

Chapter 17.

Coolaney–Rockfield Village Plan

Coolaney is situated approximately 23 km to the south-west of Sligo Town. The Settlement Strategy designates Coolaney-Rockfield as a **Satellite Village** of Sligo Regional Growth Centre (RGC).

17.1 Village profile

The settlement is bound by the disused Sligo-Limerick railway line (which forms part of the Western Rail Corridor) to the south-east and by the Owenbeg River to the north-west. The village church and primary school are located in Rockfield, approximately 1 km west of the village centre.

The Western Rail Corridor has the potential to improve transport links. Its protection is important for the future development of Coolaney - Rockfield.

The Coolaney National Mountain Bike Centre, located approximately 1 km to the north-west of the village, attracts large numbers of cycling enthusiasts to the area. Phase 1 of the development, completed in 2021, includes 80 km of bike trails. At time of writing (2023), a planning application for the provision of a café, bike hire facility and public toilets was being processed by the local authority.

Coolaney village assets			
Population	2022 Census	1,155 (without Rockfield)	+16.6% increase 2016-2022
	2016 Census	990 (without Rockfield)	+14.3% increase 2011-2016
	2002-2022	+ 988 residents	+591.6% increase since 2002
Housing stock	2016 Census	463 dwellings	
Service infrastructure	Water supply	Sourced from Lough Talt Regional Water Supply	
	Wastewater treatment	2,500 PE with spare capacity of approx. 1,299 PE.	
	Road network	Local road network provides links to the N-59 (Sligo to Ballina), N-4 and N-17 (via Collooney).	
Social infrastructure	Schools	Primary school in Rockfield	
	Churches	Church of the Sacred Heart and St Joseph in Rockfield	
	Sports facilities	Soccer pitch	
	Other assets	Crèche, community centre, playground, church, burial ground, health centre and the Coolaney National Mountain Bike Centre	

Coolaney village assets		
Sustainable transport	Train	Access to the Sligo-Dublin line at Collooney train station (8 km) Crossed by the Western Rail Corridor, which has the potential to be reopened for rail transport (or as a greenway)
	Bus	Served by Bus Eireann Route 475 and the local link.
	Active travel	Pedestrian and cycle infrastructure connecting Rockfield and Coolaney
Architectural heritage	Protected Structures	4, including the former Leyny train station
	Buildings of Note	5 Buildings of Note
Natural heritage and environment	Natura 2000 sites nearby	Unshin River Special Area of Conservation
	Natural amenities	Owenbeg River and adjoining River Walk
	Flood risk	Present. Flood Zones A and B are mapped in Appendix 1 of the SFRA.

17.2 Population and housing allocations

The potential yield of lands zoned for housing in Coolaney–Rockfield amounts to **32 units** for the Plan period. The delivery of these dwellings would facilitate an increase of Coolaney–Rockfield’s population by at least **80 residents**. **The actual housing allocation is 27 units**, as reflected in the aggregate figure for Satellite Villages indicated in the Core Strategy Table (refer to Chapter 3 in Vol. 1).

Section 17.2.1 below lists the sites which have been designated to contribute to the compact growth of Coolaney - Rockfield, together with their potential housing and population yields.

Section 17.2.2 includes a table showing the amount of land with residential potential proposed to be zoned in Coolaney–Rockfield, for the period of this CDP (2024-2030), compared to the previous Coolaney–Rockfield Mini-Plan/CDP 2017.

17.2.1 Compact growth designations

Three sites have been designated in Coolaney–Rockfield as **Settlement Consolidation Sites (SCS)**, as recommended in the *Development Plan Guidelines (2022)*, in order to give effect to the NPF requirements for compact growth.

Three **Regeneration Sites** have also been designated in accordance with Section 10(2)(h) of the Planning Act.

Regeneration sites

The three sites designated for regeneration are the Mountain Inn site and adjacent lands at Rockfield (REG-1), the dwelling house and associated back lands at the junction of main street and the L-6105 (REG- 2) and the unfinished portion of the Fort Haven Housing Development (REG-3).

At time of writing (2023), the Mountain Inn (REG-1) and the Main Street-fronting property (REG-2) were vacant and becoming derelict. The designations seek to stimulate the redevelopment of the properties.

The REG-3 designation of the abandoned construction site at Fort Haven seeks to promote the completion of the housing development.

Because there is no certainty regarding the potential housing yield of any redevelopment on these sites, they have not been included in the Core Strategy housing allocation.

Table 17.1 Regeneration sites

REG – Regeneration sites				
Site code	Location	Zoning 2017	Proposed zoning 2024	Site area (ha)
REG-1	Mountain Inn site and adjacent lands (Rockfield)	MIX	MIX	0.42
REG-2	Vacant dwelling and backlands at the junction of Main Street and L-6105 (Mountain Road)	MIX	MIX	0.24
REG-3	Unfinished portion of Fort Haven housing development	RES	RES	2.07
Total				3.14

Settlement Consolidation Sites (SCS)

Lands designated as SCS are proposed to be zoned for residential (RES) uses. The potential housing yield of these lands has been calculated based on the following:

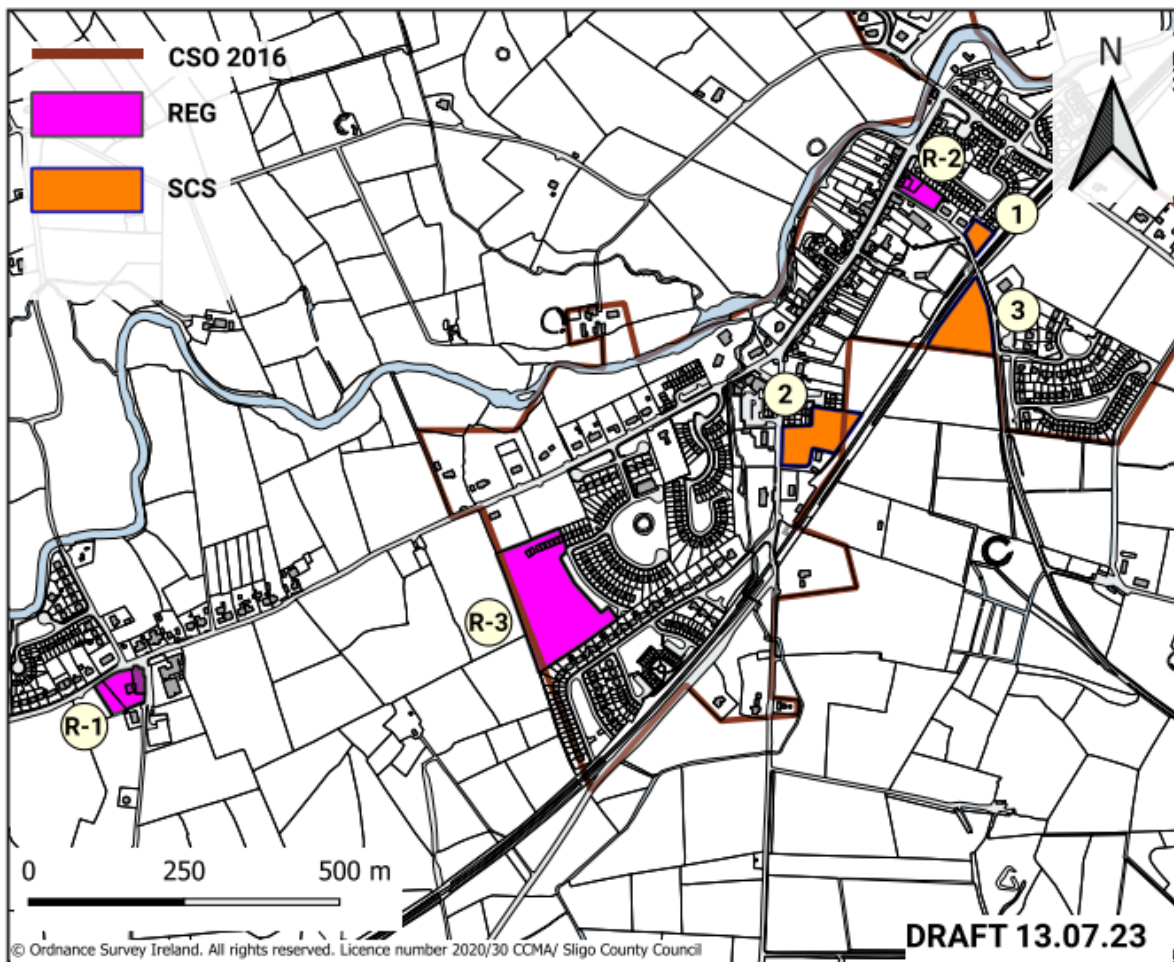
- a. the average residential density is 20 units per hectare, which is higher, but not excessive when compared to the density of existing housing estates in Coolaney - Rockfield;
- b. sites zoned RES are presumed to be developed exclusively for housing;
- c. the average household size of future occupants of new housing is set at 2.5 persons.

All SCS sites are largely within the 2016 Census boundary for Coolaney, with only a small portion of SCS- 2 partly outside. It is estimated that circa 28 houses, i.e. 87% of the potential housing yield, can be delivered within the settlement’s built-up footprint, far in excess of the 30% requirement of RPO 3.2(c)

Table 17.2 Settlement Consolidation Sites

SCS - Settlement Consolidation Sites							
Site no.	Location	Zoning 2017	Proposed zoning 2024	Site area (ha)	of which net residential	Potential housing yield	Potential no. of residents
1	Site adjoining the L-6105 (Mountain Road) and the disused railway corridor	RES	RES	0.14	0.14	3	8
2	Site between the disused railway corridor and the L-2801 (Cloonacool Road)	RES	RES	0.72	0.72	14	35
3	Site between the disused railway corridor and the L-6105 (Mountain Road)	RES	RES	0.76	0.76	15	37
Total				1.62	1.62	32	80

Fig. 17.A Compact growth designations in Coolaney: Regeneration sites (REG) and Settlement Consolidation Sites (SCS) in the context of the 2016 Census settlement boundary



17.2.2 Population, housing and land zoning requirements

The table below provides settlement-level information that has been aggregated in the main Core Strategy Table included in **Chapter 3 (Vol. 1)**.

The area in column 5 corresponds to the proposed zoning in the Draft CDP 2024-2030. It is the sum of the sites zoned RES. This figure will change if any amendments are made as a result of public consultation on the Draft CDP

Table 17.3 Population, housing land and housing allocation for Coolaney–Rockfield

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Population 2022 and percentage of County population*	Population target 2030 and percentage of County population projection**	Housing allocation 2030 and percentage of County housing demand***	RES and MIX zoning 2017 (only lands with housing potential)	Proposed RES zoning 2024 (no housing allocation to MIX lands)	Potential housing yield of RES zoned lands 2024	Excess zoned land in 2017 compared to 2024
1,155 (without Rockfield) (1.64%)	1,300 (1.7%)	27 (0.6%)	4.59 ha	1.62 ha	32	2.97 ha

* County population 2022 = 70,198; ** County population projection = 75,000 (estimated from the NPF Implementation Roadmap) *** Total adjusted housing demand = 3,892 units (calculated as per HSTM)

Notes on Table 17.3

- **Columns 4 and 5** – the undeveloped lands taken into consideration are 100% of site areas in the case of RES (residential) zoning and 50% of site areas in the case of MIX zoning (a mix of uses including residential uses); lands zoned for residential or mixed-uses, which are proposed to be designated as Regeneration Sites, are not included in these figures.
- **Column 6** – the sum of housing yield from the lands in Column 5, proposed to be used for residential and mixed uses (For specific numbers of dwellings, refer to Table 17.2)
- **Column 7** – the difference between the sum of areas zoned for RES and MIX uses in the CDP 2017-2024 and what is proposed to be zoned in the CDP 2024-2030.

Excess zoned land (2023)

The Coolaney Mini-Plan/CDP 2017 zoned more land (for housing and mixed uses) than what is now proposed in the Draft CDP 2024. The current (2023) excess of zoned land amounts to 2.97 ha.

These lands/sites have been redesignated (e.g. Regeneration Sites) or rezoned for other uses.

17.3 Village-specific objectives

Note: These objectives must be considered in conjunction with the urban development policies for towns and villages contained in **Chapter 10 Urban development principles** of this Volume (Vol. 2) and the general development policies and objectives set out in Volume 3 of this Plan.

17.3.1 Natural heritage and open space

- A.** Preserve the Owenbeg river banks as a wildlife corridor, in order to protect the conservation value of the Unshin River SAC (of which the Owenbeg is part).
- B.** Enhance the River Walk as a public amenity, extend pedestrian access along the river (e.g. from Coolaney to Rockfield) and provide connections to the village Main Street in conjunction with the development of adjoining lands.

17.3.2 Built heritage and streetscape

- A.** The old mill building along the river walk (to the rear of the main street) should be sensitively repurposed and restored ideally incorporating a tourist/heritage facility. Special attention should be afforded to the protection and careful management of the natural setting of the building.

17.3.3 Transport, circulation and parking

- A.** Reserve sufficient land for a new train station, with adequate vehicular access and park-and-ride facilities, serving Coolaney and the surrounding area. Additional parking to serve the train station could be located on the south-eastern side of the railway line.
- B.** Support the development of an active travel scheme, i.e. pedestrian and cycle route (shared surface), to connect Rockfield and Coolaney.
- C.** Protect the Western Rail Corridor by preventing any type of development with the potential to compromise its future use either as a rail link or as a greenway.

17.3.4 Community facilities

- A.** Reserve land for the possible future expansion of the primary school at Rockfield.