

Chapter 26. Residential development

A steady supply of houses in the right locations, designed for economic, social and environmental sustainability, is at the heart of national housing policy. The document “Housing for All – a New Housing Plan for Ireland” sets out the government’s vision to 2030. The national policy has four pathways to achieving this: supporting home ownership and increasing affordability; eradicating homelessness; increasing new housing supply and addressing vacancy and efficient use of existing stock.

People in County Sligo, like all citizens of the State, should have access to good quality housing to purchase or rent at an affordable price in areas supported by high quality physical and social infrastructure.

This County Development Plan promotes sustainable residential development that delivers a good quality of life, minimises the need to use cars for daily activities, supports older persons and those with disabilities, and enables the creation of well-functioning communities.

Sections 26.1 Urban Housing and **26.4 Housing in rural areas** offer general policy guidance on new housing within and outside settlements, including some limited design guidance.

The **Development management standards** chapter of this Plan (**Chapter 33**) contains detailed guidance regarding the layout and design of residential developments in rural and urban areas.

The forthcoming Sligo and Environs Local Area Plan (due to be prepared following the adoption of the CDP 2024-2030) may set additional housing policies, objectives and development standards adapted to the character and needs of Sligo Town.

26.1 Urban housing

26.1.1 House types and sizes

Average household size in County Sligo, at 2.56 persons per household, was amongst the lowest in the State in 2016. At national level, ESRI projections¹ indicate that the average number of people per household will decline from 2.81 persons per household in 2016 to 2.43 in 2040. In line with national trends, the average size of households in County Sligo is expected to decrease further.

According to Census 2016 data, 28% of households in Co. Sligo were one-person, and a further 30% were two-persons households. Over the life of the Development Plan, from 2024 to 2030, the proportion of older persons in County Sligo will continue to grow. This will have implications for housing demand, with an increasing need for smaller dwellings and a wider mix of house types and sizes.

A range of government policy documents acknowledge the housing needs of older people in terms of location and size. The 2022 *Town Centre First Policy* (p. 37) indicates that “A priority focus will be on town centre homes that could include Age-Friendly housing for our senior citizens, housing for people with a disability or reduced mobility and increased provision of 1-bed homes suitable for smaller households including under the Housing First programme.”

The Council will require prospective developers to incorporate a mix of plot sizes, unit sizes and types, such as one/two-bedroom dwellings, three-bedroom and four-bedroom houses, single-storey and two-storey etc., to accommodate the diverse needs, preferences and purchasing power of future residents.

¹ *Regional Demographics and Structural Housing Demand at a County Level* (Adele Bergin and Abian Garcia-Rodriguez – ESRI Research Series Number 111, December 2020)

26.1.2 Residential density

A key objective of the NPF and RSES is to promote the compact growth of towns and villages. One way of achieving this is by increasing the density of development in existing built-up areas and new urban extensions.

Residential densities for different types of areas in towns and villages are specified in the statutory (Section 28) *Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlements Guidelines for Planning Authorities* (January 2024). **Section 3.2.6 in Volume 1 of this Plan indicates** the applicable density ranges in the County's towns and villages as follows:

Sligo Town - apply the higher-density range (50-150 units/ha) in areas zoned TC1 and TC2, and the lower-density range in all other areas, unless site-specific reductions are necessary.

Ballymote, Enniscrone, Tobercurry, Ballysadare, Collooney and Strandhill - applicable densities range from 25 to 40 units/ha at the edges, while in the central areas new development "should respond positively to the scale, form and character of existing development, and to the capacity of services and infrastructure".

All other zoned settlements - No residential density range is recommended. The density of development at such locations should respond in a positive way to the established context.

The density ranges set out in Section 3.3 of the SRDCS Guidelines should be refined, based on consideration of centrality, and accessibility to services and public transport, settlement character, amenity and the natural environment. Section 3.3.6 of the Guidelines lists exceptional situations where very high densities (over 300 units/ha) would be open to consideration, or where lower densities would be acceptable (on very small infill sites, to protect the amenities of surrounding properties).

Having regard to the *Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlements Guidelines* (2024), the Planning Authority will determine the appropriate residential density for each development proposal by considering the following:

- a. the settlement category, based on the criteria set in Section 3.3 of the Guidelines;
- b. the type of area, based on the descriptions detailed in Section 3.3 of the Guidelines (e.g. centre, urban neighbourhood, suburban/edge/urban extension);
- c. the recommended density range for the area;
- d. the appropriate density, refined in accordance with the criteria set out in Section 3.4 of the Guidelines:
 - proximity and accessibility to services and public transport (high-capacity public transport node or interchange; accessible location; intermediate location; peripheral location);
 - local character, historic environment (built and landscape heritage), existing residential amenity and the natural environment. **[PA-88]**

26.1.3 Design and layout of housing developments

Sustainable neighbourhoods are well served by public transport, easily accessible by bike and by foot, and provide of a good range of amenities and services within short, safe walking distance of homes.

New housing developments should be visually pleasing areas, where social interaction is facilitated and where houses offer adequate living space, amenity and privacy, adaptable to the occupiers' needs. At the same time, the Planning Authority will apply a more flexible approach to certain development standards, such as minimum separation distances or minimum private open space provision, in order to enable greater innovation in house design and to facilitate increased densities in towns and villages – refer to **Section 33.3 (Development Management Standards)**.

Communal/public open spaces should be usable, interesting, well landscaped and designed for a range of ages and activities.

Car parking areas should be designed and landscaped to a high standard, having regard to the potential for the multi-functional use of the space. Off-street parking associated with street-fronting development should be located to the rear of the buildings.

Circulation routes within new residential areas should prioritise pedestrians and cyclists over cars, facilitating connections to existing or future residential areas and in accordance with the *Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets* (DoT, DoECLG 2013). New street patterns should form a grid or web to allow for easy orientation and minimize the distances between origins and destinations (Refer to **P-UHD-3**).

Statutory guidance

The *Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlements Guidelines (2024)* and the *Urban Design Manual (2009)* provide the basis on which planners, designers and developers can translate the concept of sustainable living into reality.

The height of new buildings and the design of new apartments were the subject of two sets of ministerial guidelines issued under Section 28 of the Planning and Development Act, in December 2018 and July 2023 respectively.

All these guidelines form the basis on which the Planning Authority assesses applications for housing developments in towns and villages (refer also to **Section 33.3 and 33.4 in the Development Management Standards**). **[PA-89]**

26.1.4 Age-friendly housing

The ageing of the population represents one of the most significant demographic and societal challenges that Ireland will have to address in the coming decades. ESRI projections indicate that the number of people over the age of 65 in Ireland will reach 18% of the population by 2030 and about 23% by 2040 (up from 15% in 2020).

Ideally, people should be supported to lead independent lives in their own homes. However, this is not always possible. In order to facilitate older people to continue living in their communities, it is necessary to provide a range of attractive and appropriately located accommodation choices for those who wish to downsize.

Bespoke housing for older people, sheltered housing, assisted living and other senior residential facilities should be located in towns and villages, close to services, and should present as a high-quality living environment.

'Age-friendly homes', designed for people of all ages, but in particular older people, provide level access and connection to the outdoors, and are capable of incorporating assistive technology to support ageing in place. Including 'age-friendly homes' in a residential development helps to future-proof housing for an ageing population. (For more details, please consult the website <https://agefriendlyhomes.ie>)

Sligo County Council, through its *Age Friendly Strategy 2023-2026*, will support the provision of a mix of house types suitable for older people, including 'age-friendly homes', and will work with relevant agencies and the private sector to facilitate such proposals.

26.1.5 Universal design standards in housing developments

New urban quarters, including residential areas, should be designed to meet the needs of all people who use them. If the built environment is accessible, usable, convenient and pleasant to use, everyone benefits. This is the concept known as '*universal design*'.

Universal design creates environments that meet the diverse needs of people of all ages and all abilities. The incorporation of such principles into the design of a new residential area involves the inclusion of 'age-friendly homes' and 'wheel-chair liveable homes'.

Developers will be required to incorporate the principles of universal design into new residential properties as specified in the *Universal Design Guidelines for Homes in Ireland. Building for Everyone: A universal design approach* (National Disability Centre for excellence in Universal Design, 2015).

Other documents to be considered are:

- *Dementia-Friendly Dwellings for People with Dementia, their Families and Carers - Guidelines* (National Disability Guidelines, 2015).
- *Housing Options for Our Ageing Population – A policy statement* (Dept. of Housing, Planning and Local Government and Dept. of Health, 2019)
- *Age-Friendly Principles and Guidelines for the Planning Authority* (Age Friendly Ireland, 2021).

26.1.6 Design Statement for multi-unit residential developments

Designers and developers of multi-unit residential developments will be required to submit a Design Statement as part of the planning application (**refer to P-UHD-1**). The Design Statement must demonstrate how the architects, urban designers and engineers have complied with statutory guidelines and with the design guidance for urban development set out in **Chapter 33 (Development Management Standards) of this Plan**. The Statement shall address the following:

1. Justification of proposed residential density (refer to **P-UHOU-2**)
2. House types, design and mix, where applicable (refer to **P-UHOU-4**)
3. Relationship between the scheme layout and the surrounding built environment
4. Circulation, parking and connectivity to surrounding areas, both existing and future
5. Design of streets, footpaths, cycle paths and public areas
6. Communal/public open space design and landscaping
7. Universal design and age-friendly provisions (refer to Age-friendly housing policies)
8. Mix and distribution of uses (refer to SRDCS Guidelines, Section 4.4(ii))
9. Green and blue infrastructure (refer to SRDCS Guidelines, Section 4.4(iii)) **[PA-90]**

Urban housing policies

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

- P-UHOU-1** Ensure that residential development takes place in a manner and at a pace that does not exceed the capacity of water and wastewater treatment infrastructure.
- P-UHOU-2** Ensure that appropriate densities are achieved in appropriate locations and circumstances, in accordance with the principles set out in the *Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlements Guidelines (2024)* and the *Urban Design Manual: A Best Practice Guide* (DEHLG, 2009), *Urban Development and Building Height Guidelines for Planning Authorities* (2018) and any subsequent statutory guidance. **[PA-91]**
- P-UHOU-3** In the case of residential development proposals on infill sites, ensure that access points or adequate road frontage is reserved to provide future road access to enable comprehensive backland development.

Urban housing policies

P-UHOU-4 Ensure the provision of a suitable range of house types and sizes to reflect the changing demographic structure and the trend towards smaller household sizes. In private housing schemes, the following mix of unit types should generally apply:

House type	Proportion in the scheme
1 bedroom	minimum 10% of total no. of units in any scheme with 10 or more units
2 bedrooms	minimum 20% of total no. of units
3 bedrooms	minimum 30% of total no. of units
4+ bedrooms	maximum 20% of total no. of houses

P-UHOU-5 Ensure that all new housing developments are constructed to the standards and specifications applicable to housing intended for permanent occupation.

Age-friendly housing policies

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

- P-AFH-1** Support independent living for older people by encouraging the provision of specific, purpose-built accommodation in new residential developments, in accordance with the *Age-Friendly Principles and Guidelines for the Planning Authority* (Age Friendly Ireland, 2021).
- P-AFH-2** Support the delivery of housing suitable for older people on infill and regeneration sites within town and village centres, where feasible.
- P-AFH-3** Require that new residential developments of up to 10 houses provide a minimum of one unit designed in accordance with the specifications of *Universal Design Guidelines for homes in Ireland* (National Disability Centre for excellence in Universal Design).
Schemes of 11 houses and over should have a minimum of 15% of units designed and built to this standard.
- P-AFH-4** Support the implementation of the relevant objectives under Theme 3: housing of the Action Plan contained in the *Sligo Age Friendly Strategy (2023-2026)*.
- P-AFH-5** In the case of apartment developments, ensure that 25% of units in any development comprising apartments exceed the specifications of *Universal Design Guidelines for homes in Ireland* (National Disability Centre for excellence in Universal Design) and are suitable for older people / mobility impaired people. **[PA-93]**

Urban housing (design and layout) policies

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

- P-UH-DL-1** Require all developments of two dwellings or more to be accompanied by a Design Statement providing a rationale for the proposed scheme, outlining the unique elements that will contribute to a high quality of life, both private and communal.

The Design Statement shall also indicate how the scheme addresses the key principles of urban housing as set out in this chapter, in **Chapter 10 Urban Development Principles** and **Chapter 33 Development Management Standards**.

The statement shall be in the format set out in **Section 33.3.1 (Development Management Standards)**.

- P-UH-DL-2** Ensure that new public and private developments comply with the principles, approaches and standards contained in the *Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets* (DoT, DoECLG 2019) in the provision or upgrading of vehicular, pedestrian and cycling facilities.

- P-UH-DL-3** Require that vehicular/pedestrian connections in large multi-unit housing developments are laid out in a grid or web manner, connecting into the existing street network and reserving access point into adjoining lands, where appropriate.

- P-UH-DL-4** Require new developments to locate, design and landscape any car parking provision to a high standard, having regard to the potential for the multi-functional use of the space provided. Off-street parking associated with road/street frontage development should generally be located to the rear of the buildings.

Urban housing (open space) policies

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

- P-UH-OS-1** Ensure, as far as is practicable, that open space provided as part of new development links into the town's open space network.

- P-UH-OS-2** Require developers to retain significant hedgerows, tree groups and wetlands and incorporate these features into residential developments where possible.

26.2 Social housing

Social housing is defined as rented housing provided by the local authority or an approved housing body (AHB). In line with government policy, Sligo County Council will work to deliver more and better-quality housing, focusing on building sustainable communities. The Council recognises the need to avoid concentration of social housing in any particular area. The Planning Authority will have regard to this concern in dealing with all new housing development proposals.

The Cranmore Regeneration project is an example of the manner in which the Local Authority proactively seeks to transform the social, economic and physical fabric of an area through collaborative, long-term strategic planning, investment of resources and urban regeneration.

A high proportion of applicants on the Council's Housing List are one-person households: 49.5% (down from 57% in 2016). An objective of the Housing Strategy is the provision of more dwellings for one-person households as part of suitable range of house types and sizes, to avoid uniformity in residential development, and to reflect the current and anticipated demographic characteristics and household sizes.

Social housing policies

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

- P-SHOU-1** Promote social inclusion by ensuring that social housing is well distributed throughout all residential areas rather than concentrated in a few locations.
- P-SHOU-2** 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.
- P-SHOU-3** Ensure that the supply of housing units under the Housing Strategy reflects the current and anticipated demographic characteristics and household sizes.
- P-SHOU-4** Encourage linkages between social housing developments and any adjoining residential areas through the provision of shared facilities, services, and pedestrian, cycle and vehicular connections, as appropriate.

Social housing objective

It is an objective of Sligo County Council to:

- O-SHOU-1** Continue with the programme of refurbishment and regeneration of existing local authority housing stock.

26.2.1 Voluntary, cooperative and cost-rental housing [PA-92]

Voluntary and cooperative housing provision is a significant feature in the delivery of accommodation nationally. Approved housing bodies (AHBs), also known as housing associations, are independent, not-for-profit organisations, which get government funding from local authorities.

These associations seek to achieve a balance in social housing provision by widening the range of housing options to meet different and changing needs. They provide affordable rented housing for people who cannot afford to pay private sector rents or buy their own homes.

Some AHBs provide housing specifically for particular groups of people, such as older people or homeless people. The term AHB also includes housing co-operatives, which are controlled by their tenants.

Cost Rental housing

“Cost Rental” is a new form of rental tenure designed to assist people who face significant affordability challenges meeting high rents in the private sector. Under the Cost Rental model, rents for homes are set to cover only the cost of financing, building, managing and maintaining the homes.

State subventions can be used in order to reduce the initial capital cost and make this starting cost rent more affordable. As schemes become available, prospective tenants can apply through an Approved Housing Body, the Local Authority, or the Land Development Agency, depending on who is administering the scheme.

The LDA is committed to the delivery of quality, cost-rental homes at scale, and can effectively assist in achieving the targets specified in Chapter 6 Housing delivery strategy. [PA-92]

Voluntary, cooperative and cost-rental housing policy

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

- P-VCCR-HOU-1** Assist voluntary and non-profit cooperative housing associations, as well as the Land Development Agency, in the provision of housing and encourage a more active involvement of these sectors in the housing market. [PA-94]

26.2.2 Traveller accommodation

Sligo County Council recognises the distinct culture and lifestyle of the Traveller community and will endeavour to provide suitable accommodation for Travellers who are indigenous to the area.

The range of housing options available includes standard lettings in local authority estates, lettings in voluntary housing schemes, group housing schemes, permanent or transient halting sites, single or stand-alone housing where required.

Sligo County Council's *Traveller Accommodation Plan* estimates that 81 families will need accommodation during the period 2025–2029.

Working with the Traveller community, its representative organisations and local communities, the Council will seek to ensure an equitable distribution of Traveller facilities throughout the Plan area. The Council recognises that the provision of appropriate associated supports is also a critical factor in ensuring that the accommodation solutions delivered for individual families are successful.

Traveller accommodation policies

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

- P-TA-HOU-1** Provide accommodation for Travellers, as far as is reasonable and practicable, using the full range of housing options available and having regard to the policies outlined in the *Traveller Accommodation Programme 2019–2024* and the subsequent plan(s).
- P-TA-HOU-2** Consider the submissions of Travellers, their representative organisations and those of the local communities in relation to the siting, planning and design of prospective halting sites or group housing schemes, so as to avoid social conflict and promote social inclusion.

Traveller accommodation objective

It is an objective of Sligo County Council to:

- O-TA-HOU-1** Provide accommodation for Travellers within the Sligo Town area at Alma Terrace, Glenview Park (Ash Lane), Finisklin, Cleveragh and Bundoran Road.

26.3 Housing for persons with diverse needs

Sligo County Council recognises the need to accommodate the housing requirements of those with diverse needs and those in particular circumstances, including families and individuals at risk of homelessness, persons with a disability, students and refugees. The type and location of accommodation for persons with diverse needs will be assessed in line with current thinking and practice.

26.3.1 People with disabilities

Sligo County Council aim to facilitate access to an appropriate range of housing and related services to support independent living for people with a disability, in line with the *County Sligo Strategic Plan for Housing People with a Disability 2021-2025*.

The core goal of the Strategy is to meet the identified housing needs of people with disabilities locally, whether they are currently living in the community or in a congregated setting.

To ensure that people with disabilities can live independently in their location of choice, universal-design housing should be provided in all housing developments in County Sligo (refer to **Sections 26.1.4 Age friendly housing, 26.1.5 Universal design standards in housing developments and P-AFH-3** of this Chapter)

26.3.2 Homeless persons

From the 2016 to 2022, the number of adults in emergency accommodation in Sligo increased by 138%. In March 2023, there were 58 people in emergency accommodation (excluding those sheltered from domestic violence). The government's *Housing for All* strategy aims to eradicate homelessness by 2030. The *Homeless Action Plan for the North-West Region 2023-2028* was developed by the North-West Joint Homelessness Forum and Management Groups. Sligo County Council is lead authority for the North-West, comprising Leitrim, Sligo and Donegal County Councils.

The Plan aims to prevent homelessness where possible, protect those who are homeless, support the movement to stable accommodation, and ensure stringent governance of provision. The Planning Authority will support the implementation of this Strategy in County Sligo.

26.3.3 Refugees

Persons who have been granted refugee status have automatic rights to apply for local authority housing. Consideration should be given to household size, structure, possible reunification with families and the refugees' need for access to social supports in terms of language, healthcare, education and employment.

26.3.4 Student accommodation [PA-95]

In April 2022, IT Sligo, GMIT and Letterkenny IT merged to form the Atlantic Technological University (ATU). ATU Sligo, comprising St Angela's College and the former IT Sligo, had a combined enrolment of 10,200 students (8,600 and 1,600 respectively) for the academic year 2022/23. There are seven purpose-built student villages serving these students, all are within a short walking distance of the colleges, with over 2,000 bed spaces available.

While many students commute to college from outside Sligo Town and even County, demand for accommodation in the private rented sector is strong. Given future growth in student numbers, ATU Sligo will continue to represent a significant part of the demand for private rented accommodation in Sligo town. This demand can be met either on-campus or in its vicinity, on lands zoned for residential and mixed uses. Sligo County Council will support the provision of student accommodation both on campus and off campus. [PA-95]

Housing policies for people with diverse needs

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

- P-DN-HOU-1** 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.
- P-DN-HOU-2** Facilitate access to an appropriate range of housing and related services to support independent living for people with a disability, in line with the *County Sligo Strategic Plan for Housing People with a Disability 2021-2025*.
- P-DN-HOU-3** Support the implementation of the *North-West Regional Homelessness Action Plan 2023–2028* and successor documents and prioritise the provision of suitable accommodation for the homeless and for those in need of emergency accommodation.

Housing policies for people with diverse needs

- P-DN-HOU-4** Ensure that housing developments accommodating people with special mobility needs and the households least likely to own cars have easy and convenient access to local facilities and to public transport.
- P-DN-HOU-5** Support proposals for the provision of sheltered housing and emergency accommodation, and work with the various bodies / organisations responsible for provision of this type of specialised accommodation.
- P-DN-HOU-6** Support the provision of purpose-built and designed student accommodation in appropriate locations, including adequate communal facilities and external communal space, as set out in **Section 33.3 (Residential Development in urban areas/Development Management Standards)**.

26.4 Housing in rural areas

Government policy on rural housing is set out in the guidance document *Sustainable Rural Housing – Guidelines for Planning Authorities* (DOEHLG, April 2005), which was under review at the time of drafting this Development Plan.

Sligo County Council recognises the long tradition of people living in rural areas, in a highly dispersed settlement pattern. In the past, these areas were overwhelmingly dependent on farming, but this is no longer the case. Census data indicates that only 7.18% of the County’s labour force was employed in agriculture, forestry and fishing in 2016.

It is acknowledged that there is a need to sustain rural communities, but this should be done without undermining the viability of towns and villages. Applications for individual houses outside towns and villages will be assessed based on the strategic rural settlement policies set out in Chapter 5 of this Plan, **Section 5.5 Strategy for Rural Settlement** and – where applicable – with respect to their compliance with the national roads policy **P-NR-1** (Chapter 29 Transport infrastructure), which seeks to protect the traffic carrying capacity of national roads. **[PA-96]**

26.4.1 Siting and design of rural houses

It is important to note that the policy considerations outlined above represent only one element in the assessment of an application for dwelling house in a rural area. Other considerations relating to siting, design, environment, heritage, amenity and traffic considerations are also of paramount importance in the consideration of any development. These considerations are dealt with in more detail in the Development Management chapter.

New houses in rural areas should be absorbed and integrated successfully into the rural setting, i.e. the buildings should harmonise or ‘read’ with the existing traditional pattern of development, without intruding on unspoilt landscapes or breaking the skyline.

The practical achievement of well-integrated rural housing development requires considerable skill and experience in site assessment and detailed design. It requires an ability to examine a site in the context of its natural and built surroundings and analyse whether the proposed house and ancillary buildings can be accommodated on the site buildings without becoming unduly dominant on either the surrounding landscape or pattern of development.

Practical guidance regarding the siting and design of rural houses can be found in **Section 33.4 Housing in rural areas** (development management standards).

Rural housing siting and design policies

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

- P-RHOU-1** Encourage those who wish to build in rural areas to apply traditional principles in the siting and design of new houses, while facilitating high-quality modern design solutions.
- P-RHOU-2** Require new house proposal in rural areas to comply with the guidance set out in **Section 33.4 Housing in rural areas** (development management standards).

26.5 Miscellaneous housing provisions

26.5.1 Holiday home developments

Managing the provision of tourism accommodation is essential to ensuring the delivery of a sustainable tourism strategy. As outlined in **Section 28.3 Tourism**, much of Sligo’s tourism offer is based upon its heritage and landscapes. Therefore, in the interest of protecting the rural environment, demand for holiday homes should be accommodated in serviced settlements only.

Enniscrone, Easky, Mullaghmore, Rosses Point and Strandhill are designated “settlements with special coastal tourism functions”, which play a regionally significant tourism role. In the past, holiday homes in these settlements were designed to relatively low standards, as they were intended exclusively for seasonal or short-term occupation by owners or tourists. In more recent times, due to acute housing shortages, there has been a trend of upgrading, extending and improving the privacy of units in holiday developments, to make them suitable for permanent occupation.

It is sometimes unclear whether a particular residential development is to be used as tourist accommodation or as permanent housing. In the interest of clarity, certain multi-unit residential development proposals in towns and villages with special tourism functions may be required to submit additional details regarding tenure, management etc.

Holiday home development policies

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

- P-HHD-1** Direct proposals for multi-unit holiday home developments into existing serviced settlements, particularly those with special coastal tourism functions subject to adequate wastewater treatment and water supply capacity. **[PA-97]**
- P-HHD-2** Ensure that new holiday home developments are constructed to the standards and specifications applicable to housing intended for permanent occupation. Exceptions may be made for specific types of holiday accommodation designed exclusively for short-term occupation by tourists – e.g. apart-hotels, chalets etc.
- P-HHD-3** Require, where appropriate, at planning application stage, the submission of precise details regarding the intentions for tenure and management of multi-unit residential developments with potential to function as ‘holiday villages’, i.e. short-term tourist accommodation.

26.5.2 Vacant housing

The 2016 Census recorded that 20.1% of permanent housing units in County Sligo were vacant on Census night (compared to 22.2% in 2011 and 23.1% in 2006). This is significantly higher than the national average of 12.8%. According to the GeoDirectory database (which is considered more accurate than the Census), the residential vacancy rate was 8.9% in the second quarter of 2022. This continues to be significantly higher than the national average of 4.2% (GeoDirectory) in the same period.

It is likely that this vacant stock will accommodate some of the additional housing units estimated to be required over the period of the plan. The reasons for vacancy are not evident, and in many cases, there may be complex issues involved. However, it would be desirable that some of this vacant stock is brought back into use so that it can satisfy some of the housing demand over the Plan period.

Sligo County Council recognises the value of reusing existing buildings to support the compact growth of towns and sustainable development and to boost the housing stock. The Planning Authority supports the renovation and re-use of obsolete, vacant and derelict buildings, and will implement or promote the use of all relevant funding schemes.

Furthermore, the Council will seek to procure vacant properties, where appropriate, for refurbishment and return to the market, to ensure their continued use for residential purposes.

Croí Cónaithe (Towns) Fund

The Croí Cónaithe (Towns) Fund, delivered by local authorities, provides new choices for people to live in towns and villages in Ireland. The **Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant**, launched in 2022, provides grant funding to support the refurbishment of vacant properties in towns and villages for residential use, where the level of vacancy/dereliction is high. The **Ready to Build Scheme (Serviced Sites for New Homes)** envisages that local authorities make available serviced sites at reduced cost to support self-build home ownership.

At the time of drafting this CDP, Sligo County Council had not engaged in implementing the **Ready to Build Scheme**, as all lands in the ownership of the Local Authority were committed in the Housing Delivery Action Plan 2022-2026. However, the Enforcement Section of the Planning Department was administering the **Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant** in accordance with the terms of this scheme.

Vacant housing policies

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

- P-VHOU-1** Support the renovation, adaptation and bringing back into active residential use of vacant dwellings in all areas of County Sligo, subject to normal planning considerations.
- P-VHOU-2** Where reactivation of residential use is not feasible, adopt a flexible approach towards alternative uses of vacant dwellings in towns and villages, including redevelopment for tourism-related uses, subject to appropriate design and compatibility with existing and proposed surrounding uses. **[PA-98]**

Vacant housing objectives

It is an objective of Sligo County Council to:

- O-VH-1** Deliver the Vacant Home Refurbishment Grant Scheme of the Croí Conaithe (Towns) Fund.
- O-VH-2** Identify suitable vacant and derelict properties for compulsory purchase and return them to the housing market.

26.5.3 Derelict houses

The Council will encourage the renovation and re-use of derelict houses, in preference to their demolition and replacement. Consideration will be given, on a case-by-case basis, to proposals to provide replacement dwellings where restoration is not practical.

Whether it is proposed to renovate or replace a derelict house, the subject structure should be clearly recognisable as a dwelling. This means that the main characteristics of a house (i.e. external walls, roof, and openings) must be substantially intact and the structure, when last used, must have been used as a dwelling. In assessing the condition of such structures, the Planning Authority will disregard any recent structural works carried out as an attempt to comply with the above requirements.

In the case of both renovation and replacement proposals, the design should reflect the scale, character and external finishes of the existing house and should generally be constructed on the site of the house to be replaced – i.e. replacement *in situ* – except in circumstances where a setback is required in order to improve vehicular access or where alternative siting would be preferable in the interests of visual amenity, public health or orderly development.

Renovation and re-use will be normally required in the case of a historic or vernacular structure which is considered to be of local architectural, cultural or social significance (**Refer to Section 25.3 Built Heritage**).

Demolition and replacement of such structures will be considered only where it is clearly demonstrated, by way of a suitably qualified engineer's or architect's report, that the building cannot be made structurally sound through reasonable measures.

Derelict houses policies

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

P-DHOU-1 Encourage the renovation and reuse of derelict houses and consider proposals for replacement houses on their merits.

The structures proposed for renovation or replacement should be generally intact and exhibit the main characteristics of a dwelling.

The location, siting and design of any such replacement house shall reflect those of the existing derelict dwelling.

Where vernacular non-residential buildings are located on the same site, consideration should be given to their retention or incorporation into any proposed development.

P-DHOU-2 Generally require the retention and restoration of vernacular dwellings of local architectural, cultural or social significance.

Demolition and replacement of vernacular houses will be considered only where it is clearly demonstrated, by way of a suitably qualified engineer's or architect's report, that the building cannot be made structurally sound through reasonable measures.

26.5.4 Ribbon development

Ribbon development is formed by the building of a row of houses along a road outside of any settlement boundaries. It is undesirable because it creates numerous access points onto traffic routes, sterilises backlands (on the edge of towns), landlocks farmland, creates demands for the uneconomic provision of public infrastructure (e.g. water supply, drainage, footpaths, street lighting) and intrudes on public views of the rural setting.

For the purposes of this Development Plan, and in accordance with the Department’s guidance provided in the *Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines*, ribbon development is defined as five or more houses on any side of a given 250-m stretch of road.

Ribbon development policies

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

- P-RD-1** Discourage development proposals which would be likely to contribute to or exacerbate ribbon development.
- P-RD-2** Consider development proposals on gap sites or peripheral sites at locations where ribbon development is already in place, only as an alternative to dispersed development that might have a greater visual or traffic safety impact.