
MEMBERS AND MANAGEMENT OF STRANDHILL GOLF CLUB

Submission on The Draft Sligo County Development Plan 2024-2030



December 2023



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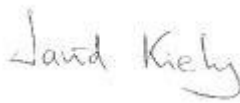
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MEMBERS AND MANAGEMENT OF STRANDHILL GOLF CLUB

SUBMISSION ON THE DRAFT SLIGO COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2024-2030

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1. **INTRODUCTION**

Jennings O'Donovan & Partners Limited have been commissioned by Strandhill Golf Club to prepare this submission on their behalf on the Draft Sligo County Development Plan 2024-2030. The purpose of this Submission is to highlight and present current issues and constraints that Strandhill Golf Club are experiencing, to highlight the value of Strandhill Golf Club to the Community and the challenges the Club faces as a result of current and further village development and to put forward the Clubs growth ambitions for the next number of years, including recommendations which could inform the final detailed policies, objectives and zoning in the revised Strandhill Village Plan for the Strandhill Area.

Strandhill Golf Club wish to submit in particular on the strategic framework, policies, zoning and objectives maps for Strandhill Village, where they directly impact on the future development and sustainability of the Golf Club.

The Club have growth ambitions for its future development, a key element of which will be to propose that the area to the south, east and north of the Clubhouse would ideally be placed to become a Sports, Recreation and Community Hub for the village of Strandhill and greater catchment area. This would require the rezoning of some adjoining lands from their current zoning as Strategic Land Reserve and the zoning of Green Belt lands to the South, to a Sports, Recreation and Community type Use.

The Golf Club are currently developing a number of live projects to ensure that facilities are continuously upgraded, as they are genuinely regarded as one of the best in the northwest region. The upgrade and improvement of facilities is critical to ensure that the Club can compete with and compliment the network of Golf Clubs in the region which have become part of a national and international golf tourism product, along with providing a much loved Club ethos for Members and their families and the wider community. The development of the Club will maintain and continue to raise the standard of Strandhill Golf Course as one of the premier links golf courses along the Wild Atlantic Way and will continue to be a key contributor to the local economy and the national tourism product.

The Golf Club welcomes the opportunity to submit proposals which can inform and shape emerging planning policy for the County, which in turn can encourage sustainable and appropriate development of the Golf Club and the surrounding area and requests that Sligo County Council consider the wider Golf Course catchment and its potential in providing facilities which benefit the entire community. The Golf Club would be concerned that any potential new development in the immediate surrounds could provide further restrictions and constraints to the development of the Course and the Club and could disadvantage the future potential of the Community and Tourism

product which Strandhill Golf Club provides. In this regard, the members and management of Strandhill Golf Club, would like to make the following submission and request that Sligo County Council consider the proposals in the review of the County Development Plan.

1.1. Site Location/Context

Strandhill Golf Club is an 18-hole links golf course situated on Ireland's Atlantic coast in Strandhill, Sligo. It is situated 8km west of Sligo town and located under Knocknarea mountain. It boasts stunning views of the surrounding landscape, out to Culleenamore Beach and Ballisodare Bay, Strandhill Beach and Sand Dunes, Benbulbin and further towards Donegal Bay. The Golf club is strategically located and conveniently placed within Strandhill Village, its facilities and amenities being within walking distance of the entire village where a number of restaurants, bars and tourist facilities compliment the Club. The Primary School adjoins the Course, providing an aspirational backdrop for future budding golfers to develop their enjoyment and skills.

The extract from the Ordnance Survey Ireland Map, below, shows Strandhill and the general location of the Golf Course (Fig 1.1).

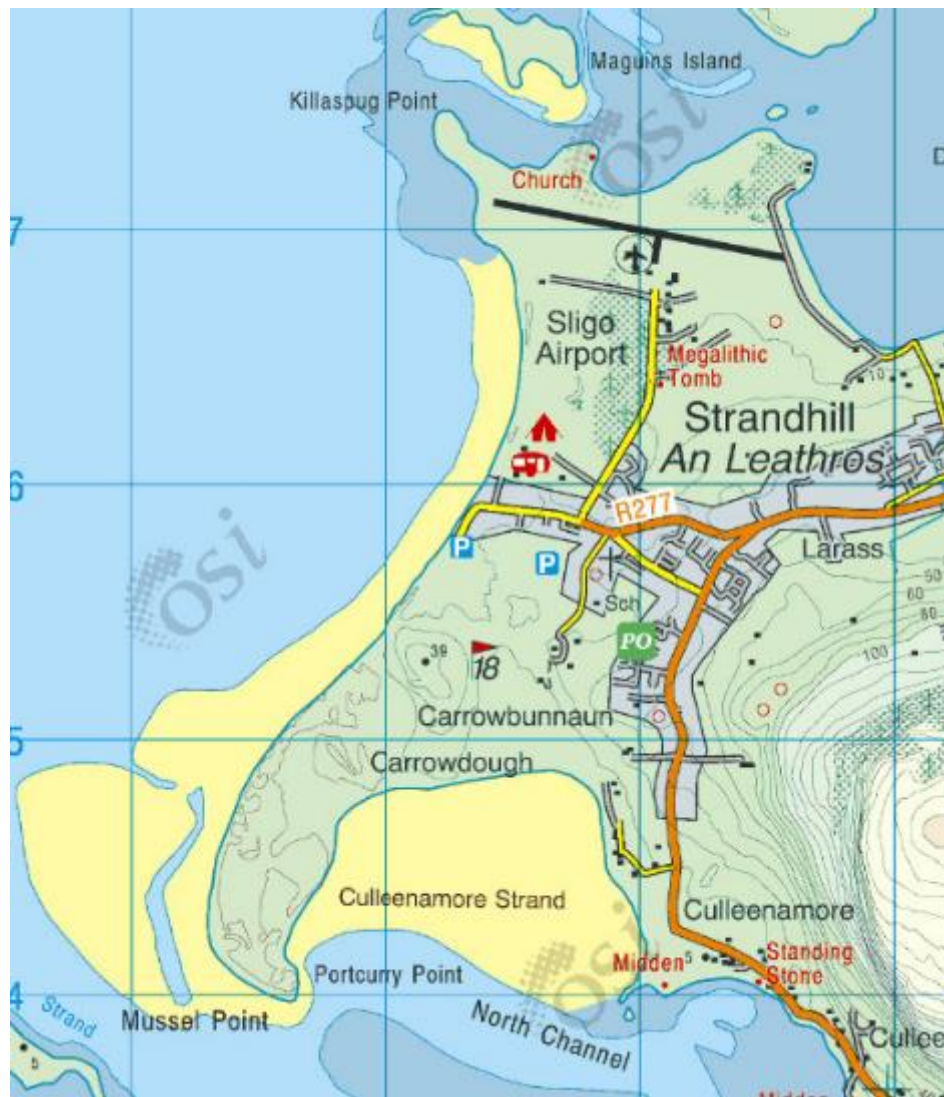


Figure 1.1: Ordnance Survey Ireland Extract

1.2. Surrounding Land uses

The Golf Course is located to the southwest of the core of Strandhill Village, stretching between the beach and the sand dunes to the West and Culleenamore Strand to the South. To the East, the Course is bounded by agricultural land and the Public Road (L-7507-0), known locally as the Golf Course Road, which also serves the Primary School, 3 dwellings, and a Rath, or fairyfort, which is a National Monument, all of which are located along the road. The junction of the Golf Course Road lies to the northeast corner of the Course, where the Church is located. To the north, the Course is bounded by Buenos Aires Drive/Shore Road where the rear of a significant number of dwellings back on to the Course, along with the village public car park and the National Surf Centre yard area. The Surf Centre itself, along with a number of commercial developments are located to the North Western corner of the Course, where the Promenade and Car Park are located.

From a Planning perspective, in the Draft Development Plan, the Golf Course is bounded to the North by zonings which are predominately Mixed Use, Existing Residential Uses and Transport and

Utilities Infrastructure Uses. To the East, the zoning includes Community Facilities, Existing Residential, Open Space and Recreational Amenities, and Strategic Land Reserve. The Southernmost part of the Eastern boundary is outside the Development Limit of the Village and is therefore zoned Green Belt. The Southern and Western boundaries are unzoned and largely constrained by designated European Nature Conservation Areas. The Golf Course itself is zoned Green Belt and the Club House and surrounding area is zoned Community Facilities.

The Draft Strandhill Village Plan Zoning Map showing the Golf Club to the southwest, in the green belt and outside the development limit, and relative to adjoining land uses is set out hereunder (Fig 1.2). The existing Strandhill Mini Plan Zoning Map is also set out below (Fig 1.3).

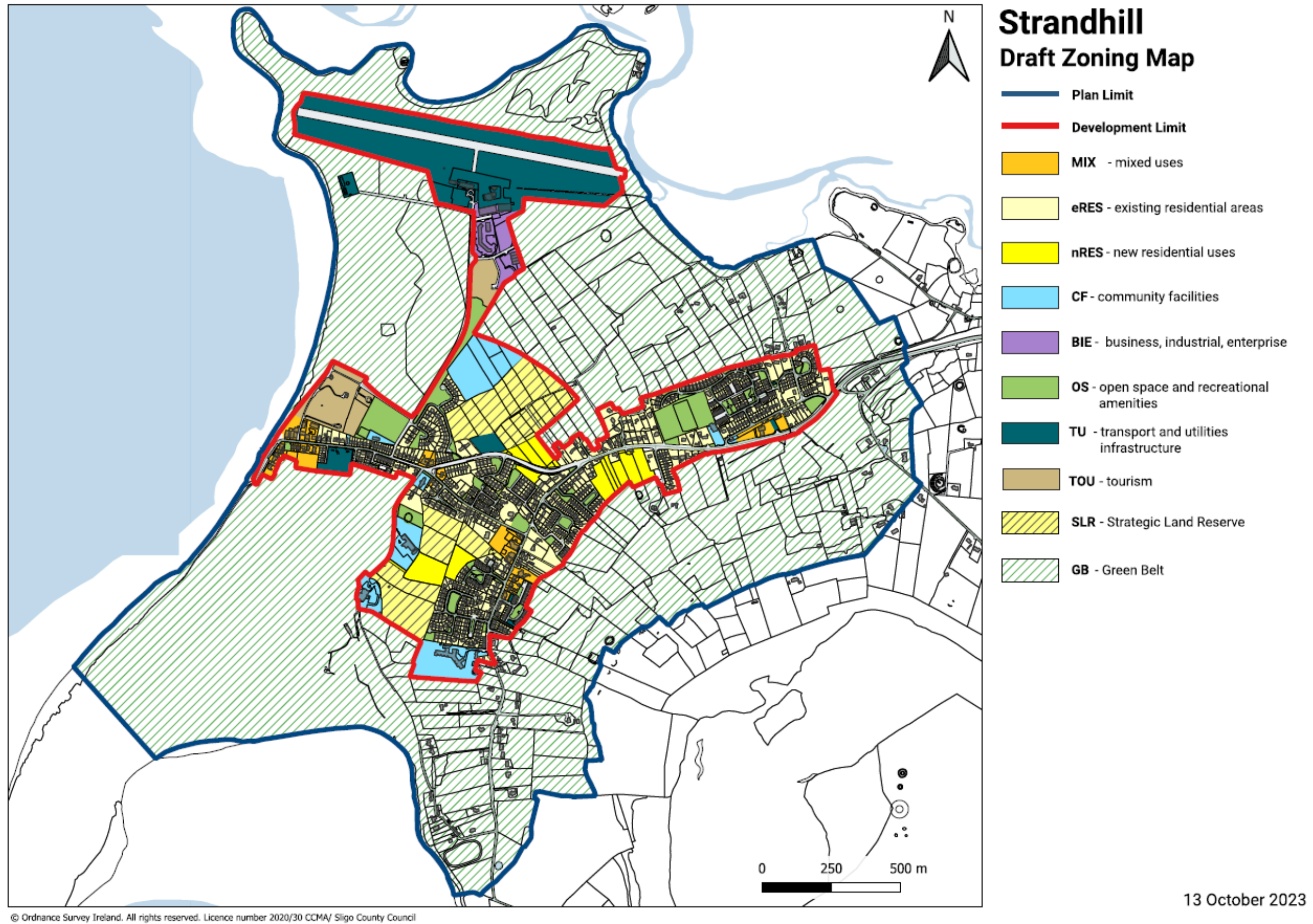


Figure 1.2: Strandhill Draft Village Plan Zoning Map

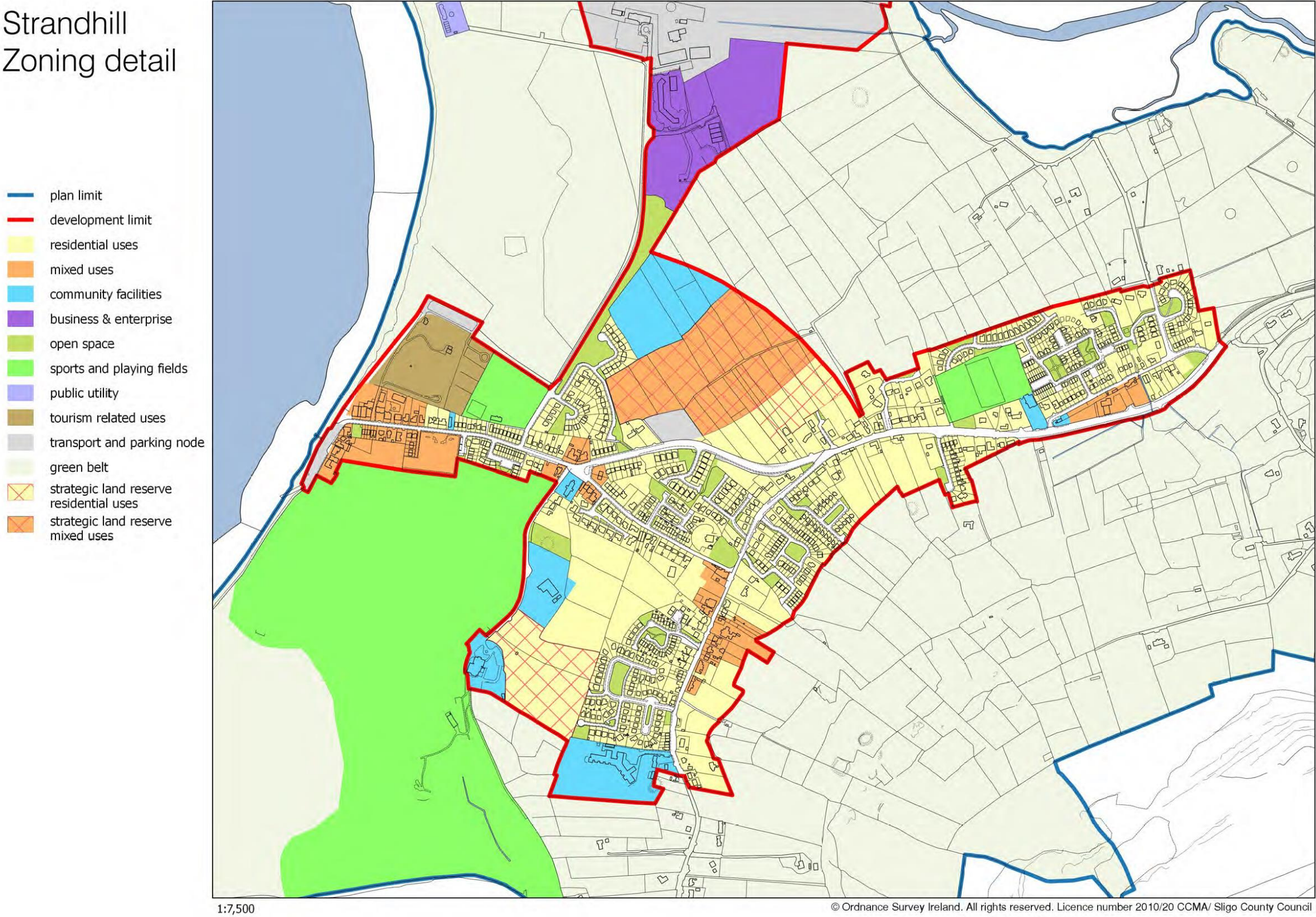


Figure 1.3: Current Strandhill Mini Plan Zoning Map

2. **GOLF**

Over the past number of years, the physical and mental health benefits of golf for women and men of all ages have been widely recognised. Both golf membership and participation have grown, Golf is now in the top 4 participation sports on the island of Ireland, which is home to over 400 golf clubs, including a third of the world's natural links courses, of which Strandhill is one. The challenge now is to build on that momentum.

“Golf Ireland” are the Governing Body for golf in Ireland - their Strategic Plan states that “Golf is a game for everyone, for enjoyment, for health and for life”. Its fundamental values support the vision that people of all ages and backgrounds are welcome in the sport. Golf Ireland’s Strategy identifies five key focus areas to drive success: Securing the future of golf; Supporting clubs and golfers; Leading the organisation; Delivering events; and Nurturing talent.

Currently in Ireland there are 220,000 registered Club Members and Golf Ireland wants this to grow. Opportunities for developing the game includes a focus on Juniors, Women, Minorities and people with Additional Needs to try golf for the first time, and to have access to safe, inclusive and welcoming clubs. The introduction of Community Golf Instructors as an employable role, to support the many Volunteers involved in developing the game, is reflective of this focus. Annual Operational Plans place a special emphasis on the place of young people, women and girls in the future of golf in Ireland, and on excellent governance at all levels.

Over the next few years, high-profile golf events will take place on the island of Ireland: The 153rd Open Championship - one of the four Major Worldwide Championships - will take place at Royal Portrush Golf Club in Northern Ireland in 2025; and the Ryder Cup will return to Ireland in 2027 when Adare Manor, in County Limerick hosts the biennial Golf contest between Europe and America. The Horizon Irish Open and The KPMG Women’s Irish Open, will continue to be run successfully on an annual basis on many of our flagship Courses, along with the Walker Cup. These events will garner the attention of the world and inspire hundreds of thousands to start, continue or re-engage with the game of golf and will ensure that Ireland is showcased worldwide as a key Golfing destination.

International sport tourism influences the sport economy, ranging from the community sector to the commercial and public sector. According to Fáilte Ireland, international Golf Tourism is an enormously significant economic contributor and is continuously increasing, having a value of more than €300 million to the Irish economy. Ireland welcomes 200,000 international golfers annually, and a golf visitor typically spends three times more than the average leisure tourist. Over €540 million is spent annually on golf in Ireland providing direct employment for over 9,000 people.

Sligo is home to three of the top Links Courses in the Country, Rosses Point Ranked 14th, Enniscrone Ranked 15th, and Strandhill Ranked 35th (“Irish Golfer” rankings). Very few counties in Ireland have such a fantastic offering which puts the County in a strong position to benefit from the growth in golf tourism.

Strandhill has seen an increase in Overseas Visitors especially over the last number of years. Traditionally, International Visitors golfed in the southern counties, however a migration north of international golfers have now been seen.

3. **STRANDHILL GOLF CLUB**

Strandhill Golf Club pride themselves on the high quality of magnificent golf, superb amenities and outstanding service that they offer their valued customers and community. They have worked incessantly over the years to become a staple of the community and in the process, have earned recognition as one of the regional premier golf experiences.

The Club is financially stable, turning over €1 million per year. Approx 27 staff are directly or indirectly employed within the Golf Club, in areas such as Course Management, Administration, Shop Staff, Kindred Yoga Studio, and the Bar and Restaurant. There is continued investment in the Club House and facilities. A full time Golfing Professional has been employed in 2023 and is actively involved in the marketing and promotion of the Club and in expanding the Shop and associated facilities. The Club is growing as a business, being in demand for national competitions and events and becoming a predominant option in national and international golf tours.

Strandhill Golf Club currently has approximately 610 adult and junior members. Competitions are held every weekend, Open Competitions are on Fridays, Ladies Competitions are on Thursdays, Summer Competitions are held on Mondays and Tuesdays. Mens and Women's Senior Golfers have active Societies within the Club playing on Wednesdays and Tuesdays respectively. An active Junior Programme is in Place to cater for Younger Golfers.

The Club formed in 1931 and was originally a 9-hole course, located on the northern part of the site, with a clubhouse located close to the present 7th green along the seashore. In 1939, John McAlister was engaged to re-design a new nine-hole course over the existing land, and this was opened in 1940. In 1946, the club moved the clubhouse to “Bustards Lodge” adjacent to the 18th green and which is the site of the current Club House. It was upgraded and extended in 1973 and again in 1998 with a significant remodelling on this occasion. Unfortunately, the new clubhouse was severely damaged by fire in 2005 requiring major reconstruction work and further remodelling.

The course was extended to 18 holes over a period up to 1973 and has been updated on a number of occasions. It continues to be improved up to the present time. Much of the work was carried out by the Members on a voluntary basis.

The golf club facilities include:

- 18 Hole Golf Course
- Clubhouse with full catering/dining and bar facilities open to the public, full locker rooms and changing facilities, a Golf Shop
- Putting Green and Chipping Area, currently being upgraded and redeveloped into a Short Game Practice Area
- Long Game Practice Area (limited distance)
- Car Parking
- Greenkeepers and Maintenance Buildings



Plate 1: View of the undulating links of Strandhill Golf Course

While Strandhill Golf Club is currently climbing the golf course rankings in Ireland there remains to be further development and ongoing sustainability work necessary. In February 2016, the club began a further set of phases to develop the course. The renowned Golf Architect, Ally Macintosh, was procured to assist the management of the Club with refreshing the Course architecture. The restructuring of the bunkers was carried out, which aesthetically and strategically enhanced the Course while also reducing course costs in maintenance. Further work on reshaping Tee boxes, Greens and reshaping holes within the boundaries of the Course continues. The lengthening of existing holes, the addition of new holes and the re-sequencing of the current holes was anticipated as a further phase, however due to restrictions, constraints and issues, this has not been possible to

date. A further area lacking is the development of proper long-range practice and driving-range facilities. These shortfalls have restricted further progression of the development of the Club.

A recent article in the Global Journal of Golf Club Design and Development "Golf Course Architecture" (Issue 45) sets out Ally McIntosh's long term vision at Strandhill Golf Club.

It is acknowledged in this article that seaside duneland is an environment which is typically highly protected across the world, and it is further acknowledged that for golf courses that occupy such dunes, difficulties can arise when the clubs want to develop.

This article recognises the key issues in Strandhill, and states that the question of expansion onto new land is particularly important. It states that prime among these issues is the routing, and another major issue is the par three ninth. The article then makes reference to the other end of the course, where lies a substantial amount of undeveloped links land. It makes reference to this being a better available option referring to the large dune hill lying at the centre of this area, protecting part of the golf course from the open Atlantic. A plateau of land ideally suited for the creation of a couple of excellent new golf holes is referred to and significantly, the fact that although protected, biodiversity studies have shown that this area supports significantly fewer species than the part of the links that is maintained for golf. This in itself is a remarkable finding and one that supports the view that golf, properly maintained, is an ideal custodian of these sensitive ecosystems.

Strandhill Golf Club also featured in the Irish Independent Tee to Green magazine recently, the work undertaken by the Course Architect and Head Greenkeeper, Jason Kelly and his team, acknowledged as getting national recognition with the links, climbing up the ranks as a must play venue on the Wild Atlantic Way. The Magazine stated that enhancements have made the course more challenging and a memorable experience for golfers of all experience and levels.

3.1. Achievements

The Club can be proud of its achievements on the inter-club stage, where it has garnered 28 Connacht titles in its 92-year history. A purple patch for the club was achieved from 2000 to 2008 when Strandhill won 12 Connacht titles, including its first women's title in 2006, bringing Strandhill to the forefront of competitive golf at All-Ireland level .

Ladies Achievements:

The ladies branch, have garnered a number of achievements, being deserved winners of the AA Ireland Junior Foursomes title, in 2006, securing their first ILGU Western District pennant in the process. In 2013 Strandhill Golf Club Ladies won the Connacht Final in the Challenge Cup and in 2016 they reached the Regional Semi Final of the Revive Active Fourball. In 2018 the team finished

3rd in Connacht in the Australian Spoons and won the final in Athlone and in 2022, Strandhill ladies were the regional and Connacht final winners in the NCBI Granard Cup, securing a pennant for the club.

Men's Achievements:

Among the individual achievements the club has celebrated, two Members have been capped for Ireland (John Graham in 1951-54 and Tommy McGowan in 2007-09), with 16 Members representing Connacht either at underage or senior level since Joseph Dolan won his first provincial cap in 1974. Members have also contributed handsomely to Summerhill College's success in All-Ireland competition with no fewer than 9 Strandhill players participating in the Senior teams that were victorious at Irish Schools Senior Championship in 1997, 2002 and 2007.

Junior Achievements:

The Junior section is thriving currently and growing annually. Many young golfers are resident in the village with some going on avail of elite coaching at national level. Of our current Junior Members, Bobby Sweeney won the All-Ireland under-10 boys' category while Patrick Tuffy won the Munster Under-14 Open and Connacht Under-15 Close titles in 2023. A number of Junior Girls have succeeded in being chosen for the Golf Ireland Connacht Junior Pathway Programme.



Plate 2: Junior Golf

4. **STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE OF THE GOLF CLUB**

4.1. **Economic benefit of Golf**

Golf is one of the most popular sports in Ireland. International sport tourism influences the sport economy, ranging from the community sector to the commercial and public sector.

- €540 million is spent on Golf annually in Ireland
- 9000+ people are employed across 32 counties
- Average golf tourism spend is 3x that of general leisure visitors
- 220,000 international golf visitors spending €300 million (ROI only)

Golf Ireland will be commissioning further economic impact research alongside the R&A next year to measure continued progression regarding the above indicators. It is noted that golf tourism was one of the first sectors to rebound after the 2008 recession. More than 221,000 visitors to the country in 2019 cited golf as the primary purpose for their travel spending €300 million in the local economy.

According to Fáilte Ireland research a golf visitor typically spends three times more than the average leisure tourist with most of the spend going directly into local economies on non-golf expenditure such as accommodation, transport and food and beverage. Ireland's largest market is North America, with 47% of 2019 visitors arriving from the US and Canada. Mainland Europe follows with 30% of 2019 visitors and 19% arriving from the United Kingdom.

Speaking on the importance of golf tourism to Ireland, Head of Commercial Development at Fáilte Ireland, has recently said: *"With Ireland's world-class golf product, experienced Irish based golf buyers and a motivated, capable industry, we believe that golf tourism will play an important part in supporting tourism to rebound quickly. As such, golf is seen as a fundamental tool in driving Ireland's tourism industry.....Vitality, the spread of golf courses around the country offers a significant opportunity to drive tourism growth to all regions of Ireland and supports an extension of the tourism season – key focus areas of our work at Fáilte Ireland as we look to drive recovery."*

4.2. **Sligo as a Golf Destination**

Sligo is very much seen as a golf destination. There are number of World class Golf Clubs within the County, as well as within a short drive. The magazine "Irish Golfer" annually ranks the 100 top Golf Courses Golf Courses within the Country and the excellent courses in Sligo and neighbouring Counties which can be accessed within 90 minutes' drive. These include Belmullet, Co Mayo, (Carne), Rosses Point, Co. Sligo, Enniscrone, Co Sligo, Castle Dargan, Co Sligo, Tubbercurry, Co Sligo, Portnoo, Co Donegal, Donegal Golf Club (Murvagh), Co Donegal, Lough Erne (Enniskillen), and Carrick on Shannon, Co. Leitrim.

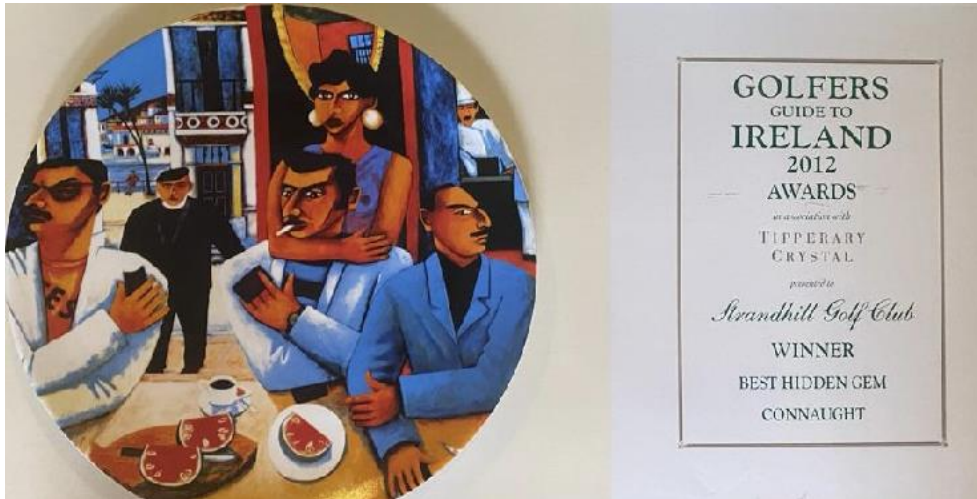


Plate 3: Best Hidden Gem Award

Strandhill Golf Club have previously been the recipient of a “Golfers Guide to Ireland” Award for the “Best Hidden Gem” in Connacht.

According to Fáilte Ireland research a golf visitor typically spends three times more than the average leisure tourist with most of the spend going directly into local economies on non-golf expenditure such as accommodation, transport and food and beverage. Ireland’s largest market is North America, with 47% of 2019 visitors arriving from the US and Canada. Mainland Europe follows with 30% of 2019 visitors and 19% arriving from the United Kingdom.

4.3. Strandhill Golf Club as an Employer

Strandhill Golf Club directly employs 15 people all year round and this employment increases during the summer months when a number of students are employed to assist over the very busy periods. The Bar and Restaurant facilities are contracted out and approximately another 7 people are employed in this area. Recently the upstairs area of the Golf Club has been rented out to a Local Yoga business, “Kindred” Studios, and another 6 people are employed in this area.



Plate 4: Kindred Studios

4.4. Strandhill Golf Club as a Visitor Destination

The club attracts over 7,000 visitors on an annual basis. As can be seen from the figures below there has been a marked increase in the number of Irish and Overseas visitors to the Golf Club since Covid. and Local hotels, restaurants, and other services in the area benefit greatly from the Golfing visitor. An example of this is in September of each year when the Club, along with Donegal, Bundoran and Enniscrone Golf Clubs host the West Coast Challenge, when up to 500 golfers from Ireland and abroad play the course over four days.

Year	Irish Visitors	Overseas Visitors	Total Visitors
2023	5,800	1,200	7,000
2022	5,600	1,200	6,800
2021	4,600	200	4,800
2020	3,450	35	3,485
2019	4,900	620	5,520
2018	4,800	300	5,100

Table 4.1: Visitor numbers

4.5. **Strandhill Golf Club in the Community**

Strandhill Golf Club is invested in the community, supporting local clubs, charities and commercial organisations.

The Club is an important community asset and has very good relationships with local sports clubs such as Sligo Rugby Club, Strand Celtic Soccer Club and the Surf Club. Other Community groups have used the facilities available including the local school, the Church and other celebratory community events.

The Club also caters for a large number of non-golfers in club house and restaurant especially during the summertime. This would mostly include people on holidays and staying in the local caravan park. The Clubhouse is on the route of a popular walking route and attracts a lot of walkers during the summer months.

Strandhill Golf Club provides active competitive Golf for Golfers of all ages. This is outlined in the categories in Table 4.2. As well as this, the Golf Club is aligned with Golf Ireland's Charter for Equality.

Categories	Men	Women	Total
Full Member	302	66	368
Country	3	0	3
Family	11	10	21
Overseas	4	0	4
Retired	92	38	130
Voting Honorary	4	0	4
Junior/Juvenile (Under 18)	41	9	50
Youth/Student (Over 18)	23	0	23
Non-Playing	3	3	6
Total	483	126	609

Table 4.2 Strandhill Golf Club Membership Table

4.6. Junior Golf

Strandhill Golf Club are committed to the development of long-term junior golf. As a club we welcome Juniors from grassroots level and cater for all abilities.

It is the mission of our Junior Section to welcome new players to the game and Club and develop them as players and members in a playful and safe environment. As a Club, we have a long-term players' development programme for the underage groups welcoming juniors from grassroot to elite level. The programme is in line with Golf Ireland guidelines, and we already have a selection of Junior boys and girls progressing through the Golf Ireland Coaching ladder.

The Club has a family culture that welcomes and allows juniors to grow as players and integrated members. The eventual goal is to accommodate Juniors at all tiers of our "Player's Pathway" from recruitment to elite level, boys and girls alike. Club volunteers structure the Junior Golf Club life including on and off the course events and coaching. The Junior Golf Programme allows and encourages Juniors to benefit from a holistic approach covering all aspects of the game such as

- Golf Skills from Putting to Full Swing
- Course Management and Tactical
- Competition
- Sport Psychology
- Strength & Conditioning
- Lifestyle
- Rules & Etiquette
- Coaching at a Regional at National Level

KPMG host the 'Irish Kids Golf Tour' each year, and Strandhill Golf Club will host the Connacht Trophy in July 2024. This national competition is "Played over some of Ireland's greatest courses" and Strandhill are delighted to be hosting this event. This Tour was established 'To develop and fill a key niche in junior golf in Ireland'. The 'Irish Kids Golf Tour' provides an elite setting for junior golfers to compete safely & enjoyably in a professionally run Tour on Ireland's best courses'. Strandhill Golf Club will benefit from the national media profile associated with this event.

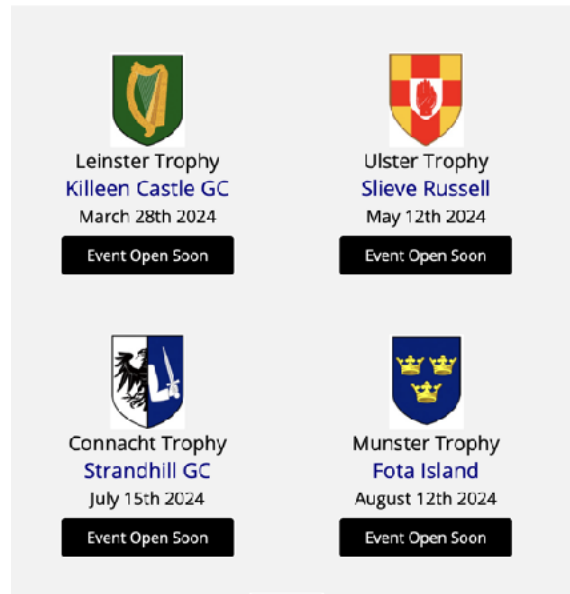


Plate 5: KPMG Irish Kids Golf Tour

4.7. Seniors and Beginners

Golf Ireland have a plan “Golf For everyone” which Strandhill Golf Club aspires to and is in line with government body’s initiatives. We have employed a PGA Advanced Professional in full time capacity whose role includes membership creation and retention. The Club welcomes new adults to the game via coaching services and mentoring. We have ran a number of successful Get into Golf programmes welcoming a large number of new lady beginners to discover the game of which a number have been now converted to full membership. The role of membership retention is also vital for a long-term relationship with the game.

Approximately 22% of the membership of Strandhill golf Club consists of Senior Men and Women. Both have their own Societies within the Club and have their own Competitions on Tuesdays and Wednesdays. Golf provides excellent exercise and mental stimulation and the benefits of increased socialisation for this cohort of members is widely recognised.

4.8. Biodiversity and Sustainability

Strandhill Golf Course supports Sligo County Councils strategy and vision “To inspire our community to know, value and care for Sligo’s unique heritage and biodiversity and to increase awareness, appreciation and enjoyment of our shared inheritance for all”. The Members and Staff of the Golf Club have a strong appreciation of the flora & fauna which occurs naturally in the area and everyone works together for its protection and enhancement. A number of scientific reports have

been completed on the Golf Course and it has been identified that there are significant quantities of species present on the course and they are increasing.

The Golf Club are keen to “green” the Club house and facilities and are currently undertaking sustainability initiatives to include bicycle stands and electric charging points and to work with the local authority on how the Club can participate in potential active travel proposals. It is proposed to reduce our plastic containers usage by installing a Water refill station which can not only be used by our members but by walkers who use the Strandhill to Culleenamore walkway.

The club continually plants and replants Marram Grass to re-establish and support areas of sand which could potentially be lost, particularly by wind erosion. The club recently re-landscaped the entire area around the Club House to remove non indigenous plants and bushes and replaced the soft landscaping with Marram Grass and short grass to give the effect that the Clubhouse is nestled in a dune.



Plate 6: New Marram Grass Planting in front of Clubhouse

5. **SUPPORTING PLANNING POLICY & LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT**

It is noted that there are a number of strategic planning policy documents that frame the County Development Plan and there are a number of relevant planning policy considerations contained within them which support the development of Golf Clubs and provide a policy framework and guidance for the future development of Golf Clubs.

5.1. **The National Planning Framework**

The National Planning Framework seeks to ensure that towns and villages are attractive and can offer a good quality of life including investment in sport and recreational infrastructure.

Section 6.2 of the Framework sets out details on Healthy Communities. It states that our health and our environment are inextricably linked and that there are specific health risks that can be influenced by spatial planning include heart disease, respiratory disease, mental health, obesity and injuries. It considers that by taking a whole- system approach to addressing the many factors that impact on health and wellbeing and which contribute to health inequalities, and by empowering and enabling individuals and communities to make healthier choices, it will be possible to improve health outcomes, particularly for the next generation of citizens.

The Framework states that decisions made regarding land use and the built environment affect these health risks in a variety of ways, including for example, opportunities for physical activity and social interactions. Physical design affects people's behaviour at every scale - buildings, communities, villages, towns, cities and regions. Communities that are designed in a way that supports physical activity encourages residents to make healthy choices and live healthier lives. Healthy places in turn create economic value by appealing to a skilled workforce and attracting innovation.

The various policies in this Framework are structured under National Policy Objectives (NPOs). They were developed as a result of extensive analysis and consultation, and they set a new way forward for regional and local planning and sustainable development policy in Ireland.

A number of supporting NPOs include NPO 26 which supports the objectives of public health policy including Healthy Ireland while NPO 27 includes focusing on integrating physical activity facilities for all ages.

Section 6.4 addresses the issue of establishing age friendly communities. The 'Age Friendly Ireland' Initiative provides leadership and guidance in identifying the needs and opportunities of an ageing population and is embedded within the local government system, which, with support from

Government, is best placed to respond to change at a local level. NPO 30 on older people states that policies will be developed with a focus on meeting the needs and opportunities of an ageing population along with the inclusion of specific projections, supported by clear proposals in respect of ageing communities as part of the core strategy of city and county development plans.

With regards to Children and Young People, the continued provision and enhancement of facilities and amenities for children and young people, such as childcare, schools, playgrounds, parks and sportsgrounds, remains necessary and will need to be maintained at similar levels for the foreseeable future thereafter. In making high quality places, the NPF seeks to support national policy and objectives for children and young people, including 'Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures' through integrating such policies, where appropriate and at the applicable scale, with planning policy.

5.2. The National Sports Policy 2018 – 2027

The National Sports Policy sets out a Vision for Irish Sport in 2027 along with 57 actions to transform the sporting landscape over the next decade. Increasing participation is the cornerstone of this policy, with every person engaging regularly in some form of sport and physical activity, irrespective of their age, economic or social circumstances, their ethnic background or their physical capabilities.

Research shows that there is a positive relationship between participation in sport and academic performance, particularly in the case of girls and young women. Given that girls are more likely to give up sport during the adolescent years and that those who play a combination of individual and team sports are more likely to sustain their involvement beyond the school years, this provides a compelling argument for increasing investment in sport and physical activity programmes.

This policy recognises and encourages all forms of sport and physical activity in the outdoors undertaken for social, recreational or competitive purposes. It includes sport and recreation facilities that are carried out in a natural or semi-natural environment and involve dealing with natural elements. It also includes sport and recreation activities that take place on infrastructure such as trails, greenways, cycle tracks and roads, both in urban and rural landscapes. The policy highlights the social, physical and health benefits associated with participating in sport and physical activity and it also supports the implementation of policies on participation in sport by people with disabilities and women in sport.

Action 13 of the Plan focuses on how the wider natural and built environment can facilitate participation in sport and physical activity.

Action 8 of the Plan states that, through Sport Ireland, an initiative will be prioritised to support Local Authorities in developing Local Sports Plans consistent with the overall vision and objectives

of the National Sports Policy - the Local Plan will review needs and set out actions to increase participation locally.

Action 10 sets out the prioritising of initiatives and programmes to engage groups with lower participation levels.

The National Strategy for Women and Girls 2017 – 2020 was launched by the Department of Justice and Equality and is intended to address obstacles to women's equality in Ireland. A key thread is around "visibility" as it seeks to promote more women participating in decision-making across all aspects of Irish society, including in sport.

The strategy includes a number of objectives and actions to advance the engagement and status of women and girls in sport and physical activity. The National Sports Policy will help address this also.

Almost 70% of children who take up a sport are introduced to the activity by parents or teachers. The Policy states that efforts to promote physical literacy in early childhood care and services, in schools and in community-based sports organisations need to be complemented by initiatives to support parents/guardians in encouraging their children to develop positive habits around sport and physical activity.

The National Sports Policy also sets out Actions on Sport and Tourism. The Government's Tourism Policy Statement, 'People, Place and Policy - Growing Tourism to 2025 'was published in 2015. It recognises that sporting events (including large scale international events but also smaller participative sporting events) should play a part in achieving future tourism growth targets.

Action 38 states that Fáilte Ireland will continue to support non-government bodies in attracting those sports events which meet its events criteria and deliver a significant economic return.

5.3. The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) 2020-2032

The North-West Region has a wide range of community and cultural, recreational, heritage and sporting assets that offer significant potential to increase the cultural, heritage and lifestyle profile of the region and to support quality of life and wellbeing. The Northern and Western Regional Authority sets out the tourism strategy for the region which includes:

- *Additional tourist supporting leisure and amenity infrastructure in the areas of recreation, entertainment, culture, catering, accommodation, transport and water services.*

-
- *Explore shared provision of access, parking, public transport to designated key rural sites for target activities (e.g. walking, cycling, water sports and golf).*
 - *Make the best use of locally distinctive cultural attributes, bringing a unique visitor experience (language, music, crafts, arts, food).*
 - *New proposals for activity tourism, particularly in rural areas, National Park's, uplands, coasts and rivers.*

The Regional Economic and Spatial Strategy addresses a wide range of issues including education, health, sports and community facilities.

The Regional Spatial Economic Strategy sets out the regional policy emanating from the National Planning Framework. It is a document which establishes a broad vision for the region and sub regions, sets out priorities for growth and regeneration and policies to achieve sustainable development, working collaboratively to deliver effective regional development. At its core it recognises the weak urban infrastructure in the region and that this region has not prospered economically compared to the other two regions of Ireland, as evidenced by reclassification of the region by the European Commission from a 'More Developed Region' to a 'Transition Region' for the Post 2020 (2021-2027) funding period.

A key pillar to the growth of the region is Quality of Life – One of the strongest foundations and emerging propositions this region has to build on is its 'liveability'. The region aspires to be one of the most liveable places in Europe with a commitment to sustainable and inclusive growth. A specific focus is upon the enablement of access to education, health, employment, recreation and opportunity for all.

There are a number of Regional Policy Objectives (RPOs) which support the overall policy direction for the development of Strandhill Golf Club. RPO 7.11 Support the objectives of public health policy including Healthy Ireland and the National Physical Activity Plan and the National Obesity Plan through integration with planning policy.

6. CURRENT ISSUES AND CONSTRAINTS AFFECTING STRANDHILL GOLF CLUB

Strandhill Golf Club is a progressive Club which wishes to develop and move forward to provide better facilities for the sport of golf in Strandhill and for wider sport and recreation in the growing area.

The Golf Club is the largest landowner in Strandhill with 192 acres. This includes all our boundaries including the lands outside the Course to the south west, which is approx 70 acres.

However, a number of issues are impacting the future development of the Club. Some of these issues are historical, some are more recent. They are due to the zonings and designations around the Club, natural features and pressures from other developments. Notwithstanding any aspirations for future development, expansion or improvement of golf club lands and facilities, the critical matter of health and safety to the community, residents, school children, visitors and golfers is paramount and cannot be ignored. Paradoxically, the restrictions on extending the course has increased the Health & Safety risks for all golfers, residents, pedestrians, the community and visitors alike.

The requirement for further development of the Golf Course and Club Facilities is necessary to sustain and maintain the Golf Club going forward. In conjunction with the ongoing issues on the Course itself, the development of the Club is inhibited by the lack of proper practice facilities and a coaching and training area. Furthermore, the Ground Staff and Greenskeepers Shed is located in between the 1st tee and 18th fairways and requires to be relocated and upgraded.

6.1. Health and Safety

There are a number of health and safety issues which require to be addressed. These mainly occur along the boundaries of the Course arising principally from the impact of existing neighbouring residential and other developments, such as the school, the public car park on Shore Road and other recreational uses.



Plate 7: Buenos Aires Court and the net along the 9th Hole

Critical to this is the safety of the residents of Buenos Aires Court due to the planning and development of this residential housing estate, in close proximity to the 9th Golf Hole. The 9th Hole has been made a major safety hazard by the development of housing on the nearby lands. In response, a large and unsightly fence and netting has been erected to stop hooked balls flying into the housing, this is far from being an ideal solution. This has been a major issue Health and Safety issue for the Club and residents for many years. There has been ongoing engagement between the Golf Club and the residents association to reduce the impact. Significant works have taken place including the reduction in the length of the hole and the movement of the entire green complex away from the boundary. Maintenance of this fencing and netting is extremely costly for the parties involved. Restrictions on extending the golf course at other locations has resulted in this ongoing difficult situation.

The Car Park located adjacent to the 8th Hole is the main Car Park for the Village. An objective in the Draft Strandhill Village Plan is to reconfigure the Council Car Park on Shore Road and increase the number of car parking spaces available, to facilitate the proposed public realm enhancement measures at the Promenade. The Car Park has already been expanded southward within its own boundaries bringing it closer to the 8th Fairway. This has resulted in further difficulty for the Golf Club with regard to golf ball spray, which has already occurred. There is weak boundary fencing at

this location which has resulted in regular trespassing on Club lands from the Car park, causing a further health and safety risk. The introduction of high fencing and netting along this boundary would be a further unsustainable expense for the parties involved. The proposed modifications to the public realm at the Shore will result in further intensification to this car park and therefore will exacerbate the issue. The requirement for an appropriate risk assessment could be useful in identifying these issues.

The pathway running from the Golf Club lands through to Culleenamore provides part of a walker's loop for the village. In recent times, some landowners nearby have also been using this to access with vehicles. The safety risk from golf ball spray at this location is serious. The path runs parallel to the entire 1st fairway, being only one metre approximately from its edge. The very welcome increased visitors to Strandhill and the more active and healthy community has resulted in an intensification of use of this pathway, further intensifying the safety issue.

6.2. Special Area Designations (Nature Conservation)

The Golf Club is built on 103 acres which is a significantly smaller area than what a course should ideally occupy. As a result, in the 1990's, the Golf Club purchased an additional 70 acres of land to the south and west boundaries of the Course. It was expected that at some point the Golf Club could expand into this area and remove the pressures on the boundaries with Strandhill Village and the existing Road leading to the Clubhouse. It was also intended to resolve safety issues with housing developments to the North of the Club adjacent to the Village. This area was previously identified and mapped on Ordnance Survey maps in the 1970's as a Special Area of Protection as part of the Ballysadare Bay Special Protection Area. In 2002, it was identified as an important site and part of the Ballysadare Bay Special Area of Conservation (SAC) under the EU habitats Directive and again in 2010 when the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) to comply with the 2009 EU Birds Directive.

The New Draft County Development Plan addresses Natural Heritage in Chapter 24. It states that the natural heritage of County Sligo is of great local value, with many features of national and international importance. It recognises that protecting and enhancing biodiversity and landscapes is vital to health, well-being and people's quality of life. Biodiversity also provides opportunities to adapt to the challenges of climate change. The Golf Club supports this position.

The Golf club understand that there is significant legislation underpinning the protection of natural heritage and biodiversity, including the EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC), the EU Birds Directive (2009/147/EC), European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (SI 477/2011) as amended, Flora (Protection) Order 2015, the Wildlife Act 1976 (as amended), and the Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2000 as amended, and including all statutory instruments made under

each act. In addition, Ireland has ratified a number of international conventions and agreements relating to natural heritage and biodiversity including the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (1992). The Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) requires development plans to include mandatory objectives for the conservation of the natural heritage and for the conservation of European sites and any other sites which may be prescribed.



Plate 8: View of 4th Green with Shelly Valley and the Large Dune

Strandhill Golf Club owns a significant amount of land to the south and west of the Course which it is now a custodian to, under the above legislation. These lands are located to the south and west of the 5th fairway, behind the 4th green, and to the West of the 6th fairway. A total land area of 50,575 sqm of golf club land is located within the Ballysadare Bay SAC (000622) and Ballysadare Bay SPA (004129).

In the past number of Years, the Golf Club misunderstood the implications and requirements of extending the Golf Course into this area, the Club inadvertently began to develop on lands which required planning permission due to their designated status. Recognising their mistakes in the process, remedial works and ongoing monitoring has ameliorated the situation, however the provision of new golf holes has proved unsuccessful to date.

The Golf Club have engaged with the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) on a number of issues, including the correctness of the boundary, the overall management of the SAC, the frequency of future ecological surveys, surveys showing some areas to have a poor species designation and also identifying sites within the course which are thriving as a habitat for various species including protected species.

The Golf Club re-engaged with the NPWS in January 2022 to discuss the matter of having the boundary revisited on the basis of the significant safety issue with the 9th Hole and Buenos Aires Court.



6.3. **Coastal Erosion**

Coastal erosion is extremely evident along the Strandhill coastline. The village itself and the Wastewater treatment plant have in recent years been subject to works and are well protected by rock armour revetments. Frequent maintenance of the revetment in front of the Promenade has protected this area. However, other intermediate areas along this particular shoreline have seen increasing erosion in recent years. This is especially evident along the sand dune areas.

Coastal erosion is a threat to the Golf Course, particularly to the 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th and 7th Holes. The 3rd and 4th holes are threatened by erosion and deposition movement from the Culleenamore Coast, recently the 5th fairway has been threatened by sand blow where a significant hole has appeared on the top of the large dune. This also threatens the 6th fairway. The 7th fairway is impacted by rocks and stones deposited from Storms and erosion from the Strandhill beachfront and path. The Boundary Fence along the walkway from the Village to the Beach has been breached numerous times and the area constantly needs upgrading and widening to provide accessibility to the Beach.



Plate 9: View of 7th Hole and Strandhill Beach and Large Dune

It is noted that the Strandhill coastline is currently being investigated as part of an OPW funded 'Coastal Erosion and Flood Risk Management' Study. The report will detail the coastal erosion processes taking place at Strandhill and will provide guidance on what practical interventions are possible to alleviate erosion at problem sites. Until specific coastal protection measures are approved, the emergent Development Plan sets out objectives. Assistance in the implementation of the recommendations of the Coastal Erosion and Flood Risk Management Study when completed will be welcomed by the Golf Club.



Plate 10: Erosion on top of the Large Dune, as viewed from the 6th Fairway.

It is noted that the preparation of an integrated coastal management plan for Strandhill in consultation with relevant agencies and interested parties will be carried out and that this should address, inter alia, the existing and potential recreational uses of the area. The maintenance and review of dune management, to include, where necessary, appropriate fencing, boardwalks and public information boards will be carried out in consultation with the National Parks and Wildlife Service.



Plate 11: Rock and Stones thrown onto Golf Course lands from Storms



Plate 12: Further view of Rock and Stone spill



Plate 13: Perforated Boundary along Coastal Path from Storm Damage



Figure 6.2: Historical Overview Coastal Change - Culleenamore

6.4. **Road Safety and Potential Road Widening**

An Objective in the Draft Plan is to upgrade the Golf Course Road (L-7507-0) and its junction with Buenos Aires Drive. This is the main access Road to the Golf club, the Church, the National School, a number of dwellings as well access to various portions of private and public Land. The majority of this land is on the Eastern and Southern side of the road and is currently zoned for Housing. The Road is not designed to current standards and consists of a footpath (on one side part of the way) and Carriageway of various width.

Currently traffic is mainly generated by the activity of the Golf Club, and the National School which is a vital part of the Community. Currently the Traffic Situation at the School during drop off and pick up times is chaotic and a significant safety issue. The area lacks a set down and turning area. An informal agreement was previously reached with Strandhill Golf Club to allow those school users/cars to turn in the front Car Park during School drop off and pick up times. In practice, vehicles turn before the fenced off area near the Golf Club Car park, on an open circular hardstand, where there are no formal markings and where it is taken for granted that this is permissible, often times ignoring traffic coming in and out of the Golf Club car park. This is a serious road safety issue and requires it to be addressed urgently.



Plate 14: Golf Course Road

Potential Road widening along the Golf Course Road and the introduction of safe areas for set down and traffic turning movements has long been identified as an issue. Recent planning permission for an extension to the school was subject to a condition requiring amendments to the road, path etc.. In addition, the Club were aware that an Active Travel Programme was to be implemented along this road. It is now understood that there is a proposal to carry out works on this road, under the remit of the Housing Department for the provision of a local authority housing scheme to be constructed to the rear of the school. It is understood that the road will be widened, and a footpath will be provided. The Golf Club has been recently approached for land take on Golf Club lands and this is currently under consideration by the Club. This will result in a further impact on the constraints facing the Club as golf ball spray from the 10th fairway will be inevitable. Any proposed upgrade of the Golf Club Road should take into consideration all the requirements of the Landowners including properly designed safe Set down/Pick up areas for the School, the increased Traffic requirements of the various Zoned lands, parking requirements of the Church, and safe junction access onto Buenos Aires Drive without impacting adversely on Golf Course. Indeed, a report by Golf Architect Ally Macintosh outlined the effect that any land take for road widening would have on the Golf Club and especially the 10th Hole.



Plate 14: Golf Course Road, at approach to Clubhouse, showing informal turning circle in front of the fenced area to the right

6.5. Policies, Zoning and Objectives in the Draft County Development Plan 2024-2030 and Zoning and Objectives in the Strandhill Village Plan 2024 -2030

Strandhill Golf Club welcomes the review of the County Development Plan, however there are a number of issues and constraints facing the club as a direct result of particular zonings and development proposals in its vicinity.

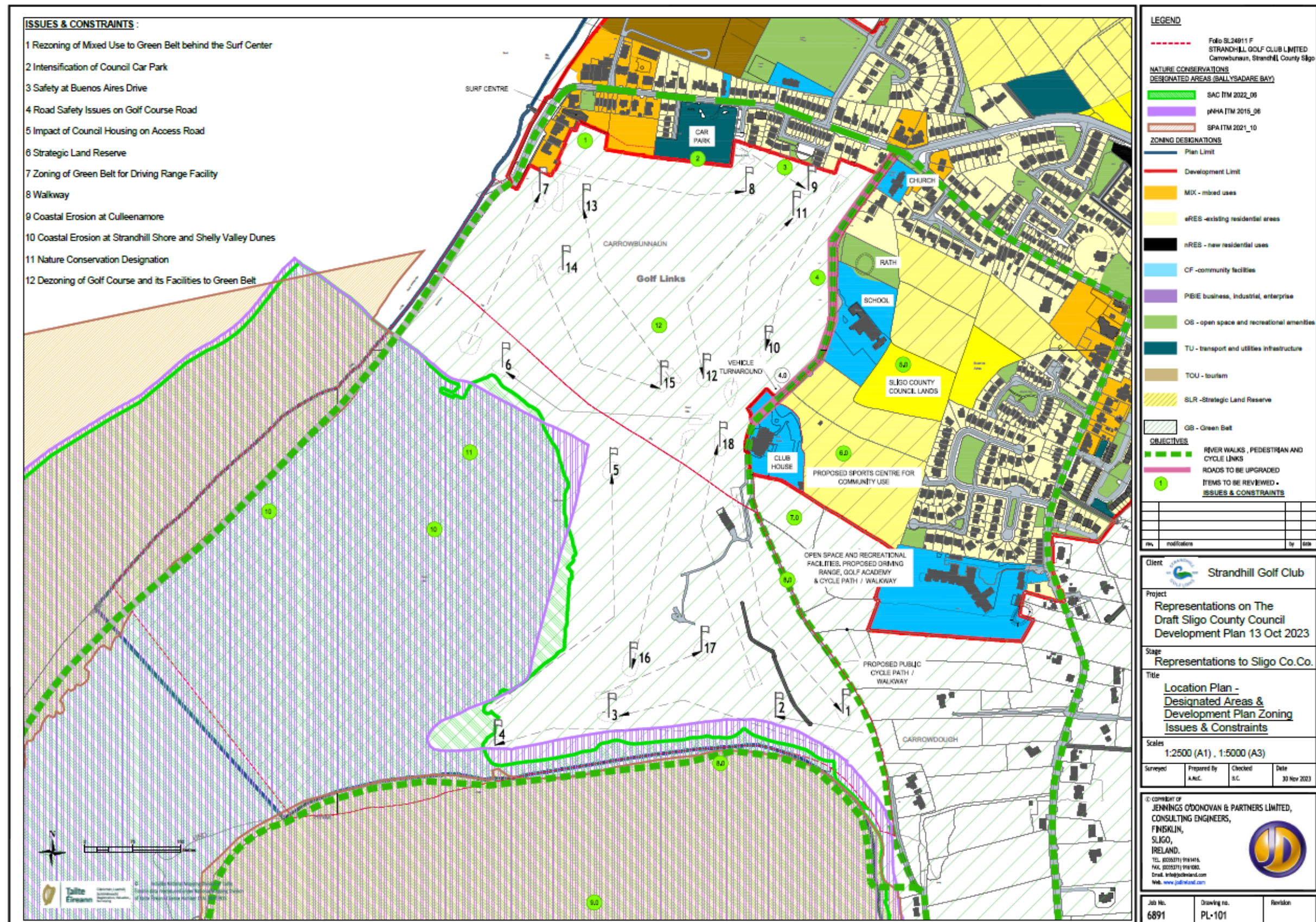


Figure 6.3: Designated Areas & Development Plan Zoning Issues & Constraints

6.5.1. Strategic Land Reserve Zoning

The Golf Club is concerned that some of the proposed allocations for proposed residential uses including strategic land reserve zonings are in unsuitable locations for future housing. It is acknowledged that the delivery of housing in Strandhill is important having regard to the national situation and shortfall of housing delivery.

The Golf Club acknowledges that the Strategic designations and land-use zoning in the Plan are informed by the Core Strategy Statement, which indicates the steps taken by the Planning Authority in designating the most suitable sites for housing delivery and compact growth. It is noted that Volume 2 of the Draft County Development Plan includes site-level information, in a tabular format, for each settlement where land is zoned for residential purposes or a mixture of residential and other uses, specifying the potential housing yields of Settlement Consolidation Sites and Additional Provision Sites. It is also noted that the designations relate only to the sites 'potential to contribute to a settlement's compact growth during the period of the Development Plan or beyond this period. The designations do not necessarily reflect the land-use zoning of the respective sites.

It is acknowledged that a variety of areas which were previously zoned for residential development, but did not meet the criteria for designation as Long-Term Strategic and Sustainable Development Sites, have been included in the Strategic Land Reserve. In general, it is stated that these lands may become suitable for development over the longer-term, and their potential needs to be preserved. Consideration may be given to the development of Strategic Land Reserve lands before the end of the current Plan period, under exceptional circumstances, such as faster-than-expected growth on zoned lands within a settlement, or a requirement to provide social and affordable housing at locations identified in the successor to the current Housing Delivery Action Plan 2022-2026. The policies associated with Strategic Land Reserve reflect this.

It is noted that Section 19.2.1 of the Plan lists the sites designated to contribute to the compact growth of Strandhill, together with their potential housing and population yields. Section 19.2.2 includes a table showing the amount of land with residential potential proposed to be zoned in this Plan (2024-2030) compared to the previous Strandhill Mini Plan 2017-2024. In accordance with the policy on compact growth designations, it is noted that a number of sites have been designated in Strandhill as Settlement Consolidation Sites as recommended in the Development Plan Guidelines (2022), in order to give effect to the National Planning Framework requirements for compact growth.

The Strandhill Mini-Plan/CDP 2017 zoned more land (for housing and mixed uses) than what is now proposed in the Draft CDP 2024. The current excess of zoned land amounts to 4.63 ha. These lands/sites have been redesignated as Strategic Land Reserve or Green Belt.

There are third party lands which are Zoned Existing Residential and Strategic Land Reserve to the East of the Golf Club and School. It is noted that there is sufficient land available to meet the delivery targets for Housing which is zoned for Existing Residential Uses which would meet the future housing for Strandhill, without the need to release any land from the Strategic Land Reserve.

In this regard, Strandhill Golf Club are concerned about the impact that possible significant numbers of dwellings, accessed from the Golf Club Road, would have on the area. The intensification of use of the Road, including future possible health and safety impacts could have a detrimental impact on the future expansion of the Golf Club. The intensification of residential development in close proximity to the Golf Club will militate against the provision of other more compatible uses and facilities.

6.5.2. Green Belt Zoning

Strandhill Golf Club are seriously concerned regarding the removal of the Golf Course lands from Sports and Playing Fields zoning and included in the Green Belt.

It is noted that the Objective associated with Green Belts is to contain and consolidate settlements, while safeguarding lands for their future expansion and for the provision of strategic infrastructure. It is stated that green belts are to be used principally for agriculture. Any new development, such as roads and buildings, should be constructed in a manner that minimises visual and environmental impact. The Golf Course outside the Development Limit further raises concern.



Plate 15: Overview of Course and Village

Section 10.5.3 of the Plan sets out the Land-use Zoning Objectives and Section 10.5.4 sets out the Land-use Zoning Matrix. It is acknowledged that the purpose of land use zoning is to indicate the intended uses of all lands zoned as part of the settlement plans. The categories are:

- Uses that are normally permitted;
- Uses that are open for consideration; and
- Uses that are not normally permitted.

These give an indication as to what types of uses are appropriate. The Zoning Matrix states the degree of acceptability of particular types of development within areas covered by various zoning objectives.

It is noted that an indication of a development/use type which would be “normally permitted”, does not imply an automatic grant of planning permission, or indeed that a planning application will ultimately be granted. It is noted that a use which is normally permitted is one which the Planning Authority accepts in theory in the relevant zone. However, development proposals are still subject to the normal planning process, including the consideration of policies and objectives outlined in the Plan. A use “open for consideration” is one which the Planning Authority may permit where it is satisfied that the proposed type of development is compatible with the policies and objectives for the zone, does not conflict with the existing or permitted uses, and conforms with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area. Development classified as “not normally permitted in a particular zone” is one which will not be entertained by the Planning Authority, except in special circumstances. This may be due to its perceived effect on existing and permitted uses, its incompatibility with the policies and objectives contained in the Plan or the fact that it may be inconsistent with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

It is acknowledged that the Zoning Matrix permits certain elements of development within the Green Belt, and that the development of Golf Courses and pitch and putt are uses that are normally permitted. However, the Golf Club remain to be concerned about the demotion of the Course from its previous very specific and relevant zoning of “Sports and Playing Fields” to one which is now largely associated with the requirement to inhibit development and is generally used for the protection of largely undeveloped, agricultural or wild land surrounding an urban area. The Golf Club is clearly not of this status, its development already having taken place and, in this context, it is considered that the application of the Zoning type is a further constraint to its development.

The area of land to the east of the 1st fairway, which is also zoned as Green Belt, and outside the development limit is also of similar concern.

6.5.3. **Mixed Use Area**

Mixed uses are defined as suitable enterprise uses, supported in mixed-use zones, as well as high-amenity open space. The associated objective is to promote the development of a dynamic mix of uses able to create and sustain viable town and village centres such as commercial (including retail), residential, leisure, community, and office uses.



Plate 16: Golf Club Lands to rear of Surf Centre

It is noted that Section 19.3.4 sets out objectives for any development proposal on mixed-use lands between the Council Car Park and the Surf Centre to incorporate the following:

- i. a pedestrian civic square, capable of being used for events and local markets; and
- ii. pedestrian linkages to the Promenade to the west, behind existing development.

It is also noted that this has been identified as a Settlement Consolidation Site.

Whilst the Golf Club very much welcome this type of development in the village, it provides a further constraint on the Golf Club due to potential noise and disturbance during Events and proximity to intensive footfall, resulting in safety issues, in very close proximity to the Course.

Strandhill Golf Club are in ownership of a piece of land behind the Surf Club which has been rezoned as Green Belt. This issue is of concern to the Club as it has lost its intrinsic benefit as a piece of

development land appropriate to the integration of the other mixed uses in the vicinity. It is not suitable for any Golf Club associated development due to its very close proximity to the commercial premises in this location. The development of this area in conjunction with the rest of the mixed-use area, would result in the Golf club being a participant in decision making overall for this location, which would result in the Club having a role in development which would not cause further constraint to the Course.

6.5.4. Strandhill Village Plan - reference to Golf Club

The Golf Club have noted the general content of the Strandhill Village Plan and have observed that there is only one reference to the golf club in the plan, which is as part of a list. We consider that the silence of the document on the Golf Club exhibits a lack of emphasis on the importance of the Club to the community of Strandhill.

The Draft Plan states that Strandhill's main employment sector is its tourism industry, created in part by its reputation as one of the top surfing destinations in Ireland and its picturesque location. It does not mention the Golf Club or its contribution to the community or tourism sector. The Draft Plan goes on to list a range of unique assets which contribute to its attractiveness for enterprise and tourism: Sligo Airport; the National Surf Centre; the Enterprise Centre and the Public realm. Whilst these are unique in the context of some other settlements, they are not unique in the context of the wider tourist product nationwide. The Golf Club is also a locally unique asset and should be included in this list.

It is noted that Strandhill is also one of the designated settlements with special coastal tourism functions, and the Golf Course should be mentioned in this regard, the Course being a links, of which is relatively rare worldwide. It is further noted in Draft Plan that Strandhill Village is not acknowledged as being on the Wild Atlantic Way.

Strandhill Golf Club welcomes the provision of more sports and recreation facilities in Strandhill and is of the opinion that more detailed policy objectives should be formulated for such uses in the Emergent Plan, of which there is a considerable need.

7. **PROPOSALS FOR AMENDMENTS AND REQUESTS FOR CHANGE TO THE DRAFT COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN AND DRAFT STRANDHILL VILLAGE PLAN**

Strandhill Golf Club have reviewed the Draft County Development Plan in the context of the issues and constraints that the club faces for its future development and sustainability. This Draft Plan contains a number of changes and introductions which the Golf Club submits will further constrain the sustainability and future development of the Club and therefore we submit, should be addressed. In this regard, we set out as follows our proposals which we request you consider in the making of the new Plan.

Strandhill Golf Club are currently developing a long-term Business Plan and Strategic Development Plan which set out a number of ambitions for the future of the Club. The proposed timescales for future development will be aligned with the Business Plan and the Club Strategic Development Plan.

A Masterplan has been proposed for a Strategic Community Sports, Services and Recreational Hub, which has been discussed with the local community, and is supported by Strandhill Community Development Association. This sets out clearly what we would like to see happen in the area. The proposal will not only provide a much needed community hub for the village but will also contribute towards the alleviating of some of the issues and constraints the Golf Club is experiencing.

The club are currently developing existing planning permissions which include the modifications to the course, internal road and carparking, the construction of a new practice area and bunker, modifications to the 10th and 12th greens and the 11th tee, along with installation of on course toilets. Further development which will be detailed in the long-term Business Plan and Strategic Development Plan will be contingent on the results of this process and in this regard, we submit that Sligo County Council has a critical role in this Plan.



Plate 17: Works carried out recently to 11th Tee Box

Our proposals are as follows:

7.1. Green Belt land to the South of Clubhouse

It is proposed that a parcel of land zoned “Green belt” to the East of the First Hole be brought into the extent of the Development Limit and zoned as OS – Open Space. There is a critical need, due to the issues and constraints set out above, to purchase land and develop proposals for a Driving Range, Practice facilities or other Holes. The Golf Club are currently in discussions regarding the purchase of these lands, which are the only lands available to the Golf Club to develop.

The intended use of the Golf Club would have for these lands would not be for Open Space, however, it is noted that sports fields and green corridors are criteria of this development zoning and the following appropriate objective, would apply:

- Support the development of playing fields, tennis courts, golf courses, bowling greens etc. at appropriate locations.
- Reserve sufficient land for the provision of pedestrian and cycle routes that will connect green areas (parks, playing fields, natural/semi-natural open space) with residential/community facilities and towns/village centres.

It is noted that this objective combines the elements of previous County Development Plan Objectives “OS” (Open Space) and “SPF” (Sports and Playing Fields).

In this regard, on these lands, the Golf Club propose the concept of a Strandhill Golf Academy and Driving Range of which there is significant demand for such a facility. This would be a public and community facility, available to all. The development would be sustainable having regard to the surrounding land uses and would be seen as an extension of the existing Strandhill Golf Club facilities. A concept proposal has been drawn up and is shown on Figure 7.1 below.

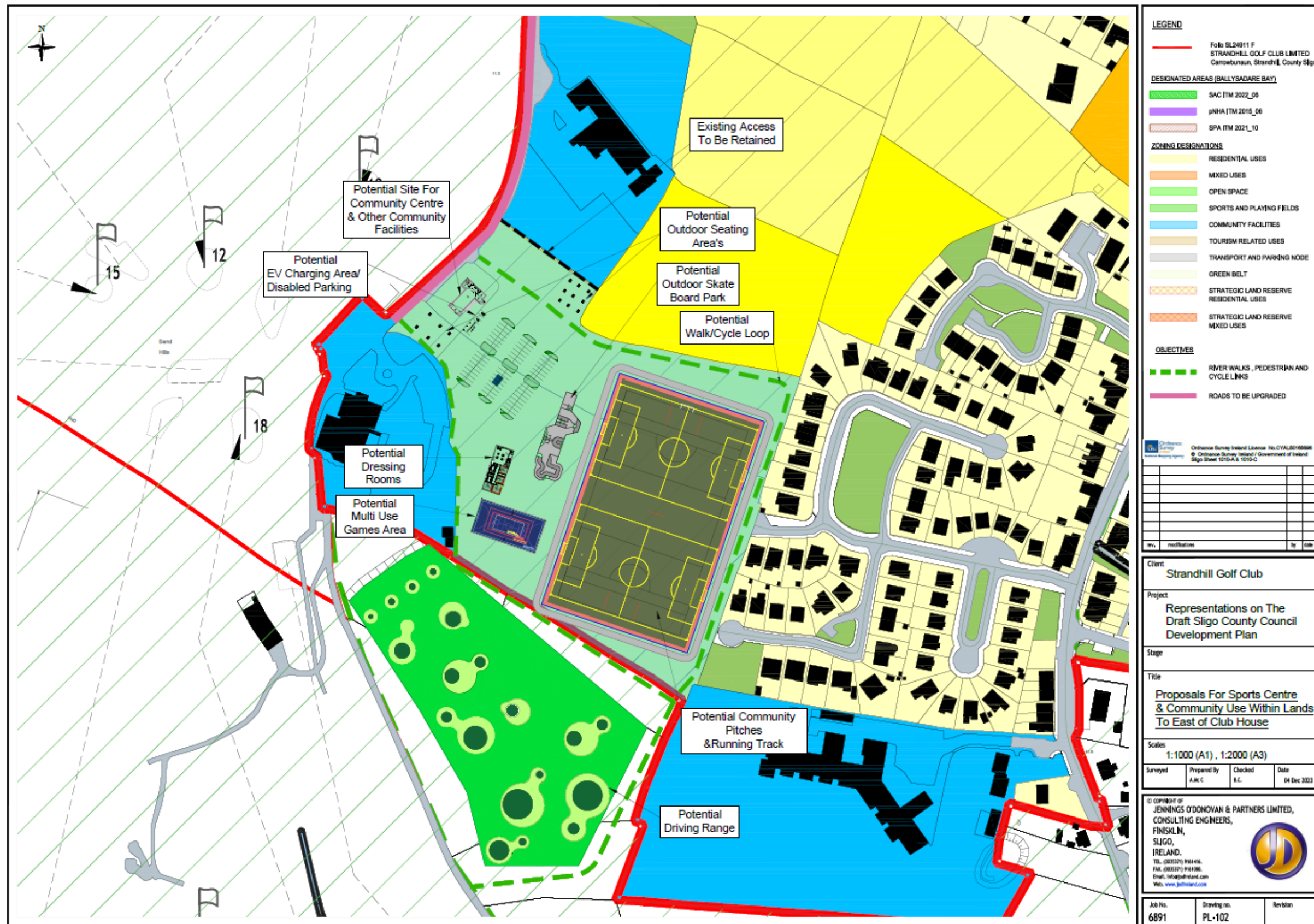


Figure 7.1: Concept proposals for Golf Academy to the South of the Clubhouse and Sports Centre and Community Use within Lands to East and North of Club House

7.2. **Walkway and Cycle Way**

The Pathway East of the 1st hole is identified as a “Riverwalk, Pedestrian and Cycle Link” in the Strandhill Village Plan Objective Map. The current walkways are a health and safety concern for users of the Golf Club. A new Pathway is proposed, as in **Figure 7.1**.

It is noted in Section 19.3.7 - Tourism development - that there is an objective to provide appropriate pedestrian access along the R-292 from Carrowdough to the village, while retaining all existing stone walls, significant trees and hedgerows. The Golf Club submits that there could be an opportunity to take this pedestrian route down through lands adjoining the Summerville Nursing Home and linking up with the walkway at the Golf Club.

7.3. **Green Belt Land - Golf Course Zoning**

Strandhill Golf Club was previously zoned as ‘Sports and Playing Fields’ in the Strandhill Mini Plan. The Plan recognised the important function that the Golf Club plays as a community facility, by including the following statement: “*Strandhill Golf Club includes an eighteen-hole links course, practice facilities and a substantial clubhouse*”. There is no similar statement in the Draft Village Plan, where the Golf Club has been essentially ignored in Section 19.1, the Village Profile, although it is a significant strategic contributor to the Village.

The Golf Course has been rezoned from “Sports and Playing Fields” to Green Belt in the new Draft Plan. It is submitted that this is not appropriate zoning for a Golf Course. The objective associated with Green Belts is to contain and consolidate settlements, of which the Golf Course has no role, and to safeguard lands for their future expansion, of which the Golf Course cannot contribute to, as it is already developed as a Golf Course. In addition, another objective of Green Belt Zoning is for the provision of strategic infrastructure, of which the Golf Course also cannot meet.

Strandhill Golf Club are seriously concerned regarding the removal of the Golf Course lands from Sports and Playing Fields and included in the Green Belt. The Golf Course being outside the Development Limit further raises concern when taken in conjunction with the Green Belt Zoning. The demotion of the Course, to a status where it no longer enjoys appropriate zoning, could result in inhibiting opportunities in the growth ambitions of the Club and therefore could result in a further constraint on the future sustainability of the Club.

It is acknowledged that there are uses that are normally permitted on Green Belt lands and the degree of acceptability of particular types of development within this area are acceptable in theory in the relevant zone. However, the Golf Club remain to be concerned about the demotion of the Course from its previous very specific and relevant zoning to one which is now largely associated with the

requirement to inhibit development and is generally used for the protection of largely undeveloped, agricultural or wild land surrounding an urban area. The Golf Club is clearly not of this status, its development already having taken place and in this context, it is considered that the application of the Zoning type is a further constraint to its development.

In this regard, a number of examples can be cited nationally, of similar circumstance where Golf Courses are located on the periphery of a town or village. For example, Malahide, Castlerea and Galway City all have zonings which are sport, recreation or open space type zonings and are not Green Belt type zonings.

Strandhill Golf Club requests that this zoning to be amended to the previous zoning, or similar, in order to allow appropriate future development of the Course and Club.

7.4. Strategic Land Reserve to the East and North of the Clubhouse

Further to the detail set out above, and an assessment by our team, it has been identified that this zoning could be a constraint on the development of the Golf Club. Having regard to the requirement for a Community, Sport and Recreation Facilities Hub and the ideal location that this entire area has, we submit that land zoned currently for "Strategic Land Reserve" from the school to the Golf Clubhouse, and behind the Clubhouse, to be amended to "Community facilities". It is noted that the objective for the Zoning for Community Facilities is to protect existing facilities or retain existing uses and provide for the establishment of new/additional community and institutional uses, such as schools, community centres, health centres etc. However, it is further noted that there are a number of uses in the Zoning Matrix which are acceptable in principle in this Zoning. The Golf Club note that Sligo County Council may consider these lands to be more appropriately zoned for Open Space in this context and the Golf Club submit that we would welcome this zoning also.

It is considered that there is sufficient land available to meet the delivery targets for Housing, zoned as Existing Residential Uses, which would meet the future housing requirement for Strandhill, without the need to release any land from the Strategic Land Reserve, for some time, and having regard to the principles of compact growth, other Strategic Land Reserves would in our opinion be more suitable for housing.

The complimentary zoning of land adjacent to the Golf Course and Club, will result in a reduction in the impact that Housing will have on the Golf Course, ensuring that overdevelopment will not occur and that a reduction in the impact of similar health and safety issues presenting in this area will not occur. The proposal, set out above, to develop a Golf Driving Range, Practice Areas or other golf holes in lands east of the First Hole, will marry smoothly with this proposal, and it will result in

the proper planning and sustainable development of the area, and an increase in the sustainability and viability of the Golf Course.

It is further noted that in the nRES Zoning of the Draft Plan, Social infrastructure/ancillary uses such as childcare and early education facilities, community, recreational and leisure facilities will also be considered, in the interest of creating sustainable neighbourhoods. The recognition of this type of suitable use, alongside residential uses, is a supporting factor in our proposal for the amendment to the zoning. These lands could accommodate these uses, enabling the further lands adjoining, zoned nRES and any further lands in the vicinity, to accommodate housing exclusively.

There is currently no community centre in the village of Strandhill. The provision of a community centre is an identified need and would serve an important role in Strandhill and could be used for community projects, play groups and could prove a vital place for older members of the community to meet. The Strand Celtic Community Room is restricted in size and is of limited capacity for what is required for a village of this scale. There is an identified need for a GAA Pitch and Multi-Use Games Area in Strandhill where there currently is no such facility. There is a significant demand for such a facility in the community.

All should be located close to or within walking distance of housing, accessible to all sectors of the community and facilitate multi-use functions through their design and layout. In this regard, we propose that the development of additional sport and recreational facilities in lands stretching from Strandhill National School to the Golf Club and onwards towards Culleenamore Beach are ideally located and serviced and of which can satisfy the criteria necessary for such development and not achievable with any other site in the village.

Strandhill Golf Club submit that other locations in the Village are not ideally placed for this type of use. Other zoned lands for Community use are at a location at a remove from the village in an isolated environment. These uses would be ideally best suited and located within the village core. It is noted that there are 2 childcare facilities located north of the village on Airport Road, and one further east in Dorrins Strand. It is also noted that there are no childcare facilities elsewhere in the village centre, near the Top Road or on the Golf Club Road side of the village, notwithstanding the concentration of residential units on this side of the village and the location of the Primary School.

The location of a youth centre, skate park and indoor sports should be complemented by a range of outdoor sports and pitch facilities and should not be developed in isolation in an appropriate setting with supports and supervision.

Furthermore, Enterprise and Employment lands associated with the Airport and the Airport Business Park could be concentrated on the Airport Road side of the Village and these lands should be zoned appropriately for this use.

The club have produced a proposed concept Masterplan (referred to above 7.1) which shows how an area of land stretching from Strandhill National School to the Golf Club and onwards towards Culleenamore Beach could accommodate a range of Community Uses and associated infrastructure, as follows:

1. *Community Centre with Childcare Facilities*
2. *Parking Area including an EV Charging Area*
3. *Multiuse Games Area*
4. *All Weather Pitches*
5. *Community Club House*
6. *Skate Park*
7. *Bowls*
8. *Walkway and Cycle Path*

It is our submission that Sligo County Council assess our proposals in the context of considering how the Emergent County Development Plan and Strandhill Village Plan will maintain and increase sport and physical activity and community facilities. We consider that there is an overwhelming community need for these facilities and submit that Sligo County Council would take our proposal into consideration.

7.5. Green Belt Land - rear of Surf Centre

The Golf Club submit that the area owned by the Golf Club to the rear of the Surf Centre, to be returned to Mixed Use Zoning, as per the original use. The Draft Plan has rezoned an area here as Green Belt.

It is not suitable for any Golf Club associated development due to its very close proximity to the commercial premises in this location. The development of this area in conjunction with the rest of the mixed-use area, could result in the Golf club being a participant in a proposed Masterplan for this development of this area.

7.6. The elevation of the sport of Golf within the Plan

It is considered that the inclusion of the sport of Golf as a Recreational, Health, Social and Economic Benefit to the Community and Tourist Economy should be recognised and elevated in the emergent

County Development Plan and the Strandhill Village Plan. As is already recognised, sport and recreation makes an important contribution to the health and well-being of local residents. The Golf Club, along with the community, would welcome the inclusion of additional land for sports, recreation and community uses.

As outlined in Section 5.13 the creation of healthy, socially inclusive communities should be an important consideration of the Emergent Strandhill Village Plan. Facilities such as community centres and playgrounds can serve as a focal point for the communities they serve, and provide venues for local sporting, cultural, community, education and social events.

The Golf Club requests that the protection and enhancement of sports and leisure facilities become a key consideration in the emergent Strandhill Village Plan, which will in turn generate an additional community benefit. We request the provision of a range of community infrastructure facilities to meet the needs of the Strandhill population, developed in conjunction with other statutory, voluntary, private sector and community groups. In this regard we consider and request that sports, recreation, community and open space facilities are clustered, with these facilities being located or combined with school facilities, as appropriate.

8. CONCLUSION

Strandhill Golf Club is a hugely important facility within the Community of Strandhill and further beyond in Sligo and the Region, along with providing a national and international golf tourism product. However, providing the type of facilities required from a world-class, elite level golf facility has been extremely difficult due to the constraints set out in this submission. The future development of the Golf Club and its role in the Community should be elevated and factored into the Emergent Strandhill Village Plan.

The proposal for the provision of additional sport, recreational and community facilities would have the potential to provide local employment opportunities as well as an additional leisure facility which benefits from access by public transport. In addition, there would be potential educational benefits for the adjoining Strandhill National School.

The development of a cluster of sport, recreation and community facilities in the vicinity of the Golf Course and Club would constitute an appropriate use of development land that would provide a significant Community benefit along with facilitating the sustainable growth and development of the Golf Club, protecting the natural environment and reducing the health and safety impacts and constraints currently being experienced by Residents, Road Users and the Golf Club. It would accord

with the planning policies and objectives of the emergent Sligo County Development Plan and Strandhill Village Plan.

Strandhill Golf Club look forward to the development of the Golf Club and the Village over the next 20 to 30 years, and consider that this submission makes an important contribution to the future development of the Area. We consider that it is important to contribute suggestions and recommendations to the local authority for consideration and that the implementation of the recommendations in our submission could enhance and provide the necessary community facilities which are required. The Golf Club respectfully request that our submission be considered, and the proposals and recommendations be considered in the Emergent Plan along with proposed amendments to the Zoning Maps.

APPENDIX A: Consultation Exercise

Strandhill Golf Club set up a Planning and Development Sub Committee for the purposes of preparing this submission. This Committee have carried out extensive consultations and communications with Members of the Golf Club, Land Owners, Sports and Community Organisations in the Village, the Strandhill Community Development Association, Elected Representatives from the Electoral Area and Sligo County Council, Nearby Golf Clubs and the Course Architect. Discussions were also had with Golf Ireland representatives and Golf Professionals familiar with the Course.

Meetings were held from June to September. A full presentation on the Planning and Development of the Course and the Club, along with an in-depth presentation of the County Development Plan Review Process and relevant policies and zonings, was carried out in the Club house on 6 September.

Representatives of the Planning and Development Sub Committee attended Sligo County Councils Public Information Session on Tuesday 21 November, where discussions were held with Mr Frank Moylan, Senior Planner.

As a result of the Consultations, a number of issues were raised and researched as part of the writing of this submission.

The Submission Document, its contents and proposals was approved for issue by the Golf Club Council on 15 December.

A briefing note was developed for the consultations. Along with the zoning maps, this note was used to explain the issues and constraints affecting the Club.

All consultees understood the pressures the Golf Club is experiencing along its boundaries, and its reasons for taking this approach to the planning and development of the area.

All consultees were particularly interested in the ideas of developing community facilities adjacent to the clubhouse and the school and all were supportive of this idea.

All also appreciated our request to have the golf course retain its zoning as a Sports and Playing Fields type zoning.

A number of particular points from the Consultations which arose a number of times were: the positive impact the Golf Club has to the village and wider area; the fact that the Golf Club brings more revenue

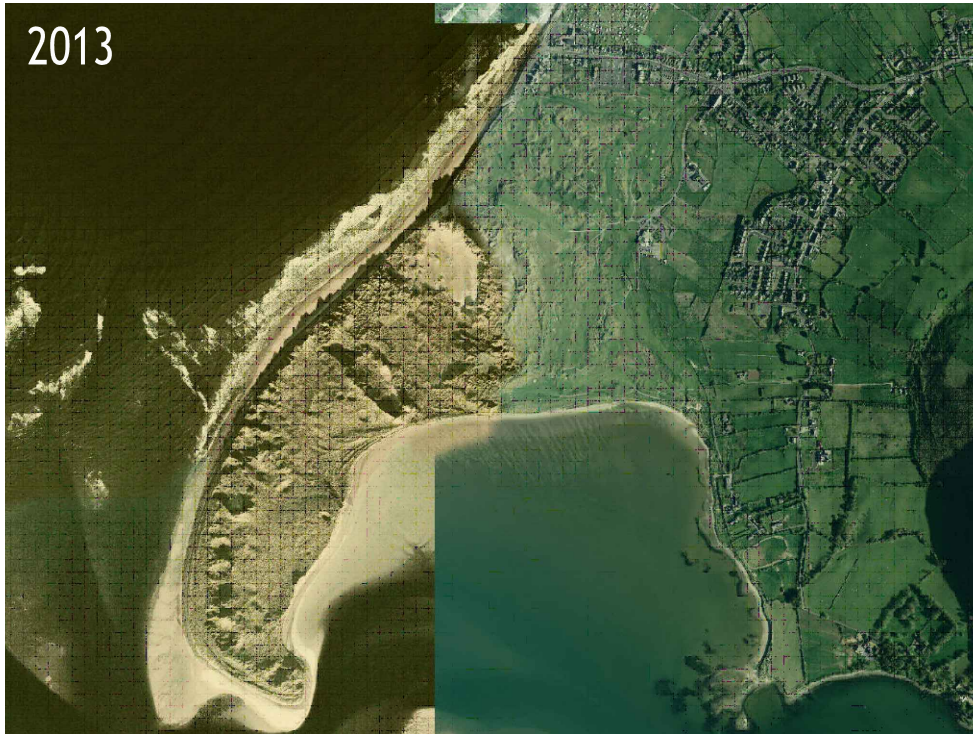
to the village and the area than any other activity including surfing; the development of Strandhill Golf Club will encourage more visitors to Sligo and prove invaluable to the restaurants, bar and hotels in the environs; the significant need for improvements to the Golf Course road and the necessity for a full comprehensive non piecemeal plan for the road would be a requirement due to H&S; that the Community Hub proposal would be a great example of a community infrastructure for the future; that the importance of maintenance and protection of the Dunes is imperative; and that role the Golf Club has in the Community goes beyond golf and the Golf Course.

It was agreed that we would forward a copy of our proposals to all Elected Members of Sligo County Council, for their information.

APPENDIX B: Drawings



rev.	modifications	by	date



Client	Strandhill Golf Club		
Project	Representations on The Draft Sligo County Council Development Plan 13 Oct 2023		
Stage	Representations to Sligo Co.Co.		
Title	Historical Overview Coastal Erosion Carrowdough - Culleenamore		
Scales	Not To Scale		
Surveyed	Prepared By A.McC.	Checked B.C.	Date 30 Nov 2023

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Job No. 6891	Drawing no. PL-101	Revision
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ISSUES & CONSTRAINTS :

- 1 Rezoning of Mixed Use to Green Belt behind the Surf Center
- 2 Intensification of Council Car Park
- 3 Safety at Buenos Aires Drive
- 4 Road Safety Issues on Golf Course Road
- 5 Impact of Council Housing on Access Road
- 6 Strategic Land Reserve
- 7 Zoning of Green Belt for Driving Range Facility
- 8 Walkway
- 9 Coastal Erosion at Culleenamore
- 10 Coastal Erosion at Strandhill Shore and Shelly Valley Dunes
- 11 Nature Conservation Designation
- 12 Dezoning of Golf Course and its Facilities to Green Belt



LEGEND

Folio SL24911 F
STRANDHILL GOLF CLUB LIMITED
Carrowbunnaun, Strandhill, County Sligo

**NATURE CONSERVATIONS
DESIGNATED AREAS (BALLYSADARE BAY)**

- SAC ITM 2022_06
- pNHA ITM 2015_06
- SPA ITM 2021_10

ZONING DESIGNATIONS

- Plan Limit
- Development Limit
- MIX - mixed uses
- eRES -existing residential areas
- nRES - new residential uses
- CF -community facilities
- PIBIE business, industrial, enterprise
- OS - open space and recreational amenities
- TU - transport and utilities infrastructure
- TOU - tourism
- SLR -Strategic Land Reserve
- GB - Green Belt

OBJECTIVES

- RIVER WALKS , PEDESTRIAN AND CYCLE LINKS
- ROADS TO BE UPGRADED
- ITEMS TO BE REVIEWED -
ISSUES & CONSTRAINTS

rev.	modifications	by	date

Client
Strandhill Golf Club

Project
Representations on The Draft Sligo County Council Development Plan 13 Oct 2023

Stage
Representations to Sligo Co.Co.

Title
Location Plan - Designated Areas & Development Plan Zoning Issues & Constraints

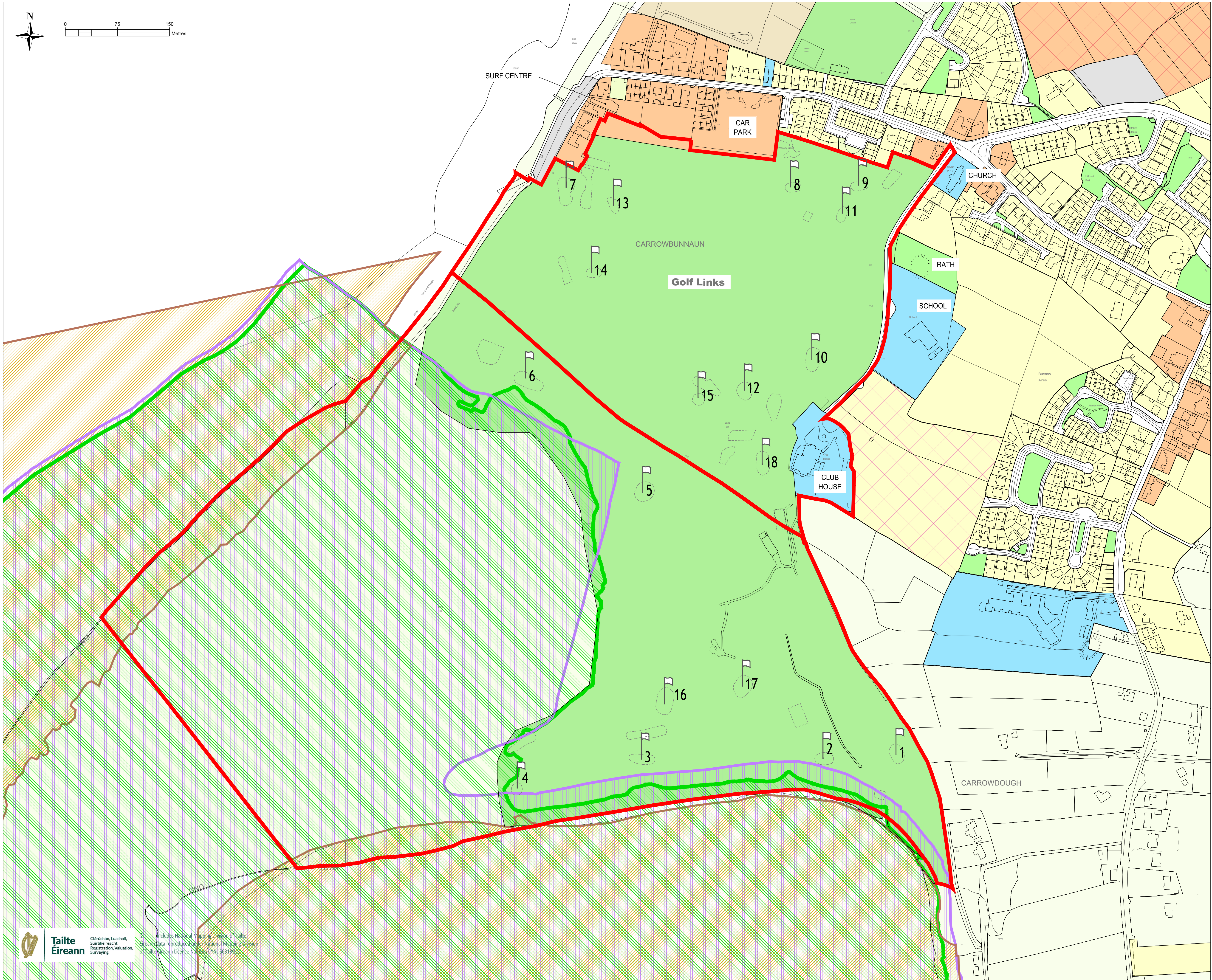
Scales
1:2500 (A1) , 1:5000 (A3)

Surveyed	Prepared By A.McC.	Checked B.C.	Date 30 Nov 2023
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Job No. 6891	Drawing no. PL-101	Revision
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LEGEND

- Folio SL24911 F
STRANDHILL GOLF CLUB LIMITED
Carrowbunnaun, Strandhill, County Sligo
- NATURE RESERVATIONS
DESIGNATED AREAS (BALLYSADARE BAY)
- SAC ITM 2022_06
 - pNHA ITM 2015_06
 - SPA ITM 2021_10
- ZONING DESIGNATIONS
- RESIDENTIAL USES
 - MIXED USES
 - OPEN SPACE
 - SPORTS AND PLAYING FIELDS
 - COMMUNITY FACILITIES
 - TOURISM RELATED USES
 - TRANSPORT AND PARKING NODE
 - GREEN BELT
 - STRATEGIC LAND RESERVE
RESIDENTIAL USES
 - STRATEGIC LAND RESERVE
MIXED USES

Ordnance Survey
National Mapping Agency

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Sligo Sheet 1010-A & 1010-C

rev.	modifications	by	date

Client	Strandhill Golf Club		
Project	Representations on The Draft Sligo County Council Development Plan		
Stage			
Title	Location Plan - Current Designated Areas & Development Plan Zoning		
Scales	1:2500 (A1) , 1:5000 (A3)		
Surveyed	Prepared By A.M.C.C.	Checked B.C.	Date 04 Dec 2023

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Job No. 6891	Drawing no. PL-103	Revision
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