



12/5/21

Re: PRE - DRAFT ISSUES PAPER
- BALLINA TOWN + ENVIRONS PLAN 2021-2027.

Dear Sir / Madam.

I am making this submission on my own behalf, as both a resident and business owner in Ballina.

DOROTHY MC KANE



(I was unable to submit this electronically, though I tried for a few hours, as submissions under each section were lost despite pressing 'save', and each time I had to log in as a new submission.)

Eventually gave up and am submitting manually.

Apologies, but your site appears to have a technical issue.

My name is Dorothy Mc Kane and I am proud of my home town, Ballina. I am glad of this chance to make a submission to the Pre-Draft Development Plan, as someone who grew up in the town centre and who continues to run our family business, Mc Kane's Pharmacy on O'Rahilly St. I hope my experience of town centre living and working might be of some assistance.

Town centre and retail.

As a business owner, I would like to relate what our customers tell us about their shopping experience in Ballina. Consistently, they report the main barriers they find to ease of shopping in Ballina town centre are traffic volumes and backups at certain times of the day and getting parking NEAR to where they want to shop.

My business, like all pharmacies (and there are 11 in Ballina) relies to a great extent on prescription dispensing. On a national basis, the main shoppers for prescription medicines are mothers with young families and the elderly. In Mayo, our age demographic means our prescription volume is tilted more towards the elderly.

Ease of access for both these groups is vital.

Anyone with a sick child, or an elderly relative, or a person with a disability, (on a wet Mayo day!) is generally not travelling on foot, and is looking for short term parking very near to medical/ pharmacy premises. They need to be in and out of town quickly, and their needs should be facilitated when planning for the Town Centre. Other quick stop "destination shops", dry cleaners etc are in a similar position.

The question of pedestrianisation of the town centre has been raised as question 1 in this document, and as to whether this might improve the retail experience.

The feedback we get is that pedestrianisation is good in theory, but only if we actually had sufficient parking nearby and the continental weather to enjoy walking about town and a cafe culture. The reality is that our Irish weather and our continued reliance on cars (and parking them as near as possible to where we want to go) make any proposal for pedestrianisation during normal business hours a worry for town centre service type businesses such as ours, and for our customers who need rapid access.

While we are planning for the next 6 years, and aspiring to a future that is less car dependent, and more focussed on walking, cycling and public transport, we are not there yet! And there are a subset of customers, such as pharmacy patients, that by virtue of their medical condition, may never be fully serviced by public transport and pedestrianisation. The new plan should reflect this, our age and health demographic, and the habits of a lifetime which for many older people, or people with disabilities, are unlikely to change in the short term.

Population and Housing

Ballina, like many other towns, has a large number of buildings in the town centre where only the ground floor is in use for commercial purposes.

Could the upper floors of these buildings be brought into residential use? The benefits to the town centre would be many, and if even a small part of our housing problem could be addressed this way, surely this is worth looking at? Utilities and services are already in place for these buildings and the benefits to the environment and reduced travel/ carbon emissions of people living/ working near at hand are well documented.

I grew up living on O' Rahilly St, ours one of a number of families " living over the shop"..... but now not a single person lives on our street. I'm sure it is much the same story on many town centre streets, which could be revitalised by a co ordinated plan or even a pilot plan to explore the potential for our town.

