

A7

Integrated Rural Tourism and Recreational Complexes



Appendix A7

Rural Tourism and Recreational Complexes and Associated Residential Development

Policy Document



A7.1 Introduction

The IRTRC policy was adopted on the 18th of December 2007 as a variation to the 2005-2011 Waterford County Development Plan. It is incorporated into the County Development Plan 2011-2017.

A7.2 Rural Tourism

It is recognised that the growth of the tourism industry is critical to the economy of the County. This is particularly true in the rural areas where employment opportunities are reducing and traditional employment levels in agriculture are in decline. While seeking to ensure that most tourism developments with associated accommodation facilities are located in or close to towns or villages or on tourism zoned lands, the Council recognises that, by its nature, some tourism developments may require other locations. In this regard consideration will be given to the provision of Integrated Rural Tourism and Recreational Complexes *and* Medium sized developments at appropriate locations throughout the County.

A7.3 Integrated Rural Tourism and Recreational Complexes

In recent years, there has been an increase in the demand for, and development of, Integrated Rural Tourism and Recreational Complexes and Golf Courses. Associated with this has been the demand for housing, either for temporary letting as holiday homes or for permanent residential use. It is acknowledged that the provision of accommodation of an individual unit nature, (self contained apartments, lodges, chalets or houses) is emerging as an integral element of the Integrated Rural Tourism and Recreational Complex (IRTRC).

An Integrated Rural Tourism and Recreational Complex can be defined as a high quality tourism development located in a rural location which includes the following:

- A quality hotel (min 50 beds); and
- A leisure centre/spa, conference centre or similar; and
- Other facilities such as an 18 hole golf club or a similar major public facility such as an Adventure centre, marina, or an indoor recreation centre.

Such proposals may also include tourism related residential developments, which are ancillary to the main tourist attraction. The Council also recognises that an element of permanent housing may be considered to balance seasonal fluctuations in population associated with such tourism developments, and to support the initial economic viability of such proposals, which will be important generators of employment in rural areas.

Consideration will be given to the provision of IRTRCs where the developments comply with the following criteria:

- Complies with the Scenic Landscape Evaluation and coastal development and landscape policies;
- Relates to the scale and level of activity in the locality;
- Will not have a significant adverse impact on the character or siting of settlements or the amenity of existing residents;
- Will not have a significant adverse affect on the character or appearance of the County's countryside and will generally retain the open nature of the land;
- Will not impact on road safety or the free flow of traffic;
- Will not have a significant adverse impact on sites of nature conservation value or archaeological importance or the built heritage;
- New dwellings are of a good standard of design and are sympathetic to the landscape in terms of their siting, design and materials; and

- Include a phasing plan for the provision of the proposed facilities.

An IRTRC proposal should be a sustainable development, which demonstrated long term viability. Overall there should be an emphasis on innovation in design and layout providing for an integrated development linking units to open space and facilities. Existing site features, including trees and hedgerows should be retained as far as possible to form a comprehensive landscaping scheme.

Applications for IRTRCs containing holiday homes should be accompanied by details of an agreement that the overall development will be retained in single management or as a time share, short term letting of similar arrangement. In no instance shall the holiday homes/holiday units be sold for or used as permanent dwelling places. Permanent residences may be permitted in association with an IRTRC application and the criteria as set out in Section 6.18 of the County Development Plan.

Screening for Appropriate Assessment will be carried out where required to ensure that there is no negative impact on the integrity (defined by the structure and function and conservation objectives) of any Natura 2000 site located at or adjacent to a proposed site for an IRTRC development and that the requirements of Articles 6 (3) and (4) of the EU Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC are fully satisfied.

A7.4 Medium Sized Tourism Developments and Associated Holiday Homes

Medium sized tourism developments of a local scale may have the capacity to accommodate holiday homes. A smaller tourism development may consist of the provision of any of the following:

- A quality hotel (minimum of 50 bedrooms); or
- A golf course; or
- A major equestrian centre, holiday camp (similar to Trabolgan), marina, adventure centre, sporting activities with a maritime/estuarine location; or
- Similar type facility of regional attraction.

A7.5 Tourist Accommodation and Facilities

The development of tourism accommodation is crucial to the effective development of the tourism industry in the County. Apartment type developments are best located within the existing established tourism centres. Clustered holiday home developments will also be most appropriate in these centres, or in other settlements throughout the County where facilities and services are available or on tourism zoned lands or as part of IRTRC or medium sized tourism developments. In settlement areas outside of established tourism centres, it is important to ensure that holiday home developments will not impact negatively on the existing residential community (e.g. seasonal fluctuations in population levels and the closure of services during winter months).

A7.6 Holiday Homes & Second Homes

In keeping with the Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines for Planning Authorities, there will be a presumption against holiday home/ second home development in areas outside of settlements, in Visually Vulnerable and Sensitive Areas, and along Scenic Routes as designated in the Scenic Evaluation Map. However, consideration will be given to the development of appropriately scaled holiday homes on tourism zoned lands or as part of IRTRC or medium sized tourism developments. The Council will encourage suitably scaled clusters of holiday homes in settlements and in IRTRC's, and will facilitate tourist houses in

areas where such development will not contravene the Council's County Settlement Strategy as outlined in Chapter 4 and/or the Rural Tourism policy.

A7.7 Tourism Development

The Council requires that planning applications for developments of this nature to demonstrate that the development provides for all year round usage. Any residential tourism development must demonstrate that it:

- Does not place unsustainable demands upon the existing or planned infrastructure capacity of the area;
- Does not conflict with the maintenance of the natural and cultural heritage of the area;
- Is located within or adjacent to an established settlement node, on tourism zoned lands or in association with an IRTRC or a viable tourism facility; or medium sized tourism development.
- Reinforces the provision of non-residential tourism facilities in the County either through integration with established facilities or by the provision of new facilities; and
- Minimises the need for additional vehicular journeys to/ from visitor facilities in the immediate environs.

A7.8 Development of an IRTRC and Housing on a Green Field Site

On a green field site, consideration shall only be given to the provision of dwellings/tourist accommodation units, where it is demonstrated that they are in accordance with the relevant criteria set out hereunder.

A7.8.1 Development of Holiday Homes in Association with an IRTRC on a Green Field Site

The following standards shall be applied to holiday home development on green field sites:

- The provision of holiday homes will only be considered where the total landholding is not less than 100 acres (40ha);
- The number of holiday homes permitted will be dependence on site specifics – area of site, location, degree of visibility, natural screening, and scale of tourist facilities available /to be provided. Each case will be assessed on its merits;
- The building height/scale of the units shall be relative to the complex, the topography and screening of the site, etc;
- The holiday homes/units shall be clustered in an open plan layout with shared amenity space;
- The IRTRC and associated holiday homes/accommodation, excluding any related limited provision of permanent housing, should be developed and managed as a single unit;
- The holiday homes shall be used for short term occupation only and not used for permanent residential use. Where holiday homes are sold or transferred in ownership, the new owner shall be required to enter into a legal agreement with the Planning Authority that the unit shall not be used as a permanent home;

- The developer will be required to pay a special financial contribution towards the provision of social and affordability housing which will be calculated using a similar methodology to that applicable under Part V of the Planning and Development Act (as amended);
- All development shall have regard to the Scenic Landscape Evaluation and specific site suitability for development – drainage, access, etc;
- Provision of adequate water supply to serve the development and safe treatment and disposal of sewage, which would not prejudice the ground water quality in the area;
- All applications for an IRTRC development must be accompanied by a detailed business proposal outlining the financial viability of the proposal. A detailed phasing plan must also be submitted as part of any prospective application; and
- There shall be a general presumption against development on the seaward side of the nearest road to the coastline except in designated settlement as set out in the Plan or in exceptional circumstances where the Planning Authority is satisfied that the proposed development shall not have a significant adverse effect on the surrounding landscape and amenity of the area. There shall also be a presumption against development on/or adjacent to areas protected under the Habitats Directive and Natural Heritage Areas.

Screening for Appropriate Assessment will be carried out where required to ensure that there is no negative impact on the integrity (defined by the structure and function and conservation objectives) of any Natura 2000 site located at or adjacent to a proposed site for an IRTRC development and that the requirements of Articles 6 (3) and (4) of the EU Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC are fully satisfied.

A7.8.2 Development of Permanent Homes in Association with an IRTRC on a Green Field Site

The following standards shall be applied to permanent residential development on green field sites:

- The provision of dwellings will only be considered where the total landholding is not less than 100 acres (40ha);
- The Planning Authority shall require, in line with a detailed phasing plan, that the tourism element of the IRTRC be substantial constructed prior to the development of any of the permanent residences or under exceptional circumstances that the permanent houses be built in tandem with the tourism element;
- The number of dwellings permitted will be dependence on site specifics – Location, topography, degree of visibility, natural screening, etc. Each case will be assessed on its merits. However in no case shall the number of dwellings provided exceed 1 unit per 10 acres;
- Detached dwellings only will be considered (to avoid urban/suburban patterns of development which would be unsuitable in a rural setting);
- Minimum site size of 0.5 acres (0.2ha);
- All development shall be required to comply with the minimum development standards as set out in the County Development Plan 2011-2017, except where in conflict with the above specified standards;
- The developer will be required to pay a special financial contribution towards the provision of social and affordability housing which will be calculated using a similar methodology to that applicable under Part V of the Planning and Development Act (as amended);
- All development shall have regard to the Scenic Landscape Evaluation and specific site suitability for development – drainage, access, etc; and

- Provision of adequate water supply to serve the development and safe treatment and disposal of sewage, which would not prejudice the ground water quality in the area.

A7.9 Development of an IRTRC and Housing in Association with a Protected Structure

Consideration shall only be given to the provision of holiday homes and permanent dwellings where the Protected Structure or group of structures within the curtilage and/or attendant grounds are being refurbished and adapted for sustainable use. Such a decision shall be based on a full appraisal of the structure and setting. Appropriate subdivision of a structure may also be an option (Prevalent in UK and Northern Ireland especially near cities and major towns).

For both permanent and holiday home development of the Protected Structure or structures within the curtilage and /or attendant grounds of a Protected Structure, the standards set out above for green field sites will applied, in addition to the standards set out below:

- The immediate grounds of the main structure/complex and the avenue/driveway/entrances of the main structure/complexes shall be maintained free from housing development and associated works.
- New housing shall be screened from the Main Structure/complex by either the topography of the site or existing mature landscaping. Where there is no existing screening arising from either topography or planting, a minimum separation distance of 500m will be required to be maintained (this is a minimum guideline only and a greater separation distance may be required in certain circumstances).
- The building height of the dwellings shall be relative to the complex, the topography and screening of the site, etc, but in no case will the building height exceed that of the protected structure.
- Consideration could be given to the conversion of existing stone stable buildings/courtyard building to high quality tourist accommodation.
- All applications for an IRTRC development must be accompanied by a detailed business proposal outlining the financial viability of the proposal. A detailed phasing plan must also be submitted as part of any prospective application.

However, it should be borne in mind that these are indicative maximum thresholds and not the minimum expectation of the developer. Regardless of the above criteria, some sites may not be suitable for such development. The suitability of the site will be determined by the Planning Authority and will be based on reports, and the potential impact of the proposed developments on the character of the Protected Structure and its setting (if applicable).

A7.10 Guidelines for Development of an IRTRC and Housing in Association with a Protected Structure

In all cases, prospective developers will be required to hold pre-planning discussions with the Planning Section, the Conservation Officer and the Heritage Officer. Preplanning with Fáilte Ireland would be advisable. Information to be submitted with any such application should include:

- A Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment report of the Protected Structure, which may include a Building Conditions and Conservation Report; (This is dependent on the site and level of proposed development);
- Description of intervention works necessary to consolidate the Protected Structure;
- Description of proposed works necessary to ensure continued use of the building (change of use will be considered where appropriate);

- Description of proposed dwellings, including site specific designs of the proposed housing which demonstrates that regard was had to the topography, landscape features and the built heritage of the site;
- Assessment of impact of proposed housing on the Protected Structure, its curtilage, setting and its landscape features;
- Assessment of the impact of the proposed development on the natural heritage of the site. This may include a tree survey and flora and fauna survey. (In some cases, this may be included in the Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment);
- A Masterplan for the holistic approach to the development of the site is necessary as careful management of the house, gardens and demesnes, which should be considered assets, will benefit public and developers alike;
- There shall be a general presumption against development on seaward side of the nearest road to the coastline except in designated settlement as set out in the Plan or in exceptional circumstances where the Planning Authority is satisfied that the proposed development shall not have a significant adverse effect on the surrounding landscape and amenity of the area. There shall also be a presumption against development on/or adjacent to areas protected under the Habitats Directive and Natural Heritage Areas; and
- Assessment of the impact of the proposed development on the natural heritage of the site. This may include a tree survey and flora and fauna survey. “Screening for Appropriate Assessment will be carried out where required to ensure that there is no negative impact on the integrity (defined by the structure and function and conservation objectives) of any Natura 2000 site located at or adjacent to a proposed site for an IRTDC development and that the requirements of Articles 6 (3) and (4) of the EU Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC are fully satisfied.

The complexity of the reports required would be dependence on the specific site and the level of development proposed. Prospective developers should comply with:

- Appendix B; Architectural Heritage Impact Assessments, The Architectural Heritage Protection, Guidelines for Planning Authorities, DoEHLG, 2004; and
- ‘Guidance Notes for the Appraisal of Historic Gardens, Demesnes, Estates and their settings’, Cork County Council, April 2007.

A7.11 Development of Medium Sized Tourism Developments and Associated Holiday Homes on Unzoned Lands

The following criteria would have to be complied with for the development of a medium sized tourism facility with associated holiday homes:

- The provision of holiday homes will only be considered where the total landholding is not less than 30 acres (12ha);
- The number of holiday homes permitted will be dependence on site specifics – area of site, location, degree of visibility, natural screening, and scale of tourist facilities available/to be provided. Each case will be assessed on its merits;
- A business plan shall be submitted with any application to demonstrate the long term viability and sustainability of the tourism development and associated holiday homes;
- The tourism development should not detract from any existing tourism facilities in the area;
- The tourism facility and any associated holiday homes shall be built and managed as a single unit by a management company;
- No permanent dwellings shall be permitted in association with the tourist facility/development;

- The developer will be required to pay a special financial contribution towards the provision of social and affordable housing which will be calculated using a similar methodology to that applicable under Part V of the Planning and Development Act (as amended);
- All development shall have regard to the Scenic Landscape Evaluation and specific site suitability for development – drainage, access, etc;
- The building height/scale of the holiday homes shall be relative to the topography and screening of the site, etc;
- The holiday homes/units shall be clustered in an open plan layout with shared amenity space;
- All development shall be required to comply with the minimum development standards as set out in the County Development Plan 2011-2017, except where in conflict with the above specified standards;
- The facility and units should be accessible to all, and fully compliant with Part M of the Building Regulations; and
- There shall be a general presumption against development on seaward side of the nearest road to the coastline except in designated settlement as set out in the Plan or in exceptional circumstances where the Planning Authority is satisfied that the proposed development shall not have a significant adverse effect on the surrounding landscape and amenity of the area. There shall also be a presumption against development on/or adjacent to areas protected under the Habitats Directive and Natural Heritage Areas.

Regardless of the above criteria, some sites may not be suitable for such development. The suitability of the site will be determined by the Planning Authority during the planning application stage.