



**Client** - Private

**Architects** - Leyden Hassett Associates  
Patrick J. Leyden, David Leyden, Shane Leyden

**Structural Engineers** - Leyden Hassett & Associates

**Main Contractor** - Guerin And Considine Ltd.

**Site area** - 0.46 acre

**Floor Area** - 601m<sup>2</sup>, 86m<sup>2</sup> per house

**Density** - 15 per acre

**Project cost** - €1m

**Location** - Station Rd., Lahinch, Co. Clare

## COURTYARD HOUSING, LAHINCH, CO. CLARE

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### REPORT BY SHANE LEYDEN

Lahinch is a small historic seaside resort in Co. Clare. It includes a well-known Links Golf Course, is a year round surfing destination and has significant tourist activity boosted by its location on the 'Wild Atlantic Way'.

The site for this project is in the heart of the village and is enclosed on three sides. There are dwellings to the south along Station Road, which links directly to the village main street, and behind the development to the northwest is the Lahinch Golf & Leisure Hotel. The site is an old 'brown field' site with a steep entrance that descends off Station Road. It consists of 'made ground' which previously provided a level standing for fixed caravans.

The project brief was to provide a housing development with secure car parking and privacy from overlooking, whilst obtaining the maximum exposure to natural daylight. The master plan consists of a series of contrasting spaces related to the human scale and proportioned to give appropriate degree of spatial enclosure, echoing the older seaside village pattern with narrow streets running down to the promenade and its view of the expansive ocean. The central 'shared-space' paved area includes private car parking and

makes up the open space for the site; it acts as a communal hard surface play area where pedestrians take precedence over vehicles.

Developing a concise house footprint was key to realising the innate capacity of this infill site. We considered the full potential for the site was nine houses; there are two un-built houses (dotted red on the master plan) which would have enclosed the eastern aspect of the site. This footprint also minimises costs associated with the piled structure due to the 'made ground' condition on the site. The layout consists of six semi-detached plus one detached single aspect courtyard houses each with an area of 86m<sup>2</sup>. The first floor accommodation consists of three bedrooms, one of which is en-suite, bathroom and hot press. The ground floor has an open plan kitchen/dining and living area, opening out into the courtyard; with wet room and utility off the entrance hall.

The individual house form maintains a visual affinity to the original early twentieth century main street dwellings with their simple material palette, low white walls, blue/black slates and gables offset against each other at right angles enclosing the courtyards. The low level white walls continue all along the enclosed private courtyards cum gardens. Rising from the first floor, are steep mono-pitched roofs covered with the same blue/black

coloured fibre cement slates as the first floor gables and façades. The rear-side elevations, overlooking the hotel, are virtually windowless. The white, almost continuous ground level walls and the dark upper storeys bind the dynamic house forms into a harmonious ensemble.

The design is contemporary by answering current building standards and complying with the DoECLG Special Guidelines for Sustainable Communities.

The scheme represents a density of 15 houses per acre or 90 bed spaces per acre - the overall site area being 0.46 acres. Studies have shown (Residential Density DoECLG, Sept. 1999) that the greatest efficiency in land use will be achieved by providing a density in the region of 35-50 dwellings per hectare (14-20 per acre).

A challenge of this housing project was in formulating a model for a sustainable environment that would function at a communal level, as well as at a personal level within each house. A model also where Ireland's collective imagined past of the Irish cottage and seaside village can be recovered and also prefigured in a sustainable future by all those who engage with the development. This model needs to preserve a past and develop a future informed our architectural consideration on this project.

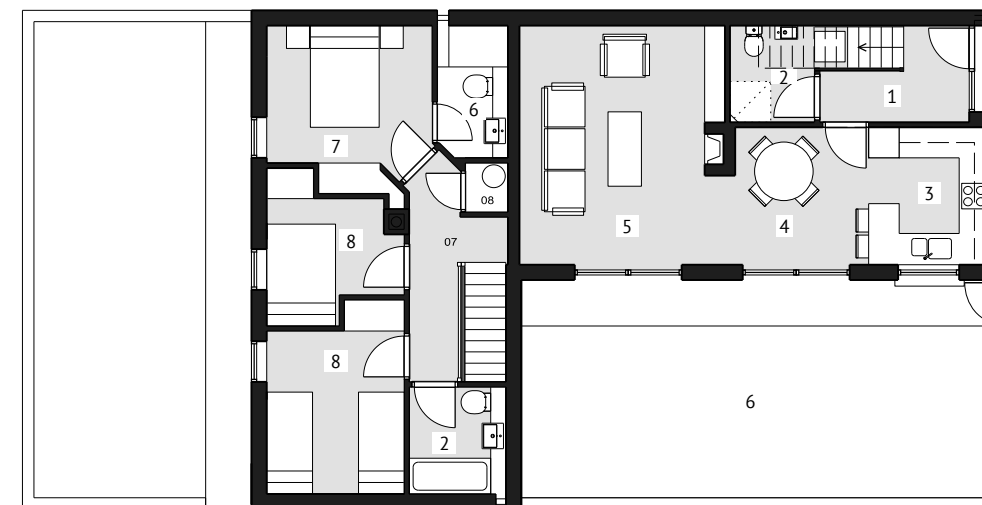


1. The central 'shared-space' paved area includes private car parking acting as a communal hard surface play area
2. The site for this project is in the heart of the village and is enclosed on three sides
3. The palette of materials is simple - low white walls with blue/black slates



#### SITEPLAN

1. Shared Space
2. Landscaped Areas
3. Private Courtyards
4. Sites for Unbuilt Houses



#### GROUND FLOOR PLAN

1. Hall
2. Ballroom
3. Kitchen
4. Dining
5. Living
6. Ensuite
7. Master Bedroom
8. Bedroom