

Press release

'Town Centre Living' – Winners of Architectural Design Competitions for creating high-quality town centre homes announced

From [Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage \(/en/organisation/departement-of-housing-local-government-and-heritage/\)](#)

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The Royal Institute of the Architects of Ireland (RIAI) and the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage, Darragh O'Brien, today announced the winning proposals for the 'Town Centre Living' architectural design competitions – providing innovative designs for four social housing schemes in town centre sites in Castleblayney, Kildare, Roscrea and Sligo.

The 'Town Centre Living' competitions, which launched on 27 January 2023, aimed to encourage innovative designs from architectural firms for social housing within town centres and progress the government's Town Centre First policy objectives of compact growth and town-centre revitalisation, by way of real showcase projects which will provide almost 100 new social housing homes.

The competitions attracted 114 entries from architectural practices in Ireland and internationally. All four competitions were adjudicated anonymously by four separate juries.

Commenting on the announcement, Minister Darragh O'Brien said:

“I am delighted to be here at the RIAI to announce the four winning design projects from this year’s ‘Town Centre Living’ competitions. The ‘Town Centre Living’ competitions operate in line with the government’s Town Centre First policy that aims to tackle vacancy, combat dereliction, and breathe new life into our town centres. This year, we see the importance of excellence in social housing design more than ever before and I am delighted to share with you the innovative design solutions presented by the four competitions winners today as we work collaboratively to build sustainable communities in our town centres.”

Speaking on the announcement today, RIAI CEO Kathryn Meghen said:

“The RIAI is delighted to have worked with the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage to deliver the 'Town Centre Living' competitions. This is an excellent and effective mechanism which we in the RIAI regularly utilise to deliver high-quality projects that exemplify architectural expertise. This is of particular importance when we consider the delivery of social housing design projects. The ‘Town Centre Living’ competitions will not only be delivering homes for people in four Irish towns across Ireland, but they will also contribute to creating sustainable communities in town centres, with access to amenities. I’d like to congratulate each of our winners, as well as commend all of the other shortlisted entries.”

The ‘Town Centre Living’ winning designs – which will provide up to 89 homes across the four towns – were announced as follows.

Castleblayney

First Prize Winner: ‘The Old Fire Station’ (Entry 5218)

Architects: Boyd Cody Architects with James Flaus and Kevin Quinlan

Jury Citation (extract):

“This project creates a strong sense of memory, reaching back to earlier occupation of the site as a Fire Station, grounding the scheme in the past yet looking to the future. The Architects gave very good consideration to the Protected Structure on site – both to contribute to open space and in terms of integrating it into their proposal. The scheme addresses climate change challenges by retaining part of the old fire station and incorporating it into the new building as well as the reuse of materials from demolished buildings to clad parts of the proposed buildings where possible. The simple, clear layouts work well and repeating plan types will deliver economies.”

Architects' Statement (extract):

“Refurbishment or adaptive re-use is critical to [the town centre living] design approach. We need to identify existing buildings which lend themselves to residential use. The ‘Old Fire Station’ in Castleblayney with its surrounding (protected) structures is a perfect site for re-development. (...) To address the immediacy of construction in Ireland today and tackle the housing crisis directly through architectural design, we need to build economically, simply and repetitively, providing housing prototypes or models that are easy to assemble, contain standardised formal components, and most important of all, provide comfortable and useful living space.”

Kildare

First Prize Winner: ‘An Thriantán’ (Entry 4831)

Architects: Shay Cleary Architects

Jury Citation (extract):

“This will be an exceptional housing scheme - an exemplar project for ‘Town Centre First’ living. The jury commends this innovative housing scheme for its convincing urban strategy and the design quality of the individual units. The triangular arrangement of the scheme is appropriate in morphology and scale to Kildare town, creating a housing scheme of notable character.”

Architects’ Statement (extract):

“Our project proposes to provide a defined place of real character, intrinsically linked to the urban form of Kildare Town. It will provide high-quality housing in an urban form, entirely own door accessed, centred around a new community garden at the heart of the development. (...) This proposed space resonates with the historic Market Square in Kildare Town at a smaller scale, echoing the form and urban presence of that particular place. The 18th century Market Square is a key reference point in the urban fabric of Kildare Town and as such is referenced in the proposed name of the scheme, An Thriantán (The Triangle).”

Roscrea

First Prize Winner: ‘Learning from Roscrea’ (Entry 5220)

Architects: JFOC Architects

Jury Citation (extract):

“This proposal unanimously impressed the jury at urban, building and detail scales and in making a place that is delightful for people, both the future residents of the housing and the broader town community. This boldness of this proposal and its fresh approach singled out this entry. The jury are delighted to award ‘Learning from Roscrea’ first place and look forward to seeing this new town centre living in Roscrea.”

Architects' Statement (extract):

"We are proposing a project that feels as if it has always been a part of Roscrea, while creating a series of new interlinked small scale public spaces grafted onto the existing flow of the town. This project serves to tidy up a slightly ragged edge-of-town condition in the spirit of the existing Gantly Road Masterplan. We want to make a new "mini-landmark" on this prominent corner, a destination on a sunny day, connected back to the main street down existing pedestrian routes. New housing on this corner site offers more than new housing; streets are reinvented and urban space is created."

Sligo

First Prize Winner: 'Housing at Pirn Mill Road' (Entry 4904)

Architects: TAKA Architects

Jury Citation (extract):

"The assessment panel were unanimous in their award to this submission which displayed an understanding of site, context and brief, a clear site strategy with a hierarchy of considered open spaces, supported by an innovative typology of building form and volumes. The jury considered that with its considered quality, clear resolution of the site and applicability to other town sites that this submission addressed all the critical aspects of the brief and look forward to its design development and construction under the auspices of the DHLGH and Sligo County Council."

Architects' Statement (extract):

“We have developed a proposal for town centre homes at Pirn Mill Road which offer an exemplar model for low-rise medium-density housing which is also appropriate for many town centre sites in Ireland. We have deployed this model in a way which addresses and enhances the specific opportunities of the Pirn Mill Road site to create a vibrant and attractive place for town centre living. Building upon the low-rise medium-density typical housing model, we have arranged this model on the Pirn Mill Road site, to achieve the best use of land, create active streetscapes and address the particularities of the context.”

It is intended that the winning architectural practice for each competition will be awarded the design commission for the project, in addition to the prize money, and that the winning proposals will be progressed by the various local authorities as live projects funded by DHLGH, through to construction and delivery.

Notes

The four sites were identified by local authorities following an open invitation by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

In addition to the First Prizes, the competitions awarded prizes to the second and third placed schemes and commendations:

Castleblayney:

- Second Prize Winner: Clancy Moore Architects
- Third Prize Winner: Donnelly Turpin Architects
- Highly Commended: Lawrence and Long Architects
- Commended: Brock Finucane Architects

Kildare:

- Second Prize Winner: Davey & Smith Architects
- Prizes for the Town Centre Living Competitions:**

- Third Prize Winner: Donnelly Turpin Architects
 - Highly Commended: Metropolitan Workshop
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- Second Prize Winner: ODKM Architects
 - Third Prize Winner: O'Mahony Pike Architects
 - Highly Commended: Boyd Cody Architects with James Flaus and Kevin Quinlan
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- Second Prize Winner: Aughey O'Flaherty Architects
 - Third Prize Winner: Hall Black Douglas Architects
 - Highly Commended: GKMP Architects

Castleblayney: Valerie Mulvin FRIAI (Chair); Paul Altman FRIAI, Senior Advisor DHLGH;

Lorcan MacCinna Senior Engineer Monaghan County Council

Kildare: Miriam Delaney MRIAI (Chair); Gareth Williams MRIAI, Architect Advisor DHLGH; David Creighton FRIAI Senior Architect Kildare County Council

Roscrea: Orla Murphy MRIAI (Chair); John Martin FRIAI, Architect Advisor DHLGH; Liam Ryan MRIAI, Senior Executive Architect Tipperary County Council

Sligo: Derek Tynan FRIAI (Chair); Joan MacMahon MRIAI, Senior Advisor DHLGH;

Seán Martin FRIAI, Senior Architect Sligo County Council

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