

# Housing and Planning

Taking decisive action to address the housing crisis.



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There is a shortage of housing across Ireland and the few homes that are available remain unaffordable to most people. We all know this is a problem that the Government has failed to address. They often claim to be making headway on this issue, but the reality is that the situation continues to worsen. What we need is common-sense reform and Independent Ireland has a plan.

The only way to address the housing crisis is to adopt a comprehensive plan that increases housing supply, reduces costs, and improves access. To accomplish this, we must incentivise new construction and spur property development. The current Government has created an entire generation of people who will never achieve homeownership, unless we enact reforms now.

## Key Policy Positions

- Declare a **housing emergency** to expeditiously implement solutions to the housing crisis;
- **Incentivise vacant property development:** Increase housing stock by introducing tax incentives for property owners to renovate and rent or sell vacant properties; and for those who change property usage to create accommodation;
- **Achieve affordable rents for tenants by making tax-free all rents lower than €1,000;**
  - Extend the Accommodation Recognition Payment (ARP) to all landlords (not just those renting to Ukrainian refugees), and increase the allowable amount to €1,000 from €800;
  - This will reduce inflationary pressure, deflate rent prices, and reduce government expenditure in Housing Assistance Payments (HAP) and other schemes;
  - It will also be profitable for landlords, ensuring their participation; The Government would receive less in tax but spend less in HAP and other schemes;
  - Increase landlord participation in the revised ARP scheme by making it voluntary and permitting landlords to opt-out, should their tenants move out;
  - This would prevent landlords from being “locked-in” to Rent Pressure Zone (RPZ) rates; the fear of which would prevent their participation in a revised ARP scheme;

- **Reform mortgage lending to help people become homeowners:** Reform the banking sector and attract international competition to reduce mortgage costs; increase threshold to allow credit unions to issue mortgages;
- **Encourage Irish builders to return to Ireland from abroad** by providing tax relief for five years to returnees via the Special Assignee Relief Program (SARP);
- **Reduce VAT on building materials** to spur construction, increase supply of homes, and reduce costs;
- **Expand student housing construction** to ensure every student who needs one has a place to stay;
- **Increase infrastructure funding for community and social housing:**  
Allocate more funds to build and maintain sewage, water, and internet to allow construction of community and social housing throughout the country, which will provide affordable housing and reduce homelessness;  
  
-This will allow for dispersion of people to avoid impacting high density areas;  
  
-It will also allow people to downsize and remain in their community, freeing up housing space for the next generation;
- **Prioritise people with strong ties to the community** for social housing, which will benefit both the community and the beneficiary;
- **Promote modular, prefabricated, and log cabin housing:** Encourage the use of modular, prefabricated, and log cabin construction methods to reduce building time and costs, increasing the supply of affordable housing more quickly;
- **Allow downsizing senior citizens to remain near their families** and retain their independence by doubling the size of rear extensions (in areas with insufficient infrastructure and community housing);
- **Expand first-time buyer support:** Allow first-time buyers to reclaim VAT on home purchases;
- **Refurbish derelict state-owned properties and properties** under state stewardship to provide sustainable accommodation to homeless families and children in their local communities;
- **Overhaul public procurement policy** to ensure contractors with track records of building in the public and private sectors can tender for the construction of affordable and social housing;



## Comprehensive Planning Reform

- **Obligate IPAS centres to follow the same planning regulations as every other entity in the country** and allow opponents to file objections with the planning office;
- **Streamline planning permissions:** Simplify and expedite the planning process for residential developments to reduce bureaucratic delays and encourage faster construction of new homes;
- **Simplify rural planning:** Reform planning guidelines to simplify permissions for one-off family homes in rural areas;
- **Require that all pre-planning be done in person:** Empower councils to allow families to build on land they own where they meet criteria for environment and safe access, including on to regional roads;
- **Reform planning framework** – the process should be bottom-up: Local development plan feeds into county development plan, and subsequently into the national planning framework, not the other way around;
- **Allow planning within cities to permit developers to build up** within reason, and with community buy-in.



These common-sense policy changes will alleviate many of the challenges currently faced by the Irish housing market and contribute to a more stable and affordable housing environment.