



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlements

Guidelines for Planning Authorities



Prepared by the Department
of Housing, Local Government
and Heritage
gov.ie

The guidelines set out policy and guidance in relation to the planning and development of urban and rural settlements, with a focus on sustainable residential development and the creation of compact settlements.



(Image source: Proctor and Matthews Architects, Tim Crocker)

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Minister's Foreword

I very much welcome the publication of the Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlements Guidelines for Planning Authorities, which set national planning policy and guidance in relation to the planning and development of settlements and housing. These guidelines build on and update previous guidance, taking account of current Government policy and economic, social and environmental considerations. They are timely particularly in light of the Government's overall objective to increase housing supply as set out under Housing for All.

The guidelines expand on the higher-level policies of the National Planning Framework (NPF) in relation to the creation of settlements that are compact, attractive, liveable and well designed. There is a focus on the renewal of settlements and on the interaction between residential density, housing standards and placemaking to support the sustainable and compact growth of settlements.

While progress continues to be made on housing delivery, the greater flexibility offered by these guidelines will help in achieving our aim of providing a broader range of housing options to meet the needs of a growing and more diverse population. I see this as critically important, as we respond to population growth and facilitate a more sustainable way of building high-quality places for existing and future communities.

The guidelines support the application of densities that respond to settlement size and to different place contexts within each settlement, recognising in particular the differences between cities, large and medium-sized towns and smaller towns and villages. They will also allow greater flexibility in residential design standards, setting national standards for the first time that support innovation in housing design and a greater range of house types. The standards will support the delivery of more compact 'own-door' housing, as an alternative to apartment developments at the right locations. This approach will not preclude traditional forms of housing, as the standards set out are minimum rather than maximum standards.

These guidelines will assist planning authorities in the preparation and adoption of city and county development plans and support a more consistent policy approach across local authority areas. They provide a sustainable basis to manage growth in all settlements and I am confident that the guidelines strike an appropriate balance in that regard. The greater level of flexibility provided for within the guidelines will also assist in addressing viability constraints within the construction sector.

Le gach dea-ghuí,



Mr. Darragh O'Brien T.D.

Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage

Minister of State's Foreword

I warmly welcome the publication of the Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlements Guidelines for Planning Authorities. The guidelines set national planning policy and guidance in relation to the delivery of sustainable housing in settlements of all sizes.

The approach in relation to residential density enables appropriate standards to be applied across a greater range of settlements, from cities to smaller towns and villages, and reflects the different places within each settlement, from central and urban areas to edge locations. Furthermore, greater flexibility in residential design standards will support the delivery of compact 'own door' housing and a greater range of affordable housing options. These guidelines will support a more consistent approach across local authority areas.

The guidelines also respond to our national obligations under European Directives and international agreements relating to the management and protection of the environment and biodiversity and the transition towards net zero by 2050. These considerations have become more central to the operation of the planning system since the Sustainable Residential Development Guidelines were published in 2009. For that reason, it is important to ensure that communities can continue to develop in a sustainable way, while safeguarding and protecting key environmental resources.

Le gach dea-ghuí,



Mr. Kieran O'Donnell T.D.

Minister of State for Local Government and Planning



1.0

Introduction and Context

1.0 Introduction and Context

1.1 Guidelines under the Planning and Development Act 2000

The Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlements Guidelines for Planning Authorities “the Guidelines” will constitute Ministerial Guidelines under Section 28 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended). Section 28 provides that planning authorities and An Bord Pleanála shall have regard to Ministerial Guidelines and shall apply any specific planning policy requirements (SPPRs) of the Guidelines, within the meaning of Section 28 (1C) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), in the performance of their functions.

1.2 Overview of the Guidelines

The Guidelines set out policy and guidance in relation to the planning and development of urban and rural settlements, with a focus on sustainable residential development and the creation of compact settlements. They are accompanied by a companion non-statutory Design Manual that illustrates best practice examples of how the policies and objectives of the Guidelines can be applied.

These Guidelines replace the Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas Guidelines for Planning Authorities issued as Ministerial guidelines under Section 28 of the Act in 2009, which in turn replaced the Residential Density Guidelines issued in 1999. They build on and update previous guidance to take account of current Government policy and economic, social and environmental considerations. There is a renewed focus in the Guidelines on the renewal of existing settlements and on the interaction between residential density, housing standards and quality urban design and placemaking to support sustainable and compact growth.

The Guidelines are set out in five chapters as follows:

- **Chapter 1 ‘Introduction and Context’** describes the key characteristics of sustainable and compact growth and sets out a summary of Government policy in the areas of spatial planning and housing, climate, sustainable mobility and architecture that inform the policy approach.

- **Chapter 2 ‘Implementation’** addresses the interaction of these Guidelines with the plan making and development management processes and with other relevant Section 28 Guidelines.

- **Chapter 3 ‘Settlement, Place and Density’** sets out policy and guidance in relation to the key growth priorities for settlements at each tier in the national settlement hierarchy and in relation to residential density.

- **Chapter 4 ‘Quality Urban Design and Placemaking’** sets out policy and guidance in relation to quality urban design and placemaking to be applied in the plan making process and in the assessment of individual planning applications.

- **Chapter 5 ‘Development Standards for Housing’** sets out policy and guidance in relation to the design of housing and standards to be applied in support of greater innovation within the housing sector and to facilitate more compact forms of residential development.

1.3 Sustainable and Compact Growth

1.3.1 National Planning Framework

The National Planning Framework (NPF) 2018 sets out a high-level strategy for the planning and development of Ireland to 2040. The NPF forecasts that Ireland will continue to experience population growth above the EU average over the next 20 years, with an expected increase of around one million people above 2016 levels by 2040. The strategy to accommodate this growth in a sustainable way focuses on 10 national strategic outcomes that include Compact Growth, Sustainable Mobility, Enhanced Amenity and Heritage, a Low Carbon and Climate Resilient Society and the Sustainable Management of Water, Waste and Environmental Resources (Figure 1.1 refers).

Figure 1.1

Illustration from the National Planning Framework - National Strategic Outcomes

Source: Government of Ireland



The overarching strategy to accommodate growth to 2040 can be summarised under three spatial headings:-

- Regional Balance:** Achieve more regionally balanced population growth, split roughly 50:50 between the Eastern and Midland Region and the rest of the country.
- City and Regional Growth Drivers:** To underpin regional balance, target 50% of projected population growth into the five cities of Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Galway and Waterford, with the balance of growth targeted throughout the country. The strategy supports the future growth of Dublin as Ireland's leading global city of scale. It also sets ambitious growth targets for the four cities of Cork, Limerick, Galway and Waterford.

- (c) Compact Urban Growth: Target 50% of new housing growth in the five cities within the existing built-up footprint, on infill or brownfield lands. Target 30% of new housing growth in all other settlements, within the existing built-up footprint, on infill and brownfield lands.

The Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlements Guidelines for Planning Authorities will expand on the high-level strategy of the NPF and set out detailed growth criteria to support the development of sustainable and compact settlements.

1.3.2 Compact Growth

The NPF priorities for compact growth include an emphasis on the renewal of existing settlements, rather than continued sprawl. This priority recognises the impacts that our dispersed settlement pattern (including the dispersal of residential, commercial and employment uses within settlements) is having on people, the economy and the environment. In particular, there is a recognition that dispersed settlement patterns are contributing to the social, economic and physical decline of the central parts of many of our cities and towns, as population and activities move out. There is a recognition that dispersed settlement patterns create a demand for travel and embed a reliance on carbon intensive private car travel and long commutes that affect quality of life for many citizens. Dispersed growth is also accelerating environmental degradation through loss of farmland and habitat and impacts on water quality. It creates a higher demand for new infrastructure and services in new communities that places a heavy financial burden on the State and results in a constant cycle of infrastructure catch-up.

By comparison, international experience shows that compact settlements with an integrated network of well-designed and mixed-use neighbourhoods have many benefits. These neighbourhoods tend to offer improved access to services and amenities, better integration with existing infrastructure and public transport, more efficient use of land, and facilitate and support a transition to lower carbon living. The term '15 minute city' has been used in recent years to describe compact neighbourhoods with a range of local services and amenities and access to public transport all within a short walk or cycle of homes (Figure 1.2 refers). This should be the overarching objective when planning for sustainable residential development and compact settlements. Planning authorities at settlement level should plan for an integrated network of well-designed neighbourhoods that can meet day-to-day needs (such as food, healthcare, education, sports and professional services) within a short 10 to 15 minute (approx.) walk of all homes. In the case of larger settlements, the residents of less central neighbourhoods should have opportunities to travel by public transport and other sustainable modes (e.g. greenways) to access higher order services, employment and amenities at more central and accessible locations. This will reduce the need for travel and the need for travel by private car, supporting the transition to a lower carbon society and the creation of settlements that are more socially inclusive.

In order to achieve compact growth, we will need to support more intensive use of existing buildings and properties, including the re-use of existing buildings that are vacant and more intensive use of previously developed land and infill sites, in addition to the development of sites in locations served by existing facilities and public transport.

The NPF targets for infill and brownfield development recognise that there is significant capacity within all settlements to accommodate a growing economy and a growing population and to enhance placemaking and restore nature and biodiversity. Since the publication of the NPF in 2018, there has been significant investment in our urban areas through the National Development Plan's Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF) and the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (RRDF). More recently, funding aligned with Town Centre First policy and investment in active travel and public transport have provided additional focus on these objectives. The URDF/RRDF and Town Centre First initiatives support regeneration and rejuvenation in settlements to ensure that our urban areas are attractive and vibrant places, where people choose to live, work, invest and visit. Investment under the National Transport Authorities Active Travel Investment Programme aims to create safer walking and cycling routes to improve access to local services and to public transport¹. The Government is also advancing a range of land activation and active land management measures to ensure that the potential for urban development and regeneration in the built-up area of cities and towns and at locations close to services and good quality public transport can be accelerated.

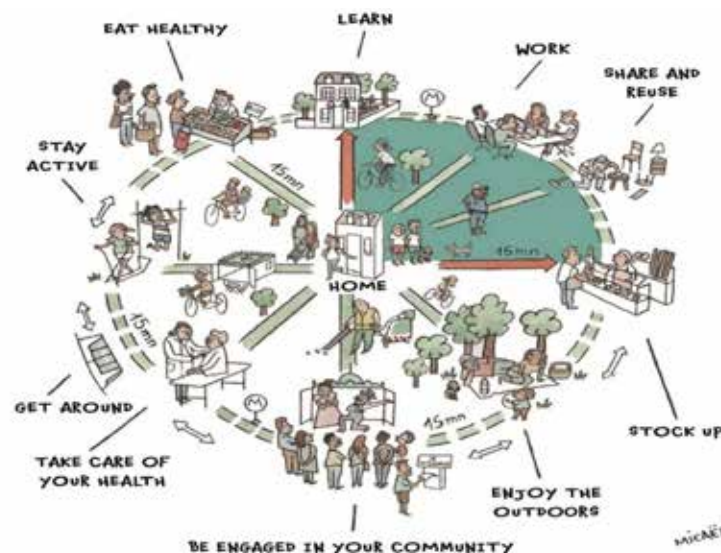
To achieve compact growth, it will also be necessary to increase the scale of new buildings in all parts of our cities and towns, with highest densities at the most central and accessible urban locations, particularly in city centres and close to public transport nodes and interchanges. It will also be necessary to adapt the scale and form of development to the receiving environment and to ensure a proportionate response. Higher densities and taller buildings that exceed the traditional scale will be encouraged in the most central and accessible parts of our cities and large towns, particularly in large regeneration areas, and subject to the protection of historic fabric, character, amenity, natural heritage, biodiversity and environmental quality. Mid-rise medium density housing will have a critical role to play outside of the urban cores at accessible and intermediate locations in particular, in combination with traditional housing. This approach will provide greater diversity in housing stock at all locations and support a critical mass of population that will make services, including public transport, more viable.

Government policy at national, regional and local levels has a central role to play in supporting and empowering the critical decisions needed to deliver compact growth and make it more attractive to citizens. The Government is confident that sustainable densification is readily achievable in all settlements and that it will lead to better outcomes for citizens and the environment.

Figure 1.2

15 Minute City

Source: Georgia Pozoukidou and Zoi Chatziyiannaki, in *15 minute City: Decomposing the New Planning Eutopia*, 2021



¹ Refer to [Active Travel Investment Programme](#) - National Transport Authority for further details.

1.4 Related Government Policy

1.4.1 Housing for All (2021)

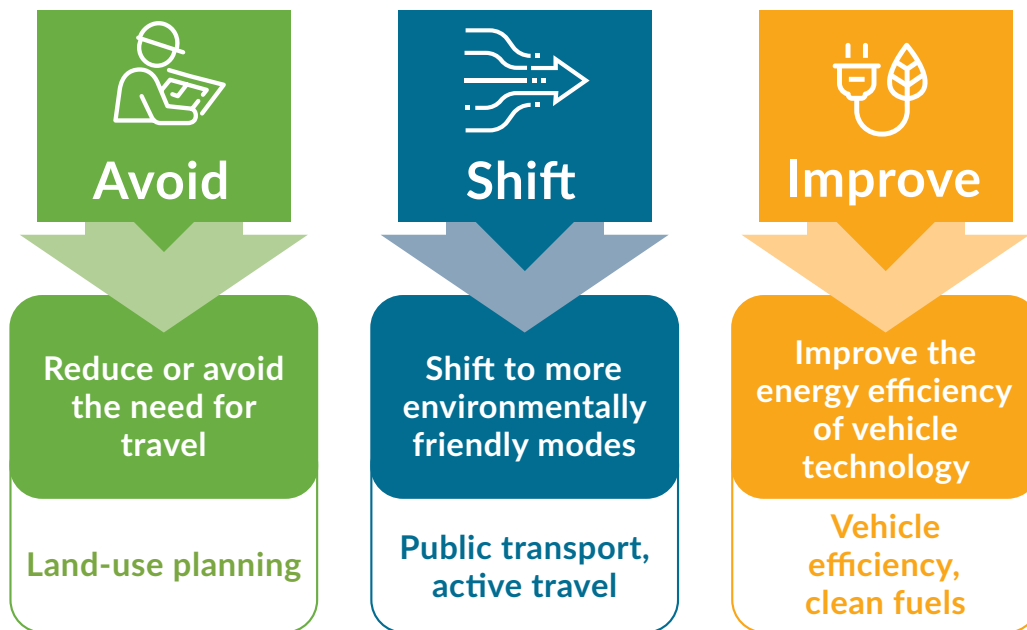
Housing for All – A New Housing Plan for Ireland (HfA) 2021 is the Government’s housing plan to 2030. The overall objective is that everybody should have access to sustainable, good quality housing to purchase or rent at an affordable price, built to a high standard, and located close to essential services, offering a high quality of life. The plan recognises the need to plan for a more diverse and socially inclusive society. It also recognises that a sustainable housing system requires infrastructure, including public transport and water services. There is a series of actions included in HfA that will allow the State to take a more active role in land management with a view to translating compact development objectives of the NPF into the delivery of housing. It is also an action of HfA to develop guidelines for sustainable and compact settlements.

1.4.2 Climate Action Plan 2023 (CAP23)

The Climate Action Plan 2023 (CAP23) is the first plan to be prepared under the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021, and following the introduction of economy-wide carbon budgets and sectoral emissions ceilings in 2022. The plan implements these carbon budgets and sectoral emissions ceilings and sets out a roadmap for taking decisive action to halve our emissions by 2030 and reach net zero no later than 2050. Of particular relevance to these Guidelines, CAP23 notes that the dispersal of residential settlements, commercial zones and workplaces to peripheral areas instead of focusing on central areas and locations served by public transport, has led to an over-reliance on the private car. The Annex of Actions to CAP23 includes an action to prepare sustainable settlement guidelines and to review planning guidelines to ensure a graduated approach in relation to the provision of car parking. The Local Authority Climate Action Plan Guidelines published in 2023 will assist local authorities in preparing local climate actions plans, required under the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021. These plans are required to be consistent with the most recent approved climate action plan and national adaptation framework.

1.4.3 National Sustainable Mobility Policy (2022)

The National Sustainable Mobility Policy (SMP) 2022 has a critical policy influence on these Guidelines. It sets out a strategic framework for active travel and public transport to 2030, to help Ireland meet its climate targets. The associated action plan to 2025 contains a range of actions to improve and expand sustainable mobility options across the country by providing safe, green, accessible and efficient alternatives to car journeys. The SMP includes a range of demand management and behaviour change measures and actions that are intended to manage daily travel demand more efficiently and reduce the journeys taken by private car - including an action to prepare sustainable settlement guidelines. The SMP’s approach is based on the principle of Avoid-Shift-Improve (Figure 1.3 refers). The creation of compact and connected urban areas is key to achieving the overarching aims of the SMP. Many of the policy goals relate to land use planning and the design of settlements. SMP actions include the delivery of metropolitan area transport strategies in the five cities and local transport plans for the regional growth centres and key towns. These plans will inform and supplement regional and local plans to ensure that future growth occurs in a more sustainable manner.

Figure 1.3:**Avoid-Shift-Improve Extract from National Sustainable Mobility Policy 2022***Source: Government of Ireland***1.4.4 Places for People – the National Policy on Architecture (2022)**

Places for People is Ireland’s national policy on architecture. It outlines ways to promote and embed quality in architecture and the built and natural environment in Ireland. It aims to boost public engagement with architecture, raise design quality and improve data and research on our built environment. Places for People includes a framework of practical actions to help Ireland get full value from architecture and to deliver buildings and public spaces that work for all. These actions will help create, sustain and regenerate local areas as vibrant, welcoming and sustainable places in which communities can flourish. Places for People also connects us to important sustainability, renovation and creative initiatives underway in Europe as part of the European Green Deal – including the New European Bauhaus.

1.5 Conclusion

In implementing the high-level approach of the NPF, and ensuring that the future development of settlements supports the actions of Housing for All, the Climate Action Plan 2023 (CAP23), Sustainable Mobility Policy and National Policy on Architecture, there is a need to carefully plan for the growth of settlements of all sizes. Understanding the opportunities and challenges facing settlements is an important first step in incorporating sustainable development principles into the planning system.



2.0

Implementation

2.0 Implementation

2.1 Implementation of the Guidelines

The policy and guidance contained within these Guidelines are to be implemented through statutory development plans² and in the consideration of individual planning applications.

2.1.1 Statutory Development Plans

The Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) “the Act” supports a plan-led system aimed at ensuring proper planning and sustainable development through a hierarchy of inter-related and complementary plans and policies from the NPF at national level, the Regional, Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSES) at regional level and development plans and local plans at a city and county level.

The development plan is at the heart of the planning system transposing national and regional policies and objectives to city and county level and setting a framework for more detailed statutory and non-statutory land use plans at an area level. It is required to set out the overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of the plan area and may include detailed objectives for certain areas. The development objectives of the development plan are required to be consistent, as far as practicable, with national and regional development objectives set out in the NPF and the RSES. Planning authorities are also required to have regard to the policies and objectives contained in Section 28 guidelines and to apply the specific planning policy requirements contained in section 28 guidelines when preparing and making a development plan. In this regard, Section 28 provides that a planning authority must append a statement to the draft development plan and the development plan that demonstrates how it has implemented the policies and objectives of the Minister contained in Section 28 guidelines.

Local Area Plans and Strategic Development Zone (SDZ) Planning Schemes have a role in translating development plan policies and objectives to a district or neighbourhood level and provide for a more in-depth consideration of planning issues that are specific to a particular area. The Act provides that the objectives of a Local Area Plan must be consistent with the objectives of the relevant development plan. A Planning Scheme is deemed to form part of the development plan in force in the area and any contrary provision of the development plan shall be superseded by the planning scheme.

When preparing a statutory development plan it will be important to consider the role of the area in its wider national and regional context and to set a vision and a framework for sustainable development and regeneration that has regard to the policies and objectives of these Guidelines at a local level and applies the specific planning policy requirements (SPPRs). The same considerations apply when preparing a variation or amendment to a statutory development plan (including SDZ Planning Schemes).

² Any reference to a statutory development plan(s) in these Guidelines refers to all development plans made under the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), or under any replacement Planning and Development Act, including local area plans and strategic development zone planning schemes, unless otherwise stated.

2.1.2 Development Management

In accordance with the provisions of Section 34 of the Act when making a decision in relation to an application that includes a residential element or other elements covered by these guidelines, the planning authority is required to have regard to the policies and objectives of the Guidelines and to apply the specific planning policy requirements (SPPRs).

In the case of a SDZ Planning Scheme, it is the intention of these Guidelines that Section 170 (2) of the Act will continue to apply and supersede any contrary provisions (including Specific Planning Policy Requirements) contained in these Guidelines until the Planning Scheme is amended to integrate changes arising from the Guidelines. This is to ensure that the consequences of the updated standards can be fully integrated into the planning schemes in due course without unintended consequences. In this regard, no permission shall be granted for any development that would not be consistent with the planning scheme.

2.1.3 Environmental Considerations

These Guidelines have been subject to Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in accordance with the European Union SEA Directive (2001/42/EC) and the European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004, S.I. No. 435 of 2004 (as amended by S.I. 2000 of 2011). In accordance with the European Union Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) and Birds Directive (2009/147/EC), Appropriate Assessment has also been carried out under Regulation 42A of the European Union (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2021 (S.I. No. 293 of 2021).

In accordance with Article 10 of the SEA Directive, the Department shall monitor the significant environmental effects, if any, of the implementation of the Guidelines in order to identify any unforeseen adverse effects, and to be able to undertake appropriate remedial action. Monitoring will be carried out by DHLGH of the indicators listed in Chapter 7 of the SEA Environmental Report in accordance with the timeframes detailed in the SEA Environmental Report.

In the preparation of statutory development plans and the consideration of individual applications it is the responsibility of the planning authority to ensure that requirements of relevant EU Directives (e.g. Habitats Directive, Birds Directive, Floods Directive, Water Framework Directive, Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive, Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive and Environmental Impact Assessment Directive) are adhered to and reflected in the plan making and development management processes.

The Natura Impact Statement for these Guidelines provides a useful reference for any planning authority carrying out an appropriate assessment of a plan or project and highlights the information available at the European Union level, including the site-specific conservation objectives and evidence from the latest Article 17 reports submitted under the EU Habitats Directive on pressures and threats of urbanisation.

2.2 Section 28 Ministerial Guidelines

A number of Section 28 Ministerial Guidelines have issued subsequent to the publication of the Sustainable Residential Development Guidelines in 2009 that are concerned with sustainable forms of residential development. The Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlements Guidelines for Planning Authorities should be read in conjunction with other guidelines where there is overlapping policy and guidance. Where there are differences between these Guidelines and Section 28 Guidelines issued prior to these guidelines, it is intended that the policies and objectives and specific planning policy requirements of these Guidelines will take precedence.

Related section 28 Guidelines for consideration in combination with these Guidelines, include:

- The Development Plans Guidelines for Planning Authorities published in 2022, is a procedural manual for the preparation of development plans. The Guidelines set out an approach to ensure that every development plan includes a core strategy that is consistent with national and regional policy objectives, including housing targets and a methodology for identifying and zoning lands for new housing. There is an emphasis in the Guidelines on facilitating development in cities, towns and urban areas; creating compact and integrated communities; meeting targets for brownfield regeneration; and supporting placemaking and the growth of sustainable communities. The Guidelines also seek to assist local authorities in adapting key national policies, such as Town Centre First and the Climate Action Plan, into their local development strategy.
- The Sustainable Urban Housing Design Standards for New Apartments Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2023 set out national policy and standards for apartment development, in order to ensure greater consistency of national policy across local authority areas. This includes recommended standards in relation to housing mix and minimum floor areas.
- The Urban Development and Building Height Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2018 set out national policy considerations in relation to building height in order to guide planning authorities in developing local planning policy and in determining planning applications. These Guidelines reinforce the national policy objectives of the NPF relating to compact growth and set a framework for a performance-based approach to the consideration of building height.
- The Local Area Plan Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2013 set out procedures for the preparation of a local area plan and the contents that should be included in such plans. The companion Manual for Local Area Plans is a best practice guide, which encourages a design process that is analysis-led, focused on placemaking and expressed by a range of conceptual illustrations and detailed masterplans (or similar).

The companion Design Manual provides best practice examples that relate to many of the policy areas addressed in the Guidelines detailed above.

2.3 Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets

The Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (DMURS) was published in 2013 (updated 2019) by the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport and the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government. It sets out design guidance for new and existing urban roads and streets in Ireland, incorporating good planning and design practice. Department of Transport Circular RW 6/2013 states that the DMURS is mandatory when providing new or modifying existing urban roads and streets within the 60 km/h urban speed limit zone, except for motorways and in exceptional circumstances, on certain urban roads and streets where the written consent of the relevant approving authority has been obtained. This manual puts well-designed streets at the heart of sustainable communities. DMURS places a strong focus on the needs of pedestrians, cyclists and public transport and on improving the safety of streets and enhancing placemaking. Section 4.4 of these Guidelines sets out further detail in relation to the design guidance and standards set out in DMURS.



3.0

Settlement, Place and Density

3.0 Settlement, Place and Density

3.1 Introduction

This chapter sets out policy and guidance in relation to growth priorities for settlements at each tier in the national settlement hierarchy and in relation to residential density.

Since 1999, the Residential Density Guidelines and the subsequent Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas Guidelines, 2009, recommend that planning authorities should promote increased residential densities in appropriate locations, including in city and larger town centres. This recommendation was based on three significant social, economic and environmental considerations, as follows:

- The trend towards smaller average household size,
- The need to encourage the provision of affordable housing, and
- The need to reduce CO² emissions by reducing energy consumption and to support a more efficient use of energy in the residential and transport sectors.

All three considerations remain relevant with even greater urgency now in respect of the need for more diverse and affordable housing to meet the needs of a growing and more diverse population and for settlement and travel patterns that support efficient energy use and a transition to lower carbon in the transport and built environment sectors.

Government policy requires a continuation of the tiered approach to residential density seen under the Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas Guidelines, 2009, with highest residential densities at the most central and accessible urban locations and more compact and sustainable forms of development overall. The 2009 Guidelines promoted a three-tiered approach to residential density, with densities of up to 35 dwellings per hectare (dph) in smaller towns and villages, densities of 35 to 50 dph in outer suburban and greenfield areas of cities and large towns and densities of 50 dph + in more central urban locations and close to public transport (Figure 3.1 refers). Given the NPF priorities for compact growth and reflecting the variety of settlements and settlement contexts where residential development takes place, the Government considers that it is necessary to expand on the number of density bands contained in the 2009 Guidelines in order to ensure that densities are efficient while, at the same time, tailored to settlement context.

Figure 3.1:
 Typical density ranges with various housing typologies - illustrative only.



DETACHED/SEMI DETACHED HOUSING
 Density Range c. 15-30 dph



SEMI DETACHED/TERRACED HOUSING
 Density Range c. 25-40 dph



TERRACED HOUSING
 Density Range c. 35-45 dph



**MIX TERRACED HOUSES, DUPLEX/
 LOW RISE APARTMENTS**
 Density Range 50-80 dph



COMPACT OWN DOOR HOUSES, DUPLEX
 Density Range c. 50-100 dph



LOW RISE APARTMENTS
 Density Range c. 100-150 dph



MEDIUM/HIGH RISE APARTMENTS
 Density Range c. 200+ dph

3.2 Tailoring Policy to Local Circumstances

3.2.1 Methodology

This section sets out a methodology to assist planning authorities in appropriately integrating national planning policy in relation to settlement growth and residential density into statutory development plans and in the assessment of individual planning applications. The policies and objectives are intended as a tool to guide the appropriate scale of development at different locations, rather than as a prescriptive methodology. Flexibility is offered so that planning authorities can operate a plan-led approach and take the circumstances of a plan area or an individual site into account as part of the decision making processes prescribed under the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).

Dwellings per hectare (dph) will continue to be the primary measure for residential density³. This measure is well understood and embedded within the planning system, and when applied alongside other design standards, provides a relatively simple and effective means of reflecting the quantum, scale and form of development within settlements. In the case of city and town centres and mixed-use, commercial and employment areas, plot ratio and site coverage standards may also need to be considered in order to manage the scale and massing of development. There is further guidance in relation to the calculation of density in Appendix B and examples in relation to the calculation of plot ratio and site coverage in the companion Design Manual.

The national settlement hierarchy defined at a national level by the NPF, at a regional level by the RSEs and at local level by city and county development plans, forms the basis for the density approach. Section 3.3 describes settlements at each tier (or groups of tiers) in the national settlement hierarchy and for each tier sets out:

- (a) priorities for compact growth,
- (b) areas common to settlements at each tier, and
- (c) recommended density ranges for each area.

Similar to the application of the 2009 Guidelines, when applying the policies and objectives of these Guidelines in relation to density in the preparation of a statutory development plan and in the consideration of a planning application, it will be necessary for the planning authority to identify:

- (a) the most applicable settlement category based on the categories described in Section 3.3⁴,
- (b) the most applicable area type based on the area descriptions detailed in Section 3.3 (e.g. central, urban, suburban or edge - refer also Figure 3.1), and
- (c) the recommended density range for that area.

³ When calculating net densities for shared accommodation, such as student housing, four bed spaces shall be the equivalent of one dwelling.

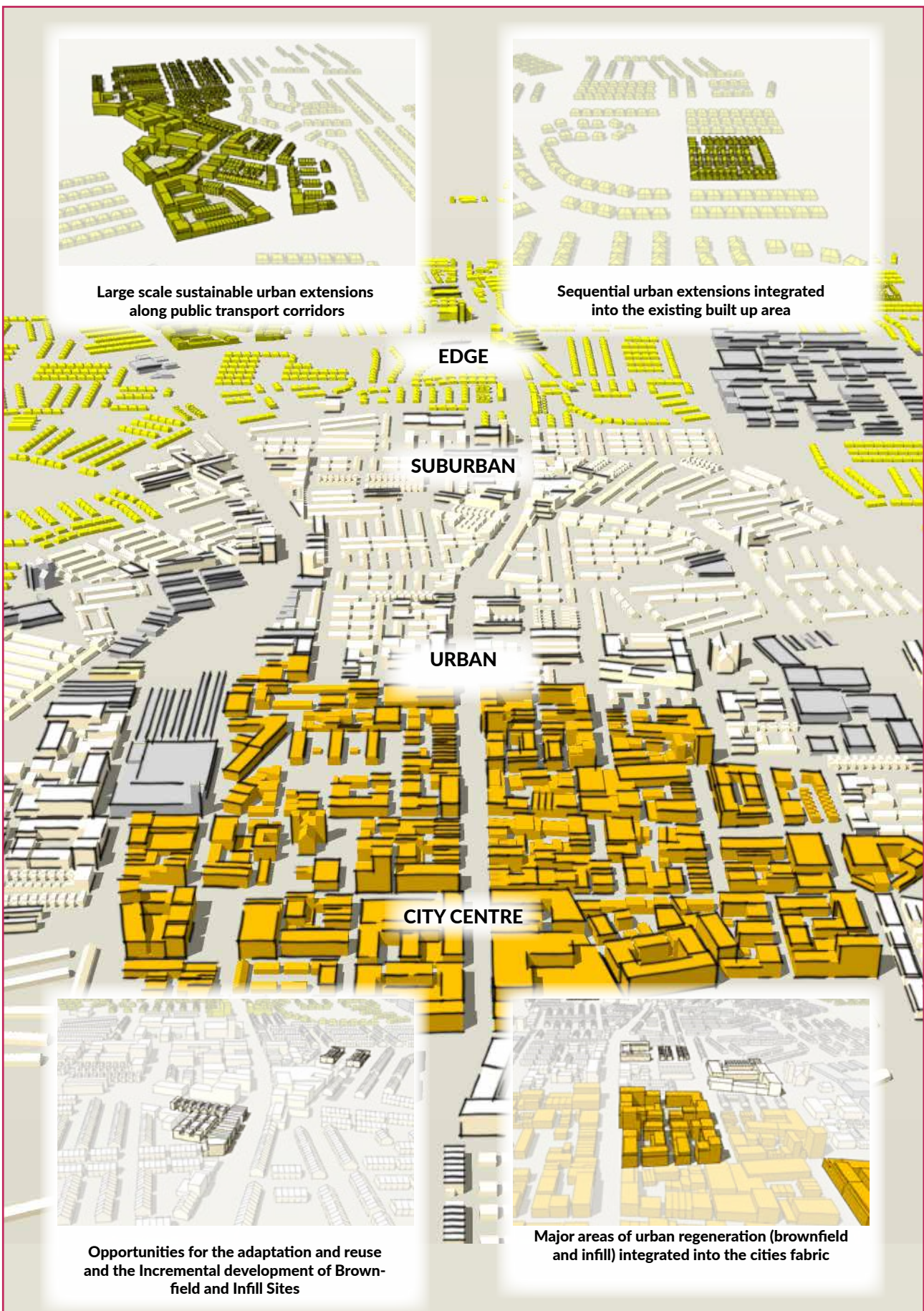
⁴ In identifying the applicable settlement NPF and / or RSEs designations take precedence over the population thresholds stated in Section 3.3.

Following this, the decision maker(s) will need to determine the appropriate density range(s) for the area or site. The densities should generally be within the ranges set out in Section 3.3 and can be refined further in accordance with the guidance set out in Section 3.4. It may be necessary and appropriate in some exceptional circumstances to permit densities that are above or below the ranges set out in Section 3.3. In such circumstances, the planning authority (or An Bord Pleanála) should clearly detail the reason(s) for the deviation in the relevant statutory development plan or as part of the decision-making process for a planning application, based on considerations relating to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

To give effect to the Guidelines and in support of a plan-led approach, when preparing a land use plan for a settlement, the planning authority should consider defining and mapping central, urban, suburban, urban extension and edge areas (Figure 3.2 refers).

In applying this methodology in the preparation of a Core Strategy under Section 10 of the Act, the planning authority will need to account for net and gross areas when calculating land requirements. It will be necessary to make an informed estimate of net developable area taking account of factors such as the need for major roads and parks, schools, commercial uses and the presence of flood zones and other environmental sensitives etc., and to determine an appropriate density range for each area. The general rule of thumb is that the net site area would be between 65 to 80 percent (approx.) of the gross area but this will depend on the area of land involved and local circumstances. Appendix B Measuring Residential Density sets out more detail in relation to net and gross site areas.

Figure 3.2:
Illustration of typical area types and key areas of growth within cities.



3.3 Settlements, Area Types and Density Ranges

3.3.1 Cities and Metropolitan (MASP) Areas

(i) Description of Settlement

The National Planning Framework identifies the five cities of Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Galway and Waterford. The city metropolitan area defined in the Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP)⁵ includes the city and suburbs area and the surrounding network of towns, villages and rural areas.

The NPF sets ambitious growth targets for cities and metropolitan areas to 2040. The strategy for all cities is to support consolidation and intensification within and close to the existing built up footprint of the city and suburbs area and metropolitan towns; and to support sustainable urban extension at locations served by public transport.

The key priorities for city and metropolitan growth in order of priority are to:

- (a) strengthen city, town and village centres,
- (b) protect, restore and enhance historic fabric, character, amenity, natural heritage, biodiversity and environmental quality,
- (c) realise opportunities for adaptation, reuse and intensification of existing buildings and for incremental brownfield and infill development,
- (d) deliver brownfield and infill development at scale at suitable strategic and sustainable development locations within the existing built up footprint of the city and suburbs area or metropolitan towns,
- (e) deliver sustainable and compact urban extension at scale at suitable strategic and sustainable development locations that are close to the existing built-up footprint of the city and suburbs area or a metropolitan town and served by existing or proposed high-capacity public transport, and
- (f) deliver sequential and sustainable urban extension at suitable locations that are closest to the urban core and are integrated into, or can be integrated into, the existing built-up footprint of the city and suburbs area or a metropolitan town.

Given the size, scale and structure of Dublin and Cork relative to the cities of Limerick, Galway and Waterford, density ranges for the city and suburbs areas of Dublin and Cork are set out in Table 3.1 and for the city and suburbs area of Limerick, Galway and Waterford in Table 3.2. Density ranges for all towns and villages in the metropolitan areas of the five cities and outside of the city and suburbs area (including designated Key Towns in the metropolitan area) are set out in Table 3.3.

Note: References to strategic and sustainable development locations in this chapter are as described in Section 4.4.4 of the Development Plan Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2022.

5 Part of the relevant Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy.

(ii) Table 3.1 - Areas and Density Ranges Dublin and Cork City and Suburbs**City - Centre**

The city centres of Dublin and Cork, comprising the city core and immediately surrounding neighbourhoods⁶, are the most central and accessible urban locations nationally with the greatest intensity of land uses, including higher order employment, recreation, cultural, education, commercial and retail uses. It is a policy and objective of these Guidelines that residential densities in the range 100 dph to 300 dph (net) shall generally be applied in the centres of Dublin and Cork.

City - Urban Neighbourhoods

The city urban neighbourhoods category includes: (i) the compact medium density residential neighbourhoods around the city centre that have evolved overtime to include a greater range of land uses, (ii) strategic and sustainable development locations⁷, (iii) town centres designated in a statutory development plan, and (iv) lands around existing or planned high-capacity public transport nodes or interchanges (defined in Table 3.8) – all within the city and suburbs area. These are highly accessible urban locations with good access to employment, education and institutional uses and public transport. It is a policy and objective of these Guidelines that residential densities in the range 50 dph to 250 dph (net) shall generally be applied in urban neighbourhoods of Dublin and Cork.

City - Suburban/Urban Extension

Suburban areas are the lower density car-orientated residential suburbs constructed at the edge of cities in the latter half of the 20th and early 21st century, while urban extension refers to the greenfield lands at the edge of the existing built up footprint that are zoned for residential or mixed-use (including residential) development⁸. It is a policy and objective of these Guidelines that residential densities in the range 40 dph to 80 dph (net) shall generally be applied at suburban and urban extension locations in Dublin and Cork, and that densities of up to 150 dph (net) shall be open for consideration at 'accessible' suburban / urban extension locations (as defined in Table 3.8).

6 For example, the Dublin City Development Plan 2022-2028 refers to the inner city and its immediately surrounding neighbourhoods within the canals; and the Cork City Development Plan 2022-2028 describes the City Centre as the City Centre Island, from MacCurtain Street and Shandon north of the River Lee to the South Parish area and Barrack Street to the south.

7 Described in Section 4.4.4 of the Development Plans Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2022. The Dublin City Development Plan 2022-2028 details Strategic Development and Regeneration Areas in Chapter 13; and the Cork City Development Plan 2022-2028 details Strategic Consolidation and Regeneration Areas in Chapter 10.

8 Section 28 Guidelines, Development Plan Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2022 set out policy requirements in relation to the zoning of lands for residential purposes.

(iii) Table 3.2 - Area and Density Ranges Limerick, Galway and Waterford City and Suburbs**City - Centre**

The city centres of Limerick, Galway and Waterford, comprising the city centre and immediately surrounding neighbourhoods, are the most central and accessible urban locations in their regions with the greatest intensity of land uses, including higher order employment, recreation, cultural, education, commercial and retail uses. It is a policy and objective of these Guidelines that residential densities in the range 100 dph to 250 dph (net) shall generally be applied in the centres of Limerick, Galway and Waterford.

City - Urban Neighbourhoods

The city urban neighbourhoods category includes: (i) the compact medium density residential neighbourhoods around the city centre that have evolved over time to include a greater range of land uses, (ii) strategic and sustainable development locations; and (iii) lands around existing or planned high capacity public transport nodes or interchanges (defined in Table 3.8) – all in the city and suburbs area. These are highly accessible urban locations with good access to employment, education and institutional uses and public transport. It is a policy and objective of these Guidelines that residential densities in the range 50 dph to 200 dph (net) shall generally be applied in urban neighbourhoods of Limerick, Galway and Waterford.

City - Suburban/Urban Extension

Suburban areas are the low density car orientated residential areas constructed at the edge of cities in the latter half of the 20th and early 21st century, while urban extension refers to greenfield lands at the edge of the existing built-up footprint that are zoned for residential or mixed-use (including residential) development⁹. It is a policy and objective of these Guidelines that residential densities in the range 35 dph to 50 dph (net) shall generally be applied at suburban and urban extension locations in Limerick, Galway and Waterford, and that densities of up to 100 dph (net) shall be open for consideration at 'accessible' suburban / urban extension locations (as defined in Table 3.8).

⁹ Section 28 Guidelines, Development Plan Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2022 set out policy requirements in relation to the zoning of lands for residential purposes.

(iv) Table 3.3 - Areas and Density Ranges – Metropolitan Towns and Villages**Metropolitan Towns (>1,500 population) – Centre and Urban Neighbourhoods**

The centre and urban neighbourhoods category includes: (i) the town centre and immediately surrounding neighbourhoods, (ii) strategic and sustainable development locations, and (iii) lands around existing or planned high capacity public transport nodes or interchanges (defined in Table 3.8). It is a policy and objective of these Guidelines that residential densities in the range 50 dph to 150 dph (net) shall generally be applied in the centres and in urban neighbourhoods of Metropolitan Towns.

Metropolitan Towns (>1,500 population) – Suburban / Urban Extension

Suburban areas are the low density car-orientated residential areas constructed at the edge of the town, while urban extension refers to greenfield lands at the edge of the existing built-up footprint that are zoned for residential or mixed-use (including residential) development. It is a policy and objective of these Guidelines that residential densities in the range 35 dph to 50 dph (net) shall generally be applied at suburban and edge locations of Metropolitan Towns, and that densities of up to 100 dph (net) shall be open for consideration at 'accessible' suburban / urban extension locations (as defined in Table 3.8).

Metropolitan Area – Village (<1,500 population)

Metropolitan Villages are small in scale with limited infrastructure and services provision. These settlements are identified for incremental growth that takes account of the capacity of existing services and infrastructure (including public transport and water services infrastructure). Density should be tailored to reflect existing density and / or built form but should not generally not fall below 25 dph.

3.3.2 Regional Growth Centres

(i) Description of Settlement

The NPF and RSEs identify Regional Growth Centres. The strategy for the Regional Growth Centres is to support consolidation within and close to the existing built-up footprint.

The key priorities for the growth of Regional Growth Centres in order of priority are to:

- (a) plan for an integrated and connected settlement overall, avoiding the displacement of development generated by economic drivers in the Regional Growth Centre to smaller towns and villages and rural areas in the hinterland,
- (b) strengthen town centres,
- (c) protect, restore and enhance historic fabric, character, amenity, natural heritage, biodiversity and environmental quality,
- (d) realise opportunities for adaptation and reuse of existing buildings and for backland, brownfield and infill development,
- (e) deliver brownfield and infill development at scale at suitable strategic and sustainable development locations within the existing built up footprint of the town, and
- (f) deliver sequential and sustainable urban extension at suitable locations that are closest to the urban core and are integrated into, or can be integrated into, the existing built-up footprint of the settlement.

(ii) Table 3.4 - Areas and Density Ranges Regional Growth Centres

Regional Growth Centre - Centre and Urban Neighbourhood

The centre and urban neighbourhoods category includes: (i) the town centre and immediately surrounding neighbourhoods and (ii) strategic and sustainable development locations that are within the existing built-up footprint. It is a policy and objective of these Guidelines that residential densities in the range 50-150 dph (net) shall generally be applied in centres and urban neighbourhoods.

Regional Growth Centre - Suburban/Urban Extension

Suburban areas are the low density car-orientated residential areas constructed at the edge of the town, while urban extension refers to greenfield lands at the edge of the existing built-up footprint that are zoned for residential or mixed-use (including residential) development. It is a policy and objective of these Guidelines that residential densities in the range 35 dph to 50 dph (net) shall generally be applied at suburban and edge locations of Regional Growth Centres, and that densities of up to 100 dph (net) shall be open for consideration at 'accessible' suburban/urban extension locations (as defined in Table 3.8).

3.3.3 Key Towns and Large Towns (5,000+ population)

(i) Description of Settlement

Key Towns are identified in the RSEs, while Large Towns are identified at a county level. The strategy for Key Towns and Large Towns is to support consolidation within and close to the existing built-up footprint.

The key priorities for the growth of Key Towns and Large Towns in order of priority are to:

- (a) plan for an integrated and connected settlement overall, avoiding the displacement of development generated by economic drivers in the Key Town or Large Town to smaller towns and villages and rural areas in the hinterland,
- (b) strengthen town centres,
- (c) protect, restore and enhance historic fabric, character, amenity, natural heritage, biodiversity and environmental quality,
- (d) realise opportunities for adaptation and reuse of existing buildings and for incremental backland, brownfield and infill development, and
- (e) deliver sequential and sustainable urban extension at locations that are closest to the urban core and are integrated into, or can be integrated into, the existing built up footprint of the settlement.

(ii) Table 3.5 - Areas and Density Ranges Key Towns and Large Towns (5,000+ population)¹⁰

Key Town / Large Town - Centre and Urban Neighbourhood

The centre comprises the town centre and the surrounding streets, while urban neighbourhoods consist of the early phases of residential development around the centre that have evolved over time to include a greater range of land uses. It is a policy and objective of these Guidelines that residential densities in the range 40 dph-100 dph (net) shall generally be applied in the centres and urban neighbourhoods.

Key Town / Large Town - Suburban/Urban Extension

Suburban areas are the low density car-orientated residential areas constructed at the edge of the town, while urban extension refers to greenfield lands at the edge of the existing built-up footprint area that are zoned for residential or mixed-use (including residential) development. It is a policy and objective of these Guidelines that residential densities in the range 30 dph to 50 dph (net) shall generally be applied at suburban and urban extension locations of Key Towns and Large Towns, and that densities of up to 80 dph (net) shall be open for consideration at 'accessible' suburban / urban extension locations (as defined in Table 3.8).

¹⁰ This category refers to towns that are outside of the designated metropolitan area of a city and includes Key Towns with a population below 5,000.

3.3.4 Small and Medium Sized Towns (1,500 – 5,000 population)

(i) Description of Settlement

Small to medium sized towns outside of metropolitan areas vary considerably in terms of population, employment and service functions and the level of public transport provision. Some small to medium sized towns have a district-wide service and employment function and are largely self-sustaining. Others, particularly those within commuting distance of cities, have experienced rapid residential expansion in recent decades based on population growth that is generated by economic drivers in larger urban centres. Many of these 'commuter' type towns have a high population but are reliant on other centres for employment and services, and tend to be heavily car-dependent.

The recommended approach for small to medium sized towns will be to plan for growth arising from economic drivers within and around the settlement and to offer an improved housing choice as an alternative, including serviced sites, to housing in the countryside. Given the range of settlement types in this tier, planning authorities will, as part of the statutory plan making process, need to refine the density standards set out in Table 3.6 to respond to local circumstances. When considering density, the planning authority should differentiate between self-sustaining towns that have a good employment and services base and can accommodate development of greater scale, commuter towns that have a more limited employment and services base and smaller towns that are at the lower end of the population range.

The strategy for all small to medium sized towns is to support consolidation within and close to the existing built-up footprint.

The key priorities for compact growth in smaller to medium sized towns in order of priority are to:

- a) strengthen town centres,
- b) protect, restore and enhance historic fabric, character, amenity, natural heritage, biodiversity and environmental quality,
- c) realise opportunities for adaption, reuse and intensification of existing buildings and for backland, brownfield and infill development, and
- d) deliver sequential and sustainable urban extension at locations that are closest to the urban core and are integrated into, or can be integrated into, the existing built up footprint of the settlement.

(ii) Table 3.6 Areas and Density Ranges Small to Medium Sized Towns**Small / Medium Town - Centre**

In many cases, the town centre comprises a main street and streets immediately adjoining, while the inner urban neighbourhood consists of the early phases of residential development around the centre, and may include local services and inter-dispersed commercial, industrial and institutional uses. Backland, brownfield and infill sites will generally be in the town centre or inner urban neighbourhoods. It is a policy and objective of these Guidelines that the scale of new development in the central areas of small to medium sized towns should respond positively to the scale, form and character of existing development, and to the capacity of services and infrastructure (including public transport and water services infrastructure).

Small / Medium Town Edge

The edge of small to medium sized towns are the lower density housing areas constructed around the centre, while urban extension refers to greenfield lands at the edge of the built-up area that are zoned for residential or mixed-use (including residential) development. It is a policy and objective of these Guidelines that densities in the range 25 dph to 40 dph (net) shall generally be applied at the edge of small to medium sized towns.

3.3.5 Rural Towns and Villages (<1,500 population)**(i) Description of Settlement**

Rural towns and villages with a population of 1,500 persons or less offer services to a wide rural hinterland. These settlements are not identified for significant population growth under the NPF and should grow at a limited pace that is appropriate to the service and employment function of the settlement, and the availability and capacity of infrastructure to support further development. Planning authorities should look to promote and support housing that would offer an alternative, including serviced sites, to persons who might otherwise construct rural one off housing in the surrounding countryside in rural towns and villages.

The key priorities for compact growth in Rural Towns and Villages in order of priority are to:

- (a) strengthen the existing urban core through the adaptation, re-use and intensification of existing building stock,
- (b) realise opportunities for infill and backland development, and
- (c) provide for sequential and sustainable housing development at the edge of the settlement at suitable locations that are closest to the urban core and are integrated into, or can be integrated into the existing built up footprint of the settlement and can be serviced by necessary supporting infrastructure.

(ii) Table 3.7 Areas and Density Ranges for Rural Towns and Villages**Rural Town or Village**

Rural Towns and Villages are small in scale with limited infrastructure and services provision. It is a policy and objective of these Guidelines that development in rural towns and villages is tailored to the scale, form and character of the settlement and the capacity of services and infrastructure (including public transport and water services infrastructure). Lands zoned for housing at the edge of rural towns and villages at locations that can be integrated into the settlement and are connected to existing walking and cycling networks can offer an effective alternative, including serviced sites, to the provision of single houses in the countryside. The density of development at such locations should respond in a positive way to the established context.

3.3.6 Exceptions

- (a) There is a presumption in these Guidelines against very high densities that exceed 300 dph (net) on a piecemeal basis. Densities that exceed 300 dph (net) are open for consideration on a plan-led basis only and where the opportunity for densities and building heights that are greater than prevailing densities and building height is identified in a relevant statutory plan.
- (b) Strategic and sustainable development locations of scale (described in section 4.4.4 of the Development Plans Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2022) will be capable of defining densities or density ranges across different neighbourhoods on a plan led basis, based on considerations such as proximity to centre, level of public transport service and relationship with surrounding built form. Densities within strategic and sustainable development locations may therefore, exceed the ranges set out in Section 3.3 on a plan-led basis.
- (c) In the case of very small infill sites that are not of sufficient scale to define their own character and density, the need to respond to the scale and form of surrounding development, to protect the amenities of surrounding properties and to protect biodiversity may take precedence over the densities set out in this Chapter.

3.4 Refining Density

The application of the density ranges in the preparation of statutory development plans and in the consideration of individual planning applications will be subject to local determination by the planning authority, or by An Bord Pleanála in the case of an appeal or direct application. The density ranges set out in Section 3.3 should be considered and refined, generally within the ranges set out, based on consideration of centrality and accessibility to services and public transport; and considerations of character, amenity and the natural environment (Figure 3.3 refers). Section 3.3.6 addresses exceptional circumstances.

3.4.1 Step 1: Consideration of Proximity and Accessibility to Services and Public Transport

While densities within the ranges set out will be acceptable, planning authorities should encourage densities at or above the mid-density range at the most central and accessible locations in each area, densities closer to the mid-range at intermediate locations and densities below the mid-density range at peripheral locations. Densities above the ranges are 'open for consideration' at accessible suburban and urban extension locations to the maximum set out in Section 3.3.

Table 3.8 (below) sets out definitions for terms used to define accessibility to allow for consistent application. The characteristics detailed in Table 3.8 are not exhaustive and a local assessment will be required.

Table 3.8: Accessibility

High Capacity Public Transport Node or Interchange
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lands within 1,000 metres (1km) walking distance of an existing or planned high capacity urban public transport node or interchange, namely an interchange or node that includes DART, high frequency Commuter Rail¹¹, light rail or MetroLink services; or locations within 500 metres walking distance of an existing or planned BusConnects 'Core Bus Corridor'¹² stop. Highest densities should be applied at the node or interchange and decrease with distance. 'Planned public transport' in these Guidelines refers to transport infrastructure and services identified in a Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy for the five cities and where a public authority (e.g. National Transport Authority, Transport Infrastructure Ireland or Irish Rail) has published the preferred route option and stop locations for the planned public transport.
Accessible Location
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lands within 500 metres (i.e. up to 5-6 minute walk) of existing or planned high frequency (i.e. 10 minute peak hour frequency) urban bus services.

11 10-15 minute peak hour frequency.

12 Core Bus Corridor refers to the 'BusConnects Core Bus Corridor Schemes' planned for cities that will provide enhanced walking, cycling and bus infrastructure on key access corridors.

Intermediate Location

- Lands within 500-1,000 metres (i.e. 10-12 minute walk) of existing or planned high frequency (i.e. 10 minute peak hour frequency) urban bus services; and
- Lands within 500 metres (i.e. 6 minute walk) of a reasonably frequent (minimum 15 minute peak hour frequency) urban bus service.

Peripheral

- Lands that do not meet the proximity or accessibility criteria detailed above. This includes all lands in Small and Medium Sized Towns and in Rural Towns and Villages.

The approach to refining density should be informed by the capacity and wider network accessibility of public transport services at a node or interchange (number of options, capacity and peak hour frequency) and the journey time to significant destinations (e.g. city centre or significant employment location).

The NTA's Public Transport Accessibility Level (PTAL) tool will provide detail of public transport accessibility at settlement level and should be used to support the preparation of statutory development plans at a settlement level and in the consideration of individual applications.

3.4.2 Step 2: Considerations of Character, Amenity and the Natural Environment

While considerations of centrality and accessibility will have a significant bearing on density, it is also necessary to ensure that the quantum and scale of development at all locations can integrate successfully into the receiving environment. New development should respond to the receiving environment in a positive way and should not result in a significant negative impact on character (including historic character), amenity or the natural environment.

- (a) The evaluation of impact on local character should focus on the defining characteristics of an area, including for example, the prevailing scale and mass of buildings, urban grain and architectural language, any particular sensitivities and the capacity of the area for change. While it is not necessary to replicate the scale and mass of existing buildings, as most urban areas have significant capacity to accommodate change, it will be necessary to respond in a positive and proportionate way to the receiving context through site responsive design.
- (b) Historic environments (built and landscape heritage) can be particularly sensitive to change. It is a recommendation of these Guidelines that a Built Heritage Character Assessment inform the preparation of statutory development plans that relate to historic environments. The assessment should describe for example, the historical evolution, urban form, street pattern, building typologies and building plots that define the historic environments. This will better inform the designation of Architectural Conservation Areas under Section 84 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) and the integration of new buildings and street patterns with historic environments. The provisions contained within Part (IV) of the Planning and Development Act regarding architectural heritage and the requirement to protect the character and setting of a protected structure must also be considered. The Architectural Heritage Protection, Guidelines for Planning Authorities (DEHLG) provides useful guidance in relation to the protection of architectural heritage in urban areas. Shaping the Future Case Studies in the Reuse in Historic Urban Environments (DAHG) 2012 provides useful guidance where building refurbishment is proposed.

- (c) Evaluation of impact on the environment and on protected habitats and species must be considered under the requirements of the Environmental Impact Assessment and Habitats Directives. Development proposals should seek to protect and enhance important natural features (habitats and species) and should avoid the degradation of ecosystems. Habitat mapping undertaken as part of a plan making process can give a good indication of natural heritage features and corridors within an area. Appendix C sets out suggested threshold for submission of an Ecological Impact Assessment (EIA) and all site surveys and the associated description of the site should detail the natural features that exist within a site to allow for consideration of impact on biodiversity and natural features.
- (d) It will be necessary to consider the impact of a proposed development on the amenities of residential properties that are in close proximity to a development site. The key considerations should include privacy, daylight and sunlight, and microclimate. These considerations are addressed in more detail in Chapter 5 Development Standards.
- (e) In all settlements, it will be important to ensure that water supply and wastewater networks (including treatment works) can service any new development.

The companion Design Manual will address best practice approaches in relation to the preservation of local character (including historic character) and amenity in more detail.

In considering impact on character and amenity as part of the assessment of a planning application, it will be important to detail the evaluation process and to draw clear and reasoned conclusions in relation to the nature and extent of potential impacts. It may not be possible in all cases to mitigate against negative impacts on character (including historic character) and amenity. In such cases, the significance of impact will need to be determined and where it is intended to grant permission for a development justified by reasoned conclusions.

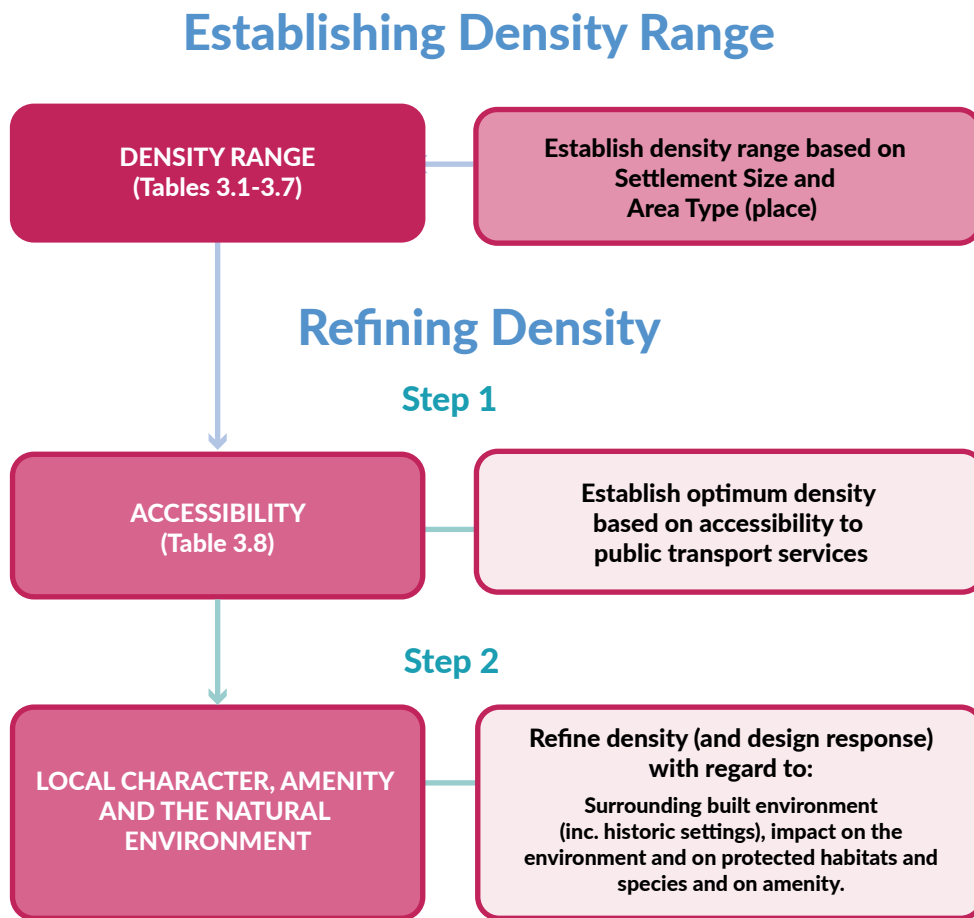
Specialist technical assessments and computer-generated visual aids can assist in the evaluation of more complex development proposals and in particular, where a proposal deviates from the established scale, mass or character or is situated in a sensitive context. In order to consider larger proposals in an integrated and informed way, an Urban Design Statement that addresses the proposal from an architectural and urban design perspective should form part of the required documentation. Refer to Appendix C for thresholds.

Policy and Objective 3.1

It is a policy and objective of these Guidelines that the recommended residential density ranges set out in Section 3.3 are applied within statutory development plans and in the consideration of individual planning applications, and that these density ranges are refined further at a local level using the criteria set out in Section 3.4 where appropriate.

Figure 3.3:

Illustration of the process for establishing, optimising and refining appropriate density for a plan or development.





4.0

Quality Urban Design and Placemaking

4.0 Quality Urban Design and Placemaking

4.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on planning and design at settlement, neighbourhood and site levels. This includes an overview of the process of design and placemaking and of key indicators of good urban design and placemaking. Further information and examples of the application of this guidance is contained within the companion Design Manual.

4.2 Role of Statutory Development Plans

(i) Development Plans

The development plan has a key role in setting the strategy for the creation of sustainable and compact settlements across the plan area, as part of the core strategy. The development plan should address the role and function of settlements at all levels in the settlement hierarchy and the interactions, interdependencies and connections between settlements.

For larger settlements, the strategy should support the creation of strong and vibrant centres surrounded by an integrated network of well-designed mixed-use neighbourhoods. In smaller settlements, the strategy should be to create smaller neighbourhoods around a central core that caters for day-to-day needs and to strengthen connections to higher order settlements that provide a greater range of services and employment, such as Regional Growth Centres and Key Towns.

The development plan should also set design principles for residential development that can be expanded in more detail in local statutory plans and (where appropriate) in other guidance documents. It is important that the development plan policies and objectives support high quality urban design and placemaking that reflects the guidance in Section 4.4 and the SPPRs in Chapter 5. In doing this, the development plan should highlight issues that should be addressed in planning applications and the related performance criteria to be met, without being overly prescriptive in relation to how performance criteria are to be achieved. This will ensure that each proposal can be considered on its own merits, having regard to the particular characteristics of the location.

(ii) Local Plans (Local Area Plans and Planning Schemes)

The 2000 Act introduced local area plans within the hierarchy of plans. Local area plans provide detailed planning policies and objectives at a local level, in particular for areas that require renewal or are likely to be subject to large-scale development over the plan period. In areas that will be subject to large-scale development or change, the local area plan will generally include a masterplan that indicates the manner in which the area will be developed. This will usually include detail of the types of development, the extent of any such development envisaged, proposals in relation to the overall design and layout of the area and a phasing strategy for the delivery of the cross cutting infrastructure, amenities and services needed to support the development. The Local Area Plan Guidelines (2013) set out in detail the policy context, key requirements and qualities for local area plans. A companion document to the Guidelines, the Local Area Plan Manual provides detailed advice with respect to best practice outcomes, including a number of case studies. While local area plans do not generally contain as much design detail as a Planning Scheme, many best practice examples incorporate detailed design frameworks that outline the physical form of development, such as a masterplan or urban design framework, and provide greater certainty in relation to the future physical form of development, for both communities and perspective applicants.

When preparing local area plans it is important to consider the role of an area in its wider context and to set a vision and a framework for development or regeneration that translates the policies and objectives of the development plan to a local level. The vision will vary depending on the context but should address the main priorities for the area (see Section 4.3 also)

The 2000 Act also introduced Planning Schemes for Strategic Development Zones (SDZ). The planning scheme is required under Section 168 of the Act to include a plan indicating the manner in which it is intended that the site (or part of the site) is to be developed. This includes detailed proposals in relation to the types of development, the extent of development and the overall design of the proposed development.

The scheme is required to include proposals for transportation and services and for the provision of amenities and services for the community where there is residential development. Once the scheme has been adopted by the elected members of the Council and approved by An Bord Pleanála (in the case of an appeal of the adopted planning scheme or amendment), development that is consistent with the scheme must be granted permission by the planning authority, without the possibility of an appeal being made to An Bord Pleanála.

Beyond statutory plans, documents such as village design statements, framework plans or individual site development briefs may be drawn up. These plans do not have a legal status as part of the decision making process but can be used to inform specific development proposals or future statutory plans.

4.3 Urban Design and Quality Placemaking Processes

Successful placemaking is the outcome of a careful process of consultation, planning, design and delivery that should work in an integrated way. To this end, the following general steps should be followed when preparing a masterplan or urban design framework for an area (Figure 4.1 also refers) and in the preparation of a development proposal.

(i) Analysis and Appraisal

The design process should start with analysis and appraisal to establish the characteristics of the area and its surrounds, including information on the function, form and qualities of an area. The nature and extent of information collected will depend on the scale and complexity of the plan area or the site. It will generally include information on natural features and ecology and on the physical and socio-economic characteristics of the area. In the case of a planning application, the statutory development plan and associated studies, strategies and environmental reports (including SEA and Appropriate Assessment) will provide a high-level context. However, it will usually be necessary to undertake more detailed/up-to-date surveys and assessments to get a full understanding of the site. This information will support an analysis of options and inform decisions in relation to how the features of the area should shape future development and how new development will integrate within its context.

(ii) Vision and Strategy

The vision for a plan area or a site should detail a set of goals for the area, while the strategy should include a set of objectives and actions to achieve that vision, for example, in relation to the nature of development and the extent of development envisaged and how it relates to the surrounding context. The development objectives in statutory plans are generally place-specific and spatially orientated, while the strategy for an individual site will focus on the specifics of the site.

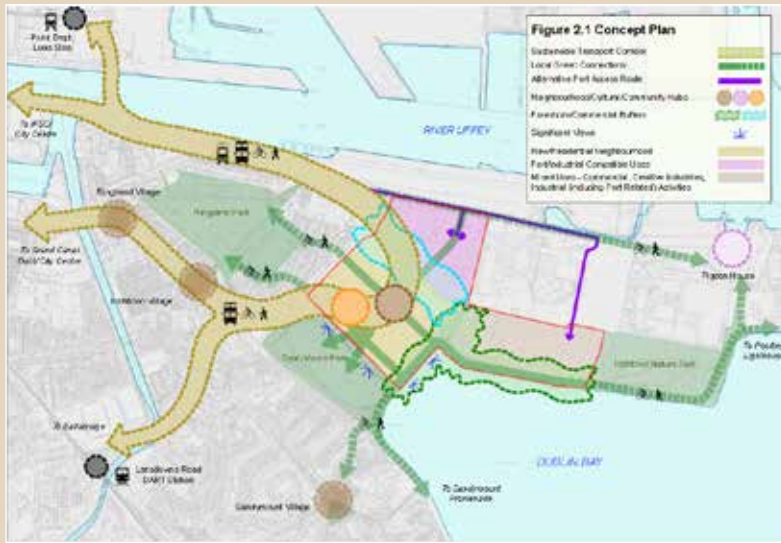
(iii) Detailed Design

A masterplan that is derived from a process of analysis and the vision and strategy for the area will add greater certainty to the development process and serve to reassure both communities and developers of the future physical form of development as part of a planned process.

The masterplan should address the conservation and restoration/enhancement of natural heritage features and biodiversity within the area, the design of development, including block layout and the street network, the provision of services and where there is residential development the provision and location of amenities and services for the community (e.g. schools, crèches and other community services). It can also be useful to publish supporting design strategies such as public realm, landscape, street design, architectural and/or materials and finishes strategies alongside the masterplan to give additional detail. When part of a statutory development plan the masterplan will be binding for decision making and more robust from a legal perspective. If it is not part of a statutory development plan, it is not binding for decision making and is indicative only.

In the case of a planning application, the site layout and design statement will need to show how the development proposal has evolved in response to the surrounding context and demonstrate how it is consistent with any statutory masterplan that has been prepared for the area. The design and placemaking process for the application should be detailed in the urban design statement submitted in support of a planning application.

Figure 4.1:
Extracts from the Poolbeg West (SDZ) Planning Scheme showing the progression from concept and vision to detailed design.



Key Theme: Connect



Key Theme: Create



Key Theme: Protect

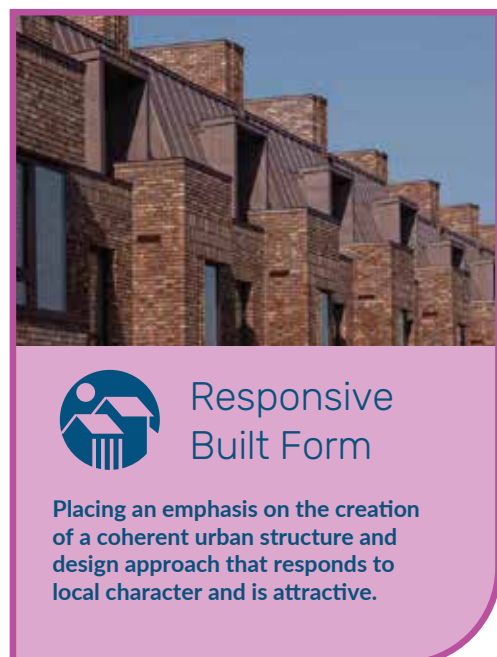


4.4 Key Indicators of Quality Design and Placemaking

This section is concerned with indicators of quality urban design and placemaking, which should inform the development strategy for settlements, neighbourhoods or an individual site. Achieving quality urban design and creating a sense of place is contingent on the provision of an authentic identity that is specific to the settlement, neighbourhood or site in question. Appendix D sets out a Design Checklist that supplements this section with a series of questions that can be used to guide the refinement and review of detailed plans (such as masterplans or urban design frameworks) and in the consideration of individual planning applications (Figure 4.1 also refers).

Figure 4.1:

Key Indicators of Quality Design and Placemaking that informs the development of settlements, neighbourhoods and/or an individual sites.



(i) Sustainable and Efficient Movement

In order to meet the targets set out in the National Sustainable Mobility Policy 2022 for reduced private car travel and increased active travel, it will be necessary to design settlements at every level to support the transition away from private car use and to support ease of movement for pedestrians, cyclists and public transport. Local authorities should plan for the development of well-connected neighbourhoods and a distribution of activities to ensure that day-to-day services and amenities are accessible within walking distance of homes and workplaces. In addition to sustainable travel objectives, this will ensure that settlements are vibrant, and when applied alongside the principles of Universal Design, will allow vulnerable users to move about and access services with ease.

The following key principles should be applied in the preparation of local plans and in the consideration of individual planning applications (Figure 4.2 also refers):

- (a) New developments should, as appropriate, include a street network (including links through open spaces) that creates a permeable and legible urban environment, optimises movement for sustainable modes (walking, cycling and public transport) and is easy to navigate.
- (b) New developments should connect to the wider urban street and transport networks and improve connections between communities, to public transport, local services and local amenities such as shops, parks and schools, where possible.
- (c) Active travel should be prioritised through design measures that seek to calm traffic and create street networks that feel safe and comfortable for pedestrians and cyclists.
- (d) The quantum of car parking in new developments should be minimised in order to manage travel demand and to ensure that vehicular movement does not impede active modes of travel or have undue prominence within the public realm. Chapter 5 Development Standards includes a specific planning policy requirement (SPPRs) that addresses car parking rates in new residential developments.

The Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (DMURS) sets out statutory guidance and standards in relation to the design of individual streets and the use of traffic management and placemaking measures to manage traffic and promote safer and more vibrant streets (Section 2.3 refers). The application of DMURS in all new developments will be key to ensure that strategic movements are catered for along desire lines and that all street networks offer route choice and maximise the number of safe and attractive walking and cycle routes between key destinations. The application of DMURS is key to ensure sustainable mobility and the creation of high quality and attractive settlements. Local Authorities should also consider preparing active travel plans or sustainable mobility plans that focus on improving ease of movement in established areas to important destinations such as schools, parks, shops and public transport. This can be of particular benefit where a new transport service or new destination such as a school is proposed.

Policy and Objective 4.1

It is a policy and objective of these Guidelines that planning authorities implement the principles, approaches and standards set out in the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets, 2013 (including updates) in carrying out their functions under the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) and as part of an integrated approach to quality urban design and placemaking.

Figure 4.2:
Key quality urban design and placemaking outcomes in relation to sustainable and efficient movement.



Highly permeable and connected network
(Image base: Google Maps)



**Enhanced local connections
(for sustainable modes)**
(Image base: JFOC Architects)



Traffic calmed streets/Ease of movement for vulnerable users



Reduced parking/integrated design solutions

(ii) Mix and Distribution of Uses

These Guidelines promote a move away from segregated land use areas (residential, commercial and employment) that have reinforced unsustainable travel in favour of mixed-use neighbourhoods. Ensuring that there is a good mix and distribution of activities around a hierarchy of centres has many benefits in terms of reducing the need to travel and creating active and vibrant places. The following key principles should be applied in the preparation of local plans and in the consideration of individual planning applications (Figure 4.3 also refers):

- (a) In city and town centres and at high capacity public transport nodes and interchanges (defined in Table 3.8), development should consist of high intensity mix-use development (residential, commercial, retail, cultural and community uses) that responds in scale and intensity to the level of accessibility. At major transport interchanges, uses should be planned in accordance with the principles of Transport Orientated Development.
- (b) In city and town centres, planning authorities should plan for a diverse range of uses including retail, cultural and residential uses and for the adaption and re-use of the existing building stock (e.g. over the shop living). It is also important to plan for the activation of outdoor spaces and the public realm to promote more liveable city and town centres. Much of this can be achieved through the implementation of urban enhancement and traffic demand management measures that work together to free up space for active travel and create spaces that invite people to meet, mingle and dwell within centres.
- (c) In areas that are less central, the mix of uses should cater for local services and amenities focused around a hierarchy of local centres that support residential communities and with opportunities for suitable non-residential development throughout.
- (d) In all urban areas, planning authorities should actively promote and support opportunities for intensification. This could include initiatives that support the more intensive use of existing buildings (including adaption and extension) and under-used lands (including for example the repurposing of car parks at highly accessible urban locations that no longer require a high level of private car access).
- (e) It will be important to align the integration of land uses and centres with public transport in order to maximise the benefits of public transport.
- (f) The creation of sustainable communities also requires a diverse mix of housing and variety in residential densities across settlements. This will require a focus on the delivery of innovative housing types that can facilitate compact growth and provide greater housing choice that responds to the needs of single people, families, older people and people with disabilities, informed by a Housing Needs Demand Assessment (HNDA) where possible. Development plans may specify a mix for apartment and other housing developments, but this should be further to an evidence-based Housing Needs and Demand Assessment.

Figure 4.3:

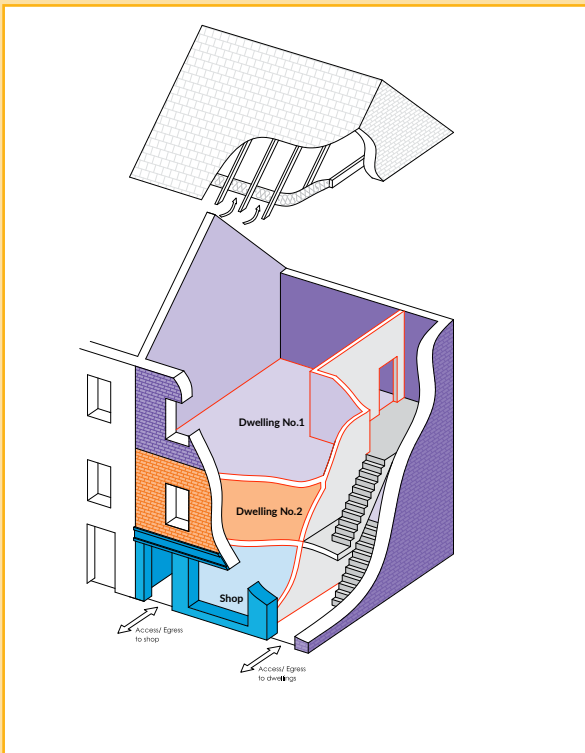
Key quality design and placemaking outcomes in relation to a mix and distribution of uses (including diverse and vibrant communities).



Higher densities/mixed use development in centres and on transport corridors/nodes



Diverse and innovative range of houses
(Image source: Shay Cleary Architects)



Adaptation and re-use
(Image source: Bring Back Homes, DHLGH, 2018)



Inviting/livable public realm
(Image source: Cork Co. Co.)

(iii) Green and Blue Infrastructure

Green and Blue Infrastructure (GBI) is a strategically planned network of natural and semi-natural areas designed and managed to deliver a wide range of ecosystem services, while also enhancing biodiversity. Ecosystem services include water purification, enhancing air quality, space for recreation and climate mitigation and adaptation. In settlements, GBI includes features such as rivers and canals, coastline and coastal habitats, green spaces (including parks), Nature-based Solutions and amenity sites that deliver ecosystem services and contribute to healthy, low carbon, resilient and connected settlements and places. National Planning Objective 58 of the NPF requires integrated planning for Green Infrastructure and ecosystem services as part of the preparation of statutory land use plans. Development plans should include (or be informed by) a Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy and include objectives for the conservation, restoration and enhancement of natural assets and GBI networks. These objectives can be refined further in local statutory plans and guidance documents in response to local circumstances.

The following key principles should be applied in the preparation of local plans and in the preparation and consideration of individual planning applications, (Figure 4.4 also refers):

- (a) Plan for the protection, restoration and enhancement of natural features, biodiversity and landscapes, and ensure that urban development maintains an appropriate separation and setback from important natural assets. New development should seek to protect and enhance important natural features (habitats and species) within and around the site, should avoid the degradation of ecosystems and include measures to mitigate against any potential negative ecological impacts.
- (b) Plan for an integrated network of multifunctional and interlinked urban green spaces. This is addressed further in subsection (iii) Public Open Space below.
- (c) Promote urban greening and Nature-based Solutions (including Sustainable Drainage Systems and slow-the-flow initiatives) for the management of urban surface waters in all new developments and retrofitting in existing areas to ensure that the benefits of ecosystem services are realised¹³. Planning authorities should adopt a nature-based approach to urban drainage that uses soft-engineering techniques and native vegetation (including the protection of the riparian zone) to minimise the impact on natural river processes.
- (d) The use of Nature-based Solutions at ground level may not be possible on certain brownfield sites due to historic land contamination. In such cases, alternative solutions such as green roofs and walls can be considered.

(iv) Public Open Space

All statutory development plans should include a strategy for the provision of an integrated hierarchy of public open spaces and corridors across the plan area to meet the needs of the planned population. The availability of accessible and high quality public open spaces within all settlements that are part of a wider GBI network will be important in creating sustainable settlements. This should include a hierarchy of multifunctional public open spaces and corridors that are accessible and provide for the recreational needs of the planned population, while also creating space for nature and ecosystem services.

13 Refer to DHLGH publication Nature-based Solutions to the Management of Rainwater and Surface Water Runoff in Urban Areas Water Sensitive Urban Design Best Practice Interim Guidance Document, 2022 for further information in relation to Water Sensitive Urban Design.

The public open space strategy in the development plan should include objectives relating to the provision of:

- (a) Regional, district and local level public parks and greenways. These are generally publically owned and managed parks e.g. by a local authority or public body such as the OPW or Waterways Ireland.
- (b) Public open space provided as part of new development proposals. These spaces should be designed to retain and protect natural features and habitats of importance within the site and to maximise biodiversity gain. They should also form an integral part of the overall design. These spaces may be offered for taking in charge by the local authority following the completion of the development.

The objectives of the development plan public open space strategy should be informed by the objectives of the RSEs and any regional GBI strategy. The form, size and distribution of new public open spaces should be planned and take account of open space provision within the area and broader nature conservation and environmental considerations.

While there is no set standard of open space provision per settlement in Ireland, it is recommended that opportunities to enhance the overall quantum of public open space and to restore and enhance nature and biodiversity within settlements is harnessed where opportunities arise, for example, through regeneration or urban enhancement projects and in new development areas. The level of provision should take account of the needs of the planned population, protected zones, landscape character and statutory obligations to protect certain habitats and biodiversity. Ideally, all residents within a settlement will have access to a multi-functional public open space within walking distance of their home.

Public open spaces should be designed to cater for a range of active and passive recreational needs (including play, physical activity, active travel, cultural uses and community gardens and allotments, as appropriate to the context) and to conserve and restore nature and biodiversity. It will be necessary to balance improved access to natural assets with the need to protect the environment as increased levels of tourism, sports and leisure can impact negatively on nature and biodiversity. In addition, the provision of public open spaces should not result in any direct or indirect adverse effects on the integrity of European Sites.

Chapter 5 includes minimum requirements for the provision of open space in new residential developments, based on the net site area.

Figure 4.4:

Key quality urban design and placemaking outcomes in relation to green and blue infrastructure network (including open space, landscape and heritage).



Integration with landscape/biodiversity



Interconnected green spaces and corridors
(Image base: Bradley Murphy Design)



Accessible and diverse range of public spaces



Nature-based solutions to urban drainage

(v) Responsive Built Form

Built form refers to the layout, position and composition of buildings and to how buildings address streets and open spaces. This is a key element in ensuring the creation of attractive and well-designed settlements.

The following key principles should be applied in the preparation of local plans and in the consideration of individual planning applications (Figure 4.5 also refers):

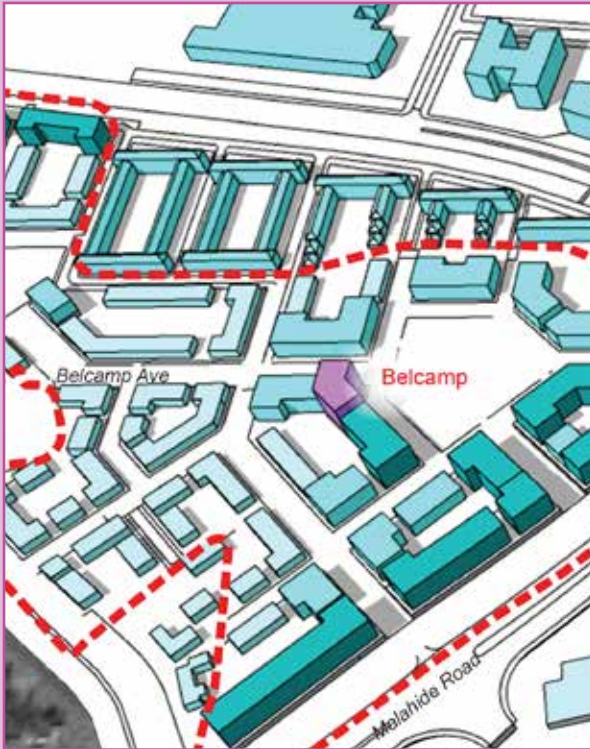
- (a) New development should support the formation of a legible and coherent urban structure with landmark buildings and features at key nodes and focal points.
- (b) New development should respond in a positive way to the established pattern and form of development and to the wider scale of development in the surrounding area. The height, scale and massing of development in particular should respond positively to and enhance the established pattern of development (including streets and spaces).
- (c) The urban structure of new development should strengthen the overall urban structure and create opportunities for new linkages where possible.
- (d) Buildings should generally present well-defined edges to streets and public spaces to ensure that the public realm is well-overlooked with active frontages.
- (e) New development should embrace good modern architecture and urban design that is innovative and varied, and respects and enhances local distinctiveness and heritage.
- (f) Materials and finishes should be of high quality, respond to the local palette of materials and finishes and be highly durable.

Policy and Objective 4.2

It is a policy and objective of these Guidelines that the key indicators of quality urban design and placemaking set out in Section 4.4 are applied within statutory development plans and in the consideration of individual planning applications.

Figure 4.5:

Key quality urban design and placemaking outcomes in relation to the urban structure and built form



Legible urban structure
(Image source: Dublin City Council)



Well-defined edges that activate/animate streets and spaces



Appropriate scale, massing and height



Distinctive design strategy
(Image Source: JTP/Craig Auckland, Fotohaus)



5.0

Development Standards for Housing

(Image source: DK Architects)

5.0 Development Standards for Housing

5.1 Introduction

Previous chapters have focused on settlements, density and urban design and placemaking at settlement, neighbourhood and site levels. This chapter focuses on the design of housing units and the relationship with their immediate surroundings. The quality of new housing can play a significant role in improving health and wellbeing and contributes to sustainable development. One of the core principles of these Guidelines is to support, alongside national building standards, new homes that provide a high standard of amenity while also achieving sustainable and lower carbon development. It will also be necessary to ensure that new housing integrates well and that the safety and amenity of residential and other sensitive occupiers of adjacent properties is safeguarded to a reasonable extent.

5.2 Need for Change

The continued application of suburban housing standards originally conceived during the 20th century is hampering innovation in the housing sector in Ireland. In particular, the inclusion of suburban housing standards in some development plans has precluded compact own-door housing solutions that have the potential to offer a broader range of housing options.

Low-rise¹⁴ medium-density housing models that are common in the UK, Europe and internationally offer significant potential to contribute to compact urban growth, when applied at the right locations. These models can deliver densities of 40 dph to 100 dph (net) with a high proportion of own-door units. Key design principles include reduced plot sizes and a tighter arrangement of houses compared to suburban housing, narrower streets and smaller street setbacks, reduced car parking ratios and distribution of private open space in the form of patio gardens and/or upper level terraces and balconies (Figure 5.1 and Appendix E refers). There is also a strong emphasis on creating high quality streets and public spaces, important in creating a strong sense of place and community. These models of housing combine modern housing standards with a more traditional town and village urban form.

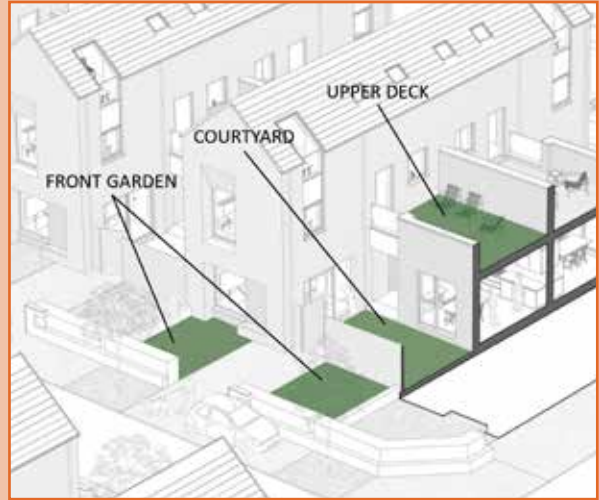
With significant population growth forecast, and changing demographics that will see a more diverse range of households, it is Government policy to support medium density 'own door' housing models in Ireland, alongside traditional housing and apartment developments. This policy is aligned to NPF priorities for compact growth and with Housing for All priorities to provide a greater range of housing options.

14 Typically 3 to 4 storey.

Figure 5.1:
Key characteristics of low-rise compact forms of 'own door' housing.



Narrow blocks, small plots and compact layouts
Image Source: Alison Brooks Architects



Varied forms of open space at multiple levels
Image Base: DK Architects



Varied housing types



Narrow streets and small setbacks



Integrated parking solutions



Reduced separation/privacy measures

5.3 Standards for Housing

To enable greater innovation, a graduated and flexible approach to the application of residential development standards is required across all housing types. In particular, it is necessary to review and update standards in statutory development plans in relation to separation between dwellings, private, semi-private and public open space provision, car parking and cycle parking.

5.3.1 Separation Distances

A requirement for a minimum separation of 22 metres between opposing upper floor rear windows has formed part of suburban housing design since the early 20th century. The standard does not account for modern methods of design and construction and the capability of modern computer-based design programmes to model outcomes in relation to sunlight, daylight and privacy. Through the careful massing and positioning of blocks, positioning of windows and the integration of open space at multiple levels it is possible to achieve a high standard of residential amenity and good placemaking with separation distances of less than 22 metres. Separation distances should, therefore, be determined based on considerations of privacy and amenity, informed by the layout, design and site characteristics of the specific proposed development.

SPPR 1 - Separation Distances

It is a specific planning policy requirement of these Guidelines that statutory development plans¹⁵ shall not include an objective in respect of minimum separation distances that exceed 16 metres between opposing windows serving habitable rooms at the rear or side of houses, duplex units or apartment units above ground floor level. When considering a planning application for residential development, a separation distance of at least 16 metres between opposing windows serving habitable rooms¹⁶ at the rear or side of houses, duplex units and apartment units, above ground floor level shall be maintained. Separation distances below 16 metres may be considered acceptable in circumstances where there are no opposing windows serving habitable rooms and where suitable privacy measures have been designed into the scheme to prevent undue overlooking of habitable rooms and private amenity spaces.

There shall be no specified minimum separation distance at ground level or to the front of houses, duplex units and apartment units in statutory development plans and planning applications shall be determined on a case-by-case basis to prevent undue loss of privacy.

In all cases, the obligation will be on the project proposer to demonstrate to the satisfaction of the planning authority or An Bord Pleanála that residents will enjoy a high standard of amenity and that the proposed development will not have a significant negative impact on the amenity of occupiers of existing residential properties.

This SPPR will not apply to applications made in a Strategic Development Zone until the Planning Scheme is amended to integrate changes arising from the SPPR. Refer to Section 2.1.2 for further detail.

15 Any reference to a statutory development plan(s) in these Guidelines refers to all development plans made under the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) or under any replacement Planning and Development Act, including local area plans and strategic development zones planning schemes.

16 Refer to definition in Appendix A: Glossary of Terms.

5.3.2 Private Open Space for Houses

Well-designed private open space forms an integral part of houses and is essential for health and wellbeing. The minimum private open space standard in development plans often reflects the traditional suburban separation standard and width of a dwelling. A more graduated and flexible approach that supports the development of compact housing and takes account of the value of well-designed private and semi-private open space should be applied.

SPPR 2 - Minimum Private Open Space Standards for Houses

It is a specific planning policy requirement of these Guidelines that proposals for new houses meet the following minimum private open space standards:

1 bed house	20 sq.m
2 bed house	30 sq.m
3 bed house	40 sq.m
4 bed + house	50 sq.m

A further reduction below the minimum standard may be considered acceptable where an equivalent amount of high quality semi-private open space is provided in lieu of the private open space, subject to at least 50 percent of the area being provided as private open space (see Table 5.1 below). The planning authority should be satisfied that the compensatory semi-private open space will provide a high standard of amenity for all users and that it is well integrated and accessible to the housing units it serves.

Apartments and duplex units shall be required to meet the private and semi-private open space requirements set out in the Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments, Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2023 (and any subsequent updates).

For building refurbishment schemes on sites of any size or urban infill schemes on smaller sites (e.g. sites of up to 0.25ha) the private open space standard may be relaxed in part or whole, on a case-by-case basis, subject to overall design quality and proximity to public open space.

In all cases, the obligation will be on the project proposer to demonstrate to the satisfaction of the planning authority or An Bord Pleanála that residents will enjoy a high standard of amenity.

This SPPR will not apply to applications made in a Strategic Development Zone until the Planning Scheme is amended to integrate changes arising from the SPPR. Refer to Section 2.1.2 for further detail.

Table 5.1 Minimum Private Open Space Standard for Houses

House	Minimum Private Open Space	Max Semi-Private (in lieu)
1 bed	20 sq.m	10 sq.m
2 bed	30 sq.m	15 sq.m
3 bed	40 sq.m	20 sq.m
4 bed+	50 sq.m	25 sq.m

Private open space must form part of the curtilage of the house and be designed to provide a high standard of external amenity space in one or more usable areas. Open spaces may take the form of traditional gardens or patio areas at ground level, and / or well designed and integrated terraces and/or balconies at upper level. The open space must be directly accessible from the unit it serves and a principal area of open space should be directly accessible from a living space.

Semi-private open space is distinct from public open space. While there is no requirement to provide semi-private open space for a house, these Guidelines provide an option under SPPR 2 to provide semi-private open space in lieu of private open space as part of a more flexible design approach. Semi-private spaces shall be for the exclusive use of the residents of a housing development and be directly accessible and integrated into the development. They should be secure and usable spaces with a range of suitable landscape features to meet the needs of intended residents.

5.3.3 Public Open Space

Public open spaces in residential schemes refers to the open spaces that form part of the public realm within a residential development. This is distinct from a public park. Open spaces provide for active and passive recreation, nature conservation, pedestrian and cycle connection and provide an important visual break between streets and buildings. All residential developments are required to make provision for a reasonable quantum of public open space. There is a need to focus on the overall quality, amenity value and biodiversity value of public open spaces. The spaces should integrate and protect natural features of significance and green and blue infrastructure corridors within the site and should support the conservation, restoration and enhancement of biodiversity. The public open spaces should also form an integral part of the design and layout of a development and provide a connected hierarchy of spaces, with suitable landscape features, including seating and provision for children's play.

Policy and Objective 5.1 - Public Open Space

It is a policy and objective of these Guidelines that statutory development plans include an objective(s) relating to the provision of public open space in new residential developments (and in mixed-use developments that include a residential element). The requirement in the development plan shall be for public open space provision of not less than a minimum of 10% of net site area and not more than a minimum of 15% of net site area save in exceptional circumstances. Different minimum requirements (within the 10-15% range) may be set for different areas. The minimum requirement should be justified taking into account existing public open space provision in the area and broader nature conservation and environmental considerations.

In the case of strategic and sustainable development sites, the minimum public open space requirement will be determined on a plan-led basis, having regard to the overall approach to public park provision within the area.

In the case of sites that contain significant heritage, landscape or recreational features and sites that have specific nature conservation requirements, a higher proportion of public open space may need to be retained. The 10-15% range shall not therefore apply to new development in such areas.

In some circumstances a planning authority might decide to set aside (in part or whole) the public open space requirement arising under the development plan. This can occur in cases where the planning authority considers it unfeasible, due to site constraints or other factors, to locate all of the open space on site. In other cases, the planning authority might consider that the needs of the population would be better served by the provision of a new park in the area or the upgrade or enhancement of an existing public open space or amenity. It is recommended that a provision to this effect is included within the development plan to allow for flexibility. In such circumstances, the planning authority may seek a financial contribution within the terms of Section 48 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) in lieu of provision within an application site.

5.3.4 Car Parking – Quantum, Form and Location

The availability of car parking has a critical impact on travel choices for all journeys, including local trips. With ongoing investment in active travel and public transport across all urban areas and particularly in our cities and larger towns, the number of locations with access to everyday needs and employment within a short walk or cycle or via a regular public transport connection is increasing all the time. In areas where car-parking levels are reduced studies show that people are more likely to walk, cycle, or choose public transport for daily travel. In order to meet the targets set out in the National Sustainable Mobility Policy 2022 and in the Climate Action Plan 2023 for reduced private car travel it will be necessary to apply a graduated approach to the management of car parking within new residential development.

The approach should take account of proximity to urban centres and sustainable transport options, in order to promote more sustainable travel choices. Car parking ratios should be reduced at all urban locations, and should be minimised, substantially reduced or wholly eliminated at locations that have good access to urban services and to public transport. In areas where car parking is reduced local authorities should be satisfied that the mobility needs of residents and workers can be satisfied (e.g. through shared mobility solutions such as car and bike share). On-site or proximate spaces should also be prioritised for use by mobility impaired persons and leased on a demonstrated needs basis rather than being sold with units. As part of this transition, it will be important that local authorities continue to progress active travel projects in conjunction with the National Transport Authority and the Department of Transport and that new ways of addressing transport needs, such as mobility hubs, increased bicycle parking across settlements and car clubs, are supported in conjunction with reduced car parking.

Table 3.8 defines 'Accessible', 'Intermediate' and 'Peripheral' Locations. These definitions should form the basis for the approach to car parking.

SPPR 3 - Car Parking

It is a specific planning policy requirement of these Guidelines that:

- (i) In city centres and urban neighbourhoods of the five cities, defined in Chapter 3 (Table 3.1 and Table 3.2) car-parking provision should be minimised, substantially reduced or wholly eliminated. The maximum rate of car parking provision for residential development at these locations, where such provision is justified to the satisfaction of the planning authority, shall be 1 no. space per dwelling.
- (ii) In accessible locations, defined in Chapter 3 (Table 3.8) car- parking provision should be substantially reduced. The maximum rate of car parking provision for residential development, where such provision is justified to the satisfaction of the planning authority, shall be 1.5 no. spaces per dwelling.
- (iii) In intermediate and peripheral locations, defined in Chapter 3 (Table 3.8) the maximum rate of car parking provision for residential development, where such provision is justified to the satisfaction of the planning authority, shall be 2 no. spaces per dwelling

Applicants should be required to provide a rationale and justification for the number of car parking spaces proposed and to satisfy the planning authority that the parking levels are necessary and appropriate, particularly when they are close to the maximum provision. The maximum car parking standards do not include bays assigned for use by a car club, designated short stay on-street Electric Vehicle (EV) charging stations or accessible parking spaces. The maximum car parking standards do include provision for visitor parking.

This SPPR will not apply to applications made in a Strategic Development Zone until the Planning Scheme is amended to integrate changes arising from the SPPR. Refer to Section 2.1.2 for further detail.

The form and location of car parking in residential developments has an impact on the built environment. In the case of low and medium density housing where basement or undercroft car parking may not be feasible, it is important to achieve a balance between the quantum of car parking and its design, in order to ensure that parked cars do not dominate public areas.

The Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (DMURS)¹⁷ indicates a preference for on-street car parking as part of a package of traffic calming measures. This supports a greater turnover of spaces and when combined with graduated and maximum standards, will support efficient street layouts. When combined with design and landscaping measures, on-street car parking can also reduce the visual impact of parked cars in public areas, relative to in-curtilage or large areas of surface parking.

DMURS also acknowledges that off-street parking has a role in some instances and, in particular, as densities increase to ensure that parked vehicles do not dominate public areas. In this regard parking within areas that would traditionally be used as front gardens should be avoided, or minimised. Where off-street or in-curtilage parking is provided it should be designed to integrate into the block layout and building envelope in order to maximise efficiency, enable future adaptability to other use and to reduce the visual impact of parked cars. This approach has the added benefit of allowing the car parking space to be used for other purposes or be repurposed should the homeowner decide that they no longer need a car. Where parking is within the envelope of a dwelling, there is a need to ensure that the street frontage is not compromised by inactive frontages. DMURS and the Design Manual (to accompany the final Guidelines) provide more detail in relation to the design of car parking.

5.2.5 Bicycle Parking and Storage

Cycling provides a flexible, efficient and attractive transport option for urban living and these Guidelines require that this transport mode is fully integrated into the design of all new residential schemes. In particular, in areas of high and medium accessibility, planning authorities must ensure that new residential developments have high quality cycle parking and cycle storage facilities for both residents and visitors. Access to secure storage of bicycles is a key concern for residents in more compact housing developments.

17 Refer to DMURS, Section 4.4.9 - On-Street Parking and Loading.

SPPR 4 - Cycle Parking and Storage

It is a specific planning policy requirement of these Guidelines that all new housing schemes (including mixed-use schemes that include housing) include safe and secure cycle storage facilities to meet the needs of residents and visitors.

The following requirements for cycle parking and storage are recommended:

- (i) Quantity – in the case of residential units that do not have ground level open space or have smaller terraces, a general minimum standard of 1 cycle storage space per bedroom should be applied. Visitor cycle parking should also be provided. Any deviation from these standards shall be at the discretion of the planning authority and shall be justified with respect to factors such as location, quality of facilities proposed, flexibility for future enhancement/ enlargement, etc. It will be important to make provision for a mix of bicycle parking types including larger/heavier cargo and electric bikes and for individual lockers.
- (ii) Design – cycle storage facilities should be provided in a dedicated facility of permanent construction, within the building footprint or, where not feasible, within an adjacent or adjoining purpose-built structure of permanent construction. Cycle parking areas shall be designed so that cyclists feel safe. It is best practice that either secure cycle cage/compound or preferably locker facilities are provided.

Planning authorities should ensure that development proposals incorporate details on the provision of and access to cycle storage facilities at planning application stage. The cycle storage facilities should be easily accessible. Unnecessarily long access routes with poor passive security or slopes that can become hazardous in winter weather should be avoided. An acceptable quality of cycle storage requires a management plan that ensures the effective security (including any proposals for electronic access or CCTV), operation and maintenance of cycle parking. It should be low maintenance and as far as possible easy and attractive to use by residents. Appropriate conditions in relation to the operation and maintenance of the cycle storage facilities should be attached to any grant of permission that includes communal cycle provision..

5.3.6 Operation and Management of the Development

For developments that include multi-unit and compact housing blocks, communal facilities such as refuse storage areas should be provided in open spaces that will not be taken in charge. Planning applications should include an operational management plan that sets out details of the long-term management and maintenance of the scheme. The plan should address provisions made for the storage and collection of waste materials in residential schemes, particularly where there are reduced areas of private outdoor space. Communal refuse facilities shall be accessible to each housing unit and designed with regard to the projected level of waste generation and types and quantities of receptacles required.

5.3.7 Daylight

The provision of acceptable levels of daylight in new residential developments is an important planning consideration, in the interests of ensuring a high quality living environment for future residents. It is also important to safeguard against a detrimental impact on the amenity of other sensitive occupiers of adjacent properties.

- (a) The potential for poor daylight performance in a proposed development or for a material impact on neighbouring properties will generally arise in cases where the buildings are close together, where higher buildings are involved, or where there are other obstructions to daylight. Planning authorities do not need to undertake a detailed technical assessment in relation to daylight performance in all cases. It should be clear from the assessment of architectural drawings (including sections) in the case of low-rise housing with good separation from existing and proposed buildings that undue impact would not arise, and planning authorities may apply a level of discretion in this regard.
- (b) In cases where a technical assessment of daylight performance is considered by the planning authority to be necessary regard should be had to quantitative performance approaches to daylight provision outlined in guides like A New European Standard for Daylighting in Buildings IS EN17037:2018, UK National Annex BS EN17037:2019 and the associated BRE Guide 209 2022 Edition (June 2022), or any relevant future standards or guidance specific to the Irish context.

In drawing conclusions in relation to daylight performance, planning authorities must weigh up the overall quality of the design and layout of the scheme and the measures proposed to maximise daylight provision, against the location of the site and the general presumption in favour of increased scales of urban residential development. Poor performance may arise due to design constraints associated with the site or location and there is a need to balance that assessment against the desirability of achieving wider planning objectives. Such objectives might include securing comprehensive urban regeneration and or an effective urban design and streetscape solution.



Appendices

Appendix A:

Glossary of Terms

In these Guidelines, the references below are taken to have the general meaning set out in this section.

Active Travel:

Travel by transport modes that require physical exertion such as walking, cycling or scooting.

Apartment:

A self-contained residential unit that forms part of a multi-unit building with horizontal divisions(s) between it and at least one other unit that is an apartment or other non-residential use. Access to individual apartments is generally via grouped access or communal areas. However, ground floor units may have direct 'own door' access from public or semi-public areas.

Architectural language:

The architectural detailing of a building. These details include the buildings form, shape, materials and finishes, façade details and fenestration.

Backland Site:

Sites to the rear of existing property with no or limited street frontage.

Brownfield:

Land which has been subjected to building, engineering or other operations, excluding temporary uses or urban green spaces, generally comprising of redundant industrial lands or docks but may also include former barracks, hospitals or even occasionally, obsolete housing areas.

Building Height:

A measure of the vertical distance from the ground to the top of a building. Different methods are used to calculate and describe building height, such as natural ground level to roof ridge, parapet or wall height.

Car Club:

A club where a group of people have an arrangement for sharing a car or cars. Cars are usually stored within a development or on street, and members of the club can book access to the cars for a fee.

Community Gardens and Allotments:

Plots of land which are made available (usually by a local authority) to community groups or individuals for the cultivation of vegetables and plants.

Dwellings per hectare (dph):

A measure of residential density and refers to the number of residential units within a defined geographic area. It is used to compare the intensity of development and the efficiency of the land use. Gross density is a general measure of the number of residential units within a defined geographic area that includes all land. Net residential density is a more refined measure of the number of residential units within a defined geographic area that includes the areas to be developed for housing and ancillary uses only. Appendix B 'Measuring Residential Density' details the methodology that should be used in the calculation of residential density.

Duplex:

A building divided into two residential units. The units or apartments may be stacked one on top of the other on separate floors. Access to duplex units is generally direct 'own door' access from public or semi-public areas. However, access to an upper floor duplex unit may be via grouped access or communal areas.

Existing Built-Up Footprint:

Existing built up footprint refers to the built up area of a settlement i.e. lands that are subject to urban development.

Greenfield:

Lands that have never been intensively developed and are (or were last used for) agricultural purposes. Greenfield lands are generally located on the periphery of cities, towns and villages. Development will generally require the provision of new infrastructure, roads and sewers; and for larger areas ancillary social and commercial facilities, schools, shops, employment and community facilities.

Habitable Room:

Primary living spaces such as living rooms, dining rooms, studies and bedrooms.

Infill:

Serviced lands that are located within the existing built up footprint of settlements. May consist of *Brownfield Sites* or *Greenfield Sites*.

Massing:

The general shape, form and size of a building in three dimensions.

Masterplan:

A masterplan is a detailed plan that sets out area specific and detailed design guidance. Masterplans will generally address land use and built form, public realm, movement and green and blue infrastructure. Masterplans have no legal status in their own right under the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) but do have legal status when integrated as part of a statutory development plan.

Neighbourhood:

A neighbourhood is a geographically localised area where people live and interact with each other, within a larger city, town, suburb or rural area. The concept of the neighbourhood as an integral building block in the development of urban structure underpins these Guidelines.

Non-Habitable Room:

Service rooms such as bathrooms, WCs, utility rooms, storerooms and circulation spaces. A kitchen is not a habitable room unless it provides space for dining.

Passive Surveillance:

Overlooking of the public realm from buildings and active frontages so as to limit the opportunity for crime and anti-social behaviour.

Permeability:

The degree to which an area has a variety of direct, pleasant, convenient and safe routes through it.

Placemaking:

A multi-faceted and holistic approach to the planning, design and management of the built environment to ensure that a location is accessible, diverse, attractive and positively perceived. Good placemaking contributes to people's health, happiness, well-being and cultural experience.

Plot Ratio:

Expresses the proportionate relationship between the area of a site and the total gross floor area of a building(s). It is a measure of the intensity of land use and is calculated by dividing the gross floor area of a building(s) (sum of floorspace within the external walls of the building) by the site area.

Private Open Space:

An outdoor open area that is exclusively for use by the occupants of a residential unit (and their visitors). Does not include areas used exclusively for access (e.g. side passages) or storage (including car parking).

Public open space:

Public open space refers to open spaces that form part of the public realm and are accessible to the public for the purposes of active and passive recreation. This includes:

- Parks
- Squares or plazas
- Large areas of landscaping including Nature-based Drainage Solutions.
- Green corridors or linear parks connecting different areas where a high environmental quality and active modes of travel are promoted.

For the purposes of calculating public open space provision, it can include areas used for Nature-based Urban Drainage and other attenuation areas where they form part of an integrated open space network. It would not generally include large retention ponds where they are fenced or separate to the open space network, but may include smaller retention basins that are integrated into and form part of the open space and landscaping scheme. Incidental areas of open space that do not form part of an interconnected network of hard and soft landscaped areas should not be included in the calculation of public open space provision.

Public Realm:

Public realm refers to all the areas to which the public has access such as roads, streets, footpaths, lanes, parks, squares, open spaces and building façades.

Scale:

The size of a building and how it is perceived in relation to its surroundings (based on its *height* and *massing*).

Semi-Private Open Space:

An outdoor open area that is exclusively for use by the occupants of a number of residential units (and their visitors). Does not include areas used exclusively for access (e.g. passages) or storage (including bicycle or car parking). Semi-private open space is not part of the public realm.

Site Coverage:

The percentage of the site covered by building structures excluding public roads and footpaths. It is a control for preventing the adverse effects of overdevelopment.

Statutory Development Plan:

References to statutory plans within these Guidelines refers to all statutory land uses plans at a local authority level with legal status under the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) or any future Planning and Development Act, and includes City and County Development Plans, Local Area Plans and SDZ Planning Schemes.

Strategic and Sustainable Development**Locations:**

Strategic and sustainable development locations are as described in detail in section 4.4.4 of the S28 Development Plans Guidelines for Planning Authorities, 2022.

Streetscape:

The visual appearance of the linear elements along a street such as buildings, spaces and landscape elements that line a street from a particular viewpoint.

Sustainable Travel:

Travel using transport modes that have a lower impact on the environment including walking, cycling and public transport.

Transport Node or Interchange:

Places of convergence and interchange between different forms of transportation.

Transport Orientated Development:

A plan-led form of urban development that seeks to maximise the provision of housing, employment, public services and leisure space in close proximity to and accessible to existing or proposed high quality public transport services.

Universal Design:

Universal Design involves the design of the built environment so that it is accessible to everybody regardless of age, size, ability, or disability.

Urban Character:

A distinct pattern or combination of elements that occurs consistently in a particular landscape or built environment (see also *urban form* and *urban fabric*).

Urban Design Framework:

Urban Design Frameworks (UDF) set out a design vision at a neighbourhood or site level focused on urban design and defining the urban structure informed by technical appraisal. UDFs generally address parameters for development such as street hierarchy and transport accessibility, open space, land use and patterns of built form and their application at a neighbourhood or site level.

Urban Design Statement:

A statement that provides a rationale and justification for a development proposal and the design approach taken, from the process of analysis, appraisal and visualisation to detailed design. They are an important communication tool that enable developers to make a case for a development, assists planning authorities in the assessment of the development proposal and inform interested parties as to how the best design solution for the site has been arrived upon.

Urban Fabric:

A more specific reference to the urban form, that centres on more finite details or features of the areas character like the proportion of buildings, the width of buildings along a street, architectural details.

Urban Form:

A general reference to the various elements that make up an urban area, such as its streets, blocks, individual buildings, open space etc. Understanding the urban form (and urban fabric) of a particular area (such as via an analysis process) can identify an areas unique characteristics and can inform a responsive design approach that enhances its placemaking qualities.

Urban Grain:

A pattern of building plots, building widths and streets in urban areas. Older parts of a city, town or village tend to have a fine grain with many narrow streets/lanes, smaller blocks and smaller plots sizes.

Urban Landmark:

A building or element of the landscape that visually stands out from its surrounds and acts as a marker for navigation. Statutory development plans may identify suitable locations for urban landmarks based on an analysis led/ masterplanned approach to urban design and placemaking.

Urban Legibility:

Good urban legibility refers to an urban environment that is easy to navigate because of a relatively straightforward layout of streets and spaces and the integration of visual cues (such as landmarks, landscape elements and building forms).

Urban Structure:

The design of routes, spaces and buildings that make up an urban area and the relationship between them. The creation of a coherent urban structure is a holistic approach to design where there is a clear hierarchy of streets and spaces around which movement, lands uses and buildings are framed.

Vulnerable Road Users:

Road users who are most at risk from injury by motor vehicle traffic, including pedestrians, cyclists, children, the elderly and people with mobility impairments.

Water Sensitive Urban Design (integrating Nature-based Solutions and Sustainable Drainage Systems):

This refers to a move away from engineered solutions to the management of rainwater and surface water in urban environments towards a more systematic approach to planning and designing to integrate water cycle management into the built environment. This involves the replacement of impermeable surfacing with nature-based planted areas that are designed to absorb, retain, store, and treat urban runoff prior to discharge back to the environment. The DHLGH document Nature-based Solutions to the Management of Rainwater and Surface Water Runoff in Urban Areas, Water Sensitive Urban Design Best Practice Interim Guidance Document, published in March 2022 sets out further detail in this regard.

Appendix B:

Measuring Residential Density

- While the principle of calculating density is straightforward (a site area multiplied by a density assumption to produce an estimate of site capacity)- the practical application is more complicated and is dependent in particular on the appropriate definitions of the site and development areas, as well as to a lesser extent, on using the correct density measure.
- Selecting the appropriate definition of the site and the development area is important.
- In forecasting the capacity of lands for housing delivery where non-residential uses, such as main roads, retail, employment and major open spaces are being planned in conjunction with housing, an allowance needs to be made in the density assumption for the land that will be occupied by such uses, which may be upwards of 25% when forecasting the capacity of a land area at the neighbourhood or district scale.
- At the site-specific level, if density controls are to produce the expected results, a density standard must be carefully related to the area accommodating the development. At different stages in the planning of a new development area, standards and measurement can be refined from an overall density that embraces the full range of uses down to one that includes only the residential component of an individual site. As the focus narrows and the area becomes smaller, the residential density assumption in terms of the number of dwellings per hectare will rise.

Gross and net densities

- A gross density measure is best applied to estimating overall land areas required for mixed-use developments or for Local Area Plans and Planning Schemes.
- A net site density measure is a more refined estimate than a gross site density measure and includes only those areas that will be developed for housing and directly associated uses as detailed in Table 1 below:

Table 1

Net Site Area Includes	Net Site Area Excludes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Streets as defined by Section 3.2.1 DMURS. • Private and semi-private open space. • Car parking, bicycle parking and other storage areas. • Local parks such as neighbourhood and pocket parks or squares and plaza's • All areas of incidental open space and landscaping. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Major road/streets such as Arterial Streets and Link Streets as defined by Section 3.2.1 DMURS. • Lands used for commercial development (inc. retail, leisure and entertainment). • Lands for primary schools, churches and other community services and facilities. • Larger, Regional or District Parks, Wayleaves or rights of way. <p>Other areas of land that cannot be developed due to environmental sensitives, topographical constraints (i.e. steepness) and/or are subject to flooding.</p>

A net density is the most commonly used approach in allocating housing land within Local Area Plans and Planning Schemes and is appropriate for development on infill sites where the boundaries of the site are clearly defined and where only residential uses are proposed. It is also appropriate where phased development is taking place in a major development area (perhaps spanning different plan periods) and individual housing areas have been identified. All densities quoted in these Guidelines are net densities.

When calculating residential densities within mixed use schemes, planning authorities shall exclude the % of non-residential uses in proportion to the net site area, i.e.

- Calculate Net Site Area
- Calculate the overall GFA
- Differentiate between the % of residential and non-residential GFA
- Reduce net site area by the percentage of non-residential GFA
- Divide number of dwelling by reduced site area.

Worked Example

Required Information

- Net Site Area = 1.7 ha
- Overall GFA = 31,400 sq. metres
- Residential GFA = 24,600 sq. metres
- Non-residential GFA = 6,800 sq. metres
- Number of residential units = 188

Calculation

- Residential GFA as a portion of development = $24,600/31,400 = 78.3\%$
- Site area for density purposes = $(1.7\text{ha} \times 78.3\%) = 1.33\text{ha}$
- Residential density = $188/1.33 = 141 \text{ dph (net)}$

Appendix C:

Supplemental Information for Planning Applications

The table below provides a reference for planning authorities and prospective applicants in relation to supplemental information that may assist in the consideration of planning applications and the suggested thresholds at which the need for supplemental information should be considered. Where a report or assessment is required under the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended) the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended) or under an EU Directive this is noted. This list is not exhaustive, and it is recommended that all prospective applicants engage with planning authorities prior to the submission of a planning application to confirm submission requirements for any given development¹⁸.

Design and Landscape

Report	Suggested Threshold	Notes
Landscape Design Report/Masterplan	30 or more residential units or 3000 sq. metres of mixed-use development.	
Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA).	Large development proposals. The threshold for LVIA will vary depending on the receiving environment and the nature and scale of the development. In the case of proposals incorporating buildings of scale and increased building height and proposals in areas of landscape sensitivity (including architecturally sensitive areas), the threshold for submission of a LVIA will be lower.	
Micro-climate Assessment	Development proposals involving taller buildings.	Refer to Section 3.2 of Urban Development and Building Heights (2020).
Quality Audit	Applications involving the creation of new streets and street networks or significant changes to existing streets	Refer also to the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets – Advice Note 4.
Urban Design Statement / Architectural Design Report	50 or more residential units 5,000 sq. metres of mixed use development	Statements may also be for developments within sensitive locations (such as Architectural Conservation Areas) or in areas of civic importance (i.e. prominent sites)

¹⁸ The recommendations in this section may be addressed as part of a general planning or technical report and should not be construed as a requirement to submit individual assessments in each instance.

Universal Design Statement	10 or more residential units or mixed use development over 1,000 sq. metres	Refer also to Building for Everyone, a Universal Design Approach and Universal Design Guidelines for Homes in Ireland (National Disability Authority)
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Heritage, Conservation and Environmental Protection

Report	Recommended Threshold	Notes
Appropriate Assessment Screening and NIS	An Appropriate Assessment Screening must be undertaken in respect of all developments. A Natura Impact Statement is required where the potential for likely significant effects on a European Site(s), either alone or in combination with any other plan or project, cannot be excluded at Screening Stage.	Refer to Office of the Planning Regulator Practice Note PN01
Arboricultural Impact Assessment (tree Survey)	Sites where there are significant trees.	As identified/requested by the Planning Authority.
Archaeological Impact Assessments	As required	Refer to Office of the Planning Regulator Planning Leaflet 13
Conservation Report	Any development relating to a protected structure, or within a sensitive historic environment.	Planning authorities may require that the Urban Design Statement include a further statement on the impact of a proposal on impact on the historic built environment. See also Section 2.9 of the Urban Development and Building Heights (2020).
Ecological Impact Assessment	All developments that are located within or adjacent to any sensitive habitat, on sites that could contain protected species or in a quality landscape environment.	May be subsumed into an Environmental Impact Assessment, where required.
Environmental Impact Assessment	All developments within the threshold set out in Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) or any sub-threshold development where the need for EIA is not screened out.	Refer also to Office of the Planning Regulator Practice Note PN02
Site Specific Flood Risk Assessment	Any developments within Flood Risk Zones A and B.	See also The Planning System and Flood Risk Management: Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2009).

Housing and Community

Report	Recommended Threshold	Notes
Community, Social and Cultural Infrastructure Audit	To be submitted in support of a Large-scale Residential Development application (in excess of 100 homes) where such an audit has not been undertaken as part of the statutory plan making process.	Refer to Section 7.3 of Development Plan Guidelines (2022).
Daylight and Sunlight Assessment	In cases where a technical assessment of daylight performance is considered by the planning authority to be necessary.	Refers to a full technical assessment.
Housing Quality Assessment	10 or more residential units	May be addressed as part of a general Planning Report addressing issues relating to housing mix (i.e. the local Housing Need Demands Assessment has been responded to) and application of housing standards.
Noise Assessment	Residential development within close proximity to noise generating activities.	Examples will include major transport infrastructure such as airports, ports, arterial streets/roads and railways. May also be required for residential development within centres in close proximity to activities associated with the night-time economy.
Operational Management Plan /Report (inc. Lifecycle Report)	All developments consisting of housing units with communal access, facilities and areas open space areas.	

Servicing

Report	Recommended Threshold	Notes
Engineering Services Report (Civil and Structural)	All developments consisting of new residential/mixed use development.	For developments of 30 homes or less may be addressed as part of a general planning or engineering report addressing connections to services.
Lighting Report	30 or more residential units or 3,000 sq. metres of mixed-use development.	
Construction and Environmental Management Plan	All developments consisting of new residential/mixed use development.	

Construction Demolition Waste Management Plan	30 or more residential units, 1,000 sq. metres of mixed-use development.	
Operational Waste Management Plan	30 or more residential units, 1,000 sq. metres of mixed-use development.	
Surface Water Management Plan	30 or more residential units, 3000 sq. metres of mixed-use development and/or where public realm improvements are proposed (i.e. via Part 8).	For larger developments or proposals which include public realm works, the Surface Water management Plan should be developed in combination with the Landscape Report/Masterplan to include Nature-based Solutions to drainage.
Climate Action and Energy Statement	30 or more residential units 1,000 sq. metres or more.	

Travel and Transport

Report	Recommended Threshold	Notes
Mobility Management Plan/ Travel Plan	100 or more residential units or mixed use development with over 100 employees	Statements may also be required for sub-threshold developments with a particular need for mobility management (e.g. to support reduced car parking provision).
Road Safety Audit	See Road Safety Audit Guidelines, Transport Infrastructure Ireland, 2017.	As noted in Section 5.4 of the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets, within urban context the findings of a Road Safety Audit should be considered in combination with a Quality Audit.
Traffic and Transport Assessment (TIA)	See Table 2.1 of the Transport Infrastructure Ireland, Traffic and Transport Assessment Guidelines (2014).	

Appendix D:

Design Checklist - Key Indicators of Quality Urban Design and Placemaking

The Design Checklist below has been developed to assist in the application of Section 4.3 - Key Indicators of Quality Urban Design and Placemaking of these Guidelines. The checklist presents a series of questions that are intended as helpful prompts that can be used in the refinement and review of detailed plans (such as masterplans or urban design frameworks) and in the consideration of individual planning applications. Plans and development proposals may perform better against some indicators than others, and it will be a matter for the planning authority (or An Bord Pleanála in the case of an appeal or direct application) to determine whether the proposal overall is acceptable from a design perspective.

1. Sustainable and Efficient Movement



- (i) Will the plan or development proposal establish a highly permeable and legible network of streets and spaces within the site that optimises movement for sustainable modes of transport (walking, cycling and public transport)?
- (ii) Have opportunities to improve connections with and between established communities been identified and responded to with particular regard to strategic connections between homes, shops, employment opportunities, public transport, local services and amenities?
- (iii) Are streets designed (including the retrofitting of existing streets adjacent to or on-route to the site, where appropriate) in accordance with DMURS to calm traffic and enable the safe and comfortable movement of vulnerable users?
- (iv) Has the quantum of parking been minimised (in accordance with SPPR4 where relevant) and designed and located in a way that seeks to reduce the demand for private car use, promote sustainable modes of transport and ensure that the public realm is not dominated by parked vehicles?

2. Mix of Land Uses (Vibrant Centres and Communities)



- (i) Is the mix and intensity of land uses appropriate to the site and its location and have land uses been distributed in a complementary manner that optimises access to public transport, amenities and local services via walking or cycling?
- (ii) Have a diverse and varied range of housing types been provided to meet local and projected needs (having regard to the Housing Need Demand Assessment), supplemented by an innovative range of housing typologies that support greater housing affordability and choice?
- (iii) Will the plan or development proposal supplement and/or support the regeneration and revitalisation of an existing centre or neighbourhood, including the adaption and re-use of the existing building stock in order to reduce vacancy and dereliction (where applicable) and promote town centre living (where applicable)?
- (iv) Is the regeneration and revitalisation of an existing centre or neighbourhood supported by the enhancement of the public realm so as to create a more liveable environment, attract investment and encourage a greater number of visitors (where applicable)?

3. Green and Blue Infrastructure (Open Space, Landscape and Heritage)



- (i) Has the plan or development proposal positively responded to natural features and landscape character, with particular regard to biodiversity, vistas and landmarks and the setting of protected structures, conservation areas and historic landscapes?
- (ii) Have a complementary and interconnected range of open spaces, corridors and planted/landscaped areas been provided, that create and conserve ecological links and promotes active travel and healthier lifestyles?
- (iii) Are public open spaces universally accessible and designed to cater for a range of active and passive recreational uses (taking account of the function of other spaces within the network)?
- (iv) Does the plan or development proposal include integrated nature-based solutions for the management of urban drainage to promote biodiversity, urban greening, improved water quality and flood mitigation?

4. Responsive Built Form



- (i) Does the layout, orientation and scale of development support the formation of a coherent and legible urban structure in terms of block layouts and building heights with particular regard to the location of gateways and landmarks, the hierarchy of streets and spaces and access to daylight and sunlight?
- (ii) Do buildings address streets and spaces in a manner that will ensure they clearly define public and private spaces, generate activity, maximise passive surveillance and provide an attractive and animated interface?
- (iii) Does the layout, scale and design features of new development respond to prevailing development patterns (where relevant), integrate well within its context and provide appropriate transitions with adjacent buildings and established communities so as to safeguard their amenities to a reasonable extent?
- (iv) Has a coherent architectural and urban design strategy been presented that will ensure the development is sustainable, distinctive, complements the urban structure and promotes a strong sense of identity?

Appendix E:

Sample Housing Images, Plans and Layouts

The Gables, Liverpool

DK-Architects

Density 44 dph

14 x 4 bed houses
12 x 3 bed houses
4 x 2 bed units



Low Rise Medium Density Test Models

O'Mahony Pike Architects

50-66 dph



O' Devaney Gardens (Phase 1), Dublin

Dublin City Council - City Architects Division

Density 77 dph

56 units, 65% Own Door



Knights Park, Cambridge

Pollard Thomas Edwards Architects, Alison Brookes Architects

Density 92 dph

69 Houses (3-6 beds)
8 x duplex units
107 apartments



The Residences, Sandford Lodge, Dublin

Shay Cleary Architects

100 dph

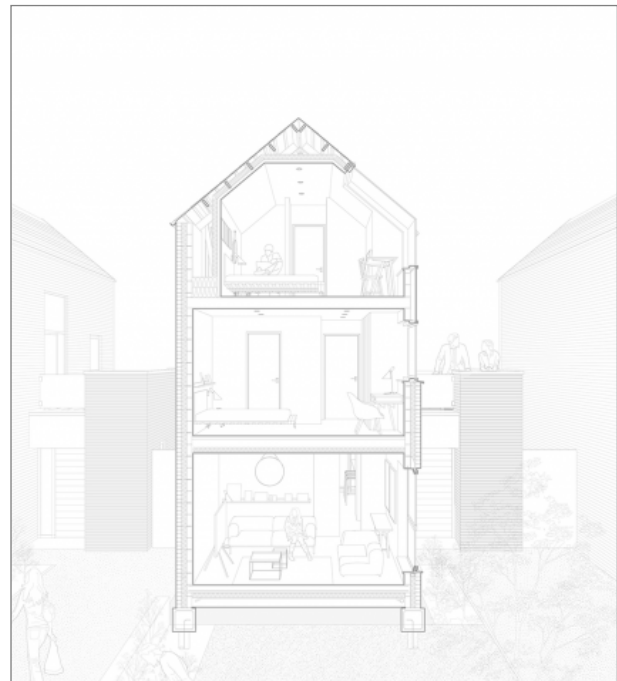
24 x 1 bed duplex units
12 x 2 bed duplex units



The Gables, Liverpool (DK-Architects)



3D Cross Section



Cross Section



4 Bed House Plan



4 Bed House Plan



Low Rise Medium Density Test Models (O'Mahony Pike Architects)



Courtyard Model

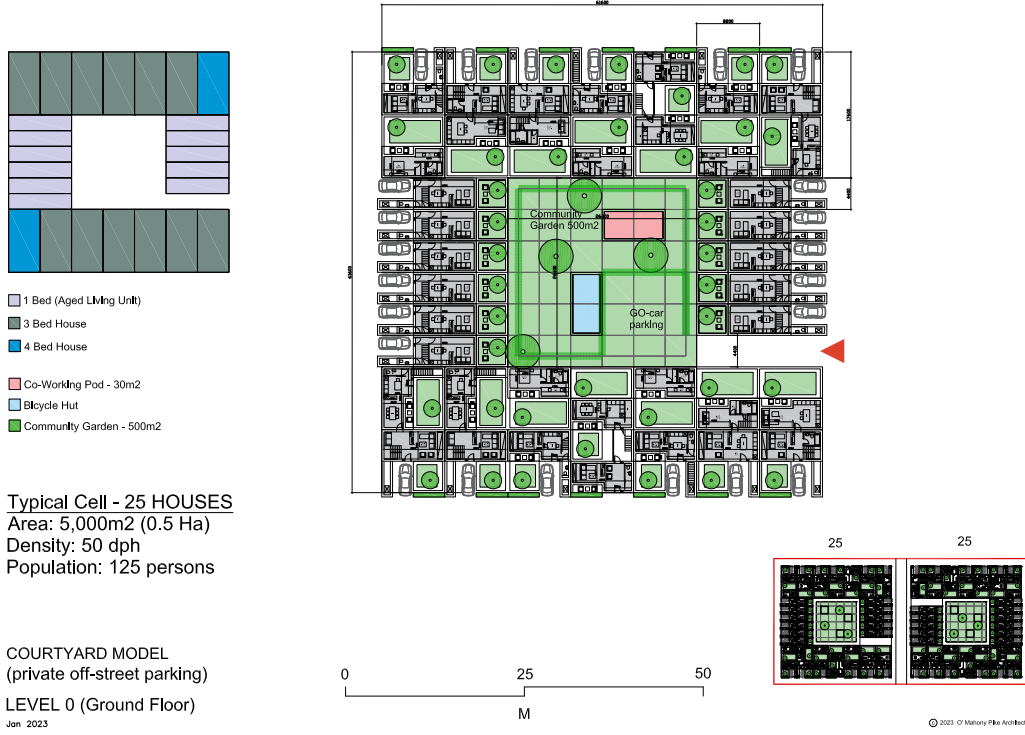


Back to Back Model

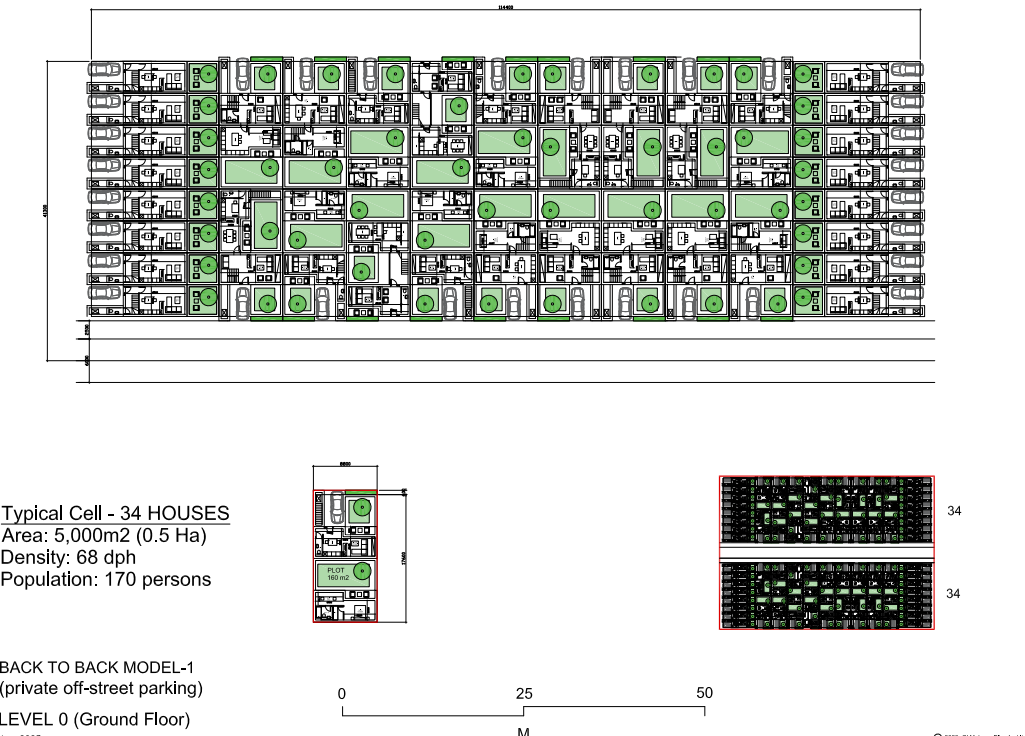


CGI Images

The additional benefit of this model is the provision of a central communal open space or community garden which residents can access directly from their homes. This is a direct result of the tight knit layout and compact housing form whereby private amenity space is cleverly redistribution and stacked within the individual plots. This in turn provides a community gain to all resident's whereby additional land is utilized for shared communal amenity and facilities.



In addition to the typical 160sq.m plot, we also tested a more compact version of 121sq.m using the same house typology. In this scenario, we provided on-street parking only located in a 'Home Zone' type arrangement as illustrated below. The resultant density is similar at 68 dph as illustrated below.



O'Devaney Gardens Phase 1 (Dublin City Council - City Architects Division)



3D Site Plan





Photo Images: Niall O'Connell

Knights Park, Cambridge (Pollard Thomas Edwards architects, Alison Brooks Architects)



3D Site Plan





Primary Street House and Mews



Terrace House



Corner Block Apartments

The Residences, Sandford Lodge, Dublin (Shay Cleary Architects)



Concept Drawing



3D Site Plan



CGI Images



Ground Floor Plan

First Floor Plan

Second Floor Plan

Prepared by the Department of
Housing, Local Government and Heritage
gov.ie



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland



An Roinn Tithíochta,
Rialtais Áitiúil agus Oidhreachta
Department of Housing,
Local Government and Heritage