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Rural Housing Pre-Planning Advice Notes

Introduction

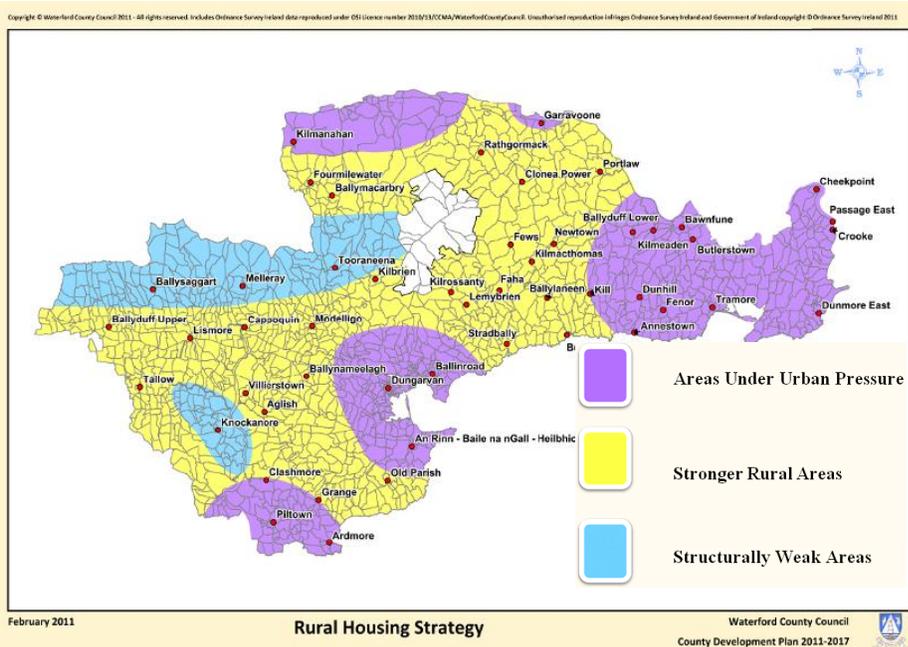
This advice note provides a brief overview of some of the main issues which can arise in relation to rural housing proposals during the planning application process. The advice provided herein is non site specific and is designed to be read in conjunction with the pre-planning report issued to you in response to your pre-planning application. It addresses issues such as the demonstration of a genuine local housing need, best practice in relation to the siting and design of a dwelling, water and wastewater issues, roads issues and minimum technical site requirements. Full details of the requirements relating to rural housing proposals are set out in the Waterford County Development Plan 2011-2017.

Genuine Local Housing Need

Rural Area Types

In line with the recommendations of the Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines the Waterford County Development Plan 2011-2017 identifies the following broad rural area types within the County:

- Areas Under Urban Pressure;
- Stronger Rural Areas; and
- Structurally Weak Rural Areas.



In Areas under Urban Pressure and Stronger Rural Areas, in any application for a new dwelling the applicant(s) would be required to demonstrate a Genuine Local Housing Need in accordance with Section 4.10 of Volume 1 of the Waterford County Development Plan 2011-2017. Full documentary evidence to assist in demonstrating this need is required at application stage to allow the informed assessment of said need. The genuine local need criteria set out in Section 4.10 are as follows:

- A landowner¹ who owned the property prior to 4th March 2004 wishing to build a permanent home for his/her own use;
- A farm owner or an immediate family member (son, daughter, mother, father, sister, brother, heir) wishing to build a permanent home for their own use on family lands;
- A favoured niece, nephew or heir (maximum of 2 persons per farm owner) of a farm owner with no children wishing to build a permanent home for their own use on family lands;
- Persons working fulltime or part-time on a permanent basis, in a specific rural area who by the nature of the work need to be close to the workplace;
- A son or daughter of an established householder (who has lived in the area for three years or more) wishing to build a permanent home for their own use to live immediately adjacent to their elderly parents to provide care;
- Persons who were born and lived for substantial parts of their lives (three years or more) in a specific rural area, who then moved away and who now wish to return to their home places to reside near other family members, to work locally, to care for elderly family members or to retire; and
- Persons who because of exceptional health circumstances – supported by relevant documentation from a registered medical practitioner and a disability organisation may require to live in a particular rural area or close to family support (or vice versa).

¹ Landowners are considered to be persons who have owned the land prior to the 4th of March 2004.

Compliance with at least one of the above criteria is required for the Planning Authority to give favourable consideration for a dwelling in either an Area Under Urban Pressure or a Stronger Rural Area.

The Local Area is defined as the area within which it can be reasonable to assume that the applicant's connection extends from the source of the specified need (whether that is the family home, rural workplace, etc). For the purposes of the implementation of the Genuine Local Housing Need Criteria, the local area is defined as being within 10km of that source, provided that a higher order zoned settlement (Primary Service Centre, Secondary Service Centre and District Service Centre), that has the infrastructural capacity to accommodate a dwelling is not located between the source of the specified need and the proposed site.

Green Belt and Buffer Zone Restrictions

In conjunction with the above criteria, within the Green Belt and Buffer Zones and on the outskirts of the zoned settlements, there will be restrictions on development to maintain a clear demarcation between the rural and urban areas, to support the sustainable development of the settlements, to reduce urban sprawl and to safeguard the potential expansion of the settlements in the future. Therefore it is the policy of the Planning Authority to restrict development within the Green Belt and Buffer Zones surrounding towns and villages to landowners and immediate family members only building a permanent dwelling for their own use.

For Settlement Nodes and Local Service Centres the Buffer Zone extends 400 metres from the designated settlement boundary. For higher order settlements this buffer zone area extends to 750 metres. For your convenience the County Settlement Hierarchy is provided below to inform you of the relevant buffer zone area. Please note that this policy

shall not apply within the areas to the north of the Military Road and along the Gold Coast Road (area zoned agriculture) in the Dungarvan Environs zoning map. However, these restrictions do apply within the buffer zones of the designated settlements in Structurally Weak Areas.

County Settlement Hierarchy	
Primary (County) Service Centre	Dungarvan
Secondary Service Centre	Tramore
District Service Centres (14)	Ardmore, Ballyduff Lower (East), Cappoquin, Cheekpoint, Croke, Dunhill, Dunmore East, Kill, Kilmacthomas, Kilmeaden, Lismore, Portlaw, Stradbally, Tallow
Local Service Centres (9)	Aglish, Ballyduff Upper (West), Ballymacarbry, Bunmahon/Knockmahon, Clashmore, Clonmel Environs, Clonea-Power, Maoil an Choirnigh, Villierstown
Settlement Nodes (14)	Annestown, Baile na nGall, Ballinroad, Ballylaneen, Bawnfunne, Fenor, Heilbhic, Knockanore, Lemybrien, Passage East, Piltown, Rathgormuck, Seanphobal, Touraneena

Occupancy Condition

To ensure that future rural housing proposals are to cater for the needs of the local community and those with a Genuine Local Housing need, the Council will attach occupancy conditions to planning permission for new houses in all rural areas.

An occupancy condition will require an applicant to enter into an agreement with the Council under Section 47 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), restricting the occupancy of the dwelling for a period of 7 years from first date of occupancy to use as a permanent place of residence for his/her own use.

Rural Dwelling Siting and Design

Siting of a Dwelling

The Planning Authority will seek for new developments to comply with the following:

- It blends sympathetically with landform.
- It uses existing trees, buildings, slopes or other features to provide backdrop.
- It uses an identifiable site with long established boundaries, which separate the site naturally from the surrounding ground.
- It does not spoil any scenic aspect or detract from the visual appearance of the countryside.

Not acceptable when viewed from surrounding vantage points:

- It occupies a prominent, skyline or, top of slope/ridge location.
- The site lacks existing long established boundaries or is unable to provide a suitable degree of enclosure for the building in the countryside.
- In flat landscapes or exposed hill areas, where some degree of prominence may be unavoidable, care siting using existing natural or manmade features can still ensure that new building does not appear to be out of place or unduly prominent.

Dwelling Design

The most important and most neglected element of a house build is the design. An intelligent house design and site layout has less of an impact on the character of the rural landscape, will create a more attractive living space that is less expensive to heat, most likely less expensive to build and will ultimately be more valuable. Waterford County Council welcomes innovative design, both contemporary and traditional, that is of architectural merit, and is accompanied by a detailed design justification. All new rural housing developments must have regard to the principles of traditional rural design. In addition consideration should always be given to the south facing aspect for solar gain and the direction of the prevailing wind. The main areas of glazing should be south facing with much reduced glazing on the north face. Taking full advantage of natural light to the living spaces should dictate the layout of the rooms.

What is traditional rural design in the context of County Waterford?

- A simple rectangular narrow plan form generally with full gables.
- Low window to wall ratio, windows with vertical emphasis.
- Strong well proportion appearance using quality local materials – slate roof, limestone cills, rendered and painted finish.

How can a modern house design be achieved having regard to traditional rural design principles?

- Ensure good proportions in roof to wall ratio. Gable widths should therefore not exceed 8.5m, (recommended <6.5m for narrow plan form) with roof pitch ranging 35° to 42°.
- Front gables/protrusions are not traditional and should be avoided. Add character to the front elevation with simple well proportioned protruding porch, natural stone cills, natural slate roof and high quality windows.
- Front and prominent elevations should limit the number and size of windows. Windows should be fairly uniform, well proportioned with a vertical emphasis. If front or prominent elevations are south facing a larger area of glazing can be achieved by subdivision to elements with vertical emphasis (e.g. double glass door with equal side panel).
- Larger houses in excess of 200m² should be sub-divided into smaller elements of traditional form to reduce the bulk of the house.
- Dormer and bay windows are not traditional features and should be used sparingly and to appropriate scale. These features may not be considered appropriate at prominent or scenic locations. Traditional storey and a half proposal with narrow plan form preferable to dormer style.
- Chimneys should be located as close to the ridge as possible to minimize visual impact. Chimneys at gable end to be flush with gable.

The Planning Authority will require all planning applications for a single rural house to include a 'Design Statement' (except for outline permission applications). A 'Design Statement' is a short document which enables the applicant to explain why a particular design solution is considered the most suitable for a particular site. The statement will usually consist of both text and graphics, but is not intended to duplicate planning application documents. It may be of special value in explaining why the context requires an exceptional – rather than a conventional – design approach. The statement should address all relevant development plan or local area plan design policies and objectives, and relate them to the site. The design statement could outline a justification for the development as proposed and any alternative design options considered.

For worked examples of rural dwelling design please refer to Cork Rural Design Guidance (www.corkcoco/planning).

Water Issues

Water Supply

Where a public water supply network with adequate capacity is available to a proposal site connection to this supply is required by the Planning Authority. In the absence of an available public water supply a private on-site borewell is required. The location of the well shall be indicated on the site layout plan. The minimum requirements for separation distances of wells from onsite wastewater treatment systems and percolation areas are set out in Table 10.3 of Volume 1 of the Waterford County Development Plan 2011-2017. This table is included in Appendix 1 of this advice note. The borewell should be located within the red line boundary of the proposal site.

Wastewater

Where a public wastewater sewer with adequate capacity is available to a proposal site connection to this sewer is required by the Planning Authority. In the absence of an available public wastewater sewer a private on-site wastewater treatment solution is required.

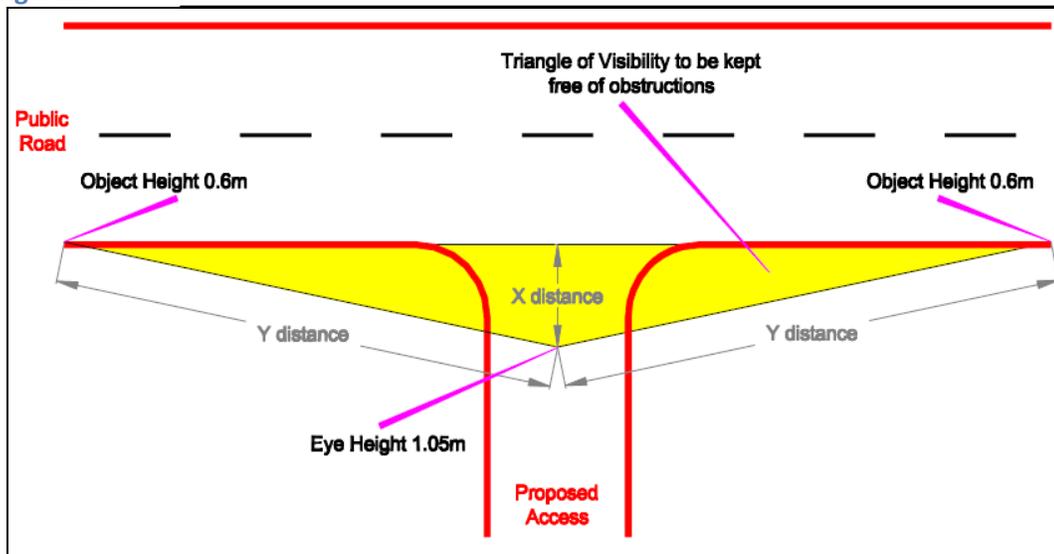
A site suitability assessment pertaining to same is required and the applicants should note that the assessors list is available on the Council website www.waterfordcouncil.ie.

The tests and subsequent system must be in accordance with the EPA Code of Practice “Wastewater Treatment and Disposal Systems Serving Single Houses” and the Development Standards as set out in Chapter 10 of Volume 1 of the Waterford County Development Plan 2011-2017. Please note that the percolation thresholds and separation distances as set out in Table 10.3 of Volume 1 of the WCDP differ from those as set out above EPA CoP). For your convenience Table 10.3 is included in Appendix 1. Percolation trial holes shall remain open for inspection by the Planning Authority during the Planning Application process. Should the holes be covered to prevent the direct ingress of rainwater please use appropriate material that will facilitate inspection by the Planning Department.

Roads Issues

For all new access applications onto the public road network full compliance with the requirements set out in Chapter 10 of Volume 1 of the Waterford County Development Plan 2011-2017 is required. Information in relation to road setback distances and ribbon development are set out in Table 10.3 (Appendix 1 of this Report).

Sightlines

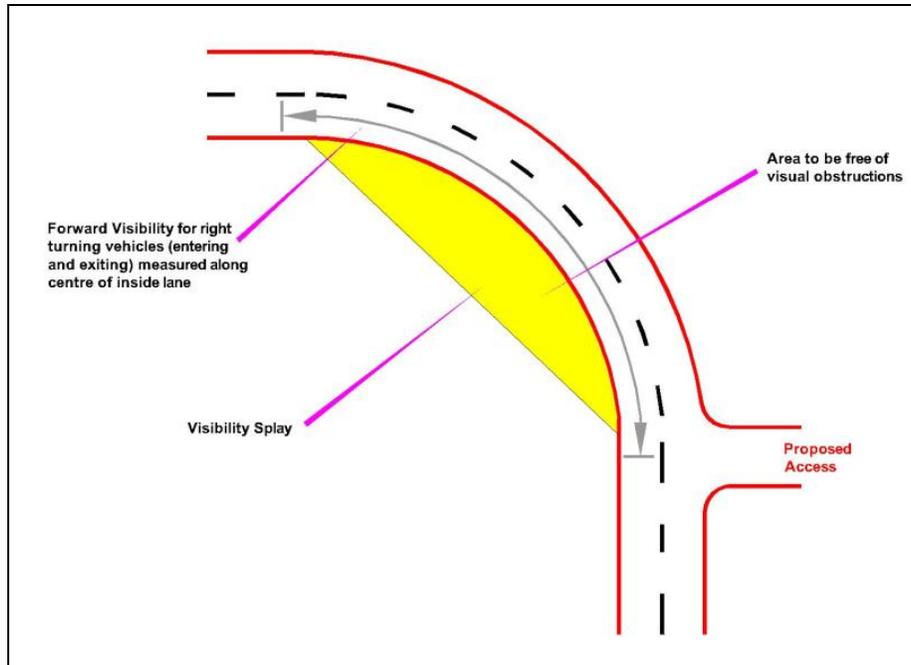


Sightline Configuration

Clear and unobstructed sightlines (as denoted by Y in the Sightline Configuration diagram) shall be provided, in each direction, from a point 2.4 metres back from the nearside edge of the roadway at the centre of the entrance to a point to the left and right on the nearer edge of the major road running carriageway (which includes the hard shoulder), at a distance given in the table below. For the distances outlined in this table, the road boundary fence shall be set back behind sightlines so as to accommodate this requirement.

Category	A	B	C	D	E
Speed Limit Km per Hr	100	80	60	50	80
			Built Up Areas	Built up Areas	Local Roads
Minimum Sight (y) Distances (Metres)	215	160	90	70	55
Sightlines of 30 meters shall be required for dwellings accessing onto a cul-de-sac (serving not more than 3 dwellings). Where the cul-de-sac meets the major road, sightlines pertaining to that road must also be achieved.					

Proposed new access points, where possible, should avoid sections of roadway with poor horizontal alignment. Where a new public road access point is proposed in relatively close proximity to a bend in the road forward visibility sightlines as per the diagram outlined below must be clearly demonstrated. The forward visibility minimum sightline requirements are also informed by the above table.



Forward Visibility Sightline Configuration

National/Regional Roads Policy

Due to the considerable financial investment in the improvement and maintenance of the National and Regional Road network and the large volumes of traffic that travel these roads it is a policy of the Council to discourage the erection of dwellings that would require an access point onto a National or Regional Road. A multiplicity of entrances onto these routes would create a traffic hazard and reduce the carrying capacity of the routes significantly. However, the Council is aware of the requirement for flexibility in this regard. Therefore, should your proposal site require access onto such a road please have regard to Section 10.2 of Volume 1 of the Waterford County Development Plan 2011-2017. This section sets out the exceptional circumstances where a new access point may be given consideration.

Natural, Built & Cultural Heritage

Please note that the potential impact of a proposed development on the natural, built and cultural heritage of the County would be fully assessed by the Planning Authority at planning application stage.

Hedgerow Protection/Replacement

To protect the integrity of hedgerows, the Council will require that where there is a break in a hedgerow to facilitate a new road entrance, connectivity to be provided by the planting of new hedgerows to all remaining site boundaries. All new hedgerows should consist of a 1m high by 1m wide earthen embankment with native hedgerow species planted on top in a staggered pattern at minimum 5 plants per metre. The raised earthen embankment increases the viability of the newly planted hedge and may be created with excavated material from the site. Planting should be carried at the earliest stage of any development from late November to March immediately following the removal of existing hedgerow. The newly planted hedgerow should be kept free from weeds and grass and protected from grazing animals. A 1m setback from livestock is recommended. The hedgerow should be maintained at a minimum height of 2m and a minimum width of 1.5m over its lifetime to maximize its habitat value.

Where possible, the removal of roadside ditches and hedges should be avoided. Where there is no alternative and hedgerow removal is unavoidable to provide sightlines, the Council will require that the roadside boundary is replaced with a new hedgerow, formed from indigenous species. Replacement of natural hedgerow boundaries by ornamental shrub planting is discouraged as it suburbanises what was a rural area and exposes new development to loss of natural screening and also causes loss of biodiversity. To adhere to the provisions of the Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2000, hedge cutting shall not be carried out during the bird nesting season from March 1st to August 31st.

Appendix 1

Table 10. 3: Minimum Standards for Individual Houses in Rural Areas.

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Site Size	The Planning Authority requires a minimum site area of 0.5 acre or 0.2ha for a single dwelling.
Site Layout	The design and location of the dwelling house should take into account the existing contours of the site and should nestle into the site as opposed to dominating the landscape. The location of the house should take advantage of the existing field boundaries and the house should also be orientated to take advantage of natural sun light.
Ribbon Development	Dwellings which give rise to ribbon development shall not be permitted. Ribbon development is defined as in excess of 3 dwellings in a row or 5 dwellings on either side of the road located on any 250m stretch of road.

Minimum Building Set Back from Public Road	Local County Road – 18 metres Regional Road – 25 metres National Road – 40 metres
Minimum Road Frontage	30 metres
Boundary Treatment	The existing roadside boundary should be retained save where it may be interfering with the provision of adequate sightlines, and there is no alternative site available. Where a roadside boundary has to be set back to achieve sightlines a new boundary hedge, set behind the sightlines shall be constructed. All remaining existing natural boundaries should be retained and supplemented where practical.
Wastewater	<p>Refer to the EPA Code of Practice on wastewater treatment for single houses.</p> <p>50<T-value<10 indicates that the site is unsuitable for development of any on-site domestic effluent treatment system discharging to ground.</p> <p>For new builds, the effluent treatment system (including septic tank and percolation/filtration system) should be located as shown hereunder:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • minimum of 30m from a private ground water source that is up-gradient of the effluent treatment system; • minimum of 100m from a private ground water source that is down-gradient of the effluent treatment system; and • minimum of 18m from any dwelling. <p>Greater separation distances may be required from sources of Public & Group Water Supplies</p>
Landscape	A detailed landscaping plan, prepared by a qualified horticulturist, shall be required at planning application stage. The location/number and type of plant species and trees should be clearly indicated on a site layout map.
Rural Design Guidelines	Refer to the Waterford Rural Housing Design Guidelines that will be prepared during the Plan period.
Renewable Energy	Renewable energy proposals should be incorporated into the design of the dwelling.