

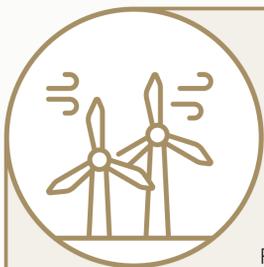
# Ballymahon Town Centre First Plan

Public Consultation – 11 February 2025

## Vision:

“Ballymahon’s town centre will grow as a welcoming economic, educational and cultural heart – championing local enterprise, creative spirit, and strong community identity through high-quality spaces where everyone feels they belong.”

## What objectives underpin this vision?



### Climate Action

Climate action underpins every element of this Town Centre First plan, shaping how Ballymahon grows, moves and thrives in the years ahead. The plan recognises that reducing emissions, strengthening climate resilience, and protecting natural assets are not standalone goals but principles that must guide all decisions – from public realm upgrades and mobility improvements to community development and economic activity. By prioritising compact growth and town centre living, enhancing active travel networks, integrating green infrastructure, and promoting energy-efficient design, the plan supports a transition to a low-carbon, climate-resilient town centre. This approach ensures that investment today contributes to long-term environmental sustainability, safeguards the wellbeing of future generations, and positions Ballymahon as a leader in climate-responsive rural regeneration.



### Social Inclusion

Social inclusion as an underlying theme of the Town Centre First Plan aims to ensure that Ballymahon’s regeneration benefits everyone, regardless of age, background, ability or circumstance. The objective is to create a town centre that is welcoming, accessible, and supportive, where all members of the community can participate fully in social, economic, and cultural life. By embedding inclusion into decision-making, design, and service delivery, the plan seeks to reduce barriers, strengthen community cohesion, and ensure that the town centre reflects and serves the diverse needs of its people.

### Theme 1: Tourism, Culture and Identity



- Objective 1:** Strengthen Ballymahon’s tourism offer by enhancing connections to the River Inny, the Royal Canal and nearby attractions, creating a coherent visitor experience that encourages longer stays and repeat visits.
- Objective 2:** Celebrate and expand cultural life by supporting arts, heritage, festivals, and community-led initiatives that express Ballymahon’s identity.
- Objective 3:** Foster a strong sense of belonging by ensuring that improvements reflect community needs, encourage participation, and create spaces where all sectors of the community feel welcome.

### Theme 2: Enterprise, Economy and Education



- Objective 4:** Support and grow local enterprise through improved shopfronts, dedicated business park, flexible commercial spaces and initiatives that make the town centre an attractive place to start and sustain a business.

### Theme 3: Town Centre Living and Regeneration



- Objective 5:** Unlock backland development opportunities to support the promotion of town centre living and the expansion of the town in a sustainable manner.

### Theme 4: Public Realm, Movement and Sustainability

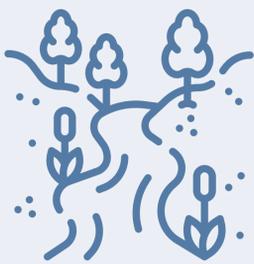


- Objective 6:** Create high-quality public spaces that are safe, accessible, and inviting, encouraging social interaction, outdoor activity, and year-round use.
- Objective 7:** Enhance connectivity and movement with better walking, cycling, and public-transport links that connects the main assets of the town and makes the town easy and enjoyable to navigate.
- Objective 8:** Promote sustainable growth through environmentally responsible design, biodiversity improvements, and climate-resilient public realm interventions.

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## THEME 1: Tourism, Culture and Identity



### Action 1: Strengthen the connections between Ballymahon and Newcastle Woods

Deliverable: A greenway linking Ballymahon with Newcastle Woods

- Ballymahon's close proximity to Newcastle Woods and from there the Royal Canal Greenway and River Inny, as well as Center Parcs Longford Holiday Village and Newcastle House Hotel, is one of its strongest natural assets, offering immediate access to an extensive forest amenity that attracts walkers, families, and outdoor enthusiasts from across the region.
- Despite this advantage, the connection between the town centre and the woods is currently indirect and car-dependent, limiting the potential for seamless movement between the two destinations.



### Action 2: Strengthen the links to tourism assets surrounding the town

Deliverable: An action plan for enhanced connection between the town and the surrounding tourism assets

- Ballymahon's unique character is shaped by its location between the River Inny and Royal Canal, creative energy with strong literary and cultural background and strong sense of community.
- Strengthening tourism, culture, and identity means building on these assets to create a town centre that feels alive, expressive, and inclusive of all sectors of the community.
- This theme focuses on elevating the town's profile as a destination, enriching cultural life, and ensuring that the town centre reflects the pride and personality of its people.



### Action 3: Support the development of Ballymahon as a cultural destination

Deliverable: A year round programme of community cultural and arts events

- Ballymahon has a small but active arts scene and is very fortunate in having a theatre in the town, Bog Lane Theatre.
- There is also a strong creative sector in the town, dating back to Oliver Goldsmith who was born not far from the town, with festivals throughout the year, including Goldsmith Festival in June and the Ballymahon One Act Festival in November and community events bringing people together throughout the year.
- Culture and arts can also act as a great means to engage the new communities in the town and helping them feel more part of the town. Ballymahon's literary links, artistic traditions, and riverside setting all feed into a growing sense of creative identity, with public art, local makers, and cultural groups adding colour and energy to the town.

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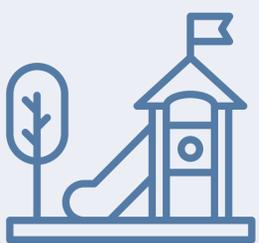
## THEME 1: Tourism, Culture and Identity (continued)



### Action 4: Delivering Pobal le Chéile

Deliverable: Upgraded buildings to accommodate enhanced social and community infrastructure

- The development of the Pobal le Chéile project emerged from a growing recognition of the need to strengthen community cohesion, local partnership, and shared identity within Ballymahon and its surrounding areas.
- As the town experienced demographic change, new investment, and evolving social needs, local stakeholders identified a gap in coordinated supports that could bring people together, empower local groups, and enhance wellbeing.
- In response, community leaders, voluntary organisations, and the local authority collaborated to shape the Pobal le Chéile project as a unifying initiative focused on supporting the social needs of the town. The project was built on extensive engagement with residents who highlighted the importance of accessible services, stronger social networks, and opportunities for people of all ages and backgrounds to connect.
- The Pobal le Chéile project will also enhance the accessibility of the area through the widening of the laneway alongside the Dean Egan library, improving access to the amenities to the rear and enhancing the safety of this area of the town.



### Action 5: Build on the recreational and amenity facilities

Deliverable: Relocated and improved playground, enhanced access to water and recreational facilities for the local community

- The community engagement with the people of Ballymahon has highlighted Ballymahon's growing population, changing demographics, and increasing demand for high-quality family amenities.
- This includes the need to relocate the existing playground and enhance the town's recreational offer. The current facility is limited in size, accessibility and visibility and no longer meets the needs of a community with more young families, visitors and active users than ever before.
- Its location also restricts opportunities for expansion, integration with other amenities, and safe, convenient access. Relocating the playground to a more central, connected, and spacious site would allow for modern, inclusive play equipment, improved safety, and stronger links to community facilities.
- This action forms part of a wider ambition to create a vibrant, family-friendly town centre where high-quality amenities support wellbeing, social interaction, and a strong sense of place.

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## THEME 2: Enterprise, Economy and Education



### Action 6: Develop a business park in Ballymahon

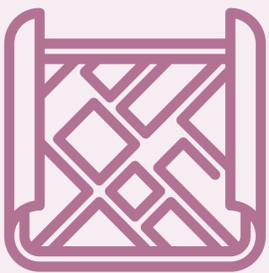
Deliverable: Business Park with serviced sites for purchase by interested businesses

- The survey of land use carried out as part of the Town Centre Health Check shows that Ballymahon has a relatively strong offer in terms of the retail and service sector but that greater diversity is needed to strengthen the overall appeal of the town.
- There is also a lack of space for business development, in particular small businesses in a business park type setting.
- The local community have identified the need for a small business park to be developed to facilitate the growth and development of the town.
- As the sewerage treatment plant is upgraded in the coming years, housing developments will grow in the town.
- There is a need to provide a space for businesses to grow alongside that to facilitate people to live and work in Ballymahon.

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## THEME 3: Town Centre Living and Regeneration



### Action 7: Unlocking the Backland potential

Deliverable: Second street behind Main Street, opening up land for housing, car parking, retail expansion

- Ballymahon is primarily based around one long, wide Main Street, with little development off that Main Street.
- Town centre living and regeneration in Ballymahon present a major opportunity to reshape the heart of the town into a more vibrant, compact, and people-focused place.
- Much of this potential lies in the underused backland areas behind Main Street. By unlocking these backlands for mixed-use development, car parking, new homes, courtyards and pedestrian links, Ballymahon can expand its town centre footprint without altering its historic streetscape.
- This approach supports sustainable growth, encourages more people to live close to shops and services, and helps activate quieter parts of the town.
- Regenerating these areas also creates opportunities for high-quality public spaces, improved permeability, and new commercial or community uses, all of which contribute to a more lively, resilient, and future-ready town centre.



### Action 8: Tackling vacancy and dereliction in Ballymahon

Deliverable: Reduced levels of vacancy and dereliction in Ballymahon Town core

- Addressing vacancy and dereliction in Ballymahon has become increasingly important as the town seeks to strengthen its role as a vibrant service centre and an attractive place to live, work and visit.
- While the town has many strong assets – its historic streetscape, river setting, and growing population – long-term vacant buildings and underused sites weaken the overall appearance and functionality of the town centre. These properties can discourage investment, limit opportunities for new housing or businesses, and undermine community confidence.
- With national supports now available for reuse and regeneration, there is a clear opportunity to bring empty buildings back into productive use, restore heritage structures, and create new spaces for living, enterprise, and community activity.
- Tackling vacancy and dereliction is therefore essential to revitalising Ballymahon's core, supporting economic resilience, and ensuring the town centre remains a lively and welcoming destination.

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## THEME 4: Public Realm, Movement and Sustainability



### Action 9: Reimagining Streets and Spaces for Ballymahon's future

Deliverable: Improved mobility in the town for all modes of transport and pedestrians through an enhanced public realm along Main Street

- Ballymahon's future depends on a town centre that is vibrant, connected, and resilient. This Town Centre First plan sets out a shared ambition to strengthen the heart of Ballymahon as a place where people and community life come first.
- The goal is to create a public realm that celebrates local identity, supports safe and accessible movement, and drives long-term environmental sustainability.
- By enhancing the streets and spaces that link the River Inny, the Royal Canal, the Main Street and surrounding neighbourhoods, the town centre will become easier to navigate on foot, by bike and by public transport.
- Investment in green infrastructure, high-quality public spaces, and low-carbon mobility will help Ballymahon grow in a way that protects its natural assets and strengthens its social and economic vitality.
- This vision positions Ballymahon not just as a place to pass through, but as a place to gather, explore, and thrive.



### Action 10: Enhanced accessibility through provision of a footbridge across River Inny alongside the current bridge.

Deliverable: New pedestrian/cycle bridge linking the Athlone Road with the Main Street

- Ballymahon's position along the River Inny creates both a natural focal point and a physical barrier within the town, making the river a defining feature of its landscape and daily life.
- Developing a new footbridge across the Inny would significantly strengthen the connections between the Athlone and Mullingar Road areas and the town centre, improving access between residential areas, the town centre, and nearby amenities such as Newcastle Woods and local schools.
- A well-designed pedestrian and cycle bridge would provide a safe, attractive and accessible crossing point, reducing reliance on vehicular routes and encouraging active travel. Beyond its functional role, the bridge has the potential to become a landmark structure that enhances the town's riverside setting, supports tourism, and reinforces Ballymahon's identity as a place closely connected to its natural environment.

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## Ballymahon Today

**Overall Snapshot:** Ballymahon is a well-located, culturally rich town with strong community assets and a wide Main Street full of potential. Its biggest challenges – traffic dominance, dereliction, limited recreation, and connectivity – are precisely where the Town Centre First Plan focuses investment and action.

### Population & People



**1,714** residents  
 (Census 2022)



**41%** not originally from Ireland  
 → diverse, multilingual community



**11%** report limited English  
 → need for language-friendly services



**10%** lone-parent households



**22%** social/affordable rental households

**Deprivation:**

**Town core:**

very disadvantaged

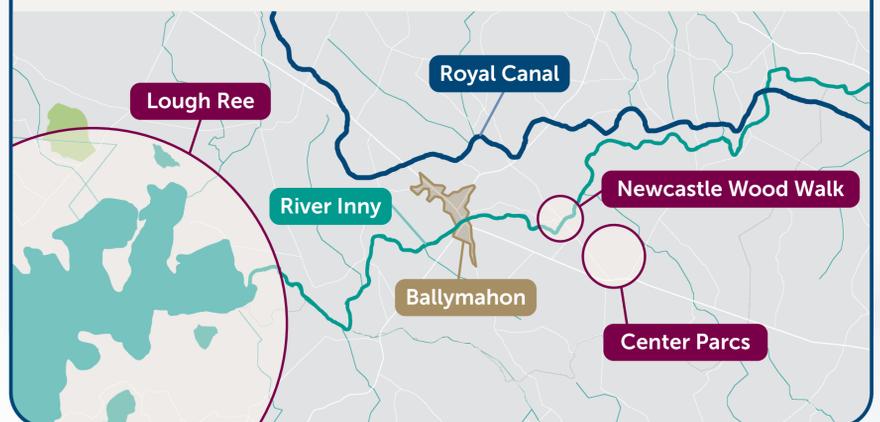
**Outer areas:**

marginally above average

### Environment and Assets

Between **River Inny** and **Royal Canal**

Close to **Newcastle Woods**,  
**Center Parcs**, **Lough Ree**



### Movement & Streets



Main Street = one of Ireland's widest high streets



Streetscape dominated by heavy traffic and perpendicular parking



Difficult crossings, esp. Library → Post Office



≈1,200 students, ≈15 buses  
 → major school-time congestion

**Walkability Audit:** wide footpaths but poor surfaces, speeding, and no cycle network

### Town Centre Health Check (2024)



**9%** vacancy on the day (low), but long-term dereliction holds back investment

**Strong foundations:** library, arts, heritage, shops

**Need for more:** active travel, seating, family-friendly spaces

### Digital & Economic Snapshot



**2.2/5** Digital Readiness Score  
 (ad hoc, limited documentation)

**Growing demand** for enterprise space

→ community request for a **business park**

### Community Insights (Place Standard)



**Strengths:** safety, natural spaces, local economy, identity and belonging



**Weak areas:** play/recreation, traffic/parking, care and maintenance, youth spaces

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## Ballymahon – Key Landmark Buildings



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## Opportunity Sites



# TOWN CENTRE FIRST PLAN:

BÁILE UÍ MHATHÁIN ANOIS, AGUS SA TODHGAÍ ...

