
PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT ISSUES

TRAVELLER SPECIFIC ACCOMMODATION - A BRIEF GUIDE



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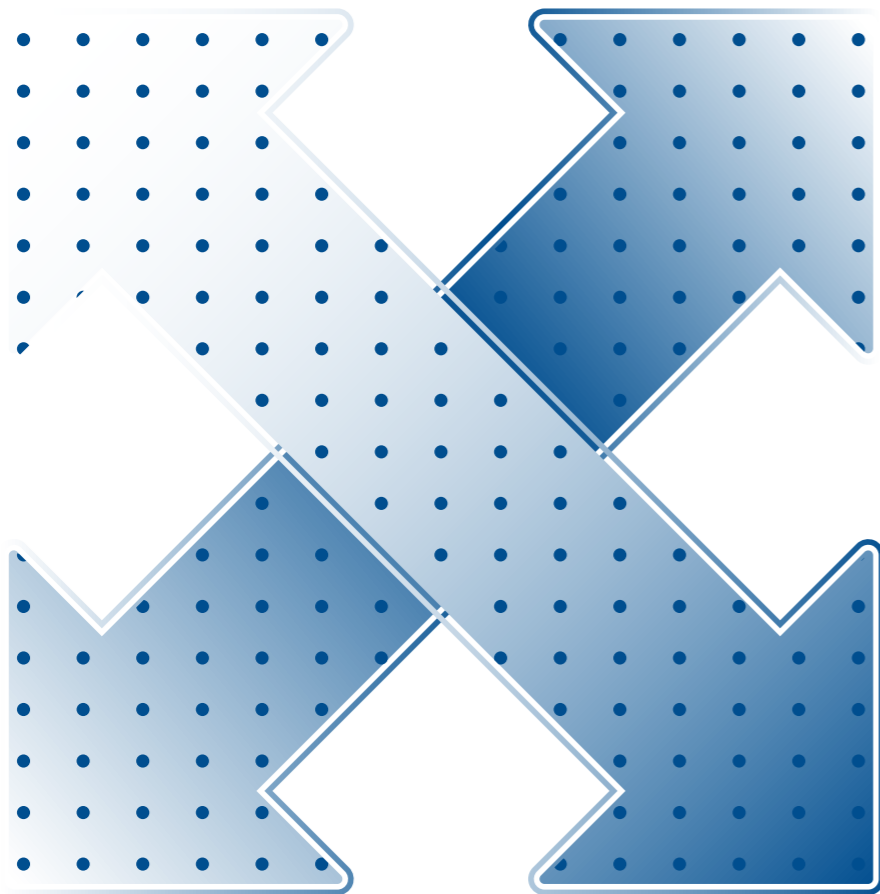
GALWAY TRAVELLER MOVEMENT
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1. WHAT IS THIS DOCUMENT ABOUT?

The purpose of this toolkit is to assist Traveller organisations understand and engage more effectively at each stage in the planning, design and construction of Traveller specific accommodation.

It includes:

- A brief summary of the different stages of planning and development that are likely be undertaken in the development or refurbishment of Traveller specific accommodation.
- A general background to some planning and building legislation in Ireland including the role and responsibilities of Local authorities.
- A glossary of terms which relate to planning, building or development.

As an introductory document, it is recommended that further reading is undertaken on topics, and links to websites where further information is available are provided.

It was developed as a result of the Health Impact Assessment undertaken by Galway Travellers' Movement in 2008 on the health impacts of living on low grade halting sites, as well as advice from public and environmental health experts, and consultations with national and local Traveller organisations.

For details on this project and access to reports please see www.paveepoint.ie, www.itmtrav.com and www.gtmtrav.ie

Disclaimer

It should be noted that this is not a legal document, and it does not give comprehensive information on the planning and development policy context in Ireland. In addition to this, local variation in practice may arise from time to time in certain aspects of the design process.

2. AN OVERVIEW OF THE PLANNING, DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION PHASES OF A PROJECT

There are typically three main stages of project development:

1. Project Planning
2. Project Design
3. Project Construction.

In this section, an overview of these stages and the key decision makers involved is outlined. In addition to this, each section is accompanied by a number of suggestions to assist Traveller organisations influence the process.

For Traveller organisations, engagement in the early stages of project planning and project design is essential in order to have an effective role in the proposed development, as fundamentals of the development cannot be altered later in the process.

It is good practice to establish a steering group early in the development process to oversee the design, planning and construction of a Traveller halting site. Such a steering group would report to the Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee (LTACC). Possible membership of such a steering group should include:

- HSE public health professionals, including public health specialists, community medical officers, environmental health officers and public health nurses.
- Local authority staff (planning, housing, and social work departments).
- Traveller representatives (proposed residents of site, if possible).
- Traveller organisations (e.g. community workers and primary health care workers).
- Elected representatives.
- Community Welfare Officers, education professionals, employment agencies, Gardaí, etc.

This structure could have the function of overseeing re-development of sites from concept stage to completion, including consultation processes undertaken. Such a group, if established, should be established early in the process, at project planning stage.

Recommendation for Traveller organisations

Traveller organisations could seek the establishment of such a group for sites being (re)developed.

PHASE 1 - PROJECT PLANNING

Activities in this stage may include the selection and acquisition of a site, and an analysis of whether the site is suitable for the particular development.

Site selection

According to the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, site selection is arguably the most important consideration in the provision of housing.¹ The Department cites factors such as location, size and accessibility of a site and proximity to services as important, and a more detailed discussion on guidelines for site selection are produced in its document *Quality Housing for Sustainable Communities: Best Practice Guidelines for Delivering Homes, Sustaining Communities*, published in 2007. This document, which is available online,² includes a list of considerations that should be made when selecting a site. One of these considerations is that 'regard should be had to the use (or proposed use) of adjoining lands, which may conflict with the safe use of the site for family housing purposes or have an adverse impact on the visual or environmental quality of the proposed housing scheme, e.g. busy traffic routes, inappropriate industrial use, and places of late night entertainment/activity' (p.11).

Prior to site acquisition, a local authority should undertake a site evaluation report, and according to the Department of the Environment's guidelines, 'sites should be inspected prior to acquisition by appropriately qualified professionals and the findings documented' (p.11). The appendices of the document also

outline guidelines for the site selection assessment and site inspection process.

Site survey

The site survey (also known as a site analysis or site plan) should describe the site, its location, the existing features of the designated space, including circulation/access topography, boundaries, adjacent buildings and structures, vistas and existing buildings, etc. Important wildlife habitats (including trees, hedgerows and wetlands), historic landscape and listed features present on the site will usually be included in the site survey. The proposed development will be included in the site survey, including where on the site the development will be located. It may also include recommendations to be considered for the development of the site.

The site survey will consider whether the site is suitable for development. In some cases, technical site assessments will need to be undertaken, e.g. an Environmental Impact Statement, if there are specific environmental issues to be considered.

In this phase of project planning, it may be the case that a design brief is developed (or this may occur in the next stage, 'project design').

The design brief (discussed below) will describe the purpose and function of the development with reference to the size, number of units, number of families and rationale for certain design features. It is important to note that there may be variation in the order and the timing of tasks. The design brief is discussed in greater detail in the next section.

¹ We use the term 'housing' to include all types of accommodation for residential purposes, and

it includes Traveller specific accommodation of all types.

² <http://www.environment.ie/en/Publications/DevelopmentandHousing/>

Housing/ FileDownload,1979,en.pdf

Roles involved in this and subsequent stages include:

The Planner: The role of a planner is to maximise the effective use of land and infrastructure in a community. The planner will make a plan for the development and management of rural or urban areas and will look at the different possible uses of land that are compatible with budgets, the environment, the local authority's development plans and legislation.

The Architect: An architect is the professional who will translate the client's requirements into a built environment. The architect can be involved in the planning and designing of a project as well as the management of the building's construction. In the planning and design phase, a client will make clear what activities will take place in the building and development, to enable the architect to design the building based on the clients' specific or general needs. In the case of Traveller accommodation, the client is usually the local authority.

Quantity Surveyor: The role of a Quantity Surveyor (QS) is to manage and control the costs associated with the construction of the project. The QS will allocate costs to specific items of work, e.g. labour costs, cost of materials, amount of time required and amount of materials required. The QS should also be able to explain the cost implications of design decisions taken at an early stage (i.e. if a design will require too much labour/time/materials). A QS is concerned about the budget of the project and how to deliver the most efficient building within the budget allotted.

Engineer: A building engineer is concerned with the design of a building in a technical way. An architect will consider the uses of the building, whereas an engineer will look at ways to answer construction questions in a technical way, e.g. designing an efficient plumbing system or an energy-rated community building, the ideal width of a wall and the types of insulation available.

PHASE 2 - PROJECT DESIGN

The second stage is project design. As stated above, there may be some overlap between this and the project planning stage, but for the purposes of this toolkit, in this stage we are concerned with design processes, of which there can be three:

1. Design brief
2. Design sketch
3. Detailed design.

The first of these is usually a design brief, which is a short document that informs the designer (usually an architect) about what is required for the development in outline terms.

DESIGN BRIEF

What is it? The design brief is a common starting point for the architect or designer, as it gives them the client's brief for the project. It is an initial, short brief (no longer than two pages) drawn up by the client (e.g. the housing department in a local authority) and given to the architect.

The design brief will be used to inform the development of design sketches and concept drawings for the development (these are discussed below).

A design brief will usually embody:

- The overall intentions and objectives of the client for the development.
- The purpose and function of the development.
- General information about the size of the site.
- The number of units and the general layout, entrance, open space requirements.
- The reasons for the inclusion of the development's important elements (*e.g. open space will enable young children to play in a safe and secure environment whilst being overlooked by their families*).

The brief should not:

- Include an in-depth description of the development.
- Describe construction and finishes in detail.
- Be lengthy or verbose - information should be to the point!

How could Traveller organisations influence the development of the design brief?

Traveller organisations can seek to influence this process in a number of ways:

- Firstly, national Traveller organisations could collectively develop sample design briefs which would indicate the key requirements for different types of Traveller specific accommodation, based on good practice. This would be a generic document, and could be modified for specific schemes.

As a guideline, Traveller organisations should consider the following: what does any architect need to be aware of before starting any design of Traveller specific accommodation? For example, is there any particular way in which the site should be laid out? Should units be clustered together? Should they be in a straight line? Should the site have a 'horse-shoe' style layout? How should open

space be organised? Should it be in the middle of the site, overlooked by housing units? How will this affect the layout? Should there be one single green space? Should there be a community building at the entrance to the site, or at the rear? Why? How far apart will housing units be from each other? What will need to be accommodated in the space between accommodation units?

Remember, the design brief should not go into the specific technical elements of the site, or the detail. Traveller organisations could consider seeking technical advice from an architect in drawing up a design brief.

- Secondly, Traveller organisations and proposed residents should seek to be consulted when the design brief is being drawn up, to ensure that it reflects the specific requirements of families. If specific families have not been identified for the site, Traveller representative organisations should seek to influence the process being guided by good practice.

DESIGN SKETCH

What is it? The design sketch will be developed by the architect or engineer, informed by the design brief. Usually it will be a hand-drawn sketch and will not be technical, nor will it be to scale.

Typically in a design process, three design sketch drawings (or concepts) will be presented by the architect and/or engineer to the client (in this case, the client would probably be the local authority housing department which is undertaking the development). The presentation should include discussion of the pros and cons of each design as well as the implications of each. A discussion on the concepts will take place and minor modifications can be made to them.

At this stage, recommendations are usually made for general acceptance of one of the designs. This will include recommendations around location of buildings and general site configuration for the proposed development. At this stage, for a Traveller accommodation project, the design sketch would be likely to outline the layout of each bay.

Once the design has been selected, the architect will undertake further design work on it.

An example of a design sketch is included in the appendices

How could Traveller organisations influence this process?

Traveller organisations and representatives of proposed residents should seek to attend the meeting at which the different design sketches are presented to ensure that residents' requirements are represented in the process.

Traveller organisations could seek 'sign-off' on the final design to be proceeded with. It is important to engage at this stage, because once the detailed design drawings are developed, it is more expensive and more difficult to change the fundamentals of the design.

DETAILED DESIGN

Detailed design drawings will be developed based on the outcomes of the discussions taking place at design sketch stage, and the design sketch favoured by the client. The detailed drawings will be technical, scaled drawings and can include the structural, electrical, mechanical, civil and

architectural drawings containing exterior elevations, foundation plans, interior elevations, detailed floor plans, and structural details.

At this stage of design, fundamental concepts of layout and design cannot be changed.

In addition, the drawings must have regard to building regulations³ (such as the location and size of windows, distances between structures, size of entrances, etc.)

Once these drawings have been developed and agreed, the architect, quantity surveyor and other technical experts will draw up tender documents.

At this stage, all the information that builders require will be presented by the architect and the engineer, and quantified by the quantity surveyor. Builders will submit tenders based on these documents.

How could Traveller organisations influence this process?

Traveller organisations and site residents could influence this process by engaging in discussions about the finishes and the materials that will be used in the construction of the units. Note: it will not be possible at this stage to change the fundamentals of design and site layout.

Traveller organisations could request that a set of precise and scaled 3D images be prepared at this stage to describe the entire area graphically, including an internal perspective view of the internal bays and a number of external perspective views should be provided and presented. The images above and below provide examples of 3D images, and were developed by Galway Traveller Movement as part of the Health Impact Assessment. An example of 3D images is outlined in the appendices.

PHASE 3 - CONSTRUCTION

The third stage is construction and management of the construction process. Typically, the project architect or quantity surveyor will oversee this process as site manager, and will sign off on completed tasks in the construction stage on behalf of the local authority (the client).

The architect employed may be within the local authority, or an independent architect contracted by the local authority. A quantity surveyor is more typically used when dealing with large scale private/commercial developments.

At this stage it is important for the client to liaise with the site manager in order to troubleshoot any construction issues, e.g. internal layout of service units.

Some changes may occur during the construction phase of the project, and these will be negotiated between the client (or the project architect or engineer acting on the client's behalf) and the contractor.

How could Traveller organisations influence this process?

Traveller organisations should hold regular briefing meetings with the local authority and should be informed of any changes in contract that impact on any of the sign-off or agreements that have already taken place.

³ See glossary for brief description of the Building Regulations.

3. BACKGROUND TO THE PLANNING SYSTEM IN IRELAND

Ireland's planning system was introduced on 1st October 1964, when the Local Government (*Planning and Development*) Act, 1963 came into effect. Since then, a number of planning laws have been introduced. All the legislation developed since 1963 has been consolidated in the form of the *Planning and Development Act, 2000*, and this legislation provides the framework for planning and development in Ireland.

In addition to the legislation, there are a number of regulations. These have also been consolidated and the main regulations are outlined in the *Planning and Development Regulations, 2001*.⁴

The Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government has responsibility for developing planning policy and legislation. Planning law is implemented by local planning authorities in Ireland. There are 88 local planning authorities, consisting of 29 County Councils, 5 County Borough Corporations, 5 Borough Corporations and 49 Town Councils. Planning applications (for planning permission) are made to these local planning authorities.

Ireland is unique among European countries in that it has an independent third party planning appeals system which is operated by An Bord Pleanála (the Planning Appeals Board).⁵

DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The *Planning and Development Act, 2000* obliges each planning authority to produce a 'Development Plan' every six years.

The Development Plan is the main instrument for regulation and control of development at the county level. The plan states the authority's policies for land use and for development control and promotion in its area.

In general, the Development Plan shows the local authority's objectives for the sole or primary use of particular areas (e.g. residential, commercial, industrial, agricultural), for road improvements, for development and renewal of obsolete areas, and for preserving, improving and extending amenities.

The authority, in exercising control, must consider the provisions of the Plan, and try to secure its objectives.

What is included in it?

Each development plan describes the local authority's plans and objectives for the use of land, e.g. residential, commercial, industrial, agricultural lands, road improvements, for development and renewal of areas, and for preserving, improving and extending amenities. The Development Plan will include the following:

- The national and regional planning policy context and, where appropriate, the Northern Ireland and European policy contexts.

⁴ <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/2001/en/si/0600.html>

⁵ In the normal planning process, planning law allows the decision of the local authority (whether permission is granted or denied) to be appealed

to 'An Bord Pleanála'. In these cases, An Bord Pleanála will have the final say. Any member of the public can appeal a decision to An Bord Pleanála.

For details of these stages and steps, go to <http://www.pleanala.ie/guide/index.htm>

- Population, housing and employment growth estimates, education provision requirements, as well as an indication of the more important drivers for change into the future.
- The overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.
- Mandatory objectives as set out in section 10(2) of the 2000 Act, including land use zoning, the provision of infrastructure, the Record of Protected Structures and urban renewal.
- Relevant discretionary objectives (listed in the First Schedule of the Act), under the headings of location and pattern of development (e.g. sustainable settlement and transport strategies), control of areas and structures (e.g. density and design issues (referring as appropriate to the Government's policies set out in *Action on Architecture 2002-2005*)), community facilities (e.g. healthcare, recreational and children's play facilities), environment and amenities (e.g. landscape protection, infrastructure) and transport (e.g. reservations of land for road and rail).
- Housing Strategy under Part V of the \ Act (as amended by the 2000 Act).
- Retail Planning Strategy (for county and city development plans).
- A strategic environmental assessment of the likely environmental effects of implementing the plan.

A set of Guidelines for local authorities in drawing up development plans has been developed by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government⁶ and this is available on the Department's website.

WHO IS INVOLVED IN DRAWING UP THE DEVELOPMENT PLAN?

Elected members

The adoption of the Development Plan is one of the most important functions of the elected members, and they should be involved in the formation of the plan, through responses to working papers on key issues, discussions, and papers devised by the Strategic Policy Committee and other structures. Members will be briefed on the process of the plan's development and will respond as it is being developed.

The general public

The public should be involved in the review of the current plan, as well as in a consultation process undertaken in preparation for drawing up the draft Development Plan (as well as later stages of amendment of the plan). The pre-draft development plan consultation process will usually involve some or all of the following:

- Acceptance of written submissions.
- Holding public meetings to discuss the development plan.
- Developing 'issues and options' papers for circulation to the general public under key topic areas.
- Local authorities will advertise their public consultation process in local press, and will often contact directly prescribed bodies, local community and voluntary groups, associations and societies, statutory agencies and others.

The County or City Manager will prepare a report on the consultation process and submissions received for the council, will prepare responses to the issues raised, and will make recommendations arising from the consultation process to the elected members.

According to the aforementioned Guidelines developed by the Department of the Environment for local authorities:

The process of making development plans must be open, transparent and, most crucially, inclusive. All interested individuals and organisations, at local, regional and national levels, must be given adequate opportunity to comment or make submissions for consideration by the elected members of Council, before the policies, objectives and measures to be included in the plan are decided upon.

Once the draft development plan has been developed, this will be available for inspection by any member of the general public. The public will have the opportunity to make submissions on the draft development plan before the 'Development Plan' is devised.

Development Plans are accessible to all members of the public - they are also often available on the local planning authority's website.

LOCAL AREA PLAN

The 2000 Act provides that a planning authority may prepare a local area plan for any area within its jurisdiction for which it considers such a plan to be suitable, and in particular for those areas that require economic, physical and social renewal, and for areas likely to be subject to large scale development within the lifetime of the development plan. A planning authority is obliged to prepare a local area plan for an area which:

- is designated as a town in the most recent census of population, other than a town designated as a suburb or environs in that census,
- has a population in excess of 2000 persons, and
- is situated within the functional area of a planning authority that is a county council.

In providing development frameworks for particular areas, or parts of an area, local plans should address relevant issues in greater detail than in the development plan, but on a basis consistent with the approach of the development plan for the overall area.

HOUSING STRATEGY

Part 5 of the *Planning and Development Act, 2000* requires planning authorities to prepare housing strategies and integrate them into their Development Plans.

Planning authorities must include measures in each housing strategy which address the housing needs of all sectors of the existing and future population in their area including first time buyers, the elderly, people with disabilities, students, Travellers, etc. Planning authorities should ensure that

⁶ Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (2007) Development plans – Guidelines for Planning Authorities.

Available online: <http://www.environ.ie/en/Publications/DevelopmentandHousing/PlanningFileDownload,14468,en.pdf>

their housing strategies provide for an appropriate mix of dwelling types and sizes to cater for the range of housing needs. The strategy must encourage mixed and balanced communities in order to counteract undue social segregation.

As the housing strategy will be developed as part of the Development Plan process, the consultation process above will apply.

Social and affordable housing action plan

Each housing authority is required to draw up a social and affordable housing action plan for a period of four years. This plan will outline in specific terms the number of housing units that will be developed by the local authority under social and affordable housing provisions. This plan will include projected Traveller accommodation outputs.

Multi-annual Action Plans were prepared by local authorities for the provision of social and affordable housing for the period 2004-2008, and were approved by Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government. The action plans were designed to assist local authorities to identify priority needs over the coming years and to provide a coherent and co-ordinated response across all housing services, including delivery of housing by the voluntary and co-operative housing sector.

TRAVELLER ACCOMMODATION PLAN

The Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act, 1998 is the legislation overseeing Traveller accommodation. This legislation put in place a number of specific provisions relating to Traveller accommodation, such as the establishment of a National Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee (NTACC) to advise the Minister in relation to any general matter concerning accommodation for Travellers, and a Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee (LTACC) in each local authority area to advise the authorities on the provision and management of accommodation for Travellers.

In addition, each local authority is required to prepare and adopt a Traveller Accommodation Plan (TAP) to cover a defined time period (the TAP should have the same timeframe as the Social and Affordable Housing Action Plan), and the current TAP will be in place for the period 2009-2013.

According to the Department of the Environment Guidelines, accommodation will range from standard local authority or voluntary housing, to group housing, permanent residential caravan parks and sites with limited facilities. The land-use aspects of adopted Traveller accommodation programmes should be reflected in the Development Plan. This should take the form of objectives that clearly set out the approach of the Development Plan in addressing the accommodation needs of the Traveller community and an indication of the specific locations of known Traveller accommodation projects.

According to the Department of the Environment, in order to support the identification of additional locations for such projects, zoning policies should also be drawn up in a flexible manner to reflect the urgent need to secure additional Traveller accommodation over the lifetime of the plan. Planning authorities should also have regard to the Guidelines for Residential Caravan Parks for Travellers (1997), Guidelines for Traveller Accommodation: Basic Services and Facilities for Caravans Pending the Provision of Permanent Accommodation (1998), Guidelines for Accommodating Transient Traveller Families (2000), and Guidelines for Group Housing for Travellers (2002), all issued by the Department.

Traveller Accommodation Plans are available from your local authority.

HOW COULD TRAVELLER ORGANISATIONS INFLUENCE THESE PROCESSES?

Traveller organisations could influence the drawing up of Development Plans, local area plans, housing strategies, social and affordable housing action plans, and Traveller Accommodation Plans in the following ways:

- Write to the local authority (e.g. planning departments, housing departments and county/city manager's office) and request details of consultation processes to be undertaken in the above planning activities.
- Make submissions when the plans and strategies are being drafted, e.g. outlining the requirements for Traveller accommodation.
- Attend the public consultation processes.
- Liaise directly with council officials and elected members about the process and ensure that they will be included in any consultation process.
- Ensure that the needs identified in the Traveller Accommodation Plans are reflected in other area or housing plans.
- Seek representation on the Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee (LTACC).

4. LOCAL AUTHORITY LED DEVELOPMENT

LOCAL AUTHORITY LED DEVELOPMENT

When a local authority wishes to undertake a new development, it does not have to go through the normal planning permission process. *The Planning and Development Act, 2000* and Part 8 of the *Planning and Development Regulations, 2001* put in place procedures for development undertaken by, or in partnership with, local authorities. The procedures here are different to the normal planning procedures. For example, in such developments, there is no right of appeal by the general public (on the decision or the development) to An Bord Pleanála, and the time-frame for observations and submissions from members of the public is shorter than that in the general planning process.

It should be noted that most Traveller sites would be developed under the Part 8 planning process, as Traveller sites are generally developed by the local authority.

STEPS TO BE UNDERTAKEN IN PROCEEDING WITH LOCAL AUTHORITY LED DEVELOPMENT

(Part 8 of the Planning and Development Regulations)

In this section we are concerned with the procedures that a local authority will put in place when proceeding with local authority led development. This process would normally be initiated after a site has been identified and selected for the development.

The decision to proceed with a development under Part 8 of the Planning and Development Regulations will normally be agreed at an elected members' meeting (i.e. by the councillors) on the recommendation of local authority officials (i.e. those employed by the local authority, such as the Director of Services or the County Manager).

In undertaking the development, the local authority is required to:

- Place a letter of notice (i.e. stating that the local authority plans to develop Traveller accommodation) in the press.
- Fix a site notice (i.e. erect a sign on the site to give details of the plans to develop the site).
- Make available for inspection documentation describing the nature and extent of the proposed development and the principal features, as well as location maps and site layout plans. There may be a fee to access these documents. The minimum period for inspections is four weeks.
- The minimum period for submissions or observations is a further two weeks. Copies of submissions and observations will be available for purchase.
- After the expiry of this period, the Manager of a local authority will prepare a written report in relation to the proposed development and submit the report to the members of the authority (i.e. the elected councillors). This report will recommend whether or not the

proposed development should be proceeded with as proposed, or be modified, or should not be proceeded with.

- The proposed development will be carried out in accordance with the County/City Manager's recommendations, unless the elected members pass a resolution to the contrary (i.e. agree to object to the recommendation and propose a different course of action). Such a resolution must be undertaken within six weeks of the Manager's report (there are some exceptions to this, such as where development must take place as a matter of urgency or for general maintenance and repair).⁷

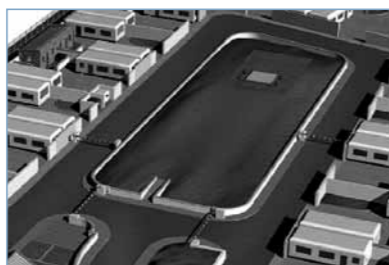
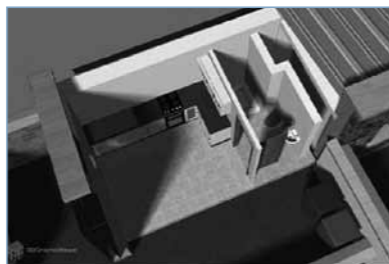
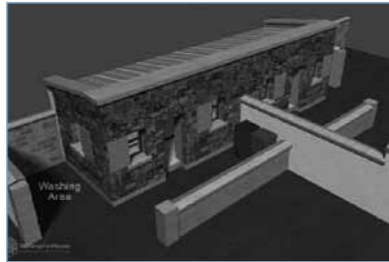
⁷ These provisions are outlined in Section 179 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000. <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/>

SAMPLE DESIGN SKETCHES



These sketches are reproduced with thanks to the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government.

3D IMAGING SAMPLES



GLOSSARY OF TERMS

THE BUILDING REGULATIONS

Building Regulations 1997 - 2008

The primary purpose of the Building Regulations is to provide for the health, safety and welfare of people in and around buildings. In general, the Building Regulations 1997 - 2008 apply to the construction of new buildings and to extensions and material alterations to existing buildings and to certain changes of use of existing buildings. These new regulations apply to all types of construction.

The Regulations address the following matters:

- Structure - Part A
- Fire Safety - Part B
- Site Preparation and Resistance to Moisture - Part C
- Materials and Workmanship - Part D
- Sound - Part E
- Ventilation - Part F
- Hygiene - Part G
- Drainage and Waste Water Disposal - Part H
- Heat Producing Appliances - Part J
- Stairways, Ladders, Ramps and Guards - Part K
- Conservation of Fuel and Energy - Part L
- Access for People with Disabilities - Part M

HOUSING POLICY

The Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government is the Department primarily responsible for the formulation and implementation of policy and for the preparation of legislation in relation to housing.

The vast majority of housing services for which the Department is responsible are delivered through the local authorities. There are two main housing policy documents published by the Department, as follows:

- **The Housing Policy Framework - Building Sustainable Communities (2005)** sets out the Government's vision for housing policy over the coming years. The key objective outlined in the policy framework is to build sustainable communities, and to meet individual accommodation needs in a manner that facilitates and empowers personal choice and autonomy.
- The present policy statement - *Delivering Homes, Sustaining Communities* published in February, 2007 provides detail on the actions required if the goals in the Framework document are to be achieved. It presents a vision for the future of housing. It is a companion to the National Development Plan 2007-2013: *Transforming Ireland - A Better Quality of Life for All* which provides the resources for required investment, and the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion which focuses particularly on social inclusion issues.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

In Ireland, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) protects the environment through its licensing, enforcement and monitoring activities. The agency has responsibility for a wide range of licensing, enforcement, monitoring and assessment activities associated with environmental protection, in areas such as licensing and permitting, environmental enforcement, resource and waste management, climate change, environmental monitoring, environmental assessment, advice and guidance. For more information, go to <http://www.epa.ie/>

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is the process by which we measure anticipated effects on the environment of a proposed development or project. If the likely effects are unacceptable, design measures or other steps can be taken to reduce or repair those effects. The document produced in this process is called an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). For more information on Environmental Impact Assessments, go to the Environmental Protection Agency's webpage on EIA: <http://www.epa.ie/whatwedo/advice/eia/>

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