**Planning** for **Rural & Urban** Areas

If you are considering building in a **Rural** area (countryside) it is important to strike the right balance between a number of factors.

**The impact the dwelling will have on its natural landscape**

**The comfort & quality of life for the home owner**

**Access to roads**

**Water supply**

**Four stages to be considered when planning in a rural area**

Choosing a site (carefully)

Accessing a sites potential

Selecting an appropriate house design

Devising a suitable landscape

Choosing a Site

Do your research on the area in relation to the design and construction of house. Seek the local County Development Plan for more information. Consider the landscape in which the house is to be sited this is essential as it will have a huge impact in the design if the house. Ensure that the site has potential to be suitable for development before you do anything.

Assessing the Sites Potential

Access to the site from the road

Shelter & Privacy

Orientation of the house to the sun (very Important)

Existing Boundaries (Trees, Hedges, Streams etc)

Location of Waste Water Treatment System

Selecting an appropriate house design

Unfortunately over the past 30 plus years many houses that have been built are alien to the Irish Countryside/Landscape. It is important that any future developments of homes in the countryside should echo that of previous generations meaning the design should be simple and rely on good proportions. The use of materials and colours should only lend itself to the natural landscape and therefore make a positive impact. Very large house should be broken down into smaller components that make it more viable to the setting it finds itself. If the appearance of the overall site is not in keeping it simply looks out of place and could ruin the landscape especially if it breaks the skyline.

Devising an appropriate landscape design

Native hedging and the use of mature trees that are currently on site should be continued to be used elsewhere on site this not only shows continuity but helps enormously in term of privacy & shelter.

Pick suitable planting the will lend itself to the landscape and also give the house a feeling that the it has always been there, planting close to the base of the house will allow you to form a connection between the house and the site

Planning to build in an **Urban** area (town)

Building in an urban area differs from that of Rural areas. In this case blending with natural landscapes is not as relevant. This is due to the fact that when residential development are being planned it usually involves the clearing of a large site and starting from scratch.

There are three main stages to be considered within rural development

Contextual Design Features

Visual Design Features

Physical Design Features

**Contextual Design**

It is important to look at the bigger picture, like the quality of life. When a large number of people live in a small area there is a bigger need for convenient services and facilities like:

Retail - Newsagents & Grocery Shopping

Recreational - Sports (gyms, swimming pools), cinema, pubs, café, parks and other open public areas

Educational – Primary & Secondary Schools, Library

Spiritual – Church’s and other places of Worship

Transport – Adequate public transport with links to urban centres (buses, rail network)

A home owner should ideally like to purchases daily items very close to the home in order to avoid travelling in car, Children ideally also would benefit if there distance to school was within walking distance. Recreational facilities should also be made available close by and accessible to those who live nearby.

In large developments it is also a good idea to include a variety of house say 3 bed, 4 bed, detached semi-detached and also space made available for extension’s so that the owners can comfortably increase their home for an ever increasing family.

**Visual Design**

This involves looking at each element of the development (houses, apartments blocks, roads, footpaths, planting etc …One of the first things to look at is the Landscape Structure. This involves the consideration of:

The amount of open space in the development

The system of roads

Height to weight ratio of the streets

A variety of spaces created (long winding streets, parking squares, high density blocks)

Use of planting to provide scale and soften the landscape

The position of the houses and the topography of the site

The way in which these are arranged will clearly determine the character of the development and can transform a once dull impersonal place to that of a vibrant interesting neighbourhood.

It is also important to note that a selection of local material be included in the development in order to connect them to the area.

**Physical Design**

The most important aspect of any development is of course the houses within it. The collection of such housing has a great impact on the immediate surroundings and also impact on the people who live within the development. Services and vehicular movement are other such elements to be considered.

The homes should be well laid out and of adequate size, larger and well placed windows should make the living spaces positive places to live in.

Home owners should enjoy privacy of their homes. Rear gardens are often a place for recreationally use and this space should be large enough to include the following:

Not over looked onto neighbouring housing

Sound acoustically should not impact on quality of living.

Garden are adequately sized for storage, waste (wheelie bins) and a future development (extention)

Boundries or (screening) are very important (above eye contact)to formally create a sense of one’s own space/land/privacy

Modern developments must ensure that a distance of 22metres is maintained from the back of one house to another

The supply of electricity and Water are essential to every development, other service include gas, removal of waste. The provision for such is often located underground

The parking and movement of cars is an essential element of housing development design