

Strandhill Mini-Plan – Variation No. 1 of Sligo County Development Plan 2011-2017

Sligo County Council, at its meeting on 7 October 2013, has made a variation to the Sligo County Development Plan 2011–2017 (CDP).

*The Variation No. 1 consists of the incorporation of **Strandhill Mini-Plan** as Chapter 44 in **Volume 2 Mini-Plans** of the CDP.*

The Mini-Plan consists of a written statement accompanied by a Zoning Map (Map 1), a Transport Objectives Map (Map 2), a Site-Specific Objectives Map (Map 3) and a Designations Map (Map 4). Where the written objectives refer to specific routes or locations, these are marked on one of the two Objectives Maps. The applicable Zoning Matrix is included in Volume 2 of the CDP.

Chapter 44. Strandhill Mini-Plan

Village profile

Strandhill is located 8 km to the west of Sligo city, on the western extremity of the Coolera Peninsula. The village extends along the north-western foothills of Knocknarea mountain and is surrounded on three sides by coastline – Cummeen Strand to the north, Sligo Bay to the west and Ballysadare Bay to the south.

In the Settlement Structure (Section 3.3 of the CDP), Strandhill is designated as a *Principal Satellite* (of the Gateway, Sligo and Environs) and as a *settlement with special functions* (i.e. tourism).

The village is characterised by linear roadside development within the serviced area and ribbon development on the unserviced fringes. In recent years, consolidation of the urban area did occur to a certain degree, with residential estates filling in some gaps and developing part of the backlands.

Population and housing

According to Census information, the village had a population of 1,413 persons in 2006 (an increase of 41% from 2002), and a population of 1,596 persons in 2011 (an increase of 13% from 2006).

Strandhill has seen significant growth during the ‘Celtic Tiger’ years, with at least 201 new housing units constructed from 2004 to 2011, most of this occurring before 2008.

Much of the residential development took the form of suburban-type estates with some road frontage and backland development. A small number of apartments have been built so far. A further 51 apartments have been permitted since 2004 but have not yet been constructed.

Given the tourism function of Strandhill, a relatively high seasonal vacancy rate would be expected. Data from the Census 2011 (taken in April 2011) indicated 185 vacancies out of a total of 773 residential units inside the plan area. Survey work carried out in September 2012 revealed 62 vacant buildings (not including apartments) in the village.

The Core Strategy of the CDP allocated to Strandhill 14.4 ha of greenfield land, which included (in 2012-2013) 4.03 ha of land with existing planning permission for residential development, comprising some 204 potential residential units. This equates to 10.37 ha which have been zoned for residential development in this Mini-Plan. Mixed-use lands are also included in the allocation based on an average of 65% residential development in the mix of uses.

Community facilities

The community facilities present in the village comprise a national school, a catholic church, playing pitches, tennis courts and changing facilities operated by Strand Celtic Football Club on the Airport Road.

A Church of Ireland church with a small graveyard is located at Scarden on the outskirts of the village.

The Rugby Club, located on the R292 at Larass, has three pitches.

The village lacks a community centre/sports centre. The resident and future population clearly need a community centre as well as other facilities. This aspiration is supported in the Mini-Plan and a suitable site has been reserved for this purpose.

Commercial and enterprise development

The Enterprise and Technology Centre, which opened in 2002, offers 1,450 sq.m. of office and enterprise space. Currently it is under-occupied.

Strandhill's main employment generator is its tourism industry, created in part by its reputation as one of the top surfing destinations in Ireland. This is visible in the village in the form of surf schools and 'surf lodges/accommodation'.

Tourism accommodation in the village includes a recently constructed 4-star, 22-room hotel on the Top Road (southern end of R292 as it passes through the village), a caravan and camping park on the sea front, an 11-bedroom hotel and holiday apartments also on the Top Road.

Permission has been granted for a tourist facility comprising a new 13 bedroom hotel, a 61 unit apart-hotel along with a leisure and fitness centre located on the Top Road. No construction has commenced on this development to date.

Infrastructure

Strandhill is well served by the R292 and the road network between the village and Sligo City. In recent years, substantial improvements have been carried out to the village streets.

Strandhill's drinking water comes from Sligo County Council's reservoir at Grange East townland, Knocknahur, which is supplied from Cairns Hill Water Treatment Plant. The capacity of this plant (between 5,000m³ and 8,000m³ a day) currently exceeds demand.

The sewage treatment plant at Killaspugbrone is currently operating at full capacity. Its proposed upgrade has been included in the Water Services Investment Programme 2010-2013.

Sligo's Regional Airport, located between the village and the sea, is seen as an essential component of the Gateway's connective infrastructure. The County Development Plan explicitly supports improved access to the Airport with a view to enhancing Sligo's accessibility for tourists and businesses. While the Airport no longer functions as a public commuter/tourist airport, it continues to accommodate the North West Helicopter Search & Rescue Base on behalf of the Irish Coast Guard and has the potential to resume its previous services in the future.

Archaeological heritage

The Strandhill area has a particularly rich archaeological heritage. The Coolera or *Cúil Irra* Peninsula was one of the major cultural and ritual centres of Neolithic Ireland (circa 4500 - 2500 BC) and Knocknarea played an important role as a ritual focal point. Today, this is evidenced by a large concentration of passage tombs, an enclosure and a hut site complex on the mountain.

The peninsula retained its importance during later prehistory and early medieval times. The *Giant's Grave* court tomb on the road to the Airport and the kitchen middens in the townlands of Culleenmore and Culleenduff are also indicators of substantial activity from the Neolithic period onwards.

One of Strandhill's archaeological gems is the ecclesiastical site at Killaspugbrone, which includes a ruined medieval church and a graveyard used by the local community in modern times.

An extensive area of Knocknarea mountain and a wedge of land to the south-west of the golf course in Carrowdough have been designated as zones of archaeological potential (ZAPs).

The lower slopes of Knocknarea are intrinsic to its archaeological amenity and unspoilt views of the mountain are of immense heritage value.

Natural heritage

Uniquely positioned at the coast, Strandhill is surrounded by some of Sligo's most valuable natural heritage sites. These sites are protected by European and national legislation, as they support a diversity of natural and semi-natural habitats and a wide range of flora and fauna.

The following areas are protected under the EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) and EU Birds Directive (79/409/EEC):

- Ballysadare Bay SAC (site code 000622);
- Cummeen Strand/Drumcliff Bay SAC (site code 000627);
- Cummeen Strand SPA (site code 004035),
- Ballysadare Bay SPA (site code 004129).

Designated sites do not represent the full extent of Strandhill's natural heritage. The wider countryside also makes a valuable contribution to the overall coherence of the ecological network. Thus, the rural hinterland of the village is home to various landscape features, which contribute significantly to local biodiversity. Such features include hedgerows, ditches and banks, stone dykes and walls, linear tree belts (shelter belts), semi-natural or ancient woodlands, plantations, estates, heathlands, green roads and ponds. These provide important habitats, buffer areas and wildlife corridors, which are of major importance for fauna and flora.

Coastal erosion

One of the more significant issues facing Strandhill is the issue of coastal erosion. The coastline surrounding the village is particularly volatile and dynamic, as evidenced by significant variations in sand levels and beach movements.

The extensive beach undergoes considerable change when storms sweep away sand rapidly. The sand often returns slowly to the shore in more stable conditions.

In the last three decades, there has been a recorded increase in the frequency of storms affecting the north-western coast of Ireland, compared to the previous half-century.

Recent coastal flooding predictions prepared by the Office of Public Works (OPW) assume a 500-mm increase in sea level by 2100. Both factors combine to indicate likely exacerbated erosion of low-lying and soft shorelines, such as the Strandhill peninsula.

The beach and ‘big dune’ area south of the beach car park were particularly affected by erosion in 2011 and 2012. Extensive works had been carried out in 2002, including the construction of a new slipway and promenade extension and the provision of 300 m of rock armour along the beachfront.

Storms in 2011 caused extensive damage to a 70-m section of sand dune as well as damage to the end of the walkway to the south of the village. An integrated coastal management strategy is required to address necessary coastal protection works, recreational use of both the dune systems and landward dune grassland, the impacts of proposed infrastructure developments and the sustainable use and management of the existing coastal edge.

Objectives

It is an objective of Sligo County Council to:

44.1 Landscape, natural heritage, open space

- A. Maintain and enhance the conservation value of the Natura 2000 sites surrounding the village. Ensure that Appropriate Assessment Screening is carried out for any plan or project within the Mini-Plan area with potential to impact on Ballysadare Bay SAC (site code 000622), Cummeen Strand/Drumcliff Bay SAC (site code 000627), Cummeen Strand SPA (site code 004035) and Ballysadare Bay SPA (site code 004129).
- B. Prepare, in consultation with the DoECLG, a management plan for the Council-owned lands at Killaspugbrone, in compliance with the provisions of the Habitats Directive.
- C. Apply the precautionary principle in relation to development proposals with potential to impact on the County Biodiversity Site within the buffer zone by requiring an ecological impact assessment to ensure that any proposed development will not affect the integrity and conservation value of the site.
- D. Have regard to the need to protect existing views of Ballysadare Bay, Sligo Bay, Cummeen Strand and Knocknarea when assessing all new development proposals.
- E. Protect the archaeological integrity of all national monuments within the plan area and ensure that development in the vicinity of these areas is strictly controlled.
- F. Preserve the following views (designated Scenic Routes in the CDP 2011-2017):
 - i. views of Sligo Harbour, Sligo Bay and Ben Bulbin from the R292 at Larass, immediately north of St Anne’s Church and Rectory;
 - ii. views of Knocknarea from the R292 at Larass, between St Anne’s Church and Sligo Rugby Club;
 - iii. views of Sligo Bay, Ballysadare Bay and Knocknarea from the R292 at Carrowdough and Culleenamore, between the southern development limit of the village and the Plan limit at Rockview House;
 - iv. views of Sligo Bay and Knocknarea from the Ransboro Local Road L-3503 at Larass, between St Anne’s Church and the eastern Plan limit close to Lecarrow and Rathcarrick townland boundaries;
 - v. views of Knocknarea from the Airport Road (L-35052) between the southern boundary of the Business and Enterprise Park and northern boundary of Community zoned lands.
- G. Provide for a number of incidental public open spaces whilst ensuring the protection of designated sites through screening for Appropriate Assessment, notably:

- i. the Sligo entrance to the village, between the new and old R292, where a floral or shrub display might be developed, possibly in conjunction with a piece of public art (location marked OS1 on Objectives Map);
 - ii. a strip of land to the east of the Airport Road, which would lend itself to a tree and shrub belt for amenity and shelter purposes (location marked OS2 on Objectives Map).
- H. Require any development on the site of Seaview House on Upper Buenos Ayres Drive to retain and landscape a substantial element of open space at the eastern end of the existing garden (location marked OS3 on Objectives Map).

44.2 Coastal protection

- A. Prepare an integrated coastal management plan for Strandhill in consultation with relevant agencies and interested parties. This plan should address, inter alia, the existing and potential recreational uses of the area. The coastal management plan will ensure the protection of Natura 2000 sites through the Appropriate Assessment process.
- B. Generally maintain a natural buffer along the Atlantic shoreline for a distance landwards of the High Water Mark in the order of 80 m outside the development limit.
- C. Retain a natural storm berm and dune buffer zone on the west side of the Strandhill caravan park, in the interests of safety. The natural buffer shall be at least 50 metres in width, as measured from the fore-dune ridge, and shall be maintained free from all new permanent structural development.
- D. Maintain and review dune management, to include, where necessary, appropriate fencing, boardwalks and public information boards in consultation with the National Parks and Wildlife Service of the DAHG.

44.3 Built heritage and streetscape

- A. Ensure that the design of new developments along the Top Road (R292) reflect the scale, character and finishes of existing vernacular buildings at this location.
- B. Require any development proposal involving the *buildings of note*, identified on the Objectives Map (and their sites), to restore or renovate and/or incorporate these buildings into new development proposals, in a sensitive manner that will contribute to the preservation of the streetscape character.
- C. Seek the protection and conservation of the following Protected Structures:

RPS-102	The Canon, Carrowbunnaun
RPS-242	Doonagleragh Lodge, Killaspugbrone
RPS-269	Dolly's Cottage, Larass
RPS-270	St Anne's Church (Church of Ireland), Larass
RPS-271	Former Rectory, Larass
RPS-272	Post box, Larass
RPS-273	St. Anne's Coach House, Larass
RPS-336	House, Rathcarrick

44.4 Mixed-use zones

- A. Require the inclusion of residential units within the mixed-uses zones, subject to medium-high densities and suitable building scale, design and layout that create a strong urban identity. Along

new mixed-use streets, terraced buildings are preferred. Civic spaces – such as small squares – are desirable, as they are conducive to human interaction and safe movement for pedestrians and those with special mobility needs.

- B. Discourage piecemeal, haphazard development and ensure the assembly and consolidated development of lands within the mixed-use zones on the basis of integrated design proposals/masterplans with appropriate pedestrian/cycle/vehicular links. Prospective developers shall have regard to the DECLG's Guidelines for Planning Authorities – Sustainable Development in Urban Areas (Cities, Towns and Villages) and to the DoT/DECLG Design Manual for Urban roads and Streets (2013).

Promenade (location marked MIX 1 on the Objectives Map)

- C. Encourage the upgrading of existing properties fronting onto the Promenade via appropriate design improvements and/or redevelopment.
- D. Encourage the redevelopment of the Promenade 'Corner' on the sea front (MIX 1, Objectives Map) currently comprising shops, dwellings and a public open space, subject to any necessary coastal protection measures whilst ensuring the protection of designated sites through screening for Appropriate Assessment at project level.
- E. Require that any development proposed on the promenade site MIX 1 adheres to the following criteria:
- i. all new build and redevelopment should be of high quality in terms of design and materials, recognising its importance for the streetscape at the 'gateway' to the promenade area;
 - ii. up to three storeys may be permitted, subject to satisfactory integration with adjoining developments;
 - iii. new development should incorporate an appropriate mix of tourism, commercial and residential uses, combined with adequate backland access and parking provision.

Buenos Aires Drive (locations marked MIX 2 and MIX 3 on the Objectives Map)

- F. Permit terraced buildings up to three storeys in the mixed-use zone along Buenos Aires Drive, subject to appropriate 'feathering' and the creation of a strong building line extending towards the Promenade.
- G. Require that any development proposal on village centre site MIX 2 (existing Council car park) incorporates the following:
- i. a pedestrian civic square, capable of being used for events and local markets;
 - ii. pedestrian and possibly vehicular linkages to the Promenade to the west, behind existing development;
 - iii. the location of any car parking behind the building line.

In recognition of the scale, and strategic location of the Council car park, the only mixed use development permitted on this site will be the enhancement of the present car parking facility, a community centre and the provision of other recreational facilities.

Terraced buildings up to three storeys shall be permitted, subject to appropriate 'feathering', to integrate with adjoining developments, from the council car park to the existing promenade & in the existing promenade area. The community centre courtyard shall be designed to a high standard in a manner capable of enhancing the streetscape and complementing the existing village. However, any developments within the car park itself shall be restricted to two storeys.

- H. Encourage any proposal which involves a change of use or redevelopment of an existing property at MIX 3 (next to the existing mini-mart), to include the upgrading of the building façade to reflect its position in the new neighbourhood centre.

Mixed-use site on the R292 (location marked MIX 4 on the Objectives Map)

- I. Require that any development proposal on the site MIX 4 (lands to the south-west of the petrol/service station, between the old and the realigned R292) incorporates the following:
- i. protection and enhancement of the setting of Dolly's Cottage through appropriate scale and design of all proposed structures;
 - ii. where appropriate, new buildings should be dual aspect, with façades fronting both public roads. Their design shall reflect a common theme and be appropriately detailed for such a high-profile site.

44.5 Transport, circulation and parking

- A. Reserve land for a New Airport Road linking the R292 to the existing Airport Road (R277) whilst ensuring the protection of designated sites through screening for Appropriate Assessment at project level.
- B. Reserve land for the creation of New Burma Road, i.e. a new road linking the lower half of Burma Road with the proposed New Airport Road.
- C. Extend the Promenade in a northerly direction and link up with the existing Airport Road as indicated on the Objectives Map, to include for the upgrading of the existing lane from the caravan park to the Airport Road whilst taking full account of the need to protect the natural and cultural heritage of the coast and the need to avoid significant adverse impacts on Natura 2000 Sites and on species protected by law. All necessary coastal protection measures should be incorporated into such a project. This extension should be developed in a similar fashion to the existing Promenade whilst also preserving as much as possible of the seafront area as a public amenity.
- D. Provide public footpaths and public lighting throughout the village as resources permit, and in particular as sites become redeveloped, especially along the Top Road.
- E. Upgrade the Golf Club Road as resources permit and as developments occur.
- F. Require all new developments to specifically provide for the needs of persons with special mobility needs (i.e. wheelchairs, prams, visual impairment etc.)
- G. Improve, as resources permit, the flow of traffic on the existing Promenade.
- H. Reserve land along Burma Road for a 'public transport node' to include car and cycle parking facilities, bus stop etc (location marked TRANS 1 on the Objectives Map).
- I. Improve the following junctions:
- i. the junction between the R292 and Upper Buenos Ayres Drive;
 - ii. the junction between the R292 and the Burma Road.

44.6 Community facilities

- A. Support the improvement and further development of the existing sports facilities adjoining the Airport Road.
- B. Require any development proposed on the greenfield site CF1 (refer to the Objectives Map) to ensure the protection of designated sites through screening for Appropriate Assessment at project

level. Any proposed development should provide a range of facilities such as a citizens' advice point, social services, tourist information, skate park and indoor sports. A youth centre and childcare facilities may be provided within the same building or in a separate structure.

- C. Assess any applications for developments on or adjacent to site CF1 (refer to the Objectives Map) in accordance with 'The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines (Nov 2009, DoECLG & OPW)'. Any application may be required to be accompanied by a site specific Flood Risk Assessment appropriate to the type and scale of the development being proposed.

44.7 Tourism development

- A. Promote the development of tourism related-infrastructure and facilities within the village in order to increase visitor numbers and to create more local employment, subject to Appropriate Assessment under the Habitats Directive.
- B. Provide a public parking and picnic area to the north of the caravan park, in conjunction with the new road (See Section 44.5), subject to Appropriate Assessment under the Habitats Directive and the implementation of a Coastal Management Plan (Obj. 44.2 A) and a Management Plan for the Council lands at Killaspugbrone (Obj. 44.1 B). This area will be located adjacent to the existing caravan park entrance, from where two-way traffic movements will operate (location marked TRANS 2 on the Objectives Map). In addition, adequate provision will be made for alternative circulation arrangements within the caravan park.
- C. Maintain existing trails and establish further looped recreational trails around the village to include:
- (1) Beachfront - Killaspugbrone – Dorrins Strand – Dolly's Cottage – Upper Strandhill;
 - (2) Beachfront – Maeve's Cairn, Knocknarea – Dolly's Cottage – Upper Strandhill;
 - (3) Beachfront – Portcurry Point – Culleenamore/Golf Course – Carrowdough – Upper Strandhill.

All of the above should be sign posted as resources permit. Refer to the Objectives Map for the indicative routes of these trails.

- D. Provide appropriate pedestrian access along the R292 from Carrowdough to the village in support of trail no. 3 above, whilst retaining all existing stone walls, significant trees and hedgerows.

44.8 Business and enterprise

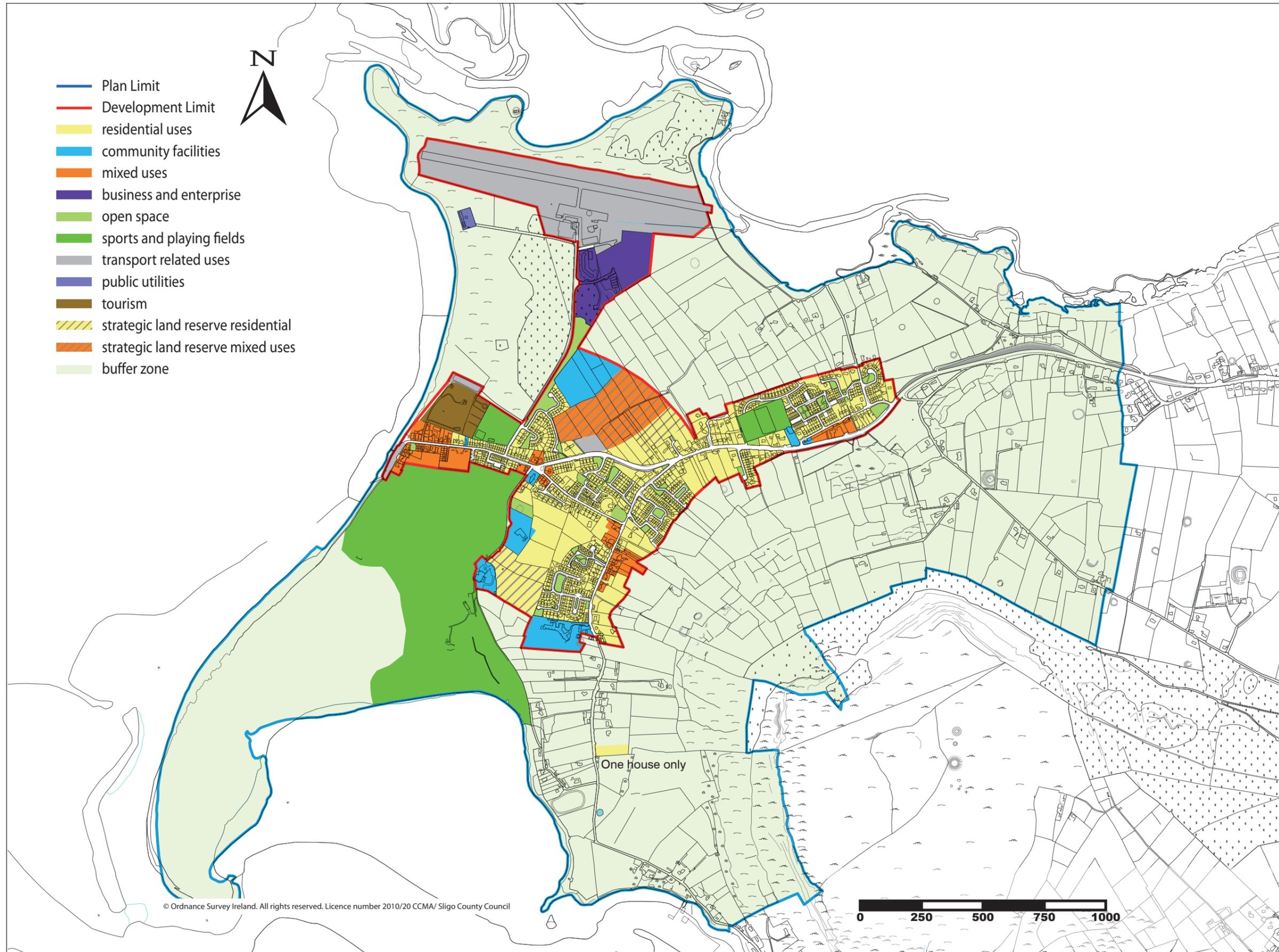
- A. Support the continued operation of Sligo Airport. The foreseeable demand for airport-related uses can be adequately met on the lands between the runway and the existing Business and Enterprise Park.
- B. Protect existing flight paths, i.e. 'declared distances (published runway length) and runway end safety areas', as requested by the North West Airport Company Ltd. Due regard will be had to airport safeguarding requirements when development proposals in the locality are being assessed. Applications requiring external lighting or floodlighting shall include details of lighting schemes, which will be expected to demonstrate that:
- i. the lighting scheme proposed is the minimum required to undertake the task;
 - ii. there will be no dazzling or distraction of pilots landing aircraft on the nearby runway.

44.9 Buffer zone

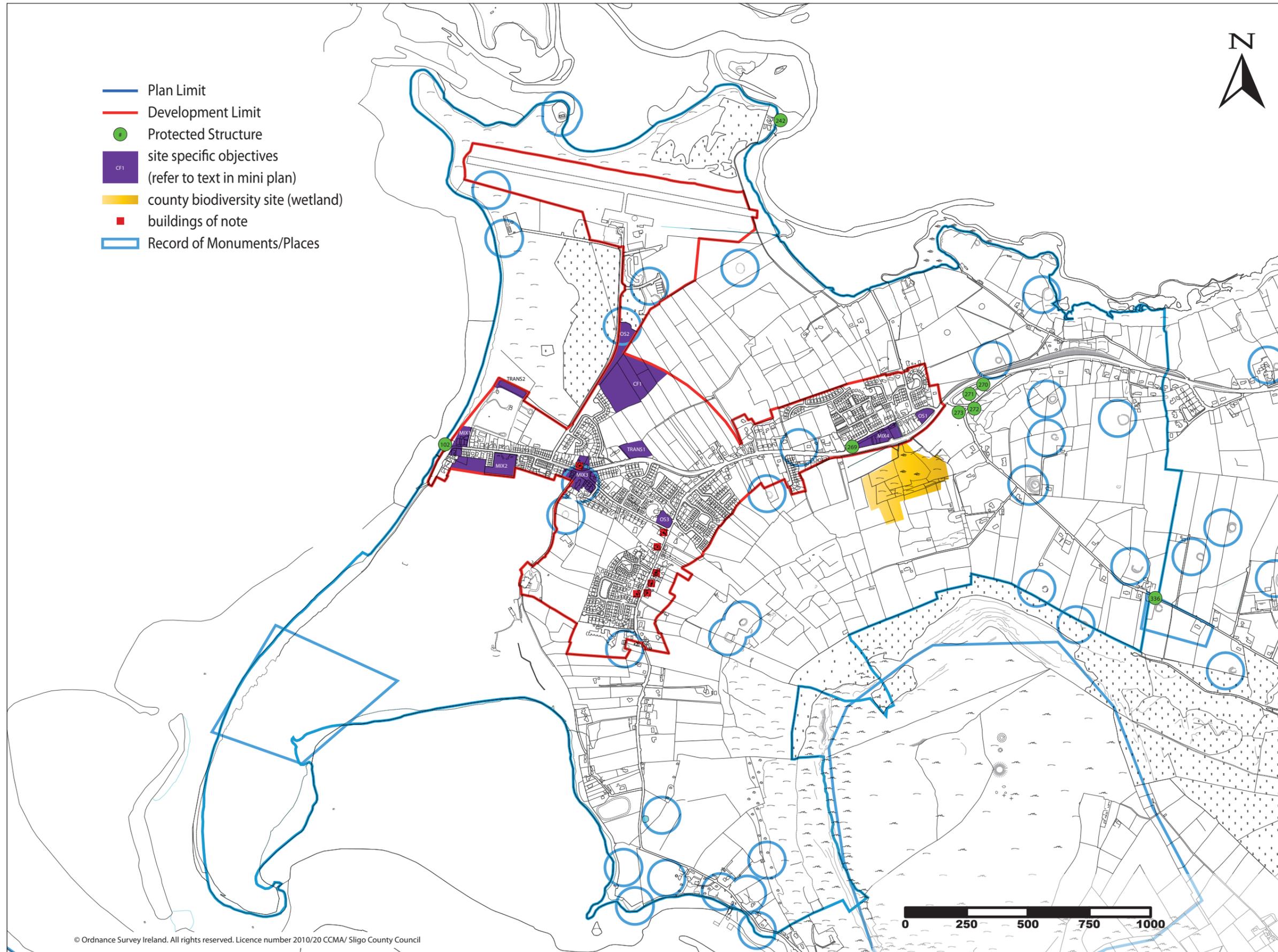
- A. Encourage landowners in the buffer area to manage their land in a sustainable manner by protecting heritage features and landscape character. The retention of stone walls, banks, hedges and trees on townland boundaries is a particular priority. The buffer zone shall remain principally in low-intensity agricultural use.
- B. Require all new and replacement agricultural structures to be designed in such manner that they do not interfere with the character of the landscape, whilst ensuring the protection of designated sites through screening for Appropriate Assessment at project level.

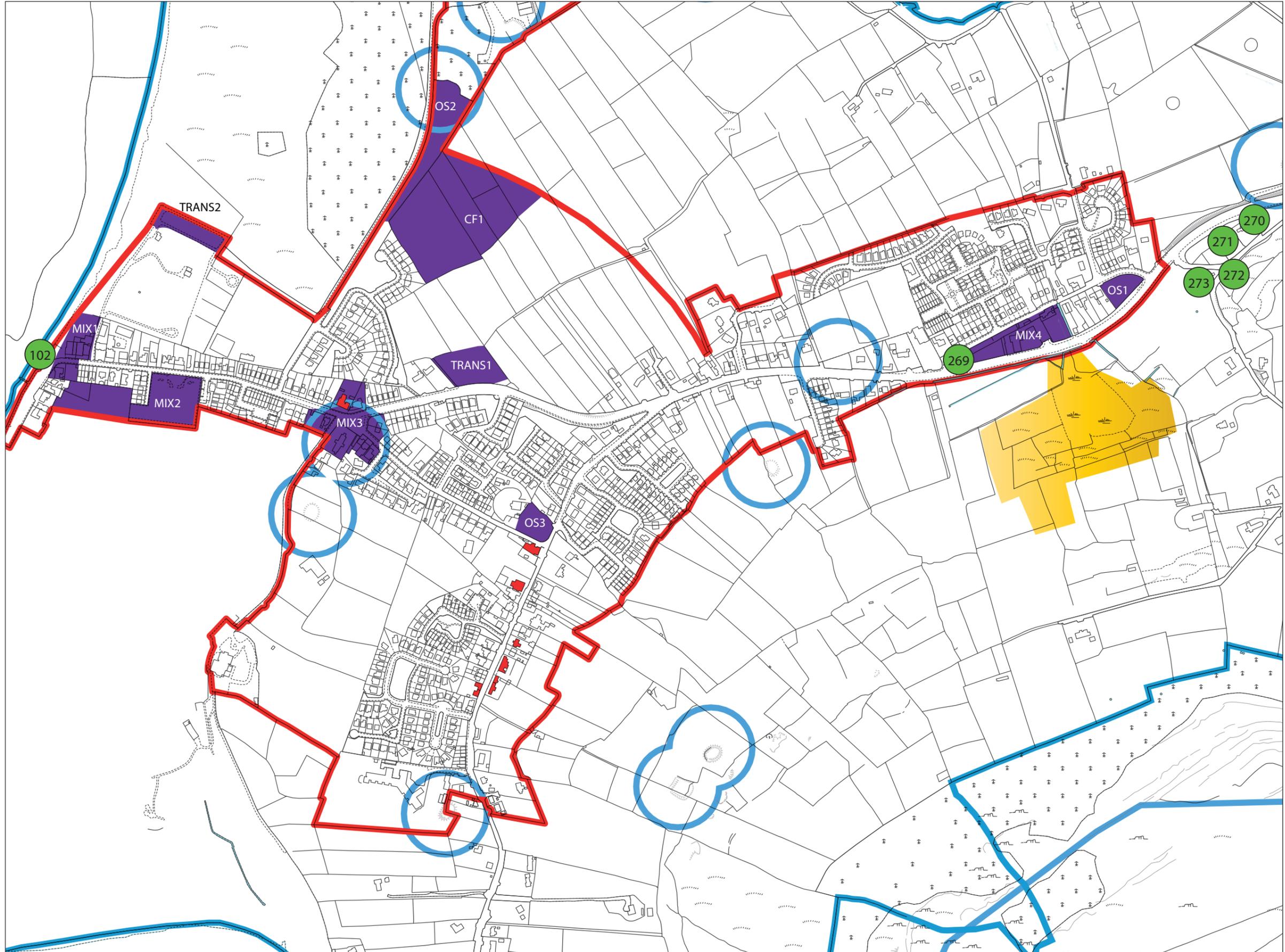
44.10 Wastewater treatment

- A. Upgrade the wastewater treatment plant at Killaspugbrone to cater for a population equivalent (PE) of circa 3,000, whilst ensuring the protection of designated sites through undertaking Appropriate Assessment at project level.



Map 2. Site-specific objectives





Map 3. Transport objectives

