

# **Volume 3 General Policies**

## **Draft Sligo County Development Plan 2024-2030**

Public consultation  
13 October to 22 December 2023



# Draft SLIGO County Development Plan 2024–2030 Volume 3

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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Prepared by the Development Planning Unit  
Sligo County Council, 13 October 2023

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# Chapter 23. Landscape character

Under the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), planning authorities have a duty to include in the development plan objectives for the preservation of the character of the landscape and the preservation of views and prospects. They also have powers to designate areas of special amenity, within which development may be prevented or limited, and landscape conservation areas, within which exempted development may be brought within planning control.

## 23.1 National policy on landscape character

### 23.1.1 National Planning Framework

The NPF recognises the importance of Ireland’s landscape character and quality as key assets for quality of life. It indicates that the protection, management and planning of the landscape is interconnected with the National Landscape Strategy for Ireland. It also signals the preparation of a national landscape character assessment.

**NPO 14** protects and promotes the sense of place and culture and the quality, character and distinctiveness of the Irish rural landscape that make Ireland’s rural areas authentic and attractive as places to live, work and visit.

**NPO 61** commits to landscape protection, management and change through the preparation of a National Landscape Character Map and development of guidance on local landscape character assessments, (including historic landscape characterisation) to ensure a consistent approach to landscape character assessment, particularly across planning and administrative boundaries.

At the time of drafting this Development Plan (2023), the envisaged National Landscape Character Map and guidance had not been published.

### 23.1.2 National Landscape Strategy for Ireland 2015-2025

As a signatory of the Council of Europe’s European Landscape Convention (ELC), Ireland is obliged to implement policy changes and objectives concerning the management, protection and planning of the landscape.

The National Landscape Strategy (published by the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht in 2015) ensures compliance with the ELC by establishing principles for protecting and enhancing the landscape, while positively managing its change. It provides a high-level policy framework with six core objectives, one of which is the development of a National Landscape Character Assessment. Until a national LCA is prepared, the strategy document indicates that the primary role of planning authorities in decision-making relating to landscape issues will continue to be governed by the provisions of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).

### 23.1.3 Landscape Assessment Guidelines (2000)

The Department of Environment and Local Government (DoELG) issued *Landscape and Landscape Assessment Guidelines* in 2000. The Guidelines, which have not been updated since publication, are intended to assist planning authorities in understanding their obligations in respect of landscape issues when preparing development plans. The Guidelines stress the need for a proactive view of how development and change can be accommodated in the landscape and also highlight the need to assess all landscapes instead of focusing on 'special' ones.

## 23.2 Landscape Character Assessment

Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) is a process that describes, maps and classifies landscapes objectively. Defining landscape character enables an understanding to be formed of the inherent value and importance of individual landscape elements and the processes that may alter landscape character in the future.

The cultural and ecological aspects of the landscape cannot be separated from its physical and visual characteristics, so all of these elements are considered. The County's landscape is not homogeneous and neither are the pressures on it. It is inevitable that different parts of the county will be subject to different development pressures and will exhibit differing abilities to absorb and accommodate such development pressure.

### 23.2.1 Sligo Landscape Characterisation Map

A landscape characterisation and appraisal study was commissioned by Sligo County Council and completed by CAAS Environmental Consultants in 1996. This resulted in a map that was the basis for the **Landscape Characterisation Map**, which formed part of all Sligo County Development Plans prepared after 1999.

The purpose of the 1996 landscape characterisation study was to assist the Council in particular where it is to:

- promote the understanding of Sligo's landscape in terms of its unique character, and recognise what elements should be preserved, conserved or enhanced;
- consider the sensitivity and capacity of the landscape to absorb new development.
- devise policies and objectives as guidance to planners and other parties, to ensure that change is favourable to landscape character;

Both the *National Landscape Strategy for Ireland (2015)* and the *National Planning Framework (2018)* indicate the government's intention to develop a National Landscape Character Assessment.

In the interest of a consistent approach to landscape characterisation and amenity protection measures across the Northern and Western Region, the RSES includes a relevant objective, RPO 5.2, which states that the Regional Assembly will prepare a **Regional Landscape Character Assessment** in order to promote improved landscape management and designation.

The existing landscape characterisation and associated map for County Sligo will be reviewed in due course, to ensure compliance with the national and regional assessments, and with any new ministerial guidance.

## 23.2.2 Landscape designations

The LC Map classifies the County according to its visual sensitivity and capacity to absorb new development without compromising the scenic character of certain areas. The Map (which is available separately in a large format – A1) has proven robust in both facilitating development and conserving fragile landscapes.

The LC Map shows the following designations:

- **Normal Rural Landscapes:** areas with natural features (e.g. topography, vegetation) which generally have the capacity to absorb a wide range of new development forms – these are farming areas and cover most of the County.

Certain areas located within normal rural landscapes may have superior visual qualities, due to their specific topography, vegetation pattern, the presence of traditional farming or residential structures. These areas may have limited capacity for development or may be able to absorb new development only if it is designed to integrate seamlessly with the existing environment.

- **Sensitive Rural Landscapes:** areas that tend to be open in character, highly visible, with intrinsic scenic qualities and a low capacity to absorb new development – e.g. Knocknarea, the Dartry Mountains, the Ox Mountains, Aughris Head, Mullaghmore Head etc.
- **Visually Vulnerable Areas:** distinctive and conspicuous natural features of significant beauty or interest, which have extremely low capacity to absorb new development – examples are the Ben Bulbin plateau, mountain and hill ridges, the areas adjoining Sligo's coastline, most lakeshores etc.
- **Scenic Routes:** public roads passing through or close to Sensitive Rural Landscapes, or in the vicinity of Visually Vulnerable Areas, and affording unique scenic views of distinctive natural features or vast open landscapes.

In addition to remote views, scenic routes have often a distinctive visual character conferred by old road boundaries, such as stone walls, established hedgerows, lines of mature trees, adjoining cottages or farmyards together with their traditional, planted enclosures etc., all of which warrant protection.

**Appendix C** contains a list of roads designated as Scenic Routes and details of the scenic views to be preserved.

## 23.3 Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC)

**Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC)** is concerned with identifying and detailing the contribution of the past to the present-day landscape and broadens the understanding of landscape character. HLC is an important addition to landscape management, because it considers the historical development of the landscape and the relationship of buildings and monuments to landscape patterns. The Heritage Council has issued guidance on Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) in Ireland: Policy and Best Practice Guidance (2010).

### Landscape Conservation Areas

Section 204 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended enables a Planning Authority to designate a Landscape Conservation Area, within its functional area, in order to preserve it. During the life of this plan, the designation of Landscape Conservation Area(s), in respect of their core areas for (a) Cuil Irra Peninsula, (b) Carrowkeel and (c) Inishmurray will be explored.

## Landscape character protection policies

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

**P-LCP-1** Protect the physical landscape, visual and scenic character of County Sligo and seek to preserve the County's landscape character.

Planning applications for developments that have the potential to impact significantly and adversely upon landscape character, especially in *Sensitive Rural Landscapes*, *Visually Vulnerable Areas* and along *Scenic routes*, may be required to be accompanied by a visual impact assessment using agreed and appropriate viewing points and methods for the assessment.

**P-LCP-2** Discourage any developments that would be detrimental to the unique visual character of designated Visually Vulnerable Areas.

**P-LCP-3** Preserve the scenic views listed in **Appendix C** and the distinctive visual character of designated *Scenic Routes* by controlling development along such Routes and other roads, while facilitating developments that may be tied to a specific location or, in the case of individual houses, to the demonstrated needs of applicants to reside in a particular area.

In all cases, strict location, siting and design criteria shall apply, as set out in **Section 33.4 Housing in rural areas** (development management standards).

**P-LCP-4** Strictly control new development in designated Sensitive Rural Landscapes, while considering exceptions that can demonstrate a clear need to locate in the area concerned.

Ensure that any new development in designated Sensitive Rural Landscapes:

- does not impinge in any significant way on the character, integrity and distinctiveness of the area;

## Landscape character protection policies

- does not detract from the scenic value of the area;
  - meets high standards of siting and design;
  - satisfies all other criteria with regard to, inter alia, servicing, public safety and prevention of pollution.
- P-LCP-5** Protect the County's Sensitive Rural Landscapes from the visual intrusion of large-scale energy and telecommunications infrastructure.
- P-LCP-6** Protect the archaeological heritage, rural character, setting and amenity of the Cuil Irra Peninsula, Carrowkeel and Inishmurray.
- P-LCP-7** Preserve the status of traditionally open/unfenced landscapes. Fencing in upland or amenity areas will not normally be permitted unless such fencing is essential to the viability of the farm and conforms to best agricultural practice. The nature of the material to be used, the height of the fence and, in the case of a wire fence, the type of wire to be used will be taken into account. Barbed-wire shall not be used for the top line of wire. Stiles or gates at appropriate places will be required.
- P-LCP-8** Where possible, preserve the open character of commonage and other hill land and secure access thereto.

## Landscape character protection objectives

It is a policy of Sligo County Council to:

- O-LCP-1** Seek the designation of a Landscape Conservation Area, pursuant to Section 204 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), for the Cuil Irra Peninsula and Carrowkeel.
- O-LCP-2** Seek the designation of a Landscape Conservation Area, pursuant to Section 204 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), for Inishmurray.



## Chapter 24. Natural heritage

The natural heritage of County Sligo is of great local value, with many features of national and international importance. It consists of biodiversity and the physical and geological foundations which underpin it. Protecting and enhancing biodiversity and landscapes is vital to the health, well-being and people's quality of life. Biodiversity also provides opportunities to adapt to the challenges of climate change.

### Relevant legislation

The **EU Habitats Directive** (92/43/EEC), the **EU Birds Directive** (2009/147/EC), **European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011** (SI 477/2011) as amended, **Flora (Protection) Order 2015**, the **Wildlife Act 1976** (as amended), and the **Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2000** as amended, including all statutory instruments made under each act<sup>1,2</sup>, provide for the protection of natural heritage. In addition, Ireland has ratified a number of international conventions and agreements relating to natural heritage and biodiversity including the **UN Convention on Biological Diversity (1992)**.

The **Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended)** requires development plans to include mandatory objectives for the conservation of the natural heritage and for the conservation of European sites and any other sites which may be prescribed.

### National and local policy documents

In 2022, the government published **Heritage Ireland 2030 – A Framework for Heritage**. The third **National Biodiversity Action Plan 2017-2023** is currently (2023) under review.

Both plans set out strategies for the conservation, management and promotion of Ireland's natural heritage as a resource to be enjoyed by all. These plans require local authorities to prepare and implement Heritage and Biodiversity Plans, in partnership with relevant stakeholders.

In 2010, Sligo County Council adopted its first **County Sligo Biodiversity Action Plan 2011-2015**, in accordance with the National Biodiversity Plan. This plan was incorporated into subsequent County Heritage Plans and is currently (2023) under review

## 24.1 Biodiversity

Biodiversity is the variety of life on Earth. It consists of native plants, animals and their habitats. Our survival depends on biodiversity and we rely on it for the "ecosystem services" that it provides, such as clean air and water, the control of climate and disease, the production of food, crop pollination, nutrient recycling etc.

Biodiversity loss is recognised as a global threat. The protection and wise use of biodiversity on land and water is vital to achieving sustainable development.

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<sup>1</sup> Additional statutory instruments for the Wildlife Act 1976 (as amended) available at:  
[https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/isbc/1976\\_39.html#associatedsecondary](https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/isbc/1976_39.html#associatedsecondary)

<sup>2</sup> Additional statutory instruments for the Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2000 (as amended) available at:  
[https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/isbc/2000\\_38.html#associatedsecondary](https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/isbc/2000_38.html#associatedsecondary)

## Biodiversity – general policies

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

- P-BD-1** Protect, conserve, enhance and sustainably manage the natural heritage, biodiversity, geological heritage, landscape and environment of County Sligo.
- P-BD-2** Protect and, where possible, enhance the plant and animal species and their habitats that have been identified under EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC), the EU Birds Directive (2009/147/EC), European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (SI 477/2011) as amended, Flora (Protection) Order 2015, the Wildlife Act 1976 (as amended), and the Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2000 as amended, including all statutory instruments made under each act.
- P-BD-3** Ensure that the ecological impact of all development proposals on habitats and species are appropriately assessed by suitably qualified professionals, in accordance with best practice guidelines, taking full account of the precautionary principle where uncertainty exists.
- P-BD-4** Minimise adverse impacts of proposed developments on existing habitats (whether designated or not) by including mitigation and/or compensation measures as appropriate.
- P-BD-5** Raise public awareness of the natural heritage and biodiversity of the County and encourage increased public participation in biodiversity conservation by supporting community-led initiatives.
- P-BD-6** Support the implementation of the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan 2021-2025 and any subsequent revisions.

## Biodiversity – objectives

It is an objective of Sligo County Council to:

- O-BD-1** Implement, in partnership with the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, relevant stakeholders and the community, the objectives and actions of both the *County Sligo Biodiversity Action Plan* and the *National Biodiversity Action Plan* as it relates to the remit and functions of Sligo County Council.
- O-BD-2** Prepare and support the implementation of a *Green Infrastructure Strategy*<sup>4</sup> for County Sligo.

<sup>4</sup> Green Infrastructure can be broadly defined as a strategically planned network of high quality natural and semi-natural areas with other environmental features, which is designed and managed to deliver a wide range of ecosystem services and protect biodiversity in both rural and urban settings. (source: *Building a Green Infrastructure for Europe* – European Commission, 2013)

## 24.1.1 Protecting biodiversity - designated sites

EU nature legislation provides the legal basis for *Natura 2000*, the nature protection network, through designation of Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs). This European network of biodiversity sites is supplemented by the Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs) and statutory Nature Reserves designated in Ireland by the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS). Locally, sites of heritage value are designated through the County Development Plan as County Biodiversity Sites.

### European Sites: Natura 2000

The EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) and the Birds Directive (2009/147/EC) provide for the conservation and protection of core breeding and resting sites for rare and threatened species, and rare habitat types considered to be most in need of conservation. Such sites, forming part of the EU network of ecologically important and protected sites known as Natura 2000, comprise:

- **Special Areas of Conservation (SAC)** – these sites are selected for the conservation and protection of plant and animal species (other than birds) and habitats listed in Annex I and Annex II of the EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC), which was transposed into Irish law by the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (SI 477/2011) as amended.
- **Special Protection Areas (SPA)** – these sites are selected for the conservation and protection of birds and their habitats designated under the EU Birds Directive 2009 (2009/147/EC) which was transposed into Irish law by the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (SI 477/2011) as amended.

There are 26 Natura 2000 sites within County Sligo. The NPWS identifies, evaluates and proposes sites for designation, and up-to-date information is available on the National Parks and Wildlife Service website. The boundaries of protected areas may change and new sites may be proposed for designation during the lifetime of this Plan. See **Appendix D** of this Plan.

Planning authorities are required to ensure that an **Appropriate Assessment** of the implications of development proposals on designated nature conservation sites (Natura 2000) is undertaken for all planning applications likely to have significant effects on these sites. Screening for Appropriate Assessment applies to all development proposals, either within or outside a Natura 2000.

### National site designations

The European network of biodiversity sites is supplemented by the following:

- **Natural Heritage Areas (NHA)** and **proposed Natural Heritage Areas (pNHA)** – designated under the Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2000. They encompass nationally-important semi-natural and natural habitats, landforms and geomorphological features.
- **Statutory Nature Reserves** – designated under Section 16 of the Wildlife Act. The objective of any such designation is to use or manage the land as a nature reserve in order to maintain and enhance the diversity of the habitats and species to be found there. The three Statutory Nature Reserves in County Sligo are:
  - Ballygilgan (Lissadell) Nature Reserve;
  - Easky Bog Nature Reserve;
  - Union Wood Nature Reserve.

- **Ramsar Sites** – these are wetlands of significant value for nature. Ramsar sites located in County Sligo are:
  - Ballygilgan (Lissadell) Nature Reserve;
  - Easky Bog (Site Code 471),
  - Cummeen Strand (Site Code 842),
  - Killala Bay/Moy Estuary (Site Code 843)
  - Lough Gara (Site Code 852)

## Designated sites for nature conservation – policies

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

**P-DSNC-1** Protect and maintain the conservation status of all natural heritage sites designated or proposed for designation in accordance with European and national legislation and agreements.

These include Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection Areas (SPA), Natural Heritage Areas (NHA), proposed Natural Heritage Areas (pNHA), Ramsar Sites, Statutory Nature Reserves, as identified by the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, and any other sites that may be proposed for designation during the lifetime of this Plan.

In addition, the Council will identify, maintain and develop non-designated areas of high nature conservation value which serve as linkages or ‘stepping stones’ between protected sites in accordance with Article 10 of the Habitats Directive.

**P-DSNC-2** Promote the maintenance and, as appropriate, achievement of ‘favourable conservation status’ of habitats and species in association with the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS).

**P-DSNC-3** Carry out an appropriate level of assessment for all development plans, land-use plans and projects that the Council authorizes or proposes to undertake or adopt, to determine the potential for these plans or projects to impact on designated sites, proposed designated sites or associated ecological corridors and linkages in accordance with the Habitats Directive. All appropriate assessments shall be in compliance with the provisions of Part XAB of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).

**P-DSNC-4** Ensure that all development proposals are subject to the process of Screening for Appropriate Assessment and subsequent stages of Appropriate Assessment, as relevant, carried out to the satisfaction of the Planning Authority, in consultation with National Parks and Wildlife Service, as appropriate.

## Designated sites for nature conservation – objectives

It is an objective of Sligo County Council to:

- O-DSNC-1** Identify any areas of high nature conservation value which are of major importance for wild fauna and flora in accordance with Article 10 of the Habitats Directive, and which have not been previously identified.
- O-DSNC-2** Undertake appropriate surveys and collect data to provide an evidence-base to assist the Council in meeting its obligations under Article 6 of the Habitats Directives (92/43/EEC) as transposed into Irish Law, subject to available resources.

### 24.1.2 Protecting biodiversity – non-designated sites

There are many sites throughout the County that host a range of plant and animal species or their habitats (including Annex I Habitats, Annex I Birds, Annex II and IV species, Flora (Protection) Orders etc.), which are not designated for nature conservation but nonetheless their ecological value is of high importance in the county.

#### Protected Species

Certain plant, animal and bird species are protected by law. This includes plant species listed in the Flora Protection Order 1999 and animals and birds listed in the Wildlife Act 1976 and subsequent statutory instruments, those listed in Annex IV of the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC), and those listed in Annex I of the Birds Directive (2009/147/EC). Proposals for developments, where appropriate, will require an assessment of the presence of bats and other protected species, and must ensure that suitable avoidance and/or mitigation measures are put in place accordingly.

The Habitats Directive contains Annexes for plant and animal species (other than birds) identified to be of conservation concern and for which conservation measures and regulations apply.

The Birds Directive contains a number of Annexes which list bird species for which varying conservation measures and regulations apply. This protection applies wherever the bird species are found and is not confined to sites designated for nature conservation. This is particularly important when assessing development proposals for lands outside an SPA which are used for roosting, feeding, nesting etc. by bird species for which the SPA is designated.

The Habitats Directive and the transposition into Irish law of this Directive; the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (SI 477/2011) as amended, require that certain species listed in Annex IV of the Habitats Directive be strictly protected. These are as follows (species known to occur in Sligo are indicated thus \*): all Bat species\*, Otter\*, Whales and Dolphins\*, Leatherback Turtle, Natterjack Toad, Kerry Slug, Killarney Fern\*, Slender Naiad and Yellow Marsh Saxifrage.

These species are not restricted to designated nature conservation areas. Bats and otters may be found anywhere in the County, where conditions and habitats are suitable. Carrying out of any work that has the potential to disturb these species, and for which a derogation licence has not been granted by the National Parks and Wildlife Service, may constitute an offence.

## Protected species – policies

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

- P-PS-1** Ensure that development does not have a significant adverse impact incapable of satisfactory mitigation on plant, animal or bird species protected by law.
- P-PS-2** Consult with the National Parks and Wildlife Service (DHLGH) and take account of any licensing requirements when undertaking, approving, and authorising development which is likely to affect plant, animal or bird species protected by law.
- P-PS-3** Provide guidance to developers and others in relation to species protected by law and their protection and management in the context of development.
- P-PS-4** Ensure, where appropriate, the protection and conservation of areas, sites, species and ecological networks of biodiversity value outside designated sites, and require an appropriate level of ecological assessment by suitably qualified professionals to accompany any development proposals likely to impact on such areas or species.
- P-PS-5** Require all new developments to incorporate habitat facilities for wildlife species, including Swifts, in or on buildings or their facades, where appropriate.

## Protected species – objective

It is an objective of Sligo County Council to:

- O-PS-1** Undertake surveys, as appropriate, to establish the location of protected flora and fauna in the Plan area through the County Heritage Plan and the County Biodiversity Action Plan.

### 24.1.3 Nature conservation outside of designated sites

Nature conservation legislation provides for the protection of sites and species of international and national importance. However, sites and species benefitting from statutory protection do not alone represent the full extent of natural heritage. In fact, most biological diversity occurs throughout the countryside. Rare and protected sites and species cannot survive independently of their surroundings.

Protected natural areas cannot thrive in isolation. Maintaining and re-establishing connectivity between these natural areas is needed in order to restore the health of ecosystems and allow species to thrive across their entire natural habitat.

This connectedness can be achieved through “green infrastructure”, which seeks to harness biodiversity as a natural infrastructure for the benefit of both people and nature. The wider landscape provides vital links and corridors to allow the movement of plants and animals between protected sites.

#### **Promoting and protecting biodiversity and wildlife corridors**

Article 10 of the Habitats Directive requires EU member states to secure the ecological coherence of the Natura 2000 network by maintaining and, where appropriate, developing features of the landscape (including those crossing national borders) which are of major importance for wild fauna and flora.

Such features are those which, by virtue of their linear and continuous nature (such as rivers with their banks or the traditional systems of marking field boundaries) or their function as stepping stones (such as ponds or small woods), are essential for the migration, dispersal, and genetic exchange of wild species.

#### **County Biodiversity Sites**

Many sites of biodiversity value within the County do not meet the criteria that would enable them to be designated at national level. Although these sites are of great importance at regional and County level, to date they have not been fully surveyed or recognised as such. In order to inform this process, the County Council has commissioned – and continues to commission habitat surveys (e.g., hedgerows, wetlands and unimproved grassland) – refer to **Appendix E** of this Plan.

It is critical to the overall ecological network and biodiversity value of County Sligo that these sites are identified, valued, and conserved. Identification of important elements of the County’s ecological network has commenced under the County Habitat Mapping Programme. This ongoing work is also listed as an action of the County Sligo Heritage Plan and County Sligo Biodiversity Action Plan.

### **Nature conservation outside designated sites - policies**

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

- P-NCODS-1** Minimise the impact of new development on habitats of natural value that are key features of the County’s ecological network. Developments likely to have an adverse effect on recognised sites of local nature conservation importance will be required to demonstrate the impacts on the ecological value of the site and will not be approved unless it can be clearly

## Nature conservation outside designated sites - policies

demonstrated that there are reasons for the development that outweigh the need to safeguard the nature conservation value of the site.

- P-NCODS-2** Ensure that development proposals, where relevant, improve the ecological coherence of the Natura 2000 network and encourage the retention and management of landscape features that are of major importance for wild fauna and flora as per Article 10 of the Habitats Directive.
- P-NCODS-3** Ensure that proposals for development protect and enhance biodiversity, wherever possible, by minimising adverse impacts on existing habitats and by including mitigation and/or compensation measures, as appropriate, which ensure that biodiversity is enhanced.
- P-NCODS-4** Applications for development may be required to be accompanied by an ecological impact assessment (EclA), to ensure that such proposed development will not affect the integrity and conservation value of important biodiversity sites.
- P-NCODS-5** Ensure that no ecological networks, or parts thereof which provide significant connectivity between areas of local biodiversity, are lost without remediation as a result of implementation of this Plan.
- P-NCODS-6** Provide guidance for developers and the general public in relation to nature conservation outside designated sites and the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity and geological heritage in general.
- P-NCODS-7** Integrate biodiversity considerations into Local Authority plans, programmes and activities where appropriate.

## Nature conservation outside designated sites – objectives

It is an objective of Sligo County Council to:

- O-NCODS-1** Continue the County Habitat Mapping project, thereby generating the necessary information to identify landscape features that are of major importance for wild fauna, flora and County Biodiversity Sites, as key features of the county's ecological network.
- O-NCODS-2** Identify and protect, in co-operation with the relevant statutory agencies and other relevant groups, County Biodiversity Sites which are not otherwise protected by legislation.
- O-NCODS-3** Ensure that the findings of the County Habitat Mapping project (when completed) are utilised to inform the development management process.

## 24.1.4 Wetlands

Wetlands include water courses, water bodies marshes, fens, reed beds, bogs and wet woodlands. Wetlands tend to have high biodiversity value, protect water quality and reduce flood risk. While many protected areas include wetlands, most wetland areas occur outside designated sites.

Planning legislation requires that works or development involving the drainage or reclamation of a wetland greater than 0.1 ha needs planning permission. For drainage or reclamation of wetlands greater than 2 ha, an Environmental Impact Assessment is necessary.

The Council will require an ecological assessment (including EIA, where necessary) to be carried out at the appropriate level in relation to proposals for drainage or reclamation of wetlands.

### Wetlands policies

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

- P-WET-1** Have regard to the County Sligo Wetlands Surveys 2008-2011 and subsequent wetland surveys that may be published during the lifetime of this Plan. Protect surveyed wetland sites that have been rated of A (International), B (National) and C+ (County) importance.
- P-WET-2** Ensure that an ecological assessment at an appropriate level (including EIA, where appropriate) is undertaken in conjunction with proposals involving drainage, reclamation or infilling of wetland habitats.

## 24.2 Woodlands, trees and hedgerows

Woodlands and trees make a significant contribution to biodiversity, landscape character and visual amenity. Trees are wildlife habitats, soften hard urban edges and provide scale and backdrops to streets and buildings. They also filter out noise, dust and pollutants and prevent flooding by retaining moisture.

Insensitively designed development can result in loss of or damage to important trees. It is therefore desirable that existing trees are taken into consideration in the formulation and assessment of development proposals. Where trees or groups of trees are of particular value and may be at risk from development or other activities, consideration will be given to the making of tree preservation orders in accordance with the Tree Preservation Guidelines.

Hedgerows constitute an important natural and historic resource, given their contribution to landscape quality, their ecological importance as wildlife habitats, corridors between habitats and historical significance as townland and field boundaries. Hedgerows are afforded protection under the Wildlife (Amendment) Act, 2000, which prohibits the cutting of hedges during the bird nesting period (1 March to 1 September).

While the relative importance of hedgerows is difficult to assess without a detailed survey, in general, the following categories are worthy of protection:

- ancient hedgerows – field systems dating prior to the mid-17<sup>th</sup> Century;
- townland boundaries;
- hedgerows that have a farming, landscape, cultural function;
- hedgerows incorporating archaeological features;
- hedgerows that are important as wildlife corridors between habitats;
- hedgerows adjacent to roads, green lanes, tracks and wooded ground;
- banks and ditches that may have the above characteristics.

## Woodlands, hedgerows and trees policies

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

- P-WHT-1** Protect woodlands, hedgerows and trees from development that would impact adversely upon them. Promote new tree and woodland planting and the enhancement of existing hedgerows by seeking increased coverage, in conjunction with new development using native species of local provenance, where possible.
- P-WHT-2** Discourage the felling of mature trees to facilitate development and, where appropriate make use of tree preservation orders to protect important trees and groups of trees which may be at risk or have an important amenity or historic value.
- P-WHT-3** Require the planting of native broadleaved species, and species of local provenance, in new developments and as part of the Sligo County Council's own landscaping works.
- P-WHT-4** Encourage the retention of hedgerows and other distinctive boundary treatments in rural areas and prevent loss and fragmentation where practically possible.
- If removal of a hedgerow, stone wall or other distinctive boundary treatment is unavoidable, reinstatement of the same type of boundary shall be required.
- P-WHT-5** Promote awareness and require the retention and protection of hedgerows which mark townland boundaries, in recognition of their historic value and archaeological importance.
- P-WHT-6** Protect native and semi-natural woodlands, groups of trees and individual mature trees in line with best practice and encourage their effective management and retention.
- Tree surgery rather than felling will be required, where possible, when undertaking, approving or authorising development.

## Woodlands, hedgerows and trees policies

- P-WHT-7** When undertaking, approving, or authorising development, ensure or require the protection of trees subject of Tree Preservation Orders, as well as Champion and Heritage Trees identified on the Tree Register of Ireland.
- P-WHT-8** Work in partnership with relevant stakeholders to develop, enhance and explore opportunities to develop woodland sites under the Native Woodland Scheme.

### 24.3 Invasive species

Invasive non-native plant and animal species are a major threat to biodiversity. There are prohibitions in relation to the introduction or dispersal of certain invasive species, as set out in the Third Schedule of the European Communities (Birds and Habitats) Regulations 2011 (S.I. 477/2011), and in the EU Regulations 1143/2014 on the Prevention and Management of the Introduction and Spread of Invasive Alien Species.

Invasive alien species can negatively impact on native species, transform habitats and threaten whole ecosystems, causing serious problems to the environment and the economy. In certain cases, they may pose a threat to human safety. There is potential for the spread of invasive species during excavation and construction works. Such species may also be introduced into the environment by spreading from private gardens, boat users, horticulture etc. Japanese Knotweed, Giant Hogweed and Himalayan Balsam are well-known examples.

## Invasive species policies

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

- P-INV-1** Prevent and control the spread of invasive plant and animal species within the county.
- P-INV-2** Require all development proposals to address the presence of invasive alien species on proposed development sites and (if necessary) require applicants to prepare and submit an Invasive Species Management Plan, in compliance with the provisions of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011-2015.
- P-INV-3** Promote best practice in the control of invasive species when carrying out statutory functions of the County Council in association with relevant bodies, including TII, the Department of Transport and the Department of Rural and Community Development.

## Invasive species – objective

It is an objective of Sligo County Council to:

- O-INV-1** Undertake studies through the County Heritage Plan and County Biodiversity Plan to quantify the extent of selected invasive species (Japanese Knotweed, Giant Hogweed and Himalayan Balsam) within the Plan area, with recommendations of priority species for control or eradication, the degree of threat posed, and the resources required for effective management.

## 24.4 Geological heritage sites

To date, sites of geological interest have not been comprehensively covered by the existing nature conservation designations. The DHLGH and the Geological Survey of Ireland (GSI) are drawing up a list of sites of geological interest that will be proposed as Natural Heritage Areas.

In the interim, Sligo County Council has listed in this Plan the geological features of national and local importance occurring in the County, with the objective of maintaining their conservation value. The list was produced in consultation with the GSI and is included in **Appendix F** of this Plan.

## Sites of geological interest – objective

It is an objective of Sligo County Council to:

- O-SGI-1** Protect from inappropriate development, and maintain the character, integrity and conservation value of those features or areas of geological interest that are listed in this Plan or that may be proposed by the DHLGH and/or the GSI in the lifetime of this Plan.

## 24.5 Inland waters – lakes, rivers, streams, groundwater

The rivers and streams, lakes, wetlands and groundwater occurring within the Plan area are home to a variety of habitats and species. Lough Gill, Lough Arrow, Lough Talt, the lakes Gara, Easky and Templehouse, together with the rivers Owenmore, Unshin, Moy and Easky, are the main water bodies in County Sligo. The banks of rivers and streams (riparian zones) are particularly important, as they contain a range of habitats and species which are different from the surrounding landscape. Riparian zones function as ecological corridors and “stepping stones” that enable species to move from place to place. Groundwater is important for supplying water and maintaining wetlands and river flows in dry periods.

Rivers and streams should be maintained in an open, semi-natural condition, wherever possible. Their corridors and valleys should be protected and maintained for their biodiversity, landscape and flood protection value. This should be achieved by strictly controlling development in river/stream corridors and valleys and by implementing sustainable drainage systems for commercial and residential developments. Groundwater resources should be protected and managed in a sustainable manner.

### Riparian zones

Riparian zones are particularly vulnerable to damage from inappropriate development. While this Plan does not prohibit development in a riparian zone, developments taking place in such zones must ensure the protection of these vulnerable areas. A key watercourse protection measure is the set-aside of sufficient land along the river margin or corridor:

- for larger river channels (over 10 m), the recommended width of the core riparian zone (CRZ) is 35-60 m (18-30 m on each side of the river) and may be larger where flood plains adjoin the riparian zone;
- for smaller channels (under 10 m), a core riparian zone (CRZ) of 20 m or greater (minimum 10 m on each side of the river) is recommended. The determined width should be tailored to the specific site, river reach or lakeshore characteristics and their associated habitats.
- for salmonid rivers, the core riparian zone should be a minimum of 25 m on each side of the river.

It is important that the buffer zone is large enough to protect the ecological integrity of the river (including emergent vegetation) and the riparian zone (bankside vegetation including trees), taking into account the historical use of the area.

In identifying the Core Riparian Zone along a watercourse, regard will be had to the following criteria:

- provision of bed and bank stability;
- protection of water quality;
- maintenance of viability of riparian vegetation;
- provision of continuity and connectivity along the riparian zone;
- integration with floodplain processes;
- management of edge effects at riparian/urban interface;
- protection of natural values within channels.

## Inland waters policies

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

- P-INW-1** Protect rivers, streams and other water courses and their associated Core Riparian Zones (CRZs) from inappropriate development and maintain them in an open state, capable of providing suitable habitats for fauna and flora. Structures (e.g., bridges) crossing fisheries waters shall be clear-span and shall be designed and built in consultation with Inland Fisheries Ireland.
- P-INW-2** Protect and enhance biodiversity richness by protecting rivers, stream corridors and valleys by reserving land along their banks for ecological corridors, maintaining them free from inappropriate development and discouraging culverting or realignment.
- P-INW-3** Ensure that all proposed greenfield residential and commercial developments use sustainable drainage systems (SUDS) in accordance with best current practice, ensuring protection of the integrity of wetland sites in the adjoining area, including their hydrological regime.
- P-INW-4** Ensure that floodplains and wetlands within the Plan area are retained for their biodiversity and flood protection value.
- P-INW-5** Ensure that proposed developments do not adversely affect groundwater resources and groundwater-dependent habitats and species.

## Inland waters objectives

It is an objective of Sligo County Council to:

- O-INW-1** Consult with prescribed bodies prior to undertaking, approving or authorising any works or development that may impact on rivers, streams and watercourses.
- O-INW-2** Require that runoff from a developed area does not result in deterioration of downstream watercourses or habitats, and that pollution generated by a development is treated within the development area prior to discharge to local watercourses.

## 24.6 Water quality

### 24.6.1 Water Framework Directive (WFD)

The Water Framework Directive (EC/2000/60/EC) is the principal piece of EU legislation relating to the protection of surface water, groundwater, tidal and coastal water quality in Ireland. Under the provisions of the WFD, surface water quality can be categorized into five status classifications: *high*, *good*, *moderate*, *poor*, and *bad*.

The Directive places an obligation on local authorities and other public bodies to achieve the *good status* classification of all watercourses and prevent existing *good* and *high status* surface waters from deteriorating. Existing *moderate*, *poor* and *bad status* waters must be improved to at least *good status* within the timescales detailed in the Directive.

Based on the most recent water quality monitoring data, all groundwater within the functional area of Sligo County Council is currently classified at *good* status. However, there are a number of surface water bodies that need to be improved to good/high status in order to satisfy the requirements of the Directive.

In terms of river water quality in County Sligo and based on monitoring carried out for the period 2013-2018, 16% of rivers are classified at *high* status, 54% are at *good* status, 18% are at *moderate* status and 11% are classified at *poor* status.

Among the County's lakes, 15% are classified at *high* status, 23% are at *good* status, 23% at *moderate* status, with 8% classified at *bad* status. In 2022, 31% of lakes within the County did not have an official status classification. Unassigned water bodies will gradually receive a status classification as the national monitoring programme is expanded.

### 24.6.2 River Basin Management Plan (RBMP)

The WFD is being implemented in Ireland through the River Basin Management Plan. At the time of writing, the third-cycle RBMP (covering the period 2022-2027) was under preparation.

The RBMP 2018-2021 adopted the following priorities:

- ensure full compliance with relevant EU legislation.
- prevent deterioration in water quality.
- meet the objectives for designated protected areas (such as designated bathing areas, drinking waters, designated shellfish, SACs etc.)
- protect high-status waters.
- implement targeted actions and pilot schemes in focused sub-catchments.

The CDP policies relating to the protection of water quality have been drafted in accordance with the measures detailed in the most recent National River Basin Management Plan and may be reviewed, if necessary, after the publication of the third-cycle RBMP.

The main sources of water pollution are agriculture, wastewater treatment plant discharges, forestry, industrial discharges, and effluent discharges from un-serviced developments. It is the role of Sligo County Council to control developments and activities, through planning policies and through the enforcement of national water quality legislation, to ensure that water quality is not adversely affected.

### 24.6.3 Quality of estuarine and coastal waters

Sligo County Council must ensure that planning and development policies take due account of the provisions of the WFD and the European Communities (Quality of Shellfish Waters) Regulations 2006 in order to maintain the existing water quality status in estuarine and coastal waters.

The principal estuarine, transitional, and coastal waters which may be impacted by the plan include Sligo, Drumcliff and Ballysadare Bays and their respective estuaries. Killala Bay also borders the western perimeter of County Sligo.

The EPA data for the monitoring period 2013-2018 indicate that the Garavogue and Ballysadare Estuaries are classified at **moderate** status, Drumcliff and Easky Estuaries are classified at **high** status, while Portavaud West did not have an assigned status.

Sligo Bay and Killala Bay are classified at **good** status, while Donegal Bay Southern is classified at **high** status.

In general, 33% of transitional waters are classified at **high** status, 50% at **moderate** status and 17% do not have an official status assigned. In terms of coastal water quality, 33% of waters are classified at **high** status, 33% are classified at **good** status and 33% do not have an official status assigned.

Drumcliff Bay and Sligo Bay are designated as shellfish waters in accordance with the European Communities (Quality of Shellfish Waters) Regulations 2006 (implemented as S.I. No. 268 of 2006), but policies for the protection of shellfish waters are now incorporated into the RBMP.

### 24.6.4 River water quality

The ongoing national water quality monitoring programme (for rivers, lakes, groundwater, transitional waters and coastal waters) is undertaken jointly by the EPA and local authorities with additional input from a range of state agencies. The EPA sampling programme is generally carried out over a three-year cycle with associated publication of updated water quality status information.

The most recent EPA published data on river water quality in County Sligo relates to the period 2013 - 2018. The report indicates that extensive areas of river water in the County are either of **good** or **moderate** status. There are also a significant number of **high**-status water bodies in the county. The EPA has highlighted the importance of retaining existing high status water bodies on a national basis.

There are two designated salmonid rivers in the County: the Moy and the Owengarve. Sligo County Council will strictly control development and activities in the catchments of rivers in order to protect these waters from pollution.

### 24.6.5 Lake water quality

Lough Gill, Lough Easky, Lough Talt, and Lough Gara are particularly important in terms of public water supply. In addition, Lough Arrow is used as a raw water source in a number of Group Water Schemes serving a wide rural hinterland. These five lakes are targeted for particular attention under the national surface water monitoring programme.

Based on 2013-2018 monitoring data, Glencar Lake, Lough Gara, Lough Arrow and Lough Gill are classified at **moderate** status. Lough Talt and Lough Easkey are classified at **good** status. Templehouse Lake is classified at **bad** status while Lough Dargan, Lough Labe and Cloonacleigha Lough have no status assigned.

A significant improvement in water quality is required within time frames specified in the Water Framework Directive. Sligo County Council will continue to control development and activities in the catchments of all lakes in order to protect and maintain existing water quality and improve water quality in lake systems that are currently not achieving the requirements of the WFD.

**Table 24.1 Status of WFD-monitored lakes in County Sligo**

Lake	2013-2018 physio-chemical status	2013-2018 ecological status
Arrow	<i>good</i>	<i>moderate</i>
Easkey	<i>good</i>	<i>good</i>
Gara	<i>moderate</i>	<i>moderate</i>
Gill	<i>good</i>	<i>moderate</i>
Kilsellagh	<i>good</i>	<i>good</i>
Talt	<i>good</i>	<i>good</i>
Templehouse	<i>good</i>	<b>bad</b>

Source: EDEN (EPA's Environmental Data Exchange Network, <https://wfd.edenireland.ie/data>)

## 24.6.6 Groundwater quality

Groundwater is an important natural resource which supplies water for drinking, for industry, for agriculture and helps maintain wetlands and river flows through dry periods.

Discharges to groundwater are subject to the European Communities (EC) Environmental Objectives (Groundwater) Regulations, which were transposed into Irish Law as Statutory Instrument No. 9 of 2010 (S.I. No. 9 of 2010). Under Regulation 4 of the Groundwater Regulations, a duty is placed on public authorities to promote compliance with the requirements of the regulations and to take all reasonable steps to prevent or limit the input of pollutants into groundwater and prevent the deterioration of the status of all bodies of groundwater.

A practical and effective means of protecting groundwater and preventing pollution is through the use of the **Sligo Groundwater Protection Scheme** which was prepared in 2009 by the Geological Survey Ireland (GSI). The scheme provides a framework to assist in decision-making on the location, nature and control of developments and activities in order to protect groundwater.

In the most recent groundwater assessment issued by the Environmental Protection Agency, based on data recorded during the period 2013-2018, all groundwater within County Sligo is classified at **good** status, which must be protected and maintained by the Council.

## 24.6.7 Blue Dot Catchments Programme

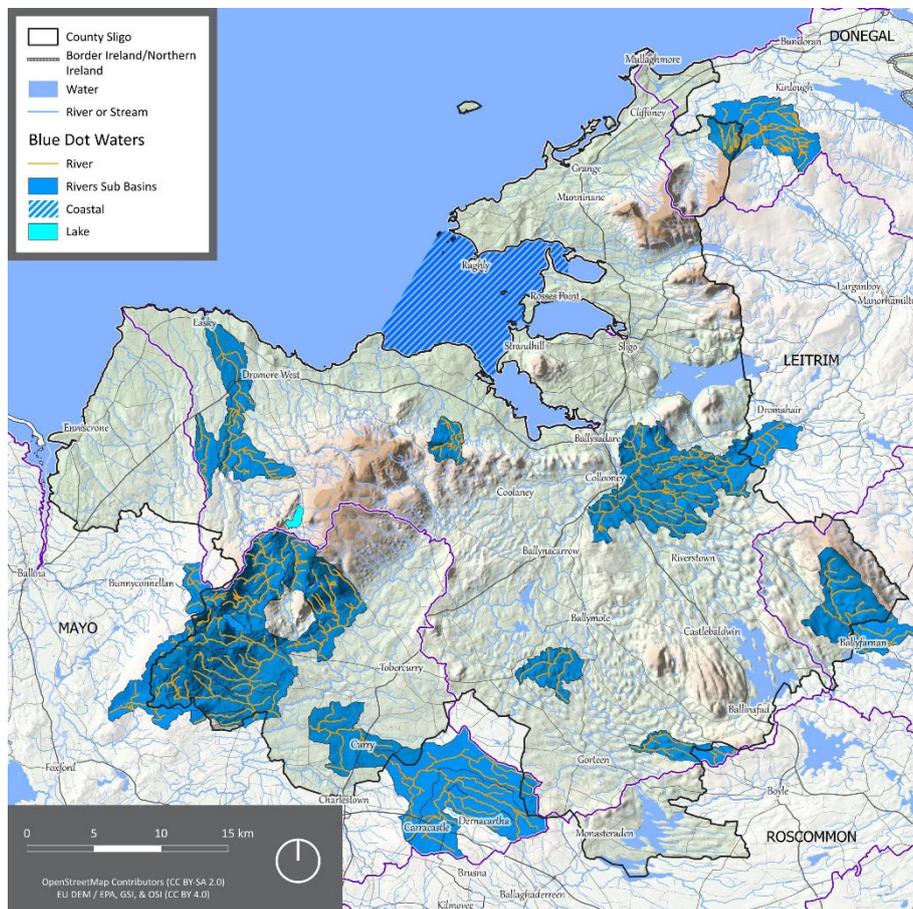
One of the key measures of the RBMP 2018-2021 is the setting up of the Blue Dot Catchments Programme to address the decline in **high** status water bodies. This is meant to ensure that high-status waters are prioritised for the implementation of supporting measures and for available funding.

Blue Dots are rivers, lakes, estuarine and coastal waters of the best quality, mostly unpolluted and closest to what their natural condition should be. Often, Blue Dot waters have a greater diversity of species that are sensitive to pollution. They can serve as an “ark” where sensitive species survive during pollution events and can then recolonise the affected water bodies after pollution has been removed.

There are 22 Blue Dot water bodies in County Sligo (see Fig. 24.A). Forestry, agriculture and a range of other human activities have a great impact on these water bodies. The preservation of the **high** status of the Blue Dots critically depends on the actions of those living and working in the respective catchments.

The Blue Dot Catchments Programme is directed by a National Steering Group and requires the cooperation of local authorities, Catchment Groups, River Trusts, Tidy Towns and others. The experience of the Community Water Officers working in the Local Authority Waters Programme (LAWPRO) is an invaluable resource for the programme. The County Council will assist and support the programme as part of its WFD/RBMP obligation to protect and restore water quality.

**Fig 24.A Blue Dot catchments in County Sligo**



## Water quality policies

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

**P-WQ-1** Support the implementation of the EU Water Framework Directive, National River Basin Management Plan and Blue Dot Catchment Programme, to ensure protection and improvement of all waters in the County.

**P-WQ-2** Promote compliance with environmental standards and objectives established for surface and groundwater bodies under the Water Framework Directive (WFD).

Applications for development must demonstrate that such proposed development would not adversely affect the ability of any water body to meet its objectives under the Water Framework Directive, individually (as a result of the proposed development) or cumulatively (in combination with other developments). Evidence to this effect may include correspondence from Uisce Éireann.

**P-WQ-3** Protect the quality of estuarine and coastal waters by controlling land-based discharges to these areas.

**P-WQ-4** Prohibit any development which is likely to lead to the deterioration of water quality.

**P-WQ-5** Ensure that all development proposals have regard to the Sligo Groundwater Protection Scheme, in order to protect groundwater resources and groundwater-dependent habitats and species.

**P-WQ-6** Strictly limit and control new development in or near the catchment areas of water bodies, particularly salmonid rivers and those that are the source of the following drinking water supplies:

- |                               |                               |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| ◆ Lough Gill                  | ◆ Lough Easky                 |
| ◆ Lough Arrow                 | ◆ Gortnaleck and Lyle streams |
| ◆ Kilsellagh Source catchment | ◆ Riverstown Source Catchment |
| ◆ Lough Talt                  | ◆ GWS source catchments       |

## Water quality objectives

It is an objective of Sligo County Council to:

- O-WQ-1** Continue to monitor, audit, and review the environmental status with regard to the water quality of rivers, lakes, estuarine and coastal waters.
- O-WQ-2** Protect, maintain, or improve water quality to the status set out in the national RBMP. All discharges to water bodies shall be licensed in accordance with the provisions of the Local Government (Water pollution) Acts 1977 & 1990.
- O-WQ-3** Implement the Programme of Measures detailed in the national RBMP.
- O-WQ-4** Ensure compliance with the relevant objectives and measures that will be set out in the Groundwater Protection Scheme for County Sligo.

## Chapter 25. Built heritage

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

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

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

### 25.1 Archaeological heritage

#### 25.1.1 Sligo's archaeology

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Underwater archaeology

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

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

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

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

### 25.1.2 Policy and legislation

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

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

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

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

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

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

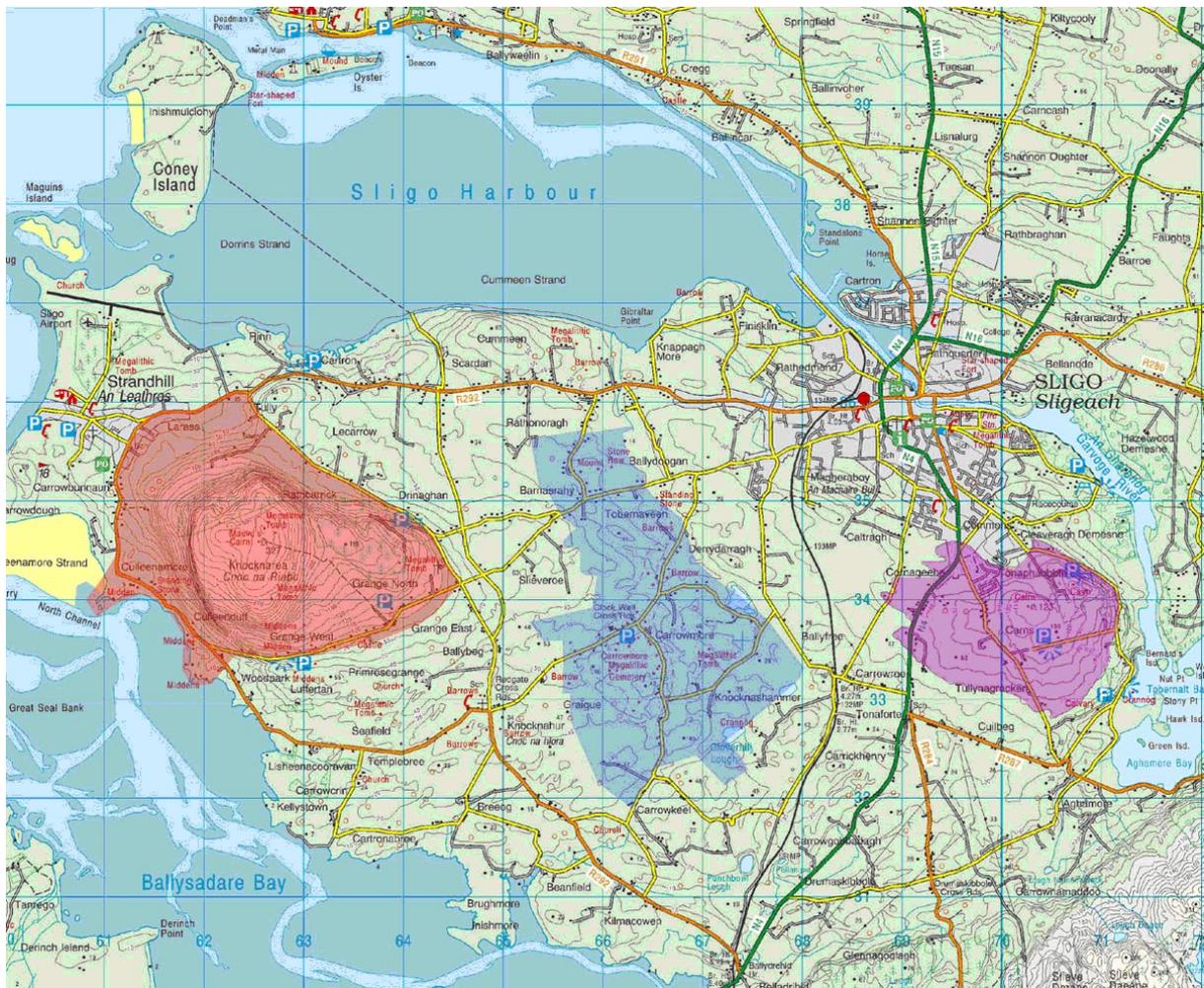
The megalithic cemetery at Carrowmore, comprising an oval-shaped cluster of 30 monuments surrounding the centrally placed cairn of "Listoghil" (Tomb 51) is located in the centre of the peninsula.

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

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

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

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



## Archaeological heritage policies

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

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

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

## Archaeological heritage policies

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

### **Cuil Irra Peninsula – Carrowmore, Knocknarea, Carns Hill**

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

### **County Sligo Heritage Plan**

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

## Archaeological heritage objectives

It is an objective of Sligo County Council to:

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

## 25.2 World Heritage Tentative List

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

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

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

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

## World Heritage Site objective

It is an objective of Sligo County Council to:

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

## 25.3 Architectural heritage

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

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

### **Industrial heritage**

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

### **Designed landscapes, gardens and demesnes**

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

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

### **Non-habitable structures**

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

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

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

### **Enabling development**

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

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

### 25.3.1 The Record of Protected Structures (RPS)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### 25.3.2 Architectural Conservation Areas (ACA)

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

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

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

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

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

### 25.3.3 Vernacular heritage and other built heritage assets

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

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

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

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

## Architectural heritage policies

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

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

## Architectural heritage policies

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

### Industrial heritage

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

### Designed landscapes, gardens and demesnes

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

## Architectural heritage objective

It is an objective of Sligo County Council to:

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

## Architectural Conservation Areas – policies

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

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

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

## Architectural Conservation Areas – policies

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

## Architectural Conservation Areas – objectives

It is an objective of Sligo County Council to:

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

## Vernacular heritage policies

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

- P-VH-1** Generally require the retention, sensitive restoration and sustainable re-use of historic building, structures and features in the County, including vernacular dwellings, farm buildings, paving, historic boundary treatments or layouts.  
  
There will be a presumption against the demolition of older buildings where restoration and adaptation are feasible.
- P-VH-2** Ensure that conversions or extensions to vernacular buildings or the provision of new adjoining buildings, are sensitively designed and do not detract from the

## Vernacular heritage policies

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

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

## Vernacular heritage objective

It is an objective of Sligo County Council to:

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



## Chapter 26. Residential development

A steady supply of houses in the right locations, designed for economic, social and environmental sustainability, is at the heart of national housing policy. The document “Housing for All – a New Housing Plan for Ireland” sets out the government’s vision to 2030. The national policy has four pathways to achieving this: supporting home ownership and increasing affordability; eradicating homelessness; increasing new housing supply and addressing vacancy and efficient use of existing stock.

People in County Sligo, like all citizens of the State, should have access to good quality housing to purchase or rent at an affordable price in areas supported by high quality physical and social infrastructure.

This County Development Plan promotes sustainable residential development that delivers a good quality of life, minimises the need to use cars for daily activities, supports older persons and those with disabilities, and enables the creation of well-functioning communities.

**Sections 26.1 Urban Housing** and **26.4 Housing in rural areas** offer general policy guidance on new housing within and outside settlements, including some limited design guidance.

The **Development management standards** chapter of this Plan (**Chapter 33**) contains detailed guidance regarding the layout and design of residential developments in rural and urban areas.

The forthcoming Sligo and Environs Local Area Plan (due to be prepared following the adoption of the CDP 2024-2030) may set additional housing policies, objectives and development standards adapted to the character and needs of Sligo Town.

### 26.1 Urban housing

#### 26.1.1 House types and sizes

Average household size in County Sligo, at 2.56 persons per household, was amongst the lowest in the State in 2016. At national level, ESRI projections<sup>1</sup> indicate that the average number of people per household will decline from 2.81 persons per household in 2016 to 2.43 in 2040. In line with national trends, the average size of households in County Sligo is expected to decrease further.

According to Census 2016 data, 28% of households in Co. Sligo were one-person, and a further 30% were two-persons households. Over the life of the Development Plan, from 2024 to 2030, the proportion of older persons in County Sligo will continue to grow. This will have implications for housing demand, with an increasing need for smaller dwellings and a wider mix of house types and sizes.

A range of government policy documents acknowledge the housing needs of older people in terms of location and size. The 2022 *Town Centre First Policy* (p. 37) indicates that “A priority focus will be on town centre homes that could include Age-Friendly housing for our senior citizens, housing for people with a disability or reduced mobility and increased provision of 1-bed homes suitable for smaller households including under the Housing First programme.”

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<sup>1</sup> *Regional Demographics and Structural Housing Demand at a County Level* (Adele Bergin and Abian Garcia-Rodriguez – ESRI Research Series Number 111, December 2020)

The Council will require prospective developers to incorporate a mix of plot sizes, unit sizes and types, such as one/two-bedroom dwellings, three-bedroom and four-bedroom houses, single-storey and two-storey etc., to accommodate the diverse needs, preferences and purchasing power of future residents.

### 26.1.2 Residential density

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

Residential densities for different types of areas in towns and villages are specified in the statutory (Section 28) guidelines for planning authorities on Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas, issued in 2009. These densities range from 35-50 dwellings per hectare (net) in larger towns such as Sligo, to 15-20 units/ha at the edge of small towns or villages.

However, 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".

Planning authorities are advised to apply a "graduated and responsive, tailored approach to the assessment of residential densities".

Having regard to the NPF, *Sustainable Residential Development Guidelines* (2009) and subsequent *Circular Letter* (2021), the Planning Authority will determine the appropriate residential density for each development proposal by considering the following:

- a. the size and character of the town or village, and its general pattern of development;
- b. the site's location in relation to the town/village centre and the range of residential densities in the surrounding area;
- b. the capacity of the infrastructure to serve the demands of the proposed development;
- c. streetscape, topography, landscape and other features of the site;
- d. design quality and the resulting levels of amenity.

### 26.1.3 Design and layout of housing developments

Sustainable neighbourhoods are well served by public transport, easily accessible by bike and by foot, and provide of a good range of amenities and services within short, safe walking distance of homes.

New housing developments should be visually pleasing areas, where social interaction is facilitated and where houses offer adequate living space, amenity and privacy, adaptable to the occupiers' needs. At the same time, the Planning Authority will apply a more flexible approach to certain development standards, such as minimum separation distances or minimum private open space provision, in order to enable greater innovation in house design and to facilitate increased densities in towns and villages – refer to **Section 33.3 (Development Management Standards)**.

Communal/public open spaces should be usable, interesting, well landscaped and designed for a range of ages and activities.

Car parking areas should be designed and landscaped to a high standard, having regard to the potential for the multi-functional use of the space. Off-street parking associated with street-fronting development should be located to the rear of the buildings.

Circulation routes within new residential areas should prioritise pedestrians and cyclists over cars, facilitating connections to existing or future residential areas and in accordance with the *Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets* (DoT, DoECLG 2013). New street patterns should form a grid or web to allow for easy orientation and minimize the distances between origins and destinations (Refer to **P-UHD-3**).

## Statutory guidance

The 2009 statutory guidelines on *Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas (Cities, Towns and Villages)* and the accompanying *Urban Design Manual* provide the basis on which planners, designers and developers can translate the concept of sustainable living into reality.

The height of new buildings and the design of new apartments were the subject of two further sets of ministerial guidelines issued under Section 28 of the Planning and Development Act, in December 2018 and December 2020 respectively.

The *Circular Letter NRUP 02/2021* brought further details and clarifications on the application of previously issued guidance. All these guidelines form the basis on which the Planning Authority assesses applications for housing developments in towns and villages (refer also to **Section 33.3** and **33.4** in the **Development Management Standards**).

### 26.1.4 Age-friendly housing

The ageing of the population represents one of the most significant demographic and societal challenges that Ireland will have to address in the coming decades. ESRI projections indicate that the number of people over the age of 65 in Ireland will reach 18% of the population by 2030 and about 23% by 2040 (up from 15% in 2020).

Ideally, people should be supported to lead independent lives in their own homes. However, this is not always possible. In order to facilitate older people to continue living in their communities, it is necessary to provide a range of attractive and appropriately located accommodation choices for those who wish to downsize.

Bespoke housing for older people, sheltered housing, assisted living and other senior residential facilities should be located in towns and villages, close to services, and should present as a high-quality living environment.

'Age-friendly homes', designed for people of all ages, but in particular older people, provide level access and connection to the outdoors, and are capable of incorporating assistive technology to support ageing in place. Including 'age-friendly homes' in a residential development helps to future-proof housing for an ageing population. (For more details, please consult the website <https://agefriendlyhomes.ie>)

Sligo County Council, through its *Age Friendly Strategy 2023-2026*, will support the provision of a mix of house types suitable for older people, including 'age-friendly homes', and will work with relevant agencies and the private sector to facilitate such proposals.

### 26.1.5 *Universal design* standards in housing developments

New urban quarters, including residential areas, should be designed to meet the needs of all people who use them. If the built environment is accessible, usable, convenient and pleasant to use, everyone benefits. This is the concept known as '*universal design*'.

Universal design creates environments that meet the diverse needs of people of all ages and all abilities. The incorporation of such principles into the design of a new residential area involves the inclusion of 'age-friendly homes' and 'wheel-chair liveable homes'.

Developers will be required to incorporate the principles of universal design into new residential properties as specified in the *Universal Design Guidelines for Homes in Ireland. Building for Everyone: A universal design approach* (National Disability Centre for excellence in Universal Design, 2015).

Other documents to be considered are:

- *Dementia-Friendly Dwellings for People with Dementia, their Families and Carers - Guidelines* (National Disability Guidelines, 2015).
- *Housing Options for Our Ageing Population – A policy statement* (Dept. of Housing, Planning and Local Government and Dept. of Health, 2019)
- *Age-Friendly Principles and Guidelines for the Planning Authority* (Age Friendly Ireland, 2021).

### 26.1.6 Design Statement for multi-unit residential developments

Designers and developers of multi-unit residential developments will be required to submit a Design Statement as part of the planning application (**refer to P-UHD-1**). The Design Statement must demonstrate how the architects, urban designers and engineers have complied with statutory guidelines and with the design guidance for urban development set out in **Chapter 33 (Development Management Standards) of this Plan**. The Statement shall address the following:

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

## Urban housing policies

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

- P-UHOU-1** Ensure that residential development takes place in a manner and at a pace that does not exceed the capacity of water and wastewater treatment infrastructure.
- P-UHOU-2** Ensure that appropriate densities are achieved in appropriate locations and circumstances, in accordance with the principles set out in the *Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas* and the *Urban Design Manual: A Best Practice Guide* (DEHLG, 2009), *Urban Development and Building Height Guidelines for Planning Authorities* (2018), *Circular Letter NRUP 02/2021* and any subsequent statutory guidance.
- P-UHOU-3** In the case of residential development proposals on infill sites, ensure that access points or adequate road frontage is reserved to provide future road access to enable comprehensive backland development.
- P-UHOU-4** Ensure the provision of a suitable range of house types and sizes to reflect the changing demographic structure and the trend towards smaller household sizes. In private housing schemes, the following mix of unit types should generally apply:

House type	Proportion in the scheme
1 bedroom	minimum 10% of total no. of units in any scheme with 10 or more units
2 bedrooms	minimum 20% of total no. of units
3 bedrooms	minimum 30% of total no. of units
4+ bedrooms	maximum 20% of total no. of houses

- P-UHOU-5** Ensure that all new housing developments are constructed to the standards and specifications applicable to housing intended for permanent occupation.

## Age-friendly housing policies

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

- P-AFH-1** Support independent living for older people by encouraging the provision of specific, purpose-built accommodation in new residential developments, in accordance with the *Age-Friendly Principles and Guidelines for the Planning Authority* (Age Friendly Ireland, 2021).
- P-AFH-2** Support the delivery of housing suitable for older people on infill and regeneration sites within town and village centres, where feasible.
- P-AFH-3** Require that new residential developments of up to 10 houses provide a minimum of one unit designed in accordance with the specifications of *Universal Design Guidelines for homes in Ireland* (National Disability Centre for excellence in Universal Design).
- Schemes of 11 houses and over should have a minimum of 15% of units designed and built to this standard.
- P-AFH-4** Support the implementation of the relevant objectives under Theme 3: housing of the Action Plan contained in the *Sligo Age Friendly Strategy* (2023-2026).
- P-AFH-5** In the case of apartment developments, ensure that 50% of units in any development comprising apartments exceed the specifications of *Universal Design Guidelines for homes in Ireland* (National Disability Centre for excellence in Universal Design) and are suitable for older people / mobility impaired people.

## Urban housing (design and layout) policies

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

- P-UH-DL-1** Require all developments of two dwellings or more to be accompanied by a Design Statement providing a rationale for the proposed scheme, outlining the unique elements that will contribute to a high quality of life, both private and communal.
- The Design Statement shall also indicate how the scheme addresses the key principles of urban housing as set out in this chapter, in **Chapter 10 Urban Development Principles** and **Chapter 33 Development Management Standards**.
- The statement shall be in the format set out in **Section 33.3.1 (Development Management Standards)**.

## Urban housing (design and layout) policies

- P-UH-DL-2** Ensure that new public and private developments comply with the principles, approaches and standards contained in the *Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets* (DoT, DoECLG 2019) in the provision or upgrading of vehicular, pedestrian and cycling facilities.
- P-UH-DL-3** Require that vehicular/pedestrian connections in large multi-unit housing developments are laid out in a grid or web manner, connecting into the existing street network and reserving access point into adjoining lands, where appropriate.
- P-UH-DL-4** Require new developments to locate, design and landscape any car parking provision to a high standard, having regard to the potential for the multi-functional use of the space provided. Off-street parking associated with road/street frontage development should generally be located to the rear of the buildings.

## Urban housing (open space) policies

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

- P-UH-OS-1** Ensure, as far as is practicable, that open space provided as part of new development links into the town's open space network.
- P-UH-OS-2** Require developers to retain significant hedgerows, tree groups and wetlands and incorporate these features into residential developments where possible.

## 26.2 Social housing

Social housing is defined as rented housing provided by the local authority or an approved housing body (AHB). In line with government policy, Sligo County Council will work to deliver more and better-quality housing, focusing on building sustainable communities. The Council recognises the need to avoid concentration of social housing in any particular area. The Planning Authority will have regard to this concern in dealing with all new housing development proposals.

The Cranmore Regeneration project is an example of the manner in which the Local Authority proactively seeks to transform the social, economic and physical fabric of an area through collaborative, long-term strategic planning, investment of resources and urban regeneration.

A high proportion of applicants on the Council's Housing List are one-person households: 49.5% (down from 57% in 2016). An objective of the Housing Strategy is the provision of more dwellings for one-person households as part of suitable range of house types and sizes, to avoid uniformity in residential development, and to reflect the current and anticipated demographic characteristics and household sizes.

### Social housing policies

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

- P-SHOU-1** Promote social inclusion by ensuring that social housing is well distributed throughout all residential areas rather than concentrated in a few locations.
- P-SHOU-2** Ensure that development in areas subject to an agreement under Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) is integrated into the housing scheme in a manner which avoids undue physical and social segregation.
- P-SHOU-3** Ensure that the supply of housing units under the Housing Strategy reflects the current and anticipated demographic characteristics and household sizes.
- P-SHOU-4** Encourage linkages between social housing developments and any adjoining residential areas through the provision of shared facilities, services, and pedestrian, cycle and vehicular connections, as appropriate.

### Social housing objective

It is an objective of Sligo County Council to:

- O-SHOU-1** Continue with the programme of refurbishment and regeneration of existing local authority housing stock.

## 26.2.1 Voluntary and cooperative housing

Voluntary and cooperative housing provision is a significant feature in the delivery of accommodation nationally. Approved housing bodies (AHBs), also known as housing associations, are independent, not-for-profit organisations, which get government funding from local authorities.

These associations seek to achieve a balance in social housing provision by widening the range of housing options to meet different and changing needs. They provide affordable rented housing for people who cannot afford to pay private sector rents or buy their own homes.

Some AHBs provide housing specifically for particular groups of people, such as older people or homeless people. The term AHB also includes housing co-operatives, which are controlled by their tenants.

### Voluntary and cooperative housing policy

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

**P-VC-HOU-1** Assist voluntary and non-profit cooperative housing associations in the provision of housing and encourage a more active involvement of these sectors in the housing market.

## 26.2.2 Traveller accommodation

Sligo County Council recognises the distinct culture and lifestyle of the Traveller community and will endeavour to provide suitable accommodation for Travellers who are indigenous to the area.

The range of housing options available includes standard lettings in local authority estates, lettings in voluntary housing schemes, group housing schemes, permanent or transient halting sites, single or stand-alone housing where required.

At the time of drafting this CDP (2023), Sligo County Council's *Traveller Accommodation Plan* estimated that 66 families would have needed accommodation during the period 2019–2024. The next iteration of the Traveller Accommodation Plan will reassess these requirements.

Working with the Traveller community, its representative organisations and local communities, the Council will seek to ensure an equitable distribution of Traveller facilities throughout the Plan area. The Council recognises that the provision of appropriate associated supports is also a critical factor in ensuring that the accommodation solutions delivered for individual families are successful.

## Traveller accommodation policies

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

- P-TA-HOU-1** Provide accommodation for Travellers, as far as is reasonable and practicable, using the full range of housing options available and having regard to the policies outlined in the *Traveller Accommodation Programme 2019–2024* and the subsequent plan(s).
- P-TA-HOU-2** Consider the submissions of Travellers, their representative organisations and those of the local communities in relation to the siting, planning and design of prospective halting sites or group housing schemes, so as to avoid social conflict and promote social inclusion.

## Traveller accommodation objective

It is an objective of Sligo County Council to:

- O-TA-HOU-1** Provide accommodation for Travellers within the Sligo Town area at Alma Terrace, Glenview Park (Ash Lane), Finisklin, Cleveragh and Bundoran Road.

## 26.3 Housing for persons with diverse needs

Sligo County Council recognises the need to accommodate the housing requirements of those with diverse needs and those in particular circumstances, including families and individuals at risk of homelessness, persons with a disability, students and refugees. The type and location of accommodation for persons with diverse needs will be assessed in line with current thinking and practice.

### 26.3.1 People with disabilities

Sligo County Council aim to facilitate access to an appropriate range of housing and related services to support independent living for people with a disability, in line with the *County Sligo Strategic Plan for Housing People with a Disability 2021-2025*.

The core goal of the Strategy is to meet the identified housing needs of people with disabilities locally, whether they are currently living in the community or in a congregated setting.

To ensure that people with disabilities can live independently in their location of choice, universal-design housing should be provided in all housing developments in County Sligo (refer to **Sections 26.1.4 Age friendly housing, 26.1.5 Universal design standards in housing developments and P-AFH-3** of this Chapter)

### 26.3.2 Homeless persons

From the 2016 to 2022, the number of adults in emergency accommodation in Sligo increased by 138%. In March 2023, there were 58 people in emergency accommodation (excluding those sheltered from domestic violence). The government's *Housing for All* strategy aims to eradicate homelessness by 2030. The *Homeless Action Plan for the North-West Region 2023-2028* was developed by the North-West Joint Homelessness Forum and Management Groups. Sligo County Council is lead authority for the North-West, comprising Leitrim, Sligo and Donegal County Councils.

The Plan aims to prevent homelessness where possible, protect those who are homeless, support the movement to stable accommodation, and ensure stringent governance of provision. The Planning Authority will support the implementation of this Strategy in County Sligo.

### 26.3.3 Refugees

Persons who have been granted refugee status have automatic rights to apply for local authority housing. Consideration should be given to household size, structure, possible reunification with families and the refugees' need for access to social supports in terms of language, healthcare, education and employment.

## Housing policies for people with diverse needs

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

- P-DN-HOU-1** Continue to meet the housing needs of persons with special needs both by direct provision of accommodation and by facilitating the provision of housing by the voluntary sector.
- P-DN-HOU-2** Facilitate access to an appropriate range of housing and related services to support independent living for people with a disability, in line with the *County Sligo Strategic Plan for Housing People with a Disability 2021-2025*.
- P-DN-HOU-3** Support the implementation of the *North-West Regional Homelessness Action Plan 2023–2028* and successor documents and prioritise the provision of suitable accommodation for the homeless and for those in need of emergency accommodation.
- P-DN-HOU-4** Ensure that housing developments accommodating people with special mobility needs and the households least likely to own cars have easy and convenient access to local facilities and to public transport.
- P-DN-HOU-5** Support proposals for the provision of sheltered housing and emergency accommodation, and work with the various bodies / organisations responsible for provision of this type of specialised accommodation.
- P-DN-HOU-6** Support the provision of purpose-built and designed student accommodation in appropriate locations, including adequate communal facilities and external communal space, as set out in Section 33.3 (Residential Development in urban areas/Development Management Standards).

## 26.4 Housing in rural areas

Government policy on rural housing is set out in the guidance document *Sustainable Rural Housing – Guidelines for Planning Authorities* (DOEHLG, April 2005), which was under review at the time of drafting this Development Plan.

Sligo County Council recognises the long tradition of people living in rural areas, in a highly dispersed settlement pattern. In the past, these areas were overwhelmingly dependent on farming, but this is no longer the case. Census data indicates that only 7.18% of the County's labour force was employed in agriculture, forestry and fishing in 2016.

It is acknowledged that there is a need to sustain rural communities, but this should be done without undermining the viability of towns and villages.

Applications for individual houses outside towns and villages will be assessed based on the strategic rural settlement policies set out in Chapter 5 of this Plan, **Section 5.5 Strategy for Rural Settlement**.

### 26.4.1 Siting and design of rural houses

It is important to note that the policy considerations outlined above represent only one element in the assessment of an application for dwelling house in a rural area. Other considerations relating to siting, design, environment, heritage, amenity and traffic considerations are also of paramount importance in the consideration of any development. These considerations are dealt with in more detail in the Development Management chapter.

New houses in rural areas should be absorbed and integrated successfully into the rural setting, i.e. the buildings should harmonise or 'read' with the existing traditional pattern of development, without intruding on unspoilt landscapes or breaking the skyline.

The practical achievement of well-integrated rural housing development requires considerable skill and experience in site assessment and detailed design. It requires an ability to examine a site in the context of its natural and built surroundings and analyse whether the proposed house and ancillary buildings can be accommodated on the site buildings without becoming unduly dominant on either the surrounding landscape or pattern of development.

Practical guidance regarding the siting and design of rural houses can be found in **Section 33.4 Housing in rural areas** (development management standards).

### Rural housing siting and design policies

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

**P-RHOU-1** Encourage those who wish to build in rural areas to apply traditional principles in the siting and design of new houses, while facilitating high-quality modern design solutions.

**P-RHOU-2** Require new house proposal in rural areas to comply with the guidance set out in **Section 33.4 Housing in rural areas** (development management standards).

## 26.5 Miscellaneous housing provisions

### 26.5.1 Holiday home developments

Managing the provision of tourism accommodation is essential to ensuring the delivery of a sustainable tourism strategy. As outlined in **Section 28.3 Tourism**, much of Sligo's tourism offer is based upon its heritage and landscapes. Therefore, in the interest of protecting the rural environment, demand for holiday homes should be accommodated in serviced settlements only.

Enniscrone, Easky, Mullaghmore, Rosses Point and Strandhill are designated "settlements with special coastal tourism functions", which play a regionally significant tourism role. In the past, holiday homes in these settlements were designed to relatively low standards, as they were intended exclusively for seasonal or short-term occupation by owners or tourists. In more recent times, due to acute housing shortages, there has been a trend of upgrading, extending and improving the privacy of units in holiday developments, to make them suitable for permanent occupation.

It is sometimes unclear whether a particular residential development is to be used as tourist accommodation or as permanent housing. In the interest of clarity, certain multi-unit residential development proposals in towns and villages with special tourism functions may be required to submit additional details regarding tenure, management etc.

### Holiday home development policies

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

- P-HHD-1** Direct proposals for multi-unit holiday home developments into existing serviced settlements, particularly those with special coastal tourism functions subject to adequate wastewater treatment capacity.
- P-HHD-2** Ensure that new holiday home developments are constructed to the standards and specifications applicable to housing intended for permanent occupation. Exceptions may be made for specific types of holiday accommodation designed exclusively for short-term occupation by tourists – e.g. apart-hotels, chalets etc.
- P-HHD-3** Require, where appropriate, at planning application stage, the submission of precise details regarding the intentions for tenure and management of multi-unit residential developments with potential to function as 'holiday villages', i.e. short-term tourist accommodation.

## 26.5.2 Vacant housing

The 2016 Census recorded that 20.1% of permanent housing units in County Sligo were vacant on Census night (compared to 22.2% in 2011 and 23.1% in 2006). This is significantly higher than the national average of 12.8%. According to the GeoDirectory database (which is considered more accurate than the Census), the residential vacancy rate was 8.9% in the second quarter of 2022. This continues to be significantly higher than the national average of 4.2% (GeoDirectory) in the same period.

It is likely that this vacant stock will accommodate some of the additional housing units estimated to be required over the period of the plan.

The reasons for vacancy are not evident, and in many cases, there may be complex issues involved. However, it would be desirable that some of this vacant stock is brought back into use so that it can satisfy some of the housing demand over the Plan period.

Sligo County Council recognises the value of reusing existing buildings to support the compact growth of towns and sustainable development and to boost the housing stock. The Planning Authority supports the renovation and re-use of obsolete, vacant and derelict buildings, and will implement or promote the use of all relevant funding schemes.

Furthermore, the Council will seek to procure vacant properties, where appropriate, for refurbishment and return to the market, to ensure their continued use for residential purposes.

### **Croí Cónaithe (Towns) Fund**

The Croí Cónaithe (Towns) Fund, delivered by local authorities, provides new choices for people to live in towns and villages in Ireland. The **Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant**, launched in 2022, provides grant funding to support the refurbishment of vacant properties in towns and villages for residential use, where the level of vacancy/dereliction is high. The **Ready to Build Scheme (Serviced Sites for New Homes)** envisages that local authorities make available serviced sites at reduced cost to support self-build home ownership.

At the time of drafting this CDP, Sligo County Council had not engaged in implementing the **Ready to Build Scheme**, as all lands in the ownership of the Local Authority were committed in the Housing Delivery Action Plan 2022-2026. However, the Enforcement Section of the Planning Department was administering the **Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant** in accordance with the terms of this scheme.

## Vacant housing policies

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

- P-VHOU-1** Support the renovation, adaptation and bringing back into active residential use of vacant dwellings in all areas of County Sligo, subject to normal planning considerations.
- P-VHOU-2** Where reactivation of residential use is not feasible, adopt a flexible approach towards alternative uses of vacant dwellings in towns and villages, subject to appropriate design and compatibility with existing and proposed surrounding uses.

## Vacant housing objectives

It is an objective of Sligo County Council to:

- O-VH-1** Deliver the Vacant Home Refurbishment Grant Scheme of the Croi Conaithe (Towns) Fund.
- O-VH-2** Identify suitable vacant and derelict properties for compulsory purchase and return them to the housing market.

### 26.5.3 Derelict houses

The Council will encourage the renovation and re-use of derelict houses, in preference to their demolition and replacement. Consideration will be given, on a case-by-case basis, to proposals to provide replacement dwellings where restoration is not practical.

Whether it is proposed to renovate or replace a derelict house, the subject structure should be clearly recognisable as a dwelling. This means that the main characteristics of a house (i.e. external walls, roof, and openings) must be substantially intact and the structure, when last used, must have been used as a dwelling. In assessing the condition of such structures, the Planning Authority will disregard any recent structural works carried out as an attempt to comply with the above requirements.

In the case of both renovation and replacement proposals, the design should reflect the scale, character and external finishes of the existing house and should generally be constructed on the site of the house to be replaced – i.e. replacement *in situ* – except in circumstances where a setback is required in order to improve vehicular access or where alternative siting would be preferable in the interests of visual amenity, public health or orderly development.

Renovation and re-use will be normally required in the case of a historic or vernacular structure which is considered to be of local architectural, cultural or social significance (**Refer to Section 25.3 Built Heritage**).

Demolition and replacement of such structures will be considered only where it is clearly demonstrated, by way of a suitably qualified engineer's or architect's report, that the building cannot be made structurally sound through reasonable measures.

## Derelict houses policies

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

**P-DHOU-1** Encourage the renovation and reuse of derelict houses and consider proposals for replacement houses on their merits.

The structures proposed for renovation or replacement should be generally intact and exhibit the main characteristics of a dwelling.

The location, siting and design of any such replacement house shall reflect those of the existing derelict dwelling.

Where vernacular non-residential buildings are located on the same site, consideration should be given to their retention or incorporation into any proposed development.

**P-DHOU-2** Generally require the retention and restoration of vernacular dwellings of local architectural, cultural or social significance.

Demolition and replacement of vernacular houses will be considered only where it is clearly demonstrated, by way of a suitably qualified engineer's or architect's report, that the building cannot be made structurally sound through reasonable measures.

### 26.5.4 Ribbon development

Ribbon development is formed by the building of a row of houses along a road outside of any settlement boundaries. It is undesirable because it creates numerous access points onto traffic routes, sterilises backlands (on the edge of towns), landlocks farmland, creates demands for the uneconomic provision of public infrastructure (e.g. water supply, drainage, footpaths, street lighting) and intrudes on public views of the rural setting.

For the purposes of this Development Plan, and in accordance with the Department's guidance provided in the *Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines*, ribbon development is defined as five or more houses on any side of a given 250-m stretch of road.

## Ribbon development policies

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

**P-RD-1** Discourage development proposals which would be likely to contribute to or exacerbate ribbon development.

**P-RD-2** Consider development proposals on gap sites or peripheral sites at locations where ribbon development is already in place, only as an alternative to dispersed development that might have a greater visual or traffic safety impact.



# Chapter 27.

## Community and social infrastructure

The Council has an important role to play in the creation of healthy and inclusive communities. Access to social and community infrastructure is essential to well-being, social inclusion and the creation of sustainable communities. Such infrastructure should be easily reached by walking, cycling and public transport.

Communities require opportunities to meet, interact and form bonds, all essential in creating a sense of place and belonging. Shared use and co-location of facilities should be encouraged, in order to use land more efficiently and increase community cohesion.

This County Development Plan is concerned with improving existing facilities and making adequate provisions for the development of new facilities.

### 27.1 Local policy documents

Several policy publications specific to Sligo provide guidance on social, community and cultural development. The most important is ***Sligo 2030: One Voice, One Vision***, which also serves as the Local Economic and Community Plan 2023.

Given the County's aging population, two other documents are of particular interest: *Sligo Healthy Ireland Strategy 2023-2025* and *Sligo Age Friendly Strategy 2023-2026*.

Further relevant provisions can be found in the following strategies:

- Sligo PEACE PLUS Action Plan 2023-2027
- Sligo Traveller Accommodation 2019-2024
- Sligo Arts Plan 2020-2025
- Sligo Culture and Creativity Strategy 2023-2027
- Sligo Digital Strategy 2020-2023
- Library Services Development Plan: Our Libraries, Our Futures 2019–2023

The above documents outline Sligo's commitment to meeting the identified local needs of all members of the community, through community regeneration, creating thriving and peaceful communities and building respect for all cultural identities.

The mainstreaming of the creative arts is intended to enable people to achieve their full creative potential, thereby promoting individual, community and national wellbeing.

The strengthening of the library service will improve its ability to advocate for equitable access to information. By embracing digital innovation, Sligo can realise its vision of becoming a 'Smart City'.

## 27.2 Delivering community facilities

Sligo County Council recognises the importance of community participation in the improvement of existing community facilities, and encourages increased involvement of local groups, independently and in association with the relevant statutory bodies, in the future development of the county.

The Council will ensure that local-level participation is facilitated and reinforced through stronger partnerships particularly with Sligo Public Participation Network (PPN), thereby enabling the development of an effective social infrastructure to cater more adequately for the needs of the current and future population.

The development of effective social and community infrastructure is supported through the zoning and strategic objectives included in the Town and Village Plans (Volumes 2 and 4 of this CDP).

Outside areas zoned specifically for community requirements, a flexible and supportive approach will be adopted towards proposals for community facilities on suitable sites within other zoning categories (e.g. residential, mixed uses, industry/enterprise etc). Any such proposal should be located within the development limits of the relevant settlement and should be easily accessible for all sections of the community.

The **future Local Area Plan for Sligo and Environs** (to be prepared after the adoption of this CDP) will identify further specific requirements that should be addressed at local or neighbourhood level in the County's main urban centre.

The Council adheres to the principle of *universal accessibility*, which is a key concept meaning that "all environments should be accessible by everyone, regardless of ability". Universal accessibility will benefit everyone, affording people with disabilities, older persons, parents with buggies etc. greater access to the built environment.

### Community facilities policies

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

- P-CF-1** Assist as far as possible in the provision of universally accessible and well-connected social, community, cultural, and recreational facilities by reserving suitably-located land and through the use of the development management process to ensure provision is made for such facilities as the Council considers appropriate.
- P-CF-2** Require high standards in the design and finishes of community facilities in accordance with the recommended standards set out in *Building for everyone – a Universal Design Approach (NDA, 2012)*.
- P-CF-3** Optimise existing and proposed physical resources and infrastructure by supporting multi-functional building use and provision, such as the accommodation of small-scale community enterprise units within existing and proposed community facilities.
- P-CF-4** Encourage the siting of community facilities in suitable locations, especially within settlement centres and residential areas or close to existing facilities and public transport routes.

## Community facilities policies

**P-CF-5** Adopt a flexible approach towards the provision of community facilities within a variety of land-use zoning categories, in particular on lands zoned for mixed uses, residential development and business / industry / enterprise. Such proposals should be located within settlement development limits and should be easily accessible for all sections of the community.

It is acknowledged that some community facilities may be better accommodated in rural areas, outside settlement development limits, subject to site suitability and subject to compliance with the requirements of the Habitats Directive.

**P-CF-6** Support local communities and development agencies that apply for funding programmes designed to improve the stock of amenity and recreational facilities which are consistent with both the County Development Plan and the Local Economic and Community Plan.

### 27.3 Educational facilities

It is recognised that education is a critical driver of economic success and social progress. The provision of quality education and training is central to the skills, knowledge and innovation-based economy that will underpin future prosperity. Improved access to education and training opportunities is also crucial to helping achieve the objectives of a more sustainable and inclusive society.

#### Primary and post-primary schools

There are 66 primary schools, two special schools (St. Cecilia's at Cregg and St. Joseph's at Ballytivan) and 13 post-primary schools in County Sligo. In the past two decades, there has been a continuous improvement in the level of education amongst the population in County Sligo. In 1991, 36.1% of adults had primary education only. This percentage fell to 20.1% in 2006, 16.6% in 2011 and 11.1% in 2016.

#### Atlantic Technological University

The County used to have two third-level education providers: the Institute of Technology Sligo (IT Sligo) and St Angela's College. Both institutes now form part of the Atlantic Technological University (ATU), which has also incorporated Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology and Letterkenny Institute of Technology.

This consolidation of the third-level institutes has greatly enhanced the range of under-graduate and post-graduate degree programmes already available in the County. The proportion of Sligo's population with third-level education has grown from 13% in 1991 to 29% in 2006, 30% in 2011 and 32.7% in 2016. The most common qualifications are in the areas of social sciences, health and welfare, engineering, science and education.

## Planned educational facilities

The Department of Education and Skills is responsible for the delivery of educational facilities and services. The 2023 School Building Programme included two large-scale projects in County Sligo: Gaelscoil Chnoc Na Re and the Ursuline College.

The County Council's role in the delivery of educational facilities is to ensure that adequate serviced or serviceable land is available to meet current and future requirements, by reserving suitable sites in settlements through the development plan preparation process.

In addition to site reservation through the specific zoning of land for the provision of community facilities, education and related uses will also be favourably considered within other zoning categories, thereby ensuring sufficient flexibility to accommodate future needs.

### Educational facilities policies

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

- P-ED-1** Support the provision of additional land for education-related uses through the consideration (on suitable sites) of such facilities in a variety of land-use zoning categories, in particular lands zoned for community facilities, mixed uses and residential development.
- P-ED-2** Direct new educational facilities to locate within existing settlements, preferably near community facilities (such as community centres, playing fields and libraries) and public transport services. Only in exceptional cases will out-of-town locations be considered and will be subject to compliance with habitats directive assessment.
- P-ED-3** Support Sligo's schools in the upgrading and modernisation of their building stock, so as to ensure that these institutions can accommodate population growth.
- P-ED-4** Ensure that appropriate infrastructure is provided concurrent with the development of an educational facility. Such infrastructure may include footpaths, pedestrian crossings, cycle lanes, parking facilities and facilities for those with special needs.

## 27.4 Arts and cultural facilities

Sligo County Council supports and promotes opportunities for everyone to participate in the cultural life of the county by facilitating the provision of well-managed, sustainable cultural infrastructure, suitable for all ages, and by adopting a flexible approach to the incorporation of cultural facilities in the development or refurbishment of community facilities.

### 27.4.1 Sligo Arts

Sligo County Council's Arts Plan, 2020-2025, entitled *Sustain Renew Collaborate*, redefines the Council's role as a leading agency and strategic partner in arts development. The local authority intends to invigorate the artistic and creative life of Sligo with additional resources including funding streams, connection, co-ordination and deepened relationships among artists and communities.

The Public Art Commission Plan 2022-2025 acts as the framework for Sligo County Council to continue to develop a public art programme, co-ordinated by the Public Art Project Manager (Sligo Arts Service) under the auspices of the Public Art Steering Group. Commissions are funded through the government-supported *Percent for Art* scheme.

### 27.4.2 Libraries, museum and archives

Sligo County Council currently operates a Central Library in Sligo Town, two community libraries in Ballymote and Tobercurry, one part-time branch library in Enniscrone, a mobile library, as well as a County Museum and County Archive service. These services play an important role in connecting and empowering communities.

**The County Museum** facilitates the preservation and exhibition of Sligo's rich archaeological and historic heritage.

**The Archives Service** conserves and catalogues the archives of with a view to making records available for future generations.

**The Library Service** in County Sligo delivers its core services as envisioned in the policy document *Strategy for Public Libraries 2023-2027*, published by the Department of Rural and Community Development

**The City Campus project** (funded under the URDF) will see the provision of a new Central Library and Headquarters alongside a purpose-built County Museum and Archive.

Public libraries in County Sligo are being upgraded as fully accessible, neutral spaces, with a view to facilitating communities to avail of arts, business and cultural activities and services.

The Council's Libraries Development Plan 2019-2023, entitled *Our Libraries, Our Futures*, charts the future direction of Sligo's library service through strategies which aim to meet the evolving needs of the County's communities.

The Library Service will explore the concept of 'Smart Libraries', including the roll-out of digital learning spaces and the delivery of a multi-functional library service using the latest technology, such as virtual reality.

## Arts and cultural facilities policies

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

- P-AC-1** Encourage and assist in the development of the arts and to support the ongoing development of cultural infrastructure throughout the County.
- P-AC-2** Continue to enhance the public domain by encouraging the provision of public art, both temporary and permanent, across all art forms and artistic disciplines throughout County Sligo, supported by the *Percent for Art* funding scheme.
- P-AC-3** Support the improvement of library facilities and services, particularly in those communities which have undergone substantial increases in population or are designated for future development.
- P-AC-4** Support the delivery of the objectives and actions set out in the Sligo County Council's Library Services Development Plan: *Our Libraries Our Futures 2019–2023* (and subsequent revisions) in providing community-based educational, cultural and lifelong learning centres.
- P-AC-5** Facilitate the use of vacant or unused Council premises (i.e. land and buildings) for exhibitions, performances and other uses related to community arts, where appropriate.

## 27.5 Childcare facilities

The provision of childcare facilities is recognised as a key piece of social infrastructure required to enable people to access employment, education and social networks. Access to good quality childcare facilities is a high priority for many families in County Sligo.

During the consultation phase of the Local Economic and Community Plan, the need for more quality childcare at affordable prices was highlighted as a key issue that needs addressed. It was also indicated that childcare facilities are nearing capacity.

Sligo County Council will support the Sligo County Childcare Committee (SCCC) in the delivery of additional childcare places mainly by zoning lands for community facilities (which include childcare) in suitable locations within settlements.

The Council will also require the provision of childcare facilities as an integral part of new large-scale residential developments, as recommended in the 2001 *Childcare Facilities: Guidelines for Planning Authorities*. Generally, one childcare facility with places for 20 children should be provided for every 75 dwellings.

### Childcare facilities policies

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

- P-CC-1** Work with the Sligo County Childcare Committee in the delivery of additional childcare places at suitable locations.
- P-CC-2** Encourage the establishment of appropriate childcare facilities in suitable locations, such as village centres, areas of concentrated employment, in the vicinity of schools, adjacent to public transport corridors and /or pedestrian areas, and in larger new housing estates.
- P-CC-3** Apply the recommendations of the *Childcare Facilities – Guidelines for Planning Authorities* (2001) when considering proposals for large-scale residential developments. In certain cases, the provision of multi-purpose community facilities may be acceptable.
- P-CC-4** Support proposals that provide an improved variety of childcare services (both in terms of childcare providers, i.e. private / community, childcare type, i.e. sessional services / full-day care) and related outdoor facilities.
- P-CC-5** Optimise existing physical resources/infrastructure within the County by supporting multi-functional building use and provision, to include childcare facilities.

## 27.6 Healthcare facilities

The Health Service Executive for the North-West is the primary body responsible for the delivery of health and personal social services to Sligo's population. Of equal significance is the role it plays in promoting health and wellbeing. Sligo University Hospital plays an important role in serving the catchment area of Sligo, Leitrim and south Donegal.

In line with the government policy of decentralisation of healthcare facilities, certain services are now being provided outside major hospitals. Residential services for the elderly, mental health services and learning disability services are now distributed throughout a number of settlements within County Sligo.

Emerging in recent years throughout the County, Primary Healthcare Centres will continue to be facilitated, to allow communities access to multidisciplinary healthcare in convenient locations.

The provision and expansion of healthcare facilities and their integration within new and existing communities will continue to be supported by the County Council.

### Healthcare facilities policies

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

- P-HC-1** Encourage the integration of healthcare services and facilities with new and existing community facilities, where feasible.
- P-HC-2** Co-operate with the HSE, with statutory and voluntary agencies and with the private sector in the provision of healthcare services and facilities within existing settlements, on sites convenient to pedestrian access and public transport.
- P-HC-3** Support the provision of healthcare services and universally accessible facilities for people with all types of disabilities and special needs in accordance with the recommended standards set out in *Building for everyone – a Universal Design Approach (NDA, 2012)*.
- P-HC-4** Accommodate the provision of accessible care facilities throughout the County to cater for the specific needs of the elderly and those of young people.

## 27.7 Outdoor recreation

Outdoor recreational spaces and facilities are essential for the health and wellbeing of people living in County Sligo. The natural amenities available in Sligo, such as the Atlantic beaches, lakes, rivers, mountains, forests and trails, make the county an ideal location for outdoor sport and recreation, both active and passive. These natural amenities need to be augmented by parks, playing fields, playgrounds, green networks for walking and cycling, which should be easily accessible to all the county's communities, urban or rural.

Open spaces, both public and private, can fulfil a variety of functions in addition to recreation, such as providing visual amenity, protecting habitats and biodiversity, drainage management (particularly storm water control) etc.

Playing fields and other open spaces are an important resource for sport. They also make a significant contribution to passive recreation and possess amenity value. There is a need to safeguard such facilities from unacceptable development in order to continue to provide for the needs of both current users and future generations. The Council will therefore generally discourage development on, or the removal of existing playing fields, pitches and other recreational open spaces.

*Embracing Ireland's Outdoors* (Department of Rural and Community Development, 2022) is a collaborative cross-government strategy designed to bring a joined-up approach to the development of outdoor recreation infrastructure at national and county level. This will include the creation of county stakeholder forums and county outdoor recreation committees to ensure that local needs are identified and local voices are heard. Building on this ground-up approach, the government will provide funding for outdoor recreation amenities.

The Council will ensure that adequate land is zoned for the development of outdoor recreational and sporting facilities, which should be equally accessible to the youth, the older adults and those who are disadvantaged or marginalised.

### 27.7.1 Open space and parks

The provision of quality green space, for people of all age groups and levels of physical fitness, is paramount, particularly in the context of urban, higher-density development.

Open spaces and outdoor recreational facilities will be required to be an integral part of the design of new development. At the same time, the Council will adopt a more proactive approach with regard to the provision of larger open spaces, such as parks, for the benefit of the city, town and village communities. Special attention should be given to targeting recreational facilities to teenagers.

Sligo County Council will continue to develop its hierarchy of parks and open spaces incorporating a network of areas for passive and active recreation, as funding becomes available. The hierarchical approach seeks to achieve a balanced provision of parks of different sizes and functions distributed throughout the County, and particularly in Sligo Town and its Environs.

### 27.7.2 Children's play

The Council will support the provision of playgrounds in a variety of land-use zoning categories, from residential areas and community facilities to areas zoned for sports and recreation or green belts, where appropriate. The development of a primary and secondary network of playgrounds, based on size of catchment, will continue to be progressed as funding becomes available.

### 27.7.3 Sports

The National Sports Policy 2018–2027 (Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport) sets out a vision and 57 actions to transform the sporting landscape over the next decade. Action 13 of the Policy focuses on how the wider natural and built environment can facilitate participation in sport and physical activity such as running, cycling, outdoor adventure pursuits and recreational walking.

The National Sports Policy requires local authorities to prepare a Local Sports Plan. This plan will involve the development of sports facilities for all ages and abilities, and will be implemented in cooperation with Sligo Sport and Recreation Partnership, clubs, communities, partner organisations and other stakeholders.

Sligo Sport and Recreation Partnership (SSRP) was established in 2001 to increase levels of participation in sport and physical activity in County Sligo. One of the objectives of the SSRP is to support the development of more quality sports facilities, promoting multi-usage, a life-course perspective, accessibility and inclusion.

This Development Plan supports the partnership approach to the delivery of sports and recreational activities, in particular the objectives set out in Sligo Sport and Recreation Partnership's Strategic Plan 2018-2023 and future plans.

Sligo County Council will facilitate the development of existing sports and outdoor recreation facilities and will support the provision of additional facilities at suitable locations.

### 27.7.4 Outdoor recreational amenities

Sligo's natural environment lends itself to a large variety of outdoor pursuits, including walking, hill-walking, mountaineering, rock-climbing, cycling, mountain biking, and all types of water sports including swimming, surfing, kite surfing, sailing, kayaking, rowing, and supping. These are all recognised as growing leisure activities that can largely be facilitated with a minimum of supporting infrastructure.

Sligo County Council will facilitate the provision of infrastructure to enable improved access to such activities. The Council supports the ongoing development of the National Mountain Bike Centre at Coolaney, the Beachery in Rosses Point and water sports facilities at key locations along the Wild Atlantic Way.

The National Surf Centre (NSC), which opened in Strandhill in 2023, is a state-of-the-art facility regarded as Ireland's premium surf and outdoor activity centre. The NSC caters for those providing advanced surfing training, up to international standards. The Centre includes an interpretative display of the history of surfing in Ireland and of the many local tourist attractions. It also functions as a central meeting and promotional point for local tourism businesses, including walking and adventure tours providers.

#### **Public rights of way**

Coastal zones, uplands, lake and river banks as well as forests are among the most attractive areas for outdoor pursuits. Access to such areas is essential for both local residents and tourists.

Public rights of way enable the enjoyment of landscape, natural and archaeological heritage, and provide links to valuable assets such as lakes, mountains, bogs and forests. A public right of way is a person's right of passage, established by usage or grant, along a road or path, even if the route is not in public ownership.

The Council recognises the importance of protecting existing public rights of way and will pursue the creation of additional ones, by agreement with landowners, to facilitate the development of walking trails in areas of high amenity value.

A public right of way will only be included in the Development Plan when the following criteria have been satisfied:

- There must be actual dedication by the landowner to the public use of the route in question or there must be sufficient evidence to show that such a dedication was intended;
- A public right of way must be open to the public and not just a class of persons or limited number of the public;
- A public right of way must start in and finish in a public area (i.e. it cannot terminate in private property);
- A public right of way cannot be obtained by stealth, by force or by licence i.e. it must be a route to which the public have a right of access as a right not by way of permission.
- The Council has identified six routes which are considered to fulfil the above criteria. These routes are listed in **Table 27.1** (below) and shown on a set of maps grouped in **Appendix H** of this Plan.

It is important to note that this is not an exhaustive list of public rights-of-way within the County. The omission of a right of way from this list shall not be taken as an indication that such a right of way is not a public right of way.

Over the life of this Plan, the Council will endeavour to add rights of way to this list, where it has been established that the above criteria have been satisfied and after consultation with the communities and landowners involved.

**Table 27.1 Public rights of way in County Sligo**

Reference no.	Location	Description
<b>PROW 1*</b>	Lissadell	From the centre of the Bunbrenoiqe Bridge for a distance of 263 m west to the point where the former Lissadell House was situated along the coast
<b>PROW 2</b>	Ballysadare	Quarry walk from the existing road to the foreshore and Abbey
<b>PROW 3</b>	Rosses Point	From the public car park to the second beach
<b>PROW 4</b>	Enniscrone	Walk north from the Pier along the seashore, exiting 870 m north onto L-66018
<b>PROW 5</b>	Trawane Bay	From the road L-7604-13 to the shoreline of Trawane Bay
<b>PROW 6</b>	Mullaghmore / Cliffony	From the R-297 to the beach at Trawalua

**\* Additional details on PROW 1**

In accordance with Supreme Court Rulings No. 89 and 92 of 2011:

— A right of way exists between point A (Easting 162505.674, Northing 344090.033) and point B (Easting 162261.274, Northing 344008.744)

— There is no right of parking off the route of PROW 1;

The right to pass and repass the nine-foot avenue does not extend to the lawns, gardens or any other land on either side of the right of way.

## Established walking routes

A number of long-distance walking routes exist throughout the county, e.g. Sligo Way, Miners' Way. These long-distance walks, together with local walks, represent important recreational resources. Their integrity should be protected. The impact of any proposed development on these routes should be taken into account when considering applications for permission for developments in their vicinity.

## Greenways

Greenways are routes shared by non-motorised users, such as walkers, cyclists, roller skaters, and sometimes horse riders. The greenways can be used for recreation, tourism and even daily commuter journeys. They are often created out of disused railways, canal towpaths, utility rights-of-way, or along river corridors. They predominantly utilise established paths but can also cross and link to public roads.

Greenways can become a framework for community-based initiatives and projects related to nature conservation, cultural heritage preservation, sustainable tourism and mobility. As they provide recreational opportunities for walking, jogging and cycling, these routes should meet satisfactory standards of width, gradient and surface condition to ensure that they are both user-friendly and low-risk for users of all abilities.

There are three major types of greenways: long-distance (connecting countries, regions and major settlements), local greenways and urban greenways.

The main purpose of **long-distance greenways** is sustainable tourism (typically cycle tourism). Please refer to **Chapter 29 Transport infrastructure** for details on the Council's objectives for long-distance greenways.

**Local greenways** are usually shorter paths developed in rural areas for recreation, heritage interpretation and week-end tourism.

**Urban greenways** are shared-use trails built along rivers, abandoned railways or natural corridors in urban areas. In addition to the recreational uses, they also provide safe mobility for daily trips.

As part of the preparation or review of settlement plans, the County Council will identify green corridors suitable for the creation of urban and local (rural greenways).

## "NeighbourWood Scheme"

The Council recognises the recreational potential of forestry and will support local communities seeking to establish a "NeighbourWood". The NeighbourWood Scheme, which is operated by the Forest Service of the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM), supports the development of attractive close-to-home woodland amenities (or 'NeighbourWoods') for public use and enjoyment. The scheme is available to public and private landowners who work in partnership with local communities and focus on providing environmental education.

## Outdoor recreation facilities policies

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

- P-OR-1** Protect and enhance public open spaces and established recreational green areas.
- P-OR-2** Support the provision of a variety of accessible, multifunctional, high-quality open spaces and facilities for active and passive recreation, which meet the needs of residents and visitors to County Sligo, are fit for purpose and are economically and environmentally sustainable.

### Parks and open spaces

- P-OR-3** Reserve land for new parks and other recreational green spaces as part of the preparation of settlement plans
- P-OR-4** Extend the range of recreational facilities provided within parks and other types of open spaces, as budgets allow.
- P-OR-5** Develop and improve physical linkages and connections between the network of parks and public open spaces in the County.
- P-OR-6** Where feasible, develop walkways and cycleways between green spaces or green corridors in built-up areas and recreational areas located outside settlements, including coastal, upland, lakeland and forestry sites and subject to compliance with the requirements of the Habitats Directive.

### Playgrounds

- P-OR-7** Support the provision of playgrounds in a variety of land-use zoning categories, from residential areas and community facilities to areas zoned for sports and recreation or green belts, where appropriate.

### Sports facilities

- P-OR-8** Support the objectives of the Sligo Sport and Recreation Partnership's 'Building a Culture of Sport and Physical Activity in Sligo 2018-2023' and any successor strategic plans.
- P-OR-9** Support the implementation of the Local Sports Plan by reserving land at suitable locations and facilitating the extension/upgrading of existing premises and the construction of new ones
- P-OR-10** Preserve existing public or private recreation areas, including sports clubs, grounds, built leisure facilities and open space. If a change of use is sought, ensure that alternative recreational facilities are provided in a suitable location.
- P-OR-11** Facilitate shared use of sports and recreation facilities, particularly school facilities.

## Outdoor recreation facilities policies

**P-OR-12** Support local sports and community groups in the development of sports and recreational facilities through appropriate land use zoning and ensure that all new facilities are appropriately located where they can best meet the needs of all sections of the community that they are intended to serve.

**P-OR-13** Encourage the provision of sports and recreation infrastructure as an integral part of new residential schemes.

### Access to outdoor recreational amenities

**P-OR-14** Continue to maintain and enhance existing walkways and expand the walking network subject to availability of resources, collaboration with stakeholders and subject to compliance with the requirements of the Habitats Directive

**P-OR-15** Preserve and improve access for the public to lakes, beaches, coastal, riverside, upland and other areas that have traditionally been used for outdoor recreation and subject to compliance with the requirements of the Habitats Directive. Where feasible, apply or support the application of universal design principles, as recommended in *Building for everyone – a Universal Design Approach (NDA, 2012)*.

**P-OR-16** Support the sustainable development of water-based leisure, tourism and related activities in County Sligo, subject to compliance with the requirements of the Habitats Directive.

**P-OR-17** Actively promote and protect public access to the coast and uplands, and designate traditional walking routes thereto as public rights-of-way.

**P-OR-18** Protect existing known rights of way and seek the establishment of additional rights of way, by agreement with landowners, to extend existing walking trails or create new ones and subject to compliance with the requirements of the Habitats Directive.

**P-OR-19** Provide adequate signposting and waymarking on rights of way.

### Greenways

**P-OR-20** Protect existing local greenways and consider designating them as public rights of way.

**P-OR-21** As part of the preparation or review of settlement plans, identify corridors suitable for the creation of urban greenways and seek to connect and integrate them with local and long-distance greenways in the adjoining rural areas.

**P-OR-22** Seek to protect the integrity of established long-distance walking routes. When assessing applications for developments in the vicinity of

## Outdoor recreation facilities policies

established walking routes, the Planning Authority shall consider the proposed developments' potential impact on such routes.

### Recreational woodlands

- P-OR-23** Protect access to forestry and woodlands – in co-operation with Coillte and private owners or operators – for walking routes (including long distance and looped walks), mountain trails, nature trails etc. for the benefit of local people and tourists.
- P-OR-24** Support local communities that wish to apply for grants under the Forest Service's *NeighbourWood Scheme* (DAFM) or any other initiative aiming to establish or enhance woodlands for recreation.

## 27.8 Allotments

An allotment is defined as an area of land comprising not more than 1,000 square metres that is let for cultivation by someone who is a member of the local community and lives close to the allotment. The purpose of allotments is the production of vegetables or fruit for consumption by the cultivators and their families.

Sligo County Council recognises the public's interest in growing fruit and vegetables locally. Cultivating food on allotments offers economic and health benefits, and can contribute to a decrease in the consumption of energy involved in the production and transportation of food.

The Planning Authority will therefore facilitate the development of allotments at suitable locations throughout the County. Such locations should be consistent with the terms of the definition above and should be located within or close to existing settlements, where they will be easily accessible to all sections of the local community.

## Allotments policy

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

- P-A-1** Facilitate the development of allotments at suitable locations throughout the County. Any such facility should be located within or close to an existing settlement and should be easily accessible.

## 27.9 Burial grounds and cremation facilities

Sligo County Council is responsible for the acquisition of land for the provision of burial grounds, for undertaking any necessary works on these lands and for delineating burial plots. The Council monitors the operation of burial grounds and reviews requirements in this regard on an ongoing basis. The Council's Burial Grounds Policy highlights the fact that 48 of the 76 burial grounds in the county are designated National Monuments and, as such, require appropriate consultation and consents prior to carrying out any works on site.

The use of crematoria has increased significantly in recent years in Ireland. In 2022, planning permission was granted for a cremation facility located in the business and enterprise zone in Collooney, in a converted warehousing unit. In recognition of the increasing cultural diversity of the County's population and of the changing trends in end-of-life services, the Council will support the development of crematoria in the county, subject to normal planning considerations.

### Burial grounds and cremation facilities policies

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

- P-BGC-1** Provide or assist in the provision of new burial grounds and, where feasible, extensions to existing burial grounds, by reserving sufficient land in suitable locations.
- P-BGC-2** Encourage the development of burial grounds to take account of cremation and 'green lawn' principles, to promote more efficient use of land and to facilitate maintenance.
- P-BGC-3** Ensure that appropriate archaeological assessment is carried out in relation to any proposals to extend or for works to burial grounds which are designated National Monuments, in accordance with the requirements of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act 2004.
- P-BGC-4** Consider the provision of crematoria and associated facilities, including a chapel/funeral service building, at suitable locations in the county, subject to compliance with normal planning and environmental criteria and with the development management standards contained in **Chapter 33** (Development Management Standards), **Section 33.7.7 Crematoria**.

## Chapter 28. Economic development

County Sligo can meet its population growth targets if job creation increases significantly. This requires continued support for the industrial employment sectors, as well as:

- attracting new investment and supporting existing businesses, including those in the retail, hospitality and tourism sectors;
- ensuring that essential infrastructure (especially transport and service infrastructure) is in place;
- supporting the local economy in rural towns and villages across Sligo, to help retain young population.

The private sector has a vital role to play in addressing these requirements, in addition to the DHLGH, Uisce Eireann, TII, NTA, Enterprise Ireland, IDA, Sligo County Council and the Local Enterprise Office (LEO).

The protection of the county's natural and built heritage through planning and environmental services is integral to the tourism offering. The attractiveness of towns and villages enhances the residents' quality of life and is important for investment decisions by both foreign and domestic business investors.

The Development Plan, which contains policies regarding all of the above, is thus a prerequisite which underpins economic growth and employment.

### 28.1 Industry and enterprise locations

The majority of jobs are concentrated in Sligo Town and Environs, which has become the County's centre for industry and enterprise due to the availability of a large pool of skilled workers, of which a substantial proportion commute from outside Sligo Town and even from adjoining counties.

#### **Sligo Town and Environs**

According to the Western Development Commission's *"Industry in the Western Region – Sectoral Profile"* (2019), manufacturers of chemicals & pharmaceuticals are by far the largest industrial employers in County Sligo, accounting for circa 30% of 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%). In the case of MedTech, Sligo has the third highest share of industrial employment in the state (24%),

Large companies involved in high-tech manufacturing include AbbVie, GSK, Brusa and TopChem. The majority of large industrial employers are located in Sligo Town, in IDA's Business and Technology Park at Finisklin, or on their own landholdings (AbbVie).

#### **Outside Sligo Town**

Tobercurry, Collooney and Grange, located along national primary roads, have developed a variety of smaller enterprises staffed by a local workforce, as did Strandhill, which has a purpose-built Enterprise Centre near the airport.

Collooney, originally targeted for the development of a small enterprise park, has seen the short-lived growth of retail warehousing, to the detriment of Sligo Retail Park (Carrowroe). Vacant units in Collooney Business Park have gradually reverted to their intended enterprise use. The continuation of this process will be supported.

Having regard to the predominance of small businesses in the County outside Sligo and Environs, enterprise centres should be fostered and expanded in the Support Towns of Tobercurry, Ballymote and Enniscrone, in addition to Strandhill.

Small-scale enterprise space should also be provided in other villages across the County, either in dedicated areas (BIE or MIX zoning objectives) or as part of general village uses (“Rural Village” zoning objective), to support the creation of local jobs in the south and west of the County.

### 28.1.1 Business, industry and enterprise

The “Business, industry and enterprise” (BIE) zoning objective applies to lands reserved for general employment uses in Sligo Town, the three Support Towns of Ballymote, Tobercurry and Enniscrone and several large villages. The objective provides for the development of manufacturing, light industry, logistics (warehousing, transport), office-based and non-retail businesses, enterprise centres (e.g. Strandhill), community enterprise units (e.g. Ballintogher) etc.

Lands designated for enterprise development include the IDA’s Business and Enterprise Park at Finisklin and the existing industrial estates in Ballymote and Tobercurry.

In addition to BIE lands already in use, there are substantial areas reserved for future development to the south of Sligo Town at Oakfield, to the north of Sligo Town at Ballytivnan / Rathbraughan / Barroe.

### 28.1.2 Office development

Currently, the main concentration of office development is in Sligo Town, in the centre and edge-of centre areas such as Finisklin and Cranmore. Larger office buildings will be directed to locate within the mixed-use zones of Sligo Town or within business parks (BIE-zoned lands), where appropriate.

Smaller-scale office developments will be facilitated in Sligo’s neighbourhood centres as well as in the centres of Ballymote, Enniscrone, Tobercurry and Satellite Villages, if demand arises.

The Council supports the repurposing of vacant and derelict buildings in the County’s town centres for office use (among other uses), as part of the anticipated *Town Centre First Plans*.

### 28.1.3 Waste management, industry, logistics and transport-related activities (former “WILT” zoned lands)

Waste management, light industry, logistics and transport-related activities have historically located mostly on lands to the south of Sligo Town, at Carrowroe and Belladrehid, between the N4 (Dublin Road) and the L-3608 (Carrowroe to Ballysadare Road).

These lands are not serviced and Uisce Eireann has no plans to service these lands during the life of the Development Plan 2024-2030. However, the area has excellent road access and is a suitable location for activities which require substantial sites, not available in the built-up urban area.

Sligo County Council will seek the inclusion of these former WILT-zoned lands in Uisce Eireann’s next Capital Investment Plan.

Until adequate service infrastructure is put place, no further expansion or intensification of existing uses on these previously zoned WILT lands will be permitted unless it can be demonstrated that the existing on-site treatment systems can safely and adequately dispose of any increased effluent in accordance with relevant EPA standards.

#### 28.1.4 Seveso sites

The *Chemicals Act (Control of Major Accident Hazards involving Dangerous Substances) Regulations 2015 (S.I. No. 209 of 2015)*, known as the “COMAH Regulations”, implement the **Seveso III Directive** (2012/18/EU). These Regulations lay down rules for the prevention of major accidents involving dangerous substances and seek to limit the consequences of such accidents for human health and the environment.

This Development Plan does not designate sites or zones for uses that might be classified as Seveso establishments and no such establishments exist at present. However, such developments may occur during the Plan’s life.

The Council will comply with the Seveso III Directive in reducing the risk and limiting the potential consequences of major industrial accidents. Any proposal for a Seveso development will be considered only in low-risk locations, within acceptable distances from relevant environmental sensitivities.

Such development proposals will be referred to the Health and Safety Authority, whose technical advice will be taken into account in the overall assessment of the proposals, in addition to normal planning criteria.

#### 28.1.5 Enterprise development outside designated zones

It is accepted that there are certain types of activities that may have specific locational requirements which can be more readily accommodated outside lands zoned for business, industrial and enterprise uses.

Where no suitable sites are available in designated areas, the Planning Authority will consider enterprise uses outside BIE zoned lands if the respective activities are sympathetic to the surrounding area and do not degrade its visual, cultural or residential amenities. Such developments will need to satisfy traffic, public health, amenity and environmental assessment requirements.

#### 28.1.6 Working remotely

With the expansion of broadband, remote working has become a viable alternative, or a complement to office-based employment. Remote working is also environmentally sustainable where it reduces emissions associated with car-based commuting.

Live/work units can be generally accommodated on lands zoned for residential and mixed uses, as well as in rural areas. In all cases, the principal use of such units must remain residential and the type of work should not have any impact on infrastructure, the natural environment or the amenities of adjoining properties.

In addition to working from home, it is now possible to avail of remote work hubs. The government’s Remote Working Strategy (2021) supports significant investment in infrastructure to underpin the development of the national hubs network. (DRCO - National Hub Network Working Group, DETE, Q4 2021)

The remote work hubs are of particular importance for the continued viability of small villages and rural areas. The use of such hubs can have a transformative impact on local economies and communities through increased employment.

## Business, industry and enterprise policies

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

- P-BIE-1** Support the consolidation of existing business/enterprise parks, their extension where necessary, and the provision of new enterprise centres in Ballymote, Enniscrone and Tobercurry in addition to Strandhill.
- P-BIE-2** Pursue, in co-operation with Uisce Eireann, the provision of service infrastructure to existing warehousing, industry, logistics and transport-related developments (former “WILT” zoned lands) located to the south of Sligo Town.
- P-BIE-3** Support the repurposing of vacant and derelict buildings in town centres for office-based enterprise activities.
- P-BIE-4** Consider development proposals for business or enterprise outside designated zones only where all of the following criteria are met:
- A.** the proposed use has locational requirements that can only be accommodated in a rural area and this has been demonstrated to the satisfaction of the Planning Authority
- AND**
- B.** the resultant development is of a size and scale that does not impact negatively on the character and amenity of the surrounding area
- AND**
- C.** the proposal demonstrates that it has taken into account traffic, public health, environmental and amenity considerations and is in accordance with the policies, requirements and guidance contained in this plan.

In all instances, it should be demonstrated that the proposal would not generate traffic of a type and amount inappropriate for the capacity of the access roads, and would not require improvements that might affect the character of these roads.

## 28.2 Economic activities in rural areas

County Sligo is predominantly rural. In order to ensure the viability of rural communities, towns and villages, there is a need to support sustainable economic activities and rural diversification.

### 28.2.1 Rural enterprise diversification

Interventions required to support the diversification of the rural economy include the promotion of rural transport and the delivery of high-speed broadband to rural areas.

The Council will support the development of niche activities, such as those relating to food (particularly value-added products such as artisan food), forestry (e.g. wood products), crafts, eco-tourism and agri-tourism – e.g. farmhouse accommodation, pet farms, farm holidays, health farms, equestrian activities, bird-watching holidays, painting and photography tuition, angling tourism, field studies and hill-walking.

Spatial policies for rural development must take into account the changing structure of agriculture and employment in rural areas, in conjunction with landscape management principles and natural resource development needs.

### Rural enterprise diversification policies

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

**P-RED-1** Facilitate farm diversification and the development of rural resource-based enterprise (such as organic farming, equestrian activities, bird watching, biomass and energy production, poultry, mushroom growing, flower growing etc.), subject to normal planning considerations and the protection of the environment.

Where a proposed development needs to locate near an existing natural resource, it will be necessary to demonstrate that it can be accommodated without damage to the environment, natural or built heritage, visual amenity, and that it will not have a negative impact on the character of the area.

**P-RED-2** Adopt a flexible approach to proposals for complementary economic enterprises undertaken to supplement income from farming. Such enterprises may be established at existing farm locations, subject to appropriate scale and intensity of development, having regard to traffic, environmental, landscape and residential amenity considerations.

Where the enterprise is not dependent on a rural location, and the scale and intensity grow beyond family or personal income needs, it will be required, where appropriate, to relocate to a nearby town or village.

**P-RED-3** Facilitate remote working by rural dwellers who are not farmers, subject to normal planning considerations. Such activities would generally involve (but are not limited to) providers of professional services whose work can be carried out from a home office using high-speed broadband.

**P-RED-4** Encourage the growth or expansion of existing rural based or well-established small-scale industry and enterprise in rural County Sligo.

Where an existing rural-based enterprise proposes to expand in its current location, it will be necessary to demonstrate that such expansion can be accommodated without damage to the environment, natural or built heritage, human health, visual and residential amenity, and that it will not have a negative impact on the character of the area.

## 28.2.2 Forestry

Sligo County Council recognises the importance of forestry development and acknowledges the potential for further afforestation in County Sligo. Forestry planting, and other forestry related activities, are outside the control of the Planning Authority. The Forest Service of the Department of Agriculture, Food & the Marine is Ireland's national forest authority. It is responsible for national forest policy, the promotion of private forestry, the administration of the forest consent system and forestry support schemes, forest health and protection, the control of felling, and the promotion of research in forestry and forest products.

As a consultative body dealing with proposals for initial forestation, the County Council will submit appropriate observations to the Forest Service in cases when new plantation has the potential to affect visually vulnerable areas, sensitive rural landscapes or exceptional views available from designated scenic routes.

### Forestry policies

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

- P-FOR-1** Support sustainable forestry development in County Sligo, subject to the protection of scenic landscapes and views, water quality, heritage features, residential amenity and public safety.
- P-FOR-2** Discourage new forestry development, except for broadleaf, in proposed/candidate and adopted NHAs, SACs and SPAs, in designated Sensitive Rural Landscapes and Visually Vulnerable Areas, along designated Scenic Routes and in water quality-sensitive areas. (Broadleaf forestry will be open to consideration in these areas and in all proposed and adopted NHAs, SPAs and SACs, will be subject to consultation with the DECLG and shall have regard to any management plans prepared by the Department.)
- P-FOR-3** Require identification of existing rights-of-way and established walking routes before planting commences. Forestry should not obstruct existing rights-of-way, traditional walking routes, recreational and tourism facilities.

### 28.2.3 Aquaculture, mariculture and fishing

Aquaculture relates to the commercial production of fish and shellfish species. The term is generally used to describe fish farming operations both on inland and coastal (marine) waters. For the purposes of this Plan, aquaculture relates to fish farming on inland water bodies, such as lakes, rivers and land-based artificial ponds and tanks. Because of environmental concerns and the very limited capacity for aquaculture on Sligo's inland lakes, major aquaculture projects will be discouraged, unless the Council is satisfied that such proposals will be environmentally sustainable and have a limited impact on the visual amenity of the area. Such environmental concerns associated with finfish aquaculture include:

- protection of the aquatic environment;
- the need to guard against escapees;
- the avoidance of any genetic threats, potential disease and parasitic implications to local fish stocks (there is a need to source seed from certified disease-free stock);
- potential conflicts in relation to water supply, which can become critical during low-flow periods.

Mariculture is the cultivation of marine organisms in their natural environment. Mariculture in County Sligo comprises the commercial production of mussels, clams and oysters. Mariculture developments are concentrated in Drumcliffe Bay off Lissadell, Cummeen Strand, in Sligo Harbour and at Culleenamore in Ballysadare Bay. These developments are subject to a licence from the Department of Agriculture, fisheries and Food (DAFF). In practice, the Council is consulted prior to issuing of licences. The aquaculture industry faces many challenges on the environmental front, and the County Council, in its limited capacity, will seek to promote sustainability and waste management programmes within the sector.

The fishing industry in Sligo is less well-developed than in nearby Donegal and Mayo. However, there are some localised areas where fishing is important. The resort town of Enniscrone supports good beach and rock fishing. Commercial fishing boats operate at Raghly, Mullaghmore, Pollnadivva, Pullaheeny, Rosses Point, Aughris and Easky. The present small-scale fisheries support some sport fishing, which has potential for expansion as a tourist activity.

## Aquaculture, mariculture and fishing policy

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

- P-AMF-1** Facilitate sustainable fishing, aquaculture and mariculture development associated with job creation, in a manner that is compatible with other uses of the Sligo coast, and subject to compliance with the requirements of the Habitats Directive, Water Framework Directive, the provisions of the EC (Quality of Shellfish Waters) Regulations and objectives of Shellfish Pollution Reduction Programmes.

## 28.2.4 Mineral extraction and quarries

Sligo County Council recognises that the aggregates and concrete products industry contribute to the development of the County by the creation of employment and the provision of essential building materials for all new construction, urban development, roads and infrastructural projects. The Council seeks to ensure that the extractive and concrete products industry operates in a manner that minimise the potential adverse impacts on the environment and local communities.

Aggregate extraction from the coastal zone, particularly from beaches, estuaries and cobble storm berms, has created many problems in the past, resulting in increased levels of erosion and flooding in coastal areas. The Sligo coastline is vulnerable to further similar activities, which have the potential to interfere with natural coastal processes and particularly the softer shoreline areas such as dune systems, which tend to be ecologically rich.

Any proposals for future coastal/marine aggregate extraction along the Sligo coast will be considered only after detailed environmental impact assessment.

### Mineral extraction and quarrying policies

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

- P-MEQ-1** Ensure that extraction and associated processes are carried out in a sustainable manner, which minimises the impact on residential amenities, natural environment and water quality, and do not impinge on existing rights-of-way or walking routes.
- P-MEQ-2** Seek the reuse of worked out quarries for recreational, industrial, ecological and other uses, following appropriate restoration.
- P-MEQ-3** In respect of development proposals on or in the proximity of quarry sites, the Council will require that appropriate investigations are carried out into the nature and extent of old quarries (where applicable), the nature and extent of soil and groundwater contamination and the risks associated with site development works. Adequate measures to mitigate these risks shall be submitted as part of the planning application.

## 28.3 Tourism development

Tourism is one of Ireland's most important indigenous economic sectors. The tourism sector is an essential component of Ireland's employment base. In many rural areas, it is the only notable employer outside agriculture.

The Council recognises the importance of the tourism industry to County Sligo and its potential to expand further.

The natural scenery of Sligo is amongst the finest and most spectacular in the country and is the County's primary tourist attraction. The mountains, forests, woodlands, lakes, rivers, coastline, offshore islands and largely unspoiled rural landscape offer a wide range of natural amenity and recreational pursuits.

The range of activities in Sligo includes surfing, walking (including hill-walking), swimming, supping, kayaking, mountaineering, rock climbing, and pony-trekking, sailing, boating, fishing etc. In addition, many landscapes in the County have strong wildlife, literary, archaeological and historical significance.

The protection of this unique natural environment, which could be jeopardised by development pressure – particularly unsympathetic, sporadic residential development, agricultural and forestry development and increased risk of pollution – is fundamental to the tourism industry.

Faite Ireland's forthcoming Sligo Destination Experience Development Plan (DEDP) will see the delivery of key projects to attract more visitors to the county.

### 28.3 1 Rural tourism

Tourism can play an important role in diversifying the economy of rural communities.

The growth of rural tourism, including agri-tourism, is linked to local amenities and natural resources. There is strong potential in County Sligo for eco-tourism, which enhances awareness and appreciation of local heritage and traditions.

The Council will co-operate with neighbouring local authorities, cross-border bodies and other agencies to promote and establish sustainable tourism initiatives.

#### **Walking trails**

In recent years, Sligo County Council has invested significantly in walking infrastructure. The county now has a network of walking trails of all levels of difficulty, through landscapes such as uplands, coastal, lakeside, forestry.

The web portal 'Sligo Walks.ie' contains all the necessary information a local or tourist needs to access these walks. The Council will continue to maintain and expand the walking trail network in the county.

#### **Coolaney National Mountain Bike Centre**

The National Mountain Biking Centre in Coolaney is a key element of Sligo's tourism offer in terms of outdoor pursuits. The project involved the development of 80 km of single-track cycling trails through Coillte-owned forestry in the Ox Mountains. It is estimated that the Centre has the potential to attract more at least 50,000 visitors per year.

Sligo County Council, in collaboration with Coillte, landowners and other stakeholders will continue to enhance and expand the offer at this centre.

**Table 28.1 Opportunities for walking and cycling trails/outdoor activities**

<b>Project</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Greenway on or along the Sligo-Leitrim Northern Counties Railway (SLNCR)</b>	Trail from Sligo to Enniskillen - high-quality greenway passing through Collooney, Ballintogher, Dromahair, Manorhamilton, Glenfarne, Blacklion, Belcoo and Letterbreen
<b>Greenway on or along the Western Rail Corridor</b>	Trail from Sligo to Bellaghy
<b>Long Bank, Beltra</b>	Walking route along the “Long Bank” land reclamation dam, providing exceptional views of Ballysadare Bay and Knocknarea
<b>Beara Breifne Way</b>	Walking route from Geevagh to Monasteraden, with potential to develop a greenway from the county boundary near Monasteraden to the Sligo-Dublin railway line and link with the Miners’ Way Historical Trail
<b>Sligo Way</b>	Realignment of the Sligo Way (Coolaney to Lough Easky), resulting in a long-distance off-road walking trail
<b>Ben Bulbin Forest Walk</b>	Link between existing walkway and the local road L-7216-21 to expand the existing trail network
<b>Water sports facilities</b>	Development of surf centres and related facilities at Mullaghmore, Enniscrone, Easky and Dunmorán Strand, in addition to Strandhill
<b>Ballina to Enniscrone Recreational Walking Route</b>	A recreational route for which a feasibility study has been completed in 2022

### **The Wild Atlantic Way (WAW)**

The Wild Atlantic Way is Ireland’s first long-distance touring route, stretching along the Atlantic coast from Donegal to West Cork. It was designed to achieve greater visibility for the west coast of Ireland and to encourage visitors to explore the wider region.

Sligo Town is one of several urban centres that have been identified as gateways to the Wild Atlantic Way. There are seven WAW Discovery Points in County Sligo, at Mullaghmore Head, Streedagh Beach, Rosses Point Beach, Strandhill Beach, Aughris Head, Easky Pier and Enniscrone Pier.

The expected development of a Signature Discovery Point at Mullaghmore Head will require significant input from the local authority.

A Yeats Trail off the WAW was completed in 2022. This signposted touring route incorporates fourteen significant locations in County Sligo that have close associations with the poet W.B. Yeats (<https://www.yeatstrail.ie/>)

### 28.3.2 Cultural tourism

County Sligo’s character and culture are vital assets that help the county compete as a tourism destination.

The County is often described as ‘Yeats Country’, due to its strong association with the Yeats family. The poet William Butler Yeats always acknowledged the inspiration he drew from Sligo’s landscape. His brother, the painter Jack B. Yeats, said that there was ‘a bit of Sligo’ in everything he painted.

Sligo County Council recognises the tourism potential associated with the Yeats connection and with the County’s archaeology, landscape, musical heritage other cultural assets.

Sligo has a varied festival and events offering across all genres of music, art, literature and performance, enabled by active community participation, and an inspiring landscape.

To support this, the Council will develop a Festival and Events Strategy to underpin policy and co-ordinate the Festival and Events offering in the county.

**Table 28.2 Opportunities for cultural tourism**

<b>Project</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Yeats Experience</b>	Development of a strong Yeatsean experience in Sligo, including the Yeats Trail.
<b>Cuill Irra Peninsula</b>	Development of Cuill Irra as a significant archaeological tourist attraction – one of only four passage tombs in Ireland which have international significance
<b>Carrowkeel-Keshcorran</b>	Development of Carrowkeel as a significant archaeological tourist attraction – one of only four passage tombs in Ireland which have international significance
<b>Sligo Gaol</b>	Development of Sligo Gaol as a tourist attraction
<b>Ballymote Castle and surrounds</b>	Tourism-related development at the Ballymote Castle site, which is adjacent to existing cultural assets such as Ballymote Abbey, the Town Park, Ballymote Corn Mill Complex
<b>Spanish Armada Visitor Centre</b>	Conservation, management and interpretation of the Spanish Armada wrecks site at Streedagh
<b>Enniscrone</b>	Development of multi-functional recreational community and cultural facilities at Castlefield, linked to Water Point leisure centre and Cliff Bath House
<b>Hazelwood Demesne</b>	Development of the Hazelwood Demesne as a year-round attraction of regional scale

## Tourism development policies

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

- P-TOU-1** Promote the development of tourism in a sustainable manner and encourage the provision of a comprehensive range of tourism facilities, subject to location, siting and design criteria, the protection of environmentally sensitive areas and other planning considerations.
- Development that might be detrimental to scenic and heritage assets, in SACs, SPAs, proposed NHAs, designated Sensitive Rural Landscapes and Visually Vulnerable Areas, and along designated Scenic Routes will be strictly controlled.
- P-TOU-2** Support the development of high-quality tourist accommodation and ensure high standards of architectural and urban design in all new tourist accommodation and facilities.
- P-TOU-3** Ensure that all built elements of agri-tourism developments are appropriately designed, satisfactorily integrated into the landscape, conserve natural heritage, protect the environment and do not have a negative impact on the visual/scenic amenity of the countryside, on natural heritage or on the environment.
- P-TOU-4** Provide signposting, interpretative signs, information boards and improve roads, existing amenity and viewing areas, and provide for car parking, public facilities and access in scenic areas (refer also to **Chapter 27, Section 27.7 Outdoor recreation**).
- P-TOU-5** Provide, with the co-operation of private landowners, public access to heritage sites and features of natural heritage, geological and archaeological interest, coastal areas, islands, mountains, rivers, lakes and other natural amenities.
- P-TOU-6** Support the growth of cultural tourism in the County and its potential for niche tourism products by facilitating the development of cultural events, infrastructure and activities.

## Tourism development objective

It is an objective of Sligo County Council to:

- O-TOU-1** Secure the establishment of a flagship visitor attraction in the County, subject to normal development control standards and compliance with the requirements of the Habitats Directive.

## Coastal zone tourism policies

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

- P-CZT-1** Ensure that tourism facilities in coastal areas (e.g. car parking at WAW Discovery Points) will not be visually intrusive and will not impact on sensitive coastal environments (e.g. sand dune systems), by requiring appropriate siting, layout, design and natural screening, as well as compliance with the Habitats Directive.
- On beaches, within dunes and in other vulnerable areas, manage and control car parking, vehicular and pedestrian movements in compliance with the requirements of the Habitats Directive where relevant.
- P-CZT-2** Promote awareness of the sensitivity of the coastal environment through the provision of heritage appreciation programmes, public information boards and other appropriate means.
- P-CZT-3** Maintain and develop small piers and harbours along the Sligo Coast, subject to funding and compliance with the requirements of the Habitats Directive.

## Wild Atlantic Way objectives

It is an objective of Sligo County Council to:

- O-WAW-1** Along the Wild Atlantic Way, identify existing and potential coastal walking routes which can be developed as a tourism product and a local amenity. These routes will ideally be permanent, of high quality and adequately managed, should allow for further expansion and provide links to other activities and facilities.
- O-WAW-2** At designated locations, provide facilities and access points for controlled water-sports activities, in a manner that avoids conflict with nature conservation and activities such as swimming, sailing, fishing and mariculture.
- O-WAW-3** Provide Signature Discovery Point infrastructure at Mullaghmore, subject to appropriate siting and design.
- O-WAW-4** Monitor the future development of the County's section of the Wild Atlantic Way touring route to ensure that the scenic and tourism value of this important amenity is maintained. This will be done in co-operation with state agencies, local community groups and other bodies interested in protecting the coastal environment and in improving access and visitor management to the Wild Atlantic Way.



## Chapter 29. Transport infrastructure

Development Plan policy aims to promote sustainable transport systems through the integration of land use and transportation, the promotion of compact development to minimise journey length and maximise opportunities to use sustainable modes.

The requirements of the Climate Action Plan, the technological progress in the transport industry and the public attitude towards sustainable travel (e.g. the move towards electricity and other fuel sources, digital connectivity, autonomous vehicles, car and bike sharing etc) have obvious consequences for development plan policy.

Sligo County Council must respond in a pro-active and collaborative manner to ensure that the county is prepared for such changes and that all local communities will benefit from them.

The identification of transport infrastructure proposals in this Plan (including locations/routes and any associated mapping), that is not already permitted or provided for by other existing plans or programmes, is non-binding and indicative.

New transport infrastructure will be considered subject to environmental constraints, including those related to potential impacts on habitats. This will include minimising river crossings, avoiding sensitive habitats and disturbance from lighting, not increasing barriers to flood waters, and sustainable design and construction techniques.

Applications for transport infrastructure projects, including greenways and blueways that are not already provided for by existing plans/programmes or are not already permitted, shall demonstrate that they have been subject to feasibility assessment, considering need, environmental sensitivities and objectives relating to sustainable mobility.

Where feasibility is established, and where appropriate, applications for transport infrastructure projects shall demonstrate that they have been subject to a Corridor and Route Selection Process undertaken in two stages: Stage 1 – Route Corridor Identification, Evaluation and Selection; and Stage 2 – Route Identification, Evaluation and Selection.

By promoting sustainable mobility initiatives, the Development Plan will contribute towards a reduction in exposure to pollution from emissions to air, including unacceptable noise levels from traffic. Proposed interventions will be required to demonstrate that they are consistent with all relevant legislative requirements, including those relating emissions to air and noise.

### 29.1 Road network

Outside Sligo Town, County Sligo has a rather dispersed population living in rural areas and small settlements throughout the county. The road network is essential because private vehicles are the primary mode of transport for the majority of the population, as well as for commercial and industrial activities. The road network in County Sligo consists of 2,834 km of national, regional and local roads.

**Table 29.1 Composition of the road network in County Sligo**

Road type	Length (km)	Percentage of total road network
National primary	105	3.7%
National secondary	47	1.7%
Regional	241	8.5%
Local	2,440	86.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,834</b>	<b>100%</b>

### Funding and oversight

At national level, the Department of Transport (DoT) is responsible for transport policy, funding and oversight of transport infrastructure and services. Working under the remit of the DoT, the non-commercial semi-state body **Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII)** is responsible for the maintenance, development and funding of the national road network. Local Authorities assist and act as agents for TII in this role, and are funded by TII with respect to works on national roads.

The **National Transport Authority (NTA)** is a non-commercial statutory body which operates under the aegis of the DoT. It promotes cycling and walking, it oversees the provision of public transport and it assists in the development of sustainable transport strategies in regional cities. The NTA also provides funding to local authorities for implementing these strategies.

The **Sligo Regional Design Office (Sligo RDO)** is responsible for the delivery of national road improvement and realignment schemes, national and regional greenway projects together with some active travel projects along the national road network. In 2022, the office also took over responsibility for the delivery of pavement renewal schemes and safety schemes.

Funding of regional and local road maintenance and improvement works is provided by the central government directly through the DoT, with some funding for maintenance coming from the Council's own resources.

### Road safety

Road safety continues to be a priority for all agencies involved, including Sligo County Council. The Road Safety Authority's *Road Safety Strategy 2021–2030* outlines specific actions, including the carrying out of minor realignment schemes on national roads and the implementation of safety schemes at high-risk locations on regional and local roads. The primary aim of the government's road safety strategy is to reduce the number of deaths and serious injuries by 50% over the next 10 years.

In compliance with the requirements of the EU Directive 2008/96/EC on Road Infrastructure Safety Management (RISM), TII has implemented an advanced Road Safety Inspection and Management system for the entire national road network. Safety schemes are developed at identified locations, to reduce risk. The RISM Directive applies to roads which are part of the Trans-European Network for Transport (TEN-T), whether they are at design stage, under construction or in operation.

## Road safety policies

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

- P-RS-1** Bring national roads up to appropriate standards, as resources become available, and continue improvement works on regional and local roads, so as to develop a safe and comprehensive road system for the county.
- P-RS-2** Continue to implement the actions of the Road Safety Authority's *Road Safety Strategy 2021–2030* in partnership with the Department of Transport and TII, and as resources become available.
- P-RS-3** Continue to progress safety schemes along the national road network, in accordance with the RISM Directive.

## 29.2 National primary and secondary roads

There are four national primary roads and one national secondary road in County Sligo. Considering the critical importance of the national road network for the Northern and Western Regions, their upgrade is vital, not just for Sligo's future growth, but for the entire region. Although national roads comprise just around 5% of the County's total road network, they carry the majority of its traffic.

### 29.2.1 Major road schemes

The National Development Plan 2021-2030 identifies **the N-4 Sligo to Dublin, the N-17 Sligo to Galway** and the **N-15 Sligo to Letterkenny** roads as providing enhanced regional accessibility to the North-West.

The NWRA's RSES also indicates that it will be necessary to pursue the enhancement or upgrading of the N-15 and N-17, as well as the strengthening of connections to the east coast via N-4 and N-16 (to Dundalk and Belfast). This would help the Region take full advantage of the opportunities offered by the Atlantic Economic Corridor.

The new **N-4 Collooney to Castlebaldwin** realigned route was officially opened in October 2021. At the time of drafting this development plan (2023), the other major road schemes were at various stages:

- An *Emerging Preferred Transport Corridor* for the **N-17 Knock to Collooney** road project had been identified and published for consultation. Once the preferred corridor is established, the project can move into the design and environmental evaluation phase in 2024, subject to necessary approvals.
- A Route Corridor for the **N-15 Sligo to County Boundary Realignment** had already been selected. However, given the lapse of time since this selection, which occurred in 2005, this may need to be reassessed prior to advancing to the statutory process when approval is given by the TII.

## 29.2.2 Minor road schemes

### N-4 / N-15 Sligo Urban Improvement Scheme

In 2015, the N-4 Hughes Bridge was widened to three lanes in each direction, along with the provision of footbridges for pedestrians and cyclists. Part of the widening of the N-4/N-15 from Hughes Bridge to Scotsman's Walk, including junction improvements, was completed in 2021 to just north of the R-291 junction (Rosses Point junction). Two further minor schemes are proposed to continue the N-15 widening to Scotman's Walk.

### National primary road N-16

Following the selection of a **Preferred Route for the full N-16** in County Sligo in 2017, the construction of the first of three minor schemes on the N16 commenced in 2023. The 2.5-km section from Drumkilsellagh to Lugnagall was expected to be completed by 2024. The other sections were envisaged to be developed as two minor schemes commencing in 2023, starting with a section from Sligo to Drumkilsellagh.

### National secondary road N-59

The **Emerging Preferred Route for the N-59 Corhawnagh to Crockacullion Road Improvement Project** was identified in 2019, after which the Sligo RDO went on to develop Phase 2 deliverables. At the time of drafting this Development Plan (2023), it was expected that formal approval would be sought from TII to move the scheme into Phase 3 (Design & Environmental Evaluation) in 2024.

## National roads policies

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

- P-NR-1** Protect the traffic carrying capacity of national roads, the level of service they deliver and the period over which they continue to perform efficiently, by avoiding the creation of new access points or the generation of increased traffic from existing accesses onto the N-4, N-15, N-16, N-17 and N-59 outside the 50 km/h speed limit, in accordance with the DoECLG's publication Spatial Planning and National Roads -Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2012)
- P-NR-2** Protect the route corridors necessary for the construction of new roads or the upgrading of existing national roads in Sligo, in accordance with the DoECLG's publication Spatial Planning and National Roads -Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2012)
- P-NR-3** Permit direct access to zoned lands along national roads inside the 50 km/h speed limit subject to normal planning considerations, including road safety, traffic assessment and design criteria.

Within **transitional zones** (between 50 km/h and 60 km/h speed limiting signs), access may be permitted, but only in limited circumstances, where it is in the interest of facilitating orderly urban development, and subject to road safety, traffic and transport assessment, and design criteria.

**Road Safety Audits (RSA), Traffic Impact Assessments (TIA) and Traffic and Transport Assessments (TTA)** shall be carried out in accordance with Transport Infrastructure Ireland's requirements.

## National roads objectives

It is an objective of Sligo County Council to:

- O-NR-1** Undertake programmed improvements to the national road network, including the programme of realignments and upgrades, as set out in Table 29.B and subject to compliance with legislative requirements.

**Table 29.2 National road projects in County Sligo**

Road number	Route	Description of work	Estimated completion time/status - subject to TII approval/funding
N-17	Knock to Collooney	Realignment and upgrading	No completion date
N-15	N4/N15 Junction to Leitrim County boundary (Initially planned to develop two minor realignments from north of Rosses Point Junction to Scotsman's Walk)	Realignment / upgrading / online improvements	no completion date
N-16	Sligo to Leitrim County boundary	Realignment / upgrading / online improvements	Part ongoing (2023)
N-59	Ballysadare to Mayo County boundary	Realignment / upgrading / online improvements	ongoing
All national roads	where required and prioritised	Maintenance including pavement overlays, pavement rehabilitation, safety interventions and minor realignments	ongoing

**Note:** the timeframe for all projects is subject to TII approval and available funding.

## 29.3 Regional and local roads and bridges

Regional and local roads make up almost 95% of County Sligo's road network. The Council strives to manage regional and local roads in an economic and efficient manner, with a particular emphasis on safety. Extensive improvements have been made to the network under the Council's Multi-Annual Restoration Programme. Road Restoration, Strategic and Specific Improvement Grants provide substantial funding for regional and local road improvements.

The **Eastern Garavogue Bridge and Approach Roads**, listed as a Strategic Non-National Road project in the National Development Plan 2021-2030, will provide north-south access across the Garavogue River on the eastern side of Sligo. At the time of drafting this Development Plan (2023), it was envisaged that the construction of the scheme would commence in 2025 and would be completed in 2027.

As Sligo Town grows, it will be necessary to ensure that adequate links can be maintained between different parts of the city, north and south, east and west. In order to ensure this accessibility, it is proposed to develop a number of routes within the expanding urban environment which will be identified in more detail as part of the preparation of the Sligo and Environs Local Area Plan.

**Table 29.3 Planned regional and local road improvements**

Road number	Route
R-284	Carrowroe to Roscommon County Boundary (serving Ballygawley, Sooey, Drumnacool and Geevagh)
R-290	Collooney to Crossboy via Ballygawley and Ballintogher
R-287	Sligo Town to Dromahair (serving Lough Gill)
R-292	Entire length from Sligo Town to Ballydrehid
R-293	Ballymote to Castlereah (serving Gorteen)
R-294	Cloonloo to Tobercurry to Lough Talt (on the Ballina to Boyle Road, also serving Gorteen)
R-296	Ballymote to Bunnannaddan to R-294
R-297	Dromore West to Enniscrone to Sligo County Boundary (linking the N-59)
R-286	Molloway Hill to Leitrim County Boundary
R-291	R-291/N-15 junction to Rosses Point
R-278	Ballinode to Leitrim County Boundary
R-296	N-59 junction in Dromore West to Enniscrone
R-279	N-15 junction in Cliffoney to Mullaghmore
R-870	Sligo Town
R-869	N-4 junction at Caltragh to R-292
S.N.N.*	Eastern Garavogue Bridge and Approach Roads

\* S.N.N. = Strategic Non-National

### 29.3.1 Bridges

Over 800 bridges dispersed throughout the county support the regional and local road network. The Council continues to adopt a proactive role in maintaining, preserving and strengthening these bridges as necessary. The majority of the structures are of considerable age. The Council will have regard to the historical value of this component of the built heritage of the county in the manner and methods engaged in maintaining the bridge stock and associated structures. At least 10 structures have substantial repairs carried out annually, and a greater number have minor improvements or repairs carried out as required.

#### Regional and local roads and bridges policies

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

- P-RLR-1** Implement the roads objectives of adopted town and village plans, subject to the availability of funding.
- P-RLR-2** Continue investment in local roads infrastructure in County Sligo, in order to improve access to peripheral areas of the County and promote social inclusion.
- P-RLR-3** Continue to maintain, repair, replace and preserve the County's bridges, the majority of which are over 150 years old and have a heritage value.

#### Regional and local roads and bridges objectives

It is an objective of Sligo County Council to:

- O-RLR-1** Carry out improvement works on regional and local roads, and in particular to the regional road network as set out in Table 29.3.
- O-RLR-2** Complete the strategic non-national road scheme – The Eastern Garavogue Bridge and Approach Roads.
- O-RLR-3** Reserve a number of proposed intra-urban road links for development within Sligo Town in conjunction with the preparation of the Sligo and Environs Local Area Plan.

## 29.4 Active travel infrastructure

**Active travel** is defined as ‘travelling with a purpose, using your own energy’. It is an intrinsic part of a sustainable transport system, one that prioritises low-carbon transport choices. Active travel comprises walking, cycling (including use of e-bikes), public transport, and car sharing.

Sligo County Council established a dedicated Active Travel Team in 2022 and has received funding for works such as improved footpaths, pedestrian crossings and cycle parking facilities.

In 2023, the NTA allocated €3,000,000 to Sligo, under the Active Travel Investment Grants scheme, for a number of projects, of which the more significant are listed in Table 29.4 below.

The County Council will develop the NTA-funded projects as part of its Active Travel Programme. The further development of active travel infrastructure in the County will be informed by the Local Transport Plan (refer to Section 9.3.2 in **Chapter 9 Transport Strategy**).

**Table 29.4 Significant NTA-funded Active Travel projects in Co. Sligo (2023)**

Project	Funding
Pedestrian and cycleways in Enniscrone and Tobercurry	€280,000
Footpaths linking Collooney to Ballysadare	€550,000
Pedestrian and cycleways in Collooney	€380,000
Sligo City to Carrowroe Active Travel Corridor – <i>Pathfinder</i> Scheme	€155,000
Sligo City to ATU Active Travel Corridor – <i>Pathfinder</i> Scheme	€100,000
Shared e-bike enabling works – <i>Pathfinder</i> Scheme	€30,000
<i>Safe Routes to School</i> Scheme (four schools)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• St. John Primary School, Temple Street, Sligo Town</li> <li>• Scoil Ursula Primary School, Strandhill Road, Sligo Town</li> <li>• Scoil Asicus Primary School, Strandhill</li> <li>• Jesus &amp; Mary Secondary School, Enniscrone</li> </ul>	<p>€105,000</p> <p>€100,000</p> <p>€20,000</p> <p>€100,000</p>

In addition to the above, in 2023 Sligo Regional Design Office was advancing two *Active Travel* projects funded by the TII, associated with the national road N-4:

1. N-4 Collooney to Castlebaldwin Active Travel Scheme,
2. N-4 Collooney to Toberbride Active Travel Scheme.

### 29.4.1 Cycle and pedestrian movements

The DoT’s 2022 **National Sustainable Mobility Policy** supports safe and green mobility by expanding cycling and walking options across the country, including greenways. At present (2023), cycling and walking play minor roles as modes of transport in County Sligo for long distances. For short trips, they are cost-effective, non-polluting and highly flexible modes of transport that foster improved health and wellbeing.

The Council will use its powers under the Planning Acts to preserve and maintain existing rights of way, to create new ones where appropriate, and to promote their greater use in amenity areas.

In addition, the Council may seek to incorporate the provision of pedestrian ways as a condition of planning permission to link amenities, facilities and points of interest. Sligo County Council is aware that providing such routes can cause concern, as these may give rise to anti-social behaviour, particularly along unsupervised and secluded laneways. Every effort shall be made to avoid such situations, through appropriate layout and design.

### 29.4.2 *CycleConnects*

The NTA's draft document *CycleConnects*, published for consultation in 2022, was expected to be finalised in 2023. The primary objective of this national cycle network plan, based on a route development methodology, aims to ensure that all relevant communities are connected in each county. The final document will include proposals for cycling links within cities, towns and villages in each county, in addition to interurban connections between the larger towns and villages.

For Sligo Town and County, the draft *CycleConnects* document contained proposals for primary and secondary cycle routes, greenways and interurban routes.

### 29.4.3 Greenways

Greenways are off-road trails dedicated to non-motorised transport such as walking and cycling. The Council actively supports the provision of greenway infrastructure within the county and acknowledges the benefits of such recreational amenities which encourage an active and healthy lifestyle.

At the time of drafting this Development Plan (2023), the following greenway projects were being advanced with the TII as the approving authority:

- **The Sligo-Leitrim-Northern Counties Railway (SLNCR) Greenway - Collooney to Enniskillen**, managed by Leitrim County Council through Section 85 agreements with other local authorities in Ireland and a Memorandum of Understanding with Fermanagh and Omagh District Council.
- **The Sligo Greenway - Collooney to Bellaghy**, directly managed by the Sligo Regional Design Office.

### 29.4.4 Active travel in the (draft) Local Transport Plan (LTP)

A SWOT analysis of the walking and cycling infrastructure in the LTP Study Area (focused on the Regional Growth Centre) indicated that the active travel network in Sligo Town is “fractured” because motor vehicles have priority at junctions, leading to a poor user experience for pedestrians and cyclists.

At the same time, there are many opportunities to improve walking and cycle links in the LTP Study Area, both for commuter and for leisure purposes.

The Draft LTP proposes ten *Walking Measures*, all relating to Sligo Town. Similarly, from a total of nine *Cycling Measures*, all but one relate to Sligo Town and its Environs. These measures will be included as objectives in the forthcoming Local Area Plan for Sligo and Environs, thus allowing a further opportunity for improvements as part of the Draft LAP public consultation process.

## Inter-urban cycling network

*Cycling Measure 6* recommends the development of an **inter-urban cycling network** “in line with the proposals presented in Table 6-6”. Figure 6-8 in the Draft LTP shows the extent of this cycling network, which links Sligo Town with Drumcliffe, Rosses Point, Strandhill, Ballysadare, Collooney, Ballygawley, Hazelwood, St. Angela’s College (along the R-286) and Calry (along the R-278).

**Table 29.5 Inter-urban cycle network proposals** (as per Table 6-6 of the Draft Sligo LTP)

No.	Route	Proposal for cycle tracks/lanes
1	<b>Cycle link From Sligo Town to Drumcliffe</b>	Extend the existing cycling infrastructure northwards along the N-15
2	<b>Cycle link from Sligo Town to St. Angela's College along Hazelwood Road</b>	Connect Hazelwood and St. Angela’s College to ATU and the east of the Town along the R-286.
3	<b>Cycle link from Sligo Town to Calry</b>	Connect residents at Calry and along the R-278 to ATU and the east of Sligo Town.
4	<b>Cycle link from Sligo Town to Ballysadare and Collooney</b>	Provide cycle tracks along the R-287, feeding into the Pathfinder Project proposals on Pearse Road. This link will run through Ballysadare village centre to Collooney along the R-290.
5	<b>Cycle link from Sligo Town to Ballygawley</b>	Provide cycle tracks along the R-284, feeding into the proposed Pathfinder Project schemes on Pearse Road
6	<b>Cycle link from Sligo Town to Rosses Point</b>	Upgrade the existing cycle lanes to cycle tracks where possible and extend cycle tracks to reach Rosses Point Beach car park.
7	<b>Cycle link to Strandhill (upgrade)</b>	Upgrade existing cycle lanes along the R-292 and improve street lighting and signage along the route. Upgrade existing Shore Road/R-227 junction in Strandhill to include clear cycle paths.

The (draft) Local Transport Plan also supports the development and delivery of the SLNCR Greenway (see Section 29.4.3 above). This greenway is expected to enhance the level of active travel in the LTP Study Area by providing an attractive leisure route for cyclists and pedestrians, while also serving as a possible cycling commuter connection.



## Cycling and walking policies

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

- P-CW-1** Promote cycling and walking as a sustainable and viable commuting mode of transport by making provision for the safe and efficient movement of cyclists and pedestrians at public transportation nodes and village/town centres, public car parks and Institutions.
- P-CW-2** Ensure that adequate cycle facilities are provided in all new institutions, employment centres, sports complexes and leisure facilities, in the form of sheltered bicycle parking and locker rooms with shower facilities.
- P-CW-3** Require that all new developments are designed to integrate into a cycling network linking with adjoining development areas and schools, and provide cycle and pedestrian-friendly development layouts, infrastructure and facilities.
- P-CW-4** Consider the use of off-road routes, such as disused railway lines and bridle paths, for both walking and cycling to improve access to rural tourist attractions. Where feasible, provide separate trails for walkers and cyclists in the interests of safety and convenience, with appropriate surfaces for each type of user and subject to compliance with legislative requirements.
- P-CW-5** Provide, improve and extend cycle and pedestrian routes on existing roads, proposed roads, roads being upgraded and green corridors (including river corridors), where feasible and practical and subject to compliance with legislative requirements.
- P-CW-6** Support the development of the cycling routes identified in the final NTA document *CycleConnects*.

## Cycling and walking objectives

It is an objective of Sligo County Council to:

- O-CW-1** Complete the development of the N-4 Collooney to Castlebaldwin Active Travel Scheme using the infrastructure (combined cycle and footway) already constructed from Toberbride Td to Doorly Td.
- O-CW-2** Seek the development of a greenway from Collooney to Bellaghy (Sligo/Mayo county boundary).

## Cycling and walking objectives

- O-CW-3** Support the development of a greenway from Collooney to Enniskillen, with a connection from Collooney to Sligo Town, which can also serve as a Smarter Travel commuter route.
- O-CW-4** Develop the Inter-Urban Cycle Network routes listed in Table 29.5, as part of the implementation of the Sligo Local Transport Plan.

## 29.6 Public transport

Public transport plays a key role in sustaining the vitality and viability of rural communities in County Sligo. Alongside the promotion of cycle facilities and pedestrian movements, quality bus and rail services can reduce car dependency within and between settlements.

Responsibility for local public transport is divided between the public and private sectors. Sligo County Council is committed to supporting an integrated and accessible public transport system.

The Local Authority has a key role in the 'whole journey approach' to making public transport fully accessible to people with disabilities. This is achieved by implementing a *universal design* approach to the built environment, including footpaths, cycle paths, roads, pedestrian crossing points, town greenways and bus stops/shelters.

### 29.6.1 Bus services

Bus services play a vital social role in rural communities, linking rural areas with settlements and essential services, such as schools and healthcare.

There are five categories of bus transportation currently serving County Sligo:

- Bus Eireann expressway long-distance services, linking Sligo with Dublin, Dublin Airport, Cork, Limerick, Galway, Knock airport, Ballina, Donegal, Letterkenny, Monaghan, Cavan, Tralee, Waterford, Wexford, Dundalk, Derry, Enniskillen and Belfast;
- Bus Eireann local commuter routes;
- Bus Eireann school bus services operated on behalf of the Department of Education and Science;
- Private mini-bus services;
- Community bus routes operated under the Rural Transport Programme (RTP). The RTP is delivered in Sligo via the (Transport for Ireland) *Local Link* as two types of service: Regular Rural Bus Services and Door-to-Door Bus Services.

### Sligo Town

Town bus services rely on the street network to be able to get people to their destination. The **Local Transport Plan** recommends the protection of town-centre streets that currently carry bus services, as well as those that are earmarked for potential route changes or future additional services.

In the residential areas of the town, the lack of orbital roads and the large number of dead-end streets within existing housing estates significantly constrain any potential new route proposals.

The long-term development of the town requires a street network that is capable of accommodating quality bus services. The forthcoming Local Area Plan for Sligo and Environs should address the issue of public transport in the extended town area and the detailed measures required to be put in place.

## 29.6.2 Railways

Rail infrastructure in County Sligo consists of:

- the Sligo-Dublin line, used mainly for inter-city services;
- the disused line from Collooney to Bellaghy/Charlestown, which forms the northern section of the Western Rail Corridor, potentially linking Sligo to Galway/Limerick, with onward connections to Cork, Waterford and Rosslare.

### **Sligo-Dublin line**

The Sligo–Dublin rail line is a key strategic transportation link for the North-West. The frequency of six-eight trains daily each way, together with the wi-fi service on these intercity routes, made this mode of transport more attractive for both business and leisure passengers.

The Draft All-Island Strategic Rail Review (published in July 2023) identifies key interventions in its final package of recommendations. Under the heading “Short Term and Decarbonisation”, the report recommends the upgrading of services on the Dublin-Sligo regional route to one train per two hours.

The construction of a new train station at Ballysadare, along with the provision of adequate car parking, would encourage commuters from west Sligo to ‘park and ride’ at Ballysadare, taking the train into Sligo City. Supporting population growth in Collooney and Ballysadare, designated satellite villages of the Sligo Regional Growth Centre, will serve to enhance the feasibility of local commuter rail services.

The Draft LTP proposes measures that aim to enhance the Collooney and MacDiarmada (Sligo) Train Stations, and also to support the connection between Collooney and Sligo, which can serve as a sustainable transport corridor.

Measures relating to Sligo Town will be addressed in the Local Area Plan for Sligo and Environs.

Proposals relating to Collooney Train Station are included as objectives in the Collooney Village Plan (refer to Chapter 16 in Volume 2).

### **Western Rail Corridor**

The feasibility of reopening the Western Rail Corridor has been considered in the Draft All-Island Strategic Rail Review as part of a “package” (option) to connect Athenry to Derry via Sligo.

“Package 3b West Coast” focused on the potential provision of a new 120km/h electrified line between Derry and Sligo, with hourly services along the whole line, complemented by a new 120km/h electrified line between Sligo and Athenry, with hourly Sligo-Galway services.

The Review states that “modelling undertaken for interventions on this corridor showed there would be very low demand for passenger rail services on this route and that building a railway on this corridor would have a significant adverse impact on the environment”. The option was “parked”, i.e. not included in the final package of recommendations.

## Public transport policies

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

- P-PT-1** Strengthen Sligo’s function as a transportation node in the North-West and facilitate an easy interchange between different transportation modes.
- P-PT-2** Promote the consolidation of settlements on existing public transport routes.
- P-PT-3** Support the provision of public transport services by reserving land in suitable locations for public transport infrastructure and ancillary facilities, such as park-and-ride.
- P-PT-4** Support the provision of a local commuter rail service on the existing Sligo-Dublin railway line, in conjunction with the upgrading of services to one train per two hours, as recommended in the (Draft) All-Island Strategic Rail Review.
- P-PT-5** Protect the route of the Western Rail Corridor as a strategic transport corridor linking Sligo to Co. Mayo, for potential future transport-related uses.
- P-PT-6** Continue to work with the service providers, such as Iarnrod Eireann and Bus Eireann, to encourage the reduction in the need for car trips by improving the availability, reliability and quality of public transport.
- P-PT-7** Ensure that the design and layout of new developments facilitates circulation by public transport.

## 29.7 Airports

County Sligo is served by Sligo Airport (Strandhill) and Ireland West Airport Knock (IWAK) in County Mayo.

IWAK is of strategic importance as a means of access to the County and is critical to the success of the local and regional economy. The airport is located just 20 km from Tobercurry and a 45-minute car journey from Sligo Town. The promotion of Tobercurry and Ballymote as Support Towns is reinforced by their proximity to IWAK and the availability of direct access to an international business and tourism market.

Sligo Airport, located near the village of Strandhill, serves as the North-West base of the Irish Coast Guard Search & Rescue Helicopter. The Airport is owned and managed by Sligo North-West Airport Co. Ltd., which has developed a high-quality, successful business park on adjacent lands.

### Airports policies

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

- O-A-1** Facilitate improved access to IWAK, so as to secure a better level and frequency of service and promote Sligo's accessibility to tourists and businesses, both nationally and internationally.
- O-A-2** Support proposals to upgrade facilities and improve the viability of Sligo Airport, subject to compliance with the Habitats Directive.

## 29.8 Port and harbours

Harbours, piers and slipways along the Sligo coast provide marine access for the fishing industry and commercial or recreational boat users. Sligo Port is one of seven in the NW Region, and the most important in the County.

While the significance of Sligo Port in national terms is quite low, it remains important in the regional and local economy, supporting local industry and providing an import/export transportation facility. The primary cargoes into Sligo Port are timber, anthracite & fish meal.

Sligo County Council took over the running of the port in 2006, and in the process, inherited its vast landbank and leases from the Sligo Harbour Commissioners.

### Sligo Bay Lifeboat Station

Located in the picturesque village of Rosses Point, Sligo Bay Lifeboat Station (RNLI) operates an inshore B-class Atlantic 85 and covers the area between Downpatrick Head and Inishmurray Island. The station was established in 1998.

### 29.8.1 Harbour lands/Docklands

The Council is now the owner of a vast area adjacent to the Deep Water Quay, Ballast Quay and Finisklin Road. These lands are currently occupied by leasehold tenants. Some lands are vacant, underutilised or derelict.

This Development Plan, through **Section 4.3 Strategic Growth Areas** (Chapter 4 – Sligo Regional Growth Centre), acknowledges the importance of the Docklands for the future of Sligo Town, as reflected in the RSES, and recommends a redevelopment framework for this area.

The strategic objective **SO-RGC-5** indicates the Council's intention to prepare a masterplan for the Harbour/Docklands area, focusing on the provision of mixed residential, employment and recreational uses while retaining the functions of a fully operational Port.

#### Port and harbours policies

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

- P-PH-1** Continue to support the sustainable development and operation of Sligo Port, and improve road and rail access to the Port, in order to retain its viability as a freight port.
- P-PH-2** Support the role of harbours, piers and slipways in facilitating fishing, marine leisure, recreation and other activities, including the RNLI Sligo Bay Lifeboat Station at Rosses Point.



## Chapter 30. Water infrastructure

The sustainable growth of County Sligo is dependent on the satisfactory delivery and management of public and private water infrastructure. A plan-led approach, in accordance with the County's Core Strategy, is required in the provision of such services.

Furthermore, this infrastructure needs to be provided in a manner that protects public health and is environmentally appropriate and economically effective.

**Irish Water**, the regulatory body for water in Ireland, became known as **Uisce Éireann** in January 2023. Uisce Éireann (UÉ) is responsible for the operation of all public water and wastewater services including management and maintenance of water and wastewater assets, planning and investment in new projects. Sligo County Council retains its role in facilitating the provision of adequate water services at a local level, through Service Level Agreements (SLAs).

Uisce Éireann is required to facilitate the growth of settlements in accordance with the Core Strategy at county level, and with national and regional planning policies and objectives, subject to the constraints of the UÉ's Capital Investment Plan.

The Uisce Éireann Capital Investment Plan 2020-2024 (CIP) sets out the priorities for investing 5.35 billion euro to deliver the most urgently needed improvements in drinking water quality, leakage reduction, water availability, wastewater compliance, efficiencies and customer service.

The CIP funds individual projects such as building new or upgrading existing water and wastewater treatment plants, upgrading existing networks, and national programmes such as the Leakage Reduction Programme, the National Disinfection Programme, the Small Towns and Villages Growth Programme, and the National Certification Authorisation Programme.

UÉ's CIP 2020-2024 includes six projects in County Sligo, some of which have been completed. All the water supply schemes and wastewater treatment plants operating in County Sligo, including those contained within the CIP 2020-2024, are presented in Tables 30.1 and 30.2.

### 30.1 Water supply

Currently there are eight schemes supplying potable water throughout Sligo – refer to Table 30.1. It is envisaged that, subject to the necessary upgrades being carried out, there will be adequate capacity to meet the projected increase in the population of County Sligo up to 2030 and beyond.

#### 30.1.1 Water supply for Sligo Town

Sligo Town is supplied by the Sligo and Environs Regional Water Supply Scheme (RWSS) from its Foxes Den and Kilsellagh Water Treatment Plants (WTPs). Foxes Den's 2021 upgrade increased capacity to 16.5 million litres per day. Upgrade works carried out at Kilsellagh WTP in 2023 resolved capacity issues.

These works have ensured that there will be adequate capacity to meet the targeted increase in Sligo Town's population for the Plan period.

In the longer term, a further upgrade at Foxes Den WTP may be required to accommodate the additional population increase by 2040.

### 30.1.2 Water supply for other settlements

Ballymote and Tobercurry are supplied from Lough Talt RWSS, where an “interim” Water Treatment Plant was commissioned in 2020 to meet short/medium-term needs. An alternative long-term supply for the area is required by 2028.

Enniscrone receives water from Lough Easky RWSS, which has available capacity to accommodate growth over the plan period.

Sligo and Environs RWSS provides water to Ballysadare, Collooney, Rosses Point and Strandhill.

Grange is supplied from the North Sligo RWSS, where solutions to find additional raw water are being investigated.

**Table 30.1** below lists County Sligo’s public Water Supply Schemes and their capacities based on information received in Q1 2023. The table includes reference to the settlements where supply issues have been identified.

### 30.1.3 Rural water supply and quality

Approximately 20% of dwellings throughout County Sligo do not have access to a public mains water supply system. These dwellings are served by group water schemes (GWS) or by individual wells.

Many private water users rely on groundwater sources that are prone to contamination from septic tanks or farmyard effluent. Therefore, the protection of underlying aquifers is important for the environmental quality of rural water supply.

Sligo County Council is responsible for the implementation of the DHLGH’s Rural Water Programme (including group schemes, private regulated water supplies and well grants), surface water drainage, flooding, and monitoring of surface water quality.

The Rural Water Programme facilitates the development of water services in rural areas, and it addresses deficiencies in group water schemes and private supplies where no alternative is available.

### 30.1.4 Water conservation and network management

Water conservation is key to the sustainable use of water resources, and it is a priority in all areas of the County, whether served by public or private supplies. Sligo County Council and Uisce Éireann are continually progressing leakage reduction, mains rehabilitation and capital maintenance activities.

Uisce Éireann is currently (2023) implementing a Leakage Reduction Programme. The Council will facilitate the delivery of this programme and promote water conservation and best-practice water conservation measures in all new developments.

**Table 30.1 Water supply schemes in County Sligo**

<b>Scheme</b>	<b>24-h production capacity (m3/day)</b>	<b>Current average daily production (m3/day)</b>	<b>Spare capacity (m3/day)</b>	<b>Planned works</b>
<b>Foxes Den Water Supply Scheme (Sligo and Environs)</b>	16,000	7,820	8,680	No planned works. Recently upgraded.
<b>Kilsellagh Water Supply Scheme (Sligo and Environs)</b>	8,000	4,800	3,200	No works are proposed by UÉ* in relation to this scheme.
<b>Lough Easky Regional Scheme</b>	4,400	3,125	1,275	No works are proposed by UÉ in relation to this scheme.
<b>Lough Talt Regional Scheme</b>	8,000	6,490	1,510	“interim” WTP** recently upgraded.
<b>North Sligo Regional Scheme</b>	3,300	1,995	1,305	No works are proposed by UÉ in relation to this scheme.
<b>South Sligo Regional Scheme</b>	1,500	1,035	465	Supplied by RCC*** from the Lough Gara WTP. No works are proposed by UÉ in relation to this scheme.  There is significant headroom available for future development. Spare capacity estimated.
<b>Riverstown Public Water Scheme</b>	640	230	410	No works are proposed by UE in relation to this scheme.
<b>Killaraght Regional Scheme</b>	100	60	40	Supplied from the Boyle / Ardcairn Regional Scheme by RCC. No works are proposed by UÉ in relation to this scheme.  There is significant headroom available for future development. Spare capacity estimated.

\* UÉ – Uisce Éireann \*\* WTP – Water Treatment Plant \*\*\* RCC – Roscommon County Council

## Water supply policies

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

- P-WS-1** Co-operate with Uisce Éireann to maximise the potential of existing capacity and to facilitate the timely delivery of new water services infrastructure, in order to support population and economic growth as set out in the Core Strategy of this Plan.
- P-WS-2** Liaise with Uisce Éireann in seeking to establish source management and protection zones around drinking water supply sources (ground and surface water) and develop appropriate management and maintenance measures for these sources.
- P-WS-3** Support the implementation of the Uisce Éireann's Capital Investment Programmes (CIP) and Minor Works Programmes (MWP).
- P-WS-4** Promote the use of water conservation measures such as rainwater harvesting and grey water use in all new developments, in order to minimise water wastage and as viable alternative to attenuation.
- P-WS-5** Where connection to a public water supply is not possible, or the existing supply does not have sufficient capacity, the provision of a private water supply will be permitted only where it can be demonstrated that the proposed water supply meets the standards set out in the EU and national legislation and guidance, would not be prejudicial to public health and would not have a significant negative impact on the source or yield of an existing supply.
- P-WS-6** Proposals relating to water abstractions shall be subject to the appropriate environmental assessments and shall demonstrate compliance with the requirements of Article 6 of the Habitats Directive and with the Water Framework Directive.

## 30.2 Wastewater treatment

The provision of wastewater treatment infrastructure is imperative to facilitate the economic, social, and physical development of the county and to support settlement growth. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is the statutory body tasked with ensuring that appropriate standards are put in place in the provision and operation of wastewater infrastructure.

Uisce Éireann is responsible for the treatment and disposal of wastewater in towns and villages where public wastewater treatment facilities are in place.

### 30.2.1 Wastewater treatment in Sligo Town

Sligo Town's Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) has a capacity of 50,000 PE. Subject to an upgrade, the capacity can increase to 75,000 PE. This would be sufficient to accommodate the targeted population growth by 2030 and beyond.

The recent connection of the Bundoran Road wastewater pumping station to the Ballast Quay network will free up capacity in the Cartron catchment of Sligo Town. There are potential network constraints in the Magheraboy and Cartron catchments, including along Markievicz Road. The southern periphery of Sligo Town is not serviced.

The surface water drainage network in Sligo Town is limited and disjointed, leading to excess surface water flowing into the foul/combined network. It is important that stormwater is removed from combined sewers where possible, and that new surface water connections to the sewer are restricted.

In 2022, Irish Water/UE commenced the preparation of a Drainage Area Plan for Sligo Town. This involves a detailed assessment of the wastewater network capacity and will take several years to complete.

### 30.2.2 Wastewater treatment in other settlements

WWTP upgrade projects have been completed in Strandhill, Ballinafad, Tobercurry, Collooney, Ballymote and Charlestown-Bellaghy on the Sligo/Mayo border.

Grange WWTP is generally compliant with its Wastewater Discharge Licence, with some spare hydraulic capacity.

The Rosses Point Sewerage Scheme commenced construction in 2022, with completion envisaged by Q3 2023. The scheme involves providing a pumping station, rising main and gravity sewers to convey flows to the Sligo Town network, connecting at the Bundoran Road wastewater pumping Station.

At the time of drafting this CDP, there were no known major wastewater network constraints in the other settlements in the county.

### 30.2.3 Small Towns and Villages Growth Programme (STVGP)

Uisce Éireann co-operates with local authorities and local communities to upgrade WWTPs or provide new plants under the **Small Towns and Villages Growth Programme** (STVGP), which is a component of UÉ's Capital Investment Programme.

In 2020 Sligo County Council’s Water Services Section nominated the villages of **Cliffony, Mullaghmore, Castlebaldwin, Geevagh and Ballintogher** for inclusion in the programme.

Strategic assessments of the treatment plants in the nominated settlements have been carried out and Mullaghmore has progressed to Stage 2/concept design. The provision of a new WWTP to serve Mullaghmore will be included in Uisce Éireann’s CIP 2025–2029.

In 2022, Sligo County Council submitted two applications to the DHLGH, under Measure A8 of Circular L1-22 ‘Wastewater Collection and Treatment needs for Villages and Settlements without access to Public Wastewater Services’. The settlements nominated were **Ballygawley and Rathcormac**. Should the two villages be included in this programme, Uisce Éireann will work with the DHLGH and the Council to support the development and implementation of an appropriate wastewater treatment solution for each village.

A number of investment cycles will be required to address all candidates in the STVGP. UÉ plans to continue this programme into the investment period 2025-2029, and Sligo County Council will submit further proposals for new or upgraded WWTPs in small villages.

### 30.2.4 Prioritisation of investment

Proposed treatment works and extensions to wastewater treatment infrastructure throughout County Sligo are outlined in the Table 30.B below. The figures are based on Uisce Éireann’s Wastewater Treatment Capacity Register issued in June 2022. The next register will be issued in June 2023.

**Table 30.2 Wastewater treatment plants in County Sligo**

Town / village	Design PE* of the WWTP	Current loading PE*	Available PE*	Comments
<b>Aclare</b>	750	55	695	Spare capacity
<b>Ballinacarrow</b>	250	231	19	Spare capacity
<b>Ballinafad</b>	200	127	73	Spare capacity
<b>Ballincar</b>	n/a	n/a	n/a	There is currently no plant serving the Ballincar area. Residents of Ballincar will be able to connect to the upgrade to the Rosses Point Sewerage Scheme*, which will pump wastewater to the Teesan pumping station and onwards to Sligo Waste Water Treatment Plant***** where spare capacity is available. Works to be completed Q4 2023.
<b>Ballintogher</b>	350	334	16	Spare capacity. A strategic assessment was carried out via a STVGP***.

Town / village	Design PE* of the WWTP	Current loading PE*	Available PE*	Comments
Ballygawley	n/a	n/a	n/a	There is no WWTP in Ballygawley. An application was submitted to include the village in the Rural Water Programme 2022-2025.
Ballysadare	4,500	1,686	2,814	Spare capacity
Ballymote	3,500	2,594	906	Spare capacity
Banada	n/a	n/a	n/a	There is no WWTP in Banada
Bellaghy / Charlestown (Co. Mayo)	3,250	1339	1,911	Spare capacity
Bunnaadden	350	156	194	Spare capacity
Carney	2,500	471	2,029	Spare capacity
Castlebaldwin	100	99	1	No spare capacity. A strategic assessment was carried out via a STVGP***.
Cliffony	800	492	308	Spare capacity. A strategic assessment was carried out via a STVGP***.
Cloonacool	500	98	402	Spare capacity
Collooney	3,500	1889	1,611	Spare capacity
Coolaney	2,500	1201	1,299	Spare capacity
Culfadda	150	42	108	Spare Capacity
Curry	400	80	320	Spare capacity
Dromore West	2,500	263	2,237	Spare capacity
Drumcliffe	75	40	35	Limited spare capacity
Easky	450	371	79	Limited spare capacity
Enniscrone	5,000	3360	1,640	Spare capacity
Geevagh	250	170	80	Spare capacity
Gorteen	2,500	455	2,045	Spare capacity

Town / village	Design PE* of the WWTP	Current loading PE*	Available PE*	Comments
Grange	900	807	93	The Plant is generally compliant to WWDL**** with spare hydraulic capacity
Monasteraden	400	47	353	Spare capacity
Mullaghmore	320	771	0	This plant was assessed under the STVGP and is proposed to be included in UÉ's 2025-2029 Capital Investment Plan
Rathcormac	n/a	n/a	n/a	There is no WWTP in Rathcormac. An application was submitted to include the village in the Rural Water Programme 2022-2025.
Riverstown	600	359	241	Spare capacity
Rockfield	250	193	57	Spare capacity
Rosses Point	1,500	1,568	0	Rosses Point sewage network is currently being upgraded to provide a pumping station in the village to pump wastewater to the Teesan Pumping Station and onwards to SMD***** where spare capacity is available. Works to be completed Q4 2023.
Sligo Town	50,000	27,028	22,972	Spare capacity. There is capacity to upgrade the plant to 75,000 PE
Strandhill	3,700	2,343	1,357	The Plant is generally compliant to WWDL****. Uisce Éireann plan to review the hydraulic loads in the network.
Tourlestraun	n/a	n/a	n/a	There is no WWTP in Tourlestraun.
Tobercurry	3,500	2,420	1,080	Spare capacity

\* PE – Population equivalent; \*\* WWTP – Wastewater Treatment Plant; \*\*\* Small Towns and Villages Growth Programme; \*\*\*\* WWDL – Wastewater Discharge Licence; \*\*\*\*\* SMD – Sligo Main Drainage (WWTP)

### 30.2.5 Sludge management

At present, sludge generated from public sewerage schemes throughout the County and from private treatment systems (including individual septic tanks and on-site systems serving one-off housing) can be transported to a sludge hub centre at the Sligo Main Drainage Centre at Finisklin for treatment and disposal.

UE's *National Wastewater Sludge Management Plan* – a strategy designed to ensure a nationwide standardised approach for managing wastewater sludge over a 25-year period – proposes to develop a Sludge Hub Centre and Satellite Dewatering Centre network for wastewater sludge treatment, optimised on a regional basis rather than county basis.

### 30.2.6 Wastewater management in rural areas

Outside serviced towns and villages, much of the wastewater produced is treated and disposed of on-site by means of individual septic tanks and proprietary effluent treatment systems (PETS). It is essential that these systems are properly designed, installed and maintained to avoid environmental pollution (refer to **Section 33.2.7 On-site wastewater treatment systems** in Chapter 33 Development Management Standards).

Where single dwellings are located outside an area that is serviced by a public foul sewer, the developer will be required to submit details to demonstrate that the on-site wastewater treatment system can safely and adequately dispose of effluent in accordance with the EPA's 2021 *Code of Practice: Domestic Wastewater Treatment Systems (Population Equivalent  $\leq 10$ )*.

Where appropriate, the development of on-site wastewater treatment systems (OSWWTS) for tourism developments, small businesses or community facilities in unserved areas may be considered where:

- they are in single ownership

**AND**

- it is demonstrated to the satisfaction of the Planning Authority that the proposed OSWWTS is in accordance with EPA's 2021 *Code of Practice: Domestic Wastewater Treatment Systems (Population Equivalent  $\leq 10$ )* and *Wastewater Treatment Manuals-Treatment Systems for Small Communities, Business, Leisure Centres and Hotels*, (EPA, 1999) as amended.

## Wastewater treatment policies

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

- P-WWT-1** Co-operate with Uisce Éireann in the provision of adequate wastewater treatment capacity to support the growth of County Sligo's settlements in accordance with the Core Strategy, including:
- A.** the programme of upgrades / extensions set out in Table 30.B.
  - B.** the provision of new or upgraded WWTPs in the settlements of Cliffony, Mullaghmore, Castlebaldwin, Geevagh and Ballintogher through Uisce Éireann, Small Towns and Villages Growth Programme or any superseding programmes.
  - C.** the provision of WWTPs in the unserved settlements of Ballygawley and Rathcormac under Measure A8 of the DHLGH Circular L1-22, '*Wastewater Collection and Treatment needs for Villages and Settlements without access to Public Wastewater Services*' or any superseding circulars.
- P-WWT-2** Require sustainable collection, treatment and discharge of wastewater effluent generated within the County and ensure that effluent/sludge is treated and disposed of in accordance with the required EU standards.
- P-WWT-3** Maximise the capacity of existing collection systems for foul water by prohibiting the discharge of additional surface water to combined (foul and surface water) sewers.
- P-WWT-4** Require all new developments to connect to the public wastewater treatment plants, where capacity exists in the system.
- In cases where a settlement is not served by a public wastewater treatment plant, or where no spare capacity exists in the relevant wastewater treatment plants, proposals for single houses using on-site wastewater treatment will be considered subject to appropriate scale, site assessment, design and ground conditions, taking groundwater vulnerability into account and subject to compliance with the Habitats Directive.
- Any such permitted development shall be subject to legally binding maintenance arrangements agreed with the Planning Authority and shall be required to connect to the public wastewater treatment plant when adequate capacity becomes available.
- However, communal on-site wastewater treatment systems for multiple housing developments (i.e. systems servicing more than one residential unit) will not be permitted.
- P-WWT-5** All proposals for on-site treatment systems shall be designed, constructed and maintained in accordance with the Environmental Protection Agency's *2021 Code of Practice: Domestic Wastewater Treatment Systems (Population Equivalent ≤10)* and/or *Treatment Systems for Small Communities, business, Leisure Centres and Hotels*, (EPA, 1999) as amended, and any guidance documents issued by the County Council.

## 30.3 Surface water management

Stormwater flows can have a significant detrimental impact on the available capacity of combined sewer networks and at treatment plants. Climate change is exacerbating the impact by way of more frequent and intense rainfall. This brings challenges in terms of drainage and capacity, traditionally addressed by hard engineering options (concrete gullies, pipes, drains etc.).

Sustainable (urban) Drainage Systems, commonly known as SuDS, seek to manage surface water as close as possible to its origin by various nature-based or engineering solutions that replicate natural drainage processes. SuDS and nature-based solutions provide many benefits, such as:

- controlling the quantity of run-off to support the management of flood risk and maintain and protect the natural water cycle;
- Improving water quality by preventing pollution;
- Supporting biodiversity;
- Contributing to the visual amenity of surrounding areas;
- building resilience to climate change through micro-cooling and carbon sequestration.

The application of SuDS techniques and nature-based solutions allows surface water to be either infiltrated or conveyed more slowly to water courses, using porous surface treatments such as bioretention areas, ponds, swales, basins, rain gardens, wetlands, filter drains, green roofs etc. These are often less expensive to construct and easier to maintain than underground solutions.

The Planning Authority will require the application of SuDS and nature-based solutions in new development proposals, in the redevelopment of existing brownfield sites and proposals to extend existing developments. The use of soakaways is deemed suitable for single dwelling houses and extensions to single dwellings, but not suitable for urban areas.

While traditionally the application of SDS techniques is site-specific and depends on the site's characteristics, the Council will work with designers and developers to deliver an integrated and area-based approach where possible, so that the approach works like a mini-catchment.

## Surface water drainage policies

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

- P-SWD-1** Require all new developments, redevelopment of brownfield sites and extensions to existing developments (where appropriate) to provide a separate foul and surface water drainage system.
- Such developments shall connect to existing surface water drainage systems (where available) which, in the opinion of the Planning Authority, have adequate capacity to accommodate additional loading (refer also to Section 3.5 of the accompanying SFRA, “Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems and Surface Water Guidance and Strategy”)
- P-SWD-2** Require that planning applications are accompanied by a comprehensive SuDS assessment that addresses run-off quantity, run-off quality and its impact on the existing habitat and water quality.
- In the case of one-off rural dwellings or extensions to dwellings without access to existing surface water drainage systems, surface water shall be disposed of, in its entirety, within the curtilage of the development by way of suitably-sized soakaways.
- In all instances the use of nature-based solutions is preferred to engineering solutions. Developers will be required to apply the provisions of *'Nature-Based Solutions to the Management of Rainwater and Surface Water Runoff in Urban Areas'* (water-sensitive urban design) Best Practice Interim Guidance Document (DHLGH, 2001) and any subsequent review.
- P-SWD-3** Seek to minimise the extent of hard surfacing and paving in all development proposals.
- P-SWD-4** Ensure that adequately designed oil interceptors are installed in all commercial developments that include car-parks or other oil- and petrol-related activities.
- P-SWD-5** Prohibit the alteration of natural and existing drainage systems, in order to preserve and protect historic drainage channels/paths and flow characteristics of existing catchments. In the case of development works, require the provision of acceptable mitigation measures in order to minimise the risk of flooding and negative impacts on water quality (including run-off, erosion and sedimentation).
- P-SWD-6** Protect the drainage characteristics of river channels and streams that can facilitate surface water drainage, by ensuring that development is kept at an appropriate distance from stream banks and/or adequate protection measures are put in place.

# Chapter 31.

## Energy and telecommunications

Ireland's energy sector must undergo radical transformation in order to mitigate the effects of climate change by switching from fossil fuels to renewable energy. This will have a bearing on all aspects of local development, and supportive planning policies are needed during this energy transition. Being rich in renewable energy resources, County Sligo is well-placed to lay solid foundations for a sustainable energy future while boosting investment, business development, job creation, and contributing to greater energy security.

Sligo County Council will promote and support the development and diversification of the local energy sector in accordance with EU, national and regional policy.

### 31.1 National policy on energy

According to the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications, the government aims to meet the following targets by 2030:

- Up to 80% renewable electricity
- 30% reduction in CO2 emissions
- 32.5% improvement in energy efficiency

There is a wide range of government policies, supports, strategies, and plans relating to energy. For the purpose of this Development Plan, the most relevant documents are the National Planning Framework (2018) and the **Climate Action Plan 2023**.

#### 31.1.1 National Planning Framework

The National Planning Framework recognises the importance of renewable energy in transitioning to a low-carbon and climate-resilient society, which represents the National Strategic Outcome 8.

The NPF envisages “diversification of energy production systems away from fossil fuels and towards green energy such as wind, wave, solar and biomass, together with smart energy systems and the conversion of the built environment into both generator/consumer of energy and the electrification of transport fleets”.

National Policy Objectives (NPOs) support offshore renewable energy development (NPO 42), strengthening all-island energy infrastructure (NPO 47), promoting renewable energy use and generation at appropriate locations (NPO 55) and energy-efficient buildings (NPO 64).

#### 31.1.2 Climate Action Plan 2023

The Climate Action Plan 2023 (CAP23) indicates that the electricity sector faces an immense challenge to meet its emissions ceilings, and will also play an important role in the decarbonisation of other sectors, such as transport, heating and industry.

Among the CAP's most important measures to increase the proportion of renewable electricity to 80% by 2030 are the targets of 9 GW from onshore wind, 8 GW from solar source, at least 5 GW of offshore wind energy and at least 500 MW of community-based renewable energy projects.

Section 12.1.4 of the CAP23 requires an alignment of the planning system with the permitting system, in order to support accelerated renewable energy development. It provides for "*national policy and associated methodologies to inform regional and local planning policies, noting that Development Plans are obliged to set out objectives to facilitate energy infrastructure*".

CAP23 also indicates that following publication of a Regional Roadmap, Regional Assemblies will publish and implement Regional Renewable Electricity Strategies, identifying areas suitable for renewable electricity deployment at regional **and county level**.

A revised **Methodology for Local Authority Renewable Energy Strategies** and a revised draft of the **Wind Energy Development Guidelines** are expected to be issued during the life of this Development Plan.

## 31.2 Regional and local energy policy

The **Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy** of the Northern and Western Regional Assembly, and the **Sligo 2030: One Voice, One Vision/Local Economic and Community Plan** are the main sub-national level documents that have informed Development Plan policy relating to energy infrastructure.

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

The RSES recognises the Region's huge potential for growth in renewables and sets out a number of relevant Regional Policy Objectives.

**RPO 4.16** states the NWRA's commitment to the identification of potential renewable energy sites of scale in collaboration with local authorities and other stakeholders. RPOs 4.17 to 4.22 and 8.1 to 8.4 support a wide range of measures relating to renewable energy production, distribution, storage, energy efficiency and conservation.

**RPO 9.4** aims to create resilient places and low carbon infrastructure by promoting renewable energy and developing the North-West as a centre for excellence for renewable energy and innovation.

### 31.2.2 Sligo 2030 – Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP)

Sustainability is interwoven throughout the LECP, which identifies the local production and use of green energy, and the development of offshore renewable energy infrastructure as opportunities for County Sligo.

Under the High-Level Goal 3, which addresses climate action, **Objective 3.1** seeks a reduction in emissions by at least 51% by 2030, in line with CAP23. A Key Desired Outcome under Goal 3 is "*to position County Sligo as a leader in retrofitting and alternative energy development*".

**Action 28** under Goal 3/Objective 3.1 commits Sligo County Council to the development of a **Renewable Energy Strategy** for Sligo.

**Action 6** under Goal 1/Objective 1.1 aims to "Complete a biomethane feasibility study to support the development of a local gas network in Sligo from renewable energy sources", led by a newly-established Sligo-Leitrim Energy Agency and the Sligo Sustainable Energy Community.

## 31.3 Renewable energy

Renewable energy is energy derived from natural sources that are replenished at a higher rate than they are consumed. Wind power, solar power, hydroelectric power, ocean energy, geothermal energy, biomass and biofuels are alternatives to fossil fuels that contribute to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, diversifying energy supply and reducing dependence on unreliable and volatile fossil fuel markets, in particular oil and gas

In County Sligo, the principal renewable energy sources are wind and micro-renewables (such as small-scale hydro plants and domestic solar panels). There are opportunities for other sources, such as green hydrogen and biomethane.

### 31.3.1 Wind energy

Sligo's mountainous landscape and exposed location on the western seaboard combine to create good conditions for the generation of wind power. According to the Sustainable Energy Association Ireland (SEAI), the wind farm capacity available in the County in 2023 was 96 MW, produced by seven wind farms located at Kings Mountain, Dunneill, Carran Hill, Geevagh, Blacklough, Derrysallagh and Lackan.

The wind energy potential available in the County is indicated in the *Wind Atlas*, a digital map providing details on wind speeds, current windfarms etc, maintained on the website of the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) to support potential developers and community groups in the initial planning stages.

Pressure for future wind farm development is likely to be concentrated in upland and coastal areas, particularly where energy providers can access the national electricity grid. The siting of wind turbines requires careful consideration. While turbines located on elevated sites tend to have a higher output, they also have a significant visual impact. Visual obtrusiveness depends on the location, layout, size, number, design and colour of the turbines, as well as the subjective perceptions of the viewer.

It is a challenge for the Council to achieve a reasonable balance between: (a) responding to government policy on renewable energy; and (b) enabling the wind energy resources of the County to be harnessed in an environmentally sustainable manner.

#### **Draft Wind Energy Development Guidelines 2019**

The Draft Wind Energy Development Guidelines 2019 contain a specific planning policy requirement (SPPR 1), requiring the Planning Authority to:

- ensure that national policy on renewable energy is acknowledged in the development plan, referring to the *National Energy and Climate Plan 2021-2030* and the *Climate Action Plan 2019*.
- indicate how the implementation of the development plan will contribute to realising the national targets on renewable energy, in particular wind energy (in megawatts);
- demonstrate compliance with Section 3.4 of the Draft Guidelines, e.g. by setting objectives and identifying suitable areas for wind energy production, among other items.

At the time of writing (2023), the final Wind Energy Development Guidelines had not yet been issued under Section 28 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).

Furthermore, the national renewable energy target set in the CAP 2019 (70% of total electricity, including up to 8.2 GW increased onshore wind capacity) has been superseded by the CAP23.

The revised targets require up to 80% of electricity to be produced from renewable sources by 2030, including 9 GW from onshore wind and at least 5 GW from offshore wind.

The CAP23 also contains three relevant Actions (EL/23/2, EL/23/3 and EL23/4) providing for the preparation of:

- A Renewable Electricity Spatial Policy Framework;
- A Roadmap for the development and implementation of Regional Renewable Electricity Strategies;
- new Draft Wind Energy Development Guidelines for onshore renewables.

Sligo County Council will prepare a Renewable Energy Strategy in accordance with the forthcoming Regional Renewable Electricity Strategy and the revised Methodology for Local Authority Renewable Energy Strategies (a measure contained in Section 12.3.1 of CAP23), when published.

In the interim period, the Planning Authority will continue to assess all wind energy development proposal using the criteria set out in the DECLG's Wind Energy Guidelines (2006).

### 31.3.2 Offshore wind, wave and tidal energy

In February 2023, the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications (DECC) published the Draft *Offshore Renewable Energy Development Plan II – A Framework for the Sustainable Development of Ireland's Offshore Renewable Energy Resource (ORED II)*.

The *ORED II* focuses on the spatial strategy, "proposing how the State will identify the areas best suited for ORE, in line with the principles of good maritime spatial planning". The Plan sets out the principles that will be used to underpin the statutory planning process for offshore renewable energy (ORE).

The implementation of the *ORED II* will involve, among other actions, the selection of Broad Areas of Interest and the designation of areas suitable for ORE. The selection will be based on the resource potential for floating wind, wave, and tidal energy, but also on the proximity to onshore infrastructure such as ports, proximity to demand centres, especially large industry.

The North-West (off the coast of Sligo and Donegal) is one of three identified Broad Areas of Interest for floating wind, along with the Celtic Sea and the Mid-West. Further analysis of the Broad Areas will allow for more detailed consideration of individual spatial opportunities and constraints (specific issues analysis) at a regional and local level.

Sligo County Council, as a local-level stakeholder, will provide input, as required, at the appropriate stages in the *ORED II* completion and implementation.

### 31.3.3 Hydroelectric power

Hydroelectricity is derived from the power harnessed from turbines driven by the flow of falling water, typically from fast-flowing streams and rivers. Presently about 2.5% of Ireland's electricity generating capacity is in the form of hydropower.

County Sligo has an installed capacity of 2.7 MW in two hydroelectric power stations operating at Ballysadare (2.2 MW) and Collooney (0.5 MW) both of which are owned and run by private operators. The SEAI Hydro-Power Map identifies numerous other potential hydro-power sources in County Sligo.

Hydro-power developments have the potential for significant impact on the aquatic resource and it is essential that where such schemes are permitted, the fisheries resource is adequately protected, without interference to fish movement, habitat or water quality.

### 31.3.4 Bioenergy

Bioenergy is produced from biomass, i.e. purpose-grown energy crops, forestry residues, agricultural residues and waste (e.g. farm waste, hydrotreated vegetable oil / HVO). Bioenergy can be used for heating, especially district heating. The cultivation of bioenergy crops may contribute to rural diversification and income generation, while increasing biodiversity and energy security.

Biomass fuels must undergo processing before they can generate energy:

- Wood refineries produce solid fuel (pellets, chips etc).
- Biofuel refineries make liquid fuels for transport.
- Anaerobic digestors and other gas facilities produce biogas, which can be upgraded to biomethane and distributed through a gas grid.

Sligo is not served by gas infrastructure at present. Large energy users, across all sectors, are currently reliant on carbon-intensive Oil and LPG for energy demand.

To ensure that Sligo has an efficient and cost-effective distribution of energy based on renewable energy sources, the Sligo 2030 Strategy (LECP) supports the development of a Local Gas Network using biomethane.

The Sligo Local Gas Network proposal, supported by ATU, Sligo Sustainable Energy Communities and the SEAI, would address the existing regional disparity in terms of access to natural gas, potentially leading to the uptake of Combined Heat and Power (CHP) technology.

Sligo County Council recognises the potential of bioenergy and will support its development. Individual proposals for bioenergy-related developments will be considered on their merits, subject to proper planning and environmental considerations.

### 31.3.5 Solar energy

There are two broad groups of technologies which generate electricity from light. Concentrated Solar Power (CSP) technologies produce electricity by focussing sunlight to produce heat and drive an engine connected to an electrical generator.

Solar photovoltaics (solar PV) are the most common solar technologies worldwide, and are best suited for use in Ireland. However, the number of large commercial solar farms is expected to increase, with consequences for land-use.

Solar farms are normally built on agricultural land and leave room for dual land use so that farm practices, such as grazing, can co-exist with the solar panels. Farmers and small rural communities will be encouraged to produce their own solar energy, both for self-supply and for selling to the grid.

### 31.3.6 Geothermal energy

Geothermal energy is heat stored beneath the earth's surface. It is a secure, reliable and renewable form of energy that can be used for heating, cooling, electricity production, or for combined heat and power generation.

Geothermal energy can be harnessed by a range of different technologies, depending on the nature of the resource, the intended use and the amount of heat required. Ireland's geothermal energy resources are currently under-utilised and mostly used for small-scale, individual heating projects (e.g. for single domestic dwellings or industrial heating applications).

### 31.3.7 Electricity transmission

The transmission network forms the backbone of power supply. Its development is critical to ensuring that County Sligo has the necessary infrastructure and capacity to attract business and accommodate the future development of the local economy.

The **Eirgrid Transmission Development Plan 2021-2030 (TDP)** indicates that the existing transmission network in the North-West area is relatively isolated from the 220 kV network and comprises 110-kV grid, mostly long lines. The area is characterised by a strong wind resource and a low electricity demand. Development of this network is mainly required to connect a high-level of renewable generation.

To cater for high levels of renewable generation, network reinforcement is necessary. This will enable the efficient export of generation from the North-West towards areas with high load, such as the East.

For County Sligo, Eirgrid's TDP 2021-2030 lists two projects:

- the Srananagh 220-110 kV Protection Upgrade project, which involves replacement of aged protection equipment in Sligo 110 kV and Srananagh 220 kV stations, to ensure optimal system performance;
- Flagford–Sligo 110 kV Line Conflict (N4 Road Realignment) and Station End Works (refurbishment/replacement).

## 31.4 Energy efficiency

Ireland's homes are responsible for one quarter of overall energy use and 10% of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Reducing the amount of energy and fossil fuels is an important part of CAP23, which sets actions across various sectors. A few examples are listed below:

- All new dwellings to be built to NZEB (Nearly Zero Energy Buildings) standard after 1 November 2019, and all new buildings other than dwellings to be built to NZEB standard after 1 January 2019;
- 600,000 heat pumps to be installed by 2030;
- Phase 2 of the social housing retrofit programme to bring dwellings more than 40 years old (30% of the social housing stock) to a B2 equivalent BER.

Ireland also has targets under EU legislation to improve energy efficiency by 2030. These targets are set out in the *National Energy and Climate Plan 2021-2030* and in the *Long Term Renovation Strategy (LTRS)*. For 2030, the targets include:

- 500,000 homes retrofitted to a B2 BER;
- public sector buildings to have a B BER;
- one third of commercial buildings to have a B BER.

The retrofitting of the older building stock in terms of energy efficiency will be actively promoted by Sligo County Council. This is supported centrally through a variety of schemes such as the Community Energy Grant Scheme and various SEAI home energy upgrade grants.

The Planning Authority will facilitate the retrofitting of protected structures, structures located within ACAs and in historic streetscapes, where it is shown that the proposed works will not negatively impact upon the character of the structure or streetscape.

## Energy policies

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

**P-EN-1** Support the sustainable development, upgrading and maintenance of energy generation, transmission, storage and distribution infrastructure, to ensure the security of energy supply and provide for future needs, as well as protection of the landscape, natural, archaeological and built heritage, and residential amenity.

**P-EN-2** Facilitate the production of energy from renewable sources and secure the maximum potential from wind energy resources within County Sligo, subject to strict location, siting and design criteria.

All such development proposals will be assessed for their potential impact on urban and rural communities, Natura 2000 sites, designated Sensitive Rural Landscapes, Visually Vulnerable Areas, Scenic Routes and scenic views, and all other normal planning considerations.

**P-EN-3** Support the development of energy from biomass, such as solid fuels (e.g. wood pellets), liquid fuels or biogas (e.g. biomethane), including the cultivation, processing and conversion of energy crops.

**P-EN-4** Support existing and new enterprises that wish to use renewable energy to serve their own needs by on-site energy production, subject to normal planning considerations

**P-EN-5** Collaborate with urban and rural communities in the development of community-level energy efficiency and renewable energy projects, subject to visual, landscape, heritage, environmental and amenity considerations.

## Renewable energy objectives

It is an objective of Sligo County Council to:

- O-REN-1** Prepare a Renewable Energy Strategy for County Sligo during the life of the Development Plan, following the publication of the Regional Renewable Electricity Strategy and the revised Methodology for Local Authority Renewable Energy Strategies, as provided for in the Climate Action Plan 2023.
- O-REN-2** Seek the progression of the Sligo Local Gas Network project in co-operation with ATU, Sligo Sustainable Energy Communities, the SEAI and all other relevant stakeholders.

## Energy efficiency policies

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

- P-ENE-1** Encourage the use of renewable energy sources in buildings and the retrofitting of buildings for higher energy efficiency in line with national retrofitting goals.

The retrofitting of protected structures and buildings located within ACAs or in historic streetscapes will be facilitated where it is shown that the proposed works will not negatively impact upon the character of the structure or streetscape.

- P-ENE-2** Promote the incorporation of energy-efficiency measures in the design of new buildings, such as passive solar design, natural ventilation, and vegetation (e.g. green roofs), as well as other design solutions that make effective and sustainable use of water, aggregates and other resources.

The proposed energy-efficiency measures or design solutions should be included as part of the documentation submitted at planning application stage.

## 31.5 Telecommunications

### 31.5.1 Broadband

The National Broadband Plan (NBP) is the government’s initiative to deliver high speed broadband services to all premises in Ireland, through investment by commercial enterprises coupled with intervention by the State in those parts of the country where private companies do not invest.

Investment in high-speed digital and internet services can realise benefits in relation to investment by boosting the attractiveness of locations outside of the urban centres, facilitating remote working from small villages and rural areas and thus contributing to the vitality and resilience of rural communities.

Sligo County Council fully supports the implementation of the National Broadband Plan and any similar subsequent plans.

### 31.5.2 Mobile telecommunications infrastructure

Sligo County Council recognises the importance of high-quality telecommunication infrastructure as a prerequisite for a successful economy. It is the aim of the Council to achieve a balance between facilitating the provision of telecommunications services in the interests of social and economic progress and protecting residential amenity and environmental quality.

Due to their design and large scale, telecommunication structures can have a significant visual impact on the landscape, both urban and rural. To avoid duplication or excessive numbers of masts within any given area, shared use of existing structures will be necessary.

The Council will ensure that all new support structures meet the co-location or clustering requirements of the most up-to-date ministerial guidelines (at the time of writing, in 2023, these were the *Telecommunications Antennae and Support Structures, 1996*, and the *Circular Letter PL07/12*)

Refer to **Section 33.11.3 (Development management standards)** for details relating to the siting and design of telecommunication infrastructure.

## Telecommunications policies

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

- P-TEL-1** Ensure that telecommunications infrastructure is adequately screened, integrated and/or landscaped, so as to minimise any adverse visual impacts on the County’s natural or cultural (historic, archaeological) landscapes.
- P-TEL-2** Support the implementation of the *National Broadband Plan for Ireland* and any related programmes aiming to provide high-speed broadband in County Sligo.
- P-TEL-3** Where appropriate, require (by planning condition if necessary) the installation of underground telecommunications infrastructure associated with road, commercial and residential schemes.



## Chapter 32. Flood risk

Managing flood risk is becoming increasingly important as the impacts of climate change are being felt throughout the country and by everyone. Through the various policies and objectives set out in this chapter, Sligo County Council aims to properly manage both surface water, coastal waters and in general the risk of flooding in our towns and villages and to prevent or mitigate the expected negative impacts of climate change.

### 32.1 Flood risk management

Flooding from rivers and coastal waters is a natural phenomenon that cannot be entirely prevented. It occurs when the capacity of a watercourse to convey water through an area is exceeded. Flooding also occurs in coastal areas, when sea water encroaches on land due to failure of coastal defences, exceptional climatic phenomena or other factors.

It is likely that climate change will have a significant impact on flood risk in Ireland, through sea level rise, increased number of heavy rainfall days per year and wetter winters leading to higher groundwater flood risk associated with aquifers and turloughs.

These potential impacts could have serious consequences on settlements located on the coast, beside rivers and in karst limestone areas. The man-made environment can exacerbate the consequences of flooding. Development in a flood plain, or building in areas where drainage infrastructure is inadequate, places property and people at risk. Flooding may impact on the economy, social well-being, public health and the environment. The impact on individuals and communities can be significant in terms of personal suffering and financial loss.

#### 32.1.1 Flood Risk Management Guidelines

Following from the EU Directive 2007/60/EC on the assessment and management of flood risks, the DoEHLG and the Office of Public Works (OPW) published *Planning Guidelines: The Planning System and Flood Risk Management* in November 2009. An accompanying document entitled *Technical Appendices* outlines the scale at which it is appropriate to carry out flood risk assessment. The Guidelines recommend a clear and transparent assessment of flood risk at all stages in the planning process, and indicate that Strategic Flood Risk Assessment is required at County Development Plan level in order to provide a broad assessment of all types of flood risk, to inform strategic land-use planning decisions.

The precautionary approach should be adopted in carrying out flood risk assessments and the following key guiding principles should be followed in all instances:

- avoidance of development in areas at risk of flooding by not permitting development in such areas unless fully justified and where capability exists to manage risk without impacting elsewhere;
- application of a sequential approach to flood risk management based on:
  - avoidance of development in areas of high/moderate flood risk;
  - reduction of flood risk through incorporation of less vulnerable uses;
  - mitigation of flood risk in assessing suitability of locations for new development;
- the incorporation of flood risk assessment into the process of making decisions on planning applications and planning appeals.

## 32.1.2 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA)

In compliance with the DoEHLG Guidelines, a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) has been prepared as part of the CDP (it is published as a separate document accompanying this Plan). The SFRA provides a description of the spatial distribution of flood risk at appropriate scales for the Plan.

The SFRA focused on land use zoning as well as flood risk management policy. It has considered available and emerging information on flood risk indicators, including the OPW's Flood Hazard and Risk Mapping and any flood defences. National CFRAM potential future scenario mapping has also been included in the SFRA and considered in the preparation of the Plan.

The flood risk management provisions of this Development Plan explicitly integrate climate change considerations. This includes Policy P-FRM-6 outlined below and the associated development management standards set out in **Chapter 33, Section 33.2.6 (Flood risk assessment)**.

The town and village plans contained in Volumes 2 and 4 have each been dealt with at a detailed local scale.

In line with the requirements of the Flood Risk Guidelines, Flood Zones A and B have been identified for all settlements with proposed land-use zoning. Lands located in flood risk areas are generally not proposed to be zoned for uses that are vulnerable to flooding. In cases where a site is proposed to be zoned for a potentially inappropriate use in an area at flood risk, a 'Justification Test' has been carried out as part of the SFRA. The findings of the Justification Test and the sites that have passed the Justification Test are outlined in the accompanying SFRA Report.

The impact of flood risk assessment on decisions regarding location of future development is recognised as being of significant importance to the growth of the county. The recommendations arising from the SFRA have been incorporated into town and village plans, and are complemented by the policies and objectives outlined below.

### Flood risk management policies

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

- P-FRM-1** Protect and enhance the County's floodplains, wetlands and coastal areas subject to flooding and associated sand dunes, beach sand or gravel. These areas represent a vital green infrastructure, which provides space for storage and conveyance of floodwater, enabling flood risk to be more effectively managed and reducing the need to provide flood defences in the future.
- P-FRM-2** Zone land for development in areas with a high or moderate risk of flooding only where it can be clearly demonstrated, on a solid evidence base, that the zoning satisfies the **Justification Test** set out in chapter 4 of the *Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines*.
- P-FRM-3** Contribute towards the general maintenance of a 20-metre-wide flood protection zone around lakes and along both sides of all rivers, and a 100-metre-wide flood

## Flood risk management policies

protection zone from soft shorelines. Development proposals will be required to maintain these flood protection zones generally free from development.

Exceptions may be considered for strategic road projects, river bank enhancement works, bridge and road repair works, in the case of brownfield sites, development on lands zoned subject to policy P-FRM-2 and in cases where the maintenance of the flood protection zone is not practically achievable. Such cases will be assessed on an individual basis and subject to compliance with the Habitats and Birds Directives.

- P-FRM-4** Ensure that new developments proposed in Arterial Drainage Schemes and Drainage Districts preserve access for maintenance and do not result in a significant negative impact on the integrity, function and management of these areas.

Where developments are proposed in the vicinity of Flood Relief Schemes, drainage channels and rivers for which the OPW is responsible, the Planning Authority will consult with the OPW and, where appropriate, will require the retention of a strip on either side of such channels, to facilitate maintenance access thereto.

- P-FRM-5** Restrict development in areas at elevated risk of flooding unless:
- it is demonstrated that there are wider sustainability grounds for appropriate development;
  - the flood risk can be managed to an acceptable level without increasing flood risk elsewhere;
  - the overall flood risk is reduced, where possible.

Developments considered necessary in order to meet the objectives of this Plan, or required on wider sustainability grounds, will be subject to the development management justification test outlined in chapter 5 of the *Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines*.

Measures such as flood compensation storage works or new hard-engineered flood defences alone will not be acceptable as justification for development in flood risk areas. Such measures will be subject to compliance with the Habitats Directive and will only be considered as part of a proposal if the development is warranted by the development management justification test set out in the Flood Risk Management Guidelines.

- P-FRM-6** Require development proposals, where appropriate, to be accompanied by a **detailed flood risk assessment** in accordance with the provisions of the DoEHLG and OPW's *Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities* and to address flood risk management in the detailed design of development, as set out in Appendix B of the Guidelines.

The following provisions shall apply:

- A.** Extensions of existing uses or minor development within flood risk areas may be permitted, provided that they:

## Flood risk management policies

- do not obstruct important flow paths;
- do not introduce a number of people into flood risk areas;
- do not entail the storage of hazardous substances;
- do not have adverse impacts or impede access to a watercourse, floodplain or flood protection and management facilities;
- do not increase the risk of flooding elsewhere.

- B.** Applications for development within Flood Zones A or B and on lands subject to the mid-range future scenario floods extents, as published by the Office of Public Works, shall be subject to **site-specific flood risk assessment** and shall provide details of structural and non-structural flood risk management measures, such as those relating to floor levels, internal layout, flood-resistant construction, flood-resilient construction, emergency response planning and access and egress during flood events (for more detail refer to **Chapter 33 “Development Management Standards” subsection 33.2.6 “Flood risk assessment”**).

Site-specific flood risk assessments shall consider climate change impacts and adaptation measures, shall apply the precautionary approach recommended in the Guidelines, and shall be informed by the advice on the expected impacts of climate change and the allowances to be provided for future flood risk management (refer to the OPW’s 2019 Flood Risk Management Climate Change Sectoral Adaptation Plan and the guidance on potential future scenarios contained therein).

- C.** Where a ‘Justification Test’ applies, it must be demonstrated to the satisfaction of the Planning Authority that the flood risk can be adequately managed, and that the use and the development of the lands will not cause unacceptable impacts elsewhere.
- D.** In Flood Zone C, where the probability of flooding is low (less than 0.1%), site-specific flood risk assessment may be required, and the developers should satisfy themselves that the probability of flooding is appropriate to the development being proposed.

Prospective applicants shall consult the SFRA datasets accompanying this Development Plan and the most up-to-date Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management (CFRAM) Programme climate scenario mapping.

Applications for development on sites identified as ‘benefitting lands’ may be prone to flooding, and site-specific flood risk assessments may be required in these areas.

- E.** Groundwater and pluvial flood risks shall be considered by any site-specific flood risk assessment undertaken at project level, in compliance with the Planning Systems and Flood Risk Management Guidelines (DEHLG, 2009).

## Flood risk management policies

**Note:** For the avoidance of doubt, the OPW's Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment indicative pluvial maps (2012) are NOT considered to be reliable for assessing pluvial risk.

- P-FRM-7** Support and facilitate the implementation of CFRAM Flood Risk Management Plans, and support the OPW in the development and implementation of sustainable flood risk management actions, including the delivery of Flood Relief Schemes.
- P-FRM-8** Protect the integrity of any formal flood risk management infrastructure, thereby ensuring that any new development does not negatively impact any existing defence infrastructure or compromise any proposed new defence infrastructure.
- P-FRM-9** Consider, as appropriate any new and/or emerging data, including, when available, any relevant information contained in the CFRAM Flood Risk Management Plans.

### Disclaimer

It is important to note that compliance with the requirements of the *Guidelines on Flood Risk Management* and of the Floods Directive 2007/60/EC is based on emerging and best available data at the time of preparing the accompanying Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (the SFRA), including Flood Risk Management Plans, which will be updated on a cyclical basis as part of Catchment-based Flood Risk Assessment and Management Plans (CFRAM) activities.

The SFRA process for the Draft Plan is ongoing and will be updated, to take account of any relevant submissions and subsequent proposals for material alterations that may arise during the Plan preparation process.

Following adoption of the Plan, information in relation to flood risk may be altered in light of future data and analysis, by, for example, the Office of Public Works, or future flood events. Any future SFRAs for the Plan area or for the County will integrate other new and emerging data.

All landowners and developers are advised that Sligo County Council and its agents cannot accept any responsibility for losses or damages arising due to assessments of the vulnerability to flooding of lands, uses and developments.

Prior to making planning or development decisions, owners, users and developers are advised to take all reasonable measures to assess the risk of flooding on lands in which they have an interest.

## 32.2 Coastal flooding and erosion

The impacts arising from climate variability, including changing weather patterns and predicted rising sea levels, will be most readily discernible at the coast. It is estimated that about 20% of Ireland's coast is at risk of coastline erosion.

The impacts of sea level rise on coastal erosion are not easy to estimate. Some coastlines are sinking, whilst others are uplifting. Irrespective of this, a sea level rise of at least 0.5 m is specified as a design requirement in many Irish coastal projects.

Storms not only bring high waves to the shoreline, but also elevated water levels through storm surges, which allow waves to directly attack the dunes and cliffs.

Flooding of low-lying coastal areas could become more frequent as a result of predicted increased intensity and frequency of oceanic storms. The likely outcome may exacerbate coastal erosion, which would have a devastating effect on existing development and infrastructure. All new proposed developments in all low-lying coastal areas should include a detailed flood risk assessment.

### 32.2.1 Coastal protection

The OPW's National Coastal Flood Hazard Mapping, completed in 2021, provides updated coastal flood extent and depth maps. Maps were produced for the 50% (equivalent to a one-in-two-year event), 20%, 10%, 5%, 2%, 1%, 0.5% and 0.1% (equivalent to a one-in-1000-year event) *Annual Exceedance Probabilities* for the present-day scenario and for future climate change scenarios, which represent increases in sea level.

The **Irish Coastal Protection Strategy Study (ICPSS)**, completed in 2013, provides maps for flood events with a probability of 0.1% (extreme flood risk – one in 1000 years) and 0.5% (indicative flood risk – one in 200 years). It also provides predictive erosion maps prepared for the years 2030 and 2050.

Sligo has a varied coastline, over 197-km long. The identified areas of potentially significant coastal erosion in County Sligo are:

- Marley's Point to Strandhill
- Raghly
- Streedagh Point to Cliffony

Coastal protection works aim to reduce loss of land, infrastructure, and the impacts of coastal flooding. This may require hard-engineered defences in order to withstand the storms and retain and defend a location. Such defences may be necessary, but can cause alterations to nearby coastal behaviour. Softer-engineered solution may be appropriate in many areas and where loss of lives is unlikely. Other options include sacrificial areas and allowing nature to take its course.

The Council will contribute towards adherence to the following general guidelines in the coastal zone:

- no building or development within 100 metres of 'soft' shorelines;
- no further reclamation of estuary land;
- no removal of sand dunes, beach sand or gravel;
- all proposed coastal defence measures should be assessed for environmental impact and habitats directive assessment;

- careful consideration should be given to the implications of using ‘hard engineering’ solutions, which should only be reserved for densely-populated coastal villages or for the protection of significant public infrastructure (e.g. harbours, piers, outfalls, public roads).

The planning and design of coastal protection works must have regard to the coastal dynamics. In light of the high cost of such defences, there is a case for restricting development near the coast, so as to minimise future demands for costly protection measures.

## Policies for coastal protection

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

- P-CP-1** Ensure that visual and environmental considerations are considered in the design of coastal defence works including compliance with the Habitats and Birds Directives.
- P-CP-2** Require that any development within the coastal zone is appropriately sited and designed, having regard to coastal flooding, future shoreline erosion, predicted sea-level rise and OPW flood mapping.
- P-CP-3** Require that detailed flood risk assessment is carried out in relation to development proposals within the coastal zone and particularly on all low-lying areas, where appropriate.

## Objectives for coastal protection

It is an objective of Sligo County Council to:

- O-CP-1** Identify, prioritise and implement coastal protection works within the coastal zone where considered necessary, subject to the availability of resources and subject to compliance with the Habitats and Birds Directives.
- O-CP-2** Monitor existing dune management schemes on an ongoing basis and carry out appropriate repairs, improvements and extensions, subject to the availability of resources and compliance with the Habitats and Birds Directives. Where appropriate, continue to employ soft engineering techniques (i.e. dune stabilisation and planting).
- O-CP-3** Examine existing beach bye-laws and make appropriate amendments, in the interest of protecting sand dunes from encroachment and damage.



# Chapter 33.

## Development management standards

### 33.1 Overview

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

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

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

#### **The planning process**

In making a decision on a planning application, the Planning Authority is restricted to considering the proper planning and sustainable development of the area<sup>1</sup>.

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

#### **Planning guidance**

The Minister for DHLGH issues statutory guidelines<sup>2</sup> to planning authorities. These guidelines cover a wide range of issues: apartment design standards, urban development, renewable energy, the design of streets, architectural heritage, housing supply, childcare facilities, retail planning, landscape assessment, quarries, etc. Some of the guidelines contain specific planning policy requirements (SPPRs) which take precedence over any policies and objectives contained within the Development Plan.

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

#### **Pre-planning meetings**

The Planning Authority provides an opportunity for anybody who has an interest in land or buildings to engage in discussions prior to making a planning application<sup>3</sup>. Potential applicants are strongly advised to avail of this service. It should be noted that such consultations will not pre-determine any subsequent decision made by Sligo County Council.

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<sup>1</sup> Section 34 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended)

<sup>2</sup> Section 28 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended)

<sup>3</sup> Section 247 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended)

## 33.2 General standards

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

### 33.2.1 Building lines

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

Building lines may be relaxed in the following cases:

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

### 33.2.2 Impact of development on its surroundings

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

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

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

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

### 33.2.3 Universal design

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

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

### 33.2.4 Infrastructure and services

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

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

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

### 33.2.5 Surface water drainage

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### 33.2.6 Flood risk assessment

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

Flood risk assessments should be:

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

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

These measures may relate to:

#### **Floor levels**

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

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

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

#### **Internal layout**

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

#### **Flood-resistant construction**

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

#### **Flood-resilient construction**

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

#### **Emergency response planning**

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

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

#### **Access and egress during flood events**

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

#### **Further information**

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

### 33.2.7 On-site wastewater treatment systems

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### 33.2.8 Waste management

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

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

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

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

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

### 33.2.9 Air and noise

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

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

### 33.2.10 Soil protection and remediation of contamination

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

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

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

### 33.2.11 Waste disposal

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

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

### 33.2.12 Site landscaping

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

Applicants shall have regard to the following requirements:

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

### 33.2.13 Undergrounding of cables

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

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

### 33.2.14 Illumination and spread of light

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

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

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

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

### 33.2.15 Home-based working and enterprises

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

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

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

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

### 33.2.16 Extensions to dwellings

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

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

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

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

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

### 33.2.17 Independent living unit for a family member

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

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

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

## 33.3 Residential development in urban areas

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

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

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

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

### 33.3.1 Multi-unit housing schemes

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### 33.3.2 Circulation, parking and connectivity to surrounding areas

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

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

### 33.3.3 Design of streets and public spaces

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

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

### 33.3.4 Security and the orientation of buildings

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

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

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

### 33.3.5 Distance between dwellings

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

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

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

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

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

### 33.3.6 Layout and design of apartments

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

**Table 33.2 Minimum net floor areas for apartments**

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

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

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

### 33.3.7 Public open space in multi-unit housing schemes

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

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

#### **Quantitative standards**

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

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

#### **Qualitative standards**

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

##### **Layout**

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

### Safety

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

### Accessibility

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

### Shared use

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

### Equipment

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

### Biodiversity

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

## 33.3.8 Private open space

### Houses

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

**Table 33.3 Minimum net garden sizes for houses**

House type	Minimum size
3 bedrooms or fewer	60 m <sup>2</sup>
4 or more bedrooms	75 m <sup>2</sup>

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

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

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

## Apartments

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

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

**Table 33.4 Minimum net private open space for apartments**

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

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

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

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

### 33.3.9 Management companies

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

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

### 33.3.10 Naming of housing estates and streets

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

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

### 33.3.11 Parking standards for housing developments

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## 33.4 Housing in rural areas

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

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

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

### Normal planning considerations

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

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

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

### 3.4.1 Rural-generated housing need

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

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

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

### 33.4.2 Site selection – locating a house in the landscape

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

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

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

#### **B. Site location**

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

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

### **C. Vehicular access**

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

### 33.4.3 Rural house design

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

#### **Design Statement**

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

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

### 33.4.4 Site boundaries

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

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

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

<b>Main features of rural vernacular house design</b>	
<b>Proportions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Ensure good roof-to-wall proportions and a high solid-to-void relationship (i.e. greater wall surface than windows and doors).</li> <li>■ Composition of windows and doors should be simple and, where suitable, symmetrical.</li> <li>■ Aim to minimise the distance between the top of the ground-floor windows and the sill of the first-floor windows to achieve good proportions.</li> </ul>
<b>Scale</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ A large house needs a large site to ensure effective integration into its surroundings (either immediately or in the future, through planned screening).</li> <li>■ Larger houses (e.g. in excess of 200 m<sup>2</sup>) should be sub-divided into smaller elements of traditional form to avoid bulky structures.</li> <li>■ Have regard to the scale of surrounding buildings.</li> </ul>
<b>Form</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Use a simple plan form to give a clean roof shape – a long plan in preference to a deep plan. This will avoid the creation of a bulky shape.</li> <li>■ Gable widths should generally not exceed 8 m, (recommended under 6.5 m for narrow plan form).</li> <li>■ A traditional storey-and-a-half house with a narrow plan form is preferable to a dormer-style bungalow.</li> <li>■ The form of a house affects the appearance of gable elevations. Gable elevations should be simple and roof pitch generally symmetrical.</li> </ul>
<b>Details</b>	
<b>Windows</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The size and shape of windows should be consistent on all elevations.</li> <li>■ Windows should be well proportioned, with a vertical emphasis.</li> <li>■ Dormer and bay windows should be used sparingly.</li> <li>■ Roof lights are preferable to mid-roof dormer windows.</li> </ul>
<b>Roofs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Roof pitch should range from 35° to 42°</li> <li>■ Natural slate or natural effect slate is preferable</li> </ul>
<b>Chimneys</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Chimneys should generally be placed centrally on the ridge and should have vernacular proportions</li> <li>■ Chimneys at a gable end should be flush with the gable.</li> </ul>

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

### 33.4.5 Ancillary buildings

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

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

### 33.4.6 Pattern of development

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

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

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

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

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

## 33.5 Retail development standards

### 33.5.1 General principles in assessing retail proposals

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

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

### 33.5.2 Permitted locations for retail development

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

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

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

### 33.5.3 Sequential approach to the location of retail development

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

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

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

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

## Order of priority

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

### Town centres

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

### Edge-of-centre sites

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

### Out-of-centre sites

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

## 33.5.4 Applications for change of use or extension

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

## 33.5.5 Retail Impact Assessment (RIA)

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

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

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

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

### 33.5.6 Transport impact assessment

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

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

### 33.5.7 Layout and design of retail developments

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

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

### 33.5.8 Design Statement

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

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

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

### 33.5.9 Shopfronts and signage

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

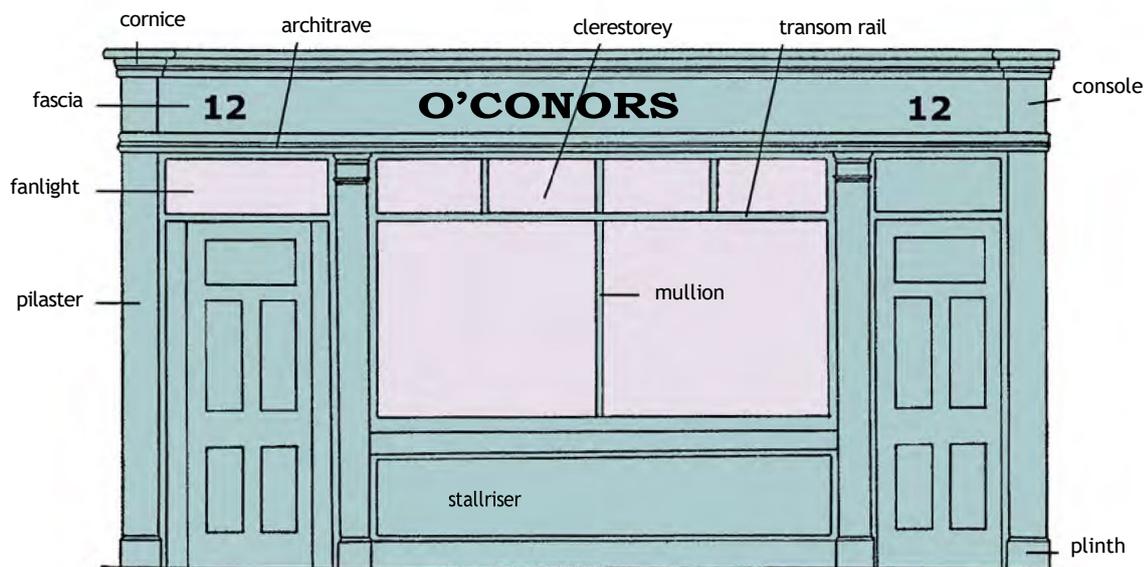
The Planning Authority will encourage the retention and refurbishment of historic shopfronts in lieu of their removal and replacement with a modern shopfront.

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

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

#### **Signage**

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



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

## Lighting

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

## Composition of traditional-style shopfronts

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

### **Composition of contemporary shopfronts**

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

### **Details**

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

## 33.6 Heritage and historic environment standards

### 33.6.1 Impact on architectural heritage

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

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

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

The conservation impact assessment shall be undertaken by an RIAI-accredited architect or practice<sup>4</sup> (or foreign equivalent for non-Irish architects or practices), where appropriate, detailing the impacts of the proposed development upon the special interest and character of the surrounding architectural heritage. The planning authority shall be consulted at an early stage in this regard, in order to determine whether there is a need for such an assessment or for specific mitigation measures.

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

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

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

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

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

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

### 33.6.2 Development in historic streetscapes

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

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

**Table 33.6 A guide to new development in historic streetscapes**

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

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

### 33.6.3 Impact on archaeology

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

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

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

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

## 33.7 Miscellaneous commercial developments standards

### 33.7.1 Petrol filling stations and ancillary uses

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

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

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

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

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

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

### 33.7.2 Bars, night-clubs and amusement centres

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

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

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

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

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

### 33.7.3 Fast-food takeaways

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

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

### 33.7.4 Guest accommodation

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

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

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

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

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

### 33.7.5 Industry, wholesale and repository warehousing

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### 33.7.6 Care facilities, nursing homes, retirement villages

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

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

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

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

### 33.7.7 Burial grounds and crematoria

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

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

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

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

## 33.8 Advertising standards

### 33.8.1 Planning requirements

Certain smaller advertisements and signs are exempted development<sup>5</sup>. Where permission is required (either planning permission or license) for the display of advertising signs this will be subject to the following requirements:

**Table 33.7 Types of advertising signage**

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

### 33.8.2 Advertising signage along public roads

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

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

### 33.8.3 Directional signage for tourism and key destinations

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

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

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

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

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

### 33.8.4 Advertising on buildings

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

### 33.8.5 Advertising hoardings

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

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

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

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

### 33.8.6 Signage at petrol filling stations

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

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

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

## 33.9 Transportation, roads and parking standards

### 33.9.1 Access onto national roads

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

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

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

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

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

#### **Sight distances for access on to national roads**

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

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

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

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

### 33.9.2 Access onto regional roads

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

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

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

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

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

### 33.9.3 Road and traffic assessments

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

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

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

### 33.9.4 Mobility Management Plans (MMP)

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

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

Measures that should be included are listed below:

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

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

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

## 33.9.5 Entrances and sightlines

### General requirements

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

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

### Rural housing

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Commercial development

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

## 33.9.6 Cycle parking and facilities

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

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

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

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

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

**Table 33.9 Bicycle parking standards**

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

### 33.9.7 Car parking requirements

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

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

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

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

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

## Car parking standards

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

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

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

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

**Table 33.10 Car parking standards**

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

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

## 33.10 Agricultural development standards

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## 33.11 Energy and telecommunications infrastructure development standards

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

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

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

### 33.11.1 Wind energy developments

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

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

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

### 33.11.2 Solar energy

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

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

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

### 33.11.3 Telecommunications and overhead cables

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

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

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