

GOVERNMENT MAPS OUT NEW HOUSING PLAN FOR IRELAND

The Government's 'Housing for All' plan represents the largest social housing build programme in the history of the State. A replacement to the five-year Rebuilding Ireland model, this latest multibillion strategy has set a target to deliver 300,000 homes by the end of 2030 across social, affordable and cost rental, private rental and private ownership.

Essentially, the 'Housing for All' model contains 213 actions, which aim to increase the housing supply to an average of 33,000 units per year over the next decade, providing an optimal mix of social, affordable and private housing for both sale and rent.

The Government's overall objective is that every citizen in the State should have access to good quality homes, to purchase or rent at an affordable price; built to a high standard and in the right place; and offering a high quality of life.

These measures will be supported by over €4 billion in guaranteed State funding every year, the highest level of government investment in building social and affordable housing. The plan also includes measures to support availability of the land, workforce, funding and capacity to enable both the public and private sectors to meet the targets.

Four pathways for a more sustainable housing system:

- Support home ownership and increase affordability.
- Eradicate homelessness, increase social housing delivery and support social inclusion.
- Increase new housing supply.
- Address vacancy and make efficient use of existing stock.

The pathways contain actions to be taken by government departments, local authorities, State agencies and others. Overall, the 'Housing for All' strategy contains 213 actions which aim to deliver a range of housing options for individuals, couples and families.

AFFORDABLE HOMEOWNERSHIP

Speaking at the official launch of the plan in early September, Minister for Housing,



Local Government and Heritage Darragh O'Brien noted that the plan would see a radical shift towards more affordable homeownership and secure renting.

"Our measures for affordable purchase, which include significant State investment, will provide opportunities for those who are losing all hope of ever owning their own home.

"Changes to the rental sector, including the supply of 2,000 'Cost Rental' homes, on average, every year, and new protections will make renting more affordable and secure for many. The planning changes, including the concept

of the State sharing in the increase in value of land zoned for housing, mark a radical departure in how land earmarked for housing is managed, in line with the aspirations of the Kenny Report of several decades ago."

LAND DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

Under 'Housing for All', the Land Development Agency (LDA) will take a lead role in creating a large-scale affordable cost-rental sector in Ireland. The strategy contains a range of measures to support the LDA's twin-track approach of accelerating near-term construction



(Source: 'Housing for All' Executive Summary)

of affordable homes on both state and private land, whilst also working over the longer term to assemble large state-owned landbanks capable of delivering thousands of new homes.

In addition to its expanded pipeline of state lands, the LDA will target the delivery of 5,000 new homes by 2026 through 'Project Tosaigh', with the agency to have full ownership of homes for affordable cost rental.

The balance will be sold to eligible households under affordable purchase arrangements. An open process to identify sites where housing delivery has stalled that would be appropriate for this scheme will be launched before the end of the year.

John Coleman, CEO of the Land Development Agency, said that the Agency is addressing a crucial gap in the market to give a fair deal to the many thousands of people who don't qualify for social housing, but who are struggling to pay private sector rents.

"The launch of 'Project Tosaigh' will allow us to supplement the State land we are already working on and accelerate the delivery of cost rental and affordable purchase homes by unlocking private land that is ready to be developed but where construction has stalled or not commenced.

"Whilst our longer-term approach will focus on publicly owned land, it makes sense to use the LDA as a catalyst to speed up delivery, with the security of knowing all homes will be delivered on an affordable basis," he added.

The LDA chief noted that whilst complex construction projects take time, the Agency is on track to commence construction of the first homes next year. "The combination of the passage of the LDA Act over the summer, and the publication of 'Housing for All', means that the LDA is positioned to make a major positive impact on Ireland's housing problems."

UNLOCKING OPPORTUNITIES

The elements of the 'Housing for All' strategy – including tax on vacant land and properties, changes to preservation orders and increased funding to the LDA – will help to unlock opportunities for the delivery of housing, according to Chambers



Ireland.

The organisation said that its 40 Chambers of Commerce members have highlighted the need for a coherent housing plan for many years and hoped the strategy would represent a “sea change in how land and housing is managed in Ireland”.

Chambers Ireland Chief Executive, Ian Talbot said: “The ambitious targets will need significant investment, substantial skills development within the construction sector and a sizeable expansion in apprenticeships. There will also need to be an expansion of the number of employment permits available to the sector.

“The focus on vacant properties also offers a pathway to not only a sustainable recovery, but also the opportunity to reinvigorate our city centres and towns which have suffered gravely over repeated Covid-19 lockdowns.

“Action on vacancies is key to creating sustainable cities and towns that are attractive places to live and work long beyond the immediate post-pandemic period. The role of local authorities will also be vital to ensure the interests of communities are served.”

MAJOR POLICY STEP FORWARD

Ireland’s Planning Regulator Niall Cussen has described the Government’s €4bn per annum ‘Housing for All’ plan as a historic and major policy step forward. He said it is fully funded, and delivery focused; centred around planned sustainable housing delivery in the right locations; and proposes major reforms to aid supply of land at lower costs in the locations of the greatest housing demand, particularly in our city, town and village cores.

Cussen also pointed out that the plan correctly identifies that Ireland’s planning process must “up its game” in terms of the capacity and capabilities of its personnel and systems to ensure sustainable housing delivery.

“Through new training initiatives and supporting the digital planning services agenda, the OPR will play its full part in ensuring that planning processes will run smoothly to support delivery under the plan.”

The Office of the Planning Regulator (OPR) has welcomed the key role for local authorities in planning for the level, the location and the types of housing needed under the umbrella of the National Planning Framework and the Climate Action Plan.

It says that from housing supply targets to housing needs demand assessments and updated development plan guidelines, local authorities now have the clarity to plan sustainably, prudently and comprehensively.

MAIN INITIATIVES UNDER ‘HOUSING FOR ALL’ PLAN

- Over 90,000 social homes by the end of 2030, including an average new-build component of over 9,500 social homes by the end of 2030.
- Delivery of 300,000 homes built over the next decade across the four categories of social, affordable and cost rental, private rental and private ownership. On average, over 33,000 homes will be built per annum, rising to 40,000 by 2030.
- Delivery of 54,000 affordable homes between now and 2030 with yearly targets for the provision of affordable housing for the first time ever – 2,000 ‘Cost Rental’ homes and 4,000 local authority Affordable Purchase Homes provided, on average, each year.
- Measures to stimulate supply and address acute viability challenges in urban areas, including provision of up to 5,000 Cost Rental and affordable units through Project Tosaigh, the new Croí Conaithe (Cities) Fund aims to ensure new apartments will be developed for sale to individual households at a lower cost.
- Focus on new builds to provide social homes, with the ending of long-term social housing leasing arrangements through the phasing out of new entrants.
- Focus on those with a history of rough sleeping or long-term use of emergency accommodation and with complex needs through 1,200 new Housing First tenancies over the next five years.
- Delivery of up to 15,000 residential units, to revitalise urban centres, through the provision of State land to the Land Development Agency.
- An expansion in access to affordable homes to buy, through an enhanced Local Authority Home Loan Scheme, which will have an increased income ceiling for single people of €65,000 and lower loan interest rates.
- ‘Land Value Sharing’ measures to ensure that an appropriate level of the increase in the value of development land, which results from zoning for residential development, is shared by the State. This value will be used to provide necessary local infrastructure and social and affordable housing, to support residential development and for the benefit of the community.
- Measures to use vacant lands for residential housing will be introduced, such as a new tax to replace the existing Vacant Site Levy.
- Measures to reduce construction costs and support innovation in residential construction will be introduced.
- Local authorities to purchase and resell up to 2,500 vacant properties in their areas.
- Further reforms to improve protections for people renting.
- New planning arrangements for Large-Scale Residential Developments and broader reforms to the planning process to ensure certainty and stability and reduce delays.

