

# STRATEGIC HOUSING DEVELOPMENT, BLACKWOOD SQUARE, NORTHWOOD AVENUE, SANTRY, DUBLIN 9

## Unit Mix Report



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**UNIT MIX REPORT**

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## Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>POLICY CONTEXT</b> .....	<b>2</b>
3.1	National Planning Framework .....	2
3.2	Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2018 .....	2
3.3	Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy.....	3
3.4	Fingal Development Plan 2017-2023.....	3
3.4.1	Housing Strategy .....	4
<b>4</b>	<b>POPULATION DEMOGRAPHICS</b> .....	<b>4</b>
4.1.1	Population Age Structure .....	4
4.1.2	Households and Families .....	5
<b>5</b>	<b>PROPOSED UNIT MIX AND APARTMENTS GUIDELINES</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>ASSESSMENT AND CONCLUSIONS</b> .....	<b>6</b>

## Tables

Table 2.1:	Schedule of Apartment Units and Areas. ....	1
Table 2.2:	Proposed Overall Residential Unit Mix. ....	2
Table 4.1:	Population Structure by Age.....	4
Table 4.2:	Size of families in Fingal 2016.....	5
Table 4.3:	Most popular household types in Fingal 2016.....	5

## 1 INTRODUCTION

This Unit Mix Report has been prepared by RPS Group Ltd. on behalf of Cosgrave Developments to support a planning application for a proposed Strategic Housing Development (SHD) at lands off Northwood Avenue, Santry, Dublin 9.

This report has had regard to the Opinion, Inspector's Report and Meeting Record issued by An Bord Pleanála following the Tripartite Preapplication Meeting held in relation to the subject site (Ref. ABP-305029-19) which sets out that a report be included with the application for permission which demonstrates that the proposed residential unit mix is consistent with the *Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments, Guidelines for Planning Authorities' (2018)*.

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 scheme.

## 2 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The proposed development will provide a total of 331 no. residential units, comprising of 6 no. 1-bedroom apartment units, 292 no. 2-bedroom apartment units, 33 no. 3-bedroom units in 4 no. 7-storey plus penthouse blocks (8-storeys) over a shared basement. The development will also provide associated resident facilities including a multi-functional room, concierge and gym. In addition, 5 no. ground floor units (accommodating class 1, 2 and 8, café and restaurant use) and childcare facility will be provided which will deliver a range of services to meet local need.

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

**Table 2.1: Schedule of Apartment Units and Areas.**

Schedule of Apartment Units and Areas		
	No. of Units	Area
<b>Block A (88 units)</b>		
1 Bed	2	50.0 – 70.7sq.m
2 Bed	63	81 - 100.8sq.m
3 Bed	23	99 – 121sq.m
Residential Concierge		81.5 sq.m
Residential Multi-function Area		133 sq.m
Residential Gym		140 sq.m
<b>Block B (77 units)</b>		
2 Bed	70	80 – 91sq.m
3 Bed	7	105 - 119sq.m
Unit 1		239 sq.m
Unit 2		216 sq.m
Unit 3		102 sq.m
<b>Block C (77 units)</b>		
2 Bed	76	80 – 110sq.m
3 Bed	1	105 sq.m
Childcare Facility		224 sq.m
Units 4		140 sq.m
Units 5		242 sq.m
<b>Block D (89 units)</b>		
1 Bed	4	50 – 58sq.m
2 Bed	83	76 – 99sq.m
3 Bed	2	107 – 110sq.m

Source: Architect Schedules

**Table 2.2: Proposed Overall Residential Unit Mix.**

<b>Proposed Overall Residential Unit Mix</b>		
<b>Apartment Type</b>	<b>No. of Units</b>	<b>% of Development</b>
1 Bed	6 units	1.9%
2 Bed	292 units	88.2%
3 Bed	33 units	9.9%
Total	331 units	100%

Source: MCORM Architect Schedules

### 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 footprints<sup>1</sup>” (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: “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 suburbs of Dublin city, and in close proximity to existing schools, community facilities, retail services and employment areas. 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 and future housing 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 Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2018

In March 2018, the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government published the updated *Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments, Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2018* (the New Apartment Standards). The updated document builds on previous guidelines published in 2015 taking account of; experience in their implementation since 2015; the need to enhance apartment output to secure both additional housing supply and more compact urban development patterns; and

<sup>1</sup> 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.

departmental and stakeholder research and analysis into the deliverability of increased supply of apartments. The guidelines state:

*“These Guidelines update previous guidance in the context of greater evidence and knowledge of 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 and Project Ireland 2040 and the National Planning Framework, published since the 2015 guidelines.” (page 1)*

The New 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 New 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.

### 3.3 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 schools, community facilities, retail services and employment. It is therefore considered that this development under the RSES will provide accelerated high-density housing.

### 3.4 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 *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.

### 3.4.1 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 choice. 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**

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

Source: CSO

### 4.1.2 Households and Families

The Census 2016 shows that there were 27,176 two-person families in Fingal - representing the most common household type in this administrative area at 35.1%. **Table 4.2** provides a summary of all family sizes in Fingal in 2016.

**Table 4.2: Size of families in Fingal 2016.**

Size of families in 2016:	Number of families in 2016:
2 Persons	27,176
3 Persons	18,484
4 Persons	19,522
5 Persons	8,852
6 Persons or more	3,312
Total	77,346

Source: CSO

**Table 4.3** shows the top three family types in Fingal. After families with children, one-person households were the most common type of household in Fingal representing 23.8% amongst the following three household types.

**Table 4.3: Most popular household types in Fingal 2016.**

Type of households:	Number of households:
Married couple with children	35,517
One person households	15,257
Married couple	13,276

Source: CSO

With regard to the above, the census data for 2016 shows that Fingal has a slightly higher population in the age cohorts of 0-14 years old and 45-65-year olds, yet 15-44-year olds experienced a decrease in individuals. This data suggests that those with young families typically between 25-44 years old may be moving away from Fingal therefore residential units of 2-bedrooms are considered to be appropriate and are likely to meet an increased demand over time. This is further justified as the most common family size was a 2-person family, accounting for 35.1% of families in Fingal. Furthermore, one person households were more common than married couple households signalling that smaller unit sizes will be more desirable within the administrative area.

## 5 PROPOSED UNIT MIX AND APARTMENTS GUIDELINES

The New 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” (our emphasis). (page 2)*

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 New Apartment Standard guidelines. As set out in **Section 2** of this report, the proposed development will comprise of 6 no. 1-bedroom units, equating to 1.9% of the total number of apartments. Regarding 3-bedroom units the development is comprised of 33 units (9.9% of the development). SPPR 1 does not impose a minimum quantum of 1-bedroomed units and states there is no minimum requirements for 3-bedroom units. Indeed, it is noted that SPPR 1 does not set limits on the level of 2-bedroom type units that are provided in a single development. Importantly it is highlighted that the Development Plan encourages an appropriate mix of units to be provided within new development and does not include thresholds to which proposals must comply. In this regard the proposed development is compliant with both the New Apartment Guidelines and the Development Plan. Furthermore, as stated in **Section 3**, the housing strategy for the County notes that 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 choice. The housing strategy therefore recognises that choice in the type of units is required in order to meet the needs of its existing and future population.

## 6 ASSESSMENT AND CONCLUSIONS

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 desired 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 (*Census Statistics Office*).

*Fingal Housing Strategy 2017-2023* created 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 proposed development is largely comprised of 2-bedroom units (292 no. units). Considering the population change, average household size and the context of the site, it is envisaged that this development will experience a strong demand particularly due to its location on a planned high quality public transport link between Dublin City Centre and Dublin Airport and the Swords area.

The New 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 8) This promotes the need for urban housing that matches the type of housing required. From analysing the population of Fingal, 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.

While 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%.”(page 9),* it is noted that SPPR 1 as set out in the New 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)*

## UNIT MIX REPORT

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Having regard for the above, it is noted that the proposed development will comprise of 6 no. 1- bed apartments, accounting for 1.9% of the overall units, 292 no. 2-bed apartments (88.2%) and 33 no. 3-bed apartments (9.9%). 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.

Taking all the above points into consideration we submit to An Bord Pleanála that the proposed development will deliver 331 no. units is in line with *NPF 2040* and play an important role towards contributing to the delivery of at least 25,000 new homes in Ireland by 2040. While the proposed development is comprised of predominantly 2-bedroom units (292 units), 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.

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