

**Rebuilding Ireland - Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness**

The Action Plan was announced by the Minister for Housing Planning Community and Local Government on 19th July 2016.

The Plan provides a multi-stranded, action-oriented approach to achieving many of the Government’s key housing objectives, as set down in the Programme for a Partnership Government, to significantly increase the supply of social housing, to double the output of overall housing from the current levels to at least 25,000 per annum by 2020, to service all tenure types, and to tackle homelessness in a comprehensive manner.

This whole-of-Government Plan has been developed in close collaboration with other key Government Departments and Agencies, under the oversight of a dedicated Cabinet Committee chaired by An Taoiseach. The Plan was also informed by the Report of the Special Oireachtas Committee on Housing and Homelessness (published on 17th June), as well as through extensive consultation with stakeholders, including at two national stakeholder events.

Over the period of the plan, 47,000 homes nationally will be delivered under the various social housing programmes, together with an expansion of the Housing Assistance Payment scheme nationwide.

This delivery will be achieved through collaboration between local authorities, Approved Housing Bodies (AHBs), the National Treasury Management Agency (NTMA) and the private sector. It will involve new innovative approaches such as 1,500 rapid build homes and 1,600 homes acquired by the Housing Agency through a dedicated new fund.

The Plan addresses all aspects of the housing system under five Pillars:

-          Address Homelessness,

-          Accelerate Social Housing,

-          Build More Homes,

-          Improve the Rental sector, and

-          Utilise Existing Housing.



**There are Five Key Pillars to the Plan and under each of the five pillars there are 84 identified actions.**

* **Address Homelessness – 21 Actions**

Providing an urgent response to the homeless crisis, Pillar One focuses on taking immediate action to help those on the streets and those in emergency accommodation, including families in hotels.

Additional healthcare and support services will be provided to address addiction and mental health, as well as many of the other underlying issues that can trigger or prolong homelessness. A “whole of Government” approach will be taken to address this challenge, with the co-ordination of inter-agency supports for people who are currently homeless.

To address the unacceptable level of families in emergency accommodation, including hotels, this core pillar of the Action Plan will provide early solutions and an increase in the level of housing made available, including new innovative solutions such as rapid build housing and acquisition of vacant private properties by the Housing Agency. A key objective is identifying people at risk of losing their homes and to support their efforts to remain in them, with particular emphasis on tenancy sustainment and supporting those in mortgage arrears. Rapid Build units will be a mechanism to deal with the growing number of families relying on hotel accommodation.

* **Accelerate Social Housing – 24 Actions**

Over the period of the plan, 47,000 homes will be delivered under the various social housing programmes, together with an expansion of the Housing Assistance Payment scheme nationwide.

This delivery will be achieved through collaboration between local authorities, Approved Housing Bodies (AHBs), the National Treasury Management Agency (NTMA) and the private sector. It will involve new innovative approaches such as 1,500 rapid build homes, 1,600 homes acquired by the Housing Agency through a dedicated new fund and a new vehicle which the NTMA will work with the private sector to establish to provide such housing off the Government balance sheet and mixed developments on State lands.

The focus on collaborated delivery will also be a feature of supporting initiatives such as a special Housing Delivery Office in the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (DHPCLG) drawing on a range of expertise within the public sector, as well as the establishment in the Housing Agency of a centre of procurement excellence and a one-stop shop for AHBs.

* **Build More Homes – 12 Actions**

Rebuilding Ireland’s third pillar will focus on improving the viability of housing construction, with the objective of doubling the completion level of additional homes in the next four years to deliver over 25,000 homes on average per annum.

A €200 million Local Infrastructure Housing Activation Fund (LIHAF) will provide much-needed enabling infrastructure on key sites to open up lands for early development, greatly enhancing existing measures in relation to construction growth, and many of the new initiatives under Rebuilding Ireland.

In addition to the large-scale off-site infrastructure to be funded under the LIHAF, the NTMA, through the Ireland Strategic Investment Fund (ISIF), is developing proposals to offer competitive financing on a commercial basis, and in line with ISIF’s statutory mandate, to meet other infrastructure requirements on large development sites.

A key objective of this plan will be ramping up the production of additional new housing stock in regional cities with a balanced approach between providing housing that is built for owner occupation as well as housing for both the private and social housing sectors that is **“built to rent”**.

* **Improve the rental Sector – 13 Actions**

Improving the functioning of the rental sector to include affordable renting plus stimulating and expanding the build-to-rent sector.

Rental housing, because of its flexibility, enables the housing market to adapt to the changing needs of the population. Almost one fifth of our population now lives in rented accommodation.

A vast improvement in how the country’s rental sector works is essential. Rental prices have increased by almost 20% since early 2012. The focus will be on addressing the obstacles to greater private rented sector delivery and improving the supply of homes at affordable rents.

Achieving this goal will include the implementation of affordable renting initiatives as well as encouraging build-to-rent developments, including expansion of the supply of student accommodation.

The plan commits to developing a strategy for a viable and sustainable rental sector by the end of the year, with early legislative actions brought forward in the autumn to govern tenancy terminations, particularly where a landlord proposes to sell a large number of homes within a development.

* **Utilise Existing Housing – 14 Actions**

Ensuring the existing housing stock is used to the maximum degree possible – focus on measures to use vacant stock and to renew urban and rural areas.

Introducing an integrated plan to bring vacant and under-utilised housing stock back into use for both private and social housing purposes.

The Plan proposes to remove existing barriers to the quick conversion and re-use of vacant or under-utilised city and town centre commercial premises for residential purposes and support wider urban regeneration, with new measures to be brought forward by the end of 2016.

The overarching aim of the Plan is to ramp up delivery of housing from its current under-supply across all tenures to help individuals and families meet their housing needs, and to help those who are currently housed to remain in their homes or be provided with appropriate options of alternative accommodation, especially those families in emergency accommodation.

**There are 4 key action areas:**

* **Financing / Viability**
* **Regulatory Reform**
* **Delivery**
* **Supporting Measures**

These are covered through various specific actions through the Action Plan.

**Some of the main Actions within the 5 key pillars of the policy are:**

* **Accelerate Social Housing**

**Through:**

* Social Housing Programme – RAPID Delivery Programme
* Approved Housing Bodies
* Part V
* Acquisitions – SDCC 70 in 2016 and through Housing Agency
* Streamline Part 8 Processes with particular focus on proposals for Social Housing projects and infrastructure servicing housing development both public and private.
* Housing Initiatives for Older People – **SDCC proposals - 3 projects**
* Work with HSE for Housing people who are transitioning from HSE accommodation and for clients of the Mental Health services living in community-based accommodation – **SDCC Disability Steering Group – Allocations and CAS Units.**
* **Address Homelessness**
* Initiative for Vacant properties and increased leasing – **SDCC Social Housing Vacancies at 0.44%.** **Voids 41 at August 2016 with a Turnaround average of 9.4 weeks.** **1,543 RAS units and 741 leased units.**
* Continue to support homeless families with child dependents and ensure that a robust referral system is in place.
* Provide emergency accommodation and support services specific to the needs of pregnant women who are homeless – **SDDC working with a provider/support body in provision of such a facility.**
* Homeless initiative by improving supply and better Homeless Prevention
* A review of the disparate Rent assessment via Differential Rents**. No timescales were detailed**

**Also:**

* Rollout of Choice Based Lettings to all LAs other than **SDCC and Cork where the process is already implemented and having a positive impact**
* Tenant purchase is for further review. **New Incremental Purchase scheme available since 1st January 2016 to those tenants in SDCC where tenants and properties meet the required criteria.**
* **Homeless SDCC:**
* 410 on Homeless Register at 31st August 2016
* 167 Single Male – 48 Single Female
* 193 Families in emergency accommodation- *998 Families across the Dublin Region*
* Allocations made in 2016 incl HAP = 94
* 1 Supported Temp Accommodation
* 65 Units Tallaght Cross
* 10 new Units at Cuan Alainn for Homeless mothers and children
* Riversdale House - 24
* I Domestic Refuge
* Step Down Facilities / Units provided for a number of service providers

*Mr. Simon Coveney T.D., Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government, on 22 September outlined the details of the Homelessness Pillar under “*[*Rebuilding Ireland – an Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness (link is external)*](http://rebuildingireland.ie/Rebuilding%20Ireland_Action%20Plan.pdf)*”.  Referencing the first pillar of the Action Plan to address the homelessness problem and the overall intention is to address homelessness by providing for early housing solutions to address homelessness among families and individuals outlined some of the main commitments and progress to date are;*

* *The main aim in relation to family homelessness, as set out in the Action Plan, is to ensure that by mid-2017, commercial hotels will only be used in limited circumstances to accommodate homeless families.*
* *Accelerating the provision of the ‘Rapid Build’ programme.  By the end of 2018 at least 1,500 units will be provided. This year we will have some 300 homes under construction or completed by the end of the year.  We have projects  in Ballyfermot, Drimnagh, Belcamp and Finglas  which have had enabling works carried  out and construction is expected to commence next month.*
* *Expanding HAP Homeless Tenancies to deliver 550 in 2016 and 1,200 in 2017. So far this year in excess of 450 tenancies have been secured and households accommodated under the pilot are families with children.*
* *Additional 200 emergency beds for rough sleepers to be put in place before end of year at a cost of up to €4m.*
* *The Housing Agency will purchase 1,600 vacant properties and a number of these will be used to provide permanent homes for homeless families. The Agency has already acquired 171 properties on behalf of LAs. In addition in excess of 730 homes have been offered to the agency for sale. So far bids have been made in respect of 96 of these homes and 49 of these have been accepted.*
* *The increased supply of social housing targeted in the Plan - 47,000 homes by the end of 2021 will also ensure that more homes are provided for those who are homeless and for those at risk of homelessness.*
* *Rebuilding Ireland also includes a range of important measures aimed at supporting homeless families with children in emergency accommodation, including the provision of dedicated child support workers, home-school liaison staff, access to free public transport, access to crèches and pre-school services and measures to address their nutritional needs. The Government is strengthening their effort to provide rough sleepers with a home, by tripling the target for the Housing First teams in Dublin from 100 tenancies to 300 tenancies and by strengthening the housing-led approach in other urban areas. HSE funding will increase from €2 million this year to €6 million next year to provide health, mental health and addiction supports to rough sleepers and people in emergency accommodation, who often have complex needs that must be addressed in tandem with the provision of stable housing.*
* *Commitment to continue to prevent people from becoming homeless. People in serious mortgage arrears will be provided with increased access to legal and financial advice and more households will be facilitated under the Mortgage to Rent scheme, while existing measures to protect tenants in the private rented sector will be extended nationwide.*
* **Housing Assistance Payments- HAP**
  + Accelerated rollout by to all LAs including the Dublin by end of 2017 – **SDCC operating HAP with 1040 active accounts at end of August 2016 and meeting target of 20 new accounts per week.**
  + increased Rent Supplement and HAP limits
  + Improved management of the Void process to minimise rent loss, refusal rate and vacant periods, together with a maintenance programme to achieve this. **SDCC performance of 5% refusals.**
* **Role of Housing Agency:**
* New Government Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness, Rebuilding Ireland, gives Housing Agency a central role
* Housing Procurement Unit to be established within the Housing Agency, with both procurement and mentoring functions
* The Housing Agency are to be provided with €70m in seed capital funding from the Exchequer to acquire 1,600 vacant properties, particularly from portfolios for sale from financial institutions and investors for social housing purposes nationally, increasing social housing delivery. This fund to be reinvested as properties are moved on to local authorities and approved housing bodies A new repair and leasing initiative will be piloted by Waterford City and County Council and Carlow County Council, with a view to nationwide application. This will allow for grants to be provided to prospective landlords to bring properties up to standard, where they are entering cost effective leases for social and affordable housing.
* New *one stop shop* Unit in Housing Agency to support Approved Housing Bodies
* The Housing Agency will play a key role in a plan to address vacancies nationally
* National Vacant Housing Re-Use Strategy to be developed by the Department, Housing Agency and local authorities
* The ambitious Action Plan will see high levels of cooperation and integration across the state and private sector to address both social and private housing needs
* **Build More Homes**
* €200m Local Infrastructure Fund – (25% of which must come from the Local Authority) – **The Planning Department is currently examining all major Residential Development areas and will submit proposals in October. It is anticipated that Adamstown SDZ will be included in this process and The Grange Integrated Housing project.**
* Larger Housing Development Applications (100+) to be made directly to An Bord Pleanala
* Review of the Planning System
* SOLAS to update skills forecast and work with stakeholders to ensure that mainstream and targeted education and training initiatives support the supply of skills required to deliver the Action Plan – **Inclusion of Social Clause in SDCC contracts for large build projects**
* **Improve the Rental Sector**
* Develop a comprehensive Strategy for the rental sector
* Extend role of the RTB
* Examine standards, costs and feasibility of good quality sustainable rental accommodation
* New Affordable Rental Scheme to be developed
* Prepare a national Student Accommodation Strategy
* Establish funding mechanisms for Institutes of Technology to support the development of their student accommodation capacity
* Carry out assessment of scope for provision of additional student accommodation on LA lands or publicly owned lands
* **Utilise Existing Housing**
* Compilation of vacant units across the country
* Review of disparate systems of differential rents
* Speed up process of re-letting social housing units - **SDCC Average = 9 weeks**
* Introduce Choice Based Letting System – In operation
* Review the tenant purchase Scheme
* Establish a Repair and Leasing Initiative for vacant private units
* Promote step down , specialist housing for older people and incentivise down-sizing where appropriate – **SDCC preparing 3 proposals**
* Review of planning legislation to allow change of use of vacant commercial units in urban areas into residential units without need to process through the planning process
* Review of Living City Initiative to incentivise private landlords and property owners to bring forward currently vacant properties for sale and/or private rental
* Progress a National Taking in Charge Initiative with a €10M fund.
* **Other areas as outlined in the Plan include:**
* Meeting Older Peoples Housing Needs
* Housing for People with Disabilities
* Releasing State Lands
* Planning for Starter Homes
* Affordable Rental
* Providing homes Cost Effectively
* ***Correspondence from the Minister to all Elected Members dated 28th July 2016 and enclosure of Circular APH2 – Planning Measures to Enhance Housing Supply issued to Planning Authorities.***

This Communication identified the urgency to deliver on across the five pillars of the Action Plan and mobilise the local government system delivering and managing the response at regional and local level. The Circular outlined available and existing mechanisms in the planning system that have the potential to expedite the supply of considerable numbers of units for sale, rent and social housing.

Through:

Prioritisation of Planning Applications for Housing Developments

Review of Part 8 Process

Land Availability

Strategic Development Zones -SDCC have Adamstown and Clonburris SDZ

Build to Rent

Student Accommodation

Vacant Homes

The Minster has emphasised specifically having regard to the current housing challenges faced principally in urban parts of the country, with output needing to double in the next two or three years to ensure optimum supply, all planning applications for scheme housing or activity relating to potential applications such as pre-planning consultations, must be afforded the highest priority by planning authorities.

In particular:

(1) A maximum waiting time of two weeks should generally apply in respect of potential applicants seeking a pre-planning consultation in respect of any housing scheme application; - *In operation in SDCC*

(2) Planning authorities should apply discretion in the level of detail requested of prospective applicants at these consultations - the request in some instances for a virtually complete set of planning application-ready drawings is considered to defeat the purpose of consultation: a broad outline and sketch design should be sufficient in most cases at this initial stage;

(3) Planning authorities must endeavour to assemble the relevant internal expertise for the consultation to be in a position to offer the broadest advice possible;

(4) Flexibility should be applied in offering general information type advice, in that *in addition* to the section 247 process, local authorities should also prioritise general queries on development plan objectives and standards relating to zoned housing land to avoid unnecessary section 247 pre-planning consultations;

(5) Requests for further information or clarification of information received should be kept to an absolute minimum - in particular, the Department has seen recent decided cases that were subject to matters raised under further information and/or clarification of further information that could have been addressed by condition; and

(6) The planning official’s report must take the lead in blending and critically evaluating the various technical and other inputs in the overall context of the provisions of the development plan and relevant legislative and policy requirements and coming to a balanced recommendation in this regard.

The aim is to offer an effective and responsive planning service to prospective applicants, where the requirements of the planning authority are clearly articulated and followed through within the decision-making process.

In addition the Minster has urged all local authorities to use Part 8 as the default process for the delivery of social housing by Approved Housing Bodies (AHBs) in their functional areas. Article 80(2)(c) of the Planning and Development Regulations is a mechanism that can be used in the case of a formal partnership between the local authority and an AHB in this regard.

The Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government, Simon Coveney TD, announced on 26th August 2016 a Call for Proposals to local authorities under the €200m Local Infrastructure Housing Activation Fund (LIHAF).

The funding is part of the programme of investment under [Rebuilding Ireland: An Action Plan for Housing & Homelessness,](http://rebuildingireland.ie/Rebuilding%20Ireland_Action%20Plan.pdf)  published by the Government on 19 July 2016.  It will target investment in enabling infrastructure to activate large housing development areas to deliver additional supply of social and private housing. LIHAF will be funded through €150m in Exchequer funding, matched by €50m in local authority funding, and will operate over the period 2017-2019. SDCC IS now preparing a LIHAF proposals, working in conjunction with housing providers, including private developers and home builders and/or Approved Housing Bodies, for submission to the Department by mid-October 2016.

As indicated earlier the Planning Department is currently examining all major Residential Development areas and will submit proposals in October. It is anticipated that Adamstown SDZ will be included in this process.

* **South Dublin County Council Construction Programme:**

In terms of the South Dublin County Council proposals on Social Housing delivery the current position is as follows:

An update in June 2016 to the elected members set out proposals for Social Housing units for the period 2015 to 2017 in line with the Housing strategy as set out in the Governments “Social Housing Strategy 2020 – Support, Supply and Reform” published late November 2014. The Action Plan envisages both new-build housing and a flexible range of supports to the private rental sector and the social housing sector as set out above. The projects are relevant in terms of the Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness. The Councils target for 2015 - 2017 is 1,445 including RAS and Leasing of which 350 units will be through capital projects including direct build, CAS projects, acquisitions and Part V.

**The position as at September 2016 in respect of the various projects as follows:**

**New Build projects which have commenced on site in 2015 are:**

3 Dwellings at Belgard Road – Completed

2 Units at St Finians - Completed

10 Units at Suncroft - to be completed by 3rd Quarter 2016.

**New Projects with Department:**

Stage 3 approval have been received from the DECLG in respect of St Marks Green – 11 Units

Mac Uilliam – 28 Units and Mayfield Clondalkin – 18 Units which allows for progression to preparation of tender documents for contractors. Consultants have been appointed in respect of the following three projects.

Total – 57 Units

**Awaiting Pre Tender (Stage 3) Approval by Department – Stage 2 Approval Received.**

Dromcarra, Tallaght – 14 Units

Letts Field,   Clondalkin - 37 Units

Owendoher,   Ballyboden – 40 Units

**Preparing for Stage 3 Approval**

Killinarden,   Tallaght – 27 Units

Total – 118 Units

**Progress in relation to the rollout of the Part 8 Social Housing Programme is as follows:**

The foregoing projects are included in SDCC Housing Strategy 2015-2017.

The Part 8 programme will continue to progress on an incremental basis throughout the county. As part of the consultation process the Council is open to engaging with representative resident groups within the area of the proposed development.

The Council proposes to advance the House Build programme including the projects outlined below through 2016/2017/2018:

St. Aidans, Brookfield, Tallaght (Includes Traveller Accommodation construction of 5 group houses)

Oldbawn Road/Firhouse Road Jct., Oldcastle at New Nangor Road and St Cuthberts Park

St. Marks Avenue Clondalkin

Stocking Lane, Rathfarnham

Fonthill Road Link Road Project, Neilstown, Clondalkin

Balgaddy F, Lucan

The Council is continuously investigating land availability for further projects and is also preparing briefs on sites for development in collaboration with Approved Housing Bodies who will be selected through expressions of interest in accordance with the agreed protocols between Local Authorities and Irish Council for Social Housing.

**Rapid Delivery Programme Units:**

As part of the Government’s direction on quick delivery of social units South Dublin County Council is required to provide 105 Rapid Delivery units as part of the 500 units to be delivered in the Dublin Region with a further 100 units in 2017. The emphasis is on Rapid Delivery units for 2016/2017. Specifically at these locations:

St. Aidans, Brookfield, Tallaght (Includes Traveller Accommodation construction of 5 group houses)

Oldbawn Road/Firhouse Road Jct., Oldcastle at New Nangor Road and St Cuthberts Park

**CAS – 2015/2016 Calls**

The 2016 CAS call for acquisitions in 2016 resulted in applications for purchase of 15 units – these are to meet homeless and disability housing needs. 22 Units have been acquired through 2015 CAS Call together with 16 CAS units for construction.

In line with the Action Plan the Council is also developing plans on 3 projects to meet Older Peoples Housing Needs:

* Arena Site - Whitestown Road
* Maplewood and
* Fernwood

These projects are expected to provide up to 80/100 units dedicated to Old Aged and step down.

**The Grange PPP and Joint Venture project:**

This project is in addition to the 100 Social Housing units as part of the first bundle of 500 units under the PPP project at this location.

A masterplan is being prepared for a mixed development of Social/Affordable and Private Units of up to 800 to 1,000 units at the Grange site in Clondalkin adjacent to the Outer Ring Road. It is proposed to start the tender process in October 2016. A briefing meeting was held with the Clondalkin Members on the 21st September 2016.

**In Summary:**

The Councils target for 2015 - 2017 is 1,445 including RAS and Leasing and of which 350 units will be capital projects including direct build, CAS projects, acquisitions and Part V at a total Capital allocation of €64.7M. SDCC proposals will far exceed these targets. It is anticipated that SDCC may exceed this Capital allocation by approximately €46M by Quarter 1 2018 having regard to current projections based on projects being progressed to meet the housing need.

Construction 2016 – 15 Units

New Build to be completed – 2017/2018 – 57

RAPID Delivery Programme Units to be completed 2017 – 105 Units plus a further 100 through 2017

Progress PPP 100 Units

Acquisitions in 2016 - 70

CAS Calls 2016 – 15 units confirmed to date (September 2016)

Part V Units – 33 units committed

3 units acquired using Vesting Orders to abate dereliction

In terms of Social Housing delivery 1,071 Units were delivered in 2015 through Leasing, RAS, HAP and Acquisition Programme. These activities will continue in 2016 including Part V delivery of Units, Rapid Delivery 100 Units through PPP at Grange and the progression of the Social Housing Build programme.