

# Buncrana & Environs Development Plan 2008-2014

## APPENDIX 2 HOUSING STRATEGY



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## **1.0 Introduction**

This Housing Strategy shall be implemented within the area of the plan described as the area of the Buncrana & Environs Development Plan 2008-2014. Therefore this Strategy shall supersede the implementation of the Housing Strategy contained in the Buncrana Development Plan 2002 for the administrative area of Buncrana Town Council and also shall supersede the implementation of the Housing Strategy 2006-2012 as contained in the County Donegal Development Plan 2006-2012 for the administrative area of Donegal County Council that is contained with the Buncrana & Environs Development Plan 2008-2014.

## **2.0 Legislative background**

The Housing Strategy is prepared under Part V of the Planning & Development Act 2000 as amended by the Planning & Development (amendment) Act 2002. The purpose of the Strategy is to ensure that the proper planning and sustainable development of the area of the development plan provides for the housing of the existing and future population of the area. The strategy shall take into account the likely future need for housing, the need to ensure that housing is available for persons who have different levels of income, the need to ensure an appropriate mixture of house types and sizes and the need to counteract undue segregation in housing between different persons or different social backgrounds. In particular, a housing strategy shall provide that as a general policy a specified percentage, not being more than 20%, of land zoned residential use, or for a mixture of residential and other uses, shall be reserved under Part V.

## **3.0 Policy context**

The Housing Strategy, as part of the Buncrana & Environs Development Plan 2008-2014, is prepared within the context of the following policy frameworks set out at a national and regional level:

- National Spatial Strategy and Regional Planning Guidelines: Settlement structure within County Donegal identifies Letterkenny as linked gateway with Derry including the identification of a Strategic Transport Corridor between the 2 settlements. Buncrana is considered as a town with a population between 1500-5000 and therein identified as medium sized town for urban strengthening.
- County Donegal Development Plan 2006-2012: Identification of Letterkenny-Derry linked gateway together with identification of an economic corridor between the 2 settlements and comprising Buncrana. Lands immediately outside the Buncrana & Environs Development Plan boundary identified as 'Urban Generated Rural Housing' wherein single houses will only be permitted where 'roots' can be demonstrated.

- Five year Action Plan for Social and Affordable Housing 2004- 2008: Sets out the overall aims of social and affordable housing in County Donegal.
- The Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS): Scheme designed to assist approved voluntary bodies to provide accommodation for persons in need of housing. The scheme is intended primarily to encourage the provision of family type accommodation. The financing of accommodation under this scheme is by way of a loan or subsidy.
- The Traveller Accommodation Programme 2005-2008.
- Guidelines on the Implementation of Part V, 2004.

## **4.0 Statistical analysis**

A statistical analysis is carried out in this section in respect of the factors that will have implications for the policies contained in this Housing Strategy. In doing so, the comprehensiveness of the statistical analysis is restricted by the extent of the area to which statistics relate i.e. statistics are available at (a) a Buncrana Town Council administrative area level (b) an Inishowen Electoral Area level or (c) a county level but are not available specifically at a plan area level.

### **4.1 Housing Construction**

During the period 2000-2004 there were approximately 13,964 houses completed in County Donegal compared to 9876 completed during the period 1996-2000. Updated figures show that the numbers of houses completed in County Donegal in 2005 alone was 3667 houses compared to only 2812 in 2004 alone, representing a growth of +30% on the total constructed in 2004. Historically, 2005 represented a boom in house completions given the highest number of completions are recorded for the 2005 year when compared to annual figures since 2000. Figures for the entirety of 2006 are not yet available but to June 2006, completions in County Donegal had reached 2098 houses indicating a continuation of the construction boom in the county.

An examination of the number of commencement notices registered within the plan area shows that this is not a reliable source of information and is therefore not quoted in this housing strategy.

During the 1996-2000 period, 88.3% of all houses constructed in County Donegal were completed by the private sector and 11.7% by the public sector. Updated figures for 2005 indicate that for the period of 2005, private house completions represent 90% of the total number of completions in 2005 and public house completions make up 10% of total house completions.

## **4.2 Housing units granted**

During the period 1996-2000 the combined total number of residential units granted planning permission within the plan area was 436 units compared to 678 units granted planning permission during the period 2000-2004. From 2004-2006, the total number of residential units granted full planning permission within the plan area was 634. Comprehensive information at a plan area level in relation to total number of houses constructed is not available as indicated at 4.1 above. However, using a rate of 36% of all units granted are not yet constructed, in line with the methodology used in the 'County Donegal Development Plan 2006-2012', there could be approximately 228 residential units that have been granted planning permission within the plan area during the period 2004-2006 that have not yet been constructed. This provides a substantial surplus of planning permission for residential units that have not yet been implemented. These figures are presented as crude figures that provide a picture only of the level of supply within the plan area and are not presented as comprehensive and fully accurate statistics.

## **4.3 Spatial distribution of housing units granted**

The environs of Buncrana have experienced a significant pressure for residential development that is exemplified by available census figures that show a surge in the population of the environs. An analysis of the spatial distribution of planning permission granted for residential units within the environs area shows a concentration of multiple residential developments to the lands located just outside the Buncrana Town Council administrative boundary and along the key arterial routes that serve the town. In particular this growth has occurred immediately north of the town at Tullyarvan, immediately Northeast at Ballymacarry Upper and immediately south at Ballymacarry Lower. The spatial distribution analysis shows that new permission granted is concentrated to these three key locations and would indicate potential for further consolidation of the urban form to lands that are undeveloped within this existing settlement pattern. In relation to the Buncrana Town Council area the restricted supply of land has encouraged the development of town centre sites at high densities so as to make provision of apartment complexes mixed with retail and commercial units at ground floor.

## **4.4 Projected housing need over the plan period**

Population projections outlined in the core text of this plan at chapter 2, predict that the population of the plan area could reach 7850 by 2014 i.e. the end of the plan period. Based on an average household size of 3.02 persons per household, this could give rise to a housing need of 300 units within the plan area over the period of the plan.

#### 4.5 Social and affordable housing

Part V of the Planning & Development Act 2000 requires that the Housing Strategy must make provision for both social and affordable housing. In this regard, this strategy defines social housing as rented housing provided either by the Local Authority or by a Voluntary or Co-operative Housing Body. Affordable housing is defined as owner-occupier, or shared ownership housing provided at a price below market value.

#### 4.6 Existing need for social and affordable housing within the plan area

Precise need for social and affordable housing within the plan area is difficult to capture given that statistics are not available specifically for the geographical area of the plan. Therefore, statistics in terms of social and affordable housing need, where they relate to the Inishowen Electoral Area, provide only a picture of the actual need within the plan area.

#### 4.7 Social housing need

The information below outlines the facts and figures that are available in relation to social housing need:

- Social housing need in Buncrana Town Council in 2007 is 293 (NB; - excludes the environs area of the plan).
- For Inishowen Electoral Area and excluding Buncrana Town Council, social housing is provided on the basis of the allocations of DoEHLG. A comparative of periods 2000-2003 and 2004 -2008 is set out in the table below for the Inishowen Electoral Area.

	2000-2003	2004-2008
New scheme houses	198 constructed	176 starts approved
Single rural houses	21 constructed	20 estimated to be constructed
Casual vacancies	80 estimated	80 estimated
Total	299	276

#### 4.8 Affordable housing need:

Applications for affordable housing are generally not received until such as time as affordable houses are constructed. Nonetheless, as a result of an information day held in Buncrana in 2005, 6 applications for affordable housing in Buncrana were received with 2 now remaining on the list and the others dealt within mainly through the shared ownership scheme as an alternative.

#### 4.9 Delivery of housing under Part V

Within the Inishowen Electoral area, excluding Buncrana Town Council 77 social housing units have been delivered under Part V and 6 affordable housing units have been delivered under Part V. To date, no Part V units have been delivered within Buncrana Town Council area.

Within the environs area of the plan, the absence of zoned lands to date has created a void in terms of delivery of social and affordable housing under Part V i.e. within the environs of Buncrana there has been no policy framework to provide social and affordable housing through the mechanism of Part V. On this basis the level of planned future provision of social and affordable housing through Part V will be guided by the policy and zoning framework that is adopted within this plan.

#### **4.10 House types**

The breakdown of house types that are being provided responds to changing demographics in terms of those who are in need of social and affordable housing. In this regard, in the Inishowen Electoral Area, need has changed in recent years towards the need for smaller units to accommodate single persons and single parents. As a result, targets are set at 75% of social housing to be 2 bed units and 25% of social housing to be 3 bed or greater. In relation to affordable housing in the Inishowen Electoral Area, provision is intended to be in the main for 3 bed starter homes for young first time buyers. In relation to Buncrana Town Council, house type targets for social housing are set at 70% 2 bed units and 30% 3 bed units whilst affordable housing shall be mainly for 3 bed room units.

#### **4.11 Voluntary housing**

Planned provision in relation to voluntary housing during the period 2000-2006, in the Inishowen Electoral Area including the area of Buncrana town Council is 119 units comprising a mixture of family units and sheltered units for the elderly and for people with disabilities.

#### **4.12 Principal reason for housing need**

Both Buncrana Town Council information and Donegal County Council information indicates that there is a change occurring in relation to the reason for housing need as indicated on applications for social and affordable housing. During the period 2000-2004 the breakdown of principle reason for housing need is as follows:

<b>Category of Need</b>	<b>Share (%)</b>
Not reasonably able to meet the cost of accommodation	50%
Unfit Accommodation	16%
Medical or Compassionate Reasons	13.5%
Overcrowded Accommodation	11%

Involuntary Sharing	5.5%
Elderly	1.8%
Travellers	0.9%
Disabled	0.6%
Leaving Institutional Care	0.5%
Homeless	0.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

The statistics show that in County Donegal, the principal reason for housing need is 'not reasonably able to meet the cost of accommodation'. During the period 1996-2000, the main reason indicated for housing need was that applicants were living in unfit, or unsuitable or in overcrowded accommodation. These statistics would indicate that the nature of housing need is changing, due at least in part to rising house prices and changing economics.

In relation to the Buncrana Town Council principal reason for housing need, the following statistics are available from the County Donegal Action Plan for Social and Affordable Housing 2004-2008 and are reflective of the Inishowen Electoral Area scenario:

<b>Category of Need</b>	<b>Share (%)</b>
Not reasonably able to meet the cost of accommodation or obtain suitable alternative	76%
Overcrowded Accommodation or Involuntary Sharing	10%
Unfit or materially unsuitable Accommodation	8%
Elderly	1%
Medical or Compassionate Reasons	5%
Elderly	1.8%
Travellers	0.9%
Disabled	0.6%
Leaving Institutional Care	0.5%
Homeless	0.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

#### **4.13 Traveller accommodation need**

The current Traveller Accommodation Programme 2005-2008 identified 47 families in need of permanent accommodation throughout County Donegal. 1 out of the total 47 related to Buncrana and this need has

been provided for in 2005. Therefore, at present there are no further permanent traveller accommodation needs in Buncrana.

A temporary emergency indigenous halting site at Nailors Row, Buncrana was permanently closed in May 2005. It is anticipated that the existing emergency temporary transient halting site at Lisfannon shall be replaced by proposals for a permanent transient halting site at Elaghbeg, Burnfoot that will progress to Part VIII planning application during 2007.

#### 4.14 Meeting needs

Meeting the housing need for social and affordable housing shall involve a range of allocation of tenancies under the Council own social housing programme and the voluntary housing programme, the provision of assistance in the form of loans scheme, affordable housing scheme and traveller accommodation programme, and the rental Accommodation Scheme.

The implementation of Part V is essential in order for the Councils to ensure the greatest output of social and affordable housing that can be achieved in the context of the legislative framework that is set out for delivery of such housing. In particular, having regard to the changing categories of need for applicants on the housing list, the elements of Part V relating to affordable housing will be of critical importance and the delivery of adequate levels of affordable housing shall be an important challenge throughout the life of the plan.

The following table is an attempt to aggregate need against planned provision within the plan area and Inishowen Electoral Area. The figures presented show that planned provision to 2008 will only cater for a portion of the existing need (at 2007). Therefore, the analysis indicates a clear need for this policy framework under part V including comprehensive implementation.

	Need for Social Housing (Buncrana Town Council only)	Need for Affordable Housing	Planned social housing provision (2004–2008)	Planned Affordable provision (2007-2008)	Planned Voluntary Housing provision (2000–2006)
Inishowen Electoral Area (including Buncrana Town Council)	293	Unknown/unquantified	313	11	119

## 5.0 Housing strategy goals and objectives

### 5.1 Goal:

To facilitate and support the provision of a standard of accommodation for the people of the area of the Buncrana & Environs Development Plan 2008-2014 in a manner so as to ensure the proper planning and sustainable development of the plan area.

### 5.2 Objectives, policies and proposals:

1. To reserve 15% of land zoned for residential use or a mixture of residential and other uses for the provision of social and affordable housing. Allocation of percentages in terms of social and affordable will be on the basis of 5% social and 10% affordable as a guide. Exact percentages shall be subject to negotiation to meet the needs as determined.

Buncrana Town Council and Donegal County Council shall continue to impose the following condition on all planning applications for housing on the relevant zoned lands:-

*Prior to commencement of development, the applicant/ developer shall enter into an agreement with the Council under Section 92(2) of the Planning & Development Act 2000 as amended by Section 3 of the Planning and Development Act 2002 for: -*

- a. Transfer of part of lands within application site; or*
- b. The building and transfer of houses within application site; or*
- c. The transfer of fully or partially serviced site with application site;*  
*or*
- d. Transfer of other lands; or*
- e. The building and transfer of housing on other lands; or*
- f. The transfer of fully or partially serviced sites on other lands; or*
- g. The payment of an agreed sum of money; or*
- h. A combination of (a) and any one or more of other options (i.e. (b) – (g))*

*Reason: To comply with the Council housing strategy.*

2. Buncrana Town Council and Donegal County Council will work in tandem so as to coordinate the delivery of social and affordable housing through Part V mechanism within the plan area that will meet identified needs.

The adoption of the Buncrana & Environs Development Plan 2008-2014 shall provide a new policy framework for the delivery of social and affordable housing in Buncrana. It shall be essential for the Councils to work jointly in the implementation of the Housing

Strategy having regard to the significant area of new land zoned for residential purposes that is provided for in the Buncrana & Environs Development Plan 2008-2014.

3. The councils will jointly identify social and affordable housing needs that are best facilitated by accommodation within town centres in lieu of Greenfield sites. In doing so the councils shall subsequently target the appropriate fulfilment of these needs by means of active consultation with landowners and developers.
4. To provide, through Buncrana Town Council Civic Offices and Carndonagh Public Services Centre, advice to applicants in relation to the range of housing assistance available in accordance with all current schemes.

The purpose of this service is to ensure the availability of guidance to the public in relation to the range of options available and to assist in advising applicants of the most appropriate scheme to suit individual circumstances. In particular, this service is critical in terms of increasing delivery and participation in affordable housing schemes in light of the changing categories of need that have been evidenced in the statistical analysis contained in this strategy.

5. Buncrana Town Council and Donegal County Council will consult with the DoEHLG and the relevant groups representing the range of disabled people to promote and develop the concept of lifetime adaptable housing to meet the needs of people with disabilities, the elderly, single persons and changing family situations.

Experience shall be taken from the construction of a lifetime adaptable house in Bruckless and Ballyshannon.

Priority will be placed on the early identification of needs in terms of lifetime adaptable housing together with appropriate tailoring of mix of house types to meet the identified needs.

6. Buncrana Town Council and Donegal County Council propose to further bridge the gap between the housing waiting list and the various supply mechanisms through the continued active promotion of voluntary housing. Additional housing units supplied through the voluntary agencies to be also secured by way of turnkey and direct construction methods.

The Councils will continue their efforts to promote the activity of the voluntary housing bodies including implementation of

guidelines for voluntary organisations in relation to how schemes are to be evaluated, so as to target schemes in areas of need as opposed to a development driven approach.

7. The Councils shall ensure a mix of social, affordable and private housing in all housing areas and the development of neighbourhood centres where appropriate by engaging in wide consultation with various agencies including the Housing/Building Strategic Policy Committee of Donegal County Council. Standards to be set and achieved in this activity to meet the accepted practice as set out in all relevant guidelines as issued by the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, policies H6, H13 of Chapter 6 of the Buncrana & Environs Development Plan 2008-2014 and the Childcare Strategy appended to this plan.

The requirement under objective 1 that 15% of all zoned lands be reserved for social and affordable housing guided by a 5% social and 10% affordable shall be used in order to offset social segregation. The Councils will also take into consideration the size and location of individual turnkey, voluntary and purchase schemes to prevent over concentration of any one social group and to avoid over concentration of social and affordable housing in larger settlements.

The Councils will seek to develop a model concept of neighbourhood centre with a range of play and other facilities derived from experience of implementation of the Buncrana Development Plan 2002 Housing Strategy and the first Housing Strategy adopted in 2002 as a variation to the County Donegal Development Plan 2000 in relation to the environs area of the plan. Experience shall also be drawn from implementation of policies and zonings set out in adopted Development Plans and Local Area Plans (e.g. Letterkenny & Environs Development Plan, Ballybofey-Stranorlar Local Area Plan).

8. The Councils will further develop systematic monitoring and review systems to monitor the delivery of housing relative to demand and to avoid undue segregation in light of changing patterns of demand.

Annual reports will be prepared to monitor the procurement of housing and to review the need for agreements under Section 96(2). The monitoring system will ensure the update of a statistical analysis prepared as part of the County Donegal Development Plan 2006-2012 together with an update of the statistical analysis contained in this Housing Strategy as part of the Buncrana &

Environs Development Plan 2008-2014. The monitoring system will ensure the appropriate review of policy.

9. The Councils will strive to acquire and maintain a reasonable housing landbank for both general and specialised housing needs as part of its overall housing procurement policy with input of the Planning Section, the Housing Section and the support of Services supplying critical environment in maintaining a landbank consistent with the need for housing and the sustainable development of the County.

The Councils will acquire and maintain a housing landbank as part of its overall procurement policy. A more detailed landbank acquisition and utilisation policy will be prepared to guide location, scale and use of lands to be acquired.

10. The Councils will seek to allocate an adequate measure of funding through the annual Budget process and otherwise to maintain all of their rented stock to an acceptable standard and specifically to upgrade older stock using all available funding sources. Upgrading and maintenance of stock will be carried out in full consultation with tenants and residents associations with input from the Council's tenant liaison facility. Where relevant, linking of these proposals with private management agreements will be ensured.
11. The Councils will implement the Traveller Accommodation Programme 2004–2008 as adopted.
12. The Councils will strive to achieve appropriate house type mixes within developments that respond to the changing demographics of persons on the housing list and in doing so, shall consider the experiences drawn from the document entitled, "Mixed Tenure Housing Estates: Development, Design, Management and Outcomes", published by the Housing Unit.