

## Chapter 8. Retail strategy

One of the required elements of the Core Strategy is a Retail Strategy for the county. A development plan should include:

- an outline of the level and form of retailing activity appropriate to each settlement in the Settlement Hierarchy;
- a broad assessment (square metres) of the requirement for additional retail floorspace;
- strategic guidance on the location and scale of retail development;
- objectives to support action initiatives in city and town centres, such as mobility management measures and public realm interventions;
- relevant development management criteria for the assessment of retail proposals.

In addition, the development plan must set out clear, evidence-based policies and objectives in relation to retailing, as specified in the *Retail Planning Guidelines for Planning Authorities* (2012).

This chapter sets out the Council's strategy for retail development by 2030 in terms of hierarchy and guidance on the location and scale.

Complementary policies and objectives relating to urban regeneration, public realm interventions and mobility management measures are included in **Volume 2 Urban development**.

Relevant criteria for assessing retail development proposals are specified in **Chapter 33 Development management standards**.

### 8.1 Retail hierarchy in County Sligo

County Sligo is considered “mono-nodal” in terms of its retail offering, which is concentrated in Sligo Town. In the national retail hierarchy, Sligo Town is placed on the *Regional* (second) tier, together with other towns performing important regional retailing functions.

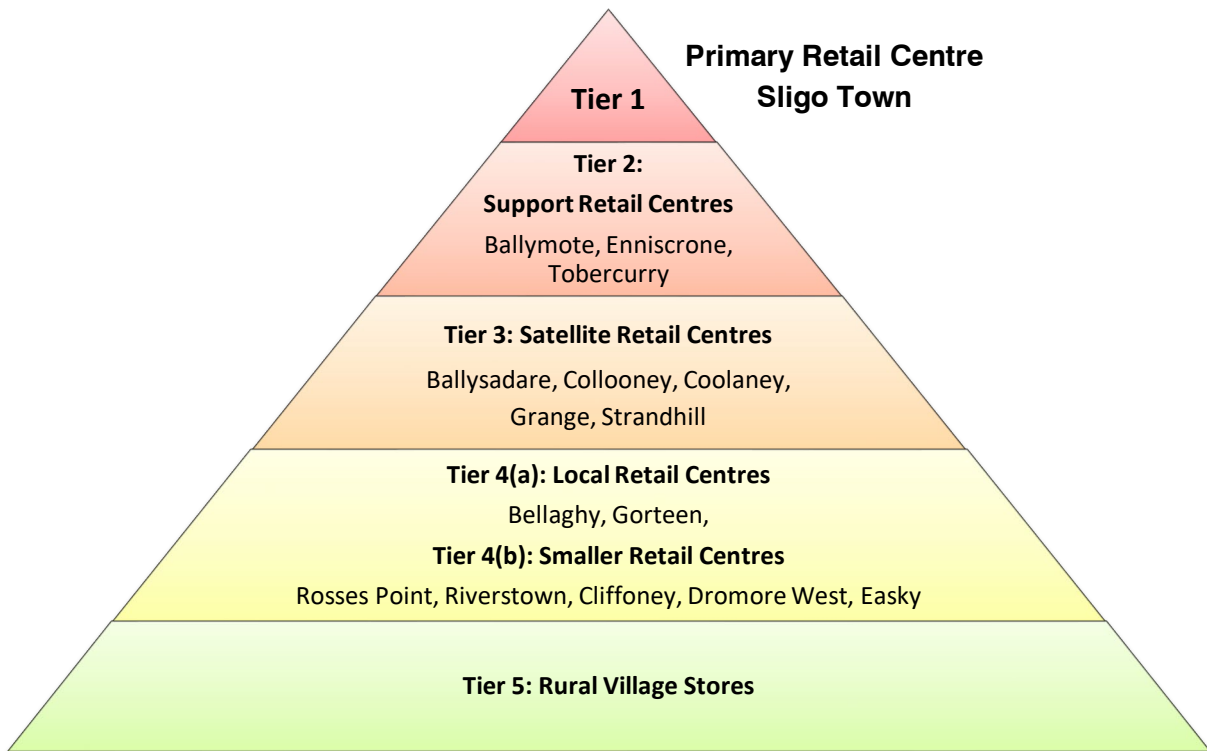
Outside Sligo Town, Tobercurry, Ballymote and Enniscrone have some significance in terms of retail, due to their size, location and role as Support Towns, as designated in the Settlement Hierarchy.

The Satellite Villages of Ballysadare, Collooney, Coolaney, Grange and Strandhill have varying levels of retail and services, easily accessible to the relatively densely-populated surrounding areas.

The villages of Bellaghy (joint to Charlestown in Co. Mayo) and Gorteen may not have large populations, but they do serve sizeable hinterlands.

A number of villages have a range of shops and service outlets, while single rural stores can be found in some of the smallest settlements and even in rural areas.

The County's retail hierarchy (see Fig. 8.A below) is largely aligned with the Settlement Hierarchy defined in Chapter 5 of this Plan. It should be noted that there are no District Centres (as defined in the *Retail Planning Guidelines*) in County Sligo.



**Fig. 8.A Retail hierarchy in County Sligo**

## 8.2 Retail floorspace requirements

The most recent assessment of retail floorspace requirements, carried out in 2016, estimated that circa 11,800 sq.m of additional retail space (convenience, comparison and bulky goods) would have been required in the County by 2023. Considering extant planning permissions at the time, no additional requirement for comparison shopping was determined for Sligo Town, and only 1,250 sq. m. of convenience floorspace.

Only a small fraction of the permitted or projected floor space has been built since 2017 in the County and Town. Due to the growth of online shopping combined with the economic impacts of the Covid-19 restrictions, energy price and cost-of-living crisis, there has been no significant addition to the County's retail floor space in recent years. On the contrary, the increase in retail vacancy has become a problem in the centre of towns and villages, particularly in Sligo Town.

It is considered that the general policy recommendations arising from the 2016 assessment remain valid. However, the retail floorspace requirements for Sligo Town will have to be reviewed in conjunction with the preparation of the Sligo and Environs Local Area Plan, following adoption of this CDP.

## 8.3 Approach to future retail development

### **Tier 1: Primary Retail Centre – Sligo Town**

Over the period of the Plan, it is anticipated that most demand for comparison retail growth will be centred upon Sligo Town (Tier 1) and the Council should facilitate the growth of comparison retailing in the town centre.

The convenience shopping function of Sligo Town is equally important to the vitality of the urban core. At the same time, it must be ensured that convenience retail facilities are easily accessible across the town as a whole, through a network of neighbourhood centres.

Neighbourhood centres (i.e. locations providing retail and other related services outside of the core town centre area) only occur in Sligo Town. Such centres would usually include a medium-sized convenience shopping outlet and a number of smaller, non-convenience businesses.

Specific details regarding the location, scale and floorspace requirements for retail development in the Sligo's town centre and neighbourhood centres will be addressed in a new Sligo Town Retail Strategy (to be prepared in conjunction with the Sligo and Environs LAP).

### **Tier 2: Support Retail Centres – Ballymote, Enniscrone, Tobercurry**

In Ballymote, Enniscrone and Tobercurry, a sequential approach will be used in the assessment of development proposals for new retail outlets greater than 500 sq.m.

The Planning Authority will encourage site assembly within town centres or in edge-of-centre locations, to support convenience retail provisions in these towns.

Enniscrone is not currently served by a large convenience retailer, despite having recorded a permanent population of 1,291 in the 2022 Census. It has a much larger population at weekends and seasonal peaks, and a significant rural hinterland. The town is capable of supporting a larger supermarket (or a substantial extension of the existing one), which may encourage occupation of existing vacant units in the town, thus reducing the need for journeys to neighbouring urban centres.

### **Tier 3: Satellite Retail Centres – Ballysadare, Collooney, Coolaney, Grange, Strandhill**

The five Satellite Villages function largely as “suburbs” of Sligo Town. Each of these villages accommodates a medium-sized supermarket and a number of smaller convenience and non-retail businesses.

Strandhill and Collooney have low retail vacancy rates, and there may be further demand for additional retail and related services in these satellites.

### **Tier 4(a): Local Retail Centres**

The local retail centres of Gorteen and Bellaghy have larger supermarkets than any other small village in the County, and are therefore recognised as performing a higher retail function. Without a commensurate increase in population, there will be no need for increased retail floorspace in these centres. The maximum net retail floorspace in the Local Retail Centres shall be restricted to 500sq.m. per unit.

### **Tier 4(b): Smaller Retail Centres**

Rosses Point, Riverstown, Cliffony, Dromore West and Easky have basic convenience shopping outlets, limited comparison shopping and local retail services including post offices, pubs and cafes. These villages have a narrow retail base and proposals for additional services in these centres is likely to be limited over of the lifetime of the Plan.

## **Tier 5 – Rural Village stores**

Such stores can be found in Aclare, Tourlestrane, Ballygawley, Banada, Curry, Bunnanadden, Mullaghmore, Cloonacool, Monasteraden, Ballinafad, Carney, Culfadda, Castlebaldwin, Geevagh, Rathcormac and Ballintogher. Primarily convenience outlets, they also provide a readily accessible service for basic goods. These stores play a vital role at local level, serving the less mobile members of rural communities, and their continued operation should be supported.

## 8.4 Sligo Town – Primary Retail Centre

It is anticipated that, within the lifetime of this Plan, most new retail floor space will be provided in Sligo and Environs. While new convenience retail floorspace would not be exclusively provided within Sligo Town, any potential increase in comparison shopping floorspace is most likely to locate in the main urban centre.

The preferred location for retail development is within the town centre and neighbourhood centres. Development proposals not according with the fundamental objective to support the vitality and viability of the town centre and neighbourhood centres must demonstrate compliance with the sequential approach. Sligo County Council will require that a full assessment of all suitable, viable and available sites is undertaken.

Specific retail policies and objectives applicable to Sligo Town Centre and in the existing and new/proposed Neighbourhood Centres will be provided in the forthcoming Sligo and Environs LAP.

A new Retail Strategy for Sligo Town, to be prepared in conjunction with the LAP, will need to address the following:

- any changes in the town centre retail environment following interventions under the Public Realm Plan 2018;
- retail vacancy and the consolidation of the town centre’s retail function as part of the preparation and implementation of any Town Centre First Plan;
- the effects of improving access to and within the town centre by implementing the mobility, active travel, public transport and parking measures recommended in the Sligo Local Transport Plan;
- the floorspace requirement implications of the proposed Centre Block Masterplan, which is intended to transform Wine Street Car Park into a vibrant shopping, leisure and residential area built around a well-designed central square;
- the location, scale, specific functions and floor space requirements of existing and proposed neighbourhood centres;
- appropriate provision for the night-time economy, including public houses, restaurants, nightclubs and takeaways, while mitigating any adverse effects of these uses on the residential amenities of town centre residents.

## Strategic retail planning policies

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

- SP-RP-1** Consolidate Sligo Town’s role as a regional shopping centre and the Primary Retail Centre in County Sligo.
- SP-RP-2** Ensure that additional retail floorspace in Sligo Town is supplied in a manner that supports the vitality and viability of the Town Centre, while making adequate provision for additional neighbourhood centres to serve new residential areas intended to accommodate the targeted population of Sligo Town.
- SP-RP-3** Support the provision or extension of retail facilities in the Support Retail Centres of Ballymote, Enniscrone and Tobercurry.  
The location of new retail outlets with a floorspace greater than 500 sq.m will be subject to the sequential approach. The Council will encourage site assembly to support convenience retail provision in these key locations.
- SP-RP-4** Facilitate small-scale retail development in villages, provided that:
- there is no significant adverse impact on the vitality and viability of the Support Retail Centres of Ballymote, Enniscrone and Tobercurry;
  - the proposals are of appropriate scale and are acceptable in terms of design, impact on residential amenity, servicing and parking arrangements.
- SP-RP-5** In Local Retail Centres (Tier 4a), Smaller Retail Centres (Tier 4b) and rural villages (Tier 5) generally discourage any retail outlet in excess of 500 sq.m. net retail floor space, including extensions that would enlarge an existing development over this threshold. Development over this size is clearly intended to serve more than a local catchment and would therefore be more suitably located in a higher-tier centre.
- SP-RP-6** Discourage out-of-town shopping facilities that detract from the vitality, viability and character of towns and villages.