

**Submission to The Housing Commission Public Consultation
From The Housing Commission**

**By
Carlow Public Participation Network
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Introduction: This consultation is being carried on behalf of the Housing Commission. The purpose of the consultation is to inform the Housing Commission's consideration of long-term housing policy post 2030. It is also looking at current housing issues that could affect the long-term.

Access the Housing Commission's Terms of Reference at this link:

<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/e9d71-terms-of-reference-for-the-housing-commission/>

The Commission is seeking specific views on each of the following areas:

- maintaining a long-term sustainable housing supply and providing balance and choice of tenures
- the cost and quality of housing, including the drivers of cost
- the capacity of the construction sector to meet housing supply requirements
- the affordability of private rental accommodation
- the affordability of house purchasing for first-time buyers
- rural housing
- regulation of social housing
- the role of Approved Housing Bodies in housing provision

Consultation Process: In completing this consultation, you will have the opportunity to provide feedback on one, some or all of the areas above, depending on your preference.

All of the answers you give will remain completely confidential. Consultation responses will not be linked back to any individual. Depending on your responses, this consultation can take approximately 20 minutes to complete.

A Public Consultation was already concluded in relation to the terms of reference relating to a referendum.

The consultation opened on Tuesday 21 March 2023 and will run until Friday 28th April 2023. Any submissions received after this date may not be considered.

To access the questionnaire, please click the link below.

<https://www.gov.ie/en/consultation/7d325-the-housing-commission-public-consultation/>

Basis for Submission

During 2019, Carlow PPN brought community groups together to develop *a shared vision for community wellbeing* for the County of Carlow. Through these meetings and online consultations, community groups were asked what their aspirations were for their community for generations to come. These contributions have formed the ' **Vision for Community Wellbeing for the County**'. This guiding Vision informs the work of Carlow PPN Representatives on county policy and decision-making bodies.

What is this Vision for Community Wellbeing?

Although we often think about wellbeing in terms of good physical and mental health, it is also a combination of social, economic, environmental, cultural, and political conditions identified by individuals and their communities as essential for them to flourish and fulfil their potential. It can describe the wider conditions needed by individuals and communities to have a better quality of life, a healthier environment and increased prosperity.

Considering all the aspects of community wellbeing together helped identify actions that can be undertaken by communities alongside local and national governments.

It was developed through an open, participative, transparent process which involved all member groups.

Which Vision have we chosen for this Submission:

Carlow PPN has chosen one of most apt Vision themes to support their submission to The Housing Commission Public Consultation.

Social and Community Development: Vision:

In the County of Carlow all people are valued and supported. We share our diverse cultures and build strong relationships throughout our communities. There is well-planned infrastructure, housing and community facilities that meet the needs of all citizens. Community services, supports and activities are in place that enable us all to live fulfilled, secure and valuable lives.

- We have a sustainable housing plan that includes flexible and creative measures to meet all housing needs.
- Our vibrant community has access to a variety of spaces that can accommodate multiple needs.
- Citizens are educated and empowered to take leadership roles and actively participate.

The Housing Commission Public Consultation Questionnaire:

1. In your opinion, what can the Government do to improve the supply of housing as to better meet the needs of first-time buyers, existing owner-occupiers, and renters?

(300 words or fewer)

There are several actions that the government can take to improve the supply of housing and meet the needs of first-time buyers, existing owner-occupiers, and renters.

Firstly, the government can incentivize the private sector to build more affordable housing through tax breaks or subsidies. This would increase the supply of affordable housing for first-time buyers and renters who are struggling to find affordable options in the current housing market.

Secondly, the government can work to remove barriers to entry for developers and encourage the development of new housing through streamlined planning processes and reduced regulation. This would increase the overall supply of housing and help to meet the needs of owner-occupiers and renters alike.

Thirdly, the government can invest in the refurbishment of existing housing stock, particularly in areas where there is a high demand for housing. This would improve the quality of housing available to renters and owner-occupiers and help to alleviate some of the pressure on the housing market.

Lastly, the government can implement policies that encourage greater homeownership, such as expanding access to affordable mortgages, providing support for first-time buyers, and promoting the use of shared ownership schemes. This would help to ensure that more people are able to take their first steps onto the property ladder and meet the housing needs of the wider population.

Overall, a multifaceted approach that includes a combination of incentivizing private developers, streamlining regulation, investing in existing housing stock, and promoting homeownership, would be the most effective way for the government to improve the supply of housing and meet the diverse needs of first-time buyers, existing owner-occupiers, and renters.

2. In your opinion, what measures / interventions are needed to improve the affordability of private rental accommodation?

(300 words or fewer)

Improving the affordability of private rental accommodation requires a range of measures and interventions.

Firstly, the government can introduce rent control policies to limit the amount that landlords can charge for rent. This would help to ensure that rental prices are affordable for tenants, particularly in areas where there is high demand for rental properties.

Secondly, the government can incentivize the development of more affordable rental properties through tax breaks and other financial incentives for developers. This would increase the supply of affordable rental accommodation and provide tenants with more options to choose from.

Thirdly, the government can introduce policies that provide greater security of tenure for tenants, such as longer-term leases or greater protection against eviction. This would help to reduce the risk of homelessness and provide greater stability for tenants.

Fourthly, the government can introduce measures to improve the quality of rental accommodation, such as mandatory minimum standards for properties and greater regulation of landlords. This would help to ensure that tenants are not forced to pay high rents for substandard properties.

Finally, the government can increase support for low-income households through housing benefit and other forms of financial assistance. This would help to ensure that tenants are not forced to choose between paying rent and meeting other essential living costs.

Overall, a combination of rent control policies, incentives for developers, greater security of tenure, improvements in property quality, and support for low-income households would be necessary to improve the affordability of private rental accommodation and provide tenants with greater access to safe, secure, and affordable housing.

3. In your opinion, what measures / interventions are needed to improve the affordability of housing for first-time buyers?

(300 words or fewer)

Improving the affordability of housing for first-time buyers requires a combination of measures and interventions, including:

Firstly, the government can introduce policies that encourage the development of affordable housing, such as tax breaks and subsidies for developers who build affordable homes. This would increase the supply of affordable properties for first-time buyers and help to reduce prices in the wider housing market.

Secondly, the government can provide financial support for first-time buyers, such as shared equity schemes or Help to Buy programs. This would make it easier for first-time buyers to get on the property ladder and help to reduce the amount of upfront capital required to purchase a home.

Thirdly, the government can reform the planning system to reduce the cost of building new homes. This could include measures to simplify the planning process and reduce regulation, as well as encouraging the use of brownfield sites for development.

Fourthly, the government can introduce measures to make it easier for first-time buyers to access mortgages, such as relaxing lending criteria or providing guarantees for high loan-to-value mortgages. This would help to increase the number of first-time buyers who are able to secure a mortgage and purchase their own home.

Finally, the government can introduce measures to improve the overall affordability of housing, such as increasing the supply of affordable rental properties or implementing rent control policies. This would provide first-time buyers with more options and reduce the pressure on house prices in the wider market.

Overall, a combination of policies that increase the supply of affordable housing, provide financial support for first-time buyers, reduce the cost of building new homes, make it easier to access mortgages, and improve the overall affordability of housing, would be necessary to improve the affordability of housing for first-time buyers.

4. In your opinion, what is required to address the costs of construction of housing in order to improve the affordability of housing in the longer term?

(300 words or fewer)

Addressing the costs of construction of housing is crucial to improve the affordability of housing in the longer term. There are several measures that can be taken to achieve this goal, including:

Firstly, the government can invest in research and development to identify new materials and construction techniques that can reduce the cost of building new homes. This could include exploring alternative materials, such as modular or prefabricated components, which can be manufactured off-site and assembled quickly on-site.

Secondly, the government can work to reduce the regulatory burden on developers, which can add significant costs to the construction process. This could include streamlining planning processes and reducing bureaucracy associated with obtaining permits and approvals.

Thirdly, the government can introduce policies that encourage innovation and competition in the construction sector, such as tax breaks for companies that invest in research and development or provide affordable housing.

Fourthly, the government can work with developers to identify opportunities for cost savings through the use of economies of scale, bulk purchasing, and standardization of design and construction methods.

Finally, the government can invest in infrastructure and amenities that support the development of affordable housing, such as public transport, schools, and community facilities. This can reduce the cost of building new homes by making it easier to develop sites and attract residents.

Overall, addressing the costs of construction of housing requires a comprehensive approach that includes investment in research and development, reduction of regulatory burden, encouragement of innovation and competition, identification of cost-saving opportunities, and investment in supporting infrastructure and amenities. By implementing these measures, the government can help to improve the affordability of housing in the longer term and provide more affordable options for those in need.

5. In your opinion, what changes to building standards and regulations, if any, are required to address the quality of housing?

(300 words or fewer)

Improving the quality of housing is essential for ensuring the safety, health, and well-being of individuals and communities. Building standards and regulations play a critical role in achieving this goal. Here are some of the changes that could be made to address the quality of housing:

Strengthening building codes: Building codes are the minimum standards for building design, construction, and materials. They should be periodically reviewed and updated to ensure they are in line with current knowledge, best practices, and emerging technologies. This would improve the safety, durability, and energy efficiency of buildings.

Ensuring accessibility: Housing should be accessible and adaptable to meet the needs of people with disabilities, the elderly, and those with mobility impairments. This would require incorporating universal design principles into building standards and regulations.

Enhancing indoor air quality: Poor indoor air quality can have serious health effects, including respiratory problems, allergies, and asthma. Building standards and regulations should require the use of non-toxic building materials and proper ventilation systems to improve indoor air quality.

Reducing energy consumption: Building standards and regulations should prioritize energy efficiency to reduce energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions. This can be achieved through the use of insulation, high-performance windows, and energy-efficient appliances.

Implementing building performance standards: Building performance standards would require buildings to meet specific energy and environmental performance targets. This would encourage the use of renewable energy sources and reduce the environmental impact of buildings.

Strengthening enforcement: Building standards and regulations are only effective if they are enforced. Strengthening enforcement mechanisms, including inspections and penalties for non-compliance, would ensure that buildings are built to the required standards and regulations.

In conclusion, improving the quality of housing requires a comprehensive approach that involves strengthening building standards and regulations. This would require a collaborative effort between governments, industry stakeholders, and the community to ensure that housing is safe, healthy, and sustainable for all.

6. In your opinion, what actions can be taken to increase capacity in the construction sector to better meet the increasing demand for housing?

(300 words or fewer)

Meeting the increasing demand for housing requires an increase in capacity in the construction sector. Here are some actions that can be taken to achieve this:

Investing in training and education: Investing in training and education programs can help to increase the number of skilled workers in the construction industry. This can be achieved by providing subsidies for training programs, apprenticeships, and vocational education.

Encouraging innovation: Encouraging innovation in the construction sector can help to increase productivity and efficiency. This can be achieved by providing incentives for the adoption of new technologies and construction methods.

Streamlining regulatory processes: Streamlining regulatory processes can help to reduce the time and costs associated with obtaining permits and approvals for construction projects. This can be achieved by simplifying application processes, reducing bureaucratic barriers, and introducing online systems.

Increasing investment: Increasing investment in the construction sector can help to increase capacity by providing funding for new projects and infrastructure. This can be achieved by providing tax incentives, low-interest loans, and grants.

Facilitating partnerships: Facilitating partnerships between the public and private sectors can help to increase capacity by leveraging the expertise and resources of both. This can be achieved by creating public-private partnerships and encouraging collaboration between industry stakeholders.

Improving supply chains: Improving supply chains can help to increase efficiency and reduce costs in the construction sector. This can be achieved by introducing lean manufacturing processes, improving logistics, and developing strategic partnerships with suppliers.

In conclusion, increasing capacity in the construction sector requires a multi-faceted approach that involves investing in training and education, encouraging innovation, streamlining regulatory processes, increasing investment, facilitating partnerships, and improving supply chains. By taking these actions, it is possible to increase the capacity of the construction sector to better meet the increasing demand for housing.

7. In your opinion, what measures / interventions are needed for the development of rural housing, including one-off housing (a house built outside of a town / village that is not part of a group of houses / estate), in an environmentally and socially sustainable manner?

(300 words or fewer)

The development of rural housing, including one-off housing, must be done in an environmentally and socially sustainable manner. Here are some suggestions about measures and interventions that can be taken to achieve this:

Encouraging energy-efficient building: Energy-efficient building practices can help to reduce the environmental impact of rural housing. This can be achieved by requiring new buildings to meet minimum energy efficiency standards, encouraging the use of renewable energy sources, and promoting the use of green building materials.

Promoting sustainable land use: Sustainable land use planning can help to ensure that rural housing is developed in a manner that is environmentally and socially sustainable. This can be achieved by promoting compact development, encouraging the preservation of natural areas, and promoting mixed-use development.

Ensuring access to services: Rural housing must be developed in a manner that ensures access to basic services, such as water, sanitation, and healthcare. This can be achieved by investing in infrastructure, including roads, water and sanitation systems, and healthcare facilities.

Encouraging community participation: Community participation is essential for the development of socially sustainable rural housing. This can be achieved by involving local communities in the planning and design process, and by promoting the use of participatory decision-making processes.

Supporting local economies: Rural housing must be developed in a manner that supports local economies. This can be achieved by promoting the use of local materials and labour, and by supporting local businesses.

Providing financial incentives: Financial incentives can be provided to encourage the development of environmentally and socially sustainable rural housing. This can include tax incentives for energy-efficient buildings, grants for sustainable land use planning, and subsidies for the use of renewable energy sources.

In conclusion, the development of rural housing, including one-off housing, must be done in an environmentally and socially sustainable manner. This requires a multi-faceted approach that involves promoting energy-efficient building practices, sustainable land use planning, ensuring access to basic services, encouraging community participation, supporting local economies, and providing financial incentives. By taking these measures and interventions, it is possible to develop rural housing that is environmentally and socially sustainable.

8. In your opinion, what measures, if any, are needed in order to regulate local authority provided social housing in Ireland?

(300 words or fewer)

In order to regulate local authority provided social housing in Ireland, several measures can be taken. Here are some suggestions:

Clear guidelines: Clear guidelines should be established to regulate the allocation, maintenance, and management of social housing units. These guidelines should be made available to tenants and should be regularly reviewed and updated.

Improved data collection: Improved data collection and monitoring of social housing units can help to identify issues and inform policy decisions. This can be achieved by establishing a centralized database of social housing units, which would include information on tenant demographics, rent payments, and property maintenance.

Greater accountability: Local authorities should be held accountable for the quality of social housing units they provide. This can be achieved by establishing a system of inspections and audits to ensure that social housing units meet minimum standards for safety, cleanliness, and maintenance.

Enhanced tenant participation: Tenant participation can help to improve the quality of social housing units and foster a sense of community among residents. This can be achieved by establishing tenant councils or resident associations, which can provide input on policy decisions and help to identify and address issues.

Increased funding: Increased funding for social housing can help to improve the quality of housing units and reduce waiting lists. This can be achieved by allocating more resources to local authorities for the construction and maintenance of social housing units.

Support for sustainable housing: Social housing should be developed in a sustainable manner, which includes energy-efficient buildings and the use of renewable energy sources. This can be achieved by providing financial incentives for sustainable housing practices and promoting the use of green building materials.

In conclusion, regulating local authority provided social housing in Ireland requires a multifaceted approach that involves clear guidelines, improved data collection, greater accountability, enhanced tenant participation, increased funding, and support for sustainable housing. By taking these measures, it is possible to improve the quality of social housing units and provide safe, affordable housing to those in need.

9. What do you believe is the optimum role of Approved Housing Bodies (AHBs), including their role regarding the housing needs of vulnerable groups?

AHBs are independent, not-for-profit organisations that provide affordable rented housing for people who cannot afford to pay private sector rents or buy their own homes (examples of AHBs include Clúid, Respond and Threshold).

(300 words or fewer)

The optimum role of Approved Housing Bodies (AHBs) is to provide affordable and high-quality housing for vulnerable groups in society. AHBs are independent, not-for-profit organizations that work in partnership with local authorities to provide social and affordable housing.

AHBs play a crucial role in meeting the housing needs of vulnerable groups, including the elderly, people with disabilities, homeless individuals and families, and those on low incomes. AHBs offer a range of housing options, including affordable rental units, shared ownership, and affordable purchase schemes.

AHBs can also provide support services to vulnerable tenants, including social care, mental health support, and employment services. They work closely with local authorities and other support agencies to ensure that tenants have access to the services they need to maintain their tenancies and improve their quality of life.

AHBs have a strong focus on social responsibility and community development. They work closely with local communities to develop housing solutions that meet local needs and are integrated with the wider community. AHBs often involve local residents in the development and management of their housing projects, which can help to build strong and vibrant communities.

In summary, the optimum role of AHBs is to provide affordable and high-quality housing for vulnerable groups in society. AHBs play a crucial role in meeting the housing needs of these groups, providing a range of housing options and support services. They also have a strong focus on social responsibility and community development, working closely with local communities to develop housing solutions that meet local needs and build strong and vibrant communities.

End of Submission

Date: 19.4.2023