

Chapter 33.

Development management standards

33.1 Overview

The purpose of this chapter is to offer guidance to potential applicants regarding the criteria used by the Planning Authority to assess development proposals. The development management standards that follow apply to the entire administrative area of the County.

The chapter indicates where additional information may need to be provided with planning applications to help in their assessment, depending on the type and nature of the development proposal.

The guidance is not exhaustive, but merely a statement of general principles. Where reference is made to national planning guidelines or policy documents, it relates to the most up-to-date version of such guidelines at the time of drafting this Development Plan (noting that they may have been superseded during the Plan's life).

The planning process

In making a decision on a planning application, the Planning Authority is restricted to considering the proper planning and sustainable development of the area¹.

The Planning Authority must have regard to the provisions of the Development Plan, Planning Act and Planning Regulations, relevant policies of the government, of the Minister for the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH) and of other ministers, and to written submissions made by bodies or persons other than the applicant.

Planning guidance

The Minister for DHLGH issues statutory guidelines² to planning authorities. These guidelines cover a wide range of issues: apartment design standards, urban development, renewable energy, the design of streets, architectural heritage, housing supply, childcare facilities, retail planning, landscape assessment, quarries, etc. Some of the guidelines contain specific planning policy requirements (SPPRs) which take precedence over any policies and objectives contained within the Development Plan.

In addition, the Office of the Planning Regulator (OPR) and the DHLGH have published a series of planning leaflets which deal with all aspects of the planning system, including guidance on making a planning application. The leaflets are available on the OPR website.

Pre-planning meetings

The Planning Authority provides an opportunity for anybody who has an interest in land or buildings to engage in discussions prior to making a planning application³. Potential applicants are strongly advised to avail of this service. It should be noted that such consultations will not pre-determine any subsequent decision made by Sligo County Council.

¹ Section 34 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended)

² Section 28 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended)

³ Section 247 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended)

33.2 General standards

When proposing any type of development, in an urban or rural location, applicants are advised to have regard to the considerations listed below.

33.2.1 Building lines

The Planning Authority will normally seek to ensure that development is not carried out in front of established building lines. Generally, it will be an aim to create a continuous building line along a street edge. Where development is proposed along roads of traffic importance, increased setbacks may be needed to provide for greater amenity, safety of road users and residents, or for future road widening.

Building lines may be relaxed in the following cases:

- to incorporate key landscape features into the development layout such as hedgerows, mature trees;
- to incorporate key landmark buildings;
- for innovative designs or layouts which positively enhance the streetscape or area;
- to provide important areas of public open space, e.g. squares;
- to facilitate traditional building forms, such as open courtyards.

33.2.2 Impact of development on its surroundings

The following factors will be considered in assessing the impact of a proposed development in both urban and rural areas:

- a. degree of overshadowing and loss of light to surrounding properties and amenity spaces (e.g. areas of open space, gardens and patios). A daylight, sunlight and overshadowing assessment may be required. The assessment shall be informed by the most recent edition of *'Site Layout Planning for Daylight and Sunlight: A guide to good practice'* (BRE);
- b. degree of overlooking and consequent loss of privacy for adjoining properties;
- c. the extent to which the development impacts on structures, streets or spaces of architectural, archaeological or historic importance;
- d. the extent to which the development impacts on important landmarks, on a skyline or on attractive public views from significant vantage points;
- e. the quality of the overall design;
- f. the effect of the development on the microclimate in the immediate vicinity.

The list of criteria given above is not exhaustive. Advice on specific development proposals can be obtained as part of a pre-planning consultation.

For specific advice on normal planning considerations for housing in rural areas, refer to **Section 33.4 Housing in rural areas**.

33.2.3 Universal design

The Council supports **the principle of universal design**. All environments, both internal and external, should be designed to meet the needs of all people who wish to use them. Universal design benefits everyone, affording people with disabilities, older persons, parents with buggies etc. greater access to the built and external environments.

The Planning Authority will endeavour to ensure that the recommended standards set out in *Building for Everyone - a Universal Design Approach* (National Disability Authority, 2015) are applied in internal and external built public environments, where feasible, and that the needs of specific user groups are considered at the preliminary design stage of a development.

33.2.4 Infrastructure and services

Uisce Eireann is the national water utility provider for water services throughout Ireland. It is responsible for the operation of public water and wastewater services, including:

- management of national water and wastewater assets;
- maintenance of the water and wastewater system;
- investment and planning;
- managing capital projects;
- customer care and billing.

Proposals from private developers to extend existing public wastewater infrastructure networks will be facilitated, where such proposals would result in the servicing of zoned lands.

33.2.5 Surface water drainage

All applications for planning permission shall incorporate proposals for the disposal of surface water. The use of **nature-based solutions** will be required in all medium to large scale development proposals.

Nature-based solutions for managing rainwater and surface water runoff in urban areas seek to replicate the natural water cycle, whereby rainwater soaks into the open ground and from there into the groundwater. This slows down the speed of the runoff and also removes many of the pollutants through filtration.

All new developments in urban areas are required to provide separate drainage systems, including nature-based SUDs (sustainable urban drainage systems) where appropriate. This approach will protect the capacity of public wastewater treatment plants and will assist in managing surface water runoff onto public roads.

For all developments, regardless of scale, applicants will be required, as part of pre-planning and/or a planning application, to illustrate how they propose to manage rainwater. The use of nature-based solutions will be strongly encouraged. Nature-based solutions to rainwater management should be identified at the early stages of the planning and design process.

Planning applications for larger developments should include hydraulic and topographical surveys showing the proposed development within the existing natural catchment, as well as a detailed rainwater management plan showing how nature-based solutions are being applied.

Within the curtilage of buildings, every effort should be made to reduce the percentage of surfacing that is impermeable. Starting at ground or street level, the use of cellular grass paving systems should be considered for parking areas, hard standings, emergency median crossings and accesses.

The replacement of impermeable surfacing with nature-based planted areas that are designed to absorb, retain, store, and treat urban runoff prior to discharge back into the environment is strongly encouraged. The Planning Authority will encourage green roofs as a proportion of all roof space for all large commercial, industrial, institutional and residential buildings (apartment blocks).

Storm water will not generally be allowed into the foul sewerage network and should be disposed of, subject to suitable treatment where necessary, to available watercourses or through separate surface water drains to independent outfalls.

In rural areas, when creating a new vehicular access onto public roads, existing roadside drainage shall be maintained by the incorporation of a suitably sized drainage pipe. In these circumstances, each application shall be accompanied by design calculations or appropriate evidence to support the size of pipe selected. In any event, surface water shall not be allowed to discharge onto the adjoining public road from the proposed development.

33.2.6 Flood risk assessment

Development management should follow the sequential approach when considering the location of development in areas at risk of flooding. Applicants may be required to submit a detailed, site-specific flood risk assessment. Pre-planning consultation is critical to the consideration of flood risk in the planning application. It is the responsibility of the applicant at this stage to gather relevant information for flood risk screening.

Flood risk assessments should be:

- proportionate to the risk scale, nature and location of the development;
- undertaken by a competent person, such as a suitably qualified hydrologist, flood risk management professional or specialist water engineer;
- undertaken as early as possible in the particular planning process;
- supported by appropriate data and information, including historical information on previous events, but focusing more on predictive assessment of less frequent or more extreme events, taking the likely impacts of climate change into account;
- clearly state the risk to people and development, and how that risk will be managed over the lifetime of the development.

Where required, flood risk assessments shall specify, in exceptional circumstances and where the criteria of the Justification Test have been met, the design of structural or non-structural flood risk management measures as prerequisites to development in specific areas, ensuring that flood hazard and risk to other locations will not be increased or, if practicable, will be reduced.

These measures may relate to:

Floor levels

- In areas of limited flood depth, the specification of the threshold and floor levels of new structures shall be raised above expected flood levels to reduce the risk of flood losses to a building, by raising floor heights within the building structure using a suspended floor arrangement or raised internal concrete platforms.
- When designing an extension or modification to an existing building, an appropriate flood risk reduction measure shall be specified to ensure the threshold levels into the building are above

the design flood level. However, care must also be taken to ensure access for all is provided in compliance with Part M of the Building Regulations.

- Where threshold levels cannot be raised to the street for streetscape, conservation or other reasons, the design shall specify a mixing of uses vertically in buildings - with less vulnerable uses located at ground floor level, along with other measures for dealing with residual flood risk.

Internal layout

- Internal space layout shall be designed and specified to reduce the impact of flooding [for example, living accommodation, essential services, storage space for provisions and equipment shall be designed to be located above the predicted flood level]. In addition, designs and specifications shall ensure that, wherever reasonably practicable, the siting of living accommodation (particularly sleeping areas) shall be above flood level.
- With the exception of single-storey extensions to existing properties, new single-storey accommodation shall not be deemed appropriate where predicted flood levels are above design floor levels. In all cases, specifications for safe access, refuge and evacuation shall be incorporated into the design of the development.

Flood-resistant construction

- Developments in flood vulnerable zones shall specify the use of flood-resistant construction aimed at preventing water from entering buildings, in order to mitigate the damage that flood water causes to buildings.
- Developments shall specify the use of flood-resistant construction, prepared using specialist technical input to the design and specification of the external building envelope, with measures to resist hydrostatic pressure (commonly referred to as “tanking”) specified for the outside of the building fabric.
- The design of the flood-resistant construction shall specify the need to protect the main entry points for flood water into buildings, such as doors and windows (including gaps in sealant around frames), vents, air-bricks and gaps around conduits or pipes passing through external building fabric.
- The design of the flood-resistant construction shall also specify the need to protect against flood water entry through sanitary appliances as a result of backflow through the drainage system.

Flood-resilient construction

- Developments in flood vulnerable zones that are at risk of occasional inundation shall incorporate design and specifications for flood resilient construction which accepts that flood water will enter buildings, and provides for this in the design and specification of internal building services and finishes. These measures limit damage caused by flood water and allow relatively quick recovery.
- This can be achieved by specifying wall and floor materials such as ceramic tiling that can be cleaned and dried relatively easily, provided that the substrate materials (e.g. blockwork) are also resilient. Electrics, appliances and kitchen fittings shall also be specified to be raised above floor level, and one-way valves shall be incorporated into drainage pipes.

Emergency response planning

- In addition to considering physical design issues for developments in flood vulnerable zones, the developer shall specify that the planning of new development also takes account of the need for effective emergency response planning for flood events in areas of new development.

- Applications for developments in flood vulnerable zones shall provide details that the following measures will be put in place and maintained:
 - Provision of flood warnings, evacuation plans and ensuring public awareness of flood risks to people where they live and work;
 - Coordination of responses and discussion with relevant emergency services i.e. Local Authorities, Fire and Rescue, Civil Defence and An Garda Síochána through the SFRA; and
 - Awareness of risks and evacuation procedures and the need for family flood plans.

Access and egress during flood events

- Applications for developments in flood vulnerable zones shall include details of arrangements for access and egress during flood events. Such details shall specify that: flood escape routes have been kept to publicly accessible land; such routes will have signage and other flood awareness measures in place, to inform local communities what to do in case of flooding; and this information will be provided in a welcome pack to new occupants.

Further information

Further and more detailed guidance and advice can be found at <http://www.flooding.ie> and in the Building Regulations.

33.2.7 On-site wastewater treatment systems

Where sewerage infrastructure is privately provided, the type and design shall be in compliance with the Environmental Protection Agency's 2021 *Code of Practice Domestic Waste Water Treatment Systems (Population Equivalent ≤ 10)* ('EPA Code of Practice') and/or the EPA's *Treatment Systems for Small Communities, Business, Leisure Centres and Hotels* manual.

The *Technical Guidance Document H (TGD H) - Drainage and Wastewater Disposal* has been amended to reference S.R. 66:2015 and remove references to national annexes. All works involving small wastewater treatment systems will have to comply with the requirements of S.R. 66:2015. Wastewater treatment systems should be located, constructed and maintained to the highest standards, to ensure minimal impacts on water quality and particularly groundwater quality.

All applications for planning permission involving the provision of an on-site wastewater treatment system must contain sufficient information to demonstrate that the proposed development will be environmentally sustainable.

In accordance with the EPA Code of Practice, a site assessment must be carried out for all planning applications involving provision of a new or retention of an existing on-site wastewater treatment system. The site assessment and design of the proposed system shall be carried out by a suitably qualified, competent, technical professional and shall be in accordance with the EPA Code of Practice.

Wetland systems are not considered satisfactory until national design and installation criteria are agreed by the Environmental Protection Agency. Proposals for the installation of reed beds must include adequate design, installation, certification, and long-term maintenance details. The design, and certification must be carried out by a suitably qualified, competent, technical professional.

Where a dwelling is served by an existing on-site wastewater treatment system, and where an extension increases the potential occupancy of a house (through the provision of additional bedrooms), the adequacy of the on-site wastewater treatment and disposal facilities should be demonstrated by the applicant.

Where adequacy cannot be demonstrated, the applicant will be required to upgrade the existing on-site wastewater treatment system to comply with the requirements of the EPA Code of Practice

The discharge or disposal of domestic wastewater from single houses to surface water bodies will not be permitted.

When a new urban wastewater treatment plant is constructed or existing plants are upgraded, new developments will be required to connect into these plants. Public wastewater infrastructure must be in place and must have adequate capacity prior to developments being occupied.

33.2.8 Waste management

Sligo County Council supports the sustainable management of waste and seeks to enable a significant reduction in the production of waste in County Sligo, in line with the principles of the Waste Action Plan for a Circular Economy (DECC, 2021).

The identification and provision of facilities for the reception of C&D waste should be integrated into the project planning and design processes. In order to ensure that this occurs, conditions will be included in the permissions granted to particular developments, requiring resource and waste management plans be drawn up prior to the commencement of the development.

These plans will be subject to approval by the Planning Authority and will include site inspections to ensure that all wastes generated during development are being handled in an environmentally-sound and sustainable manner.

The plans must be prepared and carried out in accordance with the EPA's *Best Practice Guidelines for the Preparation of Resource & Waste Management Plans for Construction & Demolition Projects* (2021).

The Council will continue to fulfil its duties under the Waste Management (certification of historic unlicensed waste disposal and recovery activity) Regulations 2008 (S.I. No 524 of 2008), including those in relation to the identification and registration of closed landfills.

33.2.9 Air and noise

Sligo County Council supports the implementation of the Noise Directive 2002/49/EC and associated Environmental Noise Regulations 2006 and will seek to minimise noise disturbance by implementing the Sligo Noise Action Plan 2018 (and all updates thereafter), including provisions relating to the design and operation of developments and associated relevant noise management standards and guidance.

The Council promotes the preservation of best ambient air quality compatible with sustainable development in accordance with the EU Ambient Air Quality and Cleaner Air for Europe (CAFE) Directive (2008/5/0/EC) and will ensure that all air emissions associated with new developments are within Environmental Quality Standards as out in the Air Quality Standards Regulations 2011 (SI No. 180 of 201) (or any updated/superseding documents).

33.2.10 Soil protection and remediation of contamination

Adequate and appropriate investigations shall be carried out into the nature and extent of any soil and groundwater contamination and the risks associated with site development works, where brownfield development is proposed. All undeveloped, contaminated sites shall be remediated to internationally accepted standards prior to redevelopment.

All applications shall be accompanied by a report from a qualified, expert consultant in remediation, incorporating international best practice and expertise on innovative ecological restoration techniques, including specialist planting and green initiatives that create aesthetically improved sites, healthy environments and contribute to the provision of new green open spaces as integral parts of newly created areas.

Treatment/management of any contaminated material shall comply as appropriate with the Waste Management Act 1996 (waste licence, waste facility permit), as amended, and under the EPA Act 1992 (Industrial Emissions licensing, in particular the First Schedule, Class 11 Waste), as amended. These measures will ensure that contaminated material will be managed in a manner that removes any risk to human health and ensures that the end use will be compatible with any risk.

33.2.11 Waste disposal

Any new commercial or residential development, urban or rural, must be designed and constructed with adequate space to securely store organic food/garden waste, dry recyclables and residual domestic waste in separate receptacles. The waste receptacles should be protected from vandals and vermin, should not create a nuisance to adjacent receptors and should not be in a public place. Adequate space and height should be provided to allow for unhindered access of refuse collection vehicles.

In the case of apartment schemes, the planning and design of the scheme shall have regard to the *Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments Guidelines for Planning Authorities* (DHLGH, 2022) and any future revision of these standards.

33.2.12 Site landscaping

All planning applications shall be accompanied by a landscape plan, designed to integrate the newly developed site into its surroundings. In the case of rural dwellings, the landscaping should provide shelter for the garden and house, encourage wildlife to the site and enhance biodiversity in the area.

Applicants shall have regard to the following requirements:

- Existing landscape features, such as stands of mature trees, hedgerows, rock outcrops and water features shall be identified and retained where appropriate.
- The maximum number of mature trees shall be retained when considering locations of buildings and site works.
- The landscape plan and the selection of plant species should take into consideration low-maintenance species. Generally, single trees require more expert attention than those in composite groups, which are less vulnerable to damage. Formal, single-tree lines have little effect as screen belts or buffers; for this reason, groupings of young trees will be encouraged.
- New planting should consist of native species, which are more valuable as wildlife habitat than non-native species. When considering what native tree and shrub species are appropriate to a particular location, the applicants should consult the Heritage Council's publication *Conserving and Enhancing Wildlife in Towns and Villages*.
- New planting, garden layout and design should have regard to the Heritage Council's publication *Gardening for Biodiversity*.
- The presence of invasive species on the development site must be indicated in the landscape plan. Where such species occur, detailed proposals for their management or eradication shall be submitted.

33.2.13 Undergrounding of cables

The Planning Authority will require that electricity and other utility cables are placed underground in the urban built-up areas, especially within zones designated for residential development and in Architectural Conservation Areas.

The Planning Authority will restrict overhead lines along Scenic Routes or in Visually Vulnerable landscapes, as it is a policy aim to preserve such sensitive landscape views from the visual intrusion of large-scale telecommunications and energy infrastructure.

33.2.14 Illumination and spread of light

The limitation of light pollution is important for nature conservation, residential amenity and energy efficiency. If external illumination is proposed, applicants shall provide documentation showing that light or glare from such illumination will not adversely affect pedestrian and vehicular traffic or adjacent properties.

External illumination shall be designed to minimise the incidence of light spillage into the surrounding environment. The design, however, should comply with the standards required for security, health and safety. Therefore all external lighting:

- shall be properly cowled and directed away from the public roadway;
- shall not be visible from any point more than 200 metres away from the light;
- shall not point upwards;
- shall be sensor controlled;
- should be energy efficient;
- shall be sensitive to protected species, where applicable.

Floodlighting in rural areas, and as part of advertising schemes in urban areas, will be discouraged.

33.2.15 Home-based working and enterprises

Home-based activities are defined as small-scale commercial activities, which are secondary to the use of the premises as a residence. They are permitted where the primary use of the building remains residential (this being reflected in factors such as the floor area of the business) and where the amenity of surrounding residences is not adversely affected.

When considering applications for such developments, the Planning Authority will examine:

- the nature and extent of the secondary use proposed;
- the potential effects on the amenity of surrounding residences;
- the levels of traffic that will be generated;
- the storage and collection of refuse;
- the potential for increased loading on any on-site wastewater treatment system.

Businesses which receive visitors and require over-the-counter services, business signage, advertising hoardings, security gates/grills and excessive security lights are not appropriate in a residential area.

33.2.16 Extensions to dwellings

Extensions to dwellings represent an important way of prolonging the life of a house, be it a vernacular dwelling, a more recent bungalow or other house type. In the case of a vernacular dwelling, extensions should be sympathetic to the scale of the existing building and should enhance its character.

The complete redesign and extension of poorly designed dwellings is acceptable, subject to the residential amenity and the design guidelines contained in this chapter. The Planning Authority will adopt a more conservative approach to proposed extensions to vernacular dwellings which contribute to the local character of an area.

The Council will require proposals for extensions to comply with the following:

- i. the extension should generally be subordinated to the main building (i.e. to be or appear smaller when seen from a public road). Exceptions will be considered when the original building is so small that a subordinate extension would not be able to reasonably accommodate the needs of the occupants;
- ii. the form and design should integrate with the main building, generally following window proportions, detailing and finishes, including texture, materials and colour;
- iii. the extension shall be designed to ensure that it will not result in overshadowing, loss of daylight or overlooking of adjacent residential properties.

Where an extension increases the potential occupancy of the dwelling (by adding bedrooms), the adequacy of the on-site wastewater treatment and disposal system should be demonstrated by the applicant. Where adequacy cannot be demonstrated, the applicant will be required to upgrade the on-site wastewater treatment system to comply with the requirements of the EPA's Code of Practice – *Wastewater Treatment and Disposal Systems Serving Single Houses (PE≤10)* (2021).

33.2.17 Independent living unit for a family member

The Planning Authority will consider the provision of an independent living unit for a family member subject to the following requirements:

- there is a demonstrated need to provide an independent unit for a family member (or more);
- the accommodation shall generally not exceed a gross floor area of 70 sqm;
- the unit shall be attached to and linked internally with the main dwelling, unless a more practical solution would involve the conversion of an existing ancillary building;
- the accommodation shall remain in a single ownership and shall revert to use of the main dwelling on the cessation of such use (normally secured by condition);
- the existing garden and curtilage of the main dwelling on the site shall not be subdivided;
- the applicant shall demonstrate the adequacy of the on-site wastewater treatment and disposal system to cater for the additional occupancy. Where adequacy cannot be demonstrated, the applicant will be required to upgrade the existing wastewater treatment system to comply with the requirements of the EPA's Code of Practice – *Wastewater Treatment and Disposal Systems Serving Single Houses (PE≤10)* (2021);

The requirements of Section 33.2.14 (i)-(iii) above also apply.

33.3 Residential development in urban areas

The following documents have informed the standards outlined in this section:

- ***Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments*** (DHLGH, 2022)
- ***Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets*** (DTTAS, 2019)
- ***Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas – Guidelines for Planning Authorities*** (DoEHLG, 2009) and ***Circular Letter NRUP 02/2021*** (DHLGH, 2021)
- ***Urban Design Manual: A Best Practice Guide*** (DoEHLG, 2009)
- ***Quality housing for sustainable communities – Design Guidelines*** (DHLGH, 2007)

The *Urban Design Manual* sets out a series of 12 design criteria for development, sub-divided into three groups: (i) Neighbourhood, (ii) Site, (iii) Home.

The above documents, along with the guidance and standards set out below and in Chapter 10 (Urban Development Principles) of this Plan, will be used in the assessment of planning applications for residential and mixed-use developments.

33.3.1 Multi-unit housing schemes

Multi-unit or multiple housing schemes are developments consisting of two or more dwellings, which are dependent upon communal services such as roads, water supply and sewerage networks.

Designers and developers of such schemes will be required to submit a **Design Statement** as part of the planning application (refer to **Section 26.1.6 Design Statement for multi-unit residential developments**).

The **Design Statement** must demonstrate how the architects, urban designers and engineers have complied with statutory guidelines and with the design guidance in this Plan. The Statement shall address the following:

1. Justification of proposed residential density
2. House types, design and mix of units, where applicable
3. Relationship between the scheme layout and the surrounding built environment
4. Circulation, parking and connectivity to surrounding areas, both existing and future
5. Design of streets, footpaths, cycle paths and public areas
6. Communal/public open space design and landscaping
7. Universal design and age-friendly provisions

More details in relation to the above requirements are provided set out in **Table 33.1** in the form of references to policies and standards contained in this Plan and in statutory guidance documents.

Table 33.1 Required contents of the Design Statement for multi-unit housing developments

Design Consideration	Demonstrate, with text, annotated diagrams and illustrations, how the proposed scheme complies with the requirements set out in this Plan and relevant national guidance documents
Justification of proposed residential density	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Section 26.1.2 of this Plan • <i>Sustainable Residential Development Guidelines (2009)</i> and subsequent <i>Circular Letter (2021)</i>
House types, design and mix of units	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sections 26.1.1, 26.1.3 26.1.4, 33.3.5 of this Plan • Criteria 03, 04, 10 and 12 of the <i>Urban Design Manual</i>
Relationship between the scheme layout and the surrounding built environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Criteria 01, 02 and 05 of <i>The Urban Design Manual</i>.
Circulation, parking and connectivity to surrounding areas, both existing and future	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Section 10.4.4 of this Plan and Sections 33.3.2, 33.3.11 below • Criteria 07 and 11 of the <i>Urban Design Manual</i>
Design of streets, footpaths, cycle paths and public areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Section 33.3.3 of this Plan • Criteria 06, 07, 08 and 12 of the <i>Urban Design Manual</i> • <i>Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets</i>
Communal or public open space design and landscaping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Section 33.3.6 of this Plan • Criteria 08, 11 and 12 of the <i>Urban Design Manual</i>
Universal Design and age-friendly housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sections 26.1.4, 26.1.5 and 32.2.3 of this Plan • <i>Building for Everyone - a Universal Design Approach</i> • <i>Age-Friendly Principles and Guidelines for the Planning Authority</i> • Criteria 03 and 09 of the <i>Urban Design Manual</i>

33.3.2 Circulation, parking and connectivity to surrounding areas

Sustainable neighbourhoods should be well served by public transport, easily accessible by bike and by foot, and provide for a good range of amenities and services within easy and safe walking distance of homes. In addition to the guidance set out in *Urban Design Manual* and *DMURS*, the following considerations shall be applied when designing new schemes:

- a. priority should be given to walking, cycling and public transport over private car transport;
- b. routes within the area should be as direct as possible, following – where feasible – existing desire lines. The construction of “gated estates” will be discouraged.
- c. street patterns should facilitate future expansion (both pedestrian/cycle and vehicular) beyond the site boundaries of any particular scheme;
- d. any culs-de-sac or ‘home zones’ should be designed to accommodate through-access and linkages for pedestrians and cyclists to adjoining areas; these linkages should be adequately overlooked by dwellings and should have a minimum width of 3 m;

33.3.3 Design of streets and public spaces

The layout of a residential area should first consider how best to arrange buildings and streets to create high quality spaces. The following should be noted:

- a. It should be easy for both residents and visitors to find their way around a residential area.
- b. Designers should create a distinctive identity for the place through variety in the layout and design of the scheme. This can be achieved in several ways:
 - by incorporating natural features (hedgerows/trees) and man-made landscape elements into the design and layout of the scheme;
 - by introducing focal points or landmarks at key locations;
- c. Traffic-calming measures – such as bends and reduced road width, tight turning radii – should be incorporated into the layout of the scheme to ensure low vehicle speed.
- d. Turning areas provided for emergency and refuse vehicles should be designed as hard-landscaped, dual-use spaces where large vehicles can turn, but should be primarily open spaces where children can play.
- e. New residential developments should incorporate ‘home zones’ and shared surfaces.
 - A ‘home zone’ is a residential area with streets designed as places where the pedestrians have priority over motor traffic.
 - In ‘home zones’, streets are designed with special materials, street furniture and a variation of road widths, to ensure that motorists drive with care, at low speed. Ideally, the surface is level and paved in sets and blocks rather than tarmac, to distinguish the ‘home zone’ from a normal road.
 - On-street car parking is normally permitted, but is often grouped at the end of blocks or terraces. The streets become places where children can play and people can interact.

33.3.4 Security and the orientation of buildings

Public space in residential schemes, such as green areas, playgrounds, playing fields, pedestrian and cycle links, should be designed with personal security in mind.

Houses should overlook streets and footpaths, pedestrian and cycle routes. Houses located on corner sites should be designed to be orientated towards both streets. Walkways should be well-lit and capable of being supervised from overlooking dwellings.

Residential layouts and house designs shall consider orientation according to the sun path, in order to maximise amenity, daylight and the benefits of passive solar gain.

33.3.5 Distance between dwellings

Houses and apartment buildings should be designed in a manner that minimises overlooking and overshadowing of adjoining properties, and avoids the loss of daylight. At the rear of dwellings, there should be adequate separation between opposing first floor windows.

In general, there should be a separation of about 22 m between the rear of 2-storey dwellings. This may be relaxed to 16 m if it can be demonstrated that the development is designed in such a way as to preserve the amenities and privacy of adjacent properties.

Careful positioning and design of opposing windows can prevent overlooking, thus enabling shorter back-to-back distances. Windows serving halls and other non-habitable spaces do not require the same degree of privacy as habitable rooms. A detailed statement in this regard, including illustrations, annotated diagrams and commentary will be required in order for the standard 22-m distance to be relaxed.

All proposals for residential development over three-storeys high shall provide acceptable separation distances between blocks, to avoid negative effects such as excessive overlooking, overbearing and overshadowing effects.

A minimum of 2.3 metres shall be provided between the side walls of detached, semi-detached and end-of-terrace dwellings, to ensure privacy and ease of access. A property boundary should occur mid-way along this separation.

33.3.6 Layout and design of apartments

The *Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments* (DHLGH, 2022) sets out minimum standards for floor areas of different types of apartments, and dimensions for storage spaces and certain rooms.

Table 33.2 Minimum net floor areas for apartments

Apartment type	Size
Studio	37 m ²
One-bedroom apartment	45 m ²
Two-bedroom apartment (3 persons)	63 m ²
Two-bedroom apartment (4 persons)	73 m ²
Three-bedroom apartment	90 m ²

The designers of apartment buildings should aim to achieve higher floor areas for all rooms, and only apply the minimum dimensions as a last resort, where there is no alternative.

The development of courtyards and new urban spaces within urban blocks will be considered, and fresh approaches to the design of urban spaces will be encouraged. Access to courtyards should generally be provided without breaking the existing street frontages, so as to assist in the creation of strong building lines.

33.3.7 Public open space in multi-unit housing schemes

Open space is required to be provided with all new housing developments. Suitably designed and landscaped areas of formal and informal recreational open space (incorporating children's play areas and associated equipment) should be an integral part of the design of new housing schemes. It is important that new open space is usable, safe and integrated within the scheme as part of a cohesive landscape structure.

The Council will encourage applicants to pool land in order to allow the provision of large multi-purpose amenity areas (e.g. parkland and playing pitches), as well as small incidental open spaces within housing areas.

Quantitative standards

A minimum of 15% of the development site area shall be reserved for the provision of communal open space, landscaped to a high standard.

On institutional lands, often containing large tracts of open space, any proposals for higher-density residential development must take into account the objective of retaining the "open character" of these lands, while at the same time ensuring that an efficient use is made of the land. In these cases, a minimum open space requirement of 20% of site area applies.

Qualitative standards

Public open space is one of the key elements defining the quality of any residential environment. The following qualitative standards should be followed when designing open space within a development:

Layout

- The layout and facilities proposed – particularly in larger schemes – should be designed to meet a range of user needs, including active and passive recreation.
- In many cases, smaller spaces of different sizes and types, designed for a particular use or range of uses, may be preferable to one large space in the centre of a scheme.
- Small areas of open space will be accepted if they are intended and designed as pocket parks where small children can play, if they contribute to the visual amenity of the area, and if they are adequately overlooked.
- Public open spaces should be suitably proportioned; narrow tracts which are difficult to maintain are not acceptable.
- Incidental (i.e. "left-over"), inaccessible or backland space will generally not be acceptable.
- Inaccessible green areas will only be permitted where they demonstrably perform a specific function, such as preserving key landscape features or providing necessary screening.

Safety

- Open spaces should be located where they do not cause an excessive security problem for households. Residents should feel safe at all times, both in their homes and within the green areas. Adequate supervision, passive surveillance, appropriate boundary treatment and public lighting contribute to creating a sense of security.
- As a rule, houses should front onto open spaces and provide passive surveillance. Rears of houses, blind gables or high boundary walls should generally not adjoin open spaces. Residential open space should be directly overlooked by houses on at least 75% of its perimeter.

Accessibility

- The main open space of a scheme should be within a short walk of the majority of homes proposed.

Shared use

- The potential for maximising the use of open space facilities (such as all-weather pitches) should be explored, for example, by sharing them with nearby schools.
- Sligo County Council may require that the open space provision of any development be located in a specific area, in order to assemble a suitably-sized open space, or to enhance the existing features of the area.

Equipment

- Developers should provide seating, waste bins, delineated play areas, lighting and planting.
- Multi-functional hard-landscaped surfaces – such as a tennis court or basketball court – as well as small green pitches, will also be considered as part of the required open space provision within residential developments.

Biodiversity

- Public open spaces, especially larger ones, can support natural habitats and can facilitate the preservation of flora and fauna.

33.3.8 Private open space

Houses

Private open space shall usually be provided behind the front building line of the house, and to the requirements set out below. Narrow strips of open space to the side of houses shall not be included in the private open space calculations.

Table 33.3 Minimum net garden sizes for houses

House type	Minimum size
3 bedrooms or fewer	60 m ²
4 or more bedrooms	75 m ²

Reductions in rear garden area or depth may be considered in the following exceptional circumstances, subject to a reasonable degree of amenity:

- High-density, infill developments, special-needs housing or retirement homes;
- houses on corner sites that perform an urban design role;
- to protect the established pattern of plot sizes of historic streets.

Rear gardens should generally be provided with a permanent and durable wall or fence with a height of 2 m, to ensure privacy.

Apartments

The provision of adequate, well-designed communal and private open space for apartment developments is considered a vital element in promoting sustainable urban living.

The document *Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments* (2022 revision) sets out minimum standards for balconies and patio areas as follows:

Table 33.4 Minimum net private open space for apartments

Apartment type	Size
Studio	4 m ²
One-bedroom apartment	5 m ²
Two-bedroom apartment (3 persons)	6 m ²
Two-bedroom apartment (4 persons)	6 m ²
Three-bedroom apartment	9 m ²

The designers of apartment buildings should aim to achieve higher floor areas for balconies and patios, and only apply the minimum dimensions as a last resort, where there is no alternative.

Private open space can also be provided in the form of rear gardens or patios for ground floor units, and roof gardens for upper-level units. A minimum depth of 1.5 m is required for a balcony or patio, extending for the full length of the external living room wall.

“Semi-private” open space should be provided within landscaped courtyards, having regard to the heights and orientation of adjoining blocks in terms of the levels of sunlight obtainable in those spaces.

33.3.9 Management companies

Estate management is necessary for maintaining the amenity, physical and visual quality of housing developments once they are completed.

Section 34(4)(i) of the Planning Act indicates that conditions can be attached to a planning permission regarding the maintenance or management of a housing development.

33.3.10 Naming of housing estates and streets

The names of residential developments and streets shall reflect local place names, particularly townlands and landscape features, or shall be linked to culture, history or personalities associated with the area. The proposed names must be approved by the Sligo County Council prior to the launching of any advertising campaign for the development.

Street name-plates, in Irish and English, should be erected on all housing estate streets in a location that is clearly visible, on walls, buildings and at junctions. Name-plates should be durable and maintenance-free, and be fixed where they are clearly visible to motorists, cyclists or pedestrians on approaching from both directions.

33.3.11 Parking standards for housing developments

Car parking spaces may be provided as a communal parking area, as bays integrated into the overall development, or on-street where road widths are adequate.

A mix of car-parking types will be required in new development proposals, so as to introduce variety and reduce the visual dominance of parking areas within the overall layout.

Within group parking areas, consideration will be given to the visibility of residents' cars from their homes and convenience. Landscaping should be used to soften the visual impact of group parking areas.

In some older residential areas, small front gardens and original features such as railings are part of the character of the area. In such cases, car parking in front gardens may not be permitted.

Appropriately designed on-street car parking will be acceptable where it facilitates higher residential densities in particular locations, and where traffic and pedestrian safety are not endangered.

Bicycle parking shall be provided in all new housing developments, for both residents and visitors.

Parking requirements are detailed in Table 33.9 (Bicycle parking) and Table 33.10 (Car parking) – refer to Section 33.9 Transportation, roads and parking standards.

33.4 Housing in rural areas

New development in rural areas should be absorbed and integrated successfully into the rural setting, i.e. development should harmonise or ‘read’ with the existing traditional pattern of development and not intrude on unspoilt landscapes.

The Council will accept either houses designed according to traditional or vernacular principles, or houses of high-quality, modern design where suitable. “Suburban”-style house design in rural areas is not acceptable.

All applications will be assessed on the basis of normal planning considerations, as detailed below.

Normal planning considerations

The “normal planning and sustainable development considerations” used in assessing planning applications include the following:

- How the proposal relates to the Core Strategy/Settlement Strategy, general policies and specific objectives of the County Development Plan;
- Whether there are any archaeological or other heritage factors involved;
- Whether the site is in a sensitive area, e.g. adjoining a scenic route, located in a sensitive rural landscape, in a visually vulnerable area, in a coastal zone or in a known flood risk zone;
- Whether the site is in an exposed location where the proposed development would be visually obtrusive;
- The settlement pattern of the area and the potential for over-development or ribbon development;
- Whether the siting, design and scale of the proposed development are appropriate to the surrounding natural and built environment;
- Whether the proposed site entrance is on a dangerous or high-speed stretch of road;
- Whether a large number of mature trees or an excessive length of roadside hedgerow need to be removed to provide an entrance;
- Whether there are any effluent disposal, surface water drainage or water supply concerns;
- Whether there are any pollution or other public safety concerns;
- Whether the proposed development would unduly affect other properties in the area (e.g. by overlooking, loss of daylight or overshadowing).

The list of criteria given above is not exhaustive. Advice on specific development proposals can be obtained as part of a pre-planning consultation.

3.4.1 Rural-generated housing need

Section 5.5.1 Types of rural areas and **Policy SP-S-9** (Chapter 5 in Volume 1 of this Plan) indicate that in **Rural Areas under Urban Influence (RAUI)**, the Planning Authority will accommodate those applicants with a demonstrable economic or social need to live in a rural area.

In order to demonstrate a housing need in RAUI, the following documentation will be required:

- a signed statement from the applicants detailing (as relevant) their current and historic housing circumstances, including past or current ownership of any other dwelling(s) within the respective rural area, details of any previous planning permissions obtained, intention for permanent occupation of the proposed dwelling and explaining the social and economic circumstances which require them to live in the respective rural area.
- land registry documentation showing ownership of the proposed site;
- map showing location of the principal family residence/original family home, where relevant;
- proof of link to the rural community in which the applicant wishes to reside including, if relevant, details of length of occupancy of any rented property within the rural community;
- any other details that may be deemed necessary by the Planning Authority, to be agreed at pre-planning stage.

33.4.2 Site selection – locating a house in the landscape

The placing of a house in the landscape is one of the most important aspects of building in the countryside. The Planning Authority will have regard to the following when considering a planning application for a dwelling in a rural area:

A. The Landscape Characterisation Map (refer to Chapter 23 Landscape Character)

- Applications for single houses will be assessed based on the landscape’s capacity to absorb new development. The proposed house must not have a visual impact that would negatively affect the character of the area.
- Visual impact will be assessed according to the landscape designations indicated on the Landscape Characterisation Map.
- The location of new houses in designated Visually Vulnerable Areas, in Sensitive Landscapes or along Scenic Routes will generally be discouraged. Exceptions may be made in the case of applicants who can demonstrate a need to reside in a particular area, in accordance with the housing policy in green belts and sensitive areas (refer to **Section 5.5.1 Types of rural areas** and **Policy SP-S-11**). However, new development must not obstruct scenic views available from or to the area adjoining the development site.

B. Site location

- Those planning to build a house in the countryside should avoid elevated or exposed locations such as hill slopes, ridge lines or vast open landscapes where the new building would appear intrusive or break the skyline or the shoreline.
- Instead of locating a house on an exposed site, the following types of site should be considered:
 - sites that cluster with existing development (other houses, sheds or agricultural development such as traditional farm complexes);
 - infill sites within existing ribbon development (in exceptional circumstances, sites at the end of ribbon development may be considered as an alternative to an exposed site);
 - sites where the new house can “round off” scattered development.
- A house should “nestle” into the site and not dominate the landscape or diminish the quality of scenic views of the surrounding countryside.

- Sites should be sheltered, where possible, by topography and by established natural boundaries. Already established mature trees and hedgerows can offer shelter, screening or backdrop to new houses.

C. Vehicular access

- Access from public roads should be managed safely and should require only minimal removal of existing roadside boundaries. The removal of hedgerows, trees or stone walls can have a negative impact on the rural character of an area.
- Access roads and driveways should be as short as possible and should follow the contours of the site to avoid creating a “scarring” effect on the landscape.

33.4.3 Rural house design

The Planning Authority welcomes innovative design, both contemporary and traditional. Buildings should be simple in terms of design and materials. All new rural housing designed in a traditional style should have regard to the principles of vernacular rural design (see Table 33.5).

Design Statement

The Planning Authority will require all planning applications for a single rural house to include a Design Statement (except for outline permission applications).

A Design Statement is a document in which the applicant (or the designer) explains why the proposed design is considered the most suitable for a particular site, having regard to the guidance set out in this chapter.

33.4.4 Site boundaries

The boundaries of a site, in particular roadside boundaries, have a great role to play in reducing the visual impact of a house on the landscape. Applicants shall have regard to the following guidance:

- Stone-faced concrete block walls, ranch, palisade, post-and-wire or other such fencing are not traditional features in the countryside, detract from the rural character of an area and should be avoided.
- All boundaries of a site should replicate the traditional boundary of existing fields in the area, e.g. dry stone walls, hedgerows, grassed earthen banks.
- Where possible, an existing roadside boundary of hedgerows or dry-stone walling should be retained, save where it may be interfering with the achievement of adequate sightlines, and there is no alternative site (or site access) available.
- Where a roadside boundary has to be set back to achieve sightlines, it should be reconstructed behind the required set back or replaced with a boundary which reflects the prevalent traditional field boundary in the area. This could take the form of a new hedgerow, a grassed bank or a dry-stone wall. The area between the road and the new boundary shall be left as a grass verge.

Table 33.5 A guide to designing a house in the rural vernacular style

Main features of rural vernacular house design	
Proportions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ensure good roof-to-wall proportions and a high solid-to-void relationship (i.e. greater wall surface than windows and doors). ■ Composition of windows and doors should be simple and, where suitable, symmetrical. ■ Aim to minimise the distance between the top of the ground-floor windows and the sill of the first-floor windows to achieve good proportions.
Scale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A large house needs a large site to ensure effective integration into its surroundings (either immediately or in the future, through planned screening). ■ Larger houses (e.g. in excess of 200 m²) should be sub-divided into smaller elements of traditional form to avoid bulky structures. ■ Have regard to the scale of surrounding buildings.
Form	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Use a simple plan form to give a clean roof shape – a long plan in preference to a deep plan. This will avoid the creation of a bulky shape. ■ Gable widths should generally not exceed 8 m, (recommended under 6.5 m for narrow plan form). ■ A traditional storey-and-a-half house with a narrow plan form is preferable to a dormer-style bungalow. ■ The form of a house affects the appearance of gable elevations. Gable elevations should be simple and roof pitch generally symmetrical.
Details	
Windows	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The size and shape of windows should be consistent on all elevations. ■ Windows should be well proportioned, with a vertical emphasis. ■ Dormer and bay windows should be used sparingly. ■ Roof lights are preferable to mid-roof dormer windows.
Roofs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Roof pitch should range from 35° to 42° ■ Natural slate or natural effect slate is preferable
Chimneys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Chimneys should generally be placed centrally on the ridge and should have vernacular proportions ■ Chimneys at a gable end should be flush with the gable.

Main features of rural vernacular house design	
Eaves	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The eaves of a typical vernacular dwelling would be flush with the wall, soffit omitted and slate would not project beyond the face of the wall. ■ Roofs would be constructed without projecting soffit at gable, and without boxed eaves detail.
Fascia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ An overhanging roof with a large fascia board adds bulk and clutter to a house. ■ Decorative fasciae or white PVC fasciae should be avoided.
Rainwater gutters / down pipes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ In vernacular houses, rainwater gutters would be affixed to a corbelled eaves course of concrete, brick or stone (as appropriate). ■ Simple, black, round plastic/cast-iron or aluminium rainwater gutters are recommended.
Doors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Doors should preferably be made of timber, painted and simple in style. ■ Doors should reflect the shape of the opening. ■ A fan light above the door, or a window to the side of the doorway is preferable to large glazed panels on the door.
Porches and conservatories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Porches and conservatories should be simple in design and in proportion to the building. ■ The use of mock classical-type porches should be avoided.
External finishes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Plastered or rendered walls are suitable finishes for a rural house. ■ Brick, random rubble stone and pebble dash are not traditional finishes for a rural dwelling and should be avoided.

33.4.5 Ancillary buildings

Sheds and garages are common features of rural residential properties. Such structures can have a significant visual impact on the landscape. The Planning Authority will carefully assess the visual impact of ancillary buildings.

In order to minimise the combined visual impact of houses and ancillary structures, sheds or garages should generally be single-storey and positioned to the side or rear of the house, unless it can be shown that the development cannot be seen from the public road or surrounding landscape.

33.4.6 Pattern of development

Ribbon development and urban sprawl in the countryside and at the edge of towns or villages will be discouraged.

Ribbon development means frontage development along a road where there is no other development in the backlands. It is defined as five or more houses located within a 250m stretch of road (one side or both sides).

Such development is undesirable because it creates numerous vehicular access points, landlocks potential future development land (on the edges of urban areas), creates uneconomic demands for services (e.g. water supply, drainage, footpaths, street lighting) and intrudes on public views of the rural setting.

Urban sprawl is development expansion outside towns and villages, in ribbon form or otherwise. It gives rise to the same problems associated with ribboning, but may have an even greater visual impact, as it leads to a gradual 'suburbanisation' of the countryside.

In certain circumstances, especially where ribbon development is substantially in place, infill development may be considered. Similarly, where urban sprawl can be 'rounded off' or significantly ordered through careful siting of new development, such development may be considered.

33.5 Retail development standards

33.5.1 General principles in assessing retail proposals

In assessing planning applications for retail development, the Planning Authority will be guided by DECLG's *Retail Planning Guidelines* (2012). The Guidelines have five key policy objectives:

- ensure that retail development is plan-led;
- promote city/town centre vitality through a sequential approach to development;
- secure competitiveness in the retail sector by actively enabling good quality development proposals to come forward in suitable locations;
- facilitate a shift towards increased access to retailing by public transport, cycling and walking;
- deliver quality urban design outcomes.

33.5.2 Permitted locations for retail development

The preferred locations for new retail development are Sligo Town Centre, the centres of Support Towns and, where appropriate, neighbourhood centres in Sligo Town Centre and other town and village centres as designated in the County retail hierarchy (refer to **Figure 8.A in Chapter 8 Retail Strategy**).

If no suitable sites are available in a town centre, edge-of-centre sites may be considered. Development proposals for such sites must demonstrate compliance with the sequential approach (refer to **Section 33.5.3 below**).

There is a general presumption against large out-of-town retail centres, in particular those located adjacent or close to existing, new or planned national roads or motorways. New development should be accessible by a variety of transport modes, including public transport.

33.5.3 Sequential approach to the location of retail development

Planning applications for retail development proposals must comply with the following criteria set out in the Retail Planning Guidelines to ensure that the site chosen is the most suitable and best available for the type of retailing proposed:

- location;
- suitability of use;
- size and scale;
- accessibility.

Where the applicants for a new retail development have demonstrated to the satisfaction of the Planning Authority that the proposal complies with the policies and objectives of the Development Plan, additional supporting studies are not required.

However, where the location of a proposed retail development application is not consistent with the policies and objectives of the Development Plan, then that proposal must be subject to the sequential approach (see below).

Order of priority

Proposals being considered under the sequential approach must demonstrate that they have addressed relevant principles set out below.

Town centres

Retail development should be located in Sligo Town Centre or in the centre of *Support Towns or Satellite Villages*. The Planning Authority will consider allowing retail development in edge-of-centre or out-of-centre locations **only** where all other options have been exhausted.

Edge-of-centre sites

Retail development in an edge-of-centre site will be considered only where the applicant can demonstrate to the satisfaction of the Planning Authority there are no sites (or potential sites including vacant units) within Sligo Town Centre or in another relevant town centre that are (a) suitable (b) available and (c) viable.

Out-of-centre sites

Retail development on an out-of-centre site will be considered only in exceptional circumstances, where the applicant can demonstrate to the satisfaction of the Planning Authority there are no sites (or potential sites including vacant units) within Sligo Town Centre or in another relevant town centre that are (a) suitable (b) available and (c) viable.

33.5.4 Applications for change of use or extension

The sequential approach shall be applied to proposals for the extension or material change of use of existing developments, where they are of a scale which could have a significant impact on the function of Sligo Town Centre and any relevant retail centre in the County retail hierarchy.

33.5.5 Retail Impact Assessment (RIA)

A Retail Impact Assessment (RIA) may be required as part of a planning application for retail developments, where the Planning Authority considers it necessary, particularly for proposals involving large-scale developments.

In accordance with the *Retail Planning Guidelines* (DoECLG, 2012), through the RIA, the applicant must address the potential of the proposed development to have the following effects:

- A. support the retail development strategy for Sligo Town Centre, all the other centres designated in the County retail hierarchy, and not materially diminish the prospect of attracting private sector investment into one or more such centres;
- B. increase employment opportunities and promote economic regeneration;
- C. increase competition and attract further consumers to the area;
- D. respond to consumer demand without diminishing the range of activities and services that an urban centre can support;
- E. cause an adverse impact on Sligo Town Centre or any other town/retail centre, either by itself or cumulatively with recent developments or other outstanding planning permissions (which have a realistic prospect of implementation), sufficient to undermine the quality of the centre or its wider function in the promotion and encouragement of the arts, culture, leisure.

- F. cause an increase in the number of vacant properties in the primary retail area that is likely to persist in the long term;
- G. ensure a high standard of access both by public transport, foot and private car so that the proposal is easily accessible by all sections of society;
- H. link effectively with Sligo Town Centre or relevant town/retail centre, so that there is likely to be commercial synergy.

33.5.6 Transport impact assessment

A Traffic and Transport Assessment (TTA) may be required for retail developments over 1,000 sq.m. gross floorspace as set out in the *Traffic Management Guidelines* (DoT and DTO, 2003) and the *Traffic and Transport Assessment Guidelines* (TII, 2014). The TTA should also address urban design impacts of proposed public and private transport proposals.

The *Planning Guidelines on Spatial Planning and National Roads* (DECLG, 2012) set out additional advice and requirements in relation to transport matters.

33.5.7 Layout and design of retail developments

Generally, structures should avoid presenting blank frontages to streets. The frontage onto a street should represent the actual retail selling space, to facilitate access for pedestrians and animate the streetscape.

Service yards and car parking should be located at the rear of developments, away from street frontages. Parking areas should be well lit and incorporate landscaping appropriate to their design and setting.

33.5.8 Design Statement

All proposals for new retail development shall have regard to the DAHG's *Retail Design Manual – A Companion Document to the Retail Planning Guidelines for Planning Authorities* (2012).

Planning applications with more than 1000 sq.m of new or additional gross floorspace and proposals in sensitive urban settings shall be accompanied by a **Design Statement** indicating the rationale for the design approach adopted and why the design proposed is considered the most suitable solution for the site in question.

At a minimum, developers shall provide an illustrated report setting out how the development proposed meets with the principles set out in the Design Manual and how it complies with the relevant Development Plan (or relevant Local Area Plan) policies and objectives.

33.5.9 Shopfronts and signage

The majority of shopfront alterations, including the removal and replacement of old shopfronts, the installation of signage, lighting, canopies or roller-shutters, require planning permission.

The Planning Authority will encourage the retention and refurbishment of historic shopfronts in lieu of their removal and replacement with a modern shopfront.

Planning applications for new shopfronts shall include drawings showing the entire building, both as existing and proposed. Elevations of adjoining buildings should also be submitted showing the proposed shopfront in its street context.

The design of new shopfronts and the modification or conservation of existing shopfronts shall comply with the guidance in this section.

Signage

- A.** Signs should not clutter or dominate the façade of a building, nor the entire street frontage, and should not detract from or obscure architectural features of the building. Projecting signs, banners and flagpoles will be limited in size and number to prevent clutter.
- B.** The size, design, colour and material of signs should be subdued. They should generally be positioned well below the first floor.
- C.** Windows should be free of advertising stickers, notices etc.
- D.** Projecting signs should be located at fascia level and should be limited to one per building frontage. The size of hanging signs should be proportionate to the building. They should not dominate the façade or obscure architectural details.
- E.** Lettering and symbols should be proportionate to the size of the sign. Hand-painted signage or low-relief boards should be used as opposed to “box” signs.
- F.** The use of hand-painted signs or individual lettering placed on existing shopfronts or placed directly on the façade of a building (where no shopfront exists) will be encouraged.
- G.** The construction of name-plate fasciae linking two or more buildings will generally not be permitted.
- H.** The height of signs and advertising on a building will be controlled. Advertising on upper floors and beyond the eaves will generally not be permitted.
- I.** Plastic or vinyl banner-type signs on the exterior of buildings will be discouraged. Only high-quality materials (e.g. wood, metal etc.) shall be used in Architectural Conservation Areas and other sensitive areas.
- J.** Signs shall not be placed above eaves or parapet levels and shall not project above the roofline of buildings.

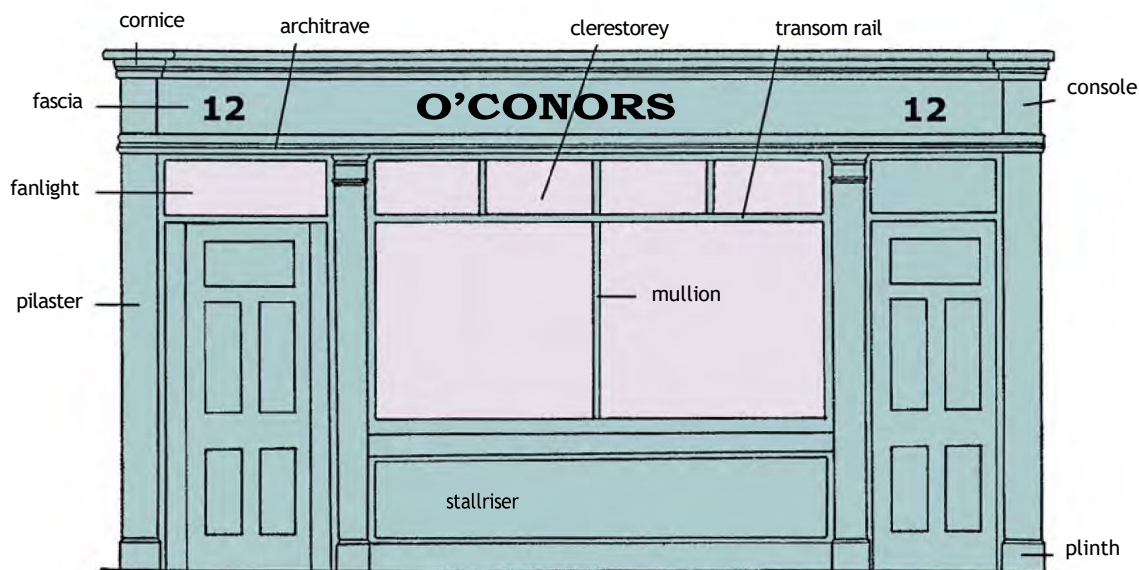


Fig. 33.A Design elements of a traditional Irish shopfront

Lighting

- K.** External illumination of buildings will generally not be permitted, but careful floodlighting of key buildings of particular architectural quality may be considered.
- L.** Limited and discrete lighting of hanging signs and fasciae may be allowed in the case of businesses open in the evening – such as restaurants, pubs and clubs – but not in addition to floodlighting. In such cases, the principal purpose of the external lighting should be to make signs legible at night. The lighting should not be a feature in itself, and the fittings should be as small and unobtrusive as possible.
- M.** The back-lighting of signage in the form of individual letters is encouraged.
- N.** Internal illumination of signs will not be permitted, except for pharmacies.

Composition of traditional-style shopfronts

- O.** Traditional-style shopfronts should comprise an appropriately scaled and proportioned fascia supported by two pilasters and framed by two consoles, a cornice and architrave. A fanlight should sit above a door and a stall riser should frame the shopfront from the ground level.
- P.** The fascia and cornice should extend as high as the first-floor window cills, subject to the scale and proportions of the shopfront and building.
- Q.** The width and detailing of pilasters and cornices should reflect that of existing original shopfronts in the town, subject to the scale and proportion of the shopfront and building.
- R.** Stall risers should not exceed the base of the pilasters or the depth of the fascia, whichever is less (circa 45 cm), in order to provide balance to the shopfront.

Composition of contemporary shopfronts

- S.** Contemporary shopfronts should include a well-defined fascia (c. 60-90 cm deep) and have a strong vertical emphasis with a substantial base or plinth.
- T.** In certain contexts, it may be appropriate to omit a fascia and apply lettering directly to the building or windows.
- U.** The fascia should respect the alignment and plot width of neighbouring buildings.

Details

- V.** Doors should be in a style and should use materials which are compatible with the rest of the shopfront and building.
- W.** Roller shutters should be placed internally, behind window displays, and they should be 'see-through'. External roller shutters will not be permitted.
- X.** Traditional awnings are preferable to fixed canopies.
- Y.** Independent access to upper floors should be retained where possible.

33.6 Heritage and historic environment standards

33.6.1 Impact on architectural heritage

In order to protect, strengthen and improve the presentation and the general character of the County's built heritage, alterations and interventions to Protected Structures shall be executed to a high conservation standard and shall not detract from their significance or value.

Where an application relates to a development which would consist of, or comprise the carrying out of works to a protected structure, the planning authority will have regard to the *Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines for Planning Authorities* (DAHG, 2011) and the following should accompany the planning application:

- drawings of elevations of the main features of any building within the curtilage of the protected structure which would be materially affected by the proposed development;
- photographs, plans and other particulars as are necessary to show how the development would affect the character of the structure;
- brief written statement describing and justifying the proposed works and the philosophy that informs their methodology;
- photographs sufficient to describe (i) the overall appearance of the exterior of the protected structure, including all exposed sides, its setting and its relationship with surrounding structure; (ii) any interior spaces or features that it is proposed to change; (iii) details of the exterior and interior sufficient to describe the structure's character and materials of construction.
- conservation impact assessment prepared by a qualified and experienced conservation architect; the assessment should include a report on the condition of the protected structure.

The conservation impact assessment shall be undertaken by an RIAI-accredited architect or practice⁴ (or foreign equivalent for non-Irish architects or practices), where appropriate, detailing the impacts of the proposed development upon the special interest and character of the surrounding architectural heritage. The planning authority shall be consulted at an early stage in this regard, in order to determine whether there is a need for such an assessment or for specific mitigation measures.

The inclusion of a structure on the Record of Protected Structure (or on the proposed RPS) ensures that any works, which would materially affect the character of that structure, or any element of that structure, will require planning permission, even where those works would normally be considered exempted development.

Similarly, any works within an Architectural Conservation Area (ACA) which materially affects the character of the ACA, will require planning permission, where those works would normally be considered exempted development.

The alteration of a building or other structure on the RPS, other than an alteration consisting of the painting of any previously painted part of such a building or structure, shall not be carried out without having secured planning permission or a declaration of exemption by the planning authority. Demolition, in all but the most exceptional circumstances, will be resisted.

⁴ To assist clients in the selection of a practice able to provide them with professional services in architectural conservation, the Royal Institute of Architects of Ireland (RIAI) developed an accreditation system to recognise differing levels of specialist expertise. There are three grades of accreditation, Grade I being the highest and Grade III the basic entry level to the system. Detailed information can be found on the website of the RIAI at www.riai.ie.

When assessing planning applications relating to buildings included in the RPS, the planning authority will have regard to the artistic, architectural or historic interest, the design, quality and character of surrounding development and the condition (which should be based on a report prepared by a qualified conservation architect) of the protected structure.

Sligo County Council will promote best conservation practice and encourage the use of appropriately qualified professional advisors and traditional building skills practitioners with recognised conservation expertise, for works to protected structures, or historic buildings in an Architectural Conservation Area (ACA).

33.6.2 Development in historic streetscapes

The integrity of the County’s historic streetscapes depends on the maintenance of traditional historic buildings and the careful design of refurbishment and new-build projects. The guidance set out in the table below establishes principles of design and materials which should be adhered to as appropriate when proposing interventions in a traditional streetscape.

High-quality, modern design proposals may deviate from this guidance, subject to successful integration into the surrounding environment. This should be demonstrated by showing the building’s elevation in the context of the streetscape where it is proposed to be inserted.

Table 33.6 A guide to new development in historic streetscapes

Feature	Heritage guidance
Proportions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ensure good proportions in roof to wall ratio reflecting that of neighbouring historic buildings and a high solid to void relationship (i.e. greater wall surface than windows and doors) ■ Building compositions (of windows and doors) should be simple in style and may be symmetrical reflecting the existing rhythm of the streetscape. ■ Aim to minimise the distance between the top of the ground floor windows and the sill of the first-floor windows to achieve good proportions.
Gable width	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Traditional town buildings generally have a narrow plan, 5-6 m. ■ Infill development should reflect the gable widths of adjoining buildings if this affects the roof profile or if the gable is seen from the street.
Plot width	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ New development should respect the scale and rhythm of the existing streetscape and maintain the traditional plot width and where plots have been assembled, designs shall reflect the grain of the streetscape with due recognition of the original plot widths.
Details	
Chimneys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Traditionally chimneys were constructed to achieve balance and formal appeal. ■ All new buildings should have regard to the rhythm of the streetscape, including the provision of chimneys. ■ Chimneys (c.1.2 m) shall be placed centrally on the ridge of the roof. ■ Where chimneys are located at gables, they should be flush with the face of the gable wall.

Feature	Heritage guidance
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ If a building is to be replaced, the chimneys of the original structure should be replicated in the new build.
Ridge Tiles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ridge tiles should reflect the traditional local characteristics and should be in a non-contrasting colour to the roof.
Slates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Natural slate (salvaged or imported) is preferable.
Roofs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ All roofs shall be pitched, unless dictated otherwise by the streetscape or original building. ■ All roofs shall be constructed so that there is no projecting soffit or barge at the gable and no boxed eaves detail.
Verges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Verges on a historic street should generally comprise render flush to slate and shall have regard to local traditional detailing.
Eaves	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Eaves should be flush with the wall where appropriate, fascia and soffit omitted and slate shall not project beyond face of wall as traditionally detailed. ■ Eaves should comprise an advanced course of stone, concrete or plastered masonry.
Rainwater goods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Rainwater gutters should be affixed to a corbelled eaves course of concrete, brick or stone (as appropriate). ■ The profile and shape should reflect traditional forms, i.e. circular, square, rectilinear. ■ Simple black round plastic rainwater gutters and down-pipes are recommended. White goods shall not be permitted.
Wall finishes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Finishes of new or redeveloped buildings within a traditional streetscape should match the traditional materials prevalent on the street. ■ Traditional finishes include lime-based renders, natural cement renders, wet dash in its natural or painted form, smooth or coursed painted renders, random coursed stone, cut stone. ■ Inappropriate use of finishes and materials such as dry pebble dash, brick, un-rendered random rubble stone will not be considered acceptable.
Windows	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The size and shape of windows should be well proportioned with a vertical emphasis having regard to the proportions prevalent on the street. ■ When appropriate, the use of painted timber sliding sash windows is encouraged. ■ The use of white PVC is not considered appropriate and will not normally be permitted. ■ Dormer windows and roof lights (preferably conservation style) may be considered on a traditional streetscape, subject to appropriate placement and detailing.
Cills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Cills shall be a minimum 100 mm deep stone (with a traditional bull-nosed profile). Concrete may be considered where appropriate.
Doors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ All doors fronting onto the street shall be hardwood timber in traditional style and dimensions. Fan lights should be above the door and not incorporated into the door.

33.6.3 Impact on archaeology

At the earliest opportunity in planning a development, it is advised to ascertain the archaeological potential of the site from existing records. The **Sites and Monuments Record** is an online database maintained by the National Monuments Service (NMS) of all known or suspected archaeological sites and monuments. The Historic Environment Viewer (HEV) is the National Monuments Service's online interactive map/search facility, providing access to all records stored on its national database of sites and monuments. Where new development is being considered, it is important to visit the HEV online in order to assess the archaeological potential of a site.

Where archaeological heritage is likely to be affected by a proposed development, applicants will be advised of their obligations under the National Monuments (Amendment) Act 1994.

Developments that impact on the county's archaeological heritage will be treated as follows:

- within **zones of archaeological notification** (formerly known as zones of archaeological protection), archaeological remains will be investigated, recorded and/or preserved;
- outside the zone of archaeological notification, where – in the opinion of the planning authority – developments would involve major ground disturbances, conditions relating to archaeology may be applied;
- the planning authority will require that archaeological investigations be undertaken by a licensed archaeologist prior to the commencement of development;
- the applicant will be liable for the cost of archaeological investigations;
- the Planning Authority may require the applicant to submit a report, prepared by a suitably qualified archaeologist, on the archaeological implications of the proposed development.
- The planning authority may impose conditions requiring:
 - professional archaeological supervision of site excavations;
 - archaeological monitoring, testing and/or assessment;
 - preservation of all or part of any archaeological remains.
- the planning authority may impose conditions which modify the development, in order to facilitate archaeological investigation or preservation;
- applicants will be encouraged to submit an archaeological assessment and a method statement outlining construction procedures as part of their planning application.

33.7 Miscellaneous commercial developments standards

33.7.1 Petrol filling stations and ancillary uses

When considering all applications of this nature, attention should be given to the safety aspects of circulation and parking within the station forecourt and the following:

- the preferred location for petrol filling stations is within the 50-60 km/h speed limits of settlements;
- a minimum street frontage of 30 m will be required;
- a low wall of approximately 0.6 m in height shall be constructed along the frontage, with allowance for two access points, each 8-m wide;
- no advertising or commercial signage shall obstruct visibility over the site access points, front boundary wall or wing walls (see also **Section 33.8.6** below);
- all external lighting should be directed away from the public road. Excessive use of large illuminated signs will not be permitted;
- the pump island shall be not less than 7 m from the footpath or road boundary.

Consideration will be given for the development of small shops selling confectionery, groceries and newspapers. Applications may include ancillary shops of up to 100 sq.m. net sales area, without being subject to the sequential test.

Where the net retail floorspace is in excess of 100 sq.m., the ancillary shop will be assessed as if it were an independent retail unit, in line with the sequential test. The associated filling station is of no consequence in these circumstances, and such proposals will be assessed as if there were no petrol filling facilities present.

All surface run-off from forecourt areas generated on site shall be discharged to adequately designed interceptors in accordance with best practice. Class 1 type interceptors shall be required for all discharges to the public surface water drainage system or to surface waters.

All petrol filling station applications, including improvement or extension, will require Autotrack Analysis, and a Road Safety Audit.

33.7.2 Bars, night-clubs and amusement centres

In order to maintain an appropriate mix of uses and enhance night life in the towns of County Sligo, the Council will prevent an excessive concentration of pubs, bars, night-clubs and hot-food take-aways in any particular area.

The Planning Authority will ensure that the intensity of any proposed use is in keeping with both the character of the area (i.e. residential, mixed-use, etc.) and of the adjoining businesses.

The following issues will be taken into account in the assessment of applications for the above uses:

- the impact of the proposed development in terms of noise and odour emissions. Noise and odour mitigation measures will be required to be submitted with any planning application;
- effects of the development on the amenity of nearby residents, such as general disturbance, hours of operation, car parking, litter etc;
- the protection of the amenity of dwellings, businesses, community facilities and other existing adjacent development.

New buildings must be designed to prevent excessive noise or odour emissions, and with adequate provision for refuse disposal, storage and collection. The design shall respect the character of the street and the buildings, and comply with the guidance set out in **Sections 33.2 General standards** and **33.5 Retail development standards**.

33.7.3 Fast-food takeaways

Concentration of fast-food takeaways will not be permitted in any particular area. Regard will be had to the impact of fast-food takeaways on the residential and visual amenities of an area, including noise, odour and litter.

The Planning Authority may impose restrictions on opening hours as a condition of a planning permission.

33.7.4 Guest accommodation

Planning permission is required for all conversions of dwellings to guest accommodation where the number of bedrooms used for such purposes exceeds four.

The Planning Authority will consider the following issues when assessing a change of use or a new development proposal:

- car parking demands;
- wastewater infrastructure or treatment capacity;
- the amenity of adjoining residential properties;
- the nature of proposed signage;
- the need to avoid concentrations of bed-and-breakfast uses in residential neighbourhoods.

In rural areas, the guidance set out in **Section 33.4 Housing in rural areas** regarding design, siting, landscaping etc will apply.

In general, the Planning Authority will direct proposals for multi-unit holiday home developments into existing serviced settlements, particularly those with special coastal tourism functions, subject to adequate wastewater treatment capacity (refer to **Section 26.5.1 Holiday homes and P-HHD-1**).

33.7.5 Industry, wholesale and repository warehousing

Wholesale and repository warehousing involves structures designed mainly for storage and as such, differs from retail warehousing which includes for the sale of goods to visiting members of the public. These are clearly different uses and as per the class of use, as outlined in the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended) (Schedule 2, Part 4) (retail warehousing falls within Class 1, while wholesale and repository warehousing falls within Class 5).

Special consideration may be given to such developments where they could help in the regeneration of an area or where they would make a significant contribution to its character.

Adequate space must be available for on-site storage of materials and refuse, loading and unloading, on-site circulation and parking. Adequate provision should be made for storage of goods and materials within the building or else in a designated storage area.

A landscaping scheme for the site will be required. A minimum open space requirement of 10% will apply. The open space should be provided such that it may function as an effective amenity area.

Industrial and repository warehousing developments should present a pleasant aspect to the public road via tree planting, the judicious placing of advertising structures, screening of open storage areas and unobtrusive loading and parking space.

Access roads to industrial estates will normally have a minimum overall reservation width of 13 m, consisting of a 7-m carriageway, two 1.5-m grass verges and two 1.5-m footpaths. Main access routes to industrial lands will also be required to provide reservations for cycleways.

Generally, the building line must be at least 9 m from the road boundary, with car parking provided to the side or rear of buildings. There shall be a landscaped/planting strip on all principal road frontages.

33.7.6 Care facilities, nursing homes, retirement villages

In general, nursing homes and care facilities should be integrated into established residential areas, where there is adequate wastewater capacity and where residents can expect reasonable access to local services.

A change of use from residential to a care facility, to care for more than six persons with an intellectual or physical disability, will require planning permission.

In assessing planning applications for nursing home developments and for change of use of dwellings or other buildings to nursing care or elderly care facilities, a range of factors will be considered including:

- the zoning of the site;
- standards set out in *National Standards for Residential Care Settings for Older People in Ireland* (HIQA, 2016) (or any updated or superseding document);
- amenities of adjoining properties;
- the availability of adequate off-street parking;
- the availability of suitable private open space;
- proximity to local services and facilities.

33.7.7 Burial grounds and crematoria

Proposals for burial grounds or crematoria shall be address the following:

- traffic impact;
- car parking;
- potential impacts on the amenities of existing properties.

In general, crematoria should be located within or on the edge of built-up areas. All proposals should demonstrate compliance with relevant legislation and guidelines, and provide details in relation to landscaping, storage, waste disposal and groundwater protection, where appropriate.

Hydrogeological surveys and monitoring of the groundwater may be required for burial grounds.

33.8 Advertising standards

33.8.1 Planning requirements

Certain smaller advertisements and signs are exempted development⁵. Where permission is required (either planning permission or license) for the display of advertising signs this will be subject to the following requirements:

Table 33.7 Types of advertising signage

Type of sign	Planning requirements
Signs on public property i.e. the road verge, advertising commercial goods or businesses.	Such signs will not normally be permitted. Where exceptional circumstances apply, a licence may be issued by the County Council.
Signs on private property advertising commercial goods.	Such signs will not normally be permitted. Where exceptional circumstances apply, planning permission will need to be obtained.
Signs on the facade of buildings	Such signs normally require planning permission subject to the criteria for exempted development as per the Regulations.
Directional signage in the form of finger post signs for tourist attractions and accommodation.	Such signs require a license. Application forms are available on the Sligo County Council website.

33.8.2 Advertising signage along public roads

The placing of advertising signage along public roads detracts from the amenity of the rural setting and interferes with views and scenic landscapes.

Sligo County Council will generally not permit signage or advertising structures for commercial enterprises, goods or services along public roads, whether on private or public property.

33.8.3 Directional signage for tourism and key destinations

Signage for key tourism attractions, tourist routes, certain community facilities (e.g. schools, hospitals) or important buildings (government or public offices) will be permitted only on the subject site, at the entry points to the host town or village, or in the vicinity of road junctions leading to the facility. At these locations, signage for all such destinations should be grouped on a single structure. Sligo County Council will determine the necessity for directional signs relating to public institutions.

⁵ Schedule 2, Part 2 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended).

Directional signs for local tourist attractions removed from the main traffic routes may be permitted under an annual licence provided that:

- they are finger-post signs only;
- the area of the sign is maximum 0.7 sq.m;
- the information contained on the sign is of a directional nature only;
- the signs do not give rise to a traffic hazard.

Applications for signage on national roads shall comply with the requirements of the *Policy on the Provision of Tourist and Leisure Signage on National Roads* (NRA, 2011). All lettering, logos and symbols shall be subject to the approval of Sligo County Council.

33.8.4 Advertising on buildings

Signage and its illumination on buildings should comply with the detailed guidance set out in **Section 33.5.9 Shopfronts and signage**.

33.8.5 Advertising hoardings

Advertising hoardings, including electronic displays, tri-vision and three-dimensional signs, have a significant impact on the visual appearance and character of an area.

In general, such signs will not be permitted on or in the vicinity of protected structures or on the façades of buildings. Temporary advertising may be permitted where they help screen building sites and derelict sites awaiting redevelopment, provided that they form an integral part of the temporary hoarding around the site.

Outdoor advertising hoardings in the open countryside will normally not be permitted.

The practice of parking trailers or other mobile objects bearing advertisements in fields adjoining roads is harmful to the visual amenities of the respective areas. Such mobile structures represent a traffic hazard because they distract motorists. Advertising in this manner will normally not be permitted.

33.8.6 Signage at petrol filling stations

Only minimal advertising will be permitted at petrol filling stations. Generally, such advertising shall be restricted to a single, pillar-type structure, not exceeding 4.5 metres in height.

Canopies should be appropriate to their setting in terms of height and design (including lighting).

The forecourt and adjacent footpath shall not be used for advertising, whether permanent or temporary.

33.9 Transportation, roads and parking standards

33.9.1 Access onto national roads

When considering any application for development on or adjacent to a national road, the Planning Authority will have regard to national policy set out in the following documents:

- ***Spatial Planning and National Roads Guidelines*** (2012);
- ***Traffic and Transport Assessment Guidelines*** (2014).

The *Spatial Planning and National Roads Guidelines* (SPNRG) require avoiding the creation of new access points or the generation of increased traffic from existing accesses to national roads at points where speed limits greater than 60 km/h apply. This is regardless of the housing circumstances of the applicant.

The SPNRG provide for limited access in transitional zones, i.e. between the 60 km/h to the 50 km/h speed limits on the approach to urban centres, to facilitate orderly urban development.

Access to national roads within 50 km/h speed limits will be considered by the Planning Authority subject to normal road safety, traffic management and urban design criteria for built-up areas.

Sight distances for access on to national roads

The sight distances required for access onto national primary and secondary roads are set out in Table 33.8. The sight distances are measured from the access point to the near-side edge of the carriageway in accordance with the *Design Manual for Roads and Bridges*.

The driver must be able to have full vision along the required sight line distance from a driver's eye height of 1.05 m to an object with a height of 1.15 m.

Table 33.8 Sight distances required for access onto national primary and secondary roads

Design speed	100 km/h	85 km/h	70 km/h	60 km/h	50 km/h	42 km/h
Sight distance	215 m	160 m	120 m	90 m	70 m	50 m

33.9.2 Access onto regional roads

In many cases, investment has improved the alignment, surface and safety of major stretches of regional roads, which carry significant volumes of traffic. The protection of such capacity and preservation of enhanced safety standards is important in ensuring that these roads can continue to perform important local and regional transportation functions.

Regional roads create vital safe and efficient links between the main urban settlements of the county and beyond. Some routes in particular are considered strategically important. Sligo County Council will endeavour to protect the carrying capacities of such roads in the interest of the economic viability of the county.

The consideration of new access points onto regional roads will be assessed with a view to:

- avoiding unnecessary new accesses, for example where access could be provided off a nearby local road;

- ensuring that necessary new entrances are located in such a manner as to provide effective visibility for both users of the entrance and users of the public roads, so that opportunities for conflicting movements are avoided, taking account of all relevant considerations such as traffic levels, typical vehicle speeds, plans for realignment;
- avoiding the premature obsolescence of regional roads due to excessive numbers of individual entrances; and
- securing recent investment in non-national roads by minimizing the provision of new entrances onto realigned stretches of regional roads.

33.9.3 Road and traffic assessments

Some development proposals will generate significant additional trips, with potentially serious implications for the capacity and safety of the road network. In these cases, applications shall be accompanied by:

- a **Traffic and Transport Assessment** (TTA) in accordance with the publication *Traffic Management Guidelines and the Traffic and Transport Assessment Guidelines* (May 2014);
- a **Road Safety Audit** (RSA), in accordance with the *Design Manual for Roads and Bridges* and Department of Transport guidelines;

The Planning Authority and/or prescribed bodies will assess the need for submission of such studies on a case-by-case basis. Ideally this will happen at the pre-planning stage.

33.9.4 Mobility Management Plans (MMP)

Mobility management is an effective means of encouraging sustainable travel choices and reducing car-based travel in existing and new developments.

Mobility management plans include mitigation measures based on assessments of the existing or required levels of public transport provision, cycle and walking infrastructure and parking provision. They bring together transportation requirements, employers, staff and site management issues in a coordinated manner.

Measures that should be included are listed below:

- integration with public transport
- promotion of car sharing/pooling.
- parking pricing and control; and
- the encouragement of cycling and walking.

Mobility Management Plans will be encouraged for employee-intensive developments, both new or existing, which are likely to generate a significant demand for travel.

MMPs must be dynamic and evolving documents, monitored and reviewed on a regular basis. For further advice and guidance on effective travel plans, refer to the following documents: *Workplace Travel Plans – A Guide for Implementers* and *Toolkit for School Travel* (NTA, 2013 and 2019 respectively).

33.9.5 Entrances and sightlines

General requirements

All developments proposing access onto public roads must show that such access will not create a traffic hazard or interfere with the free flow of traffic along such roads. The availability of adequate sight lines along the road from the proposed access point is the crucial requirement for road safety. Vehicle entrances and exits must also be designed to avoid hazards to pedestrians. New entrances must provide for a surface water disposal system to ensure that no surface water is discharged onto the public road and, where roadside drains are affected, adequate provision for piping such drains shall be made.

Vehicular entrance points shall be recessed and the wing walls (or other boundaries) splayed, so as to provide adequate sight distances in both directions, having regard to traffic conditions and roadway characteristics.

Rural housing

Proposed vehicular access points will be carefully considered by the Planning Authority, with a view to minimising the impact of a safe access on the visual appearance and rural characteristics of the area.

It may be desirable to seek alternative access points, share existing access points or consider alternative sites in order to avoid excessive removal of good quality traditional roadside boundaries.

Hedgerows and other distinctive boundary treatment such as stone walls shall be retained insofar as is possible.

Where the removal of the existing boundary is unavoidable as part of new development and to ensure a safe access point, a replacement roadside boundary shall consist of indigenous hedgerows, earth banks or dry-stone walls, in character with the vernacular boundaries in the area.

Any new hedgerows shall be planted with a double row of native species, e.g. Hawthorn, holly, blackthorn, hazel etc.

New boundary walls shall be built in local vernacular style, using recovered stone from the old walls or other local stone. Block walls and the use of non-local finishes, such as bricks or post-and-rail fences, will be discouraged.

Commercial development

Generally, no more than two vehicular entrances will be permitted to any commercial or industrial property, each not exceeding 7.5 metres in overall width. The pavement shall be dished and reinforced.

33.9.6 Cycle parking and facilities

Cycle facilities shall be provided in conjunction with any new development proposals and the standard requirements are set out in **Table 33.9**.

A distinction should be made between long-term parking for staff or residents and short-term parking for customers or visitors. "Sheffield" stands are satisfactory for short-term cycle parking, whereas long-term parking requires secure, covered lockers and sheltered bicycle parking.

Shower and changing facilities, and storage areas for clothing (e.g. waterproofs and helmets) should be provided for long-distance commuters.

Cycle facilities (parking spaces and cycle tracks) should be provided in accordance with the *National Cycle Manual* (<https://www.cyclemanual.ie>) (NTA, 2011) and the *Traffic Signs Manual* (DoT 2021).

The cycle parking standards listed in Table 33.9 are minimum standards and should be exceeded in most cases.

Table 33.9 Bicycle parking standards

Type of development	Minimum number of bicycle parking spaces
Housing developments	1 private secure bicycle space per bed space (note – design should not require bicycle access via living area), minimum 2 spaces per unit. 1 visitor bicycle spaces per two housing units
Offices	10% of employee numbers (subject to a minimum of 10 bicycle places or one bike space for every car space, whichever is greater).
Schools	10% of pupil registration numbers, minimum 10 spaces. Consider separate teacher/employee cycle parking. All spaces to be sheltered
Other developments	1 cycle space per car space or 10% of employee numbers in general
Shops	1 stand per till/check out
Public transport nodes	Minimum 10 spaces – sheltered parking
Off-street car parks (incl. multi storey)	Minimum 15 spaces or 10% of total number of car parking spaces – sheltered parking

33.9.7 Car parking requirements

Car parking standards are set out in **Table 33.10** below to guide the design and layout of new developments. These parking standards show a range from minimum to maximum parking provision within a new development.

In circumstances where a deviation from the standards is proposed, the applicant shall submit details of the predicted parking requirements associated with the proposed development and the capacity of the proposed on-site provision to accommodate this demand.

In town centre locations, consideration will be given to dual parking usage in mixed-used development proposals where peak times do not coincide.

For any use not specified, the default parking standard will be calculated based on those of a comparable use and/or as part of a transport and traffic assessment to be prepared by the applicant.

Car parking shall be provided for the disabled and mobility-impaired in all car-parking developments, in the most convenient locations for ease of use, in accordance with the document *Building for Everyone 1 – External Environment and approach*, published by the National Disability Authority in 2012.

Car parking standards

The number of car parking spaces associated with various types of development will be calculated in line with **Table 33.10**.

When assessing planning applications for change of use or for replacement buildings, the determination of parking requirements may be done as follows: the required parking spaces for the existing use (whether provided on site or not) will be subtracted from the total number of parking spaces required by the replacement use.

Where the provision of on-site parking is not possible, the Planning Authority may require a financial contribution towards the provision of car parking elsewhere, by the Authority, in accordance with Section 48 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).

All floor areas indicated in **Table 33.10** are based on the gross floor space of the proposed developments.

Table 33.10 Car parking standards

Type of development	Sligo Town Centre – TC1 and TC2 zoning (number of spaces)	All other areas (number of spaces)
House	1 to 1.5 per unit	1 to 2 per unit
Apartment	0.5 to 1 per unit	1 to 1.5 per unit
Hotel / Guesthouse	1 to 1.5 per 5 bedrooms	1 to 2 per bedroom
Hostels	0.5 to 1 per 20 beds	1 to 2 per 10 beds
Office	0.5 to 1 per 100 sq. m	1 to 2 per 30 sq. m
Warehouse	1 to 2 per 200 sq. m	1 to 2 per 100 sq. m
Light Industry	n/a	1 to 2 per 50 sq. m
Retail (Convenience)	1 to 2 per 50 sq. m	1 to 2 per 30 sq. m
Supermarkets	1 to 1.5 per 30 sq. m	1 to 1.5 per 20 sq. m
Retail Warehousing	n/a	1 to 2 per 30 sq. m
Garden Centre	1 to 1.5 per 30 sq. m	1 to 1.5 per 25 sq. m
Financial and other professional services	1 to 2 per 60 sq. m	1 to 2 per 30 sq. m
Restaurants	1 to 1.5 per 50 sq. m	1 to 1.5 per 10 sq. m
Bars and Function rooms	1 to 1.5 per 50 sq. m	1 to 1.5 per 25 sq. m
Take-away	1 to 2 per 100 sq. m	1 to 2 per 30 sq. m
Hospital / Nursing Home	1 to 1.5 per 2 bedspaces	1 to 1.5 per bedspace
Primary School	1 to 2 per classroom	1.5 to 2 per classroom
Secondary School	1 to 2 per classroom	1.5 to 2 per classroom
Tertiary Education	1 to 2 per classroom	1 to 2 per classroom
Childcare, crèche, playschool	0.5 to 1 per staff on duty	1 to 2 per staff on duty
Medical facilities e.g. GPs, dentists etc.	0.5 to 1 per consulting room	1 to 2 per consulting room

Type of development	Sligo Town Centre – TC1 and TC2 zoning (number of spaces)	All other areas (number of spaces)
Place of worship, theatre, cinema	0.5 to 1 per 25 seats	1 to 2 per 10 seats
Community Hall	1 to 2 per 100 sq. m	1 to 2 per 25 sq. m
Museum, Gallery, Library	0.5 to 1 per 50 sq. m	1 to 2 per 25 sq. m
Funeral Home	0.5 to 1 per 20 sq. m	1 to 2 per 25 sq. m
Sports Centre	0.5 to 1 per 50 sq. m	1 to 2 per 10 sq. m
Data Centre	n/a	1 to 2 per 500 sq. m

33.10 Agricultural development standards

The Council will seek to ensure that agricultural activities are carried out to the highest environmental standards. Legal requirements relating to the collection, storage and management of agricultural wastes are detailed in the European Union (Good Agricultural Practice for Protection of Waters) Regulations 2014 (S.I. No. 31 of 2014). Agricultural stakeholders must comply with the requirements of the above regulations.

The Planning Authority will apply the following considerations when assessing applications for agricultural buildings:

- **Protection of residential amenity** – sufficient distance to any dwellings in the vicinity;
- **Safe access** – adequate sightlines from the points of access onto public roads;
- **Visual impact** – new buildings should be located within or adjoining existing farmyard complexes where possible. Structures not forming part of a farm complex should be integrated into the landscape by means of appropriate siting, external colouring and screening.

Non-exempted agricultural developments will be permitted in rural areas in accordance with location and siting criteria similar to those outlined in **Section 33.4 Housing in rural areas**.

Agricultural developments will generally not be permitted in the vicinity of towns and villages, where they could affect the visual character of the area or cause an environmental nuisance.

In order to assess the potential impact of agricultural development, planning applications for these proposals should include the following:

- A. a completed application form for agricultural developments (available from the Planning Office of Sligo County Council or to download from the website of Sligo County Council);
- B. all information required in the County Council’s Guidance Notes on Agricultural Planning Applications (available from the Planning Office or to download from the website of Sligo County Council).

Agricultural developments relating to provision of waste storage infrastructure shall be carried out in accordance with the storage requirements detailed in the European Union (Good Agricultural Practice for Protection of Waters) Regulations 2014 (S.I. No. 31 of 2014), in terms of provision of the required 18-week waste storage capacity for the winter housing of livestock.

33.11 Energy and telecommunications infrastructure development standards

The Planning Authority acknowledges the current need to adopt a more sustainable approach to energy production, through the promotion of facilities or installations that generate renewable energy. Such developments will be considered subject to the following criteria:

- visual impact on surrounding landscape, and in particular on sensitive landscapes (refer to **Chapter 23 Landscape Character**);
- impact on designated sites, natural and built heritage, water bodies, groundwater, soils and air;
- impact on settlements or individual rural dwellings;
- impact on existing walking routes / rights-of-way / public access to the countryside.

All proposals for renewable energy developments should be discussed with the Planning Authority at pre-application stage.

33.11.1 Wind energy developments

The Planning Authority will have regard to the DHLGH's *Draft Wind Energy Guidelines* (2019) and any revised guidelines, when considering wind energy applications. The Guidelines outline the main criteria to be used in assessing development proposals. The Council may also require an Environmental Impact Assessment Report to be submitted as part of any planning application for large-scale commercial wind turbine schemes.

Proposals will generally be discouraged in or close to pNHAs, cSACs, SPAs, designated Sensitive Rural Landscapes, Visually Vulnerable Areas, Scenic Routes, protected views, Zones of Archaeological Notification and the internationally-important archaeological landscape of the Cuil Irra peninsula.

On-shore ancillary plant, buildings and power lines facilitating offshore wind energy developments will require assessment and all on-shore impacts must be mitigated to the greatest extent possible.

33.11.2 Solar energy

Site selection is vital for potential solar farms as solar resource, topography and proximity to the grid must be considered. Potential impacts on local ecosystems, wildlife and the land's agricultural potential need to be carefully assessed.

All development proposals must be accompanied by tailored mitigation measures, including biodiversity and land management plans. The scale of solar farms may also have the potential to affect surrounding landscapes. Cumulative impacts may arise with farms located close to each other.

At present, there are no national planning guidelines for solar energy development. The Council will assess individual applications having regard to normal planning considerations and the location criteria applicable to other types of renewable energy developments – see **Section 33.11.1** above.

33.11.3 Telecommunications and overhead cables

Telecommunication masts, access roads and associated power lines will be assessed with regard to siting and design, safety and the mitigation of intrusive impacts. The following standards shall apply:

- A.** masts will not generally be permitted in designated Sensitive Rural Landscapes, the archaeological landscape of the Cuil Irra peninsula, Visually Vulnerable Areas, pNHAs, SPAs, SACs or adjacent to Scenic Routes;
- B.** masts shall be designed and located so as to cause minimum impact on the landscape and, where possible, should be screened by forest plantations;
- C.** operators should seek to co-locate their services by sharing a single mast or, if necessary, locating additional masts in an existing cluster;
- D.** in the event of the discontinuance of any mast installations, the mast and associated equipment shall be removed from the site and the land restored to its original condition.

In assessing proposals for telecommunications installations, the Planning Authority will have regard to the most up-to-date ministerial guidelines (at the time of writing, in 2023, these were the *Telecommunications Antennae and Support Structures, 1996*, and the *Circular Letter PL07/12*).