



LIVING TOGETHER I: SPRINGFARM

An investigation of case studies and strategies for promoting safe, prosperous, integrated, sustainable communities

Housing
Executive



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Foreword

We are pleased to present this report, one of three that the Housing Executive has agreed to publish as part of research carried out by the International Centre for Local and Regional Development (ICLRD). Over the last four decades media attention has focused upon the segregated nature of housing in Northern Ireland. This segregation is most pronounced within the social housing sector and ways to resolve this challenge have been debated and researched by many. With the 'Shared Future Agenda' set out in the Good Friday Agreement and recent policies to bring communities closer together we are delighted that the focus of research should move towards communities.

As Northern Ireland moves forward in the aftermath of a period of conflict, the need for research and forward looking debate on the future of integrated, balanced and sustainable housing solutions is well formed. The Housing Executive welcomes the fact that the focus of this study has been to identify communities that are working together and the wider issues that affect segregated areas. We are particularly delighted to work alongside the ICLRd in producing a series of studies on both sides of the border that focus on areas where residents and stakeholders have come together for the improvement of the area.

This individual publication is part of an overall research project conducted in six areas in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. The six areas are distinct in that they look at unique stages of development in creating sustainable communities not only in existing estates but also in newly built areas. In Northern Ireland the research team investigated progress being made in Springfarm, Antrim; Carran Crescent, Enniskillen and Irish street/Gobnascale Interface in Derry/Londonderry. In the Republic of Ireland the focus was on Cranmore, Sligo; Mahon, Cork and Adamstown, Dublin.

All six studies will be available soon as part of an overall publication and this will also be available on the ICLRd website.

Abstract

This document investigates initiatives and policies in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland to improve and build subsidised housing in mixed communities through the lens of six case studies - Springfarm, the Irish Street and Gobnascale interface and Carran Crescent in Northern Ireland and Cranmore, Mahon and Adamstown in the Republic of Ireland.

Together, the six cases provide a cross section of the challenges faced by communities, District Councils and central government agencies working to promote or provide mixed housing, and the strategies that have helped address these challenges and opportunities to create and maintain neighbourhoods that are safe, prosperous and open to all. A final synthesis report, is also available to policy makers and practitioners and will also be used in ICLRD training programmes.



Introduction

Over the last 40 years, Ireland, north and south, has experienced dynamic changes in demographics, settlement patterns, the economy, migration, socio-economic conditions and political attitudes. Major shifts have also occurred in how both jurisdictions finance, construct, deliver and manage subsidised housing. Previously, the two governments promoted social housing as a temporary stepping stone for home ownership, a place where families could save money until they were ready to move into permanent accommodation. There was a focus on providing large numbers of units quickly and inexpensively on large social housing estates often in remote locations without appropriate services, shops or infrastructure. Increasingly, many of these estates came to be seen as areas of housing of last resort, where poor households, unable to make the transition to home ownership, became concentrated. Some estates gained reputations as hotbeds of violent crime, drugs, antisocial behaviour and, particularly in the north, sectarian paramilitary activities and ethnic intolerance.

As throughout much of Europe and North America, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland have developed new policies to counteract some of the perceived failures of earlier housing policy by improving conditions in existing housing estates and providing new mechanisms for delivering subsidised housing that does not concentrate housing of last resort in remote locations. In particular, both governments, while continuing to promote home ownership, have emphasised the need to create mixed, integrated and balanced communities that can accommodate and nurture people and households from different backgrounds, ethnicities and income groups. In Northern Ireland, the legacy of the Troubles and ongoing sectarian mistrust add an additional layer to an already complex process of promoting and supporting mixed communities. The rapid increase in migration, particularly from Eastern Europe, added a new dimension to integrated housing in both jurisdictions.

This study investigates initiatives and policies to improve and build subsidized housing in mixed communities through the lens of six case studies that range in size, location and history. Together, they provide a cross section of the types of challenges faced by communities working to promote or provide mixed housing, of strategies that have helped address these challenges and of opportunities to create and maintain housing that is safe, prosperous and open to all of Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland's residents.

Methodology

The particular history of an area and often the resolute and voluntary efforts of individual community members have profound impacts on housing estates and government programmes. Given the nuanced, context-specific factors that contribute to the success of policies and programmes to promote balanced communities, this study presents its findings as a series of case studies. Each case is unique, but they provide a wealth of information on how government bodies and other key stakeholders can play a role in the creation or continued success of balanced, sustainable communities and key factors that contribute to this success.

In preparing the cases, our research team was supported and informed by the guidance of a panel of experts from both sides of the border. The team conducted interviews, conference calls and focus groups with key stakeholders and community members at each site and in surrounding neighbourhoods. Multiple site visits and meetings with local officials and policy makers

complemented these interviews. Draft versions of the cases were distributed for comments to community representatives, government officials, estate managers, private developers and academics. Annex 1 provides an overview of the work undertaken in the preparation of this study. The research team also drew materials from a comprehensive literature review and analyzed statistics from agencies throughout Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

The Study Sites

The six case study areas vary tremendously in terms of location, scale, design and history. Three are located in Northern Ireland - Springfarm outside Antrim, the Irish Street and Gobnascale Interface area in Derry/Londonderry and Carran Crescent in Enniskillen - and three are located in the Republic of Ireland - Cranmore in Sligo, Mahon in Cork and Adamstown on the outskirts of Dublin. Four of them, Springfarm, Irish Street/Gobnascale, Cranmore and Mahon were primarily developed as social housing estates in the 1970s or earlier; while Carran Crescent, a 20 unit 'Shared Future' pilot project, and Adamstown, a 10,000 unit private development that is under construction with a 15% social rental and affordable home sales component, are 21st century new build projects.

The commonality is that they all involve a partnership of residents, public officials and private entities working to provide mixed, integrated housing or services that are available for a diversity of residents. Both governments see mixed communities as an integral part of a strategy to provide economic and social progress and stability in the 21st century as well as a policy objective in its own right.

The Six Study Sites

Site	Units	Population	Opening	City	County/DC
Springfarm Estate	460 (originally 516)	ca. 1,200	1978	Springfarm	Antrim, NI
Irish Street and Gobnascale*	ca. 1,700	ca. 4,300	1949-52; 1968-71	Derry/ Londonderry	Derry/ Londonderry, NI
Cranmore Estate	499	ca. 1,500	1974	Sligo	Sligo, RoI
Mahon	4,100 (700 social)	12,000	1970s	Mahon	Cork, RoI
Carran Crescent	20	ca. 60	2006	Enniskillen	Fermanagh, NI
Adamstown	1,019 out of 10,150	ca. 3,000	2006	Adamstown	Dublin, RoI

*Figures taken from the 2001 Census from Clondermot 1 and Victoria Super Output Areas and Hollymount 2 Output Area 95MM180004

These case studies are written to document good practices and to help others learn from what is a challenging process with many opportunities in any city or smaller town. Together the cases show the importance of: community empowerment and leadership; carefully adopting policy initiatives that have physical implications for the larger neighbourhood context and local opportunities; and consistently demonstrating incremental results on the ground.

This series of case studies and the synthesis report are part of the International Centre for Local and Regional Development (ICLRD) ongoing initiative to support the development of collaborative approaches to cross-border and inter-jurisdictional spatial planning and local and regional development through joined-up analysis and research. Funding from the Irish Government, through the Higher Education Authority (HEA), the International Fund for Ireland (IFI) and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive have supported our core research programmes which bring together a multi-disciplinary research team drawn from five academic and research organisations throughout the island of Ireland.

Acknowledgements

The ICLRDR would like to convey our sincerest thanks to the numerous interviewees at each of the case study areas who were consulted during the course of the study; their views and opinions contributed significantly to this work.

The research team further takes this opportunity to thank the ICLRDR partners for their support during this study and our sister organisation, the All-Island Research Observatory (AIRO) for their assistance in mapping the housing developments in each of the case study areas.

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**SPRINGFARM HAS BECOME A MORE
DESIRABLE PLACE TO LIVE AS
INDICATED BY A GROWING SOCIAL
HOUSING WAITING LIST**

Springfarm

Constructed by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) in 1977 and 1978, Springfarm estate originally comprised some 519 units located two and a half miles outside Antrim town in County Antrim, Northern Ireland. Its peripheral location and Antrim's economic decline have long been drawbacks for the estate and its residents. Lack of amenities within the estate and difficulties accessing those provided elsewhere within the town have consistently been identified among the barriers facing residents.¹ Unemployment has been traditionally high; qualifications, low.

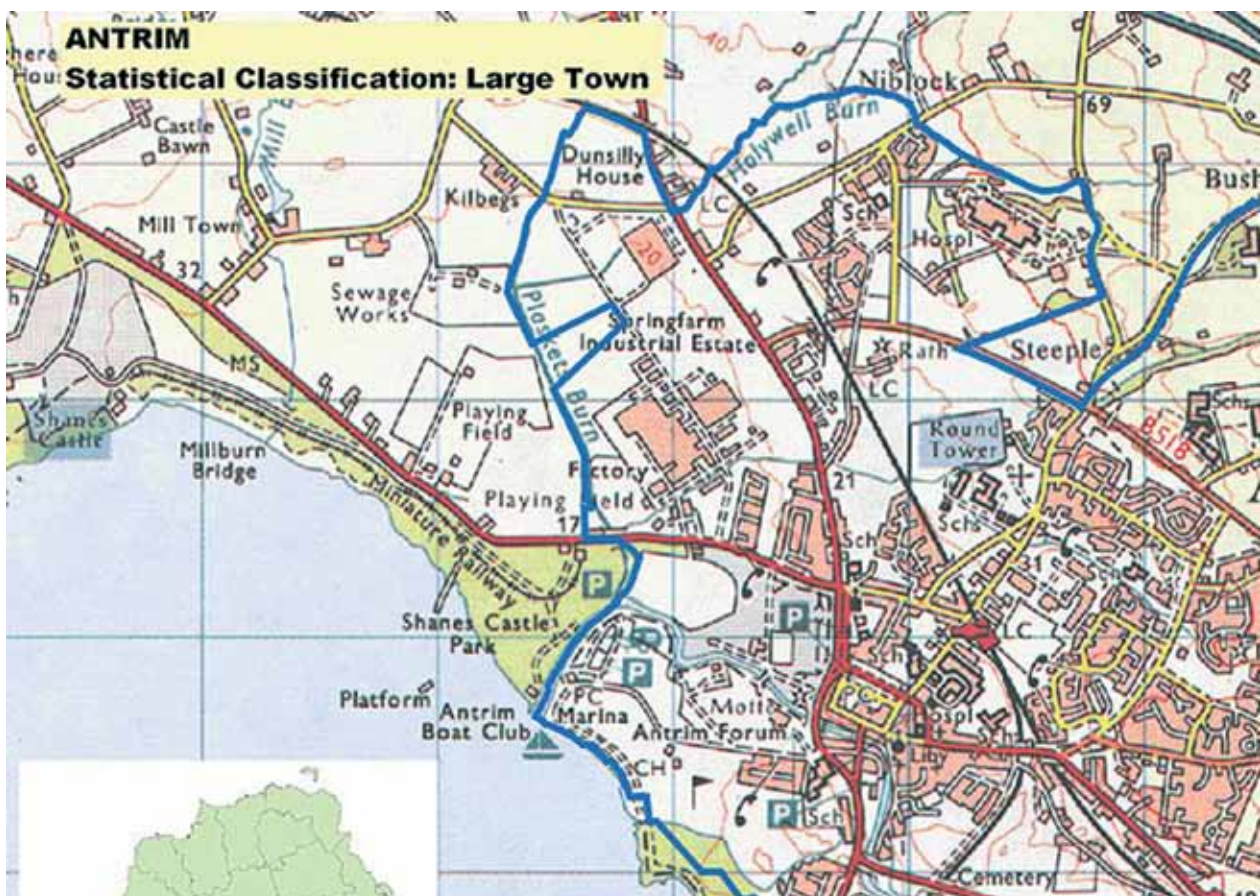
Despite its many problems, Springfarm managed to avoid both the segregation of its Protestant and Catholic communities and the kinds of sectarian violence that plagued other estates in Antrim and throughout Northern Ireland during the troubles. Some credit the presence of police and military personnel who were living on the estate in housing leased by the Ministry of Defence throughout the 1980s and '90s. Springfarm has been unique among Housing Executive estates in having a significant army presence in the area. After the military left, Springfarm's problems culminated in several drug related murders in the late 1990s and violent, racist attacks on ethnic minorities, who had moved into the estate in recent years, and their properties.

In order to cope with these issues, in 1993, residents formed a neighbourhood association dedicated to improving conditions and maintaining a healthy and mixed community. While the challenges have been great, the commitment and dedication of hard-working volunteers at the grassroots level have helped Springfarm come through the worst of its social problems and shown that poverty and peripherality don't have to be barriers to community mixing. Today, despite being one of the most deprived areas in Northern Ireland, Springfarm has become a more desirable place to live as indicated by a growing social housing waiting list. The population mix is estimated to be approximately 40% from a Protestant background, 40% from a Catholic background, and 20% from an 'other' community background.

1. During the research process, interviews were conducted with a number of key stakeholders who have been closely involved with the Springfarm Estate for several years, including representatives from the local Housing Executive District Office, the Springfarm and District Community Association, elected representatives and Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI). The interviews helped to elicit information on a variety of issues that have affected Springfarm, and how their impact has been felt or dealt with.

I. Background

Antrim town, located on the north shore of Lough Neagh about 30 kilometres northwest of Belfast, had a population of just 3,550 in 1961. At this time British Enkalon, a large manufacturer, announced its intention to locate in Antrim and in 1965 Antrim was designated a New Town which had a major influence on the development of the town. By 1966 the population had increased to 7,525 and in 1986, to 25,576. Employment levels in the town were high, supported by a strong manufacturing base. By the early 1980s, however, changing global patterns of industrial manufacturing led to the scaling back and closure of many large industrial businesses, as was the case in many other industrial towns throughout of the UK, United States and Europe. The British Enkalon plant, having stopped expansion in 1977, announced closure in 1980 and by 1982 the site was closed, taking over 1,000 jobs with it. Shortly prior to its closing, new housing construction virtually halted. The number of voids in the town increased from 121 in 1977 to over 200 in 1978 and there was a significant decrease in the waiting lists, low levels of owner occupation, rising antisocial behaviour and 'estate hopping' with households moving from one estate to another. By 2001, the population of Antrim town had dipped to just under 20,000. This had a significant effect on all estates within Antrim.

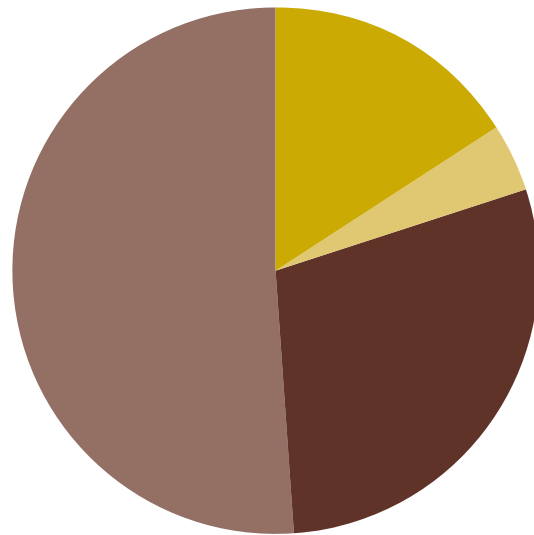
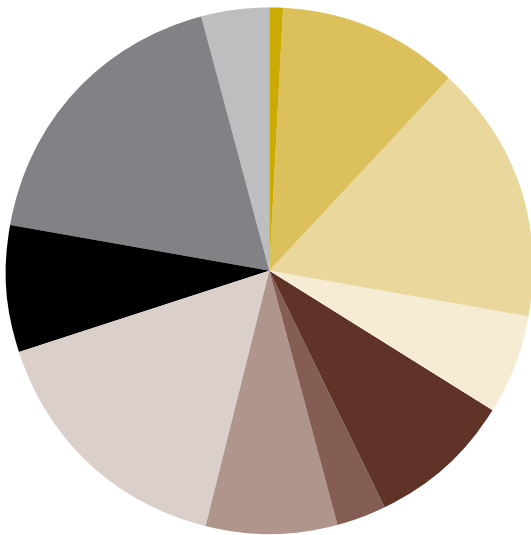


Although diminished in population and jobs, the area currently retains a small manufacturing and technology base and has since developed a number of retail jobs, particularly since the opening of the 70-shop Junction One outlet in 2004. At the time of the 2001 Census, the largest areas of employment in Antrim District Council were health and social work (18%) followed by public administration and defence (16%) and wholesale and retail trade (16%). By 2005, 80% of Antrim District Council's jobs were in the services sector, 14% in manufacturing and 6% in construction, compared to 77%, 16% and 7% respectively in 2001.²

Within the Springfarm Ward, 80% of all employees are female. Of these the majority work part time. This reflects the employment structure of local area hospitals and retail services, but also the sharp decline in manufacturing.

Antrim DC: Industry of Employment

Springfarm Ward: Employee Jobs



- Electricity, gas and water supply
- Mining, quarrying, construction
- Wholesale and retail trade
- Hotels and catering
- Transport, storage and communication
- Financial intermediation
- Real estate
- Public Admin and defence
- Education
- Health and Social Work
- Other

- Male Full Time
- Male Part Time
- Female Full Time
- Female Part Time

2. 2001 and 2005 Census of Employment (Employee Jobs) by Industry by Local Government District, NISRA.

1.1 Housing and Ministry of Defence Dwellings

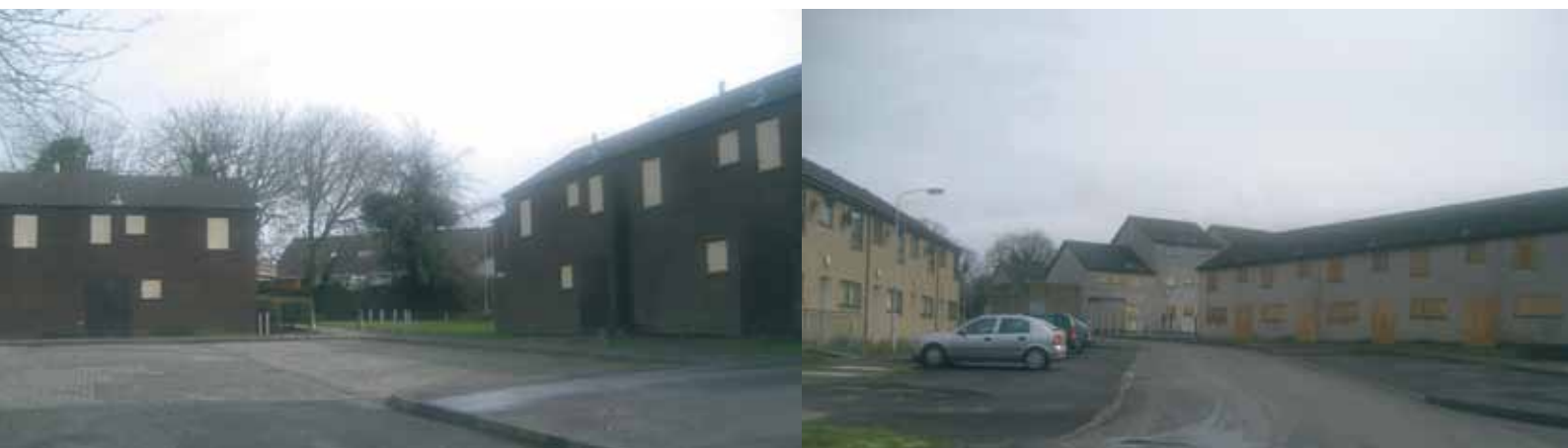
Springfarm estate, constructed in 1977 and 1978 - just as the economy and housing market were taking a turn for the worse - is the most remote of the Antrim Town estates, situated off the main Ballymena to Antrim road over two miles from the town centre. It originally consisted of 519 units of houses, bungalows and flats. The estate is divided into two distinct areas - Upper and Lower. Upper Springfarm experienced extreme antisocial behaviour in the late '80s and '90s and attracted bad publicity in relation to empty properties, associated vandalism and criminal activity in the area. Demand for housing at Springfarm estate historically had been low. The building of new houses halted in the late 1970s and increasing voids levels prompted the leasing of 114 estate houses in Lower Springfarm to the Ministry of Defence (MoD). These housed families who could not be accommodated by the nearby Royal Air Force Aldergrove facility.

This had a major effect on the Lower part of the estate - families felt that they were safe there, tucked away and apart from other estates which were suffering from paramilitary violence. The area also received attention from the military police to ensure the safety of the families during the Troubles. Stakeholders commented that this military and police presence, perhaps counter-intuitively, helped to encourage the mixed community structure of the estate by facilitating a situation where:

- Flags, emblems, painted kerb stones or an annual July bonfire did not become a feature of the surroundings; and
- The paramilitary activity that came to dominate some of Antrim's other housing estates did not gain a similar foothold in Springfarm.



The low demand in the area continued to be a problem and by 1987 the effects of net re-lets and properties lying empty for more than one year meant that realistically it would have been possible to house everyone on the waiting list twice over. Even by the time the arrangement with the MoD ended in 2003, the low demand for Springfarm units had not changed; the MoD properties were left vacant because no significant waiting list existed for the properties. In 2004 Homefirst Community Trust, the local health trust, entered into a leasing arrangement



with the Housing Executive, securing leases on 22 properties for which there was otherwise no demand at an economic rent. Springfarm is located in close proximity to the Antrim Area Hospital and Holywell Hospital and the properties were rented to employees of the Trust, predominantly migrant workers from India and Poland but also from Lithuania and the Philippines.

With tentative signs of increasing demand for accommodation in the area, a slow release of ex-MoD properties for re-let has been undertaken by the local Housing Executive, which is mindful of the destabilising impact that a mass allocation could have on Springfarm as a whole. While the local Housing Executive is of the mind that fostering a more balanced tenure mix would assist in the regeneration of the area as a whole, it is also aware that a careful and sensitive approach is needed. Currently, over 80 of the ex-MoD dwellings remain unoccupied and offer development opportunities for Springfarm but also give an appearance of blight and abandonment.

Although the former MoD properties are part of the estate, they are geographically and perceptually separated from the rest of Springfarm. The waiting list for the area comprises 65% single people for which the three bedroom houses would be unsuitable.

This leaves a dilemma for the local office. On the one hand there is a need for single person accommodation and there are 89 empty family homes. Should these be let to single people, local community representative Seamus Davis fears that this could 'change the ethos of the area'. Whilst they remain empty, however, there is the wider question of properties lying vacant when there are such high waiting lists in Northern Ireland. Indeed the BBC's David Dunseith ran a story on this in his lunchtime radio 'Talkback' show on 16th April 2008.

1.2 Current Housing Stock and Tenure Mix

There are currently 460 units in Springfarm. Since the establishment of the Housing Executive's House Sales Scheme in 1979, many of Springfarm residents have taken the opportunity to purchase their units. By March 2008, 290 of Springfarm estate's dwellings remained in Housing Executive ownership, while 170 (37%) had been sold to tenants under the House Sales Scheme (Table 1), and more than 50 demolished. These figures do not include the long term MoD voids. The majority of Springfarm's housing stock comprises standing houses (80 percent) and all but four of the 170 purchased units were houses. Houses were much more likely to be purchased by former tenants than other types of units. Only one bungalow and three flats were sold through the House Sales Scheme.

Distribution of properties in Springfarm by type and tenure, 2008

	Bungalow	Flat	House	Total	Void
NIHE owned	23	63	204	290	16
Sold to Tenant	1	3	166	170	--

Source: Northern Ireland Housing Executive Antrim District Housing Plan 2008-09



Historically there has been low demand for Springfarm's social housing, but in recent years the social housing waiting list has expanded to reflect a small but increasing demand. Private housing development on land adjacent to Springfarm has been noticeable in the last three years and has provided an alternative housing option to social housing.

2. Socioeconomic Conditions

Springfarm estate is one of the most economically deprived neighbourhoods of Northern Ireland and is located in an area with some of the poorest performing areas in terms of health and living environment. Wards and output areas are ranked from most to least deprived, so that a rank of 1 represents the highest level of deprivation, and higher numbers represent a lower relative level of deprivation. Springfarm Ward is the 44th and 28th worst performing ward out of 582 wards in terms of Health and Disability and Living Environment respectively. It performs better in terms of Income (274th), Employment (190th) and Crime and Disorder (114th), but is still below the scores of most other wards. Residents of Springfarm are much less likely to own their own home, to have a job, or to have educational qualifications than average in Northern Ireland. Only 7.3% of the population aged 16 to 74 had a degree level qualification or higher compared to 15.8% for Northern Ireland and 14.4% for Antrim District Council.

The Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency's NINIS (Northern Ireland Neighbourhood Information Service) provides information to Output Area level on a number of census-based indicators, some of which have been updated since 2001. Appendix 2 sets out some key socioeconomic indicators in Northern Ireland, as well as for the Springfarm Ward and the Springfarm 2 super output area that includes Springfarm estate.

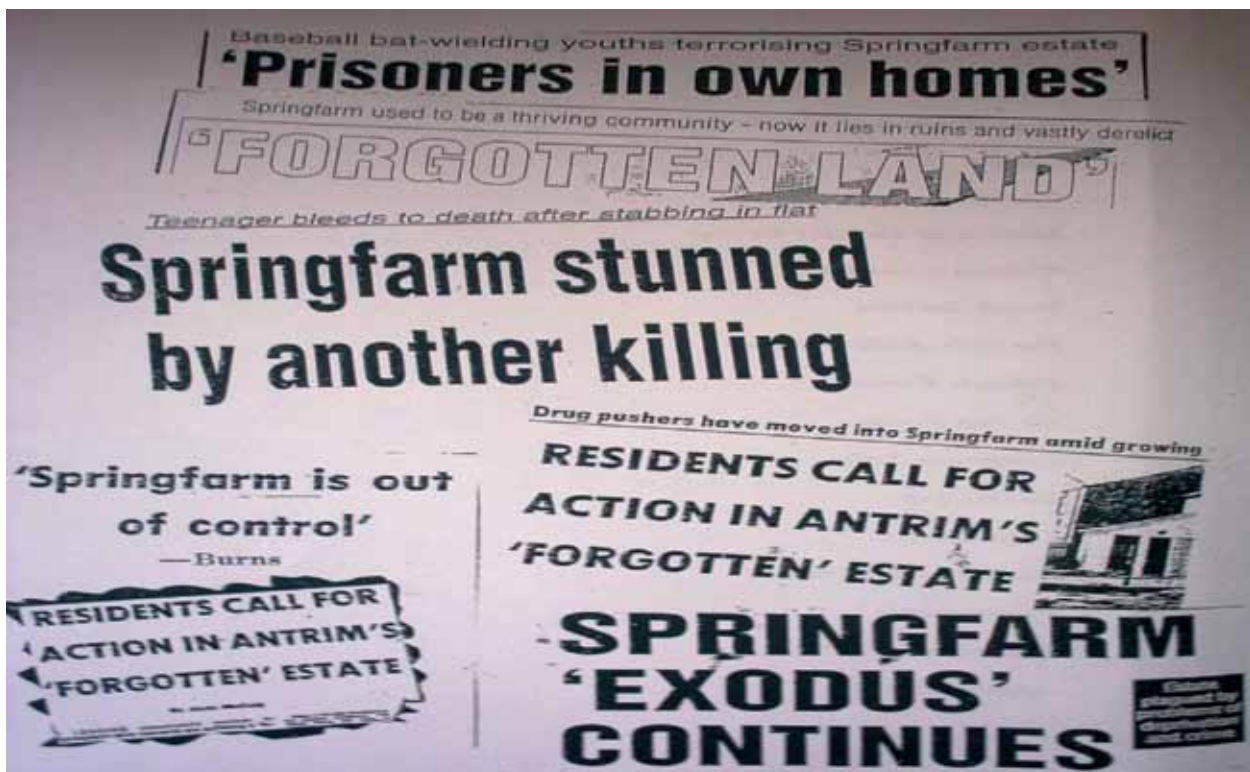
Residents and stakeholders commented on the high proportion of single parent families living in the estate, the relatively high number of persons in the 40-65 age group, counter-balanced by around 300 children who live on the estate, which has no play park or other dedicated facility for the use of younger residents. At the time of the 2001 census, persons aged 60 years and over comprised around 9%. In parts of the estate, however, the figure increases to 22%. Only 3% of households consisted of lone pensioners, compared with 12.8% in Northern Ireland as a whole. Fourteen percent of households in the Springfarm area were lone parents with dependent children, compared with the average Northern Ireland figure of 8%. While Springfarm has a mix of household types and ages of resident, there is less mixing of income groups, adding to conceptions of undesirability and relative concentration of poverty.

Consultations with local residents have identified the lack or under-provision of a number of amenities as being detrimental to Springfarm and its residents, including absent or insufficient public transportation, shopping facilities, street lighting, public telephones, cash points, play facilities, litter and dog bins, and bus shelters. Lack of facilities, social deprivation and the demographic and socio-economic structure of the area combined to erode residents' commitment to the estate and desire to stay there. Furthermore, interviewees noted that difficulties associated with a transient population that felt no pride or 'buy-in' in the area further contributed to the estate's problems.

Like many other large, peripheral housing estates, Springfarm became trapped in a vicious circle of complementary problems. Real difficulties around accessibility, social and economic deprivation and concentrations of marginalised inhabitants earned Springfarm a troubled reputation, evidenced by antisocial behaviour, drug dealing and even murders. A report produced recently by Rubicon

Consulting for the Community Relations Council and Springfarm and District Community Association³ identified a number of issues that had emerged by 2000, which contributed to the difficulties faced by both residents and statutory and voluntary agencies in trying to improve both the socio-economic conditions and the level of community cohesion in the area:

- Older neighbours started moving out of the estate, demoralised by increasing social problems;
- Young people were moving into the estate, who did not want to stay;
- The estate had a growing reputation for drug selling;
- Members of the Springfarm and District Community Association committee were being intimidated due to their stance against drugs;
- Some graffiti appeared of a sectarian and racist nature;
- Incidences of domestic violence, often hidden;
- Violence against the person incidents and a murder locally;
- Tendency toward vacancies in the housing stock;
- High proportions of single parent families and unemployment; and
- Low incidence of home ownership.



3. Springfarm Shared Neighbourhood, Community Relations Council, 2007, p3

2.1 Mixing and Sustainability

Although Springfarm, blighted by a number of significant problems, was not considered an ideal place to live, it nevertheless managed to maintain a balanced community with very little of the sectarian violence that plagued many other estates in Antrim and throughout Northern Ireland. This raises important questions about the relationship between deprivation and religious mixing. At the very least, it indicates that deprivation is not necessarily a root cause of sectarianism; nor sectarianism a necessary outcome of deprivation. Furthermore Springfarm is one of relatively few estates that has organically achieved and maintained a mix of residents.

At the time of the 2001 census, 50% of Springfarm's residents identified themselves as coming from Protestant community background, whereas 38% identified themselves from a Catholic background. These deviate somewhat from Northern Ireland, which was 53% Protestant and 44% Catholic, and Antrim District Council, 57% and 39% respectively. At present the population mix is estimated to be approximately 40% Protestant, 40% Catholic, and 20% other community background. Health card registration figures published by NISRA from 2006 and 2007 show 40 non-UK nationals per 1,000 resident population compared to 12 for Antrim Borough Council and 10 for Northern Ireland. Non-nationals continue to be more predominant within the Springfarm electoral ward than in either Northern Ireland as a whole or the Antrim Borough. According to the Home Office Immigration and Nationality Directorate, eight migrant workers were registered on the Workers Registration Scheme per 1000 resident population.⁴ Relatively high house prices, despite the recent downturn in the housing market, and lack of confidence in social housing means that any net increase in the migrant population will impact more on the private rented sector. According to the Housing Executive only four properties have been allocated to incoming minority ethnic applicants in the last two years in Antrim.

4. Home Office Immigration and Nationality Directorate May 2007

3. Springfarm and District Community Association

In addition to the previous military presence, one of the key factors that has fostered a social and ethnic mix at Springfarm over the years is the dedication of resident activists and members of the Springfarm and District Community Association. The Association, established in 1993, focuses on improving living conditions for residents and preventing social disturbances from escalating. Interviewees were unanimous in emphasising the importance of their work. Under the leadership of a small number of highly committed individuals, the Association has facilitated activities for children, young people and women's groups, meet-and-greet events between local people and recent arrivals from other countries and cultures, and lobbied and liaised with statutory organisations. The Chairperson, Seamus Davis, who started the association after a friend's window was smashed by vandals, has won awards for his work and most recently received a Community Champion award from Antrim Borough Council on 4th June 2008. The Association's work has been particularly important to increasing social stability after the closing of the MoD properties and increases in antisocial behaviour and violence.

A Rubicon Consulting report on Springfarm Shared Neighbourhood describes some of the work carried out by the Association:

...the Association worked hard to combat disadvantage, organised a campaign against drug dealing in the estate, and hosted a number of community-based activities to develop a sense of cohesion. It also successfully opposed an off licence application for the estate, and began to galvanise local opinion to take steps to improve the image and appearance of Springfarm.

With significant commitment and voluntary time the Association has helped to transform the estate into an area where people want to stay, and for the first time since the estate was built, it began to demonstrate a growing waiting list. They identified motivating local people to have a reason to stay in the estate as especially important, and started a campaign to clean bins, cut grass and circulated a Springfarm newsletter for residents. Particular efforts were made to keep the estate mixed and avoid the display of flags and paramilitary presence.⁵



3.1 Community House

One of the first achievements of the Community Association, in partnership with the Housing Executive, was the development of Springfarm Community House. The Housing Executive gave the use of two adjacent properties to the Association in 1996, with a third added in 2000. In the absence of a community centre or any other community facility, the Community House has provided a base for the Association and a focal point for a range of activities and outreach services that

5. Community Relations Council: Springfarm Shared Neighbourhood, p3

have sought to empower residents and foster community cohesion within the area.

Initially its activities concentrated on providing youth facilities in an effort to address vandalism and antisocial behaviour by young people. In the light of resourcing issues and the apparent limited impact of attempting to engage with youth in the physical setting of two houses with numerous small rooms, the activity strategy for the Community House was reconsidered. Based on the findings of an Estate-Based Survey carried out by the Housing Executive, the Association subsequently took a decision to operate the Community House as a family support and education centre. Services and activities offered through the Community House have included:

- Advice, support and information services provided by the Community Association Committee in association with various partners including Citizen's Advice, Victim Support, Women's Aid, the Housing Executive, Antrim Borough Council and the Police Services Northern Ireland (PSNI).
- One-off events including fun days, football tournaments, outings, sponsored walks and other fund raising activities, raising community pride and creating a sense of empowerment among residents.
- A Mother and Toddler group developed to provide a facility for the high number of pre-school age children in the area. The group has offered the opportunity for parents and children from all sections of the community in the area to meet and socialise. Safety surfacing and partial roof cover for the yard area were provided with the assistance of a 'Children in Need' grant to improve the facilities available to this group, which has proved invaluable for many of the single parents living in the area.
- A Women's Group aimed at targeting social issues such as domestic violence, as well as providing information, support, personal development courses and health checks. In combination, the services offered through the Women's Group were designed to empower women to take control of their lives by providing support and opportunities to raise self-esteem.
- Weekly video nights, at nominal cost, for young children.
- A Parents' Action Group, which took part in estate clean-ups and petitioned successfully for traffic calming measures on the estate, following the opening of Antrim Area Hospital and resultant increased traffic flow on routes adjacent to Springfarm.
- A computer suite with broadband internet access and web cams to allow people to see and talk to friends in the area and overseas.
- A fitness suite including multi-gym, rowing machine, exercise bikes, cross-trainer, and various other forms of exercise equipment, available for use at a nominal fee.

3.2 Supporting Migrant Workers and Ethnic Minority Residents

The Community Association has also played an important role in facilitating the integration of minority residents into the Springfarm Community. As a result of leasing arrangements with the Health Trust and broader changes in Northern Ireland's economy and population structure, the number of foreign nationals living in Springfarm has increased rapidly over the last 10 years. Initially, some residents mistrusted the migrant workers and expressed concern that they were being housed over local people from the area. On a more sinister note, Loyalist paramilitaries expressed concern that a largely Roman Catholic Polish community would be targeted by Sinn Fein in order to help the political party gain more votes. Another problem faced by the migrant community and residents was antisocial behaviour by young single Polish males due to heavy drinking at weekends. Despite efforts by both the Health Trust and the Community Association, a number of racist incidents occurred during 2004 and 2005, initially targeting Indian residents, and subsequently those from the Polish community.

After the initial attacks, the Community Association and Antrim Welcomes and Advocates Racial Equality (AWARE) went to the Indian families to reassure them. The community association also met with their employers at Holywell Hospital, which offered to provide extra security for the community including security cameras outside their homes. The families, however, preferred not to draw further attention with security cameras. Individuals known to have been involved in the hate attacks were confronted by members of the community and informed that such behaviour would not be tolerated.

When attacks on the Indian community were at their worst, a meal was arranged in the primary school for residents of Springfarm and the recent migrant arrivals. Although those committing the attacks did not attend the meal, the host community as a whole became more welcoming. When vandals slashed the tyres of Indian families on Christmas Eve 2006, a local garage opened up on Christmas Day to allow them to get new tyres and people from the host community provided lifts. When the Polish community came under attack, they had their tyres slashed and swastikas painted on cars. These incidents were dealt with by the PSNI.

Despite these racist incidents, the majority of residents sought to support and welcome the new community members through organised events. Led by the Community Association, they quickly sent out a clear message that racist attacks would not become an accepted or established feature of life in Springfarm and worked with the PSNI to deter incidents.

In an effort to address the difficulties associated with the racist incidents and find ways to help foster integration between the local and migrant communities, the Community Association's representatives made contact with the Community Relations Council (CRC), and subsequently the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) Racial Equality Unit and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive's Community Cohesion Unit to discuss the changing demographic and ethnic profile of the area and associated issues. The Community Association identifies these initial contacts as the first steps towards more organised and focused statutory sector involvement in an area that had apparently been neglected and even ignored. The work with CRC, OFMDFM and the Housing Executive's Community Cohesion Unit eventually led to a mapping exercise – carried out between August and December 2005 - which confirmed the extent to which Springfarm had developed a 'mixed' community profile.

The Springfarm & District Community Association felt initially when migrant workers moved into the estate it would be a worthwhile exercise to meet them and introduce them to statutory bodies such as the PSNI, NIHE, CAB, Victim Support and Antrim Borough Council. Twenty Polish workers attended the first meet and greet session held in the Community House. A similar event took place with members from the Indian community living on the estate and again they were given the opportunity to meet with local statutory bodies. A Polish Information Day was held covering issues such as driving legislation and the District Policing Partnership spoke to a group of Polish people about safety, hate crimes and racist attacks.



The Community Association also compiled a welcome pack in English and the languages of the predominant ethnic minority groups living in the area. The pack includes information on dealing with domestic violence, confronting racism, useful telephone numbers, maps, etc., and outlines the services available in the area as well as tenants' rights and responsibilities. Stakeholders interviewed for the research confirmed that, as part of a wide range of activities organised and driven by the Community Association, the welcome pack and other initiatives have helped foster a sense of pride and ownership within the estate.

Writing in the Springfarm & District Community Association Welcome Pack, the Antrim Community Forum commented that:

We are particularly pleased to be associated with Springfarm's pioneering and innovative approach to the subject of multi-ethnic and multi-cultural integration. Coupled with the publication of their recent Mapping Exercise, Springfarm have broken new ground in addressing the need for awareness and practical support in respect of the growing numbers of people of ethnic minority backgrounds and other national minorities settling in local communities.

3.3 Antisocial Behaviour

Racist incidents have not been the only type of antisocial behaviour in Springfarm. The estate has also had difficulties with vandalism and drug-related violence. The Community Association took a strong stand against drug-related antisocial behaviour, and its leaders experienced intimidation and threats as a result. Nevertheless, the strong leadership of the Community Association inspired support from, and confidence within, the wider community, which backed the stance against drug dealing and helped to gather evidence against dealers, working to create an atmosphere free from fear and intimidation.

In combination with the range of other activities that have been undertaken within the estate, the strong stance against anti-social behaviour in Springfarm is one element that has helped to improve the image of, and community cohesion within, the area. In one incident, anti-RUC (the predecessor to PSNI) graffiti appeared on a wall but a local community worker painted over it. Eventually Sinn Fein came into the area and removed sectarian paint from kerbstones. Progress has also been achieved through strong links with the PSNI, and the input of Community Police Officers who grew familiar with the area and gained the trust of residents, including many of the younger people within the estate. There are no bonfires in the area and workers in the community centre know people personally so they can deal problems before they escalate. Seamus Davis has acted as a witness for Antisocial Behaviour Orders (ASBOs) served and compiles evidence during introductory tenancies that might lead to tenancies being withdrawn if antisocial behaviour persists. It is normally difficult to get witnesses to come forward in housing estates across Northern Ireland due to personal safety concerns.

3.4 Springfarm Shared Neighbourhood

The Community Association in partnership with agencies like the Housing Executive has played an important role in reducing crime and antisocial behaviour as well as promoting a mixed and integrated community. Interestingly, representatives of the Community Association have commented that Springfarm has received little in the way of statutory support because the area was not an interface and did not display evidence of high levels of sectarian tension. In effect, their view is that Springfarm was penalised for being a mixed area, and that insufficient resources were channelled into recognising and nurturing those communities that had managed to retain their mixed characteristics while others which became more segregated became the focus of much higher levels of statutory intervention. The area remains relatively isolated with poor services and minimal facilities. There are poorly lit footpaths, only two bins, one small shop, no bus shelters, no park or safe play area, no recreational or sporting facilities. Buses stop after 6.30pm and if people wish to use facilities such as the Antrim Forum then they have to take taxis.

The arrival of new residents from other countries and cultures and the resultant changing profile of the estate prompted engagement from a wider range of stakeholders as described above. This was the beginning of a process of focussed consultation and engagement with all members of the local community, which generated significant interest and input from both younger and adult residents. Arising from the consultation and liaison with the Community Relations Council in particular, the Springfarm & District Community Association subsequently worked to devise and introduce a Shared Neighbourhood Scheme.

The scheme '*...aims to put in place a plan of action to build on the existing work of Springfarm & District Community Association in the development of best practice in the promotion of good community and race relations, and develop a shared vision for Springfarm which will:*

- *Place the promotion of good relations at the centre of policy, practice and delivery of public services;*
- *Establish greater clarity on the respective roles of all key stakeholders;*
- *Underscore the need for all citizens, political parties, service deliverers and churches to play a role in promoting good relations in Springfarm;*
- *Put in place a clear framework for the approach;*

- *Promote joined up approaches to policy and funding by public sector bodies towards community and race relations work in Springfarm;*
- *Seek to support staff in public authorities in their work to promote good community and race relations;*
- *Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the programme'.*

Springfarm Shared Neighbourhood Scheme is the first of its kind in Antrim and the Community Association has expressed the aspiration that it will become a model of best practice that other areas can learn from and replicate. A feature of the scheme is the development of a voluntary charter agreed by all residents.

In August 2008, Springfarm was recognised as one of the first five areas ear-marked to participate in a three-year programme to develop 30 shared neighbourhoods throughout Northern Ireland. The 'Shared Neighbourhood Programme', which is managed by the Housing Executive and received £698,000 of its £1 million funding from the International Fund for Ireland, will provide grants to enable community organisations to promote diversity and bring together residents from all backgrounds. Participating communities will also receive community relations training, community consultations and support to design their own Neighbourhood Charter and deliver their own Good Relations programme. Shared Future housing is central to Minister of Social Development Margaret Ritchie's housing agenda. At the launch in Springfarm on 19th August 2008 of the 30 shared neighbourhoods that are to be developed over the next three years, the Minister hailed the new programme as very ambitious:

'The key to it for me is it will be community led. When I launched my new housing agenda earlier this year, I made it clear that I wanted to provide housing that will bring people together, not keep them apart. This remains a central theme for all my endeavours for housing and that is why I am delighted to launch this programme, starting with the first of many schemes'.

The Chairman of Springfarm and District Community Association, Seamus Davis, spoke on behalf of the first five participating areas about the launch:

'We are proud to be leading the way in this uniquely pro-active Shared Neighbourhood Programme which recognises that community ownership is key in changing the norms and offering real choices for the future.

'The Programme recognises the expertise, leadership and good relations work that is already taking place within communities. Its aim to galvanise long term commitment from statutory and interagency partnerships will be crucial in supporting, securing and protecting Shared Neighbourhoods through a spirit of true partnership working. We look forward to working closely with the Housing Executive and the International Fund to deliver this exciting new Programme and we believe it will be a great success'.

Prior to its involvement in the Shared Neighbourhood Programme, Springfarm was designated by the Housing Executive as a Neighbourhood Renewal Area within the Executive's Neighbourhood Renewal Programme. As part of this programme, an environmental improvement scheme was carried out within the estate, addressing problems associated with parking, security, defensible space and pedestrian circulation. The scheme involved the demolition of four dwellings to improve road layout and circulation.

3.5 Younger Residents

The Community Association has been strongly committed to involving younger residents in the development and improvement of the Springfarm area. As part of the visioning process for Springfarm Shared Neighbourhood scheme, a youth consultation programme including workshops and planning exercises was undertaken. Young people identified activities that they and others could undertake to maintain and develop Springfarm's integrated community. In one particular exercise, children were encouraged to trace the history of their names to teach them the complexities of the religious divisions in Northern Ireland; many could trace their roots to opposite religious communities from the one with which they associate themselves.

A representative from the Community Relations Council, quoted in Rubicon Consulting's Springfarm Shared Neighbourhood document, commented that

'CRC worked with Springfarm and District Community Association on the development and delivery of one of the best consultation processes that I have ever witnessed. Springfarm & District Community Association were very adamant that the young people of Springfarm had a voice in the development of their Shared Neighbourhood Scheme. This open and inclusive process will reap great rewards in the rolling out of the programme in the future.'

Stakeholders interviewed as part of the research emphasised the need for ongoing engagement with young people to ensure that stability is retained within Springfarm as the area seeks to move forward in, and retain, its shared character. An important factor in ensuring that young people may continue to embrace a mixed community ethos is the presence of an integrated primary school, attended by many children from the Springfarm estate. Round Tower Integrated Primary School became an integrated school in September 2003. Today Roundtower has 216 students and attracts children from outside the Springfarm area on account of its reputation as a safe place for children of non-white ethnicity, mixed race, Protestant and Roman Catholic backgrounds. This is testimony to the fact that Springfarm is not a 'Shared Neighbourhood' by status or name alone but its reputation has extended beyond the immediate area. Philip Scott, principal of the school, hopes that his staff has created an environment in which all children from whatever background can thrive and reach their full academic potential. Twenty-two per cent of the children are entitled to free school meals.

4. Successes and Challenges

The characteristics and experiences of the Springfarm estate are similar to those of other social housing estates of its generation. Needs-based allocations policies, a peripheral location, a shifting economic base and a lack of amenities resulted in low demand for housing and a relatively marginalised population with little commitment to or pride in the area, which was troubled by antisocial behaviour and racist attacks on new-comers. Its history as a garrison estate and the long term commitment of a community association dedicated to empowering residents and enhancing and building upon the mixed characteristics of the area, however, have set Springfarm apart, helping to gradually secure the buy-in of residents, and build a more positive image of the estate.

Springfarm is not a 'created' or 'designed' mixed community, but neither has it assumed its current characteristics and profile by accident. Community leaders' hard work and long term dedication have brought Springfarm to its current position as a mixed area that has gained a more positive reputation and real commitment from its residents. Community Association members talk about the importance of responding to and defusing social conflicts before they come to a head. As a result, community workers and public agencies have begun to respond to problems proactively rather than reactively. This requires the constant commitment and availability of key members of the association. The integrated school also ensures that future generations will grow and learn together regardless of community background or ethnicity.

One particular concern is that the Community Association and its activities have been driven by a small number of highly committed individuals. Although the Association has strong support from local people, stakeholders have pointed out that more volunteers are needed to assist the leaders of the association, and to ensure its long-term sustainability. Two full-time and four part-time volunteers are currently supported by a part-time administrative assistant. As its Chairperson Seamus Davis points out, however, commitment from all relevant bodies is necessary to ensure that the area continues to thrive, and to maintain its mixed characteristics:

'Springfarm & District Community Association has delivered essential community support with no paid workers and little funding. We have enjoyed the support of the CRC, NIHE and others in the development of the Shared Neighbourhood Scheme; but it will only succeed with the buy-in and long term commitment and support of all agencies with responsibility for addressing social and economic problems, of which Springfarm has many'.

Despite the estate's problems, Springfarm shows how the commitment of small groups of volunteers with limited resources can make positive steps to improve conditions and develop social cohesion and community buy-in. This is not the end of the road, but part of an ongoing process.

Appendix I - Case Study Fieldwork and Interviews

The ICLRD research team conducted a series of site visits, interviews and focus groups. Each site was visited at least twice, once in 2008 and in 2009. Community representatives and local officials took our researchers on tours of facilities, housing units and community open spaces. Representatives of Ulidia Housing and the Housing Executive have also participated on the project's steering group, offering guidance and support.

We would like to express our gratitude to Ursula McAnulty and Michaela Keenan who undertook much of the preliminary field work and drafted the initial cases; to Peter Foley, Spatial Information Officer at the National Centre for Geocomputation, National Institute for Regional & Spatial Analysis (National University of Ireland, Maynooth), who produced maps on housing construction in the Republic of Ireland from 1998 to 2008; to Dale Till and Caroline Jordi at the Institute for International Urban Development who provided editing and data gathering support.

Interviews included: local and central Housing Executive officials, Spring Farm and District Community Association members and volunteers, residents, NEELB Youth Services Division, and the Housing Executive's Shared Future Advisor for North East area.

Appendix 2 - Springfarm Key Socioeconomic Indicators

2001 Census position, unless otherwise indicated	Northern Ireland	Antrim DC	Springfarm	Springfarm 2 SOA
Population	1,685,267	48,366	2,876	1,457
Protestant Community Background	53.1%	56.7%	47.8%	49.8%
Catholic Community Background	43.8%	38.6%	43.7%	37.6%
16 years and under	23.6%	23.9%	26.4%	29.2%
60 years and over	17.6%	14.8%	10.9%	8.8%
Average age	35.8	34.7	32.3	30.4
Limiting Long Term Illness	20.4%	17.8%	20.0%	22.1%
Degree or higher (16-74)	15.8%	14.4%	9.5%	7.3%
Income Support Claimants 16-59 (2007)	9.9%	6.7%	8.6%	10.6%
Average household size	2.65	2.71	2.70	2.62
% owner occupation	69.6%	71.1%	54.9%	41.6%
% rented	30.4%	28.9%	45.1%	58.4%
% owned outright	29.4%	26.7%	9.6%	6.1%
% lone pensioner households	12.8%	9.6%	6.7%	3.1%
% lone parent households with dependent children	8.1%	7.4%	12.1%	13.6%

Source: NINIS

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May 2010
www.nihe.gov.uk