

Sligo County Council Compulsory Purchase (No. 01 Order) 2025

**Lands At
Nos. 10,12,13,14,15, and 67 Holborn Street**



Report Prepared By

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1.0 Introduction

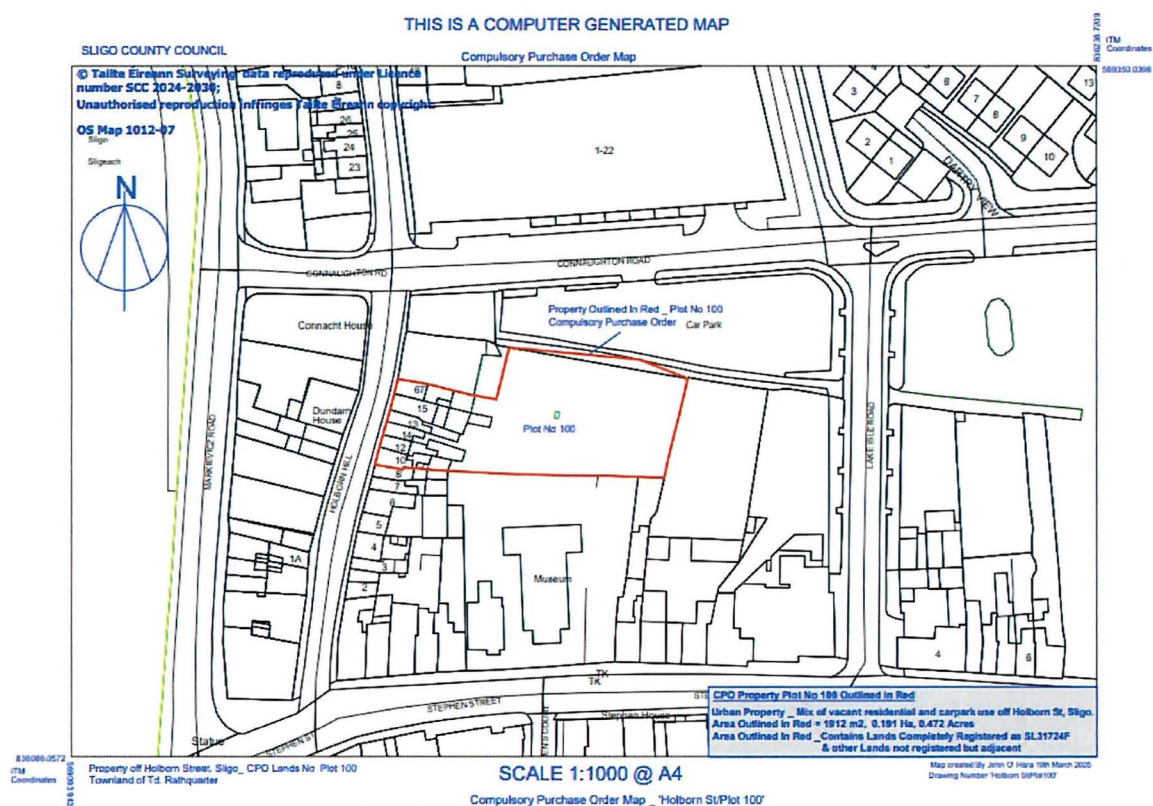
- 1.1 The National Planning Framework recognises Sligo's potential to serve the North-West as an accessible centre of employment and services, which can be a focal point for investment and have the widest possible regional influence. Sligo is thus identified as a key regional growth centre, capable of leading the development of the surrounding region. The Implementation Roadmap for the NPF projects that Sligo's population will grow by approximately 10,000 persons by 2031. The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Northern and Western Regional Assembly includes an objective to support the population growth in the principal urban area of Sligo to a level of approximately 28,000 persons by 2040.
- 1.2 The City Campus – Sligo's Cultural and Learning Hub is one the projects that Sligo County Council is progressing in response to these growth ambitions for Sligo. In accordance with the NPF's strategic objective of promoting compact growth, this project involves the transformation, regeneration and redevelopment of a brownfield, underutilised and semi-derelict block of land within the city centre. The vision is for this block comprising Connaughton Road, Stephen Street, Holborn Street and Lake Isle Road to become a new cultural, innovation and learning hub located within the heart of Sligo and hosting:
- a new Central Library;
 - a new county museum;
 - enterprise and office space;
 - residential units promoting sustainable inner city living and working.
- 1.3 The location and extent of the CPO lands within the centre of this block between two land parcels in public ownership ensures that they will play a pivotal role in the redevelopment of this block. Without their involvement, the full implementation of the City Campus Project will be jeopardised and development is more likely to occur in a piecemeal fashion or not at all. It is considered that this would seriously undermine the potential to create an enhanced and expanded cultural quarter within this block and would have significant negative consequences for the further development of Sligo as the regional growth centre of the north-west.

2.0 Site Context and Description

- 2.1 The CPO lands are located within a block of Sligo Town bounded by the following streets – Holborn Street, Connaughton Road, Lake Isle Road and Stephen Street. This is a strategically located block in the centre of Sligo in

close proximity to ample car-parking on the upper end of Connaughton Road. The entire block measures 1.13ha, of which 35% is in public ownership (the lands immediately to the north and south of the CPO lands are owned by Sligo County Council). The acquisition of the site the subject of this CPO would mean that over 50% of the overall block would be in the control of the Local Authority.

- 2.2 The CPO lands are located within the centre of this block and are comprised of a terrace of 6 buildings fronting onto Holborn Street (House Nos. 10,12,13,14,15 and 67) together with an existing surface car-park of approximately 41 spaces located to the rear. The total area of land to be acquired is 0.191 hectares.



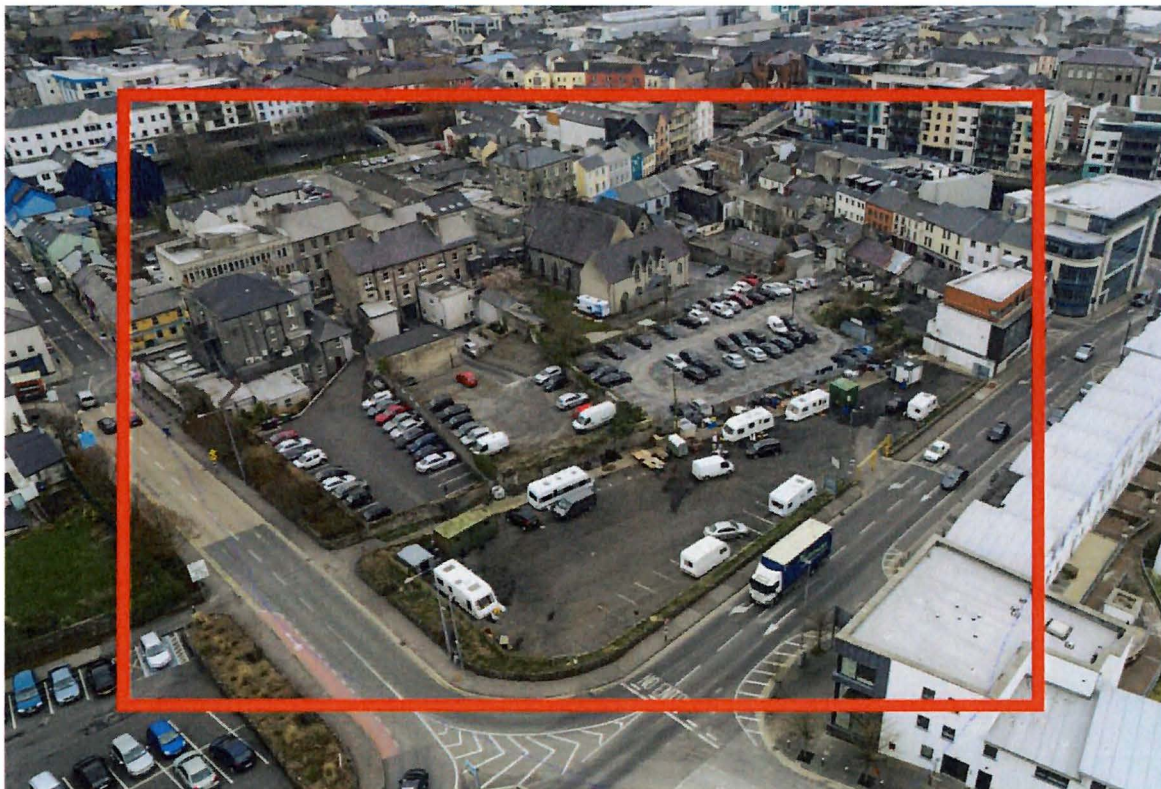
- 2.2 The privately owned surface car-park which occupies the bulk of the site was developed in 2015 and is available for public use at an hourly or daily rate. Access to the car-park is via a narrow archway through No. 15 Holborn Street and the exit is through another narrow archway at 12 Holborn Street. The remaining CPO properties on Holborn Street have been vacant for some time and are in a derelict condition.

- 2.3 The site is bounded to the south by a 1m high stone wall which separates the site from the existing public library and museum site. The rear of the offices of

Gilroy Gannon (accountants) and an AIB branch are located to the east and comprise staff and customer car parks for these businesses.

2.4 To the north is located a public car-park which is separated from the subject site by a 2m high palisade fence. For over 30 years, this Council owned car-park on the northern end of this block was illegally occupied by a traveller family who placed several caravans and other structures on the site. The unsightly nature of this site exerted a blighting effect on the surrounding area as evidenced by the extent of vacancy and dereliction on Holborn Street. Sligo County Council has recently provided the family with alternative accommodation thereby securing vacant possession of the land.

2.5 Holborn Street is acknowledged to be one of the oldest streets in Sligo and has traditionally been a residential street for circa 600 years. However, in more recent years, many of the houses have been vacated and allowed to fall into disrepair.



3.0 Planning History

3.1 Despite its location within the heart of the city, there has been very limited planning activity within the overall block for several years. The only recent development (PL03/70142) permitted is at the corner of Holborn Street and

Connaughton Road where a three storey office over ground floor betting shop was constructed in 2004.

- 3.2 The proposed CPO site was the subject of a grant of planning permission from Sligo County Council on 26th February 2017 under PL15/65. The permitted development comprised the retention of alterations to buildings fronting onto Holborn Street and the creation of a 41 space car-park to the rear. Condition No. 2 of the permission states that the use of the car-park shall cease five years after the date of grant of permission. Accordingly, the permission for the use of the site as a surface car-park expired in 2022.

4.0 National and Regional Planning Context

- 4.1 The **National Planning Framework** envisages an additional 1 million extra people resident in the Country by 2040. Of this, 25% is planned for Dublin, 25% across the other four cities combined with the remaining 50% of growth to occur in key regional centres, towns, villages and rural areas, to be determined in the regional plans – Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSEs). One of the ten National Strategic Outcomes of the NPF is compact growth which, in essence, aims to promote the following:

- provide the framework which enables people to live closer to where they work and move away from the current unsustainable trends of increased commuting;
- regenerate rural Ireland by promoting environmentally sustainable growth patterns; and
- transform settlements of all sizes through imaginative urban regeneration and bring life / jobs back into cities, towns and villages.

- 4.2 Other relevant National Policy Objectives (NPOs) include:

- **NPO 7** Apply a tailored approach to urban development, that will be linked to the Rural and Urban Regeneration and Development Fund, with a particular focus on inter alia Encouraging population growth in strong employment and service centres of all sizes, supported by employment growth; Reversing the stagnation or decline of many smaller urban centres, by identifying and establishing new roles and functions and enhancement of local infrastructure and amenities.
- **NPO 16** Target the reversal of rural decline in the core of small towns and villages through sustainable targeted measures that address vacant premises and deliver sustainable reuse and regeneration outcomes
- **NPO 18a** To support the proportionate growth of and appropriately designed development in rural towns that will contribute to their

regeneration and renewal, including interventions in the public realm, the provision of amenities, the acquisition of sites and the provision of services

4.3 The **Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy** (RSES) adopted by the Northern and Western Regional Assembly (NWRA) aims to provide regional level strategic planning and economic policy in support of the implementation of the NPF. Within this region, the RSES recognises that Sligo fulfils a city-like role to a greater extent than elsewhere and performs as a regional driver that has the potential to grow as a centre of scale. The RSES incorporates the Sligo Regional Growth Centre Strategic Plan which includes the following strategic objectives of direct relevance to the development of the City Campus project:

- **RPO 3.7.39** - Ensure that at least 40% of new residential and employment-related development in the Regional Growth Centre occurs within Sligo's main urban built-up area, through regeneration and consolidation in infill and brownfield sites;
- **RPO 3.7.48** - Upgrade the town centre environment through focused interventions in O'Connell Street, Stephen Street and car park, Rockwood Parade, Market Cross, Old Market Street and Quay Street car park, followed by gradual improvements of streets adjoining the centre;
- **RPO 3.7.56** - Support the development of a major tourist attraction in Sligo Town, as well as further expansion in the tourism functions of villages Strandhill and Rosses Point.

4.4 The **Town Centre First – A Policy for Irish Towns** (February 2022) aims to create town centres that function as viable, vibrant and attractive locations for people to live, work and visit, while also functioning as the service, social, cultural and recreational hub for the local community.

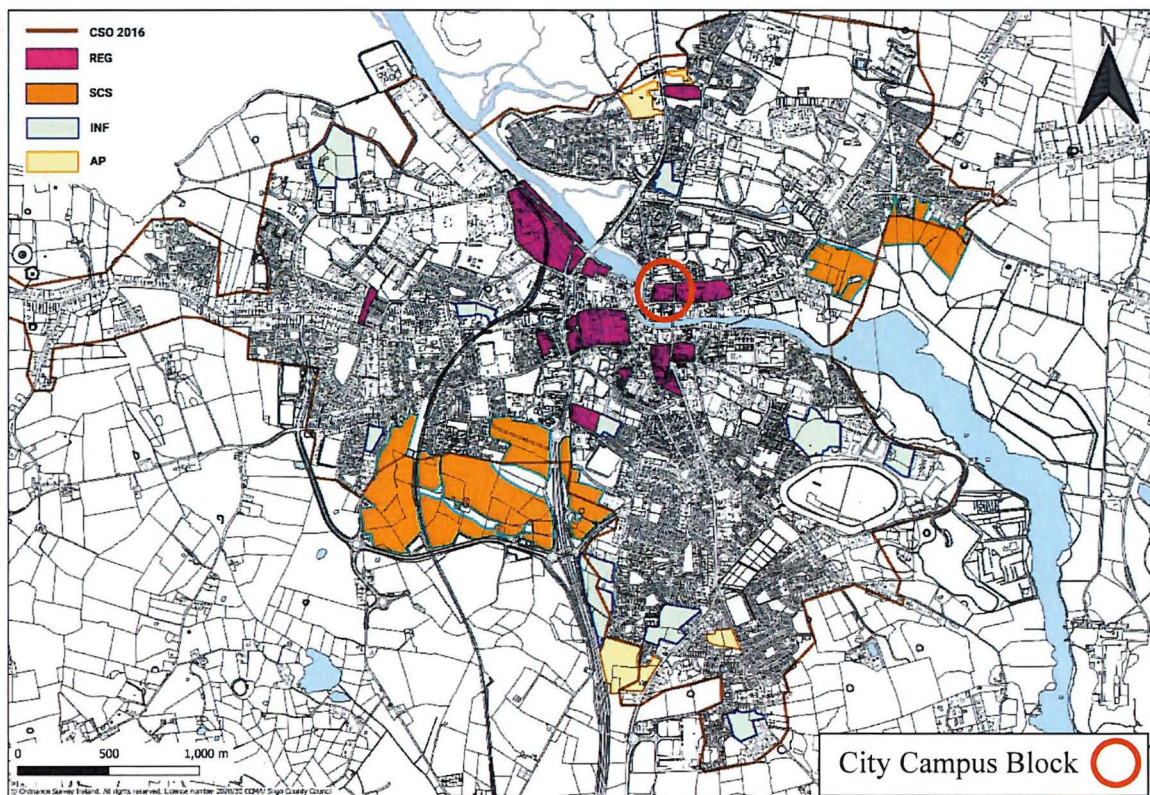
4.5 Towns will be supported to deliver on their TCF plans through substantial funding made available to support TCF implementation, particularly via funds such as the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund and the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund.

5.0 Development Plan Context

5.1 The operative plan for the area is the Sligo County Development Plan 2024 – 2030. The site is located within an area zoned TC1 – Town Centre Uses where the objective is to protect the historic character of Sligo's old town core through conservation, regeneration and public realm improvements and promote civic, retail and compatible uses that preserve the town core's identity and attractiveness.

5.2 The site forms part of a larger block identified for Urban Regeneration along with 13 other sites where Section 11.2.1 of the CDP states these sites have been identified as having the capacity to deliver regenerative, compact development, as they are fully serviced and located in the town centre or in edge of centre areas.

Figure 11.A (Extract from Sligo County Development Plan 2024 – 2030) showing Compact growth designations in Sligo Town: Regeneration Sites (REG), Settlement Consolidation Sites (SCS), Infill Sites (INF) and Additional Provision (APS)



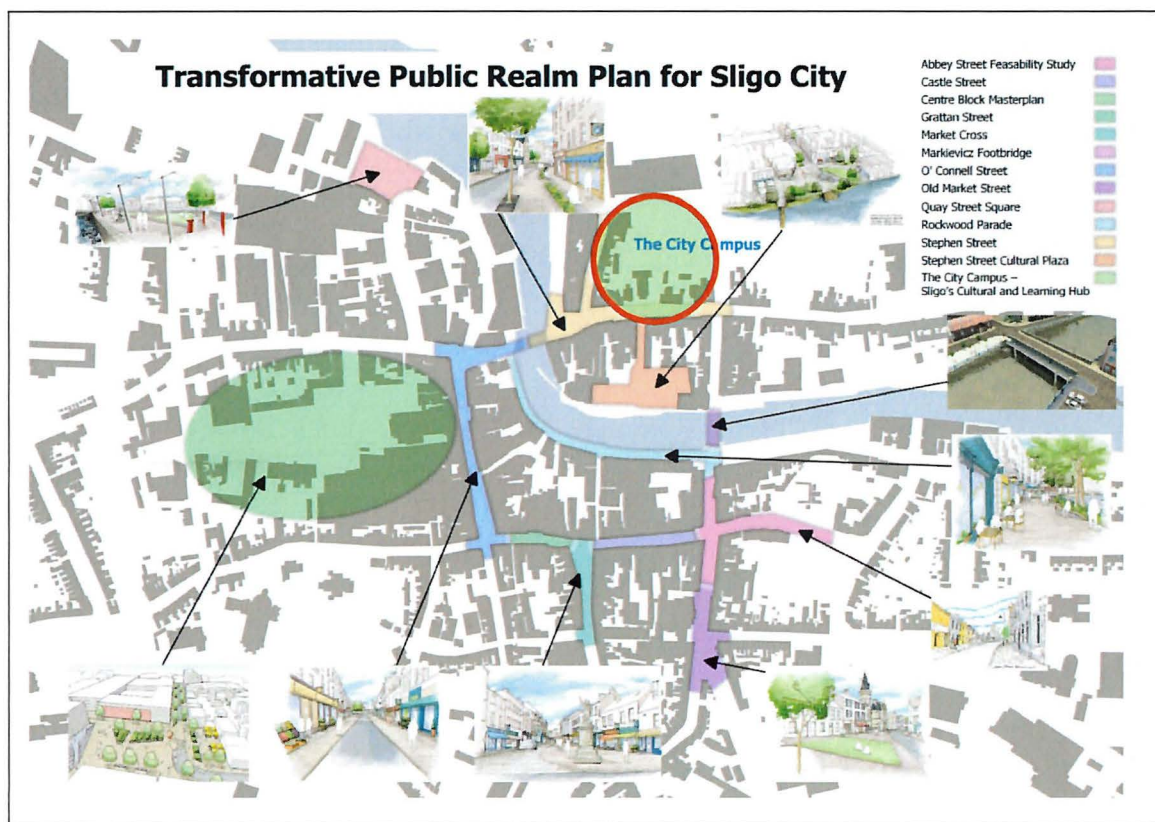
5.3 In order to achieve the desired population and employment growth as envisaged by the RSES, the CDP lists a number of key strategic projects that need to be delivered. One such project is identified under SO-RGC-7 and states:

'In conjunction with ATU Sligo, prepare and implement a masterplan for the City Campus site – Sligo's Cultural and Learning Hub involving the regeneration of this block of the town incorporating new County Library and museum facilities, enterprise space, residential units and high quality public realm'.

6.0 Urban Regeneration and Development Fund

6.1 In 2018, the Government introduced the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF) to support the implementation of projects that were clearly aligned with the NPF objectives of regenerating and rejuvenating urban centres. On foot of this funding announcement, Sligo County Council set about putting in place a strategic vision for an overhaul of the town centre. That vision was set out in our Sligo City Public Realm Plan which identified a number of projects that could be delivered over a period of time that cumulatively would transform the town centre area.

6.2 The locational context of each of the potential interventions which would ultimately be the subject of the two successful applications for URDF funding is shown below.



6.3 One of the URDF applications related to public realm enhancements within the urban core. The first public realm project undertaken was the refurbishment of O'Connell Street which was completed in 2023. The redevelopment of Stephen Street carpark into a fully pedestrianised public space now known as Queen Maeve Square was another key intervention and opened to the public in May 2024. The next phase involves street enhancement works to improve the pedestrian core by enhancing the quality of the streetscape on Stephen Street,

Holborn Street, Rockwood Parade, Tobergal Lane and Water Lane. Overall, the Government have allocated over €20 million towards the implementation of Sligo Public Realm Plan under the URDF.

6.4 The other successful URDF application saw the allocation of €28 million towards the City Campus Project to address the following issues:

- the underutilisation of this central block of land which is currently dominated by surface car-parking;
- the high vacancy rate and extent of dereliction on Holborn Street;
- a substandard / not fit for purpose / outdated County Library and Museum buildings which has been unsuccessfully seeking redevelopment funding at national level for over twenty years;
- the need for refurbishment of two protected structures on Stephen Street (the existing County Library and museum buildings) which are currently in a poor state of repair;
- the need for additional flexible city centre office space;
- the need for additional modern high quality city centre accommodation.

6.5 Following the submission in 2022 of a Preliminary Business Case in accordance with the Public Spending Code, the Department granted Sligo County Council permission to secure two key elements of the project:

1. The purchase of essential lands required to ensure the successful regeneration of the area and;
2. The development of a Masterplan to comprehensively guide and coordinate the regeneration and redevelopment of the area.

6.6 The option of a compulsory purchase of the subject lands was considered necessary to progress the project in view of several months of inconclusive negotiations with the landowner and operator of the private car park and associated lands.

6.7 A project brief for the City Campus Masterplan has been prepared and procurement of same is currently in progress.

6.8 Upon purchase of the subject lands and completion of the Masterplan, Sligo County Council will continue to comply with the Public Spending Code and secure approval to commence the preliminary design and detailed design of the project.

7.0 Rationale For The Acquisition Of The Subject Lands

- 7.1 Sligo County Council are progressing a number of projects which are responding to national and regional policies promoting compact growth. One such project is the Sligo City Campus – Cultural and Learning Hub which involves the regeneration and redevelopment of an underutilised and semi-derelict block of land in the city centre of Sligo. The vision for this area is for it to become a new cultural quarter of the town accommodating a new central library, a new enlarged county museum, offices and residential uses with pedestrian links to the new cultural plaza on the riverbank at Queen Maeve Square.
- 7.2 The new Library will bring together library, learning and business support resources in a state-of-the-art vibrant, dynamic and interactive facility that meets the needs of the public and the business and education community.
- 7.3 The new county museum will showcase Sligo's rich cultural heritage and act as a new flagship tourism attraction located within the heart of the city. The repurposing of the existing library building to create a modern museum secures a permanent use for this protected structure.
- 7.4 Key to this proposal is the convergence of a mix of uses in the one area which will act as a driver for economic activity and cultural revival. Integrated into the development of a new public buildings will be office development and residential accommodation. This mix of uses will ensure the viability and vibrancy of the scheme.
- 7.5 Sligo County Council believes that the City Campus – Sligo's Cultural Learning Hub project has the potential to be key component in transforming Sligo in the manner envisaged by both the NPF and RSES. The first step in the delivery of the project is the preparation of a detailed Masterplan for the comprehensive and sustainable development of the block.
- 7.6 The central location of the proposed CPO lands within the block separating two large plots of publicly owned land ensures that their involvement will be crucial to the delivery of any Masterplan being considered for this block. Accordingly, Sligo County Council considers that the acquisition of this land is necessary to progress this strategically important development proposal.
- 7.7 The alternative to the acquisition of these lands is likely to be an absence of development and a failure to meet the community need for the regeneration of this area located within the urban core of Sligo.