



**CASTLEBAR TOWN COUNCIL.
MAYO COUNTY COUNCIL.**

ENVIRONMENTAL REPORT OF THE
CASTLEBAR AND ENVIRONS
DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2008- 2014

Draft Report

June 2007

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1. NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

Introduction

On the 12th July 2006, the Local Authorities of Castlebar Town Council and Mayo County Council commenced the preparation of a new joint Development Plan for the Town of Castlebar and its Environs. The new Development Plan will be titled "Castlebar and Environs Development Plan 2008-2014". This plan will set out the spatial planning framework and overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of Castlebar and its Environs for the six-year period 2008 – 2014. It will also provide a strategic planning context for the continuing growth and development of the town and its environs in the long term.

This Review needs to comply with the requirements of the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004, which transpose into Irish law the requirements of Directive 2001/42/EC of 27th June 2001, commonly known as the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive.

SEA in Context

Strategic Environmental Assessment is the formal, systematic evaluation of the likely significant environmental effects of implementing a plan or programme before the decision is made to adopt the plan or programme.

The process includes:

- Preparing an *Environmental Report* where the likely significant effects are identified and evaluated;
- Consulting the public, environmental authorities and any EU Member State affected, on the environmental report and draft plan or programme;
- Taking account of the findings of the report and the outcome of these consultations in deciding whether to adopt or modify the draft plan or programme;

- Making known the decision on adoption of the plan or programme and how SEA influenced the outcome.

Benefits of SEA

SEA is intended to provide the framework for influencing decision-making at an earlier stage when plans and programmes are being developed. It should lead to more sustainable development through systematic appraisal of policy options.

SEA will improve the quality of the plan-making process by:

- Facilitating the identification and appraisal of alternative plan strategies;
- Raising awareness of the environmental impacts of plans and programmes;
- Encouraging the inclusion of measurable targets and indicators;
- SEA is better able to address cumulative, indirect and multiplier effects. Consequently, it is more flexible and proactive in nature.

SEA Methodology

The methodology is composed of three procedural stages. These stages are:

- Stage 1: Scoping of the SEA
- Stage 2: Identification, prediction, evaluation and mitigation of potential impacts
- Stage 3: Consultation, revision and post-adoption activities.

Stage 1 – Scoping of the environmental report is the process of determining which issues are to be addressed and setting out a methodology to address them in a structured manner.

The key elements of the plan are identified and the broad environmental issues are addressed. This involves compiling data on the receiving environment.

The next task involves collecting and reporting on relevant international and local plans, objectives and environmental standards, both existing and emerging, that may influence or impact upon the Plan. Then, draft environmental objectives, indicators and targets are identified to allow

the evaluation of impacts based upon the earlier findings.

The next stage, Stage 2, of the SEA process involves the identification, prediction, evaluation and mitigation of potential impacts. This involves establishing the base line environment, existing and future trends and predicting the impacts of the Plan. The significance of these impacts then needs to be evaluated and mitigated.

For this a monitoring programme will need to be prepared. Through this the preferred alternative can be justified and the final SEA Report produced.

Stage 3 involves consultation, revision and post-adoption activities. The Directive requires certain information be made available after the decision making stage is complete. This will be compiled into an SEA Statement that will include a summary of how the environmental considerations have been taken into the Plan and reasons why the Plan was adopted in its form.

The Environmental Report is the key output element of the SEA process. The report is generated from a series of distinct steps taken in the assessment of the likely potential impacts of the proposed plan policies being implemented.

Baseline Data

Baseline data was collected based on indicators described in the SEA Directive, i.e. population, biodiversity, water supply, waste water, solid waste, air, cultural heritage and landscape and visual amenity.

From the baseline study exercise, a number of key environmental issues have been identified.

Population

The population projections, which have been prepared for the draft County Development Plan, have allocated a population increase to Castlebar of 2976 persons between 2006 and 2013. This will represent an increase in population from 12,592 to 15,568. The current household size is stated as being 2.82 persons per house and is expected to reduce to 2.59 persons per household by 2013.

In order to achieve the above population levels, the average population growth over the 2006 to the end of 2013 period will be 372

additional persons per annum. By projecting this average out for the life of the proposed Development Plan to July 2014, the target population will increase to 15,940. Therefore, the projected population growth between 2006 and 2014 is 3,357. Based on the average household being at 2.59 persons per unit in 2013 a total of 1,296 housing units would be needed over the life of the plan.

The Role and Character of the Town Centre

The central area of Castlebar has been the traditional commercial centre of the town for centuries and with the growth of the town population towards its 2020 target of 25,000, a balance must be struck between the continued prominence of town centre retailing versus out of town shopping demands. The future character and success of Castlebar Town Centre will depend very much upon the quantum, type and balance of uses, how they are configured and relate to each and how well they are integrated.

Transport and Access

This is by far the most important and wide ranging issue affecting the short, medium and long-term development of Castlebar and its environs. At the macro level, the realization of the Castlebar Ring Road Project and the development of the new N5 southern bypass is critical in the development of the lands to the south of the town, while the proposed regional route to the north would also assist in the realisation of the development potential of the lands to the north. Without the development of these two roads and the proposed inner relief road, through Ballynaboll and Knocknaphunla, large areas of land, which may have development potential, will not be accessible or developable.

At the micro level, traffic movement in the town centre has been examined in the context of the Castlebar Transport Study 2002. Several town centre car parks have been identified as key redevelopment opportunities. The key to the development of these car parks lie in the development of an alternative parking solution, as the need to cater for private car parking in the town centre will continue in the short term. Without the resolution of this issue, pressures will be exerted on the council to provide for out of town shopping facilities.

It is critical that lands, which are currently accessible, are developed and that road improvements or the construction of new roads is not compromised by piecemeal or premature development.

Natural Environment

Despite the fact that the plan area is urban in character, the town and its environs contain several significant elements of the Natural Environment. The town centre is in close proximity to Lough Lannagh and Saleen Lough and the Castlebar River winds through the centre of the town. These features are supplemented by a range of public open spaces and parks, public and private playing pitches and groupings of trees, which all combine to form an attractive physical environment that distinguishes Castlebar from most other urban centers of its size. It is important that these features are protected as the town expands outwards.

Flood Risk Management

Several areas of land within the plan area are identified as being liable to flooding, including several turloughs. The threat of flooding in the long term must inform the future development pattern of the plan area and caution must be exercised in the zoning of lands, which have the potential to flood. Given the emerging change in weather pattern of heavier rainfall during winter months, which has resulted in heavy flooding in County Mayo, including some localized flooding in parts of the plan area, new developments must not be permitted on lands prone to flooding and all new developments that are permitted must have adequate managed drainage systems to cater for both surface and storm water surges.

Drainage

A key element of consideration in the Environmental report has been the significant increase in the geographical catchment of the Castlebar Sewerage Network. The Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government has provided funding through the Serviced Land Initiative (SLI) and stipulated as a proviso that the newly serviced lands be made available for development. The environmental report has examined the requirement of the Council's to comply with the requirements of the

DOEHLG in terms of the Serviced Land Initiative, against their obligations under the National Spatial Strategy, Regional Planning Guidelines, Mayo County Development Plan and the interest of proper planning and sustainable development.

Economic Opportunities

Service industries are the fastest growing sector of the economy and many of the new jobs being created in town centres are in the retail, recreational and leisure sectors. The industrial area to the east of the town is a significant local employer and it is important that the new jobs arising from any new development are made accessible to local residents and that measures are put in place to ensure maximum take up of job opportunities from the immediate locality.

Consideration of Alternatives

The SEA Directive requires that the Environmental Report should include a discussion of the *"reasonable alternatives taking into account the objectives and the geographical scope of the plan or programme"*.

Rather than comparing each individual policy measure against different alternatives, three different broad development strategies are contrasted. These represent the strategic approaches to the plan making process but also contain the framework from which individual policies and initiatives emerge.

Strategy One: Adopt Indicative Zonings as per 2004 Castlebar Development Plan

This option would involve no material changes to the established development and zoning context of the town. The zoning map provided with the existing Development Plan only provides statutory zoning context for the area of land within the former Castlebar UDC boundary and while lands within the expanded town boundary have indicative land use zonings attributed to them they are not zoned in the statutory meaning of the term. This option would involve the adoption of the indicative zonings as per the 2004 Castlebar Town Plan Zoning Map.



Strategy 2: *Expansion and consolidation of existing built form to incorporate lands inside Ring Road Project*

In this option the town and its environs would develop to the limits of the expanded town boundary and to the inner edge of the road reserves for the Castlebar Ring Road Project where applicable.

This settlement option is based on the principle of consolidation of the lands nearest the town and creating as much as possible, a definitive edge for the town, except in areas where the existing Castlebar Town Council area steps outside the road lines.

Strategy 3: *Develop the town and environs to the limits of the expanded town boundary, to the road reserves for the Castlebar Ring Road Project and the catchment of the expanded Castlebar and Environs Sewerage network.*

This option assesses the impact that the expanded Castlebar and Environs sewerage network will have on the future development of the town.

2. INTRODUCTION

Requirement for Strategic Environmental Assessment

This is a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Environmental Report for the Draft Castlebar and Environs Development Plan 2008 - 2014. This section discusses the purpose of the Development Plan, the legal requirements of SEA, its implications for the Development Plan and its main findings to date.

On the 12th July 2006, the Local Authorities of Castlebar Town Council and Mayo County Council commenced the preparation of a new joint Development Plan for the Town of Castlebar and its Environs. The new Development Plan will be titled "Castlebar and Environs Development Plan 2008-2014". This plan must be completed within two years and it will set out the spatial planning framework and overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of Castlebar and its Environs for the six-year period 2008 – 2014. It will also provide a strategic planning context for the continuing growth and development of the town and its environs in the long term.

The draft Development Plan should be read in conjunction with the Mayo County Development Plan 2003 – 2009 and any subsequent Development Plan. The new Mayo County Development Plan is currently at pre-draft stage and the draft plan is due to be published in 2007.

In addition to the making of the pre-Draft Development Plan, the Planning Authorities are also obliged to carry out a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of the plan in parallel with its preparation.

Context of SEA

Strategic appraisals, such as this SEA, look primarily at the wider, long-term issues of development. They are not concerned with more detailed matters, such as the design of buildings or detailed site layout, since these are essentially matters to be covered in the Local/Action Area Plan and the environmental impact assessments (EIA), which accompany planning applications. Neither are we concerned here with issues

related to short-term options, provided that they do not step outside the overall envelope of matters that will have already been considered at a strategic level.

Whilst the main thrust of this SEA is to look at the long term, post 2014 period, the manner of how the first phase of development up to 2014 would mesh with the overall long-term plan is an important consideration. The development objectives and options evaluated for Castlebar and its environs have been shaped to reflect the need to accommodate short-term developments without compromising the long-term strategic objectives of the Development Plan.

Legislative Framework

On the 5th June 2001, the European Council adopted the Directive 2001/42/EC on the Assessment of the Effects of Certain Plans and Programmes on the Environment ("the SEA Directive") (EU, 2001), which took effect in the member states on the 21st July 2004. The Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive was adopted into Irish law on the 14th July 2004 by means of the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations (S.I.435 & S.I.436)¹. The Directive requires all European Union member States, including Ireland, to systematically evaluate the likely significant effects of implementing a plan or programme prior to its adoption.

SEA aims to provide for more sustainable development through the methodical appraisal of policy options, considering alternative means of developing an area, by raising awareness of the environmental impacts of plans and the inclusion of quantifiable targets and indicators.

The purpose of subjecting plans to SEA is, according to the EU Directive, *"to provide a high level of protection of the environment and contribute to the integration of environmental considerations into the*

¹ European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programme) Regulations 2004 (S.I. 435 of 2004), and Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004 (S.I. 436 of 2004).

preparation and adoption of plans and programmes with a view to promoting a sustainable future." The SEA process is designed to ensure that significant environmental effects arising from plans are:

- properly identified and assessed;
- subject to public participation;
- taken into account by decision makers;
- regularly monitored.

SEA is an important instrument to help to achieve sustainable development in public planning and policy making. The importance of SEA is widely recognised. Particular benefits of SEA include:

- To support sustainable development;
- To improve the evidence base for strategic decisions;
- To facilitate and respond to consultation with stakeholders;
- To streamline other processes such as Environmental Impact Assessments of individual development projects.

3. DRAFT DEVELOPMENT PLAN AND SEA REQUIREMENT

The two-year plan preparation timeframe commenced on 12th July 2006, when Castlebar Town Council and Mayo County Council gave notice of their intention to review the existing Castlebar Development Plan and prepare a new joint Development Plan for the administrative area of Castlebar Town Council and its Environs, which are within the administrative control of Mayo County Council. A Strategic Issues Paper was published to inform the public and prescribed bodies of relevant issues pertinent to the formation of the new Development Plan. This advertisement included the notification of a SEA also being carried out in conjunction with the plan. The Planning and Development (SEA) Regulations 2004 require that SEA be carried out in respect of Development Plans for areas with a population in excess of 10,000². In 2002, the population of Castlebar Town (excluding Environs) was 10,287. The 2006 Census Preliminary Results have indicated that the town population has grown to 10,729 persons³.

The initial public consultation covered an 8-week period up to and including 6th September 2006. The principal aim of the Pre-Plan Consultation was to gain an understanding of the issues that are of concern to those working, living and investing in the area. The issues raised in the submissions from the public and prescribed bodies have been taken into account in the preparation of this report.

In preparing this Environmental Report, the Council's are meeting the requirements of the Directive by preparing an SEA in parallel with the Development Plan making process. Initial scoping consultations took place in conjunction with the publication of the Strategic Issues paper in July 2006, with

notification being sent to the prescribed environmental authorities, EPA, Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government and Department of Communication, Marine and Natural Resources. This Environmental Report relates to the consultative draft of the Castlebar and Environs Development Plan 2008-2014. Following consultation with the relevant agencies on both the Draft Plan and this Environmental Report, these documents will be finalised.

To date the two stages of the SEA process have been completed. These stages are "Screening" and "Scoping" and are briefly described below.

Screening

"Screening" is the process for deciding whether a particular plan, other than those for which SEA is mandatory, would be likely to have significant environmental effects, and would thus warrant SEA.

Where the population of a plan area is 10,000 persons or more, or the Planning Authority determines that the plan would be likely to have significant effects on the environment, the planning authority shall, prior to giving notice under section 20(3) of the Act, prepare an environmental report of the likely significant effects on the environment.

A "Screening" process was undertaken for the review of the Castlebar Town Plan and it was established that SEA was required during the review process. The population of Castlebar Town was 10,287 persons in 2002 with an environs population of 1,084.

Scoping

"Scoping" is the procedure whereby the range of environmental issues and the level of detail to be included in the Environmental Report are decided upon, in consultation with the prescribed environmental authorities. Scoping helps, at the early stages of plan preparation, to reduce the possibility of relevant issues being identified.

The draft development plan prepared by the manager shall be accompanied by or include an environmental report. (Article 13C of regulations)

² Article 13B of S.I. No. 436 of 2004. PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT (STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT REGULATIONS 2004

Where – (a) the population of the area of a planning authority is 10,000 persons or more, ... (b) (ii) the provisions of articles 13C to 13J shall apply.

Article 13C A draft development plan prepared by the manager under section 11(5) of the Act shall be accompanied by or include an environmental report

³ Excluding the Environs

The planning authority shall, as soon as practicable after giving notice of its intention of reviewing its plan and preparing a draft development plan give notice to the environmental authorities specified in article 13A(4), as appropriate, as follows:

- (i) the Environmental Protection Agency,
- (ii) where it appears to the planning authority that the plan might have significant effects in relation to the architectural or archaeological heritage or to nature conservation, the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, and
- (ii) where it appears to the planning authority that the plan might have significant effects on fisheries or the marine environment, the Minister for Communications, Marine and Natural Resources.

4. SEA METHODOLOGY

Requirements

The SEA process for land-use plans includes:

- Preparing an Environmental Report where the likely significant environmental effects are identified and evaluated (this document).
- Consulting the public, statutory and public authorities, and any EU Member State affected, on the environmental report and draft plan, giving adequate time for the receipt of submissions.
- Taking account of the findings of the report and the outcome of these consultations in deciding whether to adopt or modify the draft plan.
- Making known the decision on adoption of the plan and how SEA influenced the outcome.

In accordance with Article 2 of the E.U. Directive, this assessment process must result in an environmental report, which must identify, describe and evaluate the likely significant effects on the environment of implementing the plan and reasonable alternatives. In the guidance issued by the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DoEHLG), the following steps are recommended in the preparation of the environmental report. These steps have been broadly followed in this report, with minor amendments in order to fit the particular circumstances and attributes of the study area. Reference to the steps suggested by the DoEHLG and where they are covered in this Report is given below. In particular, the report must contain:

- Step 1 - An outline of the background to, the contents and main objectives of, the plan, and of its relationship with other relevant plans and programmes;
- Step 2 - Summarise the survey findings and identify key development issues for the plan.
- Step 3 - Description of the relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution of the environment without the implementation of the plan (do nothing scenario);
- Step 4 - Develop a list of the environmental protection objectives

based on international, EU and national level policies, which are relevant to the plan and describe how they have been taken into account of, in the formulation of the plan;

- Step 5 - Generate a set of alternative development options based on objectives in step 4.
- Step 6 - Evaluate each option against Step 4 objectives to identify the most appropriate option.
- Step 7 - Select the most appropriate option. Outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives considered and a description of how the assessment was undertaken including any difficulties. Prepare detailed objectives.
- Step 8 - Description of the likely significant effects of the chosen option on the environment (biodiversity, human health, cultural heritage, air, soil, water etc);
- Step 9 - Modify chosen strategy to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects on the environment caused by implementing the plan;
- Step 10 - Description of proposed monitoring measures.
- Step 11 - A non-technical summary of the information provided under the above headings.

The purpose of this environmental report is to identify, evaluate and describe the likely significant effects on the environment of implementing the Castlebar and Environs Development Plan.

Baseline Data

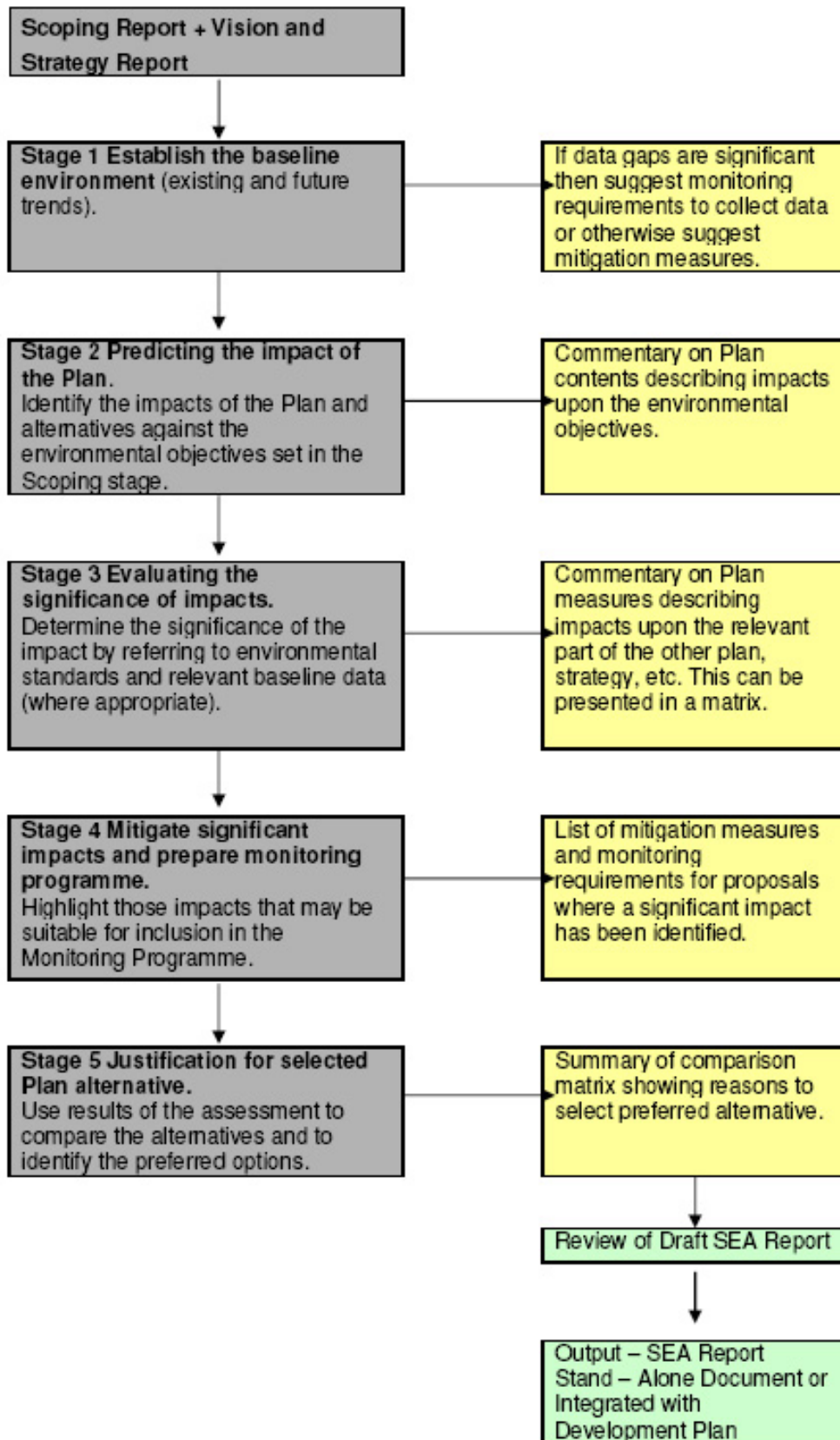
The SEA process requires that baseline data be collected using the indicators described in the SEA Directive. These topics are biodiversity, fauna, flora, population, human health, soil, water, air/climatic factors, material assets, cultural heritage including architectural and archaeological heritage, landscape and the interrelationship between the above. The impacts to be considered include secondary, cumulative, synergistic, short, medium and long-term permanent and temporary, positive and negative.

Before impacts on the environment can be predicted, it is necessary to achieve an

understanding of the relevant existing conditions. In accordance with guidance, no primary research was carried out in the collection of baseline data. Existing data sources were used. Such sources ranged from C.S.O. Census statistics, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) data, Geological Survey Ireland, O.P.W., G.S.I., Mayo County Council data on water, air, noise and traffic.

Difficulties Encountered

The lack of significant environmental data specific to Castlebar such as Environmental Impact Statements posed a difficulty in some aspects of the SEA process.



Summary of SEA Process

5. COMPATIBILITY WITH EXISTING POLICIES

Introduction

The draft Castlebar and Environs Development Plan 2008-2014 has been assessed for compatibility with all strategic plans, protocols and guidance notes that could be of relevance to the planning of the area. Plans and other documents relevant to the Castlebar and Environs Development Plan can be divided into 3 broad categories in a hierarchical fashion as follows:

- International and EU Plans, Strategies and Guidelines
- National Plans, Strategies and Guidelines
- Regional Plans, Strategies and Guidelines
- Mayo County Development Plan 2003-2009.

National Plans, Strategies and Guidelines

Sustainable Development – A Strategy for Ireland (1997)

The national strategy for sustainable development was prepared in the context of the implementation of the Operational Programmes contained in the first National Development Plan. It provides a framework for the achievement of sustainability at the national and local level. It encourages planning authorities to take account of sustainable development considerations in the preparation of Development Plans. The principle of sustainable development is an intrinsic element of the Castlebar Town Development Plan.

The National Development Plan 2007-2013

The National Development Plan – Transforming Ireland – A Better Quality of Life sets out the roadmap to Ireland's future. The NDP integrates strategic development frameworks for regional development, based on the National Spatial Strategy framework of Gateway cities and hub towns to achieve the goals of economic growth in the regions and provide major investment for the rural economy in a sustainable manner. Strong

urban centres are directly related to regional growth and development, affecting employment, incomes and quality of life.

The NDP provides general policies for infrastructural development for the regions of the country in areas such as housing, public transport, rural development, industry, water, health services and social inclusion. It was prepared to underpin the development of a dynamic and competitive economy in a competitive global context. It includes a number of strategic objectives for the Western Region, in which south County Mayo and Castlebar are located.

The National Spatial Strategy 2002-2020

The NSS was prepared to provide a spatial framework for future balanced regional development. Its main aims are to provide a better balance of social, economic, physical development and population growth between the regions over a 20-year strategic period. The Strategy seeks to establish a structure for future infrastructural investment through closer matching of where people live with where they work, in order to sustain:-

- A better quality of life;
- A strong, competitive economic position and
- An environment of the highest quality.

This is to be achieved through concentration of population in urban areas, in gateway and hub towns, with critical mass that enables a range of services and facilities to be supported to sustain a higher level of economic activity and improved quality of life. Hub towns will support the national and international role of the 9 gateway towns and will energise smaller towns and rural areas within their sphere of influence. The NSS will be supported by the Regional Planning Guidelines and extending down through County, Town and Local Area Plans.

Regional Plans, Strategies and Guidelines

Western Regional Planning Guidelines (2004)

The objective of the Regional Planning Guidelines is to give effect to the NSS and to

provide a long-term strategic planning framework for the development of the region for which the Guidelines are prepared. They encompass a wide range of policy areas providing a link between the national plans and county Development Plans. Castlebar Town is located in the West Region, which is comprised of the counties of Mayo, Galway and Roscommon.

The Guidelines identify Castlebar as the County Town and administrative centre of County Mayo. Castlebar has been designated a linked hub with Ballina, working together to promote regional development in that area. The aim is to reach a combined population of 30,000 by 2020. The purpose is to reinforce the establishment of a structured urban hierarchy in the region. The Regional Planning Guidelines also support a settlement strategy that will encourage the growth of towns and villages, as well the hubs and gateways.

Policies are to be identified; formulated and implemented that will promote the hubs and gateways to reach their targets. In terms of key issues affecting the region the Guidelines indicate that the major driver of regional population growth in the west is net immigration, which will see the population of the region rise by 80,000 by 2020. Planning authorities must therefore ensure that population increases happen in areas close to employment sources and where essential physical and social infrastructure such as transport and water services as well as schools, retail, community, healthcare and recreational/sporting facilities are available or are planned. These conditions are normally encountered in and around large towns and cities. According to the Regional Planning Guidelines for the West, Castlebar plays an integral role in the region's development.

Transport 21(2005)

On November 1 2005 the Minister for the Environment announced a €34 billion transport package –Transport 21 - to be implemented throughout the country by 2015.

The west will benefit from this investment, both in terms of improved roads and public transport. Minister Martin Cullen announced in his speech at the unveiling of Transport 21 that:

"We will develop the Atlantic Road Corridor from Letterkenny through Sligo, Galway, Limerick, Cork and Waterford. This will connect the National Spatial Strategy's Gateway Cities. The Atlantic Corridor will involve upgrading the route to dual carriageway and 2+1 road."

This should create some balance on the largely mono-centric road network and connect western towns such as Castlebar with other hubs and gateways along the Atlantic Corridor.

It also includes the improvement of the N59 coastal route from Sligo to Galway via Westport, which was outlined in the NSS as important for regional development. Existing rail links to Dublin will be increased; trains will run every hour at peak times between Galway and Dublin and every two hours off peak. There will be services every two hours on the Dublin – Sligo line and four trains a day on the Dublin – Westport line, which passes through Castlebar. Of particular interest is the announcement of the phased reopening of the western rail corridor. By 2014 trains will run from Ennis to Claremorris. This will allow interchange onto the Westport line for Castlebar, linking this hub by rail to the Western Gateways. Other public transport improvements benefiting the western region as a whole will be the Galway Commuter train service to Athenry, completion of a feasibility study of the Shannon Rail link and 9 m per annum investment in Rural Transport Initiative. This improved infrastructure will provide Castlebar will the additional transport linkages it requires as a joint hub in the NSS.

Towards Sustainable Local Communities: Guidelines on Local Agenda 21 (2001)

Local Agenda 21 was the result of the earth summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. This set out an agreement for meeting the challenges of the environment and development into the 21st century at national level. The Government is committed to ensuring that the relationship between socio-economic growth and the environment is not negative and does not exceed the carrying capacity of the local environment.

Local Agenda 21 also encourages consultative processes which involve the

whole community, local elected members and other community representative groups through the means of information awareness, public consultation and feedback, partnerships between authorities, businesses and communities, and a continuous monitoring of progress towards sustainability. Appropriate public consultation has been carried out in the preparation of this Development Plan.

The Strategic Environmental Assessment Guidelines (2004)

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is a systematic method for assessing the likely effects on the environment of plans and programs and incorporating environmental considerations into their preparation. The EU directive 2001/42/EC on SEA was passed into Irish Law by means of the Planning & Development (SEA) regulations 2004.

Scoping for the SEA process involved consultation with EPA and the prescribed bodies, consideration of the baseline conditions and assessment of relevant plans at national, regional, and local level and their relationship with the LAP.

Retail Planning Guidelines (2005)

The Department of the Environment and Local Government in December 2005 re-issued amended Retail Planning Guidelines (RPG). They set out 5 key policy objectives, which are to provide the framework for accommodating retail growth in an efficient, equitable and sustainable manner. These include the need to:

- Ensure that all future development plans provide clear policies and proposals for retail development.
- To facilitate a competitive and healthy environment for the retail industry. It is not the purpose of the planning system to inhibit competition, preserve existing commercial interests or prevent innovation.
- Ensure all forms of retail development are easily accessible to consumers. Such facilities should be in locations which have good access to transport corridors and public transport, whereby multi-purpose shopping, business and leisure trips can be encouraged on the same journey.

- Support the primary roles of city, town and district centres.
- Presumption against large retail centres located adjacent or close to existing new or planned national roads/motorways.

One of the five key objectives identified in the Retail Planning Guidelines for Planning Authorities, of relevance for a Town & Environs Development Plan is: -

- To support the continuing role of town and district centres;
- These established centres should be the preferred locations for development that attract many trips;
- This policy will also support their role as centres of social and business interaction in the community;
- In order to achieve this objective, the preferred location for retail development, should be within town centres, consistent with the requirement to achieve good access especially by public transport;
- If there are no development sites available within a town centre, then the next preference should be a location on the edge of the town centre;
- Only where there are no sites, or potential sites, within a town centre or on its edge, or a satisfactory transport accessibility (including park and ride) realistically cannot be ensured within a reasonable period of time, should out of centre development be contemplated.

The Guidelines describe the role of town centres together with district centres as providing a broad range of facilities and services and acting as a focus for the local community. They provide a range of commercial and community activities, resulting in a mix of land uses, which contribute to a sense of place and identity. They also provide a high level of accessibility to employment, services and facilities for all the community. These policies are reflected in the Development Plans.

National Heritage Plan (2002)

This Plan aims to set out a clear and coherent strategy and framework for the protection and enhancement of heritage. The plan is

founded on the principle of sustainable development and seeks to ensure the protection of Ireland's heritage and promote its enjoyment by all.

The lands have been previously subject to cultural heritage assessment as part of Environmental Impact Assessment in conjunction with planning applications and subsequent investigative examinations that have resolved the potential for impact.

National Bio Diversity Plan (2002)

This plan seeks to ensure the full and effective integration of biodiversity concerns into the development and implementation of other policies, legislation and programs, referring to: - eco-system diversity; species diversity and genetic diversity. The overall goal of the Plan is to "secure the conservation, including where possible the enhancement, and sustainable use of biodiversity in Ireland and contribute to conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity globally.

National Anti-Poverty Strategy (1997)

This 10 year strategy was formulated in 1997, with the target to considerably reduce the numbers of those who are consistently poor. Consistent poverty is described in the Strategy as being below 50% - 60% of average household income and experiencing enforced basic deprivation, referring to 5 key themes:- unemployment, income adequacy, educational disadvantage, urban disadvantage and rural poverty.

Landscape and Landscape Assessment (2000)

The Guidelines encourage a more pro-active approach to landscape in terms of its ability to accommodate development and to provide indicators as to which development might be most suited, under what conditions and using particular design criteria. This method known as "landscape character assessment" should be applied in all aspects of physical planning to provide guidance to planners and others as to how landscape considerations should be dealt with and to indicate specific requirements for

Development Plans and for development control.

Childcare Facilities, Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2001)

These guidelines are intended to guide both Local Authorities in preparing Development Plans and assessing applications for planning permission, and developers and childcare providers in formulating development proposals. One of the requirements of these guidelines is that childcare facilities should be provided at Town Centres and in the vicinity of locations where there are significant numbers working and adjacent to public transport corridors, park and ride facilities, pedestrian routes and dedicated cycle ways.

Mayo County Retail Strategy 2002

Mayo County Council adopted its Retail Strategy in 2002. It adheres to the principles outlined in the national Retail Planning Guidelines. The 2002 Mayo County Retail Strategy is a joint strategy with Castlebar, Westport and Ballina urban district councils. Castlebar is the county town and provides a wide diversity of functions, including financial institutions, industrial/ manufacturing companies, professional services, Mayo General Hospital as well as approximately 200 retail outlets. Increasing diversity in the range on offer has seen the town develop as an attractive regional shopping destination. The Strategy identifies a number of key issues relating to Castlebar's retail environment. These include: parking/accessibility, litter, dereliction, attractiveness, pedestrianisation, access for the disabled, safety, balanced development towards the Linenhall and Spencer Street areas, street lighting and signage. It outlines actions to be taken in response to each of these issues.

County Development Plan

Mayo County Council Development Plan (2003)

The Mayo County Council Development Plan 2003 – 2009 sets out Mayo County Council's policies and objectives for the development of the County from 2003 to 2009. The plan seeks to improve in a sustainable manner the social, economic, cultural and environmental assets of the county.

The County Development Plan is an expression of the Council's vision, in partnership with the wider public, for the sustainable development of the county over the 6 year life of the plan and contains the steps needed to achieve this vision. The County Development Plan sets the context with which the Castlebar Town and Environs Development Plan must be consistent.

A strategic objective of the County Development Plan is:-

to promote and facilitate the growth of Ballina, Castlebar as a linked sub-regional development hub in accordance with the National Spatial Strategy, building on their individual strengths and potential development roles and to ensure that the necessary physical and social infrastructure supports and linkages are developed.

Other relevant objectives of the plan include:

Objective EA-IE 7 supports decentralisation by the potential that exists for accommodating higher levels of population and/jobs growth in those settlements, which are currently served by main rail lines. The development plan also includes an objective (HC-RA 6) to provide a child's playground in Castlebar.

DF-1 To promote & facilitate the growth of the combined towns of Ballina, Castlebar & Westport as a sub-regional development hub, building on their individual & complimentary strengths & potential development roles & to ensure that the necessary physical & social infrastructure supports & linkages are developed.

6. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE EXISTING ENVIRONMENT

Baseline Data

Baseline data was collected based on the indicators described in the SEA directive, namely; Demographic Profile; Transport; Biodiversity / Flora and Fauna; Water; Surface Water Drainage; Waste; Water Supply; Air / Climatic Factors; Cultural Heritage; Landscape and Visual Amenity; Housing.

Location and Study Area

The new Castlebar and Environs Development Plan is being prepared as a result of the increased catchment area incorporated into the expanded Castlebar and Environs Sewerage Scheme. The sewerage network extends out from the existing network along a series of radial routes including the R373 East, N60 East, Milebush (Golf course road), N84 South, R311 West, Snugborough area, Rathbawn Road and the R310 North.

The study area and ultimately the proposed plan boundary have also been influenced by the existing administrative boundary of Castlebar town, which was extended in 2002 and the proposed alignment of the northern

and southern routes of the Castlebar Ring Road project.

Demographic and Socio-Economic Profile

Method and Sources of Data

This section has been collated from data published by Government agencies, including data from the Census of 2002 and the Preliminary Census Report 2006. To illustrate trends, direct comparisons have been made between the data outcomes of the two census results. The comparisons have been based upon a number of catchment areas.

Population trends

Preliminary results have been released from the 2006 Census. Between 2002 and 2006, the population of Castlebar Town grew by 4.3%, from 10,287 to 10,729 persons. While figures for the environs area have not been released to date, it is anticipated that the 2002 population of 1,084 will have increased such that the overall population of the town will be c 12,000 in 2006.

Table 7.1 Population of Castlebar Town & Environs 2006

Castlebar Town	2002	2006
Castlebar Urban	6,585	6,184 (-6.1%)
Castlebar Rural (part)	3,702	4,545 (+22.8%)
	10,287	10,729
Castlebar Environs	1,084	
Total	11,371	

(Source: Census of Population 2006, Preliminary Report)

The town's four year growth rate of 4.3% is below corresponding rates for County Mayo

(5.3%), Connaught (8.4%) and the State (8.1%).

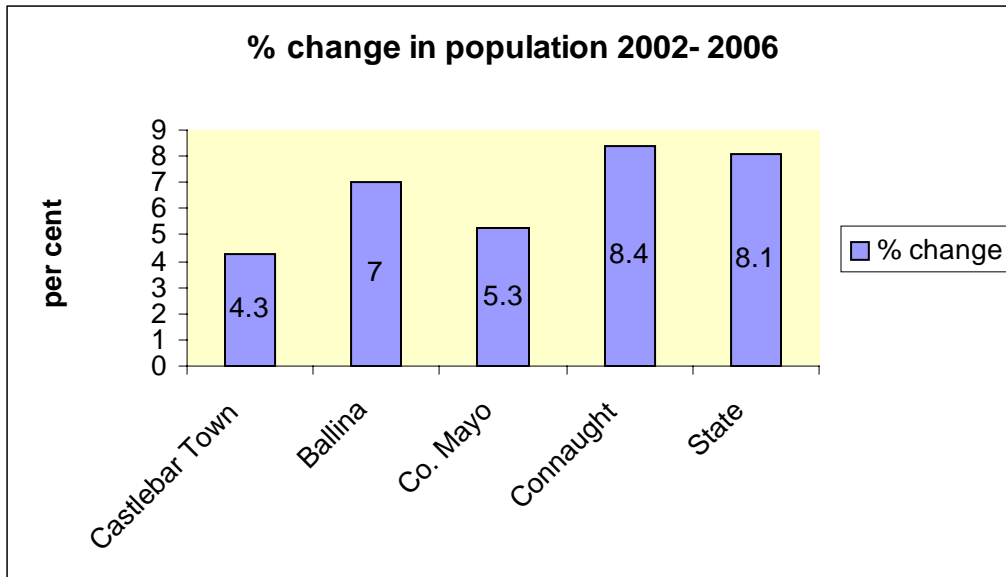


Figure 7.1: Population Growth 2002-2006
(Source: Census of Population 2006, Preliminary Report)

The population figures for the main electoral divisions (Eds) located around Castlebar indicate a high disparity in growth rates. Castlebar urban DED showed a decline over the four years. In contrast, Castlebar rural DED grew by 10-15% while other nearby electoral districts such as Breaghwy, Turlough and Ballinafid all grew by over 15%. This "doughnut effect", whereby town centre populations decline and surrounding suburban and rural populations grow is a demographic feature of many towns and cities in Ireland.

Demographic Profile

The Population Structure and Demographic Profile shows that Castlebar has a high proportion of persons in the 25-44 age cohort. This indicates that a relatively large work force exists in the town, reflective of its role as the county town. In contrast, the town has a relatively small proportion of persons in the 45-64 age cohort.

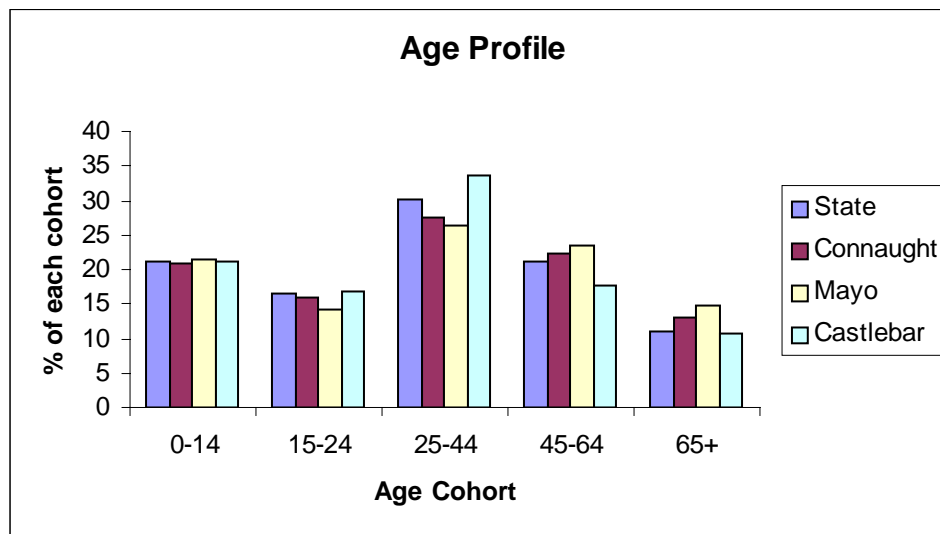


Figure 7.2: Age profile of the state, Province, County and Town, 2002

Population Projections

The task of accurate population projection is onerous given the interplay of numerous factors of uncertainty. The projected population will be influenced by variable fertility rates and the extent of migration, which is in turn dependent upon the economic welfare. The recent trend indicates that the population of Castlebar continues to grow, albeit at a slower rate than the county and the state as a whole.

The Western Regional Planning Guidelines set a population target of a minimum of 35,000 for the linked hub of Castlebar and Ballina by 2020. In 2006, the combined population of the two towns was 20,875.

Due to its central location within the county, being the county town and a joint Hub with Ballina, Castlebar is forecast to continue to grow in tandem with the projected population growth and the changing spatial settlement structures in the Western Region. To this effect a population target of 15,500 has been set for Castlebar up until 2013.

The Draft County Development Plan sets out population and household projections based on the agreed distribution between different towns within the local authority area and growth indicated by the NSS and RPG's. The figures indicate a population increase of 3,500 in Castlebar and a net household increase of 1,206 between 2008 and 2014.

The population projections, which have been prepared for the draft County Development Plan, have allocated a population increase to Castlebar of 2976 persons between 2006 and 2013. This will represent an increase in population from 12,592⁴ to 15,568. The current household size is stated as being 2.82 persons per house and is expected to reduce to 2.59 persons per household by 2013.

⁴ Draft Mayo Housing Strategy 2007

Town	1996	2002	2006	2013	2014
Castlebar	8,532	11,371	12,592	15,568	16,126
% Change		33.3%	10.7%	23.6%	3.5%

In order to achieve the above population levels, the average population growth over the 2006 to the end of 2013 period will have to be 372 additional persons per annum. By projecting this average out for the life of the proposed Development Plan to July 2014, the target population will increase to 15,940. Therefore, the projected population growth between 2006 and 2014 is 3,357. Based on the average household being at 2.59 persons per unit in 2013 a total of 1,296 housing units would be needed over the life of the plan⁵.

In accordance with the *Development Plans – Publication Consultation Draft of Guidelines for Planning Authorities – April 2006*, a Development Plan should provide sufficient residentially zoned land to cater for the projected growth for the life of the Development Plan and for a further 3 years after that time⁶, which means that a minimum 50% additional land should be provided for residential growth over and above the projected growth rate.

Socio Economic Profile

As the County Town and administrative centre of Mayo Castlebar provides a wide variety of functions to a large catchment area. It is the location for the headquarters of the County and Town administration, financial/banking institutions, various industrial companies and professional practices, the Mayo General Hospital and a number of Government Departments as well as secondary and tertiary educational institutions.

Looking at the changes in occupations within the Castlebar compared to the County reveals that in 2006, less than 5% of people in Castlebar are professionals compared to c7% in the county. 22% of people are classed as managerial or technical with 17% in the non-manual category. These figures show a change from the 2002 census indicating that there is an increase in the number of persons occupied

in higher skilled occupations. The high level of skilled manual workers provides an indication of the level of construction activity in the town.

Transport

The information on transport was gathered from the NRA Roads Design Office, Roads and Planning Departments Department Mayo County Council and the 2002 Castlebar Transportation Study.

Castlebar is located on the N5 National Primary Route, which links Westport in the west, to Dublin via Longford and the N4-N5-N6, while the N84 connects the town to Galway City. The N60 links Castlebar with Roscommon via Claremorris. A series of radial regional routes, connect the town with northern parts of the county while the numerous minor roads interconnect to all of the larger roads and provide the town with a reasonable level of routing options for motorists. Due to the continued growth of Castlebar and its status as a hub town, major investment in roads infrastructure and public transport is required to avoid traffic congestion into the future.

Traffic levels have grown significantly and increased economic activity over the last 4-5 years as a result of the growth in population levels in the suburbs. The town centre and the approaches to Castlebar continue to suffer from heavy traffic congestion, relating to the key through routes such as the N5, N60 and N84. The free flow of traffic, in and through the town center is often hindered by illegally parked cars and delivery vehicles. The lack of supply of on street town centre parking can lead to a build up of traffic circulating the center seeking a free space rather than parking in one of the towns car parks, while the ineffective use of junctions and traffic lights lead to congestion. In the long term it is likely that these car parks will be developed, as they are prime development sites. This will add significant short-term pressure to the towns parking capacity.

A number of major infrastructural projects are planned which will greatly the road

⁵ See Section 5.4 for more detailed analysis of the housing projections.

⁶ Section 4.14 of the *Development Plans – Publication Consultation Draft of Guidelines for Planning Authorities – April 2006*,

infrastructure in the area. The Castlebar Ring Road Project's Preferred Route is 12.5km long and this orbital route will link 4 national roads, 2 proposed national roads, 3 regional roads and 9 local roads of varying importance and where these roads intersect a roundabout will probably be the choice of junction arrangement. The Preferred Route will cross Lough Lannagh and the Castlebar River and will also cross the Westport-Dublin railway line twice and these crossings will be facilitated by means of a bridge.

The Castlebar Ring Road Project will be developed as two distinct entities, part as a National Road to the south (new N5) and part as a Regional Road to the north. The N5 will connect with the N60 Castlebar-Claremorris Preferred Route to the south east of the town. An inner relief road on the existing Westport road will remove traffic from the existing roads and will serve as access to the lands both north and south of it.

Public transport in Castlebar is poor, with the vast majority of journeys within and to the town being made by private car. Whilst Castlebar boasts a local rail station, it is poorly connected to the primary rail network in terms of service provision. Bus Services, while offering a more frequent service than trains are not based upon the needs of the commuter, with most services being indirect and much less attractive than the private car as a means of travel.

The town is situated on the Dublin-Westport rail service line. Three-times-daily train services run through to Claremorris, Ballyhaunis and on to Athlone and Dublin in one direction and Westport in the other.

The town is served by regular bus services linking Castlebar to all major and regional towns such as Dublin, Galway, Athlone, Ballina and Westport. The Bus Eireann network services the town 3 times daily from Dublin while busses depart Castlebar for the capital 5 times each day. The Galway City Route is much more frequent with 9 services per day as well as 8 return trips.

Unlike some town of a similar size, Castlebar is not serviced by a local bus service and the majority of journeys within the town are made by private car. There are no cyclist facilities in Castlebar and the lack of

adequate footpaths acts to discourage people living in new development on the edge of town from cycling or walking to the town center as they feel vulnerable.

Biodiversity and Flora and Fauna

At present there are no special designated sites in Castlebar, however, the Castlebar River is a tributary of the River Moy, which is a candidate SAC. The Moy, which flows through Mayo, Roscommon and Sligo is one of the most important salmon rivers in Europe. The species is threatened by loss of habitat through drainage, siltation, pollution and by over-fishing. Within the European Union, only Ireland and Scotland still have large numbers of salmon.

Water Supply

The information on water supply was received from Mayo County Council and the DOEHLG. Castlebar receives its drinking water supply for the Lough Mask Regional Scheme, which is capable of supplying a yield of 60Ml/d. The water is treated at Tourmakeady water treatment works and from there is piped to the Castlebar reservoir, which is located to the north of the town. The reservoirs two storage tanks receive their water from 2 trunk mains and have a total storage capacity of 20Ml. The scheme also serves Ballinrobe, Ballindine, Claremorris and their surrounding areas. The reservoir is deemed to be in good condition and the source is highly reliable.

Waste Water Treatment

The main source of information with respect to wastewater facilities, were PJ. Tobins consulting Engineers to the Castlebar and Environs Sewerage Expansion Scheme and the Water Services Section of Mayo County Council.

The Council has made considerable investments in wastewater treatment facilities in recent years. The Castlebar and environs sewerage extension scheme commenced in 2004. The scheme provides for:-

- ❑ Extension of foul and surface water sewers to serve new growth areas of Castlebar and Environs.
- ❑ Remedial work to existing sewers, which have deteriorated over time.
- ❑ Elimination of storm overflows which have resulted in a decline in water quality of the Castlebar River.

- ❑ Upgrading and extension to Castlebar Wastewater Treatment Works to cater for the short term and long-term (up to 2020 and beyond) requirements of Castlebar and Environs.
- ❑ The extension of treated outfall to confluence of Castlebar and Manulla Rivers.
- ❑ A number of advance sections have been completed.

The Wastewater Treatment Plant at Knockthomas currently caters for a population equivalent of 28,000. It is the intention of the Council to increase capacity to 35,000 to cater for the growing population and to facilitate enterprise.

Solid Waste

Waste Management is one of the most controversial and problematic issues facing local authorities throughout the country. Regional Waste Management Plans aim to improve waste management at a regional level.

The Connacht Region Waste Management Plan 2006-2011 applies to the six local authorities of Galway City and Galway, Leitrim, Mayo, Roscommon and Sligo.

Under the Waste Management Plan it has been recognised that as a society we must reduce our dependence on landfill, increase recycling rates through an extension and upgrading of the Bring-Bank Network. There are a number of bring centres located throughout the town.

Mayo County Council has two Licensed Landfills located at Derrinumera and

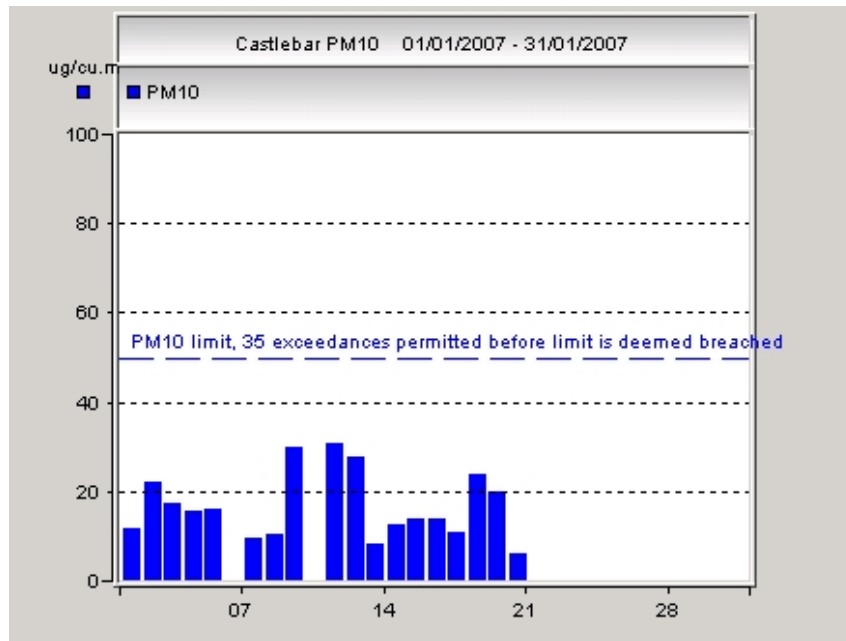
Rathroeen. Castlebar is served by the Derrinumera landfill, which is located on the Castlebar-Newport Road. As well as being a traditional landfill, the site also contains a Recycling or "Civic Amenity Centre" where householders can bring a wide range of items for recycling. This Civic Amenity Centre offers the public the opportunity to recycle a wider range of waste types than bring-banks and is open to the public from Monday to Saturday. Items, which can be recycled at this facility include glass, plastics, cardboard, scrap metals, textiles, tyres, batteries and white goods.

Air / Climatic Factors

The prevailing winds in County Mayo are west to southwest and bring with them very clean air off the Atlantic/. There are no significant polluting industries in the area. The principle air pollutant and contributor to climatic change in recent years has come from the construction industry and the end users of the new buildings through lighting heating and traffic generation.

The only air quality parameter, which is continually monitored in at the fire station in Castlebar is PM₁₀. The PM₁₀ monitor is located in the grounds of the fire station on the outskirts of Castlebar. The PM₁₀ limit of 50 ug m⁻³ is deemed breached if more than 35 exceedances have occurred.

The Graph shows the latest available results. While not shown on the graph below the daily limit of 50 microgrammes per m³/day has been exceeded twice in 2007.



Extract From EPA website

Taking into consideration the location of Castlebar on the western side of the country in an area with little heavy industry it is likely that there are no significant air pollution threats in the vicinity.

Cultural Heritage

The rich cultural heritage of Castlebar is an integral part of its attractiveness. The Castlebar Architectural Heritage Study 2000 was carried out as part of the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage in order to highlight features of architectural importance in the town. The collection of buildings and spaces surveyed include features of national, regional and local importance. Castlebar benefits from a legacy of 18th, 19th and 20th century buildings including townhouses on Main Street, civic and institutional buildings such as the Military barracks, and ecclesiastical buildings such as the Church of Ireland (Christchurch) on The Mall and the Catholic Church on Upper Chapel Street. The town has also inherited a Town Centre street pattern that has informed the layout of the subsequent expansion of the town.

The architecture of these buildings and the spaces between them such as Rock Square, the Fairgreen and Market Square lend attractiveness to the Town Centre. The institutional and civic buildings provide historic links to the past and contribute to the

town's identity as the County Town and as an important centre for public services and administration.

The traditional shop fronts in Castlebar are also important to the architectural heritage of the town.

The town and environs has a rich archaeological history. There is abundant evidence of enclosures, crannogs, earthworks and later stone fortifications around Lough Lannagh, while a large part of the town centre is designated as a single protected site.

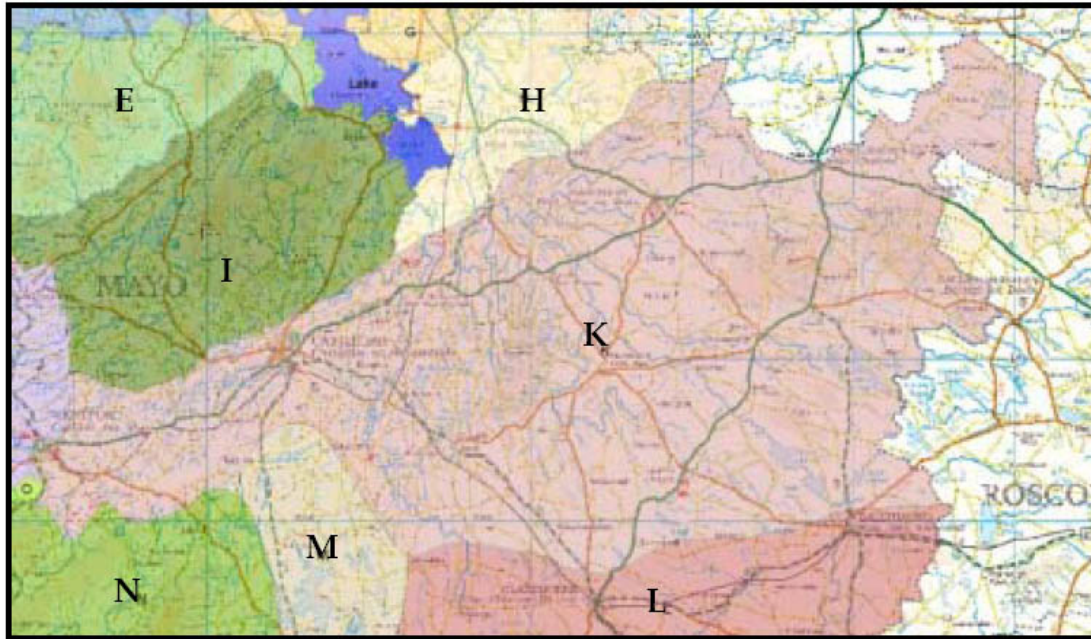
Landscape and Visual Assessment

The drumlin and lake landscape is an inherent part of Castlebar's natural and human heritage and as such it requires protection protected against possible development, which would undermine or change its character. It is paramount to Castlebar's future development that development only takes place where visual intrusion is minimal particularly within areas of elevated topography or sparse vegetation.

In line with the DOEHLG's Landscape Character Assessment Guidelines (2000), Mayo County Council commissioned an independent 'Landscape Appraisal for County Mayo' in 2002, which identifies and describes the landscape character of each part of the County. The appraisal evaluates

the capacity of each character area to accept change without disproportionate effects and provides policies to guide

development in each type of landscape unit.



Extract from landscape Appraisal for County Mayo

Castlebar is located within Area K – East-Central Drumlin Spine. This large geographical area is made up of glacial drumlins that are uniform at its western end near its transition with the distinct drumlins of Clew Bay. In the east, these become less uniform and severe, and the terrain merges into several sets of geologically distinct and isolated units as the unit encapsulates the towns of Castlebar, Swinford and Charlestown. The drumlin landscape runs from County down to Clew Bay.

While the overall landscape of the plan area is of a drumlin nature, there are two local landscapes, which are protected. They are Lough Lannagh and Saleen Lough.

There are numerous vantage points from where the landscape setting of Castlebar can be experienced, especially along the main approach roads to the town and from elevated positions to the north. There are also important views from within the urban area and outwards to the surrounding landform, often framed by streets of

traditional building form and/or individual buildings of historic merit.

The existing town centre presents as a low-rise townscape set within the context of the historical street pattern. The buildings are predominantly 2 and 3 storey in height.

Several large car-parking areas represent opportunities for redevelopment and consolidation of the town centre. The existing buildings fronting onto the main streets are set within long narrow sites. Like the carparks at Castle street and to the rear of Main Street these sites have the potential to be developed for town centre activities set within pedestrian friendly environment. Key Environmental Issues

The strategic appraisal will look at the potential impact of the development options on all environmental resources. From a review of existing environmental conditions in the Castlebar area it is considered that the following are likely to be the key issues in the choice of a development strategy to take forward into the sustainable planning of the expanded Castlebar and Environs Area.

7. KEY AIMS OF PLAN

Development Plan Strategy

The plan is known as the Castlebar and Environs Draft Development Plan 2008 – 2014. It sets out the policies and objectives of Castlebar Town Council and Mayo County Council that will guide land use development within Castlebar Town and its environs over its 6 year life.

The Draft Development Plan has been prepared in accordance with the provisions of the Planning and Development Acts 2000-2006 and has been jointly prepared and adopted by Castlebar Town Council and Mayo County Council. References within the Plan text to the 'Council' refer to the policy of both Councils as appropriate. The plan pertains to the administrative area of Castlebar Town Council (the Planning Authority for that area) and to the towns immediate environs which are within the administrative control of Mayo County Council (the Planning Authority for that area).

The general approach and the key elements of the land use strategy for the Development Plan are summarised as follows:-

- ❑ Facilitate the continued development of Castlebar as the county town and to promote its status as a joint Hub town with Ballina
- ❑ Consolidate the existing Town Centre Development area as the principle shopping area in the town
- ❑ Provide for the development of neighbourhood centre facilities to cater for the new residential area

south of the rail line at Saleen and on the Westport road.

- ❑ Provide for a mix of residential densities providing for residential infill on sites within the town centre and the existing residential/infill lands.
- ❑ Provide for the consolidation of growth in the existing residentially zoned areas by providing sufficient zoned lands to cater for the projected population growth of the town over the life of the plan.
- ❑ To reserve land corridors, free from development, for the provision of the southern N5 bypass, the northern Regional Route bypass and the inner relief road over the medium to long term.
- ❑ Control ribbon development along the main approaches to Castlebar, within the areas zoned low density
- ❑ To protect from insensitive development lands identified for Low Density Residential development in the Castlebar Development Plan 2004 through promotion of appropriate structure planting and avoiding development, which breaks the skyline.
- ❑ Protect the visual character of the plans drumlin landscape, by controlling the siting and development of new buildings and through the promotion of appropriate structure planting.
- ❑ Promote the town's existing amenities and provide new high quality and accessible amenities.
- ❑ Enhance residential areas throughout the town, by providing recreational facilities, neighbourhood centres and pedestrian/cycling linkages.

Key Strategic Objectives

Housing

It is the objective of the council to facilitate and provide for the housing requirements of the plan area and to provide for a range of new residential accommodation appropriate to the changing needs of the population

Natural Environment and Recreation

To protect, conserve, enhance and sustain the natural environment of Castlebar and its environs for future generations.

To promote the maintenance and development of opportunities for sport, recreation, leisure and the arts in accessible locations, in order to meet the needs of local communities and the overall population of Castlebar and its environs.

Retailing

Assist in the development of Castlebar's Hub status as a Regional Employment Growth Centre & Regional Shopping Destination.

Direct new development to the existing town centre; in accordance with the development strategy and other plan policies,

Town Centre

To promote Castlebar town centre as the focal point of the town's archaeological, cultural and historic heritage, the shopping, commercial and administrative core, and location for key community and residential uses.

Built and Cultural Heritage

To continue to promote Castlebar as the County Town and as a regional nodal centre, while securing and enhancing the heritage character of the town.

Public Infrastructure

To facilitate the economic and social development of the town through the provision of adequate physical services infrastructure and to optimize the return of investment on such infrastructure.

Enterprise and Employment

To facilitate the expansion of existing industries, promote sustainable economic growth and employment opportunities.

Transportation

To develop a safer, efficient and environmentally friendly integrated transport system, linked to land use objectives with improvements to the existing road network and facilitation of planned roads, with a view to a reduction in the need for travel, tackling traffic congestion and promoting public transport while enhancing pedestrian, cyclist and vehicular safety.

Community Development

To facilitate the provision of social and community facilities within Castlebar Town and its environs for the benefit of all residents and the wider community

8. KEY ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

The strategic appraisal will look at the potential impact of the development options on all environmental resources. From a review of existing environmental conditions in the Castlebar area it is considered that the following are likely to be the key issues in the choice of a development strategy to take forward into the sustainable planning of the expanded Castlebar and Environs Area.

The Role and Character of Castlebar Town Centre

The central area of Castlebar has been the traditional commercial centre of the town for centuries and with the growth of the town population towards its 2020 target of 25,000, a balance must be struck between the continued prominence of town centre retailing versus out of town shopping demands. The future character and success of Castlebar Town Centre will depend very much upon the quantum, type and balance of uses, how they are configured and relate to each and how well they are integrated.

Transport and Access

This is by far the most important and wide ranging issue affecting the short, medium and long term development of Castlebar and its environs. At the macro level, the realization of the Castlebar Ring Road Project and the development of the new N5 southern bypass is critical in the development of the lands to the south of the town, while the proposed regional route to the north would also assist in the realisation of the development potential of the lands to the north. Without the development of these two roads and the proposed inner relief road, through Ballynaboll and Knocknaphunla, large areas of land, which may have development potential, will not be accessible or developable. These roads will have a profound effect on the future development of the town and will be a key factor in the recommendations for the zoning of lands in the Castlebar and Environs Development Plan 2008-2014.

At the micro level, traffic movement in the town centre has been examined in the context of the Castlebar Transport Study

2002. Several town centre car parks have been identified as key redevelopment opportunities. The key to the development of these car parks lie in the development of an alternative parking solution, as the need to cater for private car parking in the town centre will continue in the short term. Without the resolution of this issue, pressures will be exerted on the council to provide for out of town shopping facilities. The Environmental Report will consider these issues as well as the draft retail strategy for County Mayo, which is being prepared as part of the review of the County Development Plan 2008-2014 and the most appropriate development growth strategy for the town will be established.

In the longer term this SEA is concerned with public transport improvements planned as part of Transport 21. This should ensure that future development is sustainable.

It is critical that lands, which are currently accessible, are developed and that road improvements or the construction of new roads is not compromised by piecemeal or premature development.

Natural Environment

Despite the fact that the plan area is urban in character, the town and its environs contain several significant elements of the Natural Environment. The town centre is in close proximity to Lough Lannagh and Saleen Lough and the Castlebar River winds through the centre of the town. These features are supplemented by a range of public open spaces and parks, public and private playing pitches and groupings of trees, which all combine to form an attractive physical environment that distinguishes Castlebar from most other urban centers of its size. The Development Plan will promote the continued development of a river walk along the banks of the Castlebar River by reserving lands in new developments on both sides of the river. It is important that these features are protected as the town expands outwards.

In order to protect the landscape character of the East-Central Drumlin Spine within which Castlebar lies, new developments will be restricted so that they do not protrude above the skyline of the drumlins

Groundwater

The majority of the groundwater in the county is considered not to be at a significant risk of pollution. However, in the case of the northern half of the Castlebar Plan area there is a significant risk of pollution, while the aquifer underlying the town has been assessed as being '*probably at significant risk*'.

Surface Water

Like the other major urban centers in County Mayo, Castlebar is within the catchment of a river (Castlebar River), which is classed as being at significant risk. Any development within the plan area that is not connected to the public sewerage network will pose a risk of pollution to both surface and ground waters.

Flood Risk Management

Several areas of land within the plan area are identified as being liable to flooding, including several turloughs. The threat of flooding in the long term must inform the future development pattern of the plan area and caution must be exercised in the zoning of lands, which have the potential to flood.

Given the emerging change in weather pattern of heavier rainfall during winter months, which has resulted in heavy flooding in County Mayo, including some localized flooding in parts of the plan area, new developments must not be permitted on lands prone to flooding and all new developments that are permitted must have adequate managed drainage systems to cater for both surface and storm water surges.

Drainage

A key element of consideration in the Environmental report has been the significant increase in the geographical catchment of the Castlebar Sewerage Network. The Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government has provided funding through the Serviced Land Initiative (SLI) and stipulated as a proviso that the newly serviced lands be made available for development. The environmental report has examined the requirement of the Council's to comply with the requirements of the DOEHLG in terms of the Serviced Land Initiative, against their obligations under the

National Spatial Strategy, Regional Planning Guidelines, Mayo County Development Plan and the interest of proper planning and sustainable development. The council must control the development of the town over the next 6 years, with a view to having a well planned town in the future. While drainage is considered an important factor in the zoning of lands, the availability of drainage should not be considered as a right to develop lands.

Sustainable Development

The National Sustainable Development Strategy seeks to achieve:

- Greater energy efficiency in new developments
- to reduce water consumption
- to minimize and reduce emissions of greenhouse gases and solid wastes
- to be adaptable to climate change.

All new development in Ireland is expected to be designed and constructed in a way that contributes towards sustainable development. Many of the objectives for the Castlebar and Environs Development Plan incorporate sustainability goals and these objectives have also been incorporated into the appraisal process. Also important is the flexibility of the options to incorporate new technologies into their design.

Economic Opportunities

Service industries are the fastest growing sector of the economy and many of the new jobs being created in town centres are in the retail, recreational and leisure sectors. The industrial area to the east of the town is a significant local employer and it is important that the new jobs arising from any new development are made accessible to local residents and that measures are put in place to ensure maximum take up of job opportunities from the immediate locality. To this effect the development plan has identified a significant area of additional lands for Economic Development and Enterprise, which have the greatest potential for development during the life of the development plan.

This SEA is intended to set out the scale of development that would be accommodated in the six-year development phase of expansion of Castlebar and its environs.

9. OPTIONS FOR EVALUATION

Consideration of Alternatives

In accordance with SEA regulations, a number of options for the long-term development of Castlebar have been drawn up. They take as a starting point the existing Castlebar Development Plan and the wider planning policy for County Mayo in the context of the NSS and the RPG's. These have previously been outlined in Section 3. Castlebar has been designated as a joint Hub along with Ballina. As a consequence of the elevated status given to the town and the increased level of anticipated growth, sufficient land must be zoned to accommodate the expansion of the town. The options have also been developed taking into account the results of the recent pre-plan public consultation carried out for the Development Plan.

In drawing up the long-term development options, cognisance has also been taken of SEA guidance, and in particular good practice requirement that for the assessment of alternatives. This suggests that to be meaningful, it is important that options should be broadly based and well thought through and not just generated in order to satisfy SEA requirements. Each of the options put forward here, therefore, meets the following three important criteria:

- They are realistic and genuine alternatives
- They are appropriate for consideration at a strategic level, i.e. not too detailed
- They should be reasonably distinct and easy to distinguish one from another.

During the process of making the Draft Development Plan three core options have been considered in conjunction with the various sections of Castlebar Town Council and Mayo County Council. In summary these are:

Option 1: Adopt indicative zonings as per 2004 Castlebar Town Plan

Option 2: Develop the town and environs to the limits of the expanded town boundary and to the road reserves for the Castlebar Ring Road Project

Option 3: Develop the town and environs to the limits of the expanded town boundary, to the road reserves for the Castlebar Ring Road Project and the catchment of the expanded Castlebar and Environs Sewerage network.

All scenarios account for the redevelopment and continued expansion of the Town Centre.

Development Options

Option 1 Adopt indicative zonings as per 2004 Castlebar Town Plan

This option would involve no material changes to the established development and zoning context of the town. The zoning map provided with the existing Development Plan only provides statutory zoning context for the area of land within the former Castlebar UDC boundary and while lands within the expanded town boundary have indicative land use zonings attributed to them they are not zoned in the statutory

meaning of the term. This option would involve the adoption of the indicative zonings as per the 2004 Castlebar Town Plan Zoning Map. This option performs poorly in that the Development Plan is required to cover the entire administrative area of Castlebar Town Council and its environs, which are within the Mayo County Council administrative area.



Existing Castlebar Development Plan Map

This option fails to take into consideration that the parameters for the town future development have changed since the existing plan was adopted and also fail to take account of the infrastructure that has been put in place or that a long term view must be taken for a wider geographical context than currently exists.

In addition it would not allow for changes in the towns demographic and economic profile to be administered through one plan, in particular the extent to which the towns Enterprise and Employment zoned area has expanded in the Mayo County Council area.

The following table examines several of the issues that arise in this development scenario:

Capacity	The existing statutory Development Plan only applies to the area of the old Castelbar UDC. The volume of zoned lands is rapidly expiring which would result in potential delays in the planning process. In some cases the town has already expanded beyond the expanded town boundary.
Residential	Some of the lands indicated as residential are currently not accessible and access depends on the construction of the Ring Roads. Some other lands are not serviceable by the expanded sewerage network. This scenario may lead to a shortage of serviced zoned lands during the plans lifetime. The existing designated lands would not provide sufficient land for projected growth.
Retail	This development scenario would only allow for Incremental and minor improvements to existing shopping development in the town center. Lack of strategic plan led focus on retail requirements may slow growth and damage the local and wider economy.
Community Linkages	No new pedestrian links would be created, either in the town center or between new and expanding residential areas. Infrastructure would remain in its current state with a lack of footpaths and provisions for cyclists.
Commercial	Much of the industrial/enterprise and employment lands are located outside the plan boundary and would remain outside the control of the plan and insufficient lands would become available for the expansion of the towns expanding employment base.
Waste water	The benefit of the expanded sewerage system would not be realised.

Option 2 Expansion and consolidation of existing built form to incorporate all lands inside Ring Road Project routes.

In this option the town and its environs would develop to the limits of the expanded town boundary and to the inner edge of the road reserves for the Castlebar Ring Road Project where applicable.

This strategy will allow for the incorporation of the majority of the current Industrial area to the east of the town into the plan boundary as well as small pockets of land to the north-east and south west of the town.

This settlement option is based on the principle of consolidation of the lands nearest the town and creating as much as possible, a definitive edge for the town, except in areas where the existing Castlebar Town Council area steps outside the road lines.

Expansion and consolidation of existing built form including development of backlands

and car-parking areas in town centre. This will facilitate the expansion of the shopping centre including new department store, high street shops and food store creating a larger shopping destination.

While encouraging the consolidated growth of the town, this scenario does not take into account the fact that pressures for the development of lands outside the existing Castlebar town boundary will continue and if not controlled, may lead to the longer term creation of a doughnut effect, similar to what is happening in the Castlebar Rural DED at present. In the 2002-2006 intercensal period the Castlebar Rural DED's population grew by 22% while the Urban DED lost 6.1% of its population.

The following table examines several of the issues that arise in this development scenario:

Capacity	The volume of lands available for development will be increased but will not provide for a sufficient volume of Enterprise and employment lands, which may limit economic growth.
Residential	Some residential areas on the edge of the town will not be incorporated into the plan resulting in an inability of the proper development of these areas in line with the development scenario for the town.
Retail	This development scenario will allow for the consolidation of the town center as the primary retail area with several areas dedicated to neighbourhood facilities. This will help service the new residential areas and reduce the need to travel to the town center for all retail services.
Community Linkages	New pedestrian and cycle links can be created, in the town center or between new and expanding residential areas.
Commercial	The industrial/employment lands outside the plan boundary will be incorporated into the plan and their future development can be managed in a coherent manner under a single set of policies and objectives.
Transport	The preferred road reserves can be [protected from development by the imposition of new policies and objectives. The routes have changed from the 2004 plan
Waste water	The benefits of the expanded sewerage system would not be realized due to pressures from developers outside the boundary.

Option 3: Develop the town and environs to the limits of the expanded town boundary, to the road reserves for the Castlebar Ring Road Project and the catchment of the expanded Castlebar and Environs Sewerage network.

As this is an Environs plan as well as a Town Development Plan it is necessary that a reasonable proportion of lands outside the town boundary be considered for inclusion in the plan. This option assessed the impact that the expanded Castlebar and Environs sewerage network will have on the future development of the town.

This option is identical to option 2 above with respect to the land inside the ring road lines. If the lands outside the ring road boundary are not included in the Development Plan, there will be a marked difference in the cost of the zoned lands inside the roads and unzoned lands outside. The threat to proper planning lies in the fact that once the lands are serviced the planning authority would come under pressure to grant permission for multiple housing and other developments in the service lands. Considering that there are sufficient lands available inside the road routes to cater for the projected housing and population expansions, it could lead to a doughnut effect on the town, with serviced zoned lands lying undeveloped and serviced unzoned lands being developed this would have implications for roads and water services also.

This development option is simply to incorporate all lands that are capable of being serviced by the expanded Castlebar Environs Sewerage Scheme into the plan boundary and zoning it appropriately, such that effective development management can be exercised.

It is considered that by applying restrictions on density on the more peripheral lands it will encourage the development of the lands closer to the town center. In this way the lands will be developed in a co-ordinated and sequential manner.

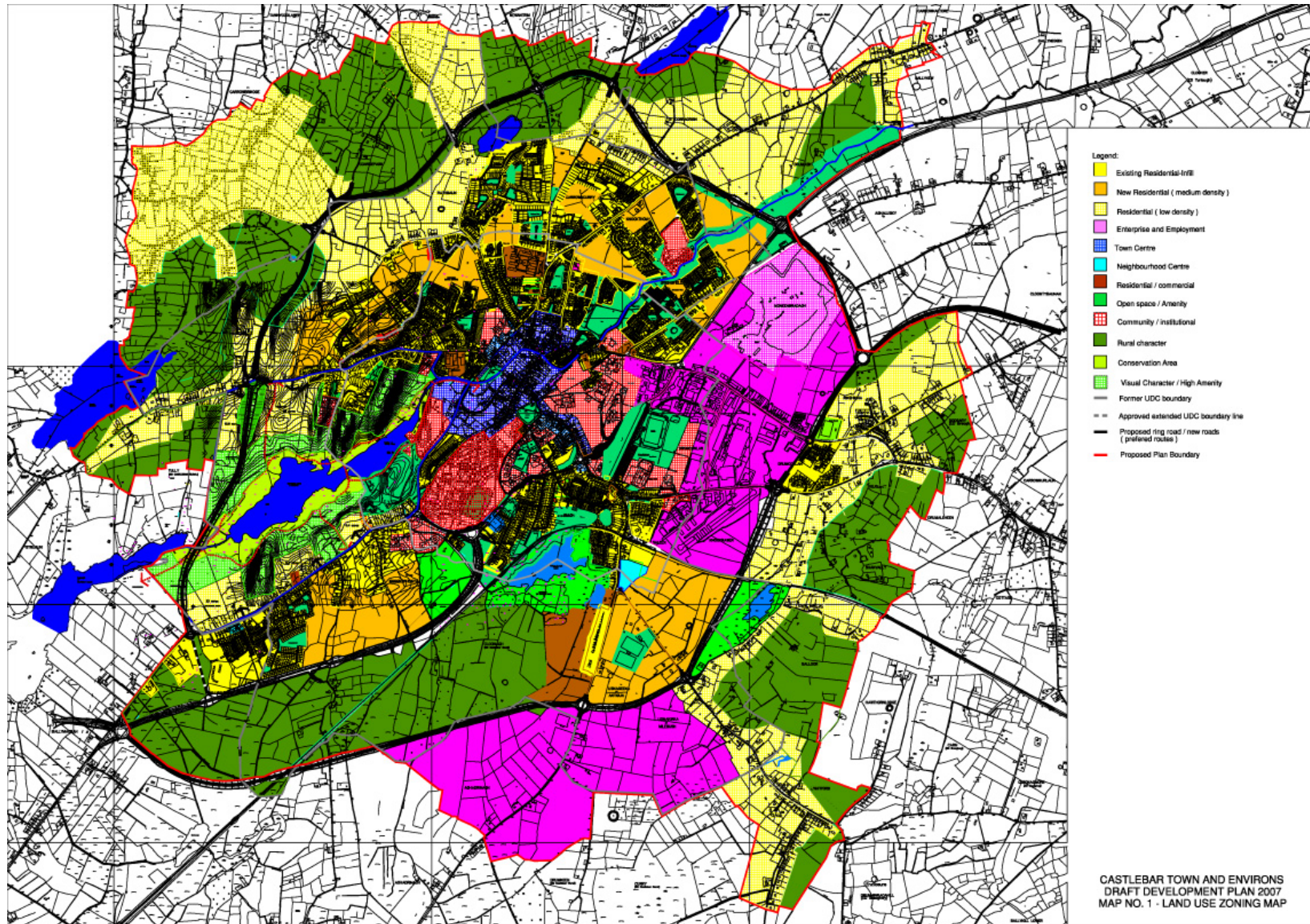
Some peripheral lands, as well as lands within the town boundary have been zoned as rural character areas. Much of the lands that which have been zoned for rural character are lands, which will have a longer-term development potential than can be realized within the life of this plan. The Rural character

lands within the environs are currently not serviced by gravity sewer while access to the lands within the town boundary is reliant on access to the Southern Ring Road Project. Without the required major investment in the roads network the full potential of the lands to the south of Castlebar cannot be realized in this plan period as per the drawing overleaf.

It is considered reasonable to set the planning boundary at this stage, even though large areas of land will not be developed in the life of the plan. In this way effective control can be exercised over land use planning in the plan area so that the longer-term strategic aims can be achieved.

This is the recommended preferred option

The proposed boundary is illustrated below.



Option 4: This option is the preferred option of the council following a review of the pre draft development plan.

This option is similar to option 3 in that it proposes to zone lands within the town and environs to the limits of the expanded town boundary, to the road reserves for the Castlebar Ring Road Project and the lands within the catchment of the expanded Castlebar and Environs Sewerage network.

The fundamental difference in this proposal is that an additional 330 ha of land have been zoned low density residential. Any development on these lands will require pumping to gain access to the expanded sewerage network. It is considered that this option will place significant pressures on the available infrastructure and make inefficient use of it. It may also result in haphazard and piecemeal development of the towns residential stock.

The threat to proper planning from this option lies in the fact that once the lands are zoned there will be an obligation of the local authority to service the lands and the planning authority would come under pressure to grant permission for multiple housing and other developments. Considering that there are sufficient lands available inside the road routes to cater for

the projected housing and population expansions for the life of the plan, it could lead to a doughnut development effect on the town, with higher density serviced zoned lands lying undeveloped and serviced/un-serviced lands being developed at low density on the edge of the town. This will have implications for the long-term proper planning and development of the town.

Considering that the access roads to many of the low-density zoned lands are of poor vertical and horizontal alignment there may be significant traffic implications for the zoning of these lands. Depending on the nature of landholdings, this option could result in a significant number of new access points being created on the local road network.

By setting the density at up to 4 units per acre there is an incentive for landowners to develop an alternative to one off housing in the countryside. However, in the long-term development of the town densities of this level would be considered to be an uneconomic use of land.

10. POLICY OBJECTIVES

Proposed SEA Objectives

The SEA objectives are specifically designed to test the performance of the Development Plan alternatives against commonly used environmental and sustainability criteria. Guidance issued by the DoEHLG provides an indicative list of objectives for use in SEA and

this has been used as a starting point for establishing realistic and appropriate range of criteria for use in the appraisal of the Castlebar and Environs Development Plan. These have been evaluated as to their suitability for adoption in the Castlebar and Environs SEA as outlined in the following table:

Table 10.1 Development of SEA Objectives

DEHLG Indicative Objectives	Relevance to Plan	Proposal
<i>Biodiversity, flora and fauna</i> a). Conserve the diversity of habitats and protected species b). Protect the marine environment, and promote integrated coastal zone management strategies	The plan area contains Lough Lannagh, Saleen Lough several other lakes and the Castlebar River. The area does not contain any marine habitats, so this objective is not directly relevant, although indirect impacts will need to be borne in mind such as the impact of treated wastewater entering the Moy River (SAC) Catchment.	1. Conserve the diversity of sensitive areas by careful siting of new developments if permissible.
<i>Population</i> c). Improve people's quality of life based on high quality residential, working and recreational environments and on sustainable travel patterns	Sufficient lands have been zoned to provide for the large residential areas that can be masterplanned with pedestrians, cyclists, quality open space and environment as principle considerations.	2. Reduce the need for people to travel by providing employment, housing, commercial and community facilities in close proximity to one another 3. Facilitate greater use of public transport, walking and cycling to the town centre 4. Ensure that the existing town centre remains viable & continues to play its wider role in South Dublin as a major town centre and offer the local community a range of retail & leisure opportunities. 5. Promote the strengthening and diversification of the local economy & encourage and facilitate local people to work in the town centre 6. Integrate any development with the local community
<i>Human Health</i> d). Minimize noise,	New developments in Castlebar are unlikely to give rise to unacceptable	7. Ensure residential uses within and adjoining

DEHLG Indicative Objectives	Relevance to Plan	Proposal
vibration and emissions from traffic, industrial processes and extractive industries	noise or air pollution but it will be important that any development is not sites so as to suffer from noise above legal levels.	Castlebar are not subject to noise or air pollution levels above accepted national and EU limit values
<i>Soil & Minerals</i> e). Maintain quality of soils f). Give preference to the re-use of brownfield lands, rather than developing Greenfield lands g). Minimize the consumption of non-renewable sand, gravel and rock deposits h). Minimize the amount of waste to landfill.	Soil in the built up area is already disturbed and in urban use but all new development will be required to maintain the existing soil quality . Objective f) is clearly relevant. g) Promote the use of renewable building products as alternatives to non-renewables h) Expanding population and employment will lead to increased production of wastes	8 Promote re-use of previously developed land 9. Minimize the consumption of non-renewable sand, gravel and rock deposits and re-use any existing materials in the new development where possible. h) Promote the reuse and recycling of household, industrial and building wastes
<i>Water</i> i). Protect and enhance the status of aquatic ecosystems and with regard to their water needs j). Promote sustainable water use based on a long-term protection of available water resources k). Reduce progressively discharge of polluting substances to waters l). Mitigate the effects of floods and droughts.	Objective i). The upgraded Environs sewerage system will promote the protection of water j/k) The water objectives depend upon good design and implementation of mitigation measures. l) Some lands within the plan area liable to flood periodically.	10. Where possible connect all dwellings and other buildings to the public sewerage network. 11 Promote sustainable water use and reduction in any polluting discharges to waters 12 Do not zone lands that are liable to flood for development.
<i>Air/climatic factors</i> m). Reduce all forms of air pollution n). Minimize emissions of greenhouse gases to contribute to a reduction and avoidance of human-induced global climate change o). Reduce waste of energy, and maximize use of renewable energy resources p). Assess, plan and manage adaptation to climate change impacts	All of these objectives are closely related. Objective m) duplicates proposed objective 5 and objectives n) and p) are too close to be able to distinguish, so it may be preferable to construct a composite climate change objective.	13. Minimize emissions of greenhouse gases to help avoid human-induced global climate change and plan and manage adaptation to climate. 14. Promote land uses and urban design that minimize the use of energy and maximizes the potential for renewable energy.
<i>Material assets</i> q). Maximize use of the existing built environment r). Avoid flood risk in selecting sites for development	Objective q) is rather close to objective f) and could be construed as double counting. It is however relevant to the Town Centre in particular. Objective r) is linked to Objective l	13. Maximize the use of the existing public and private investment that has been put into the existing Town Centre, including both the supporting infrastructure

DEHLG Indicative Objectives	Relevance to Plan	Proposal
		and built environment.
<i>Cultural heritage</i> s). Promote the protection and conservation of the cultural, including architectural and archaeological, heritage	There is an abundance of cultural heritage in the town which should be protected	Protect the Protected Structures and Recorded Monuments listed in the appendices to the draft Development Plan
<i>Landscape</i> t). Conserve and enhance valued natural and historic landscapes and features within them.	The plan is set within a rolling drumlin landscape dotted with lakes and a river.	14. Conserve and enhance the valued natural drumlin landscapes.

11. ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT OF PREFERRED DEVELOPMENT OPTION

A matrix has been used to assess the preferred development option against the objectives in the Development Plan. This enabled a strategic assessment of the implementation of the preferred option and indicated any issues that may arise in the process. Development objectives have been

amended to address issues that arose in the making of the draft Development Plan and any negative issues that arose have been mitigated in terms of the zoning of lands for particular uses. Therefore, the majority of objectives are considered either positive or neutral.

0	No significant effect, or no relationship
+	Beneficial effect/likely beneficial effect
?	Uncertainty of prediction or knowledge
x	Some deterioration in environmental quality

Objective		Impact
	HOUSING	
HO1	Meet the needs of the enlarging and diversifying population of Castlebar and its environs through the provision of a suitable range of residential types, sizes and styles and in particular to meet the requirements of smaller household size	?
HO 2	Provide for a range of new residential accommodation	?
HO 3	Ensure that the housing policy and objectives area linked with employment, environmental and infrastructural policies and objectives with the aim of improving the quality of life and the attractiveness of Castlebar Town and environs.	+
HO 4	It is an objective of the Council to encourage the use of upper floors of retail premises as residential accommodation	+
HO 5	Consolidate the development of the town of Castlebar by permitting higher density in the development of the residentially zoned lands and other lands zoned for residential and a mix of other uses, which are closest to the town centre.	+
HO 6	Permit higher density residential development in designated areas as set out in chapter 15 of the Development Plan	+
HO 7	Develop infill sites in existing residential areas of the towns as a means of providing additional housing and increasing density.	0
HO 8	Implement the Housing Strategy adopted jointly with Mayo County Council under Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2000	0
HO 9	It is an objective of the council to require that 20% of lands zoned for residential use, or for a mixture of residential and other uses, be made available for the provision of social and affordable housing.	0
HO 10	It is an objective not to direct local authority housing to areas where there is currently a high concentration of local authority housing.	0
HO 11	Encourage the high quality design and layout of residential development that reduces reliance on the motor car, supports movement by pedestrians and cyclists, provides adequate and convenient access to public transport and connects well with the wider locality.	+
HO 12	Encourage innovative housing design and layout solutions that address concerns of environmental sustainability with regard to matters such as energy efficiency and use of materials	+
HO 13	Promote social inclusion by supporting the provision of community facilities and in particular child care facilities in new and established residential areas.	0
HO 14	Ensure that adequate green space and recreational areas are provided	+

	in all new housing developments	
RHO 1	On the lands zoned low density housing, to permit housing in accordance with Policies RHP 1, RHP 2, RHP 3 and RHP 4, subject at all times to the consideration of the proper planning and sustainable development of the area	+
RHO 2	Persons other than those mentioned above and who seek to reside in a rural environment shall be accommodated on serviced sites within the new residential lands	+
RHO 3	Ensure that new housing in the low density zoned lands, respect the character, visual quality environment and amenity of the countryside and its vernacular traditions in order to safeguard the country's built and natural heritage	x
RHO 4	Ensure that as far as possible, new housing development in the lands zoned for low density housing lands is of the highest design standards	0
RHO 4	Protect the visual character of the drumlin landscape, by controlling the siting and development of housing so that ridgelines do not break the skyline and no development will occur in the top third of the hillside	+
	EMPLOYMENT GENERATION & ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT	
EO 1	Promote Castlebar as a major employment and services centre in the County Mayo.	?
EO 2	Promote the enhancement of the telecommunications infrastructure.	?
EO 3	Work in conjunction with the County Enterprise Board, the I.D.A. and other appropriate agencies in order to encourage the development of a highly skilled workforce within the town	?
EO 4	Reserve lands in key strategic locations that are suitable for a range of employment and economic activities. These lands will be protected from inappropriate development that would undermine their future economic development potential	?
EO 5	Ensure that Castlebar will attract economic activity through the provision of suitable, well managed employment zones and in industrial estates.	+
EO 6	Encourage the provision of office space in Castlebar in order to facilitate its development as a centre for administrative, professional and commercial functions.	0
EO 7	Facilitate light scale industries where such activities do not interfere with residential amenities	?
	TRANSPORTATION	
TO 1	To maintain and improve as required, the existing road network to ensure a high standard of road quality and safety	+
TO 2	To reserve land corridors, free from development, for the provision of the southern National Route bypass, the Northern Regional route bypass and the inner relief road over the medium to long term	x
TO 3	Implement as appropriate the recommendations of the 2002 Castlebar Transportation Study, including the introduction of traffic calming measures within the Central Area where required to discourage car circulation, improvements to the pedestrian environment, and supporting the development of public transport services, pedestrian networks and cycle facilities.	+
TO 4	To reserve land corridors, free from development, for the provision of the southern National Route bypass, the Northern Regional route bypass and the inner relief road over the medium to long term	x
TO 5	Work together with developers with a view to enhancing cycle and pedestrian facilities on roads approaching the town with the plan area	0
TO 6	Restore the priority to pedestrians in the town centre area	+

	COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT	
CDO 1	co-operate with the Health Service Executive and other statutory and voluntary agencies in the provision of health and community facilities in Castlebar	0
CDO 2	ensure that adequate lands and services are available for the improvement, establishment and expansion of health services	0
CDO 3	ensure that high standards of design and layout are achieved in new healthcare facilities and in the change of use of existing premises to health care facilities	0
CDO 4	to facilitate the provision of 1 childcare facility to cater for 20 children in each residential development in excess of 75 family orientated residential units	?
	NATURAL ENVIRONMENT AND RECREATION	
NEO 1	Protect and enhance the natural environment including public and private open space, natural heritage, landscapes and water resources	+
NEO 2	Protected and enhanced existing public open spaces as an amenity and recreational resource for the town and environs	+
NEO 3	Achieve a network of recreation open space and amenity areas by promoting linkage and accessibility between these areas by using walkways and cycleways to connect them where appropriate	+
NEO 4	Develop a continuous riverside walk along the banks of the Castlebar River, within the plan area boundary	+
	PUBLIC UTILITIES	
PUO 1	To continue to develop and expand the foul and surface water drainage system for the town and environs in order to facilitate the supply of serviced land for residential, commercial and industrial development.	+
PUO 2	To collect the foul sewerage from within the town and environs and discharge it after treatment in a safe and sustainable manner.	+
PUO 3	To separate foul and surface water drainage where feasible, in order to reduce the volume of material entering the treatment plants and to ensure that all new developments provide separate on-site foul and surface water drainage systems.	+
PUO 4	To promote the implementation of the Connacht Regional Waste Management Plan 2006-2011 in conjunction with the other local authorities in the region.	+
PUO 5	To promote the development of facilities in accordance with the waste hierarchy principles, which involves a shift towards preventative and waste minimisation measures.	+
PUO 6	To reduce waste consigned to landfill sites.	+
PUO 7	To encourage the recycling of construction and demolition waste and the re-use of aggregate and other materials in future construction projects.	+
	RETAILING	
RO 1	To address leakage of retail expenditure for the town and its catchment by facilitating the strengthening of the range and quality of retail on offer	0
RO 2	To facilitate the development of additional floorspace within the town centre for comparison or non-food retail use.	0
	TOWN CENTRE	
TCO 1	To facilitate, where appropriate, the provision residential uses within the town centre.	0
TCO 2	To protect the existing streetscape and enhance poorly defined edges on approach roads. New or redeveloped buildings shall respect the height of the existing streetscape, except in instances where the Council consider there are valid urban design reasons for increased height, for example, where a building would add definition to an urban space or key	0

	junction/corner site.	
TCO 3	To facilitate the development of an accessible town centre with particular reference to persons with reduced mobility, pedestrians and cyclists and to improve the availability of public transport, and short, medium and long stay car parking facilities in collaboration with the private sector, transport providers and other public bodies	+
	CULTURAL HERITAGE	
CHO 1	To protect and preserve buildings, features and sites of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest under the Local Government (Planning and Development) Act 2000 (as amended) and Draft Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2001.	+
CHO 2	To maintain and review the Record of Protected Structures in accordance with Part IV of the Planning and Development Act.	+
CHO 3	To invoke the provisions of the Derelict Sites Act 1990 to address problems of dereliction in towns.	+
CHO 4	To designate areas of special interest and importance as Architectural Conservation Areas (ACA's) as provided for in Section 81 of the Part IV of the Planning and Development Act, 2000.	+
CHO 5	To protect all buildings, structures and sites which are an inherent part of the streetscape and which contribute to the Plan area's heritage, diversity and history	+
CHO 6	It is an objective of the Council to secure the preservation (i.e preservation in-situ or, as a minimum, preservation by record) of all archaeological monuments included in the Record of Monuments as established under Section 12 of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act, 1994, and of sites, features and objects of archaeological interest generally.	+

12. PROPOSED MITIGATION MEASURES

Introduction

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

Landscape/Townscape

In visual terms, the existing open character of the environs will be maintained while the edges of the existing town will develop a more urban form. The open arrays of surface parking in the town center will be replaced by a system of streets and urban plazas, as a conventional pattern of mixed-use urbanization. The scale of buildings enclosing this street pattern will reflect the height of existing buildings, with some feature buildings at key sites, and will be designed so as to provide a visually coherent townscape.

Large areas of existing surface car parking will be encouraged to be removed, and the bulk of the new parking will be off – street - accommodated in either underground or multi-storey parking structures.

Landscape design intervention will be confined to the treatment of the network of street corridors, and to road junctions and public open space.

In overall terms the visual impact will be significant and positive for the town centre. The existing development pattern will be replaced by a coherent and dense townscape, which, in visual terms, will have a town centre character, and represent a more efficient use of the land.

The treatment of the network of streets – both vehicular and pedestrian – together with the array of public open space, will create a more pedestrian – friendly site environment, when compared to the existing situation. The increase in intensity of use will also allow for the provision of a greater variety of space types for pedestrians, thereby enhancing the overall environmental quality of the retail complex.

Visual mitigation of this new urban form will be accomplished in the following important ways:

- By the modulation of the massing and scale of the individual buildings themselves.
- By the visual control en facade to produce a series of cohesive streetscapes.
- Through the use of a controlled palette of materials on elevation, to produce a visual cohesion in the overall urban structure.
- Through the articulation of the ground plans in the public domain – optimising for pedestrian movement.
- Through the insertion of appropriate urban planting in the street corridors and public spaces.
- Through the insertion of a system of well designed street furniture – bollards, seating, litterbins, signage, cycle racks etc., - to provide a “branding” of the new townscape.
- To provide a public lighting system, to create an attractive nightscape.

The residual impact will be the physical presence of a dense and well – ordered townscape. The mitigation measures outlined above will essentially soften the presence of the complex in the sub-urban landscape, and render it more user- friendly – particularly to pedestrian users.

Air Pollution

In the event that the initial assessment indicates that air quality targets are unlikely to be achieved, mitigation measures will be implemented. Effective mitigation measures in terms of air quality may involve diverting traffic away from heavily congested areas or ensuring free flowing traffic through good traffic management plans and the use of automatic traffic control systems.

However, improvements in air quality are likely over the next few years as a result of the on-going comprehensive vehicle inspection and maintenance program, fiscal measures to encourage the use of alternatively fuelled vehicles and the introduction of cleaner fuels. Recent EU legislation, based on the EU sponsored Auto-Oil programmes, has imposed stringent emission standards for key pollutants for passenger cars to be complied with in 2006

(Euro IV) and for diesel HGVs to be introduced in 2006 and 2008 (Euro IV and V). In relation to fuel quality, EU Fuel Directive (98/70/EC) has introduced significant reductions in both sulphur and benzene content of fuels. All of these measures should ensure improved air quality in future years.

Waste Measures

A site specific C&D Waste Management Plan will be required on all sites during the construction phase of a development. This will include segregation of wastes into reusable, recoverable, recyclable and non-recyclable streams, and the materials will be stored in a specifically designated area of the site.

The Waste Management Strategy for the operational phase of the development will ensure optimum levels of waste reduction, re-use and recycling are achieved. Dedicated waste storage areas with separate receptacles for all recyclable materials will be provided so that onsite segregation will take place. Residential units will have sufficient recyclable and non-recyclable waste receptacles. Waste will only be

removed by licensed or permitted waste contractors or recycling companies.

By implementing these mitigation measures the impact of the development, in terms of waste management, will be minimised and the overall development will achieve the targets outlined in the Connaught Waste Management Plan 2006..

Archaeology

All planning applications which will have an impact or potential impact on a Recorded Monument will be required to have an archaeological test carried out on site prior to the commencement of construction. The results will be recorded and kept on record.

Surface Water Drainage

Storm flows from new development will require be attenuating or storing on site in ponds, swales or underground tanks. Underground tanks could involve the use of PVC Stormcells, reinforced concrete tanks or large diameter storage pipe systems. It is a requirement that such below ground solutions must be designed to accommodate a 1:100 year flood.

13. MONITORING

Monitoring will be required in order to ensure that any unforeseen effects of the Plan are identified quickly and measures introduced to remedy the situation.

This could include:

- monitoring of the residential population and its make up in order to ensure community and other facilities such as education and health services are adequate.
- undertaking counts of traffic and pedestrian movements so as to determine that facilities, such as pedestrian crossings match demand and are safe.
- water quality at the outfalls from the Castlebar sewerage network.
- monitor lands liable to flood and revise land use zoning as appropriate in the event of recording any significant changes in the pattern of land flooding.
- Air quality and noise monitoring at appropriate locations removed from the built up areas of the town.
- Maintain the record of protected structures as a tool to protect the built heritage of the town.
- Monitor energy consumption, new business register, live register, planning permission granted, traffic journey times transport patterns.
- Develop a comprehensive database of information specific to Castlebar from existing monitoring bodies such as the Environmental Protection Agency, Office of Public Works, National Parks and Wildlife, Geological Survey of Ireland

Overall findings

It is clear from the assessment of the policies of the draft Development Plan that the plan has a strong sustainable direction and focus. Almost all of the objectives were found to be either compatible or not in conflict with the sustainability criteria devised for the assessment exercise.