



Submission to Galway City Council for Galway City Development Plan 2023-2029

March 2021

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POPULATION & HOUSING

The population of Galway City has grown considerably over the last number of years. According to CSO figures recorded in 2016, the population size of Galway City was 79,934 which marked a 41% increase over the previous ten years; surpassing the national average increase.

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 126 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

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

Approximately 1,728 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 56 homes, with 278 new social housing homes being built by other providers.

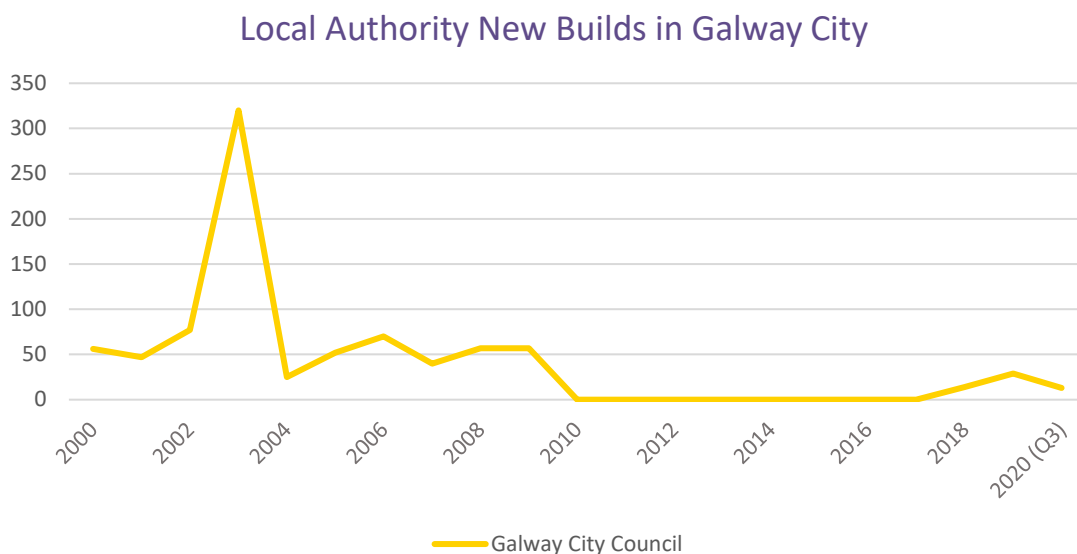


Figure 2: Source Gov.ie, Overall social housing provision, Local Authority Build

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 2019

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.

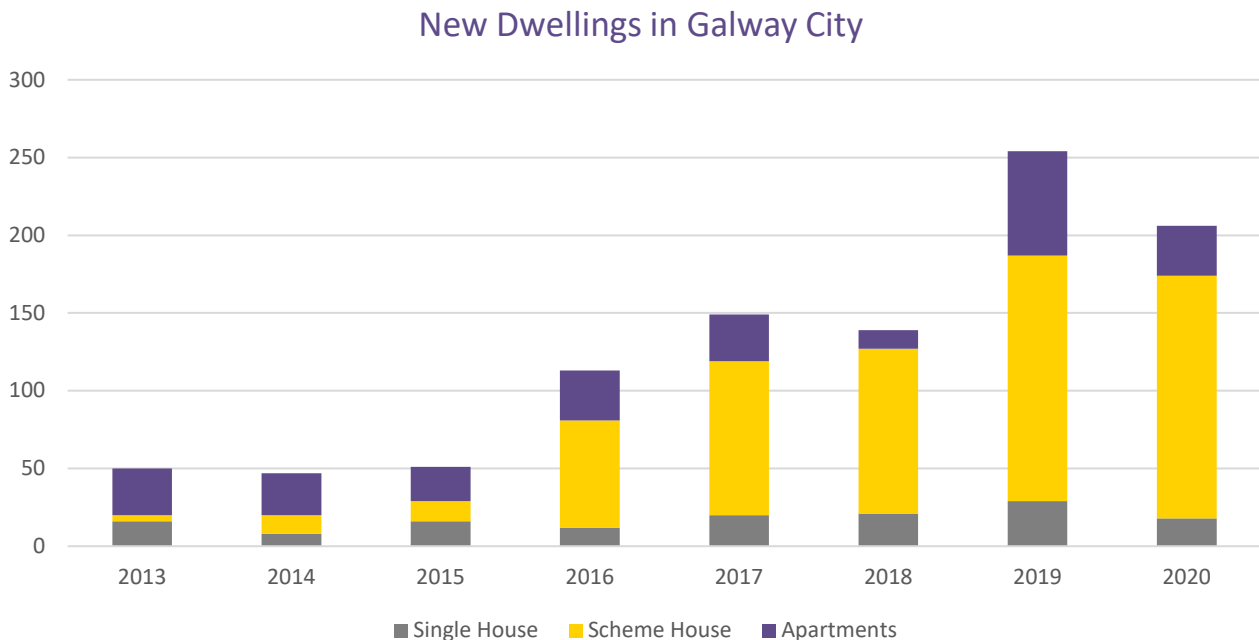


Figure 3: Source <https://statbank.cso.ie/px/pxeirestat/Statire/SelectVarVal/Define.asp?maintable=NDQ06&PLanguage=0>

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 AirBnB. Prior to Covid-19, on October 22nd 2019, one website reported 3,045 active short term rentals across Galway City and County. 1,857 of these, 61%, were entire homes⁴.

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

Over the past five years, average rents in Galway City have increased by 52%⁵, climbing from an average rent of €900 to now €1,370 per month. 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 paying 75%”⁶. For many, the increasing percentage of

³ Housing Agency, Summary of Social Housing Assessments 2019

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

⁵ Daft.ie Rental Report Q1 2016 – Q4 2020

⁶ [One in 10 households pay over 60% of income on rent \(irishtimes.com\)](https://www.irishtimes.com/news/one-in-10-households-pay-over-60-of-income-on-rent-1.4444444)

income being spent on rent is putting pressure on household income and food and fuel poverty are significant issues.

Average Rent in Galway City

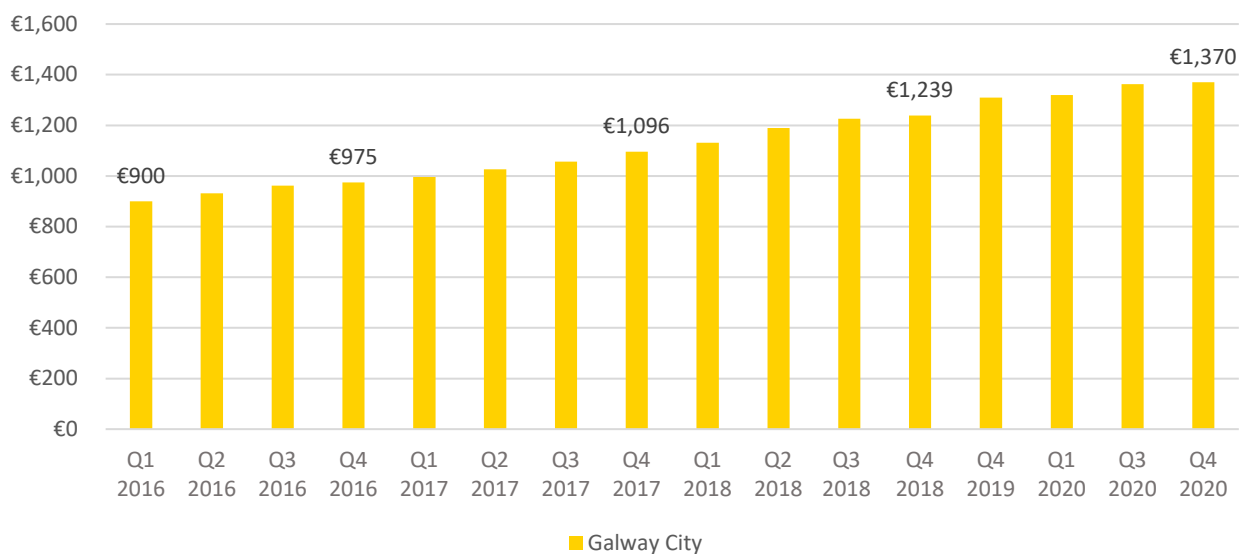


Figure 4: Source: Daft.ie Rental Reports

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 January 2021 showed that for the fifth study in a row, there were no properties that fell within the HAP limits in Galway City Centre out of the average of 62 that were available to rent. In the wider Galway City area, there were just three properties that fell within the HAP limits out of the average 61 properties available to rent⁷.

90% of social housing for Galway City in 2020 (Q1-Q3) 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.

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. Additionally, many others have had to uproot their entire lives to move out of the city as they simply cannot afford to live here.

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 in West of Ireland

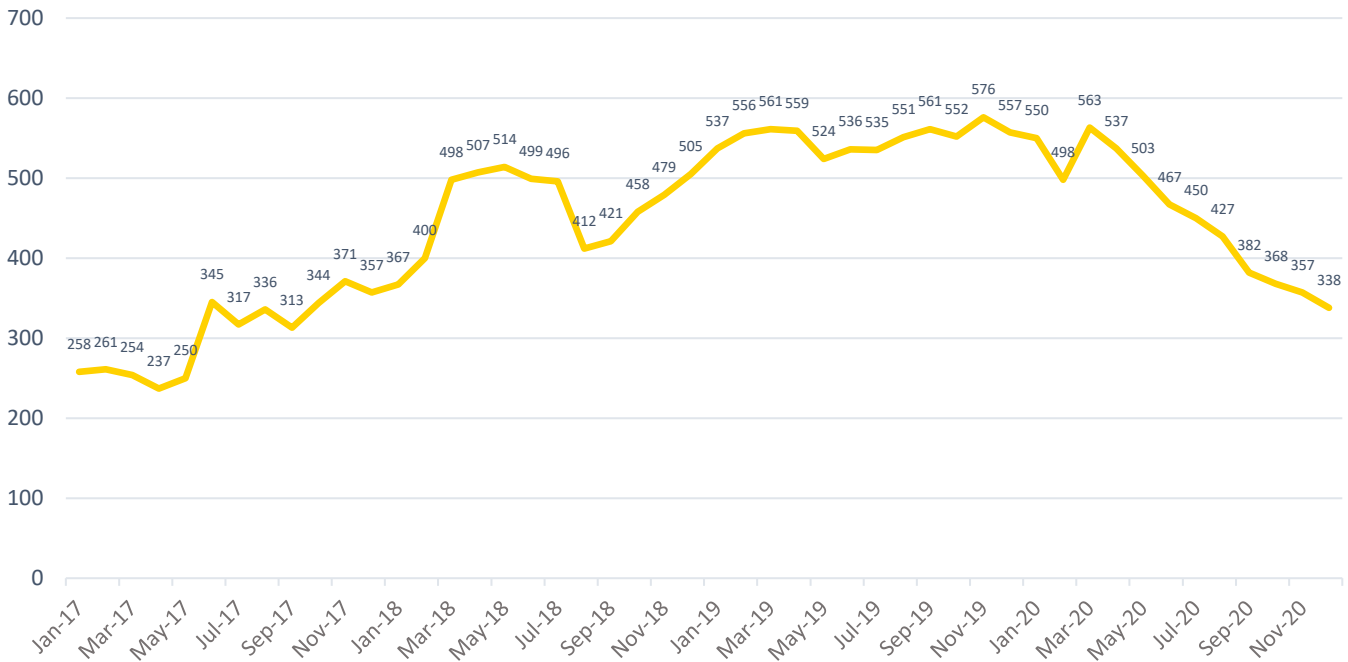


Figure 5: Source Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government. Homelessness Data.

According to the Department of Housing's data, there have been between 237 and 576 people living in Emergency Accommodation in the West of Ireland (Galway, Mayo, Roscommon) at any one time over the last four 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, couchsurfing or involuntarily sharing.

While 2020 saw a very welcome drop in the numbers in Emergency Accommodation in the West, there is significant concern across the sector that the number will rise steeply again when the moratorium on evictions is lifted as Covid-19 restrictions are eased.

In 2020, Galway Simon Community supported 646 households comprising 1,207 individuals. There was no decrease in the demand for Services during the pandemic. 63% of those who turned to Galway Simon for help 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 Covid-19 pandemic has been a crisis on top of a crisis. It is impossible to follow public health advice to 'stay at home' if you have no home.

⁸ Source Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government. Homelessness Data. (Average between January 2016 – December 2020)

Personal Stories

Behind all of these statistics are real people – men, women and children whose lives have been turned upside down by the trauma of homelessness. The impact of this trauma, on adults and children, has been well documented.

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) runs to 11m for Galway City Council 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 and a 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 are collaborating to deliver a target of 30 tenancies over the course of the 3 year pilot for Galway City. As of Dec 2020, halfway through the pilot, 19 tenancies have been allocated 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 DEVELOPMENT PLAN

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.

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.

We cannot accept that the number of people living in Emergency Accommodation and the number of households on the social housing waiting list, will grow in proportion to the population over the next twenty years.

We cannot accept that there will still be hundreds of men, women and children living in Emergency Accommodation in our City in 2040.

We cannot accept another thirteen fold, or worse, increase in the spend on Private Emergency Accommodation in Galway City when funds would deliver significantly better outcomes through Prevention and Housing First/Housing Led Services.

We cannot accept that there will be 50% more people waiting years on the social housing waiting list.

The targets for population growth will not be met with housing delivery averaging 126 dwellings per annum. Significant investment will be required. The relative investment to eliminate

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)

homelessness in the City and reduce the Social Housing Waiting List will be very achievable with a commitment to achieving these aims.

In order to resolve the City's homelessness and housing crisis, it is crucial that the following recommendations are considered for the Galway City Development Plan 2023-2029:

1. Development of housing must be accelerated and focused on appropriate affordable housing for the residents of the city, not just additional accommodation for tourists and students.
2. 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.
3. Housing solutions need to be developed that provide security and stability to people, and should be designed to facilitate independent living throughout a person's lifetime.
4. 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.
5. HAP represents very poor value for money for the State and uncertain housing solutions for tenants. We need cost effective, secure and affordable housing solutions.
6. Services for those who find themselves at risk of homelessness must be based on Housing First and Housing Led principles which provide significantly greater opportunities for long term sustainable solutions to homelessness than Emergency Accommodation options. With increasing housing delivery, the massive increases in the spend on Private Emergency Accommodation in recent years must be arrested, and funds diverted into Prevention and Housing First/Housing Led sustainable solutions.
 - a. Homelessness Prevention Services should be adequately funded to ensure that those who find themselves at risk of homelessness are supported to retain the accommodation they have or find alternative housing before they find themselves sliding into Emergency Accommodation. Prevention Services provide far better outcomes for individuals and families, and represent much greater value for money as it is so much cheaper to accommodate people in their own homes than in Emergency Hostels, Hotels and B&Bs.
 - b. Housing First should be continued beyond the Pilot Stage, extended in ambition beyond the initial 30 tenancies and adequately resourced.