

Age friendly Ireland and Limerick City & County Council

Housing for Older People

Future Perspectives

Limerick – Friday 22nd April 2016

Minister, Ladies and gentleman it is my great pleasure to be here today with Age Friendly Ireland, my colleagues from around the country and all interested parties and stakeholders for the launch of the study on Housing for Older People, Future Perspectives.

Through the work of Age Friendly Ireland I first became aware of the National Positive Ageing Strategy a few years ago and since then I have been chair of the Monaghan Age friendly Alliance and more recently, since moving to Roscommon County Council I am the Chair of the Roscommon Alliance.

And of course I wouldn't like any of you to think that I have not been aware of the contribution of older people to society or more particularly to the needs of older people who continue to play an important role in society as they (or at this stage perhaps even we) contribute to and support all aspects of society on a daily basis.

My few words today will focus on implementation and I will start by asking should Local Authorities and society as a whole cater for the needs of older people. The document being launched today clearly identifies what can and should be done to meet the needs of older people.

We are all part of an inclusive society where the needs of all our people, regardless of age, colour or religion must be met in a fair and equitable way. And I would put it to you that although our fiscal position remains somewhat "tight" there has never been a better time to start planning for and ultimately secure good quality housing suited to the needs of elderly people, living in a sustainable community.

The opportunities presented by the Social Housing Strategy 2020 offers one avenue to have a fresh look at dereliction in our cities and towns and amore

joined up approach to all aspects of service delivery nationally and calls on bodies to look at innovative ways to cater for needs of the elderly not just in terms of lifetime adaptable housing, but also in areas of health, transport, security and active participation.

All of this of course will not happen by accident and will require effort, a planned approach and a singular coordinated approach by all state bodies together with the involvement of the private sector, who must be part of the solution.

So what can we, the LAs do:

Housing for Older People can undoubtedly be positively promoted in the context of the CDP and LAPs. However, I have a strong sense that success will only come about in projects being delivered on the ground if there is a multi disciplinary approach involving Local Authority and external agencies. While there is really no formal mechanism for this in a planning context (other than mainstream Part V), the first step would at least be ensuring engagement at plan preparation stage, and then perhaps developing other communication initiatives at local level.

- **Early engagement with appropriate representative groups as part of the statutory pre-draft process of the County Development Plan preparation.**

(Section 11(3)(a) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) requires that after giving notice of intention to review the development plan, *“planning authorities shall take whatever additional measures it considers necessary to consult with the general public and other interested bodies.”*

- **Early engagement with appropriate representative groups as part of the non statutory pre-draft process of Local Area Plan preparation.**

(Section 20(1) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) requires a Planning Authority to take whatever steps it considers necessary to consult with the Minister and the public before preparing, amending or revoking a Local Area Plan, including *“consultations with any local residents, public sector agencies, non-governmental agencies, local community groups, and commercial and business interests within the area.”*

- **Exploration of innovative techniques to ensure engagement with older people.** There is a need to go beyond the mainstream methods of engagement routinely utilised in publicising statutory and non statutory consultation processes (for example newspaper notices and information on the local authority website).
- It is essential throughout all engagement that a clear understanding is provided of the purpose, the likely outcomes, and the essential co-operation of multi disciplines to ultimately deliver housing and associated developments which will meet the needs of the older population.

Plan Preparation

- **Improved population analysis and understanding of demographic trends** as part of the preparation process of all plans, in order to ensure that plans appropriately respond to and provide for the needs of all sectors of society, including the growing older population.
- **Greater understanding of differences in the age structure and associated differing needs of those collectively classed as ‘older people / elderly’.**
- **Multi disciplinary approach** required at Plan preparation stage to identify housing requirements to suit older people – involving communications internally between Planners, Social Inclusion Officers , Housing Officers, Building Control Officers and Municipal District Co-ordinators and also potential external communication with Older People’s representative groups, Approved Housing Bodies, Construction Industry representatives, healthcare professionals etc..
- **Local Authority Housing Strategy** to reflect that the housing needs of older people are a key element to be provided for - promotion of social inclusion in the provision of social housing, and a definitive requirement for a mix of housing in all areas that can accommodate people with different identified needs, including older people.
- **Inclusion of relevant and achievable policies and objectives** in relation to the provision of housing for older people, as well as the provision of a facilities which will benefit and enhance the lives of the older population.
- Incorporation of **clear development management guidelines and standards** in the Development Plan in order to ensure that the provision

of Housing for Older People is routinely considered and factored into emerging development proposals. Examples include :

- Site selection, layout and design – guided by the requirements of DECLG guidelines such as *Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas: Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2009)*.
- Mix of house types and sizes, and the facilitation of the ‘lifetime home’ concept, as well as the development of ‘lifetime neighbourhoods’ i.e. a variety of housing provision and a range of support and facilities relevant to a spectrum of ages and stages in a family cycle (a concept advocated by the RTPI in *Planning for an Ageing Population (July 2004)*).
- Provision of pedestrian and cycling links in a development and with connectivity to vital services in the area.
- Public open space provision – public space to be located and designed so that it facilitates use by all age groups; passive spaces, appropriate seating areas, and adult exercise equipment appropriate to differing age profiles are all aspects that can be considered with the older population in mind.
- Positive facilitation of suitably scaled and designed house extensions / granny flats in order to assist the formation of multi generational households.
- Encouragement of residential development provision for ‘independent step-down dwellings’ for elderly people that benefit from communal and caretaking facilities.
- The provision of community facilities in tandem with housing developments, including the integration of sheltered housing projects or nursing / elder care homes into existing and newly developing residential areas.

Practical planning related examples of the potential Role of the Local Authority in assisting in delivering housing to meet the needs of the elderly

- Early intervention and a more pro-active approach at pre-planning stage – undertaking discussions with developers, providing demographic evidence to demonstrate the increasing need and demand for housing designed to meet the specific needs of older people, utilising design

guides / visual examples of successfully completed developments to demonstrate the successful integration of specialist housing with mainstream residential accommodation;

- Local Authority housing projects to lead the way in demonstrating the successful development of integrated mixed tenure housing developments, and also demonstrating the potential to retrofit properties to accommodate the changing residential requirements of older people;
- Potential development of periodic workshops at Local Authority level to draw together relevant public and private sector representatives, including Local Authority officials (Planners, Housing Officers, Building Control Officers, Social Inclusion Officers) and representatives of Approved Housing Bodies, Construction Industry representatives, RIAI representation, financial institutions, technology providers and other relevant contractors (e.g. Eir, locally based specialist home adaptation companies etc.), healthcare providers etc. to openly discuss the requirements and challenges in providing housing for older people as a specific needs group, and identify opportunities and mechanisms to deliver such.

Like my colleague Conn Murray I too will endeavour to make sure that our Age Friendly Strategy is embedded across and in all strategies in my local authority but more I will make sure that the willing staff of RCC understand and have regard to the needs of the elderly in planning for and delivering housing and that that understanding is conveyed to the private sector

Eugene Cummins, Chief Executive Roscommon County Council 22/4/16