

**SLIGO
County
Council**

July 2012

STRANDHILL

Review of Local Area Plan and preparation of Mini-Plan
Pre-Draft Consultation Paper

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Sligo County Council intends to review the **local area plan** (LAP) for Strandhill and prepare a **Mini-Plan**, which will be incorporated in the current County Development Plan.

Before preparing a Draft Mini-Plan, the local authority wishes to consult with the residents, non-resident users (businesses or individuals), relevant institutions, public agencies and all those who are interested in the future of Strandhill.

This **Consultation Paper** is intended to assist those who wish to contribute to the preparation of the new Strandhill Mini-Plan. It offers background information relating to Strandhill and outlines the main challenges that the Mini-Plan must address.

You are invited to express your views and make suggestions in relation to the forthcoming Strandhill Mini-Plan. Where relevant, please include a map.

Please send your submission to:

Janet McNamara, Administrative Officer
Planning Section, Sligo County Council
Riverside, Sligo, Tel. 071 9111216

Submissions can be e-mailed to:

dpu@sligococo.ie

by 4 pm, 31 August 2012

For any clarifications in relation to this Paper, please contact the Development Planning Unit at **dpu@sligococo.ie**

To make an appointment with the planning team, please ring **Terri Dunleavy** on **071 9111233**

This Consultation Paper can be downloaded from www.sligococo.ie/strandhill

[This document is designed for two-sided printing on A4 paper.]

Why prepare a mini-plan for Strandhill

What is a mini-plan?

A mini-plan is the format chosen by Sligo County Council to indicate zoning and development objectives for the County's settlements which are not designated Key Support Towns. There are 30 mini-plans at present, each of them included as a separate chapter in the Sligo County Development Plan 2011-2017 (CDP).

The CDP is the document that sets out the detailed strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of the entire County (except for the Sligo and Environs area as defined in the Sligo and Environs Development Plan 2010-2016).

While the main CDP document (Volume 1) contains the Core Strategy and the general policies and objectives applicable to new development in County Sligo, the mini-plans (Volume 2) include a small number of local, specific development objectives as well as zoning objectives.

A mini-plan consists of a written statement (short description of the settlement concerned together with specific written objectives), a zoning map and a second map showing the location of other objectives, such as:

- proposed walking and cycling paths
- planned wastewater treatment works
- landmark sites (with special design requirements)
- protected structures
- archaeological monuments and zones of archaeological potential
- Special Protection Areas (Birds Directive), Special Areas of Conservation (Habitats Directive) and Natural Heritage Areas (national designation) etc.

A mini-plan for Strandhill

Sligo County Development Plan 2011-2017 (CDP) specifies that Strandhill LAP is to be reviewed by 2013 (strategic spatial development objective SO-SD-3, p. 24 of the CDP).

The CDP also includes a Settlement Structure, under which Strandhill is designated as a Principal Satellite (of the Gateway, Sligo and Environs) and as a Settlement with Special Functions (tourism).

Given that Strandhill is a satellite of Sligo and Environs, it is considered appropriate to replace the existing local area plan with a mini-plan, consistent with the approach taken in the case of the other Principal Gateway Satellites.

The preparation of the mini-plan will be conducted in the same manner as for a local area plan, i.e. with a pre-draft consultation stage and a 6-week public consultation on the Draft Mini-Plan. At the end of this process, the mini-plan will be incorporated in the CDP as a variation.

Pre-draft consultation on the mini-plan

As part of the pre-draft consultation stage, the Development Planning Unit of Sligo County Council has prepared this Consultation Paper with a view to providing the public with information and suggestions meant to stimulate a debate on the future of Strandhill.

The following pages present the most relevant CDP provisions that relate to or impact on Strandhill, together with some comments, suggestions and a number of questions aimed at establishing the public's needs and preferences that could be addressed in the new mini-plan.

What will the mini-plan do?

- It will apply zoning objectives under the CDP, which are mandatory as per Section 10 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).
- It will provide for orderly, balanced development in the interest of common good.
- It will indicate detailed requirements regarding the provision of infrastructure, housing, community facilities and amenities.
- It will set specific standards for the design of certain developments and structures.
- It will provide a degree of certainty and security, serving as a basis for the assessment of planning applications and appeals.

How can you get involved in the preparation of the mini-plan?

If you are interested in the development of Strandhill and wish to contribute to the shaping of its future, you should make a written submission to the Planning Authority during the specified period: **11 July to 31 August 2012** (see page 1 of this Paper).

All individuals, businesses, community groups, public sector and non-governmental agencies, any other organisations are strongly encouraged to participate in the plan-making process.

Based on the provisions of the CDP 2011-2017 and the outcome of pre-draft consultation, a draft mini-plan will be prepared and put on public display for statutory consultation.

Review of Strandhill LAP 2003-2012

Strandhill LAP was adopted by Sligo County Council on the 7 July 2003. It was the first local area plan adopted for a settlement in County Sligo and, as such, it raised a significant amount of interest and even controversy.

The Plan was prepared under Sections 18–20 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 and, together with the CDP 1999-2004, the CDP 2005-2011 and the CDP 2011-2017, provided the statutory basis for the consideration of planning applications.

The LAP was amended for the first time in 2004, when a strip of land was zoned for residential use, and for the second time in 2009, when its lifetime was extended by three years, to 2012.

The LAP provided a detailed, comprehensive framework of planning policies and objectives designed to guide the physical development of Strandhill so that growth could take place in a co-ordinated, sensitive and orderly manner.

The planning team carefully analysed the services, land uses, infrastructure and planning permissions in existence in 2001-2002. Environmental considerations and the concept of sustainable development underpinned most of the objectives of the Plan.

Section 1 - Strategic Context listed the main documents that would shape policy at local level and outlined relevant contents and implications for Strandhill.

Section 2 - Local Context described the natural and built heritage of the area surrounding the village and looked at its demographics, infrastructure, social-economic base and physical form. It also formulated the main planning issues and problems that needed to be addressed in the local area plan.

Section 3 - Shaping future development defined the LAP area, outlined the plan concept and general aim, and detailed policies and specific objectives for various locations within the plan limit. The LAP was structured around five goals:

- I. Consolidation of the village around a focal point
- II. Promotion of local economic development
- III. Enhancement of recreational and tourism amenities
- IV. Improvement of access and circulation
- V. Protection of the natural, archaeological and built heritage

Policies and objectives were set out in Section 3.3 under the a number of headings including, among others:

- Traffic, circulation and parking
- Village centre
- Residential development
- Caravan park
- Airport business park
- Airport
- Land west of Airport Road, including pine plantation
- Sports facilities
- Community facilities
- Archaeological heritage
- Natural heritage
- Built heritage
- Coastal protection
- Sewerage and water supply

A **Progress Report** prepared in advance of the 2009 LAP amendment came to the following conclusions:

...It is considered that the key development proposals have not yet been achieved in full. Some of the goals have only been partially realised. Many proposed development on key sites ... have obtained planning permission but remain undeveloped. Also, there are many key sites for which no development proposals have been submitted.

The situation has not changed since 2009!

The 2009 Progress Report is available for viewing and download from www.sligococo.ie/strandhill

Strandhill Mini-Plan 2012-2017

It is envisaged that the mini-plan, which will be adopted as a variation of the County Development Plan, will include a written statement, shorter than the contents of the current LAP, and fewer maps.

The mini-plan will generally follow the template of the 30 mini-plans already included in the CDP. It will contain a small section setting the local context and a number of specific objectives (and policies, if necessary) grouped under several headings, such as Natural Heritage and Open Space, Built Heritage and Streetscape, Transport, Circulation and Parking, Mixed-Use Zones, Community Facilities, Residential Development, Enterprise Development, Water Supply and Wastewater Treatment.

The mini-plan will have to be read in conjunction with **Volume 1** (general policies and objectives) of the County Development Plan 2011-2017 and **Chapter 13** in **Volume 2** of the CDP. The mini-plan will be operational for the remaining lifetime of the CDP, i.e. until 2017.

Overview of post-2003 changes

Since the adoption of Strandhill Local Area Plan 2003, there have been a number of significant changes, both local and national, in terms of the economy, legislation and planning policy.

Population

At the time of the preparation of the Strandhill LAP 2003, the most recent demographic figures available were those from Census 2002. The results of Census 2011 are only partly published, but Census 2006 information is fully available (see www.cso.ie).

Demographic change 2002-2011

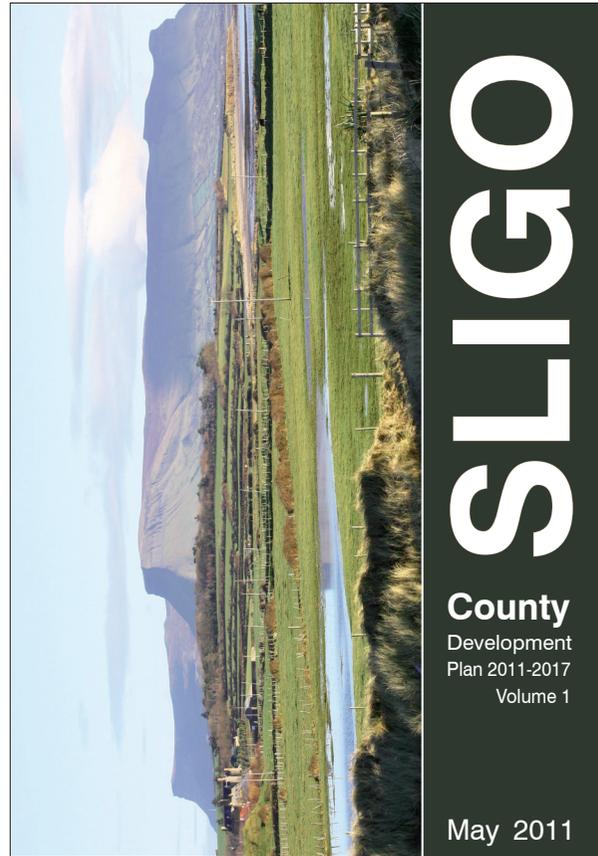
Area	pop. 2002	pop. 2006	% change '02-'06	pop. 2011	% change '06-'11
County Sligo	58,200	60,894	+4.6	65,393	+7.4
Knockaree ED	2,832	3,219	+13.6	3,557	+10.5
Strandhill	1,002	1,413	+41	1,596	+13

Source: www.cso.ie

Economy

Since 2008, the national economy has been in decline due to the global financial crisis and the collapse of the property market. Like other settlements in Ireland, Strandhill has been affected by the downturn in the economy and by the subsequent increase in unemployment.

The Enterprise and Technology Centre did not manage to attract sufficient businesses to create substantial employment in Strandhill. The failure of the Regional Airport to secure planning permission for the extension of its



runway, combined with the withdrawal of government subsidies, may have contributed to the poor performance of the local economy.

A significant proportion of people living in Strandhill commute to Sligo for work. The mini-plan therefore should strive to facilitate employment generation by supporting new developments with the potential to deliver local jobs.

Legislation

Planning & Development Act 2010

This Act amended the Planning Acts of 2000–2009 with specific regard given to supporting economic renewal and sustainable development through the introduction of a **Core Strategy** in development plans.

The Act envisages a closer alignment of development plans and local area plans with the National Spatial Strategy and relevant Regional Planning Guidelines. It also clarifies the obligations of the planning authorities under the Habitats Directive, i.e. the requirement for Appropriate Assessment of plans and projects.

Planning Policy

Regional Planning Guidelines 2010 (RPGs)

The RPGs adopted in 2010 for the first time allocate population “targets” and upper limits for the zoning of land for residential uses in the constituent counties of the Border Region. There are separate specifications for Gateways and Hubs. The allocation of these targets at sub-county level is left to the respective planning authorities, which were obliged to amend their development plans by the end of September 2011.

Sligo County Development Plan 2011-2017 (CDP)

The new Sligo CDP, which was adopted in May 2011, contains a Core Strategy which is consistent with the National Spatial Strategy and the Border Regional Planning Guidelines 2010. The CDP supports balanced development throughout the County in parallel with the growth of Sligo as a Gateway City. It also recommends population levels and allocates housing land to the County’s towns and villages, including Strandhill.

Selected CDP provisions applicable to Strandhill (I)

In the Settlement Structure and Hierarchy set out in the County Core Strategy, Strandhill is identified as a Principal Gateway Satellite, along with Ballysadare, Collooney, Grange and Rosses Point.

A number of strategic goals in the development plan are relevant to Strandhill

SG-1: Supporting Balanced economic development

- d. Promote rural/agricultural diversification, through the sustainable use of natural resources, e.g. tourism, forestry, energy production.
- k. Work with Failte Ireland, Sligo Marketing Forum and the County Development Board on the development of niche cultural tourism initiatives as an economic growth driver for the region.

SG-2: Carefully managing development patterns

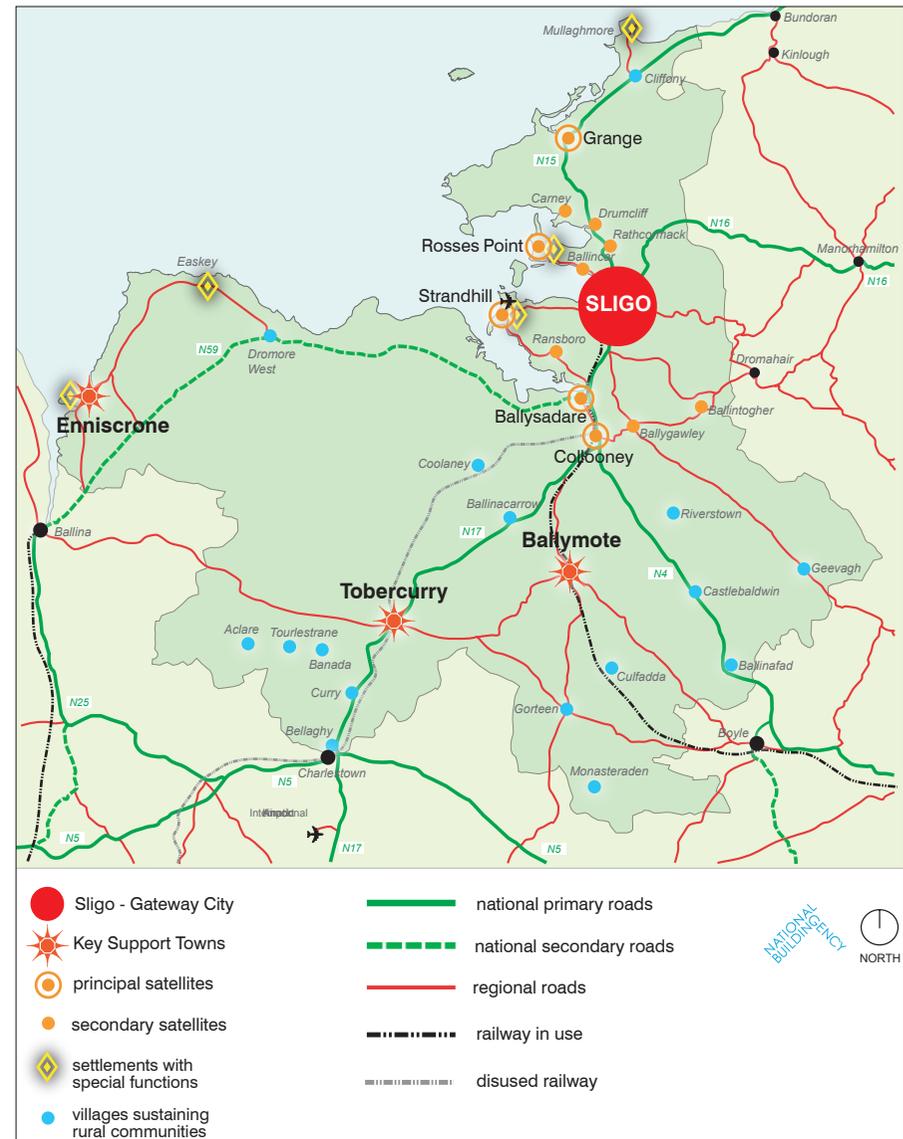
- a. Implement a clear spatial development strategy that maintains the distinctive landscape attributes of Sligo.
- e. Counteract tendencies towards extensive ribbon development and urban sprawl, particularly on the immediate environs of Sligo City and Key Support Towns.

SG-3: Conserving environmental quality

- a. Wisely conserve and manage the natural and cultural heritage of the County, including the character of the landscape, views and prospects, and the environmental quality of the County.
- b. Conserve the landscape character and ecological integrity of the coastal zone.

County Sligo: settlement structure and hierarchy.

Strandhill is a designated Principal Satellite of the Gateway and also a Settlement with Special Functions



Selected CDP provisions applicable to Strandhill (II)

Strategic goals of the County Development Plan

SG-4 Driving urban renewal

- b. Conserve the historic form and character of the towns and villages.

SG-5 Promoting effective transportation

- c. Integrate the public transportation system with a quality bus and rail service, alongside the promotion of cycle and pedestrian facilities within and adjacent to existing settlements.
- h. Promote and support the development and use of Sligo Regional Airport so as to ensure a better level and frequency of service and enhance Sligo's accessibility to tourists and businesses, both nationally and internationally.

SG-6 Delivering improved infrastructure

- a. Provide adequate water and sewerage capacity to accommodate the projected needs of the future population, ensuring the sustainable use of water resources.

Spatial development principles

Strategic spatial development policies

- SP-SD-5** Outside the Gateway, direct growth into towns and villages and promote compact settlement forms.
- SP-SD-7** Monitor and strictly control residential and commercial development in the Gateway Satellites/villages in the Subregion.
- SP-SD-11** Ensure that sensitive coastal environments are generally maintained free from development between settlements, except where

there are proposals for significant public infrastructure (e.g. roads, piers, marinas) or where significant public benefit may arise.

Strategic spatial development objective

The County Development Plan 2011-2017 also contains a specific objective to review the Ballymote LAP:

SO-SD-3 Review Strandhill Local Area Plan by 2012.

Principal Gateway Satellites: past population and recommended population levels for 2017

Principal Gateway Satellite	pop. 2002	pop. 2006	pop. 2011	recommended pop. level 2017
Strandhill	1,002	1,413	1,596	1,700
Ballysadare	853	971	1,344	1,500
Collooney	619	892	1,369	1,500
Grange	225	383	578	600
Rosses Point	774	872	824	950

Population and housing land

In an attempt to manage the growth of settlements and to direct future development in accordance with the County Core Strategy as outlined in the CDP 2011-2017, population targets have been established for the settlements in each tier of the hierarchy along with supporting policies to inform development management. Consistent with this strategy, the recommended population level for Strandhill is 1,700 persons by 2017.

The CDP also sets out 40 hectares as the maximum amount of greenfield land that can be zoned for residential uses in the Principal Gateway Satellites.

Of the 40 ha, circa 26 ha have been zoned in Ballysadare, Collooney, Grange and Rosses Point, leaving up to **14 ha of greenfield land available for residential zoning in Strandhill** (the 2003 LAP zoned 25 hectares of greenfield land for housing in Strandhill.)

The land allocations for particular settlements are derived from the provisions of the Border Regional Planning Guidelines.

Rezoning proposals

Lands zoned in LAPs prepared before the adoption of the CDP 2011-2017 may or may not retain their zoning when the LAPs are reviewed.

Rezoning and new zoning adopted as part of the review of existing LAPs will be incorporated as zoning under the CDP. Any such rezoning/new zoning will have to comply with the Core Strategy, Spatial Development Framework and Settlement Structure set out in the CDP.

Zoning/rezoning proposals shall be assessed against the Zoning Principles and Strategic Zoning Policies.

Strategic zoning policy

SP-Z-3 Ensure that the amount of land zoned for residential uses is consistent with the requirements of the Core Strategy and the recommendations of the Border Regional Planning Guidelines.

Land proposed for zoning in excess of requirements, if any, shall be included in a strategic reserve for potential development after the lifetime of this Plan, in accordance with the Settlement Structure and Housing Strategy in operation at that stage.

Selected CDP provisions applicable to Strandhill (III)

Economic development

The main asset of Strandhill is its outstanding location between Knocknarea and the Atlantic Ocean, which is the perfect setting for a local tourism industry. In addition to employment in tourism-related activities, the Enterprise and Technology Centre in Strandhill will continue to offer a working environment, with all the facilities expected from a modern business location.

Strategic economic development policies

- SP-ED-2** Facilitate enterprise development in other urban locations where infrastructural facilities, services and good communications are readily available or can be provided at a reasonable cost.
- SP-ED-3** Encourage the development of small-scale enterprise space in villages and facilitate teleworking.
- SP-ED-4** Adopt a flexible approach to start-up businesses and resource-based, small-scale industrial/enterprise activities. Where a proposed development needs to locate near an existing natural resource, it will be necessary to demonstrate that it can be accommodated without damage to the environment, natural or built heritage, visual amenity, and that it will not have a negative impact on the character of the area.
- SP-ED-5** Encourage and facilitate small indigenous industries, in recognition of their increasing importance in providing local employment and helping to stimulate economic activity among local communities.

Tourism development

- P-TOU-3** Promote the development of high-quality tourist accommodation, especially hotels and guesthouses, and ensure high standards of architectural and urban design in all new tourist accommodation and facilities
- P-TOU-4** Strictly control development that might be detrimental to scenic and heritage assets, in cSACs, SPAs, proposed NHAs, designated Sensitive Rural Landscapes and Visually Vulnerable Areas, and along designated Scenic Routes. The Council will use its other statutory procedures, particularly in relation to waste management, water and air pollution, to ensure that these natural amenities remain unpolluted and visually unspoilt.
- P-TOU-5** Provide signposting and improve roads, existing amenity and viewing areas, and provide for car parking, public facilities and access in scenic areas, subject to compliance with the requirements of the Habitats Directive.

Mariculture is another lucrative activity undertaken in Sligo Bay.

Aquaculture, mariculture and fishing policies

- P-AMF-1** Encourage and facilitate sustainable mariculture development associated with job creation, in a manner that is compatible with other uses of the Sligo coast, and subject to compliance with the requirements of the Habitats Directive, Water Framework Directive, the provisions of the EC (Quality of Shellfish Waters) Regulations and objectives of Shellfish Pollution Reduction Programmes.

Community facilities

These include education, childcare, health care and sports/recreation facilities, among others. Some of the most relevant CDP provisions in this respect are the following:

Sports, recreation and open space policies

- 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-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-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.

Key issues to be addressed in the mini-plan - housing (I)

Land use zoning - housing land

The Strandhill LAP 2003 zoned 66 hectares of land for residential purposes, with an additional 16.5 hectares for mixed uses. The current extent of greenfield lands zoned for housing in the Strandhill LAP, circa 20 ha, is in excess of the allocation contained in the Core Strategy of the CDP 2011-2017.

Only 14 hectares of greenfield residential land are to be retained. Mixed-use lands will be included in the 14 ha allocation considering a site-specific ratio of residential to other uses, set through site-specific objectives.

Residential vacancy

Given the tourism function of Strandhill, it is quasi-impossible to ascertain the extent of true vacancy in the village (as opposed to holiday homes). A survey carried out by planners in summer 2010 counted 75 vacant units out of a total of 773 dwellings inside the plan area.

Data from Census 2011 (taken in April of that year) indicate 185 vacancies out of 780 dwellings in a similar area (but it includes unoccupied houses on Coney Island!).

Housing units

From the adjoining tables it is evident that a large amount of residential development has been permitted but was not completed or has not even commenced. Planning permission for many residential developments has been extended to 2017 and even 2018.

If completed, the permitted developments would add 204 to the number of dwellings in Strandhill, with a corresponding potential population increase of at least 470 (at 2.3 persons per average household), giving a total population of 2,066, i.e. 366 above the CDP-recommended level.

Current status of permitted residential developments in Strandhill

Status of lands	Planning file no.	No. of units	Site area (ha)	Permission expiry date	Current zoning
Permitted developments that have not commenced (shown in blue on the map)	PL 04/1466	26 apartments + retail	0.47	30 June 2017 (extended)	mixed uses
	PL 06/119	1 house + 8 apartments	0.27	2 October 2016 (extended)	residential
	PL 06/528	18 apartments	0.16	26 February 2017 (extended)	mixed uses
	PL 06/1316	61-unit aparthotel	1.05	22 April 2013 (extended)	mixed uses
	PL 06/1317	20 houses + 14 apartments	1.07	22 April 2013 (extended)	mixed uses
	PL 07/850	2 houses	0.15	3 February 2018 (extended)	residential
	PL07/877	11 apartments + retail	0.2	4 November 2013	mixed uses
	PL 08/690	17 houses	0.74	7 July 2014	residential
	PL 08/965	9 houses	0.47	23 April 2014	residential
PL 09/94	33 houses	1.14	19 October 2014	residential	
Developments under construction (shown in green on the map)	PL 05/296	11 houses to be completed	5.21	21 February 2016 (extended)	residential
	PL 07/1275	12 houses to be completed	0.62	13 October 2013	mixed uses

Unfinished housing estates in Strandhill, 2011 (shown in red outline on the map)

Name of housing development	Development address	Planning file number	Date of granting permission	Number of permitted units	Number of finished units	Number of vacant units
Cois Farrage	Carrowbunnaun	PL 05/252	22/02/2006	6 apartments	1	1
Dorrins Strand	Larass	PL 05/296	12/09/2005	124 houses	102	31
Not Ascertained	Top Road	PL 07/1275	14/10/2008	12 houses	0	0
Sandy Cove	Larass	PL 03/685	31/05/2004	27 houses	25	0

Source: National Housing Survey 2011 (Department of Environment, Community and Local Government)

Note: A housing estate where all the dwelling units have been completed is considered unfinished if the roads and services have not been completed

Key issues to be addressed in the mini-plan - housing (II)



Questions

- ▶ Given that circa 5.7 hectares of greenfield land already have the benefit of planning permission, only a further 8.3 hectares can be zoned for housing in the forthcoming mini-plan. Less land would be zoned for residential use only if other areas would be zoned exclusively for mixed uses including housing.

Which areas of Strandhill should be prioritised for residential development?

- ▶ Which areas should be designated as mixed-use zones with or without residential uses included? What proportion of development should housing represent in the various mixed-use zones?
- ▶ What housing types and sizes (in terms of number of bedrooms) would be best suited for the various areas zoned for residential and mixed uses?
- ▶ Are the existing housing density recommendations appropriate or should they be revised?
- ▶ Should the mini-plan designate special zones exclusively for holiday houses/apartments?

Key issues to be addressed in the LAP - infrastructure

Community facilities

The LAP objectives sought to ensure the provision of adequate community, sports and recreational facilities. To date, only a nursing home has been constructed. The village continues to lack a community centre and sports/recreational facilities. Support for providing adequate community facilities should be maintained in the mini-plan. Suitable locations should be reserved for such facilities, ensuring that no significant negative impact is incurred by the designated nature conservation sites that surround Strandhill (see page 11).

Tourism infrastructure

In 2006 permission was granted for a tourism facility consisting of an apart-hotel and several apartment blocks, a development that could have changed the appearance of the Top Road, possibly raising the profile of Strandhill as a holiday destination. Due to the economic crisis, this development did not materialise. At the same time, a large area continues to be zoned for mixed uses with the objective to provide “village centre” facilities and possibly another hotel. There has been no development proposal for this area. If the mixed-use zoning is to be retained in this area, the mini-plan should probably redefine the types of uses that would be best suited.

Airport

Sligo’ Regional Airport at Strandhill has been seen as an essential component of the Gateway’s connective infrastructure. The County Development Plan explicitly promotes and supports improved access to the Airport, with a view to improving Sligo’s accessibility for tourists and business.

The Airport, however, has lost government subsidies and, furthermore, was not able to obtain planning permission for a runway extension project. Nevertheless, the mini-plan should continue to support the operation of the Airport, in accordance with the relevant CDP objective.

Roads

In recent years, substantial improvements have been carried out to roads in the Strandhill village and general area. Some of the LAP objectives have been achieved, but what was probably the most important one - the New Airport Road - has not been constructed. Similarly, developments that were going to contribute to improvements to the Top Road (by providing footpaths and appropriate sightlines) have not been built.

There will be no funding in the foreseeable future for either the New Airport Road or any Top Road improvements, as money for non-national roads is no longer available to the County Council.

Wastewater treatment

The proposed upgrade of Strandhill and Tobercurry wastewater treatment plants was bundled into one DBO (design-build-operate) contract with Grange and Tobercurry, in order to deliver better value for money. The planning and procurement phases for this scheme were completed and a preferred bidder was selected. The project has been included in the Water Services Investment Programme 2010–2013 in the major schemes category, with a budget cost of 10.8 million euro.

In April 2011, the Department offered a more attractive funding arrangement, for which the Council is still waiting.

Questions

- ▶ How can the mini-plan facilitate the development of community, sports and recreational infrastructure in a manner that would not have negative implications for the environment?
- ▶ What types of economic activity should be encouraged? How can the mini-plan support such activity?
- ▶ What new types of business and enterprise would be viable in Strandhill? What would be the locational and infrastructural requirements of such businesses?
- ▶ What initiatives (objectives) could the mini-plan include in order to stimulate tourism and improve the visitor experience in Strandhill?
- ▶ What measures would be required in order to alleviate traffic congestion at the Promenade?
- ▶ What would be a good, long-term solution to the parking problem?
- ▶ What types of provision should be made for non-car users of the village streets?
- ▶ Where in the village is there a need to improve or extend footpaths and locate pedestrian crossings?

Key issues to be addressed in the LAP - environmental concerns

Strategic Environmental Assessment

At the time of adopting the Strandhill LAP, the Irish legislation did not require a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) to be carried out.

SEA Regulations published in 2004 now require that SEA screening be undertaken when preparing a local area plan or variation of a development plan (Strandhill's case). Should the screening indicate a potential for significant effects of the plan on the environment, an Environmental Report needs to be prepared in consultation with prescribed environmental authorities. The purpose of SEA is to avoid, reduce or mitigate any potential negative effects of the plan on the environment.

Appropriate Assessment

A number of sites in County Sligo have been identified as being of exceptional importance for wildlife at a European and/or national level. At European level, Natura 2000 sites form a network of protected areas throughout the EU. They comprise Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) designated under the EU Habitats Directive, and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) designated under the EU Birds Directive.

The Habitats and Birds Directives were transposed into Irish law through the Natural Habitats Regulations (1997).

Circular letter SEA 1/08 and NPWS 1/08 issued by the DoEHLG states that all land use plans (development plans, local area plans), or amendments/variations thereof, must be **screened** for any potential impact on areas designated as Natura 2000 sites (SACs and SPAs), to determine whether a full Appropriate Assessment is required in accordance with Article 6 of the Habitats Directive.

An Appropriate Assessment means an assessment, based on best scientific knowledge, by a person with ecological expertise, of the potential impacts of the plan on the conservation objectives of any Natura 2000 sites and the development, where necessary, of mitigation or avoidance measures.

The impacts assessed must include the indirect and cumulative impacts of approving the plan, considered with any current or proposed activities, developments or policies impacting on the site.

If the Habitats Directive screening indicates that the plan will have a significant effect on a Natura 2000 site, either directly or indirectly, on its own or in combination with other plans and projects, then the plan must be the subject of an Appropriate Assessment as per Article 6 of the Habitats Directive.

The competent authorities shall agree to the plan or project **only after having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site(s) concerned.**

If, in spite of a negative assessment of the implications for the site and in the absence of alternative solutions, a plan or project must nevertheless be carried out for imperative reasons of overriding public interest, including those of a social or economic nature, the EU Member State shall take all compensatory measures necessary to ensure that the overall coherence of Natura 2000 is protected and it shall inform the EU Commission of the compensatory measures adopted.

It should be noted that "imperative reasons of overriding public interest (IROPI)" are extremely difficult to demonstrate. In any case, IROPI cannot be invoked where less damaging alternative solutions exist.

What does this mean for Strandhill?

Strandhill is surrounded by Natura 2000 areas: Cummeen Strand/Drumcliff Bay SAC (000627) & Ballysadare Bay SAC (000622) plus Cummeen Strand SPA (004035) & Ballysadare Bay SPA (004129). Despite the presence of these designations on the edges of the village, Strandhill LAP 2003 was not subjected to Appropriate Assessment during its preparation, because the relevant legislation was not in place at the time.

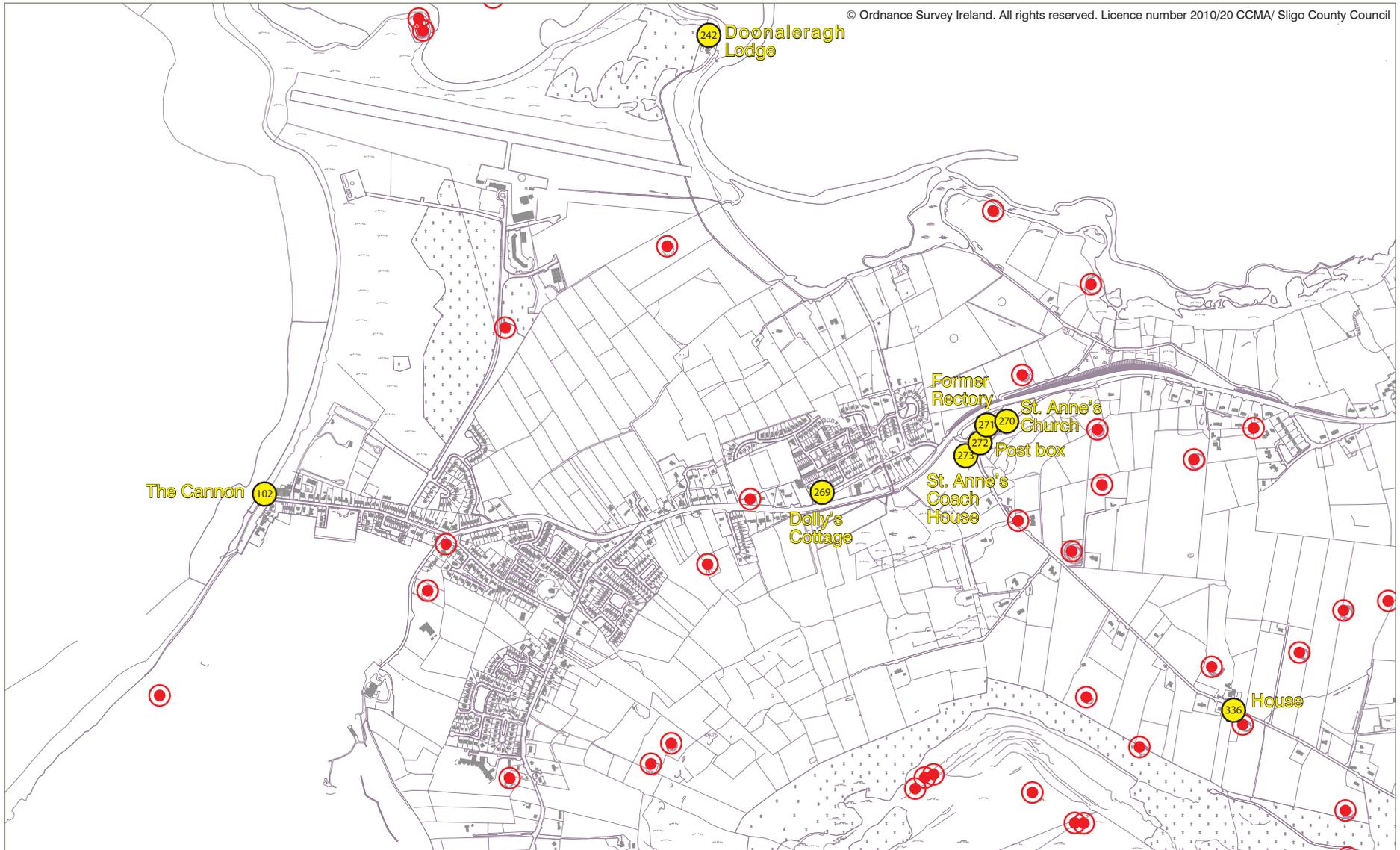
As part of the LAP, an area to the west of the Airport Road was reserved for "business and enterprise park/light industrial use", while an adjoining area to the south of the first was designated for "community, sports and recreation or caravan park, subject to minimal tree removal".

These two areas were zoned on the understanding that a portion of Cummeen Strand SAC would be "de-designated" by the former Dúchas (now National Parks and Wildlife Service), in recognition of the fact that most features of interest for which the site was originally designated (e.g. *Vertigo angustior*, a snail) were no longer present in the area to such an extent as to justify designation.

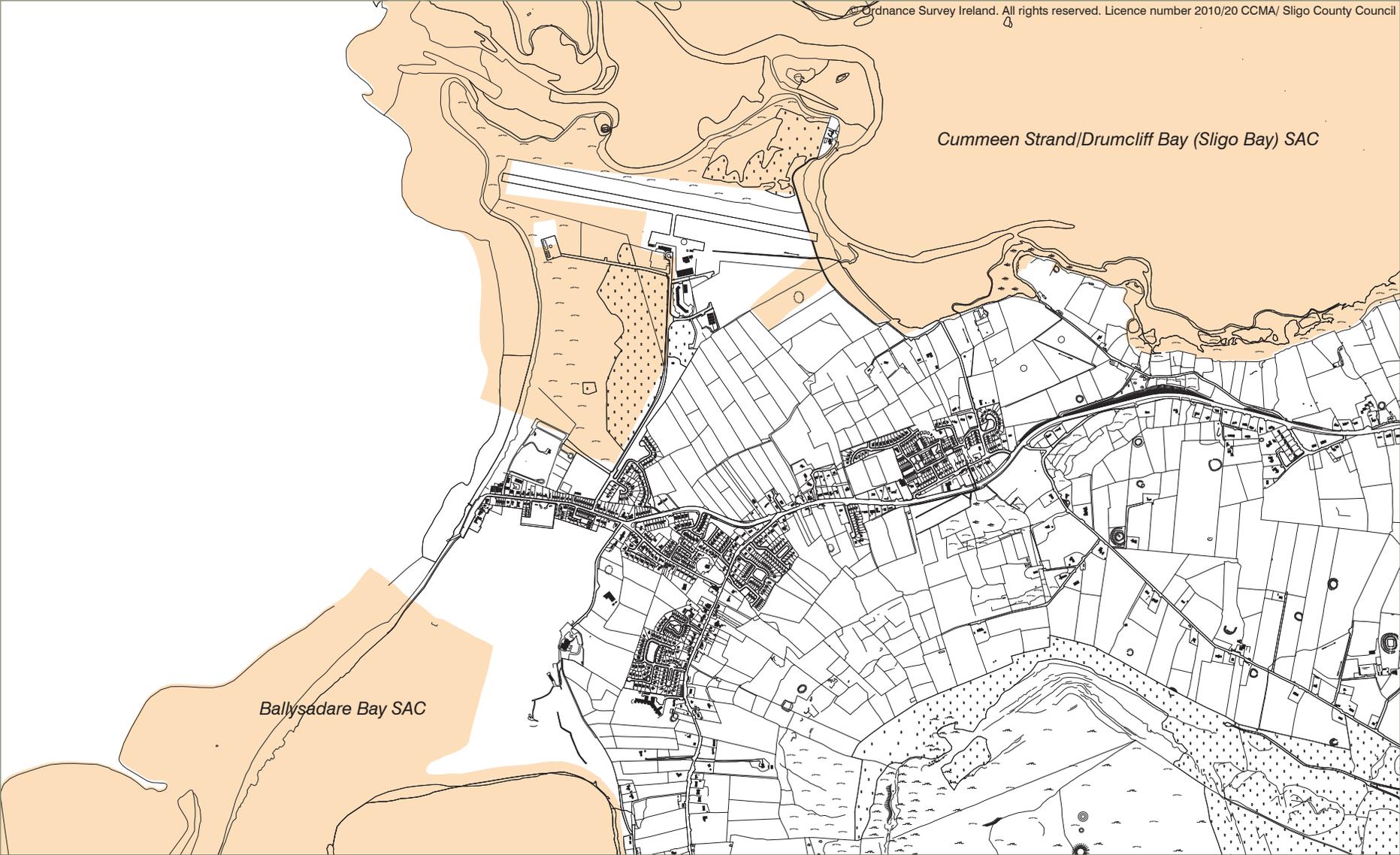
Despite the Council's undertakings, the two areas zoned for business/enterprise and community/sports/recreation continued to remain part of the Cummeen Strand/Drumcliff Bay SAC, a situation which is no longer compatible with current legislation.

It has become evident in recent years that Strandhill residents consider the area zoned for community/sports/recreation as important to the local community. However, the renewed zoning of the lands for such development will most likely result in a negative assessment of the implications for the SAC. Therefore, the mini-plan should seek to provide alternative locations for community, sports and recreational activities.

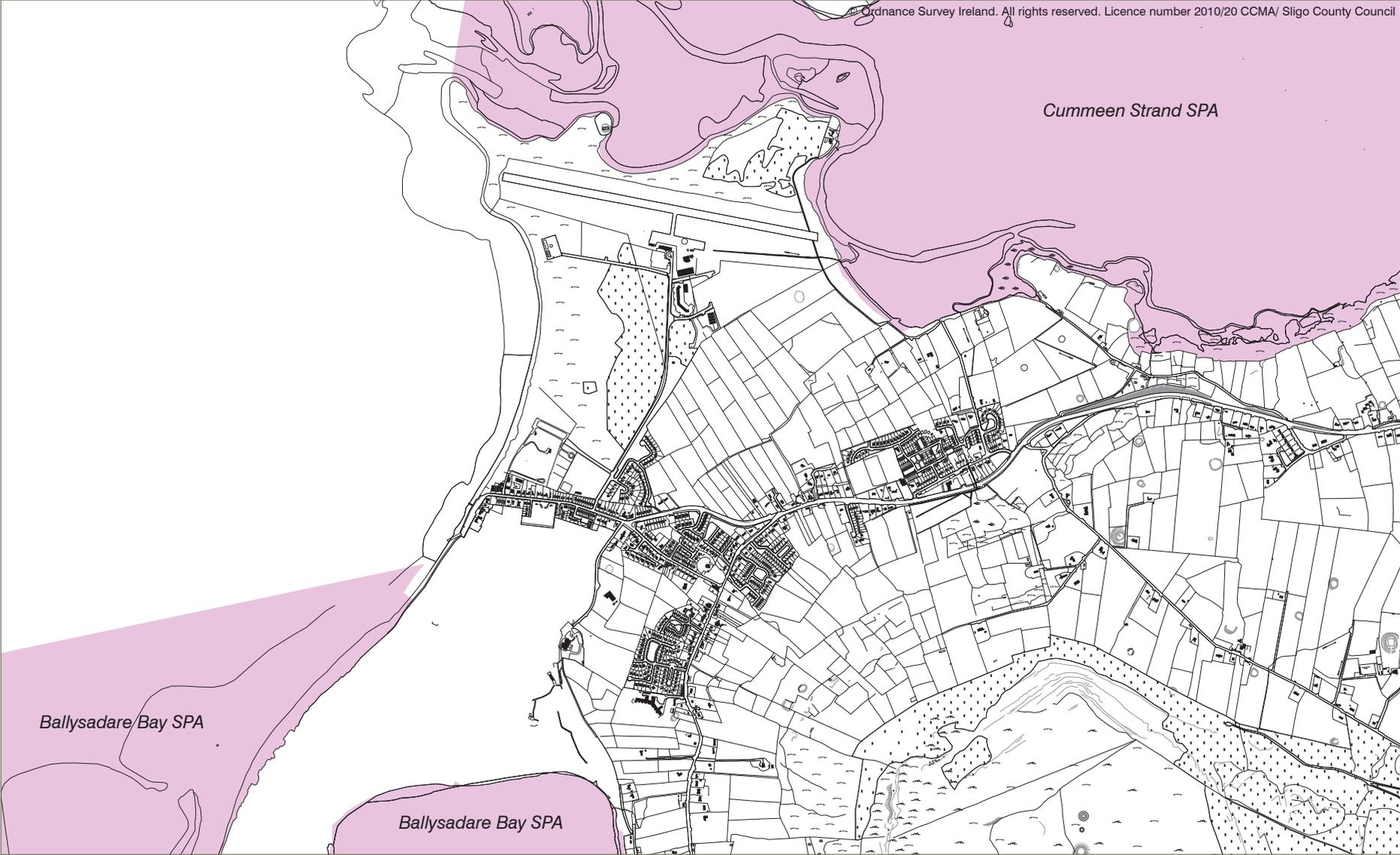
Map 1: Archaeological sites and Protected Structures



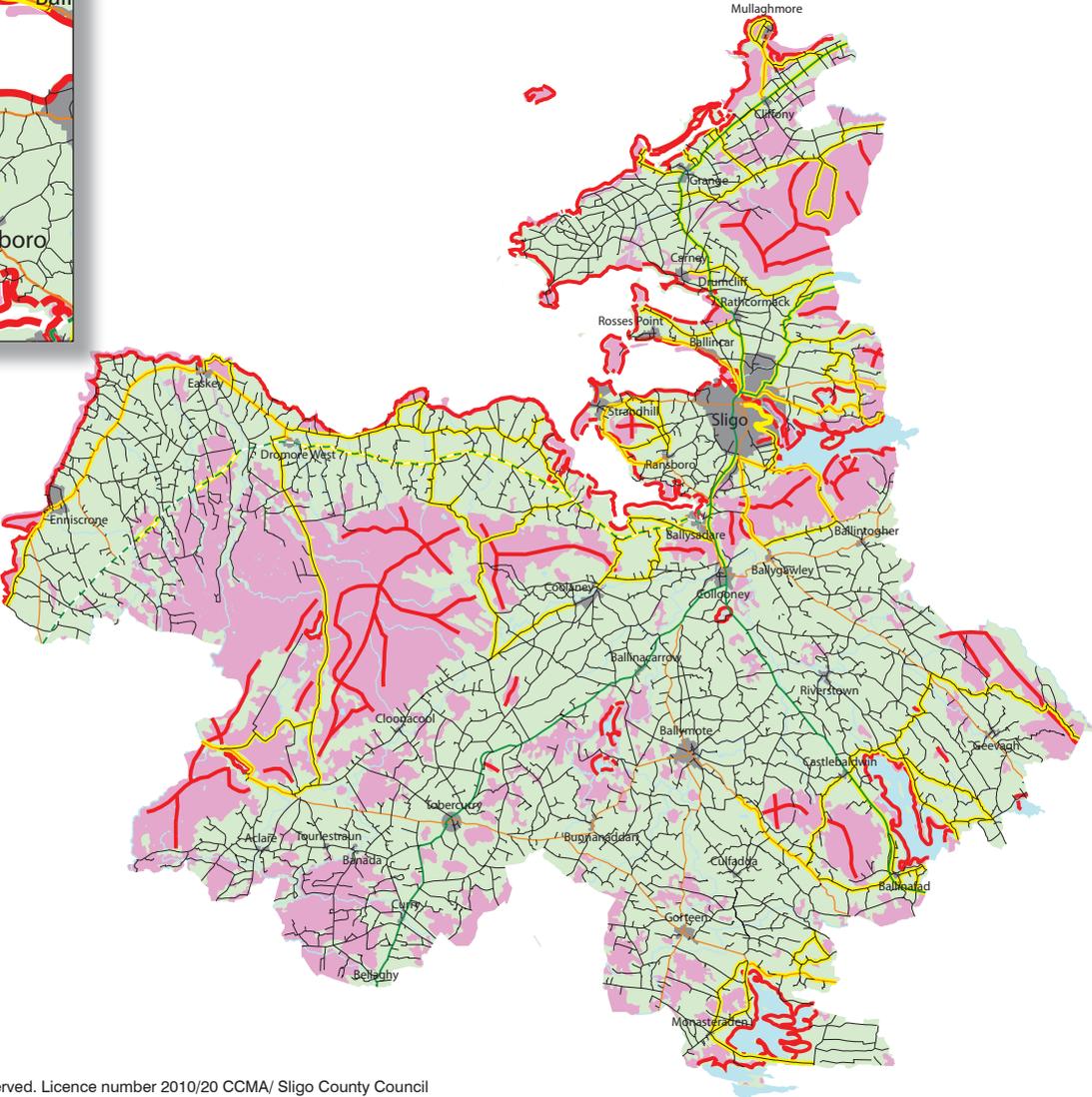
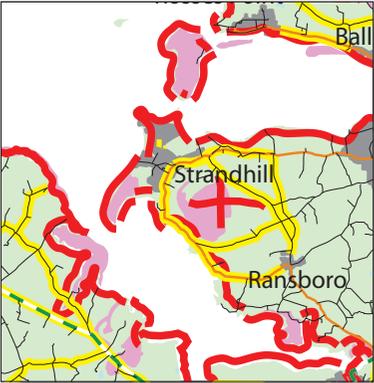
Map 2: Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) - Natura 2000 sites



Map 3: Special Protection Areas (SPA) - Natura 2000 sites



Map 4: Landscape Characterisation Map (extract from CDP)



Landscape Characterisation Map

- Normal Rural Landscape
- Sensitive Rural Landscape
- Visually Vulnerable
- Scenic Routes

Note 1: The environs of archaeological and historical sites are considered Visually Vulnerable Areas

Note 2: Scenic Routes are public roads from which the views and prospects towards Visually Vulnerable features are to be preserved

