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# DRAFT Sligo County Development Plan 2017-2023

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## Housing Strategy

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Document for public consultation  
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## Housing Strategy for County Sligo

2017–2023

### 1. Background

The Housing Strategy has been prepared in accordance with Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) and covers the functional area of Sligo County Council. The Housing Strategy forms part of the Sligo County Development Plan 2017–2023. The primary purpose of the strategy is to ensure that the overall supply of housing is sufficient to meet the needs of the existing and envisaged population of Sligo.

#### 1.1 Legislative context

Part V of the *Planning and Development Act 2000* (as amended) places an obligation on all planning authorities to prepare a housing strategy which would specify a percentage of land zoned for residential use, or for a mixture of residential and other uses, which shall be reserved for the provision of social and affordable housing. Part V of the Planning Act states that:

*'94(1)(a) Each planning authority shall include in any development plan it makes in accordance with section 12, a strategy for the purpose of ensuring that the proper planning and sustainable development of the area of the development plan provides for the housing of the existing and future population of the area in the manner set out in the strategy.'*

The Act requires that a Housing Strategy takes account of the following:

- (a) the existing need and the likely future need for both social and affordable housing*
- (b) the need to ensure that housing is available for persons who have different levels of income*
- (c) the need to ensure that a mixture of house types and sizes is developed to reasonably match the requirements of the different categories of households, as may be determined by the planning authority, and including the special requirements of elderly persons and persons with disabilities, and*
- (d) the need to counteract undue segregation in housing between persons of different social backgrounds.*

Section 95 of the Act also requires that:

- The development plan ensures that sufficient land is zoned to accommodate the requirements of the housing strategy.
- The planning authority incorporates objectives into the development plan to secure the implementation of the housing strategy, including objectives requiring that a percentage of land zoned for residential use be made available for social and affordable housing.

The *Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009* introduced a number of changes in the assessment of social housing needs and widened the scope of choices available for those seeking social housing, by providing a more developed legislative basis for the Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS).

Consequent legislation, the *Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2014* introduced a new scheme of Housing Assistance Payments (HAP) in respect of the rent payable by households qualifying for social housing support for private rented accommodation.

Following a sustained period of instability in the housing market since 2007, the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (DECLG) commenced a review of Part V, which resulted in the enactment of the *Urban Regeneration and Housing Act 2015*. This Act provides that the focus of Part V will be on the delivery of social housing in developments in excess of 9 units. It also halves to 10%, the percentage of land zoned for residential uses (or mixed including residential) that must be provided for social and affordable housing. The concept of affordable housing is being set aside for the present.

## 1.2 Policy background

The Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) requires that the Housing Strategy is consistent with the higher level strategies such as the National Spatial Strategy (NSS) and relevant regional planning guidelines (RPGs).

### National Spatial Strategy 2002-22

The NSS was devised as a coherent national planning framework to ensure a better balance of social, economic and physical development across the country. The NSS proposed that areas of sufficient scale and critical mass be built up through a network of *Gateways* and *Hubs*. Sligo City was designated as one of the new *Gateways* added to the existing five listed in the National Development Plan 2000-2006. Sligo was also an integral part of the proposed Atlantic Gateways Corridor, as an initiative to contribute to more balanced regional and inter-regional development in the implementation of the NSS. While the concept of a NSS was initially generally agreed to be a positive policy instrument for regional development, sufficient funding to ensure its implementation was never forthcoming. In February 2013, the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government announced that the NSS was to be replaced by a new strategy. This new National Planning Framework is expected to be published in 2016.

### Regional Planning Guidelines 2010

The Border Regional Planning Guidelines 2010 sought to support the development of the gateways identified in the NSS within a more detailed framework that includes hubs and other key towns outside the gateways. The RPGs also set minimum population targets and related housing land requirements for counties and major urban centres in the Border Region. Table 1 below outlines the population targets set out in the RPGs for County Sligo and the Sligo and Environs area (as defined by the Census boundary).

**Table 1: Border Region Population Targets 2010–2022**

Year	2006 (Census)	2011 (Census)	2016	2022
<b>County Sligo</b>	60,894	65,393	71,851	77,350
<b>Sligo And Environs</b>	19,002	19,452	21,200	23,700

Source: Border Regional Planning Guidelines 2010 - 2020

Both of the existing statutory plans covering the county (i.e. Sligo County Development Plan 2011–2017 and the Sligo and Environs Development Plan 2010–2016) incorporated core strategies which were consistent with the population targets outlined in the Border RPGs.

### **Social Housing Strategy 2020**

*Social Housing Strategy 2020: Support, Supply and Reform* was launched by the DECLG in November 2014. The strategy commits to provide 35,000 new social housing units and restores the State's central role in the provision of social housing through a resumption of direct building by local authorities and approved housing bodies. The national phase 1 targets are to achieve 18,000 additional housing units and 32,000 HAP/RAS units by the end of 2017 and in phase 2 to target the delivery of 17,000 additional units and 43,000 HAP/RAS units by 2020.

### **Construction 2020**

*Construction 2020*, also published in 2014, acknowledges that the construction sector is underperforming and indicates that an increase in output is required in order to meet future needs. With regard to the housing sector, there is a commitment to maintain a comprehensive database on house completions, permissions granted and vacancy levels which will be analysed against projected demands.

### **Homeless Strategy National Implementation Plan (2014)**

The implementation plan of the State's response to homelessness, the *Homeless Strategy National Implementation Plan (2014)* outlines a range of measures to secure a ring-fenced supply of accommodation to house homeless households by the end of 2016. The policy direction is to be primarily delivered through a local homeless action plan process.

## 2. Housing Demand

Future housing demand will be influenced by changes in population numbers, household formation rates and household size. This section examines demographic projections in order to make estimates of future residential requirements.

### 2.1 Demographic analysis

According to Census data, the population of County Sligo in 2011 was 65,393, while Sligo and Environs had 19,452 inhabitants. Having regard to past intercensal growth rates (most recently 7.3% from 2006 to 2011) and to the economic downturn which was likely to encourage out-migration, the County's 2016 population might be significantly lower than the RPG target outlined in Table 1 above. It is also likely that the population of Sligo and Environs area has remained stationary or changed very little.

The CSO carried out population projections for the country based on several scenarios that assume varying rates of migration and total fertility. The most recent edition of the CSO's Regional Population Projections was issued in December 2013. The national population is projected to grow from 4.6 million to 5.2 million between 2011 and 2031.

The CSO report also presents population projections for the eight former Regional Authority areas under a number of distinct scenarios. Under the so-called 'M2F2 Traditional scenario', all regions apart from Dublin and the Mid-East will lose population share due to internal migration. On the other hand, under the same scenario, the population will grow in all the regions due to natural increase. This is most noticeable in the Border Region, with projected births of 123,000 and a population increase of just 17,000.

**Table 2: Summary of CSO's Regional Population Projections 2013**

Region	Population (000s) 2011	Share of Population 2011	Population (000s) 2031	Share of National 2031	Change in Population	Change in Share
<b>Border</b>	516	11.3%	533	10.3%	3.3%	-1.0%
<b>Dublin</b>	1,262	27.6%	1,519	29.4%	20.4%	+1.7%
<b>Mid East</b>	534	11.7%	678	13.1%	27.0%	+1.4%
<b>Midlands</b>	284	6.2%	309	6.0%	8.8%	-0.3%
<b>Mid West</b>	378	8.3%	410	7.9%	8.5%	-0.4%
<b>South East</b>	499	10.9%	550	10.6%	10.2%	-0.3%
<b>South West</b>	662	14.5%	733	14.1%	10.7%	-0.3%
<b>West</b>	441	9.6%	456	8.8%	3.4%	-0.8%
<b>State Total</b>	4,576		5,188	100.0%		

Source: CSO

Table 2 indicates that the population in the Border Region is predicted to increase at an average rate of 0.2% per year over the twenty-year period. While this rate of population growth is plausible having regard to the slow pace of economic recovery giving rise to continued out-migration of young and mobile population in the coming years, it would result in a population significantly lower than the RPG predicted in 2022. Accordingly, for the purposes of this housing strategy, the RPG target figures of 71,851 (in 2016) and 77,350 (in 2022) are used as the baseline figures from which to

estimate population change over the plan period from 2017 to 2023. This approach is followed in order to adhere to the principle of alignment between the Housing Strategy, Core Strategy and the Border Regional Planning Guidelines.

## 2.2 Housing requirement

According to the 2011 Census, the average household size in the County is 2.6 persons. As shown in Table 3, the average household size has fallen significantly since 2002, both nationally and in County Sligo, reflecting changes in household composition particularly the increasing numbers of one-person households.

**Table 3: Trends in household size in County Sligo – 2002, 2006 and 2011**

Average Household Size (Persons per household)			
	2002	2006	2011
<b>Co. Sligo</b>	2.84	2.71	2.60
<b>State</b>	3.04	2.89	2.77

Source: CSO

Based on the assumption that the 2011 average household size will continue to reduce over the period of the plan in line with previous and national trends and employing the 2016 Border RPG population target as a base, the projected number of additional housing units required over the plan period (2017 to 2023) is 3,705 (refer to Table 4). This equates to an average of 618 additional units per annum.

**Table 4: Projected number of households 2017–2023**

Year	Population	Total population in private households*	Average Household Size	Number of Private Households	Net Additional Housing Units required
<b>2011 (Census)</b>	65,393	63,667	2.60	24,525	--
<b>2016 (RPG Target)</b>	<b>71,851</b>	70,414	2.49	28,279	--
<b>2017</b>	72,768	71,313	2.47	28,872	593
<b>2018</b>	73,684	72,210	2.45	29,473	601
<b>2019</b>	74,601	73,109	2.43	30,086	613
<b>2020</b>	75,517	74,007	2.41	30,708	622
<b>2021</b>	76,434	74,905	2.39	31,341	633
<b>2022 (RPG Target)</b>	<b>77,350</b>	75,803	2.37	31,984	643
<b>2023</b>	78,266	76,701	2.35	32,639	--
<b>Total</b>					<b>3,705</b>

\*The Census indicates that c. 2% of the enumerated population on the date of the census is not resident in a private household in the County. This allows for visitors, hotel guests, those in hospital, nursing homes etc. on the census date.

### 2.3 Existing housing stock

Table 5 shows Census information on the composition of the existing housing stock in the County for 2006 and 2011. It shows a significant proportion of one-person households in the county and that this percentage has seen a notable increase since 2006.

**Table 5: Private Households by Household Composition 2006 and 2011**

Nature of household composition	% Share - 2006	% Share - 2011
Husband and wife with children	32.4%	29.8%
One person	25.5%	27.6%
Husband and wife	15.1%	15.7%
Lone mother with children	8.4%	8.6%
Households with unrelated persons only	4.0%	4.2%
Cohabiting couple	3.4%	3.5%
Cohabiting couple with children	2.3%	2.9%
Non-family households and relations	2.6%	2.3%
Couple, children and others	1.8%	1.3%
Lone father with children	1.4%	1.4%
Other	3.1%	2.7%

Source: CSO

### 2.4 Vacancy rates

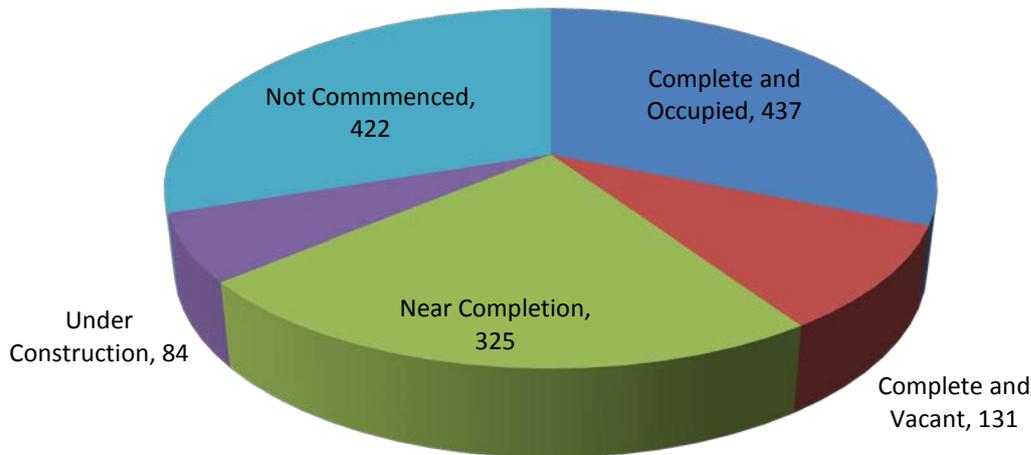
The 2011 Census recorded that 22.2% of all permanent housing units in County Sligo were vacant (other than temporary absences). This was a decrease from the 2006 figure of 23.1% but remains significantly higher than the national figure of 14.5%. Of the total housing stock of 33,044 units, there were 4,473 vacant houses, 1,086 vacant flats and 1,769 vacant holiday homes.

It is likely that this vacant stock will accommodate some of the additional housing units estimated in Table 4 to be required over the period of the plan.

### 2.5 Unfinished housing estates

The National Housing Survey undertaken by the Housing Agency in 2014 provides detailed information on the number and condition of unfinished housing estates in the country. The survey was carried out over the summer of 2014. In Sligo, a total of 30 developments were surveyed, comprising 1,399 units.

Figure 1 below shows the number and proportion of units that were either complete and occupied, complete and vacant, near completion, construction commenced but ceased, and not commenced.

**Figure 1: Unfinished Housing Developments Survey 2014** (source: *The Housing Agency*)

It can be reasonably expected that the 456 vacant and near-completed units will contribute to the overall housing supply over the period of the plan.

## 2.6 House prices

Since the Irish economy entered recession in 2008, there has been a substantial reduction in house prices in County Sligo. The continued uncertainty in the property market makes estimating average house prices for the County extremely difficult. An analysis of the quarterly reports published by Daft.ie indicates that the average asking price for residential property in County Sligo continues to fall and the rate of decline only began to reduce in 2014.

**Table 6: Average asking price in County Sligo** (source: *Daft.ie Q2 reports*)

2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
€194,564	€173,256	€149,707	€122,186	€117,140	€112,942
	-10.9%	-13.6%	-18.4%	-4.1%	-3.6%

Source: *Daft.ie Quarterly Reports*

As the price of property continues to reduce, housing also becomes more affordable. This would suggest that many of the reasons which necessitated the intervention by Government to provide affordable housing through the Part V process no longer apply. However, it is acknowledged that reducing house prices alone will not ensure access to the property market, particularly having regard to the ongoing difficulty in sourcing finance to purchase property. There are also many households affected by negative equity, mortgage arrears or unsustainable mortgages.

## 2.7 Private rented sector

Private rental accommodation has grown in importance in recent years due to the instability in the housing market and in the economy. The private rental sector serves several important functions:

- offers new households, or immigrants, time to acclimatise to the housing market;
- provides time for individuals to bridge the gap of affordability to home ownership;

- facilitates those seeking location-specific accommodation on a temporary basis;
- offers choice of accommodation for those who have a preference for rented accommodation.

The Private Residential Tenancies Board (PRTB) was established in 2004 to deal with disputes between tenants and landlords, but also operates as a national tenancy registration system providing information and policy advice on the private rented sector. According to the PRTB register, there were 5,092 private rental properties in County Sligo on 14 May 2016. This is estimated to account for approximately 20% of the total number of private households.

## 2.8 Changes in affordable housing policy

Section 94(4) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) states that a Housing Strategy shall include an estimate of the amount of:

- (i) *housing for the purposes of the provision of social housing support within the meaning of the housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009, and*
- (ii) *affordable housing*

The government's Housing Policy Statement of June 2011 and DECLG's Circular 11/2012 stated that affordable housing schemes should be stepped down.

The Urban Regeneration and Housing Bill 2015 put before the houses of the Oireachtas in June 2015, sought to address housing supply-related issues with a view to facilitating increased activity in the housing construction sector. The explanatory memorandum published in support of the Bill states:

*'The Bill provides that, in future, the focus of Part V will be on the delivery of social housing, with a requirement for up to 10% social housing in developments in excess of 9 units. In the operation of these revised Part V arrangements, the priority will be to secure social housing units on-site, the making of cash payments in lieu of social housing is to be discontinued'.*

With regard to the preparation of housing strategies and the provision of affordable housing, the explanatory memorandum states:

*'Previous affordable housing schemes have all been stood down since 2011 and there is no intention of providing any scheme in the immediate future. Due to the urgent need for social housing provision, it is essential that the current focus of Part V agreements be placed entirely on social housing output. It is intended to issue a statutory Ministerial Policy Directive under section 29 of the Principal Act to planning authorities directing that, until the issue of a further Ministerial Directive, developers should fulfil their Part V obligation in the form of social housing only.'*

Having regard to the above, it is considered unnecessary to carry out an affordability assessment at this point in time.

The Urban Regeneration and Housing Act, 2015 was signed into law by the President on 28 July 2015 and came into operation with effect from 1 September 2015.

### 3. Housing Supply

The DECLG provides house completion data which indicates that housing output in Sligo peaked in 2006 and experienced a substantial decline thereafter. House completions in Sligo reached a peak of 2,164 dwellings at the end of 2006 before decreasing rapidly year-on-year to just 167 dwellings by the end of 2015, a fall of 92%.

**Table 7: House Completions by Type**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Individual Houses</b>	<b>Scheme Houses</b>	<b>Apartments</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>2005</b>	402	608	154	<b>1,164</b>
<b>2006</b>	504	1,192	468	<b>2,164</b>
<b>2007</b>	467	661	141	<b>1,269</b>
<b>2008</b>	427	435	62	<b>924</b>
<b>2009</b>	234	208	42	<b>484</b>
<b>2010</b>	152	60	11	<b>223</b>
<b>2011</b>	162	48	14	<b>224</b>
<b>2012</b>	134	96	35	<b>265</b>
<b>2013</b>	124	29	8	<b>161</b>
<b>2014</b>	106	36	3	<b>145</b>
<b>2015</b>	115	43	9	<b>167</b>

*Source: DECLG*

Table 7 also shows a significant reduction in the number of apartments and scheme houses built in recent years, which would suggest that the majority of new houses built since 2009 were located outside of towns and villages predominantly on unserviced sites.

#### 3.1 Existing Residential Capacity

In compliance with the population targets set in the Border RPG's, the County Development Plan 2011–2017 specified that 195 ha of land were to be zoned for residential development in towns and villages outside the Sligo and Environs area.

The SEDP 2010–2016 was amended in 2011 to reduce the area zoned for residential and mixed uses to 40 ha, of which 28.6 ha were exclusively residential. Surplus lands that were previously zoned residential in the SEDP and local area plans were included in the Strategic Land Reserve (SLR).

**Table 8: Undeveloped Residentially Zoned Lands 2016 (not including SLR and residential potential on mixed use lands)**

<b>Plan Area</b>	<b>Undeveloped Residential Land (ha)</b>	<b>Potential Number of Dwellings (Based on DP density standards of 35 per hectare in SEDP and 12 elsewhere)</b>	<b>Potential Additional Population (Based on average household size of 2 persons in SEDP and 2.2 elsewhere)</b>
<b>Sligo and Environs DP</b>	28.6	1,001	2,002
<b>Ballymote LAP</b>	21.1	253	557
<b>Enniscrone LAP</b>	14.1	169	372
<b>Tobercurry LAP*</b>	19.5	234	515
<b>CDP Mini-Plans</b>	125	1,500	3,300
<b>Total</b>	<b>208.3</b>	<b>3,157</b>	<b>6,746</b>

\*The Draft LAP for Tobercurry proposed 19.5 hectares to be zoned for residential development

The CDP 2011–2017 imposed a moratorium on multiple housing development outside the Sligo and Environs area. The purpose of the moratorium was to reduce the residential vacancy in the county by allowing for the large number of houses built before the downturn to be occupied.

The moratorium seems to have been successful in promoting the completion and occupation of many of the unfinished estates in the County, which reduced from 92 estates in 2010 to 30 in 2015. Another consequence of the moratorium, combined with the lack of house building activity within the Sligo and Environs area, is that most of the land referred to Table 8 remains undeveloped.

There are 31.8 hectares of lands zoned for mixed uses in the Sligo and Environs Development Plan 2010 – 2016 which remain undeveloped in 2016. Assuming that 50% of this land could be developed for residential purposes, the potential residential yield from this land at a density of 35 units per hectare is 553 dwelling units.

When considered in conjunction with the 3,157 units that can be achieved on lands zoned for residential purposes set out in Table 8 above, it is clear that in early 2016 there was more than sufficient land zoned to meet Sligo’s anticipated housing needs up to 2023, even with a 50% overhead to allow for an element of choice, as recommended by the DECLG’s *Development Plan Guidelines for Planning Authorities*.

In the above context, it is considered that the new core strategy for the County Development Plan 2017-2023 should ensure that the amount of land zoned for residential purposes within the County area does not exceed that allocated within the CDP 2011 – 2017. However, in order to promote growth in the Gateway City, consideration should be given to expanding the options for residential development in the future Sligo and Environs LAP by offering a wider choice of location on additional sites.

#### 4. Social Housing Supply and Demand

In November 2014, the Government published the *Social Housing Strategy 2020*, which supports a new vision for social housing based around the core aim ‘*that to the greatest extent possible, every household in Ireland will have access to secure, good quality housing suited to their needs at an affordable price and in a sustainable community*’. The general principle underpinning the aim is that those who can afford to provide for their housing needs should do so either through home ownership or private rented accommodation, and that those unable to provide housing from their own resources should have access to social housing.

Local authorities are the main providers of social housing support for people who cannot afford to buy their own houses. This support is provided by way of traditional local authority built housing and also now includes other support via the Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS), Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) and leasing under Social Housing Current Expenditure Programme (SHCEP). Approved housing bodies also provide social housing for people who are unable to provide housing from their own resources.

##### 4.1 Housing needs assessment

Each local authority is required to undertake an assessment of housing need every three years, in order to identify the number of households who require social housing in its administrative area. Table 9 shows a breakdown of the 2013 housing need assessment for Sligo and indicates that the number of households with a social housing need figure for the County was 770. The majority of these households are located within the urban area.

**Table 9: Breakdown of Housing Need Assessment 2013**

Grounds of households’ social housing need	Sligo Borough Council	Sligo County Council	Total
<b>Dependent on rent supplement</b>	165	114	279
<b>Unsuitable accommodation – household circumstances</b>	116	48	164
<b>Require separate accommodation</b>	36	5	41
<b>Institution, emergency accommodation, hostel</b>	19	3	22
<b>Disability - physical</b>	11	3	14
<b>Disability - sensory</b>	2	0	2
<b>Disability – mental health</b>	15	3	18
<b>Disability – intellectual</b>	33	124	157
<b>Disability - other</b>	0	1	1
<b>Unsuitable accommodation - medical</b>	29	18	47
<b>Overcrowded accommodation</b>	5	10	15
<b>Unfit accommodation</b>	2	6	8
<b>Unsustainable mortgage</b>	0	2	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>433</b>	<b>337</b>	<b>770</b>

The 2011 Census counted 24,525 households in the County and 7,619 households in the Sligo and Environs area. This would indicate that the social housing need in the County is equivalent to 3% of the housing stock. This figure rises to 6% of the housing stock in the Sligo and Environs area.

Table 10 illustrates social housing applicants by household type in 2013 and shows that a substantial proportion (57%) of those seeking social housing are one-person households. This highlights the importance of providing a mix of house types to meet the specific housing needs in the County.

**Table 10: Social housing need by household type**

	<b>Single person household</b>	<b>Single person with children</b>	<b>Two or more adults with / without children</b>	<b>Multi-adult household</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Sligo City</b>	231	119	83	2	433
<b>Sligo County</b>	214	73	48	0	337
<b>Total</b>	<b>445</b>	<b>192</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>770</b>

#### 4.2 Provision of social housing supports

The options available to a local authority in delivering social housing supports are:

- construction of dwellings
- acquisition of dwellings
- Part V agreements
- Leasing - Social Housing Current Expenditure Programme (SHCEP)
- Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS),
- Housing Assistance Payments (HAP)

Traditionally, Sligo County Council provided social housing through either acquisition or construction. The introduction of Part V in the Planning and Development Act 2000 resulted in the delivery of a significant number of housing units during the ‘Celtic Tiger’ years up to 2007. As shown in Table 11 below, the number of house completions achieved by the Council decreased significantly since 2007.

**Table 11: Sligo's social housing output 2006–2015**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Completions (Inclusive of Part V)</b>	<b>Acquisitions</b>	<b>Voluntary</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>2006</b>	74	31	0	105
<b>2007</b>	102	49	14	165
<b>2008</b>	63	21	0	84
<b>2009</b>	67	8	8	83
<b>2010</b>	41	14	56	111
<b>2011</b>	4	30	191	225
<b>2012</b>	1	31	10	42
<b>2013</b>	0	16	13	29
<b>2014</b>	0	14	4	18
<b>2015</b>	0	22	10	32

In response to declining returns from the Part V process, and in the interest of achieving better value for money, the Government has sought to develop new models of social housing programmes. The three new models developed are the Rental Accommodation Scheme, the Social Housing Leasing Initiative (SHLI) and the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP).

Under the *Rental Accommodation Scheme*, the Council negotiates with landlords for the use of their properties for a period of up to four years. The RAS properties are allocated to people who are in receipt of rent supplement for more than 18 months and who have been assessed by the Housing Authority as having a long-term housing need. The RAS tenant may avail of the opportunity to live in good quality private accommodation, with the state contributing towards the rent. The total number of RAS tenants in the County at the end of 2015 was 465.

The *Social Housing Leasing Initiative* involves housing authorities leasing properties from private property owners for the purpose of providing accommodation to households on the social housing waiting list. In 2014, a total of 39 properties were procured under this scheme in County Sligo.

The *Housing Assistance Payment* is a new social housing support involving the transfer of the responsibility for the provision of rental assistance to those with a long-term housing need from the Department of Social Protection to local authorities. Under HAP, local authorities will make the full rent payment on behalf of the HAP recipient directly to the landlord. The HAP recipient will then pay a rent contribution to the local authority. The rent contribution is a differential rent, i.e. a rent based on income and the ability to pay. A HAP scheme was introduced in Sligo in November 2015 and the total number of HAP tenants in the County at the end of 2015 was 8.

### **4.3 Existing social housing stock**

Sligo County Council's housing stock at the end of 2015 was 2,179 dwelling. Approximately 65% of these units are located in housing estates that are managed by the Local Authority (i.e. the housing development was originally built or purchased in its entirety by the Local Authority). The vacancy rate for Sligo's social housing stock at the end of 2015 was 96 units (i.e. 4.4% of stock).

It will be an important component of the housing strategy that the utilisation of the existing stock is maximised over the period of the Plan and the number of vacant properties is kept to a minimum.

#### **4.4 Voluntary housing sector**

Approved housing bodies are independent, non-profit making organisations formed for the purpose of relieving housing needs and the provision and management of social housing. They seek to achieve a balance in social housing provision by widening the range of housing options to meet different and changing needs. They are mainly concerned with accommodating persons or families who are in need of housing and who do not have the resources to provide any accommodation of their own. At the end of 2015, there was an existing stock of 406 units in the County provided by approved housing bodies.

#### **4.5 Specific housing needs**

##### **4.5.1 Accommodation for people with disabilities**

The *National Housing Strategy for People with a Disability 2011–2016*, published in 2010, sets out the government’s strategy to address the housing needs of people with disabilities. The Strategy uses the term ‘disability’ in reference to four categories of disability, i.e. sensory disability, mental health disability, physical disability and intellectual disability. As shown in Table 8 above, the 2013 housing needs assessment for County Sligo identified 192 households on the housing list which required disability-related accommodation. A County wide strategic plan for housing people with a disability is currently at draft stage with a view to being adopted by the Council in the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of 2016.

##### **4.5.2 Accommodation for the homeless**

The *North-West Regional Homelessness Action Plan 2013–2018* has been prepared for housing authorities of Sligo, Leitrim and Donegal in conjunction the HSE. The six strategic aims of the plan are:

1. To reduce the number of household who become homeless through further development and enhancement of preventative measures
2. To eliminate the need for people to sleep rough
3. To eliminate long-term homelessness and to reduce the length of time people spend homeless.
4. To meet the long-term housing needs through an increase in housing options
5. To ensure effective services for homeless people
6. To ensure better co-ordinated funding arrangements and re-orientate spending on homeless services away from emergency responses to the provision of long-term housing and support services.

##### **4.5.3 Accommodation for the travelling community**

The Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998 requires all local authorities to prepare, in consultation with Travellers and the general public, a five-year Traveller accommodation programme to meet the existing and projected needs of Travellers in their area. The *Traveller Accommodation Plan 2014–2018*, adopted by Sligo County Council in April 2014, estimates the number of units of accommodation required to meet the needs of the Travellers Community over this period. Table 12 shows that a total of 64 households will need to be accommodated and indicates the type of accommodation proposed.

**Table 12: Accommodation type to meet identified need of Traveller households**

<b>Type of accommodation</b>	<b>Number of households</b>
<b>Standard Local Authority housing</b>	5
<b>Group schemes</b>	20
<b>Serviced sites</b>	4
<b>Private rental and RAS</b>	35
<b>Total</b>	<b>64</b>

#### **4.6 Estimated Social Housing**

Sligo's 2013 housing needs assessment identified that there were 770 households in need of social housing in County Sligo. Applying an average household size of 2.5, the number of persons seeking social housing in 2013 is therefore estimated as 1,925. For the purpose of this housing strategy, it is assumed that the number of persons requiring social housing will grow at the same rate as the general population for the period of the strategy, i.e. at a rate of 1.3% per year. Accordingly, it is estimated that the number of persons requiring social housing by 2023 will be 2,162, which equates to 865 households.

Section 2.2 above indicates that for the period of the Plan, 3,705 additional housing units will be required to meet the target population of Sligo in 2023. It is estimated, therefore, that to satisfy the social housing needs of Sligo by 2023, circa 23% of the total house provision for the period of the Plan would have to be provided for social housing. While a large proportion of these housing units will be provided through the private rental market (RAS, HAP and leasing), it is considered reasonable to apply a requirement of 10% of all land zoned for residential use or a mixture of residential and other uses, be reserved for the purposes of Part V.

## 5. Summary and Recommendations

The key issues identified in the preparation of this strategy can be summarised as follows:

### Census data and identified trends

- House completions in Sligo reached a peak of 2,164 dwellings at the end of 2006 before decreasing rapidly year-on-year to just 167 dwellings by the end of 2015, a fall of 92%.
- There has been a significant reduction in the number of scheme houses and apartments completed since 2006. This indicates that during the life of the previous Development Plans (CDP and SEDP), the majority of houses were built in rural locations, on unserviced land.
- The 2011 Census recorded that 22.2% of all permanent housing units in County Sligo were vacant, which is significantly higher than the national average of 14.5%.
- There are a significant number of one-person households, which have seen a notable increase since 2006 as a percentage of the total number of households.
- Approximately 20% of the total number of private households within the County live in private rented accommodation.

### Social housing requirements

- The 2013 housing need assessment for Sligo indicated that there were 770 households on the social housing waiting list.
- Based on current trends, it is estimated that approximately 2,162 persons will require social housing by 2023 which equates to 865 households.
- The Urban Regeneration and Housing Act 2015 places the focus of Part V on the delivery of social housing, with a requirement for up to 10% social housing in developments in excess of 9 units. In the operation of these revised Part V arrangements, the priority will be to secure social housing units on-site. The making of cash payments in lieu of social housing is to be discontinued. It is considered reasonable to apply a requirement of 10% of all land zoned for residential use or a mixture of residential and other uses, be reserved for the purposes of Part V.

### Housing land provision

- It is estimated that the County Development Plan would have to cater for circa 5,500 additional persons between 2017 and 2023, in order to comply with the population targets set by the Regional Planning Guidelines 2010.
- 3,705 housing units will be required to accommodate the estimated population increase over the period of the Plan.
- The housing land provision as specified in the Core Strategy of the CDP 2017-2023 is more than sufficient to meet Sligo's housing needs up to 2023, even allowing 50% overhead to facilitate an element of choice as recommended by the DECLG Development Plan Guidelines for Planning Authorities.
- The new core strategy for the County Development Plan 2017-2023 should ensure that the amount of land zoned for residential purposes within the County area does not exceed that allocated within the CDP 2011 – 2017. However, in order to promote growth in the Gateway City, consideration should be given to expanding the options for residential development in the future Sligo and Environs LAP by offering a wider choice of location on additional sites.

In order to address the above issues and to secure the aims of the Housing Strategy, the following policies should be included in the Draft County Development Plan 2017–2023:

**Strategic housing policies**

1. Encourage a balanced supply of private housing in the county, in a manner that is consistent with the Core Strategy and the settlement hierarchy, and which will support the creation of sustainable communities through the provision of an appropriate range of housing types and high-quality residential environments.
2. Reserve 10% of eligible sites which are subject to new residential development (or a mix of uses including residential) for the development of social housing units, in accordance with the Housing Strategy and the requirements of Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).
3. Monitor residential development and manage the supply of new housing to ensure that it is consistent with the requirements of the Core Strategy and the infrastructural capacity of each settlement.
4. Ensure that the needs of older people, people with disabilities and other special-needs persons and households are adequately catered for in new residential developments.

**General housing policies**

5. Promote the development of sustainable communities in accordance with the DECLG guidelines *Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas* (2009).
6. Ensure the provision of a suitable range of house types and sizes to facilitate the changing demographic structure and in particular the increasing trend towards smaller household sizes. In private housing schemes, the following mix of house types should generally apply:

<b>House type</b>	<b>Proportion in the scheme</b>
• 1-2 bedrooms	minimum 30% of total no. of houses
• 3 bedrooms	minimum 30% of total no. of houses
• 4+ bedrooms	maximum 20% of total no. of houses

7. Ensure that the supply of housing units under the Housing Strategy reflects the current and anticipated demographic characteristics and household sizes.
8. Where a particular need is identified, provide housing schemes designed for the needs of older people and/or those with special needs. Otherwise, housing schemes shall be designed with a suitable mix of house types and designs which can be easily adapted to accommodate special housing needs.

**Social housing policies**

9. Utilise all of the social housing support models including leasing, HAP, building, acquisition and RAS to address the demand for additional social housing supports over the period of the plan.
10. Promote social inclusion by ensuring that social housing support is well distributed throughout all residential areas rather than concentrated in a few locations.

11. Ensure that development in areas subject to an agreement under Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) is integrated into the housing scheme in a manner which avoids undue physical and social segregation.
12. Provide for the accommodation needs of Travellers, as far as is reasonable and practicable, using the full range of housing options available to the Local Authorities and having regard to the policies outlined in the Traveller Accommodation Programme 2014–2018 and any subsequent programme.
13. Encourage linkages between existing public and private housing areas through the provision of shared facilities, services and pedestrian, cycle and vehicular connections, as appropriate, between these areas.
14. Assist approved housing bodies in the provision of housing and encourage a more active involvement of these sectors in the housing market.
15. Continue to support independent living for older people and the provision of specific, purpose-built accommodation.
16. Continue to meet the housing needs of persons with special needs both by direct provision of accommodation and by facilitating the provision of housing by the voluntary sector. Facilitate the provision of suitable accommodation for the homeless and for those in need of emergency accommodation.
17. Assist in the implementation of the provisions of North West Regional Homelessness Action Plan 2013 – 2016 and successor documents.