

Rockwood Parade, Sligo

2.13 Urban Design

2.13.1 Introduction

In essence, urban design can be viewed as the concept of determining the shape, form and design of our urban environment. It is concerned with the external appearance of development and the relationship of buildings to one another and to the spaces around them. Therefore, it is concerned with architecture, buildings and space as they are experienced in the public realm - the street and public places like squares. Good urban design is based on an understanding of how successful places work, it enhances the image of the city and therefore can contribute to the economic well-being of a place. This section sets out the key urban design policies to be applied to new development.

The principal policies or broad goals of urban design for Sligo and Environs, are as follows:

- Establish a strong positive identity for the city and environs.
- Ensure that any new buildings or development respects the local setting and context.
- Create an attractive urban environment that will enhance the liveability of the area and attract inward investment.
- Increase the overall permeability and legibility of the built environment. Permeability relates to how easy it is to get around, establishing connections between places, whereas legibility relates to how easy it is to understand the area - this is enhanced by landmarks, focal buildings and key features in the landscape.
- Promote places that are safe and secure.
- Promote sustainable development.

Without detailed design guidelines and a close examination of the local character of different areas of the city and environs, it is impossible to provide a comprehensive set of urban design policies that will adequately ensure that all areas are laid out and designed to the highest quality. For this reason, the plan area has been divided into a number of distinct '**character areas,**' - focusing on the attributes and character of local areas within the plan area. The character of the city centre is described in Section 2.5 - Townscape Management and Building Heritage.

It will be an objective of the local authority to prepare Action Area Plans and/or Local Area Plans for a number of the 'Character Areas' (see Objectives below).

2.13.2 The Port

The port lands offer an extensive area of industrial and commercial lands that currently includes uses such as storage, warehousing and in more recent years, retail warehousing activity. The area also displays a significant number of lands in state and semi-state ownership, in addition to vacant buildings, brownfield sites and under-utilised lands that offer tremendous scope for redevelopment. The areas' proximity to the city centre, its waterside location and the presence of larger and deeper plot widths than those typically found in the city centre present a number of strong attributes for comprehensive redevelopment. From a strategic point of view the local authority envisages the city centre's ultimate expansion in this direction.

2.13.2.1 Policies for the Port

Within the city centre, it will be the policy of the local authorities to:

- Promote the relocation of any port related activities from Ballast Quay to the northwest end of Deep Water Quay.
- Promote the relocation of industrial activities from Ballast Quay to either Deep Water Quay or to alternative industrial locations in the city and environs.



Signature Building

- Promote large scale mixed use developments in the port area, which will typically consist of around 5 storeys in height and may increase above this for key landmark sites or focal sites.
- Promote a continuous waterfront promenade along the waterfront on the Quays, with provisions for pedestrians and cyclists.
- Given the narrow width of area between Ballast Quay and the waterfront, apartment blocks and other developments will generally be restricted to a standard depth of 10-12 metres, requiring double frontage (i.e., frontage onto the waterfront and frontage onto the street). These development blocks may continue for up to 60 metres in length, where breaks in the building line will provide access from street to quaysides.
- Ensure an adequate area of pedestrian movement of no less than 10 metres wide along the waterfront.
- Retain rail line through the area, so as to ensure that should rail access ever be viable that this area of high density can be accommodated.
- Have regard to significant views and vistas, particularly of noteworthy landscape features such as Ben Bulbin, in assessing development proposals.

2.13.3 Summerhill-Caltragh-Carrowroe Mixed Use Zone

In keeping with the development strategy for the city and environs, a new broad linear economic development corridor is proposed which will extend from the city centre, north towards Teesan and south to Carrowroe. This model adheres to the system of growth called the “Centre-City” model (see section 1.4). This strategy seeks to integrate land uses that typically generate high transport demands, such as more intensive employment and office activities, other mixed uses and higher residential activity along the strategic transport corridor (the N4/N15, proposed Inner Relief Road and rail corridor).

Given the quite extensive nature of this mixed use zone (see Map 22, Zoning Map), it is important to safeguard against piecemeal developments of varying character, size, scale and building typology, that might result in an uncoordinated development pattern. Therefore a new urban block system is proposed for those lands lying to the west of the proposed Inner Relief Road. A similar block system is proposed for those lands lying to the east of the proposed Inner Relief Road between it and Pearse Road in the area zoned C3, south of Cornageeha.

The urban design aim is to create a new image of Sligo on its main approach roads, with an attractive environment consisting of high profile developments (prime office sites, for example) along either side of the Inner Relief Road, and therefore avoiding a blanket provision of standard or monotonous housing estates. The image for these areas is to create a new network of streets (as opposed to cul-de-sacs), that result in a new urban block structure. This block structure may be regular (particularly on level sites) or irregular (incorporating existing road patterns, field boundaries and landscape features).

Uniform building lines will be promoted along the respective edges of the block, with 2, 3, 4 and 5 storey buildings (significant variations in height along one block edge will not be permitted). The emphasis will be to permit higher buildings to flank the proposed Inner Relief Road, with 2 and 3 storey developments on the eastern edge of the zone, where it interfaces with the residential zoned areas. Corner buildings, and other strategically located urban design buildings will be permitted to increased heights (subject to the planning authority’s approval), so as to create landmarks or focal points.

As the zoning provision permits a mix of land uses, blocks can be designed with a mix of uses. The blocks should be designed around inner courtyards. Within residential blocks, internal shared areas of open space will be encouraged and will be required to meet high standards of landscaping. Car parking will typically be encouraged either within blocks (as shared space) or on-street, as this facilitates increases in density provision.

2.13.4 Residential Areas

The plan proposes a number of distinct new residential areas in different parts of the city and environs. In order to promote the distinctive character of each of these areas, the following principles will apply, as a policy of the local authority:

- To maintain the ridges and key landscape features (such as streams, significant tree groups and archaeological features) into the open space layouts.
- To avoid an unnecessary proliferation of Cul-de-Sacs, so as to increase permeability and facilitate the future provision of bus routes and ensure convenient pedestrian and cycling access.
- To ensure provision of more meaningful open spaces, such as playing fields and formal parks, within housing areas.

A number of specific character residential areas have been identified. These include the Finisklin-Gibraltar Point Area and the Hazelwood-Ballinode Area.

Guidelines for the Hazelwood-Ballinode Area are contained within the Hazelwood-Ballinode Draft Local Area Plan. These will be used as supplementary guidelines for the area, and will be revised and updated so as to fit within the strategy as outlined in this development plan (copies are available from the relevant Planning Authority).

The vision for the Gibraltar Area of Finisklin, provides a significant area of open space, that will act as a linear park along the shores of Sligo Harbour, with views across the Bay to Knocknarea and Rosses Point. In order to provide a strong edge treatment to the expanse of open space in this area, it is proposed to create a uniform building line of large high quality residential dwellings overlooking the linear park. This is a departure from the Action Plan for Finisklin (1995) in the intent of surveillance and safety. In other respects the planning authority will have regard to the Action Plan for Finisklin when considering planning applications. Within this area also some apartment developments may also be permitted, where building lines are maintained and where the heights do not negatively impact on neighbouring dwellings.

2.13.5 Neighbourhood Centres

A network of neighbourhood centres is proposed (see section 2.7) to act as focal points for all residential areas. These are proposed to reinforce existing and emerging centres and to ensure that all new residential areas are adequately serviced by local facilities. Mixed-use developments at new neighbourhood centres will be permitted to 3-4 storey heights (with local retail developments at ground floor level and local office and apartments overhead). Open space in the form of a village green or pocket park will also be required at the neighbourhood. Ideally, the open space should be framed by a terrace of buildings. Shared car parking provisions will be permitted to the front of buildings to allow convenient access, but otherwise private car parking (for either business owners or apartment dwellers) will be encouraged to the rear or side of buildings.

2.13.6 Urban Squares

Three new urban squares are proposed for the city centre. These are outlined in section 2.2 and include a new civic Square near the junction of Adelaide Street and Wine Street; a redevelopment of the Stephen Street car park to accommodate an open air market and the redevelopment of Quay Street car park to provide a green landscaped park.



Neighbourhood Centre

2.13.7 Key Landmark Sites

There are a number of high profile sites at strategic locations in the city and environs. Some of these will be more apparent following the completion of the Inner Relief Road. Many of the sites are situated at critical road junctions and intersections. The sites are highly visible and as such, it is essential that they are designed to the highest standards, as their development will set the tone for the city, and influence the public perception of it.

These landmark sites are as follows:

- The Northern Gateway (Lisnalurg).
- The Southern Gateway (Carrowroe Roundabout - Three sites).
- South side of Hughes Bridge (east and west).
- Proposed Summerhill Roundabout (on the proposed Inner Relief Road - east and west).
- Lands north of Duck Street along the N15 (Bundoran Road).

2.13.8 Riverside Development

There are significant development opportunities on the north banks of the Garvogue River, west of Kempton Promenade to the Glebe House to the rear of the Church of Ireland on The Mall. The objective is to extend Kempton Promenade westwards and to provide a strong and continuous building edge on its route, similar to the Rockwood Parade example. The scale of development will be consistent with existing development on The Mall and Rockwood Parade, though an increase of up to four storeys may be permissible, given the sloping topography from The Mall to the River. Pedestrian and vehicular access to the area will be promoted via the archway system on the Mall, while car parking and access will be managed along Kempton Promenade. Mixed uses will be encouraged.



Public Seating as Art, Kempton Promenade, Sligo

2.13.9 Public Art

The local authority acknowledges the contribution of public art to the urban landscape and will encourage the provision and installation of public art in various forms and media throughout the city and environs.

2.13.10 Design Statements and Other Requirements

For sensitive sites and major development proposals, applicants will be required to provide a short written statement setting out the design principles adopted as well as illustrative material in plan and elevation. This Design Statement is intended to help officials to get a better understanding of the approach to the design and to provide evidence of the level of design appreciation behind the application. For all infill developments, the applicant will be required to show elevations of buildings on either side and submit photographs of the streetscape within which the development is proposed. For large schemes, the applicant may be required to provide an urban design framework plan, action area plan or masterplan. Photomontages, 3-D images and townscape views illustrating the design proposal may also be required.



2.13.11 Design Review Panel

In order to ensure high quality urban design, particularly in relation to larger architectural schemes or large residential developments, a design review panel will be established to assess specific development proposals. This panel may include qualified architects, urban designer and planners, including others with a special skill or knowledge (i.e. building conservation), who remain remote from the planning authority's affairs. The purpose of such a panel will be to act as a sounding board in relation to development proposals, from a design perspective and it ensures that any subsequent refusals on aesthetic or urban design grounds can be more easily defended.

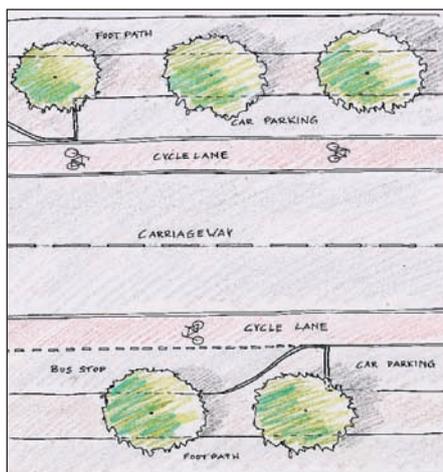


Figure 1: Possible Street Layout for Key Urban Routes



Figure 2: Cross-section of figure 1, above

A number of other design issues are addressed in the Section 3 of the Development Plan - Development Control and Development Guidelines. These deal with detailed specific design issues, such as infill buildings, landscaping requirements and advertising.

A number of principle policies will apply in striving for high quality urban design.

2.13.12 Policies

It is a policy of the planning authorities to:

- Promote high quality architectural solutions and innovative urban design initiatives, through the preparation of design guidelines, framework plans, masterplans; establishing a design review panel; and/or promoting 'design and tender' initiatives, and local 'design awards'.
- Require the submission of a design statement with all major developments and proposals for sensitive sites and key landmark sites.
- Ensure that developments for key landmark sites are designed to the highest architectural and urban design standards.
- Ensure that new development is carried out in an orderly and planned manner, having consideration for the future development and form of the area. Therefore, permissions for developments may not be granted unless they are set within an overall masterplan, concept plan or neighbourhood plan to be carried out at the behest of the Planning Authority, but at the expense of the applicant or developer.

2.13.13 Objectives

It is an objective of the local authorities to:

- UD1** Prepare a number of Local Area Plans, Action Area Plans or Masterplans for specific areas of the city and environs, which will outline the urban design concept for the area. These are proposed for the following areas:
- Carrowroe (and the Southern Gateway).
 - Lisnalgur (and the Northern Gateway).
 - Hazelwood-Ballinode
 - The Port
 - Caltragh-Maugheraboy
- UD2** Implement a design scheme for the attractive layout of key roads in the plan that will conform with the concept of a boulevard and will include the provision of a carriageway (7.3m), cycle track (1.8m provided on each road side), on-street car parking (2.25m either side) tree-lined verges (2.25m on either side), and a safe pedestrian footpaths (2-4m on either side) - see figures 1 and 2. These boulevard routes are proposed for routes T1.3, T2.1, T2.2, T2.7, T2.12. (see section 2.1 - Effective Transport and Movement).
- UD3** Ensure the high quality design and architectural treatment of key landmark sites as identified in section 2.13.7.
- UD4** Ensure, through any redevelopment proposal, in the vicinity of Quay Street Car Park (including its redevelopment as a public open space), that buildings are of sufficient height and composition, to frame the proposed open space.
- UD5** Ensure, through any redevelopment of backlands and plots associated with the south side of The Mall, and continuing along Kempton Promenade, that a new streetscape is created with an almost continuous building line, with 3-4 storeys in height and a minimum pedestrian pavement area of 4 metres from building edge to road edge.

