

Chapter 3 Development Strategy

3.0 Introduction

In line with the analysis, targets and goals set out in Chapters 1 and 2 this chapter articulates the Councils' key strategies for the plan under three headings, namely:

- Settlement Form
- Employment/Economic Strategy
- Housing

3.1 Settlement Form

Birr town, Crinkle village and their immediate surroundings, in effect, function as one place which is categorised as a 'large town' in the county settlement hierarchy and as such it is expected to be a self sustaining settlement which strengthens the county settlement pattern and provides support to the immediate hinterland. The purpose of this plan is to reinforce this role and to improve the effectiveness of Birr as the key settlement in South and West Offaly by creating a more balanced settlement. The overall vision governing the expansion of Birr is one of Birr town being the major node with Crinkle village as a separate but complementary node within the attractive setting of the town's environs.

It is intended that this will be achieved by the following:

- Appropriate planning in terms of land uses, zoning, quantity and distribution.
- Creation of an effective place with a convenient transportation network (both vehicular and pedestrian) in line with the Birr Land Use and Transportation Study (adopted November 2007 – refer to chapter 8).
- Ensuring that, where possible, development occurs in a sequential manner and that it respects the town's built and natural environment.
- Ensuring the environs area of the town is managed in a positive and sympathetic manner in order to preserve and enhance the setting of both Birr and Crinkle.
- Ensuring that implementation will be brought forward by way of local area strategies which will identify the main development opportunities and outline how they might be achieved.

3.2 Local Area Strategies

In order for the plan to be implemented to allow for a balanced and coherent outcome to be achieved, local area based strategies have been prepared for a number of key areas which have been identified (refer to Table 3.1) for the following reasons:

- Their strategic locations within the town's structure.
- Their relationship to the transportation network as proposed in the Land Use Transportation Study (2007).
- To ensure that development be brought forward in a comprehensive manner to allow a coherent urban fabric to evolve.
- To ensure that new development enhances the existing fabric and links up in such a way to give better access to important "backland" development opportunities.
- To give strategic guidance to landowners and developers in advance of development applications.

Table 3.1

Local Areas	Location	Site Area(s) approx
1. North East Area	Land parcels 1, 2 and 3	1. 7.77 2. 12.22 3. 8.88 Total: 28.87ha
2. South East Area	Land parcel 4	32.61ha
3. Central Area	Land parcel 5	10.63ha
4. Crinkle Area	Land parcels 6, 7 and 8	6 17.06ha 7. 5.00ha 8. 5.57ha Total: 27.63ha

Within these four areas, eight “land parcels” have been identified (refer to Map 3.1 for location and context).

3.2.1 North East Quadrant (Parcel No.'s 1, 2 and 3)

This area covers the northern approaches to Birr and as such impacts on people's first impression of the town. The main aim behind this area strategy is to ensure that future development will be harnessed to create an attractive, coherent and vibrant area, which will enhance the town in general and improve the “arrival experience” in particular.

3.2.2 South East Quadrant (Parcel No. 4)

This area lies to the south of the River Camcor between the Roscrea Road and the Kinnitty Road. The aim underpinning this area strategy is to utilise ongoing development to consolidate and improve the urban fabric and to create an attractive well-planned edge to the town. Given that this is a large area, it will require a wide diversity of development outcomes with different layouts, scale and sizes in order to maintain variety and interest.

3.2.3 Central Area (Parcel No. 5)

This area comprises a large area of undeveloped land to the north east of and very close to the town centre. The surrounding development virtually land locks the land parcel and consequently this area strategy is set out to ensure that the area is opened up in a co-ordinated manner and to accommodate the land uses necessary to enhance and reinforce the adjacent town centre.

3.2.4 Crinkle (Parcel No.'s 6, 7 and 8)

Crinkle Village, lying immediately to the south of Birr, has come under increasing development pressure from the town and consequently the strategic aim behind the area strategy is to ensure that its village identity and character are protected and the two settlements remain physically separate and do not coalesce.

3.2.5 Riverstown

Riverstown is located to the west of Birr and while the bulk of the existing settlement is in County Tipperary, there is a portion to the east of the Little Brosna River that is partially located within the administrative area of Offaly County Council and partially located within the administrative area of Birr Town Council. It was considered that, in order to expedite a plan for that part of the village located within Offaly, the County Development Plan would be the appropriate plan to deal with a settlement plan for Riverstown and as a result, a village plan for Riverstown was prepared as part of the review of the County Development Plan 2009-2015.

The area strategies as detailed above are expanded in detail within Chapter 6 Local Area Strategies. Crinkle, is addressed fully in Chapter 7 - Crinkle Village.

3.3 Environs Area

The environs of Birr essentially consist of the town's attractive rural surroundings, which contribute greatly to the setting and amenity of the urban elements of the plan, namely Birr and Crinkle. These areas have come under pressure for development which if not managed effectively would not only detract from the foregoing but would also prove difficult to service due to the lack of infrastructure. To this end, a fairly robust development management regime will be necessary in order to protect and enhance the environs areas.

3.4 Economic Strategy

The Councils will continue to comply with the principles of the National Spatial Strategy (2002-2020) and the Midland Regional Planning Guidelines (2004) in providing for the competitiveness of the region in accordance with sustainable development.

3.4.1 General

While the local economy of the Birr and Environs area is generally recognised as being relatively robust, it is the Councils' goal to strengthen this sector, wherever possible, in order to encourage economic activity and to bring forward a balanced and sustainable settlement.

3.4.2 Methodology

The Council intend to pursue this by creating a framework that will encourage and facilitate employment and economic activity at all possible levels. This will be achieved by a number of different actions:

- **Land Use – Zonings**

By way of zoning the plan makes provision for different land uses to be accommodated in different size sites and in different locations in order to foster choice and variety (see Chapter 15 for zoning objectives).

- **Industry**

A number of different sites have been identified in line with the above to accommodate such uses as factories, workshops, warehouses etc.

- **Business/Employment**

The plan identifies a variety of sites that can accommodate a wide cross section of activities e.g. light industry, office campuses etc.

- **Mixed Use**

These areas allow a number of different uses to be accommodated in relatively close proximity e.g. shops, housing, offices, entertainment etc. and are especially suited for town/neighbourhood centre type situations where variety and vitality are crucial for a high quality standard of life.

- **Development Management**

The Councils will adopt a positive and flexible approach to managing development applications related to economic activity.

- **Initiatives and Promotion**

The Councils will encourage, facilitate, promote and investigate all initiatives that bring forward economic activity in the area. While the Councils will, where necessary, act alone in this regard they will also co-operate with relevant bodies (County Enterprise Board (CEB), Shannon Development etc.) involved in this endeavour.

3.5 Tourism

In addition to the above, tourism is also recognised as a potentially significant sector in the local economy and Birr's high quality built heritage and strategic location in the midlands west region make it an ideal candidate for promotion as a focal point for tourism within County Offaly. This can be achieved from a physical standpoint by:

- Careful management of the town's built fabric including high quality environmental improvement interventions.
- Effective promotion of the locality as a tourist destination.
- Sensitive implementation of the development plan to make the town a more attractive place.
- Encourage the development of arts, heritage and leisure facilities.

3.6 Housing

3.6.1 Aim

To ensure that suitable accommodation is available for each household within Birr by:

1. Facilitating the provision of appropriate private developments and
2. Provision of social and affordable housing, where feasible and in accordance with Birr's position within the County Settlement Hierarchy.

3.6.2 Overview

The Councils recognise the major role housing plays in shaping the social, economic and physical character of Birr and further recognise the housing needs of all sectors of the population within the plan area. The housing market in Birr has experienced increases in both the demand and supply side in recent years.

This section establishes the context of housing as applicable to Birr in terms of:

- The Councils' established Multi-Annual Social and Affordable Housing Plan which determines the Councils' own housing activities.
- Traveller Accommodation Programme for County Offaly (relative to Birr).
- The Councils' settlement and landuse strategy (as highlighted within this chapter).
- The Councils' Housing Strategy 2008-2015.

3.6.3 Legislative/Policy Context

The Planning and Development Acts 2000-2009 require each Local Authority to adopt a Housing Strategy for their administrative area. Offaly County Council's Housing Strategy 2008-2015 has been developed jointly by the three Local Authorities in County Offaly, namely Offaly County Council, Tullamore Town Council and Birr Town Council.

Further, The Housing Acts 1966-2004 and the 2007 statement on Housing Policy '*Delivering Homes, Sustaining Communities*' have, as their core objective, that every household should have a dwelling suitable to its needs, located in an acceptable environment at an affordable price and as far as possible at the tenure of choice. '*Delivering Homes, Sustaining Communities*' has been endorsed and embraced by the social partners in *Towards 2016*. The document proposes a broader approach to housing than has been the case, by delivering additional and enhanced quality housing options in a more strategic way with a major focus on building sustainable communities so as to contribute positively to the overall social and economic well-being of an area.

The Councils seek to meet individual accommodation needs in a manner that facilitates and empowers personal choice and autonomy in a rapidly changing and dynamic environment.

3.7 Offaly County Housing Strategy 2008-2015

Offaly County Council's Housing Strategy 2008-2015, in having regard to national policies and guidelines on residential development, provides an estimate of existing and future need and supply of housing for the county, including the need for social and affordable housing and the need to ensure balanced development throughout Offaly. This is in accordance with 'Part V' of the Planning and Development Acts 2000-2006 and the county's settlement hierarchy.

Key points and objectives of the Housing Strategy relating to Birr include:

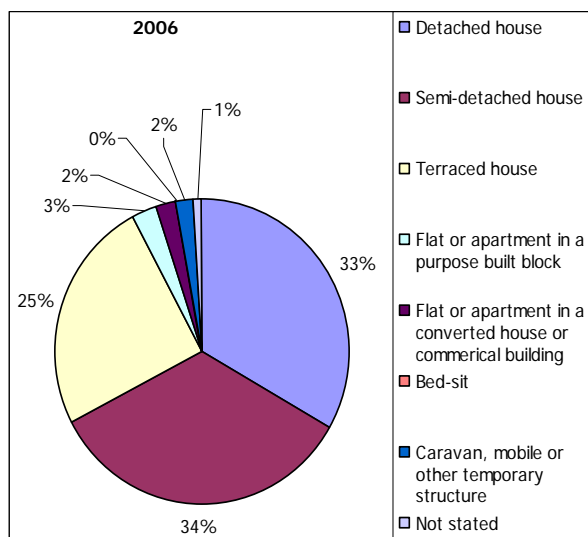
- Ensure balanced development across the county in accordance with the settlement hierarchy e.g. ensuring that Birr can act as a western counterpoint to the development pressure in the east of the county and that other towns will also attract moderate growth as per their role and carrying capacity.
- In relation to demand for Social Housing in County Offaly – Of the total number of applicants, 44% are located in the Offaly County Council area, 38% in Tullamore Town Council and 18% in Birr Town Council.
- (Birr) comprise undeveloped lands zoned for town centre and mixed use, which are currently developed, but could be suitable for intensification of town centre uses. Some of these lands could be potentially be made available for residential development over the period of the strategy, due to the nature of development likely to be put forward/permitted within them i.e. mixed use. However significant amounts of this developed and undeveloped town centre/mixed use land are therefore unlikely to be made available for residential development over the lifetime of the strategy.
- Excessive amounts of residential lands zoned - requiring re-examination of the extent of lands currently zoned and implementation of the 'sequential approach' to development and re-examine the extent of lands currently zoned.

3.7.1 Future Housing Development - Challenges and Priorities from a land-use and settlement structure perspective

Figure 3.1 illustrates a snapshot of persons in private households classified by type of accommodation in 2006. Over 67% of the population live in a semi-detached and/or detached house. Such housing is pre-dominantly provided for in the suburbs or edge of the town centre. 25% of the population live in terraced housing which is usually catered for the

town centre (but can also be incorporated into housing estate designs in the suburbs) and 8% live in flats/apartments/bed-sit/other which is predominately provided for in the town centre.

Figure 3.1 Persons in Private Households Classified by Type of Accommodation in 2006



As highlighted in bullet point 3 above, Birr has a quantity of undeveloped lands zoned for town centre and mixed use. Some of these lands could be potentially made available for residential development, although due to the nature of the town and nature of development likely to be put forward within them, significant amounts of this developed and undeveloped town centre/mixed-use land are therefore unlikely to be made available for residential development.

Notwithstanding the above, the Councils recognise the importance of having a variety of mixed uses (including residential) within the town centre to continue its vibrancy, vitality, decrease the need to travel and encourage more sustainable modes of travel. Therefore, as highlighted in Chapter 4 Town Centre, the Councils will continue to encourage the development and percentage increase of

appropriate residential development in the town centre including large apartments/flats/bed-sits and living over-the-shop units (for further information refer to Chapter 4 Town Centre, Retail and Renewal).

Figure 3.2 Number of Persons in Permanent Private Households by Type of Occupancy

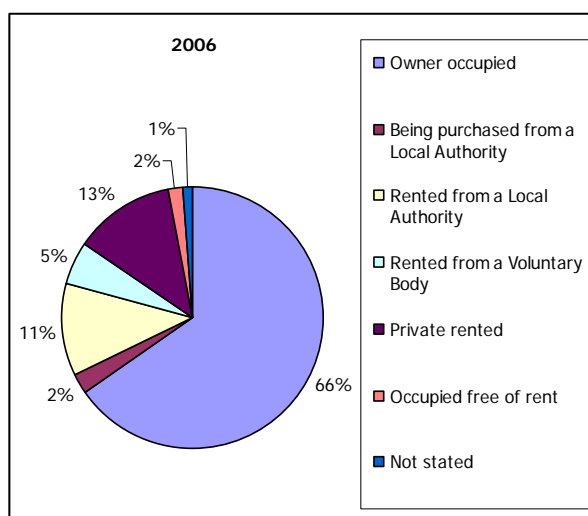


Figure 3.2 adjacent, illustrates the number of persons in Birr in permanent private households by type of occupancy. The majority of the population surveyed (66%) own the accommodation that they occupy. 13% of those surveyed privately rent while 11% rent from the Local Authority.

The Councils encourage a mix of occupancy types and endeavour to ensure that housing provided by the Local Authority provides the opportunities for ownership to the occupants, where feasible and appropriate.

Housing Demand and Supply – 2010-2016

As indicated in Chapter 2 Survey and Analysis, it is projected that the population of Birr (at the upper end) will grow by approximately 1,341 persons between the years 2010-2016. Estimating 2.5 number persons per dwelling, this would amount to a demand of 536 residential units during the life of this plan. There are adequate lands zoned residential within this plan to meet these projected demands.

Offaly County Housing Strategy 2008-2015

The Councils Housing Strategy highlights **three core challenges and priorities** as applicable to future housing development in Offaly and Birr. These include the need to:

- | |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fully support and promote population growth and development of Tullamore as part of the Midlands Linked Gateway, in order for Tullamore and all of County Offaly to attract people, jobs and services to compete on a national and international stage. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conserve, enhance and strengthen the town and village structure within the county. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Re-balance growth patterns in accordance with the county's settlement hierarchy. |

As an integral part of the development plans in County Offaly, the housing strategy is central to achieving these strategic priorities providing a framework to guide future development of the county.

The housing strategy determines that, as at the time of its preparation, there were **more than adequate lands zoned** to provide for housing needs within Birr over the plan period 2010-2016.

3.7.2 Summary of Main Provisions in Addressing Housing Needs as applicable to the Role of the Councils

Table 3.2

'Part V' Main Provisions set out in Housing Strategy 2008-2015	
▪	20% of all lands zoned for residential use, or a mixture of residential and other uses, to be reserved for social and affordable housing.
▪	Allocation between social and affordable housing shall be determined on a case-by-case basis depending on the identified social and affordable needs of the area within which the development is taking place and the specific features of the development.
▪	All residential developments to ensure that a range of house sizes and types are provided in schemes.

3.7.3 Provision of 'Part V' Social and Affordable Housing

As per the Planning and Development Acts 2000-2009, the options open to negotiate between the Councils and a developer for a "Part V" agreement are provided in Table 3.3 below. The developer should liaise with the housing section at an early stage regarding Part V options/obligations.

Table 3.3

Options Available as Per 'Part V' of the Planning and Development Acts 2000-2006	
(a)	The transfer of completed dwellings on the site subject to the application.
(b)	The transfer of fully or partially serviced sites on the site subject to the application.
(c)	The transfer of a portion of the site which is the subject of the application.
(d)	The payment of a monetary contribution .
(e)	The transfer of serviced sites at another location .
(f)	The transfer of land at another location .
(g)	The transfer of completed dwellings at another location .

3.7.4 Application for 'Part V' Exemption Certificate

In accordance with the Planning and Development Acts 2000-2009, an exemption from 'Part V' requirements may be sought from the Councils in the case of small housing developments i.e. those of **four or fewer houses**, or on land of **0.1 hectares or less**. This may be subject to conditions, where necessary.

3.7.5 Special Needs Accommodation

The Councils continue in addressing particular identified needs through the provision of **purpose built, adaptable dwellings**, where feasible. This includes provisions for the needs of the elderly, persons with physical disabilities and persons with learning disabilities.

3.7.6 Traveller Accommodation Needs

Table 3.4

The Councils recognise the special needs of the Travelling Community within Birr. These are addressed and delivered within the context of an adopted specific Multi-Annual Programme for Traveller Accommodation in the county, where feasible. This Programme states that to meet the accommodation needs of the Travelling Community within the county, a range of accommodation options will be required including those shown in Table 3.4. In accordance with the traveller accommodation options, the Councils will continue to take a flexible approach to the location of accommodation for Travellers.

Traveller Accommodation Options Available	
Standard Local Authority Housing	
Group Housing Schemes	
Halting Sites – Permanent/Temporary/Transient	
Single House Purchase	
House Purchase Loans	
Voluntary Housing Schemes	
Private Rented Accommodation/Rental Accommodation Scheme	

Birr Town Council is responsible for the provision of accommodation for members of the travelling community. The Town Council, however, will have regard to the Traveller Accommodation Programme 2009-2013, which was prepared by Offaly County Council in accordance with the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act, 1998.

The Government, under the Housing Acts 1966-2004, and in particular the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998, provides the necessary legal, administrative and financial supports to facilitate Local Authorities in meeting the accommodation needs of Travellers. The Housing Acts 1966-2004, places responsibility on Local Authorities for the provision of serviced caravan sites for the Travelling Community.

Birr Town Council together with Offaly County Council is aware of the special needs of the Travelling Community in the Birr Area. It is an objective of both Councils' to provide a good living environment for travelling communities including recommended standards of accommodation, sanitary facilities and pre-school education facilities. In accordance with stated government policy, the Councils will continue their policy of assisting in the process of integration with the settled community.

Offaly County Council has provided a Residential Caravan Park for Travellers on a site on the Roscrea Road in the Administrative Area of Offaly County Council adjacent to the town boundary. Birr Town Council has provided a Residential Caravan Park for Travellers on a site at Croghan Road.

3.7.7 Homelessness

The Councils continue to provide an important role alongside voluntary groups and other agencies in the provision of emergency accommodation for the homeless and for those in need of crisis facilities.

3.7.8 Implementation of Plan

In order to secure the successful implementation of this plan for Birr and the County Development Plan's overall settlement strategy, the Councils will undertake an ongoing review and monitoring programme.

This process will involve in particular:

- Analysis of Census data
- Analysis of planning applications decided
- Development trends relating to Birr and the remainder of the county, having regard to obligations set out by the Regional Planning Guidelines.

Subsequent corrective action will be taken where necessary. In accordance with Section 15 of the Planning Acts 2000 - 2009, a 2-year report on the progress achieved in securing the objectives contained in the plan will be undertaken. It will contain a sub-section purporting to key findings and possible outcomes of this analysis.

In addition, the Council in its Development Management function will have regard to current relevant Ministerial Guidelines where reference is made to appropriate growth levels in urban areas.

3.8 Policy

Overall Strategic Development Policy

BTEP 03-01 It is the Councils' policy to ensure Birr town and environs plays its role in achieving balanced growth and development across County Offaly and the Western Area of the Midlands Region in accordance with the County Settlement Hierarchy e.g. ensuring that settlements within the west and south of the County can help counterbalance the development pressure in the east of the County.

BTEP 03-02 It is the Councils' policy to have regard to the particular role of Birr town, identified in the MRPGs as a "Key Service Town" within the "Western Area" of the Midlands Region.

BTEP 03-03 It is the Councils' policy to ensure that population growth of Birr is **appropriate in scale** in order for it to fulfil its identified role as a "large town" within the County settlement hierarchy as set out in the County Development Plan 2009-2015. The Councils' will therefore apply appropriate management measures to ensure that such growth and/or part of growth is in compliance with the above. In this regard, the Councils accept that a lower growth rate from that projected by the Midlands Regional Authority in 2004 may occur with Birr town and environs and County Offaly over the plan period. In this instance, Birr town and environs settlement policy must be considered within the context of ensuring that both Birr town and Crinkle village apply a **"sequential approach"** to their future development in a proper and plan-led manner. That is, a positive presumption in favour of developing from the centre most point of a settlement outwards and a presumption against the development of isolated or outlying sites.

BTEP 03-04 It is the Councils' policy to ensure that housing developments are reflective in size/scale of Birr town and Crinkle. In this regard, and without prejudice to other development plan policies or development management best practices, there will be positive presumption for housing developments of the following sizes **or smaller**, as appropriate: Birr town – "Large Town": 80 – 100 houses.

Crinkle village – "Village" 10-20 houses.

This policy is not intended to preclude developers/landowners who have large blocks of zoned and serviced land for development from developing same. In such cases, land blocks should be brought forward in two main ways namely:

- Where land is designated as a local area strategy land parcel, it will be subject to the criteria set out in the relevant section (see Chapter 6).
- Land holdings not within a local area strategy shall be brought forward for development by means of planning applications and shall be done so in a sequential manner.

BTEP 03-05 It is the Councils' policy to require that developments be linked to each other and to the existing urban fabric of the settlement by means of roads, footpaths, linked open spaces etc., and that developments differ in design and layout while maintaining the overall character of the area in order to achieve interest and variety in the built form and to provide choice. Local Authority housing or housing delivered in co-operation with the Councils will also be required to comply with these policies.

Further, it is the Councils' policy to require a mix of dwelling types in housing developments across the settlement hierarchy, in particular to encourage, as part of housing developments, the provision of:

- Small numbers of single storey houses to give choice to persons with enhanced accessibility needs i.e. the elderly and persons with a disability.
- Detached dwellings on large sites subject to adherence with general principles regarding the efficient use of building land i.e. such dwellings may form part of a mixed density development.
- Individually serviced sites, particularly in the outer areas e.g. edge of town, Crinkle village, provided the dwellings do not lead to a disjointed and un-coordinated outcome.

All new development shall have such a mix of house types such as not to closely overlook of existing dwellings. Planning applications comprising multiple units i.e. 5 or more in Crinkle, 50 or more in Birr town will be required to submit a social

infrastructure assessment, which demonstrates the facilities available to adequately service their proposed development. This should include details regarding the following facilities as applicable to the subject settlement's identified tier within the County's settlement hierarchy i.e. education, childcare, health and other services such as shops, post offices, recreational facilities etc.

BTEP 03-06 It is the Councils' policy that specific areas within the plan boundary shall be the subject of more detailed guidance. This will take the form of Local Area Strategies (Chapter 6) and Crinkle Village Plan (Chapter 7). These areas will be governed by the policies contained therein as well as those in this chapter.

BTEP 03-07 Housing Policy – Birr Environs and Open countryside.

It is the Councils' policy that, notwithstanding compliance with policies set out hereunder, quality, design, siting and other environmental considerations will be of paramount importance in the assessment of each individual application for a dwelling in the environs countryside. In considering applications for single houses in the environs countryside, regard shall also be had to all provisions contained in this plan under the separate chapter headings.

BTEP 03-08 Single rural house policy for areas of special control within the open countryside of Birr Environs.

It is the Councils' policy that on unzoned lands within the plan boundary, there shall be a **positive presumption** toward new single houses for the **permanent occupation** of an applicant who falls within any of the following three categories.

Category 1: Local Rural Person

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.) 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.
- b.) 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 the urban area of Birr.
- c.) 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 the surrounding 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

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 surrounding rural area.

Category 3: Exceptional Health Circumstances

Having regard to the DoEHLG's 'Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines' (2005), special consideration shall be given in limited cases or 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.

BTEP 03-09 Single Rural Housing Policy within Ballywilliam Aquifer Protection Zone

Having regard to the need to protect the Birr town and environs valuable groundwater supplies from contamination, it is the Councils' policy to only consider for established residents within this zone, a permanent single dwelling where the following can be demonstrated:

1. There is no reasonable alternative within the remainder of any of the family landholding outside the protection zone.
2. The applicant does not already own or have owned a house in the surrounding rural area, except in exceptional circumstances.

BTEP 03-10 Replacement of Habitable Houses in Birr Environs Countryside

In the case of the proposed demolition of a substandard dwelling and its replacement with a new single dwelling, it is the Councils' policy to favourably consider proposals subject to normal environmental, siting, design and layout considerations. In such circumstances, the provisions of policy BTEP 03-08 (i.e. 'Local Need' requirement) will not apply. Notwithstanding the above, it is Council policy to protect Birr town and environs vernacular building stock from demolition where restoration is a feasible option.

BTEP 03-11 Reuse of existing structures as dwellings in Birr Environs Countryside

It is the Councils' policy to favourably consider all applications (i.e. 'Local Need' requirement will not apply) for the refurbishment and/or reuse of older building stock subject to the following criteria.

- The external walls and roof are substantially intact.
- The design of the proposal does not erode the siting and design qualities of the building which makes it attractive in the first instance.
- The size of any extension takes account of the siting and size of the existing dwelling.
- The design, scale and materials used in the refurbishment and/or extension are in keeping and sympathetic with the existing structure.
- Mature landscape features are retained and enhanced, as appropriate.
- That normal planning considerations i.e. road safety, amenities, public health, design etc. shall take precedence over the 'principle' of encouraging such development.

BTEP 03-12 Refurbishment of Derelict Dwellings in Birr Environs Countryside

It is the Councils' policy to encourage the sensitive refurbishment of existing dwelling houses which have fallen derelict subject to the following:

- That normal planning considerations i.e. road safety, amenities, public health, design etc. shall take precedence to the 'principle' of encouraging such development, and in particular that for such developments alongside or directly accessed from National Roads, that the provisions of policy BTEP 08-13 shall apply (refer to Chapter 8, Transport, movement and accessibility).

Overall Housing Policy**BTEP 03-13 Reservation of Lands for the Provision of Social and Affordable Housing**

It is the Councils' policy, as required under Section 95 of the Planning and Development Acts 2000-2006 that **20% of all land** zoned for residential use and/or for a mixture of residential and other uses, shall be reserved for the provision of housing for the purposes of either or both:

- 1) Housing for persons referred to in Section 9(2) of the Housing Act, 1988;
- 2) Affordable housing (as defined in Section 93 of the Planning and Development Acts 2000-2009)

BTEP 03-14 It is the Councils' policy to ensure that a sufficient amount and variety of serviced land, designed for residential use, is available for house building in Birr and environs.

BTEP 03-15 It is the Councils' policy to ensure housing of a high standard is provided in Birr to meet projected needs. It is the policy of the Council that every family unit should have housing of a standard suitable to its needs.

BTEP 03-16 It is the Councils' policy to promote social inclusion by ensuring that social and affordable housing is suitably distributed throughout all residential developments and locations.

BTEP 03-17 It is the Councils' policy to allow for revisions should the Housing Strategy be reviewed or Planning Legislation (notably 'Part V') be amended during the lifetime of plan.

BTEP 03-18 It is the Councils' policy to ensure the delivery of the policies and objectives of the Housing Strategy by ensuring sufficient lands within Birr are zoned in accordance with its position within the County Settlement Hierarchy.

BTEP 03-19 It is the Councils' policy that where considering development and/or acquisition of social and affordable housing the Councils will have full regard to:

- (a) The policies contained in the Birr Development Plan and Offaly Development Plan and any other relevant action plans.
- (b) Birr's position within the County Settlement Strategy.
- (c) The policies contained in the Councils' Social Housing Multi-Annual Programme.
- (d) The need for social integration.
- (e) The need to ensure the overall coherence of the development.

BTEP 03-20 Social Housing

It is the Councils' policy to provide social houses through a combination of mechanisms including direct build, 'Part V', turnkey and the acquisition of second-hand housing in accordance within Birr's position within the County Settlement Hierarchy to meet identified needs. Social housing units will be allocated on the basis of the Councils' adopted scheme of letting priorities.

BTEP 03-21 Affordable Housing

It is the Councils' policy to appropriately manage the provision of affordable housing provided by the Councils within Birr.

BTEP 03-22 House Types and Sizes

It is the Councils policy to ensure that an appropriate mix of house types and sizes are provided in each residential development and in accordance with Chapter 6 Local Area Strategies. House designs and layout should reflect the requirements of different categories of households within Birr – particularly those needs and requirements of elderly persons and persons with disabilities coupled with continuing trends in changing demographics i.e. decreasing household size. This will be considered in relation to Birr's position within the settlement tier of the County Settlement Hierarchy.

BTEP 03-23 It is the Councils' policy to promote a mix of house types and social integration within residential developments.

BTEP 03-24 It is the Councils' policy to require that a high standard of design and layout of residential development is achieved, including the provision of adequate suitably designed open space.

BTEP 03-25 Serviced Sites

It is the Councils' policy to encourage the provision of private serviced building sites, for example as part of housing developments within Birr in order to strengthen the fabric of the town and environs, and to offer an element of choice. It is also the Councils' policy to ensure that the size of such sites is adequate for appropriate levels of privacy and choice of house type and style.

BTEP 03-26 It is the Councils' policy to encourage and facilitate private house building in Birr and suitably designed residential infill development where appropriate.

BTEP 03-27 It is the Councils' policy to encourage private house building in Birr and Crinkle.

BTEP 03-28 Homeless People

It is the Councils' policy to actively promote integrated solutions to address the issue of homelessness within Birr. The Councils will continue to work in partnership with the statutory and voluntary agencies on the Offaly Homeless Forum to address the accommodation needs of homeless persons in a targeted and focussed manner using an inter-agency approach, in particular with the Midlands' Simon Communities.

BTEP 03-29 Travellers

It is the Councils' policy to respect the distinctive culture of the **Travelling Community** and assist in the process of integration with the settled community.

BTEP 03-30 It is the Councils' policy to provide a good and well-managed living environment for the **Travelling Community** including recommended standards of accommodation, sanitary facilities, and pre-school education facilities, where feasible.

BTEP 03-31 It is the Councils' policy to provide accommodation to meet the needs of the Travelling Community in the Birr Area and to prohibit illegal parking.

BTEP 03-32 Elderly

It is the Councils' policy to take account of the demand and need for elderly persons' dwellings in its annual housing programme. The possibility of providing Old Persons' Dwellings close to existing services in the town centre area will be examined.

3.9 Objectives¹

BTEO 03-01 To secure the implementation of the **Housing Strategy 2008-2015** including the proper implementation of its policies, objectives and goals, in particular, through the reservation of 20% of all and zoned solely for residential use, or for a mixture of residential or other uses, to be made available for the provision of social and affordable housing referred to in Section 94(4) (a) of the Planning and Development Acts 2000-2006. Further, it is the Councils' objective that the allocation between social and affordable housing will be determined on a case-by-case basis depending on the identified social and affordable needs of the area within which the development is taking place and the specific features of the development.

BTEO 03-02 To co-operate with Voluntary Housing Associations in the provision of social housing.

BTEO 03-03 To facilitate orderly development to meet housing requirements of the town and environs.

BTEO 03-04 Ratio of Social to Affordable Housing

To seek the development of social and affordable units on a case-by-case basis, in accordance with the existing local needs and special needs requirements of the population of an area.

BTEO 03-05 House Types and Sizes

To ensure that an appropriate mix of house types and sizes are provided in each residential development as part of 'Part V' proposals, where feasible.

BTEO 03-06 Proposed Accommodation for the Travelling Community

To provide adequate accommodation for Travellers in accordance with the Council's Traveller Accommodation Programme for County Offaly. Further it is an objective of the Councils to take a flexible approach to the location of this accommodation for Travellers.

BTEO 03-07 To meet the housing requirements of the travelling community of the Birr Area.

¹ The order of listing of objectives is not intended to indicate priorities. Subject to the availability of resources, it is the Councils' aim to monitor and accomplish the objectives listed in this section within the period of the plan.

BTEO 03-08 Purpose built dwellings

To provide purpose built dwellings for those with special needs, including provisions for the needs of the elderly, persons with physical disabilities and persons with learning disabilities where feasible and in conjunction with other voluntary bodies and the private sector.

BTEO 03-09 Detailed

To carry out the following detailed objectives:

- Provide suitable accommodation for Travellers at appropriate locations in the urban area.
- Identify further sites for infill housing for public and private sector development.
- To convert the Millbrook Park site in Birr from a residential caravan park to a Group Housing Scheme on a phased basis, commencing with Phase 1 during the current programme with 4 group housing units.