

1.0 Village Context/Character

Slane is a village renowned for its rich and varied cultural and built heritage. It is located adjacent to the River Boyne, an area of outstanding natural beauty which is a designated Special Area of Conservation and Special Protection Area, and is the gateway to the World Heritage Site, Bru na Bóinne. Much of Slane's charm derives from its geographical setting, its iconic formal set piece of the octagon and the use of stone in its architecture. The village, Slane Castle Demesne and Slane Mill are designated Architectural Conservation Areas (ACAs). The approaches to the village, are largely defined by rubble stone walls framed by mature trees, a classic feature of eighteenth-century Irish villages. It must be emphasised that these features are just as important as the building fabric within the village. The built fabric of Slane's streets and enclosed private grounds is typically austere and well defined by an eclectic mix of uniform terraces, houses with varied plot widths and detached landmark buildings in both residential and ecclesiastical use.

The prominent position of the village on a hill provides numerous attractive views of the surrounding countryside; and, of the town itself from the N2 to the south and Slane Hill to the north. The village has primarily grown northwards and out from the crossroads. The village has a broad offering of hotels, shops, restaurants and pubs. Residential development has taken place on the outskirts of the village boundary along the approach roads.

Slane Castle with its attractive setting and historic surrounds provides a unique tourist offering, attracting many visitors to the area. The castle grounds are a world renowned venue for many concerts with its unique setting on the banks of the Boyne creating a natural amphitheatre. Slane Castle open for tours, is used as a wedding venue and provides restaurant and bar facilities. In addition, the Slane Distillery has recently opened in the grounds of Slane Castle adding further to Slane's tourist attraction. The village is also the birthplace of Francis Ledwidge, one of Ireland's war poets. A civic space has been constructed in his honour with a dedicated museum located outside the town.

Slane is therefore developing as an employment centre for the area with a diverse offering of tourist related uses, artisan foods, craft shops and community uses.

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| Position in Settlement Hierarchy | Village |
| 2016 Population | 1,369 |
| 2011 Population | 1,349 |
| Percentage Change 2011-2016 | + 1.50% |
| Housing stock 2016 | 542 |
| Number of units completed 2016-2019 | 4 |
| Committed units not yet built | 37 |
| Population Projection 2027 | 1,469 |
| Education Facilities | St Patrick's Primary School |
| Community Facilities | 6 |
| Architectural Conservation Areas (ACAs) | Slane Historic Core ACA; Slane Castle & Demesne ACA and, Slane Mill ACA. |
| Protected Structures | 70 |
| Zone of Archaeological Potential | There are a number of National Monument Service Zones of Archaeological Notification located in the central area of the settlement. |

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| <p>Natura 2000 Sites</p> | <p>The River Boyne & River Blackwater SPA and SAC is located within the settlement area.</p> |
| <p>Strategic Flood Risk Assessment</p> | <p>Manage flood risk and development in line with approved policies and objectives as set out in Vol. 1 Chapter 6: Infrastructure.</p> |
| <p>Water Services Infrastructure/Capacity</p> | <p>Slane Water Supply Scheme has available capacity. Slane Wastewater treatment plant - limited available capacity.</p> |

2.0 Vision

To enhance and protect the historic character of Slane village while providing for the needs of the local community, businesses and visitors; and, to support the village's role as a gateway to the Boyne Valley, cultural tourism and artisan food hub in Meath. A central tenet of this Plan is to support and further develop tourism and craft industry in Slane and its wider hinterland thus maximising Slane's proximity to the Bru na Boinne UNESCO World Heritage Site.

3.0 Opportunities

- There is a significant opportunity to further develop Slane as a tourist destination and as hub for visitors to the Boyne Valley.
- Village branding/presentation along main roads and at village entry points would add to the sense of place, and strengthen Slane's unique identity.
- The main access roads through the village are characterised by a large volume of traffic much of which includes HGVs. It is an objective of the Council to bypass Slane village.
- Consistent public lighting and a quality footpath network throughout the village would make a significant contribution to improving the pedestrian environment.

- There are comparatively few opportunity sites that do not have extant permissions. Residentially zoned lands in the centre of the village present good opportunities to reinforce the existing compact development.

4.0 Land Use Strategy

The land use strategy for Slane aims to maintain and add to a built environment of the village that is both attractive and distinctive to create a unique sense of place for those who both live and work, as well as those whose visit, Slane. This will be achieved through the sensitive treatment of infill development and the conservation of important key buildings particularly within the 3 no. Architectural Conservation Areas. The provision of a compact and vibrant village centre is essential if Slane is to cater for its current and future population needs in a manner that is sustainable.

4.1 Settlement and Housing

In terms of recent development, there is an extant permission for a mixed-use development of 13 apartments, 4 houses, 4 retail units and a medical centre at the centre of the village. A further permission for 23 no. two storey dwellings to the north east of the village was approved by the Council.

There are 2 no. sites that have no recent planning history. The first site is adjacent to the existing Castlehill residential estate and is 2.6 ha. in size. The site is located to the rear of an existing housing estate on a contoured south facing slope. Access may be achievable through the existing residential area. The second is located north east of the village crossroads. Again the site is located to the rear of the existing built up area adjacent to Ledwidge Hall residential area and is 0.9 ha in size. The site is also proximate to the Fennor High Cross and occupies a prominent site overlooking the village.

4.2 Economy and Employment (including retail)

Slane is identified as a Level 4 retail centre in the County Retail Hierarchy. Commercial and retail units line the roads intersecting the village centre. The retail core includes businesses such as small convenience shops, veterinary surgery, Credit Union, restaurants, launderette & dry cleaners, butchers, bookmakers, pharmacists, hairdressers, Artisan patisserie and bakery, hotel and public bars. There is also an arts studio, a craft shop and delicatessen associated with Slane's 'Artistic Quarter'. There is a high occupancy rate among the retail and commercial units in the village.

Aside from small scale retailing and typical of a village of this size there are few significant employers within Slane and its immediate hinterland. The local industrial development in Slane is located at the northern edge of the village in the form of a large fertiliser plant (Grassland Fertilizers Ltd.) and at a site to the north of Slane Mill (Slane Industrial Estate). Slane Industrial Estate or Newmill Industrial Estate contains a number of industrial units and piping manufacturers. Slane Castle and Slane Distillery has an important employment role in the village.

As indicated above, future economic development in Slane, given the notable heritage assets in the village, where opportunities exist in the area of tourism development, artisan foods and crafts etc.

4.3 Water Services Infrastructure

Slane is served by the following water services infrastructure:

Water: Slane is supplied with water from the Slane Water Supply Scheme which has available capacity.

Wastewater: Slane Wastewater Treatment Plant has limited spare capacity. There are no current plans for a Capital expansion. All proposals for development shall be considered in the context of available capacity.

4.4 Movement

Slane has good road accessibility with the N2 and N51 national routes intersecting at the village centre. Correspondingly with this road network, Slane has suffered traffic related problems, owing to the volume of traffic using the N2 and N51 traffic routes which both intersect and pass through the village. The level and type of traffic passing through the village has impacted negatively on the current village environment.

A bypass for Slane has been a long-standing objective of the Council and has the support of the majority of the local residents.

The primary mode of public transport available in Slane is the regional Bus Éireann services. The number 177, 188 and the 190 buses are the main routes which have a scheduled stop in the village. The most frequent direct service to Dublin is from the private bus operator 'Collins Coaches' (No. 980).

4.5 Cultural and Natural Heritage

The character of modern day Slane reflects the fact that it was laid out as an early 18th century estate village associated with Slane Castle and the Conyngham family. At the centre of the village, at the intersection of the two main streets, stand four almost identical Georgian houses known as the 'Four Sisters Houses'. The four houses and four streets form an octagon. This feature is known locally as 'The Square'. The two main streets in the village feature 18th century gray limestone buildings with slate roofs, oriel windows and stone steps and archways.

To the north of the village rises the Hill of Slane. It contains a number of historic sites including the site of a Christian abbey.

4.6 Green Infrastructure

Slane is surrounded by a picturesque and attractive landscape. The Boyne Valley has a diverse range of attractive and important habitats associated with the River Boyne, including a well-wooded river corridor south of the village centre. The River Boyne is a designated Natura 2000 site and is part of the River Boyne and River Blackwater Special Area of Conservation (Site Code: 002299) and the River Boyne and River Blackwater Special Protection Area (Site Code: 004232)

In addition to this, Slane has a strong network of hedgerows and a number of tree stands and individual trees are designated in this Plan for preservation under the provisions of the Meath County Development Plan.

The Boyne Valley Landscape Character Area, in which Slane is located, is characterised by a steep river valley with areas of rolling lowland adjacent to the River Boyne. It contains the Brú na Bóinne World Heritage Site which is one of the largest and most important prehistoric megalithic sites in Europe. Lands encompassing Brú na Bóinne are located outside the development boundary of Slane, 2km to the east of the village.

Slane Community Biodiversity Action Plan 2016-2020 highlights the ecological value of the area and the high local biodiversity. The Biodiversity Action Plan proposes a number of ambitious projects and actions to be carried out by the community of Slane.

4.7 Social Infrastructure

There are a number of existing community groups and associated facilities in the village. Within Slane village centre, there are two churches and ancillary buildings, a health centre, and an attractive public square. To the north of the village is St Patrick's National School and to the west of the village are a day care centre, Garda station, library and Wheatfield Park which is home to Slane Wanderers Football Club. A children's playground has been developed on the Collon Road. Slane contains a network of local community groups who are very active in the management and future growth of the village. Slane GAA is located outside the village at Monknewtown and the club obtained planning permission in 2016 to extend and redevelop the clubhouse and associated pitches. This project is currently at an advanced stage.

4.8 Urban Design and Public Realm

Slane is set in a unique environmental landscape, against the backdrop of the Hill of Slane, mature woodlands and the Boyne Valley. The surrounding landscape of Slane is largely unspoilt and is an integral part of the identity of the village. Slane's historic core still marks the centre of social life in the village containing a number of existing business premises and residential premises. The village is focused around the central 'square' an octagon configuration with four streets leading on to it.

The town is synonymous with its distinctive historic structure and instantly recognisable Slane crossroads, centred on four large three-storey detached houses. The local vernacular style dates from the 18th Century, with simple square cut stone buildings, with less brick detailing than is common elsewhere in the County. Residential development in the town centre is limited apart from some 1950's – 70's housing on the western approach. The overall form and structure of the village retains its 18th and 19th Century origins. Essentially, the strong morphology of Slane grew from the village crossroads, with later 20th century development largely forming beyond the boundaries of the traditional village area.

5.0 Village Development Policies and Objectives

The Policies and Objectives set out below are in addition to those included in the Written Statement in Volume One of the County Development Plan. To avoid repetition Policies and Objectives have only been restated where they have particular relevance to the settlement. These Policies and Objectives should therefore be read in conjunction with the Policies and Objectives and Development Standards in Volume One of the County Development Plan.

Policy

It is the policy of the Council:

SLN POL 1

To consolidate and strengthen the commercial and residential village centre of Slane, and encourage development which will contribute to the character and structure of the village core and to preserve and enhance the quality of the village's attractive built and natural environment, while catering for the needs of all sections of the local community to ensure that the village develops in a sustainable manner, as an attractive place to live, work, recreate and visit.

Objectives

It is an objective of the Council:

Settlement and Housing

SLN OBJ 1

To support and encourage residential development on under-utilised land and/or vacant lands including 'infill' and 'brownfield' sites, subject to a high standard of design and layout being achieved.

Economy and Employment

SLN OBJ 2

To encourage the return of vacant buildings in the village core back into uses which complements the existing scale and character of the village.

SLN OBJ 3

To seek the development of infill opportunity sites to reinforce compact development in the village and utilise centrally located site.

SLN OBJ 4

To promote Slane Castle as a multi experience tourism destination and attraction in the County, subject to the normal development management standards. The Council will support and encourage further appropriate development of the integrated tourism product at Slane Castle subject to the

provision or upgrade of the requisite physical infrastructure and the protection of the integrity of the Protected Structure and its surrounds including the River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC & SPA.

SLN OBJ 5

To seek to support and develop Slane as a tourist hub.

Infrastructure

SLN OBJ 6

To support and facilitate the delivery of an N2 Bypass for Slane to the east of the Village, which is considered to comprise important infrastructural development and to construct same subject to obtaining the relevant development consents required and to reserve and protect route option corridors from development which would interfere with the provision of the project. Development of the project will be subject to the outcome of the Appropriate Assessment process.

SLN OBJ 7

To liaise with and support Irish Water to endeavour to provide adequate water services to meet the development needs of Slane within the Plan period.

SLN OBJ 8

To protect the sites of existing community and sporting facilities in Slane and support their further development and expansion.

Movement

SLN OBJ 9

To seek to introduce efficient traffic calming measures along the main village roads and at the key locations to reduce traffic speeds and improve pedestrian safety.

Cultural and Natural Heritage

SLN OBJ 10

To protect the landscape setting of the village.

SLN OBJ 11

To require the preservation and reinstatement of traditional details and materials on existing buildings and the streetscape where improvements or maintenance works are being carried out.

SLN OBJ 12

To support the community and all key stakeholders in the implementation of the Slane Community Biodiversity Plan 2016-2020 and any revisions thereof.

SLN OBJ 13

To require that all development proposals within or contiguous to the Architectural Conservation Area be sympathetic to the character of the area, that the design is appropriate in terms of height, scale, plot density, layout, materials and finishes and is appropriately sited and designed in accordance with advice given in Slane Architectural Conservation Area Character Statement.

SLN OBJ 14

To seek to preserve views identified on the land use zoning map from development which would adversely impact on the character and visual amenity of the landscape.

SLN OBJ 15

To promote the preservation of individual trees or groups of trees as identified on the land use zoning map and to manage these trees in line with arboricultural best practice.

Urban Design & Public Realm

SLN OBJ 16

To preserve the character of the village and its setting by requiring that the height, scale, design and materials of any proposed development within the village and in the surrounding area should complement the character of the village and not diminish its distinctiveness of place. New buildings should respond to the individual site context and take due cognisance of adjoining development.

SLN OBJ 17

To introduce consistent village branding/presentation at the village entry points and along main streets in form of high-quality signage, tourism information, public art and consistent village type lighting standards which would strengthen Slane's identity.

SLN OBJ 18

To encourage the removal of visually intrusive elements such as overhead cables and inappropriate signage.

SLN OBJ 19

Explore the potential of widening footpaths around St. Patricks Primary School and provide screen planting to school carpark, in conjunction with relevant stakeholders.

SLN OBJ 20

To implement and ensure compliance with the Public Realm Plan for Slane which provides for a themed strategy for the provision of street furniture, planting, traffic and parking, lighting, building colours, (local and tourist) signage and surface materials etc. within the town.