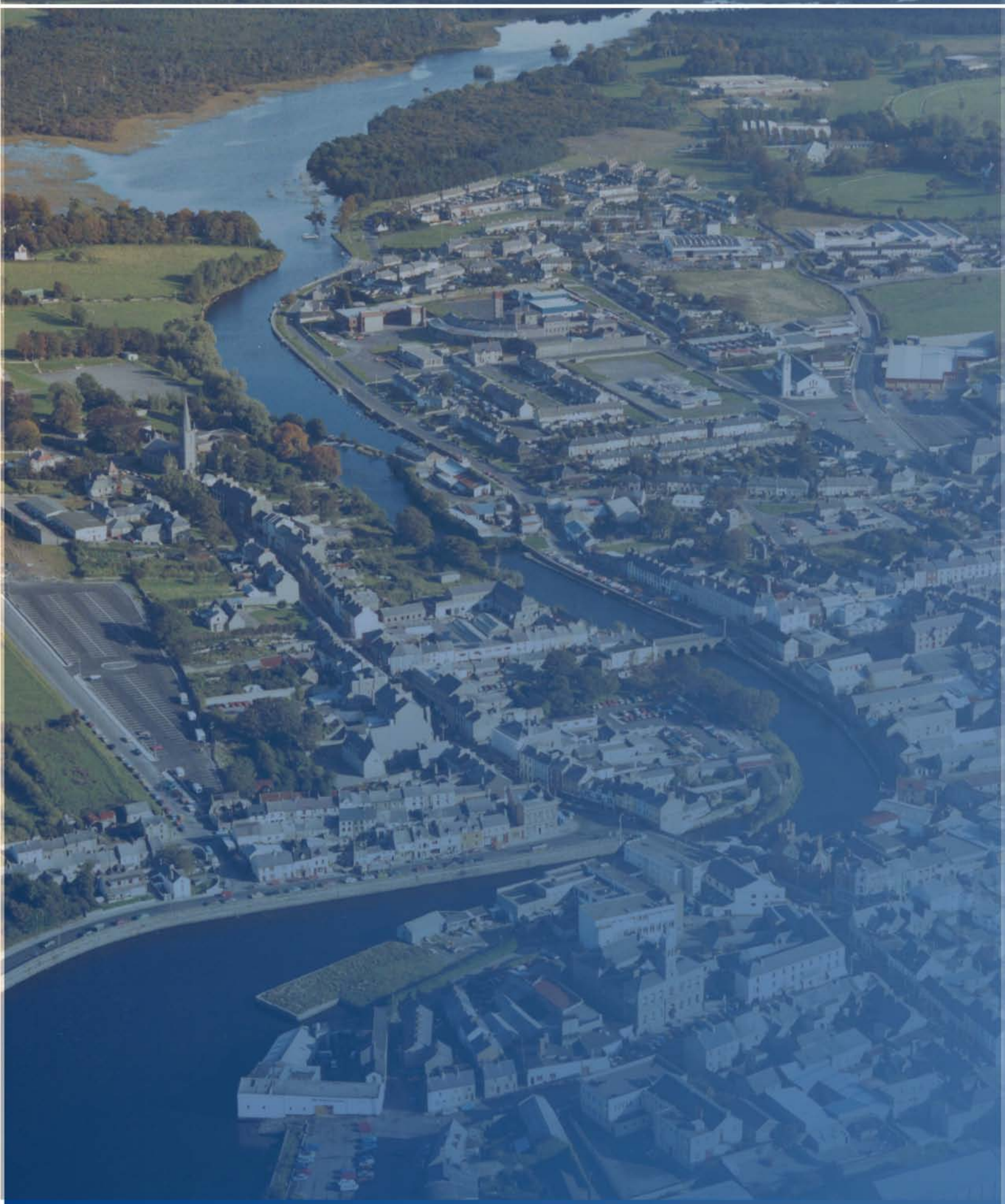


SECTION 1: SLIGO - A STRATEGIC CONTEXT





Aerial view of Sligo City and surrounding environs

1.1 The Sligo and Environs Development Plan – An Overview

The principal mechanism by which development takes place in a planned and co-ordinated manner is through the preparation of the Development Plan. Thus the Development Plan process is likely to have a significant influence on the future growth and development of Sligo and Environs for years to come. Objectives that must be included in the Development Plan are set down in the Planning and Development Act, 2000. Every planning authority is required by law to make a development plan every six years, and the timetabling of the process is guided by the framework that is set out within the 2000 Act. This Plan will replace the Sligo City Development Plan 1992-1997.

Sligo serves as a nationally strategic and regionally important centre for administrative, employment, education, retailing, transport and healthcare functions for the wider Sligo area and Northwest region.

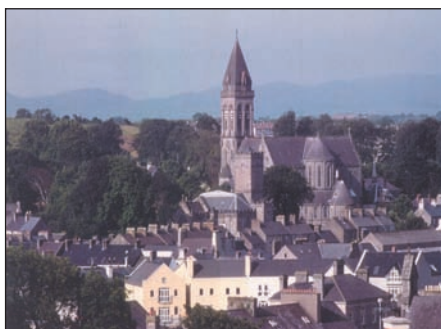
The growth and development of Sligo in recent years has played a key role in lifting the economic prospects of the wider county and region. Continued development is a key determinant of socio-economic prosperity and an indicator of the city and county's growing significance in maintaining and attracting necessary investment.

Limited progress now makes it necessary to ensure that a dynamic and innovative development plan is put in place in order to achieve the following key objectives:

- (1) That there is a transport framework with which to co-ordinate the development process.
- (2) That the knock-on implications of success, in terms of greater levels of development, additional traffic, additional housing and upgraded infrastructure are managed effectively and in a sustainable way into the future, and
- (3) That through effective and high-quality planning, ensuring that investment, both by the private sector and the state, can be generated indigenously and externally.

Under the provisions of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, Sligo Borough Council and Sligo County Council, acting through their public representatives, must prepare a development plan for Sligo every six years. In view of Sligo's important regional role and the scale of projected growth for the city, it is necessary to plan for the surrounding environs alongside planning for the city. For this reason, Sligo County Council has a fundamental role to play in the development plan process.

Although development plans are prepared to cover a six year timeframe, it is important that the plan is set within a longer-term strategic perspective for the next twenty years in line with the Sligo Sub Regional Development Strategy 2001 – 2021, (see Map 1, Location Map, page 3) which was previously commissioned by Sligo Corporation and Sligo County Council.



Townscape view of Sligo

The Sub-Regional Strategy looks in detail at the relationship between Sligo City and its surrounding hinterland and establishes a framework for the future development of Sligo and the wider environs, an area extending from Grange in the north to Collooney in the south.

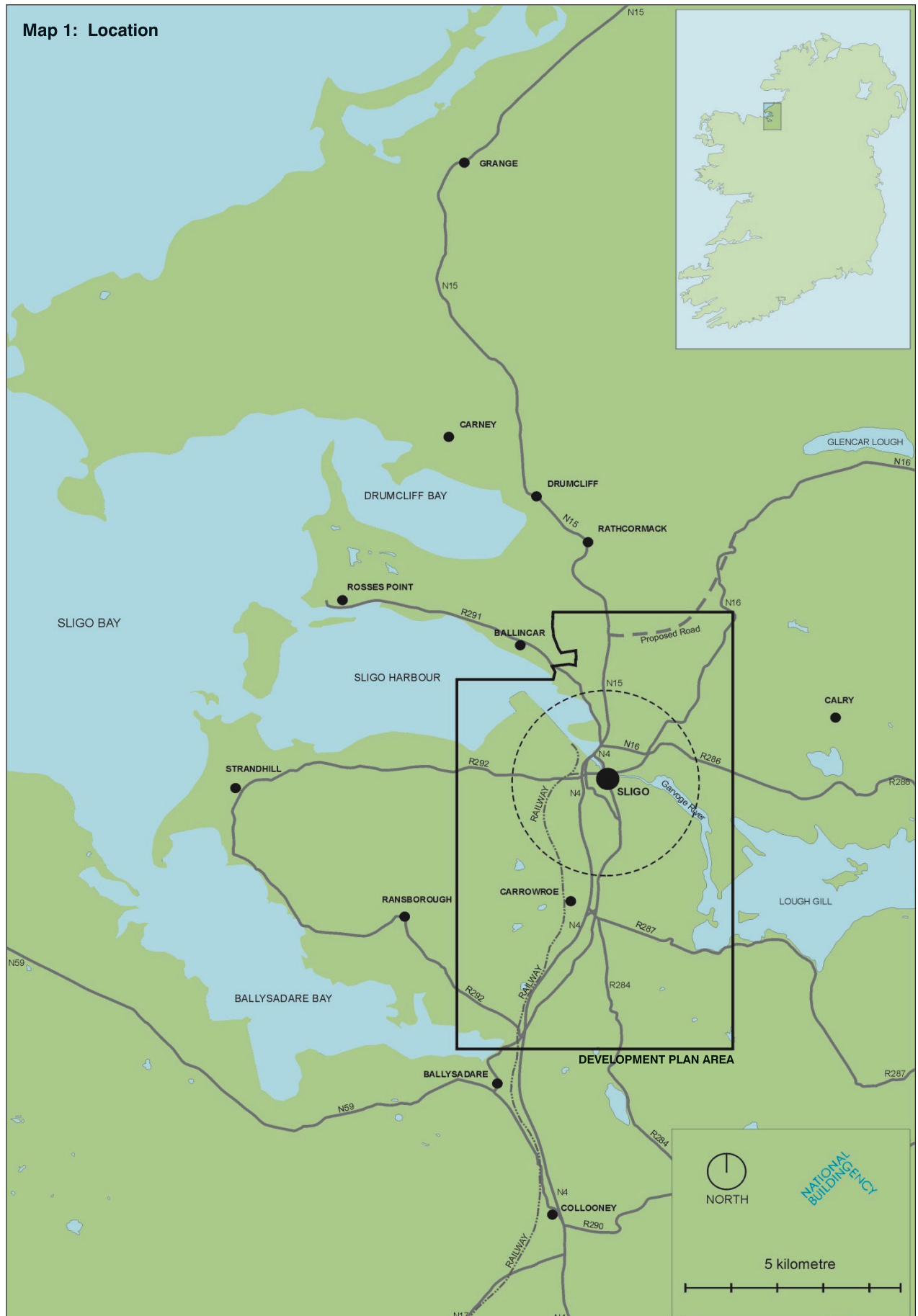
This document is the Development Plan for Sligo. The plan is set out in broad and general terms around three key sections:

- Section 1: A Strategic Context – which summarises some of the “big picture” issues facing Sligo in the future from the national, regional and local perspectives.
- Section 2: Policies and Objectives– which sets out broad policies and more detailed objectives and proposals for achieving a high quality living, working, investment and physical environment for Sligo.
- Section 3: Development Control – which explains the roles of local and central government and the private sector in delivering aspects of the plan. It also includes a ‘Development Control and Development Guidelines’ Section, which establishes criteria for the assessment of individual planning applications.

These sections are supplemented by a number of appendices that set out additional material of a technical or detailed nature.

1.1.1 Plan Coverage

The Sligo and Environs Development Plan covers the area indicated in Map 2 (page 4), which includes the Sligo Borough area (marked by the Borough circular boundary) and extends beyond it to include lands outside this boundary; the townlands of Rathaberna, Carncash and Kiltycooly to the north and north east, Ballydoogan and Oakfield to the West, Knappagh More, Bellanode, Farranacardy and parts of Hazelwood Demesne, Tonaphubble and Carrowmore to the east and south east, Carrowkeel, Drumaskibbole and Carrownamaddoo to the south and the eastern banks of Lough Gill to the east.



SLIGO AND ENVIRONS DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Map 2: Study Area for Development Plan



1.2. Sligo: Current Trends and Conditions

1.2.1 Sligo Today

Current factors influencing Sligo's development indicate a number of key pointers for setting out a planning and development framework for the next six years that also fits comfortably within a 20 year strategic horizon.

These factors include:

- Sligo's national and regional spatial context and the emerging issue of achieving more balanced regional development.
- The spatial manner in which Sligo is tending to develop and some conclusions that can be drawn.

- Sligo's socio-economic performance and key strengths, issues and opportunities that arise.
- The nationally unique physical setting of Sligo and its importance as a cultural, economic and physical asset.

1.2.2 National and Regional Spatial Context

Sligo is the largest urban centre in the north west and, given its location midway between Galway and Derry (each being approx 130 km in distance), is a natural capital for a large hinterland in the northwest. Sligo has been identified in the National Spatial Strategy, 2002 – 2020 (NSS), as a 'gateway' city. According to the NSS "Sligo was selected as a gateway because of its strategic location in the North West, its physical and infrastructural capacity to develop substantially in the future and its stock of the critical factors such as water services, education and healthcare, necessary to support Gateway functions. Sligo's spatial position means it is capable of energising a wider area encompassing parts of Mayo, Leitrim, Donegal and Sligo County itself as well as capitalising on emerging cross-border co-operation, while being part of a broader corridor of cities spanning from Cork to Derry". Sligo is located at the mouth of Sligo Harbour on the Garvogue River, set within a magnificent scenery of mountains, rivers, lakes and an extensive Atlantic coastline. Sligo, because of its size and spatial location in the northwest, is a key "regional capital" in terms of employment, retailing, health, education, social services, transport and other functions. Due to the links and relationships between Sligo and its wider county and regional context, and the topography of the area, Sligo is the natural gateway through which the urban and rural strengths of the locality and region can be accessed.

Sligo City is served by a wide range of social and economic infrastructure. It is a focus for local, regional and national road networks, road and rail based public transport networks, energy and communication networks and key health, education, cultural and other facilities.

Sligo is located on the national primary route (N4) which links Dublin to the northwest. Other primary and secondary routes (see Table 1 below) connect Sligo with Belfast, Galway, Derry, Limerick and other major centres in the region. The city is served by a national rail route linking Sligo to Dublin via the centres of Mullingar and Longford. It also has a bus terminus located adjacent to the railway station linking the city to centres nationally and also providing a local service; this gives the city an excellent regional infrastructural base and the opportunity to expand.

Table 1: Road Distances

Road Distances from Sligo City	Kms	Miles	Roads to Destination
Belfast	208	129	N16/A4/M1
Dublin	212	135	N4/M4
Galway	138	86	N4/N17
Larne	233	145	N16/A4/M1/A8
Cork	330	207	N4/N17/N18/N20
Derry	137	85	N15/A5
Enniskillen	65	41	N16
Ballina	59.5	37	N4/N59
Donegal	40	64	N15
Castlebar/(Westport)	83/(111)	52/(69)	N17/N5/(N60)
Athlone	116	72	N4/N61



View of the landscape that surrounds Sligo City

In a more local context, Sligo is a key economic energiser for the Sligo county area. Close to Sligo are the towns of Tobercurry, Ballymote, Collooney and Ballysadare (population: 1,891, 1,396, 1,253 and 1,532 respectively, (C.S.O., July 2002). Some of these centres have recently been experiencing rapid development, encouraged by their proximity to Sligo, the supply of housing and their unique attractiveness.

Achieving more balanced regional development is a key objective of the Government policy as expressed in the National Development Plan 2000 – 2006 and the National Spatial Strategy 2002 – 2020. The NSS places much emphasis on the importance of “critical mass” or achieving a key threshold of development in terms of scale and function – to further drive development. Building on Sligo’s strategic national and regional location, recent development and progress, and the boosting of Sligo’s critical mass, will be essential in delivering the Governments objective for regional development. Planning for growth in a sustainable quality-based way will be vital to better position Sligo on the national stage. This can be achieved through marshalling public and private investment with local development potential to generate better local employment prospects and better access to amenities and services.

1.2.3 Physical Development Issues

Within the Sligo Borough boundary, development has taken place to the north, west and south leaving noticeable tracts of land to the southwest, northeast and east underutilised (See Map 3, Existing Landuse, page 7). The areas that mostly benefited from development are biased towards the south of the city towards the Carrowroe area.

To the north the harbour acts as a constraint on development and to the east the Garvogue River and significant areas of woodland in Hazelwood Demense also prevent development. However, to the south (west of the proposed Inner Relief Road) there is a significant area of underdeveloped land within the boundary.

The fact that this land to the southwest has remained underdeveloped is primarily due to the undetermined nature of the inner relief road over the preceding 10 years or so. There is now a significant opportunity for development in this area and the manner in which this is carried out is critical to the future of the city. Further to the southwest, close to Carrowmore, this area displays a great wealth of archaeology and therefore poses restrictions on development activity.

The city’s growth can be categorised into three principal areas: the inner core (the commercial heart of Sligo); the inner fringe belt (displaying older residential development and dominated by significant public and institutional lands) and an outer fringe area (typified by more recent suburban growth and larger industrial lands – see Maps 3 & 4).

The inner core of the city is dominated by commercial and retail activity, although its edges display some noticeable office activity (particularly along the Mall and western Wine Street) and some public-institutional lands. The commercial core displays the greatest intensity of uses and the density is highest in this area. It also features some of the more impressive architecture dating from the 18th century, a period of prosperity for the city.

The inner fringe belt features pockets of older residential development but is dominated by public institutional lands including religious institutions, the Hospital, the Institute of Technology and several schools; these uses are an important part of the city centre. There are also areas of open space, most significantly in the vicinity of the Green Fort, to the north of the city centre.



View of Hazelwood Demense



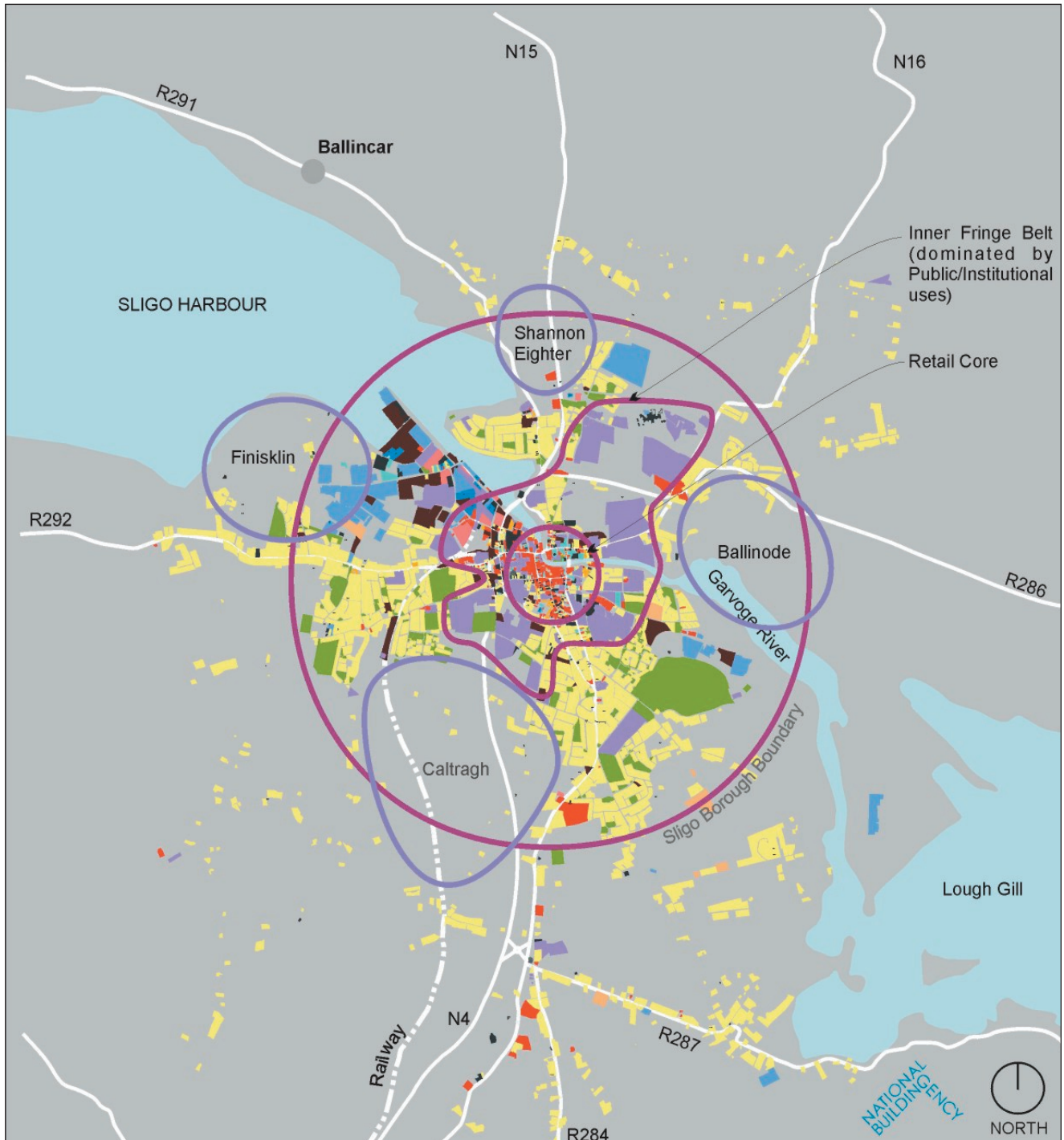
Dolmen at Carrowmore - one of the many archaeological features that exist in and around Sligo City

3. Existing Land Use Map

3.1 Existing City Centre Land Use - Ground Floor Map

3.2 Existing City Centre Land Use - First Floor Map

Map 4: Concept Land Use Map showing underdeveloped areas in the context of the Borough Council Boundary





Pedestrian Footbridge in city centre, Sligo



View of Garvogue River



The Landscape of County Sligo

The outer fringe belt features primarily residential development but also includes large areas of industrial land to the west and smaller areas to the north and east. A significant part of this belt is the port, which is a critical element of the city's structure as its role is likely to change in the future. There are noticeable areas of brownfield land and under-utilised sites available for development in this area, with the port being an important part of the future strategy for the city. The outer fringe belt also features the racecourse and other significant areas of open space such as Hazelwood Demesne. The future of the racecourse is uncertain and the long term use of this area will be important.

Three road bridges traverse the river in the city centre – Hyde Bridge, New Bridge, and Hughes Bridge (these link the inner core of the city). Two footbridges also connect north and south Sligo, at Rockwood Parade and the J.Fallon Footbridge further east at Riverside.

Sligo is served by the National Primary Route N4, the main Dublin Road. Other primary and secondary roads connect Sligo with Belfast, Galway, Enniskillen, Derry and Limerick and other major centres in the region. These routes particularly the Dublin road have influenced the pattern of development in Sligo by drawing developments towards them. There is also a rail connection with Dublin and a regional airport at Strandhill, just five miles from the city. These are important infrastructural elements in any future growth of the city.

1.2.4 Sligo's Nationally Unique Environment

Sligo City has developed at the mouth of the Garvogue River. The centre of the city is situated along the river course between Lough Gill and the sea, and these natural features contribute to the city's enduring character.

County Sligo is dominated by a mountainous landscape, with Sligo City surrounded by the Ox mountain range to the south, Knocknarea to the west, Benbulbin and Kings Mountain to the north, Copes mountain and Keelogyboy Mountain to the north-east and Slieve Daeane and Slieve Dargan to the south. There is a sense of enclosure from these mountains in Sligo City as they provide a backdrop to development and are visible from many locations throughout the city. (see Map 5, Topography Map, page 12)

The main environmental features of Sligo City and Environs (Map 6, Environmental Parameters, page 13) consist of significant expanses of fresh and salt water and associated habitats, along the Garvogue River, Lough Gill and Sligo Bay. Large areas of mixed and natural woodland are situated on the banks of the Garvogue at Hazelwood Demesne, Cleveragh Demesne, Aghamore, to the south of Aghamore Bay and Tobernalt Bay, and a significant zone of archaeological amenity is located in the Carrowmore area.

Within the city and environs there is also varying topography, the most notable area of high ground is the area to the south west of the city in the Cairns and Tonaphubble area: this area is clearly visible from the city and has significant views over Lough Gill, Hazelwood Demesne and the city itself. The route of a scenic drive runs through the area and skirts Lough Gill.

Directly to the north of the city centre the topography rises to form a ridgeline of notable prominence in the vicinity of Forthill (also the site of Green Fort archaeological remains); this area has remained undeveloped due primarily to its archaeological importance and visual sensitivity. Other ridges occur further north and east of the city.

Map 5: Topography Map

Map 6: Environmental Parameters Map

1.2.5 Socio-Economic Performance

1.2.5.1 Economic and other Functions

Sligo serves as an administrative, employment, commercial, health, recreational and educational centre for a large hinterland area. It also acts as an important distribution centre in the northwest. Sligo has a strong and considerably important manufacturing base, particularly with the existence of the IDA Business Park, and larger companies such as Abbott, a pharmaceutical company. The IDA has recognised this importance by designating Sligo a 'gateway city', which has been subsequently been reflected in the National Spatial Strategy. The city however is primarily identified by its service sector, which plays a very significant role in its function as a regional centre. The city draws employment from a large area due to these functions.



Yeats' Grave, Drumcliff Cemetery

The city has an important role in retail provision. The commercial centre is regionally significant particularly in comparison shopping and is quite significant for convenience goods. The commercial area serves a large hinterland area for goods and services. Sligo's regional retail significance was highlighted by a retail impact analysis indicating that the retail catchment is very large, extending as far as 44 miles from the city.

Sligo Institute of Technology gives the city a regional educational role. The campus has a student population in excess of 3,000 and has the capacity for 6,500. The institute offers undergraduate diploma and degrees, and postgraduate masters and Ph.D.'s. St. Angela's College is also a third level college offering a wide range of specialist courses.

Sligo General Regional Hospital establishes the city as a regional centre in terms of healthcare. Extensive medical and specialist facilities are available at the 300+ beds General Hospital, which also provides a training school for nurses.

County Sligo has one of the highest densities of archaeological sites/remains in the country and has a rich association with literature, culture, arts and music. Several features give Sligo a unique character as a tourist destination – its association with Yeats, the sublime landscape; surfing in places such as Strandhill, the Carrowmore Megalithic Cemetery; the built heritage such as Sligo Abbey, Lissadell House and Markree Castle; in addition to an attractive townscape and interesting street pattern.

1.2.5.2 Occupational and Employment Profile

Analysis of Sligo's workforce in terms of the sectors, which people are employed in, coupled with their educational attainment, indicates that:

- There is considerable scope for strengthening the high technology and professional skills base.
- The traditional strengths in the manufacturing areas need to be diversified.
- Strengthening the capacity for learning, innovation and flexibility and retraining are vital to sustaining and extending past progress.

1.2.6 Population

Preliminary figures from the Central Statistics Office (CSO), 2002, reveal that the population of the Borough is 18,429. No figures are currently available for the City and Environs, though it is estimated to be approximately 19,000 persons. Sligo Borough showed a percentage increase of 3.6% since 1996.

However, examining the population change in the context of the Sub-Region (that includes 15 District Electoral Divisions that surround the Borough), indicates that Sligo's hinterland displayed a growth rate over twice that experienced in the Borough.



Indeed, some of the rural areas around and outside Sligo experienced growth rates in excess of 10%, Knockaree D.E.D displaying a massive 38% increase.

The rural areas that surround the city are therefore absorbing the majority of the growth of Sligo City and Environs, as people move or migrate to the countryside. A key issue for this plan is therefore to address the underlying conditions that are driving this trend in terms of making Sligo City and Environs an attractive alternative to living in surrounding rural areas so that its critical mass can be enhanced, thereby attracting public and private investment in a national and international context.

Appendices A, B, and C outline additional population information and demographic analysis of Sligo. Key issues of relevance for this plan that emerge from this analysis include the following:

- The city and environs display a young, dynamic population structure.
- The average household size in Sligo is smaller than the national average.
- The city and environs displays a higher than national average student population, likely to be attributed to Sligo Institute of Technology and St. Angela's College.

Note these figures are based on CSO 1996 data, as figures from the 2002 Census were unavailable at time of plan preparation.

1.2.7 Future Population

The Sligo Sub-Regional Strategy 2001-2021 underlined the need to position Sligo as a 'gateway city' of the northwest with the necessary critical mass to compete at the regional and national levels. It envisaged the growth of Sligo City and Environs' population to approximately 37,761 by 2021. This would result in a doubling of population from 1996 levels. A population of 27,000 is feasible by 2010, or a typical growth of 961 persons per year.

The Sub-Regional Strategy acknowledged the uncertainty in the area of population projections at local level in Ireland at the present time. This uncertainty arises from a number of factors, including:

- The rapid rise in house completion over the preceding Development Plan period. Increases in the number of households has resulted in an increased demand for accommodation and formation of residential units. Therefore, in determining future land use needs, household formation is as important as population growth.
- High levels of economic growth over the preceding Plan period which led to increased development activity. However, projections on National economic growth have become less clear in light of the changes in the world economy and the economic impacts associated with the events of September 11th, 2001.
- Development of an as yet undefined National Spatial Strategy.

In relation to the National Spatial Strategy, it is likely that achieving a sufficient level of critical mass may necessitate a level of development beyond what can be accurately predicted using normal predictions.



Slishwood, Sligo

1.3 Sligo: A Strategic Vision

The previous section has outlined that:

- The national and regional policy context is favourable to positioning Sligo as a key urban driver of growth in Sligo County and the wider northwest region.
- There is considerable potential for development in three strategic directions, with the centre of Sligo emerging as a significant focus for business, retail and cultural functions.
- Sligo must capitalise on its nationally unique setting if it is to offer a distinctive place in which to live, work and recreate and this will become a key feature of Sligo's comparative advantage in the future.
- Public and private investment will be required to realise Sligo's potential and will be enabled by clear development frameworks such as this plan.

1.3.1 What future do we want?

For Sligo, the aim is to grow a compact relatively self-contained, fast-growth city on the western seaboard as a growth driver for the region, with a strong combination of industry, services, arts, culture and tourism. This would build on the considerable infrastructural investment that has already taken place. Sligo has the basic ingredients of a scenic setting, an airport, national road and rail connections, a strengthening base of arts and cultural facilities, and a number of regional government offices.

At a practical level, this entails working towards creating a centre with the level of population and critical mass that will drive Sligo itself, and the wider region, forward. Looking to the performance of, for example, Galway as a model for Sligo, this suggests aiming towards a long-term and strategic population horizon of between 50,000 and 80,000 people over the next 20 – 30 years. Such a population horizon should be a strategic reference point for actions at the day to day level that will ordinarily be driven by providing for the projected population increase outlined in section 1.2.7.

This approach acknowledges that employment can have a major impact on population trends, as people are attracted to employment growth spots and thus increase population above natural increases. In addition, young graduates and others who might otherwise migrate from Sligo and the region would be encouraged to remain. Therefore, the approach taken in this Development Plan, is not a 'predict and provide' one, but rather a 'plan-monitor-manage' approach that ensures that Sligo can reach its Gateway status, with adjustments to land use zoning occurring in subsequent development plan periods.

Sligo has been recognised for over 30 years as an urban centre of regional importance for economic development in the northwest (e.g. The Buchanan Report – Regional Studies in Ireland, 1969). One of the principal objectives of the Sub-Regional Strategy (2001-2021) was to facilitate and encourage the development of Sligo as a 'Gateway City' or an economic growth driver for the northwest. Thus, it will be seen as the 'capital of the northwest'. In order for Sligo to achieve this status, Sligo needs to reinvent itself in a manner which will not just place it on the map in a regional sense, but also on the national and European sense.

In line with its development in this manner, a primary aim will be to ensure that Sligo remains desirable both for attracting inward investment and the mobile population sector. Its appeal as a place to live is also fundamental to the existing inhabitants of the area.

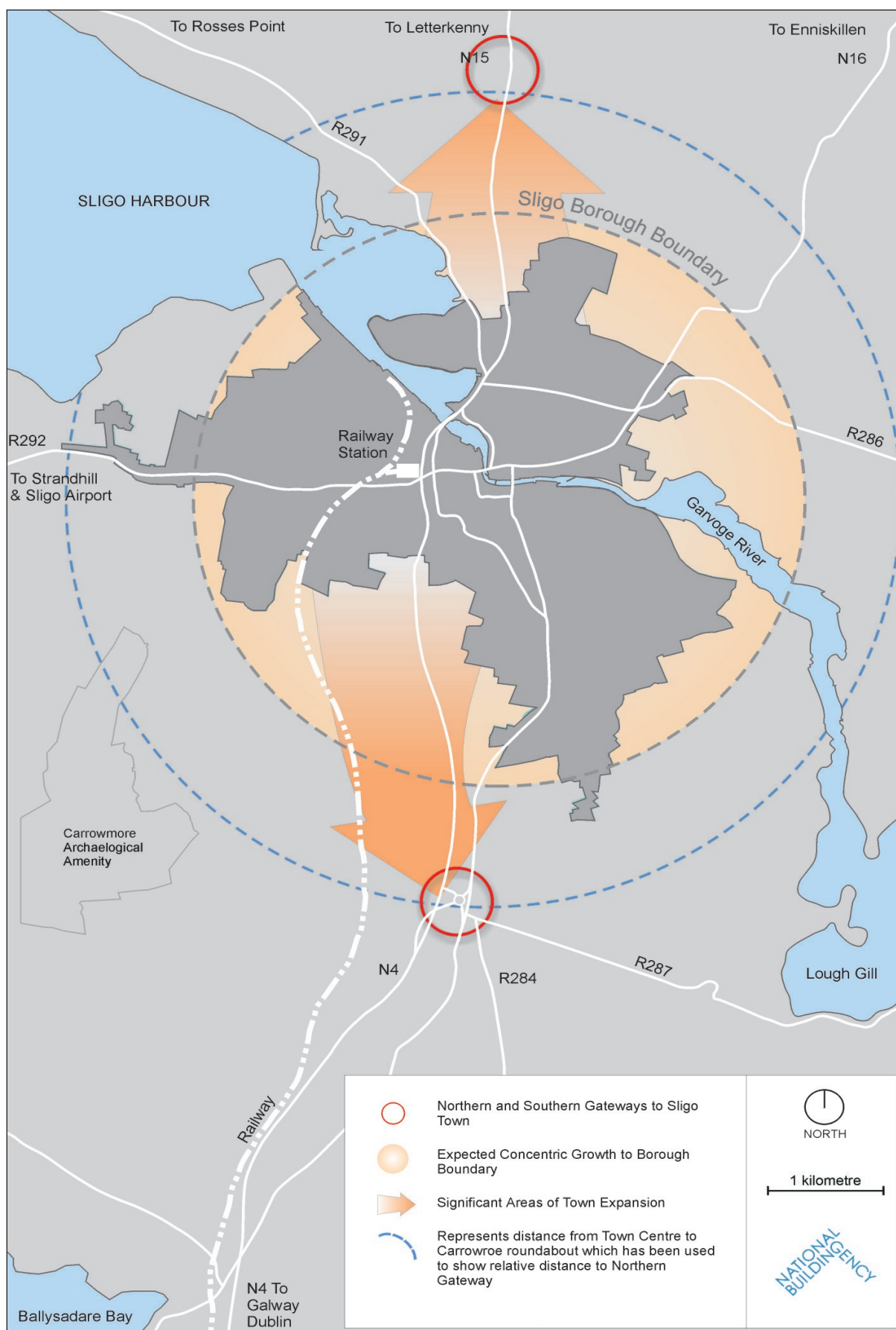
In order to be attractive, it needs to be liveable. Liveability requires meeting several objectives:

- Maintain a healthy environment
- Support the provision of affordable housing
- Maintain ease of access to green areas and the countryside
- Provide contact with nature and ensure a high quality and sustainable natural environment
- Provide and promote infrastructure conducive to varied forms of mobility, including an efficient public transport system
- Promote cultural continuity through a respect for historical assets (architecture and archaeology) and the promotion of cultural activities (the Yeats family, literature and painting, etc.)
- Ensure visual harmony between old and new architecture (i.e., context design) and quality urban design initiatives.
- Respect for the existing landscape context
- Provision of the necessary infrastructure, facilities and services associated with an expanding urban centre.
- Promote Sligo as an attractive shopping experience and a place for entertainment.
- Promote linkages to other urban centres in the region.

In line with the Border, Midland, West Strategy (BMW), it will be the aim of Sligo Borough Council and Sligo County Council to support the development of Sligo as a centre for:

- Electronic Commerce, with the appropriate telecommunications
- Vital business services
- Major new tourism honeypots, particularly with regard to untapped tourism potential
- Research and Technology Development, by redesigning and upgrading RTD facilities at the Institute of Technology.
- Establishment of new technology parks at Sligo.

Map 7: Centre-City Concept Map showing the Principal Development Strategy for the Future growth of Sligo and Environs





1.4 Developing a Strategy

1.4.1 Development that is Sustainable

Government policy has now shifted to include sustainability as a cornerstone of planning policy with the adoption of the Planning and Development Act 2000. Local Authorities must now address the issue of sustainability when deciding upon the future development of the city. The Strategy for development therefore is assessed on its sustainability credentials, which subsequently affect the type of strategy implemented; for example a strategy which disperses development throughout the study area would have a more negative effect on the environment than one which promotes a compact development form.

1.4.2 Where are the Opportunities?

An examination of the two existing Land Use Maps reveals that the city has experienced significant development to the west (along the Strandhill Road) and immediately south of the city (on either side of the Dublin Road towards Carrowroe). Lands between these two areas - at Caltragh, in the vicinity of the Inner Relief Road and the Railway Line - have remained relatively free from development.

More development has taken place to the south of the city than to the north and there has been little development east of the city relative to the west. The lack of development to the east of the city is partly accounted for by the Garvogue River, associated alluvial woodlands, Lough Gill and more environmentally sensitive lands at Cairns. Nonetheless, even where development could take place, little has occurred.

In conclusion, there are significant development opportunities south of the city in the area of Caltragh, east of the city in Ballinode, west of the city at Finisklin and north of the city towards Lisnalgur. (see Map 7, Development Strategy, page 18)

Urban Audit

The urban audit is based on all contiguous development within the Sligo Borough Council Boundary and is based on a Land Use Survey carried out in the Summer 2001.

Land Use Characteristics

	Hectares	Percent
Total Area within the Borough Boundary	1317.72	N/A
Urban Footprint (Total urban area developed)	498.37	100%
Proportion of urban area in residential use	213.84	42.91
Proportion of urban area in multi-residential use	1.75	0.35
Proportion of urban area in commercial/retail use	20.51	4.12
Proportion of urban area in retail warehousing use	5.45	1.09
Proportion of urban area in office use	3.77	0.76
Proportion of urban area in public/institutional use	96.5	19.36
Proportion of urban area in public utility use	3.22	0.65
Proportion of urban area in public open space use	70.77	14.2
Proportion of urban area in industrial/warehousing use	41.55	8.33
Proportion of urban area in vacant use or categorized as brownfield sites	41.00	8.22
Proportion of undeveloped land within Borough Council Boundary (excluding brownfield sites, vacant sites, roads, rivers and woodlands) = 465.87 Hectares		

Population Density

Population density within the area of contiguous development is approximately 3,571 persons per km sq.

Figures include areas used for car parking associated with principal use

1.4.3 Developing the Strategy

The Sub-Regional Strategy selects a particular model for the growth of the sub-region. The recommended model is for Sligo Densification or The Compact City with Satellite Villages (in preference to uncontrolled peripheral sprawl and dispersed urban generated housing in rural areas). The aim of this model is to consolidate peripheral growth into more central areas of the city and to redirect rural and one-off housing into a number of selected satellite villages.

The model has a preference for densification (redevelopment of under-utilised lands, brownfield sites and infill development) rather than continuous edge-of-city expansion and urban sprawl in the form of concentric low density developments. A restriction on significant expansion on the outskirts of the city will apply with a preference for a more compact urban form that would support public transport and pedestrian movement patterns (in addition to cycling). The focus will be on urban renewal and regeneration and will see new growth on the edges being directed into specific areas, such as the 'undeveloped wedges' of the city which have seen little development over the preceding 10 - 15 year period, so as to create a more balanced structure to the city's development, i.e., along the strategic corridor route of the N4 Inner Relief Road (at Caltragh, from the Carrowroe roundabout to the area of Circular Road/College Road).

1.4.4 Refining the Strategy

The city's future development needs to be considered in terms of medium and long term growth and, in particular, in terms of the implications of current decisions on future options. It is desirable that Sligo consolidates its existing structure in order to facilitate a compact and sustainable form of urban development. In this regard, a number of land use and transportation issues need to be jointly considered within the framework of existing environmental factors.

Westward development along the roads to Strandhill and Rosses Point will be curtailed so as to maintain the more sensitive coastal environments along these routes free from development. Continuous development between Sligo City and Ballincar would also be restricted so as to maintain the distinction between village and city. In addition, maintaining ease of access to Sligo Regional Airport is important to ensure Sligo remains attractive to inward investment and businesses. The presence of the Carrowmore Zone of Archaeological Protection is also a restrictive element to westward development.

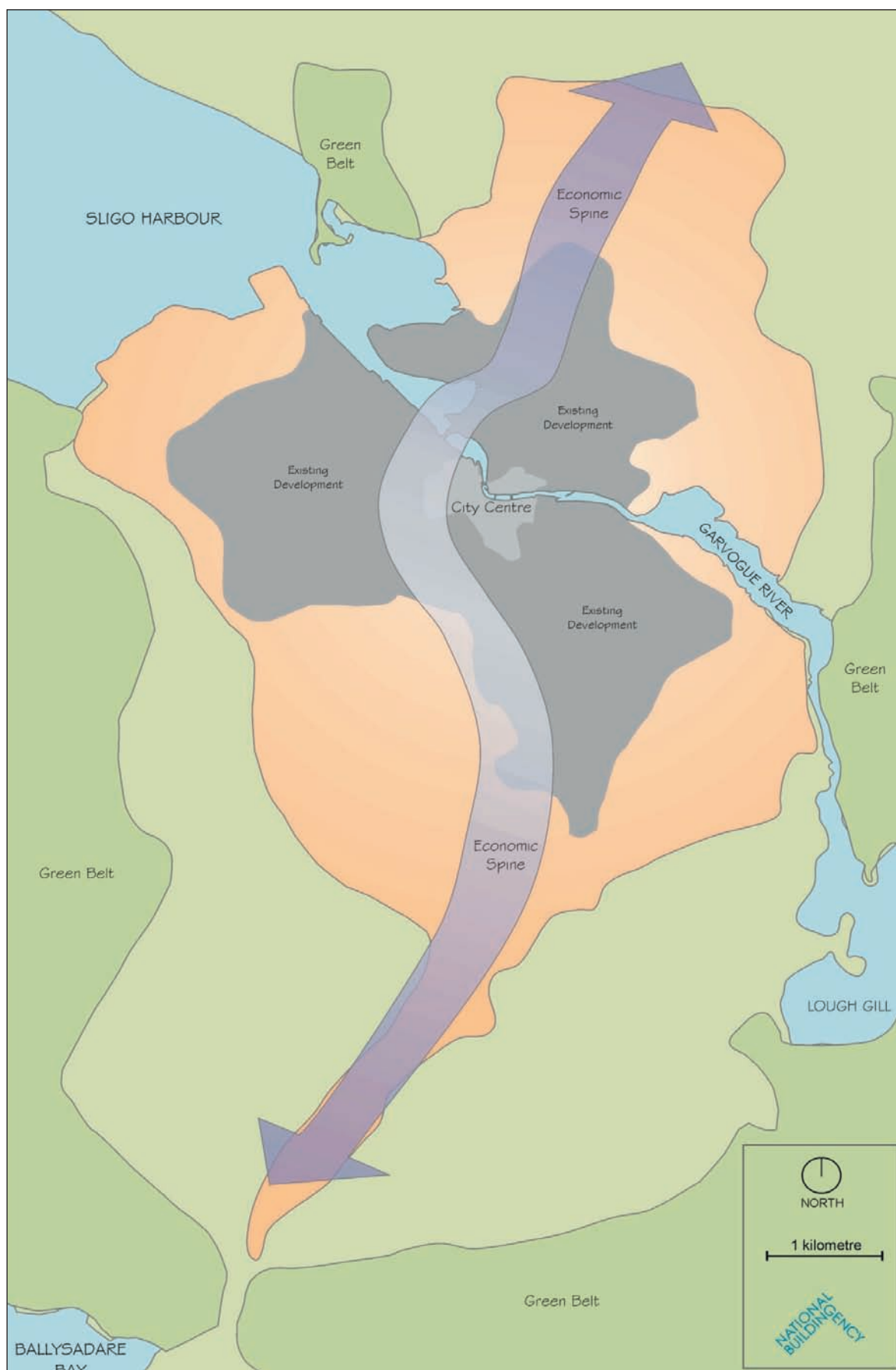
These issues place restrictions on the westward expansion of the City. Eastwards, future development is also restricted by the presence of Lough Gill, the Garvogue River and associated alluvial woodlands. The higher lands associated with Carns also limit the intensity of development. Some development can take place towards Hazelwood, but otherwise there are limitations to eastward expansion, especially south of the Garvogue River.

1.4.5 Introducing Transport into the Strategy

The main traffic corridor running through Sligo (the N4 and N15) runs along a north-south axis due to the Atlantic and associated peninsulas to the west and the Garvogue River and Lough Gill to east. This north-south alignment offers the greatest opportunities for the future growth and development of Sligo City, though there is still capacity within the Borough boundary to enable continued concentric growth to its limits (see Map 8 page 21).

The desired balance may be best achieved through the development of an open system of growth called "Centre-City". This type of development ensures proximity to the centre and to public transport systems and promotes development in a broad linear manner, as opposed to a pure concentric model. The concentric growth model consistently

Map 8: Opportunities for the Future Growth and Development of Sligo



generates problems relating to accessibility to public transport - the further out that the city develops, the greater the distance to public services. It also creates difficulties in relation to social, energy and environmental problems. The Centre-City model overcomes these problems by focusing on the relationship between urban structure and public transport, with an emphasis on ensuring proximity to stations and direct transport routes, as well as accessibility to mixed-use functions and services. Modest European densities need to apply to ensure maximum use of the land supply and avoidance of low-density sprawl. (see Map 9, Southern Block Concept)

This model informs an aspect of the chosen vision for the development of Sligo City towards the south, where there is a wedge of undeveloped land in the vicinity of Caltragh which runs as far south as the Carrowroe roundabout and includes the Dublin Road area, the route of the Inner Relief Road and also the railway line - three important and strategic transportation routes leading into Sligo City Centre. The model is also to be extended to the north of the city towards Lisnalgur and over time to Teesan to where the new alignment of the N16 route will link with the existing N15 (Refer to Section 2.1 for details). Thus, this junction could form the gateway point to Sligo from the north while the Carrowroe roundabout could provide an urban design gateway to the south.

In conclusion, therefore the model for Sligo is a broad linear central spine or development corridor extending from Carrowroe in the south, through the centre of the city and north towards the N16/N15 proposed interchange at Teesan/Lisnalgur. Along this corridor, more intensive development will generally be encouraged, whereas moving east and west, away from the corridor and into more environmentally sensitive areas, the density and the intensity of development will be gradually reduced.

Map 9: Southern Block Concept



1.5. Future Land Use Structure

1.5.1. Integration of Transport and Land Use

Having identified the basic structure and form for the future expansion of Sligo, it is necessary to examine the proposed land use structure for the City. The specific land uses identified as suitable in such Centre-City areas and its environs are in line with the concept of integrating land use and transportation.

The key to Sligo's sustainable growth is the development of an integrated land use and transportation system and a development pattern that protects ecologically sensitive lands and natural environments of high amenity. In order for the city to grow, yet remain compact, there needs to be a consolidation of existing under-utilised spaces within the city. This will enable the maximum use of public infrastructure and ensure that future developments contribute to local services, especially by sustaining the city centre, existing open spaces, local shops etc. and also ensure the viability of an efficient public transport system. Expansion is to be catered for via integration of proposed road networks, the provision of bus routes, the acknowledgement of the long term potential of rail based solutions and suitable land use activities according to the principles espoused by the Centre-City Model.

The proposed structure and land use zoning for the City of Sligo has been developed following a review of key transportation elements that are being developed or have been proposed and some strategic land use issues. Both issues are very much inter-related.

1.5.2 Key Land Use Issues

The following is outlined as a basic explanation of the land use framework for the City and Environs. More detailed analysis, including relevant policies and objectives are provided in Section 2 of the plan.

1.5.2.1 Expansion of the City Core to the Port Area

There are areas quite close to the city centre, which are suitable for regeneration and the expansion of the core of the city – such as the port lands to the northwest. This area contains many unused industrial lands, which could be better utilised as an extension of the commercial and retail development of the urban core. The area is also served by rail infrastructure, a feature that should be maintained for possible future use.

Given the significant amount of greenfield sites in relative proximity to the City Centre and the comparative high costs involved in the redevelopment of the port lands, it is acknowledged that significant redevelopment initiatives will be difficult to achieve over the period of this development plan. However, in order to pave the way for its development, during the current and subsequent development plan periods, it is proposed that the existing port related activities be relocated to the northern end of the harbour and the rest of the area be redeveloped to enable the provision of mixed uses. This will facilitate future city centre expansion that could include residential and commercial activities akin to those achieved under the regeneration of Rockwood Parade.

1.5.2.2 Residential Development

Recent government guidelines advocate the need for increased residential densities. This development plan acknowledges this, but also recognises that there is a need for a variety of housing densities, housing types, and locations to cater for different lifestyles, to provide choice in the market and to ensure an adequate social mix within the plan area.



Higher density residential development

The zoning of specific areas for low density and high density housing within the plan is based on strategic planning grounds. However, there is a balance in the provision of different densities in different parts of the city and environs. Higher densities will be encouraged in the city centre and along all strategic transportation routes leading to the city, in particular, on lands either side of the railway line and along the W5 Inner Relief Road.

Lower densities have been provided for in particular areas that are either more peripheral or environmentally sensitive, eg. adjoining native woodlands at Hazelwood, and the more visually vulnerable lands at Cairns.

This residential strategy highlights the balanced spatial nature of the future development of Sligo, with a range of development densities and housing types available in the north, south, east and west of the city, these allocations influenced by the need to ensure a balanced social, economic and environmental landscape.

1.5.2.3 Neighbourhood Centres

The location of new neighbourhood centres is aimed at ensuring that all residential areas are adequately serviced by local facilities and services, including commercial and community facilities. In some cases this will involve the acknowledgement of a commercial node or facility that has already emerged to serve the local community, whereas in other cases it designates a new area for this role. The aim is to ensure that the neighbourhood centres will serve catchment areas within approximately 500 metres and reduce the necessity to travel by car to avail of their services. In practice, catchment areas of neighbourhood centres overlap and neighbourhood centres will not be 'self-sufficient' but rather will be dependent on adjacent or neighbouring centres for additional facilities (e.g. one may provide a pharmacy, or a public house or post office). The proposed neighbourhood centres are located on through-routes and junctions, as successful neighbourhood centres are also frequently dependant on passing trade.

In general, community facilities and neighbourhood parks will be encouraged to locate at neighbourhood nodes or in their vicinity.

1.5.2.4 Employment and Enterprise

Employment and enterprise are catered for within a number of sites in Sligo City and Environs. The sites which have been identified are strategically placed within the context of the balanced spatial development of Sligo. Provisions have been made to the north, west, east and south of the city.

The IDA has proposed a business park to the southwest of Sligo at Oakfield, in close proximity to the proposed western by-pass and the railway line (where a future transit stop could be provided).. Further industrial development opportunities are being provided at the expanding IDA site in the Finisklin area. Abbotts Pharmaceutical Company (the largest employer in Sligo) is expanding its development to the north of the city, while on adjoining lands, a second business technology park is proposed which could provide educational outreach programmes and/or research and development in partnership between the Institute of Technology and industries. South of the Garvogue River, there is some scope for the expansion of the industrial activity at Cleveragh, just north of the racecourse.

The city centre and its fringe areas (revealing a pattern of small scale office use and large scale public-institutional use, e.g. the General Hospital) will remain a strong focus for commercial activity and economic development. Larger scale office development, including those associated with possible Government decentralisation will be

encouraged alongside the inner relief road immediately beyond the existing 'urban edge' to the south of the city (the Central Development Corridor).

Other enterprises which do not attract high numbers of employees or customers, will be encouraged to locate in the more peripheral environment, south of Carrowroe along the Old Dublin Road. Thus in this manner, there is a balanced provision of employment land in all areas of the expanding City.

1.5.2.5 Retail Warehousing

Generally, new retail development is most suitably located within the City Centre, or in an edge-of-centre site if no central sites are available. This accords with the government's policy of 'sequential development' which aims to see vacant city centre sites utilised as a priority. This policy exists to promote healthy and vital town and city centres, and is particularly relevant in Sligo which has large, centrally located brownfield sites that are subject of proposals for retail provision.

An exception to this policy is the provision of retail warehousing. This is typified by large single store buildings specialising in the sale of bulky goods such as carpets, furniture and bulky DIY items. Because of the requirement for good car parking and servicing, this class of retail development does not fit easily into city centres. However, retail warehousing should be restricted to 'bulky goods' and conform to the size thresholds established within section 2.3, otherwise it can have a damaging material impact on the commercial viability of the city centre. As a result of the need to reduce car traffic, it is appropriate to consolidate retail warehousing on single sites so customers can avoid multiple shopping trips. Two sites have been identified as suitable in order to provide choice and limit monopolies. Firstly a large site on the Dublin Road, south of Sligo Park Hotel and secondly a smaller site to the north on Bundoran Road at Shannon-eighter.

1.5.2.6 Land Extensive Uses - Vehicular Sales and Services, Warehousing and Storage

There are some land uses that are land extensive (i.e, they require larger parcels of land to conduct business on) but are less intensive in the numbers of people attracted to them (either customers or employees). The development plan acknowledges this distinctive category and has made provisions for such uses, south of the Carrowroe roundabout in the wedge of land that lies between the N4 and the Old Dublin Road. The area displays a trend of car sales, depots, storage areas, warehousing and other activities connected with the auto trade. The scale and bulk of buildings generally associated with these uses can detract from the adjacent character and use of an area. For this reason, this peripheral location has been chosen. In order to protect the landscape setting of Sligo City as approached from the N4, it is proposed to provide a landscaped amenity buffer along the eastern side of the N4. The width of the buffer and the intensity of planting will vary and have respect for the existing rolling topography of the area.

1.5.2.7 Landscape and Open Space Strategy

The aim of the open space strategy is to provide an adequate balance between active and passive open space elements in the City and Environs and an even distribution of these amenities throughout the plan area. One of the prerequisites of the development strategy - as outlined in the Strategic Vision, section 1.3, was to ensure that the future inhabitants have 'ease of contact with nature'. In a city surrounded with a landscape unequalled by other urban centres in Ireland, it is important that the city remains as attractive and 'green' as possible. In order to achieve this the strategy for open space proposes the following measures.

- The development of a linear park system along the shores of the Garvogue River to connect Lough Gill to the City Centre.
- The extension of the linear park system through the City Centre to connect with a quayside promenade along the redeveloped Port area.
- The development of new 'urban spaces' in the City Centre, particularly the development of a new civic square in the vicinity of the railway station, a new street market and square at Stephen Street Car Park and the redevelopment of Quay Street Car park into a 'green' town park.
- The retention and incorporation of streams in the plan area into a system of linear parks with associated storm water retention facilities that will provide 'ponds in a parkland.'
- The retention and incorporation of key landscape elements, notably ringforts, raths and other enclosures, in addition to significant tree groups in the open space network.
- The development of active open space areas with playing fields at Kevinsfort, Shannon Oughter, Summerhill, Forthill, Hazelwood, Cleveragh and at Maugheraboy/Caltragh.
- The provision of links between open space areas and the provision of linear parks running approximately east-west through the proposed super-block in the south of the city, thereby ensuring that future residents have ease of access to the surrounding countryside.
- Maintaining topographically higher areas that are visually sensitive free from development.
- Restricting development in the Carrowmore Zone of Archaeological Potential.

