

Planning regulations could be amended to allow for the creation of eco-villages and clustered rural small housing in County Offaly as well as land trusts. Given the myriad of problems facing this county (rural depopulation; long commutes; chemical agricultural inputs causing release of carbon to the atmosphere and depletion of water quality throughout the county, the encouragement of eco-villages comprising green building, Net Zero Energy homes, solar power and organic food production, would create community and social inclusion for all ages. This would fulfil on a number of the Principles for Growth: namely i: compact growth, iii: establishing a low carbon society, v: Aligning population, employment, community and housing growth in a balanced fashion, vii: Moving towards self-sustaining rather than long distance commuter driven activity, viii: balanced and sustainable development, xi: reversing decline in rural areas, xv: reducing car dependency, xvi: creating well designed, attractive, liveable places, xvii: promoting enterprise activity which is also low carbon and sustainable , and is integrated with sustainable land use, xix: promoting social inclusion in a REAL and effective way. Such communities have been designed purposefully and successfully in many other countries, including LILAC in Leeds (a low carbon, green, self-powered community in Leeds, UK <https://www.lilac.coop>); Cloughjordan Ecovillage in Tipperary; Community Land Trusts in Wales: <https://wales.permaculture.org.uk/practical-solutions/community-land-trusts> Ireland -and Offaly - need a diversity of ways to address the national housing crisis as well as provide affordable housing for our population, while addressing the environmental fallout from the climate crisis and biodiversity crisis. Allowing for and encouraging the creation of low impact housing in small clusters rather than the standard current method of imposing a development of huge expensive houses in way wholly insensitive to an area's landscape and local community's needs is imperative. This has successfully been implemented in many countries over the past centuries yet Ireland is once again, behind on thinking expansively and innovatively when it comes to providing intelligent, structured options for housing families, people and communities creatively and thoughtfully. Please consider introducing planning laws that will enable a diverse range of housing options to be recognised, encouraged and implemented. Many thanks

