



2.10 Recreation and Community Facilities

2.10.1 Analysis and General Introduction

The social infrastructure in Sligo consists of a diverse range of social clubs, sports organisations, resident associations and support groups, in addition to community, educational and health services that typify its importance as a regional centre. The development and facilitation of an effective social infrastructure network within Sligo is important in the promotion of the city and environs as an urban centre with a good overall quality of life, where social inclusion and community participation are regarded as necessary prerequisites. The Council recognises the importance of community participation in the improvement of existing community and recreation facilities, and encourages increased involvement of local groups, both independently and in association with the relevant statutory bodies, in the future development of the city.

Sligo has a range of community and recreational facilities, such as community centres, schools, health centres, crèches, playing fields, recreational facilities and so on. In relation to indoor recreational facilities, Sligo is served by the Regional Sports Centre at Cleveragh, and has a number of local sports clubs, which have access to a limited number of indoor halls. The city also has a strong cultural background, supporting two museums, a seven-screen cinema, and a film society (refer to section 2.12, Tourism, Arts and Culture for further details). There are a number of educational facilities to cater for primary, post primary and third level students, as well as training programmes for school leavers and adults. Sligo acts as a regional centre of importance in the provision of community services and facilities, as indicated by the presence of the Courthouse (which now hosts two annual High Court sittings), a Central Post Office, County Library, North Western Health Board, FÁS centre, and the Headquarters of the North Western Regional Tourism Authority, among many other community services.

Despite the broad range of services on offer, the level and standard of current provisions are deemed to be inadequate, with improvements in local services and local community facilities required. The local authority will ensure that local level participation is facilitated and reinforced through stronger partnership with the local authority, thereby enabling the development of an effective social infrastructure to cater more adequately for the needs of the current and future population. One of the mechanisms through which this can be more easily achieved is through the Local Area Plan process, where specific requirements and needs can be identified and addressed at the local or neighbourhood level. A schedule of areas intended for local area plans are identified in section 2.13, Urban Design, UD1.

2.10.1.1 General Policies

It is the policy of the local authorities to:

- Assist as far as possible in the provision of such community facilities as Community Centres, Schools, Health Centres, Crèches, Playing Fields, Recreation Facilities etc., by reserving suitably located sites, by assisting in the provision of finance for their development (where appropriate), and/or by the use of development control to ensure provision is made for such facilities as the Council considers appropriate
- Encourage high standards in the design and finish of community facilities.
- Introduce development levies to provide for recreational and community facilities relating to new residential developments



Educational Facilities - secondary school

2.10.2 Education Facilities

Sligo provides a wide range of educational facilities from primary to third level, catering for approximately 9,425 students. It provides for its educational needs through fifteen primary schools, five-post primary schools, two third level educational institutions, a Youthreach programme, Adult Arts Education facility, and a FÁS centre.

The fifteen primary schools accommodate 2,929 pupils (2002). From these 15 schools, 8 have indicated the need for improved facilities for both teaching and recreational purposes, with a shortage of space and lack of funding causing problems. A total of three primary schools open their gyms/indoor halls to the public in the evening. The local authority will promote other schools and educational centres to do likewise.

There are five post primary schools, namely Sligo Grammar School Ltd., Summerhill College, Ursuline College, Mercy College and Ballinode College VEC, catering for a total of 2,736 students. All of these schools can cater for the existing numbers, however there is little room for expansion and a lack of funding for the upkeep of existing buildings. The VEC currently needs to relocate from their facilities at Quay Street and Ballinode and will require an estimated 8-10 acres for new facilities. Sporting facilities are generally weak, with the majority of these schools not opening their facilities to the public after school hours. Only a small number allow their sports halls to be used.

With regard to third level education, Sligo Institute of Technology and St. Angela's College both serve Sligo City. The S.I.T. caters for in excess of 3000 students, with the campus having the capacity to serve 4,500 students by 2006. There are plans for the further expansion of the college with an overall aim to reach university status in 5 to 10 years and the potential to serve up to 6,500 students. Such developments will increase the pressure for student accommodation in the city and environs, and ancillary services and facilities.

St. Angela's College currently serves 695 students, and is developing facilities for on-campus nursing programmes, with developments also in the Food Product Development Centre in association with Enterprise Ireland. While St. Angela's is not situated in the plan's study area, it has an important role to play in the local economy of the city and environs. Although there is accommodation for its first year students, the vast majority of other students reside in the city and environs and this has implications on the provision of student accommodation.

The Adult Arts Education Centre, a Youthreach Training Centre and a Regional FÁS centre in Sligo complement the existing primary and post primary educational structure. The FÁS centre provides apprentice and adult training in basic and advanced industrial skills to meet the needs of local businesses. Further resource centres are needed to cater for additional training programmes, particularly in the high-tech and telecommunications sector.

There are three special needs schools within Sligo for young children. The educational services for those with special needs are limited, with the existing facilities stretched due to the wide catchment area, which they must also serve.

2.10.2.1 *It is the policy of the local authorities to:*

- Support the educational institutions in their plans to expand and develop, in particular the Sligo Institute of Technology.
- Support and facilitate the relocation of the VEC school to a suitable site, which can be served by public transport.



Summerhill College - educational facilities, Sligo



Sligo Hospital

- Promote the development of out-reach programmes between businesses and the third level institutions, whereby Sligo can develop as a centre for excellence in research and development.
- Encourage and support the development of further educational facilities and training programmes for children and adults with special needs.
- Encourage the integration of those with special needs into the education system of streamlined schools, where possible
- Support Sligo's secondary schools in the upgrading and modernisation of its building stock so as to ensure that these institutions can accommodate the anticipated population growth.

2.10.3 Health Facilities

Sligo is served by a range of public and private health care services and facilities, including Sligo General Hospital, The Mental Health Service on St. Columba's Road, Markievicz House Day Centre, St. John's Hospital (all of which are run by the North Western Health Board) and St. Joseph's Hospital (a private hospital). Sligo General Hospital provides 326 beds and caters for a range of health areas. A Mental Health Service is provided at St. Columba's Psychiatric Hospital in Ballytivnan, which serves Sligo, Leitrim and South Donegal. Markievicz House runs a day hospital facility, also providing mental health services. St. John's Hospital in Ballytivnan (246 beds) provides services geared toward the care of the elderly patient. St. Joseph's Hospital at Garden Hill is a private hospital (32 beds) run by the Sisters of St. Joseph of the Apparition, providing medical, surgical and nursing care. There are also general practitioners, consultants, opticians and dental surgeons in private practice in the city.

In relation to facilities for the disabled, there are a small number of primary schools and day care facilities. Bodies such as the Learning Disability Unit at Nazareth House, the Resource Centre at Ballytivnan, Rehab Care, the NTDI and the NW Parents and Friends Voluntary group provide resources for those with special needs, with Cregg House, St. Joseph's Special School and the Holy Family Pre-school providing day care for children with special needs. However, this area is not adequately resourced, with these bodies covering a catchment area of Sligo, Leitrim and West Cavan. There is a lack of facilities for those over 18, with a limited number of places available in training programmes.

Sligo Social Services provides a social work service, accommodation support services, administration, meals-on-wheels kitchen, pre-school, furniture store and sales, and a large FAS scheme. There is currently a shortage of emergency accommodation available, with a further facility/land required.

2.10.3.1 *It is the policy of the local authorities to:*

- Support Health Service provisions for people with learning disabilities.
- Encourage the development of specific bodies and programmes to facilitate the integration of those with special needs.
- Facilitate the needs of Sligo Social Services, particularly in relation to the development of emergency accommodation.



Nazareth House, Nursing Home, Sligo

2.10.4 Facilities for the Elderly

As highlighted by the 1996 census, 12% of the population of Sligo City and Environs are 65 years and older (11% nationally), with a trend that will have important implications for the demand for care and development services in the future. In relation to nursing care, Nazareth House provides on average 136 beds for older people from Sligo City. St. John's Hospital also provides a service for the care of the elderly, as does Garden Hill Hospital. A new 60-bed nursing home is currently being built in Ballytivnan. Due to the increase in the elderly cohort nationally and within Sligo, it is important that the needs of the elderly are catered for in the future, with additional nursing care being developed to cater for the health needs of this sector of the population.

There are a number of community groups catering for the needs of the elderly in the various housing areas, such as the Cranmore Senior Citizens Group, M.C.R. Senior Citizens Club, St. Joseph's Senior Citizen Club and the Sligo and District Active Retirement Association. The Council will continue to support the work of these community groups.

2.10.4.1 *It is the policy of the local authorities to:*

- Facilitate further development in the area of health care facilities for the elderly.
- Support existing and future community groups catering for the elderly through additional financial support where appropriate and through a co-operative approach to addressing their needs.

2.10.5 Childcare Facilities

Due to the high percentage of those in the 0-14 age group (21.4%), Sligo and Environs has a high age dependant cohort. This has implications in terms of the social infrastructure in the city, particularly with regard to childcare facilities. There are 14 community providers of childcare facilities in Sligo city, of which 12 are sessional (providing up to 6 hours care) and 2 providing full day care. There are also 16 private providers, of which 8 provide sessional care and 8 provide full-day care. There is a recognised shortage of full-day care facilities. The Sligo County Childcare Committee (established 2001) is currently developing a strategy to ensure the balanced provision of quality childcare facilities throughout the County. The Council will consider this strategy in the future provision of childcare facilities and also have regard to the Department of Environment and Local Government's Planning Guidelines on Childcare Facilities (2001).

2.10.5.1 *It is the policy of the local authorities to:*

- Work with the Sligo County Childcare Committee in the development of a strategy for the City and Environs.
- Consider childcare needs in future local area plans and residential planning applications.
- Encourage the location of childcare facilities in suitable locations, such as neighbourhood and district centres, areas of concentrated employment, in the vicinity of schools, adjacent to public transport corridors and in larger new housing estates.



Childcare facilities



Rowing on Lough Gill, Sligo

2.10.6 Recreational Facilities

Sports and recreation facilities in the city and environs include tennis courts, a racecourse, soccer and GAA clubs (although the provision of facilities for these clubs are very limited), athletics, badminton, basketball, boxing, canoeing, cycling, a flying club, gymnastics, pitch and putt, sports acrobatics, squash, hockey, volleyball, karate, judo and a trampoline club. However, the provision of outdoor and indoor facilities is generally lacking, with a lot of clubs having to rent land and/or indoor facilities. According to the 1998 Sports and Recreational Strategy, 13 of the 14 soccer clubs had to rent playing surfaces. The GAA have two playing fields located at St.Mary's and Markievicz Park (Kevinsfort is owned by Sligo Borough), and many clubs have to depend on the Sligo Sports Centre or the hiring of other facilities for training sessions. Sligo Regional Sports Centre caters for a variety of clubs in the city, while also providing a swimming pool, gym facilities and an all-weather pitch. It is an objective of the local authority to expand the range of facilities in this area.

2.10.6.1 *It is the policy of the local authorities to:*

- Encourage the provision of indoor sporting/community facilities in co-operation with local community groups.
- Support local sports and community groups in the development of facilities through the reservation of suitable land and provision of funding where appropriate.
- Facilitate the greater use of existing school sporting facilities by the public. The construction and maintenance of community and sporting facilities can be costly and demand a lot of resources, therefore in the interests of sustainability, the dual usage of such facilities is encouraged, through time management - for example, school sports halls could be used by others outside of normal school hours. The local authority will promote a partnership approach between clubs, social groups and the school boards to facilitate such initiatives.

2.10.7 Community Development

Sligo has a number of community centres, which provide a variety of functions for the local population - a number of these centres are listed below³⁴:

- **Cranmore/Abbeyquarter:** This is a meeting centre for local communities, which provides a range of services, such as a playschool, youth club, senior citizens group, women's group and men's group. This centre also has a football pitch and dressing rooms. It has the potential to be developed as an indoor community sports hall facility.
- **Merville Youth and Community Group:** Located in Maugheraboy in the West Ward, this centre contains an all-purpose hall, meeting rooms, an outdoor tennis court and a soccer pitch. It is a significant local development resource to the community and has additional development potential as a running track and playing pitch.
- **Northside Community Resource Centre:** This centre provides activities for the young, particularly during the summer months and are also involved in fundraising for a sports centre for the North Ward.
- **Northside Youth Group:** Provides a homework club, summer projects, art festivals, Christmas shows and discos.
- **M.C.R.:** This centre is located in the centre of the city in the East Ward and hosts clubs such as the Seniors Citizens' Club, Pre-School Group, Women's Group and bingo.

³⁴ Sligo Corporation, Sligo Sports and Recreation Facilities and Action Strategy: A Framework for Action, February 1998

- **St. Mary's Gaelic Athletic Club:** Consists of a clubhouse with a bar facility, squash, racquetball, handball courts and a playing pitch area. Located on a prime 10-acre site, it has room for expansion and development.
- **Gilhooly Hall:** One of the oldest and most used community halls in Sligo, which caters for active and passive recreational activities.
- **St. Annes Youth Centre:** This centre has a hall, where facilities to cater for the youth are provided.
- **St. John's Hall, on John St.:** This hall accommodates badminton and Irish dancing, among other activities.
- **Rockwood Parade Youth Centre:** Provides various activities for the young, including practical training courses, as well as an indoor sports hall.
- **St. Joseph's Hall in Ballytivnan:** This facility provides a youth club that includes a homework club, karate and Irish Dancing.

These community centres enable local groups to provide a range of assistance for adults and children; they provide educational resource help, childcare facilities, employment training, assistance for the elderly and the socially excluded, and they provide sports facilities. In order to facilitate these groups, a range of improved facilities for these community halls, alongside improved funding is required. The Local Authority recognises this vital and vibrant community resource and are committed to supporting these groups in their endeavour. To this end the local authorities will work as co-ordinator between these local groups and statutory bodies to assist in the future planning and development of the city from a local level.

2.10.7.1 *It is the policy of the local authorities to:*

- Facilitate and assist, where possible, social and community development in the city.
- Encourage a partnership approach between local community groups, statutory bodies and other organisations in the identification and provision of community facilities, such as community centres, and indoor and outdoor recreational facilities.

2.10.8 Cemetery Development

Sligo Cemetery currently has a capacity of approximately 800 unopened plots available. On average 150-200 plots are sold per year, hence the cemetery has capacity for a remaining four or five years.³⁵ There is currently capacity for an extension to the north-east of the cemetery, where 3.48 acres/1.41 hectares of land are available. As 850 plots can be accommodated per acre within a lawn type cemetery layout, there is capacity for an additional 12-17 years, giving a total remaining active life of 16-22 years.

In enabling the sustainable use of this land, account should be taken of the most efficient use of the cemetery land for present and future generations, as well as changing attitudes to different types of burials, such as that of cremation. Traditional burial plots are orientated on an east-west axis and can normally hold up to 4 persons, a trend which is changing with smaller family sizes and changing family structures. Plots today, on average, accommodate two sets of remains. Traditional plots are often defined by ornamental stone/marble borders and usually have high maintenance costs associated with them, costs which can become burdensome to cemetery owners when plots can no longer be cared for by friends and relatives. With reference to the area indicated for expansion, it is recommended that this land be designed along the principles of a green lawn cemetery where plots are defined by individual headstones, but do not require individual stone sets around each plot. This would allow a greater number of plots per hectare and at the same time enable easier and less expensive maintenance. Due consideration should also be given to the landscaping of this lawn cemetery to create a number of spaces within the site.



Cemetery development, Sligo

³⁵ Active life refers to the availability of new unopened plots within the cemetery.

In addition, it is recommended that an area be set-aside as a 'Garden of Remembrance' to accommodate cremation plots and provide a tranquil area for reflection. This area would act as a transition between the 'old' and 'new' cemeteries and should be well landscaped with seating provided. Cremation plots can take three forms: plots laid out as traditional plots with individual headstones (this area being normally one-third the size of a traditional plot); plots in the ground with the names of those buried within a specific area engraved on a common headstone; placement of ashes in a columbarium wall which contains niches of 10"x10" for the ashes, with individual plaques for the names. Cremation enables a greater number of human remains to be accommodated within a small space and is thus more efficient in terms of the land it requires and its ability to extend the life span of an existing established cemetery for use by future generations.

2.10.9 Objectives

It is an objective of the local authorities to:

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| RCF1 | Facilitate the provision of 1 childcare facility to cater for 20 children for each 75 dwelling units in larger new housing estates. (no map reference) |
| RCF2 | Reserve lands for cemetery expansion to the northeast of Sligo Cemetery. |

