

Ballina Town & Environs LAP 2021-2027



**Ballina
Chamber**
Advancing business together

MAY 19

**Ballina Chamber of Commerce
Submission**



Introduction

Ballina is a town blessed with a richness of natural resources and beautiful landscapes, but also challenged by lesser economic opportunity, high unemployment and social disadvantage. Like others, Ballina has had to face the harsh reality of the impact of Covid-19 restrictions - recent development momentum has stalled, and the significant progress in terms of tourism development and promotion has been disrupted. There is real fear about what lies ahead for the economic future of our community.

However, in that change lies opportunity.

The pause in our traditional economic, community and social patterns has allowed the green shoots of change to thrive in Ballina, making space for an already emerging grass roots momentum that has been working quietly, inclusively and effectively, with commitment, driven by a conviction that we, as a community, can work together to make our town greener and a better place to live, work and enjoy.

These initiatives reach the full spectrum of our community. It has become abundantly clear that in order to succeed and achieve the best outcomes for our community and our future, the town must work harder to unify, combining its strengths across the commercial, public, community and voluntary sectors.

There is a unanimous agreement that the people of Ballina want to enhance its presentation, cleanliness and biodiversity, lessen our burden on the economy and improve our quality of life. Ballina has committed to working toward becoming Ireland's Greenest Town by 2025 of which Ballina Chamber is very much supportive of. In doing so, we will also reach out and involve our neighbours in Ballina's wider hinterland. We recognise that we are inter-dependent, and that the opportunities afforded Ballina must also benefit our neighbours.

Achieving this means being honest with ourselves; looking back and learning from the past, recognising the achievements of the present, and looking towards the future with optimism and ambition, and a generosity of spirit that allows for constructive conversations and shared growth, both personal and professional.

Ballina has proudly taken control of its destiny and is facing its challenges through active citizenship at all ages. It has strived to achieve an increased presence on decision-making forums with the local authority, ensuring our grass roots and leadership are aligned in their actions and vision.

We are working together in new ways to give all of our community a voice and a role in shaping the future we want to see for our town. It is early in the journey, and many of us are learning as we go, but enthusiasm, optimism and work-rate levels are high.

Ballina is rising and like many of the submissions into the LAP, we all want to contribute, be apart of this future for our town and region.

We request that Mayo County Council and Ballina Municipal District continue to support the Ballina Tourist Office and Ballina Chamber of Commerce, ensuring the office remains operational, so that it can continue to promote and provide invaluable information to visitors and businesses as well as provide two of only a few public toilets in the town. Supporting Mayo North Tourism Promotions Office and Ballina Salmon Festival Office, the absence of a tourist office in Ballina-Salmon Capital of Ireland, would be catastrophic and counterproductive to the existing ten years work already committed be Ballina Chamber and its strategic alliances and collaborative partners.

Population and Housing – Town Centre Living Expansion

Future housing supply in the town must be provided in a sustainable manner; with reference to the 773 approx new houses identified as been the number necessary to meet the expected population rise.

It is felt this housing number is not anyway near the required number of houses needed by 2027, as there is already a housing shortage in Ballina and its environs in 2020/2021.

Residential planning and zoning needs to be expanded as per the current plan.

Review Ballina town (5km radius)

<https://www.maps.ie/draw-radius-circle-map/?lat=54.1135624090199&lng=-9.155044555664064&radius=5000>

Ballina Town Centre Health Check Ballina, which is due to be launched in May 2021, as attached;

As referenced in Ballina Town Centre Health Check pg 8, Ballina Town Centre 2019, Land Use (Ground Floor Units)

80% occupancy rate

19% retail vacancy

20% complete vacancy

27% of surveyed units were classified as retail

Breakdown of activities in Ballina Town Centre

30% Residential

27% Retail

20% Vacant

8% Leisure Services

6% Financial and Business Services

4% Public Service

2% Health and Medical Services

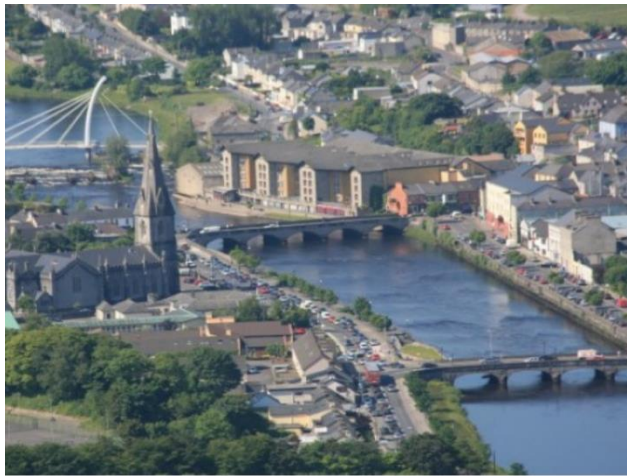
1% Religious Service

1% Storage and Warehouse

We recommend that projects should be focused around themes of Town Centre Living Expansion – housing sector incentivisation in town centres;

- There is potential to utilise the unoccupied space for town centre living, encourage living above businesses apartments and homes, not necessarily turn vacant buildings into housing opportunities, However encourage the space that is already there or in use, as a more cost effective way in creating a town first living environment for young and old and in doing so, re-energise the town centre, by activating the town by creating a heart in the town centre
- When developments e.g. housing have occurred at the edge or away from towns they are not often building in the appropriate local services or transport variety and become car-dependent neighbourhoods. This has resulted in excess and less active travel and issues around sustainability of public transport services.
- The current system can be environmentally damaging, impacting negatively on many people's lives and on town centres.
- The overall economy needs to consider aspects of digital infrastructure and development, the scope for housing, of a variety of forms, including accessible housing and homes in Ballina town centre, and on the need to develop local, small business and community enterprises and businesses to build resilience and engagement.
- The housing sector could be incentivised to prioritise town centre living, both to increase the volume (potentially setting proportion of housing in town centres and support 10-minute neighbourhoods)

- and the mix (social, affordable, mixed tenure).
- Town Centre Living Expansion: Rejuvenated town centres with more people living in them with accessible and affordable housing is a central part of this overall ambition.



"WE HAVE TO GIVE BALLINA THE OPPORTUNITY TO ACHIEVE ITS FULL POTENTIAL, SO THAT IT CAN BE A SUSTAINABLE, FAIRER, HEALTHIER, GREENER TOWN, NOT ONLY FOR US, BUT FOR OUR CHILDREN AND OUR CHILDRENS CHILDREN."

Gerry Lusk, President Ballina Chamber of Commerce 2021

museum
presidential archive
research facility
events venue

THE
MARY ROBINSON
CENTRE



BALLINA
GREEN TOWN



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Compact Growth – Key Development Area/Regeneration

Regional Development

The Regional and Economic Strategy (RSES) adopted in January 2020 by the Northern and Western Regional Assembly (NWRA) identifies Ballina as a Key Town, with the aim of delivering significant compact growth. The consolidation of Ballina's vibrant town centre will be key in achieving this goal. Ballina is an independent town, sole driver of its economic success, with a strong enterprise-base in its town centre. The RSES seeks to enhance that business base by improving the area around Market Square, the Military Barracks and the riverside of the Moy, creating the right conditions for businesses to thrive.

Ballina Chamber recommends that the Military Barracks encompass remote working space and hot desking, as there is a genuine need for office space albeit not necessarily space to lease on a long term basis, but space that could be offered up to enterprises who wish to use office space on an ad hoc basis.

It is also recommended that the Military Barracks open space be transformed into an open public realm space, ideal for urban animation when the project is complete. (Not return to car parking services)

In the interim, it is recommended the market square become a space for the public, prioritise people over cars. Create a space for young and old to enjoy, and as Ballina is very fortunate to have a town centre open space, this area needs to be sympathetic to the demands of the citizens of the town.

Ballina Farmers Market has great opportunity to flourish, and grow and after a pilot project organised by Ballina Chamber over Christmas 2020; Pop Up Christmas market, it was found demand is high for a semi indoor/outdoor space to accommodate crafters, artisan food producers etc. It is recommended Ballina Municipal District consider a number of spaces to accommodate Ballina Farmers market, as there is an abundance of crafters and food

producers in North Mayo eager to rent stands and or space e.g. Kilcullen's Water works, or perhaps Barretts open space on Barrett St.

Additionally Kilcullens Water works, Pearse St, is an area that must be considered for future development and growth and would be ideal for a number of projects including; Craft beer brewery, Farmers Market or a community wealth building.



As per the recently launched Ballina / North Mayo Growth Cluster Study (BNMGCS) outlines a high level strategy, Vision 2030 –

North Mayo Economic Gateway to ‘unlock’ opportunities to further develop the established linkages and synergies between Ballina, classified a ‘Key Town’ within the Northern and Western Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy, regional settlements and the Regional Growth Centre of Sligo.

Ballina Chamber supports the implementation of the North Mayo Economic Gateway, as recommended in the Ballina / North Mayo Growth Cluster Study;

“This will in part be achieved through the promotion of, investment in and continued consolidation of the Atlantic Economic Corridor and other emerging regional economic drivers in delivering critical partnerships and collaborations to enable new high-potential businesses to enter markets and expand unimpeded within the region.” See attached AEC recommendations and presentation to Chambers along the AEC.

Ballina Chamber propose and correlates the recommendations of the AEC vision and the Ballina / North Mayo Growth Cluster Study in creating a future focus for Ballina and its environs

Town Centre Regeneration

A Town centre plan needs to be developed and implemented with the local community and with a focus and commitment on the wellbeing of people, the planet and the economy;

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- (a) Town Centre Living Expansion– housing sector incentivization in town centres
 - (b) Digital Skills and Use in Towns – skills development for businesses and enterprises and extended uses of various technologies to understand and change behaviours in town centres
 - (c) Enterprising Communities – Strategic Acquisition Fund to alter ownership, development and use patterns in town centres to encourage local small business, community enterprises and entrepreneurship around local and circular economies
 - (d) Climate Change Response – building on existing programmes in Climate Action Towns, micro-generation, retrofitting of town centres buildings and the alteration of space in town centres for active travel, pedestrian movement, green space and social settings, with a view to enhancing the resilience of town centres against climate change.

Community Wealth Building:

Consider places where community can shape their own future. Where interventions and investments support local businesses, and decisions are taken for the benefit of the whole community.

With anchor collaborations acting as local agents of change, making their collective financial power work for their local places. Places that are not only successful in retaining and attracting population but also in attracting and retaining wealth within their communities.

Community Led Regeneration:

Places where communities take coordinated action to respond to local challenges and opportunities. Places that are physically changing to reflect the concerns and aspirations of the people who live there.

With strong, local controlled, enterprising community organisations owning and developing land and buildings to meet local priorities. Places where local people are making local change happen.

Ballina 10-Minute Neighbourhoods:

Places that provide easy, convenient access to most of the services and facilities that you need in your daily life. Being able to live and work locally, pursuing opportunities, learning and wellbeing in your own neighbourhood. Being supported and cared for locally in a place that offers quality of life in nurturing and sustainable surroundings. With local infrastructures, active travel networks, and the connections which make it possible to bring together essential activities from across the sectors, located at the heart of communities.

Town Centre Action:

Healthier, greener and more sustainable urban and rural centres, where social renewal and economic recovery is evident on the ground. Remade places which directly respond to the specific needs of their local communities. With reimagined high streets where public, third, community and business sector activities are clustered – generating footfall, social interaction, economic activity and a shared purpose, Town centres which are lived in and enjoyed by the whole community. Surely this is possible for our town and community ?

It is proposed that a Town Centre Plan needs to be developed and implemented with the local community and with a focus and commitment on the wellbeing of people, the planet and the economy.

Building the Future

It is a shared vision and future where people are prioritized, where household energy consumers become energy producers, where nature blends with our town, is rejuvenated and thrives, where you are never more than 10mins by bike from where you want to be and where products and produce are produced locally and sustainability!

Economic Impact of Covid on Mayo, to consider when implementing town centre rejuvenation. We must change our way of thinking, embrace new opportunities afforded to our town, as Ballina is ideally placed in that it never developed outside of the town centre, this is now to the benefit of the business community and those wanting to live in the town centre.

Latest available statistics capturing the economic impact of COVID-19 in Mayo:

- 13,150 people that are living in Mayo were in receipt of the Pandemic Unemployment Payment (PUP) as of the 31st of January 2021 .
- 7,884 employees that work for an employer based in Mayo, were in receipt of the Employment Wage Subsidy Scheme (EWSS) as of January 2021 .
- 49.7 per cent of Mayo's commercial units were operating in the sectors that were likely to be the worst affected from the public health measures; with these businesses likely to be experiencing significant economic disruption. This was above the corresponding national average of 46 per cent.
- All towns in Mayo were likely to be experiencing greater economic disruption compared to the national norm. For example, 53.4% of commercial units operating in Claremorris were likely to be experiencing significant economic disruption, and this was followed by Castlebar at 50.4 per cent, Ballina at 48.9 per cent, Ballinrobe at 48.3 per cent and Ballyhaunis at 46.4 per cent. All of these ratios were above the corresponding national average of 46 per cent.

Links to information below

- PUP source: (<https://data.cso.ie/table/LRW03>)
- EWSS source: (<https://www.revenue.ie/en/corporate/documents/statistics/registrations/covid-19-support-schemes-statistics-11-february-2021.pdf>)
- COVID-19 Regional Economic Analysis: (<https://www.nwra.ie/news/coronavirus-the-towns-most-economically-at-risk/>)

In conclusion Ballina Chamber recommends that by empowering Enterprising Communities – Strategic Acquisition Fund to support ownership, development and use patterns in town centres to encourage local small business, community enterprises and entrepreneurship around local and circular economies, we can strive to ensure the future of our town is supported.

Consider making better use of vacant buildings, consider contacting the owners and enforcing penalties on owners of derelict unkept buildings, and ensure those who wish to develop existing buildings are supported by Council staff, remove the barriers and assist the entrepreneurs who want to move Ballina forward.

Economic and Employment

In accordance with the Ballina / North Mayo Growth Cluster Study, and as recommended by Ballina Chamber, we recommend that revitalising the Ballina Town Core gives the town the greatest opportunity for economic growth and employment in the region, as per the report;

Ballina and its surrounding hinterlands have historically struggled to incentivise business to relocate to the region which has consequently resulted in high commercial vacancy rates and under-utilised industrial / commercial space, lack of high quality shop brands and pockets of deprivation around Ballina. These challenges have been further compounded by economic competition with Galway, Sligo and the Castlebar-Westport Growth Cluster and insufficient regional road infrastructure, which has restricted connectivity both within the region and to larger business hubs in the country, e.g. Dublin.

These same challenges represent significant opportunities to regenerate Ballina and should be exploited:

- Availability of investment commercial properties for businesses and anticipated remote working satellite sites;
- Availability and access to a skilled workforce;
- Established utility services;
- Opportunities to identify and tailor economic ecosystems for specific industries, particularly tourism (history, outdoor pursuits, wildlife and biodiversity education) and the digital /entrepreneurial start-up economy.

In order to pursue these opportunities, a long term vision for Ballina, which exploits its strengths and acknowledges its weaknesses, will need to be developed through joint-up thinking and planning.

The Ballina Town Centre Consumer Survey (Nov. 2019, see attached), undertaken as part of the Collaborative Town Centre Health Check Programme, noted the following key findings regarding Ballina's economic landscape:

- Retail is the highest driver of visits to Ballina Town Centre; however, only half of the respondents rated the town as good or excellent for parking or traffic flow;
- The vast majority of respondents visit Ballina regularly (87% visit once a week).
- Castlebar, Sligo and Galway are the town's biggest competitors; however, respondents noted visiting these towns less than once a month;
- Close to 75% respondents feel that tourism sector is strong within the town with a general vibrancy and wide range of events;
- 18-34 year olds are less likely to come to the town centre for shopping with 1 in 5 respondents noting a lack of shops catering for young people / modern ware; major opportunity, and
- The people of Ballina are mentioned as the most likable feature of the town (28%)

Green Economy Objectives

Ballina Chamber of Commerce proposes a greater emphasis on a green economy for the county and the chamber makes particular reference to Ballina, as it and its strategic partners works towards – Irelands Greenest Town initiative, and the Chamber has particular focus on Ballina commitment to becoming a Decarbonising Zone.

Particular focus must be placed on and recorded in the county development plan with the Investment focus to drive a Low Carbon High Value county;

- Investment focus on direct, indirect or leveraged sustainable use of natural resources
- Investment in alternative use of land to support environmentally balanced use, carbon sequestration, local high value food, amenity and protection of air, water and wildlife.
- Infrastructure investment in the Marine to support Tourism, Marine Services, near shore access to bio and food resources and off shore multi-purpose platforms to support wave and wind energy generation and the development of the low carbon network to support the future use of bio-gas and hydrogen.
- Focus industry investment on large “brown and Green field” sites to leverage public and private investment to create integrated infrastructure hubs and LCHV conversion plants for key technologies and sectors.
- Align Private and Community Enterprise investment to LCHV sector investments, new blue and green technologies targeted to natural resource use , environmental protection and the mitigation of emissions.
- Increase development of social enterprise, aligned to Local Authority investment, in all Service sectors including Tourism and associated traded services to increase the value of tourism, improve lifestyle through flexible working and community services, and generate unique local low carbon economies.

Ballina Chamber suggests that Mayo County Council alongside AEC commit to;

“We the People must own and develop a sustainable economic future for ourselves and future generations”

Ensure the Ballina /North Mayo Cluster Growth study is identified and included as a strategic and future plan for Ballina and the North Mayo region to be included and identified in the Mayo County Development Plan 2021 – 2027 .

In accordance with the Mayo County Development Plan; To explore the feasibility of seeking the designation of the former Asahi Plant and adjoining lands outside of Killala as a Strategic Development Zone. Highlight this as a high priority for the county and indeed North Mayo South Sligo region.

Tourism and Recreation

Ballina Chamber of Commerce supports Ballina Lions Club recommendations that the Ballina Town and Environs Local Area Plan (LAP) includes a strong commitment to elements of the recently completed Moy Estuary Development Strategy ‘A Shared Vision’, launched July 2020.

Ballina Chamber supports the LAP applying the Moy Estuary Strategy as a key source to support delivery of key infrastructural enhancements required to achieve its strategic aims. This would demonstrate a clear commitment to the Growth Ambitions of ‘Creating a Great Place to Live’ and engagement with ‘Innovative People.

The Strategy identifies key projects that will realise strong economic return from the regions natural, cultural and heritage-based assets. It provides an agreed and collaborative framework for the sustainable growth of the areas tourism industry.

Over 300 individuals and organisations were consulted and actively participated in building the Strategy, including businesses, community organisations, statutory bodies, local authorities (Mayo & Sligo County Councils) and individuals.

While supporting Ballina Lions Club, Ballina Chamber also makes its own submissions to the LAP for consideration in the development of Tourism and Recreation in Ballina town and its environs; Ballina Chamber strongly supports projects such as,

1. Ballina to Enniscrone Greenway

Greenways are a proven visitor concept generating overnights, visitor spend and become a signature attractor for an area. The principle objective is to create a linear Greenway linking Killala – Ballina – Enniscrone along the River Moy.

The consensus through all consultations for a Hero Theme is:

‘Development of an off-road mixed-use Greenway linking Killala – Ballina – Enniscrone which opens up the river Moy and its coastal attributes and heritage to local people and visitors to the area.

The Monasteries of the Moy Greenway from Belleek to Killala is already under construction. Commitment to the development of the Ballina to Enniscrone Greenway compliments the Monasteries Greenway and offers a unique, iconic, off road, mixed use, modern touristic infrastructure linking and supporting three towns (Ballina, Killala and Enniscrone). The project is market-place stand out tourist offering at national and international level and closely associates with the market proposition of the ‘Wild Atlantic Way’.

Ballina Chamber recommends the LAP commits to this long-term strategic project constructed on a phased basis as investment becomes available & sections of the project are ready to proceed.

2. Bridge at Ballina Quays

To further reinforce the opportunity for a Ballina Enniscrone greenway, it is recommended by Ballina Chamber a feasibility study be conducted with the view to developing a pedestrian bridge across the Moy at the Quay area that links the Greenway between Killala, Ballina and Enniscrone

3. Ballina Quay/Harbour Area

The Quay area at Ballina is one of magnificent natural scenic beauty. The place has massive local utility and touristic potential and remains undeveloped. The Moy Estuary Strategy proposes that the area becomes a central activity hub and civic space for marine, sporting, cultural, visitor, civic and family leisure experiences to ensure this remarkable space is used to its full potential.

Ballina Chamber recommend that the LAP commits to the development of the Quay area within the lifetime of the Plan 2021 – 2027.

It should be noted local community groups have mobilised to commence delivery of initiatives that support the Moy Estuary Strategy suggestions and conclusions (e.g. Ballina Rowing Club). The prioritisation of deliverables by Mayo County Council should endeavour to support these efforts.

Inter alia the development of the Quay space and Ballina town centre should include consideration and implementation of the following:

Short-Term Developments

- Signage, there is poor signage leading into and around the town, identifying points of interest to visitors and locals ! e.g. Ballina Tourist Office.
- Improved river access for sports and boating
- Public toilets and changing area for water sport

- More Public Services for locals and visitors to include; public toilets and more bins.
- More Doggie poo bins around the town, disposable bags and dispensers
- More Bins in Belleek Forest, we recognise this maybe under the jurisdiction of Coillte, but we continue to recommend additional bins and around Belleek Heritage Walk and start to the Greenway
- Adequate Cycling infrastructure to include cycling docs and more cycle friendly spaces in town and the environs, supporting Ballina 10 minute neighbourhood, reduction in carbon omissions, healthy Ireland projects

Medium Term Developments

- Seating and public realm landscaping, reference Ballina Town Centre Health Check
- Static visitor information point and orientation signage
- Picnic area in the Quay area/Canalside area of town

Long-Term Developments

- Outdoor adventure activity/centre support/storage facilities
- Outdoor performance space, based in Ballina town centre-Market Square, Military Barracks, The Quay and Canalside space, encourage Urban animation through available public space
- Town schools having dedicated cycleways
- **Ensure the final remaining town centre green space in public ownership has been designated as a town centre park, which will create a green biodiversity corridor in the town centre. This project is a part of a joint motion by all Ballina Councillors to improve biodiversity and carbon sequestration in Ballina.**
- Ballina's vision is to become a 10min town, creating transformational walking and cycling infrastructure, which will connect communities with schools, amenities and workplaces.

4. Implementation/Administrative/Marketing

The Moy Estuary Development Strategy identified the need for a distinct Marketing Strategy for the Moy Estuary and North Mayo. The desired Visitor Experience and Product actions were outlined with a table of costs in the Ballina Lions Club Moy Estuary plan, to run in conjunction with Mayo North Tourism and steering committee objectives, Mayo County Council Tourism Strategy, Failte Ireland's marketing strategy for the county and North West Tourism Marketing Strategy.

The outline of a Marketing Strategy and Implementation Structure with attendant costs were outlined in the Moy Estuary Plan. This included make up of Steering Group Implementation and Support Partners .

The Local Authorities are tasked with taking a strong leadership and commitment position in the action plan including provision of resources and expertise.

Provision of infrastructure without attendant commitment to Marketing will lead to dilution of economic impact of investment and reduction in job creation and job stability.

5. Ballina Salmon Weir

Consideration should be given to creating a Salmon Weir visitor experience;

The Ballina Salmon Weir has stood at the mouth of the River Moy for over three hundred years. Originally built in the 16th Century, the weir has functioned since that time as a means of harvesting salmon that were channelled into one of the weirs nine holding boxes as they made their way upstream to spawn. Commercial exploitation of salmon on the River Moy has ceased and the structure has been refurbished and modified (2011) to accommodate a series of electronic fish counters whose function is to provide valuable information on salmon stocks which is used in the conservation of the species.

This ancient Ballina landmark, protected structure, is replete with a significant heritage and historical legacy and is now married with, state of the art, technology to ensure sustainable management of salmon stocks into the future. One way to achieve this is develop the existing infrastructure to, safely, take touring parties out into the centre of the river standing feet above the rushing turbulent waters to view salmon in their natural environment, in an old fashioned holding box, as utilised for hundreds of years. This is the kind of 'experience' Failte Ireland recommend when developing tourism products. Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) employees already use the structure to walk to the middle of the river, so the basic infrastructure already exists.

The idea is the brainchild of Michael Hogan who mentioned it at the public consultation meetings in conjunction with the Moy Estuary Development Strategy report.

The project has been discussed, on site, with local IFI management staff. The reaction was very positive. The IFI are committed to projects where organisations and local communities join in common purpose. Projects embedded in heritage and history and affording an opportunity for outreach and education are very attractive to IFI.

Such a project should be considered and implemented in the LAP, bringing the potential project to light but also making the project a reality with the support of funding, local authority backing or indeed support through public and private backing

6. Motor Home Parking facility

In order to combat illegal motorhome parking in the town, for example at Ballina Arts Centre car park, Sonas Nursing home Moyridge, it is recommended a specific motor home parking facility in one of the lesser used town car parks be introduced, for example at Bachelors Walk car park. An example of such a facility is in 'Five Foot Way Car Park' Cobh, County Cork, Ireland. Charging €10 a night with services such as Chemical toilet discharge and Waste water discharge, with good access to Ballina town, proximity to the river and CCTV in operation, this could be an additional revenue generating opportunity for the Municipal District

7. Hostel accommodation

It has been identified by tourist office the need for a quality hostel accommodation in the town centre. It is recommended by Ballina Chamber that the local authority encourage such an enterprise or indeed similar new enterprises by offering additional business supports in the form of rate wavers, and in support of the Small business support scheme. Ballina Chamber recommends that the local authority continue to encourage and reach out to potential new businesses, underlining that Ballina town and its environs is a great place to invest, and move and live west.

Movement & Transport

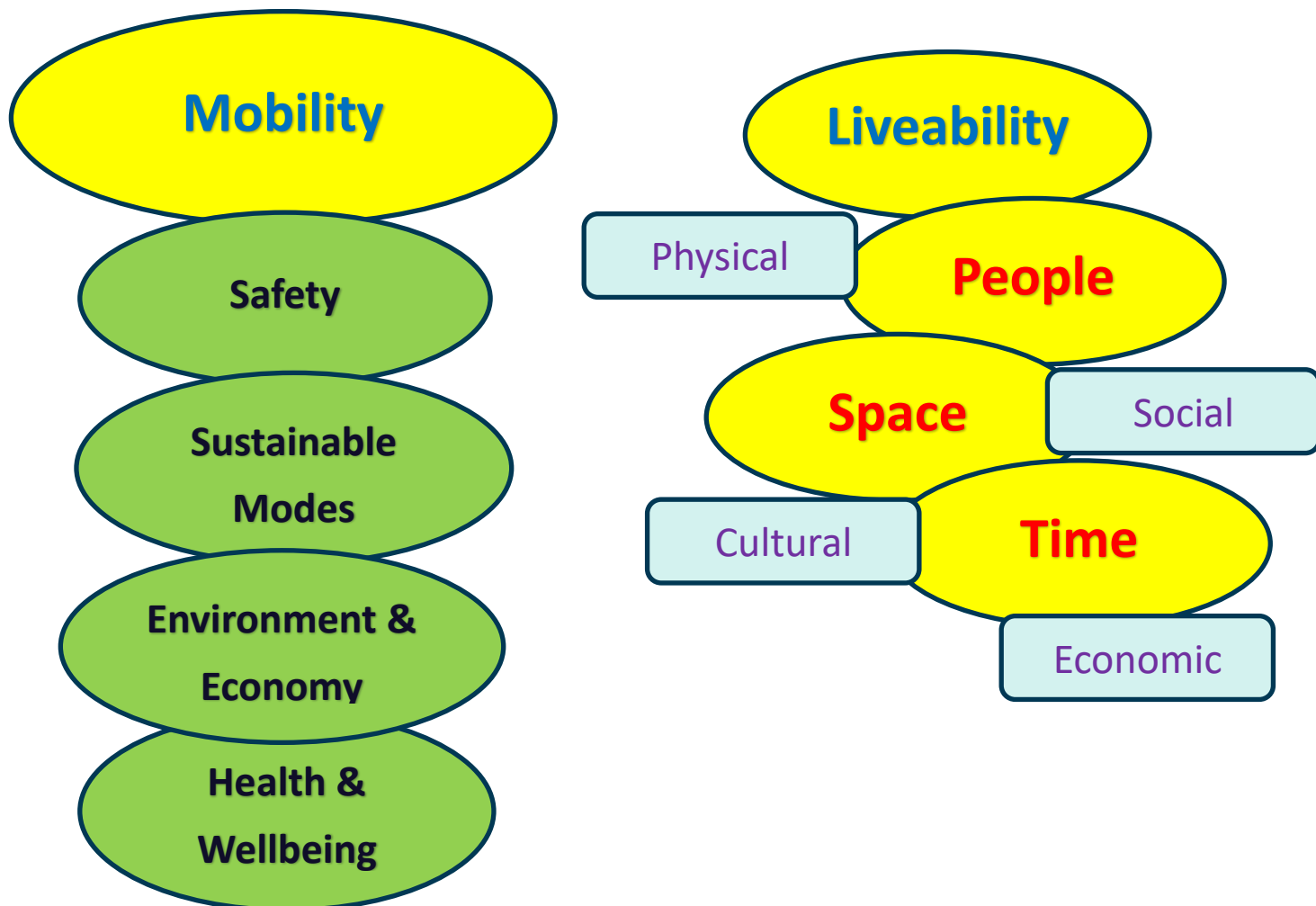
The Ballina Green Town initiative is a community inspired and driven initiative that aims to make Ballina Ireland's Greenest town by 2025. The vision includes five interdependent core areas - Energy, Mobility, Economy, Ecology and People. Ballina Camber recommends the following for consideration;

- Major changes in towns and cities throughout the world, research what other countries/cities are doing,
- 15-minute City in Paris, Superblocks in Barcelona, Town Centres First in Scotland – all pre-date the pandemic,
- Town Centres First (Irish Government Policy) – focuses on Activity (social, economic & cultural), Attractiveness and Accessibility,
- Challenges with high street retail, with increasing competition from online retailers, working from home & fall-off in visitors,

- Growing body of research that shows that investment in the public realm, including providing better facilities for walking & cycling, not only provides more people-friendly places, but can significantly increase retail sales,
- Climate action means that we need to make our urban spaces more climate-resilient – meet challenges of increased rainfall, more storms, increasing temperatures, rising sea-levels, etc.
- Vehicle congestion in our towns and cities comes at a significant economic cost:

Dublin 6th most congested city in Europe /Congestion est. €350m in 2017 & projected €2 billion in 2033

Consider this..Mobility & Liveability



To consider when reviewing Mobility v Liveability in Ballina:

- One-way system for vehicles, widened footpaths, expanded public space and cycling facilities
- Review and include space for public seating, outdoor dining and queuing for retail,
- Heritage Town - placemaking and public realm improvements, highlight the towns rich heritage-possible town heritage trail,
- Ballina's vision is to become a 10min town, creating transformational walking and cycling infrastructure, which will connect communities with schools, amenities and workplaces.
- Use the engaged business & residential community of Ballina.

Coastal Mobility Route

Consider and highlight the Monasteries of the Moy Greenway, providing an important linkage between Killala and Ballina as both a tourism route and a visitor attraction involving Rathfran, Moyne and Rosserk monasteries and Tobar Mhuire Holy Well at Rosserk. Further investment in developing and enhancing greenways within North Mayo will improve regional connectivity while simultaneously providing the food, beverage and hospitality industries situated along these routes greater opportunities to attract customers.

Road Projects in Co. Mayo

National Routes | Non-National Roads Objectives

Make considerations and highlight the need for support towards the N26: Ballina Chamber of Commerce input into the National Development Plan

Ballina Chamber and the Chamber network have made clear and concise recommendations to the review of the [review of the National Development Plan](#) (NDP). Chambers Ireland and the network have been calling on Government to significantly increase levels of spending on infrastructure as the best way to protect our economy from the threat of Brexit, to support continued growth and improve quality of life. We welcome the target to bring Ireland from one of the lowest levels of capital investment in the EU to among the highest by 2024.

With particular emphasis on the N26, the lack of investment in this national primary road over a forty year period for the business community of Ballina and North Mayo, means the lack of infrastructural investment in particular and continued isolation the business community experience in North Mayo, has given rise to a two tier society; those struggling to do business and live along the Atlantic Economy Corridor, in particular the North West of Ireland and those outside of the region.

The Business community of North Mayo demand a more strategic approach to the allocation of infrastructural investment so that we can all operate on a level playing field. After a forty year wait, and decades of lobbying, we demand the N26 be prioritised for investment.

'We have to strengthen our infrastructure, our physical and our technical infrastructure, roads and broadband.'

And while this is not a specific Mayo County Council directive we would expect the local authority to support and identify the lack of infrastructural investment in North Mayo in particular on the N26, in the Mayo County Development Plan 2021 – 2027 and Ballina LAP, as a means of recognising it as a primary concern for the region and the county.

Rail

To support the enhancement of rail services to Dublin and commuter services between Ballina,

To liaise with and encourage Iarnród Éireann to: (a) Continue investment in rail freight facilities at Ballina.

Ballina Chamber has identified this as a huge potential for Ballina and North Mayo; freight services into Ballina and welcomes this in the Mayo County Development Plan 2021 – 2027, Ballina LAP but also recognises this submission and project as a bigger development opportunity for the county and warrants a more in depth acknowledgement in the county development plan.

In Conclusion to make spaces vibrant and active we need to ensure people can get from A (Home/Work) to B (Town), and then spend dwell time in the town. Absolutely Cycling and Walking is vital to this, but in many towns the absence of a functional public transport system means cars are still required. It must be considered “Can we create more pedestrian friendly towns without public transport investment first?”

Infrastructure Services

Growth Ambition:

Ballina Chamber recommends that provision and maintenance of economic infrastructure, such as energy, water, and wastewater, are key to delivering compact growth and a connected, vibrant, inclusive, resilient and smart region.

Social & Community Facilities

Recreation Facilities and Provision Objectives

To support and facilitate the provision for the development of an indoor all-weather multi-sport dome for Ballina to serve clubs and organisations in North Mayo/ West Sligo.

It must be noted that Ballina Chamber working alongside St Muredach’s College and sporting clubs which also include Ballina Stephenites GAA Club and Ardnaree Sarsfields GAA Club, supports this objective and would greatly boost the sporting activities of our young people, more emphasis should be placed on this in the submission document.

Town Centre and Retail

Over history, town centres have been the heart of a town providing shared social, cultural and economic benefit to many citizens through work, residence, municipal and commercial activities as well as civic and other, including green spaces. In early 2020 the COVID-19 pandemic struck with unimaginable consequences, which are still playing out.

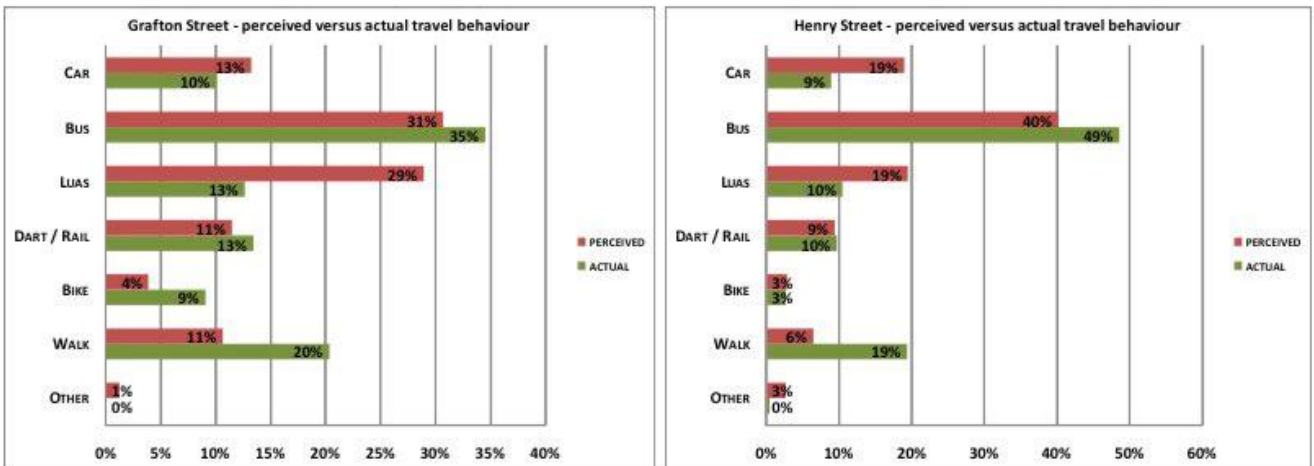
However a determined Shop Local, Shop Ballina and an Open for Business campaign coordinated by Ballina Chamber with the support of local businesses has seen a definite shift in peoples priorities, with the public making a concerted effort to shop local, shop local online where possible. People have tended to stay local, relied on local facilities and community and have begun to reassess their priorities and what is important to them.

To consider:

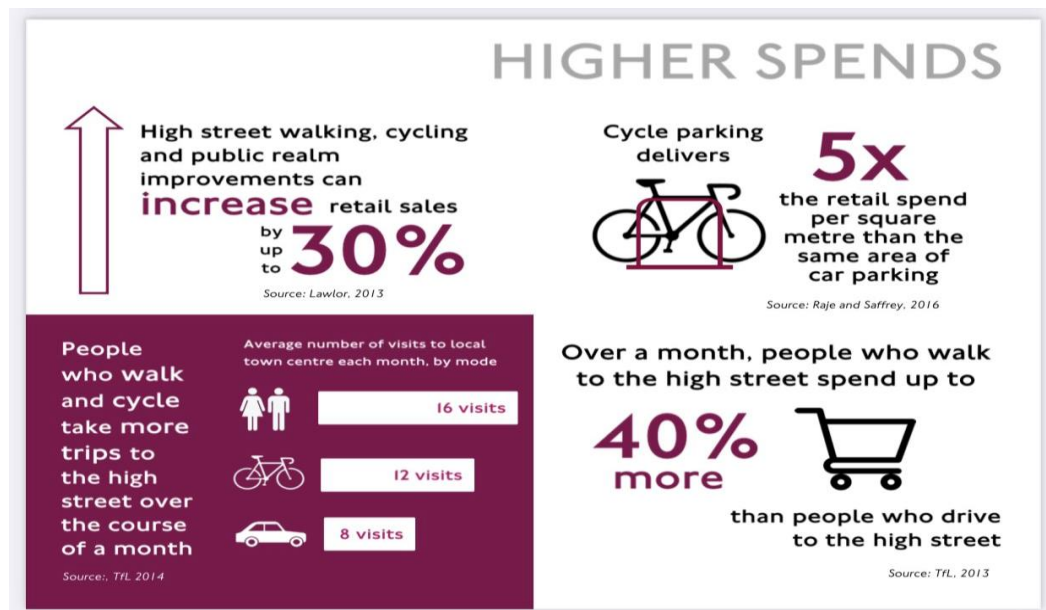
- In 2011, researchers from TU Dublin surveyed actual shopper travel behaviour & retail managers’ perceptions on Grafton St. & Henry St. in Dublin
- Surveys clearly showed retailers overestimate their customers’ car use & underestimated proportion of customers who walk & use buses
- <https://arrow.tudublin.ie/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1035&context=civpostbk>
- For example, on Henry St.
 - 19% of customers actually arrived by foot, 49% by bus & 9% by car

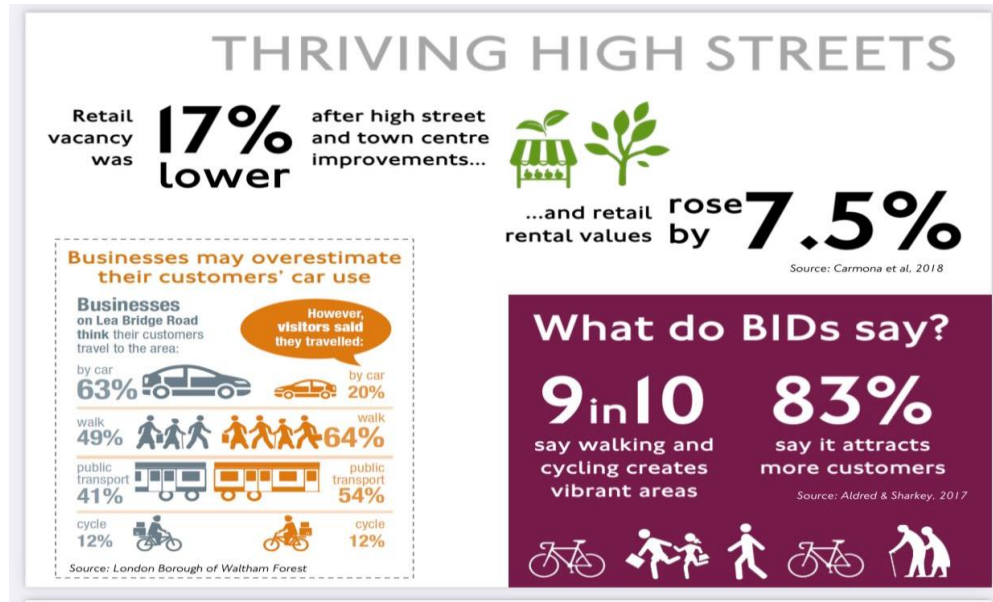
- Retail managers perceived that only 6% of customers arrived by foot, 40% by bus & thought that 19% came by car
- Over half to two-thirds of shoppers on both streets arrived by foot or bus
- Ennis Chamber of Commerce conducted surveys through the businesses called 'Saturday Surveys' with 63% of customers saying the actually preferred to park away from town, and walk into town.

Figure 4a & 4b: Perceived versus Actual Travel Behaviour



- Research for Transport for London by University College London shows public realm, walking & cycling improvements can boost high street retail sales by 30%
- Those who walk to the high street spend on average 40% more per month than those who drive
 - <http://content.tfl.gov.uk/walking-cycling-economic-benefits-summary-pack.pdf>





Preparing for an Outdoor Summer, in 2021 and beyond - Reallocating Public Space



- Mock-up on right shows space for 12 to 16 socially-distanced seats using 2-3 car parking spaces.
- 1 car parking space c. 10m²
- Could fit 4 to 6 diners (Covid spaced)
- 3 sittings/night
- Avg. customer spend €20
- Total €360/night/1 equivalent parking space
- 2 spaces, €720; 3 spaces, €1,080, etc.
- Need to ensure people with disabilities are not adversely impacted by cluttering footpaths with furniture

REF: DLR County Council September 2020

Recommendations

Priority projects in an aim to reduce high percentage of commercial vacancy in town, is a 'Pop Up Shop Opp', identifying empty premises, be it retail or office space in the town centre and making these spaces available to potential clients and or businesses. Giving potential tenants the opportunity to try before they buy or commit to a longer term lease.

Work had begun on this project in September 2020, however Covid restrictions curtailed the implementation of the scheme, a collaborative approach by Ballina Chamber and Mayo County Council;

In a bid to address high commercial vacancy and encourage additional footfall into the town of Ballina, and bring some areas of the town back to life. The Pop Up Shop makes use of temporary contracts that allow community groups, small businesses or individuals to move into these vacant spaces and set up shop, on the understanding that they will leave within an allotted time.

"We are currently looking for landlords with vacant properties who are interested in becoming involved in the Pop Up Shop Opp scheme."



We also want to open up space to those, who would like to exhibit, play music, be creative based on the Creative Ireland model; creative community, people, space etc. (Using the Leitrim Co Co Creative Space template and Waterford Co Co)

Leitrim; <http://www.leitrimcoco.ie/eng/Community-Culture/Arts/Programmes/Creative-Space/>

Waterford: <https://www.creativespacesstudio.net/>

Creative Ireland <https://www.creativeireland.gov.ie/en/>

Night Time Economy

Ballina is still the holder of the Purple Flag, an award accredited to towns and cities who make a concerted collaborative effort ensuring they have a safe and vibrant night time economy, with the first purple flag awarded to Ballina in 2014. In this challenging times and aligning ourselves with the Government Night Time Economy Task Force, we must consider “How do we continue to protect and promote a vibrant nightlife, economy and culture in our town?” Issues to consider include; transport, planning, public safety, licensing, noise pollution, diversity of cultural offerings.

It is recommended a collaborative Ballina night time economy group be formed, (a subcommittee of the Purple Flag Committee) with a view to creating and devising a plan to extend the operating evening hours in the town, with particular emphasis on

- encouraging families to come into town,
- encourage the use of the arts in our public realm space,
- encourage retailers to extend their opening hours etc,
- activate and animate Ballina Town centre, bring it to life after 6pm.

Final Thoughts

- Investment in public realm, walking and cycling improvements creates more attractive and welcoming urban spaces and can boost retail activity by 30%
- Major challenges for retail – particularly High St. retail - in Ireland and focus is likely to move to customer ‘experience’ of visit to urban spaces
- Meaningful & ongoing engagement between public bodies, local community, businesses, elected representatives & other stakeholders is critical
- Leadership required in public, business, representative bodies, community sectors & a willingness to change & adapt – **strategic & not ideological**
- Continued support of Ballina Chamber and the business community using the office as an extension of the LEO Mayo, offering business outreach clinic
- Communicate & Explain – need to proactively communicate to explain & promote changes, get feedback, counter misleading information & embrace modern communication tools
- Ongoing review & evaluation and taking an evidence-based approach are crucial
- Fear of loss often outweighs the promise of gain, but there is also a risk that **not** adapting to challenges may leave our villages, towns & cities behind
- ***‘That worked in x place, but won’t work here’ lets get Ballina thinking outside the box***

Ballina Chamber of Commerce

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President Gerry Luskin

Vice President Brian Hopkins

Secretary Mariea Carr

Treasurer Tracey Glacken

PRO Patrick Hallahan

CEO & Office Manager Mags Downey Martin

12th May 2021

References and supports of Ballina Town & Environs Local Action Plan submission May 2021:

Ballina Chamber of Commerce submission to Mayo County Council County development Plan April 2021.

Ballina Collaborative Town Centre Health Check 2021.

Ballina Decarbonisation Zone Application, supported by The Mary Robinson Centre, Ballina-Irelands Greenest Town, Ballina Chamber, April 2021.

Ballina / North Mayo Growth Cluster Study (BNMGCS) 2021.

Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council, presentation to Chamber network 2021.

A New Future for Scotland's Town Centres, Town Centre Action Plan Review Group Report February 2021.

Moy Estuary Development Strategy "A Shared Vision", commissioned by Ballina Lions Club July 2020.

Town Chamber Network Group, Chamber Network, Chambers Ireland.

Purple Flag Award and ongoing accreditation from 2014-2020.

Ballina Vacancy & Town Enhancement Task Force.

The Mary Robinson Centre, Project Manager and Chairperson of DZ Committee, Susan Heffernan.

Ballina – Irelands Greenest Town, Kevin Loftus & Cllr Mark Duffy and members of SEC.