



# Volume 1 Core Strategy

## Draft Sligo County Development Plan 2024-2030

Public consultation  
13 October to 22 December 2023



# Draft SLIGO County Development Plan 2024–2030 Volume 1

This Draft Development Plan for County Sligo (CDP) has been prepared under Section 11 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).

The Draft CDP consists of four volumes, nine appendices, and is accompanied by the following supporting documents:

**Housing Strategy**

**Draft Sligo Local Transport Plan**

**Wine Street Car Park Masterplan**

**Strategic Flood Risk Assessment**

**Environmental Report** (Strategic Environmental Assessment)

**Natura Impact Report** (Appropriate Assessment)

The **Landscape Character Assessment Map** (A1 format) is also available as part of the Draft CDP.

All documents can be downloaded from the Council's consultation portal at [consult.sligococo.ie](https://consult.sligococo.ie)

The Draft CDP and associated documents are available for inspection or purchase at the Planning Office of Sligo County Council in the City Hall (Quay Street, Sligo). They can also be inspected in the County Library, Council's Area Offices and library branches in Ballymote, Enniscrone and Tobercurry.

Sligo County Council invites submissions and observations from 13 October 2023 to 22 December 2023, both dates included.

Contributions should be made by anyone interested in the future development of County Sligo and its settlements. You are therefore invited to examine the Draft Plan and associated documents, and exercise your statutory right to comment upon the draft proposals.

A report with recommendations on all valid submissions or observations received will be prepared and presented to the elected Council members for their consideration.

Submissions should be made through the Council's consultation portal at [consult.sligococo.ie](https://consult.sligococo.ie)

Although NOT recommended, written submissions, headed "Draft CDP 2024-2030", may be e-mailed to [cdp@sligococo.ie](mailto:cdp@sligococo.ie)

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**A vision for County Sligo in 2030:** a smart, sustainable, and socially inclusive Sligo; one that cherishes its vibrant communities, protects and celebrates its unique environment and rich culture, and is a champion of innovative growth and development. (*Sligo 2030: One voice, One vision – Local Economic & Community Plan 2023-2030*)

# Chapter 1. Introduction

As the blueprint for development in County Sligo, the County Development Plan is the overarching strategic framework document for sustainable development in spatial, economic, social and environmental terms.

The development plan must offer clear guidance on sustainable development policies and objectives, addressing various issues such as the creation of sustainable communities, economic development, transport, energy, judicious use of natural resources, protection of the environment and adaptation to climate change.

**Sligo County Development Plan 2024-2030 (CDP)** sets out an overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of County Sligo, in accordance with the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).

The preparation of this Plan has been informed by recent social, economic and environmental changes, as well as national, regional and local policy developments.

The 2018 **National Planning Framework** (NPF) recognises Sligo's potential to serve the North-West as an accessible centre of employment and services, which can be a focal point for investment and have the widest possible regional influence.

The 2020 **Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy** (RSES) formally identifies Sligo as a Regional Growth Centre (RGC), capable of leading the development of the surrounding region.

The CDP presents the Council's outlook for the future development of County Sligo and its designated Regional Growth Centre driven by Sligo Town, for the period up to 2030, within a longer-term perspective.

The Plan provides a spatial planning framework designed to support the economic and social development of the County, as envisioned in the **Sligo 2030** strategy document (Local Economic and Community Plan).

## 1.1 Setting the scene

County Sligo, located in the province of Connacht, in the north-west of Ireland, encompasses a total land surface of approximately 1,837.11 sq.km. It is bordered by counties Leitrim, Roscommon and Mayo, and flanked to the west by almost 200 km of Atlantic coastline.

The main urban area is Sligo Town, which is considered a regionally important centre, serving as the administrative, commercial, service, health and educational focus for a large hinterland. It has a significant industrial role and also acts as a distribution centre in the North-West. The County's rural areas are supported by services provided in the smaller towns of Ballymote, Tobercurry and Enniscrone.

### 1.1.1 Natural and cultural heritage

The County has a varied natural landscape with spectacular limestone mountains, such as Ben Bulbin and Ben Wiskin, other interesting upland terrain (e.g. the Ox and Bricklieve Mountains), picturesque lakes (Loughs Gill, Arrow, Glencar, Easky, Gara and Talt), extensive inland and coastal plains and a diverse coastline comprising low-lying cliffs, indented shoreline and sandy beaches. These topographic features combine to give Sligo an outstanding landscape setting.

Sligo possesses unique archaeological and historical remains, with more than 5,000 recorded archaeological sites dating back over 6,000 years, including the prehistoric sites of Carrowmore, Carrowkeel and Creevykeel.

The beauty of the countryside, coupled with a rich cultural and historical past, has inspired musicians, artists and poets alike, including the Yeats family, St. Colmcille and Michael Coleman. This has provided Sligo with strong international recognition on which to base a thriving tourism industry.

### 1.1.2 Demographic trends

Census 2022 recorded 70,198 people in County Sligo, a 7.1% (4,663 persons) increase since the previous census. In 2016, the County's population had been 65,535, of which 19,200 persons lived in Sligo Town.

The most noticeable demographic trend between 2011 and 2016 was a 5% decrease in the County's working age population (15 to 64 years old) and a substantial 19% increase of the number of people aged 65 and older. The proportion of one-person households has also risen by 28% between 2011 and 2016 – the highest growth rate among all types of households.

According to the Western Development Commission's *Preliminary Results Census 2022: Analysis of results for the Western Region*, "higher old-age and youth dependency ratios suggest that there are fewer "economically active" persons to support the "economically inactive" population. Higher dependency ratios act as a constraint for future growth prospects and are related to longer-term historical structural issues such as the outward migration of the region's working-age population".

The 2022 Census preliminary results show a reversal of the 2011-2016 trend of negative net migration across the Western Region. Net inward migration was not only positive, but outweighed the natural increase in five counties, including Sligo.

At the time of writing (summer 2023), the CSO had published "*Profile 1 – Population Distribution and Movements*", detailing demographic data collected by the 2022 Census. The report indicates that **County Sligo is on track to achieve or even surpass the population projections set out in the National Planning Framework – Ireland 2040.**

### 1.1.3 Education, economy, employment

The County offers a good mix of skills, infrastructure and support services for any company establishing operations here, particularly in Sligo Town.

#### **Education**

According to Census 2016 statistics at County level, 47.7% of residents in the area aged 15 years and older held some form of third-level qualification (i.e. NQF 6, Advanced Certificate or higher), which is higher than the national average of 42%. Particularly, the number of women with masters or higher degrees increased significantly (24%). Prior to Covid-19, the Atlantic Technological University Sligo recorded 4,500 students attending courses.



## Economy

In 2016 there were 19 multinational companies located in IDA business parks in County Sligo (Finisklin and Ballytivnan in Sligo Town, Collooney, Tobercurry and Ballymote). In 2020, IDA-supported companies in the County employed 2,351 people across sectors such as Engineering, Medical Technology, Biopharmaceuticals, Consumer Goods, Business and Financial services.

Sligo also has a vibrant cluster of Irish companies - 74 companies were supported by Enterprise Ireland and employed 1,992 people across the County in 2020.

Outside the towns, agriculture remains an important part of the local economy, while tourism and other small-scale, rural-based economic activities continue to support a substantial population living in villages and in the countryside.

## Employment

Circa 50% of the economically active people were employed in 2016, with unemployment at 7% in 2016 - the same as the national average.

The impact of Covid-19 has facilitated the introduction of remote working for employees across many different industries. A study conducted in July 2021 (“The Best Place to Work from Home in Ireland”, available at [switcher.ie](http://switcher.ie)) developed a remote working index to determine which town or city provides the best conditions for working from home.

Sligo was ranked the overall best place to work from home in Ireland, with particularly high ranking for affordable housing, access to a high number of GPs and several schools in the area.

### 1.1.4 Key issues and implications for the County Development Plan

Taking account of recent economic and demographic trends, the main implications for the formulation of a spatial development strategy for County Sligo to 2030 and beyond are as follows:

- County Sligo should continue to increase its population, building on its strategic location, improved infrastructure, quality of life and its natural and cultural heritage attributes. Education, graduate retention, employment diversification and further investment in infrastructure are required in growing the County’s population.
- Sligo’s communities need to be inclusive and healthy, catering for all age groups, but with a growing focus on the older population. Supports must be put in place for people with disabilities and those from vulnerable minority groups, regardless of whether they are in an urban or rural setting.
- It is imperative that the County’s spatial development strategy addresses carbon emissions, adaptation to climate change and mitigation of its effects. The County Development Plan is crucial for the implementation of adaptation policies, because land use and development have a significant impact on the vulnerability of settlements to the effects of climate change.
- There is a pressing need to focus on Sligo Town and its role as a Regional Growth Centre, by mobilising all national, regional and local agencies which can contribute to the development of a compact, accessible, physically attractive town, with a strong cultural identity and a business-friendly environment.
- Essential pieces of infrastructure have still not been delivered, despite being at advanced planning stages – e.g. the Eastern Garavogue Bridge and Approach Roads Scheme, Cranmore Regeneration and the IDA Business Park at Oakfield. It is critical that funding is made available for the provision of such infrastructure.

- In the interest of balanced development within County Sligo, it will be necessary to improve the functions and performance of Ballymote, Enniscrone and Tobercurry, while supporting the provision of essential services in smaller settlements;
- In the future, Sligo's cultural offering must become stronger and more diverse if the County seeks to attract increased visitor numbers and an internationally mobile workforce. By making it a priority in the Development Plan, the County Council will strive to protect and develop Sligo's distinctive character.
- At present there are new opportunities for diversifying the economy of the rural areas. There is also a growing pressure to develop large renewable energy projects, such as wind farms. In the interest of preserving the County's natural and cultural heritage, which give it a strong identity, development pressure on sensitive landscapes and associated resources needs to be carefully managed.

This County Development Plan addresses the spatial implications of the key issues listed above, thus complementing the Local Economic and Community Plan, which is focused on the non-spatial goals, objectives and actions governing Sligo's future development.

## 1.2 Spatial development options

Current planning and environmental legislation requires local authorities to consider a range of options when preparing their development plans. These possible scenarios for future development must be reasonable, taking into account the objectives and the geographical scope of a development plan.

The alternative options must be evaluated and compared in terms of their potential environmental effects. The process results in the selection of a preferred development option.

There are three stages to the consideration of alternatives:

- Identify reasonable alternatives;
- Evaluate and compare the alternatives;
- Provide reasons for the choice of preferred alternative.

In terms of overall spatial development strategy, Sligo County Council has identified two realistic alternatives to the default option of “doing nothing” (which means retaining the existing development plan policies and objectives unchanged).

The potential development scenarios are all based on the same settlement hierarchy – which is not subject to change in the short or medium term – but the strategies for the various tiers of settlements are slightly different.

### 1.2.1 Option 1 – “Do nothing”

The “default” option is to “do nothing”, which in planning terms would mean to retain the existing development plan with minimal updates, where required by changes in national/regional policy and legislation.

Current zoning and development objectives for Sligo and Environs, Ballymote, Enniscrone, the Satellite Villages and smaller settlements would be largely the same. Any changes to zoning would result from the infrastructural assessment required by the NPF. This would involve a small reduction in the total amount of zoned land. Lands in Tobercurry would remain unzoned.

Additional future population would be accommodated throughout the County’s towns and villages theoretically in proportion to the amount of greenfield land zoned for residential and mixed uses in settlements with adequate service infrastructure.

No housing or population growth targets would be assigned to villages where wastewater treatment is deficient or inexistent. As indicated in the NPF, land that cannot be serviced during the life of the Plan should not be zoned.

### 1.2.2 Option 2 – Support “towns-only” growth

Under this option, Sligo Town would continue to sit at the top of the settlement hierarchy, with the second tier being represented by the Support Towns of Ballymote, Enniscrone and Tobercurry.

The existing residential and mixed-use zoning in Ballymote and Enniscrone would be largely retained. Up to 23 ha would be zoned in Tobercurry (as per the Draft LAP 2015). All zoning would be subject to infrastructural assessment.

Future population and housing would be directed into Sligo Town, Ballymote, Enniscrone and Tobercurry, where employment and services can be provided more efficiently.

In order to ensure that sufficient housing land is available in the four towns, no sites would be zoned for housing outside these urban areas. Greenfield lands previously zoned for residential and mixed uses in villages would be zoned “RV” (Rural Village) instead.

The flexible “RV” (Rural Village) zoning objective would allow for local housing need to be catered for in villages with adequate service infrastructure, while unserved settlements would not be zoned.

### 1.2.3 Option 3 – Driving growth in the County through the Sligo RGC

This option would see the majority of population accommodated in the Sligo Town and its Satellite Villages located within the RGC Strategic Plan area.

This approach would be the most closely aligned with the RSES, which promotes development in the Sligo Regional Growth Centre and requires a Local Transport Plan for the Sligo RGC Strategic Plan Area. Population and housing growth would be promoted in the area where land-use can be best integrated with public transport and active travel.

While the focus remains on Sligo Town, there would be suitable population and housing allocations for the three Support Towns (Ballymote, Enniscrone, Tobercurry), recognising their roles in the Settlement Strategy.

Similar to Option 2, the flexible “RV” (Rural Village) zoning objective would allow for locally-needed housing in the remaining villages with adequate service infrastructure, while unserved settlements would not be zoned.

**Option 3 is the preferred spatial development scenario for County Sligo up to 2030.**

## 1.3 Environmental assessments

In accordance with current legislation, the policies, objectives and zoning included in the County Development Plan have been subject to three types of environmental assessment: Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), Appropriate Assessment (AA) and Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA). The respective reports are published as separate documents. Their recommendations have been incorporated into the Draft Plan – written statement and zoning maps.

### 1.3.1 Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

The European Directive 2001/42/EC of 27 June 2001, also known as the SEA Directive, was transposed into Irish law in the form of two sets of Regulations. The Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004 (S.I. 436 of 2004) apply to the preparation, review and amendment of land use plans. Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is mandatory for development plans (i.e. those plans that cover the entire functional area of a planning authority).

During public consultation, the Draft CDP 2024-2030 is accompanied by an Environmental Report (ER) and a Non-Technical Summary (NTS). The ER indicates how alternative development scenarios were considered and how decisions were made to select a preferred scenario. It also explains how the Draft Plan's policies and objectives have been assessed against environmental objectives.

Any proposed amendments that will be subject to the final round of public consultation will also be assessed against environmental objectives, informing the Chief Executive's recommendations and the final decision-making by the elected members of Sligo County Council.

Upon adoption of the Plan, a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Statement will be published, showing how environmental considerations were integrated into the Plan.

### 1.3.2 Appropriate Assessment (AA)

An assessment under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) is commonly referred to as an Appropriate Assessment (AA) or a Habitats Directive Assessment (HDA) of a plan or project. This relates to the likely significant environmental effects on Natura 2000<sup>1</sup> sites, resulting from the implementation of the plan.

An Appropriate Assessment Report has been prepared in conjunction with the Draft CDP. Any amendments that might be proposed following public consultation on the Draft Plan must also be assessed for potential impacts on Natura 2000 sites.

### 1.3.3 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA)

Following from the implementation of the Floods Directive (2007/60/EC) into Irish legislation, the *Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities* (DoEHLG/OPW, 2009) indicate that county development plans must establish the flood risk assessment requirements for their functional area. Planning authorities must ensure that development is not permitted and land is not zoned in areas of high flood risk, particularly floodplains, except where there is no suitable alternative. The Strategic Flood Risk Assessment which accompanies the Draft CDP focuses on land use zoning and flood risk management policy. It is based on the best available and emerging information on flood risk indicators, as well as climate change considerations.

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<sup>1</sup> Natura 2000 is a network of nature protection areas in the EU territory, made up of Special Areas of Conservation designated under the Habitats Directive and Special Protection Areas designated under the Birds Directive.

## 1.4 Plan structure

The CDP 2024-2030 is the first development plan to incorporate the strategy, zoning, policies and objectives for ALL settlements in County Sligo that are designated for growth in terms of population and housing. Given the extended scope and complexity, the Plan has been structured in four volumes, with a number of nine appendices.

**VOLUME 1** (this volume) contains the sectoral strategies which, together, make up the Core Strategy of the Development Plan: **Settlement, Housing Delivery, Economic, Retail and Transport Strategies**.

**Climate Action** is located at the forefront of the CDP, setting the framework for the Council's commitments and obligations under the Climate Action Plan.

The chapter dedicated to the **Sligo Regional Growth Centre Strategic Plan** demonstrates how the relevant Regional Policy Objectives (RPOs) contained in the NWRA's Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) are reflected in the Development Plan.

The **Core Strategy Statement** summarizes the process of distributing population and housing across the County's settlements.

**VOLUME 2** provides the detailed compact growth designations, zoning and specific objectives for the **12 towns and villages** where development will be promoted during the Plan period.

Fewer objectives are included in relation to **Sligo Town**, for which a Local Area Plan must be prepared following the adoption of this Development Plan.

**VOLUME 3** contains all the **general policies and objectives** designed to guide development in the County, thematically grouped in chapters such as Residential Development, Community and Social Infrastructure, Economic Development, Water infrastructure, Transport Infrastructure, Energy and Telecommunications etc.

This volume also sets out the development management standards used by the Planning Authority in the assessment of planning applications.

**VOLUME 4** includes specific objectives for the villages sustaining rural communities, where no significant population or housing growth is envisaged.

The Development Plan policies and objectives have been informed by the **Housing Strategy** and the (Draft) **Sligo Local Transport Plan**. These documents accompany the Draft Plan on public display, along with the **Wine Street Car Park Masterplan**.

## Chapter 2. Climate action

Climate Action is a significant priority for the Irish government, which considers it “the most critical long-term global challenge of our time” (as per the *Local Authority Climate Action Plan Guidelines*, 2023).

The Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021 provides the framework for Ireland to meet its international and EU climate commitments and to become a leader in addressing climate change.

Through strengthened climate legislation and an annually updated Climate Action Plan, the Government intends to halve Ireland’s greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 and to put Ireland on course to becoming carbon neutral by 2050.

### 2.1 Climate Action Plan (CAP)

The Climate Action Plan 2023 is the second annual update to Ireland’s Climate Action Plan 2019. This plan is the first to be prepared under the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021, and following the introduction, in 2022, of economy-wide carbon budgets and sectoral emissions ceilings. The plan sets a roadmap for taking decisive action to halve emissions by 2030 and reach net zero by 2050.

The CAP23 indicates that spatial planning provides “an important enabling framework for individual, household, community, and company-level climate action”. Along with government policies on taxation/expenditure, digital transformation and the bioeconomy, spatial planning is stated to “have a key role to play in supporting delivery of emissions reductions in sectors with emissions ceilings”.

#### **The role of spatial planning in implementing the CAPs**

Section 11.2.3 of the CAP23 addresses “Spatial and Planning Policy” by referring to the National Planning Framework, which must inform regional and local decision-making, through RSES and local authority development plans.

The CAP23 specifies, inter alia, that spatial planning is critical for reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by promoting low-carbon, sustainable transport, and for facilitating renewable energy infrastructure.

### 2.2 National Adaptation Framework (NAF)

The National Adaptation Framework (NAF), first published in 2018, sets out Ireland’s strategy for the application of climate adaptation measures across different government sectors and bodies, including local authorities. The aim of the strategy is to reduce the vulnerability of the State to the negative impacts of climate change, but also to identify opportunities that may result from the transition to a climate-resilient economy and society.

Local authorities must ensure that climate adaptation considerations are mainstreamed into all local policy, including planning policy.

Following a review of the existing NAF under the 2021 Climate Action Plan, an updated NAF was expected to be published in 2023 (at the time of drafting this development plan).

## 2.3 *Climate action* in the National Planning Framework

**At national level**, the NPF states that “the planning process provides an established means through which to implement and integrate climate change objectives, including adaptation, at local level”.

The National Planning Objective **NPO 54** requires the reduction of the “*carbon footprint by integrating climate action into the planning system in support of national targets for climate policy mitigation and adaptation objectives, as well as targets for greenhouse gas emissions reductions*”.

The “transition to a low carbon and climate resilient society” is the 8th of the 10 National Strategic Outcomes (NSOs), i.e. the “shared goals” expressed in the NPF. The detailed description of **NSO 8** (p. 147 of the NPF) relates entirely to the transition to sustainable energy.

In addition to the above, **NPO 21** (supporting the diversification of rural economy), **NPO 41b** (addressing coastal flooding and erosion) and **NSO 9** (sustainable management of water and other environmental resources) specifically mention climate change and adaptation.

Other relevant National Policy Objectives (NPOs) are:

- **NPO 53** – *Support the circular and bioeconomy including through greater efficiency in land management, greater use of renewable resources and by reducing the rate of land use change from urban sprawl and new development;*
- **NPO 55** – *Promote renewable energy use and generation at appropriate locations within the built and natural environment to meet national objectives towards achieving a low carbon economy by 2050;*
- **NPO 56** – *Sustainably manage waste generation, investing in different types of waste treatment and support circular economy principles, prioritising prevention, reuse, recycling and recovery, to support a healthy environment, economy and society.*

These NPOs inform the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSES), which contain Regional Policy Objectives (RPOs) to ensure emissions can be reduced and targets met.

## 2.4 *Climate action* at regional level

In 2018, four **Climate Action Regional Offices (CARO)** were established for the purpose of coordinating climate action at regional and local levels. As specified in its **Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES)**, the Northern and Western Regional Assembly supports the work of the Climate Action Regional Offices (CARO).

**RPO 5.1** indicates that “*the Assembly will support through CARO and Local Authorities the preparation and implementation of Local Climate Strategies which will, inter alia, address vulnerability to climate risks and provide prioritised actions in accordance with the guiding principles of the National Adaptation Framework*”.

The **Atlantic Seaboard North** CARO coordinates climate action undertaken by the five local authorities of Donegal, Sligo, Mayo, Galway County and Galway City. The office is funded by the Department of Communication, Climate Action and Environment, and is hosted by Mayo County Council as the lead local authority for the Region.

The CAROs are mandated to assist in the development of local authority climate action plans and to provide a strong support function in this regard.



## 2.5 *Climate action* at Local Authority level

### ***Climate-Ready Sligo***

Sligo County Council's first **Climate Change Adaptation Strategy**, titled ***Climate-Ready Sligo***, was prepared in 2019. The Strategy set out the Local Authority's strategic priorities, measures and responses for adaptation in County Sligo over the subsequent five years, to 2024. The Adaptation Strategy, which was required by the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015, contains over 40 actions under the three goals of *Engagement, Planning and Adaptation to climate change*.

Based on the complementary objectives of adaptation (identifying risks and taking action to prevent or minimise damage) and mitigation (reducing greenhouse gas emissions to limit climate change), the strategy identified the scale of the challenge posed by climate change.

The main existing and potential future climate risks for Sligo are flooding, coastal erosion, threats to biodiversity, risks to critical infrastructure and buildings, and threats to agriculture. This CDP addresses the identified risks essentially through an integrated land-use/settlement and transport strategy, as well as through policies and objectives on flood risk, coastal erosion, renewable energy production and the protection of biodiversity.

### **Local Authority Climate Action Plan**

Under the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021, local authorities must prepare their own Climate Action Plans. These plans must cover both mitigation and adaptation, and must be updated at least once every five years.

In accordance with Action 78 (Implement the NPF) of the CAP21 Annex of Actions, the *Development Plan Guidelines for Planning Authorities* issued in 2022 specify that "local authority development plans must be aligned with each local Climate Action Plan."

The *Local Authority Climate Action Plan Guidelines* (published in March 2023) have been developed in response to Section 16 of the Climate Amendment Act 2021 and are intended to support local authorities in both the content and preparation of their local authority climate actions plans. They aim to ensure that a coherent and consistent approach to climate action planning is adopted by local authorities, but seek to avoid being prescriptive, for example, by determining the specific content or providing sector specific information.

**Sligo County Council's first Climate Action Plan** was under preparation in 2023, at the time of finalising the Draft CDP 2024-2030.

A ***Climate Change Risk Assessment*** carried out in May 2023 (by consultants KPMG Future Analytics) identified flooding as the main potential threat to communities in County Sligo. The frequency of river and pluvial flooding is stated to be on the rise, while coastal erosion and coastal flooding have already damaged habitats and disrupted transport networks. Sligo County Council will need to proactively plan for and adapt to the current and future climate change risks identified.

Given that the Local Authority's development plan must take account of the LA Climate Action Plan, it may be necessary to amend/vary this CDP post-adoption in order to ensure consistency between the two statutory documents in terms of spatial planning.

## 2.6 Integrating *climate action* in the Development Plan

The Planning and Development Act 2000 was amended in December 2021 to bring it in line with the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021.

Section 10(2)(n) of the Planning and Development Act (as amended) specifically identifies **Climate Action (adaptation and mitigation)** as a mandatory objective to be included in development plans.

This must be achieved through the promotion of sustainable settlement and transportation strategies in urban and rural areas, the promotion of measures to reduce energy demand and anthropogenic GHG emissions and the integration of climate adaptation measures in the location, layout and design of new development.

### **Embedding *climate action* in the Core Strategy**

The Core Strategy supports compact settlement growth, in line with NPF and RSES, with a focus on regeneration, consolidation and the redevelopment of brownfield lands. Compact growth leads to energy efficiency throughout the County, reducing costs and carbon emissions. Promoting brownfield over greenfield development also protects natural areas, ecosystems and biodiversity.

Most of the County's targeted population and housing growth has been allocated to towns and larger villages, with the biggest share of future development to be located within Sligo Town, the principal urban area of the designated Regional Growth Centre.

Such distribution facilitates the delivery of improved public transport infrastructure, thus reducing the need for private car use and contributing towards a reduction in GHG emissions.

### ***Climate action* through development management policies**

Many of the policies and objectives set out in this Development Plan have been designed to promote the achievement of climate action ambitions, either by mitigating the impacts of climate change or through adaptation to its adverse effects.

**Mitigation** means making the impacts of climate change less severe by preventing or reducing the emission of greenhouse gases (GHG) into the atmosphere. Mitigation is achieved either by reducing the sources of these gases – e.g. by increasing the share of renewable energies, or establishing a cleaner mobility system – or by enhancing the storage of these gases – e.g. by increasing the size of forests.

**Adaptation** means anticipating the adverse effects of climate change and taking appropriate action to prevent or minimise the damage they can cause or taking advantage of opportunities that may arise. Examples of adaptation measures include building defences against sea-level rise or reducing the risk of flooding by restricting development, while protecting wetlands and enhancing aquatic ecosystems.

## Strategic policies for *climate action*

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

- SP-CA-1** Support the implementation of the government’s climate action policy in accordance with the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021, the national Climate Action Plan 2023, the National Adaptation Framework 2018 and all subsequent relevant updates.
- SP-CA-2** Ensure that Sligo County Council’s Climate Adaptation Strategy, Climate Action Plan and County Development Plan are fully aligned.
- SP-CA-3** Integrate appropriate climate mitigation and adaptation considerations and measures into all relevant development management and development planning processes.

**Table 2.1 Envisaged *climate action* effects of the Development Plan**

Development Plan Volume	Climate adaptation and mitigation effects of the Development Plan provisions
<p><b>Volume 1 – Core Strategy</b>                      Including chapters on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Settlement Strategy</li> <li>– Housing Strategy,</li> <li>– Economic Strategy,</li> <li>– Transport Strategy</li> </ul>	<p>The preferred spatial development option was selected as part of Strategic Environmental Assessment, which includes Climate Action considerations.</p> <p>The preferred option integrates land-use and transport in a manner that seeks to reinforce the existing settlement structure, focusing on the Regional Growth Centre, enhanced public transport and active travel provisions with consequent GHG emissions reduction.</p>
<p><b>Volume 2 – Urban development</b>                      Including <b>Sligo Town Plan</b> and similar land-use plans for Support Towns, Satellite Villages and Villages with Special Coastal Tourism Functions</p>	<p>Settlement consolidation, compact housing and commercial development, regeneration and reuse of brownfield lands – all these measures support energy efficiency and a reduction in traffic-related greenhouse gas emissions.</p>

Development Plan Volume	Climate adaptation and mitigation effects of the Development Plan provisions
<p><b>Volume 3 – General Development Policies</b></p> <p>Including chapters on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Natural heritage</li> <li>– Residential, community, economic development</li> <li>– Transport, water, energy infrastructure</li> <li>– Flood risk management</li> </ul>	<p>A safe and climate-resilient living environment can be created through energy-efficient design and layout of buildings, appropriate mix of uses, densities, height and the sensitive integration of the natural and built environment.</p> <p>Locating homes close to workplaces, services, amenity and leisure facilities reduces the need to travel by car and can result in significant reductions in GHG emissions. Promotion of sustainable travel modes and patterns contributes to emission reductions.</p> <p>The preservation of a robust green infrastructure network and the use of nature-based solutions for urban rainwater drainage contribute directly to carbon sequestration and water quality improvements, in addition to decreasing flood risk to settlements.</p>
<p><b>Volume 4 – Village development</b></p> <p>Including plans for Villages Sustaining Rural Communities</p>	<p>The principles of consolidation, regeneration and compact development are applied to villages, supporting energy and resource efficiency, with consequent reductions in GHG emissions and protection of the rural/natural environment.</p>

## Chapter 3. Core Strategy statement

Section 10(1A) of the Planning Act requires the development plan to include a Core Strategy which shows that the Plan’s objectives are consistent with the National Planning Framework, the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy and with specific planning policy requirements (SPPRs) contained in planning guidelines issued by the Minister (so-called “Section 28 guidelines”).

The Act specifies the “required elements” of a Core Strategy. These elements include the definition of a settlement hierarchy, allocating population and housing targets, providing details on lands zoned for residential and mixed uses, integrating transport considerations in the phasing of development and setting out a retail strategy for the county.

All the required elements are addressed in detail in Chapters 3 to 9 of this Volume (Volume 1).

This chapter (Chapter 3) represents the **Core Strategy Statement**, which summarises the required elements, as recommended in Section 4.6.4 of the Development Plan Guidelines 2022:

- Consistency with national and regional policy, and in particular the total quantum of additional housing and population targeted over the plan period;
- The rationale for the settlement strategy, that informs the settlement hierarchy, which must address each settlement and area type in the hierarchy;
- The rationale behind the distribution of housing and population for each settlement type, identifying key issues such as any local infrastructural deficiencies
- The total quantum of existing and proposed land zoned for residential use.

### 3.1 Consistency with national and regional policy

#### 3.1.1 Consistency with the National Planning Framework

The 2018 **National Planning Framework (NPF)** is the main document that will guide, at a high level, strategic planning and development for the country over the period to 2040, so that as the population grows, that growth is sustainable in economic, social and environmental terms

The NPF recognises **Sligo Town** as a Regional Centre and highlights it as being a growth driver to a greater extent than any other towns in the North-West. The NPF indicates that “it will be necessary to prepare a co-ordinated strategy for Sligo at both regional and town level to ensure that the Town can grow sustainably and secure investment as a key regional centre”. This recommendation is reiterated in the NPO 7, which provides, inter alia, for the strengthening of Ireland’s urban structure, particularly in the Northern and Western Regions, to include the regional centre of Sligo.

The NPF Implementation Roadmap provides population projections for County Sligo up to 2031, which are in the range of 74,000 to 75,500.

Based on the higher-figure projection, **the County’s population should be approximately 75,000 by 2030**. This would equate to an additional County population of 4,800 above the circa 70,200 recorded by Census 2022.

There are no county-level housing targets set out in the NPF.

### 3.1.2 Consistency with the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy

The 2020 ***Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Northern and Western Region (RSES)*** is a 12-year strategy which “provides a high-level development framework for the Northern and Western Region that supports the implementation of the National Planning Framework (NPF) and the relevant economic policies and objectives of Government”. It is intended to deliver “effective regional development” for the entire region, embracing the development opportunities specific to each sub-region.

The Strategy identifies Sligo Town as an “urban place of regional scale” and designates it a *Regional Growth Centre*. This is a significant position in the Region’s settlement hierarchy, second only to Galway City’s Metropolitan Area designation and on the same level as Letterkenny and Athlone Regional Growth Centres.

Regional Policy Objectives RPO 3.2 (b and c), RPO 3.3 and RPO 3.4 specifically support population growth in County Sligo, seeking to direct it within existing settlements’ built-up footprints and partially on brownfield sites in urban and rural areas.

The RSES sets population targets for Sligo Town while also indicating “minimum uplifts” to 2026, 2031 and 2040.

In line with the above provisions of the RSES, the Core Strategy of this Development Plan prioritises population growth in Sligo Town to a minimum level of **23,800 persons by 2030** (refer to the Core Strategy Table in Section 3.3). The 3,200 population increase (above the 2022 Census figure of 20,608) represents 68% of the projected total County population growth of 4,800 by 2030.

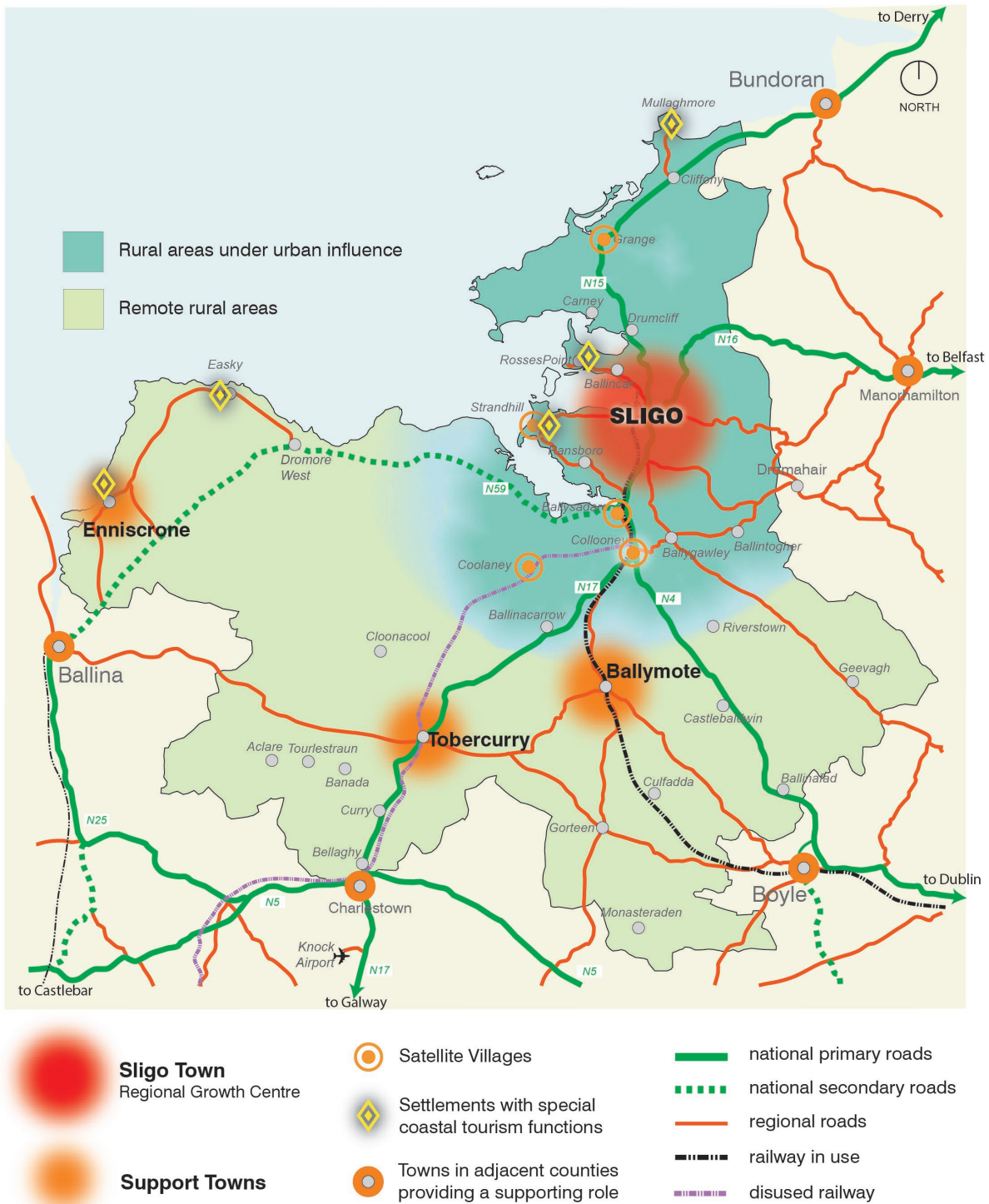
### 3.1.3 Consistency with national housing supply targets

The Core Strategy requirement is that each development plan must set out a clear housing supply target for the relevant six-year plan period calculated in accordance with the methodology prescribed in the Housing Supply Target Methodology Guidelines (HST Guidelines), which were issued by the DHLGH in 2020 under Section 28 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).

For County Sligo, the total adjusted demand corresponding to the Plan period is **3,892 units**.

The calculations are detailed in **Chapter 5 Settlement Strategy, Table 5.2**.

**Fig. 3.A Core Strategy Map**



## 3.2 Distribution of population and housing

The additional population envisaged by the NPF and RSES and the housing demand calculated using the HST methodology have been allocated to the County's settlements based on the following criteria:

- designation and role in the **Settlement Strategy**
- outcome of **Infrastructural Assessment** (IA) of existing (2023) zoned lands
- outcome of **Settlement Capacity Audits** (SCA) of settlements proposed to be zoned

This section contains a summary of the process, which is detailed in Chapter 5 (Settlement Strategy) and Chapters 11 to 22 (individual town and village plans)

The resulting allocations of population and housing are presented in the **Core Strategy Table** (refer to **Section 3.3** in this chapter), designed in accordance with Section 1.3.2 in Appendix A of the Development Plan Guidelines (2022).

The differentiated approach recommended in the Guidelines means that “the smaller, more rural local authorities, with relatively few major settlements, should tailor the core strategy table accordingly and will provide a more limited amount of detail, reflective of the smaller number of often small-scale settlements”.

### 3.2.1 Summary of Settlement Strategy

County Sligo's settlement structure and hierarchy have remained largely unaltered for many decades, due to the slow pace of economic and social changes, similar to the entire North-West Region, where development continues to lag behind the EU average.

The NPF/RSES designation of Sligo Town as a Regional Growth Centre recognises the Town's complex role in the North-West and places it at the top of the County's Settlement Hierarchy.

Consistent with the NPF and RSES, the **Core Strategy will continue to focus on developing Sligo Town**, while ensuring that the County's lower-tier towns and villages retain their vitality.

**The settlement hierarchy and the strategy for each category are summarised below and detailed in Chapter 5.**

- **Sligo Town** is the County's main urban centre, which provides employment, education, healthcare and other services to people living in its large hinterland, within and beyond the County boundaries. It is the designated **Regional Growth Centre** of the North-West.
- In terms of size and social-economic role, the second level is occupied by **three Support Towns**. The market towns of **Ballymote and Tobercurry** and the tourism-focused **Enniscrone** are designated for consolidation, regeneration and a quantum of growth proportional to their current population and infrastructural capacity.
- Sligo Town's **Satellite Villages - Ballysadare, Collooney, Coolaney, Grange and Strandhill** – are home to large numbers of regular commuters who go to work or to school in the main urban centre. These larger villages have relatively good infrastructure and also offer a variety of local services.
- **Easky, Mullaghmore and Rosses Point** are **villages with special coastal tourism functions** (a role shared with Enniscrone and Strandhill). The Core Strategy supports the provision of adequate infrastructure for sustainable tourism development in these villages.



- At the lower end of the Settlement Hierarchy, **19 villages sustaining rural communities** (small villages with adequate wastewater treatment plants) are supported through the Core Strategy to cater for limited local needs in terms of residential development.
- A substantial population continues to live in dispersed communities throughout the County’s rural areas, including small villages without adequate wastewater treatment infrastructure.

**Table 3.1 County Sligo – Settlement Strategy summary**

Designation in the Settlement Hierarchy	Settlement name	Strategy
<b>Regional Growth Centre</b> (Principal Urban Area)	<b>Sligo Town</b>	Facilitate strong housing and population growth in accordance with the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy, implement Regional Growth Centre RPOs and other major projects, promote urban regeneration and economic development
<b>Support Towns</b>	<b>Ballymote, Enniscrone, Tobercurry</b>	Promote urban consolidation and regeneration, facilitating housing and population growth commensurate with town size
<b>Satellite Villages</b>	<b>Ballysadare, Collooney, Coolaney, Grange, Strandhill</b>	Carefully manage development, prioritising the provision of adequate service infrastructure, recreational and community facilities
<b>Villages with special coastal tourism functions</b>	<b>Easky, Mullaghmore, Rosses Point</b>	Ensure the provision of adequate infrastructure for sustainable tourism development
<b>Serviced villages sustaining rural communities</b>	Aclare, Ballinacarrow, Ballinacorney, Ballinacorney, Ballinacorney, Ballinacorney, Bunnacorney, Carney, Castlebaldwin, Cliffony, Cloonacool, Culfadda, Curry, Dromore West, Drumcliff, Geevagh, Gorteen, Monasteraden, Riverstown	Support the retention of local services and the limited provision of residential development to satisfy local needs
<b>Unserviced villages and dispersed settlement in rural areas</b>	Ballygawley, Banada, Ransboro, Rathcormac, Tourlestrane and rural areas	Pursue the provision of wastewater treatment infrastructure in unserviced villages and manage development in rural areas in accordance with the strategic rural settlement policies set out in Chapter 5 (Settlement Strategy)

### 3.2.2 Summary of Infrastructural Assessment (IA)

In accordance with NPF requirements, the Planning Authority has carried out an Infrastructural Assessment (IA) of the existing undeveloped zoned lands in towns and villages which currently (2023) have land-use plans in place. IA was also carried out for sites in Tobercurry, which did not have a land-use plan in 2023.

The assessment considered the availability of service infrastructure (watermains, foul sewers, surface drainage systems) and transport infrastructure (roads, footpaths, cycle lanes) that would allow the development of lands immediately or during the Plan period.

From a total of 208 sites subject to IA, 205 sites were classified as Tier 1 (fully serviced lands) and three sites (all in Sligo Town) as Tier 2 (lands serviceable during the Plan period).

### 3.2.3 Summary of Settlement Capacity Audit (SCA)

The Tier 1 sites resulting from the IA have been subject to a further examination as part of the Settlement Capacity Audits for relevant settlements.

In the case of Sligo Town, the sites were assigned numerical scores based on criteria grouped under three main headings:

- “Spatially sequential” test – where the main consideration was proximity to the town/village centre (defined as the walking distance to a specified landmark)
- Availability of social infrastructure in the surrounding area (e.g. primary school, grocery shop, pharmacy, public open space etc.)
- Planning and environmental status (previous planning consents, sites highlighted in the RSES or reserved for social housing in the Council’s Housing Delivery Action Plan, flood risk etc.)

In carrying out the Settlement Capacity Audits of all other settlements where land is proposed to be zoned for residential and mixed uses, a simplified version of the SCA was applied.

Details of the IA and SCA, grouped by relevant settlement, can be found in **Appendix A** of this Plan.

### 3.2.4 Designation of sites for housing delivery

The outcome of the IA and SCA confirmed that there is an excess of fully serviced, undeveloped, zoned land in Sligo Town and County.

#### **Settlement Consolidation Sites and Infill Sites**

In the interest of achieving compact growth, it was decided to retain the most suitable (highest-scoring) sites for future residential (and mixed-use) development and designate them as **Settlement Consolidation Sites** and - in Sligo Town only – **Infill Sites**.

#### **Additional Provision**

In accordance with the Development Plan Guidelines (2022), which recommend that zoned and serviced housing land should not be subject to de-zoning, less centrally-located lands with live planning permission for residential development were designated as **Additional Provision** sites.

## Regeneration Sites

**Regeneration Sites**, designated under Section 10(2)(h) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), have not been taken into consideration in the allocation of housing to settlements, because there is no certainty regarding their development during the Plan period, due to the variety of issues affecting these lands. Any amount of housing that may be provided through the redevelopment of Regeneration Sites will be regarded as a bonus.

## Long-Term Strategic and Sustainable Development Sites

In line with the provisions of Section 4.4.4 of the Development Plan Guidelines (2022), several substantial sites in the Sligo and Environs area (outside the 2016 Census boundary of Sligo Town) have been designated as **Long-Term Strategic and Sustainable Development Sites**. No housing allocation is associated with LT SSDS for the duration of the Plan (2024-2030).

These sites have potential for significant residential development to be delivered over a timescale greater than a single six-year development plan period. It is considered imperative that these lands are reserved for the future co-ordinated development of new urban extensions to Sligo Town, on the basis of masterplans.

### 3.2.5 Strategic Land Reserve

In Sligo Town and other settlements in County Sligo, there is a legacy of lands previously zoned for residential and other types of uses. In the CDP 2011, the amount of zoned land was reduced where zoning was in excess of Core Strategy requirements at the time. The surplus land was designated as Strategic Land Reserve (SLR). Most of it was later carried forward into the CDP 2017.

Under this Draft Plan (2024-2030), the SLR designation is applied to lands which are not designated as Long-Term Strategic and Sustainable Development Sites, but may still be needed for future development of settlements. The SLR designation seeks to ensure that these lands remain available in the longer term. The Strategic Land Reserves are shown on the zoning maps associated with the town and village plans (Volume 2 – Urban Development).

### 3.2.6 Residential density

A key objective of the NPF and RSES is to promote the compact growth of towns and villages by increasing the density of development in existing built-up areas and new urban extensions.

The NPF also acknowledges that there is a need for more proportionate and tailored approaches to residential development. The *Circular Letter NRUP 02/2021* clarifies that "it is necessary to adapt the scale, design and layout of housing in towns and villages, to ensure that suburban or high density urban approaches are not applied uniformly and that development responds appropriately to the character, scale and setting of the town or village".

Having regard to the NPF, the *Sustainable Residential Development Guidelines* (2009) and subsequent *Circular Letter* (NRUP 02/2021), the Planning Authority has determined the appropriate average residential density in each town and village subject to land-use zoning. Details are provided in the individual town and village plans (Chapters 11 to 22 of this Plan).

### 3.3 Core Strategy Table

The **Core Strategy Table 3.2** presents population and housing figures for each of the County’s four towns, and aggregated figures for lower-tier settlements. Detailed figures and additional information can be found in Chapters 11 to 22, which contain the respective town and village plans.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Settlement	Population 2022 and percentage of County population	Population target 2030 and percentage of County target	Housing allocation 2030 and percentage of County HST allocation	RES and MIX zoning 2017, undeveloped in 2023 (hectares)	Proposed RES and MIX zoning 2024 (hectares)	Potential housing yield of RES and MIX proposed zoned lands 2024 (dwellings)	Current (2023) excess of zoned land (hectares)
<b>Sligo Town</b> Regional Growth Centre	<b>20,608</b> (29.3%)	<b>23,800</b> (31.77%)	<b>2,512 units</b> (64.54%)	43 ha	<b>86.85 ha</b>	<b>2,952</b>	No excess
<b>Ballymote</b> Support Town	<b>1,711</b> (2.44%)	<b>1,850</b> (2.46%)	<b>185 units</b> (4.75%)	22 ha	<b>9.94 ha</b>	<b>215</b>	12.09 ha
<b>Enniscrone</b> Support Town	<b>1,291</b> (1.84%)	<b>1,400</b> (1.86%)	<b>130 units</b> (3.34%)	18.5 ha	<b>6.69 ha</b>	<b>151</b>	11.86 ha
<b>Tobercurry</b> Support Town	<b>2,307</b> (3.29%)	<b>2,450</b> (3.27%)	<b>130 units</b> (3.34%)	No zoning in 2017	<b>6.88 ha</b>	<b>153</b>	Not applicable
<b>5 Satellite Villages</b>	<b>7,250</b> (10.32%)	<b>7,750</b> (10.34%)	<b>370 units</b> (9.50%)	34.5 ha	<b>22.73 ha</b>	<b>433</b>	11.81 ha
<b>3 villages with special tourism functions</b>	<b>1,290</b> (1.83%)	<b>1,400</b> (1.86%)	<b>70 units</b> (1.80%)	20.8 ha	<b>6.29 ha</b>	<b>82</b>	14.54 ha
<b>All other villages and rural areas</b>	<b>35,913</b> (51.16%)	<b>36,500</b> (48.73%)	<b>495 units</b> (12.71%)	59.2 ha	No RES or MIX zoning	<b>580</b>	59.2 ha
<b>Total</b>	<b>70,198</b>	<b>75,000</b> (estimated from NPF)	<b>3,892 units</b> (HST allocation)	<b>198 ha</b>	<b>132.5 ha</b>	<b>4,566 units</b> (117% of HST allocation)	<b>65.5 ha</b>

### 3.3.1 Notes on the Core Strategy Table

- The figures presented in Columns 2, 3, 5, 6 and 7 of the Core Strategy Table correspond to the **Draft County Development Plan 2024-2030**. These figures may change if amendments to zoning, housing or population allocations are made as a result of public consultation on the Draft Plan. The Core Strategy Table will be updated upon adoption of the new CDP 2024-2030.
- The total County population estimate of **75,000** by 2030 is based on the NPF/ESRI population projections contained in the **NPF Implementation Roadmap**. Based on previous demographic trends, this figure is considered reasonable and attainable.
- The total County housing allocation of **3,892** is calculated using the *Housing Supply Target Methodology* (refer to Table 5.2 in Chapter 5). There is no correlation between the population allocations and the housing allocations, because the HST figure is an “adjusted total housing demand”, which takes into account the undersupply of housing since 2017, and factors in a degree of “convergence to NPF strategy”.
- The allocations in Column 3 represent circa 85% of the potential housing yield of zoned lands in each settlement. Based on past trends, it would be unrealistic to expect that the zoned land is fully developed during the Plan period. The assumed utilisation rate of 85% is optimistic, given that less than 50% of residential development in County Sligo has taken place on zoned lands since 2011.
- The allocation of 580 dwellings (Column 6) to “All other villages and rural areas” consists of 480 one-off houses (estimated by the Housing Strategy) and an overall estimate of 100 dwellings that may be built within villages without housing allocations, on lands zoned RV (“Rural Village”).

### 3.3.2 Proposed redesignation of excess zoned land<sup>1</sup>

At the time of drafting the CDP 2024-2030, there is an overall amount of **198 ha of undeveloped land zoned for residential and mixed uses** (including residential) distributed across 35 settlements.

**The Draft Plan proposes to zone 132.5 ha of land for residential and mixed uses** (including residential) **in only 12 settlements**. This represents a 33% reduction in the amount of land with residential potential within the County, resulting in a total excess of 65.5 hectares.

The excess zoned land detailed in Column 7 of the Core Strategy Table has been addressed in this Plan as follows:

- Long-Term Strategic and Sustainable Development Sites have been designated in Sligo Town;
- Regeneration Sites have been designated in most settlements;
- some lands previously zoned for residential uses have been rezoned for other uses (e.g. “RV/”Rural Village”) or included in the Green Belts of relevant settlements.
- a Strategic Land Reserve has been designated in certain settlements, where appropriate;
- lands have been dezoned in villages without adequate wastewater treatment.

Details can be found in Volumes 2 (Urban development) and 4 (Village Plans) of the Draft Plan. The respective details may change as a result of any amendments arising from public consultation on the Draft Plan.

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<sup>1</sup> It is a requirement of the Development Plan Guidelines (Appendix A, Section 1.3.5) to “demonstrate how the level of any excess of land or housing will be addressed”.



## Chapter 4. Sligo Regional Growth Centre Strategic Plan (RSES)

In accordance with the NPF, the Northern and Western Regional Assembly's *Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy* (RSES) sets out a development framework for the region "leading with the key role of Sligo in the North-West".

Section 3.7(c) of the RSES includes a **Regional Growth Centre Strategic Plan** for Sligo, seeking to ensure that the place grows as a successful population, employment and service centre which is "enterprising, inclusive, resilient and environmentally sustainable".

The RGC Strategic Plan contains fifteen **regional policy objectives (RPOs)** grouped under **three strategic goals** identified as "Compact Growth", "Enterprising Sligo" and "Liveable Sligo".

The Strategic Plan indicates the means to achieve these goals, highlights strategic growth areas (with a further six RPOs), regeneration sites and infrastructure, and lists key projects to be delivered over the life of the RSES.

Some of the RPOs have already been achieved since the publication of the RSES in 2020, while the implementation of several other RPOs was ongoing at the time of drafting this Development Plan.

Although the implementation of several RPOs has been completed, the strategic goals for the RGC remain the same. This chapter includes further strategic objectives supporting development in the Regional Growth Centre.

### 4.1 RGC Strategic Plan area

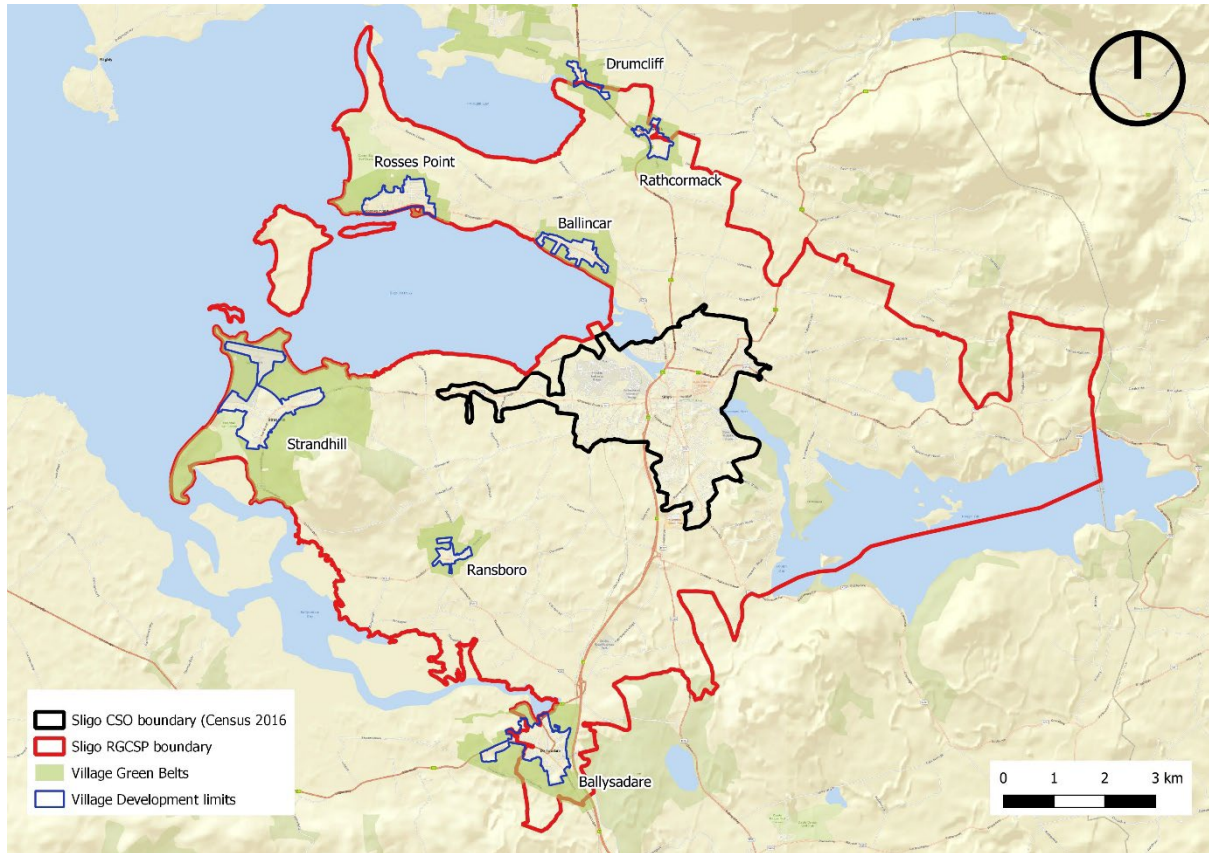
The County's Settlement Strategy focuses on the development of the Regional Growth Centre (RGC) as recommended by the NPF and supported by the RSES.

The Sligo RGC Strategic Plan covers Sligo Town and its Environs together with a significant rural hinterland. The Strategic Plan area had a population of 28,465 people in 2016 (Census data) of which 68% (19,413 persons) resided in the "principal urban area" (PUA) of Sligo and Environs.

The boundaries of the Sligo RGC SP, as shown in the RSES, are based on the CSO's Small Areas (basic statistical units for the purposes of Census 2016). The selection includes Sligo Town's closest satellite villages of Ballysadare, Strandhill and Rosses Point together with all major employers and educational institutions located outside the Town (see Fig. 4.A).

The three villages provide homes and local services for a combined population of 3,986 persons (2016). While they do offer a variety of jobs, these commuter villages are heavily reliant upon Sligo for employment. Strandhill and Rosses Point have additional tourism functions, with corresponding employment opportunities.

**Fig. 4.A Extent of the Sligo RGC Strategic Plan area**



(source: NWRA RSES, as updated in May 2020)

## 4.2 RGC strategic goals and RPOs

The Regional Strategy specifies three strategic goals for the RGC:

- **Compact Growth** – expressed through nine Regional Policy Objectives (RPOs)
- **Enterprising Sligo** – two RPOs
- **Liveable Sligo** – four RPOs

The following sub-sections indicate how the RSES goals and RPOs are integrated into this development plan.

### 4.2.1 Strategic goal – Compact Growth

Section 3.7(c) of the RSES suggests that compact growth can be achieved through regeneration and consolidation, planned expansion and improved mobility. The corresponding RPOs 3.7.37 to 3.7.45 set out the main development parameters for the RGC up to 2040. Their incorporation in various chapters of this Plan is detailed below:

#### ❖ **RPO 3.7.37 – Sligo Town’s population to reach at least 27,200 by 2040**

The population target for Sligo Town is set out in Chapter 5 Settlement Strategy.



❖ **RPO 3.7.38 – Between 3,000 and 5,000 houses to be built by 2040**

The housing allocation for Sligo Town is set out in **Chapter 3 Core Strategy Statement**. The allocation amounts to circa 2,500 dwellings to be delivered by 2030. This would facilitate the achievement of the target set by RPO 3.7.38 for 2040.

❖ **RPO 3.7.39 – Minimum 40% of development to take place on infill and brownfield sites**

The Settlement Capacity Audit (SCA) for Sligo Town, included in **Chapter 11 (Volume 2)** demonstrates that more than 40% of new housing development can be accommodated on infill and brownfield sites.

❖ **RPO 3.7.40 – Eastern Garavogue Bridge and Approach Roads Scheme to be completed by 2021**

As the scheme could not be completed by 2021, a **strategic objective** (SO-RGC-1) is included in this chapter and a **regional and local roads objective** (O-RLR-2) is included in **Chapter 29 Transport Infrastructure (Vol.3)**.

❖ **RPO 3.7.41 – Western Distributor Road to be completed by 2020**

The Western Distributor Road has been completed on time, therefore this RPO has been achieved.

❖ **RPO 3.7.42 – Prioritise development on greenfield sites served by the above roads**

The Settlement Capacity Audit carried out for Sligo Town prioritises greenfield lands at Oakfield and Ballinode for development in conjunction with the WDR and the Eastern Garavogue Bridge and Roads Scheme.

❖ **RPO 3.7.43 – Complete the vehicular “ring route” around Sligo’s town centre**

The Strategic Transport Objectives for Sligo Town, included in **Chapter 11 (Volume 2)**, specify the corridors to be reserved for the provision of the urban roads necessary to improve circulation around the town centre.

❖ **RPO 3.7.44 – Carry out a building height study targeting housing densities above 50 units per hectare in the town centre**

The required building height study will be carried out in conjunction with the preparation of a Local Area Plan for Sligo and Environs. A strategic objective in this regard is included in this chapter.

❖ **RPO 3.7.45 – Retain free from development the agricultural land within the RGC SP area which is not subject to zoning in a statutory plan**

Within the RGC Strategic Plan area, the lands zoned for development as part of this Plan are located in Sligo Town, Ballysadare, Strandhill and Rosses Point.

This Plan includes adequate provisions to generally retain the current agricultural use on all greenfield lands located outside the development limits of the four zoned settlements, and outside the village boundaries of Ballinac, Drumcliff, Rathcormac and Ransboro.

The entire RGC SP area is located in the designated rural area under urban influence (RAUI) surrounding Sligo Town. The relevant strategic settlement policy for RAUI is SP-S-9 in Chapter 5 of this Plan.

## 4.2.2 Strategic goal – Enterprising Sligo

The RSES indicates that local economic development should be achieved through supporting higher education, servicing new business and enterprise zones, investing in transport infrastructure and the Smart City Initiative, and progressing tourism projects.

Some of these actions fall outside the remit of the CDP but are adequately supported through the LECP/Sligo 2030 strategy.

### ❖ **RPO 3.7.46 – Facilitate the development of a new IDA Business Park at Oakfield**

This RPO is implemented through the strategic policy SP-RGC-2 (in this chapter) for the IDA lands at Oakfield, and in the zoning included in **Chapter 11 Sligo Town Plan** (Volume 2).

### ❖ **RPO 3.7.47 – Promote local heritage and culture to deliver tourism products of regional and national significance**

While the promotion of local heritage and cultural tourism is normally carried out by specialised, statutory bodies (e.g. Heritage Council, Failte Ireland), Sligo County Council has included relevant actions in its LECP/Sligo 2030 strategy.

This County Development Plan contains policies designed to protect natural and cultural heritage (**Chapters 23 Landscape Character, 24 Natural Heritage, 25 Built Heritage**). Overall, the CDP sets a comprehensive policy framework which is adequate for managing proposals related to tourism developments of any scale – local, regional or national (refer to Volume 3, **Chapter 28 Economic development**).

### ❖ **RPO 3.7.52 – Consolidate existing IDA Business Park at Finisklin and expand enterprise uses into the northern Docklands area**

This RPO is reflected in the strategic policies for the IDA lands at Finisklin (SP-RGC-2) and for the Docklands area (SO-RGC-5) included in this chapter, and in the zoning objectives for Sligo Town (**Chapter 11**, Volume 2).

### ❖ **RPO 3.7.53 – Encourage new companies to locate on lands zoned for business, industry and enterprise at Ballytivnan and Rathbraughan (north of Sligo Town)**

This RPO is reflected in the zoning objectives for Sligo Town (**Chapter 11**, Volume 2).

### ❖ **RPO 3.7.54 – Improvements to national roads N-4, N-15, N-16, N-17**

The implementation of this RPO is within the remit of the TII, with funding provided through the National Development Plan. The CDP supports the RPO through its national roads objectives contained in **Chapter 29 Transport infrastructure**.

### ❖ **RPO 3.7.55 – “Give effect to the infrastructure” needed to transform Sligo into a ‘Smart City’**

The implementation of relevant infrastructure policies contained in Volume 2 of this Plan will support the transformation of Sligo into a ‘Smart City’ as envisaged by the LECP/Sligo 2030 document.

❖ **RPO 3.7.56 – Support tourism development in Sligo Town (major attraction), Strandhill and Rosses Point**

This RPO is reflected in the provisions of **Section 28.3 Tourism (Chapter 28 Economic development, in Volume 3)**. In addition, the Special Coastal Tourism functions are retained in the Settlement Strategy for Strandhill and Rosses Point.

❖ **RPO 3.7.57 – Seek an increase in the number of jobs in the RGC to 17,000 by 2040**

This RPO is addressed in the Sligo Town Plan (**Chapter 11**) essentially by zoning sufficient, serviced and suitable land for residential and business/enterprise development, in order to accommodate the additional population targeted by the NPF, with a corresponding growth in the number of persons employed in the RGC SP area.

### 4.2.3 Strategic goal – Liveable Sligo

Relating mainly to Sligo Town, this goal requires the enhancement of the built environment and the use of open space to benefit residents, support businesses and attract tourists. Three “Key liveability projects” are listed – the O’Connell Street enhancement (completed in 2022), the Stephen Street Cultural Plaza (renamed Queen Maeve Square – works commenced in 2023) and the “Green Link South” to potential future greenways.

❖ **RPO 3.7.48 – Upgrade the town centre through focused public realm interventions**

This RPO is reflected in the strategic objective **SO-RGC-8** in this chapter.

❖ **RPO 3.7.49 – Prepare and implement a new masterplan for the Centre Block**

This RPO is reflected in the strategic objective **SO-RGC-6** in this chapter.

❖ **RPO 3.7.50 – Complete the major recreational complex at Cleveragh/Doorly Park**

This RPO is reflected in the **strategic objective for green corridors** in Chapter 11 (Sligo Town).

❖ **RPO 3.7.51 – Expand cycle and walking routes through the urban area and outwards**

This RPO is reflected in the **strategic objective for green corridors** in Chapter 11 (Sligo Town).

## 4.3 Strategic growth areas

The Regional Strategy distinguishes between three categories of strategic growth areas:

- predominantly residential areas – Docklands, Caltragh, Ballinode;
- regeneration areas – Town Centre, Cranmore, Docklands;
- industry and technology areas – Finisklin, Ballytivnan-Rathbraughan, Oakfield.

In addition to the RPOs 3.7.52 to 3.7.57, which have been addressed in Section 4.2.2 above (Strategic goal – Enterprising Sligo), the RSES argues in favour of releasing lands from the Strategic Land Reserve in order to support the development potential at Caltragh and Ballinode. This has been done based on the outcome of the Settlement Capacity Audit for Sligo Town.

The Docklands area is described as “an established working landscape”, subject of “piecemeal development over the years” but still “largely unutilised”. Its potential for future residential commercial, community and enterprise uses is repeatedly highlighted in the RSES.

The recommended redevelopment framework for the Docklands should focus on:

- the retention of the Port as a valuable piece of commercial/industrial infrastructure;
- remediation of the former landfill and other potentially contaminated lands;
- revised street/road layout and improved connectivity with Sligo centre;
- an improved mix of uses, including community, commercial and residential;
- enhanced provision of open space in the form of linear parks and cycle/pedestrian routes;
- the provision of a cultural landmark building;
- the re-use of former industrial buildings for creative enterprises and the new community uses.

A strategic objective for the Docklands area is included in this chapter – refer to **SO-RGC-5**.

### **Strategic sites for regeneration**

The Docklands is not the only area earmarked by the RSES for urban regeneration. The Cranmore Regeneration Project, based on the masterplan launched in 2016, is yet to be completed. In the centre of Sligo Town, the Centre Block (Wine Street car park), the Courthouse Block and the Quay Quarter are also designated for regeneration with strong heritage, urban design and public realm elements.

The above requirements are transposed in this Plan through the strategic objectives **SO-RGC-3**, **SO-RGC-6**, **SO-RGC-7** and **SO-RGC-8**.

## 4.4 Strategic infrastructure

In order to achieve the desired population and employment growth, the RSES lists key infrastructure projects that need to be delivered.

Transport infrastructure projects such as the Eastern Bridge and Approach Roads Scheme, the Western Distributor Road and the realignment of national roads N-15 and N-16 have already been mentioned in relation to the implementation of RPOs 3.7.40, 3.7.41 and 3.7.54 (see sections above).

The RSES restates the strategic importance of the Inner Relief Road (N-4) and the need to improve its relationship with adjoining urban areas and to soften the “boundary” effect while enhancing junction capacity. In addition, it is essential to complete the “ring route” around Sligo’s town centre, by providing a link from Mail Coach Road to Burton Street.

These requirements are set out in **Chapter 11 Sligo Town Plan** and will be detailed in the Local Area Plan for Sligo and Environs.

The Port, the wastewater treatment infrastructure and the potential local gas network are also mentioned in the RSES as existing or envisaged strategic infrastructure for the Regional Growth Centre. Objectives are included in this chapter.

## Strategic policies for Sligo Regional Growth Centre

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

- SP-RGC-1** Support population, housing and employment growth in Sligo RGC to achieve the targets set in the RSES (2020) and subsequent reviews.
- SP-RGC-2** Assist the IDA in the development of a new Business Park at Oakfield.
- SP-RGC-3** Ensure that the required infrastructure is in place to support the transformation of Sligo into a Smart City as envisaged in the LECP/Sligo 2030 strategy.

## Strategic objectives for Sligo Regional Growth Centre

It is an objective of Sligo County Council to:

### Circulation

- SO-RGC-1** Support RSES provisions (including RPO 3.7.40) relating to the completion of the Eastern Garavogue Bridge and Approach Roads Scheme within the lifetime of this development plan.

### Housing

- SO-RGC-2** Carry out a building height study targeting increased housing densities in Sligo Town Centre.
- SO-RGC-3** Complete the implementation of the Cranmore Regeneration Project.
- SO-RGC-4** Seek the development of new urban quarters at Caltragh and Ballinode, based on land assembly and comprehensive masterplanning with appropriate phasing.

### Regeneration

- SO-RGC-5** Prepare a masterplan for the Docklands area, focusing on the provision of mixed residential, employment and recreational uses while retaining the functions of a fully operational Port.
- SO-RGC-6** Coordinate and oversee the implementation of the masterplan for the Centre Block/Wine Street Car Park area, aiming to deliver a mixture of housing and employment uses through a high-quality urban design solution.

## Strategic objectives for Sligo Regional Growth Centre

- SO-RGC-7** In conjunction with ATU Sligo, prepare and implement a masterplan for the City Campus site – Sligo’s Cultural and Learning Hub involving the regeneration of this block of the town incorporating new County Library and museum facilities, enterprise space, residential units and high quality public realm.
- SO-RGC-8** Pursue the refurbishment of Sligo’s town centre in line with the Public Realm Plan.

# Chapter 5. Settlement Strategy

The Settlement Strategy of the Development Plan represents the Council’s options and priorities in terms of spatial and economic development of County Sligo within the national (NPF) and regional (RSES) planning frameworks.

This Strategy provides local direction on the desired future development of all urban and rural settlements, including rural areas.

In accordance with Section 10(2A) of the Planning Act, the Settlement Strategy comprises those elements of the Core Strategy that relate to the settlement hierarchy, population growth projections and housing land requirements.

## 5.1 Settlement structure and hierarchy

The settlements of County Sligo have remained largely unchanged since the 1990s in terms of their social and economic roles. While some villages have seen unprecedented housing growth during the early 2000s, their economic functions have not developed sufficiently to make them self-sustaining.

Despite an apparent demographic stagnation, Sligo Town has retained and consolidated its economic functions, providing services and employment for the population of a very large hinterland.

The established settlement structure forms the basis of the County’s settlement hierarchy, which is summarised below. The settlement hierarchy is illustrated in **Fig. 3.A Core Strategy Map** (refer to **Chapter 3 Core Strategy Statement**)

Towns	
Regional Growth Centre (RGC)	Sligo Town (and Environs)
Support Towns	Ballymote, Tobercurry, Enniscrone

Villages	
RGC Satellite Villages	Ballysadare, Collooney, Coolaney, Grange, Strandhill
Villages with Special Coastal Tourism Functions	Easky, Mullaghmore, Rosses Point
Villages Sustaining Rural Communities (serviced)	Aclare, Ballinacarrow, Ballinafad, Ballincar, Ballintogher, Bellaghy, Bunnanadden, Carney, Castlebaldwin, Cliffony, Cloonacool, Culfadda, Curry, Dromore West, Drumcliff, Geevagh, Gorteen, Monasteraden, Riverstown
Unserviced villages and dispersed settlement in rural areas	Ballygawley, Banada, Ransboro, Rathcormac, Tourlestrane and rural areas

## 5.2 Population growth and housing supply

Population projections relevant to County Sligo are provided in the NPF Implementation Roadmap, while the NWRA Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy sets population targets for Sligo Town and estimates the corresponding number of housing units required by 2040.

Housing projections for the County are appended to the Section 28 Housing Supply Target Methodology Guidelines (DHLGH, 2020).

### 5.2.1 Population and housing projections set at national level

#### Population

Appendix 2 of the NPF Implementation Roadmap includes transition regional and county population projections to 2031. Figures for County Sligo are specified in the context of the North-West subregion of the NWRA.

**Table 5.1 NPF population projections for County Sligo**

(extract from Appendix 2, p.14 of the NPF Implementation Roadmap)

Population	Census 2016	Projection 2026	Projection 2031
County Sligo	65,500	71,500–72,500	74,000–75,500

In accordance with the above projections, the County’s population should increase by 8,000 to 9,400 persons by 2030 above the number recorded in Census 2016 for a total of approximately **75,000 residents**.

Census 2022 recorded a County population of **70,198**. Having regard to this recently published figure, the estimated additional population to be accommodated by 2030 period would be circa **4,800**.

#### Housing

Based on the population projections scenarios prepared by the ESRI, the DHLGH issued Housing Supply Target Methodology Guidelines (HSTM Guidelines) in 2020 under Section 28 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).

The Excel database accompanying the Guidelines provides projected annual figures for new household demand in each local authority area up to the year 2031.

For County Sligo, the total adjusted demand corresponding to the Plan period is approximately 3,892 units. The calculations in accordance with the "Worked Example 2" provided in Appendix 1 of the HSTM Guidelines are shown in Table 5.2 (see next page).



**Table 5.2 Adjusted total housing demand in Co. Sligo during the Development Plan period<sup>1</sup>**

Plan period: Q3 2024 to Q3 2030 (1 July 2024 to 30 June 2030)		Annual average households	Total households
<b>A</b>	<b>ESRI NPF scenario projected new household demand 2017 to Q2 2030</b> (end of Plan period)	827	<b>4,964</b> (from ESRI research)
<b>B</b>	<b>Actual new housing supply 2017 to Q4 2022 and estimated future delivery in 2023 and Q1-Q2 2024</b>		<b>1,188</b> (from CSO completions data and estimation of 2023-2024 delivery based on average of 2017 to 2022)
<b>C</b>	<b>Homeless households</b> (latest data from January 2023 Homeless Report), and <b>unmet demand</b> as at Census 2016		<b>59</b> (from DHLGH and Census) (was 43 originally)
<b>D</b>	<b>Plan Housing Demand = Total (A-B+C)</b> (Projected ESRI NPF demand - new completions) + Unmet demand	639	<b>3,835</b>
<b>E</b>	Potential adjustment 1 to end 2026 portion of plan period to facilitate convergence to NPF strategy (where justified)	Mid-point between ESRI NPF and baseline scenarios to 2026 in lieu of A above	
<b>E1</b>	ESRI Baseline scenario projected new household demand 2017 to Q4 2026		<b>4,056</b> (from ESRI research)
<b>E2</b>	ESRI NPF scenario projected new household demand 2027 to Q2 2030 (Plan end)		<b>1,230</b> (from ESRI research)
<b>E3</b>	Mid-point between A-E2 (ESRI NPF and Baseline scenarios to Q4 2026)		<b>3,791</b>
<b>E4</b>	<b>Adjusted Total Plan Demand</b> calculation based on E2 + E3 in lieu of A above	648	<b>3,892</b> (E2 + E3 - B + C = total)
<b>F</b>	<i>NOT APPLICABLE IN THIS EXAMPLE</i> <i>Potential adjustment 2 to end 2026 portion of plan period to facilitate convergence to NPF strategy, applicable where B exceeds or is close to D (where justified)</i>	<i>Mid-point between ESRI NPF and baseline scenarios to 2026 in lieu of A above, plus up to 25%</i>	

<sup>1</sup> As per HST Guidelines, Appendix 1, Worked Example 2: Local Authority where (i) ESRI NPF scenario is lower than the ESRI Baseline scenario, and (ii) mid-point between ESRI baseline and NPF scenarios can be justified to 2026 as a housing supply target for a Q3 2024 to Q2 2030 Plan period.

## 5.2.2 Population and housing targets set at regional level

### Population

The RSES sets population targets for Sligo Town while also indicating the minimum uplift to 2040 and to the same intermediate years as the NPF Implementation Roadmap.

**Table 5.3 Sligo RGC population targets** (extract from Table 3 on p. 40 of the RSES)

	2016 Census population	Minimum increase to 2040 (%)	Uplift to 2040 (persons)	Minimum uplift to 2026	Minimum uplift to 2031	Target population in 2031
Sligo Town	19,200	40%	8,000	4,400	2,200	26,000

In accordance with the above provisions, the targeted population growth in Sligo Town would be circa 6,160 persons by 2030, bringing the total population to **circa 25,360**. This is a very ambitious target, which may not be attained based on past trends.

The Draft Plan proposes a lower population target for Sligo Town, of **23,800 residents by 2030**.

### Housing

In Section 3.7(c) of the RSES, RPO 3.7.38 requires Sligo County Council to facilitate the provision of 3,000 to 5,000 residential units to accommodate the additional Sligo Town population envisaged by 2040. This would be equivalent to providing between 150 and 250 units per year from 2020 to 2040.

During the 6-year life of the CDP 2024-2030, the number of dwellings allocated to Sligo Town in accordance with the RSES provisions would be between 900 and 1,500 units.

Taking into account the empirical evidence of acute housing shortage in Sligo Town, constantly increasing since 2016, the actual demand is probably much higher.

This Draft Plan facilitates “frontloading” the delivery of housing in Sligo Town, by proposing to zone sufficient land to accommodate **at least 2,500 units by 2030**.

## 5.2.3 Population and housing allocations at local level

It is evident that the figures derived from the NPF population projections and the RSES population and housing targets are not correlated with the HST housing figure as calculated in Table 5.2.

As indicated in the Core Strategy Statement, the Planning Authority considers reasonable to base settlement population targets on past trends and on the NPF County population estimate of 75,000 by 2030.

The overall housing allocation of 3,892 units has been distributed to the 12 towns and villages in accordance with the preferred spatial development option (selected SEA Alternative) described in Section 1.2 (Chapter 1), i.e. “Option 3 – Driving growth in the County through the Sligo RGC”. The allocations have been made on the basis of Infrastructural Assessments and Settlement Capacity Audits – details are provided in Volume 2, which contains 12 town and village plans.

The Settlement Strategy for each of the six settlement levels, together with the respective population and housing allocations, reflects the above option.

## 5.3 Strategy for towns

### 5.3.1 Sligo Town: accelerated compact growth

Sligo Town, previously under the joint jurisdiction of Sligo County Council and Sligo Borough Council (dissolved in 2014) has seen a long period of stagnation in terms of population and housing. It is estimated that the population of the County’s main town grew by only 4.4% between 2002 and 2022.

A series of complex factors, including a chronic shortage of investment in the town, have influenced new households to locate outside the Sligo Borough boundary. It is evident from Tables 5.4 (below) and 5.5 (further in this chapter) that the Environs of Sligo and the Satellite Villages have seen significant population growth in the 2000s.

Sligo County Council has been striving to reverse this trend through major regeneration projects (e.g. Cranmore Regeneration) and public realm interventions (e.g. O’Connell Street, Queen Maeve Square etc).

The Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF) has been essential and, along with other funding streams, will continue to be one of the most important resources for enhancing Sligo Town’s attractiveness for living and investing.

**Table 5.4 Population trends in the Sligo and Environs area from 2002 to 2022**

Sligo Town (statistical units)	Population 2002	Population 2006	Population 2011	Population 2016	Population 2022	% change from 2002 to 2022
<b>Sligo East ED</b>	5,568	5,334	4,937	4,998	4,940	– 11.28%
<b>Sligo North ED</b>	5,745	5,346	5,502	5,222	6,127	+ 6.65%
<b>Sligo West ED</b>	7,160	7,212	7,129	7,219	7,788	+ 0.8%
<b>3 EDs combined</b> <i>(jurisdiction of Sligo Borough Council until 2014)</i>	<b>18,473</b>	<b>17,892</b>	<b>17,568</b>	<b>17,439</b>	<b>18,855</b>	<b>+ 2.06%</b>
<b>Environs of Sligo</b> <i>(jurisdiction of Sligo County Council)</i>	723	1,510	1,884	n/a	n/a	n/a
<b>Sligo and Environs</b> (Census “legal town” boundary until 2011)	<b>19,735</b>	<b>19,402</b>	<b>19,452</b>	n/a	n/a	See notes below
<b>Sligo and Environs</b> (Census settlement boundary in 2016)	n/a	n/a	n/a	<b>19,199</b>	n/a	See notes below
<b>Sligo and Environs</b> (new Built-Up Area boundary in 2022)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	<b>20,608</b>	<b>Est. 4.4%</b> (See note below)

**Note:** As the Census boundary of the legal settlement “Sligo and Environs” was modified by the CSO in 2016 and again in 2022, enclosing a different area than in 2011 and previous Census years, it is not possible to calculate a correct percentage for the intercensal population growth in Sligo Town and its Environs

The largest urban settlement in the County has the greatest potential to deliver compact growth and regeneration in the existing built-up area, as well as in the designated *strategic growth areas* to the north-east (Ballinode) and south-west (Caltragh/Oakfield).

The town also has the potential to become County Sligo’s most sustainable urban area by promoting active mobility as specified in the Sligo Local Transport Plan prepared in conjunction with this Development Plan (refer also to **Chapter 9 Transport Strategy**).

**The Strategy for Sligo Town** consists of the following elements:

- Support accelerated population growth to a level of **at least 23,800 persons by 2030**.
- Facilitate the provision of **at least 2,500 residential units** to accommodate the accumulated unmet demand and the additional population envisaged by 2030.
- Ensure that at least 40% of new development occurs within Sligo Town’s existing built-up area, through regeneration and consolidation on infill and brownfield sites.
- Prioritise new residential and employment-related development on greenfield sites in the areas served by the Western Distributor Road at Caltragh and Oakfield, and at Ballinode, which will be served by the Eastern Garavogue Bridge and Approach Roads Scheme.

**A Local Area Plan for Sligo Town and Environs** will be prepared after the adoption of the Development Plan, as required by current planning legislation. The LAP will set out the detailed objectives for the area’s future growth.

This County Development Plan includes only the zoning and strategic designations and objectives for Sligo Town – refer to **Chapter 11**.

### 5.3.2 Support Towns – regeneration and consolidation

Throughout much of County Sligo, particularly the south and the west, there is a continuing need to address the weak urban structure and build on the strengths and scale of existing settlements.

Three towns were first identified in the CDP 2005-2011 – Ballymote, Tobercurry and Enniscrone – as urban centres able to sustain the County’s social and economic development outside Sligo Town.

During the 20 years from Census 2002 to Census 2022, all three towns have experienced substantial increases in population, exceeding the rate of investment in their physical and social infrastructure.

**Table 5.5 Population growth in Sligo’s Support Towns (2002 to 2022) and targets for 2030**

Support Towns	Population 2002	Population 2006	Population 2011	Population 2016	Population 2022	% growth 2002–2022	Population targets 2030
<b>Ballymote</b>	981	1,229	1,539	1,549	1,711	+ 74%	<b>1,850</b>
<b>Enniscrone</b>	668	829	1,223	1,156	1,291	+ 93%	<b>1,400</b>
<b>Tobercurry</b>	1,171	1,421	1,747	1,986	2,307	+ 97%	<b>2,450</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,820</b>	<b>3,479</b>	<b>4,509</b>	<b>4,691</b>	<b>5,309</b>	+ 88%	<b>5,700</b>

The three Support Towns must be consolidated and equipped with adequate infrastructure and with all the services required to respond to the needs of their own residents and of those living in the surrounding rural areas.

It will be essential to address vacancy/dereliction and to regenerate the town centres through public realm improvements.

Detailed objectives for the three Support Towns’ regeneration and consolidation are set out in the Town Plans contained in Chapters 12, 13 and 14, together with zoning objectives.

## 5.4 Strategy for villages

### 5.4.1 Satellite Villages – carefully managed development

During the early Celtic Tiger years, before the introduction of Core Strategy requirements in development plans, there has been significant developer-led residential development in villages located close to Sligo Town.

These villages have become home to a substantial proportion of Sligo Town’s workforce, offering lower-density housing but falling behind in the provision of essential services.

As detailed in Table 5.5 below, the combined population of the five villages has grown by 4,609 persons from 2002 to 2022 – a 174% increase – while the County’s main urban centre, Sligo Town, has remained stagnant during the same period.

**Table 5.6 Population growth in Sligo’s Satellite Villages (2002 to 2022) and targets for 2030**

Satellite Villages	Population 2002	Population 2006	Population 2011	Population 2016	Population 2022	% growth 2002–2022	Population targets 2030
Ballysadare	853	971	1,344	1,350	1,747	+ 104%	<b>1,900</b>
Collooney	619	892	1,369	1,610	1,797	+ 190%	<b>1,900</b>
Coolaney	167	208	866	990	1,155	+ 591%	<b>1,250</b>
Grange	225	383	578	586	569	+ 152%	<b>600</b>
Strandhill	1,002	1,413	1,596	1,753	1,982	+ 97%	<b>2,100</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,641</b>	<b>3,867</b>	<b>5,753</b>	<b>6,289</b>	<b>7,250</b>	<b>+ 174%</b>	<b>7,750</b>

In recent years, service infrastructure problems (i.e. wastewater treatment) have been largely remediated in these Satellite Villages, but there are still insufficient community facilities for the local population, and inadequate active travel and public transport services for commuters to Sligo Town.

In order to support accelerated growth in Sligo Town, it is essential to carefully manage development in the Satellite Villages, focusing on improving the quality of life of existing residents. Any additional residential development must be directed first onto brownfield and infill sites within the villages’ built-up areas.

Consistent with RPOs 3.2 and 3.3, the Council must pursue the delivery of new development within the Census boundaries in proportion of a minimum 30% in settlements over 1,500 population (e.g. Ballysadare, Collooney, Strandhill) and a minimum 20% in settlements under 1,500 population (Coolaney and Grange).

Detailed objectives for the five Satellite Villages are set out in the Village Plans contained in Chapters 15 to 19, together with zoning objectives.

## 5.4.2 Settlements with Special Coastal Tourism Functions – support for sustainable tourism development

The Council acknowledges the fact that several towns and villages in the County have special functions. Enniscrone, Easky, Mullaghmore, Rosses Point and Strandhill are widely recognised for their coastal tourism role.

The inclusion of Easky, Mullaghmore and Rosses Point in the Wild Atlantic Way route presents new opportunities for tourism and related development in these villages, requiring appropriate zoning and specific objectives. These are provided in Chapters 20, 21 and 22.

## 5.4.3 Villages Sustaining Rural Communities – small-scale development

Throughout the County, there is a variety of small villages, some of which have seen little or no growth in decades. Other villages, where substantial residential development took place during the economic boom, have experienced high levels of vacancy for extended periods.

It is necessary to support these settlements and seek to direct a certain amount of development in the villages with adequate infrastructural capacity, in order to ensure that local services are sustained and to offer a suitable alternative to rural one-off housing.

Chapters 34 to 51 contain specific objectives and simplified zoning provisions in 19 Village Plans.

## 5.4.4 Unserviced villages – strictly limited development

Five villages – Ballygawley, Banada, Ransboro, Rathcormac and Tourlestrane – where land has been zoned for development in the past, do not have adequate wastewater treatment services.

Sligo County Council, in co-operation with Uisce Éireann, will pursue the provision of wastewater treatment facilities to serve these villages.

In accordance with NPF provisions, lands may not be zoned unless they are serviced or serviceable during the life of the development plan.

Although these villages are not zoned as part of the CDP, the development limits are retained, in order to direct proposals for one-off houses on lands that will likely be serviced in the long-term (beyond 2030). Clustering houses served by individual wastewater treatment systems will facilitate their future connection to public wastewater infrastructure.

## 5.5 Strategy for rural settlement

Throughout County Sligo, people live and work outside of villages and towns in a dispersed settlement pattern. In the past, these areas have been largely dependent on farming, but with the decline of agricultural employment, there is a need to sustain these rural communities through other means.

Government policy on rural housing is set out in the National Planning Framework, which places a major emphasis on rural areas in relation to strengthening Ireland’s rural fabric and supporting the communities who live there.

The Council remains committed to Sligo’s Regional Growth Centre status and will support the development of Sligo Town by seeking to defuse the pressure for additional housing in rural areas close to Sligo and Environs.

At the same time, the Council acknowledges that it is necessary to accommodate those applicants with a **genuine need to live in a rural area**, which must be demonstrated at planning application stage.

In formulating policy on rural housing, the Council has considered the intrinsic characteristics of rural areas and their location (and distance) in relation to Sligo Town. Applicants with a demonstrable rural housing need will be accommodated subject to the policies set out in this chapter.

### 5.5.1 Types of rural areas

**The NPF** indicates that there are clear differences between types of rural areas and communities, including accessibility and the influence of neighbouring urban centres. A distinction is made between rural areas located within commuter catchments of large towns and those located outside such commuter catchments.

**The RSES** acknowledges that the management of rural area is challenging “in that some areas have a declining and ageing population whilst others are experiencing urban generated pressure from the demand for houses within the commuter zone of our cities, regional centres and their support towns”.

**The National Policy Objective (NPO) 19** identifies two different types of rural area and calls for different policy responses for each. The two types of rural area are:

- rural areas under urban influence;
- rural areas elsewhere.

The 2005 Sligo County Development Plan was the first to recognise the two types of rural areas in County Sligo, and to designate a rural area under urban influence. Census data and planning applications for rural housing in recent years show that the trends have remained largely constant in terms of population change and demand for one-off housing in both types of rural areas in county Sligo.

This County Development Plan retains the rural area definitions and extents, as set out in previous development plans (2005, 2011 and 2017), which are in accordance with NPO 19.

## Rural Areas under Urban Influence (RAUI)

These are areas located in the proximity of large urban centres or near major transport routes leading to those centres. In such areas, there is evidence of high demand for one-off housing development and of pressure on the local road network.

The NPF clearly states that “It will continue to be necessary to demonstrate a functional economic or social requirement for housing need in areas under urban influence, i.e. the commuter catchment of cities and large towns and centres of employment. This will also be subject to siting and design considerations” (S.5.3 *Planning for the future growth and development of rural areas*, p. 74 of the NPF).

The RSES reiterates the NPF provisions, reaffirming the need to provide single rural houses “for those that have a demonstrable economic or social need to live in the area, subject to all other proper planning and sustainable development considerations”.

Sligo Town is the dominant urban centre in County Sligo, with a commuter catchment extending northwards and eastwards to the County Leitrim boundary (and beyond), southwards and westwards for at least 15-18 km.

The **Rural areas under urban influence** designated in this CDP largely correspond to the core of the commuter catchment described above. The challenge here is to direct new housing development into Sligo Town and surrounding villages, while accommodating those with a genuine need to live in a rural location.

The extent of the **Rural area under urban influence** is shown on **Fig. 3.A Core Strategy Map** in Chapter 3 Core Strategy Statement.

## Remote Rural Areas

Areas in the west and south of County Sligo, located at a longer distance from Sligo Town, have fewer settlements and a weaker economy. Younger people continue to move away for better job opportunities and older generations are not being fully replaced.

The NPF supports the sustainable development of rural areas by encouraging growth and arresting decline in areas that have experienced low population growth or decline in recent decades (NPO 15, p. 71 of the NPF).

In these areas, the challenge is to retain population and support the rural economy, while seeking to consolidate existing settlements.

The extent of the **Remote rural areas** is the entire County territory located outside the **Rural areas under urban influence**.

## 5.5.2 Green Belts

Proliferation of development, including dispersed dwellings in rural areas, can have a detrimental effect on the long-term viability of towns and villages. Such developments can also be expensive to sustain in terms of transport and service infrastructure (water and wastewater).

It is essential that Sligo’s settlements are consolidated within the development limits established as part of the town and village plans contained in this Development Plan.

Outside development limits, **Green Belts** have been designated for the purposes of preventing urban sprawl and preserving the visual identity of Sligo’s towns and villages.



It is also important to protect wildlife habitats and reduce the risk of pollution to water bodies from an accumulation of individual wastewater treatment systems in the areas around settlements, which are under constant pressure for one-off housing.

## Strategic settlement policies for towns and villages

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

### Towns

- SP-S-1** Pursue the accelerated and compact development of Sligo Town as a Regional Growth Centre and economic driver for the North-West region.
- SP-S-2** Promote consolidation and regeneration in the Support Towns of Ballymote, Enniscrone and Tobercurry.

### Villages

- SP-S-3** Carefully manage development in the Satellite Villages of Ballysadare, Collooney, Coolaney, Grange and Strandhill, prioritising investment in social infrastructure and active travel infrastructure.
- SP-S-4** Support the Villages with Special Coastal Tourism Functions – Easky, Mullaghmore, Rosses Point – to achieve their full potential for sustainable tourism development.
- SP-S-5** Direct new small-scale rural development proposals into the designated Villages Sustaining Rural Communities, in the interest of their continued viability.
- SP-S-6** In unserviced villages, promote clustering of development within village development limits, to facilitate their future connection to service infrastructure.

### Green Belts

- SP-S-7** Prevent inappropriate development around towns and villages by establishing Green Belts which shall serve the following general purposes:
- consolidate the settlements within development limits and retain their visual identity distinct from the surrounding countryside;
  - reserve land for future planned expansion of settlements and for the provision of major infrastructure (e.g. transport).

## Strategic rural settlement policy

- SP-S-8** Strengthen existing rural communities by facilitating sustainable rural settlement in accordance with the National Planning Framework and the National Policy Objective 19, which requires that a distinction is made between areas under urban influence and rural areas elsewhere.
- A.** In rural areas under urban influence, facilitate the provision of single housing in the countryside based on the core consideration of demonstrable economic or social need to live in a rural area and siting and design criteria for rural housing in statutory guidelines and plans, having regard to the viability of smaller towns and rural settlements;
  - B.** In rural areas elsewhere, facilitate the provision of single housing in the countryside based on siting and design criteria for rural housing in statutory guidelines and plans, having regard to the viability of smaller towns and rural settlements.

## Strategic settlement policy for Rural Areas Under Urban Influence

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

- SP-S-9** Accommodate proposals for one-off rural houses in **Rural Areas Under Urban Influence**, subject to normal planning considerations and compliance with the guidance set out in **Section 33.4 Housing in rural areas** (development management standards), where a housing need is demonstrated by the following categories of applicants:
- A.** landowners, including their sons and daughters, who wish to build a first home for their permanent occupation on the landholding associated with their principal family residence;
  - B.** persons whose primary employment is in a rural-based activity with a demonstrated genuine need to live in the locality of that employment base, for example, those working in agriculture, aquaculture, forestry, horticulture or other natural resource-based employment;
  - C.** persons who have no family lands, but who wish to build their first home for their permanent occupation in the area of their original family home, within the rural community in which they have spent a substantial and continuous part of their lives (this provision does not apply in cases where the original family home is located in an area zoned for development in a town or a village);

- D. persons with a link to the rural community in which they wish to build a first home for their permanent occupation, by reason of having lived in this community for a substantial and continuous part of their lives, or by the existence in this community of long-established ties with immediate family members;
- E. persons who are required to live in a rural area for exceptional reasons, including health reasons. Such applications must be accompanied by a specialist's report and recommendation outlining the reasons why it is necessary for the applicant to live in a rural area. The application should also be supported by a relevant disability organisation of which the applicant is a member, where applicable,

**AND** where such persons can demonstrate that the home they propose is in the interest of the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

**Note:** *This policy does not apply to sites located within the development limit of villages (in RAUI).*

## Strategic settlement policy for Remote Rural Areas

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

- SP-S-10** Accommodate proposals for one-off rural houses in **Remote Rural Areas**, subject to normal planning considerations and compliance with the guidance set out in **Section 33.4 Housing in rural areas** (development management standards).

## Strategic settlement policy for Green Belts and Sensitive Areas (Scenic Routes, Sensitive Rural Landscapes, Visually Vulnerable Areas)

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

- SP-S-11** Accommodate proposals for one-off rural houses in Green Belts and Sensitive Areas, subject to normal planning considerations and compliance with the guidance set out in **Section 33.4 Housing in rural areas** (development management standards), where a housing need is demonstrated by the following categories of applicants:
- A.** landowners, including their sons and daughters, who wish to build a first home for their permanent occupation on the landholding associated with their principal family residence;
  - B.** persons whose primary employment is in a rural-based activity with a demonstrated genuine need to live in the locality of that employment base, for example, those working in agriculture, aquaculture, forestry, horticulture or other natural resource-based employment;
- AND** where such persons can demonstrate that the home they propose is in the interests of the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

# Chapter 6. Housing delivery strategy

Section 94 in Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) requires the Planning Authority to include a Housing Strategy in its Development Plan, to ensure that the Plan provides for the housing of existing and future population of its functional area.

Section 95 of the Act requires that sufficient land is zoned under the development plan to accommodate the requirements of the Housing Strategy.

The implementation of the housing strategy, must be secured by including objectives in the Plan, specifying the percentage of land zoned for residential use that should be made available for social and affordable housing.

The Affordable Housing Act 2021 defines new forms of affordable housing (e.g. affordable purchase dwellings and cost-rental housing) and amends the required contents of local authority Housing Strategies prepared under Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2000.

A Housing Strategy has been prepared in conjunction with the CDP 2024-2030, in accordance with the legislation. The Housing Strategy is informed by a Housing Need and Demand Assessment (HNDA) carried out on by the Council's Planning and Housing sections, based on the DHLGH-issued data and methodology.

This chapter presents a summary of the prescribed contents, including identified trends, social housing requirements and housing land provision recommended in the Housing Strategy document. It also contains the strategic housing policies of the Council.

## 6.1 Policy context

### 6.1.1 Main national policy documents

#### **National Planning Framework (NPF)**

The NPF targets the delivery of 550,000 housing units between 2018 and 2040 (NPO 32). In Section 6.6 Housing, it, sets out priorities and principles for the housing sector, indicating that “the long-term vision for Ireland’s housing future aims to balance the provision of good quality housing that meets the needs of a diverse population, in a way that makes our cities, towns, villages and rural areas good places to live now and in the future”.

**NPO 34** supports the provision of lifetime adaptable homes that can accommodate the changing needs of a household over time.

**NPO 35** requires an increase in residential densities through a range of measures, including reductions in vacancy, re-use of existing buildings, infill development, regeneration and increased building heights,

**NPO 37** introduces the requirement for a **Housing Need Demand Assessment (HNDA)**<sup>1</sup> to be prepared by each local authority in support of its housing strategy and development plan policies. The NPF specifies that “HNDAs are designed to give broad, long run estimates of what future housing need might be, rather than precision estimates”.

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<sup>1</sup> A “HNDA Tool” and a database have subsequently been issued to all local authorities by the DHLGH in April 2021. It is important to note that the housing need estimate for County Sligo produced by the HNDA Tool does not align with the housing allocation calculated using the Housing Supply Target Methodology issued by the DHLGH in 2020 as statutory Section 28 guidelines.

## National Development Plan 2021-2030 (NDP)

The 2021 revision of the National Development Plan indicates that there is a need to accommodate around 600,000 new households by 2040 (above the original NPF target), with the Department of Housing planning to deliver an average of 33,000 homes per annum to 2030. Data from the HNDA provides detailed information on households who will require social housing supports and households who face an affordability constraint to secure their own.

This evidence has supported the development of strategy and targets to deliver the necessary housing solutions. Details of these measures are set out in the Government's, *Housing for All* plan, published in September 2021.

## Housing for All (2021)

Part of the *Programme for Government – Our Shared Future*, the document *Housing for All - a New Housing Plan for Ireland* is the government's housing policy to 2030.

The vision over the longer term is to achieve a steady supply of housing in the right locations with economic, social and environmental sustainability built into the system, through increased affordability, eradication of homelessness, increasing housing supply and social housing delivery, and addressing vacancy and underuse of existing stock. The document specifies 213 actions to be taken by government departments, local authorities, state agencies and others.

Based on all of the information and resources made available under the *Housing for All* plan and the Housing Need and Demand Assessment (HNDA) Tool, housing targets have been issued to local authorities, which are required to prepare *Housing Delivery Action Plans* (refer to subsection 6.1.2 below).

## 6.1.2 Regional and local policy

### Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2020 (RSES)

The RSES, in Section 7.6 **Housing**, focuses on compact in cities, towns and villages, supporting the provision of high-quality, affordable and accessible homes.

**RPOs 7.16 to 7.20** require local authorities to ensure, through their development plans, that housing is delivered "in the areas and quantities" identified in the Regional Strategy by means of population targets. New homes should meet the needs of communities in terms of social and affordable provision, lifetime adaptable design etc.

The RSES sets a population growth target for Sligo Town as a Regional Growth Centre, which involves a population increase of 8,000 between 2016 and 2040.

**RPO 3.7.38** requires Sligo County Council to facilitate the provision of 3,000 to 5,000 residential units to accommodate the additional Sligo Town population envisaged by 2040.

### Sligo 2030 – One Voice, One Vision

Sligo County Council, working in partnership with the Local Community Development Committee, the Strategic Policy Committee for Planning Community & Economic Development and the Sligo Economic Forum, has developed a strategic framework to guide the development of County Sligo over the next 8 to 10 years.

*Sligo 2030 - One Voice One Vision* is a multi-sectoral Local Economic & Community Plan (LECP), integrating economic, social and community goals and objectives, with an ambition for a smart and green Sligo. The need for more housing, including affordable housing, has been identified as a key message resulting from public consultation on the LECP.

Under **Goal 1** of the **Implementation Plan** associated with the LECP, **Objective 1.2** ‘*Increase the Housing Supply across Sligo*’ requires preparation of a HNDA as part of the County Development Plan process, support for the Housing Deliver Action Plan (see below), bringing vacant and derelict houses back into use etc.

## **Housing Delivery Action Plan 2022-2026 (HDAP)**

Sligo County Council’s first **Housing Delivery Action Plan**, covering the period 2022 to 2026, was published in July 2022. The HDAP aligns with the National Planning Framework, in particular the compact growth objectives, setting out the details on the delivery of local authority housing over the five years of the plan.

Noting the government-set target of 517 dwelling to be delivered between 2022 and 2025, the HDAP indicates that Sligo County Council’s target is set higher, at 621 units by 2026.

The HDAP includes precise details on the location, size and other indicators (age-friendly homes, units adapted for people with disabilities etc.) relating to the targeted dwellings, as well as the manner of delivery.

## 6.2 Census data and identified trends

At the time of drafting this Plan, the CSO had not yet published housing data collected in the 2022 Census.

### 6.2.1 Housing in the 2016 Census

- According to Census 2016, there were 24,760 dwellings in County Sligo. Only 1,542 of these (6.3%) were apartments. The high proportion of detached houses (57%) indicates a pattern of low-density development, including one-off dwellings in the countryside.
- Owner-occupied dwellings represented 69% of the total in 2016, while circa 16% of the total number of private households within the County lived in privately rented accommodation.
- Circa 10.2% of the County’s households lived in dwellings rented from the Local Authority or from an approved housing body.
- The Census-recorded vacancy rate was 20.1% in 2016 (down from 22.2% in 2011).
- One-persons households represented 28.3% of the total number in the County.

### 6.2.2 Local trends

- House completions reached 211 in 2022, a consistent increase from the lowest level in 2014, when only 60 units were completed.
- In 2022, Sligo had 165 commencement notices, the 6th lowest number in the state, after staying among the bottom five counties in the preceding four years.
- There were three remaining unfinished housing schemes in 2023, comprising 36 houses and 73 apartments. Of these, 28 houses were expected to be completed in the short term. The remaining units were awaiting sale or legal resolution.
- Sligo’s social housing stock was 2,298 units in 2023, with a vacancy rate of circa 1.5%.

## 6.3 Main outputs of the HNDA process

### 6.3.1 Total forecast

The HNDA indicates that the overall housing need between 2023 and 2031 is likely to be around 4,650 units (on average 465 per annum) and with a potential range of between 4,350 and 5,300. For the Development Plan period (2024 to 2030) the likely housing need will be around 2,790 units.

The HNDA figure is lower than the 3,892 housing requirement calculated using the Housing Supply Target (HST) methodology (refer to Section 5.2 in Chapter 5 Settlement Strategy), which represents the total adjusted demand, including the cumulated undersupply since 2017.

The overall housing allocations in the Core Strategy of the Development Plan are based on the HST methodology, while the HNDA has informed the housing policies of the Plan.

### 6.3.2 Housing need by tenure

Under a HNDA scenario which seeks to account for the significant growth in house and rent prices from 2019 to 2022, there is likely to be a notable requirement for affordable housing units, with a tenure split of 11% affordable, 28% social rent and 61% private market for the period to 2031.

Over the Development Plan period, this would mean making provision for about 780 social rented houses, 300 affordable housing units and 1,710 private market houses.

### 6.3.3 Rural houses

Available CSO data on 'one-off houses' granted planning permission and 'new dwelling completions' (single houses) does not accurately represent the number of houses built in rural areas, as it may include individual houses constructed within designated settlement boundaries.

Since 2011, Sligo County Council granted planning permission for 922 one-off houses. During the same period, 978 one-off houses were built (representing on average 82 houses per year).

An analysis of planning permissions for housing granted by Sligo County Council from 2011 to 2022 indicates that the proportion of one-off dwellings relative to total number of units permitted has remained above 40%. The peak was reached in 2015, when permissions for single houses amounted to 98% of total, but the long-term average is circa 66%. The proportion of single houses has started to decline since 2018, as the delivery of housing schemes in urban areas has increased.

On the basis of recent trends, it is considered reasonable to assume a potential demand for approximately 80 individual housing units in the countryside annually over the period 2024-2030, equating to circa 480 houses.



## 6.4 Social housing requirements

### 6.4.1 Housing need

The 2021 Housing Need Assessment carried out by Sligo County Council indicated that 1,573 households were eligible and in need of social housing support, with the net housing need being 582 households. By April 2023, this had increased to 1,679 households, with the net housing need being 732, an increase of 25% in 18 months. Almost 50% of the households eligible for support in 2023 were one-person households.

For the purpose of the Housing Strategy, it is assumed that the number of persons requiring social housing will grow at the same rate as the general population grew in the period 2016-2022, i.e. at a rate of 1.3% per year.

It is estimated that the number of persons requiring social housing by 2030 will be 4,702 (which equates to 1,836 households if the 2016 average household size of 2.56 is applied).

Over the Development Plan period, this would mean making provision for about 780 social rented houses, 300 affordable housing units and 1,710 private market houses.

### 6.4.2 Planned delivery of social and affordable housing

Sligo County Council's Housing Delivery Action Plan 2022-2026 (HDAP) sets out housing targets and the methods of delivery for both social and affordable housing. The HDAP is designed to be a dynamic document, which will be reviewed regularly to take account of opportunities that might arise during the lifetime of the Plan, such as working with the private sector through Part V agreements.

#### **Social housing**

In relation to social housing the HDAP indicates the locations of Local Authority landholdings and the requirements for acquisition of additional land and "turnkey" dwellings.

The HDAP targets are detailed by year of planned delivery, location, delivery stream (i.e. Part V, Buy and Renew"), type (e.g. Disability, Age Friendly) etc. The targeted delivery on Local Authority lands is consistent with the NPF and RSES compact growth provisions which require a certain proportion of new residential development to be delivered on infill and brownfield sites, within the built-up footprints of settlements.

#### **Affordable housing**

DHLGH guidance for local authorities, in relation to setting targets for affordable housing, is that where the HNDA indicates an affordability constraint of 5% or below over the term of the HDAP, there is no requirement to set specific targets in the Housing Delivery Action Plan.

The HNDA undertaken by Sligo County Council in advance of preparing the HDAP and this Development Plan, based on the default settings of the HNDA Tool (as provided by the DHLGH) indicates a negligible requirement for affordable housing before 2025. The requirement for affordable units, at a level above 5% of the total annual housing need, is likely to occur after 2025.

Notwithstanding this, Sligo County Council will keep this assessment under review, considering the available opportunities to respond to affordability constraints using schemes promoted by the DHLGH such as:

- The First Home Affordable Purchase Shared Equity Scheme
- The Local Authority Loan Home Scheme
- Deployment of New Croí Cónaithe Town Fund to service sites and refurbish vacant properties in towns and villages
- The Help to Buy Scheme

**Table 6.1 Summary of planned delivery of social housing under the HDAP 2022-2026**

Settlement	Total number of units proposed under the HDAP 2022-2026	Number of units proposed on brownfield sites	Number of units proposed on infill sites	Proportion of dwellings on brownfield and infill sites
Sligo Town	402	112 (28%)	290 (72%)	100%
Ballymote	30	0	30	100%
Tobercurry	29	15	14	100%
Strandhill	42	0	42	100%
Collooney	20	0	20	100%
Small villages and rural areas	98	22	n/a	20%
<b>Total</b>	<b>621</b>	<b>149</b>	<b>396</b>	

## 6.5 Housing land provision

The total adjusted demand for new housing in County Sligo during the Plan period was calculated in Section 5.2.1 of Chapter 5 Settlement Strategy, in accordance with the HSTM Guidelines. It was determined that **circa 3,892 new dwellings would be required by 2030**.

The **Core Strategy Table** (refer to Section 3.3 in Chapter 3) indicates that this Development Plan zones approximately **135 ha for residential and mixed uses** (including residential), which represents sufficient provision to accommodate the calculated housing demand while allowing for a degree of location choice.

Details regarding the location and amount of housing land in each settlement are provided in Chapters 11 to 22 (town and village plans).

## Strategic housing policies

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

- SP-HOU-1** Encourage a balanced supply of housing in the county, in a manner that is consistent with the Core Strategy and the Settlement Hierarchy, and which will support the creation of sustainable communities through the provision of an appropriate range of house types and high-quality residential environments.
- SP-HOU-2** Reserve 20% of eligible sites which are subject to new residential development (or a mix of uses including residential) for the development of social housing units, in accordance with the Housing Strategy and the requirements of Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).
- SP-HOU-3** Ensure that the needs of older people, people with disabilities, and other persons and households with diverse/special needs are adequately catered for in new residential developments.

## Strategic housing objectives

It is an objective of Sligo County Council to:

- SO-HOU-1** Implement the relevant provisions of the Housing Delivery Action Plan 2022-2026 and successor documents.
- SO-HOU-2** Monitor residential development and manage the supply of new housing to ensure that it is consistent with the requirements of the Core Strategy and the infrastructural capacity of each settlement.



## Chapter 7. Economic strategy

Like all local authorities, Sligo County Council plays an important role in supporting communities through economic and enterprise development at local level. This is done in a number of ways, including through the Council's capital and current budgets, infrastructure provision, undertaking socio-economic research and analysis, spatial and economic planning, and the provision of services and community infrastructure.

The County Development Plan draws on the frameworks set out by the NWRA's *Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy* (RSES) and by the document *Sligo 2030: Once Voice, One Vision*, which is also the County's Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP).

As indicated in the Development Plan Guidelines (2022), "the development plan is primarily focused on physical planning issues such as the location of development, the provision of infrastructure and the appropriate use of land" in the context of the economic objectives of the community.

The economic strategy of this development plan focuses on the spatial elements of economic activity in County Sligo.

### 7.1 Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy provisions

The NWRA's *Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy* (RSES) has an economic policy role, which provides a framework for the economic strategy of the Sligo County Development Plan 2024-2030.

The framework is presented in the RSES as five "Growth Ambitions" with corresponding Regional Policy Objectives (RPOs). Not all RPOs are applicable to Sligo Town, the Regional Growth Centre or to County Sligo.

All the relevant RPOs have been incorporated into the strategic and general development policies in Volumes 1, 2 and 3 of this Development Plan.

#### 7.1.1 RSES Growth Ambition 1: Economy and Employment

The main element of Chapter 4 of the RSES, titled "Growth Ambition 1: Economy and Employment – Vibrant Region", and most relevant to Sligo Regional Growth Centre, is the **Atlantic Economic Corridor (AEC)**.

**The AEC** seeks to "maximise the Atlantic region's assets and connect the economic hubs, clusters and catchments of the region" in order to support job creation.

The RSES expresses a strong support for "indigenous enterprise" areas, primarily tourism and agri-business, but also for emerging clusters of Irish and foreign-owned companies operating in "MedTech and Life Sciences". The Regional Strategy acknowledges the imperative requirements for renewable energy, ICT services (information and communication technology), innovation and the development of a low-carbon, circular economy.

The RPOs pertaining to the Growth Ambition 1 support tourism in the form of increased access to the countryside (RPO 4.1), to state lands such as National Parks, Forest Parks, Monuments and Historic Properties (RPO 4.2) and through the preparation of Visitor Experience Development Plans within the North-West Region. Further RPOs (4.4 to 4.15) support tourism along the Wild Atlantic Way, in “Destination Towns” and in other specific locations.

The Economy and Employment section of the RSES also contains RPOs relating to energy, building efficiency, agri-food industry, bio-economy, marine economy, port infrastructure, research & development, town revitalisation and retail development, of which the most relevant are reflected in this CDP.

### 7.1.2 RSES Growth Ambition 2: Environment

Under the heading “Economic Progress and Environmental Impacts”, the Regional Strategy acknowledges the need to consider the interdependence between population growth, economic development, resource management and environmental impacts.

Landscape, natural, built and cultural heritage are considered assets with potential, which need to be used sustainably, while ensuring their protection and conservation.

Particularly relevant provisions for Sligo are contained in RPO 5.11 – supporting the upgrading of cultural facilities in Regional Growth Towns, and RPO 5.18 – development of regional greenway projects, such as the SLNCR (Sligo-Leitrim-Northern Counties Railway) Greenway.

This Development Plan incorporates the above RSES provisions through relevant policies and objectives in Volume 2 (Urban development) and Volume 3 (General policies).

### 7.1.3 RSES Growth Ambition 3: Connectivity

Investment in transport, sustainable travel and digitalisation are the main themes of this Growth Ambition. While the provision of digital infrastructure is seen as the key to delivering a “Smart Region”, the emphasis remains on improving physical connectivity, i.e. transport links.

Of special importance to Sligo is the requirement to prepare a Local Transport Plan for the Regional Growth Centre, detailed in RPOs 6.27 and 6.28 (refer also to **Chapter 9 Transport Strategy**).

The national road network is one of the Regional Strategy’s main priorities, translating into RPOs designed to connect the major urban centres in the region. The RSES supports the following ongoing road projects in County Sligo:

- National roads: N-17 Knock to Collooney (realignment), N-59 Sligo to Ballina (upgrade) – RPOs 6.7 and 6.8;
- Regional and local roads: Eastern Garavogue Bridge and Approach Roads Scheme – RPO 6.9.

Investment in Sligo’s rail network is addressed in RPOs 6.11 (review of Western Rail Corridor); RPO 6.13 (extension of railway from Athenry to Sligo) and RPOs 6.15 and 6.16 (enhance and expand the Dublin-Sligo railway towards the north-west).

There are no Sligo-specific RPOs relating to the bus network, rural transport, walking, cycling or electric vehicle infrastructure.

All these areas are suitably addressed, at County level, in the **Transport Strategy** (Chapter 9) and in the **Transport Infrastructure chapter** (Chapter 29) of this CDP.

#### 7.1.4 RSES Growth Ambition 4: Quality of life

“Inclusive growth” is considered imperative for the Northern and Western Region in order to strengthen social cohesion. There is a historic pattern of exclusion and deprivation not only in peripheral areas, but also in urban centres, among disadvantaged or minority groups.

Improving access to housing, education and jobs is essential for reducing deprivation. The RSES sets requirements for a built environment that is age-friendly and supports physical health and well-being, with an accent on housing designed to meet the needs of all groups and communities.

The majority of RPOs under this Ambition are of a general nature, with no specific objective relating to Sligo. The **Residential Development chapter** (Chapter 26) of this Plan includes new and extensive provisions on housing for people of all ages and levels of ability.

#### 7.1.5 RSES Growth Ambition 5: Infrastructure

The RSES indicates that the delivery and prudent management of critically enabling infrastructure must support the vision for the region over the 20 years of the Strategy.

The focus of the RPOs under this Growth Ambition is on electricity transmission and gas networks, water services and waste infrastructure, as well as on managing flood risk and protecting water resources.

RPO 8.5 supports the “build-out of the gas supply network” in County Sligo, while a relevant Case Study discusses the proposal for a “Sligo CNG” - local network fed with compressed natural gas. The project is sponsored by the SEAI and led by Sligo Sustainable Energy Community, which represents “a collaboration between HSE, Sligo County Council, AbbVie, Abbott, PlanEnergy, Aurivo and Sligo Chamber of Commerce”

## 7.2 Sligo 2030: One Voice, One Vision

The **Sligo 2030** strategic framework approved by Sligo County Council in 2023 also acts as the County's statutory Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP). It sets out a vision for Sligo as it moves towards 2030 along with high-level goals and specific objectives, outcomes and actions.

The plan seeks to position Sligo as a cutting-edge and forward-thinking County that is smart and sustainable, embraces change and creates innovative solutions for its challenges. As such, it is envisaged that the County in 2030 will have enhanced levels of employment and be transformed through digital and green actions.

A sustainable economy is the main pillar of the 'Smart Sligo' model. This means "focusing on attracting investment in jobs of the future (e.g. industry 4.0, renewables, retrofitting), developing meaningful employment for the County's people by building on existing highly-skilled sectors such as MedTech and Pharmaceuticals, increasing industry-academia collaboration to address skill gaps and increase R & D, and using an industry-led approach to creating an innovative ecosystem where entrepreneurs and SMEs can flourish".

The economic elements of the plan include objectives and actions related to attracting investment to the County, supporting the needs of existing companies and encouraging entrepreneurship, developing and upskilling the workforce, the regeneration of urban centres, development of sustainable and green economy and the use of existing public assets for the deployment of smart technology.

As stated in the introduction to this chapter, the Sligo CDP 2024-2030 focuses on the **spatial elements of economic activity**.

### 7.2.1 Sligo's economic profile

The LECP provides some useful baseline information about the nature of the local economy, in terms of broad economic activity trends and local specialisations, none of which include spatial elements of particular relevance to the development plan.

According to the Western Development Commission's "*Industry in the Western Region – Sectoral Profile*" (2019), manufacturing of chemicals and pharmaceuticals is by far the largest industrial employer in county Sligo, accounting for almost one in three industrial workers.

The share of industrial employment in these fields in Sligo is second highest in the country (after Waterford) and considerably greater than the next highest western county (21% in Mayo) and national average (18%).

Companies including AbbVie, GSK, Brusa and TopChem are involved in this area. At 24%, Sligo has the third highest share of industrial employment in MedTech in the state. After these two high-tech manufacturing sub-sectors, the next largest are Agri-Food and Metals & Other, both accounting for 10% of industrial employment.

Specialised sectors identified by the LECP in Sligo include Hospitality and Tourism, Performing Arts, Environmental Services, Medical Device Production, Metalworking Technology and Heavy Machinery Technology.



In 2021, IDA-supported companies in the County employed 2,732 people across sectors such as Engineering, Medical Technology, Biopharmaceuticals, Consumer Goods, and Business and Financial services. 74 companies were supported by Enterprise Ireland and employed 1,992 people across the County in 2020. The Innovation Centre at IT Sligo is home to over 35 businesses at different stages of development.

It is vital that manufacturing's continued central role in County Sligo's economy is fully recognised in policy decisions. Industry and enterprise in the County are supported mainly by the IDA, Enterprise Ireland and Sligo County Council's Local Enterprise Office (LEO).

The CDP must ensure that the spatial planning framework facilitates further industrial and enterprise development in Sligo.

### 7.2.2 LECP-identified needs

Following socio-economic analysis and stakeholder consultation carried out in 2022, the Sligo 2030/LECP document identified the essential needs of the County in terms of economic development. In summary, a significant increase in job creation and employment needs to be planned for and delivered.

The CDP must address the above needs from a spatial perspective, including:

- attracting new investment and supporting existing businesses, including those in the retail, hospitality and tourism sectors;
- ensuring the necessary infrastructure, including office space, is in place;
- promoting increased mobility and accessibility between and within towns and villages;
- revitalising town centres and improving the settlements' public realm;
- zoning adequate amounts of land for housing, education, healthcare, community and recreational facilities, to improve quality of life;
- preparing to meet the challenges posed by climate change (e.g. increased flood risk).

The private sector will have a vital role to play in addressing these needs, as will government departments and semi-state providers and agencies, such as Enterprise Ireland, IDA, Irish Water, EirGrid, TII and NTA.

### 7.2.3 High-Level Goals of the LECP

Following analysis and extensive consultation, Sligo County Council and its partners have developed six "High-Level Goals" and more detailed objectives designed to realise the Sligo 2030 vision.

**Table 7.1** below indicates the manner in which the relevant LECP goals are supported by the CDP 2024-2030.

**Table 7.1 LECP High-Level Goals – incorporation of spatial planning elements into the CDP**

<b>High-Level Goals</b>	<b>Goal description</b>	<b>Needs addressed</b>	<b>Corresponding CDP chapters</b>
<b>Goal 1 Economy and employment</b>	Sligo will be a Regional Growth Centre that drives sustainable economic activity and employment throughout the region and increases the population across the County.	Economy and employment, housing, community and quality of life, infrastructure and accessibility, revitalising town centres, environment and sustainability	All of Volume 1 - Core Strategy Chapter 26 Residential development Chapter 27 Community facilities Chapter 28 Economic Development Chapter 29 Transport infrastructure Chapter 30 Water infrastructure Chapter 31 Energy and telecommunications
<b>Goal 2 Smart Sligo</b>	Sligo will become a smart county and a leader in the utilisation of smart technology through partnership with educational and commercial third parties.	Economy and employment, community and quality of life, environment and sustainability, infrastructure and accessibility, defining and measuring Sligo as a smart county	No direct spatial planning implications, but contributing elements are found in: Chapter 29 Transport infrastructure Chapter 30 Water infrastructure Chapter 31 Energy and telecommunications
<b>Goal 3 Climate action</b>	Sligo will be a proactive county in the fight against climate change and a model of best practice in climate action with sustainability central to all areas of life	Environment and sustainability, infrastructure and accessibility, community and quality of life, economy and employment	Chapter 2 Climate action Chapter 31 Energy and telecommunications Chapter 32 Flood Risk Management
<b>Goal 4 Vibrant communities</b>	Sligo will be a healthy and equitable society that supports its vibrant communities and champions active inclusion	Economy and employment, community and quality of life, revitalising town centres	All chapters containing Town and Village Plans Chapter 9 Transport Strategy Chapter 10 Urban development principles Chapter 27 Community Facilities
<b>Goal 5 Heritage and tourism</b>	Sligo will celebrate its exceptional heritage, creative sector, and realise its tourism potential in a sustainable manner	Economy and employment, community and quality of life, revitalising town centres, environment and sustainability	Chapter 10 Urban development principles Chapter 23 Landscape Character Chapter 24 Natural Heritage Chapter 25 Built Heritage Chapter 28 Economic Development
<b>Goal 6 Collaboration and innovation</b>	A collaborative and innovative Sligo	Seeks to address and contribute to all identified needs	No spatial planning implications to be addressed in the CDP.

## 7.2.4 LECP Actions with direct implications for the CDP

The objectives associated with the **High-Level Goal 1** of the LECP (economy and employment) seek to increase employment, housing supply, connectivity and public transport.

Some of the actions required for implementing the economic objectives have evident spatial planning implications, which must be addressed in the CDP.

- **Action 5(A)** under Goal 1/Objective 1.1 (Increase employment), relating to under-utilised Council-owned lands in the Docklands area, mandates the following:

*“Improve the business environment across the County through: (A) Developing a **masterplan for the regeneration of the Sligo town docklands** into a net zero area for potentially recreational, commercial and residential purposes with NZEB buildings. (medium-term timeframe, with Sligo County Council as lead agency) •(B) Developing a masterplan for **provision of enterprise space, including hubs and cluster centres across the county.** (medium term, Enterprise Ireland as lead)*

Chapter 28 Economic development supports the provision of enterprise space in all towns and villages. All settlement plans contained in Volume 2 include lands specifically zoned for business, industry and enterprise uses.

- **Action 8(C)** under Goal 1/Objective 1.2 (Increase housing supply) specifies:

*“Address current and future housing needs and requirements in Sligo through: ... (C) **Preparing a Housing Needs Demand Assessment (HNDA) as part of the County Development Plan process.** (ST)”*

The Housing Need and Demand Assessment (HNDA) has been prepared in accordance with DHLGL guidance, and informs the Housing Strategy which accompanies this development plan.

- **Action 10(A-B)** under Goal 1/Objective 1.3 (Increase connectivity) specifies:

*“Invest in **critical transport infrastructure** to maximise the opportunities and build future transport needs of the county across road, rail and smart travel including: •(A) Continuing to support upgrades and improvements to Sligo’s road networks including the N15 to Letterkenny, N17 to Galway, as well as the N4 to Dublin and the N16 to Enniskillen and Belfast. •(B) Exploring further options to reduce traffic congestion in Sligo Town including construction of the **Garavogue Bridge**”*

The Transport Strategy and the Transport Infrastructure chapters of this Plan (Chapters 9 and 29) contain strategic and specific policies and objectives supporting the implementation of Action 10.

- **Action 14(A-C)** under Goal 1/Objective 1.4 (Reduce the commercial vacancy rate in Sligo Town and County) specifies:

*“Explore and implement initiatives, including the **Town Centre First policy**, to reduce the high vacancy rate in Sligo and other urban centres. This will include: •(A) Conducting a study to identify ownership of vacant and derelict properties throughout Sligo and initiate dialogue with identified owners. (short term) •(B) Repurposing vacant property for residential and recreational purposes where commercial use is not viable including digital and creative hubs. (long term) •(C) **In relation to Town Centre First, achieve pathfinder status for Sligo Town and become a pilot town for the night-time economy task force.** (short term)”*

The implementation of Action 14(C) requires the preparation of a **“Town Centre First” Plan** for Sligo Town, for which the CDP provides the general development policy framework.

- **Action 27(A-B)** under Goal 3/Objective 3.1 (Reduce emissions) specifies:

*“Encourage smarter travel and **increase and upgrade active travel infrastructure including cycleways, greenways and cycle paths across the county** (long-term). This will include: ●(A) Developing a segregated cycling network through committing to all new cycle paths being segregated from other traffic (pedestrian and vehicular) where feasible and upgrade existing cycle paths to segregate from traffic where possible. (short-term) ●(B) Exploring options for the development of new greenways in the County. (short-term)*

The Transport Strategy, Community Facilities and Transport Infrastructure chapters of this Plan (Chapters 9, 27 and 29) contain strategic and specific policies and objectives supporting the implementation of Action 27.

- **Action 28(A)** under Goal 3/Objective 3.1 (Reduce emissions) specifies:

*“Increase the use of renewable / alternative energy sources across Sligo: ●(A) **Developing a renewable energy strategy for Sligo and ensuring that policy frameworks are in place to assist the attraction of investment in this area.** (short term)”*

Chapters 23 Landscape Character Assessment and 31 Energy and Telecommunications include the required policy framework to assist development proposals and investment. Chapter 31 also includes an objective to prepare a Renewable Energy Strategy for the County.

- **Action 40(B)** under Goal 4/Objective 4.1 (Improve the health of the community) specifies:

*“In line with the Healthy Ireland Strategic Action Plan, promote healthy life choices ... including: ●(B) **Developing necessary infrastructure and support new and existing campaigns to encourage healthy mobility and social inclusion, such as building on the existing investment in walking, cycling, and outdoor products and promoting the use of outdoor open spaces through creative community engagement initiatives.***

Chapter 27 Community Facilities contains outdoor recreation policies and objectives which support the implementation of Action 40.

- **Action 42(A, E)** under Goal 4/Objective 4.2 (Improve the health of the community) specifies:

*“Continue to increase participation in sport, recreation and physical activity in Sligo through ... ●(A) **Lead in the development of a County Sligo Sports Plan in collaboration with Sligo Sport and Recreation Partnership and stakeholders ...** ●(E) **Developing opportunities for physical activity in the outdoors utilising our rich natural landscape and urban settings”***

Chapter 27 Community Facilities contains policies and objectives which support the implementation of Action 42.

- **Action 44(D)** under Goal 4/Objective 4.3 (Support rural communities) specifies:

*“Maximise the opportunities for rural communities in Sligo under the Rural Development Programme (LEADER element) by: ... ●(D) **Supporting the development of social, economic and cultural infrastructure and services in hard-to-reach and geographically disadvantaged communities.**”*

**Chapter 27 Community Facilities** and **Chapter 28 Economic Development** set out policies and objectives supporting the implementation of Action 44. The Town and Village Plans contained in Volume 2 include lands specifically zoned for community facilities, as well as business, industry and enterprise uses.

- **Action 55(B, F)** under Goal 5/Objective 5.3 (Enhance Sligo as a tourist destination) specifies:

*“Develop Sligo’s leisure tourism offering to deliver world class visitor experiences including through: ... ●(B) Developing further **quality attractions (including outdoor activities)** and the variety of events and festivals across the County ... ●(F) Encouraging the development of an **increased tourism offering where the choice and variety of tourism accommodation includes boutique hotels, hostels, glamping, 5-star hotels etc.**”*

The Tourism section of **Chapter 28 Economic Development** contains policies and objectives supporting the implementation of Action 55.

## 7.3 Spatial planning for economic development

County Sligo’s ability to attract investment continues to be restricted by its relatively weak infrastructure, including under-provision of broadband services. These barriers to the economic development of the county are addressed in the Development Plan essentially through policies relating to energy generation and transmission, telecommunications and transport infrastructure.

The promotion of economic development in general, and industry and enterprise in particular, requires a multi-pronged approach, the key components of which are:

- earmarking specific settlements for focused growth (see **Chapter 5 – Settlement Strategy**);
- ensuring that towns and villages become more attractive to investors by offering a good quality of life to those who live and work in them (see **Chapter 27 Community facilities** and all Town and Village Plans)
- providing or supporting the provision of essential infrastructure, including high-speed telecommunications (see **Chapters 29 Transport Infrastructure, 30 Water Infrastructure and 31 Energy and Telecommunications**)
- reserving sufficient land in suitable locations for industry and enterprise uses (see the Town and Village Plans in Volume 2);
- supporting the provision of energy from renewable and reliable sources (see **Chapter 31**);
- securing high standards of landscape and environmental protection (see **Chapters 23 Landscape character, 24 Natural heritage, 25 Built heritage and 32 Flood risk and coastal protection**);

The strategic policies for economic development outlined below need to be paralleled by initiatives in education, training and enterprise support provided by both the private and the public sectors.

## Strategic policies for economic development

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

- SP-ED-1** Ensure that sufficient, serviced and suitable land is reserved for new enterprise development at key locations in Sligo Town, Tobercurry, Ballymote and Enniscrone, and promote the Support Towns as secondary employment centres, after Sligo Town.
- SP-ED-2** Promote the integration of employment with other land uses and the transportation network and ensure that employment-intensive uses are located in proximity to existing and planned strategic routes, where public transport is most viable.
- SP-ED-3** Facilitate the development of small-scale enterprise space, including digital hubs and cluster centres in villages where good access, infrastructure and services are readily available or can be provided at a reasonable cost.
- SP-ED-4** Liaise with the IDA and Enterprise Ireland to ensure a co-ordinated approach to the provision of necessary infrastructure and services to support enterprise and industrial development.

## 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.

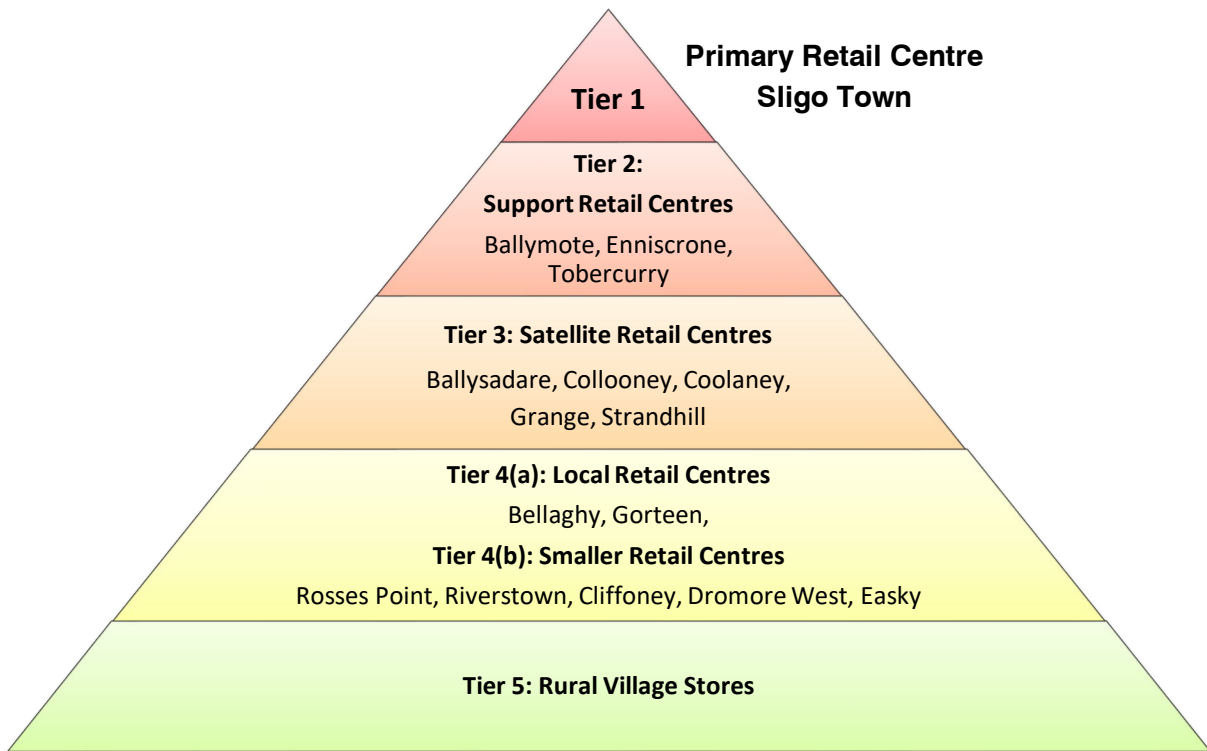
Outside Sligo Town, Tobercurry, Ballymote and Enniscrone have some significance in terms of retail, due to their size, location and role as Support Towns, as designated in the Settlement Hierarchy.

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.



## Chapter 9. Transport strategy

The designation of Sligo Town as a Regional Growth Centre in the NPF/RSES emphasises the importance of strong transport links to urban centres in the Northern and Western Region, along the Atlantic Economic Corridor, beyond regional and national boundaries.

Sligo Town is the convergence point of strategic transport corridors, connecting to Dublin, Galway and Letterkenny/Derry. Five national roads and a network of regional and local roads facilitate private and public transport, which is also supported by the rail link to Dublin.

The national roads M-4/N-4 (Dublin to Sligo), the N-17 (Galway to Sligo), the N-15 (Sligo to Donegal) and the N-16 (Sligo to Northern Ireland) form part of the EU's TEN-T<sup>1</sup> Comprehensive Network (outside the Core Road Network, which links Dublin only to Belfast, Cork and Limerick).

The peripheral location of County Sligo in the north-west of Ireland requires strengthening of the transportation network, in the interest of increasing the economic competitiveness and vitality of the county. At the same time, the overall priority in national and regional transport policy is to facilitate a shift towards sustainable modes of *travel* – public transport, walking and cycling, thus decreasing the reliance on private cars.

It is the Council's aim to support the provision and maintenance of an effective, sustainable and accessible transport system, integrated with land-use planning. This development plan provides the local framework for investment in transport infrastructure to ensure economic growth, expanded employment opportunities, reduced commuting times, more sustainable communities and enhanced quality of life through improved connectivity within and between the settlements.

### 9.1 National transport policy

Ireland's national transport policy in Ireland is focused on the efficient movement of people and goods, and ensuring increased accessibility to all passengers using the transport network. The aim is to enhance competitiveness, economic growth, regional development and social cohesion.

The government also seeks to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve air quality by promoting sustainable mobility options such as active travel and public transport.

The **National Sustainable Mobility Policy** sets out a framework to 2030 for active travel (walking and cycling) and public transport to support Ireland's overall requirement to achieve a 51% reduction in transport emissions by 2030. The policy aims to deliver at least 500,000 additional daily active travel and public transport journeys by 2030, and a 10% reduction in the number of kilometres driven by cars powered by fossil fuels.

The policy is aligned with the NPF/Project Ireland 2040 and with the National Development Plan, which set out strategic objectives and investment priorities for transport infrastructure and services.

The Department of Transport and the National Transport Authority are responsible for implementation, in collaboration with other stakeholders such as local authorities, transport operators and users.

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<sup>1</sup> The TEN-T or Trans-European Transport Network Policy addresses the implementation and development of a Europe-wide network of railway lines, roads, inland waterways, maritime shipping routes, ports, airports and railroad terminals. In general, TEN-T projects are mostly funded by national or state governments. In a proposal issued by the European Commission in 2022, there are increased standards for the Core road network (by 2030), including the use of latest technologies, low-noise road surfaces and ensuring that alternative fuels infrastructure is deployed. For the Comprehensive Network (by 2050) there are specific requirements for the design, building or upgrading of roads.

### 9.1.1 Provisions of the National Planning Framework

**NSO 4 “Sustainable mobility”** is one of the ten National Strategic Outcomes envisaged by the NPF. This involves progressive electrification of mobility systems through “new technologies such as electric vehicles and introduction of electric and hybrid traction systems for public transport fleets”.

Public transport and active travel modes (walking and cycling) are also a prerequisite to the achievement of “Compact Growth” – the first of the ten NSOs.

**NSO 2** requires enhanced connectivity between “centres of population of scale”, including stronger public transport links between “cities and large growth towns in Ireland and Northern Ireland with improved services and reliable journey times”.

In relation to “Accessibility to the North-West”, NSO 2 provides for the upgrading of northern sections of the national road N-4 and for the progressive development of the Atlantic Economic Corridor from Galway northwards by upgrading sections of the national roads N-17 and N-15.

### 9.1.2 National Development Plan 2021-2030 (NDP)

**Project Ireland 2040** includes not just the NPF, but also the National Development Plan (revised in 2021), which sets out a ten-year investment strategy to underpin key Government priorities.

The overall level of investment in transport infrastructure has been significantly increased in the revised NDP. Funding of transport projects identified in the NDP must align with the Government’s commitment on new public transport and new roads, the NIFTI framework (see subsection 9.1.3 below) and the requirements of the national Climate Action Plan.

Considerable investment is envisaged for active travel and public transport, which are prioritised over private transport. The budget for national roads must consider the balance of maintenance, optimisation and improvement of existing road stock before decisions can be approved for new projects.

Since 2018 (year of publication of NPF and initial NDP), a number of important national road projects have been completed. The **N4 Collooney to Castlebaldwin improvement scheme** in County Sligo, which opened in August 2021, has significantly enhanced accessibility to the North-West.

The **N17 Knock to Collooney scheme**, which was part of the initial NDP, has been retained following the 2021 review and will be subject to further approvals.

### 9.1.3 National Investment Framework for Transport in Ireland (NIFTI)

The policy document **National Investment Framework for Transport in Ireland** (NIFTI) published by the Department of Transport (DoT) in 2021, recognises the interdependence of transport and spatial planning and supports investment that will help realise compact growth and enhance connectivity.

In line with the Government’s commitment to reduce GHG emissions, NIFTI prioritises sustainable environmentally transport modes. It emphasises “*the development of cycle networks throughout the country, the delivery of major new public transport, the widespread deployment of low-emission vehicles, and improving sustainable mobility outside our towns and cities*”.

### 9.1.4 National Sustainable Mobility Policy

The DoT's 2022 **National Sustainable Mobility Policy** sets out a strategic framework to 2030 for active travel (walking and cycling) and public transport journeys to help Ireland meet its climate obligations. It is accompanied by an action plan to 2025 which contains actions to improve and expand sustainable mobility options across the country by providing safe, green, accessible and efficient alternatives to car journeys. The Policy targets the delivery of at least 500,000 additional daily active travel and public transport journeys and a 10% reduction in kilometres driven by fossil fuelled cars by 2030.

This Policy supports better integration of land use and transport planning through a transport-orientated housing development approach, in order to reduce car dependency. It indicates that *“local transport plans for the regional growth centres and key towns will allow for local implementation of national and regional level land use and transport policies. These plans will be prepared based on the Area Based Transport Assessment Guidance produced by the NTA and TII”*.

### 9.1.5 National Roads 2040

The **National Roads 2040** (NR2040), published in April 2023, is TII's long-term strategy for planning, operating, and maintaining the National Roads Network (NRN), supporting the delivery of *Project Ireland 2040* (NPF) objectives. NR2040 was prepared to ensure that the operational and functional needs of national roads are fully aligned with the NPF and with DoT's NIFTI.

NR2040 outlines commitments to address challenges such as population growth, decarbonisation, biodiversity, climate adaptation, safety, and congestion. It envisions a transport system focused on safety, innovation, accessibility and mobility of people, goods and services.

The NR2040 investment priorities, aligned with the four NIFTI investment priorities, are as follows:

- decarbonisation - encompassing integrated mobility; electric vehicle charging; and active travel;
- protection and renewal – including road safety, resilience and climate adaptation;
- Mobility of people and goods in urban areas – catering for the needs of all users of national roads;
- Enhanced regional and rural connectivity – maintaining and improving inter-urban, regional and international road links.

#### **Active Travel commitments**

TII is committed to delivering more on active travel modes in all its projects, such as improving the safety of National Roads for active travel users and reducing the severance caused by some National Roads in urban areas. TII will collaborate with other stakeholders to implement the **National Cycle Network** plan (see below) to cater for more active trips and expand the **Greenway network** nationwide (see below), on behalf of the Department of Transport. Provision of safe, high quality and active travel infrastructure will encourage modal shift and result in reductions in carbon emissions.

The development of these programmes is coordinated with partner and stakeholder organisations – such as local authorities and the NTA – who are advancing local, county, and urban cycle and pedestrian networks.

#### **National and Regional Greenways**

In 2018, the (then) Department of Tourism, Transport and Sport published a **Strategy for the Future Development of National and Regional Greenways**, aimed assisting in the *“strategic development of*

*nationally and regionally significant Greenways in appropriate locations constructed to an appropriate standard*". While such greenways are seen primarily as a tourism product with potential to attract foreign visitors, they can benefit all users from local communities as an amenity and through their links with other cycling and walking infrastructure.

## National Cycle Network

In summer 2022, TII published for consultation a proposal to create a National Cycle Network (NCN) aiming to link towns, cities and destinations across Ireland with a safe, connected and inviting cycle network. The NCN has been designed to integrate with and complement other cycle infrastructure and networks – both existing and planned. After identifying and confirming the corridors through public consultation, the NCN will be delivered via a series of rolling, five-year phases by local authorities. The first implementation phase will run from 2023-2025. Subsequent phases will run every five years – starting in 2026-2030.

## 9.2 Transport policy at regional level

The “**Growth Ambition 3**” (Chapter 6) of the RSES focuses on connectivity, with the national roads network seen as a critical enabler in facilitating an island-wide sustainable transport system. Regional connectivity depends on the efficiency, capacity and safety of the national, regional and local road network.

**Strategic road projects** that must be delivered in order to give effect to NSO 2 are specified in RPOs 6.6 to 6.10. The following projects are relevant to Sligo Town and County:

- N4 Collooney to Castlebaldwin (RPO 6.6 - Completed in 2021)
- N-17 Knock to Collooney (RPO 6.7)
- N-15 Sligo to Bundoran, N-16 Sligo to Blacklion and N-59 upgrade (RPO 6.8)
- Garavogue Bridge and Approach Roads Scheme (RPO 6.9)
- The East-West Road, Dundalk to Sligo via Enniskillen (RPO 6.10)

In relation to **rail connectivity**, the RSES seeks the “*commencement and completion of the review of the Western Rail Corridor project as a priority for passenger and freight transport*” (RPO 6.11)<sup>2</sup>.

RPOs 6.13 to 6.17 support the extension and improvement (including electrification) of the railway to and from Sligo.

**Bus transport**, both urban and rural, **walking and cycling** are promoted and supported in the RSES, as are permeability of town centres and new development areas for such modes of transport. The deployment of **electric vehicle charging infrastructure** is promoted by RPO 6.34<sup>3</sup>.

The **RPO 6.27**, supporting the preparation of **Local Transport Plans** for specified towns, is of particular relevance to Sligo – refer to Section 9.3.2 below.

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<sup>2</sup> The Draft All-Island Strategic Rail Review was published on 25 July 2023. The Western Rail Corridor was considered as part of an option to connect Athenry to Derry via Sligo, but not included in the final recommendations.

<sup>3</sup> The Implementation Plan associated with the Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Strategy 2022-2025 (published on 25 July 2023) identifies Regional Assemblies and Local Authorities as key stakeholders in the delivery of such infrastructure.



## 9.3 Transport and mobility at local level

In accordance with the above national and regional policy requirements, it is the aim of Sligo County Council to strengthen the County's strategic transport links and to provide and maintain a high-quality transport network throughout the County.

The Council will also support the creation of a pedestrian-friendly and cyclist-friendly environment within and between the County's settlements, with a good provision of public transport, reduced congestion and attractive town and village centres which are not dominated by car.

**Integrated mobility** will be promoted through the provision of park-and-ride facilities at appropriate locations in Sligo Town and in other settlements located along road and rail links.

**Active travel** will be supported by extending and improving the cycle route network in the County, in accordance with the National Cycle Network Plan and Local Transport Plan (LTP) for the Sligo Regional Growth Centre Strategic Plan area.

### 9.3.1 Active travel strategy

Sligo County Council's **active travel strategy** involves providing a combination of cycling and walking infrastructure linking the outlying population centres to the main centres of employment. Since 2021, the Council has been receiving funding for cycling and walking infrastructure from the national Active Travel Investment Programme.

In 2023, under the national Active Travel Investment Grants, County Sligo received an allocation of €3 million for walking and cycling infrastructure. This is intended to fund the development of cycle lanes and widened footpaths, new walking and cycling bridges, and new pedestrian crossings in the County.

The **Sligo Local Transport Plan** (see below) will provide a basis for transport strategies and interventions that will cover the 6-year period of the CDP 2024-2030. Most of the interventions identified within the LTP will target Sligo Town and its Environs.

### 9.3.2 Sligo Local Transport Plan

In 2022, Sligo County Council commissioned specialist consultants Jacobs Engineering Ireland Ltd. to prepare a Local Transport Plan (LTP) through the Area Based Transport Assessment (ABTA) process in conjunction with the review of the Sligo County Development Plan and preparation of a new CDP.

The requirement for a Local Transport Plan is set out in the NWRA's Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES), as indicated in Section 9.2 above. The area subject to ABTA largely coincides with the Sligo RGC Strategic Plan Area identified in the RSES. The LTP Study Area was extended to include the Satellite Villages of Collooney and Coolaney.

Chapter 3 of the Draft LTP, informed by the Baseline Assessment Report (Stage 1 of the ABTA), indicates that there is a strong reliance on the private car, due to the rural nature of the study area outside Sligo Town.

In Sligo Town, despite recent improvements (e.g. completion of the Western Distributor Road, introduction of new cycle routes and public realm interventions in the town centre), there are unresolved, long-standing issues with the pedestrian environment and sustainable transport connectivity with the rest of the Study Area.

## LTP guiding principles

The Draft LTP establishes **six principles** to guide future transport development at local level. These are presented in Chapter 5 of the document:

- Support the Climate Action Plan through reducing emissions from the car, enhancing Active Travel and Electric Vehicle provision to promote modal shift.
- Support the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy by providing a permeable Sligo Town Centre for walking, cycling and the mobility impaired.
- Ensure that the Study Area is flexible against the projected population growth and residential developments by providing safe, convenient alternatives to the private car, without inhibiting arterial connections.
- Ensure the needs and requirements of the elderly and mobility impaired are supported through a more accessible transport system within the Study Area.
- Develop robust measures to secure funding in line with the National Investment Framework for Transport in Ireland.
- Improve social inclusion and wellbeing by promoting Active Travel linked to a ‘sense of place’ within the Study Area.

## LTP Objectives

**Five objectives** have been derived from the above principles. Under each objective, there is a set of measures required for its implementation. It must be emphasised that, in the context of emerging transport trends and modes, the measures indicated are a minimum and that potential additional new measures can be considered where appropriate. The objectives are as follows:

1. Increase public transport patronage by promoting the convenience and attractiveness of bus, rail and park-and-ride facilities.
2. Enhance integration between existing and proposed land uses and transport.
3. Enhance accessibility of Sligo Town Centre for rural communities.
4. Develop an enhanced pedestrian network focusing on improving permeability and creating a ‘sense of place’ within Sligo Town.
5. Improve the cycle network throughout the Study Area.

## LTP-proposed measures

**Chapter 6** of the Draft LTP outlines detailed measures and specific proposals for improving the transport networks, separately for each mode, i.e. walking, cycling, public transport and private vehicles (road network).

**Chapter 29 of this Development plan (Transport Infrastructure)** includes details on the cycling network connecting Sligo Town to the surrounding villages and rural areas. The specific proposals which are relevant to the settlements located outside Sligo Town have been taken into consideration and integrated as objectives into the respective village plans, where applicable.

Given that the majority of the measures and proposals relate to Sligo Town, the most significant will be included as objectives in the forthcoming Sligo and Environs Local Area Plan. This will ensure that there will be further opportunities to refine the proposals through public consultation on the LAP.

## Transport – strategic policies

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

- SP-TRA-1** Strengthen the strategic transport links providing regional, national and international connectivity, in accordance with the NSO 2 of the NPF and the RSES Transport Investment Priorities.
- SP-TRA-2** Support the creation of an integrated and sustainable transport system, in particular with regard to accessibility and choice of transport, with a quality bus and rail service, alongside the promotion of cycle and pedestrian facilities.
- SP-TRA-3** Encourage the shift from car use to sustainable modes of transport such as cycling and walking.
- SP-TRA-4** Reduce the demand for travel by integrating land use with transport planning, ensuring that new development takes place in a compact form at locations with the highest levels of accessibility for public transport and active travel (walking and cycling).
- SP-TRA-5** Plan for the future traffic and transportation needs in Sligo and ensure that new development does not compromise the expansion of rail, road and cycling corridors in the County. Proposed road realignment/improvement lines, road corridors and national cycle route corridors shall be preserved free from development that would prejudice the implementation of the schemes.

## Transport – strategic objectives

It is an objective of Sligo County Council to:

- SO-TRA-1** Implement the relevant national transportation policies set out in the **National Investment Framework for Transport in Ireland (NIFTI)** and **National Sustainable Mobility Policy**, in partnership with funding agencies.
- SO-TRA-2** Progress the development of the **Atlantic Economic Corridor** through County Sligo by upgrading sections of the national roads N-17 and N-15, in conjunction with the TII.
- SO-TRA-3** Extend and improve the cycle network in the County in accordance with the **National Cycle Network** plan.

## Transport – strategic objectives

- SO-TRA-4** Implement a programme of measures to support active travel in the county with the support of funding from the **Active Travel Investment Programme** of the NTA.
- SO-TRA-5** Implement the principles and objectives of the **Local Transport Plan** for the Sligo Regional Growth Centre by:
- A.** Promoting the convenience and attractiveness of bus, rail and park-and-ride facilities.
  - B.** Enhancing integration between existing and proposed land-uses and the transport network.
  - C.** Improving accessibility to Sligo Town from the settlements located in the LTP Study Area.
  - D.** Developing an enhanced pedestrian network, improving permeability and creating a 'sense of place' within Sligo Town.
  - E.** Extending and enhancing the cycle network throughout the LTP Study Area.
- SO-TRA-6** Facilitate the roll-out of charging infrastructure for electric vehicles, in line with the NDP Strategic Investment Priority for Transport target of nearly one million electric vehicles on the road by 2030, and with the Implementation Plan associated with the Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Strategy 2022-2025 (and subsequent reviews).