



A CASE STUDY OF CRANMORE HOUSING ESTATE

County Sligo, Ireland



Paddy Gray, Erick Guerra, John Driscoll, Ursula McAnulty, Peter Shanks
International Centre for Local and Regional Development
and University of Ulster



The views expressed in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the Board of Management of the Housing Agency. This document is not intended to be a legal interpretation of any existing legislation or to be a legal instruction in relation to procedure.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form, or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording or any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

Foreword

We are pleased to present this report, one of three that the Housing Agency has agreed to publish as part of research carried out by the International Centre for Local and Regional Development (ICLRD).

This individual publication is part of a research project conducted in six areas in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. The six locations are distinct because they look at unique stages of development to create sustainable communities not only in existing estates, but also in newly built areas. In Northern Ireland, the research team investigated the progress being made in Springfarm, Antrim, Carran Crescent, Enniskillen and Irish Street/Gobnascale Interface in Derry/Londonderry. In the republic, the focus was on Cranmore, Sligo, Mahon, Cork and Adamstown, Dublin.

All six studies will be available soon as part of a larger publication. They will also be available on the ICRLD website

Abstract

This case study on Cranmore is part of a larger study undertaken by the International Centre for Local and Regional Development (ICLRD) that documents initiatives and policies in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland to improve and build subsidized housing in mixed communities through the lens of six case studies – Springfarm, the Irish Street and Gobnascale interface and Carran Crescent in Northern Ireland and Cranmore, Mahon and Adamstown in the Republic of Ireland.

Together, the six cases provide a cross section of the challenges and opportunities faced by communities, councils, and central government agencies working to promote or provide mixed housing. Each case highlights the strategies that have helped address these challenges and opportunities to create and maintain housing that is safe, prosperous and open to all. A synthesis report that summarizes the six cases is also available.

Introduction

Over the last 40 years, Ireland, north and south, has experienced dynamic changes in demographics, settlement patterns, the economy, migration, socioeconomic conditions and political attitudes. Major shifts have also occurred in how both sides of the border finance, construct, deliver and manage subsidized housing. There was a focus on providing large numbers of units quickly and inexpensively on large social housing estates, often in remote locations without appropriate services, shops or infrastructure. Increasingly, many of these estates came to be seen as areas of housing of last resort, where poor households, unable to make the transition to home ownership, became concentrated. Some estates gained reputations as hotbeds of violent crime, drugs, antisocial behaviour and, in the north, sectarian paramilitary activities and ethnic intolerance.

Just as in much of Europe and North America, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland have developed new policies to counteract some of the perceived failures of earlier housing policies by improving conditions in existing housing estates and providing new mechanisms for delivering subsidized housing that does not concentrate housing of last resort in remote locations. In particular, both governments, while continuing to promote home ownership, have emphasised the need to create mixed, integrated and balanced communities that can accommodate and nurture people and households from different backgrounds, ethnicities and income groups. In Northern Ireland, the legacy of the Troubles and ongoing sectarian mistrust add an additional layer to an already complex process of promoting and supporting mixed communities. The rapid increase in migration, particularly from Eastern Europe, added a new dimension to integrated housing in both jurisdictions.

Methodology

The particular history of an area and even the resolute and voluntary efforts of individual community members have profound impacts on housing estates and government programmes. Given the nuanced, context-specific factors that contribute to the success of policies and programs to promote balanced communities, this study presents its findings as a series of case studies. Each case is unique, but also provides a wealth of information on how government bodies and other key stakeholders can play a role in the creation or continued success of balanced, sustainable communities and key factors that contribute to this success.

In preparing the cases, our research team was supported and informed by the guidance of a panel of experts from both sides of the border. The team conducted interviews, held conference calls and set up focus group meetings with key stakeholders and community members at each site and in the surrounding neighbourhoods. Multiple site visits and meetings with local officials and policy makers complimented these interviews. Draft versions of the cases were distributed for comments to community representatives, government officials, estate managers, private developers and academics. The research team drew materials from a comprehensive literature review and analyzed statistics from agencies throughout Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

The Study Sites

The six case study areas vary tremendously in terms of location, scale, design and history. Three are located in Northern Ireland – Springfarm outside of Antrim, the Irish Street and Gobnascale Interface area in Derry/Londonderry and Carran Crescent in Enniskillen – and three are located in the Republic of Ireland – Cranmore in Sligo, Mahon outside of Cork and Adamstown on the outskirts of Dublin. Four of them, Springfarm, Irish Street/Gobnascale, Cranmore and Mahon were primarily developed as social housing estates in the 1970s or earlier; while Carran Crescent, a 20 unit ‘Shared Future’ pilot project, and Adamstown, a 10,000 unit private development that is under construction with a 15% social rental and affordable home sales component, are 21st century new build projects.

The commonality is that they all involve a partnership of residents, public officials and private entities working to provide mixed, integrated housing or services that are available for a diversity of residents. Both governments see mixed communities as an integral part of a strategy to ensure economic and social progress and stability in the 21st century as well as a policy objective in its own right.

Table 1: The Six Study Sites

| Site | Units | Population | Opening | City | County/DC |
|------------------------------|----------------------|------------|---------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Springfarm Estate | 460 (originally 516) | ca. 1,200 | 1978 | Springfarm | Antrim, NI |
| Irish Street and Gobnascale* | ca. 1,700 | ca. 4,300 | 1949-52; 1968-71 | Derry / Londonderry, NI | Derry/ Londonderry, NI |
| Cranmore Estate | 499 | ca. 1,500 | 1974 | Sligo | Sligo, Rol |
| Mahon | 4,100 (700 social) | 12,000 | 1970s | Mahon | Cork, Rol |
| Carran Crescent | 20 | ca. 60 | 2006 | Enniskillen | Fermanagh, NI |
| Adamstown | 1,019 out of 10,150 | ca. 3,000 | 2006 | Adamstown | Dublin, Rol |

Source: 2001 Census from Clondermot 1 and Victoria Super Output Areas and Hollymount 2 Output Area 95MM180004

These case studies document good practices and will help others learn from the challenges and opportunities encountered in the planning process. Together the cases demonstrate:

- the importance of community empowerment and leadership;
- the successful creation and management of dynamic partnerships between residents, community groups, the voluntary sector, housing providers and local authorities, public safety and social services among others;
- the adoption of central government policy initiatives that generate local opportunities and have physical implications for the larger neighbourhood context;
- and the ability to achieve results on the ground.

Support

This series of individual case studies and the synthesis report are part of the International Centre for Local and Regional Development's ongoing initiative to support collaborative approaches to cross-community and cross-border development through jointed-up analysis and research. Funding from the Irish Government, through the Higher Education Authority (HEA) and the International Fund for Ireland (IFI) supported this research as part of the core research programme, which brings together a multi-disciplinary team from five academic and research organisations on the island of Ireland and the United States.

Acknowledgements

The ICLRD would like to convey our sincerest thanks to the numerous interviewees in each of the case study areas who were consulted during the course of the study; their views and opinions contributed significantly to this work.

We would like to express our gratitude to the stakeholders and local officials for their support, input and guidance during the interview and data collection process.

The research team conducted the following interviews at Cranmore Estate in Sligo: Architects Department of Sligo Borough Council, Cluid Housing Association, Urban Capital, Cranmore Regeneration Project, Cranmore Community Cooperative Society, RAPID, Foroige, Schools Completion programme, Spring Board, residents, Spatial Planning & Housing at Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government, the local housing association, a DOEHLG Focus Group and the architects.

The research team further takes this opportunity to thank the ICLRD partners for their support during this study and our sister organisation, the All-Island Research Observatory (AIRO) for their assistance in the mapping housing development in each of the case study areas.

Research Team

Professor Paddy Gray, University of Ulster

Mr. Erick Guerra, Institute for International Urban Development

Mr. John Driscoll, International Centre for Local and Regional Development

Dr. Michaela Keenan, University of Ulster

Ms. Ursula Mc Anulty, University of Ulster

Mr. Peter Shanks, University of Ulster

Maps by Justin Gleeson and Peter Foley, All Island Research Observatory (www.airo.ie) at The National Institute for Regional and Spatial Analysis, NUI Maynooth.

About the Authors

Paddy Gray is Professor of Housing at the University of Ulster. He is a Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) and is currently national President of the CIH for UK.

Erick Guerra is a Research Associate at the Institute for International Urban Development in Cambridge, Massachusetts. He is currently pursuing a Ph.D. in City and Regional Planning at the University of California Berkeley.

John Driscoll is the Director of the International Centre for Local and Regional Development and Vice President of the Institute for International Urban Development, Cambridge Massachusetts.

Ursula Mc Anulty is a Lecturer in Housing at the University of Ulster. She is a member of the Housing Studies Association Committee.

Peter Shanks is a Lecturer in Housing at the University of Ulster. He is a Corporate Member of the Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH)

Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| INTRODUCTION | 2 |
| BACKGROUND | 3 |
| COMMUNITY CHALLENGES | 7 |
| Physical Challenges | 7 |
| Socioeconomic Challenges | 7 |
| CRANMORE REGENERATION PROJECT | 9 |
| Managing the Regeneration | 10 |
| Early Regeneration Initiatives | 11 |
| Revised Regeneration Plan | 11 |
| Social Regeneration | 13 |
| Social Plan 2007 | 13 |
| Plan Implementation and 'Early Wins' | 15 |
| FOSTERING SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES | 16 |
| Increased Community Infrastructure and Community Participation | 16 |
| Promotion of Interagency Cooperation | 17 |
| SUCCESES AND CHALLENGES | 17 |
| APPENDIX | 20 |

Introduction

Cranmore housing estate, located in County Sligo, is the largest local authority housing estate in the northwest of the Republic of Ireland with almost 500 housing units. When construction began in the early 1970s, long waiting lists for housing created pressures for a 'quick-fix' approach. The priority was on the provision of local authority housing with little emphasis on community and recreational facilities.

While Cranmore is centrally located and only a short walk from Sligo Town Centre, according to Sligo's Borough and County Manager, Hubert Kearns, the estate has been physically and socially segregated from its surrounding context since it was built. It remained a largely inward looking estate with no centre or focus for the neighbourhood. Outside impressions of the estate as an area of disadvantage have compounded Cranmore's social segregation from the rest of Sligo. Furthermore, while its location should have advantages in terms of access to employment and services, it also means that the estate has not benefited from the recent suburban population growth.

Starting in 2004, residents and the Sligo Borough Council embarked on an ambitious process of social and physical regeneration for the area. There have been some 'early wins' and useful lessons. In particular, capacity building for residents, improved cooperation between statutory and non-statutory agencies, and engaged community participation have had noticeable and positive impacts.

The physical regeneration of the Estate has been a more complex challenge and illustrates the planning and financial challenges of integrating Cranmore into its surrounding context and harmonising central government and local development policies around physical development. In 2007, policy changes at the national level regarding large-scale regeneration initiatives led to a request to the Council to revise its 2006 framework plan that had been developed with significant community support, to better integrate Cranmore with the rest of Sligo, which has been identified as an important 'gateway' city under the National Spatial Strategy (NSS) 2002-2020.

The shift in emphasis in the physical regeneration strategy well into the process was considered a setback for those involved in developing the initial approach. Yet, even as the physical strategic plan looks at ways to physically regenerate Cranmore and integrate it into the city fabric, community groups, statutory agencies, and residents are moving forward social regeneration initiatives. An August 2009 article in IAF Europe Newsletter highlighted the more recent work in Cranmore as an example of

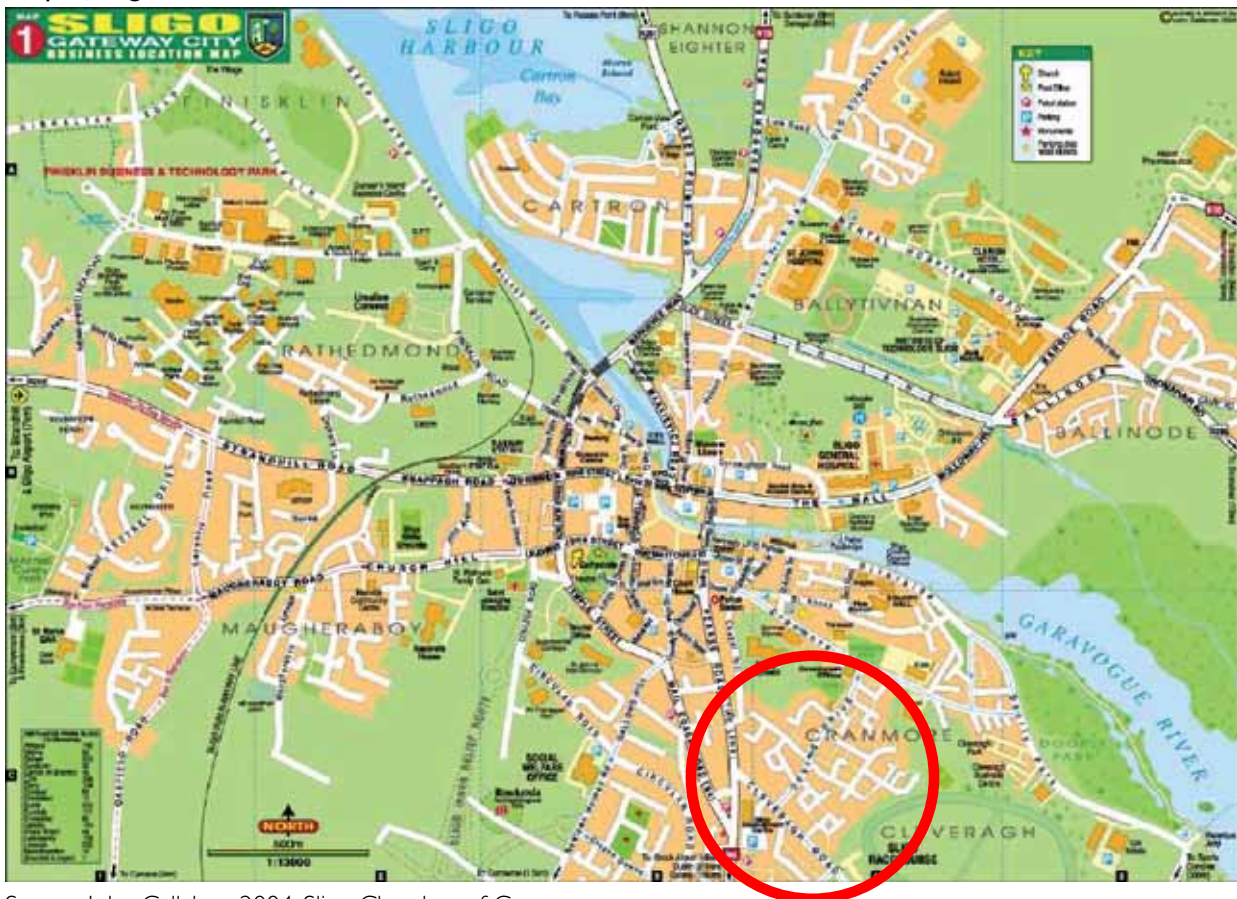
'building community by identifying assets, connecting them and mobilising them for the benefit of all. Residents quite simply refuse to be defined any longer by their deficiencies. Instead, they define themselves by their resources, both those that are visible and those yet to be uncovered, and insist that everyone else do the same.'

Background

Cranmore estate is located in the East Ward of Sligo City near the city centre. It was built in five phases between the early 1970s and 1985, and consists of 499 dwellings. Its central location and large size distinguish it among the six cases reviewed in this study. The estate itself covers around 45 acres (18.2 ha) and includes a considerable amount of underutilized open space, giving it a gross density of about 11 units per acre. Although its proximity to the city centre is an advantage for Cranmore, the estate has been physically and socially segregated from its surrounding context. It is bounded to the east by the Sligo Racecourse and undeveloped lands and to the west by the Mercy School; the estate has only two primary vehicular access points.

With its estimated 1,500 residents, Cranmore comprises approximately 30% of the population of the East Ward and just less than 10% of the population of the Sligo Gateway as a whole. The community therefore plays an important role in the cultural, social, and economic fabric of the city.

Map of Sligo



Source: John Callahan, 2004, Sligo Chamber of Commerce

Most of the homes in Cranmore are privately owned or held by the Sligo Borough Council. Just over half (55%) of all dwellings in the estate are in the social sector. Property prices are relatively low in Cranmore, partially as a result of reluctance of buyers to move into or invest in the area. (Cranmore Regeneration Project, Social Plan, 2007)

Table 1: Ownership of Housing Units in Cranmore Estate

| Owner | Number of housing units |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| Sligo Borough Council | 222 |
| Cluid Housing Association | 51 |
| Private | 226 |
| Total | 499 |

Source: Cranmore Regeneration Project, Social Plan, 2007

View of Cranmore Estate (Cranmore Regeneration Project, Social Plan, 2007)



Source: Cranmore Regeneration Project, Sligo Borough Council

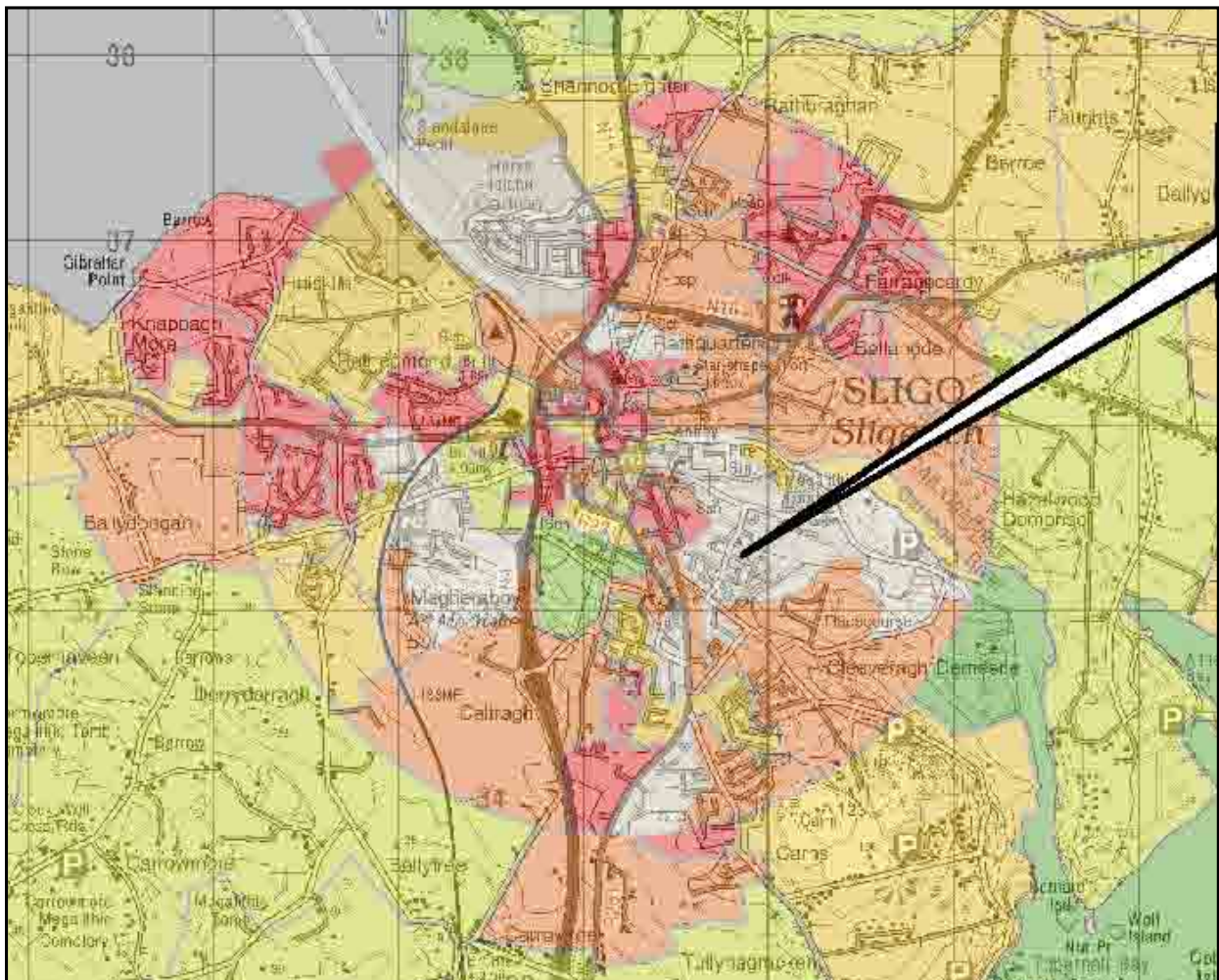
Despite the influx of migrants from outside of Ireland, in the ten year period from 1996 to 2006 the city of Sligo experienced a very low population increase. In the period from 2002 to 2006 the total population actually declined by 3.1%. The East Ward where Cranmore is located lost more than 10% of its residents between 1996 and 2006.

Table 2: Population Changes in Sligo Town at ED Level, 1996-2006

| Population | Year | | | |
|------------|--------|--------|--------|-----------|
| | 1996 | 2002 | 2006 | 1996-2006 |
| East Ward | 5,961 | 5,568 | 5,334 | -10.5% |
| North Ward | 5,041 | 5,745 | 5,346 | 6.1% |
| West Ward | 6,784 | 7,160 | 7,212 | 6.3% |
| Sligo City | 17,786 | 18,473 | 17,893 | 0.6% |

Source: Census 1996, 2002, 2006, Central Statistics Office

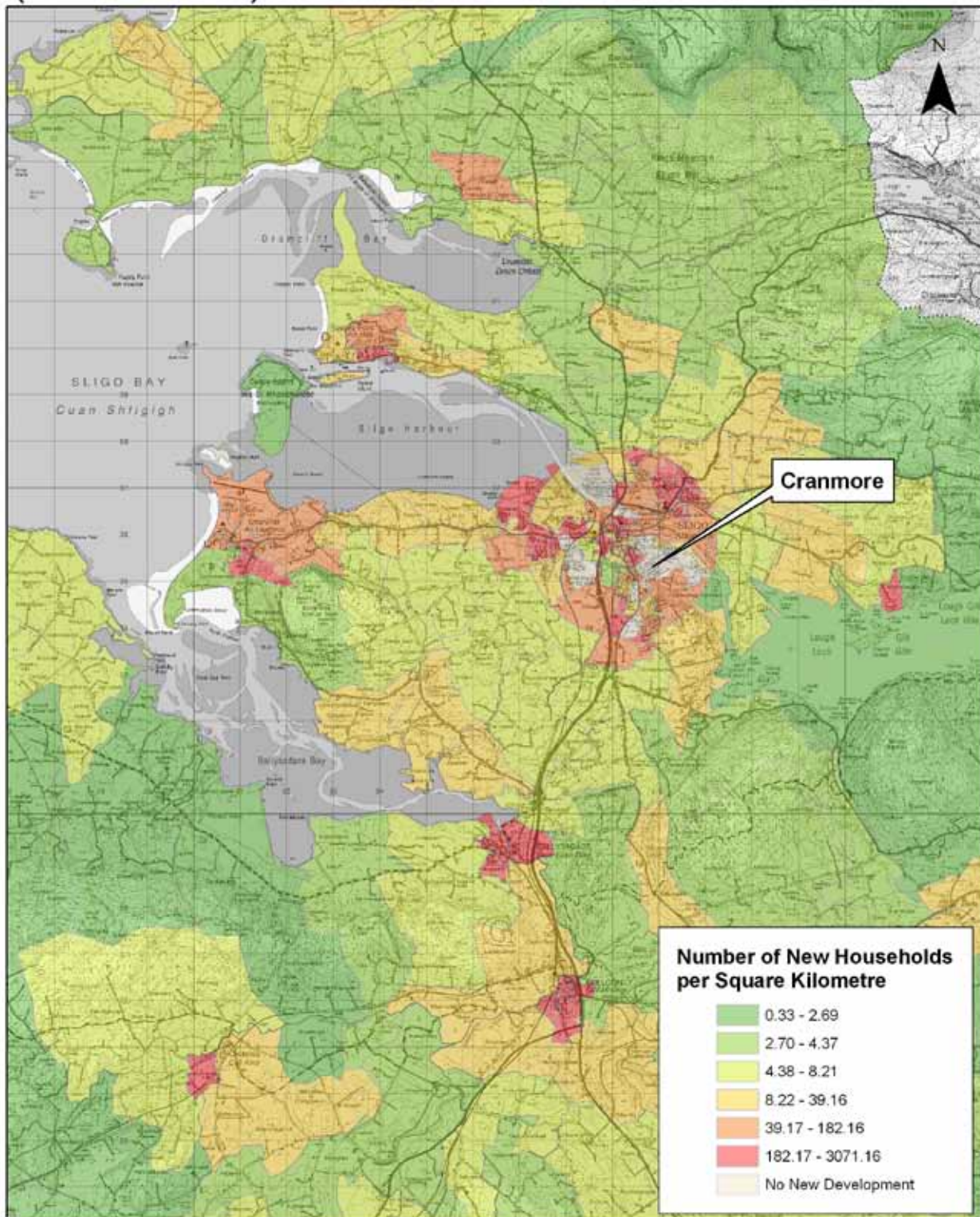
Map of Cranmore



Source: ICLRD, All Island Research Observatory, National Centre for Geocomputation, National Institute for Regional and Spatial Analysis

There is a stark contrast between urban and suburban growth rates; County Sligo grew by 9.6% from 1996 to 2006, while Sligo City only grew by 0.6%. The considerably higher population increases in the County can be attributed to growth beyond the city boundary (see map of residential construction in Sligo County). Tax incentives schemes also contributed to the growth of outlying areas such as Colloney, Ballasodare, Ballymote, Carney and Grange.

Residential Construction in Sligo County from 2000 to 2008



Source: GeoDirectory. Map by Peter Foley, NIRSA

Community Challenges

A combination of factors contributed to the decline in the social and physical environment in Cranmore and residents and the Council recognized that something had to be done to reverse this decline. Many of the community challenges are being addressed through a partnership approach between the Council and the community, which is beginning to show results. For example, the estate officer has recorded a significant decrease in complaints relating to nuisance and anti-social behaviour and abandoned and burnt out cars (see section on social regeneration).

Physical Challenges

Throughout the history of the estate, there have been several physical challenges facing Cranmore residents. Improperly constructed chimney systems leaked smoke into houses, an issue which eventually developed into a court case between residents and Sligo Borough Council over potential links between the smoke and respiratory problems faced by residents.ⁱ The entire process was highly divisive and left a very negative mark on relations between the local authority and the community. On a larger scale, until the introduction of smokeless fuels, a sulphuric smell pervaded parts of the estate where accumulated smoke from chimneys settled due to local topography.

Residents also expressed concerns about insufficient parking and the generally poor quality of design and layout of the scheme. Alleyways were also singled out as problem areas that facilitated drug dealing and anti-social behaviour. A number of void properties in the estate also became focal points for graffiti, vandalism, rubbish dumping and other anti-social behaviour.

The lack of access to recreational facilities, especially for teenagers, was a concern, although, as noted by a Council Official, "the issue is not so much about the absence of facilities but more about the levels of participation from the area, quality, accessibility and affordability. Targeted sports programming is key to encouraging participation in the area".ⁱⁱ

Socio-economic Challenges

In addition to physical issues, today the residents of Cranmore estate are also challenged by high levels of socio-economic deprivation. Half of the adult population receive welfare benefits,ⁱⁱⁱ one fifth of the adult population head single parent households and only 3% of the population have a third level qualification. Less than half of residents in Cranmore (46%) do not have a car or van.^{iv} Unemployment is relatively high and cases of second or third generation unemployment are common. Poor school attendance is also prevalent.

Crime is of particular concern in Cranmore. Three murders have taken place in Cranmore in recent years, generating negative local and national media coverage. In one case from August 2007, a member of the Traveller community was murdered outside his parents' home. According to one housing official, there has been increasing tension between Travellers and the rest of the community for several years. After the murder, some Travellers illegally occupied houses to be close to their parent, as the local allocation policy assigned homes for Travellers throughout the estate. Serious gun crimes have exacerbated the perception that the area is becoming increasingly violent and out of control.

ⁱ Sligo Borough Council successfully challenged the alleged linkage between the chimneys and asthma in court.

ⁱⁱ Cranmore has a football pitch, tennis and basketball courts, a playground and a youth drop in centre. It is also situated close to Cleveragh Regional Sports Centre and the Mercy Convent.

ⁱⁱⁱ Pension, lone parent family allowance, job seekers allowance, disability

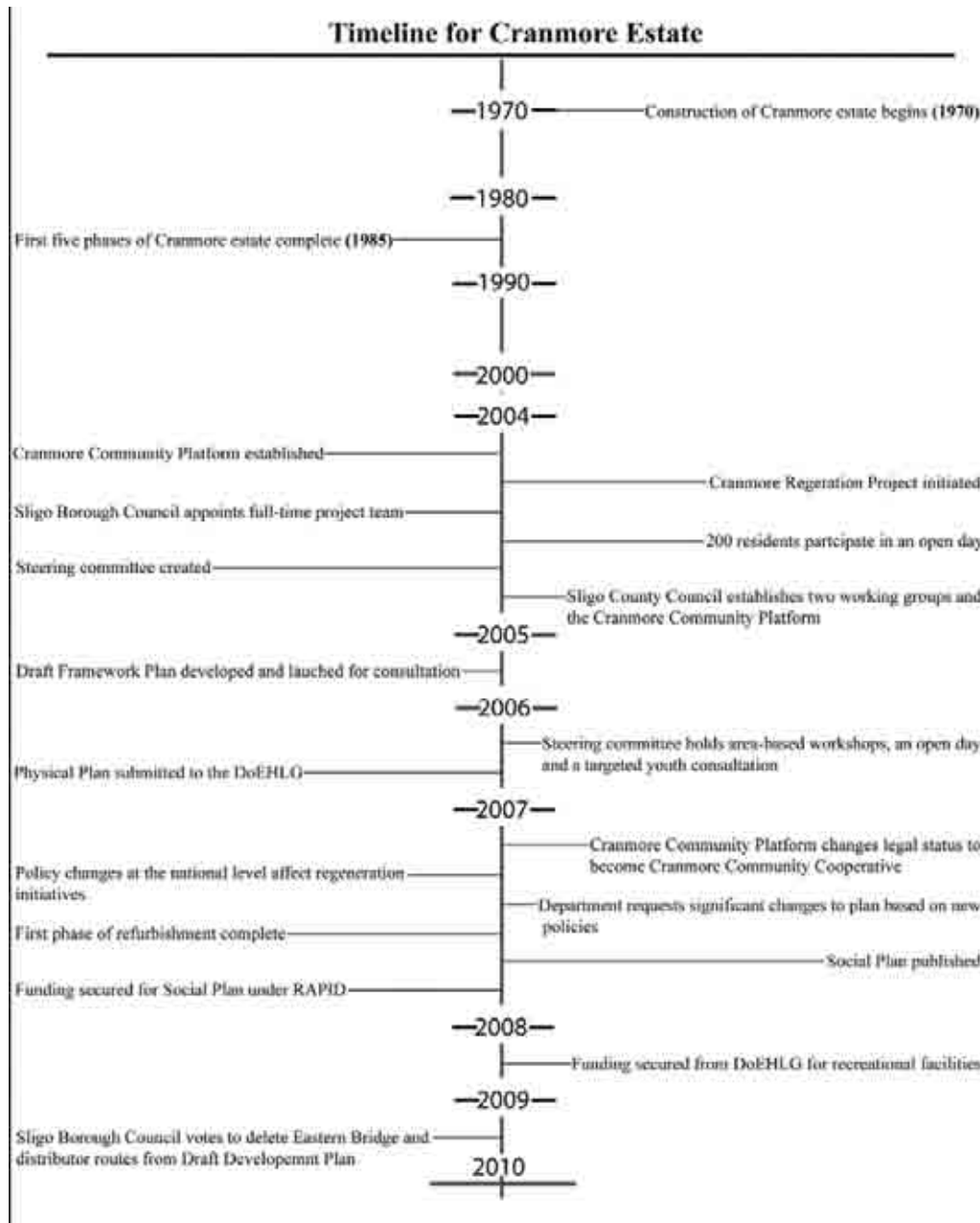
^{iv} 'Listening to the Voice of Residents in Cranmore: A Platform for Social Regeneration', Forkan, Prosoc Research, 2006.

One housing official referred to the problem of money lending and spiralling debt. Anti-social behaviour and general noise nuisance of young people on the estate are also a serious concern. In describing one particular street in the estate, one community worker stated that it is 'the toughest part of the toughest estate in town'.

Importantly, it should be noted that problems on the estate can be attributed to a small number of residents. One local housing worker commented that the estate's problems could be confined to 40-50 houses or approximately 9% of the population. According to the Chair of the Co-op and Residents Group, there are about 9 extended families occupying about 30 houses, who cause the vast majority of problems and that, 'some families are bullying others'.

Over the years, Cranmore estate's various problems have led to negative stereotyping of residents outside of the estate. Many residents feel that they suffer unfairly from prejudice and discrimination in the wider community, particularly in relation to the job market. One community worker noted that 'young people don't get called for interview if they put down their home addresses'. A representative of the Schools Completion Project, a project that includes 7 primary and 6 post primary schools stated that, 'some of the older kids say there is a stigma to living in Cranmore'.

Overcoming these negative perceptions and integrating them within the wider city development are the biggest challenges faced by those committed to regenerating the area. Both the Sligo Borough Council and Clúid Housing Association reported difficulties in getting prospective applicants to accept housing allocation in Cranmore (Cranmore Regeneration Project, Social Plan, 2007). In addition to social stereotyping, potential residents identified the size of the housing scheme and its poor-quality design as factors negatively impacting their interest in living in Cranmore.



Source: ICLRD

Cranmore regeneration project

In 2004, Sligo Borough Council embarked on the development of plans for the social and physical regeneration of Cranmore, with the establishment of the Cranmore Regeneration Project in 2004 as a result of a consensus between elected representatives, officials, local community representatives and public service providers who acknowledged that concerted action was needed to reverse the estate's on-going social, environmental, and physical decline.

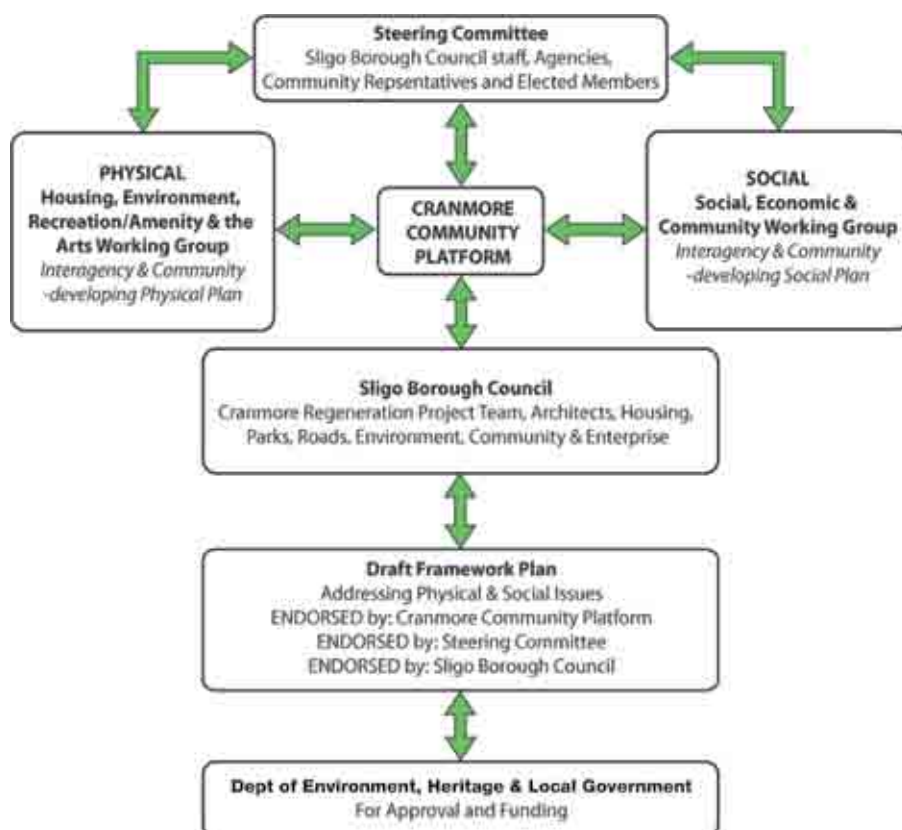
'Cranmore Regeneration Project aims to transform the social, economic and physical landscape of Cranmore through long term strategic planning and investment of resources.'

Sligo Borough Council

Managing the Regeneration

The Sligo Borough Council appointed a full-time core project team in September 2004 to oversee the project's planning, coordination and implementation with an interagency steering committee providing oversight and coordination. To achieve an integrated regeneration strategy and to encourage meaningful community participation, the Council also established an interagency and community partnership.

Cranmore Regeneration Project Structures



Source: Cranmore Regeneration Project, Sligo Borough Council.

The Council established two working groups, consisting of local service providers and community representatives, to work with the project team to develop the regeneration plans. One group focused on social regeneration and the other, with physical regeneration. The Council also established a community platform (now called the Cranmore Community Co-operative) in 2004 to represent the community on the steering and working groups. The group operates from an office within the estate and is responsible for driving a number of community based initiatives and articulating the voice of estate inhabitants in the regeneration process.

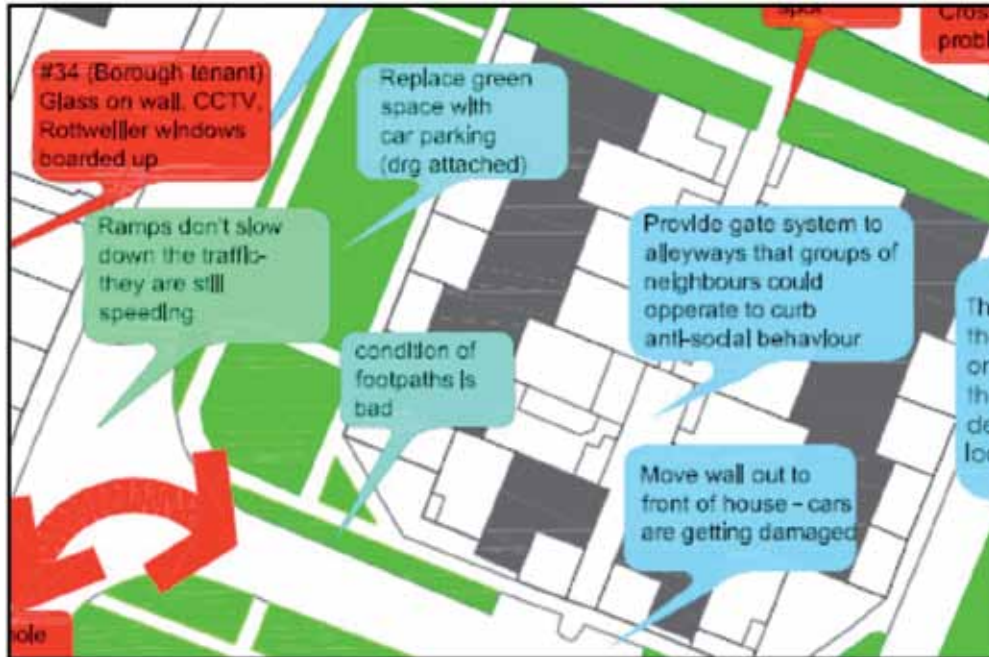
The Cranmore Project has remained part of the Sligo Borough Council structures and is guided by a steering group made up of elected representatives, community representatives and agencies operating locally. This is different from, for example, the Limerick Regeneration Agency which is a distinct legal entity established by ministerial order.⁹

⁹ In 2007, the DoEHLG suggested that a regeneration agency be established to manage the project. Later, this option was not pursued in light of the central government's evolving policy of reducing the number of agencies operated and supported by the public service.

Early Regeneration Initiatives

In October 2004, an open day gave over 200 residents the opportunity to identify issues and problems which they felt the plan should address and to propose ideas to improve the quality of life in Cranmore. A Draft Framework Plan was subsequently developed and launched for consultation in September 2005. In 2006, to further community participation, the regeneration project team held a series of area-based workshops, another open day, and a targeted youth consultation.

Sligo Community Connects



See Appendix for full map, Source: Sligo community meeting

The proposed physical regeneration plan called for the demolition of 124 units and replacement with 60 social/sheltered units and 70 affordable units; by replacing social rental units with affordable home sales, the net effect would be an increase in the estate's home ownership rates from 45% to 60%.

Council officials hoped that developing a balanced social mix with higher levels of home ownership would have a stabilising effect on the estate over time. This objective of increasing homeownership reflected a larger trend where over 60% of Sligo Borough Council tenants have indicated an interest in purchasing their homes from the Council (Social Plan, 2007).

Revised Regeneration Plan

According to those involved in developing the regeneration strategy, the Sligo Borough Council worked under the guidance of the DoEHLG to devise a plan that was practicable and could be implemented over a 7-10 year period. Early consultations among the Council and the community considered the need to improve Cranmore's connectivity to the Eastern road and the city centre via Mercy College lands. Later, according to Council officials, these more ambitious objectives were scaled back and phased with the June 2006 plan submitted to the DoEHLG by the Council as primarily a 'physical plan' to be followed later by a social plan.

In reviewing the submitted plan, the Department requested significant revisions to reflect the new Policy Framework for Regeneration of Local Authority Estates (Circular NI 1/07 of May 2007). The framework notes that regeneration involves major restructuring and should take into account broader planning objectives; and secondly, regeneration projects should incorporate social elements to address issues of deprivation, anti-social behaviour and even criminality. Based on these new policy guidelines, the DoEHLG agreed with the Council that the initial physical scope of the regeneration project should be broadened beyond the immediate boundaries of the estate to reflect the development of Sligo as a Gateway City.

According to a Council official, both the Council and the Department recognised that they were developing a regeneration approach that could act as a template to be used in other smaller authorities throughout the country. According to the Senior County Architect, the scale, location and nature of the proposed regeneration presented new challenges and issues which were outside the realm of those more traditional and well-known regeneration programmes such as Ballmun, Fatima Mansions and O'Devaney Gardens. For example, these three examples used public/private partnership models that depend on strong land values and markets that might not be available in a smaller city where alternative land for development may be more easily available to private investors.

The Sligo Borough Council commissioned a new Master Plan to promote a greater social mix and investment by the private sector and also reflect the advice of the DoEHLG to open up lands adjacent to Cranmore and the Eastern Bridge and Distributor Routes (See Map 2). This reinforces the development of Sligo as a gateway city as designated in the NSS, which notes that 'critical mass in the West and North West can be strengthened by developing Sligo as a gateway to capitalise on its strategic location and energise its associated hinterland'.^{vi}

For Sligo, both local and central governments are keen to reverse a declining population trend and increase the number of residents living, working and seeking entertainment within the city environs. The city has undergone major redevelopment over the past ten years including developing the river front area and retail offices. According to a 2006 DoEHLG/Forfás report, Implementing the NSS: Gateway Investment Priorities Study, the Gateway designation has led to increased private sector and public infrastructure investment in and around Sligo. Given its large size and central location, Cranmore estate plays a key role in delivering on the gateway potential of Sligo.

By their nature, regeneration strategies are complex in their delivery and need the support of a wide range of stakeholders. The 2006 Framework Plan focussed on an implementation period of 7-10 years and tried to minimise dependence on the support of external stakeholders such as adjacent landowners. The new brief for the physical Master Plan is much broader in scope and will examine how the regeneration of Cranmore relates to the development of Sligo as a Gateway City, opening up lands to the east and tying into plans for new transport infrastructure. This represents a much more complex challenge to deliver.

For example, in July 2009, complications arose when the Borough Council voted to delete the specific objective reference to the Eastern Bridge and distributor routes from the new Draft

^{vi} Building up the national role and scale of Sligo requires the development of a planning, land use and transportation framework' (DoEHLG, 2002, p.45).

Development Plan, despite the recent confirmation of its planning permission from An Bord Pleanála, the Planning Appeals Board. This presents the Cranmore Regeneration with a major problem as the parameters of the project as envisaged by the DoEHLG are clearly at odds with current draft development plan for the area. However, measures are under way to resolve this matter to facilitate delivery of the wider Master Plan objectives.

The Cranmore Case study illustrates a crucial difficulty faced by many regeneration initiatives, namely,

- (a) defining the shorter-term brief for the physical regeneration to meet the needs of the local community in and around the estate and
- (b) providing scope in the longer-term to strengthen its city and gateway status.

Social Regeneration

A 2006 community survey found that three-quarters of local residents were dissatisfied with the way that Sligo Borough Council dealt with anti-social behaviour.^{vii} Although a number of community representatives have been extremely active in civic leadership over the years, in 2006, community participation was low and could be described at best as ad hoc or issue-based, usually involving single interest groups (Draft Framework Plan, 2006).

Since the 2006 survey, Sligo Borough Council developed a policy to deal with anti-social behaviour and appointed a housing investigations officer. This, according to a council official, coupled with the introduction of an extensive CCTV system in 2008 and the appointment of community wardens has resulted in a significant reduction in the incidents of anti-social behaviour in the estate. The Council also noted that the number of complaints to the Estate Office in relation to anti-social and nuisance behaviour decreased between 2008 and 2009. The Gardai have also reported a decrease in the number of reports of serious crime over the past two years.

During the last three years, significant progress has been made by the Community Co-operative and there has been a significant increase in local volunteerism in relation to youth activities, local fundraising, and community pride events and residents' associations. Currently there are 18 voluntary groups operating in the area.

Social Plan 2007

The Cranmore Regeneration Project Social Plan, published in September 2007, built on the consultations of the 2005 Draft Framework and complemented the physical plans with an emphasis on residents' social concerns. The Social Plan aimed to improve the quality of life in the Cranmore estate through the better coordination of services, community development, and integrated planning. The long-term goal was to achieve lasting improvement through increased employment, education and training opportunities, improved local amenities, and greater coordination and co-operation amongst public organisations, residents, and community and voluntary bodies active in the area.

^{vii} Listening to the Voice of Residents in Cranmore: A platform for Social Regeneration', Forkan, Prosoc Research, 2006

The Social Plan contained eight thematic areas and provided a series of objectives and actions, details of the responsible agencies, required resources, and projected impacts of action. The thematic areas were:

- (1) Community Development, Arts and Culture;
- (2) Employment and Economic Development;
- (3) Education and Training;
- (4) Housing and Estate Management;
- (5) Crime and Policing;
- (6) Family Supports;
- (7) Opportunities; and
- (8) Sports and Recreation.

Funding was secured under the Revitalising Areas through Planning, Investment, and Development (RAPID) programme to employ a development worker for two years to establish and support the Community Platform and community development initiatives as part of the Regeneration Project.^{viii} The Regeneration Project successfully applied for funding from the Sustaining Communities Fund^{ix} to implement a number of important elements of the Social Plan. The Council notes that these programmes are having a significant impact on the estate including: the Community Wardens Service, Youth Active Citizenship Programme, the community co-operatives work on building a positive identity, an outreach worker (Drug and Alcohol Programme) and Tenancy Support programme. Additionally, the advancement of the demolition of 74 units has greatly transformed the estate physically and environmentally.

According to the Chair of the Community Co-op and Residents Group, community members are working to improve residents' self esteem and the area's image. Local perceptions are beginning to change,

'the image out there in the outside is very different than the one on the inside. There is a fantastic community spirit and we look after each others' families and we have street clean-ups. Teenagers look out for each other and neighbours look after each other'.

Local initiatives and a festival run by the Co-op and Residents' Group encourage children from different backgrounds to work and play together. Traveller children are fully integrated in these activities.

There are also two positive trends which need to be acknowledged. There has been an increase in participation in community and voluntary activities such as residents' associations, best kept garden competitions, community pride events such as festivals and parades, community training such as computer classes, gardening etc and participation in general policy making. Additionally, the

^{viii} This funding was from the Dormant Accounts Fund and was secured with the assistance of the RAPID co-ordinator. The community development worker was employed by Sligo Borough Council as part of the Regeneration Team. Since then the Community Co-op has secured funding under the Peace II programme to employ the Community Development Worker directly.

^{ix} Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government.

estate officer has recorded a significant decrease in complaints relating to nuisance and anti-social behaviour, abandoned and burnt out cars, and illegal and stray dogs.

The Community Co-op has gained international recognition for their Asset Based Community Development approach which involves focusing on the skills rather than the deficiencies in the community. It involves activating people in relation to issues that concern them and connecting them to one another. This is one of the major initiatives which have contributed toward the creation of a sustainable community in Cranmore as it operates on the principle that everyone has something to contribute. See Appendix I for an article published in the IAF August 2009 Europe Journal.

Plan Implementation and ‘Early Wins’

Despite revision of the Master Plan, many issues identified during the consultation exercise have been prioritised as ‘early wins’. These successes are important to build confidence and a working partnership with the community, particularly in light of frustration arising from revisions to the physical regeneration plans. These include a pilot refurbishment project, a playground, Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) police monitoring, and a central heating strategy.^x

Cranmore Community Playground

During the consultation exercise, the community identified a new children’s playground as essential to the well-being of children in the local area. The RAPID Playground Scheme, RAPID Local Authority Housing Enhancement Scheme, Sligo Borough Council, and Groundwork Northern Ireland funded the project. ‘Acorn Park’ playground was opened in September 2006 and provides a safe play area for children.

CCTV (Closed Circuit Television)

Through the RAPID programme, Sligo Borough Council secured funding to provide CCTV in Cranmore as part of its estate management strategy. The scheme aimed to improve community safety and to assist in the prevention and reduction of crime and antisocial behaviour. Residents have generally been positive about the cameras. Crime and antisocial behaviour have dropped in affected areas. Although crime still occurs on the estate, the cameras have improved public safety.

Recreational Facilities

Plans have been made and financing secured to develop the ‘Mound Area’, an open space on the south side. On the north side, there are plans for a development site on the main road that will accommodate permanent estate offices, a community facility, commercial space, and some houses. One local worker in the area stated, ‘Co-operation between agencies working in the area has never been better although nothing is perfect. It is important to do a little bit at a time’.

Funding of €3 million was also approved by the DoEHLG in 2008 for the development of high quality recreational facilities as part of the Cleveragh Park project, which is part of the Cranmore Regeneration Area. However, because of the July 2009 decision by the Borough Councillors to remove the Eastern Bridge and distributor routes from the development plan, Sligo Borough Council has been unable to appoint the contractors for the project.

^x Listening to the Voice of Residents in Cranmore: A platform for Social Regeneration’, Forkan, Prosoc Research, 2006

Refurbishment

The DoEHLG recognised that much work had gone into the development of the 2006 Draft Framework Plan and accepted that some of the proposals were relevant for a future regeneration strategy for Cranmore. This included the demolition of an area in the centre of Cranmore for use as a redevelopment site. The area consisted of 67 dwellings, 29 of which were privately owned. Sligo Borough Council was responsible for working with the residents living in the area to negotiate re-housing and purchasing options. The area has since been vacated and an extensive demolition programme is underway.

In 2007, the first phase of the pilot refurbishment programme was completed and saw the rehabilitation of thirteen boarded-up houses and upgrading of the immediate neighbourhood, including landscaping, new boundary wall treatments, and removal of alleyways. However, changes to the plan slowed down the process of rebuilding other parts of the estate and the recent unexpected and rapid decline in the housing markets has further delayed conversions of empty flats to private ownership housing. Currently many of the units designated for conversion remain boarded up.

Fostering Sustainable Communities

The process of consulting with residents and involving the community in developing the social and physical regeneration plans was as important as the plans themselves. It resulted in a stronger community infrastructure, increased community participation, and the promotion of inter-agency co-operation. It also helped foster a general sense of community among residents.

Increased Community Infrastructure and Community Participation

The 2007 Social Plan does not focus on the deficiencies in the community. According to a council official, it “recognises the history and tradition of community activity and seeks to build on the strengths of the past whilst identifying mechanisms for dealing with emerging issues.”

In response to a prevailing lack of community infrastructure and community participation as a problem in Cranmore, the Cranmore Community Platform, established in 2004, provided local residents with a vehicle for voicing their concerns. Run by local residents for local residents, community ownership was at the core of its foundation. It consisted of representatives from the different areas of Cranmore as well as representatives from various interest groups, including youth, people with disabilities, and resident groups. These representatives, who are elected by the local community, sit on all regeneration working groups and on the Steering Committee. They provide a voice for residents, publish a community newsletter, and are actively involved in the Cranmore Regeneration Project.

Cranmore Regeneration Project Social Plan



Source: Cranmore Regeneration Project

In January 2007, Cranmore Community Platform changed its legal status to become an established cooperative, Cranmore Community Cooperative. Many members of Cranmore Community Cooperative have attended capacity-building training events to learn to take on new roles and responsibilities. The group's activities reflect the local community's desire to take ownership of local issues and help shape the regeneration of Cranmore.

Promotion of Inter-agency Cooperation

A multi-agency approach was required given the range of agencies involved in both the planning and the implementation. The Regeneration Project Team worked closely with several Council departments including the Housing, Parks, Planning, and Roads Departments in Sligo Borough Council, and also with the Community, Enterprise and the Arts Department of Sligo County Council. The social working group has been instrumental in promoting community safety through inter-agency co-operation between local Gardai, the Health and Safety Executive, Emergency Services, Sligo Borough Council, and local community representatives. The Cranmore Community Co-operative has also provided an important mechanism for interaction between residents and the agencies – local and otherwise – responsible for delivering services that impact the community (Galligan, 2008). This process, which necessitated networking between various agencies and the local community, resulted in improved coordination and cooperation on the ground.

Successes and Challenges

The DoEHLG (2007:1) has defined sustainable communities as:

...places where people want to live and work, now and in the future. They meet the diverse needs of existing and future residents, are sensitive to their environment, and can contribute to a high quality of life. They are safe and inclusive, well planned, built and run, and offer equality of opportunity and good services for all.

Not unlike many other housing estates which were built in an era where the emphasis was on providing much needed social housing units rather than building community, Cranmore became a marginalised social housing estate characterised by social and spatial segregation relative to the wider area. It has also had to deal with serious crime and anti-social behaviour activities. Such deep-seated problems are not easy to overcome to meet the definition of a sustainable community and require sustained efforts over a longer-period of time than generally anticipated.

Nonetheless, in the case of Cranmore, through cross-cutting community and statutory agency involvement, progress has been made. The process itself has strengthened agency and community involvement as well as created gains in policing, social activities and sense of pride in the estate. Creating the infrastructure for community participation through the Cranmore Regeneration Project, including the Cranmore Community Cooperative, was critical to improving community conditions. Remaining areas that require additional attention include:

- Promoting intercultural understanding.
- Community representatives feel that programmes should be created that promote intercultural understanding and integration. Anti-social, racist, and prejudicial behaviours are still areas of concern for community representatives and it is felt that there is a lack of understanding regarding diversity in the area.

- Continuing to reach out and engage marginalized groups. Despite increased community involvement, there is still difficulty in engaging marginalized residents.
- Addressing long-standing negative images of Cranmore within the larger community. This will also be important to encouraging as a more socially mixed community with higher levels of owner-occupied homes.
- Working to deliver tangible short-term and long-term results. There is still a sense of frustration in the area. One resident of 34 years stated that, 'over the years there has been huge consultation and people have been brought in to consult on different things. However, lots of recommendations were made with nothing being done'.

From the community's perspective, it is understandable that the request of the DoEHLG's to revise the initial Community Master Plan was somewhat unexpected and a bit disheartening, given the time and dedication put into the development of the original Master Plan. While the shift from a localised housing project to major planning project has its merits, the revisions to the community-led plan 'deflated' some of the positive momentum that had been generated. It also slowed the delivery of important interventions. Residents lost confidence and trust in the regeneration process, and agencies are still working to regain it. The 2007 Social Plan recognised that residents know their neighbourhoods best and have a lot to contribute to the planning process.

The challenges of developing a regeneration strategy in a small urban centre such as Sligo highlight that there is no 'one-fix' solution to improve a neighbourhood. The initial shaping and subsequent re-shaping of the project illustrates how standardised approaches do not always work and must be tailored to local conditions.

The shift in the physical scope of the Cranmore project also illustrates the trade-offs between 'inward and outward regeneration strategies'. Focusing regeneration within the boundaries of the estate can be easier to deliver given land ownership and management control. Yet, good practice has shown the need to connect housing estates into the wider city and regional contexts if the objective is to promote social and economic mobility.

The Cranmore project has shown the importance of sequencing physical interventions; ranging from those that can be achieved more easily within the estate or its immediate surroundings, to interventions that have longer-term strategic impacts and require more complex structuring of partnerships and financing. 'Early win' projects such as building parks and renovating homes can go a long way to alleviate community fears and regain trust and interest during a lengthy master planning process. One local worker stated, 'Sometimes, smaller delivery on social issues is better than putting up new buildings'.

In terms of project management, there were concerns that the local authority, with its long engagement on the issue, could be sidelined if the regeneration programme was to be delivered by a new non-statutory agency. This kind of tension between local and outside authorities is not unique to Cranmore. Regeneration agencies are usually under pressure to deliver results and cut through red tape, which can sometimes disrupt the participatory process from a local perspective. However, taking time to gain consensus usually results in valuable longer-term benefits.

Observing the Cranmore regeneration project over time offers insights on the challenges and merits of maintaining local management control. Although a multi-faceted, multi-agency approach is necessary to improve conditions at Cranmore, stakeholders have noted the importance of action-

oriented approaches. One resident commented that, 'the only one that has stuck is RAPID; it has given people that have an interest a kick start'. Another resident stated that the regeneration office has become more approachable, which 'was not always the case'.

'The reality in Cranmore is that citizens are stepping into their power and the local authority are also stepping up and taking responsibility for their part in the co-production of a sustainable neighbourhood.'

IAF Europe Newsletter, August, 2009

According to a Council official, the programmes rolled out under the Social Regeneration Plan over the past two years have had a significant impact on the estate including a significant increase in participation in community and voluntary activities such as residents' associations, best kept garden competitions, community pride events such as festivals and parades, community training such as computer classes, gardening and general policy making.

The social dimension of the Cranmore regeneration programme has arguably been much greater to date than that of the physical regeneration. Given the recent economic downturn and funding limitations for physical improvements, it will be important to sustain the social regeneration work over the long-term.

A combination of sustained inter-agency co-operation and community empowerment, the timely and continued introduction of social, economic and physical projects that improve conditions on the ground, and offering opportunities to link Cranmore residents into the larger Sligo regional economy are ambitious undertakings, but they have a strong potential to positively impact the sustainability of the community over time.

Appendix

- Article of Regenerating From Inside Out
- Map from community consultation day

Regenerating From Inside Out in Cranmore, Sligo

Regeneration of the area has created much change in Cranmore in Sligo, Ireland. The local residents who form the Cranmore Cooperative recognised early on in the process that community participation and input was central to Cranmore's successful regeneration. They focused on building a strong relationship with the Cranmore Regeneration Team of Sligo Borough Council, which has resulted in a strong community partnership developed through intentional relationship building that uses the ABCD approach.

Building community in Cranmore has been a process of identifying assets, connecting them and mobilising them for the benefit of all. Residents quite simply refuse to be defined any longer by their deficiencies. Instead, they define themselves by their resources, both those that are visible and those yet to be uncovered, and insist that everyone else do the same.

During the conference, the Co-op shared stories of citizen-driven social and economic regeneration, including a story of an active citizen who began to connect isolated women by establishing a savings scheme (micro-finance scheme), which has generated incredible social capital.

This story is not just about better partnership between a regeneration authority and local residents – it is about the relocation of authority with regard to community building. This community understands that in the process of building a sustainable community, there are certain things only citizens can do; that professionals are simply just not equipped to do.

Their story reminds us that only citizens can produce real care, which in essence is the freely given gift of the heart from one person to another. Agencies produce services and programmes, and while agencies are filled with caring individuals, their systemic nature focuses on service production. Only when citizens and agencies work in real partnership that mutually respects the intrinsic value of each, does real community building occur.

Peter Block (*The Structure of Belonging*, 2007) might say that these citizens are changing the conversation from one that speaks about regeneration to one of 'community restoration' as defined by the citizens themselves. Regeneration in Europe and North America tends at best to be an 'outside in' affair led by professionals, with some attempts at consultation with residents about how best the 'outside in' intervention should be done, while community restoration is an inside-out conversation. Block reminds us that when the conversation changes, so does reality.

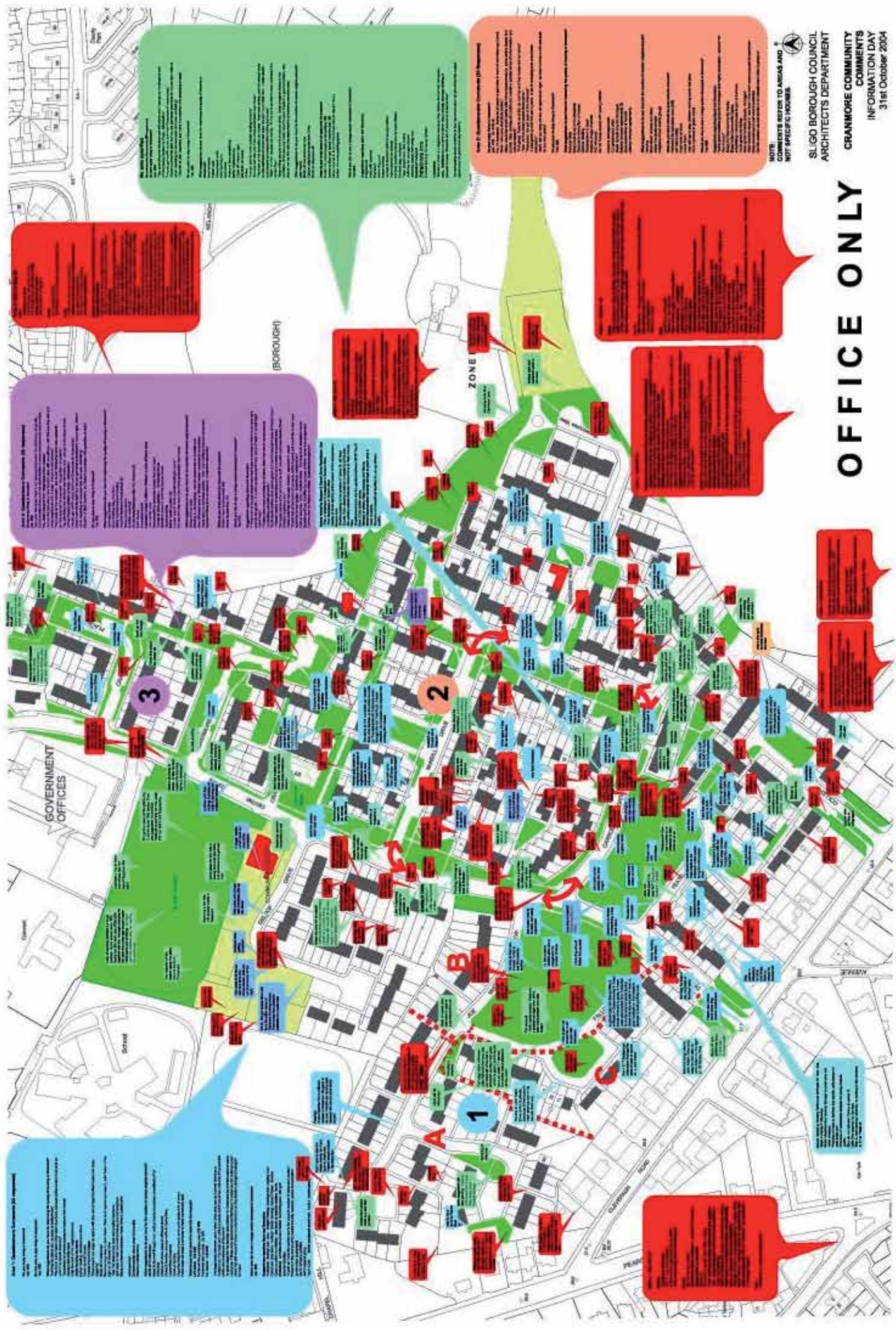
The reality in Cranmore is that citizens are stepping into their power and the local authority are also stepping up and taking responsibility for their part in the co-production of a sustainable neighbourhood. Given that citizens are an essential ingredient in baking a successful community cake, it is worthwhile highlighting the number of citizens that are engaged in community building in Cranmore, and the diversity of that engagement.

This is a genuine community – a neighbourhood where no-one is not needed and everyone is invited to contribute. The constant commitment by the ABCD initiating group (made up of residents with the support of one paid organiser) to facilitate door to door learning conversations that explore what each person cares enough about to act for change is remarkable and has created more bridging social capital than any other participatory or social inclusion intervention that community has ever seen before.

The initiating group uses these learning conversations to support connections across various interest groups, working with them to identify organising issues that bring the entire neighbourhood together. They then map out the internal assets that they have identified and when necessary, they leverage the external assets required. This has meant that they have built real collective power for change within Cranmore; from the ground up.

COMMENTS FROM CRANMORE COMMUNITY

(FROM THE FESTIVAL CONSULTATION DAY, VISITS AND RESIDENTS ASSOCIATIONS)



NOTE:
COMMENTS REFER TO AREAS AND NOT SPECIFIC HOUSES.

SLIGO BOROUGH COUNCIL
ARCHITECTS DEPARTMENT

CRANMORE COMMUNITY
COMMENTS
INFORMATION DAY
31st October 2004

OFFICE ONLY

References

- Acheson, N. (2004). *Two paths, one purpose: Voluntary action in Ireland, North and South: A report to the Royal Irish Academy's Third Sector Research Programme*. Dublin, Ireland: Royal Irish Academy, Institute of Public Administration.
- Anderson, R., Musterd, S., Galster, G., & Kaupinen, T. (2007). What mix matters? Exploring the relationship between individual's incomes and different measures of their neighbourhood context. *Housing Studies*, 22(5), 637-660.
- Bailey, N., Haworth, A., Manzi, T., & Roberts, M. (2007). *Creating and sustaining mixed income communities in Scotland: a good practice guide*. Coventry/York. Chartered Institute of Housing/Joseph Rowntree Foundation.
- Bartley, B., & Kitchin, R. (Eds) (2007). *Understanding contemporary Ireland*. Sidmouth, England: Pluto Press.
- Berube, A. (2005). *Mixed communities in England: A US Perspective on Evidence and Policy Prospects*. York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation.
- Berube, A. (2005). *Transatlantic perspectives on mixed communities*. York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation.
- Byrne, J. (2007). *Review of interfaces within the city of Derry*. Belfast, Northern Ireland: Institute for Conflict Research.
- Cairns, E., Van Til, J., & Williamson, A. (2004). *Social capital, collectivism-individualism and community background in Northern Ireland*. Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister, Belfast
- Cosgrove, S. (2005). *Rapid Programme in Focus: A Study of Community Participation in the RAPID programme*. Dublin: Ireland. Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Area Development Management 2005)
- Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government / Forfas (2007). *Implementing the NSS: Gateway Investment Priorities Study Final Report*
- Grainger, P. (2007). *Sustainable Communities: A Case Study from India*, (York April 11th-13th, 2007) Northumbria University, School of the Built Environment Housing Studies Spring Conference: Housing and Sustainability
- Gray, P. (2008). Housing; Challenging Times. *Chartered Institute of Housing National Journal*, 28.
- Green, G., Grimsley, M., & Stafford, B. (2005). *The dynamics of neighbourhood sustainability*. York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation
- Hogan, P and O'Mahoney J(2005). *Lessons from Large-Scale Housing Schemes and SDZs* The National Housing Conference. (South Dublin Country Council)
- Irish Council for Social Housing. (2008). *Working for Good Governance*. Dublin: Irish Council for Social Housing
- Jarman, N. (2005). *No Longer a Problem? Sectarian Violence in Northern Ireland*. Belfast:

- Kearns, A. & Mason, P. (2007). Mixed tenure communities and neighbourhood quality. *Housing Studies*, 22(5), 661-691.
- Minton, A. (2002). *Building balanced communities. The US and UK compared*. London: RICS
- Monk, S., Crook, T., Lister, D., Rowley, S., Short, C., & Whitehead, C. (2005). *Land and finance for affordable housing: The complementary roles of social housing grant and the provision of affordable housing through the planning system*. York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation
- Monk, S., Crook, T., Lister, D., Lovatt, R., Ni Luanaigh, A., & Rowley, S. (2006). *Delivering affordable housing through Section 106: Outputs and outcomes*. York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation
- Murtagh, B., & Cush, C. (1997). *From the margins to the mainstream*. Top of the Hill (2010)
- Murtagh, B. (2004) *Collaboration, Equality and Land-use Planning*, *Planning theory & practice*. 5(4), pp453-469
- Murtagh, B. (2002). Research Update: Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey: *Social Activity Interaction Northern Ireland*, Number 10
- Murtagh, B., Graham B., & Shirlow, P. (2008). *Authenticity and stakeholder planning in the segregated city*. *Progress in Planning*, 69(2) pp41–92
- Norris, M., & Redmond, D. (Ed) (2007). *Housing contemporary Ireland: Policy, society and shelter*. Dordrecht: Springer
- Peace and Place. (2006). *A symposium exploring peace in the home community and the Urban environment*. Centre for Peace Studies, University of Tromso CPS, Working Paper No. 9, 2006
- Roberts, P. (2000). *Sustainable Communities and Housing*. Housing Studies Association Conference. York: April 2000
- Roberts, P. (2007). *Delivering Egan: Implementing the review and creating sustainable communities*. SURGE Research Seminar, Coventry.
- Robinson, D. (2004). *Communities and cohesion: What's housing got to do with it?*. Housing Studies Association Spring Conference. Sheffield Hallam University
- Rowlands, R.; Murie, A.; & Tice, A. (2006). *More than Tenure Mix: Developer and Purchaser Attitudes to New Housing Estates*. Joseph Rowntree Foundation/Chartered Institute of Housing
- Tunstall, R. & Fenton, A. (2006). *In the mix: A review of mixed income, mixed tenure and mixed communities*. London: English Partnerships/Joseph Rowntree Foundation/Housing Corporation
- Watson, J. (2006). *Understanding planning gain: What works?* York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation.
- Williamson, L. (2007). Economic and Social Data Service: *Guide to data sources for Northern Ireland*, I.I.

