

**REVIEW of
Sligo County
Development Plan**

ISSUES PAPER
for pre-draft consultation
30 July to 24 September 2021

This document is intended to assist those who wish to participate in public consultation, to contribute to the review of the Sligo County Development Plan (CDP) 2017-2023 and to have their say in the preparation of a new Development Plan for the period 2023-2029.

The pre-draft consultation document explains the legal and procedural requirements, offers background information relating to the current CDP, presents the most important ministerial guidelines affecting the Plan and outlines the main issues that the new Plan must address.

This consultation document is not an interpretation of current legislation.

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 CDP review process, please consult the CDP web page at www.sligococo.ie/cdp

CONTENTS

Pre-draft public consultation	1	Focus on: Economic and Community Development	11
The nature and role of the development plan	2	Focus on: Housing Supply	12
Development plans – legal requirements	3	Focus on: Compact Growth	13
National policy and legislative changes shaping the next CDP	4	Focus on: Regeneration – Town Centres First	14
National Planning Framework – recognising Sligo’s role	5	Focus on: Sustainable Mobility	15
Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy – provisions for Sligo	6	Focus on: Climate Change – Adaptation and Action	16
Significant requirements of the NPF and RSES	7	Preparing a new CDP – Section 28 guidelines	17
Recent ministerial guidelines of highest relevance to the CDP	8	Preparing a new CDP – strategic assessments	18
NPOs and RPOs already in the current CDP 2017-2023	9	Preparing a new CDP – milestones and key dates	19
Necessary changes to the current CDP 2017-2023	10	HAVE YOUR SAY!	20

Commencing the CDP Review

On 30 July 2021, Sligo County Council commences the review of its County Development Plan (CDP) 2017-2023 in accordance with the requirements of Section 11 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).

The process starts with a period of pre-draft public consultation from 30 July to 24 September 2021.

The review will involve assessing the performance of the current CDP and the preparation of a Draft CDP, with a view to adopting a new Development Plan for County Sligo in 2023.

The current County Development Plan can be obtained from the Planning Office of the County Council. It can also be viewed and downloaded from the Council's website at www.sligococo.ie/cdp.

The new CDP will be based on a Core Strategy (see details on page 3 of this document) and will address a wide range of issues, including land use and transportation, housing, retail and economic development, infrastructural provision, community, social and cultural requirements, town and village development, recreational amenities, environmental issues, protection of natural and built heritage, preservation of landscape character.

Strategic Environmental Assessment

The Planning Authority will carry out an environmental assessment as part of the preparation of the new CDP. 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 review process will take two years to complete and will involve public consultation at three stages: pre-draft stage, Draft Plan stage and Proposed Amendments stage.

As part of the first stage, Sligo County Council 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 County Sligo.

Pre-draft submissions should be made ONLINE, or by post or e-mail, by **4 p.m. on 24 September 2021**.

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 zoning proposals cannot be considered at pre-draft stage.

Submissions should be clear, concise and to the point. Please state if you are writing as an individual or on behalf of an organisation. Submissions will be published on the Councils' consultation portal, so please do not provide personal, confidential or other sensitive information.

Please include a map if you refer to particular locations or features. If you are making a lengthy submission, please attach an executive summary to it.

A Chief Executive's Report will be prepared on issues raised in submissions received within the specified period. The Report will include the Chief Executive's response and recommendations to the elected members of the Council regarding the content of the future Plan.

Once a Draft Plan is published (in summer 2022), you will be invited to express your views on its content.

Written submissions may be sent in hard copy or by e-mail, headed "Sligo County Development Plan 2023-2029" and addressed to:

Siobhán Gillen, Administrative Officer
Planning Section, Sligo County Council
City Hall, Quay Street, SLIGO F91 PP44
E-mail: cdp@sligococo.ie

Deadline for pre-draft submissions: Friday, 24 September 2021, 4 p.m.

Please make your submission on Sligo County Council's online consultation portal at consult.sligococo.ie

What is a development plan?

The development plan is a document that sets out an overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of the area covered by it. The legal basis for the process of making a development plan is set out in the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).

All planning authorities – city or county councils – are mandated by law to make a development plan for their area every six years. The plan is meant to be a blueprint for the physical/spatial, economic and social development of the city or county to which it applies.

The development plan outlines a vision for the area that it covers, specifies the type, amount and quality of development needed to achieve that vision and seeks to protect and enhance the environment and amenities. It provides the policy framework and necessary degree of certainty within which individual development decisions can be made over the life of the plan.

The Core Strategy, policies and objectives of the development plan must align with national and regional planning policy, as set out in the National Planning Framework (2018) and the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy adopted by the Northern and Western Regional Assembly (2020).

The plan consists of a written statement and a set of maps. It is accompanied by several documents setting out the process and outcomes of Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), Appropriate Assessment (AA) and Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA). These assessments are carried out in parallel with the plan preparation and inform its contents.

Why do we need development plans?

- To provide for orderly, balanced spatial growth, in the interest of the common good.
- To ensure that all sectors of society are properly considered and catered for.
- To provide a degree of certainty and security with respect to physical development.
- To plan responsibly for the future and manage resources in a sustainable manner.
- To apply European, national and regional legislation and policy at local level.

How does the plan affect you?

- Specifies future development areas, highlighting opportunities and constraints.
- Makes appropriate provision for the quantum and location of future housing supply and infrastructural projects, supports social and economic development, promotes conservation of the natural and built heritage.
- Provides the planning framework for future public and private investment in infrastructure or services.
- Facilitates community groups in obtaining funding for local projects.
- Represents a tool for guiding and managing new development proposals.
- Its policies and objectives are used to assess planning applications and appeals.

How does public consultation contribute to the preparation of the new development plan?

The development plan review is a two-year process that will result in the preparation and adoption of a new CDP for the period 2023-2029.

The Planning Act allocates a substantial amount of time to public consultation: a minimum of 22 weeks divided between three stages:

- pre-draft consultation,
- consultation on the Draft Plan and
- consultation on Proposed Amendments to the Draft Plan.

In all three stages, Sligo County Council will seek written submissions and observations from the general public.

The Planning Authority will also consult with the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage, the Office of the Planning Regulator, the Regional Assembly, environmental authorities, adjoining County Councils, legally-prescribed state bodies and providers of infrastructure and services, in order to ascertain their long-term plans.

If you are interested in the development of Sligo and wish to contribute to the shaping of the County's future, please make a written submission during any or all of the three stages of consultation.

All individuals, community groups and other organisations are encouraged to participate in the plan-making process.

Sections 9 and 10 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) specify the content of development plans. Below is a brief selection of the most relevant legal requirements:

- a development plan must be made every six years for the whole functional area of a planning authority;
- development plans of adjoining planning authorities must have regard to each other and generally co-ordinate their objectives;
- a development plan must be consistent with national and regional plans, policies and strategies relating to sustainable development;
- a development plan must include a **core strategy** which shows that the development objectives are consistent with national and regional development objectives set out in the National Planning Framework and the relevant *regional spatial and economic strategy*.;
- the planning authority must carry out a strategic environmental assessment and an appropriate assessment of a draft development plan;
- a development plan must include a separate statement which shows that the development objectives are consistent, as far as practicable, with the conservation and protection of the environment;
- a development plan may indicate that local area plans will be made for specific areas;
- *“There shall be no presumption in law that any land zoned in a particular development plan (including a development plan that has been varied) shall remain so zoned in any subsequent development plan.”*

Contents of the Core Strategy

- a settlement hierarchy with details on town designations (e.g. Regional Growth Centre);
- proposed roles or functions of the towns listed in the settlement hierarchy, including details on their potential for economic and social development;
- designation of rural areas where the Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines apply;
- information on relevant roads and rail routes;
- a map or diagram representing the above items;
- relevant information on policies and objectives issued by the Government or the Minister in relation to national and regional population targets that apply to the development plan area;
- details on population targets and projected population growth in towns, villages and rural areas;
- details regarding the size of the area zoned for housing or a mixture of residential and other uses;
- the proposed number of houses to be built on zoned lands;
- the size of any additional area proposed to be zoned for housing or a mixture of residential and other uses and details of any proposed phasing of development;
- information regarding compliance of retail development objectives with retail guidelines issued by the Minister.

Mandatory objectives

Among the mandatory objectives to be set by a development plan, the main ones are:

- ▶ zoning of land solely or primarily for particular purposes and the renewal of urban areas in need of regeneration;
- ▶ promotion of sustainable settlement and transportation strategies, including measures to reduce energy demand, reduce anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions and address adaptation to climate change;
- ▶ provision of infrastructure (transport, energy, communications, water supply, waste management, wastewater) and community services (e.g. schools, crèches and other childcare facilities);
- ▶ conservation and protection of the environment, including archaeological and natural heritage, protection of European sites, preservation of the landscape character, views and prospects;
- ▶ protection of structures, or parts of structures of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest;
- ▶ preservation of the character of architectural conservation areas;
- ▶ protection of landscape character, management of landscape features which are essential for wildlife (e.g. field boundaries) and which ensure the coherence of the Natura 2000 network;
- ▶ preservation, improvement and extension of recreational amenities, identification and preservation of rights-of-way giving access to recreational areas.

National Planning Framework (NPF)

The NPF is the Government's high-level strategic plan for shaping the future growth and development of the country to the year 2040. It sets out 10 National Strategic Outcomes and 75 National Policy Objectives (NPOs).

The purpose of the Framework is to enable all parts of Ireland, whether rural or urban, to successfully accommodate growth and change, by facilitating a shift towards Ireland's regions and cities other than Dublin, while also recognising Dublin's key role.

The NPF is implemented at a regional level through the Regional Spatial Economic Strategies (RSES) and **at county level through the development plan.**

Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES)

The *Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2020-2032 (RSES)* adopted by the Northern and Western Regional Assembly is structured around five "Growth Ambitions", seeking to promote a Region that is "Vibrant, Connected, Natural, Smart and a Great Place to Live".

The RSES identifies regional assets, opportunities and pressures and provides targeted policy responses in the form of Regional Planning Objectives (RPOs). The focus of the Strategy is on sustainable land use planning and economic investment with overall positive cumulative impacts on the environment.

Compact growth of urban and rural settlements is a top priority of the RSES, as reflected in a settlement strategy "focusing on People and Places".

National Energy and Climate Plan

Ireland's draft National Energy & Climate Plan (NECP) 2021-2030 was submitted to the European Commission in December 2019. The draft NECP took into account energy and climate policies developed up to that point, the levels of demographic and economic growth identified in the Project 2040 process and included all of the climate and energy measures set out in the National Development Plan 2018-2027.

The NECP was prepared to incorporate all planned policies and measures that were identified up to the end of 2019 and which collectively deliver a 30% reduction by 2030 in non-ETS greenhouse gas emissions (from 2005 levels). The government intends to review the NECP.

Ireland's local authorities play a pivotal role in their local communities and can act to demonstrate public sector leadership on climate action in their areas. In 2018, four Climate Action Regional Offices (CAROs) were established to assist the local authority sector in building capacity to engage effectively on climate change. Under the National Adaptation Framework (NAF), the 31 local authorities in Ireland are required to develop their own adaptation strategies, with support from the CARO in that region.

Sligo's Climate Adaptation Strategy

On 2 September 2019, Sligo County Council adopted its first **Climate Adaptation Strategy 2019-2024**, a document which contains over 40 individual actions. Under the "Goal : Planning", action P1 seeks to "Ensure that prominence of Climate Change (CC) is maintained within the Development Plan and ensure all CC-related actions in the CDP are followed through and achieved".

Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021

This recently adopted piece of legislation supports Ireland's transition to Net Zero and the achievement of a climate-neutral economy by no later than 2050. It establishes a legally binding framework, with clear targets and commitments set in law.

Starting in 2021, the Government will adopt five-year carbon budgets with targets for each economic sector. A National Long-Term Climate Action Strategy will be prepared every five years. Actions for each sector will be detailed in the Climate Action Plan, updated annually.

Section 15 of the Climate Action and Low Carbon (Amendment) Act 2021 requires local authorities to make a **Local Authority Climate Action Plan (LACAP)** relating to a period of five years, which shall specify the mitigation measures and the adaptation measures to be adopted by the local authority.

The first LACAP must be made within 12 months following the request of the Minister (any such request must be made within 18 months after the commencement of the Bill), and once every five every years for every subsequent LACAP.

The Planning and Development Act 2000, which requires development plans to include objectives in respect of climate action, will be amended to provide the approved LACAP is taken account of in the preparation of any future development plan.

Sligo County Council's Development Plan 2023-2029 will be required to align with the Council's LACAP that will operate at the time of CDP adoption.

“Ireland 2040 - Our Plan”

The National Planning Framework “Ireland 2040 - Our Plan” (NPF), the successor to the National Spatial Strategy (NSS), is the Government’s high-level strategic plan for shaping the future growth and development of Ireland out to the year 2040. It is a framework for the co-ordination of a range of national, regional and local authority policies and activities, planning and investment, both public and private.

The 2018 NPF recognises that Sligo, as a regional centre, “serves a large hinterland that extends beyond County Sligo into surrounding counties” and that “Sligo’s significance as a centre of employment and services is much greater than its scale in terms of population”.

The NPF indicates that “it will be necessary to prepare a co-ordinated strategy for Sligo at both regional and town level to ensure that the Town can grow sustainably and secure investment as a key regional centre”.

Updated County population targets

The **NPF Implementation Roadmap** provides a transitional set of population projections to inform city and county development plans for the periods to 2026 and to 2031.

For County Sligo, the projected future population is circa 71,500-72,500 by 2026 and 74,000-75,500 by 2031. (These figures are lower than what was previously envisaged in the Border Regional Planning Guidelines.)

The County’s 2016 population was 65,500 persons. Given the lack of growth observed in recent years, the revised population projections set out in the NPF Implementation Roadmap appear to be more realistic.



Fig. 1
The National Planning Framework recognises Sligo as a Regional Growth Centre in the Northern and Western Regional Assembly Area

Since 2014, County Sligo is part of the area covered by the Northern and Western Regional Assembly (NWRA). In January 2020, the NWRA published its first **Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES)**, which replaced the Border Regional Planning Guidelines.

The 12-year Strategy “provides a high-level development framework for the Northern and Western Region that supports the implementation of the National Planning Framework (NPF) and the relevant economic policies and objectives of Government”. It is intended to deliver “effective regional development” for the entire region, embracing the development opportunities specific to each sub-region.

The RSES identifies Sligo City as an “urban place of regional scale” and designates it a Regional Growth Centre. This is a significant position in the Region’s settlement hierarchy, second only to Galway City’s Metropolitan Area designation and on the same level as Letterkenny and Athlone Regional Growth Centres.

Population targets for Sligo Town

The RSES envisages at least a 40% increase in Sligo Town’s population by 2040, equivalent to circa 8,000 more residents than in 2016, giving a total of 27,200 people. Intermediate “targets” are set for 2026 (+4,400 more than in 2016) and for 2031 (+2,200 from 2026 to 2031). Thus, the population of Sligo Town would grow from 19,200 (end of 2016) to 23,600 (end of 2026), then to 25,800 (by the end of 2031).

The additional population that should be accommodated in County Sligo’s main urban centre during the life of the next Development Plan, from 2023 to 2029, would be a minimum of 2,640 persons.

Regional Growth Centre Strategic Plan

The Regional Policy Objective **RPO 3.1** indicates the Regional Assembly’s intention to develop urban places of regional scale through compact growth in Metropolitan and Regional Growth Centres, such as Sligo.

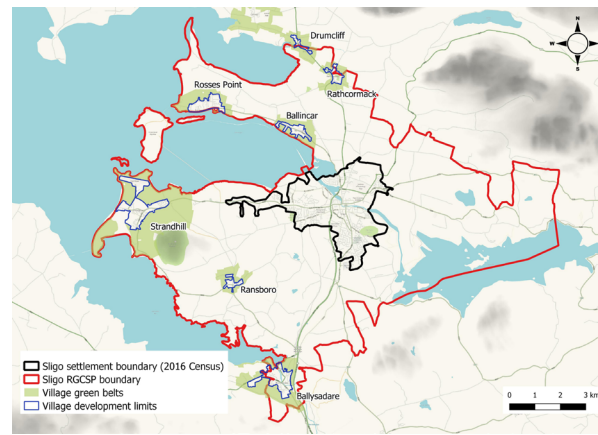


Fig. 2 Sligo Regional Growth Centre Strategic Plan boundaries

Source: NWRA RSES (2020)

The RSES includes a Regional Growth Centre Strategic Plan for Sligo, which sets out broad development goals and specific regional policy objectives.

The Sligo RGC Strategic Plan (Section 3.7 of the RSES) covers Sligo and Environs together with surrounding rural areas.

Based on Census 2016 demographic information, the Strategic Plan area has a population of 28,465 people, of which 68% reside in Sligo and Environs, the “principal urban area” (PUA).

The boundaries of the Sligo RGC Strategic Plan are based on the CSO’s **small areas** (basic spatial units comprising between 80 and 120 dwellings), which were selected to include all major employers and educational institutions in the vicinity of Sligo and Environs, together with its closest satellite villages of Ballysadare, Strandhill and Rosse Point.

Recognising that Sligo has the vision and capacity to be a Regional Growth Centre of scale, the Strategic Plan contains **twenty regional policy objectives (RPOs)** grouped under three strategic goals identified as “Compact Growth”, “Enterprising Sligo” and “Liveable Sligo”.

Strategic goal - compact growth

Two regional policy objectives (RPOs) are of great significance for future urban development in the Regional Growth Centre.

RPO 3.7.38 supports the provision of between 3,000 and 5,000 new residential units in Sligo’s main urban area by 2040.

RPO 3.7.39 seeks to ensure that at least 40% of the new residential and employment-related development will occur within the town’s existing built-up area (i.e. within the Census boundary established in 2016), through regeneration and consolidation on infill and brownfield sites.

The Sligo Regional Growth Centre Strategic Plan indicates the means to achieve the goals and RPOs, highlights strategic growth areas, regeneration sites and infrastructure, and lists key projects to be delivered over the life of the RSES.

The implementation of some RPOs is ongoing or has already been completed.

Compact growth in towns

One of the National Strategic Outcomes of the NPF is **compact growth**, which means that a greater proportion of residential development must be delivered within existing built-up areas of cities, towns and villages.

National Policy Objective (NPO) 3c requires at least 30% of all new homes that are targeted in settlements (other than Cities) to be located within their existing built-up footprints.

The RSES raises this requirement to 40% in Sligo and Environs (**RPOs 3.2 and 3.7.39**) and indicates that the 30% requirement will apply to settlements with 1,500 residents or more.

This translates into building 40% (or 30%) of the specified housing target for each town within the Census boundary of that town, i.e. on infill and brownfield lands.

Stronger urban places

The most relevant NPOs under this heading seek to ensure the creation of attractive urban places, through regeneration, high-quality urban design and through the identification of lands for strategic employment development, with a view to bringing more people and more jobs to towns and villages.

NPO 13 specifies that building heights and car parking standards “will be based on performance criteria” within “a range of tolerance” that allows the achievement of well-designed places without compromising public safety or affecting the environment.

RPO 3.1 focuses on the development of “derelict and underutilised sites”, particularly in town cores, while **RPO 3.4** supports the “regeneration and renewal of small towns and villages”.

Diverse rural places

Protecting the sense of place, quality and character of the rural landscape while sustaining vibrant rural communities is a requirement of the NPF (**NPOs 14 and 15**).

NPO 19 ensures that distinct approaches to one-off housing are used within the commuter catchments of large towns (rural areas under urban influence) and “elsewhere”. In both cases, planning authorities must have “regard to the viability of smaller towns and rural settlements”.

A programme for “new homes in small towns and villages” will be put in place to deliver serviced sites for people who want to build their own houses (**NPO 18b**).

NPO 20 requires planning authorities to “project the need for single housing in the countryside through the local authority’s overall Housing Need and Demand Assessment (HNDA) tool and county development plan core strategy process”.

Tourism development and rural economic diversification are encouraged, based on the delivery of the National Broadband Plan (**NPOs 21-24**).

The resource-based economy - agricultural and food sector, forestry, fishing, aquaculture, energy, extractive industries - will continue to be facilitated while at the same time protecting the natural and built heritage.

NPO 25 expresses the Government’s commitment to continually invest in rural Ireland through relevant Departments and agencies. Initial funding has already been provided by the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund. Further “structures for funding rural development” will be co-ordinated in the future through a dedicated mechanism.

People, homes, communities

The NPF promotes the development of healthy, diverse and inclusive communities in safe environments, designed for walking, cycling and integrating physical activity and recreational facilities for all ages.

Core strategies of county development plans, but also specific policies for housing, accessibility and leisure, must include clear proposals in respect of an ageing population (**NPO 30**).

New homes should be “lifetime adaptable”, to accommodate the changing needs of households over time (**NPO 34**).

Residential density in settlements must be increased through re-use of building stock, infill development, site-based regeneration and increased building heights (**NPO 35**).

Environmental sustainability

A renewed emphasis is placed by the NPF on integrating climate action into the planning system.

The main actions remain:

- ▶ integration of land use and spatial planning to support public transport, walking and cycling (**NPO 64**);
- ▶ identification and strengthening of green belts around settlements (**NPO 62**);
- ▶ reduction in greenhouse gas emissions (**NPO 54**), renewable energy generation and use (**NPO 55**);
- ▶ water resource management (**NPOs 57 and 63**);
- ▶ conservation of natural and cultural heritage (**NPOs 59 and 60**), protection of the landscape character (**NPO 61**).

Urban housing development – building heights and design standards

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

Noting that “constant expansion of low-density suburban development around our cities and towns cannot continue”, the Minister indicates that urban growth must be “upwards, not just outwards” (Urban Design and Building Heights Guidelines, 2018).

The 2020 version of the **Design Standards for New Apartments** represents an update of the guidelines originally published in 2015 and amended in 2018. The Guidelines seek to ensure that apartment living becomes “an increasingly attractive and desirable housing option for a range of household types and tenures”.

Local authority development plans are required to enable increased building heights in order to achieve a greater density of development. The decision-making process in this regard must take into consideration the sensitivity of historic town-centre environments.

The **Specific Planning Policy Requirement 1** contained in the Design Standards for New Apartments indicates the maximum proportions of one-bedroom (50%) or studio-type (20-25%) units in new apartment developments. It also states that development plans may specify “a mix for apartment and other housing developments, but only further to an evidence-based Housing Need and Demand Assessment (HNDA)” that has been agreed on a county base and incorporated into the county development plan.

Housing Supply Target Methodology for Development Planning (2020)

Published in December 2020, these guidelines are intended to assist planning authorities in integrating the national and regional population parameters into their statutory planning processes, such as the preparation of their county development plan and the preparation of their housing strategy, informed by the Housing Need and Demand Assessment (HNDA) process.

The Guidelines will also assist the Office of the Planning Regulator (OPR) in the plan evaluation process and contribute to achieving consistency in planning policy from a national perspective.

The Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) has developed a demographic projection model further to work previously undertaken for the NPF. This model serves as a “nationally integrated and standardised evidence base for local authorities to estimate overall housing demand”.

The ESRI model provides projections for structural housing demand for each county, utilising housing completion data which is now published by the Central Statistics Office on a quarterly basis.

It is emphasised that county development plans must plan to provide housing to the extent identified by the NPF Roadmap population projections for each local authority.

This must be reflected in the core strategy, settlement strategy and zoning.

Section 4 of the Guidelines includes a methodology for determining the total housing demand in a county during the six-year life of the development plan.

Housing Need and Demand Assessment (HNDA, 2021)

In April 2021, the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH) issued guidance, source material and a “tool” to be used by local authorities in determining the long-term, strategic housing need within their jurisdictions, including the requirements for different tenures (e.g. social and affordable housing).

The Housing Need and Demand Assessment (HNDA) is required by NPO 37 of the National Planning Framework.

The HNDA is a pre-requisite for the county development plan and its associated housing strategy. HNDA must be integrated into the development plan review process if this process commences after 14 April 2021.

Therefore, the review of Sligo County Development Plan and the preparation of the new CDP and Housing Strategy 2023-2029 shall be based on HNDA.

The Department has published data sources and an Excel-based HNDA “tool”, which local authorities must use in order to correlate and align future housing requirements.

The Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) has provided the scenario datasets, the household projections for each local authority and data on income, rents and house prices.

The requirement to utilise the HNDA standard methodology based on scenarios, datasets and household projections issued by the ESRI is intended to ensure a consistent approach in the country. This would remove uncertainty and help avoid discretionary procedures in determining future housing needs at local authority level.

Development Plan Variation 2020

Planning legislation requires that development plans be reviewed or varied (i.e. modified) to incorporate the changes in national and regional policy, as introduced by the 2018 NPF and by relevant RSES. Updated designations and population growth targets must be inserted into the CDP, replacing the previous designation and growth targets.

In 2020, Sligo County Council carried out a variation of the Development Plan in accordance with Section 13 of the Planning and Development Act. The Variation No. 1 of Sligo CDP 2017-2023 was subject to public consultation in July-August 2020 and was adopted by the Council in October 2020.

While the most important NPOs and RPOs have been incorporated, there are further provisions in the NPF and RSES which require modifications to existing development plan policies.

What changes were made to the CDP?

Only five of the thirteen chapters in Volume 1 of the CDP required certain changes. These were:

- Chapter 1. Introduction
- Chapter 3. Core Strategy
- Chapter 4. Economic Development
- Chapter 5. Housing
- Chapter 8. Transport and Mobility

Apart from specific amendments to the above chapters, references to National Spatial Strategy, Border Regional Planning Guidelines and Gateway City needed to be replaced by references to NPF, RSES and Regional Growth Centre throughout the CDP.

Chapter 1 - Introduction

The introductory chapter of the CDP includes references to national and regional policies applicable to County Sligo.

The modifications made in 2020 summarised the main provisions of the NPF and RSES regarding the County and the Regional Growth Centre of Sligo.

Chapter 3 - Core Strategy

The Core Strategy of the CDP consists of a set of sectoral strategies and specifies population targets and corresponding amounts of land needed to be zoned for residential purposes.

The Core Strategy Map did not change, but the Core Strategy Table B was updated.

The Settlement Hierarchy remained largely the same. The subsection focusing on the Gateway was replaced by a summary of the Regional Growth Centre provisions contained in the RSES.

Section 3.3 Rural settlement includes additional provisions of the NPF, which strengthen the existing rural housing policies without introducing further restrictions.

In **Section 3.4 Population and housing land**, population projections for the County and target for Sligo Town were updated in accordance with the NPF and RSES.

The updated population figures are similar to those initially set out in the CDP in 2017, only the timelines for achieving such targets are longer.

The corresponding overall amounts of land zoned for housing in the County were considered adequate and did not need to be revised during the lifetime of the CDP 2017-2023.

Chapter 4 - Economic Development

While the economic climate has changed radically since the first quarter of 2020, Sligo County Council's approach to economic development, as outlined in Section 4.1, remains focused on supporting growth and facilitating the provision of essential infrastructure.

A new initiative is the **Atlantic Economic Corridor**, which seeks to build on the potential of large urban centres in the West, including Sligo.

No changes were made to the Tourism Development section or to the Retail Strategy.

Chapter 5 - Housing

Modifications to **Section 5.1 Housing Strategy** included updated population figures, housing land requirements and equivalent housing units, to correspond with the Core Strategy tables A and (updated) B in Chapter 3 of the CDP.

The new **Section 5.1.1 Securing compact growth** seeks to implement the National and Regional Policy Objectives targeting the delivery of specific ratios of all new homes within the built-up footprint of settlements, in proportion to the settlement size.

Several additional strategic housing policies were also included, in order to support the implementation of the above-mentioned national and regional requirements.

Chapter 8 - Transport and mobility

Alterations to the Transport and Mobility chapter consisted mainly of updates regarding the timeframe for completing major projects for both national road improvements and urban road infrastructure.

Current Development Plan structure

Sligo County Development Plan 2017-2023 consists of the following documents:

- **Volume 1** identifies the main challenges faced by Sligo and provides a response to these challenges in the form of the Core Strategy. It also sets out general policies and objectives for:
 - ▶ economic development, retail and tourism
 - ▶ housing
 - ▶ community facilities
 - ▶ natural and built heritage
 - ▶ transport and mobility
 - ▶ environmental infrastructure
 - ▶ environmental quality
 - ▶ energy and telecommunications
 - ▶ town and village design

The last section of Volume 1 outlines development standards and guidelines for assessing development proposals/planning applications.

- **Volume 2** of the CDP includes 32 mini-plans, i.e. village land-use plans that include locality-specific development objectives.
- **Sligo and Environs (former Development Plan)** has been incorporated into the CDP 2017-2023.

The Development Plan is accompanied by a **Record of Protected Structures** for the entire county area.

A **Retail Strategy** and a **Housing Strategy** are integral components of CDP 2011-2017.

The CDP is supported by an **Environmental Report** (Strategic Environmental Assessment), an **Appropriate Assessment Screening Report** and a **Strategic Flood Risk Assessment**.



Sligo as a Regional Growth Centre

The extent of the area subject to the provisions of the Sligo and Environs Development Plan 2010 is shown as the blue rectangle in **Fig. 3** above.

The Plan boundary (blue line) does not reflect any physical or geographical features, and does not coincide with the Regional Growth Centre Strategic Plan (RGC SP) area as shown in the RSES.

RGC SP boundaries and the future Sligo and Environs LAP limits will be redefined in the CDP 2023-2029.

Envisaged MAJOR changes in the CDP

- While the structure of Volume 1 of the CDP will remain largely unchanged, the **Core Strategy** of the new CDP will incorporate the main provisions of the RSES and the principal elements of the **Sligo Regional Growth Centre Strategic Plan**.
It will provide the general planning framework for the preparation of a **local area plan for Sligo and Environs**, which will replace the SEDP. This will involve, among other things, redrawing the Plan boundary (see illustration on the left), in line with the provisions of the RSES.
- The **Settlement Strategy** will be revisited and brought in line with the provisions of the RSES.
- The **Housing Strategy** for the period 2023-2029 will be supported by a Housing Need and Demand Assessment (HNDA), based on household projections for Sligo and specific data provided by the ESRI.
- **The CDP 2023-2029 will incorporate all zoning in the County**, including the Sligo and Environs area, the towns of Ballymote, Enniscrone, Tobercurry and the villages with existing mini-plans. The extent of land currently zoned throughout the County will be reviewed.
- **An enhanced quality of life** – to be achieved through town and village regeneration, compact, smart and green growth, sustainable mobility and adaptation to climate change – will be at the centre of all policies and objectives of the new Plan.
- **CDP chapters**, such as those relating to economic development, community and recreational facilities, transport, telecommunications, energy and essential infrastructure, will be updated.

Complementing the Development Plan, Sligo's first Local Economic and Community Plan was adopted in 2015 and is currently being reviewed.

Sligo County Council has commenced the process of developing a strategic framework which will become Sligo's new Local Economic & Community Plan (LECP) and will be known as **Sligo: One Voice One Vision - Towards 2030** (or "**Sligo 2030**").

Sligo 2030 will be an integrated and coordinated economic, social, community and spatial plan for all of Sligo, guiding the development of the city and county over the next ten years.

The new LECP will function as a framework for the implementation of a cross-sectoral, coordinated approach to the management of Sligo's local development and community funding. The plan will focus on economic and social infrastructure development, aimed at improving employment, education and training, social inclusion, health and wellbeing in County Sligo.

Sligo 2030 will be innovative and collaborative, focusing on "smart" and "green" growth. Objectives set out in the plan will promote the accelerated development of digital infrastructure, making use of available data and information to improve decision making.

The **Digital Strategy for Sligo**, adopted by the Council in 2020, represents only the first step in the County's transition to a "smart" future.

Initial consultation on the new LECP took place from 15 June to 8 July 2021. A Consultation Paper (prepared by consultants KPMG-Future Analytics) was published on the Council's website at <https://www.sligococo.ie/2030/>. A community survey and a business survey were also carried out online.



Socio-economic profiling and analysis

The consultants will provide the baseline data on the socio-economic performance of County Sligo in a clear, simple and accessible format - translating key data metrics into appropriate data visuals and infographics which can be easily understood and interpreted.

Building on the socio-economic profiling, KPMG-FA will examine existing areas of economic activity within the county. Combined, this data will assist in presenting an in-depth analysis of spatial and functional linkages within the County and between Sligo town, its environs, and its social and economic interaction with its wider catchment (County Leitrim, North Mayo, South Donegal and North Roscommon).

Strategic economic locations will be identified within the county from an enterprise and employment perspective. Potential new 'green' enterprise development opportunities will be highlighted. These will incorporate sustainable and low carbon enterprises, for example the development of biomass industry.

Relation between CDP and Sligo 2030

The new LECP/Sligo 2030 will consider issues relevant to the preparation of the new CDP 2023-2029, particularly where these have a community or economic focus.

The background analysis of demographic, social and economic data - provided by the most recent census and other CSO publications - was traditionally inserted in the corresponding sections of the County Development Plan.

The new CDP 2023-2029 will no longer include such analysis. Instead, it will build on the actions contained in the LECP, concentrating on the spatial components of economic and community development. This will involve, among other things, the reservation of strategic sites at appropriate locations for the construction or extension of community facilities and business/enterprise units.

The four **areas of ambition** presented in the Sligo 2030 Consultation Paper will be shared by the County's next development plan. These areas are:

- supporting Sligo in its role as a Regional Growth Centre;
- creating the foundations for a "smart" and "green" economy;
- addressing the challenges of climate change in an exemplary manner;
- improving people's lives by meeting their needs for housing, healthcare, education, employment, transport etc. with particular attention to the ageing population.

The Sligo 2030 Consultation Paper provides a "snapshot" of the County's demographic and economic profile. The Paper continues to be available for viewing on the Council's website at <https://www.sligococo.ie/2030/>

How many houses have been built in recent years in County Sligo? Figures provided by the Department of Housing in January 2021 show that from 2011 to 2019, only 1,042 houses were built in the entire county.

The annual average over the nine years was only about 116 units, with the highest number of houses built in 2012 (169 units) and the lowest number in 2014, when only 60 dwellings were completed.

During the first half of the current development plan period, from 2017 to 2019, there were 139 houses built per year, on average.

Community-led housing in Ireland

The country's first **co-housing project** was launched in 2020 in Co. Wicklow. Under the name Common Ground Co-Housing, a group of people came together to form a company, locate a site and access funding in order to build a community of 25 individual homes, as well as a common house with gardens and allotments.

The residents will repay one common loan (instead of 25 mortgages) and own shares in the estate. The standard 3-bedroom house is 20% smaller than an average house. The savings thus made would be invested in shared social spaces, small guest rooms, laundry, a tool shed and gardens.

The wider community will also be catered for through a neighbourhood centre with a multipurpose hall, wellness centre, work hub, cafe, market space and playground (www.cgcohousing.ie)

How many houses do we need?

Up to the end of 2020, planning authorities were required to determine the number of houses needed during the lifetime of the development plan based on overall population growth targets assigned in relevant regional planning guidelines. Using the additional population targets and an estimated average household size, it was possible to calculate the housing requirements for six years.

The Housing Supply Target Methodology Guidelines, published in December 2020, has greatly simplified the planning authorities' task by providing, in Appendix 1, precise numbers representing the housing demand in each county from 2020 to 2031.

The numbers are based on the ESRI research report "Regional Demographics and Structural Housing Demand at a County Level".

The equation combines the "NPF scenario" for projected demand 2017-2031, the actual housing supply from 2017 to 2019 and the estimated "unmet demand" (as per Census 2016).

The result indicates that the housing demand in County Sligo will be 468 new dwellings per year, on average, from 2020 to 2031.

Compared to the 116 units per year built from 2011 to 2019, the estimated annual demand of 468 houses is more than quadruple.

It will be an extraordinary challenge to deliver the houses needed by current and future residents of County Sligo, given the chronic lack of finance and, more recently, the steep increase in the cost of building materials and the shortage of skilled workforce.

Questions

- How can Sligo County Council stimulate the construction of houses in the County's settlements on zoned, serviced lands? Are there specific development plan policies that would help increase the number of new houses built in Sligo's towns and villages?
- Where would it be appropriate for the Plan to designate higher residential density zones, as required by national policy?
- Are there urban areas where tall buildings (including residential) could be located?
- How can we ensure that the needs of our aging population are taken into account in terms of residential accommodation?
- What kind of policies would support the delivery of multi-generational housing schemes?
- Should the County Council encourage development based on the co-housing model in County Sligo? If so, by what means?
- What kind of measures should we include in the Development Plan to reduce the number of vacant dwellings in urban and rural areas?
- How should the Plan cater for people who need to live in rural areas, due to economic or social reasons, without undermining the viability of small towns and villages?

Compact growth strategy, as outlined in the NPF, involves locating new development and investment in areas with existing infrastructure that can support further economic and population growth

The NPF brings a new emphasis to developing existing settlements, and avoiding their continual expansion and sprawl at the expense of their town centres.

The Core Strategy of the new Development Plan will set out the main locations into which population, employment and housing growth will be directed.

Future employment in the County

The focus will be on developing Sligo Town, which is the nucleus of the designated Regional Growth Centre.

Towns such as Ballymote, Tobercurry and Enniscrone will act as economic drivers in their surrounding rural areas. The existing “Key Support Towns” designation in the Core Strategy will be changed to “Support Towns”, in order to avoid confusion with the RSES “Key Towns” located outside County Sligo (e.g. Ballina, Carrick-on-Shannon etc.).

While urban regeneration of the County’s towns and villages will be prioritised during the next Plan period, any increase in their populations can only be achieved through the creation of suitable new jobs.

RPO 3.13 supports the important roles of smaller towns in terms of service provision and employment for their catchments. The RPO specifically requires the identification of such towns in the Settlement Hierarchy of the Core Strategy.

At the same time, adequate provisions will also be made for the sustainable development of the County’s rural areas, through economic diversification.

New development in Sligo Town

At least 40% of all new housing allocated to Sligo Town (in the future Core Strategy) must be delivered within the existing built-up area, on infill sites and on brown-field lands, according to **RPO 3.2(b)**. (“Existing built-up area” refers to the lands contained within the settlement boundary established by the most recent census.)

The Strategic Plan for Sligo RGC (RSES) further specifies that the remainder of allocated housing, as well as employment-related development, should take place in the areas served by the Western Distributor Road (Caltragh, Oakfield), and by the Eastern Garavogue Bridge and approach roads (Ballinode) – **RPO 3.7.42**.

Consistent with the provisions of the Sligo and Environs Plan 2010, the RSES recognises the importance of regenerating areas such as Cranmore and the Docklands, in addition to Sligo’s town centre. Such regeneration must integrate housing and employment opportunities.

Housing in smaller towns and villages

In towns with more than 1,500 residents, minimum 30% of allocated houses must be built within the existing footprint, as per **RPO 3.2(c)**. This is the case for Ballymote, Tobercurry, Strandhill and Collooney, all of which had populations above 1,500 in the most recent census (2016).

In smaller towns (such as Enniscrone) and villages, Sligo County Council must identify and service sites (**RPO 3.7**), in order to offer an alternative to one-off housing in the countryside.

In unserved rural areas, at least 20% of new houses should be constructed on brownfield sites (i.e. should replace or renovate derelict dwellings).

Zoning lands for future development

The NPF-mandated infill and brownfield growth in urban areas needs to be implemented through appropriate zoning of lands.

NPO 72a requires planning authorities to apply “a standardised, tiered approach to differentiate between i) zoned land that is serviced and ii) zoned land that is serviceable within the life of the plan”.

The Draft CDP 2023-2029 and the final development plan, when adopted, must include a “reasonable estimate” of the cost of providing service infrastructure to lands considered for zoning (**NPO 72b**).

Land that cannot be serviced within the life of the plan should not be zoned for development, in accordance with NPO 72c.

Infrastructural assessment

Sligo County Council’s Development Planning Unit has commenced the process of assessing the infrastructure available (or planned) to serve existing zoned lands in Sligo and Environs, Ballymote, Tobercurry and Enniscrone. The assessment is carried out in conjunction with the Roads Section and with the assistance of Irish Water.

Apart from the obvious transport and water/wastewater infrastructure, the assessment will take into consideration the sites’ contribution to compact urban growth, as reflected in the distance and connectivity (especially the ease of access for pedestrians and cyclists) to town centres, to shops, schools and other essential facilities.

Sligo's Public Realm Plan (PRP)

A public realm plan (PRP) was prepared for Sligo Town in 2018. The plan identified areas in the town centre which could greatly benefit from enhancements in order to create high-quality urban spaces.

The plan proposed a fresh approach to thinking about the DESIGN of public space in Sligo:

- it really matters how streets look;
- spaces should be designed and not 'engineered';
- a consistent design approach is essential;
- designing streets for pedestrians is much more important than designing roads for cars.

An accompanying document to the PRP established a palette of materials to be used on the Sligo's streets over the coming years, to ensure consistency and improve the look of public spaces.

Design work is currently underway on two of the projects highlighted in the PRP: the enhancement of the riverside area of Sligo Town and the Stephen Street area. These works are being funded by the Urban and Regeneration Development Fund (URDF).

The URDF was established to support development, through regeneration of Ireland's cities and large towns, in line with the National Strategic Outcome 1.

The idea behind the Public Realm Plan and all the enhancement projects that are inspired by the PRP is to make the town centre so attractive that it becomes a place where more and more people like to spend time socialising, eating, having fun. Ultimately, the town centre should become a place where people want to live.

"Town Centre First" principle

A Town Centre First approach encourages state agencies, businesses and communities to put town centres at the heart of decision-making.

Locating services such as schools or medical services, for example, in town centres rather than on the outskirts can help to revitalise the town by increasing footfall and creating a sense of place.

Regeneration through utilising existing buildings and unused lands for new development, while promoting residential occupancy, is an essential element to securing a sustainable future for rural towns and villages.

Questions

- Do you, as an individual or as a community group, have ideas for public realm improvement projects in your town or village, which could be funded by the RRDF?
- Are there specific measures which would entice people to move to a town or village, rather than building new dwellings in the surrounding countryside?
- How do you think Sligo's settlements could be made more accessible and attractive for pedestrians of all ages, but specifically for children and older people?

Revitalising rural towns and villages

Published in 2020, *Our Rural Future - Rural Development Policy 2021-2025* supports the regeneration of rural towns and villages through a range of measures centred on the **Town Centre First** approach.

Sligo's new CDP will include a new, substantial chapter dedicated to town and village regeneration, building on the provisions contained in the current Chapter 12 (Town and village design) and integrating the government's rural development policy.

This should facilitate access to the 1 billion euro Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (RRDF) for projects serving local communities.

Such projects could include the re-use of derelict buildings or sites, enhancement to shop fronts and main street facades, adaptation of outdoor spaces for cultural events and all-year round social activities, investment in water and wastewater infrastructure etc.

Design work is currently underway on several projects which are funded by the RRDF. These include:

- public realm schemes in Strandhill and Rosses Point;
- a regeneration/public realm project in Tobercurry;
- a county-wide Yeats Trail;
- the redevelopment of one of Enniscrone's most iconic buildings, the Cliff Bath House.

All these projects represent new opportunities for Sligo to celebrate its cultural and natural heritage by enhancing access to amenities and supporting infrastructure. These projects will not only serve local residents, but will significantly improve the tourist experience.

Car-based mobility, as it has developed over many decades, has empowered a lot of people and facilitated the spread of economic growth, but these achievements also generate social and ecological stresses. According to the **European Mobility Atlas: Facts and Figures about Transport and Mobility in Europe** (2021), motorised mass transport has reached its limits.

A European transport sector dominated by fossil fuels adds to global warming, pollution and environmental degradation. Climate-friendly means of transport and fossil fuels are incompatible. Sustainable energy and mobility transitions go hand in hand.

Cars occupy too much space in towns and cities.

The limited available public space should be used more efficiently for cycling, walking and various forms of public transport.

The mobility of the future entails interlinked, attractive, resource-efficient and climate-friendly means of transport, contributing to a high quality of life in urban areas and well-connected rural areas.

AVOID—SHIFT—IMPROVE is the prevailing European strategy to make mobility more sustainable, particularly in urban areas.

DEMAND-RESPONSIVE TRANSPORT – shared transport with routes and frequency according to users' demand – is the solution designed to encourage people to leave their cars at home and use public transport in rural areas.

Both approaches are expected to be incorporated in forthcoming national transport policy documents, such as the DoT's new transport investment framework and new sustainable mobility policy.

New transport investment framework

Following the publication of the NPF, the Department of Transport (DoT) initiated a programme to update the existing transport investment framework, based on the NPF's National Strategic Outcomes.

The forthcoming framework will establish four investment priorities: *Decarbonisation, Protection and Renewal, Mobility of People and Goods in Urban Areas, and Enhanced Regional and Rural Connectivity.*

This will include major public transport schemes in cities, improved access to sustainable mobility in towns and rural areas, and major investment in cycling and walking throughout the country.

Modal shift to active travel and public transport will be supported. The reach of sustainable mobility will extend to rural areas through investment in greenways, public transport and the strategic provision of integrated park and ride solutions.

New sustainable mobility policy

In parallel with the new investment framework, the DoT is conducting a detailed review of policy within the sustainable mobility sector. The focus is on accessibility, affordability, modal shift, and emissions reductions.

This is the first review in 10 years and will put in place a new policy that supports a shift away from the private car, travel by cleaner and greener transport, and comfortable and affordable journeys for all purposes.

Aligned with the NPF's National Strategic Outcomes, the new policy will replace the 2009 sectoral policy documents i.e. *Smarter Travel: A Sustainable Transport Future* and the *National Cycle Policy Framework*.

Local Transport Plan for Sligo RGC area

The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) requires Sligo County Council to prepare a Local Transport Plan (LTP) for the Regional Growth Centre, in collaboration with the National Transport Authority (NTA).

RPO 6.27(a) specifies that the LTP must inform the development plan, local area plans and any other planning framework document.

As indicated in **RPO 6.28**, the policies, objectives and detailed measures emerging from the LTP will be incorporated into the CDP 2023-2029 and in the subsequent Local Area Plan for Sligo and Environs.

Sligo County Council will seek specialist support and funding from the NTA for the preparation of the Local Transport Plan in consultation with relevant stakeholders.

Questions

- What are the biggest obstacles to mobility encountered by people who don't drive or just want to avoid using private cars?
- Are there specific policies or measures which would help people shift to walking, cycling or public transport, if included in the development plan?
- How far from Sligo Town should the forthcoming Local Transport Plan extend its reach?
- How should dispersed rural dwellings be served in terms of transport to/from towns?

Climate change adaptation refers to how we plan for the negative effects of climate change and take action to prevent or minimize the damage caused by climate change. As a policy approach, adaptation seeks to protect people, buildings, infrastructure, businesses and ecosystems against the negative impacts of climate change, but also builds resilience to such change.

The Climate Action Charter for Local Authorities is a key action in the government's Climate Action Plan 2019, which seeks to ensure that local authorities "embed decarbonisation, sustainable development and climate resilience" into every aspect of their work.

Sligo County Council, as a signatory of the Charter, must exercise its planning and regulatory roles to help improve climate outcomes in the wider community, by developing and implementing robust policies on climate action, relevant adaptation and mitigation measures.

Sligo's Decarbonisation Zone

The Climate Action Plan 2019 requires local authorities to identify and develop plans for one Decarbonising Zone (DZ), in which a range of climate mitigation, adaptation and biodiversity measures and actors are identified to address local low carbon energy needs and GHG emissions.

Sligo's first DZ will be a 400-ha area in the south-east of Sligo Town, with a population of circa 4,000. It includes private and public buildings, housing areas, the Regional Sports Centre as well as a significant area of parkland. Work will start following approval by Sligo County Council.

Climate adaption and action in the CDP

Having regard to updated national climate policy, the new Development Plan must increase County Sligo's resilience to climate change by promoting sustainable development through appropriate policies in relation to:

- integration of land use and transportation in the form of compact, sustainable settlements - to be emphasised in the Core Strategy, Settlement Strategy and relevant sections relating to urban development;
- promotion of sustainable travel patterns and modes of transport, with consequent reduction in GHG emission levels - to be embedded in the Sustainable Mobility chapter and relevant subsections on walking, cycling and public transport infrastructure.
- support for renewable energy production to facilitate the transition to a low-carbon energy system;
- support for the "green economy" and "circular economy", to develop indigenous enterprises, create local employment and secure sustainable economic growth;
- sustainable and climate-resilient building design, construction and retrofit for higher energy efficiency;
- protection of wetlands, water bodies, forests, wildlife habitats, biodiversity, areas of natural heritage importance and green spaces in general;
- flood risk assessment and management, and protection against coastal flooding and erosion;

Sustainability considerations, including climate change resilience, will be essential elements of the Strategic Environmental Assessment carried out in conjunction with the Development Plan 2023-2029.

Questions

- What are the biggest problems caused by climate change that are affecting (or are likely to affect) your town or village?
- Are there specific policies or measures which would help address such problems if included in the next development plan?
- In what manner could local communities approach "decarbonisation"?
- Where should we designate further Decarbonisation Zones in County Sligo?
- Should Sligo County Council take the lead in addressing the climate challenges by delivering specific, exemplary projects that would demonstrate the integration of sustainable, "smart" and "green" considerations in masterplanning and design? If so, where?
- What type of CDP policies or objectives would be necessary to encourage the development of a "circular economy"?
- Should the new Plan include policies requiring specific energy efficiency measures in new developments?
- How can the CDP support an increase in renewable energy production?
- Where do you think are good locations for new wind farms in the county, taking account of the need to protect landscape character ?

In preparing the new CDP, Sligo County Council has to take account not only of the provisions of the NPF and RSES, but also of ministerial guidelines issued under Section 28 of the Planning and Development Act.

The most recent such guidelines, highly relevant for the new CDP, are detailed on page 8 of this Issues Paper. These are the ***Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments*** (2020), the ***Housing Supply Target Methodology for Development Planning*** (2020) and the ***Housing Need and Demand Assessment*** (2021).

The most important of the other Section 28 Guidelines are listed below.

Development Plans Guidelines (2007)

These guidelines set out a framework within which development plans will achieve high standards in (a) how they set out their aims and objectives, (b) how they are produced, (c) how they are presented, and (d) how they are implemented and monitored.

An updated version of the Development Plan Guidelines is expected to be issued by the DHLGH in 2021.

Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas (2009)

The aim is to set out the key planning principles which should be reflected in development plans and local area plans, and which should guide the preparation and assessment of planning applications for residential development in cities, towns and villages. These guidelines are accompanied by a best-practice urban design manual. It is understood that the DHLGH is preparing an update to the guidelines.

Sustainable Rural Housing Development (2005)

These guidelines set out in detail how the Government's policies on rural housing are to be implemented by planning authorities in making their development plans and in the operation of the development control system to ensure a vibrant future for all rural areas.

Spatial Planning and National Roads Guidelines (2012)

The guidelines set out planning policy considerations relating to development affecting national roads (including motorways, national primary and national secondary roads) outside the 50/60 km/h speed limit zones for cities, towns and villages.

Retail Planning Guidelines (2012)

The aim of the guidelines is to ensure that the planning system continues to promote competitiveness in the retail sector in accordance with proper planning principles. At the same time, the planning system must support the vitality and viability of city and town centres, encouraging a high standard of urban design and a greater use of sustainable forms of transport.

Draft Revised Wind Energy Development Guidelines (2019)

The originally-issued guidelines in September 1996 were superseded by the 2006 guidelines and again by the 2019 ones. The latest review of the Wind Energy Guidelines reflects technological developments in the wind energy sector and seeks to strike a balance between the concerns of local communities and the need to invest in indigenous energy projects. There are several technical appendices in relation to noise assessment, monitoring and the setting of planning conditions.

Interim Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Statutory Plan, Renewable Energy and Climate Change (2017)

It is a requirement of these guidelines that the development plan acknowledges the overall national policy on renewable energy as contained in government documents. Furthermore, the plan must indicate how its implementation will contribute to "realising overall national targets on renewable energy and climate change mitigation, and in particular wind energy production and the potential wind energy resource (in megawatts).

Strategic Environmental Assessment Guidelines (2004)

The purpose of these guidelines is to assist planning authorities in implementing the requirements of Directive 2001/42/EC ("SEA Directive") on the assessment of the effects of land use plans on the environment.

Appropriate Assessment Guidelines (2010)

This guidance is intended to assist planning authorities in the application of Article 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive(92/43/EEC), as it relates to their responsibilities in undertaking Appropriate Assessment (AA) of development plans. It explains the concepts, tests and steps involved in the assessment procedure, seeking to ensure the protection of Natura 2000 sites and their conservation objectives.

Flood Risk Management Guidelines (2009)

The guidelines introduce comprehensive mechanisms for the incorporation of flood risk identification, assessment and management as an integral and leading element of local authorities' development planning functions.

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.

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is mandatory for development plans (i.e. those plans that cover the entire functional area of a planning authority).

What is SEA?

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

- preparing an environmental report where the likely significant environmental effects are identified and evaluated;
- consulting the public, environmental authorities and any EU Member State affected, on the environmental report and draft plan;
- 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;
- making known the decision on adoption of the plan and how the Strategic Environmental Assessment influenced the outcome.

SEA and the plan-making process

SEA must run in parallel with the preparation of the new development plan for County Sligo.

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) that will accompany the Draft Plan all the way to adoption.

Scoping is done in consultation with the public and the prescribed environmental authorities, which include the EPA and the planning authorities of adjoining counties, among others.

When the draft CDP is published in 2022, 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 (and any amendments) 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.

If you 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.

Appropriate Assessment (AA)

An assessment under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) is commonly referred to as an Appropriate Assessment (AA) or a Habitats Directive Assessment (HDA) of a plan or project. This relates to the likely significant environmental effects on a Natura 2000 site generated by the implementation of the plan.

Natura 2000 is a network of nature protection areas in the EU territory. It is made up of Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) designated under the Habitats Directive and Birds Directive, respectively.

A Natura Impact Report (NIR) is required to be prepared in conjunction with the Draft CDP. Any amendments that might be proposed following public consultation must also be assessed for potential impacts on Natura 2000 sites.

Strategic Flood Risk Assessment

As part of implementing the Floods Directive (2007/60/EC) into Irish legislation, the DoEHLG and the Office of Public Works issued Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities (DoEHLG/OPW, 2009).

The Guidelines indicate that county development plans must establish the flood risk assessment requirements for their functional area. Planning authorities must ensure that development is not permitted in areas of high flood risk, particularly floodplains, except where there is no suitable alternative.

The current Sligo County Development Plan 2017-2023 (CDP) was adopted by Sligo County Council on 31 July 2017. The Plan became operational four weeks later, on 28 August 2017.

Section 11 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) requires planning authorities to give notice of intention to review their existing development plan “not later than 4 years after the making of a development plan”.

The CDP review process will commence formally on **Friday, 30 July 2021**. This process is expected to take 99 weeks to complete, meaning that the new development plan for County Sligo should be adopted by **11 July 2023**.

There is a degree of flexibility regarding deadlines and the duration of particular stages in the review process.

However, specific dates - such as the start of the Development Plan review process - must be adhered to.

The same requirement applies to the minimum prescribed duration of public consultation. Such consultation will take place in three stages, amounting to at least 22 weeks in total.

The new Plan will become operational four weeks after its adoption, on **22 August 2023**, and will remain in force for the following six-year period, 2023 to 2029.

Key dates and milestones in the CDP review process are as follows:

- **26 to 30 July 2021 – notices are published** in the local newspapers announcing the commencement of the CDP review; submissions are invited from the public and prescribed state and semi-state agencies; pre-draft public consultation will extend over eight weeks, **closing on 24 September 2021**.
- **By 19 November 2021** (by week 16) – the First Chief Executives’s Report on pre-draft submissions is submitted to the Members for consideration.
- **By 6 February 2022** (by week 26) – the Members direct the Chief Executive to prepare the Draft Sligo County Development Plan 2023-2029 (CDP) and the Draft Environmental Report (ER).
- **By 1 May 2022** (by week 38) – the Chief Executive submits the proposed Draft CDP and ER to the Members for consideration.
- **By 26 June 2022** (by week 46) – the Members approve the Draft CDP and ER for publication, with or without modifications.
- **6 to 10 July 2022** (by week 48) – public notices announce the **availability of the Draft CDP 2023-2029** and ER for public debate; public consultation will extend over 10 weeks, to 18 September 2022.
- **By 11 December 2022** (by week 70) – the Second Chief Executive’s Report on comments and observations on the Draft CDP and ER is submitted to the Members for consideration.
- **By 14 March 2023** (by week 85) – Members adopt the CDP or amend the Draft Plan; the draft ER must be amended accordingly; the proposed amendments must go on public display.
- **1 to 4 April 2023** (by week 85) – notices are published in the local newspapers announcing that **proposed amendments to the Draft CDP are available** for scrutiny; submissions are invited; public consultation will take four weeks, until 2 May 2023.
- **By 30 May 2023** (by week 93) – the Third Chief Executive’s Report is submitted to the Members.
- **By 11 July 2023** (by week 99) – the Members formally adopt the new Sligo County Development Plan 2023-2029.
- **22 August 2023 - the new CDP 2023-2029 becomes operational.**

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.

DO NOT MISS YOUR OPPORTUNITY to influence the preparation of a new County Development Plan for Sligo and help shape its future up to 2029 and beyond!

Children and young people, or groups and associations representing their interests, are specifically invited to make submissions or observations.

Timeline

The consultation period for the first stage of the Development Plan review will run for eight weeks, **from Friday, 30 July 2021, to Friday, 24 September 2021.**

Find out more!

Please visit the County Council's website to read the current CDP and to find updated information on its review - www.sligococo.ie/cdp

Please make your submission on Sligo County Council's online consultation portal at consult.sligococo.ie

How to make a valid submission

You are strongly advised to use our online portal!

Please go to consult.sligococo.ie and click on the button "Make a submission".

Although not recommended, submissions may also be sent by post or by e-mail (see addresses below).

Only one submission per person or organisation will be accepted, either through the consultation portal or by post/e-mail. Submissions sent by post and requesting an acknowledgement shall include a full postal address (this will not be published in any form).

All submissions will be made available for public viewing on the consultation portal (personal or sensitive information will be redacted). Anonymous submissions will not be taken into consideration.

Pre-draft submissions should focus on strategic matters and the "big issues". You may include a map if these issues relate to specific locations.

Submissions on land zoning cannot be considered at this stage. There will be an opportunity to make land zoning submissions when the Draft County Development Plan 2023-2029 is published in 2022.

Written submissions may be sent in hard copy or by e-mail, headed "Sligo County Development Plan 2023-2029" and addressed to:

Siobhan Gillen, Administrative Officer
Planning Section, Sligo County Council
City Hall, Quay Street, SLIGO F91 PP44
E-mail: cdp@sligococo.ie

Deadline for pre-draft submissions: Friday, 24 September 2021, 4 pm