

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

**Report to Emer Concannon, Director of Services, Placemaking
Lands At
Nos. 10,12,13,14,15, and 67 Holborn Street**



Report Prepared By

**Michael Carty - Senior Engineer
Kealan Donagher – A/Senior Executive Engineer,
Capital Projects,
Sligo County Council
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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The National Planning Framework (NPF) 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 of 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

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. 67, 15, 13, 14, 12, and 10) together with an existing surface car-park of approximately 41 spaces located to the rear. The total area of land to be acquired is 0.1912 hectares.

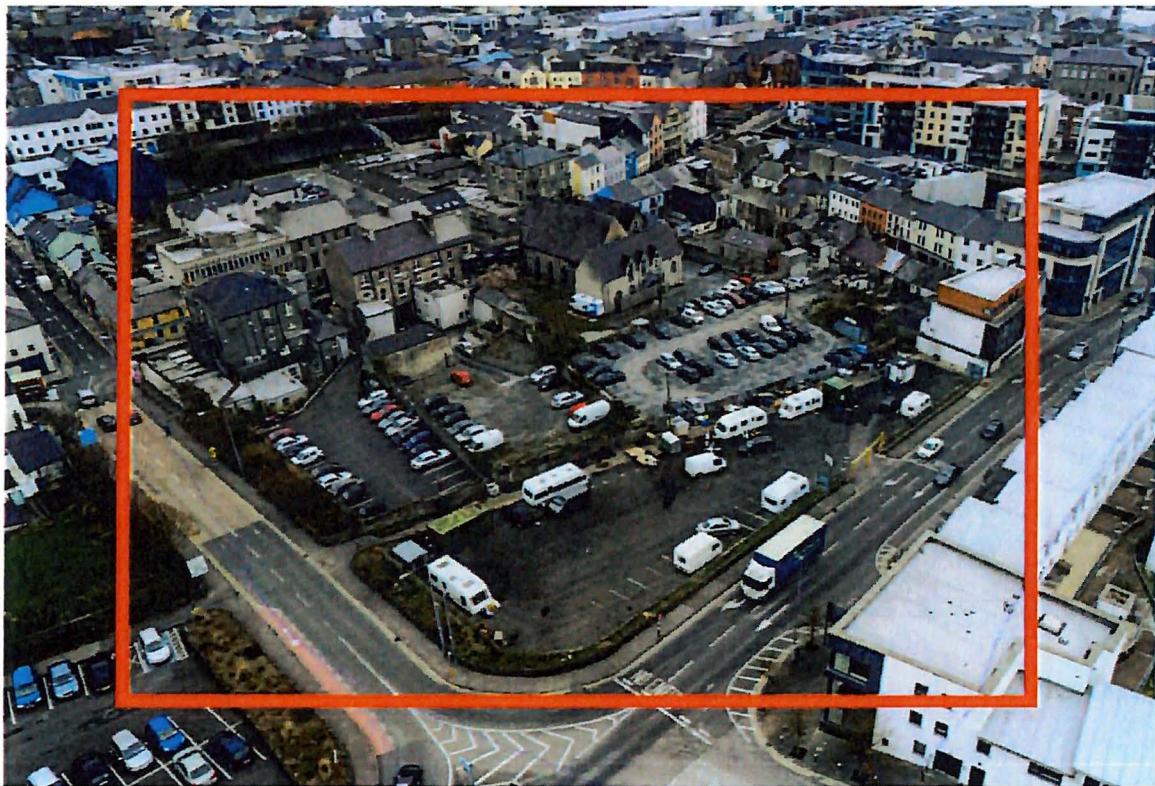


2.3 The site is bounded to the south by a 1m high stone wall which separates the site from the existing public library and museum site. The rear of the offices of Gilroy Gannon (accountants) and an AIB branch are located to the east and comprise staff and customer car parks for these businesses.

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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.

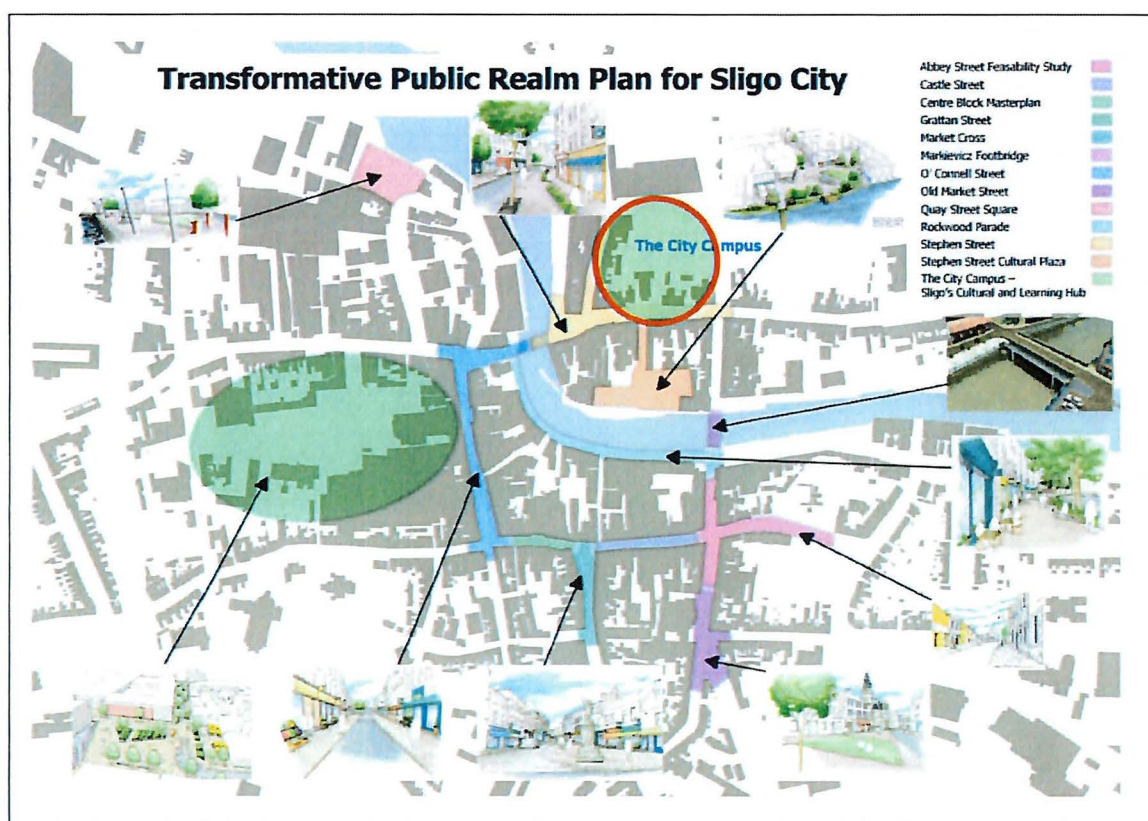


3.0 Urban Regeneration and Development Fund

- 3.1 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.

3.2 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.



3.3 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.

3.4 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.
- 3.5 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.
- 3.6 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.
- 3.7 A project brief for the City Campus Masterplan has been prepared and procurement of same is currently in progress.
- 3.8 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.

4.0 Rationale For The Acquisition Of The Subject Lands

- 4.1 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.

- 4.2 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.
- 4.3 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.
- 4.4 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.
- 4.5 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.
- 4.6 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.
- 4.7 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.

5.0 Recommendation

- 5.1 Attached is a report from the Senior Planner detailing the planning history, the national and regional planning context and the development plan context of the subject lands. The City Campus has the potential to be a key component in transforming Sligo in the manner envisaged by both the NPF and RSES. The proposed CPO lands are considered crucial to the delivery of any Masterplan being considered for this block.

For the reasons as detailed within this report and as endorsed within the Senior Planner's report, it is proposed to acquire the necessary lands by Compulsory Purchase Order. Your approval is sought to proceed in this manner.

Signed:

Michael Carty - Senior Engineer, Capital Projects

Michael Carty Date 28/3/25

Kealan Donagher - A/Senior Executive Engineer, Capital Projects

KD Date 28/3/25

Approved

Emer Concannon, DOS

16/04/2025

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