



'Ballinasloe Local Area Plan',  
Forward Planning Section,  
Galway County Council,  
Prospect Hill,  
Galway.

29<sup>th</sup> November, 2021

**RE: Draft Ballinasloe Local Area Plan**

A Chara,

The Assembly acknowledge and thank you for the invitation to make a submission on the Draft Ballinasloe Local Area Plan (BLAP). The BLAP was considered at the Assembly meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> November, 2021 and it resolved to send this submission.

### Format of Submission

In keeping with our practice of making submissions on Draft Plans, we generally restrict our contribution to comments on how the Draft Plan is consistent with the RSES and we include recommendations and observations in relation to relevant parts of the plan. It is intended to replicate this practice for the BLAP.

### Ballinasloe and the RSES

Ballinasloe is classified as Key Town. It had a population of 6,700 in the 2016 census and the RSES has a target to increase its population by 30% (2,000) by 2040.

In section 3.8 (Key Towns) of the RSES the key future priorities for Ballinasloe are given these included compact growth in the town centres, promotion of the town's heritage, promoting sustainable land use and transport, provision of community services, promotion of tourism, development of St. Brigid's Hospital, development of suitable lands for business and enterprise at named locations.

Ballinasloe has been identified as a key destination Town in Ireland's Hidden Heartlands and it is also identified in RPO 4.10 as a location for slow Tourism. RPO 6.27 requires the preparation of a local Transport Plan for Ballinasloe.

### Commentary on Plan

The BLAP is being prepared contemporaneously with the preparation of the County Development Plan which is an obvious challenge when it comes to achieving consistency with a plan that does not exist. There are mechanisms to remedy inconsistencies, such as making material alterations and they may need to be used. The BLAP proposes that all of the population projection for Ballinasloe up to 2040 will be achieved by 2028 i.e. increase of 2,000. This is very ambitious and if it were to be achieved it would exceed all recent population trends for Ballinasloe and similar size towns across Ireland. Table and Core Strategy also proposes that 805 new dwellings would be delivered and 30% of these will be landfill/brownfield sites.

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The Plan Issues and Challenges identifies many of the key priorities in the RSES, these are referred to above. The land zonings are outlined and explained in section 1.6 and are typical of what would be expected for rural towns. The area zoned for each use is given, it is unclear how much residential development will be allocated to town centre and mixed-use zonings. There is very little reference to residential vacancy or how such might be addressed in terms of regeneration.

There are over 60 policy objectives in Section 3 of the written statement. The objectives confirm the primacy of the town centre for new commercial and retail development, and they propose the preparation of a town centre management plan. Regeneration in the town centre will be of limited scale and the major regeneration project in the town is St. Brigid's Hospital site and grounds. The objectives propose collaboration with Westmeath and Roscommon. This is welcome and fits well with cooperation on bordering towns which appears to be ongoing nationally. There are significant serviced lands in Creagh, Co Roscommon which should be considered for development jointly.

The objectives cover tourism, infrastructure, community facilities and aside from a small number of road projects they are all written at a very general level and project identification or prioritisation are not strong features of the plan.

The submission from the Assembly comprises the following –

1. Recommendation that population projection be aligned with RSES figures.
2. Recommendation that data on residential vacancy be included in the plan.
3. Recommendation that timeframes be given for the preparation of a town centre management plan and a masterplan for St. Brigid's Hospital.
4. Recommendation that specific lands be identified and zoned for nursing homes to comply with RPO.
5. Observation that the delivery of a flood relief scheme for Ballinasloe should have high priority and a timeline associated with its delivery.
6. Observation that a timeline for the feasibility study on Ballinasloe Town Park be included in the plans.
7. The Regional Assembly would urge that the council prepare a Joint Local Area Plan with Roscommon County to include the areas in Creagh serviced with sewerage with a view to making it a linked settlement.

We hope the above helps in making the Ballinasloe Local Area Plan and we would like to complement the council on the concise written statement and the very informative SFRA carried out.

Mise le Meas,

David Minton  
Director