



Submission to Galway City Local Economic & Community Plan Issues Paper

July 2021

Table of Contents

POPULATION & HOUSING	1
Housing Availability	1
Type of Housing	2
Private Rented Sector	2
IMPACT ON HOMELESSNESS	4
Costs of Private Emergency Accommodation and Housing First	5
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GALWAY CITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN	5

POPULATION & HOUSING

The population of Galway City has grown considerably over the last number of years. According to CSO preliminary figures recorded in Census 2022, the population size of Galway City was 83,456 which marked a 10.7% increase over the 2011 Census.

Further significant growth is planned. In 2020, The Irish Independent¹ quoted Brendan McGrath, Chief Executive of Galway City Council, saying the city's expectation is that its population will grow by 50pc to 120,000 by 2040.

Housing Availability

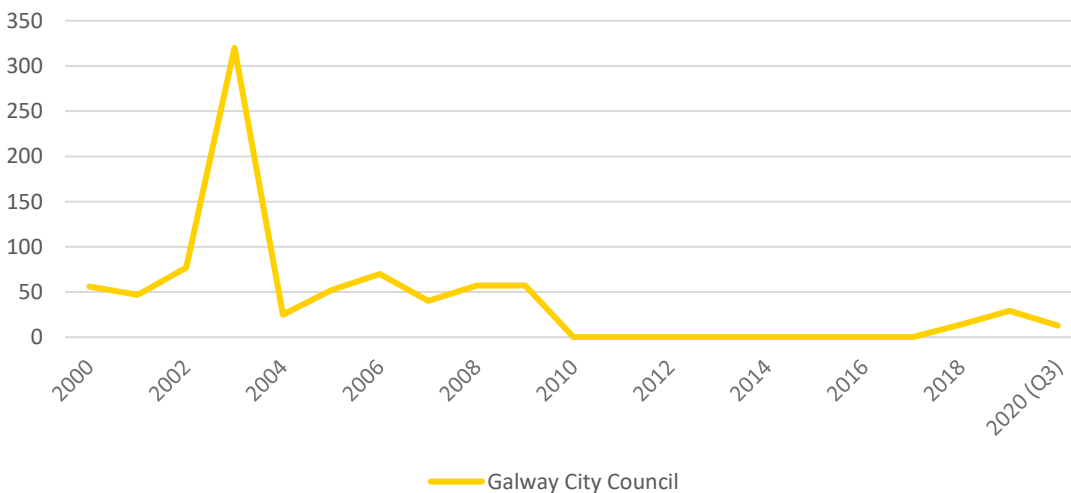
While Galway City has experienced population growth in recent years, the development of properties has been slow and unfortunately has not kept pace with the growing need for housing in our City. An average of 146 new dwellings per annum has been completed in the City since 2013.

Galway City Council - New Dwelling Completion by Type of House				
Year	Single House	Scheme House	Apartments	Total
2013	16	4	30	50
2014	8	12	27	47
2015	16	13	22	51
2016	12	69	32	113
2017	20	99	30	149
2018	21	106	12	139
2019	29	158	67	254
2020	18	156	32	206
2021	26	213	65	304

Figure 1: Source <https://statbank.cso.ie/px/pxeirestat/Statire/SelectVarVal/Define.asp?maintable=NDQ06&PLanguage=0>

Approximately 1,263 households² are currently on the Social Housing Waiting List in Galway City, many of whom have been on the list for several years. Since 2015, the Local Authority in Galway City has built 216 homes, with 327 new social housing homes being built by other providers.

Local Authority New Builds in Galway City



¹ <https://www.independent.ie/irish-news/news/galway-could-gain-1000-homes-in-plan-to-develop-brownfield-site-38885291.html>

² Housing Agency, Summary of Social Housing Assessments 2021

Figure 2: Source Gov.ie, Overall social housing provision, Local Authority Build

Type of Housing

There is a severe shortage of one and two-bed properties within the City across private, affordable and social housing and development is not matching the profile of need. Only 16% of the 206 new dwellings completed in the Galway City Local Authority Area in 2020 were apartments. 56% of households³ on the Social Housing Waiting List are single person households.

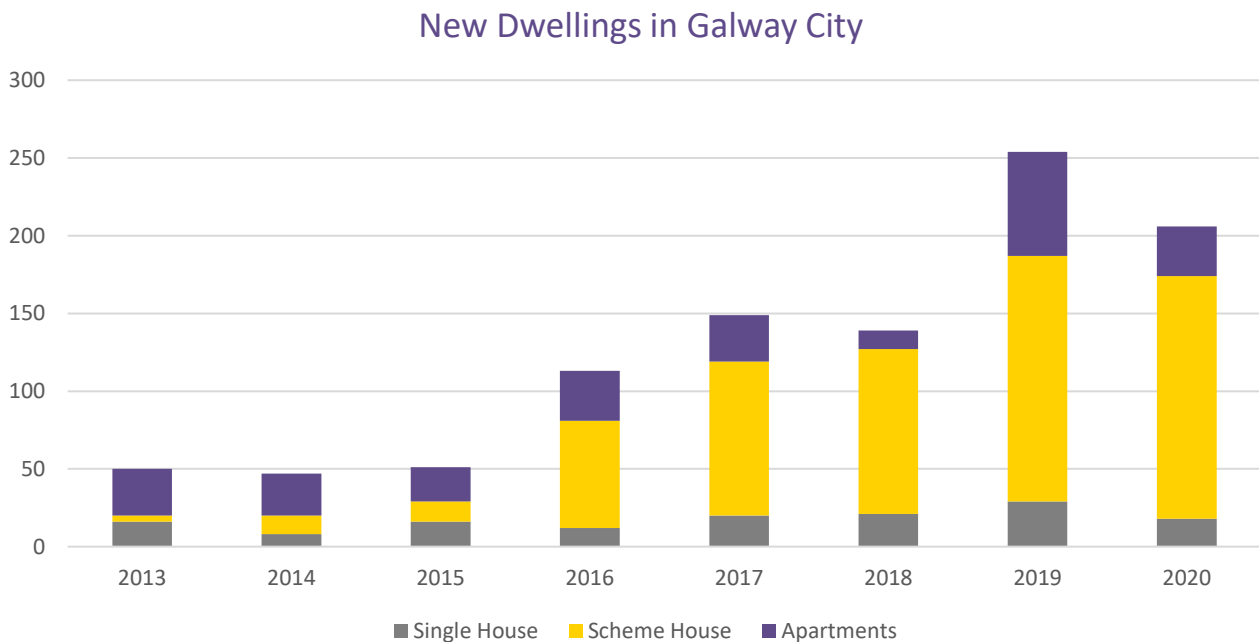


Figure 3: Source <https://statbank.cso.ie/px/pxeirestat/Statire/SelectVarVal/Define.asp?maintable=NDQ06&PLanguage=0>

The current supply of housing and the rate of new housing coming on stream in Galway City is wholly inadequate relative to demand across social, affordable and private housing. The consequence of this has been an increasing overreliance on the Private Rental Sector.

Private Rented Sector

Demand within the Private Rental Sector in Galway City is far outstripping the current supply. Those relying on private rented accommodation include people in receipt of social housing benefits, private residents and students. Additionally, Galway has a vibrant tourist industry and there is significant demand for short term lets through sites such as Air BnB. On July 15 2022 there was 809 active rentals available in Galway City on one short term letting site and 56% were entire homes⁴.

With demand for housing far greater than the available supply, the most basic economic principle applies – prices increase.

Over the past six years, average rents in Galway City have increased by 76%⁵, climbing from an average monthly rent of €900 in January 2016 to €1,585 in January 2022. Very few households have enjoyed a similar increase in net income. With such a reliance on the private rental sector and relentless increases in rent prices over recent years, Galway City has become out of reach for many within our community. Nationally, it was reported in 2019 that “more than one in five tenants paying market rent in Ireland are paying over 40% of their disposable income on housing, with almost one in ten paying over 60% and more than one in twenty

³ Housing Agency, Summary of Social Housing Assessments 2020

⁴ Source: <https://www.airdna.co/vacation-rental-data/app/ie/default/galway/overview>

⁵ Daft.ie Rental Report Q1 2016 – Q1 2022

paying 75%⁶. For many, the increasing percentage of income being spent on rent is putting pressure on household income and food and fuel poverty are significant issues.

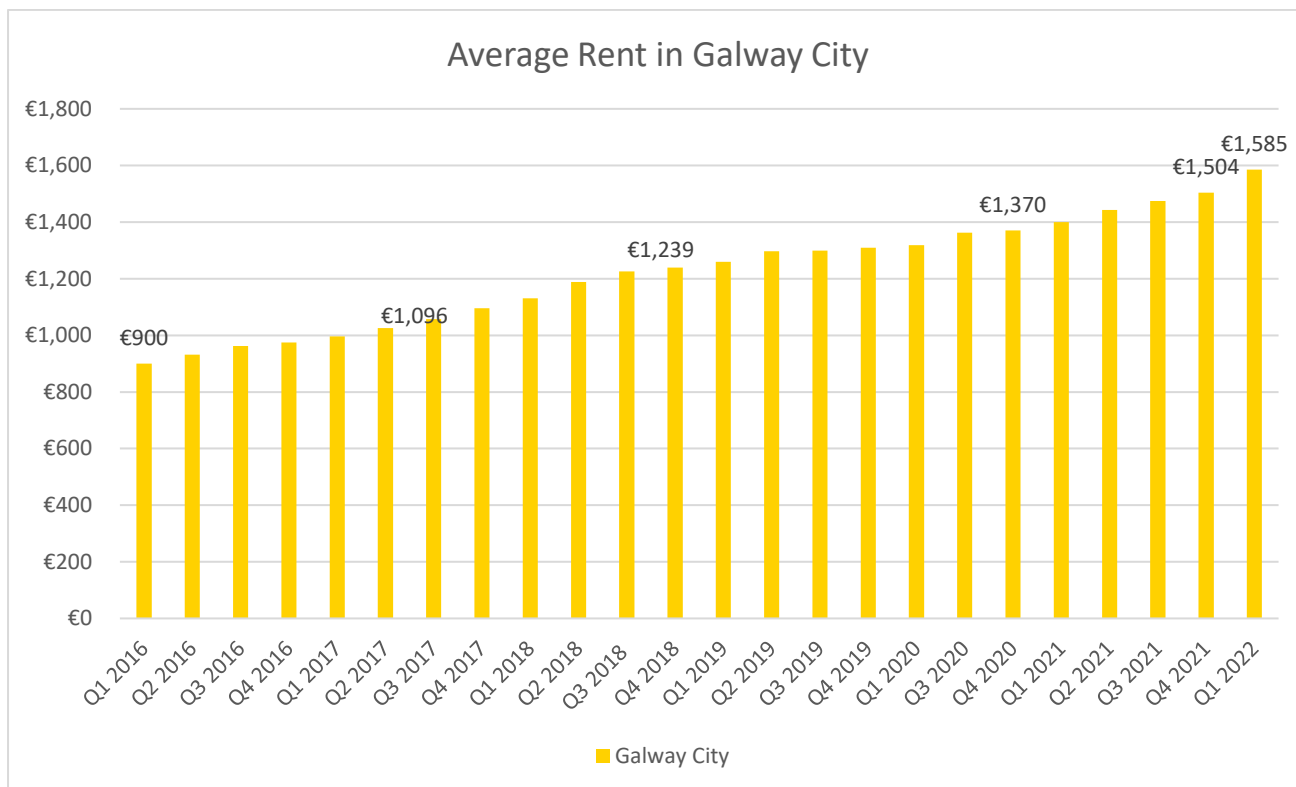


Figure 4: Source: Daft.ie Rental Reports

Locked Out of the Market, a periodic research study conducted by the Simon Communities of Ireland, tracks the number of properties advertised to rent in the Private Rental Sector that are within the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) limits. The latest report released in July 2022 showed that for the sixth study in a row, there were no properties that fell within the HAP limits in Galway City Centre out of the average of 7 that were available to rent. In the wider Galway City area, there were no properties that fell within the HAP limits out of the average 17 properties available to rent⁷.

78% of social housing for Galway City in 2021 was delivered through HAP tenancies through the Private Rental Sector. However, the Private Rental Sector does not provide security of tenure and is unaffordable for many of those within our community who rely on social housing, as well as those on low and middle incomes.

Renting in Galway City has become unsustainable for many in the local community who are facing high rents, low supply and in some cases, sub-standard accommodation. Additionally, many others have had to uproot their entire lives to move out of the city as they simply cannot afford to live here. The housing crisis is having an impact on the economic development of the City as it become increasingly unviable for people to live and work here.

The lack of supply and affordability within Galway City’s rental sector has resulted in hundreds of individuals and families falling into homelessness or finding themselves at risk of losing their home over recent years.

⁶ [One in 10 households pay over 60% of income on rent \(irishtimes.com\)](https://www.irishtimes.com)

⁷ [Simon Communities in Ireland > Publications > Research](#)

IMPACT ON HOMELESSNESS

The sharpest edge of the housing crisis is the homelessness crisis.

Number of People in Emergency Accommodation since RI Launch

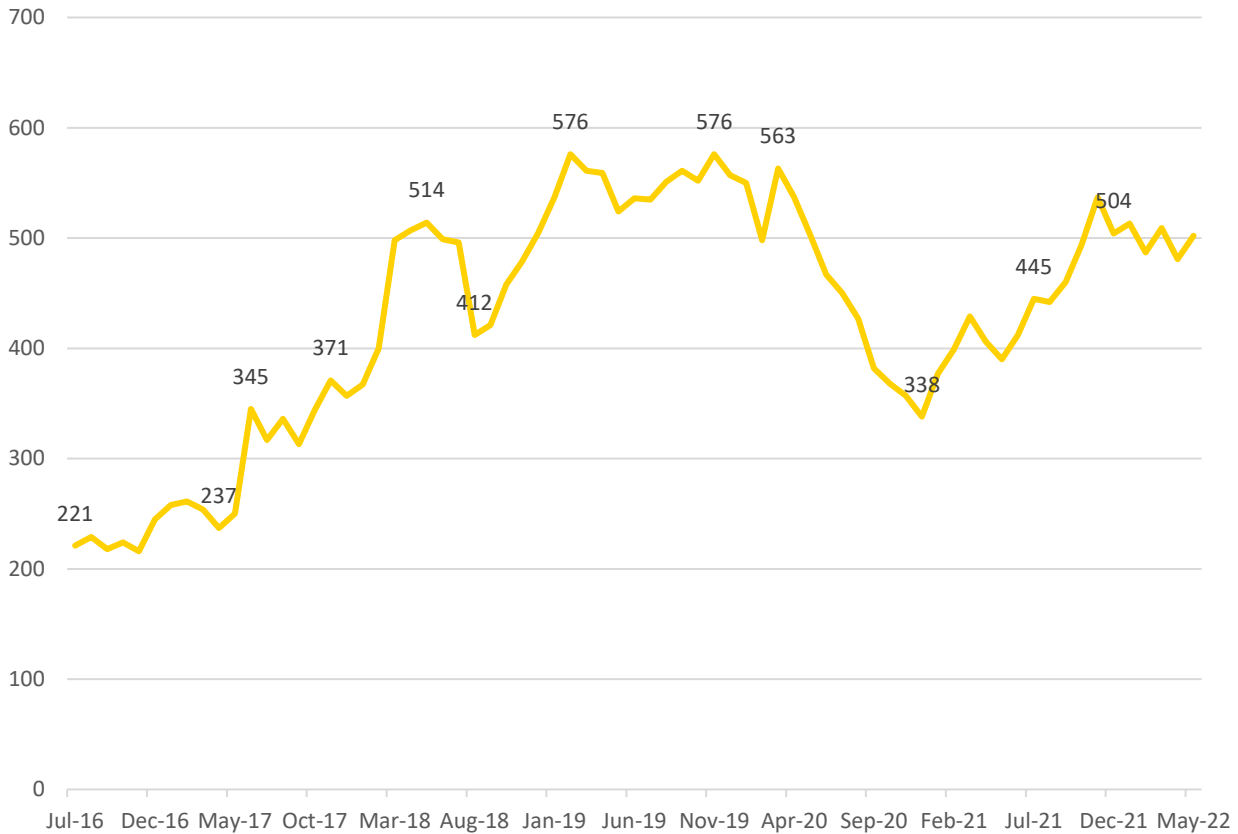


Figure 5: Source Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government. Homelessness Data.

According to the Department of Housing’s data, there have been between 221 and 576 people living in Emergency Accommodation in the West of Ireland (Galway, Mayo, Roscommon) at any one time over the last six years. 36% on average are children, 60% on average are in the Galway region⁸. In addition to those in Emergency Accommodation in Galway, hundreds more are living in ‘hidden homelessness’, sleeping rough or in cars, couch surfing or involuntarily sharing.

While 2020 saw a very welcome drop in the numbers in Emergency Accommodation in the West, there has been a steep rise in the numbers since the moratorium on evictions was lifted as Covid-19 restrictions were eased. Numbers in emergency accommodation are nearly back to their peak pre-pandemic levels. There was no decrease in the demand for our services during the pandemic. 63% of those who turned to Galway Simon for help in 2021 were registered with Galway City Council for housing. The homelessness crisis remains a very significant issue within our City.

For those at risk of, or experiencing homelessness, the cost of living crisis is a crisis on top of a crisis.

⁸ Source Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government. Homelessness Data. (Average between January 2016 – December 2021)

Costs of Private Emergency Accommodation and Housing First

The costs incurred in providing Private Emergency Accommodation (PEA) in Galway City have risen substantially in recent years from around €300,000 in 2016 to an estimated €1.2million in 2018⁹ and €3.8m in 2019¹⁰ - a thirteen-fold increase in four years. The total Homeless Services budget (including Covid 19 costs) ran to €11m in Galway City Council's budget in 2021¹¹, inclusive of a significant percentage budgeted for PEA.

The Government is committed to Housing First to provide long term sustainable solutions for those most entrenched in homelessness. A National Director of Housing First has been appointed, a National Housing First Office has been established and the second National Housing First Implementation Plan is being implemented.

Galway Simon Community welcomes and endorses the commitment to Housing First and Housing Led solutions to homelessness. Galway Simon and Cope Galway collaborated to deliver the target of 30 tenancies over the course of the 3-year pilot for Galway City to May 2022. with a 95% tenancy sustainment rate and with very high fidelity (based on independent research) to the principles of Housing First. The tenants who have been housed through this Service are finding significant stability in their lives and the Service represents dramatically better value for money than Emergency Accommodation.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GALWAY CITY LOCAL ECONOMIC & COMMUNITY PLAN

While it is welcome that the Issue Paper recognises that there is a homelessness issue in the City, the figure of 226 it identifies as homeless adults in Galway City in February 2022 is only the tip of the iceberg as this is only those in Emergency Accommodation. In addition to those in Emergency Accommodation hundreds more are living in 'hidden homelessness', sleeping rough or in cars, couch surfing or involuntarily sharing. In 2021, Galway Simon Community supported 814 households comprising 1,511 individuals across our housing and homeless prevention services and we are one of several agencies supporting people in Galway City.

The Issue Paper is lacking any specifics as to what was achieved during the current LECP or any objectives for the next plan around addressing homelessness in the City.

Targeting a 50% increase in the population of Galway City, 40,000 people, over the next twenty years is very ambitious. We must be equally ambitious in addressing homelessness in our City. We must aim to end homelessness in Galway in line with the government's Housing for All Strategy target for eradicating homelessness by 2030.

Alongside the significant population growth in our City over the last decade, homelessness increased to unprecedented levels. When Galway Simon Community was established in 1979, none of the early volunteers could have imagined that forty years later – with the City thriving – more people than ever before would be turning to us in crisis for help.

The targets for population growth will not be met with housing delivery averaging 146 dwellings per annum. Significant investment will be required. The relative investment to eliminate homelessness in the City and reduce the Social Housing Waiting List will be very achievable with a commitment to achieving these aims.

While we appreciate the Galway City LECP does not have responsibility for the provision of housing there are a number of actions it can take that would help address homelessness in the City.

⁹ Galway City Tribune, August 20th 2018

¹⁰ [gov.ie](http://www.gov.ie) - Homelessness Financial Report End of Year 2019 - West (www.gov.ie)

¹¹ [Adopted Budget Book 2021.pdf \(galwaycity.ie\)](http://galwaycity.ie)

In order to support the resolution of the City's housing and homelessness crisis, we ask that the following recommendations are included in the next Galway City LECP:

Goal 3: An equal and inclusive city

To support the delivery of this goal priority should be given to:

- a) Increasing accessibility and participation of people experiencing homelessness in services /activities.
- b) Supporting and facilitating Community Engagement enterprises that engage and work with people experiencing homelessness, particularly those experiencing long term homelessness or inter-generational homelessness

Goal 4: A sustainable, resilient urban environment that is the regional capital of the West

To support the delivery of this goal it is essential to provide suitable accommodation for the people of the city. To achieve this the next LECP should ensure:

- a. That the type of housing delivered must be based on the profile of demand. It is essential that far greater numbers of one and two bed units are delivered for individuals and smaller families/households.
- b. That housing solutions to be developed need to provide security and stability to people, and should be designed to facilitate independent living throughout a person's lifetime.
- c. There must be a focus on the development of sheltered housing that allows for more options for vulnerable and older people to live with support services nearby.

The LECP can also support economic developments that will support those experiencing homelessness. Specifically, the plan should:

- a) Provide support for and facilitate social enterprises that work with and support those who are or at risk of homelessness. Social enterprises such as Galway Simon's Charity shops and Barista Bus
- b) Make the public realm available for such social enterprises and treat social enterprises differently to commercial enterprises.

Goal 5: A city that promotes the health and well-being of all its people.

To support the delivery of this goal priority should be given to:

- a) Supporting the implementation of health and wellbeing programmes that promote positive mental and physical health among people experiencing, or who may in the past have experienced, homelessness.
- b) Supporting the development of sport and physical activity programmes that engage with and encourage participation among people experiencing homelessness.