

November 2012

# National Housing Development Survey

## Summary Report



Comhshaol, Pobal agus Rialtas Áitiúil  
Environment, Community and Local Government





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# 1. Introduction

The Department of the Environment Community and Local Government, with local authorities around the country, prepared a survey of unfinished housing developments in Ireland over summer 2012 in a similar format to previous surveys in 2010 and 2011.

The survey provides a key evidence base for the Government's action program on tackling the issue of unfinished housing developments and measuring the progress being made.

As in the case of the previous surveys above, the 2012 survey covered all housing developments of two or more dwellings commenced since 2007.

It is important to note that the survey generally tracks the progress of housing developments included in previous surveys<sup>1</sup> where there are or were uncompleted construction works involving either housing or infrastructure or both, but it does not include every completed housing development in the country with outstanding taking-in-charge or maintenance issues.

The survey was conducted by the Department's Architecture and Building Standards Inspectorate, in conjunction with relevant staff across all local authorities, capturing data and information on:

1. The numbers of **housing developments that can now be regarded as substantially complete** (either whole developments or phases of developments where the remaining phases are no longer likely to proceed);
2. The **numbers of incomplete developments** with outstanding housing construction or infrastructure works or both;
3. The **numbers of incomplete developments that are in a seriously problematic condition** (see Appendix 2);
4. The **number of complete and occupied houses** in the surveyed developments;
5. The **number of complete and vacant houses**;
6. The **number of houses partly constructed** and the stage of construction;
7. The **activity status of the development**, whether active or not;<sup>2</sup>

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1 A small number of additional developments were included in the 2012 survey having been identified by the local authorities as not having been surveyed in previous years.

2 Whether or not a site is active or not is a relative phrase, because a site could be recorded as active even though the level of activity could be very low and the numbers of workers engaged on the site could be very small.

## 2. Key Findings

The 2012 survey reveals that:

- 1. 1203 developments previously included in the survey can now be removed because they are either substantially complete** or development never commenced and many of the substantially complete developments will now progress to being considered for taking in charge by the relevant local authorities;
- 2. 1770 developments remain unfinished;**
- 3. Of the 1770 remaining unfinished developments, approximately 1100 of these or parts thereof are in a seriously problematic condition** and are a focus for continued action;
- 4. 16,881 houses remain vacant** (over a slightly increased number of developments surveyed), down from the 18,638 dwellings recorded in 2011 and the 23,250 recorded in 2010;
- 5. 91,692 houses are complete and occupied**, up from the 79,234 houses in 2011;

Overall, the figures indicate the following trends:

**Firstly**, good progress continues to be made on the majority of sites in bringing vacant housing into beneficial use and bringing down the level of vacant new housing.

**Secondly**, with the major outstanding construction works on 1203 sites complete, the next immediate priority for the majority of these developments is for developers, funders and local authorities to work together in assessing developments for the purposes of taking in charge and expediting that process on condition that reasonable standards of completion are achieved. Other substantially complete developments, mainly apartment and multi-unit schemes, will be maintained by management companies controlled by residents.

**Thirdly**, the focus on unfinished housing developments will need to shift to resolving the remaining 1770 developments that are incomplete and especially the approximately 1100 developments that are in a seriously problematic condition.

Within this latter cohort of developments, the Department is working with local authorities and other key stakeholders in developing a response to developments which would appear to be commercially unviable in both a short and long term context due to location, build quality, commercial demand or other factors and where the most prudent course of action from public safety, commercial and planning viewpoints may be to seek the agreement of owners/funders to clear the site and return it to some other beneficial usage.

The Department will be bringing forward detailed proposals on this matter during late spring 2013.

### 3. Background

A total of 2973 developments were inspected, marginally up on the 2876 developments included in the 2011 survey. Most of the additional 97 developments were identified through advice from local authorities.

Where one or more phases of a development had been fully completed but no work had commenced on subsequent phases, that development was regarded as being unfinished and was included in the survey.

As in 2010 and 2011, certain completed developments with unoccupied dwellings were also included in the survey, being developments completed in 2007 and where 10% or more of the dwellings were vacant at the time of survey.

The 2012 survey also maintained the improvements introduced in 2010 including additional data on the breakdown between house types (apartments and houses for example), enabling tracking of the relative occupation of houses compared with apartments.

The 2012 survey also distinguishes between developments not started and (i) covered by a live planning permission and (ii) where planning permission is expired.

While the survey captures data on rates of vacancy, it should be noted that this information is not always readily apparent from an external survey or site visit and can be difficult to obtain particularly in the case of apartments. Supplementary information on occupancy was obtained from residents and other sources.

In general, the figures would appear to indicate that overall, there is continuing progress on unfinished housing with developments moving through the various stages of construction and on to completion, leading to occupancy and a reduction in vacancy levels.

Nationally, there have also been improvements recorded in relation to the provision of public infrastructure, such as roads, footpaths, lighting and open spaces.

It is also noteworthy that the numbers of sites remaining active is relatively stable, albeit at a very low level of around 250 sites. Essentially, the level of activity is very low and concerns the completion of building works rather than the commencement of any new development.

Notably, there is also a trend of developments where the relevant planning permission has expired with permissions for around 25,000 un-commenced dwellings in unfinished housing developments now having expired.

## 4. Vacant Housing Trends

Initial analysis of the data highlights a number of points.

To provide a nationally consistent context within which to analyse the level of new vacant houses across the different sizes of city and county council areas, the total number of new vacant homes in each area was converted into a ratio per 1000 households.

The analysis above reveals that, as in previous surveys, the highest ratio's of vacant new homes arise in some midland, border and western counties with comparatively much lower levels in the main urban areas.

Table 1 and the map below graphically summarise and depict the data.

## 5. Next Steps

The survey is an invaluable tool in supporting the work of the Department, the Housing Agency, Local Authorities and other key stakeholders to bring about an effective resolution of the problems with unfinished housing developments.

A detailed excel spreadsheet of the overall survey will be available on [www.environ.ie](http://www.environ.ie)

Work is continuing in finalising some mapping of the surveyed developments including developments that remain unfinished and the cohort of these developments in a seriously problematic condition. When the mapping is complete by Christmas, mapping of all developments will be available through the Department's [www.myplan.ie](http://www.myplan.ie) planning information system.



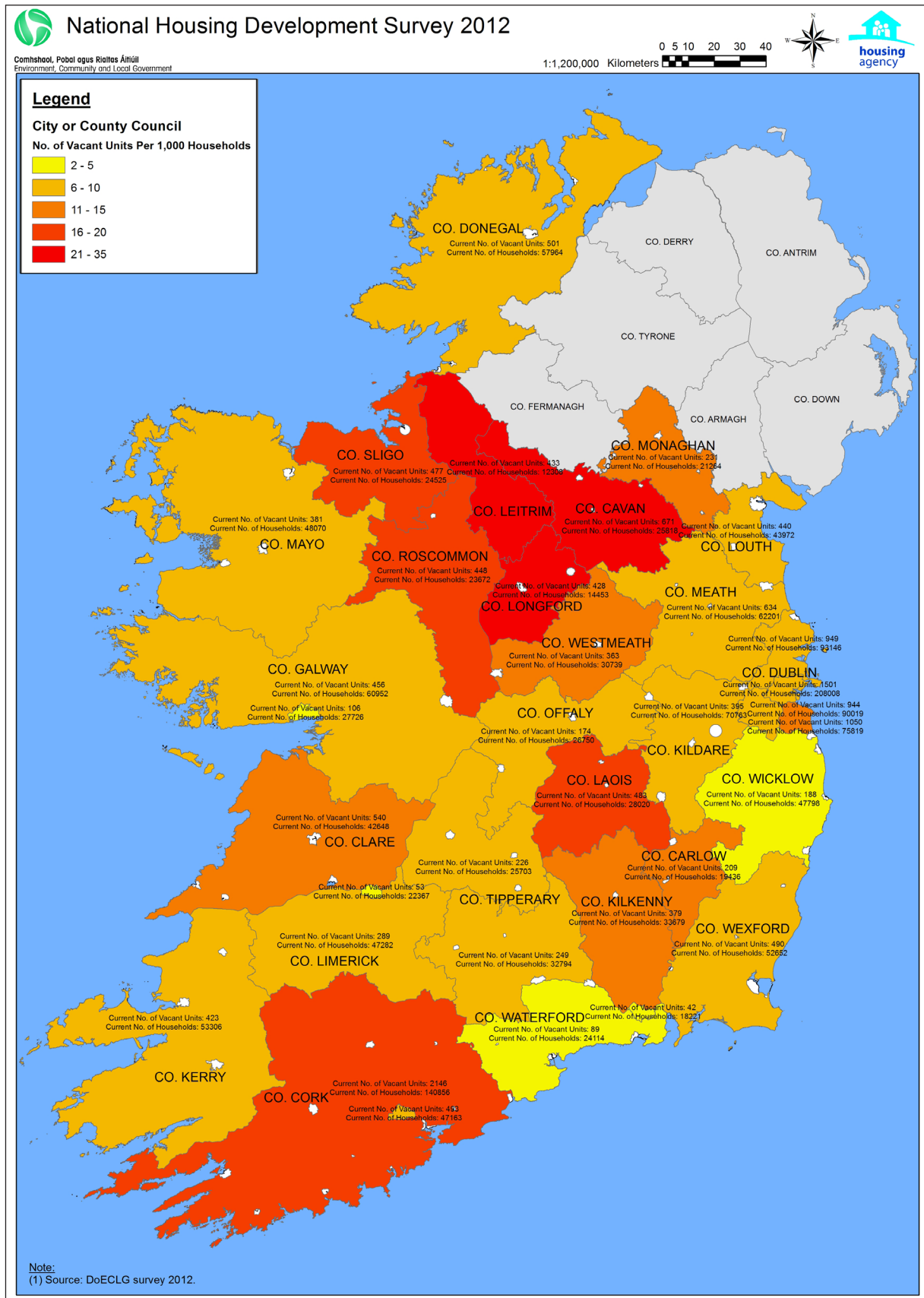
Table 1: Number of Vacant Units per 1,000 Households

Local Authority	Number of Vacant Units derived from Survey	Total Number of Households	Number of Vacant Units Per 1,000 Households
Waterford City	42	18,221	2
Limerick City	53	22,367	2
Waterford County	89	24,114	4
Galway City	106	27,726	4
Wicklow	188	47,798	4
Kildare	395	70,763	6
Limerick	289	47,282	6
Offaly	174	26,750	7
Dublin City Council	1,501	208,008	7
Galway County	456	60,952	7
South Tipperary	249	32,794	8
Mayo	381	48,070	8
Kerry	423	53,306	8
Donegal	501	57,964	9
North Tipperary	226	25,703	9
Wexford	490	52,652	9
Louth	440	43,972	10
Fingal	949	93,146	10
Meath	634	62,201	10
Cork City	493	47,163	10
South Dublin	944	90,019	10
Carlow	209	19,436	11
Monaghan	231	21,264	11
Kilkenny	379	33,679	11
Westmeath	363	30,739	12
Clare	540	42,648	13
Dun Laoghaire Rathdown	1,050	75,819	14
Cork County	2,146	140,856	15
Laois	483	28,020	17
Roscommon	448	23,672	19
Sligo	477	24,525	19
Cavan	671	25,818	26
Longford	428	14,453	30
Leitrim	433	12,308	35

**Note 1:** As derived from the 2012 Survey

**Note 2:** Note 'number of households' is derived from most recently published CSO data, 2011.

Map of City and County Councils Showing  
Numbers of Vacant Houses per 1000 Households



# Appendix 1

## Summary of National Figures from the 2012 National Housing Development Survey

Survey of Unfinished Housing Developments		2010	2011	2012
<b>NATIONAL TOTAL</b>				
No of Developments Inspected		2846	2876	<b>2973</b>
5. Housing Development Form / Type				
5.1	Detached	24476	25048	<b>25864</b>
5.2	Semi-detached	55243	56007	<b>57528</b>
5.3	Terrace	36872	38044	<b>39644</b>
5.4	Duplex	7873	7870	<b>7979</b>
5.5	Apartment	54766	54466	<b>54640</b>
TOTAL		179230	181435	<b>185655</b>
6. Dwellings Completion Status				
6.1	Complete & Occupied	78195	85538	<b>91692</b>
6.2	Complete & Vacant	<b>23250</b>	<b>18638</b>	<b>16881</b>
6.3	Near Complete - No building activity	7277	6860	<b>6978</b>
6.4	Near Complete - With building activity	2699	1934	<b>1014</b>
6.5	Wall Plate - No building activity	2104	2040	<b>2037</b>
6.6	Wall Plate - With building activity	923	417	<b>432</b>
6.7	DPC complete - No building activity	2507	2668	<b>2682</b>
6.8	DPC Complete - With building activity	467	273	<b>201</b>
6.9	Founds to DPC level - No activity	3251	3268	<b>3370</b>
6.1.0	Founds to DPC level - With activity	602	412	<b>318</b>
6.1.1	No Construction Started Planning Expired	58025	59381	<b>35191</b> <b>24864</b>
TOTAL			181429	<b>185655</b>
7.1	Roads - Complete and in service	67535	73140	<b>79786</b>
7.4	Footpaths - Complete	100155	104611	<b>110176</b>
7.6	Lighting - Compete	98022	102740	<b>106762</b>
8.1	Potable water supply fully operational	101279	105045	<b>109372</b>
8.2	Waste water system fully operational	101199	104586	<b>108974</b>
8.3	Storm water system fully operational	100940	104524	<b>112780</b>
9.1	Planned number of open space areas	5300	5355	<b>5565</b>
9.2	OS Areas - fully complete	3305	3418	<b>3616</b>
10.	Construction activity on site	429	245	<b>252</b>

## Appendix 2

### Criteria for Assessment of Unfinished Housing Developments In a Seriously Problematic Condition

#### General

In assisting in the completion of the 2012 National Housing Development Survey, each Local Authority identified any unfinished housing development (UHD), or any part thereof and the individual dwellings concerned that, in the opinion of that local authority, are in a seriously problematic condition. In arriving at this qualitative assessment, each Local Authority applied the criteria below.

#### Criteria

A dwelling unit should be deemed to be in a seriously problematic condition if, in the opinion of the relevant Local Authority any of the following essential public infrastructure and amenity standards have not been met:

- Installation and commissioning of public lighting, (subsequent maintenance issues such as individual lamp standards not working etc. should be discounted).
- Provision of potable water supply.
- Provision of wastewater collection, treatment and disposal systems (if provided on a stand-alone basis to serve the particular UHD) sufficient to ensure that, in the opinion of the local authority, no pollution or public health issues are arising.
- Access road to at least base course level, including, where required, provision for parking.
- Provision of access to the dwelling by constructed footpath.
- Provision of open space capable of serving the amenity needs of permitted dwellings, being suitable for access and use by members of the public

*Deficiencies in the landscaping (e.g. tree planting) of public open space or similar would not render a development to be in a seriously problematic condition.*



