

Appendix A. Population and housing

A.1 Previous population projections

In 2003 Sligo County Council prepared a range of population change scenarios based on the NSS recommendations and taking into account growth documented by previous censuses. Of the four population change models that were developed as part of the CDP 2005-2011, the Fast Growth Scenario was selected as the preferred one. This scenario envisaged a County population of up to 75,000 by 2011, with a Gateway population of 35,000–40,000.

Following the publication of Census 2006 reports, it became apparent that despite the Border Region's population growing more than anticipated (according to the Central Statistics Office's Regional Population Projections 2005), Sligo and Environs – as defined by Census boundaries – had lost 1.69 % of its population (333 residents), while the population of the County as a whole increased by just 4.6% (2,663 people).

In 2007, revised Regional Population Projections were published by the CSO and subsequently the DoEHLG recommended that Regional Authorities adjust their Gateway population targets.

Based on the Revised Regional Population Projections for the Border Region, the Border Authority recommended that Sligo Local Authorities consider a target of circa 77,000 residents for the County, of which 42,000 would be in the Gateway by the year 2020. These targets were taken into consideration when preparing revised population change scenarios, in early 2008.

A.2 Population change scenarios

Three population change scenarios were developed for the purpose of both Sligo and Environs Development Plan 2010-2016 and this County Development Plan 2011-2017: a current trend/low-growth scenario, a high-growth scenario and a revised NSS-target scenario. These are summarised in Table AA-2 on the next page. Please note that the definition of the SEDP area differs from the Census boundaries (see below).

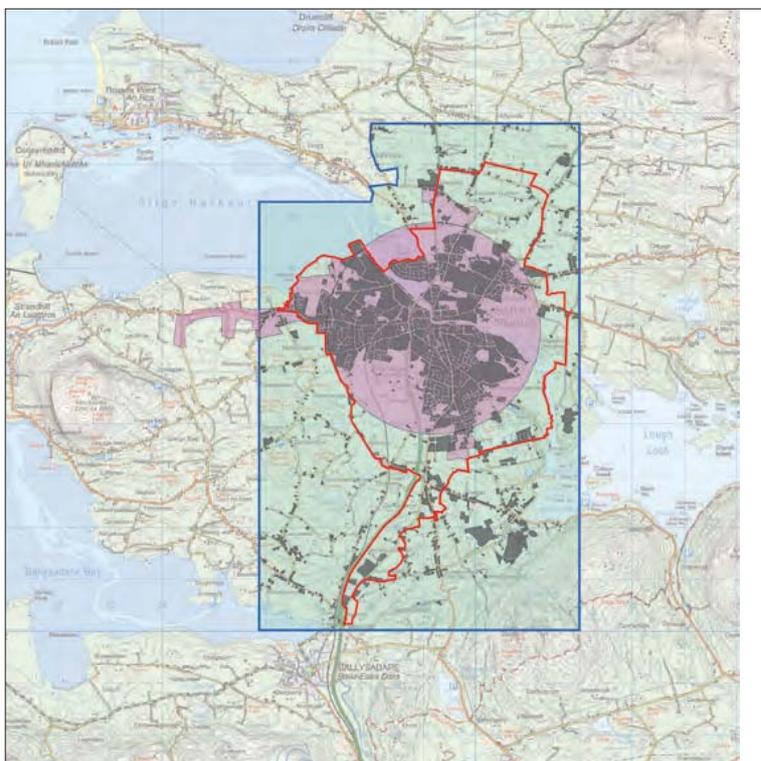


Fig. AA-1

Sligo and Environs, as defined by Census boundaries (shaded in purple), is much smaller than the area covered by Sligo and Environs Development Plan (area inside the blue line)

Table AA-2. Summary of population change scenarios for Sligo City and County to the years 2017 and 2020

Scenarios - main assumptions	Total County population (60,894 in 2006 Census)		Gateway* population (24,755 in 2006 - estimate)		Rest of County population (36,139 in 2006 - estimate)	
	2017	2020	2017	2020	2017	2020
<p>Low-growth scenario</p> <p>This scenario is based on the recent performance of the housing market, which is considered a reasonable indicator of the general economic trend.</p>	68,943	71,341	30,229	31,921	38,714	39,420
<p>High-growth scenario (preferred scenario)</p> <p>The scenario assumes improved socio-economic conditions and subsequent higher population growth attaining the NSS target for the County, distributed in a balanced manner between Gateway, key support towns, satellites and settlements with special functions, in accordance with the Settlement Strategy.</p>	73,835	76,909	33,947	37,000	39,888	39,909
<p>Revised NSS-target scenario</p> <p>This scenario assumes that both County and Gateway population targets will be achieved by 2020, with growth strongly concentrated in the Gateway and population declining in rural County areas.</p>	73,835	76,909	39,554	42,236	34,281	34,673

* The estimate and associated projections relate to the population of the larger area covered by the Sligo and Environs Development Plan 2010-2016 (SEDP) and defined as Gateway area in the SEDP. The estimate does not represent the population of Sligo and Environs as defined by Census boundaries (essentially Sligo Borough and minor extensions into the County Council area).

A.3 Selecting a population change scenario

It is evident from Table 3.F that:

- the Low-Growth scenario would attain neither the Gateway nor the County revised NSS population targets of 42,000 and 77,000 respectively.
- simultaneous attainment of both Gateway and County revised NSS population targets (as in the Revised NSS-target Scenario) would involve a substantial depopulation of rural areas.

Therefore, the High-Growth Scenario is the preferred growth model, as it proposes balance between Gateway and the rest of the County. The SEDP 2010-2016 was prepared and adopted on the basis of this scenario. In the interest of consistency, the same scenario has been employed in the preparation of the CDP 2011-2017.

Regardless of what scenario is selected, the key driver of Sligo City's population increase is the extent of net migration into the Gateway, which in turn is dependent mainly on business development and job creation, supported by local entrepreneurship and investment in physical and social infrastructure.

A.4 Compliance with national projections and regional population targets

In April 2008, the Central Statistics Office issued national population projections (Population and Labour Force Projections 2011-2041), which were followed in December 2008 by regional projections. On the 5th of January 2009, the DoEHLG issued National Population Projections and Regional Population Targets 2010-2022 (see Table below), recommending that these targets be incorporated into the review of Regional Planning Guidelines and subsequently into County Development Plans.

Table AA-3. Border Regional Population Targets 2010, 2016 and 2022

	2008	2010	2016	2022 (low / high range)
Border Region population targets	492,500	511,000	552,700	595,000 - 611,400

Source: National Population Projections and Regional Population Targets 2010-2022, DoEHLG January 2009

Based on the DoEHLG's population projections and recommendations, the Border Regional Planning Guidelines, adopted in September 2010, set out "population targets" (i.e. allocations) for the years 2016 and 2022 for each county in the Border Region, as well as for each NSS Gateway, Hub and regionally-important town.

The targets for County Sligo are presented in Table AA-4 below, in parallel with the figures resulting from the preferred, High-Growth Scenario adopted by both Sligo Development Plans.

Table AA-4. Comparison between RPG population targets and the High-Growth Scenario estimates for County Sligo

Scenario	2006	Target 2016	Target 2020/2022
RPG-defined population targets	60,894 (Census)	71,851	77,350 (in 2022)
High-Growth Scenario population estimates	60,894 (Census)	72,838	76,909 (in 2020)

For the County, it is evident from the above figures that the adopted High-Growth Scenario anticipates a higher population in 2016 than the minimum RPG target, while the figure for 2020 is on course for attaining the 2022 RPG target.

It is considered that the High-Growth Scenario adopted in both the SEDP and this County Development might prove too optimistic, given the prevailing economic conditions. The difference of under 1,000 is not considered significant, therefore the Plan is essentially compliant with the population targets set out in the RPGs.

A.5 Future population distribution

The Joint Housing Strategy adopted in 2009 by Sligo local authorities as part of the Sligo and Environs Development Plan outlined the broad distribution of population in the County settlements as shown in Table AA-5 below.

Table AA-5. Housing Strategy 2010-2017 - summary of past and envisaged population distribution in County Sligo

Settlement category or area	Population 2002 (Census)	Population 2006 (Census)	Population 2010 (projection)	Population 2017 (projection)
Gateway	25,247	24,755	27,767	33,947
Satellites*	3,473	4,531	5,011	5,976
Key Support Towns	2,820	3,479	3,891	4,732
Other settlements**	1,953	2,827	3,012	3,365
Rural areas***	24,707	25,302	25,622	25,774
County total	58,200	60,894	65,322	73,835

* Satellites considered in the Housing Strategy were: Grange, Rosses Point, Strandhill, Ballysadare and Collooney.

** Other settlements considered in the Housing Strategy were: Easkey, Mullaghmore, Coolaney, Bellaghy, Rathcormack, Ballintogher, Ballygawley, Carney, Drumcliff, Calry, Ransboro.

*** Rural areas considered in the Housing Strategy included not just population residing in one-off rural housing, but also the population of the villages not listed in the settlement hierarchy of the CDP 2005-2011, i.e. Aclare, Ballincar, Ballinacarrow, Ballinacarrow, Banada, Bunnannadden, Castlebaldwin, Cliffony, Cloonacool, Culfadda, Curry, Dromore West, Geevagh, Gorteen, Monasteraden, Riverstown, Tourlestrane.

The Settlement Structure of this CDP allocates future population growth to the County's settlements generally in accordance with the Housing Strategy 2011-2017. However, certain adjustments had to be made to take account of village population estimates for 2010 (which were based on a survey of the number of occupied housing units).

Furthermore, the villages sustaining rural communities now have specific recommended population levels and are no longer included in "rural areas" in terms of population figures.

The table AA-6 below is a copy of Table 3.E in Section 3.3. It shows the adjusted population distribution between different settlement categories in the County.

Table AA-6. Summary of past and envisaged population distribution in County Sligo: Census 2002 and 2006, projections/allocations for 2017

Settlement category or area	Population 2002	Population 2006	Population 2017
Gateway	25,247	24,755	33,947
Principal Satellites	3,473	4,531	6,250
Secondary Satellites	n/a	n/a	2,110
Key Support Towns	2,820	3,479	4,700
Villages supporting rural communities	n/a	n/a	4,090
Rural areas	n/a	n/a	22,738
County total	58,200	60,894	73,835

A.6 The impact of residential vacancy on Sligo settlements

Data from the 2006 Census indicates that 23% of all dwellings in County Sligo were vacant in April of that year. This data was made available at county level, with the only breakdown given by broad type of dwelling (see Table AA-8 overleaf). At the time of adopting this Plan, no data was available from the 2011 Census.

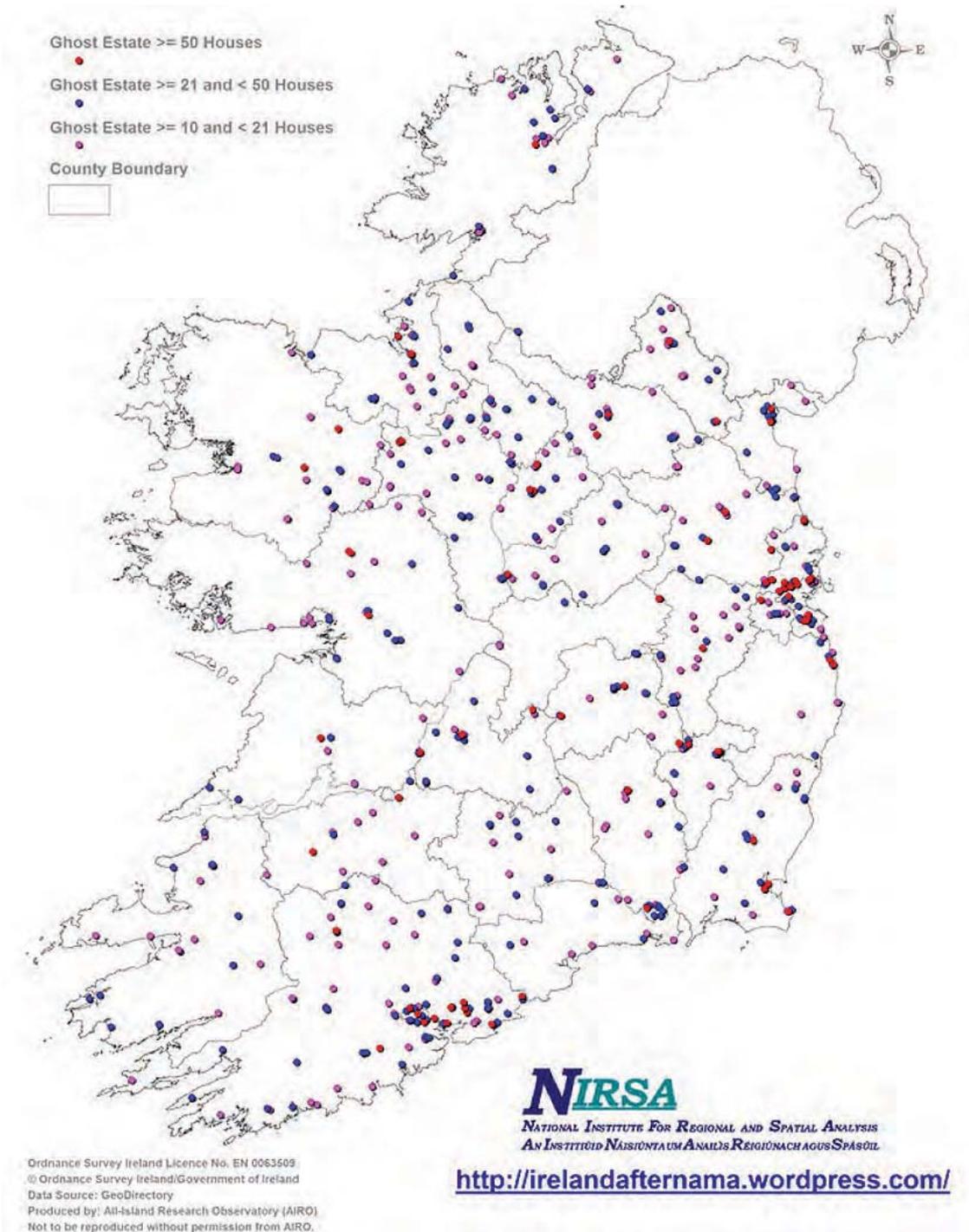


Fig. AA-7 Vacant housing estates in Ireland, 2009

Table AA-8. Permanent housing units by occupancy status on Census Night, 2006

Occupancy	No. of units
Occupied by usual resident(s) of the household [A]	21352
Occupied by visitors only [B]	277
Unoccupied: Residents temporarily absent [C]	474
Unoccupied: Vacant house [D]	4,459
Unoccupied: Vacant flat [E]	649
Unoccupied: Holiday home [F]	1,540
Total housing stock [G=A+B+C+D+E+F]	28,751
Vacancy rate [(D+E+F)/G] %	23.1

Source: Census 2006 – Principal Demographic Results, CSO

No details are provided for individual towns/villages, electoral divisions or even urban/rural areas. It is therefore difficult to assess the extent of residential vacancy at settlement level. If holiday homes and dwellings where residents were temporarily absent are not taken into consideration, the vacancy rate is still high, at 17.76% or 5,108 vacant houses of the total stock of 28,751. The problem may have been compounded by the large number of additional houses built since the Census of 2006, which was a peak year for house completions.

According to CSO data, a total of 4,357 houses were completed in County Sligo in 2006, 2007 and 2008. However, only 2,478 new houses were registered during the same period. While house completions have decreased dramatically since their 2006 peak, the total vacancy rate may have increased between 2006 and 2011.

Table AA-9. House completions in County Sligo, 2000 to 2008

Year	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Private houses	627	679	675	953	1143	1099	2090	1153	861
Social houses	81	99	80	112	169	65	74	116	63
All housing sectors	708	778	755	1065	1312	1164	2164	1269	924

Source: CSO Database Direct for DoEHLG

A research paper on future housing demand in the Border Region (*Report on Future Housing Demand in the Border Region and Implications for Planning and Development Policy* - B. Hughes, B. Williams, d. Redmond, DIT 2009) described the situation as a “housing oversupply disequilibrium”, with a regional vacancy rate of 16.73%, which could be reduced to circa 13.76% by the year 2016.

This forecast did not take cognisance of existing planning permissions. According to the study, “current economic circumstances would indicate that there will not be sufficient demand to realise these permissions or any start-ups over the next number of years.”

The paper also noted that much of the current surplus is in the “wrong locations” with regard to the DoEHLG’s Regional Planning Guidelines Review – Gateways and Hub Targets (October 2009), which stresses the importance of achieving faster population growth in designated urban locations.

National Housing Development Survey 2011

The most recent *National Housing Development Survey*, undertaken on behalf of the DoEHLG in 2011, found 311 unfinished houses and 120 unfinished apartments in the so-called “unfinished estates” in County Sligo, outside Sligo Town. The same survey counted 287 vacant houses and 166 vacant apartments in Sligo Town. However, these figures do not include vacancies outside the unfinished estates that were the subject of the survey.

The publication of Census 2011 housing data is expected to clarify the extent of residential vacancy in County Sligo. This will facilitate the formulation of a better-tailored policy response, if necessary, during the lifetime of the CDP 2011-2017.