

Draft Variation No. 1

of Sligo County Development Plan
2017-2023

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Part I – Explanatory Introduction

1. Background to the Variation No. 1

Sligo County Council has prepared a Draft Variation No. 1 to the Sligo County Development Plan 2017–2023 (CDP) under Section 13 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).

Planning legislation requires that the Development Plan be varied to incorporate the recent changes in national and regional policy:

- at national level, the National Spatial Strategy 2002-2020 was replaced in 2018 by the National Planning Framework/Project Ireland 2040;
- at regional level, the Border Regional Planning Guidelines 2010-2022 were replaced in 2020 by the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Northern and Western Region.

1.1 Reasons for varying the CDP

The National Planning Framework, which replaced the NSS, did not retain the *Gateway* designation for Sligo City, but recognised it as a Regional Centre and highlighted it as being a growth driver to a greater extent than any other towns in the North-West.

The RSES identifies Sligo City as an “urban place of regional scale” and designates it a *Regional Growth Centre*. The Regional Strategy envisages a 40% increase in Sligo City’s population by 2040, equivalent to circa 8,000 additional residents, giving a total of 26,000 people. Intermediate “targets” are set for 2026 (+4,400 persons) and 2031 (+2,200).

The RSES includes a Regional Growth Centre Strategic Plan for Sligo, which sets out broad development goals and specific regional policy objectives.

It is necessary to incorporate the above changes in designation and population growth targets into the CDP, replacing the previous designation and growth targets. There are further provisions in the NPF and RSES which require modifications to existing development plan policies.

These are material changes, which can only be made after public display and consultation in accordance with the legislative framework set out in the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).

1.2 Legislative requirements

Section 11(1)(b) of the Planning and Development Act indicates the following:

- (i) *where notice of a development plan review to be given, is prior to the making of the relevant regional spatial and economic strategy, then notice of the review shall be deferred until not later than 13 weeks after the relevant regional spatial and economic strategy has been made,*
- (ii) *where a development plan review has commenced and a draft plan has not been submitted to the members of the planning authority, prior to the making of the relevant regional spatial and economic strategy, then the review process shall be suspended until not later than 13 weeks after the making of the relevant regional spatial and economic strategy,*
- (iii) *where notice of a development plan review is more than the period of 26 weeks after the making of the relevant regional spatial and economic strategy, then each planning authority concerned shall, within that period, either —*
 - (I) give notice of a development plan variation in accordance with section 13, or**
 - (II) give notice of a development plan review.**

The relevant Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy was made by the Northern and Western Regional Assembly on 24 January 2020.

Sligo's County Development Plan 2017-2023 was adopted in July 2017. Notice of statutory development plan review is due to be issued four years after its adoption, in July 2021, circa 77 weeks (18 months) after the making of the RSES by the NWRA.

Therefore, paragraph (iii) above is applicable to the Sligo CDP 2017-2023.

Within 26 weeks counting from 24 January 2020 (the date when the RSES was made), i.e. by Thursday, 23 July 2020, Sligo County Council must give notice of CDP variation under Section 13 or review under Section 11.

Having regard to the length of a full CDP review (two years) and the consequent delay in the preparation of a local area plan for the Sligo Regional Growth Centre, the Planning Authority has chosen to carry out a development plan variation in accordance with Section 13 of the Planning and Development Act (see text highlighted in bold type on the previous page).

2. Summary of necessary changes to the CDP

Only five of the thirteen chapters in Volume 1 of the CDP require certain changes. These are:

- Chapter 1. Introduction
- Chapter 3. Core Strategy
- Chapter 4. Economic Development
- Chapter 5. Housing
- Chapter 8. Transport and Mobility

Apart from specific amendments to the above chapters, references to NSS, RPG and Gateway City need to be replaced by references to NPF, RSES and Regional Growth Centre throughout the CDP.

What does not change in the CDP

The updated County population projections are not substantially different from the ones currently stated in the CDP, therefore there is no requirement for additional lands to be zoned in towns and villages outside the Sligo and Environs Area.

This means that the Mini-Plans in Volume 2 of the CDP do not require any modifications.

Any zoning modifications in the Sligo and Environs area will be made as part of the preparation of the Local Area Plan scheduled to recommence as soon as this CDP Variation is adopted by Sligo County Council.

The Settlement Hierarchy, the Housing Strategy and the Retail Strategy for County Sligo do not need to change.

2.1 Main changes to the CDP Introduction (Chapter 1)

The introductory chapter of the CDP includes references to national and regional policies applicable to County Sligo. The changes summarize the main provisions of the NPF and RSES regarding the County and the Regional Growth Centre of Sligo.

2.2 Main changes to the Core Strategy (Chapter 3)

The Core Strategy of the CDP consists of a set of sectoral strategies and specifies population targets and corresponding amounts of land needed to be zoned for residential purposes.

The Core Strategy Map does not change.

The **Settlement Hierarchy** remains largely the same. The subsection focusing on the Gateway is replaced by a summary of the Regional Growth Centre provisions contained in the RSES.

Section **3.3 Rural settlement** includes additional provisions of the NPF, which strengthen the existing rural housing policies without introducing further restrictions.

In Section **3.4 Population and housing land**, population projections for the County and target for Sligo City are updated in accordance with the NPF and RSES. The new population figures are similar to the existing ones, only the timelines for achieving such targets are longer. The corresponding overall amounts of land zoned for housing in the County are adequate and do not need to be revised during the lifetime of the current CDP.

2.3 Main changes to Economic Development (Chapter 4)

While the economic climate has changed radically in the first quarter of 2020, Sligo County Council's approach to economic development, as outlined in **Section 4.1**, remains focused on supporting growth and facilitating the provision of essential infrastructure.

A new initiative is the Atlantic Economic Corridor, which seeks to build on the potential of large urban centres in the West, including Sligo.

It should be noted that there is no change proposed to the Tourism Development section or to the Retail Strategy.

2.4 Main changes to Housing (Chapter 5)

Changes to **Section 5.1 Housing Strategy** include updated population figures, housing land requirements and equivalent housing units, to correspond with the Core Strategy tables A and B in Chapter 3 of the CDP.

The new **Section 5.1.1 Securing compact growth** seeks to implement the National and Regional Policy Objectives targeting the delivery of specific ratios of all new homes within the built-up footprint of settlements, in proportion to the settlement size.

Several additional strategic housing policies are also proposed, in order to support the implementation of the above-mentioned national and regional requirements.

2.5 Main changes to Transport and Mobility (Chapter 8)

Changes to the **Transport and Mobility** chapter consist of updates regarding the timeframe for completing major projects for both national road improvements and urban road infrastructure.

3. Public consultation

The procedure for carrying out a variation of the development plan, including the requirement for public consultation, is set out in Section 13 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).

3.1 Procedure in accordance with the Planning Act

The Draft Variation No. 1 will be subject to public consultation from 27 July to 24 August 2020 (four weeks).

By 21 September 2020, the Council's Chief Executive will submit to the elected members a report on submissions and observations made in relation to the Draft Variation No. 1.

The Members will then have six weeks to consider the Draft Variation and the Chief Executive's report. Following consideration, there are three possible outcomes:

- A.** The Members may, by resolution, make (adopt) the Variation with or without further modifications. In this case, only minor modifications (i.e. not "material") may be made to the Draft Variation before it is adopted.
- B.** The Members may, by resolution, refuse to make the Variation.
- C.** The Members may propose more substantial modifications, which would require a second four-week period of public display and consultation. Such further modifications should not have significant effects on the environment or adversely affect the integrity of any European site (SAC, SPA), and must not increase the amount of land zoned for any purpose or make additions to/deletions from the Record of Protected Structures.

In this case, a second Chief Executive's report on submissions will be prepared and submitted to the elected members for consideration.

In making a variation under Section 13 of the Act, the members of the planning authority shall be restricted to considering the proper planning and sustainable development of the area to which the development plan relates, the statutory obligations of any local authority in the area and any relevant policies or objectives for the time being of the Government or any Minister of the Government.

3.2 Public display of the Draft Variation No. 1

The Draft Variation No. 1 to the Sligo County Development Plan 2017-2023 can be viewed online or downloaded from the Council's website at

<https://www.sligococo.ie/planning/DevelopmentPlans/CurrentPublicConsultations/>

and from the Council's new consultation portal, at consult.sligococo.ie

Anyone who wishes to inspect a printed copy of the Draft Variation No. 1 and associated documents should contact the Planning Office on tel. 071 911 4452 , Monday to Friday, 10:00 to 16:00.

Printed copies of the Draft Variation No. 1 and associated documents may also be ordered for purchase.

Any queries relating to the Draft Variation or to the public consultation process shall be e-mailed to dpu@sligococo.ie. Alternatively, the public can call the Planning Office on tel. 071 911 4452.

3.3 How to make a submission

Written submissions or observations regarding the Draft Variation No. 1 will be made to Sligo County Council between **Monday 27 July** and **Monday, 24 August 2020** in the following ways:

- **Online at consult.sligococo.ie** – strongly recommended method
- **By e-mail** – sending submissions to the Development Planning Unit of Sligo County Council at dpu@sligococo.ie
- **By post** – addressing submissions to:

Ms Janet McNamara, Administrative Officer
Planning Section, Sligo County Council
City Hall, Quay Street, SLIGO, F91 PP44

All submissions posted or e-mailed shall be clearly marked with the text **“Draft Variation No. 1 of Sligo CDP”**. Submissions sent by post and requesting an acknowledgement shall include a full postal address (this will not be published in any form).

All submissions will be made available for public viewing on the Council's consultation portal.
Anonymous submissions will not be taken into consideration.

Submissions will be accepted until **4 pm on Monday, 24 August 2020**. Late submissions will not be taken into consideration.

Part II – Draft Amendments

The following sections of this document set out the Draft Amendments to the five chapters of the Sligo County Development Plan 2017-2023 where modifications are warranted on foot of the NPF and RSES.

Where text needs to be deleted, the respective wording is **shown in red like this**.

New text proposed to be included is **shown in blue like this**.

This document contains only those paragraphs where amendments are necessary, not the whole chapters being amended. Therefore, it is recommended to read this document in conjunction with Volume 1 of the Sligo County Development Plan 2017–2023.

The Draft Amendments document is accompanied by two other reports – the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SAE) Screening Report and the Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening Report.

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) - Screening

Following consultation with prescribed environmental authorities, an SEA Screening Report has been prepared by the Development Planning Unit of Sligo County Council. Its conclusion is that there would be no significant effects on the environment as a result of the proposed Variation.

Appropriate Assessment (AA)

A screening for Appropriate Assessment pursuant to Article 6 of the EU Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC has been carried out by Sligo County Council’s Heritage Officer. The conclusion of this report indicates that the Variation will have no significant effects on any Natura 2000 site.

Draft Amendments to Chapter 1 of the CDP

Draft Amendment No. 1

In the introduction to **Section 1 County Development Plan: Introduction**, delete the text in red and insert the text in blue as follows:

County Development Plan: Introduction

As the blueprint for development in County Sligo, the County Development Plan is the over-arching strategic framework document for sustainable development in spatial, economic, social and environmental terms.

The development plan must offer clear guidance on sustainable development policies and objectives, addressing various issues such as settlement and the creation of sustainable communities, economic development, transport, energy, judicious use of natural resources and adaptation to climate change

Sligo County Development Plan 2017-2023 (CDP) sets out an overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of County Sligo, in accordance with the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).

As a result of the implementation of the Local Government Reform Act 2014 and consequent abolition of Sligo Borough Council, Sligo County Council has extended its jurisdiction over the Sligo and Environs area, for which two development plans were previously prepared jointly by the two planning authorities (in 2004 and in 2010)

The Local Government Reform Act 2014 also established a Municipal District system of local administration. There are three such districts in County Sligo: the Borough District of Sligo, the Municipal District of Sligo-Drumcliff and the Municipal District of Ballymote-Tobercurry.

This Plan builds on the review of the Sligo CDP 2011-2017, taking into account recent changes as well as national, regional and local policy developments.

The CDP presents the Council's outlook for the future development of County Sligo and **its Gateway Sligo City, a designated Regional Growth Centre**, for the period up to 2023, within a long-term perspective.

The Plan provides a spatial planning framework designed to support the economic and social development of the County, as envisioned in the first Sligo Local Economic and Community Plan 2016-2021.

Draft Amendment No. 2

In **Section 1.1 Planning policy**, insert the text in blue as follows:

1.1 Planning policy

A variety of national, regional and local government policy documents have been reviewed in preparing this Development Plan. The policy documents most relevant to the CDP are:

- at national level: the National Spatial Strategy 2002-2020, replaced in 2018 by the National Planning Framework/Project Ireland 2040;
- at regional level: the Border Regional Planning Guidelines 2010-2022, replaced in 2020 by the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Northern and Western Region;
- at local level: the Sligo Local Economic and Community Plan 2016-2022 (LECP) and the Sligo and Environs Development Plan 2010-2016 (SEDP)

Key messages from these documents are outlined below.

Draft Amendment No. 3

In **Section 1.1(1)**, delete the text in red and insert the text in blue as follows:

At **national** level:

1. The NSS, Ireland's first national strategic planning framework, identified Sligo as an urban centre to be developed in an accelerated manner as a Gateway City to drive the overall development of the North-West.

The National Planning Framework, which replaced the NSS, did not retain the Gateway designation for Sligo City, but recognised it as a Regional Centre and highlighted it as being a growth driver to a greater extent than any other towns in the North-West.

The National Policy Objective 2b specifies that the regional role of Sligo "will be identified and supported in the relevant Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy".

This County Development Plan, like its predecessors, promotes growth in the Gateway City of Sligo City while seeking to achieve balanced development in all County areas outside gateway.

The NSS is due to be replaced by a statutory National Planning Framework (NPF) in 2017. It is expected that the NPF will retain the Gateway designations and will continue to promote balanced development of the national territory, taking into account the diverse characteristics of urban and rural areas.

Draft Amendment No. 4

In Section 1.1(2), delete the text in red and insert the text in blue as follows:

At regional level:

2. The Border RPGs 2010 aimed to support the development of the Gateways identified in the NSS within a more detailed framework that included Hubs and other key towns outside the Gateways.

The Guidelines established a broad framework for county development plans to ensure that the development of the Gateways under the NSS moved forward in tandem with a process of strengthening other urban areas and supporting a dynamic rural community.

The RPGs also set minimum population targets and related housing land requirements for counties and major urban centres in the Border Region up to the year 2022. The Core Strategy of this County Development Plan takes full account of the RPG population targets.

The Border Regional Planning Guidelines are due to be replaced in 2017 by a Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy prepared by the Northern and Western Regional Assembly.

The 2020 *Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Northern and Western Region* (RSES) relates to a much larger area than the RPGs for the Border Region, as a result of the 2015 “streamlining” of Regional Assemblies.

The 12-year Strategy “provides a high-level development framework for the Northern and Western Region that supports the implementation of the National Planning Framework (NPF) and the relevant economic policies and objectives of Government”. It is intended to deliver “effective regional development” for the entire region, embracing the development opportunities specific to each sub-region.

The RSES identifies Sligo City as an “urban place of regional scale” and designates it a *Regional Growth Centre*. The Regional Strategy envisages a 40% increase in Sligo City’s population by 2040, equivalent to circa 8,000 additional residents, giving a total of 26,000 people. Intermediate “targets” are set for 2026 (+4,400 persons) and 2031 (+2,200).

The Regional Policy Objective RPO 3.1 indicates the Regional Assembly’s intention to develop urban places of regional scale through compact growth in Metropolitan and Regional Growth Centres, such as Sligo.

The RSES includes a Regional Growth Centre Strategic Plan for Sligo, which sets out broad development goals and specific regional policy objectives.

Draft Amendment No. 5

In Section 1.1(3), delete the text in red and insert the text in blue as follows:

At local level:

3. The first Local Economic and Community Plan for County Sligo was prepared by Sligo County Council and the Local Community Development Committee during 2015 and adopted in January 2016. The LECP sets a vision, goals, objectives and detailed actions designed to mobilise all stakeholders with an interest in a successful future for Sligo.

Generating employment and stimulating economic activity emerged as the highest priority of the LECP, with complementary goals relating to quality of life and a culture of inclusion seeking to reduce poverty and deprivation. Such goals are reflected in relevant chapters of this County Development Plan.

4. The Sligo and Environs Development Plan 2010-2016 represents a detailed development framework to transform Sligo into a Gateway City, as outlined in the NSS. Jointly prepared by Sligo Borough and County Councils, the SEDP was incorporated in 2014 into the CDP 2011-2017, following the merging of Sligo's planning authorities.

The Core Strategy of this County Development Plan reflects the strategic goals of the SEDP and provides for the preparation of a local area plan for Sligo and Environs as a detailed policy document directing the growth of the Gateway Regional Centre.

Draft Amendment No. 6

In Section 1.2.1 Sligo City, delete the text in red and insert the text in blue as follows:

1.2.1 Sligo City

The city of Sligo is the largest centre of population in the North-West, exerting its influence on a hinterland that extends far beyond the County boundaries (Gateway the city's functional area),

Sligo Gateway Regional Growth Centre is one of two Gateways three such Centres designated by the NSS in the Border Region RSES in the Northern and Western Region of Ireland, with the linked cross-border Gateway "North-West city-region" of Letterkenny and Derry located approximately 110 km to the north-east, and the Dundalk Gateway circa 170 km to the east Athlone RGC circa 117 km to the south-east.

As is the case with many of the other designated Gateways RGCs, Sligo serves as an administrative, employment, commercial, health and education centre for a large hinterland.

The Gateway City benefits from the presence of two third-level colleges. The Institute of Technology Sligo offers a diverse range of courses in business, engineering, humanities and science, while St. Angela's College (a constituent college of the NUI Galway) provides courses in nursing, health studies, home economics and education.

With the benefit of improvements in telecommunications, utilities, infrastructure and the availability of well-serviced sites, the Gateway Sligo has been able to establish itself as a high-quality location for business, with several international companies choosing to locate here.

Since the NSS was published in 2002, Sligo's transport links have improved. The Gateway City is served by road and rail-based public transport. There is also a port facility in the City, allowing for the import and export of goods.

Draft Amendment No. 7

In Section 1.2.4 Economic environment, delete the text in red and insert the text in blue as follows:

1.2.4 Economic environment

The Gateway City of Sligo has grown to be a regionally important urban centre, serving as the administrative, commercial, service, health and educational focus for a large hinterland. It has a significant industrial role and also acts as a distribution centre in the North-West.

The County offers a good mix of skills, infrastructure and support services for any company establishing operations here. In 2016 there were 19 multinational companies located in IDA business parks in County Sligo (Finisklin and Ballytivnan in Sligo City, Collooney, Tobercurry and Ballymote). Sligo also has a vibrant cluster of Irish companies.

Sligo City, with a sizeable mass of labour and skills, underpinned by its ease of access and availability of infrastructure and services, has developed as the key location for industry in County Sligo. Tobercurry is the County's second largest employment centre.

The public sector remains the most important employer in County Sligo, with a high concentration in Sligo City. As in other Western counties, private-sector employment tends to be in sectors that are lower-skilled, lower-value-added and more vulnerable to economic fluctuations.

Outside the City and towns, agriculture remains an important part of the local economy, while tourism and other small-scale, rural-based economic activities continue to support a substantial population living in villages and in the countryside.

Draft Amendment No. 8

In Section 1.3.2 Population living in twelve electoral divisions surrounding Sligo Borough, delete the text in red and insert the text in blue as follows:

1.3.2 Population living in twelve electoral divisions surrounding Sligo Borough

In 1991, there were 11,933 persons living in the twelve electoral divisions (EDs) close to or adjoining the Borough area (the three Sligo urban EDs). By 2011, the population of the same area had grown by over 40%, to 16,714 persons. Census 2016 recorded a corresponding figure of 17,020 persons.

This significant population increase outside the main urban area of the County occurred mostly in the Environs of Sligo and in the designated Gateway satellites villages of Ballysadare, Collooney and Strandhill.

Draft Amendment No. 9

In Section 1.3.5 Population trends, delete the text in red and insert the text in blue as follows:

1.3.5 Population trends

The key trends that emerge from a review of Census information are as follows:

- the population of the former Sligo Borough is stagnant, while that of the nearby electoral divisions is rising steadily; most of this growth has occurred in designated Gateway satellites villages;
- the County as a whole has outpaced Sligo and Environs in terms of long-term population growth rate; the main towns had the largest increases;
- the process of population decline has been reversed in most parts of the County; western parts of County Sligo exhibit more persistent patterns of population stability or decline, generally in the mountainous and remote areas.
- the County population in 2016 was almost at the same level as in 2011 (increase of 142 persons or 0.2%), indicating that the natural increase (births minus deaths) during this period was slightly higher than the out-migration caused by the recent economic crisis and associated job losses.

Draft Amendment No. 10

In Section 1.4 Recent trends and implications, delete the text in red and insert the text in blue as follows:

1.4 Recent trends and implications for the County Development Plan

Taking account of recent developments, economic and demographic trends, the main implications for the formulation of a renewed development strategy for County Sligo to 2023 and beyond are as follows:

- County Sligo should strive to retain and increase its population, building on its strategic location, improved infrastructure, quality of life and its natural and cultural heritage attributes. Employment creation, education, training and further investment in infrastructure are essential in retaining and growing the County's population.
- There is a pressing need to focus on the Gateway City Regional Growth Centre of Sligo, by mobilising all national, regional and local agencies which can contribute to the development of compact, accessible, physically attractive and business-friendly city with cohesive communities and a strong cultural identity.
- In the past, County Sligo has benefited from investment in critical enabling infrastructure in the areas of transport, water supply, wastewater treatment and broadband. This process was due to continue with the support of the Gateway Innovation Fund (GIF); in 2007, Sligo Local Authorities submitted an application for the funding of four projects: the Eastern Garavogue Bridge, the enhancement of O'Connell Street, the creation of a Cultural Quarter and the development of a Regional Park at Cleveragh. However, due to economic crisis, the GIF did not materialise.

In Sligo, essential pieces of infrastructure have still not been delivered, despite being at advanced planning stages – e.g. the Eastern Garavogue Bridge and Approach Roads Scheme, Cranmore Regeneration, the Western Distributor Road and the IDA Business Park at Oakfield. It is critical that funding is made available for the provision of such pieces of infrastructure if the Gateway Regional Growth Centre is to develop to achieve its economic and social potential.

- In the future, Sligo's cultural offering must become stronger and more diverse if the County seeks to attract increased visitor numbers and an internationally mobile workforce. By making it a priority in the development plan, the County Council will strive to protect and develop Sligo's distinctive character and identity.
- In the interest of balanced development within County Sligo, it will be necessary to improve the functions and performance of Ballymote, Enniscrone and Tobercurry, while supporting the provision of services in Gateway Satellites and smaller villages;
- Rural areas in Sligo have experienced significant economic and demographic changes. Some areas have stagnated or lost jobs and population. At the same time, there are new opportunities for diversifying the rural economy. The County's natural and cultural heritage give it a recognisable identity and are resources that need to be wisely managed.

Draft Amendments to Chapter 3 of the CDP

Draft Amendment No. 11

In the introductory section to **Chapter 3 Core Strategy**, [insert the text in blue](#) as follows:

3. County Sligo: Core Strategy

Sligo was designated as a Gateway City in 2002, under the National Spatial Strategy (NSS), which aimed to achieve a balanced social, physical and economic development across the state. Within this context, Sligo was recognised as having the potential to build scale and critical mass to drive development in the North-West.

In the absence of substantial investment in critical infrastructure, partly due to the economic crisis, Sligo has not yet achieved its potential in terms of economic development and population growth. Despite the difficulties, Sligo County Council remains determined to drive the development of the City and County towards the vision [originally](#) set out in the NSS.

In July 2014, Sligo County Council, working with Sligo Local Community Development Committee, embarked on an extensive research and consultation process to identify Sligo's key challenges, opportunities and priorities from both a community and economic perspective. The outcome of that process was Sligo's first Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP), which set a vision, goals, objectives and detailed actions designed to mobilise all stakeholders with an interest in a successful future for Sligo.

It is acknowledged that many of the major issues affecting the County's development are contingent on national policy and government funding. The LECP focuses on what can be achieved locally by working together to bring about a higher quality of life and more sustainable economic development in Sligo.

The LECP and the County Development Plan are complementary policy documents, which share the same **vision** (see below) for the County's future.

Overarching Vision

County Sligo will be an enterprising, creative, inclusive and resilient place, which values and celebrates its unique environment, rich culture and heritage, and where the wellbeing of current and future generations is central to everything we do.

Realising this vision involves the promotion of development in the Gateway City of Sligo, the creation of compact, attractive towns and villages, in a green and accessible County, which offers affordable homes, healthcare, educational, cultural and recreational facilities set in a high-quality natural environment where heritage is protected and enhanced.

The 2018 National Planning Framework (NPF) recognises Sligo's potential to serve the North-West as an accessible centre of employment and services, which can be a focal point for investment and have the widest possible regional influence.

The 2020 Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) formally identifies Sligo as a Regional Growth Centre (RGC), capable of leading the development of the surrounding region.

The RSES includes a Strategic Plan for the Sligo RGC, which sets out the vision and the strategic goals and objectives designed to achieve that vision.

Apart from the Sligo RGC Strategic Plan, the RSES contains a range of regional planning objectives (RPOs), of which the most relevant to the future development of County Sligo have been incorporated (as amendments) in the Core Strategy, as well as in Chapters 4 (Economic Development) and 5 (Housing) of this Plan.

All the policies and objectives for development contained in Volume 1 and Volume 2 of this Plan are subject to compliance with the requirements of the Habitats Directive and, where relevant, those of the Birds Directive, EIA directive and relevant national legislation.

Draft Amendment No. 12

In Section 3.1 Core Strategy basics, delete the text in red and insert the text in blue as follows:

3.1 Core Strategy basics

The Planning and Development Act 2010 amended Section 10 of the Principal Planning and Development Act by introducing includes the requirement for a “core strategy which shows that the development objectives in the development plan are consistent, as far as practicable, with national and regional development objectives set out in the National Spatial Strategy and regional planning guidelines/ National Planning Framework and the regional spatial and economic strategy”.

This section contains relevant information to demonstrate consistency with the NSS and RPGs NPF and RSES.

Draft Amendment No. 13

In **Section 3.1.1 Required contents**, delete the text in red and insert the text in blue as follows:

3.1.1 Required contents

The Planning Act indicates that a Core Strategy must set out a medium- to long-term development framework for the County area, expressed in both qualitative and quantitative terms.

The main QUALITATIVE dimension of the Core Strategy is represented by the **settlement hierarchy** with details on **NSS NPF/RSES** designations, settlement roles or functions, and designations of rural areas for sustainable rural housing purposes. A further qualitative dimension is added by the retail hierarchy (refer to Section 3.2 Settlement hierarchy).

The main QUANTITATIVE indicators are the **population allocated to settlements and rural areas**, the corresponding **land zoned for housing** (or a mix of housing and other uses) and the number of **residential units proposed to be built** on zoned lands (refer to Section 3.4 Population and housing lands).

The Core Strategy must provide details of national roads and relevant regional roads, rail routes, areas designated for growth and for which it is intended to prepare local area plans (refer to the Core Strategy Map and to Section 3.5 Local area plans).

The **Core Strategy Map** is a diagram showing the settlement hierarchy, the main roads and rail routes and the designation of rural areas for the purpose of sustainable rural housing – refer to Figure 3.A.

Draft Amendment No. 14

In **Section 3.1.2 Consistency with NSS and RPGs**, delete the text in red and insert the text in blue as follows:

3.1.2 Consistency with **NSS and RPGs** the **NPF and RSES**

A. Consistency with the National Planning Framework

Having identified Sligo as one of four new gateways in 2002, the NSS emphasised the role of balanced development at local level, which must be achieved through the strengthening of the urban settlement structure in parallel with ensuring that the resources of rural areas are developed to offer a viable future to rural dwellers.

The 2018 NPF recognises that Sligo, as a regional centre, “serves a large hinterland that extends beyond County Sligo into surrounding counties, to include parts of Donegal, Leitrim, Mayo and Roscommon, supported in particular by nearby county towns. Sligo’s significance as a centre of employment and services is much greater than its scale in terms of population”.

The NPF indicates that “it will be necessary to prepare a co-ordinated strategy for Sligo at both regional and town level to ensure that the Town can grow sustainably and secure investment as a key regional centre”. This recommendation is reiterated in the National Policy Objective 7, which

provides, inter alia, for the strengthening of Ireland's urban structure, particularly in the Northern and Western Regions, to include the regional centre of Sligo.

Draft Amendment No. 15

In **Section 3.1.2 Consistency with NSS and RPGs**, delete the text in red and insert the text in blue as follows:

B. Consistency with the RSES

The 2010 Border Regional Planning Guidelines (RPGs) proposed a polycentric settlement model, supported by a strong road network. The RPGs recommended the prioritisation of key urban settlements in terms of population and investment growth, while at the same time sustaining and revitalising rural areas.

The 2020 RSES identify twelve "Urban Places of Regional Scale", where growth should be accelerated. Among these, Sligo City is designated as a Regional Growth Centre, with a targeted population growth of at least 40% by 2040 (S. 3.4 Urban places, p. 34 of the RSES).

Regional Policy Objectives RPO 3.2 (b and c), RPO 3.3 and RPO 3.4 specifically support Sligo's population growth, seeking to direct it within existing settlements' built-up footprints and partially on brownfield sites in rural areas.

In accordance with the above concepts, this **Core Strategy** prioritises growth in the **Gateway City of Sligo Regional Growth Centre** and consolidation of the County's main towns, while seeking to support rural areas mainly by strengthening a range of small villages throughout the County.

Draft Amendment No. 16

In Fig 3.A, modify the legend by replacing **Gateway City** with **Regional Growth Centre** and **Gateway Satellites** with **Satellite Villages**.

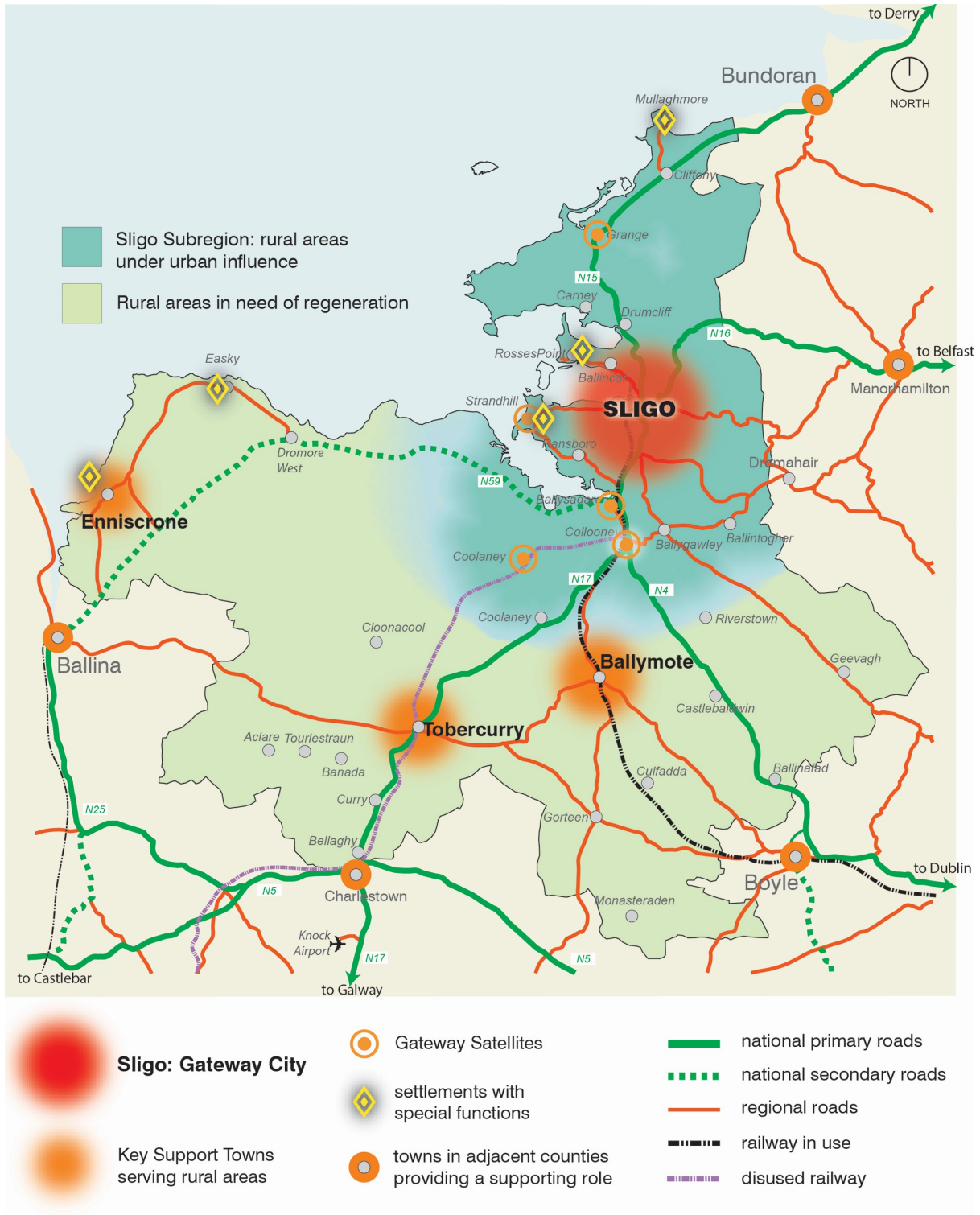


Fig. 3.A County Sligo – Core Strategy Map

Draft Amendment No. 17

In Section 3.1.3 RPG population targets, delete the text in red and insert the text in blue as follows:

3.1.3 RPG population targets and housing land allocations

3.1.3 Initial (RPG) and revised (NPF/RSES) population projections and targets

The 2010 RPGs set out population targets for 2016 and 2022 for both County Sligo and the Sligo and Environs area (as defined by Census). Having estimated a population of 66,430 in 2010, the RPGs indicated that the targets for County Sligo (including the Sligo and Environs area) were 71,851 persons in 2016 and 77,350 persons in 2022.

The specific population targets for Sligo and Environs (Census area) were set at 21,200 (in 2016) and 23,700 (in 2022).

Census 2016 indicates that the County population has remained stationary, with 65,535 persons counted, 142 persons more than in 2011. The demographic stagnation demonstrated by the 2016 Census is reflected in the fact that almost all the greenfield land zoned for housing in 2011 has remained undeveloped.

Following the RPG recommendations, the previous Plan (CDP 2011-2017) allocated greenfield housing land for an additional population of 5,421. The RPG housing land allocations for the period 2011-2017 were 195 ha in the County plus 40 ha in the Sligo and Environs area. Substantial amounts of these lands continue to be available for development.

This Development Plan initially followed the 2010 Border RPG recommendations regarding population by taking into consideration the additional population that the RPGs envisaged for the period 2016-2022, i.e. the difference between the 2022 and the 2016 targets. This figure is was 5,500 persons, who will potentially needed to be accommodated during the life of this Plan (2017-2023).

As the lands previously zoned to accommodate 5,421 new residents have had not been developed, it is was considered that the same lands would have been able to accommodate 5,500 persons.

For the period of the current Plan (2017-2023), the housing land allocations were determined based on the RPG population targets for 2022. These allocations are detailed in Section 3.4 Population and housing land of this Plan.

The CDP 2017-2023 may have to be varied (amended) following the replacement of the NSS with a National Planning Framework (NPF) and the subsequent preparation of Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSES). It is likely that the RSES for the Northern and Western Regions, applicable to County Sligo, will set revised population targets with corresponding housing land allocations.

The 2018 National Planning Framework provides a transitional set of population projections to inform city and county development plans for the periods to 2026 and 2031. These projections are described as “mid-way” between what is currently being planned for in development plans, and the “more likely evidence-based and nationally coherent projected scenario to 2031 and 2040”. For County Sligo, this means that NPF-projected future population is lower than what was previously envisaged in the Border Regional Planning Guidelines. Given the lack of growth observed in recent years, the revised NPF projections appear to be more realistic.

The 2020 Regional Strategy seeks to allocate a portion of the nationally-projected county population to the major urban centres in the Northern and Western Region, i.e. Galway City and the Regional Growth Centres of Athlone, Letterkenny and Sligo. These allocations are presented as targets for the years 2026, 2031 and 2040. The NPF projections and RSES targets are detailed in Sections 3.1.4 and 3.1.5 below.

Draft Amendment No. 18

Insert a new **Section 3.1.4** as follows:

3.1.4 NPF (Implementation Roadmap) population projections

The NPF Implementation Roadmap includes the following population projections for County Sligo:

	Pop. 2016 (census)	Pop. 2026 (projected)	Pop. 2031 (projected)
State	4,761,865	5,399,256	5,683,670
NWRA	847,442	942,500–986,500	961,500
North-West (Sligo, Leitrim, Donegal)	265,000	280 – 284,500	289,500 – 296,000
Donegal	159,000	173,500 – 176,500	179,500 – 183,500
County Sligo	65,500	71,500–72,500	74,000–75,500
Leitrim	32,000	35,000 – 35,500	36,000 – 37,000

The Roadmap specifies that “The published NPF/NDP national average baseline population projection accounts for a 25% ‘headroom’ allowance for additional population growth in every County pro-rata, for each Census year and related intercensal period”.

The document also notes that “planning authorities have generally made provision for 50% more zoned land than is required to meet demand during the six-year lifetime of a Development Plan i.e. sufficient land for a further three years.”

This means that “there is limited further requirement for ‘headroom’ for population growth to be incorporated into statutory Development Plans in most cases.”

At the same time, up to 25% headroom “can be considered to 2026 in counties where population is projected to be at or above the national average baseline”. The Roadmap includes County Sligo in this category.

Draft Amendment No. 19

Insert a new **Section 3.1.5** as follows:

3.1.5 RSES population targets

The RSES sets population targets for Sligo Regional Growth Centre while also indicating the “minimum uplifts” to 2040 and to the same intermediate years as the NPF Implementation Roadmap:

	2016 Census population	Minimum increase to 2040 (%)	“uplift” to 2040 (persons)	Minimum “uplift” to 2026	Minimum “uplift” to 2031	Target population in 2031
Galway City	79,900	50-55%	42,000	23,000	12,000	115,000
Athlone RGC	21,300	40%	8,700	4,800	2,400	28,500
Letterkenny RGC	19,300	40%	8,000	4,400	2,200	26,000
Sligo RGC	19,200	40%	8,000	4,400	2,200	26,000

Draft Amendment No. 20

In **Section 3.2 Settlement hierarchy**, **delete the text in red** and **insert the text in blue** as follows:

3.2 Settlement hierarchy

The distribution of future population growth into settlements is based on the settlements’ role and position in the spatial hierarchy. County Sligo’s settlement hierarchy is as follows:

Gateway City Regional Growth Centre: Sligo and Environs

Gateway Satellites Villages: Ballysadare, Collooney, Coolaney, Grange, Strandhill

Key Support Towns: Ballymote, Tobercurry, Enniscrone

Villages sustaining rural communities: Aclare, Ballinacarrow, Ballinafad, Ballincar, Ballintogher, Ballygawley, Banada, Bellaghy, Bunnanadden, Carney, Castlebaldwin, Cliffony, Cloonacool, Culfadda, Curry, Dromore West, Drumcliff, Easky, Geevagh, Gorteen, Monasteraden, Mullaghmore, Ransboro, Rathcormack, Riverstown, Tourlestrane, Rosses Point.

In parallel with their position in the settlement hierarchy, Strandhill, Rosses Point, Mullaghmore, Enniscrone, Easky and Coolaney and have a regionally-significant **special tourism function**.

The settlement hierarchy is shown in **Fig. 3.A County Sligo – Core Strategy Map** (see page 17).

Draft Amendment No. 21

In Section 3.2.1 Gateway focus, delete the text in red and insert the text in blue and new Fig. 3.B as follows:

3.2.1 Gateway focus

At the core of the Settlement Hierarchy is the development of **Sligo Gateway** as envisaged by the National Spatial Strategy, i.e. a nationally significant urban centre, whose location and scale support the desired critical mass necessary to sustain strong levels of economic growth and prosperity in the North-West, and reinforce its links with Gateways and Hubs in neighbouring counties.

Sligo City, as intended for the purposes of the RPG allocations, is equivalent to Sligo and Environs as per Census boundaries, i.e. the three Electoral Divisions of Sligo North, Sligo East and Sligo West plus the urban extensions outside these EDs.

The Gateway area is defined in this County Development Plan as Sligo City together with the surrounding area consisting of twelve Electoral Divisions in the city's proximity (Ballintogher East; Ballintogher West; Ballysadare East; Calry; Carney; Collooney; Drumcliff East; Drumcliff West; Glencar; Kilmacowen; Knockaree; Lissadill East – refer to Fig. 1.C in Chapter 1). The Gateway area includes the satellite villages of Strandhill, Collooney, Ballysadare and the smaller villages of Ballinacra, Ballintogher, Ballygawley, Carney and Rosses Point.

This definition reflects the likely extent of the area with the highest proportion of residents commuting daily to Sligo for work, education or shopping.

The population of the twelve EDs increased by over 42% between 1991 and 2016, from 11,933 to 17,020 persons. The population of the three urban EDs (former Sligo Borough) increased by just 1.5% over the same period, from 17,302 to 17,658 persons. The 2016 Census figure was slightly lower, at 17,439 persons. It is evident that the most significant population growth is taking place outside the County's main urban centre, especially in villages and rural areas and much less in the urban Environs of Sligo.

This Gateway definition has been chosen in this Plan for the purpose of monitoring population change on the basis of ED-level data collected by successive Censuses.

3.2.1 Focus on Sligo Regional Growth Centre

At the core of the Settlement Hierarchy is the development of Sligo Regional Growth Centre (RGC) as recommended by the NPF and supported by the RSES.

The Sligo RGC Strategic Plan (Section 3.7 of the RSES) covers Sligo and Environs together with surrounding rural areas. The Strategic Plan area has a population of 28,465 people of which 68% (19,413 persons) reside in Sligo and Environs, the "principal urban area" (PUA).

The boundaries of the Sligo RGCSP are based on the CSO's Small Areas, which were selected to include all major employers and educational institutions in the vicinity of Sligo City, together with its closest satellite villages of Ballysadare, Strandhill and Rosses Point (see Fig. 3.B).

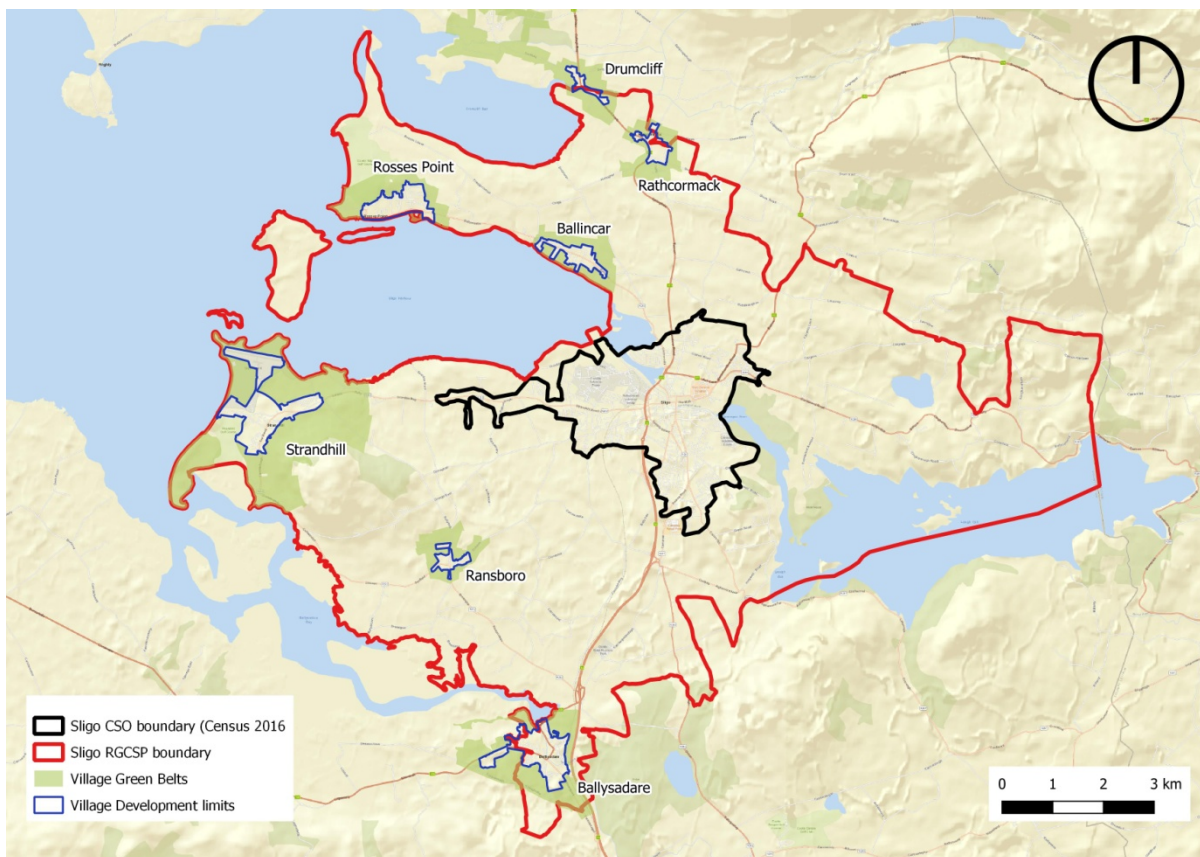


Fig. 3.B Extent of the area covered by the “Regional Growth Centre” designation
(source: NWRA RSES, as updated in May 2020)

Recognising that Sligo has the vision and capacity to be a Regional Growth Centre of scale, the Strategic Plan contains **twenty regional policy objectives (RPOs)** grouped under three strategic goals identified as “Compact Growth”, “Enterprising Sligo” and “Liveable Sligo”.

The Strategic Plan indicates the means to achieve the goals and RPOs, highlights strategic growth areas, regeneration sites and infrastructure, and lists key projects to be delivered over the life of the RSES. The Sligo RGC Strategic Plan will inform the preparation of the Sligo and Environs Local Area Plan.

Draft Amendment No. 22

In **Section 3.2.2 Managed growth in the Sligo Subregion**, ~~delete the text in red~~ and **insert the text in blue** as follows:

3.2.2 Managed growth in the Sligo Subregion

In order to support the development of Sligo **City Regional Growth Centre**, it is essential to control growth ~~not just in the Gateway area but also~~ in the wider Sligo Subregion. This hinterland of the City largely coincides with what the NSS **originally** described as a ‘rural area under strong urban influence’ (refer to Section 3.3 Rural settlement).

The Subregion contains thirteen villages, of which five are designated **Gateway Satellites Villages**.

Development in the Subregion needs to be strictly managed and directed into Sligo City, Gateway its satellites and into smaller villages with adequate infrastructure, preserving the rural areas mainly for agriculture and selected tourism and recreation uses.

Draft Amendment No. 23

In Section 3.2.7 Integration of transport and urban settlement, delete the text in red and insert the text in blue as follows:

3.2.7 Integration of transport and urban settlement

National primary and secondary roads, as well as strategic non-national roads, reinforce the County's transport network, connect the Gateway City Regional Growth Centre with other important urban centres and link it with its satellites and the Key Support Towns.

The consolidation of Tobercurry and Ballymote would support an enhanced provision of public transport and would also increase the potential for a rural commuter rail service along the Dublin-Sligo line and, if feasible at some stage in the future, along the Western Rail Corridor.

Draft Amendment No. 24

In Section 3.3 Rural settlement, delete the text in red and insert the text in blue as follows:

3.3 Rural settlement

Throughout County Sligo, people live and work outside of villages and towns in a dispersed settlement pattern. In the past, these areas have been largely dependent on farming, but with the decline of agricultural activities and associated population, there is a need to sustain these rural communities through other means.

Government policy on rural housing is was set out in the National Spatial Strategy (2002) and the document *Sustainable Rural Housing – Guidelines for Planning Authorities* (DOEHLG, April 2005). The rural settlement policy framework contained in the NSS aimed to sustain and renew established rural communities, while strengthening the structure of smaller settlements to support local economies.

Introducing a “new strategy for managing growth”, the 2018 National Planning Framework places a major emphasis on renewing and developing existing settlements, as opposed to the continuation of sprawl into the countryside to the detriment of towns and villages (S. 1.2, p. 11 of the NPF).

In relation to “Ireland's rural fabric”, the NPF recommends the implementation of “properly planned, local authority-led approach to identifying, meeting and managing the real housing needs arising in countryside areas” (S. 2.2, p. 22 of the NPF).

National Policy Objective 15 seeks to “Support the sustainable development of rural areas by encouraging growth and arresting decline in areas that have experienced low population growth or decline in recent decades and by managing the growth of areas that are under strong urban influence to avoid over-development, while sustaining vibrant rural communities.” (Section 5.3 Planning for the future growth and development of rural areas, p. 71 of the NPF).

The RSES acknowledges that the management of rural area is challenging “in that some areas have a declining and ageing population whilst others are experiencing urban generated pressure from the demand for houses within the commuter zone of our cities, regional centres and their support towns”.

The Council remains committed to Sligo’s **Gateway Regional Growth Centre** status and will support the growth of Sligo City by defusing the pressure for additional housing in rural areas close to Sligo and Environs. At the same time, the Council acknowledges that it is necessary to accommodate those applicants with a genuine **rural-generated housing need**, which must be demonstrated at planning application stage.

In formulating policy on rural housing, the Council has considered the intrinsic characteristics of rural areas and their location in relation to Sligo City. Applicants with a demonstrable rural housing need will be accommodated subject to the policies set out in **Section 5.3 Housing in rural areas**.

Draft Amendment No. 25

In **Section 3.3.1 Types of rural area**, **delete the text in red** and **insert the text in blue** as follows:

3.3.1 Types of rural areas

The NSS identified **four** different types of rural area and called **for** different policy responses for each. The broad different types of rural area are:

- rural areas under strong urban influences;
- stronger rural areas;
- structurally weak areas;
- areas with predominantly dispersed settlement patterns.

The 2005 County Development Plan was the first to identify two main types of rural area in County Sligo: **rural areas under urban influence** and **rural areas in need of regeneration** (i.e. structurally weak). Having analysed Census data and planning applications for rural housing in recent years, the Planning Authority determined that the trends have remained largely constant in terms of population rise or decline and demand for one-off housing in both types of rural areas in county Sligo.

The 2018 National Planning Framework emphasises the difference between, on the one hand, rural areas located within the commuter catchment of cities and larger towns and, on the other hand, rural areas outside these catchments.

The NPF clearly states that “It will continue to be necessary to demonstrate a functional economic or social requirement for housing need in areas under urban influence, i.e. the commuter catchment of cities and large towns and centres of employment. This will also be subject to siting and design considerations” (S. 5.3 Planning for the future growth and development of rural areas, p. 74 of the NPF).

The relevant objective is NPO 19, which requires the following:

National Policy Objective 19

Ensure, in providing for the development of rural housing, that a distinction is made between areas under urban influence, i.e. within the commuter catchment of cities and large towns and centres of employment, and elsewhere:

- In rural areas under urban influence, facilitate the provision of single housing in the countryside based on the core consideration of demonstrable economic or social need to live in a rural area and siting and design criteria for rural housing in statutory guidelines and plans, having regard to the viability of smaller towns and rural settlements;
- In rural areas elsewhere, facilitate the provision of single housing in the countryside based on siting and design criteria for rural housing in statutory guidelines and plans, having regard to the viability of smaller towns and rural settlements.

The Regional Strategy reiterates the NPF distinction between rural areas under urban influence and rural areas elsewhere, reaffirming the need to provide single rural houses “for those that have a demonstrable economic or social need to live in the area, subject to all other proper planning and sustainable development considerations”.

This County Development Plan retains the same rural area designations as set out in previous plans (2005 and 2011), which remain consistent with national and regional policy as set out in the NPF and RSES.

Rural Areas under Urban Influence

According to The NSS originally defined these are as areas located in the proximity of large urban centres or of major transport routes leading to such centres. In such areas, there is evidence of high demand for one-off housing development and of pressure on the local road network.

The NPF seeks to protect areas that are under strong urban influence from unsustainable over-development (S. 5.3, p. 71 of the NPF).

Sligo City is the dominant urban centre in County Sligo. The City Sligo’s influence extends northwards and eastwards to the County Leitrim boundary (and beyond), southwards and westwards for circa 15-18 km. The challenge here is to direct new housing development into the Gateway Sligo City and surrounding villages, while accommodating those with a genuine need to live in a rural location. The extent of the **Rural area under urban influence** is shown on **Fig. 3.A Core Strategy Map** (see page 17).

Rural Areas in Need of Regeneration

These areas have a weaker economy and fewer settlements. Historically, they experienced persistent or significant population decline. In these areas, the challenge is to retain population and support the rural economy while seeking to consolidate existing settlements.

The NPF supports the sustainable development of rural areas by encouraging growth and arresting decline in areas that have experienced low population growth or decline in recent decades (NPO 15, p. 71 of the NPF).

The areas in the west and south of County Sligo are considered to be structurally weak and in need of regeneration. Their extent is shown on **Fig. 3.A County Sligo – Core Strategy Map** (see page 17).

Draft Amendment No. 26

In the set of Strategic Settlement Policies, modify the Urban and rural settlement policies SP-S-1 and SP-S-4 by deleting the text in red and inserting the text in blue as follows:

Strategic settlement policies

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

Urban and rural settlement

SP-S-1 Pursue the further development of Sligo as a Gateway City Regional Growth Centre and economic driver for the North-West region.

.....

SP-S-4 Strengthen existing rural communities by facilitating sustainable rural settlement in accordance with the National Spatial Strategy and the Sustainable Rural Housing – Guidelines for Planning Authorities (DoEHLG, April 2005) National Planning Framework and the National Policy Objective 19, which requires that a distinction is made between areas under urban influence, i.e. within the commuter catchment of cities and large towns and centres of employment, and elsewhere:

A. In rural areas under urban influence, facilitate the provision of single housing in the countryside based on the core consideration of demonstrable economic or social need to live in a rural area and siting and design criteria for rural housing in statutory guidelines and plans, having regard to the viability of smaller towns and rural settlements;

B. In rural areas elsewhere, facilitate the provision of single housing in the countryside based on siting and design criteria for rural housing in statutory guidelines and plans, having regard to the viability of smaller towns and rural settlements.

.....

Draft Amendment No. 27

In Section 3.4 Population and housing land, delete the text in red and insert the text in blue as follows:

3.4 Population and housing land

According to Census data, the total population of County Sligo in 2016 was 65,535, of which 19,199 persons lived in Sligo and Environs.

As indicated in Section 3.1.3 (RPG population targets Initial and revised population projections and targets), this Development Plan follows the 2010 Border RPGs recommendations regarding population targets by taking into consideration the **additional population (additional to the base year 2016)** envisaged by the RPGs for the period 2016-2022 has been amended to take account of the revised County population projections contained in the 2018 NPF and of the revised population targets for Sligo City, as set out in the 2020 RSES.

Housing land requirements for the lifetime of the plan are calculated accordingly.

Draft Amendment No. 28

In Section 3.4.1 Population considerations, delete the text in red and insert the text in blue as follows:

3.4.1 Population considerations

According to Census data, the total population of County Sligo in 2011 was 65,393, of which 19,452 persons lived in Sligo and Environs. Census 2016 counted 65,535 persons.

The RPGs specified population targets for Sligo and Environs (Census area) of 21,200 (in 2016) and 23,700 (in 2022). The remaining County population target was set at 50,651 (in 2016) and 53,650 (in 2022).

The economic downturn of 2008-2014 has encouraged out-migration. Due to this, the County's 2016 population has remained at the same level as in 2011, significantly lower than the RPG target of 71,851 (whole county population). The population of Sligo and Environs area has decreased slightly.

For the purposes of aligning the Core Strategy with the Border Regional Planning Guidelines, the RPG population targets for Sligo City and remaining County area taken to be the additional population envisaged to locate in the Gateway and County between 2016 and 2022. This would mean a **2,500-person increase in Sligo City** and an additional population of **circa 3,000 in the remaining County areas** between 2016 and 2022.

Entire County area

Over the eleven-year period between 2016 and 2026, the County's population is projected to grow by up to 7,000 persons, or 636 persons per year on average. The corresponding population increase over the eight years from 2016 to 2023 would be circa 5,088, resulting in a County population of **70,588 persons** by the end of this Plan's lifetime.

Adding the 25% headroom to the 5,088 projected population increase would result in a potential growth of **6,360**, leading to a 2023 County population of **71,860 persons**.

Sligo and Environs area

According to the RSES, over the eleven-year period between 2016 and 2026, Sligo City's population is projected to grow by up to 4,400 persons, or 400 persons per year on average. The corresponding population increase over the eight years from 2016 to 2023 would be circa 3,200, for a total of 22,400 persons.

Draft Amendment No. 29

In Section 3.4.1 Population considerations, replace the text in Table 3.1 (text in red to be deleted) and insert the text in blue as follows:

**Table 3.1 Summary of past and envisaged population distribution in County Sligo:
Census 2002, 2006, 2011, 2016 and allocations for 2023**

Settlement category or area	Pop. 2002	Pop. 2006	Pop. 2011	Pop. 2016	RPG target 2016 or pop. level recommended in CDP 2011-2017	RPG target 2022 or recommended pop. level by 2023
Sligo and Environs (Census boundary)*	19,735	19,402	19,452	19,199	21,200 (RPG), i.e. 2,000 more than in 2010	23,700 (RPG), i.e. 2,500 more than RPG target for 2016
Key Support Towns (combined)	2,820	3,479	4,509	4,691	4,700	5,100
Ballymote	981	1,229	1,539	1,549	1,700	1,900
Enniscrone	668	829	1,223	1,156	1,200	1,450
Tobercurry	1,171	1,421	1,747	1,986	1,800	2,000
Villages	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	12,450	14,300
Rural areas	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	33,501	34,000
County total	58,200	60,894	65,393	65,535	71,851 (RPG), i.e. 5,421 more than in 2010	77,350 (RPG), i.e. 5,500 more than RPG target for 2016

* As the Sligo and Environs boundary has changed in Census 2016, direct comparison is not possible.

Table 3.1 Summary of past and envisaged population distribution in County Sligo: Census 2002, 2006, 2011, 2016 and allocations for 2023, based on NPF and RSES

Settlement category or area	Pop. 2002	Pop. 2006	Pop. 2011	Pop. 2016	RPG target 2022 or initially recommended pop. level by 2023	RSES target or NPF projection or revised recommended pop. level by 2023
Sligo and Environs (Census boundary)*	19,735	19,402	19,452	19,199	23,700 (RPG), i.e. 2,500 more than RPG target for 2016	22,400 (RSES target)
Key Support Towns (combined)	2,820	3,479	4,509	4,691	5,100	5,100
Ballymote	981	1,229	1,539	1,549	1,900	1,900
Enniscrone	668	829	1,223	1,156	1,450	1,450
Tobercurry	1,171	1,421	1,747	1,986	2,000	2,000
Villages	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	14,300	14,300
Rural areas	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	34,000	30,060
County total	58,200	60,894	65,393	65,535	77,350 (RPG), i.e. 5,500 more than RPG target for 2016	71,860 (NPF projection with added 25% headroom**)

* As the Sligo and Environs boundary has changed in Census 2016, direct comparison is not possible.

** Refer to Section 3.1.4 which explains the additional 25% headroom.

Draft Amendment No. 30

In Section 3.4.2 Housing land availability in 2016, delete the text in red and insert the text in blue as follows:

3.4.2 Housing land availability in 2016

Sligo and Environs

In Sligo and Environs, the SEDP (2010), as amended in 2011, zoned approximately 28.6 ha for housing and a further 16 ha for mixed uses, including housing. Due to the economic crisis, no private multi-unit housing development and no mixed-use development including housing have been were built in Sligo City since between 2010 and 2016.

Apart from the provision of social housing by Sligo County Council (i.e. Fr. O’Flanagan Terrace – 22 units, Harbour View – 14 units, Knappagh Road – 28 units), residential development after 2010 has been sporadic, on infill sites, mainly involving single houses.

As a result, the areas zoned for residential development or mixed uses including housing have not been used. **The only form of residential development during 2010-2016 has been sporadic, on infill sites, involving single houses.**

Draft Amendment No. 31

In Section 3.4.3 Approach to housing land allocation, **delete the text in red** and **insert the text in blue** as follows:

3.4.3 Approach to housing land allocation 2017 to 2023

Given that most lands zoned for housing have remained unused both in Sligo City and in the County’s towns and villages, it is assumed that any population increase in County Sligo since 2011 has occurred mostly in rural areas, on unzoned land or in settlement green belts (areas previously designated as “buffer zones”).

In order to promote growth in the **Gateway City Regional Growth Centre**, in accordance with the **NSS and RPGs NPF and RSES**, a dual approach is proposed:

- **Sligo and Environs area** – expand the options for residential development by offering a wider choice of location on additional sites.
- **remaining County area** – generally retain the total amount of residential zoning as allocated in the CDP 2011-2017.

Draft Amendment No. 32

In Section 3.4.4 Sligo and Environs area, **delete the text in red** and **insert the text in blue** as follows:

3.4.4 Sligo and Environs area

For Sligo and Environs, the RPGs recommended that 40 ha of greenfield land be zoned for residential uses, to cater for 2,000 additional persons between 2010 and 2016 with a corresponding requirement of 1,000 residential units. The RPGs recommendations were based on an average density of 35 units per hectare in Sligo and Environs, on an average household size of 2 persons, and incorporated 50% over-zoning in accordance with DEHLG’s Development Plan Guidelines. Having regard to these parameters, the recommended area should have been 43 ha, as noted in the Variation No. 2 “Core Strategy” of the SEDP (Table 5.I on p. 3 of that document).

The RPG recommendation translated into the retention of 68 ha of land zoned for residential and mixed use, of which a net area of 28.6 ha had residential potential. Over 514 ha of land with residential potential were placed in the Strategic Reserve.

The spatial distribution and ownership of zoned residential land in the SEDP area, combined with a shortage of financing, have not been conducive to development, despite a sustained demand for new houses in the Sligo City area. With the economy recovering, there are indications that house-building activity could restart in Sligo and Environs if there were more choices in terms of location. This could be achieved by releasing housing land from the Strategic Reserve.

When calculating housing land allocations for the period 2017-2023, it **is was** considered appropriate to apply the same parameters (residential density and household size) as those used in the RPGs for the period 2010-2016.

Applying the average household size of 2 persons, an average residential density of 35 units per hectare and an over-zoning coefficient of 50%, for an additional population of 2,500 (RPG target), the corresponding housing land would amount to **circa 53 ha to be zoned in the forthcoming Sligo and Environs Local Area Plan for residential and mixed uses by releasing sites from the Strategic Reserve.**

Should the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (due to replace the RPGs) make different recommendations, the amount of land to be zoned for housing and mixed uses in Sligo and Environs will be revised accordingly.

Housing land requirements in the forthcoming Sligo and Environs LAP 2021

According to the RSES, over the eleven-year period between 2016 and 2026, Sligo City's population is projected to grow by up to 4,400 persons, or 400 persons per year on average. The corresponding population increase over the eight years from 2016 to 2023 would be circa 3,200.

However, the forthcoming Sligo and Environs Local Area Plan, due to be adopted in 2021, should ensure that sufficient housing land will be available to cater for population growth over a 10-year period¹, i.e. up to 2031, in line with the Regional Strategy.

According to the RSES, the targeted additional population from 2016 to 2031 is **6,600 persons**.

Regional policy objective RPO 3.2(b) specifies that in Regional Growth Centres such as Sligo, at least 40% of all new housing should be delivered within the existing built-up footprint.

This provision could be interpreted as a requirement to accommodate 40% of the additional population (2,640 persons) within the existing built-up area of Sligo and Environs, in housing units built on infill and brownfield sites (i.e. within the CSO-defined Census boundary).

The remaining 60% of the 6,600 population increase targeted by 2031, i.e. 3,960 persons, could be accommodated on greenfield lands.

Considering an average household size (for newly-formed households) of 2 persons and a residential density of circa 35 units per hectare, a minimum of 56 ha of greenfield lands would be required to house the additional 3,960 persons mentioned above on greenfield lands outside the current CSO boundary.

If brownfield and infill sites cannot be developed fast enough, or if their capacity proves insufficient to cater for 40% of the target population (2,640 out of 6,600 persons), it may be necessary to release additional land from the current Strategic Land Reserve (SLR).

¹ In accordance with S.18 (4) of the Planning and Development Act, a local area plan must indicate the period for which the plan is to remain in force. A LAP may remain in force notwithstanding the variation or review of the development plan affecting the area of the LAP, if there are no conflicting provisions. If a LAP which indicates that it will remain operational for ten years, the elected members must consider whether this is appropriate not more than five years after its adoption. The procedure is detailed in S.19(1)(d-f) of the Planning and Development Act.

The maximum amount of land required to house 6,600 persons would be circa 92 hectares (considering a household size of 2 persons and an average residential density of 35 units per hectare).

The precise amounts of greenfield lands to be zoned for housing and mixed uses in the forthcoming Sligo and Environs Local Area Plan shall be determined as part of the preparation of the LAP, in consultation with all stakeholders, taking into consideration the availability of infill/brownfield sites, essential infrastructure and the potential for servicing lands during the life of the LAP.

Draft Amendment No. 33

In Section 3.4.5 Remaining County area, delete the text in red and insert the text in blue as follows:

3.4.5 Remaining County area

For the remaining County area, the RPGs recommended the zoning of 195 ha of greenfield land for housing, to provide 1,555 new housing units for a population increase of 3,421 between 2010 and 2016. The average household size considered was 2.2 persons and the average residential density was 12 units per hectare.

Due to the fact that no new housing scheme has been was built since between 2011 and 2016, the amount of land zoned for residential uses in mini-plans and local area plans has decreased only slightly (due to small infill developments).

In the beginning of 2016, there were approximately 58 hectares of greenfield land allocated for residential uses in the County's towns (draft and adopted LAPs) and circa 125 hectares zoned for housing in the villages (mini-plans).

Considering an average household size of 2.2 persons and an average density of 12 dwellings per hectare, the total amount of 183 hectares was capable of accommodating 4,831 persons in 2,196 housing units, or - if the 50% overzoning is taken into account - 3,220 persons in 1,464 new dwellings. These figures do not include the residential potential of lands zoned for mixed uses.

Having regard to the above, it was considered unnecessary to zone additional land for housing in the current Plan for the period 2017-2023. Several sites have in fact been rezoned due to various reasons, including poor access, peripheral location, potential flood risk and proximity to designated nature conservation sites.

The quantum of land zoned for residential development in the County's towns and villages for the period 2017-2023, outside the Sligo and Environs area, is circa 169 ha, as shown in the Core Strategy Table B (on the following pages).

Housing land requirement based on NPF-revised population projections

Over the eleven-year period between 2016 and 2026, the County's population is projected to grow by up to 7,000 persons, or 636 persons per year on average. The corresponding population increase over the eight years from 2016 to 2023 would be circa 5,088, resulting in a County population of **70,588 persons** by the end of this Plan's lifetime.

Adding the 25% headroom to the 5,088 projected population increase would result in a potential growth of **6,360**, resulting in a 2023 County population of **71,860 persons** (refer to Section 3.1.4 above, which explains the additional 25% headroom).

Approximately 3,200 persons of the additional 6,360 would be housed in the Sligo and Environs area by 2023 (see Section 3.4.4 above), with the remaining population (3,160) to be accommodated in the County area outside Sligo City.

Considering an average household size (for newly-formed households) of 2.2 persons and a residential density of circa 12 units per hectare, **a minimum of 120 hectares of greenfield land** would be required to accommodate the 3,160 persons mentioned above.

The 2017 Plan retained 169 ha of the overall amount of lands zoned for housing under the 2011 Plan.

Given the short remaining lifetime of this Development Plan (three years, to 2023), the amount of land currently zoned for housing (169 ha) is more than sufficient to cater for the projected population increase.

The major challenge for the County's towns and villages will be to offer better services and quality of life, in order to attract families which would otherwise choose to build in the countryside.

The Core Strategy Tables A and B show the amount of land allocated to residential uses in **the Gateway Sligo and Environs** and **in** the rest of the County for the period **2017- up to 2023**, together with its housing potential and the number of additional residents that can be accommodated in Sligo City, Key Support Towns and the smaller villages.

It is noted that both **RPG NPF and RSES** targets for additional population, i.e. **2,500 3,200** in Sligo City and **3,000 3,160** in the County towns and villages, can be accommodated by 2023 without **major any** changes to the residential and mixed-use zoning already in place.

Draft Amendment No. 34

At the end of **Section 3.4 Population and housing land**, replace the title and text of the **Core Strategy Table A** (text in red to be deleted) and insert the text in blue as follows:

Core Strategy Table A. Allocated residential zoning, corresponding housing capacity and potential additional population in Sligo City (future LAP)

Gateway City	Undeveloped residential land 2016 (hectares)	Residential zoning allocated to future LAP (including 50% overzoning)	Potential number of dwellings (average density 35 units /ha)	Potential additional population (average household size of 2 persons)	Potential additional population if the 50% overzoning is not taken into account
Sligo and Environs	44 ha*	53 ha**	1,855 units	3,710 persons	2,473 persons

* The existing area includes the residential potential of mixed-use zoned lands

** The allocated area DOES NOT include the residential potential of mixed-use zoned lands

Core Strategy Table A. Allocated residential zoning and corresponding housing capacity needed to accommodate additional population in Sligo and Environs (future LAP) in accordance with RSES targets

Regional Growth Centre	Undeveloped residential land 2016 (hectares)	Residential zoning required for a population increase of 3,200 by 2023	Residential zoning required for a population increase of 6,600 by 2031	Additional number of dwellings by 2023 (average household size of 2 persons)	Additional number of dwellings by 2031 (average household size of 2 persons)
Sligo and Environs	44 ha*	46 ha**	94 ha**	1,600 units	3,300 units

* The existing area includes the residential potential of mixed-use zoned lands

** The allocated area DOES NOT include the residential potential of mixed-use zoned lands. It is calculated using an average housing density of 35 units per hectare and a household size of 2 persons.

Draft Amendment No. 35

At the end of **Section 3.4 Population and housing land**, in the **Core Strategy Table B**, **delete the text in red** and **insert the text in blue** as follows:

Core Strategy Table B. Proposed residential zoning, corresponding housing capacity and potential additional population in Sligo County, excluding the Gateway the Sligo and Environs area

Settlement	Undeveloped residential land 2016 (hectares)	Residential zoning specified in the CDP 2017-2023 (including 50% overzoning)	Potential number of dwellings (average density 12 units /ha)	Potential additional population (average household size of 2.2 persons)	Potential additional population if the 50% overzoning is not taken into account
Key Support Town Ballymote	21.1 ha	21.1 ha	253 units	558 persons	372 persons
Key Support Town Enniscrone	14.1 ha	14.1 ha	169 units	372 persons	248 persons
Key Support Town Tobercurry	n/a *	19.5 ha	234 units	515 persons	343 persons
32 Villages	125 ha	114 ha	1,368 units	3,010 persons	1,987 persons
Total County excluding S&E Gateway City	160.2 ha**	168.7 ha	2,024 units	4,455 persons	2,950 persons

* The Draft LAP prepared in 2015 for Tobercurry zoned 19.5 hectares for multi-unit residential development

** The total zoned area DOES NOT include the allocation for Tobercurry, as the LAP was not adopted.

Draft Amendment No. 36

In Section 3.5 Local area plans, delete the text in red and insert the text in blue as follows:

3.5 Local area plans

In accordance with section 10(2) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), this County Development Plan zones land for various uses within the framework of 32 village mini-plans (refer to volume 2).

The zoning of land in the Gateway City of Sligo and Environs area and in the Key Support Towns will be set out as part of the preparation of review of local area plans for these urban centres.

The zoning objectives and zoning matrix contained in this CDP are applicable to the 32 mini-plans and to existing and future local area plans outside the Sligo and Environs area.

It is, however, accepted that different or modified zoning objectives may apply to local area plans, in recognition of each urban centre's specific character and also as a result of public consultation undertaken as part of LAP preparation.

Draft Amendment No. 37

In Section 3.5.1 Sligo and Environs, delete the text in red and insert the text in blue as follows:

3.5.1 Sligo and Environs

The Sligo and Environs Development Plan 2010-2016 (SEDP) was incorporated into the Sligo County Development Plan 2011-2017 following the abolition of Sligo Borough Council and the establishment of a single planning authority with jurisdiction over the entire county.

The zoning and objectives contained in the SEDP are incorporated as statutory provisions into this County Development Plan (2017-2023) and shall remain unchanged until the adoption of a local area plan for Sligo and Environs (expected in 2018).

In accordance with recent amendments of the Planning and Development Act 2000, a local area plan may remain in operation for up to ten years after its adoption, subject to the decision of the elected members (procedure specified in Section 19(1)(d-f) of the Act).

Having regard to the status of Sligo as a Regional Growth Centre and to the anticipated investment in urban infrastructure, some of which requires medium- and long-term planning, it is recommended that the Sligo and Environs Local Area Plan be designed to cover a ten-year period, from 2021 to 2031.

Draft Amendment No. 38

At the end of **Section 3.6 Miscellaneous zoning provisions**, insert a new **Section 3.63 Infrastructural assessment of land zoning in local area plans** and insert the text in blue as follows:

3.6.3 Infrastructural assessment of land zoning in local area plans (including LAP reviews)

The zoning of land in local area plans to be prepared or reviewed during the lifetime of this Development Plan shall comply with the requirements of the National planning Objective 72, as detailed in Appendix 3 of the NPF – *A Methodology for a Tiered Approach to Land Zoning*.

This methodology requires that land should not be zoned for development unless there is sufficient service capacity available (Tier 1) or the lands have the potential to become fully serviced (Tier 2) during the life of the plan.

Local area plans shall be accompanied by a detailed infrastructural assessment aligned with the approved infrastructural investment programme(s) of the relevant agencies, e.g. Irish Water, or based on a written commitment of the relevant agencies to deliver the identified infrastructure within the lifetime of the respective plan.

The infrastructural assessment carried out by the Planning Authority must include “a reasonable estimate of the full cost of delivery of the required infrastructure to the identified zoned lands”.

Draft Amendment No. 39

In the set of **Strategic Zoning Policies**, modify the policies SP-Z-1 to SP-Z-4 by deleting the text in red and inserting the text in blue as follows:

Strategic zoning policies

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

SP-Z-1 Use zoning to promote the sustainable development of the Gateway City of Sligo Regional Growth Centre and a hierarchy of compact, attractive, pedestrian-friendly settlements, with vital commercial cores and adequate economic bases. No lands shall be zoned for development in isolation, outside the development limits of settlements.

SP-Z-2 Ensure that the amount of land zoned for residential uses in the County is consistent with the requirements of the Core Strategy as set out in Section 3.4 of this Plan, as derived from the recommendations of the Border Regional Planning Guidelines 2010.

Any land proposed for zoning in excess of the above Core Strategy requirements (refer to Core Strategy Tables A and B) shall be included in a Strategic Reserve for

potential development after the lifetime of this Plan.

SP-Z-3 **Revise the housing land allocation for Sligo County and for Sligo City (as part of the preparation of the Sligo and Environs LAP), if required by the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy due to replace the Border Regional Planning Guidelines.**

When zoning or rezoning lands for development in Local Area Plans and Mini-Plans, implement the National Policy Objective 72, which requires the following:

- A. *Apply a standardised, tiered approach to differentiate between (i) zoned land that is serviced and (ii) zoned land that is serviceable within the life of the plan.*
- B. *When considering zoning lands for development purposes that require investment in service infrastructure, make a reasonable estimate of the full cost of delivery of the specified services and prepare a report, detailing the estimated cost at draft and final plan stages.*
- C. *When considering zoning land for development purposes that cannot be serviced within the life of the relevant plan, such lands should not be zoned for development.*

SP-Z-4 On serviced or serviceable lands included in the Strategic Land Reserve, permit the development of the following, insofar as they do not adversely impact on the potential for comprehensive and co-ordinated development of surrounding lands:

- individual houses for landowners, including their sons and daughters, who wish to build a first home for their permanent occupation on the landholding associated with their principal family residence where they have lived for a minimum period of seven years;
- social and special-needs housing;
- community facilities and other non-residential developments compatible with residential uses;
- student accommodation.

Etc.

Draft Amendment No. 40

In **Section 3.7 Implementation**, insert **the text in blue** as follows:

3.7 Implementation

Under the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), planning authorities have a statutory obligation to secure the implementation of the objectives of a development plan. The implementation of these objectives may be constrained by factors such as the economic climate, political support, allocated local authority funding and the availability of funding from diverse sources. Accordingly, no funding of projects can be guaranteed in advance, nor can the implementation of all objectives contained within the Plan be assumed. However, it is the intention of Sligo County Council to exercise all legal powers to ensure that objectives are implemented. This includes the use of compulsory acquisition powers, where necessary.

National regeneration funding

As a key enabler to support the objectives of the NPF, the Government has approved four funds, with a total allocation amounting to €4bn over the 10-year period of the National Development Plan 2018-2027 (NDP). The most relevant for implementing the objectives of the County Development Plan are the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF) and the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (RRDF).

The purpose of the URDF is to support more compact and sustainable development, through the regeneration and rejuvenation of Ireland's five cities and other large towns, in line with the objectives of the NPF and NDP.

The Rural Fund is designed to make a significant and sustainable impact on rural communities, strengthen the fabric of rural Ireland, support job creation in rural areas and thereby address depopulation of rural communities.

Sligo County Council has been submitting projects for approval under both the URDF and the RRDF every year since the funds' inception and will continue to apply for funding in future calls for proposals.

Draft Amendment No. 41

In Section 3.7.1 Local area plans and mini-plans, delete the text in red and insert the text in blue as follows:

3.7.1 Local area plans and mini-plans

An important element of the development plan strategy is to bring policies to a more detailed local level through local area plans and mini-plans. The strategic and broad-ranging policies of the CDP provide a general framework, but not necessarily the detailed treatment required for significant proposals in certain areas.

The Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) specifies that a local authority must make a local area plan (LAP) for all towns under its jurisdiction with a population in excess of 5,000 persons and for settlements with a minimum of 1,500 residents in cases when the development plan does not already include objectives for these settlements.

According to Census ~~2011~~ 2016 demographic data, no town in County Sligo (outside ~~the Gateway Sligo City~~) had a population of 5,000 or more. However, in the past decade the County Council has considered it necessary to put in place detailed planning frameworks for those settlements that came under significant development pressure in the early 2000s.

Local area plans are in place for the Key Support Towns of Ballymote and Enniscrone, and a Draft LAP has also been prepared for Tobercurry.

~~A Local Area Plan will replace the former Development Plan for Sligo and Environs. This LAP will have regard to the Regional Growth Centre status of Sligo Town and to the corresponding Strategic Plan included in the RSES.~~

~~The Sligo and Environs LAP will provide the optimal framework for implementing relevant national and regional policy objectives, as well as specific development plan provisions.~~

Sligo County Council has included 32 mini-plans as part of the County Development Plan 2017-2023. These are village planning frameworks consisting of a set of detailed written objectives accompanied by three maps (Zoning, Objectives and Designations). Without having the complexity of a local area plan, mini-plans have proven successful in the detailed implementation of the previous CDP's policies and are expected to be similarly effective during the lifetime of the current Plan.

Draft Amendment No. 42

In Section 3.7.4 Vacant site levy, delete the text in red and insert the text in blue as follows:

3.7.4 Vacant site levy

The Urban Regeneration and Housing Act 2015 introduced the vacant site levy as a site activation measure, to ensure that vacant or underutilised land in urban areas is brought into beneficial use, while also ensuring a more efficient return on State investment in enabling infrastructure and helping to counter unsustainable urban sprawl.

The vacant site levy can be imposed by planning authorities under certain conditions in designated areas, i.e. where sites remain vacant and site owners/ developers fail to bring forward reasonable proposals, without good reason, for the development/reuse of such property in line with the provisions of the relevant local area or development plan.

For the purpose of the application of the vacant site levy, a site means “any area of land exceeding 0.05 hectares identified by a planning authority in its functional area but does not include any structure that is a person’s home.”

The levy shall be applied annually by a local authority at a rate of ~~3%~~ 7% of the market valuation of the vacant sites, exceeding 0.05 hectares in area, ~~with reduced and zero rates applying in certain circumstances~~ (0.05 hectares roughly equates to one-eighth of an acre or 500sq.m). The market valuation shall be determined by the local authority by authorising a suitably qualified person to estimate the price which the unencumbered fee simple of the site would fetch if sold on the open market. The levy shall be payable by the registered owner(s) of the site.

Sligo County Council will implement the vacant site levy as provided for in the Urban Regeneration and Housing Act 2015 and in accordance with the requirements set out in the ~~relevant Circular Letters issued by the~~ Department’s ~~Circular Letter PL 7/2016~~.

Draft Amendments to Chapter 4 of the CDP

Draft Amendment No. 43

In the introduction to **Chapter 4 Economic development**, delete the text in red and insert the text in blue as follows:

4. Economic development

The national economy has started to recover, as proven by strong GDP growth rates since 2014 to date. The Irish economy is set to register a steady growth in 2017 and 2018, with expected GDP increases of 3.8% and 3.5% respectively has registered a steady growth between 2014 and 2019, with an outstanding GDP increase of 8.2% in 2018 and, despite the threat of Brexit, 5.7% in 2019. Assuming no change in the trading relationship between the EU and the UK in the short term, the economy was set for a 3.3% growth in the beginning of 2020 (source: ESRI's *Quarterly Economic Commentary, Winter 2019*).

Unfortunately, the coronavirus pandemic came as a shock to the society and the economy in early 2020. In response, the government introduced a set of emergency measures which had a drastic impact on certain aspects of economic activity.

The uncertainty at the time of writing (first half of 2020) is reflected in the ESRI's *Quarterly Economic commentary – Summer 2020*. The Commentary outlines three scenarios, of which the Benign Scenario assumes a return to normal social and economic life in Q4, while the Severe Scenario involves a second strict lockdown in Q4. The Baseline Scenario assumes continued physical distancing and containment measures to the end of 2020.

Under these scenarios, the Irish economy would shrink by 12-17 per cent, while the unemployment rate would average 17 per cent in 2020.

However, substantial government spending has been provided to support workers and assist businesses facing declines in revenue, in order to help restart the economy after the crisis.

More important, unemployment is forecasted to fall to 6.2% in 2017 and 5.2% in 2018 4.6% in 2020. This constitutes a remarkable recovery given the scale of difficulties which have afflicted the domestic economy since 2007 (source: ESRI's *Quarterly Economic Commentary, Summer 2017*).

County Sligo should be prepared to share in the predicted expected return to growth over the following years by putting in place a robust economic development framework as part of its development plan.

Like all local authorities, Sligo County Council plays a central role in supporting economic development and enterprise at local level. This is done in a number of ways, including through the Council's capital and current budgets, infrastructure provision, undertaking socio-economic research and analysis, spatial and economic planning, and the provision of goods, services and community infrastructure. The County Council is also a key agent for the local delivery of national policy objectives.

Planning, development and the provision of local infrastructure are core functions that are vital for enterprises. The protection of the county's natural and built heritage through planning and environmental services is integral to the tourism offering. The attractiveness of towns, villages enhances the quality of life and is important for investment decisions by both foreign and domestic business investors.

The Development Plan, which contains policies regarding all of the above, is thus a pre-requisite which underpins economic growth and employment.

Draft Amendment No. 44

In **Section 4.1 Approach to economic development**, delete the text in red and insert the text in blue as follows:

4.1 Approach to economic development

This County Development Plan ~~draws~~ **was based initially** on the principles for developing the economy of the Border Region outlined in the 2010 Border Regional Planning Guidelines.

The Plan ~~may have to be~~ **has been** amended to bring it in line with the provisions of the ~~forthcoming~~ Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSES) ~~due to be~~ prepared by the Northern and Western Regional Assembly, which took over the planning co-ordination role previously held by the Border Regional Authority.

Both the NPF and the RSES support the Atlantic Economic Corridor (AEC) initiative, which seeks to build on the growth potential of large urban centres in the West, including Sligo. The overarching objective of the AEC initiative is to maximise the infrastructure, talent and enterprise assets along the western seaboard and to combine the economic hubs, clusters and catchments of the area to attract investment, improve competitiveness, support job creation and contribute to an improved quality of life for the people who live there.

County Sligo's ability to attract investment continues to be restricted by its relatively weak infrastructure, including under-provision of broadband services. These barriers to the economic development of the county are addressed in the Development Plan through policies relating to energy, telecommunications and transport infrastructure.

The promotion of economic development in general, and industry and enterprise in particular, requires a multi-pronged approach, the key components of which are:

- earmarking key settlements for focused growth (see Chapter 3 – Core Strategy);
- ensuring that towns and villages remain attractive to investors by offering a good quality of life to those who live and work in them (see Chapter 6 – Community facilities and Chapter 12 – Town and village design)
- providing or supporting the provision of essential infrastructure, including high-speed telecommunications (see Chapters 8, 9, 10 and 11);
- reserving sufficient land in suitable locations for industry and enterprise uses (see Mini-Plans in Volume 2 and adopted local area plans);
- supporting the provision of clean energy from reliable sources (see Chapter 11);

- securing high standards of landscape and environmental protection (see Chapters 7 – Heritage and 10 - Environmental quality);

The economic development policies outlined in the following subsections need to be paralleled by initiatives in education, training and enterprise support. The Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) complements the CDP policies through its goals, objectives and actions which focus on the non-spatial elements of economic development, such as:

- promoting and facilitating appropriate educational/training measures to ensure a suitably skilled local workforce
- encouraging research and development linkages between industry/business and local third-level institutions
- forging mutually-beneficial linkages and partnerships – e.g. with regional and cross-border bodies

Draft Amendment No. 45

In **Section 4.2.3 Industry and enterprise locations**, delete the text in red and insert the text in blue as follows:

4.2.3 Industry and enterprise locations

Sligo City and Tobercurry are the primary locations for manufacturing industry in the County.

Sligo City has become the main centre for industry and enterprise due to its large pool of skilled workers, ease of access and relatively good telecommunications infrastructure. The availability of labour, transport facilities and infrastructure attracts enterprise and stimulates agglomeration effects in the local economy. Due to the spatial concentration of production in Sligo City, cost savings are made by companies locating there, rather than in rural areas. Economies of scale help to explain why growth is unevenly distributed between the Gateway City Regional Growth Centre and the rest of the County.

Tobercurry, Collooney and Grange have developed a variety of smaller enterprises, due to their location along national transport corridors and the availability of a local workforce. Strandhill has potential as a centre for enterprise, given the presence of an Enterprise and Technology Centre near the airport.

Collooney, originally earmarked for the development of an enterprise park, has seen the short-lived development of retail warehousing, to the detriment of Sligo Retail Park. Vacant units in Collooney Business Park have slowly started to revert to their intended industrial/enterprise use. The continuation of this process will be supported.

Having regard to the predominance of micro-businesses in County Sligo, enterprise centres should be fostered and expanded in the Key Support Towns of Tobercurry, Ballymote and Enniscrone, in addition to Strandhill.

Small-scale enterprise space should also be provided in other settlements across the County, either in dedicated areas or as part of mixed-use zones, to help offset the loss of employment in sectors such as construction and manufacturing, and support the creation of local jobs in the south and west of the County.

Draft Amendment No. 46

In Section 4.4.2 Trends and assumptions for the future, delete the text in red and insert the text in blue as follows:

4.4.2 Trends and assumptions for the future

Tourism is a critical component of the West of Ireland economy, with the accommodation and hospitality sectors as key drivers of employment. Tourism also supports the service sectors, including retail and transport, thus delivering substantial social and community benefits.

International tourism to the West of Ireland declined significantly in both visitor numbers and share of holiday visits to Ireland in the period 2007-2010. County Sligo had 156,000 overseas tourist in 2006 (who generated revenue of 39m euro), but only 133,000 overseas tourists in 2013 (revenue generated – 44m euro).

The availability of high-quality accommodation is a prerequisite for attracting high-spending tourists to the region. A number of hotels have been built in recent years, but County Sligo is still significantly lacking in guesthouse accommodation.

There are strong indications that Sligo has not capitalised on its full tourism potential. In 2015, the county had 61 accommodation premises (of which 14 hotels), compared to 137 in Co. Donegal (53 hotels) and 166 in Co. Mayo (44 hotels). There were 4,314 tourist beds in Sligo, compared to 10,288 in Donegal and 10,240 in Mayo. The number of tourist attractions was 127 in Sligo, but 340 in Donegal and 246 in Mayo. Unless addressed, such deficits will continue to act as a constraint to the development of the local and regional tourism industry.

In an attempt to reverse the decline in tourist numbers, Fáilte Ireland has developed the Wild Atlantic Way as a tourism initiative of strategic importance for the West of Ireland. This initiative, which is undertaken on an unprecedented scale, is expected to play a significant role in generating employment and revenue from national and international tourism in County Sligo.

In line with the *Border Regional Planning Guidelines 2010*, *NWRA Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2020*, it will be the aim of Sligo County Council to promote the development of new tourist attractions, particularly with regard to untapped tourism potential.

Draft Amendment No. 47

In Section 4.5.1 Retail hierarchy in County Sligo, delete the text in red and insert the text in blue as follows:

4.5.1 Retail hierarchy in County Sligo

In the national retail hierarchy, Sligo is placed on the “Regional” (second) tier, together with other **NSS Gateway, Hubs and** towns performing important regional retailing functions.

Outside **the Gateway Sligo City**, the towns of Tobercurry, Ballymote and Enniscrone are of significance in terms of retail, due to their size, location and designation as Key Support Towns in the Settlement Hierarchy of the Development Plan.

In terms of population, there are other significant settlements in the County, such as the five **Gateway Satellites of Sligo City** – Ballysadare, Collooney, Coolaney, Grange and Strandhill.

As noted under the previous Retail Strategy, County Sligo is considered mono-nodal in terms of its retail offering, which is concentrated in Sligo City. Tobercurry serves as the second largest urban centre in terms of retail and related businesses, followed by Ballymote and Enniscrone. The satellite villages of Collooney, Grange, Ballysadare, Strandhill and Coolaney have varying levels of retail services. The villages of Bellaghy and Gorteen may not have large populations, but they do serve sizeable hinterlands based on their service offering.

The recommended retail hierarchy (see Fig. 4.E below) is largely aligned with the settlement hierarchy defined the Core Strategy of this Plan. It should be noted that there are no District Centres (as defined in the *Retail Planning Guidelines*) in County Sligo.



Fig. 4.E Retail hierarchy in County Sligo

The Retail Strategy, which is published as a separate document, provides detailed assessments and recommendations for Sligo City and each of the towns and villages listed above. The Strategy also incorporates a health check of small villages, which play an important role in the local economy and are part of the retail landscape of the County.

Draft Amendment No. 48

In Section 4.5.2 Projected retail floor space requirements, delete the text in red and insert the text in blue as follows:

4.5.2 Projected retail floor space requirements

The Retail Strategy suggests that the demand for additional commercial facilities will be dependent on population increase and an increase in *per capita* expenditure, taking into consideration the existing and future dynamics of retailing in the catchment and the existing provision of retail floorspace.

Following a county-wide survey of retail floorspace and having estimated future change in retail sales and household expenditure, the Retail Strategy calculates the future floorspace requirements for convenience, comparison and bulky goods as shown in the table below:

Table: 4.F Estimated additional retail floor area in County Sligo by 2023

Year	Convenience	Comparison	Bulky Goods	Total
2023	2,492	4,338	4,975	11,805

Convenience floorspace

It is noted that extant planning permissions, concentrated in Sligo City and Enniscrone, can facilitate in the region of 5,600sq.m. convenience retail floorspace, but these permissions are nearing expiration and look unlikely to be realised.

The Strategy states that an increase in convenience shopping floorspace is most likely to be required in Sligo City and the Key Support Towns. Over the period of the Plan, the 2,492 sq.m. requirement is considered modest, but capable of facilitating an improved retail mix within the County and reduced drive times for shoppers.

Outside ~~the Gateway Sligo City~~, the requirement for additional convenience retail floorspace is estimated to be 1,270 sq.m net up to 2023. This additional floorspace may entail expansion of an existing retail operation or a new-build retail unit, such as a supermarket. However, given the average floor plates of new supermarket facilities (generally above 1,000–1,300 sq.m. net), extending above the estimated requirements should be considered in such instances, on a case by case basis.

Etc.

Draft Amendment No. 49

In the set of Retail Planning Policies, modify the policy P-RP-7 by deleting the text in red and inserting the text in blue as follows:

Retail planning policies

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

.....

P-RP-7 Promote initiatives or programmes to enhance the character and urban design quality of the Key Support Towns (Tobercurry, Ballymote, Enniscrone) and Gateway Satellites Villages (Ballysadare, Collooney, Coolaney, Grange and Strandhill), to ensure that they become and remain attractive for investment in commerce and retailing.

Etc.

Draft Amendments to Chapter 5 of the CDP

Draft Amendment No. 50

In Section 5.1 Housing Strategy, delete the text in red and insert the text in blue as follows:

5.1 Housing Strategy

A *County Sligo Housing Strategy 2017–2023* has been prepared in accordance with Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended). The Housing Strategy forms an integral part of the Sligo County Development Plan 2017–2023. The primary purpose of the Strategy is to ensure that the overall supply of housing is sufficient to meet the needs of the existing and future population of Sligo.

The key findings of the 2016 Housing Strategy are as follows:

Census data and identified trends

- House completions in Sligo reached a peak of 2,164 dwellings at the end of 2006 before decreasing rapidly year-on-year to just 167 dwellings by the end of 2015, a fall of 92%.
- There has been a significant reduction in the number of scheme houses and apartments completed since 2006. This indicates that during the life of the previous Development Plans (CDP and SEDP), the majority of houses were built in rural locations, on unserviced land.
- The 2011 Census recorded that 22.2% of all permanent housing units in County Sligo were vacant, which is significantly higher than the national average of 14.5%.
- There is a significant number of one-person households, which have seen a notable increase since 2006 as a percentage of the total number of households.
- Approximately 20% of the total number of private households within the County live in private rented accommodation.

Social housing requirements

- The 2013 housing need assessment for Sligo indicated that there were 770 households on the social housing waiting list.
- Based on current trends, it is estimated that approximately 2,162 persons will require social housing by 2023 which equates to 865 households.
- The Urban Regeneration and Housing Act 2015 places the focus of Part V on the delivery of social housing, with a requirement for up to 10% social housing in developments in excess of 9 units. In the operation of these revised Part V arrangements, the priority will be to secure social housing units on-site. The making of cash payments in lieu of social housing is to be discontinued. It is considered reasonable to apply a requirement of 10% of all land zoned for residential use or a mixture of residential and other uses, be reserved for the purposes of Part V.

Initial and revised housing land provision

- It **is was initially** estimated that the County Development Plan would have to cater for circa 5,500 additional persons between 2017 and 2023, in order to comply with the population targets set by the Regional Planning Guidelines 2010.

The more recent County population projections, revised in accordance with the NPF, indicate that between 5,088 and 6,325 additional persons may need to be accommodated by 2023. The current housing land provision is considered sufficient to cater for the revised population figures, as detailed in the Core Strategy (as amended).

- 3,705 housing units **will be required were initially deemed necessary** to accommodate the estimated population increase over the period of the Plan.

As indicated in the amended Core Strategy Tables A and B (Section 3.4 of this Plan), circa 3,624 housing units will be required by 2023. This figure is similar to the initial provision of the Housing Strategy.

- The housing land provision as specified in the Core Strategy of the CDP 2017-2023 is more than sufficient to meet Sligo's housing needs up to 2023, **even allowing 50% overhead to facilitate an element of choice as recommended by the DECLG Development Plan Guidelines for Planning Authorities** (refer to the Core Strategy tables A and B in Section 3.4 on page 29).
- The Core Strategy for the County Development Plan 2017-2023 should ensure that the amount of land zoned for residential purposes within the County area does not exceed that allocated within the CDP 2011–2017. However, in order to promote growth in the **Gateway City Regional Growth Centre**, consideration should be given to expanding the options for residential development in the future Sligo and Environs LAP by offering a wider choice of location on additional sites.

Draft Amendment No. 51

In **Chapter 5 Housing**, insert **new Section 5.1.1** (text shown below in blue) and renumber the subsequent sections as 5.1.2 and 5.1.3

5.1.1 Securing compact growth

Seeking to curtail the trend of greenfield sprawl that extends the physical footprint of urban areas, the 2018 National Planning Framework favours a compact development approach that focuses on reusing previously developed, “brownfield” land, building up infill sites which may not have been built on before, and either re-using or redeveloping existing sites and buildings.

The NPF indicates that such compact forms of growth can make a “transformational difference” to settlements of all sizes, bringing “new life and footfall”, contributing to the viability of services, shops and public transport, thus reducing travel distances and related energy demand.

National Policy Objectives 3a, 3b and 3c target the delivery of specific ratios of all new homes within the built-up footprint of settlements, in proportion to the settlement size.

The built-up footprint of a settlement is contained within the census boundary defined by the CSO “in line with UN criteria, i.e. having a minimum of 50 occupied dwellings, with a maximum distance

between any dwelling and the building closest to it of 100 metres, and where there is evidence of an urban centre (shop, school etc.)”

The 2020 Regional Strategy also embraces the principle of compact growth, which “will be pursued to ensure sustainable growth of more compact urban and rural settlements, supported by jobs, houses, services and amenities, rather than continued sprawl and unplanned, uneconomic growth” (Section 2.2 Growth ambitions, p. 23 of the RSES).

The Strategy states that the identification and delivery of appropriate development lands within the existing built-up footprint of urban places is a central tenet to the RSES.

Regional Policy Objective 3.2 promotes the delivery of at least 40% of all new housing targeted in the Regional Growth Centres within the existing built-up footprint, while RPO 3.3 encourages the delivery of at least 20% of all new housing in rural areas on brownfield sites.

Draft Amendment No. 52

In the set of **Strategic Housing Policies**, insert three new policies (text shown below in blue) as follows:

Strategic housing policies

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

- SP-HOU-1** Encourage a balanced supply of private housing in the county, in a manner that is consistent with the Core Strategy and the Settlement Hierarchy, and which will support the creation of sustainable communities through the provision of an appropriate range of house types and high-quality residential environments.
- SP-HOU-2** Reserve 10% of eligible sites which are subject to new residential development (or a mix of uses including residential) for the development of social housing units, in accordance with the Housing Strategy and the requirements of Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).
- SP-HOU-3** Ensure that the needs of older people, people with disabilities and other special-needs persons and households are adequately catered for in new residential developments.
- SP-HOU-4** Promote the delivery of at least 40% of all new housing targeted in the Regional Growth Centre within the existing built-up footprint of Sligo and Environs (census boundary).
- SP-HOU-5** Support the delivery of at least 30% of all new homes that are targeted in settlements other than the Regional Growth Centre within their existing built-up footprints (census boundaries).
- SP-HOU-6** Encourage the delivery of at least 20% of all new housing in rural areas on brownfield sites.

Draft Amendment No. 53

In **Section 5.1.2 (former 5.1.1) Sustainable residential development**, ~~delete the text in red~~ as follows:

5.1.2 Sustainable residential development

It is an aim of this Plan to promote sustainable residential development that delivers a good quality of life and minimises the need for the use of private cars for daily activities.

Sustainable residential development should provide variety in terms of ancillary uses and supporting facilities, and should promote social integration between diverse household types and age groups.

New houses should be designed to ensure efficient use of land and energy, and to create an attractive living environment which respects its context.

The approach towards future housing provision will take into account the location and context of a particular proposed development.

Further in this chapter, **Sections 5.2 Urban housing** and **5.3 Housing in rural areas** offer general policy guidance on new housing both within and outside settlements.

Urban design considerations which are relevant to new residential development in towns and villages can be found in **Chapter 12 Town and village design**.

The **Development management standards** chapter of this Plan (**Chapter 13**) contains detailed guidance regarding the layout and design of housing developments in rural and urban areas. The standards relating to urban development apply to all land-use plans prepared by Sligo County Council.

Chapter 1 of Volume 2 includes further housing policies specifically for the 32 villages subject to mini-plans.

The local area plans prepared for the Key Support Towns of Ballymote, Enniscrone and Tobercurry (draft LAP 2015) also include housing policies responding to the specific character of each area.

The forthcoming Sligo and Environs Local Area Plan (~~due to be prepared following the adoption of the CDP 2017-2023~~) will set additional housing policies, objectives and development standards adapted to the character and needs of the City.

Draft Amendments to Chapter 8 of the CDP

Draft Amendment No. 54

In Section 8.1 National and regional transport policy, delete the text in red and insert the text in blue as follows:

8.1 National and regional transport policy

The designation of Sligo as a Gateway City in the National Spatial Strategy further emphasised the importance of strong transport links to urban centres in the Border Region, along the Atlantic Corridor, beyond regional and national boundaries. The 2010 Border Regional Planning Guidelines specifically supported the development of a number of strategic routes, in order to ensure Sligo's success as a Gateway, including all national roads and rail links.

The 2018 NPF requires “a particular focus on improving accessibility and connectivity northwards on the emerging Atlantic Economic Corridor (AEC) network, that links a network of major centres on the western seaboard”.

Sligo's designation as a Regional Growth Centre in the 2020 Regional Strategy re-confirms the need to improve connectivity along the Atlantic Economic Corridor.

The national roads M-4/N-4 (Dublin to Sligo), the N-17 (Galway to Sligo), the N-15 (Sligo to Donegal) and the N-16 (Sligo to Northern Ireland) are identified as part of the EU's Trans-European Transport Networks TEN-T², which are a planned set of road, rail, air and water transport networks in the European Union.

The policy document *Investing in our Transport Future - Strategic Investment Framework for Land Transport*, published by the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (DTTAS) in 2015, emphasises the need for improved alignment of transport and spatial planning. The document states that effective and mutually supportive land use and transport planning policy, in the form of national and regional frameworks, are essential for the development of more sustainable communities.

The guidance document *Spatial Planning and National Roads*, published by the Department of Environment, Community & Local Government (DOECLG) in 2012, sets out planning policy considerations relating to developments affecting National Roads outside the 50 and 60 km/h zones. This document emphasises the importance of maintaining and protecting the strategic function of National Roads.

Government policy strongly promotes the move to more sustainable modes of transport and the policy document *Smarter Travel – A New Transport Policy for Ireland 2009-2020*, published by the

² The TEN-T networks are part of a wider system of [Trans-European Networks](#) (TENs), including a [telecommunications](#) network (eTEN) and a proposed energy network (TEN-E or Ten-Energy). TEN-T envisages coordinated improvements to primary roads, railways, inland waterways, airports, seaports, inland ports and traffic management systems, providing integrated and intermodal long-distance, high-speed routes.

In general, TEN-T projects are mostly funded by national or state governments. Other funding sources include: European Community funds ([ERDF](#), [Cohesion Funds](#), TEN-T budget), loans from international financial institutions (e.g. the [European Investment Bank](#)), and private funding.

Department of Transport (DOT), sets out Government policy objectives with respect to promoting a significant modal shift from private transport to sustainable transport modes over the period to 2020.

In accordance with the above, it is the aim of Sligo County Council to strengthen the County's strategic transport links. The Council will also support the creation of a pedestrian-friendly and cyclist-friendly environment within and between the County's settlements, with a good provision of public transport, reduced congestion and attractive town and village centres which are not dominated by the car.

Draft Amendment No. 55

In Section 8.1.1 replace the section title, delete the text in red and insert the text in blue as follows:

8.1.1 Provisions of the National Spatial Strategy

National policy on accessibility

National Spatial Strategy (2002)

The NSS recognised that quality road networks are crucial to economic development. Improvements in terms of travel time and cost can reduce the disadvantages of distance.

The N-4 Sligo to Dublin road is was identified as a Strategic Radial Corridor, providing road and public transport connections between Dublin and Sligo.

The N-17 Sligo to Galway and N-15 Sligo to Letterkenny are were identified as Strategic Linking Corridors, providing improved connections between gateways and hubs from Cork to Derry via Sligo.

The N-16 Sligo to Belfast is was identified as a Strategic International Access Point providing road access internationally to and from Gateways, hubs and other areas in the vicinity of the Border.

The national roads above also connect Sligo to Dublin International Airport and Port, to Ireland West (Knock) and Shannon International Airports, and to Belfast International Airports and Port.

In relation to public transport, the NSS seeks sought to ensure that rail continues to offer realistic alternatives to road travel on the key inter-city routes, such as the Sligo-Dublin railway line.

It is was recognised that bus services will be the principal means of providing effective public transport in Gateways and Hubs.

National Planning Framework (2018)

Focusing on a more compact approach to urban development, the NPF also seeks to enhance connectivity between large centres of population.

The National Strategic Outcome 2 (p. 140 of the NPF) targets an average inter-urban speed of 90 km/h on national roads, whose capacity and safety are to be maintained and enhanced.

Accessibility to the North-West is to be improved by upgrading existing roads such as the N-4, N-15 and N-17.

There is a stronger emphasis on public transport between large urban centres and on more effective traffic management around and within and cities, favouring buses, walking and cycling.

Draft Amendment No. 56

In Section 8.1.2 replace the section title, delete the text in red and insert the text in blue as follows:

8.1.2 Provisions of the Regional Planning Guidelines

Regional policy on accessibility

Border Regional Planning Guidelines (2010)

One of the Key Strategic Goals in the 2010 Regional Planning Guidelines is to improve connectivity in the Region through the development of Strategic Radial Corridors and Strategic Links.

The RPGs identified the **M-4/N-4 Western Radial Route** as a Strategic Radial Corridor, linking Dublin with Sligo. The N-4 (Collooney to Castlebaldwin section) **is was** a priority route for improvement.

The Atlantic Corridor, which includes the **N-15 and the N-17**, **is was** identified as a Strategic Link. Priorities for this route **are were** the N-17 (Bellaghy to Collooney section) and the N-15 (Sligo to Leitrim county boundary section).

The West/North Central Corridor N-16/A-4, which linked **the Gateway of Sligo** with Enniskillen in Northern Ireland, **is was** also identified as a Strategic Link, which required **substantial investment**. The key priority for this route **is was** the N-16 (Sligo to Enniskillen).

The RPGs supported the integration of road, rail, and bus transport at key locations and the development of park-and-ride facilities particularly within the Gateways.

The re-opening of the Claremorris–Sligo railway line **is was** seen as a long-term priority for the Region, but only when the other sections of the Western Rail Corridor **are would have been** completed and operational. The RPGs also supported examining the potential of a rail link from Sligo to Letterkenny.

The RPGs supported the Government’s Smarter Travel Policy and the National Cycling Policy Framework, as well as other measures to encourage cycling and walking, particularly in urban centres such as Sligo.

NWRA Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (2020)

Among the “Growth ambitions” stated in Section 2.2 of the RSES, the “Connected Ambition” relates to accessibility and mobility within the Region. The Strategy supports further investment in sustainable transport measures.

Regional Policy Objective 6.2 is designed to “*Support, enhance and enable investment in the development and diversification of our network of key Airports and Seaports/Harbours, providing them with adequate and efficient capacity and ensuring they have high-quality sustainable transport connectivity, including road, rail, cycling and pedestrian infrastructure, as appropriate and subject to environmental considerations*”.

Among the national roads projects integrated with the targeted development of major urban centres in the Region, the RSES support investment in improvements to the N-4 Collooney to Castlebaldwin (RPO 6.6), N-17 Knock to Collooney (RPO 6.7), N-15 Sligo to Bundoran, N-16 Sligo to Blacklion and N-59 upgrades (RPO 6.8).

RPOs 6.9, 6.11 and 6.13 to 6.16 promote further investment in upgrading or providing transport infrastructure, including the Eastern Garavogue Bridge and Western Distributor Road in Sligo, Western Rail Corridor, Sligo-Dublin rail line, smarter travel etc. Additional RPOs in Section 6 of the RSES promote bus services, rural transport, walking and cycling, as well as the extended provision of charging infrastructure for electric vehicles.