

30/10/2024

**Re: Freedom of Information request 202424 – Request Granted.**

Dear

I refer to your request dated the 02<sup>nd</sup> of October 2024 and received on the 03<sup>rd</sup> of October 2024 which you have made under the Freedom of Information Act 2014 for records held by this FOI body. Your request sought:

*copies of any briefings, memos, submissions, speaking notes, Q&As or other such overview/discussion material prepared for the CEO or the board with regard to Sinn Féin policy around the abolition of the LDA.*

*In particular, I am seeking any briefing material prepared for the CEO ahead of media interviews such as the following: <https://www.newstalk.com/podcasts/breakfast-business/john-coleman-chief-executive-of-the-land-development-agency>*

*Searches of any mobile phones, relevant private email addresses and/or messaging services should be considered when processing this request.*

I wish to inform you that I have decided to grant your request on the 30<sup>th</sup> October 2024.

The purpose of this letter is to explain that decision.

**1. Findings, particulars and reasons for decisions to deny access.**

Details of both parts of your request were provided to the relevant sections within the LDA to identify records held which were within the scope of your request.

The record requested is attached to this decision letter for your information.

**2. Right of Appeal**

In the event that you are unhappy with this decision you may appeal against it. If you need to make such an appeal, you can do so by writing to the Freedom of Information Unit, Land Development Agency, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Ashford House, Tara Street, Dublin 2 or by e-mail to [foi@lda.ie](mailto:foi@lda.ie).

Please note that a fee applies. This fee has been set at €30 (€10 for a Medical Card holder). Payment should be made by way of bank draft, money order, postal order or personal cheque, and made payable to Head of Finance, Land Development Agency, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Ashford House, Tara Street, Dublin 2.



An Ghníomhaireacht Forbartha Talún  
The Land Development Agency

Payment can be made by electronic means, using the following details:

**The Land Development Agency DAC**  
**IE61AIBK93101264101092**  
**BIC: AIBKIE2D**

You must ensure that your FOI reference number (**FOI 202424**) is included in the payment details.

You should make your appeal within 4 weeks from the date of this notification, where a day is defined as a working day excluding, the weekend and public holidays. However, the making of a late appeal may be permitted in appropriate circumstances. The appeal will involve a complete reconsideration of the matter by a more senior member of the staff of this body.

Please be advised that the Land Development Agency replies under Freedom of Information may be released into the public domain via our website at [lda.ie](http://lda.ie).

Personal details in respect of your request have, where applicable, been removed to protect confidentiality.

Should you have any questions or concerns regarding the above, please contact me by telephone on (01) 9103400.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'M. Szyszko'.

Monika Szyszko,  
Senior Compliance Manager

## Appendix 1: Schedule of Records

Requester name:			Request Re:202424		
Page number	Description of document	Deletions	Relevant section of FOI Act	Reasons for deletion	Decision Maker's decision
1-9	Record 1	NA	NA	NA	Grant
		<b>Total number of pages</b>			9
		<b>Total number of pages for full release</b>			9
		<b>Total number of pages for partial release</b>			0
		<b>Total number of pages being withheld</b>			0

## Guide to questions that could be asked at Shanaganagh Castle Estate launch/September 20<sup>th</sup> 2024

### Q. Is the pricing really affordable?

Yes. It certainly is.

If you take the example of the 51 affordable purchase homes, a 2-bed can be purchased for €334,600 when the Local Authority equity share is taken into account.

This is significantly below the cost of similar new homes on the open market, so the buyer in this case is getting an excellent high quality, brand new, A-rated home in a super development in a wonderful location at an affordable cost.

If you look at other new developments in this area, you have 2 bed houses starting at €550k and 3 beds from €565k. The value delivered by the LDA and DLR at Shanganagh Castle Estate is undeniable.

Affordable purchase is targeted at people who already have a good household income but just need extra support to make home ownership a reality.

The support they need to buy a home is provided by the local authority through an equity share as part of the Local Authority Affordable Purchase Scheme.

Over time the owners have the option of buying back the equity share, so it's great way for someone to get on the housing ladder or to get their house they need for their family. They can enjoy the security and the sense of place and community that this brings while still allowing them options and flexibility should their household income increase over time.

The household income needed to afford these homes is just over €75,000 , which is an achievable income, but not quite one that would allow households to buy without support or other funds. [A couple made up of a teacher, nurse or Garda would qualify for these homes]

Property Type and No of Homes	Minimum Sales Price	Market Value	Maximum % equity share for LA or Minimum sales price as % Reduction from Market Value	Typical Minimum Household Income Required*	Typical Gross Household Upper Income Limit*
2 Bed House x 21	<b>€334,600</b>	€478,000	30%	€75,285	€ €96,795
3 Bed Terrace x 22	<b>€349,300</b>	€499,000	30%	€78,592	€ 101,048
3 Bed Semi x 6	<b>€374,500</b>	€535,000	30%	€84,263	€108,338
3 Bed Semi (larger units) x 2	<b>€385,000</b>	€550,000	30%	€86,625	€111,375

*\*Income to be assessed by DLRCC and exceptions apply e.g. a higher level of savings will allow the applicants to meet the buying power necessary to purchase the homes with lower incomes.*

It's important to note that we will also have apartments available in Shanganagh under the affordable purchase scheme as part of future phases.

We already know and can show that Local Authority Affordable Purchase schemes are affordable for households who qualify for them, so we are confident that these homes will sell.

### **Q. What are the income thresholds for the affordable purchase schemes in Shanganagh?**

The minimum household income threshold for the 2 beds is just over €75k, with an upper limit of €97k

For the three beds, the household income thresholds range from €78,500 to €111,375.

Through the Local Authority Affordable Purchase Scheme, middle income couples, or individuals on a good wage, bridge the gap between the price of a new home and the amount of personal funds, Help to Buy (HTB) and mortgage funding available to them.

### **Q. Is the Local Authority Affordable Purchase Scheme working/popular?**

Yes. We have already launched four other affordable purchase housing schemes in other parts of the country including Navan, Dublin, Cork and Waterford.

We launched 50 affordable homes in Baker Hall in Navan in September of last year, for example, and all 50 are now sold.

We recently launched 57 homes in Wilkinsons Brook in Hollystown in Dublin in May and 30 are now sale agreed.

In Clonmore, in Mallow in Cork, all 69 homes in the first phase are sold and we launched a final phase of 26 homes this summer – 14 are now sale agreed.

In Kilbarry in Waterford we have sold 81 of 92 affordable homes with three sale agreed and another 8 about to go sale agreed.

So – not only are the homes affordable, they are in demand and the people that are living in them are extremely happy with their purchase.

## Q. The cost rental rents seem very high?

The rents charged by the LDA for cost rental apartments are generally between 25% to 35% lower than equivalent market rates. In Shanganagh Castle Estate, they're an average of 33.1% lower than market rates.

We will have passive house standard apartments for rent from €1250 – substantially lower than any similar new build apartments in the surrounding area.

### 195 Apartments: prices are 33% lower than marker rents

Apartment type	Rent
Studio	€1,175
One Bed	€1,250
Two Bed	€1,575
Three Bed	€1,775

rates are set by taking into account the cost of building the apartments in question and of maintaining them.

It is expensive to build apartments and we use the available STAR funding scheme to subsidise the cost and ensure our rents are as low as we can possibly make them.

We know that the rents we set on our cost rental developments suit many households and are affordable for them. In the last 12 months, around 1,000 households have moved into LDA cost rental homes.

[We regularly discuss the workings of the cost rental scheme with the Department of Housing and the Department is always looking at ways in which more people could be brought into the net.

We will continue to work with the Department on this, but I think it is important to note at the same time that we have already launched a series of cost rental developments and we already have people living in the vast bulk of these with more due to move in soon.]

## Q. You're only announcing 51 homes – how is this going to address the urgent housing need?

Well, for starters it's not just 51 homes. It's 51 affordable purchase homes which are part of phase one of the largest public housing projected completed in years. There are 597 homes in total including the 51 affordable purchase homes, along with 40 affordable purchase apartments, 306 cost rental apartments and 200 social apartments.

And then, it's not just one estate either.

At the LDA, we have two delivery channels – direct delivery on state owned or acquired land and Project Tosaigh, which involves partnerships with developers.

We have already delivered well over 1,000 homes through our partnerships with homebuilders and Shanganagh Castle Estate is our first direct delivery housing project to be completed.

Crucially, however, these housing projects are just the start of a development pipeline which is growing and ongoing all the time.

We already have over 10,000 homes in our direct delivery pipeline across 20 sites and at all stages from design to planning and construction.

We are currently under construction on two other direct delivery sites – Devoy Barracks in Kildare and St Kevin's in Cork and we will be on site on five other sites within the next six months – St Teresa's Gardens, Cromcastle, Clongriffin, Balbriggan and Skerries.

Through our homebuilder partnerships, we have already delivered affordable purchase homes in Navan in Meath, Kilbarry in Waterford, Mallow in Cork and Hollystown in Dublin.

We have delivered cost rental apartments in Delgany, Citywest, Hansfield, Kilternan, Leixlip, Cookstown and Parkside.

Of the 8,000 homes we are targeting by the end of 2028, 2,800 are either delivered or under construction and we are in advanced discussions on another 2,000 with contracts due to be signed by year end.

**Q. You got this site from the council and partnered with the council to deliver these homes, but there has been a number of stories of other state agencies being very slow to hand over land and in some cases refusing – is this an issue?**

No. We are developing a steady pipeline of state-owned land with more sites becoming available. In our Report on Relevant Public Land we identified a series of sites with the potential to deliver a high number of homes, but we were clear at the time that this document was the start of a discussion with the state bodies involved to explore the possibility of using the lands in question for housing.

I am pleased to say we have already been successful in working with state bodies to make land available. Just recently, for example, we announced that the ESB had transferred a site in Wilton in Cork to the LDA for housing. We also made a similar announcement about land in Galway, owned by Galway Harbour Company.

We are now making progress on the transfer of land at key locations, and, at the same time, we are increasingly partnering with local authorities to develop homes on land they own.

The local authorities have land that is suitable for housing and the LDA has the experience, the funding and the expertise to plan and deliver housing on such sites.

We recently received planning permission, for example, for over 700 homes at Cherry Orchard Point in Dublin in partnership with Dublin City Council. We are also working with Dun Laoghaire in Dundrum to secure permission for over 900 homes on the former Central Mental Hospital site.

In addition to these we are working with local authorities to build homes in Mungret in Limerick, Bluebell Waterways in Dublin, Dyke Road in Galway, Cromcastle in Dublin and St Teresa's Garden in Dublin city centre. We are also collaborating with Fingal County Council to deliver new homes in Hacketstown in Skerries and Castlelands in Balbriggan.

At the same time, we are also involved in ongoing discussions with other state bodies about more land transfers and we are exploring a number of sites to assess their full potential for housing.

We are also not just relying on state transfers as we recently started to purchase our own land on the open market – taking advantage of the value on offer at present. We purchased a site in Clongriffin, for example, with the potential for over 1,300 homes and we are exploring further purchases with others expected soon.

**Q. SF wants to abolish LDA and give councils back the funding to build their own homes. What is your response to this?**

The LDA acts on policies set by the government and that would remain the case even if there was a change of government.

Any changes in the role and remit of the LDA or to how the LDA operates or is constituted would require legislative change through the Oireachtas.

However, I don't believe that abolishing the LDA would make sense. You can see first hand here today, the value of the LDA in delivering high quality homes at scale.

The more funding we have access to, the more homes we can deliver and we feel we are now delivering homes that represent a good return on our funding.

Our cost rental homes are owned by the state and are earning a rental income that covers the cost of delivering them while remaining affordable.

We also know that we are in a position to ramp up housing delivery given the experience and expertise we have now built up.



We are able to operate at speed and at scale to the point where local authorities are now looking to partner with the LDA to use us to deliver homes on sites they own.

I think this approach makes sense. It has taken a number of years to get the LDA to this point and I'm not sure it would make sense to make changes to the LDA's role and remit at a time when we are clearly starting to deliver at pace. Any changes could lead to disruption at a time when we are delivering.

*See other answers on delivery.*

**Q. The government is looking for ways to spend the Apple billions. Do you think it should be spent on housing and be given to the LDA?**

The LDA is on course to become the largest homebuilder in the State and I believe the LDA has an important role to play in helping to respond to the country's housing need.

Funding is a matter for government and I note that housing has been mentioned as one of the sectors that could be prioritised when it comes to the upcoming budget and any decision on the Apple money. However, I am heartened by recent remarks by the Minister and the Tánaiste about potentially using some of that money to further capitalise the LDA.

We currently have ambitious targets and we would of course increase our targets if asked to do so.

**Q. What will the amenity space be used for?**

The LDA, together with its partners DLR, are working to identify appropriate community activation mechanisms including:

A local enterprise space: Possibly co-working spaces or space for start-up hubs

And retail units – subject to planning

We are also liaising with external operators with expertise in this area to identify the right opportunities for these spaces, which will cater for the needs of the community here.

**Q. How does affordable purchase work?**

Affordable purchase homes are available to would-be homeowners who do not qualify for mortgages or other state backed housing supports due to their income levels, but who are struggling to otherwise purchase their own house. Through the support of the Local Authority Affordable Purchase Scheme, prospective homeowners are able to

bridge the gap between the price of a new home and the amount of personal funds, Help to Buy (HTB) and mortgage funding available to them.

Successful applicants have the option of buying out the local authority's equity share over time, if they so wish. Equity shares are calculated on an individual basis and are linked to an individual applicant's income, savings and mortgage capacity.

## **Q. How does cost rental work?**

The LDA will launch the application process for the 135 cost rental apartments included in Phase One of Shanganagh Castle Estate in November of this year. The exact date will be announced by the LDA shortly and would-be applicants are advised to check the LDA website regularly for more details.

Cost rental is a relatively new tenure in Ireland, created under the Affordable Housing Act 2021. It is designed to provide secure and affordable rental accommodation for those who do not qualify for social housing, but who are effectively locked out of the private market.

The rent is based on the cost of building, managing, and maintaining the homes, and to qualify as affordable, the rent involved must be no greater than 35% of an applicant's monthly net income.

The average rent of LDA cost rental homes is at least 25% lower than equivalent market rents. To be eligible for consideration for cost rental housing, applicants must meet the following criteria:

- Their net household income must be below €66,000 per annum in Dublin and €59,000 elsewhere in the country.
- They must not be in receipt of any social housing supports including Rent Supplement or HAP).
- They must not own a property in Ireland or elsewhere.
- Their household size must match the size of the property advertised and all members of the household must be living in Ireland at time of applying.
- They must be able to afford to pay the cost rent for the home.
- Each household must only enter one application for a specific cost rental property.

## **Key Messages:**

- Shanganagh Caste Estate is the first direct delivery project to be completed by the LDA and is one of the largest state housing projects to be completed in years.
- In keeping with its mission to unlock state-owned land and to deliver large-scale housing projects, the Agency partnered with DLR to deliver the 597 homes on land owned by the local authority and according to a design that was developed by DLR architects.
- While the LDA has already delivered homes through its partnerships with homebuilders, this is the first of a growing pipeline of direct delivery projects with more to come.
- It involves a total of 597 homes including affordable purchase houses, and cost rental and social apartments.
- Built by Walls Construction to the highest standards, the Estate has been delivered ahead of time and on budget.
- Construction started in September 2022, so the launch event is taking place just two years later.
- Phase one includes 51 affordable purchase houses, 195 cost rental apartments and 35 social apartments.
- The application process for the affordable homes will open on Wednesday 9 October with details to follow for the other units.
- Subsequent phases will involve the release of 40 affordable purchase apartments, 165 social apartments and 111 cost rental apartments.
- The affordable purchase homes are being made available under the Local Authority Affordable Purchase Scheme, which enables eligible buyers to bridge the gap between the price of the house and the amount of personal funds and mortgage available to them.
- The Estate is located between the sea and the mountains on the Dublin Road in Shankill, next to Shanganagh Park and near to both Shankill village and Bray town.
- Residents will have easy access to a host of shops, services and facilities as well as amenities such as golf courses, hiking trails and beaches.
- The N11 and M50 roads are nearby while the location is also well-served by existing public transport. There are regular buses running past the estate to and from the city centre and Dún Laoghaire with a new Bus Connects route planned.
- The DART runs through Shanganagh Park and a new station is being developed at Woodbrook, which is a 10 minute walk from the estate.
- There are also a range of primary and secondary schools in the area, including Scoil Mhuire, Woodbrook College, St. Gerard's School, Presentation College, St. Killian's, and Loreto Secondary School.
- The LDA's core purpose involves the creation of dynamic and sustainable new communities in addition to the delivery of new homes. Designed by ABK

Architects and constructed by Walls Construction, this will be the largest development in Europe to be reach Certified Passive Housing standards once fully completed.

- The houses are all A-rated and feature high levels of indoor air quality. They involve low running costs thanks to a combination of insulation, heat recovery ventilation and air to water heat pumps.
- Each home comes with thermostatic control of heating in all rooms, allowing homeowners to set the temperature in individual rooms, to their preference.