



LEINSTER

Rural Communities Workgroup Report January 2017



Foreword

In mid 2016 Cathaoirleach Comhairle Laighean, John Horan, formed a 'Rural Communities Workgroup' to look at the issues that affect the rural clubs in the province and in the past number of months our committee has consulted with individuals, clubs and committees at all levels and compiled the necessary data to formulate this report.

Leinster, in terms of its demographic, has changed dramatically in the past few decades with most counties experiencing spectacular growth in numbers which is having an impact on both rural and urban clubs in different ways. We now have 55% of the population of the state resident in the province and though our remit was to look at the rural club, the reality is that we cannot look at either the rural or urban in isolation, both are interlinked, to varying degrees, in each county.

The detail is in the document so there is no need for me to comment any further other than to say that there is an urgent need to focus on the grassroots of our association and help to address the issues raised.

I would sincerely like to thank all who contributed to the compilation of this report and I would like to extend a special thanks to the other members of the committee, namely:

- Michael Reynolds (Secretary)
- Andy O'Brien (Wicklow)
- Paddy Kelly (Meath)
- Terry McCague (Westmeath)
- Margaret Doyle (Wexford)
- Joe O'Brien (Offaly)

The knowledge, enthusiasm and genuine interest shown by my fellow committee members made this exercise one of the most enjoyable pieces of work that I've been involved with.

Mise le meas,

Syl Merrins

Chairman, Rural Communities Workgroup

1. Introduction

'Rural areas are increasingly diverse and there are distinct spatial patterns and differing capacities evident throughout rural Ireland. These patterns reflect the variation in the endowment and scale of human, physical, natural and capital resources available within each area. They reflect past developments and contemporary economic and social profiles. As a consequence rural areas will differ in their capacity to respond to both external and internal stimuli. It is clear that rural life is highly valued among Irish citizens and rural areas are particularly cherished for their distinctive quality of life, culture and heritage assets, clean environment, strong community ties and tradition of volunteerism. The growth in rural population during the boom years showed that rural areas are attractive as residential locations. At the same time, the downturn has left many in rural Ireland unable to achieve their ambitions and potential, and out-migration is depleting rural areas of much-needed human resources'.

Report Of The Commission For The Economic Development Of Rural Areas 2013

Terms of reference for Workgroup

The Workgroup was requested to examine and report on all issues relating to Rural GAA club activities and welfare in the province.

The club is the lifeblood of the GAA, and the basic building block of the association. It is central to life of and social wellbeing of many communities across the province, be it a half parish in north Longford or a large urban area of the commuter belt. The welfare and development of the Club is key to the strength and continued advancement of the CLG within Irish society.

Over the past number of months the Leinster GAA 'Rural Communities Workgroup' have met various individuals, clubs and committees to formulate this report. The Committee found the process enlightening and informative and as commented on above, in the extract from the 'Report Of The Commission For The Economic Development Of Rural Areas in 2013', the diverse nature of not just the urban/rural divide but the diversity in rural Ireland itself is even more profound in a Leinster context.

This diversity is having an impact on the rural GAA Clubs in the province, both positive and negative.

2. National & Leinster Population Trends – Urban and Rural

Between 2006 and 2011, the population of the province of Leinster grew faster than the State overall, increasing by 9.1%. This trend continued between 2011 and 2016 (5% increase) and this strong growth has resulted in Leinster increasing its share of the population of the state with over half of all persons, 55%, now residing in the province. Leinster now has a population of 2,630,720 persons (preliminary census returns 2016), an actual change of 125,906 persons on the 2011 figure. The total population of the province rose by 525,141 persons between 2002 and 2016, an increase of 25 % in that period.

The number of people in urban areas (i.e. towns with a population of 1,500 or more) surpassed 2.8 million nationally for the first time in 2011. Overall, 2,846,889 people lived in urban areas in Ireland in 2011 representing 62% of the total population. This represents an increase of 272,576 or 10.6% on 2006. Since 1996, Ireland has shown a rise in its urban population of 738,898, and the trend is positively towards increasing urbanisation.

The 2011 census recorded approximately 38% of the Irish population overall as living in rural areas, including smaller towns and villages. In some counties particularly in parts of the midlands and in the west, a much higher proportion of households live in rural areas. The 2011 census also shows widely varying trends in relation to the population levels in different types of rural areas. Rural areas close to Dublin and some larger towns in Leinster, have been experiencing population growth, with very substantial rates of growth in the urban areas.

Rural areas overall experienced a lower rate of growth between 2006 and 2011 growing by 75,828 persons or 4.6%, from 1,665,535 in 2006 to 1,741,363 in 2011. 38% of the population lived in rural areas nationally in April 2011 compared with 54% fifty years ago.

Other more remote and economically weaker areas are experiencing population decline as detailed in the map below (fig.1), showing population change in all Electoral Divisions as taken from the 2011 CSO figures and the most recent 2016 figures.

The projected population increase for Leinster up to 2031 is almost 500,000 with the vast majority of this increase likely to take place in the urban areas in line with Government Strategic Planning Guidelines. The extent of the movement in population is detailed in the following map (fig.2), which shows where all children under 5, both males and females, resided at the Census 2011

Figure 1

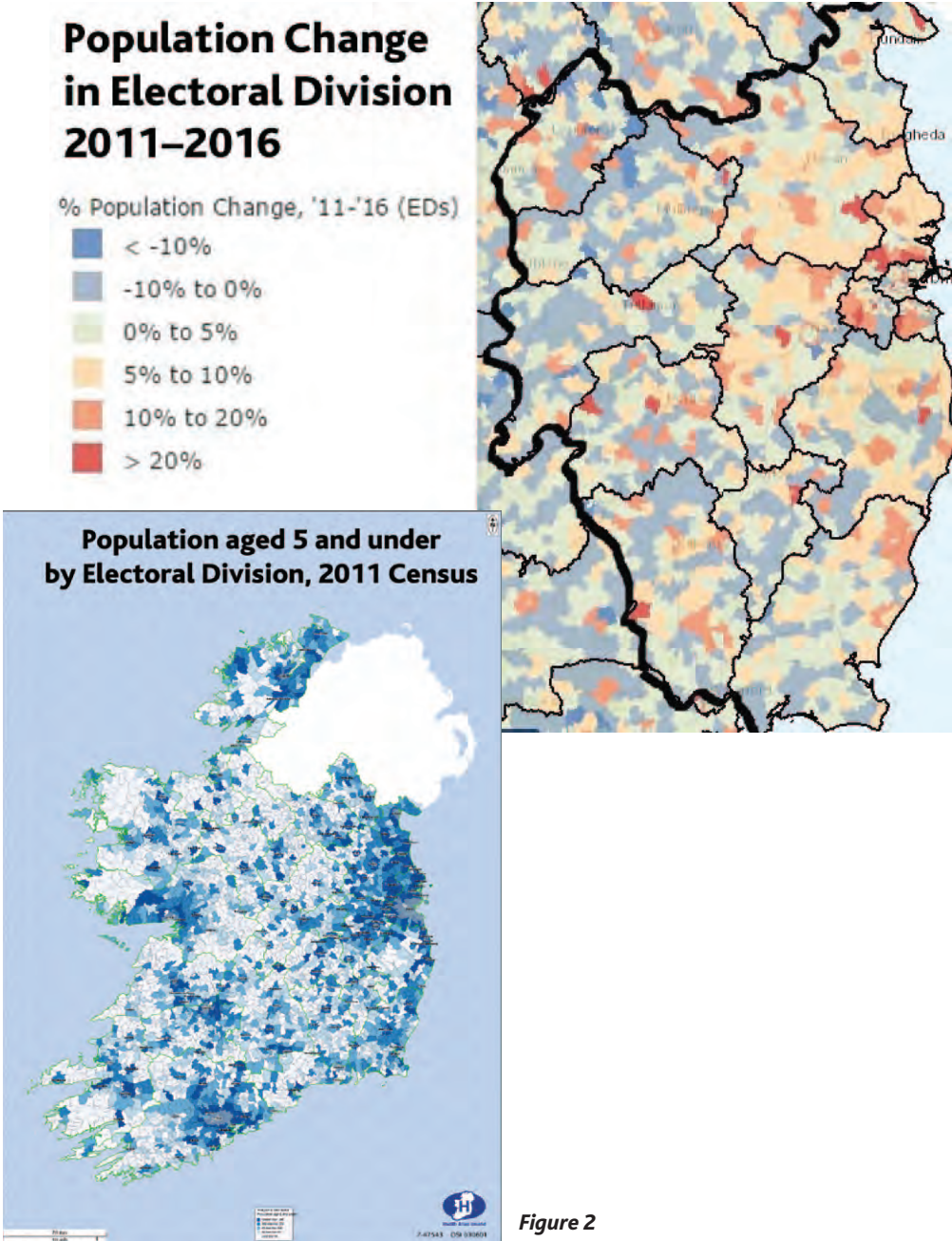


Figure 2

During the period 2002-2016, the impact of the growth and movement in population can be seen in Dublin and in the counties on its doorstep in particular Meath, Kildare, Wicklow and Louth but all counties have been impacted as detailed in fig.3. Outside of Dublin the lowest population increase was 23% in Kilkenny, Offaly and Westmeath, which is still significant, and counties such as Laois 44% and Longford 31% also showing a significant increase. As stated previously this increase is projected to continue as the economic climate improves and the Leinster region acts as a migration magnet.

Figure 3

Leinster Census Figures 2002-2016 by county

| County | 2002 | 2006 | 2011 | 2016 | increase 02-16 | % inc 02-16 |
|-----------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|-------------------|----------------|
| Carlow | 46,014 | 50,349 | 54,612 | 56,875 | 10,861 | 24 |
| Dublin | 1,122,821 | 1,187,176 | 1,273,069 | 1,345,402 | 222,581 | 20 |
| Kildare | 163,944 | 186,335 | 210,312 | 222,130 | 58,186 | 35 |
| Kilkenny | 80,339 | 87,558 | 95,419 | 99,118 | 18,779 | 23 |
| Laois | 58,774 | 67,059 | 80,559 | 84,732 | 25,958 | 44 |
| Longford | 31,068 | 34,391 | 39,000 | 40,810 | 9,742 | 31 |
| Louth | 101,821 | 111,267 | 122,897 | 128,375 | 26,554 | 26 |
| Meath | 134,005 | 162,831 | 184,135 | 194,942 | 60,937 | 45 |
| Offaly | 63,663 | 70,868 | 76,687 | 78,003 | 14,340 | 23 |
| Westmeath | 71,858 | 79,346 | 86,164 | 88,396 | 16,538 | 23 |
| Wexford | 116,596 | 131,749 | 145,320 | 149,605 | 33,009 | 28 |
| Wicklow | 114,676 | 126,194 | 136,640 | 142,332 | 27,656 | 24 |
| Leinster | 2,105,579 | 2,295,123 | 2,504,814 | 2,630,720 | 525,141 | 25 |

The population breakdown between urban and rural in the province (excluding Dublin) can be seen clearly in figure 4, taken from the 2011 Census. The urban element will no doubt increase in all counties when the finer detail of the 2016 Census becomes available later in 2017.

Figure 4

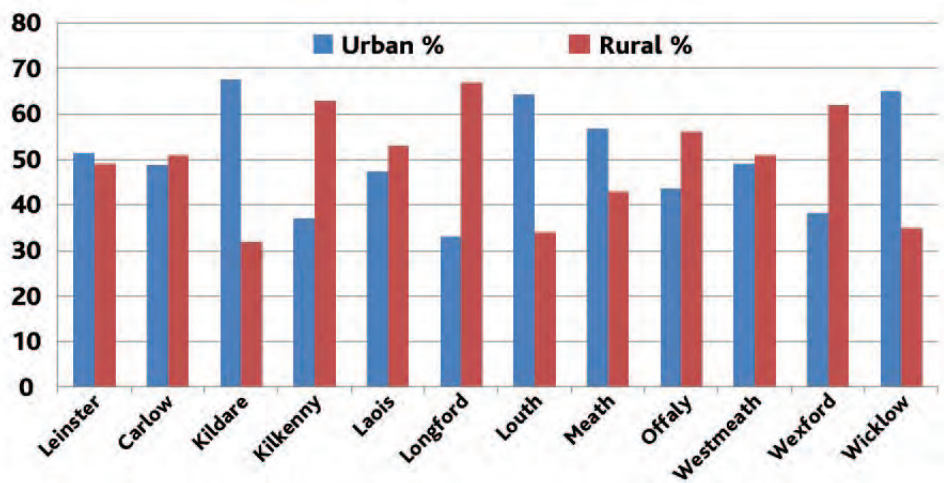


Figure 5

| Percentage Rural/Urban Divide | | |
|-------------------------------|-------|-------|
| County | Urban | Rural |
| Carlow | 49% | 51% |
| Kildare | 68% | 32% |
| Kilkenny | 37% | 63% |
| Laois | 47% | 53% |
| Longford | 33% | 67% |
| Louth | 64% | 34% |
| Meath | 57% | 43% |
| Offaly | 44% | 56% |
| Westmeath | 49% | 51% |
| Wexford | 38% | 62% |
| Wicklow | 65% | 35% |

The 'Urbanisation' of Leinster in a GAA context is seen mainly as a problem for the big urban clubs in trying to cope and cater with the influx of youth in their areas but the reality is that urbanisation is having an impact on both urban and rural clubs in the province in different ways.

It should also be said that not all rural areas in the province have been impacted by inward migration or the impact of a neighbouring urban centre and that there are pockets, both large and small, that have had very little change in their demographic and in some cases are experiencing depopulation as we have shown already.

In this document we look at not just the needs and challenges of rural clubs but also best practice models that can be replicated throughout the Province. We outline the process used to compile our report and detail our findings and proposals.

3. Compiling the Report

In compiling this report a consultation process took place where meetings were held with all relevant stakeholders. Data was compiled in relation to population breakdown and movement, club and team affiliation, primary school numbers etc.

Detailed discussions in relation to needs and difficulties encountered in terms of player and volunteer retention, coaching, facilities, finance etc. took place in the form of a workshop, which was held in Áras Laighean on September 28th. Outside of the workshop discussions also took place with interest groups and units of the association at club, county and provincial level, and primary schools teacher representative. The discussions also highlighted the positives in many clubs where areas of best practice were noted.

The workshop and club discussion feedback, in the form of a SWOT analysis, can be found in Appendix 1. To summarise the following are key points made in relation to the Rural Club:

Strengths

- Good facilities
- Local heroes
- Good school link
- Good underage structures
- Identity
- Community
- Tradition
- The Club is the bedrock of the association and the community
- Go Games
- Player retention
- Opportunity for all to play
- Rules that help the rural club
- Good committee structure
- One club model

Weaknesses

- Lack of numbers
- Small pool of volunteers
- Poor governance
- Rules that affect participation
- Planning laws,
- Emigration
- Lack of quality administrators
- Players in Third Level College
- The affect of Inter-County Competition on the club
- Lack of funding opportunities
- Employment
- Lack of parent involvement
- Poor quality coaches
- Adjacent to bigger urban clubs
- Poor facilities

Opportunities

- Officer Training
- Rules/Bye-laws to help Rural Clubs
- Integration with Ladies Football/ Camogie
- Non GAA Development, e.g. Walking tracks
- Land availability at low cost
- Primary School involvement
- Use of County player to promote the club
- County Development Plan engagement
- Funding opportunities
- Cúl Camps

Threats

- Lack of finance
- Attraction of larger clubs
- Volunteer burnout
- Planning regulations
- Rules hindering participation
- De-population
- Poor Governance
- Lack of GAA Teachers
- Attraction of other sports
- Players not getting opportunity to play at the level of their ability
- Lack of success
- Lack of volunteers
- Smaller family numbers
- School closures
- Ourselves

The SWOT analysis highlighted the fact that not all club situations are the same and that one size and solution does not fit all. Strengths in some clubs were seen as weaknesses in others. We should also note, as with all clubs, the variation in size of our rural clubs and also note that large does not always mean success. There were a number of themes repeated throughout the workshop and are summarised in the following:

• **People: The importance of good:**

- Coaches
- Administrators
- Volunteers

• **Club/School Link:**

- The importance of a strong club/school link is vital to the success and in many cases the survival of the rural club

• **Sense of Community: The Rural GAA Club is more than a sports club, it means:**

- Identity
- Tradition
- Pride of place

People

The volunteer in the GAA is probably the most important person to the Association. Volunteers are in essence the lifeblood of the GAA and always have been since its inception. The role of the 'volunteer' is in effect the pursuit of vocation, in the service of others, and without them the Association has no future.

The importance of having skilled and competent administrators and coaches is vital to the continued growth of our Association. The challenge for many rural clubs is to have sufficient administrators and coaches and sometimes the competency and skills needed are overlooked. It is imperative that both County Boards and Leinster Council assist all clubs in the following:

- Providing a mentoring programme for Club Officers & Volunteers
- Insist on the GAA Club Leadership Development Programme becoming mandatory for all clubs
- Ensure a more focussed approach in areas of greatest need
- Help develop a club nursery structure in all clubs
- Help strengthen Club/School links
- Help enhance volunteer participation
- Help enhance player development
- Ensure mandatory coaching standards are in place in all clubs
- Provide a mentoring programme for coaches
- Assist every Club to develop a Coaching & Games Plan from Nursery to Adult level
- Assist clubs in an area/region to work together to provide teams to help sustain clubs

Schools

The importance of a strong and structured club/school link came through very clearly in all of our discussions. The success and in many cases survival of clubs will depend on this relationship. In times past the GAA took it for granted that the local primary school would promote and be fully supportive of our games. We must acknowledge the trojan work undertaken by teachers over the years in the development of our games in schools and the work in particular of Cumann na mBunscoil and indeed the post primary school sector.

We can however no longer take for granted that schools have:

- Teachers with a GAA or even sports orientation
- Capacity to organise and manage teams
- A sports friendly management
- A GAA ethos

The variation in primary school numbers in club catchment areas is huge. We found that the feeder school at Primary Level of one club had only thirty nine pupils, but with a good club/school relationship and excellent coaching structure this club has been very successful in recent times.

On the other end of the scale we found that some clubs in urban areas have primary school numbers of up to 3,500 pupils with low GAA participation levels due to lack of capacity in the club or a lack of GAA ethos in the schools.

In compiling our report we not only looked at the club/school relationship from a club perspective but we also sought the views from a Teacher/Principal/School viewpoint to understand the needs and restrictions that schools currently encounter and the following points were made that need to be taken into account:

- That many teachers and principals may not always be interested in the GAA
- The primary school curriculum allows for one hour per week for Physical Education. This one hour is confined to facilities available and subject to weather conditions. The curriculum has six strands:
 - Athletics
 - Aquatics or water confidence
 - Games
 - Dance
 - Gymnastics
 - Outdoor and adventure activities
- Even if a club coach is involved with a team there may be a Cumann na mBunscoil bye-law in some counties that states that a teacher must also be involved with the team
- Primary school insurers are positively disposed to club mentors being involved with school teams provided discipline is guaranteed, so the designated club coach should fit this requirement
- GAA Garda Vetting is sufficient in most schools but some may require specific Garda Vetting for their school
- Club mentors must be approved and ratified by school Board of Management

In the context of one hour per week for Physical Activity and the consideration of the six strands it should be remembered that the GAA may not receive a greater share of time than any other listed games which include soccer, hockey, handball, volleyball, and a range of invasion games.

So any significant input to Gaelic Games outside of the curriculum is limited and hence fair to say there is no compulsion to promote one game over another.

Outside involvement in a school by GAA, Soccer, Rugby, Basketball, Spikeball and Handball would be by invitation of the school.

Insistence by the GAA that Gaelic Games enjoy a preferential treatment in a school may be counter productive and therefore would be ill advised. Gaelic Games may initially need to be placed as an attraction that can be developed within the school when and where possible but developed also in the local club. The club programme can benefit by advertising its values through the school.

Clubs, County Boards and Leinster GAA should use every opportunity to promote our games in the Primary Schools with the following just some of the advice put forward:

- Develop a good relationship with teachers, Parents Committee and Board of Managements
- When your club commits to coaching in your school be reliable, punctual and organised
- If a teacher is willing to help a club mentor with coaching, accept the offer because they may not be as experienced in coaching but they will be experienced in controlling large numbers
- Use Transition Year (TY) Students as coaches where possible
- Agree with the school to use the thirty six Croke Park hours (or part of) for GAA activity
- Organise regular after school training sessions as it has been proven that students have a better attitude to homework etc., which can be used as a positive in your relationship with parents/teachers
- Promote the Hurley subsidy scheme
- Cumann Na mBunscoil should be represented at County Board level and CB's should support in the strongest way possible the work of Cumann na mBunscoil and their delegates in promoting the GAA in their schools
- County Boards/Leinster GAA should maximise the Club/School Link Programme and consider a concentrated promotional period each year
- Cumann na mBunscoil should introduce small sided league competitions where necessary in order to include all schools
- All County Boards/Leinster GAA should provide a GAA Coaching course to Primary School teachers each year that can be used as an 'Entitlement to Extra Personal Vacation' (EPV) days on foot of attending approved summer courses

Sense of Community

The GAA is and always has been about community, identity, pride of place and sense of belonging. It is far more than a sporting organisation.

As Leinster has become more and more urbanised there was a view in our discussions that the sense of community and feeling of pride in many rural clubs has been impacted on. As this community element is a vital pillar to the success of our Association we must not take for granted that it will happen automatically. It must be fostered and promoted and we must ensure that all of our clubs remain the focal point and the most important organisation in the community. We must be forward thinking, promoting community development and inclusiveness in an ever changing landscape.

The extent of the urban/rural change and the knock on affect on our communities is summarised visually in Appendix 1 where we have outlined the detail of the changes between 2002 and 2011 in graph form.

From the graphs it can be seen that all counties show increases in both urban and rural populations. The overall trend in every county is however for greater urbanisation, but more so in the counties close to or within commuting distance of Dublin. For example, the change from Rural to Urban in the makeup of the population in Meath is quite spectacular in the short space of nine years. Kildare, Wicklow and Louth are now 66% or more urbanised.

Interestingly Kilkenny remains a predominately "Rural" county. Counties such as Laois and Westmeath have also shown large change in less than a decade, both now a roughly 50:50 urban/rural split. What does not appear in the graphs is what is occurring within counties and this requires further analysis on a county by county basis. It must be highlighted that there are pockets of persistent decline in some counties like Longford, Offaly, small areas of Westmeath and parts of North Meath. Planning policy should be designed to respond to such trends by facilitating new development proposals to sustain local services such as schools and community services. This in effect is national planning policy for rural areas and generally local planning policy in the county development plans take this approach. Within some of these areas difficulties may be encountered by GAA clubs, and the need for GAA involvement, at national as well as local level in lobbying to address these needs is vital.

The situation in areas where there is evidence of population decline will be different to areas experiencing growth and therefore presents different sets of challenges - absence of employment opportunities, emigration of younger age groups, smaller family size, may all be contributory factors.

Those areas which have recorded population increases in the period reviewed present a further set of challenges. These generally involve the larger towns and suburban areas of the commuter belt, where rapid rises in population have occurred.

Tapping into this growth of new families into an area has not always been successful for local GAA clubs, as evidenced by participation rates and levels of involvement of families in community activities. A separate strategy is required for these areas which can be informed by the success stories of some of the larger urban clubs.

Good quality facilities, including modern community centres offering a range of services from youth to senior citizen, male and female, extending to employment support services may be the model to build on here.

Other issues that were mentioned in the discussions and that we feel need to be highlighted include:

Third Level Students

The percentage of our youth now attending Third Level College has increased considerably over the last number of years with this increase being reflected in the makeup of teams at all levels. The effect that this has on rural clubs is even greater due to lack of numbers. In one instance a club had ten third level students on their first team. Their ability to field a team at exam time and even at times during the summer, due to some students getting jobs away from home became increasingly difficult. The fielding of a second team has become impossible in many clubs.

Rules/Bye-Laws

The use of Rules and Bye-laws was seen by many as a way of helping to increase numbers in rural clubs. For example many rural clubs in Leinster are close to large urban areas. Can we attract some of the youth from these areas (many of whom do not play Gaelic Games or any sport) to play and help sustain the neighbouring rural club? Do we need to look at our transfer bye-laws?

Are their rules in place that hinder participation in the rural club? For example many urban residents now use the rural primary school in the neighbouring parish to educate their children but if there is a 'Parish Rule' in operation these children are unable to play with their primary school friends.

There is no doubt that we need to look at how we can assist the rural club with the help of the rule book. This will have to be done not just on a county by county basis but also for specific areas within counties if many clubs are to survive.

Finance, Sponsorship and Fundraising

Financing of clubs raised its head time and again with the ever increasing costs putting added pressure on officials and causing a major distraction to what their main focus within the club should be.

High and ever increasing insurance costs were their main concern but other areas, that may not always be apparent, such as internal communications were proving a serious cost to many clubs. The vast majority of the GAA's revenue is re-invested in the Association but the feeling is that this revenue does not trickle down to the grass roots.

This view is not entirely true. For example, Comhairle Laighean disperses club grants on an annual basis throughout the province, with the purchase of land a priority. Other club development grants are allocated at a lower percentage of total development cost and this allocation is looked upon as a bonus by clubs, when successful, and in most cases does not form part of their decision making as to whether they proceed or not with a development.

The Comhairle Laighean Coaching and Games programme is another area that benefits from the dispersal of revenue and is an efficient and professional operation that has done outstanding work at all levels with the resources at its disposal. The proposed East Leinster Coaching Project will prove hugely beneficial and was enthusiastically welcomed by clubs in this area and will provide greater interaction at club level.

As mentioned insurance costs have become an ever increasing worry for club officers, and especially in rural clubs it is one of the big outlays. This scheme is heavily subsidised by Cumann Lúthchleas Gael.

Despite the examples mentioned, there is a feeling of disconnect in many cases and a view that there is a top down approach, instead of bottom up. The needs of a province the size of Leinster with over half of the population of the state residing here are great and the reality is that clubs need help, not always financial.

The lack of fundraising & sponsorship opportunities encountered by rural clubs was another area highlighted. As costs continue to rise the more urbanised and successful clubs have a greater ability to attract sponsorship from a broader commercial base while the rural club continues to depend on the local shop or pub, who themselves are coming under increased pressure. Other funding streams, such as LEADER etc., needs to be explored and the importance of ensuring a sustainable GAA club to enhance the social and cultural wellbeing of the rural community must be promoted to help unlock such funding avenues.

Games

The importance of having a proper competition and fixtures structure in place in order to be successful in retaining players is vital.

- It is necessary to provide a games programme that is:
 - Meaningful
 - Competitive
 - Attractive
 - Providing a sufficient number of games
 - Operated in line with the fixtures schedule
 - Complemented by appropriate levels of coaching

Leinster GAA's Cross-County fixtures initiative has been an important addition to providing a meaningful games programme and will help to raise standards. The 'buy-in' and enthusiasm shown by so many clubs at this early stage of the programme is really encouraging and the putting in place a competition structure to align both county and cross county competitions is important.

It should also be noted that one of the issues raised in our discussions is the impact that Inter-County competitions are having on club fixtures, whether clubs have a county player or not. It is important to provide all our players with regular games in a well organised manner.

Facilities

The provision of facilities was put forward as a huge strength of the GAA by all in our discussions and we felt it important to note this in our report. Sometimes we take for granted the work of club members and communities, both past and present, in providing excellent facilities in every town, village and parish. In the rural communities the GAA Club is the 'Community Centre', the focal point of the community. This shows the importance of a strong and vibrant GAA club, not just to the sporting needs of the community but as importantly to its social and cultural wellbeing. We must continue to maintain and develop our facilities but we also must lobby at governmental level, both local and national to ensure a community structure that is capable of maintaining the GAA club and the facilities it provides.

4. Rural Housing Policy

In the course of the workshop, members expressed the view that the rural planning policy was militating against club development, in regard to regulations controlling the development of housing, including single houses. This subject is examined in brief in this section of the report.

The more urbanised we become as a province the more our Rural Communities will be subjected to increased stringent guidelines in relation to 'Rural Housing Policy'.

Some counties as mentioned previously in this report are subject to strict guidelines presently and this will only increase in the future and affect all counties to varying degrees.

The Governments Planning Guidelines on Rural Housing entitled *Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines for Planning Authorities, April 2005* states as follows:

- People who are part of the rural community should be facilitated by the planning system in all rural areas, including those under strong urban-based pressures
- Anyone wishing to build a house in rural areas suffering persistent and substantial population decline will be accommodated
- The development of the rural environs of major urban areas, including the gateways and hubs identified in the National Spatial Strategy and county and other larger towns over 5000 in population needs to be carefully managed in order to assure their orderly development and successful functioning into the future

The Guidelines also state that Rural Housing Policy requires acknowledgement of the role that people living in both small towns and villages and the wider countryside have to play in supporting a dynamic rural economy and social structure. Reversing population decline by accommodating new development contributes to sustainability by helping to deliver strong social and economic benefits to rural areas. Such benefits can be maximised by locating new rural housing development as closely as is conveniently possible to essential local services and community facilities. Those rural areas experiencing substantial and persistent population decline risk losing the level of population necessary to sustain essential services such as schools, local shops and sporting clubs leading to difficulties in supporting a vibrant social structure.

Planning authorities are requested to aim to acknowledge the importance of encouraging development needed to sustain and renew established rural communities in both smaller rural towns and villages and wider countryside areas, and to tailor planning policies to respond to these differing local circumstances. Two categories of rural housing applicants are identified in the guidelines as follows:

Persons who are an intrinsic part of the rural community

Such persons will normally have spent substantial periods of their lives, living in rural areas as members of the established rural community.

Persons working full-time or part-time in rural areas

Such circumstances will normally encompass persons involved in full-time farming, forestry, inland waterway or marine related occupations, as well as part time occupations where the predominant occupation is farming/natural resource related. Such circumstances could also encompass persons whose work is intrinsically linked to rural areas such as teachers in rural schools or other persons whose work predominantly takes place within rural areas.

County Development Plan Policies

The County Development Plan is the main public statement of planning policies for the local community and county. It sets out a range of land use objectives and policies to be applied by the local planning authority, for a six year period. The plan consists of a written statement of objectives and a map or series of maps. The County Development Plan has been described as the blueprint for the planning and development of the county for a six year period. It is within this document that policies in relation to rural housing for the local area are set out. All planning applications are measured against the development plan to assess their conformity with the plan's objectives and development permitted must normally be in accordance with the plan. Following consideration of a draft plan and any submissions on the draft made by individuals, interested parties and community groups, the plan is formally adopted by the elected Councillors and becomes the official Development Plan for the area.

In all Counties separate and more restrictive policies apply to areas of high amenity, or environmental sensitivity eg: Wicklow Uplands, Brú na Bóinne, Co. Meath, the Coastal areas of County Wexford, Louth & Wicklow. The extent of these areas varies from County to County. Common to all plans is a reference to the Planning Authority supporting applications made on the basis of personal health conditions and also by returning emigrants.

In general those Counties within the commuter area of Dublin such as Wicklow, Kildare, parts of County Meath that are experiencing the most development pressure have more stringent requirements for one-off rural housing. Policy in these areas is to direct what is termed urban generated housing to areas zoned for new housing development in towns and villages in the area of their development plans. In most plans, the Counties are classified into sub-areas on the basis of development pressure, eg:- close to large towns or urban areas where more stringent requirements apply, and the areas of lesser development pressure. Within some counties areas identified as structurally weak or experiencing population decline e.g. Longford, Westmeath, Laois Offaly, parts of Meath –a favourable approach is taken to applications for single houses, subject to standard planning requirements. Policies in all plans accord a weighting to the existence of continuing close family ties with rural communities but however tend to differ markedly in regard to maximum acceptable distances from the local rural area to which the family connection applies. Relevant extracts from each of the County Development Plans in the province are attached (*Appendix 3*).

It is important that County Boards, supported by Leinster GAA are actively engaged with the County Development Plan process in each county to ensure our communities remain vibrant. The sustainability and survival of the rural GAA Club is not just vital to the sporting needs of the community they serve but as mentioned previously, a rural GAA Clubs survival, or not, will have an impact on the entire community and on a range of other clubs or services in an area such as Active Retirement Groups, ICA, Walking Groups etc.

5. Demographic Change v GAA Change

We have already looked at the population trends that have occurred in the province in more recent times, now we are going to look at what has actually happened in terms of Demographic Change versus GAA Change to determine if the GAA has grown with the population increase.

We have delved a little further back in time and have looked at the census figures for the province from 1971 compared to the 2016 figures (fig. 6).

Figure 6

| Population 1971 v 2016 | | | |
|--|----------------|------------------|-------------|
| County | 1971 | 2016 | % increase |
| Kildare | 66,404 | 222,130 | 235% |
| Kilkenny | 60,463 | 99,118 | 64% |
| Laois | 44,595 | 84,732 | 90% |
| Longford | 28,989 | 40,810 | 41% |
| Louth | 69,519 | 128,375 | 85% |
| Meath | 67,323 | 194,942 | 190% |
| Offaly | 51,717 | 78,003 | 51% |
| Westmeath | 52,900 | 88,396 | 67% |
| Wexford | 83,437 | 149,605 | 79% |
| Wicklow | 60,428 | 142,332 | 136% |
| Leinster Total (exc. Dublin) | 619,368 | 1,285,318 | 108% |

We also asked each County Board (with the exception of Dublin) a number of questions to ascertain the situation in relation to club numbers over the last forty years and projections for the future:

1. Question: Has the number of adult clubs increased (or decreased) in the last forty years and if so how many?

Answer: There are at least 20 clubs less in the province (outside of Dublin) after having either disbanded or amalgamated in the last forty years.

2. Question: Are there any clubs in your county that you fear will disband or will have to amalgamate in the next 10 to 15 years and if so how many?

Answer: The returns showed that the possibility of losing over 30 clubs in the province in the next 10 to 15 years is very high.

3. Question: Is there a realistic chance of a new club being formed in your county in the next 10 to 15 years?

Answer: The view is that there is no realistic chance of a new club being formed in the next 10 to 15 years.

Team Registrations figures 2010 v 2016

The committee looked at the official figures in relation to team registrations, comparing 2010 versus 2016 (figure 7). In total there were 123 less teams registered in 2016 compared to 2010 and 144 less if you include Dublin.

It should also be noted that the Under 21 team figures were not included in this as we felt it would skew the figures somewhat and show an even greater decline in team numbers.

It should also be remembered that the 2010 figures occurred in the midst of the economic downturn and despite the reduction in emigration since that time there has still been a continuous decline in team numbers registered in the intervening years.

- The figures above are actual registration figures but the reality of the situation is far worse as between 25%-40% of adult teams registered for secondary competitions in some counties either failed to take part or did not complete their programme of fixtures in 2016.

Some reasons for the decline in adult team numbers were put down to:

- A lack of player numbers
- The cost of Players Injury Scheme
- Rules etc.

In the environment we now find ourselves in, the main purpose of the secondary adult competitions should be the development of the player, team and club, to help player retention and increase participation. New and amended rules, along with mindset change will be needed to make this possible.

Figure 7

| Adult Teams Registrations 2010 v 2016 | | | |
|--|-------------|-------------|-------------------|
| County | 2010 | 2016 | Difference |
| Carlow | 63 | 55 | -8 |
| Dublin | 299 | 278 | -21 |
| Kildare | 134 | 119 | -15 |
| Kilkenny | 116 | 111 | -5 |
| Laois | 128 | 111 | -17 |
| Longford | 57 | 37 | -20 |
| Louth | 86 | 79 | -7 |
| Meath | 153 | 148 | -5 |
| Offaly | 113 | 91 | -22 |
| Westmeath | 95 | 95 | 0 |
| Wexford | 190 | 168 | -22 |
| Wicklow | 94 | 92 | -2 |
| Leinster Totals | 1528 | 1384 | -144 |

The figures for youth team registration during the 2010 to 2016 period (fig 8) were also compiled and shows an increase of 411 teams in that period and 941 if you include Dublin. This is a positive outcome and reflects the increase in population but the vast majority of this increase has taken place in the large urban areas where there is a huge fall off in participation from 12-14 age group, after Go Games, and from 16-18 years.

The lack of facilities in these areas and the knock on affect of clubs not having the capacity to field teams is not the main reason for this drop off but is certainly a contributory factor. This highlights the need to develop facilities in these areas.

The contrast between the urban clubs, who are unable to cope with numbers and the rural clubs, whose survival is threatened, is one of the greatest challenges for the GAA. How can we use the vast numbers in the urban areas to help sustain the neighbouring rural club?

Figure 8

| Youth Team Registrations 2010 v 2016 | | | |
|--------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| County | 2010 | 2016 | Difference |
| Carlow | 150 | 82 | +32 |
| Dublin | 990 | 1520 | +530 |
| Kildare | 491 | 696 | +205 |
| Kilkenny | 460 | 432 | -28 |
| Laois | 270 | 362 | +92 |
| Longford | 130 | 167 | +37 |
| Louth | 381 | 369 | -12 |
| Meath | 546 | 600 | +54 |
| Offaly | 173 | 208 | +35 |
| Westmeath | 258 | 250 | -8 |
| Wexford | 541 | 560 | +19 |
| Wicklow | 280 | 265 | -15 |
| Leinster Totals | 4670 | 5611 | +941 |

Ladies Football and Camogie

The increased female participation in Ladies Football and Camogie over the past decade in particular should be seen as a major positive to the progression of our association. This involvement has increased our facility needs in some areas as mentioned on a number of occasions in our consultation process but the enthusiasm and energy brought to clubs who have embraced the Ladies games and the 'One Club' model was put forward as one of the main strengths and opportunities that exists.

The ever increasing female involvement in volunteering, administration and coaching in our clubs should be continually promoted and encouraged.

Diversity

We have mentioned earlier about the diversity of the province, not just rural v urban but in many cases rural v rural. The following example is worthwhile mentioning.

St. Columba's GAA Club, Mullinalaghta, Co. Longford won their first Longford Senior Football title in 66 years in 2016 and went on to defeat Stradbally and St. Lomans to reach the Leinster Senior Football semi-final. In the Semi-Final they were defeated by St. Vincents of Dublin by 2-12 to 0-11. St. Vincents went on to win the title. The club amalgamates with Abbeylara for underage purposes and have won numerous titles in recent years. They also have a successful Ladies Football section.

The story of Mullinalaghta is quite remarkable. You could say that they're a small island of their own in north Longford, bounded by Lough Gowna and the River Erne to the west and north, County Cavan to the east, and cut off from the rest of Longford by the River Clooneen to the south.

The area is made up of just 11 townlands in total, half of a parish that straddles the Cavan border, and has a population of little more than 400. The National School that feeds the club has 39 pupils. The inward migration witnessed in many parts of the province has not occurred here.

Mullinalaghta GAA Club utilise their resources to the full. The club school link is maximised, it needs to be for survival, with players past and present giving of their time in a well oiled coaching structure with every child playing Gaelic games. Representing St. Columbas GAA Club, Mullinalaghta is more than representing a club, it is representing your community, your family, the past, present and future. When they won the County Title in October their first stop was at Mullinalaghta Graveyard to remember and honour the club-men, all who have passed away, who last won the championship in 1950.

We should not take clubs like Mullinalaghta for granted and be conscious that a small negative change in population, a loss of a strong participating family or families or the loss of an influential, club officer, coach or teacher could have a catastrophic effect on a club of this size.

In contrast to the Mullinalaghta story we looked at the highly populated North East of Kildare, in the greater Dublin 'Commuter Belt'. There are eight clubs in this region with Celbridge, Confey, Leixlip, Maynooth and Kilcock classified as urban, while Straffan, Ardclough and Rathcoffey are designated rural, despite their proximity to the vast urban area. The overall population of this area has exploded in the last few decades but the rural clubs, because of Government planning policy and circumstance, have not grown in recent years and amalgamate at underage level. Ardclough in particular, a dual club with a great tradition and fine facilities, in recent years have found themselves unable to field in the primary football competitions at adult level, regressing to the secondary competition, due to lack of numbers.

In the area as a whole 8,200 children attend primary school with Straffan NS contributing 284 of this total, Rathcoffey NS, 211 and Ardclough NS, 270. On the face of it you would imagine that all three clubs should have sufficient numbers to field independently at underage and have a successful adult structure. The reality is that a huge percentage of those attending

these schools are coming from the adjacent urban areas and are not local to the community. There is also a large percentage who are committed to other sports firstly or to no sporting activity at all.

Looking at this area as a whole in more detail and the 17/18 age group in particular, clubs were asked what in their view were participation numbers at Minor football level. From the club numbers it was calculated that the participation rate at this level is 21% but on closer scrutiny the situation was far different when compared to actual minor team participation in the area.

The eight clubs in the North East area were represented by six and a half minor teams in the League – Celbridge, Confey, Leixlip, Maynooth, Kilcock, St. Edwards & Killard (Kill/Ardclough) – Kill’s numbers were not used as they are in Greater Naas area. It was assumed that each team had an average of 13 exclusive minors giving 6.5 teams x 13 exclusive minors ie: 86 players or only 9% of the total.

Figure 9 below summarises the findings:

Figure 9

| | Total 17/18 Year Old Population | Participating | % Participating |
|--|---------------------------------|---------------|-----------------|
| No’s given by Clubs | 924 | 199 | 21% |
| No’s based on actual Minor Football League Participation | 924 | 86 | 9% |

As can be seen from the above table the club’s view of the participation rate at minor level is far greater than reality. The assumption of 13 exclusive minors per team may also be questioned as it is perhaps calculating on the high side, meaning that even the 9% participation rate at this age group is more than likely too high.

6. Conclusion & Recommendation

The demographic and social change that has occurred in the province in the last number of decades and in particular during the 'Celtic Tiger' years has had a major affect on all aspects of life in the Province and the GAA has not been insulated from this change.

- This Committee was tasked with looking at the current state of our rural clubs but from our findings it is very apparent that, in a Leinster context, the rural GAA Club cannot be dealt with in isolation. The need to look at both the rural and urban situation in tandem is crucial to the advancement of all clubs.
- The need to look at the situation on a county by county basis is also important so as to micro-manage the situation as 'One size does not fit all'.

Future projections point to a continued dramatic increase in population in the province (500,000 increase projected in the next fifteen years) with the continued increase in economic activity, particularly in the Greater Dublin area, acting as a magnet for this increased growth. We pose the question - what percentage of this increase in population will be become involved in the association either as a player, official or supporter?

Government planning policy will dictate that this increased population will be resident in areas where services are available, increasing the population of our towns, increasing urbanisation. Government policy will also dictate that Rural Housing Policy guidelines will become stricter, reducing the rural population in all counties. As it stands the GAA will continue to lose clubs, becoming less and less relevant in the province.

Urbanisation is not just a phenomenon of Dublin and the commuter belt. All counties have large urban areas that will form a greater percentage of each counties population as the years progress. This very fact is a major challenge for the GAA in Leinster, and CLG needs to respond strategically to this challenge.

The need to actively build on, and establish in some cases, constructive and positive relationships with stakeholders outside of the organisation, such as the education sector, Local Authority sector, other statutory bodies and the political establishment in general is crucial.

We will need to be very proactive and inventive to develop and grow Cumann Lúthchleas Gael in the province and we will need to influence policy at all levels to ensure the survival of many of our rural clubs.

- We have found that despite the huge population increase in the province in the last forty years that we now have lost at least a twenty clubs, outside of Dublin, in that time.

As an organisation are we concerned about this?

- We have found that despite our huge population increase, along with projections of similar growth in the coming years that our Association is projecting the loss of a further 30 clubs in the next ten to fifteen years.

As an organisation are we concerned about this?

- We have also found that despite our huge population increase, along with projections of similar population growth in the coming years the view from around the province is that there is no realistic chance of a new club being formed, outside of Dublin, in the next ten to fifteen years.

As an organisation are we concerned about this?

There is an urgent need for resources to be put in place to help the grassroots of the association. Many club volunteers are tired and lack motivation, many club volunteers are engrossed in ensuring that the everyday financial needs of their clubs are met, instead of being able to focus on the primary purpose of the club.

The 'East Leinster' coaching project and the Cross County competitions, put in place by Comhairle Laighean, are excellent examples of initiatives that will act as a catalyst to help clubs retain players and increase participation and we need to continue to develop, expand and resource initiatives such as this.

We must also remember that helping the grassroots in the province will need more than just Comhairle Laighean intervention. The population of Leinster is now over 55% of the total population of the state and the growth, development and success of the GAA in the province is vital to the growth of the association as a whole.

The reality is that we have been, and continue to be, the biggest sporting organisation in the country and perhaps because of this we have become complacent. Continued complacency will be detrimental to our association.

The Rural Communities Workgroup recommends that Comhairle Laighean adopt the findings of this report and agree to prioritize addressing the issues raised in relation to club wellbeing and development in the province. These issues are discussed in detail in the main body of the document and may be summarised as follows:

- No new clubs will be formed in the next fifteen years
- Over 20 less clubs in 2016 compared to 1971
- The possibility of over 30 clubs either amalgamating or disbanding in the next 15 years
- 144 less teams registered in 2016 compared to 2010
- Up to 40% of teams in secondary competition either failing to play in, or complete, fixtures programme in 2016
- The population of the 11 counties outside of Dublin has increased by 108% since 1971
- 55% of the State's population are now resident in Leinster
- Estimated 500,000 increase in population by 2031
- The diversity is not only between urban and rural clubs but also between many rural clubs
- The province is becoming more urbanised and less rural

- Pockets of de-population still exist in some counties
- Rural and urban issues are interlinked
- Sense of community diminishes the more urbanised we become
- A strong Club/School link is vital to the survival or progress of clubs
- Tired and unmotivated volunteers in many clubs
- The affect that Rural Housing Policy is having on GAA Clubs
- The lack of fundraising and sponsorship opportunities in rural clubs
- Some rules/bye-laws are hindering participation
- The need for a meaningful games programme
- One size does not fit all
- Allegiance to and relevance of the GAA has diminished in many rural areas

The Rural Communities Workgroup also recommend that Comhairle Laighean put a committee in place to address the issues raised. The composition of this committee will be critical to achieving the goals and objectives necessary to ensure the survival of many rural clubs and the increase of GAA participation in the province as a whole.

The committee should include members with expertise in the following areas:

- Club Development
- Coaching
- Governance
- Understanding & analysing demographic trends
- Knowledge of Local Authority planning
- Rules/Bye-Laws
- Funding
- Games
- Schools
- Community Development
- Building partnerships

Full SWOT Analysis Findings

Strengths

- Opportunity for all to play
- Good underage structures
- Player retention
- Club School link
- Heroes - ex & current Inter-County players (role models)
- Focal point – facilities
- Sense of community - Identity - tradition - spirit
- Lack of competing sports
- Strong Committee structure
- Local Sponsorship
- Defined Catchment Areas
- Tribalism
- Primary Community Organisation
- Facilities
- Strong School Links
- Good relationship with Ladies Football and
- Involvement of Camogie/Ladies football
- Rules/Bye Laws to help Rural Clubs
- Go Games – Clubs partake individually
- Well structured amalgamations
- Club Committee Structure
- Scór
- County Player – Used to increase profile of club

Opportunities

- Grants/Sponsorship
- Non-GAA Development, eg: Walking Track
- Good amalgamations
- Officer Training
- Planning
- Employment Schemes
- County Development Plans
- Facility generating income and new members
- Rule & Bye Law changes
- Cross County Club Games
- Social membership
- Go Games
- Independent small sided teams
- Land availability at reasonable cost
- Club School Links
- Sense of Community
- Growth of School numbers
- Integration with L.G.F.A. and Camogie
- Utilise expertise in Clubs – people
- Attract new members
- Underage Structures – collaboration with Adults
- New industry
- Rules to attract urban population to Rural Clubs
- Cul Camps
- Better communication

Weaknesses

- Amalgamations- sometimes the easy option
- Recruitment - Not maximising potential if adjacent to urban centre
- Suitable Volunteers e.g. for Club/School Link
- Co Board Delegates not relaying information
- Playing at lower grades – Lack of success
- Employment – Emigration – Housing – 3rd Level
- Fixtures
- Lack of population
- Lack of sponsorship and funding opportunities
- Small pool of volunteers
- Lack of numbers for 2nd teams
- Availability of County Players
- Lack of communication to underage
- Poor retention of ex-players
- Facilities
- Lack of 'GAA Teachers'
- National School determines Club-numbers
- Governance
- Rules – Lack of knowledge
- 'Females Not Welcome' perception in some cases
- Planning Laws
- 'Closed Shop' perception

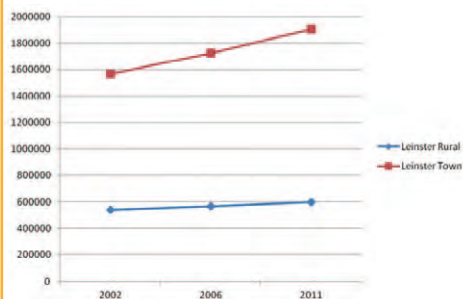
Threats

- Attraction of large urban Clubs
- Lack of Finance
- Gap between Juvenile and Senior Level
- Closed Shop attitude /Strong Personalities
- Discipline – Mentors
- Lack of "G.A.A. Teachers"
- Emigration
- Unemployment
- Ourselves
- Leaving for 3rd Level Education
- School closures
- H & S Compliance – Increased regulation
- Drive for professionalism
- Other Sports
- Depopulation
- Failure to promote 'One Club' Model
- Lack of Club Planning
- Planning Regulation
- Rule Book – Club Constitution
- Shortage of Volunteers
- Lack of numbers at one age
- Poor fixture planning
- Coach Burn Out
- Stale Officers
- Dual Clubs in terms of decision-making
- Underage Rules

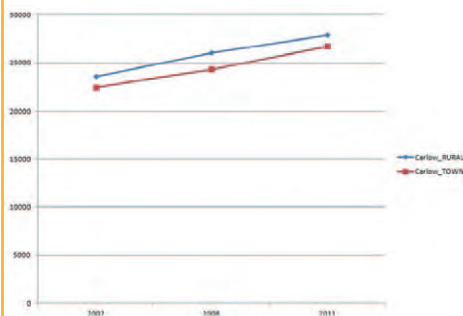
APPENDIX 2

Leinster Rural – Urban Divide 2002–2011

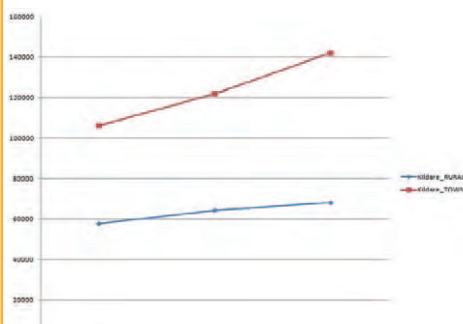
Leinster



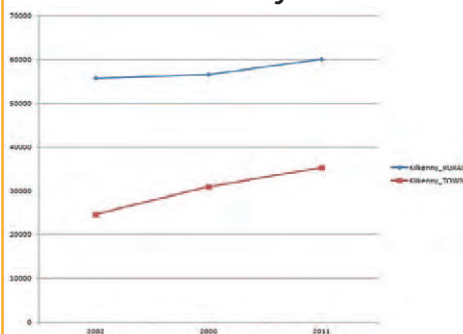
Carlow



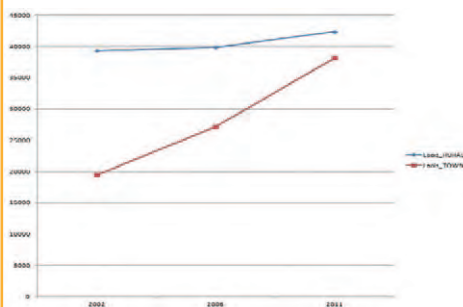
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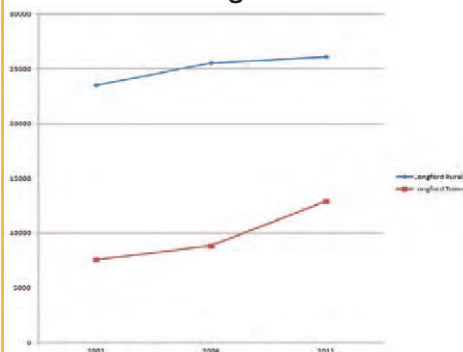
Kilkenny



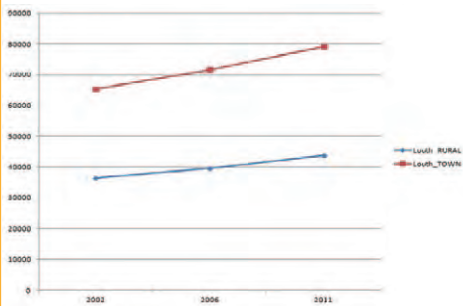
Laois



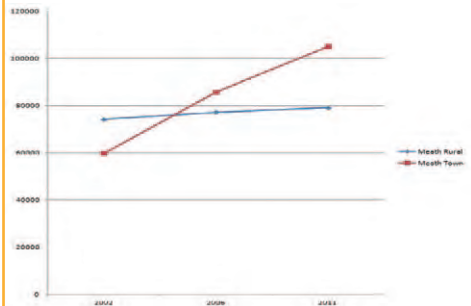
Longford



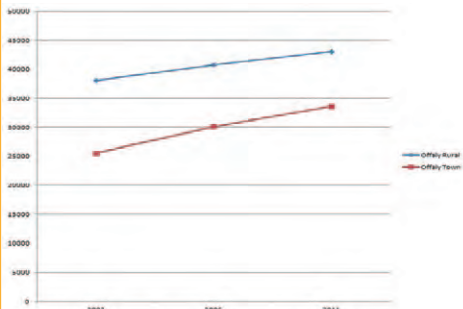
Louth



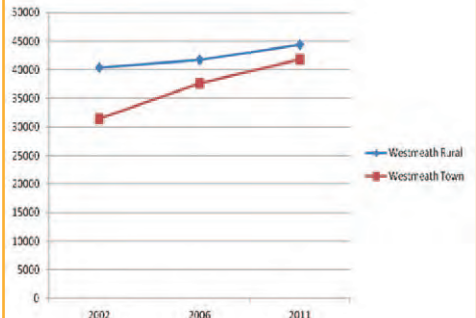
Meath



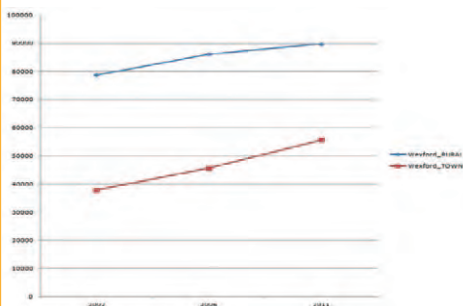
Offaly



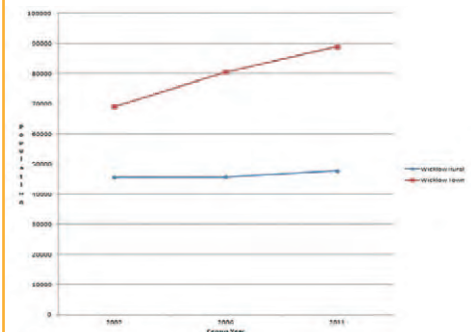
Westmeath

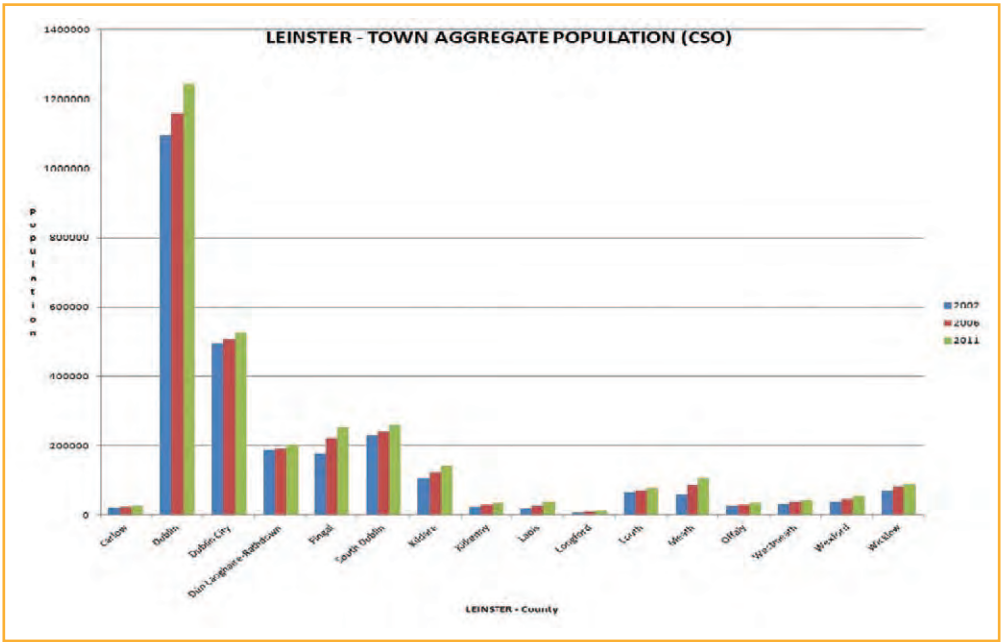
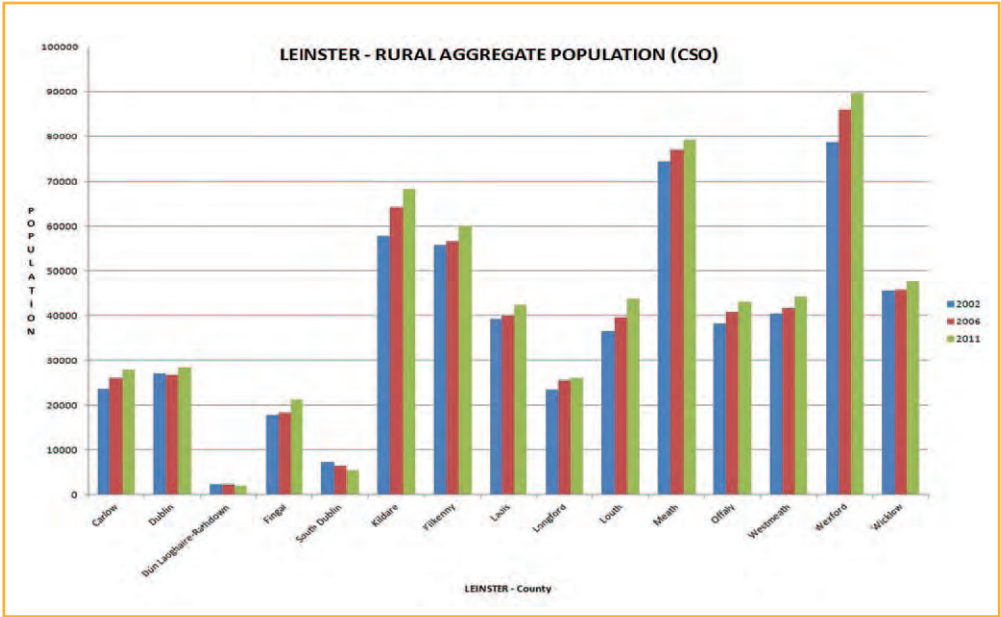


Wexford



Wicklow





Carlow County Development Plan 2015-2021

2.7.1.3 One-off Housing in the Countryside

The Council recognises the need to maintain vibrant rural communities and respond effectively to the rural generated housing needs of the people of Carlow. It shall be the policy of Carlow County Council to facilitate the development of one off rural housing throughout the county by persons demonstrating local rural generated housing needs. In this regard positive presumption will be given to the building of rural dwellings by persons in the following categories:

- a) The dwelling will be for the persons own occupation and is required having regard to housing need and the applicants wish to live in the local area
- b) Good practice has been demonstrated in relation to site location and access, drainage and design
- c) Those who can satisfy the Planning Authority of their commitment to operate a full-time business from their proposed home in a rural area. The applicants must outline how their business will contribute to and enhance the rural community and that they satisfy the Planning Authority that the nature of their employment or business is compatible with those specified in the local needs criteria for rural areas
- d) Identify existing Extraction Industry sites in relation to proposed rural housing sites
- e) The development of one-off rural housing will be subject to appropriate assessment in accordance with Article 6 of the Habitats Directive.

2.7.1.4 Persons who are an intrinsic part of the rural community

Such persons will normally have spent a substantial part of their lives living as members of an established local rural community and/or can demonstrate strong family ties with the local community. Examples include:

- Immediate family member of an existing householder/ landowner who is intrinsically linked to the area to include son, daughter, mother, father, sister, brother, wishing to build a permanent home for their own use in the local area
- 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
- Persons who were born and lived for substantial parts of their lives in a specific rural area who then moved away and who wish to return to their home places (returning migrants)
- An immigrant returning to their local area seeking to build a house for his/her own use not as speculation
- A son or daughter, or niece/nephew considered to merit the same position as son/daughter within the law (i.e. when the uncle/aunt has no children of his/her own) of a permanent native resident of a rural area, who can demonstrate a definable social or economic need to live in the area in which the proposal relates and not as speculation
- Persons living in rented accommodation who have been resident in the local rural area for a period not less than 3 years
- Persons wishing to downsize for his/her own use and not as speculation in the rural area in which they currently reside must:

- Have lived in their current residence for a period of not less than 10 years
- Demonstrate a reasonable need to downsize e.g. certain medical conditions
- Demonstrate non-availability of alternative suitable accommodation in the immediate rural area in which they are currently residing
- Demonstrate the unsuitability in adapting the current residence to suit their need for downsizing
- Submit proposals outlining the future use of the existing place of residence

Should persons demonstrate the need to downsize in accordance with the above requirements applications will only be considered for properties that have a reduction of 35% in floor area in comparison to the applicants existing place of residence. Persons wishing to upsize for his/her own use and not as speculation in the rural area in which they currently reside must:

- Have lived in their current residence for a period of not less than 10 years
- Demonstrate a reasonable need to upsize e.g. certain medical conditions
- Demonstrate non-availability of alternative suitable accommodation in the immediate rural area in which they are currently residing
- Demonstrate inability to increase the floor area of the current residence

Documentary proof will be required to be submitted with applications to show compliance with the above policies.

Three years shall be deemed to be the minimum period of residency necessary in order to be considered a member of the local community. The term local shall be construed for assessment purposes as within a radius of circa 8 km.

2.7.1.5 Persons Residing in Bordering Counties

Applications from persons in neighbouring counties who reside within a 3km radius of the Carlow County border maybe considered subject to compliance with the following:

- Must reside in their current rural area/place of residence of the neighbouring county for a period of not less than 10 consecutive years
- The intended area of residence must be within 5km of the Carlow County boundary and must be within 8km radius from the existing place of residence
- Demonstrate compliance with other requirements of the rural housing policy as set out above 2.7.1.6

Persons working full time or part time in rural areas

Consideration will be given to the persons demonstrating the following circumstances:

- A person whose principal occupation is in agriculture and who owns and farms lands in the immediate vicinity of the site
- An immediate family member i.e. son or daughter of a person who is employed in agriculture in the immediate vicinity of the site
- Persons who are fulltime farmers or employed fulltime in other rural based activity such as horticulture, forestry, bloodstock,

farming, agri-tourism or other rural-based activity in which they wish to build or whose employment is intrinsically linked to the rural area in which they wish to build

- Persons working fulltime or part-time on a permanent basis in a specific rural area and who has resided in the immediate area for at least 3 consecutive years prior to the application who by the nature of the work need to be close to the workplace and/ or their employment provides a service to the local community. Examples include agricultural contractors providing services to the local rural area or teachers in rural schools
- Persons whose work is intrinsically linked to the local rural area and who can prove a definable social and economic need to live in the rural area and who has resided in the immediate area for at least 3 consecutive years prior to the application. Examples include medical and veterinary services
- The Council seeks to facilitate the development of rural enterprises such as the alternative use of redundant agricultural buildings for workshops operating at the micro enterprise level. The Council may also therefore have regard to the housing needs relating to small rural or cottage type micro enterprises including arts, crafts, woodwork etc. In considering the latter regard will be had to inter alia the location, size, scale and nature of the enterprise and its related building requirements. Medium to large scale enterprises in terms of building size requirements and / or employment numbers are not generally considered appropriate for location in the open countryside

- The Council may also consider on a case by case basis persons whose employment type is such that they are most suitably accommodated in the rural area

Documentary proof will be required to be submitted with applications to show compliance with the above policies. Minimum employment period of 3 years shall be deemed necessary and the term local shall be construed for assessment purposes as within a radius of circa 8km

2.7.1.7 Social/Community, Medical and Personal Circumstances

Under certain circumstances consideration may be given to applicants who can demonstrate a social/community, medical, or personal need as outlined below:

- Permanent native resident who has to dispose of their dwelling on foot of a court order following a divorce or legal separation
- A close relative who has inherited, either as a gift or on death, an agricultural holding or site for his/her own purposes and not for speculation and who can demonstrate a definable social and/or economic need to live in the area to which the proposal relates
- Any persons wishing to live adjacent to immediate family members (son, daughter, mother, father, sister, brother) to provide care and support or vice versa

Documentary proof will be required to be submitted with applications to show compliance with the above policies.

Such circumstances could also encompass persons whose work is intrinsically linked to rural areas such as teachers in rural schools or other persons whose work predominantly takes place in rural areas.

Strong Rural Areas

- a) the application is being made by a long term landowner or his/her son or daughter seeking to build their first home on the family lands; or
- b) the applicant is working in rural activities and for this reason needs to be accommodated near their place of work; or
- c) the application is being made by a local rural person(s) who for family and/or work reasons wish to live in the local rural area in which they have spent a substantial period of their lives (minimum 5 years) and are seeking to build their first home in the local rural area.

Structurally Weak Rural Areas

To help stem decline and strengthen structurally weak areas, it is an objective of the Council that in general, any demand for permanent residential development should be accommodated, subject to meeting normal planning and environmental criteria.

A local rural person is a person who is living or has lived in the local rural area for a minimum of 5 years prior to making the planning application except for a local rural person living within areas of strong urban influence, in which case the qualifying criterion is 10 years the local rural area for the purpose of this policy is defined as the area generally within 10km of the applicants family home.

Laois County Development Plan

The key development plan objectives in these areas seeks to facilitate the genuine housing requirements of the rural community as identified by the planning authority in the light of local conditions while on the other hand directing urban generated development to areas zoned for new housing development in towns and villages

Rural Areas Under Strong Urban Influence

It is an objective of the Council only to permit single houses in the area under strong urban influence to facilitate those with a local rural housing need in the area, in particular those that have lived in an rural area. In order to demonstrate a genuine rural housing need, any of the following criteria shall be met:

- a) the application is being made by a long term landowner or his/her son or daughter seeking to build their first home on the family lands; or
- b) the applicant is engaged in working the family farm and the house is for that persons own use; or
- c) the applicant is working in rural activities and for this reason needs to be accommodated near their place of work; or
- d) the application is being made by a local rural person(s) who have spent a substantial period of their life (minimum 10 years) living in the local rural area, and, who for family and/ or work reasons need to live in the rural area

3 Such rural activities will normally encompass persons involved in full time farming, forestry, inland waterways or marine related occupations as well as part time occupations where the predominant occupation is farming/ natural resource related.

Offaly County Council Development Plan 2014-2020

Rural Housing in the Open Countryside Rural Housing Design

SSP-17 It is Council policy to encourage and promote quality design, appropriate scale, form, informed siting, quality materials and finishes and to incorporate where possible and practicable, the best principles and mechanisms for sustainability and energy efficiency. In addition, it is also Council policy to ensure that, notwithstanding compliance with the local need criteria, applicants comply with all other normal siting and design considerations including the following:

- The protection of features that contribute to local attractiveness including: landscape features, historic and archaeological landscapes, water bodies, ridges, skylines, topographical features, geological features and important views and prospects.
- The capacity of the area to absorb further development. In particular, the following factors will be examined; the extent of existing ribbon development in the area, the degree of existing haphazard or piecemeal development in the area and the degree of development on a single original landholding.
- The ability to provide safe vehicular access to the site.
- The ability of a site in an unserviced area to accommodate an on-site waste water disposal system in accordance with the EPA Code of Practice for Wastewater Treatment Systems for Single Houses (2009), Source Protection Plans within the county, and any other relevant documents /legislation as may be introduced during the Plan period.
- The need to comply with the requirements of The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities published by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government in November 2009.

Rural Housing Policy – Local Need SSP-18

It is Council policy that within areas of the open countryside identified as a pressure area in Map 1.4: a positive presumption will be given towards a new single house for the permanent occupation of an applicant who falls within one or more of the 3 categories below and meets the necessary criteria.

Category 1: Local Rural Persons (a), (b) and (c)

The following 3 criteria arise in assessing applicants under this category: The applicant must come within the definition of a 'Local Rural Person' and the proposed site must be situated within their 'Local Rural Area' and the applicant must have a 'Local Rural Housing Need'

- A 'Local Rural Person' (applicant) is a person who was born within the local rural area, or who is living or has lived in the local rural area for a minimum of 5 years at any stage prior to making the planning application. It includes returning emigrants seeking a permanent home in their local rural area
- The 'Local Rural Area' for the purpose of this policy is defined as the area generally within a 8km radius of where the applicant was born, living or has lived. The rural area excludes all urban settlements contained with Tiers 1, 2, 3 and 4 of the settlement hierarchy).
- An applicant who satisfies a 'Local Rural Housing Need' is defined as a person who does not or has not ever owned a house in a rural area and has the need for a permanent dwelling for their own use.

Category 2: Persons Working Fulltime or Part-time in Rural Areas (a) or (b) Such persons shall be defined as persons who

by the nature of their work have a functional need to reside permanently in the rural area generally immediately adjacent to their place of work. Such circumstances will normally encompass persons involved in full-time farming, horticulture or forestry as well as similar part-time occupations where it can be demonstrated that it is the predominant occupation. Other cases will be dealt with on their own individual merits having regard to the intended spirit of the policy. In each case the applicant must not already own or have owned a house in the rural area.

Category 3: Exceptional Health Circumstances Having regard to the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government's 'Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines' (2005),

special consideration shall be given in limited cases of exceptional health circumstances - supported by relevant documentation from a registered medical practitioner and a disability organisation proving that a person requires to live in a particular environment or close to family support, or requires a close family member to live in close proximity to that person.

Policy: Rural Housing Policy for Areas of Special Control

SSP – 19 Having regard to the need to protect County Offaly's natural resources, environment, landscape and infrastructure, it is Council policy to consider a single dwelling for the permanent occupation of an applicant in Areas of Special Control where all of the following can be demonstrated:

1. Applicant must meet the criteria of one or more of the 3 categories of Policy SSP - 18 (Rural Housing Policy) and,
2. Applicant has a functional need to reside in this particular rural area,
3. Adequate measures are proposed which will ensure protection of the drinking water source from any deleterious effects of the development (source protection zones).
4. No alternative site is available outside the areas of special control and,
5. Applicant does not already own or has owned a house in a rural area.

Areas of special control include (Refer to Map 1.4):

- National/International Conservation Designations (SPA, SACs, NHAs).
- Areas of High Amenity.
- Source Protection Zones.
- Restricted Regional Roads (as per list set out in Chapter 4).

'Functional need' is defined as a need to reside at this particular location in exceptional circumstances to be outlined by the applicant or for the purposes of employment.

Policy: For Rural Housing in areas not under Rural Housing Development Pressure or within Areas of Special Control:

SSP-20 It is Council policy that within areas of the open countryside identified as being:

- NOT under Rural Housing Development Pressure (refer to Map 1.4), or
- NOT in an Area of Special Control (refer to Map 1.4 and SSP-19),

There will be a presumption in favour of applications for single houses by persons from within or outside these rural areas who seek a permanent dwelling and will therefore contribute to the social and economic well being of the area. It is the policy of the Planning Authority to prohibit speculative development in these areas. Any application for a single permanent dwelling must be made in the name of the person for whom it is intended and a condition will be attached to any permission granted requiring them to occupy the house in the first instance.

Meath County Development Plan 2013-2019

Area 1 - Rural Areas under Strong Urban Influence Key Challenge:

To facilitate the housing requirements of the rural community while directing urban generated housing development to areas zoned for new housing in towns and villages in the area of the development plan. This area exhibits the characteristics of proximity to the immediate environs or close commuting catchment of Dublin, with a rapidly rising population and evidence of considerable pressure for development of housing due to proximity to such urban areas. This area includes the commuter-belt and peri-urban areas of the county, and are the areas that are experiencing the most development pressure for one-off rural housing.

These areas act as attractive residential locations for the inflow of migrants into the county.

POLICIES – It is the policy of Meath County Council:

RD POL 1 To ensure that individual house developments in rural areas satisfy the housing requirements of persons who are an intrinsic part of the rural community in which they are proposed, subject to compliance with normal planning criteria.

RD POL 2 To facilitate the housing requirements of the rural community as identified while directing urban generated housing to areas zoned for new housing development in towns and villages in the area of the development plan.

RD POL 3 To protect areas falling within the environs of urban centres in this Area Type from urban generated and unsightly ribbon development and to maintain the identity of these urban centres.

Area 2 - Strong Rural Areas Key Challenge:

To maintain a reasonable balance between development activity in the extensive network of smaller towns and villages and housing proposals in the wider rural area. This area is underpinned primarily by relative levels of residential stability compared to Area Type 1 within a well developed town and village structure and in the wider rural area around them.

This stability is supported by a traditionally strong agricultural economic base and the level of individual housing development activity in these areas tends to be lower than that within Area Type 1 and confined to certain areas. This area type is to be found in rural areas along a spine from the north of the county east of and including Kells as far as Oldcastle. The environs of Athboy and Slane are also included in this category. This area has less of a tradition of urban settlement. It is under more moderate pressure for one off housing development than the areas under strong urban influence.

POLICIES – It is the policy of Meath County Council:

RD POL 4 To consolidate and sustain the stability of the rural population and to strive to achieve a balance between development activity in urban areas and villages and the wider rural area.

RD POL 5 To facilitate the housing requirements of the rural community as identified while directing urban generated housing to areas zoned for new housing development in towns and villages in the area of the development plan.

Area 3 - Low Development Pressure Areas Key Challenge:

To arrest population and economic decline. This area type covers much of the northwestern, western and south-western parts of the county. This area is associated with relatively high levels of residential stability above average percentages of family households and high rates of agricultural employment. In addition, it is characterised by the lowest average population densities. This

area has the weakest urban structure within the county and the rural housing policy applicable should reflect same.

POLICY – It is the policy of Meath County Council:

RD POL 6 To accommodate demand for permanent residential development as it arises subject to good practice in matters such as design, location and the protection of important landscapes and any environmentally sensitive areas.

10.4 Persons who are an Intrinsic Part of the Rural Community

The Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines outline that Planning Authorities, in formulating policies, recognise the importance to rural people of family ties and ties to a local area such as parish, townland or the catchment of local schools and **sporting clubs**. It also delivers positive benefits for rural areas and sustains rural communities by allowing people to build in their local areas on suitable sites.

Meath County Council will support proposals for individual dwellings on suitable sites in rural areas relating to natural resources type employment where the applicant can:

- Clearly demonstrate a genuine need for a dwelling on the basis that the applicant is significantly involved in agriculture. In these cases, it will be required that the applicant satisfy Meath County Council with supporting documentation that the nature of the agricultural activity, by reference to the area of land and/or the intensity of its usage, is sufficient to support full time or significant part time occupation. It is also considered that persons taking over the ownership and running of family farms and/or the sons and daughters of farmers would be considered within this category of local need. The applicant shall satisfy Meath County Council as to the significance of their employment. Where persons are employed in a part time capacity, the predominant occupation shall be farming / natural resource related. It should be noted that, where an applicant is also a local of the area, the onus of proof with regard to demonstrating the predominance of the agricultural or rural resource employment shall not normally be required;
- Clearly demonstrate their significant employment is in the bloodstock and equine industry, forestry, agri-tourism or horticulture sectors and who can demonstrate a need to live in a rural area in the immediate vicinity of their employment to carry out their work. In these cases, it will be required that the applicant satisfy Meath County Council with supporting documentation that the nature of the activity, by reference to the area of land and/or the intensity of its usage, is sufficient to support full time or significant part time occupation. The applicant shall satisfy Meath County Council as to the significance of their employment. Where persons are employed in a part time capacity, the predominant occupation shall be bloodstock and equine industry, forestry, agri-tourism or horticulture related. It should be noted that, where an applicant is also a local of the area, the onus of proof with regard to demonstrating the predominance of the agricultural or rural resource employment shall not normally be required.

Meath County Council recognises the interest of persons local to or linked to a rural area, who are not engaged in significant agricultural or rural resource related occupation, to live in rural areas. For the purposes of this policy section, persons local to an area are considered to include:

- Persons who have spent substantial periods of their lives, living in rural areas as members of the established rural community for a period in

excess of five years and who do not possess a dwelling or who have not possessed a dwelling in the past in which they have resided or who possess a dwelling in which they do not currently reside;

- Persons who were originally from rural areas and who are in substandard or unacceptable housing scenarios and who have continuing close family ties with rural communities such as being a mother, father, brother , sister, son, daughter, son-in-law, or daughter-in-law of a long established member of the rural community resident rurally for at least ten years;
- Returning emigrants who have lived for substantial parts of their lives in rural areas, then moved abroad and who now wish to return to reside near other family members, to work locally, to care for older members of their family or to retire, and;
- Persons, whose employment is rurally based, such as teachers in rural primary schools or whose work predominantly takes place within the rural area in which they are seeking to build their first home, or are suited to rural locations such as farmhands or trades-people and who have a housing need.

Meath County Council also recognises that exceptional health circumstances may require a person to live in a particular environment or close to family support. In such cases, the exceptional health circumstances would require supporting documentation

from a registered medical practitioner and a disability organisation supporting a planning application. In the absence of any significant environmental, access or traffic reasons for refusal and the proposal adheres to sensitive design and siting criteria, Meath County Council will consider granting planning permission, subject where appropriate to conditions regarding occupancy.

Where an applicant for a one off house in the countryside can demonstrate, by the submission of documentary evidence, that their original dwelling was sold due to unavoidable financial circumstances, such applications will be considered on their individual merits, where the applicant satisfies local housing need criteria. This consideration does not override the other normal assessment criteria as set out in this Development Plan for a one off house. Where an applicant has resided in a rural area for a considerable period of time, being a period of time in excess of the previous 10 consecutive years, in a dwelling attached to their business, such as farming, and the business inclusive of dwelling house is being sold for retirement or other circumstances, such applications will be considered on their individual merits, where the applicant satisfies local housing need criteria. Meath County Council will facilitate preplanning consultation in such circumstances.

Longford County Development Plan 2015-2021

3.2.2 Rural Areas

The Settlement Strategy contained at Section 2.1.6 of this document identifies a hierarchy of settlements within the County. The settlement strategy also acknowledges the rural nature of the County and the following section of this plan details objectives and policy for residential development within these areas.

The nature of the following policy with relation to residential development within rural areas is two-fold as defined below;

- a) Primarily outlined below are general policies (Section 3.2.2.1) for residential development within these areas in order to ensure the sustainability of rural communities and the surrounding landscape.
- b) Secondly requirements and standards for development (Section 3.2.2.2) within rural areas.

3.2.2.1 Rural Areas - General Policy and Objectives In general, residential developments in rural areas shall have cognisance of the following objectives and policies.

HOU RUR 1: Assessment of residential development in rural areas shall be guided by the suitability of the area in terms of its sensitivity, its ability to accommodate development in a sustainable manner and compliance with the relevant technical criteria.

HOU RUR 2: In terms of rural housing, Longford County Council recognises the need of applicants defined within policy CS 12 to locate in their own rural areas. These cases shall be assessed on their merits, with regard being had to ability of the applicant and/or proposed resident to provide, at their own expense, the services required to sustain the proposed development without detrimental impact on road safety, water quality, public health or environmental and landscape integrity

HOU RUR 3: Outside designated settlements and development envelopes, there shall be a presumption against extensive urban generated commuter development, ribbon development, development by persons who do not intend to use the dwelling as their primary residence and unsustainable, speculator driven residential units. In this respect, applicants for permission

for residential development in non-designated areas shall be required to submit a statement indicating the sustainability of the proposal, which shall form part of the assessment of the application for planning permission and in which shall be outlined

- a) The reason for the location of the proposed dwelling in a particular locality.
- b) The connection or close relationship between the applicant and/or proposed resident and the locality in which the proposed dwelling is to be situated and the criteria outlined in CS 12.
- c) The place of employment of the applicant and/or proposed resident where relevant
- d) A demonstration of the ability of the applicant and/or proposed resident to provide, at their own expense, the services required to sustain the proposed development without detrimental impact on road safety, water quality, public health, views and prospects, landscape, environmental integrity and amenity
- a) The following categories of applicant shall be considered for the development of housing in the rural area with a view towards sustaining rural communities:
 - Members of farm families, seeking to build on the family farm.
 - Landowners with reasonably sized farm holdings who wish to live on their land.
 - Members of the rural community in the immediate area, this includes returning emigrants or their children with remaining substantial family or community ties, who wish to permanently settle in the area.
 - Persons whose primary full or part-time employment is locally based or who are providing a service to the local community.
- b) Speculative and unsustainable urban generated housing development will be discouraged in the rural area.
- c) Occupancy Conditions may be attached in accordance with Ministerial Guidelines to protect the policy application and integrity.

Louth County Development Plan 2016-2021

2.19 One-Off Rural Housing Policy One-off housing refers to individually designed, detached houses primarily located on large unserviced sites in the open countryside. The overriding aim of the Council's approach to one-off houses in the countryside is guided by the Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines, 2005, DECLG wherein rural generated housing relates to those who have spent a substantial period of their lives living in a rural area as members of the established rural community. This approach seeks to accommodate, within rural areas, people who are functionally or socially part of the rural community and to resist demand for urban generated housing in the countryside.

Policy SS 18 To permit rural generated housing in order to support and sustain existing rural communities and to restrict urban generated housing in order to protect the visual amenities and resources of the countryside, subject to the local needs qualifying criteria as set out in Section 2.19.1 below.

2.19.1 Local Needs Qualifying Criteria

In order to protect the rural areas of the County from excessive urban generated housing, the Council considers it necessary to retain the local needs provision as recommended in the document Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines, 2005 DECLG. Local needs provisions apply across the entire rural area of the County. Applicants for one-off rural housing will be required to demonstrate compliance with criteria relevant to the specific Development Zone in which the dwelling is to be located. These Local Needs Qualifying Criteria are as outlined below;

Development Zone 1: To Preserve and protect the natural unspoilt physical landscape

1. Applicants are the son or daughter of a qualifying landowner. The applicant must demonstrate a rural housing need and show that they do not already own a house or have not owned a house within the rural area of the county for a minimum of 5 years prior to making an application; OR
2. That the applicant is providing care for an elderly person(s) or a person(s) with a disability who lives in an isolated rural area and who does not have any able-bodied person residing with them. One house only will be allowed on this basis and the site must be adjacent to the dwelling in which the elderly person(s) or person(s) with the disability resides.

Development Zone 2: To protect the scenic quality of the landscape and facilitate development required to sustain the existing rural community.

Development Zone 3: To protect the recreational and amenity value of the coast.

Development Zone 4: To provide for a greenbelt area around the urban centres of Dundalk, Drogheda and Ardee.

1. Applicant(s) is the son/daughter of a qualifying landowner. The applicant must demonstrate a rural housing need and show that they do not already own a house or have not owned a house within the rural area of the county for a minimum of 5 years prior to making an application; OR
2. That the applicant(s) have lived for a minimum period of 10 years in the local rural area (including cross-border), they have a rural housing need, they do not already own a house or have not owned a house within the rural area of the county for a minimum of 5 years prior to making an application; OR

3. That the applicant is actively and significantly involved in agriculture and that the nature of the agricultural activity, by reference to the area of land and/or the intensity of its usage, is sufficient to support full time or significant part time occupation. Where the applicant is employed in a part time basis, the predominant occupation shall be agriculture. In all cases, supporting documentation outlining that the nature of the activity is sufficient to support full-time or significant part time work shall be provided. The proposed dwelling shall be on a site immediately adjacent to or within the boundaries of that agricultural enterprise; OR

4. That the applicant is actively and significantly involved in the bloodstock and equine industry, forestry, agri-tourism or horticulture sectors or rural based enterprise, that the nature of the activity is sufficient to support full time or significant part time occupation and that the applicant can demonstrate a specific functional need to live at the site of their work. Where the applicant is employed in a part time basis, the predominant occupation shall be in the bloodstock and equine industry, forestry, agritourism or horticulture sectors or rural based enterprise. In such cases supporting documentation outlining that the nature of the activity is sufficient to support full time or significant part time work shall be provided. The proposed dwelling shall be on a site immediately adjacent to or within the boundaries of that enterprise; OR

5. That the applicant is providing care for an elderly person(s) or a person(s) with a disability who lives in an isolated rural area and who does not have any able-bodied person residing with them. One house only will be allowed on this basis and the site must be adjacent to the dwelling in which the older person(s) or person(s) with the disability resides.

Development Zone 5: To protect and provide for the development of agriculture and sustainable rural communities and to facilitate certain resource based and location specific developments of significant regional or national importance. Critical infrastructure projects of local, regional or national importance will also be considered within this zone.

1. Applicant(s) is the son/daughter of a qualifying landowner. The applicant must demonstrate a rural housing need and show that they do not already own a house or have not owned a house within the rural area of the County for a minimum of 5 years prior to making an application; OR
2. That they have lived for a minimum period of 10 years in the local rural area (including cross-border), they have a rural housing need, they do not already own a house or have not owned a house within the rural area of the County for a minimum of 5 years prior to making an application; OR
3. That the applicant is actively and significantly involved in agriculture and that the nature of the agricultural activity, by reference to the area of land and/or the intensity of its usage, is sufficient to support full time or significant part time occupation. Where the applicant is employed in a part time basis, the predominant occupation shall be agriculture. In all cases, supporting documentation outlining that the nature of the activity is sufficient to support fulltime or significant part time work shall be provided. The proposed dwelling shall be on a site immediately adjacent to or within the boundaries of that agricultural enterprise; OR

4. That the applicant is actively and significantly involved in the bloodstock and equine industry, forestry, agri-tourism or horticulture or rural based enterprise, that the nature of the activity is sufficient to support full time or significant part time occupation and that the applicant can demonstrate a specific functional need to live at the site of their work. Where the applicant is employed in a part time basis, the predominant occupation shall be bloodstock and equine industry, forestry, agri-tourism or horticulture sectors or rural based enterprise. In such cases supporting documentation outlining that the nature of the activity is sufficient to support full time or significant part time work shall be provided. The proposed dwelling shall be on a site immediately adjacent to or within the boundaries of that enterprise; OR
5. That the applicant is providing care for an elderly person or a person with a disability who lives in an isolated rural area and who does not have any able bodied person residing with them. One house only will be allowed on this basis and the site must be adjacent to the dwelling in which the older persons or person with the disability resides; OR
6. That the applicant is required to live in a rural area for exceptional health reasons. Such applications must be accompanied by a medical consultant's report and recommendation outlining the reasons why it is necessary for the applicant to live in a rural area and also be supported by an appropriate disability organization of which the applicant is a registered member.

Development Zone 6: To preserve and protect the heritage and cultural landscape of the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Brú na Bóinne, the UNESCO (Tentative) World Heritage Site of Monasterboice and the Site of the Battle of the Boyne.

1. Applicant(s) is the son/daughter of a qualifying landowner in the local rural area (including cross-border) and where the applicant has resided in the family home on the landholding for a minimum period of 10 years. The applicant must demonstrate a rural housing need and show that (i) they do not already own a house or have not owned a house within the rural area of the county for a minimum of 5 years prior to making an application and (ii) that they do not own land outside of the buffer area of the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Brú na Bóinne and/or the UNESCO (Tentative) World Heritage Site of Monasterboice Early Medieval Monastic Site and (iii) that they comply with either (a) or (b) as outlined below,
 - a) That the applicant is actively and significantly involved in agriculture and that the nature of the agricultural activity, by reference to the area of land and/or the intensity of its usage, is sufficient to support full time or significant part time occupation. Where the applicant is employed in a part time basis, the predominant occupation shall be agriculture. In all cases, supporting documentation outlining that the nature of the activity is sufficient to support fulltime or significant part time work shall be provided. The proposed dwelling shall be on a site immediately adjacent to or within the boundaries of that agricultural enterprise; OR
 - b) That the applicant is actively and significantly involved in the bloodstock and equine industry, forestry, agri-tourism or horticulture sectors or rural based enterprise, that the nature of the activity is sufficient to support full time or significant part time occupation and that the applicant can demonstrate a specific functional need to live at the site

of their work. Where the applicant is employed in a part time basis, the predominant occupation shall be bloodstock and equine industry, forestry, agri-tourism or horticulture sectors or rural based enterprise. In such cases supporting documentation outlining that the nature of the activity is sufficient to support full time or significant part time work shall be provided. The proposed dwelling shall be on a site immediately adjacent to or within the boundaries of that enterprise; OR

2. That the applicant is providing care for an elderly person(s) or a person(s) with a disability who lives in an isolated rural area and who does not have any able bodied person residing with them. One house only will be allowed on this basis and the site must be adjacent to the dwelling in which the elderly person(s) or person(s) with the disability resides.

Policy SS 19 To require that applicants for one-off rural housing demonstrate compliance with the Local Needs Qualifying Criteria relevant to the respective Development Zone as set out in Section 2.19.1 above.

2.19.2 Definition of Local Rural Area In addition to establishing criteria for local needs qualification, it is also considered necessary to have a clear definition of 'local rural area' in order to implement the rural housing policy. For the purposes of this plan, local rural area is defined as "being a radius of six kilometres from the qualifying rural family residence. Where the qualifying area is reduced by reason of its location, for example, proximity to the coast, county boundaries or development zone boundaries, the six kilometer (6km) radius may be extended to include an area equivalent to the area lost". For the purposes of this definition it shall be the case that the rural area excludes those lands which lie within Level 1, 2, 3 and 4 Settlements inclusive.

2.19.3 Definition of (Cross-Border) Local Rural Area In addition to establishing criteria for local needs qualification, it is also considered necessary to have a clear definition of '(cross border) local rural area' in order to implement the rural housing policy. Where an individual can demonstrate by credible documentary form, to the satisfaction of the Council that they have long standing links to a local rural area which crosses the Louth County border from an adjacent county, permission may be granted for a dwelling within County Louth for the applicant. Applicants in this category must demonstrate compliance with the qualifying criteria as detailed in Section 2.19.1.

Any development permitted must accord with the policies applicable to the relevant Development Zone located within County Louth.

In all cases, a maximum radius from the County border of 0.5 km will be applied. Those living in townlands located in urban areas which extend into rural areas will not be eligible to apply for permission under this qualification criterion.

Policy SS20 To consider the local area for the purposes of assessing one-off rural housing applications encompassing a maximum radius from the Louth County border of 0.5 km.

Applicants must demonstrate compliance with the qualifying criteria as detailed in Section 2.19.1.

Wicklow County Development Plan 2016-2022

Housing in the Open Countryside

HD21 Residential development will be considered in the open countryside only when it is for the provision of a rural dwelling to those with a housing, social or economic need to live in the open countryside.

Residential development will be considered in the countryside in the following circumstances:

1. A permanent native resident seeking to build a house for his / her own family and not as speculation. A permanent native resident shall be a person who has resided in a rural area in County Wicklow for at least 10 years in total (including permanent native residents of levels 8 and 9), or resided in the rural area for at least 10 years in total prior to the application for planning permission.
2. A son or daughter, or niece/nephew considered to merit the same position as a son/daughter within the law (i.e. when the uncle/aunt has no children of his/her own), of a permanent native resident of a rural area, who can demonstrate a definable social or economic need to live in the area in which the proposal relates and not as speculation.
3. A son or daughter, or niece/nephew considered to merit the same position as a son/daughter within the law (i.e. when the uncle/aunt has no children of his/her own), of a permanent native resident of a rural area, whose place of employment is outside of the immediate environs of the local rural area to which the application relates and who can demonstrate a definable social or economic need to live in the area to which the proposal relates and not as speculation.
4. Replacing a farm dwelling for the needs of a farming family, not as speculation. If suitable the old dwelling may be let for short term tourist letting and this shall be tied to the existing owner of the new farm dwelling where it is considered appropriate and subject to the proper planning and development of the area.
5. A person whose principal occupation is in agriculture and who owns and farms substantial lands.
6. An immediate family member (i.e. son or daughter) of a person described in 5, who is occupied in agriculture.
7. A person whose principal occupation is in a rural resource based activity (i.e. agriculture, forestry, mariculture, agri-tourism etc.) and who can demonstrate a need to live in the immediate vicinity of this activity.
8. A close relative who has inherited, either as a gift or on death, an agricultural holding or site for his/her own purposes and not for speculation and who can demonstrate a definable social and / or economic need to live in the area to which the proposal relates.
9. The son or daughter of a landowner who has inherited a site for the purpose of building a one-off rural house and where the land has been in family ownership as at 11th October 2004 for at least 10 years prior to the application for planning permission and not as speculation.
10. An emigrant, returning to their local area, seeking to build a house for his/her own use not as speculation.
11. Persons whose work is intrinsically linked to the rural area and who can prove a definable social or economic need to live in the rural area.

12. A permanent native resident that previously owned a home and is no longer in possession of that home (for example their previous home having been disposed of following legal separation / divorce / repossession, the transfer of a home attached to a farm to a family member or the past sale of a home following emigration) and can demonstrate a social or economic need for a new home in the rural area.
13. Permanent native residents of moderate and small growth towns, seeking to build a house in their native town or village within the 60kph / 40mph speed limit on the non national radial roads, for their own use and not as speculation as of 11th October 2004.
14. A person whose business requires them to reside in the rural area and who can demonstrate the adequacy of the business proposals and the capacity of the business to support them full time.
15. Permanent native residents of the rural area who require a new purpose built specially adapted house due to a verified medical condition and who can show that their existing home cannot be adapted to meet their particular needs
16. Persons who were permanent native residents of a rural area but due to the expansion of an adjacent town / village, the family home place is now located within the development boundary of the town / village.

In the event of conflict of any other settlement strategy objective / Landscape Zones and Categories, a person who qualifies under policy HD21 their needs shall be supreme, except where the proposed development would be a likely traffic hazard or public health hazard.

With regard to the preservation of views and prospects, due consideration shall be given to those listed within the area of the National Park; and with respect to all other areas, to generally regard the amenity matters, but not to the exclusion of social and economic matters. The protection and conservation of views and prospects should not give rise to the prohibition of development, but development should be designed and located to minimise impact.

Wexford County Development Plan 2013-2019

Objective SS34

To permit one-off rural housing in accordance with the Sustainable Rural Housing Strategy in Chapter 4 and subject to compliance with normal planning and environmental criteria and the development management standards contained in Chapter 18.

Objective RH01

To facilitate the development of individual houses in the open countryside in 'Areas under Strong Urban Influence' in accordance with the criteria laid down in Table No. 12 subject to compliance with normal planning and environmental criteria and the development management standards laid down in Chapter 18.

Rural Area under Strong Urban Influence - Permitted Definitions

Housing for 'local rural people' building permanent residences for their own use who have a definable 'housing need' building in their 'local rural area'

'Local rural people' are defined as people who were born or have lived for a minimum period of five years in that 'local rural area'. This includes people who have lived there in the past/returning emigrants. It also includes persons who were born or reared in such a 'local rural area' but that area is now within a settlement boundary/ zoned land. A local rural person also includes a person who has links by virtue of being a long term rural landowner or the son or daughter or successor of such a person.

'Local rural area' is defined as within a 7km radius of where the applicant has lived or was living. Where the site is of a greater distance but the applicant can demonstrate significant ties with the area for example immediate family or landownership then these applications will be considered on their merits. The 'local rural area' includes the countryside, Strong Villages, Smaller Villages and Rural settlements but excludes District towns, Larger Town, and The Hub.

Housing for people working in rural areas building permanent residences for their own use who have a definable 'housing need'.

Such persons shall be defined as persons who by the nature of their work have a functional need to reside permanently in the rural area close to their place of work. Such circumstances will normally include persons involved in full-time farming, horticulture, forestry or marine related activities as well as others who can demonstrate a genuine need because of their occupation to live in the rural area. Similar part-time occupations can also be considered where it can

be demonstrated that it is the predominant occupation. OR

Bone fide applicants who are not considered eligible under the preceding categories may be considered as qualifying to build a permanent home in the rural areas, subject to being able to satisfy the Planning Authority of their commitment to operate a full time business from their proposed home in a rural area, as part of their planning application, in order for example, to discourage commuting to towns or cities.

Applicants must be able to submit evidence that:

- their business will contribute to and enhance the rural community in which they seek to live and
- that they can satisfy the Planning Authority that the nature of their employment or business is compatible with those specified in the local needs criteria for rural areas so as to discourage those that are not location specific (e.g. telesales or telemarketing) i.e. that they are serving a need in their local rural area.

Housing for people with exceptional health and/or family circumstances building permanent residences for their own use.

Special consideration shall be given in cases of exceptional health circumstances – supported by relevant documentation from a medical practitioner proving that a person needs to live in a particular environment or close to family support, or requires a close family member to live in close proximity to that person. In cases where an applicant needs to reside near elderly parents so as to provide security, support and care, or where elderly parent(s) need to reside near an immediate family member favourable consideration will also be given. Similar consideration will be given to a relative of an elderly person who has no children.

Strong Rural Area - Permitted Definitions

As above with the alterations to the definitions of 'local rural area'

As above for 'Areas under strong urban pressure' except 'local rural area' is defined as within a 15km radius of where the applicant has lived or was living. Where the site is of a greater distance but the applicant can demonstrate significant ties with the area for example immediate family or long term landownership then these applications will be considered on their merits.

The 'local rural area' includes the countryside, Strong Villages, Smaller Villages and Rural settlements but excludes District towns, Larger Town, Towns and The Hub.

Kilkenny County Development Plan

3.5.2.3 Rural Generated Housing need In areas under urban influence and in stronger rural areas the Council will permit (subject to other planning criteria) single houses for persons where the following stipulations are met:

1. Persons who are employed full-time in rural-based activity such as farming, horticulture, forestry, bloodstock or other rural-based activity in the area in which they wish to build or whose employment is intrinsically linked to the rural area in which they wish to build such as teachers in rural schools or other persons by the nature of their work have a functional need to reside permanently in the rural area close to their place of work.
2. A full time 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.
3. Persons who have no family lands but who wish to build their first home, on a site within a 10 km radius of their original family home, (the local rural area) in which they have spent a substantial and continuous part of their lives (minimum 5 years

4. Persons who were born and lived for substantial parts of their lives (minimum 3 year) in the local area and wish to return to live in the local area (returning migrants).

5. A landowner who owned property prior to 14th June 2013 wishing to build a permanent home for his/her own use or a son or daughter. (This provision is to deal with historical land issues which might arise close to existing settlements where families could be excluded from building a home for their own lands for their own occupation due to emerging development trends over previous plan periods. This cut off date is a definitive time frame which will not be revised in subsequent Development Plans.)

Local Area: Local area is defined as within approximately 10km from the site, excluding defined urban areas. Where the site is of a greater distance but the applicant can demonstrate significant ties with the area for example immediate family or well-established landownership then these applications will be considered on their merits.

Draft Kildare County Development Plan 2017-2023

4.12.7 Rural Housing Policy Rural generated housing demand will be managed having regard, inter alia, to the applicant's genuine local need, together with the protection of key economic, environmental, natural and heritage assets, such as the road network, water quality, important landscapes, habitats and the built heritage. In order for an applicant to be considered for a one-off dwelling in the rural area of Kildare, an applicant must:

- a) Meet one of the following category of applicant:
 1. A member of a farming family who is actively engaged in farming the family landholding; OR
 2. A member of the rural community. AND
- b) Meet one of the local need criteria (i) – (iv) set out in Table 4.3 Schedule of Need.

Category of Applicant 1: A member of a farming family who is actively engaged in farming the family landholding.

The applicant must demonstrate a genuine local need to reside in the area through active and direct involvement in the running of the family farm. The farm must be in the ownership of the applicant's immediate family² for a minimum of seven years preceding the date of the application for planning permission.

Rural Housing Policy Zone 1

(i) Persons who have grown up and spent substantial periods of their lives (12 years) living in the rural area of Kildare, as members of the rural community and who seek to build their home in the rural area on their family landholding and who currently live in the area. Where no land is available in the family ownership, a site within 2km of the original family home may be considered.

(ii) Persons who have grown up and spent substantial periods of their lives (12 years) living in the rural area of Kildare, as members of the rural community who have left the area but now wish to return to reside near to, or to care for, immediate family members, seeking to build their home in the rural area on the family landholding or on a site within 2km of the original family home.

(iii) Persons who can satisfy the Planning Authority of their commitment to operate a, full time business from their proposed home in the rural area where they have existing links to that rural area and that the business will contribute to and enhance the rural community and that the nature of such enterprise is location dependent and intrinsically linked to a rural location.

Rural Housing Policy Zone 2

(i) Persons who have grown up and who have spent substantial periods of their lives (12 years) living in rural area of Kildare as members of the rural community and who seek to build their home in the rural area on their family landholding and who currently live in the area. Where no land is available in family ownership, a site within 5km of the original family home may be considered.

(ii) Persons who have grown up and who have spent substantial periods of their lives (12 years) living in the rural area of Kildare as members of the rural community who have left the area but now wish to return to reside near to, or to care for immediate family members seeking to build their home in the rural area on the family landholding or on a site within 5km of the original family home.

(iii) Persons who can satisfy the Planning Authority of their commitment to operate a full time business from their proposed home in the rural area where they have existing links to that rural area and that the business will contribute to and enhance the rural community and that the nature of such enterprise is location dependent and intrinsically linked to a rural location.

NOTE: Applications for rural one off dwellings will be considered, subject to the policies and objectives set out in the County Development Plan, where it is demonstrated that the development would not prejudice the environment and the rural character of the area. In this regard factors such as the sensitivity of the receiving environment, the nature and extent of existing development and the extent of development on the original landholding will be considered.

Westmeath County Development Plan

11.8 Local Housing Need

1.1 Local Housing Need within Strong Rural Areas Under significant urban influence, will be

1.2 Assessed having regard to Local Need Housing Policy outlined below:

It is a policy of Westmeath County Council

P-LHN1 To permit residential development in areas outside of the development boundaries of the settlement hierarchy subject to the following circumstances:

- (1) Persons who are actively engaged in agriculture, horticulture, forestry, bloodstock and peat industry,
- (2) Members of farm families seeking to build on the family farm,
- (3) Landowners and members of landowners' families (landowner for this purpose being defined as persons who owned the land in question since the year 2000),
- (4) Persons employed locally whose employment would provide a service to the local community,
- (5) Persons who have personal, family or economic ties within the area, including returning emigrants
- (6) Persons who wish to return to farming and who buy or inherit a substantial farm-holding which is kept intact as an established farm unit, will be considered by the Council to be farmers and will be open to consideration for a rural house, as farmers. Where there is already a house on the holding, refurbishment or replacement of this house is the preferred option.

P-LHN2 To manage the development of one off rural housing in conjunction with the Rural Typology Map and Local Need criteria. Applicants must submit documentary evidence of compliance with the rural housing policy and comply with local need criteria.

1.3 Structurally Weak Rural Areas

These areas are concentrated in a few areas in the north and west of the county. They have shown persistent and significant population decline and have a weaker population structure than the stronger rural area.

The policy in these areas is to accommodate demand from individuals for permanent residential development subject to good planning practice. This policy will facilitate the expansion of the rural population and the maintenance of essential local services. In these areas it is a requirement to distinguish between speculative house building and genuine long-term commitment to the area in question.

1.3 Structurally Weak Areas Policy

P-SWA1 To accommodate demand from individuals for permanent residential development within defined structurally weak areas, subject to good planning practice.

The general categories of people who will normally be considered in each area type, are described above. However, in all cases, permission will be subject to good practice in matters such as design, location and the protection of the environment.



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