

housingunlocked.ie

Housing Unlocked

Making it Happen

**Irish
Architecture
Foundation**



**An Ghníomhaireacht
Tithíochta**
The Housing Agency

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Foreword

Bob
Jordan



At The Housing Agency, we understand the importance of collaboration when it comes to delivering housing and providing housing solutions. Over the last 10 years, some of the Agency's most significant achievements have been made by working in close collaboration with other stakeholders. Many people working in housing in Ireland have practical and innovative ideas on how to unlock the potential in our housing system to provide more and better homes in sustainable communities. For this reason, we were very proud to partner with the Irish Architectural Foundation on the Housing Unlocked exhibition.

The innovation and creativity demonstrated in the selected entries is hugely energising. The exhibitors have proposed practical ways to address important issues such as vacancy, regeneration and climate change. While they address different topics and concerns, these ideas could be applied in every city, town, and village in Ireland.

It is important that the proposals put forward at the Housing Unlocked exhibition are now translated into practical actions that provide new homes. The exhibitors have set out proposed planning and policy changes to make this a reality. This publication describes the changes required and how they could unlock housing and deliver homes in the hearts of our communities.

The Irish Architecture Foundation specialises in curating architecture and opportunities for the public to encounter, question, appreciate, and help to shape the built environment in which we all live, work, study, and play. We believe that architecture is both an art form and a civic right.

It has been a great privilege to work in partnership with The Housing Agency on a creative initiative that has the potential to help unlock and transform the ways in which high-quality housing is delivered in Ireland to meet the needs of all who live here. There are many factors: great design, affordability, social inclusivity, environmental responsibility, regeneration, bringing vacant buildings back into use, suitable density, sensitivity to history and culture and to what is unique about each locality and community. The sheer variety of proposals in the Housing Unlocked exhibition demonstrates that one size does not fit all. The exhibition pieces are ambitious and creative in how they address these challenges.

Together with The Housing Agency, we designed the Housing Unlocked open call, exhibition, and public programme to encourage progressive and innovative ideas that put community, the environment, and people at the centre. This vision does not end with the close of the exhibition. We hope that Housing Unlocked proposals are refined and implemented, stimulating social innovation through architecture to ensure that every person's needs for home and community are met.

Nathalie
Weadick



Glossary

TCFO - Town Centre First National Office

LA - Local Authority

RIAI - The Royal Institute of Irish Architects

DHLGH - Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage

DAFM - Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine

LEO - Local Enterprise Office

TII - Transport Infrastructure Ireland

DPH - Dwellings per Hectare

TCF - Town Centre First

DCC - Dublin City Council

LAPs - Local Area Plans

EI - Enterprise Ireland

CI - Construct Innovate

DPER - Department of Public Expenditure and Reform

LGMA - Local Government Management Agency



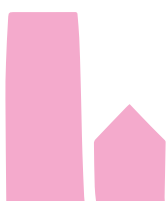
Overview & Introduction

In October 2022, the Irish Architectural Foundation and The Housing Agency launched the Housing Unlocked exhibition. Running until mid-February 2023, this exhibition showcased eight innovative ideas to create more and better housing for our communities.



Housing Unlocked started with a single aim - to give people working in housing, primarily architects, an opportunity to showcase their expertise, by providing ideas to improve Ireland's housing sector. The competition began with an Open Call which was launched in February 2022. Proposals were sought that provided practical ideas and creative thinking in the areas of vacancy, regeneration, compact growth, construction technologies and social inclusion. A jury of high-profile international judges selected eight winning submissions from the fifty-plus received. Each winning team received €7,500 in funding to develop their proposals into an exhibition piece.

The exhibition garnered significant public and media interest and enthusiasm. Over 6,000 people visited the exhibition, and 75 public engagement events were held. The innovation shown at the Housing Unlocked exhibition showcases the talent within Ireland's housing sector. This innovation can help Ireland meet its housing delivery targets as outlined in the government's Housing For All programme. However, some changes to the Irish housing sector are required in order to introduce these solutions. They include new planning exemption classes; changes to planning guidelines; policy changes; engagement with stakeholders such as local authorities, central government and Transport Infrastructure Ireland; changes to building regulations; launching pilot schemes of projects; and fiscal support.



This document outlines the eight projects and summarises the actions required to turn these ideas into a reality. We hope that this information can be useful to those working in the areas where such actions might be achievable. We welcome the prospect of continuing discussions with these parties and hope to be able to progress some or all of these wonderful ideas exhibited.

The Working Home

Potential Units: Approximately 8,700 units

Concept:

This proposal creates a new typology “The Working Home” that includes both commercial and residential activity on the ground floor.

It is suggested that this new typology be exempt from requiring planning permission. The proposed regeneration project would convert existing commercial units, with no dwelling provided on upper floors, to one with a micro commercial unit on the ground floor, a dwelling to the rear of the ground floor and on the upper floors of the building.



The micro-shop/office unit works as a ‘shop front’ for shops and businesses that often have no need for large floor areas. These micro-units could be reserved to support local industry. This is a proactive solution with the potential to prevent vacancy by providing a new use to properties before they become vacant or derelict.



This approach yields new homes and protects commercial units, contributing to the vibrancy of our town centres. It uses existing infrastructure to provide new homes in a sustainable way, while reducing the cost of delivery.

Benefits:

- ➔ Contributes to the vibrancy of Irish towns and villages by encouraging people to live, work and shop in existing urban centres.
- ➔ Prevents vacancy and dereliction by removing the requirement for commercial spaces to be empty for two years to qualify for exemption of planning permission and grant funding when delivering homes.
- ➔ Situating partial residential activity on the ground floor helps resolve accessibility and fire safety issues associated with confining living areas to the upper floors.
- ➔ Achieves compact growth and provides homes within existing settlements, using existing infrastructure.
- ➔ Promotes active travel as it locates homes proximate to amenities.



CARLOW TOWN GROUND FLOOR VACANCY.

21%

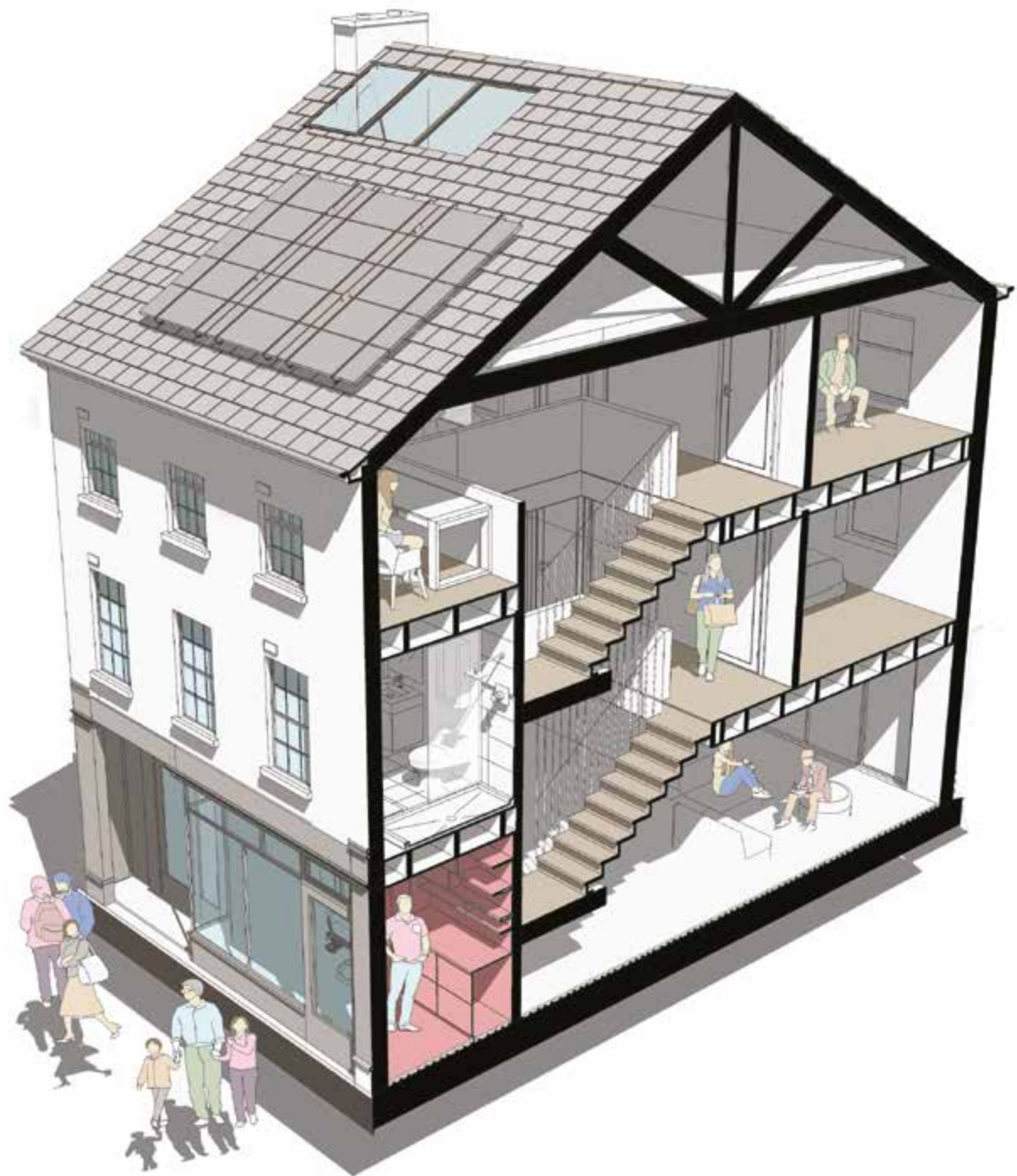
(Carlow County Council Survey Plan 2022)



For many, the pandemic has fundamentally changed the relationship between work and home. Hybrid working has resulted in people operating businesses from their attics, bedrooms, and garden sheds. The **Working Home** proposal aims to provide a solution for these types of enterprises. The coffee stall, the nail bar, the one-man barber, the watch repair, the phone reseller, the architect's corner, web designer, or the paperless office. It is a solution for start-ups and small businesses that require visibility instead of large and expensive retail space.



The Working Home Actions



PLANNING/REGULATION

- 1 New Planning Exemption classes:**
Under current planning regulations, the 'Working Home' would require planning permission if the commercial unit is not vacant for more than two years. As there is no loss of commercial activity for this proposal, it is proposed that a new 'Working-Home' designation be created that would be exempt from planning regardless of commercial unit being vacant or occupied: delivering homes in town centres while maintaining commercial activity.
- 2 Zoning:** Development Plans, Local Area Plans and Town Plans to include new zoning class for 'Working Home' development in core commercial areas. Within these zones, this type of development would be given favourable planning outcomes beyond any time-restricted planning exemption class. The planning documents could refer to this 'Working Home' project as an exemplar and actively recommend this approach.
- 6 Cost impact of Regulations:** Investigate the cost implications (if any), of complying with the Building Regulations when upgrading existing over the shop accommodation. If appropriate, identify where changes could be made to reduce costs and complexity of such projects.

FISCAL

- 9 Financial support:** Introduction of tax schemes to support and incentivise reuse of existing buildings.
- 10 Financial access:** Investigate solution for financing the regeneration of mixed-use properties which are currently not eligible for a residential mortgage.
- 11 Grant support:** Adapt Croí Conaithe (Towns) which only applies to properties that are fully vacant for two years or more. Propose that it is modified to fund delivery of housing without the vacancy requirement where there is no loss of commercial activity. This would prevent the negative cumulative effect of long-term vacancy on a town (such as the Working Home proposal).
- 12 Levy:** The Vacant Site levy is a welcome instrument to encourage development of vacant sites. Similar mechanism targeted at properties remaining unused at ground floor level and/or above to be introduced to encourage the development of these units.

SUSTAINABILITY

- 14 Existing Buildings First**
Government commitment to tackle vacancy, dereliction, and support low carbon development by implementing a "reuse of existing buildings" strategy where appropriate, for public sector projects.

REGENERATION

- 17 Skills + Employment:** Increased training for conservation skills required for the sensitive restoration of existing buildings. A dedicated state-funded heritage skills training centre could provide targeted training in this area.

POTENTIAL PROJECTS

- 19 Town Centre Living Competition:** The RIAI and DHLGH have jointly launched a competition for the design of social housing for Castleblayney, Kildare, Roscrea and Sligo. A second round of this competition, or a similar competition, could be held for any of the 8 proposals in targeted locations.
- 20 Pilot Project:**
TCFO / LAs to develop a number of "Working Homes" pilot projects in suitable locations. These can be used as demonstrator projects and to determine typical programme, costs, returns and potential challenges. LEO units can assist in matching units to local enterprise.

Action numbers are as identified in Actions Table on p36

Start Spreading the Mews

Potential Units: 20,000 within M50 (similar nationwide)

Concept

This project identifies the potential for developing the rear lanes of existing residential areas to create 20,000 new homes within the M50.

These proposed mews houses are an easy way of increasing density within existing residential areas and could provide thousands of 1 - 2 bedroom units, which are in short supply in the Irish housing sector.



The proposal provides a comprehensive design guide for the for most common site conditions.



It also advocates for an exemption of planning permission for the development of a mews in designated areas if constructed in strict accordance with this design guide.

Benefits:



Creative and innovative method to increase density and provide new 1- and 2-bedroom homes in desirable locations.



Homes are located close to existing amenities, public transport, centres of employment, and communities, and represent a cost-effective, sustainable form of urban development.



These new units can be used to provide accommodation for adult children, elderly relatives, or for couples to downsize. Alternatively, they can be rented or sold to provide an additional form of income for the homeowners.



These new homes are well served by public transport. Car parking is not provided, encouraging sustainable and low-carbon commuting.



Enhances existing public laneways which are currently often characterised by dereliction and anti-social behaviours.



Combined, these enhanced laneways can provide a new greenway network throughout the city, connecting urban villages and centres with pleasant walking and cycling routes.



Mews development could include the retrofit of existing outbuildings thereby lowering the embodied carbon of the project and improving the thermal performance of existing structures.



Can we increase housing density at the edges of cities?

Start Spreading the Mews Actions



PALMERSTOWN AVENUE

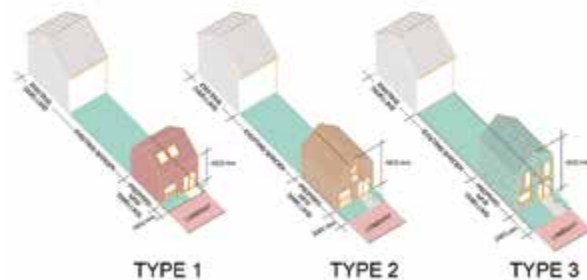
Distance between main construction edge and back boundary.

	SITE TYPE 1 : $18 < X < 20$ m	22/125
	SITE TYPE 2 : $20 < X < 23$ m	30/125
	SITE TYPE 3 : $23 < X < 25$ m	36/125
	SITE TYPE 4 : $X > 25$ m	7/125
	INSUFFICIENT SPACE	30/125

BACK GARDEN



FRONT GARDEN



PLANNING/REGULATION

1 **New Planning Exemption classes:**

Introduce a new Exempted Development Class and Mews Design Guidelines for mews development within laneways identified as suitable for housing. New homes built in strict accordance with the design guidelines would be exempt from requiring full planning in these areas. A Section 5 declaration confirming exemption would be required before carrying out the works to ensure compliance with the design guide and to prevent unauthorized development.

2 **Zoning:** Local Authorities to designate suitable areas in Development Plans as appropriate for mews development. Design guidelines to be provided. The design guidelines developed as part of the Start Spreading the Mews project could form the basis of these.

3 **New Planning Guidelines:** New Design Standards for mid density housing required. Allow for smaller private open space standards and inclusion of upper-level balconies/terraces (as per apartments), and closer back-to-back distances, similar to the 'Cambridge Model'.

SUSTAINABILITY

15 **Improved Greenways + Urban Realm:** Consultation between local authorities and TII to agree strategy for incremental development that could yield new pedestrian and cycling routes through urban neighbourhoods. Funding for these works could be provided for by TII. Development Plans could advocate for the delivery of new community spaces such as pocket parks/greenways for all urban regeneration sites.

POTENTIAL PROJECTS

19 **Town Centre Living Competition:** The RIAI and DHLGH have jointly launched a competition for the design of social housing for Castleblayney, Kildare, Roscrea and Sligo. A second round of this competition, or a similar competition, could be held for any of the 8 proposals in targeted locations.

20 **Mews lanes:** 65km of laneway development opportunity has been identified within the M50, located in both Dublin City and South Dublin Local Authority areas. These Local Authorities could use this study to select a laneway or series of laneways to be used as a pilot project.

Action numbers are as identified in Actions Table on p36



EcoCube

Potential Units: A low rise - medium density model that provides housing densities in the range of 50 to 70 dwellings per hectare (DPH) net.

Compared to current low density sub-urban housing models developed at 35 dwellings per hectare, this alternative compact housing model has the potential to double the increase in supply of new homes.

Concept:

This concept makes use of modular design and construction to provide an innovative model for low rise, medium density housing.

Each module is of a standard size and can be combined in a variety of ways to provide 1, 2, 3 and 4 bedroom homes.



These modules can be added or removed as the families' requirements change overtime e.g. to cater for new children, to downsize, add in office space etc.



This model is based on a serviced site that is laid out in a simple, fixed grid.

Benefits



This alternative low rise – medium density model provides for more sustainable use of our valuable land resource.



These factory produced timber frame homes utilise the potential benefits of our local mass timber production industry to reduce embodied carbon and deliver zero-carbon homes for the future.



Units can be produced quickly, to a very high standard and high-quality finish with significantly less waste than traditional construction methods. The system can significantly reduce on-site construction time by up to 40%.



Factory production provides an alternative to on-site skilled labour which is often in short supply.



Serviced public land can be provided to deliver an alternative form of affordable housing where home buyers purchase pods to be installed in the serviced site. The flexibility of the model allows for smaller 1 and 2-bedroom starter homes making the initial home purchase more affordable.



The module units are designed to be flexible and can adapt to accommodate the changing requirements and spatial needs of the household overtime. The standardised design could facilitate 'Module Trading' with neighbours when up/down sizing.



EcoCube Actions

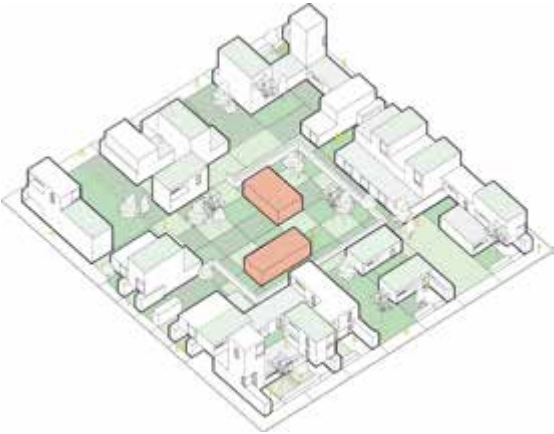
Year 01



EcoCube provides for smaller, more affordable 1- and 2-bedroom starter homes with the ability to scale up over time depending on financial circumstances.

- Food production
- Community Living
- Plug & Play Construction
- Starter Homes
- Sustainable Design
- Live-Work Units

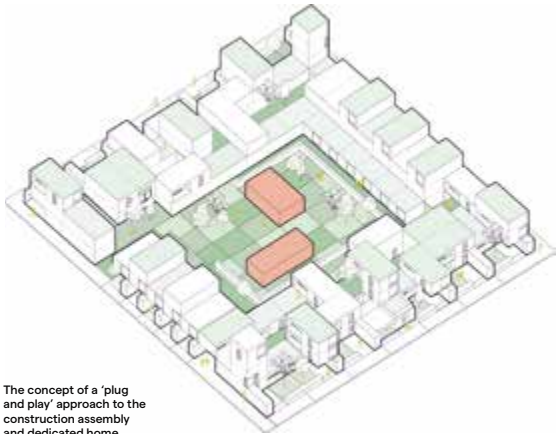
Year 03



The Modular Living concept provides for Expansion and Contraction, responding to the natural family lifecycle.

- Plug & Play Construction
- Food Production
- Downsizing/ Upsizing
- Passive Surveillance
- Community Living
- Children's facilities
- Starter & Family Homes
- Sustainable Design
- Live-Work Units

Year 05



The concept of a 'plug and play' approach to the construction assembly and dedicated home energy pod can facilitate the trading of modules within an established community allowing for an organic system to evolve.

- Plug & Play Construction
- Food Production
- Downsizing/ Upsizing
- Passive Surveillance
- Community Living
- Children's facilities
- Starter, Family & Lifelong Homes
- Sustainable Design
- Live-Work Units

PLANNING/REGULATION

- 3 **New Planning Guidelines:** New Design Standards for mid density housing required. Allow for smaller private open space standards and inclusion of upper-level balconies/terraces (as per apartments), and closer back-to-back distances, similar to the 'Cambridge Model'.
- 5 **Fire Standards for timber construction:** Change Part B to allow structural timber for buildings higher than 10m (3 stories approx.) This would allow timber construction for apartment building as well as houses thereby increasing the environmental benefits of timber construction (as in the UK + other jurisdictions).

MODULAR/ TIMBERFRAME

- 7 **Support for Modern Methods of Construction:** Government and industry support is required to upscale the modern methods of construction sector. For example, pilot public sector housing projects to be built using modern methods of construction, grants and funding to be provided to modular manufacturers by the State, and Government commitment to ongoing orders to de-risk modular construction and enable manufacturers to produce at scale.
- 8 **Expanding the timber frame Sector:** Consider ways to increase indigenous supply of suitable timber to support an expanding Irish timeframe construction sector.

POTENTIAL PROJECTS

- 19 **Town Centre Living Competition:** The RIAI and DHLGH have jointly launched a competition for the design of social housing for Castleblayney, Kildare, Roscrea and Sligo. A second round of this competition, or a similar competition, could be held for any of the 8 proposals in targeted locations.
- 20 **Pilot Projects:** These exhibition proposals would make ideal pilot projects for innovative delivery of housing across Ireland. A programme of pilot projects could be implemented under the TCF policy/Housing for All and matched with funding. On completion, the projects could be promoted as approved strategies for regeneration and housing projects by public + private sector.

Action numbers are as identified in Actions Table on p36



Home 4 Community

Potential Units: A low rise - medium density compact housing model approx. 60 dwellings per hectare (DPH).

Concept

Home4Community achieves a higher-than-normal density for a housing development by making use of housing clusters and arranging units back-to-back, and side to side.

While garden sizes are reduced, shared green and community spaces are large to encourage community building.



The proposed units are timber-frame construction and were designed in collaboration with Lagan Homes timber frame manufacturers.



This proposal also includes a community-led funding model which ensures the affordability of the homes.

Benefits



Creative way of achieving higher density by emphasising shared community space and reducing garden size.



Sustainable form of development using timber-frame construction.



Encourages community building by providing a variety of community spaces, including community rooms, shops, work hubs and creches.



Provides an alternative form of affordable housing through a mutual home ownership society. In this model, funding is provided through a shared mortgage, and debt is serviced by the household's monthly payments. Households accrue equity through these payments.



High quality factory-built construction.



Car use is discouraged, and vehicular movements are kept to a minimum and to the periphery of the development to encourage carbon neutrality and build safe spaces.



Home 4 Community Actions



PLANNING/REGULATION

- 3 **New Planning Guidelines:** New Design Standards for mid density housing required. Allow for smaller private open space standards and inclusion of upper-level balconies/terraces (as per apartments), and closer back-to-back distances, similar to the 'Cambridge Model'.
- 4 **High Quality Design for increased Densities:** Planning applications for higher density housing to be reviewed by a design quality committee of architects and urban designers as part of the planning process. This is common in other jurisdictions.
- 5 **Fire Standards for timber construction:** Change Part B to allow structural timber for buildings higher than 10m (3 stories approx.) This would allow timber construction for apartment building as well as houses thereby increasing the environmental benefits of timber construction (as in the UK + other jurisdictions).

MODULAR/ TIMBERFRAME

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- 8 **Expanding the timber frame Sector:** Consider ways to increase indigenous supply of suitable timber to support an expanding Irish timeframe construction sector.

FISCAL

- 13 **Co-Housing Sector:** Government regulation, support and financing stream for co- housing sector similar to other EU countries.

POTENTIAL PROJECTS

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Building Societies

Potential Units: 5000 – 6000 Units - Approximately 620 units through the reuse of Bank of Ireland branches across Ireland, and over 5000 by unlocking access to the back lands of these banks.

Concept:

This concept was inspired by an announcement in March 2021, that Bank of Ireland planned to close 103 regional branches.

It proposes the reimagining of vacant bank buildings on main streets in towns and villages all around Ireland.



These large bank buildings, together with their rear sites, could provide new homes in existing towns, ensuring these important heritage buildings are kept in use.



They also have the potential to provide new community space and pedestrian/cycle routes through towns.

Benefits:



Contributes to the vibrancy and character of Irish towns by preserving important buildings and encouraging housing developments in already existing urban centres.



Regional bank buildings are often the tallest and most ornate civic buildings on Irish main streets. By re-imagining these heritage structures, this enhances the townscape and provides heritage-led regeneration with wider economic, tourism and employment benefits.



Tackles vacancy and dereliction on the high street by bringing buildings back into use as housing.



Sustainable form of housing provision, by using existing buildings and infrastructure.



Adapting and re-use of buildings has a lower carbon footprint than new builds. The proposed approach is more suitable environmentally and protects our heritage.



Provides access to currently unused back land space which can be used to provide housing in desirable locations.



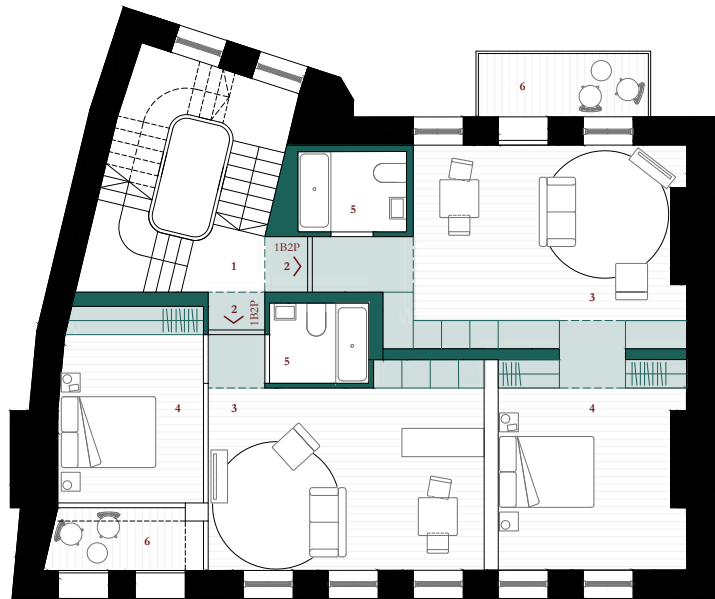
Creates new through-routes and improves permeability which promotes walking, cycling and 20-minute neighbourhoods.



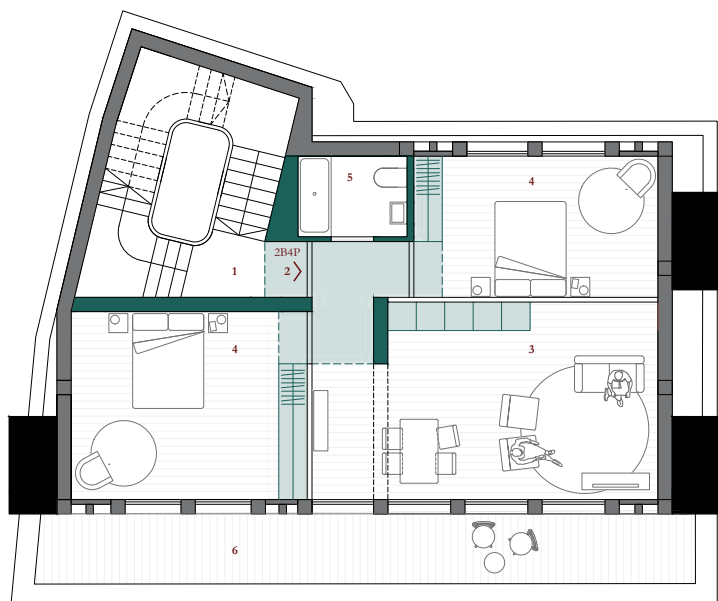
Speed of Delivery - due to the reduced need for enabling and groundworks, homes can be delivered more quickly than through new build.



Building Societies Actions



1. Communal Stair 2. Apartment Entrance 3. Living/Kitchen/Dining 4. Bedroom 5. Bath room 6. External Terrace



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PLANNING/REGULATION

- 6 Cost impact of Regulations:** Investigate the cost implications (if any), of complying with the Building Regulations when upgrading existing over the shop accommodation. If appropriate, identify where changes could be made to reduce costs and complexity of such projects.

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- 12 Levy:** The Vacant Site levy is a welcome instrument to encourage development of vacant sites. Similar mechanism targeted at properties remaining unused at ground floor level and/or above to be introduced to encourage the development of these units.

SUSTAINABILITY

- 14 Existing Buildings First**
Government commitment to tackle vacancy, dereliction, and support low carbon development by implementing a “reuse of existing buildings” strategy where appropriate, for public sector projects.
Government guidelines: Proposals such as Urban Horticulture and Join the Dots could be used to develop guidelines on how to regenerate and reimagine existing towns, while the 33 Churches and Building Societies’ projects could be included in new guidelines promoting best practice reuse of important community buildings.
- 15 Improved Greenways + Urban Realm:** Consultation between local authorities and TII to agree strategy for incremental development that could yield new pedestrian and cycling routes through urban neighbourhoods. Funding for these works could be provided for by TII. Development Plans could advocate for the delivery of new community spaces such as pocket parks/greenways for all urban regeneration sites.

REGENERATION

- 17 Skills + Employment:** Increased training for conservation skills required for the sensitive restoration of existing buildings. A dedicated state-funded heritage skills training centre could provide targeted training in this area.

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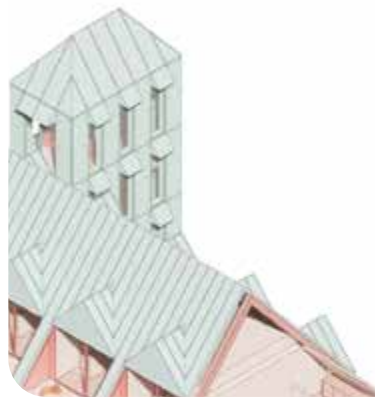
33 Churches

Potential Units: 20 units provided in the case study church, St. Mary’s Church of the Angels, Dublin 7. Remaining 32 church sites would provide an additional 19.5 hectares for the provision of housing.

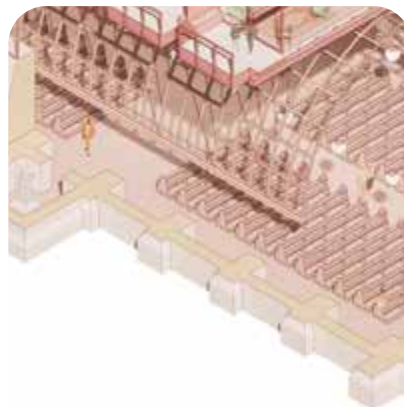
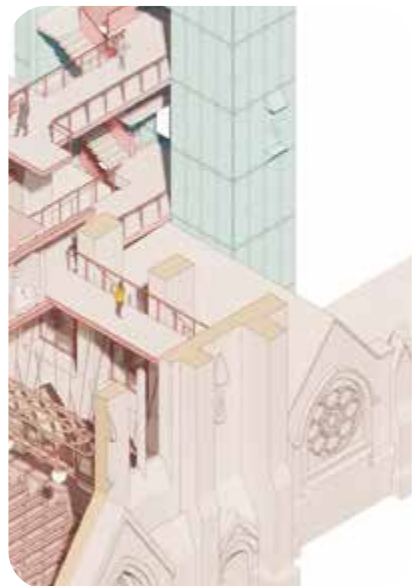
Concept:

This proposal considers how church buildings and sites can be adapted to provide housing units.

It takes the historic St. Mary’s Church of the Angels in Dublin 7, as a case-study, to demonstrate how the building envelope of the church could be altered to provide 20 new homes, while still functioning as a place of worship.



Additionally, it is proposed to reopen an existing laneway beside the church to provide pedestrian/cycle permeability. An existing walled garden within the church grounds can provide amenity space to both residents and the public.



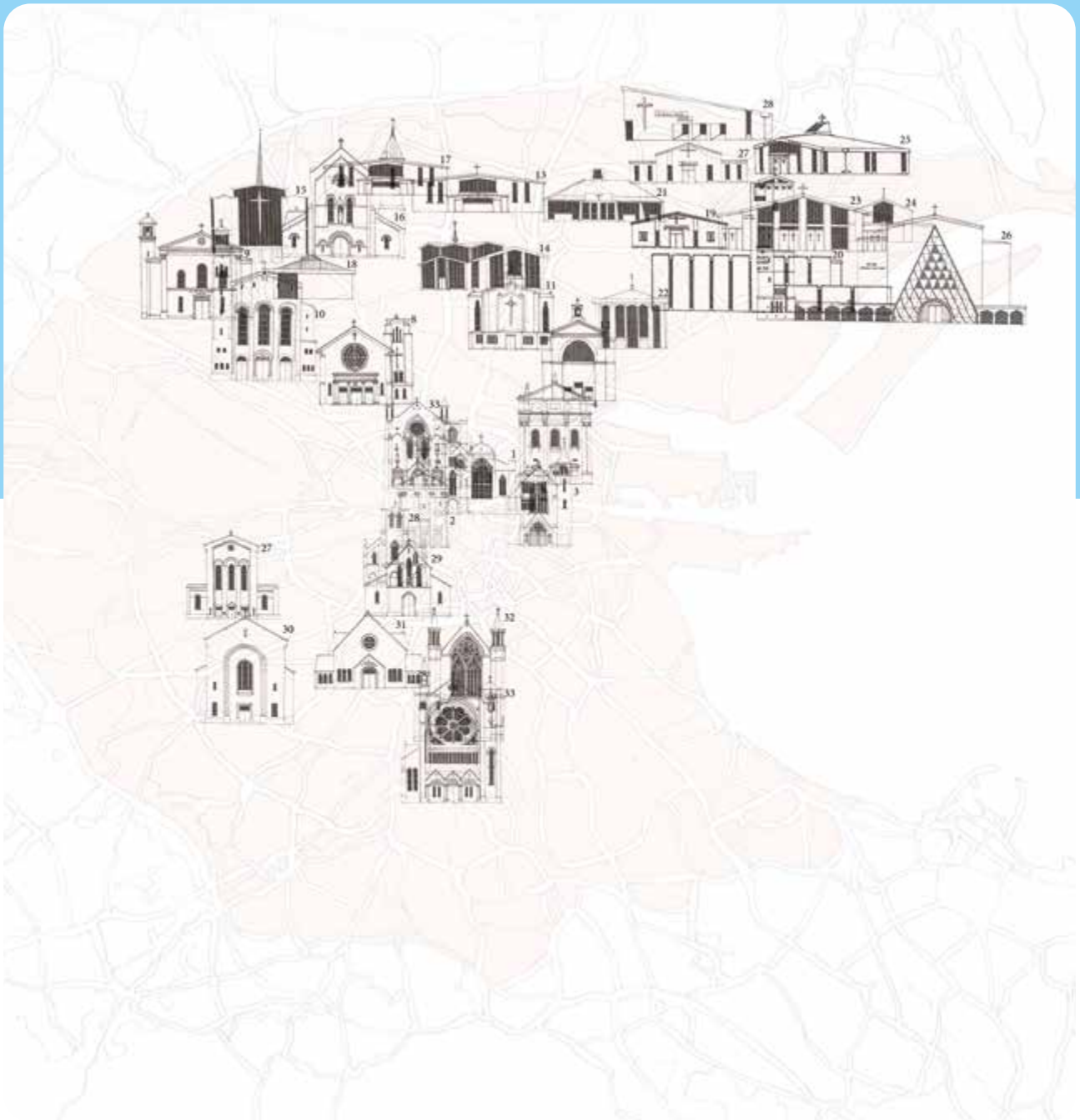
This church is one of 33 churches identified by the Archdiocese of Dublin, within their submission on the draft Dublin City Council Development Plan (2022—2028), for potential rezoning for future residential use.

Benefits:

- Creative use of existing buildings to increase density in desirable locations.
- Churches are important community and architectural buildings, adding to the identity of an area. By re-imagining these spaces, new homes can be provided while maintaining the buildings.
- Sustainable form of housing provision, by using existing buildings and infrastructure.
- Churches are important community spaces, with intrinsic architectural, social and cultural value. However, their management and maintenance are costly, this proposal maximises the value and potential of these buildings.
- Adaption and re-use of buildings has a lower carbon footprint than new builds. The proposed approach is more suitable environmentally and protects our heritage.
- Churches are located in existing urban areas, close to public transport and amenities which promotes walking, cycling and 20-minute neighbourhood.
- New green spaces and walking routes provided for existing settlements.



33 Churches Actions



FISCAL

- 9** Financial support: Introduction of tax schemes to support and incentivise reuse of existing buildings.

SUSTAINABILITY

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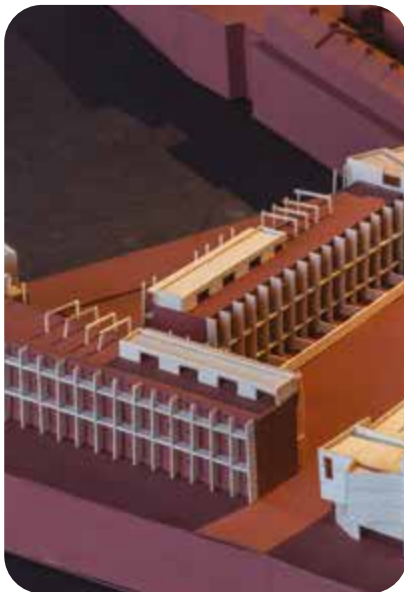
Urban Horticulture

Potential Units: More than 100,000 units nationally: For this particular study - 336 new units and 250 rehabilitated units in The Liberties, Dublin. Potential for similar in c. 300 urban neighbourhoods of Ireland

Concept:

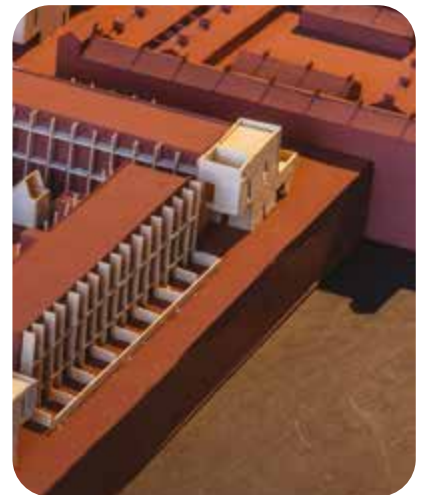
Urban Horticulture takes The Liberties in Dublin as a case-study of how new homes can be provided for in existing neighbourhoods.

The analysis reveals a range of untapped opportunities to increase density, while protecting and enhancing existing neighbourhoods and communities.



Hidden sites are identified, such as:

- Land reserved for expired road widening projects.
- Blank gables and residual verges of older social housing apartment developments which can provide new sites for housing, these could be delivered together with the upgrading of the existing units.
- Infill sites
- Living above commercial units



Together these opportunities are developed into a sensitive and incremental regeneration project that yields many new homes, associated workspaces and green spaces within an existing community. Such considered analysis is a model for regeneration projects across the country.

Benefits:



Takes a holistic approach and identifies a programme of small work packages that together would have a large impact on an area.



Increases density in existing desirable residential and urban areas.



Sustainable form of development that makes use of existing infrastructure and delivers homes in neighbourhoods well serviced by public transport and amenities.



Enhances the local area by utilising untapped development opportunities and carrying out parallel upgrade of existing housing stock in the area.



Demonstrates opportunities for models of living and working, reducing commuting and developing resilient communities.



Significant portion of the case study area is publicly owned, which should facilitate more rapid delivery.



Lower carbon footprint and lower costs utilising and enhancing existing infrastructures.



Can be implemented incrementally to reduce disruption to existing communities and manage multi-annual budgets.



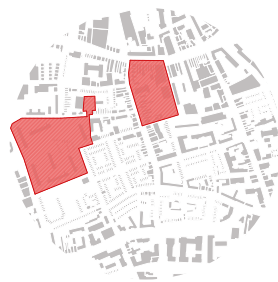
Provides new green spaces and walking/cycling routes in urban centres.

INHABITED SECTION THROUGH PIMLICO FLATBLOCK ADDITION - 1:20



● INTERSTICES

CASE STUDY AREAS // INTERSTICES . LIVING OVER . STITCHING ON



● AREAS

AREAS OF OPERATION // PIMLICO . MOLYNEUX



AXONOMETRIC SKETCH OF PIMLICO FLATBLOCK ADDITION

Urban Horticulture Actions



PLANNING/REGULATION

- 6 Cost impact of Regulations:** Investigate the cost implications (if any), of complying with the Building Regulations when upgrading existing over the shop accommodation. If appropriate, identify where changes could be made to reduce costs and complexity of such projects.

FISCAL

- 9 Financial support:** Introduction of tax schemes to support and incentivise reuse of existing buildings.
- 10 Financial access:** Investigate solution for financing the regeneration of mixed-use properties which are currently not eligible for a residential mortgage.
- 11 Grant support:** Adapt Croí Conaithe (Towns) which only applies to properties that are fully vacant for two years or more. Propose that it is modified to fund delivery of housing without the vacancy requirement where there is no loss of commercial activity. This would prevent the negative cumulative effect of long-term vacancy on a town (such as the Working Home proposal).

- 12 Levy:** The Vacant Site levy is a welcome instrument to encourage development of vacant sites. Similar mechanism targeted at properties remaining unused at ground floor level and/or above to be introduced to encourage the development of these units.

SUSTAINABILITY

- 14 Existing Buildings First:** Government commitment to tackle vacancy, dereliction, and support low carbon development by implementing a “reuse of existing buildings” strategy where appropriate, for public sector projects.
Government guidelines: Proposals such as Urban Horticulture and Join the Dots could be used to develop guidelines on how to regenerate and reimagine existing towns, while the 33 Churches and Building Societies’ projects could be included in new guidelines promoting best practice reuse of important community buildings.
- 15 Improved Greenways + Urban Realm:** Consultation between local authorities and TII to agree strategy for incremental development that could yield new pedestrian and cycling routes through urban neighbourhoods. Funding for these works could be provided for by TII. Development Plans could advocate for the delivery of new community spaces such as pocket parks/greenways for all urban regeneration sites.

REGENERATION

- 16 Urban Regeneration Skills:** Increased urban regeneration expertise needed for successful Town Centre First projects.
Public - The newly funded Town Regeneration Officer scheme could be expanded to provide a permanent urban/regeneration unit in each Local Authority to include a mix of architects and planners.
Private- Establish panels of consultants experienced in master planning and urban regeneration for regeneration projects. Procurement criteria to allow smaller local firms, familiar with the project areas, to be eligible for participation.
- 17 Skills + Employment:** Increased training for conservation skills required for the sensitive restoration of existing buildings. A dedicated state-funded heritage skills training centre could provide targeted training in this area.
- 18 Clear and Engaged Public Consultation:** Encourage active public & stakeholder consultation with regeneration projects through local community liaison networks (e.g. DCC Liberties Area Improvement Initiative). Require 3D models of proposals for L.A.P.s / town plans as part of the design process to enhance public understanding of and engagement with proposals.

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Action numbers are as identified in Actions Table on p36

Join the Dots

Potential Units: > 45,000 new units nationally. For this particular study - 150 units identified for Mountrath. 45,000 units nationwide if replicated for 300 Irish towns.

Concept:

This concept takes Mountrath, Co. Laois as a case-study to identify small, and medium scale interventions that can be implemented in Irish towns and villages, creating new homes in existing urban centres.

The approach highlights the value of the architectural heritage of Irish towns and shows how this can be protected. It encourages development that respects and builds on the character of a town.



Many sites for housing, and opportunities for regeneration are identified. When combined they provide a masterplan for the exemplar regeneration of a town. These changes improve the public realm, which is important if we are to encourage people to live in rural towns instead of one-off housing.



The enhanced streetscape, together with an increased population living in the town would reinvigorate Irish towns by making them enjoyable, vibrant places to live and work.

Benefits:

- Contributes to the vibrancy and character of Irish towns by reducing vacancy and dereliction and encouraging people to live in town centres.
- Offers an attractive alternative to one-off housing by creating a vibrant, well populated town.
- Reduces requirement for driving as new homes are located next to amenities.
- Adaptation and re-use of buildings has a lower carbon footprint than new build. The proposed approach is more suitable environmentally and protects our heritage.
- Provides access to currently unused back land space which can provide new green space, pedestrian routes through a town and housing sites in desirable locations.
- Speed of Delivery - due to the reduced need for enabling works homes can be delivered more quickly than through new build.
- Provides a range of potential living and working unit types in one area, facilitating new models of housing that suit inter-generational living and working from home.
- Proposes pilot projects be carried out by local authorities in partnership with local interest groups to demonstrate the excitement and potential of a real alternative lifestyle for the 21st century.
- Costs five types of interventions to prove the case for unlocking the housing potential within our existing towns.



Join the Dots Actions



PLANNING/REGULATION

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Table of Actions Identified in the Proposals

Glossary of Project Names

WH: The Working Home
BS: Building Societies
MW: Start Spreading the Mews
33C: 33 Churches
EC: Eco-Cube
UH: Urban Horticulture
H4C: Home 4 Community
JTD: Join The Dots

Glossary of Respondents

DHLGH: Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.
DHLGH – P: Planning
DHLGH – HAU: Housing Advisory Unit
DHLGH – HPLG: Housing Policy, Legislation and Governance
DAFM: Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine
DETE: Department of Enterprise Trade + Employment
TCFO: Town Centre First national Office
LA: Local Authority
EI: Enterprise Ireland
CI: Construct Innovate

No Action Description

No of projects proposing

Suggested by

Respondent

PLANNING/REGULATION

No	Action Description	No of projects proposing	Suggested by	Respondent
1	<p>New Planning Exemption classes:</p> <p>Working Home: Under current planning regulations, the 'Working Home' would require planning permission if the commercial unit is not vacant for more than two years. To prevent loss of commercial activity a "Working-Home" designation is recommended. These properties would be exempt from planning regardless of commercial unit being vacant or occupied. This will deliver homes in town centres while maintaining commercial activity.</p> <p>Mews: Introduce a new Exempted Development Class and Mews Design Guidelines for mews development within laneways identified as suitable for housing. New homes built in strict accordance with the design guidelines would be exempt from requiring full planning in these areas. A Section 5 declaration confirming exemption would be required before carrying out the works to ensure compliance with the design guide and to prevent unauthorized development.</p>	2	WH MW	DHLGH- P
2	<p>Zoning Working Home: Development Plans, Local Area Plans and Town Plans to include new zoning class for 'Working Home' development in core commercial areas. Within these zones, this type of development would be given favourable planning outcomes beyond any time-restricted planning exemption class.</p> <p>Mews: Local Authorities to designate suitable areas in Development Plans as appropriate for mews development. Design guidelines to be provided. The design guidelines developed as part of the Start Spreading the Mews project could form the basis of these.</p>	2	WH MW	DHLGH- P LA
3	<p>New Planning Guidelines: New Design Standards for mid density housing required. Allow for smaller private open space standards and inclusion of upper-level balconies/terraces (as per apartments), and closer back-to-back distances, similar to the 'Cambridge Model'.</p>	3	MW EC H4H	DHLGH-P & DHLGH - HAU
4	<p>High Quality Design for increased Densities: Planning applications for higher density housing to be reviewed by a design quality committee of architects and urban designers as part of the planning process. This is common in other jurisdictions.</p>	1	H4H	DHLGH-P DHLGH - HAU
5	<p>Fire Standards for Timber Construction: Change Part B to allow structural timber for buildings higher than 10m (3 stories approx.) This would allow timber construction for apartment building as well as houses thereby increasing the environmental benefits of timber construction (as in the UK + other jurisdictions).</p>	2	EC H4C	DHLGH- HPLG
6	<p>Cost impact of Regulations: Investigate the cost implications (if any), of complying with the Building Regulations when upgrading existing over the shop accommodation. If appropriate, identify where changes could be made to reduce costs and complexity of such projects.</p>	4	WH BS UH JTD	DHLGH -HPLG

MODULAR/ TIMBERFRAME

<p>7 Support for Modern Methods of Construction: Government and industry support is required to upscale the modern methods of construction sector. For example, pilot public sector housing projects to be built using modern methods of construction, grants and funding to be provided to modular manufacturers by the State, and Government commitment to ongoing orders to de-risk modular construction and enable manufacturers to produce at scale.</p>	<p>2</p>	<p>H4C EC</p>	<p>DHLGH EI CI</p>
<p>8 Expanding the Timber Frame Sector: Consider ways to increase indigenous supply of suitable timber to support an expanding Irish timeframe construction sector.</p>	<p>2</p>	<p>EC H4C</p>	<p>Coillte, DAFM</p>

FISCAL

<p>9 Financial Support: Introduction of tax schemes to support and incentivise reuse of existing buildings.</p>	<p>5</p>	<p>WH BS UH JTD 33C</p>	<p>DPER DHLGH</p>
<p>10 Financial Access: Investigate solution for financing the regeneration of mixed-use properties which are currently not eligible for a residential mortgage.</p>	<p>3</p>	<p>WH JTD UH</p>	<p>DHLGH DPER</p>
<p>11 Grant Support: Adapt Croí Conaithe (Towns) which only applies to properties that are fully vacant for two years or more. Propose that it is modified to fund delivery of housing without the vacancy requirement where there is no loss of commercial activity. This would prevent the negative cumulative effect of long-term vacancy on a town (such as the Working Home proposal).</p>	<p>3</p>	<p>WH BS JTD</p>	<p>DPER DHLGH</p>
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<p>13 Co-Housing Sector: Government regulation, support and financing stream for co- housing sector similar to other EU countries.</p>	<p>1</p>	<p>H4C</p>	<p>DHLGH</p>

SUSTAINABILITY

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Unlocked

Housing

Unlocked

How might we optimise quality of life in a compact urban block?



Irish Architecture Foundation

Housing

Can vacant shops be used for housing?



An Glasraheen
Tábhacht
Housing Agency

Unlocked

Can towns find
extra housing
in iconic buildings?



Housing Unlocked

**Irish
Architecture
Foundation**



**An Ghníomhaireacht
Tithíochta**
The Housing Agency

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