



ROSCOMMON HOUSING STRATEGY

September 2001

Variation adopted on 28th May 2007



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ROSCOMMON COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2002 **VARIATION**

- **HOUSING STRATEGY**

ADOPTED 28th May 2007

Addition to County Development Plan 2002:

“Reference to the Housing Strategy in the County Development Plan 2002 shall be construed as the Housing Strategy adopted in July 2001 and the said strategy shall be valid until end July 2008 or the date of the making of the revised Housing Strategy, whichever is the earlier”.

CONTENTS

| | PAGE |
|---|------|
| FOREWORD | |
| EXECUTIVE SUMMARY | |
| 1. INTRODUCTION | |
| Background and context to housing strategy | 1 |
| The economic and social context in Roscommon County | 1 |
| Changes within local government in Roscommon County | 2 |
| Approach and methodology | 2 |
| Structure of Roscommon Housing Strategy | 4 |
| 2. ESTIMATING HOUSING DEMAND | |
| Approach to estimating demand | 5 |
| Household formations and population projections | 5 |
| Household incomes | 10 |
| Rental sector | 14 |
| Assessment of affordability | 14 |
| 3. ESTIMATING HOUSING SUPPLY | |
| Introduction | 16 |
| National policy | 16 |
| Local policy | 17 |
| Development pressure | 17 |
| Development capacity | 19 |
| Spatial distribution of housing projections | 20 |
| Social and affordable housing distribution | 23 |
| Mix of house types and sizes | 25 |
| 4. SOCIAL AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING | |
| National Development Plan | 26 |
| Social Housing | 26 |
| Affordable Housing | 27 |
| Assessment of need for social housing | 28 |
| Role of voluntary and community sector | 31 |
| Social Housing Programme 2000-2003: Summary | 33 |
| 5. CONCLUSIONS | 35 |
| APPENDICES | |
| Appendix A Annual Assessment of Affordability | |
| Appendix B Summary of key provisions of the Planning and Development Act | |
| Appendix C Summary of Development Plans within County Roscommon | |
| Appendix D Infrastructure | |
| Appendix E Summary of submissions | |

FOREWORD

- i. The Roscommon Housing Strategy has been prepared jointly by Brady Shipman Martin and PA Consulting Group for Roscommon County Council.
- ii. The immediate context for this work is represented in the provisions of Part V of the Planning and Development Act, 2000. The particular significance of Part V is the requirement that local authorities must develop housing strategies which address the housing needs of populations, and which will form an integral part of their development plans. Such strategies should relate to the period of the development plan.
- iii. In addition, the provisions of Part V require that a communities need for social and affordable housing should be interpreted as a material planning consideration, which must be taken into account in the preparation of the development plan and related policies.
- iv. As a response to the requirements of Part V, the Department of the Environment and Local Government prepared a Model Housing Strategy and Step by Step Guide. The purpose of this document was to assist local authorities in their preparation of their housing strategy. The Roscommon Housing Strategy has substantially followed the approach outlined in the Model Housing Strategy, augmented by locally available data where possible.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- i. This Housing Strategy has been prepared for Roscommon County Council as required under section 94(1) of the Planning and Development Act 2000. The strategy sets out current and future housing within the county and in particular the requirement for social and affordable housing. Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2000 contains important new provisions for planning authorities in relation to social and affordable housing.
- ii. One of the key new provisions of the Act enables planning authorities to reserve up to 20% of land zoned for residential or mixed development for the purpose of social and affordable housing. The amount of land to be reserved, is based upon the Council's assessment of the number of households likely to experience affordability problems over the life of the strategy.
- iii. The Act defines individuals with affordability problems as individuals *"in need of accommodation and whose income would not be adequate to meet the payments on a mortgage for the purchase of a house to meet his or her accommodation needs because the payments calculated over the course of a year would exceed 35% of that person's annual income net of income tax and related social insurance"*.
- iv. The Roscommon Housing Strategy outlines the demand for housing within the county, and in particular the demand for social and affordable housing, the supply of housing, and social and affordable housing policies. The key conclusions of the strategy can be summarised in the following.

Estimating housing demand

- v. It is projected that 2,148 households will be formed over the six years of the strategy and that of these households, some 23% will have affordability problems as defined by the Planning and Development Act 2000, i.e. over 35% of their disposable income would be required to service their mortgage. While the Council considered several population scenarios to estimate demand for housing over the six years of the housing strategy, the projected 2,148 is based on house completions within the county since 1996. In calculating the number of households likely to experience affordability problems, the Council took account of household incomes, forecast house prices and mortgage interest rates. (see section 2.6)
 - v. Given the assessment of the need for social and affordable housing, the Council's policy is to reserve 20% of land zoned for residential, or a mixture of residential or other uses, for the provision of social and affordable housing (section 94(4)(c)). It is estimated that the application of this provision under Part V will generate a total of 152 housing units within the county between 2001 and 2006.
 - vi. The Council's policy is to engage in pre-planning discussions with developers to agree which of the options provided for in the Act will apply to individual developments. The Act provides for three core options: transfer of ownership of the land to the Council, transfer of houses to the Council or persons nominated by the Council, or transfer of fully or partially serviced sites to the Council or persons nominated by the Council. In exceptional circumstances, where it is considered that an agreement under section 96(3) of the Act is not practical, the Council will have recourse to the provisions of section 96(12)(a).
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Estimating housing supply

- vii. There are currently five land-use zoning plans within the county as well as zoning plans for Creagh and Cortober. Each land use zoning plan contains a significant level of residential zoning.
- viii. This capacity will further increase with the development of further town and village plans in Ballinlough, Frenchpark, Loughglinn, Ballyfarnan, Strokestown, Elphin, Lanesborough-Ballyleague, Clontuskert and Roosky.
- ix. The Housing Strategy encourages development in towns and serviced villages with the capacity to absorb further development as well as providing for local rural housing need. Non-local rural housing demand will, where possible, be met in small villages and cluster development in the future. It is important that the character of these settlements is retained by ensuring that the scale, mix and nature of housing development is appropriate to its individual location and that it avoids undue social segregation.
- x. It is projected that approximately 2,148 new households will be formed during the Housing Strategy. The indicative spatial distribution of these provides for 1,074 in the main and priority settlements and 1,074 in the rural areas and villages. This provides for 308 households to be formed in Roscommon town, 125 in Castlerea, 105 in Ballaghaderreen, 152 in Boyle, 110 in Athlone environs, 50 in Cortober and 30 in Creagh. A further 194 households will be formed in the settlements as stated in paragraph viii. above.
- xi. It is intended that Roscommon County Council will intervene as provided for in section 94(4)(c) of the Act to reserve 20% of residentially zoned lands for the purpose of providing for social and affordable housing. Based on the household projections this will provide 152 social and affordable housing units through the application of Part V during the Housing Strategy.

Social and affordable housing

- xii. The Housing Strategy estimates that the current stock of 715 rented houses within the county will be increased through the provision of a further 540 houses by the end of 2006. This figure assumes that the annual rate of construction/acquisition under the 2000-2003 multi-annual programme will continue in 2004-2006. This is a reasonable assumption in view of the commitments, contained in the National Development Plan, to increase housing stock. In addition to its construction programme, the Council is also committed to using remedial works scheme to improve the quality of its existing housing stock.
 - xiii. The Housing Strategy envisages an enhanced role for the voluntary and co-operative sector – its output within the county to date has been modest with just 52 units in total supplied, primarily by locally-based associations. It is estimated that output from this sector will increase by 96 housing units by the end of 2006.
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1. INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT TO HOUSING STRATEGY

- 1.1 Under Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2000, local authorities are required to include in their development plans a housing strategy to provide for the existing and future population of their area. The most significant element of the Act relates to the provision of both social and affordable housing. Roscommon County Council have, to date, had the following two roles in relation to housing.
- through their development plans, the local authority has zoned land for residential development and controlled development through the planning process; and
 - through their social housing programmes, they have catered for those in need of social housing and as a consequence an important contributor to the construction industry.
- 1.2 The remit of Roscommon County Council in relation to the housing market has due to the Planning and Development Act, 2000, been significantly extended. The Council now have to undertake an assessment of current and existing housing within their area and have to provide for those unable to meet the market cost of housing through social and affordable housing.
- 1.3 The provision in the Act that allows a local authority to reserve up to 20% of land zoned for residential or mixed development for social and affordable housing is an important instrument aimed at ensuring that Roscommon County Council can meet their identified social and affordable housing needs. The precise intervention point is on the basis of an assessment of needs articulated in this housing strategy.
- 1.4 The Act requires that Roscommon County Council have prepared their housing strategy by 1st August 2001 and begun the variation process to incorporate the housing strategy into the respective Development Plans. This will result in social and affordable housing becoming a material consideration, which must be taken into account, in formulating the development plan, preparing the housing strategy and when making planning decisions. A summary of the provisions of the Act is provided in Appendix B.
- 1.5 The Roscommon County Housing Strategy has been prepared by Roscommon County Council with the assistance of Brady Shipman Martin and PA Consulting Group.

THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CONTEXT IN ROSCOMMON COUNTY

- 1.6 County Roscommon has undergone limited economic as well as social development and expansion until recent years. Apart from Athlone (Monksland) and Roscommon town few areas have seen a significant population expansion. One of the main reasons for this is the location of three population centres adjacent, but outside, the county. These are Athlone (County Westmeath), Ballinasloe (County Galway) and Carrick-on-Shannon (County Leitrim).
- 1.7 A number of consultations and interviews with both national and local stakeholders and interested parties were undertaken as part of the Housing Strategy. A number of common issues relating to Roscommon, and the current social, economic and housing context, were raised and are summarised below.
- people are in employment but cannot afford houses. This perception is borne out by our findings, which estimate that during 2001, at least 105 people within the

County will be unable to afford the most affordable house available, priced at IR£58,000.

- there is a need for the Council to zone more land for residential use.
- there is a need for good quality, mixed housing design, combining social, affordable and private housing development.
- there is a need for a more thoughtful and acceptable dispersal of social housing, rather than “block” development.
- there is need to attract multiple employers to the town’s enterprise / industrial / commercial parks.
- there is need to develop tourism within the County.
- there is a need to attract devolved Government department(s) to the County.

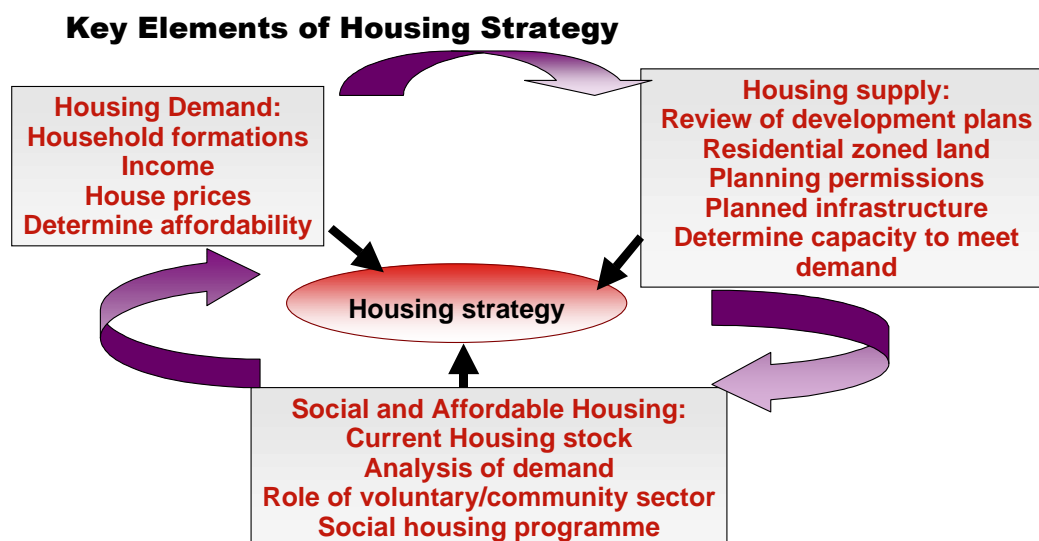
CHANGES WITHIN LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN ROSCOMMON COUNTY

- 1.8 The Housing Strategy has been prepared by the Council against a backdrop of unprecedented change within the local government system. One of the key developments has been the modernising of the local government process through the Government’s *Better Local Government* policy. Arising from this policy, Roscommon County Council is now putting in place new structures and processes at Council and Executive level aimed at improving the way the Council manages its services.
- 1.9 In relation to housing and planning, two new Strategic Policy Committees have been formed, which comprise both councillors and stakeholders. This is a significant new development in that for the first time it formally involves representatives of community and voluntary groups in relation to housing and planning policy formulation. In addition to Better Local Government, two other developments are of particular significance:
- the remit of the Council in relation to the economic, social and cultural development of the county has been strengthened and expanded with the addition of the County Development Board. The Board is an important new initiative within the county that aims, under the auspices of the Council, to bring together all the key partners involved in the economic, social and cultural development of the county.
 - the capital spending programme in the National Development Plan is critical for the future economic and social development of the county. Roscommon County Council has an important role to play in ensuring that the Plan is successful in meeting its objectives.

APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

- 1.10 The Department of the Environment and Local Government issued a Model Housing Strategy and Step-by-Step Guide in December 2000 as an aid to local authorities to implement the provision of Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2000. The Roscommon Housing Strategy has substantially followed the approach outlined in the Model Housing Strategy, augmented by locally available data where possible.

- 1.11 The diagram below illustrates the key elements of the Housing Strategy prepared by Roscommon County Council.



- 1.12 The Housing Strategy is by definition a strategic document that is forward-looking, and includes an estimate of housing demand and supply as well as social and affordable housing requirements for the County from January 2001 until the end of December 2006. In making its estimates, the Council has made every attempt to ensure that they are based on the most up-to-date and statistically reliable data available. Two aspects of the data collection process are worthy of comment
1. In relation to official data, a County level analysis was mainly dependent on CSO Census data. The last Census was conducted in 1996 and the next Census will now not be conducted until 2002. The time lag means that the latest official data available is already five years old, and this period has been one of unprecedented growth. The Act provides for a review of the Housing Strategy within two years, and the Council will avail of this provision to review its Strategy in 2003 at which point the 2002 Census data will be available to validate projections.
 2. Where possible, data was collected at county and sub-county level. Analysis of housing supply was at a county and sub-county basis through the analysis of data for scheduled towns, villages and rural areas which was aggregated on a county electoral area basis. The analysis of social and affordable housing currently within the county was primarily based on data available within the Council. Most of the data needed for estimating housing demand is readily available on a county basis – data at a sub-county level is in general not available. Given the short time period that was available to prepare the strategy it was not possible to collect robust data at sub-county level. The Council did, however, seek to determine whether there were significant variations in house prices within the county through a survey of local auctioneers and estate agents. The survey sought to establish precise patterns of house prices at sub-county level. The survey however resulted in a low response rate.
- 1.13 In preparing the Housing Strategy, the Council examined relevant reports prepared on the county and the region as well as consulting with key stakeholders.

STRUCTURE OF ROSCOMMON HOUSING STRATEGY

- 1.14 This Housing Strategy is divided into the following main sections.

Introduction

This chapter outlines the background to the Housing Strategy, the national and local context, and the approach and methodology employed.

Estimating Housing Demand

This chapter outlines the basis for estimating housing demand including population, income and house prices. It concludes with an assessment of demand for affordable houses in the county based on the affordability criteria outlined in section 93(1) of the Planning and Development Act 2000.

Estimating Housing Supply

This chapter assesses the development capacity and pressure including planned infrastructure, a review of current development plans, assesses the availability and requirement for residential zoned land, examines the pattern of planning permissions, and projects the spatial distribution of housing and the volume of housing to which Part V will apply. In addition to Part V of the Planning and Development Act, this chapter draws on national policy in relation to the proper planning and sustainable development of the County.

Social and Affordable Housing

This chapter examines the demand for social housing and the role of the Council as well as the voluntary and community sector in providing social and affordable housing. It concludes by providing an estimation of the supply of social and affordable housing for the duration of the plan, including the type and mix of houses.

Conclusions

This concluding chapter draws on the analysis of the previous chapters and examines the policy implications for the Council, as well as identifying key actions required over the life of the Strategy.

2. ESTIMATING HOUSING DEMAND

APPROACH TO ESTIMATING DEMAND

- 2.1 In estimating the demand for housing, including social and affordable housing, the Council looked at the following key variables that determine whether individuals are likely to encounter affordability problems in the county.
- household formations;
 - household income; and
 - house prices.
- 2.2 In projecting household formations, the Council considered both trends in household formation over the past five years (as expressed in house completions), and population projections using different scenarios. It should be emphasised that in projecting population figures, the Council's primary concern was to estimate the pattern of household formation with reference to projections based on historical trends of house completions. A summary of the scenarios analysed is presented in Table 2.2.
- 2.3 In projecting household income, the Council analysed income levels and the number of households at different income levels within the county. A summary is presented in Tables 2.3 and 2.4.
- 2.4 In projecting house prices, the Council analysed trends in house prices for the county over the past five years, on the basis of which it was able to look at current and projected house price ranges and the number of houses available at each price range. A summary is presented in Table 2.5.
- 2.5 Based on this analysis, the Council was then able to determine the number of households likely to experience affordability problems over the next six years. This figure is a key element in considering the appropriate intervention point at which to reserve appropriately zoned lands for social and affordable housing.

HOUSEHOLD FORMATIONS AND POPULATION PROJECTIONS

- 2.6 As outlined above, trends in household formation and population projections were drawn upon to project likely demand for housing. The primary focus in regard to projection is based on household formations, rather than population. This section looks at recent population trends within the county. It also includes a summary of the approaches used to project household formation, i.e. population projections and patterns of house completions.

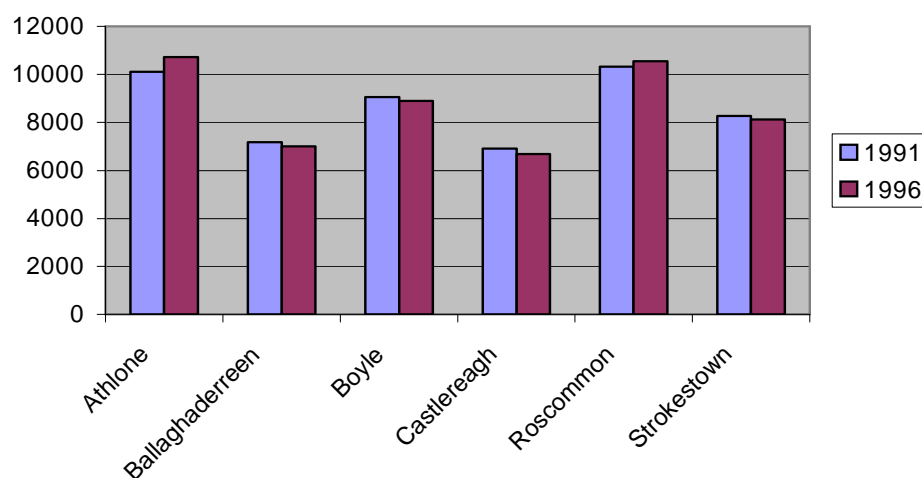
Recent population trends at county and sub-county level

- 2.7 The projected population for the county, and at sub-county level, is a key driver in estimating the demand for housing over the six years of the Housing Strategy. By linking population increase and average household size, it is possible to estimate the projected number of household formations. The most recent available data on population trends is from the 1996 Census of Population.
- 2.8 Analysis of population trends indicate that there was a 5.2% decline in the population of County Roscommon between 1986 and 1991. There was however a small increase of 1% in the population between 1991 and 1996 to a total of 51,975. The main reason for the decline between 1986 and 1991 was a net outward migration of

3,045. This outflow was reversed between 1991 and 1996 by a net inward migration of 177.

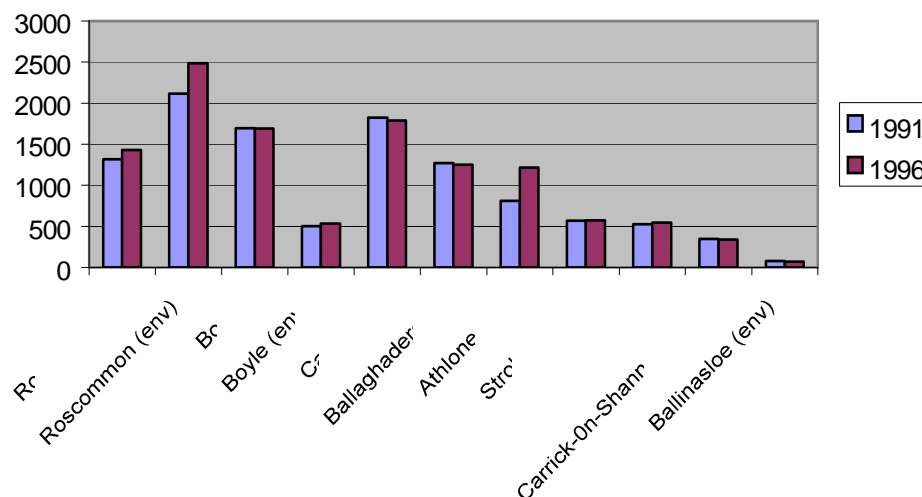
- 2.9 The annual rate of natural change was +1.315 per 1,000 persons between 1986 and 1991 dropping to -0.381 by 1996. The corresponding figures for migration were -11.44 and 0.68. Both the rate of net migration and natural change declined between 1986 and 1991, followed by marginal increases between 1991 and 1996, which nonetheless resulted in an overall decline in population between 1986 and 1996. At sub-county level, population figures have been examined on a county electoral area as well as key towns and settlements.

Figure 2.1 Population in electoral areas in 1991 and 1996



- 2.10 The electoral area of Athlone experienced the highest rate of population increase between 1991 and 1996 at 5.86%, followed by Roscommon at 2.15%. The electoral areas of Ballaghaderreen, Boyle, Castlerea and Strokestown experienced declines in population of 2.55%, 1.90%, 3.22% and 1.92% respectively during this period.

Figure 2.2 Population in urban centres



- 2.11 It is clear from figure 2.2 that the largest population centre is Roscommon town and environs, with a combined population of 3,915 in 1996. Boyle and environs, Castlerea, Ballaghaderreen and the environs of Athlone in order of size follow this.
- 2.12 It is clear from the population changes between 1991 and 1996 that Roscommon town and environs are still growing substantially, at 9.0% and 17.5% respectively, while the environs of Boyle grew at 6.0% and Elphin at 3.8%. The strongest growth, in percentage terms, occurred in the environs of Athlone, which grew at 50.4% during this period. The other key towns experienced a slight decline in population during this period: the population of Ballaghaderreen declined by 1.7%, Boyle town by 0.3%, Castlerea by 1.8% and Strokestown by 0.7%.
- 2.13 It can be summarised that there was a net decline of 5% in the population of the county between 1986 and 1996. This was due primarily to a net outward migration and a decline in the rate of natural change between 1986 and 1991. This trend reversed between 1991 and 1996 but not enough to compensate for the decline in the previous five years.
- 2.14 Although the latest population figures available are from 1996, anecdotal evidence indicates that there has been a reversal of the population decline throughout the towns of the county, with particularly strong housing demand in Monksland (the environs of Athlone) between 1996 and 2001.

Estimating future demand for housing and population projections

- 2.15 Estimating the likely number of household formations required in the county over the six years of the strategy was undertaken using two different methodologies.
- The first approach looked at three different scenarios of population growth at county level and from these figures, derived the projected number of household formations between 2001 and the end of 2006. The base figure was the population for 1996 and the yearly increase was calculated using annual rates of increase. The number of households was generated by dividing the population by the average household size.
- The second approach estimated demand for housing, taking as a starting point actual housing completions over the past five years and, projecting forward the likely number of house completions over the duration of the strategy. From this, it was possible to estimate population increases based on household size.
- 2.16 A summary of the implications of the two approaches and the implications for household formation and population is given in Table 2.2. The publication in June 2001 of the Regional Population Projections indicate a significant increase of 60,000 in the population of the West Region within which Roscommon is situated between 2001 and 2031. A significant amount of this population increase is likely to be located within Galway with a smaller increase within Roscommon.

Method 1 - Household formation based on population projections

- 2.17 The following scenarios were applied to project population by the end of 2006:
- Population projections based on the natural rate of increase evidenced over the two inter-censal periods 1986-91 and 1991-96.*
- 2.18 By focusing on the natural rate of increase only, we have excluded migration effects from this scenario, effectively neutralising the effect of migration, i.e. it is neither positive nor negative. Unless there is a dramatic change in population trends with a return to outward migration, we can assume that this figure understates the future housing requirement. Based on the natural rate of increase, there would be a requirement for 971 additional households over the next 6 years.

CSO Population and labour force projections for 2001-2031.

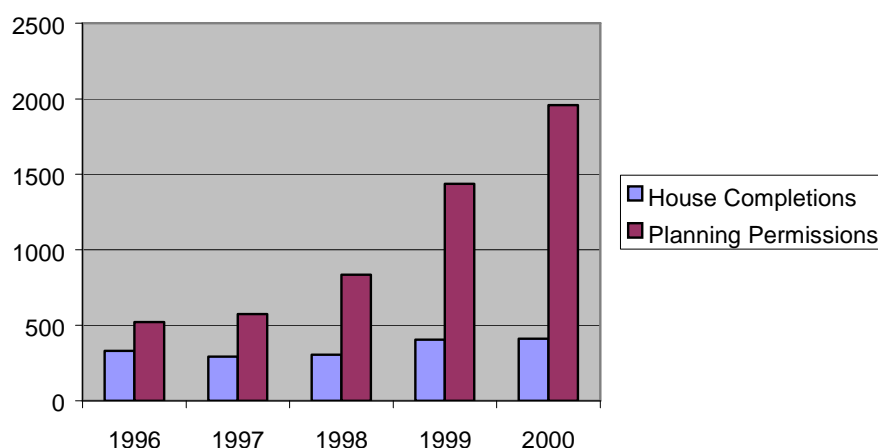
- 2.19 The CSO projections are applied at a national level in this scenario. A breakdown of projections is not provided at county level. For the purpose of this analysis it has been assumed that growth will be evenly distributed throughout the country (although this is unlikely to be the case). The analysis applied the upper and lower population scenarios envisaged by the CSO. It is reasonable to assume that the population increase for Roscommon will not be lower than the lowest projected increase by the CSO.
- 2.20 The CSO projections are based on different assumptions about migration and fertility and six different scenarios are presented by the CSO incorporating the various assumptions. The projected annual average percentage increases range from a projected high of 1.13% up to 2001 (immigration continuing but diminishing and TFR continuing to rise until 2001 and then remaining constant) to 0.38% for 2011 (immigration followed by emigration and total fertility rate remaining constant and then decreasing to 1.5 by 2011).
- 2.21 Calculating migration presents one of the biggest challenges in projecting population. The CSO identified two migration scenarios – the highest being net migration of 20,000 for the State for the period 1996 to 2001, slowing down to 15,000 in the period 2001 to 2006 and eventually to 5,000 during 2011 to 2031. The Department of Enterprise and Employment estimates inward migration of 45,000 per annum up until 2005 to meet labour force requirements. If this projection holds true, it would appear that the CSO's highest scenario may be understated for the country as a whole. Applying CSO projections within Roscommon would mean a requirement in the range of 2,334 and 1,759 additional households for the county over the six years. This would result in population levels in private households of 58,639 and 56,639 respectively.
- 2.22 For each of these scenarios, i.e. natural increase and CSO maximum and minimum projections, population was calculated taking 1996 as a base – the number of households was derived by applying average household size to the total population.

Household Size

- 2.23 The effect of declining household size is significant on the projected formation of households. By factoring out any increase in population, there will still be a substantial requirement for additional houses. Between 1986 and 1996, the average household size decreased from 3.35 to 3.09 in County Roscommon, giving an annual decline of 0.026. The 1996 figure is lower than the national figure for household size at 3.04 but still considerably higher than the European average of 2.63. It is therefore reasonable to assume that household size will decrease by the same rate to 2006 giving a household size of 2.83 which is still above the current European figure. This indicates that the decline in household size is unlikely to plateau before 2006.

Method 2 - Estimating demand based on house completions

- 2.24 This approach applies the methodology of the Model Housing Strategy, prepared by the Department of the Environment and local Government, and estimates demand based on house completions over the past five years – it assumes that house completions are equivalent to household formations. The following table illustrates the level of house completions for County Roscommon from 1996 to 2000.

Figure 2.3 House completions and permissions

- 2.25 The figures for house completions refer to the total number of house completions for the county both in the public and private sector. The figures have been calculated by the Department of the Environment and Local Government based on ESB connections within the county area. The trend within Roscommon indicates a peak of 411 in the number of house completions in 2000. In deriving projected house completions for 2001 to 2006, the following two factors were considered:

The differential between planning permissions and house completions.

- 2.26 There was a 376% increase in planning permissions between 1996 and 2000, with particularly large increases of 172% and 136% between 1998 and 1999, and 1999 and 2000 respectively. There was also a significant difference between planning permissions and house completions. In 1993, house completions represented 64% of planning permissions; and by 2000, house completions represented only 21% of planning permissions.
- 2.27 The large differential between planning permissions and house completions can be attributed to either a significant increase in pressure for development in the county or a speculation effect in anticipation of the implementation of Part V. Whatever the reason, it is clear that in estimating household projections it is necessary to take account of this figure as an indicator of potential growth. It should be noted, however, that as they were granted prior to the implementation of Part V, the provisions of Part V do not apply.

Projected house completions

- 2.28 The base figure of house completions for 2001 has been derived by taking a five year average between 1996 and 2000 of 349 house completions. The Council estimates that the number of households will increase by an additional 1% per year during the period of the Housing Strategy. This reflects a realistic estimate of projected growth.

Table 2.1 Projected household numbers

| Year | Household numbers | Additional households | Average household size | Population |
|------|-------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|------------|
| 1996 | 16,457 | 221 | 3.09 | 50,919 |
| 1997 | 16,678 | 292 | 3.07 | 51,170 |
| 1998 | 16,970 | 305 | 3.04 | 51,625 |
| 1999 | 17,275 | 406 | 3.02 | 52,103 |
| 2000 | 17,681 | 411 | 2.99 | 52,868 |
| 2001 | 18,092 | 349 | 2.96 | 53,627 |
| 2002 | 18,442 | 353 | 2.94 | 54,182 |
| 2003 | 18,794 | 356 | 2.91 | 54,730 |
| 2004 | 19,150 | 360 | 2.89 | 55,269 |
| 2005 | 19,510 | 363 | 2.86 | 55,800 |
| 2006 | 19,874 | 367 | 2.83 | 56,323 |
| 2007 | 20,241 | | | |

Total additional households 2001 - 2006 = 2,148

Note: The base figure for household numbers is total private households. 1996 completions refer to the last 8 months of 1996 – it is assumed that figures for the first four months are incorporated in the 1996 Census figure. The total additional houses required is 2,148, which is the number of households at the beginning of 2001 less the number of households at the end of 2006. The population figure is for the number of people in private households which is slightly lower than total population (e.g. in 1996 1,056 people lived in non-private accommodation)

2.29 The highest number of houses required is projected using the CSO Maximum projections at 2,334, with the Model Housing approach and CSO Minimum showing 2,148 and 1,759 households respectively. The lowest house projections are derived when using natural rate of increase only.

Table 2.2 Summary of the population scenarios

| | Model housing strategy | CSO (Max) | CSO (Min) | Natural increase |
|------------------------------------|------------------------|-----------|-----------|------------------|
| Total additional households | 2,148 | 2,598 | 1,893 | 971 |
| Population 2006 | 57,363 | 58,639 | 56,639 | 51,994 |

- 2.30 Although 1996 to 2001 CSO statistics are not available, given the rate of growth during this period the Council has decided to use the Model Housing Strategy approach and assume an increase of 2,148 households based on a population of 56,837 by 2006. Again, population trends between 1991 and 1996 as well as anecdotal evidence for the period 1996 to 2001 suggests that this will be driven especially by growth in the environs of Athlone and other urban centres in the County.

HOUSEHOLD INCOMES

- 2.31 The second critical component in estimating the need for affordable housing in the county is disposable household income. Income figures for the county were derived from the following three main sources.

Household Budget Survey

- 2.32 The 1994/95 Household Budget Survey provided the figure for disposable household income for the country as a whole, which in turn provides the basis for calculating income at county level. This indicates the average annual disposable household income and the percentage of households in each income category. By applying the number of private households in Roscommon in 1995, the total number of households in each income category within the county has been derived.

Household Incomes Regions and Counties 1991-1997

- 2.33 To allow for county variations, trends in the estimates of disposable income per capita on a county basis were extracted from the CSO Household Incomes Regions and Counties 1991-1997. The figures show that per capita disposable income in the county declined between 1991 and 1997 (85.5% and 82.4% respectively). In 1995, county income was 83.8% of national income – the national income figures were adjusted downwards by this percentage to derive local income levels. A summary of the distribution of income within the county is given in Table 2.3.

ESRI Medium Term Review 1999-2005

- 2.34 The 1995 figures were inflated annually to reflect income growth from 1996 to 2006. The figures were taken from the ESRI Medium Term Review 1999-2005 and the Quarterly Economic Commentary, published in March 2001 (for 2000, 2001, and 2002). The projected income per year for each income band is given in Table 2.4.

Table 2.3 Projected income ranges

| Income range | Weekly disposable income (IR£) | % of households in each category | Average annual disposable household income (National) (IR£) | County deflator | Average annual disposable household income (County) (IR£) | No. of households in the County, 1995 |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|---|-----------------|---|---------------------------------------|
| 1 st decile | <77.92 | 10 | 3,263.00 | 0.838 | 2,734.48 | 1,635 |
| 2 nd decile | <121.60 | 10 | 5,109.00 | 0.838 | 4,281.47 | 1,635 |
| 3 rd decile | <154.70 | 10 | 6,959.68 | 0.838 | 5,832.39 | 1,635 |
| 4 th decile | <206.39 | 10 | 9,033.44 | 0.838 | 7,570.25 | 1,635 |
| 5 th decile | <268.76 | 10 | 11,188.32 | 0.838 | 9,376.09 | 1,635 |
| 6 th decile | <340.89 | 10 | 13,730.08 | 0.838 | 11,506.15 | 1,635 |
| 7 th decile | <425.89 | 10 | 16,723.20 | 0.838 | 14,014.46 | 1,635 |
| 8 th decile | <524.18 | 10 | 19,989.32 | 0.838 | 16,751.55 | 1,635 |
| 9 th decile | <698.69 | 10 | 24,435.84 | 0.838 | 16,751.55 | 1,635 |
| 10 th decile | <689.69 | 10 | 36,156.12 | 0.838 | 20,477.85 | 1,635 |
| | | 100 | | | 30,299.74 | 16,346 |

- 2.35 An analysis of household income indicated that in 1995 the average annual disposable household income in Roscommon ranged from IR£2,734.48 to IR£30,299.74 (table 2.3, column 4). This income range had increased to IR£5,526 – IR£61,234 by 2001, taking into account ESRI projections for national disposable income growth. The figures for 2006 suggest an income range within the county of IR£8,008 to IR£88,729.

Table 2.4 Projected average annual disposable income in County Roscommon

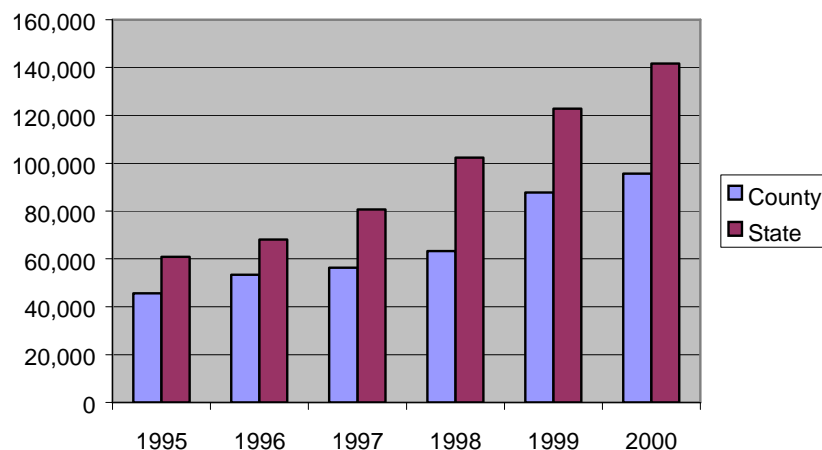
| Average annual disposable household income (County) (IR£) | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| 1995 | 1996 | 1997 | 1998 | 1999 | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 |
| % growth | 10.5 | 13.9 | 13.5 | 10.6 | 13.2 | 13.1 | 10.5 | 7.8 | 7.7 | 8 | 7.2 |
| 2,734.48 | 3,022 | 3,442 | 3,906 | 4,422 | 5,001 | 5,526 | 5,957 | 6,422 | 6,916 | 7,470 | 8,008 |
| 4,281.47 | 4,731 | 5,389 | 6,116 | 6,923 | 7,830 | 8,653 | 9,327 | 10,055 | 10,829 | 11,696 | 12,538 |
| 5,832.39 | 6,445 | 7,341 | 8,332 | 9,431 | 10,667 | 11,787 | 12,706 | 13,697 | 14,752 | 15,932 | 17,079 |
| 7,570.25 | 8,365 | 9,528 | 10,814 | 12,242 | 13,845 | 15,299 | 16,492 | 17,779 | 19,148 | 20,680 | 22,168 |
| 9,376.09 | 10,361 | 11,801 | 13,394 | 15,162 | 17,148 | 18,949 | 20,426 | 22,020 | 23,715 | 25,613 | 27,457 |
| 11,506.15 | 12,714 | 14,482 | 16,437 | 18,606 | 21,044 | 23,253 | 25,067 | 27,022 | 29,103 | 31,431 | 33,694 |
| 14,014.46 | 15,486 | 17,639 | 20,020 | 22,662 | 25,631 | 28,322 | 30,532 | 32,913 | 35,447 | 38,283 | 41,039 |
| 16,751.55 | 18,510 | 21,083 | 23,930 | 27,088 | 30,637 | 33,854 | 36,494 | 39,341 | 42,370 | 45,760 | 49,055 |
| 20,477.85 | 22,628 | 25,773 | 29,253 | 33,114 | 37,452 | 41,384 | 44,612 | 48,092 | 51,795 | 55,939 | 59,967 |
| 30,299.74 | 33,481 | 38,135 | 43,283 | 48,997 | 55,415 | 61,234 | 66,010 | 71,159 | 76,638 | 82,769 | 88,729 |

House Prices

- 2.36 There has been a sharp increase in house prices with consequent difficulties experienced by first-time house buyers at a national level. While house prices have increased in Roscommon, the rate of increase has not been as marked as trends at national level.
- 2.37 In preparing the housing strategy, the following key issues in relation to house prices were considered.
- Trends in house prices at county level compared to national trends;
 - Projected house price increases for 2001 – 2006; and
 - The incidence of price variations at sub-county level.

Trends in house prices at county level

- 2.38 Table 2.4 shows that house prices more than doubled in the county between 1995 and 2000, with average house prices increasing from IR£45,702 in 1995 to £95,667 in 2000. The largest single increase occurred between 1998 and 1999. The gap between house prices at national and county level has increased since 1996, when county prices were 78% of the national average. The corresponding figure in 2000, was 67.53%.

Figure 2.4 Average house prices 1995 – 2000 (IR£)

- 2.39 Based on the average annual price of houses, a range of house prices was derived, and from this the distribution of houses sold in each price range was calculated. This figure provides the average number of houses sold in each house price range between 2000 and 2006, which is indicated in table 2.5.

Table 2.5 House price band inflation

| Year | Av. price rise | | | | | | | | | | |
|------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|-------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| 2000 | | 0.00 to 50,000 | 50,000 to 60,000 | 60,000 to 70,000 | 70,000 to 80,000 | 80,000 to 90,000 | 90,000 to 100,000 | 100,000 to 110,000 | 110,000 to 120,000 | 120,000 to 130,000 | 130,000 to 140,000 |
| 2001 | 16% | 0.00 to 58,000 | 58,000 to 69,600 | 69,600 to 81,200 | 81,200 to 92,800 | 92,800 to 104,400 | 104,400 to 116,000 | 116,000 to 127,600 | 127,600 to 139,200 | 139,200 to 150,800 | 150,800 and over |
| 2002 | 13% | 0.00 to 65,540 | 65,540 to 78,648 | 78,648 to 91,756 | 91,756 to 104,864 | 104,864 to 117,972 | 117,972 to 131,080 | 131,080 to 144,188 | 144,188 to 157,296 | 157,296 to 170,404 | 170,404 and over |
| 2003 | 10% | 0.00 to 72,094 | 72,094 to 86,512 | 86,512 to 100,932 | 100,932 to 115,350 | 115,350 to 129,769 | 129,769 to 144,188 | 144,188 to 158,607 | 158,607 to 173,026 | 173,026 to 187,444 | 187,444 and over |
| 2004 | 8.5% | 0.00 to 78,222 | 78,222 to 93,866 | 93,866 to 109,511 | 109,511 to 125,155 | 125,155 to 140,800 | 140,800 to 156,444 | 156,444 to 172,088 | 172,088 to 187,733 | 187,733 to 203,377 | 203,377 and over |
| 2005 | 7.5% | 0.00 to 84,089 | 84,089 to 100,906 | 100,906 to 117,724 | 117,724 to 134,542 | 134,542 to 151,360 | 151,360 to 168,177 | 168,177 to 184,995 | 184,995 to 201,813 | 201,813 to 218,630 | 218,630 and over |
| 2006 | 7.5% | 0.00 to 90,395 | 90,395 to 108,474 | 108,474 to 126,553 | 126,553 to 144,632 | 144,632 to 162,712 | 162,712 to 180,791 | 180,791 to 198,870 | 198,870 to 216,949 | 216,949 to 235,028 | 235,028 and over |
| % of county units within each band | | 6.6% | 7.5% | 8.3% | 12.1% | 14.6% | 12.8% | 12.8% | 8.0% | 4.6% | 12.7% |

House price forecasts

- 2.40 A critical element of the housing strategy is the projection of how prices are likely to increase up to 2006. The third Bacon Report published in June 2000 projected average house price increases of 18% and 16% for 2000 and 2001 respectively, followed by a slight easing in house prices from 2002 to 2006 from 13% to 7.5%.
- 2.41 The returns on average house prices in 2000 published by the Department of the Environment and Local Government, indicate an actual increase in house prices of 15.3% in contrast with an actual increase of almost 20% in 1999 and the forecast growth of 18% in the Bacon report. These latest returns on average house prices for 2000 would appear to indicate that, while price increases are still considerably higher than the rate of inflation, the rate of increase is slowing down.
- 2.42 The Council also considered the house price index prepared by the Irish Permanent in conjunction with the ESRI. The index supports the downward trend evidenced by the Department. In February 2001, for example, the index recorded the lowest monthly increase in house prices in over two years. However, while a slow-down is now evident, the average house price increase for 2000 was 21.3% compared to 17.9% in 1999. The differences may be due to different methodological approaches in collecting the information and also to the fact that the Department compiles figures from all lending institutions.
- 2.43 The Council has taken the view that, given the slowdown in house price increases in 2000 it is reasonable to adjust downwards the projections in the Bacon report based on the difference between the projected and actual house price increases in 2000, i.e. actual house price increases for 2000 were 85% of projected house price increases in the Bacon Report. By applying this deflator to projections in the Bacon report, the following house price increases for 2001 - 2006 have been assumed.

Table 2.6 Adjusted house price increase

| Year | Bacon projection | Adjusted forecast |
|------|------------------|-------------------|
| 2000 | 18% | 15.3% |
| 2001 | 16% | 14% |
| 2002 | 13% | 11% |
| 2003 | 10% | 8.5% |
| 2004 | 8.5% | 7% |
| 2005 | 7.5% | 6.5% |
| 2006 | | 6.5% |

RENTAL SECTOR

- 2.44 The rental sector is an important source of housing for those unable to afford houses or who, for various reasons (e.g. mobility, age) do not wish to purchase property. It is difficult to estimate the size of the rental sector, either nationally or locally, but the following two local indicators are available:
- the total number of private rented dwellings registered with the Council in 2000 was 130.
- 2.45 Both figures understate the actual rental housing stock, because not everybody renting is in receipt of rental subsidy from the Health Board, and because not all landlords are registered with the Council. The Rental Review Commission estimates that 11% of the national housing stock is rented. For Roscommon, this would suggest that there could be up to 1,945 rental units based on the projected number of private households for 2000.
- 2.46 Feedback from estate agents and auctioneers surveyed in the county indicate that the size of the private rental market has increased significantly since 1998. Average rents have also increased from IR£200-400 per month to IR£300-500 per month in the same period. The type of accommodation being sought tends to be at the smaller end of the scale, i.e. apartments, town houses, terraced or semi-detached houses. Key locations reflect the population centres already identified for the county, such as Roscommon town, Boyle and Monksland. The recent increase in provision or availability of private rented accommodation is encouraging, however, the associated increase in rents is not, and may contribute to the County's affordability problem.

Subject to Government decisions in relation to a forthcoming report of a Planning Group on rental assistance, it is unlikely that, in future, the Council will have responsibility for addressing the housing needs of a greater proportion of households who would otherwise be assisted under the Supplementary Welfare Allowance scheme. This may require adjustments of estimates relating to social housing requirements. The government's "Action on Housing" indicated that more supply-based approach to rental assistance would be pursued. It is envisaged that new arrangements will be developed, in partnership with the private sector, to procure rental accommodation, which would be available on a long-term basis to help address the needs of eligible households not accommodated through other housing options. More specific proposals in this regard are likely to be developed in the context of the Planning Group report.

ASSESSMENT OF AFFORDABILITY

- 2.47 Based on the foregoing assessment of the demand for housing, household income and house prices between 2001 and 2006 and an interest rate of 6% per annum, the estimated demand for social and affordable housing is summarised in table 2.7.

Table 2.7: Summary of housing demand and anticipated need for social and affordable housing

| | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 |
|---|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1. Household formations | 349 | 353 | 356 | 360 | 363 | 367 |
| 2. No. of households meeting affordability criteria | 79 | 85 | 88 | 87 | 83 | 85 |
| 2 as % of 1 | 22.6% | 24.1% | 24.7% | 24.2% | 22.9% | 23.2% |

- 2.48 The percentage of households meeting the affordability criteria varies by about 2% over the duration of the strategy. The strategy assumes that the relationship between house incomes and house prices will remain relatively stable and that no major changes in the demand for houses will occur. Based on these figures in Table 2.7, the Council will reserve 20% of land zoned for the development of social and affordable housing.
- 2.49 Based on this assessment of affordability, it is clear that over the term of the housing strategy between 22.6% and 24.7% of households meet the eligibility criteria specified under section 93(1) of the Act. The Council will therefore seek to reserve 20% of residentially zoned land for social and affordable housing.

3. ESTIMATING HOUSING SUPPLY

INTRODUCTION

- 3.1 A primary requirement of a housing strategy is to ensure that an adequate level of residentially zoned land is provided for within the county. The capacity to accommodate future housing growth is dependent on a range of factors. The most important are:
- the amount of serviced residentially zoned land;
 - the amount of other land suitable for development;
 - constraints and limits in the provision of water supply and drainage;
 - constraints and limits in the provision of other physical, social and economic infrastructure;
 - access, including public transport;
 - topographical constraints; and
 - areas of high amenity or nature conservation value.
- 3.2 This section of the housing strategy examines the factors that influence housing supply and addresses the planning and management of the physical environment in County Roscommon. This section also includes an analysis of land use and housing supply in regard to zoned and serviced land as well as a spatial allocation of private, affordable and social housing within the county.
- 3.3 The decreasing household size and increases in development pressure require a more efficient use of serviced land. There is a clear benefit in increasing the density of residential developments on serviced land and where there are other adequate facilities and services. It is however important that these increases occur in appropriate locations and at a scale that is appropriate to their location. The strategy also encourages a more sustainable approach to rural housing and will facilitate the development of rural communities within County Roscommon.

NATIONAL POLICY

- 3.4 The population and household scenarios presented in section 2 of this strategy have been used as a basis for determining the likely future scale and distribution of development in County Roscommon. The housing strategy supports the national policy objectives as stated in *Sustainable Development: A Strategy for Ireland, Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Residential Density* and *Part V of the Planning and Development Act, 2000: Housing Supply, Guidelines for Planning Authorities*. These policy documents provide a strategic context for the County Roscommon housing strategy and aim to:
- promote higher residential densities especially in proximity to town centres, public transport nodes and access points;
 - encourage mixed use developments;
 - ensure a clear demarcation between urban and rural land-use;
 - promote the redevelopment of brownfield sites;
 - protect and enhancement of the natural environment; and
 - new development to be located in an environmentally sustainable and sensitive manner.

LOCAL POLICY

- 3.5 Roscommon County Council is currently reviewing and preparing a Draft Development Plan for the County as well as the towns of Ballagherderreen, Boyle, Castlerea and Roscommon Town. A development plan is also being reviewed and prepared for the western environs of Athlone.
- 3.6 The County Development Plan also contains land use plans for Creagh, Cortober and the Lough Key area. All the development plans have been on display for the first statutory display period of three months and it is envisaged that they will be adopted as the statutory development plan for each of their respective areas by the end of 2001.
- 3.7 As of 1st January 2001 a local planning authority must begin a review of its development plan after it has been in operation for four years. The lifespan of the development plan is now six years, as opposed to five years under the previous legislation.
- 3.8 The primary aim of the Roscommon County Development Plan 2000 is to consolidate the County as an attractive place in which to live, work and recreate, and to facilitate the achievement of a high quality of life for residents and visitors through the further development of sustainable economic and social activities in a quality environment.
- 3.9 The Plan aims to consolidate the towns and villages of County Roscommon as centres of economic and population growth, thereby facilitating the sustainable development of housing, industry and services. Further, the Plan aims to conserve the natural and built environment and to improve the physical infrastructure of the County.
- 3.10 In order to develop a planned approach to this development the Council aim to develop town and village plans for settlements other than the four scheduled towns, Athlone Environs, Creagh and Cortober. A summary analysis of the policies contained in each of the existing development plans is set out in appendix C of this study.

DEVELOPMENT PRESSURE

- 3.11 The existing settlement structure of County Roscommon is characterised by a strong rural population supported by the dominating town of Roscommon and a number of smaller settlements. The County has experienced an increasing amount of development pressure due to its location adjacent to areas of major employment and the location, just outside the county, of the three large urban population, service and employment centres of Athlone, Ballinasloe and Carrick-on-Shannon. The County have responded to this pressure by developing land use plans to control development in the County Roscommon areas adjacent to these towns.
- 3.12 There remains a strong demand for urban generated housing around the main towns, both inside and outside the county, as well as along the River Shannon and in other amenity areas. The demand for housing is also being stimulated by the Rural Renewal Scheme, which promotes housing development, in the north of the county and the demand for holiday homes especially in areas around Boyle and Strokestown. The demand for housing in smaller settlements has placed considerable pressure on the local infrastructure in these areas and has altered the appearance of many of the smaller settlements.
- 3.13 Improvements in the transportation network, especially the N4, N5 and N6, have facilitated commuting to and from the surrounding counties and continue to stimulate further housing demand in the county. The pressure for development is also being stimulated by the increasing price of housing in the main towns and the decrease in household size.

- 3.14 The Council has attempted to control the increase in urban generated housing and ribbon development in rural areas close to settlements through the introduction of control policies in their development plans and have aimed to encourage new development into existing settlements, where there is infrastructure capacity.
- 3.15 It is envisaged that the pressure for residential development in the county will continue to increase due to migration into the County and due to the economic growth of towns such as Athlone and Carrick-on-Shannon.
- 3.16 The level of rural house completions indicate that despite stricter development control policies the number of rural house completions and especially the level of planning permissions has continued to increase. The continued proliferation of one-off housing will have a visual and resource impact on the landscape and will not in the long term serve to sustain rural communities and services. Non-local housing demand should, therefore where possible, be met in existing small villages and cluster development in the future. The successful implementation of such policies will minimise the visual impact of housing on the landscape and enable services and facilities in rural towns and villages such as schools, shops and post offices to be sustained.

Table 3.1 Planning permissions and house completions within County Roscommon between 1996 and 2000

| | | 1996 | 1997 | 1998 | 1999 | 2000 | Total |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------|------------|------------|------------|--------------|--------------|-------|
| Planning Permissions | <i>One-off housing</i> | 243 | 315 | 441 | 573 | 713 | 43% |
| | <i>Large Developments</i> | 278 | 260 | 393 | 863 | 1,245 | 57% |
| | Total | 521 | 575 | 834 | 1,436 | 1,958 | |
| Housing Completions | <i>Rural</i> | | 190 | 232 | 281 | | 70% |
| | <i>Urban</i> | | 102 | 73 | 125 | | 30% |
| | Total | 332 | 292 | 305 | 406 | 411 | |

Notes : The large developments contain planning permissions for five or more housing units.

Breakdowns for urban and rural house completions were only available from the DoE&LG for the period 1997 - 1999.

- 3.17 Development in regard to house completions has not mirrored the rapid increase in the number of housing units being granted planning permission. This has resulted in there being over 3,500 housing units with planning permission that have yet to be constructed. The implementation of all these permissions will result in a significant increase in population in the county over the next five years.
- 3.18 The low level of completions of planning permissions is indicative of the speculative and investment planning permissions that have been granted in recent years - possibly due to the oncoming implementation of Part V, the low demand for new housing, the impact of the Rural Renewal Scheme and the capacity of the building industry. The figures illustrate the increase in the level of planning permissions, especially in regard to larger developments, over the last five years. Most of these permissions are located on zoned land in urban areas. The number of one-off housing permissions has doubled over the last five years. Most of these permissions are granted in rural areas.

Table 3.2 Location and scale of planning permissions granted for housing units over the last five years

| Location | Total |
|------------------------------|--------------|
| Roscommon town | 640 |
| Castlerea | 561 |
| Ballaghaderreen | 172 |
| Boyle | 610 |
| Athlone environs (Monksland) | 513 |
| Cortober | 55 |
| Other settlements | 488 |
| Rural areas | 2,285 |
| | 5,324 |

- 3.19 The level of planning permissions granted for housing units over the last five years has followed the split in the population of the main urban areas, although Roscommon town and areas such as Athlone environs (Monksland) have remained dominant in regard to the pressure for planning consent. Castlerea and Boyle have increasingly come under pressure for development due to the implementation of the Rural Renewal Scheme in this area of the county.
- 3.20 There is a requirement to sustain the population of rural villages and towns where lower levels of development pressure have been prevalent in recent years. It is recognised that rural housing, where it meets local demand and needs, is an integral requirement to sustain rural communities. This housing should however be located in rural villages wherever possible. It is therefore an aim of the Strategy to ensure that residential development occurs in appropriate locations throughout the County.

DEVELOPMENT CAPACITY

- 3.21 The capacity of a county to absorb development is indicated by the level of residentially zoned land and the ability of rural settlements and other rural areas to absorb future housing. Where development is allowed to take place in the countryside there is a need to ensure that it is not unsympathetic to its setting and does not have a visual impact on the amenity within which it is set. Knowledge of the distribution and capacity of the range of service networks is essential in any spatial analysis of demand and supply. A detailed analysis of the current and planned infrastructure provision within the county is provided in appendix D.
- 3.22 The current and future improvements to roads and sanitary services, will both sustain and encourage development to locate in the county. Development pressure will also be stimulated by the availability of employment, amenity, heritage as well as social, educational, retail and community facilities both within and adjacent to the county.
- 3.23 The Strategy should positively encourage new development whilst ensuring the natural and built assets of town and country in the form of historic houses, scenic landscapes, rivers, etc. and their settings, are not damaged by unsympathetic developments or pollution. The County Development Plan sets out policies for the County's natural and built heritage along with appropriate design standards to ensure new development is attractive and appropriate in the context of its surrounds.
- 3.24 A primary requirement of a housing strategy is to ensure that an adequate level of residentially zoned land is provided for within the county. There is a need to provide for approximately 2,148 new houses throughout the county during the period of the Housing Strategy. A significant number of these will be provided for on zoned land in the main and secondary settlements.

- 3.25 There are currently six development plans within the county. Each development plan contains a significant level of residential zoning.
- 3.26 The Plans clearly indicate that there is a significant level of undeveloped residential zoned land within the county. The estimates for the capacity of undeveloped zoned land do not, however, allow for lands that may not be released for development in the period between 2001 and 2007, or which might not be serviceable within the timescale of the housing strategy. The serviced land and where land is to be serviced can accommodate well above the anticipated growth of household numbers in the main settlements in the period up to the start of 2007.
- 3.27 The Housing Strategy provides and projects new housing, not just in the main settlements of Roscommon, but throughout the county to ensure a balanced and integrated approach to development. In response to this a significant amount of residential development will be accommodated in smaller settlements, villages and rural areas as well as through infill development in existing residential areas as well as on land that is zoned for a mix of uses where housing is permitted.

SPATIAL DISTRIBUTION OF HOUSING PROJECTIONS

- 3.28 There is a need to accommodate a projected increase of 2,148 new households during the period of the Housing Strategy. The following strategic options were assessed for the future distribution of this scale of housing in the county.
- balanced approach to future development with a spatial distribution of future housing based on existing population;
 - future growth to be focused on rural areas and villages;
 - expansion of Roscommon town as well as the towns of Ballaghaderreen, Boyle, and Castlerea;
 - concentration of future growth in the peripheral areas of the county in the environs of Athlone, Ballinasloe and Carrick-on-Shannon; and
 - major expansion of Roscommon Town in proportion to the other centres.
- 3.29 Each of these 'options' could accommodate the scale of expected growth in the future and provide a basis for the proposed spatial distribution of the Roscommon Housing Strategy. Each option, apart from the second option where rural housing would in any case be prevalent, will provide for significant rural housing development for local need and other rural housing demand being met within hamlets, villages and other rural settlements.
- 3.30 A combination of elements from most options, but particularly the balanced approach provides the most sustainable housing and land use option in regard to the spatial distribution of new housing projections. It is imperative that the strategy enables the county to grow and develop in a sustainable manner providing for a mix of housing types and sizes throughout the county. A significant amount of future growth can be provided in smaller settlements as well as providing for local and rural needs.
- 3.31 The spatial distribution of population at the time of the 1996 Census of Population was approximately 74% rural and 26% urban. The definition between urban and rural is based on urban areas that have been categorised as towns and settlements in the 1996 Census. There is some evidence to suggest that spatial distribution of population has been mirrored by the level of house completions within the county between 1997 and 1999.

Table 3.3 Spatial distribution of population in 1996

| Electoral Areas | | Population in 1996 | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------|----------------|
| | | Settlements | Rural |
| Castlerea and Ballaghaderreen | <i>Castlerea</i> | 1,790 | |
| | <i>Ballaghaderreen</i> | 1,248 | |
| | <i>Rural Settlements</i> | 681 | |
| | <i>Rural areas</i> | | 9,978 |
| Boyle and Strokestown | <i>Boyle</i> | 2,197 | |
| | <i>Cortober</i> | 336 | |
| | <i>Rural settlements</i> | 2,184 | |
| | <i>Rural</i> | | 12, 295 |
| Roscommon and Athlone | <i>Roscommon</i> | 3,915 | |
| | <i>Athlone environs</i> | 1,214 | |
| | <i>Creagh</i> | 69 | |
| | <i>Rural</i> | | 16, 068 |
| Total | | 13, 644 | 38, 331 |
| Total as % of population | | 26% | 74% |

Source : Census of Population, Central Statistics Office

- 3.32 Each electoral area, as identified in table 3.3, is comprised of the rural settlements identified below. There are no rural settlements within either the Roscommon or Athlone Electoral area as identified in the 1996 Census.

Castlerea - Ballinlough.

Ballaghaderreen - Frenchpark, Loughglinn.

Boyle - Ballyfarnan.

Strokestown - Strokestown, Elphin, Lanesborough - Ballyleague, Clontuskert, Roosky.

- 3.33 The level of house completions, as illustrated in table 3.1, indicate that 70% of completions were in rural areas. The continuation of this trend, especially due to the one-off nature of the rural housing completions, is likely to have an increasing pressure on resources and services as well as having a visual impact on the landscape.
- 3.34 The current spatial split of planning permissions indicates that 43% of grants were for housing units in rural areas. This spatial distribution is less focused on rural areas as existing levels of population and house completions. This is indicative of the level of speculative planning applications due to the Rural Renewal Scheme and the forthcoming implementation of Part V.
- 3.35 The current development plan policy is to encourage new housing into existing towns and rural settlements and to ensure a more consolidated approach to development. The indicative distribution of growth also takes cognisance of the need to reduce the absorption of urban generated housing around the main urban centres and the need for such housing to be absorbed within existing settlements.
- 3.36 The Housing Strategy aims to concentrate residential development, where possible, in locations where there is access to education, employment, commercial and community facilities as well as access to the rail network.
- 3.37 It is proposed based on current policy, pressure and capacity that an indicative spatial distribution of future housing should be approximately 50% rural and 50% urban.

- 3.38 The implementation of the 50:50 split between urban and rural into the total new households of 2,148, as indicated in table 3.4 provides the spatial distribution of 1,074 new households being provided in the main towns and secondary settlements and 1,074 new households being formed in rural areas, both in the countryside and in smaller villages. An indicative distribution of future new housing levels in the main towns, rural settlements and rural areas is given in table 3.4.

Table 3.4 Indicative spatial distribution of future new housing in Roscommon between 2001 and 2006

| Electoral area | | Future new housing | | Zoned land requirements |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------|--------------|-------------------------|
| | | Urban | Rural | |
| Castlerea and Ballaghaderreen | <i>Castlerea</i> | 125 | - | 7 hectares |
| | <i>Ballaghaderreen</i> | 105 | - | 6 hectares |
| | <i>Rural Settlements</i> | 54 | - | 3 hectares |
| | <i>Rural</i> | - | 280 | |
| Boyle And Strokestown | <i>Boyle</i> | 152 | - | 8 hectares |
| | <i>Cortober</i> | 50 | - | 3 hectares |
| | <i>Rural settlements</i> | 140 | - | 7 hectares |
| | <i>Rural</i> | - | 344 | |
| Roscommon and Athlone | <i>Roscommon</i> | 308 | - | 16 hectares |
| | <i>Athlone environs</i> | 110 | - | 6 hectares |
| | <i>Creagh</i> | 30 | - | 2 hectares |
| | <i>Rural</i> | - | 450 | |
| Total | | 1,074 | 1,074 | |

Note 1 : new housing has been calculated at total additional households of 2,148

Note 2 : all areas have been round up to the nearest hectare with densities at 20 units per hectare.

- 3.39 The distribution indicated in table 3.4 enables a more significant number of social and affordable housing units to be developed in areas that are close to services and facilities. The indicative spatial distribution of 50% urban and 50% rural enables a more efficient allocation of social / affordable housing units where they are most needed.
- 3.40 Future housing developments will require the implementation of schemes currently at construction, in planning or projected by the local authorities to meet wastewater treatment requirements. In addition, measures to improve the necessary sewerage infrastructure will be required.
- 3.41 The figures for zoned land requirements relate to the area of land required to accommodate the estimated demand for housing. It is however good planning practice to zone between 1.5 and 2.5 times the required level of zoned land to make provision for land that may not or can't be developed.
- 3.42 There is sufficient land capacity within Roscommon to accommodate the required levels of growth, but only if the relevant infrastructure and zoning plans are put in place especially in the smaller settlements.
- 3.43 Development and land use zoning plans will be prepared for the settlements of Ballinlough, Frenchpark, Loughglinn, Ballyfarnan, Strokestown, Elphin, Lanesborough - Ballyleague, Clontuskert and Roosky. Other development plans will also be considered in settlements and areas that experience significant growth and development pressure during the Housing Strategy period. The preparation of development plans will ensure that a more co-ordinated and integrated approach to future development as well as providing a more sustainable planning framework to control development in the county.

SOCIAL AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING DISTRIBUTION

- 3.44 Table 2.7 indicated that a higher percentage than 20% of new household formations in Roscommon over the period 2000 - 2006 are likely to present themselves as eligible persons as defined in section 93(1) of the Act. Section 94(4)(c) of the Act makes provision for up to 20% of residentially zoned land to be reserved for social and affordable housing. On this basis, and on the basis of the analysis presented in Section 3 of this document, it is intended that Roscommon County Council will intervene as provided for in section 94(4)(c) of the Act to reserve 20% of residentially zoned lands for the purpose of providing for social and affordable housing.
- 3.45 This intervention will be focused on the main towns where there is existing and potential zoned land, infrastructure, services and other facilities to sustain and accommodate the projected levels of social and affordable housing.
- 3.46 Outside the main settlements, in towns and villages identified as rural settlements in the Housing Strategy as illustrated on page 21, an intervention point of 20% will also be used for social/affordable housing following the adoption of these plans. Where necessary, the breakdown of social and affordable housing in such circumstances will be weighted towards affordable housing, reflecting the relatively lower levels of services, facilities, and transportation alternatives in rural areas.
- 3.47 Due to the anticipated high levels of eligibility for social or affordable housing, a constant intervention of 20% will be applied in all settlements and areas in the county. However in some cases and in some parts of the county, a percentage lower than 20% will be considered particularly where a high level of social housing already exists.

Table 3.5 Current land banks within each Electoral Area

| Electoral Area | Land bank |
|-----------------------|------------------|
| Castelrea | 6.0 hectares |
| Ballaghadrreen | 9.2 hectares |
| Boyle | 11.2 hectares |
| Strokestown | 3.8 hectares |
| Roscommon | 9.4 hectares |
| Athlone | 9.1 hectares |

- 3.48 The current land bank within Roscommon, as identified in table 3.5, is significant. This land bank of nearly 50 hectares is capable of providing some of the social housing needs in local and rural locations where Part V of the Planning and Development Act cannot be applied. The development of all this land would, at a density of 20 housing units per hectare, provide for 1,000 housing units.
- 3.49 Where the local authority own undeveloped residentially zoned land it may be more appropriate for the land to be developed for a wider mix of uses than just social housing. The local authorities should aim to focus future land purchases in smaller pockets in both the main towns and rural villages and settlements in order to counter balance the level of social / affordable housing being provided in the main settlements under Part V of the Planning and Development Act.
- 3.50 Some of the land bank may however be more appropriately developed for other uses due to its poor location, high existing concentration of local authority housing in the area, or for other reasons. It is important that social and affordable housing is properly integrated into existing communities by ensuring a form of scale and compactness that is in keeping with the current town or settlement.

- 3.51 A number of planning permissions will have been granted prior to the adoption of the Strategy into the development plans. These planning permissions, if constructed prior to the lapsing of their length of permission, are not subject to the provisions of Part V of the Planning and Development Act. However, where a planning permission has lapsed, a subsequent permission, for the whole or part of the site, is subject to an intervention point of 20% under the provisions of Part V of the Planning and Development Act.
- 3.52 It has been assumed, based on current development pressure and capacity, that a total of 537 new houses, equivalent to 18 months of the housing projections, will be built during the period of the Housing Strategy that are not subject to the provisions of Part V of the Planning and Development Act.

Table 3.6 Indicative spatial allocation of social and affordable housing units under Part V on zoned land in Roscommon County between 2001 and 2006

| Electoral Area | | New households in towns | New Households not affected by Part V | | New Households affected by Part V | Social/affordable housing (20%) |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| | | | A | B | | |
| Castlerea and Ballaghaderreen | <i>Castlerea</i> | 125 | 32 | - | 93 | 19 |
| | <i>Ballaghaderreen</i> | 105 | 27 | - | 78 | 16 |
| | <i>Rural Settlements</i> | 54 | 13 | 14 | 27 | 5 |
| Boyle and Strokestown | <i>Boyle</i> | 152 | 38 | - | 114 | 23 |
| | <i>Cortober</i> | 50 | 12 | - | 38 | 8 |
| | <i>Rural settlements</i> | 140 | 34 | 35 | 71 | 14 |
| Roscommon and Athlone | <i>Roscommon</i> | 308 | 78 | - | 230 | 46 |
| | <i>Athlone environs</i> | 110 | 27 | - | 83 | 17 |
| | <i>Creagh</i> | 30 | 7 | - | 23 | 5 |
| TOTAL | | 1,074 | 268 | 49 | 757 | 152 |

Note 1 : Column A relates to all planning permissions that have been granted and are not applicable to Part V of the Act. It has been assumed, based on development trends, that approximately 537 new houses will be built, during the Housing Strategy that have already been granted planning permission. Of these new house completions it has been assumed that the same 50:50 ratio will apply between rural and urban areas. A total of 268 houses will be built in urban areas that have already been granted planning permission and therefore not applicable to the intervention point under Part V of the Act.

Note 2 : Column B relates to those settlements where until the adoption of a development plan future development will not be able to partake of Part V and the implementation of a 20% social/affordable element. A lag period of 2 years has therefore been provided to allow for development plans to be written and adopted in the rural settlements

Note 3 : It has been assumed that the number of planning permissions granted before the year 2001, but not developed, will be equal to the number of permissions granted between the period 2001 and 2007, and not developed.

- 3.53 It has been assumed that the same ratio of 50% urban to 50% rural will apply to these permissions. It has therefore been assumed that of the 537 new houses under which Part V is not applicable, approximately 268 houses will be built in urban and 268 houses constructed in rural areas.

- 3.54 Until the adoption of development plans, Part V of the Act will not be applicable to future development in the settlements of Ballinlough, Frenchpark, Loughglinn, Ballyfarnan, Strokestown, Elphin, Lanesborough - Ballyleague, Clontuskert and Roosky. The spatial distribution in table 3.6 has presumed a lag period of 2 years until the adoption of development plans for these settlements.
- 3.55 Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2000 will be applicable to approximately 757 housing units. This will enable, with the adoption of further development plans for the rural settlements, for approximately 152 social and affordable housing units to be provided under Part V of the Act.
- 3.56 Household projections have indicated that there will be a requirement for additional social and affordable housing to be provided within the County. The local authorities through traditional land banks, which currently has the capacity to provide approximately 1,000 further homes, can provide for a certain amount of this housing need, especially due to its scattered location throughout the county.
- 3.57 The greater affordability of rural housing and especially the cheaper cost of single building plots will also provide for a certain element of the affordable housing need.

MIX OF HOUSE TYPES AND SIZES

- 3.58 Integral to this strategy is the need to ensure that a range of housing types and sizes will be made available to meet the different demands of the market including the needs of first time buyers. Section 4 of this housing strategy will also consider the question of affordable housing for households on modest incomes, as well as providing for a range of social housing for a broad span of households such as the disabled, the elderly and those on the lowest incomes, and the unemployed.
- 3.59 The provision of a suitable range of housing types and sizes will diminish the uniformity of suburban type development and will facilitate the further integration of social and affordable housing into existing communities. Equally, the priority to promote sustainable development is reflected in the housing strategy through the approach taken which seeks to reduce the need to travel and encourages a form of residential development that reduces urban sprawl. The strategy is also concerned to maintain a clearer distinction between urban and rural areas.
- 3.60 It is an objective of a number of the draft development plans to ensure that a mix of house types and sizes is developed to reasonably match the requirements of different categories of households, including the special requirements of the elderly and persons with disabilities. Other requirements such as open space, amenity, education, social and community facilities need to be taken into consideration when designing a housing layout.
- 3.61 The trend towards smaller households is likely to continue over the next decade. The providers of housing have responded positively to this by building an increasing variety of house types. It is recommended that in private housing schemes the following mix should apply to ensure the future provision of a suitable mix of housing types and sizes:
- | | | |
|-----------------------------|---|--|
| <i>Two bedroom houses</i> | : | at least 30% of the total number of houses |
| <i>Three bedroom houses</i> | : | at least 30% of the total number of houses |
| <i>Four bedroom houses</i> | : | maximum 20% of total number of houses |
- 3.62 Exceptions to this should only be considered where it can be shown that local market circumstances require a different housing mix.

4. SOCIAL AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING

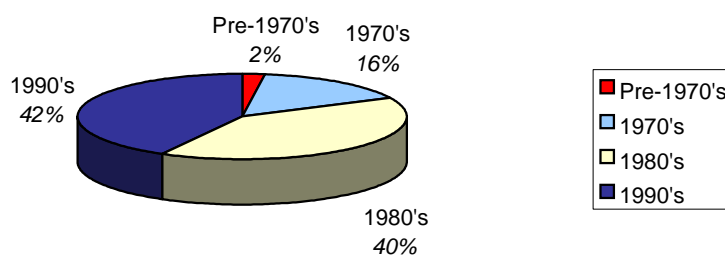
NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

- 4.1 Housing has been included for the first time as a sectoral priority area in the current National Development Plan, reflecting the priority attached by the Government to correcting the infrastructure deficit in the national housing stock. It is estimated that 500,000 additional housing units will be needed by 2010. The Plan earmarked £7.7 billion for social and affordable housing between 2000 and 2006, which represents 34% of total projected expenditure on social and economic infrastructure.
- 4.2 Of this housing capital allocation, 27% has been allocated to the Border, Midland and Western Regional Operational Programme, representing a per capita investment of £2,145 over the life of the plan. The National Spatial Strategy, which is currently being prepared, is addressing issues arising from the imbalance in the spatial distribution of economic development to date. However, it is unlikely that the effects of this strategy will impact on the forecasts for the BMW region in the initial years of the housing strategy.
- 4.3 In terms of social and affordable housing, the key priorities identified in the NDP are an increase in the housing programme, an expansion of voluntary housing activity (up to 4,000 units per year), provision of affordable housing by local authorities (1,000 units per year) and the continuation of the shared ownership scheme (target of 1,000 units per year). The Plan also envisages allocating significant resources to:
- refurbishment of housing stock, especially houses built before 1960;
 - area based regeneration initiatives; and
 - schemes targeted at the elderly, the homeless, travellers and disabled persons.
- 4.4 It is clear from the NDP that the potential impact of social and affordable housing on promoting social inclusion is an important component of policy.

SOCIAL HOUSING

- 4.5 There are approximately 715 local authority houses in County currently rented or available for rent, which represents approximately 4% of the total number of households within the county, based on projected figures for 2000. Critical factors to consider in relation to the suitability of the housing stock in meeting social needs are its age profile and categorisation in terms of number of bedrooms.

Figure 4.1 Housing Stock by Decade



- 4.6 In terms of the age profile, it is important to note that over 80% of the housing stock was built in the 1980's and 1990's, which will have a material impact on the allocation of funds, i.e. funds can be directed to new builds or acquisitions as opposed to refurbishment.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

- 4.7 The development of affordable housing in addition to social housing is one of the key policy implications for the Council arising from the housing strategy. It has already been estimated that 548 households are likely to experience affordability problems over the life of the housing strategy.
- 4.8 The main instrument of the present affordability scheme is that it subsidises the cost of the land, not the cost of building – the effect being to bring cheaper houses to the market available to those individuals that qualify. In general, applicants for the affordable housing are either existing tenants or people already approved on the Council's housing list. While this approach targets those most in need of housing, it also means that, while houses are sold at less than the market rate, the price can still be out of reach for many of those on the housing list.
- 4.9 The Planning and Development Act requires each planning authority to develop a scheme of priorities for allocating affordable houses to eligible persons and this is a reserved function. The Act specifies seven criteria to be considered by the Local Authority, which can be added to (s.98):
- (a) The accommodation needs of eligible persons, in particular eligible persons who have not previously purchased or built a house for their occupation or for any other purpose.
 - (b) The current housing circumstances of eligible persons.
 - (c) The incomes or other financial circumstances of eligible persons (with priority given to those eligible people with the lowest income).
 - (d) The period for which they have resided in the area of the development plan.
 - (e) Whether they own houses / lands in the area of the development plan or elsewhere.
 - (f) Distance of affordable housing from places of employment of eligible persons
- 4.10 As already stated, people are eligible for affordable housing if more than 35% of net income i.e. net of income tax and pay related social insurance is required to service a mortgage.
- 4.11 During consultations with stakeholders, one of the main requirements identified in relation to meeting demand for affordable housing in the County was the need for the Council to release more land zoned for residential use. Since 1996, the Council has sold 45 sites. The following table shows the breakdown of these sites by location, year sold, and price.

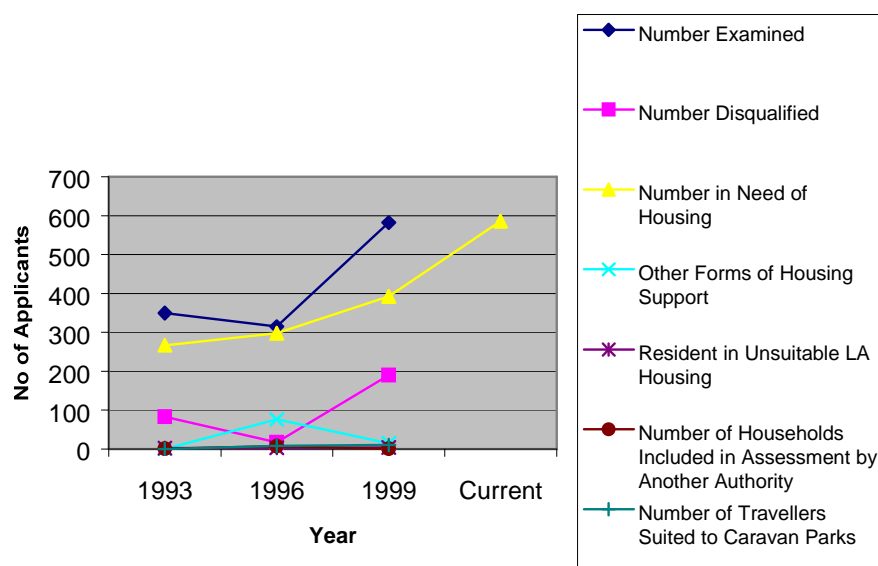
Table 4.1 Location, sites, year sold and price range of sites sold by local authority

| Location | No. sites sold | Year | Price range £ |
|----------------------------|----------------|---------|---------------|
| Ballyleague | 5 | 1997 | 6,500-7,000 |
| | 2 | 1998 | 7,000-10,000 |
| Kilcolman, Ballaghaderreen | 4 | 1996 | 3,500 |
| | 6 | 1997 | 3,500-4,000 |
| | 8 | 1998 | 6,000-6,500 |
| | 2 | Ongoing | 13,500 |
| Warren/Drum, Boyle | 2 | 1998 | 4,000 |
| Castlerea | 1 | 1999 | 10,000 |
| Hawthorn Dr., Roscommon | 6 | 1996 | 4,000 |
| | 6 | 1997 | 4,000 |
| Monksland, Athlone | 2 | 1996 | 2,900 |
| | 1 | 1997 | 7,000 |
| Total | 45 | | |

- 4.12 As can be seen, in general the price of sites has increased over the last number of years. In relation to specific provision for affordable housing, the National Building Agency has approved one site for the construction of 60 “affordable” houses. However, no progress has been made in developing the site.

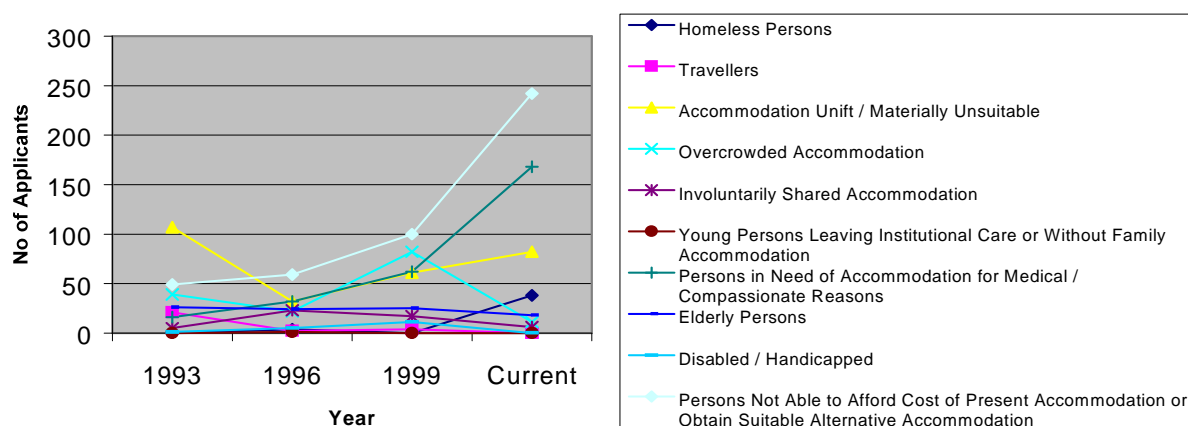
ASSESSMENT OF NEED FOR SOCIAL HOUSING

- 4.13 An assessment of trends in the number and profile of those qualifying for social housing indicates that there are currently approximately 586 people on the waiting list for social housing, i.e. applicants who have applied and been approved for social housing. This figure was arrived at by reviewing the Council’s list of approved applicants by unique Housing Authority Reference Number (as of 9 May 2001).

Figure 4.2 Roscommon County net need for housing, 1993 – 2001

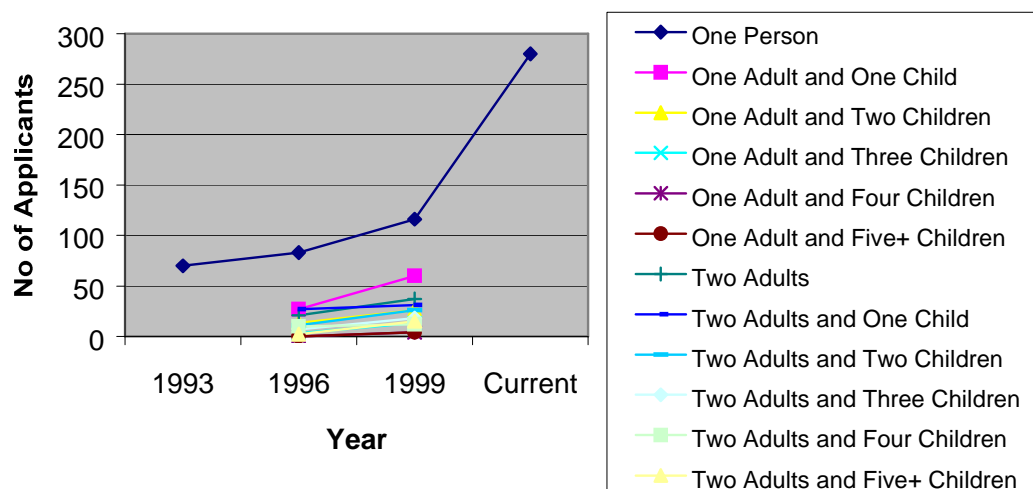
- 4.14 In respect of the numbers of applicants for social housing, the graph above illustrates that since 1993, the number of people qualifying for housing has more than doubled (the underlying figures are based on the Assessment of Housing Needs in 1993, 1996, 1999 and an analysis of the current housing list).
- 4.15 While the graph indicates a strong upward trend, there is at least one factor that may be responsible for overstating the demand: to qualify for rental subsidy the Health Board requires individuals to apply for local authority housing. Even when this factor is taken into account, there is still an underlying upward trend and, significantly, an increasing proportion of applicants qualify because they cannot afford the cost of their current accommodation or find suitable alternative accommodation (see Figure 4.3).

Figure 4.3 Roscommon County Applicant Categories



- 4.16 In respect of category of applicant, based on current figures, over 43% of current applicants for social housing now qualify on grounds of affordability, and historical data shows a persistent upward trend in the number of applications made on foot of affordability problems (a 496% increase since 1993. Note that of 586 applicants as of 9 May 2001, category assignments are available for only 561 applicants). There is also strong demand from applicants applying on grounds of medical/compassionate reasons, who represent almost 30% of current applicants (a 1050% increase since 1993).
- 4.17 In terms of prioritising lettings, homeless persons and those living in accommodation that is unfit for human habitation are the two key priorities. On the basis of the assessment of housing needs, no applicants qualified for housing on the basis of homelessness for the years 1993 – 1999, while there are 114 current applicants, or approximately 20%, who qualify on the basis of unsuitable/materially unfit accommodation.

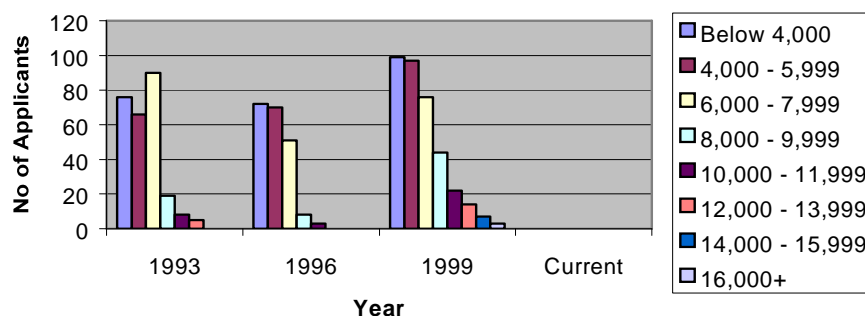
Figure 4.4 Roscommon County Household Size



NB: apart from figures for single adults, no data for 1993 or current

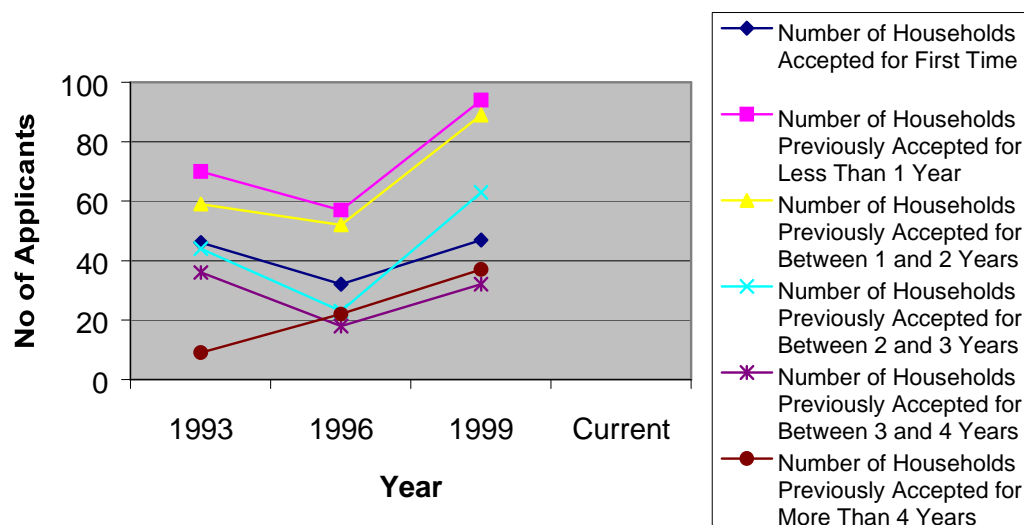
- 4.18 Regarding the composition of applicant households, an assessment of the relevant data shows that the largest single category currently qualifying for social housing is Single Adults (the Housing Section of the Council indicates that the people in this group consist primarily of elderly people); no current data are available for any other category of household. As the graph above illustrates, there was increased demand in every category between 1996 and 1999, with the strongest demand coming from households comprised of one adult and one child (an increase in demand of 222% for the period), followed by households comprised of two adults (an increase of 176%).

Figure 4.6 Roscommon County Household Income



- 4.19 In terms of household income, for the years 1993, 1996 and 1999, applicants on household incomes of less than IR£6,000 represented over half of all applicants, and represented just under 70% in 1996. Although current data are not available, these figures strongly indicate that affordability is a major problem. In fact, in 1996, there were even ten applicants on incomes of IR£14,000 or greater, income levels approaching the average industrial wage.

Figure 4.6 Roscommon County Waiting List times



- 4.20 Finally, in respect of waiting list times, after decreases between 1993 and 1996 in all categories except the number of households previously accepted for more than four years, waiting list times increased across all categories between 1996 and 1999. In addition, the categories for households previously accepted for less than one year and households previously accepted for between one and two years continue to show the highest figures, followed by households previously accepted for between two and three years, which grew by 63% between 1996 and 1999.

ROLE OF VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR

- 4.21 The Voluntary Sector is a potentially valuable provider of social and affordable housing, whether working in partnership with the Local Authority or private developers. Nationally, the Sector has provided approximately 13,000 rental dwelling units, with an additional 4,000 units per annum planned under the National Development Plan 2000-2006. The Council acknowledges this valuable contribution to the provision of housing in the County and welcomes the opportunity to work with the Voluntary and Co-operative Housing Sector to meet the accommodation needs of the County.
- 4.22 Despite this growth, the Voluntary Sector has not played a very significant role in the provision of social or affordable housing in Roscommon. To date, only 52 units have been completed, consisting of the following units.

Table 4.2 Voluntary housing provision

| Voluntary provider | No. units | Size / type units | Built |
|---|-----------|-------------------|---------|
| Frederick Ozman Trust | 8 | 1-2 bedroom | 1997/98 |
| Roscara Housing Association | 6 | - | 1997/98 |
| Midland Housing Association | 4 | 1-2 bedroom | 1994/95 |
| Killtullagh Voluntary Housing Association | 4 | 2 bedroom | 1999/00 |
| SVP Ballaghaderreen | 20 | 1-2 bedroom | 1991/92 |
| Tulsk Voluntary Housing Association | 10 | Elderly / family | 1995/96 |
| Total | 52 | | |

- 4.23 Most of these units are fairly new and therefore likely to be in good condition, however, there is little provision (4 units) for family accommodation. Given the fact that 279 or 50% of those currently on the County's Housing List are in need of "family" accommodation, there would appear to be a particular need to increase the number of larger (2, 3, 4 bedroom) units provided by the Sector.
- 4.24 During this review, we consulted with two key Voluntary Sector housing providers – Cluid Housing Association and St. Vincent de Paul – to identify the extent to which they represent a viable option for the development of social and affordable housing in Roscommon.
- 4.25 Cluid operates throughout Ireland, primarily developing social rented housing under the Rental Subsidy Scheme for a range of household types. Housing stock is developed and managed by the Association using Local Authority land and waiting lists. They incorporate affordable housing on larger schemes, operating as agent of the Local Authority, i.e. Cluid builds the houses and the Authority sells them to eligible applicants.
- 4.26 Looking forward, a number of developments, primarily "family" units of 2-3 bedrooms, are proposed within Roscommon. The Association sees itself playing a continued role in the provision of social rented housing, expanding its role into other tenures including low cost home ownership and not-for-profit renting.
- 4.27 The St. Vincent de Paul has built between 650-660 social housing units throughout the country. To date, the organisation has provided 28 units in Roscommon under the auspices of the Frederick Oznam Trust and the St. Vincent de Paul, Ballaghaderreen.
- 4.28 Housing policy is set by the "centre" with local members identifying and responding to local need. Members have traditionally been approached by the Local Authority, but are increasingly being encouraged to actively work with developers in relation to social housing development. The organisation focuses on providing social housing within a support environment, building and managing their own schemes on Local Authority land. Social housing provision is a priority for the St. Vincent de Paul at present and they wish to increase the scale of their involvement, driven by the local members. Nationally, a further 150 units planned for completion this year, but at present there are no planned developments in Roscommon.
- 4.29 The following table shows the housing developments proposed (although not necessarily approved) for the County in 2001.

Table 4.3 Proposed voluntary housing developments in Roscommon 2001

| Voluntary provider | No. units | Type | Location |
|---|-----------|---------|-------------|
| Cluid Housing Association | 13 | Family | Ballinagare |
| | 12 | Family | Strokestown |
| | 10 | Family | Ballinlough |
| Croghan Development Association Ltd. | 6 | OPD | - |
| Strokestown Voluntary Housing Association | 6 | OPD | Strokestown |
| | 1 | Daycare | Strokestown |
| Total | 48 | | |

- 4.30 The potential contribution of the Voluntary Sector to the social and housing needs of the County has also been identified by the County Development Board, which recommended "the establishment of a Network of Voluntary Housing Associations at a local level to exchange information and improve services".

- 4.31 In order to ensure that this source of provision is utilised fully to help meet the estimated demand for 2,148 additional households by 2006, it is important that the Council continues to accelerate its work with the Voluntary Sector in planning and executing innovative and high quality housing schemes. As a reflection of this engagement with the voluntary sector, the Council is projecting the construction of a further 96 units by the sector over the course of this housing strategy.

SOCIAL HOUSING PROGRAMME 2000-2003: SUMMARY

- 4.32 Policy at national and county level is to frontload the building programme to have maximum impact on the housing infrastructure deficit. At the end of 2000, 70 houses had commenced or were in progress. Approximately 40 units per year were built or acquired between 1996 and 2000, while approximately 90 will be completed or acquired per annum between 2000 and 2003. In terms of projecting the housing programme beyond 2003 to 2006, it is assumed that the county will be allocated a similar annual rates, i.e. of 90 per year giving a total of 540 units between 2001 and 2006.

Table 4.4 Current social housing programme

| No. of houses in programme | Completions/Acquisitions '96-2000 |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 360 | 195 |

Note: 70 houses were either commenced or in progress at the end of December '00

Source: Roscommon County Housing Report, 30 April 2001

Special needs

- 4.33 Local Authority housing needs are unique to each county and tend to be non-standard within each county. Needs differ not only in terms of household size and affordability, but also in terms of severity of need, differences in cultural traditions, accessibility requirements, etc.
- 4.34 We have endeavoured to identify the needs of a number of key groups in Roscommon, the Council's response to date, and any gaps or areas which need to be addressed as a priority.

Accommodation for Travellers

- 4.35 Under the terms of the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998, Roscommon County Council has developed a five-year Traveller Accommodation Programme 2000-2004. The Programme is based on an assessment of need carried out by the Council and a census conducted by the Local Authority Social Worker in 1999. Using these assessments and a Task Force multiplier, the Traveller population in Roscommon is estimated to increase as follows:

Table 4.5 Estimated increase in the traveller population in Roscommon

| Accommodation type | 1999 | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 |
|----------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Serviced permanent halting sites | 18 | 18 | 19 | 22 | 24 | 26 |
| Serviced temporary halting sites | 4 | 4 | 4 | 5 | 5 | 5 |
| Group housing | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3 |
| Standard housing | 13 | 13 | 13 | 14 | 16 | 18 |
| Unauthorised sites | 4 | 4 | 4 | 5 | 5 | 5 |
| Traveller accommodation dev. | 7 | 7 | 8 | 8 | 8 | 9 |
| Total | 48 | 48 | 50 | 56 | 60 | 66 |

- 4.36 This translates into the need to provide accommodation for an additional 18 families by 2004. Community consultations carried out as part of the preparation of the County Development Plan identified the need for greater Traveller involvement in planning their own accommodation. The appointment of a Traveller Resource Worker is seen as a very positive step in involving and supporting the community, although further involvement is sought.

Homeless

- 4.37 All Local Authorities and Health Boards are required to prepare an integrated response to homelessness. Roscommon County Council has held preliminary meetings with the Western Health Board with a view to establishing a Homeless Forum with representatives from the Voluntary Sector, although the Forum has not yet been established.
- 4.38 The Forum will be tasked with consulting on and preparing an Integrated Homeless Strategy, which will consider emergency, mid-term and long-term responses, as well as issues of health, education and employment.
- 4.39 Although there is little or no known demand for homeless accommodation in the County, need can often be “hidden” as this group tends to be very marginalised. Other adjoining counties have planned some provision for homeless, including Westmeath which is due to commence building 10 units later this year under the management of the St. Vincent de Paul.

Asylum seekers

- 4.40 There is one centre for asylum seekers in the county with a capacity for 20 persons. Asylum seekers are catered for through the Direct Provision Scheme of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reforms. At present, there has been no demand for social housing through the local authorities. It can be anticipated that demand will arise in cases where the status of individuals has been regularised, assuming that they intend to base themselves in the county.

Lone Parents

- 4.41 Approximately a third¹ of the 266 people waiting for “single” accommodation are estimated to be lone parents. The needs of this key group must be taken into consideration in planning future development of social and affordable housing in the County.

Needs of the Elderly

- 4.42 in its Draft Corporate Plan, 2001-2004, specifically in respect of housing, the County's strategy is to “provide and facilitate the provision of suitable, cost-effective housing accommodation”. Its first action under this plan is to deliver on the Multi-Annual Housing Programme, 2000-2003, which provides for 360 units. As regards the accommodation needs of the elderly, the County will review proposed development designs, layouts and standards on an on-going basis to enhance the image of local authority housing in the County. Through this on-going review, the Council will ensure that vulnerable groups such as the elderly are given due recognition within agreed housing accommodation programmes.

¹ Based on the Assessment of Needs for Housing Accommodation carried out by Roscommon County Council 31 March 1999.

5. CONCLUSIONS

5.1 The key elements of the Housing Strategy can be summarised as follows:

- The total estimated demand for housing between 2001 and 2007 is 2,148 housing units.
- It is estimated that 23.6% of households (507) will meet the eligibility criteria for affordability as defined in section 93(1) of the Act. On this basis the Council intend to intervene at up to 20% on appropriately zoned land within the county.
- There is sufficient land zoned for residential development within the county to meet the projected demand for housing in the urban areas.
- The Strategy recommends that land use zoning plans are developed for the rural settlements of Ballinlough, Frenchpark, Loughglinn, Ballyfarnan, Strokestown, Elphin, Lanesborough - Ballyleague, Clontuskert and Roosky. Part V of the Act will not be applicable to future development in these settlements until the adoption of the respective development plans. This will ensure that there is a better spatial distribution of land zoned for development throughout the county.

Table 5.1 Overview of key provisions of the Roscommon Housing Strategy

| | Total |
|---|--------------|
| Demand for housing | |
| Projected Household Formations | 2,148 |
| Total households with affordability problems | 507 |
| Spatial distribution of housing supply | |
| Main towns and rural settlements | 1,074 |
| Rural areas | 1,074 |
| Housing type | |
| Private | 1,360 |
| Houses provided under Part V | 152 |
| Local authority housing programme | 540 |
| Voluntary and Community sector | 96 |
| Total supply | 2,148 |

Note 1: The figure of 1,353 for the supply of private housing is the difference between the total demand for housing (2,148) and the total supply by sources other than the private sector (152 under Part V, 540 under the local authority housing programme and 96 under the voluntary and community sector)

- In relation to the supply of housing, 152 housing units will be provided under the terms of Part V of the Act.
- The local authority social housing programme will provide 540 households over the period of the Housing Strategy.
- The total demand for social and affordable housing, that will not be met by either Part V, the local authority programme or the voluntary sector, is approximately 305 housing units.
- The housing strategy will reduce the social and affordable waiting lists by nearly 50% over the six years

Table 5.2 Analysis of social and affordable housing supply and demand 2001 to 2007

| | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 |
|--|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| <i>Opening waiting list</i> | 586 | 562 | 510 | 461 | 411 | 357 |
| Households with affordability problems (see table 2.7) | 79 | 85 | 88 | 87 | 83 | 85 |
| Provision under Part V | 7 | 29 | 29 | 29 | 29 | 29 |
| Provision under local authority programme | 90 | 90 | 90 | 90 | 90 | 90 |
| Provision under voluntary sector | 6 | 18 | 18 | 18 | 18 | 18 |
| <i>Closing waiting list</i> | 562 | 510 | 461 | 411 | 357 | 305 |

- 5.2 The opening waiting list in 2001, as shown in table 5.2, illustrates the social housing waiting list in Roscommon County. Part V of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 now requires that local authority to also prepare an affordable housing list.
- 5.3 An affordable housing list will take into account a number of criteria as set out in s.98 (3) of the Act to establish an order of priority to eligible persons. The number of eligible persons, or as stated in the Strategy the number of households with affordability problems, is indicated in the tables. This figure illustrates the number of new households formed each year with affordability problems. The local authority will, under Part V of the Act (section 98(2)), establish a scheme to determine the priority to be accorded to eligible persons in the allocation of affordable housing being provided under Part V in accordance with A Model Scheme of Allocation Priorities issued in June 2001.
- 5.4 The table also take account of the level of social and affordable housing that is projected to be provided under Part V, through the local authority programme, the voluntary sector and the increase in the level of affordable housing that will be provided during the life of the Housing Strategy. The summation of all these elements provides a closing waiting list that includes households on both the social and affordable housing list. There is therefore a natural increase in the waiting list in 2001 due to the influx of new eligible persons as defined in the Act.
- 5.5 The Council recognise this and will aim to provide, in collaboration with other sectors within the housing market, an increase in the level of affordable housing available within the county during the life of the Strategy. The Council also aim to increase the provision of social housing under their local authority programme as well as encouraging the provision of both social and affordable housing by the voluntary sector. The result of this increase in provision is that the waiting list at the end of 2006 is projected to have decreased, despite the widening of the criteria of eligible persons under the Act.

Policy Conclusions

- 5.6 It is envisaged that 152 houses will be provided as a consequence of the 20% intervention point under Part V of the Planning and Development Act, 2000. The policy of the Council will be to engage in pre-planning discussions with developers to negotiate details of the operation of Part V in relation to the specific development. As a general rule, the Council will seek the transfer of land to the Council's ownership as provided for under section 96(3)(a)(i). However, depending on the specifics of the individual applications, other options identified in section 96(3)(a) of the Act will also be availed of including options where:

- The developer builds and then transfers houses to the planning authority (or to persons nominated by the planning authority) at a pre-determined price. The number and type of houses will be agreed in advance with the developer.
- The developer transfers to the relevant planning authority (or persons nominated by the local authority) other fully or partially serviced sites in lieu of land that is reserved under Part V.

5.7 The planning authority will indicate, under section 96, to the extent that it is known, how it intends to develop land transferred in terms of the number and type of houses to be built. In its pre-planning discussions with developers, the Council will have regard to the following factors as outlined in the Act.

- The proper planning and sustainable development of the area to which the planning application relates;
- The housing strategy and specific objectives of the development plan which relate to the implementation of the strategy;
- The need to ensure the overall coherence of the development to which the planning application relates; and
- The views of the applicant in relation to the impact of the agreement on the development.

5.8 The Council will take particular note of:

- The mix of social, affordable and private sector housing in the immediate vicinity of the development to avoid undue segregation and ensure that a suitable mix of housing types are provided;
- The location and characteristics of the site and the proposed development; and
- The business environment in which the developer is operating.

5.9 In particular in relation to the County Roscommon Housing Strategy the Council will aim to undertake the following objectives:

- Residential developments on serviced land to occur at higher densities, especially where there are other adequate facilities and services.
- Future housing should occur throughout the county, both in rural areas as well as main and rural settlements, to ensure a balanced and integrated approach to development. This will ensure that rural communities within the county are sustained by encouraging the consolidation of rural settlements and villages and the provision of rural housing for local need.
- Where the local authority own undeveloped residentially zoned land it may be more appropriate for the land to be developed for a wider mix of uses than just social housing.
- The local authorities should aim to focus future land purchases in smaller pockets in both the main towns and rural villages and settlements in order to counter balance the level of social / affordable housing being provided in the main settlements under Part V of the Planning and Development Act.
- It is important that social and affordable housing is properly integrated into existing communities.

- All forms of housing should be of a form and scale that is appropriate to the location.
- The provision of a suitable mix and range of housing types and sizes to reasonably match the different categories of households, including the special requirements of the elderly and persons with disabilities. This will ensure that social and affordable housing is integrated into existing communities.
- Policies should aim to reduce the need to travel and encourages a form of residential development that reduces urban sprawl.