

Appendix 1

Public Consultation

In order to fully involve the people of County Wexford in the preparation of the County Development Plan, extensive public consultation was undertaken. The Planning Authority published a discussion document entitled “*Strategic Planning Issues for County Wexford*” which was widely circulated to groups and organisations, both public and private, to interested parties and individuals. A series of public meetings were held throughout the County to discuss this document and to facilitate the general public in making their views known on planning matters affecting County Wexford. Public meetings were also held in the various villages where it was proposed to prepare Village Plans to discuss issues specific to those areas

A wide range of responses were received to the discussion document, at the public meetings and in individual communications. While no general consensus emerged, a number of issues came to the fore.

Housing and Community Development

- *Attention was drawn to the need to cater for the needs of the disadvantaged in the provision of social housing; groups identified in this context included the elderly, people with disabilities, low-income families and members of the travelling community. There was a perception that planning should address the needs of children in the provision of housing by incorporating functional and usable play areas and other facilities. In general, there was a need to create a greater sense of community identity and cohesion in new housing developments. The view was also expressed that while every effort should be made to meet social housing need, it was also necessary to avoid over concentration of such housing in a limited number of areas.*

- *Concern was expressed about the proliferation of holiday home developments and second homes, particularly in coastal areas. Such developments were seen as having an adverse impact on local property markets, and there was a strong sense that local people could no longer afford to live in their own areas. While it was accepted that some holiday home development was inevitable in County Wexford, a greater balance in the provision of such development and more permanent affordable residences for local people was required.*
- *The view was expressed that there was a need to ensure that people who wished to live in rural areas could be allowed to do so, provided scenic values were protected. On the other hand, concern was also expressed regarding the increased volume of urban generated rural housing, particularly its impact on the landscape. It was felt that the reuse of older and derelict houses as a means of improving and expanding the housing stock should be investigated and encouraged.*
- *Approval was expressed in some responses for a more flexible approach in determining density standards in residential development. Rigid density standards in the past had resulted in a wasteful use of scarce land resources and infrastructure services in built up areas.*

Settlements

The role and importance of settlements also evoked a number of responses. The view was expressed that there was a need to plan for the coherent growth of these areas so that they did not suffer from over development with consequent strains on the local community and infrastructure capacity. There was a need to prepare land use strategies for settlements which were experiencing development pressures so that lands could be zoned to provide affordable housing, strategic open spaces and other amenities. In general, there was support for the greater use of the core areas of towns and villages for residential purposes.

The Environment and Conservation

The need to care for the environment and to conserve natural and cultural assets and resources arose in several responses and submissions. In particular, it was felt that

there was a need for greater emphasis on landscape protection including trees and hedgerows. References were made to the need to control housing in rural areas, particularly linear development. The importance of the County's historic buildings and structures was frequently referred to including the unique heritage of thatched houses.

The Coast

- *The need to manage and control development pressures in coastal areas was frequently highlighted. The view was expressed that such pressures were inevitable having regard to the attractiveness and proximity of County Wexford to the Greater Dublin Area, improvements in road communications and to the increasing availability of land due to structural changes in the agriculture sector.*
- *There was a concern that coastal communities would not benefit from large scale holiday home complexes which concentrated primarily on the provision of housing units without appropriate social and recreational facilities.*
- *The issues of coast erosion was also raised and it was felt that much greater investment was needed to tackle this problem.*

Enterprise and Employment

- *The lack of zoned and serviced land for small enterprises throughout the County was frequently referred to.*
- *It was considered that there was a need for better layout and design in industrial estates and parks and that heavily planted buffer zones be provided where industry was located in proximity to residential areas.*

Infrastructure

- *Inadequate public transport facilities were cited as preventing the economic and social participation of significant numbers of people in the County and it was felt that there was a need to provide a rural community transport initiative to cater for those sections of the rural population not served by the conventional public transport system.*

- *Perceived deficiencies on the public road network were referred to on several occasions, particularly with regard to County Roads.*
- *Traffic safety at junctions on National Roads was highlighted; there was a need for more traffic calming measures and by-passes at several locations.*
- *The need for a modern telecommunications infrastructure was generally recognised. Concern was expressed with regard to public health implications arising from such development and to the visual impact on the County's landscapes.*
- *The issue of alternative energy development, particularly wind farms, continued to achieve greater recognition. While it was accepted that there were long term environmental benefits arising from a move towards alternative energy sources, the impact of such developments on local communities and landscapes needs to be carefully considered.*
- *Pressures on water and sewerage infrastructure resulting from new development were highlighted and it was considered that new development would need to be restricted in certain settlements unless and until investment in capacity has been made.*
- *Reference was made to the need to ensure that developers contributed to the costs of provision of new infrastructure which facilitated development so that the community also benefited from new development.*
- *It was felt that the role of public and private partnerships in the provision of infrastructure should be investigated and encouraged.*

Design

- *The issue of the design of new development in both urban and rural areas gave rise to much comment. Reference was made in several responses to the County Council's Design Guide "**Building Sensitively in the Landscapes of County Wexford**". While reaction to the Design Guide was generally favourable, it was felt by some that it was too restrictive particularly in areas not being designated as of landscape importance.*

- *The need for good design in town and villages was generally accepted. New residential estates and infill developments must have regard to the scale and character of the settlements in which they were proposed.*
- *It was suggested that the planning authority could become more proactive in design matters by organising design workshops and seminars, providing improved guidance and ensuring that design and landscaping conditions attached to planning permissions were strictly adhered to.*

Sustainability

There was support for the concept of sustainable development and for the integration of policies throughout the Plan to ensure conservation of both the natural and built environment.