

UNIT MIX REPORT

Whitehaven Strategic Housing Development



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1 INTRODUCTION

This Unit Mix Report has been prepared by RPS Group Ltd. on behalf of Cosgrave Developments Unlimited Company (the Applicant) to support a planning application for a proposed Strategic Housing Development (SHD) consisting of 255 no. units at lands off Northwood Avenue, Santry, Dublin 9.

This report provides an analysis of the proposed residential unit mix in the context of projected population demographics including prevailing household sizes in the surrounding area, and with consideration for relevant guidelines, policies and objectives that relate to the proposed development.

This report is presented in the following sections:

- **Section 1** – Introduction
- **Section 2** – Proposed Development
- **Section 3** – Policy Context
- **Section 4** – Population Demographics
- **Section 5** – Assessment of Proposed Housing Mix
- **Section 6** – Conclusion.

2 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The subject site extends to c. 1.5 ha and is located on Northwood Avenue within the administrative area of Fingal County Council. Northwood Avenue is a spine road through Northwood linking the Ballymun Road (R108) with the Swords Road (R132) and is located south of the M50.

The proposed development will comprise of construction of a residential development consisting of 5 no. apartment blocks over a shared basement area, providing a total of 255 no. units comprising 11 no. 1-bedroom units, 229 no. 2-bedroom units and 15 no. 3-bedroom units.

The development also includes:

- shared residential services to include a concierge / multifunctional room (c. 246 sq.m.) and gym facility (c. 73 sq.m.) and a childcare facility (c. 398 sq.m.) within the ground floor of Block 1 and associated outdoor play area (c. 189 sq.m.)
- associated car parking spaces, motorbike parking spaces, cycle parking spaces and access ramp to basement level
- private open space to apartments in the form of terraces, balconies and gardens
- communal and public open spaces including play areas
- all associated plant, drainage arrangements, utility connections, substations, boundary treatment, landscaping, public lighting, refuse storage, construction compound and site development works.

A summary of the proposed overall residential unit mix is set out in **Table 2.1**, and a detailed schedule of the proposed apartment units per block is set out in **Table 2.2**.

Table 2.1: Proposed Overall Residential Unit Mix

Apartment Type	No. of Units	% of Development
1 Bedroom	11 units	4.3%
2 Bedroom	229 units	89.8%
3 Bedroom	15 units	5.8%
Total	255 units	100%

Source: MCORM Architect *Housing Quality Assessment*

Table 2.2: Schedule of Apartment Units

Apartment Units	Unit Type	Total Units
Block 1		
1-bedroom unit	7 no.	
2-bedroom unit	42 no.	
3-bedroom unit	0 no.	
Total		49 no.
Block 2		
1-bedroom unit	1 no.	
2-bedroom unit	57 no.	
3-bedroom unit	2 no.	
Total		60 no.
Block 3		
1-bedroom unit	1 no.	
2-bedroom unit	38 no.	
3-bedroom unit	8 no.	
Total		47 no.
Block 4		
1-bedroom unit	1 no.	
2-bedroom unit	49 no.	
3-bedroom unit	2 no.	
Total		52 no.
Block 5		
1-bedroom unit	1 no.	
2-bedroom unit	43 no.	
3-bedroom unit	3 no.	47 no.
Total		255 no.

Source: MCORM Architect *Housing Quality Assessment*

3 POLICY CONTEXT

3.1 National Planning Framework

Project Ireland 2040: National Planning Framework (NPF) is the Government’s high-level plan for the future development of Ireland, with a particular focus on strategic growth and housing. The NPF aims to avoid urban sprawl by promoting increased residential densities in urban areas, consequently reducing pressure on infrastructure demands and adverse impacts on the environment.

The NPF seeks to deliver 550,000 new homes by 2040, with **National Policy Objective 33** stating that it is a national policy to “prioritise the provision of new homes at locations that can support sustainable development and at an appropriate scale of provision relative to location.” (page 92) The NPF expands on this objective, explaining that the future homes of Ireland will be built in locations that support sustainable development such as cities and larger towns with provision of infrastructure, access to services and can be delivered in an efficient and appropriate way.

National Policy Objective 3b states that it is an objective of the NPF to “deliver at least half (50%) of all new homes that are targeted in the five Cities and suburbs of Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Galway and Waterford, within their existing built-up footprints¹” (page 29). In delivering these new homes the NPF aims to achieve inclusive and sustainable communities that are finished to a high standard.

In this regard, **National Policy Objective 4** promotes the delivery of mixed communities and seeks to:

¹ On the basis of National Policy Objective 2a, this effectively targets 25% of all new homes nationally within the five cities and their suburbs as defined by the CSO in the Census of Population.

“ensure the creation of attractive, liveable, well designed, high quality urban places that are home to diverse and integrated communities that enjoy a high quality of life and well-being.”
(page 55)

In accordance with these national policy objectives, it is submitted that the proposed development will provide a high-quality residential development within the Dublin Metropolitan area served by existing and planned public transport services, and in close proximity to existing retail services, employment areas and parks. The proposed development will include a mix of unit types, open space, vehicular and pedestrian infrastructure that will be delivered through a high-quality integrated layout that connects to adjacent existing residential areas. It is therefore considered that the proposed development will contribute to the creation of a sustainable neighbourhood at this highly accessible location in accordance with the national policy objectives set out in the NPF.

3.2 Housing for All

Housing for All is the government’s housing plan to 2030, which was published in September 2021. It is a multi-annual, multi-billion euro plan which will improve Ireland’s housing system and deliver more homes of all types for people with different housing needs. The overall aim of our new housing plan for Ireland is that: *“Everyone in the State should have access to a home to purchase or rent at an affordable price, built to a high standard and in the right place, offering a high quality of life.”*

Housing for All requires, under Housing Policy Objective 4 that Local Authorities prepare *Housing Delivery Action Plans*. These plans shall be cognisant of the need to provide an appropriate unit mix, including an:

“assessment of housing types and sizes, in accordance with local need, including
• *the adequate proportion of 1-, 2-, 3- and 4- bedroom homes aligned with those needs”*

Policy Objective 20.5 in *Housing for All* recognises the need for smaller units to allow householders relocate to smaller units where appropriate:

“Develop a national policy on rightsizing and explore options Q1 2022 DHLGH to support and incentivise rightsizing on a voluntary basis”

Housing for All also recognises the need for housing to meet the varied needs of all members of society including the elderly, the disabled and refugees.

3.3 Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2020

In December 2020, the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government published the updated *Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments, Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2020* (the Apartment Standards). The Apartment Standards take account of the need to enhance apartment output to secure both additional housing supply and more compact urban development patterns, and departmental and stakeholder research and analysis into the deliverability of increased supply of apartments. The guidelines provide guidance having regard for current and likely future housing demand in Ireland, taking account of the *Housing Agency National Statement on Housing Demand and Supply*, the Government’s action programme on housing and homelessness *Rebuilding Ireland, Project Ireland 2040* and the NPF.

The Apartment Standards set parameters with regard to the various elements of an apartment development including inter alia apartment unit mix, dual aspect ratios, floor to ceiling height, amenity space, room sizes and car parking. While several of these parameters are guidelines based on best practice, the Apartment Standards also include Specific Planning Policy Requirements (SPPR) which take precedence over any conflicting policies or objectives set out in Development Plans or Local Area Plans.

The Apartment Standards aim to:

- ***“Enable a mix of apartment types that better reflects contemporary household formation and housing demand patterns and trends, particularly in urban areas;”***

- *Make better provision for building refurbishment and small-scale urban infill schemes;*
- *Address the emerging 'build to rent' and 'shared accommodation' sectors; and*
- *Remove requirements for car-parking in certain circumstances where there are better mobility solutions and to reduce costs" (page 2)*
Our Emphasis

Section 2.18 of the Apartment Standards considers unit mix and states that *"in the context of sustainably increasing housing supply, targeting a greater proportion of urban housing development and matching to the type of housing required, there is a need for greater flexibility"* (page 8). In this context, SPPR 1 states that:

"Apartment developments may include up to 50% one-bedroom or studio type units (with no more than 20-25% of the total proposed development as studios) and there shall be no minimum requirement for apartments with three or more bedrooms. Statutory development plans may specify a mix for apartment and other housing developments, but only further to an evidence-based Housing Need and Demand Assessment (HNDA), that has been agreed on an area, county, city or metropolitan area basis and incorporated into the relevant development plan(s)." (page 9)

Regarding the provisions of SPPR 1, the proposed apartment unit mix is in accordance with the Apartment Standards. As set out in **Section 2** of this report, the proposed development does not include any studio units and will comprise of 11 no. 1-bedroom apartment units. This equates to 4.3% of the total number of apartments.

SPPR 1 does not set limits on the level of 2-bedroom type units that are provided in a single development. SPPR 1 states there is no minimum requirements for 3-bedroom units. The development includes 15 no. 3-bedroom apartment units (5.8% of the proposed number of apartments).

Section 3.7 of the Apartment Standards recommends that no more than 10% of the total number of units in any private residential development may comprise two-bedroom three-person apartment. No 2- bedroom 3-person apartments are proposed as part of the subject development.

The housing mix accords with the specific requirements of the Apartment Standards and the general presumption within the Apartment Standards for flexibility and a range of unit sizes and types.

3.4 Housing Supply Target Methodology for Development Planning

In December 2020 the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage published the *Housing Supply Target Methodology for Development Planning - Guidelines for Planning Authorities* (Housing Supply Guidelines) issued under Section 28 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended) with the aim of strengthening the relationship between national and regional population projections and their integration into the development planning process at local authority level. The document provides very limited guidance on housing types / sizes and is more concerned with overall housing supply.

In support of the Guidelines the ESRI has published Regional Demographics and Structural Housing Demand at County Level. The report notes that headship rates had been steadily increasing in Ireland at a national level up to the 2008 economic downturn. Such a trend has resulted in smaller household sizes.

With regard to types of housing demand the report finds that there may be changes in the demand for different types of housing units up to 2040 and identifies population age and regional variation as key determinants of demand for particular housing types and notes:

"Combining the projected path of the population for each local authority with the observed differences in the mix of housing types, it could be possible to create an approximation to how the demand for different housing types could evolve up to 2040." (page 39)

The ESRI report does not however provide projections on housing type demand within planning authority areas. In the absence of such guidance, it is considered that the provision of a significant quantum of 2

bedroom units within the Dublin Metropolitan Area accords with the general findings reported including higher headship rates and lower household sizes.

3.5 Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy

The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Midland and Eastern Region is to support the implementation of the NPF 2040 and their economic policies and objectives. The RSES aims to promote sustainable growth in identified towns and cities, covering 12 local authorities, including Fingal. In this regard, **Regional Policy Objective 5.4** promotes high density living in the Dublin Metropolitan Area and states that:

“Future development of strategic residential development areas within the Dublin Metropolitan area shall provide for higher densities and qualitative standards as set out in the ‘Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas ‘Sustainable Urban Housing; Design Standards for New Apartments Guidelines’ and ‘Urban Development and Building Heights Guidelines for Planning Authorities.’” (page 112)

The RSES further expands on this objective and explains that in order to provide compact sustainable growth and deliver accelerated housing they must *“promote sustainable consolidated growth of the Metropolitan Area, including brownfield and infill development, to achieve a target to 50% of all new homes within or contiguous to the built-up area of Dublin City and suburbs, and at least 30% in other settlements.”* (page 101)

Having regard for the above, it is highlighted that the proposed development has been designed with consideration for strategic growth on an infill site within the Dublin Metropolitan area, in accordance with the policy objectives set out in the RSES. This development promotes sustainable growth by ensuring the provision of new housing on a site that has been zoned for residential development in close proximity to existing community facilities, retail services and employment. It is therefore considered that this development under the RSES will provide appropriate high quality housing.

3.6 Fingal Development Plan 2017-2023

The *Fingal Development Plan 2017-2023* (the Development Plan) sets out an overall strategy for the planning and sustainable development of the areas within the jurisdiction of Fingal County Council (FCC). Future development of the subject lands is governed by the Development Plan which sets out planning policies and objectives, as well as design standards for the administrative area. The Development Plan advocates a suitable mix of housing types in new residential areas to meet the needs of residents. The Plan encourages homes, whether apartments, traditional houses or otherwise, to be adaptable to the life stage of those living there. It recognises that the needs of a family with children are very different to those of an elderly couple. In this regard the Plan seeks to ensure that the basic structure of the home should be easily adaptable to accommodate these different life stages. The Plan states that *“Residential developments should include a range of house sizes and types to allow for people to remain in an area at every stage of their lives”* (page 71). In this regard Objective PM40 of the Development Plan is to:

“Ensure a mix and range of housing types are provided in all residential areas to meet the diverse needs of residents.” (page 71)

The *Building Life Cycle Report* and the *Architectural Design Statement* parred by McCrossan O’Rourke Manning Architects accompanying the planning application submission confirm that while all apartments proposed are all compliant with the relevant apartment standards the internal layouts may be easily altered to facilitate the needs of the occupants’ overtime depending on their priority at different stages throughout their lifetime.

3.6.1 Housing Strategy

FCC’s housing strategy is set out in Appendix 2 of the Development Plan and identifies existing and future housing demand and seeks to ensure the development of sufficient housing within Fingal. The housing strategy projects an average household figure of 2.9 persons by 2023 and states that:

“57% of all households in the Dublin Region will be for one and two person households, while three person households will account for a further 18%. It is likely that a high proportion of the 18% may be in Fingal but there should be choice so that people can move freely within the area in which they live, as their needs and circumstances change.”
(page 9)

As acknowledged by the strategy, generally the housing stock in Fingal consists of 3-4-bedroom dwelling houses therefore the provision of 2-bedroom apartments units will assist in contributing towards greater choice and a housing stock more consistent with housing demand. The housing strategy recognises that choice in the type of units is required in order to meet the needs of its existing and future population.

4 POPULATION DEMOGRAPHICS

As stated in the NPF *“our population is changing rapidly, with average households becoming both smaller in size and older as an increasing number of people live independently in their later years.”* (page 93)

According to the latest Central Statistics Office (CSO) Census of Population (2016), Fingal has a total population of 296,214 people which makes up 22% of Dublin’s total population. The Census results indicate that the population of Fingal grew from 239,992 in 2006 to 273,991 and 296,020 in 2016. This level of population growth is considerably higher than the national average and among the highest within any county in the State.

4.1.1 Population Age Structure

The age profile of the population at the State and Fingal levels for 2011 and 2016 are highlighted in **Table 4.1**. This table shows that the proportion of 0-14-year olds increased in Fingal but dropped across the State as a whole over this period. The 15-24-year-old age cohort showed an overall decrease of population throughout the State and in Fingal. The 25-44 age cohorts for Fingal and the State also experienced a drop in population with a decrease of 2.1% and 3.0% in these areas respectively. The 65+ age group experienced an increase in population in both areas.

Table 4.1: Population Structure by Age

Area /Age	0 – 14 (%)	15 – 24 (%)	25-44 (%)	45-64 (%)	65+ (%)
State 2011	21.3	12.6	31.6	22.7	11.7
State 2016	21.1	12.1	29.5	23.8	13.4
Change	-0.2%	-0.5%	-2.1%	+1.1%	+1.7%
Fingal 2011	24.2	11.9	36.6	20.0	7.2
Fingal 2016	24.5	11.3	33.6	21.5	9.1
Change	+0.3%	-0.6%	-3.0%	+1.5%	+1.9%

Source: CSO

The data indicates that within Fingal there are, in comparison to national figures, a lot of people in the 0 – 14yr and 25 – 44yr cohorts.

4.1.2 Households and Housing

Census data shows there has been a steady decline in household size within Ireland from 1966 to 2011 (See **Figures 4-1**). The average household size in Ireland remains somewhat above the EU and UK averages. The marginal increase in household size recorded in 2016 is widely attributed to scarcity of supply rather than a long term reversal of an underlying trend. It is anticipated that household size will fall further in the future.

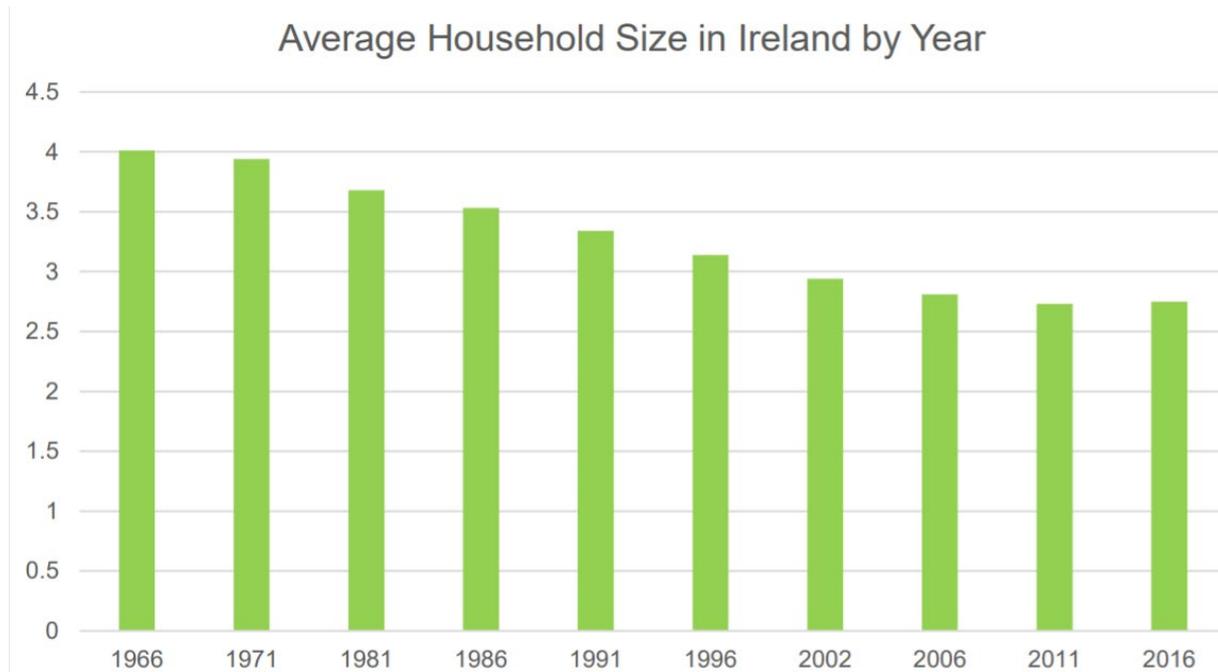


Figure 4-1: Average Household Size - Ireland

Table 4-2 provides a summary of all household sizes in Fingal in 2016. This shows that 60,433 of 96,812 (62%) households in Fingal comprise 1, 2 or 3 people.

Table 4-2: Fingal Household Size

Size of Household in 2016	Number of Households in 2016
1 Person	15,257
2 Person	26,072
3 Person	19,104
4 Person	20,842
5 Person	10,464
6 Person	3,692
7 Person	914
8 Person	467
Total	96,812

Source: CSO

CSO data on housing type shows that a large portion of existing housing stock within Fingal is made up of detached and semi-detached houses. The 2016 census found that in Fingal there were 78,164 no. houses / bungalows and 17,015 no. flats / apartments. Based on these figures, there are c. 4.6 existing houses for each apartment within Fingal (78,164 no. houses / bungalows and 17,015 no. flats / apartments).

The census data shows that households are becoming smaller. There is a significant young population within Fingal who will, in the coming years, be seeking smaller housing units.

5 ASSESSMENT OF PROPOSED HOUSING MIX

Apartments have historically been under provided within Irish town and cities and offer particular advantages for those seeking a smaller housing unit, or to downsize or minimise their building maintenance requirements. Given the existing housing stock within Fingal, the provision of 2-bedroom apartments will cater for the long term and ongoing decline in household size and the established need for a greater number of small residential units.

The proposed development will provide a total of 225 no. residential units, comprising of 11 no. 1-bedroom apartment units, 229 no. 2-bedroom apartment units, 15 no. 3-bedroom units in 5 no. blocks over a shared basement. It is considered that the proposed mix is in accordance with planning policy, the Apartment Standards and is appropriate given projected household sizes and the existing mix of housing units within Fingal.

6 CONCLUSION

As stated in the NPF, with regard to increasing housing demand, *“between 2018 – 2040 an average output of at least 25,000 new homes will need to be provided in Ireland every year to meet people’s needs for well-located and affordable housing, with **increasing demand to cater for one- and two-person households** (our emphasis) (page 94).*

It is evident that apartments are becoming the more appropriate living space for individuals, particularly within the Greater Dublin Area. Apartments account for 12% of all occupied households in Ireland and 35% of occupied households in the Dublin City Council area (CSO).

The Apartment Standards state that *“in the context of sustainably increasing housing supply, targeting a greater proportion of urban housing development and matching to the type of housing required, there is a need for greater flexibility, **removing restrictions that result in different approaches to apartment mix**”*. (page 9). SPPR 1 as set out in the Apartment Standards does not set limits on the provision of 2-bedroom type units within a development, it states:

“Apartment developments may include up to 50% one-bedroom or studio type units (with no more than 20-25% of the total proposed development as studios) and there shall be no minimum requirement for apartments with three or more bedrooms”. (page 9)

This recognises the need for urban housing that matches the type of housing required.

Fingal Housing Strategy 2017-2023 sets a projected average household size of 2.9 by 2023. This is in line with the *NPF 2040* projections *“7 out of 10 households in the state consist of three people or less, which is expected to decline to around 2.5 people per household by 2040”* (page 95). The Development Plan states that *“57% of all households in the Dublin Region will be for one and two person households, while three person households will account for a further 18%. It is likely that a high proportion of the 18% may be in Fingal but there should be choice so that people can move freely within the area in which they live, as their needs and circumstances change”*. (page 9)

From analysing the population of Fingal and on review of national and local policy, it is evident that a greater proportion of 2-bedroom units are needed to match Fingal’s household profile and the projected decrease in average household size.

Having regard for the above, it is noted that the proposed development will comprise of 11 no. 1- bed apartments, accounting for 4.3% of the overall units, 229 no. 2-bed apartments (89.8%) and 15 no. 3-bed apartments (5.8%). This provision is within the requirements set out under SPPR 1 and has been designed with consideration for the age profile and trends in household composition of Fingal together with its strategic location. The location of the site on a planned high quality public transport link between Dublin City Centre, Dublin Airport and the Swords area further point to the appropriateness of the proposed development.

WHITEHAVEN STRATEGIC HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

Taking all the above points into consideration, the proposed development will deliver 255 no. units is in line with *NPF 2040* and play an important role towards contributing to the delivery of at least 250,000 new homes in Ireland by 2040. The mix of apartment sizes is well positioned to cater for Fingal's projected decreasing average household size and is consistent with national guidelines and is in accordance with national, regional and county policy regarding unit mix.