



CHY 22684

Submission to the Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029

Housing and Sustainable Communities

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The development of Age Friendly Homes in Clonlara

1. Introduction

Living well in our old age is so important to us all, today as we age, we are all healthier, more active and more engaged with our communities and the wider world. Because people's life expectations have changed and are expected to live a much longer healthier active lives, the need for Age friendly housing options and healthcare support is very important.

According to the WHO healthy ageing is defined as developing and maintaining the functional ability that enables well-being in older age. Functional ability is determined by the intrinsic capacity of an individual (i.e., an individual's physical and mental capacities), the environment in which he or she lives (understood in the broadest sense and including physical, social and policy environments) and the interactions among them. One of the key action areas outlined in the UN Decade of Healthy Ageing (2021–2030) strategy is to ensure that communities foster the abilities of older people.

Research has shown that as people age, they wish to remain in their own homes in their own communities. Remaining in their own communities is the most important consideration as the fear of isolation and distance from families causes stress and potential poor health. Older people recount that living in older large family homes often isolated is no longer suitable for their needs.

2. Age Friendly communities and housing needs

Clare Rural Development Strategy 2029 states: “*there is an urgent need to consider all generations and all ages when planning*”

There is now an opportunity to address the needs of Clonlara's older generation's housing needs. Clonlara and its environs is mainly rural with many of the older generation living in one off houses or isolated farms.

By the provision of :

- A. A retirement village or a scheme of co operative housing placed in the centre of the village for active retired residents wishing to downsize their existing homes
- B. Include a number of customised age friendly accommodation within any new developments suitable for the elderly.
- C. Independent supervised living accommodation for the less active or more vulnerable members of our community. (COVID has taught us that the existing model for care of the elderly is not a suitable option for the future) .

- D. This strategy should be extended county wide so that any future housing developments would include a number of custom-built units to facilitate an aging population
- E. Increased life expectancy can be considered an achievement of Public Health, however the demographic shift towards an older population in Ireland also has wider implications, particularly in rural communities. Projections suggest the Irish population will reach 6.5 million by 2070 (Eurostat) however, the population aged 65 and over is set to grow significantly faster than the working age population.
- F. According to data from The Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing (TILDA) over half of adults aged over 50y over experience some type of housing problem. Most frequently reported problems are damp/mould, structural problems and heating difficulties. Adults who report difficulty heating their homes have poorer self-rated health and this cohort would especially benefit from home improvement, energy efficiency and fuel allowance schemes.

There are many advantages to including these types of arrangements in any future housing developments, free up existing housing stock that is more suitable for families, prevent isolation and exclusion of our elderly, allow our vulnerable residents “safety and security at home” and also most importantly remain in their own community.

Aligned with housing Clonlara Development Group would also require development of suitable amenities and venues to facilitate activities and social gatherings for our older population.

3. Summary

Clonlara because of its proximity to both Limerick city and the University of Limerick and its many natural built and environment heritage has become a very desirable area to set up home and build a family. This has had many advantages for Clonlara as it allows the community to grow and develop. What we have to ensure is that our aging population are not forgotten in these developments. Clare Co Co and the community need to work together to provide housing/ accommodation options that allow our elders to remain in the community that they, through the many organisations and associations over the years have put a lot of effort and hard work building a vibrant community in Clonlara.

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