



Sligo County Council
Comhairle Chontae Shligigh

Sligo.

Chief Executive's Report

recommending a Variation of the Sligo County Development Plan 2024-2030

on foot of the Section 28 Guidelines for Planning Authorities titled
"NPF Implementation – Housing Growth Requirements" (2025),
which replace the *"Housing Supply Target Methodology"* (2020)

Sligo County Council
**Development
Planning Unit**

25 November 2025

Contents

Executive Summary	1
1. Background to the Proposed Variation	3
1.1 Purpose of the Section 28 Housing Growth Requirements Guidelines	3
1.2 Implementation of the new housing targets	3
1.3 Housing capacity of lands zoned in the adopted Sligo CDP 2024-2030	4
1.4 Effects of the Draft Ministerial Direction	4
1.5 Implications for the CDP	5
2. Options considered by the Council	7
2.1 Option 1 – Await Final Direction	7
2.2 Option 2 – Release lands from the Strategic Land Reserve	8
2.3 Option 3 – Amend the Strategic Land Reserve policies	8
2.4 Recommended option	11
3. Next steps towards a Development Plan variation	13
3.1 Recommended contents of the Proposed Variation	13
3.2 Procedure in Accordance with the Planning Act 2000	14
3.3 Estimated timeframe for making the Variation	16
 Appendix A – Sites zoned SLR: Infrastructure Assessment and Settlement Capacity Audit scores	
 Appendix B – Proposed Variation	

Executive Summary

On 30 July 2025, the Minister of State for Local Government and Planning, John Cummins, sent a letter to the Chief Executive of Sligo County Council in relation to the Section 28 Guidelines entitled “**National Planning Framework (NPF) Implementation – Housing Growth Requirements**”, which had been issued one day earlier, on 29 July 2025.

The Minister of State indicated that “*there is now an urgent need for development plans to be updated to reflect the requirements of the recently approved Revised NPF in respect of housing*” and requested that “*planning authorities use all available means to incorporate new housing growth requirements within development plans as quickly as possible*”, prioritising the updating of county development plans to reflect the requirements of the Guidelines.

The purpose of this Chief Executive’s Report, as recommended by the Housing Growth Requirements (HGR) Guidelines, is to outline to the Elected Members how it is proposed to secure the objectives of these recent Section 28 Guidelines and of the Revised NPF. The Report contains:

- an outline of the HGR Guidelines and their implications for the current Sligo County Development Plan 2024-2030 (CDP);
- a high-level assessment of the CDP in terms of its compliance with the HGR Guidelines (Core Strategy, Settlement Strategy, Zoning Objectives);
- a quantitative assessment of the adequacy of existing zoned lands to cater for the housing growth requirements;
- a brief description of the available options for implementing the objectives of the HGR Guidelines;
- the Chief Executive’s recommendation regarding the preferred manner of addressing the requirements of the Guidelines;
- the recommended contents of a Proposed Variation;
- the estimated timeframe for completing a Development Plan variation.

In essence, it is recommended that Sligo County Council vary its development plan in the following manner:

- I. replace the contents of CDP **Section 3.1.3 Consistency with national housing supply targets** with appropriate wording to reflect the replacement of the Housing Supply Target allocation (2020) with the new Housing Growth Requirements target (2025), as per the S. 28 HGR Guidelines.
- II. delete **Table 5.2 Adjusted total housing demand in Co. Sligo during the Development Plan period** from CDP Chapter 5 Settlement Strategy (Vol. 1 of the CDP), because it has become redundant as a consequence of the 2025 HGR Guidelines replacing the S. 28 Housing Supply Target Methodology Guidelines (2020).
- III. amend the **Strategic Land Reserve Policies** included in **CDP Volume 2, Chapter 10 Urban development principles** to unlock additional housing within the County.
- IV. **rezone two sites** in accordance with the Planning Authority’s determinations on submissions RZLT 25-01 and RZLT 25-02 received in 2025 following public consultation on the Residential Zoned Land Tax (RZLT) draft map.

Copies of this report are to be provided to the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage, and to the Office of the Planning Regulator.

1. Background to the Proposed Variation

1.1. Purpose of the Section 28 “Housing Growth Requirements” Guidelines

The **Housing Growth Requirements (HGR) Guidelines** set out the housing demand scenario to 2040 for each local authority by translating the requirements of the National Planning Framework Revision (2025) into estimated average annual figures.

The new Guidelines replace the *Housing Supply Target Methodology Guidelines* (2020), which previously provided detailed instructions for each local authority’s calculations of their respective housing demand.

The HGR Guidelines specify the new annual housing growth requirements in the following manner:

Local Authority	Existing annual 2020 housing requirement (Housing Supply Target)	Adopted Development Plan – annual housing requirement (Housing Supply Target)	New annual housing growth requirement to 2034	New annual housing growth requirement to 2040
Sligo	468	672	672	585

1.2 Implementation of the new housing targets

The Guidelines contain three “Policy and Objective” statements, requiring the following:

- that the housing growth requirements for each planning authority (set out in Appendix 1 of the Guidelines) are reflected in the relevant City or County Development Plan (*Policy and Objective 1*);
- that ‘additional provision’ of up to 50% over and above the housing growth requirement for each local authority is reflected within the relevant City or County Development Plan (*Policy and Objective 2*);
- that planning authorities should use all available means to ensure that the objectives of these Guidelines are incorporated within development plans as quickly as possible through the variation of the current adopted development plan (*Policy and Objective 3*).

Each planning authority is required to assess its current development plan, to determine whether the lands zoned for residential use in the plan can accommodate the specified housing targets plus up to 50% additional provision. If this is not the case, the plan needs to be varied.

The assessment should involve the review of:

- A. the Core Strategy** – which sets out the total (county) and settlement-specific population and housing allocations;
- B. the Settlement Strategy** – which indicates where growth should be supported;
- C. the zoning objectives** – e.g. the amount of land zoned for residential and mixed uses (including residential) as well as the location of such lands (which determines the acceptable average residential density), to identify the lands’ development potential;
- D. the application of “additional provision”** of up to 50% over and above the housing growth requirement.

*The Guidelines imply that **up to 50% more land should be zoned** in addition to the minimum area necessary to accommodate the housing targets. “Additional provision” recognises the fact that, for a*

*variety of reasons, a relatively significant proportion of zoned lands are not activated over the period of a development plan. This application of the “additional provision” requirement involves the identification of **additional** lands suitable for residential zoning.*

The above assessment should determine whether the Development Plan is able to accommodate the required 150% of the housing targets. If this is not the case, the Plan will have to be varied, regardless of the stage in its life.

1.3 Housing capacity of lands zoned in the adopted Sligo CDP 2024-2030

The Core Strategy Table (Section 3.3) in Chapter 3 (Core Strategy Statement), Volume 1 of the CDP (Interim Version, published on 11 November 2024), indicates a total County housing allocation of 4,029 units by 2030, which is equivalent to **671.5 units (672 rounded up)** for each of the six years of the Plan’s life.

The total CDP annual housing allocation (housing supply target calculated as per the Housing Supply Target Methodology Guidelines) is the same as the “new annual growth requirement to 2034” – 672 units.

In the adopted Plan, Sligo County Council zoned **205 ha** for residential uses, i.e. **89.7 hectares in addition to the minimum 115.3 hectares** necessary to deliver the housing allocation. In area terms (hectares), the additional zoning represents an “additional provision” of **77.8%**, which is more than the “up to 50%” specified by the Guidelines.

The resulting housing capacity of all lands with housing potential (100% of lands zoned residential and 50% of lands zoned for mixed uses) was calculated at **6,025 units**, equivalent to **1,004 units for each of the 6 years** of the Plan’s duration, which is equivalent to **149.4%** of the “new annual growth requirement to 2034”.

The housing capacity of lands zoned for residential and mixed uses in the adopted CDP ensures an “additional provision” of 49.4% above the new housing growth requirement.

1.4 Effects of the Draft Ministerial Direction

The County Development Plan 2024-2030 was made by the Members of Sligo County Council on 30 September 2024 with 40 amendments which were contrary to the recommendations of the Office of the Planning Regulator.

The Regulator, after being notified by the Council, informed the Minister that “*the County Development Plan has not been made in a manner consistent with recommendations of the Office*” and recommended the exercise of the Minister’s functions “*under the relevant provisions of section 31 of the Act taking such steps as to rectify the matter*”.

On 8 November 2024, Alan Dillon, the Minister of State for Local Government and Planning, gave notice of his intention to issue a direction to Sligo County Council to take certain measures regarding the Sligo County Development Plan 2024-2030, consequent to a recommendation made by the Office of the Planning Regulator on 27 October 2024.

The Draft Direction requested Sligo County Council to delete one zoning objective, reverse 21 amendments to zoning and omit one amendment from the text of the adopted County Development Plan.

The Draft Ministerial Direction affects **55.03** hectares of land (11 sites) zoned for residential uses in the following settlements:

- Sligo Town - 5 sites, 43.68 ha in total
- Enniscrone – 3 sites, 2.86 ha in total
- Ballysadare – 2 sites, 4.47 ha in total
- Strandhill – 1 site, 4.02 ha

As a consequence of the Draft Direction, the adopted zoning of the affected sites has not come into effect. In accordance with Section 31(6)(b) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), the effective zoning of the sites subject to the Draft Direction is the same as in the previous Development Plan (Sligo CDP 2017-2023/24).

This means that some RES and MIX sites revert to their previous SLR designation, others revert to GB (green belt) zoning, and one piece of land reverts to TOU (tourism) zoning, resulting in the following changes:

- **Before** the Draft Direction, the lands zoned in the CDP included 205 ha RES + MIX and 181 ha SLR;
- **After** the Draft Direction, the effective zoning in the CDP includes 150 ha RES + MIX and 218 ha SLR.

At the time of drafting this Report (November 2025), the Minister had not yet issued a Final Direction.

Should the Final Direction require the dezoning of all the affected sites, there would remain an **additional provision of 34.67 ha** of land suitable for housing (89.7 ha excess zoning minus 55.03 ha dezoned lands), representing **30% more than the area required** to deliver the new (equal to existing) annual housing requirement to the end of the Plan's life.

The 34.67 ha would cater for circa 1,213 housing units (considering an average density of 35 units/ha), thus falling short of the 2,016 additional provision which would represent 50% above the target of 4,032 units.

1.5 Implications for the CDP

It is evident that, as a consequence of the Draft Direction, the CDP is not currently able to ensure an additional provision of up to 50% more land zoned, or to cater for 150% of the new housing targets, as required by the HGR Guidelines.

An assessment of the CDP in terms of its compliance with the HGR Guidelines indicates the need for a variation. Below is a summary of this assessment.

1.5.A Core Strategy

The Core Strategy Table (Table 3.2 in Section 3.3 of the CDP) indicates that the adopted Plan set a County housing target/allocation of 4,029 units for the period 2024-2030 (671.5 units per year) and zoned 205 ha for residential use (77.8% excess zoning), with a total capacity of 6,025 units (49.5% above the housing target).

In light of the new housing target of 4,032 units and "additional provision" of zoned land providing capacity for up to 6,048 units, the Core Strategy Table included in the adopted Plan does not require modifications, other than replacing the wording "HST allocation" (Housing Supply Target allocation) with "HGR target" (Housing Growth Requirements target).

Given the ongoing uncertainty regarding the effects of the Final Direction on the total amount of land zoned for residential development, it is not considered opportune to modify the Core Strategy Table by means of a variation. **The Core Strategy Table shall be updated upon completion of the variation procedure and receipt of the Final Ministerial Direction, to reflect accurately the quantum and distribution of housing land throughout the County.**

However, the Core Strategy Statement (Chapter 3) should be amended – through the variation procedure - by replacing the Housing Supply Target allocation with the new Housing Growth Requirements target, to ensure full formal compliance with the S. 28 HGR Guidelines. The relevant part is **Section 3.1.3 Consistency with national housing supply targets. All other figures and statements related to Section 3.1.3 shall be updated as part of the final version of the CDP (after the receipt of the Final Ministerial Direction).**

1.5.B Settlement Strategy

The established settlement structure of County Sligo has remained largely unchanged since the 1990s. The settlement hierarchy, based on the towns' and villages' current roles and functions, does not require any modifications in light of the new housing targets.

However, as the method previously recommended for calculating housing demand was effectively abolished when the S. 28 Housing Growth Requirement Guidelines replaced the 2020 Housing Supply Target Methodology Guidelines, **Table 5.2 Adjusted total housing demand in Co. Sligo during the Development Plan period has become redundant and should be deleted from Chapter 5 Settlement Strategy.**

Any figures or statements relating to Table 5.2 shall be updated as part of the final version of the CDP (after the receipt of the Final Ministerial Direction).

1.5.C Zoning objectives

The HGR Guidelines require a review of the amount of land zoned for residential and mixed uses (including residential) as well as the location of such lands (which determines the acceptable average residential density), to identify the lands' development potential.

The Sligo CDP 2024-2030 is just over one year old, so **a full review of the amount and location of residential zoned land is not warranted.** The zoned lands' development potential is explicitly stated in each individual town and village plan, in Volume 2 of the CDP, Chapters 11 to 22 (12 settlement plans in total).

As already mentioned above, the adopted Core Strategy Table demonstrates that the adopted zoning objectives ensure the provision of sufficient land to meet 149.5% of the new housing target.

1.5.D Application of "additional provision"

Sligo County Council has long acknowledged the fact that the majority of sites zoned for housing are not being developed during the life of the development plan. The "land hoarding" phenomenon is particularly damaging to the growth of Sligo Town and to its proper functioning as a Regional Growth Centre.

The Guidelines indicate that in the situation where lands are not activated – for any reason – it will be necessary to identify other suitable lands, where the probability of development is higher.

It is considered opportune to identify up to 50% additional lands suitable for residential use – up to 50 hectares – to ensure compliance with the "additional provision" required by the Guidelines.

To this end, several options have been examined, and a recommendation is included in the next section of this Report.

2. Options considered by the Council

In order to support the Elected Members in deciding on how to comply with the Minister's request (as per the letter dated 30 July 2025), three options were identified and presented to the Members during a workshop on 13 October 2025. The options are summarised below.

Option 1	Option 2 (A and B)	Option 3
Await the issuing of a Final Ministerial Direction before deciding on whether (or not) to carry out a variation of the development plan	Identify sites (up to 50 ha of land) for release (by variation) from the Strategic Land Reserve: (2A) in Sligo Town only OR (2B) in Sligo Town and in the Support Towns of Ballymote, Enniscrone, Tobercurry	Amend (by variation) the Development Plan's policies relating to the Strategic Land Reserve, to facilitate housing development where it can be demonstrated that lands are adequately serviced

2.1 Option 1 – Await Final Direction

Given that the adopted zoning (residential and mixed uses including residential) of circa 55 ha of land has been made ineffective by the Draft Direction, there is no certainty regarding the final amount of land zoned for housing in the CDP.

This option involves holding off until the issuing of a Final Ministerial Direction would provide the necessary basis for assessing the housing potential of lands zoned for residential and mixed uses. Should this potential be lower than the requirements of the HGR Guidelines, (i.e. including an additional provision of up to 50%), a Development Plan variation would be necessary.

If a variation is demonstrably necessary, the next step would be to choose between Option 2 and Option 3.

Pros and cons

Positive consequences (potential) – holding off until the Minister makes a decision regarding the contents of the Direction may, in fact, hasten/trigger the issuing of the Final Direction. This would provide the evidence basis for decision-making regarding the opportunity and scope of a Development Plan variation.

Negative consequences – an excessive waiting period would obviously delay the implementation of the policies and objectives of the Housing Growth Requirements Guidelines. This would not be appropriate, given the urgency expressed in the Minister's letter (dated 30 July 2025) – *"there is now an urgent need for development plans to be updated to reflect the requirements of the recently approved Revised NPF in respect of housing"*.

2.2 Option 2 – Release lands from the Strategic Land Reserve

This option involves the examination of lands included in the Strategic Land Reserve. The purpose is to identify those sites which would be the most appropriate – in terms of infrastructure and location – for residential/mixed use. The sites would then be zoned accordingly through a Development Plan variation procedure.

The selection of sites – up to 50 hectares in total (refer to page 12 for calculations) – would be carried out based on the Infrastructure Assessment and Settlement Capacity Audits already published as part of the adopted CDP (with minor updates or corrections, where applicable).

Two sub-options have been considered:

- 2A** focus on Sligo Town, selecting up to 50 hectares from SLR sites
- 2B** select sites up to 50 hectares from SLR sites in Sligo Town and in the Support Towns (Ballymote, Enniscrone, Tobercurry)

Pros and cons

Positive consequences – this option (both sub-options) is consistent with the ‘additionality’ of “*up to 50% over and above the housing growth requirement for each local authority*” specified in the Policy and Objective 2 of the HGR Guidelines. It also involves the selection of the most suitable sites, based on clear criteria.

Negative consequences – reopening the debate on residential zoning has the potential to generate requests for considering other sites across the County, not necessarily suitable for housing or not previously assessed in terms of infrastructure availability. Choosing this option would also lead to a longer time for preparing documents for consultation on the proposed variation.

2.3 Option 3 – Amend the SLR policies to open land for development

In the adopted Plan, the Strategic Land Reserve policies restrict development with only two exceptions: shortage of housing land (due to faster-than-expected house-building or demonstrable constraints to development) and identification of sites for social and affordable housing as part of the Council’s Housing Delivery Action Plan (HDAP).

The amendment of the SLR policies would reduce their number and would retain the current restriction while reformulating one of the two exceptions as shown on the next page

Pros and cons

Positive consequences – in principle, this option removes any potential bias or error in deciding which additional lands should prioritised for residential development, as it theoretically opens for development the entire Strategic Land Reserve of the County, which amounts to circa 218 ha.

Where developers can demonstrate (at pre-application consultation stage) that essential infrastructure – such as water supply, wastewater drainage and transport – is already in place or under construction, **any site included in the SLR will be considered suitable – in principle – for residential development.**

Negative consequences (potential) – there are six Compact Growth policies in Chapter 10 of the CDP, the first one relating to sequential development. Residential proposals on SLR sites which are/have become serviced may not be able to demonstrate 100% compliance with all six policies. Planning decisions in favour of residential development may result in the construction of new housing in locations that are not adjoining existing built-up areas – particularly in Sligo Town – at least until infill development takes place. However, given the growing housing deficit, some temporary gaps in the urban fabric might have to be accepted.

Strategic Land Reserve policies

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

- P-SLR-1** Restrict development on lands included in the Strategic Land Reserve, which are shown on the Zoning Maps pertaining to the towns and villages plans contained in this CDP.
- P-SLR-2** Release lands from the Strategic Land Reserve only in the following exceptional circumstances:
- A.** The Planning Authority considers that the development of zoned lands is progressing faster than expected and a shortage of residential land may arise during the lifetime of the CDP, as a result of zoned land not coming forward for development due to demonstrable constraints.
 - B.** The lands have been identified for the provision of social and affordable housing as part of the Local Authority Housing Delivery Action Plan.
- P-SLR-3** Any land release from the SLR shall be supported by factual evidence demonstrating that the lands proposed to be released are/have become fully serviced and can deliver residential development within the lifetime of the Plan, thus facilitating progress towards the housing targets for the respective settlement.
- P-SLR-4** The land release shall be done using the development plan variation procedure.

Proposed amendments to SLR policies:

Strategic Land Reserve policies

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

- P-SLR-1** Restrict development on lands included in the Strategic Land Reserve, which are shown on the Zoning Maps pertaining to the towns and villages plans contained in this CDP.

- P-SLR-2** Exceptions to the above policy will only be considered in the following circumstances:

- A.** The lands have been identified for the provision of social and affordable housing as part of the Local Authority Housing Delivery Action Plan.
- B.** There is factual evidence that such lands are/have become fully serviced in terms of water supply, wastewater and transport infrastructure.

Any proposal for residential or mixed-use development (including residential) on such lands must have regard to the **Compact Growth policies** set out in **Section 10.4, Chapter 10** (this chapter) of the Development Plan.

The proposal must also demonstrate capability to deliver residential development within the lifetime of the Plan, thus facilitating progress towards the housing targets for the respective settlement.

The Compact Growth policies (which would remain unchanged in Chapter 10), mentioned in the amended policy P-SLR-2, are as follows:

Compact growth policies

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

- P-CG-1** Ensure that the expansion of towns or villages takes place in accordance with the principle of sequential development, from the settlement core outwards, on infill sites, backland sites and designated Settlement Consolidation Sites.
- P-CG-2** In town and village centres, promote high-quality infill and backland development that consolidates and regenerates the existing urban core of the settlement and provides a diverse range of uses.
- P-CG-3** Require that backland development is based on masterplans to be prepared in consultation with the Planning Authority. Piecemeal development of backlands within town and villages will be discouraged.
- P-CG-4** Seek to create a strong urban edge for every town and village by preventing ribbon development on the approaches to built-up areas and by restricting unnecessary development within the green belts around the settlement.
- P-CG-5** Require new development on or in the vicinity of a settlement's development limit to address the views from the approach roads and present an attractive frontage to these roads.
- P-CG-6** Ensure that large areas of greenfield zoned land in towns and villages are developed on the basis of masterplans, to be prepared by or in consultation with the Planning Authority, in order to ensure appropriate integration of land-use and transport. Such masterplans shall be subject to public consultation and, where considered appropriate based on the extent of land involved, incorporated into the relevant statutory plan (development plan or local area plan).

2.4 Recommendation: vary the CDP as per Option 3

In light of the elected Members' feedback received during and after the workshop of 13 October 2025, **it is considered that Option 3 should be selected.**

The positive features of Option 3 largely outweigh any potential negative consequences. This Option offers equal opportunities – in principle – to all landowners or developers who have invested into servicing their respective SLR sites. Such sites will be “self-selecting” for residential development, provided that well-prepared planning applications can demonstrate compliance with all the relevant policies and objectives of the County Development Plan.

Theoretically, Option 3 opens circa 218 ha (39 sites in eight settlements, of which 19 sites are in Sligo Town) of SLR lands for residential development. This area is in addition to the 150 ha already zoned in the adopted CDP and not affected by the Draft Ministerial Direction (affected sites reverting to previous SLR zoning are included in the 218 ha).

The 368 ha (218 ha + 150 ha) have a housing capacity of 11,087 units: 4,304 units from RES + MIX zoned lands and 6,783 from SLR lands.

The total area of 368 ha might seem excessive, given that only 172 ha would be necessary for the construction of 6,048 units (new housing target of 4,032 plus 50% additional provision), at an average density of 35 units/ha. But it is highly unlikely that all the RES, MIX and SLR lands would be developed during the remaining life of the CDP (by 2030).

Nevertheless, Option 3 would offer landowners and developers a strong incentive to invest in the infrastructure required to support new housing development. If completed before 2030, such infrastructure will provide a solid basis for full residential and mixed-use zoning in the next Development Plan (which will have a 10-year lifespan).

It is recommended that Sligo County Council vary its Development Plan by amending the Strategic Land Reserve Policies included in Volume 2, Chapter 10 Urban development principles.

The Core Strategy Table (Table 3.2 in Chapter 3 Core Strategy Statement) should be updated and finalised only after the issuing of the Final Ministerial Direction and the completion of the CDP variation procedure.

Summary of potential housing capacity of zoned lands

New S. 28 Housing Growth Targets (HGR) allocation for County Sligo (over the life of the CDP 2024-2030):

672 units per year x 6 years = 4,032 units

150% of 4,032 units = 6,048 units (additional provision of 50% included)

Housing capacity of lands zoned RES, MIX and SLR:

between 11,087 units and 11,568 units

Housing potential of lands zoned in the adopted CDP (before the Draft Direction)

RES and MIX zoning (only lands with housing potential)	Potential housing yield of RES and MIX zoned lands (dwellings)	Potential housing yield of RES and MIX zoned lands PLUS houses across villages and rural areas	Strategic Land Reserve (SLR) (only lands with housing potential)	Potential housing yield of the SLR (dwellings)	TOTAL potential housing yield of RES, MIX and SLR lands (dwellings)
205 ha	6,025 units (149.4 % of HGR Guidelines allocation)	6,025 + 580* = 6,605 (163.81% of HGR Guidelines allocation)	181.01 ha	5,543 units	11,568 units (285.4 % of HGR Guidelines allocation)

* It is assumed that circa 580 units will be built in small villages and rural areas over the life of the CDP 2024-2030

Shortfall before the Draft Direction: 6,048 units minus 6025 units = 23 units

(equivalent to 0.65 hectares considering an average residential density of 35 units/ha)

Housing potential of zoned lands based on their effective zoning (after the Draft Direction)

["effective zoning" is detailed in Section 1.4 of this Report]

RES and MIX zoning (only lands with housing potential)	Potential housing yield of RES and MIX zoned lands (dwellings)	Potential housing yield of RES and MIX zoned lands PLUS houses across villages and rural areas	Strategic Land Reserve (SLR) (only lands with housing potential)	Potential housing yield of the SLR (dwellings)	TOTAL potential housing yield of RES, MIX and SLR lands (dwellings)
150 ha	4,304 units (106.7 % of HGR Guidelines allocation)	4,304 + 580* = 4,884 (121.13% of HGR Guidelines allocation)	218.18 ha	6,783 units	11,087 units (273.46 % of HGR Guidelines allocation)

* It is assumed that circa 580 units will be built in small villages and rural areas over the life of the CDP 2024-2030

Shortfall after the Draft Direction: 6,048 units minus 4,304 units = 1,744 units

(equivalent to circa 50 hectares considering an average residential density of 35 units/ha)

3. Next steps towards a Development Plan variation

3.1 Recommended contents of the Proposed Variation

- I. In Volume 1, Chapter 3 of the CDP (Core Strategy Statement), **Section 3.1.3 Consistency with national housing supply targets** should be replaced by appropriate wording to reflect the replacement of the Housing Supply Target allocation (2020) with the new Housing Growth Requirements target (2025), as per the S. 28 HGR Guidelines.
- II. **Table 5.2 Adjusted total housing demand in Co. Sligo during the Development Plan period** should be deleted from Chapter 5 Settlement Strategy (Vol. 1 of the CDP), because it has become redundant as a consequence of the 2025 HGR Guidelines replacing the S. 28 Housing Supply Target Methodology Guidelines (2020).
- III. In line with the recommendation contained in Section 2.4 of this Report, the Development Plan should be varied by amending the **Strategic Land Reserve Policies** included in **CDP Volume 2, Chapter 10 Urban development principles**.
- IV. The Proposed Variation should also include the **rezoning of two sites** in accordance with the Planning Authority's determinations on submissions RZLT 25-01 and RZLT 25-02 received in 2025 following public consultation on the Residential Zoned Land Tax (RZLT) draft map¹.

Please refer to Appendix B of this Report, which contains all the four parts of the Proposed Variation in the form that would be published for consultation.

¹ The Finance Act 2024 introduced provisions for landowners to submit rezoning requests to remove their land from the liability to tax, to allow for the continued economic use of the land. Sligo County Council issued positive determinations on two requests for rezoning from residential use to a use that would reflect the ongoing agricultural use of the lands.

3.2 Variation procedure in accordance with the PDA 2000

Step One – Confirmation the by the Elected Members

Following consideration of this Chief Executive's Report by the Elected Members at their Ordinary Meeting on 1 December 2025, it is expected that they will confirm their agreement for the contents of the Proposed Variation. After this confirmation, the Development Planning Unit will finalise the documentation for a Draft Variation and commence the procedures set out in Section 13 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) (PDA).

Step Two - Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Appropriate Assessment (AA)

Article 13(k)(1) of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended) requires the Planning Authority to ascertain that the Proposed Variation will not have significant effects on the environment.

Section 13(13) of the PDA specifies that "*an appropriate assessment of a draft variation of a development plan shall be carried out in accordance with Part XAB*".

It will be necessary to carry out both Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Appropriate Assessment (AA) screening of the Proposed Variation.

As the CDP has already been subject of full SEA and AA before its adoption, the proposed changes to SLR policies and the rezoning of two sites would not be expected to have significant additional effects on the environment.

For the purpose of SEA, where it is NOT determined that the Proposed Variation would be likely to have significant environmental effects, the Planning Authority must notify the prescribed environmental authorities, inviting submissions during a specified period of minimum 4 weeks.

The Planning Authority will then make a determination and publish a copy of its decision, including the reasons for not requiring a full environmental assessment.

Step Three – Draft Variation: statutory notifications

In accordance with Section 13(2)(a) of the PDA, where the Planning Authority proposes to make a variation of its existing development plan, it must give notice to the Minister for DHLGH, the Minister for Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media the Office of the Planning Regulator, An Coimisiún Pleanála, the Northern and Western Regional Assembly, the planning authorities of adjoining counties, the prescribed authorities (listed in the Planning Regulations) and the Local Community Development Committee. The same notice must be published in one or more local newspapers.

The notice will also indicate that the Planning Authority's decision on the requirement for environmental assessments (SEA and AA) is available for inspection by the public in hard copy and on the Council's website, together with the Draft Variation.

Any person or organisation will be able to make a submission during a specified period of minimum 4 weeks. Submissions will be published on the Council's Consultation Portal within 10 working days of receipt.

Step Four - Chief Executive's Report

Following public consultation, the Chief Executive must prepare a report summarising the issues raised in submissions and give a response to those issues. The Minister or the Office of the Planning Regulator may make recommendations, which must be addressed in the first instance.

Within 8 weeks of the date of the public notice, the Chief Executive's report must be submitted to the Elected Members for consideration during a Council meeting.

Step Five – Consideration by Elected Members

After receiving the Chief Executive's Report, the Elected Members will have six weeks to consider the following:

- the Draft Variation;
- any potential for significant effects on the environment (as per the determination at Step Two);
- the Chief Executive's recommendation on the manner of addressing issues raised in submissions.

At this stage, the Elected Members may pass a resolution to:

- make the variation, with or without further (minor) modifications OR
- refuse to make the variation.

The process ends if the Members decide to make the variation, which becomes effective immediately.

If the Members decide, by resolution, to make material modifications (i.e. propose amendments) to the Draft Variation, these proposed amendments must go on public display for a period of at least four weeks, but only after they are assessed for potential environmental impacts.

Step Six – Proposed Amendments to the Draft Variation

The Proposed Amendments and any accompanying environmental reports must be placed on public display for a period of four weeks (minimum).

The Planning Authority will issue a public notice, inviting the public and prescribed bodies to participate in the final round of consultation. All submissions received during the third public consultation phase will be summarised in a second Chief Executive's Report.

Step Seven – Elected Members make the Variation

After considering the Proposed Amendments and the Chief Executive's recommendations on the issues raised during the second phase of consultation, the Members will finally adopt/make the Variation of the Development Plan, which will become operational from the day it is made.

3.3 Estimated timeframe for making the Variation

After the Elected Members consider this Chief Executive's Report and decide on the contents of the Draft Variation, Sligo County Council must adhere to the statutory process set out in Section 13 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) and the procedure outlined in Article 13(K) of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended).

The estimated timeframe for the Development Plan Variation process is provided below, assuming that the Elected Members make their decision during the ordinary Council meeting on 1st December 2025. Stages that directly involve the Elected Members are indicated in green type.

Development Plan Variation process and estimated timeframe

1. *Members confirm the contents of the Draft Variation, after consideration of the Chief Executive's Report on the application of S. 28 HGR Guidelines – 1 December 2025*
2. *Preparation of Draft Variation and associated environmental reports (SEA and AA screening) for consultation with prescribed environmental authorities – by 19 December 2025*
3. *Environmental authorities are given 4 weeks to respond to consultation – from 19 December to 30 January (9 days over the Christmas period are disregarded, as specified in the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended)*
4. *Based on the above consultation, the Planning Authority makes the SEA and AA Determinations for publication alongside the Draft Variation – by 6 February 2026*
5. *Give notice of publication of the Draft Variation to the public and the prescribed bodies – during the week of 9-13 February 2026*
6. *Draft Variation on public display for 4 weeks – 13 February to 13 March 2026*
7. *Chief Executive's Report on submissions submitted to Members – by 10 April 2026*
8. **Members may wish to modify the Draft Variation or accept the Manager's recommendations and make the Variation without further modifications – on 11 May 2026 (ordinary Council meeting). In this case, the Variation comes into effect on the same day.**
9. *If the proposed modifications are a material alteration of the Draft Variation, publish notice within two weeks of Members' decision, i.e. by 22 May 2026, specifying the additional time required for carrying out SEA and AA of the proposed material alteration*
10. *Put the proposed amendments on public display and invite submissions (minimum four weeks) – possibly from 12 June to 10 July 2026*
11. *Chief Executive's Report on submissions and observations submitted to Members by 7 August 2026*
12. **Members make the Plan with or without the proposed amendments on 7 September 2026**
13. **The Variation comes into effect on the day it is made, i.e. 7 September 2026**