

SNEEM

1.0 CONTEXT

Location

The town of Sneem (An tSnaidhm), 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.



Population

The census recorded a decrease in the population between 1996 and 2002 from 296 to 285 persons (3.7%). This trend continued in the inter-censal period 2002 to 2006 with a

recorded population loss of 2.1% from 285 to 279 persons. 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.

Functions

Sneem is an important service town for its rural catchment area, especially as it is located a 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.

Facilities

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.

A new hotel (The Sneem Hotel) has recently opened on the Kenmare Road which 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 pitch and putt course and a tennis court at the western side of the river. On Quay Road there is a Garden of the Senses, a public barbeque area, Bird Village and sculpture park (The Way the Fairies Went). A new playground has recently been constructed at Sea View.

The Geopark building is located on the Killarney Road. Kerry Geopark comprises an area bordered by Kenmare Bay and extending inland to the mountains to Sneem, Castelvogue, Caherdaniel and Valentia Island and is an area rich in geology, man-made features, flora and fauna.

Infrastructure

Construction on the new treatment plant for the town is currently underway. The treatment plant has been funded by public private partnership which is the first that has been funded in this way in the county. There will therefore be a constraint on future developments in the town until the new treatment plant is in operation.

2.0 DEVELOPMENT ANALYSIS

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 shops.

Residential Development

There are many residential properties on the two squares in the town and in the approach roads into the town. There is a council housing estate at Seaview. Three new housing developments are currently under construction, one of them is on the Kenmare road to the east of the town, the second which includes retail units/offices is located off north square on the road to the GAA grounds and the third is a mixture of holiday homes and permanent

homes on the western edge of the town on the Waterville Road. Ribbon development has occurred on the approach roads into the town from Molls Gap and Kenmare.

In order to counter ongoing population loss, Sneem needs to attract permanent residents. The creation of an attractive vibrant town, as seen in Kenmare, is one element of achieving this. 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 might create an image of a holiday home town not attractive to permanent residents.

Architectural Heritage

There are seven 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 100-003	The Way the Fairies Went (Stone Sculptures)

The town has several important buildings and streetscapes. One additional structure will be added to the record of protected structures and ACAs will also be proposed in order to maintain the architectural integrity and form of both Squares.

It is proposed to add the following to the Record of Protected Structures;

- Sneem House, formerly Sheehan's Hotel, South Square

Archaeology

There are no recorded monuments within the plan area.



Above: Sneem House

Natural Environment

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 centre and amenity areas are maintained. The town received the national Tidy Towns award in 1987.

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.

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 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 the 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.





3.0 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.

In addition, it is intended by means of this local area plan, 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 square form an intrinsic element of the character of the town, which must be maintained. The plan aims to designate the areas fronting onto the square 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 at a central location 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. Future residential development will therefore be for permanent residents only.

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.

An opportunity site has been identified at the centre of the town. It is considered that this site provides an excellent opportunity for regeneration of this underused back lane and its use to expand the retail/mixed use provisions within the town centre in an attractive way. It also provides an opportunity to create an attractive village market location facilitating producers to market local produce in an attractive setting without detracting from the village square. An action area plan for this site should be prepared in order to ensure its coordinated development.

4.0 OVERALL OBJECTIVES

Objective No.	Overall Objective 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.
OO-5	Ensure that the provision of social and retail facilities keep pace with the development of housing to support a growing population and create a viable community.
OO-6	Ensure that 20% of the land zoned in the plan for residential, or for a mix of residential and other uses, shall be made available for the provision of social and affordable housing.
OO-7	In addition to the obligations under Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2000, 30% of the land zoned for residential development shall be reserved for permanent residential use. Applicants shall be aware in designing developments of the need to create attractive developments with a sense of identity and community, avoiding interspersing holiday homes with permanent residences and giving preference to the location of permanent residences

	close to the existing developed areas and services.
OO-8	Residential densities should reflect the traditional density of the settlement. Applications for development shall be accompanied by an urban design statement as required under section 10 of this plan.
OO-9	It is an objective of the council that a village design statement for the town of Sneem should be prepared during the lifetime of this plan

5.0 SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

Vehicular and Pedestrian Traffic

Objective No.	Specific Objective It is an objective of the Council to:
T-1	Reserve new access points to facilitate orderly in-depth development as indicated on the Zoning Map.
T-2	Facilitate improvements at the junction of North Square with Seaview and the junction of South Square with Quay Road.
T-3	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.
T-4	Develop a plan to limit coach parking and upgrade pedestrian facilities around the fair greens in order to reduce congestion, ensure a more pedestrian-friendly town centre and promote an attractive central area within the life time of this plan.

T-5	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.
T-6	Seek the provision of a footbridges across the river to the south of Sneem Bridge and to the north of Sneem Bridge to provide safe pedestrian connection between the amenity areas on the east and west sides of the river. The footbridge will be sensitively designed so as not to detract from the views of the river from Sneem Bridge or detract from the character of the Bridge which is a protected structure.
T-7	Seek the provision/improvement of footpaths as indicated on the Zoning Map.
T-8	Ensure that new developments will include provision for pedestrian movement and connectivity throughout the village.

Architectural Heritage and Built Environment

Objective No.	Specific Objective It is an objective of the Council to/that:
AH-1	Designate those areas indicated on the zoning Map as Architectural Conservation Areas (ACAs) in accordance with the provisions of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) and the guidelines for designation issued by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government.
AH-2	Secure the inclusion of the structure indicated on the Zoning Map in the Record of Protected Structures.
AH-3	Preserve the town's architectural heritage and encourage development to be designed in a manner that is in keeping with the scale and character of the existing town. New developments must be designed to a high architectural stand and be respectful in each

	design element of local design features.
AH-4	New developments in the town will be required to submit detailed colour scheme showing material to be used in order to ensure integration with the existing built fabric.

Views and prospects

Objective No	Views and Prospects It is an objective of the Council that:
VP-1	The views and prospects as indicated on the zoning map along the N70 and the R568 as included in the Kerry County Development Plan 2003-2009 be retained and be protected from inappropriate development.

Natural Environment

Objective No	Specific Objective It is an objective of the Council to;
NE-1	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.
NE-2	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.



NE-3	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 South West Fisheries Board and the OPW.
NE-4	Ensure that when development may have a significant environmental impact on the national environment of the Sneem River that an environmental report is carried showing mitigation measures and how they can be offset.
NE-4	Ensure that development shall not have a significant detrimental impact on the natural environment.
NE-5	Prepare a tree preservation order for appropriate trees throughout the settlement and promote additional planting
NE-6	Make a Tree Preservation Order in accordance with the provisions of the Planning and Development Act 2000(as amended) in relation to the trees within the area shown on the Zoning Map. This will ensure that these trees are protected and their contribution to the amenity of the town and the environment is maintained.

Retail

Objective No	Views and Prospects It is an objective of the Council to:
R-1	Zone land for retail use in the town to provide for the future retail needs of the town and outlying areas.

Mixed Use

Objective No.	Overall Objective It is an objective of the Council to:
MU-1	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.
MU-2	Prepare an action area plan for the opportunity site and promote the development of the site as indicated on the zoning map. This will include the redevelopment of the back lane areas to the rear of North Square with attractive streetscape river frontage, walkways and public areas and possibly incorporating a market area.
MU-3	Promote and facilitate the development of a craft village as indicated on the zoning map which will be supported by the council.
MU-4	Promote and facilitate the development of an incubator business and technology park as indicated on the zoning map.

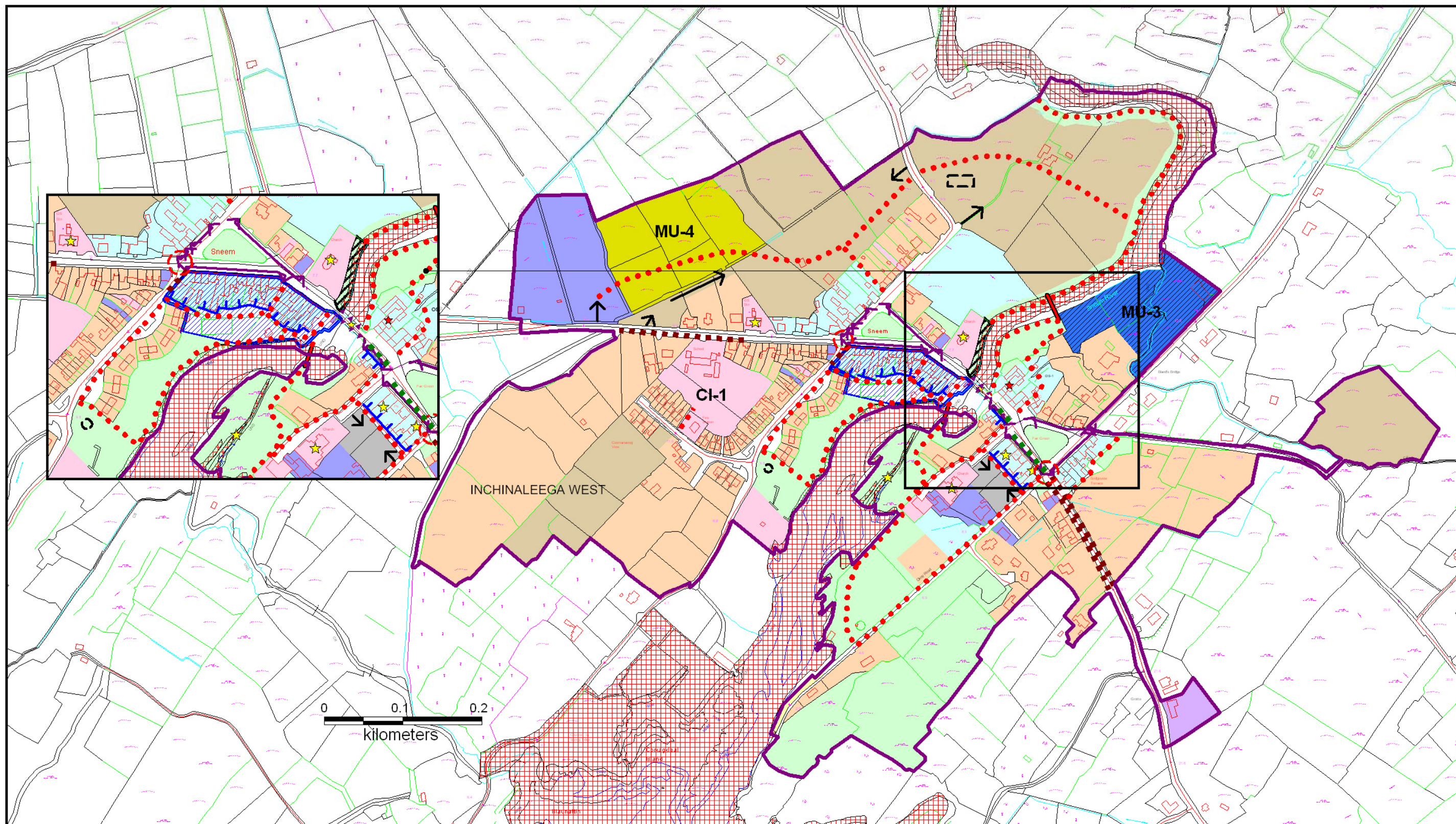
Community/Institutional

Objective No.	Overall Objective It is an objective of the Council to:
CI-1	Reserve land for the future expansion of the primary school to the south as indicated on the zoning map.
CI-2	Reserve land for use as a public boat house.

A-2	Facilitate the provision of a river walkway along the Sneem River, in particular to the North of the Bridge.
A-3	Ensure that the existing amenity areas in the town are retained and protected from development.

Amenity

Objective No.	Specific Objective It is an objective of the Council to:
A-1	Facilitate the development of new amenity areas in the town where appropriate.



Sneem

Map
Land Zoning Map
Adopted
Feb. 2008

Kerry County Council
 Planning Policy Unit



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|---------------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------------------|--|--|--------------------------|
| Residential (ext.) | Mixed Use | SAC | Parallel Parking & Footpath Improvements (T-5) | Ext. Playground | ACA (AH-1) |
| Residential (prop.) | Amenity | Existing Protected Structures | Pedestrian Footbridge (Indicative) (T-6) | Indicative Playing Pitch | Views & Prospects (VP-1) |
| Retail (R-1) | Car/Coach Park (T-3) | Proposed Protected Structure (AH-2) | Indicative Pedestrian Walkway (T-8) | Indicative Access Point (T-1) | Development Boundary |
| Community/ Institutional (CI-1) | Quay | Junction Improvements (T-2) | Mixed Use Streetscape | Footpath Provisions / Improvements (T-7) | |
| Opportunity Site (MU-2) | Business Park (MU-4) | Craft Village (MU-3) | Commercial | TPO (NE-6) | |