

# LOCAL AUTHORITY ACTION PLANS IS KEY TO HOUSING DELIVERY

*A key action of the Government's Housing for All plan to tackle Ireland's housing crisis is that all 31 local authorities will develop their own action plans to set out details of social and affordable housing delivery over the next five years. So, just how well are the housing delivery action plans currently progressing in several councils across the country?*

The Housing for All' plan which was launched by Minister for Housing Darragh O'Brien TD in September 2021, has been described as the most ambitious plan in the history of the State. The plan proposes to increase the supply of housing to an average of 33,000 per year over the next ten years, and includes the delivery of 90,000 social homes, 36,000 affordable purchase homes and 18,000 cost rental homes.

Having replaced the Rebuilding Ireland Strategy, which was launched in 2016, the Housing for All plan has been dubbed the "single largest investment in housing since the 1960s". The scheme contains 213 actions which will deliver a range of housing options for families, couples and individuals.

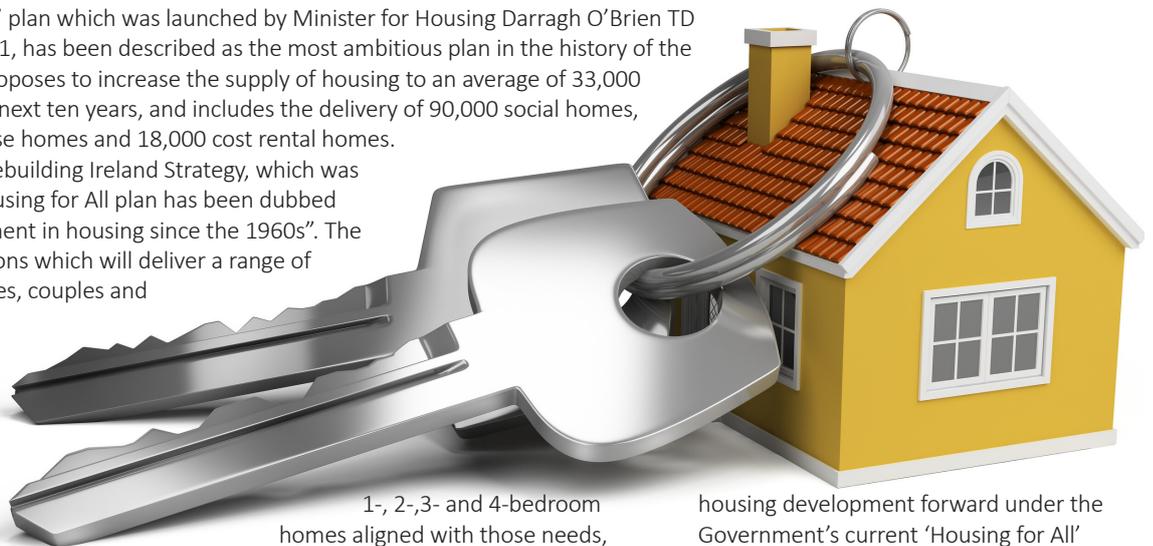
It is supported by an investment package of over €4 billion per year. This is through an overall combination of €12 billion in direct Exchequer funding, €5 billion in funding through the Housing Finance Agency and €3.5 billion in funding through the Land Development Agency.

A major component of 'Housing for All' is that these housing delivery action plans are consistent with the relevant adopted Development Plan for each local authority area and any associated environmental assessments.

These plans are to set out the alignment of the Housing Delivery Action Plan with the National Planning Framework, in particular compact growth objectives. The location of where housing will be delivered to be outlined (such as towns, villages, urban and rural areas) and the planned numbers of homes to be delivered in each area and by year.

The plans should also outline the planned delivery streams used to meet the targets, including the role of the Approved Housing Bodies, Land Development Agency (LDA) or other partners with a focus on delivery through new build.

An assessment of housing types and sizes, in accordance with local needs, must include the adequate proportion of



1-, 2-,3- and 4-bedroom homes aligned with those needs, the provision of housing for people with a disability and for Age Friendly Housing.

*'Local Authority Journal' checked out how some local authorities around the country are currently progressing with their own housing delivery action plans over the five-year period.*

## FINGAL COUNTY COUNCIL

The impact of construction inflation and lack of skilled labour on housing delivery action plans has been echoed by Robert Burns, Director of Housing and Community Development at Fingal County Council. He noted that in July this year the Society of Chartered Surveyors in Ireland reported the annualised rate of inflation is now running at 14 per cent.

He feels that while it is a challenge for local authorities to support central government in providing temporary housing solutions, the Ukrainian crisis has not impacted Fingal County Council's progress in delivering social and affordable housing in the county.

Fingal was one of the first local authorities in Ireland to bring affordable

housing development forward under the Government's current 'Housing for All' policy. It has 39 affordable homes under construction in Dun Emer in Lusk, North County Dublin, where new owners are due to move in before the end of the year.

"The council has further affordable housing and mixed tenure projects in the pipeline. Fingal is committed to constructing almost 1,000 new affordable homes over the next five years, including one of the largest mixed tenure developments in Church Fields, Mulhuddart.

"This will, on its own, result in the delivery of over 1,000 social and affordable homes. We have also met our housing delivery targets since 2016 when the Rebuilding Ireland policy was introduced right through to recent years under the Housing for All policy," according to Burns.

The impact of COVID-19 on Fingal's housing delivery action plans is waning, but was a factor when restrictions were in place and construction was not able to proceed. Supply in terms of contractor capacity is now under pressure to meet demand.

Vacant homes in the Fingal region do not appear to be a particular issue. "The level of vacancy in Fingal is quite low, being the second lowest in the country at 17 empty

dwellings per 1,000 inhabitants according to the 2016 census. I don't believe that it is contributing to the housing crisis in any meaningful way," he noted.

#### KILDARE COUNTY COUNCIL

With a target to deliver 2,416 social housing homes and 226 affordable homes over the next five years, Kildare's Housing Delivery Action Plan sets out how Kildare County Council and the AHBs will provide these new homes through direct build, turnkey and Part V arrangements.

The council aims to deliver a range of housing including mixed-tenure schemes, increase social housing stock and address issues such as affordability and vacancy between 2022 and 2026.

Annette Aspell, Director of Services at Kildare County Council, said that the targets set out in the plan shows the council's commitment to delivering social and affordable housing for the county and "to playing our part in addressing this national challenge".

She described it as an ambitious plan with a series of key objectives to be delivered by 2026. "It is our ambition to continue working closely with our Approved Housing Body partners and with the Department of Housing to achieve these targets which will make a significant and positive impact on the supply of social and affordable housing in Kildare."

#### MAYO COUNTY COUNCIL

As part of the Housing for All delivery action plan, Mayo County Council received its delivery target for social housing of 730 units up to the year 2026. Mayo felt the need



**Fingal's affordable housing scheme at Dun Emer, Lusk, Co. Dublin, where 51 homes are being built (39 affordable, 12 social) with owners due to move in before the end of the year.**

to be more ambitious and subsequently provided a greater target of 1,004 units for the provision of social housing.

Although it did not receive an allocation for affordable housing, it is currently examining its eligibility for affordable housing funding, with an application due to be submitted to the Department of Housing by the end of September 2022.

Tom Gilligan, Director of Services for Mayo County Council, was also instrumental in setting up the vacanthomes.ie initiative. "Two of the more significant housing delivery schemes include a 50-unit social housing project in Ballina which is well

advanced and another 50-unit housing scheme in Westport which has gone to tender," he said.

"We're seeing significant interest in the recently announced Croí Cónaithe (Towns) Fund. This aims to tackle vacancy and dereliction by giving homeowners or prospective homeowners a grant of up to €30,000 (€50,000 if you can prove dereliction) for the refurbishment of a vacant property for occupation as a principal private residence. Although still very much in its infancy, I anticipate the Croí Cónaithe Fund will prove very popular," he added.

Mayo County Council is currently



**Kildare County Council's housing delivery action plan has been described as "ambitious" with a series of key objectives to be delivered by 2026.**

working on more than 34 projects which are at different stages. Before the 'Housing for All' Plan, it exceeded its overall housing targets under Rebuilding Ireland, despite the COVID-19 pandemic.

Gilligan sees the lack of suitable land as well as a shortage of skilled tradespeople within the construction sector as particular challenges. He even recalls one visit to a building project where a foreman asked if he brought any block layers with him, such was the shortage.

"In some cases, we are seeing builders not being able to access additional finance to deliver housing schemes. This is one of the significant challenges to Mayo County Council being successful in delivering its 'Housing for All' Plan," he said.

#### CORK CITY COUNCIL

In accordance with the targets as set by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, Cork City Council's Housing Delivery Action Plan will provide for the delivery of 3,934 social homes and 1,737 affordable homes across the city within the 2022-2026 timeframe.

Cork City Council will provide 378 homes with the balance to be delivered by AHBs and the Land Development Agency (LDA) through affordable purchase and cost rental schemes. It is noted that these targets are deemed minimum affordable delivery targets.

The city council is confident, in partnership with both AHBs and the LDA, that the proposed housing delivery detailed within this Housing Delivery Action Plan can be delivered during this timeframe.



**Mayo County Council's 50-unit social housing project in Ballina, now at an advanced stage, is one of two significant housing delivery schemes in the county; while the other 50-unit housing scheme in Westport has gone to tender.**

The Lord Mayor of Cork, Cllr Deirdre Forde, stated that this is the first plan in recent times to deliver both social and affordable homes in Cork City. "I am delighted to see such an amazing number of homes being committed to in the plan and supported by Government."

Describing the action plan as the "most ambitious", Ann Doherty, Chief Executive Cork City Council, said the undertaking will involve considerable commitment and focus from all stakeholders, both internal and external. "Plans like this do not appear without considerable work behind the scenes," she noted.



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**Four new social housing developments, comprising 106 new homes for Cork City across Blackpool, Mahon, Pouladuff Road and Togher, were officially opened in June 2022.**