

Social Housing Development Application

4 no. Apartments at
Main Street
Ballinamore,
Co. Leitrim



Development Briefing Report

21 May 2024

Table of Contents

1. Introduction
 - 1.1 Project Overview
 - 1.2 The Design Team
 - 1.3 Housing Needs Response
2. Planning Policy Context
 - 2.1 Project Ireland 2040
 - 2.2 Housing for all
 - 2.3 Quality Housing for Sustainable Communities 2007
 - 2.4 Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2020-2032
 - 2.5 Leitrim County Development Plan 2023-2029
 - 2.6 Leitrim County Housing Delivery Action Plan 2022-2026
3. The Site
 - 3.1 Site Description
 - 3.2 Site Zoning
 - 3.3 Site Levels
4. Proposed Development
 - 4.1 Design Statement
 - 4.2 Open Space and Landscaping
 - 4.3 Boundary Treatment
 - 4.4 Bin Storage
 - 4.5 Site Services
5. Appropriate Assessment
6. Archaeology
7. Conclusions
8. Appendix A – Summary of Proposed Development

1. Introduction

The Design Team led by DHB Architects have been engaged by Leitrim County Council to write this report to accompany the Part 8 Social Housing Development of four apartments on Main Street, Ballinamore, Co. Leitrim. This report forms part of an overall package of information setting out the rationale, the need, and the design intent of the proposed development. This development is part of a national policy of increased housing provision to meet increasing demand. The proposed site is in Leitrim County Council ownership and offers an opportunity to replace the vacant property on-site and provide four quality apartments in the town of Ballinamore, County Leitrim.

1.1 Project Overview

The proposed site is located on Main Street, Ballinamore. The site comprises of a vacant pub and residential property over two floors.

The proposed site measures approximately 385.4 sqm and is accessed off Main Street. There is also a side access laneway which leads to both the site and its adjoining property which has a wayleave here. The site's topography shows it near level with a minimum fall of 300mm from south to north.

The proposed development consists of four 1-bed apartments. The existing building fronts onto the street and there is a substantial private area behind. The design of the apartments takes into account the context of the street while not copying the existing streetscape, it complements the variety of building types commonly seen in an Irish town of this size. The design takes account of all national and local policies and meets all the standards set to provide a high-quality, sustainable development.

The Design Team

The Design Team is led by DHB Architects, a Waterford-based practice with extensive experience in the design of residential units, both housing and apartments. Clifton Scannel Emmerson Associates provide the engineering expertise (Civil and Structural), Douglas Carroll Engineers (Mechanical and Electrical) and Nolan Construction Consultants are the Quantity Surveyors for the project. All members of this team have a wealth of experience in a project of this kind and have worked closely with Leitrim County Council through the design and developed design stages of the project.

1.2 Housing Need Response

This apartment scheme is a response to the local need which is set out in the Leitrim County Council's Housing Delivery Action Plan 2012-2026 document which highlights the significant demand that currently exists within the county – *'The 'Waiting List'* for those on the housing list for social housing has levelled out at approximately 502 no. requests. The current housing target for Ballinamore is 17 no. This development will help to meet that target. In addition, one of the Five Pillars as set out in the Government Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness is to accelerate the supply of social housing.

2 Planning Policy Context

This section of the report examines local, regional, and national planning policy documents which are relevant to this proposed development. The proposed scheme adheres closely to all relevant legislation and guidance documentation as set out below.

2.1 Project Ireland 2040

Project Ireland 2040 is the government's long-term overarching strategy to make Ireland a better country for all its people. This document sets out the vision for the future growth of Ireland over the next 20+ years. This document seeks to balance the future growth of Ireland and counterbalance the draw of people and resources to the Greater Dublin Area. National Policy Objective 1b sets out a target of population growth within the northern and Western regions of between 150,000-175,000.

The National Planning Framework is the Government's plan to cater for the extra one million people that will be living in Ireland, the additional two-thirds of a million people working in Ireland, and the half a million extra homes needed in Ireland by 2040. The Framework focuses on:

- Growing our regions, their cities, towns and villages, and rural fabric.
- Building more accessible urban centres of scale.
- Better outcomes for communities and the environment, through more effective and coordinated planning, investment, and delivery.

Developments such as that proposed, help strengthen the existing towns and villages and build a critical mass of users to support economic growth and infrastructure.

2.2 Housing for all

It is recognised within Ireland that there is a crisis-level shortage in housing supply. Housing for All is the Government's plan to increase the supply of housing to an average of 33,000 per year over the next decade. The plan provides for an optimal mix of social, affordable, and private housing for sale and rent.

The plan is based on four pathways, leading to a more sustainable housing system:

- support home ownership and increase affordability.
- eradicate homelessness, increase social housing delivery, and support social inclusion.
- increase new housing supply.
- address vacancy and make efficient use of existing stock.

This development will supply much-needed accommodation to the people of Ballinamore and is a step, however small, to meet the national targets set by the government in 2016.

2.3 Quality Housing for Sustainable Communities 2007

In February 2007, the Department of the Environment, Heritage, and Local Government published a statement on housing policy, *'Delivering Homes Sustaining Communities'*, which set out the fundamentals of the Government's vision for housing in the coming years. The aim of these Guidelines is to identify principles and criteria that are important in the design of housing and to highlight specific design features, requirements, and standards that have been found, from experience, to be particularly relevant. Section 8 of this document sets out minimum standards for all housing units. Section 8 of this report provides detailed breakdowns of each unit and its comparison to the standards set out in this policy document. This information can also be read in conjunction with the architect's drawings.

2.4 Regional, Spatial, and Economic Strategy 2020-2032

This RSES provides a high-level development framework for the Northern and Western Region that supports the implementation of the National Planning Framework (NPF) and the relevant economic policies and objectives of the Government. It provides a 12-year strategy to deliver the transformational change that is necessary to achieve the objectives and vision of the Assembly. The strategy is about delivering effective regional development for the Northern and Western Region, encompassing Connacht and the Ulster Counties of Cavan, Donegal, and Monaghan.

2.5 Leitrim County Development Plan 2023-2029

Leitrim County Council, through the Housing Strategy as set out and contained in the County Development Plan 2023-2029, states that the core objective in relation to the provision of housing is to ensure that every household has accommodation suitable to their needs, located in a suitable environment, at a price or rent it can afford. The Council's role with regard to housing is to formulate a planning policy in the County Development Plan, to consider planning applications for private housing against this policy framework, to ensure that sufficient lands are zoned to meet the projected housing demand and to provide houses or facilitate the provision of social housing for those requiring assistance to provide homes for themselves. The achievement of the strategic aim and the stated principles are supported by a series of policies and objectives which the Local Authority is obliged to realise.

These include:

Housing Obj. 2: Aims to secure the delivery of social housing in our county in accordance with the Council's Social Housing Delivery Programme and Government Policy as set out in Rebuilding Ireland: Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness.

Housing Obj. 3: Seeks to ensure that sufficient lands are identified through land use zoning objectives at appropriate locations and made available to realize the housing projects and residential development needs identified in the Core Strategy, as informed by the Housing Needs Demand Assessment.

Housing Obj. 7: Seeks to increase the stock of social housing within the county to meet the social housing needs identified in this Housing Strategy as well as the long-term housing needs of existing households on the Local Authority housing waiting list.

Housing Obj. 9: Wishes to deliver high-quality housing of an appropriate scale, mix, tenure, location, and density, aligned with adequate physical and social infrastructure and the household allocations contained in the Core Strategy. The proposed development also complies with:

Housing Policy 5: Promotes the principles of Universal Design for housing development to provide age-friendly standards.

Housing Policy 11: Promotes residential densities appropriate to the development's location and surrounding context, having due regard to Government policy relating to sustainable development, which aims to reduce the demand for travel within existing settlements, and the need to respect and reflect the established character of rural areas.

Housing Policy 12: Is achieved by ensuring high standards of energy efficiency in existing and new residential developments in line with good architectural practice and promotion of energy efficiency and conservation in the design and development of new residential units, encouraging improved environmental performance of building stock (measures to reduce carbon emissions, improve resource use efficiency and minimise pollution and waste).

Housing Policy 13: Requires residential development proposals to be of high quality and make a positive contribution to the built environment and local streetscape facilitating and encouraging innovation.

The proposed development is fully compliant with all aspects of the policy framework contained in the County Development Plan 2023-2029 including the Development Management standards contained in Chapter 13 of same.

2.6 Leitrim County Housing Delivery Action Plan 2022-2026

The Council has prepared the Leitrim County Housing Delivery Action Plan 2022-2026, in accordance with its obligations under Part V of the Planning & Development Act. This document aims to set out a strategy for housing within the county over the lifetime of the County Development Plan and it is prepared in the context of the new '*Core Settlement Strategy*' required as part of the Development Plan.

The Plans will set out details of both social and affordable housing delivery as appropriate over the period 2022-2026, in line with targets set under Housing for All.

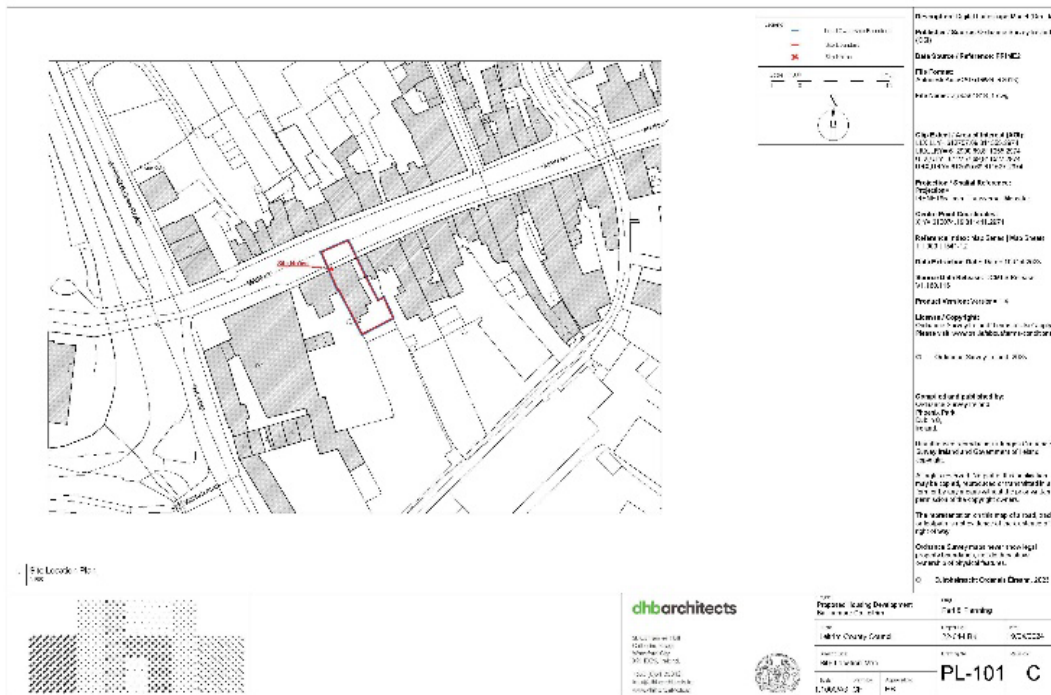
The Housing Delivery Action Plan will also

- Demonstrate alignment of the Housing Delivery Action Plan with the National Planning Framework.
- Provide an outline of locations where housing will be delivered (e.g. towns, villages, urban areas, rural areas, etc.) and the planned numbers of homes to be delivered in each area and by year.
- Include details of existing land holdings and land acquisition required to deliver the targets in the Plan.
- Indicate the planned delivery streams to be used to meet the targets, including the role of the Approved Housing Bodies /LDA or other partners with a focus on delivery through new build.
- Include an assessment of housing types and sizes, per local need, including the adequate proportion of 1-, 2-,3- and 4-bedroom homes aligned with those needs.
- Provide for housing for people with a disability and the provision of Age Friendly Housing.
- Show targets for the use of vacant properties as social housing through the Buy and Renew Construction and Repair and Leasing scheme.

3 The Site

3.1 Site Description

The proposed site is located on Main Street, Ballinamore. It is an existing vacant property that was used as a public house in recent times and is two stories in height. There is a passageway to the side of the building which passes under the first floor and gives access to the rear of the site. This passageway is also a right-of-way for the adjoining property to the rear. The two-storey building fronts onto Main Street and a large single-storey extension is located to the rear. This extension was the lounge bar. The proposed site is 385.4 sq. m. in extent. The topography of the site includes a slight slope along the site from south to north and is currently vacant.



3.2 Site Zoning

As noted in the County Development Plan 2023-2029, the social and economic infrastructure of urban areas are under threat from population decline. The Land use Zoning of the site is 'Town/Village Centre'. As such, it is important to consolidate new residential development within the core of existing urban centres where possible. This site, zoned 'Town/Village Centre', is a prime opportunity for infill development, maintaining and enhancing the fabric of the town of Ballinamore. The proposed Development is in line with the land use zoning objectives of the Leitrim Country Council Development Plan 2023-2029.

3.4 Site Levels

The site has a gentle slope from south to north, a total of approx. 300mm over the entire site. Access to the existing building is from Main Street, one entrance is to the existing stone building, and another entrance is to a corridor leading to the rear lounge. The entrance to all apartments will be in compliance with Part M of the Building Regulations.

4 The Proposed Development

4.1 Design Statement

DHB architects were asked to design four 1-bed apartments on the site, two at ground floor being fully accessible and two at first floor. The apartments should meet the latest regulations with regard to energy conservation and sustainability. They should also

address their context on the street and should add to its architectural character. The new apartments should be designed to a BER rating of A2.

The initial idea was to adapt the existing stone building to accommodate the four apartments, using the two entrances from Main Street, one accessing a ground-floor apartment and the other a common entrance hall to the first floor apartments and a third as the entrance to the second ground floor apartment from the passageway. Using the existing building proved very difficult as the first-floor walls were thicker than the ground-floor walls (in places) which supported them, and the quality of stonework was poor and the site investigation showed that new foundations would need to be 2.6m down to bearing capacity, thus undermining the existing stone walls. Adequate floor-to-ceiling heights were difficult to achieve.

In consultation with the Planning Department of Leitrim County Council and the Housing Department, it was agreed that the building should be demolished and replaced with a new building that echoed the original building.

- Site Design Approach

Having made the decision to demolish the existing, and the Planning Department's opinion that it was not of any particular significance in the town, it was decided to design the new build keeping the two entrance points from Main Street. One is an entrance to the first ground-floor apartment, the second as an entrance to a common hallway for the two first-floor apartments and a new third entrance in the passageway to the second ground-floor apartment. The rear of the site would accommodate two private terraces for the enjoyment of each ground-floor apartment, a common green area, and a secluded common bin store. The access to the rear of the neighbouring property is preserved as it exists, and a new gate is located at the entrance to this passageway for privacy. Stone from the existing building will be used in the boundary walls of the property where possible. The scale of the new building will be similar to the old, demolished building, respecting the context of the street and the varying ridge heights along Main Street. Fenestration is again in keeping with the context of the street with a vertical emphasis with a rendered band around each window and door.

- Design Evaluation

The design strategy was tested with several options which were discussed with both the Planning Department and the Housing Department of Leitrim County Council.

- Boundaries

It is proposed that some of the natural stonework from the demolition of the existing buildings will be used in the boundary walls where possible. Boundary walls between the private terraces will be of Aluminium construction and 1.2m to 1.8m high to encourage conversation between those who live in the apartments.

- **Apartment Design**
All four apartments are a 1-bed, 2-person type. Space standards for all dwellings are generally in accordance with the requirements set out in the '*Quality Housing for Sustainable Communities*' document. The use of natural daylight and sunlight has been maximised, with all windows and rooflights sized to allow good daylight penetration. A double-height entrance area overlooked by the access corridor to the first-floor apartments gives a feeling of airiness and space in what is an efficiently planned apartment layout on both floors. Kitchens to the front of the plan connect the resident with the street and at ground floor reinforces that connection.
- **Apartment Layout**
Each apartment has an open-plan kitchen, dining, and living area. Entrances are placed, where possible, to divide the day space, separating the living space from the kitchen and dining space. Each kitchen has adequate space for the machinery of modern living, dishwashing, water heading, and storage space. Bedrooms are located to the rear, the more private side of the house. Bathrooms are of good size and include the washing machine. The outdoor private areas to the rear are south-facing and sunny and the bin store is enclosed.
- **Materiality**
The design uses traditional masonry cavity construction, the walls are well-insulated with a rendered finish and the main roof has a natural slate finish. The flat roof to the rear has a single skin pvc waterproof finish with standing seams. The new build will be in keeping with up-to-date building standards and best practices.
- **Energy Statement**
The apartments will be built to a BER of A2 which is an excellent standard. Full-fill cavity wall insulation, a well-insulated attic and ground floor, triple glazing throughout, an air-to-water heating system and heat pump, and air tightness all add to the energy efficiency of the apartments.

4.3 Private Open Space and Landscaping

All apartments have access to the rear of the site. This is orientated towards the south. Hard landscaped terraces are provided for ground-floor apartments with aluminium fences and balconies for first-floor apartments. These fences are designed at a height of 1200mm to 1800mm. The bin store is screened from view with a 2m high timber fence enclosure.

4.4 Boundary Treatment

The boundary wall to be the side of the site will utilise the stone from the demolition as a facing to the blockwork construction. There is an existing stone wall which will be kept on the right side of the site. Internal boundary walls to the private terrace

areas will be of aluminium construction and 1200mm to 1800mm high with aluminium access gates to each terrace.

4.5 Bin Storage

Bin storage is to the rear with access to the street via the existing passageway. The storage area is screened by a 2m high timber sheeted fence on a timber frame with a timber sheeted access door. The frame and sheeting are to be treated with an oil or similar protective treatment.

4.6 Site Services

The site will be serviced by connections to the public water supply in the town and the existing foul sewer. Surface water will be connected to the public surface water drainage system. Full details and plans are provided in the Engineering report forming part of this application.

5 Appropriate Assessment

Article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EEC) requires that all plans and projects be screened for potential impacts on Special Areas of Conservation (SAC's) or Special Protection Areas (SPA's). The aim of the screening process is to establish whether a full Appropriate Assessment of the proposed plan or project is necessary. The site is not part of an SAC or SPA.

6 Archaeology and Protected Structures

An initial archaeological screening assessment of the proposed site was undertaken and carried out by Tamlyn McHugh consultant archaeologist, Fadó Archaeology and a copy of the full assessment forms part of this planning package.

7 Conclusions

This proposed development by Leitrim County Council seeks to provide much needed social housing for this area in line with government policy and in recognition of the local need in this respect. This proposal is in line with the principles of proper planning and sustainable development and as illustrated above, complies in all respects to local and national policy.

8 Appendix A

8.1 Schedule of Accommodation

Each dwelling is a 1-bed apartment:

Apt A	49.6 sqm
Apt B	51.0 sqm
Apt C	52.0 sqm
Apt D	51.6 sqm

8.2 Open Space

Each dwelling has a private terrace to the rear together with a common garden:

Apt A terrace	15 sqm
Apt B terrace	10 sqm
Apt C Balcony	5 sqm
Apt D Balcony	5 sqm

8.3 Quality Housing for Sustainable Communities

This document includes a table 5.1 Spaces Provision and Room Sizes for the apartments proposed for this development:

8.4 Bedroom Sizes

Apt. A	13.5 sqm
Apt. B	13.0 sqm
Apt. C	15.8 sqm
Apt. D	13.1 sqm

8.5 Storage

The Quality Housing for Sustainable Communities recommends 3 sqm of storage for a 1-bed apartment. This does not include any storage that will be provided in the form of kitchen presses and free-standing bedroom wardrobes.

Storage spaces are as follows:

Apt. A	3.5 sqm
Apt. B	3.7 sqm
Apt. C	3.0 sqm
Apt. D	3.2 sqm

8.6 Aggregate Living Area

The aggregate living areas:

Apt. A	25 sqm
Apt. B	25.5 sqm
Apt. C	24.7 sqm
Apt. D	26.5 sqm

DWELLING TYPE	TARGET GROSS FLOOR AREA	MINIMUM - MAIN LIVING ROOM	AGGREGATE LIVING AREA	AGGREGATE BEDROOM AREA	STORAGE
	(m ²)	(m ²)	(m ²)	(m ²)	(m ²)
Family Dwellings - 3 or more persons					
4BED/7P House (3 storey)	120	15	40	43	6
4BED/7P House (2 storey)	110	15	40	43	6
4BED/7P House (1 storey)	100	15	40	43	6
4BED/7P Apartment	105	15	40	43	11
3BED/6P House (3 storey)	110	15	37	36	6
3BED/6P House (2 storey)	100	15	37	36	6
3BED/6P House (1 storey)	90	15	37	36	6
3BED/6P Apartment	94	15	37	36	10
3BED/5P House (3 storey)	102	13	34	32	5
3BED/5P House (2 storey)	92	13	34	32	5
3BED/5P House (1 storey)	82	13	34	32	5
3BED/5P Apartment	86	13	34	32	9
3BED/4P House (2 storey)	83	13	30	28	4
3BED/4P House (1 storey)	73	13	30	28	4
3BED/4P Apartment	76	13	30	28	7
2BED/4P House (2 storey)	80	13	30	25	4
2BED/4P House (1 storey)	70	13	30	25	4
2BED/4P Apartment	73	13	30	25	7
2BED/3P House (2 storey)	70	13	28	20	3
2BED/3P House (1 storey)	60	13	28	20	3
2BED/3P Apartment	63	13	28	20	5
1BED/2P House (1 storey)	44	11	23	11	2
1BED/2P Apartment	45	11	23	11	3

Taken from Quality Housing for Sustainable Communities – Dept. of Environment, Heritage and Local Government