

## PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT GUIDANCE NOTE

### INTRODUCTION

The physical environment plays an important role in the quality of life of residents and in building sustainable communities. The issue of the physical environment is consistently among the top three priority issues for most RAPID Area Implementation Teams. From a national perspective this connection is further confirmed in academic research. In *Social Housing in Ireland: A Study of Success, Failure and Lessons Learned* (1999, Tony Fahey, ed.) Michelle Norris observed “the planning and design of estates and the physical standard of the accommodation in which people live affects the quality of their day-to-day lives in an obvious and immediate way.”

Her findings from research in seven local authority estates that are located in areas subsequently designated as RAPID areas suggest that “Residents are concerned about issues such as access to services, the design and use of public space, the quality of construction of individual dwellings, the quality of the heating systems and the adequacy of security measures”.

### THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT AND RAPID

RAPID offers a valuable inter-agency/ community vehicle for developing, co-ordinating and implementing strategies and actions to improve the physical environment in RAPID areas and to build sustainable communities in disadvantaged areas.

The twelve projects profiled in *RAPID in Action: Physical Environment and Community Safety Case Studies* confirm that RAPID areas have prioritised the following four issues:

- Housing / estate management
- Recreational facilities
- Waste / environmental management
- Traffic

These four areas comprise the sub-themes under the Physical Environment Strategic Theme and plans from RAPID areas should focus on these four areas.

***Housing / Estate Management*** – Approaches to dealing with boarded-up housing and timely re-letting of properties; development of estate management approaches; documenting and disseminating models of resident / agency collaboration and partnership; maximizing opportunities for joint decision-making and implementation of best practice in terms of resident – local authority relations; and new resources including Tenant Liaison Officer / Tenancy Enforcement Officers.

***Play / Recreational Facilities*** – More innovative play facilities that move from traditional playgrounds to encourage active use for a range of age groups and as a venue for integrated service delivery that might support health and family support issues. Focusing on ways of developing recreational and sporting facilities for all in the area.

**Waste / Environmental Management** – Implementation of local strategies to encourage residents to reduce, reuse and recycle.

**Traffic** – Improved safety for pedestrians and traffic in local areas.

## RESULTS

Sub-theme	Result	Indicator
<b>Housing / Estate Management</b>	Enhanced quality and quantity of housing stock in RAPID areas	Reduction in number of boarded up houses in estates Upgrading of houses under Remedial works Scheme and Housing Management Initiative Development of infill houses/ other responses to counteract issues of anti-social behaviour
	Estate Management Structures Operational	Estate management groups in place and meeting regularly Estate management policies developed and being implemented Agreed Local Authority / Community communication mechanism in place Employment of Tenant Liaison officers and Tenant Enforcement Officers focused on RAPID areas
	Enhanced quality and quantity of Traveller Accommodation in RAPID areas	Total number of Traveller families accommodated as a % of the targets set in the local Traveller Accommodation Programme Improvements to existing accommodation carried out Improvements to the physical environment of Traveller specific accommodation
	Improvement in the design and aesthetics of RAPID areas	Crime prevention or other Environmental Design Audits carried out Level of Graffiti removed per annum Types of community anti-graffiti projects undertaken No. and types of physical environment projects completed under the Leverage Fund
	Enhanced sense of place /	Involvement in Tidy Town/ pride of Place

	community spirit	competitions Community/ family fun days held
<b>Play/ Recreational Facilities</b>	<p>Good quality and sustainable play, sport &amp; recreation facilities and opportunities for RAPID areas</p> <p>Improved access to play, sport &amp; recreation facilities and activities for RAPID residents</p>	<p>Development/ refurbishment of play areas Structured play activities for children in place Development/ refurbishment of sports facilities Structured sports activities for young people in place Development/ refurbishment of arts/ social/ community/ recreational facilities</p> <p>AIT strategy &amp; policy on play, sport and recreation developed and implemented – key priorities, funding opportunities and access policies Links with local play, sport and recreation providers to develop facilities, maximize funding opportunities and improve access for all Prioritisation of RAPID areas in Local Authority Play Strategy and support from Play/ Sports Officers</p>
<b>Waste / Environmental Management</b>	<p>Decrease in illegal dumping / littering in RAPID areas</p> <p>Pro-active on related issues (e.g. bonfires, abandoned cars. Dog fouling)</p> <p>Reduction in waste &amp; increased recycling opportunities</p> <p>Improved awareness of environmental / sustainability issues / practices</p>	<p>Identification of littering hotspots and development of appropriate local responses Community clean up days and events</p> <p>Strategy developed and implemented to respond to these issues locally Development of community education projects in relation to littering/ illegal dumping</p> <p>Strategy developed to encourage households in RAPID areas to reduce, reuse, recycle</p> <p>Environmental campaigns in RAPID areas undertaken Schools/ childcare facilities with green flags</p>
<b>Traffic</b>	Improved safety for pedestrians & traffic in RAPID areas	<p>Footpath improvements/ dishing of footpaths undertaken Installation of pedestrian lights/ crossings Installation of speed ramps Provision of car park spaces</p>

## **INPUTS**

The core resources being made available to RAPID areas are those presented through the budgets of the local state agencies and Departments involved in service delivery. The core Local Authority resources should focus on ways in which targeted responses to RAPID communities can be developed and implemented in partnership with local communities and other state agencies. In addition to these core resources, some funding lines that particularly prioritise RAPID areas, and Leverage Fund opportunities are also available to progress work on the physical environment in RAPID areas as outlined below.

### **DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT HERITAGE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

1. 2008 Remedial Works Scheme
2. Continued support for approved projects under the Sustainable Communities Fund, Housing Management Initiative including the provision of tenancy liaison officers
3. Local Authorities are encouraged to use existing community consultative structures when preparing proposals for remedial and regeneration projects.

### **DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY RURAL AND GAELTACHT AFFAIRS**

#### **1. Dormant Accounts Fund RAPID Additionality**

In 2006, 2007 and 2008 funding was made available from the Dormant Accounts Fund to support priority projects in RAPID areas. EUR7.5m was allocated specifically to RAPID areas in the 2008 round of funding. AIT's may find it appropriate to target some of these funds on actions eligible for Dormant Accounts funding within this (or other) strategic themes.

#### **2. Programme of Grants for Locally-Based Community and Voluntary Organisations**

This Programme offers three schemes of once-off grants to local community and voluntary organisations for refurbishment of premises, equipment and education/ training/ research.

Grants are made to a range of local voluntary and community organisations/ groups with a focus on addressing disadvantage in their communities.

Application forms and further information are available from the Department's website.

## **DEPARTMENT OF ARTS SPORTS AND TOURISM**

### **Sports Capital Programme**

This Programme aims to foster an integrated and planned approach to developing sports and physical recreation facilities throughout the country. In particular, its objectives are to:

- assist voluntary and community organisations, national governing bodies (NGBs) of sport, VECs and local authorities to develop high quality, safe, well-designed and sustainable facilities in appropriate locations and to provide appropriate equipment to help maximise participation in sport and physical recreation
- prioritise the needs of disadvantaged areas in the provision of sports facilities
- encourage the multi-purpose use of local, regional and national sports facilities by clubs, community organisations and national governing bodies of sport

Projects must be of a capital nature and must be directly related to the provision of sporting or physical recreation facilities. This means that the project must involve:

- improving or building an asset; or
- buying non-personal sports equipment that will be used for at least five years.

Applicants located in or mainly serving RAPID Areas can obtain extra credit at the DAST assessment and scoring stage of the process. To qualify for this extra credit, such applicants must be endorsed by the local AIT and CDB (in certain cases).

## **CROSS DEPARTMENT FUNDING**

### **LEVERAGE FUNDING:**

#### **1. Physical Environment Leverage Fund**

A total of €9.2m will be made available under the 2009 cycle. This funding is jointly provided by the Department of Community, Rural & Gaeltacht Affairs and by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government through the Local Authorities. An innovation in this scheme is that allocations to each RAPID area will relate to the population and deprivation of the area, rather than each area getting the same allocation as has been the practice to date.

The purpose of this scheme is to support locally identified small-scale capital works in local authority housing estates, civic and open spaces, and areas within RAPID areas that have become neglected or in need of rehabilitation. All works being undertaken must be within RAPID communities and should meet demonstrated local needs. Works funded under this scheme should contribute to the thematic approach adopted for the Programme by directly delivering actions under the Environment or Community Safety strategic theme or by complementing actions being considered or identified by the AIT under other strategic themes.

This scheme can be used to fund works designed to:

- Enhance the general build environment of local authority estates that will improve the quality of life of local residents
- Address traffic management and control to improve safety for residents, particularly aimed at children and older people or those with limited mobility
- Undertake actions that reduce anti-social activities and improve community safety
- Increase the quality and availability of recreational space through improvements to open and green spaces
- Encourage and support improvement works to the exteriors of civic amenities, shop fronts and estate shopping centres

## **2. Playground Leverage Scheme**

A total of €3m was made available under this scheme in 2007/2008 and each RAPID area will receive €66,000 in funding under this scheme. This funding is jointly provided by the Department of Community, Rural & Gaeltacht Affairs and by the Health Service Executive (HSE) for play facilities in RAPID areas.

These funds will be available to the Local Authority for the development of new or refurbishment of existing playgrounds or MUGA's in the RAPID area. The fund can be used to support one or more projects, selected by the Local Authority in conjunction with the Area Implementation Team (AIT).

The aim of the scheme is to increase the range of public play opportunities available to children and young people in designated RAPID areas. The scheme will provide funding for the provision of new playgrounds or the refurbishment of existing playgrounds. In the context of this scheme 'playground' should be interpreted to include the provision of fixed play equipment for children of any age, and can include play equipment suitable for older children and teenagers, such as Multi Use Games Areas (MUGAs). Play areas for older people can also be considered under this Scheme.

## **The Community Anti-Graffiti Scheme**

The Community anti-Graffiti Programme, which is supported by the Department of Justice Equality and Law Reform, the Department of Community Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs and the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, was launched in January 2008. The programme aims:

- to allow an immediate anti-graffiti impact on a wide range of cities/towns
- in parallel, to move systematically to a longer-term and locally appropriate set of anti-graffiti actions.

Areas will receive a maximum allocation of €150,000 under the scheme. Phase one of the scheme will be open only to RAPID areas. RAPID areas will be offered additional weighting in the scoring system for Phase 2.

## **AN GARDA SIOCHANA**

### **Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED)**

CPTED, also known as Designing Out Crime aims to design out crime at the planning stage of building development and it has the following objectives:

- To design out crime
- To avoid repeating mistakes in design
- To improve natural surveillance and access control
- To create a sense of community and neighbourhood ownership

CPTED is based on three core concepts - defensible space, natural surveillance and community interaction. Contact Garda Community Relations for more information.

## **LINKAGES**

As stated in the introduction, the condition of the physical environment has direct links with the quality of life of its residents. In a RAPID context particular linkages exist with the following 2 themes, both of which have already submitted their strategic plans:

**Crime and Community Safety** – It is widely acknowledged that the design and maintenance of the built environment can be a subtle but effective deterrent to anti-social and criminal behaviour. In some RAPID areas the implementation of recommendations from the Crime Prevention Design Reports undertaken by An Garda Siochana including the installation of white lighting, CCTV, signage, speed ramps / bumps, closure of alleyways have all assisted in deterring ASB. These physical interventions are more effective when delivered in conjunction with social actions such as youth diversion and education programmes. The improvement of the built environment through the Housing Estate Enhancement Schemes has also assisted in enhancing the physical appearance of the areas and a sense of community spirit and pride. All which combine to challenge anti-social behaviour and bolster community safety

**Health** – Increased awareness of environmental issues and practices and the provision of recreational facilities and amenities has a long-term impact of residents' health. Through education and creation of accessible more sustainable / hygienic waste management and recycling practices and more active and healthy lifestyles are encouraged.

## **IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT STRATEGIC THEME**

At local level, a Physical Environment Sub Group of the AIT will be established to identify the physical environment needs and responses required in the RAPID area. A strategy will be developed with an action plan and implementation plan in place by Thursday, March 12<sup>th</sup> 2009.

The Local Authority AIT representative is responsible for convening the sub group and for co-ordinating work on the physical environment strategic theme at local level.

## **MEMBERSHIP OF THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT SUB GROUP**

It is recommended that the following agencies and groups be invited to participate in the Physical Environment Sub Group:

- Appropriate representation from the Local Authority, Gardai, Community Development Projects
- Appropriate representation from estate management groups, where in existence
- A representative from local social housing projects, if relevant
- A community representative nominated from the RAPID Community Forum structure

Leadership of the Physical Environment Sub Group is by the Local Authority AIT Representative.

**N.B.** The above is not intended to detract in any way from the statutory powers of agencies to perform their duties or from the requirement for representatives to comply with their respective organisation's policies and directives.

## **SUBMISSION OF THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT ACTION PLAN AND IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

The Local Authority AIT representative should forward the completed templates, once endorsed by the AIT and SIM to the Department of the Environment NMC representative, by Thursday, March 12<sup>th</sup>, 2009.

The RAPID Co-ordinator should also forward a copy to Pobal for information.