



2.14 Employment, Enterprise and Economic Development

2.14.1 Aims

In line with the Borders Midlands West (BMW) Strategy, it will be the aim of the Sligo Borough Council and Sligo County Council to support the development of Sligo as a centre of:

- Electronic Commerce, with the appropriate telecommunications.
- Vital business services.
- Major new tourism honeypots, particularly with regard to untapped tourism potential.
- Research and Technology Development, by redesigning and upgrading RTD facilities at the Institute of Technology.
- Establishment of new technological parks at Sligo.

Such development would support the Government's objective to achieve a more balanced regional economic structure in the country. The strategy to make this attractive is outlined in section 2.14.3 below.

2.14.2 Analysis: Employment Profile

Sligo serves as an administrative, employment, commercial, health, and educational centre for the region, which accounts for many of the professional service and administration sector jobs in the area. It is not surprising that the service sector is the primary employment sector in the city. Nonetheless, Sligo also acts as an important distribution centre in the northwest. In addition, Ireland's tool making industry is centred on Sligo, which is a manufacturing centre of considerable importance. The I.D.A. has over 15 Foreign Direct Investment (F.D.I) companies of varying size, and Enterprise Ireland has over 50 companies located in Sligo City and Environs.

The I.D.A. has two business parks in Sligo, one at Finisklin and another at Cleveragh, which accommodate mainly knowledge based industries and small engineering companies. The pharmaceutical industry is significant with several companies producing goods for this sector, most notably Abbott (Ireland) Ltd. Abbott is the largest employer in Sligo and is currently undergoing a significant expansion process creating an additional 195 jobs at its Ballytivnan operation.

Appendix A, consists of an analysis of the employment profile of Sligo. The main findings from this analysis show that the service sector is the primary employment sector in the city, with 7% more individuals working in this sector, compared to national figures. Although there is a reliance on the service and administration sector, the employment profile also highlights a substantially lower percentage of professionals in the city, with a heavier (than national) reliance on non-manual/manual and semi-skilled/skilled sectors. In order to redress this imbalance, more professional related employment sources need to be attracted to the city to retain third level graduates. The percentage of secondary school students that go on to third level education in Sligo is 4.3% above the national average (see Appendix B); this highlights the importance of attracting professional related industries to the area, so as to retain graduates. The capacity of Sligo Institute of Technology is expected to double over the next 5 – 10 years, from 3000 students to 6500, therefore Sligo has the ability to provide the workforce for the professional related sector.

There is a 1% higher than national unemployment rate in Sligo (see Appendix C), although there has been a 63% decrease in those on the live register over the last 5 years, indicating a growth in the local economy.





A.T.M. Banking

The Health and Food Sectors are particularly important development areas, and are supported by the presence of the General Hospital and pharmaceutical related industries such as Abbott's, and also specialisation in the food sector in St. Angela's College.

2.14.3 Future Economic Strategy

Overall the local authority sets out to create an environment of well-planned land uses, which in turn create a favourable climate for investment. A key element in the proposed land use structure is the development of an economic growth corridor that will run either side of the proposed Inner Relief Road (N4) from Carrowroe to the city centre and north of the city centre along either side of the Bundoran Road. This economic corridor establishes high profile sites within easy reach of the city centre, all residential areas and amenities. It also facilitates the opportunity to integrate land use with transportation, ensuring transport options for employees. Priority for growth in industrial and business activity during the lifetime of the plan will be along this corridor, in addition to proposed IDA sites.

The city has a prominent role within the region as 'Capital of the Northwest' and as a centre for public administration and services. Sligo is an attractive location for investment because it is situated on a good national road network, has direct rail access, has an airport within 5 miles, has broadband and ISDN telecom facilities and has a FAS training facility, as well as two third level education facilities.

Quality of life is an important issue to companies and their employees. Sligo is a particularly attractive area, which offers a good quality of life with excellent scenery, heritage and attractions such as Lough Gill, Roses Point and Benbulbin. Sligo also provides access to good health recreation, leisure and cultural facilities. In recent years there has been significant city centre improvements, which are set to continue with the development proposals for Wine Street, the development of civic squares and pedestrianisation schemes.

Protection and enhancement of the natural assets in Sligo are important elements within the plan and are covered in more detail within section 2.8, Sligo and the Natural Environment. The provision of local facilities such as play areas and crèches are also an important element within the plan and has implications for employers in the city, who may need such facilities available for their staff. The local authority recognises the need for improved recreation and community facilities; this is covered in more detail within section 2.10 Recreation and Community Facilities.

2.14.4 I.D.A - Promotion of Sligo as a 'Gateway'

The I.D.A. has identified Sligo as a 'gateway' city serving the western region, to which it intends to target investment. As section 1.5.2.4 highlights, there are several areas that have already been reserved for industrial development. The IDA has proposed the development of a business park to the southeast of Sligo at Oakfield, in close proximity to the proposed western by-pass and the railway line (where a future transit stop could be provided).

The local authority recognises the strategic regional importance of the Finisklin site. Although there are some current access difficulties, the site is appropriate for future expansion for industrial activity due to the established use in the area and the current and proposed access improvements such as the proposed Inner Relief Road, the proposed Western By-Pass and upgrading of the First Sea Road.

The Cleveragh site is within a high amenity area and also adjacent to several residential areas, therefore significant industrial expansion would not be desirable. However a

business park for high technology uses is appropriate for this area. This site has been identified as an area for industrial starter units which would be appropriate for small-scale industrial activity, in addition to office and general business use. Cleveragh will be unique amongst areas zoned as BITP (Business, Industry and Technology Parks) small-scale retail workshops will be permissible, provided they are ancillary to an adjacent industrial or business unit. Such outlets will not be allowed in excess of 100 sq.m of net selling space and will be restricted to selling bulky goods that are related to the business on site. Regarding the definition of bulky goods, the same set of guidelines should apply as applied to retail warehousing in section 2.3 Shopping and Retail Planning. The provision of this type of development uniquely applies to the Cleveragh BITP zone and is not considered appropriate elsewhere in other BITP zones in the plan area.

2.14.5 Micro Enterprises

Enterprise Ireland are currently promoting the concept of a Webworks Facility in Sligo. This would act as a prototype development for Regional Information Technology Hubs to serve such sectors as digital media, e-business and healthsciences and is envisaged to accommodate start-up technology companies.

The Local Authority recognises that there is a need for small industrial and business starter units. There is provision, as highlighted above, for industrial and business starter units at the Cleveragh site. The Local Authority will play an active role in encouraging these starter units and where necessary acquire the necessary lands and buildings for development of this nature during the course of the plan.

Small local businesses starting up may however find it difficult to locate within designated locations and thus the local authority will be flexible to the needs of indigenous and entrepreneurial business depending on the impact of the proposed development on the amenities of the surrounding area. In general a sequential approach will be taken with new businesses with preference to city centre, edge-of-centre and then out-of-centre depending on the nature and type of business.

2.14.6 New Types of Working

Section 2.16.4, Sustainability, highlights the benefits in terms of sustainability of new types of working practices such as working from home in the form of 'live work units', these uses mix office and residential uses. With the rise in information technology this method of working has become more realistic and more prevalent in businesses. Flexible working practices and the ability for employees to work in a comfortable environment often benefit productivity. The local authorities recognise the need to encourage flexibility in the zoning of areas to encourage the creation of 'live work' units.

2.14.7 Office Development

Currently the main concentration of office development in Sligo is within the city centre primarily along Wine Street and Stephen Street. The Government Buildings are located along Cranmore lane and are also a large office employer.

Smaller scaled office developments will be encouraged in the city centre and at neighbourhood centres. Larger office facilities will be encouraged to the south of the city adjacent to the necessary infrastructure within the mixed use zone (C3) or in the vicinity of the port (C2), in an effort to revitalise that area, enabling easy access to the city centre. Former public institutional buildings can also provide a suitable base for office and enterprise activity.



Modern office block development

2.14.8 General

Abbott's, as highlighted above, is undergoing an expansion at its Ballytivnan site to the north of the city. Due to the heavy business and employment influence of this site, its close proximity to the transport network and the Institute of Technology it is appropriate for business expansion. Further growth in this area would be in line with the north south growth strategy, it is therefore proposed to create an expanded industrial zone in this area.

As highlighted within section 1.5.2.5 Retail Warehousing, transport and logistic activities, which are reliant on good road infrastructure facilities, are an appropriate activity for the wedge of land that lies between the N4 and the Old Dublin Road (see Map 22 Draft Land Use Zoning). Heavy industrial type units will also be generally encouraged in this area subject to environmental review and assessment.

2.14.9 Policies

It is the policy of the local authorities to:

- Facilitate and encourage the development of Sligo as a 'Gateway City' and economic growth driver for the northwest.
- Promote Sligo as a centre for government decentralisation and promote lands in the vicinity of the redesigned N4 for such development, particularly at the Caltragh interchange and lands south to the Carrowroe roundabout.
- Encourage office development close to strategic transport corridors, neighbourhood centres, the city centre, and in mixed use zones.
- Encourage local or small scale offices in neighbourhood areas.
- Encourage the integration of employment locations with other land uses and the transportation network and in particular, ensure that the location of employment intensive land uses are located in proximity to existing and planned strategic routes, where public transport is most viable.
- Provide areas to accommodate business starter units.
- Ensure that there are sufficient lands zoned for business and economic growth.
- Support the concept of live/work studios on a pilot basis.
- Facilitate e-tailing as a shopping option, by ensuring that adequate lands are identified for the storage and distribution of products and goods.
- Where industrial sites are developed adjacent to residential areas ensure there is adequate screening in the form of tree planting and landscaping.
- Support an expanded education and research sector in Sligo.
- Facilitate the development of broadband infrastructure.
- Liaise with the I.D.A, Enterprise Ireland and other relevant bodies, to attract international and indigenous industry, enterprise and employment to the city.
- Encourage the reuse of vacant public institutional buildings for office and enterprise activity, where community and services facilities are no longer necessary.
- Facilitate the provision of infrastructure corridors as a means of attracting investment and employment in Sligo.
- Apply a flexible approach to the zoning of entrepreneurial start-up businesses and small-scale industrial activities, where it can be demonstrated that the proposed use would have minimal adverse impacts on adjoining uses and properties. In such cases a sequential approach to the location of the development will generally apply with a general preference order of city centre, edge-of-centre and then out-of-centre locations, depending on the nature and type of business.
- Promote and encourage the full utilisation of the Sligo freight yard, as part of the national freight distribution system.

2.14.10 Objectives

It is an objective of the local authorities to:

- EE1** Support the creation of a way-leave for an Infrastructure Corridor, running along the west side of the railway line, as shown on the Objectives Map.

