

# Part II. Development Plan Objectives

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## 4. Providing Housing



### 4.1. Housing issues

Sligo County Council and Sligo Borough Council prepared a joint Housing Strategy for the period between 2005 and 2011. This document is an integral part of the *Sligo County Development Plan 2005-2011* and the *Sligo and Environs Development Plan 2004-2010*. The Housing Strategy reflects the objectives contained in the RPGs in relation to housing.

The key findings of the *Housing Strategy 2005-2011*<sup>1</sup> are as follows:

- An estimated 5,672 households will need to be accommodated within the combined Borough Council and County Council areas during the period 2005-2011. Of this total estimate, it is anticipated that approximately 3,420 households (60%) will need to be accommodated within the Sligo & Environs area.
- The capacity of zoned lands in the *Sligo and Environs Development Plan 2004-2010* is adequate to meet the overall housing requirements in the Plan area.
- There is a need to ensure that up to 250 hectares of land are zoned in various towns and villages throughout the County to meet housing need and in particular social and affordable housing need.
- A curtailment to the provision of sustainable housing is the lack of proper sewage treatment facilities in the smaller towns and villages in the County and the lack of zoning in these settlements. In order to address this issue, Sligo County Council intends to advance a programme of local area plan and mini-plan preparation (as provided for in Section 3 of this Plan).
- 20% of eligible sites which are the subject of new residential development is to be set aside for the development of social and affordable units.
- The Planning Authorities will ensure that units are developed to meet the needs of the elderly, people with disabilities and other special needs households.
- The Authorities will implement schemes to maximise the utilisation of the existing social and affordable housing stock in the County.
- The Authorities will establish a register of eligible households interested in acquiring affordable housing.

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<sup>1</sup>The full version of the *Housing Strategy 2005-2011* can be inspected or purchased at the Planning Office of Sligo County Council (Riverside, Sligo).

### 4.1.1 Assessment of overall housing needs

A review of household projections, carried out as background analysis to the County Development Plan, estimates that up to 100 hectares of land will be needed between 2005 and 2011 to cater for residential needs. This is based on an average gross density of 10 units per acre (i.e. 25 units per hectare), which is consistent with local preferences. Applying a coefficient of 2.5, to allow for location choice and possible non-release of zoned lands, it is estimated that up to 250 hectares of land will be required for residential use in the County, outside the Sligo and Environs area.

### 4.1.2 The issue of density

While these projections are based on modest assumptions about housing density, the Council acknowledges Government policy, which seeks to adopt more sustainable housing densities, in order to efficiently manage the consumption of land and demand for services (*Sustainable Development – A Strategy for Ireland*, Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government – DoEHLG, 1997; *Residential Guidelines for Planning Authorities*, DoEHLG, 1999).

Accordingly, in or immediately adjoining existing settlements, densities of 10–14+ units per acre (i.e. 25–35+ units per hectare) will be encouraged. The key issue is that each site is different and in some cases a low density may be appropriate, while in other instances a certain increase in densities would be suitable (for example a courtyard development in the middle of a village or some infill sites within a village or town, where it is important to maintain the traditional streetscape).

### 4.1.3 Land requirements in towns and villages

The settlement strategy of this Plan proposes the development of Key Support Towns – Ballymote, Enniscrone and Tobercurry – in addition to rural villages. It is the policy of the Council to implement the Housing Strategy and to ensure that sufficient and suitable land is zoned in towns and villages through the preparation of local area plans and other land use plans.

### 4.1.4 Future household sizes

In line with national trends, average household size in rural County Sligo continues to decrease and, at 2.92 persons per household, was amongst the lowest in the State in 2002. The review of household projections assumes that the trend of falling household size will accelerate in the rural areas of the County, as a consequence of levelling off of the differences between rural and urban lifestyles. Over the period of the Development Plan, 2005-2011, it is assumed that the average household size will decrease to 2.58 persons per household. This will have implications for housing demand, with an increasing need for smaller dwellings and a greater mix of house types and sizes.

A high proportion of those on the Council's Housing List are households with a preference for two/three-bedroom units and the elderly/persons with special needs, who prefer single-bedroom units. A key objective of the Housing Strategy is the provision of a suitable range of housing types and sizes, to avoid the uniformity of suburban-type development and facilitate the integration of social and affordable housing into existing communities.

### 4.1.5 Affordability

The Housing Strategy seeks to ensure that housing is available for people with different levels of income and includes an estimate of the amount of social, affordable and voluntary housing required in County Sligo. A large proportion of households cannot meet their accommodation needs, due to significant increases in house prices in recent years.

The Housing Strategy concludes: “On average, it is expected that 44% of households will experience housing affordability<sup>1</sup> problems during the lifetime of the housing strategy.”

<sup>1</sup>The Planning and Development Act 2000 defines housing as being affordable when mortgage repayments on a house to meet the household's accommodation needs do not exceed 35% of the net household income (assuming a 90% mortgage).



#### **Social and affordable housing schemes in County Sligo**

The following assumptions are made in relation to social and affordable housing:

- Sligo will be the subject of a proactive Government strategy to promote development and economic growth.
- Up to 7,300 new households may locate in Sligo County, including the Borough.
- The percentage of households meeting the affordability criteria exceeds 44% and will vary during the period of the Plan.

There were approximately 480 households on the Council's Housing List at the end of March 2005, over half of which had a location preference. The greatest demand was for Enniscrone, Ballymote and Grange, where 170 households wished to locate. Other desired locations where the Council has the potential to supply social and affordable housing include Ballysadare, Easky and Tobercurry.

The 2005 *Assessment of Housing Need in County Sligo* found that a third of those on the housing list were not reasonably able to meet the cost of the accommodation they were occupying or to obtain suitable alternative accommodation. A quarter of those on the housing list were single men and 33% of households assessed were lone-parent families.

The Council produces a multi-annual programme of housing targets and completions and, in conjunction with the Housing Strategy, outlines present and future housing needs and supply in County Sligo. It is expected that there will be an annual completion and output rate of 96 social units and 10 affordable units per year. These figures indicate that there will be a significant shortfall in the supply of social and affordable housing by the Local Authority. The difference will have to be made up under the provisions of Part V of the Planning and Development Act, 2000.

The objective of Part V is to ensure an adequate supply of housing for all sectors of the existing and future population. Up to 20% of land zoned for residential development must be reserved for social and affordable housing and a planning permission granted on zoned residential land may be conditional on an agreement with the Council concerning the transfer of dwellings, sites or land for this purpose. To date, land has been zoned in Strandhill, Enniscrone, Ballysadare, Collooney, Grange and the Environs of Sligo City. With the adoption of land use plans for other towns and villages, the role of Part V will expand.

Local Authority housing is well distributed throughout the County, with the largest provisions located in Tobercurry, Ballymote and Enniscrone. Over the period of the Plan, the provision of further social and affordable housing may be considered on Council-owned lands in Ballintogher, Ballymote, Carney, Collooney, Coolaney, Culfadda, Dromore West, Easky, Geevagh, Grange and Tobercurry. In order to mitigate the effects of social segregation and to improve social mix, it is intended to provide new social and affordable housing in smaller developments and, where possible, to avoid extending existing large-scale housing estates.

#### 4.1.6 Social and affordable housing objectives

- A. Reserve 20% of land zoned for residential development, or a mix of residential and other uses, to secure the implementation of the *Housing Strategy 2005-2011*.
- B. Ensure that the supply of housing units under the Housing Strategy reflects current and emerging demographic characteristics and household sizes.
- C. Promote social inclusion by ensuring that social and affordable housing is well distributed throughout all residential areas.
- D. Promote joint ventures with the private and voluntary sectors for the provision and management of housing.
- E. Assist voluntary and non-profit, co-operative housing associations in the provision of housing and encourage a more active involvement of these sectors in the housing market.
- F. Promote a partnership approach between the Health Service Executive, disability organisations, voluntary housing associations and the local authority in meeting the particular needs of the elderly and people with disabilities.
- G. Maintain the condition of existing social housing and continue to carry out essential remedial works, as funding permits.
- H. Purchase houses on the open market in areas where a housing demand exists and where the houses represent value for money.
- I. In lieu of building new Council housing, where practicable, improve or extend privately-owned houses, to eliminate defects or extend existing accommodation, where it is necessary to eliminate overcrowding or accommodate an additional person in the house.
- J. Facilitate the provision of emergency accommodation for the homeless and for those in need of crisis facilities.

#### 4.1.7 Housing mix and types: objectives

- A. Ensure the provision of a suitable range of housing types and sizes to facilitate those with special needs and the changing demographic structure of society.
- B. Promote higher-density development on serviced land in towns and villages, having regard to settlement pattern and form, and existing/planned facilities and services, including quality public transport corridors.
- C. Promote more compact development forms, including more comprehensive backland development in towns and villages, while restricting the degree of ribbon development on the edges of settlements.

#### 4.1.8 Traveller accommodation

There are existing Traveller accommodation sites at Ballyfree, south of Sligo City, and Tobercurry. Sligo County Council's *Traveller Accommodation Programme 2005-2008* has identified a number of other sites based on local needs arising from consultation with Traveller families in the County. The 2005 *Assessment of Housing Need in County Sligo* found that:

- eight Traveller families are seeking to be accommodated in standard local authority/specific instance housing;
- eight Traveller families express a preference for group housing accommodation;
- the number of Traveller families will increase by 10-15 within the lifetime of the *Programme*.

Work commenced in 2005 on a transient halting site at Cloonamahon and on a house for a Traveller family in Collooney.

##### 4.1.8.1 Traveller accommodation: objectives

- A. Implement the *Traveller Accommodation Programme 2005-2008* and subsequent programmes, taking into consideration the needs of transient and indigenous Travellers.
- B. Provide Traveller accommodation across County Sligo in line with the *Traveller Accommodation Programme 2005-2008*, particularly in the preferred locations of Ballinacarrow, Cloonamahon, Collooney, Enniscrone and Tobercurry.
- C. Consult with Travellers, their representative organisations and the local settled community in relation to the siting, planning and design of prospective halting sites or group housing schemes, in order to promote social inclusion.
- D. Seek to ensure full tenant participation in the management of Traveller accommodation.

## 4.2 Rural housing

### 4.2.1 Context

Government policy on rural housing is set out in the NSS. The rural settlement policy framework contained in the NSS aims to sustain and renew established rural communities, while strengthening the structure of smaller settlements to support local economies. In this way, key assets of rural areas are protected to support quality of life, and rural settlement policies are responsive to differing local circumstances.

Sligo County Council acknowledges that there is a long tradition of people living in rural areas in County Sligo. The Council also acknowledges that there are extensive rural areas throughout the County, where people continue to live in a highly dispersed settlement pattern. In the past, these areas were largely dependent on agriculture and farming. With the decline of such activities, there has been an associated decline in the rural population. In these areas, it is accepted that there is a need to sustain rural communities, and therefore a less restrictive policy on one-off housing will apply.

In formulating policy on rural housing, the Council will consider whether a proposal is classed as *rural-generated housing* or *urban-generated housing*, as defined in subsections 4.2.3 and 4.2.4.

### 4.2.2 Rural housing strategy

The Settlement Strategy (Part I, Section 3) highlighted the fact that there are parts of County Sligo experiencing significant development pressure (principally within the Sligo City Sub-Region) and other areas experiencing significant rural depopulation that are in need of regeneration (principally those areas included in the CLÁR Programme). Whilst these two distinct types of area require a different policy response, it will remain the policy of the Council to accommodate genuine rural housing need.

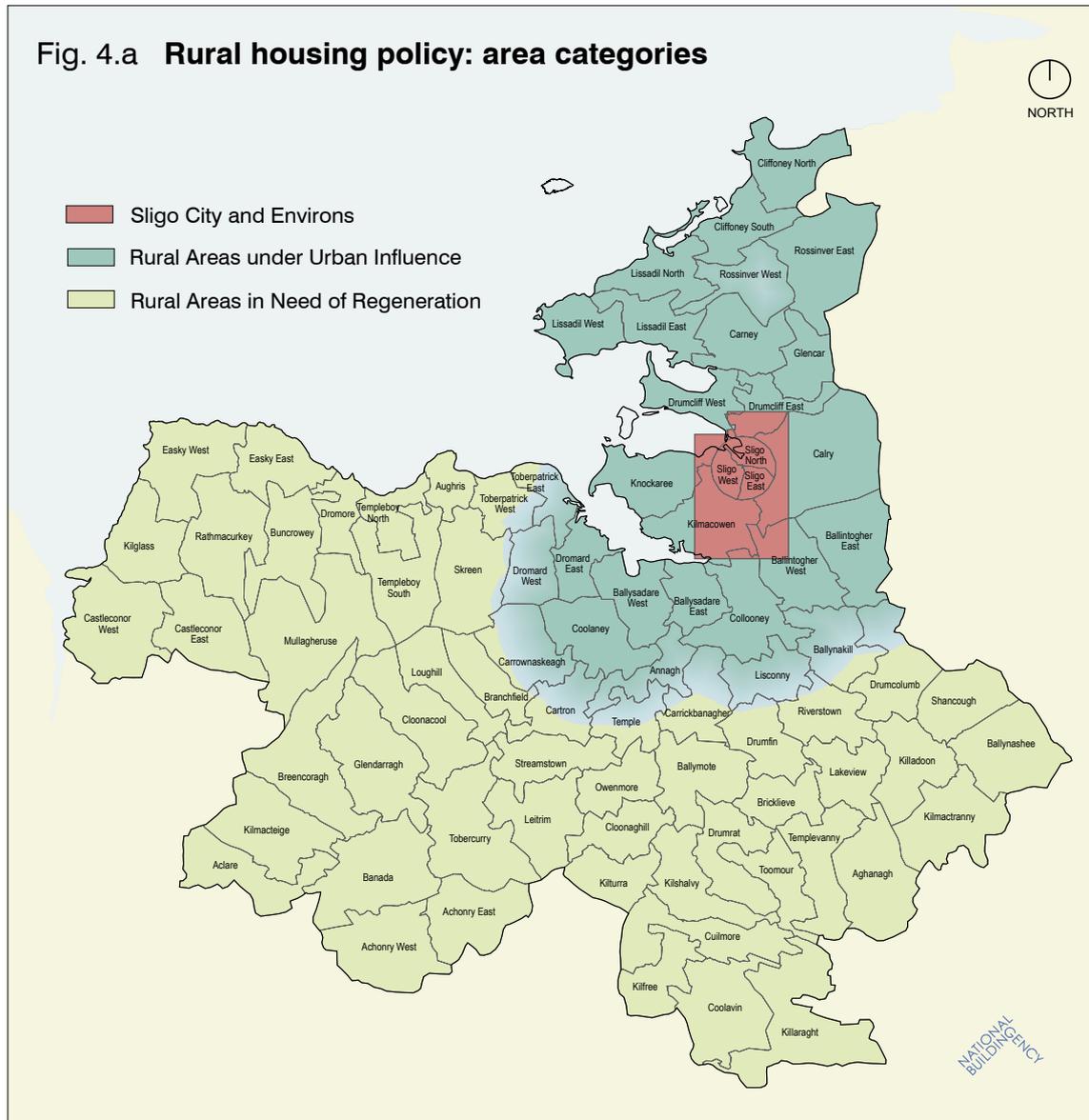
It is the policy of the County Council to consider proposals for rural housing under two broad categories, as set out below.



#### Rural Areas in Need of Regeneration

In general, one-off housing (*urban-generated* and *rural-generated*) will be facilitated in areas that have experienced depopulation and that are in need of regeneration. (These areas generally conform to CLÁR areas, but have been updated and, in some cases, extended in the light of demographic changes during the period 1991-2002.) This policy does not extend to sites in close proximity to Key Support Towns and other settlements, or their approach roads. The overall aim here is to maintain rural communities and associated services.

**Easky village in West Sligo,  
an area in need of regeneration**



### Rural Areas Under Urban Influence

In general, one-off housing will be discouraged in areas that have experienced significant development pressure/population growth in the period 1991-2002, except for cases of rural-generated housing need (refer to subsection 4.2.3 below). The aim here is to manage the pressure of *urban-generated housing* in the Sligo City Sub-Region and in those areas that are considered to be under urban influence, while facilitating *rural-generated housing* need. Rural areas under urban influence accommodated almost 65% of the County's total population in 2002. This policy will ensure ease of access for local people to affordable sites.

The Rural Areas in Need of Regeneration and Rural Areas Under Urban Influence are broadly outlined on the Rural Housing Policy Map (Fig. 4.a). Proposals for rural housing in or near the general boundary or interface of these zones will be considered on their merits, having regard to the existing pattern and intensity of development and the absorption capacity of the landscape.

The need for the distinction between the two types of rural area is important, as the Council must remain committed to Sligo's Gateway status and the need to attain critical mass, thereby defusing the pressure for additional housing in rural areas close to Sligo City and Environs. Additional housing pressure associated with the NSS goal for regional balance should generally be accommodated within the Sligo Borough and Environs area, satellite settlements, Key Support Towns and other settlements, where sufficient growth opportunity exists.

### 4.2.3 Rural-generated housing

This is defined as housing relating to:

- persons employed in rural areas with a need to live in the locality, for example, those working in agriculture, forestry, horticulture, tourism and other rural-based activities;
- persons who do not work on the land, but have a vital link to the area in question via close family ties, including returning emigrants; and/or
- persons whose primary employment is in County Sligo and who can demonstrate the need to live in a rural location because of that employment or other social reasons, or whose employment would provide a service to the local community.

In applying sympathetic consideration to bona fide farmers, returning emigrants and such applicants claiming exceptional social circumstances<sup>1</sup>, the over-riding concern of the Council will be the resultant net community benefit accruing to an area by permitting further residential development, particularly in areas of population decline and/or where local rural services are under threat e.g. CLÁR Areas. Whilst each individual case will be considered on its merits, the carrying capacity of the landscape in absorbing new development will be the determining factor. In other areas, development will be assessed with respect to its sustainability and to the specific design requirements set out in Section 9.1.2 Rural housing.

The Council will endeavour to accommodate *rural-generated housing*<sup>2</sup> in all rural areas<sup>2</sup>, including Rural Areas Under Urban Influence and Rural Areas in Need of Regeneration (refer to subsection 4.2.6 Rural housing: general objectives).

### 4.2.4 Urban-generated housing

This is defined as housing in rural areas sought by those living and working in urban areas; it includes second and holiday homes. Frequently, this demand takes the form of ribbon and/or sporadic development along the approach roads to larger settlements and low-density housing patterns in scenic locations. The Council will endeavour to accommodate *urban-generated housing* within the development limits of all towns and villages and in Rural Areas in Need of Regeneration (refer to subsection 4.2.2). This approach has been adopted because of the problems that arise from a proliferation of one-off houses, including those listed below:

- creation of demands for the subsequent provision of public infrastructure (i.e. roads and utilities);
- proliferation of septic tanks in areas with poor soils that do not have the capacity to absorb effluent;
- contamination of local water supplies and a reduction in water quality;
- rising land values that push up prices for those with a genuine local housing need;
- higher energy consumption and transportation costs arising from an increased dependence on car-based commuting.
- profound effects on landscape character, with potentially harmful effects on the tourism sector, which depends on high-quality landscapes;
- loss of investment in rural towns and villages, leading to dereliction and vacancy;
- relocation of younger and more affluent people from settlements to the surrounding rural areas.

<sup>1</sup>Exceptional social circumstances might relate to socio-economic needs that result from a major accident, illness, poverty, or similar hardship accruing to a family. It might also include philanthropic undertakings or business ventures that will result in a demonstrable positive community benefit accruing to an area.

<sup>2</sup>Operationally, the following matters will apply to planning permissions in rural areas with respect to 'Sterilisation Agreements' and occupancy conditions:

- 'Sterilisation Agreements' should be used only in exceptional circumstances and are not to be applied in areas in need of rural regeneration.
- Any 'Sterilisation Agreement' should only cover a portion of the landholding of which the site is the subject of a planning application and should not cover other unattached landholdings owned by the applicant/landowner.
- Occupancy conditions should only be applied in limited circumstances in rural areas under urban influence and should include a clause allowing the planning authority to lift the restriction in exceptional circumstances.



### 4.2.5 Developing and sustaining existing rural settlements

The identification of Rural Areas under Urban Influence and the direction of *urban-generated housing* into existing towns and villages will have a number of sustainable benefits. In particular, this policy approach will:

- support and maintain services and infrastructure within existing settlements, e.g. primary schools, local post offices, shops and community facilities;
- ensure economical and efficient use, maintenance and expansion of infrastructure and utilities, including roads, footpaths, public water and sewerage systems, public lighting and telecommunications;
- ensure an economical and efficient use of public services, such as postal and emergency services;
- conserve the natural features of the rural landscape, which give each area its distinct identity and make it attractive for tourists and holiday-makers;
- prevent the loss of land for agriculture, forestry and other uses, to urban-generated uses;
- maintain a strong distinction between urban and rural landscapes;
- reduce the need to travel (particularly commuting), thereby reducing pollutants and emissions, road congestion and road traffic accidents;
- consolidate and renew existing rural settlements through the redevelopment of derelict, backland and vacant sites;
- promote a diverse social mix of people in terms of age and socio-economic background.

#### 4.2.6 Rural housing: general objectives

- A. Revitalise and consolidate rural towns and villages by encouraging future homeowners to live in existing settlements, where essential services and infrastructure can be maintained or easily provided.
- B. Ensure that new housing development in towns and villages is of appropriate scale, layout and quality design, and that it relates to the character and form of the settlement in question.
- C. Promote the use of professional design advice and supervision to achieve high standards of design and create high-quality living environments.
- D. Ensure that, in permitting one-off rural housing, key rural assets such as water quality, natural and cultural heritage and landscape quality are respected and protected.
- E. Encourage the renovation and reuse of existing derelict rural properties. These properties should generally be intact and exhibit the essential characteristics of a dwelling house.
- F. Consider proposals for replacement dwelling houses on their merits.
- G. Facilitate the conservation and reuse of buildings on the Record of Protected Structures, for residential purposes.
- H. Facilitate *rural-generated housing* in all areas of the County, while providing for *urban-generated housing* in Rural Areas in Need of Regeneration, subject to the policy considerations set out below:
  1. Control of ribbon development, especially close to Key Support Towns and other settlements.
  2. Control of rural housing in the Coastal Zone, especially between coastal roads and the sea. (Refer also to Section 6.2 on Coastal zone management).
  3. Protection of designated heritage sites, such as proposed Natural Heritage Areas (pNHAs), candidate Special Areas of Conservation (cSACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs).
  4. Protection of the integrity of designated Visually Vulnerable and Sensitive Rural Landscapes and Scenic Routes (refer to Fig. 9.a Development Control Policy Map).
  5. Protection of key natural assets, such as surface and ground water and aggregate or mineral reserves.
  6. Ensuring the safe operation of key transport arteries, particularly National Primary and Secondary Routes and the rail network.
  7. Ensuring that physical planning standards are met – e.g. soil conditions suitable for effluent disposal, availability of a suitable and reliable water supply, adequate flood control/avoidance measures.
  8. Incorporation of existing natural and heritage features into the development, e.g. tree stands, significant hedgerows, stone walling, wetlands and streams.
  9. Minimising the visual impact of the development on the surrounding landscape by ensuring that normal siting, layout and design criteria are met – e.g. avoid visually prominent sites, design the dwelling house to integrate appropriately with its landscape context, include screening and landscaping proposals.
  10. Ensuring that the scale, bulk and massing of the proposed development is in keeping with existing developments in the area
  11. Encouraging innovative design, provided it does not dominate its setting or alter the character of the landscape.
  12. Promotion of building layouts that maximise the potential for solar gain and wind protection.
  13. Ensuring that there is adequate infrastructure available to service the development.
  14. Ensuring that the road network is adequate to cater for the development, that safe vehicular access is available and that the traffic movements generated by the development will not give rise to traffic hazard.
  15. In granting permission for one-off rural housing, the Council is insistent that it will not provide public services, such as footpaths, public lighting, water or sewerage connections where they do not already exist.

### 4.2.7 Holiday homes and second homes

Holiday and second homes will be treated the same as *urban-generated housing* and should be accommodated within or immediately adjoining existing towns and villages.



Holiday accommodation in Enniscrone

## 4.3 Community development and facilities

Community facilities include facilities for education, childcare, sports and recreation, healthcare and burial. This County Development Plan is concerned with improving existing facilities and making adequate and appropriate provisions for the development of new facilities.

### 4.3.1 Community development and facilities: general objectives

- A. Assist, as far as possible, in the provision of community facilities, by reserving suitably located sites, by facilitating their development and, where appropriate, by the use of development control to ensure provision
- B. Recognise the importance of community participation in the improvement of existing community and recreation facilities, and encourage increased involvement of local groups, both independently and in association with the relevant statutory bodies, in the future provision of such facilities.
- C. Encourage the siting of community facilities in suitable locations, especially in settlements or in close proximity to existing facilities and public transport routes.
- D. Encourage high standards of design of community facilities.
- E. Work with the relevant agencies in identifying areas for the provision of quality social infrastructure, particularly in relation to the provision of appropriate and accessible health-related services.
- F. Explore means to integrate minority groups into the community and to avoid social exclusion.
- G. Encourage social inclusion through the development of fully-integrated communities catering for people of different ages and incomes.
- H. Encourage the development of specific bodies and programmes to facilitate the integration of those with special needs.
- I. Support the development of Comhairle na nÓg and other effective structures for the participation of young people in the democratic and decision-making process of local government policies.
- J. Work with North-West Tourism, the Arts Council and other relevant bodies to promote and develop the arts and tourism sectors in Sligo.
- K. Facilitate and assist, where possible, social and community development throughout the County.

### 4.3.2 Education

The Department of Education is responsible for the delivery of educational facilities and services. The County Council is responsible for ensuring that adequate serviceable land is available to meet current and future requirements.



St Attracta's School, Tobercurry

#### 4.3.2.1 Education objectives

- A. Ensure that new education facilities are located within existing settlements, and only in exceptional circumstances consider out-of-town locations.
- B. Ensure that the appropriate infrastructure is provided concurrent with the development of an education facility. Such infrastructure may include footpaths, pedestrian crossings, cycle lanes, parking facilities, ramps and facilities for those with special needs.
- C. Support education institutions in their plans to expand and develop within the County.
- D. Promote and facilitate appropriate educational/training measures to ensure a suitably skilled local workforce.
- E. Promote the development of outreach programmes between businesses and third-level institutions, whereby Sligo can develop as a centre of excellence in research and development.

### 4.3.3 Childcare

National policy recognises that childcare facilities are integral to economic and social wellbeing. Under Partnership 2000, an expert working group was established to develop a strategy for the development and delivery of childcare and early education services. Through this, the *National Childcare Strategy 1999* was formulated.

In 2001, the Department of the Environment and Local Government published *Childcare Facilities: Guidelines for Planning Authorities*. Sligo County Childcare Committee, established in response to these Guidelines, prepared a strategy document entitled *Sligo County Childcare Plan 2002-2006*.

The *Sligo County Childcare Plan* outlines the strategic framework for the development of high-quality, affordable and accessible childcare services for all children and families in County Sligo.

This framework highlights the need to increase the supply of quality childcare within the County and, in particular, to address the shortage of places for young and school-age children. It also recognises the need to balance the provision across the county, as there is a particular lack of such facilities in rural areas. This needs to be considered in conjunction with the issue of rural transport.

As outlined in subsection 5.2 Analysis: Economic Overview, there has been a significant increase in the number of women going on to third-level education and working outside the home. Therefore, consideration should be given to employer involvement in childcare provision.

Family-friendly work policies are especially important for women living in rural locations. The non-availability of rural transport, combined with the distances that parents have to travel to childcare facilities, diminishes women's access to employment outside the home, further education and community activities.



#### 4.3.3.1 Childcare objectives

- A. Support the implementation of the *Sligo County Childcare Plan 2002-2006*.
- B. Promote the location of childcare facilities in settlement centres, on sites convenient to public transport and pedestrian access.
- C. Encourage the provision of childcare facilities as an integral part of residential schemes, places of employment (e.g. business/industrial parks) and in the vicinity of schools.
- D. Work with the Sligo County Childcare Committee in identifying priority areas within the County for the provision of childcare facilities.
- E. Optimise existing physical resources/infrastructure within the County by supporting multi-functional building use and provision, to include childcare facilities.
- F. Take a lead role in the development of stand-alone, outdoor play areas, subject to funding, and agree on priority areas in consultation with the County Childcare Committee.

#### 4.3.4 Children's play

In line with *Ready, Steady, Play: A National Play Policy* (National Children's Office/Department of Health and Children – NCO/DoHC, 2004), Sligo County Council recognises the importance of play in childhood and the need to maximise opportunities for play, both within the natural and built environment. The Council is committed to consulting with children and young people when developing plans for play provision, as recommended in the *National Children's Strategy: Our Children – Their Lives* (NCO/DoHC, 2000).

#### 4.3.4.1 Play objectives

- A. Develop a children's play policy that will incorporate guidelines for appropriate play provision, including partnership arrangements with community organisations and potential funding sources.
- B. Prepare a plan for the development of play provision in the County, in conjunction with the County Development Board and in consultation with children and young people.
- C. Seek to maximise the range of play opportunities available to children, particularly children who are marginalised or disadvantaged or who have a disability.

#### 4.3.5 Sports, recreation and open space

The Sligo Sport and Recreation Partnership has formulated a Strategic Plan for the years 2003-2005. Entitled *Sport and Recreation: A Way of Life in Sligo*, the Plan provides information on the state of sporting and recreational facilities within the County and outlines a framework for the future development of these activities. The Council will ensure that adequate land is zoned for the development of accessible and affordable sporting and recreational facilities, particularly for the youth, the older adults and those who are disadvantaged or marginalised.



#### 4.3.5.1 Sports and recreation objectives

- A. Support the aims, goals and objectives of the Sligo Sport & Recreation Partnership Strategic Plan 2003–2005: *Sport and Recreation: A Way of Life in Sligo*.
- B. Preserve existing public or private recreation areas, including sports clubs, grounds, built leisure facilities and open space. If a change of use is sought, ensure that alternative recreational facilities are provided in a suitable location.
- C. Facilitate shared use of existing sports and recreation facilities, particularly school facilities.
- D. Support local sports and community groups in the development of facilities through land use zoning.
- E. Ensure that all new facilities are appropriately located where they can best meet the needs of the community that they are intended to serve.
- F. Encourage the provision of sports and recreation infrastructure as an integral part of new residential schemes.



Ballymote town park

### 4.3.5.2 Open space objectives

- A. Develop a network of open spaces throughout the County to encourage a range of recreational and amenity activities that will cater for both active and passive needs.
- B. Encourage and, if necessary, require developers to incorporate natural features such as rivers, streams, trees and tree groups into open space layouts in the planning of future developments.
- C. Require the preparation and implementation of landscaping plans and open space maintenance arrangements for all proposed open spaces areas.
- D. Preserve and improve access for the public to coastal, riverside, upland and other areas that have traditionally been used for outdoor recreation.

### 4.3.6 Healthcare facilities

The Health Service Executive for the North-West Area is the primary body responsible for the delivery of health and personal social services to Sligo's population. Of equal significance is the role it plays in promoting health and wellbeing.

In line with the present government policy of decentralisation of healthcare facilities, certain health facilities and services are now being provided at a remove from major hospitals. Residential services for the elderly, mental health services, learning disability services and primary care services are now distributed throughout a number of settlements within County Sligo. This has improved service accessibility and has been achieved through the upgrading of existing health centres and the construction of new ones.

#### 4.3.6.1 Healthcare objectives

- A. Encourage the integration of health services and facilities with new and existing community facilities, where feasible.
- B. Promote the location of health services and care facilities within existing settlements, on sites convenient to pedestrian access and public transport.
- C. Support the provision of health services for people with learning disabilities and special needs.
- D. Ensure that appropriate, accessible care facilities are available throughout the County to cater for the needs of the elderly.

#### 4.3.7 Burial grounds

Sligo County Council is responsible for the acquisition of land for the provision of burial grounds, for undertaking any necessary works on these lands and for delineating burial plots. Currently the Council has 64 burial grounds under its control and has provided an extension to the Calry facility. Other grounds that may need to be extended during the life of this Plan include Keelogue, Dromard, Ahamlish and Easky.

An annual survey is undertaken, to assess each burial ground, in particular the critical issue of plot capacity and the condition of buildings/structures on site. The most recent survey (2004) identified eight burial grounds with imminent space problems and a work plan is currently being devised to deal with this matter. The survey highlighted the need to reassess the safety of structures in the burial grounds and a safety committee has been formed to provide advice and assistance on necessary remedial action.

#### 4.3.7.1 Burial grounds objectives

- A. Provide or assist in the provision of new burial grounds and extensions to existing burial grounds, by reserving sufficient land in suitable locations.
- B. Encourage the development of burial grounds to take account of cremation and 'green lawn' principles, to promote more efficient use of land and facilitate maintenance.



Templevanny graveyard, Keash, Ballymote