

# 6. Community facilities



Community facilities include facilities for education, childcare, sports and recreation, arts and culture, healthcare, burial grounds etc. This County Development Plan is concerned with improving existing facilities and making adequate and appropriate provisions for the development of new facilities.

The development and facilitation of an effective social infrastructure network is important in the promotion of Sligo as a county which offers a good quality of life, where social inclusion and community participation are regarded as necessary prerequisites to sustainable development.

## 6.1 Delivering community facilities

The Council recognises the importance of community participation in the improvement of existing community facilities, and encourages increased involvement of local groups, independently and in association with the relevant statutory bodies, in the future development of the County.

The Council will ensure that local-level participation is facilitated and reinforced through stronger partnerships, thereby enabling the development of an effective social infrastructure to cater more adequately for the needs of the current and future population.

One of the mechanisms through which this can be more easily achieved is the local area plan process and the preparation of mini-plans (see Volume 2 of this Plan), where specific requirements and needs can be identified and addressed at the local or neighbourhood level.

Whilst LAPs and mini-plans include lands zoned specifically for community requirements, a flexible and supportive approach will be adopted towards proposals for community facilities on suitable sites within other zoning categories (i.e. residential, village centre, industry/enterprise etc).

However, any such proposal should be suitably located within the development limits of the relevant settlement and should be easily accessible for all sections of the community.

## **Community facilities policies**

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

- P-CF-1** Assist as far as possible in the provision of community facilities by reserving suitably-located land, by assisting in the provision of finance for their development (where appropriate), and/or by the use of the development management process to ensure provision is made for such facilities as the Council considers appropriate.
- P-CF-2** Encourage high standards in the design and finishes of community facilities.
- P-CF-3** Continue to apply development levies to provide for recreational and community facilities relating to new developments.
- P-CF-4** Optimise existing and proposed physical resources / infrastructure by supporting multi-functional building use and provision.
- P-CF-5** Recognise the importance of community participation in the improvement of existing community and recreational facilities, and encourage increased involvement of local groups, both independently and in association with the relevant statutory bodies, in the future provision of such facilities.
- P-CF-6** Encourage the siting of community facilities in suitable locations, especially within residential / village centre areas, or close to existing facilities / services and public transport routes.
- P-CF-7** Work with relevant agencies in identifying areas for the provision of quality social infrastructure.
- P-CF-8** Promote social inclusion by exploring ways to integrate minority groups into the community and by supporting the development of fully-integrated communities catering for people of different ages and incomes. The Sligo County Community Forum will have a key role in implementing this policy.
- P-CF-9** Encourage the establishment of specific bodies and programmes to facilitate the integration of those with special needs, and people of all age groups.
- P-CF-10** Adopt a flexible and supportive approach towards proposals for the provision of community facilities within a wide variety of land-use zoning categories, in particular lands zoned for community facilities, village-centre mixed-use zones, residential development and commercial/enterprise uses. Any such proposal should be suitably located within the development limits of the relevant settlement and should be easily accessible for all sections of the community. It is also acknowledge that some community facilities may be accommodated in rural areas, subject to site suitability.
- P-CF-11** Consider the accommodation of small-scale community enterprise developments within existing and proposed community facilities areas, subject to appropriate design, layout and servicing.

## **Community facilities objective**

It is an objective of Sligo County Council to:

- O-CF-1** Facilitate the phased redevelopment of the existing Wisdom services care facility at Cregg, to provide an integrated residential and educational community to include a range of facilities for those with and without intellectual disabilities and special needs, subject to the availability of adequate wastewater treatment infrastructure.

## 6.2 Education

The Department of Education and Science is responsible for the delivery of educational facilities and services. The County Council's responsibility in this regard is to ensure that adequate serviced or serviceable land is available to meet current and future requirements.

One method of addressing these future requirements is by reserving suitable sites in settlements through the mini-plan and local area plan adoption processes. Whilst sites may be specifically reserved for this purpose, education and related uses should be favourably considered within a variety of land-use zoning categories, thereby ensuring sufficient flexibility to accommodate future needs.

County Sligo contains a wide range of educational facilities. At third level, the Institute of Technology (IT) and St. Angela's College both play important roles. IT Sligo is located within the Sligo and Environs Development Plan area. St. Angela's College, part of the National University of Ireland (Galway), is located within the County Development Plan area, currently serves over 800 students and has continued to experience significant growth in recent years.



**St Attracta's School, Tobercurry**

### Education facilities policies

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

- P-ED-1** Support the provision of additional land for educational uses through the consideration (on suitable sites) of such facilities in a wide variety of land-use zoning categories, in particular lands zoned for community facilities, mixed uses and residential development.
- P-ED-2** Promote the location of new educational facilities within existing settlements, and preferably near community facilities (such as community centres, playing fields and libraries) and public transport services. Only in exceptional cases will out-of-town locations be considered.
- P-ED-3** Support the educational institutions in their plans to expand and develop.
- P-ED-4** Encourage and support the development of further educational facilities and training programmes to ensure a suitably skilled local workforce, including facilities for children and adults with special needs.
- P-ED-5** Encourage facilities connected with the integration of those with special needs into the education system of streamlined schools.
- P-ED-6** Support Sligo's schools in the upgrading and modernisation of their building stock so as to ensure that these institutions can accommodate population growth.
- P-ED-7** Ensure that appropriate infrastructure is provided concurrent with the development of an educational facility. Such infrastructure may include footpaths, pedestrian crossings, cycle lanes, parking facilities, ramps and facilities for those with special needs.
- P-ED-8** Support the further development of St Angela's College, subject to appropriate siting, design and servicing infrastructure.
- P-ED-9** Promote the development of outreach programmes between businesses and third-level institutions, whereby Sligo can develop as a centre of excellence in research and development.

## 6.3 Childcare

National policy recognises that childcare facilities are integral to economic and social wellbeing. Under Partnership 2000, an expert working group was established to develop a strategy for the development and delivery of childcare and early education services. Through this, the National Childcare Strategy 1999 was formulated, and later replaced by the National Childcare Strategy 2006-2010.

In 2001, the DoEHLG published *Childcare Facilities: Guidelines for Planning Authorities*. Sligo County Childcare Committee (SCCC), established in response to these guidelines and operating under the National Childcare Investment Programme (NCIP), prepared a strategy document entitled *Sligo County Childcare Plan 2002-2006*, which was then superseded by the *Sligo County Childcare Strategic Plan 2007-2010*.

The *Sligo County Childcare Strategic Plan 2007-2010* includes a review of the previous plan period (2002-2006) and notes that significant progress has been made in childcare provision. This includes a dramatic increase in the number and range of childcare facilities, along with significant improvements in terms of membership / representation, quality of service, training, information, performance review and evaluation.

A mapping exercise also identified a total of 78 childcare facilities located throughout the County. However, it was noted that private childcare provision in the south of the County is relatively poorer than in the north. This is particularly evident in disadvantaged rural areas, where childcare provision is mainly community-based.

The Strategic Plan provides a framework for the implementation of the NCIP, and incorporates the background work undertaken by SCCC in developing the plan, as well as the agreed county-level strategic goals and objectives.

The Council will consider the SCCC Strategic Plan in dealing with the future provision of childcare facilities, and will also have regard to the DoEHLG's 2001 *Childcare Facilities – Guidelines for Planning Authorities*.

### Childcare policies

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

- P-CC-1** Work with the Sligo County Childcare Committee in the implementation of the Strategic Plan 2007–2010 and successor documents.
- P-CC-2** Consider childcare needs in future local area plans and residential development proposals.
- P-CC-3** Encourage the establishment of appropriate childcare facilities in suitable locations, such as village centres, areas of concentrated employment, in the vicinity of schools, adjacent to public transport corridors and /or pedestrian areas, and in larger new housing estates.
- P-CC-4** Have regard to the DoEHLG's *Childcare Facilities – Guidelines for Planning Authorities* (2001). In applying standards regarding the provision of childcare facilities in larger residential developments, the Planning Authorities will show flexibility by considering the provision of multi-purpose community facilities in certain cases, as appropriate.
- P-CC-5** Support proposals that provide an improved variety of childcare services (both in terms of childcare providers, i.e. private / community, and childcare type, i.e. sessional services / full-day care), having particular regard to the deficits identified in the SCCC Strategic Plan 2007–2010.
- P-CC-6** Optimise existing physical resources/infrastructure within the County by supporting multi-functional building use and provision, to include childcare facilities.

## 6.4 Children's play

In line with *Ready, Steady, Play: A National Play Policy* (National Children's Office/Department of Health and Children – NCO/DoHC, 2004), Sligo County Council recognises the importance of play in childhood and the need to maximise opportunities for play, both within the natural and built environment. The Council is committed to consulting with children and young people when developing plans for play provision, as recommended in the *National Children's Strategy: Our Children – Their Lives* (NCO/DoHC, 2000).

Together with Sligo County Development Board, the County Council has established a Local Play Advisory Forum with the dual role of developing a Play Policy and a County Play Plan. The forum consists of various departments within the County Council, external groups including the Community Forum, County Childcare Committee, the Sligo Sport and Recreation Partnership, parents' organisations and councillors. The Play Policy was adopted by SCC in 2008.

There are currently eight public playground facilities in the CDP area. There are also two fee-paying playgrounds in Enniscrone, one of which is seasonal. A significant proportion of work on these playgrounds was completed since 2005.



### Children's play policies

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

- P-CP-1** Support the implementation of Sligo County Council's Play Policy in co-operation with the relevant community organisations and agencies.
- P-CP-2** Seek to maximise the range of play opportunities available to children, particularly children who are marginalised or disadvantaged or who have a disability.
- P-CP-3** Take a lead role in the development of stand-alone, outdoor play areas, subject to funding, and agree on priority areas in consultation with the County Childcare Committee.

### Children's play objective

It is an objective of Sligo County Council to:

- O-CP-1** Prepare a plan for the development of play provision in the County, in conjunction with the County Development Board and in consultation with children and young people.

## 6.5 Sports, recreation and open space

Playing fields and other open space facilities are an important resource for sport. They also make a significant contribution to informal recreation and possess amenity value. There is a need to safeguard such facilities from unacceptable development in order to continue to provide for the needs of both current users and future generations. The Council will therefore generally discourage development on, or the removal of playing fields, pitches and other recreation facilities.

Sligo has been designated as a Sports and Recreation Partnership under the Irish Sports Council's *Era for Sport* programme, which ensures that sports resources are co-ordinated at a local level. The partnership has formulated a local strategic plan for the years 2007-2012, entitled *Making Sport and Recreation a Way of Life*. Through the adoption of a clear direction and targets, the plan aims to lead the development of sport in Sligo, to increase levels of physical activity and to ensure that partnership remains strong and effective.

The Council will ensure that adequate land is zoned for the development of accessible and affordable sporting and recreational facilities, particularly for the youth, the older adults and those who are disadvantaged or marginalised.

### Sports, recreation and open space policies

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

- P-SRO-1** Support the aims, goals and objectives of the Sligo Sport & Recreation Partnership Strategic Plan 2007-2012, *Making Sport and Recreation a Way of Life*.
- P-SRO-2** Preserve existing public or private recreation areas, including sports clubs, grounds, built leisure facilities and open space. If a change of use is sought, ensure that alternative recreational facilities are provided in a suitable location.
- P-SRO-3** Facilitate shared use of sports and recreation facilities, particularly school facilities.
- P-SRO-4** Support local sports and community groups in the development of facilities through appropriate land use zoning.
- P-SRO-5** Ensure that all new facilities are appropriately located where they can best meet the needs of all sections of the community that they are intended to serve.
- P-SRO-6** Encourage the provision of sports and recreation infrastructure as an integral part of new residential schemes.
- P-SRO-7** Encourage and, if necessary, require developers to incorporate natural features such as rivers, streams, trees and tree groups into open space layouts in the planning of future developments.
- P-SRO-8** Require the preparation and implementation of landscaping plans and open space maintenance arrangements for all proposed open spaces areas.
- P-SRO-9** Preserve and improve access for the public to lakes, coastal, riverside, upland and other areas that have traditionally been used for outdoor recreation, subject to compliance with the requirements of the Habitats Directive.
- P-SRO-10** Assist in developing a network of sports, recreation and open space facilities throughout the County to encourage a range of recreational and amenity activities that will cater for both active and passive needs.
- P-SRO-11** Actively promote and protect public access to the coast and designate traditional walking routes thereto as public rights-of-way.
- P-SRO-12** Where feasible, develop walkways/cycleways between coastal sites and green space in built-up areas.
- P-SRO-13** Ensure that golf course development does not damage or encroach upon vulnerable dune systems and does not impinge on existing rights-of-way or walking routes.



## 6.6 Healthcare facilities

The Health Service Executive for the North-West is the primary body responsible for the delivery of health and personal social services to Sligo's population. Of equal significance is the role it plays in promoting health and wellbeing.

In line with the government policy of decentralisation of healthcare facilities, certain health facilities and services are now being provided at a remove from major hospitals. Residential services for the elderly, mental health services, learning disability services and primary care services are now distributed throughout a number of settlements within County Sligo. This has improved service accessibility and has been achieved through the upgrading of existing health centres and the construction of new ones.

The provision and expansion of healthcare facilities will continue to be supported by the County Council.

### Healthcare policies

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

- P-HC-1** Encourage the integration of health services and facilities with new and existing community facilities, where feasible.
- P-HC-2** Promote the location of health services and care facilities within existing settlements, on sites convenient to pedestrian access and public transport.
- P-HC-3** Support the provision of health services and facilities for people with learning disabilities and special needs.
- P-HC-4** Accommodate the provision of accessible care facilities throughout the County to cater for the specific needs of the elderly and those of young people.
- P-HC-5** Support existing healthcare facilities in their plans to develop and expand.



## 6.7 Burial grounds

Sligo County Council is responsible for the acquisition of land for the provision of burial grounds, for undertaking any necessary works on these lands and for delineating burial plots.

Following a survey of all burial grounds carried out in 2005, a Burial Grounds Policy 2006-2010 has been adopted. The policy identifies ten burial grounds in need of urgent action and sets out a programme of works aimed at addressing these concerns. Whilst some projects have been successfully completed, the Council will continue to monitor and review requirements in this regard.

A revised policy, which incorporates the National Monuments (Amendment) Act 2004, has also been formulated. The policy highlights the fact that 48 of the 64 burial grounds in the county are designated National Monuments and, as such, require appropriate consultation and consents prior to carrying out any works on site.

### Burial grounds policies

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

- P-BG-1** Provide or assist in the provision of new burial grounds and extensions to existing burial grounds, by reserving sufficient land in suitable locations.
- P-BG-2** Encourage the development of burial grounds to take account of cremation and 'green lawn' principles, to promote more efficient use of land and to facilitate maintenance.
- P-BG-3** Promote the establishing of burial ground committees and assist them in the appropriate maintenance and management of burial grounds.
- P-BG-4** Ensure that appropriate archaeological assessment is carried out in relation to any works to burial grounds which are designated National Monuments, in accordance with the requirements of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act 2004.

## 6.8 Arts and cultural facilities

Sligo County Council supports and promotes opportunities for everyone to participate in the cultural life of the county by facilitating the provision of well-managed, sustainable cultural infrastructure, suitable for all ages, and by adopting a flexible approach to the incorporation of cultural facilities in the development or refurbishment of community facilities.

Public art is commissioned and co-ordinated by the Public Art Officer (Sligo Arts Service) and carried out in line with the Council's public art policy and the aims and objectives of its public art programme.

### Arts and cultural facilities policies

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

- P-AC-1** Encourage and assist in the development of the arts and to support the ongoing development of cultural infrastructure throughout the County.
- P-AC-2** Continue to enhance the public domain by encouraging the provision of public art, both temporary and permanent, across all art forms and artistic disciplines, in towns, villages and new residential developments through the government-supported *Per Cent For Art* scheme.

**Seat Leaves (2008) by artist Alex Pentek at River Walk, Coolaney**



## 6.9 Allotments

An allotment is defined as an area of land comprising not more than 1,000 square metres that is let or available for letting to and cultivation by one or more than one person who is a member of the local community and lives adjacent or near to the allotment, for the purpose of the production of vegetables or fruit mainly for consumption by the person or members of his or her family.

Sligo County Council recognises that the public's interest in growing fruit and vegetables locally has increased significantly in recent years. This has been due to a number of reasons including economic circumstances and health benefits, along with concerns regarding sustainability and the embodied energy involved in the global production and transportation of food.

The planning authority will therefore facilitate the development of allotments at suitable locations throughout the County. Such locations should be consistent with the terms of the definition above and should be located within or close to existing settlements, where they will be more easily accessible to all sections of society.

### Allotments policy

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

- P-A-1** Facilitate the development of allotments at suitable locations throughout the County.  
Any such facility should be located within or close to an existing settlement and should be easily accessible.

**Allotments in Germany - originally developed after WW2 as a social public utility**

