



SLIGO
COUNTY COUNCIL
COMHAIRLE CHONTAE SHLIGIGH



Sligo City Centre Public Realm Enhancement Project

Part VIII Report

in accordance with Article 83 Local
Government (Planning and
Development) Regulations, 2001 (as
amended)

Sligo.

3 December 2020

1. Introduction

Sligo County Council intends to enhance a number of key urban streets within the town centre. These changes seek to rebalance Sligo's urban core by putting the pedestrian experience first, whilst introducing high quality materials and creating adaptable streets.

This scheme, known as the Sligo City Centre Public Realm Enhancement Project (SCPREP) comprises a series of streets within the historic core of the town: Stephen Street, Holborn Street, Rockwood Parade, Tobergal Lane and Water Lane. Within these streets, there are a large number of local businesses, public facilities and landmarks. These elements add unique value and character that should be promoted alongside the conservation of Sligo's heritage assets.

This enhancement project follows on from the Sligo Public Realm Action Plan produced in 2018 which set out the future approach to the streets and spaces of Sligo's town centre, establishing a vision and guiding principles to ensure consistency in design.

The SCPREP will build upon the success of recent and proposed regeneration schemes in Sligo and will transform the town centre into a pedestrian focused place where people want to spend time and enjoy themselves.

The project will be a major catalyst in creating a vibrant town centre that actively promotes Sligo as a destination to its residents, businesses and visitors.

2. Description of the proposed development

The proposed works include the following:

Stephen Street

1. Provide wider footpaths for a better pedestrian experience;
2. Remove bollards and street clutter to provide showcase seating and stepped plaza;
3. Celebrate heritage, architecture and the Yeats Statue with seating and planting;
4. Introduce trees and planting for local wellbeing and biodiversity enhancement;
5. Introduce high quality granite paving and street furniture.

Holborn Street

1. Provide wider footpaths where possible;
2. Remove overhead wires;
3. Introduce high quality concrete paving to footpaths and loading bay;
4. Create the opportunity for spill-out spaces for local businesses.

Rockwood Parade

1. Create riverside pedestrian promenade with high quality granite paving;
2. Focus on riverside activation with feature seating, lighting and highlighting cultural interpretation;
3. Protect and conserve (where possible) existing trees whilst enhancing their setting;
4. Define forecourt activity space for local businesses to engage, e.g. tables and chairs.

Tobergal and Water Lane

1. Introduce planting and feature seating to Tobergal Lane;
2. Remove bollards and street clutter to improve pedestrian experience;
3. Introduce high quality granite paving to footpaths with opportunity for cultural interpretation;
4. Enhance local dining experience with over-head lighting and by defining activity space.

3. Development plan policy

Sligo County Council is committed to an urban strategy that aims to enhance the quality of its urban core, as contained in the Sligo and Environs Development Plan 2010-2016 (as currently incorporated into the Sligo County Development Plan 2017-2023 (CDP)).

The relevant objectives in the CDP are as follows:

P-UD-16 All new streets shall be designed in accordance with the provisions of the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (DoE, DTTAS, 2013).

The relevant objectives in the SEDP are as follows:

GP-CC-7 Ensure that refurbishment and redevelopment proposals contribute to the environmental quality and are in keeping with the character of the city centre.

P-CC-CC-1 Promote the improvement of the public realm in the Commercial Core area.

P-CC-PR-1 Promote the development of a pedestrian-friendly city centre through a programme of pedestrianisation, pavement widening and traffic calming.

P-CC-PR-2 Improve the public realm in the city centre by requiring that overhead wires be placed underground, by improving street lighting, paving, landscaping, introducing street furniture and placing public art objects.

P-CC-PR-3 Ensure that street furniture is sympathetic with its historic surroundings as part of a consistent approach for each of the various character areas of the city centre.

P-CC-PR-4 Encourage the “greening” of the city centre by planting trees/flowers and by introducing planter boxes at appropriate locations.

O-BH-6 Introduce a uniform type of fitting for street lighting throughout the city centre, which is sympathetic with the historic surroundings.

Within this context, the works as described in section 2 of this report are in accordance with the development plan policy.

4. Sligo Public Realm Plan

In February 2018, Sligo County Council commissioned international design consultancy Building Design Partnership (BDP) to prepare a public realm plan (PRP) for Sligo. The preparation of such a Plan was an objective of the County Development Plan 2017-2023.

The aim of the Plan is to propose improvements to Sligo's public spaces, including streets and car parks and to enhance the town as an attractive place in which to live, work and visit. It also proposes a palette of materials to be used on the town's streets over the coming years to ensure consistency and improve the look of public spaces.

The Plan's vision is to enhance the image and setting of Sligo through the enhancement of its streets and spaces, conservation of its built heritage, encouraging people to explore, businesses to flourish and creating a vibrant street scene.

As part of the PRP process, BDP engaged with stakeholders and key interest groups to ensure that the people of Sligo have an input into the emerging Plan.

The Plan has proposed a number of initiatives around the city core which embody its vision and the principles of good urban design and place making. The rejuvenation of O'Connell Street and the creation of the new Cultural Plaza at Stephen Street car park were the first proposals from the plan to be implemented. The Sligo City Centre Public Realm Enhancement Project will follow and is expected to stimulate further investment and interest in Sligo.

5. Access & car parking

All existing vehicular and pedestrian access points have been retained across the scheme. Care has been taken to ensure the movements of emergency, refuse and delivery vehicles can continue operations throughout the scheme.

Widening footpaths has created opportunity for new tree planting, strategically placed to enhance pedestrian footfall and key desire lines. The location of planting and position of new street trees have been designed so that visibility splays for both drivers and pedestrians are maintained.

The design has been carefully considered to allow for universal accessibility including for those who are visually impaired and wheelchair users. The layout of crossings throughout the project has been considered to provide better connected spaces.

More sustainable methods of transport are encouraged with better links to public transport and more bicycle parking.

Taking steps to reduce overall street clutter, a new lighting strategy will promote the use of wall mounted luminaires where possible. Overhead lighting will enhance Sligo's character and architectural heritage.

Stephen Street

It is proposed to introduce a number of traffic calming interventions to Stephen Street and Holborn Street including a series of raised tables to existing and proposed crossing points, a reduction in the overall road width and a rationalisation of the number of on-street car parking spaces. This will reduce overall traffic congestion and long-stay vehicular presence which in turn will be conducive to improving the public realm. The existing number of disabled car parking spaces shall be retained and relocated accordingly to create a balanced and functional street.

Holborn Street

Existing car parking spaces to Holborn Street have been retained. The proposed kerb alignment will improve the pedestrian crossing point to the north whilst providing an element of traffic calming. The loading bay to Holborn Street has been retained, with the loading bays to Stephen Street reduced and relocated according to the business requirements.

Water Lane, Tobergal Lane, Rockwood Parade

Access to Water Lane will be controlled by means of retractable bollards located mid-way.

A strict loading and delivery management plan will be implemented along Rockwood Parade, Tobergal Lane and Water Lane. This is to ensure these spaces remain a pedestrian priority zone.

6. Archaeology

The proposal has been the subject of an Archaeological Impact Assessment carried out by an archaeologist licensed by the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. The report concludes that while the proposal is unlikely to impinge on the archaeological layer, archaeological monitoring of ground works should be undertaken during the construction phase of the development.

7. Ecology

The proposal has been the subject of a Screening for Appropriate Assessment in compliance with Article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive. The assessment has determined, in light of best available scientific data, that there is no potential for significant effects on Lough Gill SAC, Cummeen Strand/Drumcliff Bay (Sligo Bay) SAC, Unshin River SAC, or Cummeen Strand SPA. The assessment also determined that there is no potential likelihood for significant effects from the proposed project in combination with other plans or projects.

It is concluded that there are no likely potential impacts, whether direct, indirect or in-combination, which could give rise to significant effects on the conservation objectives of the conservation features of Lough Gill SAC, Cummeen Strand/Drumcliff Bay SAC, Unshin River SAC and Cummeen Strand SPA and that the integrity of these sites will not be affected. Consequently, this proposed Project does not require an NIS or need to advance in the Appropriate Assessment process.

8. Screening for Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)

Sligo County Council has concluded from a preliminary examination, that there is no real likelihood of significant effects on the environment arising from the proposed development and that an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is not required for the following reasons:

Having regard to the nature and scale of the proposed development, the receiving environment, and to the nature, extent, characteristics and likely duration of potential impacts, it has been concluded that the proposed development is not likely to have significant effects on the environment. The need for environmental impact assessment can, therefore, be excluded at preliminary examination and a screening determination is not required.

9. Architectural heritage

An Architectural Heritage Impact Assessment of the scheme has been prepared by Dedalus Architecture. The existing historic streetscape was reviewed, including a brief exploration of significant historic buildings and their setting that are affected by the proposals, and the possible impacts that may result in undertaking the proposed work.

Overall, the proposed development is expected to have a positive impact in enhancing the historic town centre, assisting in supporting a sustainable future for the historic buildings in maintaining their setting, in providing vitality to the streetscape and encouraging complementary new activities within the neighbourhood.

The impact on the fabric and thus also the visual character of the buildings, subject to adoption of recommendations of the architectural conservation report and execution in line with best practice, is considered to be minimal, and therefore acceptable in terms of architectural conservation.

10. Conclusion

Sligo County Council is committed to transforming the urban core of Sligo into a safe and pleasant area, free of the barriers created by traffic congestion and delivered back to the pedestrian in such a way that provides sustainable streets and places. We aim to strike a considered balance between the demands of commercial realities and the need for calmed places for people to meet, carry out their business affairs and avail of the amenity that civic places, squares, and greens can provide.

The Public Realm Action Plan for Sligo embodies this idea and the enhancement of Stephen Street, Holborn Street, Rockwood Parade, Tobergal Lane and Water Lane actively seeks to deliver this vision.

11. What happens next?

After the expiration of the period during which submissions or observations may be made, a report will be prepared and presented to the elected members of Sligo County Council.

This report will incorporate a list of the persons or bodies that made submissions, along with a summary of the issues raised by them and the Chief Executive's response.

This report will also recommend whether or not the proposed development should be proceed with as proposed or should not be proceeded with.

Following consideration of the Report by the members of the Council, the proposed development may be carried out as recommended in the Report, unless the members, by resolution, decided to vary or modify the development, otherwise than as recommended in the Report, or decide not to proceed with the development.