



# BALLINA FLOOD RELIEF SCHEME

## Environmental Impact Assessment Report Chapter 2: Planning & Policy

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## Chapter 2: Planning and Policy

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## Chapter 2: Planning and Policy

### Acronyms

Term	Meaning
AFA	Area for Further Assessment
CDP	County Development Plan
CFRAM	Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management
CMBAP	County Mayo Biodiversity Action Plan
DEHLG	Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government
DHPLG	Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government
DPER	Department of Public Expenditure and Reform
EDP	Economic Development Policies
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
EU	European Union
FRS	Flood Relief Scheme
LA	Local Authority
LAP	Local Area Plan
MCA	Multi-criteria analysis
MCC	Mayo County Council
NBAP	National Biodiversity Action Plan
NMPF	National Marine Planning Framework
NPF	National Planning Framework
NPO	National Policy Objective
NSO	National Strategic Outcome
NTIG	National Technical Implementation Group
NWRM	National Water Retention Measures
OPW	Office of Public Works
RBMP	River Basin Management Plans
RSES	Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy
SAC	Special Area of Conservation
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SFRA	Strategic Flood Risk Assessment
SPA	Special Protected Area
SSO	Settlement Strategy Objectives
SSP	Settlement Strategy Policies
SUDS	Sustainable Urban Drainage System
UN	United Nations
WFD	Water Framework Directive
WRBD	Western River Basin District

## 2 PLANNING AND POLICY

### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the planning and policy objectives that support the Ballina Flood Relief Scheme (FRS) in the context of international, European and national flooding policy, and within regional, and local planning policy.

### 2.2 Planning and Policy Context

The Proposed Scheme is consistent with the overall objectives of international, European, national, regional, and local planning policy and guidance as considered below.

### 2.3 International Policy Context

The United Nations (UN) published 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015 (see **Figure 2-1**). These SDGs provide a shared blueprint to help ensure sustainability is integrated into policymaking on a national and international scale. The SDGs were formed in recognition that:

*“ending poverty and other deprivations must go hand-in-hand with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth – all while tackling climate change and working to preserve our oceans and forests” (United Nations , 2015).*



**Figure 2-1: UN Sustainable Development Goals**

The Proposed Scheme has been assessed in terms of a multi-criteria analysis (MCA) based on the current Office of Public Works (OPW) guidance (OPW, 2018). Four criteria were considered: technical, social, economic and environmental.

**Table 2-1** presents the relationship between these assessment criteria and the UN SDGs.

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**Table 2-1: Ballina FRS Alignment with UN Sustainable Development Goals**

Ballina FRS Sustainability Goals	Relation to UN Sustainable Development Goals
<b>Technical</b>	
Sustainable drainage and catchment management including grassed surface water channels and catchment-based flood modelling	6. Clean water and sanitation 11. Sustainable cities and communities
Developed design that utilises local materials, reuses existing materials on site to minimise amount of imported material required.	12. Responsible consumption and production
Prioritise sustainable design, from inception through to construction as well as whole life sustainability and maintenance. Structures were design to achieve 50-year design life with minimal requirements for future maintenance.	9. Industry, innovation and infrastructure 11. Sustainable cities and communities 12. Responsible consumption and production 13. Climate action
Low-carbon construction materials such as low-carbon cement alternatives are proposed.	9. Industry, innovation and infrastructure 11. Sustainable cities and communities 12. Responsible consumption and production 13. Climate action
<b>Social</b>	
Ensure essential services and amenities is retained for vulnerable groups via improvements to current river access with ramps and widened street access in areas such as Cathedral Rd.	3. Good health and well-being 10. Reduced inequalities
Consider the needs of cyclists and pedestrians by retaining and improving access and visibility to the River Moy, as well as considering existing and proposed active travel routes.	3. Good health and wellbeing
<b>Economic</b>	
Reducing flood risk strengthens social and economic cohesion by improving development opportunities along the River Moy. Design also supports the Mayo County Council (MCC) goals to build-up the urban structure through the Ballina Draft Public Realm Strategy, as Ballina Town transitions towards a more broadly based mix of economic activities sufficient to underpin a long term, self-sustaining local community.	8. Decent work and economic growth 9. Industry, innovation and infrastructure 16. Peace, justice and strong institutions
<b>Environmental</b>	
Consideration of fish passage and spawning periods in the proposed construction programme by minimising instream works and restricting works during spawning season.	14. Life below water
Set-back of flood defences to minimise impact on otter habitat, reduce tree removal and avoid any works within designated areas like the River Moy Special Area of Conservation (SAC), wherever possible.	14. Life below water 15. Life on land

## 2.4 European Policy

### 2.4.1 EU Directive on the Assessment and Management of Flood Risks (2007/60/EC)

This Directive, which was transposed into Irish law in under SI No.122 of 2010, requires Member States to assess watercourses and coastlines at risk from flooding, to map flood extent, assets and humans at risk, and take adequate measures to reduce this flood risk. Implementation is being co-ordinated with the European Union (EU) Water Framework Directive (WFD) and the current River Basin Management Plans by the OPW.

This Directive established a legislative framework for the protection of all waters (including rivers, lakes, estuaries, coastal waters & groundwater) and their dependent wildlife and habitats. It requires Member States to protect and improve water quality in all water bodies, so they achieve good ecological status by 2015 (extended to 2027). It requires the preparation and regular review of River Basin Management Plans.

### 2.4.2 EU Strategy on Adaption to Climate Change, 2021

This Strategy is an integral part of the European Green Deal which seeks to address the impacts of climate change and the need to become climate resilient by 2050 by way of smarter, swifter and more systematic adaptation. Flooding is identified as a climate-related risk and the need for flood protection is recognised.

The Strategy has four principle objectives: to make adaptation smarter, swifter and more systemic, and to step up international action on adaptation to climate change.

### 2.4.3 EU Floods Directive (2007/60/EC)

The EU Directive came into force in 2007 for the assessment and management of flood risk. The EU Flood Directive has certain requirements that have to be met by each EU Member State. Ireland has established the Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management (CFRAM) Programme. This CFRAM programme is Irelands way of implementing the requirements expected by the EU Floods Directive.

The aim of the EU Flood Directive for the “*reduction of the adverse consequences for human health, the environment, cultural heritage and economic activity associated with floods in the Community*”.

## 2.5 National Policy

### 2.5.1 National Planning Framework 2040

The *National Planning Framework 2040* (NPF) sets out a framework of policy objectives to help Ireland achieve its long-term sustainable goals. The strategic plan focuses on integrating Ireland’s economic development, spatial planning, infrastructure planning and social considerations. It promotes environmentally focused planning at local level to tackle climate change and the implementation of appropriate measures to mitigate existing issues.

The plan aims to align itself with the UN SDG’s, by ensuring that the decision process will safeguard the needs of future generations. These objectives are integrated as part of the National Strategic Outcomes (NSOs) in areas such as climate action, sustainable cities and innovation and infrastructure.

**NSO 9** outlines the urgency of upgrading and investing in water management and environmental resources, stating;

*“Coordinate EU Flood Directive and Water Framework Directive implementation and statutory plans across the planning hierarchy, including national guidance on the relationship between the planning system and river basin management. Local authorities, DHPLG, OPW and other relevant Departments and agencies working together to implement the recommendations of the CFRAM programme will ensure that flood risk management policies and infrastructure are progressively implemented.*”

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*Improve storm water infrastructure to improve sustainable drainage and reduce the risk of flooding in the urban environment.”*

The importance of flood relief measures are further highlighted under Section 9 of the NPF, titled *Protecting Conserving and Enhancing our Natural Capital*. It is envisioned that planning will play a vital role in mitigating development in inappropriate or vulnerable areas and will aid the delivery and design of necessary infrastructure in our towns and cities.

National Policy Objective (NPO) 41b emphasises the importance of flood relief works as part of the national agenda for climate adaption:

*“In line with the collective aims of national policy regarding climate adaptation, to address the effects of sea level changes and coastal flooding and erosion and to support the implementation of adaptation response in vulnerable areas.”*

The proposed FRS works which will deliver flood relief works to protect Ballina from flood events is supported by NPO 41b.

NPO 57 seeks to

*“enhance water quality and resource management by:*

- *Ensuring flood risk management informs place-making by avoiding inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding in accordance with The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities;*
- *Ensuring that River Basin Management Plan objectives are fully considered throughout the physical planning process;*
- *Integrating sustainable water management solutions, such as Sustainable Urban Drainage (SUDS), nonporous surfacing and green roofs, to create safe places”.*

### 2.5.2 Draft First Revision to the National Planning Framework

The Government published the draft first revision of the NPF for public consultation in July 2024. Arising from the public consultation process the Updated Draft Revised National Planning Framework was published in November 2024 (hereafter, the Updated Draft NPF).

The Updated Draft NPF notes under *Water Resource Management and Flooding* that *“Flooding is a cross-sectoral issue that can affect all aspects of life, and that can be influenced, positively or detrimentally, by actions in many other sectors.”* The Updated Draft NPF has the same general policy approach to flooding issues as the current NPF. Some National Policy Objectives (NPOs) have been updated and amended with a number of new NPOs added. The Updated Draft NPF includes NPO 77 and 78 that address mitigation of flood risk and states:

*“Support the management of stormwater, rainwater and surface water flood and pollution risk through the use of nature-based solutions and sustainable drainage systems, including the retrofitting of existing environments to support nature based solutions.”*

*Promote sustainable development by ensuring flooding and flood risk management informs place-making by:*

- *Avoiding inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding that do not pass the Justification Test, in accordance with the Guidelines on the Planning system and Flood Risk Management;*
- *Taking account of the potential impacts of climate change on flooding and flood risk, in line with national policy regarding climate adaption.”*

The Proposed Scheme will deliver flood relief measures designed to address both existing and projected flooding in Ballina, mainly resulting from the River Moy and tributaries. By doing so, the Proposed Scheme will safeguard Ballina and its communities from flood risks, providing infrastructure to address climate change and manage the impacts of flooding events caused by changing climate patterns, thus aligning with the provisions and vision of the Updated Draft NPF.



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### 2.5.3 National Development Plan 2021 -2030

This plan underpins the NPF, and it sets a framework for investment priorities which includes expenditure commitments to secure a wider range of Strategic Strategies, including Flood Risk Management. It is noted that:

*“the existing flood capital investment programme, including new schemes being progressed on foot of the Flood Risk Management Plans, launched in 2018 developed under the CFRAM process, are also helping to reduce the vulnerability of the country to the negative effects of climate change through effective adaptation measures.”*

### 2.5.4 National Marine Planning Framework, 2021

The *National Marine Planning Framework 2021* (NMPF) provides for a comprehensive marine spatial planning framework. It brings together all marine-based human activities and outlines the Government’s vision, objectives and marine planning policies for each marine activity.

The NMPF recognises that, *“Climate change is expected to alter patterns in storm surges, sea level rise, and floods that can all play a part in coastal change”*.

It provides for the co-ordination of appropriate measures to deal with coastal change resulting from climate change (incl. storm surges, sea level rise and floods) and requires that, *“proposals should demonstrate that they have considered, and are resilient to, the effects of climate change for the lifetime proposed plans”*.

### 2.5.5 Climate Action Plan 2024

The *Climate Action Plan* (CAP) 2024 is the most recent annual update to Ireland’s Climate Action Plan. CAP 2024 implements the carbon budgets and sectoral emissions ceilings and sets out a roadmap for taking decisive action to halve our emissions by 2030 and reach net zero no later than 2050, as committed to in the Programme for Government. This Plan sets out a Summary of Potential Impacts of Climate Change on Ireland, which include:

- *“Precipitation extremes and flooding, resulting in disruption of transport services, damage to structures, damage to the built environment, unsafe driving conditions and deterioration of transport infrastructure”*.  
and
- *“Projected increases in sea levels and storm surge will result in increased frequency of coastal flooding and change, with significant impacts for coastal structures, communities, settlements, and coastal heritage sites”*.

*Table 23.2 2023 – 2024 Actions* outlines actions that will be undertaken in support of the Government policy on climate change. Included in this table are AD/24/2 AD/24/3 which state:

*“Complete a review of the national Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment to assess the potential impacts of climate change on flooding and flood risk across Ireland”*.

*“Develop options for the delivery of a National Implementation Strategy for Nature-Based Solutions and interim guidance to the management of rainwater and surface water runoff in urban areas.”*

### 2.5.6 Ireland’s 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan 2023–2030

Ireland’s 4<sup>th</sup> *National Biodiversity Action Plan 2023–2030* (NBAP) prepared by the Government of Ireland outlines the challenges facing biodiversity within the state. Scientific assessments of the state of nature in Ireland have found that 85% of our EU protected habitats are in unfavourable status. The NBAP takes account of the wide range of policies, strategies, conventions, laws and targets at the global, EU and national level that influence our shared environment in order to scale up biodiversity action.

The Action Plan identifies 5 no. high level objectives:

- Adopt a Whole-of- Government, Whole- of-Society Approach to Biodiversity.
- Meet Urgent Conservation and Restoration Needs.

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- Secure Nature’s Contribution to People.
- Enhance the Evidence Base for Action on Biodiversity; and
- Strengthen Ireland’s Contribution to International Biodiversity Initiatives.

More detailed outcomes, targets and actions are set out. Outcome 2D is “*Biodiversity and ecosystem services in the marine and freshwater environment are conserved and restored*”.

Within this outcome are the following targets and actions:

*“Action No. 2D2*

*Target: By 2027, protection and restoration measures detailed in Ireland’s third RBMP are implemented to ensure that our natural waters are sustainably managed, that freshwater resources are protected so that there is no further deterioration; and where required, Ireland’s rivers, lakes and coastal water bodies are restored to at least good ecological status.*

*Action No. 2D5*

*Target: By 2027, optimised benefits in flood risk management planning and drainage schemes are in place*

*Action: OPW will work with relevant authorities to ensure that Flood Risk Management planning and associated Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), EIA and Appropriate Assessment (AA), minimises loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services through policies to promote more catchment-wide and non-structural flood risk management measures*

*Action No. 2D6*

*Action: OPW will ensure that all significant drainage (arterial drainage), including both initial drainage and maintenance drainage will be assessed for its implications for biodiversity, particularly for wetlands*

*Action No. 2D7*

*The OPW, in coordination with other relevant stakeholders, will continue to enhance its knowledge and capacity with regards to Nature-based Solutions for Catchment Management (NBS-CM) and will assess the potential NBS-CM as part of the development of the future flood relief schemes.*

*Action No. 2D8*

*OPW will review existing flood relief schemes, identifying opportunities for retrofit of biodiversity enhancement measures, and developing biodiversity good practice from the lessons learned into guidance for new schemes”.*

### 2.5.7 Biodiversity Action Strategy 2022-2026

This *Biodiversity Action Strategy 2022-2026*, published by the OPW, sets out OPW’s intention for protecting, promoting and enhancing biodiversity across its operations. The Strategy identifies strategic actions to help to deliver Government policy through contribution to the delivery of the National Biodiversity Action Plan.

The OPW is the Government’s principal engineering agency and coordinates policy and service delivery in flood risk management, flood risk planning, and the delivery of flood risk capital projects.

The strategy sets out actions relating to NBAP objectives, those pertinent to flood relief works are outlined below:

- “2.9 *Develop biodiversity guidance and manuals for waterway maintenance and flood relief scheme;*
- 3.2 *Develop a requirement for contractors to have completed the environmental awareness training as a requirement for OPW- funded work on flood relief schemes or river maintenance;*
- 3.4 *Carry out a review of biodiversity measures within flood relief scheme; and*
- 3.8 *Develop biodiversity opportunity planning for a range of demonstration flood relief scheme projects and drainage maintenance operations.”*

## 2.5.8 Climate Change Sectoral Adaptation Plan for Flood Risk Management, 2019-2024

This Plan, published by the OPW, considers the impacts climate change will have on flooding and flood risk as well as the effect it will have on the flood risk management. There are 21 no. actions identified which shall ensure effective and sustainable management of flood risk in the future.

The Objectives of the Plan are as follows:

- **Objective 1:** *“Enhancing our knowledge and understanding of the potential impacts of climate change for flooding and flood risk management through research and assessment”.*
- **Objective 2:** *“Adapting flood risk management practice to effectively manage the potential impact of climate change on future flood risk”.*
- **Objective 3:** *“Aligning adaptation to the impact of climate change on flood risk and flood risk management across sectors and wider Government policy”.*

At present Ballina falls under First Phase Flood Relief Scheme. The First Phase comprises of Scheme Development and Preliminary Design.

There are several Objectives/actions within the Climate Change Sectoral Adaptation Plan for Flood Risk Management relevant to Ballina FRS, including:

- **Objective 2, Adaptation Action 2.A – OPW, 2027:**  
*“Assessment of appropriate adaptation measures for those existing flood relief schemes, where climate change may in time impact the current standard of protection”.*
- **Objective 2, Adaptation Action 2.B – OPW, 2019 and Ongoing:**  
*“The Brief for the detailed development of flood relief schemes to include a requirement for a Scheme Adaptation Plan that will set out how climate change has been taken into account during the design and construction, and what adaptation measures might be needed and when into the future”.*
- **Objective 2, Adaptation Action 2.D – OPW & DPER, 2021:**  
*“The inclusion of potential increases in flood damages as part of the economic cost-benefit analysis for future flood relief schemes will be reviewed”.*
- **Objective 3, Adaptation Action 3.B – OPW & Other Stakeholders in Catchment Management, Ongoing:**  
*“The OPW, in coordination with other relevant stakeholders, will continue to enhance its knowledge and capacity with regards to National Water Retention Measures (NWRMs) and will assess the potential for NWRMs as part of the development of the future flood relief schemes”.*

## 2.5.9 National Flood Policy, 2004

This Policy builds on the Arterial Drainage (Amendment) Act 1995, which permits the OPW to implement localised flood relief schemes to co-ordinate the management of flood risk in Ireland. The Policy provides for:

- A catchment-based context for managing risk.
- More pro-active flood hazard and risk assessment and management, with a view to avoiding or minimising future increases in risk, such as that which might arise from development in floodplains.
- Increased use of non-structural and flood impact mitigation measures.

## 2.5.10 The Planning System and Flood Risk Management 2009

The OPW in conjunction with the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DEHLG) published a set of guidelines that relate to flood risk management. The guidelines advocate for a proactive

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approach to prevent flooding from occurring. This includes, for example, adopting general policies for protection, improving or restoring floodplains, and upgrading of flood barriers. Under these guidelines Planning Authorities have a key role in the delivery of effective measures, policies and infrastructure to minimise the risk of flooding.

In this regard, the proposed Ballina FRS accords with the guidelines in enhancing flood barriers and reducing flood risk.

### 2.5.11 National Catchment-based Flood Risk Assessment and Management (CFRAM) Programme

The adopted national Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management (CFRAM) programme commenced in Ireland in 2011. The OPW undertook the CFRAM Programme in consultation with the Local Authorities.

The process identified and mapped the existing and potential future flood hazard and flood risk in the areas at potentially significant risk from flooding, called Areas for Further Assessment (AFA). The CFRAM programme is central to the medium to long-term strategy for the reduction and management of flood risk in Ireland.

The OPW designated 300 AFAs at potentially significant risk from flooding. Ballina and environs was one of these AFAs.

### 2.5.12 Water Action Plan 2024 A River Basin Management Plan for Ireland for Ireland

The *Water Action Plan 2024 A River Basin Management Plan for Ireland for Ireland* (Water Action Plan 2024) prepared by the Government of Ireland sets out Ireland's approach to protect and restore its rivers, lakes, estuaries and coastal waters over the third cycle of the EU Water Framework Directive (WFD). The Plan builds upon the previous two cycles of River Basin Management Plans and signals to the international community, Ireland's commitment to implementing the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 6 to improve water quality, protect and restore water-related ecosystems.

The Plan sets out the environmental improvements to be delivered during a river basin planning cycle. The plans contain water quality objectives and a programme of measures to achieve those objectives.

Flooding, flood relief works and the need for protection against flooding are referenced within the RBMP. The increasing prevalence of flooding, due in part to climate change is acknowledged.

Multiple measures to reduce flooding, including flooding protection, appropriate planning control, nature based urban sustainable urban drainage are reference and supported. The Water Action Plan 2024 states the following with regard to structural flood protection is:

*“the current policy in relation to flood protection is to implement the Floods Directive in full. This includes structural flood protection measures proposed for communities at significant flood risk, aimed at reducing the likelihood and/or degree of flooding, identified through the National Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management (CFRAM) Programme.”*

### 2.5.13 National Adaptation Framework 2024

The *National Adaptation Framework 2024: Planning for a Climate Resilient Ireland* (hereafter, the NAF), published by the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment, provides a broad strategic direction for climate change adaptation across various sectors in Ireland, including flood risk management, which is one of the 13 priority sectors under the NAF.

While providing limited guidance on flood relief schemes, the NAF acknowledges the increasing frequency and intensity of extreme weather events, including projected precipitation that may increase pluvial and fluvial flooding due to climate change and supports capital investment in flood adaptation measures. In this regard, investments in critical infrastructure, such as water management systems, are highlighted to ensure they can withstand severe flooding events. Furthermore, it notes the role of local authorities in developing and implementing local climate adaptation measures, focusing on flood-prone areas and strengthening

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infrastructure to better cope with increased rainfall. These actions aim to reduce vulnerabilities in terms of flood risk and align with broader national objectives for climate resilience.

Considering the above, the proposed flood relief measures will allow the sustainable management of flood risks associated with the River Moy and for climate change adaptation.

## 2.6 Regional Policy

### 2.6.1 Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2020-2032- Northern and Western Regional Assembly

The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) seeks to enable the vision set out in the NPF be implemented at a regional / local level.

The RSES is cognisant of the need to address flooding as outlined in the objectives below:

#### RPO 3.10

*“Ensure flood risk management informs development by avoiding inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding and integrate sustainable water management solutions (such as SUDS, non-porous surfacing and green roofs) to create safe places. Development plans should assess flood risk by implementing the recommendations of the Planning System and Flood Risk Assessment Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2009) and Circular PL02/2014 (August 2014)”.*

#### RPO 3.11

*“Local Authorities, DHPLG, OPW, and other relevant Departments and agencies to work together to implement the recommendation of the CFRAM programme to ensure that flood risk management policies and infrastructure are progressively implemented.”*

#### RPO 8.13

*“Support the delivery of flood defence works planned by OPW to be implemented in the short-term.”*

#### RPO 8.22

*“Prioritising investment to improve stormwater infrastructure to improve sustainable drainage and reduce the risk of flooding in the urban and rural environment”.*

The regional importance of Ballina is recognised in the RSES and Ballina is designated a “Key Town” in the RSES. Key future priorities include:

*“Regeneration within the town core particularly in the Market Square/Military Barracks area and regeneration of the riverside along the River Moy is crucial to facilitate an enterprise-led regeneration of the town centre.”*

## 2.7 Local Policy

### 2.7.1 Mayo County Development Plan 2022 – 2028

The *Mayo County Development Plan 2022 – 2028* (CDP) is the primary articulation of local statutory planning policy in the county. As such it provides guidance *inter alia* on the development of Ballina and the provision of flood relief defences.

#### 2.7.1.1 Development of Ballina Town

The policies and objectives of the CDP support the growth and development of Ballina town, particularly the existing town centre, proximate to the River Moy. The CDP contains Settlement Strategy Policies (SSP), Settlement Strategy Objectives (SSO) and Economic Development Policies (EDP).

#### SSP 2

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*“Support the continued growth and sustainable development of Ballina, Castlebar and Westport, as designated Tier I towns (Key Towns and Strategic Growth Town) in the Settlement Strategy, capitalising on Ballina’s designation as a Key Town in the context of the Sligo Regional Growth Centre and Castlebar/Westport as a linked growth driver in the region.”*

### SSO 2

*“To facilitate the development of Ballina, Castlebar and Westport to underpin their role as designated Tier I Key Towns and a Strategic Growth Town, respectively, in the Settlement Hierarchy and to ensure that the growth of these towns takes place in an orderly and sustainable fashion that will not detract from the vitality and viability of their town centres.”*

### SSO 3

*“To require sustainable, compact, sequential growth and urban regeneration in Ballina, Castlebar and Westport by consolidating the built-up footprints of these towns through a focus on regeneration and development of town centre infill and brownfield sites, and encouraging regeneration of underutilised, vacant and derelict lands for residential development and mixed use to facilitate population growth.”*

### SSO 4

*“To apply higher densities to the higher order settlements of Ballina, Castlebar and Westport (see DM Standards), to align with their roles within the settlement hierarchy, subject to good design and development management standards being met.”*

### EDP 6

*“To support and grow the role of Ballina as the key economic driver in the north-west of the county, capitalising on its designation as a Key Town within the context of the Sligo Regional Growth Centre and its location in relation to the Atlantic Economic Corridor, in order to facilitate long-term economic growth within the context of a high-quality environment, supporting a wide range of services and amenities.”*

### 2.7.1.2 Land Use Zoning

The adopted CDP has maintained the land use zonings from the *Ballina Town and Environs Development Plan 2009 – 2015*. The active land use zoning within Ballina is shown **Figure 2-1**. The figure below shows that the town extends along the western and eastern banks of the River Moy. The town centre is based around the streets Pearse Street/ O’Rahilly Street and Tolan Street/ Tone Street being zoned for commercial use. Most lands proximate to the River Moy are zoned:

- Commercial
- Existing Residential
- Community Facility
- Phase 1 / Phase 2 Residential
- Recreation/Leisure
- Agricultural

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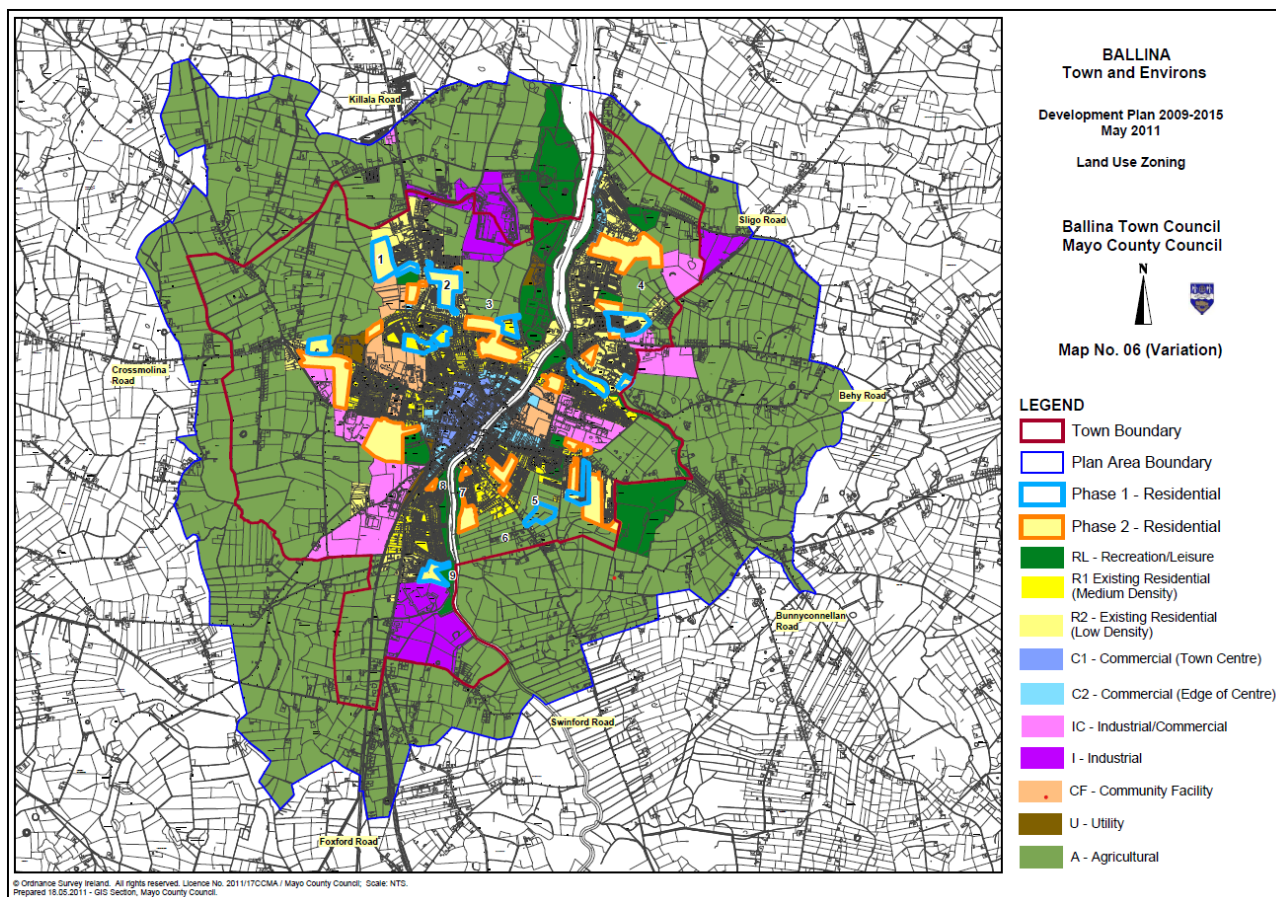


Figure 2-2: Land Use Zoning in Ballina

### 2.7.1.3 Flood Risk Management

The CDP outlines that flooding is the most common source of climate related impacts and loss around the country, with Ballina being a town at a high risk for flooding. The CDP aims to promote efficient flood risk practices in planning and development management and to deliver infrastructural provision which will reduce flood risk:

#### Policy INP 14

*“To have regard to the Guidelines for Planning Authorities on the Planning System and Flood Risk Management and Circular PL2/2014 (or as updated), in the preparation of plans and strategies related to development and in the assessment of projects”.*

#### Policy INP 15

*“To support the implementation of the recommendations in the Flood Risk Management Plans (FRMP’s), including planned investment measures for managing and reducing flood risk”.*

#### Policy INP 16

*“To support the implementation of recommendations in the CFRAM Programme to ensure that flood risk management policies and infrastructure are progressively implemented.”*

#### Objective INO 19

*“To ensure that a flood risk assessment is carried out for any development proposal where a flood risk is identified in accordance with the Planning System and Flood Risk Management (DOEHLG/OPW, 2009) and Circular PL2/2014. This assessment shall be appropriate to the scale and nature of risk to the potential development”.*

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### Objective INO 21

*“To assist the OPW in developing catchment-based Flood Risk Management Plans for rivers in County Mayo and have regard to their provisions/recommendations”.*

### Objective INO 23

*“To ensure that where flood risk management works take place that natural heritage, cultural heritage, rivers, streams and watercourses are appropriately protected.”*

## River Moy

The significance of the River Moy is recognised in the CDP with multiple objectives pertaining to the protection and better utilisation of the river, including:

### Objective KAO 7

*“To protect Killala Bay/Moy Estuary Special Area of Conservation (Site Code 000458) and Special Protection Area (Site Code 004036). Development proposals will be required to demonstrate that the development will not have an adverse effect on the integrity of the sites.”*

### Policy TRP 6 (C)

*“Exploration of the development potential of Westport and Ballina harbour areas in terms of marine related tourism and extensive marine resources.”*

### Policy TRP 6 (D)

*“Promote the significant tourism potential of Ballina and its location as a prominent stop on the Wild Atlantic Way, a gateway to Northwest Mayo, the Céide Fields, and internationally renowned salmon fishing, through investment in tourism related infrastructure, including Monasteries of the Moy Greenway from Belleek to Killala, incorporating EuroVelo1 Atlantic Coastal Route, Mountain Biking Trail via Ballina connecting the Wild Nephin Ballycroy National Park to the National Mountain Bike Trail at Coolaney and ongoing development of the Wild Atlantic Way, including Discovery Points at Crockets Town.”*

### Policy TRP 6 (G)

*“To support the implementation of the feasibility study entitled Moy estuary, A Development Strategy, where appropriate.”*

## 2.7.2 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment to the Mayo County Development Plan

Within the Planning System and Flood Risk Management guidelines, the purpose of the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) is *“to provide a broad (wide area) assessment of all types of flood risk to inform strategic land-use planning decisions. SFRA enable the LA to undertake the sequential approach, including the Justification Test, allocate appropriate sites for development and identify how flood risk can be reduced as part of the development plan process”.*

The SFRA for the CDP classifies Ballina to be an area for *“Further Assessment”*, this means the SFRA is unsure of the extent and degree a flood from the River Moy would have on the area.

The Strategic Flood Risk Assessment has three stages which can be seen below:

- **Stage 1 Strategic Flood Identification**

*“to identify whether there may be any flooding or surface water management issues related to either the area of Regional Planning Guidelines, Development Plans and Local Area Plans, or a proposed development site that may warrant further investigation at the appropriate lower-level plan or planning application levels.*

- *Identify the broad nature of flood risk in the County.*
- *Outline the flood risk management objectives to be included in the Plan.*



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– *Outline the development management standards to be included in the Plan*”.

- **Stage 2 Initial Flood Risk Assessment**

*“to confirm sources of flooding that may affect a Plan Area or proposed development site, to appraise the adequacy of existing information and to scope the extent of the risk of flooding which may involve preparing indicative flood zone maps. Where hydraulic models exist the potential impact of a development on flooding elsewhere and of the scope of possible mitigation measures can be assessed. In addition, the requirements of the detailed assessment should be scoped.*

– *Provide an improved understanding of flood risk issues within the area of the Plan.*

– *Identify where more detailed flood risk assessments may have to be carried out, for development that is planned within areas at risk of flooding. These more detailed assessments will be used to identify and evaluate the potential for the development of the lands and the associated environmental impact”.*

- **Stage 3 Detailed Flood Risk Assessment**

*“to assess flood risk issues in sufficient detail and to provide a quantitative appraisal of potential flood risk to a proposed or existing development or land to be zoned, of its potential impact on flood risk elsewhere and of the effectiveness of any proposed mitigation measures”.*

### 2.7.3 Draft Mayo Heritage and Biodiversity Strategy 2023-2030

The *Draft Mayo Heritage and Biodiversity Strategy 2023-2030* facilitated by the Heritage Office of Mayo County Council aims to build on the achievements of the previous County Mayo Heritage and Biodiversity Plans. The Strategy identifies 8 no. thematic areas for inclusion in the Strategy of: “*Community, Biodiversity, Awareness and Education, Historic and Archaeological Heritage, Research and Data Collection, Climate, Intangible Cultural Heritage*”, and “*Partnerships*”. Within the theme of biodiversity there is a commitment to the promotion of planting and management of hedgerows and native trees, to explore and promote opportunities for habitat conservation, enhancement and restoration and to conduct an audit of Mayo County Council land/property to identify, conserve and enhance biodiversity potential.

Public consultation on the draft Strategy is complete but it is understood the Strategy has not yet been finalised.

### 2.7.4 County Mayo Biodiversity Action Plan 2010 - 2015

The County Mayo Biodiversity Action Plan (CMBAP) aims to raise awareness of and promote the conservation of the natural heritage and biodiversity of the county.

The vision for the CMBAP is “*That Mayo becomes a place even richer in wildlife and wild places that is cherished and respected by all, and for the benefit of all*”.

The Plan provides a framework for the conservation of biodiversity and natural heritage at a local level.

It is noted in the CMBAP that the River Moy is famous for its salmon fishery and is a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and that Killala Bay / Moy Estuary is designated as both a SAC and SPA.

The three over-riding objectives as set out in the plan are:

- *“Objective 1: Increase awareness, understanding and appreciation of Mayo’s biodiversity and natural heritage;*
- *Objective 2: Collect and make accessible biodiversity/ natural heritage information; and*
- *Objective 3: Promote best practice in natural heritage management and conservation.”*

The *County Mayo Heritage & Biodiversity Strategy 2023-2030* is currently at pre-draft public consultation stage.

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### 2.7.5 Mayo County Council Climate Action Plan 2024 -2029

The *Mayo County Council Climate Action Plan 2024 -2029* (MCAP) sets out how MCC will be responsible for enhancing climate resilience, increasing energy efficiency, and reducing greenhouse gas emissions, across its own assets, services, and infrastructure, for which it is fully accountable, whilst also demonstrating a broader role of influencing, advocating, and facilitating other sectors, to meet their own climate targets and ambitions.

Each chapter of the MCAP includes a case study that details an example of the climate action projects undertaken by MCC to date. Case Study 2 details the Councils commitment to tackle the increased frequency and impact of flooding in Mayo. Case Study 2 notes, **“Ballina Town: The Ballina Flood Relief Scheme is nearing the submission of a planning application to An Bord Pleanála.”**

The MCAP also details results from the Climate Change Risk Assessment including:

*“Recent experiences of river and pluvial flooding events in 2020, 2021 and 2022 resulted in damages to buildings and infrastructure, damage of transport networks (e.g., Closure of R334 road between The Neale and Ballinrobe at The Neale crossroads) and impacts on business and local economy. Projected increases in the frequency of extreme precipitation events will result in increased surface water and riverine flood risk for County Mayo.”*

The need to provide flood alleviation via nature-based solutions is an action (No. 14) of the MCAP.

### 2.7.6 Ballina Local Area Plan 2024 - 2030

The *Ballina Local Area Plan 2024-2030* (Ballina LAP) sets out an overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of Ballina in the context of local, regional and national planning policies.

The Ballina LAP was formally made by the Elected Members of the Ballina Municipal District of Mayo County Council on 18<sup>th</sup> September 2024. The Plan has effect from 30<sup>th</sup> October 2024 for a period of 6 years until 2030 save for the items referenced within the Draft Ministerial Direction issued on the 15<sup>th</sup> of October 2024.

The draft direction directs the Planning Authority to delete 7 no. material alterations regarding land use zonings.

The “Vision Statement” for the town as set out in the Ballina LAP is:

*“To support and grow the role of the Key Town of Ballina, to create a sustainable and competitive town that supports the health and well-being of the people of Ballina, providing an attractive destination, as a place in which to live, work, invest, do business and visit, offering high quality employment and educational opportunities within strong and vibrant sustainable communities, whilst ensuring a transition to a carbon neutral and climate resilient town that supports high environmental quality.”*

Policies within the Ballina LAP pertaining to the subject proposed FRS include:

Climate Action Policy 2 states:

*“It is a Policy of the Council to promote and encourage development which is resilient to climate change by ensuring that development proposals demonstrate sustainable design principles for new buildings/ services/site, including:*

*.... d) reducing flood risk, damage to property from extreme events—residential, public, and commercial*

*e) reducing risks from temperature extremes and extreme weather events to critical infrastructure such as roads, communication networks, the water/drainage network, and energy supply...”*

A flood relief scheme is identified as part of the “medium / longer term vision” for the Town Core, Moy Quarter and Cathedral Quarter

Objective NEO10 is to:

*“Enhance and promote biodiversity and amenity and to ensure the protection of environmentally sensitive sites and habitats, including where flood risk management measures are planned.”*

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Chapter 10 Infrastructure and Environmental Services, Section 10.4 Flood Risk Management outlines specific planning development management standards for development where there is an identified or potential flood risk and outlines the progress being made in the bringing forward of the Ballina Flood Relief Scheme.

This Chapter also includes Objectives IESO 3, which states:

*“It is an objective of the Council to:*

- a) *Manage flood risk in accordance with the requirements of “The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities”, DECLG and OPW (2009) and any revisions thereof and consider the potential impacts of climate change in the application of these guidelines.*
- b) *Require applications in areas at risk of flooding to be supported by a comprehensive flood risk assessment. All flood risk assessments should have regard to ‘The Planning System and Flood Risk Management’ (DEHLG and OPW, Nov.2009) as revised by Circular PL 2/2014, national flood hazard mapping, predicted changes in flood events resulting from climate change and the Moy & Killala Bay Catchment Flood Risk and Management Plan.*
- c) *Minimise flood risk arising from pluvial (surface water) flooding in Ballina by promoting the use of natural flood risk management measures including sustainable 109 drainage systems (SuDS), minimising extent of hard surface/paving, and smart solutions such as innovative green infrastructure.*
- d) *Demonstrate that future development will not result in increased risk of flooding elsewhere, restrict flow paths, where compensatory storage / storm water retention measures shall be provided on site*
- e) *Have regard to the most up to date Flood Mapping as presented on the Office of Public Works (OPW) maps.*
- f) *The LAP supports the on-going design, planning and implementation of the Ballina Flood Relief Scheme*
- g) *Only minor additions to existing developments and new water compatible developments are permissible within Flood Zone A and less vulnerable water compatible developments are permissible in Flood Zone B in accordance with the provisions of the Flood Risk Management Guidelines (DoEHLG/OPW 2009) and Circular PL2/2014 (or any updated/superseding document). SFRA will be reviewed and updated accordingly.”*

The land use zoning within the Ballina LAP is shown in **Figure 2-3** below. The figure below shows the River Moy as it bisects the town and the land use zonings proximate to the river, including:

- Existing Residential;
- New Residential;
- Town Centre;
- Edge of Town Centre;
- Recreation & Amenities;
- Open Space Ballina;
- Agriculture; and
- Infrastructure and utilities.

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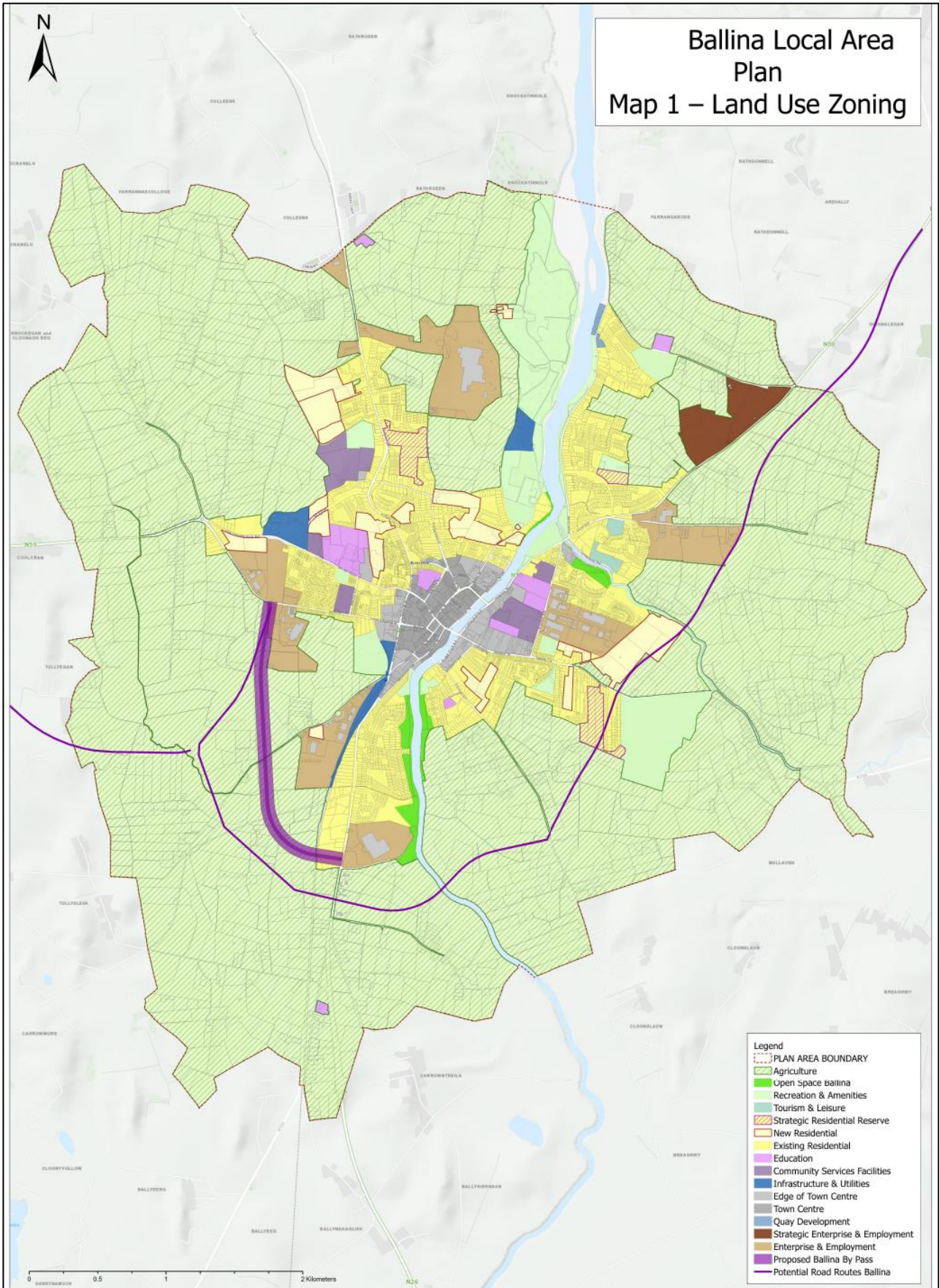


Figure 2-3: Land Use Zoning in Ballina LAP

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### 2.7.7 Draft Ballina Local Transport Plan 2023

The *Draft Ballina Local Transport Plan 2023* informs the preparation of the Ballina Local Area Plan. This Plan sets out a series of objectives and actions to ensure the essential transport infrastructure will be delivered at the correct locations in the town to create opportunities for a modal shift in transport. The overall aspiration of the transport plan is to provide recommendations to deliver a high quality, safe, coherent, direct, and attractive sustainable transport network.

### 2.7.8 Ballina Draft Public Realm Strategy

The *Ballina Draft Public Realm Strategy* fulfils one of the stated actions of the County Mayo Heritage Plan. The Ballina Draft Public Realm Strategy builds upon and ties together the six themes of: *Identity, Bringing Streets to Life, New Civic Quarters, An Activated and Connected Waterfront, Legibility and Orientation, and Welcome and Arrival*. Chapter 4 of this Strategy describes public realm projects and identifies specific areas along the River Moy. Amongst these areas is Cathedral Road, which has a number of opportunities and recommendations stated including to “*Introduce high quality lighting, seating, high canopy trees in planters and soft landscaping*”. Emmet Street is also highlighted as an area for planned public realm projects such as “*enhanced waterfront area with seating, outlook areas, planting and trees*”. This Strategy concludes with a public realm action plan that lists 10 no. steps and recommendations for Mayo County Council to implement to deliver this Strategy in the short to medium term.

### 2.7.9 Flood Risk Management Plan Moy and Killala Bay

The purpose of the Plan, prepared by the OPW, is to set out the strategy, including a set of proposed measures, for the cost-effective and sustainable, long-term management of flood risk in the River Basin, including the areas where the flood risk has been determined as being potentially significant.

The Plan includes non-structural flood risk prevention and preparedness measures and also structural flood protection measures proposed for communities at significant flood risk, aimed at reducing the likelihood and/or degree of flooding, identified through the National CFRAM Programme.

A series of measures are proposed in the Plan including:

- Sustainable Planning and Development Management
- Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS)
- Adaptation Planning
- Land Use Management and Natural Flood Risk Management
- Arterial Drainage Schemes
- Maintenance of Channels not part of a scheme
- Emergency Response Planning
- Promotion of Individual and Community Resilience
- Individual Property Protection
- As part of the development of the National Flood Forecasting Service, a flood forecasting system should be developed to include Foxford to Killala Bay, including Ballina and Knockanelo Tributary.

Of particular relevance to the project is the following proposal:

*“For Ballina & Environs, it is proposed in the Plan that a flood relief scheme is progressed to project-level development and assessment, including environmental assessment as necessary and further public consultation, for refinement and preparation for planning / exhibition and, if and as appropriate, implementation.”*

## **2.8 Summary**

European, national, regional and local planning policies identify the increased flood risk arising in part from climate change. There is support at all levels for the appropriate provision of flood relief measures to address flooding risk.

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