O'Connell Street, Sligo

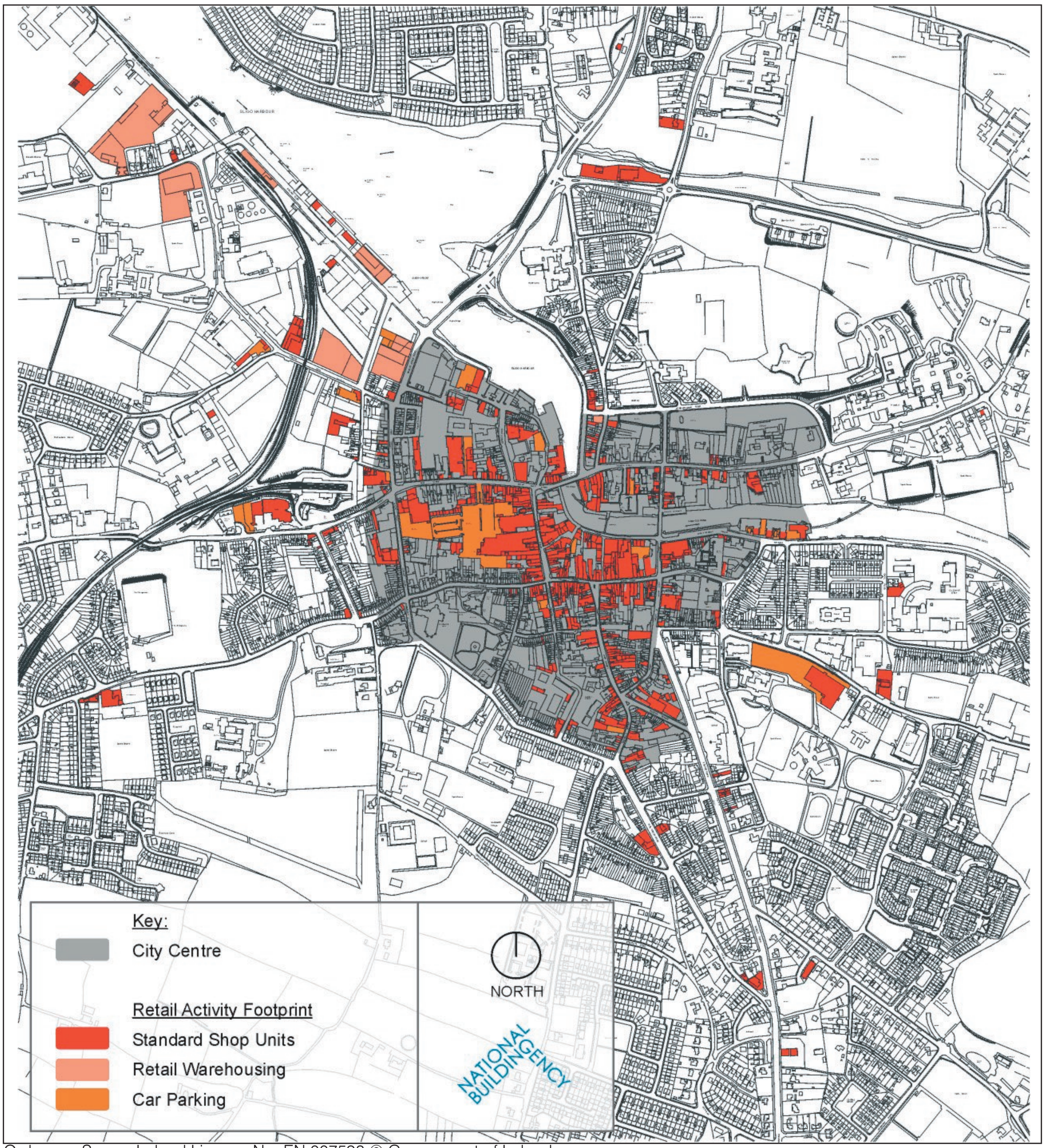
2.3 Shopping and Retail Planning

2.3.1 Analysis and Overview

All local authorities are obliged to follow the guidelines issued by the Department of the Environment and Local Government - Retail Planning Guidelines for Local Authorities, December 2000. The implications of these guidelines as well as more detailed survey and analysis are discussed in greater detail in the 'Sligo Retail & City Centre Strategy', a supplementary report to the Sligo and Environs Development Plan. This section summarises and discusses some of the findings derived from that strategy and formulates policies and objectives accordingly.

The government has stipulated in policy that established centres should be the preferred locations for retail developments. Edge-of-centre sites, followed by out-of-centre sites should only be considered where it can be demonstrated that there are no central sites, which are suitable. This is referred to as the sequential approach to the location of retail development. The city centre is defined in Map 13.

Map 13: City Centre Boundary and Current Retail Activity Footprint



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Shopping Spree, Sligo

Sligo faces the challenge of ensuring that additional retail development is provided in a way that is efficient, equitable and sustainable whilst fostering a pleasant and stimulating shopping environment that will appeal to long-distance 'event' shoppers. In particular, Sligo needs to provide sites for the mid-sized 'name-brand retailers' or 'multiples'. The provision of these types is crucial, as they will act as 'key attractors' for the city centre. The lack of city-centre multiples or 'key attracters' is a key factor inhibiting Sligo's growth. This deficiency is partly because Sligo has no modern shopping centre and comparatively little modern shopping space. As such there have not been many opportunities for new retailers to enter the Sligo market. However, a positive consequence of this has been the development of an interesting variety of local independent stores contributing to the city's unique retail sector. Sligo must also continue to provide an environment where specialist, independent retailers can flourish, thus adding to the diversity of urban life. Research shows high quality indigenous local shops for browsing are crucial in maximising a centres overall appeal to the shopper. The smaller, specialist units have the affect of acting as a backup to the big name multiples.

The breakdown of retail activity in Sligo is shown in Table 3. Vacancies are currently most notable in suburban neighbourhood centres, and also in the edge streets that are contracting to the south east of the city centre, most notably High Street, Old Market Street and Connolly Street.

Table 3: Summary of Retail & Service Outlets in Sligo and Environs (2002)

	Number	Percentage (%)	Total Floorspace (sq.m)*	Employees Full-Time	Employees Part-Time
Convenience	51	11.8	6,790	316	343
Comparison	203	46.9	40,275	781	440
Service	125	28.9	22,432	535	613
Vacant	54	12.5	8,662	N/a	N/a
Total	433	100	78,159	1,632	,396

Source: NBA Retail Survey February 2002.
*Note: Ground and first floors, excluding attached storage.

2.3.2 Sligo's Catchment and Future Growth in Retail Floor Space

NBA Pedestrian and Origin-Destination Surveys helped define the retail catchment of Sligo for convenience and comparison goods. Sligo has a potentially large primary catchment area since it is the largest centre within a sparsely populated region. The catchment population for convenience goods extends across two counties, Sligo and Leitrim, and numbers about 46,000[1]. The catchment population for comparison goods extends across six counties, (Sligo, Leitrim, Donegal, Roscommon, Mayo and Fermanagh) and numbers approximately 79,000[9]. The majority (about three quarters) of shoppers visiting Sligo City, live within County Sligo. As such the catchment area presently extends out about 13-14 miles from the city for convenience goods and approximately 24-25 miles for comparison goods

Smaller centres in the county attract a significant number of convenience shoppers who are resident within County Sligo. These competing centres for convenience goods include Ballymote, Tobercurry, Riverstown, Grange and Strandhill. Likewise, expenditure leakage occurs from Sligo's primary catchment area for comparison goods. Much of this leakage is event-related to Dublin or Galway since a day-out shopping in a large urban centre is often a family event.

[9] 2002 Census of Republic of Ireland and 2000 Census estimates for Northern Ireland

Detailed methodology contained in the Retail & City Centre Strategy examines the implications for three differing scenarios for population growth in Sligo. The most likely scenario (Scenario B from the Strategy) envisages the population of Sligo's urban area rising to 26,565 by 2010 and to 37,761 by 2021. This prediction accords with figures outlined in the Sligo Sub-Regional Strategy and anticipates increasing levels of growth as a result of Sligo achieving regional 'gateway' status. The methodology and analysis demonstrates that the predicted population increases in Sligo and Environs will result in significant demand for new retail floorspace. The most likely estimate of this requirement is outlined in Table 4.

Table 4: Sligo Floorspace Requirements (Sq.m)

Year	2002	2004	2006	2008	2010	2021
Convenience Goods	4,962	5,845	6,814	7,869	9,018	18,122
Comparison Goods	8,965	12,254	15,990	20,227	25,023	65,656
Total	13,926	18,099	22,804	28,096	34,041	83,778

Source: Sligo City Centre & Retail Strategy 2002

However, the developments that are currently planned or under construction, particularly the Wine Street Centreblock and the Buttermarket contain sufficient retail floorspace to cater for likely demand within the plan period. Sligo's principal advantages lie in its compact nature so development of these large central sites must remain the priority in accordance with the sequential test. This certainty thus gives developers and traders a secure framework within which to work towards implementation.

In the event of all available city centre sites becoming occupied in the future, lands to the north extending to Hughes Bridge, and to the west of the inner relief road will offer the most suitable edge-of-centre locations for retailing expansion since they are accessible by public and private transport, adjacent to the centre and, currently at least, contain under-utilised sites. Although an 'edge-of-centre' has not been specifically defined in figure 1, generally it is considered that locations within easy walking distance (up to 300-400 metres) from the retail core fall within this definition, although the distance can vary according to the level of pedestrian accessibility.

2.3.3 Retail Warehousing

Retail warehousing is characterised by large single level stores specialising in the sale of 'bulky' items such as furniture and DIY items. This type of activity in Sligo is currently dispersed as individual or small clusters at the Port, Cleveragh and Ash Lane, whilst a major retail warehouse park has been granted permission by the relevant planning authority on the Pearse Road, with a retail capacity of 19,000 square metres. Due to their size and parking requirements, retail warehouses do not generally fit within a city centre and as such need to be considered separately from standard retailing.

Retail warehousing depends heavily on good access to the national road network, and also benefits from being agglomerated together on single sites so as to minimise the number of trips by car. It can have a positive role to make in the retail hierarchy, and provided they are of appropriate scale and are restricted to bulky comparison goods, need not necessarily have a material adverse impact on an existing city centre. Individual units should also accord to the relevant policies concerning scale and design requirements.

In addition to the Pearse Road development, a retail warehouse park of not more than 5,000 sq.m will be permissible at Shannon Eighter adjacent to the N15 as indicated

Traditional Shopfronts, Sligo

on the zoning map. This will facilitate a healthy and competitive retail climate in Sligo and encourage linked trips by agglomerating retail warehousing on a single site with good access to the national road network. The provision of these two suitable sites for retail warehousing will reduce piecemeal development of retail warehousing scattered around the Harbour, thereby assisting in a more comprehensive development of other Port lands.

In general retail warehiuse floorspace will comprise approximately 45% of all comparison goods floorspace projections identified in Figure 4.

2.3.4 Strengthening the City Centre

The retailing core of the city has slowly migrated westwards in recent times. It was previously centred on the Market Cross area and has since moved towards the Wine Street Centreblock. However, the projected population expansion of the city ensures all areas of the city centre have potential for increased commercial success.

The declining south-east city centre area has much potential to build upon the area's traditional attractiveness and create an appropriate area for craft, gift and other specialist and independent shops, including restaurants. Provision of these types of outlets will assist in attracting event shoppers and tourists to Sligo and will act as a back-up for browsing to the larger retailers.

2.3.5 Local Retail Needs - A Network of Neighbourhood Centres

A network of effective neighbourhood centres, which include a significant retail element, are designated in Sligo's suburbs. The location of neighbourhood centres seeks to ensure that all future residential areas are adequately serviced by local facilities and services, including commercial and community centres. Neighbourhood centres provide a valued service and cater for the daily needs of nearby residents, particularly the elderly, the less mobile, families with children and those without access to a car. Typically these should be located so that all residential development is within reasonable walking distance (about 500 metres) of the facilities and have good road access. Neighbourhood centres comprise elements of the following retail provision; convenience stores, newsagents, pharmacies, butchers, post offices, restaurants, take away, video/DVD rental, laundry facilities, hairdresser and public houses. The centres designated for the period of this development plan are illustrated in Map 19, page 92.

Standard retail development will generally be restricted outside of the city centre and identified neighbourhood centres. However, shops serving purely a local need (i.e. small convenience stores, video rental and dry-cleaners) will generally be considered acceptable in the mixed land use zone of the harbour. It is this area that offers the greatest scope for long term city centre expansion.

2.3.6 Policies

It is the policy of the local authorities to:

- Cement Sligo's role as regional shopping centre and 'gateway' city.
- Assist the city in making the transition from a third tier to a second tier shopping centre on the national retail hierarchy.
- Provide overall retail space in line with projected requirements in Table 4 and as outlined in the Sligo Retail and City Centre Strategy (supplementary background paper to the Development Plan).
- Adhere to the requirements of the sequential approach to retailing in line with national guidance.
- Site retail development in locations that encourage multi-purpose shopping, business and leisure trips on the same journey.
- Encourage a range of shopping facilities in the City Centre.

- Facilitate a competitive and healthy environment for retail in Sligo.
- Reinforce existing retail areas.
- Oversee the successful implementation of retail elements of the 1998 Integrated Area Plan for Sligo, the Centre Block Masterplan (1999) and the Framework Plans for the four urban renewal areas (as designated under the 1999 Urban Renewal Scheme), as outlined in the City Centre section. (Area 1- Markievicz Road, Holborn Street and Connaughton Road; Area 2 – Abbey Street, Teeling Street, Chapel Street, Charlotte Street; Area 3 – Grattan Street, Harmony Hill, West Gardens, Market Street; Area 4 – Castle Street, Market Street, High Street, Old Market Street, Teeling Street).
- Generally discourage permission for change of use from retail or service (including banks and similar institutions with over the counter services) to non-retail or non-service at ground-floor level within the following areas - O'Connell Street, Gratton Street, Castle Street, Market Street, High Street, Rockwood Parade, Tobergal Lane, Abbey Street and Stephen Street.
- Discourage certain types of commercial and retail development at ground floor level on Rockwood Parade, J.F.K. Parade, Kempten Promenade and in the vicinity of Stephen Street Car Park, where the proposed use is likely to detract from the ambience of the riverside area. Uses that generate activity and contribute to the pedestrian realm and/or facilitate window-shopping will be viewed favourably. The following class of retail or service outlet will generally be considered acceptable in these areas - restaurants, cafes, bars, clothing, footwear, books, arts/crafts, newsagents, bakeries, gifts, china, glass & leather goods, florists, jewellers/clocks, sports, toys, hobbies, hairdressing and beauty & health. High standards of urban design and shop front fascia are expected, in keeping with the area.
- Designate specific neighbourhood centres (see objectives NC1 & NC2, section 2.7).
- Ensure that retail development is accessible by both public transport and private car, so as to ensure accessibility to all groups of the population, particularly the needs of the elderly and families with young children.
- Encourage national-chain retail branches and retail department stores to locate within the city centre.
- Seek to preserve and enhance existing traditional shop-fronts of high quality.
- Encourage modern shop fronts which respect context, where existing shop fronts are not worthy of preservation.
- Encourage the development of 'e-tailing' as a shopping option in Sligo.
- Restrict retail warehouse developments solely to the sale of 'bulky' comparison goods, and ensure they are of appropriate scale.
- Ensure that the amount of convenience floorspace to be provided in the city centre should be assessed relative to achievements of population growth targets.

2.3.7 Objectives

It is the objective of the local authorities to:

S1 Assess the provision of new retail development in accordance with the sequential test as outlined in the Sligo Retail and City Centre Strategy.

S2 Promote the Centreblock and the Buttermarket as the priority areas for the provision of new medium and large-scale retail development in Sligo.

S3 Create an arts, crafts, antiques, organic foods & gastronomy stalls focused street market on the site of Stephen Street Car Park.

S4 Promote specialist and small-scale tourist related retail outlets to locate on the south side of Abbey Street. Suitable uses include antiques, crafts, gifts and cafes. Commercial and office uses and/or apartments would be suitable on upper floor levels.