

SLIGO and Environs Development Plan 2010-2016



SLIGO
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Sligo Borough Council

Sligo County Council

SLIGO and Environs Development Plan 2010-2016

This Development Plan for Sligo and Environs (SEDP) has been prepared under Section 11 of the Planning and Development Act 2000-2006.

At their special meetings of 2 November 2009, Sligo County Council and Sligo Borough Council decided to adopt the SEDP 2010-2016. The Plan came into force on 30 November 2009 and will remain in force for a period of six years.

The SEDP and associated documents are available for inspection or purchase at the Planning Offices of Sligo Borough Council and Sligo County Council, in hard copy or in digital format (CD-ROM). The publications can also be viewed and downloaded from the Councils' websites at www.sligoborough.ie/sedp and www.sligococo.ie/sedp

The Plan is accompanied by the following supporting documents:

Joint Sligo City and County Housing Strategy 2010-2017

Joint Sligo City and County Retail Strategy 2010-2017

Environmental Report (Strategic Environmental Assessment)

Five A0 maps and one A1 map are also available as part of the SEDP.

The documents associated with the SEDP are: the *Record of Protected Structures* for the Sligo and Environs area, the *North Fringe Local Area Plan*, the *Hazelwood-Ballinode Local Area Plan*, the *Courthouse Urban Design Framework*, the *Quay Quarter Urban Design Framework* and the *Centre Block Masterplan*.

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**Revised
edition
May 2010**

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November 2009

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Cover illustration: *WB Yeats* (bronze by Rowan Gillespie, 1990) against the *Glasshouse* (designed by Vincent Hannon Architects, opened in 2007)

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Chapter 1. Existing context

1.1 Policy documents

A range of national, regional and local policy documents have been reviewed as part of the preparation of this Development Plan.

The documents most relevant to the development of Sligo City are:

- at national level: the *National Spatial Strategy 2002-2021* (NSS) and the *National Development Plan 2007-2013* (NDP).
- at regional level: the *Regional Planning Guidelines for the Border Region 2004-2024* (RPGs) and the *Connaught Waste Management Plan 2006-2011*. A *Western River Basin Management Plan* (WRBMP), which covers most of County Sligo, is currently being prepared. The relevant provisions of this plan will be incorporated in the SEDP following adoption of the WRBMP.
- at local level: the *County Development Plan 2005-2011* (CDP), *Sligo Subregional Strategy 2001-2021* and the *County Development Board's Integrated Economic, Social and Cultural Strategy for County Sligo 2002-2012*.

The Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DoEHLG) also issues guidelines for planning authorities (see Box 1.B).

Key messages

Key messages from these policy documents, to which this Plan responds, are as follows:

1. The NSS identifies 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. Drawing from *Sligo Subregional Strategy 2001-2021*, *Sligo & Environs Development Plan 2004-2010* has set out the for the first time a growth framework for Sligo City. The *SEDP 2010-2016* refines and consolidates this framework.
2. The NDP prioritises capital investment in line with the objectives of the NSS through a specific chapter on balanced regional development. A Gateway Innovation Fund (GIF) has been specified in the *NDP 2007-2013*. This initiative aims at stimulating the growth of the nine gateways identified under the NSS. The NDP also mentions Sligo as part of the envisaged Atlantic Gateways Corridor.
3. The RPGs seek to promote the growth of the NSS-identified gateways within a regional structure that also supports the development of other key settlements in the Border Region and the diversification of rural areas.
4. The CDP responds to the call in the NSS for frameworks at county level designed to achieve balanced development in areas outside the gateways. The CDP establishes a hierarchical settlement structure and outlines the growth potential of key settlements, outside the Gateway. The CDP is also a tool for managing urban and rural development in the areas directly influenced by Sligo City.

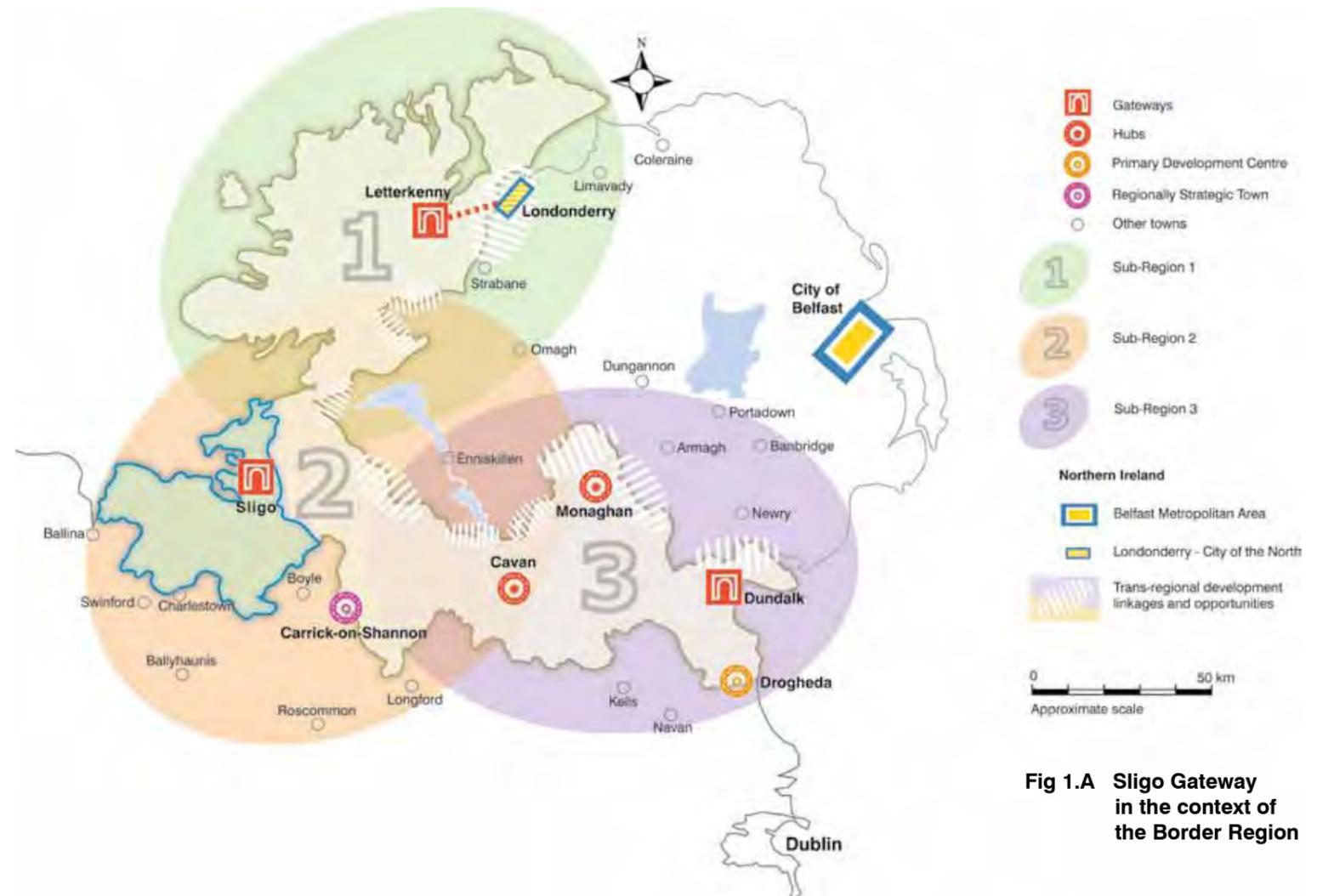


Fig 1.A Sligo Gateway in the context of the Border Region

Box 1.B Planning guidelines relevant to the SEDP

- Architectural Heritage Protection (2004)
- Architectural Heritage Protection for Places of Worship (2003)
- Best Practice Urban Design Manual (2008)
- Childcare Facilities Guidelines (2001)
- Design Standards for New Apartments (2007)
- Development Management Guidelines (2007)
- Development Plans Guidelines (2007)
- Implementing Regional Planning Guidelines (2005)
- Landscape and Landscape Assessment (draft, 2000)
- Provision of Schools and the Planning System (2008)
- Quarries and Ancillary Activities (2004)
- Retail Planning Guidelines (2005)
- Strategic Environmental Assessment - SEA (2004)
- Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas (2008)
- Sustainable Rural Housing (2005)
- Telecommunications Antennae and Support Structures
- The Planning System and Flood Risk Management (draft, 2008)
- Wind Energy Development (2006)

1.2 Physical development



1.2.1 Strategic location

With an estimated population of circa 25,000 in 2008 (refer to Section 1.3 Demographic trends), Sligo and Environs is the largest urban centre in the North-West. Given its location midway between Galway and Derry (circa 140 km from each city), Sligo is the natural capital of a substantial territory in the North-West.

Four national primary roads connect Sligo to Dublin (N4), Belfast (N16/A4), Derry (N15/A5) and Galway (N17), with a national secondary road (N59) linking Sligo to Ballina in Co. Mayo.

Along with its development potential in terms of existing infrastructure and services, Sligo's strategic location was a critical element in its designation as a Gateway under the NSS.

The city's spatial position means that it is capable of energising a wider area encompassing parts of Mayo, Donegal and Leitrim, as well as capitalising on cross-border co-operation initiatives, while being at the northern end of an emerging extended Atlantic Gateways corridor (currently comprising only Waterford, Cork, Limerick and Galway).

1.2.2 Landscape setting

Sligo is located at the mouth of the Garavogue River, between Sligo Harbour and Lough Gill, where the river originates. The city is surrounded by a mountainous skyline, with the ridges of Slieve Daeane and Killery Mountain to the south-east, Cope's and Keelogyboy Mountains to the north-east, the highly-distinctive Knocknarea to the west and Ben Bulbin to the north. These mountains, visible from many locations throughout the city, give Sligo a special sense of enclosure, interrupted only by the openings towards the sea to the west and the picturesque Lough Gill to the east.

The topography is varied within the city and environs. The most notable heights are Cairns Hill and the Green Fort, both containing archaeological remains and offering exquisite views over the city.

1.2.3 Urban shape

Within the boundary of Sligo Borough, development has mainly taken place to the south, west and north. Noticeable tracts of land have been left unused to the south-west, north-east and east. The Garavogue River and estuary, Lough Gill and the significant woodlands at Hazelwood and Cleveragh have constrained the town to grow predominantly southwards towards Carrowroe and westwards along Strandhill Road.

The three road bridges – Hughes Bridge, Hyde Bridge and New Bridge – connecting the northern and southern parts of the city have gradually become less able to cope with the ever-increasing traffic and a fourth bridge is necessary to alleviate the problem.

The city's shape can be described as follows:

- the **City Centre** lies mostly on the southern side of the Garavogue; it is dominated by retail and other commercial activities. It also contains some public-institutional lands with heritage buildings dating from the 18th century, a period of prosperity for the city.
- the **Inner City** surrounding the core features older, established residential areas and substantial amounts of institutional lands, including former convents, the General Hospital, several schools and the Institute of Technology.
- the **Outer City** combines a variety of uses, from new residential areas developed at Finisklin, Knappaghmore, Caltragh, Carrowroe, Ballinode and Shannon Eighter to business/industrial areas at the Docklands, in Finisklin, Ballytivnan and Rathbraghan; a working port; utilities such as water/wastewater treatment plants (Fox's Den and Harbour); warehousing and logistics at Belladrihid; retail warehouses at Carrowroe and Cleveragh; a racecourse at Cranmore; and an expanding recreational area at Cleveragh.
- the **City Fringes** have long been the predilect territory of ribbon development and single rural houses – see Strandhill Road west of the city, Ballinode-Calry Road or Teesan-Lisnalurg; in more recent times this form of sprawl has been replaced by orderly development.

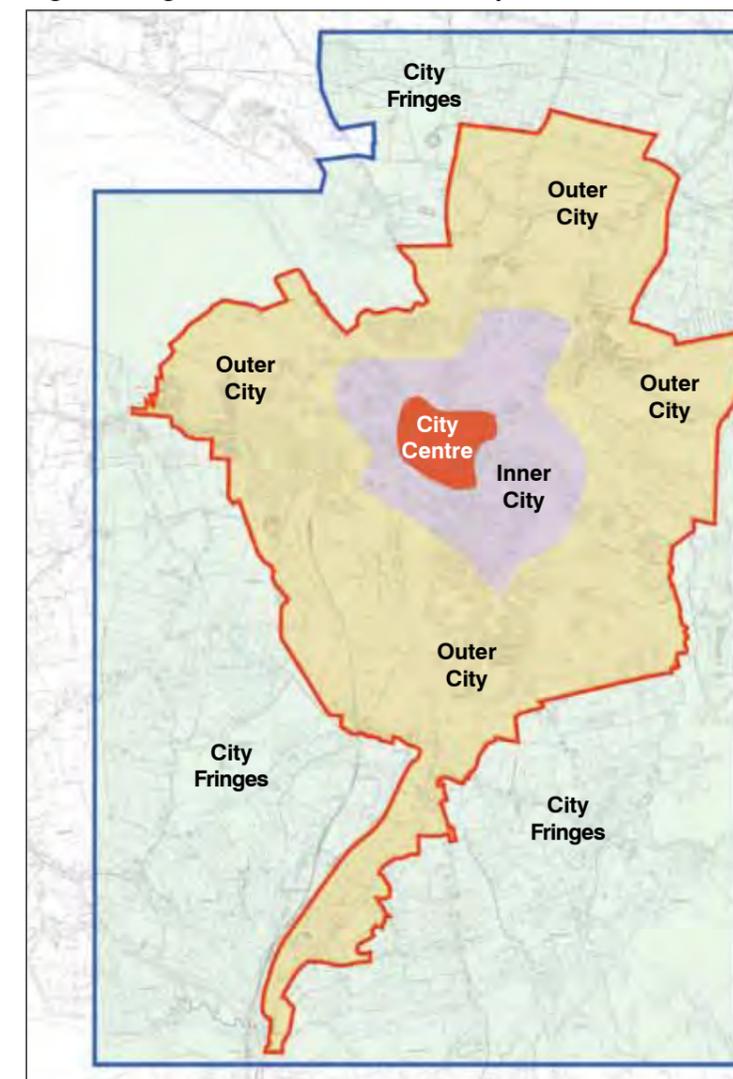
The gaps visible in the outer city development were caused by a range of factors, such as the undetermined road corridor for the Inner Relief Road and the insufficient resources available for land servicing. With most of

these factors no longer hindering the city's development, the way is now open for urban consolidation in a planned manner.

At the same time, there are noticeable spots of brownfield (i.e. previously used) and underutilised land within all areas: Centre, Inner and Outer City. Some of these sites have already become the target of urban regeneration initiatives, the best example being the Green Fort project, a proposed mixed-use development including landmark cultural facilities.

The Fringes, especially the North Fringe, offer the opportunity of planning and fostering entirely new communities on quasi-greenfield lands where essential infrastructure and services can be provided before development takes place.

Fig. 1.D Sligo and Environs - urban shape



1.3 Demographic trends

1.3.1 Population estimates

Gateway population

The population of the Gateway is defined in this Plan as the total population living inside the SEDP boundary. This figure includes the population of the Borough and Environs as enumerated by the Census, plus the population living in the suburban fringes and in the rural areas within the Plan limit.

As detailed Census figures for the entire Plan area are not available, the Gateway population is approximated by the total population of the Borough and the five adjoining Electoral Divisions (Calry, Drumcliff East, Drumcliff West, Kilmacowen and Knockaree) minus the population of Strandhill, Rosses Point, Ballincar, Rathcormack and Drumcliff (for the last two settlements, estimates were used).

Thus, the population of the Gateway was estimated at 24,755 in 2006 (a fall of 492 persons compared to 2002).

Population change in Sligo Borough and adjoining electoral divisions

During the intercensal period 2002-2006, the population of Sligo Borough decreased by 579 persons, from 18,473 to 17,894. This represents a loss of 3.1%, contrasting with the 3.9% population gain during the period 1996-2002.

In the same time, the five electoral divisions (EDs) adjoining the Borough, i.e. Calry, Drumcliff East, Drumcliff West, Kilmacowen and Knockaree, saw their combined population increase by 458 persons, from 9,321 to 9,779. This is a 4.91% increase over four years, comparable with the 8.4% increase over the six years from 1996 to 2002.

Total population living in the City and within 10 miles of it

In 2002, there were 38,780 people living in the Borough and the 29 EDs within 10 miles of the City Centre. By 2006, the population of the same area had grown to 40,011, which represents 65.73% of the total County population. This proportion is somewhat lower than its 2002 equivalent of 66.63% (38,780), but slightly higher than the 1996 ratio of 65.33% (36,468 persons).

The actual number of people living in Sligo Borough and within 10 miles of it has risen, slowly but constantly, by 3,543 persons, or 9.7% between 1996 and 2006.

Possible interpretations of recent population change

The loss of population from the Borough to the surrounding areas could be attributed to several factors, among which probably the most important is the effect of the Rural Renewal Tax Incentive Scheme, which covered most of the southern and eastern parts of County Sligo and adjoining areas in County Leitrim. The Scheme led to a mini-boom in house construction in towns such as Tobercurry and Ballymote, in smaller villages like Ballysadare, Collooney and Coolaney, and in nearby settlements outside

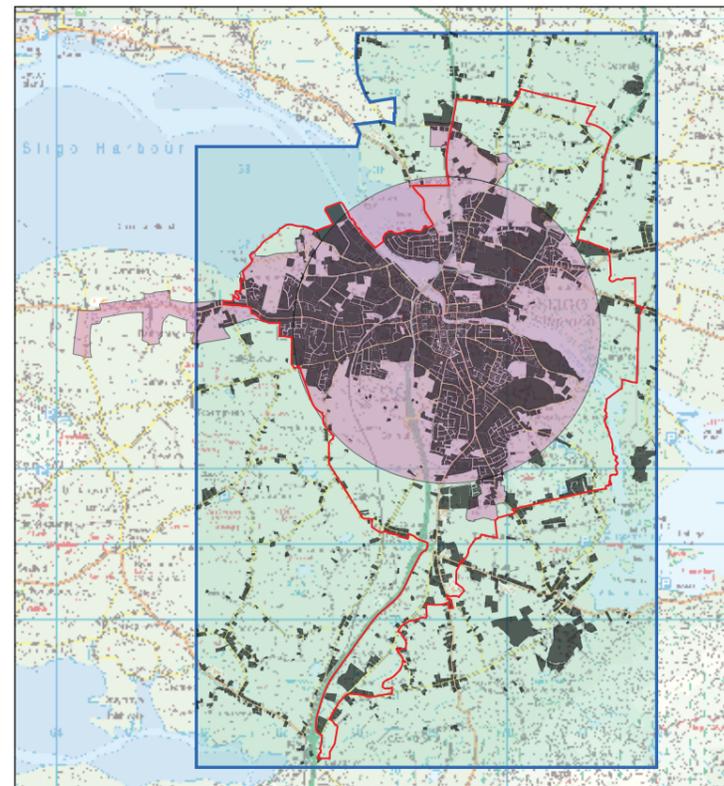


Fig. 1.E Sligo and Environs, as defined by Census boundaries (shaded in purple), is much smaller than the area covered by Sligo and Environs Development Plan (area inside the blue line)

the County boundaries, such as Dromahair, Manorhamilton and Kinlough in County Leitrim.

The availability of relatively cheap accommodation in a small-town or village setting, within short commuting distance, combined with the lack of quality new dwellings in Sligo, probably led families to move out of the City.

New residential and commercial development brought about by Sligo's designation as a Gateway (2002) and the adoption of Sligo & Environs Development Plan 2004-2010, did not begin to materialise until 2005-2006.

A significant number of residential units, many included in mixed commercial and residential developments, had been completed by 2008 and others were under construction or at planning/pre-planning stage at the time of preparing the Draft SEDP 2010-2016.

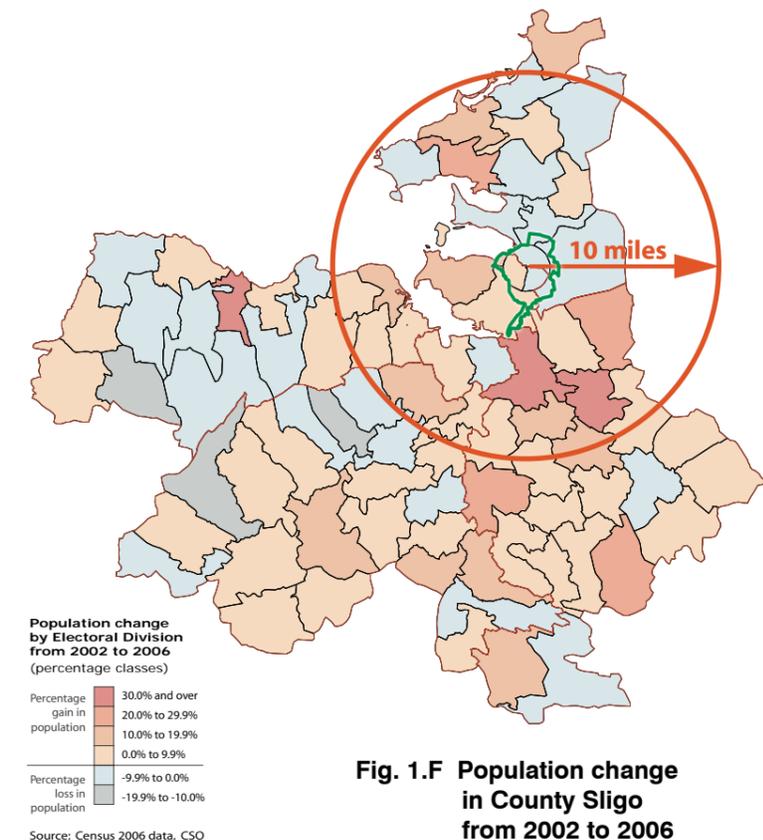


Fig. 1.F Population change in County Sligo from 2002 to 2006

Box. 1.G Summary of Sligo Gateway's population change between 2002 and 2006

- Gateway population fell by 1.95% (492 persons).
- Sligo Borough's population decreased by 3.1% (579 persons).
- The population of Sligo & Environs (Census area) decreased by 1.69% (333 persons).
- The population of Electoral Divisions within 10 miles of Sligo increased by 8.91% (1,810) – growth occurred mainly in satellite villages (Strandhill, Collooney, Grange, Ballysadare).
- The County's population as a whole increased by 4.6% (2,663 persons).
- Over 40,000 persons (circa 66% of the County's population) live in Sligo City or within 10 miles of it.
- Noticeable population growth in the City was expected in 2007-2008, following the completion of residential developments permitted since 2004 (the year when the first SEDP became operational) – approximately 500 apartments were permitted in the City between 2004 and 2006.

Table 1.H Persons in Sligo and Environs classified by age group in Census years 1996, 2002 and 2006

Age group	Persons 1996		Persons 2002		Persons 2006		Change 1996-2002		Change 2002-2006		Change 1996-2006	
0 – 14 years	3,954 (21.36%)		3,645 (18.47%)		3,116 (16.06%)		– 300 or fall of 7.59%		– 529 or fall of 14.51%		– 838 or fall of 21.19%	
15 – 24 years	3,848 (20.79%)		4,168 (21.12)		3,752 (19.34%)		+ 320 or rise of 8.32%		– 416 or fall of 9.98%		– 96 or fall of 2.49%	
25 – 44 years	5,164 (27.90%)		5,752 (29.15)		5,803 (29.90%)		+ 588 or rise of 11.39%		+ 51 or rise of 0.89%		+ 639 or rise of 12.37%	
45 – 64 years	3,291 (17.78%)		3,817 (19.34%)		4,154 (21.41%)		+ 526 or rise of 15.98%		+ 337 or rise of 8.83%		+ 863 or rise of 26.22%	
65 years and over	2,252 (12.17%)		2,353 (11.92%)		2,577 (13.28%)		+ 101 or rise of 4.48%%		+ 224 or rise of 9.52%		+ 325 or rise of 14.43%	
Total number of persons	18,509 (100%)		19,735 (100%)		19,402 (100%)		+ 1,226 or rise of 6.62%		– 333 or fall of 1.69%		+ 893 or rise of 4.82%	
	males	females	males	females	males	females	males	females	males	females	males	females
	8,627	9,882	9,194	10,541	9,274	10,128	+ 567	+ 659	+ 80	– 413	+ 647	+ 246

Notes:

1. The percentages in brackets in the Persons columns refer to the proportion of that category in the total number of people in the given years, i.e. 1996, 2002 and 2006
2. The percentage changes in the Change columns refer only to the change in the respective category over the given period, i.e. 1996-2002, 2002-2006 and 1996-2006 using the first year as the base year)

1.3.2 Demographic characteristics

Gender, age and dependency rate

Census 2006 recorded a total of 19,402 living within the Borough and the environs as designated by the boundaries determined by the Central Statistics Office. Of this total, 52% or 10,128 were female and 48% or 9,274 were male. Circa 70% of this population was of working age, i.e. fell into the 15-64 age bracket. There were 3,116 children under 14 years and 2,577 aged 65 and over, giving a total dependency ratio of 2.4 to 1 (2.4 persons of working age for every child under 15 or senior over 64).

Sligo residents' origin and ethnicity

Of the 19,402 people living in Sligo Borough and its environs as defined by the 2006 Census, 18,902 were usually resident in the area. Of these, 3,247 had been born outside Ireland, most of them in the UK (1,285) but also in Poland (596), Lithuania (108), other EU states (424) and outside the EU (834).

Between April 2005 and April 2006 (Census date), 1306 persons had moved from the County to live permanently in Sligo City, with 690 more coming to Sligo from other parts of Ireland. From abroad there was an influx of 858 people in 2005.

The Traveller community numbered 143 members in 2006. Alongside 17,298 white persons, Sligo was home to 141 Black and 385 Asian people.

Household types and sizes

Of the 6972 households counted in 2006, the largest number – 1950 (circa 28%) – consisted of only one person.

Lone parents lived with their children in 886 households, while 680 households were made up of two or more unrelated persons. The parents-and-children families (1880 units) represented 27% of the total number of households.

While the average household size in the Census area was 2.78 (people per household) in 2006, the most frequent type was the two-person household (29% of all), followed by the one-person (28%) and the three-person household types (19%).

In 2006, 1,297 persons lived in 36 communal establishments (e.g. nursing homes and other care institutions).

1.4 Socio-economic trends

As a significant regional centre for employment, retail, healthcare, education and recreation, Sligo serves a hinterland extending far beyond the County boundaries.

There is an important manufacturing base in Sligo City, particularly in IDA's business park at Finisklin, with names such as Abbott, Fort Dodge and Stiefel Laboratories, all pharmaceutical companies. Indigenous firms like Loftus Automation, Avenue Mould solutions, Garmore and Infacta are engaged in tool-making, precision engineering and information technology.

While the number of manufacturing jobs has been constantly falling, employment in retail and professional services has seen a rapid expansion. Public-sector jobs also continue to represent a sizeable proportion of the City's employment, due to employers such as Sligo Regional Hospital, Sligo local authorities, primary and secondary schools, third-level institutions, and several sections of central government departments.

Over the decade 1996 to 2006, there have been substantial changes not only in the local economy but also in the social fabric of Sligo City. The following two subsections outline the main features of these changes as reflected in statistical data collected by the Censuses of 1996, 2002 and 2006.

Section 1.4.3 lists the achievements under the NDP 2000-2006 and presents the progress to date in implementing the NDP 2007-2013.

1.4.1 Social change

Number of people

The Census reports of 1996, 2002 and 2006 provide figures for Sligo Borough and Sligo Environs, which is a smaller area than that covered by the Sligo and Environs Development Plan. However, the main trends for the Plan area can be discerned from examining the available Census figures.

Having grown by 6.62% (1226 persons) between 1996 and 2002, the population of (Census-defined) Sligo and Environs then fell by 1.69% (333 persons) between 2002 and 2006. It is not clear from the CSO statistics whether this "lost" population moved just outside the enumeration boundaries, yet remained in the SEDP area, or went further away.

Ageing population

A trend visible in many Irish cities is the decrease of the younger population segments combined with a steady increase in the older-age groups. While the entire City population has risen by 893 between 1996 and 2006, there were 838 fewer children under 14 in 2006 compared to 1996, and 325 more people over 65 in Sligo and Environs.

The proportion of under-14s has fallen sharply from 21.36% in 1996 to 16.06% in 2006, while the largest increase was in the share of the 45 to 64 group, from 17.78% in 1996 to 21.41% in 2006.

Gender fluctuations

An interesting development during the 1996-2006 decade was a strong rise in the number of females in 1996-2002 (659 additional females) followed by a sudden drop in female population between 2002 and 2006 (413 fewer females), especially in the younger age brackets, 15 to 44 years. At the same time, the male population has increased constantly, but with a marked slowdown between 2002 and 2006 – only 80 additional males.

Spatial mobility

Census data indicates an increasing mobility of Sligo's population, in particular residential mobility. While in 2002 the Census counted 982 persons who moved to Sligo City from the county and 587 who came from the rest of Ireland during the year before the Census, in 2006 the number of people in the same situation was 1306 and 690 respectively.

It must be added that in 2002 there were 380 persons who had an address abroad one year before the Census, while in 2006 there were 858 such people.

It appears that Sligo's core population – i.e. those who were enumerated at the same address in successive censuses – consists of just over 15,800 residents, and there has been significant in- and out-migration between 1996 and 2002, in the range of 12-14% of the total number of residents.

As a proportion, the number of Sligo-born residents has fallen slightly between 1996 and 2006, by 96 people (2.49%).

At the same time, the number of Sligo residents who were not born in the city has grown constantly during the decade 1996-2006: 12.37% more residents born in Northern Ireland; 26.22% more people born in England, Scotland or Wales; 14.43% more persons born in the rest of the EU (excluding the UK); and almost three times more (+ 202.35% or 535) persons born in countries outside the EU.

Better education

A positive trend has been noticed in the field of education, with fewer people ceasing their education at primary or secondary level and more enrolling in third-level education.

Between 1996 and 2006 the number of persons with primary education only has fallen by 836. In the same period, the number of those educated to degree level has grown from 1250 to 1949.

The number of students aged over 15 and engaged in full-time education was 3315 in 2006 compared to 2156 in 1996 – a rise of over 50%.

Social mobility

Social classes, as defined by the Census, bring together people with similar levels of occupational skills. In determining social class, no account is taken of the differences between individuals on the basis of other characteristics such as education. Social class ranks occupations by the level of skill required.

In social class terms, upward social mobility has become apparent in Sligo and Environs. A fall of 43% (533) in the number of unskilled manual workers between 1996 and 2002 has been accompanied by significant rises in the numbers of semi-skilled, technical and professional workers (419, 351 and 186 respectively).

There was also a noticeable growth in the number of persons who cannot be precisely allocated to one of the six other classes. Those gainfully occupied but not readily categorised grew in numbers from 2647 in 1996 to 4290 in 2006 (increase of 62%).



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Table 1.I Persons aged 15 years and over classified by highest level of education completed in Census years 1996, 2002 and 2006

Highest level of education	Persons 1996	Persons 2002	Persons 2006	Change 1996-2002	Change 2002-2006	Change 1996-2006
Primary and no formal education	3,046 (20.93%)	2,390 (14.85%)	2,210 (13.57%)	- 656 or fall of 21.53%	- 180 or fall of 7.53%	- 836 or fall of 27.45%
No formal education	n/a	n/a	86 (0.53%)	n/a	n/a	n/a
Primary education	n/a	n/a	2,124 (13.04%)	n/a	n/a	n/a
Lower secondary education	2,134 (14.66%)	2,453 (15.25%)	2,407 (14.78%)	+ 319 or rise of 14.95%	- 46 or fall of 1.87%	+ 273 or rise of 12.79%
Upper secondary education	3,717 (25.54%)	2,363 (20.90%)	3,608 (22.15%)	- 1,354 or fall of 36.43%	+ 1,245 or rise of 52.69%	- 109 or fall of 12.93%
Third-level non-degree education	1,497 (10.29%)	1,408 (8.75%)	1,372 (8.42%)	- 89 or fall of 5.95%	- 36 or fall of 2.56%	- 125 or fall of 8.35%
Degree and higher education	1,250 (8.59%)	1,949 (12.11%)	2,314 (14.21%)	+ 699 or rise of 55.92%	+ 365 or rise of 18.73%	+ 1,064 or rise of 85.12%
Students*	2,156 (14.81%)	3,199 (19.88)	3,315 (20.35%)	+ 1,043 or rise of 48.38%	+ 116 or rise of 3.63%	+ 1,159 or rise of 53.76%
Not stated	755 (5.19%)	1,328 (8.25%)	1,060 (6.51%)	+ 573 or rise of 75.89%	- 268 or fall of 20.18%	+ 305 or rise of 40.39%
Total number of persons aged 15 years and over	14,555 (100%)	16,090 (100%)	16,286 (100%)	+ 1,535 or rise of 10.54%	+ 196 or rise of 1.22%	+ 1,731 or rise of 11.89%

* Students = persons who were engaged in full-time education at the time of the enumeration.

1.4.2 Economic change

Economic status

Of the 16,286 Sligo residents aged 15 and over, just over half (8670 or 53%) were working in 2006, according to the Census. Only 5.17% (842 persons) were unemployed. The proportion of the labour force in the population over 15 was approximately 60% – this includes those working, the unemployed and those looking for their first regular job. This is a visible change compared to 1996, when just 56% of the over-15s were in the labour force and only 46.7% (6,803 people) were actually working.

Unemployment, which has fallen by 23% between 1996 and 2006, is expected to rise by the time this Plan is adopted, because of unfavourable economic circumstances.

The most noticeable developments between 1996 and 2006 have been:

- a 54.7% rise in the number of persons unable to work due to sickness or disability (281 additional persons);
- a 35% fall in the number of people, women in majority, looking after the home and family;
- a 31% increase in the number of retired people (489 additional retired)

Occupations

According to Census 2006, almost half of Sligo's working population was engaged in two sectors: retail/wholesale (23%) and professional services (23.3%). Just over 15% of workers had manufacturing jobs, with construction employing 7.71% of those at work. Only 60 people in Sligo and Environs worked in agriculture and forestry in 2006, compared with 77 in 1996.

During the 1996-2006 decade, 17 agricultural and 167 manufacturing jobs had been lost, but this loss has been offset by a total gain of 1,866 jobs (27% more in 2006 than in 1996). Retail/wholesale has been the fastest-growing employment sector, with 923 jobs created between 2002 and 2006. Construction jobs more than doubled from 310 in 1996 to 671 in 2006.

The most stable sectors have been transport (2.29% of jobs lost) and public administration (3.55% increase in job numbers).

1.4.3 NDP support for Sligo's development

The National Development Plan is the main policy document co-ordinating investment in the State.

In Sligo, the most important achievements under the first NDP (2000-2006) have been:

- the completion of the Inner Relief Road/N4 (2005)
- the establishment of the broadband Metropolitan Area Network (MAN)
- provision of a Renal Unit at Sligo General Hospital (Acute Hospitals Measure)
- approval of new Business Incubation Centre at Sligo Institute of Technology (now operational)

The second National Development Plan, *NDP 2007-2013 – Transforming Ireland: A Better Quality of Life for All*, which takes full cognisance of the NSS, recognises Sligo, together with Derry-Letterkenny and Dundalk, as one of the three gateways in the Border Region.

Gateway Innovation Fund

Gateways are entitled to bid for funding through the Gateway Innovation Fund.

In 2007, Sligo local authorities submitted a proposal for funding of four projects under the Gateway Innovation Fund.

The four projects are:

1. Eastern Garavogue Bridge and approach roads (cost – €34 million)
2. Enhancement of O'Connell Street (cost – €5 million)
3. Cultural Quarter / Green Fort Project (cost – €123 million)
4. Cleveragh Regional Park (cost – €25 million)

The total funding sought amounted to circa €69 million. A decision on the application had not yet been made at the time of preparing the Draft SEDP.

1.4.4 Sligo's socio-economic priorities

Sligo has benefited from infrastructure improvements under the NDP 2000-2006, resulting in increased private sector investment in retailing, hotels and value-added enterprise. Occupying a strategic position in the North-West, Sligo now needs to attract further investment to drive forward the development of the Gateway and expand its hinterland.

From a social and economic perspective, Sligo's investment priorities are as follows:

- the completion of the remaining sections of the N4 (Dublin Road) requiring upgrades;
- the development of the Atlantic Road Corridor (N15-N4-N17) enhancing road connections to other Gateways;
- construction of new eastern and western urban distributor road systems to open up strategic land banks for accelerated development of new private housing areas;
- strengthening the research and development capacity of Sligo Institute of Technology and linkages between third-level institutions and industry;
- development of regional sports and recreation facilities;
- continued development of the emerging cultural and entertainment quarter;
- targeted urban regeneration including urban enhancement, pedestrianisation and redevelopment of the Docklands area;
- continued support for Sligo Regional Airport.

Box 1.J Main projects funded by the NDP in Sligo during 2006-2007

The *NDP Annual Report 2007* highlights the most important projects relevant to Sligo, funded in 2006-2007:

Tourism – the hosting of Rally Ireland (November 2007), along with seven other counties both sides of the border.

Education – continued support (through the the Department of Education and Science) of apprenticeship training jointly provided by the Institute of Technology Sligo and the Fermanagh Institute of Further Education in carpentry and joinery. Projects included the refurbishment of the old engineering wing at Sligo Institute of Technology and renovation of the food laboratory at St Angela's College.

Healthcare – under the Acute Hospitals Sub-Programme, the construction of a new Medical Assessment Unit began in 2007 at Sligo General Hospital. The Board of the HSE has approved Sligo General Hospital's bid under the Government's Co-location Programme, involving development of private hospitals on public sites.

Decentralisation – the outputs delivered under this Sub-Programme in 2007 included new buildings for staff of the Department of Social and Family Affairs in Sligo.

Chapter 2. Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

2.1 Legal context

In June 2001, the European Parliament and Council adopted the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive (2001/42/EC), which was transposed into Irish law in the form of Statutory Instruments no. 435 and 436 of 2004 (SEA Regulations). Both sets of regulations became operational on 21 July 2004. The Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004 (S.I. No. 436 of 2004) is applicable to Sligo and Environs Development Plan.

2.2 SEA definition

SEA is a systematic process for evaluating, at the earliest stage of decision-making, the environmental quality and potential consequences of alternative visions incorporated in plans or programmes. The undertaking of a "full SEA", i.e. the preparation of an Environmental Report, is mandatory in the case of development plans.

2.3 SEA stages

SEA involves several stages, the most important being:

- determining the scope of the assessment;
- collecting baseline environmental data;
- preparing and evaluating alternative development scenarios;
- selecting the optimal scenario and preparing the Draft Plan;
- assessing the Draft Plan against baseline data and Strategic Environmental Objectives;
- modifying and refining the Draft Plan to minimise negative environmental impacts;
- recommending mitigation measures;
- establishing a system of monitoring the environmental effects of implementing the Plan, based on appropriate indicators and targets.

2.4 Environmental Report

The Strategic Environmental Assessment of the Sligo and Environs Development Plan 2010-2016 has been undertaken by environmental consultants CAAS on behalf of Sligo Borough and County Councils.

The resultant Environmental Report (ER), which includes a Non-Technical Summary, is published as a separate document.

The ER has informed the policies and objectives included in the Plan and has also suggested appropriate mitigation measures, which were incorporated in the relevant chapters of the Plan upon its adoption in November 2009.

2.5 Scoping

The scope of environmental issues to be dealt with by the SEA, together with the level of detail to which they are to be addressed, was determined in consultation with the prescribed environmental authorities, i.e. the Environmental Protection Agency, the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government and the Minister for Communications, Marine and Natural Resources.

The most important strategic environmental issues in Sligo City and Environs are identified as follows:

- the compliance of the Garavogue River, Lough Gill, Sligo Harbour and the area's underlying groundwater with the objectives of the Water Framework Directive;
- the capacity of the wastewater treatment infrastructure;
- the protection of: ecological sites designated under the Habitats Directive - including Lough Gill SAC and NHA, and Sligo Harbour SPA - and, the protection of shellfish growing areas in Sligo Harbour;
- the removal and deposition of dredged material - which may include contaminated soils - and the remediation of contaminated sites in the Docklands area (this will be addressed as part of the preparation of a local area plan for the Docklands);
- the avoidance of incompatible development in areas at risk of flooding;
- the protection of archaeological heritage and sensitive landscape features.

2.6 Alternatives

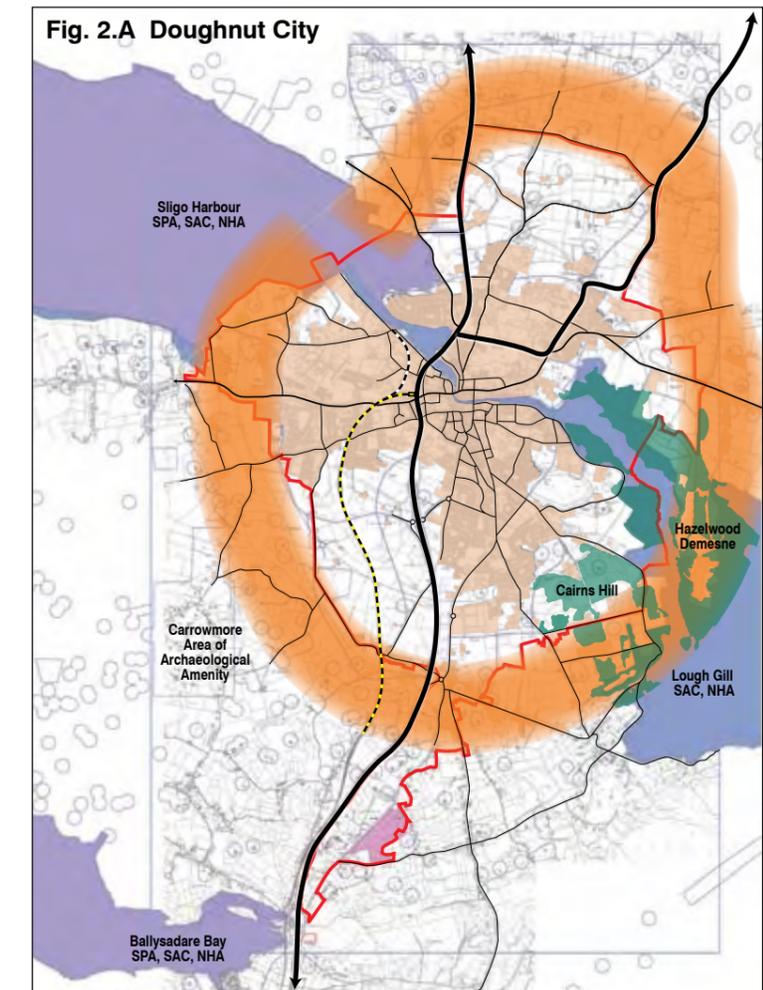
The SEA Directive requires that reasonable alternatives (taking into account the objectives and the geographical scope of the plan) are identified, described and evaluated in relation to their likely significant effects on the environment.

These alternative strategies must be realistic, capable of implementation, and should represent a range of different approaches within statutory and operational requirements of the plan.

Taking into account the objectives and the geographical scope of the SEDP, three alternatives were formulated through consultation between the plan-making team, relevant sections of the local authorities and SEA consultants.

The Doughnut City, the Horseshoe City and the Compact City scenarios provide alternative visions of how the future development of Sligo City and its Environs might occur.

As the SEDP is required to be reviewed and replaced by a new Development Plan under planning legislation, a *do-nothing* alternative was not considered.

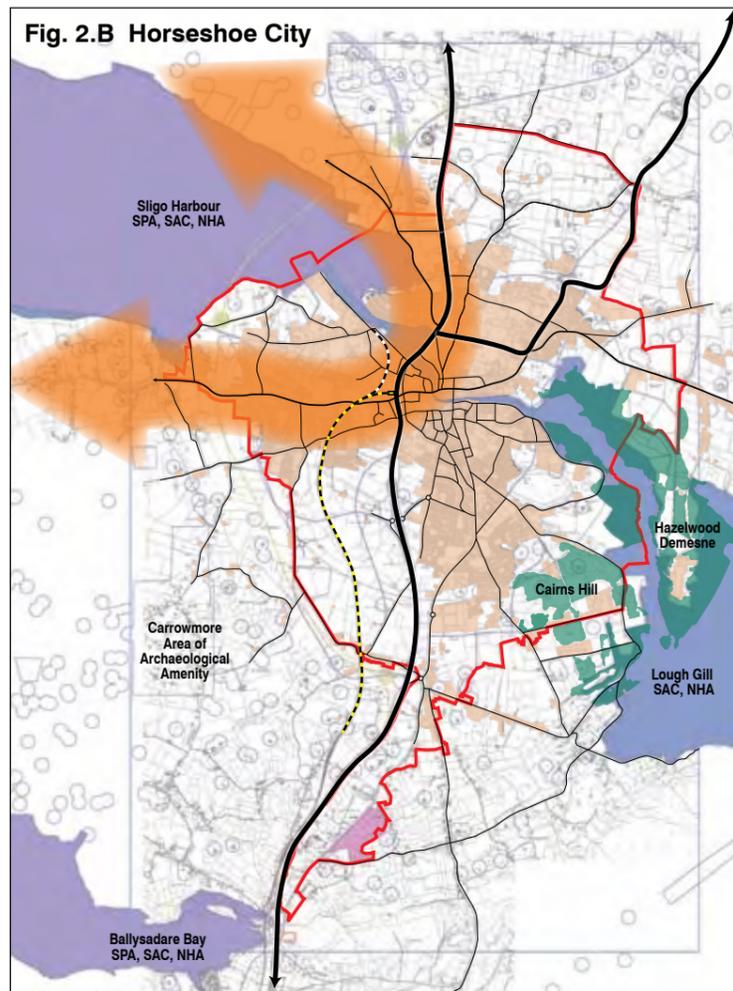


2.6.1 Scenario 1: Doughnut City

Scenario 1 is based upon development occurring in a doughnut-shaped pattern, adjoining the existing development limit on its outside. Lands already zoned that surround the existing built-up area of Sligo City would remain largely undeveloped under this scenario. The availability of newer, more affordable residential development in a rural setting - which seems to be preferred by many Sligo residents - would lead to the hollowing-out of the town.

The scenario is strongly informed by the land zoning requests received in submissions made at the pre-draft stage of the Sligo and Environs Development Plan review process.

The submissions, coming mainly from landowners, generally requested residential and/or mixed-use zoning of lands outside the development limit pertaining to the SEDP 2004-2010.



2.6.2 Scenario 2: Horseshoe City

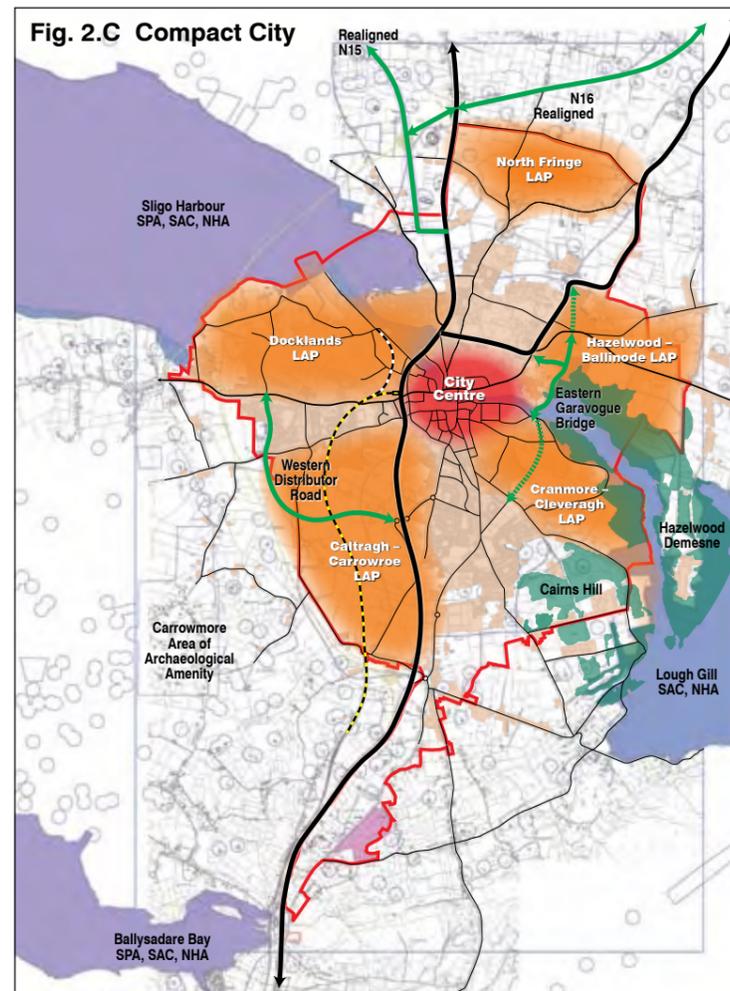
The practical experience of planners in Sligo's local authorities indicates that, if development were not controlled, there would be a preference for low-density residential development outside Sligo City and Environs.

This is particularly the case for areas located to the west and north-west of the city along the Strandhill Road and Rosses Point Road (including Ballincar), where a notable amount of ribbon development has occurred.

The demand for housing in these areas is based on the convenient location between the city and the seaside settlements of Strandhill and Rosses Point.

It appears that views of Sligo Bay, Knocknarea, Benbulbin, and also the attraction of living close to the water and not far from the city make these locations highly desirable in residential terms.

The Horseshoe City scenario is based on the intensification of existing uses and further development along the regional roads around Sligo Bay.



2.6.3 Scenario 3: Compact City

Scenario 3 is based upon achieving a balance between the consolidation/regeneration of the existing built-up area and the planned expansion of the City into the Environs.

The scenario identifies five areas:

- two areas - Sligo Docklands and Cranmore-Cleveragh - would be subject to comprehensive consolidation/regeneration.
- the North Fringe area and the south-western quadrant at Caltragh-Carrowroe are identified for the planned expansion of the City.
- to the east of the City, the Hazelwood-Ballinode area, for which a Local Area Plan is already in place, would be subject to a combination of consolidation (at Ballinode) and planned expansion to the east.

The evaluation presented in Sections 7.3 to 7.6 of the Environmental Report indicates that the Compact City scenario for the development of Sligo and Environs would involve the smallest number and least extent of potential environmental effects. **This is the preferred scenario.**

2.7 Evaluation of the Plan

Section 8 of the Environmental Report evaluates the goals, policies and objectives of this Plan against sixteen Strategic Environmental Objectives (SEOs), making use of the baseline environmental information and a wide range of maps.

The SEOs were developed from international, national and regional policies which generally govern environmental protection objectives.

The SEOs are used as standards against which the development strategies, goals, policies and objectives of the Draft Plan can be evaluated in order to help identify areas in which significant adverse impacts are likely to occur, if unmitigated against.

A total of 143 sets of policies and objectives were assessed against the SEOs. The assessment indicates that:

- 98 groups of policies and objectives are likely to improve the status of certain SEOs;
- 85 groups of policies and objectives are potentially conflicting with the status of certain SEOs, but this is likely to be mitigated;
- the interaction of 37 groups of policies and objectives with the status of specific SEOs is uncertain;
- 6 groups of policies and objectives are not likely to interact with the status of the SEOs.

2.8 Mitigation measures

Mitigation measures are measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and, as fully as possible, offset any significant adverse impacts on the environment of implementing the Development Plan.

Section 9 of the Environmental Report recommends general mitigation measures, which have been incorporated in the relevant Plan chapters.

Additional and more detailed mitigation measures than those which have been integrated into the Plan are likely to be required by the development management and EIA processes for individual projects.

2.9 Monitoring

The SEA Directive requires that the significant environmental effects of the implementation of plans and programmes are monitored.

Monitoring enables, at an early stage, the identification of unforeseen adverse effects and the undertaking of appropriate remedial action. In addition to this, monitoring can also play an important role in assessing whether the Plan is achieving its environmental objectives and targets and whether the proposed mitigation measures are being implemented.

The Environmental Report puts forward proposals for monitoring the environmental effects of the SEDP. The proposals include specific indicators and targets as well as suggestions for putting in place a monitoring system within the local authorities.

Chapter 3. Strategic goals and broad aims of the SEDP

In recent years, population growth in Gateways has been below levels required for them to perform their lead regional development roles. Population growth in the period from 2002 to 2006 in all Gateways taken together was 1.0 % per year, half the national population growth rate of 2.0%.

In the Border Region, the population of Sligo – as enumerated within Census boundaries – declined by 0.4 % p.a. To an extent, this trend reflects the existence of a commuter belt extending far beyond the boundaries of Sligo and Environs as defined in this Plan.

Given the NSS aim of creating more compact, yet expanding urban areas as motors for regional development, the modest changes experienced by Sligo City between 2002 and 2006, combined with a difficult economic environment at national level and international level, poses substantial challenges for the future, especially in the short and medium term.

3.1 Strategic goals

Taking account of recent policies, development trends, the achievements of the previous SEDP and the collective implications of the above for the period to 2016, the strategic goals of this Development Plan are:

- SG-1** To support the full implementation of the Gateway status for the City of Sligo, as set out in the NSS, by ensuring the structured and orderly development of Sligo as a compact and sustainable city.
- SG-2** To encourage and facilitate the economic development of the Gateway, in co-operation with relevant government bodies, third-level institutions, other state/semi-state agencies and the private sector.
- SG-3** To promote vigorously Sligo City's keystone role in the County Settlement Strategy, while managing growth in the Subregion and consolidating the Key Support Towns that sustain villages and rural communities in County Sligo.
- SG-4** To drive forward the development of the Gateway City of Sligo towards the NSS target population of 42,000 by 2020.
- SG-5** To ensure that the nationally- and internationally-renowned natural and cultural heritage of Sligo City is wisely conserved and enhanced, as a key aspect of Sligo's identity and attractiveness for economic activity, and as a legacy to be handed forward to future generations.
- SG-6** To build up linkages between Sligo and the other Gateways and Hubs within the Border Region and adjoining regions, such as the Western Region and Northern Ireland, by supporting the implementation of the RPGs, collaborating on support for critical enabling infrastructure such as road and rail connections, and cooperating in areas of mutual planning interest.

3.2 Broad aims

BA-1 Supporting balanced economic development

- a. Facilitate and encourage the sustainable development of the Gateway City of Sligo as an economic growth driver for the North-West, in accordance with the NSS.
- b. Integrate business locations with the surrounding land use and transportation network.
- c. Work with the providers of infrastructure to ensure adequate provision in terms of road, rail, aviation, energy and telecommunications.
- d. Work in partnership with key organisations, such as the Industrial Development Agency and Enterprise Ireland, whose remit it is to promote and/or secure economic development.
- e. Involve Sligo Institute of Technology in the promotion of Sligo as a centre of third-level education and hence an attractive place for investment.
- f. Promote Sligo City as a suitable location for the relocation/decentralisation of state and semi-state bodies.
- g. Promote Sligo as a higher-order retail and service centre – including healthcare, education, recreation and culture – for a regional catchment area.

BA-2 Carefully managing development patterns

- a. Implement a robust settlement strategy that emphasises the role of the Gateway City and seeks to maintain the distinctive landscape attributes of Sligo.
- b. Encourage a mix of land uses integrated with an effective transport network, capable of supporting viable public transport systems and reducing car-based commuting.
- c. Promote the consolidation of Sligo City through regeneration and phased expansion based on local area plans.
- d. Counteract tendencies towards extensive ribbon development and urban sprawl in the immediate environs of Sligo.
- e. Strengthen existing rural communities by ensuring that the planning system facilitates both the housing needs of all persons with links to rural areas, as provided for in the NSS, as well as local enterprise initiative.

Sligo Borough Council and Sligo County Council will make full use of all their statutory powers to secure the implementation of the strategic goals, broad aims, policies and objectives of Sligo and Environs Development Plan. Where necessary and appropriate, lands may be compulsorily purchased in order to progress the implementation of particular objectives of Sligo and Environs Development Plan.

BA-3 Protecting environmental quality

- a. Wisely conserve the natural and built heritage of Sligo City and the surrounding area, including the character of the landscape, views and prospects, and the environmental quality of the urban setting.
- b. Conserve the historic form and character of Sligo City.
- c. Protect the landscape character and ecological integrity of the coastal and lakeshore zone.
- d. Promote sustainable water use, based on long-term protection of water resources, and provide for sufficient supply of good quality surface and groundwater.
- e. Implement the provisions of the Western River Basin Management Plan (WRBMP).
- f. Support the implementation of the National Climate Change Strategy 2007-2012 and successor documents.

BA-4 Increasing mobility sustainably

- a. Target, prioritise and promote investment in inter-city road and rail connections, as a means of realising Sligo's potential as an important economic centre in the North-West.
- b. Support effective and sustainable public transport through the provision of a high-quality bus and rail service with adequate park-and-ride facilities, alongside the promotion of cycle and pedestrian links.
- c. Encourage large employers, including public institutions (such as schools), to locate on sites where public transport is available or can be easily provided.
- d. Support the development and use of Sligo Regional Airport so as to ensure and enhance Sligo's accessibility to tourists and businesses, both nationally and internationally.

BA-5 Delivering improved infrastructure

- a. Provide adequate drinking water, wastewater treatment, water management services and associated network capacity to accommodate the projected needs of the future population and local businesses.
- b. Maximise the use of existing water supply, sewerage, electricity and telecommunications networks and support the extended provision of broadband.
- c. Promote the development of gas supply and the generation of alternative energy forms in Sligo.
- d. Implement the Connacht Waste Management Plan 2006-2011 and successor policy documents.
- e. Extend the range of recreational facilities and infrastructure provided within parks and other types of open space throughout the Plan area.

Chapter 4. Growth model and key planning issues

This section expands on the core aims of the Development Plan by outlining a growth framework for the Gateway City based on the Settlement Strategy set out in Sligo County Development Plan (CDP) and a set of three adjusted population change scenarios developed in light of revised Gateway population targets recommended by the DoEHLG in 2007.

Gateway population

As indicated in Section 1.3.1 Population estimates, the population of the Gateway is defined as the total population living within the area covered by the Sligo and Environs Development Plan.

This figure includes the residents of Sligo Borough and the Environs as counted by the Census plus the population living in the suburban fringes and in the rural areas within the Plan limit, which includes part of the electoral division of Calry, Drumcliff East, Drumcliff West, Kilmacowen and Knockaree.

The population of the Gateway City of Sligo and Environs is estimated to have been 24,755 in 2006.

4.1 Revised population projections

In 2005, having reconsidered its population forecasts in light of the NSS, Sligo County Council provided a proactive basis for the future development of the county, centred on developing Sligo City towards the critical mass that is necessary to sustain the County and the North-West into the future.

This involved aiming towards a long-term, strategic population horizon of 50,000 to 80,000 over 20 to 30 years. Of the four population change models that were developed as part of the CDP preparation, the Fast Growth Scenario was selected as the preferred one. This scenario envisaged a County population of up to 75,000 by 2011, with a Gateway population of 35,000–40,000.

Following the publication of Census 2006 reports, it became apparent that despite the Border Region's population growing more than anticipated

(according to the CSO's Regional Population Projections 2005), Sligo and Environs – as defined by Census boundaries – had lost 1.69 % of its population (333 residents).

In 2007, revised Regional Population Projections were published by the CSO and subsequently the DoEHLG recommended that Regional Authorities adjust their Gateway population targets.

Based on the Revised Regional Population Projections for the Border Region (RRPPs), the Border Authority recommended that Sligo Borough and County Councils have regard to the RRPPs and consider a target of circa 77,000 residents for the County, of which 42,000 to be resident in the Gateway by the year 2020.

4.1.1 Population change scenarios

Three population change scenarios were developed for the purpose of both this Development Plan and the County Development Plan 2011-2017: a current trend/low-growth scenario, a high-growth scenario and a revised NSS-target scenario. These are summarised in Table 4.A.

4.1.2 Selecting a scenario

It is evident from Table 4.A that:

- the low-growth scenario would attain neither the Gateway nor the County revised NSS population targets;
- simultaneous attainment of both Gateway and County revised NSS population targets would involve a substantial depopulation of rural areas.

Therefore, the **high-growth scenario** is the preferred growth model, as it proposes balance between Gateway and the rest of the County.

The High-Growth Scenario would see the County population reach the revised NSS target, with substantial progress towards the 42,000 target for the Gateway. Fewer people would be living in the countryside but more would reside in small villages where services and transport can be provided more efficiently.

Regardless of what scenario is selected, the key driver of Sligo City's population increase is the extent of net migration into the Gateway, which in turn is dependent mainly on business development and job creation, supported by local entrepreneurship and investment in physical and social infrastructure.

Table 4.A Summary of population change scenarios for Sligo City and County to the years 2016 and 2020 (rounded-up/down figures)

Scenarios - main assumptions	Total County population		Gateway population		Rest of County population	
	2016	2020	2016	2020	2016	2020
Low-growth scenario This scenario is based on the recent performance of the housing market, which is considered a reasonable indicator of the general economic trend.	68,000	71,000	29,700	32,000	38,000	39,000
High-growth scenario The scenario assumes improved socio-economic conditions and subsequent higher population growth attaining the NSS target for the County, distributed in a balanced manner between Gateway, key support towns, satellites and settlements with special functions, in accordance with the Settlement Strategy	73,000	77,000	33,000	37,000	40,000	39,000
Revised NSS-target scenario This scenario assumes that both County and Gateway population targets will be achieved by 2020, with growth strongly concentrated in the Gateway and population declining in rural County areas	73,000	77,000	38,700	42,000	34,000	35,000

4.2 Growth model

4.2.1 Preferred scenario

The Development Plan for Sligo and Environs is based on the High-Growth Scenario, which suggests that Sligo City could grow to circa 33,000 residents by the year 2016 and attain a population of 37,000 by 2020.

In terms of housing requirements corresponding to the population target, it is estimated that in the period 2010–2017, provision will need to be made for up to 4,056 households for Sligo City and Environs, well distributed across the urban area and balanced in terms of private, social and affordable housing.

Reaching a critical mass, i.e. a sufficient population base, would also facilitate the development of critical urban infrastructure such as an efficient public transport system, cultural facilities, sports centres, entertainment quarters, regional offices etc.

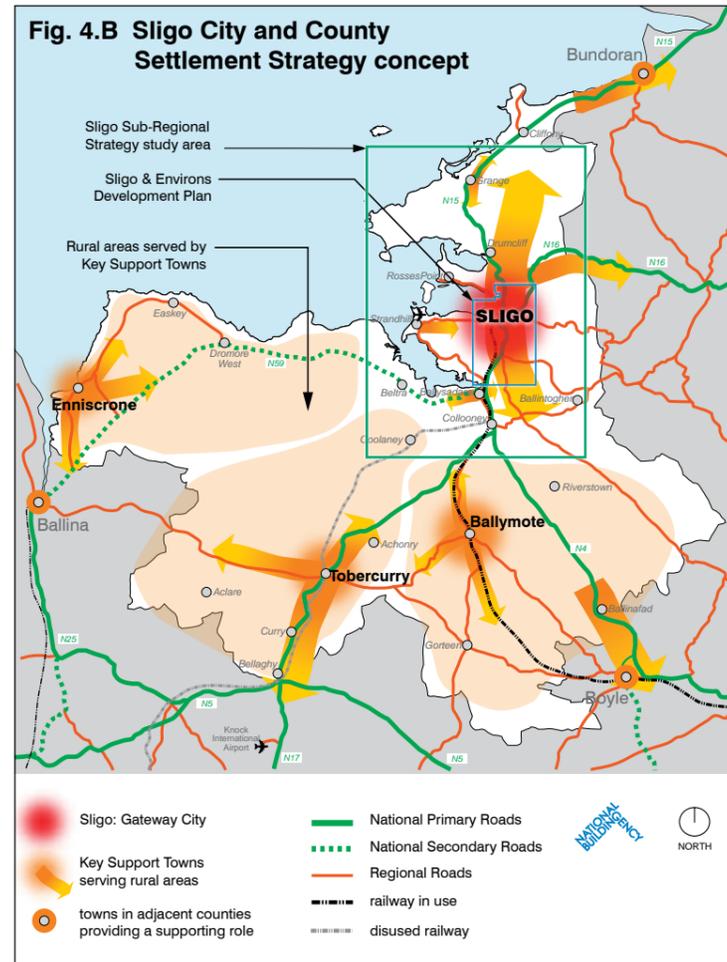
Sligo Borough and County Councils acknowledge that the achievement of such growth will depend significantly on assistance from the Government, in terms of:

- the provision of key infrastructure (water, transport, energy and telecommunications);
- input from key organisations whose remit it is to promote and/or secure economic development, particularly the IDA;
- relocation/decentralisation of state or semi-state bodies;
- promoting Sligo as an attractive place to live and work and ensuring that the Gateway is supported by a robust County settlement structure.

4.2.2 Sligo City and County Settlement Strategy

Sligo's Settlement Strategy – as set out in the CDP – is based on the following principles:

1. **Promotion and development of Sligo as a Gateway City** – a nationally significant urban centre, whose location and scale support the critical mass necessary to sustain strong levels of economic growth and prosperity in the North-West.
2. **Careful growth management in the Sligo Subregion** – the commuter belt of the greater Sligo area, including its satellite villages and the rural area under urban influence.
3. **Development of Key Support Towns of Ballymote, Tobercurry and Enniscrone** – to address the imbalance at county level by building on the strengths of these settlements, thus decreasing the pressure on the Subregion and sustaining the rural economy.



4.2.3 Growth management in the Subregion

In order to advance Sligo's development as a Gateway, it will be necessary to ensure that the City is attractive for both investment and people wishing to live in the Subregion. This will be achieved by carefully managing demand for housing in the Subregion, which is an area under strong urban influence.

While the housing needs of members of the rural communities will be generally accommodated, residential development generated by Sligo City will be channelled towards zoned and serviced lands in the satellite villages.

It is essential for the growth of the Gateway that the population targets set out in the CDP are not exceeded in the short to medium term. This is particularly important in the case of the satellite villages (Ballysadare, Collooney, Grange, Rosses Point and Strandhill) but also for the other settlements in the Subregion (Ballintogher, Ballygawley, Calry, Carney, Coolaney-Rockfield, Drumcliff, Ransboro and Rathcormack).

4.3 Key planning issues

The key planning issues that the SEDP must address are derived from the vision for Sligo's future, the strategic goals arising from this vision, the analysis of socio-economic and demographic trends and the preferred growth scenario.

The vision for Sligo focuses on developing a compact city, enhancing its liveability, improving general accessibility, focusing on the environment, supporting economic development, and promoting culture and diversity.

In order to achieve this ambitious vision, Sligo needs to improve its offer in terms of employment, healthcare, education, recreation and shopping, thereby attracting more people to live in the city.

In practice, this means:

- developing a robust spatial strategy – see **Chapter 5** – which ensures that sufficient land is available for a range of uses at appropriate locations, based on the principles of urban consolidation and sequential development, implemented in detail through the preparation of local area plans for selected areas;
- sustaining the Gateway economy and regional retail function by making adequate provision for businesses to locate and expand in Sligo and by promoting the city centre as the main retail development area – see **Chapter 6**;
- providing quality housing – see **Chapter 7** – that responds to the needs and aspirations of all sections of the society;
- supporting the provision of an array of community facilities, from crèches to burial grounds – see **Chapter 8**;
- promoting the cultural development of Sligo – see **Chapter 9**;
- improving mobility by ensuring that the traffic/circulation network maximises the number of activity locations that can be reached within an acceptable time from home and from the workplace – see **Chapter 10**;
- expanding the emerging network of recreational open spaces connected by pedestrian and cycle ways – see **Chapter 11**;
- advancing the regeneration of the urban core, kickstarting the redevelopment of edge-of-centre brownfield areas and establishing new urban quarters on greenfield lands, guided by urban design frameworks, masterplans and site briefs – see **Chapter 12**;
- conserving Sligo's archaeological, architectural and natural heritage – see **Chapter 13** and the **Record of Protected Structures**;
- ensuring sufficient capacity of environmental infrastructure, such as water supply, wastewater treatment, waste management and other facilities that provide essential services to a growing city – see **Chapter 14**;
- supporting the development of telecommunications and energy provision from both conventional and alternative sources – see **Chapter 15**;
- facilitating development management by setting standards and providing guidance for prospective developers – see **Chapter 16**.