in the urban environment in a way that is well located, secure and attractive.
	12. Detailed Design	The design of the building should make a positive contribution to the locality.

Policy

RES 7 To require that new residential developments are consistent with the DoEHLG guidelines and *Urban Design Manual*.

5.5 Master Plans

Master plans are a valuable tool in ensuring the sustainable development of large areas of land particularly where such land is in multiple ownership. Master plans should be prepared by the applicant in consultation with the council and should establish strategic planning principles for each area including phasing, infrastructure provision, community facilities, density, layout, open spaces, landscaping and development design brief.

The principles elements of master plans are detailed below. Whilst this checklist provides a guide to the preparation of a master plan, it is not intended to be an exhaustive list. Therefore it is recommended that applicants and designers engage in a scoping exercise with the council in advance of the preparation of master plans in order to ensure that all relevant aspects of the proposed development are included. The agreed master plan shall be submitted with planning applications for all areas falling within the master plan boundary.

5.5.1 Checklist for the Preparation of Master Plans

1. Is the master plan consistent with the policies and objectives the Plan?
2. Is the master plan in compliance with the range of guidance documents issued by the by the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, with regard to design, density, the provision of educational and other facilities and flooding.
3. Is the master plan and design brief reflective of the twelve key considerations set out in the *Urban Design Manual - A Best Practise Guide*?
4. Does it establish an overall urban design framework for the development of the area including design guidance on quality architectural treatments, respect to topography, urban structure and built form consistent with the established character of the town and village?
5. Is an integrated infrastructure framework plan included for roads, cycle and pedestrian paths, bus routes, public lighting and water services?
6. Have the principles of sustainable urban drainage systems (SUDS) and water conservation measures been incorporated?
7. Has an audit of essential community facilities such as availability of school places, crèches and local shops been carried and where deficiencies have been identified, has provision been made to address these in the master plan?
8. Does it demonstrate how the development connects with the town or village centre, adjoining residential neighbourhoods and planned employment areas, in terms of safe and accessible pedestrian and vehicular linkages?
9. Does it contain a detailed design brief and guidance on the provision of high quality urban design and built form consistent with or complementary to the established character of the town or village and adjoining areas?
10. Does it include a comprehensive topographical survey setting out information on existing land form, flora and fauna including trees, hedgerows and other natural and manmade features?
11. Has a landscape plan been included, including where practical the retention of natural and man made features that give character to the area?
12. Does the master plan provide for the phasing of the development in spatial terms as well as the roll out of essential social and physical infrastructure?
13. Does it provide for the integration of sustainable design and building methods which promote energy conservation and efficiency?

Policy

- RES 8** To require developers and landowners to prepare master plans to ensure integrated and coherent development of large scale developments.

5.6 Homezone Principles

Homezones can facilitate higher density development due to the provision of on street parking and by designing the streets as attractive public spaces, thus reducing the requirement for private amenity for each dwelling unit. As such they are most suitable for town and village centres and edge of centre sites. The principles are however generic and therefore applicable across a range of instances and may be suitable in certain circumstances, especially where higher density schemes are proposed.

Homezones characteristics include:

1. Shared surface for vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists. A variety of surface treatments suited to a pedestrian environment, trees, planting and street furniture. Bollards and street lighting should be incorporated to afford pedestrian protection.
2. Features which require drivers to drive slowly such as speed bumps, ramps, chicanes, unclear junction priorities and restricted carriageway widths designed for a normal peak flow in the region of 100 vehicles per hour.
3. Vehicle pathways should be not less than 3 metres with passing opportunities provided in the carriageway at least every 50 metres.
4. Entrances clearly marked by localised signage and physical changes in the street surface.
5. High degree of permeability is important throughout the development therefore extensive use of cul-de-sacs is not desirable.
6. Bus routes within comfortable walking distance in the range 100 to 200 metres.
7. One way streets are not encouraged due to the tendency for vehicle drivers to increase speed in such areas.
8. Effective pedestrian and cycle desire lines should be provided.
9. Careful consideration of the requirements of people with mobility impairments including people with physical disabilities, people with sensory impairment, parents with prams, young children and older people. Special attention should be made to surface treatments.
10. Incorporation of a wide variety of housing design and development layout, including variations in building lines, building heights, deviations in the width and alignment of vehicle paths, variety of surface treatments and extensive use of street furniture and planting.



Policy

RES 9 To encourage the use of homezone design principles in the design of residential layout where appropriate.

5.7 Energy Performance of Dwellings

The EU Directive on the *Energy Performance of Buildings (EPBD)* contains a range of provisions aimed at improving energy performance of residential and non-residential buildings, both new-build and existing. As part of the Directive, a *Building Energy Rating (BER)* certificate, which is effectively an energy label, will be required at the point of sale or rental of a building, or on completion of a new building.

The current minimum energy performance requirements for residential buildings are set out in the *Second Schedule to the Building Regulations 1997 (S.I. No. 497 of 1997)*. Amendments to these statutory regulations came into effect from the 1st of July 2008, namely, the *Building Regulations (Amendment) Regulations 2007 (S.I. No. 854 of 2007)*. The provisions of these regulations must be complied with.

The council will encourage both passive and active solar design principles in residential developments in the interest of energy conservation and the reduction of green house gases. Passive solar design refers to matters such as orientation, size of openings and glazed areas, internal layout and avoidance of overshadowing.



Active solar design does not rely on site orientation or layout but is incorporated within building design to maximise energy efficiency and includes the use of technology such as solar panels, geothermal heat pumps and wood pellet burners in conjunction with very high levels of building insulation. In this regard the council considers it appropriate that at least 25% of all residential energy requirements should be obtained from renewable energy sources.

Policy

RES 10 To require that all residential units comply with improved energy ratings as set out under the amended *Building Regulations (S.I. No. 854 of 2007)*.

RES 11 To require applicants for residential developments to demonstrate that a minimum of 25% of the energy requirements of the building is from renewable sources.

5.8 Housing Layout Guidelines

5.8.1 Layout

New residential layouts should have user friendly designs to the forefront and high levels of connectivity and integration with existing areas. Thus excessively long cul-de-sac layouts should be avoided. Development proposals should have layouts which provide for and facilitate all forms of movement with desire lines to create a permeable interconnected series of routes that are easy and logical to navigate around.

The housing units should be focused on the streets and on creating active frontages by facing the front door directly onto the street. The streets should be designed as places where people live instead of just roads, thereby helping to creating a suitable environment whereby pedestrians, cyclists and children have priority. Traffic calming measures should be incorporated into the design and layout of the development rather than by the retro fitting of measures such as speed humps.

5.8.2 Security and Defensible Space

All proposals for new residential developments should be in accordance with the principles of defensible space. The key feature in defensible space is the importance of designing layouts which provide natural surveillance and some control over access thus enhancing the perceived ownership of an area by its residents.

Public lighting must be designed to ensure there are no dark alleys or other un-illuminated public areas. Housing should overlook car-parking areas and bus stops. Designers are advised to liaise with the local Garda at the early stage of designing the scheme in order to secure advice in relation to the elimination of aspects of the design that might give rise to anti-social behaviour.

5.8.3 Flexibility

Housing should be designed so as to be flexible, allowing for extensions to be built at a later stage. Larger housing units designed to be split into separate residential units or workspaces may be acceptable to the council if such an option is designed into the building at the outset. Appropriate provision of car parking and concerns regarding residential amenity would need to be addressed.

5.8.4 Access for all

In all proposals for new residential development, adequate provision should be made to enable people with mobility impairments to safely and independently access and use a building. When designing residential layouts, provision for movement for people with mobility impairments should be included at the design stage. Such provision should provide reasonable access to open space, public transport facilities and other public areas.

5.8.5 Lifetime Housing

Lifetime housing developments and units are designed to accommodate the changing

needs of the groups, families and individuals who will occupy them over the course of the house's lifetime. These needs will vary as each individual's circumstances change and the homes are designed to be inherently flexible in this respect. Lifetime homes should be fully physically accessible and easily adaptable at minimum cost with minimum disruption. The principles of universal, inclusive, barrier free design must be demonstratively applied where possible.

5.8.6 Building Lines

The desirability of creating different urban forms will require a more varied building line in order to reduce the often regimented appearance of suburban layouts. However, where there are established building lines, particularly on infill development sites, these should be respected.

Policy

RES 12 To ensure that a high degree of building flexibility is incorporated into the design of new dwellings within the county including adaptability to lifetime housing needs and provision of accessibility for people with impaired mobility.

5.8.7 Bus Routes and Stops

Within larger new residential developments, care should be taken to permit full penetration by public transport services when designing internal circular distribution routes. The overall layout should contribute to the efficient and logical movement of buses around the area. Bus routes should be identified and included in proposed layouts.

Careful consideration should be given to the provision of bus routes including the location of bus stops and lay-bys. Bus stops should be provided in locations where the majority of dwellings are at a maximum distance of 400 metres and should be located close to the main public road.

The design of surface treatments adjacent to bus infrastructure should highlight pedestrian needs and include dropped kerbs, tactile surfaces and clear signage.



Policy

RES 13 To require that master plans and planning applications for large scale residential developments identify bus routes and the location of bus stops and lay-bys in such a manner as to ensure that the majority of residents are no more than 400 metres from a stop.

5.8.8 Pedestrian and Cycle Infrastructure

The building of new roads, road improvement schemes and new residential developments, presents opportunities for the provision of pedestrian and cycle routes. Pedestrian and cycle routes should be as direct as practicable between commercial and residential areas and major attractors such as shops, schools and other community facilities, including public transport. There is a preference for segregated pedestrian and cycle tracks where possible.

In order to reduce dependency on car usage, it will be necessary to improve facilities for pedestrians and cyclists. The provision of better facilities for pedestrians and cyclists will encourage the use of more sustainable forms of transport.

Policy

RES 14 To require that master plans and planning applications for residential developments identify pedestrian and cycle paths within the site and externally to adjoining residential areas, existing services and community facilities.

5.8.9 School Transport

Traffic congestion owing to journeys to schools has become a significant element in morning rush hour traffic. In relation to existing schools, initiatives such as the “walking bus” and dedicated cycling routes could provide safe and viable alternatives to the car.

Policy

RES 15 To encourage safe and viable alternatives to the car for school traffic such as the walking bus and dedicated cycling routes, in any major planned housing development and in town and village centres.

5.9 Residential Standards

5.9.1 Density

The council recognises the benefits of increased residential density as recommended in the DoEHLG's *Residential Density Guidelines for Planning Authorities 1999*. The need for higher densities was based on consideration for trends towards smaller average household sizes, the need to encourage the provision of affordable housing and to support a more efficient use of energy in the residential developments. *Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas 2007* reviewed and revised the 1999 *Residential Density Guidelines*, particularly with regard to appropriate densities in smaller towns and villages.

The revised guidelines recommend that for towns and villages with a population of less than 5,000, new development should contribute to maintaining compact forms and its scale should be in proportion to existing development. The guidelines also require that new development should provide for easy connectivity to existing facilities especially by

pedestrians and cyclists and that leap-frogging of development at some distance from the existing built up area should be avoided.

Having regard to the DoEHLG guidelines on residential density and the need to maintain compact urban form, residential development will comply with the density requirements set out in table 5.5.

Table 5.5: Residential Densities for Towns and Villages with Populations of less than 5000.

	Densities per Hectare	Note
Centrally located sites	30 plus	Mainly residential schemes or mixed use schemes
Edge of centre sites	20-30	Include a variety of housing types – detached dwellings, terraced and apartment style
Edge of town and village	15-20	Densities lower than 15 units per hectare will be considered provided that this lower density does not represent more than 20% of the total planned housing stock and to reduce demand for scattered one off housing.

These density guidelines will be applied and further refined as part of the review of the local area plans of the towns and villages of the county.

Policy

RES 16 To apply density standards in respect of the county's towns and villages as set out in table 5.5 and to carry out further refinement where necessary as part of the review of the local area plans.

5.9.2 Private Amenity Space

The provision of an area of outdoor private amenity space, attaching or available to, each residential unit is important for the quality of the residential environment. Therefore all new residential units will have access to an area of private amenity space. In apartment and innovate layouts, private amenity space may be provided in the form of shared private areas, courtyards, terraces, patios, balconies and roof gardens or any acceptable combination of these.

Table 5.6: Private Amenity Space Standards

Dwelling Unit Type	Min. Private Open Space Standard (Square metres)
Houses - 1 and 2 bedrooms (Greenfield/suburban)	60
Houses – 3 plus bedrooms (Greenfield/suburban)	80
Houses (Town Centre/brown field)	50
Apartments/Duplexes (Greenfield/suburban)	
1 bedroom unit	20
2/3 bedroom unit	40
Apartments/Duplexes (Town Centre/ brownfield)	
1 bedroom unit	10
2/3 bedroom unit	20

Where it is considered appropriate in the interests of protecting residential amenity, the council will attach planning conditions requiring that certain categories of exempted development permissible within the curtilage of a private dwelling will not take place. This may include domestic garages, sunrooms and extensions.

Policy

RES 17 To require that private amenity space is in accordance with the quantitative standards set out in table 5.6.

5.9.3 Public Open Space

Qualitative Requirements

The provision of public open space within residential developments is a key requirement in the provision of high quality residential areas. The basic principle governing public open space is that provision should be made for both active and passive open space. Accordingly, open space networks should be an integral part of an overall development and provide linkages to adjoining areas of residential and community facilities. Open space networks should be organised along passive green linear parks, with pockets of active open space, community facilities and schools located close to or along them.

In proposed developments public open space should be arranged to facilitate the retention of existing landscape features, such as mature trees, hedgerows, biodiversity rich areas, streams, rivers and archaeological remains. The provision of high-quality landscaping, including the provision of semi mature trees, should be an integral part of any residential development.



Finished levels for public open space relative to adjoining areas and full details of hard and soft landscaping, play equipment and furniture should be provided as part of planning applications.

Passive surveillance, accessibility and linkages to other public open spaces, existing and proposed, should be incorporated into the layout. Peripheral areas, narrow tracts, back land areas and poorly proportioned areas will not be considered acceptable. No area of public open space should be less than 200 square metres in area and no boundary shall be less than ten metres in length.

It is recommended that public open space should be provided in a variety of forms to cater for the active and passive recreational needs of the community.

- Informal, flat kick-about areas
- Playgrounds for a specific age group, that is, local equipped play areas (LEAP) as specified by the National Playing Fields Association for 4-8 year olds or a neighbourhood equipped areas for play (NEAP) for 8-12 year olds.
- Circuit training facilities
- Formal playing fields
- Village greens in larger developments
- Landscaped gardens
- Small parks or natural parkland utilising existing and enhancing native flora and fauna
- Seating and rest areas
- Paved areas should be designed using sustainable urban drainage principles (SUDS)

Quantitative Standards

Table 5.7 sets down the quantitative standards for open space in residential areas.

Table 5.7: Quantitative Standards for Public Open Space

	Minimum Percentage of the gross Site Area
Standard Requirement*	15 %
Institutional Lands	20 %

**Where residential developments are in close proximity to public parks or other natural amenities or in the town centre, a relaxation of the above standards may be permitted. Where open space standards cannot be achieved, more intensive recreational facilities may be accepted by the council in lieu.*

Policy

- RES 18** To require that the quantitative standards, as detailed in table 5.7, are provided as public open space in all new residential developments and that the qualitative requirements described above are adhered to.
- RES 19** To ensure that no area of public open space is less than 200 square metres in area and no boundary is less than 10 metres in length.

5.9.4 Car Parking Provision

Car parking provision is important particularly in low density suburban sites and less so within high density sites in town centres or close to public transport facilities. Car parking spaces should be provided in accordance to table 5.8 below and designed to comply with the principles of passive surveillance.

Table 5.8: Residential Car Parking Standards

	Spaces per dwelling unit
Greenfield Sites/Suburban	2.0
Brownfield/Town Centre	1.0*

**A relaxation of this requirement may be considered in certain town and village centre sites where the applicant can demonstrate that there are satisfactory alternative transport modes readily available.*

The above standards are applicable in respect to both conventional housing, apartments and duplexes. However, within town centres, where infill development is proposed, the above standards may be relaxed and a financial contribution in lieu of the provision of car parking by the developer may be acceptable.

Policy

- RES 20** To ensure residential car parking provision as set down in table 5.8 are adhered to.

5.9.5 Privacy and Spacing between Buildings

The design and layout of a development should ensure sufficient privacy for its intended residents both within the dwelling and within an area of garden close to each dwelling.

A distance of at least 22 metres is recommended between the windows of habitable rooms which face those of another dwelling. In the case of windows of non-habitable rooms, within 22 metres of another facing window, obscure glazing may be acceptable.

Roof terraces and balconies are not acceptable where they would directly overlook neighbouring habitable rooms or rear gardens.

Where new buildings are located very close to adjoining buildings, the council may require that daylight and shadow projection diagrams be submitted. The recommendations of *Site Layout Planning for Daylight and Sunlight: A Guide to Good Practice* (B.R.E.1991) or *B.S. 8206 Lighting for Buildings, Part 2 1992: Code of Practice for Day lighting* should be followed.

5.9.6 Internal Space Requirements

Recommended minimum internal space requirements for houses and apartments are set down in the DoEHLG documents *Quality Housing for Sustainable Communities 2007* and *Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments (2007)*. Internal space requirements and room sizes are primarily determined by the uses of individual rooms and spaces. Living room and bedroom spaces should be well proportioned, in terms of floor shapes and ceiling heights, so as to provide a good quality living environment for the occupants.

It is important that the standards should relate to floor areas of different types of apartments and make provision for storage areas, balconies, patios and room dimensions. In line with the recommendations set out in the guidelines, the Plan requires that the minimum requirements for apartment sizes should not be taken as the norm and the majority of apartments in any scheme should exceed the minimum standard. It is considered that this is a reasonable and necessary requirement to ensure that new apartment development will provide for a sustainable and attractive living environment for future residents. In this regard, the Plan sets out the following requirements:

Tables 5.9, 5.10, 5.11, 5.12, 5.13, 5.14 and 5.15 which are abstracted from the DoEHLG guidelines set out the required space provision and room size requirements for typical dwellings and apartments. All proposed residential developments should be designed to comply with these guidelines.

Table 5.9: Space Provision and Room Sizes for Typical Dwellings

Dwelling Type	Target Gross Floor Area	Minimum Main Living Room	Aggregate Living Area	Aggregate Bedroom Area	Storage
	(m ²)	(m ²)	(m ²)	(m ²)	(m ²)
Family dwellings for 3 or more persons (P)					
4 bed / 7P House (3 storey)	120	15	40	43	6
4bed / 7P House (2 storey)	110	15	40	43	6
4bed / 7P House (1 storey)	100	15	40	43	6
4bed / 7P Apartment	105	15	40	43	11
3bed / 6P House	110	15	37	36	6

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(3 storey)					
3bed / 6P House (2 storey)	100	15	37	36	6
3bed / 6P House (1 storey)	90	15	37	36	6
3bed / 6P Apartment	94	15	37	36	10
3bed / 5P House (3 storey)	102	13	34	32	5
3bed / 5P House (2 storey)	92	13	34	32	5
3bed / 5P House (1 storey)	82	13	34	32	5
3bed / 5P Apartment	86	13	34	32	9
3bed / 4P House (2 storey)	83	13	30	28	4
3bed / 4P House (1 storey)	73	13	30	28	4
3bed / 4P Apartment	76	13	30	28	7
2bed / 4P House (2 storey)	80	13	30	25	4
2bed / 4P House (1 storey)	70	13	30	25	4
2bed / 4P Apartment	73	13	30	25	7
2bed / 3P House (2 storey)	70	13	28	20	3
2bed / 3P House (1 storey)	60	13	28	20	3
2bed / 3P Apartment	63	13	28	20	5
1bed / 2P House (1 storey)	44	11	23	11	2
1bed / 2P Apartment	45	11	23	11	3

Sources: *Quality Housing for Sustainable Communities, Best Practice Guidelines for Delivering Homes Sustaining Communities* DOEHLG 2007

Table 5.10: Minimum Floor Areas and Standards for Apartments

Minimum Overall Apartment Floor Areas	
One bedroom	45 sq m
Two bedrooms	73 sq m
Three bedrooms	90 sq m

Table 5.11: Minimum Aggregate Floor Areas for Living / Dining / Kitchen Rooms and Minimum Widths for the Main Living / Dining Rooms

Apartment Type	Width of living / dining room	Aggregate floor area of living/ dining / kitchen area*
One bedroom	3.3m	23 sq m
Two bedrooms	3.6m	30 sq m
Three bedrooms	3.8m	34 sq m

Note: an enclosed (separate) kitchen should have a minimum floor area of 6.5 sq.m. In most cases, the kitchen should have an external window.

Table 5.12: Minimum Bedroom Floor Areas and Widths

Type	Minimum width	Minimum floor area
Single bedroom	2.1 m	7.1 sq m
Double bedroom	2.8 m	11.4 sq m
Twin bedroom	2.8m	13 sq m

* Note: Minimum floor areas exclude built in-storage presses.

Table 5.13: Minimum Aggregate Bedroom Floor Areas

One bedroom	11.4 sq m
Two bedrooms	11.4 + 13 sq m = 24.4 sq m
Three bedrooms	11.4 + 13 + 7.1 sq m = 31.5 sq m

Table 5.14: Minimum Storage Space Requirements

One bedroom	3 sq m
Two bedrooms	6 sq m
Three bedrooms or more bedrooms	9 sq m

Table 5.15 Minimum Floor Areas for Main Apartment Balconies

One bedroom	5 sq m
Two bedrooms	7 sq m
Three bedrooms	9 sq m

Source: Sustainable Urban Housing, Design Standards for New Apartments, 2007

Policy

- RES 21** To require that all proposed residential developments including apartments comply with the internal space provisions as set out in tables 5.8 to 5.11.
- RES 22** To require that the minimum apartment sizes set out in table 5.9 is exceeded by at least 20% in respect of not less than 50% of the total number of units in the scheme.
- RES 23** To ensure that in any apartment development of 30 or more units, 40% of the units should exceed 80 square metres in area.

5.9.7 Waste Storage

Adequate provision should be made for the storage, segregation and recycling of waste and for convenient access for its deposit and collection as detailed in table 5.16. Refuse enclosures should be designed so that they are integrated with the building or boundary enclosures and are well screened.

Table 5.16: Provision for Waste Storage

Units type	Provision requirements
Detached Semi Detached	Direct external access should be made available from the rear of the dwelling to the public road for collection.
Terraced Duplex	Communal bin storage facilities should be provided at secure, well screened locations convenient to the units served and for the purposes of collection.
Apartment	Communal bin storage facilities should be provided in a secure well ventilated space within the basement of the apartment block convenient to the units served and for the purposes of collection.

Policy

- RES 24** To ensure that provision is made for the storage, segregation and recycling of waste and for convenient access for its deposit and collection.

5.9.8 Building Heights

In general, all new development should be consistent in height with adjoining structures. Within developments there should be a mixture of typologies and sizes. Except in exceptional circumstances, the council considers that residential buildings should not exceed four storeys in height, including roof space development, except where provision for higher buildings is provided for in any local area plan.

Policy

RES 25 To require that residential buildings shall not exceed four storeys in height, including roof space development, except where provision for higher buildings is provided for in any local area plan.

5.9.9 Naming of Estates

The council will require the naming of residential developments to reflect local or historical place names in accordance with the Department of the Environment and Local Government circular entitled *Naming of Streets and Roads, Numbering of houses and the Use of Irish*. The naming of all development shall seek and gain the approval of the Louth Local Authorities Place Names Committee.



5.9.10 Public Art

Public art should be provided alongside infrastructure and development schemes through the *Percent for Arts Scheme* administered by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government. The council should be consulted on opportunities for permanent art to reflect to area's heritage and to enhance focal points within towns, villages and developments.

Policy

RES 26 To require planning applications for residential schemes in excess of seventy five dwelling units incorporate works of public art.

5.9.11 Management

Where it is intended that roads, services or public spaces will be retained in private or communal ownership, estate management schemes should be prepared and implemented. These arrangements must be approved by the council and covered by a condition attached to the relevant planning permission.

5.9.12 Taking in Charge of Housing Estates

The council is required under the provisions of *Section 180 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000* to take in charge roads, open spaces, car parks, sewers, watermain and drains where requested to do so by the person carrying out the development or by a majority of the owners or occupiers of the houses involved. The council's policy and procedures in relation to taking in charge housing estates is set

down in the policy document *Procedures for Taking in Charge of Recently Completed Housing Estates*. This document is attached as appendix 8.

Policy

- RES 27** To take in charge on request housing developments of two or more houses where the development has been completed to the satisfaction of the council in accordance with the permission and any conditions to which the permission is subject and having regard to the policy document *Procedures for Taking in Charge of Recently Completed Housing Estates*.

5.10 Community Facilities

Successful communities require a wide range of local services and facilities. These include employment, shops, childcare, educational, health, civic amenities and leisure based activities. All community facilities as far as is practical should be readily accessible from residential areas by safe, convenient and direct walking routes. In this regard, the layouts of new residential developments need to facilitate pedestrian and cycle movements.



It is essential that new residential developments in the county are carried out in such a manner as to provide for the provision of childcare facilities, healthcare, nursing homes, community buildings, sports facilities and amenity schemes in tandem with the completion of houses. To facilitate this, applicants for planning permission for residential developments on sites over 1 hectare (2.47 acres) or for more than 50 residential units, will be required to submit an audit of community facilities as part of the planning application. This should provide details of all available community facilities in the locality and where a shortfall in facilities exists, demonstrate how this will be made good, either through provision on site or such other means as is acceptable to the council.

Policy

- COM 1** To require applications for residential developments on sites of one hectare or over or for more than 50 residential units provide an audit of existing community facilities in the locality and where a shortfall in facilities exist, demonstrate how this will be made good, either through provision on site or such other means as is acceptable to the council.
- COM 2** To identify and zone land within local area plans for the purposes of providing or extending community facilities where a demonstrated need exists.

5.11 Schools and Education

In July 2008, the Department of Education and Science and the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government published a joint document entitled *The Provision of Schools and the Planning System - A Code of Practice for Planning Authorities*. This is part of a package of initiatives designed to facilitate the timely and cost-effective provision of schools, particularly primary schools and school related infrastructure. It includes new mechanisms for site identification and acquisition.



There are currently seventy-five primary and seventeen post-primary schools and one third level institution, Dundalk Institute of Technology, within County Louth.

Table 5.17: Primary Schools in County Louth

	Ordinary	Special	Total
Number of schools	70	3	73

Table 5.18: Post - Primary Schools in County Louth

	Secondary	Vocational	Community	Comprehensive	Total
Numbers in Co. Louth	11	5	1	-	17

Source: Department of Education

The Department of Education and Science calculates future primary school requirements on the basis of 12% of the overall population in school catchment areas and on the basis of 25 pupils per classroom. The council will adopt these guidelines in relation to the calculation of future primary school demands and will require that master plans and large scale applications provide school sites in accordance with it.

Policy

- COM 3** To co-operate with the Department of Education in the identification of need and provision of school sites.
- COM 4** To identify and zone lands as required in local area plans for schools and educational infrastructure as required.
- COM 5** To facilitate and encourage multi-school campus arrangements incorporating both primary and secondary levels.

5.12 Childcare Facilities

Childcare may be defined as full day care, session facilities and services for pre-school children and school going children during out of school hours. It is recognised that the increased female participation in the labour force together with social change has resulted in a major increase in the demand for childcare. Access to good quality childcare facilities contributes to the social, emotional and educational development of children. The *Childcare Facility Guidelines for Planning Authorities* which were published by the Department of the Environment and Local Government in 2001 advocate a more pro-active role by the council in the promotion of increased childcare provision.

The Department's guidelines recommend the provision of a twenty unit crèche or child care facility for every seventy-five houses within new developments. Where it is demonstrated to the satisfaction of the council that there are sufficient childcare spaces available



in the locality, the council will not require that additional child care facilities be provided. Where this applies, developers will be required to provide other community benefits by way of direct provision or financial contribution in lieu as agreed with the council.

The *National Childcare Strategy 2006-2010* produced by the Department of Health and Children and the *Louth Childcare Strategy* aim to improve the availability and quality of childcare to meet the needs of both children and parents. A new *National Childcare Investment Programme 2006 - 2010* is expected to create a further 50,000 childcare places.

Policy

- COM 6 To ensure that adequate and suitable childcare facilities are provided having regard to DoEHLG guidelines and the *Louth Childcare Strategy*.
- COM 7 To seek the provision of additional community benefits by way of direct provision or financial contribution in lieu of the provision of childcare provision where it is demonstrated to the satisfaction of the council that there are sufficient childcare spaces available in the locality.

5.13 Nursing Homes

The demand for nursing and care facilities for older people has grown over the last number of decades. Advances in the field of medicine as well as improved nutrition and quality of life have increased average life expectancy. Between 2001 and 2007 some 217 bed spaces were provided in private nursing homes in the county.

Guidelines for the location of Nursing Homes in County Louth contains a presumption against nursing home developments in the open countryside for reasons relating to unsustainability, poor accessibility, social exclusion and visual intrusion.

Policy

- COM 8** To require that nursing homes be located within or adjacent to towns and villages.
- COM 9** To ensure that all applications comply with the planning considerations as detailed in *Guidelines for the Location of Nursing Homes in County Louth*.

5.14 Primary Health Facilities

The provision of health care facilities is a function of the Health Service Executive (HSE). The council can assist however by ensuring that provision is made within development plans and local area plans for such facilities. Where new large scale housing development is proposed, the council will require the provision of new or extension to existing primary health facilities. It is desirable that good quality, accessible health care is provided in the local community.

Policy

- COM 10** To facilitate the provision of primary health facilities within towns and villages including Category I and Category II(a) settlements and within new large scale residential developments.

5.15 Community Buildings and Sports Facilities

Community buildings and sports and recreation facilities play a very important role in fostering a sense of community identity and well being. With the substantial increase in population in the county and projected further growth, it is important that the necessary facilities are provided through the county and in new residential developments.

In 2006 the *Louth Local Authorities Sports and Recreation Strategy 2006-2012* was prepared. The aim of this strategy is to establish a set of strategic objectives to increase opportunities for sport, recreation, play and leisure for the inhabitants of the county. The council will seek to secure the implementation of this strategy over the period of the Plan.

Policy

- COM 11** To ensure that adequate provision is made for community buildings, sports and recreational facilities, including playing fields and children play areas in master plans and residential proposals, having regard to the *Louth Local Authorities Sports and Recreation Strategy 2006-2012*.
- COM 12** To resist the loss of existing social and community facilities and playing fields.

5.16 Disabled Persons

The Barcelona Declaration 2002, of which Ireland is a signatory advocates the right of disabled people to equal opportunities and recognises their contribution to society and the environment they live in. Under the terms of the Barcelona Declaration, the council consulted with people with disabilities and adopted the *Louth Local Authorities Disability Implementation Plan 2008 -2015*. This plan outlines actions that the local authority will take to ensure that persons with disability and impaired mobility have unrestricted access to their buildings and services.

In addition, Part M of the Building Regulations 1990 requires that all public and private buildings will have provision for suitable access for disabled persons.

Policy

COM 13 To implement the *Louth Local Authorities Disability Implementation Plan 2008 -2015*.

COM 14 To ensure that access for disabled persons is provided in accordance with *Part M of the Building Regulations 1990*.

5.17 The Library Service

The council provides a countywide network of library services serving individual communities and the county as a whole. There are five libraries in the county, Drogheda, Dundalk, Carlingford, Ardee and Dunleer.

Dundalk and Drogheda provide a regional service. Both libraries have hosted numerous visits by school classes, adult students and other groups. There has been much work carried out in the expansion of IT facilities for the public. These included courses for public use on terminals, public cards for use on public internet terminals and the provision of a wide selection of CD ROMs.

In meeting the needs of people at risk of social exclusion, the library service has established links with the local office of the National Council for the Blind whereby blind and partially sighted people can borrow talking books from the library. The council will continue this policy of establishing links with socially excluded members of our society. The smaller libraries and mobile library service continue to improve library participation by reaching communities in the more local centres. The mobile library service has continued to extend its range of stops to suit the needs of the community, incorporating as many stops as possible both urban and rural.

Policy

COM 15 To continue to improve the library service in County Louth to meet the current and future needs of all members of the community and to strengthen links with socially excluded members and groups of our society.

5.18 Emergency services

Dundalk fire service, Drogheda fire service and Louth county fire service all work together to provide operational fire cover for the people of Louth. Fire prevention and building control for the three authorities is provided by Louth County Council.

The major emergency plan was reviewed in 2007 in accordance with revised DoEHLG requirements and is currently in place. This plan will be reviewed from time to time to ensure that it remains relevant and up to date in order to ensure the safety of the people of the county.

Policy

COM 16 To continue to improve the delivery of the fire and emergency services within the county and to review the major emergency plan as required.

