

7. Heritage



Heritage includes many aspects of the world around us. Landscapes, hedgerows, field systems, rivers, plants and animals are all part of our natural heritage. Archaeological sites and many other buildings and structures – such as houses, shops, bridges and mills are features of our built heritage. County Sligo has a rich and varied heritage, including dramatic landscapes, archaeological monuments and the coastline.

Heritage is integral to the identity of Sligo. It provides the county with a strong sense of place, character and distinctiveness. Protection of our heritage not only has environmental and quality of life benefits for the people of Sligo, but it also brings significant economic benefits.

Many features of Sligo's heritage are nationally or internationally important and are therefore protected by international and national legislation. These heritage features are non-renewable and once destroyed, they are lost forever. Protection of our heritage for future generations is the responsibility of us all.

Protecting our heritage is an integral part of sustainable development and also brings economic benefits to the county. As custodians of this heritage, we have a duty to continue our guardianship role, so that future generations may also benefit from and enjoy this rich inheritance. Managing our heritage resource in an appropriate manner provides a county that is a good place to live, work and visit and will bring significant benefits to the people of Sligo.

In 2002, the Government published the *National Heritage Plan* and the *National Biodiversity Plan*, which set out strategies for the conservation and management of our heritage. A key element of both plans is an enhanced role for local authorities in heritage awareness and management, to be given effect through the preparation and implementation of *County Heritage Plans* and *Biodiversity Action Plans*.

Box 7.A Heritage protection principles

The policies and objectives for environment and heritage have been developed in accordance with the following principles:

1. The natural and built environment, particularly those elements that are non-renewable and most valuable, need to be properly protected, managed and enhanced.
2. The conservation and enhancement of biodiversity, natural heritage, landscape and the built environment should be promoted as important elements of the long-term economic growth and development of the County.
3. The protection of County Sligo's physical heritage (including archaeology and historic buildings) is a tangible representation of the County's past and is a sound basis for economic growth and regeneration.
4. The *polluter pays* principle and the *precautionary* principle are important elements of any planning policies that deal with environmental and heritage matters.

Heritage objectives

It is the objective of Sligo County Council to:

- O-H-1** Implement, in partnership with all relevant stakeholders, the *County Heritage Plan 2007-2011* and subsequent heritage plans.
- O-H-2** Adopt and implement, in partnership with all relevant stakeholders, a *County Biodiversity Action Plan* and subsequent biodiversity plans.

7.1 Natural heritage

Our natural heritage includes the variety of life we see around us every day, often referred to as biodiversity. It includes plants, animals and their habitats, as well as the physical and geological foundation that forms our landscape and seascapes.

County Sligo supports a wide diversity of natural heritage and biodiversity of local, national and international importance. When sustainably managed, our natural heritage and biodiversity can improve our quality of life, create jobs and increase people's enjoyment and pride in the County.

Sligo County Council plays an important role in the protection of the County's natural heritage and the conservation and enhancement of the natural environment. Protecting and enhancing our natural heritage is vital for the health, well-being and quality of life of communities throughout County Sligo. It is a core aim (CA-5 – see subsection 3.1.3) of this development plan to protect, conserve and manage these natural resources in a sustainable manner to ensure that economic growth complements the county's unique environmental setting.

This section sets out how Sligo County Council will meet its statutory obligations to provide for the conservation and protection of our natural heritage. In general, it is an objective to ensure, wherever possible, that developments or activities do not impact adversely upon wildlife and its habitats. A sustainable approach requires that the natural heritage resource, comprising natural habitats and species within the Plan area, should be conserved and protected for the benefit of future generations.

In general, if uncertainty exists regarding the potential impact of a proposed development, full account must be taken of the *polluter pays* and *precautionary* principles, and the proposed development will be resisted unless or until its effects are more clearly understood.

Natural heritage - general policies

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

- P-NH-1** Protect, sustainably manage and enhance the natural heritage, biodiversity, geological heritage, landscape and environment of County Sligo in recognition of its importance for nature conservation and biodiversity, and as a non-renewable resource, in association with all stakeholders.
- P-NH-2** Ensure as far as possible that development does not impact adversely on wildlife habitats and species. In the interest of sustainability, biodiversity should be conserved for the benefits of future generations.
- P-NH-3** To promote increased understanding and awareness of the natural heritage and biodiversity of the county.
- P-NH-4** Protect and, where possible, enhance the plant and animal species and their habitats that have been identified under the EU Habitats Directive, EU Birds Directive, the Wildlife Act and the Flora Protection Order.
- P-NH-5** The *polluter pays* and the *precautionary* principles are integral components of planning policies that deal with environmental and heritage matters. Where uncertainty exists regarding the potential impact of a proposed development on the natural heritage resource, full account shall be taken of the precautionary principle.



Glencar Valley seen from N16
designated Scenic Route

Box 7.B Natural heritage – legislative and policy context**European Directives**

The European Communities Habitats Directive (1992) plays a major role in the provision of protected areas for habitats and species of conservation concern, designated in Ireland as Special Areas of Conservation (SAC). The EU Birds Directive (1979) offers protection to internationally important bird populations in Special Protection Areas (SPA). Collectively, these designated areas are known as Natura 2000 sites. The Habitats and Birds Directives were transposed into Irish law through the Natural Habitats Regulations (1997) and subsequent amendments.

The National Heritage Plan 2002

The National Heritage Plan sets out a clear and coherent strategy and framework for the protection and enhancement of Ireland's national heritage. The core objective of the Plan is to protect the national heritage as well as promoting it as a resource to be enjoyed by all.

National Biodiversity Plan 2002

This Plan recognises that conservation and enhancement of biodiversity is essential for sustainable development, and for maintaining the quality of human life. The National Biodiversity Plan sets out 91 actions to halt the current and continuing loss of plant and animal species, as well as the biodiversity and habitats that they comprise, by 2010. The second National Biodiversity Plan has now been drafted and, once adopted, will provide the new context for biodiversity policy and planning in Ireland in the future.

Border Regional Planning Guidelines 2010

The 2010 Border Regional Planning Guidelines (Section 6.3 of the guidelines) recognise that the region is rich in natural heritage areas of international, national, regional and local importance. The Guidelines include a number of policies and objectives relating to natural heritage.

County Sligo Heritage Plan 2007-2011

The Plan aims to collect and make available heritage information, to inform public policy on heritage, to support the strategic and integrated management of heritage at a local level, to demonstrate best practice in heritage conservation and to raise awareness through education initiatives.

County Sligo Biodiversity Action Plan

The plan aims to prioritise, co-ordinate and initiate action to ensure the effective conservation and enhancement of biodiversity in County Sligo. It is also meant to raise awareness and appreciation of local biodiversity through involving local communities in its conservation, and to inform policy.

7.1.1 European and national designated natural heritage sites

A number of sites in County Sligo have been identified as being of exceptional importance for wildlife at a European and/or national level. European and national legislation protects the most valuable of our natural heritage areas.

At European level, Natura 2000 sites form a network of protected areas throughout the European Union. They comprise Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) designated under the EU Habitats Directive, and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) designated under the EU Birds Directive. The Habitats and Birds Directives were transposed into Irish law through the Natural Habitats Regulations (1997). Any person proposing to carry out a plan or project that is likely to have a significant impact on a Natura 2000 site should refer to subsection 7.1.2 of this chapter, regarding Habitats Directive Assessment (HDA).

Local authorities are required to ensure that a Habitats Directive Assessment of the implications of proposals affecting designated conservation sites is undertaken in respect of developments requiring planning

permission. This applies to all development proposals, plans and licensed activity (water abstraction, waste permits etc.), irrespective of location, likely to impact on these sites.

At national level, the Wildlife Act 1976 and the Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2000 are the principal statutory provisions for the protection of wildlife (both flora and fauna) and the control of activities which may impact adversely on the conservation of wildlife.

Under the Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2000, Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs) are designated to conserve species and habitats of national importance and it is proposed that sites of geological interest would in time be given statutory protection as NHAs through the Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2000.

The designation of these sites at national level is the responsibility of the DoEHLG, but it is the responsibility of all to secure their protection for the future. Some of these sites also have other designations, such as Statutory Nature Reserve, Refuge for Fauna, Biogenetic Reserve or Ramsar Site.

The process of site designation is ongoing, with new sites being added and/or upgraded, in terms of their conservation status, and the boundaries of existing sites being adjusted, as better information becomes available. In addition, there is a range of plants and animals and their associated habitats that are protected under European and national legislation, wherever they occur (see subsection 7.1.6 in this chapter).

The lists and maps of pNHAs, cSACs and SPAs, Ramsar Sites and statutory Nature Reserves occurring in County Sligo, provided in Appendix A, were compiled in March 2010. For up-to-date information, please contact Sligo County Council or the National Parks and Wildlife Service of the DoEHLG.

7.1.2 Habitats Directive Assessment (Appropriate Assessment)

Circular letter SEA 1/08 and NPWS 1/08 issued by the DoEHLG states that any draft land use plan (development plans, local area plans) or amendment/variation to it proposed under the planning and development Act 2000 (as amended) must be screened for any potential impact on areas designated as Natura 2000 sites (i.e. SACs or SPAs), to determine whether a full Appropriate Assessment of the project is required in accordance with Article 6 of the Habitats Directive (1992). The DoEHLG has also issued a document titled *Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland - Guidance for Planning Authorities* (2009).

An Appropriate Assessment means an assessment, based on best scientific knowledge, by a person with ecological expertise, of the potential impacts of the plan on the conservation objectives of any Natura 2000 sites (including Natura 2000 sites not situated in the area encompassed by the draft plan) and the development, where necessary, of mitigation or avoidance measures. The impacts assessed must include the indirect and cumulative impacts of approving the plan, considered with any current or proposed activities, developments or policies impacting on the site. The potential impacts of policies outside Natura 2000 sites (known as 'ex-situ' impacts) must also be included in the assessment.

If the Habitats Directive screening indicates that a plan or project arising from this Development Plan will have a significant effect on a Natura 2000 site, either directly or indirectly, on its own or in combination with other plans and projects, then the plan or project must be the subject of an Appropriate Assessment as per Article 6 of the Habitats Directive (1992).

Having considered the conclusions of the Habitats Directive Assessment, the competent national authorities shall agree to the plan or project only after having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site(s) concerned. If, in spite of a negative assessment of the implications for the site and in the absence of alternative solutions, a plan or project must nevertheless be carried out for imperative reasons of overriding public interest, including those of a social or economic nature, the Member State shall take all compensatory measures necessary to ensure that the overall coherence of Natura 2000 is protected and it shall inform the Commission of the compensatory measures adopted.

Where the site concerned hosts a priority natural habitat type and/or priority species, the only considerations which may be raised are those relating to human health or public safety, to beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment, or further to an opinion from the Commission, to other imperative reasons of overriding public interest. The Member State shall take all compensatory measures necessary to ensure that the overall coherence of Natura 2000 is protected and it shall inform the Commission of the compensatory measures adopted.

Where development is permitted in spite of a negative assessment, the planning authority will consider the use of conditions or planning agreements to ensure the protection and enhancement of the site's nature conservation interest.

The National Parks and Wildlife Service will be invited to prioritise the preparation of Management Plans for Natura 2000 Sites. This will facilitate the development of site specific Conservation Objectives in the context of the proper planning and sustainable development of the County.

European and national designated natural heritage sites - objectives

It is an objective of Sligo County Council to:

- O-NH-1** Protect and maintain the favourable conservation status and conservation value of all natural heritage sites designated or proposed for designation in accordance with European and national legislation and in other relevant international conventions, agreements and processes. This includes sites designated or proposed as Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs), Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs), Ramsar Sites and Statutory Nature Reserves.
- O-NH-1a** Promote the maintenance and, as appropriate, the achievement of favourable conservation status of protected habitats and species in association with the NPWS.
- O-NH-2** Assess, in accordance with the relevant legislation, all proposed developments which are likely to have a significant effect (directly or through indirect or cumulative impact) on designated natural heritage sites, sites proposed for designation and protected species.
- O-NH-3** When considering any plan or project prepared or assessed on the basis of this development plan, the planning authority must comply fully with Article 6 of the EU Habitats Directive (as transposed into Irish Law by the EU Habitats Regulations 1997 and subsequent amendments) and assess whether the plan or project is likely to have a significant impact upon the integrity, conservation objectives and qualifying interests of any Natura 2000 site.
- O-NH-4** Consult with the relevant prescribed bodies and appropriate agencies when considering undertaking, approving or authorising developments which are likely to affect designated natural heritage sites or those proposed to be designated.
- O-NH-5** Establish and maintain an up-to-date planning register of all previously adopted and proposed plans/programmes and all granted and proposed developments which are likely to have a significant effect (directly or through indirect, cumulative or in-combination effect) on European Sites within or adjoining the county, to allow for the appropriate assessment of potential ex-situ and cumulative/in combination effects of proposed plans, programmes and projects on such sites.
- O-NH-5a** An appropriate assessment screening determination shall be made for all land use plans, related variations and projects in consultation with the National Parks and Wildlife Service of the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government.
- O-NH-6** Support and co-operate with statutory authorities and others in support of measures taken to manage designated nature conservation sites in order to achieve their conservation objectives. Specific regard shall be had to Conservation Management Plans and their conservation objectives/management practices, where they exist.
- O-NH-7** Promote development for recreational and educational purposes that would not conflict with maintaining favourable conservation status and the meeting of the conservation objectives for designated sites.

7.1.3 Nature conservation outside of designated sites

Existing nature conservation legislation provides for the protection of particular species and sites of international and national importance. However, such primary habitats and landscape features cannot be sustained in the long-term in isolation from one another. There must be a network of protected areas, ecological corridors, and ecological “stepping stones” available to support the movement of species and to sustain the habitats, ecological processes and functions necessary to maintain biodiversity and the key elements in this ecological network need to be identified, protected and enhanced.

Most of Sligo’s biodiversity is interwoven throughout our landscape and includes woodlands, hedgerows, earthen banks and ditches, coastal habitats such as mudflats and sand dunes, our rivers, lakes and wetlands, areas of upland blanket bog, heath and raised bogs and unimproved grasslands, as well as the plant and animal species that are found in these wild places. Rare and protected sites and species cannot survive independently of their surroundings. The wider landscape provides vital links and corridors to allow the movement of plants and animals between protected sites.



Burnet moths
on thistle



Harebells



Common spotted
orchid

Promoting and protecting biodiversity and wildlife corridors

Article 10 of the Habitats Directive outlines our obligations in relation to natural heritage in the wider countryside. It provides that, through land use planning and development policies, Planning Authorities shall endeavour to improve the ecological coherence of the Natura 2000 network and encourage the management of landscape features that are of major importance for wild fauna and flora. Such features are those which, by virtue of their linear and continuous structure (such as rivers with their banks or the traditional systems of marking field boundaries) or their function as stepping stones (such as ponds or small woods), are essential for the migration, dispersal and genetic exchange of wild species.

County Biodiversity Sites

Many sites of biodiversity value within the County do not meet the criteria that would enable them to be designated at an international or national level. Although such sites are of immense importance at a regional and county level, to date they have not been fully surveyed or recognised as such. In order to inform this process, the County Council has commissioned – and continues to commission – surveys of key habitats such as hedgerows, wetlands and unimproved grassland. It is critical to the overall ecological network and biodiversity value of County Sligo that these sites are identified, valued and conserved. The County Biodiversity Sites which are of recognised conservation value are listed for protection in Appendix C of this Plan.

A key support measure to this policy area is the ongoing work in identifying important elements of the county’s ecological network. This ongoing work commenced under the County Habitat Mapping Programme and is an action of the County Heritage Plan and County Biodiversity Plan.

During the lifetime of this Development Plan, Sligo County Council will continue to identify – for protection – landscape features of major importance for wild flora and fauna as per Article 10 of the EU Habitats Directive and County Biodiversity Sites.

Nature conservation outside designated sites - policies

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

- P-NH-6** Minimise the impact of new development on habitats of natural value that are key features of the County's ecological network. Developments likely to have an adverse effect on recognised sites of local nature conservation importance will be required to demonstrate the impacts on the ecological value of the site and will not be approved unless it can be clearly demonstrated that there are reasons for the development that outweigh the need to safeguard the nature conservation value of the site.
- P-NH-7** Ensure that development proposals, where relevant, improve the ecological coherence of the Natura 2000 network and encourage the management of landscape features that are of major importance for wild fauna and flora as per Article 10 of the Habitats Directive.
- P-NH-8** Ensure that proposals for development protect and enhance biodiversity, wherever possible, by minimising adverse impacts on existing habitats and by including mitigation and/or compensation measures, as appropriate, which ensure that biodiversity is enhanced.
- P-NH-9** Apply the *precautionary* principle in relation to development proposals with potential to impact on County Biodiversity Sites or on local nature conservation interest by requiring an ecological impact assessment to ensure that any proposed development will not affect the integrity and conservation value of the site.
- P-NH-10** Ensure that no ecological networks, or parts thereof which provide significant connectivity between areas of local biodiversity, are lost without remediation as a result of implementation of this Plan.

Nature conservation outside designated sites - objectives

It is an objective of Sligo County Council to:

- O-NH-8** Continue the County Habitat Mapping project, thereby generating the necessary information to identify landscape features that are of major importance for wild fauna, flora and County Biodiversity Sites, as key features of the county's ecological network which will enable planning for future development in a sensitive manner while protecting sites of high nature conservation value.
- O-NH-9** Identify and protect, in co-operation with the relevant statutory agencies and other relevant groups, County Biodiversity Sites which are not otherwise protected by legislation.
- O-NH-10** Ensure that the findings of Habitat Mapping project (when completed) are utilised to inform the development management process.
- O-NH-11** Endeavour, where considered necessary, to improve the ecological coherence of the Natura 2000 Network, by encouraging the preservation and management of features of the landscape which are of major importance for wild fauna and flora as referred to in Article 10 of the Habitats Directive. These features include those which, by virtue of their linear and continuous structure (such as rivers with their banks or the traditional systems for marking field boundaries) or their function as stepping stones (such as ponds or small woods), are essential for the migration, dispersal and genetic exchange of wild species.
- O-NH-12** Integrate biodiversity considerations into Local Authority plans, programmes and activities where appropriate.
- O-NH-13** Provide guidance for developers and the general public in relation to nature conservation outside designated sites and the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity and geological heritage in general.

7.1.4 Woodlands, trees and hedgerows

Woodlands, trees and hedgerows within County Sligo contribute significantly to biodiversity and landscape character. There are a number of woodland habitats such as oak woodland, wet woodland and scrub throughout the county.

Trees make a positive contribution to the county's landscape and townscapes. In addition they provide wildlife habitats, soften hard urban edges and provide scale and backdrops to streets and buildings. They also filter out noise, dust and pollutants and prevent flooding by retaining moisture.

Hedgerows constitute an important natural and historic resource, given their contribution to landscape quality, their ecological importance as wildlife habitats and historical significance as townland and field boundaries. While the relative importance of hedgerows is difficult to assess without a detailed survey, in general, the following categories are worthy of protection:

- ancient hedgerows - field systems dating prior to the mid-17th Century;
- townland boundaries;
- hedgerows that have a farming, landscape, cultural function;
- hedgerows incorporating archaeological features;
- hedgerows that are important as wildlife corridors between habitats;
- hedgerows adjacent to roads, green lanes, tracks and wooded ground;
- banks and ditches that may have the above characteristics.

Woodlands, trees and hedgerows policies

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

- P-NH-11** Protect trees and hedgerows from development that would impact adversely upon them, and promote the enhancement of existing hedgerows by seeking increased coverage, in conjunction with new development.
- P-NH-12** Protect woodlands and hedgerows from damage and/or degradation and work to prevent the disruption of the connectivity of the woodlands and hedgerows of the county.
- P-NH-13** Protect and manage existing woodlands, trees and hedgerows which are of amenity or biodiversity value and/or contribute to landscape character, and ensure that proper provision is made for their protection and management when undertaking, approving or authorising development.
- P-NH-14** Ensure that, when undertaking, approving or authorising development, sufficient information is provided to enable an assessment of impacts on woodlands, trees and hedgerows.
- P-NH-15** Encourage development proposals that enhance the landscape through positive management and additional planting/sensitive replanting of native tree species.
- P-NH-16** Ensure, where required, that applications for development include proposals for planting and/or leave a suitable ecological buffer zone between the development works and areas/features of ecological importance.
- P-NH-17** Recognise the biodiversity and archaeological importance of townland boundaries, including hedgerows, and promote their protection and retention.
- P-NH-18** Encourage the development of proposals for new woodlands utilising funding available through schemes such as the NeighbourWood and Native Woodland Schemes.

Woodlands, trees and hedgerows objectives

It is an objective of Sligo County Council to:

- O-NH-14** Undertake a study to document and map significant mature trees within the County area within the lifetime of the plan.
- O-NH-15** Make Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) as required in order to ensure the protection of important trees in urban and rural areas that contribute to public amenity, particularly indigenous trees and trees under threat.
- O-NH-16** Preserve and conserve trees or groups of trees identified in the Tree Preservation Order (TPO) at Mullaghmore.

7.1.5 Inland waters – lakes, rivers, streams, wetlands and groundwater

The rivers and streams, lakes, wetlands and groundwater occurring within the Plan area are home to a variety of habitats and species. Lough Gill, Lough Arrow, Lough Talt, the lakes Gara, Easky and Templehouse, together with the rivers Owenmore, Unshin, Moy and Easky, are the main water bodies in County Sligo. The banks of rivers and streams (riparian zones) are particularly important, as they contain a range of habitats and species which are different from the surrounding landscape. Riparian zones function as ecological corridors and “stepping stones” that enable species to move from place to place.

Wetlands associated with rivers and streams, such as wet grasslands and marshes, are important for biodiversity but have other benefits as well. They reduce the flow of pollutants to both surface water and groundwater and ease the impacts of flooding by retaining floodwaters and releasing them slowly back into our waterways. Rivers and streams also provide recreational benefits for local communities. Groundwater is important for supplying water and maintaining wetlands and river flows in dry periods.

Rivers and streams should be maintained in an open, semi-natural condition, wherever possible. Their corridors and valleys should be protected and maintained for their biodiversity, landscape and flood protection value. This should be achieved by strictly controlling development in river/stream corridors and valleys and by implementing sustainable drainage systems for commercial and residential developments. Groundwater resources should be protected and managed in a sustainable manner.



Lough Talt

Riparian zones

Riparian zones are particularly vulnerable to damage from inappropriate development. While this Plan does not prohibit development in a riparian zone, developments taking place in such zones must ensure the protection of these vulnerable areas. A key requirement of an integrated watercourse protection strategy is the set-aside of sufficient land along the river margin or corridor:

- for larger river channels (over 10 m), the recommended width of the core riparian zone (CRZ) is 35-60 m (18-30 m on each side of the river) and may be larger where flood plains adjoin the riparian zone;
- for smaller channels (under 10 m), a core riparian zone (CRZ) of 20 m or greater (minimum 10 m on each side of the river) is recommended. The determined width should be tailored to the specific site, river reach or lakeshore characteristics and their associated habitats.
- for salmonid rivers, the core riparian zone should be a minimum of 25 m on each side of the river.

It is important that the buffer zone is large enough to protect the ecological integrity of the river (including emergent vegetation) and the riparian zone (bankside vegetation including trees), taking into account the historical use of the area. In identifying the Core Riparian Zone along a watercourse, regard will be had to the following criteria:

- provision of bed and bank stability;
- protection of water quality;
- maintenance of viability of riparian vegetation;
- provision of continuity and connectivity along the riparian zone;
- integration with floodplain processes;
- management of edge effects at riparian/urban interface;
- protection of natural values within channels.

Inland waters policies

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

- | | |
|----------------|---|
| P-NH-19 | Protect rivers, streams and other water courses and their associated Core Riparian Zones (CRZs) wherever possible and maintain them in an open state, capable of providing suitable habitats for fauna and flora. |
| P-NH-20 | Protect and enhance the natural heritage and landscape character of river and stream corridors and valleys, maintain them free from inappropriate development and make provision for public access where feasible and appropriate. |
| P-NH-21 | Protect and enhance biodiversity richness by protecting rivers, stream corridors and valleys by reserving land along their banks for ecological corridors, maintaining them free from inappropriate development and discouraging culverting or realignment. |
| P-NH-22 | Ensure that all proposed greenfield residential and commercial developments use sustainable drainage systems (SUDS) in accordance with best current practice, ensuring protection of the integrity of wetland sites in the adjoining area, including their hydrological regime. |
| P-NH-23 | Ensure that floodplains and wetlands within the Plan area are retained for their biodiversity and flood protection value. |
| P-NH-24 | Ensure that proposed developments do not adversely affect groundwater resources and groundwater-dependent habitats and species. |
| P-NH-25 | Work with landowners, local communities and other relevant groups to protect and manage inland waters, river corridors and their floodplains from degradation and damage, and to recognise and promote them as natural assets of the urban/rural environment. |
| P-NH-26 | Have regard to the County Sligo Wetlands Surveys 2008 and 2009 and subsequent wetland surveys that may be published during the lifetime of this Plan. |

Inland waters objectives

It is an objective of Sligo County Council to:

- O-NH-17** Consult with prescribed bodies prior to undertaking, approving or authorising any works or development that may impact on rivers, streams and watercourses.
- O-NH-18** Require that runoff from a developed area does not result in deterioration of downstream watercourses or habitats, and that pollution generated by a development is treated within the development area prior to discharge to local watercourses.
- O-NH-19** Ensure that an appropriate ecological assessment is undertaken for developments with the potential to impact on inland waters.

7.1.6 Protected species

County Sligo hosts many native wild plant and animal species, some of which are unique and special to the county. Certain species are rare or vulnerable and are protected by law, as they require special measures to ensure their continued survival. At national level, the Flora (Protection) Order (1999), or other such orders, list legally protected plant species. The Wildlife Act 1976 and the Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2000 list protected animal species.

The Habitats Directive contains Annexes for plant and animal species (other than birds) identified to be of conservation concern and for which conservation measures and regulations apply.

The Birds Directive contains a number of Annexes which list bird species for which varying conservation measures and regulations apply. This protection applies wherever the bird species are found and is not confined to sites designated for nature conservation. This is particularly important when assessing development proposals for lands outside of an SPA but which are used for roosting, feeding, nesting etc. by bird species for which the SPA is designated.

The Habitats Directive and the implementing Birds and Natural Habitats Regulations 2011 require that certain species listed in Annex IV of the Habitats Directive are strictly protected. These are as follows (species known to occur in Sligo are indicated thus *): all Bat Species*, Otter*, Whales and Dolphins*, Leatherback Turtle, Natterjack Toad, Kerry Slug, Killarney Fern*, Slender Naiad and Yellow Marsh Saxifrage.

These species are not restricted to designated nature conservation areas. Bats and otters may be found anywhere in the county, where conditions and habitats are suitable. Carrying out of any work that has the potential to disturb these species, and for which a derogation licence has not been granted by the National Parks and Wildlife Service, may constitute an offence. A list of all known protected plant and animal species known to occur in County Sligo along with the relevant legislation affording their protection is included in Appendix C of this Plan.

Protected species policies

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

- P-NH-27** Protect plant species and their associated habitats listed in the Flora (Protection) Order 1999.
- P-NH-28** Protect species and their associated habitats that require strict protection under the Habitats Regulations (*S.I. No. 477/2011 - EC (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011*).
- P-NH-29** Protect animal and bird species and their associated habitats protected under the Wildlife Act 1976 and Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2000.
- P-NH-30** Ensure that development does not have a significant adverse impact, incapable of satisfactory mitigation, on plant, animal or bird species protected by law.

Protected species objectives

It is an objective of Sligo County Council to:

- O-NH-20** Consult with the National Parks and Wildlife Service (DoEHLG) and take account of any licensing requirements when undertaking, approving and authorising development which is likely to affect plant, animal or bird species protected by law.
- O-NH-21** Provide guidance to developers and others in relation to species protected by law and their protection and management in the context of development.
- O-NH-22** Undertake surveys, as appropriate, to establish the location of protected flora and fauna in the Plan area through the County Heritage Plan and the County Biodiversity Action Plan.

7.1.7 Invasive species

Invasive non-native plant and animal species are the second greatest threat to biodiversity worldwide, after habitat destruction. They can impact negatively on native species, can transform habitats and threaten whole ecosystems, causing serious problems to the environment and the economy.

There is potential for the spread of invasive species during excavation and construction works. To minimise the risk of accidental transfer of non-native species, it will be necessary to adhere to current best practice protocol for avoiding the spread or transfer of all invasive species and plants, in particular Japanese Knotweed, Giant Hogweed and Zebra Mussel, all of which occur within the Plan area. Sligo County Council will strive to prevent their spread and to seek eradication where possible, as opportunities and resources allow.

Invasive species policies

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

- P-NH-31** Prevent the spread of invasive species within the Plan area, including requiring landowners and developers to adhere to best practice guidance in relation to the control of invasive species.
- P-NH-32** Seek the control and/or eradication of invasive species, as appropriate, within the Plan area, as opportunities and resources allow. Targeted invasive species control should be informed by current distribution of species, degree of threat posed and resources available to control and/or eradicate them.
- P-NH-33** Promote public awareness and engagement with regard to invasive species through awareness campaigns and the provision of targeted information on the role of the general public in the control of invasive species.

Invasive species objective

It is an objective of Sligo County Council to:

- O-NH-23** Undertake a study through the County Heritage Plan and County Biodiversity Plan to quantify the extent of invasive species within the Plan area, with recommendations of priority species for control and /or eradication, the degree of threat posed and the resources required for effective management.

7.1.8 Geological heritage sites

To date, sites of geological interest have not been comprehensively covered by the existing nature conservation designations. The DoEHLG and the Geological Survey of Ireland (GSI) are currently drawing up of a list of sites of national geological interest that will be proposed as NHAs as part of the Irish Geological Heritage Programme (IGHP). In the interim, Sligo County Council has listed in this Plan the geological features of national and county importance occurring in the County with the objective of maintaining their conservation value. The list has been produced in consultation with the GSI and is included in Appendix D of this Plan.



The Glen, Coolera Peninsula

Sites of geological interest - objective

It is an objective of Sligo County Council to:

- O-NH-24** Protect and maintain the character, integrity and conservation value of those features or areas of geological interest that are listed in this Plan or that may be proposed by the DoEHLG and/or the GSI in the lifetime of this Plan.

7.2 Archaeological heritage

7.2.1 The archaeological resource

Archaeology is an irreplaceable link with our past and is to be found in every townland in County Sligo. Sligo's archaeological heritage, through its monuments, artefacts and environmental evidence, provides knowledge and a critical resource for the study of our historic or prehistoric peoples and their cultures. Only a portion of the material remains of the past has survived, as many sites have disappeared from the landscape. Of those that do survive, some are visible in the landscape while others only survive beneath the current ground surface or have been remodeled within more modern buildings.

County Sligo, with over 6,500 known archaeological sites and monuments, has one of the highest densities of archaeology of any Irish county. Sligo's archaeology varies greatly in form, date and condition. Ranging from the Mesolithic Period (7000 BC) to the end of the Medieval Period (1700 AD), the archaeological record includes megalithic sites, fulachta Fiadh, Early Christian ecclesiastical sites, churches and graveyards, medieval buildings, castles, industrial archaeology and underwater sites such as wrecks. Sligo has a number of significant archaeological and historical landscapes, the most notable being the Cuil Irra Peninsula (which includes Knocknarea, Carrowmore and Carns Hill), Carrowkeel and Inishmurray.

The archaeological heritage is a resource that can be used to gain knowledge and understanding of the past and is, therefore, of great cultural and scientific importance. Sligo County Council recognises the importance of preserving and protecting this resource, while fostering a greater public appreciation of the archaeological heritage within the Plan area.

7.2.2 Policy and legislation

The principles set out in the DoEHLG publication *Framework and Principles for the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage* (1999) provide the national policy framework in relation to archaeological heritage.

The National Monuments Act 1930 and its amendments of 1954, 1987, 1994 and 2004 provide for the protection of the archaeological heritage. Archaeological heritage includes all types of archaeological remains including monuments, ship-wrecks and archaeological objects.

Under the Act there are different levels of monument protection. A level of universal protection is afforded to all monuments listed in the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP). The RMP was established under Section 12 of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act 1994; all entries on the list are known as recorded monuments and are shown on an accompanying set of maps.

While all known monuments are included on the RMP, a lesser number are accorded a higher level of protection. Some are entered on the Register of Historic Monuments established under Section 5 of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act 1987. The highest level of protection is accorded to National Monuments, i.e. monuments deemed to be of national significance (see Appendix F of this Plan).

7.2.3 Development proposals affecting archaeology

Various types of development can impact on the visual appreciation, setting and amenity of recorded monuments. Such impacts should be adequately assessed and, where possible, negated or minimised. Previously unidentified archaeological sites may be uncovered during development works, while archaeological deposits that would be damaged by development must be investigated and recorded in great detail.

Any proposed development (due to its location, size or nature) with the potential to affect the archaeological heritage resource will be subject to an Archaeological Impact Assessment. This includes proposals close to archaeological monuments, proposals extensive in area (half a hectare or more) or length (1km or more), and development that requires an Environmental Impact Assessment. Other areas of high archaeological potential may exist outside the boundaries of conventionally recognised monuments, especially in wetlands, former wetlands and in the inter-tidal zone.

The Council will have regard to the recommendations of the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government when considering proposals with potential to affect the archaeological heritage. The Planning Authority recommends that potential developers consult as early as possible with the relevant agencies, such as the National Monuments Service of the DoEHLG and the Planning Section of Sligo County Council, in order to ensure that archaeological concerns can be integrated into development proposals at as early a stage as possible.

7.2.4 Industrial archaeology

In 2005, an *Industrial Archaeology Survey of County Sligo* was commissioned by Sligo County Council on behalf of the County Sligo Heritage Forum, as an action of the County Sligo Heritage Plan. The project collated all paper-based information relating to industrial heritage sites in the County. The project outputs were a report outlining approximately 1200 industrial heritage sites in the county, an accompanying database and a digital map of the recorded locations. When considering development proposals that may affect sites identified in the Sligo Industrial Archaeology Survey (2005), the Council will require an Industrial Archaeology Assessment.

7.2.5 Conservation plans

Conservation plans were commissioned for Carrowkeel (2005) and Inishmurray (2007) by Sligo County Council on behalf of the County Sligo Heritage Forum, as an action of the County Sligo Heritage Plan. The purpose of any conservation plan is to describe the significance of a site, assess the issues that make the site vulnerable and put in place policies to address those issues. The Council will seek the adoption and implementation of the Conservation Plans for Carrowkeel and Inishmurray in association with the landowners and relevant stakeholders, within the lifetime of this Plan. Sligo County Council recognises the significance of these unique and internationally important sites and associated landscapes, and is fully committed to ensuring that they are protected and preserved *in situ*.

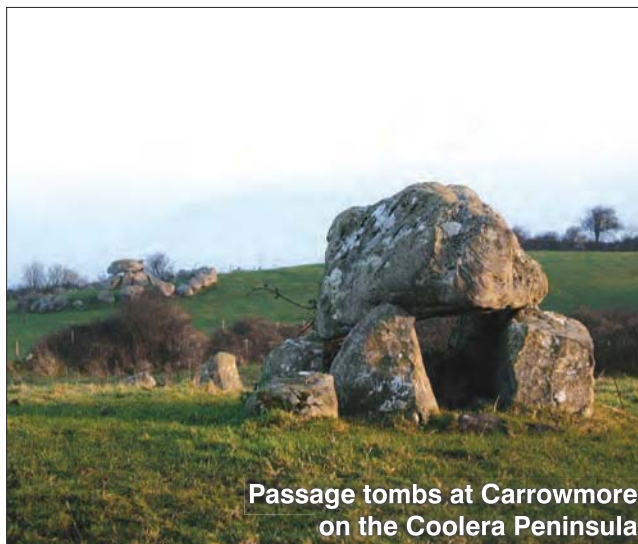
7.2.6 The Cuil Irra Peninsula – Carrowmore, Knocknarea and Carns Hill

The cluster of megalithic tombs at Carrowmore represents one of the four major passage tomb cemeteries in Ireland and is the largest such cemetery in the country. Others include Carrowkeel, also in County Sligo, as well as Newgrange and Lough Crew in County Meath. The archaeological landscape of the Cuil Irra (Knocknarea) peninsula dates from around 4,000 BC or earlier, as suggested from excavations. The site formed an important ritual centre in the Neolithic period and the known archaeological monuments present are mostly laid out on an east-west axis.

Providing a focus at the centre of the peninsula is the megalithic cemetery at Carrowmore, comprising an oval-shaped cluster of 30 monuments surrounding the centrally

placed cairn of “Listoghil” (Tomb 51). To the west of the peninsula, overlooking Carrowmore megalithic cemetery from the summit of Knocknarea Mountain, is the iconic flat-topped cairn known as Miosgán Meadhbha (Maeve’s Cairn). To the east of Cuil Irra, also overlooking Carrowmore, are two large cairns on the summit of Carns Hill. The cairns are comparable in size to Maeve’s Cairn on the summit of Knocknarea.

Sligo County Council recognises the significance of the unique and internationally-important archaeological landscape of the Cuil Irra Peninsula and is fully committed to ensuring that this special archaeological landscape is protected and preserved *in situ*.



Passage tombs at Carrowmore
on the Coolera Peninsula

Sligo County Council will seek to put in place a development management strategy for the Cuil Irra Peninsula to include Knocknarea, Carrowmore and Carns Hill, and will work with the relevant agencies to achieve this objective within the timeframe of this Plan. In this regard, the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government has appointed a steering group to oversee the preparation of a Conservation Study of Archaeological Features at Knocknarea, Carrowmore and Carns Hill, Sligo.

Archaeological heritage policies (I)

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

- P-AH-1** Protect and enhance archaeological sites, monuments, their setting, appreciation and amenity within the Plan area, including those that are listed in the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP) or newly discovered archaeological sites and/or sub-surface archaeological remains.
- P-AH-2** Require archaeological assessment, surveys, test excavation and/or monitoring for planning applications in areas of archaeological importance, if a development proposal is likely to impact upon in-situ archaeological monuments, their setting and archaeological deposits.
- P-AH-3** Ensure that full consideration is given to the protection of archaeological heritage when undertaking, approving or authorising development in order to avoid unnecessary conflict between development and the protection of the archaeological heritage.
- P-AH-4** Secure the preservation in-situ or by record of:
 - the archaeological monuments included in the Record of Monuments and Places as established under section 12 of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act, 1994;
 - any sites and features of historical and archaeological interest;
 - any subsurface archaeological features that may be discovered during the course of infrastructural/development works in the operational area of the Plan.

Preservation relates to archaeological sites or objects and their settings. Preservation in-situ is most effectively achieved by the refurbishment of existing buildings, in situations where it is possible to retain the greater part of existing structures without the need for new foundations.
- P-AH-5** Ensure that development within the vicinity of a Recorded Monument does not detract from the setting of the feature and is sited and designed appropriately.
- P-AH-6** Protect historic burial grounds that are recorded monuments and encourage their maintenance in accordance with conservation principles. Development may be restricted or conditions requiring substantial excavation may be imposed in and adjacent to former burial grounds.
- P-AH-7** Encourage and promote the appropriate management and enhancement of the archaeological heritage within the Plan area.
- P-AH-8** Facilitate and enhance public access to and understanding of the archaeological heritage and disseminate information and advice on the archaeological heritage to prospective developers and the general public.
- P-AH-9** Require that all development proposals for industrial buildings and sites of industrial archaeological importance be accompanied by an industrial archaeology assessment of the surrounding environment. New development should be designed in sympathy with existing features and structures.
- P-AH-10** Ensure, through the application of appropriate design standards and criteria, that land uses do not give rise to significant losses of the integrity, quality or context of archaeological material except as may be conditioned or directed by the appropriate heritage agencies. [continues on the next page]

Archaeological heritage policies (II)

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

- P-AH-11** Have regard to the policy recommendations and guidelines established in the Conservation Plans for Carrowkeel and Inishmurray, commissioned by Sligo County Council.
- P-AH-12** Have regard to the recommendations and guidelines which will be established in the document *A Conservation Study of the Passage Tomb Group and Associated Archaeological Features and Other Monuments of Knocknarea, Carrowmore and Cairns Hill, Co. Sligo*, commissioned by the DoEHLG in partnership with relevant stakeholders. .

Archaeological heritage objectives

It is an objective of Sligo County Council to:

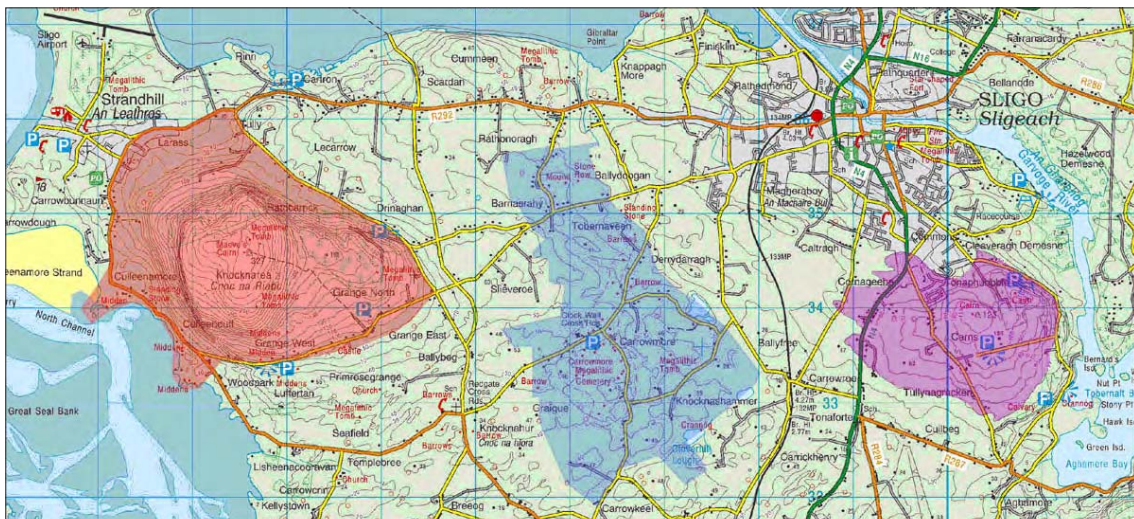
- O-AH-1** Require an Archaeological Impact Assessment when considering development proposals with a potential to affect archaeological heritage, and have regard to the advice and recommendations of the prescribed bodies as defined in the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) in relation to undertaking, approving or authorising development.
- O-AH-2** Refer to the above-mentioned prescribed bodies all proposals for linear development over one kilometre in length, proposals for development involving ground clearance of a half hectare or more and proposals for development affecting present or former wetlands, unenclosed land, rivers or estuaries.
- O-AH-3** Require the preservation of the context amenity and visual integrity and connection of archaeological monuments to their setting. Views to and from archaeological monuments should not be obscured by inappropriate development. Archaeological visual impact assessments should be undertaken to demonstrate the continued preservation of an archaeological monument's siting and context.
- O-AH-4** Ensure that a suitably qualified archaeologist carries out all archaeological works required when permission is granted for development that requires mitigation of impacts on the archaeological heritage.
- O-AH-5** Encourage the incorporation of, or the reference to significant archaeological finds into development schemes, where feasible. Archaeological monuments should not form part of green space or car parking allocations in proposed developments.
- O-AH-6** Identify and protect internationally important archaeological landscapes such as the Carrowkeel, Inishmurray and the Cuil Irra Peninsula (which includes the core areas of Knocknarea, Carrowmore and Carns Hill), in co-operation with landowners and relevant stakeholders and statutory agencies.
- O-AH-7** Identify appropriate archaeological sites in the Plan area to which public access could be provided and work to secure public access, where appropriate, in consultation with the land owners.
- O-AH-8** Protect and preserve archaeological sites discovered since the publication of the Record of Monuments and Places (1995).
- O-AH-9** Protect and preserve the archaeological value of underwater archaeological sites. In assessing proposals for development, the Council will take account of river, lake, inter-tidal and sub-tidal environments.
- O-AH-10** Protect and preserve the archaeological value of industrial heritage sites as identified in the Industrial Archaeology Survey of County Sligo (2005). Proposals for refurbishment, works to or redevelopment/conversion of these sites will be subject to a full architectural and archaeological assessment.

Objectives for the Cuil Irra Peninsula – Carrowmore, Knocknarea and Carns Hill

It is an objective of Sligo County Council to:

- O-CIP-1** Have regard to the recommendations and guidelines which will be established in the document *A Conservation Study of the Passage Tomb Group and Associated Archaeological Features and Other Monuments of Knocknarea, Carrowmore and Carns Hill, Co. Sligo*, commissioned by the DoEHLG in partnership with relevant stakeholders.
- O-CIP-2** Protect groups of important National Monuments in the Cuil Irra Peninsula, inclusive of their contextual setting and interpretation, through careful management of development in the area.
- O-CIP-3** Protect the vulnerable archaeological and cultural landscape and protect views within and adjacent to Carrowmore Megalithic Cemetery, Knocknarea and Carns Hill.
- O-CIP-4** Protect the context, amenity and integrity of the archaeological heritage and landscape at Carns Hill, including the direct intervisibility between the core areas of the Cuil Irra Peninsula (Knocknarea, Carrowmore and Carns Hill) and other relevant locations within the wider Cuil Irra passage tombs complex.
- O-CIP-5** Establish a co-ordinated signage programme (directional and information signage) for Carrowmore Megalithic Cemetery, Knocknarea and Carns Hill with the relevant agencies including the OPW and NMS, DoEHLG.
- O-CIP-6** Refer to the National Monuments Section DoEHLG all development proposals within the archaeological and historic landscape of the Cuil Irra Peninsula (which includes the core areas of Knocknarea, Carrowmore and Carns Hill) as identified in fig. 7.A below.
- O-CIP-7** Ensure that Archaeological Impact Assessments are requested at pre-planning and planning application stage for all development proposals within the archaeological and historic landscape of the Cuil Irra Peninsula (which includes the core areas of Knocknarea, Carrowmore and Carns Hill).
- O-CIP-8** Put in place a development management strategy for the protection of the archaeological landscape of the Cuil Irra Peninsula, to include Knocknarea, Carrowmore and Carns Hill, in partnership with landowners, the relevant agencies and stakeholders.

Fig. 7.C Archaeological and historic landscape of the Cuil Irra Peninsula



7.3 Architectural heritage



Lisadell House, Lissadill, Carney

County Sligo hosts a rich heritage of buildings and structures. It is an objective of this Plan to seek the protection and conservation of buildings and structures of architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social and technical importance.

The principal mechanism for protection of these buildings and structures is through their inclusion on the Record of Protected Structures (RPS). This provides positive recognition of the structures' importance, protection from adverse impacts and potential access to grant aid for conservation works.

There are currently 400 structures included in the Record of Protected Structures for County Sligo. As the review of the Record of Protected Structures is an ongoing process, these figures may change during the lifetime of this Plan.

7.3.1 The Record of Protected Structures (RPS)

The Planning and Development Act, 2000 (Part II, Section 10(2)(f) and (g)) places a statutory obligation on local authorities to include in their development plans objectives for the protection of structures, or parts of structures, which are of special architectural, historic, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest. These buildings and structures are listed in a register known as the Record of Protected Structures (RPS). In preparing the RPS for the County Sligo, the Planning Authority had regard to:

- the Architectural Inventory for County Sligo, prepared by the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH) of the DoEHLG, and associated Ministerial recommendations; (see www.buildingsofireland.ie)
- the *Architectural Heritage Protection – Guidelines for Planning Authorities* (DoEHLG 2004).

A Protected Structure, unless otherwise stated in the RPS, includes the interior of the structure, the land lying within its curtilage, any other structures and their interiors lying within that curtilage, plus all of the fixtures and features that form part of the interior or exterior of any of these structures.

The owner or occupier of a Protected Structure is entitled to ask the Council for a written declaration (under Section 57 of the Planning and Development Act 2000) indicating the type of works that would or would not materially affect the character of that structure or any element of it that contributes to its special interest.

Declarations provide guidance as to what works would or would not require planning permission in the context of the protection of the architectural heritage.

County Sligo has buildings of different character, quality, age and style, which contribute significantly to the county's attractive streetscapes. The buildings and structures identified in the RPS are irreplaceable records of the past and therefore require protection. Their presence enhances the character of the county and adds to local distinctiveness.

It is recognised that in order to prolong the life of a protected structure, it may be necessary for such a building to accommodate change or new uses. The effect of the Protected Structure status is to ensure that any changes or alterations to the character of the building are carried out in such a way that the existing special character is retained and enhanced.

With a view to encouraging the restoration of protected structures, the Council will not seek development contributions provided for under Section 48 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, which might normally apply to the development, if the proposal involves restoration/refurbishment to a high architectural standard.

The RPS may be amended between reviews of the Development Plan and the Council can add to or delete from the RPS at any time by following the procedures outlined in Section 55 of the Planning and Development Act 2000.

An up-to-date RPS, incorporating any additions or deletions within the lifetime of the current Development Plan, will be maintained on Sligo County Council's website and will also be made available for inspection at the public counter of the Planning Section at Sligo County Council's offices.

7.3.2 Protection of non-habitable structures

Non-habitable structures, such as historic gardens, stone walls and street furniture, make a significant contribution to our architectural heritage. A lack of awareness of their inherent and associative value can result in the loss of these structures and subsequent erosion of heritage assets.

Stone walls are an integral part of our rural/demesne landscape, often providing significant historic reference and contributing to the character of areas. They can be vulnerable to needless damage or destruction during development, as well as inappropriate and poor reconstruction.

There are a number of significant historic garden/estate landscapes in County Sligo. It is essential that appropriate appraisal and surveying informs the consideration of development proposals for these sensitive sites.



Non-habitable structures make a significant contribution to our built heritage

7.3.3 Architectural Conservation Areas

In some towns and villages there are significant groups of heritage structures that require protection and conservation. In the countryside there are also concentrations of particular building types or buildings related to a certain period of history. The need to protect these buildings and the character of their settings is acknowledged in this Plan. It is therefore intended, where appropriate, to establish Architectural Conservation Areas (ACAs), in conjunction with the preparation of Local Area Plans and other statutory land use plans.

The main consequence of ACA designation is the control of inappropriate development for the purpose of preserving and enhancing the character of the area concerned. The designation of ACAs will give protection to parts of the built heritage that may not warrant inclusion in the RPS, but without which, areas would be characterless.

7.3.4 Town and village streetscapes

Sligo County Council acknowledges that many historic buildings in Sligo's towns and villages have been altered in recent years and not always in the most sympathetic manner. While individually, many buildings in Sligo's towns and villages may not warrant inclusion on the RPS, or even within an ACA, nonetheless it is the ensemble of many ordinary traditional building types, their plot patterns, their fenestration, materials, meandering building lines and subtle variations in building height that contribute to the inherent character of a particular settlement. These details should be considered very carefully before allowing the alteration or replacement of buildings to occur.



Collooney



Ballymote



Easky



Coolaney

Concentrations of traditional building types contribute to the character of settlements

7.3.5 Enabling development

Enabling development is development that would be unacceptable in planning terms (e.g. inconsistent with zoning objectives for an area) but for the fact that it would bring significant public benefits in the form of securing the long-term future of a protected structure.

Enabling development will be considered in circumstances where:

- it secures the restoration of a protected structure, currently in poor condition, to best-practice conservation standards for any purpose compatible with the character of the structure or its constituent features, including the setting of the protected structure;
- it is demonstrated that the extent of enabling development is the minimum necessary to secure the future of the protected structure;
- the public benefit associated with securing the future of the protected structure decisively outweighs the drawbacks of breaching other planning objectives;
- it involves the conversion of a protected structure to a use compatible with the character of the building;
- it avoids detrimental fragmentation of the heritage asset.

Architectural heritage policies (I)

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

- P-BH-1** Preserve, protect and enhance the architectural heritage of County Sligo for future generations. The area's architectural heritage is of national and regional importance and is central to Sligo's ability to promote itself as a centre for cultural tourism.
- P-BH-2** Secure the protection of buildings and structures or features of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest identified on the Record of Protected Structures.
- P-BH-3** Generally encourage the re-use of older buildings through renovation and rehabilitation, in preference to their demolition or reconstruction.
- P-BH-4** Have regard to the 2004 *Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines* and subsequent guidance issued by the DoEHLG when assessing proposals for development affecting a protected structure.
- P-BH-5** Exempt a development proposal from the normal requirement for the payment of a development contribution if the proposal involves restoration/refurbishment of a protected structure to a high architectural standard.
- P-BH-6** Ensure that any development, modifications, alterations, or extensions affecting a protected structure, adjoining structure or structure within an ACA is sited and designed appropriately and is not detrimental to the character of the structure, to its setting or the general character of the ACA.
- P-BH-7** Promote the principles of contextual compatibility for all new buildings within the historic built environment and promote carefully-designed architectural solutions that are modern and innovative, except in or adjoining an ACA or a protected structure, where, in the opinion of the planning authority, redevelopment in the traditional or historicist manner may be more appropriate.
- P-BH-8** Ensure that any new development activity acknowledges the traditional frame for development - in particular, buildings will be required to maintain historical building lines. There will be a presumption against new buildings stepping back from established building lines, except for key public buildings, or where a new building might interfere with the setting of a protected structure or an ACA. [continues on the next page]

Architectural heritage policies (II)

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

- P-BH-9** Maintain the traditional plot width along the perimeter of blocks within historic streetscapes, particularly where the building façade is manifested on the streetscape. Under some circumstances, a new building with a broader plot width might be permitted, but the façade will be required to include some form or articulation that emulates or fits in with the traditional streetscape character.
- P-BH-10** Facilitate and permit plot amalgamation and land assembly in the centre of blocks (backlands of plots) so as to promote commercial viability while ensuring that there is a balance between the scale of the development proposals, in terms of height, mass and bulk, so as not to dwarf the traditional perimeter buildings of the block.
- P-BH-11** Generally maintain a continuous building line along streetscapes - this assists in maintaining the character of an area and can screen car parks, loading bays and service yards within blocks.
- P-BH-12** For new or replacement buildings, encourage the retention of subtle variations in building lines, building heights and plot widths, which are a trademark of the traditional Irish streetscape.
- P-BH-13** Generally, only consider applications for change of use where the level of physical intervention required to make the building suitable for its new use does not damage or alter the character of the structure that makes it of special interest.
- P-BH-14** Protect important non-habitable structures such as historic bridges, harbours, railways, roadside features (e.g. historic milestones, cast-iron pumps and post-boxes), street furniture, historic gardens, stone walls, landscapes, demesnes and curtilage features, in cases where these are not already included in the Record of Protected Structures.
- P-BH-15** Support the visual attractiveness of the county by encouraging owners of derelict sites/buildings to develop and improve them in an appropriate manner and pursue, where necessary, owners of buildings and sites under the Derelict Sites Act 1990.
- P-BH-16** Facilitate enabling development to be carried out in conjunction with works to protected structures where consistent with the parameters outlined in subsection 7.3.5 Enabling Development.
- P-BH-17** Continue to develop the Council's advisory/educational role with regard to heritage matters and to promote awareness and understanding of the architectural heritage.
- P-BH-18** Encourage the retention of original windows, doors, renders, roof coverings, chimneys, rainwater goods and other significant features of structures of architectural heritage merit, whether protected or not.
- P-BH-19** Encourage the restoration or appropriate replacement of original doors, sash/casement timber windows and slate roofs over their replacement with modern materials (such as PVC windows and doors) or designs that may be insensitive in their detailing or relief to traditional façades and roofs.
- P-BH-20** Ensure that modern design solutions have regard for the traditional context and streetscape elements and utilise some of the traditional architectural idioms in their composition, form and/or design.

7.4 Protecting landscape character



7.4.1 Regulatory context

Planning and Development Act 2000

Under the Planning and Development Act, 2000, planning authorities have considerable duties and powers in relation to the landscape. They have a duty to include in the development plan objectives for the preservation of the character of the landscape; they have powers to designate areas of special amenity, within which development may be prevented or limited, and landscape conservation areas, within which exempted development may be brought within planning control.

The Landscape and Landscape Assessment Guidelines (2000)

Landscape and Landscape Assessment Guidelines (2000) have been published by the Department of Environment and Local Government (DoELG). The Guidelines are intended to assist planning authorities in understanding their obligations in respect of landscape issues when preparing development plans. The Guidelines stress the need for a proactive view of how development and change can be accommodated in the landscape and also highlight the need to assess all landscapes instead of focusing on 'special' ones.

Section 1.2 of the guidelines states: "It is Government policy that, in deciding for or against development, the appropriateness of that development within the given landscape context be considered". The guidelines seek to heighten awareness of the importance of landscape issues in all aspects of physical planning; provide guidance to planners and others to show how landscape considerations should be dealt with; and indicate specific requirements for development plans and for development management.

The European Landscape Convention (ELC) (2000)

The most significant policy development regarding landscape character and its assessment and protection has been the adoption of the European Landscape Convention in 2000 (ratified by Ireland in 2002). The Convention potentially requires that signatories must first recognise landscapes in law and establish policies aimed at their protection, management and planning. The Convention defines "landscape" as an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors. The definition applies to all landscapes - rural, urban, peri-urban or degraded - and to all scales of landscape.

By giving this recognition and protection to all landscapes, the Convention formally acknowledges that it is no longer feasible to recognise and protect landscapes solely through a 'special areas' approach. The Convention is intended to 'democratise' landscape by extending to the entire population the right to benefit from good quality landscapes and to influence future landscape change. The way in which these requirements are met is left to the discretion of national governments, and it is generally envisaged that many of the requirements of the Convention can be met under existing legislation and policies, if sensitively applied to give due recognition and weight to landscape issues.

7.4.2 Landscape Character Assessment

Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) is a process that describes, maps and classifies landscapes objectively. Defining landscape character enables an understanding to be formed of the inherent value and importance of individual landscape elements and the processes that may alter landscape character in the future.

The cultural and ecological aspects of the landscape cannot be divorced from its physical and visual characteristics, so all of these elements are considered. In preparing an LCA, the county's rich natural and built heritage, as outlined in the preceding sections, have a significant bearing.

The purpose of an LCA is to assist the Council in the formulation and implementation of its policies, informing the council, in particular where it is to:

- promote the understanding of Sligo's landscape in terms of its unique character and recognise what elements should be preserved, conserved or enhanced;
- predict the broad pattern of future changes and devise policies and objectives as guidance to planners and other parties which will ensure that change is favourable to landscape character; sensitivity and capacity of the landscape should be given due consideration in all aspects of decision-making;
- assist in the achievement of sustainable development, the underlying principle of all current planning practice and legislation, by promoting a unified approach to landscape planning and management which links policies and recommendations for landscape character to existing planning policies.

7.4.3 Current knowledge and policy

The county's landscape is not homogeneous and neither are the pressures on it. It is inevitable that different parts of the county will be subject to different development pressures and will exhibit differing abilities to absorb and accommodate such development pressure.

A landscape characterisation and appraisal study was commissioned by Sligo County Council and completed by CAAS Environmental Consultants in 1996. This resulted in a map that was the basis for the Development Control Policy Map, which formed part of the Sligo County Development Plan 1999-2004 and the subsequent Sligo County Development Plan 2005-2011.

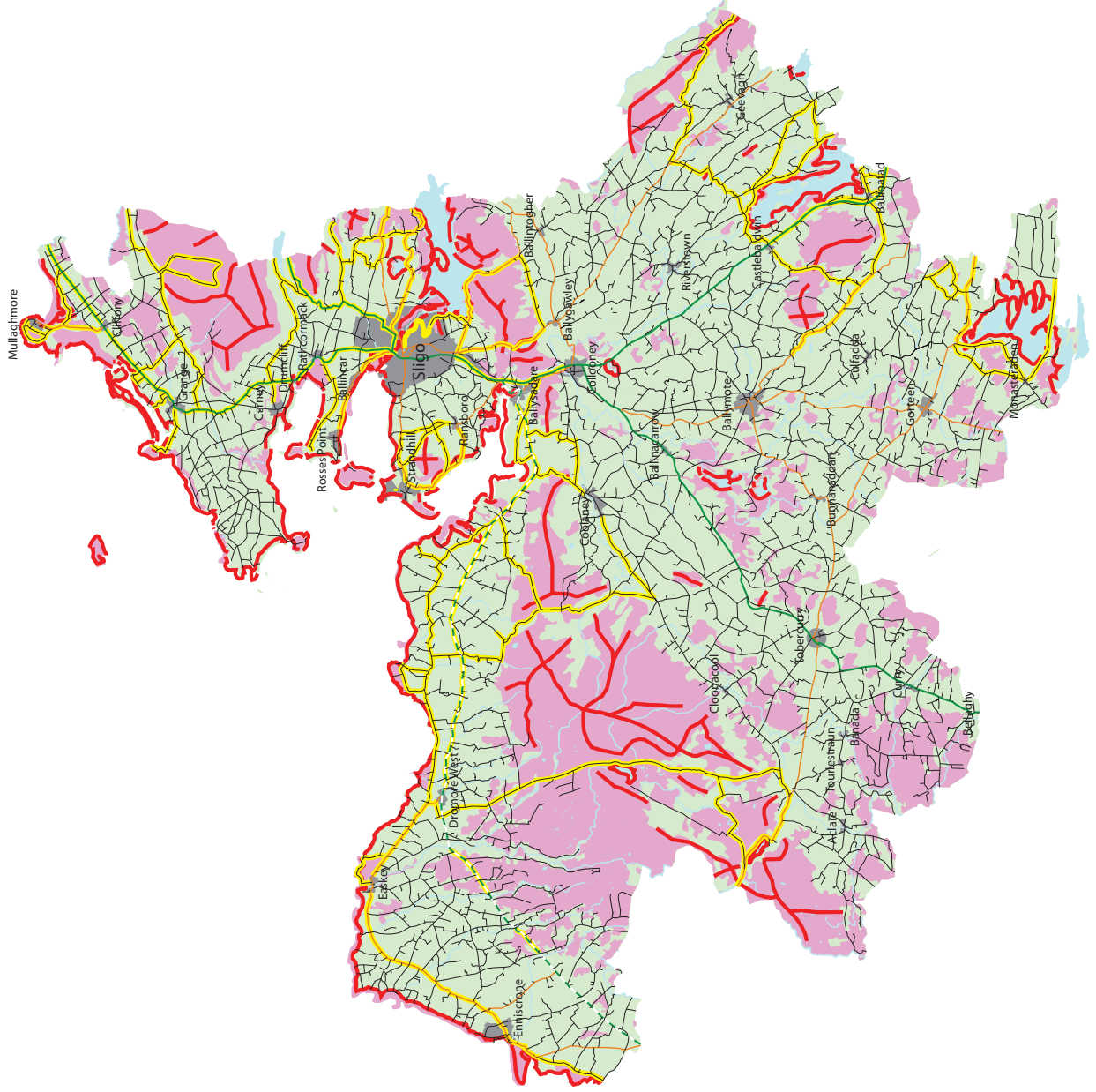
The Map classifies the County according to its visual sensitivity and ability to absorb new development without compromising the scenic character of the area. It indicates, inter alia, designated:

- **Normal Rural Landscapes:** areas with natural enclosing features (e.g. topography, vegetation), which have the capacity to absorb a wide range of new development forms – these are the main farming areas of the County.
- **Sensitive Rural Landscapes:** areas that tend to be open in character, with intrinsic scenic quality and a low capacity to absorb new development – e.g. Knocknarea, Aughris Head, Coney Island.
- **Visually Vulnerable Areas:** distinctive and conspicuous natural features of significant natural beauty or interest, which have extremely low capacity to absorb new development – examples are the Ben Bulbin plateau, the Sligo coastline, lakeshores.
- **Scenic Routes:** public roads that coincide generally with popular tourist routes passing through or close to Sensitive Rural Landscapes, or adjoining Visually Vulnerable Areas, and affording unique scenic views of one or more distinctive natural features.

The Map (see Fig. 7.D opposite, also available in A1 format) has proven robust in both facilitating development and conserving fragile landscapes. The designation of Scenic Routes provided a basis for protecting views and prospects of certain Visually Vulnerable features. Appendix G contains a list of the scenic views to be preserved.

Figure 7.D

Landscape Characterisation Map



- Normal Rural Landscape
- Sensitive Rural Landscape
- Visually Vulnerable
- Scenic Routes

Note 1: The environs of archaeological and historical sites are considered Visually Vulnerable Areas

Note 2: Scenic Routes are public roads from which the views and prospects towards Visually Vulnerable features are to be preserved

7.4.4 Heritage landscapes

Areas which are of exceptional value and of international importance, such as the Cuil Irra Peninsula, Carrowkeel and Inishmurray, are highly sensitive to development and thus must be afforded particular protection. Over the life of this Plan, the Council will explore the preparation of a Local Area Plan and/or designation of Landscape Conservation Area(s), pursuant to Section 204 of the Planning & Development Act, 2000, in respect of the above heritage landscapes. The purpose of such plans and/or designations is to protect the rural character, setting, historic context and archaeological heritage of the landscape. In identifying and/or designating such areas, the Planning Authority will ensure that the scope and extent of such designation is sufficient to conserve the specific areas requiring protection.



County Sligo seen from Carrowkeel Neolithic cemetery



Kesh caves



View towards Sligo City from the eastern slope of Knocknarea

Landscape character assessment and protection policies

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

- P-LCAP-1** Promote the understanding of Sligo's landscape in terms of its inherent and unique character, in order to recognise what elements should be preserved, conserved or enhanced.
- P-LCAP-2** Promote a unified approach to landscape planning and management, linking policies and objectives for the preservation of the county's unique landscape character to all relevant planning policies and objectives throughout the Plan.
- P-LCAP-3** Protect the physical landscape and visual character of the County.
- P-LCAP-4** Protect the historic and archaeological landscapes of the County.
- P-LCAP-5** Protect and enhance the visual qualities of rural areas through the sensitive design of necessary development.
- P-LCAP-6** Maintain a variety of settlement types as a critical part of landscape character in Sligo and preserve the essential characteristics of individual settlements within their settings by developing robust design guidance.
- P-LCAP-7** Have regard to potential environmental impacts of new infrastructure/industrial development, such as noise and air pollution impinging on views, tranquility and character, and the consequences that such development may have for the evolution of settlements.
- P-LCAP-8** Promote the development of tourism in a sustainable manner and encourage the provision of a comprehensive range of tourist facilities, subject to location, siting, design criteria and compliance with the Habitats Directive
- P-LCAP-9** Encourage the continued sustainable development of rural communities without compromising the physical, environmental, natural and heritage resources of the county.
- P-LCAP-10** Maintain a vibrant and healthy agricultural sector based on the principles of sustainable development whilst at the same time finding alternative employment in or close to rural areas to sustain rural communities.
- P-LCAP-11** Preserve the status of traditionally open/unfenced landscapes. Fencing in upland or amenity areas will not normally be permitted unless such fencing is essential to the viability of the farm and conforms to best agricultural practice. The nature of the material to be used, the height of the fence and, in the case of a wire fence, the type of wire to be used will be taken into account. Barbed-wire shall not be used for the top line of wire. Stiles or gates at appropriate places will be required.
- P-LCAP-12** Where possible, preserve the open character of commonage and other hill land and secure access thereto.

Landscape character assessment and protection objectives

It is an objective of Sligo County Council to:

- O-LCAP-1** Undertake a Landscape Character Assessment for County Sligo within the lifetime of this Plan, in accordance with the principles of the European Landscape Convention and best practice guidance.
- O-LCAP-2** Explore, within the lifetime of this Plan, the opportunity of preparing a Local Area Plan and/or designating of Landscape Conservation Area(s), pursuant to Section 204 of the Planning & Development Act, 2000, in respect of the following heritage landscapes: Cuil Irra Peninsula, Carrowkeel and Inishmurray.
- O-LCAP-3** Seek to preserve the landscape character of County Sligo by assessing all development proposals against the provisions of the Landscape Characterisation Map. Planning applications that have the potential to impact significantly and adversely upon landscape character or scenic views may be required to be accompanied by a visual impact assessment using agreed and appropriate viewing points and methods for the assessment.
- O-LCAP-4** Discourage any developments that would be detrimental to the unique visual character of designated Visually Vulnerable Areas.
- O-LCAP-5** Strictly control new development in designated Sensitive Rural Landscapes, while considering exceptions that can demonstrate a clear need to locate in the area concerned.
- O-LCAP-6** Ensure that any new development in designated Sensitive Rural Landscapes:
- does not impinge in any significant way on the character, integrity and distinctiveness of the area;
 - does not detract from the scenic value of the area;
 - meets high standards of siting and design;
 - satisfies all other criteria with regard to, inter alia, servicing, public safety and prevention of pollution.
- O-LCAP-7** Preserve the scenic views listed in Appendix G by controlling development along designated Scenic Routes and other roads, while facilitating developments that may be tied to a specific location or to the demonstrated needs of applicants to reside in a particular area. In all cases, strict location, siting and design criteria shall apply, as set out in Section 12.3 Residential Development Standards.
- O-LCAP-8** Liaise with adjoining planning authorities to ensure that development plan policies are consistent in the protection and management of landscape.