



City Centre residential development, Sligo

2.7 Residential Strategy and Neighbourhoods

2.7.1 Addressing the Imbalance of Population Growth and Building Activity

Of the houses actually completed between 1996 and 2000 in County Sligo, 18% were located in the Sligo Borough area, whereas 45% were constructed in rural areas. It is the aim of this development plan to readdress this population and development imbalance so as to ensure that people can find attractive houses closer to jobs, facilities and services in a more sustainable development pattern and thereby protect the surrounding rural landscape from further urban sprawl.

2.7.2 Existing Housing

The existing land use pattern in Sligo and Environs is characterised by a very low percentage of residential uses within the city centre¹⁹ and expanding residential developments of relatively low density housing estates and ribbon development on the fringes of the city. These developments are primarily concentrated to the southern side of the city on both sides of Pearse Road, and west of the city between the Strandhill Road and the Maugheraboy Road. Ribbon development is evident on most of the approach roads to the city, but is particularly prevalent on the Strandhill Road, the Rosses Point Road, on country roads in Teesan and Lisnalurg, Calry, Cairns and between Carrowroe and Aghamore.

Most of the private housing estates built in recent years contain semi-detached single family two-storey houses. The quality of these estates varies, and a number of design issues have been highlighted, with some estates arguably being of poor quality, particularly in relation to the layout, in the provision of meaningful areas of open space, the lack of adequate landscaping, or poor linkages between adjoining residential areas and open space. The typically low densities of these estates do not support the provision of community services and facilities within or close to these areas, such as public transport, shops or crèches, as indicated by vacant shop units in existing neighbourhood centres in Cartron and Crozon. The local authority will encourage and support the enhancement of existing residential areas, through estate management and other means.



Low density suburban development

Within the city centre, streets such as Wolfe Tone Street, John Street, Mail Coach Road, Church Street and Chapel Street have a strong residential character. The practice of 'living over the shop' is no longer common in the city centre. The protection and promotion of residential uses within the city centre is crucial to creating a vibrant and safe city centre and the recent trend towards apartment living, as evident at Rockwood Parade, Market Place and J.F.K. Parade, is encouraging. With a national trend toward smaller household sizes and Sligo's high percentage of young professionals and students, the demand for apartment accommodation is likely to continue to increase in the coming years. Additional accommodation in the city centre close to all facilities reduces the need to travel by car and thereby supports a sustainable land use pattern.

2.7.3 Housing Strategy

Figures for the Housing Strategy are based on a review of population projections carried out as background analysis to the Sligo Sub-Regional Strategy²⁰. Four population projection scenarios were examined. The scenario selected is close to present trends, though envisages a faster growth rate and may overstate growth somewhat in the absence of a pro-active regional policy.

The figures projected a total population of the Sub-Region in 2011 of 44,774 persons. These figures are to be used unless over-turned by any National Spatial Strategy work that may emerge, with resultant policy implications.

¹⁹ An Urban Audit undertaken by the NBA, revealed that the proportion of the urban area in residential use in the Borough is significantly below that of other urban centres (just 42.9%, whereas in typical cities it would be around 50%).

²⁰ The Sub-Regional Strategy comprises 15 DEDs in the environs of Sligo, extending from Lissadill North DED in the north to Collooney DED in the south, and extending eastwards to include the DEDs of Glencar, Calry and Ballintougher.



Social Housing

Certain Assumptions are made in relation to the housing strategy:

- Sligo will be the subject of a pro-active Government strategy to promote development and economic growth.
- The population of the Sub-Region has the capacity to reach 44,774 persons (17,300 households) by 2011, or a net increase of 10,520.
- 70% of all future growth in the Sligo Sub-Region will be directed into the Sligo and Environs Development Plan area, so as to achieve the critical mass of a gateway centre. This equates to 7,364 persons between 2002-2010.
- The percentage of households meeting the affordability criteria does not vary significantly over the period of the plan.
- In keeping with earlier findings of the Housing Strategy, 2001, 44% of future householders will meet the eligibility criteria for social and affordable housing, over the course of this plan.
- Average household size is expected to decrease from approximately 2.96 persons per household in 2002 to 2.59 by 2011, therefore an average of 2.7 is taken for all calculations.

Based on the foregoing assumptions, it is assumed that Sligo and Environs has the capacity for a per annum increase of 818 persons, or approximately 303 households. 44% of these will be expected to meet the eligibility criteria for social and affordable housing, therefore this equates to approximately 133 households per year.

Over the period of the plan 2004-2010, it is expected that the demand for social and affordable housing will be an additional 800 units.

There are 466 households on the housing list at present (Sligo Borough - See Table 5). Due to the distortion resulting from persons applying to both Sligo Borough and the County Council for social and affordable housing, the number of 466 households is seen to be representative of the Borough and its Environs. The 2001 Housing Strategy established that there were 636 on the housing list at that time and that this would fall to 552 by 2002 and fall to 466 by 2003. On this basis, the Borough is currently ahead of the 2003 target, as established in 2001.

Table 5: Sligo Borough, 2002 - Housing List.

Housing List (August, 2002)	Number of Households	Percentage
Elderly	19	4.0
Lone Parents	80	17.1
Traditional Family Unit	268	57.5
Traveller Families	16	3.4
Disabled	16	3.4
Single Parents	67	14.3
Total	466	100

Table 6: Estimated Typical House Size Required for those on the Current Housing List (August 2002)

House Size	Actual Number	Percentage	Overall Breakdown
1 Bedroom Units	73	15.6	1 & 2 Beds 51%
2 Bedroom Units	166	35.6	
3 Bedroom Units	183	39.2	3 & 4 Beds 49%
4 Bedroom Units	44	9.4	
Total	466	100%	100%

Sligo Borough currently has 157 units either under construction or being purchased to address the current housing shortage. It is expected that there will be an annual completion and output rate of 94 units. In addition to these, it is expected that the voluntary sector will produce an average of 18 units per year. These figures indicate that there will be a significant shortfall in the supply of social and affordable housing which will need to be provided under Part V, Section 94 (c) of the Planning and Development Act, 2000. This is illustrated in Table 7.

Table 7: Analysis of Social and Affordable Housing Supply and Demand 2002-2010, for Sligo City and Environs

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Waiting List - Carried Forward	466	360	321	282	243	204	165	126	87
Estimate Annual Demand	+66*	+133	+133	+133	+133	+133	+133	+133	+133
Total Year Demand-Waiting List	532	493	454	415	376	337	298	259	220
Local Authority Programme	-94	-94	-94	-94	-94	-94	-94	-94	-94
Voluntary Sector	-18	-18	-18	-18	-18	-18	-18	-18	-18
Part V	-60	-60	-60	-60	-60	-60	-60	-60	-60
Closing Waiting List	360	321	282	243	204	165	126	87	48

* The average annual addition of households on the Housing List is expected to be 133, but for 2002, this figure has been halved to reflect this mid-year analysis.

Social housing is fairly well distributed around the city, with however a notable concentration to the southeast of the city at Cranmore (1970's and early 1980's) and to the northwest at Cartron (1970's). More recent social housing has been developed at Ballytivnan. The larger estates at Cranmore and Cartron have led to a significant social imbalance in their respective parts of the city. In order to address this imbalance, the local authority intends to restrict any significant, additional social housing in these areas. The County Council have purchased lands at Lisnalgur that may offer the opportunity to provide social and affordable housing.

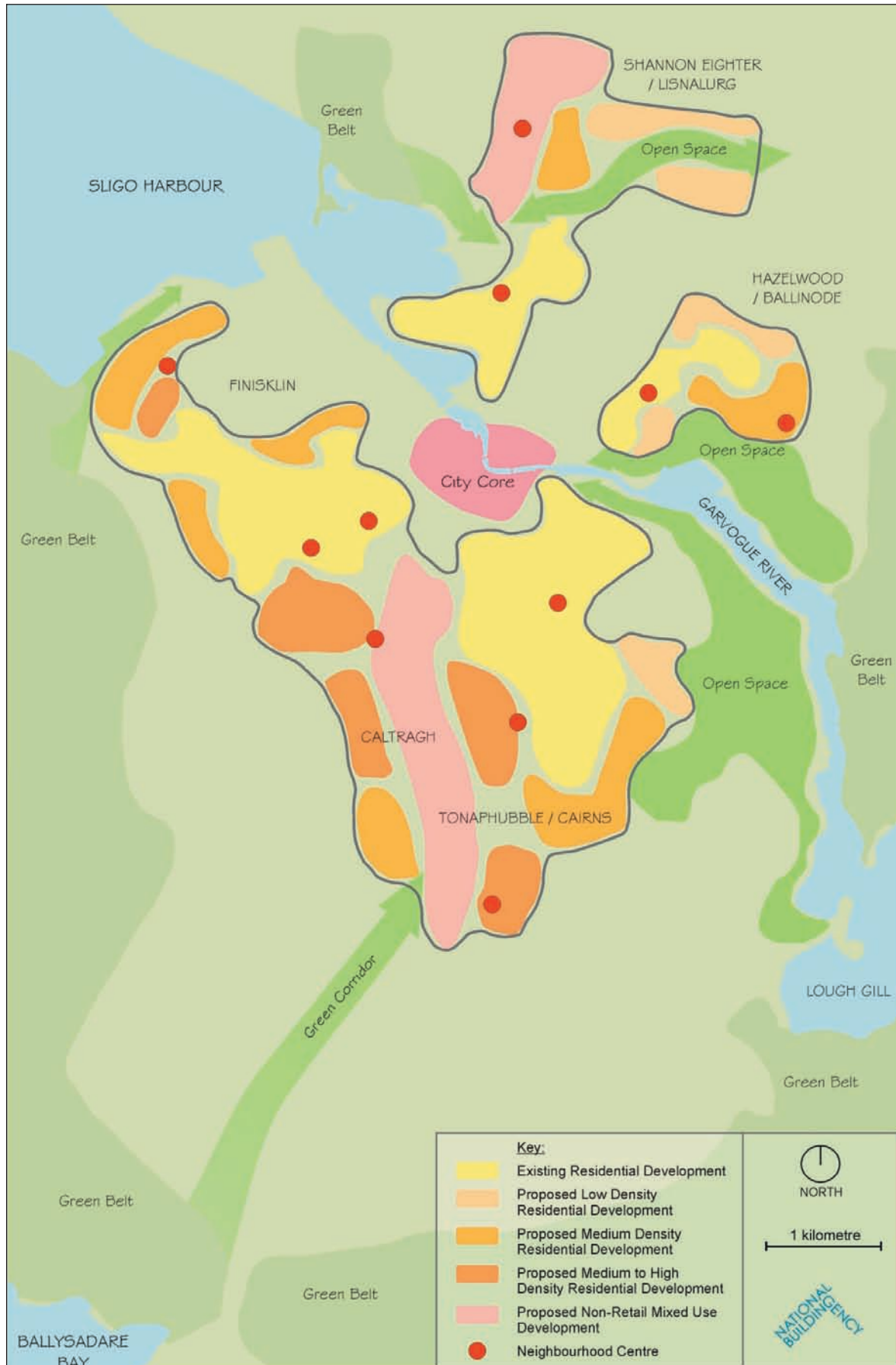
So as to avoid an undue concentration of social housing in any one particular area, particularly in, or adjoining existing areas of social housing, it is intended that the local authorities reduce the 20% provision as provided under Section 94 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, in specific areas of the city and environs (Refer to Objectives H4, H5, H6 and H7). Such reductions have not been reflected in Table 7, but are intended to be off-set by the local authorities aim of increasing the level of housing provision, as it has done since 2001, in addition to encouraging a more active role from the voluntary and co-operative housing sectors, in keeping with Government policy.

2.7.4 Location of Future Housing Development

Section 1.5.2.2 of the plan gave an overview of the spatial allocation of residential development in the city and environs, as part of the overall development strategy. It also established the need for a variety of housing types, housing densities and locations to cater for different lifestyles, and to provide an element of choice in the market place.

In general, higher densities are promoted along strategic transportation corridors (the railway line and the Inner Relief Road) and in proximity to the city centre, whereas lower densities are generally encouraged in more peripheral areas or environmentally sensitive locations (i.e, Cairns Hill). (see Map 18, Concept Residential Map, page 89).

Map 18: Concept Residential Map



SLIGO AND ENVIRONS DEVELOPMENT PLAN



Higher density development

As this plan is being prepared in the context of an as yet unpublished National Spatial Strategy, the plan has zoned lands capable of achieving a sufficient critical mass that would enable Sligo to reach 'gateway status' associated with a fast-growth city. As such, it is possible that only a portion of the lands zoned will be developed in the period of the plan. In order to ensure an orderly, co-ordinated sequence to the development of the city, a sequential approach will be adopted as general principle, whereby areas closer to the city (i.e., within 2 kilometres) will be expected to be developed in advance of lands further from the city (i.e, 3-4 kilometres), unless there is a demonstrated over-riding public interest in developing a particular site, for example, much needed traveller accommodation, social and affordable housing, etc. The rationale for phasing is in keeping with government guidelines advocating the need to prevent leap-frogging.

This plan zones 458.41 hectares for residential use. These lands could accommodate a population between 35,000 to 55,000 depending on the density allocation and having regard to the trend towards smaller average household sizes. With a projected population growth of approximately 961 persons per year or 5766 over the 6 year period of the plan, this equates to a possible demand of approximately 2,135 housing units between 2004-2010.

Table 8: Capacity of Lands Proposed for Residential Development

Proposed Residential Zones	Hectares	Min. No. of Dwellings	Population Equivalent ²¹	Max. No. of Dwellings	Population Equivalent
R1:	33 ²²	99	276	627	1,749
R2:	136 ²³	2,720	7,588	4,624	12,900
R3:	256 ²⁴	8,960	24,996	12,800	35,708
C3:	62 (31) ²⁵	1,085	3,027	1,550	4,324
Total:	456	12,864	35,887	19,601	54,681

2.7.5 Traveller Accommodation

The local authorities recognise the distinct culture and lifestyle of the travelling community and it will endeavour to provide suitable accommodation for travellers who are indigenous to the area. Currently in the city, there are group housing schemes for travellers at Finisklin and Ash Lane. In addition, some travellers have settled into housing in local authority estates, whereas others remain encamped at a site in Cleveragh. South of the Borough boundary, at Ballyfree, there is another group housing scheme, while north of the Borough boundary there is a site a Rathbraughan (a single dwelling).

Working with the travelling community, their representative organisations, and local communities, the local authorities will seek to ensure an equitable distribution of traveller facilities throughout the plan area. The priority will be on the provision of standard housing for families who express a preference for that type of accommodation. Group housing will also be provided at locations throughout the city and environs (Refer to Objective H1).

2.7.6 Student Accommodation

With the recent growth of the Sligo Institute of Technology and the rapid rise in student numbers, and further expansion anticipated, the provision of adequate student accommodation is required. Although some student accommodation might be located on the grounds of the Sligo IT as part of the institute's future expansion, it will be an objective of the local authority to reserve key sites in proximity to the college for this use. The 1999 Finance Act introduced a new scheme of tax relief for investors in student accommodation²⁶.

²¹ Average household size of 2.79 persons has been applied to determine population equivalent.

²² Residential Density (R1): 3-19 dwellings per hectare (1-7 dwellings per acre).

²³ Residential Density (R2): 20-34 dwellings per hectare (8-13 dwellings per acre).

²⁴ Residential Density (R3): 35-50+ dwellings per hectare (14-18+ dwellings per acre).

²⁵ C3: With a proposed percentage for residential use of 50% and a density of 35-50 dwellings per hectare.

²⁶ Section 50 reliefs allow investors to offset over 90% of the purchase of a qualifying unit against all rental income derived in the state.



Successful Neighbourhood Centres should provide for a variety of shops and services on more than one level

2.7.7 New Residential Neighbourhoods and Neighbourhood Centres

Section 1.5.2.2 outlined the strategy as to the future neighbourhood structure of Sligo. The location of neighbourhood centres seeks to ensure that all existing and future residential areas are adequately serviced by local facilities and services, including commercial and community centres. The provision of neighbourhood centres also seeks to provide a strong local focus for residential areas, creating a sense of place and community. The role of designated neighbourhood centres is to reinforce some existing areas which display emerging or existing neighbourhood characteristics (i.e. Ballinode) or to designate new neighbourhood centres to serve existing or future residential areas (i.e. at Caltragh). (see Map 19, Neighbourhood Concept Map, page 92)

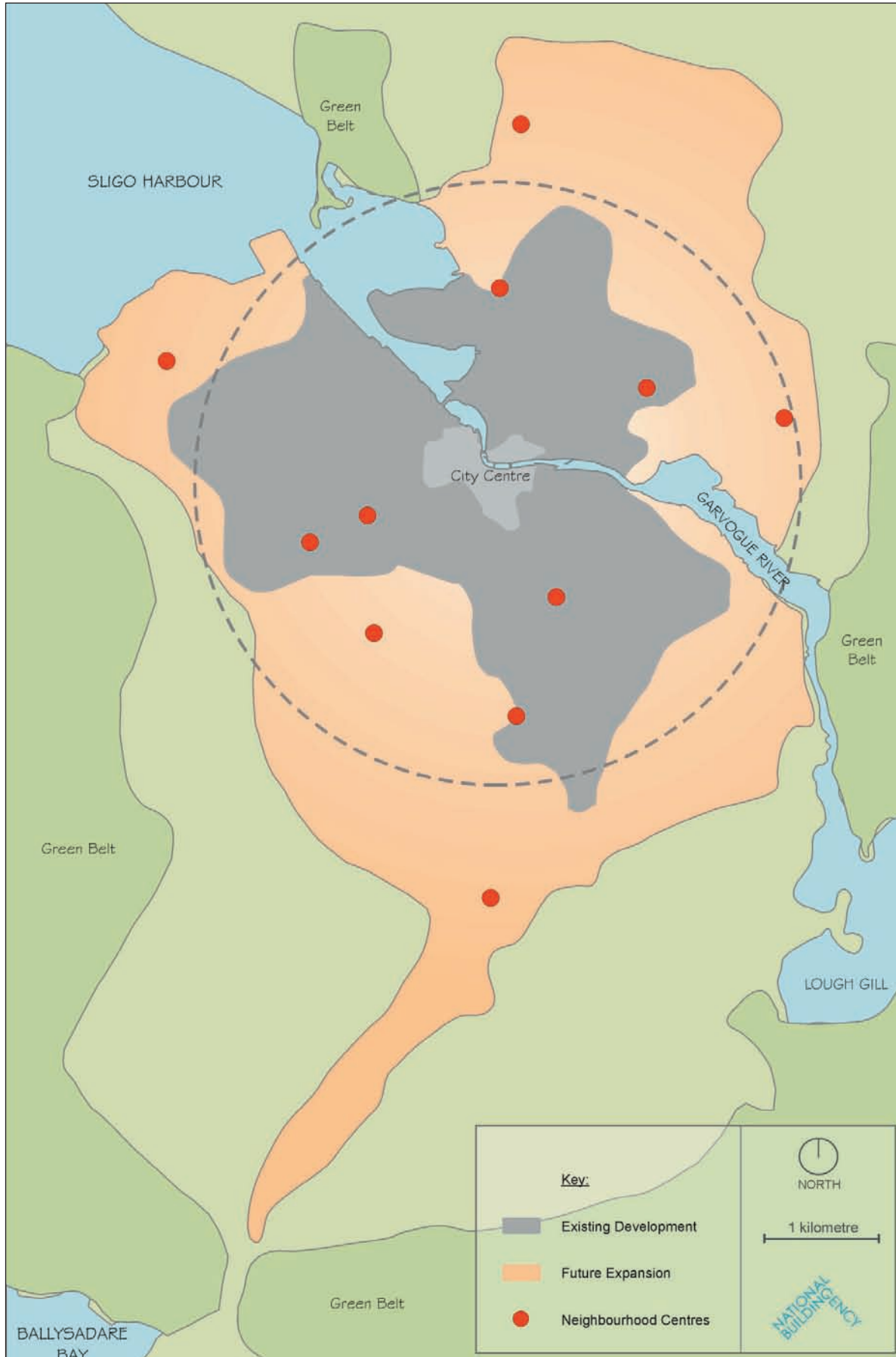
A range of uses will be encouraged at neighbourhood centres, namely local convenience shops (including fruit and vegetable market, local butchers, etc.), a pharmacy, post office, credit union, video/DVD rental, laundry facilities, pub, take away, hairdresser, dental and medical surgery, place of worship, crèche and childcare facilities. The scale, number and size of the units will be restricted to ensure that they serve local needs.

In order to act as a focal point in a residential area, high urban design quality will be sought. Buildings comprising the neighbourhood centre or in the immediate vicinity will generally be permitted to increase their heights to three or four storeys to reflect their prominence. A mix of uses will be encouraged at the centres, with residential and office uses promoted above first floor levels. This will also act as an incentive towards their construction and development. Local parks (emulating a 'village green' for example), civic spaces and community facilities (e.g. educational, sports and recreation) are encouraged in the immediate vicinity of neighbourhood centres so as to enhance their role in the community and encourage linked trips.

A full schedule of neighbourhood centres is identified in Objective NC1 and NC2. The strategy ensures that most, if not all, future residential areas are within approximately 5-8 minutes walk from a neighbourhood centre (400-600 metre catchments). As not all neighbourhood centres will provide a full and total range of services, strong linkages are envisaged between adjoining centres so that ease of movement between centres is facilitated.

For a neighbourhood centre to be successful it needs to be strongly linked to surrounding residential developments, with good access for pedestrians and cyclists. It also requires a prominent location with good road frontage and access. Opportunities for passing trade also reinforce their role. Two neighbourhood centres in Sligo have failed to provide some of these essential elements - Cartron Village and Crozon. In order to address some of the difficulties they are experiencing, small scale business and enterprise units, or starter units, will be encouraged to locate at these centres and the local authority will take a flexible view towards the redevelopment of vacant units for other uses.

Map 19: Concept Neighbourhood Centre Map



SLIGO AND ENVIRONS DEVELOPMENT PLAN

2.7.8 Policies

Location

It is the policy of the local authorities to:

- Ensure that a high priority is given to locating residential development within the existing city core, utilising brownfield sites, infill sites, and upper floors of city centre areas ('living over the shop').
- Have regard to a sequential approach to assessing all new residential development proposals, whereby areas closer to the city (i.e., within 2 kilometres) will be expected to be developed in advance of lands further from the city (i.e. 3 kilometres and beyond), unless there is a demonstrated over-riding public interest in developing a particular site, i.e., much needed traveller accommodation, social housing, etc.
- Encourage excellence and innovation in the location and design of new residential development that reflects the principles of environmental sustainability.
- Encourage the development of new residential units where this helps to consolidate existing residential areas and provide sufficient population to sustain local facilities such as shops, crèches, schools and public transport.
- Discourage speculative and sporadic development, especially in areas, which are visually and/or environmentally sensitive and vulnerable, and on all agriculturally zoned lands.

Densities and Household Types

It is the policy of the local authorities to:

- Promote apartment and higher density development, particularly in the city centre (C1), mixed use development zones (C2 & C3), neighbourhood centres, along strategic transport corridors and close to public transportation nodes.
- Ensure the provision of a suitable range of housing types and sizes to facilitate the changing demographic structure of modern society, and in particular, the increasing trend towards smaller household sizes.
- Reserve lands for student accommodation.

Conservation of housing stock and Improvement of Existing Residential Amenity

It is the policy of the local authorities to:

- Conserve the existing housing stock and residential character of the city. The Local authority will generally discourage the loss of any habitable dwelling through neglect and/or change of use.
- Improve the residential amenities of existing residential areas where necessary by traffic calming, environmental improvements, provision of open spaces, landscaping, tree planting and the provision of community facilities.
- Examine funding possibilities under the R.A.P.I.D. (Revitalising Areas by Planning, Investment and Development) programme and other initiatives, for redevelopment of the Carton Village Centre.

New Residential Developments

It is the policy of the local authorities to:

- Ensure, through the development control process, that existing access points to back land areas are reserved or that adequate road frontage is reserved to provide future road access.
- Promote more comprehensive backland development and development to the rear of existing road frontage properties, in preference to one-off housing or additional ribbon development patterns.
- Promote high standard of design and layout in new residential developments with regard for the local character of townscape and landscape.
- Promote layouts, which reflect the principles of permeability and legibility²⁷,

²⁷ Permeability refers to the ease with which people can move about and get to their destinations; Legibility refers to how easy it is to understand the layout of developments and the physical structure of our environment.

in order to facilitate public transport routes, cycling routes and pedestrian connections.

- Promote a balanced population structure by ensuring that a range of residential units, particularly smaller house types, apartments and townhouses, are constructed to cater for the current and expected demographic structure and market needs, to discourage the blanket provision of three and four bedroom houses, so as to avoid the uniformity of bland and repetitive suburban type developments.
- Explore and facilitate new innovations and design concepts in the provision of housing, which might see the development of 'live and work units', 'home zones', energy efficient units, the concept of sustainable housing and unconventional residential layouts (internally and in site design), where they contribute to the principles of sustainability.
- Ensure that services and utilities in residential developments are provided concurrent with the construction of new dwellings.
- Ensure that all new residential developments incorporate a detailed landscape plan, which shall be an integral part of the implementation of the development. Maximum use should be made of the opportunities presented by existing landscape features (including tree groups, hedgerows and streams).
- Encourage and in some cases, require the use or incorporation of local placenames for new housing developments.
- Ensure that all housing developments are finished to an acceptable standard.
- Support the provision of rented accommodation.

Neighbourhood Centres

It is the policy of the local authorities to:

- Promote the development of new neighbourhood centres to serve the needs of new or expanded residential areas with basic facilities, such as local convenience shopping, community facilities, childcare facilities, children's playgrounds, etc..
- Encourage mixed-use developments at all neighbourhood centres with a horizontal as well as vertical mix of uses, e.g. apartments or offices over shops.

Social and Affordable Housing

It is the policy of the local authorities to:

- Promote social inclusion by ensuring that social and affordable housing is well distributed throughout all residential areas rather than concentrated in a few locations.
- Reserve 20% of land zoned for residential development or a mix of residential and other uses to secure the implementation of the Housing Strategy, and as provided for under Section 94 (4)(c) of the Planning and Development Act, 2000.
- Permit, at the discretion of the local authority, that developments adjoining an existing local authority housing scheme may benefit from a reduction of the 20% allocation so as to avoid undue concentration of social housing in a particular area of the city and environs.
- Ensure that all apartment and mixed-use developments provide for estate management so as to preserve the amenity, quality and visual character of the development and to ensure adequate maintenance of common facilities and areas and encourage tenant involvement and participation in estate management. (Refer also to Development Control Section).
- Ensure that the development of areas that are subject to an agreement under Section 94 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, are integrated with the rest of the development, so as to avoid undue social segregation.
- Ensure that the supply of housing units under the Housing Strategy reflects the current and emerging demographic characteristics and household sizes²⁸. (see Table 6)

²⁸ Currently, approximately 50% of those on the housing list are just one or two person households, requiring one and two bedroom accommodation. Approximately 40% require 3 bedroom units and just 10% require a 4 bedroom unit. With a gradual trend towards smaller household sizes, it is expected that through the course of the development plan period, the number of persons requiring a 2 bedroom dwelling will exceed those requiring a 3-bedroom dwelling.

- Encourage social linkages between existing public and private housing areas through the provision of shared facilities and services and the opening up of access, where appropriate, between these areas.
- Ensure that the elderly, the disabled and those households least likely to own cars have easy and convenient access to local facilities and to public transport.
- Explore means to integrate minority groups into the community and to avoid social exclusion.
- Support the providers of emergency accommodation.
- Ensure the implementation of the Homeless Action Plan for Sligo.
- Encourage social inclusion through the development of fully integrated neighbourhoods catering for people of different ages and incomes.
- Assist voluntary and non-profit co-operative housing associations in the provision of housing and encourage a more active involvement of these sectors in the housing market.
- Maintain the condition of existing social housing and continue to carry out essential remedial works such as the replacement of windows and doors and the provision of central heating.
- Promote a partnership approach between the Health Board, disability interest groups, voluntary housing associations and the local authority in meeting the particular needs of people with disabilities and the elderly.

Travelling People

It is the policy of the local authorities to:

- Provide for traveller accommodation in halting sites, individual dwellings or in group housing schemes for travellers who normally reside in Sligo City and who require such accommodation.
- Consult with travellers and their representative organisations and with the local settled community in relation to the siting, planning and design of prospective halting sites or group housing schemes so as to avoid social conflict and promote social inclusion.
- Implement an agreed “Travellers Accommodation 5 Years Programme,” once adopted by the elected members, to meet the existing and projected needs of travellers in the plan area in accordance with the requirements of the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act, 1998.
- Provide and manage halting sites in a manner compatible with the local environment and the needs of the travelling community. (In general it will be policy to set up management plans in co-operation with traveller families to manage halting sites provided by the local authority). Any area zoned for residential development is deemed to be suitable for a halting site development; such developments will be subject to the detailed design standards as outlined in the Department of the Environment’s Guidelines for Residential Caravan Parks for Travellers (Oct., 1997), and normal development control standards.

2.7.9 Objectives

It is an objective of the local authorities to:

- H1** Provide traveller accommodation at Finisklin (See Objectives Map).
- H2** Improve the residential amenity of major housing estates, notably Cranmore, Cartron and Crozon, through enhanced estate management, road improvements, landscaping, tree planting and other environmental improvements, including litter control (no map reference).
- H3** Ensure that 20% of all eligible residential sites are set aside for the development of new social and affordable residential units, while having regard to Objectives H4, H5, H6 & H7 (no map reference).

- H4** Waive the provision to supply 20% of lands for social housing on lands that lie between Cranmore and the Cleveragh Business Park and the Garvogue Villas, in order to provide a range of home ownership and tenure options within this part of city. A 10% provision of affordable housing will be required in its place.
- H5** Waive the provision to supply 20% of lands for social and affordable housing on lands at Cartron to a 10% allocation, so as to ensure that there is a range of home ownership and tenure options in this part of the city.
- H6** Waive the 20% requirement for social and affordable housing to a 10% allocation, in the event of a suitable development initiative for lands west of St. Columba's Hospital, so as to ensure that there is a range of home ownership and tenure options in this part of the city.
- H7** Waive the 20% requirement for social and affordable housing to a 10% allocation for St. Columba's Hospital in the interests of securing its prompt redevelopment, on condition that the entire property is not subdivided into separate ownership prior to development. This objective will be reviewed should any subdivision occur.
- H8** Regenerate the neighbourhood centres at Cartron and Crozon by adopting a flexible land use zoning to encourage a variety of new uses including small scale business and enterprise units, or starter units, in addition to community and neighbourhood uses.
- H9** Update the Sligo County Council and Sligo Borough Council's Housing Strategy from June 29th, 2001 following publication of the final results of the 2002 Census from the Central Statistics Office (CSO).
- H10** Ensure that residential development in the designated area of Barroe does not proceed in the absence of road proposal T2.10.

Proposed Neighbourhood Centres:

- NC1** Promote and facilitate new neighbourhood centres at the following locations:
- On the Pearse Road opposite Sligo Park Hotel.
 - Caltragh-Maugheraboy
 - Finisklin
 - Lands at the junction of Link Road and the Bundoran Road (N15)
 - Lands in the Lisnalurg area (long term objective)
 - Hazelwood

Existing Neighbourhood Centres:

- NC2** Reinforce and encourage consolidated neighbourhood development in the following areas, where characteristics of neighbourhood centres are existent or emerging:
- Church Hill Road.
 - Junction of Maugheraboy and Larkhill Road, including backlands between Oakfield Road and the Railway Line.
 - Ballinode.
 - Pearse Road, junction with Mail Coach Road and Cleveragh Road.
 - Carrowroe.

