

Appendix

Explanatory Note

on the Core Strategy Variation

of the Sligo and Environs Development Plan 2010-2016

A. The Core Strategy Variation

The Sligo and Environs Development Plan 2010-2016 was adopted by both Sligo County Council and Sligo Borough Council at their special meetings of 2 November 2009. In accordance with section 13 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), a planning authority may at any time, for stated reasons, decide to make a variation of a development plan which for the time being is in force.

On the 9th May 2011 the first variation to the plan was adopted with the incorporation of the Eastern Bridge and Associated Roads Scheme.

The Core Strategy Variation, which became operational on 3 October 2011, is Variation No. 2 of the SEDP.

The Core Strategy Variation consists of the following:

- Amendments to Chapter 5 Spatial Strategy – **new Section 5.4 Core Strategy**
- Amendments to Chapter 17 Implementation – **changes to Sections 17.2 Local Area Plans, 17.3 Prioritising development and 17.4 North Fringe LAP.**
- Amendments to the Zoning Map (Map 1 and corresponding figures in the SEDP document) – **graphic indication of the Strategic Land Reserve.**

The variation is accompanied by the following supporting documents:

- Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Screening Report
- Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening Report
- SEA Decision

In order to better highlight the extent of land affected by the variation, an **Explanatory Map** is included with this Explanatory Note. This Explanatory Note and the Explanatory Map have been included as an Appendix to the variation.

B. Reason for the variation

Under Section 7 of the Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2010, each Planning Authority is required to introduce a Core Strategy as part of its development plan. The purpose of the Core Strategy is to articulate a medium- to longer-term quantitatively-based strategy for the spatial development of the area of the planning authority.

The Core Strategy must demonstrate that the development plan and its objectives are consistent with national and regional development objectives set out in the National Spatial Strategy and Regional Planning Guidelines (RPGs), especially with regard to the settlement hierarchy and the role of Gateways. The Strategy must give effect to the hierarchy by setting population targets in accordance with regional targets along with associated requirements for housing land.

In the case of existing development plans, the planning authorities are required to incorporate the Core Strategy through the variation procedure set out in section 13 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended). The deadline for planning authorities in the Border Region is 29 September 2011.

This is the reason for the proposed Core Strategy Variation of the Sligo and Environs Development Plan 2010-2016.

C. Border Regional Planning Guidelines 2010–2022 (RPGs)

The Border RPGs indicate that, based on current housing surpluses and population projections, it is not envisaged that there will be significant demand for estate-type housing construction in the Border Region, particularly in the western counties such as Sligo.

Table 3.8 of the RPGs outlines the potential housing demand and residential land requirements for key settlements in the Region. It should be noted that the housing figures outlined mark the **upper end** of any demand likely to arise during the period 2010-2016. Details for the Sligo and Environs area are as follows:

Settlement	Population increase 2010 - 2016	Potential no. of residential units required over period 2010-2016	Total zoned housing land required over period 2010-2016 (incorporating 50% overzoning in accordance with DEHLG Development Plan Guidelines)
Sligo	2,000	1,000 (based on average household size of 2.0 persons as per Sligo Housing Strategy 2010-2017)	40 ha (based on average housing density of 35 units per hectare)

However, it would appear that the figure of 40 hectares in the final column is a miscalculation, as 1000 housing units at an average density of 35 units per hectare would actually require 42.85 hectares (i.e. 1000 units divided by 35 units/ha = 28.5 ha, plus 50% overzoning = 42.85 ha).

Therefore a total allocation of 43 hectares is assumed for the purposes of this variation.

D. National guidelines and other guidance documents

In preparing the proposed Core Strategy Variation of the SEDP, the following documents were used:

- *Implementation of Regional Planning Guidelines – Best Practice Guidance* (DoEHLG December 2010)
- DoEHLG Circular PSSP6/2010 – *Guidance Note on Core Strategies* (November 2010)
- *Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas* (DoEHLG May 2009)
- *Development Plans - Guidelines for Planning Authorities* (DoEHLG June 2007)

E. Core Strategy for County Sligo (County Development Plan 2011-2017)

County Sligo's Core Strategy, included in the Sligo County Development Plan 2011-2017, provides relevant information to demonstrate consistency with the NSS and RPGs and sets out core aims and strategic goals that, in turn, define and shape growth locations, population distribution and land use zoning for the County's settlements (except Sligo and Environs).

The dominant role of the Gateway in the settlement hierarchy of the County is duly emphasised. At the same time, the Core Strategy identifies a total of 385 hectares of greenfield land zoned for residential development (excluding mixed uses) in the current SEDP 2010-2016, and acknowledges the necessity to reduce this area through the variation process in order to ensure compliance with the RPGs target.

(It has now been clarified that the amount of greenfield land suitable for residential development is much higher, at 582 hectares – see below.)

F. Core Strategy Approach

In order to reduce the extent of land zoned for residential uses (or a mix of residential and other uses) to a level that is consistent with the RPGs allocations, a **prioritising/phasing approach** was adopted, whereby the lands surplus to requirements are regarded as a **strategic reserve**. Any proposals for multi-unit housing developments on such lands will not be considered during the remaining lifetime of the current SEDP.

On assessment of the zoned land in the SEDP 2010-2016, it has been calculated that **there is a total of 582 hectares of greenfield land capable of accommodating residential development** – this includes land zoned for mixed uses, commercial/mixed-uses and neighbourhood centres.

Consistent with the RPGs allocations as outlined in Section C above, a total of **68 hectares** of these lands (of which 43 ha available for housing) have been retained as suitable for development during the plan period. The breakdown of these lands within various zoning objectives and the assumptions regarding residential development on mixed use lands are outlined in the table below.

Breakdown of lands that can be developed by 2016

Zoning objective	Gross extent of land	Assumed proportion of lands that would be used for housing	Extent of housing land including the 50% overhead	Nett extent of housing land excluding the 50% overhead	Estimated housing yield (at circa 35 units per hectare)
Residential (R2 & R3)	23.9 ha	100%	23.9 ha	15.9 ha	557 units
Mixed uses (Mix-1)	31.6 ha	50%	15.8 ha	10.53 ha	369 units
Commercial and mixed uses (C2), and Neighbourhood centre (NC)	12.4 ha	25%	3.1 ha	2.06 ha	74 units
Totals	68 ha		43 ha	28.6 ha	1000 units

The remaining **514 hectares** of residential and mixed-use lands are included in the Strategic Land Reserve and will be reviewed for housing development suitability in the next plan period.

Development on lands included in the Strategic Land Reserve will be considered in the following circumstances:

- proposals for developments other than residential uses (e.g. community facilities);
- proposals for one-off rural housing in cases of genuine rural-generated housing need which comply with the criteria set out in section 7.2.5 of the Plan.

The inclusion of lands within the Strategic Land Reserve will not prevent the implementation of any extant planning permission on these lands.

Sites designated for urban regeneration (see Section 12.8 – p. 88 of the SEDP) together with small brownfield and infill sites – where development would make a significant contribution to the amenity of the surrounding area – are not proposed to be included in the Strategic Land Reserve and have not been counted as lands suitable for major housing developments.

Criteria used in the designation of the Strategic Land Reserve

Section 5.2.2 of the SEDP 2010-2016 sets out the zoning principles of the Plan. It also states that any rezoning proposal that might be considered during the lifetime of this development plan should be assessed against the Strategic Zoning Policies and the principle of sequential development.

Consistent with this approach and the other guidance documents outlined above, the lands identified for inclusion in the strategic reserve have been selected for the following reasons:

- peripheral location, at a longer distance from the city centre, where development would generate more car trips to work and other facilities;
- limited accessibility, location removed from public transport routes;
- vicinity of designated nature conservation sites, landscape, archaeology, valuable natural amenity areas, water and natural resources;
- deficiencies in infrastructure including water and wastewater, roads, footpaths, public lighting etc;
- absence of community facilities and social infrastructure including childcare, healthcare, schools and recreational facilities;
- location potentially at risk from flooding.