Tionól Réigiúnach an Deiscirt

Southern Regional Assembly

Housing Delivery in the Southern Region

Analysis of Data and Trends from 2024

April 2025

Contents

Introduction

Given the significant housing shortage in the State at present, and commitments to a major increase in the delivery of new housing, recently published data on housing delivery for 2024 has been subject to intense scrutiny and discussion.

Much of this analysis is based on national level statistics. However, there are significant disparities in the rates of housing delivery, the issues and challenges faced across, and within, the Country's three Regions – Southern, Northern and Western, and Eastern and Midlands.

From the perspective of the Southern Region, understanding what the most recent data reveals about housing delivery across our Cities and Metropolitan Areas, Key Towns, other Towns and wider rural communities is important for future planning.

In that context, this report assesses the key trends that can be garnered from updated data for 2024 for new dwelling completions, housing commencements and planning permissions for all local authority areas as published by the Central Statistics Office (CSO)[1]. It also assesses the key insights and trends evident from major residential applications which have been granted planning permission through the Strategic Housing Development (SHD) and Large-scale Residential Development (LRD) planning processes.

This analysis is based on 2024 data and should be read in that context. It will along with other data sources contribute to the evidence base of the Southern Regional Assembly (SRA) as it prepares to undertake a review of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Region and Metropolitan Area Strategic Plans (MASPs) for Cork, Limerick-Shannon and Waterford. It also builds upon the findings and recommendations of the RSES Two Year Monitoring Report (2022-24)[2].

It should be noted that data reported from individual local authorities may differ from those published from the CSO and can provide a more accurate insight on housing delivery at a local level.

1) Housing data may be accessed on the CSO Housing Hub: https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/hubs/p-hh/housinghub/

2) RSES Two Year Monitoring Report: https://southernassembly.ie/rses-implementation/

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Housing Targets, Housing Need and City and County Development Plans

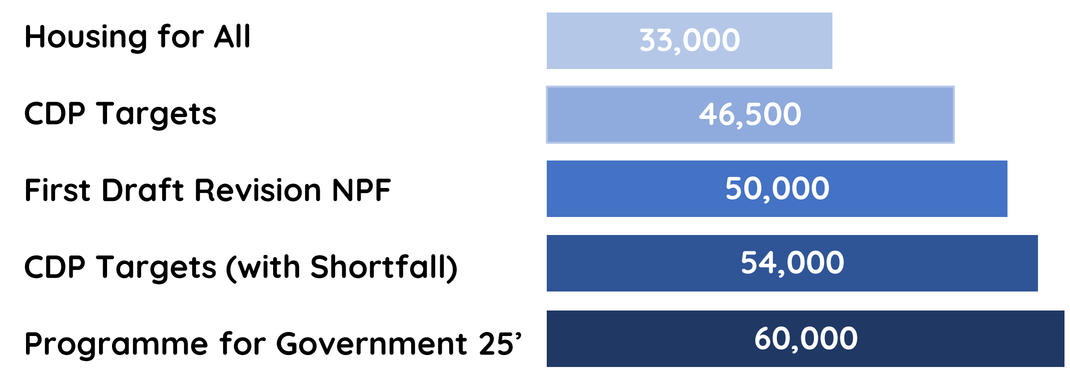
Much of the analysis of housing delivery in Ireland is linked to housing targets. The most prominent national targets referenced in recent years were those set out in *Housing for All* (2021), which identified a target of 33,000 homes on average up to 2030. Following the results of Census 2022, the *Draft First Revision of the National Planning Framework* has identified an indicative housing need of 50,000 per annum to 2040. The recent Programme for Government *Securing Ireland's Future* has committed to a target of 60,000 per annum on average up to 2030.

From a planning perspective, housing targets that have been established through City and County Development Plans (CDPs) in line with national guidance on determining housing supply targets[1], are particularly important.

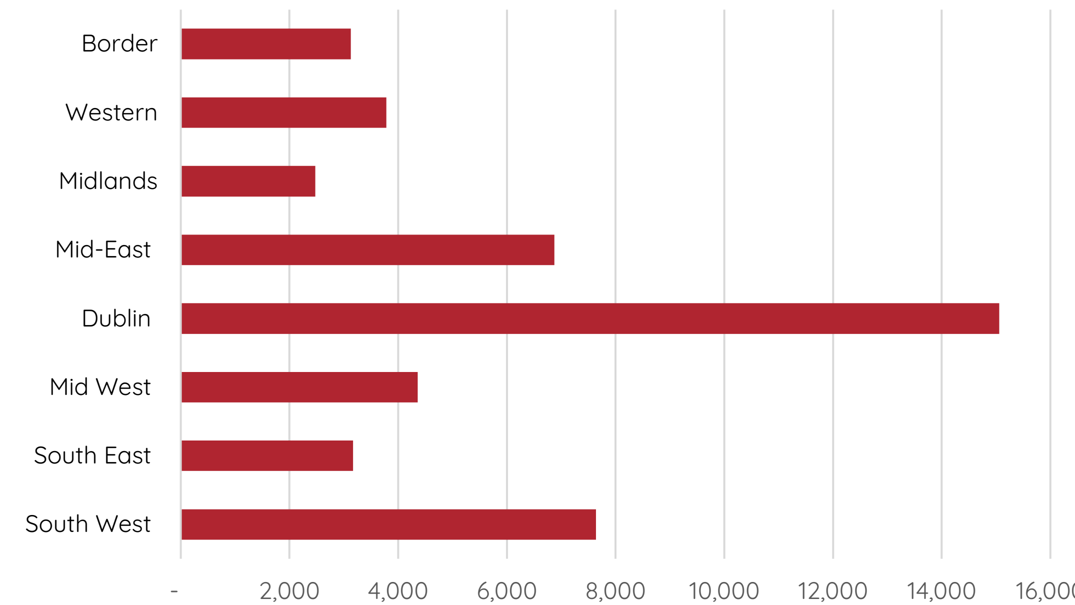
Collectively, annualised CDP targets across the State amount to 46,500 homes per annum. As CDP targets are for six-year plan periods rather than individual years, under delivery in early years results in an increased annualised target for subsequent years. **If under-delivery since the beginning of plan periods is considered, then annualised targets going forward amount to circa 54,000**. This is higher than the target of 50,000 identified in the First Draft Revision of the NPF, and closer to the Programme for Government target of 60,000 homes per annum up to 2030.

It should be noted that housing targets are the primary basis which determine the overall quantum of lands zoned for housing within Development Plans, with appropriate allowances for non delivery or lack of activation.

Within the Southern Region, CDP annual targets amount to 15,166 across the Region, or over 18,000 when accounting for under-delivery in the early parts of plan periods. Despite the NPF objective for regional parity and for 50% of growth to occur outside of the Eastern and Midlands Region, CDP targets for the Eastern and Midland Region amount to 55% of the national total.



CDP Housing Targets by Strategic Planning Areas (SPAs)



1) Section 28 Guidelines: Housing Supply Target Methodology for Development Planning (DHLGH)

Housing Delivery Across the State and Regions

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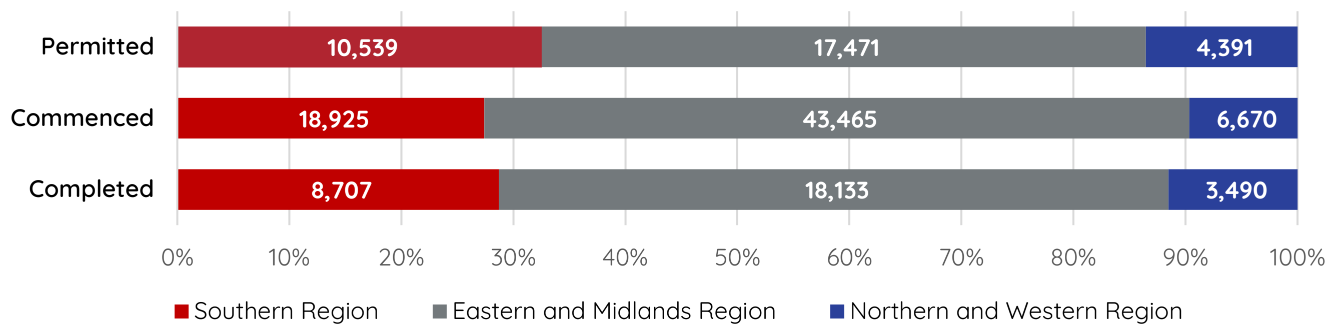
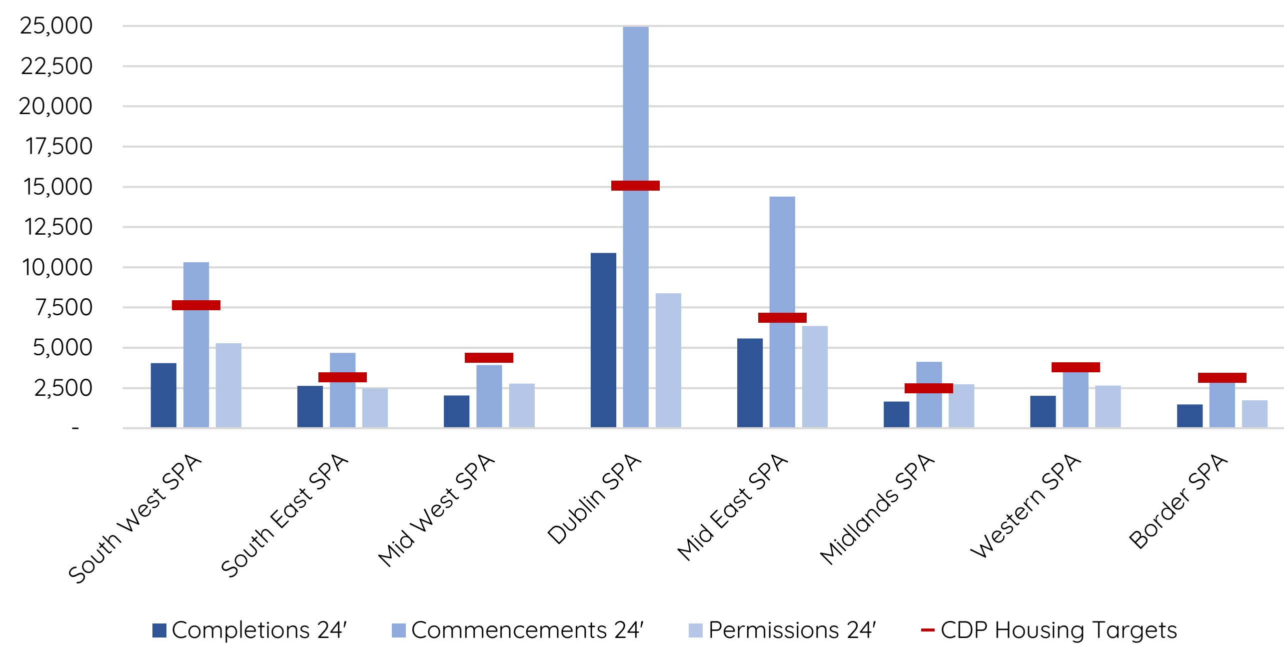
Share of Housing Delivery across Regions 2024



Housing Delivery Statistics (SPAs) 2024



Source: CSO Housing Hub, City and County Development Plans

30,330 homes were completed in the State in 2024, a reduction of 6.7% from 2023 and a shortfall of 16,154 units when measured against CDP targets. 8,707 homes were completed in the Southern Region. This represented a rise of 909 homes (12%) on 2023, though still 6,459 homes (43%) short of CDP targets for the Region.

The Eastern and Midlands Region witnessed a 15% reduction in the number of new homes completed from 2023, however this is a smaller shortfall versus targets of 6,277 homes (25%).

Completions were lower than annual CDP housing targets in all Strategic Planning Areas (SPAs), most significantly in the two Northern and Western Region SPAs, as well as the Mid-West and South-West SPAs. Completions were closest to targets across the three Eastern and Midland Region SPAs and the South-East SPA.

In contrast, **there was a substantial increase in the number of commencements recorded nationally**. Commencements significantly exceeded targets in Dublin and the Mid-East. In the Southern Region, commencements exceeded targets in the South-West and South-East, but not in the Mid-West.

There was a significant decrease in the number of homes granted planning permission nationally at 32,401, down 8,800 (21%) from 2023. **This is primarily a result of a sharp reduction of over 55% in homes granted permission in Dublin. While there was a reduction in the Southern Region, it was more marginal at 10%.** There was an increase in homes granted permission in the Mid-East, Midlands and in the Northern and Western Region. Permissions are lower than CDP targets in all areas except for the Midlands.

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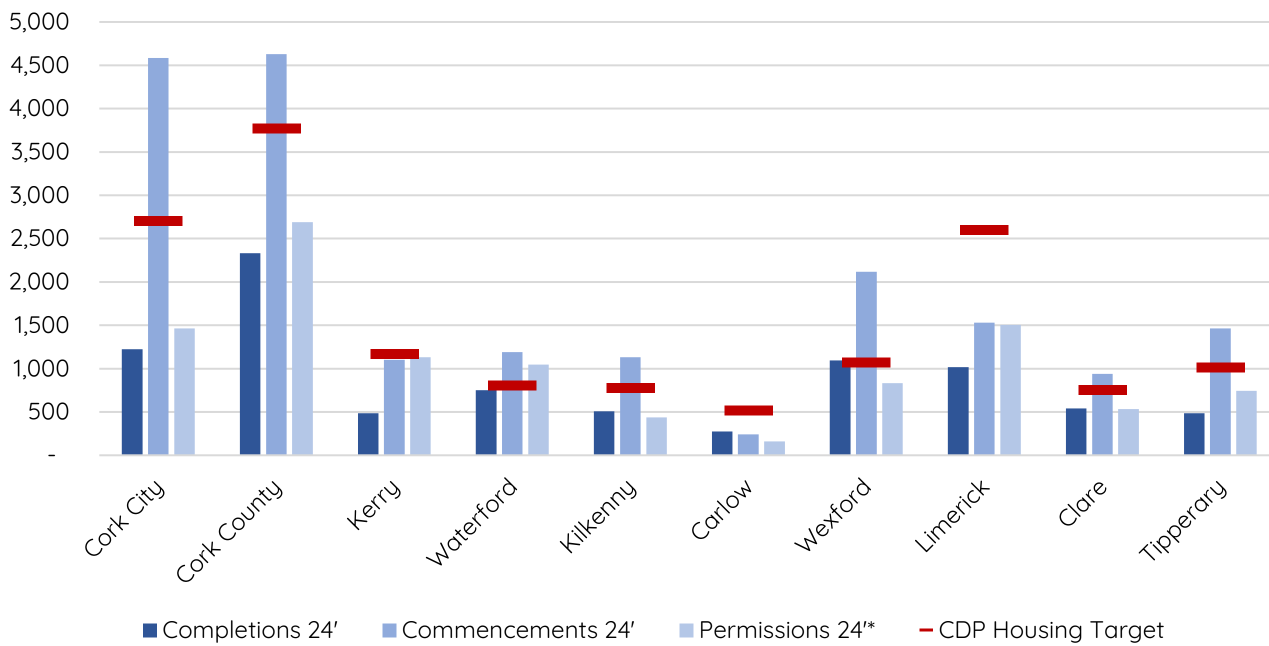
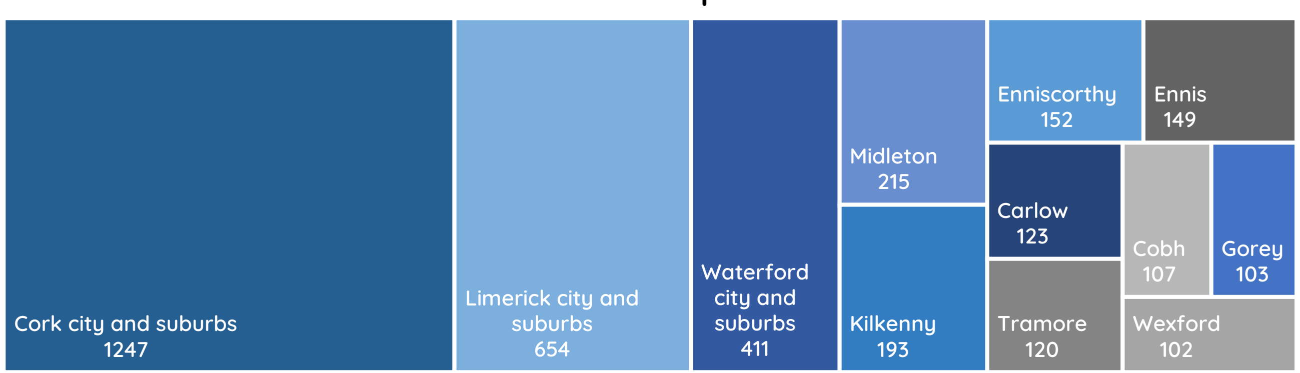
Housing Delivery Across the Southern Region

Housing Delivery Statistics (SRA Local Authorities) 2024



Urban Areas with more than 100 Homes Completed in 2024



Source: CSO Housing Hub, City and County Development Plans

Cork County saw the highest number of homes completed across the Region at 2,331 which represented 62% of it's annualised housing target. While commencements were higher than CDP targets, the number of homes granted permission was lower. There are indications that housing delivery is generally stronger within the Cork Metropolitan Area and locations that are under strong influence from the Metropolitan Area.

In Cork City, there was a substantial shortfall in the numbers of homes completed, though it still saw the most of any urban area. Cork City witnessed a sharp rise in housing commencements, though a drop in the number of permissions granted.

Trends for **Limerick are significantly behind CDP targets**. However, it should be noted that Limerick has an ambitious housing target, owing to NPF and RSES objectives for Limerick City to grow by 50% from 2016 to 2040. **Delivery in Waterford is meeting and exceeding CDP targets, despite trends being proportionally similar to those in Limerick.** Despite Waterford having similar growth objectives in the NPF and RSES, its housing target is proportionally much lower.

Wexford was the only County where the number of housing completions surpassed CDP targets, and there was also a significant rise in housing commencements. Across **Counties Kerry, Kilkenny, Clare and Tipperary, completions were significantly short of CDP targets**, however a significant rise in commencements was recorded**. In Carlow, all trends for 2024 are significantly below CDP targets**. It should be noted that as the smallest County in the Region, trends can vary significantly from year-to-year owing to activity from specific sites, and activity in Carlow Town in particular.

Increase in Housing Commencements in 2024

As noted, there has been a major increase in the rate of housing commencements nationally in 2024. Commencement notices were issued for over 69,000 homes nationally, a 111% increase on 2023. **The Southern Region saw commencement notices issued for 18,925 homes, a 126% increase on 2023 and 20% higher than the annualised CDP targets.**

Cork City saw the sharpest rise in commencements across the State, with more homes commenced in 2024 than the previous four-year period combined. The commencement of a number of large-scale apartment schemes, primarily through the support of public initiatives including Project Tosaigh and Croí Conaithe (Cities) has had a significant impact in Cork.

The significant rise in commencements was evident in most local authorities, in some cases notably above CDP targets, significantly so in Wexford. While there was a clear increase in Limerick, it's still significantly short of CDP targets. Carlow is the only County where commencements fell in 2024.

The rise in commencements was evident across other Regions, particularly in Dublin and the Mid-East where they were significantly above targets.

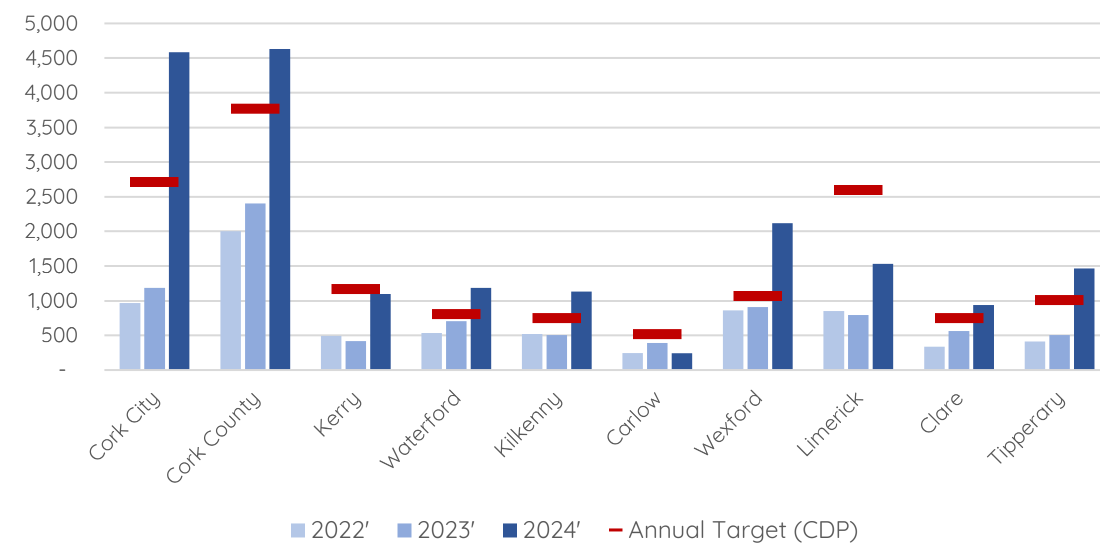
The increase in housing commencements has primarily been attributed to the impact of the development contribution waiver scheme, with the sharpest rise recorded in April 2024 just before the original scheme was due to expire.

While this data is a positive indicator of an uplift in housing activity, **there is uncertainty over the true extent to which work has directly commenced on all homes** for which commencement notices have been issued. It is likely that many of these homes will actually commence in 2025 or later, while it is unlikely that a similar level of commencements will be recorded in 2025. **Nevertheless, it should result in a substantial increase in new housing in the near term.**

Source: CSO Housing Hub, City and County Development Plans

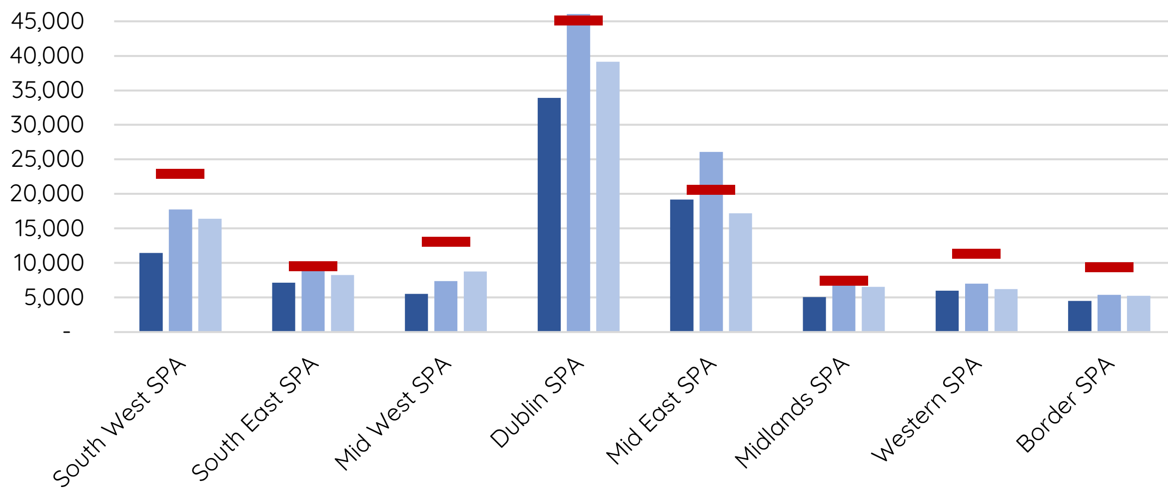
Housing Commencements Across SPAs, 2022 to 2024

Housing Commencements Across SPAs, 2022 to 2024

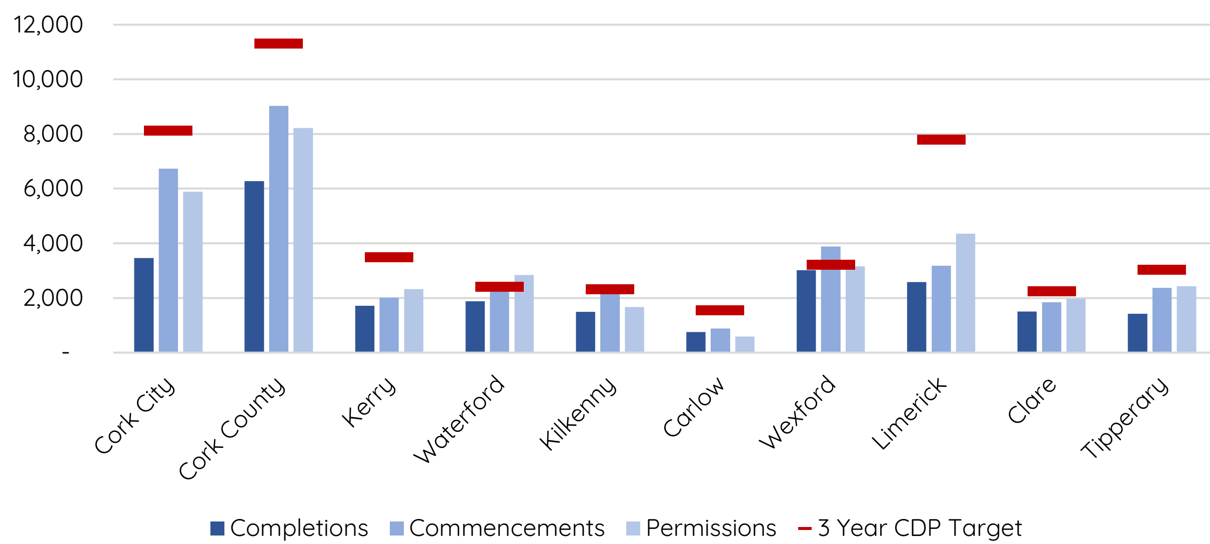


Multi Year Trends for Housing Delivery

Planning and Development Trends by SPA, 2022 to 2024



Planning and Development Trends 2022 to 2024 (3 Year Period)



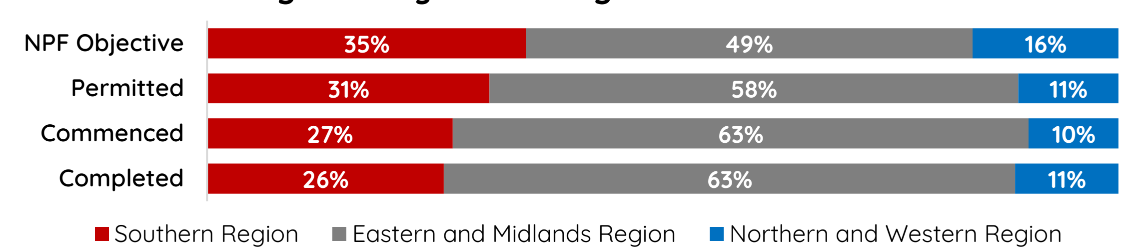
Source: CSO Housing Hub, City and County Development Plans

45,500 homes were targeted for delivery in the Southern Region over the 3-year period from 2022-24. Only 24,102 were completed, 53% of targets and a total shortfall of 21,400 homes. 34,506 homes commenced in the Southern Region over the same period, the majority of which commenced in 2024. This represents 76% of CDP targets, a shortfall of 10,992 homes.

33,433 homes were granted planning permission in the three-year period, a shortfall of 12,065 homes (27%). Permissions are lower than CDP targets in the majority of local authorities, with the most pronounced shortfall in Limerick and Carlow. This is a key indicator of the potential capacity of housing delivery in future years. **A significant increase in planning activity is needed across the region to deliver the major uplift in housing delivery required up to 2030**.

Planning and development trends across the Eastern and Midland Region (EMRA) are generally closer to, or exceeding, CDP targets over the 3-year period. Delivery within EMRA is also far higher than the 49% share of national growth identified within the NPF. **This indicates that a pattern of imbalanced growth towards Dublin and Mid-East, above 60%, is likely to continue for the remainder of this decade, undermining NPF objectives. Focused measures are required to increase delivery across the Southern and Northern and Western Regions.**

Share of Housing Delivery across Regions 2022 to 2024



Type and Location of Housing Being Delivered in the Southern Region

Metropolitan Areas accounted for 43% of all housing delivered in the Southern Region in 2024. While high, it should be noted that Metropolitan areas have been identified to cater for 75% of the Region's growth up to 2032 within the RSES. Other settlements, including Key Towns, accounted for 37% of all new homes in the Region.

21% of housing delivered within the Region in 2024 were single homes in rural areas. In parts of the Region beyond Metropolitan Areas, this accounted for 36% of housing output. Generally, this rate of one-off housing is significantly higher than what Local Authorities have projected within Development Plans and highlights the continued reliance on one-off rural housing across the Region. **It also highlights that housing delivery within settlements is significantly below what has been targeted**. In some Counties, while overall CDP targets are at or close to targets, the higher rate of one-off housing is compensating for an under delivery within many towns and villages.

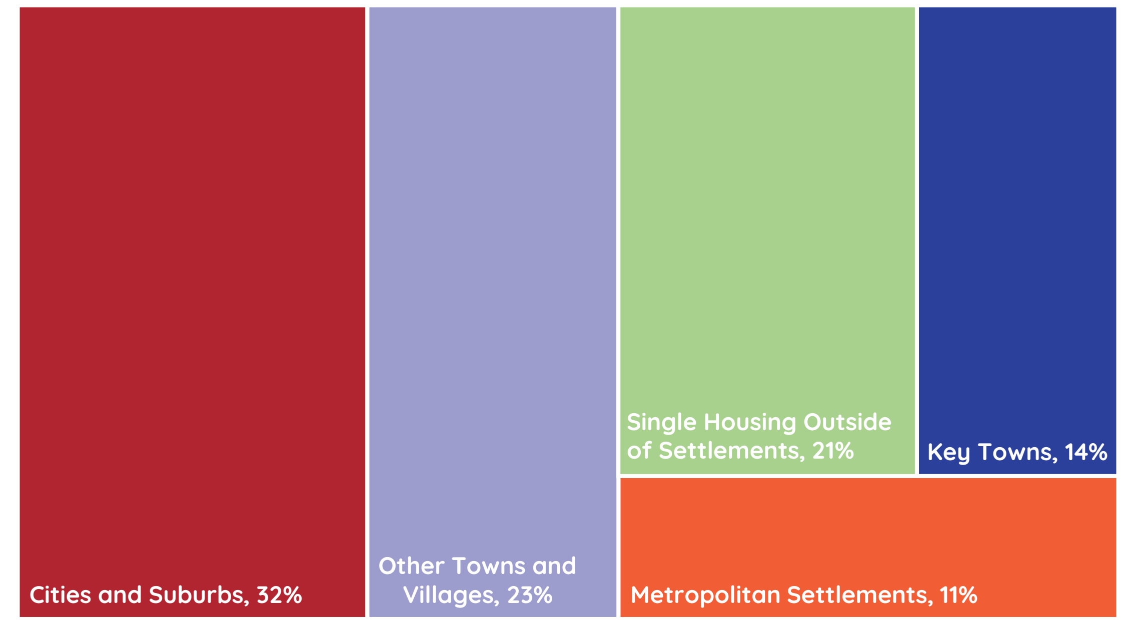
With regards to housing type, 26% of homes delivered in 2024 were single houses, 62% scheme houses and 12% apartments.

When data from across 2022 to 2024 is assessed, it is clear that there is a strong correlation between the number of single houses and scheme houses being granted planning permission and those being completed. However**, there is a stark contrast between the number of apartments being granted planning permission, and the number actually being delivered**. This highlights the specific challenges faced in apartment delivery. This is a key issue with regards to overall housing supply, and in achieving objectives for sustainable and compact growth.

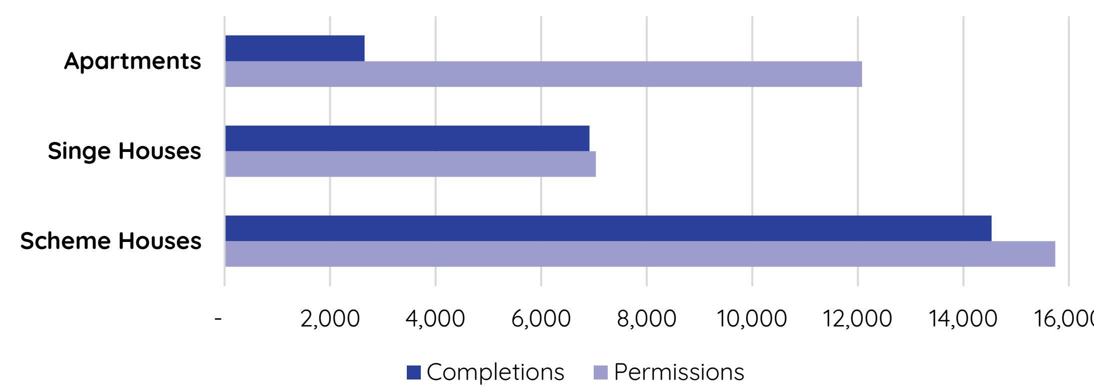
Data on social and affordable housing is not yet available for 2024, but initial trends indicate that an increase from 2023 is anticipated.

Source: CSO Housing Hub

Housing Delivery in Southern Region 2024 by Area Type

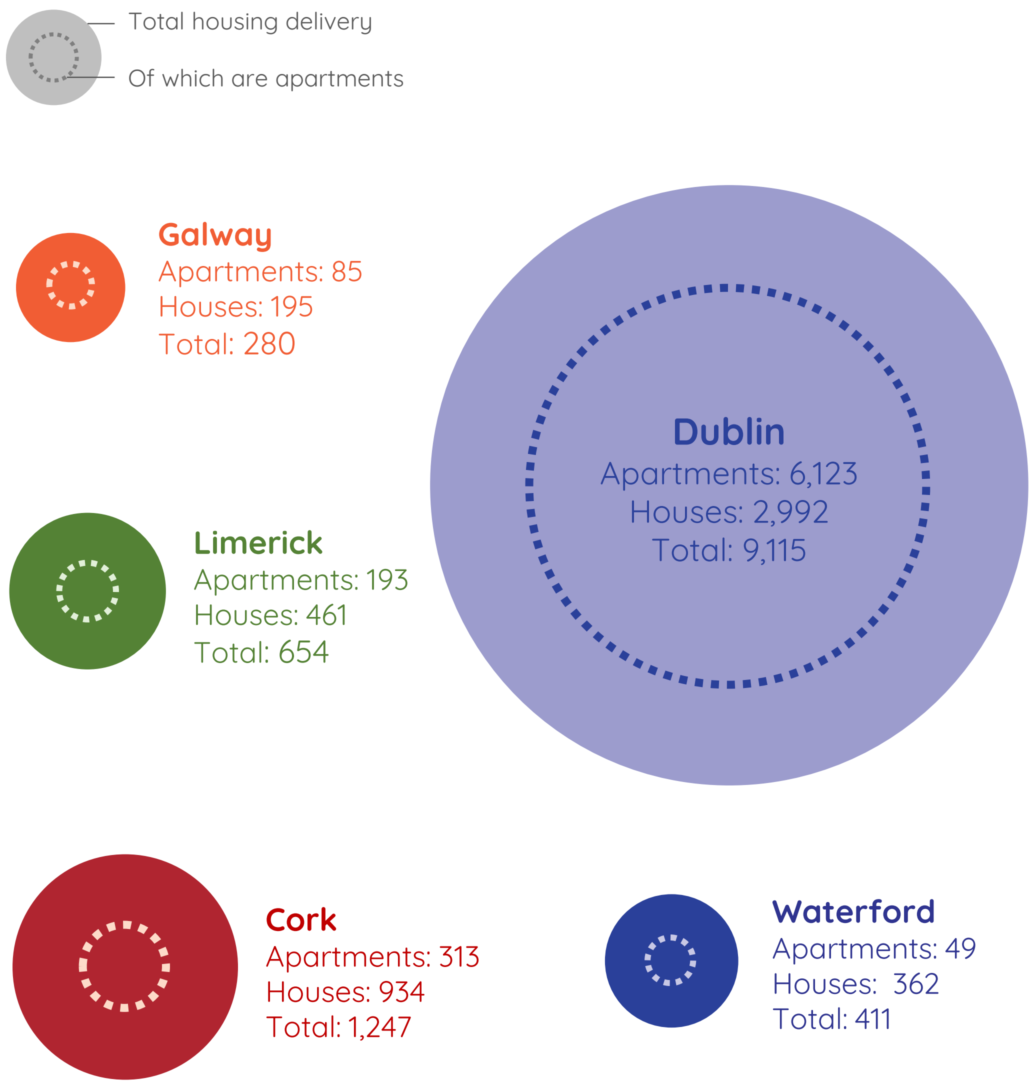


Completions and Permission by Housing Type (22'- 24')



Housing Delivery in Cities and Challenges in Apartment Developments

Overall Delivery of Housing in Cities and Suburbs in 2024



Source: CSO Housing Hub.

Ireland's five Cities have been identified in both the original NPF and Draft First Revision NPF as being strategic locations for focused growth up to 2040. A particular focus is placed on the role of the Cities outside of Dublin to become European Cities of Scale, and to underpin the over-arching objective for Regional Parity.

Ireland's five Cities saw 11,707 homes delivered in 2024, accounting for 39% of all completions nationally**. However, there is a major contrast in the amount of housing being delivered in Dublin (78%) compared to the other four Cities (22% combined).** The comparable share of population from Census 2022 was 73% and 27%. The Draft First Revision NPF envisions that that the other four Cities will each grow by at least 40% up to 2040, compared to 25% growth for Dublin.

The disparity in the rate of housing delivery can largely be attributed to the contrasting rates of apartment development. Since 2020, 30,821 apartments have been completed across the five Cities. **Of these, 28,524 (93%) have been delivered in Dublin, with only 2,279 (7%) delivered across other Cities combined.**

Much of the discussion on apartment delivery in Ireland has focused on the role of Built-to-Rent (BTR) schemes in the Dublin market. **It should be noted that no major new developments of this type have been delivered in our other Cities**. The vast majority of apartment schemes that have been delivered have generally been publicly delivered/subsidised social or affordable housing. Industry stakeholders have cited that the lack of private led apartment developments is due to high construction costs (€600,000 per unit) and the impact on viability. This is despite rents from comparable schemes that are generally above €3,000 per month.

The sharp rise in commencements recorded in Cork in 2024 was largely driven by several major apartment schemes. These schemes were primarily financed in partnership with either the LDA or Approved Housing Bodies through public subsidies**. There is still a near total absence of the private financing of large-scale apartment developments outside of Dublin.**

Trends from Major Planning Applications

Since 2018, Strategic Housing Development (SHD) and Large-scale Residential Development (LRD) procedures have been in place for schemes delivering more than 100 housing units or 200 student bed spaces. In the Southern Region, **68 schemes have been granted planning permission to date under these schemes for 17,850 homes, and 2,806 student bed spaces.** A further 20 schemes, for 5,404 homes and 564 students bed spaces are awaiting a decision.

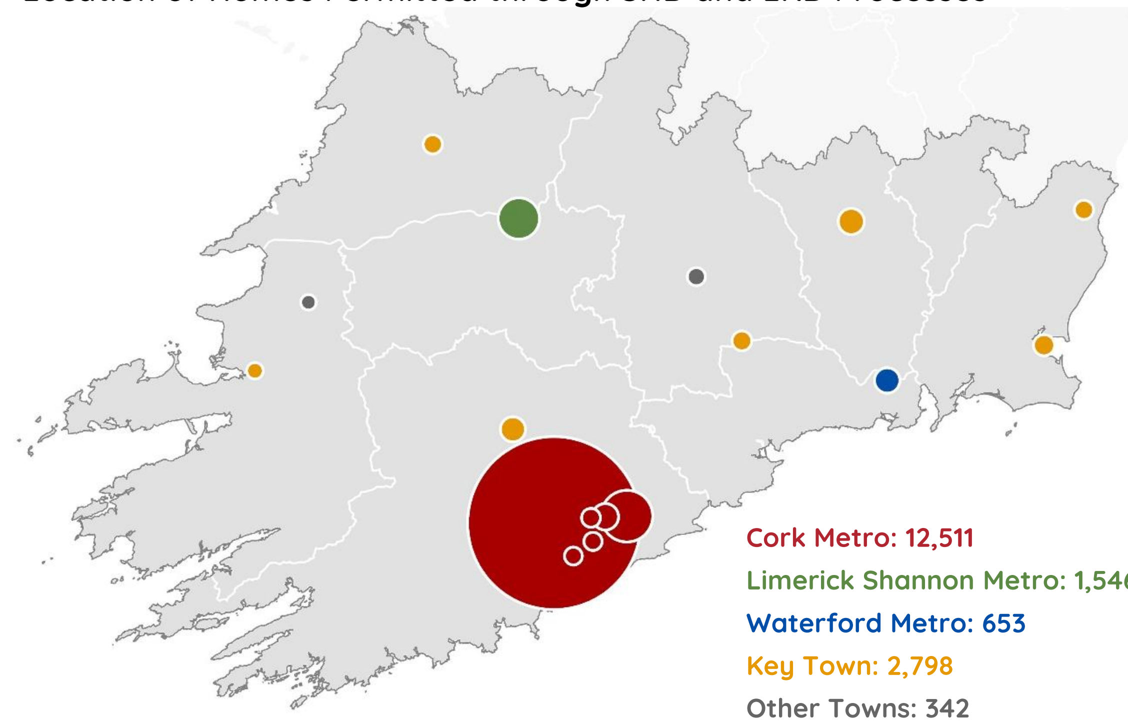
The vast majority of permitted schemes are located in Cork, with 12,511 homes (70% of the total) granted permission in the Cork Metropolitan Area. The major increase in commencements recorded in Cork in 2024 can be largely attributed to this pipeline of major planning permissions. As of January 2025, planning permission is in place for 4,818 units from schemes which have yet to commence, while a further 3,137 units are included in schemes which are yet to be determined. This demonstrates that Cork is well positioned to benefit from public measures to accelerate housing delivery in the short term though initiatives including Project Tosaigh and Croí Conaithe (Cities).

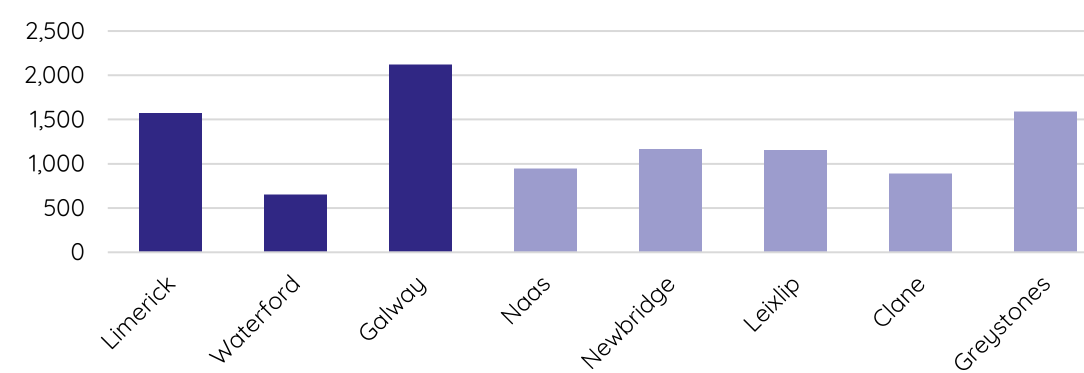
In contrast, Limerick and Waterford have seen a much lower number of homes come through the planning process as part of larger schemes. The number of SHD/LRD applications in these Cities is lower than in Galway, and comparable to the level seen in smaller towns in the Mid-East. Limerick and Waterford have been identified for growth of at least 40% up to 2040 in the Draft NPF. Delivering this scale of growth will require a substantially higher number of larger scale housing developments.

Beyond the three Metropolitan Areas, **3,140 units from 16 schemes are located in Key Towns and other Towns across the region**. While it is to be expected that 100+ home schemes would be less prevalent outside of Metropolitan Areas, housing supply in larger towns in particular would benefit from an increased number of major housing schemes.

Source: An Bord Pleanala, Local Authority Planning Databases

Location of Homes Permitted through SHD and LRD Processes





Trends from Major Planning Applications

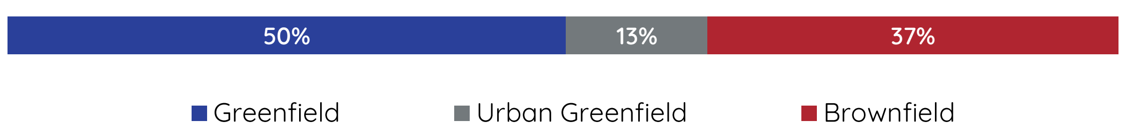
Overview of Permitted Schemes

Apartments
9,804 (55%)

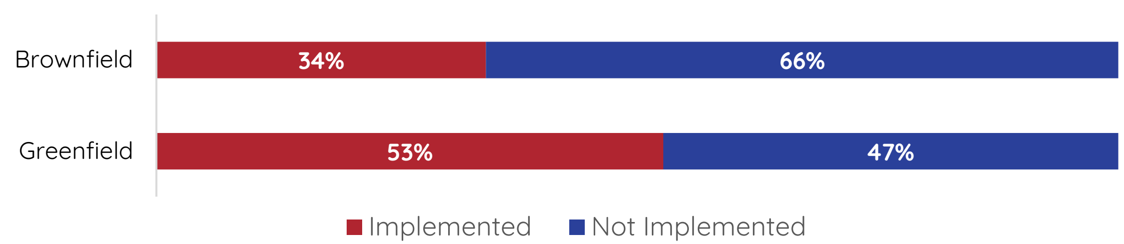
Houses
8,046 (45%)

Density
110 dph

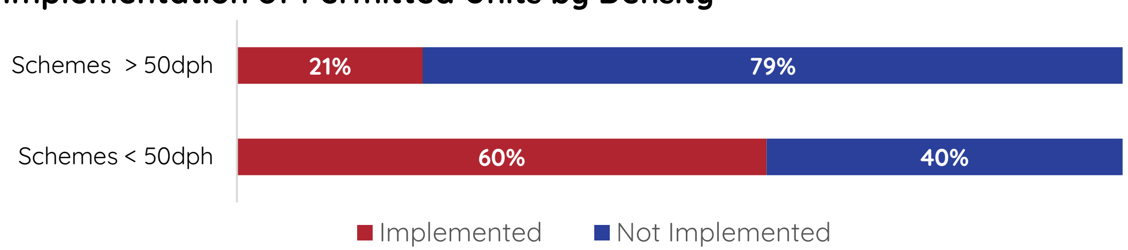
Share of Permitted Units by Site Type



Implementation of Permitted Units by Land Type



Implementation of Permitted Units by Density



Source: An Bord Pleanala, Local Authority Planning Databases

1) Based on research from the London Plan which determined that 2.5 new purpose built student beds will unlock 1 conventional housing unit

Data for permitted schemes shows that more apartments have been granted permission than houses, while there is an equal split of units on greenfield sites and brownfield/urban greenfield sites. This demonstrates that **that permitted schemes are generally in line with NPF and RSES objectives for compact growth, and national policy guidance for sustainable residential development and compact settlements.**

However, **there is a clear contrast in the implementation of planning permissions based on their density, and whether they are brownfield or greenfield sites.** While 53% of units on greenfield sites have been implemented, only 34% of units from brownfield sites have. The contrast is even starker with regards to density, where implementation is 3 times higher for schemes with a density below 50 dwelling per hectare (dph) than for schemes with a density above 50dph.

Purpose Built Student Accommodation (PBSA)

Permitted:
2,806 Bed Spaces
(= 1,122 housing units[1])

Implemented:
1,570 bed space
(= 628 housing units[1])

While eligible for the SHD and LRD processes, PBSA units are not considered new dwellings. However, they do address a specific residential need, and a significant amount of student accommodation has been permitted and implemented through major applications**. In the absence of apartment development, this has provided a supply of higher density residential accommodation on brownfield sites in line with compact growth objectives.**

Key Issues

The Role of Housing Targets

There has been significant commentary, including by media and industry, on the need for revised housing targets to be issued by Government, and for Development Plans to be revised to take account of these and increase the quantity of zoned land. It is anticipated that revised housing targets for some local authorities will be issued by Government in the coming months.

However, annualised CDP housing targets (which set the basis for zoned land) are already at the higher end of the various national targets, and upwards of 54,000 accounting for under delivery in the early phases of plan periods. Only in the Mid-East have housing completions in recent years been in line with CDP targets. The shortfall against targets in the Southern Region has been more pronounced.

Some local authorities may witness an upward revision to housing targets. However, **across most of the State and Region, CDP housing targets are most likely sufficient. The key issue has been the extent to which delivery is falling short of these targets.**

With regards to zoned land, this highlights that the quantum is not the key issue – the primary challenge is activating the land that is zoned. Servicing of individual sites, infrastructure deficiencies, development viability and reluctance of some landowners to sell for development have been cited as key issues.

It is important that any revisions to local housing targets continue to reflect the core objectives of the NPF and RSES including balanced regional growth, ambitious growth for our Cities and settlements, and the need to guard against unsustainable patterns of development. Priority should be given to ensure activation of land zoned for development.

Imbalanced Nature of Housing Delivery Nationally

The First Draft Revision of the NPF has ambitious targets for the Southern Region, and for an equal distribution of growth between the Eastern and Midlands Region and the rest of the Country between 2022 to 2030, and beyond this to 2040. However, on recent trends, the Eastern and Midlands Region is accounting for more than 60% of new housing, with similar trends evident in the pipeline of commencements and planning permissions.

Based on these trends, it is increasingly unrealistic that a balanced distribution of growth will be realised up to 2030. The imbalanced nature of housing delivery is not generally reflective of the much more balanced nature of growth in employment and industry across regions, or the shortage and demand for homes to rent and purchase.

A significant issue is that private investment is disproportionately focused on Dublin and the Mid-East. This is driven by higher values and subsequent impacts on viability and improved access to finance, rather than a reflective response to housing need across the State.

The current structure of certain state schemes aimed at activating private led development results in public funding being directed towards market priorities. **As a result, this element of public investment in housing is being disproportionately focused towards the Greater Dublin Area.**

It is critical that both public and private investment in housing reflects housing need across the state, and that it supports rather than undermines objectives for balanced regional growth.

Key Issues

Contrasting Delivery in the Region's Three Cities

While housing completions in Cork City have been significantly below targets in recent years, the rate of recent commencements and planning permissions across the Metropolitan Area indicates a major shift in momentum in the short term.

In contrast, Limerick and Waterford have not benefited from the same level of planning activity for major housing schemes to enable a significant rise in housing commencements. The contrast in the number of SHD/LRD schemes in Cork and those seen in Limerick and Waterford is particularly stark. As a result, Limerick and Waterford are not in the same position to benefit from state measures targeted at activating unimplemented planning permissions.

An important factor in the higher rates of planning activity witnessed in Cork has been the legacy of strategic planning for the metropolitan area, which identified key regeneration areas like the Docklands, and the potential of transport-oriented development along commuter rail and future light rail corridors. This has not been witnessed to the same extent in Limerick and Waterford, which limits opportunities for strategic, longer-term growth and transport-oriented development.

In the short term, there is a clear need for collaboration between public and private stakeholders to identify and progress development on zoned and serviced land in Limerick and Waterford to increase the supply of housing.

In the longer term, the upcoming review of the Metropolitan Area Spatial Plans (MASPs) for Limerick-Shannon and Waterford will be important in identifying areas of the Cities and wider Metropolitan areas with the potential for significant growth.

Differing Challenges Across the Region

Beyond the largest urban areas, there are a variety of significant challenges faced in housing delivery across more rural parts of the Region. A common trend is that across many communities, there is a continued reliance on single rural housing and a substantial under delivery of housing within towns and villages.

Constraints in water services infrastructure is a fundamental obstacle to new housing delivery for many towns and villages across the Region. While Uisce Éireann is undertaking a major programme of improvements across the Country, many settlements are faced with continued restrictions on new connections which inhibits housing delivery. **It is crucial that options to accelerate necessary upgrades are explored between Uisce Éireann and local authorities.**

Where infrastructure is in place, the development industry will generally prioritise delivery in locations where viability and values are most favourable. As a result, housing delivery in some areas is particularly strong, even where delivery in the wider local authority may be significantly behind targets. In other areas, development value is often not high enough to offset development costs. Even in cases where developers and landowners are willing to progress development, access to the necessary finance can be a major barrier.

In addition to increased investment in water infrastructure across the Region, focused measures are also required to address development viability and improved access to finance for housing development in areas witnessing a clear under delivery of housing.

Key Issues

Challenges to Apartment Delivery and Brownfield Land Activation

One of the fundamental challenges that has emerged in housing delivery in the Region is the under-delivery of higher density forms of housing and development on brownfield land. Where such development is occurring, it is predominantly publicly subsidised social, affordable or cost rental housing. Underlying development costs for apartments are recognised as a key issue, where delivery of **a 2-bedroom apartment is estimated to be €100,000 more expensive than for a 3-bedroom house**[1].

While this is an issue nationally, **there is a clear contrast between the viability of such development in Dublin and in other Cities and urban areas**. While positive trends are emerging for Cork, this is primarily being enabled by public initiatives such as Croí Conaithe (Cities) and Project Tosaigh. In Limerick and Waterford, a lower rate of planning activity means that they aren't in the same position to benefit from such public initiatives to improve delivery in the short term.

Beyond the Cities, the viability of apartments and brownfield land development is even more challenging within Towns. This presents a major challenge not just to housing delivery, but the regeneration of urban areas and objectives for compact growth. Furthermore, the reliance on social and affordable housing to enable apartment development has the potential to undermine objectives for mixed and tenure blind communities.

If overall housing targets and objectives for compact growth are to be achieved, market delivery of higher density development needs to be financially viable. Focused measures which recognise the significant regional variances in viability are required which enable delivery of these typologies across all regions.

1) Source: Total Cost of Development 2024 , DHLGH

Typical Costs of Different Housing Types, 2024[1]

3 Bed Semi-Detached	**€450,652**
2 Bed Duplex	**€466,834**
2 Bed Suburban Apartment	**€549,790**
2 Bed Urban Apartment	**€591,783**

Government have indicated that it is considering a range of measures, which could include planning policy and financial interventions, aimed at significantly accelerating the rate of housing delivery in the State.

A key concern of the Southern Regional Assembly is that if these measures are broad based and ignore regional and local variances, then their impacts will be not be felt equally across all areas, and may serve to increase supply where it is already strongest.

Measures which will be effective in increasingly large-scale apartment delivery in Dublin may not have the same effect in other Cities. Similarly, areas where market delivery of housing is already strong are not likely to require financial incentives to accelerate delivery when compared to areas where market delivery is far lower.

Any state led interventions to accelerate housing delivery need to take account of the significant variances in local circumstances and development viability across different Regions, Cities, Towns and rural areas. It is also crucial that they seek to support implementation of the NPF, including objectives for balanced regional growth, compact growth and transport-oriented development.

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