

Strategic Environmental Assessment

SEA Screening Report **on the proposed Variation No.1** **(Strandhill Mini-Plan)** **of the Sligo County Development Plan 2011-2017**

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1. Introduction

Sligo County Council intends to vary the Sligo County Development Plan 2011-2017 (CDP) by incorporating a mini-plan for the village of Strandhill (replacing the Strandhill Local Area Plan 2003-2012) as **Chapter 44** in **Volume 2 Mini-Plans** of the CDP.

The public consultation on this proposed variation will be carried out based on the procedure set out in Section 20 (Consultation and adoption of local area plans) of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended. This approach is designed to ensure a meaningful consultation with the local community and other interested parties, by making it possible to consider material amendments to the draft Mini-Plan.

Article 13K(1) of the Planning and Development Regulations (Strategic Environmental Assessment) 2004 (SEA Regulations) indicates the following:

Where a planning authority proposes to make a variation of a development plan under section 13 of the Act, it shall, before giving notice under section 13(2) of the Act, consider whether or not the proposed variation would be likely to have significant effects on the environment, taking into account of relevant criteria set out in Schedule 2A.

This **SEA Screening Report** has been carried out in accordance with the requirements of the SEA Regulations and should be read in conjunction with the Environmental Report prepared in relation to the Sligo County Development Plan 2011-2017.

Additional information on the proposed variation is contained in the Explanatory Note that accompanies the Draft Mini-Plan and this Report.

2. Sligo County Development Plan 2011-2017

Sligo County Development Plan came into force on 13 June 2011. It will remain operational for a period of maximum six years. The Plan sets out the Council's policies and objectives for the proper planning and sustainable development of the County of Sligo.

The undertaking of a "full SEA", i.e. the preparation of an Environmental Report, is mandatory in the case of development plans. The SEA of the CDP 2011-2017 was undertaken by environmental consultants CAAS on behalf of Sligo County Council. The resultant Environmental Report (ER) and its Addenda were published alongside the CDP 2011-2017.

Strategic environmental assessment has informed the policies and objectives of the Plan and has also suggested appropriate mitigation measures, which were incorporated in to the relevant chapters of the Plan upon its adoption in 2011.

This SEA Screening Report should be read in conjunction with the CDP 2011-2017 and the associated Environmental Report.

Sligo CDP and its associated Environmental Report are available at www.sligococo.ie/cdp.
Strandhill Local Area Plan 2003 and the Pre-draft Consultation Paper relating to its proposed replacement with a mini-plan are available at www.sligococo.ie/strandhill.

3. Background information on Strandhill

3.1 Location

Strandhill is a satellite of Sligo City and a traditional seaside resort, which boasts a unique blend of landscapes, scenic views, rich archaeological resources and valuable natural heritage sites.

The village is located 8 km from Sligo on the western extremity of the Coolera Peninsula. The built-up area extends along the north-western foothills of Knocknarea mountain and is surrounded on three sides by coastline – Cummeen Strand to the north, Sligo Bay to the west and Ballysadare Bay to the south.

Strandhill has developed along the R292 and on both sides of the main roads leading towards the sea. The village is characterised by linear roadside development within the serviced area and ribbon development on the unserviced fringes. In recent years, consolidation of the urban area did occur to a certain degree, with large estates filling in some gaps and developing part of the backlands.

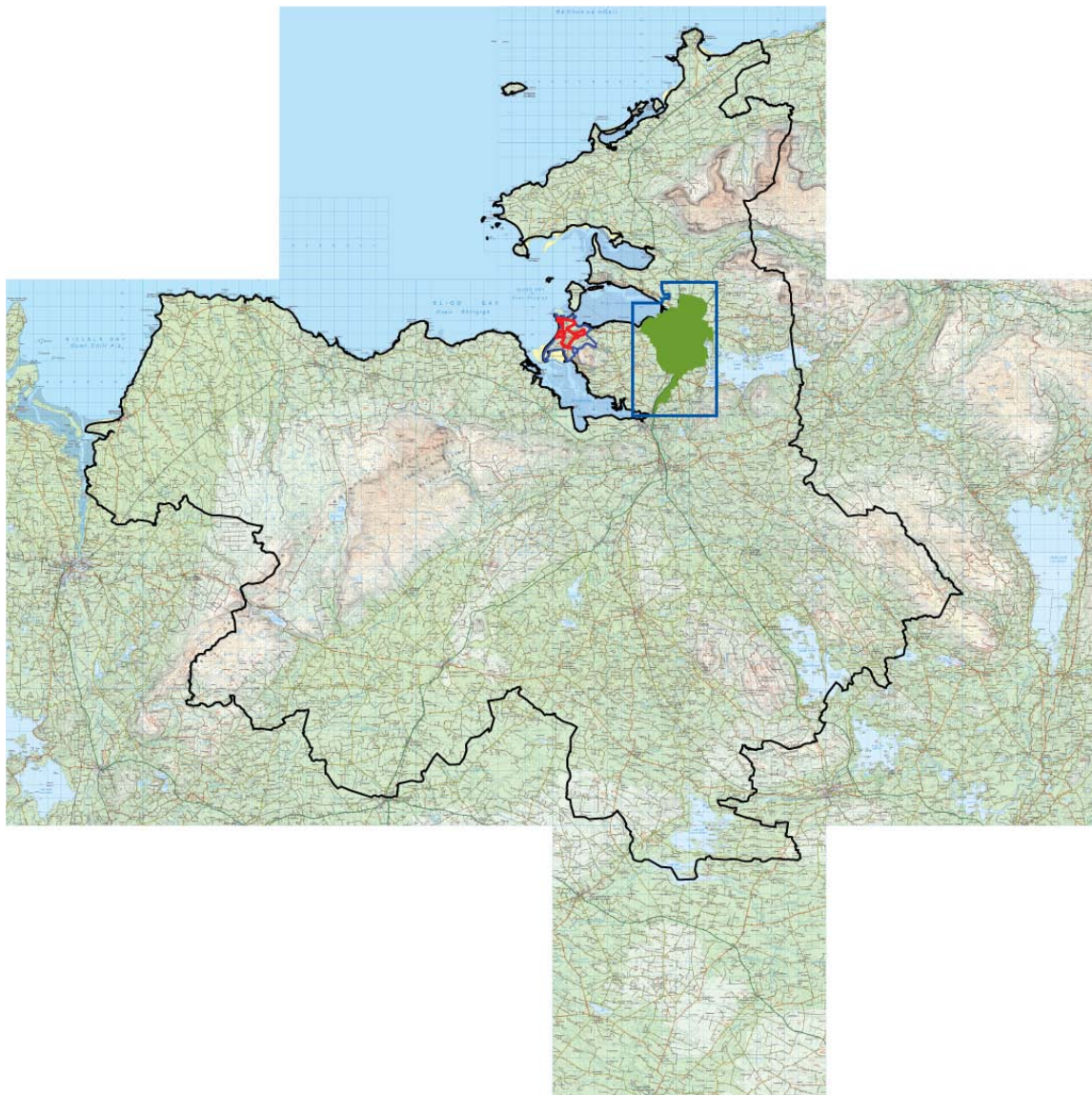


Fig. 1 Map of County Sligo showing the location of Strandhill (the red line represents the village's 2003 development limit) in relation to Sligo City and Environs (shown in green)

3.2 Population

According to the 2006 Census information, the village had a population of 1,413 persons in 2006 (41% higher than the 2002 population) and a population of 1,596 persons in 2011 (13% higher than the 2006 population).

Demographic change 2002-2011

Area	Population 2002	Population 2006	percentage change 2002-2006	Population 2011	percentage change 2006-2011
County Sligo	58,200	60,894	+4.6	65,270	+7.2
Strandhill	1,002	1,413	+41	1,596	+13
Knockaree ED*	2,832	3,219	+13.6	3,557	+10.5

*Knockaree is the Electoral District in which the Strandhill is the largest settlement.

In accordance with the Core Strategy of the CDP, the recommended population level for Strandhill is 1,700 persons. Through the appropriate allocation of land for additional residential development, together with associated objectives, the Strandhill Mini-Plan will ensure consistency with this recommended population level.

3.3 Natural and archaeological heritage

Strandhill is surrounded by some of Sligo's most valuable natural heritage sites. These sites are protected by European and national legislation, as they support a large number of diverse natural and semi-natural habitats and a wide range of flora and fauna.

Several notable features can be found in the surroundings of the village:

- Ballysadare Bay SAC (site code 00062);
- Cummeen Strand/Drumcliff Bay SAC (site code 000627);
- Cummeen Strand SPA (site code 004035);
- Ballysadare Bay SPA (site code 004129);
- Knocknarea Mountain and the Glen Valley pNHA;
- County Biodiversity Site at Larass;
- Numerous archaeological monuments and sites.

Designated sites do not represent the full extent of Strandhill's natural heritage. The wider countryside also makes a valuable contribution to the overall coherence of the ecological network. Habitat mapping carried out in 2009 identified several habitats of some local significance in the area.

3.4 Water quality

Water quality monitoring and management is governed by the EU Water Framework Directive and provides for water management on the basis of River Basin Districts. Strandhill is situated in the Western River Basin District.

There are no monitored rivers or streams in the Plan area nor are there any designated pearl mussel sites in County Sligo.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has classified Sligo Bay as 'high status' and Sligo Harbour as 'good status'. Ballysadare Bay is classified as 'moderate status' and must be improved to good status by 2015.

Sligo Bay and Sligo Harbour are important aquaculture areas for clams and oysters. Sligo Bay is designated as shellfish waters in accordance with the European Communities (Quality of Shellfish Waters) Regulations 2006. Sligo Bay is also an important salmonid migration route for both the Ballysadare River and the Garavogue River. The area to the south of Strandhill Beach and the channel south of Coney Island are popular sea angling areas.

The DoECLG has prepared a Pollution Reduction Programme for Sligo Bay, which must be implemented by Sligo County Council. Sligo County Council prepares an annual progress report on the implementation of the Pollution Reduction Programme.

The Groundwater in the Plan area is classified as good status and the groundwater vulnerability is High. Sligo County Council must protect and maintain the existing good status.



Fig. 2 Special Areas of Conservation in the area surrounding Strandhill *

* The proposed Mini-Plan does not involve any land take within Natura 2000 sites. The NPWS has confirmed that significant discrepancies occur at Killaspugbrone in relation to the boundary of the Cummeen Strand/Drumcliff Bay Special Area of Conservation SAC. The DoECLG recognises that errors/discrepancies do exist. These errors will be corrected when the maps are updated. In the meantime, from the site boundary notes, the following can be clarified:

- The entirety of Sligo Airport (including the runway, buildings, car park, amenity/managed grassland) are not within the Special Area of Conservation or Special Protection Area;
- The wastewater treatment works (entire fenced compound) at Killaspugbrone is not within the Cummeen Strand/Drumcliff Bay Special Area of Conservation SAC;
- The caravan park roads and hardstands are not within the Cummeen Strand/Drumcliff Bay Special Area of Conservation SAC.



Fig. 3 Special Protection Areas in the area surrounding Strandhill

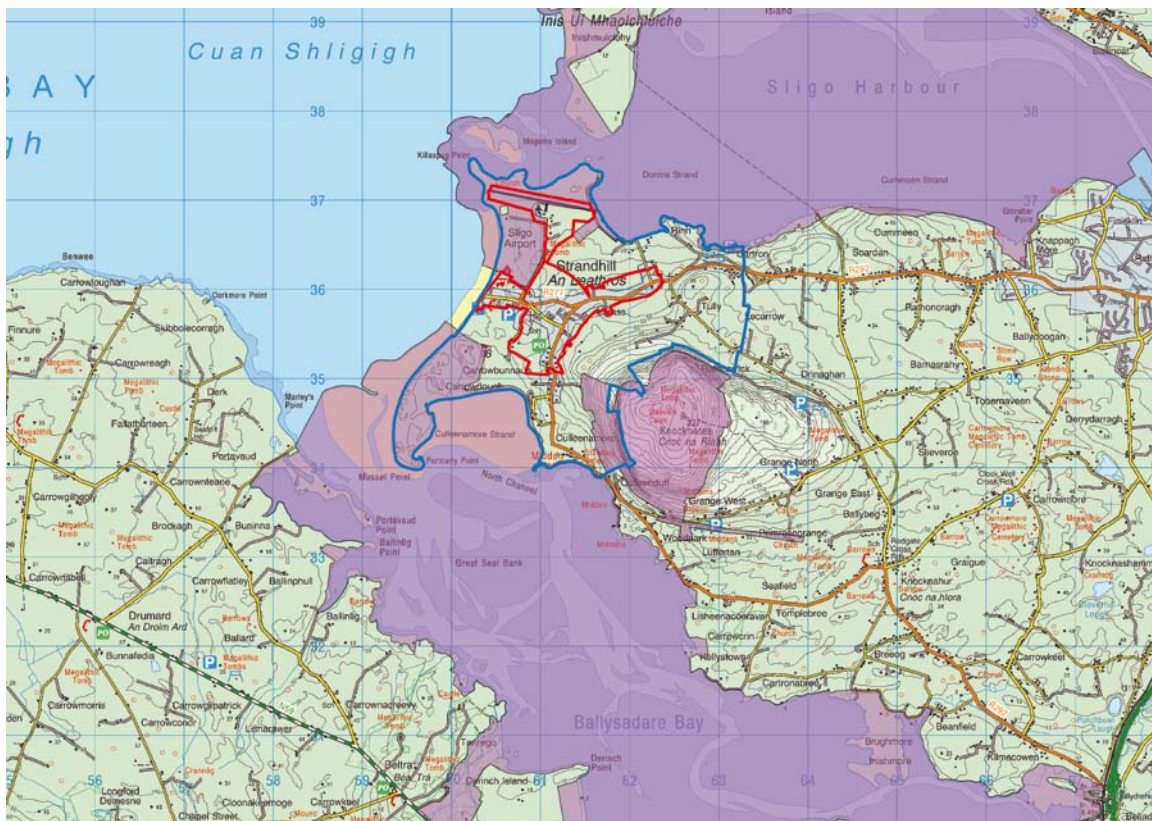


Fig. 4 Proposed Natural Heritage Areas in the area surrounding Strandhill

3.5 CDP designations

The County Development Plan 2011-17 includes a Landscape Characterisation Map, which is a tool for assessing the visual impact and sustainability of new development. The map, first published as part of the 1999 CDP, is based on composite landscape studies and has been further refined in subsequent development plans (i.e. those of 2005 and 2011).

The Landscape Characterisation Map indicates the following in relation to Strandhill:

- most of the landscape within the plan limit is classified as *normal rural landscape*;
- the tip of the coastline to the south-west of the village, the Knocknarea plateau and parts of its western slopes are designated as *sensitive rural landscape* (shown in pink on Fig. 5 below);
- the entire coastline around the village is designated as *vulnerable*;
- the three main approach roads into the village are designated *scenic routes*.



Fig. 5 Scenic routes (in yellow), visually vulnerable coastlines and mountains (in red) and sensitive landscapes (in pink) in the area surrounding Strandhill

3.6 Protected Structures

The County Development Plan 2011-17 includes a Record of Protected Structures.

There are eight Protected Structures within the mini-plan area:

RPS-102	The Canon, Carrowbunnaun	RPS-271	Former Rectory, Larass
RPS-242	Doonagleragh Lodge, Killaspugbrone	RPS-272	Post box, Larass
RPS-269	Dolly's Cottage, Larass	RPS-273	St Anne's Coach House, Larass
RPS-270	St Anne's Church, Larass	RPS-336	House, Rathcarrick



Fig. 6 Protected Structures in Strandhill and the surrounding area

3.7 Archaeology

There are 25 Recorded Monuments and two Zones of Archaeological Potential (ZAP) within the Mini-Plan limit (grey areas in the illustration below).



Fig. 7 Recorded archaeology, Monuments and Zones of Archaeological Potential in Strandhill and the surrounding area

3.8 Land use

The predominant land uses in the village are residential, with a mix of tourism-related facilities and some retail. A business and enterprise park is located to the north of the village, adjacent to the airport. There is a golf course to the south-west and a caravan park at the seafront. A school and a nursing home are the most significant community facilities.

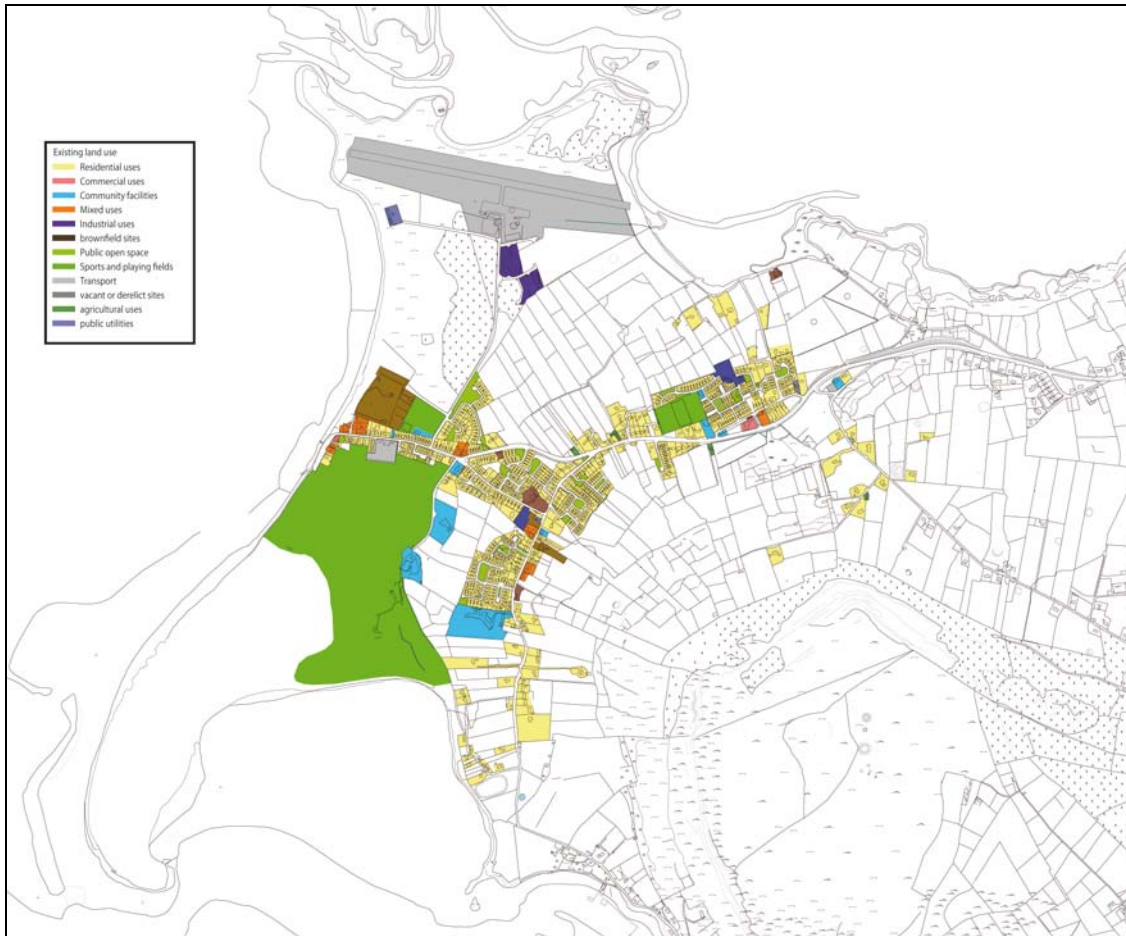


Fig. 8 Current land use in Strandhill

3.9 Infrastructure

3.9.1 Wastewater

The Strandhill Sewerage Scheme is included in the Water Services Investment Programme 2010-2013 under “Contracts to Start”. The upgrading of this scheme is supported through objectives O-WW-1 and O-WW-5 in the current CDP.

The existing plant has a design PE (population equivalent) of 1,500. There is limited capacity in the wastewater treatment plant at present to cater for new developments. Significant work has taken place in the last two years to improve the efficiency of the plant pending the proposed upgrade. Sligo County Council is awaiting a response from the EPA as regards the application for a wastewater discharge license.

A substantial portion of the existing drainage network in Strandhill is a combined system, in particular on the lower portion of the village. It is proposed to upgrade the existing pumping station located to the north of Buenos Aires Drive and provide storage capacity. However, it is not proposed at this stage to upgrade the drainage network.

All new developments will be required to provide separate drainage systems, including the provision of SUDs where appropriate. This approach will maximise the efficient use of the residual capacity in the system. The removal of storm water will serve to increase the available treatment capacity at the plant to cater for new developments.

3.9.2 Water

Strandhill’s drinking water comes from Sligo County Council’s reservoir at Grange East townland, Knocknahur, which is sourced from the Cairns Hill water treatment plant. The plant is part of the Sligo and Environs Water Supply Scheme which serves Sligo City and its outlying settlements. The current daily output from the water treatment plant is in the range of 5,000– 8,000m³/day. There are no capacity issues at this stage and currently supply far exceeds demand.

3.9.3 Road

Strandhill is well served by the R292 and the road network between the village and Sligo City. In recent years, substantial improvements have been carried out to the village streets.

3.9.4 Airport

Sligo’s Regional Airport, located between the village and the sea, is seen as an essential component of the Gateway’s connective infrastructure. While the airport no longer operates as a public commuter/tourist airport, it continues to accommodate the North-West Coast Guard Rescue Helicopter Service and has potential for future resumption of its extended functions.

3.9.5 Coastal protection works

One of the more significant problems facing Strandhill is the issue of coastal erosion. The coastline is particularly volatile and dynamic, as evidenced by the significant variations in sand levels and beach movements over time in the area surrounding the village.

The beach and dune system has experienced severe erosion in recent times. Extensive works were carried out in 2002, including the construction of a new slipway and promenade extension and the provision of 300 m of rock armour along the beachfront. Storms in 2011 caused extensive damage to a 70-m section of sand dune to the end of the walkway to the south of the village.

Coastal protection works comprising 260 linear metres of rock armour along with a stone-faced concrete wall and a coastal path were constructed in 2011 to protect the existing wastewater treatment plant at Killasupugbrone.

4. Brief outline of the proposed Mini-Plan

It is proposed to vary the County Development Plan 2011-17 by incorporating a mini-plan for the village of Strandhill.

The Mini-Plan will be consistent with the Core Strategy of the CDP in terms of designating sufficient housing land to ensure the accommodation needs of the future population, to the level recommended in the CDP.

Why mini-plans?

Sligo County Council has chosen the mini-plan approach as an alternative to preparing local area plans for most settlements within its jurisdiction. There are no towns or villages in the County with a population of 5,000 or more, except for Sligo City. Therefore, the complex process of adopting local area plans is not warranted in the case of Sligo villages and towns. However, in the interest of orderly development, the Council decided to adopt land use zoning and associated objectives in the form of mini-plans, which became components of the CDP.

As a general rule, the mini-plans serve the following purposes:

- to facilitate orderly development;
- to earmark specific areas for stated uses;
- to reserve strategically-located lands for important future infrastructure;
- to protect areas that are sensitive, special and/or at risk;
- to provide a degree of certainty for local communities, land owners, potential developers;
- to guide interventions by the local authority and other state agencies.

4.1 Pre-draft consultation

Following initial survey and analysis work, a **Pre-Draft Consultation Paper** was prepared and put on public display in summer 2012.

The Paper identified several issues that required attention in the mini-plan:

1. the excessive amount of land zoned for housing development;
2. residential vacancy;
3. the upgrade of the wastewater treatment plant;
4. the protection of Natura 2000 sites.

(Please refer to the Pre-Draft Consultation Paper for details – www.sligococo.ie/strandhill)

In response to this consultation document, 30 submissions were received from the public in relation to the development of the village, highlighting in particular the following issues:

1. the retention of the community facilities zoning on lands to the west of the Airport Road;
2. the provision of a skate park.

4.2 Contents of the proposed Mini-Plan

4.2.1 Main goal - consolidation

The consolidation of the village centre was envisaged by the 2003 LAP but has not been fully realised to date. Under the 2003 LAP, approximately 71.9 hectares of land were zoned for residential use and mixed uses compared to 56.1 ha in the proposed Mini-Plan.

A number of permissions for residential and tourism developments have been granted between the years 2004 and 2009, but no development has taken place based on such permissions.

The Mini-Plan, like the preceding LAP, promotes sustainable development at a local level through the balanced allocation of land to various uses and through objectives aiming to protect the natural and built heritage.

The Mini-Plan seeks the consolidation and sustainable development of the area to cater for the needs of the settlement's population, its seasonal visitors and the inhabitants of the surrounding area.

In addition to the existing general policies in Chapters 3 to 12 of the CDP, and the mini-plan policies contained in Chapter 13, the Strandhill Mini-Plan contains detailed objectives applicable to specific areas in the village.

The Mini-Plan is structured under the following headings:

1. Landscape, natural heritage and open space
2. Coastal protection
3. Built heritage, streetscape and building design
4. Mixed-use zones
5. Transport, circulation and parking
6. Community facilities
7. Tourism development
8. Business and enterprise
9. Buffer zone
10. Wastewater treatment

Note: All the policies and objectives contained in Chapters 3 to 12 of the CDP are applicable to all settlements in County Sligo. Policies in Chapter 13 are applicable to all mini-plans. These policies and objectives have already been assessed for effects on the environment through the SEA process in preparing the CDP 2011-2017.

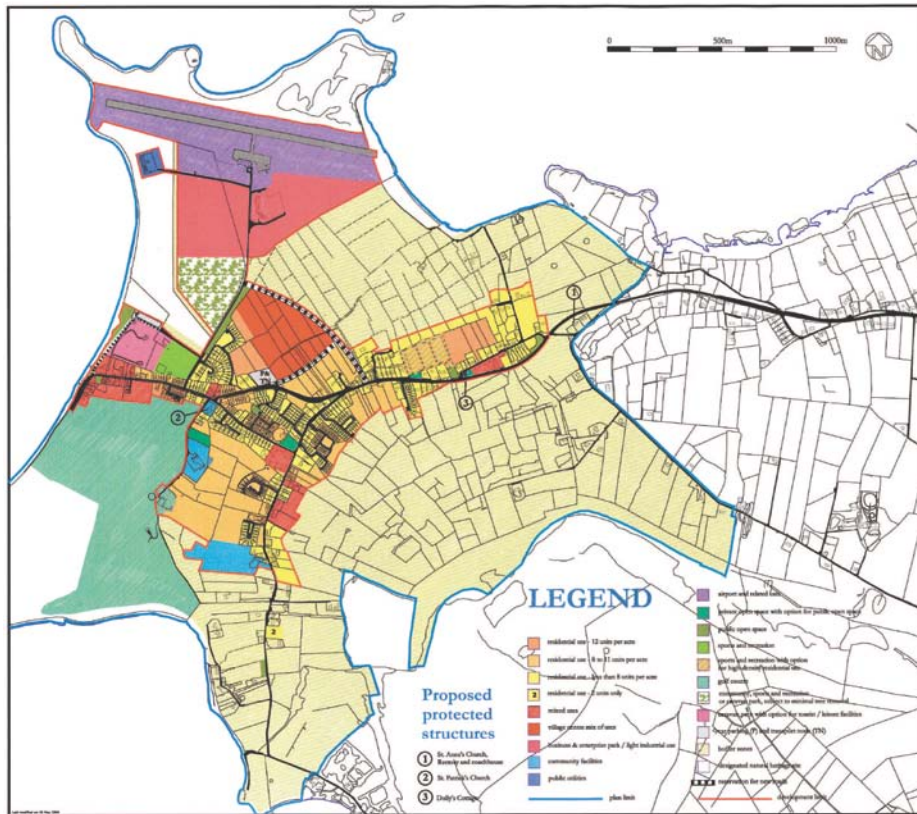


Fig. 9 Zoning map of Strandhill Local Area Plan 2003

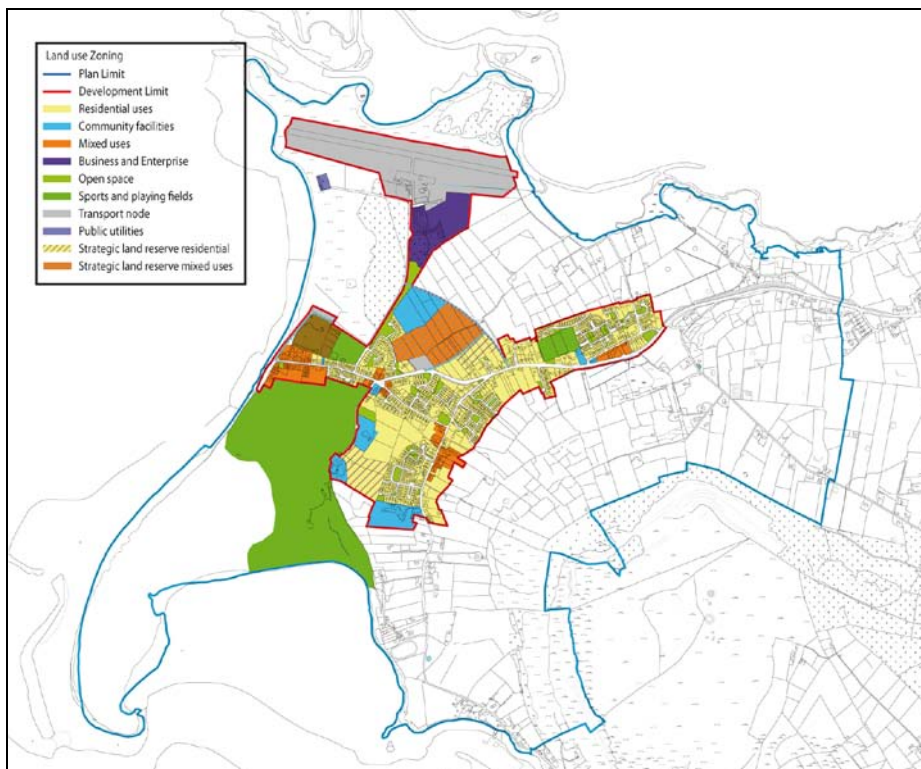


Fig. 10 Preliminary Draft Zoning Map - Strandhill Mini-Plan

Land zoned under the 2003 Strandhill LAP for commercial and residential uses

Selected zoning categories	Lands zoned in 2003 (ha)	Lands zoned 2012 (ha)
Residential	66	48.6
Business and enterprise	20.4	7.3
Mixed uses	16.5	7.5
Community facilities	5.4	10.0

4.2.2 Landscape, natural heritage and open space

This section of the Mini-Plan deals with national monuments, scenic routes, views to be protected, open space in the village, the Habitats Directive and the protection of all Natura 2000 sites in the Plan area.

Part of the Cummeen Strand/Drumcliff Bay SAC Site Code 000627 was included within the Plan limit and zoned for community facilities in the 2003 Local Area Plan for Strandhill. This area is now proposed for designation as Buffer Zone and exclusion from the development limit.

4.2.3 Coastal protection

Coastal protection is a significant issue in Strandhill. This section of the Mini-Plan sets out specific objectives in relation to buffer zones and dune management along the coastline in the Plan area. It is an objective of the Council to prepare an integrated coastal management plan for the coastline surrounding the village, which should address the recreational use of the area.

4.2.4 Built heritage and streetscape

This section emphasises the consolidation of the village, and the preservation of its character. The protected structures within the Plan area are listed here.

4.2.5 Mixed-use zones

Three distinct zones of the village have been identified as areas which could benefit from re-development and/or upgrading, namely (1) The Promenade/Beachfront, (2) Buenos Aires Drive, in particular the council car-park and the crossroads with Burma Road, and (3) the lands adjoining the R292 beside the petrol station. This section of the Mini-Plan contains urban design guidelines for each of these areas.

Land at the junction of Burma Road and Buenos Aires Drive has been zoned for mixed uses in the Mini-Plan as it was considered that this area, which already supports a mini-mart, a chemist and beauty parlour, has the potential to serve as a small neighbourhood centre for the village. Owners of existing buildings seeking to change their use from residential to commercial will be encouraged to re-design the structures, in order to reflect their new function in the village.

4.2.6 Transport, circulation and parking

The proposed New Airport Road is included in this section, as well as objectives to upgrade various roads, junctions and footpaths as resources permit. It is also an objective to extend the Promenade in a northerly direction to link up with the existing Airport Road.

4.2.7 Community facilities

Land to the west of the Airport Road, zoned for community facilities in the 2003 LAP, is proposed to be designated as Buffer Zone and kept outside the development plan limit on account of the land's SAC designation. Land across the road from this site is proposed to be zoned for community facilities to cater for the village's needs in relation to community services.

4.2.8 Tourism development

It is proposed to establish a series of looped, multi-purpose recreational trails around the village and coast, via sign posting and marketing of existing walks. Such a project may include appropriate upgrading of pathways and facilitating access over relevant lands.

4.2.9 Business and enterprise

This section supports the continued operation of the airport and protecting existing flight paths. The Mini-Plan proposes a reduction in the area zoned for business and enterprise around the airport, in order to avoid impacting on lands designated as an SAC.

4.2.10 Buffer zone

A buffer zone has been defined between the development limit of the village and key heritage areas, notably Knocknarea and the coast. As a general rule, development will be restricted within the buffer zone and landowners will be encouraged to manage their land in a sustainable manner by protecting heritage features and landscape character.

The Plan limit has been extended towards the south-west, to incorporate the full lands of the Culleenamore House and Rockview House demesne, and towards the north-east, to ensure protection of vulnerable landscapes on the approach to the village.

4.2.11 Wastewater treatment

The proposed upgrade of the existing wastewater treatment plant at Killaspugbrone is covered under this section. This upgrade will assist compliance with River Basin District Management Plans, the European Communities (Quality of Shellfish Waters) Regulations, and the Sligo Groundwater Protection Scheme.

4.3 Other assessment

4.3.1 Appropriate Assessment

An **Appropriate Assessment** (AA) screening of the Mini-Plan, currently under preparation in accordance with the requirements of Article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive (Directive 92/43/EEC), will accompany the proposed mini-plan when published.

4.3.2 Flood Risk Assessment

A **Flood Risk Assessment** (FRA) was carried out as part of the preparation of the Strandhill Mini-Plan. This takes into account the flood-related information compiled for Strandhill to date. The FRA has informed the preparation of the Mini-Plan both in terms of the suitability of land for zoning and the incorporation of appropriate policies and objectives.

5. Assessment based on Schedule 2A criteria

The following assessment has been conducted in accordance with the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004 (SI No. 436 of 2004). The screening of the proposed Plan is undertaken using specified criteria for determining the likely significant environmental impacts of a plan as set out in Schedule 2a of the SEA Regulations (S.I. 435 of 2004).

5.1 Characteristics of the proposed Mini-Plan

a. “the degree to which the plan sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources”

The Strandhill Mini-Plan should be read in the context of the CDP 2011-2017, which sets the broad framework for development in the County. The Mini-Plan will implement this framework at local level by setting out objectives designed to facilitate the appropriate development of land in the village. Such development should complement and enhance the character of the built environment and should be sensitive to the surrounding landscape and coastline.

Land is the main resource to be allocated through zoning. Approximately 127.77 hectares (ha) of land is proposed to be zoned for development in Strandhill. However, 89.58 ha of this total are already developed, 14.37 ha will be placed in the SLR, and approximately 6.2 ha will be zoned for open spaces. Accordingly there will be just approximately 26.56 ha available for development during the plan period, of which a maximum of 14.4 hectares will be zoned for housing in accordance with the CDP (including a percentage of Mixed Use land).

Significant additional residential development is not an aim of this Plan, whose primary aim is consolidation as opposed to expansion.

17.1 ha of land previously zoned for development will now be proposed as Buffer Zone on account of its designation as a SAC.

The impacts on the environment are therefore unlikely to be significant. Any such impact will be satisfactorily mitigated through the development management process.

b. “the degree to which the plan influences other plans, including those in a hierarchy”

The proposed Mini-Plan does not influence any other land-use plans.

The plan is set in the context of the County Sligo Development Plan 2011-17 (CDP) and is intended as a tool for implementing the CDP strategies at local level as part of an integrated planning strategy. The Plan was prepared in a manner consistent with the CDP 2011-2017 and will not influence any other statutory plans.

c. “the relevance of the plan for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development”

Environmental considerations have been integrated into the objectives set out in the Mini-Plan with a view to promoting sustainable development.

Sustainable development is promoted at local level through the balanced allocation of land to various uses and through objectives designed to protect the natural and built heritage and to consolidate development around the village core.

d. "environmental problems relevant to the plan"

The following environmental issues are relevant to Strandhill:

- coastal erosion and coastal flooding;
- proximity of EU designated sites, including Cummeen Strand/Drumcliff Bay (Sligo Bay) SAC/pNHA; Cummeen Strand SPA/Ramsar Site; Ballysadare Bay SAC/SPA/pNHA and Knocknarea Mountain and Glen pNHA;
- vulnerability of the water quality of Sligo Bay, Sligo Harbour and Ballysadare Bay;
- vulnerability of designated shellfish waters at Sligo Bay;
- possible contamination of surface and ground water by poorly treated effluent discharge, substandard septic tanks and surface water run-off.
- encroachment of development onto sensitive landscapes surrounding the village.

It is considered that appropriate measures are in place to address these potential environmental problems within the Plan period, such as policies of the CDP and objectives contained in the Mini-Plan.

Of particular relevance is the objective to upgrade the wastewater treatment plant (WWTP). In the interim, the situation will be addressed through existing policies in the County Development Plan which restrict any development that would exceed the capacity of a public WWTP.

It is considered that any flooding concerns have been appropriately addressed in the Flood Risk Assessment carried out in conjunction with the Mini-Plan. The zoning of land and the formulation of policies and objectives have been informed by the outcomes of the FRA.

e. "the relevance of the plan for the implementation of European legislation on the environment (e.g. plans linked to waste management or water protection)"

The Strandhill Mini-Plan will not seek to directly implement European legislation on the environment. The plan will be in compliance with the policies and objectives of the CDP 2011-2017, which contains policies implementing the relevant European legislation.

5.2 Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected

Expected/anticipated effects of Strandhill Mini-Plan's implementation include:

- A. Consolidation of the built-up area;
- B. Minor displacement of wildlife/interference with habitats;
- C. Increase in human population;
- D. Protection of nature conservation areas;
- E. Protection of built heritage and archaeology;
- F. Protection of existing natural assets such as hedgerows, grasslands and wetlands;
- G. Protection of sensitive rural landscapes;
- H. Reduction in surface and ground water pollution.

a. the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects

The development of lands within the Mini-Plan plan area will result in various effects on the environment, through the consolidation of the built-up area and population increase. However, many of the effects will be positive, as the Plan will provide a framework for the sustainable development of the area, rather than allowing development to proceed in a haphazard manner. The Mini-Plan seeks to ensure the protection of the built and natural heritage.

Land adjacent to the SAC within the Plan area is zoned for development. Any proposal for development in the vicinity of the SAC will be required to comply with Article 6 of the EU Habitats Directive and therefore will be permitted only if no significant impacts on the Natura 2000 site are likely.

As outlined previously in this report, the Mini-Plan will involve a reduction in the overall extent of land available for development. The main aim of the Plan will be consolidation rather than expansion. Appropriate policies are incorporated into the CDP to address any associated impacts on the environment.

The likely effects will arise gradually over the lifetime of the Plan. The effects will be permanent and not readily reversed. However, this is not considered significant in the context of the ongoing sustainable development of the area.

b. the cumulative nature of the effects

The Mini-Plan provides a framework for sustainable development within the Strandhill area and reduces the likelihood of cumulative adverse effects by encouraging the consolidation of development in the village. The nearest village is 5 km away (Ransboro) and the nearest large urban settlement is Sligo City (8 km away). Both these settlements were considered in the SEA process accompanying the CDP.

Screening for Appropriate Assessment, carried out separate to this SEA screening exercise, will ensure that the potential for cumulative impacts on EU Natura 2000 sites is considered.

c. the transboundary nature of the effects

Strandhill is located approximately 40 km from the Northern Ireland border. The entire Mini-Plan area is located within the administrative area of Sligo County Council.

In the wider context, it is noted that water supply (from the Cairns Hill Water treatment plant via a reservoir at Grange East) is also from within the county. The wastewater treatment system discharges to Sligo Bay. It is not anticipated that the implementation of the Mini-Plan will have any trans-boundary effects.

d. the risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents)

It is not anticipated that the implementation of the Mini-Plan will result in risks to human health or the environment. Future development will have to conform to the policies and objectives of the CDP, whose fundamental aim is to create a sustainable and healthy environment in which people can live, work and recreate. Suitable mitigation measures have been incorporated into the CDP, in particular in relation to wastewater concerns.

There are no designated SEVESO sites within the plan area.

e. the magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of population likely to be affected)

The spatial extent and magnitude of the vast majority of the effects of implementing the Mini-Plan will be limited to the village of Strandhill itself.

The overall Plan area extends to approximately 702.4 ha (including the buffer zone around the village). It is envisaged that the Mini-Plan will curtail adverse impacts on the wider surrounding environs of the village, such as ribbon development, sporadic housing development, ground and surface water pollution.

f. the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:

i) special natural characteristics or cultural heritage

The natural features of significance surrounding the village, such as the coastal area and the lower western slopes of Knocknarea, are located outside the development limit, within the buffer zone, where development will be strictly controlled. It is therefore not likely that significant effects will occur within these areas.

The Plan area contains part of the lower slopes of Knocknarea Mountain and the tip of the coastline to the south-west of the village, which are classified as *sensitive rural landscape* under the CDP. The entire coastline around the village is designated as *vulnerable*. The remaining land is classified as *normal rural landscape*.

In addition, there are a number of *scenic routes* (as designated in the CDP) which require protection in the Plan area.

The existing CDP policies and proposed mini-plan objectives on heritage (built, natural and archaeological), landscape and the environment will apply to the Mini-Plan area. Any potential significant effects will be adequately addressed through the development management process.

ii) exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values

Both the existing CDP and the proposed Mini-Plan ensure that adequate policies and objectives are in place to maintain environmental quality standards. These will be enforced through the development management process.

iii) intensive land-use

The Mini-Plan will focus on consolidation and limited growth. It is unlikely that high-intensity development will occur during the lifetime of the plan. Any effects are unlikely to be significant in this regard.

g. the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognized national, European Union or international protection status

The Natura 2000 sites within the Plan area are the following: Ballysadare Bay SAC (000622), Cummeen Strand/Drumcliff Bay SAC (000627), Cummeen Strand SPA (004035) and Ballysadare Bay SPA (004129).

Relevant policies and objectives included in the CDP and the Mini-Plan seek to reduce any potential negative impact of development on protected areas within the plan area.

6. Consultation with environmental authorities

Formal notification, accompanied by the proposed draft text, maps and the Screening Report, was issued to the prescribed environmental authorities on 6 December 2012, giving them an opportunity to comment on the likely environmental effects of implementing the proposed CDP Variation No. 1/Strandhill Mini-Plan. The deadline for returning comments was 7 January 2013.

The Environmental Protection Agency responded on 3 January 2013. No submissions were received from the other prescribed environmental authorities.

The EPA noted the Planning Authority's position with regard to the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of the proposed mini-plan. A number of specific comments were made as follows:

- A. Consideration should be given to showing how the Environmental Protection Objectives of the SEA for the County Development Plan have been taken into account in the preparation of the mini-plan, in the context of ensuring that the potential for cumulative effects have been taken into account. There would be merits in providing a table showing how the existing SEA has influenced.*

Planning Authority's response: Chapter 13 of the CDP contains general policies applicable to all mini-plans, including Strandhill Mini-Plan, when adopted. These policies have been evaluated using a set of 16 Strategic Environmental Objectives (refer to Table 8.1 on p. 117 of the Environmental Report accompanying the CDP). The outcome of this evaluation is presented in Section 8.5 of the Environmental Report.

Strandhill Mini-Plan does not include any additional policies. It contains only objectives, which are specific to the settlement and which have been drafted in accordance with the existing CDP policies, based on local circumstances.

- B. The Agency acknowledges the inclusion of specific objectives for protection of Landscape/Natural heritage/Open Space and Coastal Protection in particular. The re-designation of development lands to Buffer Zone within the boundary of the Cummeen Strand / Drumcliff Bay SAC is also acknowledged.*

Planning Authority's response: Noted.

- C. It should be ensured that the Strandhill Miniplan will not conflict with the Policies/Objectives of the County Development Plan 2011-17, and that other significant Plans/Programmes including the Sligo Bay Shellfish Waters Pollution Reduction Programme are taken into account.*

Planning Authority's response: As indicated in Section 10.1.1 Quality of estuarine and coastal waters (p. 146 of the CDP) and Section 3.4 of this Report, Sligo Bay and Sligo Harbour are important aquaculture areas for clams and oysters. Sligo Bay is designated as shellfish waters in accordance with the *European Communities (Quality of Shellfish Waters) Regulations 2006*. Sligo Bay is also an important salmonid migration route for both the Ballysadare River and the Garavogue River. The area to the south of Strandhill Beach and the channel south of Coney Island are popular sea angling areas.

The DoECLG has prepared a Pollution Reduction Programme for Sligo Bay, which must be implemented by Sligo County Council. Sligo County Council prepares an annual progress report on the implementation of the Pollution Reduction Programme.

The Mini-Plan has been drafted taking account of the existing policies of the CDP 2011-2017. The CDP contains detailed provisions and policies relating to water quality in Section 10.1 (p. 145-149). Policy P-WQ-4 explicitly requires compliance with the provisions of the *European Communities (Quality of Shellfish Waters) Regulations* and the objectives of *Shellfish Water Pollution Programmes*.

The Mini-Plan acknowledges the fact that the sewage treatment plant at Killaspugbrone is currently operating at full capacity. However, its proposed upgrade has been included in the Water Services Investment Programme 2010-2013.

The Mini-Plan contains a specific objective in this regard:

44.10 Wastewater treatment

- A. Upgrade the wastewater treatment plant at Killaspugbrone to cater for a population equivalent of circa 3,000 persons.

D. Consideration should also be given to including an objective which requires that Appropriate Assessment Screening be required for any Plan/Project with potential to impact on the adjacent designated Natura 2000 sites (Ballysadare Bay (SAC/NHA), Cummeen Strand / Drumcliff Bay (SAC/NHA), Cummeen Strand (SPA)).

Planning Authority's response: The CDP already includes an objective – O-NH-2 – to “assess, in accordance with the relevant legislation, all proposed developments which are likely to have a significant effect (directly or through indirect or cumulative impact) on designated natural heritage sites, sites proposed for designation and protected species.

Strandhill Mini-Plan also includes an objective to maintain and enhance the conservation value of the designated Natura 2000 sites that surround the village.

However, in the interests of clarity, it is proposed to modify this objective as suggested by the EPA. The modified objective shall read as follows (additional text in blue):

44.1 Landscape, natural heritage, open space

- A. Maintain and enhance the conservation value of *the Natura 2000 sites surrounding the village. Ensure that Appropriate Assessment Screening is carried out for any plan or project within the Mini-Plan area with potential to impact on* Ballysadare Bay SAC (site code 000622), Cummeen Strand/Drumcliff Bay SAC (site code 000627), Cummeen Strand SPA (site code 004035) and Ballysadare Bay SPA (site code 004129).

E. It is noted that a flood risk assessment was carried out for the proposed Variation; however consideration should be given to highlighting areas which are significant risk of flooding. It should also be ensured that development is appropriate to the risk of flooding identified and that requirements of the Flood Risk Management Guidelines (2009) are fully implemented as appropriate.

Planning Authority's response: The Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) report which accompanies the proposed Variation No.1/Strandhill Mini-Plan includes a map that shows the locations of areas with potentially high, medium and low risk of flooding (flood zones A, B and C). It is considered unnecessary to include a duplicate of this map in the SEA Screening Report.

In respect of new development that may be proposed in areas at risk of flooding, the CDP contains a set of Flood risk management policies (Section 10.6.2 Flood risk, p. 158-159 of the CDP). These policies are designed to restrict development in areas at risk of flooding, except where certain criteria are met and the proposals satisfy the justification test outlined in Chapter 5 of the *Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2009)*. The policy P-FRM-6 specifically requires the implementation of the Guidelines' provisions.

7. Considerations

Most of the concerns of the EPA have already been addressed through the inclusion of relevant policies in the CDP. The EPA's suggestions regarding the contents of the Mini-Plan have been adequately incorporated into the draft text and the associated SEA Screening Report.

The lack of a response from the other prescribed environmental authorities cannot be construed as an implicit agreement with the Planning Authority's conclusion regarding the level of impact of the proposed Mini-Plan on the environment. However, in the absence of recommendations from the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government, the Minister for Agriculture, Marine and Food, and the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (DCENR), the Planning Authority has no reason to further alter the proposed Strandhill Mini-Plan or the SEA Screening Report.

8. Conclusion

Strandhill Mini-Plan has been prepared in the context of the existing CDP 2011-2017, which sets out a strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of the County and has already been assessed under the SEA carried out in association with the CDP.

The Mini-Plan is and must remain consistent with the CDP. The CDP provisions will apply to the Mini-Plan area.

Strandhill Mini-Plan will be focused on the consolidation of the village, with provision for some growth in appropriate areas.

When compared to the 2003 Strandhill LAP, the Mini-Plan involves a reduction in the extent of the overall area of greenfield land available for development during the Plan period, particularly for residential development.

Having described the characteristics and assessed the expected effects of implementing the Mini-Plan for Strandhill, and having regard to the characteristics of the area likely to be affected, it is considered that the proposed Mini-Plan, if implemented, would have negligible effects on the environment.

Following the assessment based on the criteria set out in Schedule 2A of the SEA Regulations, it is the opinion of the Planning Authority that the implementation of the proposed CDP Variation No. 1 / Strandhill Mini-Plan is not likely to have significant effects on the environment.

Accordingly, a full Strategic Environmental Assessment, separate from the SEA associated with the CDP, is not required.