

MONARD

Co. Cork

**The case for a new
public housing initiative**



A solution to the housing crisis

The withdrawal of the state from the provision of housing, which was left in the hands of developers, has created a housing crisis that the current developer-led, for-profit housing model cannot solve.

Homelessness has soared in Ireland, with the number of homeless children in Dublin recently exceeding 2,000 for the first time since current records began. Over the past year, the average rent in Cork increased by 18.2% to €1,051, the highest increase in the country. A single room for rent in Cork City now costs an average of €344 a month.

The government's Rebuilding Ireland programme, while acknowledging that, if 'left to its own devices', the private sector 'would not ensure all households are housed appropriately or at all', approaches the housing issue by subsidising the for-profit housing sector.

In contrast, PBP Cork calls for the provision by the state of secure, permanent and affordable local authority housing. We consider housing to be a social right and call for a new housing initiative that responds to the needs of individuals and communities.

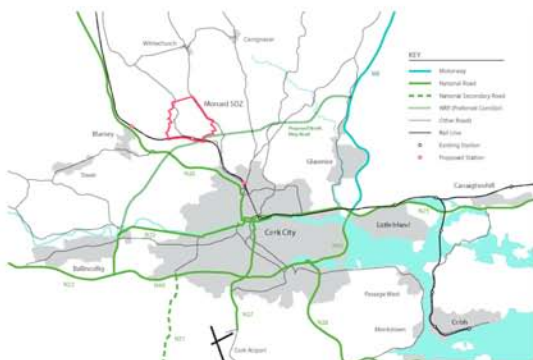
Housing constructed privately through tried, tested and failed models will not be affordable to the majority. The new housing initiative called for by PBP Cork offers an opportunity to provide an affordable and sustainable solution to the housing crisis.

Monard New Town

Cork County Council has planning permission for the construction of a new town, including up to 5,300 homes, near Blarney, County Cork, on a 391 hectare site. The town will be connected to Cork by a new suburban railway station on the existing Cork to Dublin mainline, and the works will require the construction of vast infrastructure.

Under the current plans, the infrastructure for the town (roads, railway station, schools and utilities) will be constructed publicly. Given this scale of public investment (upwards of €50 million), People Before Profit Cork is calling for the housing to be constructed publicly also and to be provided as high-quality, affordable rental accommodation.

PBP Cork calls for the land of the Monard Strategic Development Zone to be put to public use and for Cork County Council to deliver the housing for which it has planning permission through a public housing agency.



Proposed location of Monard Strategic Development Zone in relation to Cork City



Proposed layout of Monard Strategic Development Zone

A public initiative in the public interest

With the average salary now at €35,000, most workers are priced out of the prospect of ever owning their own private home at current prices. The shortage of affordable housing has led to an increase in demand on the rental sector, resulting in high rents for property which is in many cases maintained to a very low standard. Private housing, built and sold for profit, will not be available to the market at prices affordable to the majority.

The housing market should not be managed by private property developers, who have no interest in people's social well-being. Housing should be managed by a public agency which is democratically accountable and acts in the interest of the public and to ensure basic human rights.

A new approach to housing

Cork County Council should obtain the land required for the planned town through existing mechanisms.

A not-for-profit housing agency should be established and run by Cork County Council. This agency would hire workers to build and manage the construction of new houses in developments such as Monard. Given the scale of the housing supply needed, it would be necessary to hire permanent workers to meet the challenge. A public housing body should construct the houses and house tenants on a long-term basis at affordable rents.

The establishment of a public agency which hires permanent workers would offer secure employment to those involved in the house-building programme. By building houses publicly, the private developer is removed from the equation, which significantly lowers the cost.

If private developers can borrow money to build housing, then there is no reason that a public house-building agency cannot do the same.

Only through an ambitious project in the public interest can the problems of homelessness, unaffordable rents and the housing deficit be solved. The investment in affordable local authority housing, which puts the right to a home for all above the profit motive, offers a sustainable solution to the housing crisis that is of benefit to society as a whole.

About People Before Profit

The People Before Profit (PBP) Alliance was established in 2005 by workers from a variety of local campaigns.

The Alliance represents a different form of politics, fitting for the 21st century. It sees 'people power' and the mobilisation of citizens in workplaces and communities and on the streets as the key to bringing about change in society. In the Dáil, our TDs fight to reverse policies which place wealth creation for the few over the welfare of communities in Ireland.

PBP stands for the abolition of water and property taxes and the Universal Social Charge burden, the reversal of unfair cuts and major public investment in social housing, services, sustainable energy and infrastructure.

The Cork branch of PBP works with individuals and groups to effect change at the local level.

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public housing in Cork:**

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