

Chapter 25. Built heritage

Sligo has a rich and diverse built heritage. It includes the passage tomb landscape of the county, medieval churches and monasteries, the historic town of Sligo and other historic streetscapes across the county, country houses and demesne landscapes, industrial structures as well as a rich vernacular tradition. This Plan recognises the role of built heritage in sustaining attractive places for people to enjoy.

Sligo County Council will ensure the conservation, management, protection and enhancement of the archaeological and architectural heritage of the County, which are valuable and finite resources.

The County Sligo Heritage Plan identifies opportunities to connect with this heritage through a wide range of initiatives. The preparation of Conservation Plans will play a key role in the protection and management of important heritage sites in the County.

25.1 Archaeological heritage

25.1.1 Sligo's archaeology

Sligo's archaeological heritage includes structures, places, caves, sites, features or portable objects, whether on land, underwater or in the intertidal zone. It is central to the identity of the County and it is an important resource for communities, education and tourism.

To date, over 6,500 archaeological monuments have been identified in County Sligo, which has one of the highest densities of archaeology of any Irish county. All known archaeological sites are identified in the Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) (see www.archaeology.ie).

Sligo's archaeology varies greatly in form, date and condition. Ranging from the Mesolithic Period (7000 BC) to the end of the Medieval Period (1700 AD), the archaeological record includes megalithic sites, *fulachtai fiadh*, early Christian ecclesiastical sites, churches and graveyards, medieval buildings, castles, industrial archaeology and underwater sites such as wrecks.

Within the County, there are a number of significant archaeological and historical landscapes, the most notable being the Cuil Irra Peninsula (which includes Knocknarea, Carrowmore and Carns Hill), Carrowkeel and Inishmurray.

Various types of development can impact on the visual appreciation, setting and amenity of archaeological monuments. Such impacts should be assessed and, where possible, eliminated. Previously unidentified archaeological sites may be uncovered during development works, while archaeological deposits that would be damaged by development must be investigated and recorded in great detail.

Any proposed development with the potential to affect the archaeological heritage resource (due to its location, size or nature) will be subject to an Archaeological Impact Assessment. This includes proposals close to archaeological monuments, proposals extensive in area (0.5 ha or more) or length (1 km or more), and development that requires an Environmental Impact Assessment.

Other areas of high archaeological potential may exist outside the boundaries of conventionally recognised monuments, especially in graveyards and monastic sites, in wetlands, former wetlands and in the intertidal zone.

Underwater archaeology

Sligo's offshore and coastal waters, tidal estuaries and rivers have a diverse range of heritage features, such as piers, quay walls, fords, stepping stones and shipwrecks,.

Development (including flood protection infrastructure) within the marine, offshore and coastal waters, tidal estuaries and rivers areas, which may impact on known and potential terrestrial and underwater archaeology, will require intertidal and underwater archaeological assessment.

The Council will seek to protect, preserve and promote marine and coastal zone archaeology, including the underwater heritage of Sligo. Where flood relief schemes are being undertaken, the Council, will have regard to the *Archaeological Guidelines for Flood Relief Schemes* (DHLGH 2022).

Section 3 of the *National Monuments (Amendment) Act 1987* makes specific provisions for the protection of shipwrecks and underwater archaeological objects.

25.1.2 Policy and legislation

The Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage (HLGH) has specific responsibilities for the identification and protection of archaeological heritage. The National Monuments Service (NMS) carries out these duties in respect of sites and monuments, in line with national policy.

Provisions for carrying out works to designated archaeological monuments are outlined in documents such as the *Register of Historic Monuments*, the *Record of Monuments and Places* and in the *National Monuments Act 1930 (as amended)*. Under the Act, there are different levels of monument protection. A level of universal protection is afforded to all monuments listed in the *Record of Monuments and Places* (RMP).

The highest level of protection is accorded to National Monuments, i.e. monuments deemed to be of national significance (see **Appendix G** of this Plan). Under Section 14 of the *National Monuments (Amendment) Act 2004*, a National Monument is a monument in the ownership or guardianship of the State or a local authority, or a monument that is the subject of a Preservation Order or a Temporary Preservation Order.

25.1.3 The Cuil Irra Peninsula– Carrowmore, Knocknarea, Carns Hill

The cluster of megalithic tombs at Carrowmore is Carrow more the largest of the four major passage tomb cemeteries in Ireland. The other three are Carrowkeel (also in County Sligo), Newgrange and Lough Crew in County Meath.

The archaeological landscape of the Cuil Irra (Knocknarea) peninsula dates from around 4,000 BC or earlier. The site formed an important ritual centre in the Neolithic period.

The megalithic cemetery at Carrowmore, comprising an oval-shaped cluster of 30 monuments surrounding the centrally placed cairn of "Listoghil" (Tomb 51) is located in the centre of the peninsula.

To the west, overlooking Carrowmore, is the iconic flat-topped cairn known as Miosgán Meadhbha (Maeve’s Cairn) on the summit of Knocknarea Mountain. To the east, also overlooking Carrowmore, are two large cairns on the summit of Carns Hill.

Sligo County Council recognises the significance of the unique and internationally-important archaeological landscape of the Cuil Irra Peninsula and is fully committed to ensuring that this special archaeological landscape is protected and preserved *in situ*.

The Council will seek to put in place a management strategy for the Cuil Irra Peninsula, to include Knocknarea, Carrowmore and Carns Hill, and will work with the relevant agencies to achieve this objective within the timeframe of this Plan. In this regard, the National Monuments Section with the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage has appointed a steering group to oversee the preparation of a *Conservation Study of Archaeological Features at Knocknarea, Carrowmore and Carns Hill, Sligo*.

Fig. 25.A Archaeological and historic landscape of the Cuil Irra Peninsula



Archaeological heritage policies

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

- P-AH-1** Protect, manage, and enhance archaeological sites, monuments and landscapes, underwater archaeology (including protected wrecks), historic burial grounds (including their setting, appreciation and visual amenity) listed in the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP), Sites and Monuments Record (SMR), the Register of Historic Monuments, and any additional newly discovered archaeological sites and/or sub-surface archaeological remains.
- This shall be done in accordance with conservation principles and best practice guidelines.
- P-AH-2** Require **Archaeological Impact Assessment**, surveys, test excavation and/or monitoring, as appropriate, for development in the vicinity of monuments or in areas of archaeological potential. Where there are upstanding remains, a visual assessment may be required.
- P-AH-3** Require the preservation of the context, amenity, visual integrity and connection of archaeological monuments to their setting. Views to and from archaeological monuments shall not be obscured by inappropriate development. Where appropriate, **Archaeological Visual Impact Assessments** will be required to demonstrate the continued preservation of an archaeological monument's siting and context.
- P-AH-4** Require Archaeological Impact Assessments, geophysical survey, test excavations or monitoring, as appropriate, where development proposals involve ground clearance of more than 0.5 ha, for linear developments over 1 km in length, and for developments in proximity to areas of known archaeological monuments and history of discovery, as identified by suitably qualified archaeologists.
- P-AH-5** Secure the preservation *in situ* or by record of:
- the archaeological monuments included in the Record of Monuments and Places as established under section 12 of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act, 1994;
 - any sites and features of historical and archaeological interest;
 - any subsurface archaeological features that may be discovered during the course of infrastructural/development works in the operational area of the Plan.

Preservation relates to archaeological sites or objects and their settings. Preservation *in situ* is most effectively achieved by the refurbishment of existing buildings, in situations where it is possible to retain the greater part of existing structures without the need for new foundations.

Archaeological heritage policies

- P-AH-6** Protect historic burial grounds that are National and/or Recorded Monuments and encourage their maintenance in accordance with best conservation principles. Development may be restricted or conditions requiring substantial excavation may be imposed in and adjacent to former burial grounds.
- P-AH-7** Where possible, facilitate and enhance public access to and understanding of the archaeological heritage and disseminate archaeological information and advice to prospective developers and the general public.
- P-AH-8** Require that all development proposals for industrial buildings and sites of industrial archaeological importance be accompanied by an **Industrial Archaeology Assessment** of the surrounding environment.
- The preservation *in situ* of significant examples of industrial or military heritage will be required. New development should be designed in sympathy with existing features and structures.
- P-AH-9** Protect and preserve the archaeological value of underwater archaeological sites and associated features. In assessing proposals for development, the Council will take account of the potential underwater archaeology of rivers, lakes, intertidal and subtidal environments.

Cuil Irra Peninsula – Carrowmore, Knocknarea, Carns Hill

- P-AH-10** Refer to the National Monuments Section (DHLGH) all development proposals within the archaeological and historic landscape of the Cuil Irra Peninsula (which includes the core areas of Knocknarea, Carrowmore and Carns Hill) as identified in **Fig.25.A**.
- P-AH-11** Ensure that Archaeological Impact Assessments are requested at pre-planning and planning application stage for all development proposals within the archaeological and historic landscape of the Cuil Irra Peninsula (which includes the core areas of Knocknarea, Carrowmore and Carns Hill).

County Sligo Heritage Plan

- P-AH-12** Implement the **County Sligo Heritage Plan** and all its revisions, in partnership with the County Sligo Heritage Forum and all relevant stakeholders and the community.

Archaeological heritage objectives

It is an objective of Sligo County Council to:

- O-AH-1** Identify and protect internationally important archaeological landscapes such as the Carrowkeel, Inishmurray and the Cuil Irra Peninsula (which includes the core areas of Knocknarea, Carrowmore and Carns Hill), in co-operation with landowners and relevant stakeholders and statutory agencies.
- O-AH-2** Identify appropriate archaeological sites in the Plan area to which public access could be provided and work to secure public access, where appropriate, in consultation with the landowners.
- O-AH-3** Prepare and implement conservation plans, in partnership with relevant stakeholders, for key heritage sites in County Sligo, including Sligo Gaol, the Green Fort (Sligo), Drumcliffe Monastic Site and Inishmurray.

25.2 World Heritage Tentative List

The World Heritage Tentative List is an inventory of natural and cultural heritage sites that have potential to demonstrate '*outstanding universal value*' (OUV) and which are being considered for nomination to the World Heritage List.

The nomination of any site from the Tentative List for inscription on the World Heritage List will only take place after consultation with local communities and other relevant stakeholders.

In July 2022, a new World Heritage Tentative List for Ireland was announced, including one site in County Sligo: '**The Passage Tomb Landscape of County Sligo**'.

Sligo County Council is the lead authority on the proposal for 'The Passage Tomb Landscape of County Sligo' nomination on the Tentative List as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and the Council will support the State in the nomination process.

World Heritage Site objective

It is an objective of Sligo County Council to:

- O-WHS-1** To support the State in the nomination process of '**The Passage Tomb Landscape of County Sligo**' to UNESCO World Heritage status, in co-operation with relevant State agencies and key stakeholders.

25.3 Architectural heritage

County Sligo contains a rich heritage of buildings and structures which contribute to its unique sense of place. Sligo County Council will ensure that buildings, streetscapes and features of merit are protected and managed so that they retain their character and special interest.

This Plan seeks to protect and conserve building and structures of architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social and technical importance.

Industrial heritage

Industrial heritage consists of structures associated with manufacturing, transportation, communications, public utilities and materials extraction. Examples include canals, railway structures, mills, warehouses, lighthouses, lime kilns and milestones. A desktop survey of the industrial heritage of County Sligo was carried out in 2005.

Designed landscapes, gardens and demesnes

Historic designed landscapes consist of private gardens, public parks and the gardens and landscapes associated with country house demesnes. In the County, the designed landscapes are largely found in demesne or estate lands, and frequently form the setting for protected structures.

In 2003, the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH) carried out a desktop survey of Historic Gardens and Demesnes in Ireland, which identified approximately 72 such sites in the County. This survey can be found at www.buildingsofireland.ie.

Non-habitable structures

Non-habitable structures, such as stone walls and street furniture form an important part of the County's architectural heritage. A lack of awareness of their inherent and associative value can result in the loss of these structures and subsequent erosion of historic character.

Stone walls are an integral part of rural landscapes, contributing to the historic character of areas. They are vulnerable to damage or destruction during development, as well as inappropriate and poor reconstruction.

Historic street furniture contributes to the character and interest of an area, whether designated an ACA or not. Such items include lamp standards, seats and benches, bollards, railings, street signs, free-standing or wall-mounted post boxes, telephone kiosks, horse troughs, water pumps, drinking fountains, jostle stones, milestones, paving, kerbstones, cobbles and setts, pavement lights, coal hole covers, statues, plaques, gates etc.

Enabling development

Enabling development is development that would be unacceptable in planning terms (e.g. inconsistent with zoning objectives for an area) but for the fact that it would bring significant public benefits in the form of securing the long-term future of a protected structure. Enabling development will be considered in circumstances where:

- it secures the restoration of a protected structure, currently in poor condition, to best-practice conservation standards for any purpose compatible with the character of the structure or its constituent features, including the setting of the protected structure;
- it is demonstrated that the extent of enabling development is the minimum necessary to secure the future of the protected structure;
- the public benefit associated with securing the future of the protected structure decisively outweighs the drawbacks of breaching other planning objectives;
- it avoids detrimental fragmentation of the heritage asset.

25.3.1 The Record of Protected Structures (RPS)

The Planning and Development Act, 2000, as amended (Part II, Section 10) places a statutory obligation on all local authorities to include in their development plans, objectives for the protection of structures, or parts of structures, which are of special architectural, historic, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest. These buildings and structures are listed in a register known as the Record of Protected Structures (RPS).

The RPS provides positive recognition of the structures' importance, protection from adverse impacts and potential access to grant aid for conservation works. There are over 700 structures included in the Record of Protected Structures for County Sligo (which also covers the Sligo and Environs area).

In preparing the RPS for County Sligo, the Planning Authority had regard to:

- the Architectural Inventory for County Sligo, prepared by the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH) of the DHLGH;
- the *Architectural Heritage Protection – Guidelines for Planning Authorities* (DoEHLG, 2004).

A Protected Structure, unless otherwise stated in the RPS, includes the interior of the structure, the land lying within its curtilage, any other structures and their interiors, and all of the fixtures and features that form part of the interior or exterior of any of these structures.

County Sligo has buildings of different character, quality, age and style, which contribute significantly to the county's attractive streetscapes. The buildings and structures identified in the RPS are irreplaceable records of the past and therefore require protection. Their presence enhances the character of the county and adds to local distinctiveness.

It is recognised that in order to prolong the life of a protected structure, it may be necessary for such a building to accommodate change or new uses. The effect of the Protected Structure status is to ensure that any changes or alterations to the character of the building are carried out in such a way that the existing special character is retained and enhanced.

With a view to encouraging the restoration of protected structures, the Council will not seek development contributions provided for under Section 48 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, which might normally apply to the development, if the proposal involves restoration/refurbishment to a high architectural standard.

It should also be noted that under Section 57(10) (b) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), the Council "shall not grant permission for the demolition of a protected structure or proposed protected structure, save in exceptional circumstances".

The RPS may be amended between reviews of the Development Plan and the Council can add to or delete from the RPS at any time by following the procedures outlined in Section 55 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).

25.3.2 Architectural Conservation Areas (ACA)

An Architectural Conservation Area (ACA) is a place, area, group of structures or townscape, which is of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest. They may also include areas which contribute to the appreciation of Protected Structures.

ACAs can comprise entire streetscapes, designed landscapes associated with a country house, medieval towns, industrial complexes, designed open spaces, religious complexes and so forth. The special character of an ACA is made up of its architectural features, setting, spatial qualities and

land uses. Unless a structure is also included on the Record of Protected Structures, the protected status afforded for inclusion in an ACA only applies to the exteriors and streetscape.

The main consequence of ACA designation is the prevention of inappropriate development for the purpose of preserving and enhancing the character of the area concerned. Piecemeal alterations on individual non protected structures can have a significant cumulative effect on a streetscape. Any works which would have a material effect on the special character of an ACA require planning permission.

Five ACAs have been designated in Sligo Town (see **Sligo Town Specific Objectives Map**). The town centre of Ballymote has also been designated as an ACA (see **Fig.12.A Chapter 12 Ballymote (Vol.2)**).

25.3.3 Vernacular heritage and other built heritage assets

Sligo's built heritage is not fully reflected in the Record of Protected Structures or ACA designations. There are many modest historic buildings which enrich the character of towns, villages and rural areas throughout the County. Most were built by local people using local materials, in the vernacular tradition, to be used as homes and workplaces. The form, scale, materials, detailing and layout of such structures contribute positively to the rural landscapes or to historic villages and towns across the County, adding historic and architectural interest, as well as visual amenity.

Considering the 'embedded carbon' contained within the older building stock, their retention and continued use or reuse represent sustainable development and best energy conservation practices.

The National Vernacular Strategy (*'A living tradition: a strategy to enhance the understanding, minding and handing on of our built heritage'*), published by the DHLGH in 2021, provides direction on understanding, protecting and maintaining the modest everyday buildings constructed using traditional methods and materials.

Restoration of vernacular buildings will be strongly encouraged by Sligo County Council. Such restoration should include the retention of as much historic fabric as possible, using traditional construction methods and materials, and should retain the distinctive vernacular character of the building. (Refer also to **Section 10.2 Heritage led regeneration** in Chapter 10 Urban Development Principles, Volume 2 of this Plan).

Architectural heritage policies

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

- P-ARH-1** Preserve, protect and enhance the architectural heritage of County Sligo for future generations by seeking to prevent the demolition or inappropriate alteration of protected structures and their settings.
- P-ARH-2** Ensure that any development, modifications, alterations, or extensions affecting a protected structure, an adjoining structure or a structure within an ACA is sited and designed appropriately and is not detrimental to the character of the structure, to its setting or the general character of the ACA.

Architectural heritage policies

- P-ARH-3** Exempt a development proposal from the normal requirement for the payment of a development contribution if the proposal involves restoration/refurbishment of a protected structure to a high architectural standard.
- P-ARH-4** Facilitate 'enabling development' to be carried out in conjunction with works to protected structures.
- P-ARH-5** Protect important non-habitable structures such as historic bridges, harbours, railways or non-structural elements such as roadside features (e.g. historic milestones, cast-iron pumps and post-boxes), street furniture, historic gardens, stone walls, landscapes, demesnes and curtilage features, in cases where these are not already included in the Record of Protected Structures.

Industrial heritage

- P-ARH-6** Encourage the re-use of industrial heritage structures, provided that change of use does not impact on the intrinsic character of the structure, and that all works are carried out in accordance with best conservation practice.
- P-ARH-7** Protect and enhance the built heritage of the Sligo-Leitrim & Northern Counties Railway (SLNCR) and Great Southern & Western Railway (GS&WR / Limerick & Sligo Branch) and associated structures.
- In as far as practically possible, development which may impact on the character and setting of these structure shall be sensitively designed.
- P-ARH-8** Require an Architectural/Archaeological Heritage Assessment, as appropriate, which references the Sligo Industrial Heritage Survey and other relevant sources, for all proposed developments relating to industrial heritage structures or sites.

Designed landscapes, gardens and demesnes

- P-ARH-9** Require the protection and enhancement of heritage gardens and demesne landscapes, and support the provision of public access to these sites in consultation with landowners.
- P-ARH-10** Discourage development that would adversely affect the character, the principal components or the setting of historic parks, gardens and demesnes of heritage significance.
- P-ARH-11** Require an appraisal of the landscape, designed views and vistas, including a tree survey, where relevant, to accompany proposals for development in designed landscapes and demesnes, in order to inform site-appropriate design

Architectural heritage objective

It is an objective of Sligo County Council to:

- O-ARH-1** Carry out **Phase 2** of the **Sligo Industrial Heritage Survey** comprising field surveys and assessments. Where appropriate, propose the addition of surviving sites and structures to the Record of Protected Structures.

Architectural Conservation Areas – policies

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

- P-ACA-1** Conserve and enhance the special character of the Architectural Conservation Areas in this plan. The special character of an area includes its traditional building stock and material finishes, spaces, streetscapes, shop fronts, landscape and setting.
- P-ACA-2** Protect all buildings, structures, groups of structures, sites, landscapes and all features considered to be intrinsic elements to the special character of the ACA from demolition, removal and non-sympathetic alterations.
- Any proposal for **demolition** or alteration within an ACA shall be accompanied by a measured and photographic survey, a Condition Report and an Architectural Heritage Assessment.
- P-ACA-3** Promote appropriate and sensitive reuse and rehabilitation of buildings and sites within ACAs.
- P-ACA-4** Require the retention of original windows, doors, renders, roof coverings, chimneys, rainwater goods and other significant features of structures of architectural heritage merit, whether protected or not.
- P-ACA-5** Seek the repair and reuse of traditional shopfronts and where appropriate, encourage new shopfronts of a high-quality architectural design.
- P-ACA-6** Ensure that new development within or adjacent to an ACA respects the established character of the area, contributes positively in terms of design, scale, setting and material finishes to the ACA.

Such development shall be appropriately sited and designed, having regard to advice given in the Statement of Character for the respective ACA, where available.

Architectural Conservation Areas – policies

- P-ACA-7** Promote high quality architectural design within ACAs, including redevelopment in the traditional or historicist manner, where appropriate.
- P-ACA-8** Ensure that all new signage, lighting, advertising and utilities on buildings within an ACA are designed, constructed, and located in such a manner that they do not detract from the character of the ACA.
- P-ACA-9** Protect and enhance the quality of open spaces within ACAs and ensure the protection and where necessary reuse of street furniture and use of appropriate materials during the course of public infrastructure schemes within ACAs.

Architectural Conservation Areas – objectives

It is an objective of Sligo County Council to:

- O-ACA-1** Identify places of special character in the County, with a view to designating them as Architectural Conservation Areas or to modify existing ACAs, where necessary.
- O-ACA-2** Prepare and review, where necessary, a detailed Character Statement and planning guidance for each ACA.

Vernacular heritage policies

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

- P-VH-1** Generally require the retention, sensitive restoration and sustainable re-use of historic building, structures and features in the County, including vernacular dwellings, farm buildings, paving, historic boundary treatments or layouts.

There will be a presumption against the demolition of older buildings where restoration and adaptation are feasible.
- P-VH-2** Ensure that conversions or extensions to vernacular buildings or the provision of new adjoining buildings, are sensitively designed and do not detract from the

Vernacular heritage policies

character of the historic building. Demolition or removal will be considered only in exceptional circumstances.

- P-VH-3** Encourage the retention and restoration of thatched dwellings and promote available grant schemes to assist owners with such works.
- P-VH-4** Seek the retention of original or historic fabric such as windows, doors, wall renders, roof coverings, shopfronts, pub fronts and other significant features of older or historic buildings, whether protected or not.
- P-VH-5** Promote the retention and re-use of the vernacular built heritage through increasing public awareness of its potential and adaptability to change.
- P-VH-6** When considering proposals to adapt vernacular buildings to meet contemporary living standards and needs, require applicants to apply the conservation principles and guidelines set out in the the ICOMOS Charter on the Built Vernacular Heritage (Mexico 1999).
- P-VH-7** Seek the retention of surviving historic plot sizes and street patterns in the villages and towns of Sligo, and incorporate ancient boundaries or layouts, such as burgage plots and townland boundaries, into any re-developments.

Vernacular heritage objective

It is an objective of Sligo County Council to:

- O-VH-1** Update the survey of surviving thatched structures in the County.