National Development Plan 2007 - 2013

Environmental Protection Agency
An Ghníomhaireacht um Chaomhnú Comhshaoil

STRIVE
Report Series No.44

Sustainable Rural Development: Managing Housing in the Countryside

STRIVE

Environmental Protection Agency Programme

2007-2013

SSTI

Comhshaol, Oidhreacht agus Rialtas Áitiúil
Environment, Heritage and Local Government

Environmental Protection Agency

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is a statutory body responsible for protecting the environment in Ireland. We regulate and police activities that might otherwise cause pollution. We ensure there is solid information on environmental trends so that necessary actions are taken. Our priorities are protecting the Irish environment and ensuring that development is sustainable.

The EPA is an independent public body established in July 1993 under the Environmental Protection Agency Act, 1992. Its sponsor in Government is the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government.

OUR RESPONSIBILITIES

LICENSING

We license the following to ensure that their emissions do not endanger human health or harm the environment:

- waste facilities (e.g., landfills, incinerators, waste transfer stations);
- large scale industrial activities (e.g., pharmaceutical manufacturing, cement manufacturing, power plants);
- intensive agriculture;
- the contained use and controlled release of Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs);
- large petrol storage facilities.
- Waste water discharges

NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL ENFORCEMENT

- Conducting over 2,000 audits and inspections of EPA licensed facilities every year.
- Overseeing local authorities' environmental protection responsibilities in the areas of - air, noise, waste, waste-water and water quality.
- Working with local authorities and the Gardaí to stamp out illegal waste activity by co-ordinating a national enforcement network, targeting offenders, conducting investigations and overseeing remediation.
- Prosecuting those who flout environmental law and damage the environment as a result of their actions.

MONITORING, ANALYSING AND REPORTING ON THE ENVIRONMENT

- Monitoring air quality and the quality of rivers, lakes, tidal waters and ground waters; measuring water levels and river flows.
- Independent reporting to inform decision making by national and local government.

REGULATING IRELAND'S GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

- Quantifying Ireland's emissions of greenhouse gases in the context of our Kyoto commitments.
- Implementing the Emissions Trading Directive, involving over 100 companies who are major generators of carbon dioxide in Ireland.

ENVIRONMENTAL RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

- Co-ordinating research on environmental issues (including air and water quality, climate change, biodiversity, environmental technologies).

STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

- Assessing the impact of plans and programmes on the Irish environment (such as waste management and development plans).

ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING, EDUCATION AND GUIDANCE

- Providing guidance to the public and to industry on various environmental topics (including licence applications, waste prevention and environmental regulations).
- Generating greater environmental awareness (through environmental television programmes and primary and secondary schools' resource packs).

PROACTIVE WASTE MANAGEMENT

- Promoting waste prevention and minimisation projects through the co-ordination of the National Waste Prevention Programme, including input into the implementation of Producer Responsibility Initiatives.
- Enforcing Regulations such as Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) and Restriction of Hazardous Substances (RoHS) and substances that deplete the ozone layer.
- Developing a National Hazardous Waste Management Plan to prevent and manage hazardous waste.

MANAGEMENT AND STRUCTURE OF THE EPA

The organisation is managed by a full time Board, consisting of a Director General and four Directors.

The work of the EPA is carried out across four offices:

- Office of Climate, Licensing and Resource Use
- Office of Environmental Enforcement
- Office of Environmental Assessment
- Office of Communications and Corporate Services

The EPA is assisted by an Advisory Committee of twelve members who meet several times a year to discuss issues of concern and offer advice to the Board.

EPA STRIVE Programme 2007–2013

Sustainable Rural Development: Managing Housing in the Countryside

(2005-SD-MS-41-M2)

STRIVE Report

End of Project Report available for download on http://erc.epa.ie/safer/reports

Prepared for the Environmental Protection Agency

by

School of Geography, Planning and Environmental Policy, University College Dublin, Ireland

Editor:

Mark Scott

Authors:

Finbarr Brereton, Vivienne Brophy, Craig Bullock, Peter Clinch, Karen Foley, Dan Gilbert, Menelaos Gkartzios, Jim Kinsella, Michelle Norris, Deirdre O'Connor, Geraldine O'Daly, Declan Redmond, Paula Russell, Mark Scott and Nessa Winston

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
An Ghníomhaireacht um Chaomhnú Comhshaoil
PO Box 3000, Johnstown Castle, Co.Wexford, Ireland

Telephone: +353 53 916 0600 Fax: +353 53 916 0699
Email: info@epa.ie Website: www.epa.ie

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report is published as part of the Science, Technology, Research and Innovation for the Environment (STRIVE) Programme 2007–2013. The programme is financed by the Irish Government under the National Development Plan 2007–2013. It is administered on behalf of the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government by the Environmental Protection Agency which has the statutory function of co-ordinating and promoting environmental research.

The authors are grateful to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for supporting this research and express particular thanks to Kevin Woods and Shane Colgan for guiding the progress of this research through to completion. We are especially appreciative of those key informants who met with us to share their views on rural planning and development matters. As is usual in any research project, we take personal responsibility for the content and we would indicate that the analysis expressed within this paper is not necessarily the view of the EPA. The research team are also grateful to an advisory panel that provided timely guidance at the commencement of this research project. Members of this panel included Dr Michael Murray (Queen's University Belfast), Prof. David Douglas (University of Guelph, Canada), Niall Cussen (Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government), and Kevin Woods (EPA).

EPA STRIVE PROGRAMME 2007–2013

Published by the Environmental Protection Agency, Ireland

ISBN: 978-1-84095-338-1 **Online version**

Price: Free

Details of Project Partners

Mark Scott
School of Geography, Planning and Environmental Policy
University College Dublin
Belfield
Dublin 4
Tel.: +353 1 7162789
Email: mark.scott@ucd.ie

Finbarr Brereton
Urban Institute Ireland
University College Dublin
Belfield
Dublin 4
Tel.: +353 1 7162691
Email: finbarr.brereton@ucd.ie

Vivienne Brophy
School of Architecture, Landscape and Civil Engineering
University College Dublin
Belfield
Dublin 4
Tel.: +353 1 7162770
Email: vivienne.brophy@ucd.ie

Craig Bullock
School of Geography, Planning and Environmental Policy
University College Dublin
Belfield
Dublin 4
Tel.: +353 1 7162784
Email: craig.bullock@ucd.ie

J. Peter Clinch
School of Geography, Planning and Environmental Policy
University College Dublin
Belfield
Dublin 4
Tel.: +353 1 7162751
Email: peter.clinch@ucd.ie

Karen Foley
School of Architecture, Landscape and Civil Engineering
University College Dublin
Belfield
Dublin 4
Tel.: +353 1 7167751
Email: karen.foley@ucd.ie

Dan Gilbert
School of Geography, Planning and Environmental Policy
University College Dublin
Belfield
Dublin 4
Tel.: +353 1 7162794
Email: dan.gilbert@ucd.ie

Menelaos Gkartzios
School of Geography, Planning and Environmental Policy
University College Dublin
Belfield
Dublin 4
Tel.: +353 1 7162805
Email: menelaos.gkartzios@ucd.ie

Jim Kinsella
School of Biology and Environmental Sciences
University College Dublin
Belfield
Dublin 4
Tel.: +353 1 7167760
Email: jim.kinsella@ucd.ie

Michelle Norris
School of Applied Social Sciences
University College Dublin
Belfield
Dublin 4
Tel.: +353 1 7168203
Email: michelle.norris@ucd.ie

Deirdre O'Connor
School of Biology and Environmental Sciences
University College Dublin
Belfield
Dublin 4
Tel.: +353 1 7167706
Email: deirdre.oconnor@ucd.ie

Geraldine Byrne O'Daly
Energy Research Group
University College Dublin
Belfield
Dublin 4
Tel.: +353 1 7162770
Email: geraldine.odaly@ucd.ie

Declan Redmond
School of Geography, Planning and
Environmental Policy
University College Dublin
Belfield
Dublin 4
Tel.: +353 1 7162716

Paula Russell
School of Geography, Planning and
Environmental Policy
University College Dublin
Belfield
Dublin 4
Tel.: +353 1 7162772
Email: paula.russell@ucd.ie

Nessa Winston
School of Applied Social Sciences
University College Dublin
Belfield
Dublin 4
Tel.: +353 1 7168261
Email: nessa.winston@ucd.ie

Table of Contents

Executive Summary

Research Context

The background to this report is the increasing difficulty being experienced in addressing the question of housing development in rural areas. An issue for many years, the debate has become increasingly contentious and polarised. This stems from an accelerating pace of development, the changing population dynamics of rural areas, and a growing recognition of the need to include environmental considerations in the planning process. Central to this debate is the concept of sustainability and its interpretation and application in rural areas; however, currently there is insufficient evidence to allow a more complete understanding of rural housing dynamics and sustainable rural development.

Research Approach

Rural housing is a complex and multidimensional-faceted public policy issue. In order to address the multidimensional themes surrounding rural housing effectively, the research project consisted of an interdisciplinary team, involving University College Dublin researchers with backgrounds in environmental planning; spatial and land-use planning; economics; environmental studies; landscape architecture; rural development; sociology; social policy; geography; architecture; and building technology.

A range of novel methodologies and the collection of significant new data in relation to rural change and housing in Ireland have underpinned this report. This included a national representative survey of rural households (*N* = 800), a series of household surveys in three case-study locations (Kildare, South Tipperary and Clare) (*N* = 1,200), a survey of county councillors (*N* = 300), a series of focus groups with rural and professional stakeholders, and qualitative interviews with planners, councillors, rural development stakeholders and civil society representatives. Furthermore, the issue of second homes was examined through three additional case-study locations in high amenity rural areas where holiday homes have been prevalent. When appropriate, secondary data was also used.

Key Findings

Rural Ireland is not a homogenous area with a single common shared experience. Depending on economic circumstances and geographic location, rural areas face contrasting challenges and experiences. Areas close to large cities and regional towns are experiencing rapid population growth, which increases pressures for development. In contrast, the structurally weaker areas, with low or zero population growth rates, have been affected most negatively by the decline in the economic importance and employment potential of the agriculture sector. There is a significant legacy of dispersed rural settlement throughout most rural areas.

From an economic perspective, the buoyancy in the Irish economy since the mid-1990s, particularly in the construction sector, has enabled rural economies to absorb the decline in the primary sectors of agriculture and fisheries, as well as in industrial employment in certain regions. As employment opportunities grew, many rural areas gained population. However, with the most recent downturn in construction activity, employment in rural areas is already under significant pressure.

It was found from the case studies in Kildare, South Tipperary and Clare that rural housing and settlement patterns were generally underpinned by a fairly stable community – 35.5 per cent of respondents in the survey have been resident in their current dwelling for over 20 years. Moreover, of the more recent 'movers', 29 per cent of this group had moved to their current property from within the local area, while a further 20.6 per cent of recent movers had moved from another rural locality. Significantly, over half of recent movers had moved to their current rural dwelling from a more urban location (this was significantly higher in the peri-urban case study). Interestingly, approximately half of this 'urban-to-rural' group were originally from a rural background, suggesting a 'return-to-the-rural' pattern of movement. In all, 82 per cent of all respondents in three case studies were from a rural background.

The social and physical characteristics of rural areas were reported as the main reasons for moving to a current dwelling. When this was explored further, factors such as the perception of the countryside as a good place to raise children, the presence of social networks and a perceived sense of community were cited. It was also found that rural dwellers report high levels of life satisfaction.

The research revealed too the importance of dwelling type in the decision-making process. For example, of the sample of respondents who were considering making a move, the results suggested that they were influenced by practical considerations (e.g. journey times to work), but were subsequently diverted by the attractions of house design or views. The opportunity for individuals to influence their house design was often a further incentive to move to a new dwelling in the countryside.

There has been a very marked growth in the number of second homes in Ireland since the mid-1990s; this has been concentrated in certain rural and coastal regions and consists mainly of newly constructed dwellings. In addition, there has been a significant increase in the number of long-term vacant dwellings in these regions, particularly since 2000. These developments are linked to economic and population growth, the 'laissez-faire' nature of land-use planning in rural Ireland, the particularly high rate of housing output in Ireland since the mid-1990s, the generous fiscal treatment of housing, and tax incentives to encourage house building in economically marginal areas.

Effective environmental design can provide a valuable tool in mitigating some of the impacts of rural dwellings. Sustainable design and construction can reduce consumption of resources, cut greenhouse gas emissions and contribute to good health. A sustainable approach can help ensure that buildings are adaptable and responsible in minimising their impact upon the environment and can make the most of natural systems, including local ecosystems. Considerable potential exists to improve this aspect of the rural built environment through encouraging siting and landscaping to manage solar gain; exploring choice of materials, the scale of new dwellings and construction practices to ensure minimal impacts; improving thermal efficiency in new homes to reduce total energy consumption; and the operating of continued professional development programmes surrounding issues of environmental design for planners and architects.

The prevalence of scattered rural housing development in Ireland presents additional costs in terms of infrastructure provision – for instance, maintaining minor roads, supplying electricity, school transport and postal services. Very little of this cost is recouped directly. In most cases, whether borne by the government or the utility companies, the costs are ultimately passed onto the wider population to become an external cost. On the other hand, the economic costs must be evaluated in terms of the perceived social benefits of maintaining local communities, including services such as pubs and shops. In some cases, as with broadband provision, rural population growth can strengthen the case for the supply of services to rural areas outside the larger towns. There is also some evidence that rural in-migration can encourage investment and economic development, although the relationship appears to be more complex and less inevitable than many pressure groups presume.

Local elected representatives display an overwhelmingly proactively development position in relation to accommodating further housing in the countryside. This view is framed within the context of sustainable communities, sustaining viable rural population levels and maintaining local services. Environmental issues appear to be lower priorities.

Policy Implications

Planning policy that reflects the diversity of rural Ireland: rural Ireland is not a homogenous entity, but reflects contrasting development pressures, landscape contexts, and community and cultural dynamics. Similarly, all rural areas are not changing at the same pace, or indeed share a capacity to manage change effectively. In this context, avoiding a 'one-size-fits-all' approach to rural policy and planning is a central principle. In particular, policy-makers should recognise that there is a significant legacy of dispersed rural settlement in Ireland, and local authorities should integrate the statutory requirement for landscape assessment with a parallel analysis of rural community and economic contexts.

Towards integrated rural planning: there is a clear need to develop integrated, holistic and multidimensional

approaches to rural sustainable development. This will involve a few key elements: connecting the issue of rural housing with wider debates of rural development; adopting an evidence-informed approach to policy-making; a consideration of the social-policy implications of dispersed rural communities; and the further integration of land-use development plans and local strategies for social/economic/cultural issues. A new White Paper on rural sustainable development could also reformulate the government's commitment to rural Ireland and integrate other dimensions of public policy affecting rural localities.

Influencing future residential preferences: understanding residential behaviour enables policy-makers to influence future behaviour through positive and evidence-based planning policies. For example, enhanced village planning and greater scope for 'self-build' within villages may provide plan-led incentives towards accommodating future rural growth within existing settlements, while countering counter-urbanisation could provide an appropriate goal for regional plans.

From development control to environmental management: a proactive stance towards rural planning suggests the need to move beyond development control and traditional regulatory instruments to a more positive planning response. This includes using planning tools such as detailed housing design guidance, participatory village planning, village/local design statements and to explore the potential of market-based instruments to more effectively encourage sustainable rural settlement patterns. In summary, managing rural housing should be a plan-led process, rather than an incremental approach.

Acknowledging the importance of design: good design plays a key role in mitigating some of the visual and environmental impacts of rural housing. Influencing the quality of the rural built environment involves extending the practice of rural house design guidelines; greater use of Village Design Statements (VDSs); encouraging the design of new buildings to reduce energy consumption; encouraging greater synergy between planning control and building control functions; strategies for retrofitting of the rural housing stock to reduce energy consumption; and effective design and siting to protect water resources.

Developing interactive styles of plan-making: rural housing in Ireland in recent years has proved to be an emotionally charged issue, pointing to the need for more interactive, deliberative communication between decision-makers, technical experts, other stakeholders and the public. The challenge ahead is to engage proactively with rural people and in this regard attention should be given to developing innovative large-group interaction methodologies.

Exploring the value of alternative policy instruments: new instruments must be developed which encourage the delivery of sustainable rural development in an efficient and equitable manner and in a way which is acceptable to the public. The potential of market-based instruments should be explored in relation to rural planning. This could include incentives to encourage development in villages, planning gain, and market-based tools as instruments in landscape management and protection.

Holiday/vacant homes: improved data are required in relation to numbers, distribution, uses of second homes and impacts (including on local housing markets). The demand for second homes should be directed to appropriate locations as a tool for rural revitalisation and the impact of the second homes tax should be monitored.

Further Research

Further research should address issues surrounding rural housing affordability, the implications for rural housing of an ageing society, supply-side issues and technological innovation in relation to improving environmental performance.

Since the completion of the research fieldwork underpinning this report, there have been dramatic changes in the Irish economy and in the housing market in particular. In relation to rural housing and sustainable rural development, there is an urgent need to explore the following issues in the context of current economic conditions: housing-market conditions in rural areas; the impact of 'abandoned' or unfinished housing schemes in rural towns and villages; housing supply and planning policy (including the issue of over-zoning or excessive zoning for residential land use); the impact of the recession on sustainable rural livelihoods; and the impact of diminishing public funds on rural areas.

1 Introduction

Mark Scott

The background to this report is the increasing difficulty being experienced by policy-makers and planning officials in addressing the issue of housing development in rural areas and its impact on the environment, landscape, rural communities and public finances. This has been an issue for many years, but increasingly the debate has become contentious and polarised. This is due to an accelerating pace of development, the changing population dynamics of rural areas, and a growing recognition of the need to include environmental considerations in the planning process (Gkartzios and Scott, 2009). The concept of sustainability and its interpretation and application in rural areas are central to this debate; however, currently there is a dearth of evidence to enable a more complete understanding of rural housing dynamics and sustainable rural development.

1.1 Research Context

Perhaps one of the most characteristic features of Irish rural areas is the distinctive dispersed settlement pattern. Approximately 70 per cent of the rural population live in single, dispersed houses built in the open countryside (i.e. outside towns and villages) (Keaveney and Walsh, 2005), often referred to as 'one-off' houses. Over the course of Ireland's economic growth experienced from the early 1990s to the mid-2000s, rural Ireland witnessed vast changes. In line with the demographic recovery of many rural areas (particularly those in close proximity to urban centres), an unprecedented boom in house building occurred, with government estimates suggesting that between 35 and 40 per cent of total house completions in the state were built as single houses in the open countryside (Gkartzios and Scott, 2009). This rural housing growth can be associated, inter alia, with counter-urbanisation trends, the relatively lower costs associated with building a one-off house and a permissive rural planning regime (Clinch et al., 2002; Gallent et al., 2003).

Accordingly, one of the most visible and contested indicators of rural change in recent years in Ireland has been housing development in the countryside. Those opposed to accommodating further development in rural areas generally frame the issue within environmental sustainability terms, arguing that rural housing has negative impacts on the landscape, that it leads to higher CO_2 emissions caused by car dependency and dispersal and to groundwater pollution from septic tanks. However, accommodating or restricting further development in rural areas also raises a range of social policy issues notably absent from policy debates in recent years. For example, a dispersed settlement pattern raises issues of cost inefficiencies in relation to service delivery for social services, particularly schools and health-care provision (especially in areas with an ageing population). In addition, public- or community-based transport initiatives are less effective when serving a dispersed and low-density population, with the availability and rising costs of transport providing a major barrier to social inclusion in rural areas. Nonetheless, restrictive rural planning policies raise concerns in relation to housing affordability (as one-off houses are often built on a self-build basis on family-owned land) and access to constrained local housing markets for low-income groups. In addition, although restricting future rural housing may address a sustainable planning agenda, a 'withdrawal' from rural areas leads progressively to rural communities becoming less sustainable in economic and social terms. Therefore, rural housing brings to the fore issues of both supply and demand for rural services.

The unique context for rural housing development in Ireland – including the scale and density of Irish rural settlements; the nature of Irish culture and attachment to place; the predisposition of many people to live in the open countryside; and the diversity of Irish rural communities and landscapes – suggests the need for a careful planning response appropriate to Ireland. Managing housing in the countryside is a complex and multidimensional issue. Rather than a singular rural housing debate, as often portrayed in the media, in reality the generators of rural housing, development pressures, and environmental and community contexts vary widely across space. There are important issues for community identity, rural services, infrastructure investment, car use, landscape and water quality that are examined in this report.

1.2 Rural Policy and Rural Planning Background

Throughout Europe, the last two decades have witnessed the restructuring of the agricultural sector, demographic changes in rural areas (associated with in-migration, second home ownership and an ageing population), an increase in environmental concerns and conflicting demands over rural space, which in turn has led to a shift in rural policy from essentially sectoral support policies (predominantly agricultural) to territorial development and spatial approaches. This policy shift is a recognition that area-based strategies and policies can integrate sectoral dimensions to public policy delivery (agriculture, housing, employment creation, transport, etc.) and offer a holistic approach to balancing the economic, social and environmental processes that shape Europe's rural areas. Throughout the 1990s, rural development theory and practice were firmly focused on local development and bottom-up approaches to face the challenge of the continued restructuring of the agricultural industry, exemplified by the EU's LEADER[1] programme. In contrast to the emphasis on *local* development in the 1990s, the current policy proposal of the EU is to tie rural areas much more into their urban and regional contexts; in this regard, the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP) calls for the strengthening of the partnership between urban and rural areas to overcome 'the outdated dualism between city and countryside' (Committee for Spatial Planning, 1999, p. 19) and to provide an integrated approach to regional problems. These structural and policy changes have been well charted in the literature (e.g. Gallent and Tewdwr-Jones, 2007; Marsden, 2007; Moseley and Owen, 2008). In this report, the processes of rural change are examined through the lens of housing in the countryside.

In Ireland, new housing and physical development in rural areas is controlled by a statutory land-use planning system; this was formally established with the Local Government (Planning and Development) Act in 1963, which introduced a statutory development plan and development control system. Historically, the fate of smaller settlements and rural areas in Ireland received less than significant attention from planning officials and policy-makers. This focus on the urban was reinforced by a lack of development pressures on the countryside because of historically high levels of out-migration from rural communities, and also a common perception of the rural arena as agricultural space (Greer and Murray, 1993). This standpoint has led to the operation of a liberal planning system in rural Ireland, described as one of the more lax rural planning regimes in Europe (Duffy, 2000). However, since 2000, Ireland has witnessed a reinvention of the planning system as a direct response to rapid national economic growth during the 1990s, a growing population, and the related (and unprecedented) boom in house building. In 2000, new comprehensive planning legislation was adopted (Planning and Development Act 2000), and the planning policy framework was further enhanced with the publication in 2002 of the National Spatial Strategy (NSS) (DoELG, 2002). This represents the Irish government's first national spatial framework, adopting in effect the European notion of spatial planning rather than the conventional regulatory approach focusing narrowly on land use.

Within the context of the restructuring of the countryside and new demands on rural space, spatial planning has the potential to move 'centre stage' in managing rural change processes – particularly as non-agricultural interests play an increasingly significant role in shaping rural areas and the emergence of multifunctional rural geographies[2]. The planning system *should* provide a key statutory spatial framework for managing rural change; for example, in outlining the future location of housing or services; identifying sites for economic opportunities; landscape management; and balancing conservation and development interests. In addition, public participation in the preparation of the development plan suggests a potential for the planning process to produce consensus-driven development strategies or to mediate between conflicting conservation and development goals. This suggests that spatial planning can perform a key role in 'place making', coordinate the activities of different stakeholders over rural

1 The LEADER (links between actions for the development of the rural economy) programme is a EU initiative to promote 'bottom-up' community-led rural development, established in 1991.

2 Multifunctional rural geographies refer to a radical redefinition and reconfiguration of rural resources in and beyond the farm enterprise (Marsden and Sonnino, 2008) as a departure point beyond traditional productivist models of agriculture. This includes a greater emphasis on rural economic diversification, landscape management and sustainable development.

space and reduce levels of conflict. Furthermore, the involvement of local elected representatives provides a political and democratic legitimacy for managing spatial change. Therefore, there appears to be considerable potential for planning policies and development plans to provide key instruments in developing integrative and multidimensional approaches to rural sustainable development in partnership with rural communities and other key stakeholders. However, planning policies for rural areas often appear to be underpinned by conflicting and competing rationalities for rural sustainable development, leading to a disintegrated and fragmented approach to policy formulation, rather than a holistic and integrated framework to establish rural policy goals.

1.3 Research Methodology – Data Sources

The research involved a range of novel methodologies to investigate rural housing. This included new research approaches in relation to assessing individual well-being; choice experiments to assess residential preferences and housing decision-making behaviour; visualisation techniques to assess landscape change; and approaches to understanding sustainable rural communities. Secondary data used in this project included Census data at county (or local authority) and electoral division (ED) scale, and data from the housing statistics bulletins, published by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DoEHLG). In addition, secondary data was collected in relation to planning applications for rural housing and for infrastructure provision in rural Ireland, including roads, electricity, telecommunications, postal services, schools and water. In relation to primary data collection, this included a national representative survey of rural households; household surveys in three case-study locations; a survey of county councillors; a series of focus groups with rural and professional stakeholders; and qualitative interviews with planners, councillors, rural development stakeholders and civil society representatives.

In relation to the case studies presented in this report, all work packages of the research used three case studies to provide consistency and to enable a triangulation of results. The rationale for choosing these three different rural case studies with different structural and demographic characteristics was the need to reflect in the research the heterogeneity of rural areas, as increasingly recognised in both academic and applied literature (e.g. Murdoch et al., 2003; Mahon, 2007). The case studies were selected on the basis of location, population dynamics and economic contexts:

- Kildare local authority: peri-urban rural areas that experienced significant population growth;
- South Tipperary local authority: agriculturally based rural area with average population growth, in line with national population growth trends;
- Clare local authority: remote coastal rural area that has experienced population decline in some areas.

The exception to this approach is in the findings from research outlined in Section 8 (second and vacant homes), which examined three alternative case-study locations to capture trends in high amenity rural areas that have experienced growth in the number of second homes. This research was undertaken by Norris and Winston and funded under University College Dublin (UCD) Seed Funding.

2 A Context for Rural Housing in Ireland

Jim Kinsella and Deirdre O'Connor

Section 2 focuses on the wider socio-economic and policy context for studying rural housing in Ireland, emphasising the importance of sustainable livelihoods (an issue that has dominated public policies internationally). For example, the United Nation's (UN) Earth Summit agreed the need for policies and programmes to deliver sustainable livelihoods that would achieve a balance in meeting economic, social and environmental objectives (UN, 2002). Sustainable livelihoods and in particular sustainable rural communities are key objectives of both the EU's Salzburg Declaration (EC, 2003) and Ireland's first Strategy on Sustainable Development published in 1997 (DoELG, 1997). Sustainable rural livelihoods are about people in and outside rural areas having the opportunity to achieve standards of living that are acceptable in contemporary society. They are influenced by household assets (e.g. financial, human, capital, natural, infrastructure), wider social, economic and political conditions within which people live, as well as public, private and civil society institutions (Fig. 2.1). The status of sustainable rural livelihoods will constantly evolve in response to the changing context and will be influenced by the institutional arrangements that exist at any given time. It is also accepted that the quality of life outcomes for rural households ultimately contribute to the stock of household and community assets. In cases where this contribution is positive and reinforcing, it will help to maintain populations in rural areas and ultimately build sustainable communities. In rural Ireland, assets such as quality of life and a clean environment can serve to attract and retain people or businesses where there is good transport and communications infrastructure.

Regarding the Irish rural economy, agriculture remains more important to the Irish economy than in other EU member states, despite a decline in its contribution to the gross domestic product. Data from the Census of Agriculture reveal that the number of farms has declined, although the average farm size has increased. Public data confirm the emergence of *multifunctional agriculture* in Ireland, which can be observed with the growing dependence on off-farm income and engagement in non-agricultural activities on the farm (i.e. farm tourism and forestry). For example, the growing dependence on off-farm income is evidenced by the fact that approximately 55 per cent of farms had such a source in 2005 and the most recent Census of Agriculture, carried out in 2000, showed approximately

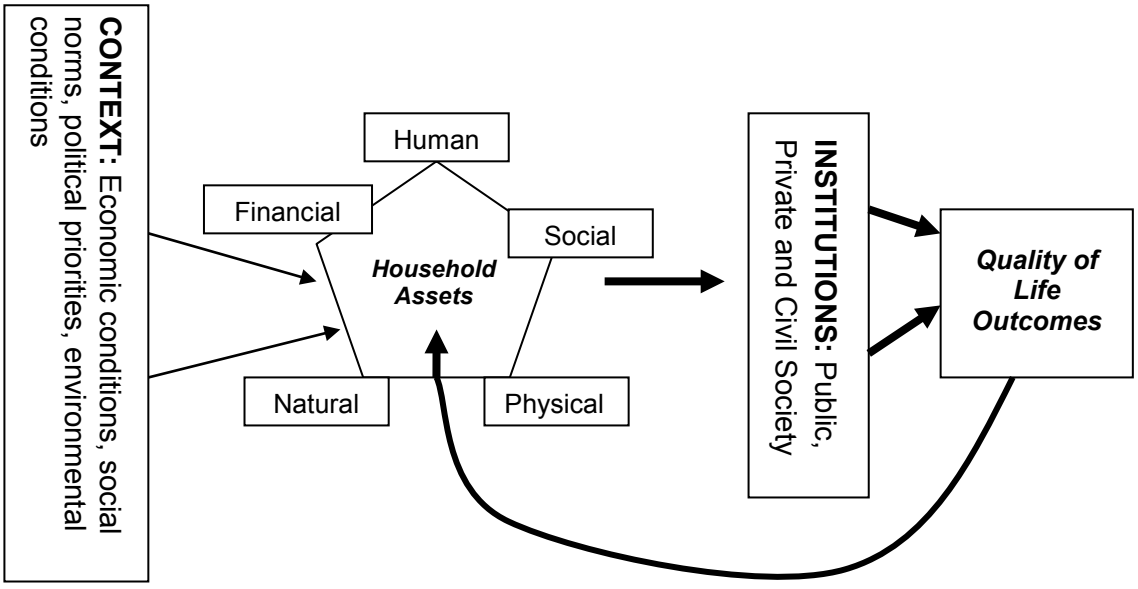

Figure 2.1. A model for sustainable rural livelihoods.

5 per cent of farms were involved in non-agricultural activity on the farm (Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, 2007). Many multifunctional activities, such as nature and landscape management, have been almost entirely driven by policy support mechanisms (i.e. Rural Environment Protection Scheme[3]). However, others (for example agritourism) have been constrained by the absence or incoherence of policy.

On a policy level, in the absence of a national development strategy in the 1970s and the 1980s, Ireland's development was guided by European policy, particularly the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). The investments made through the CAP supports in the 1970s and 1980s helped to modernise Irish agriculture. In the 1980s and 1990s, following CAP reforms, a shift was experienced towards broader-based rural territorial development. The EU Structural and Cohesion Funds were also very important and contributed to the country's 'tiger economy' since the mid-1990s. Since 2003 the public policy environment for agriculture has changed fundamentally when agricultural direct payments from production were decoupled. The new policy environment has led to changes in both the volume of output and level of inputs used in Irish agriculture. Further changes are anticipated in the agricultural sector following the EU's vision for rural areas, expressed in the Salzburg Declaration (EC, 2003) and Ireland's commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 13 per cent above 1990 levels as stated in the National Climate Change Strategy (DoELG, 2000).

One of the most important policy papers for rural Ireland has been the *White Paper on Rural Development*, which was adopted by the Irish government in 1999 (Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, 1999). The White Paper recognised the following core challenges for Ireland's rural areas:

- The maintenance of a rural population in the light of urbanisation;
- The inability of agriculture alone to maintain rural economies;
- The relative disadvantage in rural areas in terms of employment and job creation;
- The extent of rural poverty and the growing concerns for the natural environment.

Further developments for rural and regional policy came with the NSS, which was adopted by the Irish government in 2002. The NSS sets a 20-year planning framework in order to achieve a better balance of social, economic and physical development. It accepts the diversity that exists in rural Ireland and suggests a rural typology to tailor policy responses to the characteristics of particular areas. Priorities identified in the NSS for rural areas include the need for appropriate community infrastructure; the provision of economic opportunities; and the need to develop further leisure and cultural facilities. More recently, the National Development Plan (2007–2013) (Department of Finance, 2007) proposes an investment of €184 billion over the seven-year period to tackle key infrastructure deficits and to promote sustainable economic and social progress. A central part of the plan is the promotion of 'balanced regional development' under the umbrella of the NSS which aims to impact directly and positively on rural Ireland.

Apart from the outlined changes in the agricultural sector and rural policy initiatives, institutional arrangements that influence rural Ireland evolved significantly as well. For example, in the early 1980s the European Commission's policy measures were administered at national level by the Department of Agriculture. This top-down approach to development significantly changed by the early 1990s with the emergence of local development agencies such as County Enterprise Boards, Local Development Partnerships and the EU LEADER-supported Local Area Development Groups. In addition, structural improvements to the local government administrative system under the Better Local Government (1996) programme strengthened the sector's capacity to represent local communities, to shape local policy and to deliver a wider range of services. Similarly, the government's *White Paper on Supporting Voluntary Activity and the Community and Voluntary Sector* (Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs, 2000) marked an important formal recognition of the role of the sector in participative democracy and strong civil society. The change of institutional arrangements that has been observed

3 The Rural Environment Protection Scheme (REPS) is a scheme designed to reward farmers for carrying out farming activities in an environmentally friendly manner and to bring about environmental improvement on existing farms.

has had a direct impact on the rural economy. Since the 1980s, businesses in rural areas have emerged as a result of support for local entrepreneurs from the LEADER programme and also through grant aid and advisory support from County Enterprise Boards.

Ireland is still characterised by a relatively centralised system of government. However, it has over time created an environment that enables greater participation by its citizens in planning development at the local level. Recent policy actions aim to enhance local government, for example the Programme for Government (2007–2012) and the *Green Paper on Local Government Reform* (DoEHLG, 2008). The increasing opportunities for people's participation in local development processes, coupled with government proposals to give back greater autonomy to local authorities will help to provide local communities with a greater say in how their rural areas are shaped. Future changes in rural Ireland will continue to be directed by public policy and in particular the supports towards multifunctional agriculture and those invested under the National Development Plan (NDP) as part of the NSS. Employment in the agricultural sector is expected to decline; however, as not all jobs in rural areas are linked to agriculture, many of them will be dependent upon the wider economy. In this regard, the future of the rural economy will mirror wider trends in the Irish economy, faced with a declining manufacturing output and falling employment in the construction sector.

3 Rural Settlement Trends and Patterns Part I: Emerging Rural Geographies

Menelaos Gkartzios

Population growth has been a common feature in Ireland ever since the 1960s, as illustrated in Fig. 3.1 below. Significant population increases, particularly after the 1990s, were experienced in counties in close proximity to Dublin. In particular, the Censuses of 1996 and 2002 (Central Statistics Office [CSO], 1996–2002) showed that the most dramatic increases of population took place in the mid-eastern region (Counties Meath [22.1 per cent], Kildare [21.4 per cent] and Westmeath [13.5 per cent]), along the eastern coastline (Counties Louth [10.5 per cent], Wicklow [11.7 per cent] and Wexford [11.7 per cent]) and around other major urban areas in the country (Fig. 3.2). In contrast, despite the general population growth, other areas in the country experienced population decline – depopulation mainly affected western rural parts of the country and in particular Co. Mayo, coastal areas in Counties Galway, Donegal and Kerry, Western Cork and Sligo (Fig. 3.3). Population decline has not only been observed in these less accessible rural areas, but also in urban areas, notably in the metropolitan area of Dublin, as well as in urban wards in the cities of Cork, Waterford and Limerick. The redistribution of population in recent years in the country suggests a residential preference for more rural residential environments in areas accessible by major road links and rail transport. This is indicative of the subsequent sprawl and urban growth of cities towards their rural hinterlands, a trend quite distinctive in the whole country. Ireland is also one of the most low-density countries in the EU, with a population density of 57.3 people per sq km (EC, 1995–2007).

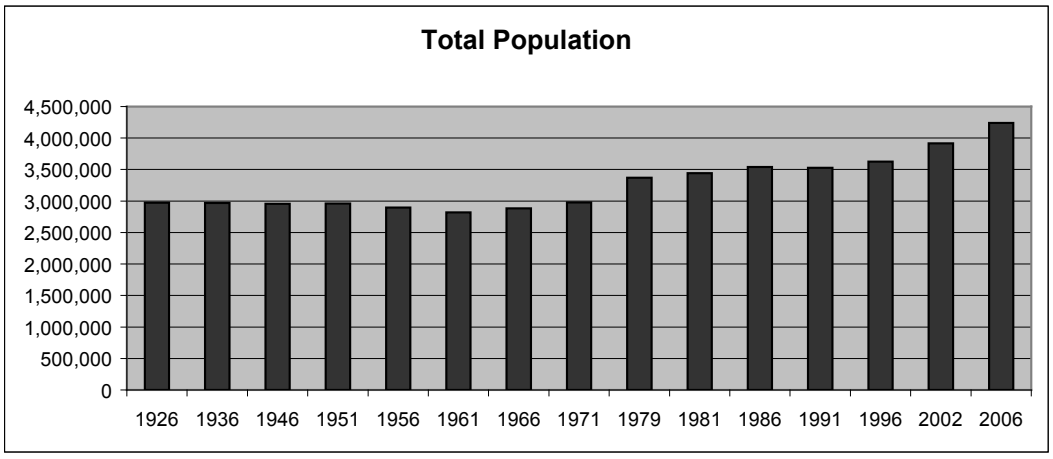

Figure 3.1. Total population in the Republic of Ireland, 1926–2002 (Source: Central Statistics Office, 2006).

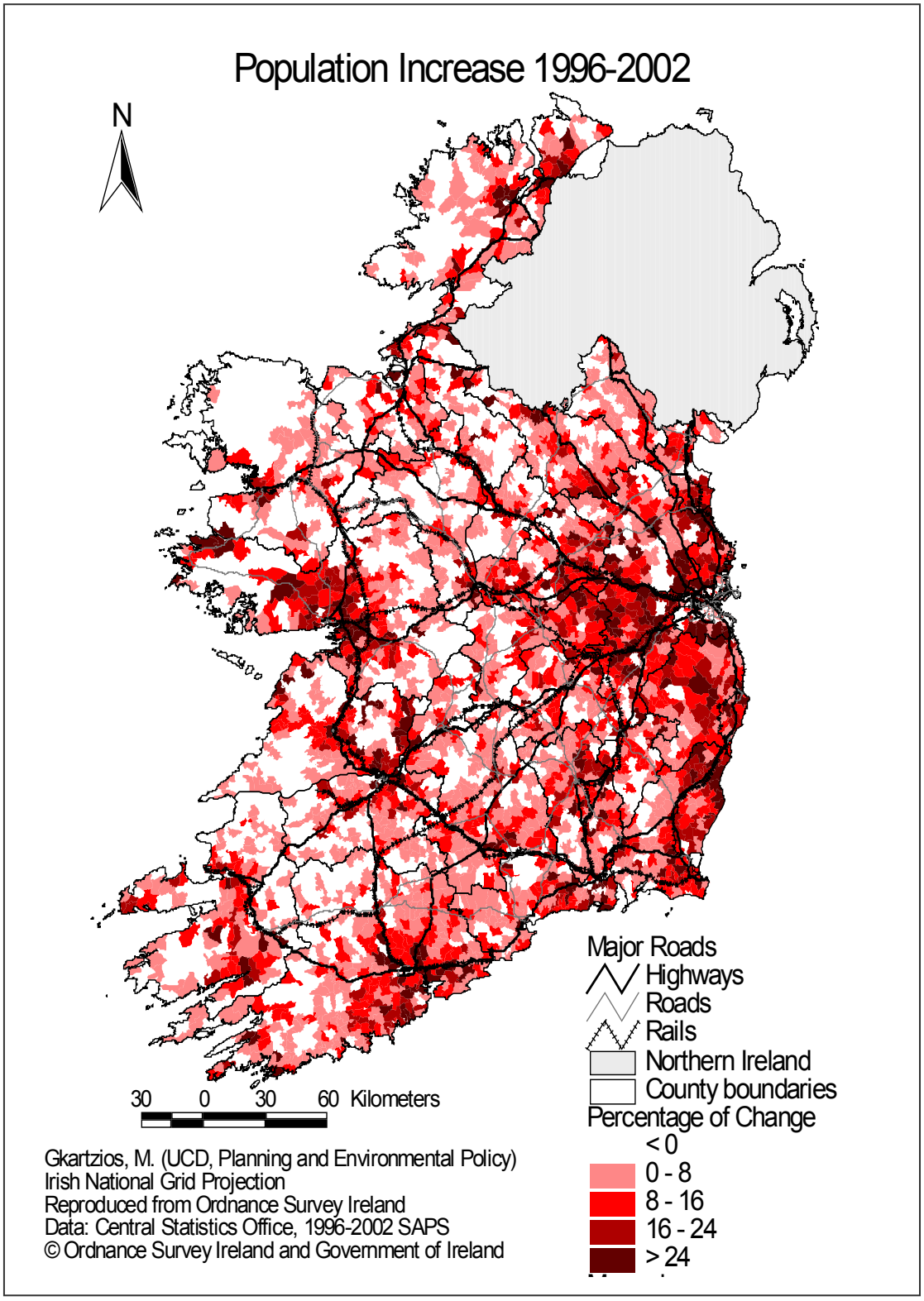

Figure 3.2. Population increase, 1996–2002 (Source: reproduced from Ordnance Survey Ireland. Data: Central Statistic Office, 1996–2002 SAPS).

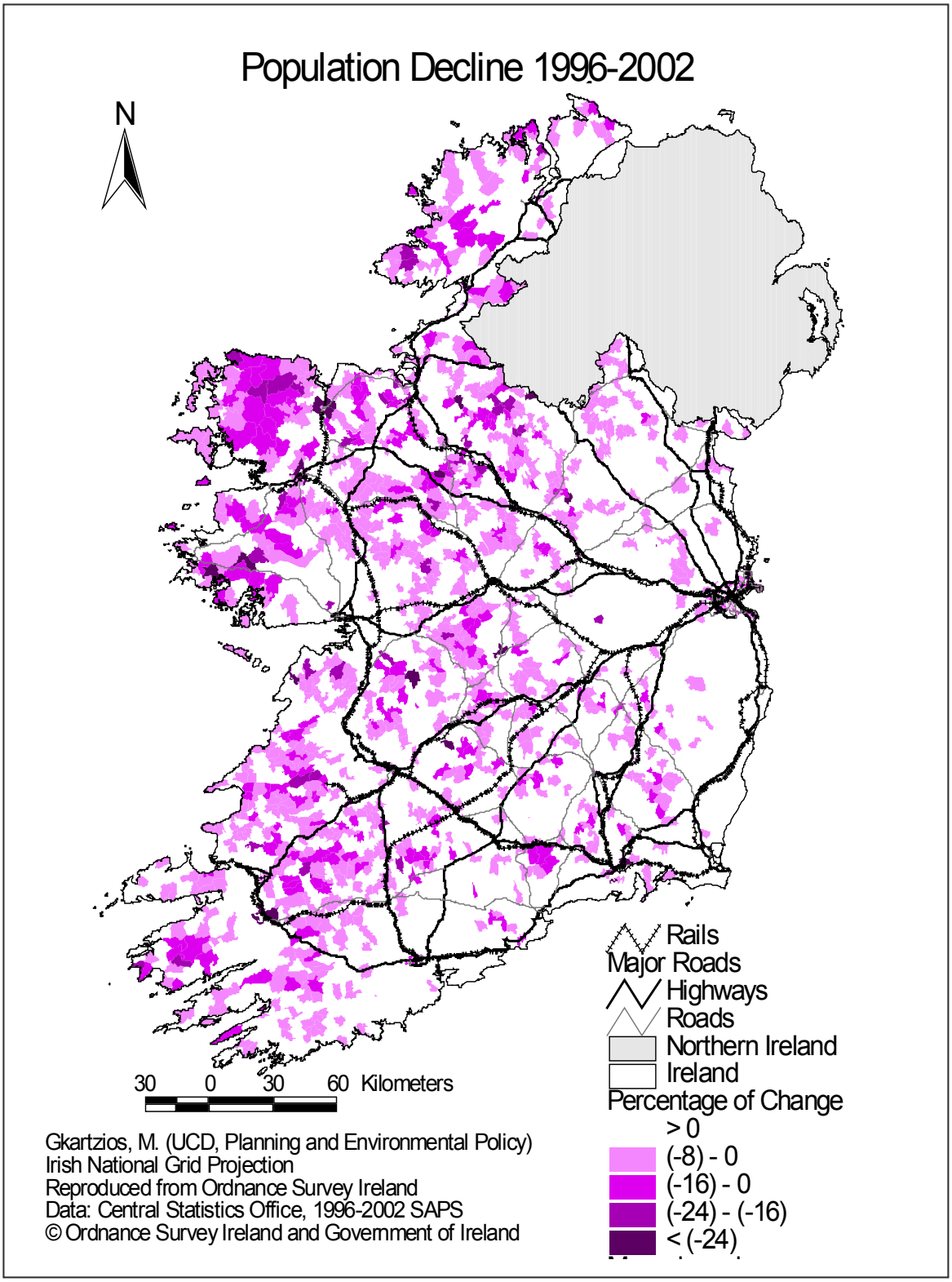

Figure 3.3. Population decline, 1996–2002 (Source: reproduced from Ordnance Survey Ireland. Data: Central Statistic Office, 1996–2002 SAPS).

In relation to housing, impressive house-building activity was recorded after the early 1990s, in line with the economic boom that Ireland experienced during that time. In particular, over the 1994–2004 period, private house completions increased by 183 per cent, adding more than half a million new private houses in the country (DoEHLG, various years). The housing boom is also reflected in the growth of planning applications after the mid-1990s. However, the impressive level of housing construction has masked significant variations in the spatial output of new housing. For example, supply difficulties experienced in Dublin were partially met by an enhanced housing supply response in the hinterland. A high proportion of the building activity during this time in Ireland involved single detached houses and bungalows. In fact, 40 per cent of the dwelling units that were constructed during the 1994–2004 period consisted of single detached houses and bungalows. The persistence in the supply of such types of house explains the low-density settlement structure observed in the country and the predominance of suburban type estates. Data from the CSO on the construction of new dwellings over two different periods (1991–1995 and 1996–2002) indicate widespread housing development and sprawl, particularly along the rail and road routes.

House prices at the same period followed a constant increase and they were substantially higher in Dublin city than the country as a whole. For example, over the 1995–2005 period new house prices rose by 254.2 per cent nationally – in Dublin, they grew by 304.9 per cent (DoEHLG, various years). These increases were even higher in the second-hand housing market. During the same period, second-hand house prices in Dublin city increased by 393.4 per cent, while the average national figure was 344.6 per cent. More recently, the housing market has witnessed a decline in house prices (ESRI, 2009), and at the time of writing there is great uncertainty in relation to the property market due to global financial conditions.

Regarding mobility trends, Ireland has witnessed a substantial increase in car-ownership levels, which has led to an increasing reliance on the private motor vehicle as the preferred means of transport. The majority of people living in the hinterland of cities in Ireland, for example Dublin, Galway, Limerick and Cork, commute to work by driving or as passengers in a car. Long-distance commuting is particularly characteristic in these areas. Additionally, according to Census data, the highest levels of households with two or more cars can be found in the counties within the Greater Dublin Area (Counties Meath, Kildare and Wicklow), exhibiting a high level of car dependence in that region. In summary, despite a national spatial policy framework that favours concentrating development in key centres (DoELG, 2002), based on public data, the emerging geographies of Ireland display the following characteristics:

- Low population densities and a low-density settlement pattern system;
- Population growth in accessible rural areas, along the road and rail transportation routes;
- Population decline in less accessible rural areas (particularly in the west of the country);
- Impressive housing growth during the last decade in both urban and rural areas;
- High proportion of single detached houses and bungalows in the overall house-building construction;
- Increasing house prices, particularly in Dublin city;
- High dependency on private cars;
- Increased spatial separation of home and workplace, as is evident by deconcentrated residential development.

4 Rural Settlement Trends and Patterns Part II: Micro-Level Changes

Karen Foley and Dan Gilbert

Following the general description of demographic and settlement trends in the previous section, Section 4 focuses on the micro-scale to explore physical patterns of change, in terms of location and siting of housing in the countryside. As part of the three case studies that are used throughout this research project, a series of electoral divisions (EDs) were selected for micro-level analysis. The EDs were chosen based on particular landscape attributes – including proximity to water, location within a valley and relationship with settlement morphology. The rationale for choosing these attributes was that there is inherent conflict in areas with landscape designation, reflected in the local authority development plans. Data sources included the Geodirectory[4] and a set of aerial photographs of the selected EDs (the 1974, 1995, 2000 and 2002 Discovery Series). All building structures built in different time series are represented individually to produce a visual representation of the expansion and growth (where observed) over time in the selected rural localities. Overall, nine EDs were selected, three of which (one from each case study) are described briefly in this section: Downing (Kildare), Drumwood (South Tipperary) and Kilmurry (Clare).

Micro-level analysis in the Co. Kildare case study (peri-urban high-growth rural areas) shows significant change in residential development in one of the EDs selected (i.e. Downing). As Fig. 4.1 shows, the 1974 and earlier housing (red) is concentrated on the main street of the town, with some ribbon development along the R403, and the other minor roads in the area with a dispersed settlement pattern. The period 1974 to 1995 (yellow) indicates a shift of the urban settlement to the west of the town, and significant ribbon development along all of the roads, including the R403. These new houses are often located adjacent to the earlier housing, and in some cases it can be seen that semi-clustering of development occurs – for example, on the R403 south of Curryhills and on the spur road west of Emerson's Bridge. The period 1995 to 2000 (green) shows a decrease in ribbon development: the majority of the housing from this period is clustered on the western side of the town. Some small clusters of housing from this period are located away from the town, for example, on the small road running north off the R403 east of Curryhills. The latest phase of housing, from 2000 to 2004 (blue), is primarily located in several clusters associated with the westward expansion of the town. There appears to be some ribbon development along the road running west from The Hatters Cross Roads, but this has effectively become the southern boundary of the town.

The main driver of residential change in Downing has been its location to Dublin in addition to the many employment centres in north Kildare, making it an attractive location for commuters. The town itself, Prosperous, forms a service centre in terms of educational, retail and community facilities. The local plan lists the town centre as an architectural conservation area (Kildare County Council, 2007), explaining why more recent development has been located to the west of the original main street.

Analysis of one of the South Tipperary (agriculturally based and average growth rural areas) EDs, Drumwood (see Fig. 4.2), showed a much more stable situation than that found in Kildare (see Fig. 4.1 below): there has been relatively little housing change since the early 1970s. Indeed, the majority of the dwellings identified in this case study date from before 1974 (red). These are predominantly dispersed as ribbon development along the secondary roads, with some clustering evident in the Ayle bridge area west of the case study. Some of these earlier houses are located on spur roads off the secondary roads, often indicative of traditional farmsteads. The relatively few houses built in this area

4 Geodirectory is a complete database of every building in the Republic of Ireland. Each of the 1.7 million building records contained in Geodirectory includes accurate standardised postal addresses, usage details for each building (commercial or residential) and a unique eight-digit identity number. The addresses used in this study were confined to residential addresses.

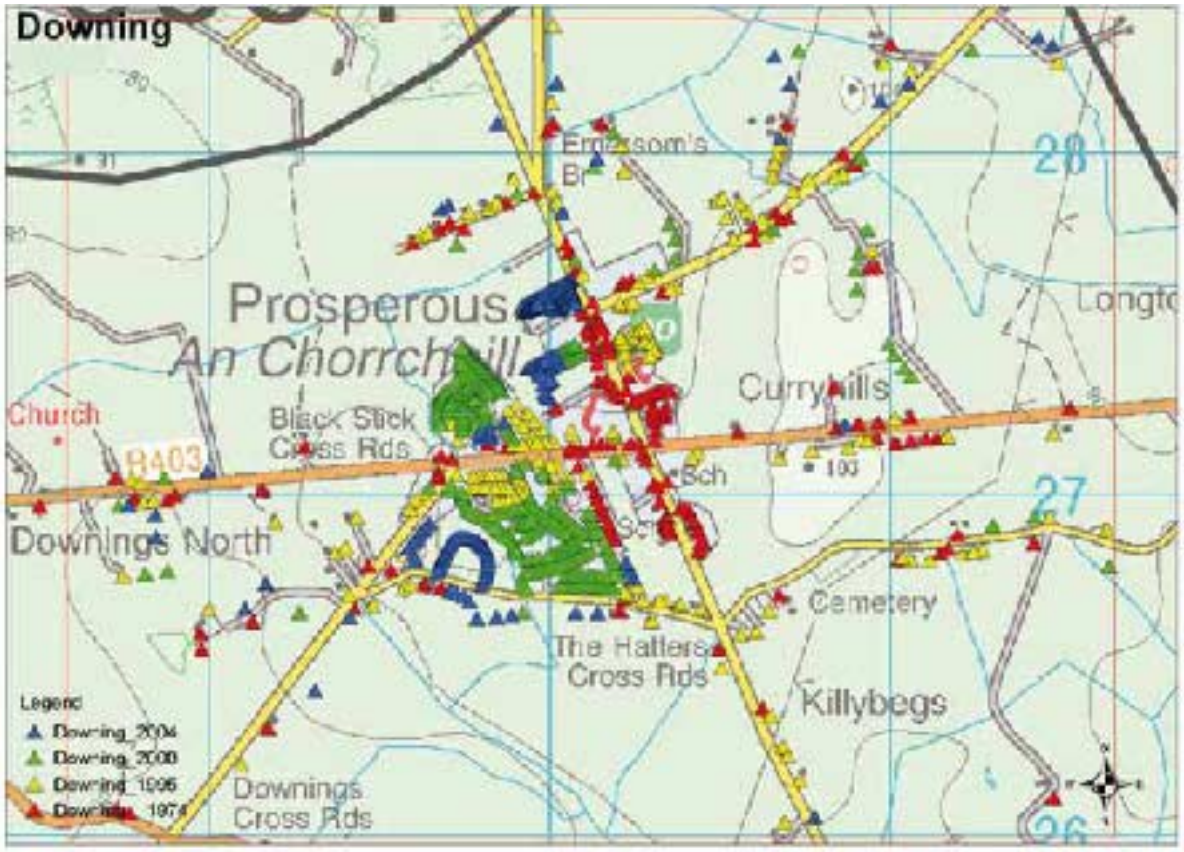

Figure 4.1. Downing (Kildare). Reproduced with permission from Ordnance Survey Ireland, Permit no: 8015.

Figure 4.2. Drumwood (South Tipperary). Reproduced with permission from Ordnance Survey Ireland, Permit no: 8015.

between 1974 and 2002 (yellow and green) continued this dispersed pattern of ribbon development. About 12 new dwellings have been identified in the 2000 to 2004 period (blue). Some of these are grouped together, for example the cluster of five houses located in the south-west of the case-study area near Clonbrick.

Finally, analysis of the settlement history in one of the selected EDs for the Co. Clare case study, Kilmurry. shows little recent change in the village and its surroundings (Fig. 4.3). The settlement history here indicates pre-1974 settlement (red) within the village, and ribbon development along the national route as well as the secondary roads. Sea views would appear to be a driver of settlement even in these early houses, with a prevalence of houses located either close to the coast, for example on the spur road running out towards the promontory fort in the north-west of the site, or on higher ground, for example the housing located on the 30 metre ridge line on the road south out of Quilty. The period 1974 to 1995 shows significant housing development (yellow). There has been a substantial increase around the village of Quilty and a sizeable new (holiday home) development constructed on the coastal side of the spur road to the promontory fort. There is the beginning of a clustered development on

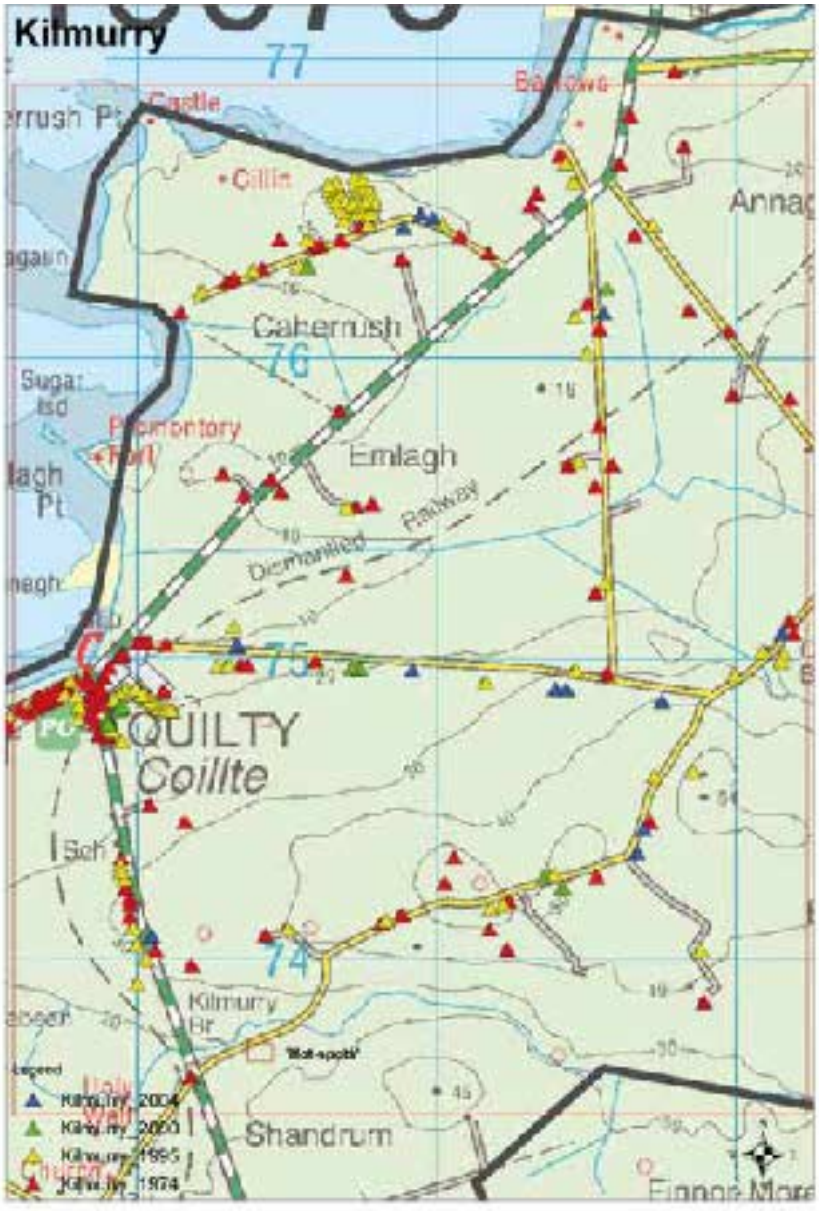

Figure 4.3. Kilmurry (Clare). Reproduced with permission from Ordnance Survey Ireland, Permit no: 8015.

the N67 national route north on Kilmurry bridge and a continuation of ribbon development along many of the secondary roads. The period 1995 to 2000 does not see as many houses being constructed. There is a small number of houses built around the village, with the remainder being constructed as ribbon development on the secondary roads. There are no houses from this period constructed on the national route. The period 2000 to 2004 sees a continuation of this dispersed ribbon development, again on the secondary roads.

In conclusion, analysis of all nine EDs reveals several trends: the significant increase in rural housing, identified in various reports, is not evenly spread across the selected study areas. Several of the case studies demonstrate a stable scenario with little housing change. There is evidence of a dispersed settlement pattern and ribbon development across all the case studies in the pre-1974 housing, with rural housing as an evident feature of the countryside at this time. While this ribbon development persists in subsequent periods, there is a noticeable reduction of development of this type on regional and national routes. It is notable from the case studies how much of the underpinning form of the settlement pattern comprises the pre-1974 housing (red). Even in those case studies experiencing a significant demographic increase (i.e. in Kildare), the more recent development is building on the framework of the earlier settlement, either in cluster form associated with the existing village or town, or augmenting existing ribbon development. The nine case studies give an indication of the complexity of residential settlement and of the interaction between the drivers that influence it. The case studies demonstrate that the policy limiting housing along major routes has had an impact on the location of more recent development, while the aspiration of developing more clustered settlements in the rural landscape is yet to be effective.

5 Residential Mobility and Rural Migration

Menelaos Gkartzios and Mark Scott

Section 5 focuses on rural in-migration and rural housing in the three case studies outlined in Section 1: Kildare, South Tipperary and Clare local authority areas. Rural housing needs concern not only permanent rural residents, but also a number of other rural in-migrants (as can be seen with counter-urbanisation flows or demands for second, holiday homes), and therefore it is important to understand the extent and the drivers of rural residential mobility.

The data for this section come from a household survey conducted in the three case-study areas in 2007. Quota sampling was used (based on age, gender, marital status and social class) to select a representative sample of circa 1,000 households residing in particular rural EDs. Interviews (using closed-ended questions) were conducted during the spring and summer of 2007 to explore issues surrounding residential mobility and preferences, satisfaction with the locality and housing. All respondents were asked to describe the main benefits of rural living. The diverse answers were recoded in two categories: (i) physical features of rural living (i.e. space, clean and fresh air, better environment, no pollution, environmental amenities, etc.) and (ii) social features of rural living (i.e. peaceful living, friendly people, better quality of life, less crime, more privacy, etc.). The distinction made between these two categories was based on Halfacree (1994), who identified and differentiated between key social and key physical features of rural destinations. The data from all rural case studies exhibit the importance of social characteristics regarding rural living. There is significant evidence to suggest that notions of the rural idyll are primarily associated with the physical quality of the rural destination as a primary reason for relocation down the urban hierarchy. These data, however, suggest that the Irish rural idyll is associated much more with the social attributes of rural localities than the natural and physical characteristics of the rural landscape.

The data distinguished between *permanent* residents (i.e. living in the same residence for more than 20 years) and *movers* in all three case studies. As Table 5.1 shows, there are far more movers in the Kildare case study than in Clare and Tipperary. Additionally, there were significantly more *recent movers* in Kildare than in the other two case studies. The data suggest that the Kildare case study has experienced much more intense change than the other rural case studies, due to its proximity to Dublin city. By focusing on respondents who were identified as movers, the data showed (Table 5.2) that rural population change is much more complicated than as presented usually (i.e. unidirectional flows from urban to rural areas). All possible residential movements (both local and long distance from bigger, similar or even smaller size settlements) were recorded in all three cases studies. The majority of movers came from bigger size settlements, particularly in the Kildare and South Tipperary case studies. Significant local rural residential movements were recorded also – particularly in the Clare and South Tipperary case studies, while significant rural-to-rural residential movements (lateral migration) were recorded in the Kildare case study. These findings suggest that counter-urbanisation is a significant component of rural population change in all the case studies (particularly in the peri-urban case study), but, obviously, not the only one. Apart from counter-urbanisation, significant local residential movements were recorded in both the remote and the agriculturally based rural area, as well as lateral migration (especially in the peri-urban case study), and even movements from more rural residential environments (upwards the urban hierarchy).

Table 5.1. Movers and permanent residents.

	Case study			
	Kildare	**Clare**	**S. Tipperary**	**Total**
Recent movers	149	119	85	353
	47.6%	30.6%	25.9%	34.2%
Not recent movers	104	115	92	311
	33.2%	29.6%	28.0%	30.2%
Permanent residents	60	155	151	366
	19.2%	39.8%	46.0%	35.5%
Total	313	389	328	1,030
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 5.2. Location of previous residence.

	Case study			
Previous residence in …	**Kildare**	**Clare**	**S. Tipperary**	**Total**
… the same area where I am currently living – local movements	39	64	53	156
	18.7%	34.0%	37.6%	29.0%
… in a bigger size settlement (more urban) – counter-urbanisation	119	86	66	271
	56.9%	45.7%	46.8%	50.4%
… in a similar size settlement (rural) – lateral migration	28	12	8	48
	13.4%	6.4%	5.7%	8.9%
… in a smaller size settlement (more rural)	23	26	14	63
	11.0%	13.8%	9.9%	11.7%
Total	209	188	141	538
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

In an effort to explain this residential mobility, residents who were not permanent residents were asked to describe the main reason for moving to their current residence. For a better understanding of the answers that were given, the data were aggregated in the following categories, reflecting the primary motive that was stated in each answer:

- *Economic needs* – emphasis on economic reasons;
- *Social and physical characteristics* – emphasis on 'social' and 'physical' features of the rural area;
- *Location* – emphasis on the location of the area/house;
- *Housing characteristics* – emphasis on characteristics of the property/house;
- *Build/get/buy my own home* – emphasis on the need to own, or to build their own home;
- *Change in household composition* – emphasis on personal events (i.e. marriage).

The data (Table 5.3) suggest that the social and physical characteristics of the rural destination were the primary reason for relocating to the current residence, particularly in the Kildare and Clare case-study areas. This value is significantly higher in the Clare study area, probably because of the more scenic characteristics of the area. The second most popular reason for moving referred to the characteristics of the property (i.e. bigger house, land, etc.), which was the most frequent answer to account for the residential relocation in the Tipperary case-study area. Economic factors (i.e. the rural destination as a cheaper area to live) were the third most cited reason for moving to the current residence. These motivations were significantly higher in the Kildare case study, reflecting 'push' factors from Dublin city. Additionally, it should be mentioned that the need to build, get or buy one's own home, was cited significantly more frequently in the Kildare case-study area.

Table 5.3. Reasons for moving to current residence (only movers).

	Case study			
Motivation	**Kildare**	**Clare**	**S. Tipperary**	**Total**
Economic needs	42	22	15	79
	18.3%	11.7%	10.3%	14.1%
Social and physical characteristics	67	70	34	171
	29.3%	37.2%	23.4%	30.4%
Location – accessibility	11	13	16	40
	4.8%	6.9%	11.0%	7.1%
Housing characteristics	57	51	42	150
	24.9%	27.1%	29.0%	26.5%
Build/get/buy my own home	29	4	6	39
	12.7%	2.1%	4.1%	6.9%
Change in household composition	9	13	16	38
	3.9%	6.9%	11.0%	6.8%
Other reasons	14	15	16	45
	6.1	8.0%	11.0%	8.0%
Total	229	188	145	562
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Exceptionally high levels of residential satisfaction were observed among all residents (permanent and movers) in all three case-study areas. These referred to both the area of residence and the actual house in which residents lived. These results also confirm a very positive association regarding rural living in the Republic of Ireland and the existence of an Irish rural idyll.

The overall findings are very important for planning policy. First, rural housing policy in Ireland is regulated through a distinction between urban-generated and rural-generated housing, which on the local level comprises a distinction between local-generated and non-local-generated housing. However, the data showed much more complicated patterns of rural residential change, rather than just 'local' and 'non-local' movements. Local movements, counter-urbanisation movements, movements from similar or even smaller (i.e. more rural) size settlements were all recorded in all three different rural case studies. Second, given the very positive images surrounding rural lifestyle in Ireland, it remains to be seen how such images can be utilised in policy discourses in order to manage population growth and settlement change in rural areas. As the 'rural' is primarily associated with community aspects, including friendliness, safety and a better place to raise children, rather than physical features of the rural landscape, the challenge for the Irish planning system, if it aims to control rural in-migration and consequently house building in rural areas, is to consolidate such features into urban environments also.

6 Quality of Life in Rural Ireland

Finbarr Brereton and Peter Clinch

Macro-measures of national income (gross national product and gross domestic product) can be regarded as inadequate for assessing the performance of an economy and wider society (e.g. UN, 1954; Erikson, 1993). As an alternative, determinants of subjective well-being and happiness have been examined while recent studies have added weight to the claim that happiness scores are useful in the analysis of welfare (Kahneman, 1999; Ferrer-i-Carbonell and Frijters, 2004). In that theoretical context, the objective of Section 6 is to assess and compare quality of life in rural Ireland between 2001 and 2007. As rural Ireland has witnessed many changes over the course of the Celtic Tiger, it is not yet clear how these changes have affected quality of life in rural areas. This section fills this gap in the literature by examining the determinants of life satisfaction in rural Ireland and examining attitudes to rural living.

The data are derived from two household surveys (2001 and 2007) which addressed a number of issues related to quality of life in Ireland. A proportionate random sampling procedure was used in both surveys, using probability proportionate to size (PPS). A total of 812 interviews was obtained in the 2007 survey and 565 individuals living in rural areas were surveyed in 2001. Responses from the two surveys were firstly compared regarding subjective opinions and attitudes that reflect the changes that have occurred in rural Ireland. Following this, regression analysis was employed to examine the determinants of life satisfaction and shed light on any changes in the factors influencing quality of life between the two surveys.

Respondents were asked their opinions on a series of topics (see Table 6.1). As the table shows, what individuals perceive to be the main benefits and limitations of rural life has changed very little over the six-year period. Environmental issues are seen as the main benefit of rural life, while lack of facilities and services are seen as the limitations. In 2001, the cost of housing, lack of access to public transport and drug-related problems were seen as the main problems in rural areas. In 2007, access to health-care services and lack of access to public transport had emerged as the most problematic issues. Between 2001 and 2007, there was a large increase in the percentage who perceived access to health-care to be a major problem. This finding may be due in part to high-profile media attention on problems in the health service since 2002. Large increases in the percentage of respondents saying ‘major problem’ are also seen in relation to access to shops and public transport. The opposite is witnessed in relation to the cost of housing and access to childcare.

The data revealed generally high life satisfaction in rural Ireland, but also differences on the level of social capital, suggesting that as rural communities have expanded due to in-migration, the traditional sense of community is breaking down. Additionally, the data suggest that rural Ireland remains a stronghold of the Catholic Church, as almost 65 per cent of rural respondents attended religious services once a week or more in both 2001 and 2007.

The satisfaction with life indicator is based on the answers to the question: ‘Thinking about the good and bad things in your life, which of these answers best describes your life as a whole?’ Respondents could choose a category on a scale of 1 to 7 (‘As bad as can be’; ‘very bad’; ‘bad’; ‘alright’; ‘good’; ‘very good’; ‘as good as can be’). An initial, ‘standard’ regression of life satisfaction on socio-economic and socio-demographic variables (age, gender, employment status, educational attainment, health, marital status and income) for 2001 and 2007 is estimated and compared. The results indicate no significant relationship between life satisfaction and variables such as gender and age. Insignificant differences were also found between those who were disabled, unable to work, engaged in household activities and self-employed regarding life satisfaction. However, those with lower secondary or upper secondary and third-level education are more satisfied with life than those with a primary-level education. Respondents who visit their doctor frequently are found to be less satisfied with their lives than those not attending or attending only once a year.

Table 6.1. Perceptions of issues affecting rural areas (%).

	Year	Major* problem	Minor problem	Not a problem	Don't know
Access to health services (e.g. GP or hospital)	2007	35	17.5	42.5	5
	2001	13	27.5	57	3.5
Access to food shops/supermarkets	2007	19.5	17	56.5	7
	2001	5	20	75	1.5
Access to local schools, colleges and adult education	2007	12	15	60	13
	2001	6	19.5	70	4.5
Access to public transport	2007	46.5	13.5	31.5	8.5
	2001	22	29.5	46.5	2
Access to social and leisure facilities for people like yourself	2007	31.5	15.5	42	11
	2001	–	–	–	–
Access to facilities for young children up to the age of 12	2007	21.5	13	42.5	23
	2001	–	–	–	–
Access to childcare facilities	2007	18	13	40.5	28.5
	2001	25	26	25	24
Access to facilities for teenagers (aged 13 to 17)	2007	28	11	39	22
	2001	–	–	–	–
Suitability of the area for bringing up children	2007	6	9	71	14
	2001	–	–	–	–
Overcrowding in the area	2007	10	9.5	70.5	10
	2001	–	–	–	–
Cost of housing	2007	36.5	12.5	38	13
	2001	77	14	7	2
Level of noise	2007	8	9	73	10
	2001	–	–	–	–
Amount of litter	2007	11	11	69	9
	2001	–	–	–	–
Level of pollution	2007	10	10.5	68	11
	2001	–	–	–	–
Employment opportunities	2007	32.5	14.5	41	12.5
	2001	–	–	–	–
Rural isolation	2007	20	14	55	11
	2001	7	17	62.5	13

* Blank cells indicate that the question was not asked in that year.

Being separated or divorced emerges as significant and such respondents are less likely to be satisfied with their lives than single respondents. Surprisingly, income is significantly related to life satisfaction only in 2007, but its coefficient is low.

The regression was then extended to examine the influence of individual and location characteristics on subjective well-being (number of dependent children in the household, type of household tenure and civic engagement) and those individual characteristics not typically employed in life satisfaction regressions (religious beliefs and practices). The data revealed that increased religious attendance increases well-being. Examining the proxies for social capital[5] (the level of volunteerism that the respondent was engaged in in 2007 and commitment to the area in 2001), only the latter emerges as significant. In terms of family composition, conflicting results were found. In 2001, the presence of three or more children emerged as negative and significant (i.e. having children was associated with less contentment). However, in 2007, having two children was positively related to life satisfaction. Household tenure emerged as insignificant in the regression in both years.

Finally, in an additional regression carried out only for 2007, location variables were included. The location variables were divided into four categories consisting of open countryside (one-off house), open countryside (cluster of 10 houses or less), village and small town. Results show that respondents living in the open countryside (one-off houses) were more satisfied with their lives than those living in villages or small towns. The interpretation of this result may be that individuals living in one-off housing enjoy the peace and quiet of more remote rural areas and that this compensates for a lack of services. This line of reasoning is backed up to some degree by a positive and significant coefficient on the composite access to facilities and services variable. That is, respondents reporting problems with access to health-care, shops, transport or educational facilities are more satisfied with life. No statistical difference was found between those in one-off houses and those in housing clusters in the open countryside. These quality of life findings also present a challenge to viewing rural housing sustainability in terms of concentrating further development within villages and towns.

5 Social capital has been used by authors such as Putnam (2000) to describe social networks that provide bonds within a community.

7 Residential Preferences: Insights from 'Choice Experiments'

Craig Bullock

The objective of Section 7 is to complement the previous analysis on rural residential mobility with a quantitative assessment of rural housing preferences. In particular, the pros and cons of residential choices are examined. The data come from a choice experiment exercise, in which survey respondents were presented with two of more alternative bundles of attributes – in this case, housing characteristics. Nine attributes were selected with three respective levels as listed below:

1 *Exterior design* (standard; you can vary the appearance; architect designed);

2 *Interior design* (standard; you can vary the appearance; architect designed);

3 *Garden* (less than 1 tennis court size; 1–2 tennis courts; bigger than 2 tennis courts);

4 *Garage/Workshop* (none; attached to the house; separate building);

5 *View* (neighbouring gardens; view of fields and countryside; hilltop view);

6 *Distance to work* (30 minutes drive; 20 minutes; less than 10 minutes);

7 *Distance to school* (15 minutes drive; 5 minutes drive; walking distance);

8 *Distance to amenities*, i.e. shops, post office, surgeries and pubs (20 minutes drive; 10 minutes drive; walking distance);

9 *Price* (at the lower limit you stated; at your most affordable level; at the hither limit that you stated).

As part of a household survey in rural localities, which comprised both a general rural probability sample as well as a quota sample in three case-study locations, each respondent was presented with six choice sets, an example of which is given in Box 7.1. After each choice set, the respondent was asked two questions: (i) identify their preferred alternative and (ii) whether they would prefer to purchase either alternative compared with their current property.

The various approaches to the analysis of the choice experiment data provide different perspectives on the influence of different attributes on the probability of housing choice. For the first part of the analysis, a multinomial logit model (MNL) was run to analyse preferences for housing attribute levels comprising two hypothetical generic alternatives, A and B. The model utilises a maximum likelihood estimation to supply the probability that a respondent will choose one attribute over another (or one set of attributes over another).

Box 7.1. Example choice set.

Choice 1

Property A	**Property B**
Exterior: Standard	Exterior: You can vary the appearance
Interior: You can vary the layout	Interior: You choose from a standard layout
Garden: 1–2 tennis courts	Garden: 1 tennis court
Garage/Workshop: Attached to house	Garage/Workshop: Separate building
View: Neighbouring gardens	View: Hilltop view
Distance to work: 30 minutes drive	Distance to work: Less than 10 minutes
School: Walking distance	School: 15 minutes drive
Shops/Amenities: Walking distance	Shops/Amenities: 20 minutes drive
Price: At the lower level you stated	Price: At the upper limit you stated
Other features same as your current home	Other features same as your current home

The MNL approach indicates that the 'hilltop view' and 'higher-level interior design' attributes exerted a relatively high influence on the probability of choice. The same was true for the closer distance attributes, with evidence of a corresponding rapid fallout in preference for housing alternatives that are distant from amenities. Two of these distance attributes are of most relevance to particular subsets of the sample – respondents with children of school age and those who need to drive to work. Once an analysis of interactions was undertaken, the influence of these attributes became more prominent, although to some extent this influence could be diluted by the availability of school buses (for which no data for analysis was publicly available) and by varying attitudes towards the disutility of car travel (e.g. for work) in rural areas. A perception of disutility does seem to be associated with longer journeys to shops and other amenities, perhaps particularly for older people. The highest preference for all these distance attributes was demonstrated for journeys of walking distance. While, in practice, it appears that few people do walk to such facilities, the short distance also corresponds to short vehicle journey times.

A mixed logit analysis[6] provided further evidence of the importance of distance attributes, particularly for that subset of respondents who were considering moving in the next five years (an important subset for planning policy and developers and estate agents). In other respects, there does appear to be an influence for attributes that together could constitute what could be considered a 'desirable property'. A significant interaction appears to exist between exterior design and larger garden size, while a role for elevated views is expressed particularly by people already living in one-off rural properties.

The second main part of the analysis constituted the choice between hypothetical alternatives and the respondent's existing property. Here, there was an unfortunate attachment to the status quo despite the efforts made to encourage respondents to make a valid trade-off between the represented housing attributes. Nevertheless, the preferences revealed by respondents who were prepared to consider this trade-off could be argued to provide a firm indication of which attributes exert the most influence. In this respect, distance attributes again emerged as an important influence as did *hilltop view*, but also now a larger *garden size*. A mixed logit analysis of this data indicated varying preferences in relation to separate garages/workshops, which may again be associated with property type, but also more evidence of the importance of distance attributes to that subset of the population considering a future move. Life cycle (age, marriage, children, retirement) and gender factors also appear to be the cause of a modest level of variation in preferences.

Taken together, the choice experiment data provided an indication of the private benefits that people associate with rural housing and their willingness to consider alternatives such as living in the open countryside or in villages. In this respect, the analysis seemed to indicate a dichotomy between preferences for the rural idyll and the convenience of living close to amenities. Future analysis could identify more closely whether these divergent preferences apply to different subsets or must be weighed up and dealt with by the same individuals. It did appear that people considering a move are influenced by rational considerations such as journey times, but may subsequently be diverted by the attractions of house design or countryside views. This did suggest an opportunity to influence actual housing choices through considerations of estate and house design in towns or villages. Since the 1990s, however, housing developments in villages and small towns have often been uninspiring, comprising standard suburban-style housing estates, which fail to provide the attributes that many consumers desire. With more imaginative and sensitive approaches to village and small-town planning, there does appear to be the potential to accommodate some of the demand for rural housing. In this regard, the recent DoEHLG *Planning Guidelines for Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas* (DoEHLG, 2009a) and *Complementary Urban Design Manual* (DoEHLG, 2009b), and the ongoing work of the Heritage Council in promoting village design statements (VDS) as a participatory tool to manage the built environment provide valuable frameworks for improving housing and environmental quality.

6 A more sophisticated means to examine heterogeneity in preferences is that of T = Random Parameters Logit, commonly referred to as 'mixed logit'.

8 Second and Vacant Homes in High Amenity Rural Areas

Michelle Norris and Nessa Winston

Section 8 focuses on second and vacant homes in rural Ireland. Since the mid-1990s, there has been a very marked growth in the number of second homes, which is concentrated in certain rural and coastal regions and consists mainly of newly constructed dwellings. In addition, there has been a significant increase in the number of long-term vacant dwellings in these regions, particularly since 2000. It could be argued that these developments are linked to economic and population growth, the 'laissez-faire' nature of land-use planning in rural Ireland, the particularly high rate of housing output in Ireland since the mid-1990s, the generous fiscal treatment of housing, and tax incentives to encourage house building in economically marginal areas.

The analysis in Section 8 is based on Census data on holiday and vacant dwellings[7] and case-study research on three high amenity rural localities with relatively high concentrations of second homes. The Census figures refer to data from 1991 to 2006 on empty dwellings for which a Census form could not be completed. These were categorised as: 'permanently or usually vacant'; 'holiday homes' or 'temporarily vacant'. The data reveal that the proportion of 'holiday homes' in Ireland grew from 1 to 3 per cent between 1991 and 2006 and in the latter year the vast majority (91 per cent) of these dwellings were in the largely rural and peripheral border, mid-west, south-east, south-west and west regions. The data also show that 72 per cent of all vacant dwellings in these regions are located in rural EDs, 58 per cent in coastal EDs and 38 per cent in EDs which fall into both categories. This distribution indicates that second homes account for a significant proportion of vacant dwellings, which is in line with international norms whereby second homes are generally concentrated in rural and coastal regions of high landscape amenity value (Coppock, 1977; Gallent et al., 2005). Although tax incentives schemes, such as the Rural Renewal (RRS) and Seaside Resort Schemes (SRS)[8], can be seen as drivers of this trend, the high number of vacant and second dwellings in rural areas not eligible for these schemes indicates that schemes of this type were not the only driver of these holiday home developments.

The three districts selected for case-study research examined in this section are Courtown in Co. Wexford, Drumshambo in Co. Leitrim and Schull in Co. Cork[9]. These areas were chosen because they share a feature in that they all contain relatively high proportions of holiday homes. At the same time, they are diverse in a number of important respects. The case-study research entailed an analysis of Census small-area population statistics; a review of existing research evidence on second homes; official documents such as land-use plans and 10 in-depth interviews with key actors in each area (30 in total). Respondents included local authority land-use planners, environmental engineers and councillors, estate and property letting agents, local business people, teachers, community activists, members of the clergy and police.

The case studies reveal that second homes have had some social and economic benefits in all three locations examined. However, one result of the prominence of newly constructed dwellings in the Irish second home stock (in contrast to the experience of many other countries) is that their environmental consequences have been almost universally negative. While respondents in Schull did point to some social and economic problems associated with second and vacant homes, they proffered the most positive assessment of the houses' impact in comparison to respondents

7 This draws on the only available source of information – the data returned by Census enumerators on empty dwellings.

8 The SRS provided tax incentives for the building of holiday homes which must be available for short-term letting during the summer months. The RRS tax relief is available only for dwellings intended for permanent occupation by owners or renters, so second homes are ineligible for support (Revenue Commission, 2008).

9 These case-study areas are different from the three primary case studies used in this report. This has been to enable this section to focus on high amenity rural areas and to examine areas which contain a high proportion of holiday homes.

from other case-study areas. This may be because Cork has the lowest proportion of second and vacant home development of the three sites, and was also the only one not subject to area-specific tax incentives for house building. Respondents in Courtown were less positive about social impacts, which suffered from the over-development of both principal and secondary residences. In Drumshambo too, the social and economic benefits were questioned by respondents; again, an excess in housing output has resulted in a glut of long-term vacant dwellings and short-term economic benefits, largely perceived to be confined to construction employment.

The output of vacant and second homes in Courtown and Drumshambo was driven mainly by area-based tax incentives and the analysis casts severe doubt on the value of this type of rural development initiative and suggests that it has brought housing oversupply rather than economic or population growth. In Drumshambo, locals were well aware of these limitations prior to the introduction of the RRS. Although commercial development incentives were introduced as part of the RRS, they were modest in scale and their introduction was delayed as a result of concerns from the European Commission that they were potentially anti-competitive. The case of Courtown demonstrates that even if business development incentives are available, if they are in competition with housing-development incentives, investment is overwhelmingly attracted to the latter – a more uncomplicated prospect for small investors with the prospect of higher returns during the recent housing boom (Norris and Winston, 2009). This finding in turn raises questions about the thrust of rural development policy in Ireland more generally, because expenditure on these housing-related reliefs dwarfs that of other comparable initiatives (i.e. LEADER).

This research also cast some light on the national and regional consequences of the rising number of second and vacant dwellings in the Irish countryside. These issues are largely ignored in second homes research, much of which is based on case studies and assumes that their regional and national consequences are positive if the local impacts are beneficial. The Irish case highlights the limitations of this assumption. Although the growth in second and vacant dwellings had mixed impacts in the case-study areas, their development had largely negative economic consequences in those regions where these dwellings are concentrated. Building second and vacant dwellings in rural areas diverted construction away from population growth centres where housing needs were most pressing and this had negative implications for the efficient functioning of those regions.

9 Rural Housing and Landscape Preferences

Karen Foley

This section examines attitudes towards changes in the Irish rural landscape in the context of new residential settlements. It analyses specifically the perceptions held by different stakeholders and examines common areas of agreement regarding the appearance of rural housing and identifies a potential variance in preference. In order to test different group attitudes towards alternative rural housing scenarios, the methodology underpinning this section embraces a multidimensional-strategy approach. The study was based around a series of structured focus groups, combined with individual and group responses to digitally manipulated photographs examining the variables of housing 'number' and housing 'shape/form' (see for example Fig. 9.1). Five different focus groups were used, consisting of participants from specific population subgroups (Table 9.1). The focus groups took place between November 2007 and May 2008 and they were organised around the following five key questions:

1 What changes have you noticed in the appearance of the Irish countryside in the last 10–15 years?

2 What is it particularly about new housing in rural areas that you respond strongly to?

3 Look at the range of scenarios in greater detail and record your feelings about the images.

4 What other changes have you noticed in the countryside around where you live?

5 Of all the things happening in the area around where you live, which one is the most important to you?

Figure 9.1. Focus group exercise looking at increasing housing density.

Table 9.1. Description of focus groups.

No.	Name of focus group	Description of focus group	Identification of professional and lay focus groups
1	Professional	Those with a professional involvement in decision-making in the rural sector. Groups represented: IFA, ILI, IPI, IRDA, RIAI and senior planning officers from local authorities*	Professional
2	Urban	Urban population	Lay focus group
3	Rural 1	Rural area with urban influence and experiencing significant population increase (selected from electoral districts in Co. Kildare)	
4	Rural 2	Rural area (strong agriculture) experiencing national average in population growth (selected from electoral districts in Tipperary South)	
5	Rural 3	Rural area experiencing depopulation (selected from electoral districts in Co. Clare)	

* Representatives from the Irish Planning Institute (IPI), the Irish Rural Dwellers (IRD), the Royal Institute of Architects of Ireland (RIAI), the Irish Farmers Association (IFA), the Irish Landscape Institute (ILI) and senior local authority planning officers.

All focus groups raised the issue of new rural housing as an aspect of the changing countryside. Nevertheless, these concerns were most acute in the Kildare focus group. This group articulated the idea of reduced landscape quality associated with new housing. While new rural housing as a sign of landscape change was raised in the Tipperary focus group, it was mentioned in the context that the new housing stock was an improvement on what had been there before. These differences in attitude illustrate the notion of a 'differentiated' countryside as conceived initially by Marsden et al. (1993), suggesting that, following the decline of the importance of agriculture, the countryside is now subject to a range of social, political and regulatory influences which contribute to a differentiation of spatial areas within rural areas.

Landscape as a social space and setting for community life emerged as a key theme in all the rural focus groups. While new housing was often regarded as a sign of sustainable communities, this interpretation was nuanced between the different rural focus groups, based on their local context. In the focus group in Co. Clare, an area that has experienced a decline in population while at the same time having a high percentage of second homes, it was suggested that new residential development does not automatically mean a vibrant community as second homes can lie vacant for considerable periods of time. The relationship between newcomers and long-term residents was also expressed differently in the three rural focus groups. For example, the focus group in Clare felt strongly about the newcomers' lack of involvement in community affairs, while the Kildare group used the term 'commuters' to define the new dwellers, identifying them as separate from the indigenous community.

Participants in the Kildare focus group felt that planning permission for a new house seemed to be easier to obtain today than in the past. The opposite opinion was expressed in the Tipperary and Clare focus groups, where respondents considered it much more difficult today to get planning permission than formerly. Within the focus groups, it was the farmers who were most vocal on the issue of the difficulty of getting planning permission for family members. This formed part of a perceived rural–urban divide that encompassed both a frustration on behalf of rural dwellers that they were individuals having to fight the 'planning system' but also that urban-based elements including the media were causing them difficulty in managing their own affairs.

A proactively landscape conservation attitude towards new houses in the landscape was expressed in the urban focus group, with some participants expressing a 'tourist' viewpoint – that the countryside is for their visual consumption. Nearly all the mediated rural images presented to city dwellers contained some merit, confirming previous research findings that even

relatively mundane 'natural' scenes would be preferred to the majority of predominantly man-made scenes (Kaplan, 1988; Lowenthal, 1997).

Participants in all five focus groups expressed considerable variation in individual preference towards aspects of rural housing. The overall pattern of preference of the responses for the focus group participants was as expected in line with the international literature (e.g. Bunce, 1994), i.e. that preference would decrease as density increases. While some differences in preference between professional and lay participants emerged in the focus group exercise looking at house style, more profound differences in stakeholder attitude centred on the issue of space around individual houses. From the housing density exercise, it appeared that an expectation of relative spatial isolation is a strong driver of the desire to live in a one-off rural house.

Proposed solutions for rural housing, regarding the clustered/dispersed duality, offered by members of the professional focus group, included clustering large houses in villages to encourage people to select to live there and promoting more private housing in rural villages and towns. Some proposals centred on housing design and acknowledged the contemporary expectation for larger rural houses than those constructed in the past. Best-case practice was discussed such as splitting up the building mass of a new house into smaller subunits, so that the total desired house area is achieved, but externally the building resembles a traditional farm cluster. The focus groups in this study indicate that the rural ideal is to live in the *open countryside* rather than a village or country town. Within the professional focus group there was consensus that there is a poor quality of life being offered in small towns and villages at present. This was because of poor quality housing stock and also a preponderance of social housing in small towns and villages.

From the review of the participants in these focus groups, it is apparent that the visual impact of new rural housing is significant. It is equally evident that the appearance of new housing in rural areas engenders a wide range of responses from different groups within the sample population. Analysis of the focus group transcripts reveals that attitudes to landscape change associated with new rural housing is varied, that is, there appears no universal principle or pattern of preference for rural housing density or style. Bourassa's (1991) research on aesthetic responses to landscape identified certain preferences that are transcultural, applying to most people (e.g. preference for views containing water), and other types of preference that are culturally determined, that is, apply to specific groups of people who share certain attributes or experiences. The differences in attitudes expressed in this study would appear to indicate that attitudes to rural housing is culturally determined and one of the most influential factors is the local context, that is, in those locations where there were significant levels of development and change, new rural housing is regarded more negatively than in more stable areas experiencing less change.

10 Single Rural Housing, Sustainability and Planning and Building Control

Geraldine O'Daly and Vivienne Brophy

Section 10 explores the relationship between the sustainability policies in local authority development plans and the manifestation of these policies in the design and construction of single rural houses. Similar to other sections in this report, the following three case-study local authorities were selected: Co. Kildare, Co. Clare and South Tipperary. The analysis involved: documentary research (i.e. a review of policies on sustainable design for rural housing in the case-study local development plans and an examination of planning applications for single rural houses); and an analysis of a questionnaire survey of forward planners, development control planners and building control officers.

All examined development plans stated a commitment to sustainable development and presented an awareness of the importance of green design[10] in the siting, orientation, form, mass and material choices of the buildings. The design guidelines, which are appendices to the development plans, indicate a preference for small traditional style single-storey cottages, blending into the landscape. The guidelines also indicate a preference for small 'cottage' style windows. The design guidelines of Co. Clare and South Tipperary state that good contemporary architecture could be considered. Tables 10.1 and 10.2 show the number of planning permissions granted in 2005 for single rural houses, both countrywide and in the three counties in the study.

Seventy-seven planning permissions for single houses in the countryside across the three case studies were examined on the basis of a list of criteria, including shelter, sun exploitation, scale, material finishes, boundaries, renewable energy, construction and architect or designer. Probability sampling was used to select a representative sample of the total population of planning grants of each local authority. Hence, 26 files were examined for Co. Kildare, 31 for Co. Clare and 20 for South Tipperary. The analysis showed that generally little cognisance is taken by the applicants for planning permission of the ambitions for sustainable development set out in the development plans. For example, despite orientation being one of the key areas which should apply to all new designs, only 10 per cent of applicants

10 Design that mitigates the environmental impact of development.

Table 10.1. Summary of planning permissions granted for new houses countrywide in 2005.

Year	Total number of units	Average floor area	Number of single rural houses	Average floor area
2005	75,650	149.1 sq m	20,868	213.6 sq m

Source: Central Statistics Office, 2006.

Table 10.2. Number of planning permissions granted for one-off houses in 2005 for the three counties in the study.

Period	County	Number of single rural houses	Average floor area
2005	Kildare	528	240 sq m
	Clare	620	214 sq m
	Tipperary South	397	219 sq m

Source: Central Statistics Office, 2006.

in South Tipperary evidently considered topography (see Fig. 10.1). The choice of materials was considered by just 38 per cent of applicants to Kildare, 25 per cent to South Tipperary, but 66 per cent of Clare applications gave consideration to finishes and materials. A similar picture emerges with regard to boundary treatment: 46 per cent of Kildare applicants, 33 per cent of Clare and 25 per cent of South Tipperary applicants demonstrated sensitivity to boundary treatment including screening and shelter belts. Furthermore, of the 77 cases studied only 4 employed qualified architects.

Analysis of the questionnaires that were sent to forward planners, development control planners and building control officers revealed very interesting results. The majority of both forward planners and development control planners in the three selected counties outlined their support for policies which would improve sustainability in rural housing. While the forward planners were au fait with the sustainability policies in their development plans, there was a lack of awareness amongst development control planners about whether or not such policies were in development plans and, if so, whether or not they were enforced. As the decision-makers and enforcers of development, one might argue that they should be more aware as a group of the policies of their planning authority. It appears that each planner operates to a considerable degree autonomously, with little reference to other planners.

In conclusion, there appears to be little connection between the ambitions set out in the development plans and the reality of development control. A number of impediments were identified:

- Policies on sustainability in development plans are advisory in presentation and are not implemented in practice;
- Planning authority design guidelines promote sustainability in housing, but by indicating a preference for traditional vernacular architecture planners fail to correct the inherent contradictions. The scale, form and mass of modern one-off houses cannot be equated with the simple form of the traditional houses;
- The 'painting-by-numbers' methodology, which pertains in the guidance of the planning authorities included in this study, inhibits innovative design as applicants stick rigidly to what they imagine are planners' demands in order to achieve a successful outcome to their application;
- Apparent lack of understanding on the part of all parties of the concepts of sustainability used in the design guidelines and how such practices might be implemented;

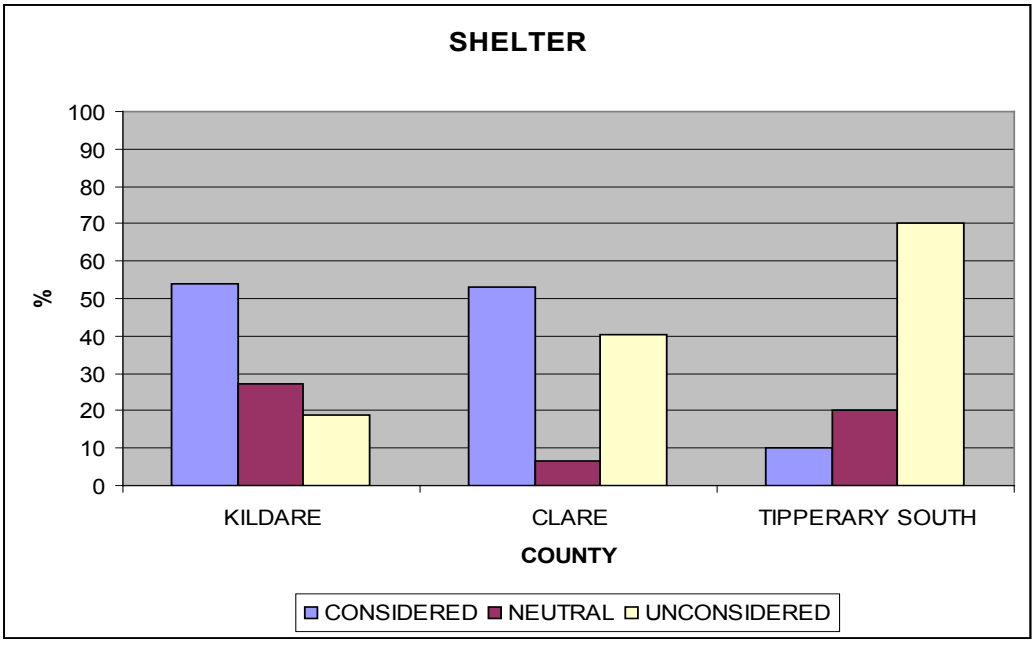

Figure 10.1. Topography, landscape, screening.

- Building control enforcement is missing from the equation and consequently compliance is an issue. Each Building Control Authority is expected by the DoEHLG to inspect a minimum of 15 per cent of all buildings during the course of their construction. With an average of 75,600 (CSO, 2006) housing completed annually in recent years, many units are not inspected. There are limited resources in all local authorities and it is not envisaged that the Building Control Inspectorate will be strengthened in the future. Reform in compliance and enforcement practices is urgently required.

To improve the sustainable design and construction of one-off rural houses, the following reforms are proposed:

- Training programmes on sustainability along with sustainability guidelines should be introduced in all planning authorities for forward planners and development control planners;
- Existing undergraduate educational programmes on sustainable design for architects and engineers should be strengthened and courses on sustainable design introduced for planning students;
- Professional bodies could play a central role by providing continuous professional development programmes on sustainability and encourage architects and other design professionals to take part;
- A countrywide campaign could be undertaken by the Royal Institute of the Architects in Ireland and other professional bodies to promote sustainable contemporary architecture in housing;
- Resourcing of the building inspectorate is crucial. Evidence indicates that government cannot afford *not* to strengthen this function. Building on current practice the percentage of on-site inspections of housing should be increased from 15 per cent to 85 per cent, with inspections carried out at several key points during the course of construction.

The net benefits to society of implementing these recommendations are substantial. They would be manifested in higher-quality dwellings with lower running costs and a lighter burden on the environment.

11 Economic and Social Cost of Rural Housing

Craig Bullock

This section examines the economic and social costs of dispersed rural settlement, extending some former analysis of the subject by O'Grada (2004) and by the pressure group Feasta (2003). The costs of rural housing are examined in relation to road infrastructure, electricity provision, telecommunications supply, postal services, school construction and school transport, water supply and waste-water quality.

As regards the road infrastructure, there is clearly a lack of consideration by policy-makers of the external cost of new rural housing and the anxiety of some rural local authorities to attract new development leads to an underpricing of these costs in terms of developer levies. Non-national roads may involve a per capita expenditure of €244 in rural areas compared with an updated figure of €76 per person in urban areas (Fitzpatrick Associates, 2002). However, it appears safe to assume that a new rural house may impose marginal costs of double the former amount.

In assessing the electricity provision costs, it is stated that the prevalence of new rural housing imposes only marginal new capital and maintenance costs, unless distant from existing lines (Electricity Supply Board [ESB], 2001). However, connection charges do not cover the full cost. Furthermore, the dispersed nature of Ireland's rural population means that a lengthy distribution network is in place. This causes distribution losses and voltage irregularities and requires continuing maintenance and renewal costs[11]. Costs are recovered across the whole population with an additional levy being exerted onto the entire rural population.

New rural settlement requires telecommunications providers to invest in new infrastructure. The costs associated with telecommunication supply (i.e. broadband) are much higher per user than for urban areas, but are borne by private operators rather than the public utility companies (EC, 2008). Telecommunication companies must cover this cost through their customer income and so this is largely transferred to all users, irrespective of need. However, there are social benefits too in that migration and new settlement improves the argument for improved telecommunications capacity in rural areas with consequent benefits for rural sustainability and employment.

As with other rural services, postal delivery to single rural houses has a direct cost. New properties may not significantly improve the cost-effectiveness of delivery in rural areas, but the scattered nature of Ireland's population certainly adds to the cost of delivery in relation to other countries (O'Grada, 2004). Nevertheless, other deficiencies in performance and working practices have been identified by An Post and others as contributing to the relatively high cost of a stamp. Furthermore, Ireland has no postcode system, a factor which adds to distributor costs, but which arguably discourages competition. The large number of rural post offices is itself another legacy of Ireland's dispersed population, with 1,900 post offices (DCENR, 2001). New settlement in remote rural areas, concentrated or dispersed, would improve the raison-d'être for local post offices. However, the prevalence of the car means that most people are less dependent on these local offices than had previously been the case. Lack of investment has meant that local post offices have been unable to offer more than basic services that are inferior to those found in post offices in the larger towns.

Ireland's dispersed rural population inevitably creates a demand for rural schools. The availability of such schools is clearly beneficial to rural sustainability. The contribution of rural in-migration may be either positive or negative depending on the number of pupils at each school. Teacher–pupil ratios are greater overall in rural areas, but the ratio is more likely to be inefficient in locations where little migration or population growth has occurred. There is, of course, also an argument for the merits of high teacher–pupil ratios. Indeed, some parents may prefer particular rural schools for this reason. Dispersed rural housing presents a more tangible cost where school bus services are concerned. Where houses are located more than 3.2 km from the nearest school, costs are borne directly by the state (Department of Education and Science, 1998) and,

11 Based on consultation with the ESB.

therefore, a real social and economic cost is involved. Where parents locate away from established school routes, these costs are more likely to be borne by parents themselves, although in this case, other social costs are present due to road traffic and pollution. Accidents too are an issue in that many rural schools have insufficient parking to accommodate today's level of morning drop-offs.

Finally, regarding water supply in rural areas, this is delivered by a mixture of public local authority provision and private group water schemes (GWS) as well as by independent private supplies. Isolated properties are responsible for their own water supply. Grants are available to houses more than seven years old where these are not connected to a public supply or GWS. However, new properties do not impose additional costs on government unless connected into an existing GWS or local authority network. Rather, single rural dwellings impose their own social cost on the environment in terms of waste-water disposal. A greater problem arises with the water quality of private sources supplying less than 15 properties. Such data are not collected by local authorities and quality is suspected of being poor in many cases due to widespread diffuse pollution. Ireland is allowed to exempt itself from EU regulations in relation to ensuring adequate water standards for these private wells and minor schemes, although grants are available.

New residential development in smaller towns and villages has been used to help finance and justify the provision of waste-water treatment and to avoid any additional burden on local surface water quality. Grants are made available to local authorities, but are not available to private householders. Older and isolated houses may therefore remain dependent on septic tanks, except where new sewerage facilities have been provided to supply new residential developments. Even in these cases, householders must pay for both the cost of pipe laying and for connection charges (approximately €1,500 per house). Reductions in pollution may therefore be marginal. Estimates from 2004 suggest that there were up to 500,000 individual septic tanks, discharging almost 250 million litres of effluent into the countryside per annum (O'Grada, 2004). The latest figures from the CSO (2006) reveal that, out of a total stock of 1,288,284 detached houses, 1,150,283 have individual septic tanks (CSO, 2006).

New isolated rural developments are now required to include new modern septic tanks. These requirements have reduced the risk of more serious pollution arising from the spate of new constructions during the recent building boom. However, serious doubts have been voiced about the enforcement of building regulations and the types of tank that have been installed. Where fitted, modern facilities do reduce the risk of human faecal contamination to water supplies, but can still permit the input of additional nutrients into the environment, particularly where the surrounding ground conditions do not allow for adequate percolation facilities to be installed. An additional problem is that householders are not obliged to maintain their septic tanks in the long term. Two thirds of homeowners empty their tanks either at irregular intervals or when a blockage problem arises. Indeed, older properties without modern septic tanks remain dependent on a very small number of local specialist contractors for cleaning and disposal. In most cases, local farmers are called upon to dispose of the waste, for which the possibility of large fines represents the main deterrent to any failure to use local authority treatment facilities (O'Grada, 2004).

In conclusion, this section outlines that there are very considerable social or external costs to scattered rural residential development. Against these must be stacked some significant private benefits, such as income transfers to landowners, generally farmers, and to local developers and builders. If building were to be concentrated in villages, a more restricted range of people would benefit from residential development in rural areas while others face a cost of development income foregone, particularly farmers wishing to sell parcels of land for single rural houses. People may be unaware of the social costs, for example of water pollution, or fail to make the connection between these and planning. In this context, it is possible that greater controls on rural development would discourage people from moving to rural areas, or at least, to those rural areas without larger towns and villages. If the argument is restricted to the prevailing nature of development as separate from the case for rural development per se, the case in favour of permitting people to build almost however, or wherever, they like, would appear to be unproven. It is, though, clearly inequitable that private benefits should be allowed to dominate the wider public good.

12 Managing Rural Housing: Policy and Planning Practice

Menelaos Gkartzios and Mark Scott

This section addresses the shifting planning and policy arena for managing housing in the Irish countryside. Based on secondary analysis of public data and documentary research of national, regional and local planning policy documents, the section focuses on the implications for planning for rural communities in the context of the broader changes towards spatial planning.

At a national level, the NSS provided for the first time an explicit national framework for dealing with spatial issues on an inter-regional basis and it contributed to the development of a more sophisticated planning framework in the country, operating at national, regional and local scales and regulated by the Planning and Development Act of 2000 (see also Table 12.1).

The publication of the NSS represented a timely opportunity for addressing rural issues and managing rural settlements in the state. The strategy, based on a rural typology, called for different responses to managing dispersed rural settlements, reflecting contrasting development patterns and social, economic and environmental contexts. Surprisingly perhaps, the strategy did not formulate an explicit policy framework for dealing with single, dispersed housing developments in the countryside. It did, however, develop a rural housing policy prescription that makes a distinction between urban- and rural-generated housing in rural areas. Generally, the NSS outlined that development driven by urban areas (including urban-generated rural housing) should take place within built-up areas

Table 12.1. Planning policy documents in the Republic of Ireland.

Policy document	Spatial dimension	Time dimension	Description
National Spatial Strategy		2002–2020	A coherent national planning framework
National Development Plan	National	1st: 1989–1993 2nd: 1994–1999 3rd: 2000–2006 4th: 2007–2013	National programme for investment in economic infrastructure, social infrastructure, human capital, enterprise, science and innovation
Ministerial Planning Guidelines		At any time	The Minister may issue guidelines to planning authorities regarding any of their functions, and planning authorities shall *have regard* to those guidelines in the performance of their functions
Regional Planning Guidelines	Regional authorities	From 12 to 20 years (Optional)	A long-term strategic planning framework for the development of a region
Development Plans	Planning authorities	Every 6 years (Compulsory)	An overall strategy for the sole or primary use of particular areas (e.g. residential, commercial, industrial, agricultural) for road improvements, for development and renewal of obsolete areas, and for preserving, improving and extending amenities
Local Area Plans	Any particular area within a planning authority	At any time (Optional)	They can be prepared in respect of any area and in particular for those areas which require economic, physical and social renewal and for areas likely to be subject to large-scale developments

Source: Based on the Planning and Development Act, 2000.

or land identified in the development plan process and that rural-generated housing needs should be accommodated in the areas where they arise. This has been further developed in the *Planning Guidelines for Sustainable Rural Housing* (DoEHLG, 2005), where it is stated that housing needs by people who are part of the rural community should be facilitated by the planning system in all rural areas, including those under strong urban pressures.

As the implementation of national and regional planning guidelines is the responsibility of local authorities through their statutory development plans, all the 29 county development plans (CDPs) across the state's local authorities were comprehensively reviewed and compared on the following criteria: existence of 'local need' criteria; occupancy conditions; rural housing policy (i.e. zoning, separate policy area); housing provision for scenic or environmentally sensitive areas; provision for ribbon development; provision for holiday homes; and rural housing design guidelines.

The comparison showed that the vast majority of local authorities in Ireland, based on the ministerial guidelines, have special rural housing provision for members of the rural community or 'locals'. However, a wide variation can be identified in the criteria required to be considered 'local' or a member of the established community across the CDPs. A residency in the area is sometimes required, ranging from 2 years to 15 years, but in many cases this period is not clarified. In addition, the special provision for local people or members of the established community in most cases includes housing needs for farmers and generally people employed in agricultural activities, their (immediate) family members (husband, wife, son, daughter); in some cases, 'local need' provisions apply also for returning emigrants. Most CDPs provide for an occupancy condition (up to 15 years), to prohibit the potential sale of the house/land and to safeguard that the house for which a planning permission is requested is a permanent residence (rather than a holiday home). Undoubtedly, the designation of 'local need' criteria has been underpinned by successful pressures to secure planning permissions for single rural, dispersed housing demands from the rural community.

Regarding rural housing policy, most CDPs follow the NSS's distinction between rural-generated and urban-generated rural housing. Major differences can also be identified in rural housing policy suggested in each CDP. This includes explicit zoning, the recognition of different rural area types with different rural housing provision in each rural area or separate policy areas within and outside identified settlements. Three CDPs do not outline any clear zoning or separate housing policy in rural areas within their administrative boundaries. In line with arguments in academic (e.g. Murdoch et al., 2003) and applied literature on the heterogeneity of rural space, most CDPs identify diverse rural areas within their local authority boundaries. The majority of CDPs have explicit rural housing provision for areas of special environmental and amenity value, including housing provision for second holiday homes. It must be acknowledged that all CDPs discourage ribbon development. Contrasting approaches can also be identified in relation to the production of rural housing design guidelines in each local authority. In most CDPs, some guidelines are published within the development plan (or in the appendix). Seven local authorities have published separately detailed rural housing design guidelines, and finally six local authorities have not produced any design guidelines; nevertheless, they have stated an obligation to do so in the near future.

From the review of policy, the shift from physical planning to a broader notion of strategic spatial planning experienced in Europe and Ireland provides a basis for a more integrative agenda between physical and environmental management with social and economic objectives, and between urban and rural interests. The vocabulary of European spatial planning has been embraced in new national and regional planning initiatives, which have reformulated planning policy for rural areas – for example, planning practice in Ireland is increasingly characterised by a shift towards spatial planning from a more narrow focus on land-use regulation. Importantly, the Irish spatial policy framework gives a belated recognition to regional differences within rural Ireland, providing the basis for tailored responses to emerging rural geographies (DoELG, 2002). At least on paper, the NSS provides a broad conceptual and policy framework for rural territorial development, broadening and widening the scope of planning to integrate a range of policy sectors and actors within a negotiated form of governance. However, at the point of implementation – the local authority level – this new discourse of spatial planning in Ireland withdraws to its more traditional form of land-use regulation and 'command and control'

policy instruments. Local authority development plans are characterised by a focus on managing physical and environmental change, with limited connection to the changing social and economic conditions of rural areas and poor integration between physical planning goals and wider rural development objectives. Instead, rural housing is treated as a sectoral issue in isolation from wider rural issues. Rural housing policy in the country is based on a dual distinction of housing types (urban- and rural-generated housing in the countryside), facilitated by a number of development control policies, but it lacks the initiatives to secure the coordinated growth of villages.

A key policy tool in the Irish case for managing rural housing growth and demand are policies which discriminate in favour of local people in permitting new housing through 'local needs' provision. As the analysis indicates, there is a wide variation in how this policy tool is implemented across local planning authorities, and their ability to deliver a coherent and coordinated rural housing policy. Notably, 'local needs' policies have been developed largely in the absence of an evidence base, such as an understanding of local housing markets in rural areas or housing affordability issues. 'Local needs' policies place the emphasis on applicants for planning permission to demonstrate their suitability to build a new dwelling in the countryside, rather than as a strategic or spatially targeted tool for allowing local planners to contribute to sustainable and balanced rural communities and to enable a more proactive planning response (e.g. allocating additional land for housing on the basis of price signals). 'Local needs' policies also raise issues concerning 'who' is the countryside for, and the appropriateness of the local planning response to the restructuring of the countryside (e.g. restricting housing supply when faced with rural gentrification[12]). Similarly, there is an opportunity for local planners to engage in more interactive styles of plan-making in partnership with local communities, where issues such as defining local needs could be addressed through negotiation and consensus rather than through a technocratic process.

12 The social transformation of an area involving the middle classes (Stockdale, 2009).

13 The Politics and Governance of Rural Housing: Insights from Local Councillors

Declan Redmond, Mark Scott and Paula Russell

This section focuses on perceptions on rural housing of those who practise local government. This is justified by the fact that local councillors have often been excluded from the analysis of planning policy, with an assumption that central government, through policy, and planning professionals, through implementation, are the key actors. However, with the politicisation of the rural housing debate, local councillors are a key conduit through which the debate is refracted. Local councillors are responsible for the making of the development plan and are, through their role as elected representatives, subject to and in receipt of local and popular sentiment. This section focuses on the roles played by local authorities in respect to rural housing, together with the concerns of key decision-makers in regard to relationships between elected representatives and local government officers, central and local government, and councillors and the wider local constituency.

Data for this section are derived from a postal questionnaire of rural county councillors (excluding city councillors and councillors in Dun Laoghaire–Rathdown County Council). In total, 725 rural county councillors were identified and the postal questionnaire was sent to them, after piloting, in June 2007. Finally, 315 valid questionnaires were collected by the end of November 2007. The main aim of the questionnaire was to seek the views of county councillors on key aspects of rural housing and planning. As such, the questionnaire sought views on the following:

- What councillors identified as the key issues in rural Ireland;
- Their perception of the advantages and disadvantages of one-off rural housing;
- Their perception of who influences rural housing policy;
- Their views on planning policy and rural housing;
- Their view of their own influence on policy.

The analysis showed that the primary issues facing rural Ireland, as identified by councillors, related to planning restrictions on rural housing, followed by inadequate infrastructure and then population decline. The issue of population decline has been a key rural narrative following over a century of out-migration and emigration from rural Ireland, and even though many rural areas have experienced a demographic recovery over the last decade, depopulation remains an important 'frame' for local development decision-making. Other problems which were thought significant were crime, lack of affordable housing for young people and the decline in the importance of farming. Although almost half of the councillors agree or agree strongly that the rural landscape is idyllic, environmental issues appear to be much lower priorities for elected representatives, including environmental pollution, climate change and loss of biodiversity. This balance between socio-economic and environmental concerns suggests that the majority of councillors construct a narrative of the rural as a social/community space rather than as an environmental resource to protect and conserve.

The respondents were accordingly asked to list what they thought were the first and second most significant advantages of one-off rural housing. The most common response was that one-off housing strengthens community in rural areas, with almost 40 per cent selecting this answer. The next most common response was that housing in the open countryside provides a good quality of life for residents (15 per cent), followed by the response that it provides affordable rural housing (11 per cent). The answers reinforce a discourse of rurality as a social space, with emphasis on community sustainability prominent among councillors, as outlined above. On the other hand, when the respondents were asked to consider the disadvantages of one-off rural housing, the most common answer, from almost 40 per cent of respondents, was environmental pollution from poorly maintained septic tanks. Increased commuting

was cited by 15 per cent of respondents as an important disadvantage and cost inefficiencies in providing services was cited by almost 12 per cent of respondents. It is notable that a low proportion of respondents cited such issues as the negative aesthetic impact of rural housing or the destruction of landscape quality.

Councillors were asked for their opinion as to who influences policy on rural housing among government and politicians (see Table 13.1). Councillors see both the DoEHLG, as well as the Minister for the Environment, as the most important influences. Over 80 per cent of respondents thought the DoEHLG has significant or very significant influence over policy, while over 70 per cent thought the Minister for the Environment has such influence. Under a quarter (23 per cent) of councillors thought other ministers had influence, although 38 per cent thought the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs had significant influence. When it comes to local elected politicians, local TDs were seen as having limited influence: only 24 per cent considered that they had a significant or very significant influence. In contrast, 44 per cent thought that local councillors had significant influence.

The majority of councillors regard planning policy and controls for rural housing as too restrictive. Sixty-three per cent either agree or agree strongly with the view that the planning authority is too restrictive in approving permission for rural housing. Almost 60 per cent think that the development plan is too restrictive with respect to rural housing location, despite the fact that the making of the plan is a reserved function of councillors – this perhaps suggests that councillors perceive that planning officers have a greater influence on the development plan than elected representatives. Interestingly, 78 per cent think that it is now more difficult than ever to obtain planning permission to build a detached house or bungalow; however, there is limited evidence to support this view as rates of refusal for housing in the countryside have remained fairly low (DoEHLG, 2007). Following these themes, it is no surprise that, the majority (76 per cent) of councillors believe that the new rural housing guidelines introduced in 2005 (DoEHLG, 2005) have seen planning controls become much stricter with regard to single rural houses. While the rural housing guidelines were interpreted in some quarters as relaxing planning controls, this shows that 93 per cent of councillors think that planning controls on rural housing have either remained the same or become stricter.

In relation to how councillors perceive their own role within the development process, 80 per cent of councillors thought that their interactions and interventions in the planning process were in the interests of the common good. Somewhat oddly, perhaps contradictorily, however,

Table 13.1. Perceived influence of government and politicians on rural housing policy.

	DoEHLG	Minister for Environment	Dept. of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs	Other ministers	Local TDs	Local councillors
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Very significant influence	56.1	41.7	13.8	5.3	6.5	19.2
Significant influence	26.7	30.6	24.7	17.7	17.7	25.3
Some influence	9.8	18.8	35.6	35.5	32.9	27.1
Little influence	5.3	6.3	20.0	28.7	30.7	19.5
No influence	2.1	2.8	5.8	12.8	12.3	8.9
Total (%)	100	100	100	100	100	100
n =	285	288	275	265	277	292

only 38 per cent of respondents believed that the integrity of elected representatives was unquestionable. With regard to some specifics, over 90 per cent of councillors disagreed with the contention that local elected representatives had too much power in the making of the development plan while just over 95 per cent disagreed with the idea that they should not make representations on individual planning applications (development control is a function of county managers, rather than elected representatives).

In conclusion, the analysis suggests that notions of sustainable rural development have become a flag of convenience within the housing debate. Whereas environmental groups and planners often focus narrowly on landscape issues, councillors also focus selectively within sustainable planning debates, emphasising community and economic factors, suggesting that rural planning is underpinned by competing rationalities and latent social conflicts. The analysis of councillors appears to suggest that Ireland largely displays characteristics associated with a 'clientelistic countryside', whereby councillors tend to reflect traditional rural concerns (physical development, resistance to regulation) and support the interests of farmers (who wish to sell sites for housing) and local capital. Actors who do not conform to perceived local or rural values are cast as outsiders, urban and often elitist. Within this context, a more inclusive, integrated and networked planning arena could provide an important role in exploring (holistic) storylines of the rural condition. For example, a key role could be played by enhanced regional governance and planning to mediate between top-down guidelines (which can be insensitive to local contexts and specificities) and local, clientelistic politics which lead to incremental and disjointed decision-making.

14 Conclusions and Policy Recommendations

Mark Scott

In the context of the overall project on managing rural housing and all the multidimensional-disciplinary and multi-method sub-projects presented in this summary report, the objective of this section is to provide a suite of principles to inform policy-making, to explore alternative policy instruments and to identify areas of further research. The various recommendations are considered under nine headings: (i) planning policy and reflecting the diversity of rural Ireland; (ii) towards integrated rural planning; (iii) influencing future residential choices; (iv) from development control to environmental management; (v) the importance of design; (vi) developing interactive styles of plan-making; (vii) exploring the value of alternative policy instruments; (viii) addressing holiday homes; and (ix) further research.

14.1 Report's Limitations

Before outlining the conclusions, it is also important to highlight the limitations of the study, both in relation to existing research and policy advice (which this report did not wish to duplicate) and also in terms of areas that require further research and attention.

First, the research project did not investigate issues surrounding groundwater protection and on-site treatment systems for rural housing. In this regard, there was no wish to replicate existing policy advice and tools such as the EPA's *Wastewater Treatment Manual: Treatment Systems for Single Houses* (2000), which provides a methodology for assessing the suitability of on-site systems for a range of hydrogeological conditions. In addition, the Geological Survey of Ireland has developed interactive GIS tools to provide public data on the geography of groundwater vulnerability (see www.gsi.ie), which are currently used within the development management process. Furthermore, the DoEHLG issued planning authorities with *Circular Letter SP-03* in 2003 to provide guidelines on best practice in relation to protecting water quality in the development plan and management process at local authority level.

Second, although the issue of assessing costs and benefits of rural housing is addressed, this proved to be a challenging task. This was for several reasons: (i) considerable data constraints were experienced in developing a reasonable assessment of costs and benefits. For example, different public agencies collect data at different spatial scales which often prevents a 'fine-grain' approach. (ii) There were significant data gaps in relation to public data. (iii) There is the issue of scale and study area. In this sense, the work package examined costs and benefits of accommodating future rural housing. However, this raises two further issues: (a) what are the potential costs to existing rural dwellers if policy-makers begin a policy of service withdrawal from rural areas (given the legacy of substantial rural settlements)? and (b) what are the opportunity costs of rural housing in relation to urban settlements? Both of these issues are significant, but were beyond the scope of the project's time frame, but would be worth pursuing in further research.

Third, additional research should address the issue of environmental carrying capacity in relation to accommodating further housing development in rural areas. Housing in the countryside competes with other land uses for rural resource use. Some of these uses may have a commercial value (e.g. mineral extraction or wind farms which may be prevented due to opposition from local residents) or may compromise future needs (e.g. agricultural fragmentation in the context of rising food-security concerns). In addition, accommodating further housing development may lead to environmental costs in relation to habitat loss and habitat fragmentation, leading to threats to biodiversity through loss of habitats or may have quality of life impacts relating to loss of open space for recreation.

Fourth, since the completion of the research fieldwork underpinning this report, there have been dramatic changes in the Irish economy and in the housing market in particular. In relation to rural housing and sustainable rural development, there is an urgent need

to explore the following issues in the context of current economic conditions: housing market conditions in rural areas; the impact of 'abandoned' or unfinished housing schemes in rural towns and villages; housing supply and planning policy (including the issue of over-zoning or excessive zoning for residential land use); the impact of the recession on sustainable rural livelihoods; and the impact of diminishing public funds on rural areas following the publication of the McCarthy Report in 2009[13].

14.2 Planning Policy and Reflecting the Diversity of Rural Ireland

Rural areas in Ireland are far from being homogenous, so avoiding a 'one-size-fits-all' approach to rural policy is a central principle. Rural areas are dynamic and they have become arenas for conflict and tension, sites for consumption as well as production activities – however, not all rural areas have the same capacities or undergo change at the same time or pace. Planning policies have often been characterised in the past by a shallow assessment of rurality. Therefore, spatial planners and planning policy need to engage more fully with rural issues. In relation to policy responses it is suggested that:

- **Policy-makers should recognise that there is a significant legacy of dispersed rural settlement in Ireland**: this suggests the need for more fine-grained and nuanced policies that reflect the realities of rural Ireland and all its dimensions – physical, social and economic;
- **Landscape assessments should be integrated with a parallel analysis of rural community and economic contexts**: this suggests the need for local authority landscape assessments to include evaluations of local social networks and social capital, community infrastructure and economic needs in order to establish local housing needs and issues surrounding community identity and attachment to place;
- **Landscape assessments should not be just technical documents**: this suggests the need for considerable potential to *engage with rural communities* in the preparation process, to identify community values and explore local knowledge.

14.3 Towards Integrated Rural Planning

Currently, local planning and rural development processes and goals appear to be poorly integrated. In simplistic terms, this often translates to a community development perspective concerned with local needs, maintaining key services and ensuring vibrant local communities, and on the other hand, a conservation perspective, which focuses its concerns on 'inappropriate development of the countryside'. Both of these long-standing and competing rationalities for rural planning have led to increasing difficulties in attempting to develop a consensus surrounding housing in the countryside. In relation to policy responses, it is suggested that there is a need to:

- **Develop integrated, holistic and multidimensional approaches to rural sustainable development**: at present, policy delivery for rural areas remains fragmented and is characterised by competing and conflicting storylines of rurality;
- **Connect rural dwellings and rural development**: the rural housing debate has often been portrayed as a single issue. However, this issue should not be divorced from wider discussions surrounding rural development and the future of rural communities;
- **Develop an evidence-informed approach**: local authorities should undertake ongoing research into the drivers of change in local housing markets and settlement patterns to enable an understanding of increases or decreases in local housing demand;
- **Consider the social policy implications of dispersed rural settlements**: the multiple components of the rural housing challenge can be located and can revolve around important matters that include social housing new build and affordability, rural homelessness, housing integration, building conservation and renovation, and community involvement;

13 The McCarthy Report was prepared for the government and sets out a series of recommendations to reduce public spending.

- **Produce a new White Paper on Rural Sustainable Development**: to mark 10 years since the publication of the government's *White Paper on Rural Development* in 1999, there is a timely opportunity to reformulate the government's policy commitment to rural Ireland;
- **Integrate land-use development plans and local strategies for social/economic/cultural issues**: this should include a common policy formulation process, particularly in relation to community participation and the use of existing stakeholder networks and sub-county structures.

14.4 Influencing Future Residential Choices

Various sections in the report showed strong preferences for rural housing and generally rural living. In relation to policy responses, it is suggested that:

- **Understanding residential behaviour** enables policy-makers to influence future behaviour through positive and evidence-based planning policies;
- Policy-makers should consider whether **the attractive attributes of rural places** can be found (or created) in other localities or in settlements other than dispersed rural communities;
- **Effective village planning** is central to managing rural housing: with more imaginative and sensitive approaches to village and small-town planning, there appears to be the potential to accommodate some of the demand for rural housing;
- Given the desire among many rural dwellers to have some influence in the design or layout of their property through self-build, greater scope could be given to allow consumers the **opportunity to 'self-build' within villages**;
- Investment in water-services infrastructure: addressing a lack of capacity in relation to **water and sewerage infrastructure in small towns and villages** can provide a method of increasing development opportunities;
- There is clearly an urban–rural relationship in relation to housing markets, and a **regional scale** often captures a more meaningful scale for policy action. In this context, 'countering counter-urbanisation' could provide an appropriate policy goal for regional planning guidelines. This requires a holistic approach which not only addresses urban-generated rural housing in accessible rural areas, but also the issue of housing supply in urban areas, the creation of liveable neighbourhoods and integrated planning (including social and physical infrastructures).

14.5 From Development Control to Environmental Management

Since the 1970s, the planning profession's engagement with rural issues has been largely minimal, with an emphasis on development control rather than a broader concept of environmental or development management. For example, this approach has been stressed in the DoEHLG's recent *Development Management, Guidelines for Planning Authorities* (DoEHLG, 2007), which suggests that development management is preferred to development control as it implies a more positive role for the planning system in promoting suitable development rather than simply controlling undesirable forms of development. In that regard, it is suggested that there is a need for:

- **A positive planning response to rural housing issues**: this includes rural housing design guidelines, VDSs, market-based instruments, landscape assessments and community impact assessments;
- **A plan-led response**: a plan-led approach signals a research-based and strategic approach towards rural housing demand and supply-side issues;
- **A holistic perspective of rural housing supply**: this includes assessing the various components of the rural settlement system, including the open countryside, clusters, villages and small towns, and also the mix of housing types and tenure;
- **Collaborative environmental management**: to develop consensus-based local planning frameworks;
- **Continued investment in local authority planning departments to improve the effectiveness of the planning system**;

- **Offer mentoring**: a system of mentoring for graduate planners would provide support during the transition from training to practitioner, enabling graduate planners to draw on more experienced colleagues when assessing planning applications;
- **Provide a high-quality and transparent service to planning applicants**: communicating with applicants in a jargon-free manner and providing advice in relation to site, layout and design issues, and in relation to energy performance, can improve the quality of applications for rural housing;
- **Ensure effective planning enforcement**: there are concerns in relation to enforcing occupancy conditions and conditions attached to planning permission in relation to design and landscaping;
- **Monitor environmental performance**: this includes the regular monitoring and servicing of septic tanks and assessing the energy performance of houses.

14.6 The Importance of Design

Good design plays a key role in mitigating some of the visual and environmental impacts of rural housing, while also improving the attractiveness of villages as an alternative to accommodating housing in the open countryside. In relation to policy responses, it is suggested to:

- **Extend the practice of rural housing design guidelines**, drawing on vernacular building traditions while fostering and supporting experimentation and innovation in house design;
- **Extend the practice of VDSs**: the strength of this approach is that the preparation of VDSs should be informed by the involvement of local stakeholders and the community, providing the basis for consensus-based planning;
- The principles behind VDSs can also be used to inform planning in more dispersed rural settlements, through **engaging with communities to identify locally agreed principles in relation to dispersed rural settlement** (location, siting and landscaping) and to identify landscapes that local citizens wish to preserve and protect;
- **Encourage the design of new buildings to reduce energy consumption**: greater attention should be paid to environmental design factors in assessing planning applications;
- **Encourage greater synergy between planning control and building control functions**: to integrate the assessment of design aesthetics and environmental performance;
- **Encourage the retrofitting of the existing rural housing stock to reduce energy consumption**: this will require a mix of regulation, effective technology and price incentives for households to undertake action;
- **Encourage effective design and location to protect water resources**: development plans should identify areas vulnerable to groundwater pollution, where septic tanks are often ineffective.

14.7 Developing Interactive Styles of Plan-Making

The extensive literature on community planning outlines that the benefits of adopting more participatory planning approaches are twofold: first, to achieve democratic principles within the planning process and, second, to achieve instrumental policy objectives – in other words, participation can generate information, understanding and agreement on problems, and create a sense of ownership of planning proposals. In relation to rural housing and planning in Ireland, it is suggested to:

- **Embed participatory planning practice in the development planning process**: there has been a vast array of community-driven strategic planning initiatives since the 1990s. The challenge is to learn the lessons from this experience and embed them into the statutory planning process;
- **Foster experimentation and innovation in engaging with local rural communities**: to include emerging new approaches to engaging citizen involvement in the planning process, such as citizen panels or juries, environmental mediation, community-needs assessment, visioning studies and large-group interaction methodologies;

- **Build on existing governance arrangements**: there are a number of existing platforms for stakeholder involvement in the planning process that are currently under-utilised (e.g. Strategic Policy Committees, County Development Boards);
- **Explore the potential of sub-county-level planning**;
- **Enhance the role of local councillors in the planning process**: greater emphasis should be given to involving councillors at an early 'pre-draft' stage of the development plan process through the use of planning workshops to explore the effectiveness of past decisions, the likely impacts of various policy options and available evidence on housing and demographic trends.

14.8 Exploring the Value of Alternative Policy Instruments

Planning policy instruments have traditionally comprised blunt 'command and control' instruments, which often generate inefficient and expensive settlement patterns, and inequitable and unpopular results. To facilitate the implementation of sustainability, new instruments must be developed that encourage the delivery of sustainable rural development in an efficient and equitable manner and in a way which is acceptable to the public. Successful policy interventions are likely to require an appropriate mixture of policy types, rather than relying on a single type of policy approach. In relation to policy responses, it is suggested that:

- **The potential of market-based instruments in rural planning policy should be explored**: these measures could address both demand and supply-side factors and landscape protection.
- **Any alternative policy instruments and approaches must fulfil three essential elements, namely (i) equity (redistributive impact), (ii) administrative feasibility and (iii) political sustainability**.

14.9 Holiday/Vacant Homes

At present, the issue of rural holiday homes is often treated as a single planning challenge together with rural dwellings used as primary residences. In that regard, it is suggested that:

- There is a need for **improved data** for second/ holiday homes;
- More research should look at the **impacts of second homes on local housing markets**;
- The demand for second homes should be directed to appropriate locations as **a tool for rural revitalisation**: holiday home developments should be integrated into local tourism strategies;
- **Effective enforcement is necessary**: cases have been reported where planning permission is granted for a house in the countryside on the basis of local need, which subsequently is sold as a second home, contrary to planning conditions;
- **The impact of the second homes tax should be monitored**: the monies raised from the recently introduced tax on second homes, should be reinvested into the rural communities where second home development has taken place, to support and maintain key rural services to ameliorate the negative impacts of holiday homes;
- The notion that a rural house, which is to **change use from a place of primary residence to a second/holiday home should require planning permission** as a material change of use, should be explored as a policy option.

14.10 Further Research

Finally, the report identifies the following four themes for future research:

1 **Rural housing affordability**: while there has been much research undertaken in the UK on affordability issues, there is currently a dearth of literature on rural housing affordability in an Irish context. In particular, although more restrictive housing policies are favoured by some stakeholders, there is limited evidence of the impact of restricting rural housing supply on rural housing affordability;

2 **An ageing rural society**: as rural areas increasingly experience an ageing population (due to amenity migration, as well as depopulation, etc.), the relationship between a dispersed settlement pattern and the ability to adequately care for those in need requires further investigation;

3 **Supply issues**: the focus of this research report has been related to demand-side factors in relation to rural housing. Future research should also address supply-side factors, including the cost of land, availability of sites for rural housing, market conditions for rural housing resale and the impact of second homes on the housing market;

4 **Technological innovation**: ongoing research and development is necessary to continually improve the technology to improve energy performance and home water treatment.

Acronyms and Annotations

CAP	Common Agricultural Policy
CDP	County development plan
DoEHLG	Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government
ED	Electoral division
ESDP	European Spatial Development Perspective
NSS	National Spatial Strategy
SAPS	Small area population statistics
VDS	Village design statement

References

Bourassa, S.C. (1991) *The Aesthetics of Landscape*. London: Belhaven Press.

Bunce, M. (1994) *The Countryside Ideal: Anglo-American Images of the Landscape*. London: Routledge.

Clinch, P., Convery, F. and Walsh, B. (2002) *After the Celtic Tiger, Challenges Ahead*. Dublin: O'Brien Press.

CEC (Committee for Spatial Planning) (1999) *European Spatial Development Perspective: Towards a Balanced and Sustainable Development of the Territory of the EU*. Luxembourg: CEC.

Coppock, J. (ed.) (1977) *Second Homes, Curse or Blessing?*. Oxford: Pergamon.

CSO (Central Statistics Office). (1996–2002) *Small Area Population Statistics (SAPS)*. Dublin: Urban Institute Ireland.

CSO (2002) *Census Documents: Appendices.* Dublin: CSO. Available at http://www.cso.ie/census/documents/vol1_appendices.pdf

CSO (2006) *Planning Permissions, Supplementary Tables*. Dublin: CSO.

EC (European Commission) (2003) '*Planting Seeds for Rural Futures*' *– Building a Policy that Can Deliver our Ambitions*. Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities. Available at http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/events/salzburg/index_en.htm

EC (1995–2007) *Eurostat: Statistical Office of the European Communities*. Eurostat Regional Yearbook (various years). Luxembourg: European Commission. Available at http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/

EC (2008) *13th Progress Report on the Single Telecoms Market*. Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.

DCENR (Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources) (2001) *Report of the Post Office Working Group*. 23 July 2001. Dublin: DCENR. Available at http://www.dcenr.gov.ie/NR/rdonlyres/82E1B276-3711-4159-B8DA-FA90EA80F963/0/AnPostWorking GroupReportfinal.pdf

Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development (1999) *White Paper on Rural Development*. Dublin: Stationery Office.

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (2007) *Annual Review and Outlook for Agriculture*. Dublin: Stationery Office.

Department of Education and Science (1998) *Report of the School Transport Review Committee*. Dublin: Department of Education and Science.

DoELG (Department of Environment and Local Government) (1997) *Sustainable Development – A Strategy for Ireland*. Dublin: Stationery Office.

DoELG (2000) *National Climate Change Strategy*. Dublin: Stationery Office.

DoELG (2002) *National Spatial Strategy 2002–2020: People, Places and Potential*. Dublin: Stationery Office.

DoEHLG (Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government) (1994–2005). *Annual Housing Statistics Bulletin*. Dublin: Stationery Office.

DoEHLG (2003) *Circular Letter SP-03*, issued to local planning authorities. Dublin: Stationery Office.

DoEHLG (2005) *Sustainable Rural Housing: Guidelines for Planning Authorities*. Dublin: Stationery Office.

DoEHLG (2007) *Development Management, Guidelines for Planning Authorities*. Dublin: Stationery Office.

DoEHLG (2008) *Green Paper on Local Government: Stronger Local Democracy, Options for Change*. Dublin: Stationery Office.

DoEHLG (2009a) *Planning Guidelines for Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas*. Dublin: Stationery Office.

DoEHLG (2009b) *Best Practice Urban Design Manual*. Dublin: Stationery Office.

Department of Finance (2007) *National Development Plan 2007–2013: Transforming Ireland, A Better Quality of Life for all*. Dublin: Stationery Office.

Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs (2000) *White Paper on Supporting Voluntary Activity and the Community and Voluntary Sector*. Dublin: Stationery Office.

Duffy, P. (2000) Trends in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Settlement, in T. Barry (ed.) *A History of Settlement in Ireland*. London: Routledge.

ESB (Electricity Supply Board) (2001) *Distribution Price Review 2001–2005*. Dublin: ESB.

EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) (2000) *Wastewater Treatment Manual: Treatment Systems for Single Houses*. Wexford: EPA.

Erikson, R. (1993) Descriptions of Inequality: The Swedish Approach to Welfare Research, in M. Nussbaum and A. Sen (eds) *The Quality of Life*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

ESRI (Economic and Social Research Institute) (2009) *Quarterly Economic Commentary, Autumn 2009*. Dublin: ESRI.

Feasta (Foundation for the Economics of Sustainability) (2003) *Submission on Rural Housing to the Oireachtas Committee on Environment and Local Government*. 6 November 2003. Dublin: Feasta. Available at http://www.feasta.org/documents/landhousing/OCenvland.pdf

Ferrer-i-Carbonell, A. and Frijters, P. (2004) How important is methodology for the estimates of the determinants of happiness?, *Economic Journal*, 114, pp. 641–659.

Fitzpatrick Associates (2002) *Evaluation of Investment in the Road Network, Part C Non-National Roads.* Prepared for NDP/CSF Evaluation Unit in association with African Transport and Engineering Consultants and A & L Goodbody Consulting.

Gallent, N., Mace, A. and Tewdwr-Jones, M. (2005) *Second Homes: European Perspectives and UK Policies*. Aldershot: Ashgate.

Gallent, N., Shucksmith, M. and Tewdwr-Jones, M. (2003) *Housing in the European Countryside, Rural Pressure and Policy in Western Europe*. London: Routledge.

Gallent, N. and Tewdwr-Jones, M. (2007) *Decent Homes For All*. London: Routledge.

Gkartzios, M. & Scott, M. (2009) Planning for rural housing in the Republic of Ireland: From national spatial strategies to development plans, *European Planning Studies*, 17, pp. 1751–1780.

Greer, J. and Murray, M. (1993) Rural Ireland – Personality and policy context, in M. Murray and J. Greer (eds) *Rural Development in Ireland, A Challenge for the 1990s*. Aldershot: Avebury.

Halfacree, K. (1994) The importance of the 'rural' in the constitution of counterurbanisation: Evidence from England in the 1980s. *Sociologia Ruralis*, 34, pp.164–189.

Kahneman, D. (1999) Objective Happiness, in D. Kahneman, E. Diener and N. Schwarz (eds) *Well-Being: The Foundations of Hedonic Psychology*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Kaplan, S. (1988) Perception and landscape, in J.L. Naser (ed.) *Environmental Aesthetics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Keaveney, K. and Walsh, J. (2005) The geography of households and housing types, in *Geographical Perspectives on Outputs from Census 2002*, *January 2005*. Maynooth: Department of Geography, National University of Ireland Maynooth.

Kildare County Council (2007) *County Development Plan*. Kildare: Kildare County Council.

Lowenthal, D. (1997) European landscape transformations: the rural residue, in P. Groth and T.W. Bressi (eds) *Understanding Ordinary Landscapes*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Mahon, M. (2007) New populations; shifting expectations: The changing experience of Irish rural space and place, *Journal of Rural Studies*, 23(3), pp. 345–356.

Marsden, T. (2007) Denial and diversity: some reflections on emerging agri-food geographies and rural development in the United Kingdom, in H. Clout (ed.) *Contemporary Rural Geographies – Land, Property and Resources in Britain: Essays in Honour of Richard Munton*. London: Routledge.

Marsden, T., Murdoch J., Lowe, P., Munton, R. and Flynn, A. (1993) *Constructing the Countryside*. London: University College London Press.

Moseley, M. and Owen, S. (2008) The future of rural services in rural England: The drivers of change and a scenario for 2015, *Progress in Planning*, 69, pp. 93–130.

Murdoch, J., Lowe, P., Ward, N. and Marsden, T. (2003) *The Differentiated Countryside*. London: Routledge.

Norris, M. and Minston, N. (2009) Rising second home numbers in rural Ireland: Distribution, drivers and implications, *European Planning Studies*, 17, pp. 1303–1322.

O'Grada, Diarmund (2004) *Some Hidden Costs of Rural Housing*. Paper presented to Irish Planning Institute Annual Conference, Mullingar, 22–23 April 2004.

Putnam, R.D. (2000) *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. New York: Touchstone.

Revenue Commissioners (2008) *A Guide to Section 23 Relief*. Dublin: Revenue Commissioners.

Scott, M. (2008) Managing rural change and competing rationalities: Insights from conflicting rural storylines and local policy-making in Ireland, *Planning Theory and Practice*, 9, pp. 9–32.

Stockdale, A. (2009) The diverse geographies of rural gentrification in Scotland, *Journal of Rural Studies*, doi: 10.1016/j.jrurstud.2009.04.001

UN (United Nations) (1954) *International Definition and Measurement of Standards and Levels of Living*. New York: United Nations Publications.

UN (2002) *UN General Assembly: World Summit on Sustainable Development*. New York: United Nations Publications. Available at http://www.earthsummit2002.org/resolution.pdf

An Ghníomhaireacht um Chaomhnú Comhshaoil

Is í an Gníomhaireacht um Chaomhnú Comhshaoil (EPA) comhlachta reachtúil a chosnaíonn an comhshaol do mhuintir na tíre go léir. Rialaímid agus déanaimid maoirsiú ar ghníomhaíochtaí a d'fhéadfadh truailliú a chruthú murach sin. Cinntímid go bhfuil eolas cruinn ann ar threochtaí comhshaoil ionas go nglactar aon chéim is gá. Is iad na príomh-nithe a bhfuilimid gníomhach leo ná comhshaol na hÉireann a chosaint agus cinntiú go bhfuil forbairt inbhuanaithe.

Is comhlacht poiblí neamhspleách í an Ghníomhaireacht um Chaomhnú Comhshaoil (EPA) a bunaíodh i mí Iúil 1993 faoin Acht fán nGníomhaireacht um Chaomhnú Comhshaoil 1992. Ó thaobh an Rialtais, is í an Roinn Comhshaoil agus Rialtais Áitiúil a dhéanann urraíocht uirthi.

ÁR bhFREAGRACHTAÍ

CEADÚNÚ

Bíonn ceadúnais á n-eisiúint againn i gcomhair na nithe seo a leanas chun a chinntiú nach mbíonn astuithe uathu ag cur sláinte an phobail ná an comhshaol i mbaol:

- áiseanna dramhaíola (m.sh., líonadh talún, loisceoirí, stáisiúin aistrithe dramhaíola);
- gníomhaíochtaí tionsclaíocha ar scála mór (m.sh., déantúsaíocht cógaisíochta, déantúsaíocht stroighne, stáisiúin chumhachta);
- diantalmhaíocht;
- úsáid faoi shrian agus scaoileadh smachtaithe Orgánach Géinathraithe (GMO);
- mór-áiseanna stórais peitreail.
- Scardadh dramhuisce

FEIDHMIÚ COMHSHAOIL NÁISIÚNTA

- Stiúradh os cionn 2,000 iniúchadh agus cigireacht de áiseanna a fuair ceadúnas ón nGníomhaireacht gach bliain.
- Maoirsiú freagrachtaí cosanta comhshaoil údarás áitiúla thar sé earnáil - aer, fuaim, dramhaíl, dramhuisce agus caighdeán uisce.
- Obair le húdaráis áitiúla agus leis na Gardaí chun stop a chur le gníomhaíocht mhídhleathach dramhaíola trí comhordú a dhéanamh ar líonra forfheidhmithe náisiúnta, díriú isteach ar chiontóirí, stiúradh fiosrúcháin agus maoirsiú leigheas na bhfadhbanna.
- An dlí a chur orthu siúd a bhriseann dlí comhshaoil agus a dhéanann dochar don chomhshaol mar thoradh ar a ngníomhaíochtaí.

MONATÓIREACHT, ANAILÍS AGUS TUAIRISCIÚ AR AN GCOMHSHAOL

- Monatóireacht ar chaighdeán aeir agus caighdeáin aibhneacha, locha, uiscí taoide agus uiscí talaimh; leibhéil agus sruth aibhneacha a thomhas.
- Tuairisciú neamhspleách chun cabhrú le rialtais náisiúnta agus áitiúla cinntí a dhéanamh.

RIALÚ ASTUITHE GÁIS CEAPTHA TEASA NA HÉIREANN

- Cainníochtú astuithe gáis ceaptha teasa na hÉireann i gcomhthéacs ár dtiomantas Kyoto.
- Cur i bhfeidhm na Treorach um Thrádáil Astuithe, a bhfuil baint aige le hos cionn 100 cuideachta atá ina mór-ghineadóirí dé-ocsaíd charbóin in Éirinn.

TAIGHDE AGUS FORBAIRT COMHSHAOIL

- Taighde ar shaincheisteanna comhshaoil a chomhordú (cosúil le caighdéan aeir agus uisce, athrú aeráide, bithéagsúlacht, teicneolaíochtaí comhshaoil).

MEASÚNÚ STRAITÉISEACH COMHSHAOIL

- Ag déanamh measúnú ar thionchar phleananna agus chláracha ar chomhshaol na hÉireann (cosúil le pleananna bainistíochta dramhaíola agus forbartha).

PLEANÁIL, OIDEACHAS AGUS TREOIR CHOMHSHAOIL

- Treoir a thabhairt don phobal agus do thionscal ar cheisteanna comhshaoil éagsúla (m.sh., iarratais ar cheadúnais, seachaint dramhaíola agus rialacháin chomhshaoil).
- Eolas níos fearr ar an gcomhshaol a scaipeadh (trí cláracha teilifíse comhshaoil agus pacáistí acmhainne do bhunscoileanna agus do mheánscoileanna).

BAINISTÍOCHT DRAMHAÍOLA FHORGHNÍOMHACH

- Cur chun cinn seachaint agus laghdú dramhaíola trí chomhordú An Chláir Náisiúnta um Chosc Dramhaíola, lena n-áirítear cur i bhfeidhm na dTionscnamh Freagrachta Táirgeoirí.
- Cur i bhfeidhm Rialachán ar nós na treoracha maidir le Trealamh Leictreach agus Leictreonach Caite agus le Srianadh Substaintí Guaiseacha agus substaintí a dhéanann ídiú ar an gcrios ózóin.
- Plean Náisiúnta Bainistíochta um Dramhaíl Ghuaiseach a fhorbairt chun dramhaíl ghuaiseach a sheachaint agus a bhainistiú.

STRUCHTÚR NA GNÍOMHAIREACHTA

Bunaíodh an Ghníomhaireacht i 1993 chun comhshaol na hÉireann a chosaint. Tá an eagraíocht á bhainistiú ag Bord lánaimseartha, ar a bhfuil Príomhstiúrthóir agus ceithre Stiúrthóir.

Tá obair na Gníomhaireachta ar siúl trí ceithre Oifig:

- An Oifig Aeráide, Ceadúnaithe agus Úsáide Acmhainní
- An Oifig um Fhorfheidhmiúchán Comhshaoil
- An Oifig um Measúnacht Comhshaoil
- An Oifig Cumarsáide agus Seirbhísí Corparáide

Tá Coiste Comhairleach ag an nGníomhaireacht le cabhrú léi. Tá dáréag ball air agus tagann siad le chéile cúpla uair in aghaidh na bliana le plé a dhéanamh ar cheisteanna ar ábhar imní iad agus le comhairle a thabhairt don Bhord.

NDP
National Development Plan 2007 - 2013

Science, Technology, Research and Innovation for the Environment (STRIVE) 2007-2013

The Science, Technology, Research and Innovation for the Environment (STRIVE) programme covers the period 2007 to 2013.

The programme comprises three key measures: Sustainable Development, Cleaner Production and Environmental Technologies, and A Healthy Environment; together with two supporting measures: EPA Environmental Research Centre (ERC) and Capacity & Capability Building. The seven principal thematic areas for the programme are Climate Change; Waste, Resource Management and Chemicals; Water Quality and the Aquatic Environment; Air Quality, Atmospheric Deposition and Noise; Impacts on Biodiversity; Soils and Land-use; and Socio-economic Considerations. In addition, other emerging issues will be addressed as the need arises.

The funding for the programme (approximately €100 million) comes from the Environmental Research Sub-Programme of the National Development Plan (NDP), the Inter-Departmental Committee for the Strategy for Science, Technology and Innovation (IDC-SSTI); and EPA core funding and co-funding by economic sectors.

The EPA has a statutory role to co-ordinate environmental research in Ireland and is organising and administering the STRIVE programme on behalf of the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government.

epa
Environmental Protection Agency
An Ghníomhaireacht um Chaomhnú Comhshaoil

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
PO Box 3000, Johnstown Castle Estate, Co. Wexford, Ireland
t 053 916 0600 f 053 916 0699
LoCall 1890 33 55 99
e info@epa.ie w http://www.epa.ie

SSTI

Comhshaol, Oidhreacht agus Rialtas Áitiúil
Environment, Heritage and Local Government