

Chapter 10. Urban development principles

Towns in Ireland have changed from what they once were – vibrant residential centres with commercial activity concentrated along main streets and public spaces. During the past few decades, commercial activity has been migrating to the edges of towns, housing estates have been developed far from town centres, while the building of one-off housing in the countryside has continued to constitute a significant proportion of the County’s overall housing output.

In line with national policy, Sligo County Council promotes town-centre living as part of the consolidation and regeneration of town centres. The County’s towns and villages should be developed in a manner which retains and enhances their identity and character and creates pleasant and attractive places. This is important in order to encourage people not just to work and socialise in urban areas, but also to live there as an alternative to building single houses in rural areas.

The policy framework contained in this chapter is designed to guide the sustainable development of Sligo’s towns and villages through:

- urban regeneration, with a focus on town centres;
- heritage-led regeneration including the maintenance of the character of historic streetscapes;
- place-making and public realm improvements;
- quality in architecture and urban design to contribute toward place-making, wellbeing and healthy communities. [PA-36]
- the compact growth of urban areas;
- strategic designations and zoning objectives

The policies and objectives contained in this chapter are applicable to all settlements in County Sligo.

10.1 Urban regeneration

Urban regeneration involves the revitalisation of underutilised and neglected areas, such as infill or brownfield lands within the built-up areas of towns and villages. The focus must be on the residents’ quality of life and on attracting more people to live in urban areas.

Urban regeneration should also encourage economic development and job creation, by creating an environment which attracts visitors and investment.

In accordance with Section 10(2)(h) of the Planning and Development Act, the County Development Plan must include objectives for the development and renewal of areas that are in need of regeneration, in order to prevent urban blight and decay, anti-social behaviour, or a shortage of housing.

Sligo County Council has identified several urban areas where it is necessary to bring derelict or under-utilised land and buildings back into active use.

This Plan designates urban regeneration sites in Sligo Town and in each of the three Support Towns. The number and extent of such areas in Sligo Town may be revised as part of the preparation of Sligo and Environs Local Area Plan.

Urban regeneration policies

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

- P-UR-1** Promote the regeneration of the County's town and village centres by directing new development to infill sites, brownfield or underutilised lands before considering edge-of-town sites.
- P-UR-2** Prioritise urban regeneration projects which will result in both social and economic benefits to towns and villages in County Sligo.
- P-UR-3** Continue to seek funding from relevant agencies and Government sources including the Rural and Urban Regeneration and Development Funds (RRDF/URDF) for town and village renewal projects in the county.

Urban regeneration objectives

It is an objective of Sligo County Council to:

- O-UR-1** Identify, if necessary, further areas in need of regeneration in Sligo Town as part of the process of preparation/review of Sligo and Environs Local Area Plan (in addition to the Regeneration Sites designated in this Plan – refer to **Chapter 11 Sligo Town**)
- O-UR-2** Actively pursue the reduction of vacant/derelict residential structures and sites within the town centres of Sligo, Ballymote, Enniscrone and Tobercurry.

10.1.1 *Town Centre First Policy*

The **Town Centre First (TCF) Policy**, issued by the DHLGH in February 2022, is the overarching national strategy for the renewal and regeneration of Irish towns. It supports a more strategic and co-ordinated approach to town regeneration, with measures to tackle the underutilisation of existing buildings and sites in town centres.

Through TCF, the government aims to create town centres that function as “viable, vibrant and attractive locations for people to live, work and visit, while also functioning as the service, social, cultural and recreational hub for the local community”. The Policy recognises that an increased focus on housing in towns will be a critical part of their regeneration, providing homes for people close to local services and amenities.

As indicated under Action 9 in Appendix 1 of the **Town Centre First Policy** document, the Land Development Agency will support the Policy’s objectives in towns with populations over 10,000 persons. The LDA has confirmed its commitment to actively engage with the Council and other state authorities to identify the potential for the reuse of vacant and underutilised sites in Sligo Town. [PA-37]

10.1.2 *Town Centre First Plans*

A key element in the delivery of the *Town Centre First Policy* at local level is the preparation of TCF Plans. TCF Plans are non-statutory, community-level plans, underpinned by surveys and Town Centre Health Check data analysis, to be carried out by local Town Teams. The content of a TCF Plan must be informed by the policies and objectives of the County Development Plan (and vice versa).

In towns with more than 5,000 residents, where the Planning Act requires the preparation of Local Area Plans, such LAPs provide the opportunity to put elements of a TCF Plan on a statutory footing. This alignment between TCF Plans and statutory plans is critical for ensuring that there are complementary initiatives and strategies to regenerate the town concerned.

A TCF Plan will be expected to outline a shared vision for the development of the town centre and immediate surrounds, to be action-orientated and to identify specific interventions required to meet the objectives of the plan. The TCF Plans will generate a pipeline of projects to be implemented through the various TCF-aligned funding streams. These include the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF), Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (RRDF), Crói Cónaithe (Towns) fund, Active Travel Fund, Town & Village Renewal Scheme etc.

In County Sligo, Tobercurry has been identified by the National TCF Office as a “Pathfinder Town”, i.e. an early demonstrator of the implementation of the TCF Policy. The Pathfinder Town experience will help to inform the subsequent approach to supporting other towns in the TCF process.

Sligo County Council supports the preparation of TCF Plans for all towns and villages which are zoned for development in this CDP.

10.1.3 *Placemaking through quality in architecture and urban design*

The pursuit of ‘placemaking’ in urban areas will require high-quality architectural, urban and landscape design interventions. New developments should demonstrate not only functionality, but also appropriateness to locational context and character, and positive contribution to the streetscape, townscape and ‘sense-of-place’, consistent with the criteria set out in the Urban Design Manual (DEHLG, 2009). [PA-38]

Town Centre First policies

It is a policy of Sligo County Council to:

- TCF-1** Support the implementation of the national TCF Policy in County Sligo by ensuring consistency between the objectives of the County Development Plan, Local Area Plans and *Town Centre First* Plans.
- TCF-2** Pursue the preparation of TCF Plans for Sligo Town, Ballymote and Enniscrone, informed by the “Pathfinder Town” experience gained in Tobercurry, and support the future preparation of TCF Plans for all villages zoned for development in this CDP.
- TCF-3** Promote a strategic approach to the regeneration of towns in County Sligo through the Collaborative Town Centre Health Check (CTCHC) framework as part of the preparation of their Town Centre First Plans.
- TCF-4** Ensure that all proposals submitted for funding under the URDF, RRDF, Town & Village Renewal Scheme, Active Travel Fund or any other similar programmes are consistent with the objectives of the relevant TCF Plan and with the policies and objectives of the County Development Plan and Local Area Plan(s) (where applicable).
- TCF-5** Strengthen the economic and social functions of town centres by ensuring that:
- retail or commercial uses are retained at the ground floor level within urban cores;
 - retail and other development proposals enhance the public realm in their vicinity through active frontages and any necessary remedial works to adjoining public spaces;
 - vacant premises are brought back into active use;
 - “meanwhile use”, i.e. suitable temporary uses, can be established in vacant units;
 - town centre homes in new or refurbished buildings provide suitable options for one-person households and people with reduced mobility.
- TCF-6** Discourage inappropriate out-of-town shopping facilities that detract from the vitality, viability or character of town and village centres.

10.2 Heritage-led regeneration

The character of historic town and village centres has been eroded in recent years, due in part to the following:

- lack of awareness regarding the value of historic buildings, leading to demolition or neglect;
- replacement of traditional sash windows and timber doors with “modern” materials such as aluminium and PVC;
- inappropriate design of infill or refurbished buildings;
- poorly designed shopfronts or derelict traditional shopfronts
- removal of plasterwork to reveal stonework never intended for display;
- poor management of the public realm – overhead network cabling, inappropriate lamp standard design, intrusive positioning of equipment, insensitive siting of road traffic signage etc.

This loss of character can be remedied, and every effort should be made to restore these areas and enhance their visual appeal.

10.2.1 Historic streetscapes

The historic streetscapes of an urban area play an essential role in defining the character of the place. Their value should not be estimated only in terms of heritage and visual appeal, but also in terms of their contribution to the vitality and economic well-being of towns. Well-maintained streetscapes are pleasant places for spending time and encourage longer and repeated visits.

Architectural Conservation Areas (ACAs) are important tools to protect valuable streetscapes, which can be unique selling points of a town or village. However, it is important to conserve a range of historic features, not just the buildings within an ACA.

Features such as sash windows, cast-iron gutters and down-pipes, hardwood doors, original shopfronts were designed out of necessity, with a distinct sense of aesthetics. These features, when retained and maintained, create character and contribute to visual amenity and local identity.

In recent years, the extent of dereliction and vacancy in historic town centres has been highlighted as a serious concern. There is a drive to address these issues through dedicated funding and programmes such as Croí Conaithe, the Streetscape Enhancement Initiative, the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (RRDF) and the *Town Centre First* Policy. It is essential not to lose sight of the character of the urban fabric of towns in a drive to reduce dereliction and vacancy. The funding should be used to regenerate town centres whilst also restoring their unique identity.

10.2.2 Buildings of Note

Historic buildings, whether protected or not, are an intrinsic part of a settlement’s cultural heritage and identity. They are a finite resource, which cannot be replaced once lost or damaged.

Buildings of Note (identified in **Appendix B** of this Plan) have been selected by reason of their distinctive vernacular character and positive contribution to the streetscape. Some of these buildings have been altered in the past but still retain their original character. While they may not be classified as ‘protected structures’ they are worthy of retention and refurbishment.

Appropriate re-use and refurbishment of these *Buildings of Note* is essential so that they retain their individual architectural merit and positive contribution to the streetscapes of County Sligo’s towns and villages.

10.2.3 Shopfronts

The quality and nature of shopfronts play an important role in defining the character of a streetscape. Well-maintained historic shopfronts add charm to a street and contribute to creating a town's unique identity. Well-cared-for historic shopfronts and well-designed modern shopfronts make a town centre more attractive, improving the desirability of the area and potentially increasing footfall. This, in turn, can lead to better economic performance and prosperity for the town.

Guidance for the design of new shopfronts and refurbishment of historic shopfronts can be found in **33.5.9 Shopfronts and signage** (development management standards).

Historic streetscapes policies

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

P-HS-1 Require the retention and refurbishment of historic buildings in traditional town and village streetscapes. Demolition will be considered only in exceptional circumstances.

P-HS-2 Require the retention and restoration of historic windows, doors, renders, roof coverings, chimneys, rainwater goods and other significant features of structures of architectural heritage merit, whether protected or not.

Where retention is not possible, the replacement of original or historic features should be executed in a manner sympathetic to the original fabric and design intent of the building. 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 will be discouraged.

P-HS-3 Promote the principle of contextual compatibility (including building height, style, materials etc.) for all new buildings within the historic built environment and require carefully-designed architectural solutions in compliance with the guidance set out in **Section 33.6.2 Development in historic streetscapes** (development management standards).

P-HS-4 Maintain the traditional plot width and street patterns of historic streetscapes. In exceptional circumstances, a new building with a broader plot width may be permitted, but the façade will be required to include some form of articulation that emulates the original plot width or fits in with the traditional streetscape character.

P-HS-5 Require the retention or refurbishment of traditional vernacular boundary treatments and street furniture on historic streetscapes (railings, front boundary walls etc.)

P-HS-6 Generally maintain a continuous building line along historic streetscapes. Car parks, loading bays and service yards of new or extended developments shall be located to the rear of buildings.

Buildings of Note

P-HS-7 Require the retention and appropriate renovation and reuse of *Buildings of Note*, instead of their demolition and replacement.

Historic streetscapes policies

Historic shopfronts

- P-HS-8** Require the retention and sensitive refurbishment of historic shop fronts and pub fronts of good design quality.
- P-HS-9** Encourage the replacement of inappropriate modern shopfronts with traditionally-detailed shopfronts, based on historical evidence, or with appropriately-designed and well-detailed contemporary shopfronts (refer also to **Section 33.5.9 Shopfronts and signage** in **Chapter 33 Development management Standards**).

10.3 Placemaking and public realm improvements

10.3.1 Placemaking

In urban design, 'placemaking' refers to the intentional process of creating and shaping public spaces to enhance the quality of life and promote community engagement, prioritising people over infrastructure. It involves transforming a physical location, such as a street or square, into a vibrant, inclusive, and functional place that meets the needs and desires of its residents and visitors.

Placemaking goes beyond the mere design of the physical environment. It focuses on the human experience and aims to create places that are inviting, accessible, and foster a sense of belonging. It involves understanding the social, cultural, and economic dynamics of a place and integrating them into the design and planning process.

Placemaking requires the active involvement of community members and all users of a space in the preparation of public realm plans or strategies, to ensure that the design reflects their needs and aspirations.

10.3.2 Public realm improvement schemes

The public realm of a town or village includes all the outside spaces that are publicly accessible and shared by all members of a community. It includes streets, footpaths, parks, squares and other gathering places, comprising façades of buildings, shopfronts, signage, lighting fixtures on buildings, lamp posts, bollards, seating etc. A high-quality public realm is pleasant to use and easy to access. Making an area appealing to pedestrians may also bring significant economic benefits by increasing commercial activity.

All new development should be designed in a manner that enhances the public realm. The elements of an attractive public realm include:

- well-designed urban spaces;
- active ground-floor uses;
- well-maintained buildings and shopfronts;

- high-quality surface treatments;
- discrete building signage and lighting;
- minimal street signage;
- comfortable street furniture, based on a common design theme.

Measures to improve the public realm of the County's town and village centres should involve – at the minimum – reducing visual clutter, harmonising signage and adopting a consistent approach in terms of street furniture, lighting and paving.

Public realm policies

It is a policy of Sligo County Council to:

- P-PR-1** Require the design of public realm schemes to be based on the concept of shared streets, where low traffic speeds are applicable and the needs of the pedestrians are prioritised above all other modes of transport.
- P-PR-2** Ensure that street furniture is of an appropriate scale to fit in with the buildings and the overall streetscape, is visually unobtrusive, comfortable and does not act as an obstacle to pedestrians.
- P-PR-3** Ensure that all public realm schemes, whether private or public, address universal design and accessibility issues.

Public realm objectives

It is an objective of Sligo County Council to:

- O-PR-1** Commission the preparation of Public Realm Plans for the County's three Support Towns – Ballymote, Enniscrone and Tobercurry.
- O-PR-2** As resources permit, prepare public realm strategies/schemes for the five Satellite Villages – Ballysadare, Collooney, Coolaney, Grange and Strandhill. This objective shall also apply to Easky, a **settlement with special coastal tourism functions** with a substantial historic streetscape.

Where such schemes specify works to intra-urban portions of national roads, a *Design Report* shall be completed and submitted in accordance with TII Publications DN GEO-03030 (Design Phase Procedure for Road Safety Improvement Schemes, Urban Renewal Schemes and Local Improvement Schemes). **[PA-42]**

10.4 Compact growth

The first priority (National Strategic Outcome 1) of the National Planning Framework is “Compact growth”. This involves “carefully managing the sustainable growth of compact cities, towns and villages”. It requires a co-ordinated approach to activating strategic, centrally located and underutilised areas that are suitable for re-use to provide housing, jobs, amenities and services.

A compact settlement is one where commercial development is concentrated in the core and housing areas are dense and walkable. Compact growth is the opposite of urban sprawl, which involves spreading development over larger areas and consuming more land.

Sligo County Council promotes the compact growth of settlements based on the principles set out below:

- **consolidation** through the development of gap sites, brownfield or derelict sites;
- **sequential development** (i.e. no leapfrogging of development – the built-up area expands progressively from the centre outwards);
- **masterplanning** of development on large greenfield sites;
- **connectivity** between new and existing development by means of footpaths, cycle paths and streets designed in accordance with DMURS;
- **strong urban edge** – a clean visual break between the built-up area and the surrounding countryside.

10.4.1 Compact growth - consolidation

Consolidation of towns and villages into compact settlements involves prioritising the development of infill, brownfield and backland sites.

- **Infill developments** can be instrumental in strengthening streetscapes. Proposals for infill development should have regard to the character and context of the surrounding area. On larger sites, there may be a case for new development to establish its own character in a contemporary architectural language. Important aspects to consider are active frontages, location of car parking and servicing to the rear of the buildings and the protection of amenity of adjacent buildings.
- **Brownfield sites** are usually abandoned, derelict or underutilized properties, often affected by some form of environmental contamination. Structures on brownfields may be unsafe due to decay, structural damage, or the presence of hazardous materials. Such sites can comprise substantial amounts of land in or near the centre of an urban area. Large brownfield sites should be developed on the basis of a masterplan for the entire area, after addressing any potential environmental, health and safety issue.
- **Backland sites** are undeveloped lands behind buildings, with limited road frontage (or none). Very often, particularly in town centres, such land can be in multiple ownership. Development in such areas will only be considered as part of a comprehensive masterplan for the entire backland area. Piecemeal development of individual plots will generally not be permitted.

Important to the success of delivering Compact Growth is the provision of attractive housing options to people of all ages in all types and sizes of residential development (refer to **Chapter 26 Residential Development**).

10.4.2 Sequential development – outwards from the town centre

Sustainable urban growth involves the incremental expansion of urban boundaries and the concomitant development of infrastructure, amenities, and services in a logical sequence, from the centre outwards.

Building beyond the urban edge, while a substantial amount of in-between land remains in a greenfield state, or “leapfrogging”, leads to an uncontrolled spread of the built-up area. The resulting disjointed blocks of developments can negatively affect the quality of life of these new communities and also harm the character of the town and its surrounding countryside. In order to avoid this, careful phasing of urban extensions is required, in accordance with the principle of sequential development.

10.4.3 Masterplanning urban extensions

The growth of a town should not depend only on land ownership and availability, i.e. field-by-field development. Poorly connected, cul-de-sac housing estates, built on relatively small sites in single ownership, are not appropriate forms of urban development.

Towns should expand on the basis of masterplans for defined larger areas. The aim of masterplans should be to design town “quarters” or neighbourhoods addressing the multifaceted aspects that make places successful, such as:

- the quality of the buildings and spaces and the way these come together to create unique places
- the provision of physical and social infrastructure and services
- the building and urban design in relation to local history, culture and landscape
- the engagement of local people and the role of different agencies in delivering the projects.

Further guidance on the role, scope and content of masterplans may be obtained from the *Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlements Guidelines for Planning Authorities* (January 2024) and the *Urban Design Manual – A Best Practice Guide* (DECLG, 2009), as well as from the UK documents *Creating Successful Masterplans* and *Getting the big picture right: A guide to large scale urban design* (Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment, 2004 and 2010, respectively). **[PA-40]**

10.4.4 Connectivity – new circulation networks

Effective urban connectivity enhances accessibility, making it easier for people to reach destinations and engage in various activities. Well-designed circulation networks, including public transport systems and pedestrian-friendly infrastructure, allow residents to move around the town efficiently and affordably. This promotes mobility, independence, and social interaction, especially for those who cannot afford or choose not to own private vehicles.

Understanding the historical context of a place is important when planning extensions to towns and villages. The design of new circulation networks should be informed by an appreciation of the existing street patterns and of the way the town evolved. The imposition of incongruous street layouts upon an area should be avoided.

The main objective in designing new connections should be to create a grid. This can have either a regular or irregular shape, but it is important that each end of a street or path connects to others. Grid street networks are easy to understand and navigate, particularly for pedestrians and cyclists. They allow for easy orientation and minimize the distances between origins and destinations. This can result in shorter travel times and reduced congestion. Pedestrians and cyclists can further benefit from filtered permeability, whereby links are provided for these modes only, thus offering a clear advantage over vehicular traffic. **[PA-41]**

Cul-de-sac street patterns tend to concentrate traffic on a few entry and exit points, potentially leading to higher congestion and longer travel times, especially for pedestrians and cyclists. Cul-de-sac systems, which lead to less efficient land use and more dispersed development, will be discouraged.

10.4.5 Urban/rural interface – strong urban edge

The entrance to a town is an important element in its physical appearance. A clearly defined urban edge contributes to the visual quality and aesthetics of a settlement. It helps create a sense of place, maintains scenic vistas, and protects views of natural and cultural landmarks. A characteristic of Irish towns in the past was the obvious distinction between built-up areas and countryside. Recent patterns of development have resulted in the blurring of this distinction, due to the proliferation of housing, commercial developments and advertising structures along the approach roads into towns.

The Planning Authority will endeavour to create strong edges for the County's towns and villages by discouraging ribbon development on the approaches to compact built-up areas. By retaining a clear boundary for urban growth and protecting non-urban areas from encroachment, the Council seeks to preserve natural and rural landscapes, protect sensitive ecosystems, and maintain the character and identity of both urban and non-urban areas.

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). **[PA-39]**

10.5 Strategic designations and land-use zoning

10.5.1 The role of strategic designations

A new provision of the Development Plan Guidelines is the requirement to designate **Settlement Consolidation Sites (SCS)** within each settlement with a population greater than 10,000 persons, and also in smaller towns with an important role in the settlement strategy of the development plan.

While these sites are essential in delivering compact growth, the Guidelines specify further designations that a planning authority might assign to certain lands – **Additional Provision sites (AP)** and **Long-Term Strategic and Sustainable Development Sites (LT SSDS)**.

Regeneration Sites have been identified in Sligo Town, Ballymote, Tobercurry and Enniscrone.

Section 3.2.4 in Chapter 3 Core Strategy Statement indicates the steps taken by the Planning Authority in designating the most suitable sites for housing delivery and compact growth.

Volume 2 of the CDP (Chapters 11 to 22) includes site-level information, in a tabular format, for each settlement where land is zoned for residential purposes or a mixture of residential and other uses, specifying the potential housing yields of SCS and AP (refer to Chapters 11 to 22).

It is important to emphasise that the above designations relate only to the sites' potential to contribute to a settlement's compact growth during the period of the Development Plan or beyond this period (in the case of LT SSDS). The designations do not necessarily reflect the land-use zoning of the respective sites.

For example, a Regeneration Site located in Sligo Town centre could be zoned for mixed uses, while another Regeneration Site elsewhere, adjoining an unfinished housing scheme, might be zoned for residential uses. Similarly, Settlement Consolidation Sites may be zoned for either residential or mixed uses.

10.5.2 Strategic Land Reserve (SLR)

A variety of areas which were previously zoned for residential development, but did not meet the criteria for designation as Long-Term Strategic and Sustainable Development Sites, have been included in the Strategic Land Reserve. In general, these lands may become suitable for development over the longer-term, and their potential needs to be preserved.

However, consideration may be given to the development of SLR lands before the end of the current Plan period only under exceptional circumstances, such as faster-than-expected growth on zoned lands within a settlement, or a requirement to provide social and affordable housing at locations identified in the successor to the current Housing Delivery Action Plan 2022-2026.

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.

10.5.3 Land-use zoning objectives

All land-use zoning in County Sligo has been undertaken as part of this County Development Plan, to ensure coherence in the decision-making process, with the full extent of residential zoning set out for the six-year period from 2024 to 2030.

This approach will also provide certainty by avoiding a scenario whereby lands are inappropriately zoned in separate statutory processes, such as the future preparation of the Sligo and Environs Area Plan.

Given that the land-use plans have been prepared for Sligo Town, three Support Towns and a total of 27 villages, the objectives specifying the uses that would be permissible under each zoning category will apply to all lands zoned in the County. The zoning objectives must be sufficiently flexible to help guide development proposal in settlements of all sizes, from Sligo and Environs to the small villages supporting rural communities.

There are several notable changes in the zoning objectives included in this Plan, compared to the previous CDP (2017-2023). For example, some objectives have been formulated exclusively for Sligo Town Centre (TC1 and TC2), others combine two or more similar objectives from previous development plans (BIE – business, industry and enterprise, TU – transport and utilities), and a new objective is proposed for smaller villages (RV- rural village uses), in accordance with the recommendations of the Development Plan Guidelines (2022).

The zoning objectives are detailed below, and the types of uses permissible within each zoning category are presented in the **Zoning Matrix** (at the end of this chapter).

TC1 – Town centre uses, type 1 (only in Sligo Town)

Objective: Protect the historic character and of Sligo’s old town core through conservation, regeneration and public realm improvements, and promote civic, retail and compatible uses that preserve the town core’s identity and attractiveness.

TC2 – Town centre uses, type 2 (only in Sligo Town)

Objective: Consolidate the existing fabric of central areas outside the town core (TC1 Zone) by densification of appropriate commercial and residential developments, ensuring a mix of commercial, recreational, civic, cultural, leisure, residential uses and urban streets, while delivering a quality urban environment.

This zoning objective emphasises compact growth and priority for pedestrians, cyclists and public transport.

MIX – mixed uses

Objective: Promote the development of a dynamic mix of uses able to create and sustain viable town and village centres. Commercial (including retail), residential, leisure, community, office and suitable enterprise uses are supported in mixed-use zones, as well as high-amenity open space.

eRES – existing and infill residential use

Objective: Protect and enhance the residential amenity of established residential areas and their communal or public open space and allow for small-scale infill development which is appropriate to the character and pattern of development in the immediate area.

The introduction of other compatible or ancillary uses, redevelopment and regeneration may also be considered in these areas, as long as the dominant use remains residential.

nRES – new residential uses

Objective: Promote the development of greenfield/infill/backlands for high-quality residential uses such as apartments, houses, sheltered housing and live-work units, retirement homes etc., in tandem with the provision of the required physical infrastructure.

Social infrastructure / ancillary uses such as childcare and early education facilities, community, recreational and leisure facilities will also be considered, in the interest of creating sustainable neighbourhoods.

RV – rural village uses

Objective: To protect the character of the village, ensuring that local housing needs are appropriately addressed, physical and community infrastructure is maintained and improved, and local services can continue to be provided.

This objective applies to the smaller Villages Sustaining Rural Communities, which have not been allocated a housing target under the Core Strategy. Areas previously zoned for residential, mixed and commercial uses are subject to the more general and flexible RV zoning objective. This type of objective is recommended in the Development Plan Guidelines (2022).

NC – neighbourhood centre uses (only in Sligo Town)

Objective: Promote the development of sustainable local retail and service centres to serve the surrounding residential neighbourhoods.

CF – community facilities

Objective: Protect existing facilities or retain existing uses and provide for the establishment of new/additional community and institutional uses, such as schools, community centres, health centres etc. Cemeteries, church yards, allotments, playing fields/pitches and other compatible uses will also be accommodated on lands zoned for community facilities. [refer also to PA-43, amended Zoning Matrix]

RW – retail warehousing

Objective: Provide for retail warehousing development by facilitating the sale of bulky goods/goods in bulk within high-quality settings, in locations with good accessibility.

BIE – business, industry, enterprise

Objective: Promote the development of business/technology parks and industrial estates, including office-based businesses, research and development, high-technology manufacturing, workshops, small-scale warehousing, logistics/transport-related uses, waste management and light industrial units in dedicated areas where a high density of employees can be accommodated in a well-designed environment, based on the adequate provision of sustainable transport and mobility infrastructure.

This zoning objective combines the elements of previous objectives “BITP” and “WILT” (Business, Industry and Technology Parks, and Warehousing, Industry, Logistics and Transport in the former Sligo and Environs Development Plan 2010), “BUS” (Business and Enterprise in the County Development Plan 2017-2024) and “BP”/Business Park/Industrial Estate as recommended in the Development Plan Guidelines (2022).

TOU – tourism-related uses

Objective: Retain, enhance and support the development of tourism-related facilities and activities.

TU – transport and utilities-related infrastructure

Objective: Facilitate the provision and improvement/upgrading of transport-related infrastructure and essential services/utilities such as power supply, telecommunications, gas infrastructure, waste facilities, water supply, wastewater treatment etc. This zoning objective combines the elements of previous CDP objectives “TPN” (Transport and Parking Nodes) and “PU” (Public Utilities).

NR – natural resources

Objective: Protect all known unworked mineral deposits from development that might limit their scope for extraction. Within the NR zone, only extraction and associated activities will be permitted. Such activities may include industrial uses, heavy vehicle depots, waste recycling and refuse transfer.

OS – open space (public, private, natural, semi-natural, sports fields, green corridors)

Objective:

- a. Ensure adequate provision and maintenance of public open space, to be developed and used for parks and playgrounds. Green areas associated with housing development become public open spaces only after they are taken in charge by the Local Authority.
- b. Require the retention and maintenance of private green areas that have traditionally been open for public enjoyment, i.e. parks and gardens located on existing or former institutional lands, as well as gardens that make a significant contribution to the streetscape or character of the locality.

- c. Require the protection and enhancement of natural/semi-natural green areas such as wetlands, forests, water-edge habitats, riparian zones and ensure that any development that may be permitted in such areas does not damage its surroundings.
- d. Support the development of playing fields, tennis courts, golf courses, bowling greens etc at appropriate locations. These facilities can be provided either by the County Council or by other organisations such as sports clubs and associations.
- e. Reserve sufficient land for the provision of pedestrian and cycle routes that will connect green areas (parks, playing fields, natural/semi-natural open space) with residential/community facilities and towns/village centres. The pedestrian/cycle corridors may be provided the County Council as well as by the private sector as part of new commercial or residential development.

This objective combines the elements of previous CDP objectives “OS” (Open Space) and “SPF” (Sports and Playing Fields). **Please note the SFRA-related limitations attached to the Zoning Matrix.**

GB – green belt

Objective: Contain and consolidate settlements, while safeguarding lands for their future expansion and for the provision of strategic infrastructure.

Green belts are to be used principally for agriculture. Any new development, such as roads and buildings, should be constructed in a manner that minimises visual and environmental impact.

10.5.4 Land-use Zoning Matrix

The purpose of land use zoning is to indicate the intended uses of all lands zoned as part of the settlement plans contained in this CDP.

The Zoning Matrix (see the following four pages) states the degree of acceptability of particular types of development within areas covered by various zoning objectives.

An indication that a development/use type would be “normally permitted” does not imply an automatic grant of planning permission, or indeed that a planning application will ultimately be successful.

Uses that are normally permitted

A use which is normally permitted is one which the Planning Authority accepts in theory in the relevant zone. However, development proposals are still subject to the normal planning process, including the consideration of policies and objectives outlined in the Plan.

Uses that are open for consideration

A use open for consideration is one which the Planning Authority may permit where it is satisfied that the proposed type of development is compatible with the policies and objectives for the zone, does not conflict with the existing or permitted uses, and conforms with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

Uses that are not normally permitted

Development classified as not normally permitted in a particular zone is one which will not be entertained by the Planning Authority, except in special circumstances. This may be due to its perceived effect on existing and permitted uses, its incompatibility with the policies and objectives contained in this Plan or the fact that it may be inconsistent with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

Existing non-conforming uses

The extension/expansion of existing non-conforming uses in each zoning category shall be assessed on its merits. Nothing in the Zoning Matrix shall be taken as absolutely precluding the reasonable extension/expansion of non-conforming uses or the conversion of these developments to similar uses.

Zoning Matrix

TC1 - town centre 1; **TC2** - town centre 2; **MIX** - mixed uses; **eRES** - existing residential; **nRES** - new residential; **RV** - rural village; **NC** - neighbourhood centre; **CF** - community facilities; **RW** - retail warehousing; **BIE** - business, industry, enterprise; **TOU** - tourism; **TU** - transport and utilities infrastructure; **NR** - natural resources; **OS** - open space; **GB** - green belt

○ the use type is normally permitted ● the use type is not normally permitted ◐ the use type is open to consideration

Use type \ Zoning category	TC1	TC2	MIX	eRES	nRES	RV	NC	CF	RW	BIE	TOU	TU	NR	OS	GB
Abattoir	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	◐	●	●	●	●	●
Advertisements and advertising structures	◐	◐	◐	●	●	◐	◐	●	◐	◐	◐	◐	●	●	◐
Agricultural buildings	●	●	●	●	◐	◐	●	●	●	◐	●	●	◐	●	○
Amusement arcade	◐	◐	◐	●	●	◐	◐	●	●	●	◐	●	●	●	●
Bank/building society	○	○	○	●	●	○	○	●	●	◐	●	●	●	●	●
Bed and breakfast	○	○	○	○	○	○	◐	●	●	●	◐	●	●	●	◐
Betting office	○	○	◐	●	●	◐	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Boarding kennels	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	◐	●	●	●	●	◐
Café	○	○	○	◐	◐	○	○	◐	◐	○	○	◐	●	◐	◐
Car park (see note 1)	●	◐	◐	●	●	◐	○	●	○	◐	◐	◐	●	◐	◐
Car park, multi-storey	○	○	◐	●	●	●	◐	◐	○	◐	●	◐	●	●	●
Caravan park, camping site, glamping site	●	●	●	●	●	◐	●	●	●	●	○	●	●	●	●
Cemetery	●	●	●	●	●	◐	●	○	●	●	●	◐	●	●	◐
Childcare facility (crèche/playschool)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	◐	○	●	●	●	◐	●
Community facility	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	●	◐	○	◐	●	○	◐
Crematorium	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	◐	●	◐	●	○	●	●	●
Conference centre	○	○	○	◐	◐	◐	◐	●	●	○	◐	●	●	●	●
Dance hall (see note 2)	○	○	○	◐	◐	◐	◐	◐	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Data centre (see note 3)	◐	○	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	●	◐	●	●	●
Drive-thru restaurant	●	●	◐	●	●	●	●	●	◐	◐	●	●	●	●	●

Use type	Zoning category															
	TC1	TC2	MIX	eRES	nRES	RV	NC	CF	RW	BIE	TOU	TU	NR	OS	GB	
Education - school	◐	○	○	◐	◐	○	○	○	●	◐	◐	●	●	●	●	
Education - third level institution	◐	○	○	●	●	○	○	○	●	◐	●	●	●	●	●	
Enterprise centre / units	◐	○	○	●	●	◐	●	●	●	◐	◐	◐	●	●	●	
Enterprise - live-work units	◐	◐	◐	◐	◐	◐	◐	●	●	●	◐	◐	●	●	●	
Extractive industry and associated facilities	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	●	◐	
Funeral home	◐	○	◐	●	●	○	◐	◐	●	◐	●	●	●	●	●	
Garage – motor sales showroom	●	◐	◐	●	●	◐	◐	●	◐	◐	●	●	●	●	●	
Garage – petrol station	●	○	○	●	●	○	◐	●	○	◐	●	○	●	●	◐	
Garage – service facilities	●	◐	◐	●	●	○	◐	●	●	○	●	◐	●	●	●	
Garage – scrapyard	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	●	◐	●	●	●	
Garden centre	●	◐	○	●	●	◐	◐	●	◐	◐	●	◐	●	●	◐	
Golf course / Pitch & Putt	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	○	
Hair salon	○	○	○	◐	◐	○	○	●	●	◐	●	◐	●	●	●	
Health centre and related consultants	○	○	○	◐	◐	○	○	○	●	◐	●	●	●	●	●	
Heavy vehicle depot	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	●	◐	◐	●	●	
Hospital	●	◐	◐	◐	◐	◐	◐	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	
Hostel	○	○	○	◐	◐	○	◐	◐	●	●	○	●	●	●	●	
Hotel	○	○	○	●	◐	○	○	●	●	●	○	●	●	●	●	
Household fuel depot	●	●	◐	●	●	◐	◐	●	◐	◐	●	◐	●	●	●	
Industry - general use (see note 4)	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	●	○	◐	●	●	
Industry - light (see note 5)	●	◐	◐	●	●	◐	●	●	●	○	●	○	◐	●	●	
Industry - workshop/ ancillary showroom (see note 6)	●	●	●	●	●	◐	●	●	●	◐	●	●	●	●	●	

Continues overleaf

Use type \ Zoning category	TC1	TC2	MIX	eRES	nRES	RV	NC	CF	RW	BIE	TOU	TU	NR	OS	GB
Library	○	○	◐	◐	◐	○	○	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Media recording and general media-associated uses	◐	○	○	◐	◐	◐	○	○	●	○	●	◐	●	●	●
Mobility hub	◐	◐	○	◐	○	◐	○	○	◐	○	●	○	●	●	●
Night club	○	○	●	●	●	◐	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Office under 100 sq.m	○	○	○	●	●	○	○	◐	●	○	●	○	●	●	●
Office of 100 sq.m and above	○	○	○	●	●	◐	○	●	●	○	●	○	●	●	●
Park-and-ride facility	●	◐	◐	●	●	○	◐	●	○	○	●	○	●	●	●
Place of public worship	○	○	○	◐	◐	○	○	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Public house	○	○	○	●	●	○	○	●	●	◐	◐	●	●	●	●
Recreation - cultural facilities	○	○	○	◐	◐	○	○	○	○	◐	◐	◐	●	◐	◐
Recreation - leisure facilities	◐	◐	◐	◐	◐	◐	○	◐	○	◐	◐	◐	●	◐	◐
Refuse transfer centre	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	◐	●	○	◐	●	●
Residential - apartments	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	●	●	●	◐	●	●	●	●
Residential - houses	◐	○	○	○	○	○	◐	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Residential - Traveller accommodation	◐	◐	◐	○	○	○	○	●	●	◐	●	●	●	●	●
Residential - institution or day care centre	◐	◐	○	○	○	●	○	◐	●	◐	●	●	●	●	●
Restaurant	○	○	○	◐	◐	○	○	◐	●	●	◐	◐	●	●	●
Retirement home or nursing home	◐	◐	○	○	○	○	●	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Retail - shop (comparison)	○	○	◐	●	●	●	○	●	◐	●	●	●	●	●	●
Retail - shop (convenience)	○	○	◐	◐	◐	○	○	◐	●	◐	◐	◐	●	●	●
Retail - shopping centre	○	◐	●	●	●	●	◐	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Retail - cash & carry	●	◐	◐	●	●	◐	●	●	◐	◐	●	●	●	●	●

Use type \ Zoning category	TC1	TC2	MIX	eRES	nRES	RV	NC	CF	RW	BIE	TOU	TU	NR	OS	GB
Takeaway	○	◐	◐	●	●	○	○	●	◐	●	◐	●	●	●	●
Transport depot	●	●	◐	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	●	○	●	●	●
Veterinary surgery	●	◐	◐	◐	◐	○	○	●	●	○	●	●	●	●	●
Warehousing - retail / non-food	●	◐	◐	●	●	●	●	●	○	●	●	●	●	●	●
Warehousing - wholesale / repository	●	●	◐	●	●	◐	●	●	●	○	●	○	●	●	●
Waste recycling depot	●	●	●	●	●	◐	●	●	●	○	●	●	◐	●	●

Notes

1. Excluding car parking ancillary to other uses, for example employees' car parking at offices or communal parking within new residential estates.
2. A dance hall relates to activities such as Irish dancing, ballet, ballroom dancing, salsa etc., especially where lessons are given or where the facilities are used for evening-time recreational purposes.
Such uses do not include night club, music club or discotheque (which are treated as a separate use type in the Zoning Matrix - refer to "Night club")
3. A data centre may be defined as a facility where information technology equipment is installed and operated, along with the storage and distribution of electronic data.
4. General industrial uses include all industrial manufacturing, processing and storage outside the definition of light industry.
5. Light industry generally makes small things and does not need to use large, heavy machinery. Examples include food processing, textiles, consumer goods etc.
6. The ancillary showroom shall be restricted to the sale of bulky goods within a net retail selling space of maximum 100 sq.m.

Limitations related to Flood Risk Zones

The limitation described in this note applies to a relatively small number of instances where Flood Risk Zones A and B overlap with certain land-use zoning objectives, including Open Space (OS) and Green Belt (GB).

Uses under all zoning objectives (apart from where the Justification Test outlined in the Flood Risk Management Plan has been passed or where the uses comprise minor development in existing developed areas, as outlined in Section 5.28 of the Guidelines as amended by Circular PL 2/2014) shall be limited to water-compatible uses in Flood Zone A, and less vulnerable or water-compatible uses in Flood Zone B. Detailed, site-specific Flood Risk Assessment will be required in these areas. This limitation shall take primacy over any other provision relating to the specific land-use zoning objectives.

The lands/sites that have passed the Justification Test are detailed in the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment that accompanies the Development Plan.