

Proposed Core Strategy Variation

Manager's Report

on submissions relating to
the proposed variation of the
Sligo and Environs Development Plan 2010-2016

Sligo Borough Council
Sligo County Council



Prepared by

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Development
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1. Introduction

The proposed Core Strategy Variation of the *Sligo and Environs Development Plan 2010-2016* (SEDP) was on public display from 13 July to 9 August (both dates included).

The proposed variation would involve the following

- A. Insertion of an additional section in Chapter 5: **Section 5.4 Core Strategy – compliance with the P&D Act 2010.**
- B. Changes to the text of **Chapter 17 Implementation.**
- C. Changes to the **Zoning Map (Map 1).**

The text and map of the proposed Core Strategy Variation were accompanied on public display by the following supporting documentation:

- Explanatory Note
- Explanatory Map
- Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Screening Report
- Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening Report

During this public consultation period, Sligo Borough and County Councils received 11 submissions and observations on the Proposed Variation. One submission was received after the closing date.

A submission made by the Development Applications Unit of the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, in response to preliminary consultation with prescribed environmental bodies (16 June to 8 July), arrived too late to be taken into account for the SEA Decision and is addressed in this Manager's Report as an early submission.

The Report summarises the issues raised in submissions and gives the Manager's response to these issues, including appropriate recommendations, where necessary.

How the Manager's Report is organised

On receipt, each submission was allocated an official reference number, in the order in which they were received.

Submissions received from the Border Regional Authority, the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government, the National Roads Authority and An Taisce support the Proposed Variation and suggest various modifications thereof or changes to other sections of the existing SEDP.

Submissions received from landowners whose properties are proposed to be included in the Strategic Land Reserve oppose this designation.

Two submissions received from state bodies are considered "neutral", as they noted the proposed variation but did not make comments on it.

Section 2 of this Report summarises the issues raised in each submission and, where appropriate, gives the Manager's opinion on such issues.

Sections 3 contains the list of persons and organisations that made submissions on the proposed variation.

The role of the elected members

Deciding whether to adopt or to reject the proposed variation of the SEDP is a function reserved for the elected members of Sligo Borough Council and Sligo County Council.

The members are required to consider the proposed variation and the Manager's recommendations contained in this Report.

According to Section 13 (5) of the Planning and Development Act as amended,

- (aa) Following consideration of the proposed variation and the report of the manager under paragraph (a) where a planning authority, after considering a submission of, or observation or recommendation from the Minister made to the authority under this section or from a regional authority made to the authority under section 27C, decides not to comply with any recommendation made in the proposed variation and report, it shall so inform the Minister or regional authority, as the case may be, as soon as practicable by notice in writing which notice shall contain reasons for the decision.
- (b) The consideration of the variation and the manager's report under paragraph (a) shall be completed not later than 6 weeks after the submission of the manager's report to the members of the authority.

Further relevant provisions of Section 13 are as follows:

- (7) In making a variation under this section, the members of the 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.
- (11) A variation made to a development plan shall have effect from the day that the variation is made.

2. Response to submissions on the proposed Core Strategy Variation of the SEDP 2010-2016

Submission no. 1

3 August 2011

Matt Donnelly, Director
on behalf of the Border Regional Authority

The Regional Authority welcomes the publication of the proposed variation and acknowledges the work carried out, to date, by respective councils in preparing the variation.

The content of this submission is intended to assist the Local Authority in meeting their requirements under the Act and to provide for the proper planning and sustainable development of Sligo over the remaining plan period.

Part 1 of this submission outlines the Regional Authority's recommendations as per the statutory requirements under the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).

Part 2 "outlines other requirements of the Act and additional proposals which seek to enhance the Core Strategy and the overall role and function of the Sligo and Environs Development Plan 2010 – 2016, as varied".

Part 1

Issue no. 1

The Border Regional Authority indicates that "the majority of the strategy and content" of the Sligo and Environs Development Plan 2010–2016 is "current and is generally robust". The proposed variation to incorporate the Core Strategy into the SEDP 2010 - 2016 should include relevant information from both the RPGs and new County Development Plan, particularly with respect to the population, housing and the likely resultant amount of zoned residential land required to accommodate this growth over the remaining plan period.

Opinion

The proposed variation already incorporates – in section 5.4.1.2 and Table 5.I – the relevant information on population targets and housing land requirements as outlined in the Border Regional Planning Guidelines 2010 and in the County Development Plan 2011-2017.

Recommendation

No change to the proposed variation.

Issue no. 2

The BRA notes that the proposed variation is accompanied by a Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Report and Decision Statement as well as an Appropriate Assessment Screening Report. The Regional Authority agrees with the methods of assessment and findings from both processes. It considers that the proposed variation will further protect the Natura 2000 network, both in-situ and ex-situ, as well as all other aspects of the local environment.

Opinion

The observations are noted.

Recommendation

No change to the proposed variation.

Issue no. 3

The BRA recommends that “consideration is given to the legacy of planning over the past decade where supply outstripped demand for housing and indeed, commercial properties. Challenges such as managing and finishing unfinished estates, as well as high levels of residential vacancies, are a manifestation of these problems which are apparent throughout the state. The Core Strategy must, therefore, incorporate these issues and provide a robust growth strategy for the county for the remaining plan period up to 2016.”

Opinion

The level of residential vacancy in the SEDP area is 9.4% (see Note no. 6 to Table 5.K in section 5.4.4.5), which is considered within the scope of the natural/structural vacancy rate for a city of Sligo’s size.

The National Housing Development Survey (DoEHLG, 2010) defines an *unfinished housing development* as one where the approved dwellings and their associated services and amenities have not been completed¹ and occupied. A total of 11 developments located in the Sligo and Environs area were surveyed and only a few of these can be considered unfinished in the sense of the definition mentioned above. There were a number of vacant units in the developments surveyed in 2010. Swan Point (a large apartment block in the city centre) continues to be vacant, although the building is in fact completed. Ard Mor (a commenced housing development at Calry) is a construction site where building activity has ceased. There are no occupied units in this development, where public access is restricted. In all housing developments (except Ard Mor and a small area at the rear of Swan Point), the roads, lighting and footpaths have been completed and all infrastructural services are in place. Therefore, the issue of unfinished housing developments is not considered of significance for the Core Strategy.

Recommendation

No change to the proposed variation.

¹ ‘Completed’ in this context does not necessarily mean that all the works required in terms of building regulations and/or the planning permission have been completed. Minor outstanding works, such as individual house electricity connections, entrance gates, decoration etc. would not be regarded as significant. A development was regarded as finished if an Inspector considered, on the basis of a normal visual on-site inspection, that the following have been substantially completed: dwellings, roads and footpaths, lighting, water supply, wastewater infrastructure, open spaces, as defined for the purposes of the National Housing Development Survey (source: *National Housing Development Survey*, DoEHLG 2010)

Issue no. 4

It is the view of the Regional Authority that the Councils should consider including both the Explanatory Map and Note as an appendix to the Development Plan, as varied.

Opinion

Agreed. The Explanatory Note (appropriately updated) and the Explanatory Map should be included in an appendix to the Core Strategy Variation of the SEDP.

Recommendation

Update the Explanatory Note and include it as an appendix to the Core Strategy/Development Plan, together with the Explanatory Map.

This is considered a minor modification, which does not constitute a material alteration of the proposed variation.

Issue no. 5

The Regional Authority acknowledges the variance that exists in the CSO Definition of the Town and Environs and the Gateway definition (defined in the existing SEDP 2010 – 2016) as outlined on page 3 of the draft Core Strategy. The population growth targets for the period up to 2016 and the end of the plan period are however to be applied to the prevailing Development Plan area as outlined on Section 3.7.2 on page 45 of the RPGs 2010 – 2022. It is therefore a matter for Sligo County Council and Sligo Borough Council as to what percentage of the County Growth target is allocated to the Gateway as defined in the existing development plan. What is clear however is that the population growth target of 2000 additional persons by 2016 can be accommodated within existing vacant zoned residential lands within the town and environs as correctly identified on the amended map 1 and the draft Core Strategy. It is therefore recommended that the text of subsection 5.4.1.2 is amended accordingly.

Opinion

Agreed. A statement should be added to section 5.4.1.2 to clarify that the population growth target of 2000 additional persons by 2016 can be accommodated within existing zoned residential lands within the town and environs. This would not constitute an amendment; it would be a minor modification to section 5.4.1.2.

Recommendation

In Section 5.4.1.2 include the following clarification:

The population growth target of 2000 additional persons by 2016 can be accommodated within existing zoned residential lands within Sligo and Environs.

This is considered a minor modification to Section 5.4.1.2, which does not constitute a material alteration of the proposed variation.

Issue no. 6

Section 5.4.4 of the Core Strategy acknowledges that Section 4.1 of the Development Plan is now superseded as the population projections are out-dated. The BRA suggests that all relevant sections of the Development Plan should be updated to reflect the content of the Core Strategy (See section 3 of this submission for detail of key amendments). It is recommended that the Manager's Report provides a detailed schedule of all amendments to the existing Development Plan.

Opinion

The purpose of the Core Strategy Variation is to achieve compliance with the requirements of the Planning and Development Act 2010, as indicated in the section titled **Reason for the Proposed Variation** in the **Explanatory Note**.

Section **5.4.4 SEDP Core Strategy** indicates that the existing sections in Chapter 5 of the SEDP fulfil most of the 2010 legislative requirements, and this is demonstrated in subsections 5.4.4.1 to 5.4.4.4.

The main elements still required to comply with the P&D Act are:

- a. the recognition of the level of additional population allocated through the Regional Planning Guidelines for the period 2010-2016
- b. an indication of the amount of land zoned for residential and mixed uses necessary to accommodate the allocated population.

The above elements are addressed in subsections **5.4.4.5 Land zoned for residential development** and **5.4.4.6 Strategic Land Reserve**.

It is not the intention of the Borough and County Councils to undertake a detailed review of the entire SEDP and modify all sections of the Plan at this stage.

It is acknowledged that the population projections presented in Chapter 4 of the SEDP are now outdated. It is noted, however, that population projections/demographic change scenarios usually become outdated as soon as new Census figures and national/regional projections are published.

It is the Councils' intention to reconsider population growth scenarios as part of the next SEDP review (due to commence at the end of 2012), in light of the demographic data provided by the Census 2011 publications and any future/revised regional population projections.

Recommendation

No change to the proposed variation.

Issue no. 7

The Regional Authority agrees with the identification of the Docklands area as strategically important and supports the regeneration and redevelopment of brownfield sites as part of the preparation of a local area plan. It recommends that "a key objective of the LAPs, and particularly the Docklands area, should be to promote cycling and walking in accordance with Section 5.2.4 of the RPGs".

Opinion

Walking and cycling are supported throughout the SEDP, which includes numerous policies and objectives conducive to the creation of an urban environment which would be friendlier to pedestrians and cyclists. Specific provisions are included in section **10.7 Cycling** (p. 64 of the SEDP), in **Chapter 11 Open space, sports and recreation** (p. 65 of the SEDP) and in section **12.4 City-centre urban design initiatives** (p. 82 of the SEDP).

Further specific objectives relating to walking and cycling will be included in all future LAPs or LAP reviews, in accordance with the SEDP and RPG policies.

Recommendation

No change to the proposed variation.

Issue no. 8

The Authority suggests that, as part of the proposed variation, Chapter 17 should be further amended to outline the growth targets for each of these areas covered by existing proposed Local Area Plans, as well as “the sequencing of the Local Area Plan development that will occur following the adoption of the Core Strategy”. The Councils should consider including “policies to provide for the implementation of this framework for the future development of Local Area Plans”.

Opinion

In view of the uncertain economic future at national, regional and local level (SEDP area), it is considered unrealistic to set population growth targets for LAPs at this stage. The estimated timeframe for preparing the LAPs is included in Chapter 17 of the SEDP. However, the exact sequence of LAP preparation cannot be anticipated since, for example, the Cranmore LAP depends on the availability of departmental funding for Cranmore regeneration masterplan, which would be the key element of the LAP.

Recommendation

No change to the proposed variation.

Issue no. 9

Section 5.4.4.5 outlines most of the key elements of the Core Strategy, including the Core Strategy table. Table 5.J together with the table in Section F of the Explanatory Note provide the justification for the figures in the Core Strategy table. It is suggested that tables 5.J and the table in the Explanatory Note could be amalgamated, simplified and included in the Core Strategy.

Of particular significance, is the explanation of the percentages of land available for residential development from the relevant zoning categories i.e. R2, R3 MIX 1, C2 and NC. This is important as table 5.J identifies Circa 68 hectares of land is available for residential development when in fact only a specific percentage of each category is allocated to residential development. The total housing land requirement is correctly identified as 43ha in Table 5.K but it is important that the background calculations are clarified.

Consideration should also be given to incorporating some of this information into the amendments to Table 5.G in the existing plan (see also point VI in Section 3 of this submission). Further cross references to Map 1 should be provided in this section as it identifies the location of the lands that will be available for residential development during the plan period.

Opinion

It is agreed that the figures in Table 5.J should be clarified. This should be done by means of a note accompanying the table and a corresponding change in section 5.4.4.6.

Regarding the suggested amendments to Table 5.G and the inclusion of cross-references in the existing Plan, please refer to first part of the Manager’s opinion in response to Issue no. 6.

Recommendation

In conjunction with **Table 5.J**, introduce a footnote identifying the proportion of land available for residential development within various mixed-use zones. Modify accordingly the fourth paragraph in Section 5.4.4.6, by replacing “43 ha of lands” with “68 ha of lands (43 ha nett)”.

These are considered minor modifications, which do not constitute material alterations of the proposed variation.

Issue no. 10

The quantum and location of lands available for residential development during the plan period have been correctly identified within the Core Strategy and revised Map 1. The BRA considers that there is, however, no policy framework for the implementation of the Core Strategy. Section 5.4.4.6 outlines and defines the lands which have been zoned for Strategic Land Reserve with a policy framework provided in policies P-SLR-1 to P-SLR-5. It is therefore suggested that further policy(s) are incorporated into the Core Strategy which will provide the framework for those residential lands to be developed during the plan period.

Opinion

The policy framework for developing lands not included in the Strategic Land Reserve is outlined in Sections 6 to 15 of the SEDP. There is no need for additional policies.

Recommendation

No change to the proposed variation.

Issue no. 11

The BRA suggests that “cross-referencing to the sequential development of lands outlined in the existing Development Plan and a justification test (see Policy CSP 8 of the RPGs 2010–2022) should be included within the additional policies suggested above”.

Opinion

RPG policy **CSP 8** reads as follows:

Zoned land should be assigned to different phases of development, with a proviso that generally, a later phase should not commence until a given percentage of an earlier phase has been granted permission, and another given percentage has been developed or currently being developed;

It is considered that the requirements of CSP-8 are fulfilled by the designation of the Strategic Land Reserve. Given the inclusion of 514 hectares as Strategic Land Reserve, of the total of 582 greenfield lands zoned for residential and mixed-use in the SEDP, it is considered unnecessary to impose further restrictions on the development of the remaining 43 hectares of lands, which are all located within or adjoining the city centre.

The proposed variation does not require any particular proportion of land to be developed before releasing land from the Strategic Land Reserve. However, proposed policy P-SLR-4 specifies that any such release can be done only in exceptional circumstances, i.e. if the supply of residential land proves insufficient during the lifetime of the SEDP.

Given the varied typology, locations, accessibility and zoning designations of sites retained for development under the current SEDP, it may be unreasonable to impose a condition whereby, for example, 75% of all lands zoned C1 and C2 (city-centre mix of uses) must be developed before any medium- or lower- density residential lands can be released from the SLR, in a potential situation where there would be growing evidence of demand for this type of housing.

Considering the ongoing economic recession, the level of vacancy, the current housing market circumstances and the trend of decreasing population observed in Sligo Borough and its immediate environs, the probability of a situation where there would be insufficient land for residential development by 2013 appears to be extremely low.

Recommendation

No change to the proposed variation.

Issue no. 12

The Authority recommends the inclusion of an additional policy with respect to the sites designated for urban regeneration and brown and infill sites (referred to in last sentence on page 8 of the Draft Core Strategy) to ensure that no ambiguity exists at the implementation stage of the Core Strategy.

Opinion

The policy framework for developing lands not included in the SLR is outlined in Chapters 6 to 15 of the SEDP. Specific provisions relating to sites designated for urban regeneration are included in Section 12.8 (p. 88 of the SEDP), as indicated in the text of the proposed variation.

Recommendation

No change to the proposed variation.

Issue no. 13

The Regional Authority agrees that the existing Map 5.C is a good diagrammatic representation of the Gateway's structure and its future spatial development and fulfils the requirements of Section 10 (2a) of the Act.

Opinion

The observation is noted.

Recommendation

No change to the proposed variation.

Issue no. 14

The Regional Authority recommends that a number of sections of the existing Development Plan, which include references to population projections, are re-visited and amended.

Opinion

The purpose of the Core Strategy Variation is to achieve compliance with the requirements of the Planning and Development Act 2010, as indicated in the section titled **Reason for the Proposed Variation** in the **Explanatory Note**.

It is not the intention of the Borough and County Councils to undertake a detailed review of the entire SEDP and modify all sections of the Plan at this stage.

Recommendation

No change to the proposed variation.

Issue no. 15

The Core Strategy must be introduced and cross referenced earlier within the Development Plan. Chapter 3 should be amended to include reference to the Core Strategy (an additional Strategic Goal or Objective) as it is a key cornerstone of the Development Plan.

Opinion

Please see the Manager's response to Issue no. 14 above.

The Core Strategy acts as the **general framework** for strategic goals and objectives and it will be introduced as such when reviewing the SEDP.

Recommendation

No change to the proposed variation.

Issue no. 16

The BRA considers that a long-term vision (20 -30 years) and/or population target could be provided in Section 4.1 of the Plan.

Opinion

Please refer to the Manager's response to Issue no. 14.

Whilst population growth scenarios will be updated at the next review of the SEDP, there is sufficient land included in the SLR to accommodate a future population of circa 50,000 in the SEDP area. However, the probability of such growth or its timeframe cannot be estimated at this stage.

Recommendation

No change to the proposed variation.

Issue no. 17

It is recommended that Section 4.2.1 should be amended to outline the relevant housing demand, or alternatively, should be cross referenced with the relevant section of the Core Strategy;

The Authority suggests that Section 5.2.2 Zoning Principles and Section 5.2.3 Zoning Objectives should be amended for the Development Plan, given that the residential zonings will be altered as a result of the proposed variation. Similarly, Sections 16.1, 16.2 and the Zoning Matrix should be amended so that "no ambiguity exists at Development Management stage".

Sections 7.1 and 7.2 (including 7.2.3 The Outer City) should be amended to reflect the new population targets, resultant housing and housing land requirements outlined in the Core Strategy for the future growth of the Gateway of Sligo.

Opinion

It should be noted that the zoning of lands is not changed by the proposed variation, which, at this stage, simply introduces a prioritising/phasing strategy for the development of lands zoned under the SEDP.

The quantum of land zoned for each type of use is not modified by the proposed variation. Only the timeframe for development of lands would be changed through the creation of the Strategic Land Reserve.

There is no scope for ambiguity during the development management process.

Please refer also to the Manager's response to Issue no. 14.

Recommendation

No change to the proposed variation.

Issue no. 18

Figure 5.H outlines a potential additional population of 27,000 persons to the Gateway from the five Local Area Plan areas. This is an aspirational figure that is applicable to a long term vision for these areas and does not reflect the population targets outlined in the RPGs or Core Strategy. This is not consistent with the Growth model for the Gateway. It is recommended that the population targets and all other relevant sections of the existing Development Plan should be amended to reflect the targets outlined in the Core Strategy.

Opinion

The potential additional population corresponds to the total amount of zoned land and does not take into account the SLR designation. There is no contradiction between the population allocated by the RPGs for the lifetime of the SEDP 2010-2016 and the potential of the Plan area to accommodate further additional population in the long term.

Recommendation

No change to the proposed variation.

Issue no. 19

Section 6.5.4 outlines a Sligo Catchment Population for future growth in the retail sector. The BRA considers that the "population targets" outlined in this section are not consistent with the content of the Core Strategy for County Sligo. The section should be amended to include the relevant population targets for the Gateway, as well as the amended population growth targets from all relevant adjoining Counties Core Strategies which are currently being developed at present. Retail Catchment populations should be realistic and in line with population growth targets.

Opinion

Sligo's retail catchment extends outside the county boundaries, but does not coincide with any conventional (county/ED) boundaries. The population size and future population growth in the catchment area were estimated in 2008 as part of the preparation of the *Joint Sligo City and County Retail Planning Strategy*, which will be revisited at the next SEDP review. It is not considered necessary or realistic to amend the Retail Planning Strategy at this stage.

Recommendation

No change to the proposed variation.

Part 2

The following is a list of additional suggestions which, in the view of the BRA, cover other requirements of the Act and seek to enhance the Core Strategy and the SEDP 2010–2016 as varied.

Issue no. 20

Map 1 of the existing Development Plan will be superseded by the revised Map 1. It is suggested the lands identified for residential development during the plan period should be more clearly identified on the map. The relevant lands should be outlined by a bright colour that makes them easily identified;

Opinion

It is considered that the graphic representation of the Strategic Land Reserve is adequate and sufficient.

Recommendation

No change to the proposed variation.

Issue no. 21

The Core Strategy could be enhanced by providing baseline information on potential yields that may be gained from unfinished estates and extant permissions for residential developments during the remaining plan period. This will be in addition to the vacant units already identified in the Core Strategy.

Opinion

As indicated in response to Issue no. 3 of this submission, unfinished estates are not a significant problem in the Sligo and Environs area. The vacancy rate of less than 10% is considered within the normal limits for a city of Sligo's size.

Information on potential yields from extant planning permission is already included in Note no. 6 attached to Table 5.K in section 5.4.4.5 of the proposed variation.

Recommendation

No change to the proposed variation.

Issue no. 22

The BRA makes the following additional suggestions:

- Section 1.1 and Figure 1.A should be updated with relevant detail from the RPGs 2010 – 2022 i.e. include map 3.1 and relevant text
- Update Figures 5.F and 16A with the relevant updated map;
- The legal framework for Local Area Plans has been amended following the publication of the Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2010. Section 5.3 should therefore be updated to reflect those changes introduced by the above;

- Section 6.1 of the existing Development Plan should be updated with relevant information from the Regional Economic Strategy (Chapter 4) of the RPGs 2010 – 2022. The Forfás Regional Competitiveness Agendas should also be referenced;
- Section 6.5.4 should be updated to reflect the population growth framework outlined in the Core Strategy.

Opinion

Please refer to the Manager’s response to Issue no. 14 above.

Recommendation

No change to the proposed variation.

Issue no. 23

The Regional Authority considers it important that the Local Authorities “revisit all zoning objectives within the next full Development Plan review, with a view to revisiting the options available to them in dealing with the over provision of zoned residential lands and outlined in Section 5.4.1.1 of the Core Strategy itself”.

Opinion

The comments are noted and agreed.

Recommendation

No change to the proposed variation.

Issue no. 24 – Conclusion

The Regional Authority acknowledges the work of Sligo County Council and Sligo Borough Council in preparing the Draft Core Strategy for the Gateway of Sligo. The housing and housing land requirement figures used in the Core Strategy are consistent with the framework of principles outlined in Chapter 3 of the RPGs 2010.

Opinion

The Border Regional Authority’s acknowledgement of the validity of the Councils’ approach to incorporating a Core Strategy in the SEDP 2010-2016 is noted.

Recommendation

No change to the proposed variation.

Submission no. 2

4 August 2011

Michael McCormack, Policy Advisor (Planning)
on behalf of the National Roads Authority

Issue no. 1

The National Roads Authority attaches particular importance to the network of national roads and considers that specific reference should be made in the Core Strategy to support the objective of maintaining and protecting the safety and efficiency of national roads.

The Authority notes that the current Plan and proposed variation make no reference to the *Spatial Planning and National Roads Guidelines* (DoEHLG, 2010) and suggests the inclusion of a reference to these Guidelines in the proposed variation.

Opinion

The purpose of the Core Strategy Variation is to achieve compliance with the requirements of the Planning and Development Act 2010, as indicated in the section titled **Reason for the Proposed Variation** in the **Explanatory Note**. There is no legislative requirement for the Core Strategy to refer to the safety and efficiency of national roads.

In **Chapter 10 Mobility** (p. 51 of the SEDP), strategic policy SP-MOB-10 ensures the protection of the carrying capacity, operational efficiency and safety of national roads.

It is acknowledged that the recently-published *Spatial Planning and National Roads Guidelines* (DoEHLG, 2010) are not mentioned in the SEDP. However, the guidelines will be adhered to in the assessment of development proposals, as part of the development management process.

It is not the intention of the Borough and County Councils to undertake a detailed review of the entire SEDP at this stage. All sections of the Plan will be revisited and appropriately modified as part of the next review of the SEDP.

Recommendation

No change to the proposed variation.

Issue no. 2

The NRA notes that the proposed Core Strategy variation addresses the quantum and location of residential land and expresses the view that the extensive areas identified for future business/industry/commercial development are not necessarily linked to areas identified for future residential development.

The submission states: “Significant areas subject to the BITP and WILT zoning objectives are situated proximate to lands now identified as Strategic Land Reserve and which are identified as such because of their peripheral location, their limited accessibility and location removed from public transport. Such zoning distribution may have the unintended implication of encouraging greater car usage with attendant implications for the national road network in the area.”

It is suggested that the Councils review the quantum and distribution of the business/ industry/ commercial lands, particularly those close to or adjoining national roads.

Opinion

It should be noted that the significant areas zoned BITP, adjoining the Strategic Land Reserve, are currently undeveloped. Therefore, it is unlikely that such lands will generate greater car usage during the lifetime of the current SEDP.

The retention of BITP and WILT zoning at current locations ensures that suitable lands will be available for businesses planning to locate in Sligo, in any future economic upturn, thereby adding employment and income to the local economy and contributing to the strategic goal of facilitating the economic development of the Gateway.

As indicated in response to Issue no. 1 above, the safe and efficient operation of national roads is protected by the strategic policy SP-MOB 10.

Recommendation

No change to the proposed variation.

Issue no. 3

The National Roads Authority notes that “the Core Strategy Map does not appear to indicate major transport infrastructure in the area, nor does it outline the provision of public transport services thereby demonstrating the integration of transport and land use policies”. It also suggests that “the Councils may wish to address the demonstration of the provision of public transport facilities in the context of section 5.4.4.7 of the proposed variation”.

Opinion

Figure 5.C **Future city structure** (p. 14 of the SEDP) shows all the national and regional roads in the SEDP area, both existing and proposed, and also shows the rail link to Dublin. The relation between roads/railway and lands zoned for residential and employment uses is evident in the diagram.

The provision of public transport is appropriately addressed in Section 10.6 (p. 62 of the SEDP). It is not considered necessary to repeat this information in the Core Strategy.

Recommendation

No change to the proposed variation.

Issue no. 4

The NRA contends that “the Authority was not consulted on the pre-draft consultation that has taken place in relation to the Docklands LAP” and requests “consultation, in accordance with the provisions of the Spatial Planning and National Roads (Draft) Guidelines, on future local area plans that may have implications for the national road network”.

Opinion

As a prescribed consultative body for local area plans, the NRA was advised in writing of the pre-draft consultation on the proposed Docklands LAP (letter dated 24 January 2011). The Authority will continue to be consulted as legally required at all stages of preparation of future local area plans.

Recommendation

No change to the proposed variation.

Submission no. 3

5 August 2011

Cunnane Stratton Reynolds
on behalf of Shafin Developments

The submission relates to two portions of land at Carrowroe which are stated to total 6.9 hectares in area. The lands are divided by the Ballygawley road (R284) with the majority of lands located on the eastern side of the road and zoned as 'R1 low-density residential areas' in the current SEDP 2010-2016. The smaller western portion of land is currently zoned as 'R2 low/medium-density residential areas'.

Issue no. 1

The submission contends that the subject lands should retain their current low and low/medium density residential zonings and should not be included within the Strategic Land Reserve. In support of this contention, the submission highlights the importance of retaining low-density housing land (i.e. land zoned as R1), particularly in relation to providing a wide range of housing at various locations and offering a suitable alternative to one-off rural housing. It is stated that the proposed inclusion of all the existing R1-zoned lands within the SLR is contrary to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

Opinion

Of the 43 hectares proposed to be retained for residential development, 6.7 hectares zoned 'R2 - low/medium-density residential areas' can accommodate densities as low as 20 units per hectare (or 8 units per acre).

Section 5.11 of the DoEHLG's *Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas* outlines that even in the outer suburban areas, where the lowest density ranges are usually applicable, net densities of less than 30 units per hectare should generally be discouraged in the interests of land efficiency.

The proposed variation adequately provides for the accommodation of comparatively lower densities.

Having regard to the existing and potential low-density housing supply, it is considered that the SEDP, as varied, would satisfactorily accommodate a range of house types throughout the plan area.

Recommendation

No change to the proposed variation.

Issue no. 2

The submission assesses the suitability of the subject lands against the criteria set out in the National Spatial Strategy and the sequential approach test regarding appropriate locations for housing development. This test relates to issues such as availability of community resources, carrying capacity of the environmental setting, transportation, integration between housing and employment, character of the area, integration of all sections of society and avoidance of flood risk.

It is contended that the subject lands satisfy all these criteria, unlike all the other R1-zoned lands which fail one or more of the tests included in these criteria.

Opinion

It is acknowledged that the subject lands can potentially benefit from the availability of some adjoining physical and social infrastructural services. The availability of these services may assist in facilitating the development of these lands at an appropriate stage in the future.

However, the lands are located on the periphery of Sligo and Environs, at circa 3 km distance from the city centre. In light of revised housing land requirements as outlined in the proposed variation, it is considered that the retention of the subject lands would conflict with the principle of sequential development as outlined in section 5.2.2 of the current SEDP, as well as conflicting with the strategic goal of creating a compact and sustainable city (as outlined in SG-1, section 3.1 of the current SEDP).

Whilst some regional bus routes serve the Carrowroe area, it should be noted that these routes are not part of the Sligo city service. The routes serving the area run infrequently and, being a predominantly regional service, have not been designed to meet the commuting needs of a sustainable city. It is therefore not considered that the retention of the lands would significantly reinforce the usage of public transport.

It is acknowledged that the Carowroe-Caltragh area includes large portions of land zoned for the future development of employment-generating uses. However, given the current scarcity of employment in this area and the likelihood of this situation prevailing in the short-medium term, it is not considered that the retention of the subject lands would ensure integration between the location of housing and employment.

Recommendation

No change to the proposed variation.

Issue no. 3

It is stated that the retention of the existing zoning would be consistent with the aim of developing a north-south *Economic Spine* between Lisnalurg and Carrowroe as outlined in section 5.1.2 of the SEDP.

Opinion

Whilst the aim in the current SEDP of creating this economic spine is acknowledged, it should be noted that the proposed variation amends this approach. Consistent with the sequential approach, the two proposed larger neighbourhood centres at the extreme ends of the proposed spine, i.e. Lisnalurg and Carrowroe, would be omitted from the “areas where development will be encouraged during the life of the SEDP 2010-2016” as outlined in section 17.3 of the proposed variation.

Recommendation

No change to the proposed variation.

Issue no. 4

It is stated that whilst the preparation of the Caltragh-Carrowroe LAP will delay development in this area, the subject lands could be developed relatively quickly. It is stated that this may encourage further development of business and industry in the area.

Opinion

The timing of the preparation of the Caltragh-Carrowroe LAP may not necessarily delay development of this area. Furthermore, a significant portion of land in this area is zoned for BITP (business, industry and technology park) and other commercial uses which would not be affected by the proposed variation.

The subject lands are relatively minor and peripheral when considered in the overall context of the Caltragh-Carrowroe area and accordingly it is not considered that the development of these lands would have any significant impact with regard to encouraging further business and industry in the wider area.

Recommendation

No change to the proposed variation.

Issue no. 5

In relation to Table 5.J it is stated that the reference to ‘Area of land that can be developed during the current plan period’ (in row 1, column 5) is misleading and should refer to a ‘recommendation for zoning’ instead.

It is also stated that the average gross housing density used in the calculation of housing yields (i.e. 35 units per hectare) is artificially high and is at odds with the three ranges of density set out in Table 3.9 of the Border Regional Authority Planning Guidelines. In this regard it is contended that the retention of the subject lands, with a lower density range of 3 – 19 units per hectare, would have a relatively small additional requirement for immediate zoning and deletion from the SLR.

Opinion

It is proposed to make a minor modification to Table 5.J by inserting a footnote clarifying the proportion of land that can be developed in each zoning category.

Please refer to the Manager’s response to Issue no. 9 of Submission no. 1.

In relation to the issue of density, it should be noted that Table 3.9 of the BRA Guidelines outlines projections for the area of County Sligo outside the Sligo and Environs area. It is acknowledged that lower densities are used in these projections, as such densities would be appropriate to smaller towns and villages in rural Sligo. However it would be inappropriate to apply these densities to the urban area of Sligo and Environs. It is considered that the assumed average density of 35 units per hectare is appropriate in this case.

Recommendation

No further change to the proposed variation.

Issue no. 6

The submission highlights the attractiveness of the Carrowroe area for family living and states that the development of the subject lands could provide additional housing at the higher end of the market. Information included in the submission contends that a scarcity of housing at the higher end of the market has resulted in a “reasonable level of market activity” and that further similar development opportunities are limited.

Opinion

As outlined above, it is considered that the existing vacant and permitted housing stock offers a suitable range of housing options throughout the plan area. It is considered important that existing vacancy rates fall substantially before the development of further housing would be considered.

Recommendation

No change to the proposed variation.

Submission no. 4

8 August 2011

Ian Lumley, Heritage Officer
on behalf of An Taisce

Issue no. 1

An Taisce welcomes the proposed Core Strategy variation of the SEDP in accordance with the Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2010, which provides a mechanism to address “the appalling legacy of over-zoning throughout Ireland, which has contributed immeasurably to the inflation of the property bubble and the resulting calamitous consequences, including the establishment of NAMA”.

An Taisce contends that, with 514 hectares of “over-zoned residential land”, the Planning Authority “has failed in its approach to strategic planning and it should fundamentally reset its approach”. The Core Strategy “must be rigorously adhered to and implemented through the development management process”.

Opinion

The comments are noted.

It should also be noted that the zoning of land for residential and mixed uses in the SEDP 2004-2010 and 2010-2016 has been consistent with the growth potential for Sligo outlined in the National Spatial Strategy, the Border Regional Planning Guidelines 2004 and with the preferred population growth scenario selected at the time of drafting the two SEDPs.

The proposed Core Strategy Variation seeks to adjust the amount of land that can be developed for residential uses based on the additional population allocated through the RPGs for the lifetime of the current plan. This is the first time that the RPGs allocate population “targets” to counties and gateways in the Border Region.

It is the intention of both Councils to adhere to the Core Strategy, once adopted, and diligently implement the policies of the SEDP through the development management process.

Recommendation

No change to the proposed variation.

Issue no. 2

The variation should de-zone or “down-zone” inappropriately zoned land. The use of phasing/strategic reserve approach is inappropriate. An Taisce believes that “it is most likely that there will never be sufficient demand for new-build multi-unit residential properties to justify the extent of land zoned”. Surplus land should be simply de-zoned. “Down-zoning” land from residential to commercial, community or employment use “so as to side-step the provisions of the Planning Act 2010 cannot be justified”. Where a significant de-zoning is required, “other land zonings must also be de-zoned in tandem to ensure that there is an appropriately balanced supply of zoned land in any settlement”.

Opinion

It is not clear what is meant by “inappropriately zoned land”. Lands have been zoned in the SEDP area following the statutory process of preparing and adopting the Development Plan.

It is considered that the designation of a Strategic Land Reserve is appropriate and in compliance with departmental guidance in relation to surplus residential land. The short- and medium-term demand for residential land may be reduced, but it is considered prudent to safeguard sufficient land to allow the Gateway of Sligo to attain its potential in the future, should the demand rise in the long term.

Zoning objectives, together with the other objectives and policies of the SEDP, will be revisited at the next review of the Development plan.

Recommendation

No change to the proposed variation.

Issue no. 3

An Taisce contends that the Planning Authority “has a duty and obligation to secure the value of the multi-billion asset loan portfolio which has been transferred to the tax-payer via the National Asset Management Agency (NAMA)”. It is suggested that “the Planning Authority will be doing just service to the tax payers of the country by de-zoning inappropriately zoned lands early. This will allow well located strategic sites to retain some of their value, enhance their development potential and ensure future development is prioritised in sustainable serviceable locations”.

Opinion

Under the Planning and Development Acts 2000-2010, there is no duty or obligation on the Planning Authority to secure the value of assets held by an asset management company, be it a private or a state-owned entity, through the zoning or other objectives of its Development Plan.

It should be noted that the recently-published **List of properties subject to enforcement action** by NAMA does not include any property located within the Sligo and Environs area.

Recommendation

No change to the proposed variation.

Issue no. 4

An Taisce recommends that “where a demonstrated and justifiable demand for new residential development exists, the only criteria for selecting zoned lands to be released for development must be the Sequential Approach, environmental constraints and the availability of adequate infrastructure and services. All other criteria, including the economic and commercial circumstances of the landowner must be discounted.”

Opinion

Section 5.2.2 **Zoning principles** (p. 15 of the SEDP) states that “any rezoning proposal that might be considered during the lifetime of this Plan should be assessed against the Strategic Zoning Policies and the principle of sequential development”. There is no indication in the SEDP that the economic and commercial circumstances of a landowner are to be used as criteria when rezoning lands.

The above provision is also applicable in a situation where land might need to be released from the Strategic Reserve in accordance with the proposed new policy P-SLR-4 (i.e. in exceptional circumstances, if the supply of residential land proves insufficient).

Recommendation

No change to the proposed variation.

Issue no. 5

An Taisce reminds the Planning Authority of the legal provisions requiring the Development Plan to be consistent with the Regional Planning Guidelines. It also mentions the Judgement of the High Court in respect of Farrell & Forde v Limerick City Council [2008 No. 1398 J.R.], where Justice McGovern found that the Manager only had to give effect to the lawful resolutions of the elected members. It is stated that “the Manager has the power to treat a resolution as invalid where the Elected Members have ignored the local authority’s expert advice to the effect that the development would be contrary to the proper planning and development of the area and where they fail to outline any proper planning-based reason for rejecting that advice”.

An Taisce adds that “there is no presumption in law that land zoned will remain therefor zoned and there is no legal prohibition for the de-zoning of land”. It requests that “the Manager and Elected Members have full regard to their legal obligations in the consideration of this submission and the adoption of the proposed variation”.

Opinion

The comments are noted.

Recommendation

No change to the proposed variation.

Submission no. 5

8 August 2011

Paul O'Neill, GVA Planning

On behalf of Northwest Livestock Holdings Limited

The submission relates to a significant landholding in the Hazelwood area which already has the benefit of a 10-year planning permission for a major residential development. It also relates to the development of adjoining lands in the Hazelwood-Ballinode area and the overall development of Sligo as a whole.

Issue no. 1

The submission refers to recent population trends and contends that the proposed variation will result in a reduction in the range and choice of housing availability in the Sligo and Environs area, thereby consolidating recent trends of population loss from the area to rural towns and villages.

Opinion

As outlined in response to Submission no. 3 (Issue no. 1), it is considered that the SEDP, as varied, would satisfactorily accommodate a range of house types throughout the plan area.

Recommendation

No change to the proposed variation.

Issue no. 2

The submission raises concerns that, as a result of their inclusion within the SLR, their client's lands and adjoining lands in the area cannot now be developed over the lifetime of the plan. It also raises the issue of services provision and contends that the extant planning permission would not be financially viable. It is therefore requested that their client's lands, together with a comparable area of surrounding lands in the Hazelwood-Ballinode area, be excluded from the SLR.

Opinion

The variation does not and cannot affect any existing planning permissions, and therefore would not prevent the implementation of the permissions granted on these lands (which have a 10-year lifetime and will not expire until 2019).

Whilst existing planning permissions at this location can still be implemented irrespective of the proposed inclusion within the SLR, it is nonetheless considered that these lands should be retained within the SLR having regard to their peripheral location.

Consistent with the sequential approach, lands closer to Sligo City Centre are prioritised for development, as they can more readily avail of existing physical and social infrastructure, community facilities, public transport and pedestrian/cycling linkages. This is consistent with the SEDP aim of creating a compact, sustainable city.

Recommendation

No change to the proposed variation.

Issue no. 3

The submission raises the issue of any possible future amendment planning applications in relation to existing planning permissions on their client's lands, and raises concerns that any such proposal would not be permitted because of the inclusion of the lands within the SLR.

Opinion

As outlined above, the proposed variation does not propose to impact upon the implementation of any existing planning permissions. As this issue is not specifically addressed in the proposed variation, it could be clarified in the Explanatory Note.

Recommendation

No change to the proposed variation.

In the Explanatory Note (Section F Core Strategy), include the following clarification:

The inclusion of lands within the Strategic Land Reserve will not prevent the implementation of any extant planning permissions on these lands.

Issue no. 4

As an alternative to the complete omission of the lands from the SLR (as discussed in issue no. 2 above), the submission requests a policy amendment to make it clear that extant planning permissions will not be affected by the inclusion of the relevant lands within the SLR.

Opinion

As outlined above, the proposed variation will not affect any extant planning permissions.

Since this issue is not specifically addressed in the proposed variation, it could be clarified in the Explanatory Note (see the Manager's response to Issue no. 3 of this submission). This is considered an operational matter and therefore any such clarification does not require a policy change.

Recommendation

No change to the proposed variation.

Submission no. 6

9 August 2011

Yvonne Dalton, Head of Planning
on behalf of Dublin Airport Authority

The submission indicates that the Dublin Airport Authority has no comments to make with regard to the proposed Core Strategy Variation of Sligo and Environs Development Plan 2010–2016.

Opinion

Noted.

Recommendation

No change to the proposed variation.

Submission no. 7

9 August 2011

Deirdre Maher, Executive Officer, Forward Planning Section
on behalf of the Department of Education and Skills

The Department notes the proposed Core Strategy Variation of Sligo and Environs Development Plan 2010–2016 and has no comments to make in this regard.

Opinion

Noted.

Recommendation

No change to the proposed variation.

Submission no. 8

8 August 2011

Patrick F. Quinn

The submission refers to lands at Shannon Eighter/Lisnalurg with a stated site area of approximately 6.1 hectares. The lands are zoned Mix-1 – mixed uses (non retail) in accordance with the current SEDP and are proposed for inclusion within the Strategic Land Reserve as part of the proposed variation.

Issue no. 1

The submission refers to plans to construct an Alzheimer centre on this land and supports the need for the provision of associated sheltered/assisted living facilities.

Opinion

The proposed centre and any associated sheltered/assisted living facilities would be considered a community facility which can be permitted within the Strategic Land Reserve (SLR) as outlined in the proposed variation (policy P-SLR-3).

Recommendation

No change to the proposed variation.

Issue no. 2

The submission contends that as the site is serviced, it is unreasonable and contrary to the proper planning of the area to prevent development of the site for the next 5 years.

Opinion

As outlined above, not all development will be prevented by the SLR designation.

Whilst it is acknowledged that the site can be serviced with some infrastructural facilities including wastewater disposal and water supply, it should be noted that a wider range of criteria must be met in order for an area to be prioritised for residential development. Notably, under PL 07/865, An Bord Pleanála issued a decision to refuse planning permission for a major residential development on these lands on the basis of deficiencies in the adjoining road network and traffic hazard.

Furthermore, deficiencies in this area exist in relation to the availability of community/social services and other services including public transport, commercial services etc. Consistent with the sequential approach outlined in the proposed variation, other sites closer to the existing services and facilities offered in Sligo City Centre should be prioritised for development.

Recommendation

No change to the proposed variation.

Issue no. 3

It is stated that the landowner's family will have a housing need within the plan period and that retaining the existing zoning will take the pressure off the demand for one-off housing in the surrounding area.

Opinion

The proposed variation does not involve any changes to current policy regarding one-off housing on zoned lands. Section 7.2.5 of the current SEDP outlines that such proposals will be facilitated in cases of genuine rural-generated housing need which would not adversely impact on the potential for comprehensive and co-ordinated development of the surrounding lands. This approach is retained in the proposed variation, as clearly set out in policy P-SLR-2.

Recommendation

No change to the proposed variation.

Submission no. 9

9 August 2011

Darragh McGonigle, Senior Planner, GVA Planning
on behalf of Tesco Ireland Ltd

Issue no. 1

Tesco Ireland is strongly opposed to the inclusion of the MIX-2 lands at Carrowroe within the Strategic Land Reserve. It is requested that these lands are omitted from the SLR.

It is reiterated that MIX-2 zoning is intended to encourage mixed-use developments emphasising employment/enterprise, residential, leisure and commercial uses, with retail warehousing open for consideration.

As the Core Strategy is intended to address an over-supply of residential land, confirmation is sought that other uses can be developed on the subject lands. It is also requested that a specific objective be inserted to allow for “a portion residential development where it forms an ancillary part of an overall proposal i.e. required to meet the principles of mixed-use development”.

Opinion

Among the criteria for excluding lands from the Strategic Land Reserve are: the proximity to the city centre, good accessibility and the availability of environmental and social infrastructure. Whilst the MIX-2-zoned lands at Carrowroe enjoy good vehicular accessibility, they are removed from the city centre, community facilities and have infrastructural deficiencies. Therefore, they are considered less suitable for short-term residential development than lands located within or immediately adjoining the city centre.

However, other uses (compatible with residential development) will be considered on these lands during the lifetime of the Plan, as indicated in policy P-SLR-3, insofar as they do not adversely impact on the potential for comprehensive and co-ordinated development of surrounding lands.

Any development proposal that might involve ancillary residential development in order to be sustainable will be assessed for compliance with the provisions of the SEDP and its Core Strategy.

Recommendation

No change to the proposed variation.

Issue no. 2

Tesco Ireland contends that “there is an under-provision of modern competitive food stores within the Plan lands and the inclusion of substantial land areas within the SLR may inhibit new store developments”.

Opinion

The SLR designation indeed covers both residential/mixed-use lands and the neighbourhood centres that were designed to serve these areas. Although the development restriction relates only to residential uses, it would affect the development of neighbourhood centres (including food stores), as these facilities “should not precede the surrounding residential development they are meant to serve” (Section 16.4.15 of the SEDP).

However, it is considered that existing and permitted food store development constitutes adequate provision for the current and additional population allocated through the RPGs for the lifetime of the SEDP 2010-2016.

Any new store development must take place in accordance with the retail planning provisions contained in Section 6.5 Retail Strategy of the SEDP.

Recommendation

No change to the proposed variation.

Issue no. 3

The MIX-2 lands at Carrowroe are highly accessible from the road network and “can provide modern shopping facilities”. The lands are also suitable “as they can accommodate the operational requirements of retailers, particularly with regard to servicing, car parking and a minimum site area.”

As an alternative to omitting the MIX-2 lands at Carrowroe from the SLR, it is suggested that the policy P-SLR-3 should be amended by adding the following:

“Retail development will be permitted on the MIX-2 zoning on a case-by-case basis, having regard to the assessment of need.”

Opinion

As indicated in the response to Issue no. 1 above, good vehicular accessibility is only one of a multitude of criteria used to assess any type of development. As stated in the response to Issue no. 2 above, any retail development proposal must comply with the SEDP provisions set out in Section 6.5 Retail Strategy.

Development proposals for non-residential development on lands included in the SLR will be considered and assessed for compliance with the relevant Development Plan provisions.

Recommendation

No change to the proposed variation.

Issue no. 4

Suggesting that Sligo is experiencing “significant trade leakage to adjoining counties (intra-regional trade leakage) and to cross-border areas (inter-regional), thereby illustrating key weaknesses in the retail offer of the Gateway, Tesco Ireland argues that there is a lack of modern foodstore developments within Sligo and Environs. In order to facilitate the delivery of modern convenience floor space within Sligo, it is requested that the Planning Authority designate appropriate sites both within and adjoining the city centre for “stand-alone food store development”.

Tesco welcomes the emphasis given to future retail provision within the Docklands area and requests that policy statements be included in the Core Strategy to facilitate new food store developments within this area.

Opinion

Whilst no evidence is provided to demonstrate that Sligo and Environs is experiencing trade leakage to adjoining counties or to cross-border areas in terms of food shopping, it is acknowledged that the residents of peripheral areas in County Sligo use the nearest supermarkets in neighbouring counties. This is a practical shopping pattern, as it would be unsustainable for population in these areas to travel to Sligo City for their food/supermarket shopping.

The subsection **Location of new retail floor space**, in Section **6.5.4 Sligo’s catchment and future growth in retail floor space** (p. 26 of the SEDP) gives an indication of the Planning Authority’s policies applicable to proposals for new retail facilities. The Docklands area is specifically mentioned in this section. It is not considered necessary for the Core Strategy to designate sites or to include policy statements relating specifically to food stores.

Recommendation

No change to the proposed variation.

Submission no. 10

9 August 2011

Paul O'Neill, GVA Planning
on behalf of the Monahan family

The submission relates to a significant amount of land located to the north and south of Carrowroe roundabout, between the old N4 and the new N4/Inner Relief Road. The lands are zoned as a combination of 'MIX-1 – mixed uses (non-retail)' and 'MIX-2 – mixed uses (optional retail warehousing)' in the current SEDP, and are proposed for inclusion within the SLR.

The submission contends that residential is not the principal intended use for these lands and therefore expresses concern that other types of development (commercial etc.) may be prohibited due to the inclusion of the lands within the SLR. Whilst the submission acknowledges that it would not appear to be the objective of the proposed variation to prevent other non-residential uses on Mix-1 and Mix-2 lands, it is requested that the subject lands be excluded from the SLR in order to avoid any ambiguity.

Alternatively it is requested that Policy P-SLR-3 be amended to clarify that other non-residential uses that are normally permissible on MIX-1 and MIX-2 zonings will be considered and will not be materially affected by SLR policies.

Opinion

The designation of a Strategic Land Reserve and associated policies relates only to residential development and does not prevent the development of non-residential uses on the subject lands or any other lands included within the SLR. It is considered that this has already been made explicitly clear in the proposed variation, both within the Explanatory Note (to be included as an appendix in accordance with the Manager's recommendation in relation to Submission no. 1) and the proposed changes to the text of the SEDP.

Recommendation

No change to the proposed variation.

Submission no. 11

9 August 2011

David Walker, Spatial Policy Unit
Department of Environment, Community and Local Government

Issue no. 1

The Department wishes to compliment the Planning Authorities on the clearly set out Core Strategy and the manner in which it has identified the location of land for development which has residential potential.

Opinion

The comments are noted.

Recommendation

No change to the proposed variation.

Issue no. 2

The Department suggests that the Planning Authorities may wish to consider “the incorporation of a condition in terms of which land in the Strategic Land Reserve (SLR) could be developed. For example, the condition could indicate that at least 75% (or other similar proportion) of the land identified for development in the Plan period (i.e. the 43 ha) would need to have been developed before development on SLR land could take place. Such a condition would give clarity to policy P-SLR-4, which states that SLR land could be released only in exceptional circumstances, where the supply of land proves insufficient”.

Opinion

The proposed variation does not require any particular proportion of land to be developed before releasing land from the Strategic Land Reserve. However, proposed policy P-SLR-4 specifies that any such release can be done only in exceptional circumstances, i.e. if the supply of residential land proves insufficient during the lifetime of the SEDP.

Considering the ongoing economic recession, the level of vacancy, the current housing market circumstances and the trend of decreasing population observed in Sligo Borough and its immediate environs, the probability of a situation where there would be insufficient land for residential development by 2013 appears to be extremely low.

Given the varied typology, locations, accessibility and zoning designations of sites retained for development under the current SEDP, it may be unreasonable to impose a condition whereby, for example, 75% of lands zoned C1 and C2 (city-centre mix of uses) must be developed before any medium- or lower- density residential lands can be released from the SLR, in a potential situation where there would be growing evidence of demand for this type of housing.

It is considered that the proposed policy P-SLR-4 is sufficient at this stage. However, further policy changes may be made as part of undertaking the full review of the SEDP in 2013-2015.

Recommendation

No change to the proposed variation.

Issue no. 3

It is noted that “land with planning permission for 791 dwellings is designated as SLR lands and is thus not included as part of the 43 ha. If a developer were to exercise the right to development, this would have implications for the amount and location of the 43 ha land, and the Authorities would need to review the situation in order to ensure compliance with the County Development Plan and the Regional Planning Guidelines”.

Opinion

The observation is noted. As outlined above, the current housing market conditions make it unlikely that all or a part of the 791 permitted dwellings would be constructed during the lifetime of the current SEDP. However, should this situation occur, the Planning Authorities will review the situation and, if necessary, amend the Strategic Land Reserve.

Recommendation

No change to the proposed variation.

Issue no. 4

The Department “draws the Authorities’ attention to the recent past pattern of growth in the wider Sligo Town area. In the period from 2006 to 2011, the population in the town declined by 345 persons (-1.9%), whereas the population in the Enumeration Districts surrounding the town up to 10 km distant increased by 1,211 persons (+9.0%). Clearly this recent past pattern of growth would need to be substantially reversed if the land identified in the Core Strategy for development in the Plan period (i.e. 43 ha) was to be developed to any significant extent. Achieving this reversal created challenges for both the Borough Council and the County Council which, if not adequately addressed, could lead in future years to a continuation of the same past pattern. National and regional policy, as expressed in the National Spatial Strategy and the Regional Planning Guidelines, is to strengthen the Sligo Gateway and not for development to be occurring at substantially faster rates in the wider catchment area.

Opinion

The comments are acknowledged. The “hollowing-out” pattern is not a recent trend in the Sligo and Environs area. This phenomenon became apparent after the 1991 Census and has accelerated in recent years as a consequence of, essentially, two factors:

- a preference of households for family dwellings on larger sites, located in a rural environment. This has been facilitated by the flexibility of the County Development Plan’s rural housing policy, which was/is, nonetheless, fully consistent with national and regional guidance.
- the large number of new dwellings recently built in Sligo’s satellite villages, many of which are vacant. As the price of these dwellings continues to decrease, they would probably become ever more attractive to newly-formed households.

Considering that none of the two factors mentioned above is likely to abate in the short/medium term, it is expected that the population of Sligo and Environs (as defined by the Census) will continue to fall and no policy provision included in the CDP or the SEDP will be able to reverse this trend.

Recommendation

No change to the proposed variation.

Submission no. E-1

13 July 2011

Paul McMahon, Development Applications Unit
on behalf of the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht

This submission has been received in response to the preliminary consultation with environmental authorities regarding the need for a Strategic Environmental Report. The submission was received too late to be taken into consideration before making the SEA Decision. However, it was decided to address it as an early submission on the proposed variation.

The submission indicates that the Development Applications Unit “continues to have serious reservations about the proposed development at Lisnalurg” in the vicinity of Recorded Monument SL014-01201 (ceremonial enclosure) and SL014-01202 (enclosure).

The submission acknowledges that “works will not be considered until 2016 in this area” and recommends that the preparation of any future Development Plan should have due regard to the National Monuments Acts 1930-2004 and “provide for a suitable buffer area around the monument to protect its amenity and setting.

Opinion

The comments are noted. Any development that might be proposed in the vicinity of the Recorded Monument, in accordance with the proposed policy P-SLR-3, will have to comply with the provisions of **Chapter 13.1 Archaeological Heritage** and the **Archaeological heritage policies** (pp 91-92 of the SEDP). The development management process will ensure the creation of a suitable buffer zone around the monument.

Zoning and other objectives included in the current SEDP will be revisited as part of the next review of the Development Plan.

Recommendation

No change to the proposed variation.

3. List of persons and organisations that made submissions in relation to the Proposed Core Strategy Variation of Sligo and Environs Development Plan 2010–2016

Submissions received during the public consultation period

Ref. No.	Date received	Name or agency	on behalf of (where applicable)	Address
01	3/8/2011	Matt Donnelly, Director	Border Regional Authority	Corlurgan Business Park, Ballinagh Road, Cavan
02	4/8/2011	Michael McCormack, Policy Advisor (Planning)	National Roads Authority	St. Martin's House, Waterloo Road, Dublin 4.
03	5/8/2011	Eamonn Prenter, Director	Shafin Developments	Cunnane Stratton Reynolds, Land Planning & Design, 3 Molesworth Place, Dublin 2.
04	8/8/2011	Ian Lumley, Heritage Officer	An Taisce	Tailors' Hall, Back Lane, Dublin 8.
05	8/8/2011	Paul O'Neill, Principal Planner	Northwestern Livestock Holdings Ltd.	GVA Planning and Regeneration Ltd., 2 nd Floor Seagrave House, 19-20 Earlsfort Terrace, Dublin 2.
06	9/8/2011	Yvonne Dalton, Head of Planning	Dublin Airport Authority	Head Office, Dublin Airport, Ireland.
07	9/8/2011	Deirdre Maher, Executive Officer	Department of Education and Skills	Forward Planning Section, Portlaoise Road, Tullamore, Co. Offaly.
08	8/8/2011	Patrick F. Quinn		Mount Shannon House, Bundoran Road, Sligo.
09	9/8/2011	Darragh McGonigle, Senior Planner	Tesco Ireland	GVA Planning and Regeneration Ltd., 2 nd Floor Seagrave House, 19-20 Earlsfort Terrace, Dublin 2.
10	9/8/2011	Paul O'Neill, Principal Planner	Monahan family	GVA Planning and Regeneration Ltd., 2 nd Floor Seagrave House, 19-20 Earlsfort Terrace, Dublin 2.
11	9/8/2011	David Walker	Planning System and Spatial Policy Section	Department of Environment, Community and Local Government, Custom House, Dublin 1.

Early submission

Ref. No.	Date received	Name or agency	on behalf of (where applicable)	Address
E-1	13/7/2011	Paul McMahon	Development Applications Unit	Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, Newtown Road, Wexford.

Late submission

Ref. No.	Date received	Name or agency	on behalf of (where applicable)	Address
L-1	10/8/2011	Carmel Conaty	Department of Communications, Energy & Natural Resources	F.O.I. Unit, Elm House, Cavan.