

BALLYHAUNIS – Béal Átha hAmhnais

TOWN CENTRE FIRST PLAN

July 2025

DRAFT



Lár Bailte ar dTús
Town Centre First



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland



Comhairle Contae Mhaigh Eo
Mayo County Council



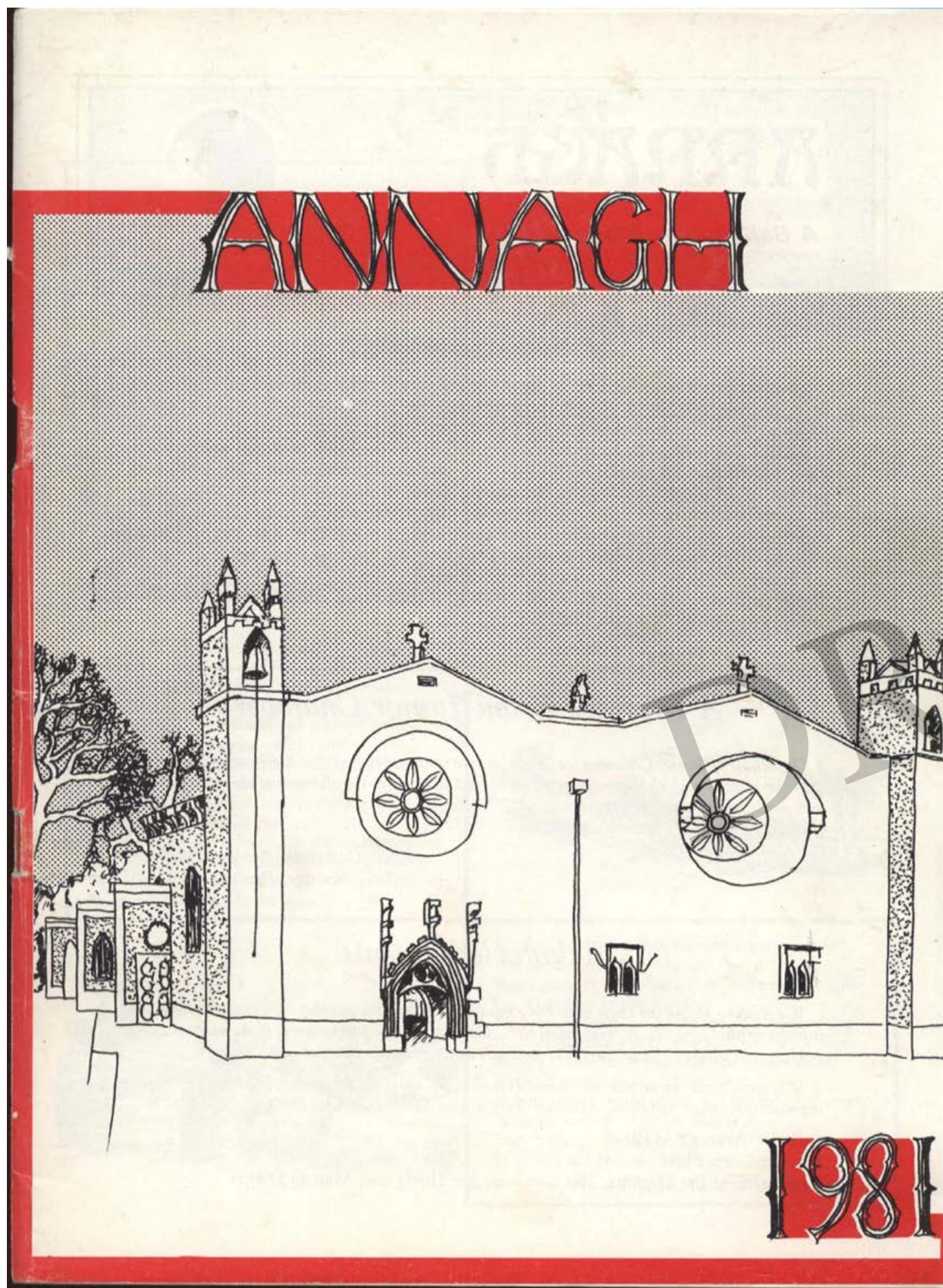


Image: Taken from the cover of Annagh Magazine 1981 edition. Artwork by Chris Pratt

CHEERS!

Now here's a toast, friend, to Ballyhaunis,
And to all God's people in it!
And should any man ask where on earth it is,
This is hardly to his credit!
But to bring the light now to backward folk
From Downpatrick to Tralee,
It's the first town set on the fine high-road
Between Knock and Castlereagh
Or if ever by any grim misfortune's blighting
South to Galway you must go,
It's the last blessed town to give you heart
Before you will leave Mayo!

But then backward folk may still well ask
What is its claim to fame?
Has it very much else to shout loud about
Beyond its pleasant name?
Well, there is its Abbey on the one high-hill,
And its convent on the other,
And on the third there's the parish church,
And can many a town do better?
Then I ask what other inland towns take pride,
In a swimming pool of size,
Or a plant to package there the finest meats
That gladden European eyes?

Then, we have our social centres, friend,
Our den for the Scouts and Cubs,
Our libraries, courts and our playing fields,
Our cinemas, cumanns, and clubs.
We have homes from home and hotel rooms,
We've the café and the lounge bar,
With a hinterland rich in fine fishing lakes
A golf course without par.
And we have our schools for the willing hearts,
And willing they are and blest,
And wise men know them the whole world over
As proud paragons in the west!

Besides, our town now like most good towns
Has its cattle - mart and fair,
But I wonder how many hold their market still
On Tuesdays in the Square?
So here we have reverence for past good ways,
And we cherish old traditions,
But this does not mean that life passes us by
With its progress and inventions
But how poor is the town that has no such roots,
With no memory fine to ponder!
Like a plastic flower with a false bright face
It lacks the heart of wonder!

Rev. John O'Connor O.S.A.

Page 1

Image/Poem: Taken from Page 1 of Annagh Magazine 1981 edition. Poem by Rev. John O'Conner O.S.A

TOWN CENTRE FIRST PLAN July 2025

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Mayo County Council and the project design team would like to thank all those who have contributed their time, knowledge and ideas to this plan and plan making process.

The Ballyhaunis Town Centre First Plan was prepared under the direction of the Town Regeneration Officer of Mayo County Council, and in collaboration with:

Ballyhaunis Town Team

Claremorris-Swinford Municipal District Executive Team

TBLA – Project Lead + Urban Masterplanners

LUC – Graphic Support

Queens University Belfast – Town Centre Health Check and Consultation Support

Special thankyou to:

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<https://akmedialive.com/>

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<https://liamlyons.com/>

We would like to warmly acknowledge Stephen Grogan's contribution to the Town Team and his years of dedicated work towards developing a more equitable Ballyhaunis, before his untimely death in August 2024.

Also all the groups that helped bring this plan together including the Town Centre Health Check, Digital Town Blueprint and Groups Audit.

Introduction

In September 2024, Ballyhaunis was chosen to be the second town in County Mayo to develop a Town Centre First (TCF) Plan. Town Centre First is the Government’s policy strategy to support the rejuvenation of Irish rural town centres and halt their decline.

The initiative is a key part of Our Rural Future – the Government’s ambitious five-year strategy designed to reimagine and revitalise Rural Ireland and is backed up by the Town Centre First Policy, a co-ordinated, whole of government approach to regenerate and revitalise Irish towns and villages.

Mayo County Council have appointed a multidisciplinary design team led by TBLA to prepare a non-statutory Masterplan for Ballyhaunis.



BALLYHAUNIS TOWN TEAM

The Ballyhaunis Town Team formed to help guide this comprehensive plan and is the result of 12 months of meetings between Mayo County Council, stakeholders within the community and the consultant team.

- TOWN TEAM MEMBERS**
- Tom Forde - Fordes Ltd / Ballyhaunis Chamber
 - Rachel Jordan - BRCIE Ltd
 - Mohammad Cherbatji - Nour Foods/Ballyhaunis Chamber
 - Eibhlin Murphy - Major International / BRCIE Ltd
 - William Nestor - Chairperson Ballyhaunis GAA
 - Mark Godfrey - Community Council
 - Tzyy Wang - Family Resource Centre
 - Pat Higgins - Abbey Trust
 - Chris Ganley - Rural Irish Artists
 - Mary Donnelly - Tidy Towns/Community Council
 - Anne Cunnane - Ballyhaunis Chamber/BRCIE Ltd
 - Abdul Shafique - Pakistani Community & Mosque
 - Arfan Rafique - Muslim Community

The Ballyhaunis Town Team Statement

'We are an enthusiastic group of Ballyhaunis people who have come together as a Town Team, under the Town Centre First programme. We have diverse backgrounds, skills and experiences and are all active in Ballyhaunis in different ways: business, sports, arts, culture, community, tidy towns, biodiversity, festivals & events. We want to do the best for our town, to drive it forward positively and inclusively. As Ballyhaunis has such rich cultural diversity, has one of the fastest growing populations in the West and it is one of the most youthful towns, it has incredible potential. For us it is important that everyone has a chance to contribute their ideas so that together, we can plan what needs to happen to make Ballyhaunis a better place to live, work, play, visit and do business.'

TOWN CENTRE FIRST POLICY

The Town Centre First (TCF) policy is the Government of Ireland's core strategy for supporting the revitalisation of rural town centres, aiming to foster places that are viable, vibrant and attractive for living, working, and visiting. As part of the broader Our Rural Future: Rural Development Policy 2021–2025, this approach promotes locally-led, nationally supported regeneration to ensure town centres thrive as service, social, and cultural hubs.

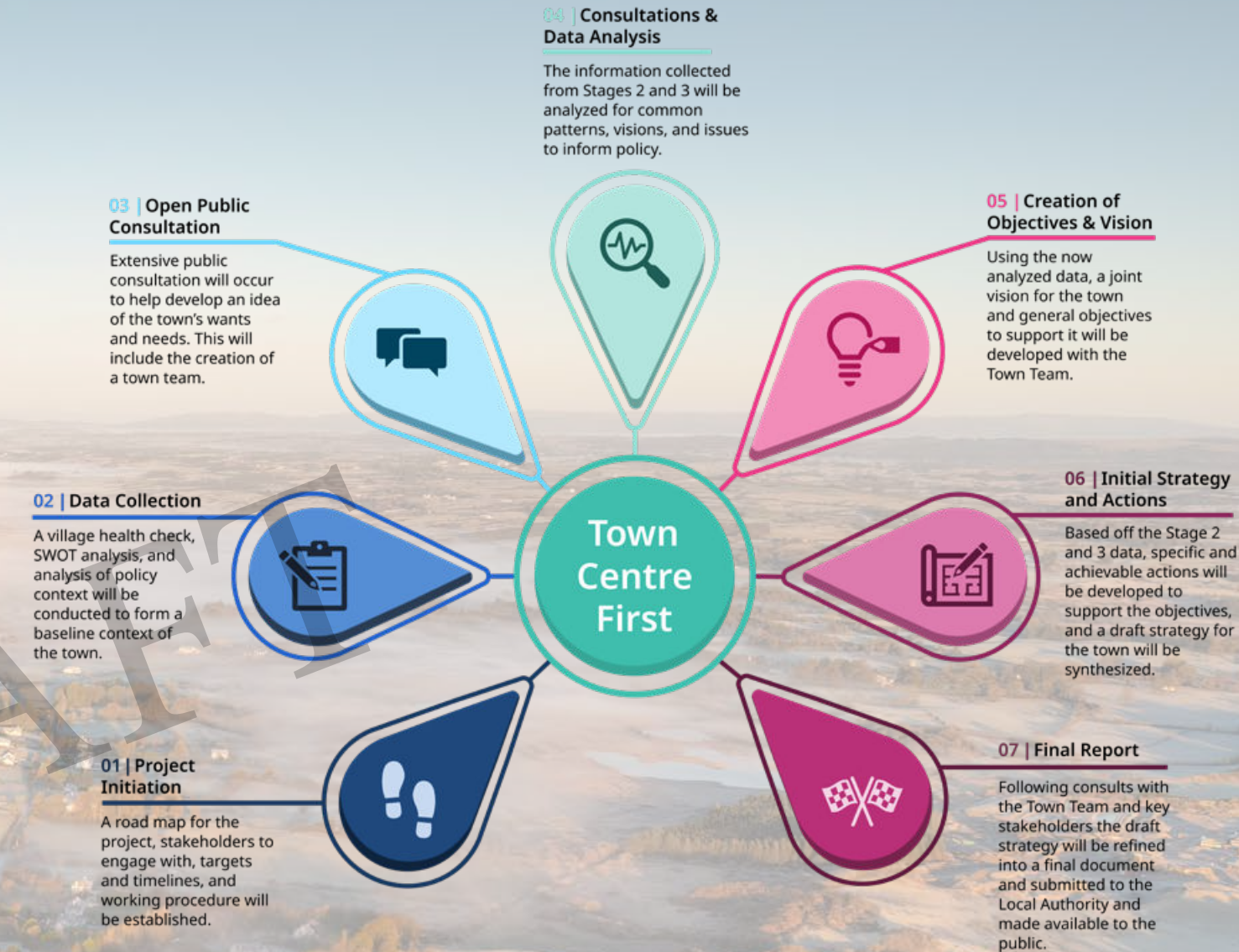
The Town Centre First Plan for Ballyhaunis has been developed within this framework, drawing on national, regional, and local policies (see Policies in Appendices) and informed by the TCF methodology set out in Town Centre First – A Policy Approach for Irish Towns. It provides a strategic, community-driven roadmap to guide Ballyhaunis through a period of transformation and long-term renewal.

TOWN CENTRE FIRST POLICY RECOGNISES SUCCESSFUL PLACES THAT:

- PROVIDE PLACES TO MEET, MINGLE AND DWELL
- ANIMATE STREETS AND SPACES
- CHERISH UNIQUE BUILDINGS
- ATTRACT BUSINESS
- UTILISE TECHNOLOGY
- SUPPORT HEALTHY LIFESTYLES

The Plan has been shaped by an extensive analysis of the town's identity, challenges, and opportunities (Part 1 – Understanding the Place), including its historic character, socio-economic profile, urban form and the experience of its town centre. It has also been strongly informed by community consultation (pages 19–23), ensuring local voices remain central to its vision and proposals.

In Part 2 – Defining the Place (pages 24–33), the Plan sets out a clear Vision for Ballyhaunis, identifies the needs of the community, and assesses infrastructure, public spaces, housing, and active travel opportunities. Notably, it includes the Friary Grounds Masterplan, offering a model for inclusive, community-oriented placemaking.



Part 3 – Enabling the Place presents the core Action Plan, which translates objectives into measurable, deliverable steps. These actions reflect the feedback gathered, align with planning policy, and are designed to guide real, tangible progress over time. Supporting materials—such as the Town Centre Health Check, Consultation Summary Report, and Digital Town Blueprint—are included in the Appendices to ground the Plan in evidence and transparency.

Ultimately, this Plan is more than a policy document; it is a shared vision for the future of Ballyhaunis, one that is durable yet flexible, rooted in community priorities, and shaped by a commitment to place-based renewal.



Part 1 – Understanding the Place



Welcome to Ballyhaunis

Ballyhaunis, or Béal Átha hAmhnais—meaning “ford-mouth of strife”—is a dynamic and culturally rich town in East County Mayo, located at the intersection of the N60 and N83 national roads and served by the Dublin–Westport railway line. It lies within close reach of major urban centres such as Claremorris and Tuam, offering a vital connection between rural communities and regional networks.

According to the 2022 Census, the population of Ballyhaunis stands at 2,773, continuing a strong upward trend and marking a 17% increase since 2016. The town has long served as a key employment centre in East Mayo, with deep roots in manufacturing, agri-processing, and the service sector—industries that reflect its broadly working-class population and strong ties to practical trades and rural enterprise. Ballyhaunis is the sixth largest settlement in Mayo, and a vital service hub for a wide agricultural hinterland extending into County Roscommon.

Culturally, Ballyhaunis is known as Ireland's most ethnically diverse town, with 37% of residents identifying as non-Irish nationals, including significant Pakistani, Syrian, Brazilian, Polish, and Croatian communities. This diversity enriches the town's social fabric and supports a welcoming, inclusive atmosphere.

Originally developing around the Augustinian Friary (founded in 1348), the town has grown westward along the River Dalgan, structured around four main streets and defined by a strong sense of identity. Ballyhaunis combines a proud historical legacy with ongoing public investment, regeneration projects, and sustainable growth initiatives, positioning it as a resilient and forward-looking town.

B. Átha hAmhnais
BALLYHAUNIS



BALLYHAUNIS TODAY

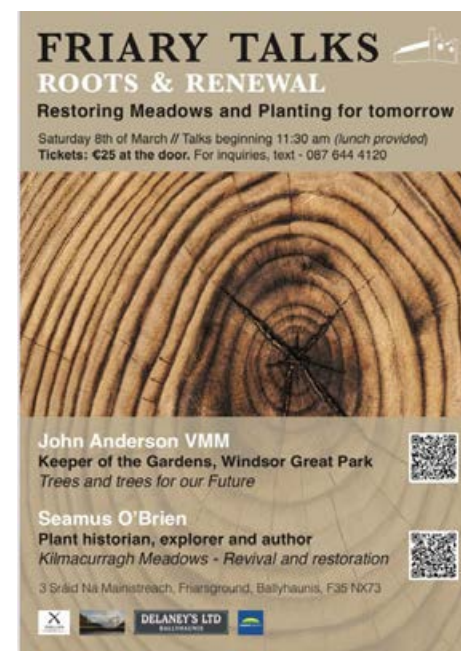
Ballyhaunis, a vibrant town in County Mayo, Ireland, is known for its rich cultural heritage, inclusive community spirit, and scenic surroundings. Nestled in the Irish countryside, it draws visitors eager to experience traditional life with a modern cultural flair. Historic landmarks like the 15th-century Augustinian Friary and Ireland's first purpose-built mosque highlight its diversity and long-standing heritage.

The town is a creative hub, where groups like St. Patrick's Dramatic Society and the Rural Irish Artists enrich the local arts scene through theatre and visual expression. The Women's Writing Group nurtures storytelling, while the Ballyhaunis Language Café connects people through Irish, Spanish, Italian, and English, celebrating cultural exchange.

Le Cairde, the Arts & Music Group, brings joy with performances and community events, while the Film Club fosters lively discussion around cinema. Strategy fans find a home in the Bridge Club, and the Abbey Male Voice Choir showcases local vocal talent. The Beekeepers Association promotes environmental awareness and preserves traditional skills.

Annual highlights like the Ballyhaunis Summer Festival and Abbey Pattern celebrate local culture with music, games, and heritage activities. The Christmas Festival, featuring Santa lighting up the town, adds festive cheer.

Ballyhaunis also thrives as a hub for active living. Sports clubs such as the GAA, rugby, soccer, cricket, basketball, table tennis, and boxing foster pride and connection. Leisure seekers enjoy angling, cycling, and the local gun club. Facilities like the rugby, GAA, and soccer pitches, outdoor pool, and an award-winning 9-hole golf course support a healthy, outdoor lifestyle.



Geographical Context

Ballyhaunis is situated in the east of County Mayo, within the province of Connacht in the west of Ireland. The town's strategic location, surrounded by rolling countryside, small lakes, and rivers would have placed it as an ideal setting for a settlement to develop. It is at a crossroads of important transport routes, making it a hub for the region. With its proximity to larger towns like Castlebar and Claremorris, as well as connections to the broader Irish road and rail network, it has long contributed to Ballyhaunis' importance in both regional commerce and transport.

Ballyhaunis lies at the junction of the N60 and N83 roads, providing vital links to surrounding towns and villages. It is approximately 18 km northeast of Claremorris, 40 km south of Castlebar, and enjoys direct access to regional towns like Tuam (Galway) to the south, Charlestown (Sligo) to the north and Castlerea (Roscommon) to the east.

In addition to its excellent road connections, Ballyhaunis is also well-served by rail. The town lies on the Dublin-Westport line, which connects it to major urban centres across the country. Furthermore, Ireland West Airport Knock, located nearby, provides direct flights to several European destinations, enhancing Ballyhaunis' accessibility for both business and tourism.

Nestled within the eastern boundary of County Mayo, Ballyhaunis enjoys a picturesque rural setting that reflects the agricultural heritage of the area. The town's natural surroundings have shaped its historical role as a market centre, where livestock and other agricultural products were traded, and continue to contribute to its rural character today.

This combination of transport infrastructure and rich natural landscapes makes Ballyhaunis an accessible and vital point in County Mayo, offering both local charm and regional connectivity.



Ballina 54 Mins		Sligo 59 Mins	
Castlebar 40 Mins		Galway 1Hr 11 Mins	
Athlone 1Hr 6 Mins		Donegal 1Hr 53 Mins	
Westport 58 Mins		Ballinamore 1Hr 15 Mins	
Carrick on Shannon 51 Mins		Tullamore 1 Hr 33 Mins	
Longford 1Hr 4 Mins		Mullingar 1Hr 35 Mins	
Loughderg 1Hr 44 Mins		Dublin 2Hr 30 Mins	
Roscommon 38 Mins		Achill 1Hr 28 Mins	
	BUS STATION		TOWN CENTRE
	TRAIN STATION		TOWN CENTRE
	KNOCK BASILICA		12 Mins
	IRELAND WEST AIRPORT		17 Mins
	Connaught Centre of excellence		8 Mins

STUDY AREA

The Ballyhaunis Town Centre First Plan focuses on the main urban and historic core of the town, encompassing key community assets and potential development opportunities. The community assets include a retail zone with grocery shops, community buildings, religious centres, the Friary Grounds (now a park), and the town's train station. The opportunity sites identified for future growth include vacant buildings, underused spaces, and areas of land near the town centre, along with the approach roads and 'gateways' into Ballyhaunis. Additionally, the plan considers expanding recreational parkland and protecting the rural-urban edge, ensuring balanced development while preserving the town's character.

The study area boundary line, agreed with the Town Team, serves as a tool to concentrate efforts on the town centre core. It is important to note that while key projects are proposed within this defined boundary, many of these initiatives may extend beyond it or overlap with areas outside the focus zone, depending on evolving needs and opportunities. This flexible approach ensures that the wider context of Ballyhaunis is considered in planning and development, allowing for a more holistic and integrated vision for the town's growth.



Historic and Cultural Identity

Ballyhaunis, derived from the Irish Béal Átha hAmhnais meaning "the mouth of the rough ford," is an area steeped in history and archaeological richness. The landscape is dotted with ringforts, souterrains, crannogs, and early Christian sites, suggesting continuous habitation since prehistoric times. A log boat dated to around 2000 BC, discovered in Carrowneden in 1996, confirms this ancient presence.

The town first entered written records around 1430 with the founding of the Augustinian Friary. Ballyhaunis developed around this religious centre, with the Augustinians ministering to the community until 2001. Their legacy continues through local partnerships.

By the 18th century, Ballyhaunis gained significance with the establishment of markets and fairs, notably through a 1751 patent granted to William Knox. It grew as a market town throughout the 19th century, hosting regular cattle and horse fairs. In 1841, it had a modest population of 353, with few houses and a sparse economic profile, though infrastructure like a dispensary and a police station were present.

The opening of the railway in 1861, connecting it to the Dublin–Westport line, marked a turning point. The late 19th and early 20th centuries saw the construction of key institutions like a courthouse (1875), convent (1898), banks, and churches.

Ballyhaunis played a notable role in the War of Independence, with multiple local skirmishes now commemorated by monuments.

In the late 20th century, the town experienced industrial development. United Meat Packers opened in 1974, later transitioning to operations under Dawn Meats, a major local employer. In 1999, Ballyhaunis participated in a local currency pilot scheme, part of the EU's transition to the euro.

Further reading on Ballyhaunis history can be found in the references and further reading section at the end of the report.

Timeline

1348-1430 - - - -



The Augustinian Friary in Ballyhaunis was founded circa 1400, with the site gifted by MacSiurtain Dubh (Mac Jordan Duff) MacCostelloe. The Augustinians were given about 150 acres of land, known as Abbey Quarter, for farming. Today, only 14 acres remain, now used as the town park.

1751

In 1751, a patent was granted to William Knox to establish a market in Ballyhaunis. This was a pivotal moment in the town's development, as it officially recognized Ballyhaunis as a commercial hub, facilitating the trade of local produce and goods.

1837

By 1837, there was a penny post to Claremorris and Frenchpark while there was also a constabulary police station in the town.



Ballyhaunis benefited from the arrival of the railway in the 19th century. The opening of the Ballyhaunis railway station (part of the Western Railway Corridor) helped to connect the town to other parts of Ireland, promoting trade and travel.

1861

1875 - - - -



The Ballyhaunis Courthouse, a limestone-faced building established in 1874, served the local community for nearly 140 years before its closure in 2013 due to government cutbacks.

1898



Ballyhaunis IRA volunteers participated in the War of Independence, with local tensions rising amid RIC and Black and Tans activity, shaping the town's role in Ireland's path to independence.

1903-1909 - - - -

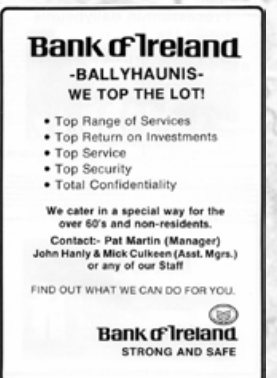


The building of St Patrick's Catholic Church began in 1903

1919-1921

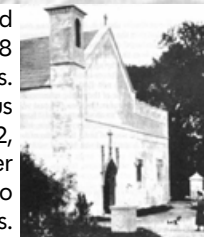
1923 - - - -

The Bank of Ireland opened a branch in the town



1938

St. Mary's Abbey, was opened as a Catholic church in 1938 following extensive renovations. It remained active for religious services until its closure in 2002, when the Augustinian Order withdrew from the town due to declining vocations.



1974-1992

United Meat Packers was established in 1974 when Chairman Sher Mohammed purchased a local slaughterhouse in Ballyhaunis. The facility provided much-needed employment in the area. However, due to financial difficulties, the company closed in 1992 and subsequently entered liquidation.



Ireland's first purpose built mosque opened in 1987

1989 - - - -

Midwest Radio started broadcasting within the town

2003 - - - - -



Upgrades to Market Square and surrounding streets



Sir William Petty Map of County Mayo c. 1650

Ballyhaunis is not named on the 1650 edition of the William Petty map however historic records state that the Augustians settled in the area circa 1400. Indeed there is a wealth of archaeology in the area suggesting there were several settlements dating back thousands of years.



1st Edition 6inch Black and White Map c. 1837-1842

The first edition maps composed between 1837 - 1842 identify the individual plots for each building however not every building is shown to exist. It is only the second edition maps composed between 1888 - 1913 that show each building plot.



1893-97 6in Os Overview

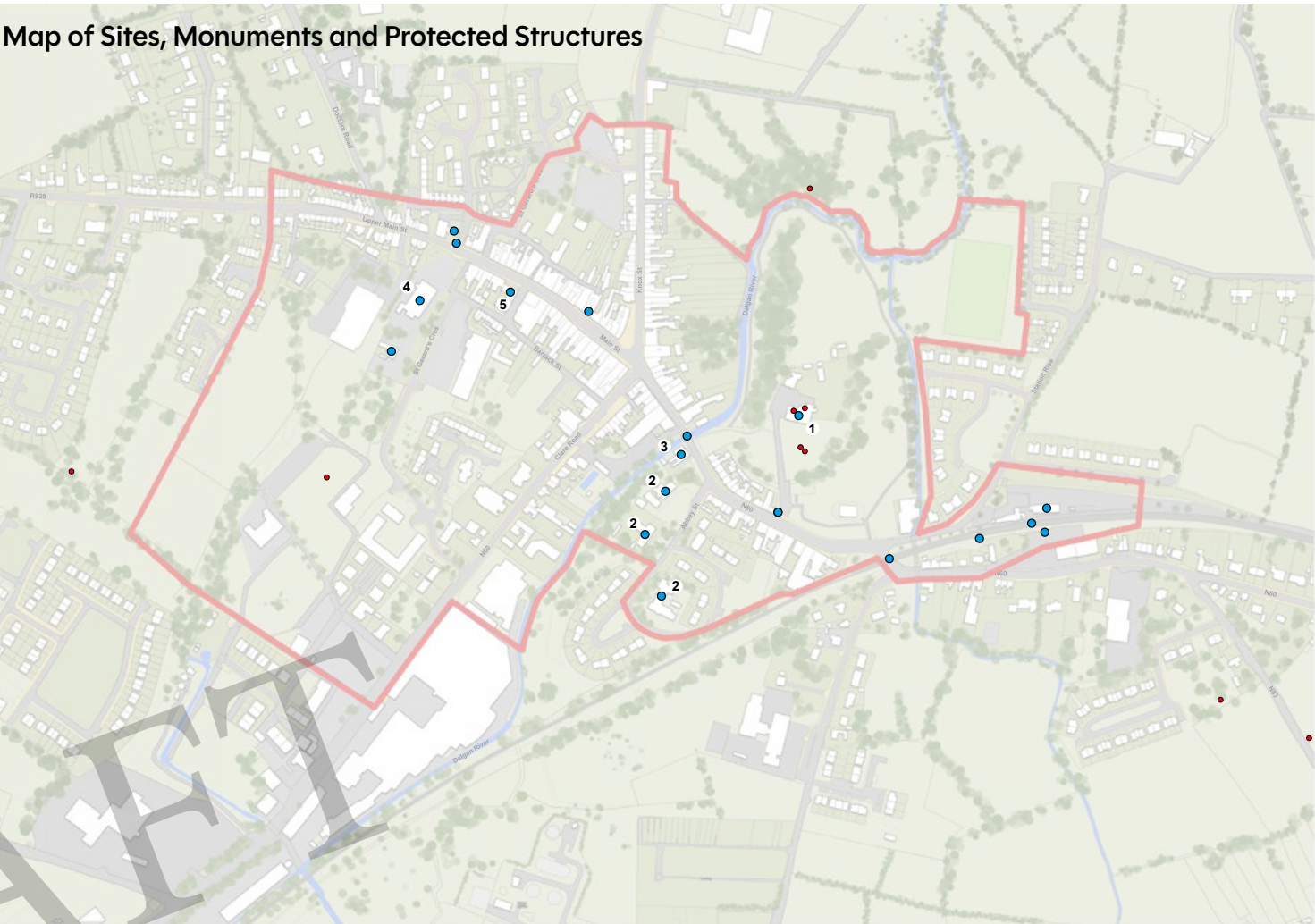
This overview map, resembling the 1650 Petty Map, illustrates Ballyhaunis within a broader landscape—featuring roads, lakes, wells, rivers, churches, and burial sites. It also highlights parish boundaries, with the northern part of the town lying in Began and the southern part in Annagh.



2nd Edition 25inch Black and White Map 1888-1913

From reviewing the maps, it can be seen that the area of Ballyhaunis has not increased significantly from the creation of the first edition map. However several changes had occurred within the region such as a Abbeyquatre school (Scoil Iosa), railway station, cemetery and Courthouse. This particular copy of the map has been marked up to show that the extent of new road surfacing in the town in 1914.

Map of Sites, Monuments and Protected Structures



Urban Morphology of Ballyhaunis

The urban morphology of Ballyhaunis reflects a compact, linear town structure shaped by its historical development and transportation routes. The town has evolved along a primary east-west axis, centred on Main Street, which serves as the main commercial spine connecting key landmarks like the train station, Market Square, and Friary grounds.

The historic centre around Main Street, Knox Street, and Clare Road features a traditional terraced urban fabric, with narrow plots and street-front buildings that create a strong sense of enclosure. This part of the town exhibits a mixed-use character, with retail, residential, and service functions interwoven, although some areas—particularly Knox Street—suffer from vacancy and dereliction.



Modern Day - Urban Grain

Ballyhaunis is still distinctly recognisable from the historic urban but more than 100 years on and the expansion and development of the town is evident through residential sprawl and large scale supermarkets, factories and warehouses. It also goes to highlight how all traffic is filtered through a very narrow corridor within the town centre which has both opportunities and challenges.

- National Inventory of Architectural Heritage
- Sites and Monuments Records

Key buildings

- 1 St Mary's Abbey Chapel
- 2 Former st Joseph's Convent
- 3 Ulster Bank
- 4 St Patricks RC Church
- 5 Courthouse

Town Centre Experience

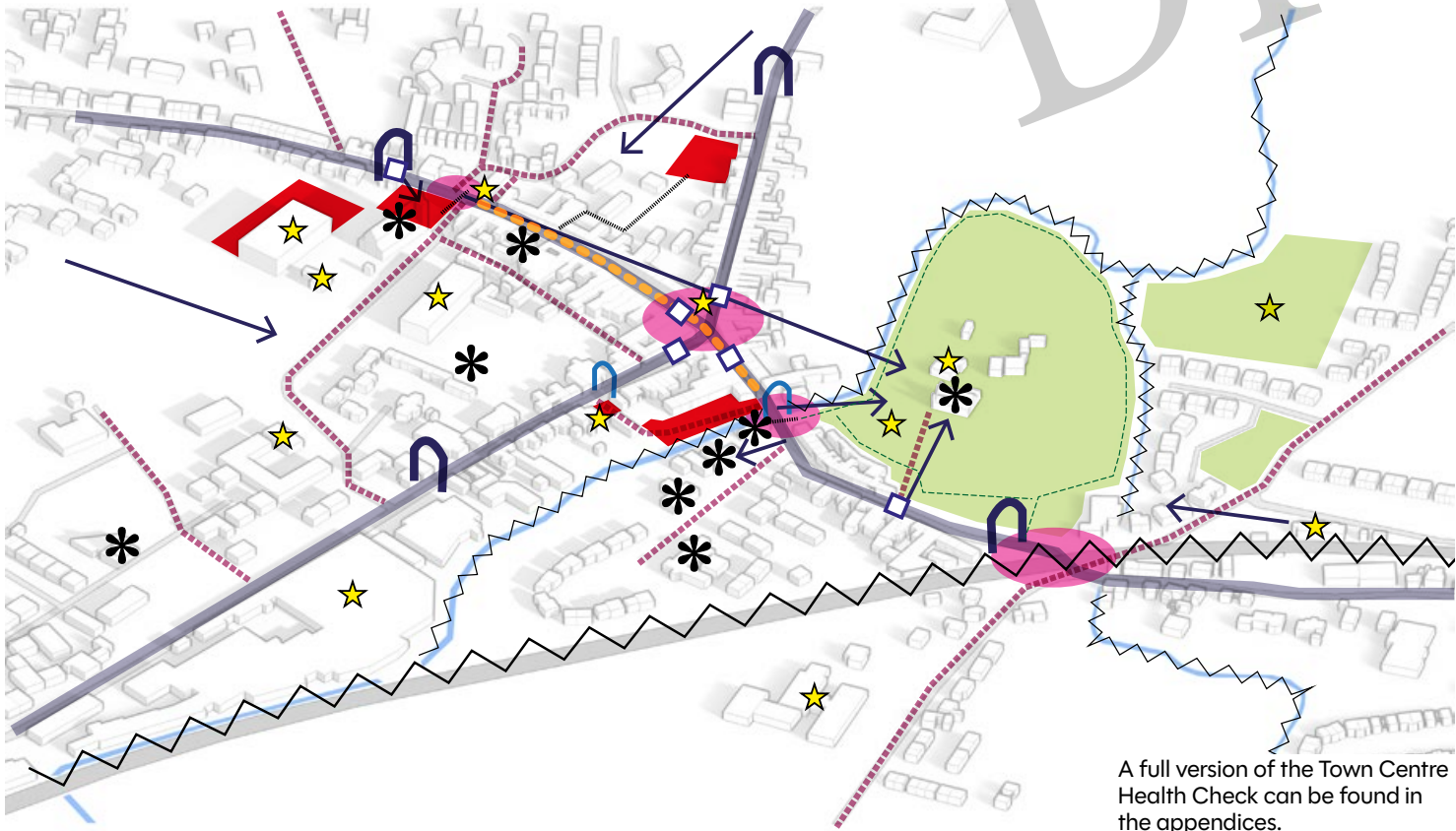
Ballyhaunis offers a positive first impression with an attractive Main Street and evident local pride, though issues like vacancy and dereliction, especially on Knox Street, detract from the experience. Narrow streets and heavy pavement parking restrict movement, creating a car-dominated environment.

Traffic counts show high vehicle use and low pedestrian footfall, with underused off-street car parks just minutes from the centre. This highlights the need for improved walking and cycling infrastructure and a shift away from car dependency.

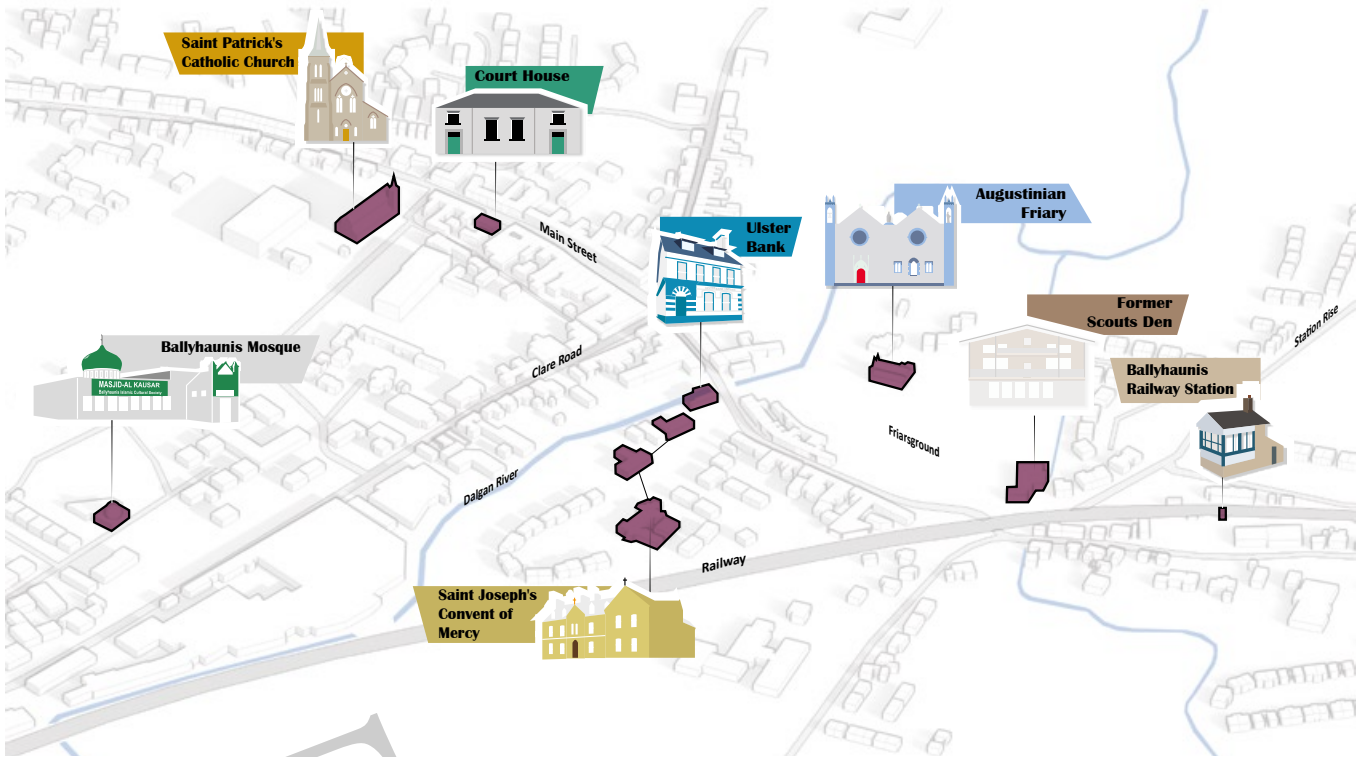
On-street parking contributes to congestion, while off-street areas like Knox St. carpark remain largely empty due to poor layout and visibility. A revised parking strategy is needed to support better pedestrian flow and reduce town centre congestion.

Pedestrian crossings are limited or poorly located, with many residents using informal routes. Safer, better-placed crossings aligned with actual movement patterns would improve access, especially for vulnerable users.

Public spaces lack seating and inclusive features. Narrow, obstructed footpaths and underused areas like the Market Square and Friary grounds offer opportunities for enhancement. Investing in seating, wider pathways, and interactive public spaces would make the town more welcoming and connected.



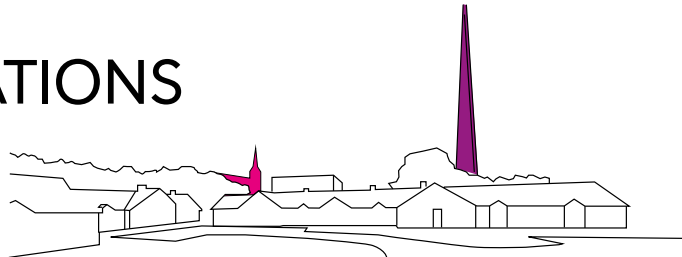
A full version of the Town Centre Health Check can be found in the appendices.



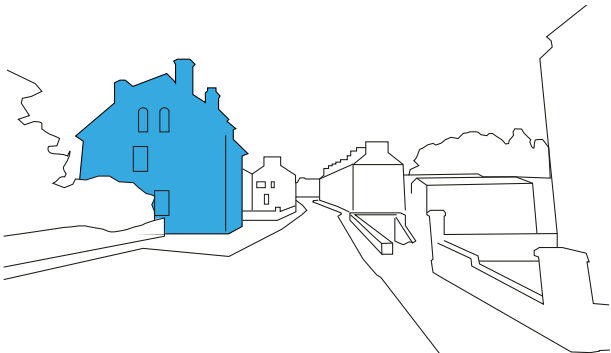
LANDMARKS AND DESTINATIONS

Ballyhaunis is home to a range of distinctive landmarks that contribute significantly to its placemaking potential and community infrastructure. Historic and civic buildings such as the Augustinian Friary, the Courthouse, and St. Patrick's Catholic Church offer deep cultural resonance and architectural character, serving as anchors of identity and continuity within the town. Religious and institutional sites, including Ballyhaunis Mosque—the first purpose-built mosque in Ireland—and St. Joseph's Convent of Mercy, reflect the town's diverse, inclusive, and evolving social fabric.

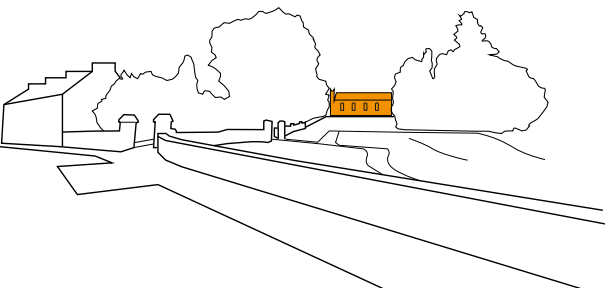
Key locations like the Ballyhaunis Railway Station and Main Street connect the town physically and socially, reinforcing walkability, accessibility, and the potential for vibrant public life. Underused or derelict sites such as the former Scouts Den and Dalgan river frontage present opportunities for adaptive reuse, providing flexible community meeting places. Together, these landmarks form a strong foundation for placemaking strategies that prioritize heritage, connectivity, and community well-being, helping to shape Ballyhaunis as a town rooted in its past but focused on inclusive, dynamic growth.



View looking north from St Gerard's Crescent / Communal House towards St Patrick's Church and the radio aerial tower



View looking west along Bridge St with the Former Ulster Bank building



View looking north from Abbey St towards St Mary's Abbey which is largely concealed behind a tree line

BUILT FORM

Town Centre Streetscape



Community Buildings



Protected Buildings



Housing



Laneways



Backlands



Industrial



Train Station



Vacant Buildings



ACCESSIBLE TOWN

Ballyhaunis Autism Friendly Town:

A number of parents of autistic children in the community have come together to form an Autism Friendly Town (AFT) Committee for Ballyhaunis. Meetings with AsIAM's Autism Friendly Town's Manager have been initiated to formalise this process. (AsIAM is Ireland's Autism Charity). Ballyhaunis will soon be joining a national programme with huge momentum with over 40 other communities on this journey.

Ballyhaunis Age-Friendly Town:

Ballyhaunis Town Centre First, Mayo Age Friendly Programme, Claremorris Swinford Municipal District and Active Travel are working together on walkability audits for the town.

A walkability audit is a community-based assessment of the built environment of an urban area (external) or a building (internal); it is a method to involve the community in shaping the public realm. These audits use the universal design tool, produced by National Transport Authority with Age Friendly Ireland and the Centre for Excellence in Universal Design. This assists in assessing the environment so that it can be accessed, understood, and used to the greatest extent possible by all people, regardless of their age, size, ability, disability. Through this process and resulting changes, Ballyhaunis hopes to become Mayo's first Age-Friendly Town.

Mayo LAIT:

The Local Authority Integration Team aims to support people new to Mayo to integrate into Ireland. We guide people to access services they require to integrate into the community, particularly Applicants for International Protection, Those with Refugee status, Subsidiary Protection, or Permission to Remain, Programme Refugees and Beneficiaries of Temporary Protection. The Integration Team acts as the direct point of contact to provide information, guidance and advice, providing signposting to services to help gain access to employment and training, to learn English, to access family supports, childcare and healthcare services and to connect to sporting, voluntary or any other community activities. They also oversee grants for communities to support the integration of new communities.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES

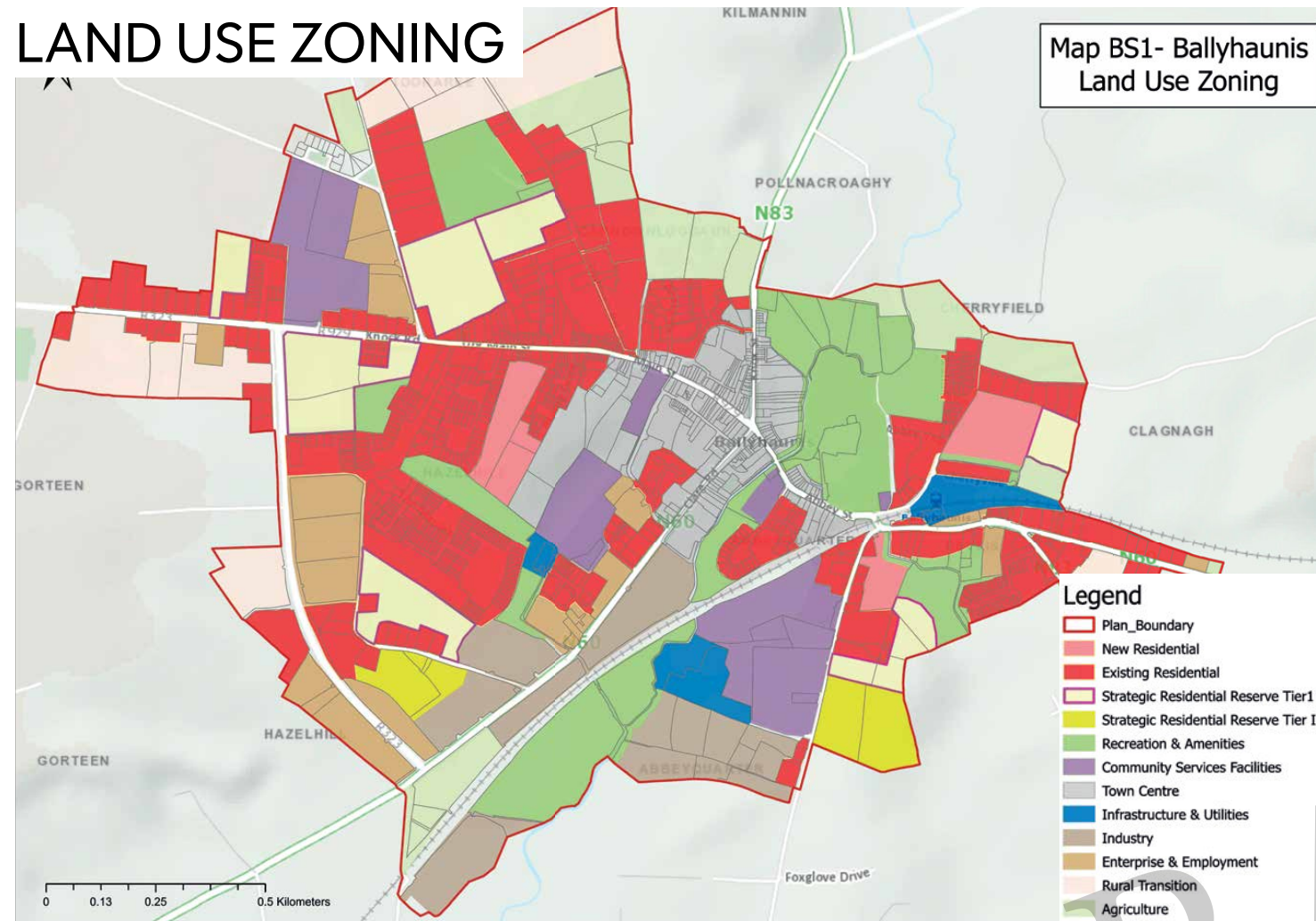
- Community Hall - Main Street
- Family Resource Centre - Abbey Street
- Mayo Sligo Leitrim ETB - Enterprise Centre, Clare Road
- Clare Court / Communal House - Clare Road
- Ballyhaunis GAA Clubhouse - Knock Road
- Ballyhaunis Rugby Club - Doctors Road
- Ballyhaunis Community School - Knock Road
- Scoil Iosa - Abbey Quarter
- Ballyhaunis Mosque - Sherwood Avenue

GROUPS and ACTIVITIES

- | | |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Walking | MSPCA |
| TC Fitness | Beekeepers |
| LGFA | Mayo Sligo Leitrim ETB |
| Ballyhaunis Town Soccer Club | Family Resource Centre |
| Ballyhaunis Hurlers | Ballyhaunis Le Caidre |
| Agape Christian Church Group | Community Based Family Support |
| Foroige / BEY Project | Crochet Group |
| Table Tennis Club | Activities for Parents |
| Parent & Toddler Group | Sports Hub Coordinator/Mayo |
| Mother & Baby Group | Sports Partnership |
| Ballyhaunis Foróige Club | Tusla |
| Gymnastics | AA |
| TC Fitness | Safe Ireland |
| Mayo Sports Partnership | MABS |
| Yoga | Primary Health Care |
| Children's Fitness | Annagh Magazine |
| Designer Minds | St Vincent De Paul |
| Language Café | Abbey Partnership / Trust |
| Community Council | Abbey Pattern Committee |
| Tidy Towns | Soccer Club |
| Parish Pastoral Council | Community Garden |
| Muslim/Indian Communities | Ballyhaunis Tidy Towns |
| Families | Sustainable Ballyhaunis |
| Ballyhaunis Parish | Mayo Autism Camp |
| Ballyhaunis Community School | Devils Basketball |
| Claremorris Drama Group | GAA Hurling |
| Ballyhaunis GAA Club | GAA Football |
| Mayo SPCA | School of Dancing |
| Active Retirement | Janette Webb Zumba |
| Faith & Light | Arabic classes |
| Western Care use the facilities | Therapies |
| Senior Citizens | Islamic Community Meetings |
| Pilates | Zumba |
| Unislim | Computer skills and literacy |
| Tai Chi | Drama Society |
| Rural Irish Artists | |



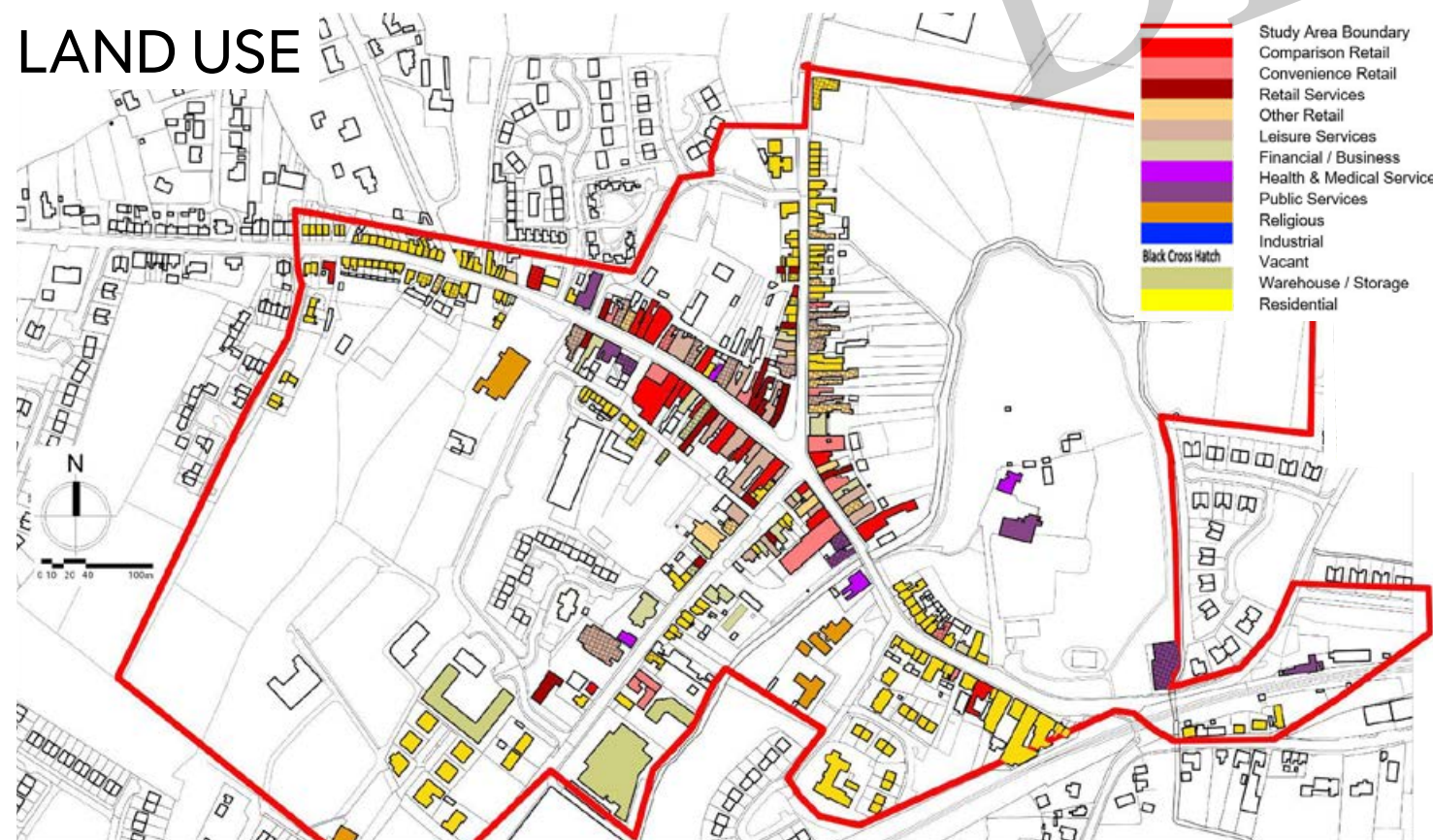
LAND USE ZONING



Above: 'Land Use Zoning' Extract from Mayo County Development Plan 2022-28

Below: 'Land Use' Mapping Extract from the Town Centre Health Check undertaken in 2025 by QUB

LAND USE



TOWN CENTRE HEALTH CHECK

Ballyhaunis

Town Centre Health Check
Mayo County Council



The Ballyhaunis Town Health Check, carried out by Queen's University Belfast students in collaboration with Mayo County Council, provides a snapshot of the town's physical and functional condition. The assessment identifies Ballyhaunis as a car-centric town with significant potential for improving walkability, public spaces, and connectivity. While first impressions of the town centre were generally positive—highlighting a strong commercial core and painted facades, the study found notable issues, including high vacancy rates, underutilised off-street parking, limited pedestrian infrastructure, and a lack of vibrant public people friendly spaces. The report recommends rationalising on-street parking, enhancing pedestrian crossings (especially along key desire lines), upgrading footpaths, and improving public seating and inclusive outdoor areas. Overall, the Health Check presents a data-driven call for strategic urban design space improvements to make Ballyhaunis a more accessible, inclusive, and community-oriented town.

A full version of the Town Centre Health Check can be found in the appendices.

DIGITAL TOWN BLUEPRINT

The .IE Digital Town Blueprint (DTB) is an entry-level assessment for local authorities, chambers of commerce and other local community groups interested in understanding the current digital readiness of their town. The DTB has been designed to help towns rapidly and cost-effectively:

- Understand their current digital town readiness and digital competitiveness
- Compare their town against Irish and international benchmarks
- Stimulate stakeholder engagement on digitalization.

The Ballyhaunis Digital Blueprint measures existing provision across seven dimensions: infrastructure for connectivity, the digital Economy and digital business, digital public services, digital education, digital technologies and civil society, digital tourism and governance of Digital Town initiatives.



Socio-Economic Profile

Population Growth

Ballyhaunis is considered to be the most ethnically diverse town in Ireland and boasts one of the fastest growing populations in the Western region. According to the 2022 census, the town's population rose 14.3 percent between 2016 and 2022, a growth of 438 people to a total of 3,495. According to the data –published by the Western Development Commission as part of a recent report – Ballyhaunis is also growing faster than the population of county Mayo which rose 5.2 percent from 2016 to 2022. This is largely due to high levels of migration of staff taking jobs in two large local food processing companies. The town is also home to approximately 400 asylum seekers. Ballyhaunis' demographic uniqueness—a young population (average age 35.1) and 49.7% foreign-born residents—defines its evolving cultural landscape.



Age Profile

Ballyhaunis is the youngest town in Mayo with an average age of 35.1 year, compared to Mayo as a whole, where the average age is 41.6 years. Student numbers at Ballyhaunis Community School (BCS) grew from 515 to 720 in the space of nine years up to 2022. A €4million extension of the school completed in 2022 caters to this growing population.

Economic Development

Ballyhaunis serves as the retail centre and employment base for a larger rural catchment area and provides a range of services, social and community facilities. It is an important employment base in the east of the county, particularly in the areas of food processing, agri-engineering and manufacturing. It is envisioned that Ballyhaunis, along with Claremorris and Ballinrobe can form a Growth Cluster in South Mayo to harness their combined strengths to contribute towards the consolidation of the Atlantic Economic Corridor.

Economic Development Ballyhaunis has an established industrial and manufacturing base in the town. Manufacturing Industries account for 27.3% of the main employment sectors in the town, which is significantly higher than the state average (13%). The other main employment sectors in the town include the Service Sector (19.3%) and ICT and Professional Services (9%). The key economic activities in Ballyhaunis are concentrated in a number of significant companies that relate directly and indirectly to the food processing industry. The town also has a range of other manufacturing industries that includes furniture, plastics and kitchen construction. A range of medium to small retail outlets, as well as employment in the state sector and the financial sector provide important employment in the town. Opportunities also exist for start-ups and incubation hubs in Ballyhaunis at the Enterprise Centre, located centrally. Additionally, Ballyhaunis remains an important service town for a wide agricultural hinterland in East Mayo and with a reach into County Roscommon.

Ballyhaunis is heavily reliant on food and farming, with the suckler and sheep industries being crucial to the local economy. Moreover, there are farms like Wild Acre Farm which focus on horticulture and growing tomatoes, and Wood Garlic Farm focusing on sustainability and eco-tourism. Ballyhaunis Farmers Market is also a major part of the local food and farming landscape.

As Ballyhaunis becomes more ethnically diverse it has an increasing set of international economic linkages. Diverse communities have opened their own businesses: the Aleppo store on Main Street, retailing Asian and middle eastern groceries, was opened in 2019 by the Rahmani family. A related distribution company, Anta Foods, also runs a bakery in Ballinlough. The local Supermac's franchise is owned by Sri Lankan businessman Dinal Swaris, while Pakistani native Adnan Ahmed operates two restaurants in the town.



Educational Attainment

In terms of socio-economic characteristics relating to education levels amongst resident workers in the Ballyhaunis catchment, they tend to have a lower rate of 3rd level education attainment than the Western Region. The Ballyhaunis catchment also has a much higher proportion of workers engaged in the 'Manufacturing Industries' sector and lower rates in 'Education, Health and Social Work'. Resident workers in the Ballyhaunis catchment also have an older age profile than the Western Region average. 41.1% of the 101 people surveyed in that cluster have third level education while male unemployment is at 3.5 percent and female unemployment at zero.

To address the needs of the demographic base, Mayo Sligo Leitrim ETB has seen a large demand for courses in English and healthcare (level 5 qualification) classes offered at its offices in the Enterprise Centre. The Local Employment Service, funded through the Department of Rural and Community Development, meanwhile offers advice to jobseekers.



Nationalities

Based on Census 2022, Ballyhaunis was the town with the highest proportion of non-Irish residents at 49.7%. Some 5 % of the town's population were Brazilian, 4 % were Poles and 3 % were Croatian, according to the data.

Ballyhaunis first welcomed a cohort of workers from Pakistan in 1974, when Sher Mohammed Rafique opened the Halal meat plant, also providing many locals with a livelihood. In 1987, Ireland's first purpose-built mosque opened in Ballyhaunis, serving the Muslim community which has expanded in recent years, as many asylum seekers housed in the local IPAS centres are increasingly from Muslim majority countries like Somalia, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Jordan and Morocco.



In Scoil Íosa National School there are now 31 different nationalities among 399 pupils and there are 42 nationalities in Ballyhaunis Community School. Kenneth Dennedy, Principal of Scoil Íosa has said: The percentage of children who do not speak English when they go home in the evening is 63 %."

Pobal HP Deprivation Index

A detailed analysis of socio-economic indicators in the Ballyhaunis region shows that areas outside the town have pulled away from the town centre. Data based on a sampling of 331 people living in the centre of the town, shows far greater levels of economic disadvantage, with male unemployment levels at 37.5% and female unemployment at 41%. 26% percent of those in this cohort said they had third level education. The town-centre area is classed as "disadvantaged" in the Pobal report. 51.7% of those surveyed in the town classed themselves as lone parents.

The designation of both Ballyhaunis Community School and the local primary school as participants in the Delivering Equality in Education (DEIS) programme has allowed both schools to hire home school liaison officers while also offering free hot meals to students. The local Family Resource Centre, among its various services, also operates the Food Cloud service, redistributing donated food to those in need.

Socio-Economic Challenges

Unskilled workers on minimum wage salaries have been particularly impacted by acute price inflation in recent years. The national consumer price index for September 2021 to September 2022 shows a 49.6% rise in the cost of electricity with a 9.9% jump in food and beverage costs and an 11.3% rise in transport. Rent rose by an average 10% in the time frame.

Migrants nationally are more prone to poverty, according to research by the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) research (published 2023) compiled by Frances McGinnity, which puts the percentage of migrants below the poverty line at 16.8%, compared to an 11.6% equivalent for the Irish born population.

Immigrant workers are also far more dependent on private (and non-social) housing compared to the Irish born population, according to the ESRI data. Most alarming perhaps, the percentage of income spent on accommodation at 41% compared to an average of 8.5% for Irish nationals.

Programmes which seek to address inequality and disadvantage among local youths include Ballyhaunis Engaging Youth (BEY) run by the national Foróige office with programmes on IT and health funded through MSLETB. BEY programmes are sometimes supported by the local Family Resource Centre.

The socio-economic challenges facing the town's population continue to evolve. Much of the town's social fabric is kept together by a team of Rural Social Scheme and Tus workers who do a great deal of the landscaping in public areas like the Friary grounds. Finding suitable applicants at a time of full employment has become a challenge and increasingly these positions are being taken by Ukrainian and other Eastern European candidates.

The presence of three evangelical Protestant churches caters -and offers support networks - to the new migrant populations: two of these churches are Brazilian while Pastor Emmanuel Olaurewaju ministers to a largely African congregation at the Word of Life church each Sunday.



Sustainable Travel

One of four towns surveyed in Connacht, Ballyhaunis scored well for local access to employment in the Sustainable Mobility Index for Rural Towns published by the Western Development Commission in 2023. However, the town scored only 30 out of 35 (a high score suggesting lower performance) in local low carbon transportation. Ballyhaunis scored 28 for access to social services and facilities.

There have been efforts to increase [low carbon] mobility locally. The Active Travel programme improved footpaths and lighting enabling people of all ages and incomes to exercise more. Another public travel initiative, Local Link, connects rural dwellers to Ballyhaunis with several weekly routes. In 2023 the service was extended to villages in Co Roscommon and has proven an important link, particularly for those living alone.

Part 2 – Consultation



Talking to and involving a wide range of people is a key part of creating the Town Centre First Plan. The plan brings together ideas from the community, local businesses, and people with expert knowledge from different sectors and the local council. The feedback gathered during this process has helped shape and guide the plan.



STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT WITH CLAREMORRIS–SWINFORD MD

A productive meeting took place with the Claremorris–Swinford MD team to discuss key sites and future priorities for Ballyhaunis as part of the Town Centre First (TCF) Plan. Discussions focused on community facilities, heritage buildings, sports and recreation, and public realm improvements, all aimed at supporting Ballyhaunis's growth as a vibrant, connected, and inclusive town.

Key Projects & Priorities Identified:

- **Scout's Den:** Potential to be redeveloped as a youth and community facility (e.g., Montessori, Foróige, Boxing Club). The project will require new access and significant funding for clearance and feasibility work.
- **Courthouse:** Proposed lease to the Chamber of Commerce and Irish Rural Artists. Urgent repairs are needed before occupation. The building has potential for community use and creative industries.
- **Ballyhaunis Friary:** Under community ownership via Ballyhaunis Abbey Trust. A long-term conservation and redevelopment plan is needed, especially to protect its historic Harry Clarke stained glass windows. This site has strong potential as a cultural and community anchor.
- **Swimming Pool:** Recently renovated and run by local volunteers. Options are being explored to upgrade heating and extend its use beyond summer months.
- **Cricket Facilities:** Current space is inadequate; a dedicated pitch may be needed, depending on demand. Site ownership and use remain challenges.

- **Multi-Purpose Community Hall:** There is demand for an indoor sports and community events space. Successful examples exist nearby (e.g., Knock, Aghamore).
- **Public Realm & Placemaking:** Proposals include improved lighting, expanded park infrastructure, and a new footbridge linking the Friary to the swimming pool area. These efforts aim to improve access, safety, and the visual quality of public spaces.
- **Street Enhancements:** Past streetscape improvement schemes have had a positive impact but were limited in scope. There's support for further investment to revitalize vacant buildings and underused sites.
- **Heritage & Arts:** Opportunities exist to use upcoming heritage anniversaries (e.g., 100 years since Harry Clarke's death) as a platform for cultural programming and funding applications.
- **Transport & Active Travel:** There is currently no Active Travel Plan for Ballyhaunis. Improved walking and cycling routes, and the possibility of electric bus services (e.g., like Killala) were discussed. This is now being looked at by Active Travel and the routes indicated in this plan are being reviewed (See page 33).
- **Town Centre Power Supply:** A Phase 3 electricity upgrade would reduce the need for costly generators during events and benefit community and enterprise uses.

Next Steps & Planning Considerations:

- A full baseline analysis of the town's physical, social, and economic characteristics.
- Identification of land use, transport patterns, community needs, and opportunities for growth.
- Coordination with existing Local Area Plans (LAPs), Mayo's County Development Plan, and recent census data.
- Consultation with local groups including the Town Team, Mayo County Council, and wider stakeholders.

The insights and priorities discussed will directly inform the TCF plan's goals to improve community infrastructure, protect heritage assets, support local enterprise, and deliver a better quality of life for all who live, work, and visit Ballyhaunis.

TOWN TEAM MEETINGS

The Ballyhaunis Town Team was established in March 2024 as part of the Town Centre First process. Since its formation, the team has met approximately once a month, actively contributing to the development of a shared vision for the future of Ballyhaunis. These meetings, along with a mix of group and one-to-one sessions facilitated by the Town Regeneration Officer, provided ongoing opportunities for discussion, reflection, and collaboration throughout the early stages of the process. The purpose of these engagements was to support Mayo County Council and the appointed consultant team by offering a grounded local perspective to guide their work. By consistently engaging with the Town Team, the project partners were able to build a clearer understanding of the town's needs and ambitions in advance of the first round of public consultation. This approach helped ensure the consultation was focused, relevant, and responsive to local priorities.

To help shape the initial SCOT (Strengths, Challenges, Opportunities, Threats) analysis, each member of the Town Team was asked to respond to the following five questions:

- What are the 3 best things about Ballyhaunis?
- What are the 3 biggest challenges for the town?
- What is holding Ballyhaunis back?
- What top 3 things would improve the town?
- What are the best opportunities for the future of Ballyhaunis?

The collective responses formed the basis of the SCOT analysis, which was instrumental in shaping the outcomes of the Defining the Place stage — now complete. This phase clarified key themes and priorities, and laid the foundation for future strategy and action.



Strengths

- Cultural diversity of the town
- Friendly people
- Community spirit
- Entrepreneurship
- Chamber of Commerce
- Tidy Town Team
- Active groups, sports clubs and societies
- Friary Grounds
- Employment options
- High levels of employment
- Success of business
- Great local schools
- Great town layout and buildings
- The railway
- Walkable town
- Rich heritage and culture

Challenges

- Lack of accomodation/homes
- Businesses closing
- Lack of families in the town
- Dilapidated businesses
- Dereliction
- Lack of community cohesion
- Language / culture
- Linking communities
- Traffic in the town centre
- Wider perception of the town
- Attitudes to road use
- Library too small
- Isolated communities

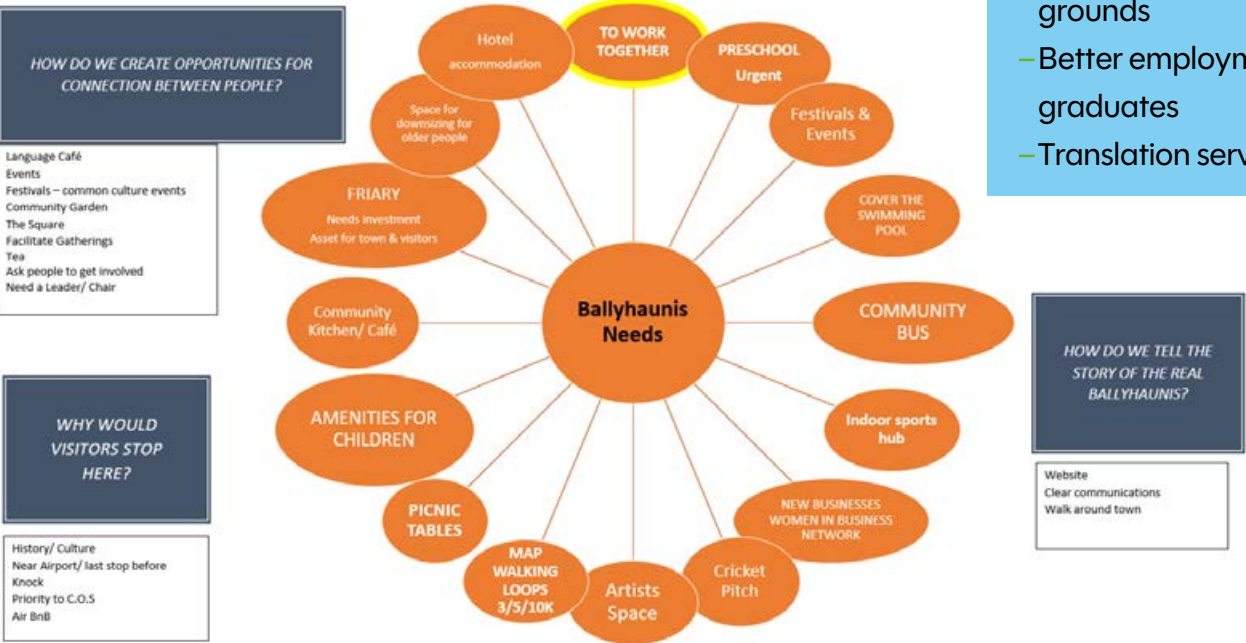


Opportunities

- The people of Ballyhaunis
- More places to meet
- Improve existing sports and other activity options
- Improve night life with events
- To increase housing and accommodation through new housing developments
- Improve services: banks / Garda / Health care
- Space to have a useable town square
- Restore and repurpose historic buildings
- Better infrastructure for walkers and cyclists
- More useable green space
- Investment in the Friary and grounds
- Better employment for graduates
- Translation services

Threats

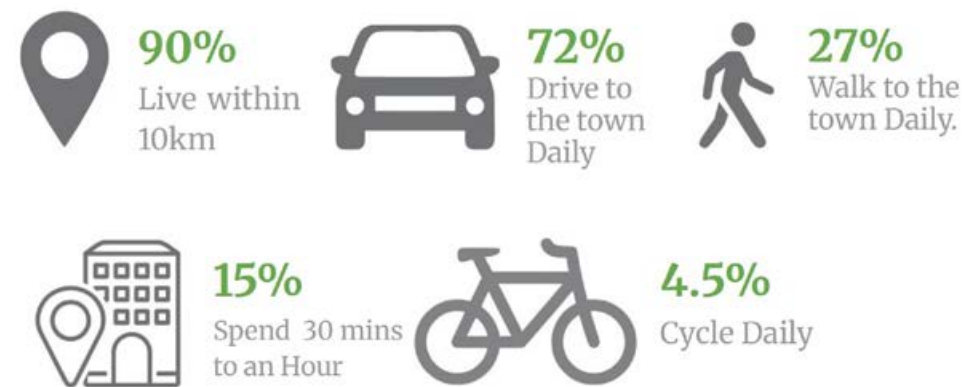
- Lack of Public Health Clinic
- No Post Office and Bank
- Garda Station only open on limited basis
- Uncoordinated transport services
- Too few volunteers
- Lack of investment
- no high speed broadband
- Nature of the employment - low wage and industrial
- No vision or plan for the town
- Aligning what is needed and getting agreement
- People not working together
- Closing retail in the High st.



ONLINE SURVEY – OVERVIEW

An online survey ran for the entire month of February 2025 and received 128 responses. The survey consisted of multiple choice and long answer questions to allow for detailed feedback. This page is an overview of the Stage 1 Consultation Summary Report which can found in the appendices.

The vast majority of respondees were residents or locals with a minority stating work or visiting family or for shopping.



"First Word That Comes to Mind for Ballyhaunis"

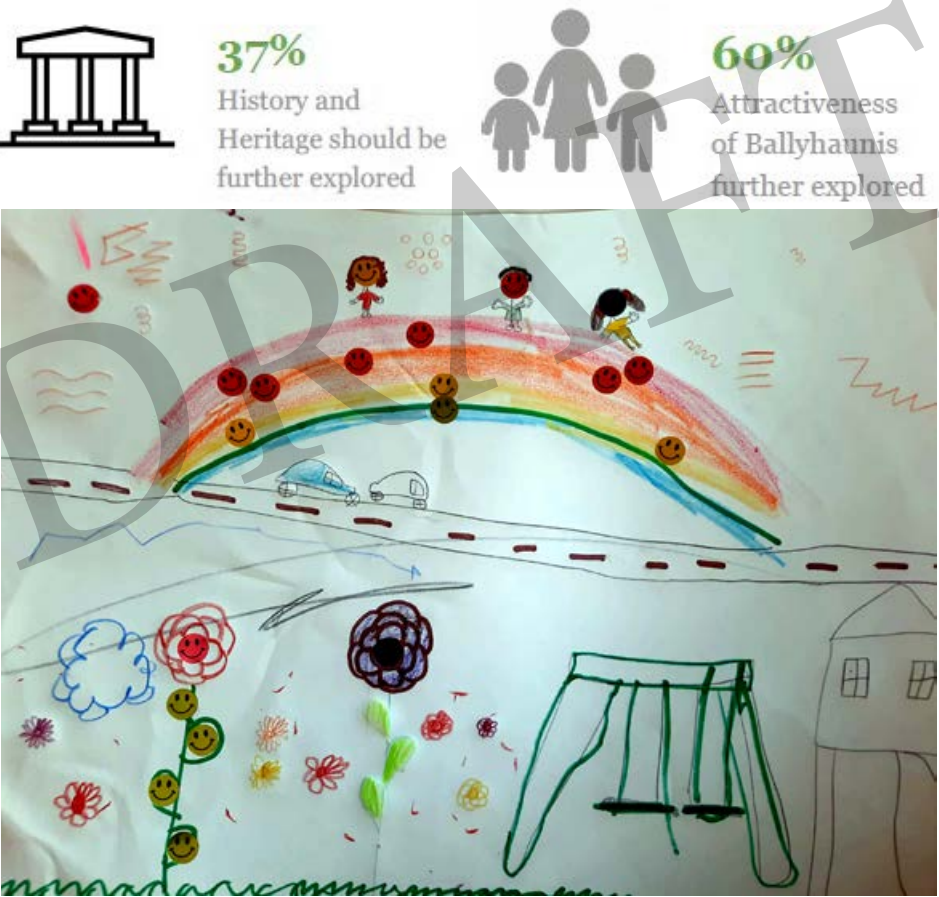
friendly
home
community
neglect
traffic
diverse



"Top Three Places to Visit in Ballyhaunis"

Friary Grounds
Supervalu
Val's Bistro

The Friary Grounds provides the people of the town with a peaceful, scenic park that is centrally accessible for quiet walks, sports, play and engaging with nature.



Accessibility in Ballyhaunis

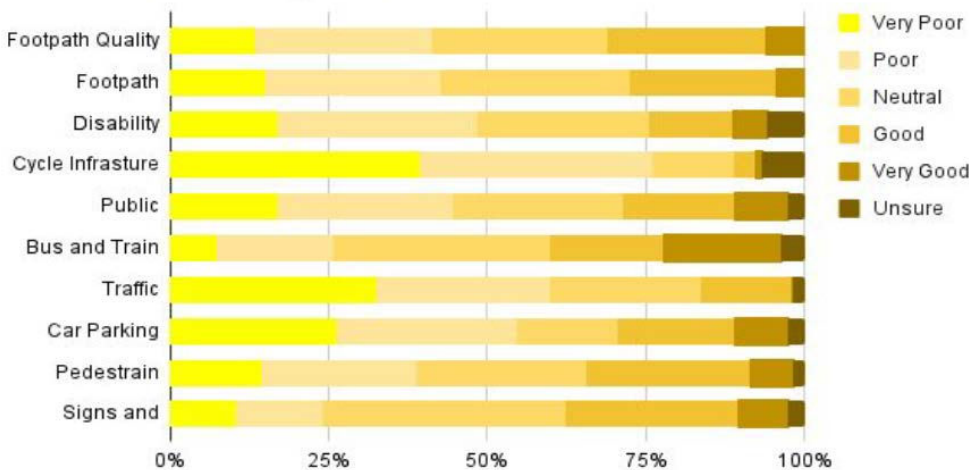
The survey highlights a strong reliance on private cars in Ballyhaunis, despite its accessibility.

55% of respondents live within a 15-minute walk, and 90% within 10km, yet 65% of daily trips are by car, while cycling remains low at 4.5%.

15% of respondents take 30 minutes to an hour for trips, likely for school runs or quick errands.

Even among the 50% living in Ballyhaunis, many still drive, underscoring the need for better sustainable transport options.

Quality of Mobility and Accessibility in Ballyhaunis



39%
People suggested that the quality of cycling infrastructure is inadequate.



27%
People suggested that the quality of Footpath is Satisfactory.



13.5%
people think disability access is good

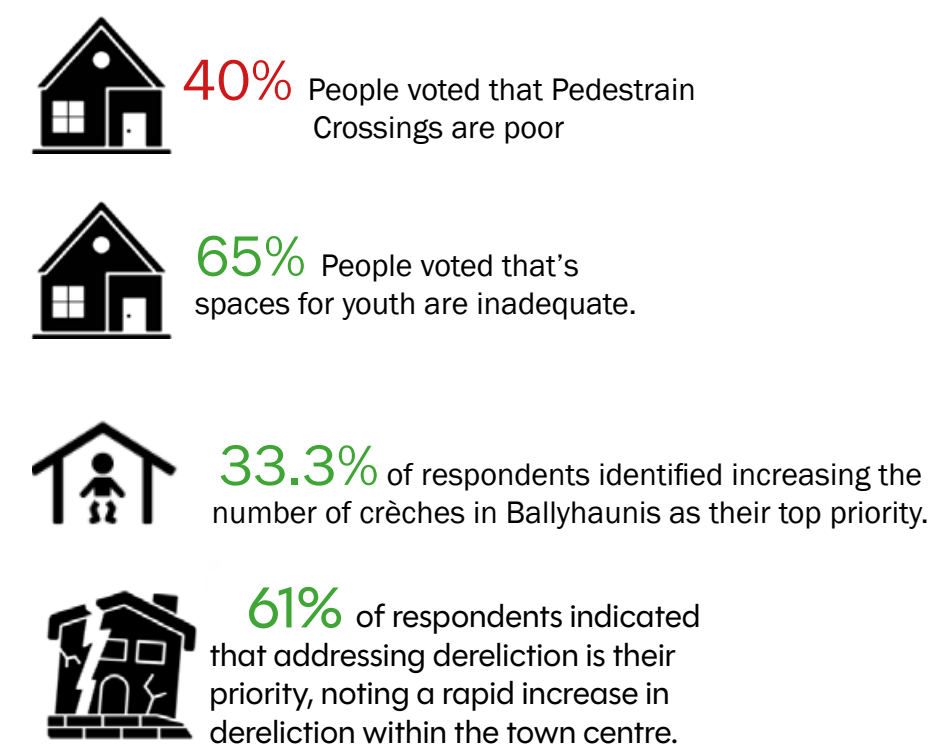


38%
people suggest that wayfinding and signage are good

ONLINE SURVEY – OVERVIEW

Liveability in Ballyhaunis

The survey reveals strong concerns about Ballyhaunis' long-term growth, with 80% of respondents believing the town offers limited opportunities beyond school or college. While housing and tackling dereliction are top priorities for improving the town centre, there is also a clear need for better pre-school and childcare facilities, leisure and play spaces, safety measures, and access to health services—highlighting a desire to make Ballyhaunis a safer, healthier, and more engaging place to live. This need is reinforced by widespread dissatisfaction with the town's social and cultural offerings, as many rated bars, cafés, events, music, arts, and tourist facilities as very poor, pointing to a significant gap in cultural and recreational infrastructure.



"Top 10 Most Wanted Services/Facilities in Ballyhaunis"

Visitor accommodation
Banking facilities
Indoor sports facilities
Youth entertainment
Evening social spaces
Flexible community space
Safer streets
Childcare facilities
Affordable retail options
Safer routes

Community feedback shows strong demand for key improvements in Ballyhaunis, including a hotel, full-service bank, indoor leisure centre, and better public transport. There is widespread support for youth facilities, more dining and retail options, enhanced health services, and safer walking and cycling routes—reflecting a community eager for a more vibrant, connected, and family-friendly town.

"Top Three Places in Ballyhaunis to improve"

Swimming Pool
Scouts Den
Convent Grounds

The swimming pool is seen as outdated, with strong support for covering it to allow year-round use. The Scouts Den is viewed as a derelict eyesore, especially given its visibility from the train station, with calls for demolition or reuse. The Old Convent is considered underused, while plans for a new library have been widely welcomed.

Commercial Activity in Ballyhaunis

Survey results highlight strong concern over Ballyhaunis' commercial activity, with 31% viewing it negatively and only 28.7% expecting improvement. Respondents called for revitalising vacant town centre spaces and attracting new businesses, rather than focusing on rental accommodation. Comparisons to towns like Claremorris—seen as more developed commercially—were common. Many household, electrical, and fashion items are available locally, yet residents often travel to nearby towns, citing affordability and greater choice as key reasons.

Numerous Economic Opportunities for Private investment where highlighted during the consultation process with online respondees identifying the below as missing from the Ballyhaunis.

- Hotel / B&B
- Warehouse Spaces
- Cafes - especially later opening hours
- Clothes shops for Children / teens
- Discount stores
- Second-hand shops
- Spaces for upcycling/ making/ alterations
- Cinema

COMMUNITY DROP-IN – OVERVIEW

The initial results from online survey and discussions with the Town Team formed a basis to inform and focus the community drop-in consultation sessions. A concerted effort was made to ensure a broad representation of the local community attended with announcements and adverts on social media, newspaper, radio, posters and leaflets all undertaken in the weeks before and on the day of the consultation.



Through discussions it became apparent there were a number of interconnected challenges that faced the town including infrastructure, public services, safety, and community vitality. Concerns were raised about the lack of cycling infrastructure, limited transport options, and accessibility issues, while a significant number of participants emphasized the need for affordable housing, eliminating vacant properties, and enhancing safety measures. Additionally, there was strong community support for improving recreational and sporting facilities,



expanding tourism opportunities, and creating a more age-friendly environment.

Community Infrastructure and Services

Safer walking and cycling routes within the town was a priority these included better lighting, footpaths, crossings and connections to schools, car parks and places of work. Providing more safe spaces for people to meet and mingle was a key priority for the town and this included public spaces and existing cafe's and restaurants. Greater inclusivity was required in the later.

Sports Facilities

There was demand for a site for a dedicated cricket pitch and improved facilities for the active local Cricket Club. The Boxing Club requires a venue in Ballyhaunis and several existing locations are considered as well as purpose built. There was a general call for better indoor sports facilities which could be used by the whole community.



Traffic and Parking

It was agreed that better traffic and parking management was needed in the town to reduce congestion at peak times and free up on-street parking bays. It was noted that a lot of on-street parking was taken up by 'long-stay' users where they might as easily use carparks. Reducing traffic might be eased through reduction in speed limits and encouraging more people to walk and cycle through better active travel infrastructure.



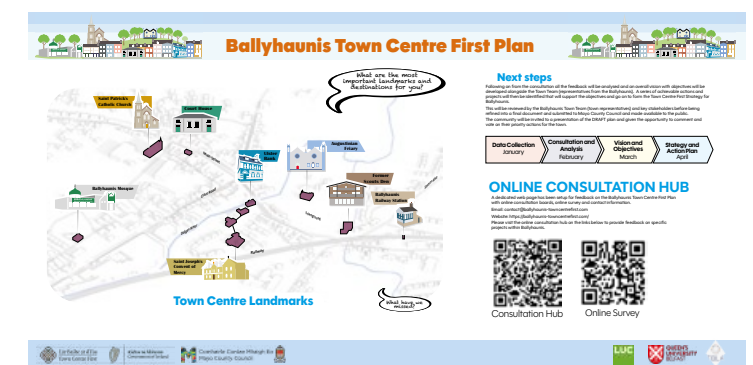
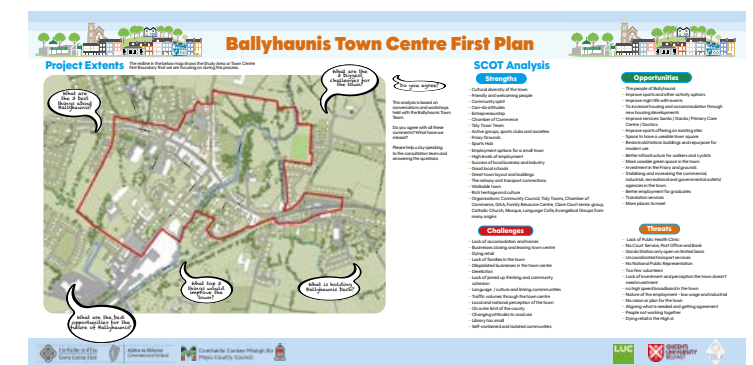
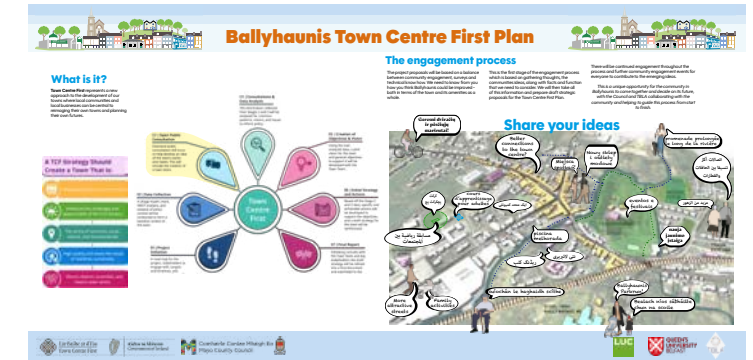
Public Transport Connections

The train station was seen as a huge asset for the town and this might be improved by allocating more parking spaces and coordinated bus connections into the town. Wider bus services to would be beneficial



Stage 1 Consultation Boards

A scale version of the Stage 1 Consultation Boards can be found in the appendices of the full report.



Part 3 – Defining the Place



DEFINING THE PLACE: INTRODUCTION

Defining the Place: Ballyhaunis

The Understanding the Place section of this plan provided a foundation for identifying the key challenges, opportunities, and assets within Ballyhaunis town centre. Building on this analysis, the Defining the Place chapter sets out a clear, strategic framework to guide regeneration—one that reflects the town's unique character and responds directly to the aspirations of the local community.

This section functions as a high-level visioning tool for Ballyhaunis. It offers a strategic direction for Mayo County Council, local stakeholders, landowners, businesses, and community groups, helping to prioritise projects as funding opportunities emerge and to inform future feasibility and masterplanning work.

Vision, Objectives, and Actions

The vision, objectives, and actions outlined here are informed by a comprehensive understanding of Ballyhaunis—developed through site analysis, desktop research, and extensive community and stakeholder engagement.

The vision sets out an ambitious but achievable direction for Ballyhaunis over the coming decade. It is supported by a set of objectives that are aspirational yet grounded, each linked to a suite of practical actions or projects. These actions aim to deliver tangible outcomes and reflect the feedback gathered throughout the consultation process.

Vision – a central vision to support regeneration

Themes – links to consultation feedback

Objectives – to support the delivery of the vision

Actions – designed to bring the objectives to fruition

BALLYHAUNIS TOWN VISION

"Ballyhaunis aims to be a vibrant, inclusive town where a diverse population is actively engaged in community life, supported by strong social infrastructure, diverse employment opportunities, and a welcoming town centre."



what we'll be saying

TRANSPORT & CONNECTIVITY



Ballyhaunis is great for walking, cycling or public transport.

A SHARED VISION FOR THE ABBEY AND ITS LANDSCAPE



A place where we care for our environment and wildlife

COMMUNITY & SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE

A town that has a range of experiences for young people

We are connected to and supported by our community

There are interesting places to meet and socialise

Our heritage buildings are looked after and used every day

In Ballyhaunis, we pray in different ways – but we all share the same sense of belonging

We have a platform to progress our education and careers

We have a wide range of sports facilities and clubs which welcome everyone

PUBLIC SPACES

Lots to do in the evenings

Businesses are supported through town marketing and attractive, accessible streets

We love our cosmopolitan town

It's so vibrant

PEOPLE IN BALLYHAUNIS

Ballyhaunis offers a range of support services

The town encourages a healthy and happy lifestyle

A range of housing types including options for older people

Active groups work towards making the town attractive and a great place to live

A. PEOPLE IN BALLYHAUNIS – COMMUNITY ACTION

Ballyhaunis has a wealth of riches when it comes to its people. As a town that has been called the ‘most diverse’ in Ireland, it can celebrate its array of cultures and create a vibrant and colourful cosmopolitan town with residents from across Europe, Asia, South-America and Africa.

With a young and predominately ‘working class’ population which includes a large number of migrant workers there is a need to provide supports to ensure that they are catered for within the community.

The consultation feedback revealed that more needs to be done for school leavers and low wage earners to develop their skills and create potential for career development.

Fostering an all inclusive community spirit would support a more considerate and responsive approach to day to day living. This could be achieved by creating more opportunities to meet and mingle.

OBJECTIVE

A. To foster an inclusive, connected, and active community by enhancing access to shared spaces, programmes, and opportunities for all ages, particularly young people.

Supporting Actions/Projects:

1. Explore Community Action through targeted initiatives – See p.40: A1
2. Consider support and space for a growing young population – See p.40: A2
3. Activate community spaces and venues to host a year-round programme of inclusive events, courses, and festivals that celebrate local culture, support the circular economy, and make full use of existing facilities for everyone in the community – See p.40: A3
4. Improve outdoor facilities and spaces for young people and the wider community to meet and socialise – See p.41: A4



Thematic Objectives

B. COMMUNITY & SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE - MAYO COUNTY COUNCIL OBJECTIVE

Ballyhaunis is home to several important community facilities that provide essential services. A key priority is to retain and protect these existing assets to ensure they continue serving the town into the future.

Located within the Friary Grounds, the Family Resource Centre delivers vital services for local families, including a Pre-school catering to 66 children aged 2–4. Rehousing the Pre-school is a matter of critical importance to ensure the continuity of this service.

The Community Hall on Main Street hosts a wide range of activities throughout the week and is under significant pressure due to high demand. The recent and upcoming openings of the Information Hub, Community Library, and Courthouse Cultural Centre are expected to ease this strain and offer new opportunities for engagement and cultural development.

There is also strong community demand for a greater variety of sports facilities, with calls for boxing, cricket, a gym, and a dedicated indoor sports hall.

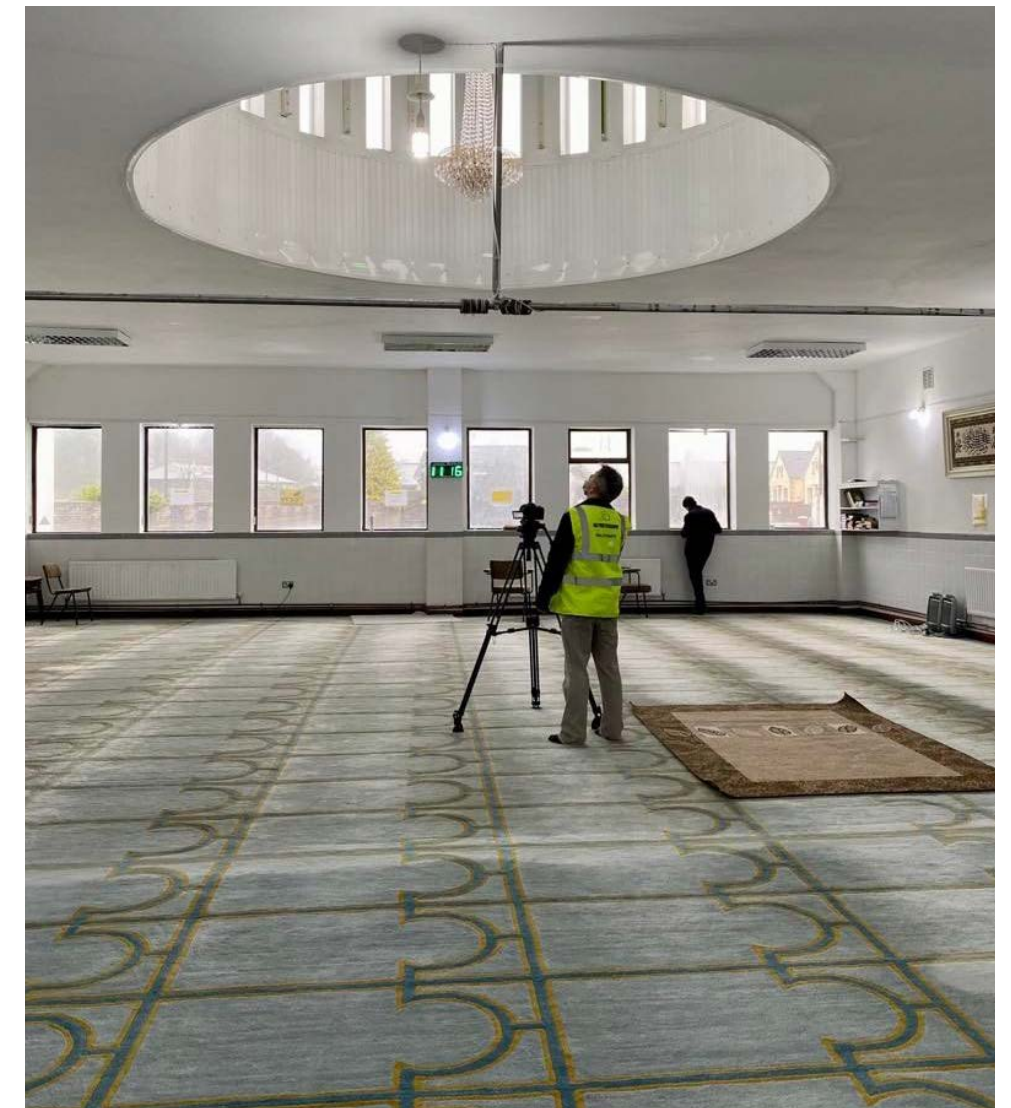
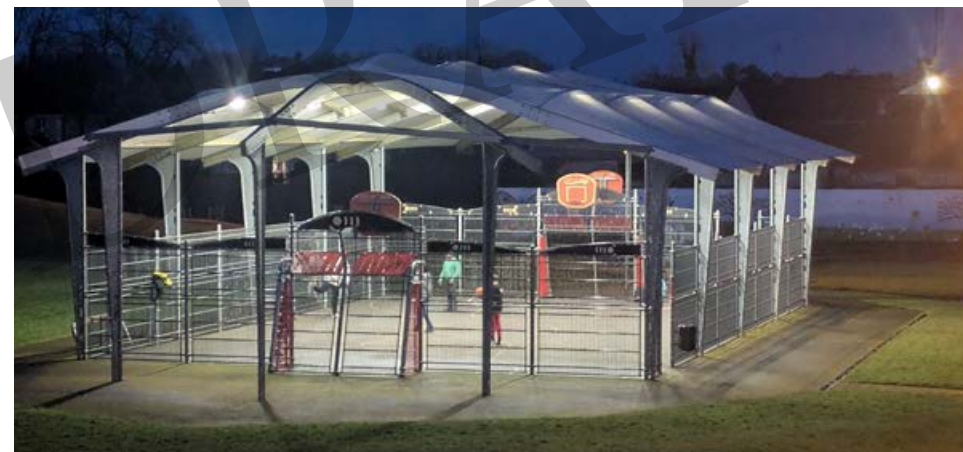
B. To enhance access to education, culture, information, and recreation through the development of inclusive, community-focused facilities in Ballyhaunis.

Supporting Actions/Projects:

1. Develop a purpose-built Community Pre-school (See p.42: B1)
2. Support the delivery of the Community Library project (See p.43: B2)
3. Continue to work towards opening the Courthouse as a Cultural Centre for the community (See p.43: B3)
4. Support the opening of the Information Hub (See p.44: B4)
5. Explore the provision of sports facilities in the town centre in collaboration with sports groups and organisations. Provide advice on funding sources. (See p.44: B5)



Note: A facilities audit list and groups can be found in the appendices



C. A MASTERPLAN FOR THE ABBEY AND ITS SURROUNDINGS – BALLYHAUNIS ABBEY TRUST, LOCAL ORGANISATIONS AND MAYO COUNTY COUNCIL

The Augustinian Friary (St Mary's Abbey) was founded in the 14th century, and the town of Ballyhaunis grew around it. In the 2000s, the Augustinians handed over the Abbey and its surrounding grounds in trust to the local community, who have managed it ever since.

The site's rich setting and heritage make it one of Ballyhaunis's greatest assets. There is significant potential for the Abbey and grounds to deliver wider community benefits—such as spaces for recreation, improved access to nature, and a stronger sense of place for the town. Developing a masterplan would help unify these possibilities under a shared vision, enabling various community groups to work together effectively.

Emergent works are the restoration of the Abbey and the clearing and development of the Scouts Den site. Smaller, more immediate interventions could involve programming spaces along the river walk to enhance views and create stronger connections to the river and surrounding landscape.

OBJECTIVE (working with the Ballyhaunis Abbey Trust)

C1. To develop a community, heritage, and landscape-led masterplan that conserves the historic Abbey site while enhancing its use, accessibility, biodiversity, and value for all user groups.

Supporting Actions/Projects:

1. Restore the Abbey and safeguard key artifacts, including the Harry Clarke windows (See p.45: C1)
2. Improve access and connectivity throughout the site (See p.46: C2)
3. Exploring spaces for broader community use, such as outdoor cooking, play and cultural activities (See p.47: C3)
4. Remove the derelict 'Scouts Den' to support site enhancement (See p.48: C4)
5. Ensure long-term conservation, biodiversity management, and maintenance across the site.



Restoring views towards abbey through careful editing/removal of existing trees. The landmark is brought back into townscape

D. PUBLIC SPACES – MAYO COUNTY COUNCIL

Much like the Augustinians did nearly 700 years ago, Ballyhaunis has the opportunity to re-centre its community life along the Dalgan River, embracing it as a defining civic and ecological asset.

By creating a dedicated civic corridor that strengthens the social, recreational, and environmental functions of the river and surrounding heritage sites, the town can broaden the traditional footprint of the town centre. This expanded focus would incorporate key spaces such as the river frontage, Bridge Street, the Convent Grounds, and the Friary Grounds—enhancing their accessibility, connectivity, and vibrancy through a series of targeted interventions.

Priority actions include improvements to connectivity and public realm quality—such as enhancing entrances, sightlines, pedestrian priority areas, seating, shelter, and placemaking elements—to encourage increased footfall and community interaction. A central initiative is to create a seamless link between the Town Centre, Clare Street river frontage, Friary Grounds, and Convent Grounds. This will be achieved through traffic calming measures on Bridge Street, improved pedestrian crossings, and greater permeability.

A new pedestrian bridge connecting the Convent Grounds and Clare Street river frontage is also proposed, establishing a direct, legible desire line between two key civic spaces and significantly enhancing pedestrian movement and placemaking potential along the river corridor.

A series of projects and phased actions are outlined in Part 5 of this report to support the delivery of this vision.

OBJECTIVE (See plan numbering)

D. To enhance the public realm and town centre experience by improving accessibility, activating social spaces, and creating a stronger sense of place in Ballyhaunis.

Supporting Actions/Projects:

1. Define and enhance key town gateways to create a welcoming arrival experience (See p.50: D1)
2. Develop more public spaces for socialising, gathering, and community use (See p.51: D2)
3. Explore opportunities to improve Main St (See p.52 D3)
4. Reinforce Market Square as a central community hub and gathering space (See p.53: D4)
5. Investigate unused spaces for temporary community use (See p.54: D5)



E. TRANSPORT & CONNECTIVITY - ACTIVE TRAVEL

Ballyhaunis is home to two centrally located schools—Scoil Íosa and the Community School—both within easy reach of the town centre. There is significant potential to improve pedestrian and cycle access, encouraging students and others to travel actively through better infrastructure.

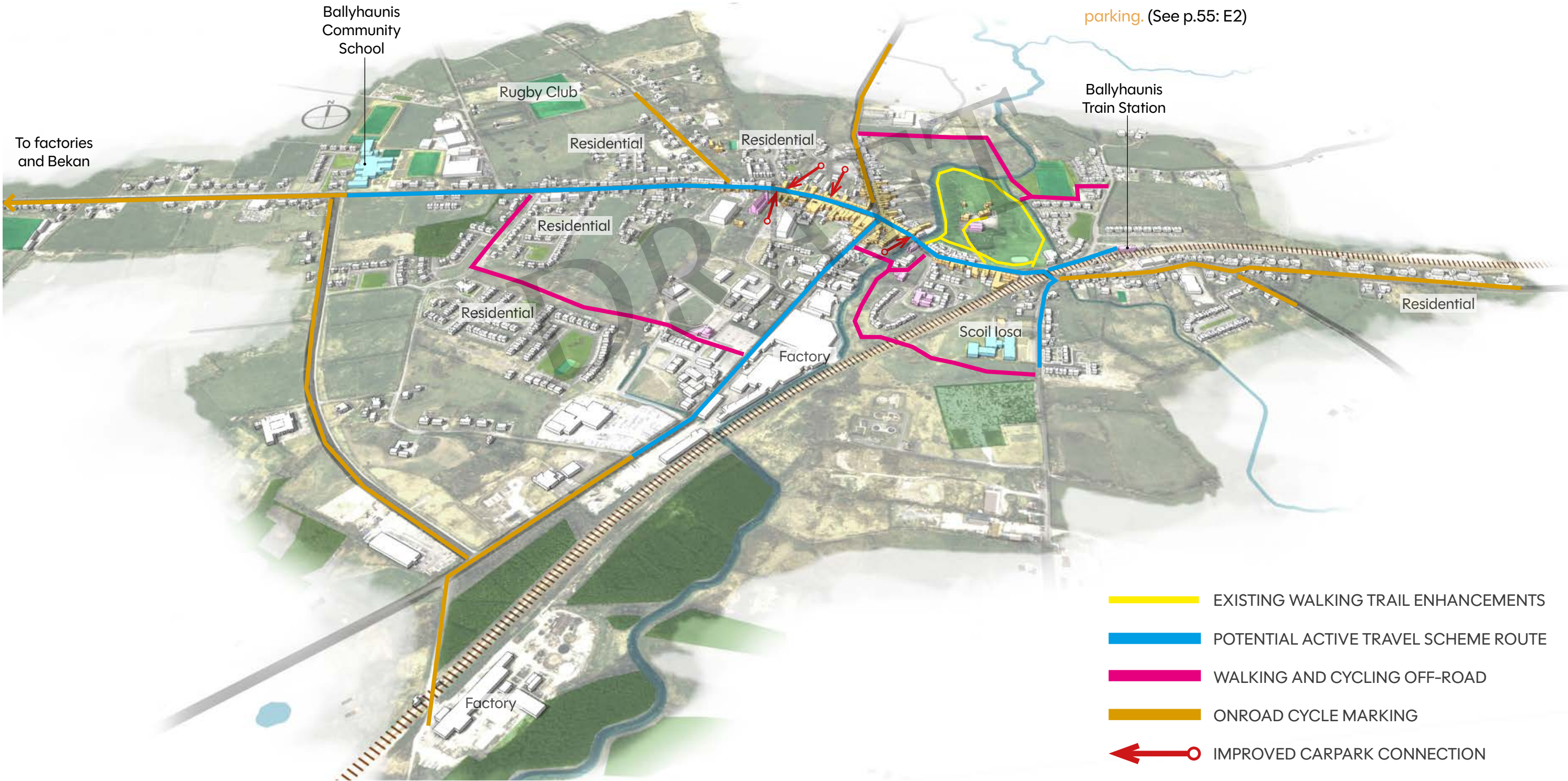
Several key Active Travel Schemes are currently in development and will be implemented in the coming years. These schemes offer an opportunity to rethink how people move around the town.

OBJECTIVES

E1. To improve active travel and connectivity in Ballyhaunis by creating safer, more accessible links between homes, schools, workplaces, and surrounding communities.

Supporting Actions/Projects:

- 1. Support proposals that enhance connections between residential areas, schools, and employment centres. (See p.54: E1)
- 2. Introduce road markings and signage to enhance cyclist safety. Link and extend existing and planned cycle and pedestrian networks within Ballyhaunis and to nearby areas. (See p.54: E1)
- 3. Review existing carpark usage and connections and look at ways of increasing carpark usage to alleviate pressures from onstreet parking. (See p.55: E2)



Part 4 – Enabling the Place



DELIVERY PLAN

Implementing the Ballyhaunis Town Centre First Plan is an ongoing, step-by-step process that must remain flexible and responsive to local opportunities, constraints, and changing circumstances. Regular review of the plan's objectives and goals will be essential to ensure it continues to reflect the community's aspirations. The Town Team, as a representative community body, will play a key role in making sure these priorities are pursued with consistency and ambition.

Delivery of this plan will require sustained effort and strong collaboration. Failure to act now risks weakening community confidence and missing the opportunity for long-term positive change. Ballyhaunis has shown remarkable community spirit and participation through this process—this momentum must be maintained through action.

Governance

The Town Centre First policy places the Town Team at the heart of local regeneration, working in close partnership with Mayo County Council and other stakeholders. For Ballyhaunis to achieve its collective vision, local leaders must continue to work cooperatively and reflect the diverse voices of the town.

The Town Team provides a structure through which the community can have an active say in local development. Successful regeneration depends on strong working relationships between the Town Team, Mayo County Council, and other local groups and organisations.

Key Roles in Delivery

Town Regeneration Officer (Mayo County Council)
The Town Regeneration Officer is the key link between the Ballyhaunis Town Team, Mayo County Council, and external agencies. This role is central to providing expert advice, building stronger partnerships, and ensuring alignment with available funding and policies.

Ballyhaunis Town Team
The Town Team will continue to coordinate local regeneration efforts, support delivery of priority projects, communicate progress, and review the TCF Plan regularly. Supported by the Town Regeneration Officer and Town Champion, the Town Team will also have access to targeted supports, including training, funding advice, and peer learning networks through the Town Centre First programme.

Capacity Building and Support

To ensure the Ballyhaunis Town Team is fully equipped to lead, ongoing training and mentoring is recommended. This might include:

- Procurement and budgeting skills
- Annual peer-learning visits to towns that have successfully delivered similar regeneration plans (e.g. Gort, Balla, Boyle, Carrick-on-Shannon)

Action Planning by the Town Team

It is recommended that the Town Team prepare a short-to-medium term Action Plan for implementation of the Town Centre First Plan.

This could include:

- Annual evaluation of the plan's objectives and identification of priority projects
- Establishment of focused Working Groups aligned with key themes and member skills
- Transparent communication to the wider community—e.g., through local social media or newsletters
- Monitoring funding opportunities and how they align with the plan's priorities
- Setting clear timeframes for reviewing progress against the plan's vision and goals

Ballyhaunis Town Centre First – Action Plan Overview

The following Action Plan sets out the key steps required to deliver each priority project identified through the Town Centre First process. Each project is accompanied by an outline of the project leads and partners, and highlights key stakeholders who could support successful delivery.

To ensure transparency and alignment with the community's voice, each action is clearly linked to one or more of the five core themes identified through public and stakeholder engagement. This thematic approach makes it easy to see how projects respond directly to local needs and priorities.

Each action is categorised and presented in a table format, with the following details:

- Project Description – a concise overview of the initiative
- Project Champions and Stakeholders – local leaders, groups or agencies who could lead or contribute
- Key Actions – steps necessary to bring the project to life
- Preliminary Budget and Timeline – indicative figures and phasing to inform funding applications and scheduling
- Policy Alignment – relevant national, regional or local policies the project supports

Each of these actions is further illustrated and expanded upon in the following section of the report, providing visual material, case studies, and more detailed context to support their delivery.

Thematic Objective	Project	Priority	Key Partners	Strategic Actions	Potential Funding	Considerations	Timeline	Policy Alignment
COMMUNITY & SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE								
B2	Ballyhaunis Library and Community Space	High	Mayo County Council & Library Services Ballyhaunis Chamber of Commerce	MCC Capital Delivery Team is managing this project"	Funded by RRDF	The project is underway	0- 2 years	
B1	Community Pre-school	Critical	Ballyhaunis FRC Ballyhaunis Abbey Trust Ballyhaunis Abbey Partnership	Identify priorities & best location.	DCEDIY Building Blocks Capital Programme (Pobal) LEADER	Project could stay sited in Ballyhaunis Abbey grounds	0 - 4 years	
??	Family Resource Centre	High	Ballyhaunis FRC Ballyhaunis Abbey Trust Ballyhaunis Abbey Partnership	FRC to identify priorities & best location with service users	LEADER funding FRC Funding (Tusla) HSF	Local businesses, Ballina MD, Heritage Council	0-2 years	
??	Youth (Community) Facilities and Provision	Medium	Mayo County Council Mayo CYPSC Ballyhaunis BEY project Foróige	Partners working group to consider best location & Funding source	DRCD, LEADER, DCEDIY	Project may be appropriate on site of former Scout's Den	0-5 years	
B3	Old Courthouse Cultural Space	Medium	Rural Irish Artists Mayo County Council	CRF funding has been achieved	Community Recognition Fund, DRCD, LEADER	Plans underway to make this building safe for lease	0-2 years	
SPORTS FACILITIES								
B5	Boxing Club	Critical	Ballyhaunis Boxing Club Mayo Sports Partnership	Identify potential sites for relocation or new build	Sports Capital Funding	Current facilities are inadequate & outside Ballyhaunis. Club provides social integration	0-1 years	
B5	Cricket Pitch	High	Ballyhaunis Cricket Club Mayo Sports Partnership	Identify suitable sites for pitch	Sports Capital Funding,	There is a strong Cricket team in Ballyhaunis which provides opportunities for integration.	0 - 2 years	
B5	Indoor Sports Hub	Medium	Relevant sporting groups, Mayo Sports Partnership		Sports Capital Funding, LEADER, DRCD	A dedicated space for use by multiple sports groups was a priority during consultation.	0- 3 years	
C1	Masterplan for Ballyhaunis Abbey & Grounds	Critical	Ballyhaunis Abbey Trust Ballyhaunis Abbey Partnership Mayo County Council Ballyhaunis Community Garden	Ballyhaunis Abbey Trust working with MCC to source funding	Heritage Council, TVRS, LEADER	Essential project for the preservation and appropriate development for all Ballyhaunis Citizens	0-2 years	

Part 5 – Supporting Actions/Projects

This section provides further detail and visualisation of the Supporting Actions/Projects outlined in the Action Plan. These proposals are directly informed by the Stage 1 Baseline Analysis, its recommendations, and insights gathered through stakeholder and community consultation.

Each proposal has been developed to a RIAI/RIBA Work Stage 2 – Concept Design level. They are intended to demonstrate the potential of each action and how it aligns with the masterplan objectives and wider town goals. The proposals include concept diagrams or sketches to help communicate the ideas clearly.

Each project proposal includes:

- Project Proposal – a summary of the intended intervention or initiative
- Background and Context – rationale for the project, supported by consultation findings
- Supporting Examples – reference to relevant case studies or best practices
- Visual Materials – maps, diagrams, or sketches to bring the idea to life

To ensure transparency and coherence, every project is clearly linked to one or more of the six key themes identified through community engagement. This helps demonstrate how each initiative directly responds to Ballyhaunis's priorities and long-term vision.

A1. COMMUNITY-LED ACTION

Community consultation highlighted that one of Ballyhaunis's greatest strengths is its strong sense of togetherness and active network of local groups. From the Community Council, Family Resource Centre, and TidyTowns, to a wide range of sports clubs, youth services, and cultural groups, there is already a strong foundation for local action.

Residents also expressed a clear willingness to get more involved in shaping the future of the town—especially when opportunities are well-communicated and easy to access. Many groups, however, rely on a small number of volunteers and would benefit from fresh support and coordination.

To build on this momentum and further strengthen community life, the plan supports:

- Raising awareness of existing groups and services,
- Encouraging more people to get involved, and
- Creating opportunities for shared action, from town clean-ups to events and creative projects.

The opening of the Information Hub, led by the Ballyhaunis Chamber of Commerce, will be key in bringing people together—providing a central space for sharing ideas, promoting activities, and supporting community-led regeneration.

A thriving Ballyhaunis depends on its people. Empowering the community to lead, collaborate, and take pride in shared spaces is central to the success of this Town Centre First Plan.

A2. SUPPORT AND SPACE

Ballyhaunis has a solid base of community support services, which are vital not only for young people but for the health and wellbeing of the whole town. Consultation has shown that maintaining and building on this support network is essential as the population grows and diversifies.

Key supports that could be strengthened or expanded—through the coordination of the Information Hub, Community Hall, Family Resource Centre, Chamber of Commerce, and Community Council—include:

Youth and Education

- Homework Clubs and youth mentoring to support learning and build confidence.
- Volunteer-led sports, music, arts and drama activities to give young people safe, engaging outlets.
- Career and life skills programmes supported by local businesses and mentors.

Community Wellbeing

- Mental health peer support, befriending services, and community health visits, particularly for those at risk of isolation.
- First responder volunteers and basic IT support to help residents of all ages access vital services.

Inclusion and Integration

- Language and literacy support, intercultural events, and integration teams to help newcomers feel welcome and involved.
- Intergenerational initiatives to strengthen ties between young people and older residents.

These community-led supports, when well-coordinated and visible, can help foster a sense of belonging, purpose, and pride among young people—and ensure they feel supported to grow, contribute, and stay connected to Ballyhaunis into the future.

A3. GROWING A YEAR-ROUND CELEBRATION OF COMMUNITY

Community consultation highlighted the desire for more year-round cultural and community events in Ballyhaunis. While the town already benefits from a vibrant mix of festivals and groups—including the Ballyhaunis Summer Festival, Abbey Pattern Day, and Christmas Festival, as well as drama, arts, music, and language clubs—residents shared that activities can feel seasonal, sporadic, or under-promoted.

People expressed pride in Ballyhaunis's strong tradition of community-led events, but also a need for greater consistency, coordination, and access—particularly during quieter months. Many existing events rely on the dedication of small volunteer groups, and there's strong local appetite to broaden participation and increase visibility.

With the opening of the new Library, Information Hub, and more flexible civic space, Ballyhaunis is well-placed to grow its calendar of inclusive, community-driven activities that reflect the town's creativity, heritage, and cultural diversity.

To support this, the plan focuses on:

- Expanding use of civic spaces—creating room for regular markets, performances, and pop-up events that activate the town centre year-round.
- Celebrating local identity and diversity—building on events like Abbey Pattern Day and Culture Days to showcase both traditional Irish heritage and the town's multicultural character.
- Strengthening coordination and promotion—using the Information Hub to improve event visibility, make volunteering easier, and support collaboration between groups.

Encouraging new community-led programming—offering support for arts, music, storytelling, and cultural exchange through the new library and creative spaces.

A more visible, inclusive, and consistent calendar of events will not only bring people together, but reinforce Ballyhaunis as a town proud of its heritage, rich in diversity, and alive with community spirit all year round.

A4. MEETING PLACES

A key priority emerging from Stage 1 community consultation was the need for more indoor and outdoor meeting places to support the wide range of community groups active in Ballyhaunis. While the town benefits from strong community networks, there is a clear gap in accessible, inclusive, and informal spaces where people can simply meet, connect, and spend time—particularly in the evenings and during winter months.

This need was especially highlighted for young people, immigrant workers from lower-income households, young families, and older residents—groups who may face barriers to participation or social isolation without suitable places to gather.

Creating more outdoor social spaces, such as seating areas, small shelters, and covered gathering spots, would be a simple and cost-effective way to promote everyday social interaction. These spaces become more valuable when weather-protected and integrated into key walking routes, civic areas, or scenic spots—supporting spontaneous, low-cost community use.

Equally important is the development of inclusive indoor spaces—open in the evenings, welcoming to all ages, and not dependent on purchasing food or drink. These could serve as youth-friendly hubs, family drop-in spaces, or places where older people can find company and support. Residents also pointed to the lack of non-commercial evening venues, and the potential for a shared community space to double as a social asset and a business opportunity.

The plan also recognises the opportunity for these meeting places to be integrated into valued local settings, such as the Friary grounds, riverside, or new convent grounds. These locations could accommodate flexible indoor and outdoor facilities, blending natural and historic character with modern community needs.

To support this, the plan proposes:

- Developing informal meeting places throughout the town, including small-scale interventions like benches, shelters, and outdoor seating clusters that encourage mingling.
- Exploring shared indoor community hubs, with evening access and flexible use for youth groups, family activities, and social support initiatives.
- Activating underused heritage and natural spaces—such as the Friary grounds, riverside, and convent lands—to host pop-up social events or accommodate future community spaces.
- Encouraging social activity as a regeneration tool, recognising that improving places to meet fosters wellbeing, inclusion, and vibrancy in town life.

Creating more places to gather—casual, accessible, and welcoming—will help Ballyhaunis grow as a town where people not only live, but also feel deeply connected and supported in their community.



Their typology can differ in depending on their location and its context (sheltered structures, simpler platforms or individual seats in more intimate areas). Character of shelter can also reflect the population diversity of the town.



B1. COMMUNITY PRE-SCHOOL

The redevelopment of the existing community preschool facility in Ballyhaunis is crucial. The project is focused on creating a high-quality, inclusive, nature-inspired environment that supports early years learning and development. The new pre-school aims to include a landscaped, nature-based outdoor area that fosters children's connection with the natural world, aligning with the principles of the Universal Design Guidelines (UDG) for Early Learning and Care settings.

The community survey revealed that 75% of respondents expressed a strong need for more and better childcare facilities in Ballyhaunis. Currently, the town is served by a single preschool building, which accommodates over 60 children. During consultations, families repeatedly voiced concerns about the lack of local early years and after-school care, noting that many are forced to travel to neighboring towns to access suitable services.

During consultations, it was noted that the nature-based aspect of play for preschoolers is often under-prioritised, highlighting the need to better integrate natural play elements into early years settings.



Built structure inspiration



33.3% of respondents identified increasing the number of crèches in Ballyhaunis as their top priority.



30% of respondents identified importance of play as their 3rd priority.

Inspired by the RE Hub at Sutton Valence School, the proposed design is a lightweight, modular structure that complements its heritage setting while embracing the natural landscape. Using sustainable timber construction and large height windows, the building promotes daylight, biophilic connection, and sensory-rich learning. With a low-impact form and natural material palette, it offers a contemporary yet earthy presence that respects heritage and enhances early years engagement with nature.



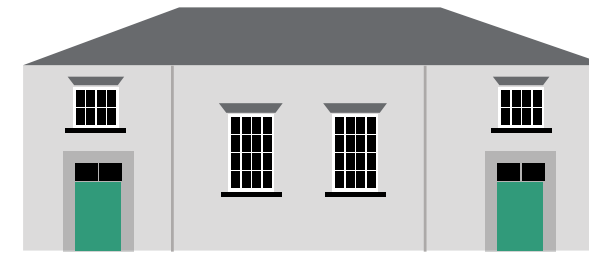
Avonbeg, Tallaght

Principals



Modular design allows for phased expansion as demand grows.

1. Dedicated zones for preschool and after-school services.
2. Child-height windows offer accessible views of nature.
3. Nature-based play area with trees, sensory gardens, water features, and climbing elements.
4. Inclusive facilities for children of all abilities.
5. Safe drop-off and parking zones to manage peak-time traffic.
6. Adaptable site layout supports long-term growth and evolving needs.



B3. BALLYHAUNIS COURTHOUSE

The former courthouse in Ballyhaunis will be converted into artists and community cultural space under a €150,000 refurbishment funded by the Community Recognition Fund.

Opened in 1874, the limestone-faced Ballyhaunis courthouse closed in 2013 as part of a package of government cutbacks. Ownership of the building was later transferred from the Office of Public Works to Mayo County Council. The plan is to lease the building to the local Rural Irish Artists group.

The current funding will be used to carry out essential repair works to make the building safe for use by this group.

To guide this project effectively, several key actions are recommended:

- Support and monitor refurbishment works
- Develop a vision and operating model for long-term use
- Encourage multi-use and inclusivity
- Improve accessibility and connectivity



The Rural Irish artists will be hosting a weekly arts social club at clarecourt communal house every Wednesday evening 6.30 to 9.30 where you can come and socialise at the same time as working on your own art projects numbers will be limited details and booking is essential by emailing:

ruralirishartists@gmail.com



B2. COMMUNITY LIBRARY – OLD CONVENT

Funding has been secured through the Rural Regeneration Development Fund to develop a design brief for the redevelopment of the former convent school on Abbey Street. The aim is to repurpose the building for community use, transforming it into a workspace hub that will support local enterprise and foster economic growth.

The design brief also includes the creation of a new public plaza adjacent to the community hub, enhancing the area's accessibility and public engagement. A new pedestrian bridge will connect the plaza to the public swimming pool, strengthening links between these key community assets.

To guide this project effectively, several key actions are recommended:

- Identify potential users and partners for the hub
- Coordinate with the Chamber of Commerce, Community Council and BRCIE Ltd
- Enhance connections to surrounding assets
- Support the creation of a vibrant public plaza
- Celebrate the site's heritage



B4. INFORMATION HUB

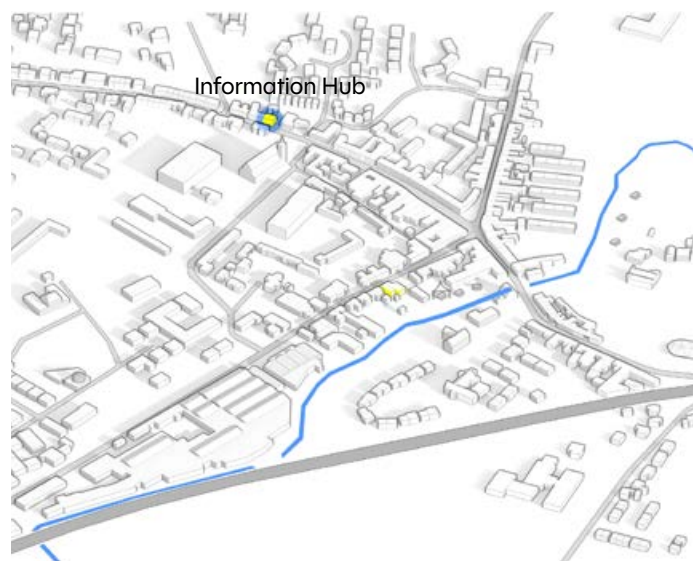
The recently completed Ballyhaunis Information Hub at 16 Upper High Street, will be operated by the Ballyhaunis Chamber of Commerce, and has potential to be a vital asset for the town. Positioned at the heart of the community, the Hub has the potential to serve as both a welcoming point for visitors and a valuable support centre for residents and local groups.

Consultation feedback identified the need for a central, accessible space where people can find help, information, and opportunities to get involved in town life. The Information Hub responds to this need and can grow to play a central role in strengthening community connections and coordination.

As it develops, the Hub can:

- **Support older residents** with access to information, help with forms, and guidance on services.
- **Provide practical support to community groups**, helping residents connect with local clubs, events, and available facilities.
- **Act as a communications centre for local businesses**, sharing updates, promoting opportunities, and increasing visibility for local enterprise.
- **Offer a base for volunteer coordination and civic action**, becoming a meeting point for groups working on town clean-ups, events, or regeneration projects.
- **Serve as a central coordination point for festivals and events**, helping with logistics, promotion, and community outreach.
- **Welcome visitors to Ballyhaunis**, offering maps, local recommendations, and heritage information that highlights the town's unique story.

The establishment and growth of the Information Hub will help identify emerging needs in the community and link people to the supports available, acting as both a listening post and a connector. As Ballyhaunis works to grow its community infrastructure, the Hub can become a cornerstone of inclusive regeneration, where everyone knows where to turn for support, ideas, or involvement.



B5. PROVISION OF SPORTS FACILITIES

A clear priority identified through community consultation is the need for more inclusive and accessible sports facilities within Ballyhaunis town centre. While the town has a proud tradition of active clubs and strong participation across all ages, several key groups currently lack suitable or permanent spaces—and many residents are travelling to Claremorris or further afield to access all-weather and flexible sporting facilities.

Two clubs in particular—the Boxing Club and Cricket Club—are well established, with growing and diverse membership bases, and are actively seeking permanent homes close to the town centre. Providing these clubs with dedicated, fit-for-purpose facilities would secure their future, support youth development, and add to the town's inclusive recreational offer.

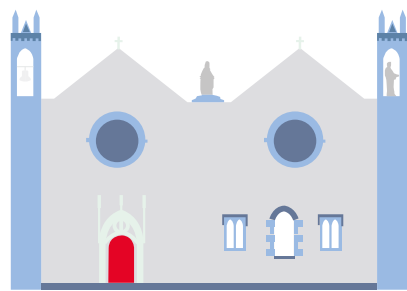
In addition to supporting specific clubs, there is strong interest in a multi-use indoor or all-weather facility that can accommodate a range of sporting activities year-round. This would reduce reliance on external towns, provide accessible options for all age groups, and contribute to a healthier, more connected community.

To support this, the plan recommends:

- Identifying a suitable town centre location for the permanent accommodation of the Boxing and Cricket Clubs, ideally co-located with shared amenities to maximise impact and usage.
- Exploring the development of a flexible, multi-use sports facility, including indoor space and/or all-weather surfaces suitable for football, training, and community fitness programmes.
- Investigating opportunities for shared use of school sports facilities, identifying the upgrades or agreements needed to open access for community groups, especially during evenings, weekends, and holiday periods.
- Ensuring inclusivity is at the heart of design and programming, so that all groups—regardless of background, age, or ability—can find a place to be active, connected, and involved.

Expanding the town's sporting infrastructure will not only serve growing demand but also reinforce Ballyhaunis as a healthy, vibrant, and inclusive place to live, where everyone has the opportunity to participate in sport and physical activity close to home.





C1. RESTORING THE ABBEY

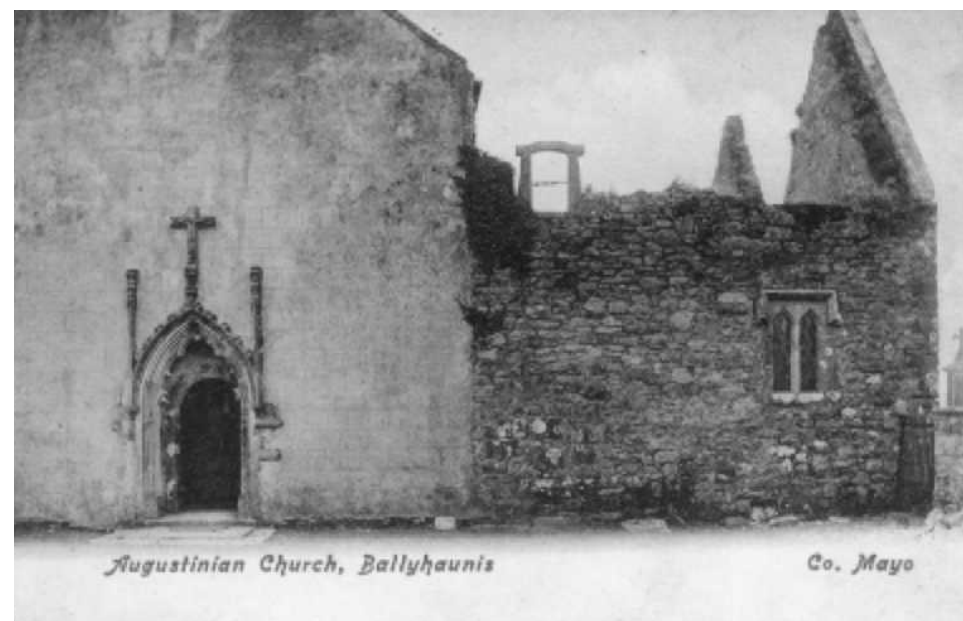
St Mary's Abbey is the oldest surviving structure in Ballyhaunis and has stood as a symbol of the town's identity for centuries. Rich in artefacts and memory, the Abbey continues to serve as a powerful link to the past and a unique opportunity for community connection.

To ensure its ongoing preservation and relevance, careful management, regular maintenance, and urgent repair works are essential.

Equally important is strengthening the Abbey's relationship with the town and surrounding Friary grounds. As an iconic and defining landmark, the Abbey has huge placemaking potential—not just as a building, but as the heart of a wider heritage and landscape setting. A clear vision and masterplan for the full site will help unlock this potential, guiding future investment, improving access, and ensuring the landscape reinforces the Abbey's role as a cultural and community anchor.

Key Actions:

- Undertake urgent repairs to safeguard the structure and its contents.
- Develop a masterplan for the Abbey and Friary grounds to guide conservation, access, and long-term use.
- Identify appropriate, respectful uses for the Abbey—such as cultural events, heritage groups, or museum/archive space—that maintain its integrity while keeping it active and relevant.



Restoring Views of St Mary's Abbey

Careful management and selective removal of trees can reintroduce long-lost views of St Mary's Abbey from key points around the town. Reinforcing the Abbey as a visual and cultural landmark strengthens its role as a focal point and placemaking anchor within the Ballyhaunis townscape.



View from Abbey St.



View from Bridge St.



View from Upper Main St.

C2. TOWN CENTRE FOOTBRIDGE

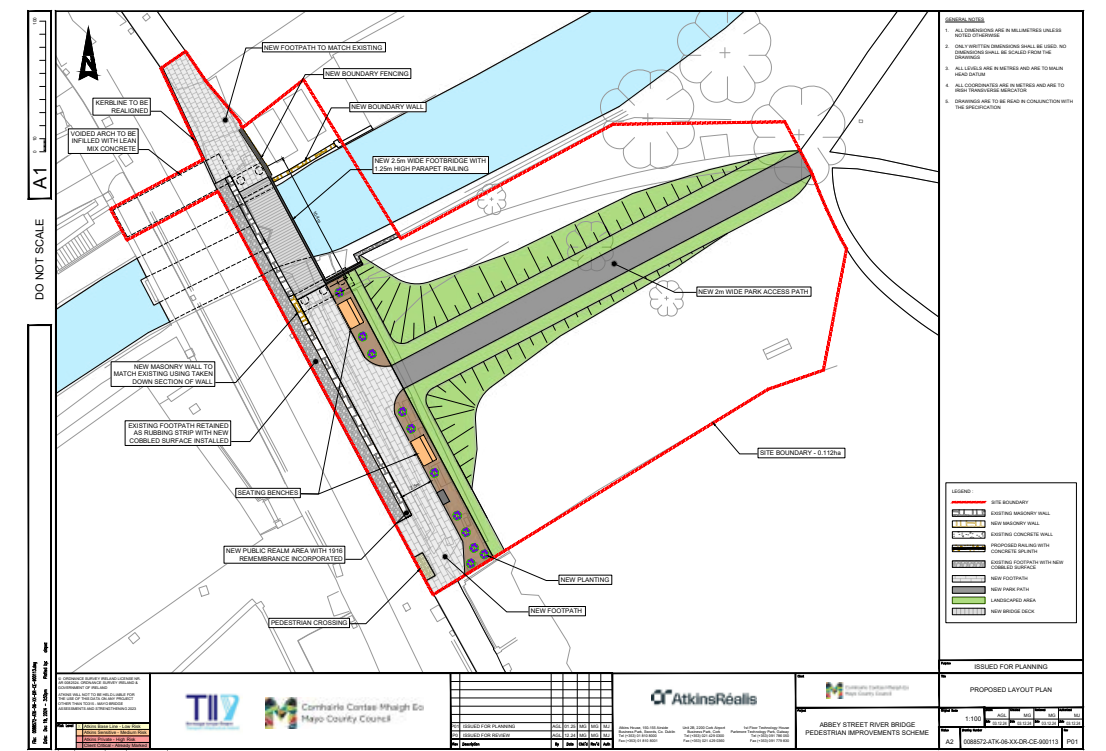
A new pedestrian footbridge across the Dalgan River is a community-backed proposal that would significantly improve connections between the town centre, Friary Grounds, and Convent Grounds. More than just a crossing, it creates a clear, accessible, and inviting route into the heart of Ballyhaunis' green spaces—making it easier for people to explore, meet, and enjoy the town's natural and historic assets.

By offering a welcoming new link between key public places, this project is a catalyst for wider improvements to the town's walkability, heritage appreciation, and sense of place.

To guide this project effectively, several key actions are recommended:

- **Link Key Spaces**
Establish a direct, inviting route between the town centre, Friary Grounds, and Convent Grounds.
- **Enhance Public Realm on Both Sides**
Coordinate the bridge with wider improvements such as landscaping, seating, and access paths.
- **Celebrate Local Heritage**
Improve views to the Abbey and upgrade the setting of the existing historic bridge.
- **Respect Nature**
Retain trees and hedgerows along the river while carefully editing views from the Friary hillside.
- **Boost Biodiversity**
Preserve the river's natural character and support wildlife through sensitive design and planting.

This small but meaningful intervention unlocks major benefits for community access, connectivity, and pride in place.



C3. ACTIVATING THE RIVER

These ideas are considerations that look to sensitively enhance the river frontage by encouraging public use and appreciation of the site's natural and historic character. Emphasis could be placed on small, low-impact interventions that make the most of the existing riverside, meadows, and woodland setting. These enhancements will strengthen the site's connection to the river, open up new views, and offer quiet opportunities for recreation, play, and social interaction.

- **Strengthen River Connection**
Shape gentle banks, add flowering plants, and install discreet river access steps.
- **Reveal Views & Vistas**
Selectively thin trees to open views to the Abbey, Knox Street, and surrounding countryside.
- **Support Informal Recreation**
Introduce small lawn areas within meadows for games and passive use.
- **Encourage Social Use**
Provide simple picnic areas and BBQ spots to invite gathering and outdoor cooking.
- **Create Natural Trails**
Develop low-key paths and steps to encourage exploration and connect with wider grounds.

These small, strategic interventions will create a more inviting and accessible public spaces, while maintaining the tranquility and natural charm that make the River Dalgan a valued part of the town's landscape.



C4. COMMUNITY PAVILION

The replacement of the former Scouts Den with a new Community Pavilion is a priority for Ballyhaunis. Positioned along the river's edge within the Friary Grounds, the pavilion will not only remove an unsightly and dilapidated structure but also deliver a flexible, low-maintenance community hub in a prime location. Close to the town centre, train station, and surrounded by natural lawns, meadows, and play areas, it offers an inviting space for all age groups to gather, connect, and engage in local life.

The new structure will serve as a shared community asset—somewhere casual and welcoming, that supports everyday social interaction, events, and activities for families, young people, and older residents alike.

Broad Outline of Actions:

- Remove the Existing Scouts Den Building
Demolish the deteriorating structure to improve the overall impression of the town and open the site for high-value community use.
- Design a Simple, Flexible Pavilion
Create a low-maintenance, versatile building that can host a wide range of informal and programmed activities—indoors and outdoors.
- Strategic Positioning in the Landscape
Situate the pavilion to overlook sloped lawns and natural play areas, while maintaining a respectful relationship with the river and Friary Grounds.
- Improve Access and Arrival
Include a small drop-off/pick-up area while prioritising walking and cycling access to minimise car traffic and support sustainable movement.
- Enhance Connections to Surrounding Amenities
Strengthen visual and functional links to the MUGA (multi-use games area), playgrounds, and nearby public spaces to increase usage and vibrancy.
- Celebrate the Setting
Use high-quality yet modest materials that blend into the naturalistic setting, helping the structure feel rooted in place and welcoming to all.
- Plan for Shared and Inclusive Use
Ensure the design supports everyday use by all age groups—from teenagers and youth groups to family meet-ups and older residents enjoying the green surroundings.

This project enhances the Friary Grounds as a valuable community landscape, while delivering a lasting facility that reflects the needs, spirit, and aspirations of Ballyhaunis.



The Weston, Yorkshire sculpture park, UK



D1. TOWN GATEWAYS

The four primary entry points to Ballyhaunis town centre—Knox Street, Clare Road, Upper Main Street, and Abbey Street—play a critical role in defining the town's identity and setting the tone for arrival. By enhancing these gateways with distinctive public realm improvements, the project aims to signal a transition into a more people-focused, pedestrian-prioritised environment.

These improvements will create a stronger sense of place, improve safety for all users, and elevate the visual quality of the town centre, making it more welcoming and navigable for both residents and visitors.

Broad Outline of Actions:

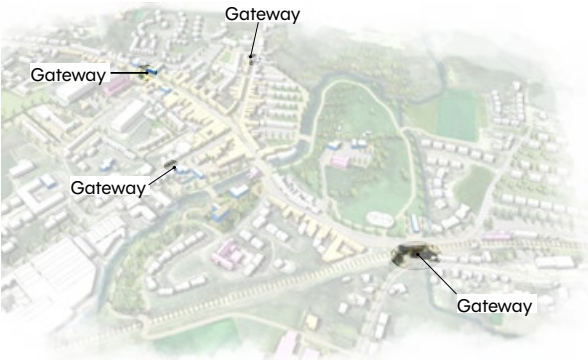
- **Clearly Define Gateways**
Use surface materials, signage, planting, and public art to signal arrival into the pedestrian-prioritised town centre.
- **Enhance Safety and Accessibility**
Introduce raised crossings, smooth surfaces, and clear sightlines to slow traffic and support all users, including those with mobility needs.
- **Improve Public Realm and Aesthetics**
Add trees, planting, lighting, and creative features to soften the streetscape, aid navigation, and reinforce local identity.
- **Ensure Integration with Wider Network**
Align gateway improvements with active travel and public realm projects for a cohesive town centre experience.

This project strengthens Ballyhaunis' town centre presence, helps manage vehicle speed, and enhances the experience of arriving on foot, by bike, or by car—making the town more inviting, legible, and cohesive.

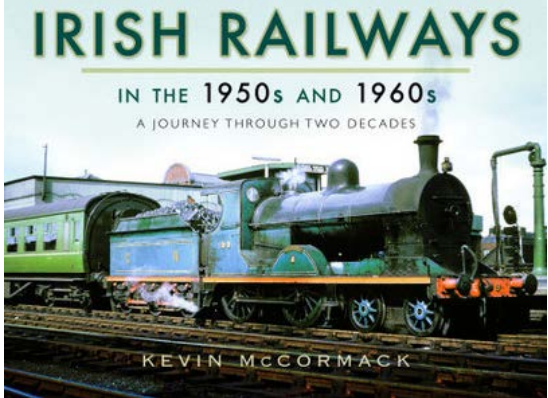


Illustrative sketch of the eastern gateway. Location of railway bridge creates obvious entrance to the town centre.

Unique gateway bridge signage can draw inspiration from historic railway fonts and also from modern fonts with interesting patterns



Gateway Location Plan



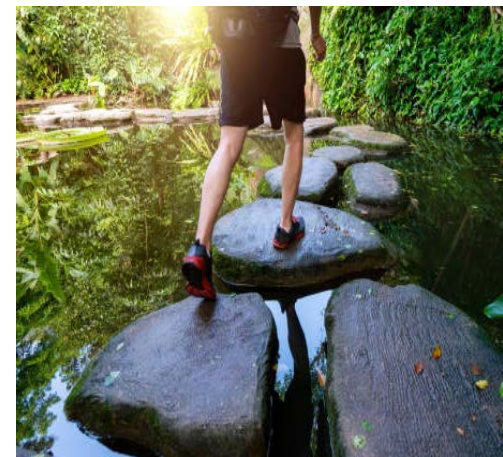
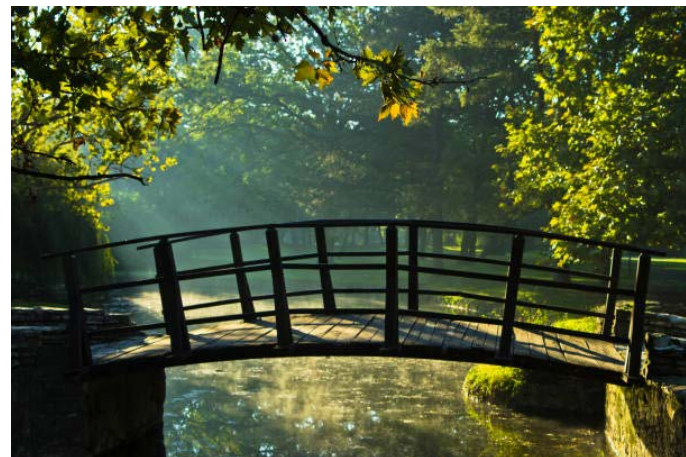
D2. RIVERSIDE SPACE

This project aims to transform the Dalgan River corridor along Clare Street into a vibrant, accessible, and nature-connected public space. Enhancing the riverside with widened paths, new connections, and improved landscaping will provide a welcoming setting for walking, gathering, and enjoying the water's edge. It also improves links between key community spaces like the library, swimming pool, and town centre.

To guide this project effectively, several key actions are recommended:

- **Widen Footpaths Along the River**
Expand existing footways to allow for more comfortable walking, better accessibility, and informal gathering spaces along the water's edge.
- **Install a New Pedestrian Bridge**
Provide a new crossing between the riverside and the library site, linking key community hubs and improving local walkability.
- **Reclaim Parking Bays for People**
Focused Uses – Remove select parking spaces to create areas for seating, outdoor dining, greenery, and social interaction—supporting local hospitality businesses.
- **Improve Connectivity with Town Centre**
Upgrade surfaces and crossings to make movement between the riverside and central streets more inviting, legible, and accessible for all.
- **Landscape and Planting Enhancements**
Edit overgrown vegetation to open views to the river and introduce appropriate new planting for biodiversity, visual interest, and seasonal colour.

This project reimagines the Dalgan River as a green spine of public life, bringing nature into the town and creating a space that reflects the identity and needs of the Ballyhaunis community.



D3. MAIN STREET

This project focuses on transforming the town centre into a more welcoming, attractive, and accessible place for all. By calming traffic, upgrading pathways, and improving the quality of public spaces, the initiative aims to support everyday use, encourage footfall, and create a more enjoyable town centre experience.

The town centre will become safer, greener, and more sociable—supporting local businesses, improving accessibility, and reinforcing Ballyhaunis's identity as a vibrant, people-focused place.

- Calm Traffic Throughout the Town Core
- Upgrade Pathways and Crossings
- Prioritise People Over Cars
- Create Inviting Spaces to Sit and Socialise
- Integrate Wayfinding and Local Identity
- Enhance Greening and Street Design

This project aims to reclaim the heart of Ballyhaunis for its people—making it more walkable, sociable, and reflective of the town's rich character and future ambitions.



D4. MARKET SQUARE

Market Square has long been the civic and social centre of Ballyhaunis. This project aims to restore its historic role by creating a vibrant, flexible public space that supports everyday life, community events, and cultural expression.

Key interventions will:

- Respect and highlight the square's historic significance
- Improve safety and accessibility for all users
- Create a welcoming, flexible space for social gathering, markets, exhibitions, and outdoor dining
- Enhance the visual and environmental quality of the space with planting and creative features

To guide this project effectively, several key actions are recommended:

1. Declutter the Square – Remove unnecessary street furniture and visual clutter to open the space for public use and events.
2. Enhance Accessibility – Improve courtesy crossings and pedestrian links to reinforce a shared, people-friendly space
3. Encourage Social and Commercial Activity – Support outdoor dining, shopfront spill-out, and flexible use for markets and festivals.
4. Celebrate Local Identity – Install display panels, murals or temporary art curated with local artists, schools, and heritage groups to share stories and celebrate Ballyhaunis creativity
5. Improve the Edge Treatment – Introduce planting and green buffers to create a soft edge between the road and pedestrian areas.
6. Mark the Heart of the Square – Consider installing a centrepiece (e.g., sculpture, water feature or raised platform) to mark this historic crossroads and invite gathering.

This revitalised square will become a strong placemaking tool and a proud focal point for Ballyhaunis life.



Display in form of movable panels

D5. MEANWHILE SPACES

A community led initiative to activate vacant and underused plots of land within Ballyhaunis with potential for low-cost, short-term community uses. By partnering with willing landowners, these spaces can be temporarily transformed into valuable places for social connection, health, creativity, and learning. These small-scale interventions could serve a variety of age groups and interests.

Possible uses include:

- Allotments or fruit/vegetable growing areas
- Plant nurseries for use in town landscaping
- Themed play areas or informal sports spaces
- Outdoor exercise equipment or courts
- Temporary art displays or cultural installations

To guide this project effectively, several key actions are recommended:

- Identify Suitable Sites – Map and assess empty plots in and around the town centre with potential for community use.
- Engage Landowners – Approach owners to discuss short-term leasing or partnership models.
- Assess Local Needs – Determine which age groups or activities are currently underserved (e.g. teenagers, older adults).
- Select Low-Cost Uses – Choose interventions that are easy to deliver, maintain, and remove if necessary.
- Secure Funding & Partnerships – Apply for small grants and seek support from local groups or businesses.
- Community Involvement – Involve residents in the design, delivery and use of the space to encourage long-term stewardship.

This project can be a catalyst for community engagement and vitality while testing ideas for more permanent uses in the future.



Naturalistic pump track with kiosk and sitting area for occasional events, Slavonice, Czech republic

Community growing, IGA Campus, Berlin, Germany



E1. ACTIVE TRAVEL ROUTES

This project aims to create a safer, more attractive and more accessible network for walking and cycling throughout Ballyhaunis. It will prioritise everyday journeys—such as walking to school, cycling to shops, or commuting to work—by making routes more comfortable, interesting, and inclusive.

Improvements will support sustainable mobility, encourage healthier lifestyles, and enhance the experience of moving through the town.

To guide this project effectively, several key actions are recommended:

- Create Segregated Paths Where Feasible – Prioritise safe, dedicated lanes for cyclists and pedestrians along key routes, especially near schools and community facilities.
- Improve Crossings and Connectivity – Install pedestrian crossings at key junctions and desire lines to connect different parts of the town and make travel easier for all users, including children and older residents.
- Implement Traffic Calming Measures – Use features such as tree planting, raised crossings, narrowed carriageways, and surface treatments to reduce vehicle speeds and create a more welcoming street environment.
- Add Interest and Identity Along Routes – Integrate public art, murals, or sculptures—especially where long boundary walls create monotonous streetscapes—to make walking and cycling routes more engaging.
- Highlight Links to Key Community Assets – Use signage and visual cues to connect active travel routes to schools, parks, Market Square, the Abbey, the swimming pool, and community centres.

These improvements will help make Ballyhaunis a safer, greener, and more connected town, while supporting inclusive access for residents of all ages and backgrounds.



Illustrative image of interpretive panels in Ballina



E2. PARKING CONNECTIONS

A key concern raised during consultation was the pressure on on-street parking, often resulting in double parking and use of restricted areas. While many called for more parking near shops, analysis shows that Ballyhaunis already has several underused off-street car parks, both public and private.

Rather than creating new spaces, the focus is on making existing car parks more accessible, attractive, and safer to use. Improving the quality and visibility of these areas—and their connections to the town centre—can encourage greater use and reduce pressure on the High Street.

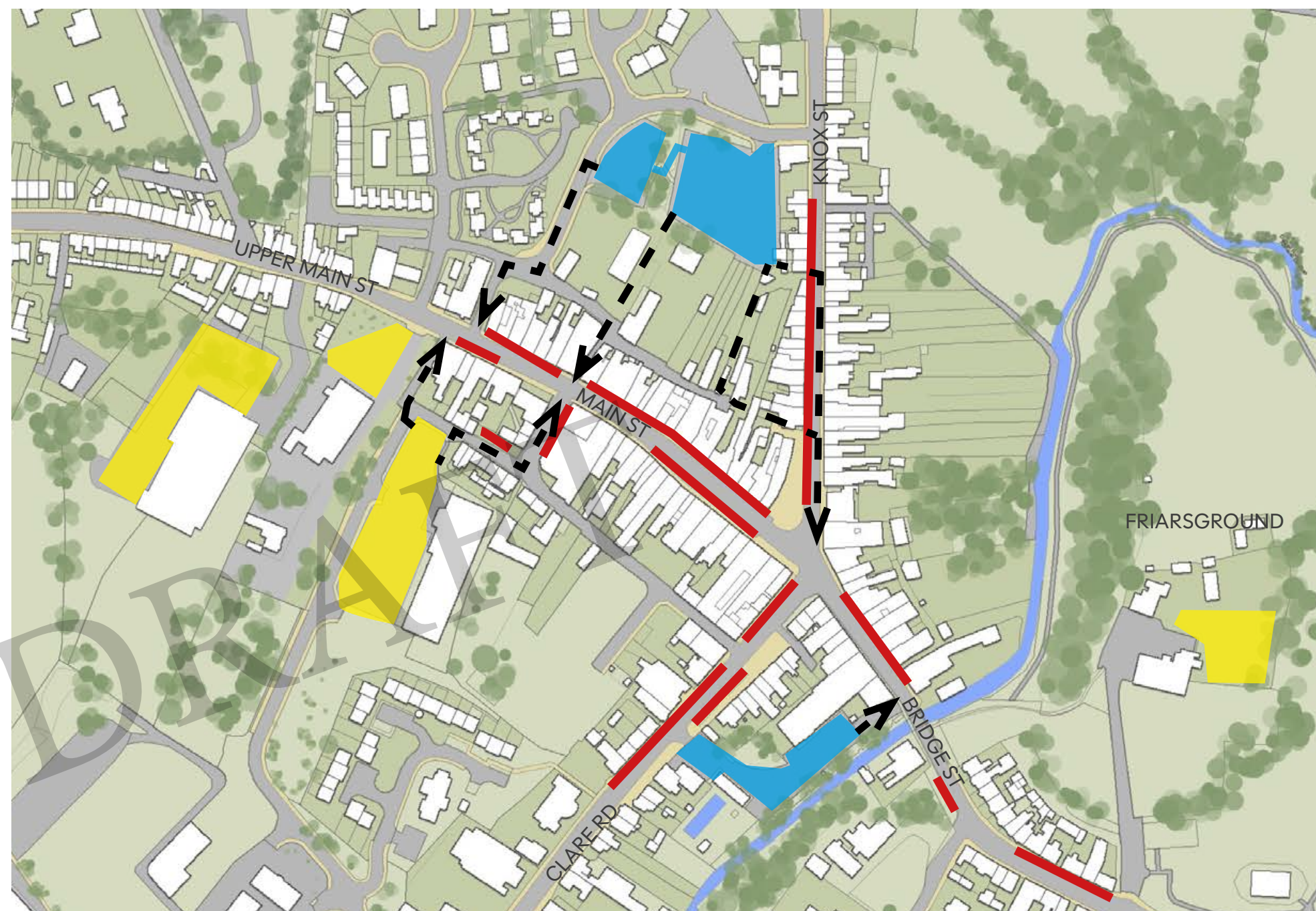
This project proposes to:

- Upgrade links between car parks and the town centre, especially laneways to Main Street and Knox Street, with better lighting, signage, surfacing, and accessibility.
- Improve safety and visibility, especially during evening hours.
- Bring elements of the High Street into car parks through planting, lighting, and creative features to make walks more enjoyable and feel shorter.
- Encourage turnover of on-street parking, making it available for quick stops, while promoting off-street parking for longer visits.

A small behavioural shift is needed: encouraging those staying longer—such as for work or appointments—to use car parks, while preserving High Street spaces for short, convenient stops. This balance will ease congestion and support local businesses through improved access and footfall.

The diagram opposite highlights the locations of existing public and private car parks, along with on-street parking areas. It also identifies potential connection points where improvements—such as clearer signage, lighting, or surfacing—could be introduced to enhance the link between parking and key streets in the town centre.

By reimagining car parks as safe, connected entry points, Ballyhaunis can create a more welcoming and accessible town centre experience for everyone.



- MAYO COUNCIL OWNED PUBLIC CARPARK
- RETAIL / CHURCH CARPARK
- ONSTREET PARKING
- ➡ - - IMPROVED CARPARK CONNECTION

Carpark connection improvements in Boyle, Co. Roscommon



Appendices

Further Reading:

- Ballyhaunis Town Centre Health Check 2025
- Mayo County Development Plan 2022-2028
- Mayo County Council – Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP 2023-29) Socio-Economic Statement: Draft Vision and High-Level Goals
- Ballyhaunis Renewed Community Action Plan 2016-2021
- Digital Town Blueprint Report Ballyhaunis, Co. Mayo 2025
- Ballyhaunis Local Area Plan 2010-2016
- Travel to Work and Labour Catchments in the Western Region – A Profile of the Ballyhaunis Labour Catchment – 2019
- Annagh Magazine <https://www.annaghmag.ie/>

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