

Draft Tobercurry Local Area Plan

SEA Screening Report

Prepared in accordance with the Planning and Development
(Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004–2011

Sligo County Council has prepared a draft local area plan (LAP) for Tobercurry for the period 2015-2021, in line with the provisions of Sligo County Development Plan 2011–2017.

This proposal will follow the procedure set out in Sections 18–20 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) relating to the preparation and adoption of local area plans.

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To access the internet location of the CDP and of the Draft Tobercurry LAP, please follow the links:
www.sligococo.ie/cdp and www.sligococo.ie/tobercurry

A. Background information on Tobercurry

A.1 Location

Tobercurry, the second-largest urban settlement in County Sligo, established itself as a market town in the first half of the 19th Century. It is located 35 km (22 miles) south-west of Sligo, along the Sligo–Galway Road (N-17), at the junction with the Ballymote–Ballina Road (R-294). The disused Sligo–Limerick rail line (the Western Rail Corridor) runs along the western side of the town centre.

The landscape surrounding Tobercurry is generally flat and low-lying, supporting small- and medium-sized field patterns, with hedgerows and mature tree belts. Most of the town lies at an altitude of 80–90 m above sea level, with the land gently rising to the north-east, reaching 104 m.

Notable landscape features such as the Ox Mountains, Knocknashee Hill and Muckelty Hill are all located within a 10-km radius. The nearest significant bodies of surface water are the River Moy (4 km west of the town), the River Owengarve (5.5 km south-west) and several lakes, including Lough Talt and Templehouse, all located more than 10 km away from Tobercurry.



Fig. 1 Map of County Sligo showing the location of Tobercurry in relation to Sligo & Environs

A.2 Population

Tobercurry is a *Census town*, i.e. a town with a legally-defined boundary for Census purposes. It had a population of 1,171 in 2002, having increased by 82 persons (7.5%) from the previous Census, in 1996. The town's growth accelerated substantially after 2002, with a population increase of 576 persons (49.2%) by 2011.

The population of the Tobercurry Electoral Division (ED) grew by 155 persons (8.9%) between 1996 and 2002 and by 799 (25.4%) between 2002 and 2011.

Figures from the Censuses of 2002, 2006 and 2011 are shown in the table below.

Demographic change in Co. Sligo, Tobercurry ED and Tobercurry town – 2002 to 2011

Area	Population 2002	Population 2006	% change 2002-2006	Population 2011	% change 2006-2011
County Sligo	58,200	60,894	+4.6 %	65,270*	+7.2 %
Tobercurry ED	1,739	2,181	+25.4 %	2,538	+16.4 %
Tobercurry Town	1,171	1,421	+21.3 %	1,747	+22.9 %

Source: cso.ie

In accordance with the Core Strategy of the CDP, the recommended population level for Tobercurry is 1,800 persons by 2017. Considering the Census 2011 figure, it would appear that this level of population may have been attained or even exceeded by now. This is considered a positive development and an indicator of Tobercurry's capacity to attract and retain permanent residents.

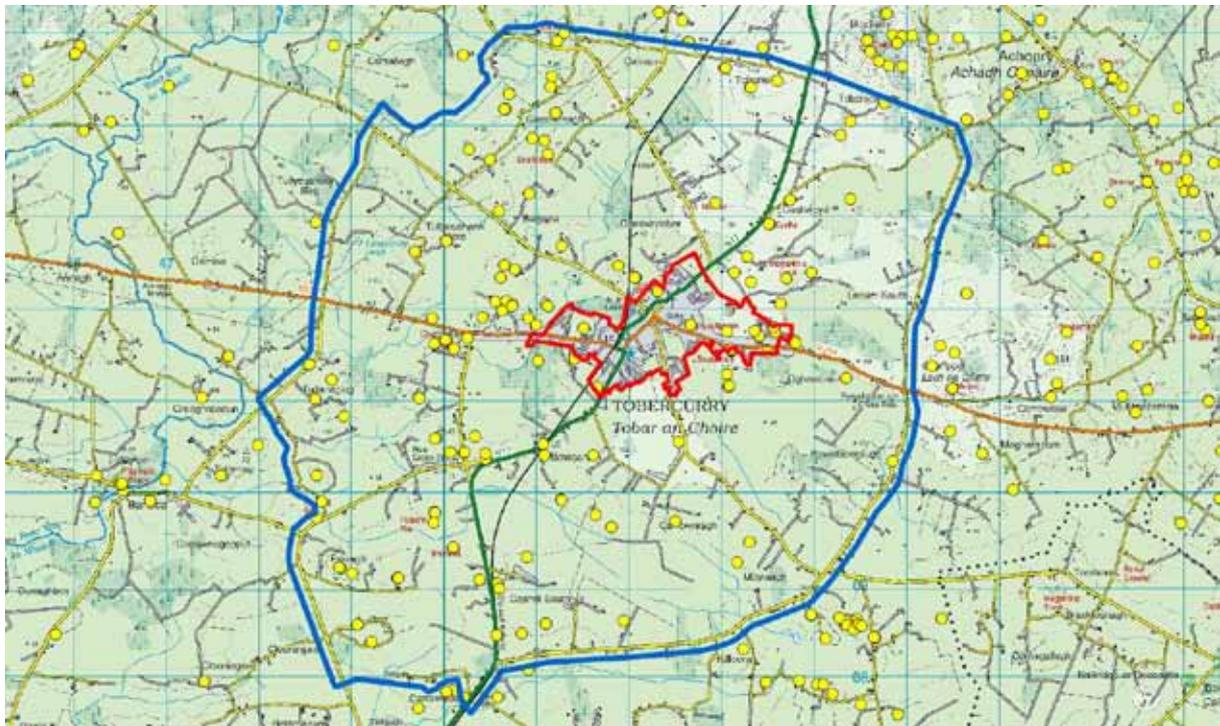
A.3 Archaeological heritage

There are **135** recorded archaeological monuments in the Plan area, of which **12** are located inside the development limit. There is a variety of archaeological remains, including ring forts, souterrains, tombs, enclosures etc. Fig. 2 on the next page shows the location of these monuments within and around the Plan area, while the associated table indicates their ID numbers and gives the corresponding descriptions.

Recorded archaeological monuments within the development limit of Tobercurry LAP

RMP no.	Townland	Class description
SL038-029----	Rathscanlan	Ringfort - Rath
SL038-032----	Carrowntober	Southern
SL038-033----	Tobercurry	Southern
SL038-034----	Oghambaun	Ringfort - Cashel
SL038-037----	Oghambaun	Ringfort - Rath
SL038-038001-	Oghambaun	Ringfort - Cashel
SL038-038002-	Oghambaun	Ringfort - Rath
SL038-037001-	Oghambaun	Standing Stone possible
SL038-038003-	Oghambaun	Enclosure possible
SL038-074----	Rathscanlan	Megalithic Tomb - Court Tomb
SL038-036----	Oghambaun	Ringfort - Rath possible
SL038-035001-	Oghambaun	Southern

Fig. 2 Archaeological sites and monuments in the Tobercurry Plan area



A.4 Natural heritage

What is particularly striking about Tobercurry is the scarcity of mature trees in the town. On its outskirts and within short distance, there are commercial conifer plantations of various ages, which are not easily accessible or normally used for walking.

Natural and man-made features within the town and its immediate surroundings include:

- several conifer plantations, of various ages;
- significant extents of peatland, both east and west of Tobercurry
- pockets of mature trees and some tree avenues, most of them outside the built-up area;
- Tobercurry Stream (locally known as Maiden River), a water course which collects the effluent from the wastewater treatment plant and most of the town's surface water run-off;
- Turloughmore, the only designated nature conservation area within the Plan area, a turlough situated to the north-east of Tobercurry, which is both a SAC and a pNHA – site code 00637.

The following designated areas are located within 15 km of Tobercurry:

Special Protection Areas

None

Special Areas of Conservation

County Sligo:	Ox Mountains Bogs, River Moy, Templehouse and Cloonacleigha Loughs, Lough Nabrickkeagh Bog, Turloughmore, Flughany Bog, Lough Hoe Bog
County Roscommon:	River Moy
County Mayo:	River Moy, Ox Mountains Bogs, Doocastle Turlough, Flughany Bog, Cloonakillina Lough

Natural Heritage Areas

None

Proposed Natural Heritage Areas

County Sligo:	Ox Mountains Bogs, Fin and Riskeen Loughs, Templehouse and Cloonacleigha Loughs, Lough Nabrickkeagh Bog, Turloughmore, Quarryfield West Turlough, Moylough Turlough, Flughany Bog, Cloongoonagh Bog
County Roscommon:	Derrynabrock Bog
County Mayo:	Ox Mountains Bogs, Doocastle Turlough, Flughany Bog, Cloonakillina Lough, Gowlaun Bog, Tawnaghbeg Bog, Kilgarriff Bog, Derrynabrock Bog

The three types of designated areas are shown in Figures 3, 4 and 5 below.

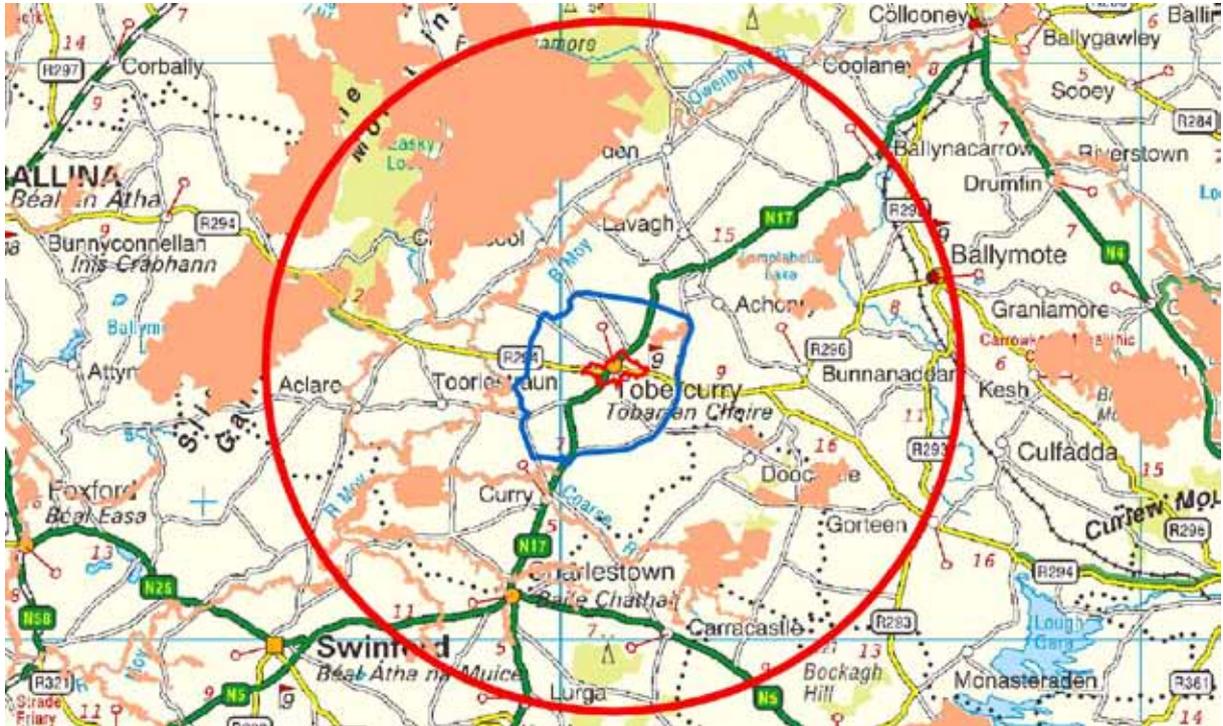


Fig. 3 Special Areas of Conservation (orange) within 15 km (red circle) of Tobercurry



Fig. 4 Proposed Natural Heritage Areas (green) within 15 km (red circle) of Tobercurry

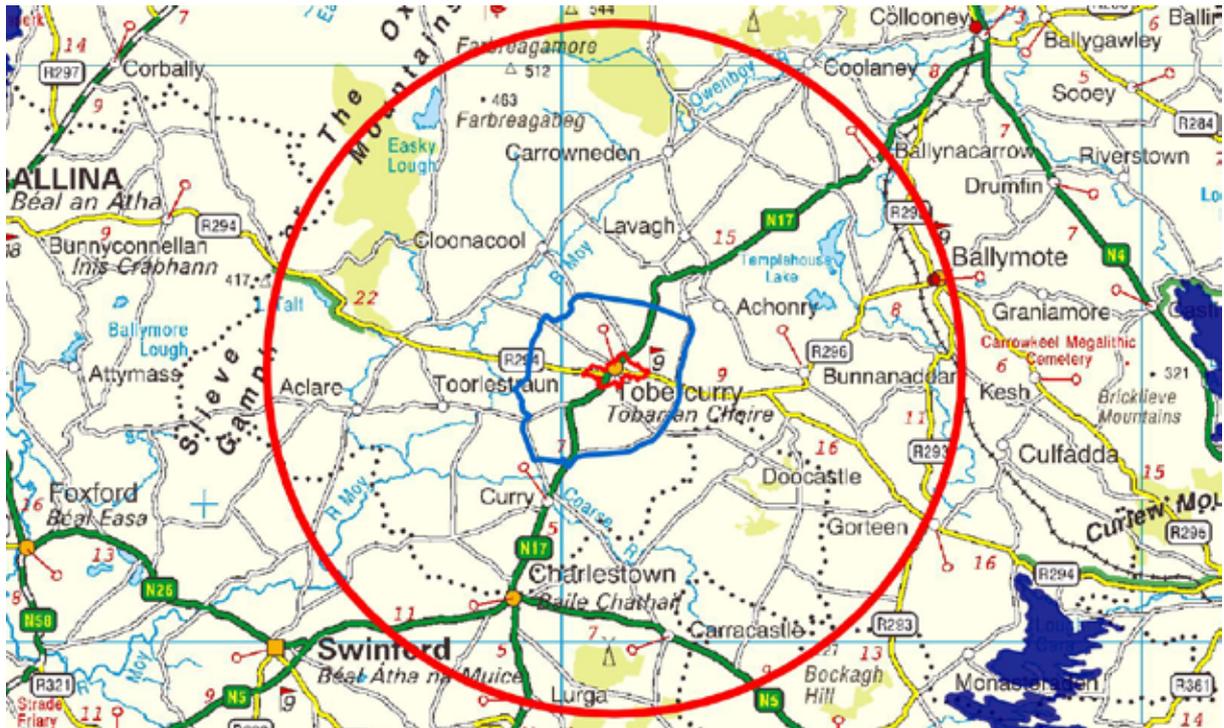


Fig. 5 Special Protection Areas (blue) within 15 km (red circle) of Tobercurry

A.5 CDP designations

The County Development Plan 2011-2017 includes a Landscape Characterisation Map, which is a tool for assessing the visual impact and sustainability of new development. The map, first published as part of CDP 1999-2004, is based on composite landscape studies and has been further refined throughout the years.

The features that can be found in/around Tobercurry are listed below.

- Most of the landscape is classified as *normal rural landscape*;
- Various wooded and peatland areas, as well as the turlough at Turloughmore (SAC/pNHA) are designated “sensitive rural landscape”
- The ridge of Muckelty Hill, north-east of the town, is designated “visually vulnerable”.

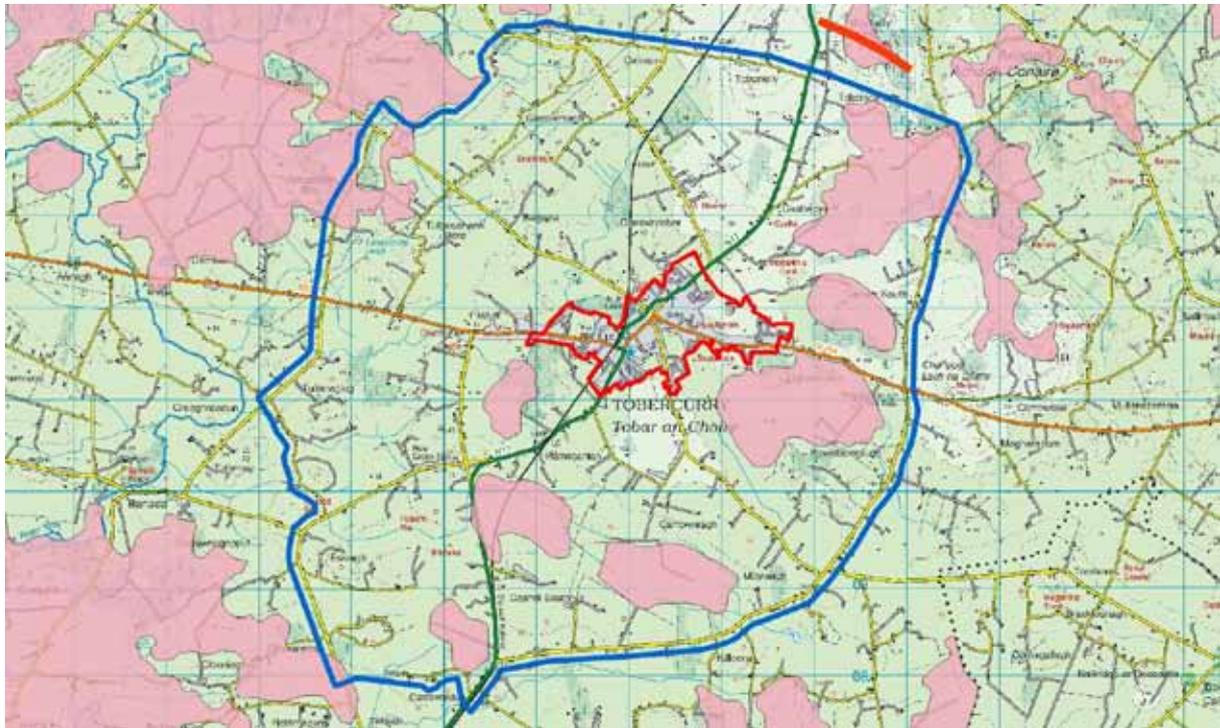


Fig. 6 Extract from the CDP Landscape Characterisation Map - sensitive rural landscapes (pink areas), visually vulnerable ridgeline of Muckelty Hill (red line)

A.6 Land use

Historically, the town has developed mostly on the eastern side of the railway, along the N-17 (Sligo to Galway Road).

Approximately **48.8 ha** of land throughout the town is in residential use, with the majority of units being part of multiple housing schemes. This figure does not account for the significant amount of ribbon development that has taken place over the years especially along R-294 (to the east and west), and the N-17 (particularly to the south).

Mixed residential and commercial uses in the town centre cover **circa 5.2 ha**, while vacancy and dereliction in the same area affects sites and lands totaling **6 ha**.

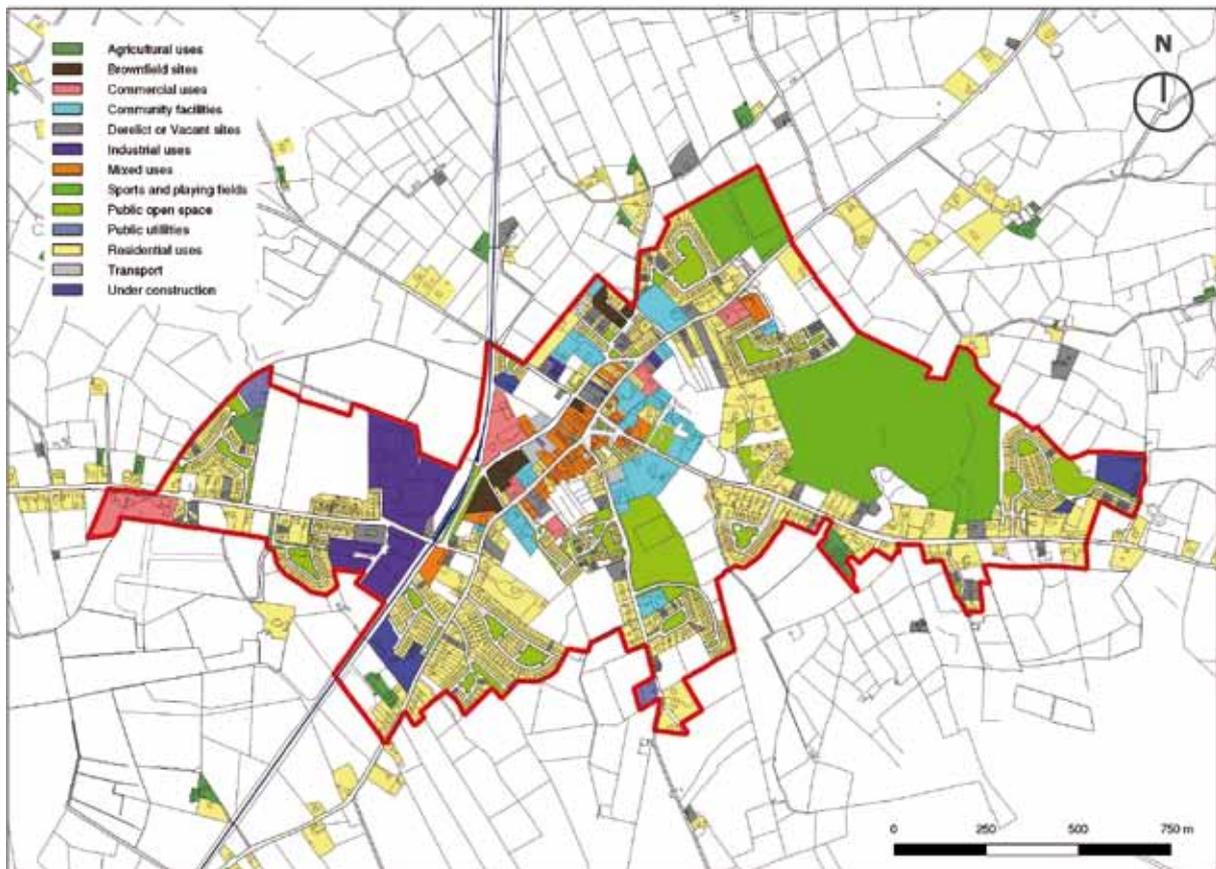
The town is modestly endowed (**6.2 ha**) with lands owned by the community, charities and public institutions, most of them conveniently located on the edge of the centre. However, there is a lack of proper community facilities, with the exception of St Attracta's Secondary School (out of town, on the Ballina Road) – a positive example of public-private partnership.

At the junction of N-17 and R-294, west of the railway, there is a business/industrial zone hosting manufacturing and logistics. The total area of land used for business, industry and warehousing is **7.8 ha**.

Publicly-accessible, landscaped open space is almost non-existent within the town. Sports/playing fields and the golf course cover **27.3 ha** in total.

Commercial forestry around the town is either not mature or not suitable for walking / recreational use.

Fig. 7 Land use in Tobercurry, 2014



A.7 Built environment and heritage

Tobercurry has grown less around the old core and more along the two main roads, N-17 (Galway Road) and R-294 (Ballina Road). Residential development is represented by larger houses along the main roads, outside the town centre, with some backland development consisting of housing estates of varying age and quality. Large tracts of undeveloped land still remain between housing estates.

Of two existing Council housing estates, Connolly Park contains a significant number of houses that have fallen into neglect.



Backland residential development along Charlestown Road (N17) and derelict dwellings at Connolly Park, a Council housing estate

The old commercial core of Tobercurry is easily identifiable with shops, pubs and other businesses stretching along three main streets: Humbert Street, Teeling Street and Emmet Street. The three streets converge in the central Wolfe Tone “Square” (which has a rather triangular shape).



Looking towards Wolfe Tone Square from Teeling Street (left) and from Humbert Street (right)

On Teeling Street, the main commercial street, two- and three-storey buildings with traditional shop fronts give Tobercurry its typical aspect of a small market town.

Humbert Street, on the other hand, suffers from wide-spread dereliction. Dereliction is blighting other parts of the town, such as the south-eastern side of the Circular Road (N17), and is also present on the outskirts and in the rural surroundings of Tobercurry. The County Council has attempted to kick-start urban regeneration north of Wolfe Tone Square by locating an important public building in a run-down area of Humbert Street.



The County Council’s Teach Laighne and a row of derelict buildings – contrasting views obtained within a short stretch of Humbert Street (on opposite sides)

Teach Laighne, the County Council’s “One-stop Shop” (including a library, among other services), is a relatively recent intervention into Humbert Street. The construction of this facility was followed by the repair of several other (privately-owned) buildings.

Protected Structures

There are thirteen protected structures within the Tobercurry Plan area, of which only two are outside the town’s built-up area. The protected structures are identified in Fig. 8 below and in the table on the next page.

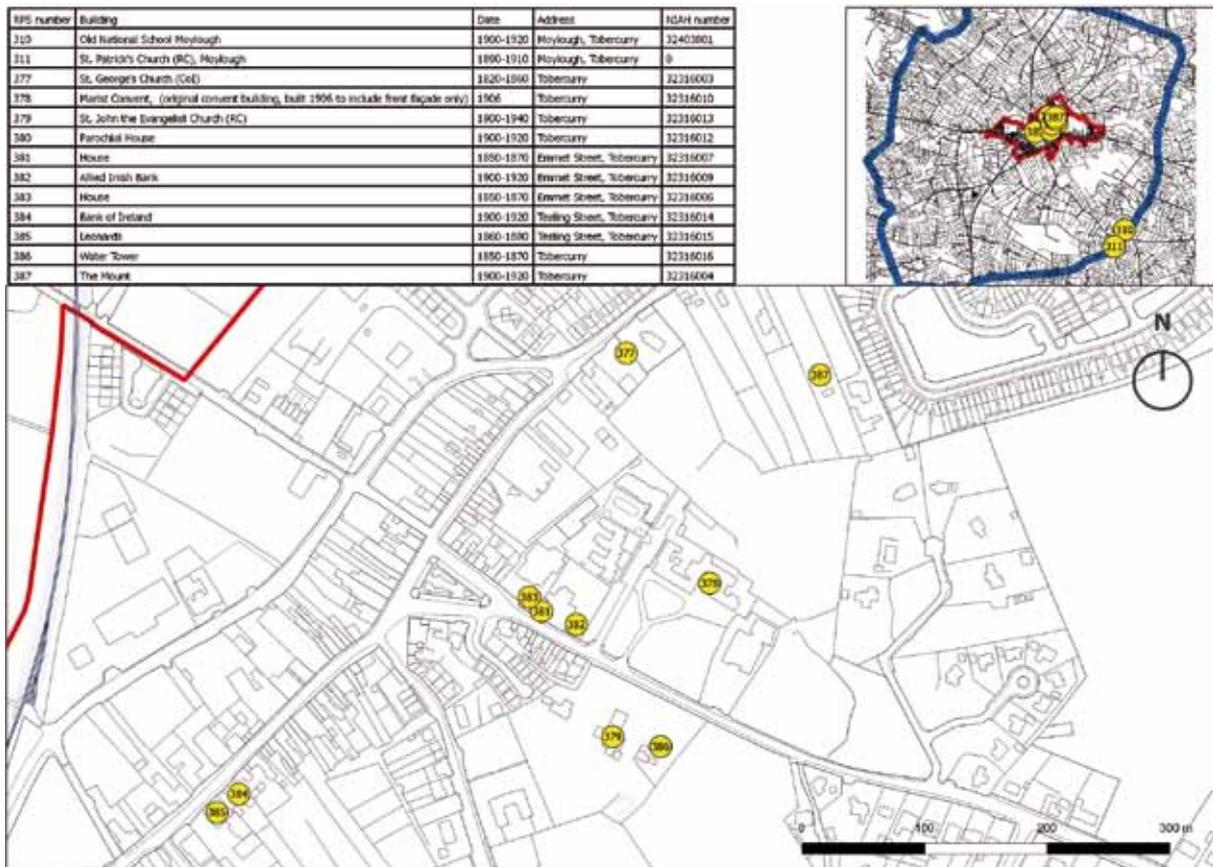


Fig. 8 Protected Structures within the Plan limit of Tobercurry LAP

Protected Structures within the Plan limit of Tobercurry LAP

RPS No.	Structure name	Date built	Address (street or townland)	NIAH No.
310	Old National School Moylough	1900-1920	Moylough, Tobercurry	32403801
311	St. Patrick's Church (RC), Moylough	1890-1910	Moylough, Tobercurry	
377	St. George's Church (Col)	120-1860	Tobercurry	32316003
378	Marist Convent, (original convent building, built 1906 to include front façade only)	1906	Tobercurry	32316010
379	St. John the Evangelist Church (RC)	1900-1940	Tobercurry	32316013
380	Parochial House	1900-1920	Tobercurry	32316012
381	House	1850-1870	Emmet Street, Tobercurry	32316007
382	Allied Irish Bank	1900-1920	Emmet Street, Tobercurry	32316009
383	House	1850-1870	Emmet Street, Tobercurry	32316006
384	Bank of Ireland	1900-1920	Teeling Street, Tobercurry	32316014
385	Leonards	1860-1880	Teeling Street, Tobercurry	32316015
386	Water Tower	1850-1870	Tobercurry	32316016
387	The Mount	1900-1920	Tobercurry	32316004

A.8 Water supply

Tobercurry receives its drinking water from the Lough Talt Regional Water Supply Scheme, which covers the area of County Sligo east of the Ox Mountains. The water treatment consists of chlorination and fluoridation. The Scheme supplies approximately 8,500 m³/day to circa 11,000 people and to businesses in the south-west Sligo area (Ballymote, Coolaney, Ballinacarrow, Aclare, Banada, Cloonacool and Curry). Currently the capacity of the plant is sufficient, but according to the EPA, the treatment for Cryptosporidium is inadequate.

In May 2014, Irish Water published its Proposed Capital Investment Plan (CIP) for 2014–2016. The Lough Talt Regional Water Supply Scheme is included in this Programme under the section “review scope and commence construction”.

In early 2015 Sligo County Council was pursuing the construction of a new water treatment plant with a capacity of 12,500 m³/day, storage reservoirs and intake works, in partnership with Irish Water (IW)

as per the CIP. In parallel, the Council was discussing with IW the possibility of an interim upgrade of the water treatment plant.

A.9 Wastewater treatment

Tobercurry’s existing wastewater treatment plant has a design PE of only 1,400, which is inadequate for the people and businesses of the town.

The treatment system is based on conventional low-rate bio-filtration, preceded by an Imhoff tank and followed by a humus tank. The collection network consists of a combined system which includes two storm water overflows. The final effluent is discharged into the Maiden River, which has a very low assimilation capacity.

The upgrade of the plant was originally bundled with the Grange and Strandhill sewerage treatment schemes. In Irish Water’s proposed Capital Investment Plan (CIP) for 2014–2016, the item “Grange/ Strandhill/ Tobercurry Sewerage Scheme – Wastewater Treatment Plant Upgrades” is included under the section “review scope and commence construction”. Under this Programme it is proposed to construct a 3,500 PE wastewater treatment plant and to relocate the outfall to the Moy River, which has adequate assimilation capacity

A.10 Water quality

Water quality relates to rivers, lakes, groundwater, estuarine and coastal waters. Water quality monitoring and management is governed by the EU Water Framework Directive (WFD) and provides for water management on the basis of River Basin Districts (RBD). Tobercurry is situated in the Western RBD. The water bodies in the Plan area and their status as classified by the Environmental Protection Agency are detailed below.

Water body	Status
The Moy Oghambaun (known as the Tobercurry Stream)	Bad
Moy Tributary Tullycusheen Beg	Bad
Moy Tributary Doomore	Good
Moy Tributary Cashel South	High
Ballysadare Chaffpool	Good
Moy Dromada (Duke)	Good
Moy Owengarve Curry	High
Moy Owengarve Tributary Ballincurry	Poor

The EPA classified groundwater within the Plan area as being of good status.

The main sources of water pollution in the Plan area are agriculture, forestry, industrial discharges, wastewater treatment plant discharge and effluent discharges from unserviced developments.

Sligo County Council controls the aforementioned developments and activities in accordance with the relevant Development Plan policies and through the enforcement of national water quality legislation, to ensure they do not adversely affect water quality.

B. Brief outline of the draft local area plan

The Sligo County Development Plan 2011-2017 (CDP) requires the preparation of a local area plan for Tobercurry. The CDP earmarks Tobercurry as a Key Support Town, in order to build on its strengths and existing scale of development. As recommended in the CDP, the strategy for Tobercurry involves the consolidation of the town through adequate land designation for housing and a range of urban-type activities. In addition to residential uses, lands are zoned for mixed uses, community facilities, open space, business and enterprise, to enable the Key Support Town to serve its residents and those in the rural catchment in an appropriate manner.

Through the judicious allocation of land for balanced residential development, together with associated policies and objectives, the Draft Tobercurry LAP ensures consistency with the CDP's Core Strategy, strategic spatial development and settlement policies.

B.1 Tobercurry Local Area Plan – purpose and structure

The Tobercurry LAP is intended to serve the following main purposes:

- to provide for orderly, balanced development in the medium and long term, in the interest of the common good, whilst ensuring the protection of heritage assets;
- to indicate detailed requirements regarding the provision of housing, community facilities, mixed use developments and public amenities, and regarding vehicular traffic and pedestrian circulation;
- to set specific standards for the design of developments and structures;
- to ensure that all sectors of society are properly considered and catered for;
- to provide a degree of certainty and security to residents and prospective developers.

The Draft Tobercurry LAP is structured under the following main headings:

Chapter 1	Plan context
Chapter 2	Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)
Chapter 3	Core Strategy
Chapter 4	Economic development
Chapter 5	Housing
Chapter 6	Community facilities
Chapter 7	Heritage
Chapter 8	Transport
Chapter 9	Infrastructure
Chapter 10	Environmental quality
Chapter 11	Urban design

Note: All the policies and objectives contained in Sections 3 to 12 of the CDP are applicable to all settlements in County Sligo. These policies and objectives have already been assessed for potential effects on the environment through the SEA process in preparing the CDP 2011-2017.

B.2 Pre-draft consultation

Preliminary consultation took place in November-December 2011, based on a *Pre-Draft Consultation Paper*. However, the Council did not proceed with the preparation of the LAP at that time.

In June 2014, the Planning Section resumed pre-draft consultation and organised a public information session (19 June 2014) in Teach Laighne, Tobercurry.

Six submissions were received during this first stage of consultation, including those from prescribed environmental authorities (for details, refer to Section F of this Report).

The main issues raised in submissions related to sewerage and wastewater treatment, archaeological heritage, flood risk management, protection of habitats, phasing of residential development, traffic and parking, walkways, sports and recreational facilities.

All the above concerns are addressed in the LAP, which also incorporates the recommendations and suggestions of state agencies which responded to pre-draft consultation.

B.3 Main provisions of the Draft LAP 2015-2021

The Draft LAP contains two significant provisions:

- § the establishment of a development limit and a buffer zone around the town;
- § the zoning of land for various uses, including residential development in accordance with the allocation made under the CDP.

Development limit and buffer zone

Due to ribbon development along the approach roads, Tobercurry does not have a defined urban edge at present.

There is evidence of ongoing pressure for one-off housing in an extended rural area around Tobercurry. At present, applications for housing in the south-west Sligo area are determined in accordance with the rural housing policy outlined in the CDP 2011-2017. The area surrounding Tobercurry is designated as “*in need of regeneration*” and one-off housing is generally facilitated.

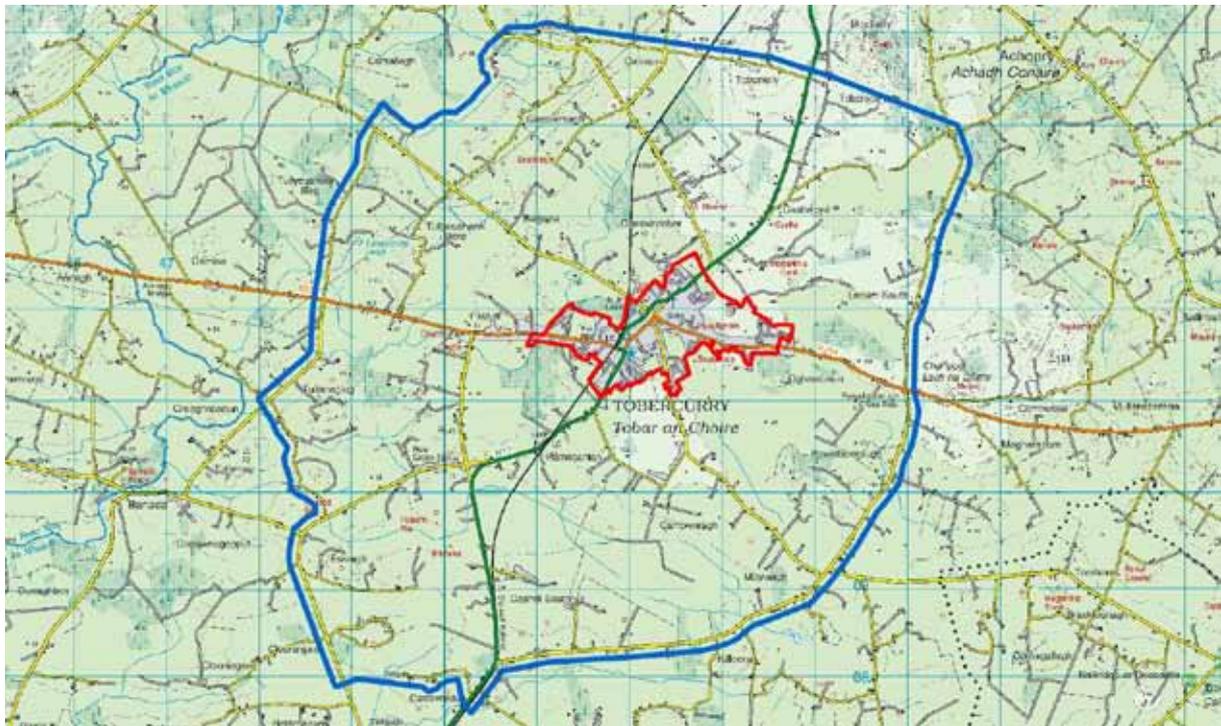
It is likely that much of the rural housing permitted in recent years is subsequently occupied by people who commute to towns other than Tobercurry for work, given the scarcity of local jobs. This phenomenon undermines Sligo County Council’s strategic spatial development and settlement policies, which require that population growth be supported and directed into settlements, especially into Key Support Towns such as Tobercurry.

All the land-use plans (local area plans and mini-plans) adopted or reviewed in recent years in County Sligo include the provision of a buffer zone around the respective settlement. The purpose of a buffer zone is to help consolidate a town or village by preventing sprawl within the surrounding rural area and uncontrolled development along the approach roads.

In the case of Tobercurry, the buffer zone extends between 1.5 km and 4.3 km outside the contiguous built-up area of the town (measured along public roads).

The illustration below shows the development limit (red line) and the extent of the buffer zone (between the red line and the blue line).

Fig. 9 Plan Limit (blue line) and Development Limit (red line) for Tobercurry LAP



Residential zoning

Of a total of circa 70 hectares already developed, there are currently 48.8 hectares of land in residential use in Tobercurry, excluding the areas of mixed commercial and residential development. The development limit of the Draft LAP includes approximately 184 hectares, of which 19.5 hectares of greenfield land (excluding infill sites) are zoned for residential use, to be developed in two phases, corresponding to their potential to consolidate existing development.

The reason behind this allocation of land for new housing development is to ensure consistency with the Core Strategy of the CDP, which indicates that a maximum of 22 hectares of greenfield land can be zoned for housing in Tobercurry.

A.4 Flood risk

A **Flood Risk Assessment (FRA)** has been carried out as part of the preparation of the Draft Tobercurry Local Area Plan 2015-2021. This assessment informed zoning decisions and led to the incorporation of an additional flood-risk management objective (FRMO-1 in Chapter 10 Environmental Quality).

According to the OPW's Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment Maps, Tobercurry and the surrounding area are subject to only limited fluvial and pluvial flooding.

Fluvial flood risk in the Plan area occurs mostly on lands included in the Buffer Zone, outside the development limit.

Due to its topography, Tobercurry occasionally suffers from storm water flooding in the centre of the town and along some streets (such as Masshill Road), often for extended periods.

In 2007, a surface water pipe was laid from Kilcoyne Park along the N17, Humbert Street, The Lane and Circular Road, discharging to the Maiden River. An additional pipe is proposed along Circular Road to reduce the pressure on the storm water system in the centre of the town.

In order to control the volume of surface water going into the Maiden River, and to remove the threat of flooding in the centre of Tobercurry, the LAP includes a policy requiring the use of SUDS (Sustainable Urban Water Drainage Systems) to dispose of storm water from all new developments (P-FRM-11 in Chapter 10 Environmental Quality).

It is considered that any pluvial flood risk within the development zone can be managed through effective drainage and construction methods.

The screening exercise outlined in the following sections was done in accordance with Article 14A of the SEA Regulations, taking into account the relevant criteria set out in Schedule 2A of same.

C. Characteristics of the draft local area plan

- a. "the degree to which the plan sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources"

Schedule 2A of P&D (SEA) Regulations 2004-2011

The CDP 2011-2017 has set the broad framework for the Tobercurry Local Area Plan 2015-2021 (LAP), which now implements this framework at a more detailed and local level.

Tobercurry LAP 2015-2021 sets a medium- to long-term **framework for sustainable local development** that will be used to assess planning applications. Land is the main resource allocated through zoning.

Significant additional residential development is not an aim of the Draft LAP. The primary aim of the plan is one of consolidation rather than expansion, while at the same time implementing at local level the CDP framework for the protection of Natura 2000 site within the Plan area. The impacts on the environment are therefore unlikely to be significant and any such impact will be satisfactorily mitigated through the development management process.

The area zoned for development in Tobercurry is approximately 184 ha. Of this total, 70 hectares are already developed, circa 21 hectares represent open spaces and another 27.3 hectares are occupied by sports grounds.

Of the remaining 65 ha, 19.5 hectares of greenfield land (excluding infill sites) are zoned for housing. There are additional lands zoned for open space (town park), mixed uses, community facilities, business and enterprise and transport/parking.

- b. "the degree to which the plan influences other plans, including those in a hierarchy"

Schedule 2A of P&D (SEA) Regulations 2004-2011

The LAP is a tool for implementing the CDP strategies at local level as part of an integrated planning strategy. In accordance with section 19 (2) of the Planning and Development Act 2010, a local area plan shall be consistent with the objectives of the development plan. The LAP is superseded by the CDP in case of conflicting provisions. At present there is no such conflict, as the Draft LAP is consistent with the CDP 2011-2017.

Tobercurry LAP requires the preparation of masterplans for specific sites. The LAP will therefore influence other physical plans, which will define in more detail the developments envisaged by the LAP.

- c. "the relevance of the plan for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development"

Schedule 2A of P&D (SEA) Regulations 2004-2011

The LAP promotes sustainable development at local level through balanced allocation of land to various uses and through objectives aiming to protect Natura 2000 areas, other designated natural heritage sites, to protect archaeological heritage and the built heritage.

Through the consolidation of the existing town centre and integration of land-use and transportation/circulation objectives, the LAP promotes sustainable transport by proposing alternatives to car-based transport.

- d. "environmental problems relevant to the plan" Schedule 2A of P&D (SEA) Regulations 2004-2011

Environmental concerns in the Tobercurry LAP area, particularly outside the development limit, would include the potential encroachment of development onto the Natura 2000 site and other sensitive areas, contamination of surface and ground water by poorly treated effluent discharge, substandard septic tanks and surface water run-off.

However, appropriate CDP policies are in place to address these concerns within the lifetime of the plan. In addition, the Buffer Zone and housing policies of the Draft Tobercurry LAP set out restrictions on residential development in the rural area surrounding the town, which should limit the impact of on-site wastewater treatment systems on groundwater and surface water.

It is considered that any flooding concerns are appropriately addressed in the Flood Risk Assessment carried out in conjunction with the LAP. The zoning of land and the formulation of policies and objectives have been informed by the outcomes of this assessment.

- e. "the relevance of the plan for the implementation of European legislation on the environment (e.g. plans linked to waste management or water protection)"

Schedule 2A of P&D (SEA) Regulations 2004-2011

Tobercurry LAP will not seek to implement directly European legislation on the environment. The LAP was drafted in compliance with the policies and objectives of the CDP 2011-2017, which contains policies implementing relevant European legislation.

Consistent with the CDP 2011-2017, the LAP has regard to the Connacht Waste Management Plan 2006-2011, the Western River Basin Management Plan and the Western Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management (CFRAM) study.

D. Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to:

- a. the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects;

The development of lands within the LAP will result in a high probability of effects on the environment, through the expansion of the built-up area and population increase. Many of these effects will be positive, as the LAP provides a framework for sustainable development, rather than allowing development to proceed in a haphazard manner. A good example of a positive effect is the envisaged reduction in rural sprawl as a consequence of restrictions on new housing in the buffer zone. The LAP also seeks to protect the built and natural heritage.

The main aim of the plan is consolidation rather than large-scale expansion. Appropriate mitigation policies have been incorporated to address any associated impacts on the environment.

The probable effects will arise gradually over the lifetime of the plan. It is likely that the effects will be permanent and will not be readily reversed. However, this is not considered a significant negative feature in the context of the ongoing sustainable development of the plan area.

- b. the cumulative nature of the effects;

The ongoing development of the area will have a variety of effects, such as traffic increase, demands on services/resources and impacts on built, natural and cultural heritage assets. However, having regard to the LAP's provision of an integrated strategy for the sustainable development of the area, it is considered that the cumulative nature of these effects can be adequately addressed.

As part of the CDP 2011-2017, land-use plans (mini-plans) were prepared for other settlements in south-west Sligo, such as Ballinacarrow, Cloonacool, Banada, Tourlestraun, Curry and Gorteen, which are located between 6 and 20 km from Tobercurry. A local area plan was prepared for Ballymote, which is located 18 km to the north-east of Tobercurry.

Given the separation distances and the fact that the plans for these settlements comply with the CDP in terms of environmental protection policies and objectives, it is considered that there is no potential for cumulative effects.

Charlestown, located circa 12 km to the south-west, in County Mayo, is also considered to be sufficiently remote so that cumulative effects of urban development on the environment would not occur.

- c. the transboundary nature of the effects;

The entire LAP area is located within the administrative area of Sligo County Council.

The water supply comes from Lough Talt within County Sligo.

The wastewater treatment system discharges to Tobercurry Stream, which is also in County Sligo.

It is not anticipated that the LAP will have any transboundary effects.

- d. the risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents);

It is anticipated that the implementation of the LAP will not result in any significant risks to human health or the environment. Future development will have to conform to the policies and objectives of the LAP, whose fundamental aim is to create a sustainable and healthy environment in which people can live and work. Suitable mitigation measures will be incorporated into the LAP, where necessary.

There are no designated SEVESO sites within the plan area.

- e. the magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of population likely to be affected);

The spatial extent and magnitude of the vast majority of the effects of the LAP will be limited to Tobercurry town itself. The LAP development zone comprises approximately 184 hectares of land of which 70 hectares are already built-up. The plan allows for some limited development, but this would occur anyway in the absence of the LAP. Population figures for the town were presented earlier in this report.

As the overall plan area extends to approximately 4.81 sq.km (including the buffer zone around the town), the LAP will inevitably result in some minor impacts on the wider surrounding environs of the town. However, these impacts should be largely positive, given the restrictions imposed by the buffer zone designation.

The LAP seeks to avoid and mitigate any potentially negative effects on the environment through the promotion of sustainable development and the incorporation of appropriate policies and objectives, particularly in relation to the protection of Natura 2000 areas and natural heritage in general.

- f. the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:

- i) special natural characteristics or cultural heritage

The majority of surrounding natural features, including the Turloughmore SAC/pNHA, are located outside the development limit, within the buffer zone, where development will be strictly controlled. It is therefore not likely that significant effects will occur.

The existing CDP policies on heritage (built, natural and archaeological), landscape and the environment already apply to the LAP area. Any potential significant effects will be adequately addressed through the development management process.

- ii) exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values

The existing CDP and proposed LAP ensures that adequate policies and objectives are in place to maintain environmental quality standards. These will be enforced through the development management process and through specific actions of the Environment Section of Sligo County Council.

- iii) intensive land-use

The LAP will focus on consolidation and limited growth. The probability of high-intensity development occurring during the lifetime of the Plan is low. Any effects are unlikely to be significant in this regard.

- g. the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognized national, European Union or international protection status;

The Plan area includes the turlough at Turloughmore, which is a designated SAC and pNHA. However, this rather small designated area would be included in the Buffer Zone, which has the role of restricting development and protecting natural heritage.

The Draft LAP contains specific natural heritage policies (NHP-1 and NHP-4 in Chapter 7 Heritage) designed to ensure that there will be no negative impact on the Turloughmore SAC/pNHA.

Whilst it is acknowledged that the LAP can have effects on the wider surrounding environment, it is considered that due to the mitigation policies of the CDP, together with the separation distances between the development area and any designated natural heritage areas, significant effects will not occur.

E. Preliminary conclusion

The Draft Tobercurry LAP 2015-2021 has been prepared in the context of the existing CDP 2011-2017, which sets out a strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of the County and has already been assessed under the SEA completed as part of the CDP process.

The Draft LAP is consistent with the CDP. The CDP provisions (including the SEA mitigation measures) apply to the LAP area.

The LAP is focused on the consolidation of the town and the protection of Natura 2000 site and other sensitive habitats within the Plan area.

The Draft LAP involves a relatively small area of greenfield land available for development during the plan period, with two phases of residential development. It also establishes a Buffer Zone in order to facilitate the above-mentioned urban consolidation and to offer additional protection to designated natural heritage areas.

Having described the characteristics and assessed the expected effects of implementing the Local Area Plan for Tobercurry, and having regard to the characteristics of the area likely to be affected, it appears that the proposed LAP, if implemented, would have negligible effects on the environment.

On the basis of the above assessment based on the criteria set out in Schedule 2A of the SEA Regulations, it is the opinion of the Planning Authority, at this stage of the process, that the proposed Tobercurry LAP is not likely to have significant effects on the environment.

Accordingly, a full Strategic Environmental Assessment is not required.

F. Consultation with prescribed environmental authorities

As prescribed by the SEA Regulations, the relevant environmental authorities were notified and a preliminary Screening Report, with the preliminary conclusion outlined in Section E of the Report, was sent on 13 June 2014 to the Department for Environment, Communities and Local Government (SEA Section), Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Development Applications Unit), the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources, the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, the Environmental Protection Agency and the Planning Authorities of counties Leitrim, Mayo and Roscommon, for comments.

F.1 Leitrim County Council

Leitrim County Council responded on 24 June 2014, indicating that in the interest of achieving a consistent approach between local authorities, in particular in terms of determining housing land requirements, consideration should be given to the existing vacant housing stock and also to the release of residential zoned land.

Land zoned for residential uses in the Draft Tobercurry LAP is to be released in two phases, in the interest of consolidating the town around its existing core and in accordance with the principle of sequential development. This provision is set out in Section 3.2.3 of the LAP.

F.2 Inland Fisheries Ireland, DCENR

The Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources, through **Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI)**, responded on 7 July 2014 with the following comments:

- 1. Wastewater treatment.** No further development should be permitted in Tobercurry until the new WWTP is operational. The sewerage network within the town also requires improvements, to avoid uncontrolled discharges to the Tobercurry River.

Irish Water is the company in charge of upgrading the WWTP and the sewerage infrastructure in Tobercurry.

The development management process takes into account the availability of adequate infrastructure to service new development. All decisions regarding new development will take into account the comments and observations of Irish Water regarding the capacity of infrastructure at that particular time.

- 2. Zoning.** The buffer zone, which comes to within 300 m of the River Moy, should be extended to the west, to discourage development outside the buffer zone and close to the river. The extended buffer zone should include the townlands of Gortemon, Annagh and Cloonca along the River Moy. It should be a condition of planning permissions for single houses that a long-term maintenance contract is entered into with regard to proprietary effluent treatment systems.

Extending the buffer zone in a westerly direction to include the townlands of Gortemon, Annagh and Cloonca is considered excessive in terms of rural housing policy and unnecessary in terms of protecting the water quality in the River Moy. There is a Special Area of Conservation along the River Moy. It is considered that the SAC designation offers sufficient protection to the river, as any proposal for development within it or in its vicinity would require Habitats Directive screening at the minimum.

- 3. Flood alleviation.** IFI supports the use of SUDS as part of all new developments and proposes that existing open space be utilized as surface water attenuation areas. All flood alleviation, drainage or in-stream works must be done in consultation with IFI. There must be no development in areas which are liable to flooding.

SUDS are required for new developments in Tobercurry by policy IP-5 in Chapter 9 Infrastructure.

The Strategic Flood Risk Assessment associated with the LAP identifies one site which may be liable to pluvial flooding and outlines an appropriate objective, FRMO-1, which is included in Chapter 10 Environmental Quality.

- 4. Riparian and aquatic habitat.** The LAP should include a policy on the protection of aquatic habitat. Lands along the Tobercurry River should remain undeveloped and zoned as open space.

Natural heritage policy NHP-5 in Section 7.1.3 Water-based habitats requires the protection of core riparian zones, extending 10 m on each side of the rivers. Land along the Tobercurry River (Maiden River) is zoned as open space or buffer zone.

- 5. Water abstraction.** As part of the construction of the new water treatment plant, investment must be made in the supply network to minimise leaks and reduce the abstraction pressure on Lough Talt.

Investment in water supply infrastructure is the responsibility of Irish Water.

- 6. Invasive species.** The LAP should include a policy of the control of invasive species, such as Japanese knotweed and Himalayan balsam, which can spread through construction earthworks as part of developments and road works.

Natural heritage objectives NHO-1 and NHO-2 in Section 7.1 Natural heritage address the issue of invasive species within the Plan area.

F.3 Development Applications Unit, DAHG

The Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, through the Development Applications Unit (DAU), responded on 14 July 2014 with the following comments:

- 1. Specific Section/Chapter entitled Archaeological Heritage.** The DAU suggests specific narrative, policies and objectives to be included in the Archaeological Heritage Chapter.

The suggested narrative, policies and objectives are included in Section 7.2 Archaeological Heritage.

- 2. Inclusion of Recorded Monuments on maps.** In the interest of clarity, it is suggested to “include the two relevant enclosures in Tobercurry” on the maps contained in the LAP.

The recorded monuments within the Plan area are shown on the relevant maps in Chapter 12 of the LAP.

F.4 Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

The Environmental Protection Agency responded on 14 July 2014 with the following comments:

- 1. Wastewater and drinking water infrastructural deficiencies.** The EPA suggests that Sligo County Council consider the inclusion of a commitment in the LAP to work with Irish Water to address the identified deficiencies within the lifetime of the Plan. It should be required to have or put in place appropriate infrastructure to service any development authorised during the lifetime of the Plan.

Infrastructure policy IP-1 in Chapter 9 of the LAP commits the Council to working with Irish Water to address the said deficiencies. The issue of servicing new developments will be addressed at planning application stage through referral to Irish Water

- 2. Land zoning.** The EPA recommends a phased approach to land zoning, in the interest of sustainable development and consistency with the Regional Planning Guidelines and Core Strategy.

The Agency also suggests categorising the buffer zone as an “environmental” or “sustainable development” buffer, to further clarify its nature and purpose. Clarification should also be provided regarding the manner in which development would be controlled in the buffer zone.

Zoned lands should be screened for significant effects, taking into account the requirements of the SEA, Floods and Habitat Directives. Lands should be zoned in a manner that is appropriate to the level of flood risk identified.

Land zoned for residential uses in the Draft Tobercurry LAP is to be released in two phases, in the interest of consolidating the town around its existing core and in accordance with the principle of sequential development. This provision is set out in Section 3.2.3 of the LAP.

The purpose of the buffer zones is clarified in Section 3.3.3 of the LAP. The management of development in the buffer zone will be undertaken in accordance with the Buffer zone policies BZP-1 and BZP-2 included in Section 3.3.3, and with the Housing in the buffer zone policies HP-5 and HP-6 included in Chapter 5 of the LAP.

The Draft LAP has been subjected to SEA Screening, Appropriate Assessment and Flood Risk Assessment. The relevant reports are published alongside the Draft Plan for public consultation.

- 3. CDP policies.** The EPA suggests identifying the relevant CDP policies and objectives and incorporating these into the LAP as specific policies/objectives.

All CDP policies and objectives that are relevant to Tobercurry are listed in the beginning of every chapter. Where appropriate, similar provisions are incorporated as specific LAP policies/objectives.

- 4. Historic landfill.** According to the EPA submission, there is a record of a historic landfill within the buffer zone, to the north-west of the town. The Agency indicates that this is registered on the Environmental Data Exchange Network (EDEN) and suggests consideration of appropriate mitigation and monitoring.

The landfill mentioned in the EPA submission could not be identified on the ground and there is no record of it on the County Council GIS. The relevant EDEN database is not accessible to Sligo County Council's Planning Section staff.

- 5.** The EPA highlights other environmental considerations to be taken into account, such as the high groundwater vulnerability in the Plan area, the high levels of radon and the protection of designated and undesignated sites and associated ecological corridors.

Chapter 7 Heritage and Chapter 10 Environmental quality include relevant provisions with regard to the protection of designated and undesignated sites, ecological corridors and groundwater.

It is not considered that a local area plan is the appropriate means to address the issue of radon control. This should be addressed through specific new building design or retrofitting existing buildings where necessary.

- 6.** Having outlined the key environmental issues to be taken into account in the preparation of the LAP, the EPA lists a number of documents and procedures that the Planning Authority must comply with at the next stages in the process.

The recommendations are noted and will be followed.

G. Conclusion

The Planning Authority has incorporated in the LAP the recommendations received from the prescribed environmental authorities that have responded to pre-draft consultation.

Having described the characteristics and assessed the expected effects of implementing the Local Area Plan for Tobercurry, and having regard to the characteristics of the area likely to be affected, it appears that the Draft LAP, if implemented, would have negligible effects on the environment.

On the basis of the above assessment based on the criteria set out in Schedule 2A of the SEA Regulations, it is the opinion of the Planning Authority that the Draft Tobercurry LAP is not likely to have significant effects on the environment.

Accordingly, a full Strategic Environmental Assessment is not required.

This decision is published alongside the Draft Plan.