

APPENDIX F – Simplified Rural Settlement Strategy

9.5 Rural Settlement Strategy

9.5.1 Local Context

The Council recognises the long tradition of people living in rural areas of the County and promotes sustainable rural settlement as the key component of delivering viable rural communities.

In recent years, Meath has experienced significant pressure to accommodate rural housing which has resulted in the open rural character of many areas being eroded by piecemeal housing development. This level of residential development threatens the future viability of agricultural enterprises, agricultural related/processing enterprises, quarrying and extractive industries and newly emerging technological industries on appropriately zoned lands.

It is also clear that the capacity of the environment and the road network to accommodate further new residential development is reaching its limit in many areas of the County. There is a concern that if rural housing continues to be permitted at the current levels, that irreversible damage will be done to the rural environment including water quality and landscape character. The opportunities for farm families to continue to live/work within their own communities is likely to be compromised.

Therefore, there is a necessity to carefully manage future rural housing development in County Meath. The provision of more sustainable housing options for rural communities will be facilitated by the Plan through building up the capacity of rural villages and rural nodes to accommodate the future house needs of rural dwellers not engaged in agriculture or rural economic enterprises, which will sustain their futures.

Policies

It is the policy of the Council:

RUR POL 2

- (i) To manage residential development in Rural Areas under Strong Urban Influence by ensuring that in these areas the provision of single houses in the open countryside facilitates farm families to continue to live and/or work within their own communities.
- (ii) To manage residential development in Strong Rural Areas by ensuring that in these areas the provision of single houses in the open countryside facilitates farm families and those with demonstrable intrinsic links to the rural area to continue to live and/ or work within their own communities.

RUR POL 3

In Areas under Strong Urban Influence and Strong Rural Areas the provision of more sustainable housing options for rural communities will be facilitated by the Plan through building up the capacity of rural villages and rural nodes to accommodate the future housing needs of rural dwellers not engaged in agriculture or rural economic enterprises, which will sustain their futures.

9.5.2 Rural Area Categories in County Meath

Based on analysis of population densities, population change, commuting patterns², it is clear that there are 2 distinct rural categories in Co. Meath. These are as follows:

- **Rural Areas Under Strong Urban Influence**
- **Strong Rural Areas**

(Please refer to Map 9.1 - Rural Development Pressure Map which sets out the extent of both areas).

Rural Areas Under Strong Urban Influence

This area is characterised by a rapidly rising rural population, a significant proportion of which are commuting outside of the County for work. The County's outbound commuting rates³ are the highest in the Country and it is a key tenet of the Meath Economic Development Strategy to address this issue with the creation of 'live work' communities in suitable locations within the County.

The Rural Area Under Strong Urban Influence spans a large geographic area of the County, comprising the commuter-belt and peri-urban⁴ areas. Continued high levels of single rural houses in these locations would inhibit the growth of the County's urban areas, cause further deterioration of rural amenities, contribute to the continuing decline of rural villages and nodes and create significant sustainability challenges.

Strong Rural Areas

The level of individual housing development activity in these areas tends to be lower than that within the Rural Area Under Strong Urban Influence.

The Strong Rural Area is primarily located to the north west of the County and includes rural areas outside Oldcastle, Kilmainhamwood, Crossakiel, Nobber, Carnaross and Moynalty. In these areas, the focus of urban generated housing should be in the network of settlements/nodes to support the development of services and infrastructure and to take pressure off development in the open countryside.

9.5.3 Rural Housing Policy

This section sets out the policies for rural housing in the two distinct categories referred to above (i.e. Rural Area Under Strong Urban Influence & Strong Rural Area (refer to Map 9.1).

All rural housing proposals will be assessed having regard to, inter alia, the protection of key economic, environmental, natural and heritage assets, such as the road network, water quality, important landscapes, habitats, biodiversity and likely future impacts of climate change.

Applications for rural dwellings will be considered, having regard to the requirements set out in Tables 9.3(a) – 9.3(d) '**Schedule of Local Need**' and **where it is demonstrated that the development would not prejudice the environment and the rural character of the area** (Refer to Section 9.5.6 Development Assessment Criteria).

Please note that the requirements pertaining to rural dwellings in the UNESCO World Heritage Site Brú na Bóinne are set out in Chapter 8 Cultural and Natural Heritage and Appendix 8.

² Data provided by AIRO (All Island Research Observatory)

³ POWSCAR Data Census 2016

⁴ Peri Urban areas are parts of the open countryside that have been subjected to very high levels of urban generated adjustment.

Alternative Rural Living Options (Local Housing Need not a requirement)

While the Rural Housing Policy applies to all applications for one-off houses in the open countryside it is important to note that there are a number of alternative options provided for in the Plan to facilitate rural living. If a prospective applicant is not eligible for rural housing in one of the 4 Local Need Applicant Categories as detailed in Table 9.3(a)-(d) those seeking to reside in the rural area could further qualify under the following circumstances. See Chapter 11. Development Management Chapter for specific policies relating to same.

Table 9.1: Alternative potential options for rural dwellers (Local Need does not apply)

Alternative Option	Rural Area Under Strong Urban Influence	Strong Rural Area
Family Flat Extension	√	√
Sensitive restoration and adaptive re-use of traditional dwellings/ outbuildings/farm buildings	√	√
Conversion of disused rural commercial buildings (e.g shop, public house)	√	√
Replacement Dwelling	√	√

Table 9.1 above represents viable potential options for prospective applicants who would not comply with RUR POL 4 and the Schedule of Local Need as detailed in Table 9,3(a)-(d). For further details in relation to each of these alternative options which may also facilitate rural living please refer to the following relevant sections;

- **Section 9.12 Vernacular Rural Buildings (Refurbishment and Re-Use)** – Main policies of relevance are;

RUR POL 49 ‘To promote the viable re-use of vernacular dwellings without losing their character and to support applications for the sensitive restoration of disused vernacular or traditional dwellings’.

RUR POL 53 ‘To consider the limited conversion of outhouses and other structures attached to large country houses or other heritage structures where acceptable conservation practice is observed in line with the other policies and objectives of this Plan and where acceptable site suitability has been established in terms of access, car parking, open space, wastewater disposal and maintaining the setting and amenities of the main structure’

RUR POL 54 ‘To respect the sensitive restoration and conversion to residential use of disused vernacular or traditional dwellings or traditional farm buildings, including those which are Protected Structures, such proposals shall not be subject to the Rural Housing Policy (i.e. local need) that applies to new dwellings’.

- **Section 9.13 Replacement Dwellings –**

Section 9.13 states that ‘The provisions of RUR POL 4 (i.e. Rural Generated Housing Need) and RUR POL 16 (Occupancy clause) will not apply in the case of refurbishment and/or replacement of existing housing stock’. In the case of replacement dwellings, it is required that the original structure was last used as an authorised habitable dwelling and that the roof, and all internal and external walls and windows are substantially intact.

- **Section 9.15 Family Flat Extensions in the Rural Area and Rural Node Zones –** The main policy of relevance is **RUR POL 56** The creation of a custom-built ‘family flat’ to be occupied by a member of the occupant family with a housing need is generally acceptable subject to site suitability and compliance with RUR OBJ 47. Family flats allow for semi-independent accommodation for an immediate family member.

Map 9.1: Meath Rural Development Pressure Map

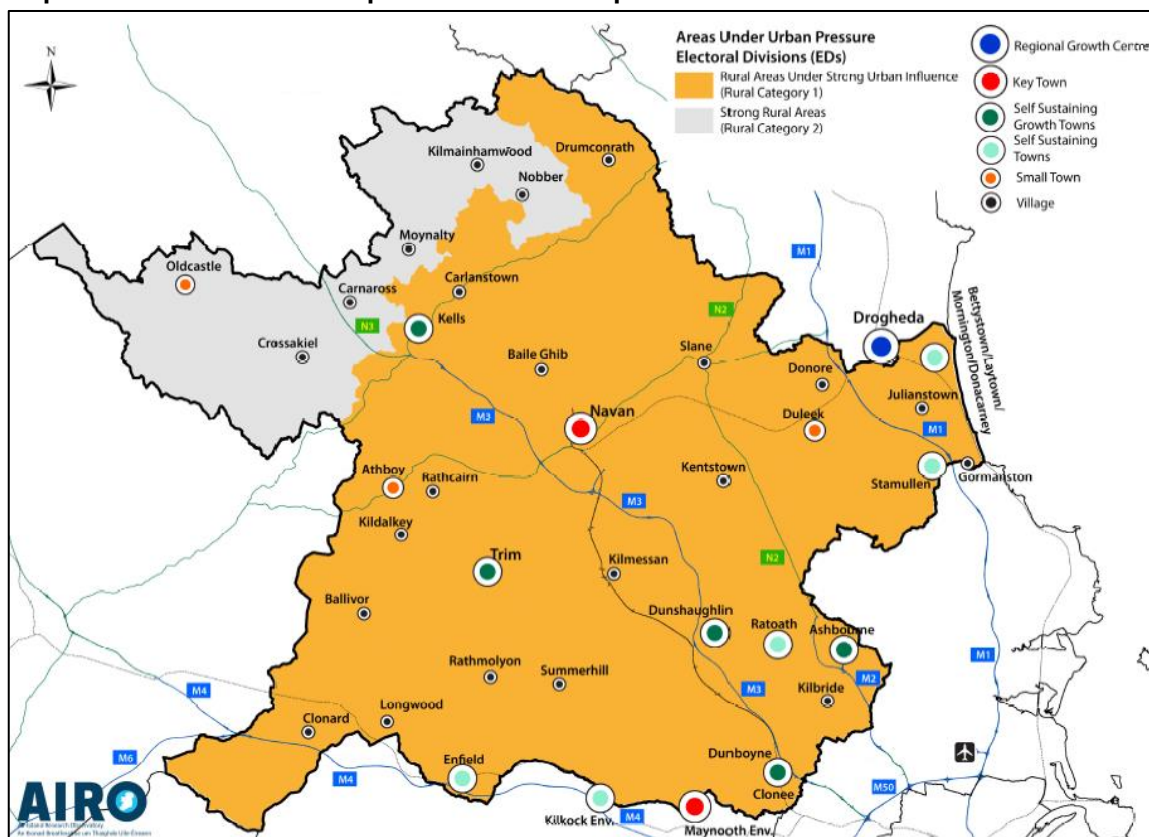


Table 9.2: Summary Matrix of those categories of eligible persons for housing in the rural area.

Local Need Category (See Table 9.3(a)-(d))	Rural Area Under Strong Urban Influence	Strong Rural Area
Involved in the family farm - Persons engaged full time in agriculture > 7 years (5 years Strong Rural Area), family farm > 25 acres, family ownership > 10 years.	✓	✓
Member of farm family - Persons who have grown up & spent > 10 years living in rural area, seek to build first home on their original family landholding > 25 acres, family ownership > 10 years	✓*	✓
Intrinsic Links - Persons who have spent > 10 years living in a Strong Rural Area as members of the rural community		✓
Owner of established rural business – established and operating authorised/licensed businesses for > 5 years.	✓	✓
Site specific rural employment - Persons working full time in farming, equine, forestry, agri-tourism, period > 5 years	✓	✓
Exceptional Health Reasons - may require a person to live in a particular environment, certified by specialist documents	✓	✓
Returning Emigrant – lived > 10 years in local rural area, wish to return to reside near to or care for immediate family members on their original family landholding > 25 acres	✓*	✓

* Members of farm families are eligible to relocate to the original family landholding of 25 acres irrespective of whether they already owned a dwelling outside of the original family landholding.

Note: The matrix is a summary only regarding the suitability of applications for housing across County Meath. In all cases, the written policy will apply and as such the matrix should be read in conjunction with the identified policies

Schedule of Local Needs

RUR POL 4

In order to satisfy the rural housing policy for a rural dwelling in Co. Meath in all areas, an applicant shall:

(A) Meet one of the following categories of applicant:

Local Need 1. A member of a farming family who is actively engaged in farming the family landholding.

OR

Local Need 2. A member of a farm family or returning emigrant who wishes to reside on the family landholding.⁵

OR

Local Need 3. An intrinsic member of the rural community (Strong Rural Area only).

OR

Local Need 4. A person whose principal occupation is in a rural resource based activity or owns an established rural business. The applicant must demonstrate a genuine local need to reside in the rural area by reason of their active and direct involvement in a rural based enterprise or a full-time rural resource based occupation.

AND

(B) Meet one of the local need criteria set out in Tables 9.3 (a), 9.3 (b), 9.3 (c) or 9.3 (d) Schedule of Local Need.

Table 9.3 (a) Schedule of Local Need

Local Need 1 - A member of a farming family who is actively engaged in farming the family landholding (25 acres)	
<i>The applicant must demonstrate a genuine local need to reside in the area through direct and active involvement in the running of the family farm. The farm must be in the ownership of the applicant's immediate family for a minimum of ten years preceding the date of the application for planning permission.</i>	
Local Need Criteria	
Rural Areas Under Strong Urban Influence	Strong Rural Areas
(i) Persons engaged full time in agriculture (including commercial bloodstock/horticulture), wishing to build their home in the rural area on the family landholding and who can demonstrate by way of documentary evidence that they have been engaged in farming at that location for a continuous period of over 7 years, prior to making the application. The family farm shall be in all cases in excess of 25 acres and in its entirety within the family's exclusive ownership for a minimum of 10 years.	(i) Persons engaged full time in agriculture (including commercial bloodstock/horticulture), wishing to build their home in the rural area on the family landholding and who can demonstrate by way of documentary evidence that they have been engaged in farming at that location for a continuous period of over 5 years, prior to making the application. The family farm shall be in all cases in excess of 25 acres and in its entirety within the family's exclusive ownership for a minimum of 10 years.

Table 9.3 b) Schedule of Local Need

Local Need 2 – A member of a farm family who wishes to reside on the family landholding.	
<i>The applicant must demonstrate a genuine local need to reside on the family lands by reason of immediate family ties</i>	
Local Need Criteria	
Rural Areas Under Strong Urban Influence	Strong Rural Areas
(i) Persons who have grown up and spent substantial periods of their lives (10 years) living in the rural area of Meath as members of the rural community and who seek to build their first home in the rural area on their original family landholding which shall be in all cases in excess of 25 acres and in its entirety within the family's exclusive ownership for a minimum of 10 years.	(i) Persons who have grown up and spent substantial periods of their lives (10 years) living in the rural area of Meath as members of the rural community and who seek to build their first 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 a 5km radius of the original family home may be considered.
(ii) Emigrants returning to build a dwelling on the family farm, who have grown up and spent substantial periods of their lives (10 years) on their original family landholding which shall be in all cases in excess of 25 acres and in its entirety within the family's exclusive ownership for a minimum of 10 years.	(ii) Emigrants returning to build a dwelling who have grown up and spent substantial periods of their lives (10 years) living in the rural area of Meath, 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, returning to build on the family landholding or on a site within circa 5km radius of the original family home.

Table 9.3 c) Schedule of Local Need

Local Need 3 – An intrinsic member of the rural community.	
<i>The applicant must demonstrate a genuine local need to reside close to their family home by reason of immediate family ties (Immediate family members are defined as mother, father, son, daughter, brother, sister or guardian), and social linkages to the rural area.</i>	
Local Need Criteria	
Rural Areas Under Strong Urban Influence	Strong Rural Areas
(i) In Rural Areas Under Strong Urban Influence this category of applicant will be facilitated in the Rural Nodes in compliance with RUR POL 15.	(i) Persons who have grown up and spent substantial periods of their lives (10 years) living in a Strong Rural Area as members of the rural community and who seek to build their home in the rural area on their family landholding. Where no land is available in the family ownership, a site within 5km of the original family home may be considered.

Table 9.3 d) Schedule of Local Need

Local Need 4 – A person whose principal occupation is in a rural resource based activity or owns an established rural business	
<p><i>The applicant must demonstrate a genuine local need to reside in the rural area by reason of their active and direct involvement in a rural based enterprise or a full-time rural resource based occupation.</i></p>	
Local Need Criteria	
Rural Areas Under Strong Urban Influence	Strong Rural Areas
<p>(i) Persons who can satisfy the Planning Authority by way of documentary evidence that their rural business is authorised/licensed, has been established and operating for a minimum of 5 years. The applicant must demonstrate a genuine local need to reside in the rural area by reason of their active and direct involvement in a rural based enterprise or a full-time rural resource based occupation.</p>	<p>(i) Persons who can satisfy the Planning Authority by way of documentary evidence that their rural business is authorised/licensed, has been established and operating for a minimum of 5 years. The applicant must demonstrate a genuine local need to reside in the rural area by reason of their active and direct involvement in a rural based enterprise or a full-time rural resource based occupation.</p>
<p>(ii) A person whose principal occupation is in a rural resource based activity for a minimum period of 5 years (i.e. agriculture, forestry, mariculture, agri-tourism etc.) can demonstrate a need to live in a rural area in order to carry out their occupation. The Planning Authority will strictly require any applicant to show that there is a specialised/professional aspect or characteristic of their employment that requires them to live in that rural area, as opposed to a local settlement/node.</p>	<p>(ii) A person whose principal occupation is in a rural resource based activity for a minimum period of 5 years (i.e. agriculture, forestry, mariculture, agri-tourism etc.) can demonstrate a need to live in a rural area in order to carry out their occupation. The Planning Authority will strictly require any applicant to show that there is a specialised/professional aspect or characteristic of their employment that requires them to live in that rural area, as opposed to a local settlement/node.</p>

* Where an applicant has resided in a rural area in excess of the previous 15 consecutive years, in a dwelling attached to their business, such as farmer, and the business inclusive of the dwelling house is being sold for retirement or other circumstances, such applications will be considered on their individual merits in both rural areas, where the applicant satisfied the local housing need criteria.

** The needs of persons with exceptional health circumstances in both rural areas are also recognised (subject to submitting the necessary supporting medical documentation certified from a registered specialist medical practitioner). Please refer to RUR POL 12 in this regard.

Policies

It is the policy of the Council:

RUR POL 5

To recognise and promote the value of agricultural land to ensure sustainable food supply and the landscape value of the rural area.

sports groups; letter from a Financial Institution confirming address, Utility bills confirming address.

The Planning Authority may seek additional information to that set out above if considered necessary.

RUR POL 6

All applications for rural dwellings in the case of Local Need 1 and 2 in the Rural Area under Strong Urban Influence shall include detailed documentary evidence of compliance with the rural housing policy as set out in RUR POL 4 as follows:

- Set out clearly your relationship to the land owner i.e mother, father, son, daughter, brother, sister, guardian;
- Completed Local Housing Needs Assessment Form;
- Land Registry Certificate and land holding maps of all land holdings in family ownership in County Meath;
- Documentary evidence of date of acquisition/purchase of land holding;
- Details of all places of residence of the applicant over the previous 10 years (7 years if engaged in farming activity on the lands);
- Documentary evidence of Intrinsic Links to the area which shall include, where applicable, : Copy of applicant entry on Electoral Register, Evidence of attendance at Local School confirmed in writing by the School, Evidence of Membership of local community/

RUR POL 7

All applications for rural dwellings in the case of Local Need 1, 2 and 3 in the Strong Rural Areas shall include detailed documentary evidence of compliance with the rural housing policy as set out in RUR POL 4 as follows:

- Set out clearly your relationship to the land owner i.e mother, father, son, daughter, brother, sister, guardian, (if applicable);
- Completed Local Housing Needs Assessment Form;
- Land Registry Certificate and land holding maps of all land holdings in family ownership in County Meath, (if applicable);
- Documentary evidence of date of acquisition/purchase of family land holding;
- Where the applicant is not the owner, a letter confirming details of the relationship between the applicant and the landowner signed by both parties is required;
- Land Registry Certificate and land holding maps of all land holdings in

the landowner's ownership in County Meath, if applicable;

- Details of all places of residence of the applicant over the previous 10 years (5 years if engaged in farming on the lands);
- Documentary evidence of the applicants Intrinsic Links to the area which shall include, where applicable, : Copy of applicant entry on Electoral Register, Evidence of attendance at Local School confirmed in writing by the School, Evidence of Membership of local community/sports groups; letter from a Financial Institution confirming address, Utility bills confirming address.

The Planning Authority may seek additional information to that set out above if considered necessary.

RUR POL 8

All Applications in the case of Local Need 4 for rural dwellings based on established rural businesses/rural occupation shall include detailed documentary evidence of compliance with the rural housing policy as set out in RUR POL 4 as follows:

- Documentary evidence that the rural business is authorised/licensed, has been established and operating for a minimum of 5 years;
- Details of principal occupation and documentary evidence that principal income is derived from the business;
- Completed Local Housing Needs Assessment Form

- Land Registry Certificate and land holding maps of all land holdings in family ownership in County Meath;

- Documentary evidence of date of acquisition/purchase of family land holding;

- Details of all places of residence of the applicant over the previous 10 years;

The Planning Authority may seek additional information to that set out above if considered necessary.

RUR POL 9

To require all applicants in areas Under Strong Urban Influence who are seeking to build their home on their family land holding for their own full time occupation shall be required to demonstrate that they have not been previously granted permission for a one off rural dwelling in Meath and have not sold this dwelling or site to an unrelated third party.

RUR POL 10

To require all applicants in Strong Rural Areas who are seeking to build their home on their family land holding for their own full time occupation shall be required to demonstrate that they have not been previously granted permission for a one off rural dwelling in Meath and have not sold this dwelling or site to an unrelated third party in the last 10 years.

RUR POL 11

To restrict residential development on a landholding, where there is a history of development through the speculative sale or development of sites, notwithstanding the applicant's compliance with the local need criteria.

RUR POL 12

To recognise that exceptional health circumstances, certified by relevant documents, from a registered specialist medical practitioner that a disability, may require a person to live in a particular environment. The supporting evidence must confirm and clearly outline that residence in a rural environment is essential for the health of the applicant or carer. Housing in such circumstances should generally be facilitated close to existing services and facilities in Rural Nodes within 12 km radius of their existing dwelling. All planning permissions for such housing shall be subject to a seven year occupancy clause. In all cases the Planning Authority reserves the right to request such additional certification considered necessary to establish the bona fides of the applicant's unambiguous compliance with the requirements of this policy.

RUR POL 13

To recognise that unavoidable exceptional financial circumstances, certified by relevant documents including in all such cases a letter from the relevant financial institution confirming the requirement to sell an existing rural home, may occur. Housing in such circumstances shall be facilitated in Rural Nodes within 12 km radius of their existing dwelling. All planning permissions for such housing shall be subject to a seven year occupancy clause. In all cases the Planning Authority reserves the right to request such additional certification considered necessary to establish the bona fides of the applicant's unambiguous compliance with the requirements of this policy.

RUR POL 14

To recognise that in limited exceptional circumstances unacceptable housing scenarios certified by relevant documentation, may occur. This policy is applicable to persons who have grown up and spent substantial periods of their lives (10 years) living in the rural area of Meath as members of the rural community. Housing in such circumstances shall be facilitated close to existing services and facilities in Rural Nodes within 12 km radius of their existing dwelling. All planning permissions for such housing shall be subject to a seven year occupancy clause. In all cases the Planning Authority reserves the right to request such additional certification considered necessary to establish the bona fides of the applicant's unambiguous compliance with the requirements of this policy.

9.5.4 Rural Nodes

The housing needs of those members of the rural community who are not part of the agricultural/horticulture community as set out at section 9.3 will be facilitated in the extensive network of rural nodes.

The majority of rural nodes, (see Table 9.4) comprise largely unserviced rural areas with limited social and community infrastructure. Rural nodes are designated for limited development at a sustainable scale for immediate local need through the development of clusters. It is anticipated that each rural node can cater for a small population increase from their current population base over the period of the Plan.

Consideration of planning applications for development within the nodes will have regard to the role and form of the node within the wider rural area with particular care being taken that these settlements do not compete with designated villages in the services they provide or the role and function they play within the rural area.

Detailed siting and design guidance including best practice examples and layouts in terms of the development of the rural nodes will be provided in the Meath Rural House Design Guide when reviewed.

The Council will support infill development on appropriate sites in rural nodes which make the most sustainable use of serviced land and existing public infrastructure. The Council will also promote the clachan tradition of clustering houses together in the modern context (6-8 detached dwellings maximum per planning application). Cluster Housing Schemes in rural nodes should be developed in a sustainable way respecting the unique aspects of the village and the site itself, whilst also responding to current economic and social needs.

Residential use of the upper floors of commercial properties is positively encouraged and can make a positive contribution to the regeneration of rural nodes.

Where external alterations are proposed to facilitate the conversion of existing premises to residential use these will only be permitted where they are in keeping with the host building and the character of the surrounding rural area in terms of design, scale and use of materials.

Table 9.4 Designated Rural Nodes

Ashbourne MD - Rural Nodes
Ardcath
Bellewstown
Clonalvy
Curragha
Cushinstown
Edoxtown
Lismullin
Oberstown

Kells MD - Rural Nodes
Ballinacree
Ballinlough
Castletown
Cortown
Dromone
Drumbarragh
Fordstown
Kilallon
Kilbeg
Kilberry

Kilskeer
Meath Hill
Newcastle
Oristown
Rathkenny
Rathmore
Teervurcher
Wilkinstown

Laytown-Bettystown MD - Rural Nodes
Yellow Furze
Grangegeeth
Lobinstown
Monknewtown
Newtown

Navan MD - Rural Nodes
Bective
Bohermeen
Boyerstown
Robinstown

Ratoath MD - Rural Nodes
Batterstown
Culmullin
Drumree
Dunsany
Kilcloon
Kiltale
Moynalvy

Trim MD - Rural Nodes
Ballinabrackey
Castlejordan
Coole
Dunderry
Kilbride
Killyon
Hill of Down
Rathcore

Policies

It is the policy of the Council:

RUR POL 15

To ensure that the provision of housing in all rural nodes shall be reserved for persons who are an intrinsic part of the rural community. In all cases applicants shall certify to the satisfaction of the Planning Authority that they have been a rural resident for a minimum of 5 years. The node shall be within 12 km of their current place of residence.

Detailed documentary evidence shall be submitted to support the foregoing applications as follows:

- Completed Local Housing Needs Assessment Form;
- Details of all places of residence of the applicant over the previous 5 years;
- Documentary evidence of the applicants Intrinsic Links to the area which shall include, where applicable: Copy of applicant entry on Electoral Register, Evidence of attendance at Local School confirmed in writing by the School, Evidence of Membership of local community/sports groups; Letter from a Financial Institution confirming address, Utility bills confirming address.

- Health/ Financial/Unacceptable accommodation circumstances (Refer to RUR Pol 11-13.)

The Planning Authority may seek additional information to that set out above if considered necessary.

Objectives

It is the objective of the Council:

RUR OBJ 14

To support rural nodes located across the County in offering attractive housing options to meet the needs of the established rural communities and to support existing local community facilities such as schools, post offices, recreational facilities and childcare facilities etc.

RUR OBJ 15

To seek to ensure that new residential development in rural nodes is in accordance with 'the Meath Rural Design Guide' and is of a design and layout compatible with the character of its setting including the requirement to provide footpaths where appropriate.

RUR OBJ 16

To promote the development of central brownfield sites in rural nodes, if existing, as appropriate. Suburban type developments or multiple housing developments will not be permitted.

RUR OBJ 17

All development in rural nodes should take cognisance of the prevailing scale, pattern of development and services availability.

RUR OBJ 18

To promote the development of local craft/artisan facilities in Rural Nodes, of a design and layout reflective of its rural setting.

RUR OBJ 19

To promote the provision of childcare facilities within rural nodes to meet local demand and encourage the location of such facilities near schools where possible.

RUR OBJ 20

To encourage the provision of local small scale convenience shops, exclusive of service stations, at an appropriate scale in rural nodes where there is a clear deficiency in retail provision, subject to the protection of residential amenity and the rural character of the area.

RUR OBJ 21

To require the provision of high quality, durable, appropriately designed, secure boundary treatments in rural nodes reflective of the rural environment in all developments.

RUR OBJ 22

To promote the retention of field boundaries and mature trees and hedgerows to protect the rural character of the area.

RUR OBJ 23

To ensure that proposals for infill development take account of the character of the area and where possible retain existing features such as building line, height, railings, hedgerows, trees, gateways etc.

RUR OBJ 24

To require that infill proposals accord with the relevant Development Management Standards contained in this Plan and should contribute positively to the renewal of these areas and to the established character and amenities of the area.

RUR OBJ 25

To promote residential use above shops and other business premises subject to compliance with the relevant Development

Management Standards contained in this Plan.

RUR OBJ 26

To promote the clachan tradition of clustering houses together in rural nodes while respecting the unique aspects of the node and the site itself. An overall indicative scheme layout shall be provided as part of the first planning application on the subject landholding. Each planning application shall be for a maximum of 6 – 8 dwellings.

RUR OBJ 27

To require the provision of footpaths and public lighting as part of residential development in rural nodes, as appropriate.

RUR OBJ 28

To require a minimum site area of 0.2 hectares (0.5 acres) for each residential unit in rural nodes where serviced by an individual waste water treatment plant.

9.5.5 Occupancy Conditions

The Council is required to attach occupancy conditions in accordance with the Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines and Circular SP 5/08 issued by the then Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government.

It is the policy of the Council:

RUR POL 16

To attach an occupancy condition to all rural dwellings, including those located in Rural Area RA and Rural Node RN zones pursuant to Section 47 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, restricting the use of the dwelling to the applicant, as a place of permanent residence. The period of occupancy will be limited to a period of **7 years** from the date of first occupation.

- Local circumstances such as the degree to which the surrounding area has been developed and is trending towards becoming overdeveloped;
- In the rural area, the degree of existing development on the original landholding from which the site is taken including the extent to which previously permitted rural housing has been retained in family occupancy. Where there is a history of individual residential development on the landholding through the speculative sale of sites, permission may be refused;
- The extent of ribbon development as defined in Appendix 4 of the Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines.

Please refer to Appendix 13 'The Meath Rural House Design Guide' 2009 for further guidance on siting and design of rural buildings.

9.5.6 Development Assessment Criteria

Meath County Council has produced a Rural Housing Design Guide which provides guidance on good siting and design principles regarding rural dwellings in the countryside and rural nodes.

It is the intention of the Council that rural dwellings constructed in Rural Area and Rural Node Zones will be of an excellent standard, will complement the character of the landscape, and will contribute in a positive manner to the built heritage of the County.

The Council will take into account the following matters in assessing individual proposals for dwellings in Rural Areas and Rural Nodes:

- The suitability of the site in terms of access, wastewater disposal and house location relative to other policies and objectives of this Plan; The siting and design of new buildings to ensure that they integrate harmoniously with their surroundings and thereby protect the amenity and character of the landscape of the County.

RUR OBJ 29

To require that all planning applications for rural dwellings in Rural Area RA and Rural Node RN zones shall be accompanied by sufficient information prepared by a competent person as follows:

- Certification that wastewater proposals are compliant with relevant National Standards;
- Certification that access arrangements is compliant with relevant National Standards;
- Certification that all lands necessary to achieve access arrangements in accordance with relevant National Standards are within the application red

