



Unique Reference Number: SLG-C9-27
Submission:
Recommendations regarding Active Travel for the County
Development Plan 2023-2029

Author: Sligo Cycling Campaign
Date Created: 24.09.2021 - 8:25am

Consultation:
Pre-draft consultation on the preparation of Sligo County
Development Plan 2023-2029

Status: Submitted
Date Submitted: 24.09.2021 - 8:48am

Observations:

Theme: CDP review 2021 to 2023

Sligo Cycling Campaign is very pleased to see the emphasis on Sustainable Transport in the Issues paper published to facilitate discussion on the new County Development Plan. We are also very happy with the Submission regarding same from the National Transport Authority (NTA) and endorse all its recommendations.

We unreservedly welcome the statement that *"Cars occupy too much space in towns and cities. The limited available public space should be used more efficiently for cycling, walking and various forms of public transport. The mobility of the future entails interlinked, attractive, resource-efficient and climate-friendly means of transport, contributing to a high quality of life in urban areas and well-connected rural areas."*

We also welcome the recognition in the **Climate Change Adaptation and Action** chapter of the link between land use, transportation policies and compact growth. In this context we are concerned that the submission by Transport Infrastructure Ireland, emphasises the need to plan for "future capacity" without reference to the link between transport and emissions. We welcome the recognition that the Local Authority Climate Action Plans will be required to deliver mitigation as well as adaptation measures.

We are aware that inserting policies regarding active and sustainable travel into the County Development Plan is but a necessary first step. Unless these policies are matched with real leadership and commitment they will not be implemented. The Current County Development Plan 2017 -2023 has some excellent policies regarding walking and cycling but these have not been realised in practice.

It is true that major funding didn't become available until 2020 but in our view lack of progress is about more than a shortfall in funding. For Sligo to become truly walking and cycling friendly the movement of people walking and cycling has to be prioritised and that means less priority for cars.

Our responses to the questions posed in the Issues paper re sustainable transport are as follows -

Q: What are the biggest obstacles to mobility encountered by people who don't drive or just want to avoid using private cars?

For people who wish to cycle instead of drive, the obstacles are -

- Lack of safety due to the absence of a segregated cycle network. Instead, we have random sections of mainly painted cycle lanes none of which offer a cross-town commuting route

- Lack of safety due to lack of space. The preponderance of parked cars on almost every street in the town-centre leaves insufficient room for cycling. Outside the centre cars are allowed to park in the cycle lanes
- Lack of safety due to poor/non-existent cycling infrastructure, particularly at junctions e.g. extremely hazardous junctions on the N4 for cyclists, this deters people from cycling across town.
- The one-way system is designed for cars and is not cycling friendly or safe.
- Driving routes and car-parks are clearly signposted but there are no designated cycling commuting routes, for example from the Strandhill Road to SUH or the IT or from Calry/Manorhamilton road area to Finisklin Business Park
- The absence of safe routes to school, the school run is one of the main generators of short trips
- Insufficient bike parking at places where people want to go including shops and public buildings.
- Lack of secure covered bike storage/drying room/showering facilities at workplaces.
- Lack of a dedicated forum for sustainable mobility, which would provide a networking opportunity for stakeholders to coordinate sustainable and active travel projects, programmes and services. Cork Transport and Mobility Forum is a good example and has proven successful at getting all transport sectors around the table.

For people who wish to walk instead of drive the obstacles are -

- Wide kerb radii at junctions, found at all junctions in Sligo, add to the time taken to cross the road on foot and are therefore dangerous. They permit vehicles to approach the junction quickly and sometimes to turn without stopping.
- Wait times for the green man at pedestrian lights are too long. The prioritisation of traffic movements means that pedestrians are constantly impeded. This applies throughout Sligo but particularly at the junctions across the N4
- The toleration of parking on footpaths is a major obstacle to mobility. Two types of footpath parking are common, one is footpath parking by residents outside their homes. This happens even when the road is wide enough to accommodate parking and the movement of traffic. The other type of footpath parking occurs when attendees at sporting or cultural events park on footpaths in the vicinity of the event. It also happens when parents bring children to activities or when people are nipping into a shop “just for a minute”

Walking and Cycling -Transport infrastructure Ireland submission:

The speed of vehicles through towns and villages and the lack of safe crossings on N Roads is a major deterrent to both walking and cycling. We are very concerned that the submission by Transport Infrastructure Ireland, (TII) highlights the Current Road Safety Strategy, (due to be superseded) as requiring “ acceptance of shared overall responsibilities and accountability between system designers and road users”. We reject shared responsibility as being equal between road users, eg a child and a HGV driver. If said child is knocked down by the HGV driver while crossing the N15 from her school to the bus -stop, the responsibility of the driver and designer are greater than that of the child. TII also states in its submission “It is of particular importance that policies and objectives are drafted which allow the network of national roads to continue to play the intended strategic role in catering for inter-urban and inter-regional transport requirements that will serve economic competitiveness and regional accessibility by providing faster, more efficient and safer access to and from our major ports, airports, cities and large towns.” There is no mention here of ensuring the safety of pedestrians, cyclists and local drivers in the many small towns and villages situated on these strategic EU TEN-T N Roads. We very much hope that the Development

Plan will give at least as much consideration to the needs of local people including school children , adults, elderly people and those with mobility impairments in Rathcormac, Drumcliffe, Grange and Cliffooney as it does to faster, efficient inter-urban traffic.

Speed Limits: The Development Plan should mandate the introduction of 30 km speed limits in built up areas. In February 2020 Ireland signed the Stockholm Declaration of the Third Global Ministerial Conference on Road Safety. This was subsequently endorsed by the General Assembly of the United Nations. Paragraph 11 committed to: “mandate a maximum road travel speed of 30 km/h in areas where vulnerable road users and vehicles mix in a frequent and planned manner, except where strong evidence exists that higher speeds are safe, noting that efforts to reduce speed in general will have a beneficial impact on air quality and climate change as well as being vital to reduce road traffic deaths and injuries”

Q: Are there specific policies or measures which would help people shift to walking, cycling or public transport, if included in the development plan?

Yes, rectifying all of the above issues would make walking and cycling safe and attractive options. This can be done by adopting the recommendations in the submission from the NTA.

Q: How far from Sligo Town should the forthcoming Local Transport Plan extend its reach?

The amount allocated for the local transport plan in Sligo’s 2021 Active Travel Allocation is €275,000: (SO/21/0009 Transport Studies/ Urban Mobility Plans/Active Travel Network) Ideally the plan would extend to Collooney, Grange, Rosses Point and Strandhill but realistically the allocated budget will only go so far and we note from the NTA comments that the catchment area appears to be Sligo town with Strandhill and Rosses Point

Terminology used in the Development Plan:

Before drafting the active travel component of the new CDP we recommend that the authors review the commitments in the current plan and reflect on the reasons why various measures were not implemented. As stated previously it is our opinion that budget constraints are but one factor.

The new plan needs to define the terms used. For example, Section 8.3 of the current plan regarding Cycle and Pedestrian Movements states

“The provision of facilities for commuting cyclists will be a priority for Sligo County Council over the lifetime of this plan”.

The word facilities is too vague and does not commit the council to anything in particular. Neither are “ commuting cyclists” defined. The National Census asks about trips to work, school or college. Is this the definition used here?

The term “commuting” doesn’t cover trips to shops, leisure activities, cultural events etc so we would prefer to see the forthcoming CDP adopt a policy of providing a segregated cycle network, traffic calming and lower speed limits so as to enable “Cycling for all ages and abilities”. The NTA references the guidelines for inclusive Design in its submission. both walking and cycling facilities need to be inclusive.

Documents Attached: No

Boundaries Captured on Map: No