



Sligo County Council
Comhairle Chontae Shligigh

Sligo.

Issues Paper

for pre-draft consultation
on a proposed

Sligo Town and Environs Urban Area Plan



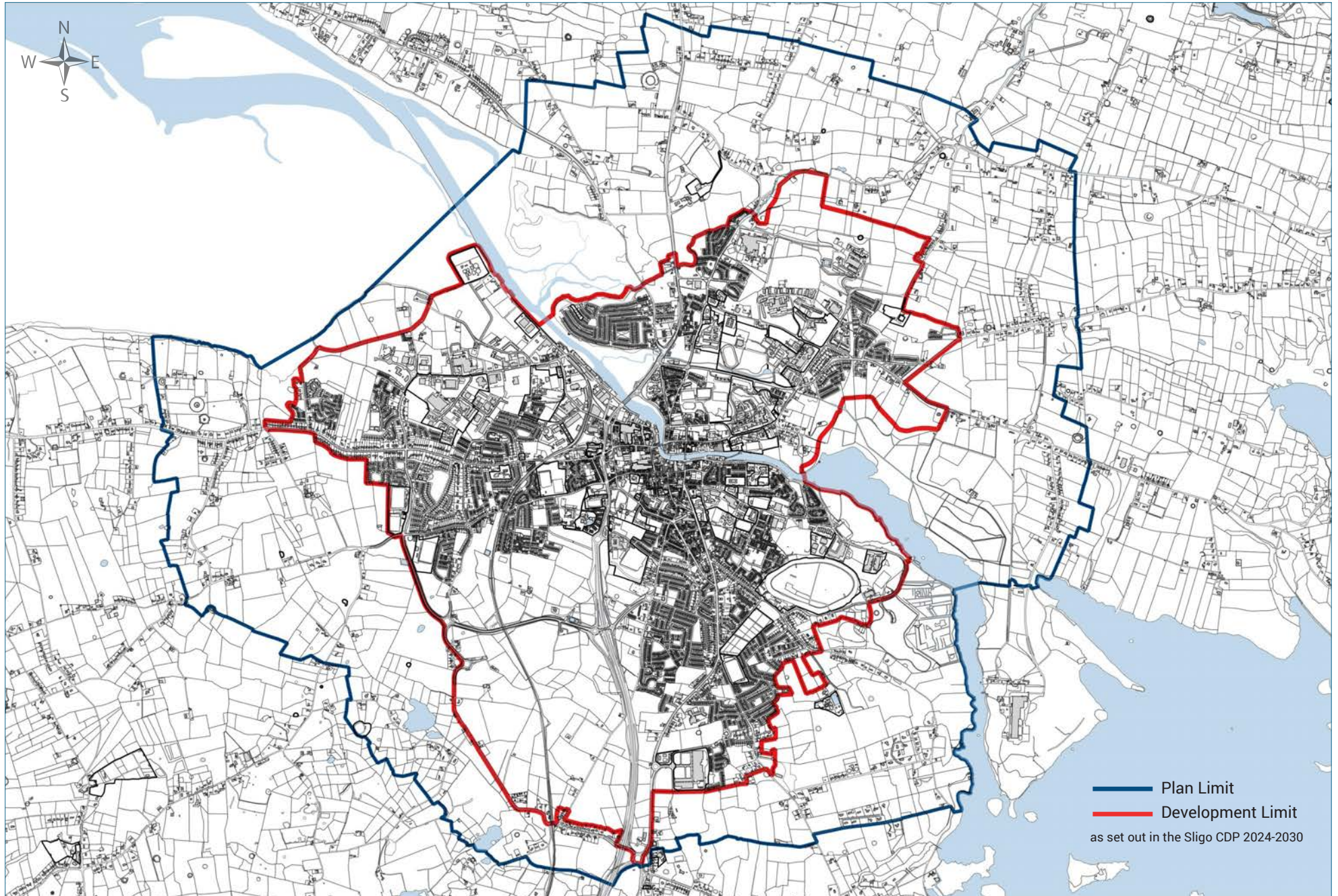
9 July - 22 August 2025

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Area covered by the proposed Sligo Town and Environs Urban Area Plan



A new plan for Sligo Town

Sligo County Council intends to prepare a new plan to guide the future development of Sligo Town as a Regional Growth Centre (designated in the National Planning Framework - 2025 Revision).

In accordance with the provisions of the forthcoming Planning and Development Act 2024, the new plan will be called an **Urban Area Plan**.

The County Development Plan 2024-2030 (CDP) sets out the national and regional planning context for Sligo Town as well as its population target, housing allocation, zoning and strategic objectives (refer to Chapters 3, 4, 5 and 11 of the CDP).

The **Sligo Town and Environs Urban Area Plan** (STEUAP) will complement the provisions of the CDP with detailed and specific objectives tailored to the distinctive characteristics of Sligo Town.

The Plan will address urban regeneration, sustainable mobility, design, community facilities, open space, heritage etc.

The UAP must be materially consistent with the settlement-specific objectives and zoning objectives set out in the Sligo County Development Plan 2024-2030.

Submissions relating to the zoning of lands will not be taken into consideration, as the Sligo Town and Environs UAP will not address zoning.

Public consultation

Pre-draft public consultation is not required by legislation. However, it is considered good planning practice to promote effective public participation and invite pre-draft contributions from the community, as recommended in the *Local Area Plans Guidelines for Planning Authorities* (DECLG, 2013).

Later in the Plan process, there are certain statutory periods when the Council must consult with the public and prescribed state agencies.

The Chief Executive of Sligo County Council is required to consult with the elected members before publishing the draft Urban Area Plan.

Issues Paper

This Issues Paper will be the starting point of the non-statutory pre-draft consultation regarding the proposed Urban Area Plan.

Its purpose is to stimulate conversations on key topics concerning the future development of Sligo Town and its environs.

Suggestions or observations are invited from anyone with an interest in the future development of the town, including local residents, bodies representing particular interests such as younger and older people, persons with disabilities etc.

How to make a pre-draft submission

Submissions should be focused on Sligo Town and its Environs and may relate to any planning matter, except zoning. Please include a map if you wish to highlight locations or features.

Submissions should be clear, concise and to the point, and should state if you are writing as an individual or on behalf of an organisation.

As submissions will be published on the Council's Consultation Portal, do not include personal, confidential or other sensitive information.

Submissions or observations should be made online via Sligo County Council's **Consultation Portal** at

<https://consult.sligococo.ie/en/browse>

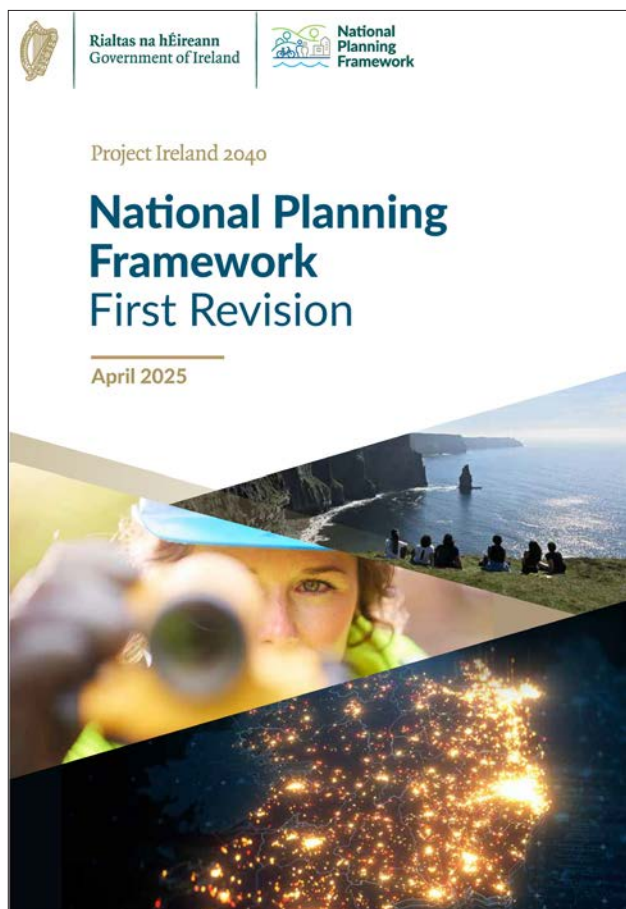
Although not desirable, submissions marked "pre-draft Sligo Town UAP" will also be accepted in following forms:

1. By e-mail sent to the Council's **Development Planning Unit** at dpu@sligococo.ie

2. By post addressed to:

Ms Siobhán Gillen,
Administrative Officer,
Planning Section, City Hall,
Quay Street, Sligo, F91 PP44

Submissions or observations must be made in writing from
Wednesday, 9 July, until 4 p.m. on Friday, 22 August 2025



The hierarchy of planning policy documents is governed by the **National Planning Framework** (First Revision, 2025) and includes Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies, city/county development plans and a range of local-level area plans (*urban area plan, priority area plan, co-ordinated area plan*).

The proposed **Urban Area Plan (UAP)** for Sligo Town and Environs will be prepared in accordance with the Planning and Development Act 2024, and in line with the NPF 2025.

Sligo Town in the revised NPF (2025)

One of the most important provisions of the revised NPF is the explicit support for Sligo Town under the heading “**Key future planning and development and place-making policy priorities for the Northern and Western Region**”:

Enhancing the city-region like functions performed by Sligo in line with its statutory development plan, activating the potential for further rejuvenation and renewal of its core and further enhancing its connectivity in a national and regional context to ensure wider accessibility of relevant services and amenities.

This support is further expressed in the **National Policy Objective 15**, which requires the strengthening of Ireland’s overall urban structure, particularly in the Northern and Western and Midland Regions, to include the regional centres of Sligo and Letterkenny in the North-West.

Under the heading “**Better Strategic Planning for Urban Areas**” and the **National Policy Objective 100**, the NPF specifies that Urban Area Plans will be prepared for Regional Growth Centres, such as Sligo Town.

This new type of focused area plans, prescribed by the Planning and Development Act 2024, will replace Local Area Plans prepared under the Planning and Development Act 2000.

The **Sligo Town and Environs UAP (STEUAP)** will be the local-level instrument for implementing National and Regional Policy Objectives (NPOs and RPOs) relating to Regional Growth Centres.

The STEUAP must be consistent with the current Sligo County Development Plan 2024-2030, which sets the strategic parameters for land-use zoning, transportation and compact growth designations.

The STEUAP must also be consistent with the provisions of the RSES published by the Northern and Western Regional Assembly in 2020, even if this Strategy is due to be reviewed following the publication of the revised NPF.

Other relevant provisions of the NPF

Securing **Compact Growth** continues to be the top National Strategic Outcome (NSO 1). The focus needs to be on four areas:

- Liveability (quality of life) in urban places
- Regeneration of existing built-up fabric
- Tackling concentrations of disadvantage in central urban areas
- Climate action through energy efficiency and use of renewables

NPO 12 – high quality of urban life: *creation of attractive, liveable, well-designed urban places that are home to diverse and integrated communities enjoying life and well-being.*

NPO 20 – infill and brownfield development: *presumption in favour of development that can encourage more people and generate more jobs and activity within existing settlements.*

NPO 22 – performance-based design: *planning standards, including building height and car parking, will be based on performance criteria that seek high-quality outcomes in order to achieve targeted growth in urban areas.*

NPO 40 – age-friendly settlements: *housing, health facilities and services, transport/ accessibility and leisure policies should focus on meeting the needs and an ageing population, supported by clear proposals in respect of ageing communities.*

Climate change is a long-term issue which will affect generations to come. National policy – as detailed in the annual Climate Action Plans – establishes a vision for Ireland to achieve, by 2050, the transition to a climate resilient, biodiversity rich, environmentally sustainable and climate neutral economy.

Achieving this vision will involve changing how we travel and how we design and build our homes and communities.

Locally, the Sligo County Development Plan (CDP) has put climate action at the heart of land use, transportation and spatial planning policy.

The role of the UAP is to translate the high-level strategies from the CDP into specific objectives aimed at helping Sligo become a 'low carbon, climate resilient town'.

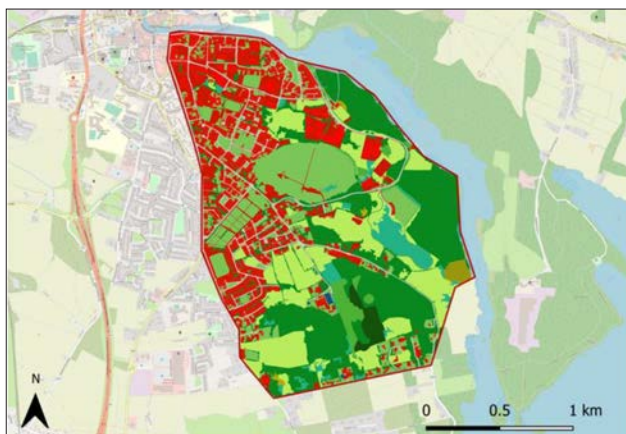


Image: Decarbonisation Zone in Sligo Town
(Sligo County Council Climate Action Plan 2024-2029)

*A **Decarbonisation Zone** is a specific area that has been chosen by the local authority to identify and test a range of decarbonisation projects. The ultimate goal is to reduce community dependence on fossil fuels and contribute to achieving national climate action targets.*

Local Authority Climate Action Plan

Sligo County Council's first **Climate Action Plan** was adopted in February 2024. The Local Authority CAP (LACAP) identified flood risk management as the most critical issue to be addressed in the UAP, informed by Strategic Flood Risk Assessment.

The Sligo LACAP also required the establishment of a **Decarbonisation Zone (DZ)** in Sligo, as part of efforts to reduce carbon dependency. The DZ has been set up in the south-eastern area of Sligo Town. The Zone covers approximately 4 sq.km and has a resident population of just under 4,000 persons.

The aim of the DZ is to identify pathways to meet the national emission reduction target of 51% by 2030 (from the baseline of 2016 - 2018) and net zero by end of 2050.

Sligo County Hall at Riverside is located within the DZ, as are the Regional Sports Centre and the Cranmore residential area.

Sligo County Council will directly engage with the DZ community by establishing a committee which will be involved in the identification of potential decarbonisation projects.

Climate action measures

The following climate action measures have been implemented to date:

- In 2024, the Sligo-Leitrim Energy Agency, was established to assist homeowners in counties Sligo and Leitrim to identify the best way to retrofit their homes with support from SEAI.
- Public lighting in Sligo Town is being upgraded with energy efficient LED lamps.
- Retrofitting of Local Authority residential units is underway in Sligo Town.
- Retrofitting of lighting in County Council offices and in the Regional Sports Centre.
- The Community Climate Action programme has funded several initiatives in Sligo Town, including the "green wall" in Queen Maeve's Square and the replanting of a green space to support biodiversity in Abbey Street.
- SEAI-supported energy retrofitting projects at County Hall, Sligo Fire Station and Regional Sports Complex (RSC) are all at design stage, with a geothermal heating system also being installed at the RSC.

Questions

Are there any climate action initiatives that would be beneficial for your local community?

How can Sligo Town become a 'low carbon town'? What specific climate mitigation and adaptation measures should be incorporated in the Urban Area Plan?

Do you think there are other environmental issues facing Sligo Town? How can the UAP address these issues?

How can the UAP achieve a balance between the growth of Sligo Town and Environs and the protection of the environment?



Image: Sligo Public Realm Plan 2018, BDP Landscape Architects

A safe and well-kept town is attractive for both visitors and residents. It encourages new people to settle and more tourists to repeat their visits. Visitors will stay in town longer, supporting a vibrant street life, night and day.

“**Placemaking**” is a term used to describe a collaborative process between the community (businesses and residents) and a local authority, aiming to create enjoyable public spaces that work for everybody. An essential component of placemaking is regeneration.

Urban regeneration involves the reuse and refurbishment of vacant or underutilised spaces and buildings, with the goal of reinvigorating town centres, removing dereliction, improving the residents’ quality of life and the visitors’ experience.

Since the adoption of the previous plan for Sligo Town (the Sligo and Environs Development Plan 2010), the Local Authority has endeavoured to set the ground rules for urban regeneration and placemaking in Sligo Town. All urban regeneration and public realm interventions should be governed by universal principles of good urban design.

Public Realm Plan (PRP)

In 2018, the Council commissioned a **Public Realm Plan (PRP)** for Sligo Town, to ensure that universal urban design principles are enshrined in policy and are adhered to in all public realm interventions.

The PRP and its associated technical guidance document set out to ensure consistency in design throughout the town.

A Regeneration Team has been established within Sligo County Council to pursue the implementation of the Public Realm Plan.

Following three successful applications to the national Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF), one in 2018 and two in 2020, the Council secured funding of over €19 million to improve Sligo Town’s public realm.

The funded projects prioritised pedestrians and were designed to make the town centre a pleasant and safe place for people of all ages.

To date, **O’Connell Street** has been transformed from a vehicle-dominated busy roadway to a calm urban street.

Stephen Street car park has been repurposed as **Queen Maeve’s Square**, a welcoming pedestrian area capable of hosting a variety of events.

The PRP and subsequent applications to the URDF identified several other locations within the town centre with potential to create high-quality urban spaces: **Quay Street car park, Old Market Street, Market Cross and the Abbey Street-Castle Street-Grattan Street area.**

The Urban Area Plan will set out detailed objectives and planning guidance for each of these areas.

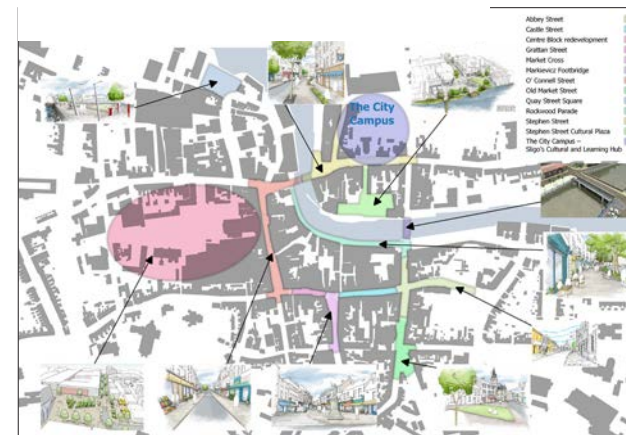


Image: Sligo Public Realm Plan 2018, BDP Landscape Architects

Forthcoming projects

The enhancement of **five town centre streets – Stephen Street, Rockwood Parade (below), Tobergal Lane, Water Lane and Holborn Street** – was a key project identified by the PRP. This multi-million scheme is expected to go to construction in 2026.

A **Wayfinding Plan** for Sligo Town, funded by the URDF, involves the placement of wayfinding maps and “totem” poles on the streets of Sligo. The bespoke signage, with interpretative elements, will help orientate visitors, highlighting points of interest in the town.

Wine Street Car Park Masterplan seeks the redevelopment of this strategic area in the town centre. The new masterplan explores redevelopment options considering the needs and expectations of different owners.

The ultimate objective is the creation of a mixed-use focal space in the heart of Sligo Town comprising shops, apartments, restaurants, other complementary activities as well as attractive multi-use public spaces.

Dereliction and vacancy

In common with most Irish Towns, dereliction and vacancy are noticeable on Sligo's town centre streets, with over twenty buildings currently on the County's Derelict Sites Register.

The County Council is working with the owners of these buildings, as required by the CDP and Urban Regeneration Objective (O-UR-2 in Chapter 10, Volume 1) to *"actively pursue the reduction of vacant/derelict residential structures and sites within the town centre of Sligo ..."*

In addition, the Council is involved in a URDF-funded project to tackle long term dereliction and vacancy by compulsorily purchasing derelict buildings.

Buildings will be prepared for onward sale in an effort to facilitate their renovation and reuse.

Regeneration Sites

The CDP designates **14 Regeneration Sites** in Sligo Town, as required by the Planning and Development Act. Nine of these (brownfield) sites are located in the town core.

The CDP acknowledges the difficulties in bringing them back in use, *"often requiring the displacement of existing uses, site assembly in some cases and the preparation of masterplans for the larger sites"*.

The UAP will identify dereliction blackspots and may formulate specific objectives in relation to dereliction in Sligo Town.

The number and extent of the designated Regeneration Sites in Sligo Town may be revised as part of the preparation of the UAP, in order to inform the next CDP review or relevant variation.

Redevelopment of the Harbour area

One of Sligo Town's strategic growth areas, earmarked in the RSES for urban regeneration, is the Docklands - described as *"an established working landscape ... subject to piecemeal development ... largely unutilised"*.

A **"Harbour Masterplan"** – for a substantial amount of land in Sligo's former Docklands area – is currently under preparation and will form part of the forthcoming Sligo Town UAP.

The Masterplan will establish a framework for the regeneration of the area via a mix of residential, commercial and recreational uses, without impeding on the Port's operations.

Surrounding areas, such as the Inner Relief Road, Ballast Quay Pontoon, and the formerly industrial Deepwater Quay, will be carefully considered in the Masterplan.

Other elements of the framework will seek to enhance the provision of open space, to improve the area's permeability and connectivity to the town centre (especially via active travel) and to re-use former industrial buildings for creative enterprises and community activities.

The City Campus project

This project involves the redevelopment of a large site behind the County Library on Stephen Street. Funding of circa 28 million euro was secured from the URDF to develop this project from concept design to construction.

The preparation of a masterplan for the area will commence shortly. It is envisaged that this site will accommodate a new state-of-the-art Central Library for County Sligo and a new County Museum.



Image: Sligo Public Realm Plan 2018, BDP Landscape Architects

Questions

In your opinion, what regeneration works or projects could be transformative for Sligo?

In addition to the sites described here, are there any other places in town where you think significant urban design interventions are required?

What areas in Sligo Town should be repurposed for pedestrians only?

What kind of measures could the UAP include to reduce commercial vacancy in the town centre?

Is there a particular location (or more) which the Council should prioritise in terms of tackling dereliction?

Imagine the Harbour area in 20 years' time! What do you see?

Local authorities have an important role to play in the establishment and maintenance of sustainable communities by facilitating an equitable distribution (and provision, where applicable) of well-designed community and recreational facilities, in tandem with residential developments.

Homes for people

The provision of attractive residential areas and well-designed houses for people to call home is vitally important to create and maintain sustainable communities.

While Sligo Town's population grew by about 1,400 (7%) from 2016 to 2022, reaching 20,608, the housing stock rose by just 723 units (2.89%). This suggests a large discrepancy between population growth and housing supply, which may lead to greater demand for housing and ultimately higher prices.

Census 2022 recorded 2,623 households consisting of only one person. There were 2,217 two-person families in Sligo Town, more than three-, four- and five-person families combined (1,010 + 804 + 345 respectively). At the same time, most dwellings had three bedrooms (3,141 units) and very few had one bedroom (497).

It is a priority to ensure that Sligo's future housing stock includes an adequate range of dwelling types, sizes and tenures. Suitable accommodation should be available for single adults, both young and old, not just for families with children.

Universal design and lifetime adaptability will be crucial for delivering inclusive, liveable neighbourhoods, which are the basis of sustainable communities.

Compact growth

The 2025 Revised National Planning Framework (NPF) continues the policy emphasis on **compact growth**. This prioritises the development of existing settlements from the centre outwards, discouraging further sprawl into rural areas.

Compact growth involves using land within the existing built-up area more efficiently. The boundary of a town's built-up area is defined by the CSO.

Compact growth requires taller buildings and increased densities, particularly on greenfield sites, but also developing infill and brownfield sites instead of

Compact growth is also about ensuring easy access on foot from residential areas to the town centre, to community facilities, recreational amenities and green spaces.

The CDP allocated 2,649 houses to Sligo Town for the period 2024-2030. At least 40% of all new housing should be delivered within the existing built-up area, on infill and brownfield sites, as required by NPO 7 of the National Planning Framework.

To help achieve this, the CDP identified the most suitable sites for regeneration and sustainable housing development.

The designations include **14 Regeneration Sites**, (totalling over 32 ha of brownfield land) and **seven Settlement Consolidation Sites** (SCS) (74 ha of greenfield land).

Given the significant challenges in developing the brownfield Regeneration Sites, they don't have a housing allocation, but their potential for high-quality, town-centre housing is very high.



Image: 3-D model from Part 8 Report for SCC proposed development

The seven SCS sites have potential for at least 1,700 new houses. Other designated sites are **Infill Sites** and **Additional Provision Sites** (lands with planning permission), which can accommodate over 1,100 houses on circa 40 ha.

There is also a substantial amount of land (c. 54 ha) with housing potential, placed in the **Strategic Land Reserve** (SLR). Such lands can be "activated" when necessary, if the town grows faster than envisaged.

Questions

What kind of houses do you think Sligo needs, in terms of dwelling type (e.g. houses, apartments, co-housing structures etc.), size, design, location, and mix with other uses?

Should the UAP make provision for tall buildings (seven storeys or more) in Sligo Town in the pursuit of higher densities? If so, where? If not, why?

In which areas of the town should the UAP encourage the construction of dwellings adapted to the needs of single people, particularly those who are old or young?

Community infrastructure

Apart from suitable homes, Sligo's residents need schools, childcare, healthcare, community centres, libraries, playgrounds, sports pitches, parks – anything that supports the well-being of people and promotes social interaction.

Sligo Town is relatively well served by many community facilities. All existing and new facilities should be easily reached by walking, cycling and public transport from existing and new residential areas.

The Department of Education - which was consulted as part of the CDP preparation in 2023-2024 - has identified a potential future requirement for the provision of additional primary school places in Sligo Town, possibly in the form of a new school to be delivered in conjunction with planned urban expansion.

An appropriate location would be the area zoned for new residential, mixed and community uses to the south-west of the existing built-up area of Sligo Town. However, other areas should not be excluded from consideration.

Photo: Sligo County Council (LMcC)



‘If you design for the young you exclude the old, but if you design for the old you include everyone’

Being Age Friendly in the Public Realm - Guidelines and Good Practice (Age Friendly IRELAND, 2021)

Age-friendly Sligo

Sustainable communities are inclusive, responding to the needs of all people, be they young or old, and of any level of ability.

As life expectancy increases, there is a greater onus on planners to facilitate the creation of urban spaces which can be used easily by both young and old people. While children require stimulation and space to thrive, old age can bring physical and cognitive impairments, requiring special design attention.

Therefore all new interventions in the town should be designed for both young children and older people. Spaces designed this way can be enjoyed by the whole community, leading to a greater sense of ownership and public pride.

The UAP should set out objectives for the realisation of an age-friendly and playful Sligo Town.

Image: SCC Sligo Age Friendly Strategy, 2023-2026



Questions

What community infrastructure is lacking in Sligo? Where should new facilities be located?

Where should a new primary school be built?

A new library is planned for Sligo Town. What other services would you like to find in the new library building?

Should there be more playgrounds? Could you suggest where?

What does the town need in order to become more age-friendly?

What would make the greatest difference to the way in which Sligo's youngest and oldest citizens experience the town?



Photo: Sligo County Council (MD)

Access to nature

Almost every form of outdoor recreational space can be accessed easily from the Sligo town centre: the Garavogue River and Estuary, Lough Gill, Carns Hill, Hazelwood Forest, the Atlantic shoreline at Cartron and Gibraltar Point etc.

Urban parks and playing fields

Open amenity and recreational spaces are essential for physical and mental health, generally increasing the quality of life. Sligo Town boasts an extensive network of open spaces including the following managed parks and playing fields:

- Mitchell Curley Park
- Forthill Park
- Doorly Park
- Seaview Park
- Cleveragh Regional Park
- Ballytivnan Park
- Finisklin Park

Cleveragh Regional Park

This is the largest park in town. Recent additions to the Park include an outdoor public performance space, new footpaths and cycleways, as well as upgrades to the indoor gym areas and renovations to the Sports Centre.

Sligo County Council's new *Outdoor and Recreation Plan 2025-2030* sets out to:

- improve opportunities for walking and cycling between Sligo Town, Doorly and Cleveragh Park, Hazelwood and Carns Forest;
- improve opportunities for water sports and angling on the Upper Garavogue and Lough Gill;
- develop adventure-natural play facilities in the Cleveragh Regional Park. The vision is for a Sligo Myths and Legends regional playground.

A Part 8 public consultation process is scheduled for July-August 2025, in relation to upgrades to the Park featuring a skate park, basketball courts, a "learn to cycle" area and a pump track.

Questions

Is there adequate, good quality open space close to where you live? How about other outdoor recreational facilities?

In addition to those listed here, do you think there are other natural features or routes that could be developed as walkways or green corridors?

How can the Sligo Town UAP improve people's health, well-being and quality of life?

Green corridors

An integrated trail and greenway system for walking, cycling and jogging will be created as part of the development of Sligo Town's park and open space network.

Development proposals on lands crossed by green corridors will be required to make adequate provision for their construction, and facilitate public access to these corridors, as appropriate.

The green corridors, set out as strategic objectives in the County Development Plan, are as follows:

- Doorly Park to Holy Well
- Hazelwood to Ballinode
- Gibraltar to Finisklin
- Oakfield to Carraroe
- Markiewicz Road to Standalone Point corridor (along the foreshore at Cartron)
- Hyde Bridge to Hughes Bridge and Ballast Quay
- Cleveragh River Way: Bridge Street to Hazelwood and J. Fallon footbridge to Cleveragh Park
- Along the stream at Duck Lane and Ash Lane to Ballinode and Hazelwood
- Oakfield Road to Summerhill Roundabout

The preparation of the UAP will have regard to the aspirations of the new Outdoor and Recreation Plan.

The UAP will also include an assessment of existing and required community facilities, including playgrounds, to ensure the equitable distribution of new facilities in the urban area and their accessibility for everyone.



Images: site layout plan (fragment) and landscaping illustrations from Part 8 documentation prepared for Sligo County Council by Murray and Associates Landscape Architects

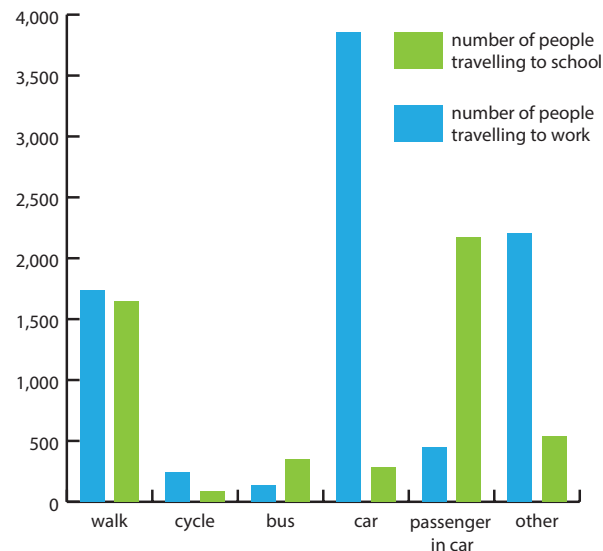


Sustainable urban mobility describes a transport system which focuses on public transport and active travel measures to move people around an urban area. The proposed UAP will facilitate and promote sustainable travel patterns in Sligo Town and its environs.

Current travel modes

Sligo's streets continue to be dominated by cars. Over half the resident population engaged in employment or education drive to school and work. Empirical evidence shows that a large proportion of these daily trips cross the town centre, causing traffic congestion, noise and air pollution. This makes walking and cycling less appealing.

Census 2022 found that nearly 3,400 people walked to work or school in Sligo Town, and only circa 330 cycled. Slightly more people (489) took a bus, minibus or coach to school or work.



Modes of travel to work and school in Sligo Town

Source: data from Census 2022

Barriers to mobility

As in other urban centres of similar size, there are many kinds of constraints which discourage sustainable mobility in Sligo Town. The main issues are:

- lack of direct walking and cycling access from many housing estates to main roads, services and amenities;
- inadequate walking and cycling infrastructure;
- insufficient bus services in terms of catchment and frequency, and poor supporting infrastructure, i.e. inadequate shelter and waiting areas.

Poor connectivity between places impacts negatively on quality of life, especially for those who cannot drive (e.g. children) or choose not to do so (including many older people). The UAP must attempt to identify and address the barriers described above.

New priorities since 2010

Active Travel is all about encouraging people to walk or cycle more and leave their car at home.

There have been many changes in traffic management since the last Plan adopted for Sligo Town (SEDP 2010), including an increased focus on promoting and facilitating cycling and walking. There are also new bus services going through and serving the town.

The promotion of active travel, reduced transport demand and enhancement of the public transport sector is a key component of the national Climate Action Plan, which aims to reduce transport carbon emissions by 50% by 2030.

The UAP must support these aspirations and seek to create a pedestrian- and cyclist-friendly town centre, with fewer cars (stationary and moving).



Photo: Sligo County Council (MD)

Local Transport Plan (LTP)

The LTP prepared in conjunction with the review of the CDP outlines the Council's strategy for managing and improving transportation, considering all modes of transport.

The LTP recommends a suite of measures to improve the transport system in Sligo Town, including town centre cycle routes.

This UAP will have regard to the LTP when proposing transport objectives for Sligo.

Strategic connectivity projects

In order to achieve the desired population target and ensure better connectivity between residential areas, employment areas, town centre and essential services, there are several infrastructure projects that need to be delivered in Sligo Town:

- The Eastern Garavogue Bridge and Approach Roads Scheme
- The N15 and N16 realignment schemes
- The N4-N16 Active Travel Urban Scheme

All these strategic projects will have major active travel components, including safe footpaths, pedestrian crossings and dedicated cycle lanes.

The aim of the N4-N16 project is precisely to improve pedestrian connectivity along the two national roads.

Works proposed to achieve this may include junction tightening, restrictions on turning movements, provision of footpaths, improved pedestrian crossings or additional crossing points.

Active Travel initiatives

In 2020, Sligo County Council set up a dedicated Active Travel team with a remit to make the town more accessible for walkers and cyclists. The Team is currently working on the following projects:

- A segregated cycle link from the Carrowroe Roundabout to Burton Street. This is the first phase of a cycle link that will safely bring cyclists from Carrowroe to the ATU.
- A series of junction tightening schemes designed to slow down traffic and make it easier for pedestrians to cross roads.
- 'Safe Routes to School' projects – designed to make walking to school easier for children and parents. Scoil Ursula and St. John's National School are included in the scheme for 2025.
- 'Permeability projects' - designed to make walking around Sligo Town easier and quicker.
- The roll-out of network of eHubs - these are areas (on a street) that bring together e-bikes, e-cargo bikes, e-scooters and/or e-cars. The purpose is to offer citizens an alternative to using private cars.

Electric bike sharing

The Active Travel Team has collaborated with private company Bolt to provide a network of electric bike stations around the town.

In 2024, the company reported a total of 115,738 km travelled in almost 63,000 trips. It is hoped that this sustainable method of getting around the town will become an established part of Sligo's mobility options.

Could Sligo be a 10-Minute Town?

A **10-Minute Town** is a town where residents can access most of their daily needs within a 10-minute journey from their home, be it on foot, by bicycle or using public transport.

The proposed Urban Area Plan will examine the potential for Sligo to become a 10-Minute Town and will make recommendations for any necessary interventions or new facilities to make this a reality.

Questions

If you live or work in Sligo Town, what are the main problems affecting your movement through the urban area?

Can you reach essential services (e.g. daily shopping) within a 10-minute trip from your home, on foot, by bus or even by bike?

What measures should the UAP propose to help increase the number of people who walk, cycle or use electric micro-mobility vehicles?

What new pedestrian/cycle links could improve permeability between different areas? (for example, between housing estates, from residential areas to the IDA business parks, from residential areas to the town centre)

What would be the best way to reduce private car traffic, especially in the town centre?

What UAP measures could help older people retain independent mobility for as long as possible?

Sligo is well placed as a Regional Growth Centre to attract investment for economic development, as confirmed by employment data collected in the 2022 Census.

Sligo Town has the 10th highest number of jobs located within its boundary of all the towns and cities in Ireland. The total number of jobs based in Sligo Town in 2022 was 13,562, accounting for 5% of all jobs within the Western Region¹.

Almost 8,600 people commute to the town for work.

The ratio of local jobs to workers who are also residents is 1.59, i.e. there are more jobs in town than resident workers. This indicates the importance of Sligo Town to the regional labour market.

More jobs, more workers

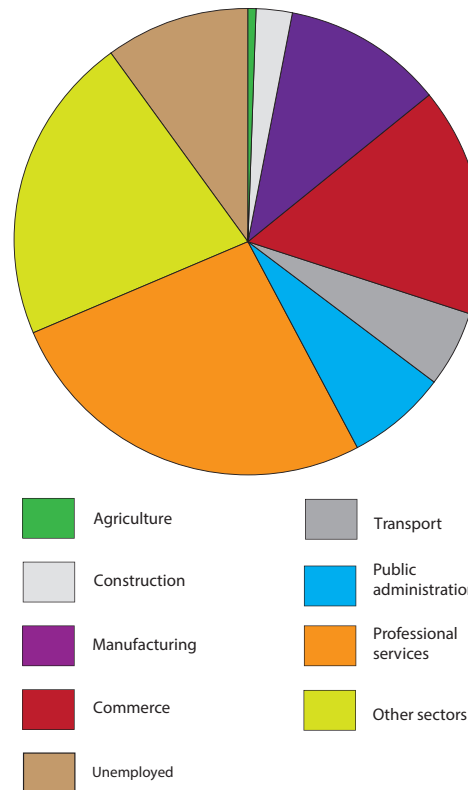
Between 2016 and 2022, the labour force (people at work and those unemployed) in Sligo Town grew by 12.1% (from 8,815 to 9,883).

The number of Sligo Town residents at work increased by 22.7% (from 7,133 to 8,752), proportionally more than the change in the State (+15.6%) or the Western Region (+14.6%).

Where do people work?

In 2022, the main sectors of employment in Sligo Town were Human Health (1,425 jobs), Wholesale and Retail (1,042 jobs), Manufacturing (1003 jobs) Education (833 jobs), and Accommodation and Food Services (771 jobs).

While the importance of Sligo University Hospital as an employer is apparent, commerce, industry and tourism play a substantial role in the local economy. The construction industry in Sligo Town is relatively small (only 260 jobs in 2022).



Sligo Town's labour force by sector of employment

Source: data from Census 2022

Knowledge-based economy

Economic development can greatly benefit from the presence of a local higher education institution.

To ensure that Sligo Town retains its students and attracts more young professionals, the Urban Area Plan will endeavour to facilitate the Atlantic Technological University's strategic role in Sligo, to promote a 'Knowledge-Based Economy'.

New Oakfield Business Park

Industrial activity in Sligo Town is concentrated in the IDA industrial estate at Finisklin, which is nearly at maximum capacity in terms of occupied units.

Work has commenced on a new IDA Business Park at Oakfield, located to the south-west of Sligo Town, off the Western Distributor Road. This Park will be an important component of Sligo Town's offer in terms of new large scale commercial units.

There is a clear opportunity for this new IDA business park to be exemplary in terms of site planning, with due regard to its proximity to important archaeological landscapes, and to the new CDP requirements for biodiversity net gain (BNG).



Photo: Sligo County Council (JC)

Questions

What are the key strengths that the UAP should safeguard in the interest of furthering the development of Sligo Town's economy?

In your opinion, can the Urban Area Plan remove any kind of constraints to the expansion of existing businesses and to the establishment of new enterprises in Sligo?

How can this be done through planning policies and objectives?

¹. Source: the *Travel to Work and Labour Catchments* report published by the Western Development Commission (WDC) in 2024

Within the national retail hierarchy, Sligo Town is placed on the Regional (second) tier, along other towns in the country. The Town is an important retailing centre serving a wide hinterland.

However, due to the growth of online shopping combined with the socio-economic impacts of the Covid-19 restrictions, followed by high energy prices and increasing cost of living, there has been no significant addition to the town's retail floor space in recent years. On the contrary, retail vacancy has become a problem in the centre.

According to a recent Geodirectory Commercial Buildings Report, the "retail and wholesale" vacancy rate was 22.3% in Q4 2024, above the national average of 21.9%. Despite this, the Wholesale and Retail sector remains the second largest employer in Sligo Town, in terms of job numbers (1,042 jobs in 2022).

Town Centre First

In accordance with Town Centre First policy, the UAP will focus on the importance of a strong retail sector in maintaining the vitality of Sligo's urban core.



Photo: Sligo County Council (JC)

Wine Street Car Park Masterplan

The 2021 masterplan for the Wine Street Car Park envisions the transformation of the area into a mixed-use quarter comprising apartments, shops and offices, centred around a multi-functional public space. Redevelopment of this car park will enhance the overall attractiveness of Sligo Town Centre as a shopping destination.

A key component of the masterplan is the provision of a multi-storey car park to support the retail and residential uses while removing parked vehicles from town centre streets.



Image: Wine Street Car Park Masterplan, BDP Landscape Architects

Neighbourhood centres

A **neighbourhood centre (NC)** is a mixed-use zone within a residential area which includes at least one food shop and several service-related stores. Since food is one of the main daily needs, food stores should be available within a short distance from any home, ideally in a neighbourhood centre. This is particularly important for those who do not own or drive a car.

The development of a network of easily accessible neighbourhood centres across the town is vitally important in the interest of promoting sustainable transport patterns.

The "10-Minute Town" assessment (to be carried out in association with the Urban Area Plan) will seek to confirm the locations of existing NCs, identify any potential need for additional NCs, and make recommendations for accessibility improvements or to enlarge the catchments of the existing ones, where necessary.

Retail Parks

The 18-unit Sligo Retail Park at Carrowroe, which opened in 2004, was Sligo's first major out-of-town shopping development, offering 18,000 sq.m of net retail warehouse floorspace and circa 500 car parking spaces. It accommodates mainly bulky items, with limited amounts of small items for sale, but no convenience (food) shops.

Cleveragh Retail Park, opened in 2008, offers a mix of uses not solely confined to bulky goods. The Park also contains office space (e.g. engineering and architecture firms) and a medical centre.

The UAP will address details regarding the location, scale and type of new retail development in the town centre and neighbourhood centres.

Questions

If you live in Sligo Town, are you happy with the location of food shops relative to your home?

If you come to Sligo Town for major shopping, how could your overall experience be improved?

Do you think there is a good distribution of local shops on the outskirts of town?

What kind of measures should the UAP put in place to support Sligo's retail environment?

Sligo Town and its surrounding areas are rich in archaeological monuments, protected buildings, historic streetscapes, and natural landscapes full of biodiversity. Together, these form the unique heritage that makes Sligo a special place to live, work, and visit.

The town is a **Historic Town** as per the Urban Archaeology Survey and its core is included within a Zone of Archaeological Potential.

The new Urban Area Plan (UAP) will aim to strike the right balance between protecting Sligo's historic character and encouraging sustainable new development.

A key theme of the UAP will be **heritage-led urban regeneration** - the restoration and reuse of historic buildings to stimulate the rejuvenation of the town centre.

Architectural heritage

The Sligo and Environs section of the County's **Record of Protected Structures (RPS)** lists 309 historic buildings and a few non-structural elements (post box, fire hydrant, gate piers etc.) located in Sligo Town and its wider environs.

These structures will not be subject to review as part of the Urban Area Plan. It is intended to review the entire County RPS separately, at a later date.



Architectural Conservation Areas

Sligo Town has five designated Architectural Conservation Areas (ACAs) – areas of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, and social interest.

Most structures in an ACA are important for their contribution to the streetscape or character of the area. Statutory protection is placed on the exterior (not the interior) of such structures.

First designated in the 2004 Sligo and Environs Plan, the ACAs are now enshrined in the Sligo CDP 2024-2030. The areas are:

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

Buildings of Note

Certain buildings, which are not listed in the RPS or located in any ACA, may be considered significant in terms of their contribution to the streetscape and architectural amenity of the surrounding area.

These are known as Buildings of Note (BoN) in the County Development Plan, where 107 have been identified in nine towns and villages, excluding Sligo Town.

It may be beneficial to identify BoN in the Sligo and Environs area and to include appropriate policies in the UAP in relation to the protection of their main features.



Photo: Hugh MacConville

Shopfronts and street furniture

Certain shopfronts and historic street furniture, such as street lighting, signage, kerbing or traditional street surface finishes, while not statutorily protected, are important records of old Sligo. Their features should be retained.

Traditional shopfronts located in ACAs should be repaired and reused, as required by the relevant policy in the CDP (P-ACA-5).

Questions

How can the Local Authority support and encourage property owners to preserve and maintain their historic buildings, to help improve the overall appearance of Sligo Town?

Are there any historic features in Sligo that currently do not have formal protection, but you believe should be conserved and enhanced?

What shopfronts in Sligo town do you consider important or worthy of protection?

UNESCO World Heritage List

In July 2022, *'The Passage Tomb Landscape of County Sligo'* was added to Ireland's World Heritage Tentative List. Inclusion on the Tentative List is the first step towards obtaining full World Heritage Site status.

The World Heritage Tentative List is an inventory of natural and cultural heritage sites that have potential to demonstrate **'outstanding universal value' (OUV)** and which are being considered for nomination to the World Heritage List. To be deemed of Outstanding Universal Value, a site must meet the conditions of integrity and/or authenticity and must have an adequate protection and management system to ensure its safeguarding.

The site in County Sligo comprises Cairns Hill, Knocknarea, Carrowkeel Passage Tombs and Carrowmore Megalithic Cemetery.

Sligo County Council, as lead proponent for the World Heritage bid, will liaise with key stakeholders, landowners and local communities to support the bid process, which will take several years to complete.

In the meantime, the UAP should include specific objectives to protect this exceptional cultural landscape.



Photo: Sligo County Council

Natural heritage and biodiversity

Our natural heritage includes the variety of life we see around us every day: plant and animal species, their habitats and ecosystems. An essential part of natural heritage are the processes that support life, such as pollination, nutrient cycling, and the regulation of our climate.

Biodiversity is crucial for the health and stability of life as we know it, but it is under threat from factors like habitat destruction, climate change, pollution, and invasive species.



EU and Irish legislation provide protection for certain species and habitats by designating Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas and Natural Heritage Areas. But even outside these sites, the woodlands, hedgerows and wetlands provide important space and networks for nature.

At EU level, the high level of objective is nature restoration. Making space for nature is critical. The CDP contains a suite of general policies and development management guidelines aimed at protecting and enhancing biodiversity.

The UAP should include specific objectives for Sligo Town and Environs, to support biodiversity based on a "green infrastructure" approach.

1. Information on the importance of hedgerows - <https://www.teagasc.ie/environment/biodiversity-countryside/farmland-habitats/hedgerows/>

2. Information on 'dark skies' - <https://www.darksky.ie/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/DSI-Environmentally-Friendly-Lighting-Guide-4.pdf>

Such UAP objectives should address the manner in which sites are planned and developed, to protect and enhance local biodiversity.

Examples include the incorporation of existing mature hedgerows¹ into the open space pertaining to new developments, the planning for specific "dark-sky areas"² and incorporating nature-based surface water management systems at the initial stages of planning a development.

The UAP should also include provisions to incorporate "dark-sky thinking" into public lighting.

"Green infrastructure" can be broadly defined as an interconnected network of natural spaces that enable ecosystems to thrive.

To promote biodiversity, the network should incorporate public and private green spaces, linear green corridors (such as the banks of rivers and streams) and areas where farming, forestry, recreation and conservation can take place together.

Questions

From your experience, which are the most threatened natural heritage features in the Sligo and Environs area?

What planning measures should the UAP put in place to support biodiversity within the Town's built-up area?

How should we safeguard and enhance natural heritage in the Plan area as the population of Sligo Town continues to grow?

Photo: Sligo County Council



The promotion of tourism and the attraction of investment and young professionals go hand in hand. An interesting town centre, with plenty to do, appeals to both tourists and prospective residents.

Tourism is one of Ireland's most important indigenous economic sectors and its significance to Sligo County and Town cannot be underestimated.

The scenic setting of Sligo Town is amongst the most spectacular in the country. The landscape, the potential for expanding unique cultural experiences (e.g. focusing on the Yeats family) and the range of activities available within a short distance from the town represent a substantial tourism offer.



Photo: Sligo County Council (MD)

Destination and Experience Development Plan (DEDP)

Fáilte Ireland's DEDP for County Sligo sets out strategic initiatives for the development of the tourism industry and calls for Sligo Town to be the tourism hub for the North-West region.

The DEDP promotes significant investment in the regeneration of the town's public realm.

It also calls for the development of a new attraction of scale (Hazelwood Demesne) and for the re-imagining of the cultural visitor experience base: Sligo Gaol, The Model Arts Gallery, a new County Museum and Sligo Abbey (see below).



Photo: Sligo County Council (LMcC)

Night-time economy

The 'evening and night-time economy' (building on the Purple Flag Award) is very important for tourism and the general economic well-being of Sligo Town

The Night-Time Economy is the diverse social, cultural and economic activity occurring during evening and night-time hours, from 6 pm onwards.

A vibrant Night-Time Economy is enabled by a well-designed public realm, effective transport solutions and various activities occurring at different times of the evening.

These issues will be examined and supported, where appropriate, in the UAP.



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Questions

How can the Urban Area Plan support and improve Sligo's tourism offering?

What does Sligo need in order to attract more tourists to the town and encourage them to stay longer?

Are there any new or less-known tourism opportunities in Sligo that should be further investigated?

Pre-draft consultation

As pre-draft consultation on a proposed Urban Area Plan is not mandatory, a Chief Executive's Report on submissions received is not required.

After the closing of the consultation period, the issues raised in submissions will be carefully considered in the preparation of a draft UAP.

Preparation of Draft UAP

The Draft Plan will be prepared by the Council's Development Planning Unit in collaboration with relevant departments of the Local Authority.

The draft document will be subject to screening for Strategic Environmental Assessment and Appropriate Assessment. Depending on the screening outcome, a full SEA and a Stage 2 AA may be necessary.

Consultation on the Draft UAP

Once the Draft UAP, any accompanying documents and the associated environmental assessments have been completed, they will be published for statutory consultation. This is expected to happen in the first half of 2026.

This stage of consultation will take six weeks, during which anybody will be able to make a submission in relation to the contents of the Draft Plan.

After the consultation period, the Chief Executive will submit a statutory report to the Elected Members. The report will comprise summaries of submissions and recommendations for amendments to the Draft UAP. This report will also be published.

Consultation on Proposed Amendments

If the Members decide that amendments are warranted, there will be a further round of consultation (relating only to the amendments) for a period of four weeks.

However, this stage of consultation cannot commence until the proposed amendments have been subjected to SEA and AA screening.

The Chief Executive will then submit a second statutory report to the Elected Members, summarising submissions and making recommendations on the proposed amendments.

Making of the Urban Area Plan

It will be the decision of the Elected Members to make the UAP with or without any of the proposed amendments. Minor modifications may also be made, if they do not represent material alterations.

Role of the Office of the Planning Regulator (OPR)

The OPR is the main statutory consultee at Draft UAP and Proposed Amendments stage. Under the 2024 Act, if the UAP is made "inconsistently" with any submission made by the OPR, the Chief Executive must notify the Office and provide a statement of the reasons for such inconsistency.

The OPR may request that the UAP (or any part of it) be suspended pending an assessment. If the UAP is assessed as "materially inconsistent" with the CDP or with submissions from certain prescribed bodies, the OPR may then recommend the issuing of a Draft Direction by the Minister.

Pre-Draft Stage (non-statutory)

- Preparation of Issues Paper
- **Public consultation for 6 weeks**
- Consideration of issues raised in submissions

Draft Plan Stage

- Preparation of Draft Urban Area Plan
- Screening for Strategic Environmental Assessment and Appropriate Assessment
- If required - preparation of Environmental Report (SEA) and Natura Impact Report (AA)
- Consultation with Elected Members
- Publication of the Draft Urban Area Plan
- **Consultation with the public and prescribed bodies for 6 weeks**
- First Chief Executive's Report on Submissions relating to the Draft Plan prepared for the Members
- Members adopt the UAP or propose material alterations, i.e. amendments

Proposed Amendments Stage

- Screening for Strategic Environmental Assessment and Appropriate Assessment
- If required - prepare addenda to Environmental Report (SEA) and Natura Impact Report (AA)
- Publication of the Proposed Amendments
- **Consultation with the public and prescribed bodies for 4 weeks**
- Second Chief Executive's Report on Submissions relating to the Proposed Amendments prepared for the Members
- Members adopt the UAP with or without material alterations (amendments)

