

## **SECTION 4**

# **SNEEM**

### **FUNCTIONAL AREA**

### **LOCAL AREA PLAN**

## Section 4a SNEEM LOCAL AREA PLAN

### 1.0 CONTEXT

#### 1.1 Location

The picturesque town of Sneem (An tSnaidhm – The Knot), is located on the N70 on the Iveragh Peninsula and Ring of Kerry tourist route and is located approximately 25km to the west of Kenmare and 30km to the east of Waterville. The R568 to the northeast connects the town with Molls Gap and the N71 to Killarney which is 45km away. The town is attractively located on the River Sneem with dramatic mountains as a backdrop.

#### 1.2 Population

There are no population figures for the village of Sneem in the 2011 census. The village is located within the electoral DED of Sneem. The census recorded a decrease in the population between 2006 and 2011 from 577 to 555 persons. This equates to a percentage loss of 3.8%. While the population of the town is relatively small, the extent of the built up area and the bustling nature of the town give the impression of a larger town.

In accordance with the RPG and the Core Strategy it is intended to allocate 50% of the Sneem Functional Area Plan growth to the town. This represents an increase of 57 persons in the period 2012-2018.

#### 1.3 Growth and Residential Development

The development boundary for Sneem defines the existing extent of the area where new development may be considered, whilst also allowing for some expansion for some re-development in the town core. The development boundary is largely determined by topography and infrastructural considerations.

It is envisaged that Sneem will have a projected population increase of 57 people during the plan period. At an occupancy rate of 2.6 persons this equates to 22 dwellings at an average density of 5 dwellings /acre (12/ha), indicating a demand for 4.4 acres (1.8 Ha) of zoned land. This figure in conjunction with an allowance of headroom to ensure choice in the market for development land equating to a 50% increase on actual housing land requirement, in line with the Development Plans Guidelines for Planning Authorities (DoEHLG, 2007) results in a overall figure of 6.6 acres( 2.7 ha). The additional headroom is included to allow for the provision of competition, the avoidance of market monopoly and the non availability of zoned lands. Therefore 6.6 acres (2.7ha) are required to be zoned to fulfil the urban residential housing demand over the period of the plan.

| <i>Settlement</i> | <i>Area of Land Zoned Residential (acres)*</i> | <i>Projected Housing Provision (no.)</i> | <i>Projected Population Increase</i> |
|-------------------|--|--|--------------------------------------|
| Sneem             | 6.6a (2.7 ha)                                  | 22                                       | 57                                   |

\* includes 50% headroom

**Table 1.1 Land Requirement and Population projection**

The survey of ongoing housing developments conducted by the DoECLG and Kerry County Council concluded that there are a number of the unfinished/derelect/vacant estates in the town. These estates contain dwelling units at various levels of completion.

**It is the policy of Kerry County Council to seek the completion of these estates. Considering the existing availability of 26 vacant completed units, an additional 36 units commenced, 31 not commenced it is considered that there is a sufficient amount of existing housing available to meet the housing demand. It is therefore proposed not to zone any additional land for residential purposes.**

#### **1.4 Functions & Facilities**

Sneem is an important service town for its rural catchment area, especially as it is located a significant distance from other major service towns such as Kenmare and Killarney. It is also a busy tourist stopping point on the Ring of Kerry tourist route. It therefore serves an important dual role in the South Kerry area

The town has a wide range of services and facilities. There are several small shops in the town and several pubs, cafés and restaurants. The town also has a primary school, a Garda station, a fire station and both Catholic and Church of Ireland churches.

The Sneem Hotel is located on the Kenmare Road and adds to the range of tourist accommodation available in the town. Sneem boasts large amenity areas which are mainly focused on the River Sneem and Quay Road. There is a tennis court at the western side of the river and a playground at Sea View.

On Quay Road there is a Garden of the Senses, a public barbeque area, Bird Village and a sculpture park (The Way the Fairies Went).

The Geopark building is located on South Square on the Killarney Road. Kerry Geopark comprises an area c.500sq.km comprising of a number of communities including the Blackwater, Sneem, Caherdaniel, Derrynane and Tahilla (not all included in the functional area of this plan) and is an area rich in geology, man-made features, flora and fauna.

#### **1.5 Infrastructure**

Sneem is located on the National Secondary route N70 and experiences considerable through traffic and congestion during peak times in the tourist season. Its physical configuration as a single long street with a narrow single lane bridge aggravates the problem. As a busy tourist town the pressure of through traffic volume and a busy stop on the ring of Kerry, leaves a marked effect on the towns environmental qualities.

Sneem has a new modern treatment plant with a 2,500 population equivalent. The treatment plant was funded by public private partnership which was the first that was funded in this way in the county. It is the policy of Kerry County Council to ensure that all new residential dwellings located within the settlement and within the sewer catchment shall be connected to the public sewer.

## **1.6 Urban Form**

Sneem has retained a compact and attractive urban form which has developed around the Squares and the natural features of the area. The town is focused on two squares, North Square and South Square, which are noted on the 1841 survey of the town. The squares are separated by the River Sneem and a narrow stone bridge from which there are attractive views of the River. Both Squares are in fact triangular in form and are based around two fair greens which are very well maintained and contain a number of public art pieces and statues to local characters. The streetscapes which form both squares are attractive and highly coloured giving the town a distinct character

The North Square is the largest and the quieter of the two squares and contains many residential properties while South Square contains more of the tourist orientated shops.

## **1.7 Built Heritage & Archaeology**

There are eight structures included in the Record of Protected Structures, which are as follows:

|                   |   |
|-------------------|---|
| Ref. no. 21309901 | Sneem Garda Station                                 |
| Ref. no. 21310008 | Sneem Bridge  |
| Ref. no. 21310009 | Church of the Transfiguration                       |
| Ref. no. 21310010 | The Blue Bull, South Square                         |
| Ref. no. 21310011 | Quill's Woollen Market, South Square                |
| Ref. no.21310006  | St. Michael's Catholic Church                       |
| RPS KY-100-003    | The Way the Fairies Went (Stone Sculptures)         |
| RPS KY-100-004    | Sneem House, formerly Sheehan's Hotel, South Square |

The town has several important buildings and streetscapes. ACAs are proposed in order to maintain the architectural integrity and form of both Squares.

There are no recorded archeological monuments within the plan area.

## **1.8 Natural environment and Amenity**

The town is set in a high quality natural environment which is reflected in the amount of public parks that have been developed in the town. The town's people recognise the importance of their environment which is evident from the high standard to which the town centres and amenity areas are maintained.

As the town is on an important tourist route, it is vital that attractive views of the river from the bridge be maintained and that areas adjacent to the river are kept free from inappropriate development.



The River Sneem running through the town is a candidate Special Area of Conservation (002158- Kenmare River). There is a history of flooding at certain locations along the river and any proposed development or works in proximity to the river will have to be carefully assessed by means of a flood impact assessment. A major development constraint in the town will be the preclusion of development on the flood plains of the River.

As part of any project to provide a pedestrian bridge to the south of the river linking the amenity areas, the development is required to demonstrate compatibility with the Nature Conservation Objectives of Natura 2000 sites in the vicinity by way of an Article 6, Habitats Directive Assessment. Views of the river from Sneem Bridge and the 'Special Interest' of Sneem Bridge which is a protected structure should also be protected

### **1.9 Vehicular and Pedestrian Traffic**

The town suffers from traffic congestion in particular during the tourist high season. This is due to the single lane bridge at the centre of the town and the volume of tourist traffic that passes through. Parking is a problem in the town during the summer when many cars and coaches park haphazardly on the North and South Squares. Not only does this cause congestion, it also takes away from the visual enjoyment of the Fair Greens and the surrounding streetscapes. Parking for coaches and cars is therefore an urgent requirement in the town. It is recognised that any new car/coach parks need to be centrally located so that they will be used by visitors and locals as an alternative to parking on both Squares.

Junction improvements at the junctions of North Square and Seaview and South Square and Quay Road are also required. The latter especially is hazardous as it is a busy and restricted junction and visibility is often obstructed by parked vehicles.

New footpaths and footpath improvements are needed in certain areas of the town to improve pedestrian connectivity and pedestrian safety. The movement of pedestrians between the town and amenity areas would be improved by the provision of a new pedestrian footbridge on the south side of Sneem Bridge. This will allow for better pedestrian connectivity between amenity areas on both sides of the river. A favoured design or location for this proposed crossing has not been identified at this stage. Support for this proposal is conditional on its compatibility with Nature Conservation Designations, Flood Risk Management, Water Quality and Landscape protection objectives. As part of this any such project will be required to demonstrate compatibility with the Nature Conservation Objectives of Natura 2000 sites in the vicinity by way of an Article 6, Habitats Directive Assessment.

### **1.10 Employment**

The main source of employment in the area is the service industry and tourism related employment. The town is over reliant on tourism of a seasonal nature and measures to encourage year round employment must be encouraged.

### **1.11 Residential Development**

There are many residential properties on the two squares in the town and in the approach roads into the town. Three housing developments have been constructed in the town over the last few years. One on the Kenmare road to the east of the town, the second is located off North Square and the third is a mixture of contemporary holiday homes and permanent homes on the western edge of the town on the Waterville Road. There are a number of unfinished dwelling units within these estates.

Ribbon development has occurred on the approach roads into the town from Molls Gap and Kenmare.

### **1.12 Flood Management**

It is the policy of the Council, that development should not be subject to an inappropriate risk of flooding nor should it cause or exacerbate such a risk at other locations. In this regard, applicants for development shall ensure that the Plan fully integrates the requirements of the Flood Risk Management Guidelines where relevant and appropriate.

The OPW have published draft preliminary flood Zone Maps for the County, these are noted by Kerry County Council. Any proposed development on those lands shall be subject to a flood impact assessment.

## **2.0 DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY**

The overall strategy aims, through its land-use planning function, to improve the quality of life of the residents of the town and through its zoning provisions to promote economic development in a sustainable manner capitalising on the towns indigenous strengths and qualities.

The strategy is to provide for the development of the town as an important tourist town and a local service centre on a scale commensurate with its infrastructural capacity and ensure that the unique character of the town is retained in its high quality environmental setting so that the town continues to be an attractive place to live and visit.

At present, there is a good balance between tourist development and development for locals in the town. Future development needs to maintain the fragile attractive character of the settlement.

The architecture form and layout of the North and South Squares form an intrinsic element of the character of the town, which must be maintained. It is an objective to designate and preserve the areas fronting onto the squares as architectural conservation areas.

In order to reduce congestion and improve the appearance of the town during the summer months the strategy is to provide for a designated coach park incorporating toilet facilities. The operation of this car park may require additional traffic management measures.

While Sneem contains some of the most attractive amenity provision of any town within the County, knowledge of and access to these amenities is not readily apparent to visitors. The strategy aims to create greater permeability, connectivity and access between these amenities, thereby integrating them with the town. This will enhance the overall image of Sneem and complement its urban form with a definite environmental image.

In order to counter ongoing population loss, Sneem needs to attract permanent residents. The provision of holiday homes, while creating a demand during summer months and thereby sustaining employment in the services sector, has its drawbacks in attracting permanent residents. People wishing to reside permanently in Sneem do not wish to live in development where many of the dwellings will be empty for a large part of the year, where they will not know their neighbours and where there will be no sense of place, identity or community spirit. This strategy considers that, in view of the level of residential development permitted within the town that residential development for the period of the plan should be for permanent residential development. It is considered that further holiday home development will militate against the creation of an attractive town for permanent residents.

It is considered that the Sneem area needs to capitalise on its local strengths and the strategy aims to promote Sneem as a centre for craftwork and arts. An area of land has, therefore, been zoned for a craft village, which it is hoped can be developed for small craftwork units. In addition, it is proposed to zone an area within the town to expand the retail facility and provide an opportunity for the sale of local produce both local crafts and horticultural products from the local hinterland.

### 3.0 OVERALL OBJECTIVES

| Objective No. | It is an objective of the Council to:   |
|---------------|---|
| OO-1          | Encourage the development of a compact and sustainable town structure by ensuring that new development is contiguous with existing development and makes effective use of backland and infill sites                   |
| OO-2          | Ensure that the high quality and unique natural setting of the town and the amenity areas in the town are protected from inappropriate development  |
| OO-3          | Promote attractive streetscapes and approaches into the town by using appropriate urban design techniques to preserve and enhance the elements of the built environment which define the unique character of the town |
| OO-4          | Ensure that the scale and balance of tourist facilities in the town is designed so that excessive or inappropriate tourist developments do not detract from the unique character of the town.                         |

#### 4.0 SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

| Objective No. | Open Space, Recreation and Amenity<br>It is an objective of the Council to:   |
|---------------|---|
| OS-1          | Ensure that development shall not have a significant detrimental impact on the natural environment  |
| OS-2          | Facilitate the development of new amenity areas in the town where appropriate   |
| OS-3          | Facilitate the provision of a river walkway along the Sneem River, in particular to the North of the Bridge.  |
| OS-4          | Ensure that the water quality of the Sneem River which is part of the Kenmare River cSAC (002158) is maintained and protected from polluting development  |
| OS-5          | Ensure that developments within the flood plain of the river will not be permitted. Any applications for developments in proximity of the river shall be accompanied by a flood impact assessment indicating any flood mitigation measures proposed |
| OS-6          | Ensure that infill and riverbank alteration will be prohibited where there is a risk of interference with the aquatic habitat and flood discharge. Any such development will be subject to the approval of the Inland fisheries Ireland and the OPW |
| OS-7          | Ensure that when development may have a significant environmental impact on the natural environment of the Sneem River that an environmental report is prepared.  |
| OS-8          | Prepare a tree preservation order for appropriate trees throughout the settlement and promote additional planting   |

| Objective No. | Commercial/Retail Facilities<br>It is an objective of the Council to:  |
|---------------|--|
| COM-1         | Zone land for retail use in the town to provide for the future retail needs of the town and outlying areas.  |
| COM-2         | Zone lands for the development of commercial/mixed uses at appropriate locations to provide local employment and the retail and service needs of the locals and tourists |
| COM-3         | Promote the development of a Craft Village at this location.   |

| <b>Objective No.</b> | <b>Transport and Movement<br/>It is an objective of the Council to:</b>   |
|----------------------|---|
| <b>T-1</b>           | Reserve new access points to facilitate orderly in-depth development as indicated on the Zoning Map   |
| <b>T-2</b>           | Facilitate improvements at the junction of North Square with Seaview and the junction of South Square with Quay Road  |
| <b>T-3</b>           | Provide a new car and coach parking area adjacent to the Catholic Church with entrances off Quay Road and the road leading to the Church. Existing stone wall boundaries shall be retained where possible. This car and coach park shall be designed to a high architectural standard.  |
| <b>T-4</b>           | Facilitate parallel parking along the southern street frontage of South Square from the junction with Quay Road to the Bridge. Footpaths along this area will also be widened within the life time of this plan.  |
| <b>T-5</b>           | Seek the provision of additional footbridges across the river to the south and north of Sneem Bridge at appropriate locations and in a sustainable manner so as to provide safe pedestrian connection between amenity areas. Support for these proposals is conditional on demonstrated compatibility with Nature Conservation Designations, Flood Risk Management, Water Quality and Landscape and Built Heritage protection objectives. |
| <b>T-6</b>           | Seek the provision/improvement of walkways as indicated on the Zoning Map.  |

| <b>Objective No.</b> | <b>Community/Institutional Facilities<br/>It is an objective of the Council to:</b>                      |
|----------------------|--|
| <b>CI-1</b>          | Reserve land for the future expansion of the primary school to the south as indicated on the zoning map. |
| <b>CI-2</b>          | Promote the development of a public boat house at an appropriate location.                               |

| <b>Objective No.</b> | <b>Architectural Heritage<br/>It is an objective of the Council to:</b> |
|----------------------|---|
| <b>AH-1</b>          | Preserve the Architectural Conservation Area                            |

## Appendix 1

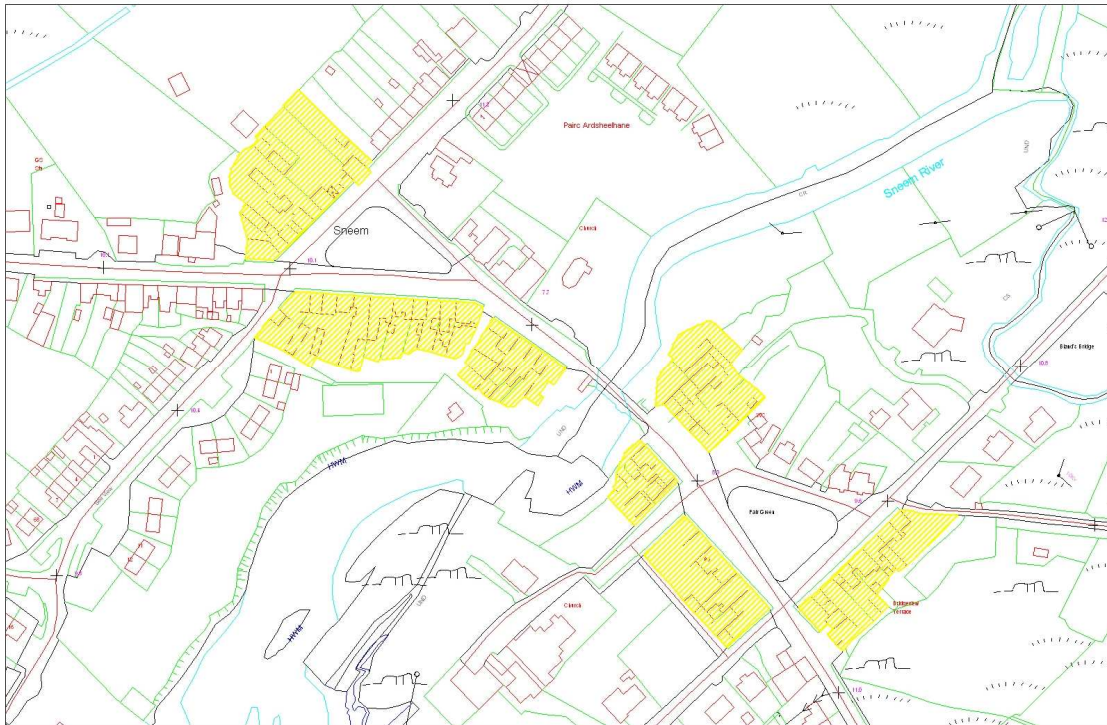
### Sneem Architectural Conservation Area

#### Introduction

See the introduction to the Cahersiveen ACA .

#### Location and boundary of the Conservation Area

The proposed ACA is centred on the two squares, and essentially includes all the village centre area with the exclusion of the north western side of the North Square and the northern side of the South Square.



**Map 1: ACA Boundary**

#### Historical development of the area

The footprint of the village as shown in the 1841/42 OS map is very similar to today. The northeast side of the North Square remains undeveloped, the South Square is depicted as a Fair.





Map 2: 1<sup>st</sup> Edition OS map 1842



Map 3: 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition OS Map 1897

Green, the North Square has no designation. Development along the south east and south west sides of the South Square is incomplete.

In the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of the OS map (1897) the built up area has been extended but the north east side of the North Square remains undeveloped.

*Draft Sneem Functional Area Local Area Plan*  
**Sneem**

The south side of the South Square is fully developed and the North and South Squares are designated as ‘Fair Green’, no mention of North Square or South Square. The south east side of the southern Fair Green is referred to as Bridgeview Terrace



**Photo 1; 1880-1900**



**Photo 2; Present Day**



**Photo 3; 1880-1914**



**Photo 4; Present Day**



**Photo 5; 1880-1914**



**Photo 6; Present Day**





**Photo 7; 1880-1914**



**Photo 8; Present Day**



**Photo 9; 1880-1914**



**Photo 10; Present Day**

A comparison of some early photographic images of the South Square with current images demonstrate that the overall appearance of the built fabric has remained relatively unaltered for well over a century.

### **Schedule of Protected Structures and Recorded Monuments**

There are four structures included in the Record of Protected Structures within the ACA.

- |                           |               |
|---------------------------|---------------|
| - RPS Ref. No. 21401104   | Sneem Bridge  |
| - RPS Ref. No. 21401106   | The Blue Bull |
| - RPS Ref. No. 21401107   | Quills        |
| - RPS Ref. No. KY-100-004 | Sneem House   |

There is no Recorded Monument within the proposed ACA.

#### *a) Street Pattern*

The street layout resembles an elongated figure of 8, dissected by the Sneem River, which forms a focal point in the centre of the village. This street pattern has allowed for the formation of a more compact urban core, compared to many other villages in the county which are comprised of one long street.



**Photo. 11**



**Photo. 12**

*b) Form and arrangement of public and private open space.*

The layout of the village is unique, with not just one, but two large triangular public open spaces within the ACA. Although referred to as squares, these spaces are triangular in form. These well maintained public open spaces set off the streetscape and provide an added dimension to the overall living area (Photo 11, 12). Private open space is confined to the rear of premises.

*c) Socio economic functions.* The buildings within the ACA are a mix of private and commercial premises.

*d) Built fabric-general description.* The vast majority of the buildings are two storey with a few exceptions including a small number of two and a half storey structures and a few single storey buildings. Overall the built fabric is in good condition with little if any evidence of dereliction.



**Photo. 13**

e) *Roofs, ridges, chimneys.*

Ridge heights are fairly standard throughout the ACA, particularly along the southern end of the South Square (Photo. 11) There are instances where the ridge heights vary, this serves to enliven the overall streetscape (Photo 12, 13). The vast majority of the roofs are pitched slated roofs.



Photo. 12



Photo. 13

f) *Walls.* The majority of the buildings within the ACA have a smooth plaster or lined render finish although a pebble-dash finish is also used in a few instances. (Photo.15)

g) *Openings.*

Some entrances and openings have been altered over the years to suit particular commercial or domestic circumstances, but overall, window openings, doorways and archways have remained relatively intact. The use of colour to emphasize architectural elements such as windowsills is effective and highlights the window openings. (Photo.14). A number of former commercial premises have retained their window opening which serves to maintain the character of the streetscape.



Photo. 14



Photo. 15

h) *Boundaries.* Most structures within the ACA front directly onto the pavement. A low stonewall boundary delineates the two main public spaces.



i) *Rainwater Goods.* Some original cast-iron rainwater pipes and gutters remain, however many metal elements have been replaced by uPVC in the recent past. Cast iron is a resilient material and the retention of cast iron rainwater goods not only makes sense from an economic viewpoint but also enhances the heritage value of buildings.

j) *Views.* There are a number of vistas within the ACA, in particular

### **Summary of Special Character**

#### ***The principle features of the built form are;***

- traditional urban style buildings dating mainly from the late 19<sup>th</sup> to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.
- pitched roofs covered in slate or artificial slate
- roofs have variable ridge and eaves heights and mainly A type roofs with a few exceptions.
- simple rectangular shapes with a mixture of traditional and modern shopfronts
- the use of traditional unobtrusive signage ( Photo. 16)
- the retention of old style shopwindow openings in domestic buildings
- quite a number of timber sash windows, with a selection of uPVC top opening or casement windows.
- some modern infill of a non traditional style
- the arrangement of buildings around the two greens; relatively unaltered for over 150 years.

#### ***Negative features***

- some unsympathetic alterations to historic features such as windows, the cumulative effect of which is damaging to its status as a conservation area.
- some unsympathetic modern development



**Photo. 16**

For the Guidelines for development within the Conservation area., Works not affecting the character of the ACA (do not require planning permission) and works impacting on the character of the area (works requiring planning permission) see the Cahersiveen ACA

## Appendix 2

### Existing Protected Structures

#### 1. Name & Address

Garda Station., Inchinaleega East.

**RPS Ref. No.** 21401101



#### 2. Name & Address

St. Michaels R.C. Church.

**RPS Ref. No.** 21401102



#### 3. Name & Address

The Way the Fairies Went.

**RPS Ref. No.** 21401103



**4. Name & Address**

Sneem Bridge.

**RPS Ref. No. 21401104**



**5. Name & Address**

Church of the Transfiguration.

**RPS Ref. No. 21401105**



**6. Name & Address**

The Blue Bull.

**RPS Ref. No. 21401106**



**7. Name & Address**

Quills Woollen Market, Sneem

**RPS Ref. No. 21401102**



**8. Name & Address**

Sneem House

**RPS Ref. No.** KY-100-104

