

8. The Development of the Masterplan

8.1 The Development of the Masterplan area as a Quarter or District.

The area covered by the masterplan has the capacity to cater for a significant amount of development. In keeping with the principle of sustainability and in the interests of such, it is advisable that a variety of uses are catered for, with cognisance given to the inter-relationship of these uses - i.e., places to live, to work, to recreate, to avail of a variety of local services and community facilities and to shop for basic convenience goods.

The development of a variety of uses, which help support each other could see the development of the masterplan as a distinct Quarter or District in the environs of Sligo City. This Quarter or District will be set in an area of high amenity and the plan will outline guidelines to ensure it is developed to high standards and is an attractive place in which to live.

8.2 Future Land Uses

An examination of the land uses in this part of the town (refer to sections 2.1 and 2.2) revealed a good mix of land uses close to the town centre. Between the town centre and Ballinode, public/institutional lands predominate with the Grammar School, Sligo General Hospital and the Institute of Technology. These uses are associated with fairly large land-holdings and tend to place the recent residential developments in the Ballinode and Farranacardy areas, further from the commercial and mix of land uses associated with the town centre.

At Ballinode however, at the junction of Ash Lane/Calry Road and Hazelwood Road there is a service station and associated forecourt convenience shop. There is also a public house in the immediate vicinity. An examination of the 1837 and 1887 Ordnance Survey Maps reveal that there was a cluster of traditional buildings here that is indicative of the formation of a village.

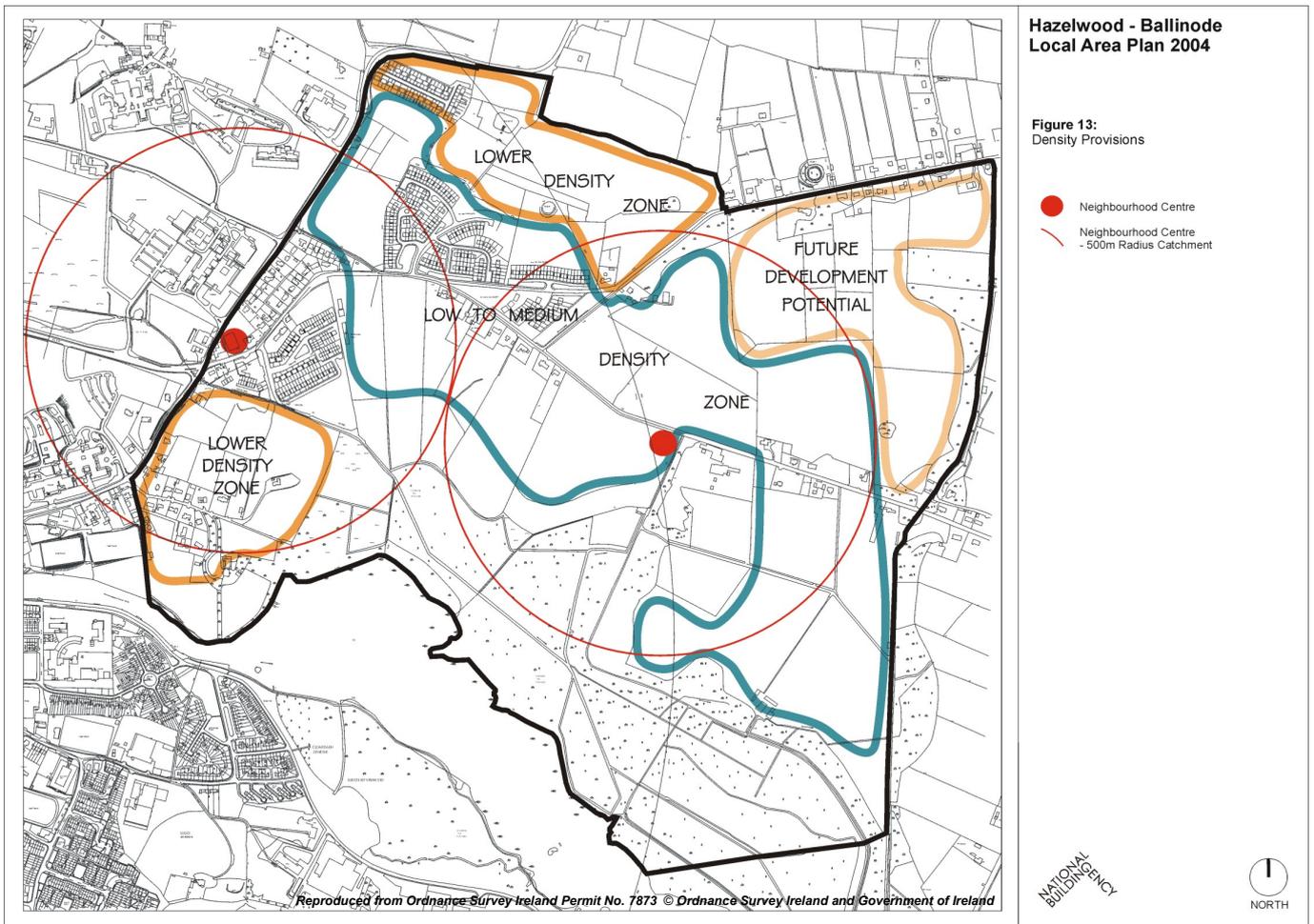
To date most of the development in the Ballinode and Hazelwood area has been residential in nature and there is a significant demand for more residential activity catering for private, social and affordable housing. It is important that existing and future residential areas are supported by adequate community, social and commercial (local convenience retailing) activities. These are best provided together in the form of a neighbourhood centre.

The future Land Use Framework is shown on Figure 4.

8.2.1 Residential Development - Homes for the Community

The plan aims to create a mix of residential units - in terms of density provisions, socio-economic mix, residential unit size and design (see Figure 13).

The masterplan promotes varying residential densities for different areas. These have been chosen on the basis of location (i.e., proximity to neighbourhood centres or significant transportation routes, including future possible public transport corridors) and environmental sensitivity (i.e., visual vulnerability). Residential developments in the immediate vicinity of the neighbourhood centres and public transport corridors will be required to



promote increased residential densities. Areas chosen for lower densities tend to be in areas of high landscape amenity. The high landscape value of these areas should make them attractive to private developments catering for the higher end of the market. Reduced densities, together with significant landscaping and tree planting should ensure that their impact is minimised.

Social Housing

Sligo Borough Council plan to accommodate 170 residential units in the area. It is likely that these units will be provided in three schemes of between 50 to 60 units each. A significant portion of these units will be provided for on Development Cell 2.

Additional provision of social housing may need to be catered for in the plan area, subject to the current review of the County and Borough Council's Housing Strategy.

15. Example of residential development.



Student Accommodation

Proximity of the area to the third level educational institution (particularly Development Cells 2 and 3), favours well for the provision of student accommodation in these areas. The college itself has approximately 3,000 students and the existing campus has the capacity to serve around 6,500 though this is seen as possible in the longer term (i.e., ten years and beyond) and is dependant on demographics, the status of Sligo in the national economy and the town's potential growth.

To date, the general standard of student accommodation has not been great comprising mostly of bed-sits and shared accommodation in family homes. The lack of suitable ac-

accommodation in the area may have a direct correlation with the significant increase in student car parking, as students have opted for driving from cheaper accommodation or their own family homes elsewhere in the region.

Currently there are student accommodation development schemes underway or on the drawing board and there are plans for a student village in Development Cell 2. These have the potential to generate in the region of 800-1,200 bedspaces, however if the college is to expand additional accommodation will be necessary. Student accommodation will be expected to achieve higher than average residential densities and any other residential developments in the vicinity of the college (and in particular in cells 2 and 3) should be designed to provide flexibility for adaptation for student accommodation at a later date. Therefore, terraced developments, apartments, smaller garden sizes and low maintenance garden designs will be encouraged in these areas.

Private Housing

This will be encouraged throughout the plan area, and in particular in Development Cells 1, 2, 4 and 5.



16. Proposed Site of Ballinode Neighbourhood Centre.

8.2.2 Development of Neighbourhood Centres - the Focus of Community

In order for a neighbourhood centre to be successful, it is critical that the location is right. They are best located along a main arterial route (i.e., leading to the City Centre), have the capacity to serve a significant residential catchment (ideally within 500 metres - a reasonable walking distance of approximately 5 to 10 minutes) and where the existing (and proposed) land uses lend themselves to the development of such a centre.

Three options have been examined (see Figure 14). These include:

- (1) The vicinity of the Ash Lane/Calry Road/Molloway Hill and Hazelwood Roads.
- (2) A location in the eastern part of the masterplan, serving future developments in this area.
- (3) Junction/bend on The Mall and Molloway Roads (existing offices could be adapted for use as a neighbourhood centre in the future).

Options one and two lend themselves very favourably for the development of a neighbourhood centre. If option 3 were developed, there would be a significant overlap of catchments with option 1 and while it could serve the hospital (staff and visitors), its catchment comprises mostly low density developments and its proximity to the Garvoge River limits its catchment to the south. Another factor, is the limited car parking in the area and its location on a bend in the road which would be undesirable for significant movement of vehicles entering and exiting. For this reason the masterplan proposes the development of a neighbourhood centre at locations (1) and (2).

The Ballinode Neighbourhood Centre (option 1) has distinct advantages worthy of its promotion and development. These include its location at the 'crossroads' of four main routes (east-west and north-south). It also would assist in serving the expanding Sligo Institute of Technology and student residences in the area. In addition, the existing warehouse/storage facility in the vicinity is an under-utilisation for a key strategic site, which is likely to relocate in return for site development and higher financial returns. It also has the capacity to cater for car parking.

The Hazelwood Neighbourhood Centre (Option 2) is necessary to serve the future developments in the eastern part of the masterplan in Development Cells 2, 4 & 5. Locational considerations were determined by topography (in particular, the steeper southern slopes in Cell 4), environmental parameters (landscape protection south of Cell 2) and existing industrial use (the lumberyard in Cell 3).

Both neighbourhood centres are located so as to serve developments within a 500 metre catchment (approximately 5-7 minutes walk).

Facilities which will be encouraged at the neighbourhood centres include - crèche and child care facilities, local neighbourhood shopping (defined below) pharmacies, post offices, ATMs and other community facilities and services such as schools will also be encouraged to locate at or in the vicinity.

In providing for crèche facilities, consideration will be had for government guidelines on their provision, which call for one childcare facility to cater for approximately 20 children for each 75 dwellings.

Table 5 examined the demand for services. Larger facilities requiring significant population catchments could be provided in the long term on the site of the existing lumber/timber yard. As the masterplan area develops, this existing use will become more incompatible with the new uses establishing in the area. It is therefore a long term objective to retain this site for community purposes so as to reinforce the community element proposed adjacent to it in the form of the neighbourhood centre.

In light of the Government's Retail Planning Guidelines for Planning Authorities (Department of the Environment and Local Government, December 2000) consideration is given to the type and scale of retail outlets at the neighbourhood centres. In line with the guidelines a local centre or neighbourhood centre typically comprise a newsagent, small supermarket/general grocery store, sub-post office and other small shops of a local nature serving a small, localised population catchment.

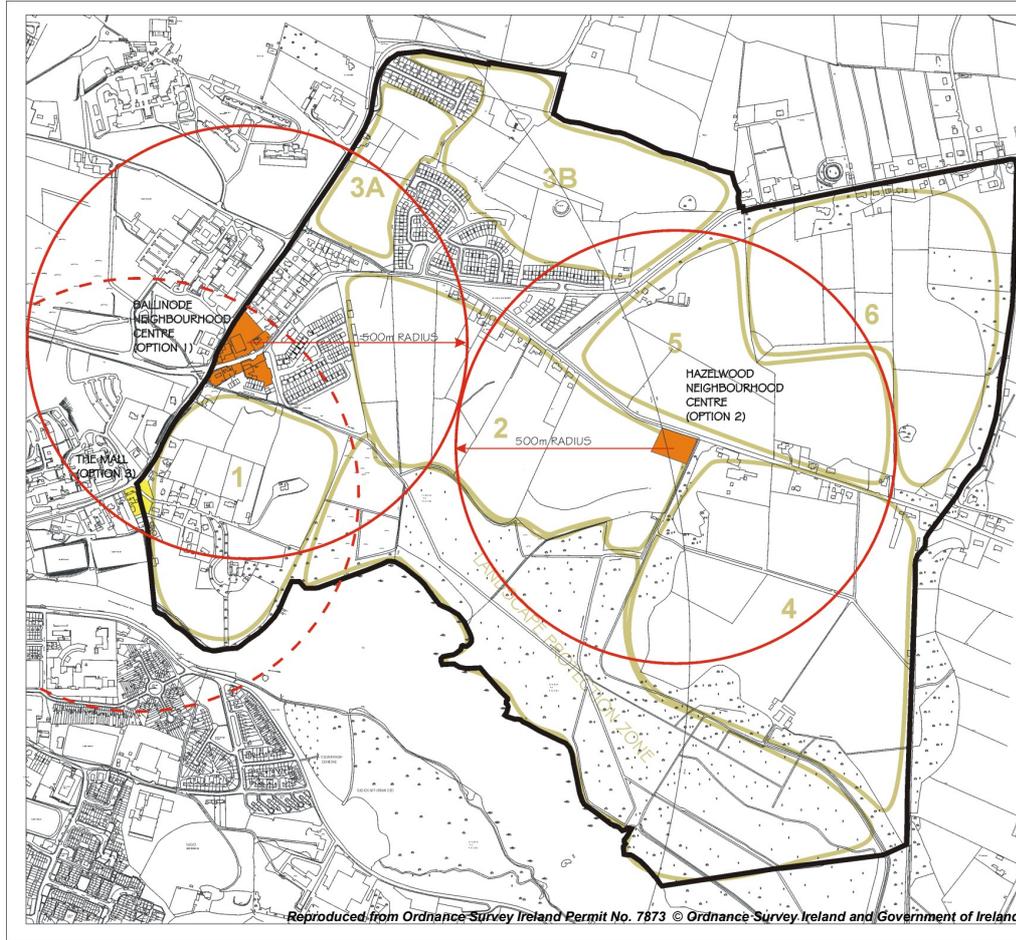
Table 4 outlined the projected populations of the masterplan (minimum and maximum based on density ranges).

Individual retail units permitted at neighbourhood centres will typically have a net sales area of not more than 300 square metres (approximately 450 gross floor area), while the retail capacity of the entire neighbourhood centre would normally not exceed 1,500 square metres of net retail floorspace. These provisions should be adequate for catering for the population growth based on minimum density standards (i.e. approximately 4,141 persons), however should the population grow to meet the higher threshold of around 7,133 persons, there will be a demand for a small to medium sized supermarket (selling principally food items) of approximately 1,000 square metres (net retail floor area).

It is important that the masterplan has the population to support these retail facilities, otherwise it may draw people away from established retail outlets and in particular could undermine the vitality of the town centre. Therefore, the development of the commercial/retail component of the neighbourhood centre will need to be phased so that it develops concurrent with the residential development of the area. It is proposed therefore that retail development is phased to occur in tangent with the respective completion of residential development.

**Hazelwood - Ballinode
Local Area Plan 2004**

Figure 14:
Neighbourhood Centres



- Chosen Options
- Alternative Location Considered Less Viable and Therefore not Chosen
- Development Cells

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**Hazelwood - Ballinode
Local Area Plan 2004**

Figure 15:
Open Space Strategy and Framework



NATIONAL BUILDING AGENCY



The capacity of future residential development to serve additional community facilities is explored further in Section 9 - Capacity Study and Demand for Community Facilities.

8.2.3 Areas for Local Employment Initiatives

Opportunities for small scale enterprise and employment should be encouraged within the masterplan. Proximity to the Sligo Institute of Technology favour well for the possible development of educational out-reach programmes or the provision of research and development in partnership between the college and industries. Small scale enterprises associated with such activity will be encouraged at the neighbourhood centres.

8.2.4 Open Space - Space and Recreation for Residents

This section examines the desirable allocation of open space in the masterplan and having consideration to other areas of amenity protected for reason of landscape, archaeological or other importance. The Government guidelines on residential densities advocate a 15% reservation of opens spaces when preparing masterplans and action area plans and this is the standard that will be applied.

The open space structure and allocation has been considered in the context of existing zoning provisions and specifically key landscape elements, such as features, views, aspects and topography. The aim is to provide open space to cater for both active and passive needs and that this should be developed into a comprehensive network of formal and informal open spaces. Linkages or connectivity between open spaces has been encouraged.

The plan has had due consideration for the critical environmental areas that have been identified in Figure 6. The habitats and landscape features identified on that map have been retained and incorporated into the open space network. Sites of possible archaeological interest, as identified in Figure 9, have also been identified for possible inclusion into the open space network (subject to confirmation of their archaeological status with Dúchas).

The open space network can be summarised as follows (refer to Figure 15):

1. Landscape Protection Zone: Preservation of the cSAC (in its entirety) between the Garvoge River and the southern development boundary. A linear park will be provided along its northern edge providing a buffer between the future developed areas and the cSAC, which will provide an east-west pedestrian route through the masterplan.

2. Natural Parks: The existing woodland areas have been preserved, notably along the waterfront in Cell 1; the Oak trees and other trees that form the parkland setting in the southeast corner of Cell 2; the trees that adjoin the lane that bounds Cell 2 and 4; the trees along the private lane immediately east of Cell 4; the areas immediately on the north and the east of Cell 6 along the public roads. A linear park system will extend along the outer edges of these tree groups which will assist in providing a network of open spaces that will encourage walks along the woodland edges.

The park system that runs along the northern border of the cSAC should be laid out to accommodate stormwater retention ponds so as to assist in the regulating stormwater run-off from future development in the area and maintain the natural hydrological charac-



Photo 17 (above): View of parkland type open space for casual and informal recreation.

Photo 18 (below): Existing trees to be incorporated into a future parkland area.



19. (Below): Waterfront lands proposed to incorporate a linear park along the Garvoge River.

Overleaf (Photos 20-26): The development of a linear park along the Garvoge River has the opportunity to develop the existing pedestrian path system (shown in photos 20-24) along areas in the masterplan (photos 25 & 26).





From top to bottom: Photos 20-26.

teristics of the alluvial woodland habitat of the cSAC. This will also serve a dual purpose in minimizing potential pollutants (from oil residue, bitumen, etc. derived from roads and car parking) entering into the Garvogue/Lough Gill catchment.

3. Linear Parks: A linear network of spaces is provided in Cell 4 incorporating the sites of possible archaeological interest - this is a diagonal open space alignment through Cells 5 & 6 comparable to 'beads on a chain'. This will enable a high quality amenity route for pedestrians through Cell 4 that will connect with the neighbourhood centre to the south in Cell 2. It will also assist in tempering the expanse of development that might otherwise occur in Cell 4 while providing a central amenity space accessible to all residences developed within this block.

A linear park will be provided along the northern, eastern and southern boundary of Cell 1. This will incorporate the stream and pond to the immediate north and some associated wetland areas which could include an attractive eastern extension of the cycle path that runs along Ash Walk. The masterplan also maintains the southern slopes fronting the Garvogue River that provide attractive views upstream. This linear park has the potential to be extended back into town to connect with the existing pedestrian bridge crossing the River. Sligo Borough Council and Sligo County Council will also examine the feasibility of extending this walk along the waterfront of the Garvogue River and Lough Gill shores.

4. Local Pocket Park: Maintain the summit of the hill in Development Cell 1 free from development and make provisions for a viewing point down along the Garvogue River towards Lough Gill.

Small and localised pocket parks in the form of local 'greens', crescents and squares will be encouraged throughout the other development cells.

5. Civic Square: A civic square or park is proposed at the Hazelwood neighbourhood centre and this should be the focus of its buildings and activities. A sense of enclosure should be provided around its edge by ensuring that buildings are positioned so that they form the edge of the street or road that surrounds it. Where buildings are not proposed, tree planting should define this edge treatment.

6. Playing Fields: The standard for playing fields is recommended at approximately 1 Ha per 1,000 population to be met by the provision of a number of larger sites. Other studies have indicated that all new dwellings in urban areas should be within 1 kilometre (1,000 metres) from playing fields, but that approximately 80% should be within approximately 750 metres of such space. An important consideration in this regard are the proposals for the Forthill Amenity Area which will provide for three playing fields (one of which is all-weather) and two basketball/tennis courts in addition to a sports pavilion. This encompasses an 'active' area of approximately 4.41 Hectares.

As the western areas in the masterplan will be adequately served by this active amenity area, the focus of providing additional active open space has been in the eastern portion of the plan area. Ideally, space should be provided in relative proximity to the neighbourhood centre and in particular other community facilities that might require similar space, for example schools and community centres where shared or combined usage could occur at a later date. Given the significant amount of open space already provided through



Photos 27 & 28: The development of the area will generate a demand for active recreational areas for varying age groups.

landscape and other environmental protections in Cells 2, 5 & 6, the focus for active playing fields has been in the western portion of Cell 4, where 4.1 Hectares of open space has been provided and has the capacity to provide approximately 6 playing fields.

The existing colleges and schools to the west of the study area also contain playing fields and recreational facilities which could provide additional facilities to those living in the area, either through formal games as part of the institution's teams or in the form of extra-curricular activities. Recent planning studies have called for better management of existing resources and in particular the doubling up of such facilities for the wider community use, particularly for the use local residents during evenings and after school hours.

The linear park system in Cells 5 and 6 which connects the sites of possible archaeological interest could provide some additional active open space, particularly for young teenagers playing informal games. The intermediate areas between archaeological sites could be broadened to ensure that they meet general standards for 'formal' games and matches.

Pedestrian connections are provided to connect these areas together where opportunities arise and these are indicated on the Masterplan - Figure 15. Connections linking the linear parks described in 1 and 4 above would require a pedestrian/cycle bridge over the existing stream and it would require the removal of the galvanised fencing in the intermediary area.

It is noted that despite the apparent significant amount of land taken up by the open space network, all Development Cells fall below the recommended 15% allocation required and thus additional areas will be required as part of the planning application procedure.

8.2.5 The Social Dimension

Section 8.3.2 made reference to the various residential developments that will be accommodated in the area. These include social housing, public housing, affordable, voluntary, private housing and student accommodation. The aim is to achieve social mixing and integration within the future community. Mixing should also consider elements such as tenure and particularly household size so as to ensure that there are a variety of house sizes to cater for single person households, young families, retirees and pensioners as opposed to single category developments.

In addition, the implementation of the plan will have cognisance for the National Anti-Poverty Strategy as a method of addressing social exclusion. Allied to the provision of social housing and childcare facilities (sections 8.2.1 and 8.2.2), the plan, through the development of the neighbourhood centres (Section 8.2.3), aims to link these social provisions with economic and employment development. In an effort to avoid social exclusion, the local authorities will examine means through which training can be provided in association with the educational institutions, Sligo Area Partnership and others to ensure equal employment opportunities for all.

Table 6: Summary of Development/Land Use Structure

Development Cell	Proposed Land Uses
1	Residential (Low and Medium Densities); Open Space and Amenity.
2	Residential (Primarily High Density); Student Accommodation; Neighbourhood Centre and Open Space and Amenity
3	Business Technology Park; Open Space and Amenity.
4	Residential (Low, Medium and High Densities); Open Space and Amenity
5	Residential (Medium and High Density); Student Accommodation.



29. The plan aspires to address the social dimension.