Ballinasloe Area Community Development Company CLG

Submission to Galway County Council Development Plan

Executive Summary of Submission

In essence the core three pillars of our community's focus for the next decade must be:(as based on BACD's emerging 10-year Plan for the town)

- Sustainable Living Town (Enterprise and Remote Working prioritised)
- Tourism (including Heritage and Genealogy Development)
- Healthcare (Become the centre of excellence for mental health.)

Specifically, the 5 year statutory plan needs to prioritise:

1. The prioritisation of the releasing of the final tranche of capital monies transferred to Galway County Council from the UDC for the development of River Park, Walks and Main Street Rear Development, which was first advocated in the Town Development Plan of 1985 and again in all of the 1990s plan.

2. The Plan must set out timescales and milestones in the implementation phases. A cursory read of the last plan 2015 – 2021 in relation to the town shows how little has been achieved.

3. The St. Brigids Hospital Complex development needs to be agreed upon and implemented with the relevant state agencies.

4. The North Western Regional Assembly RSES Report and it's designation of priorities for the town (As one it's 9 Key Towns) must underpin all development objectives .

5. To spatially and sustainably develop the county as a counterbalance to population migration and apparent congested activity of the City – Ballinasloe needs to be earmarked for aggressive population growth.

6. The Report must create a template for working on resource and infrastructural collaboration between the Eastern – frontier of Galway County, South Roscommon, Westmeath and Offaly who all make up our Eastern and Southern hinterland and under the Just Transition Programme is viewed as the Western envelope of the Government's new programme post Bord na Mona in the Midlands.

Ballinasloe Area Community Development Ltd (BACD Ltd) as one of leading stakeholders of the community will work assiduously with the Executive and Members of Galway County Council and all Govt. Agencies in realising our ambition for our town.

BACD Submission to the County Development Plan

Introduction

Ballinasloe Area Community Development Ltd (BACD Ltd) (see Appendix 1 for Full background and details of BACD Ltd.) as the local community development company have carefully considered this submission based on the works carried out by the company in Ballinasloe over the past 20 years.

Our submission has been workshopped by our board members over some weeks and reflects the deliverable priorities of our developing 10 year Strategic Plan for the Community. (See appendix 2 for the Summary Presentation of our evolving Plan)

We earnestly believe that our submission needs to be reviewed in conjunction with the points made about our Town's potential and attributes in the envelope of the Ireland 2040 Plan, the CEDRA Report and Teagasc Index of the Economic Strength of Rural Towns 2014, The Just Transition Report 2019, and the NWRA Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2020 – 2032 .

Specifically pages 124 and 125 of the NWRA Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2020 – 2032 details what needs to prioritised and actioned by the local authority as we are located in one of the County's Strategic Corridors and has been designated as one of 9 key towns to deliver its ambitious and forward-looking strategy for our region.

Context

BACD Ltd are currently formulating a 10-year plan for the town that will work alongside the county development plan. In essence there are three pillars of our community's focus for the next decade:

- Sustainable Living Town (Enterprise and Remote Working prioritised)
- Tourism (including Heritage and Genealogy Development)
- Healthcare (Become the centre of excellence for mental health.)

Ballinasloe is strategically located on the Galway Dublin route just off the M6 Motorway with two exits and entrances on each side of the Town, and location on the Dublin Galway Railway line. The town has a significant service capacity and acts as a service Hub for East Galway, where it serves a huge electoral and natural catchment area from Moylough and Clonberne to the North west, to Clonfert, Lawrencetown and Killoran to the East, Ballymoe Williamstown to the North, and Aughrim on to Cloonkeenkerrill South, Ballydangan & Dysart to the West and Shannonbridge to the South West

In addition, it has huge potential to benefit from its proximity to Athlone's growth as a regional Gateway in recent years.

Ballinasloe also has a developed IDA Business and Technology Park, and has had a multi-million town enhancement scheme just recently completed by Galway County Council.

Sustainability/Smart Living Town

Ballinasloe is a Key Town in many ways. One less often discussed is the proximity to Athlone Institute of Technology as well as NUIG and GMIT will be of particular interest to technology companies now and even more so as AIT transitions to University Status, making Ballinasloe an ideal hub for these companies in the Medical, Pharma, Software and Fin Tech sectors whilst keeping them situated in county Galway.

Combining the tech opportunities with the proximity to Portiuncula as a University Hospital will provide additional opportunities to attract specialised business to the town in the medical and pharma area.

With a stable and entrenched (family) population, the town and its hinterlands provides a wide employment resource pool for potential enterprises. This deep-rooted workforce will not job hop for slight improvements in hourly income. As the number of non-Irish population is relatively small when compared with the larger towns and city in the county, there will be low staff turnover should there be a major economic shift.

The location of the town to the major transportation arteries allows for the seamless the movement of goods and materials from suppliers to customers at home or overseas.

The town and environs of Ballinasloe are ideally suited for the development of Remote Working Hubs. A local charter of Grow Remote has been active since 2019. In addition, there are numerous vacant buildings (either whole or part) which can be transformed into remote working hubs.

Ballinasloe will play its part in helping County Galway to deliver on the climate change actions as per the CAP. We are already establishing ourselves as an urban Sustainable Energy Community (SEC) under the umbrella of BACD Ltd . We are members of the SEAI network and are working closely with our Mentor in completing the Energy Master Plan (EMP) application.

Tourism

The town as a Demesne laid out town of the 19th century with its Clancarty influences, the Mills, the Canal, the Workhouse, the Hospitals , the Railway , the Fair and the Early Christian sites combined with quality accommodation , walks, parks, trails and of course the marinas on the Shannon – Erne waterway – the most westerly link, means the town is poised to become a new Hidden Heartlands destination location .

The Battle of Aughrim site a few kilometres west , Clonmacnoise (15 kms away) the Beara Brefni way and Hymany Way waymarked walks and the Shannon – Suck Valley corridor provide the community with a variety of underutilised assets to deliver a Tourism and Heritage Strategy as part of our 10 year plan.

Mental Health

St. Brigid's Hospital was one of the largest institutions of it's kind in the country, catering for the Mental wellbeing at it's peak, 1800 patients and 850 staff. The Re- Imagining St. Brigids Plan was an in depth process over 9 weeks in 2018 that culminated in a day long workshop based on over 200 submissions received from the community and stakeholders to route map possible uses for the old Psychiatric Buildings and the 51 acre campus they stand upon. A full report was issued to the relevant stakeholders and principally the key Dept. of Health . (See full report in appendix 3)

Ballinasloe can become a support centre for the existing Hospital and all medical care distributed in the town along with the Pharmaceutical Manufacturing Plants which are based nearby in Athlone and Galway.

The Town can consolidate as a Centre of Excellence for Mental Health Care and we can draw on the existing pool of talent and experience which is already in place along with the education and research and graduates which are available from our four 3rd Level Institutions (AIT, GMIT, NUIG , Maynooth University).

The Past, The Present & Our Future

For Ballinasloe as the County Town – the last 20 years of development can be best described as uneven with significant decline of town centre and erosion of local manufacturing based jobs from At Cross in 1999 right though to this months announcement of the loss of 105 with the APTAR closure .

The loss of over 2000 manufacturing and service jobs in that 20 years have been somewhat offset by the growth of the commuter workforce to Galway, Athlone, Tullamore and even Dublin .

The foundation of BACD ; in 1999 has been one of the most positive legacies of the local losses and in supporting some 500 new posts and 80 companies has(with the support of the agencies) delivered on an Enterprise economy , see appendix 4.

The Celtic Tiger years left the town with some additional housing, a new Nursing home, a new 4 star hotel , a new Dunlo Shopping Complex , new investment in educational facilities . The designation of the town as a RAPID town (one of the 51 most economically disadvantaged towns in the country in 2010) in it's entirety allowed for fast tracking and prioritising of all sporting and leisure grants which has resulted in the town centre having a myriad of top of the range, floodlit sports facilities in all codes.

The economic collapse of the town's fortunes owing to marked rise in unemployment was confirmed by the Teagasc Government Report of 2014 when on the Index of Economic Strength of 292 Rural Towns; we were ranked 249th for unemployment and 194th for emigration.

Allied to the economic malaise - the Reform of Local Government, the abolition of the town Councils – replacing them with unwieldy Municipal Districts in 2014 saw the community without its own administration of local affairs in 173 years.

In the six years since the removal of the Town Council , loss of Mayor, loss of Urban elections – even as a platform for issues of significance has removed administrative focus on the towns development which the Development Company through the Town Team has attempted with limited support to address.

On the takeover in 2014 Galway County Council had transferred to them from the old UDC a capital account of €22 million (€4.5 for the Convent / Library Project/ €6.5 for the Streets Enhancement and landscaping Project / €1.2 million for Community Capital Projects / €6 m set aside for the Remediation works of the old Landfill in Poolboy and €4.3 for the development of River Park, Walks and Main St. Rear Development).

Given that the final planning problems with the new National School Development have been addressed this year and the Dept of Education will be proceeding to tender and build shortly it is imperative that this Development plan signals the prioritisation of the releasing of the final tranche of capital monies and utilising it with INTER REG / National or other European Funding to develop the parallel street from the school in the Convent Grounds, a Biosphere River Park and Walk and new road way with commercial opportunities which can address the deficit in shopping choices identified in the Town Benchmarking Report of 2014 & Review in 2016 (See full details in Appendix 5)

This focus would allow for a new regeneration of the town centre to the RIVER – which was first advocated in the Town Development Plan of 1985 and again in all of the 1990s plan.

Another key ask with this County five year plan is that is sets out timescales and milestones in the implementation phases. A cursory read of the last plan 2015 – 2021 in relation to the town shows how really little has been achieved.

The town has been eclipsed by Tuam in the past decade in terms of population – this was not signalled or prioritised in any of the previously published plans. In the 20 years since 1996 - the population growth of Ballinasloe has remained stunted in comparison to it's Loughrea and Tuam counterparts.

If the County is serious about taking pressure off the city and spatially spreading sustainable living and economic activity to all parts of the county a far more aggressive strategy and focus is needed for Ballinasloe than that of the past 25 years .

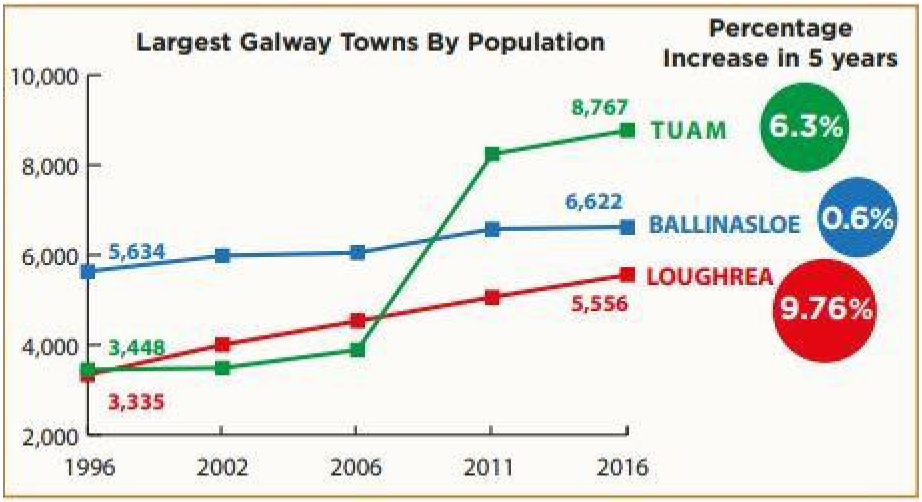

Fig1 : Population Statistics for Loughrea Tuam & Ballinasloe 1996 to 2016

The next plan for five years has to accept that the location of the town as practically frontier in that some 35% of it's natural catchment population lives in County Roscommon and some 25% of it's citizens work in Athlone in County Westmeath .

Some latitude has to be allowed for in the plan in interlocking the developmental objectives of Ballinasloe to provide some of the needs of South Roscommon , the Connacht side of Athlone and west Offaly.

The NWRA RSES Report encourages neighbouring and adjoining county councils to harmonise approaches to development and we strongly feel that Ballinasloe could form a pilot in this regard with Roscommon County Council & Offaly County Council .

Our submission refers to issues and actions that should be prioritised for inclusion based on the layout of themes included in the Galway County Council issues paper.

1) Core Strategy and Housing.

Re Focus Ballinasloe Town as an area of Exponential Growth.

Ballinasloe Town and the vast majority of the Ballinasloe Municipal District is outside the GTPS study Area and this should remain.
The Town of Ballinasloe should be designated an Area of unlimited growth in the Development Plan.
Fast track the upgrade Waste Water and Water services in The Ballinasloe Electoral area to allow the Town and the Municipal District to grow its population in line with other areas of the County.

Current house prices (2020) indicate that private housing is outside the means of many people and is likely to remain so. Therefore the provision of housing will largely rely on local government developments. Borrowing for such developments may be inexpensive in the period of the development plan 2022-2028 based on current economic evidence.

Population growth of 30% from 6700 to 8700 should be our target. The development of appropriate and serviced lands to provide for high quality, well laid out and well landscaped sustainable residential communities with an appropriate mix of housing types and densities, together with complementary land uses such as community facilities, local services and public transport facilities, and sustainable transport options to serve the residential population of the area and the surrounding environment needs to be a priority.

Finding a suitable pilot project with some of the St. Brigid's Grounds and the State Housing Agency must be key.

Prioritise infill developments.

Options for development of housing for the plan period under consideration for promotion must include:

- Green site development with utilities provided.
- Brown site development – there may be some utilities already in place.
- Reusing / restoring / redeveloping the upper floors in 2nd and 3rd floor structures (usually over a commercial premises) in streets and thoroughfares within the town(s). This may require governmental grant aid to private owners of such premises. This type of street renewal would have a knock effect on local businesses etc. Utilities already in place.
- Downsizing developments i.e. retirement campus – many middle class housing estates now house one or two parents per house whose children have fled the nest and they are sitting on 3 and 4 bedroom premises far too large for their requirements. Allowing them to sell up and downsize would release substantial housing for other families to use and would also provide a retirement nest egg to the sellers!! The downsize premises are essential for this to work.
- A proper mix of social housing within private housing schemes.
- A supply of single parent / single child accommodation i.e. 2 bedsits etc.
- An assurance from Irish Water that it can supply any new developments.

2) Urban Living and Placemaking

The plan should include :

- Sizeable Grant aid for old buildings
- Greenways to local villages (REDZ areas)
- Investment in quality signage
- Develop rear of Main Street / Society Street – River Parks, River Walk

- Provide an annual grant to cover management and resources to manage the public realm of town centre.
- Broadband is crucial, but so too is the already existing road, rail and pending greenway networks to ensure these companies and their employees will have not only easy commutes but facilitate their leisure time also.
- Additional facilities for teenagers to spend their free time is key to any urban setting.
- An outdoor park with dedicated areas for young children and also teenagers would be ideal
- Enhancement of the Marina area and routes to the town centre will also benefit both the residents and business as well as tourists
- We feel that housing on the outskirts of the town is more beneficial overall compared to more dense housing closer to the town centre. These housing units of course need to be carefully zoned and planned to ensure they enhance the area, facilitate the required schools, creches, and other services needed for a growing population.
- The town centre is ideal for socialising, and the facilitation of additional restaurants, cafes and recreational centres to be promoted and new businesses serving the locality in these areas supported as much as possible.
- Ballinasloe is the ideal stop on the Athlone to Galway greenway. For leisure cycling and attracting tourists to the area, who in turn will support local businesses, is essential.
- The inclusion of formal cycle paths on the main routes around the town would be a welcome addition.
- Any new planning should certainly promote the inclusion of cycle and pedestrian pathways either along main road routes, or through alternative routes leading to the town centre.

3) Rural Placemaking & Countryside

- Cycleways from the surrounding villages into the town centre need to be advanced – during all stages of road widening and resurfacing .
- The town needs to reconnect with it's South Eastern hinterland of Shannonbridge , Co Offaly fully through the Just Transition Programme.

4) Economic, Enterprise, Tourism and Retail Development

- Provide a realistic Budget for enterprise centre management
- Preplanning team to advise on potential site for remote working hubs
- Link greenway / Hymany Way / Beara Breffni Walkway
- Develop Aughrim Centre

- Hidden Heartlands central office Ballinasloe (part of TII office)
- Tourism Officer one day per week Ballinasloe
- Shop front enhancement scheme fully completed
- Library Office Space be maximised with effective management and tenant progression

Remote Working

- The town and environs of Ballinasloe are IDEALLY suited for the development of Remote Working Hubs. A local charter of Grow Remote has been active since 2019. In addition, there are numerous vacant buildings (either whole or part) which can be transformed into remote working hubs.
- The plan is to develop a number of hubs under the direct management of the BACD. With such an infrastructure in place, it would be easier to both manage desk and office spaces, but also to have a unified marketing approach.

A Comprehensive Tourist Trail Within the County

- Ballinasloe is one of the largest towns in the new Failte Ireland Hidden Heartlands. Discussions have already taken place with Failte Ireland to find ways of developing the town as a tourism hub. There are sufficient tourist attractions within a short distance including Clonmacnoise, Battle of Aughrim as well as significant number tours of ancient churches.
- It is imperative that such an important town like Ballinasloe will be included on the chosen routing for the Dublin to Clifden Greenway, providing direct access to the town. The facilities available to the visitor which are needed on a daily basis are in place – Banking, Laundry, Bars, Restaurants, Café's, Accommodation, Bike Hire & Repair, direct access to Public Transport – an ideal Starting / Finishing point for any tour.
- Ballinasloe is an ideal centre point to be an 'Axis' between the Hidden Heartlands and The Greenway allowing for a multitude of activities to be undertaken.
- A Tourism , Genealogical and Heritage Centre needs to be established to anchor the social enterprise and soft skill sets needed for domestic and international visitors.
- The development of River Walks, Bog Walks, Trails a Biodiversity River Park , canal walks and forest walks need to be fast tracked in conjunction with the pre planning , tendering and construction of the OPW Flood Alleviation works.

Further supporting town centre retailing and commercial activities that enhance the vitality and vibrancy of our town.

The plan must make the town centre – attractive, accessible, amenable, and sustainable.

- The immediate Use it or Lose It 'attitude' needs to be adopted with derelict commercial buildings in the immediate town centre – a charter needs to be implemented which lays out stating the minimum standards of care/appearance which must be adhered to.

- Better usage of existing streetscape – bringing business onto the streets through outdoor café and restaurant seating area's.
- Better use of our side lanes which lead onto our main streets which again can be incorporated into the previous point.
- Development of cycle lanes through the town centre, promoting health and wellbeing and taking unnecessary traffic out of the centre.
- All new development and refurbishment to be carried out for a sustainable future with emphasis placed on eco friendly practices leading to a better environment.
- The town to be a centre for Electric Vehicle charging.

Integrating enterprise land uses with other uses such as residential, transportation and tourism?

Consideration to fuller exploitation of the main focal points of the town :

St. Michael's Square which is primarily used for parking.

- Outside dining and commercial activity.
- A place for country markets / exhibition of local arts & crafts
- Regional or specialist Organic Food events
- The Fair Green which at present is used for one week in the year and car parking for the GAA pitch - hosting festivals/ concerts/ events on a regular basis. It is a natural arena which is underutilised.

5) Infrastructure and Transport

- Board of works infrastructure link to maximise use of River Suck
- Complete Greenway initiative within 3 year timespan
- Improve inner lanes on roadways for cyclists/ walkers
- Water and Waste facility upgrade for new housing and industrial developments
- Encourage supporting measures and education of water conservation and harvesting
- Villages in the 20 km catchment of Ballinasloe should be prioritised for water/wastewater improvements

Promotion of Walking, Cycling ,Use Of Public Transport

- Trailing/ Signposting and mapping of current and new town centre and suburb walk trail
- Development of Athlone to Galway greenway, ideal for healthy and safe activities.
- Development of River Suck amenity, including walkways or board walk on the new levees which will accompany the Floodrelief scheme
- Developing infrastructure in Poolboy bog for walkways that link the Beara Breifne/Hymany routes with the riverwalk way that runs from Poolboy lough to the Marina or other access roads into the town in alliance with Galway Sports Partnership, tourism officer and Local Authority.

- Signage for this developing area & guided bogwalks, signage in the center of town to indicate all of the developing walkways both in Poolboy, linking walks on Hymany way through Aughrim Battle field and Aughrim village, suck valley walks so they become recognised walks.
- Signage for local biodiversity in this area. Developing infrastructure of picnic benches, look out points in scenic spots.
- GCC to work in conjunction with Ballinasloe Walks & Trails
- In this disadvantaged area of Ballinasloe working with the National Physical Activity Plan and Sports Partnership Officer to promote healthy activities ie. Walking, cycling, nordic walking or any other activities that will support all sectors of our community.
- Investment in areas to sit and water refill points.
- In Ballinasloe and surrounding areas we have a larger aging population and we need to provide easy accessible sports and activities for this part of the community.
- Support and funding to develop some surrounding public owned lands for community recreational use and integrate awareness, education in the preservation and promotion of biodiversity
- More frequency of public transport services to the main population centres
- More frequency of connections for outline rural population centres
- Provision of public transport timetables that coincide with travel/ work requirements – East and West

Smarter Travel To Reduce Dependence On The Private Car

- Ballinasloe is ideally positioned to take advantage of 'Smarter Travel' being on the main transport route from East to West, with rail & good infrastructure for public transport.
- Need for increased frequency of both train and bus availability
- Introduction of more regional timetables (Athlone-Galway rail travel), similar with bus connections.
  - parking standards for new developments can't reflect the need to reduce car dependency until a light bus or suburban service is introduced to plug into current public bus and rail services.

Improving The Safety of vulnerable road users (cyclists/ pedestrians)

- Development of Athlone to Galway greenway.
- Continue to improve the footpath maintenance within the urban area & encourage individuals to use these on daily walks
- Develop specific walkways within the urban area, increased signage for existing walk trails

6) Environment, Renewable Energies and Communications

Ballinasloe Flood Relief Scheme

- There is an urgent need to fast track the timeframe on the proposed €8.59 million flood relief scheme proposed for Ballinasloe from the CFRAMs report which had its inception in 2018. The proposed completion date is 2025, and this is five years away and the risk of flooding in town remains high owing to the ever-increasing rainfall levels. Further flooding would cause interruption to business and to citizens of the town and its hinterlands.
- There is an urgent need for Galway Co Council, the OPW, Engineering Consultants, Environmental Consultants, and all other stakeholders to redouble their efforts to fast track the timeframe.
- There is an urgent need for develop and identify a preferred option for Ballinasloe flood relief Scheme.

SEI Plan Ballinasloe

Ballinasloe will play its part in helping County Galway to deliver on the climate change actions as per the CAP. We are already establishing ourselves as an urban Sustainable Energy Community (SEC) under the umbrella of BACD Ltd . We are members of the SEAI network and are working closely with our Mentor in completing the Energy Master Plan (EMP) application.

The EMP will be our roadmap for the next 10 years of this project. Our aim is to become a low carbon urban community. The SEC team is the driving force of this project, hoping to create a 5-8% reduction in carbon emissions through increased energy efficiency and energy upgrades. This will include home and commercial retrofitting.

We will develop energy management skills and knowledge and invest in smart technologies to facilitate the transition to low carbon transport and heating. Our Register Of Opportunities will highlight what natural resources we can take advantage of to develop renewable energy.

We are very fortunate to have the River Suck which meanders around our town. The banks of the River Suck will provide an ideal location to establish a renewable energy demonstration project - a very effective way of introducing solar energy to the community and increasing acceptance levels. It will be a small scale, 6/8 solar panels, which will introduce the concept of, and promote the benefits of solar energy being very passive, with no noise or pollution.

It will empower our community to generate our own renewable energy project which will be owned, operated and controlled by the community. The benefits of the SEC at community level will result in enhanced comfort and health from living/working in energy efficient buildings, financial and energy savings, boosting local employment and supporting community development. SEC's contribute to regional/national energy targets and reduce society's environmental impact. Globally low carbon and renewable energy support the need to address climate change by reducing global emissions.

Environmental

- Anti Dumping Initiative, building awareness, educating and putting measures in place to prevent Dumping in scenic areas.
- Ballinasloe Walks and Trails have been very active in a number of voluntary cleanup days in Poolboy Bog with the support of the local litter warden, tidy towns Ballinasloe and the Environment section of GCC.

- There would be a more structure Engagement with the Environment Section, Litter warden, Galway Co Co to organize targeted voluntary clean-ups of Poolboy Bog
- Coordination of organized cleanups during the year
- Bulky item collections be targeted at 1 per month to be available to the community for this area in civic amenity centre to prevent illegal dumping
- Signage for these bulky item collections be displayed on the entrances to this bog area/at amenity centre entrance and on social media or brochures
- General preventative measures put in place

  The County Development Plan must set out to partner and underpin the key deliverables of the SEI Plan being created for the town which addresses in a very comprehensive way the evolution of renewable energies and protection of environment.

- Drive Broadband scheme rollout faster to attract new investment and facilitate remote working.

7) Architectural and Archaeological Heritage

- St Brigids Hospital Grounds – buildings and 200 acre campus an architectural conservation plan needs to be urgently implemented.
- Clontuskert Abbey headstones need to be restored and like need to have full preservation
- All local archaeology heritage sites the writings, symbols and carvings on all stone is fading from the elements. There must some way of protecting these as has been done in the Abbey in Boyle, Roscommon by erecting a glass roof on the abbey.
- Maps and guides should be available for structures like Clontuskert Abbey, Kilconnell Friary with all features and graves included. Structures like these could also benefit from more history panels being to read on site.
- A heritage trail for town centre linking to APP to allow users find their own level of engagement needs to be introduced onto the historical landscape.

Promote Awareness Of The County's Past Which Includes Protected Structures, ACA's and Archeology

- Establish and create trails and tours of these ecclesiastical and archaeological heritage sites. There needs to be more signage, directions and information points from the centre points around Ballinasloe, ie. Tesco roundabout and marina. These trails and tours need to be linked in with other tourist attractions like Beara Breifne Way, Hymany Way

- Ballinasloe needs a tourist office with literature highlighting all these ecclesiastical and heritage sites within a radius of 30miles.

- There needs to be more website/online promotion of these sites on Hidden Heartlands linked sites and also Ballinasloe related and linked websites ie. Ballinasloe.ie

Facilitating modern living standards and conveniences in some of our older buildings that are protected structures located in conservation areas.

- When owner's of these protected structures wish to enhance or renovate them there needs to be some coherence between all the involved preservation bodies. Currently it is impossible for many of owner's to do anything with these structures as different bodies cannot agree. Maybe the bodies for these structures need to be consolidated.

- Over the shop living needs an integrated approach from HSE, Environment , Planning , Fire and Conservation elements, not the disjointed one that leaves the property owner discouraged from making improvements – even with Government Schemes.

Parts of Co Galway For ACA Designation

- The Togher at Kellysgrove, Ballinasloe, Co Galway (Medival wlakway found in 1940's connects the Clontuskert Abbey to Teampallin)
- Teampallin, Poolboy, Ballinasloe, Co Galway
- Aughrim Battlefield
- Fair Green – UNESCO Site

Older Buildings Worthy Of Protection

- Teampallin, Poolboy, Ballinasloe, Co Galway
- Aqueduct on the Grand Canal between Lsmany and Ballinasloe. This structure is in urgent need of help to stop the trees/vegetation growing and destroying the structure. This aqueduct is on the Beara Breifne way/ Hymany Way and would be an amazing feature for pilgrims walking these trails.

Securing The Protection Of Our Archaeological Features Including Landscapes Into The Future.

- The bodies for preservation should be consolidated and this body work with the local community groups in creating a pride in protecting and preserving their own personal heritage.
- To educate, bring awareness to and assign meaning to the benefits of understanding a communities heritage and how it can be very effective and creating a more coherent community in all areas. From learning effectively by the mistakes and the celebrations of our past we can create a greater future in society.

8) <u>Social, Community and Cultural Development</u>

- Develop cultural events calendar – October Fair , Ada English / Larry Reynolds / Dinny Delaney etc.
- Community sports facilities are indeed of great benefit and Ballinasloe town is well served with such resources. Whilst the county may have a…"rich and varied cultural tradition" we in Ballinasloe also have a number of buildings to accommodate the performance of cultural and artistic productions. Such infrastructure includes a Town Hall (capacity circa 400) a Town Band Hall (capacity circa 100), the Library (capacity circa 100) and two hotels with ballrooms attached
- The town has Drama groups, a Musical Society, a Town Band, a Harp Orchestra, a Pantomine group and a vibrant traditional music scene.
- All of these contribute to social capital and enhance social cohesion and community spirit. Given the infrastructure that's in place currently, both in artistic endeavour and the premises to house same much greater emphasis should be placed on the performing arts within the town.

- The plan must encourage and foster greater collaboration and co marketing of these groups, facilities for audience participation.
- Ballinasloe Social Services and other such advocacy groups play a key role in responding to the needs of our fellow citizens and the Plan must identify avenues of assistance for them for the next few years.

9) Natural Heritage, Landscape and Green Infrastructure

- Boardwalk / walkways / Jettys along river / A public bathing point on the River Suck to be created
- Develop Walks & Trails in conjunction with Just Transition fund ESB/ Bord Na Mona
- Funding for infrastructure for bog walks, walkways, linking national walkway routes to Ballinsloe town (in conjunction with Ballinasloe Walks & Trails)
- Signage in these areas of these walkways and in the Center of Ballinasloe town to highlight these walkways
- Promotion of the benefits of these activities on Health and Wellness in our community
- Ballinsloe Walks and Trails activities, walks and routes to be included in the at least 3 information leaflets/Brochures with Galway Co Co
- Signage for the local flora and fauna to be found in these areas walked by Ballinasloe Walks and Trails
- 5 Picnic areas to be set up in the next 2 years
- Directional signs to navigate these walkways to include level of fitness required, terrain and approx time
- Investment in Bog Sculpture and art to be displayed in these areas and supporting local artists and crafts people in the area
- As previously stated - one of our greatest amenities is the river and apart from the Marina area the town turns it back to the river. This must be reversed by building pedestrian walkways and cycleways along the riverbank from town centre behind Salmons to the Station, from town centre to Creagh and town centre to Poolboy, possibly part of the greenway.

10) Agriculture, Fishing Marine & Forestry

- Encourage Inland fisheries to keep Suck lower reaches stocked with fish
- Encourage Inland fisheries to create and promote fishing cuts/ swims and jetties
- Encourage Coillte to sign post Forest plantations to South and North of Town enviorns with species and way marks

Appendixes attached

- Appendix 1: BACD Company Details & Background Details
- Appendix 2 The Summary Presentation of our evolving10 Year Plan 2021 – 2031 .
- Appendix 3 The Re Imagining St. Brigids Report
- Appendix 4: List of firms supported and jobs fostered from BEC
- Appendix 5 : 2014 Town Benchmarking Report & 2016 Town Benchmarking Review
- Appendix 6 Pages from the RSES 124 and 125 detailing the Key Town priorities for Ballinasloe

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Background & Details of Ballinasloe Area Community Development

Ballinasloe Area Community Development Ltd (BACD Ltd) is Ballinasloe and its hinterland local development company that was established in 1999 by the Ballinasloe community. The Company is a not for profit entity with charitable status with the main objective to create sustainable employment by promoting enterprise and supporting projects that encourage investment into the Ballinasloe area.

The company is run by its Board of Directors, which currently has 15 members and is a cross section representation of the Ballinasloe community.(See details below)
The company employs a fulltime manager to run Ballinasloe Enterprise Centre and to manage, promote and support the various different community projects spearheaded by the company. Some of these Projects include

Ballinasloe Enterprise Centre (BEC): The once derelict building has been extensively renovated to become Ballinasloe Enterprise Centre, offering high quality office, work and training space to start-up and existing businesses in the area. The building currently has 29 enterprises directly employing over 181 people. The company manager also provides support and network services to all local businesses in the area. Over the past 20 years over 500 jobs have been created in the centre. (see details in Appendix)

Ballinasloe Life Magazine: BACD Ltd oversee the publication and delivery of Ballinasloe Life Magazine a free glossy bi monthly magazine that is delivered to every house and business in Ballinasloe and strategic locations in the wider Ballinasloe Hinterland. The magazine highlights every aspect and organisation in the town and gives all local business's & Entrepreneurs a platform to advertise themselves locally, the magazine also has a designated "business section" where editorial articles are done on local business's & entrepreneurs and informs & encourages residents to participate in the many different functions/outings in the town.

Ballinasloe Town Team Project: This project has been coordinated by BACD Ltd. through the formation of the town team . It is an ongoing project with the main aim to revitalise Ballinasloe town centre and its hinterland. To date a number of successful projects have been carried out including the building and maintenance of the new town website www.ballinasloe.ie, the establishment of Ballinasloe Zombie Walk. Ballinasloe Christmas Illuminations Project, Sustainable energy communities & the People Of The Year Awards.

The Pulse Club is an innovative business networking group in Ballinasloe area supporting start-ups and existing enterprises, It provides peer to peer mentoring, training workshops and large scale networking events . Since the inception of the Pulse Club in January 2019 , the club has supported over 20 new business to go from idea to launch.

The Re- Imagining St. Brigids Plan was an in depth process over 9 weeks in 2018 that culminated in a day long workshop based on over 200 submissions received from the community and stakeholders to route map possible uses for the old Psychiatric Buildings and the 51 acre campus they stand upon. A full report was issued to the relevant stakeholders and principally the key Dept. of Health .

The Advance Factory Project was a three year plan led by BACD that involved negotiating with the IDA and EI and other stakeholders after an incubation Enterprise Centre company had to move town with 200 jobs in 2017 as there was no suitable building. A lease was secured on an IDA site and outline planning permission was obtained with support and funding from the local Credit Union to deliver a shovel ready site for any potential investor to the midlands.

Current BACD Board Members and Expertise

• **Seamus Duffy**, Chairperson : 30+ Years Financial Experience as financial advisor and retired Bank Manager, 12 years as Chairperson and 14 years on the board
• **Brian King,** Vice Chairperson, 30+ years international enterprise experience , 3 years on the BACD Board
• **Micheal Connolly**, Galway County Councillor, 30+ years industry experience , 4 years on the board
• **Dan Dowling** Retired Farmer & Local community activist, director with BACD since its founding (20+ years)
• **Eoghan Kenny**, Local consultancy business owner with 15 years experience,founding member of the Pulse club, joined BACD board in 2020
• **Joe Lyons** Retired Engineer with 40+ years experience, part of the BACD board for 12 years.
• **Kevin Broderick**, Local pharmacist with 30+ years experience, part of BACD board for past 4 years
• **Pearse Keller** Local business owner with 20 years experience in the travel industry, part of board for the past 3 years
• **Marina Downey**, Local restaurateur & publican with 40+ years experience in the industry part of BACD board for past 3 years
• **Noel Madden**, Retired CEO of Ballinasloe Credit union with 40+ years experience . On the BACD board for 20 years
• **John McKenna**, Financial controller in AIT with 30+ years' experience. On the BACD board for 5 years
• **Ruth Sheridan Cregg**, Local business owner with 15+ years education experience. On the BACD board for past year
• **Anita Killeen** Radiographer in Portiuncula Hospital and coordinator of the Sustainable Energies Community. On the board for the past year
• **Valerie Dolan** Local business Owner and community leader. Founding Member of Ballinasloe Walks & Trails. On the board for the past 2 years
• **Sean Kelly** Accountant with 30+ years industry experience. On the board for the past year.
• **Lyn Donnelly** Civil Engineer with 15 + years experience in business & Community development. Employed as fulltime BACD manager for the past 8 years

Contact Details: Lyn Donnelly, Ballinasloe Enterprise Centre, Creagh Road, Ballinasloe, Co. Galway 09096 46516. Email: info@ballinasloeenterprisecentre.ie

Ballinasloe 2030 Plan

Internal Board Meeting Document

August 2020

Ballinasloe 2030 Plan – Key pillars

TOURISM

SMART /SUSTAINABLE TOWN

HEALTH CARE

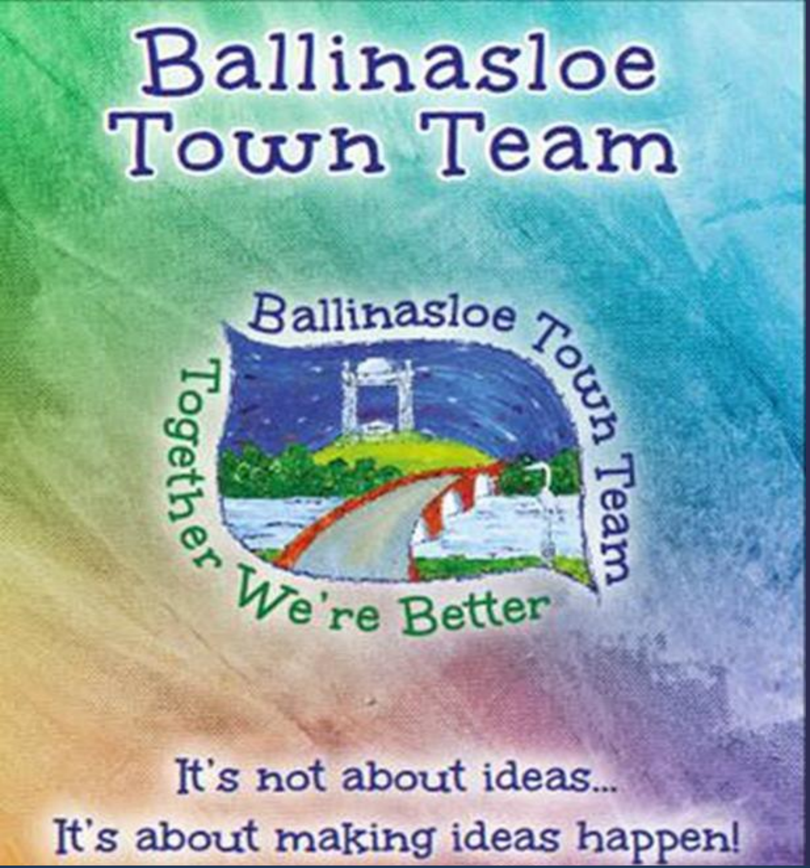
BALLINASLOE 2030 PLAN

	Pillar 1	Pillar 2	Pillar 3
	Ballinasloe Smart/Sustainable Town	Tourism	Health – One Stop location
Objective	Become a centre for remote working , smart business and & sustainable Energy community (SEC)	Ballinasloe to become a Tourism Hub	Become the centre of excellence for mental health
Strategy	Formation of remote working hubs in the town centre, Completion of Energy Master Plan (EMP)	Align with Failte Ireland Hidden Heartlands	Create clusters of care centres large & small

BALLINASLOE 2030 PLAN

Pillar 1: Smart /Sustainable Towns

- Remote Working
  - Library Office Space
  - Ballinasloe Enterprise Centre
  - Pulse Club Window
  - Conversion of Existing Town Centre Space



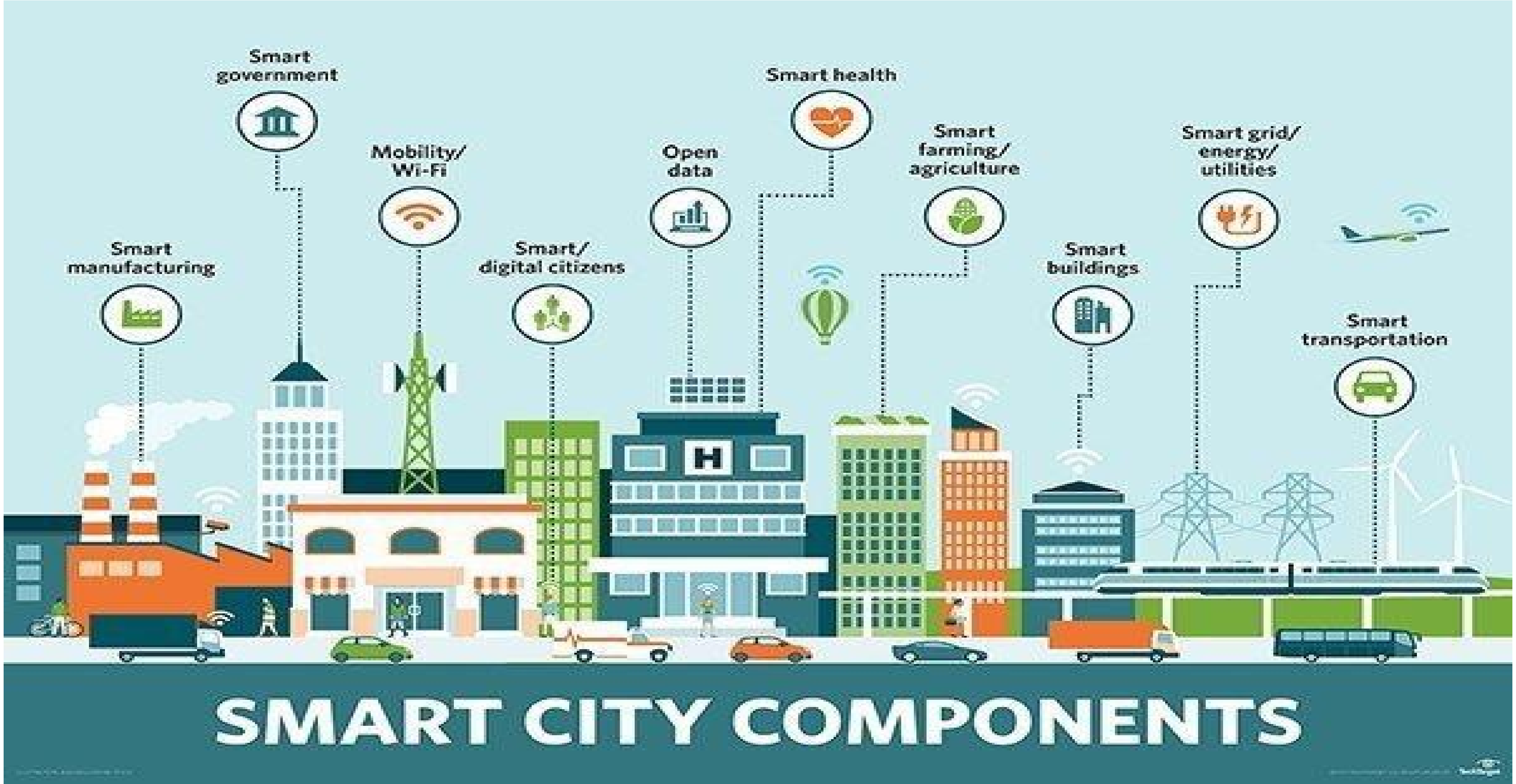
BALLINASLOE 2030 PLAN

Pillar 1: Smart /Sustainable Towns

- Ballinasloe Town Team
- Anita Kileen- Coordinator
- Pop-up Clinics
- Sustainable Energy Communities (SEC)
- 10 Year Road map under the Energy Master Plan (EMP)

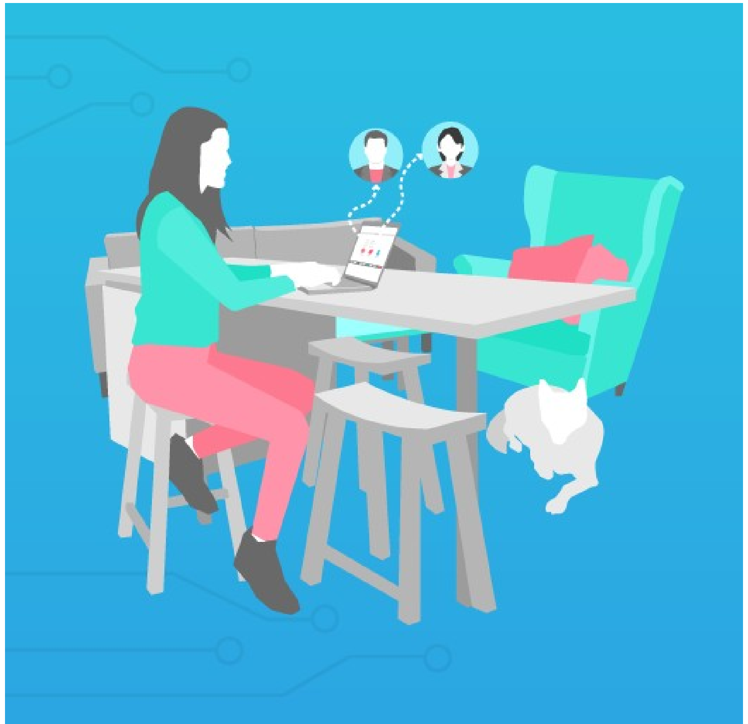
BEC
Ballinasloe Enterprise Centre
An Initiative of Ballinasloe Area Community Development Ltd.

Pillar 1: Ballinasloe Smart Town 2030



Remote working

- We are IDEALLY situated to become a major remote working hub
- Specially designed and built unit for 100+ desks??



Smart Town Flood prevention?

Ballinasloe E Bike Scheme

- Strategically select key locations throughout town for bike collection / drop points (train station / workplaces/square)
- Reach out for business sponsorship example Coca Cola Galway
- Discuss funding with Failte Ireland

Ballinasloe Eco Hub

Irelands Midlands Electric Charging Station

Electric Car Charging
Electric Bike Charging
Electric Bus Charging
+
Entertainment Centre

Pillar 2: Tourism

Objective: Ballinasloe to become a Tourism Hub

Strategy: Align with Failte Ireland Hidden Heartlands.

Fishing	Genealogy	Bog Walks	Ecclesiastical
History	Festivals	Arts	

One marketing umbrella

Tourism

- Issues:
  - Failte Office in Town
  - Build expert base of guides / knowledge
  - Accommodation?
  - Consolidated marketing (1 message)?
  - How to get all parties to work together?
  - How to attract Failte Ireland?

Pillar 3: Health – One Stop location

Objective: Become the centre of excellence for mental health. We have the history.

Strategy: Create clusters of care centres large & small:

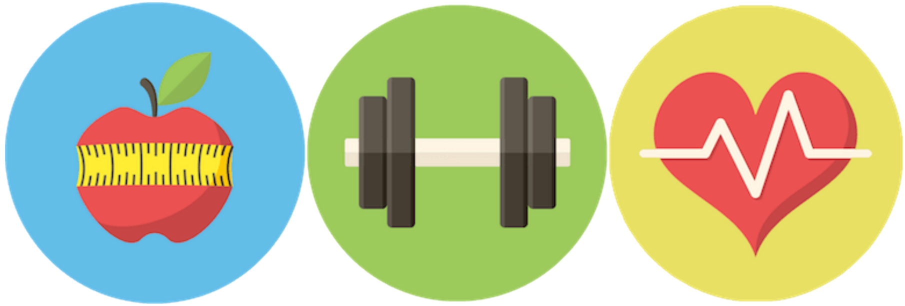
Examples:

Depression	Substance	Psychology
Stress	Schizophrenia	Anxiety

One marketing umbrella

Health

- Issues:
  - Attract experts
  - Find location(s)
  - One marketing umbrella
  - Public or private?
  - Funding?



Next Steps

- Assemble a working group
- Agree on the plan outline
- Get input from various town groups
- Get input from GCC
- Arrange town hall meeting
- Set objectives and time lines – who does what?

REIMAGINING ST. BRIGID'S

Workshop Summary Report

Prepared by Connect the Dots

A project led by Minister Denis Naughten

Putting People 1st

Denis Naughten TD

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Table of Contents

1. Overview

This Summary Report provides an overview of the workshop - the process and the findings, highlighting key visions for the site, commonalities amongst the visions, and recommendations going forward.

The most critical learning from the workshop was that across the diverse stakeholders present from all sectors and backgrounds, there came a very clear consensus around the vision for St Brigid's and the next step. This is quite unique and is a strong indicator as to the potential support and momentum for the project.

2. Workshop Design

a. Background

Local Minister Denis Naughten has undertaken a new project – 'Reimagining St Brigid's'. The project aims to stimulate debate on the future of St Brigid's, an iconic landmark in Ballinasloe, and take the first step towards reimagining its future use.

Connect the Dots was brought in to design and facilitate this process through community engagement and a key stakeholder workshop.

Following in-depth research on the site and local area, the second step of this process was a public survey for everyone with views on the future of the St. Brigid's campus to complete. The survey explored how people use the town and its amenities, what they think is missing, as well as their hopes and concerns around the future of the St. Brigid's site. The findings were then analysed and used to inform the next step of this process: an exploratory workshop on the 1st of June in Gullane's Hotel in Ballinasloe.

The purpose of this exploratory workshop (the focus of this report) was to bring together key stakeholders and community members of different perspectives and backgrounds to develop ideas for the potential reuse of the St. Brigid's site, as well as explore first steps of how to make them happen.

b. Objectives

The purpose of this exploratory workshop was to bring together key stakeholders and community members of different perspectives and backgrounds to

- Explore the potential of the St. Brigid's site
- Develop ideas for the potential reuse of the St. Brigid's site
- Build out these ideas in detail, drawing on attendee expertise to strengthen them
- Explore strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats around these visions
- Develop first steps of how to move forward with 'Reimagining St. Brigid's'

c. Format

Attendees

Those who attended the exploratory workshop in Gullane's Hotel on Friday, June 1st were selected to represent various sectors and key perspectives within the local area - as well as key regional and national stakeholders.

The Space

Each group was made up of a mix of perspectives to encourage cross-sectoral thinking and the innovation that can spark from it. The presentation from the front of the room was used to deliver the context and public insights gathered, and keep track of each activity as the workshop progressed. Attendees could also view aerial footage of the St Brigid's site to give further context to the proceedings.

Facilitators

At each table, there was a facilitator, briefed and trained by Connect the Dots in the workshop methodology and accompanying worksheets. Connect the Dots facilitated the event from the front of the room, explaining each activity and providing support to facilitators throughout.

Information Collection

To capture the ideas at each table there were strategic, custom-designed worksheets for each activity. The style of activities varied, from individual brainstorming to collaborating as a group and more. The facilitator captured notes as well as facilitated the conversation at each table.

d. Methodology

The first part of the event focused on introductions and sharing the insights from the previous research completed and public survey. Key to this section was ensuring the public's view was shared so it could be incorporated into the group's ideas.

The second part of the event was in the format of a workshop - with 6 groups going through a variety of carefully designed activities, accompanied by worksheets and tools to facilitate their brainstorming and strategising process.

Throughout the workshop, the groups were given opportunities to feed back to the room and gather feedback and suggestions from the other groups; ensuring a cross-sectional approach that leveraged the expertise of the attendees.

The day's agenda:

Introductions and Context

10:15 AM **Welcome by Minister Denis Naughten**

10:25 AM **Presentation and workshop overview**

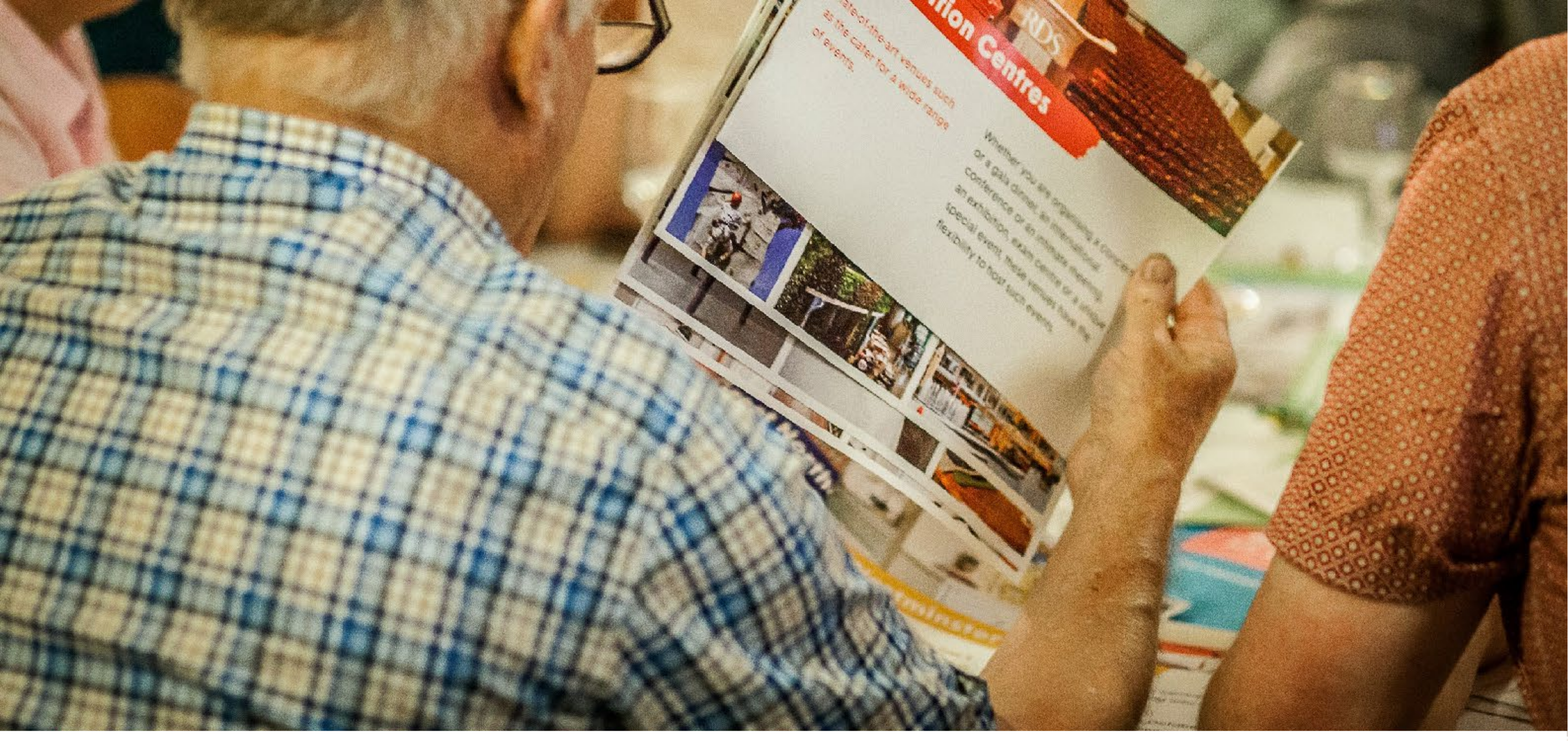
This this gave attendees the context of the workshop and parameters for the project. Included in the opening presentation were

- Overview of current sentiment of community - needs, wants, hopes and concerns; from the public survey and from previous surveys
- Overview of the opportunity context
- Overview of key assets and strengths of the town
- Overview of key strategies and policies St Brigid's reuse could feed into
- Overview of the St Brigid's site

10:40 AM **Introductions** all attendees introduced themselves to each other to get a sense of the expertise and diverse backgrounds in the room

Workshop

10:55 AM	**Activity 1: Blue Sky Thinking** Thinking big and visionary to start to help ensure the ideas for the St. Brigid's site are based on the ideal impact the site can have
11:15 AM	**The Design Challenge** Attendees were presented with a map showing local assets, personas summarising public survey insights, and inspirational case studies to draw upon when developing their vision for the space.
11:20 AM	**Activity 2: Brainstorming an idea** In response to this information each group then generated ideas for the site
11:50 AM	**Activity 3: Presenting initial ideas to the room** Each group briefly shared their main concept to the room and had an opportunity to receive and incorporate feedback
12:20 PM	**Short break** Lunch was served
12:35 PM	**Activity 4: Digging Deeper** Each group completed a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis of their updated concept
12:55 PM	**Activity 5: Ideas to Action** This stage was about moving their concept to smaller actionable steps, thinking about the finer details of how to progress the project.
1:15 PM	**Activity 6: Presenting final ideas back to the room** This was a final presentation of ideas and next steps from all teams.
1:40 PM	**Feedback** Attendees had a chance to share their thoughts on the process and project.
1:55 PM	**Close** Minister Denis Naughten gave closing address.



3. Workshop Findings

a. Executive Summary

Unlike many other workshops of its nature, this was in that consensus was reached among the groups of diverse stakeholders within the 4-hour timeframe. Developing such a collective vision is a significant achievement and clearly demonstrates the potential of this project, with a strong united group of stakeholders behind it with the potential and desire to drive it forward.

There is a strong willingness of all attendees to continue to support and be involved in the project.

Based on the feedback survey results

- 100% of attendees felt strongly in a positive manner about the project and re-imagining St Brigid's site more now (more so than before the workshop)
- 96% of attendees said they would be likely to stay engaged in the next steps of the Reimagining St. Brigid's process (all said yes except for one 'perhaps')

While more specific elements differed per group, the overall vision the groups came to was

- **Multi-use space:** achieve a variety of aims and engage a variety of target groups through leveraging the extensive size of the site and varied spaces within it
- **Draw on health / mental health history of the site:** Transform the site into a centre for wellness; emphasise the authenticity of the space by:

  – creating an interactive museum and heritage site

  – forming global centre of excellence around this sector;
  research centre / training facilities

  – setting up Outdoor wellness trails, wellness village
- **Commercial element** is necessary to help drive job growth locally and regionally

- **Training and education:** This could take the form of an ambulance training college, apprenticeships centre, school tours, R&D - research centre related to STEM / health
- **Commercial / job creation:** Many groups agreed that the site could offer office space, conference space, start-up incubation space and also potential to use this site for film / production / media
- **Community space:** The idea of a centre for the community was brought up in many of the groups as well as created indoor and outdoor spaces for all ages; especially youth / teens; some of the groups mentioned potential for creative arts hub

All groups agreed on the next steps - with key next steps including selecting an action group and main promoter, continuing community engagement, and completing a Feasibility Study of the vision.

b. Overview of Visions for St. Brigid's

Below is a summary of each vision developed by each of the table groups at the workshop. For more information and further detail on the intricacies of each idea, please see *Appendix Part II*.

Table 1

Vision

Wellbeing and Corporate Centre with training opportunities and wellness programmes the "Heart of the Town" that reflects Ballinasloe's heritage and owns and drives Ballinasloe's future.

Components

Mental health-themed multi-use space drawing on the legacy of the site, featuring

– Interactive museum
– Wellness village
– Centre for traditional building skills
– Potential to use site as film-sets

– Conference centre
– Incubation centre around healthcare - start-up potential
– Community ownership - community centre and outreach centres for youth
– Visitor centre - tells story of history and productions
– Training such as National Ambulance service

Value it can provide

150 – 200 Jobs locally; unique focused setting to improve well-being

Table 2

Vision

Multifunctional Complex split into different zones.

Components

Commercial

– R&D Companies
– Biomedical
– Economic viability of site, not retail

Creative Hub – Arts – Museum

– Museum with diverse activities for all ages
– Gallery, exhibition
– Artist's retreat
– Tourist office
– Education & training area

Residential (Elderly Care)

– Managed residential / assisted living
– Coffee shop / restaurant within facility

Recreational (parks/playgrounds)

– Community centre - O'Shea Hall developed for community groups
– Indoor and outdoor
– Not just mainstream sports
– Amenities for the young and for teens
multifunctional

Value it can provide

Employment, rejuvenation of town and town image, recreational facilities, cultural and historical significance.

Table 3

Vision

Interactive Museum (panoptic) and Heritage/Nature Mindfulness Park with sensory gardens and walking trails to put Ballinasloe on the map and develop into a learning & training centre.

Components

- Heritage and history: Interactive, pay-in museum with restaurant
- Sensory garden, outside gym, walking trails (promoting mindfulness / health i.e. Alzheimer's walking trails
- Arts & Music: St Brigid's Hall
- Training & learning services: Academic component - potential for research facility; paramedics / ambulance training, Pieta House; potential for school and bus tours
- Assisted Living Section: self-accommodated village

Value it can provide

Employment, upkeep, community well-being, brings people to the town, eventual link to services and learning regarding mental health.

Table 4

Vision

Centre of Excellence for Apprenticeships / Training & Education with a special focus on trades (including medical) and arts, cultural, Design and Construction

Components

- Educational Facilities, Conference Centre
- SME Hubs & Artists Studies
- Ancillary supports (catering, accommodation, recreational zone)
- Apprenticeships (3rd Level) - relates to Action Plan to increase number offered - National Skill Strategy 2025

Value it can provide

Fills a gap in current system nationally and regionally; provides for social needs of community; benefit jobseekers countrywide.

Table 5

Vision

Immersive, Multimedia, experiential, heritage site, bring together our past present and future; combining Academic, Wellness, and office space.

Components

– Global heritage interactive museum – let's take the past and develop into the future in terms of history, culture and wellness.
– Wellness village
– Rejuvenate walled garden, organic farm, old buildings into restaurants and cafes
– Convert old church- for use in humanist weddings or music (like Other Voices)
– Office space; innovation hub (related to mental health / wellness sector)
– Centre of excellence for training and education
– Global education and conference centre to attract international experts in mental health and related fields

Value it can provide

Economic, Wellness, Academic - site of global significance in multiple ways.

Table 6

Vision

Ireland's First Interactive Science & Adventure Park (Science & History) including Museum of Psychiatry - Multi-use area combining industry / incubator, museum (heritage and science), and outdoor space i.e. walkways

Components

– Commemorative Walk – Historical stops (e.g.: 5k Walk) Run Track and Cycle Track
– Museum Wings
    – Science Interactive to draw crowds, like ones in major cities (WS)
    – Major Psychiatric History of Ireland, preserve rooms, history
    – Horse Museum, 300-year-old Horse Fair
– STEM / Research Centre - partner with 3rd level universities
– Big Enterprise – employer
– Smaller Incubation hub for small businesses
– Additional: residential science camps, cafes/restaurants, conferences

Value it can provide

Fills a gap in current system nationally and regionally; provides for social needs of community; benefit job-seekers countrywide.

c. SWOT Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

Below is a summary of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats that applied across all six visions. For the SWOT for each specific vision, please see *Appendix Part II.*

Strengths

- Unique site of national significance; Ireland as pioneer in Mental Health which gives credibility
- Unique location - well-connected
- Ballinasloe diaspora - regional players on board with project
- Community has started this project
- Size of site + infrastructure already there
- Collaboration of state agencies has begun
- Encompasses all community
- Improve mental well-being
- Local employment
- Economic benefit - job generation and visitors
- Links into heritage trade and tourism with Portumna Workhouse & Clonmacnoise

Weaknesses

- Youth need a voice at the table
- Potential lack of capacity
- Listed buildings - it could be difficult to attract private investment
- Sewage facilities
- Sustainability
- Not focused enough - need to prioritise features?
- No promoter yet
- Lack of housing / accommodation space

Opportunities

- Two county boundary
- Creation of employment
- Availability of funds
- Possibility of commitment from stakeholders after workshop
- To open the site for international input
- Immediate opportunity: Ambulance service
- County council levies - use this to make HSE utilise / offload lands
- Focal point to sell the town
- Creation of employment
- Sell valuable assets within the site
- Family research centre - national archives
- Swifts - birds
- Chapel for weddings, space for conferences / events
- Local pool of knowledge, residents, workers
- Multimedia / offshoot business - media / production / film
- Tap into universities to carry out research
- Overseas colleges coming to the museums as interns

Threats

- Time - sense of urgency to commit to an idea
- Ourselves
- Bureaucracy and red tape
- Cost & Capacity to source funding
- Roadmap that needs to be stuck to
- Integration and ownership
- Engagement of local authority
- Planning
- Cost of dealing with structure
- Timing for delivery
- Private ownership
- Commercial viability
- Support from community
- HSE - ownership of site

d. Recommendations Moving Forwards

Interestingly, the groups were overall in consensus as to the next steps to move the vision for St. Brigid's forward. Below is a summary of their key insights and suggestions.

What's needed

HSE agreement to sell

Both local authorities

Sponsors, partners, advocates: via consultation with experts and with additional local stakeholders and government department

Endorsements / involvements / affiliation with:

- Creative Ireland
- Culture Ireland
- The Arts Council
- Fáilte Ireland
- Discover Ireland
- Department of Arts
- OPW
- European Union and UNESCO
- HSE
- Solas
- Galways Leader
- GRETB
- Academic (i.e. 3rd Level Athlone & Galway)
- Skillnet
- QQI
- WDC
- Enterprise Ireland

Discussions with Potential Funders

Funding from

- Private Investors, philanthropists, Enterprise Ireland
- County Councils, government departments, MEPs, OPW
- European Funding - European Union, UNESCO
- Creative Ireland, Fáilte Ireland, Culture Ireland

More inside knowledge on the site and size

Liaison with HSE and St Brigid's manager

Clear concise plan - definitive timeline as to next steps and milestones

Team to deliver project

Advice from Dept. of Heritage/ National Monument Service Parks and Wildlife

What we already have to progress this

Commitment of relevant people / players in the market

Already potential working group in place - BACD, Town Team, Support from Minister Denis Naughten and Connect the Dots

Archive of information and expert knowledge

Agreed vision and collective thinking

Appetite and ambition - good will of the town (community has started this project) and interest from diverse parties

People resources - people in room capable of reports, grant applications

Proven statistics and government reports

Networks

Potential funds available (national and local - perhaps international too)

National Planning Framework

Connected infrastructure of town

The authenticity of the idea with its relation to the history of the town - turn it into the forwarding of Mental Health

Absolute potential to turn this into an incredible endeavour

Variety of valuable artefacts and resources in the buildings still such as archives such as:

- Limestone
- Laundry machines
- Kitchenware
- X-ray machines
- Mirror archives in house
- Other Artefacts, etc.

Recommended Next Steps

The next steps suggested from the different groups have been analysed and collated to produce the below recommended process. In this section, across all the groups, there was an emphasis on timing and the necessity to move fast. Feasibility Study was the most important next step identified. The groups, however, seemed unclear on when the step of 'Securing site' should happen; some advocated for it to be the first step, while others advocated for it to be after the feasibility study.

1. Form Team - potentially BACD or explore new legal entity for this committee / action group - and identify main promoter / project lead
2. Committee could / should also include historical/heritage/culture advisors, financial advisors, planners, etc.
3. Integrity report on site
4. Community engagement (following from engagement done so far) to further shape idea
5. Ensure fit with regional plan and additional frameworks / funding sources; meetings with local authorities to get on board & discussions with potential funding sources such as philanthropists, EU funding, Enterprise Ireland, County Councils, Departmental Capital Funding and more
6. Consultation with HSE and representation re securing of site
7. Feasibility Study; including grand plan for idea plus economic plan for sustainability (business plan) - potentially completed by consultant via local state agencies, WDC, local enterprises
8. Source experts: science, technology, enterprise, history, parks
9. Exploratory missions to cities - European Capitals, Paris Science Museum, Manchester Part Industrial part science, Chicago Science & Industry as well as local such as Portumna Workhouse
10. Develop Master Plan
11. Site needs to be transferred to Local Authority?
12. Narrow idea into phases and develop critical path towards implementation with defined milestones
13. **Go!**

Appendix

1. **Attendee List**
2. **Table Notes: Raw Data from Worksheets**

1. Attendee List

Group / Organisation
Construction Federation
GRETB
IFA
Dept. of Culture - Built Heritage Division
Marketing
Arts Division of CHG
Ballinasloe Country Markets
Ballinasloe Area Community Development
Easy Fix
Enterprise Ireland West
Town Team
Ada English Heritage Group
Local Businesses
Galway County Council
Western Development Commission
Druids Golf
National Ambulance Service
Beauchamps
Leader
Head of Arts & Culture, RTE
Film Board
Ard Scoil Mhuire
Member of Group 8 Visual Art Group
Auctioneer
DEASP
IDA

2. Table Notes Raw Data from Worksheets

Table 1

1. Blue Sky Thinking

- Museum
- Training Centre
- Start Up Potential

Our Visions for St Brigid's
A Centre of Wellbeing & Corporate Centre with training opportunities and wellness programmes.

2. Brainstorming an Idea

Our concept

Sustainability of the site. The main concept is to preserve Mental Health as part of the site development of the site, through wellbeing enhancement of the area. Mental Health 21st Century. Activity Tourism/Multipurpose Centre.

What are the main components?

- Mix of activities to all
- Pharma Companies coming in
- Incubation
- Archaeologist, Architect and Wildlife Scientist
- Community Ownership
- Conference Centre
- Who are the users?
- Youth/Aged
- Recreational
- Nationally – Research Centres, Conference Centres
- Economic Site

What value does the idea provide?

- 150-200 Jobs Locally
- Unique focused setting to improve wellbeing
- Site of Strategic importance

3. Feedback to the room

Vision

- Education facility
- Athlone IT to be given University status faculty for site
- National training centre – heavy duty machinery
- National Ambulance Training College

Feedback

- Film Studio & Set – visitor centre incorporated offsite. Tell the story of History & productions taking place. Base for Film locations throughout the country.
- Take the wall down and create hub for Arts & Crafts
- Museum – two places old & new church
- Accommodation similar to former St Mary's Site in Castlebar
- Restore at least 10 bed in former Admission area
- Pitch could be upgraded as there is an old centre trail there
- Community Engagement
  - – Maybe needs mixed use?
  - – National showcase for excellence in history and re-use
  - – Needs a multi-disciplinary team
  - – Line-up site, lots of people
  - – Some buildings changed, some preserved
  - – Maybe architecture competition internationally
  - – State/public areas and businesses
  - – Economic benefit – visitors, business
  - – Places to (1) Visit: locals & tourists (2) do business, (3) teach & Learn (4) Film sets
- A Multi-use, multi-sector vibrant 51-acre site, that is the "New Heart of the Town" and growth engine of Ballinasloe, that reflects and owns Ballinasloe Heritage and owns Ballinasloe's future
- National Site
  - – Youth – Social forums, innovation
  - – Cherishes ethnicity – Ballinasloe Fair Celebrates
  - – Owns and names our 'National Mental Health past'
- Training Centre, National Site, Museum
- Tourism, economic growth, sports health, business generation, youth development, employment generation
- How can money be generated to sustain the venture?

- Multiple Networks working blending talent, finance towards a 10-year ambition
- Where are you generating money from to make it viable & sustainable?
- Table 1's idea could be aligned with the idea of table 4 as a centre of excellence for training in a lot of trades etc
- EU Centre for Health & Wellbeing to link up with IT and other centres
- Brendan Flynn, Cliften Arts Festival
- Unique Anchor Tenant – must have visitor/museum
- Hospital – Education of Ambulance – NUI Galway training medics
- Explore possibility of developing site as Museum akin to Kilmainham. Develop site to incorporate:
  - – Cafes
  - – Educational Centres – Mental, IT Uni-health
  - – Outreach Centres – Youth Culture
  - – Exhibition Spaces
  - – Community Centre

The revised idea!

1. **Interactive Museum**
2. **Wellness village**
3. **Centre for Traditional Building Skills**
4. **A key strand that is commercial**
5. **Incubation centre for health**
6. **Social Form Concept**

4. Digging Deeper (SWOT Analysis)

Strengths

- Education facility
- Athlone IT to be given University status faculty for site
- National training centre – heavy duty machinery
- National Ambulance Training College

Weaknesses

- Youth – needs a voice at the table
- Lack of capacity
- Listing – could be difficult to attract private investment
- Sustainability
- Sewage facilities
- Challenge to communicate the plan in place from today

Opportunities

- Two county boundary
- Creation of employment
- Extent of opportunities
- Availability of funds
- Possible of commitment after today
- To open the site for international input

Threats

- Ourselves – we could be the blocker
- Capacity to source funding
- Roadmap that needs to be stuck to
- Needs to be integrated
- Engagement of local authority
- Ownership
- Planning is a threat
- Cost of dealing with structure

5. Ideas to Action

What do we already have to progress this?

- Commitment of relevant people/players in the market
- Appetite and ambition
- Networks
- Funds available
- Timing
- National Planning Framework

What's Needed?

- Both local authorities
- Clear concise plan
- Team to deliver project – international aspect
- Advice from the Dept. of Heritage/National Monument Service Parks and Wildlife
- Circa to arrange some to help with the above

What needs to be done?	Team Together
Who should do it?	BACD
When?	ASAP with various elements from each community

What needs to be done?	Community Engagement
Who should do it?	Local group
When?	ASAP

What needs to be done?	Needs to fit overall regional plan
Who should do it?	Local
When?	ASAP

What needs to be done?	Feasibility Study – 21st Century Mental Study, Grand plan for idea, Economic Plan for sustainability
Who should do it?	Local State Agencies – Leader – Local Enterprises – WDC
When?	6 – 9 months

What needs to be done?	Funnel the ideas
Who should do it?	Fund BACD implement this into a plan
What needs to be done?	Drive it on – Critical path with defined milestones

Table 2

1. Blue Sky Thinking

- Impact – all employment
  - – Good place to live for Elderly and Specific needs
  - – Retirement village – not nursing home
  - – Assisted living – Special needs, Acquired Brain Injury
  - – Museum – Tourism – excellent location centre of Ireland
- Impact – Local
  - – Historical Record
- Impact – Appearance/Perception of the town
  - – Former employees have interest (harness this)
- Regional/National
  - – Central Location for National HQ
  - – National Historical?
  - – National Ambulance Service
- Who to benefit?
  - – Local Tourism – Greenways
  - – Local Businesses
  - – Provide Services
- Arts Retreat – will bring artists/visitors to the town
  - – Not private development only
  - – Cultural & Arts Centre – bring cultural activity out of Dublin
  - – Centre of Arts Excellence for West of Ireland
  - – Gallery Space
- Recreational/Sports/Youth Activities/Museum/Arts & Culture/Enterprise
- Economic priorities

  Engage the correct stakeholders to invest in project
    - – Long term plan containing the following
    - – Business plan
    - – Inclusion Strategy of utilizers
    - – Marketing
    - – Financial Projection
- Priorities
  - – Feasibility study to identify a sustainable plan for site
  - – Community space within site
  - – Youth space
  - – For viability it has to have an economic side to it. This could be done through a workspace hub

Our Visions for St Brigid's

- Employment
- Cultural/Historical
- Rejuvenation
- Recreation Facilities

2. Brainstorming an Idea

Our concept

Multifunctional Complex split into four different zones

1. Commercial
2. Creative Hub – Arts – Museum
3. Residential (Elderly Care)
4. Recreational (parks/playgrounds)

What are the main components?

- Commercial
  - – R&D Companies
  - – Biomedical
  - – Economic viability of site, not retail
- Museum, Gallery/Exhibition, Artists Retreat
- Managed Residential/assisted living
- Recreation
  - – Indoor/outdoor
  - – Non mainstream sports
  - – multifunction

Who are the users?

- Elderly – residential
- Amenities for the young
- Activities 15-30 yr. olds
- Creative space – artists in residence
- Cycling/walking facilities
- Museum – diverse activities
- Community Centre

Raw Data from Post-Its: similar to above but with more detail

Long Term Vision for St Brigid's -One Large Area broken in zones

Zone 1

Communicable Building placed centrally in the site, surround by green area

Zone 2

Commercial Area

Creative Hub, Historical Centre

Tourist office

Education & Training Area

Food & Beverage Business

Users: General Public, Co Working people/Commuters, Community, Tourists etc

Zone 3

Residential Area for Elderly

Man Made Mini Recreation Park

1. General area for recreation – park, playground, obstacle courses, walking areas.
2. Link to Historical, Museum, Culture/arts
3. Coffee Shop/restaurant within facility

New Building at rear of site – Museum

- O'Shea Hall developed for Community Groups
- Assisted living accommodation
- Ambulance Training Centre for West
- Green Space – family amenities

- 20 Year Plan – Mixed Campus
- Enterprise – Genesis, high end R&D
- Residential – the Naas model – Multinationals
- Medical – Primary Care Centre – other
- Arts – Music School
- Sports – Centre for minority sports
- Education – virtual college

3. Feedback to the room

- Love the Music School the Midlands (Athlone/Roscommon) needs this Centre
- Maura Canning – Different zones are a great idea: 4-5 zones would be brilliant
- Use some of the existing buildings for small scale manufacturing as there are no such facilities in the Region
- Residential Zone: does not reflect society (Elderly People & People with disabilities) Residential zone need to reflect society – all demographics
- What is the core focus? Where do you state the development?

4. Digging Deeper (SWOT Analysis)

Strengths

- Community has started the project
- Infrastructure is there
- Collaboration of State Agencies has begun
- Filling gaps required in the area
- Encompasses all aspects of the community, all demographics covered for

Weaknesses

- Not focused enough. What is priority?
- HSE?
- Need for Masterplan/Feasibility Study for funding
- No recognised promoter to drive this project. Who are the stakeholders?
- Cost prohibited due to listed buildings

Opportunities

- Immediate opportunity – Ambulance Service
- County Council Levies – (force HSE to utilise/offload lands)
- Focal point to sell the town
- Creation of employment – make town more

Threats

- Timing for delivery
- Availability of funding
- Private Ownership
- Commercial viability
- Sustainability
- Support from community

5. Ideas to Action

What do we already have to progress this?

- Already a working group in place – BAC D, Town Team – Support from Minister and Connect the Dots
- Have the site – facilities with campus
- Town has infrastructure – roads, broadband, water etc
- Appetite

What's Needed?

1. **Who needs to be involved?**
    a. Identify the potential shareholders
    b. Establish Project Promoter
    c. Need Feasibility study/main masterplan
2. **Who else should we consult?**
    a. Local Stakeholder - LEO, Galway Co Co, Local Government.
    b. Government departments
    c. Private Investors
    d. MEPS – funding sources
3. **What are the potential financial sources?**
    a. European Funding
    b. Philanthropists
    c. Departmental Capital Funding
    d. County Council/Enterprise Ireland

Potential steps

4. Identify main promoter / project lead
5. Feasibility Study required, terms of reference to be agreed, masterplan to be done
6. Site needs to be transferred to the Local Authority (Galway County Council)
7. Identify stages

1. Blue Sky Thinking

- Interactive Museum & Heritage Park
- Nurses Home
- Ambulance College
- Supervised Independent living for older people
- Supported living for those with Mental Illness, Acquired Brain Injury and the Elderly, Assisted Living for people with Dementia all the while preserving the site as a History Site
- Hobby Farm
- Wedding Centre – small chapel
- Concerts in front of the panoptic building or in 1970's church
- Escape Rooms
- Ireland was the 1st Country in the Western World to house an official district lunatic asylum system with 22 lunatic asylums. It is only a matter of time that one will be rejuvenated and turned into a **Heritage Site**. Turn the panoptic into an interactive tour/museum/exhibition with park/grounds for locals.

2. Brainstorming an Idea

Our concept

Interactive Museum (panoptic) and Heritage/Nature Mindfulness Park with sensory gardens and walking trails. Put Ballinasloe on the map. Culture and History attracts massive tourism. Tourism Funding.

What are the main components?

- Ready market in school tours/bus tours
- Academia History
- Interactive pay-in Museum (panoptic) with Restaurant
- Sensory Garden, Outside Gym, Walking Trails – promoting mindfulness, Alzheimer's Walking Trails, Greenway

Who are the users?

- All ages – local/school tours and tours from afar
- Local community for paths
- Academics
- Service Users – sensory gardens
- Elderly have their own plots for garden (Roof variety)

What value does the idea provide?

- **Local** – Employment, Upkeep, Community Building, Wellbeing, opening this side of the town – create a pathway into the town
- **National** – History Site, brings people to the town, Academia (psychiatric history), School Tours & Curriculum, Assisted Living → self-sustainability.
- Epic → Research Facility → eventual link to services & learning of mental health.

3. Feedback to the room

Our Interactive Museum and Heritage/Mindfulness Park is simply a root. It would develop to a learning/training centre promoting mental health and facilitating those needs.

The revised idea!

Four Spaces

1. Training/learning services → Paramedics/Ambulances, Pieta House
2. Arts/Music → St Brigid's Hall
3. Heritage & History (panoptic) → interactive museum & park
4. Assisted Living Section → self-accommodated village

4. Digging Deeper (SWOT Analysis)

Strengths

- Taking advantage of a unique, national identity that could put Ballinasloe on the map
- Preservation of our heritage and cultural history/identity
- Improve mental wellbeing (recreational)
- Community involvement in sustainability
- Exhibiting an educating people on mental health

- Keeps St Brigid’s for Ballinasloe (e.g. developers)
- Local Employment (e.g. rejuvenation/sustaining)
- Economic Benefit (visitors coming to the town)
- Links into heritage trade and tourism with Portumna Workhouse & Clonmacnoise
- Facility – facilitates please > designated land zone helicopter

Weaknesses

This is an expensive endeavour but no doubt of surmountable benefit – puts Ballinasloe on the map and creates a pathway

- Economic Benefit to Ballinasloe – how?
  - – Spinoff > bringing people into the town nationally & internationally
  - – Local employment
  - – Self-sustainability
- West of Ireland > away from Dublin – Why?
  - – New National Framework Plan – Athlone (City)
- What’s the evidence of benefit?
  - – e.g. Epic Centre/Kilmainham/Grangegorman/Moate Heritage Park
- This is an amenity – This is a benefit for all – Self-preservation, Local Business (Restaurant), Community Outreach

Opportunities

- Costs – Limestone/Laundry Machines/Kitchen Machines – Sold
- Family Research Centre – National Archives Digitalised – preservation of sources
- Film Set – by retaining the original set/architecture
- Swifts – birds
- This is a root – it could expand to a broader national centre for mental health wellbeing
- Conference/Lectures/Offices/Services – Large Campus
- Chapel for Weddings

Threats

- HSE
- Preserve the Birds
- Private acquisition
- Insurance – public liability
- Cost – funding
- Old fashioned ideas – counteract with education
- Another department could come in and turn it into a juvenile centre
- This is a golden opportunity and we need to do something now because the later we leave it, the costlier it will be as already costly.

5. Ideas to Action

What do we already have to progress this?

- The Building (plan to gain access)
- Representative for our voice at Dáil Eireann and Minister with a passion to better our town
- The history – the name – let’s use that PR and turn it into the forwarding of Mental Health
- The good will of the town – variety of interest from different parties her today
- Absolute potential to turn this into an incredible endeavour
- Philanthropists/Entrepreneurs, interest and passion of a variety of agencies
- Potential funding
- Limestone/laundry machines worth thousands/ Kitchenware/ artefacts/ X-ray machines etc/ Mirror/ archives in house

What's Needed?

- Departments that can provide funding e.g. Enterprise Centre
- Need Expertise – Heritage, Culture, Historical Advisors, Financial Advisors
- Definitive timelines – what happens next?
- HSE representative, St Brigid’s Manager, HSE Liaison
- Experts to draw up a business plan and further consultations and timelines

Potential steps

- First Committee
    - – Historical Advisors
    - – Financial Advisors
    - – Business People
    - – PR – Funding’s/ planners/ architects
- Need to talk/research with other projects such as Portumna Workhouse to have strong and watertight proposal
- Consultation with HSE and representatives
- Expertise to draw up a business plan and efficient/realistic timeline
- Funding

1. Blue Sky Thinking

- A one size fits all approach didn’t seem right and therefore could the site have multiple uses?
- Centre for Training and Education – Trades/Digital Hub/links with IT’s.
- Cultural spaces
- Activity, sports, adventure centre
- Third level education, apprenticeships
- Job growth – use for groups such as Ambulance Service
- Museum
- Theme Park
- Keep some buildings for workshops – teach and train young people in practical works – stone-leather-glass etc. (college)
- Develop River area for Fishing to attract back overseas anglers
- Centre of Excellence for training and education
- Digital Hub
- Cultural space – exhibition – artists- studios
- Animation & Gaming collective
- Government agencies/councils
- Hotel
- Base for new industries
- Mixed use
- 51 acres to be sold to reuse money within Health System to help reinvest in St Brigid’s
- Manmade lake again to attract anglers from all over
- Employment opportunities with third level Resident component and develop Agency interaction
- Cultural/Heritage attraction with associated amenity space

2. Brainstorming an Idea

Our concept

Centre of Excellence for Training & Education with a special focus on trades (including medical) and arts, cultural, Design and Construction.

What are the main components?

- Educational Facilities, Conference Centre
- SME Hubs & Artists Studies
- Ancillary supports (catering, accommodation, recreational zone)

Who are the users?

- Students
- Educators
- Local businesses
- 3rd Level

What value does the idea provide?

- Nationally, Regionally - fills a gap within current system
- Economic Impact locally (accommodation, services, more jobs, social, transport)
- Social

3. Feedback to the room

The revised idea!

- Centre of Excellence – these exist
- Focus: National Centre for Apprenticeship (hugely reliable)
- Great idea – need to clear us as to how it could finance itself
- 3rd level for Apprenticeships – multi agency – aligned to Government Strategy
- No duplication – addressing deficits in various areas
- Bring all to a central location
- Funding model – similar to existing, this is one element of the campus, one piece could subside, central but only one part – anchor for other developments

Reflections from other tables:

- Interactive Museum
- Mindfulness Centre
- R&D Biotech
- Financial Services
- Creative Activities – History of St Brigid's & Mental Health, Horse History, School of Music
- Sports Hub excluding existing recreational groups i.e. Rugby, GAA etc.
- Great idea need to clear up how it would finance itself!

4. Digging Deeper (SWOT Analysis)

1st Step in bringing all the other suggestions together.
This can progress with all other ideas

Strengths

Supported by Published Statistics – e.g. only 24 live apprenticeships in 2016 and rising slowly, only rising by 10 (action plan to expand apprenticeship and traineeship in 2020 – it aims to get 19,000 new enrolments before 2020).

The National Skill Strategy 2025 is part of the Programme for Government so could get funding through same. Huge European funding coming down the line delivered piecemeal at the moment this would bring it together as a centre of excellence, local knowledge willing to support it, local funding from multiple.

Weaknesses

- If HSE doesn't work with those involved
- HSE digging it heels
- Drawing down on grants

Opportunities

- All other programmes mentioned today could run in conjunction with this project.
- Countrywide this would benefit both jobseekers and employers.
- To turn negatives into positives as different groupings
- Would be working together for the betterment of the area
- There will always be a requirement for apprenticeships
- Opportunity to expand out to up-training centres

Threats

- Network there at the moment which could see this as a treat.

5. Ideas to Action

What do we already have to progress this?

- Proven Statistics and Government Reports
- People Resources (loads of people in the room capable of doing reports, submitting grant applications)
- Groups already in place if they were brought on board
- Local business for funding!!
- Machines etc/ Mirror/ archives in house

What's Needed?

- Feasibility study, business plan
- Others that need to be involved are: HSE, Solas, Galway Leader, GRETB, 3rd Level Athlone & Galway, Skillnets, QQI, WDC, Enterprise Ireland
- Financial Resources: Grants, Donations, Loans

Potential steps

- **What needs to be done?** → Feasibility Study
- **Who should do it?** → Consultant
- **When?** → Starting point without feasibility study cannot continue.

Table 5

1. Blue Sky Thinking

- Historical journey / Images/videos etc. – possible in church on site
- A beautiful worldwide recognised testimony to the thousands of stories here.
- Linking past to the future i.e. learn from the past to move to the future (wellness)
- Architect design "build it and they will come" e.g. Smithsonion in Washington DC or the Holocaust Memorial Berlin
- Building which reflects the old and the new the future and the positives
- A-grade office space
- attract FDI
- Fast landing office space – innovation hub
- Must attach people who will spend money in the town
- Tourism
- Agency interaction
- Cultural/Heritage attraction with associated amenity space

2. Brainstorming an Idea

Our concept

Immersive, Multimedia, experiential, heritage site, bring together our past present and future. Combining Academic Wellness and office space.

What are the main components?

- Historical site – let's take the past and develop into the future in terms of history, culture and wellness.
- Reflect on where we have been – huge storytelling capabilities.

Who are the users?

- Tourists, families and residents.

What value does the idea provide?

Locally, Regionally, Nationally

- Iconic, immersive, museum, develop a wellness village:
- Rejuvenate the walled garden, rejuvenate the organic farm and convert the lovely old buildings into cafes and restaurants.
- Humanist Weddings- tap into this market convert the old church, possible Other Voices type venue.

3. Feedback to the room

Our Interactive Museum and Heritage/Mindfulness Park is simply a root. It would develop to a learning/training centre promoting mental health and facilitating those needs.

The revised idea!

1. Develop historical aspect of site into a global heritage global interactive museum.
2. Identify site as a global educational/conference centre which would attract international experts in the mental health and psychology fields.
3. Develop an international academic hub/online on mental health wellness.
4. Create a wellness village – rejuvenate walled garden, organic farm etc.
5. Centre of excellence for training and education.
6. Office space within the mental health and wellness sector.

4. Digging Deeper (SWOT Analysis)

Strengths

- Ireland pioneer in Mental Health which gives a credibility and legitimate reason to tell the stories,
- Immense history
- Legacy

- Architecture
- Geographical location
- Sear Size of site
- Centre of excellence
- Rejuvenation of walled gardens and far

Weaknesses

- Lack of knowledge for progress of project
- Potential of cost of development
- Access to funding
- Are the ideas too big for the town?
- Lack of housing or accommodation space.
- Amenities/facilities in town
- Potential for “negative/sad image”

Opportunities

- Local pool of knowledge/residents/workers
- Convert the patients records and history involve the diaspora
- Tap into university third level institutions to carry out research
- Partnership/Links with education
- Multi-media/offshoot business - Media/ production/ podcasts (from the patient history/ archives)

Threats

- Time is a huge threat
- Definite sense of urgency to commit to idea
- Acquire funding – a fear that other pitches could get chosen before our own
- Time – in terms of the building itself, as long as its left idle it continues to into disrepair.
- Potential to loss or damage to the archives – historians
- Bureaucracy and red tape
- Fear of the unknown
- Potential objectors

5. Ideas to Action

What do we already have to progress this?

What Resources do we have?

- BACD and Town Team Agreed vision and collective thinking
- Potential access to national funding
- Archive of information and expert knowledge ready to go
- The site
- Ministerial support

What's Needed?

- HSE agreement to sell
- Sponsors, partners and advocates
- Endorsements - Creative Ireland, culture Ireland, the arts council, Fáilte Ireland, discover Ireland, department of arts, OPW, European union and UNESCO
- Academic affiliation
- Consultation with experts
- Establish a volunteer committee to pitch the idea
- More inside knowledge of the site and the size

Potential steps

1. Secure site
2. Establish a committee to deliver a pitch (plus the minister) explore the legal entity for development of committee
3. Integrity report on site.
4. Master/visual plan
5. NOW!

Table 6

1. Blue Sky Thinking

- Sports & Recreational Centre
- Small Enterprises and Start Up Incubator
- Big Enterprises (Apple)
- Pieta House
- Public Spaces & Walk Ways (Commemorative)

- All Weather Sports Pitch
- Museum (Horse)
- Mental Health Museum
- Walkways
- Cultural Space (which involves the community)
- Satellite Campus
- Residential for 3rd Level (International Students)
- Assisted Living for Elderly People (Communal Living)
- Location for decentralised Government Department
- New Creative Government Agency
- A place for people to retire (not a nursing home)
- Campus for FDI Company (i.e. Silicon Valley)
- National Science Museum (e.g. Belfast)
- R&D Campus
- Creative Arts Centre – Education, Production, Performance, Research
- Distillery & Brewing Centre

2. Brainstorming an Idea

Our concept

Multi-use area

- Walkways
- Industry/Incubator
- Museum (Heritage/Science)

What are the main components?

MUSEUM – with different wings

- Heritage – Horse Fair - History of Mental Health Services in St. Brigid's (Museum of the Science of Psychiatry)
- Ireland's first Interactive Science Museum – An experience, interactive experience
- Residential Science Camps
- Cafes, Restaurants
- Conferences – Speakers, talks
- River – showcase for sustainability

Who are the users?

- Children/Students – primary and post primary schools
- Elderly people
- Teenagers
- Middle aged parents
- Young Creative

What value does the idea provide?

- Job opportunities for the town
- Attracts people from all around the country
- Tourist attraction
- Area for locals to socialise, entertainment

3. Feedback to the room

Ireland's First Interactive Science & Adventure Park (Science & History) including Museum of Psychiatry.

The revised idea!

1. Commemorative Walk – Historical stops…5k walk?? Run Track and Cycle Track
2. Museum Wings
   - Science Interactive to draw crowds, like ones in major cities (WS)
   - Major Psychiatric History of Ireland, preserve rooms, history
   - Horse Museum, 300-year-old Horse Fair
3. Big Enterprise – employer
4. Smaller Incubation hub for small businesses

4. Digging Deeper (SWOT Analysis)

Plenty of room for expansion and development
Interactive & Adventure Centre

Strengths

- Job Opportunities
- Economic Growth in the town
- Atmospheric Buildings
- Good Geographical Location
- Picturesque ground
- Dynamic Town Team

- Increasing reputation in Ire of the importance of Science & Technology
- Focus on Government Developing STEM

Weaknesses

- Lack of Skills required
- Require outside experts
- Who will we attract? – especially if the museum was focused on heritage only
- Availability of €€€€€

Opportunities

- Jobs
- Overseas Colleges coming to the Museums as interns
- Create unique habitats
- Science Walk routes
- To increase the quality and understanding of STEM
- Huge learning potential
- Opportunity to partner with 3rd level colleges and industries/businesses that need STEM and Research Centres Research wing that partners with a 3rd level college
- Residential
- Summer Camps
- Access NPF €€€
- Test concept via a Pop Up Facility
- Pilot facility
- Incubator/start-up space for research and for enterprise in the science and technology areas

Threats

- Funding
- Lack of commitments and ownership from Local community and Government
- To get an agreement on a way forward
- Concept needs to be fully realised before putting forward

5. Ideas to Action

What do we already have to progress this?

- Site
- Iconic Buildings
- Grounds
- River

- Location
- Government commitment to developing STEM
- GMIT and AIT nearby
- Big Community Support (buy in) locally
- Desire for change
- Science, ICT, capability is huge within a 50/40-mile radius
- Political energy to develop area
- Motorway
- Rail links
- Bus Route

What's Needed?

- Investor – Funds
- State Buy In
- Team – Drive to take it on
- Vision
- HSE buy in
- Local buy in
- Leadership/Ambassador
- Strong Advisory Board Positivity – cooperation
- Seed funding to pilot a project
- Feasibility Study
- Agreement

Potential steps

- Draft a Blueprint/Plan
- Source the experts: Science, Technology, Enterprise, History, Parks, Entertainment centres etc.
- Visiting/Fact Finding mission to cities.
  Delegation to tour them, European Capitals, Paris Science Museum, Manchester Part Industrial part science, Chicago Science & Industry
- Preliminary meetings with the Local Authority/Agencies
  – those who have to be on board
- Identify people who are interested to drive Film Location

Putting People 1st

Denis Naughten TD

JOB CREATION BEC 1999-2020

	List of current tenants	Description	Permanent	Part-time	Total	
1	Action Physio	Pysiotherapy	2	1	3	
2	Araya Business Services	Consultancy	2		2	
3	Arbor Forest Management Ltd	Forest Management	4	1	5	
4	BACD LTD	Development Company	1	1	2	
5	BALLINASLOE TRAINING FOR EMPLOYMENT (FAS)	CE Scheme	2	34	36	
6	Carmel O Riordan	Councelling Services		1	1	
7	Child & Parent Home Programe	Outreach Programme	4	2	6	
8	Conzoe ecommerce	E Commerce	2	1	3	
9	DAVE FLYNN	H&S Consultancy	1	0	1	
10	EG Quest	E-Commerce	4	2	6	
11	Green Brick Ltd	Services Maintanence	7	15	22	
12	ICS	CONSULTANCY	1	1	2	
13	International Festival & Events Association Europe	EVENTS COORDINATOR	4	3	7	
14	JOHN POWER	Business Consultancy	1	0	1	
15	Joseph Naughten Auctioneers	Auctioneers	2	3	5	
16	Majella Comer	Holistic Therapy	1	0	1	
17	Marie Lyons	Councelling Services	1		1	
18	MATT CAREY & ASSOCIATES	Financial Advisor	1	1	2	
19	NATIONAL AMBULANCE TRAINING SERVICES	Training College	5	24	29	
20	SEAMUS DUFFY NEW IRELAND INSURANCE	Insurance Broker	1	0	1	
21	Shane Caulfield	Laywer	1		1	
22	SPREADSHEET INTERACTION LTD	TRAINING &CONSULTANCY	1	0	1	
23	ST TERESA'S SPECIAL SCHOOL	School	18	8	26	
24	TAYLOR CONDITION MONITORING LTD	Industrial Maintenance Services	3	1	4	
25	TINY TOTS	Creche/Montorssi and Preschool	6	2	8	
26	Valerie Dolan & Associates	Councelling Services	0	1	1	
27	Woodberry Project Management	Consultancy	1	0	1	
28	Etqas	Training		2	2	
29	Liz Multy	Training		1	1	
	Total		**76**	**105**	**181**	

	List of Previous Tenants	Description	Permanent	Part-time	Total	current status
1	2PM Technologies	IT Communications	2	2	4	No longer trading
2	Ace Surveillance		1	4	5	No longer trading
3	Acrylic Display Systems	Signs	1	0	1	No longer trading
4	Arenco Ltd	Medical Support		2	2	No longer trading
5	BALLINASLOE CHILDRENS CLINIC	Paediatrician Clinic	1	0	1	1
6	BALLINASLOE NUTRITON CLUB	Nutrition Club	0	2	2	2
7	BAWNMORE ENTERPRISES	EXHIBIHITION CONSULTANCY	2	6	8	8
8	Borsatec		1	0	1	No longer trading
9	Brightveiw Accouting	Accountancy	1	1	2	2
10	Brooks E Solutions	Training	1		1	no longer trading
11	CAREER FIT	Career Consultancy	1	0	1	1
12	Christy Mooney	Business Coach	1	0	1	No longer trading
13	CREA BIOTECH LTD	Biotech Company	2	0	2	2
14	Creagh Call Centre	Call Centre	2	20	22	No longer trading
15	ELECTRICAL MECHANICAL CONTROLS (EMC)	ELECTRICAL MECHANICAL CONTROLS	5	3	8	8
16	ENABLE IRELAND	DISABILITY SERVICES	1	1	2	2
17	ESIP Ltd	Online Betting	5		5	No longer trading
18	GALROS Ltd	Software Consultancy	1	1	2	2
19	Galway Rural Development	Rural Development	20	0	20	20
20	GLAN AGUA Ltd	Water & Civil Engineers	128	0	128	128
21	Grand Designs	Architects	1	1	2	2
22	Grizzly Bear Gamin Youtuber	youtuber	0	1	1	1
23	Horsecare Ireland	Lobby Group	0	1	1	1
24	Hughes Transport	Transport	1	5	6	No longer trading
25	ICE Group	Training	2	5	7	No longer trading
26	ICS LTD	INVESTIGATIVE CONSULTANCY	4	4	8	8
27	IWA	DISABILITY SERVICES	1	1	2	2
28	JOHN MULVIHILL (My wardrobe.ie)	Videographer/Online clothing	0	1	1	1
29	KLM Electrical	Electrical Contractors	1	4	5	No longer trading
30	LIAM BOYLE CONSULTANTS	Software Consultancy	1	0	1	1
31	Lice Control Clinic			1	1	1
32	LILY KELLY	Art Studio		1	1	1
33	Lilyput Bottlers		1		1	No longer trading
34	Lucas & Sons Media	Social Media	1	1	2	2
35	Mailbrand		1		1	No longer trading
36	MILAN JAY	MUSICIANS	0	3	3	3
37	MOTA ENGIL IRELAND LTD (MEIC)	Construction	39	0	39	39
38	NICECUBE DESIGN	WEBSITE DESIGN	1	0	1	1
39	One2One Verification	Data Processing	2	2	4	No longer trading
40	POLISH SCHOOL	ENGLISH LANGUAGE SCHOOL	1	2	3	3
41	Quinn Security	Security Services	1	0	1	1
42	RASCAL RESOURSES	EDUCATIONAL TOYS	2	1	3	No Longer Trading
43	ROB MURRAY	IT Consultancy	1	0	1	1
44	Saascom Ltd	Software Development	1	0	1	1
45	Sean Brennan & Associates	Business Consultant	1	0	1	1
46	Siobhain Byrne	Mediation	1		1	1
47	Sunshine Marketing	Web design	1	0	1	1
48	Talkxtra & Deisecom	Telecommunications	3	0	3	3
49	TURAS CYCLES	BIKE DESIGN/RETAIL	3	2	5	5
50	UNA SPAIN	Candle Manufacturer	0	1	1	1
	Total Previous Tenants		**247**	**79**	**326**	**257**
					total jobs created	existing jobs

	Total Existing & Previous Tenants Job Creation				**507**	

TOWN CENTRE ECONOMIC BENCHMARKING

BALLINASLOE REPORT

Measuring the performance of town centres

Published April 2015

By Chris Wade and Chris Sewart

The People and Places Partnership Ltd

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Purpose

The purpose of Town Centre Economic Benchmarking is to collect standardised key performance indicators (KPIs) to help local organisations and businesses to better understand the function, trends and issues facing a town and its potential relative to similar towns elsewhere.

The approach is 'tried and tested' as it has been operating across over 200 towns in England and Wales for the last five years. This gives a wealth of experience and information to draw upon. Ballinasloe is the first Irish town to be Benchmarked in this way and has an important role in both piloting and promoting the transferability of the approach.

Ballinasloe Town Function

The Benchmarking key performance indicators (KPIs) for Ballinasloe help understand the town's current function and whether going forward the priority should be to strengthen this role or seek opportunities to diversify. What emerges are tensions between its seemingly historic function in providing comparison retail for a wider area, its day-to-day, local customer base and emerging competition from more readily accessible neighbouring and larger centres as well as the internet. Although in contrast a majority of shoppers are in town for convenience shopping, this role is partly liable to out-of-town competition. Notable KPIs that help further interpret this include:

- There is good spread of different types of businesses in Ballinasloe town centre with just over half (51%) being retail and this is comparable with similar sized towns in the UK. Financial and professional services (8%) are slightly unrepresented compared to other small towns (14%) and there are fewer restaurants and cafes (4%) but more drinking establishments (8%) than might be expected in a town of this size.

- There is a high proportion of retailers selling comparison goods (87%) compared to convenience goods (13%). This means that attention needs to be paid to competition with neighboring and larger centres as well as with on-line retail while there are fewer routine reasons for local people to visit the town centre.

- Ballinasloe has a significantly higher percentage of independent retailers (87%) compared to similar sized towns, whilst the number of multiples (9%) is significantly lower than for similar sized towns (25%). This may cause some shoppers -especially amongst younger generations- to look to other centres or on-line to access well-known brands.

- The potential for local customers (66%) is considered the strongest positive aspect of being located in Ballinasloe town centre with accessibility indicators including geographical location (50%), transport links (36%), car parking (35%) and the potential for tourist customers (31%) being the next ranked aspects. The suggestion from this is that whilst businesses see local customers as primarily their target market, some at least recognize the potential to attract business from further afield.

- At the time of these mid-week surveys, most of the town centre users were in-town for work (25%); convenience shopping (24%) and access to services (20%). Combined with the fact that 89% of the town centre users sampled visited the town at least once a week, this suggests it retains a role as a local service centre.
- The mix of town centre users includes a higher percentage of males (57%) than amongst comparable UK figures and this does not normally typify high spend on convenience shopping. There was a good spread of ages represented including a higher proportion of under 35's than typical for small towns.
- When asked to select three words that best described Ballinasloe, the most popular choices were friendly, local, quiet, and convenient. These responses give a realistic portrayal of the town by existing users as a local service centre.

Ballinasloe Town Trends

The analysis of KPIs for Ballinasloe town trends indicates a moderately busy town centre with healthy car park occupancy but uneven footfall distribution across the town and high vacancy rates especially in peripheral areas. Reassuringly, an increased majority of businesses are optimistic for the year ahead whilst a small number continue to show year-on-year declines in turnover and provide continued cause for concern. KPIs supporting this analysis are:

- Average footfall counts for the busiest part of Ballinasloe are comparable with other small towns for the busiest location on Main Street. Footfall levels drop considerably across different parts of the town, however, with low counts recorded for Dunlo Street (43) and Society Street (34). This indicates that town centre users are not migrating around the town on normal mid-week mornings.
- Ballinasloe's vacancy rate (15%) is high compared to other benchmarked towns. The town though does have a large number of units and many of these are small in size and in older properties and so are not best suited to the demands of the modern retailer.
- Average vacancy rates of 52-53% suggest an overall good availability of parking though further analysis reveals that public car parks have 207 of these spaces (30% of the total) and are 74% vacant, whilst private car parks have 131 spaces (19% of the total) and are only 38% vacant. The private parking is thus significantly alleviating any pressure on town centre parking.
- There are fairly even proportions between businesses showing a mixture of different levels of trading performance over the last year. The spread is very similar to performance in other small towns with 71% having increased or maintained their turnover. Importantly, an increased majority of businesses (84%) are optimistic that turnover will be maintained or increased in the year ahead. Whilst this is a positive picture, concern should remain for the 16% of businesses expecting to show a year-on-year decline in turnover.

Current Issues and Priorities

The surveys of businesses and town centre users highlight positive and negative current perceptions and point to potential future priorities. Town centre users, in contrast to businesses, are markedly more positive compared to last year and other towns nationally.

Positives

- Businesses in Ballinasloe are most positive about the potential for local customers (66%) followed by the opportunities offered by its accessibility including geographical location, transport links, car parking and the potential for tourist customers being the next ranked aspects. Though modest in response, affordability of business premises and housing emerge as relatively more positive compared to similar towns.

- Responses from town centre users questioned about key characteristics of the town centre necessary to create a good trading environment and footfall are very positive about ease of walking around town (79%), safety (73%), customer service (71%), access to services (70%) and convenience (68%). Restaurants (57%) and leisure facilities (51%) are also all viewed favourably by town centre users with figures better than comparative UK averages..

- Nearly two thirds of users (63%) would currently recommend a visit to the town centre though they are less optimistic looking forward with only one third (32%) agreeing that Ballinasloe has a bright future.

Negatives

- The prosperity of the town scores markedly low (23%) compared to averages for small towns across the UK.

- Car parking (57%) is considered the most negative aspect of being located in the town centre by businesses but this is comparable to responses from other small towns (53%). Competition from out-of-towns retailers (55%), prosperity of the town (45%) and physical appearance (37%) are perceived as the only other significantly negative aspects.

- Town centre users in Ballinasloe have limited negative sentiments with retail offer (50%), physical appearance (47%), car parking (47%) and cultural activities (36%) the most significant criticisms and comparable to or only slightly worse than to be expected for a town of this size.

- When asked to respond to the statement that Ballinasloe has a bright future, only 25% of businesses and 32% of users agreed. A further 41% of businesses were undecided and this perhaps highlights the critical importance of authorities and local partners working with businesses to boost this modest optimism.

Priorities

When businesses were provided with the opportunity to make suggestions to improve the town's economic performance, a broad range of comments were made including:

- *Parking*: As typical of most towns, responses to the survey of Ballinasloe featured calls to improve parking, with a very strong emphasis on removing or reducing charges. Within this, there was some recognition of the value of charges and enforcement in restricting long-term occupation of spaces.

- *Economy:* Unusually for a survey of this nature, there were a significant number of businesses that identified a link between the wider economy of Ballinasloe and the town centre. Calls to attract a large new employer to the town doubtless reflect the impact felt from recent closures.

- *Appearance:* There was significant recognition from businesses surveyed about the need to improve the appearance of the town including empty and newly leased business units.

- *Attractions and Tourism:* There was significant recognition amongst businesses of the need to attract visitors to the town through events, activities and enhanced tourism facilities.

- *Promotion:* There was also strong recognition and creative ideas expressed around new opportunities for collective marketing of the town by businesses.

- *Local Leadership and Partnership Working:* Echoing the calls for improved collective marketing, there were limited but assertive calls to learn lessons from the past and show clear leadership in tackling issues in future.

- *Retail Mix:* There was some recognition by businesses of the need to diversify the retail mix including calls for a key attractor retail outlet to draw people to the town. There were also limited calls to introduce restaurants and coffee shops to attract customers and increase their dwell time in the town.

- *Planning:* There were differences of opinions expressed about the value of proposed town enhancement relative to other ways of improving the customer experience.

- *Social:* Very unusually for a survey of this nature, there were very pointed calls from businesses to address anti-social behavior in the town centre, especially alcohol related.

Responses from town centre users reveal similar themes to businesses though not always with the same perspective:

- Parking: There are overwhelming and consistent calls from town centre users for the re-instatement of free parking with 63 out of 191 respondents ranking it within their top two priorities. Within this there is virtually no acceptance of a role for some level of parking restriction and control. This level and type of response is typical of town centre users that have experienced the recent introduction of car park charges and needs to be carefully considered alongside the earlier data on actual parking usage which gives a more neutral portrayal of the issues.
- *Leisure:* Alongside calls to diversify the retail mix, there was a similar level of responses suggesting that there should be improved leisure facilities in the town centre including in particular a cinema. Specific calls for activities for children and young people featured quite prominently amongst the suggestions for wider diversification of the town centre offer.
- *Retail Mix:* A significant number of town centre users considered that diversifying the retail mix was a future priority including some calls for well-known multiples alongside specialist clothes retailers. There were a moderate number of calls to improve the town centre offer by opening more cafes and restaurants as part of a diversified mix.
- *Employment and Economy:* Very unusually in a survey of this nature, and echoing calls from businesses, there was wide recognition amongst towns centre users of the need to improve the wider economy and employment on offer in the town.
- *Appearance:* There were a relatively high number of calls for a survey of this nature to improve various aspects of the town centre's appearance. Echoing these responses, a significant number of town centre users gave priority to the need improve the appearance of empty premises.
- *Access and Transport*: There were a variety of responses relating to different aspects of improving town centre access and transport including footpaths, cycle routes and roads.
- *Local leadership and partnership working:* A surprising number of town centre users called for improvements in different aspects of local leadership behind the scenes rather than tangible improvements to the town centre.
- *Social:* Very unusually for a survey of this nature, a number of respondents made pointed remarks about the need to improve ant-social behaviour including excessive drinking.

Shoppers' Origins and Cross-Marketing Opportunities

The large volume of data (1225 entries) collected for town centre shoppers for Ballinasloe from a mix of convenience retailers, local services and comparison retailers is very helpful in revealing the following key patterns:

- Town centre users from the local area are imporant customers for the town's businesseses accounting for 45% of the use but is slightly less than might normally be expected for a town of this size. Not surprisingly a higher proprtion of their visits are to convenience retailers or local services but two thirds of them visited comparison retailers. Understanding this cross-over between convenience and comparison retail by local users may be signifiant in developing new approaches to cross-marketing and local loyalty promotion in future.

- A relatively small proprtion of town centre users fall in to the intermediate category described as ‘visitors’. Their pattern of spend is similar to local users.

- Compared to small towns of its size, Ballinasloe has a relatively high percentage of users who have travelled from over 25km (or approximately 30 minutes) away and are using local retailers. Whether these are tourists in the traditional sense cannot be determined fully from the data but it likely that they have purposefully set-out to visit the town. The data clearly indicates that this group are undertaking comparison shopping in particular and it may be that they have loyalty to particular stores. The opportunity to cross-market to this group between different specialist comparison retailers is worth exploring. It is also important to this group that they are well-informed about local restaurants, cafes, pubs and other failities that they might use during their stay in town.

- Relative to the 87:13% ratio between the number of convenience and comparion stores in Ballinasloe, this data suggests that convenience stores and local services are well-used.

- The data indicates that the comparison retail offer remains important to town centre users including especially those from further afield. Although the number of ‘tourists’ is only a third of the overall number of users recorded, they account for nearly the same amount of comparison shopping visits as locals. It is probable that these visitors from further afield will be higher spending on any one visit because they are likely to have made a special trip to the town or a speific retailer.

INTRODUCTION

THE APPROACH

Town Benchmarking managed by the People and Places Partnership has been developed to address the real issues of how to understand measure, evaluate and ultimately improve town centres. The approach offers a simple way of capturing data on Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) selected by those involved in town centre management. By having the tools to measure performance, strategic decision making is both encouraged and improved. By considering performance, forward strategies and action planning can be more focused and effective.

The approach is 'tried and tested' as it has been operating across over 200 towns in England and Wales for the last five years. This gives a wealth of experience and information to draw upon. Ballinasloe is the first Irish town to be benchmarked in this way and has an important role in both piloting the transferability of the approach and comparing trends across the Irish Sea.

THE SYSTEM

The Benchmarking system is divided into two sections:

- Large Towns; consisting of those localities with more than 250 units
- Small Towns; consisting of those localities with less than 250 units

Towns, depending on their size, contribute to either the Large or Small Town analysis. **Ballinasloe** with 165 units is classed as a Small~~Large~~ Town. The analysis provides data on each KPI for the Benchmarked town individually and in an overall context. The overall figures are the average for all the towns which participated in Benchmarking during 2013. Data for 2014 will become available in March 2015. Ballinasloe will therefore be benchmarked in the first instance against the performance of small towns from across the United Kingdom. In time this will be updated with data for 2014. The aspiration is that more Irish towns will be benchmarked in 2015 and that future trends for Ballinasloe will be compared against these.

THE REPORTS

The Annual Town Benchmarking reports provide statistical analysis of each of the KPI's. Individual towns are encouraged to add their own commentary to the analysis, noting specific patterns or trends and using local knowledge to provide specific explanations. The reports are used by a variety of key stakeholders such as local authorities, town and parish councils, local partnerships and universities to;

- Benchmark clusters of towns to ascertain high performers / under achievers
- understand their locality in a Regional, National and Typology context
- measure town centre performance year on year
- identify strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for improvement
- measure the impact of initiatives and developments within the town centre
- act as an evidence base for funding applications
- create an action plan for town centre improvements

METHODOLOGY

Each KPI is collected in a standardized manner as highlighted in the Table below.

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	DATA COLLECTION METHODOLOGY
KPI 1: Commercial Units; Use Class	Visual Survey
KPI 2: Commercial Units; Comparison/Convenience	Visual Survey
KPI 3:Commercial Units; Trader Type	Visual Survey
KPI 4: Commercial Units; Vacancy Rates	Visual Survey
KPI 5: Markets	Visual Survey
KPI 6 and 7: Zone A Rents/ Prime Retail Property Yield	Commercial Agent
KPI 8: Footfall	Footfall Survey on a Market Day and Non Market Day
KPI 9: Car Parking	Audit on a Market Day/Non Market Day
KPI 10: Business Confidence Surveys	Postal Survey
KPI 11: Town Centre Users Surveys	Face to Face Surveys/ Online Survey
KPI 12: Shoppers Origin Surveys	Shoppers Origin Survey

Before any KPI data is collected the core commercial area of the town centre is defined. The town centre area thus includes the core shopping streets and car parks attached or adjacent to these streets.

KEY FINDINGS

KPI 1: COMMERCIAL UNITS; USE CLASS

It is important to understand the scale and variety of the "commercial offer" throughout the town. A variety of shops and a wide range of services in a town are important to its ability to remain competitive and continue to attract customers. Sustaining a balance between the different aspects of buying and selling goods and services ensures that the local population (and visitors from outside) can spend time and money there, keeping the generated wealth of the town within the local economy. Importantly, it forms the employment base for a substantial proportion of the community too, helping to retain the population rather than lose it to nearby towns and cities.

The following table provides a detailed breakdown of each of the Use Classes as defined in the UK.

CLASS	TYPE OF USE	CLASS INCLUDES
A1	Shops	Shops, retail warehouses, hairdressers, travel and ticket agencies, post offices (but not sorting offices), pet shops, sandwich bars, showrooms, domestic hire shops, dry cleaners, funeral directors and internet cafes
A2	Financial and Professional Services	Financial services such as banks and building societies, professional services (other than health and medical services) including estate and employment agencies and betting offices
A3	Restaurants and Cafes	Food and drink for consumption on the premises- restaurants, snack bars and cafes
A4	Drinking Establishments	Public houses, wine bars or other drinking establishments (but not nightclubs)
A5	Hot Food Takeaways	Sale of hot food for consumption off the premises
B1	Businesses	Offices (other than those that fall within A2) research and development of products and processes, light industry appropriate in a residential area
B2	General Industrial	Use for industrial process other than one falling within class B1 (excluding incineration purposes, chemical treatment or landfill or hazardous waste)
B8	Storage and Distribution	Warehouses, includes open air storage
C1	Hotels	Hotels, boarding and guest houses where

		no significant element of care is provided (excludes hostels)
C2	Residential Institutions	Residential care homes, hospitals, nursing homes, boarding schools, residential colleges and training centres.
C2A	Secure Residential Institution	Use for a provision of secure residential accommodation, including use as a prison, young offenders institution, detention centre, secure training centre, custody centre, short term holding centre, secure hospital, secure local authority accommodation or use as a military barracks.
D1	Non Residential Institutions	Clinics, health centres, crèches, day centres, schools, art galleries (other than for sale or hire), museums, libraries, halls, places of worship, church halls, law court. Non residential education and training centres.
D2	Assembly and Leisure	Cinemas, music and concert halls, bingo and dance halls (but not nightclubs), swimming baths, skating rinks, gymnasiums or area for indoor or outdoor sports and recreations (except for motor sports, or where firearms are used).
SG	Sui Generis (Unique Establishments)	Theatres, hostels providing no significant element of care, scrap yards. Petrol filling stations and shops selling and/ or displaying motor vehicles. Retail warehouse clubs, nightclubs, laundrettes, taxi business, amusement centres, casinos, haulage yards, transport depots, veterinary clinics, dog parlours, tanning and beauty salons and tattoo studios.

The table overleaf provides a detailed analysis of the commercial offering in the town centre by Use Class. The figures are presented as a percentage of the **165** occupied units recorded.

There is good spread of different types of businesses in Ballinasloe town centre with just over half (51%) being retail and this is comparable with similar sized towns in the UK. Financial and professional services (8%) are slightly unrepresented compared to other small towns (14%), although major high Street banks are present. There are fewer restaurants and cafes (4%) but more drinking establishments (8%) than might be expected in a town of this size.

	UK Small Towns %	Ballinasloe Number	Ballinasloe %
A1	53	84	51
A2	14	14	8
A3	8	5	3
A4	4	14	8
A5	5	7	4
B1	3	2	2
B2	0	0	0
B3	0	0	0
C1	1	3	2
C2	0	0	0
C2A	0	0	0
D1	6	3	2
D2	1	1	1
SG	5	6	4
Not Recorded	0		

KPI 2: COMMERCIAL UNITS; COMPARISON VERSUS CONVENIENCE

A1 Retail units selling goods can be split into two different types Comparison and Convenience.

Convenience goods – low-cost, everyday items that consumers are unlikely to travel far to purchase. Defined as;

- food and non-alcoholic drinks
- tobacco
- alcohol
- newspapers and magazines
- non-durable household goods.

2. **Comparison goods** – all other retail goods.

- Books
- Clothing and Footwear

- Furniture, floor coverings and household textiles
- Audio-visual equipment and other durable goods
- Hardware and DIY supplies
- Chemists goods
- Jewellery, watches and clocks
- Bicycles
- Recreational and Miscellaneous goods
- Hairdressing

The presence of a variety of shops in a town centre is important to its ability to remain competitive and continue to attract customers. A balance of both comparison and convenience retail units is therefore ideal in terms of encouraging visitors / potential customers.

The following table provides a percentage of the A1 Shops which sell mainly Comparison Goods/ Convenience Goods.

	UK Small Towns %	Ballinasloe Number	Ballinasloe %
Comparison	79	73	87
Convenience	21	11	13

There are a high proportion of retailers selling comparison good (87%) compared to convenience goods (13%). This means that attention needs to be paid to competition with neighboring and larger centres as well as with on-line retail while there are fewer routine reasons for local people to visit the town centre

KPI 3: COMMERCIAL UNITS; TRADER TYPES

The vitality of a town centre depends highly on the quality and variety of retailers represented. National retail businesses are considered key attractors and are particularly important in terms of attracting visitors and shoppers to a town. However, the character and profile of a town often also depends on the variety and mix of independent shops that can give a town a “unique selling point” and help distinguish it from other competing centres. A sustainable balance of key attractors and multiple names alongside local independent shops is therefore likely to have the greatest positive impact on the vitality and viability of a town.

The following shops are considered Key attractors by Experian Goad in a UK context but the list needs re-defining for Ireland.

Department Stores	Clothing
BHS	Burton
Debenhams	Dorothy Perkins
House of Fraser	H & M
John Lewis	New Look
Marks and Spencer	Primark (Pennies)
	River Island
Mixed Goods Retailers	Topman
Argos	Topshop
Boots	
TK Max	**Other Retailers**
WH Smith	Carphone Warehouse
Wilkinson	Clarks
	Clintons
Supermarkets	HMV
Sainsbury's	O2
Tesco	Superdrug
Waitrose	Phones 4 U
	Vodafone
	Waterstones

Multiple traders have a countrywide presence and are well known household names. Regional shops are identified as those with stores / units in several towns throughout one geographical region only and Independent shops are identified as those that are specific to a particular town.

The following table provides a percentage of the A1 Shops which are Key Attractors, Multiples, Regional and Independent to the locality.

	UK Small Towns %	Ballinasloe Number	Ballinasloe %
Key Attractor	6	1	1
Multiple	19	7	8
Regional	7	3	4
Independent	68	73	87

The important thing to note from this data is that Ballinasloe has a significantly higher percentage of independent retailers (87%) compared to similar sized towns. Whilst the list of Key Attractors needs redefining, the number of multiples as a whole (9%) is significantly lower than for similar sized towns in the UK (25%). This may cause some shoppers – especially amongst younger generations- to look to other centres or on-line to access well-known brands. Charities with a national presence are included in the multiples percentage but are identified separately in the business use database in the appendix.

KPI 4; COMMERCIAL UNITS VACANCY RATES

Vacant units are an important indicator of the vitality and viability of a town centre. The presence of vacant units over a period of time can identify potential weaknesses in a town centre, whether due to locational criteria, high rent levels or strong competition from other centres.

The following table provides the percentage figure of vacant units from the total number of commercial units.

	UK Small Towns %	Ballinasloe Number	Ballinasloe %
Vacancy Rate	8	25	15

Ballinasloe’s vacancy rate (15%) is high compared to other benchmarked towns. The town though does have a large number of units and many of these are small in size and in older properties are so are not all suited to the demands of the modern retailer.

KPI 5; MARKETS

Good quality markets provide competition and choice for consumers. A busy and well-used street market can therefore be a good indicator of the vitality of a town centre. Conversely, if a market is in decline (e.g. empty pitches reducing numbers), it can be an indication of potential weaknesses in the town centre e.g. a lack of footfall customers due to an inappropriate retail mix or increased competitor activity. Street markets can also generate substantial benefits for the local economy. Markets can also provide a local mechanism for a diverse range of local enterprises to start, flourish and grow, adding to the sustainable mix of shops services on offer throughout the town.

The following table provides the average number of market traders at regular (at least once a fortnight) weekday markets within the locality.

	UK Small Towns %	Ballinasloe Number	Ballinasloe %
Av. No.	17	-	-

This data was not collected for Ballinasloe as there is no regular mid-week market.

KPI 6 AND 7: ZONE A RETAIL RENTS AND PRIME RETAIL PROPERTY YIELDS

The values for prime retail property yield and Zone A rentals are the "industry" benchmarks for the relative appeal of a location with its users and with the owners or investors in property. All real estate has a value and this value is based on the return on investment that can be levered out of the site. As these indicators rise and fall, they provide a barometer of success or failure and, because the same property dimensions are assessed to determine them, they can be used as an indicator of improving or declining fortunes for towns. In how attractive it is to businesses. Conversely, where rents are falling it can be an indicator of decline.

Zone A rents are normally expressed as £/€ per sq. ft. and the Prime Retail Property Yield as a net percentage figure. Local property expertise indicates that in the case of rural towns like Ballinasloe, however, there is never a reference to square footage. Most agents will quote circa €600.00 to €750.00 per month for a retail unit. Zone A rentals would therefore approximate to €6 to €8 per sq.ft.for good quality units. In addition there has been little or nothing transacting in the last 7 or 8 years in the category of prime retail properties. Many of the retail units are operated by the owner and one or two employees. Taking account of Property Yield would be 10%.

	UK Small Towns	**Ballinasloe**
Zone A Rents	27	€6 to €8
% Yield	8%	10%

KPI 8; FOOTFALL

The arrival and movement of people, whether as residents, workers, visitors or a shopper is vital to the success of the majority of businesses within the town centre. The more people that are attracted to the town, the better it trades and the more prosperous the businesses in it become, provided there is ample available disposable income in that population. Measuring passing people in a consistent manner in the same place, at the same time builds up a picture of the town, its traders and their relative success over the weeks and months.

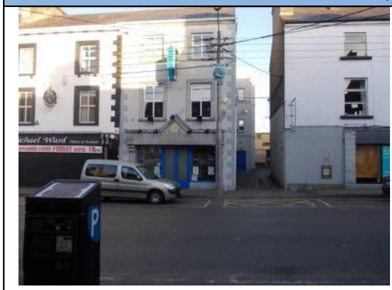
The following table provides the average number of people per 10 minutes between 10am and 1pm from the busiest footfall location in the town, Main Street, compared against similar locations in the UK.

Time	Market Day/ Busy Day Count 16/10/14	Time	Non Market Day/ Quiet Day Count 14/10/14
10.00 - 10.10	48	10.00 - 10.10	38
11.00 – 11.10	68	11.00 – 11.10	47
12.00 – 12.10	67	12.00 – 12.10	64
Comments	Overcast and mild.		Sunny autumn day

Count Point Location: Society Street, count between Brodericks & Utah

Time	Market Day/ Busy Day Count	Time	Non Market Day/ Quiet Day Count
10.30 – 10.40	34	10.30 – 10.40	23
11.30 – 11.40	52	11.30 – 11.40	38
12.30 – 12.40	45	12.30 – 12.40	41
Comments	Overcast and mild.		Sunny autumn day

Count Point Location: Main Street, count between Credit Union and Vacant unit opposite



Time	Market Day/ Busy Day Count	Time	Non Market Day/ Quiet Day Count
10.45 – 10.55	87	10.45 – 10.55	79
11.45 – 11.55	89	11.45 – 11.55	92
12.45 – 12.55	79	12.45 – 12.55	78
Comments	Overcast and mild.		Sunny autumn day

Count Point Location: Dunlo Street, count between P.Clarke & Kathleens

Time	Market Day/ Busy Day Count 16/10/14	Time	Non Market Day/ Quiet Day Count 14/10/14
10.15 – 10.25	32	10.15 – 10.25	31
11.15 – 11.25	39	11.15 – 11.25	48
12.15 – 12.25	55	12.15 – 12.25	51
Comments	Overcast and mild.		Sunny autumn day

	UK Small Towns	Ballinasloe Number
Market/ Busy Day	122	85
Non Market/ Quiet Day	90	83

Average footfall counts per ten minutes in for the busiest part of Ballinasloe are comparable on the two days surveyed with no appreciably busier day. For both days, the levels recorded are comparable with other small towns for the busiest location on Main Street. Footfall levels drop considerably across different parts of the town with low counts recorded for Dunlo Street (43) and Society Street (34). This indicates that town centre users are not migrating around the town on normal mid-week mornings.

KPI 9: CAR PARKING

A large proportion of spending customers in a town centre come by car. In the rural setting, the car tends to be an essential tool, used by both those who come to spend and those who come to work. The provision of adequate and convenient car parking facilities is therefore a key element of town centre vitality. An acceptable number of available spaces with a regular, quick turn-over for shoppers are the ideal while adequate longer stay, less convenient spaces for local owners/ workers and visitors must be considered too.

The following tables provide a summary of the Car Parking offering broken down into the;

- Provision of total number of spaces in designated car parks
- Provision of total number of short stay, long stay and disabled spaces in designated car parks
- Percentage of vacant spaces in designated car parks on a Market/ Busy Day and on a Non Market/ Quiet Day.
- Provision of total number of on street car parking spaces
- Provision of total number of on street short stay, long stay and disabled spaces
- Percentage of vacant on street spaces on a Market/ Busy Day and on a Non Market/ Quiet Day.
- Overall provision of car parking spaces
- Overall provision of total number of short stay, long stay and disabled spaces
- Overall percentage of vacant spaces on a Market/ Busy Day and on a Non Market/ Quiet Day.

	UK Small Towns %	Ballinasloe Number	Ballinasloe %
Car Parks Total Spaces	88	686	70
Short Stay Spaces: (4 hours and under)	47	40	4
Long Stay Spaces: (Over 4 hours)	41	633	65
Disabled Spaces:	4	13	1
Not Registered	8	-	-
Vacant Spaces on a Market Day:	30	391	40
Vacant Spaces on a Non Market Day:	38	390	40
Illegal Spaces on a Market Day:	n/a	2	n/a
Illegal Spaces on a Non Market Day:	n/a	2	n/a
On Street			
Total Spaces:	12	288	30
Short Stay Spaces: (4 hours and under)	56	280	29
Long Stay Spaces: (Over 4 hours)	36	-	-
Disabled Spaces:	4	8	1
Not Registered	4	-	-
Vacant Spaces on a Market Day:	14	115	40
Vacant Spaces on a Non Market Day:	22	125	43
Illegal Spaces on a Market Day:	n/a	-	-
Illegal Spaces on a Non Market Day:	n/a	2	-
Overall			
Total Spaces:	n/a	974	n/a
Short Stay Spaces: (4 hours and under)	48	328	34
Long Stay Spaces: (Over 4 hours)	40	646	66
Disabled Spaces:	4	21	2
Not Registered	7	-	-
Vacant Spaces on a Market Day:	28	506	52
Vacant Spaces on a Non Market Day:	36	515	53
Illegal Spaces on a Market Day:	n/a	2	0.2
Illegal Spaces on a Non Market Day:	n/a	4	0.4

The survey shows that there are 974 car park spaces in Ballinasloe that can be subdivided in to:

- Off-street parking accounting for 70% of spaces with a 4% to 65% split between short and long-stay along with 1% disabled parking. This is provided by a mix of chargeable public and free private car parks.

- On-street parking accounts for 30% of the total spaces in the town and all of this is short-stays (29%) or disabled (1%) parking. The proportion of on-street parking spaces (30%) is high compared to average figures for small towns in the UK.

Average vacancy rates of 52-53% suggest an overall good availability of parking and that availability of spaces is not a limiting factor. Further analysis, however, reveals that public car parks have 207 of these spaces (30% of the total) and are 74% vacant, whilst private car parks have 131 spaces (19% of the total) and are 38% vacant. Private parking is free of charge whereas on-street and local authority parking have to be paid for. The private parking is thus significantly alleviating any pressure on town centre parking as without this provision, there would only be 192 vacant spaces spread between on-street and council car parks which equates to a near critical 19% vacancy rate.

KPI 10: BUSINESS CONFIDENCE SURVEY

In regards to the 'business confidence' by establishing the trading conditions of town centre businesses, stakeholders can focus their regeneration efforts on building on existing strengths and addressing any specific issues.The following percentage figures are based on the 95 returned Business Confidence Surveys, offering an exceptional response rate and authoritative insights.

	UK Small Towns %	Ballinasloe Number	Ballinasloe %
Nature of Business			
Retail	59	54	61
Financial/ Professional Services	18	13	15
Public Sector	2	1	1
Food and Drink	12	12	13
Other	10	9	10
Type of Business			
Multiple Trader	11	9	10
Regional	6	5	6
Independent	83	73	84
How long has business been in town			
Less than a year	7	2	2
One to Five Years	21	9	10
Six to Ten Years	15	11	12
More than Ten Years	57	68	76
Compared to last year has your turnover			
Increased	38	30	35
Stayed the Same	34	31	36
Decreased	28	24	28
Compared to last year has profitability			

Increased	30	29	34
Stayed the Same	37	29	34
Decreased	33	27	32
Over the next 12 months do you think your turnover will			
Increase	44	36	42
Stay the Same	40	36	42
Decreased	16	14	16

Has your business suffered from any crime over the last 12 months	**UK Small Towns %**	**Ballinasloe Number**	**Ballinasloe %**
Yes	26	25	28
No	74	65	72
Type of Crime			
Theft	72	19	79
Abuse	13	5	21
Criminal Damage	39	10	42
Other	6	1	4

The following question was asked in order to provide a business perspective to a question recently asked during the on-line survey of local residents

Do you agree with the following statement? “Ballinasloe is a town with a bright future for the decade ahead?	**Ballinasloe Number**	**Ballinasloe %**
Strongly agree	8	9
Agree	14	16
Uncertain	36	41
Disagree	19	22
Strongly disagree	11	13

What are the positive aspects of the Town Centre?	UK Small Towns %	Ballinasloe Number	Ballinasloe %
Physical appearance		20	23
Prosperity of the town	45	20	23
Labour Pool	10	1	1
Environment		11	13
Geographical location	49	44	50
Mix of Retail Offer	39	34	39
Potential tourist customers	41	27	31
Potential local customers	78	58	66
Affordable Housing	8	17	19
Transport Links	26	32	36
Car Parking	39	31	35
Rental Values/ Property Costs	16	22	25
Market (s)	18	13	15
Events/Activities	-	20	23
Marketing/ Promotions	-	13	15
Local Partnership Organisations	-	10	11
Other	5	1	1
What are the negative aspects of the Town Centre?			
Physical appearance	-	31	37
Prosperity of the town	17	38	45
Labour Pool	6	18	21
Environment		1	1
Geographical location	7	2	2
Mix of Retail Offer	19	17	20
Potential tourist customers	7	12	14
Potential local customers	3	3	4
Affordable Housing	10	4	5
Transport Links	14	4	5
Car Parking	53	48	57
Rental Values/ Property Costs	35	12	14
Market (s)	10	5	6
Local business competition	18	9	11
Competition from other places	33	22	26
Competition from out-of-town shopping	-	46	55
Competition from the internet	39	21	25
Events/Activities	-	10	12
Marketing/ Promotions	-	8	10
Local Partnership Organisations	-	4	5
Other	7	3	4

The vast majority of the businesses that responded were independent (84%) and well established (88%) having operated in the town for more than six years. There was a reasonable spread across sectors with retailers representing 61% of those participating in the survey.

There are fairly even proportions between businesses showing a mixture of trading success over the last year and the spread is very similar to performance in other small towns with 71% having increased or maintained their turnover. Importantly an increased majority of businesses (84%) are optimistic that turnover will be maintained or increased in the year ahead. Whilst this is a positive picture, concern should remain for the 16% of businesses expecting to show what is presumably a year-on-year decline in turnover.

The potential for local (66%) is considered the strongest positive aspect of being located in Ballinasloe town centre with geographical location (50%), retail mix (39%), transport links (36%) and car parking (35%) and the potential for tourist customers (31%) being the next ranked aspects and the only ones valued by more than a quarter of businesses. The suggestion from this is that whilst businesses see local customers are primarily their target market, some at least recognize the potential to attract business from further afield. The prosperity of the town scores markedly low (23%) compared to averages for small towns. Though modest in response, affordability of business premises and housing emerge as relatively more positive compared to UK averages at least.

Car parking (57%) is considered the most negative aspect of being located in the town centre and competition but this is comparable to responses from businesses in other small towns. Competition from out-of-towns retailers (55%), prosperity of the town (45%) and physical appearance (37%) are perceived as the only other significantly negative aspects.

When asked to respond to the statement that Ballinasloe has a bright future, only 25% agreed though a further 41% were undecided. This perhaps highlights the critical importance of authorities and local partners working with businesses to ensure the most can be done to boost the optimism felt by those businesses that are as yet uncertain.

What two suggestions would you make to improve the economic performance of the town?

This Benchmarking Survey provided very authoritative and insightful responses about future priorities from the 95 participating businesses.

Parking

Parking is very often the main priority expressed by businesses in Town Benchmarking and the survey of Ballinasloe was no exception with a very strong emphasis from participating on removing or reducing charges. Within this, there was some recognition of the value of charges and enforcement in restricting long-term occupation of spaces.

- *"Remove paid parking"*
- *"Get rid of pay parking, have 1-2 hour free parking"*
- *"More free car parking. Free parking for first half hour"*
- *"Remove paid parking." "Car parking charges should be discontinued. Rates should be lowered for existing and new business."*
- *"I hour free parking"*
- *"The paid parking has a negative effect on the town and I firmly believe it should be abolished"*
- *"Have free parking days e.g. Saturdays to encourage more people into the town."*
- *"Parking is a problem. Rates are too high"*
- *"Remove paid parking"*
- *"Free 2 hour parking min and rates"*
- "2 hour free parking"
- *"Free parking needed especially on Saturdays"*
- *"Abolish paid parking"*
- *"Free car parking"*
- *"Parking"*
- *Free parking for one hour"*
- *"Free parking in the square and on the main roads, this would help businesses have more customers"*
- *"Free parking until midday every day. Saturday market re-organised and invested in or get rid of it. Free parking on a Saturday"*
- *"Pay parking has a detrimental effect on trade-strongly suggest minimum of 1 hour free parking each day"*
- *"Free car parking"*
- *"Remove parking charges".*
- *"Pay parking is a big problem from listening to customers"*
- *"Limited free parking"*
- *"Paid parking should be done away with or at least the price should be lowered e.g. Birr town is 50c per hour and the town is bursting"*
- *"The town could do with a hour free parking to bring in customers"*
- *"Pay parking has a detrimental effect on business and must be abolished completely, sooner rather than later"*

- *“Change the current parking charges- there is merit in parking charges to prevent long term parking but it is a deterrent to conducting business"*
- *“No parking fees."*
- *"Get rid of all paid parking for a start”*
- *"Eliminate paid parking”*
- *"Free parking for 1st (half hour to hour) to allow people to do business. Rates are far too high especially in this yard where they are the same as on Main Street”*
- *“Free parking areas."*
- *"Get rid of paid parking"*
- *"Introduce 1/2 hour free parking”*
- *"First 30 minutes car parking for customers or complete free parking. Look at Westport”*
- *"Free town centre parking but making some provision that people working in the town must park in designated car parks as is the case now"*
- *“Charging for parking should be got rid of or else give 3 hours free every morning"*
- *“Review the parking charges as people are obsessed with them. This negativity discourages them from coming into the town”*
- "Get rid of paid parking”
- *. I suggest that paid parking is reviewed to encourage people to spend time in town.*
- *“Get rid of paid parking on street."*
- "Free parking for the first home."
- *“Maybe to offer free parking on Saturdays”*
- *“Free parking for all of December."*

Economy

Unusually for a survey of this nature, there were a significant number of businesses that recognised the link between the wider economy of Ballinasloe and the town centre. Calls to attract a large new employer to the town doubtless reflect the impact felt from recent closures.

- *New employment needed; a new factory would help”*
- *"More local trade helping each other. Investment”*
- *"More local employment so local people will spend money locally. Factory”*
- *“Job opportunities"*
- *“Need to attract a major multinational type business that can provide large scale local employment.*

- *Attract more industry. Money to be given to individuals to improve their business/ set up their businesses, rather than being spent on useless amenities i.e. Town Library improvement"*
- *"More employment preferably a factory with jobs"*
- *Lobby local representatives for industry in Ballinasloe town and hinterland"*
- *"Dunlo Street is suffering from premises bought for investment and no plan in place for developing new businesses"*
- *"Small traders' organisation. Trader group. Group to attract employment to the town."*
- "Businesses need to pull together and think outside the box!"
- *"I suggest that Ballinasloe creates jobs for the people who can then in turn spend money in the town"*
- *"Get jobs. Put someone with political clout into government regardless of politics."*
- *A strong business organisation i.e. Chamber of Commerce something to bring the businesses together and networking."*
- *"Establish a Chamber of Commerce. Courses for traders"*
- *"Need for more employment. Need for towns people to shop locally."*
- *"New industry"*
- *"Let other businesses in not block them as has been done for years in Ballinasloe"*
- *Attract a manufacturing outlet to the town to give employment. Encourage the town's population to support the local businesses."*
- *"Multinational company needed x2"*
- *"New industry"*
- *"Some concentration to reduce number of empty commercial units. A new medium sized employer would be hugely beneficial but same could be said for most midland towns"*

Appearance

There was significant recognition from businesses surveyed about the need to improve the appearance of the town including empty and newly leased business units.

- *"Council could do with more bins and tidy up town"*
- *"Appearance of shop fronts if business owners don't appear to be proud of their premises how can they expect to attract custom"*
- *"Rates bill could be reduced for one year where business owners significantly improve shop facades"*
- *"Clean and improve the appearance of the town"*

- *“Give facelift to all rundown shop fronts"*
- “More colour outside of shops”
- *“Tidy up and landscape the approach roundabouts into town"*
- *"Please have all empty and derelict business and houses cleaned up, painted and upgraded. Please supply rubbish bins on all streets. Repairs to footpaths and streets."*
- *"Appearance of town must be improved.*
- *”Improve the physical appearance and public perception of town”*
- *“Visual impact of town as you drive in”*
- *"Newly purchased premises within the town need to have a plan in place to use that property or at least refurnish the façade”*
- *“Absolutely no service provided, no street lights, no bins, no cleaning”*
- *"Improve physical appearance, particularly unoccupied properties”*
- *“Incentives given to open small shops on streets. Some chain stores on or off Main Street to attract customers into town"*

Attractions and Tourism

There was significant recognition amongst businesses of the need to attract visitors to the town through events, activities and enhanced tourism facilities.

- *"Create events and festivals outside of Horsefair e.g. National fishing competitions, boat rallies, cultural heritage events, allowing town to become not boxed in as the town of Horse Fair e.g. create media awareness outside of the fair”*
- *“Late opening. Sunday opening."*
- *More diversity to attract diverse communities. More festivals. Introduce food into drinking establishments."*
- *"Enhancement of tourist amenities including Marina, Dublin, Galway Cycle way, October Fair. Enhancement of services of commuters to Galway/ Athlone. Focus on positive aspects of town like gyms,, soccer, rugby, athletics, drama, library, golf etc."*
- *"Create new activities that still attract people to come into town"*
- *"Attracting more tourism to the town by taking advantage of all the facilities and heritage we have here. Groups getting together to organise and advertise the above."*
- **“** *I have a major issue with the location of the playground .... is a beautiful park used only by the drunks”*
- *“Use of river amenities i.e. walks, cycle ways, fishing, on water activities*
- *“Ballinasloe Fair and Festival receive more public funding as all business get boost from it at the hardest time of the year for most."*

Promotion

There was strong recognition and creative ideas expressed around collective new opportunities for collective marketing of the town by businesses.

- *"Allow advertising on the motorway"*
- *"An initiative to encourage retailers to take up vacant units. Special preference to Dunlo St, as this forms an immediate impression on cars passing the town. This street needs to more inviting when viewed from the N6"*
- *I suggest that Ballinasloe publicize assets and inform people from town and surrounding area what Ballinasloe has to offer i.e. web page which Ballinasloe Newsletter regularly updated."*
- *"Advertise as a shopping centre. Each business pay 200 Euros per year into an advert pool"*
- *"Better highlighting of the leisure/ sports facilities in the town for families and young people. Better cultural facilities. Promote town as a tourist town. Library is a positive."*
- *Better marketing of town as a place to do business. Introduce 'crazy Friday' once a month where by businesses have a huge range of specials."*
- *"I think that the local people don't support local businesses. Businesses in the town should suggest to their employees to support local businesses. Banks etc should support them. If every person in Ballinasloe supported by 5 Euros per week I would have a great business."*
- *"That all businesses get together and maybe pick a day once a month and have really good special offers and deals with lots of advertisement, and keep it all going on a regular basis"*
- *"*To keep people in the town for all their Xmas shopping if all businesses opened for the four Sundays *leading up to Xmas"*
- *"All organisations/ groups would work together for the betterment of the town and not just their own interests. A better broadband service and a good town website which could properly market the town and be a one stop shop for all info re the town e.g. upcoming events, sport, promotions)"*
- *"More info to people that what is in the town"*

Local Leadership and Partnership Working

Echoing the calls for improved collective marketing, there were limited but assertive calls to learn lessons from the past and show clear leadership in tackling issues in future.

- *Incentives new and existing businesses i.e. break in rates, help with shop front appearance etc. Pro active Chamber of Commerce to get businesses working together and to promote the town we need to educate the people of Ballinasloe and* *its surrounding areas as to the range of quality businesses and professional services available in the town and in some way try to instill them with a sense of loyalty and pride."*

- *"There's nothing to suggest. Years back the local council turned down a huge shopping centre in favour of theirown businesses. Now Athlone which could not be compared to Ballinasloe has that shopping centre and its economy is prospering, while this town is going down because of certain people's greed. At the end of the day, people will rather drive to Athlone or Galway."*
- *"Strong retail group"*
- *"Town needs more political power. Need a local TD to front campaign for new business"*
- "Combine all organisations to sell town as one unit"

Retail Mix

There was some recognition by businesses of the need to diversify the retail mix including calls for a key attractor retail outlet to draw people to the town.

- *"Pop up shoe shops not fair on shoe shops that are open all year and paying rates"*
- *"Attraction of larger retail outlets in the town centre"*
- *Too many of the same businesses in the town instead of different i.e. more clothes shops, businesses need to bond together which they don't. Businesses that are struggling need help. (money)"*
- *"Ballinasloe needs more variety of shops in the town centre in order to bring in customers"*
- *"Better mix of shops"*
- *"Saturday trade is slow I think a lot of people head off to Athlone Shopping Centre"*
- *"An anchor type large retail outlet"*
- *Base one or two up-market or multiple stores in the town centre"*

Cafes and Restaurants

There were limited calls from businesses to introduce restaurants and coffee shops to attract customers and increase their dwell time in the town

- *Get rid of pop up restaurants. Too many Supermarkets fast foods. Polish shops really not doing businesses, don't see why they are open. Need a few night time dining restaurants other than pubs. Council do with cinema. Nothing for 18-25-30 years olds to do, only go to a pub- not all our youth want that"*
- "More coffee shops"
- *"Try to develop the food service industry particularly at night. Lack of restaurants a major drawback"*

- *"Good night time restaurant."*

Access and Signage including

There were limited and varied calls from businesses to improve access around the town.

- *"Improve signage”*
- *“Fix roads”*
- *“Pedestrianise the square."*
- *“Improve public transport into town i.e. local bus."*

Rents and Rates

There were a relatively limited number of calls for business rates reduction relative to what might typically be expected from such surveys.

- *“Reduction on rates."*
- *“Reduction for town centre"*
- *“Rates bill could be reduced for one year where business owners significantly improve shop facades”*
- *“Rates decrease incentive preferably owners who improve the facade of their property"*

Market

- "Varied and vibrant weekly farmers market”
- *"A larger market at weekends; a Sunday market at a reduced stall rates”*

Planning

There were differences of opinions expressed about the value of proposed town enhancement relative to other ways of improving the customer experience.

- *"Improve the street landscape to attract prime retail outlets. Construction of the Bank Road at the rear of Main Street to link in with Society Street”*
- *“Defer town enhancement project for 3-5 years as it will destroy businesses and add to further closures- consider town facelift e.g. street lighting, refresh buildings, paint exteriors, shop fronts etc. Definitely no need for trees, seating etc which will leave less car parking spaces"*
- *"Start and finish town enhancement programme. Finish off Marina development to include electrical hook up. Peoples Park opposite the Marina modeled on the playground in Loughrea”*
- *“Vacant houses”*

- *"Development of empty buildings in the town e.g. At Cross Square".*

Social

Very unusually for a survey of this nature, there were very pointed calls to address anti-social behaviour in the town centre, especially alcohol related.

- *"Public order problems. There are people openly walking through the town during the day clearly drunk and portrays a bad image. Town centre regeneration."*
- *"It is imperative drinkers on streets and parks are not allowed to do this. Horrible image on streets, people have actually left town on arrival and gone to stay elsewhere"*
- *"Get rid of all the winos"*
- *"Stop the practice of street drinking particularly at the marina and access to the town from the marina"*
- *Should be invested in activities that would add value to the young people. More credit allowance for young entrepreneurs with innovative ideas"*
- *"Some of the locals can be quite intimidating for people especially the elderly. The local guards should do more and make their presence felt in the town."*
- *"Get the winos off the streets."*
- *"Deal with the anti social behaviour drunks etc. better image."*

Crime and safety

- **"***Remove the anti social behaviour from the marina and park- don't feel safe in either of those places"*

Customer Service

There was some recognition of the value of good quality customer service

- *"Better all round customer relations. More positive messages from the retailers". More joint/ town centre marketing campaigns. Less negativity"*
- *"Keep families in the town centre and encourage them to spend. Give them a reason to come into the town centre. Business owners need to address their produce offering on an ongoing basis instead and always going on about the town and lack of support from customers/ locals.*
- *"Customer care workshops it helps to advertise the business and organisations that are here."*

KPI 11: TOWN CENTRE USERS SURVEY

The aim of the Town Centre Users Survey is to establish how your town is seen by those people who use it. By asking visitors, of all types, a more detailed picture can be obtained as what matters to regular visitors can be very different to someone who has never been to the place before.

The following percentage figures are based upon the 191 completed Town Centre User Surveys which represents an excellent response and provided authoritative findings.

*Please note qualitative comments have been copied directly from respondents

	UK Small Towns %	Ballinasloe Number	Ballinasloe %
Gender			
Male	38	109	57
Female	62	84	44
Age			
16-25	8	20	10
26-35	10	29	15
36-45	17	37	19
46-55	19	26	13
56-65	20	46	23
Over 65	26	37	19
What do you generally visit the Town Centre for?			
Work	15	44	25
Convenience Shopping	42	43	24
Comparison Shopping	5	18	10
Access Services	17	36	20
Leisure	13	25	14
Other	9	13	7

How often do you visit the Town Centre?	**UK Small Towns %**	**Ballinasloe Number**	**Ballinasloe %**
Daily	29	91	46
More than once a week	39	61	31
Weekly	15	23	12
Fortnightly	5	4	2
More than once a Month	3	3	1
Once a Month or Less	7	12	6
First Visit	2	6	3
How do you normally travel into the Town Centre?			
On Foot	37	44	22
Bicycle	2	10	5
Motorbike	1	1	1
Car	53	130	65
Bus	6	7	4
Train	1	1	1
Other	1	7	3
On average, on your normal visit to the Town Centre how much do you normally spend?			
Nothing	3	4	2
€0.01-€6.00	13	12	6
€6.01-€12.00	26	32	16
€12.01-€25.00	32	61	30
€25.01-€65.00	20	57	28
More than €65.00	6	35	17

What are the positive aspects of the Town Centre?	**UK Small Towns %**	**Ballinasloe Number**	**Ballinasloe %**
Physical appearance	56	84	44
Cleanliness	-	113	59
Retail Offer	49	70	36
Customer Service	-	137	71
Restaurants	44	109	57
Access to Services	75	135	70
Leisure Facilities	28	99	51
Cultural Activities	24	74	38
Pubs/ Bars/ Nightclubs	37	87	45
Transport Links	43	119	62
Ease of walking around town centre	75	152	79
Convenience e.g. near where you live	70	131	68
Safety	48	140	73
Car Parking	46	88	46
Markets	34	78	40
Other	7	0	0
What are the negative aspects of the Town Centre?			
Physical appearance	29	82	47
Cleanliness	-	54	31
Retail Offer	42	88	50
Customer Service	-	29	17
Restaurants	28	46	26
Access to Services	10	19	11
Leisure Facilities	37	44	25
Cultural Activities	37	63	36
Pubs/ Bars/ Nightclubs	27	41	23
Transport Links	22	31	18
Ease of walking around town centre	9	13	7
Convenience e.g. near where you live	8	25	14
Safety	13	26	15
Car Parking	39	82	47
Markets	29	58	33
Other	12	4	2

What three of the following words would you use to describe Ballinasloe?	Ballinasloe Number	Ballinasloe %
Local	108	56
Good value	27	14
Quirky	11	6
Convenient	62	31
Friendly	101	51
Independent	24	13
Accessible	66	34
Quiet	88	44
Charming	13	7

The most popular choices were local (56%), friendly (51%), quiet (44%) and accessible (34%).

Would you recommend a visit to the Town's Centre?	Ballinasloe Number	Ballinasloe %
Yes	123	63
No	71	37

Do you agree with the following statement? "Ballinasloe is a town with a bright future for the decade ahead?"	Ballinasloe Number	Ballinasloe %
Strongly agree	18	9
Agree	45	23
Uncertain	48	24
Disagree	58	29
Strongly disagree	28	14

The mix of town centre users includes a higher percentage of males (57%) than amongst comparable UK figures. There was a good spread of ages represented including a higher proportion of under 35's than typical for small towns.

At the time of these mid-week surveys, most of the town centre users were in-town for work (25%); convenience shopping (24%) and access to services (20%). Combined with the fact that 89% of the town centre users sampled visited the town at least once a week, this suggests a key role as a local service centre.

Nearly two-thirds of town centre users travelled by car (65%) and a significant number walked (22%). Spending in the town centre appears relatively high compared to averages for small towns in the UK with 75% of town centre users saying they spend over €12.01 on a normal visit and this is higher than comparable national figures for small towns (58%).

Ballinasloe town centre users are very positive about ease of walking around town (79%), safety (73%), customer service (71%), access to services (70%) and convenience (68%). Restaurants (57%) and leisure facilities (51%) are also all viewed favourably by town centre users with figures better than comparative UK averages.

Town centre users in Ballinasloe have milder, negative sentiments with retail offer (50%), physical appearance (47%), car parking (47%) and cultural activities (36%) the most significant criticisms and comparable to or only slightly worse than to be expected for a town of this size. All other town centre characteristics receive negative perceptions of a third or less to indicate a strong positive balance of sentiments.

Supplementary questions about Ballinasloe indicate that whilst nearly two thirds of users (63%) would currently recommend a visit to the town centre, they are less optimistic looking forward with only one third (32%) agreeing that it has a bright future. When asked to select three words that best described Ballinasloe, the most popular choices were friendly (57%), local (56%), quiet (44%), and convenient (43%). These responses give a realistic portrayal of the town by existing users than can help in understanding and promoting the town. The underlying sentiment appears to reinforce Ballinasloe's primary function as a local service centre but point to concerns about its future and limitations about its wider appeal.

What two suggestions would you make to improve the town centre?

This Benchmarking Survey provided very authoritative and insightful responses about future priorities from the 95 participating businesses.

Parking
There are overwhelming and consistent calls from town centre users for the re-instatement of free parking with 63 out of 191 respondents ranking it within their top two priorities. Within this there is virtually no acceptance of a role for some level of parking restriction and control. This level and type of response is typical of town centre users that have experienced the recent introduction of car par charges and merits careful consideration alongside the earlier data on parking usage.

- *"Free parking"*
- *"Cheaper parking needed. Half an hour free"*
- *"Parking too expensive.*
- *"Free parking."*
- *"Free parking. Half hour parking free"*
- *"Parking issue- signs, free parking"*

- *No paid parking. Saturdays free, Driving people out of work."*
- *"Parking should be free for at least 2 hours."*
- *"Pay parking- go reduce prices in shops.*
- *"Paying for parking.*
- *"Parking”*
- *"Free parking for customers"*
- *"No paid parking it is driving away customers."*
- *"No parking fees."*
- *“Car park"*
- *"Car parking.*
- *"Free parking”*
- *"More free parking"*
- *"Free parking.*
- *"Free parking"*
- *"Free parking.*
- *"Free parking. “*
- *"Paid parking”*
- *“Free parking on street especially with kids"*
- *"Free parking on streets”*
- *“More free car parking"*
- *“Get rid of paid parking."*
- *"Free car parking”*
- *"Free parking”*
- *"Parking"*
- *"Free parking."*
- *"Free parking”*
- *"Free car parking.*
- *“Car parking"*
- *"Stop parking meters"*
- *"Free parking”*
- *"Free car parking"*
- *"Free parking”*
- *"Free parking”*
- *"Free parking”*
- *“Free parking."*
- *"Get rid of the paid parking.*
- *"Free parking”*
- *"Free parking”*
- *"Free parking"*
- *“Free parking"*
- *"Free parking”*
- *"Free parking”*
- *“Free parking”*
- *"No parking fees"*
- *"Get rid of paid parking"*

- *"Free car parking"*
- *"Parking free for a period of time."*
- *"Free parking”*
- *"Free parking"*
- *"Parking”*
- *"Parking for free for 2 hours*
- *"Car park, No parking park."*
- *“More parking at train station."*
- *“Free parking/ more lenient parking"*
- *"Concession for parking for half hour”*
- *“Reduce paid parking,*
- *“Only have it for 1 hour in the morning."*

Retail Mix

A significant number of town centre users also considered that diversifying the retail mix was a future priority including some calls for well-known multiples alongside specialist clothes retailers.

- *"Bigger shops e.g. Duns“*
- *“Shops e.g. Pennies*
- *“Sports shops too expensive"*
- *"Shopping centre food ventures"*
- *"More shops"*
- *“Pennies in town."*
- *"Shopping centre*
- *"More interesting shops*
- *"More pubs and shops"*
- *“More clothes shops. More market days and markets"*
- *"Open smaller shops for young people”*
- *“More shops”*
- *"Hardware store. B and Q. Dunns, / Pennies"*
- *"A lot of shops that could open up"*
- *"More shopping centres"*
- *"More shoe shops"*
- *"Open more shopping”*
- *"More shoe shops. Especially kids"*
- *"Shopping centre. More shoe shops"*
- *“Better quality shops”*
- *"Shopping centre. Motor facilities."*
- *"Tesco destroyed our town"*
- *“Better retail offers*
- *"More bigger clothes shops.*
- *"Make new housing.*
- *“More shopping centres."*

- *“Better value."*
- *“More retail."*
- *“Improve market"*
- *“More large shops in the town centre."*
- *"Better prices”*
- *"Improve the market.*
- *"Open up shop”*
- *“More shops"*
- *"New shops”*
- *"Shopping centre"*

Customer Service

There were a modest number of responses suggesting possible improvements in customer service as part of an improved town centre offer.

- *“Longer business hours"*
- *“Customer care"*
- *"Customer care course for owners.*
- *“Shops open at 1pm* **“**
- *"The shops should not refuse people"*

Leisure

Alongside alls to diversify the retail mix, there were a similar level of responses suggesting that there should be improved leisure facilities in the town centre including in particular a cinema.

- *"Cinema”*
- *“More facilities."*
- *"Cinema/ Leisure"*
- *“Gym"*
- *"More facilities to open"*
- *"More leisure facilities"*
- *"Cinema”*
- *“Adult leisure facilities"*
- *"Cinema. Summer festival”*
- *“More Leisure, Restaurants, Cinema”*
- *“Cinema"*
- *"Cinema”*
- *"More cinema”*
- *“Leisure centre for older people."*
- *"More recreational services"*
- *"More facilities. Maybe a cinema"*
- *"Cinema"*
- *“More nightclubs”*

- *"Nightlife, night out for over 55's. Over 55s club*
- *" Leisure centres."*

Pubs and Restaurants

There were a moderate number of calls to improve the town centre offer by opening more cafes and restaurants as part of a diversified mix.

- *"More cafes/ Tea shops"*
- *"More coffee shops"*
- *"Good quality restaurant"*
- *"Great hotels, offer loyalty cards for meals"*
- *"More cafe/ restaurants"*
- *"Improve pubs."*

Activities for Young People

Specific calls for activities from children and young people featured quite prominently amongst the suggestions for wider diversification of the town centre offer.

- *"More recreational facilities for children"*
- *"Leisure facilities for young people"*
- *"Activities for kids cinema"*
- *"More children's events in town"*
- *"More facilities for young people"*
- *"More facilities for young people"*
- *"More activities for kids,*
- *" Place for young kids to use energy"*
- *"Activity centre for small children.*
- *"Youth centres"*

Attractions and Tourism

Amongst the responses from existing town centre users, were a modest number showing recognition of the opportunity to attract new visitors to the town.

- *"Tourist office with more tech. Ballinasloe app."*
- *"More events to get people into the town"*
- *"Develop heritage."*
- *"Improve the cultural activities"*
- *"More town events"*
- *"Family Days. Paint. Clean. Families. Markets*
- *"More effort to attract tourists."*

Employment and Economy

Very unusually in a survey of this nature, there was wide recognition amongst towns centre users of the need to improve the wider economy and employment on offer in the town. This highlights the impacts still felt from recent closure of major employers.

- *"Employment"*
- *"Employment"*
- *"More employment"*
- *"No factories now"*
- *"No industry"*
- *"Employment"*
- *"More jobs"*
- *"More industry and retail."*
- *"Employment"*
- *"Industry into the town"*
- *"Employment"*
- *"More industry and retail outlets"*
- *"Employment"*
- *"Employment"*
- *"Industry"*
- *"Employment*
- *"More businesses/ factory"*
- *"Incentive to start business""*
- *"More employment.*
- *"More employment"*
- *"More employment"*
- *"More work."*
- *"More jobs"*
- *"More jobs through factories etc."*
- *"All industries gone."*

Appearance

There were a relatively high number of calls for a survey of this nature to improve various aspects of the town centre's appearance.

- *"Improve footpaths."*
- *"Appearance."*
- *"Litter control.*
- *"Create employment by getting people on the dole to paint and clean the town and finish unfinished houses"*
- *"Paint job. Gardens"*
- *"Used to be lovely"*
- *"Don't change. Modern everywhere. History is great"*

- *“More flowers”*
- *“Cleanliness."*
- *"Maintenance of flower beds"*
- *"Cleanliness”*
- *“Physical appearance."*
- *"Statues at church need paint. Brighten up."*
- *"More children’s’ shops for shoes. Clarkes or something."*
- *"Properly clean up. Lick of paint."*
- *“Better general maintenance."*

Redundant Buildings and Empty shops

Echoing the responses about the general appearance of the town centre, a significant number of town centre users gave priority to the need improve the appearance of empty premises.

- *"Shop fronts need to be brightened up"*
- *"Shop fronts. Clean up Main Street”*
- *“Empty properties."*
- *“Facelift of the buildings"*
- *“Brighten up closed buildings”*
- *"Revamping shops."*
- *“Money for town refurbishment"*
- *"Shop appearance”*
- *“Shop fronts painted"*
- *"Renovate some of the tired buildings"*
- *“Derelict building."*
- *"Clean up the shops”*
- *"Use derelict units"*
- *“Facelift of the shops."*
- *“Improve derelict building"*
- *“Closed shops are a problem"*

Access and Transport

There were a variety of responses relating to different aspects of improving town centre access and transport including footpaths, cycle routes and roads”.

- *"Improve paths"*
- *"Bad pathways should be improved“*
- *Traffic lights to cross"*
- *“ Road works"*
- *"Access from Loughrea”*
- *“Cyclists control”*
- *"Develop cycle way*

- *“Dangerous junctions."*
- *“More bus stops."*
- *"Untapped resources. Nearest town to motorway"*
- *“River is cut off. Planning to have a walkway around river, it’s lost completely."*
- *“Footpaths, Roads”*
- *"Roundabout dangerous”*
- *“Parkway is uneven."*
- *"Make footpaths wheelchair accessible"*
- *"Pedestrianised square”*
- *"More bicycles"*
- *"Improve footpaths*
- *"Less steps"*
- *"Improve roads”*

Local leadership and partnership working

A surprising number of town centre users called for improvements in different aspects of local leadership behind the scenes rather than tangible improvements to the town centre.

- *“A coordinating body for activities”*
- *“No town council"*
- *"Shop owners/ councillors should be new/ get rid of old ones"*
- *"Too much money given to Council, None put into the town"*
- *"Interaction between business people and local authority. Encourage the direction the town should take"*
- *"Business owners make a better effort. They should lose negativity on paid parking, Business owners putting off customers with negativity"*
- *"A good politician. To campaign to keep hospital a mile outside the village"*
- *“Like to see locals support town instead of complaining"*
- *"Leave it up to the council."*
- *“Chamber of Commerce set up and look into improving town centre"*
- *"More pride in town.*
- *“A good politician"*
- *"Get a serious politician"*
- *“Positive attitude."*
- *"Package the positive. Be more friendly"*
- *“Lost a lot of amenities, need these back. Dead town. More of a focus."*
- *“Fresh ideas."*

Planning and Development

There was a small number of wider planning and development-related issues raised.

- *"Modernise town/ services"*

- *“Develop the marina”*
- *“Housing”*

Rents and Rates

A small number of town centre users suggested that there was a need to reduce business rates.

- *“Reduce commercial rates."*
- *“More businesses. “Drop rates."*
- *"Lower commercial rates"*
- *“Reduce rent charge."*

Social

Very unusually for a survey of this nature, a number of respondents made pointed remarks about the need to improve ant-social behaviour including excessive drinking.

- *“Too many drunks a serious issue. “*
- *“Drinkers"*
- *“No drinkers on streets."*
- *"Less drinkers.*
- *“Something to be done about drinking on street"*
- *“Less drinkers on street."*
- *“Police the pubs better"*
- *"Teenagers, no self respect.*

Crime and Safety

Two responses mentioned issues relating to rime and safety.

- *“Safety.”*
- *“Crime should be improved."*

KPI 12: SHOPPERS ORIGIN SURVEY

The Shoppers Origin Survey tracks the general area that your town centre's users originate from. The data can be used to target local marketing or promotional literature. It can also be used as evidence of the success of such campaigns by gauging the penetration into the population.

For the case of Ballinasloe, the settlement names gathered from businesses and paper based surveys are split into 3 categories to be able to compare with other towns. The categories are:

- Locals; those who live within the town and villages within 5km radius
- Visitors; those who live between 5 and 25km away
- Tourists; who live further than a 25km away

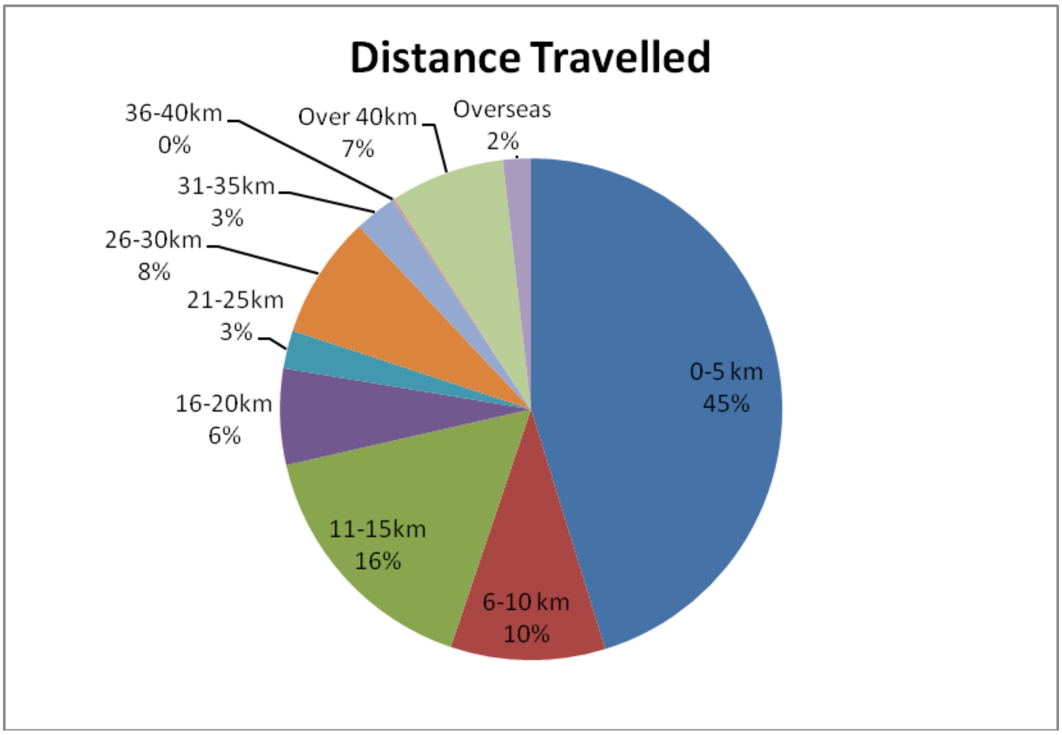
A large volume of data (1225 entries) was gathered for Ballinasloe from a mix of convenience retailers, local services and comparison retailers and this revealed the following overall pattern that is comparable with other small towns.

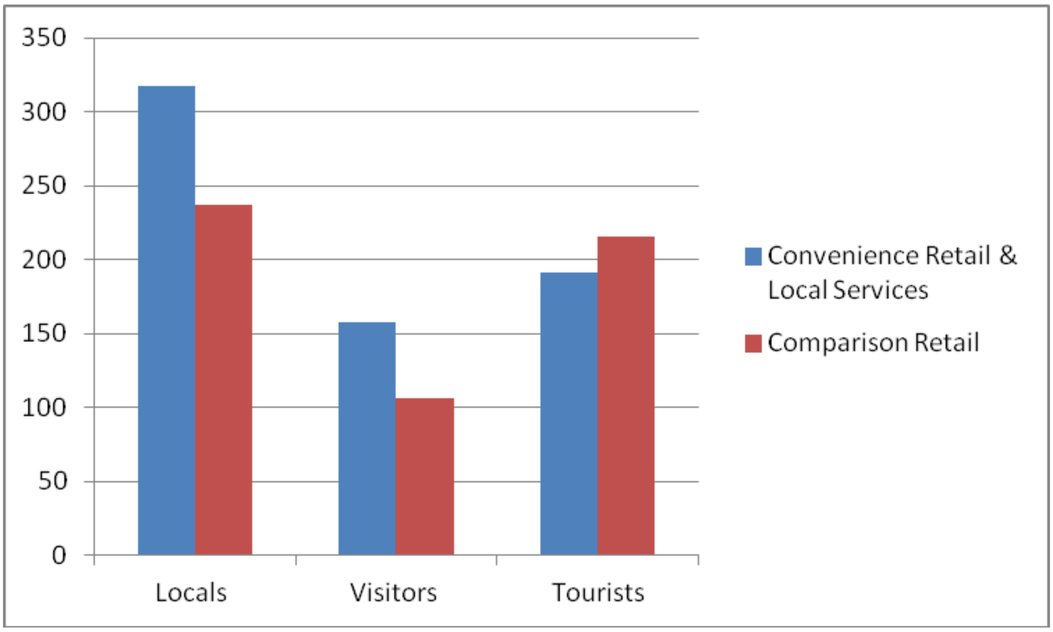
	UK Small Towns %	Ballinasloe Number	Ballinasloe %
Locals	53%	554	45%
Visitors	31%	264	22%
Tourists	16%	407	33%

Because of the wealth of data collected for Ballinasloe it is possible to further analyse and consider the different patterns for use of convenience retail and local services compared to comparison retail for town centre users of different origins. These are summarized in the table below.

	Convenience Retail & Local Services		Comparison Retail	
	Number	**%**	**Number**	**%**
Locals	317	26%	237	19%
Visitors	158	13%	106	9%
Tourists	191	16%	216	18%
Totals	**666**	**54%**	**559**	**46%**

The charts shown overleaf emphasise key points about the data collected for town centre user origin for Ballinasloe.





Key points that emerge from this analysis of town centre user origins for Ballinasloe are:

- Town centre users from the local area are imporant customers for the town's businesseses accounting for 45% of the use but is slightly less than might normally be expected for a town of tgis size. Not surprisingly a higher proprtion of their visits are to convenience retailers or local services but two thirds of them combine this with a visit to comparison retailers. Understanding this cross-over between convenience and comparison retail by localusers may be signifiant in developing new approiaches to cross-marketing ad local loyalty promotion in future.

- A relatively small proprtion of town centre users fall in to the intermediate category described as ‘visitors’. This may simply be a sympton that there are relatively small populations within 25km or that people are drawn to neighbouring centres such as Athlone and Galway. A higher proprtion of such visitors to the town visit convenience stores and local services than undertake comparison shopping.

- Compared to small towns of its size, Ballinasloe has a relatively high percentage of users who have travelled from over 25km (or approximately 30 minutes) away and are using local retailers. This may be in part explained by the rural nature of the area and also the nearby motorway. Whether these are tourists in the traditional sense who have come to experience the towns heritage and leisure facilities cannot be determined fully from the data but it likely that they have purposefully set-out to visit the town. The data indicates clear that this group are undertaking comparison shopping in particular and it may be that they have loyalty to particular stores. They also spend in loal convenience retailers. The opportunity to cross-market to this group between different specialist comparison retailers is worth exploring. It si also important to this group that they are well-informed about local restaurants, cafes and pubs that they might use during their stay in town.

- Relative to the 87:13% ratio between the number of convenience and comparion stores in Ballinasloe, this data indicates that convenience stores and local services are relatively well-used. This is likely to be accounted for by a larger volume of lower spending occasions but the data is also skewed by the fact that equal numbers of both types of stores were represented in the suvey sample.

- The data indicates that the comparison retail offer is till important to town centre users including especiually those from further afield. Although the number of ‘tourists’ is only a third of the overall number of users recorded, they account for nearly the same amount of comparison shopping visits as locals. It is probable that these visitors from further afield will be higher spending on any one visit because they are likely to have made a special trip to the town or a speifi retailer.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: PARTICIPATING TOWNS IN 2013

The following towns all contributed to the Benchmarking System in 2013 are used in comparative data for this report.

Town Name	Small or Large	Region	Typology
Clay Cross	S	East Midlands	6
Melton	L	East Midlands	2
Bury St Edmunds	L	East of England	2
Diss	S	East of England	2
Ely	S	East of England	5
Huntingdon	S	East of England	4
Ramsey	S	East of England	4
St Ives	L	East of England	4
Wickham Market	S	East of England	2
Alnwick	S	North East	2
Amble	S	North East	6
Ashington	S	North East	6
Bedale	S	North East	2
Bedlington	S	North East	6
Berwick	L	North East	6
Blyth	S	North East	6
Cramlington	S	North East	6
Haltwhistle	S	North East	2
Hexham	S	North East	5
Hornsea	S	North East	2
Morpeth	S	North East	1
Ponteland	S	North East	1
Prudhoe	S	North East	6
Ripon	S	North East	2
Alsager	S	North West	1
Alston	S	North West	n/a
Appleby	S	North West	2
Buckley	S	North West	n/a
Colwyn Bay	L	North West	n/a
Congleton	S	North West	8
Connahs Quay	S	North West	n/a
Crewe	L	North West	n/a

Disley	S	North West	1
Flint	S	North West	n/a
Handforth	S	North West	n/a
Holmes Chapel	S	North West	8
Holywell	S	North West	n/a
Kendal	L	North West	2
Kirkby Stephen	S	North West	2
Knutsford	S	North West	5
Llangefni	S	North West	n/a
Macclesfield	L	North West	n/a
Middlewich	S	North West	4
Mold	S	North West	n/a
Nantwich	L	North West	2
Penrith	L	North West	2
Poynton	S	North West	n/a
Queensferry	S	North West	n/a
Rhyl	L	North West	n/a
Saltney	S	North West	n/a
Sandbach	S	North West	8
Shotton	S	North West	n/a
Wigton	S	North West	7
Wilmslow	L	North West	n/a
Wrexham	L	North West	n/a
Barrhead	S	Scotland	n/a
Forfar	S	Scotland	2
Bagshot	S	South East	4
Basingstoke (Top of Town)	S	South East	n/a
Hungerford	S	South East	4
Sandwich	S	South East	5
Stony Stratford	S	South East	n/a
Amesbury	S	South West	4
Blaenavon	S	South West	n/a
Bradford On Avon	S	South West	5
Callington	S	South West	2
Calne	S	South West	4
Chepstow	S	South West	n/a
Cirencester	L	South West	2
Corsham	S	South West	2
Cricklade	S	South West	8
Devizes	L	South West	2
Frome	S	South West	2

Liskeard	S	South West	2
Ludgershall	S	South West	4
Melksham	S	South West	2
Pewsey	S	South West	2
Royal Wootton Bassett	S	South West	8
Tavistock	S	South West	2
Trowbridge	L	South West	2
Warminster	S	South West	2
Westbury	S	South West	2
Westbury on Trym	S	South West	n/a
Wilton	S	South West	2
Winchcombe	S	South West	3
Alcester	S	West Midlands	2
Great Malvern	S	West Midlands	2
Ledbury	S	West Midlands	2
Ludlow	S	West Midlands	2
Newport	S	West Midlands	8
Southam	S	West Midlands	4
Tenbury Wells	S	West Midlands	2
Upton Upon Severn	S	West Midlands	3

Appendix 2: BALLINASLOE BUSNIESS UNIT DATA BASE

Street Name	Number	Business Name	Use Class	Business Type (Comparison/ Convenience)	Business Type (Key Attractor/ Independent)	Additional Notes
Society Street	FR	Fusion Restaurant	A3	-	-	
Society Street	HW	Healthwise	A1	Comparison	Independent	
Society Street	DF	Donnellys Florists	A1	Comparison	Independent	
Society Street	NCBI	National Council for the Blind of Ireland	A1	Comparison	Multiple	
Society Street	JOR	Jorena's	A1	Comparison	Independent	
Society Street	BBIB	Bruen Bros Ins Brokers	A2	-	-	
Society Street		n/a	-	-	-	VACANT
Society Street	FE	Fletchers (Export)	A1	Comparison	Regional	
Society Street	SM	Supermacs	A5			
Society Street	BP	Brodericks Pharmacy	A1	Comparison	Independent	
Society Street	30	Michael McCullagh	A2			
Society Street	32	Animal Health Centre	A1	Comparison	Independent	
Society Street		n/a				VACANT
Society Street	DB	Downey's Bar	A4			
Society Street	C	Casino	SG			
Society Street	36	Society Fayre	A1	Convenience	Independent	
Society Street	NT	Noor Tandoori	A4			
Society Street	ST	Society Travel	A1	Comparison	Independent	

Society Street		n/a				VACANT
Society Street	GC	George Coyle	A2			
Society Street	ELB	Emerald Lounge & Bar	A4			
Society Street		n/a				VACANT
Society Street	UH	Unisex Hairdressers	A1	Comparison	Independent	
Society Street	THT	Town Hall Theatre	D2			
Society Street	3	High Society	A1	Comparison	Independent	
Society Street	GG	Geraroid Geraghty	A2			
Society Street	UH	Utopia Hairdesign	A1	Comparison	Independent	
Society Street	6	Avrils Beauty Rooms	A1	Comparison	Independent	
Society Street	7	Karibas	A3			
Society Street	8	The Pillar House	A4			
Society Street	IB	Image Boutique	A1	Comparison	Independent	
Society Street	10	J+S Photos	A1	Comparison	Independent	
Society Street	UO	Utah Outlet	A1	Comparison	Regional	
Society Street	11	Niall Hogan	A1	Comparison	Independent	
Society Street	JB	Johnsons Bookmakers	A2			
Society Street	TM	Top Man	A1	Comparison	Independent	
Society Street	CHP	Claire Healy Pharmacy	A1	Comparison	Independent	
Society Street	RB	Ryan's Bar	A4			
Society Street	JB	Joe's Bar	A4			
Society Street	TN	Top Notch	A1	Comparison	Independent	
Society Street	TKH	The Kebab House	A5			
Society Street		-				VACANT

Society Street (Sarsfield Rd)	SM	Supermacs	A5			
Society Street (Sarsfield Rd)	BC	Barry’s Cycles	A1	Comparison	Independent	
Society Street (Sarsfield Rd)	BH	Barratts Hardware	A1	Comparison	Independent	
Society Street (Sarsfield Rd)	SH	Sopranos Hair	A1	Comparison	Independent	
Society Street (Society Court)	TTP	The Tattoo Parlour	SG			
Society Street (Society Court)	PS	Polski Sklep	A1	Convenience	Independent	
Society Street (Emmet Place)	EHDP	Emmet House Dental Practice	D1			
Bridge Street	2	Tranquillity Beauty Clinic	A1	Comparison	Independent	
Bridge Street	TOG	The Oat Gallery	A1	Comparison	Independent	
Harbour Road (Marina Point)	7	Haven Pharmacy	A1	Comparison	Independent	
Harbour Road (Marina Point)	PS	Polska Strefa	A1	Convenience	Independent	
Harbour Road (Marina Point)	3	Sports Warehouse	A1	Comparison	Independent	
Harbour Road (Marina Point)	PBS	Paul Byron Shoes	A1	Comparison	Multiple	
Harbour Road (Marina Point)	TCB	Tony Carroll Butcher	A1	Convenience	Independent	

Harbour Road (Marina Point)	EE	Eastern Electrical	A1	Comparison	Independent	
Harbour Road (Marina Point)	MPHC	Marina Place Health Centre	D1			
Harbour Road (Marina Point)	LS	LIDL Supermarket	A1	Convenience	Multiple	
Harbour Road (Marina Point)	CSH	Carlton Shearwater Hotel	C1			
River View (Townspark)	OC	Ollie Colohan	A1	Comparison	Independent	
River View (Cullens Yard)	Unit 6	Essence of Beauty	A1	Comparison	Independent	
River View (Cullens Yard)	Unit 5	Carisma Hair Design	A1	Comparison	Independent	
River View (Cullens Yard)	GRDC	Galway Rural Development Company	B1			
River View (Cullens Yard)	VAC	n/a				VACANT
River View (Cullens Yard)	Unit 1-2	Department of Social Protection	B1			
River View (Cullens Yard)	43	Tony Murphy Footwear	A1	Comparison	Independent	
St Michaels Square	CQM	Croffy Quality Meats	A1	Convenience	Independent	
St Michaels Square	AA	Angela’s Attic	A1	Comparison	Independent	
St Michaels Square	TBB	The Bread Basket	A3			

St Michaels Square	CC	CostCutter	A1	Convenience	Multiple	
St Michaels Square	5	An Tain	A4			
St Michaels Square	MFG	Mulveys Fruit & Veg	A1	Convenience	Independent	
St Michaels Square	FS	First Stop	A1	Comparison	Independent	
St Michaels Square	JDC	Jack Duncan & Co	A2			
St Michaels Square	16	Pat Finn	A2			
St Michaels Square	GFD	Grenhams Funeral Directors	A1	Comparison	Independent	
St Michaels Square	2a	Allure Tattoo Parlour	SG			
St Michaels Square	KB	Kemal's Barbershop	A1	Comparison	Independent	
St Michaels Square	PHS	Passion Hair Salon	A1	Comparison	Independent	
St Michaels Square	PO	Post Office	A1	Convenience	Multiple	
St Michaels Square	PP	Paddy Power	A2			
St Michaels Square	SS	Sheridans Stores	A1	Comparison	Independent	
Dunlo Street	AIB	Allied Irish Bank				
Dunlo Street	GTT	Good Taste Takeaway	A5			
Dunlo Street	LP	Leahy's Pharmacy	A1	Comparison	Independent	
Dunlo Street	PCS	P. Clarke & Sons	A1	Comparison	Independent	
Dunlo Street		n/a				VACANT
Dunlo Street	6	Rothwell Staunton	A2			
Dunlo Street	MRO	Mary Rothwell Opticians	A1	Comparison	Independent	
Dunlo Street	ZZ	Zam Zam	A5			
Dunlo Street	PS	Parish Shop	A1	Comparison	Independent	
Dunlo Street	18	An Nonnch	A4			

Dunlo Street	CD	Chris Daly	A1	Comparison	Independent	
Dunlo Street	BDS	Billy’s Discount Store	A1	Comparison	Independent	
Dunlo Street	Dunlo Centre	Ladbrokes				
Dunlo Street	CO	Carry Out	A1	Convenience	Multiple	
Dunlo Street	HA	Harney’s	A1	Comparison	Regional	
Dunlo Street		n/a				VACANT
Dunlo Street		n/a				VACANT
Dunlo Street		n/a				VACANT
Dunlo Street	RGR	RGR Partners (Darren Goode)	A2			
Dunlo Street	FC	Footsteps Chiropody	SG			
Dunlo Street	GD	GARDA	D1			
Dunlo Street		n/a				VACANT
Dunlo Street	TSN	The Stork’s Nest	A1	Comparison	Independent	
Dunlo Street	GDC	Goode Dry Cleaning	A1	Comparison	Independent	
Dunlo Street	KL	Kathleen’s	A1	Comparison	Independent	
Dunlo Street	DT	The Dunlo Tavern	A4			
Dunlo Street	TB	Thomas Barber	A1	Comparison	Independent	
Dunlo Street	MFC	Morellis Fish & Chips	A5			
Dunlo Street	ENC	East Night Club	SG			
Dunlo Street	TAS	The Auld Sod	A4			
Dunlo Street	HD	Hubert Dolan	A1	Comparison	Independent	
Dunlo Street	TDS	The Deli Store	A3			
Dunlo Street	CF	Clare’s Flowers	A1	Comparison	Independent	

Dunlo Street	THG	The Hair Gallery	A1	Comparison	Independent	
Dunlo Street		n/a				VACANT
Dunlo Street	PAN	Panache	A1	Comparison	Independent	
Dunlo Street	TDI	The Duck Inn	A4			
Dunlo Street		n/a				VACANT
Dunlo Street	HH	Haydens Hotel	C1			
Dunlo Street		n/a				VACANT
Dunlo Street		n/a				VACANT
Dunlo Street	PM	Priority Meats	A1	Convenience	Independent	
Main Street	CC	Crumbs & Cream	A3			
Main Street	EW	Elite Windows	A1	Comparison	Independent	
Main Street	CHS	Carolines Hair Salon	A1	Comparison	Independent	
Main Street	16	n/a				VACANT
Main Street		n/a				VACANT
Main Street	DEB	D. Egan Bar	A4			
Main Street	GS	Gerry Stronge Photography	A1	Comparison	Independent	
Main Street	14	Keane Auctioneers	A2			
Main Street	PJS	Papa Johns/Supermacs	A5			
Main Street	FW	Fun World	SG			
Main Street	BO	Ballinasloe Opticians	A1	Comparison	Independent	
Main Street	PBS	Peter’s Barber Shop	A1	Comparison	Independent	
Main Street		n/a				VACANT
Main Street	6	Cahalan	A1	Comparison	Independent	

Main Street	GP	Grenhams Pub	A4			
Main Street	GOL	Grenhams Off Licence	A1	Convenience	Independent	
Main Street	5	Kellers Travel	A1	Comparison	Independent	
Main Street	5	Kellers Furniture	A1	Comparison	Independent	
Main Street		n/a				VACANT
Main Street		n/a				VACANT
Main Street	MMH	Murphy’s Medical Hall	A1	Comparison	Independent	
Main Street	LJP	Liam Jordan Photography	A1	Comparison	Independent	
Main Street	PPD	Phone & PC Doctor	A1	Comparison	Independent	
Main Street		n/a				VACANT
Main Street		n/a				VACANT
Main Street	JWC	John Wood & Co	A1	Comparison	Independent	
Main Street	E2	Euro2	A1	Comparison	Multiple	
Main Street	GH	Gullane’s Hotel	C1			
Main Street	SF	Spain’s Funeralcare	A1	Comparison	Independent	
Main Street	HCS	Harney Computer Solutions	A1	Comparison	Independent	
Main Street	MW	Michael Ward	A1	Comparison	Independent	
Main Street	BCU	Ballinasloe Credit Union	A2			
Main Street		n/a				VACANT
Main Street	JD	John Dolan	A2			
Main Street	VOD	Vodafone	A1	Comparison	Key Attractor	
Main Street	SF	Scannell Financial	A2			
Main Street	MM	Maud Millars	A4			
Main Street	WB	Willie Burke	A1	Comparison	Independent	

Main Street	SAL	Salmon’s	A1	Comparison	Independent	
Main Street	BOI	Bank of Ireland	A2			

Appendix 3: CAR PARKING DATABASE

Name:	Lidl
On Street/ Car Park:	Car Park (Private)
Total Spaces:	100
Short Stay Spaces: (4 hours and under)	0
Long Stay Spaces: (Over 4 hours)	98
Disabled Spaces:	2
Charge: FREE (Sign advising for customers only but no warning of penalties)	HOW MUCH DOES IT COST TO PARK FOR AN HOUR? HOW MUCH DOES IT COST TO PARK FOR 4 HOURS? HOW MUCH DOES IT COST TO PARK FOR MORE THAN 4 HOURS?
Vacant Spaces on a Market/ Busy Day:	36
Vacant Spaces on a Non Market/Quiet Day:	65
Illegal Spaces on a Market/ Busy Day:	0
Illegal Spaces on a Non Market/ Quiet Day:	0

FOR ALL COUNTS

Quiet Day: Tuesday 14/10/14. Weather: Sunny and Mild.

Busy Day: Thursday 16/10/14. Weather: Cloudy and Mild

Data Collected Between: 14.00 to 16.00 each day

Name:	Society Street
On Street/ Car Park:	Car Park (Local Auth)
Total Spaces:	70
Short Stay Spaces: (4 hours and under)	0
Long Stay Spaces: (Over 4 hours)	65
Disabled Spaces:	5
Charge:	HOW MUCH DOES IT COST TO PARK FOR AN HOUR? 0.50 HOW MUCH DOES IT COST TO PARK FOR 4 HOURS? 2.00 HOW MUCH DOES IT COST TO PARK FOR MORE THAN 4 HOURS? 2.00
Vacant Spaces on a Market/ Busy Day:	60
Vacant Spaces on a Non Market/Quiet Day:	61
Illegal Spaces on a Market/ Busy Day:	0
Illegal Spaces on a Non Market/ Quiet Day:	0

Name: Ballinasloe	West Car Park (Opposite Marina)
On Street/ Car Park:	Car Park (Local Authority)
Total Spaces:	84
Short Stay Spaces: (4 hours and under)	0
Long Stay Spaces: (Over 4 hours)	84
Disabled Spaces:	5
Charge:	HOW MUCH DOES IT COST TO PARK FOR AN HOUR? 0.50 HOW MUCH DOES IT COST TO PARK FOR 4 HOURS? 2.00 HOW MUCH DOES IT COST TO PARK FOR MORE THAN 4 HOURS? 2.00
Vacant Spaces on a Market/ Busy Day:	81
Vacant Spaces on a Non Market/Quiet Day:	60
Illegal Spaces on a Market/ Busy Day:	0
Illegal Spaces on a Non Market/ Quiet Day:	0

Name: Ballinasloe	West Car Park (Free) (Opposite Marina)
On Street/ Car Park:	Car Park (Local Authority)
Total Spaces:	54
Short Stay Spaces: (4 hours and under)	0
Long Stay Spaces: (Over 4 hours)	54
Disabled Spaces:	0
Charge: FREE (No sign advising this)	HOW MUCH DOES IT COST TO PARK FOR AN HOUR? - HOW MUCH DOES IT COST TO PARK FOR 4 HOURS? - HOW MUCH DOES IT COST TO PARK FOR MORE THAN 4 HOURS? -
Vacant Spaces on a Market/ Busy Day:	20
Vacant Spaces on a Non Market/Quiet Day:	24
Illegal Spaces on a Market/ Busy Day:	0
Illegal Spaces on a Non Market/ Quiet Day:	2

Name: Ballinasloe	Fair Green (McNevins Avenue)
On Street/ Car Park:	Car Park (Local Authority)
Total Spaces:	110
Short Stay Spaces: (4 hours and under)	0
Long Stay Spaces: (Over 4 hours)	108
Disabled Spaces:	2
Charge: FREE (No sign advising this)	HOW MUCH DOES IT COST TO PARK FOR AN HOUR? - HOW MUCH DOES IT COST TO PARK FOR 4 HOURS? - HOW MUCH DOES IT COST TO PARK FOR MORE THAN 4 HOURS? -
Vacant Spaces on a Market/ Busy Day:	76
Vacant Spaces on a Non Market/Quiet Day:	60
Illegal Spaces on a Market/ Busy Day:	0
Illegal Spaces on a Non Market/ Quiet Day:	1

Name: Ballinasloe	McNevin Avenue
On Street/ Car Park:	On Street
Total Spaces:	28
Short Stay Spaces: (4 hours and under)	28
Long Stay Spaces: (Over 4 hours)	0
Disabled Spaces:	0
Charge:	HOW MUCH DOES IT COST TO PARK FOR AN HOUR? 0.50 HOW MUCH DOES IT COST TO PARK FOR 4 HOURS? 2.00 HOW MUCH DOES IT COST TO PARK FOR MORE THAN 4 HOURS? 2.00
Vacant Spaces on a Market/ Busy Day:	14
Vacant Spaces on a Non Market/Quiet Day:	18
Illegal Spaces on a Market/ Busy Day:	0
Illegal Spaces on a Non Market/ Quiet Day:	0

Name: Ballinasloe	St Michael's Square
On Street/ Car Park:	On Street
Total Spaces:	92
Short Stay Spaces: (4 hours and under)	88
Long Stay Spaces: (Over 4 hours)	0
Disabled Spaces:	4
Charge:	HOW MUCH DOES IT COST TO PARK FOR AN HOUR? 0.50 HOW MUCH DOES IT COST TO PARK FOR 4 HOURS? 2.00 HOW MUCH DOES IT COST TO PARK FOR MORE THAN 4 HOURS? 2.00
Vacant Spaces on a Market/ Busy Day:	43
Vacant Spaces on a Non Market/Quiet Day:	48
Illegal Spaces on a Market/ Busy Day:	0
Illegal Spaces on a Non Market/ Quiet Day:	0

Name: Ballinasloe	Main Street
On Street/ Car Park:	On Street
Total Spaces:	44
Short Stay Spaces: (4 hours and under)	43
Long Stay Spaces: (Over 4 hours)	0
Disabled Spaces:	1
Charge:	HOW MUCH DOES IT COST TO PARK FOR AN HOUR? 0.50 HOW MUCH DOES IT COST TO PARK FOR 4 HOURS? 2.00 HOW MUCH DOES IT COST TO PARK FOR MORE THAN 4 HOURS? 2.00
Vacant Spaces on a Market/ Busy Day:	9
Vacant Spaces on a Non Market/Quiet Day:	13
Illegal Spaces on a Market/ Busy Day:	0
Illegal Spaces on a Non Market/ Quiet Day:	1

Name: Balinasloe	Dunlo Street
On Street/ Car Park:	On Street
Total Spaces:	74
Short Stay Spaces: (4 hours and under)	73
Long Stay Spaces: (Over 4 hours)	0
Disabled Spaces:	1
Charge:	HOW MUCH DOES IT COST TO PARK FOR AN HOUR? 0.50 HOW MUCH DOES IT COST TO PARK FOR 4 HOURS? 2.00 HOW MUCH DOES IT COST TO PARK FOR MORE THAN 4 HOURS? 2.00
Vacant Spaces on a Market/ Busy Day:	25
Vacant Spaces on a Non Market/Quiet Day:	26
Illegal Spaces on a Market/ Busy Day:	1
Illegal Spaces on a Non Market/ Quiet Day:	1

Name:	Society Street
On Street/ Car Park:	On Street
Total Spaces:	50
Short Stay Spaces: (4 hours and under)	48
Long Stay Spaces: (Over 4 hours)	0
Disabled Spaces:	2
Charge:	HOW MUCH DOES IT COST TO PARK FOR AN HOUR? 0.50 HOW MUCH DOES IT COST TO PARK FOR 4 HOURS? 2.00 HOW MUCH DOES IT COST TO PARK FOR MORE THAN 4 HOURS? 2.00
Vacant Spaces on a Market/ Busy Day:	24
Vacant Spaces on a Non Market/Quiet Day:	20
Illegal Spaces on a Market/ Busy Day:	0
Illegal Spaces on a Non Market/ Quiet Day:	1

Name: Ballinasloe	Salmons Department Store
On Street/ Car Park:	Car Park (Private)
Total Spaces:	40
Short Stay Spaces: (4 hours and under)	40
Long Stay Spaces: (Over 4 hours)	0
Disabled Spaces:	0
Charge: FREE	HOW MUCH DOES IT COST TO PARK FOR AN HOUR? - HOW MUCH DOES IT COST TO PARK FOR 4 HOURS? - HOW MUCH DOES IT COST TO PARK FOR MORE THAN 4 HOURS? -
Vacant Spaces on a Market/ Busy Day:	23
Vacant Spaces on a Non Market/Quiet Day:	24
Illegal Spaces on a Market/ Busy Day:	0
Illegal Spaces on a Non Market/ Quiet Day:	0

FOR ALL COUNTS:

Quiet Day: Tuesday 14/10/14. Weather: Sunny and Mild.

Busy Day: Thursday 16/10/14. Weather: Cloudy and Mild

Data Collected Between: 14.00 to 16.00 each day

Name: Ballinasloe	Marina Point
On Street/ Car Park:	Car Park (Private for shops and health centre)
Total Spaces:	65
Short Stay Spaces: (4 hours and under)	0
Long Stay Spaces: (Over 4 hours)	64
Disabled Spaces:	1
Charge: FREE	HOW MUCH DOES IT COST TO PARK FOR AN HOUR? - HOW MUCH DOES IT COST TO PARK FOR 4 HOURS? - HOW MUCH DOES IT COST TO PARK FOR MORE THAN 4 HOURS? -
Vacant Spaces on a Market/ Busy Day:	25
Vacant Spaces on a Non Market/Quiet Day:	26
Illegal Spaces on a Market/ Busy Day:	0
Illegal Spaces on a Non Market/ Quiet Day:	1

Name: Ballinasloe	Gullane's Hotel
On Street/ Car Park:	Car Park (Private)
Total Spaces:	142
Short Stay Spaces: (4 hours and under)	0
Long Stay Spaces: (Over 4 hours)	142
Disabled Spaces:	0
Charge: FREE	HOW MUCH DOES IT COST TO PARK FOR AN HOUR? - HOW MUCH DOES IT COST TO PARK FOR 4 HOURS? - HOW MUCH DOES IT COST TO PARK FOR MORE THAN 4 HOURS? -
Vacant Spaces on a Market/ Busy Day:	66
Vacant Spaces on a Non Market/Quiet Day:	62
Illegal Spaces on a Market/ Busy Day:	0
Illegal Spaces on a Non Market/ Quiet Day:	1

Name:	Bank of Ireland
On Street/ Car Park:	Car Park (Private)
Total Spaces:	34
Short Stay Spaces: (4 hours and under)	34
Long Stay Spaces: (Over 4 hours)	0
Disabled Spaces:	0
Charge: FREE (Sign displayed says for customers only, max 1 hour)	HOW MUCH DOES IT COST TO PARK FOR AN HOUR? HOW MUCH DOES IT COST TO PARK FOR 4 HOURS? HOW MUCH DOES IT COST TO PARK FOR MORE THAN 4 HOURS?
Vacant Spaces on a Market/ Busy Day:	4
Vacant Spaces on a Non Market/Quiet Day:	8
Illegal Spaces on a Market/ Busy Day:	0
Illegal Spaces on a Non Market/ Quiet Day:	0

Appendix 4: SHOPPERS' ORIGIN DATABASE

Distance (Kms)	**Settlement/ Business**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	Totals	%
45	Abbeyknockmoy			1		1					2	0%
11	Ahascragh	3	10	19	8	8	17	10		13	88	7%
41	Athenry	1	1	1	1		1		1		6	0%
30	Athlone	2	3	3	10	6	2	1	3	4	34	3%
8	Aughrim	7	5	5	4	10	8	4		10	53	4%
22	Ballinamore Bridge				1		2				3	0%
5k radius	Ballinasloe Town	23	48	81	61	26	139	44	51	81	554	45%
10	Ballydangan	2			1	3	5	2		1	14	1%
30	Ballygar		2	1			1	1	1		6	0%
23	Ballymacward	1	1	2			1		1	1	7	1%
30	Banagher					3					3	0%
26	Belmount				1						1	0%
42	Birr				3				2		5	0%
47	Borriskane		1						1		2	0%
22	Brideswell	1									1	0%
20	Caltra	3	1	4	1	4	4			3	20	2%
15	Cappataggle			4	4	2	1	3			14	1%
120	Castlebar			1							1	0%

111	Cavan								1	2	3	0%
87	Clare		1								1	0%
21	Clonmacnoise				1						1	0%
7	Clontuskert		2	2			5	2		3	14	1%
41	Craughwell				2						2	0%
246	Derry									2	2	0%
204	Donegal			1							1	0%
151	Dublin			3	5	1				5	14	1%
19	Dysart		1		1	1					3	0%
20	Eyrecourt	4	1	4	4	2	1	1	3		20	2%
33	Ferbane					1					1	0%
61	Galway city		1	5	3		1			2	12	1%
47	Glenamaddy				1						1	0%
53	Gort							1	1		2	0%
198	Kerry								1		1	0%
13	Kilconnell	3	1	4	10	5	10	4	1		38	3%
120	Kilkenny					1					1	0%
21	Killimor	3		2	3	4	2		4		18	1%
20	Kilreekil			2	1			1			4	0%
12	Kiltormer	1		6	4		5		2		18	1%
13	Laurencetown	2	3		1		6	3	5	4	24	2%
74	Longford			1							1	0%

29	Loughrea	2		1	8	1	5	3	13		33	3%
46	Moate				3						3	0%
40	Monevea			1					1		2	0%
27	Mountbellew		2	1	2	5	4	1	1		16	1%
71	Moycullen		1								1	0%
20	Mullagh			4			1	1		1	7	1%
20	New Inn		3	1	6	1	3	3	4		21	2%
32	Newbridge					1	1	1			3	0%
18	Newtown		1								1	0%
53	Oranmore			1					1		2	0%
	Overseas		1	1			1	2		17	22	2%
31	Portunma		1	2	4	5	3	1	12	1	29	2%
45	Riverstown (Tipp)		1								1	0%
57	Roscommon			1	3		1	1			6	0%
14	Shannonbridge		1		2	2	1	2		9	17	1%
141	Sligo			1							1	0%
10	Taughhmaconnell	2	5	3	2	5	8	14	1	1	41	3%
55	Tuam		2	4	3	1	1	1	1		13	1%
206	tyrone									3	3	0%
30	Tynagh		1					1	2		4	0%
42	Woodford	1				2					3	0%
											1225	

The Heart of Our Town:

Ballinasloe

Town Centre Survey & Review

January 2017

Table of Contents

Executive Summary

Start of a long journey

> *"Turning-around a town centre is a long-term journey that takes place against a wider backcloth of national and international economic, technological and social change."*

This survey undertaken in November 2016 provides an update on facts and perceptions about Ballinasloe town centre as the 'heart' of a wider community. It does this by gathering the same information recorded during a 'baseline' survey undertaken in 2014 and 'benchmarking' findings against average performance figures for similar types of towns.

Two years may seem a long time but don't expect the fortunes of the town centre to have been transformed over this period. Turning-around a town centre is a long-term journey and one that has to take-place against a wider backcloth of national and international economic, technological and social change. Simply 'putting the brakes on' and re-thinking approaches can be success itself in these early years.

What we look for in revisiting a town two years in to a transformational journey are signs that its 'town team' are properly engaged with businesses and other stakeholders; that a common sense of purpose is emerging; that facts and figures point to more positive trends and that priorities and ambitions for the town are moving on as local confidence increases.

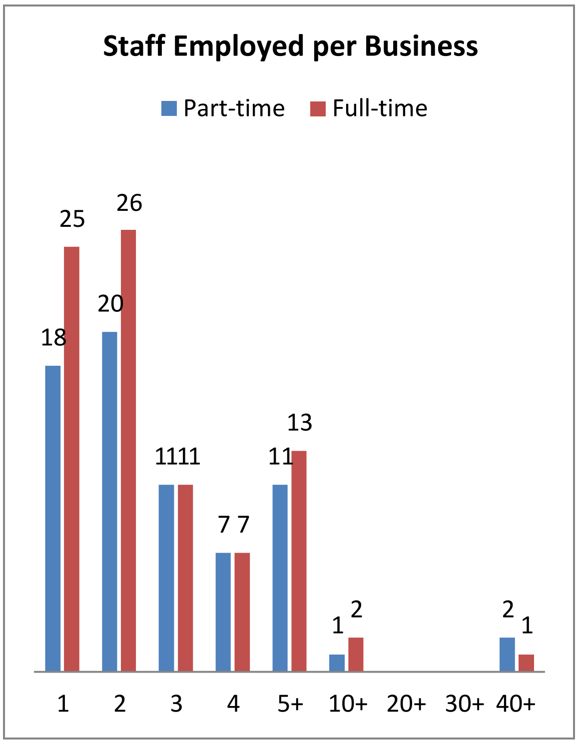
A 'great' local town again

A phrase that I have often used in discussions with Ballinasloe's new town team over the last two years is "let's make it a good, local town again". Actually after tracking recent progress that has included imaginative events and businesses beginning to come together, let's step-up that ambition: "Let's make Ballinasloe a great local town again"!

With improved transport links and online offerings, no town centre can any longer expect loyalty based on a monopoly in meeting local needs. A town centre has to attract customers and meet their needs for goods, services and leisure by providing a high quality and distinctive experience. Achieve this and there will be a much more marketable product to attract visitors from further afield.

> *"With improved transport links and online offerings no town centre can any longer* expect loyalty based on a monopoly in meeting local needs."

The updated data for 2016 reconfirms the following things about the town, its current role and the base that exists from which to re-invent Ballinasloe as a great local town once again:



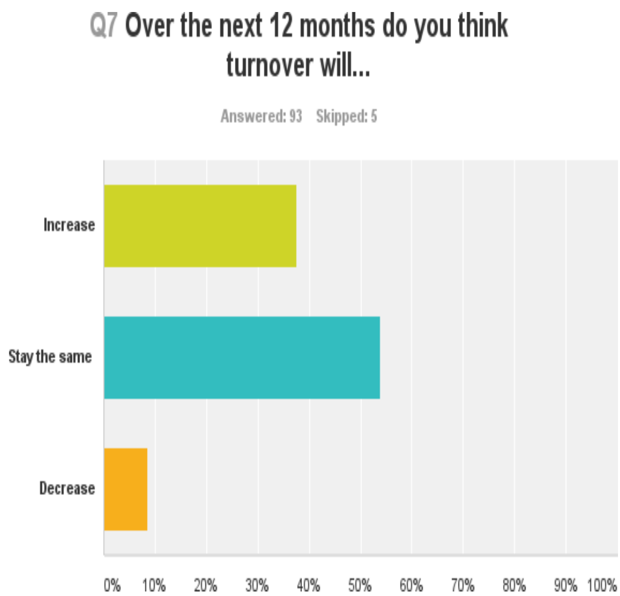
- There remains a good spread of different types of businesses in the town centre with a higher than average proportion of retail (57%).
- Town centre businesses are collectively both a significant employer and customer base, with 618 staff working in the 93 businesses sampled.
- There is a very high proportion of independent retailers (87%) and correspondingly a low number of multiples. This provides important distinctiveness but will also cause some shoppers -especially amongst younger generations- to look to other centres or on-line to access well-known brands.

"Town centre businesses are collectively both a significant employer and customer base."

- The vast majority of shops are comparison retailers (88%) and this suggests some vulnerability to competition from neighbouring centres and on-line retail.
- There has been a slight decrease in the proportion of convenience shops (12%) over the last two years from an already low base. Importantly there is still more than one butcher, a greengrocer and unusually a fishmonger that can help generate regular footfall.
- Two major high street banks, the Credit Union and other commercial services are important parts of the business mix and the town's function as a local service centre.
- Despite a small increase over the last two years (from 3% to 5%), the proportion of restaurants and cafes remains low and could be limiting day-time 'dwell times'. Conversely, there is a high proportion of drinking establishments (8%).
- The range of public services appears moderate for a town striving to provide a key local service centre function that attracts regular footfall from the surrounding area.

Changing business performance and confidence

This survey involved visiting every business in Ballinasloe town centre at least twice to get their feedback on the performance and confidence of their own businesses and the town as a whole. Once again, we are grateful for the phenomenally high response (66% compared to a normal 'good' rate of return of 25% in other towns). This is what businesses told us about their changing performance and confidence:



- The number of businesses where turnover has stayed the same or increased over the last year is up to 79% and this compares favourably with the situation in 2014 (71%) as well as with benchmark averages (70%).

"There is cause for future optimism by the fact that 91% of businesses in Ballinasloe expect turnover to stay the same or increase over the next 12 months"

- Profitability has stayed the same or increased in 75% of businesses over the last year and this compares favourably with the situation in 2014 (68%) as well as with benchmark averages (67%).
- There is cause for future optimism by the fact that 91% of businesses in Ballinasloe expect turnover to stay the same or increase over the next 12 months and this compares favourably with 2014 (82%) as well as with benchmark averages (79%). Importantly the proportion of businesses projecting a decline in turnover has reduced from 16% in 2014 to 9% in 2016.
- When asked to respond to the statement that Ballinasloe has a bright future, only 20% agreed and a further 50% were undecided. In a town Like Ballinasloe where business owners are intrinsically a part of the local community, they need to be collectively involved in shaping the town's future and understanding the role of their businesses within in it.

"In a town like Ballinasloe where business owners are intrinsically a part of the local community, they need to be collectively involved in shaping the town's future and understanding the role of their businesses within in it."

In terms of the *positives* and *negatives* about being located in the town centre businesses told us:

- *Positives*: The potential for local customers (66%) is consistently considered the strongest positive aspect of being located in Ballinasloe town centre. Transport links (41%), geographical location (39%), retail mix (39%) and car parking (36%) are all characteristics valued by more than a third of businesses.

"The potential for local customers (66%) is consistently considered the strongest positive aspect of being located in Ballinasloe town centre."

- *Negatives:* Competition from out-of-town retails is now ranked as the biggest negative aspect of trading in the town centre followed by parking (50%), the wider prosperity of the town (50%), the appearance of the town centre (41%) and competition from other localities (39%).

When asked to respond to the statement that "*Ballinasloe has a bright future*", only 20% of businesses agreed and a further 50% were undecided. This perhaps points the critical importance of local partners and businesses continuing to work together to realistically address issues and change expectations. In a town Like Ballinasloe where business owners are intrinsically a part of the local community need, they need to be collectively involved in shaping the town's future and understanding the role of their businesses within in it.

Taking a customer-led perspective

If we are to aspire to meet customers' needs for goods, services and leisure whilst providing a high quality experience, it's important to ask them what they think of current provision! This is what 153 mid-week town centre users told us about themselves, how they use the town, likes/dislikes and things they would like to see improve:

Positives: Respondents were reassuringly positive about key aspects of the experience for a town aspiring to once again be a 'great local town', including: access to services (88%); customer service (83%); convenience (80%); and ease of walking around (90%). In deed it seems users' perceptions of these aspects of the town centre experience have improved over the last two years and all are rated higher than comparable benchmarks.

"Respondents were reassuringly positive about key aspects of the experience for a town aspiring to once again be a 'great local town', including: access to services; customer service; convenience; and ease of walking around town."

Other notable improvements (>10% increase) in users' perceptions about the town centre include cafes/restaurants (67%), transport links (75%) and car parking (58%) where a majority now view these as positive aspects of the town centre experience and in a way that compares favourably with benchmarks.

Negatives: Town centre users, in contrast to businesses, were most negative about the retail offer (56%) with a slight increase in this sentiment over the last two years.

Other negative aspects worth focusing on because perceptions have worsened and/or they compare unfavourably with benchmarks, are the town's physical appearance (48%), cultural activities/events (44%), cleanliness (40%), leisure facilities (38%), pubs/bars/nightclubs (33%) and markets (43%). Many of these are aspects of the town centre that it is necessary strengthen to improve perceptions of the town centre as a place to choose for a 'day-out' or to linger.

At the time of these mid-week surveys, most of the town centre users were in-town for work (25%); leisure (25%), convenience shopping (24%) and access to services (17%). Only 5% of users stated that they were in town for comparison shopping (compared to 10% in 2014), whilst 88% of retailers offer comparison goods.

"Only 5% of users stated that they were in town for comparison shopping, whilst 88% of retailers offer comparison goods."

Spending in the town centre appears relatively high compared to averages for small towns in the UK with 70% of town centre users saying they spend over €12.01 on a normal. This relatively high spend may in part be accounted for by linked trips to supermarkets. Combined with the fact that 85% of the town centre users sampled visited the town at least once a week, this suggests a key role as a local service centre.

We now from footfall counts that the numbers of potential customers out-and-about in Ballinasloe are modest compared to similar-sized towns and that levels drop considerably across different parts of the town.

Supplementary questions about Ballinasloe indicated that once again nearly two thirds of users (63%) would currently recommend a visit to the town centre. They are less optimistic looking forward with under one third (31%) agreeing that it has a bright future and only 2% strongly agreeing compared to 9% in 2014. Such apparent pessimism may well reflect wider economic concerns expressed elsewhere as part of this survey. When asked to select three words that best described Ballinasloe, the most popular choices remain local (66%), convenient (61%). friendly (54%) and quiet (48%). These responses give a realistic portrayal of the town by existing users than can help in re-enforcing and promoting its strengths.

"Nearly two thirds of users (63%) would currently recommend a visit to the town centre."

Next steps and future priorities

Both businesses and town centre users were asked to give their top two future priorities for improving the town's economic performance. The diagram below gives a summary of the aggregated responses for both stakeholder groups.

Future Priorities *for* Ballinasloe Town Centre

	Businesses	Customers
1	On-street parking	Employment & development
2	Employment & wider economy	Retail mix
3	Local leadership & joint working	On-street parking
4	Retail mix & business rates	Appearance & empty premises
5	Appearance & empty premises	Leisure esp. young people

Here we reflect a little on these priorities, any insights provided by the survey work and potential next steps for the town team and partners to consider.

The parking conundrum

Parking remains prominent in both businesses' and customers' minds, with an increasing number of stakeholders even seeing it as strength. From the data we already have a lot of information that points to remedies:

- parking availability is very good overall although this is greatly aided by free, private provision alongside paid-for, on-street and local authority parking.
- the 'mixed' parking offer between public/private and paid/free would be confusing to the unfamiliar visitor and this is compounded by inconsistent signage to, within and from car parks. Proposals are, however, in place which can address much of this and add clarity.
- flexibility or the removal of on-street parking charges remain a key priority for many Ballinasloe businesses despite in other responses it being considered more widely as a positive of trading in the town.
- the key issue is the balance that must be struck between using parking tariffs

> *"The key issue is the balance that must be struck between using parking tariffs (costs and time restrictions) to manage the supply and demand.*

(costs and time restrictions) to manage the supply and demand for on-street, 'pop-and-shop' parking in particular.

- calls to remove on-street parking tariffs completely would likely lead to a 'free-for-all' and transfer cars from car parks to occupy on-street spaces valued by businesses and their customers.

Next steps: It will be important to try and engage parking managers and business representatives in a realistic dialogue about flexibility with tariffs for on-street 'pop-and shop' whilst generating funds to improve the consistency of signage to, within and from car parks.

Employment, development and the wider economy

Unusually for a survey of this kind, strategic issues such as employment, the economy, planning and development were very prominent amongst stakeholders' priorities for improving the town centre. It is undeniable that the prosperity of the town centre and wider economic and housing development are inextricably linked and the advancement of both should move forward in parallel.

Equally though, it is important not to use wider economic uncertainty as a reason to stall investment and initiative to improve the town centre for the following reasons:

"Without a vibrant town centre and businesses that provide a quality experience, any new income is more likely to be spent in other accessible centres or on-line."

- the vibrancy of the town centre and local community are key in determining the attractiveness of the area to major investors
- existing businesses and potential small-scale start-ups cannot wait for some of these wider economic considerations to be determined. It is important to work within and build-on the current position and collectively promote the existing strengths of the town
- without a vibrant town centre and businesses that provide a quality experience, any new income is more likely to be spent in other accessible centres or on-line. Circumstances have changed and any new of higher paid employees would no longer be a 'captive' audience

Next steps: Understand and engage with strategic partners such as Galway County Council's strategic planning and economic development roles to promote inward investment and plan for necessary new housing or infrastructure in a way that underpins the town centre's role.

Promoting and managing the retail mix

We know from this and previous surveys that existing town users, and especially 'non-users' are not entirely satisfied with the retail mix that the town centre provides. We also know that some businesses recognise this issue themselves and understand the importance of a strong, collective offer of what might be considered the town-wide 'department store'!

As has already been documented, we know a lot from the survey about existing businesses and town centre users' habits including an apparent mismatch between a composition of 88% comparison retailers and a 5% base of comparison shoppers. We also know from more detailed analysis and observation that the town has a rich variety of independent businesses including specialist comparison retailers, commercial services, drinking establishments and key convenience goods. Leisure is moderately represented through community services and private restaurants.

"The town has a rich variety of independent businesses including specialist comparison retailers, commercial services, drinking establishments and key convenience goods."

The priority in taking things forward should be to continue to enhance and promote the current offer in a way that builds on recent success. This will include bringing the town 'on-line', businesses participating in events, window displays, customer service training, expanding participation in the Sports Hub provision and creating further themed promotional material including 'viral video shorts' of sectors such as fashion, lifestyle, local food, nightlife.

Ballinasloe's vacancy rate (18%) is high compared to other benchmarked towns but this figure represents a decrease on levels for 2014 (19%). Though the town has a large number of units not well-suited to the demands of the modern retailer, there is an indication of current activity in the commercial property market for the town.

"Ballinasloe's vacancy rate (18%) is high compared to other benchmarked towns but this figure represents a decrease on levels for 2014 (19%)."

Promotional activity of existing businesses could be augmented by a pro-active programme of re-letting empty shops including a premises conditions audit, engagement with landlords and letting agents, help with essential refurbishments, short-term lets, possible rent/rates reductions, pop-up shops and business mentoring.

Next steps: The town team can build on its existing work to help improve the on-street, in-print and on-line promotion of existing businesses through a programme that also looks at pro-actively diversifying the retail mix and filling empty shops.

Appearance and empty premises

The appearance of the town and the blight caused by redundant premises and empty shops featured prominently amongst survey responses from customers and businesses. This is an important part of boosting confidence and the appeal of the town centre to existing users, visitors and potential investors. Although to date not evidenced by significant improvements on the ground, there will hopefully be a period of intense activity within the next two years as Galway Councils' long-planned Town Centre

Enhancement Scheme is implemented. It will be important to make the most of this opportunity in the following ways:

- clearly communicating any potential disruption to business representatives and customers through flexible planning and effective communications throughout
- taking the opportunity to systematically enhance existing shop-fronts to complement streetscape improvements
- targeting the restoration and re-letting of key empty premises to coincide with the enhancement works
- taking the opportunity to install essential orientation boards and signage to improve visitor access in a way that coincides with phased improvements
- organising promotional campaigns and events to celebrate the phased 're-opening' of a more attractive town centre

Next steps: Close liaison between Galway County Council, the town team and business representatives will be essential to ensure that this 'good news' story has a positive impact and opportunities and necessary investment are pursued to complement and complete the overall effect.

"There was strong recognition from town centre users about the importance of increasing the town centre's profile and attracting footfall by developing an events programme)."

Leisure and events

There was strong recognition from town centre users about the importance of increasing the town centre's profile and attracting footfall by developing an events programme and wider leisure activities including provision for young people in particular.

The town team and other partners have fast been developing expertise in this area with new events such as the festive celebrations, the piloting of the Sports Hub scheme and the development of the community cinema. It will be important to continue this work in a way that raises the profile of the town and its businesses to infrequent visitors and increases regular footfall. Hospitality-related businesses including hotels, restaurants, cafes, take-aways and bars obviously have a key part to play in this. In view of the number of comments about provision for young people, further engagement with schools, sports clubs and youth groups may help identify opportunities.

Next steps: The town team should continue its work with other community groups and businesses to develop an annual programme of activities that raises the town centres profile and increases footfall.

"It is both very encouraging and unusual that a survey like this receives significant numbers of stakeholder responses recognising the importance of local leadership and showing an appetite for partnership working."

Local leadership and joint working

It is both very encouraging and unusual that a survey like this receives significant numbers of stakeholder responses recognising the importance of local leadership and showing an appetite for partnership working. Partnership working has been an instinctive part of the team's progress over the last two years with a great track record in working with community groups, engaging businesses and maintaining relations strategic-level organisations such as Galway County Council. It is important that this approach continues and that the town team continues to maintain good communications, involves more and more businesses in collective solutions and uses the strengths and capacity of existing community-based organisations.

An identified priority for the next two years is to strengthen working relations with GCC officers and members around the Enhancement Scheme, potential access and parking improvements and engagement in wider economic development. The suggestion is that a memorandum of understanding is created and joint action plan agreed for regular six monthly reviews.

Next steps: The town team should continue to marshal local involvement from community groups and businesses whilst giving extra priority to strengthening strategic relations and influence with Galway County Council.

"An identified priority for the next two years is to strengthen working relations with GCC officers and members around the Enhancement Scheme, potential access and parking improvements and engagement in wider economic development."

Introduction

The Approach

Purpose

The town centre surveying and benchmarking approached used here was developed to help understand, measure, evaluate and ultimately improve the economic viability of communities. The approach has been used increasingly widely since 2004 and offers a simple way of capturing data on town centre Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) selected by those involved in town centre revitalisation. Measuring performance in this way helps in action planning be more focused and effective to directly improve town centres. Making comparisons with national averages and historic data helps gauge recent changes in performance in the context of wider trends.

Schedule

In order to compare most accurately across towns and over a number of years key performance indicators (KPIs) are measured at set times of year. For Ballinasloe, a first baseline survey was undertaken in late October 2014 and the same survey was repeated in early November 2016.

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	METHODOLOGY
Core Economic Indicators	
Commercial Units	
KPI 1: Use Class	Visual Survey
KPI 2: Comparison/Convenience	Visual Survey
KPI 3: Trader Type	Visual Survey
KPI 4: Vacancy Rates	Visual Survey
Cross-town Trends	
KPI 5: Markets	Visual Survey
KPI 6 & 7: Zone A Retail Rents	Valuation Office Agency/ Local Agents
KPI 7: Prime Retail Property Yields	Valuation Office Agency/ Local Agents
KPI 8: Footfall	Footfall Survey on a Market & Quiet Day
KPI 9: Car Parking	Audit on Market and Quiet Day
Stakeholder Surveys	
KPI 10: Business Confidence Surveys	Drop-in Survey
KPI 11: Town Centre Users Surveys	Face to Face Surveys/ Online Survey
KPI 12: Shoppers Origin Surveys	Shoppers Origin Survey

Key Findings

Commercial Units

KPI1: Commercial Units; Use Class

It is important to understand the scale and variety of the "commercial offer" throughout the town. A variety of shops and a range of services in a town are important to it remaining competitive and attractive to customers.

The following table provides a detailed analysis of the commercial offering in the town centre by Use Class. The figures are presented as a percentage of the 150 occupied units recorded. In this table and throughout this report, comparisons are included to the same data sets recorded in 2014.

The table in Appendix 1a provides a detailed description for each of the Use Classes. There were 182 business premises identified in the town centre and these are listed in Appendix 1b. There were 32 vacant business units recorded in the audit.

	National Small Towns %	**Ballinasloe % (2014)**	**Ballinasloe (number)**	**Ballinasloe %**
A1: Shops	52%	58%	86	57%
A2: Financial and Professional Services	14%	12%	18	12%
A3: Restaurants and Cafes	8%	3%	8	5%
A4: Drinking Establishments	4%	8%	13	8%
A5: Hot Food Takeaways	5%	5%	7	5%
B1: Businesses	3%	2%	3	2%
B2: General Industrial	1%	0	0	0
B8: Storage and Distribution	0	0	0	0
C1: Hotels	1%	2%	2	1%
C2: Residential Institutions	0	0	0	0
C2A: Secure Residential Institution	0	0	0	0
D1: Non-residential Institutions	6%	2%	6	3%
D: Assembly and Leisure	1%	2%	3	2%
SG: Sui Generis ("unique" establishments)	6%	5%	8	5%
Not recorded	0	0	0	0

There remains a good spread of different types of businesses in Ballinasloe town centre with over half (57%) being retail and this is higher than averages for similarly-sized towns taken from UK data. Financial and professional services (12%) are slightly lower compared to other small towns (12%), although importantly major High Street banks and a Credit Union are present. Non-residential institutions, assembly/leisure and unique 'Sui Generis' establishments collectively give an indication of the community function of a town centre and account for 10% of premises compared to 13% for benchmark towns.

There has been a small but significant increase in the number and proportion of restaurants and cafes from 3% to 5% though this is still lower than comparable benchmarks and may limit 'dwell times'. Conversely, there are more drinking establishments (8%) than might be expected in a town of this size.

KPI2: Commercial Units; Comparison versus Convenience

A1 retail units or shops can be split into two different types: Comparison and Convenience. The balance of comparison and convenience retail units is a good indicator of a town's function and the balance of its appeal to local shoppers and visitors.

Convenience goods -low-cost, everyday items that consumers are unlikely to travel food and non-alcoholic drinks:

- tobacco
- alcohol
- newspapers and magazines
- non-durable household goods.

Comparison goods -all other retail goods.

- books
- clothing and Footwear
- furniture, floor coverings and household textiles
- audio-visual equipment and other durable goods
- hardware and DIY supplies
- chemists goods
- jewelry, watches and clocks
- bicycles
- recreational and Miscellaneous goods
- hairdressing

The table indicates that the vast majority of businesses in Ballinasloe town centre are comparison retailers (88%) and that this is a slightly higher proportion than other benchmarked small towns. Whilst this percentage of comparison retailers indicates Ballinasloe is an established local shopping destination, it suggests a vulnerability to competition from neighbouring centres and on-line retail. This high proportion of comparison retailers also needs to be considered against the proportion of comparison shoppers later recorded through the town centre users' survey.

There has been a minor decrease in the proportion of convenience shops over the last two years and this trend could become critical if it continues. Importantly, there remains more than one butcher, a greengrocer and unusually a fishmonger in the town centre.

	National Small Towns %	Ballinasloe % (2014)	Ballinasloe (number)	Ballinasloe %
Comparison	82%	87%	76	88%
Convenience	18%	13%	10	12%

KPI3: Commercial Units; Trader Types

The vitality of a town centre depends greatly on the quality and variety of retailers represented. National retail businesses are considered 'Key Attractors' and are particularly important in terms of attracting visitors and shoppers to a town from further afield. The character and profile of a town often also depends, however, on the variety and mix of independent shops that can give it a "unique selling point" and help distinguish it from other competing centres. A sustainable balance of Key Attractors and multiple names alongside local independent shops is therefore likely to have the greatest positive impact on the vitality and viability of a town. The following shops are considered Key Attractors by Experian Goad.

Department Stores	**Clothing**
BHS	Burton
Debenhams	Dorothy Perkins
House of Fraser	H & M
John Lewis	New Look
Marks and Spencer	Primark (Penny's)
(Dunnes)	River Island
Mixed Goods Retailers	Topman
Argos	Topshop
Boots	**Other Retailers**
TK Maxx	Carphone Warehouse
WH Smith	Clarks
Wilkinson	Clintons
Supermarkets	HMV
Sainsbury's	O2
Tesco	Superdrug
Waitrose	Vodafone
	Waterstones

Multiple traders have a countrywide presence and are well known household names. Regional shops are identified as those with stores / units in several towns throughout one geographical region only and independent shops are identified as those that are specific to a particular town.

The following table provides a percentage of the A1 Shops which are Key Attractors, Multiples, Regional and Independent to the locality.

As commented in 2014, the important thing to note from this data is that Ballinasloe has a significantly higher percentage of independent retailers (87%) compared to similar sized towns. Whilst the list of Key Attractors needs redefining, the number of multiples as a whole (9%) is significantly lower than averages for similar sized towns (25%). This may cause some shoppers –especially amongst younger generations- to look to other centres or on-line to access well-known brands.

	Nat. Small Towns %	Ballinasloe % (2014)	Ballinasloe (number)	Ballinasloe %
Key attractor	5%	1%	1	1%
Multiple	22%	8%	7	8%
Regional	7%	4%	3	4%
Independent	66%	87%	75	87%

KPI4: Commercial Units; Vacancy Rates

Vacant units are an important indicator of the vitality and viability of a town centre. The presence of vacant units over a period of time can identify potential weaknesses in a town centre, whether due to locational criteria, high rent levels or strong competition from other centres. The following table provides the percentage figure of vacant units from the total number of commercial units.

	Nat. Small Towns %	Ballinasloe % (2014)	Ballinasloe (number)	Ballinasloe %
Vacancy %	9%	19%	32	18%

Ballinasloe's vacancy rate (18%) is high compared to other benchmarked towns but represents a decrease on adjusted levels for 2014 (19%). The town though does have a large number of units and many of these are small in size, are historic properties and in a seemingly poor condition that are not well-suited to the demands of the modern retailer.

There is an indication of current activity in the commercial property market for the town with several long-term empty premises displaying 'sold' signs. It is important to consistently monitor the vacancy rate to identify trends over time and in a small town, a small number of changes either way will have a significant impact on the figures.

Cross-Town Trends

KPI5: Markets

Good quality markets provide competition and choice for consumers. A busy and well-used street market can therefore be a good indicator of the vitality of a town centre. Conversely, if a market is in decline (e.g. empty pitches reducing numbers), it can be an indication of potential weaknesses in the town centre e.g. a lack of footfall customers due to an inappropriate retail mix or increased competitor activity. Street markets can also generate substantial benefits for the local economy and provide a local mechanism for a diverse range of local enterprises to start, flourish and grow to extend the sustainable mix of shops services on offer. There is no regular street market in Ballinasloe although there is a craft market in the Town Hall.

KPI 6 AND 7: Zone A Retail Rents and Prime Retail Property Yields

The values for prime retail property yield and Zone A rentals are the "industry" benchmarks for the relative appeal of a location with its users and with the owners or investors in property. As these indicators rise and fall, they provide a barometer of success or failure and, because the same property dimensions are assessed to determine them, they can be used as an indicator of improving or declining fortunes for towns. This data was not available for Ballinasloe but could ne compiled through reguar cooperation with local property surveyors.

KPI 8: Footfall

The arrival and movement of people, whether as residents, workers, visitors or a shopper is vital to the success of the majority of businesses within the town centre. The more people that are attracted to the town, the better it trades and the more prosperous the businesses in it become, provided there is ample available disposable income in that population. Measuring passing people in a consistent manner in the same place, at the same time builds up a picture of the town, its traders and their relative success over the weeks and months.

The following table provides the average number of people per 10 minutes between 10am and 1pm from the busiest footfall location in the town, Main Street, compared against similar locations in other towns.

	Nat. Small Towns	Ballinasloe (2015)	Ballinasloe
Monday (Main St)	99	83	72
Thursday (Main St)	111	85	81

This data indicates that average footfall counts for Ballinasloe are modest compared to similar-sized towns and that there has been a slight reduction compared to 2014 figures. More significant, as indicated previously, is the fact that footfall levels drop considerably across different parts of the town with much lower counts recorded for Dunlo Street and Society Street. This indicates that town centre users are not migrating around the town on normal mid-week mornings.

KPI 9: Car Parking

Usually, a large proportion of spending customers in a town centre come by car. In the rural setting, the car tends to be an essential tool, used by both those who come to spend and those who come to work. The provision of adequate and convenient car parking facilities is therefore a key element of town centre vitality. An acceptable number of available spaces with a regular, quick turn-over for shoppers are the ideal, while longer-stay, more peripheral parking can meet the needs of workers and any day-visitors.

The table overleaf provides a summary of the car parking offer in the town. More detailed data for constituent car parks and on-street parking is included in appendix 2. The data is broken down into the following categories:

- Percentage number of spaces in designated car parks and on-street
- Percentage number of short stay, long stay and disabled spaces in designated car parks and on-street
- Percentage of vacant spaces in designated car parks on a Market/ Busy Day and on a non-market/ quiet day

The survey shows that there are 981 car park spaces in Ballinasloe that can be subdivided in to:

- Off-street parking accounting for 70% of spaces and within this a 17%:52%:2% split between short-stay, long-stay and disabled parking. This is provided by a mix of chargeable public and free private car parks which oddly are located next to each other.
- On-street parking accounts for 30% of the total spaces in the town and all of this is short-stays (29%) or disabled (1%) parking. The proportion of on-street parking spaces is high compared to average figures for small towns and suggests a good ability to 'pop-and-shop' within the town centre.

	Nat. Small Towns %	Ballinasloe % (2014)	Ballinasloe (number)	Ballinasloe %
Car Parks				
Total spaces:	79%	70%	689	70%
Short stay spaces:	38%	4%	170	17%
Long stay spaces: (over 4 hours)	51%	65%	502	52%
Disabled spaces:	5%	1	17	2%
Not registered	6%	-	-	-
Vacant spaces on a busy day:	26%	57%	429	62%
Vacant spaces on a quiet day:	39%	57%	518	75%
On-Street Parking				
Total spaces:	21%	30%	292	30%
Short stay spaces:	70%	29%	283	29%
Long stay spaces: (over 4 hours)	22%	0	0	0
Disabled spaces:	5%	1%	9	1%
Not registered	3%	-	-	-
Vacant spaces on a busy day:	14%	39%	86	29%
Vacant spaces on a quiet day:	21%	43%	98	34%
Totals				
Total spaces:	n/a	n/a	981	n/a
Short stay spaces:	45%	34%	453	46%
Long stay spaces: (over 4 hours)	45%	66%	502	52%
Disabled spaces:	5%	2%	26	2%
Not registered	5%	-	-	-
Vacant spaces on a busy day:	24%	52%		53%
Vacant spaces on a quiet day:	35%	53%	622	63%

Average vacancy rates of 53-63% are higher than in 2014 and suggest an overall good availability of parking that is neither a limiting factor nor a negative. As further analysis revealed previously, however, public car parks have 210 of these spaces (30% of the total) with higher vacancy rates, whilst private car parks have 131 spaces and are busier. Private parking is free of charge whereas on-street and local authority parking have largely to be paid for. The private parking is thus significantly alleviating any pressure on town centre parking and without this provision there would far fewer vacant spaces spread between on-street and council car parks.

The 'mixed' parking offer between public/private and paid/free is confusing to the unfamiliar visitor and this is compounded by inconsistent signage to, within and from car parks. Proposals are in place which can address much of this and add clarity but it is unlikely that this alone will get to the bottom of why parking remains to be perceived as a priority, especially by businesses (see stakeholder surveys). The key issue that needs to be addressed is the balance between using parking tariffs (costs and time restrictions) and managing the availability of on-street parking in particularl. Calls to remove on-street parking tariffs completely would likely lead to a 'free-for-all' and transfer cars from car parks to occupy on-street spaces valued by businesses and their customers.

Stakeholder Surveys

KPI 10: Business Confidence Survey

Business Confidence Surveys were distributed to all the town centre businesses in Ballinasloe and every business was revisited at least twice. As in 2014, this approach resulted in a very high response rate of return 66% compared to a typical rate of return of 25% in other towns. Normally, high response rates are an indication of businesses engagement in the town centre renewal process. The following percentage figures are based on the returns from 98 businesses.

Profile of Respondents	Nat. Small Towns %	Ballinasloe % (2014)	Ballinasloe %
Business Sector			
Retail	62%	61%	62%
Financial/ professional services	18%	15%	8%
Public sector	1%	1%	2%
Food and drink	11%	13%	19%
Accommodation	7%	10%	9%
Other	0	0	0
Business Type			
Multiple trader	19%	10%	12%%

Regional	12%	6%	2%
Independent	69%	84%	86%
How Long Trading			
Less than a year	7%	2%	7%
One to five years	21%	10%	8%
Six to ten years	13%	12%	8%
More than ten years	59%	76%	76%

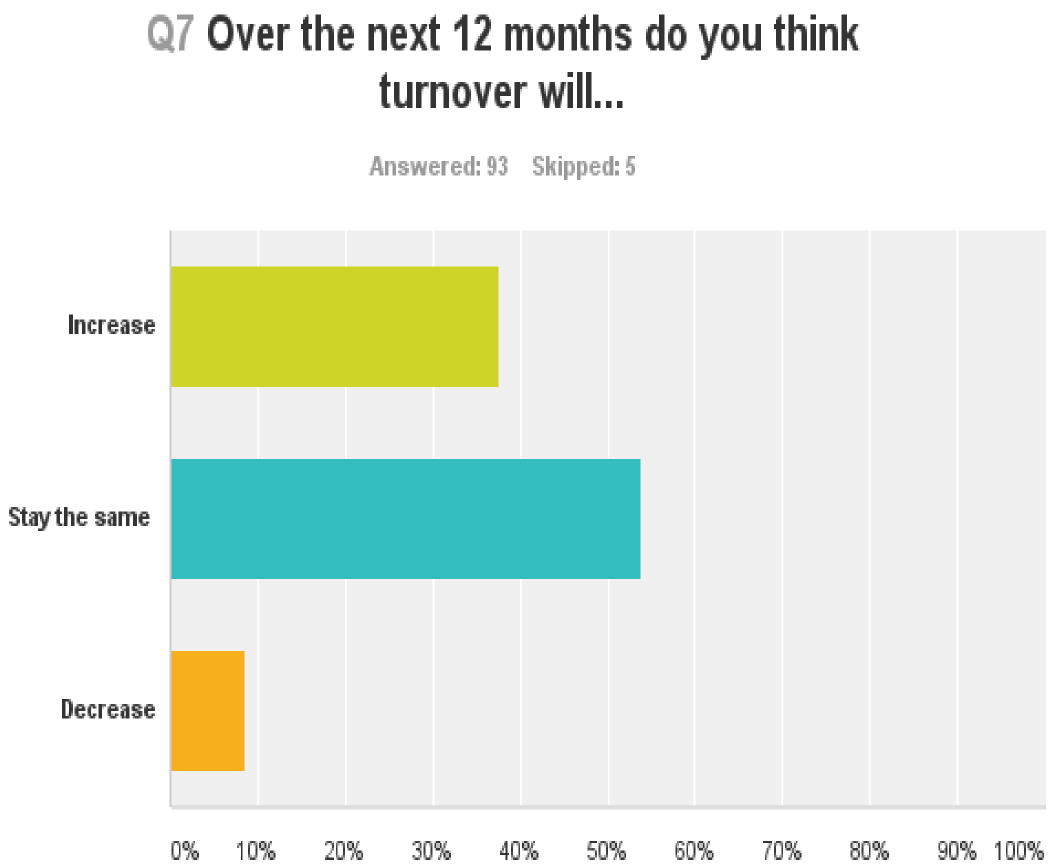
The evidence indicates that the responses to the survey came from a representative sample of business sectors and types –for example 62% were retailers and 86% were independent businesses compared to 57% and 87% respectively for the town as a whole. Importantly, this data indicates that a high proportion (84%) of respondents were long-established businesses that had been trading in the town for at least six years.

As part of the survey, businesses were asked about recent and future performance. These responses provide key insights in to the health and confidence f town centre businesses and are an indicator or probable future levels of change. The table below shows the responses from the 93 of the respondents.

Changing business performance and confidence	Nat. Small Towns %	Ballinasloe % (2014)	Ballinasloe %
Turnover over last 12 months			
Increased	38%	35%	31%
Stayed the same	32%	36%	48%
Decreased	30%	28%	22%
Profitability over last 12 months			
Increased	34%	34%	23%
Stayed the same	33%	34%	52%
Decreased	33%	32%	25%
Expected turnover over next 12 months			
Increase	47%	42%	37%
Stay the same	32%	42%	54%
Decrease	21%	16%	9%

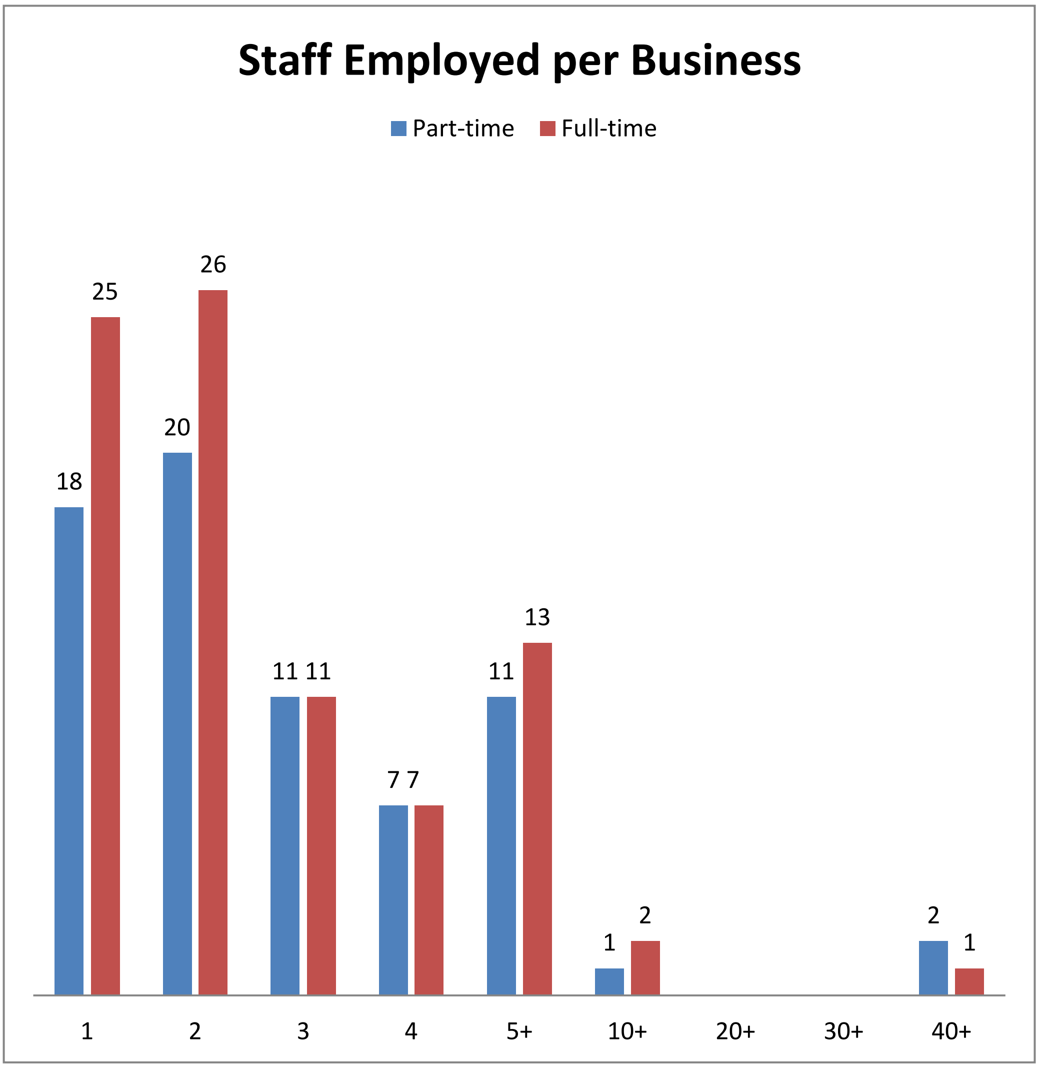
This business confidence and performance data for 2016 shows the following positive trends for Ballinasloe:

- The number of businesses where turnover has stayed the same or increased is up to 79% and this compares favourably with the situation in 2014 (71%) as well as with benchmark averages (70%).
- Profitability has stayed the same or increased in 75% of businesses over the last year and this compares favourably with the situation in 2014 (68%) as well as with benchmark averages (67%).
- There is cause for future optimism by the fact that 91% of businesses in Ballinasloe expect turnover to stay the same or increase over the next 12 months and this compares favourably with 2014 (82%) as well as with benchmark averages (79%). Importantly the proportion of businesses projecting a decline in turnover has reduced from 16% in 2014 to 9% in 2016. This figure equates to the proportion of businesses most at risk as they are likely to be showing year-on-year declines in profitability.



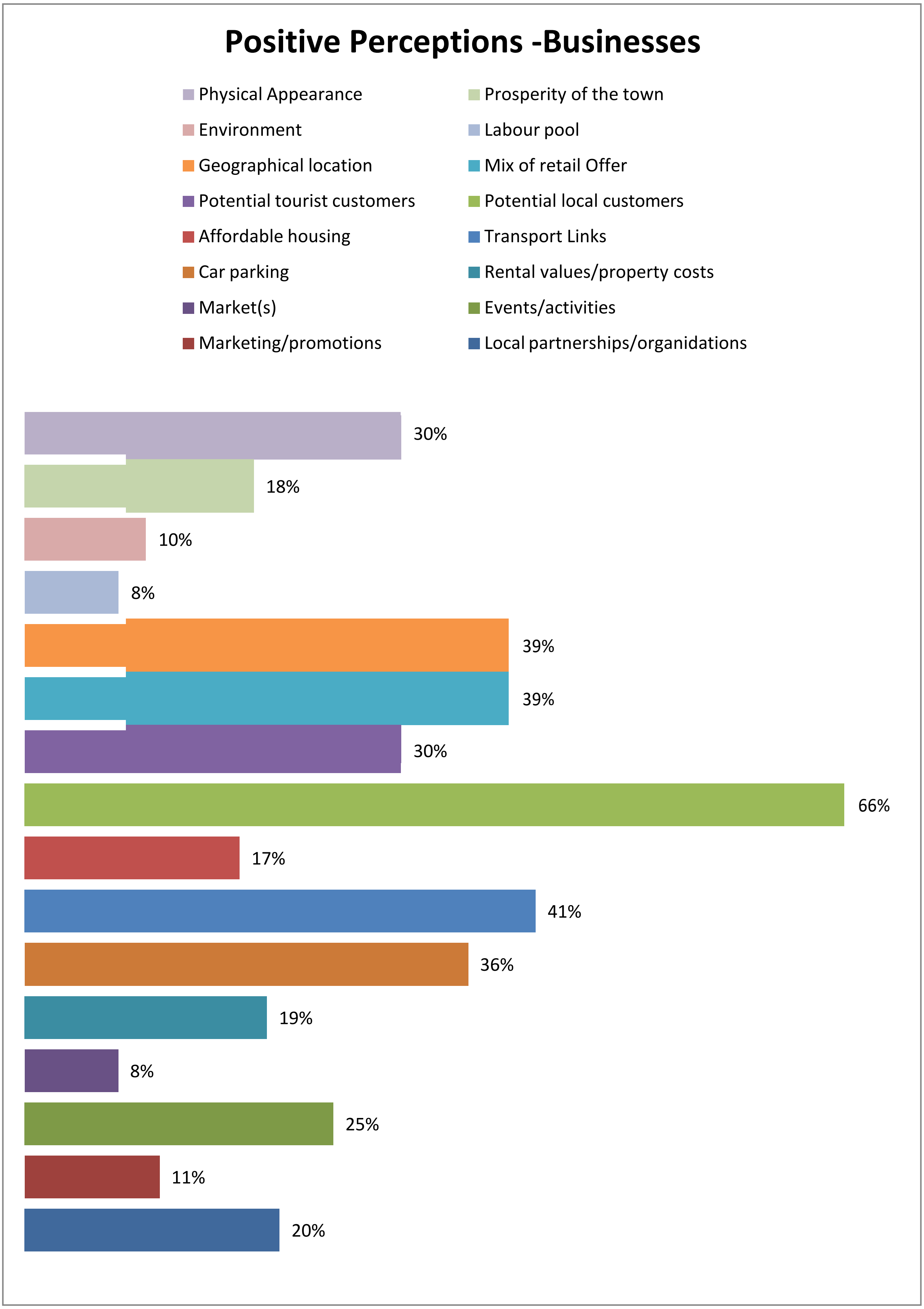
As part of the survey this year, businesses were asked how many part-time and full-time staff they employ. The overall totals are summarised in the table below and indicate that the town centre is a significant employer with 618 staff working in the 93 businesses who responded. The range in the number of employees for different businesses is represented in the chart below.

Ballinasloe Town Centre Staff	Part-time	Full-time	Total
Totals (sample of 93 businesses)	293	325	618



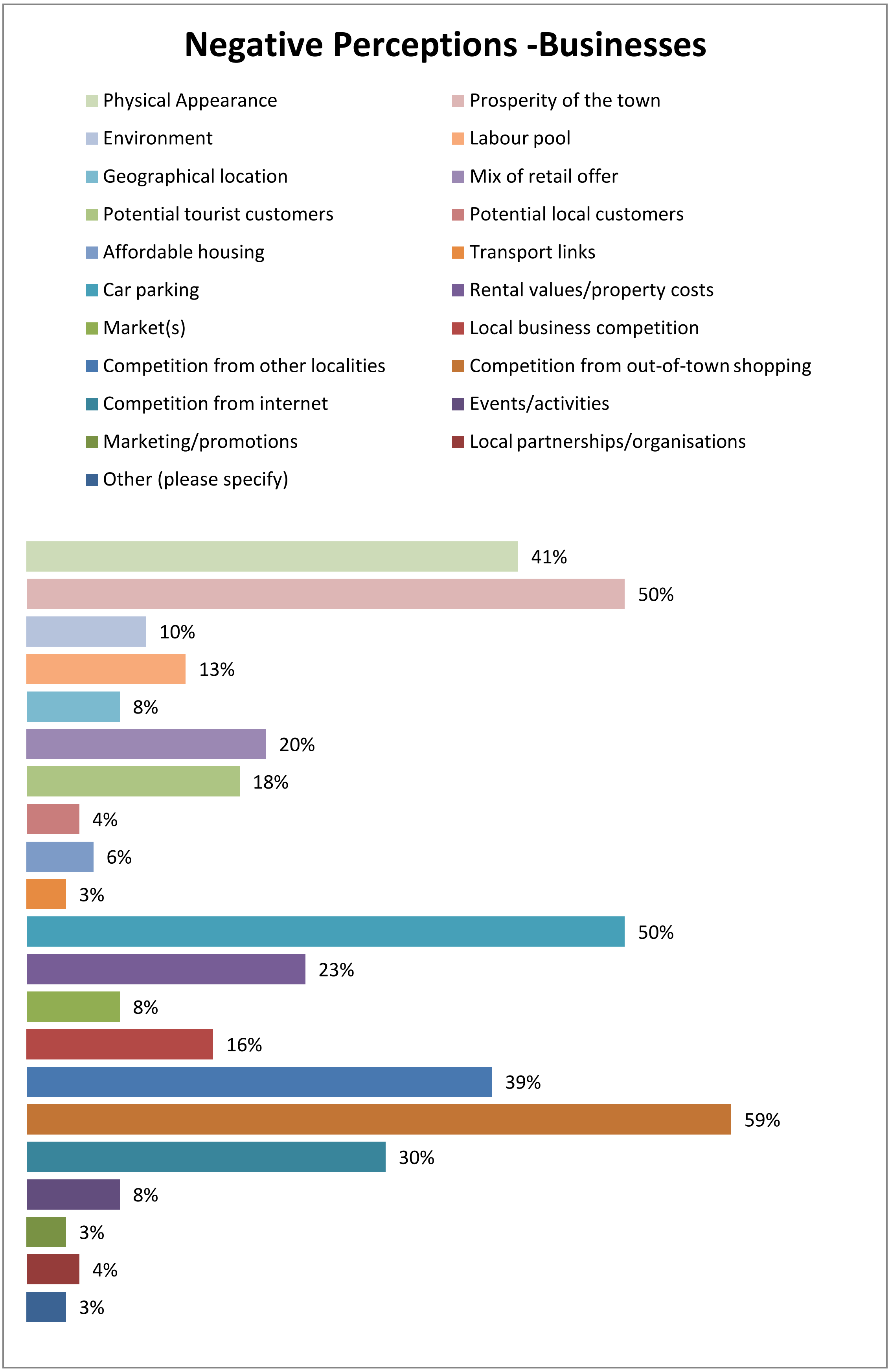
Positive aspects of being located in town centre.	National Small Towns %	Ballinasloe % (2014)	Ballinasloe %
Physical appearance	37%	23%	30%
Prosperity of the town	36%	23%	18%
Environment	18%	1%	10%
Labour pool	-	13%	8%
Geographical location	45%	50%	39%
Mix of retail offer	30%	39%	39%
Potential tourist customers	26%	31%	30%
Potential local customers	75%	66%	66%
Affordable housing	13%	19%	17%
Transport links	29%	36%	41%
Car parking	38%	35%	36%
Rental values/ property costs	23%	25%	19%
Market (s)	18%	15%	8%
Events/ activities	16%	23%	25%
Marketing/ promotions	11%	15%	11%
Local partnerships/ organisations	14%	11%	20%
Other	2%	1%	4%

Positives: The potential for local customers (66%) is consistently considered the strongest positive aspect of being located in Ballinasloe town centre. Transport links (41%), geographical location (39%), retail mix (39%) and car parking (36%) are all characteristics valued by more than a third of businesses.


Positive Perceptions -Businesses
Physical Appearance
Prosperity of the town
Environment
Labour pool
Geographical location
Mix of retail Offer
Potential tourist customers
Potential local customers
Affordable housing
Transport Links
Car parking
Rental values/property costs
Market(s)
Events/activities
Marketing/promotions
Local partnerships/organidations
30%
18%
10%
8%
39%
39%
30%
66%
17%
41%
36%
19%
8%
25%
11%
20%

Negative aspects of being located in town centre	National Small Towns %	Ballinasloe % (2014)	Ballinasloe %
Physical appearance	26%	37%	41%
Prosperity of the town	28%	45%	50%
Labour Pool	9%	21%	10%
Environment	-	1%	13%
Geographical location	6%	2%	8%
Mix of retail offer	29%	20%	20%
Potential tourist customers	13%	14%	18%
Potential local customers	5%	4%	4%
Affordable housing	9%	5%	6%
Transport links	18%	5%	3%
Car parking	54%	57%	50%
Rental values/ property costs	28%	14%	23%
Market (s)	10%	6%	8%
Local business competition	20%	11%	16%
Competition from other localities	20%	26%	39%
Competition from out of town	35%	55%	59%
Competition from the internet	33%	25%	30%
Events/ activities	7%	12%	8%
Marketing/ promotions	11%	10%	3%
Local partnerships/ organisations	4%	5%	4%
Other	9%	4%	3%

Negatives: Competition from out-of-town retails is now ranked as the biggest negative aspect of trading in the town centre followed jointly by parking (50%) and the prosperity of the town (50%). The response to parking is slightly less negative than in 2014 and is the only one of this 'top' three responses that is comparable to those typical of businesses in small towns. Negative responses to the appearance of the town (41%) and competition from other localities (39%) have increased and are the only other aspects that are rated as problematic by over a third of businesses.


Negative Perceptions -Businesses
Physical Appearance
Prosperity of the town
Environment
Labour pool
Geographical location
Mix of retail offer
Potential tourist customers
Potential local customers
Affordable housing
Transport links
Car parking
Rental values/property costs
Market(s)
Local business competition
Competition from other localities
Competition from out-of-town shopping
Competition from internet
Events/activities
Marketing/promotions
Local partnerships/organisations
Other (please specify)
41%
50%
10%
13%
8%
20%
18%
4%
6%
3%
50%
23%
8%
16%
39%
59%
30%
8%
3%
4%
3%

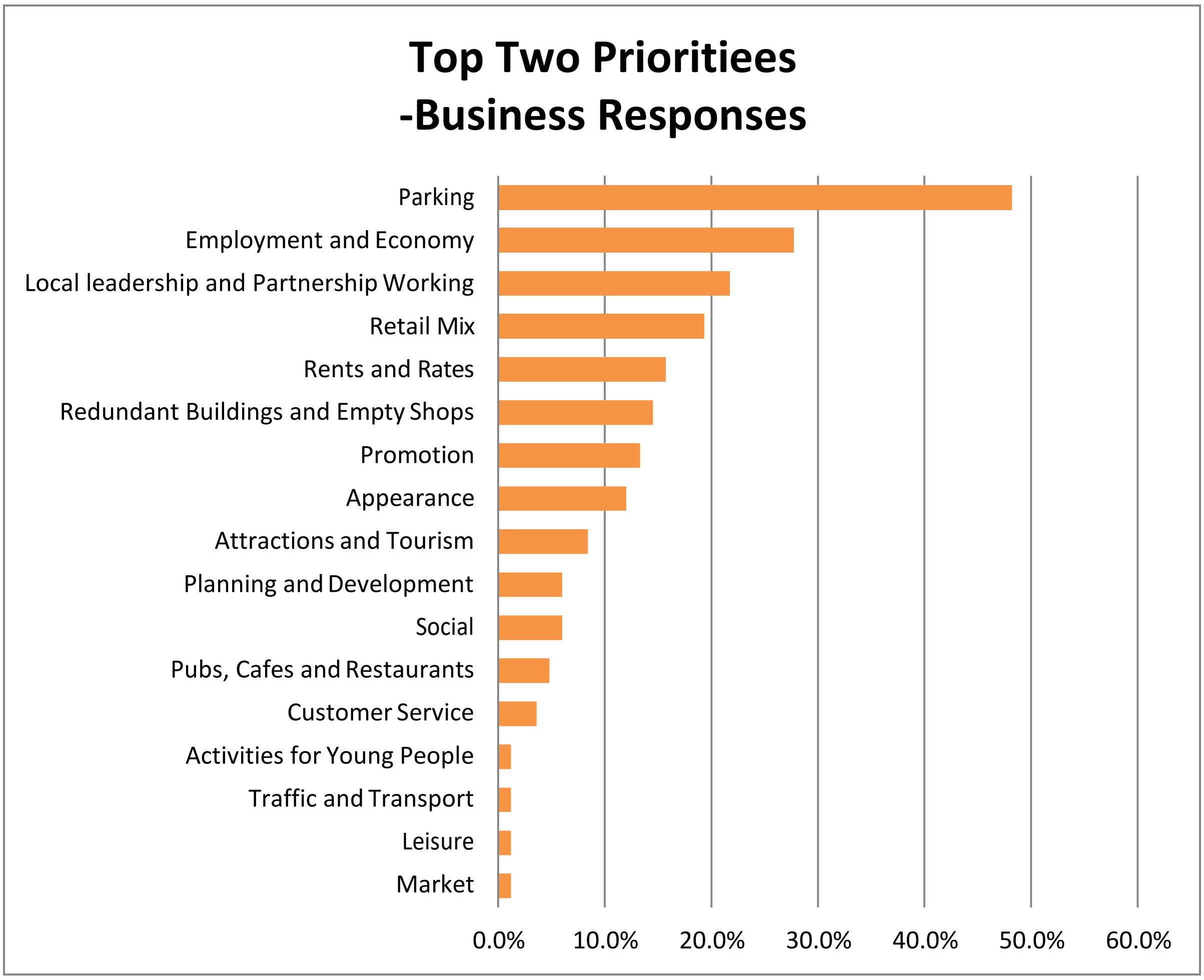
	National Small Towns %	Ballinasloe % (2014)	Ballinasloe %
Has your business suffered from any crime over the last 12 months			
Yes	26%	28%	25%
No	74%	72%	75%
Type of Crime			
Theft	69%	79%	67%
Abuse	18%	21%	21%
Criminal damage	38%	42%	13%
Other	6%	4%	0

A significant but entirely 'typical' number of businesses, compared to similar towns, had been affected by crime over the last year. Of those affected, theft was the biggest type of crime suffered.

Questions Specific to Ballinasloe

When asked to respond to the statement that Ballinasloe has a bright future, only 20% agreed and a further 50% were undecided. This perhaps highlights the critical importance of local partners and businesses working together to ensure the most can be done to boost the optimism of those with uncertainties or pessimistic sentiments.

Do you agree with the following statement? "Ballinasloe is a town with a bright future for the decade ahead?"		
	Ballinasloe % (2014)	**Ballinasloe %**
Strongly agree	9%	10%
Agree	16%	10%
Uncertain	41%	50%
Disagree	22%	16%
Strongly disagree	13%	15%



Two Suggestions to Improve the Town Centre

When businesses in Ballinasloe were asked which two would improve the town centre, the high level of responses again provided valuable insights to their perspectives. These can be compared and contrasted with town centre users' opinions and other findings.

Car Parking

Parking is very often the main priority expressed by businesses in town centre benchmarking surveys and again Ballinasloe was no exception with a very strong emphasis from participating businesses on removing, reducing or 'flexing' on-street parking charges.

- No paid parking
- Scrap paid parking and fines
- Remove parking meters
- Free parking on Saturdays
- Parking should be free at least one day per week
- Reduce parking charges at particular times
- I would stop paid parking; it has a very negative effect on people coming in to the town centre
- Get rid of paid parking

- Get rid of paid parking completely
- Free parking
- Free parking
- Abolish paid parking
- Abolish paid parking -it seems from customers it's more about the inconvenience than the money. Ballinasloe is much busier when parking is free in run-up to Christmas
- Customers complain about street parking charges. Athlone offers 4 hours underground parking for €2.
- Get rid of parking fees
- Scrap parking fines
- Not charging for parking
- Review paid parking
- Introduce free car parking
- No paid parking
- Get rid of paid parking
- Free parking
- Availability of free parking
- No paid parking from 11am; stop shop-workers parking there
- Free parking/free parking for 2 hours
- People would linger if they didn't pay for parking
- 1-2 hours of free parking
- Free parking for at least 2 hours
- More free parking
- Get rid of paid parking on Saturdays as it seems to be the worst day for wardens to be around -losing business to Athlone
- 2 hour free parking minimum
- Remove paid parking
- Free street parking -its the biggest issue all my clients discuss in terms of coming in to town
- Free parking
- No paid parking
- Get rid of paid parking on streets
- First 15 minutes parking free Monday to Friday and free all day on Saturday
- Allow free parking for one hour/30 minutes
- Free parking
- Remove paid parking

Employment and Economy

Consistent with both the 2014 survey and responses from town centre users (see later), there were a significant number of businesses that recognised the link between the wider economy of Ballinasloe and the town centre. Calls to attract a large new employer to the town doubtless reflect the impact felt from recent closures.

- New industry

- Attract major employers
- Need new industry
- Improve local employment through incentives
- Need more jobs
- Jobs
- New industries
- Jobs
- Submission to IDA with increased pressure to priorities investment in new enterprises for the town which will have numerous positive knock-on effects
- Industry
- More large buildings for industry to come in.
- Factories
- Need a committee that gets new jobs
- Attract more industry, factories
- Employment
- Attract businesses, especially manufacturers
- New factories
- Town urgently requires new jobs to develop. T.D/government help required
- Employment
- Need a factory or employer that can employ a lot of people in town
- Jobs
- Promote more start-up business
- More employment

Local Leadership and Partnership Working

Another consistently distinctive aspect of survey responses from Ballinasloe businesses is the emphasis placed on the importance of effective local leadership and partnership working. In deed there is a greater emphasis on such collective working in this year's survey. It will be important to continue to engage businesses as part of developing local solutions in the way reflected in several calls for 'getting businesses to work together' – always a challenge amongst independently-minded individuals.

- Businesses should work together to benefit and complement each other
- Get GCC to open office in town to issue driving licenses
- Stronger business allowance
- If you want businesses to keep going; help them
- Joined-up thinking; new faces to get behind them
- Lift pride in the town
- Business pulling together more
- Everyone, businesses and customers alike, need to pull together to make this town a good place to live and shop
- Encourage/insist that people take more pride and punish those who throw rubbish on streets
- Support our BACD -they are doing a great job
- Good town committee that make themselves known and seen

- Don't try ideas from other towns that have failed, e.g. local currency
- Inclusion to all local meetings
- Getting businesses to work together
- The council is doing nothing for the town. The Horse Fair is supposed to benefit all businesses but stalls and van block shop fronts
- Political pulling together for the improvement of the town
- Change the negative sentiment
- A local Ballinasloe Council -not Galway

Retail Mix

There was a slightly increased recognition by businesses in this year's survey of the need to diversify the retail mix including calls for a greater range of shops including potentially new multiples to draw people to the town centre.

- We need more shops in town
- It would be good to secure a big supermarket as an anchor tenant to attract crowds in to the town centre
- Encourage business to town centre
- Offer value for money through deals that would attract people
- Encourage other businesses in to the town
- Town centre needs more shopping choice
- Businesses need to stop copying each other
- Encourage at least one late night opening
- Nowhere to buy a paper
- Convenience shop in Dunlo Street
- Greater proportion of quality retail outlets
- New businesses
- Entice more businesses to open in town (not bookies or coffee shops)
- Get big stores like Penny's and Dunnes in to town to stop everyone going to Athlone
- More shops needed, i.e. clothes shop, shoe shop, local butchers
- More 'branded' shops

Business Rates and Property Costs

There were a slightly higher number of calls for business rates reduction including calls for discounts to attract new businesses.

- Keep rates low
- Rate reductions to encourage new businesses
- If the water rates were decreased it would encourage more businesses
- Rates reduction might help create new businesses and choice
- Encourage new businesses in to town, e.g. reduce business rates
- Reduce rates
- Rates have to be reduced
- Reduction in rates to attract more businesses
- Reduction in rates

- Cut the rates for new businesses
- Reduce rates for retail businesses
- Reduce rates for local shop keepers who are more likely to spend money in locality as opposed to Tesco, Lidl who contribute little locally
- Lower rates

Redundant Buildings and Empty Shops

There were significant numbers of comments relating to the appearance of the town centre including a particular focus on the renovation and re-use of empty shops.

- Use empty shop windows for displays
- Tax unused buildings
- Provide incentives for new businesses to locate in to town centres including rates reduction
- Focus on getting businesses in to empty properties through reduced rates and investment
- Tidy empty premises by painting and fixing-up windows & doors
- Encourage take-up of empty buildings
- We need to address derelict buildings -we got a lot of comments from Horse Fair customers about the town's decline
- Need to address run-down premises -a lot of negative comments from Horse Fair customers about town's decline
- Government should introduce grant scheme to develop derelict and vacant premises
- Utilise empty premises
- Clear up derelict fronts
- Improve the look of vacant properties

Promotion

There was again significant recognition and some creative ideas expressed around collective new opportunities for joint marketing of the town by businesses.

- Promote local businesses -everyone should know what is available
- To challenge the attitude of local customers -our towns does have a lot to offer
- Retailers need to work together. We need a stronger presence on-line; more shops should be on-line and should be using social media and mobile apps etc.
- We need footfall from further afield. Take a family focus. Crate new playground
- Get people living in Ballinasloe back shopping and rest will follow
- More emphasis on shopping local
- Shops need to open on Sunday for Christmas lights
- Support with advertising
- Build on what we have -the marina, infrastructure, facilities to entice interest from small manufacturing industry
- More needs to be done to get people to shop in the small businesses in town and not in the big shops
- Shop local and buy local

Appearance

Read with earlier summarised points about redundant buildings, there is significant recognition amongst businesses of the need for them to play a part in improving the town's appearance.

- Appearance of shop-fronts -sacrifice 50% of rates to cover costs
- Spend more on appearance
- To paint all empty buildings in three main streets
- General clean-up
- It is vital that the town should be painted. The buildings look dreary and dull.
- Attract footfall for positive reasons -maybe clean, bright
- Improve shop-fronts
- Cut grass on approach roads
- Physical appearance
- Tidy town programme

Attraction and Tourism

Combined with earlier summarised points about redundant buildings, there is significant recognition amongst businesses of the need for them to play a part in making the town more attractive to visitors.

- Evening events that bring about positive attitude or weekly at weekend
- More events to get people together
- Develop the full potential of the Marina -playground, CCTV, lights, plants etc.
- Make use of natural amenities -only festival held is Horse Fair which does not appeal to everyone. More cultural festival should be considered
- More joint marketing of attractions needs to be organised to get people in to town using business 'heroes' -sale days; reduced coffee prices on certain mornings
- Have more community festivals; get more use of town hall and square -music, crafts, arts/drama, themed events
- Nee more facilities

Planning and Development

- Encourage a new town centre supermarket to rival Tesco
- Encourage businesses to locate in town centre rather than out-of-town -maybe too late!
- Get the town development plan and enhancement plan ASAP
- What will happen to hospital main building -could they be leased and developed as an amenity area/cycle track?
- Housing to be built

Social

- Very little social activity in town; nothing to encourage young people to stay
- Tackle the anti-social street drinking -this looks awful to visitors and

regulars and is intimidating
- Stop drinking on street and by Marina
- Make sure the hospital stays
- Better control of anti-social drinking

Pubs, cafes and restaurants

- Restaurant open at night
- Town needs good evening restaurant
- Evening time restaurant Thursday to Saturday

Customer Service

- Encourage/force businesses to open by 9am. On Saturdays train are full of people heading elsewhere while town is closed. Also do not close for lunch
- Good customer care
- Personality/optimism for all front-line staff

Activities for Young People

- We need better facilities for children and teenagers, so parents won't bypass the town and head to Athlone

Traffic and Transport

- Too many artic trucks in town; too busy

Leisure

- A cinema for teens

Markets

- Revamp the Saturday market in the square to attract footfall

SUMMARY

Flexibility or the removal of on-street parking charges remain a key priority for Ballinasloe businesses despite in other responses it being considered more widely as a positive of trading in the town. It will be important to discuss practical ways to address these perceptions in ways that also best meet customers' priorities.

Unusually for a survey of this kind, employment and the wider economy were also most prominent amongst businesses' priorities along with recognition of the importance of local leadership and cooperation through initiatives such as joint marketing and promotions. Business rate reductions were amongst possible incentives suggested to help tackle this blight on the town's appearance and help diversify the retail mix to encourage more customers. Businesses in Ballinasloe understand the need to improve the town's appearances especially through renovating and re-letting empty premises.

It will be important to build on the apparent commitment of Ballinasloe businesses to positive change in the town to get then increasingly and collectively seeking to apply such solutions.

KPI 11: Town Centre Users

The aim of the Town Centre Users Survey is to establish how your town is seen by those people who use it. By asking visitors, of all types, a more detailed picture can be obtained from different perspectives -as what matters to regular visitors can be very different to someone who has never been to the place before.

The following percentage figures are based upon the 153 completed Town Centre User Surveys.

	Nat. Small Towns %	Ballinasloe % (2014)	Ballinasloe %
Gender			
Male	37%	57%	52%
Female	63%	44%	48%
Age Range			
16-25	7%	10%	13%
26-35	11%	15%	10%
36-45	20%	19%	18%
46-55	20%	13%	21%
56-65	18%	23%	24%
Over 65	23%	19%	14%
Reason for Visit			
Work	10%	25%	25%
Convenience shopping	40%	24%	23%
Comparison shopping	6%	10%	5%
Access services	22%	20%	17%
Leisure	12%	14%	25%
Other	9%	7%	6%

	Nat. Small Towns %	Ballinasloe % (2014)	Ballinasloe %
Frequency of Visit			
Daily	20%	46%	48%
More than once a week	38%	31%	25%
Weekly	21%	12%	15%
Fortnightly	7%	2%	5%
More than once a month	4%	1%	5%
Once a month or less	10%	6%	4%
First visit	1%	3%	1%
Travel to Town			
On foot	34%	22%	28%
Bicycle	2%	5%	3%
Motorbike	1%	1%	0%
Car	57%	65%	64%
Bus	4%	4%	3%
Train	1%	1%	0%
Other	1%	3%	3%
Spend per Visit			
Nothing	3%	2%	2%
€0.01-€6.00	13%	6%	10%
€6.01-€12.00	25%	16%	19%
€12.01-€25.00	32%	30%	24%
€25.01-€65.00	21%	28%	26%
More than €65.00	6%	17%	20%
How long do you spend in town?			
Less than an hour	42		25%
1-2 hours	38		39%
2-4 hours	12		14%
4-6 hours	2		6%
All day	5		16%

The mix of town centre users includes a higher percentage of males (52%) than amongst comparable UK figures. There was a good spread of ages represented including a slightly higher proportion of under 35's than typical for small towns.

At the time of these mid-week surveys, most of the town centre users were in-town for work (25%); leisure (25%), convenience shopping (24%) and access to services (17%). Combined with the fact that 85% of the town centre users sampled visited the town at least once a week, this suggests a key role as a local service centre. Only 5% of users stated that they were in town for comparison shopping (compared to 10% in 2014), whilst 88% of retailers offer comparison goods.

Nearly two-thirds of town centre users travelled by car (64%) and a significant number walked (28%). Spending in the town centre appears relatively high compared to averages for small towns in the UK with 70% of town centre users saying they spend over €12.01 on a normal. This relatively high spend may in part be accounted for by linked trips to supermarkets.

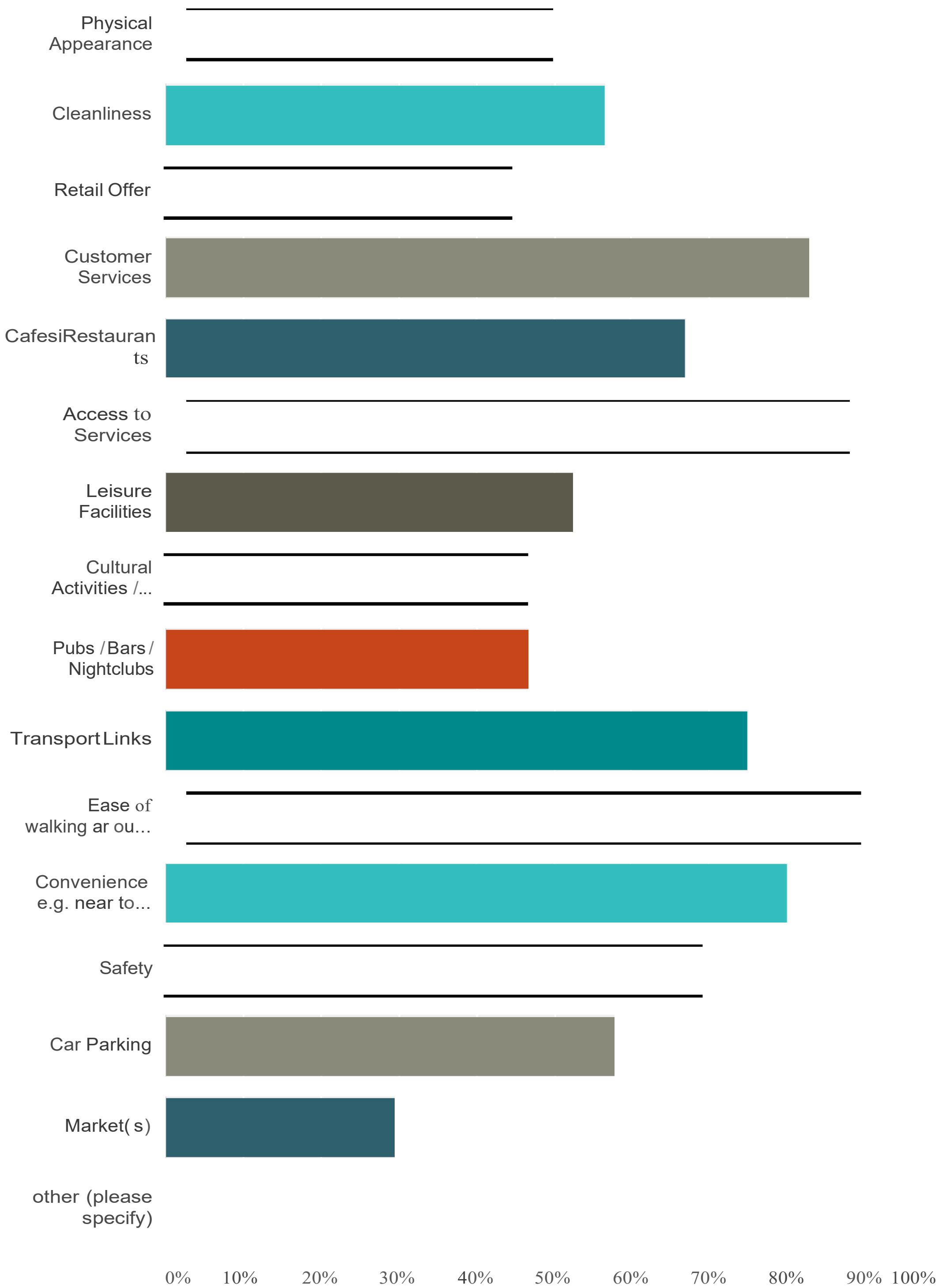
Positive Perceptions of Town Centre	Nat. Small Towns %	Ballinasloe % (2014)	Ballinasloe %
Physical appearance	45%	44%	50%
Cleanliness	52%	59%	57%
Retail offer	27%	36%	45%
Customer service	43%	71%	83%
Cafes/ restaurants	52%	57%	67%
Access to services	63%	70%	88%
Leisure facilities	20%	51%	53%
Cultural activities/events	23%	38%	47%
Pubs/ bars/ nightclubs	35%	45%	47%
Transport links	28%	62%	75%
Ease of walking around the town centre	67%	79%	90%
Convenience e.g. near where you live	71%	68%	80%
Safety	n/a	73%	69%
Car parking	43%	46%	58%
Markets	39%	40%	30%
Other	-	0%	1%

Positives: Respondents were very positive about key aspects of the experience of Ballinasloe as a 'good local town' including access to services (88%), customer service (83%) , convenience (80%) and ease of walking around town (90%). In deed users' perceptions of these aspects of the town centre experience appear to have improved over the last two years and all are rated higher than comparable benchmarks for UK towns.

Other notable improvements (>10% increase) in users' perceptions about the town centre include cafes/restaurants (67%), transport links (75%) and car parking (58%) where a majority now view these as positive aspects of the town centre experience and in a way that compares favourably with UK national benchmarks.

Q7 What are the positive aspects of the Town Centre? (Please choose all that apply)

Answered: 152 Skipped: 1

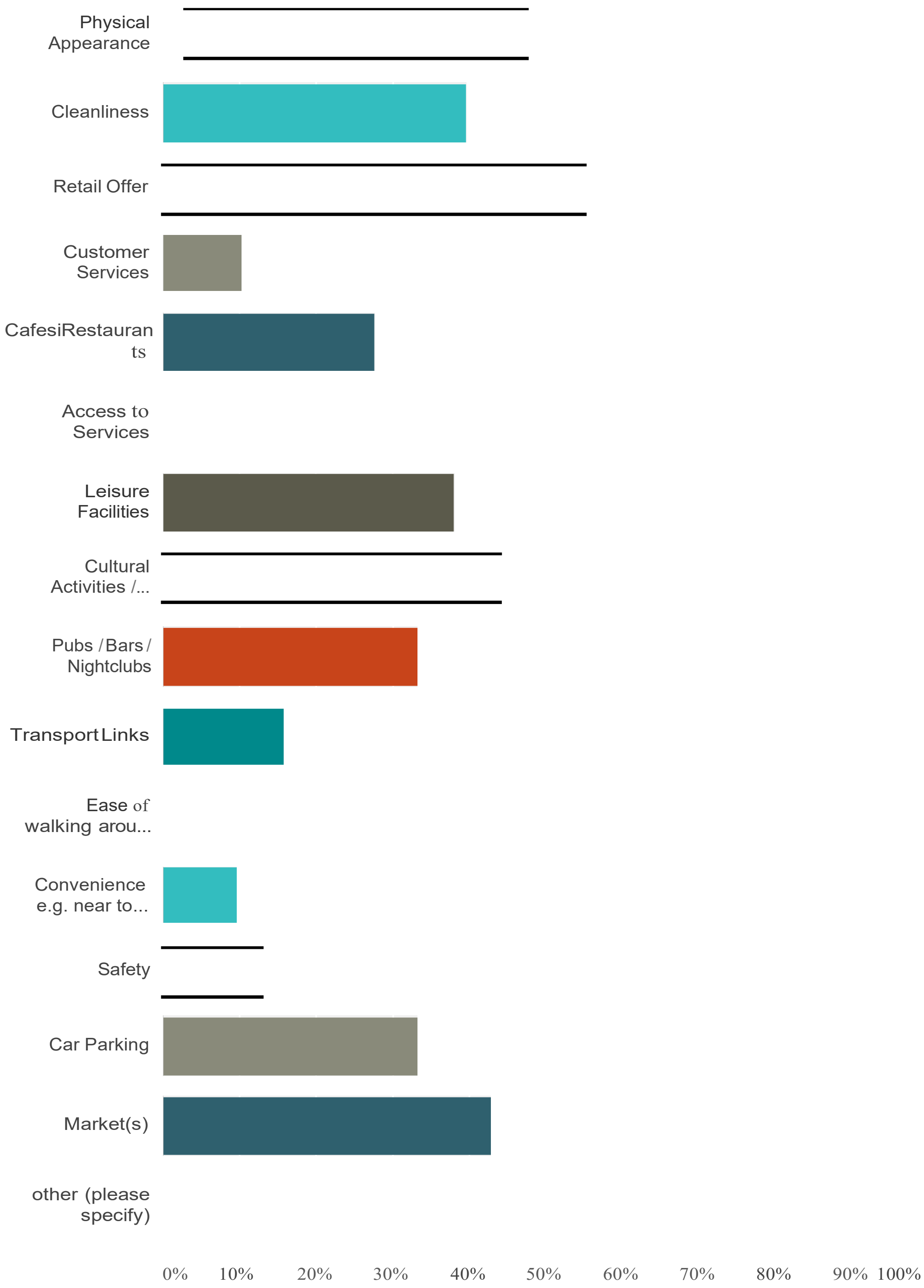


Negative Perceptions of Town Centre	Nat. Small Towns %	Ballinasloe % (2014)	Ballinasloe %
Physical appearance	34%	47%	48%
Cleanliness	19%	31%	40%
Retail offer	54%	50%	56%
Customer service	9%	17%	10%
Cafes/ restaurants	15%	26%	28%
Access to Services	13%	11%	6%
Leisure facilities	30%	25%	38%
Cultural activities/events	28%	36%	44%
Pubs/ bars/ nightclubs	18%	23%	33%
Transport links	23%	18%	16%
Ease of walking around town centre	7%	7%	6%
Convenience e.g. Near where you live	6%	14%	10%
Safety	9%	15%	13%
Car parking	43%	47%	33%
Markets	25%	33%	43%
Other	-	2%	1%

Negatives: Town centre users were most negative about the retail offer (56%) with a slight increase in this sentiment over the last two years. Other aspects that might be considered significantly negative because perceptions have worsened and/or they compare unfavourably with benchmarks are physical appearance (48%), cultural activities/events (44%), cleanliness (40%), leisure facilities (38%), pubs/bars/nightclubs (33%) and markets (43%). Many of these are aspects of the town centre that it is necessary strengthen to improve perceptions of the town centre as a destination for a 'day-out' either for locals or visitors.

Q8 What are the negative aspects of the Town Centre? (Please choose all that apply)

Answered: 144 Skipped: 9



Questions Specific to Ballinasloe

What three of the following words would you use to describe Ballinasloe?	Ballinasloe % (2014)	Ballinasloe %
Local	56%	66%
Good value	14%	23%
Quirky	6%	10%
Convenient	43%	61%
Friendly	57%	54%
Independent	13%	15%
Accessible	34%	41%
Quiet	44%	48%
Charming	7%	14%

Would you recommend a visit to the Town's Centre?	Ballinasloe % (2014)	Ballinasloe %
Yes	63%	63%
No	37%	37%

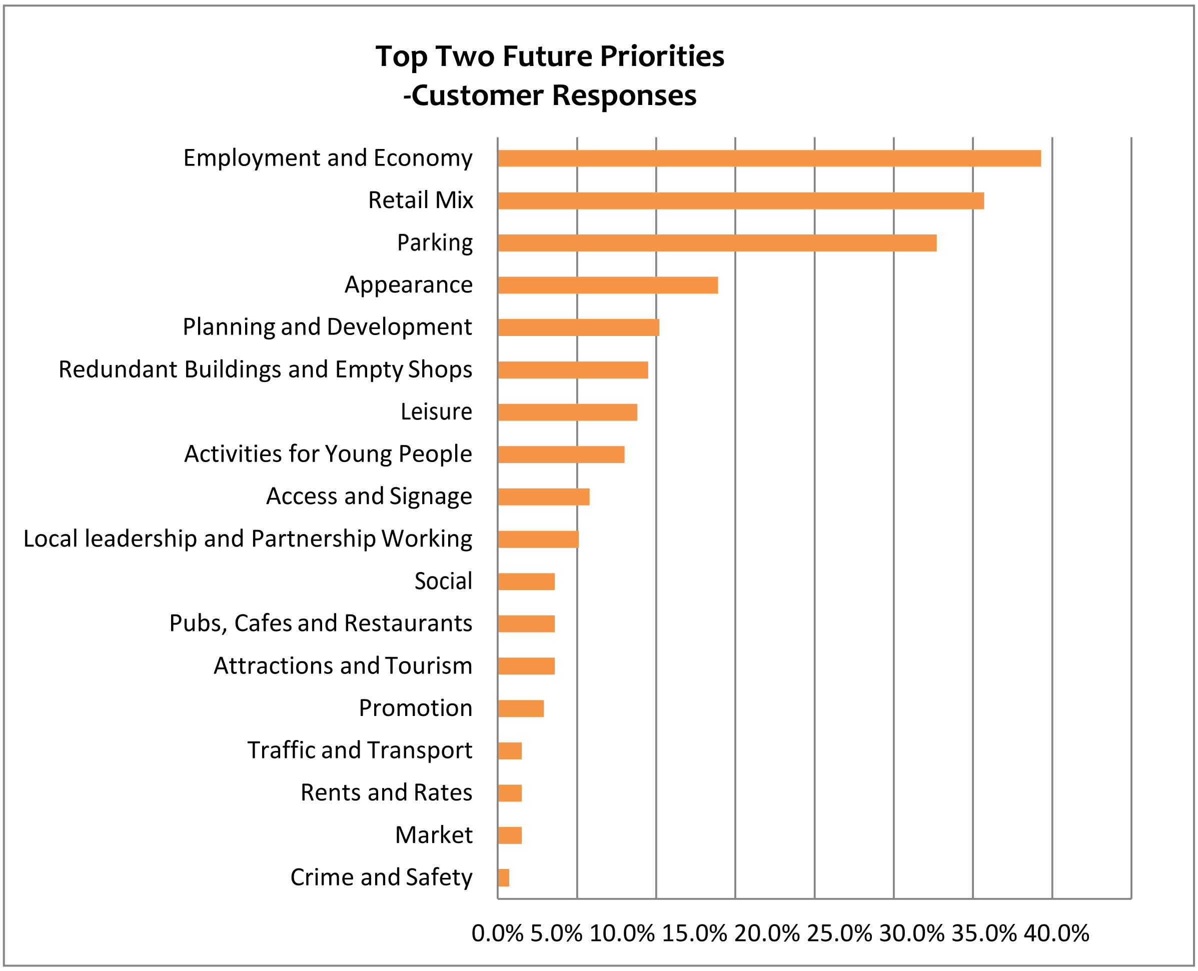
Do you agree with the following statement? "Ballinasloe is a town with a bright future for the decade ahead?"	Ballinasloe % (2014)	Ballinasloe %
Strongly agree	9%	2%
Agree	23%	29%
Uncertain	24%	32%
Disagree	29%	26%
Strongly disagree	14%	11%

Supplementary questions about Ballinasloe indicate that once again nearly two thirds of users (63%) would currently recommend a visit to the town centre. They are less optimistic looking forward with under one third (31%) agreeing that it has a bright future and only 2% strongly agreeing compared to 9% in 2014. Such apparent pessimism may well reflect wider economic concerns apparent in future priorities expressed later in this survey.

When asked to select three words that best described Ballinasloe, the most popular choices remain local (66%), convenient (61%). friendly (54%) and quiet (48%). These responses give a realistic portrayal of the town by existing users than can help in understanding and promoting the town. Consistent with 2014, the underlying sentiment appears to reinforce Ballinasloe's primary function as a local service centre but point to concerns about its future and limitations about its wider appeal.

Future Priorities

Respondents were asked about what two suggestions they think would help to improve the town centre? The responses provide and authoritative and insightful overview about future priorities from the 153 town centre users surveyed.



Employment and Economy

Very unusually in a survey of this nature -though consistent with 2014- there was wide recognition amongst towns centre users of the need to improve the wider economy and employment on offer in the town. Indeed this was the strongest response received in this 2016 with 34% of respondents raising this issue.

- More work for the town
- Employment
- More work for unemployed
- Something to bring employment
- More employment
- Bring employment
- Factory -employment
- Industry in the town for employment

- Retail shops, employment
- Employment (bring back factories and retail outlets)
- Bring back employment
- Job opportunities
- Employment
- Employment
- Employment
- Unemployment
- Improve employment
- Bring employment back; factories, retail stores
- Need industry
- Investment
- Improve jobs
- Create jobs -bring industries
- Employment (more shops)
- More employment
- Allow industry in
- Employment opportunities
- More jobs for younger people
- Keep local businesses going
- Work -improve jobs
- Business
- More industry
- More industry
- Factory (more employment)
- New jobs
- Employment -IDA; investors
- Improve/help smaller businesses
- Investment in local businesses
- Investment in local businesses
- Create employment
- Employment
- Industry in to town
- More employment.
- More work; more industry.
- More industry; more jobs
- Investment in business
- More industries
- Jobs, factory and employer

Retail Mix

As in 2014, a significant number of town centre users also considered that diversifying the retail mix was a future priority including some calls for well-known multiples alongside specialist clothes retailers.

- More shops
- Lack of shops
- More shops; could be a Dunnes store
- Keep shops up-to-date
- Very expensive -would prefer to go to Galway
- More shops
- Shops
- Shopping centre; more shop variety
- New store or shopping centre
- More shops; no variety
- Clothes shops
- More shops
- Not enough shops
- Choice of shops
- More varied stores
- More shops
- Shops (offers)
- Shops
- More clothes shops
- Big store needed (e.g. Dunnes)
- More shops
- More variety of shopping
- More shops
- More shops to open
- Support local shops
- More upmarket shops
- More shops
- Shops
- Shopping centre
- Penney's, Dunnes; only so many things you can buy in the town without travelling.
- Not enough retail outlets
- Penney's would be great
- More shops
- More shops
- More choice of shops
- Bigger shops
- Shopping centre
- Increase retail outlets; small shops (square footage)
- Modernise shops as old fashioned. Not great value especially Lady's fashion
- More retail (clothing)
- More businesses with affordable prices

- Change/open more shops/facilities

Parking

Calls from town centre users for the re-instatement of free on-street parking at least in part, remains important to 27% of respondents but this is slightly reduced compared to 2014. This level and type of response is typical of town centre users that have experienced the relatively recent introduction of car park charges.

- Parking
- Car parking
- Paid parking to go
- Free parking
- Better parking
- Car parking
- More parking
- Car parking charges
- No paid parking
- Get rid of paid parking
- Get rid of paid parking
- Get rid of parking metres
- Layout of parking in the Square
- Accessible parking (15 minute parking allowance)
- Get rid of paid parking
- Get rid of paid parking
- Stop paid parking
- Parking cheaper (free hour)
- Get rid of paid parking
- No parking and paying
- Free parking
- Free car parking
- Free parking for at least an hour
- Free parking
- Get rid of paid parking
- No parking metres
- Free parking
- Get rid of paid parking
- Parking in town centre
- Get rid of paid parking
- Free car parking
- Parking should be free
- Parking too dear
- Free parking
- More car parks
- Get rid of parking metres
- No paid parking. 2 to 2 hours free parking.

- Parking expensive around the town

Appearance

As in 2014, there were a relatively high number of calls for a survey of this nature to improve various aspects of the town centre's appearance.

- Cleaner
- Appearance of town
- Paint shops
- Tidy up the town by painting shops
- Clean-up/paint shops
- Shops need paint/cleaning
- Make shopkeepers maintain the appearance of their shops
- Clear-up business premises -especially Main Street.
- Spruce up buildings and sweep-up pathways
- Painting; knock a few buildings down
- Remove large flower boxes that are in the way of the parking
- Remove flower boxes
- No litter on streets
- Cleaner pavements
- Freshen town up
- Town shocking looking; especially Dunlo Street.
- Cleaner
- Keep cleaner; more bins
- Clean the town

Planning and Development

There was a much greater number of wider planning and development-related issues raised by town centre users in this year's survey. Alongside the responses recorded for economic development, this is very unusual for a survey of this nature and so merits careful consideration. Many of the responses related to calls for new housing.

- Further investment
- Housing
- More housing
- More houses
- Housing
- Improve infrastructure
- Council houses
- Housing for locals
- Too expensive housing
- Houses -people moving out
- Make more attractive for bigger shops
- Possible shopping centre
- More retail facilities.
- Focus businesses in the town centre rather than the outskirts like Tesco/Aldi
- Better location of housing

- More, newer housing

Redundant Buildings and Empty shops

Echoing the responses about the general appearance of the town centre, a significant number of town centre users gave priority to the need improve the appearance of empty premises.

- "Too many closed shops
- Open-up more shops(bring back employment)
- Decorate empty shops
- Incentives for retail start-ups
- Improve derelict buildings
- Get rid of the derelict buildings
- Don't let local businesses close down
- Open premises
- More shops open
- Reopen shops
- Open closed shops
- Re-open businesses
- Too much closed down

Leisure

Alongside calls to diversify the retail mix, there was a more modest response this year for calls for improved leisure facilities in the town centre including far fewer calls for a new cinema than in 2014.

- Better nightclub/nightlife
- Nightclub
- Cinema
- Nightclub
- Bigger cinema
- Nightclub; cinema
- Better nightclub
- More night life
- More hotels
- More culture and amenities
- Activities needed for all ages
- Improve the look of the local park.

Activities for Young People

Unusually again -and consistent with 2014- specific calls for activities from children and young people featured quite prominently amongst the suggestions for wider diversification of the town centre offer.

- Something for youth
- Better facilities for young people
- More family friendly events (outside)
- More activities for younger people

- More activities for younger people
- No places for young people
- Places for young people
- More facilities for younger people
- More areas for children (in Fair Green)
- Great own to live-in and bring-up children -just needs that something extra.
- More for children.

Pubs and Restaurants

There was gain a moderate number of calls to improve the town centre offer by opening more cafes and restaurants as part of a diversified mix.

- Pubs -they would bet on private parties to keep people out that aren't locals
- More restaurants
- More restaurants
- More eating establishments
- Nicer cafes and takeaways

Attractions and Tourism

Amongst the responses from existing town centre users, there was again a modest number showing recognition of the opportunity to attract new visitors to the town.

- Not as many activities
- More events
- More events
- More events would be good. Zombie walk was great.
- Utilise the river and develop its economic and recreational potential

Promotion and Marketing

- More advertising; keep businesses running by supporting them
- More important for people to shop local
- Try to get more people to stop.
- Promote more of the positives -area/accessibility

Access and Transport

There was a much smaller number of responses this year relating to different aspects of improving town centre access and transport.

- Bus service around suburbs; bus shelters
- Cycle ways; one way streets.

Local Leadership and Partnership Working

A small number of town centre users called for improvements in different aspects of local leadership behind the scenes rather than tangible improvements to the town centre.

- Work together
- Get ministers to bring changes/improvements to the town
- Shift some of our representatives as the town has potential
- Improve community spirit -club together
- Get politicians involved

Social

Unusually for a survey of this nature, a number of respondents made remarks relating to social provision though there were far fewer about anti-social behaviour than in 2014.

- More facilities
- Racism -great problem in organising events
- Anti-social behaviour
- Look after children and elderly
- More facilities
- Racism -great problem in organising events
- Anti-social behaviour
- Look after children and elderly

Market

- Improve market at weekend
- Better market near the Square

Rents and Rates

Two town centre users suggested that there was a need to reduce business rates.

- Rents are too high
- Reduce rents on businesses

Crime and Safety

One response mentioned issues relating to rime and safety.

- Need law and order; fight crimes

Other

- Better phone network
- Keep things as they are

SUMMARY

Unusually for a survey of this kind, strategic issues such as employment, the economy, planning and development were most prominent amongst respondents' priorities for improving the town centre; showing increases on 2014 response rates and topping the poll.

Calls to improve the retail mix also remained high and included requests for a greater variety that reflects the mixed demographic profile using the town centre. Parking remained a significant issue though with slightly fewer responses than previously and with comments mostly focused on at least reducing on-street parking charges. The appearance of the town and the blight caused by redundant premises and empty shops also featured prominently amongst responses. There remained a modest but significant number of responses that focused specifically on the need to improve facilities and activities for young people.

KPI 12: Shoppers Origin Survey

The Shoppers Origin Survey tracks the general area that your town centre visitors originate from. The data can be used to target local marketing or promotional literature. It can also be used as evidence of the success of such campaigns by gauging the penetration into the population.

The postcodes gathered from businesses are split into 3 categories to be able to compare with other towns. The categories are:

- Locals; those who live within a Post Code covering the town
- Visitors; those who live within a Post Code less than a 30 minute drive away
- Tourists; those who live within a Post Code further than a 30 minute drive away

	National Small Towns %	Ballinasloe %
Locals	54%	55%
Visitors	29%	32%
Tourists	16%	14%

The figures for shoppers' origin for Ballinasloe from this survey indicate that 87% come from within 30 minutes of the town. Significantly, 14% of town centre users are from over 30 minute drive away at the time of this 'snap-shot' mid-week survey

Appendices

Appendix 1a: Business Use Class Codes and Descriptions

Class & Type of Use	Class Includes
A1: Shops	Shops, retail warehouses, hairdressers, travel and ticket agencies, post offices (but not sorting offices), pet shops, sandwich bars, showrooms, domestic hire shops, dry cleaners, funeral directors and internet cafes
A2: Financial and Professional Services	Financial services such as banks and building societies, professional services (other than health and medical services) including estate and employment agencies and betting offices
A3: Restaurants and Cafes	Food and drink for consumption on the premises- restaurants, snack bars and cafes
A4: Drinking Establishments	Public houses, wine bars or other drinking establishments (but not nightclubs)
A5: Hot Food Takeaways	Sale of hot food for consumption off the premises
B1: Businesses	Offices (other than those that fall within A2) research and development of products and processes, light industry appropriate in a residential area
B2: General Industrial	General Industrial
B8: Storage and Distribution	Warehouses, includes open air storage
C1: Hotels	Hotels, boarding and guest houses where no significant element of care is provided (excludes hostels)
C2: Residential Institutions	Residential care homes, hospitals, nursing homes, boarding schools, residential colleges and training centres.
C2A: Secure Residential Institution	Use for a provision of secure residential accommodation, including use as a prison, young offenders institution, detention centre, secure training centre, custody centre, short term holding centre, secure hospital, secure local authority accommodation or use as a military barracks.
D1: Non Residential Institutions	Clinics, health centres, crèches, day centres, schools, art galleries (other than for sale or hire), museums, libraries, halls, places of worship, church halls, law court. Non-residential education and training centres.
D: Assembly and Leisure	Cinemas, music and concert halls, bingo and dance halls (but not nightclubs), swimming baths, skating rinks, gymnasiums or area for indoor or outdoor sports and recreations (except for motor sports, or where firearms are used).
SG: Sui Generis ("unique" establishments)	Theatres, hostels providing no significant element of care, scrap yards. Petrol filling stations and shops selling and/ or displaying motor vehicles. Retail warehouse clubs, nightclubs, launderettes, taxi business, amusement centres, casinos, haulage yards, transport depots, veterinary clinics, dog parlours, tanning and beauty salons and tattoo studios.

Appendix 1b: Business Audit

Street Name	Number	Business Name	Use Class	Business Type (Comparison/ Convenience)	Business Type (Key Attractor/ Independent)	2014 status	2016 Update
Society Street	FR	Fusion Restaurant	A3				
Society Street	HW	Healthwise	A1	Comparison	Independent		
Society Street	DF	Crafters Corner	A1	Comparison	Independent		Previously Donnelly's Florists.
Society Street	NCBI	National Council for the Blind of Ireland	A1	Comparison	Multiple		
Society Street	JOR	Jorena's	A1	Comparison	Independent		
Society Street	BBIB	Bruen Bros Ins Brokers	A2				
Society Street	TM2	Top Man (barbers)	A1	Comparison	Independent	VACANT	Yes. Previously vacant.
Society Street	FE	Fletchers (Expert)	A1	Comparison	Regional		Yes.
Society Street	BFO	n/a (formerly Ballinasloe Festival Office				VACANT	VACANT; Sold. Added as update to 2014 data.
Society Street	SM	Supermacs	A5				
Society Street	BP	Brodericks Pharmacy	A1	Comparison	Independent		
Society Street	30	Michael McCullagh	A2				

Society Street	32	Animal Health Centre	A1	Comparison	Independent		
Society Street		n/a				VACANT	VACANT
Society Street	DB	Downey's Bar	A4				
Society Street	C	n/a (formerly Casino)					VACANT
Society Street	36	n/a (formerly Society Fayre)					VACANT
Society Street	NT	Noor Tandoori	A4				
Society Street	ST	Society Travel	A1	Comparison	Independent		
Society Street	STA	n/a (formerly Second Time Around)				VACANT	VACANT
Society Street	GC	George Coyle	A2				
Society Street	ELB	Emerald Lounge & Bar	A4				
Society Street		n/a				VACANT	VACANT. Sale Agreed.
Society Street	UH	Unisex Hairdressers	A1	Comparison	Independent		
Society Street	THT	Town Hall Theatre	D2				
Society Street	3	High Society	A1	Comparison	Independent		
Society Street						VACANT	VACANT
Society Street	GG	Geraroid Geraghty	A2				
Society Street	UH	Utopia Hairdesign	A1	Comparison	Independent		
Society Street	6	Now Front Room (beauty salon)	A1	Comparison	Independent		Previously Avril's Beauty Rooms.

Society Street	7	Karibas	A3				
Society Street	8	The Pillar House/Gibbons bar	A4				
Society Street	IB	Image Boutique	A1	Comparison	Independent		
Society Street	10	J+S Photos	A1	Comparison	Independent		
Society Street	UO	Utah Outlet	A1	Comparison	Regional		
Society Street	11	Niall Hogan	A1	Comparison	Independent		
Society Street	JB	Bar One Racing	A2				Formerly Johnsons Bookmakers
Society Street	TM	Island of Beauty	A1	Comparison	Independent		Formerly Top Man.
Society Street	CHP	Claire Healy Pharmacy	A1	Comparison	Independent		
Society Street	RB	Ryan’s Bar	A4				
Society Street	JB	Joe’s Bar	A4				
Society Street	TN	Top Notch	A1	Comparison	Independent		
Society Street	TKH	The Kebab House	A5				
Society Street	CC	Corner Café	A3			VACANT	Added as update to 2014 data.
Society Street (Sarsfield Rd)	SM	Supermacs	A5				Yes.
Society Street (Sarsfield Rd)	GE	Grocon Energies	B1			VACANT	Added as update to 2014 data.

Society Street (Sarsfield Rd)	BC	Barry's Cycles	A1	Comparison	Independent		
Society Street (Sarsfield Rd)	BH	Barratts Hardware	A1	Comparison	Independent		
Society Street (Sarsfield Rd)	SH	Cregg Stone	A1	Comparison	Independent		Yes. Formerly Sopranos Hair.
Society Street (Society Court)	TTP	n/a (formerly Tattoo Parlour)					VACANT -presumed vacant as not open during 3 visits.
Society Street (Society Court)	PS	n/a (formerly Polski Sklep)					VACANT
Society Street (Emmet Place)	EHDP	Emmet House Dental Practice	D1				
Bridge Street	2	Tranquillity Beauty Clinic	A1	Comparison	Independent		
Bridge Street	TOG	The Oat Gallery	A1	Comparison	Independent		
Harbour Road (Marina Point)	7	Haven Pharmacy	A1	Comparison	Independent		
Harbour Road (Marina Point)	PS	Polska Strefa	A1	Convenience	Independent		
Harbour Road (Marina Point)						VACANT	VACANT. Added as update to 2014 data.
Harbour Road (Marina Point)	3	Sports Warehouse	A1	Comparison	Independent		

Harbour Road (Marina Point)	PBS	Paul Byron Shoes	A1	Comparison	Multiple		
Harbour Road (Marina Point)	TCB	Tony Carroll Butcher	A1	Convenience	Independent		
Harbour Road (Marina Point)	EE	Eastern Electrical	A1	Comparison	Independent		
Harbour Road (Marina Point)		Daisy's Cafe	A3				Added as update to 2014 data.
Harbour Road (Marina Point)	MPHC	Marina Place Health Centre	D1				
Harbour Road (Marina Point)	LS	LIDL Supermarket	A1	Convenience	Multiple		
Harbour Road (Marina Point)	CSH	Carlton Shearwater Hotel	C1				
River View (Townspark)	OC	Ollie Colohan	A1	Comparison	Independent		
River View (Cullens Yard)	Unit 6	Essence of Beauty	A1	Comparison	Independent		
River View (Cullens Yard)	Unit 5	Carisma Hair Design	A1	Comparison	Independent		
River View (Cullens Yard)	GRDC	Galway Rural Development Company	B1				
River View	VAC	Rosewood Psychological	D1			VACANT	Added as update to

(Cullens Yard)		Services					2014 data.
River View (Cullens Yard)	Unit 1-2	Department of Social Protection	B1				
River View (Cullens Yard)	43	Tony Murphy Footwear	A1	Comparison	Independent		
St Michaels Square	CQM	Croffy Quality Meats	A1	Convenience	Independent		Closed on three visits.
St Michaels Square	AA	Angela's Attic	A1	Comparison	Independent		
St Michaels Square	TBB	The Bread Basket	A3				
St Michaels Square	CC	CostCutter	A1	Convenience	Multiple		
St Michaels Square	5	An Tain	A4				
St Michaels Square	MFG	Mulveys Fruit & Veg	A1	Convenience	Independent		
St Michaels Square	FS	First Stop (barber)	A1	Comparison	Independent		
St Michaels Square	JDC	Jack Duncan & Co	A2				
St Michaels Square	16	Pat Finn	A2				

St Michaels Square	GFD	Grenhams Funeral Directors	A1	Comparison	Independent		
St Michaels Square	2a	Allure Tattoo Parlour	SG				
St Michaels Square	KB	Kemal’s Barbershop	A1	Comparison	Independent		Same owner as Passion Hair
St Michaels Square	PHS	Passion Hair Salon	A1	Comparison	Independent		
St Michaels Square	PO	Post Office	A1	Convenience	Multiple		
St Michaels Square	PP	Paddy Power	A2				
St Michaels Square	SS	Sheridan’s Stores	A1	Comparison	Independent		
Dunlo Street	AIB	Allied Irish Bank	A2				
Dunlo Street	GTT	Good Taste Takeaway	A5				
Dunlo Street	LP	Leahy’s Pharmacy	A1	Comparison	Independent		
Dunlo Street	PCS	P. Clarke & Sons	A1	Comparison	Independent		
Dunlo Street		n/a				VACANT	VACANT
Dunlo Street	6	Rothwell Staunton	A2				
Dunlo Street	MRO	Mary Rothwell Dental Practice	A1	Comparison	Independent		Same ownership as Rothwell Stauton.

Dunlo Street	ZZ	Apache Pizza	A5				Formerly Zam Zam. Closed for refitting.
Dunlo Street	PS	Parish Shop	A1	Comparison	Independent		Not open on three visits but has new stock on shelves.
Dunlo Street	18	An Nonnch	A4			VACANT	VACANT. Added update to 2014 data.
Dunlo Street	CD	Chris Daly	A1	Comparison	Independent		
Dunlo Street	BDS	Billy's Discount Store	A1	Comparison	Independent		
Dunlo Street	Dunlo Centre	Ladbrokes					
Dunlo Street	CO	Carry Out	A1	Convenience	Multiple		
Dunlo Street	HA	Harney's	A1	Comparison	Regional		
Dunlo Street		n/a (formerly Dunghams)				VACANT	VACANT
Dunlo Street		n/a				VACANT	VACANT
Dunlo Street		n/a (formerly Saorse)				VACANT	VACANT
Dunlo Street	RGR	RGR Partners (Darren Goode)	A2				
Dunlo Street	FC	Footsteps Chiropody	SG				
Dunlo Street	GD	GARDA	D1				
Dunlo Street		n/a				VACANT	VACANT. Added as update to 2014 data

Dunlo Street		n/a				VACANT	VACANT. Added as update to 2014 data
Dunlo Street	PD	n/a (formerly P Dooley)				VACANT	VACANT. Added as update to 2014 data
Dunlo Street	TSN	The Stork's Nest	A1	Comparison	Independent		Yes.
Dunlo Street		Patrick Hogan and Co (solicitors)					Upstairs with street-level entrance. Added as update to 2014 data
Dunlo Street	GDC	Goode Dry Cleaning	A1	Comparison	Independent		
Dunlo Street	KL	Kathleen's	A1	Comparison	Independent		
Dunlo Street	DT	The Dunlo Tavern	A4				
Dunlo Street	TB	Thomas Barber	A1	Comparison	Independent		
Dunlo Street	MFC	Morellis Fish & Chips	A5				
Dunlo Street	ENC	East Night Club	SG				Re-opening December.
Dunlo Street	TAS	The Auld Sod	A4				
Dunlo Street	HD	Hubert Dolan	A1	Comparison	Independent		
Dunlo Street	TDS	The Deli Store	A3				
Dunlo Street	CF	Clare's Flowers	A1	Comparison	Independent		
Dunlo Street	THG	The Hair Gallery	A1	Comparison	Independent		
Dunlo Street		Clothing for Cash	SG			VACANT	Closed on both visits.

Dunlo Street	PAN	n/a (formerly Panache)	A1	-	-		VACANT
Dunlo Street	TDI	The Duck Inn	A4				
Dunlo Street		n/a				VACANT	VACANT. Sold sign
Dunlo Street	HH	n/a (formerly Haydens Hotel)	-				VACANT
Dunlo Street	SRP	n/a (formerly Solid Rock Parish)				VACANT	VACANT
Dunlo Street	SRPadj	n/a				VACANT	VACANT
Dunlo Street	PM	Priority Meats	A1	Convenience	Independent		
Main Street	CC	Crumbs & Cream	A3				
Main Street	EW	Elite Windows	A1	Comparison	Independent		
Main Street	CHS	Caroline’s Hair Salon	A1	Comparison	Independent		
Main Street	16	Spirit 3				VACANT	Previously vacant
Main Street		n/a				VACANT	VACANT
Main Street	DEB	n/a (Formerly Egan’s Bar)					VACANT
Main Street	GS	Gerry Stronge Photography	A1	Comparison	Independent		
Main Street	14	Keane Auctioneers	A2				
Main Street	PJS	Papa Johns/Supermacs	A5				
Main Street	FW	Fun World	SG				
Main Street	BO	Ballinasloe Opticians	A1	Comparison	Independent		
Main Street	PBS	Peter’s Barber Shop	A1	Comparison	Independent		

Main Street		SG Injury Clinic				VACANT	Previously vacant.
Main Street	6	Cahalan	A1	Comparison	Independent		
Main Street	GP	Greenhams Pub	A4				
Main Street	GOL	Greenhams Off Licence	A1	Convenience	Independent		
Main Street	5	Kellers Travel	A1	Comparison	Independent		
Main Street	5	Kellers Furniture	A1	Comparison	Independent		
Main Street		n/a				VACANT	VACANT
Main Street		n/a				VACANT	VACANT
Main Street	MMH	Murphy's Medical Hall	A1	Comparison	Independent		
Main Street	LJP	Liam Jordan Photography	A1	Comparison	Independent		
Main Street	PPD	Phone & PC Doctor	A1	Comparison	Independent		
Main Street		n/a				VACANT	VACANT
Main Street		Talking Heads (hairdresser)				VACANT	Previously vacant – business has relocated from first floor location.
Main Street	JWC	John Wood & Co	A1	Comparison	Independent		
Main Street	E2	Euro2	A1	Comparison	Multiple		
Main Street	GH	Gullane's Hotel	C1				
Main Street	SF	Spain's Funeralcare	A1	Comparison	Independent		
Main Street	HCS	Harney Computer Solutions	A1	Comparison	Independent		

Main Street	MW	Michael Ward	A1	Comparison	Independent		
Main Street	BCU	Ballinasloe Credit Union	A2				
Main Street		n/a				VACANT	VACANT
Main Street	JD	John Dolan	A2				VACANT
Main Street	VOD	Vodafone	A1	Comparison	Key Attractor		
Main Street	SF	Scannell Financial	A2				
Main Street	MM	Maud Millars	A4				
Main Street						VACANT	VACANT. Added as 'vacant' in update to 2014 data
Main Street	WB	Willie Burke	A1	Comparison	Independent		Yes
Main Street						VACANT	VACANT. Added as 'vacant' in update to 2014 data
Main Street	SAL	Salmon's	A1	Comparison	Independent		
Main Street	BOI	Bank of Ireland	A2				
Croffys Yard		Celtic Healing	D1	Alternative Therapy	Independent	VACANT	New Business 2016
Croffys Yard		Croffy's Laundrette	SG	Comparison	Independent		Existing
Croffys Yard		Aloha Kids Yoga	D2		Independent	VACANT	New Business 2016
Croffys Yard		The Engine Room	D2		Independent		Previously Solid Fitness

Croffys Yard		The Frock Exchange	A1	Convenience	Independent	VACANT	New Business Dec 16
Croffys Yard		Car Valet		Comparison	Independent		Existing
Croffys Yard		Gannet Fish Mongers		Comparison	Independent		Existing

Appendix 2: Car Park Data

CAR PARK SURVEY									
Name:	**On street / car park:**	**Total Spaces**				**Vacant Spaces**			
		Short Stay		**Long-stay**		**Quiet Day**		**Busy Day**	
		Standard	**Disabled**	**Standard**	**Disabled**	**Standard**	**Disabled**	**Standard**	**Disabled**
CAR PARKS (long-stay)									
Society Street (paid)	Car park	0	0	65	5	65	5	62	5
Fair Green (free)	Car park	0	0	108	2	86	2	76	1
West Car Park (paid)	Car park	0	0	**79**	**5**	**78**	**5**	**75**	**5**
West Car Park (free)	Car park	0	0	**54**	**0**	**19**	**0**	**15**	**0**
Marina Point (free)	Car park	0	0	**64**	**1**	**44**	**1**	**37**	**0**
Gullane's (free)	Car park	**170**	**4**	**0**	**0**	**125**	**4**	**88**	**2**
Sub-totals	**0**	**0**	**0**	**512**	**13**	**376**	**13**	**328**	**11**
CAR PARKS (short-stay)									
Lidl (free)	Car park	98	2	0	0	77	2	52	1
Salmon's (free)	Car park	40	0	0	0	32	0	24	0
Bank of Ireland	Car park	32	2	0	0	16	2	12	1
Sub-totals		**170**	**4**	**0**	**0**	**125**	**4**	**88**	**2**
TOTALS		**170**	**4**	**512**	**13**	**501**	**17**	**416**	**13**

CAR PARK SURVEY									
Name:	**On street / car park:**	**Total Spaces**				**Vacant Spaces**			
		Short Stay		**Long-stay**		**Quiet Day**		**Busy Day**	
		Standard	**Disabled**	**Standard**	**Disabled**	**Standard**	**Disabled**	**Standard**	**Disabled**
On-street (long-stay)									
-	On-street	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Sub-totals									
On-street (short-stay)									
McNevin Avenue	On-street	28	0	0	0	18	0	12	0
St Michael's Square	On-street	92	4	0	0	31	2	22	2
Main Street	On-street	43	1	0	0	8	0	11	1
Dunlo Street	On-street	72	2	0	0	23	2	25	1
Society Street	On-street	48	2	0	0	18	2	16	1
Sub-totals		**283**	**9**	**0**	**0**	**98**	**6**	**86**	**5**
TOTALS		**283**	**9**	**0**	**0**	**98**	**6**	**86**	**5**
OVERALL TOTALS		**453**	**13**	**512**	**13**	**599**	**23**	**502**	**18**

KEY TOWN BALLINASLOE

Ballinisloe 1sa by county wn which provides an anchor for empioytnfflm east Galway. On the border with Roscommon, the town has strong 1 nks with Ath\o.ne. 8allnasloe lS located within one of the County's S1tatef< Oewlt>pme01 Corridors.. The lOWh has been recognised as an wectlve acetowork, live and do t-.isiness. wnh benefits we.has the M6Uotorway, railICT. ho and gas1nfrastn.1ei,.,re wel as11sscrate_fc locatlon which provides f« the creallonof SU$talll8tte eflterpr$e The town 1s 1he maineconomk drtYer for the east of County Galway.

KEY FIJ11JRE PRIORITIES