This document is intended to assist those who wish to participate in public consultation, contribute to the review of the Sligo and Environs Plan 2010 and to the preparation of a Local Area Plan (LAP) for the period 2018-2024.

This pre-draft consultation document explains the legal and procedural requirements for local area plans and offers background information relating to Sligo City and its environs. It also discusses some of the outcomes of the previous Plan and outlines the main issues that the new LAP must address.

For additional information or clarifications in relation to this document, please contact the Development Planning Unit at dpu@sligococo.ie

For up-to-date information on the LAP preparation process, please consult the web page www.sligococo.ie/sligocityplan
Commencing the LAP preparation

On Tuesday, 12 December 2017, Sligo County Council commences the preparation of the Sligo City and Environs Local Area Plan 2018-2024 in accordance with the requirements of Section 19 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).

The pre-draft public consultation period runs from 12 December 2017 to 30 January 2018. It is envisaged that a Draft Local Area Plan will be published by mid-2018 and the LAP will be adopted by the end of the year.

What will the LAP include?

The LAP will set out a land use strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of the area. It will consist of a written statement and maps indicating objectives for purposes such as the zoning of land; the phasing of development; economic and community development; residential development; heritage and culture; open space and recreation; transportation and infrastructure; urban design; and environmental protection.

The plan will not amend the Record of Protected Structures, which has been recently reviewed as part of the preparation of the County Development Plan (CDP).

Strategic Environmental Assessment

The Planning Authority will carry out an environmental assessment as part of the preparation of the new LAP. Members of the public are invited to contribute to this by highlighting general or specific environmental issues at pre-draft stage.

There will be another opportunity for submissions when the Draft Plan is published, accompanied by an Environmental Report. Comments and observations will be invited on both documents.

Public consultation

The LAP preparation process will involve public consultation at three stages: pre-draft stage, Draft Plan stage and Proposed Amendments stage.

As part of the first stage, the Planning Authority is engaging in pre-draft consultation with the general public and a wide range of organisations and interest groups. Suggestions or observations are invited from anyone with an interest in the future development of Sligo City and its environs.

Pre-draft submissions should be made in writing, in hard copy or by e-mail, by 30 January 2018.

How to make a pre-draft submission

Submissions may address any planning matter, from broad policy issues to specific types of development in identified areas.

They may also refer to environmental issues, such as natural and built heritage, archaeology, landscape, water quality etc.

Please note that (re)zoning proposals will also be considered at pre-draft stage.

Please include a map if you refer to particular locations or features or to the zoning of specific lands.

Submissions should be clear, concise and to the point.

As submissions may be made available to the public, please do not include personal, confidential or other sensitive information.

All submissions will be given equal attention and will be taken into consideration in the preparation of the Draft Sligo and Environs Local Area Plan 2018-2024.

Submissions should be made in writing (hard copy or e-mail), headed “Sligo City and Environs LAP 2018-2024” and sent to:

Janet McNamara, Administrative Officer
Planning Section, Sligo County Council
City Hall, Quay Street, Sligo
Tel. 071-9114440
E-mail: sligoandenvirons@sligococo.ie

Deadline for pre-draft submissions: 30 January 2018 by 4 p.m.
Sligo, the largest urban centre in the North-West, is strategically located midway between Galway and Derry. It is the natural capital of a substantial territory extending into neighbouring counties. The city is well served by national roads and is capable of energising a wider area encompassing parts of Mayo, Donegal and Leitrim, as well as capitalising on cross-border co-operation initiatives.

Why not prepare a Development Plan?

Following the abolition of Sligo Borough Council, there is no longer a legal requirement to prepare a development plan for the area. However, it is mandatory for a planning authority to make a local area plan in respect of an area which:

1. is designated as a town in the most recent census of population;
2. has a population in excess of 5,000;
3. is situated in the functional area of a planning authority which is a county council.

In accordance with these criteria, Sligo County Council now proposes to prepare a Local Area Plan for the Sligo and Environs area.

What is a Local Area Plan?

The Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) introduced a more plan-led system aimed at ensuring proper planning and sustainable development of land through a hierarchy of inter-related and complementary plans and policies at national, regional and county levels.

Whilst strategic policies are generally established at national, regional and county level, local area plans provide more detailed planning policies for areas where significant development and change is anticipated. A Local Area Plan is an important document which, along with other higher-levels plans, sets the policy framework for future decisions on investment and development proposals.

Future requirement for an Urban Area Plan

The Draft National Planning Framework (see page 6 for further information) was published for consultation in September 2017.

The NPF indicates that proposals will be advanced for a stronger urban focus in the Municipal District system within local authorities, enabling a more town-focused configuration to be achieved. This will be done by creating distinct electoral areas based closely on a number of larger urban centres and assigning an enhanced range of local authority functions to those areas.

It will be a requirement to make an urban area plan (based on current local area plan provisions) for larger towns and their environs with a population of more than 15,000 people. Therefore, while it is currently a requirement to prepare an LAP, it may become necessary to prepare an Urban Area Plan during or after the LAP preparation period.

However, given that Urban Area Plans are expected to be similar to LAPs in terms of content and procedures, it is envisaged that the preparation of this plan for Sligo and Environs should cover both the current and future legislative provisions for large towns.
Land use plan boundaries generally consist of a ‘development limit’, within which development is directed onto zoned lands, surrounded by a ‘green belt’. Within the green belt, land is protected for agricultural use, the preservation of the rural environment, the provision of strategic infrastructure and the future planned expansion of the built-up area. The extremity of the green belt forms the ‘plan limit’, i.e. the boundary which defines the area to which the plan’s policies and objectives apply.

The previous two development plans for the Sligo and Environs area have been defined by a somewhat crude, rectangular plan limit, as shown below.

**Fig. 1. The current Sligo and Environs Plan limit**

This plan limit clearly did not represent accurately the true functional area of Sligo City and its environs.

It should be noted that the Central Statistics Office (CSO) has used a different boundary to define the Sligo and Environs area in each census, based on the extent of the contiguous built-up area. The CSO boundary corresponding to Census 2016 is shown in Figure 2. It is evident that the CSO boundary encloses a smaller area than the current development limit defined in the SEDP. The CSO boundary extends outside the SEDP development limit, along Strandhill Road.

Over the past decade, it has proved difficult to interpret and compare census data in the context of the Sligo and Environs area as defined in the 2004 and 2010 development plans. A revision of the Plan limit is obviously necessary.

**Revised Plan boundaries**

It is considered that the proposed new plan should address this issue and provide a revised development limit and plan limit, taking into consideration, inter alia, the following:

- The extent of zoned land required for development
- Geographical features
- Environmental constraints
- Archaeological and other heritage features
- Infrastructural barriers and constraints
- CSO census boundaries and spatial units
- The location of surrounding settlements
- Distance from the city centre area

**Fig. 2. Sligo and Environs, as defined by Census 2016 (shaded blue), is different from the SEDP development limit (outlined in red).**
The vision for Sligo, as stated in the SEDP 2010, is that of a compact city of 42,000 persons where land-use and transportation are appropriately integrated. Translating the vision for Sligo, the spatial strategy builds on existing land use, promoting urban consolidation through densification, infill development and the redevelopment of underutilised or brownfield sites.

In physical terms, the spatial strategy is based on a "hard" frame – the transport corridors – and a "soft" axis – the Garavogue River, from Lough Gill to Sligo Bay. The strategy is also designed to avoid or minimise damage to sensitive areas and landscapes.

**Future city form**

The future city form was to be based upon the following:

- A consolidated city centre where commercial activity would be accommodated and the public realm and pedestrian environment would be enhanced.

- A traffic-managed "inner-ring" which would keep through-traffic out of the city centre.

- The ongoing development of the Inner Relief Road (IRR) as the main north-south artery until such time as a City Bypass is constructed.

- A "soft" east-west axis between Lough Gill and Sligo Bay comprising a walkable/cyclable natural amenity corridor.

- New residential areas at Cranmore, Ballinode, the North Fringe, the Docklands and Caltragh-Carrowroe.

- A north-south economic spine running parallel to the IRR along with planned business parks at Oakfield and Lisnalurg.

**Detailed plans**

The SEDP established a clear strategic policy framework for the sustainable development of Sligo and Environs, within which more detailed plans could be drawn up for specific parts of the plan area.

The Plan identified five such areas in need of regeneration, consolidation or where greenfield development was expected to take place at some point in the future.

These areas and their potential for accommodating additional population are shown in Fig. 4 above.

Local Area Plans were adopted for the North Fringe and the Hazelwood–Ballinode areas.

Similar plans were envisaged for the Docklands, Caltragh–Carrowroe and Cranmore–Cleveragh areas, to be prepared during or following the plan period.
Core Strategy

Consistent with national and regional policies, the Core Strategy of the CDP focuses on the further development of Sligo as a Gateway City and economic driver of the North-West region.

In order to support the development of Sligo City, it is essential to control growth in the wider Sligo Subregion, which coincides with the “rural area under strong urban influence”, as described in the National Spatial Strategy 2002.

The Subregion contains thirteen villages, of which five are designated Gateway Satellites.

Other CDP provisions that are particularly important to the Sligo and Environs area include the following:

- A targeted growth of 2,500 persons in the period to 2023.
- An expanded zoning allocation of 53 hectares for residential uses to accommodate the desired population growth with a suitable volume and mix of housing.
- The need to identify areas in need of regeneration.
- The promotion of Sligo as the primary employment centre and the need to ensure adequate land is available to accommodate industry and enterprise development.
- The aim of consolidating Sligo City’s role as a regional shopping centre and the Primary Retail Centre (Tier 1) in County Sligo.
- Objectives to upgrade transportation infrastructure in the area and to explore the feasibility of an N4/N15 City Bypass.
“Ireland 2040 - Our Plan”

The National Planning Framework “Ireland 2040 - Our Plan” (NPF) is the successor to the National Spatial Strategy (NSS).

The NPF aims to establish a new strategic planning and development context for Ireland and all of its regions in the period between now and 2040. It sets a high-level framework for the co-ordination of a range of national, regional and local authority policies and activities, planning and investment, both public and private.

A draft NPF was published in September 2017 and is expected to be finalised by the end of the year.

Whilst the NSS clearly designated Sligo and other urban centres as Gateway Cities with specific growth targets (see Fig. 6), the draft NPF has limited such designations and targets to the five main cities of Dublin, Cork, Galway, Limerick and Waterford.

There is no explicit reference to Sligo’s regional significance in the draft NPF, despite the fact that Sligo is the most obvious large regional town that should be supported to achieve its potential in terms of employment and population growth, in parallel with infrastructural development and regeneration of the town centre.

The draft NPF indicates that the scope for potential growth of urban areas with over 10,000 inhabitants (such as Sligo) will be determined at regional level as part of the preparation of the relevant Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for each Regional Assembly area.

There is, however, an indication that a growth target of 40% should be applied to larger towns in the North-West.

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Map 1 Gateways

Strategic Spatial Roles
- Revitalising
- Strengthening
- Reinforcing
- Consolidating
- Co-operating

Fig. 6
Sligo and five other urban centres were designated as New Gateways in the National Spatial Strategy 2002. No similar map or designation is included in the National Planning Framework “Ireland 2040 - Our Plan”

Source: National Spatial Strategy 2002-2020
Issues — new regional planning context

Border Regional Planning Guidelines

County Sligo previously formed part of the Border Region. The (now dissolved) Border Regional Authority (BRA) prepared the Regional Planning Guidelines 2010 (RPGs), recommending the prioritisation of key urban centres such as Sligo for population and investment growth.

The specific population targets for the Sligo and Environs (Census) area were set at 21,200 persons in 2016 and 23,700 persons in 2022. Consistent with this target, approximately 43 hectares of greenfield land are currently zoned for housing in the Sligo and Environs area.

Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy

Since 2014, County Sligo is part of the area covered by the Northern and Western Regional Assembly (NWRA). The NWRA will prepare updated regional guidance in the form of a Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) after the finalisation of the National Planning Framework (NPF).

The RSES will provide a more detailed framework for the future growth of urban centres in the region, including new population targets and corresponding housing land allocations.

In November 2017, the NWRA published an Issues Paper as a first step in the development of a Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy.

The Issues Paper suggest the development of “Smart Places” and identifies Sligo as a “City Region”, on the same level as Galway and Letterkenny-Derry in the urban hierarchy of the Northern and Western Region.

The Issues Paper can be found at www.nwra.ie/RSES. The public consultation runs until 26 January 2018.

New population targets

The Draft NPF states that, in the context of around one million additional people in Ireland by 2040, the Northern and Western Region should be targeting the accommodation of approximately 150,000 to 175,000 additional people.

In recognition of a significantly weaker urban structure in the North and West of Ireland, overall targeted population growth for large towns with populations above 10,000 persons (in 2016) should generally be 40%, or almost twice the projected national average growth.

This does not mean that individual settlements cannot develop beyond the targeted rate of growth for the region. While some towns will grow more than others, growth must generally be balanced at the regional and local planning stages.

Although 40% is a significant growth rate, it should be noted that it is over a 24-year period and actually works out at a lower rate of growth than that envisaged in the RPGs (i.e. a growth rate of 23% by 2022).

Questions

- What can be done to attract the additional investment necessary to create new employment opportunities and attain the revised population target?
- How can Sligo become a Smart City in the context of a Smart Northern & Western Region?
Recent population changes

Sligo was designated as a Gateway City in 2002, under the National Spatial Strategy (NSS), which aimed to achieve balanced social, physical and economic development across the state.

Within this context, Sligo was recognised as having the potential to build scale and critical mass to drive development in the North-West.

In the absence of substantial investment in critical infrastructure, partly due to the economic crisis, Sligo has not yet achieved its potential in terms of economic development and population growth.

There has been a significant imbalance in population growth in the urban area of Sligo when compared to the surrounding rural areas and smaller settlements such as Strandhill, Ballysadare, Carney and Collooney.

The total population of the Sligo and Environs area (as defined by Census boundaries) has generally declined from 19,735 in 2002 to 19,199 in 2016 (a fall of approximately 3%).

Conversely, in the same period there has been a substantial population increase in the twelve electoral divisions surrounding Sligo (i.e. the surrounding rural areas including Strandhill, Collooney, Ballysadare, Carney etc).

In 2002, there were 14,029 persons living in this area, but by 2016 the population had grown by over 21%, to 17,020 persons.
The new Sligo and Environs plan needs to facilitate housing for an additional 2,500 persons in the period up to 2023, as outlined in the CDP. This will require the zoning of approximately 53 hectares of land for residential development. Originally, the SEDP included 582 hectares of zoned residential/mixed-use land, but 539 ha were rezoned to ‘Strategic Land Reserve’ (SLR) in 2011, in response to the requirements of the Border Regional Planning Guidelines 2010. Just 43 hectares were retained for residential uses.

Household diversity
In addition to the amount of housing required, there is a wide range of specific housing needs to be met (e.g. a growing social housing list).

The composition of households in the Sligo urban area is changing, with a trend towards smaller households. According to the 2006 census, the percentage of one-person households in private housing was 28%. This figure rose to 32% in 2011 and was at 33% in 2016.

Location of future housing
Whilst it is important to meet demands in terms of the volume and range of housing types, it is also vital that housing is provided at suitable locations.

The zoning of housing land should be guided by the concept of sustainable residential development, which aims to:

- deliver a good quality of life and minimise the need for the use of private cars
- provide variety in terms of ancillary uses and supporting facilities
- promote social integration between diverse household types and age groups
- ensure efficient use of land and energy
- create an attractive living environment which respects its context.

At the core of this concept is the principle of sequential development, whereby areas closer to settlement centres will be prioritised for development in advance of lands further from settlement centres.

Building beyond the urban edge, while a substantial amount of in-between land remains in a greenfield state, is not sustainable. Such “leapfrogging” leads to an uncontrolled spread of the built-up area, resulting in disjointed blocks of developments, which harm the character of the town and the countryside.

In order to avoid this, careful phasing of urban extensions is required as part of the new plan. Furthermore it is an objective of the NPF to deliver at least 40% of all new homes nationally, within the built-up envelope of existing urban settlements.

One of the opportunities for Sligo is the current availability and potential future provision of good quality housing for prospective investors and employees at a much lower price when compared to larger cities such as Dublin, Cork and Galway.

Questions
- In advance of regional housing land allocations, how much land should we zone for residential use?
- Where are the most appropriate locations to zone land for housing? What range and mix of house types are appropriate for these locations?
- Is there a demand for specific types of accommodation? (e.g. student accommodation, sheltered housing for the elderly etc.)
Vacant sites

In the last 10 years, little or no development has occurred on the 43 hectares of land available for residential development in the Sligo and Environs area.

The Urban Regeneration and Housing Act 2015 introduced the *vacant site levy* as a “site activation measure”, to ensure that vacant or underutilised urban land in is brought into beneficial use. The levy can be imposed by planning authorities under certain conditions in designated areas. Designated sites can be levied if the owners or developers fail to bring forward reasonable proposals for the development of such property in line with the provisions of the relevant plan.

For the purpose of the application of the vacant site levy, a site means “any area of land exceeding 0.05 hectares identified by a planning authority in its functional area but does not include any structure that is a person’s home.” Sligo County Council has not yet formally designated such vacant sites in the Sligo and Environs area.

Regeneration lands

The SEDP designated certain areas for urban regeneration. The number and extent of such areas will be reviewed as part of the preparation of the new plan.

Question

- Which areas of Sligo City are underused and which are in need of regeneration?
The national economy has started to recover and is set to register a steady growth in the short term. Whilst the potential impact of ‘Brexit’ is unclear at this stage, Sligo should be prepared to share in the predicted return to growth over the following years by putting in place a robust economic development framework.

Sligo’s ability to attract investment continues to be restricted by certain infrastructural deficiencies which act as barriers to economic development.

Planning, development and the provision of local infrastructure are core functions that are vital for economic development. Industry, enterprise, tourism and retail are the sectors that generate most of Sligo’s jobs and income.

A land use plan with strong economic development policies regarding all of the above is a pre-requisite for further economic growth and employment.

This requires a multi-pronged approach, which involves the following key elements:

- ensuring that Sligo City and Environs is attractive to investors by offering a good quality of life to those who live and work here;
- providing or supporting the provision of essential infrastructure, including improved energy, telecommunications and transport infrastructure;
- reserving sufficient land in suitable locations for industry and enterprise uses;
- capitalising on the tourism potential of the area;
- developing a strong and vibrant retail sector.

### Industry and enterprise

The IDA industrial estate at Finisklin is now nearing maximum capacity and there is a clear need for additional land in the area. In this context the potential development of additional lands at Oakfield has been identified subject to the provision of appropriate road infrastructure in the form of the Western Distributor Route (see Figure 15). There is also additional land for expansion to the north of the City around the existing Abbott/Abbvie plants.

### Tourism

Sligo benefits from a unique landscape setting which favours the development of tourism. The protection of the area’s natural and built heritage through planning and environmental services is integral to the tourism offering. Culturally, Sligo is associated with archaeology, the Yeats family, traditional Irish music, soccer, surfing, walking – all having significant potential for tourism development.

### Retailing

In the national retail hierarchy, Sligo is placed on the “Regional” (second) tier, together with other urban centres performing important regional retailing functions. The Retail Strategy for the county, prepared as part of the CDP 2017-2023, highlights some of the challenges with regard to retailing in Sligo City:

- a consistently high rate of vacancy in the city centre and edge of centre areas;
- a relatively poor public realm standard;
- lack of progress on the Wine Street centre block;
- an over-provision of supermarkets to the east of the city centre;
- parking and vehicular circulation;
- the recent shift in comparison retail focus to the north-west of the city centre;
- pressure for retail development outside the city centre.

The County Retail Strategy estimates that there will be an additional requirement for approximately 1,250 sq.m net convenience floorspace in Sligo City by 2023.

In terms of comparison retail floorspace, there is scope for further development of some 4,338 sq.m (net). In accordance with the sequential approach, the preferred location for future retail development is within the existing City Centre and Neighbourhood Centres. However, there is sometimes considerable pressure for the development of out-of-town retail units.

### Questions

- What land is suitable to accommodate further industry and enterprise?
- What infrastructure is needed to facilitate future economic development?
- How can Sligo best capitalise upon its tourism potential?
- How can the retail environment and performance of Sligo be improved?
Urban renewal and design seeks to create and maintain successful places by ensuring that spaces are well-designed, attractive, easy to use and navigate around, pleasant and safe. It concerns the relationship between buildings, their uses and their surrounding public realm.

The importance of implementing the core principles of good urban design when creating new places and integrating new development into established built environments cannot be underestimated. Whilst good urban design should be practised throughout the Plan area, there are a number of key sites where significant redevelopment and improved urban design is vital.

The Docklands

The Docklands, encompassing an undefined area around and including Sligo Port, has been the subject of piecemeal development over the years consisting of port-related and non-port-related uses. It has become evident that such an approach is neither desirable nor sustainable. Instead, a redevelopment framework should be prepared for the area focusing on:

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

Wine Street Car Park

The area bounded by O’Connell Street, Wine Street, Adelaide Street and John Street is known as the Centre Block. In 1999, a masterplan was prepared for this area, with the purpose of providing a framework within which developers, traders and retailers could invest with a clear knowledge and expectation of the intended land use of adjacent sites. Since 1999, several mixed-use retail/residential developments have received planning permission based on this masterplan. However, there has been limited progress on the implementation of the permitted developments and the viability of the original masterplan should now be reviewed.
Stephen Street Car Park

The site of the existing car park has been identified as being suitable for redevelopment due to its central location and attractive surrounding environment. Recent years have seen an increasing use of the site for cultural and entertainment purposes and the future vision involves the permanent redevelopment of the area as an urban square suitable to accommodate a variety of open-air activities such as markets and other events.

O’Connell Street

The need for environmental enhancement of O’Connell Street has been long recognised. However, the nature and extent of enhancement has been widely debated, particularly with regard to the issue of pedestrianisation.

All over Europe, it has been documented that the conversion of main streets into pedestrian promenades changed city life for better, bringing in more people who would stay longer and participate in more activities, including shopping.

O’Connell Street was closed to traffic during the period 2006 to 2009, but has since re-opened to traffic on a one-lane basis. Pedestrianisation of the street remains the ultimate goal, subject to the availability of funding and suitable alternative traffic routes.

In the meantime, work has continued on the rehabilitation of water supply infrastructure. Consent and funding have been secured for an enhancement scheme to include:

- limited vehicular access with pedestrian priority;
- the provision of new, widened footpaths and the provision of new paving;
- the provision of a narrow centre-lane for vehicular traffic;
- The provision of new, high-quality street furniture and services;
- the traffic-calming of the junctions of O’Connell Street with Wine Street (to the north) and Gratton Street/John Street (to the south).

Fig.12 A vision of a pedestrian O’Connell Street, as it could be in the future

Questions

- What other city centre areas would be suitable for pedestrianisation?
- How can the new Plan support a more active city life?
Cranmore

The Cranmore Regeneration project came about as a result of consensus between elected representatives, officials, local community representatives and public service providers that concerted action needed to be taken to reverse the ongoing social, environmental and physical decline in the area.

In consultation with the local communities and stakeholders in the area, a vision and a regeneration masterplan was prepared for Cranmore and its wider environs, including lands to the north and east of the estate.

In December 2016, the Sligo East City (Cranmore and Environs) Regeneration Masterplan was formally launched. The social, economic and physical strategies of the Masterplan can achieve a transformative impact for the East City area, providing an action plan for change with benefits for both the local and wider community.

A series of projects and strategies are outlined under each element of the plan (physical, social, economic). It is important to ensure that the new Sligo and Environs plan respects and builds upon the content of the Cranmore masterplan.

The Mall / Connaughton Road

Together with the adjoining Green Fort site, The Mall and the Connaughton Road areas have been identified as a potential ‘cultural quarter’, the key components of which are:

- the ongoing development of ‘The Model’ arts centre;
- provision of a new County Museum;
- civic space and an outdoor performance area;
- new commercial units and underground parking;
- the preservation and enhancement of the Green Fort as a heritage site and a tourist attraction.

Question

What other areas require particular attention in the new Sligo and Environs plan?
Heritage includes many aspects of the world around us. Landscapes, hedgerows, field systems, rivers, plants and animals are all part of our natural heritage. Archaeological sites and many other buildings and structures are features of our built heritage.

The Sligo and Environs area has a rich and varied heritage, including dramatic landscapes, archaeological monuments, the coastline and the historic town core.

**Archaeology**

With the exception of the Dominican friary and the Green Fort, all other standing archaeological remains pre-1640 within Sligo City have been removed over the years, as the town developed. Although the destruction of buildings above ground has been substantial, the street pattern of the 17th-Century town is largely intact and archaeological deposits are likely to exist over a wide area.

The cluster of megalithic tombs at Carrowmore represents one of four major passage tomb cemeteries in Ireland. There are approximately 30 passage-tombs, which date from around 4000 BC or earlier.

To the east of Carrowmore are two large cairns on the summit of Cairns Hill, and to the west is Knocknarea Mountain and the iconic Maeve’s Cairn.

The protection of this internationally-important archaeological landscape is important to the Sligo and environs area for its cultural, historical and tourism value.

**Built heritage**

As per the recently adopted CDP 2017-2023, there are approximately 300 Protected Structures in the Sligo and Environs area. These will not be subject to review as part of the new local area plan.

The current SEDP also includes five designated architectural conservation areas (ACAs), which are of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest. The areas are:

- Market Cross ACA
- Courthouse ACA
- Cathedral ACA
- Wolfe Tone Street ACA
- O’Connell Street ACA

Certain buildings, while not statutorily protected, are considered significant in terms of their contribution to the setting and architectural amenity of the area. Their character should be recognised and protected through appropriate policies in the plan.

**Natural heritage**

Our natural heritage includes the variety of life we see around us every day, often referred to as biodiversity (plants, animals and their habitats), as well as the physical and geological foundation that forms our landscape. Protecting and enhancing our biodiversity and landscape is vital for the quality of life of communities throughout the Sligo and environs area.

Certain species are protected by EU legislation regarding Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs). Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs) are designated at national level. However, most biodiversity occurs outside designated sites. Features such as woodlands, hedgerows, salt marshes, rivers, streams and wetlands must be protected and enhanced.

**Questions**

- How can the heritage of the Sligo and Environs area be best preserved and used to benefit sectors such as education and tourism?
- Are there areas which have a particular heritage value and require better protection?
The new Sligo and Environs Plan must cater for the needs of all members of the community. It is vitally important that its policies and objectives take full account of the need for a socially inclusive city. Social inclusion involves a series of positive actions to achieve equality of access to goods and services, to assist all individuals to participate in their community and society, to encourage the contribution of all persons to social and cultural life, to be aware of and to challenge all forms of discrimination.

Sligo East City (Cranmore and Environs) Regeneration Masterplan 2016 is an excellent example of a comprehensive strategy that combines social and economic considerations with an urban design intervention. Key themes of the social element include education, employment, health, community safety, sports, recreation, arts, culture, community development and youth work, all based on inter-agency engagement and collaboration.

In the new Sligo and Environs Plan, consideration should be given to developing a network of “urban villages”, with neighbourhood centres containing a range of shops, community facilities and local services within walking distance of residential areas, or easily accessible by public transport.

It is also important that land is zoned in appropriate locations to accommodate the future provision of facilities relating to:

- education, training and childcare;
- healthcare and social services;
- services for older people;
- policing and security.

Open space and recreational facilities are also required to cater for a growing population and to offer opportunities for active and passive recreational facilities for all ages and groups. In the last decade, the Council has undertaken a major programme of investment in recreational infrastructure, including:

- Mitchell Curley Park
- Forthill Park
- Doory Park
- Seaview Park
- Cleveragh Regional Park
- Ballytivnan Park

It is important to continue the development of such projects and to link built-up areas into a coherent network of open spaces and linear parks.

Questions

- Where should new schools be provided?
- How can further development of third-level education be supported?
- Which areas are lacking in community facilities?
- Does any particular site require a specific zoning to accommodate a planned facility?
- How and where should open space be provided in the future?
City centre traffic management

The previous development plans for the Sligo and Environ area have aimed to create a vibrant pedestrian- and cyclist-friendly environment with good provision of public transport, reduced congestion and an attractive city centre which is not dominated by the car.

This approach adopts a circulatory system that directs traffic around the centre on a “ring route”, providing multi-storey car parks on the edge of the centre.

The car parking strategy aims to ensure that there is an adequate supply of spaces to support the city centre businesses and that these spaces are effectively managed. Short-term, off-street car parking is preferable in the city centre area.

Strategic road projects

At a strategic level, the traffic and transportation concept is supported by a number of major road projects, including:

- the planned realignment and upgrading of the N4 (Dublin Road), N15 (Donegal Road) and the N16 (Enniskillen Road);
- the Western Distributor Road;
- the Eastern Garavogue Bridge and Approach Roads scheme;
- a potential City Bypass.

It is crucial that land use and transportation policies are fully integrated in order to ensure the progress of major infrastructural projects in a sustainable manner.

Questions

- How can we encourage more sustainable forms of transport such as walking, cycling and public transport?
- Where should additional car-parking be provided?
- Is a City Bypass required? If so, what route should it take?
Strategic Environmental Assessment

The European Directive 2001/42/EC of 27 June 2001, also known as the SEA Directive, was transposed into Irish law in the form of two sets of Regulations. The Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004 (S.I. 436 of 2004) apply to the preparation, review and amendment of land use plans.

As implemented into Irish law, Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is mandatory for plans (where the population or target population is greater than 5,000 persons).

What is SEA?

SEA is the formal, systematic evaluation of the likely significant environmental effects of implementing a plan or programme before a decision is made to adopt the plan or programme. The procedure includes:

- preparing an environmental report where the likely significant environmental effects are identified and evaluated;
- consulting the public and the environmental authorities on the environmental report and draft plan or programme;
- taking account of the findings of the environmental report and the outcome of these consultations in deciding whether to adopt or modify the draft plan or programme;
- making known the decision on adoption of the plan or programme and how SEA influenced the outcome.

Your contribution is invited

If you – as an individual or as a member of a community group or environmental group – wish to communicate your opinions or suggestions on environmental issues, please include them in a submission made at pre-draft stage.

Your contribution is valued and you are strongly encouraged to participate in the environmental assessment process.

SEA and the plan-making process

SEA must run in parallel with the preparation of the new local area plan for Sligo City.

The first stage is scoping, which is intended to determine the range of environmental issues and the level of detail at which these issues should be addressed in the Environmental Report (ER) associated with the Draft Plan.

Scoping is done in consultation with the public and the prescribed environmental authorities, of which the most important is the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

When the Draft Plan is published, it will be accompanied by a draft Environmental Report (ER) and a non-technical summary.

The ER will indicate how alternative development scenarios were considered and how decisions were made to select a preferred scenario. It will also explain how the Draft Plan’s policies and objectives were assessed against environmental objectives.

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

Appropriate Assessment

The Habitats Directive on the conservation of natural habitats, wild fauna and flora aims to promote the maintenance of biodiversity, taking account of economic, social, cultural and regional requirements.

The Habitats Directive and the Birds Directive are the cornerstone of EU’s nature conservation policy. The areas designated under the two Directives form the EU-wide Natura 2000 ecological network.

The Habitats Directive requires that the draft plan is subject to Appropriate Assessment screening and, if necessary, a full Appropriate Assessment is carried out.

This is to ensure that the plan, alone or in combination with other plans or projects, will not be adopted if there is potential for adverse effects on the integrity of a European site, except in certain exceptional circumstances.

Strategic Flood Risk Assessment

The recently adopted Sligo County Development Plan 2017-2023 was accompanied by a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) prepared in accordance with the Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities (DoEHLG and OPW, 2009).

The County SFRA indicates that separate Flood Risk Assessments will be prepared in association with new or revised Local Area Plans.

The Sligo and Environs SFRA will be based on the most up-to-date flood maps made available by the Office of Public Works and the provisions of the Draft Flood Risk Management Plan for the Sligo Bay & Drowse Unit of Management (UoM 35).
**Timeframe for Plan preparation**

**Pre-draft stage**

Statutory deadlines for the preparation of a Local Area Plan are set out by legislation in the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended). However, the pre-draft stage of the plan-making process is non-statutory and therefore the timeframes have been set by Sligo County Council.

The pre-draft timeframes are envisaged as follows:

- **12 December 2017 to 30 January 2018** - pre-draft consultation; written submissions can be made.

- **February 2018 to Summer 2018** - the pre-draft submissions will be considered and a draft plan will be prepared.

**Statutory timeframe**

The statutory timeframe commences once the draft plan has been published and all prescribed bodies have been informed in accordance with legislative requirements.

- Once the draft plan is published (estimated as early summer 2018), it must be kept on public display for a consultation period of at least 6 weeks; further submissions may be made during this period.

- Within 12 weeks of the publication of the draft plan, a Chief Executive’s report on the submissions received shall be prepared and submitted to the elected members for their consideration.

- Within 6 weeks of furnishing the Chief Executive’s report to the elected members, the plan shall be deemed to be made, in which case it will come into effect 4 weeks later. Alternatively, the members may decide to materially alter the plan.

- If material alterations are proposed, they must be put on public display within 3 weeks (or other period as may be necessary to facilitate SEA or AA).

- The proposed material alterations must then remain on public display for a period of at least 4 weeks; further submissions may be made during this period.

- Within 8 weeks of the publication of the proposed material alterations, a Chief Executive’s report on the submissions received shall be prepared and submitted to the elected members for their consideration.

- Within 6 weeks of furnishing the Chief Executive’s report to the elected members, the plan shall be deemed to be made, in which case it will come into effect 4 weeks later.

If the draft plan is finalised and published in early summer 2018, it could be adopted 18 weeks later. However, if material alterations are proposed to the draft plan, it could take a period of up to 35 weeks to adopt the plan.

The above dates are calculated based on the requirements of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended). They may be adjusted in accordance with Council meeting dates, public holidays, time needed to prepare documents for publication etc.

During the consultation period, Council planning staff will be available to discuss issues relating to the Sligo and Environs plan on Tuesdays and Thursdays at City Hall (Quay Street, Sligo) between the hours of 2 pm to 4 pm.

Please feel free to call into the Planning Section at City Hall during these times or to arrange an appointment by phoning (071) 9114452.

**Lobbying**

Making a submission through the formal consultation process regarding your views on the proposed new plan, including the zoning of land, is not considered ‘lobbying’. However, communicating, with a Designated Public Official outside the formal public consultation process about a local area plan or a proposal to zone or re-zone particular lands may be considered lobbying. There are new regulations regarding lobbying and anyone who is concerned that they may be engaged in lobbying, or wants to know more about the new rules, should log onto www.lobbying.ie
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