

Submission: Ireland 2040 Our Plan

Recent CSO studies predict that Ireland's population could grow to over 6.7 million by 2046 under their strongest growth scenario. In my view, to cope with anything near this growth we will require significant changes to our current planning policy, which is already unsustainable. I suggest the following:

1. Allow increased urban building density, through permitting higher building heights in new developments, taking account, however, of the importance of retaining sufficient green areas to maintain a good living environment. It is also necessary to be sensitive to the existing historic inner city areas when planning new developments, for aesthetic, historic and tourism reasons. The preservation of these streetscapes intact should be encouraged through strict planning guidelines and financial incentives, e.g., renovation grants. Unused buildings, sites and serviced development lands should be subject to penal taxation, to encourage maximum utilisation of the significant amount of existing potential accommodation.
2. Discourage the construction of one-off housing and ribbon development in the countryside. Ireland is notorious for this. Recent years have seen a huge amount of such development, even in areas of special natural beauty, while many of our villages and provincial urban centres are in decline. This is principally because it is less expensive to build in the countryside. Such housing is often located far from social centres, such as schools, churches and shops. It is visually detrimental to the landscape and therefore to our important tourist industry. It is also costly to service with utilities such as electricity, water, broadband, etc., and has increased the pollution of our water sources through ineffective sewerage treatment. The residents of these houses are often long distance commuters, increasing our carbon footprint, and many country roads are having to carry volumes of traffic they were never designed for, making both driving and walking hazardous. The planning regulations should be stricter in this regard and financial incentives should be devised to make it more attractive to build around or in existing villages and urban centres.