

5.1 Clifden Small Growth Town

5.2 Town Context

Clifden is located in the western coastal area of Conamara in County Galway, approximately 80 kilometres northwest of Galway City. The town of Clifden is the main urban settlement serving the Conamara area as well a considerable rural hinterland in the west of the county. Apart from Galway City, the nearest large urban settlement is Westport in County Mayo, which is located 80km to the north-east. The coastal village of Cleggan is located approximately 10km north of Clifden town, while Ballyconneely is 10km to the south, along the coast.

Clifden is served by the National Secondary Road, the N59 which is the main Galway-Clifden-Westport route, serving Conamara. The topography and natural features (Alpine) of the area have influenced the pattern and form of development in the town. Clifden is intersected by the Owenglin River which flows through the town and into the sea at Ardbear bay an inlet of Clifden Bay. Clifden is one of a series of harbours facing the Atlantic, sheltered to the North and South. On the land side, Clifden lies in the sheltered valley between the Falkeeragh and Shanakeever hill ridge areas to the North and the Ardbear and Killymongan hill areas to the South.

5.3 Sustainable Communities

5.3.1 Housing

Historically, the Town Centre of Clifden including the Main Street, Market Square and Bridge Street which have been the focal point of the Town, playing a pivotal role in the administrative, commercial, cultural, recreational, residential and community functions of the Town. The town core of Clifden has developed in a sustainable manner overtime to the north and south of the main street. On the steeper lands around the town, development has generally been limited to lower density housing, while the denser

housing areas are now found to the east of the town centre and within the town envelope.

The established housing stock in the town core comprises a mix of traditional housing stock with a good mix of new infill developments. There are a number of well-established housing estates within Clifden. A number of residential developments on the eastern approach road have been built in the last decade. The most significant of these are Clifden Glen, Cuirt Cregg, Spires Estate and Tullyvogheen Estate and a number of smaller estates located off the Low Road with approximately 300 units

5.3.2 Education

In terms of education, Clifden Community School is a co-education secondary school. A new school was constructed and officially opened in 2018. Scoil Mhuire Primary School in Clifden is also co-educational.

5.3.3 Community Facilities

The Town of Clifden is served with a number of key community facilities that reflects the structure of the town and the wider hinterland that it serves. The Headquarters for the Conamara Garda service is in Clifden and the main fire station is also located in the town.

The Clifden District Hospital provides a range of services for older people in the Clifden community, including patient acute services, step down and convalescent day care services, rehabilitation and community services. The local health centre is located on Hospital Road, which provides a range of services for the local population. St. Anne's Private Nursing Home is located within the town provides full time care for the elderly in the town and surrounding area.

Naomh Feichin An Clochan GAA Club has been playing in Clifden for more than a century, first opening their doors in 1912. The local rugby team Connemara RFC-Connemara Blacks is located off a local road on the Clifden to Ballyconneely road. In

the centre of the town there are two churches: St. Joseph's (Roman Catholic) and Christ Church (Church of Ireland). scale and outstanding architectural and artistic merit.

Clifden is well served by open space and sports facilities however the steep topography of the lands surrounding the town limits the active open space uses. There is a green corridor running either side of the River Owenglin .

The existing walkways in the Clifden area vary from low level rustic walks along grassy tracks and riverside pathways to longer roadway walks such as the Sky Road. These will allow for linkages between areas of open space and will take advantage of the scenic quality of the outer lying rural areas in Clifden. These green links will connect with the existing walking trails. This will serve to enhance the permeability of the entire town, making it more pedestrian friendly.

5.3.4 Environment and Heritage

Clifden possesses a rich and varied architectural heritage and is designated an Architectural Conservation Area. It was planned in a coherent manner throughout the 18th and 19th centuries, it remains today a town of strong historical character, retaining many of its original buildings and functions. The town of Clifden follows the classic nineteenth century layout with an oval plan and three principal streets– Market Street, Main Street and Bridge Street with a Market Square. This attractive streetscape contains several buildings and sites in Clifden town that are included on the Record of Protected Structures, examples include the Court House, Christ Church and St. Joseph's Church.

In addition, the view of both St. Joseph's Church and Christ Church are also of local importance and give the town its recognisable long-distance views set against the background of the Conamara Mountains and are required to be protected. The townscape and streetscape of Clifden are an important part of the built heritage and visual amenity of the town.

The protection and enhancement of the Townscape, streetscapes and historic street pattern when considering future development are a priority for the enhancement of the town centre.

In terms of natural heritage, the key feature in Clifden is the Owenglin River which is the only European Site traversing the Plan area. The Owenglin River forms part of The Twelve Bens/Garraun Complex SAC. The plan boundary is also adjacent to the Conamara Bog Complex SAC & SPA.

5.3.5 Employment and Economic Development

Clifden has been designated a Small Growth Town (SGT) in the settlement Hierarchy for the County. The position of these SGT holds important positions within the County as key service centres and drivers for growth for their immediate and surrounding areas.

The strategy of this plan is to take advantage of the existing economic assets in order to stimulate employment within the area. The key assets the town has to offer with the N59 which is the main Galway-Clifden-Westport route, serving Conamara. Clifden is also the main urban settlement serving the Conamara area as well a large rural hinterland in the west of the county offering a wide variety of skills. There is an established tourism industry in Clifden, Cleggan and Ballyconnelly and the potential spin off tourism benefits. There is also strong agricultural sector in the area.

Given the town's location, it is considered likely that most new employment creation will be generated by smaller and medium sized local enterprises / service providers. Opportunities particularly exist to develop 'product based' intensive industries given the town's proximity to the national primary route.

5.3.6 Town Centre

Clifden Town serves a local urban population and extensive rural catchment. The policy objective for retail in Clifden Town Centre is to support the vitality and viability of the

town and to ensure it provides an appropriate range of retail and non-retail functions to serve the needs of the community and respective catchment areas.

Historically, the Town Centre including the Main Street, Market Square, Bridge Street and Hulk Street have been the focal point of the Town, playing a pivotal role in the administrative, commercial, cultural and recreational functioning of the Town. The area has a distinctive character and accommodates a number of buildings of architectural merit. The Town Centre has a distinct street frontage and core for urban activity where residential, commercial and community functions can take place side by side.

Clifden has a mix of both convenience and comparison shopping with the retail focal point more recently split between the Main Street/ Square and the newly developed area to the east of the town centre and fronting onto the Galway Road with the opening of Aldi Lidi and Spar. Supervalu fronts on the Square and is part of a larger mixed use development.

Appropriately scaled retail in the right location, including the redevelopment of brownfield and underutilised sites in the town centre will ensure resilience and assist in reducing retail vacancy levels. It is important to encourage the refurbishment and reuse of the historical residential and the retail element of the character of Clifden along Main Street, Market Street and Bridge Street especially vacant buildings/properties. These streets may have the capacity to accommodate mixed use developments consisting of appropriately scaled retail, commercial and residential with the amalgamation of a number of properties. The old Supervalu site in Main Street offers an opportunity for redevelopment.

In addition, the Town centre map provides demarcation of opportunity sites (these opportunity sites are identified in CSGT 11 Opportunity Sites) within the Town Centre whose development would greatly enhance the streetscape and help promote the town and improve the overall retail offer & town experience.

5.3.7 Tourism

Clifden, “An Clochan” in Irish, is a planned town, founded in the 19th century by John D’Arcy of Kiltullagh, Athenry. His castle is located west of the town centre on the Sky Road. Clifden has a rich history which has moulded the town both physically and culturally. In particular, its associations with Marconi and Alcock & Brown during the 19th Century; the Galway-Clifden railway; and its function as a Maritime Port. Its historical importance as a settlement is demonstrated in monuments such as the Famine Graveyard, Clifden Castle and Clifden Gaol, and Clifden Courthouse. Today, Clifden is a thriving local market town and tourist centre. It hosts a very successful annual Arts Festival along with many other vibrant events throughout the year.

Clifden is known as the “capital of Conamara”, delivering a high-profile position, with the “brand name” known internationally. The term “Conamara” carries with it a readily identifiable history of excellence from the early days of modern tourism in the nineteenth century. Clifden has been designated as a Destination by Fáilte Ireland and it is synonymous with Irish tourism and hospitality. It is an attractive town that benefits from a rich heritage and a wide choice of natural and outdoor amenities. The town has grown into its role as a service provider, as well as an end destination. Its natural local attractions are coastal, countryside, hill, lake and river. It has grown from a small accommodation provider to being a town with a large choice of accommodation type and restaurant provision. It also boasts a selection of shops with many a specialist tourist/craft/luxury nature.

Its outdoor pursuit provision encompasses sea based and land-based activities, including, walking, cycling, swimming, sailing/boating, angling, canoeing, diving, and golf. Tourism provides the most employment of a seasonal and permanent nature in Clifden.

Clifden is a tourist destination for people exploring Conamara. Places of interest in and around Clifden include the [Twelve Bens](#), [Connemara National Park](#) for outdoor

pursuits, [Inishbofin](#) and [Slyne Head Lighthouse](#) is located at westernmost point of County Galway.

Other attractions in the surrounding area include the [Conamara Pony Show](#), the Community Arts Week which offers poetry reading, lectures, recitals and traditional music. The [Omey Island Races](#) is another attraction, where horse racing occurs on the beach. Attractive walks in the locality include the Sky Road and Beach Road via the harbour area. The Sky Road is an attractive 11 km drive along Clifden Bay and Streamstown Bay rising more than 150 m above sea level at Slyne Head, with views of the [Atlantic](#), [Clifden Castle](#), coast-guard station, the islands of [Inishturk](#) and [Turbot](#) and the town which is popular with walkers year round.

The continued development of the Conamara Greenway running from Clifden to Galway City will further assist the tourism draw to the area. Clifden currently has 4 looped cycling hubs. The walking network in Clifden comprises of the existing footpaths adjoining public. The Owenglin River which flows into the sea through the town of Clifden contains brown and sea trout as well as salmon, attracting anglers and tourists.

5.4 Services and Infrastructure

5.4.1 Water Supply

Clifden receives its water supply from the Clifden Regional Water Supply Scheme serving the town, its environs and extending southwards towards Ballyconneely and northwards towards Claddaghduff.

5.4.2 Wastewater Disposal

The town is served by a municipal waste water treatment system and upgrade works have been carried out and there is capacity within the network to accommodate development that is envisaged to take place.

5.4.3 Transportation Infrastructure and Movement

The N59 brings a considerable volume of traffic through the town's edge, particularly during the peak tourist season. Traffic congestion from users of the N59, together with through traffic to other routes, and in-town created traffic, is probably the single biggest transport issue for Clifden at present.

Public transport in Clifden is limited to bus services, consisting predominantly of regional services which play a vital role in connecting Clifden to Galway City and Clifden to Westport and beyond. Citylink provides a daily service from the town to Galway. Whilst Clifden is no longer served by an operational rail service, the existing rail infrastructure in the town forms part of the historic Conamara Line, closed in 1935.

Clifden currently has 4 looped cycling hubs. The walking network in Clifden comprises of the existing footpaths adjoining public roads. There is currently no dedicated walkway/cycling network within the town centre, however, given the relatively compact urban form of Clifden there is significant potential for modal shift from the private car to walking and cycling.

5.5 Flooding

With respect to lands within the village that are liable to flood risk, the Council will require any proposed developments to comply with 'The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities (DEHLG, 2009) and Circular PL2/2014 and any amendment thereof. The Council, having regard to the nature and scope of development, may require the submission of Flood Risk Assessments, as appropriate, to assess the suitability of development proposals. There is a flood map identified for Clifden and it is in accordance with the guidelines and circular referenced above.

Land use Zoning Policy Objectives for Clifden (Clifden Small Growth Town – CSGT)

CSGT 1 Sustainable Town Centre

Promote the development of Clifden, as an intensive, high quality, well landscaped, human-scaled and accessible environment, with an appropriate mix of uses, including residential, commercial, service, tourism, enterprise, public and community uses as appropriate, that provide a range of retail services, facilities and amenities to the local community and visitors. The town centre and associated main street shall remain the primary focus for retail and service activity within these plan areas.

CSGT 2 Sustainable Residential Communities

Promote the development of appropriate and serviced lands to provide for high quality, well laid out and well landscaped sustainable residential communities with an appropriate mix of housing types and densities, together with complementary land uses such as community facilities, local services and public transport facilities, to serve the residential population of Clifden settlement plan. Protect existing residential amenities and facilitate compatible and appropriately designed new infill development, in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the settlement plan. Specifically encourage living over the shop which can contribute to the vitality of the core and extend activity beyond business hours.

CSGT 3 Community Facilities and Services

To encourage and support the expansion and development of existing community facilities and services to meet the needs of the local community.

CSGT 4 Business & Enterprise

To facilitate the expansion of businesses and enterprises uses in the plan area of Clifden where appropriate and to facilitate the provision of further local employment opportunities in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

CSGT 5 Tourism Development

- a) Promote and facilitate the further development of Clifden as a key tourist destination for the benefit of the town and its surrounding areas.
- b) To support and facilitate in co-operation with relevant bodies and landowners, the provision of tourism amenity routes around the town.

c) Encourage and assist the development of the sustainable tourism potential within Clifden in a manner that respects, builds on, protects and enhances the cultural, built, architectural, archaeological and heritage significance of the town including natural heritage and biodiversity, and its local amenities.

CSGT 6 Agriculture

To support the development of these lands for agricultural purposes and limit residential development on the subject lands in accordance with policy objective SGT 10.

CSGT 7 Public Infrastructure

(Support and encourage infrastructural development and improvement works that benefit Clifden as SGT and the wider Conamara region

CSGT 8 Pedestrian and Cycle Network

Encourage and support the development of a series of pedestrian and cycle routes linking the residential areas to the town centre and local community services where feasible.

CSGT 9 Amenity Network

Support the delivery of the Connemara Greenway Project as well as the establishment of an accessible network of greenway linkages and amenities that provide safe and attractive circulation routes for pedestrians and cyclists for the enjoyment and recreational use of the entire community and visitors to the town.

CSGT 10 Show Grounds

To ensure the long-term protection and management of this important facility, to support and encourage the maintenance and/or improvement of the grounds.

CSGT 11 Opportunity Sites

To promote and encourage the appropriate re-development of the opportunity sites identified below, which will contribute to the vitality and character of Clifden.

Only water compatible Community Use development will be permitted on the lands zoned for Community Use in the west of the Plan area that overlap with Flood Zones A and B (refer to Land Use Zoning Map).

OPT - CL1 Grain Store, Beach Road, Clifden

Brief Description: An attached five-bay four-storey former warehouse, built 1829, now derelict, with exposed rubble limestone walls, rendered to south-west gable, and having roughly dressed quoins. Located on quayside.

Area: The site area measures circa. 0.043 hectares

Zoning: The site is zoned Tourism.

Current Land-Use: Derelict – previous use as a warehouse.

Opportunity: To provide for a mix of uses capable of accommodating tourism, residential, commercial or a mixed-use development.



OPT - CL2 Vacant Chapel, Clifden

Brief Description: Combined former Methodist chapel and manse, built c.1860. Three-bay double height chapel to west end over basement and two-bay two-storey residence and schoolroom.

Area: The site area measures circa. 0.13 hectares

Zoning: The site is zoned Town Centre.

Current Land-Use: Vacant– previous use as residence and chapel .

Opportunity: To provide for a mix of uses capable of accommodating tourism, residential, commercial or a mixed-use development.



OPT - CL3 Vacant retail premises, Market Street, Clifden

Brief Description: Two storey building on the main shopping promenade, weak façade, incongruous on street scene, currently vacant.

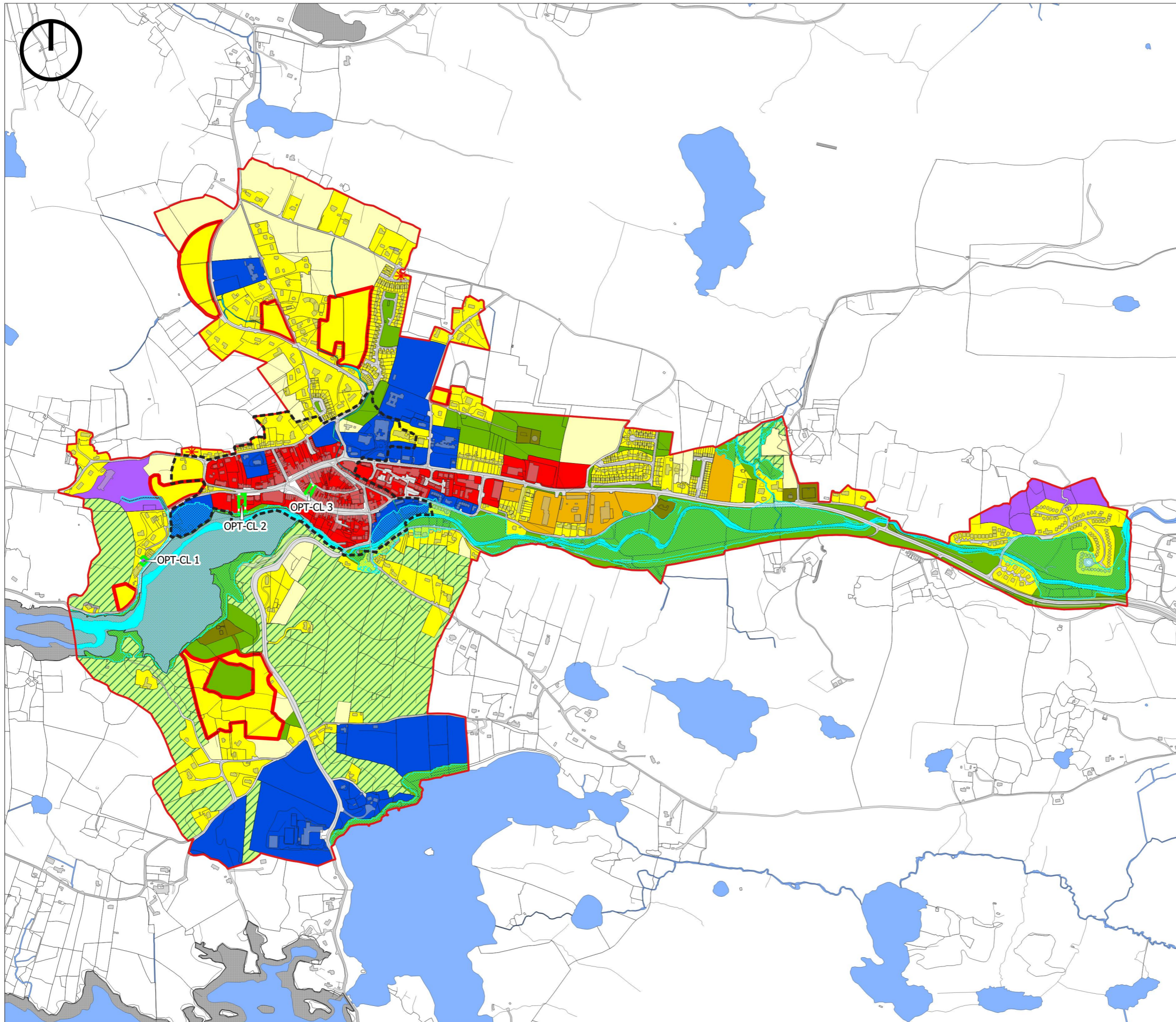
Area: The site area measures circa. 0.06 hectares














Zoning: The site is zoned Town Centre.

Current Land-Use: Vacant– previous use as retail outlet.

Opportunity: To provide for a mix of uses capable of accommodating residential/ retail, commercial or a mixed-use development. The overall development proposal for the site shall include a detailed design justification and the potential for façade improvements. The existing building façade is incongruous in the street scene and represents a negative visual impact within the ACA.

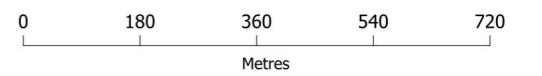




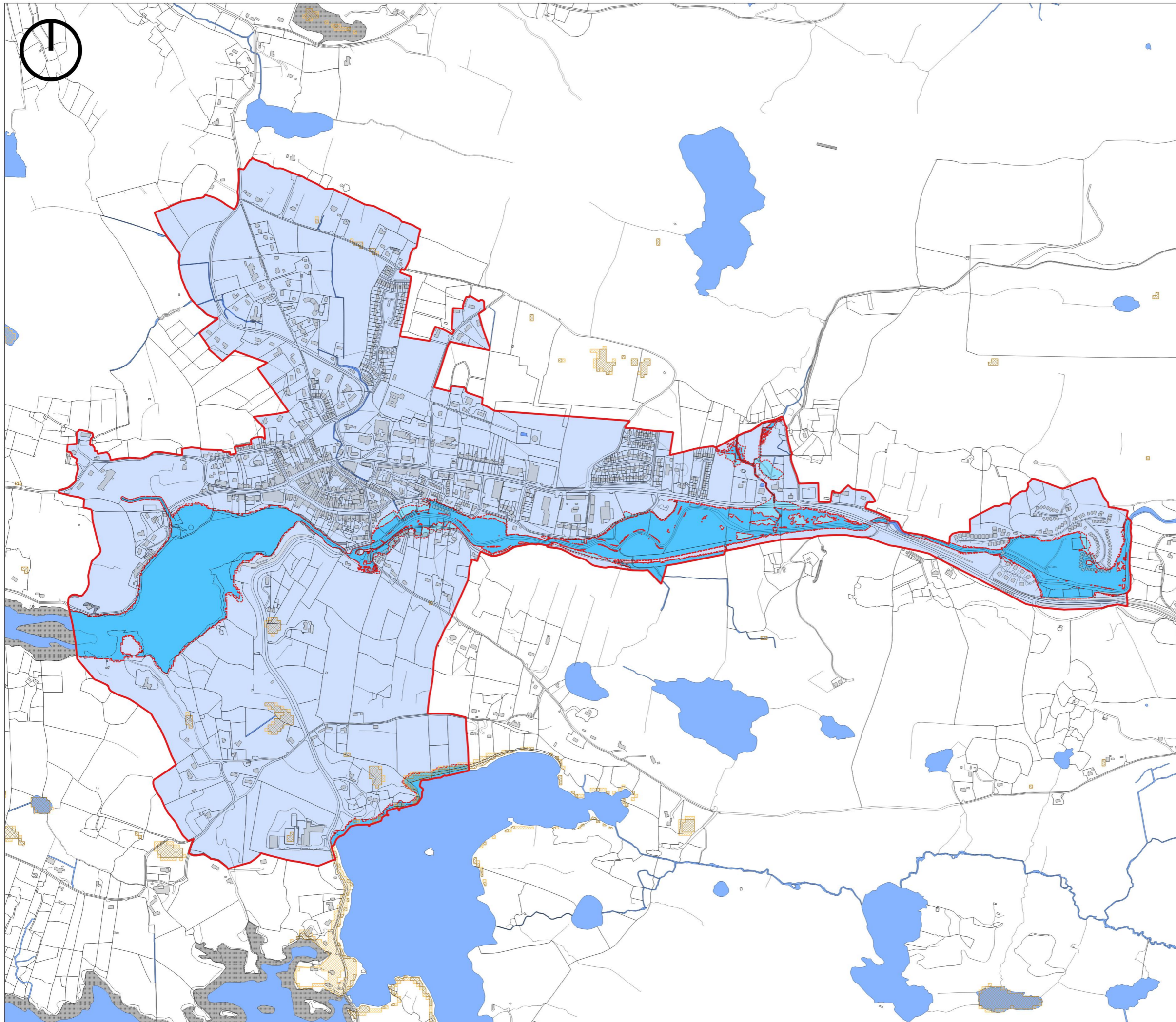
-  Settlement Boundary
-  R - Residential Existing
-  R - Residential (Phase 1)
-  R - Residential (Phase 2)
-  R - Residential Infill
-  C1 - Town Centre
-  BE - Business & Enterprise
-  T - Tourism
-  CF - Community Facilities
-  PU - Public Utility
-  OS - Open Space/Recreation & Amenity
-  A - Agriculture
-  TI - Transport Infrastructure
-  Water/Rivers/Streams
-  Constrained Land Use
-  Architectural Conservation Area
-  Opportunity Site

**Galway County Development Plan
2022-2028**

**Small Growth Town
Clifden
Land Use Zoning Map**



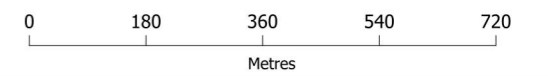
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-  Settlement Boundary
-  Indicative Flood Zone A
-  Indicative Flood Zone B
-  Indicative Flood Zone C
-  PFRA Pluvial Indicative
-  PFRA Pluvial Extreme
-  Water

**Galway County Development Plan
2022-2028**

**Small Growth Town
Clifden
Flood Risk Management**



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