

Proposed Local Area Plan for Ballymote

SEA Screening Report

Prepared in accordance with the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004–2011

Sligo County Council proposes to prepare a local area plan for Ballymote in accordance with the provisions of Sligo County Development Plan 2011–2017.

This proposal will follow the procedure set out in Sections 18–20 of the Planning and Development Acts 2000–2010 (preparation and adoption of local area plans).

This Report contains:

A. Brief outline of the proposed local area plan	2
B. Background information on Ballymote	4
C. Characteristics of the proposed local area plan	13
D. Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected	15
E. Conclusion	17

To access the internet locations of the CDP and of Ballymote LAP & Pre-draft Consultation Paper, please follow the links: www.sligococo.ie/cdp and www.sligococo.ie/ballymote

A. Brief outline of the proposed local area plan

Ballymote Local Area Plan 2005-2011 was adopted by Sligo County Council on the 5th December 2005. The Sligo County Development Plan 2011-2017 (CDP) now specifies that the Ballymote Local Area Plan is to be reviewed by 2014.

This LAP will be prepared in accordance with the procedure set out in Sections 18–20 of the Planning and Development Acts 2000-2010.

The CDP earmarks Ballymote as a Key Support Town, in order to build on its strengths and existing scale of development. As recommended in the CDP, the strategy for Ballymote will be to consolidate the town through the provision of an appropriate range of services including social infrastructure, retail, office, commercial and enterprise facilities to enable it to serve its residents and those in the rural catchment in an appropriate manner.

Ballymote Local Area Plan – purpose and structure

The forthcoming Draft Ballymote LAP is intended to serve the following main purposes:

- to provide for orderly, balanced development in the interests of the common good;
- to indicate detailed requirements regarding the provision of community facilities and amenities;
- to set specific standards for the design of developments and structures;
- to ensure that all sectors of society are properly considered and catered for;
- to provide a degree of certainty and security.

The Draft Ballymote LAP will be structured under the following main headings:

- | | |
|------------|--|
| Chapter 1 | Plan context |
| Chapter 2 | Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) |
| Chapter 3 | Core Strategy |
| Chapter 4 | Economic development |
| Chapter 5 | Housing |
| Chapter 6 | Community facilities |
| Chapter 7 | Heritage |
| Chapter 8 | Mobility and transport |
| Chapter 9 | Infrastructure |
| Chapter 10 | Environmental quality |
| Chapter 10 | Urban design |

Note: All the policies and objectives contained in Sections 3 to 12 of the CDP are applicable to all settlements in County Sligo. These policies and objectives have already been assessed for effects on the environment through the SEA process in preparing the CDP 2011-2017.

Pre-Draft Consultation Paper

Following an initial survey and analysis work, a Pre-Draft Consultation Paper has been prepared. The Paper has identified the main issues relating to the Draft Ballymote LAP under the following headings:

1. Housing
2. The Economy
3. Transport and mobility
4. Education, culture, community
5. Urban design and open space

Please refer to the enclosed Pre-Draft Consultation Paper for further details.

Main change in the proposed LAP 2012-2018

The proposed Draft LAP will be similar to the existing LAP 2005-2011 in many respects.

However, whilst the proposed LAP will include a similar extent of land zoned for development (approximately 160 hectares), a lower amount of housing land will be available for development during the plan period. This reduction will be the most significant aspect of the proposed LAP when compared to the LAP 2005-2011.

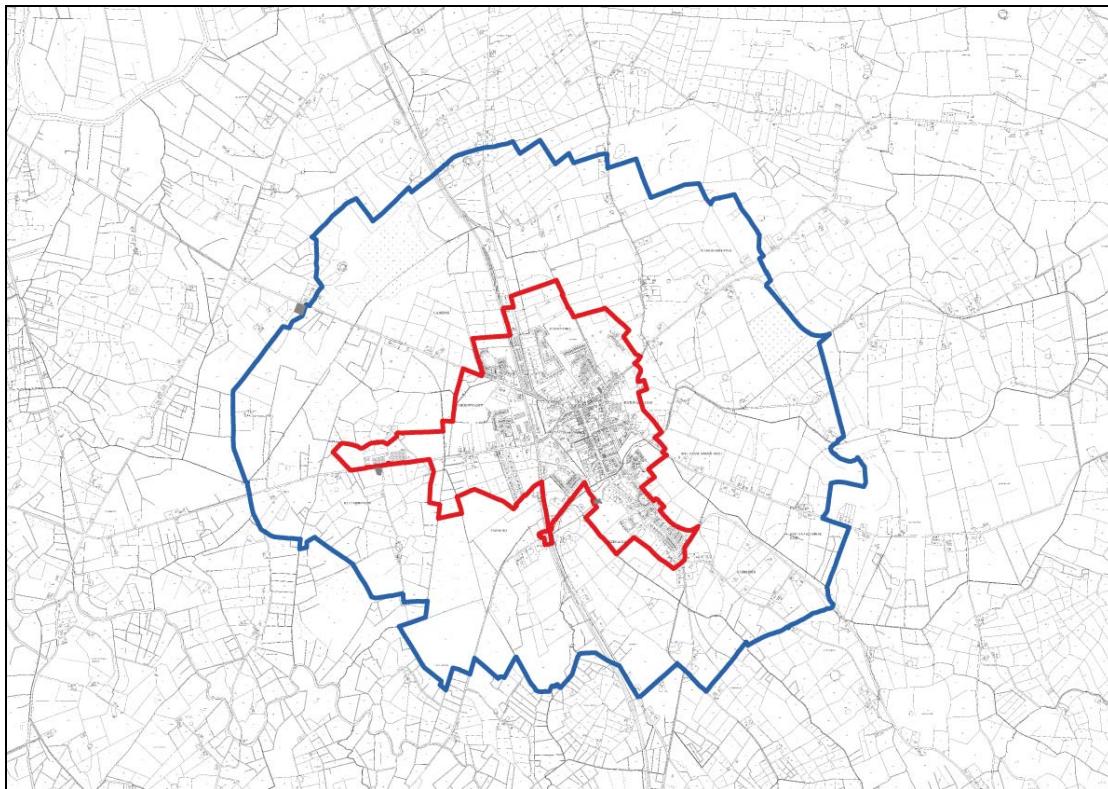
The reason behind this significant reduction in lands available for new housing development is to ensure consistency with the Core Strategy of the CDP. The Core Strategy of the CDP outlines that only 21 hectares are to be zoned for housing in Ballymote, in order to ensure compliance with the Regional Planning Guidelines.

Some of the peripheral sites zoned for residential development in the LAP 2005-2011 are to be included in a Strategic Land Reserve (SLR). Proposals for housing development within the SLR will not be considered during the plan period. One site, which is liable to flooding, will be included in the buffer zone, which is to be established around the development limit of Ballymote.

The purpose of this buffer zone is to help consolidate the town by preventing sprawl and uncontrolled infill development along the approach roads, within a 0.7–1.3 km distance from the contiguous built-up area.

The illustration on next page shows the proposed development limit and the extent of the proposed buffer zone.

Fig. 1 Proposed Plan limit (blue line) and Development Limit (red line) for Ballymote LAP



B. Background information on Ballymote

Section 2 of the Ballymote LAP 2005–2011 contains significant background information on Ballymote. The LAP 2005-2011 can be accessed at <http://www.sligococo.ie/ballymote>

Furthermore, the Pre-Draft Consultation Paper contains additional, updated information on the profile of Ballymote. The Paper can be downloaded from the same web address as above.

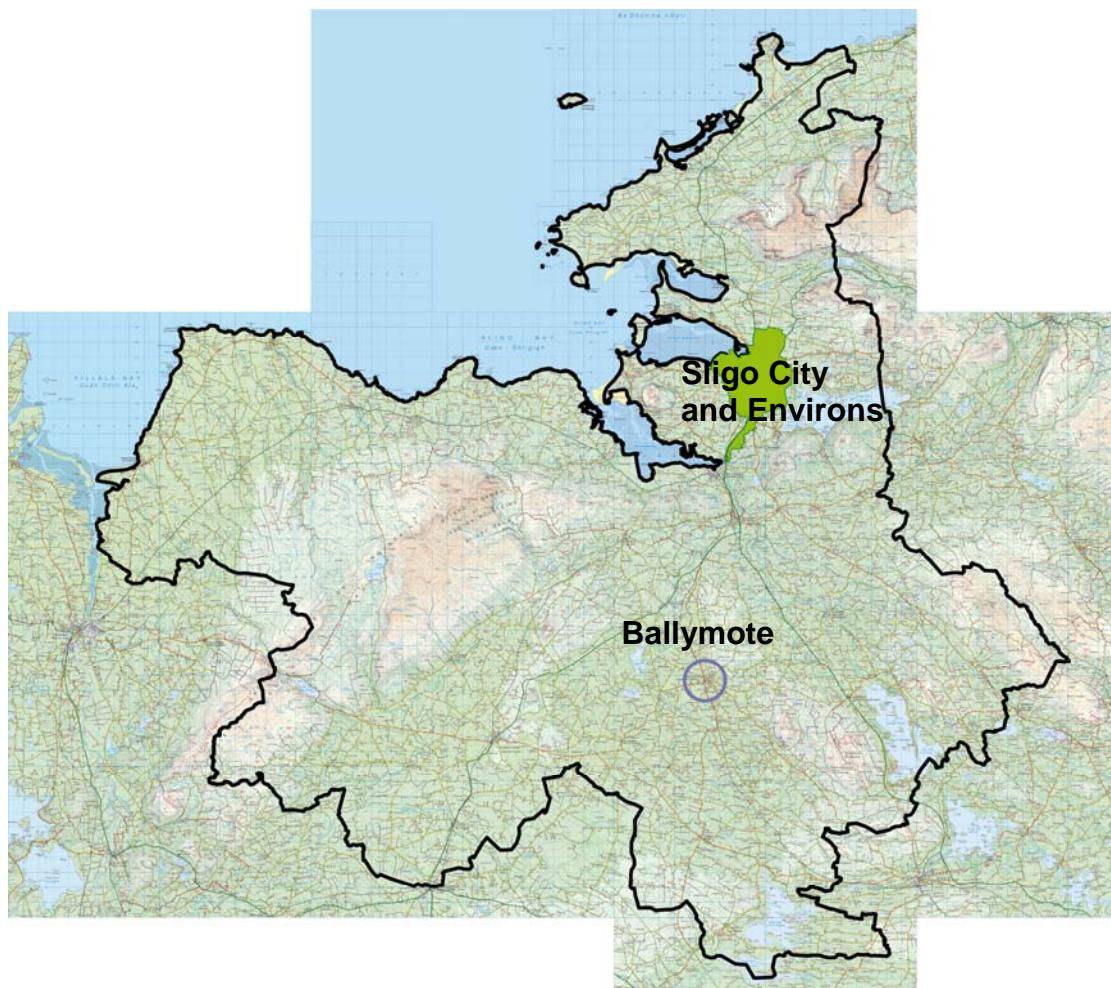
Location

Ballymote is located 24 km (15 miles) to the south of Sligo City, in the south-east of the County. The entire area lies within the administrative jurisdiction of Sligo County Council and incorporates the townlands of Camross, Stoneparks, Carrowcauley, Rathnakelliga, Keenaghan, Maghera, Carrownanty and Ballymote itself.

The Bricklieve Mountains are to be found 6 km to the south-east of Ballymote with the hill of Kesh Corann providing a picturesque backdrop to the town. Numerous caves have been found in the limestone sediment of this hill, revealing evidence of human presence dating from the Neolithic and early Christian times.

The topography of the town is undulating, with most of the built-up area lying at a height of 60 – 80 m above sea level. The northeast of the town and environs rises to a height of 120m.

Fig. 2 Location of Ballymote in the wider County Sligo context



Population

At the time of the preparation of the Ballymote LAP 2005–2011, the most recent demographic figures available were those from Census 2002. The results of Census 2011 are not yet published, but 2006 information is now available.

Demographic change 2002-2011

Area	Population 2002	Population 2006	% change '02-'06	Population 2011	% change '06-'11
County Sligo	58,200	60,894	+4.6	65,270*	+7.2
Ballymote ED	1,405	1,717	+22.2	2,076*	+20.9
Ballymote Town	981	1,229	+25.3	Not available	Not available

*Preliminary Census figures only

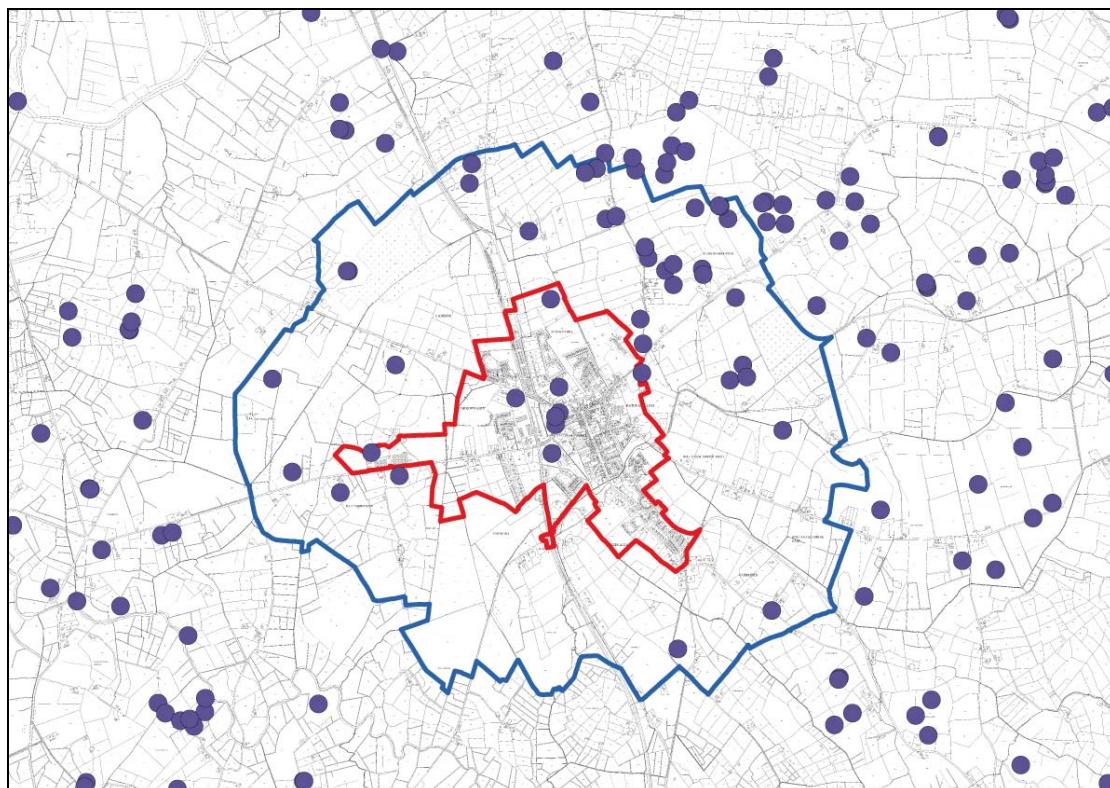
In accordance with the Core Strategy of the CDP, the recommended population level for Ballymote is 1,700 persons. Through the appropriate allocation of land for additional residential development, together with associated policies and objectives, the Draft Ballymote LAP will ensure consistency with this recommended population level.

Natural and archaeological heritage

Natural and man-made features within the town and its immediate surroundings include:

- a mixture of deciduous and coniferous tree stands/plantations;
- significant extents of peatland in the surrounding area;
- a network of small streams and drains around the town and its environs;
- several archaeological monuments/sites.

Fig. 3 Archaeological sites and monuments in the wider Ballymote area



Ballinascarrown Lough and Ardrea Lough are located in the wider surrounding area, approximately 1–2 km to the east, whilst the Owenmore River flows approximately 2 km to the south-west.

In relation to nature conservation sites, it should be noted that there are no designated NHAs, SACs or SPAs within approximately 2 km of the existing built-up area (the nearest being Templehouse and Cloonacleigha PNHA / SAC approximately 2-3 km to the west, and Feenagh and Bunnamuck Lough PNHA, Bricklieve Mountains and Kesh Corran PNHA SAC, both of which are approximately 2-3 km to the east).

The following PNHAs, SACs and SPAs are located within 15 km of Ballymote:

- | | |
|---|----------------------------------|
| Templehouse and Cloonacleigh Lakes PNHA / SAC | Feenagh and Bunnamuck Lough PNHA |
| Ballysadare Bay PNHA / SAC / SPA | Unshin River SAC PNHA |
| Ox Mountains NHA SAC | River Moy SAC |
| Turloughmore PNHA SAC | Moylough Turlough PNHA |
| Gowlaun Bog PNHA | Killgarriff Bay PNHA |
| Taunabeg Bog PNHA | Doocastle Turlough PNHA SAC |
| Quarryfield west Turlough PNHA | Cloonakillna Lough PNHA SAC |
| Flughany Bog PNHA SAC | Lough Gara PNHA SPA |
| Bricklieve Mountains and Kesh Corran PNHA SAC | Lough Arrow PNHA SAC SPA |
| Lough Dargan PNHA | Union Wood PNHA |
| Ballygawley Lough PNHA | |

The three types of designated areas are shown in Fig. 4, 5 and 6 on the following pages.

Fig. 4 Special Areas of Conservation (orange) within 15km (red circle) of Ballymote

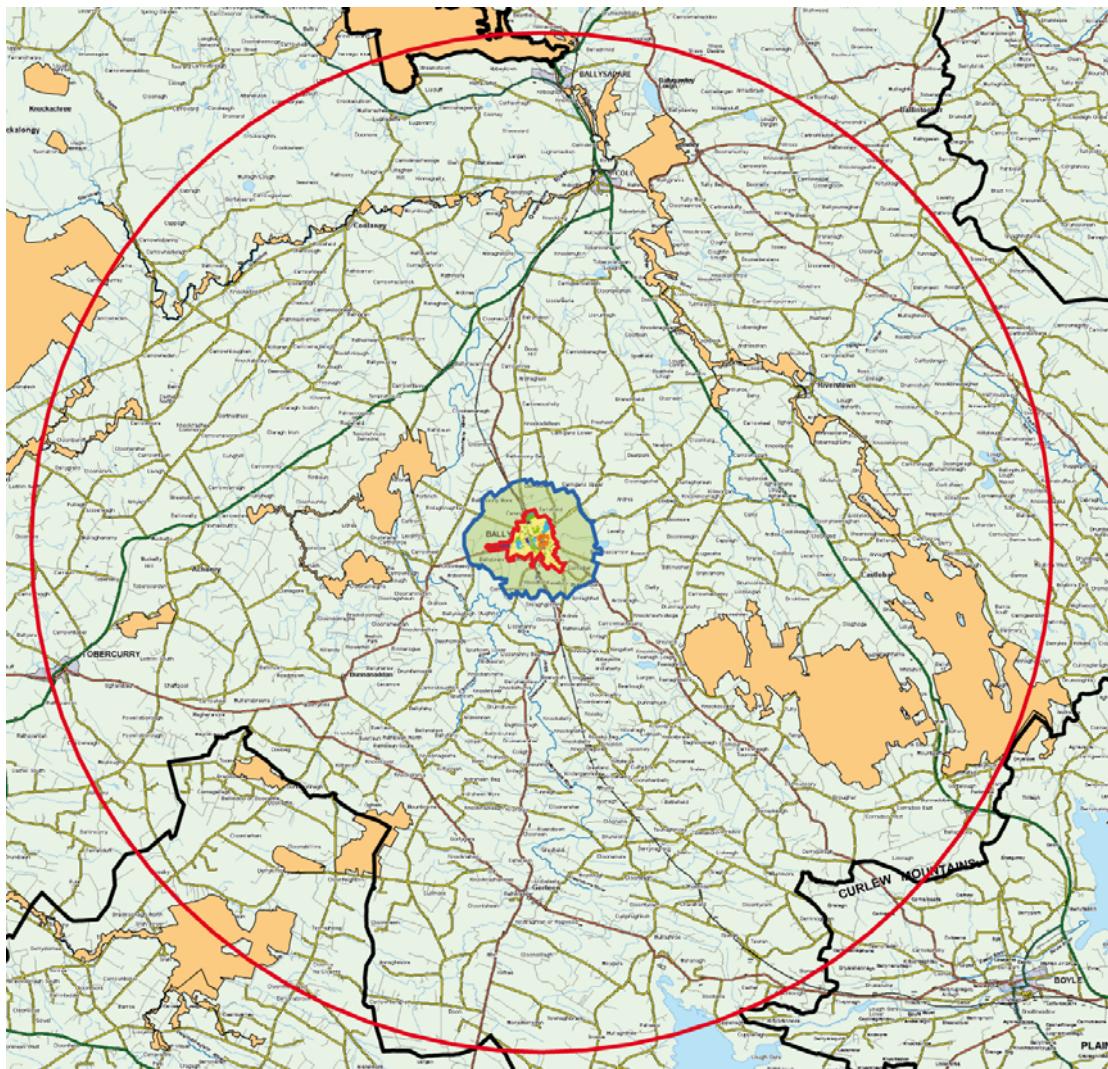


Fig. 5 Natural Heritage Areas (brown) and Proposed Natural Heritage Areas (green) within 15km (red circle) of Ballymote. (Note: the green area around Ballymote is the Buffer Zone)

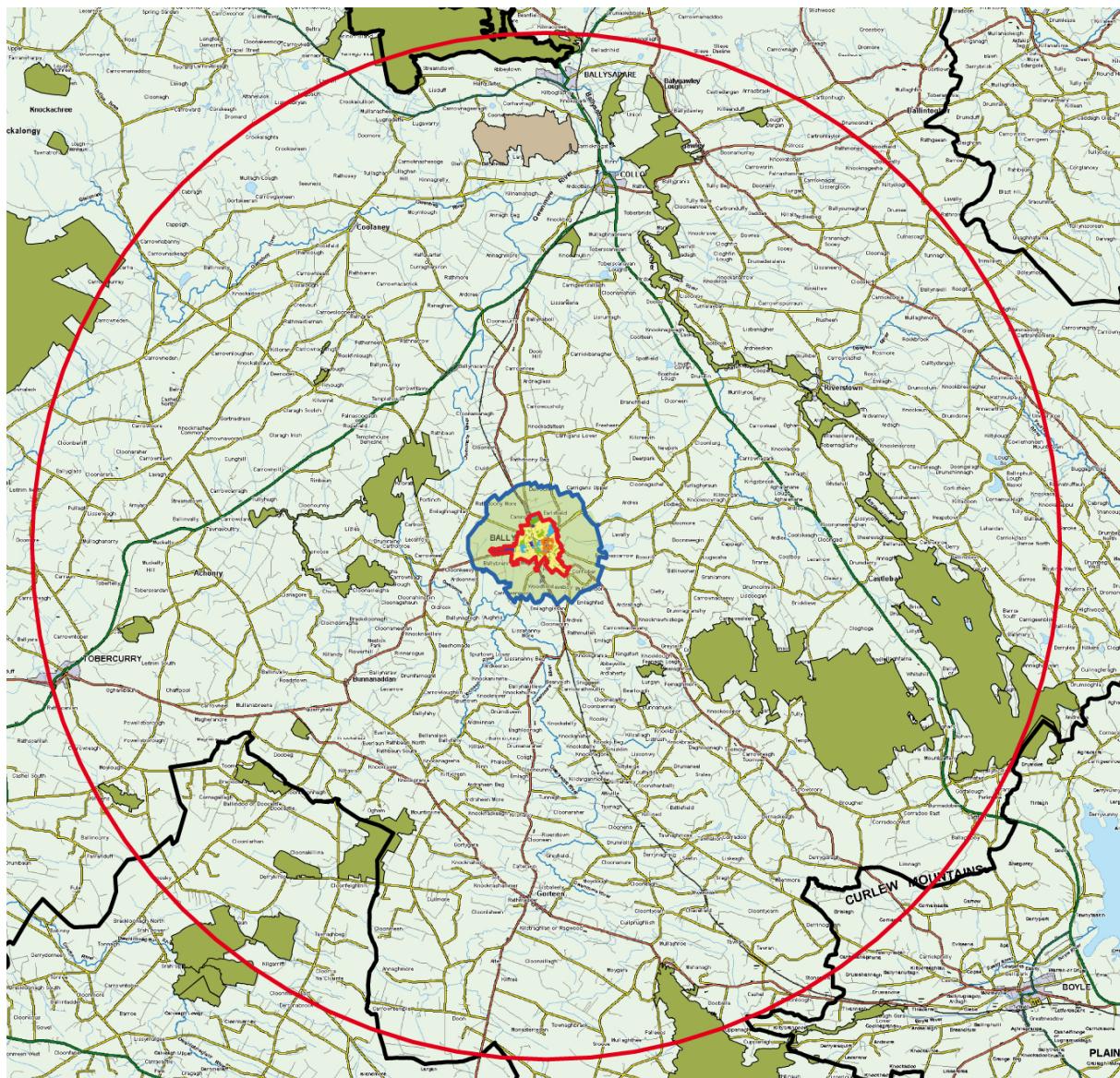
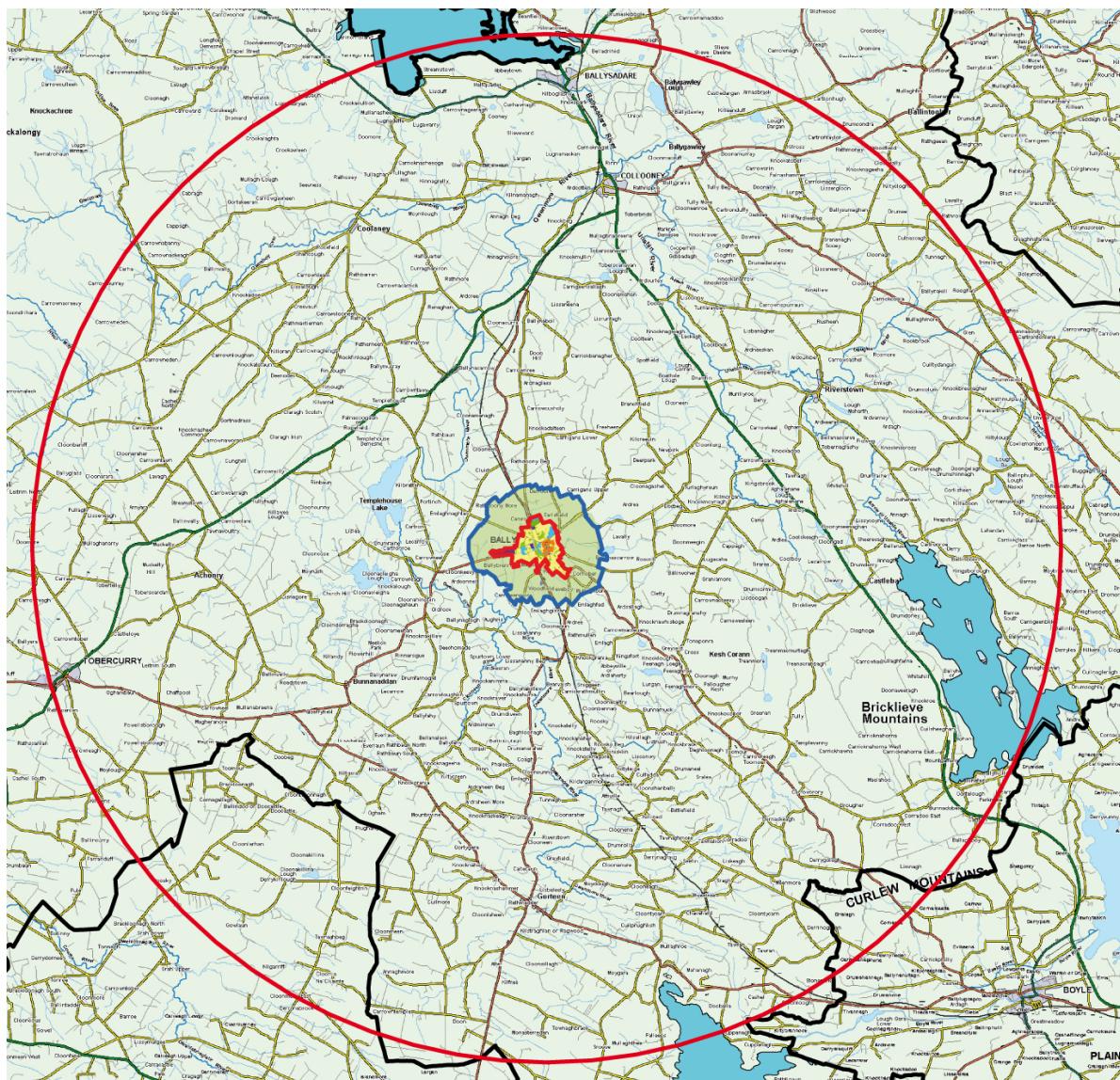


Fig. 6 Special Protection Areas (blue) within 15km (red circle) of Ballymote



CDP Designations

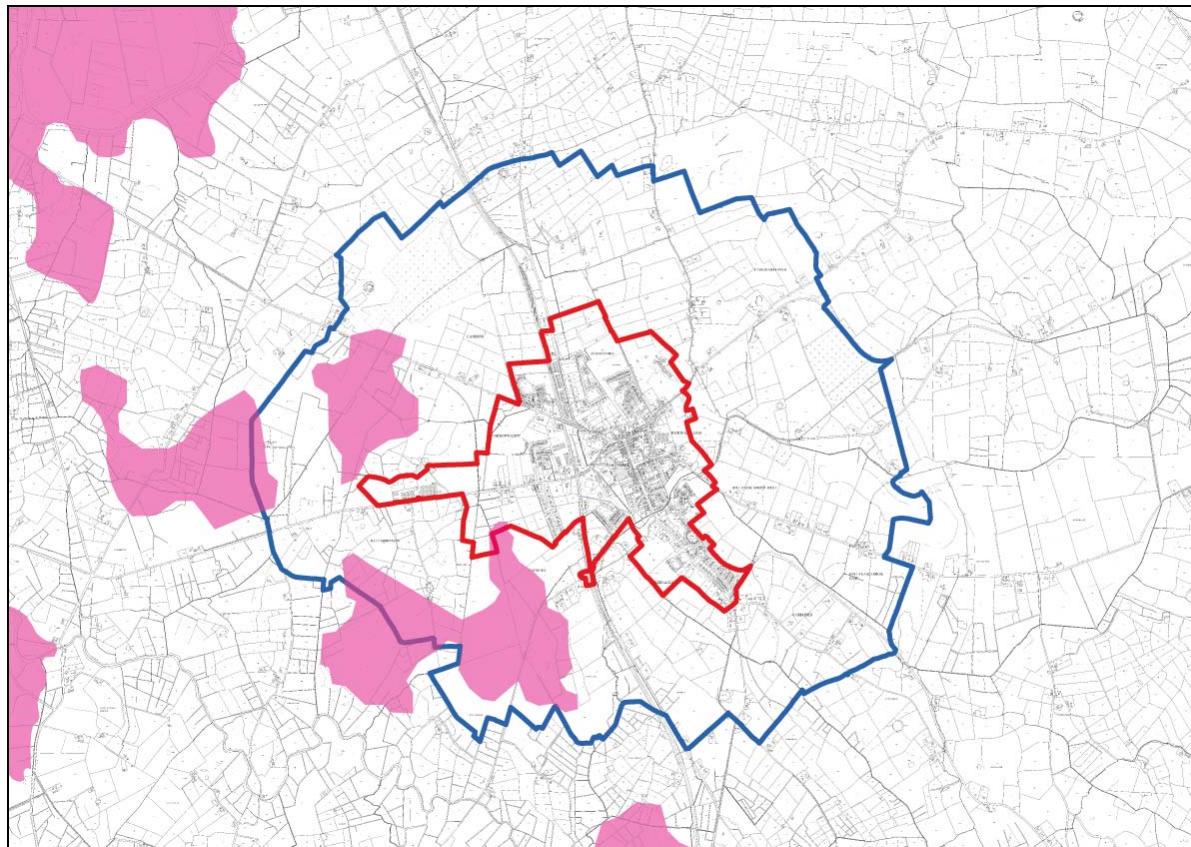
The County Development Plan includes a Landscape Characterisation Map, which is a tool for assessing the visual impact and sustainability of new development. The map, first published as part of CDP 1999-2004-2011, is based on composite landscape studies and has been further refined throughout the years.

The features that can be found in/around Ballymote are listed below.

- Most of the landscape is classified “normal rural landscape”
- Some areas to the immediate south and west of the built-up area are designated as Sensitive Rural Landscape areas (shown in pink on Fig. 7);
- Large areas further to the west (around the lakes) and to the south-east (Bricklieve Mountains) are designated as Sensitive Rural Landscape and Visually Vulnerable areas.

There are no designated Scenic Routes or scenic views to be preserved in the study area.

Fig. 7 Extract from the CDP Landscape Characterisation Map

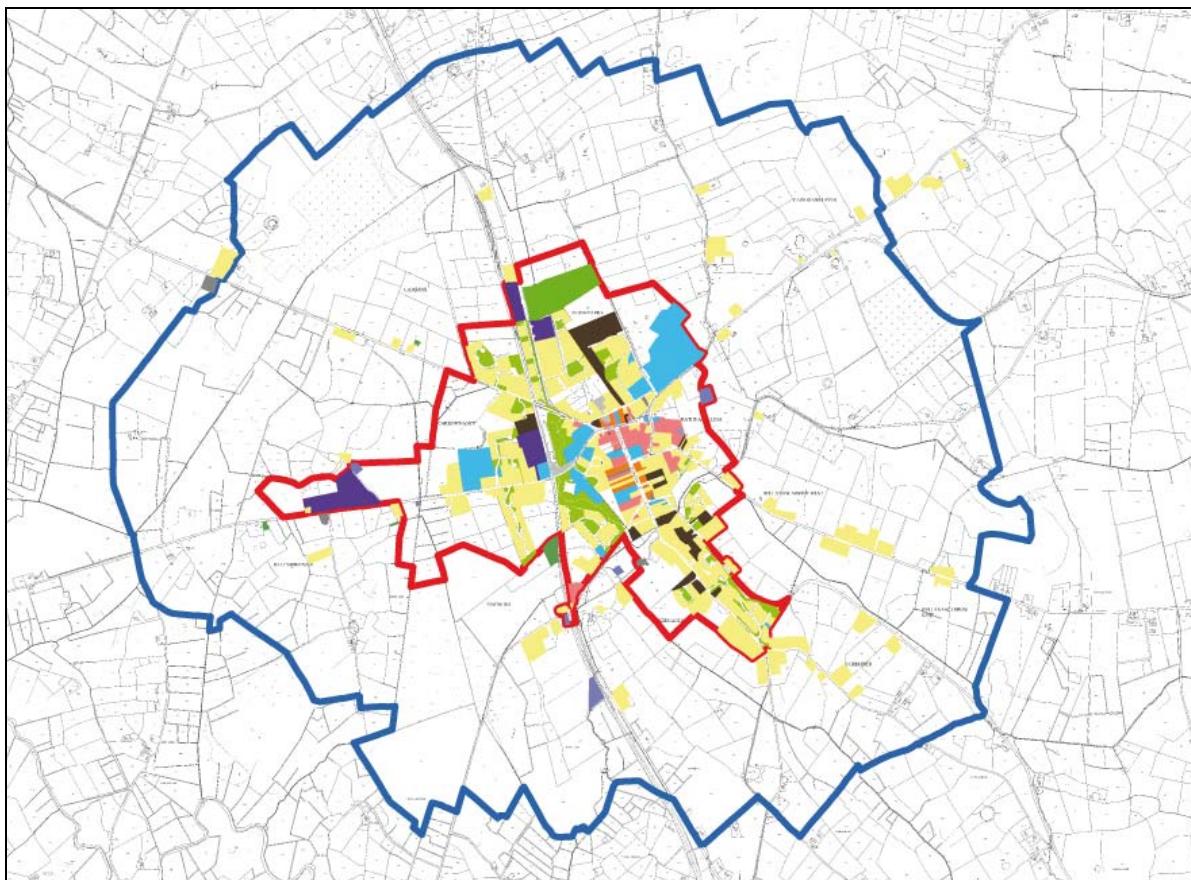


Land use

Fig. 8 illustrates the existing land uses in Ballymote. Development has occurred, to some extent, along all the approach roads entering the town. The town centre (red on the map) is focused around the junction of Teeling Street and Lord Edward Street with some commercial and retailing activity located along O'Connell Street.

Industrial development (purple on the map) has located mainly to the northern and western edges of the built-up area. Community facilities lands (blue on the map) are generally spread around the town.

Fig. 8 Current land use in Ballymote



Built environment and heritage

Please refer to Ballymote LAP 2005-2011 and the Pre-Draft Consultation Paper for information regarding the historical development of the town along with an analysis of more recent development trends and issues.

The Consultation Paper also includes a list and map of the structures in Ballymote that have been included within the Record of Protected Structures as per the CDP 2011-2017.

Water

The water supply system in Ballymote is part of the greater Lough Talt regional water supply scheme, which provides treated drinking water to a wide area in the south and west of County Sligo.

The current daily output from the water treatment plant is in the range of 8,500 - 9,000m³/day. The main settlements served by the scheme include Tobercurry, Aclare, Cloonacool, Curry, Banada, Ballymote, Ballinacarrow and Coolaney.

Works involving the upgrading of this scheme, including construction of a new water treatment works, storage reservoirs and intake works, have been included in the Water Services Investment Programme 2010-2012. This is currently being advanced through the relevant statutory planning and procurement procedures. It is an objective of the CDP 2011-2017 to complete the planning and construction of the new water treatment plan at Lough Talt subject to compliance with the requirements of the Habitats Directive (see objective O-WS-2 in the CDP).

It is anticipated that a new water treatment plant will be operational on the scheme during 2014. This will have the capacity to provide treated drinking water to meet existing and future development needs. In the interim, the Planning Authority will continue to monitor water quality and water capacity, ensuring compliance with relevant standards.

The Sligo Water Conservation and Network Management Project, which is also ongoing, will see the replacement and rehabilitation of parts of the Lough Talt regional water supply scheme network over the coming years. This work will serve to improve the quality and reliability of water supply to the Ballymote area and will assist in the provision of adequate supply capacity by reducing the overall unaccounted for water levels.

Wastewater

The Ballymote Sewerage Scheme is included in the Water Services Investment Programme 2010-2012 under “schemes at planning stage”. The upgrading of this scheme is supported through objectives O-WW-4 and O-WW-5 in the current.

The existing plant has a design PE (population equivalent) of 3,000. There is some residual capacity in the wastewater treatment plant at present to cater for new developments. However, this is limited and will be subject to ongoing review, in accordance with the requirements of the EPA wastewater discharge licence.

A substantial portion of the existing drainage network in Ballymote is a combined system. The separation of the foul and surface water collection systems, where feasible, will be an important part of the upgrade works on this sewerage scheme.

Furthermore, all new developments will be required to provide separate drainage systems, including the provision of SUDs where appropriate. This approach will maximise the efficient use of the residual capacity in the system. The removal of stormwater will serve to increase the available treatment capacity at the plant to cater for new developments.

Through the development management process, the Planning Authority will continue to assess new development proposals and will ensure that relevant capacities and standards are not exceeded.

Flooding

Flooding issues in Ballymote are currently being considered as part of the Western CFRAM process. This process is currently at Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment stage. To date, there is only limited evidence of frequent flooding, which may warrant the retention of Ballymote as an Area for Further Assessment (AFA).

A Flood Risk Assessment will also be carried out as part of the preparation of the Draft Ballymote LAP. This will take into account flood information compiled to date. The FRA will inform the preparation of the LAP both in terms of the suitability of land for zoning and the incorporation of appropriate policies and objectives. However, it should be noted that potential flood risks identified to date mainly relate to existing developments.

The screening exercise outlined in the following sections was done in accordance with Article 14A of the SEA Regulations, taking into account the relevant criteria set out in Schedule 2A of same.

C. Characteristics of the proposed local area plan

- a. "the degree to which the plan sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources"

Schedule 2A of P&D (SEA) Regulations 2004-2011

The CDP 2011-2017 has set the broad framework for the Ballymote LAP, which will now implement this framework at a more detailed and local level.

Ballymote Local Area Plan (LAP) will set a medium- to long-term **framework for sustainable local development** that will be used to assess planning applications. Land is the main resource to be allocated through zoning. It is envisaged that approximately **160 ha** of land will be zoned for development in Ballymote. However, 76 hectares of this total are already developed, 31 hectares will be placed in the SLR, and approximately 20 hectares will be zoned for open spaces. Accordingly there will be just approximately 33 hectares available for development during the plan period, of which a maximum of 21 hectares will be zoned for housing. It should be noted that this will represent a significant reduction in the extent of land available for residential development in the LAP 2005-2011.

Significant additional residential development will not be an aim of the Draft LAP. In accordance with details outlined in this report, the primary aim of the plan is one of consolidation rather than expansion. The impacts on the environment are therefore unlikely to be significant and any such impact will be satisfactorily mitigated through the development management process.

b. "the degree to which the plan influences other plans, including those in a hierarchy"

Schedule 2A of P&D (SEA) Regulations 2004-2011

The LAP is intended as a tool for implementing the CDP strategies at local level as part of an integrated planning strategy. In accordance with section 19 (2) of the Planning and Development Act 2010, a local area plan shall be consistent with the objectives of the development plan. The LAP is superseded by the CDP in case of conflicting provisions. However, such conflicts should not occur, as the LAP will be prepared in a manner that is consistent with the CDP 2011-2017. Ballymote LAP does not propose the preparation of any lower level plans (e.g. masterplans). The LAP will therefore not influence any other physical plans.

c. "the relevance of the plan for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development"

Schedule 2A of P&D (SEA) Regulations 2004-2011

The LAP **will promote sustainable development at local level** through balanced allocation of land to various uses and through objectives aiming to protect and enhance the natural and built heritage.

Through the consolidation of the existing town centre and integration of land-use and transportation objectives, the LAP will promote sustainable transport through providing alternatives to car-based transport.

d. "environmental problems relevant to the plan" Schedule 2A of P&D (SEA) Regulations 2004-2011

Environmental concerns in Ballymote would include the potential contamination of surface and ground water by poorly treated effluent discharge, substandard septic tanks and surface water run-off. This is particularly the case due to the combined foul and surface water system described above, along with the limited capacity available in the WWTP at present.

However it is considered that, as outlined earlier in this report, appropriate measures are in place to address these concerns within the plan period. In the interim, the situation will be addressed through the incorporation of appropriate policies and objectives in the Ballymote LAP, including a policy to restrict any development that would exceed the capacity of the WWTP at the time.

Concerns also apply in relation to water supply and water quality. However, it is considered that adequate measures are in place to address these concerns within the lifetime of the LAP. In the interim, the situation will be addressed through the incorporation of appropriate policies and objectives in the Ballymote LAP.

It is considered that any flooding concerns will be appropriately addressed in the Flood Risk Assessment carried out in conjunction with the preparation of the LAP. The zoning of land and the formulation of policies and objectives will be informed by the outcomes of this assessment.

- e. "the relevance of the plan for the implementation of European legislation on the environment (e.g. plans linked to waste management or water protection)"

Schedule 2A of P&D (SEA) Regulations 2004-2011

Ballymote LAP **will not seek to implement directly European legislation** on the environment. The LAP will be in compliance with the policies and objectives of the CDP 2011-2017, which contains policies implementing relevant European legislation.

Consistent with the CDP 2011-2017, the LAP will be prepared in the context of the Connacht Waste Management Plan 2006-2011, the Western River Basin Management Plan and the Western Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management (CFRAM) study.

D. Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to:

- a. the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects;

The development of lands within the LAP will result in a high probability of effects on the environment, through the expansion of the built-up area and population increase. However, many of the effects will be positive, as the LAP will provide a framework for the sustainable development of the area, rather than allowing development to proceed in a haphazard manner. In this regard, the LAP will provide for the protection of built and natural heritage, along with the protection of natural resources.

As outlined previously in this report, the LAP will involve a reduction in the overall extent of land available for development. The main aim of the plan will be consolidation rather than large-scale expansion. Appropriate mitigation policies will be incorporated to address any associated impacts on the environment.

The likely effects will arise gradually over the lifetime of the plan. It is likely that the effects will be permanent and will not be readily reversed. However, this is not considered significant in the context of the ongoing sustainable development of the plan area.

- b. the cumulative nature of the effects;

The ongoing development of the plan area will have associated effects including traffic increase, demands on services/resources and impacts on built, natural and cultural heritage assets. However, having regard to the LAP's provision of an integrated strategy for the sustainable development of the area, it is considered that the cumulative nature of these effects will be adequately addressed and appropriate mitigation measures will be incorporated.

As part of the CDP 2011-2017, land-use plans were prepared for the surrounding settlements of Ballinacarrow, Castlebaldwin, Bunnanadden and Culfadda, all of which are located approximately 5-6 km from Ballymote. Given that all these settlements were assessed under the SEA for the CDP, together with the separation distances from Ballymote, it is considered that cumulative effects are likely to be negligible.

c. the transboundary nature of the effects;

The entire LAP area is located within the administrative area of Sligo County Council.

In the wider context, it is noted that water supply (from Lough Talt) is also from within Sligo County. The wastewater treatment system discharges to the Ballymote Stream. This stream feeds into the Owenmore River, which merges with the Unshin River to form the Ballysadare River, which flows into Ballysadare Bay (all within Sligo County).

Ballymote is located approximately 45 km from the Northern Ireland border. It is not anticipated that the LAP will have any transboundary effects.

d. the risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents);

It is not anticipated that the implementation of the LAP will result in any significant risks to human health or the environment. Future development will have to conform to the policies and objectives of the LAP, whose fundamental aim is to create a sustainable and healthy environment in which people can live and work. Suitable mitigation measures will be incorporated into the LAP, in particular in relation to water and wastewater concerns.

There are no designated SEVESO sites within the plan area.

e. the magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of population likely to be affected);

The spatial extent and magnitude of the vast majority of the effects of the LAP will be limited to Ballymote town itself. The LAP proposes to zone approximately 160 hectares of land for development, most of which is already been developed or will be designated as Strategic Land Reserve. The plan therefore allows for some limited expansion, but this would most likely occur anyway in the absence of the LAP. Population figures for the town are discussed earlier in this report.

As the overall plan area extends to approximately 1000 hectares (including the buffer zone around the town), the LAP will inevitably result in some minor impacts on the wider surrounding environs of the town. The LAP will seek to avoid and mitigate any of these effects through the promotion of sustainable development and the incorporation of appropriate policies and objectives, particularly in relation to water and wastewater.

f. the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:

i) special natural characteristics or cultural heritage

The majority of surrounding natural features, including rivers, streams, tree groups, wetlands etc. are likely to be located outside the development limit, within the buffer zone, where development will be strictly controlled. It is therefore not likely that significant effects will occur.

The existing CDP policies on heritage (built, natural and archaeological), landscape and the environment will apply to the LAP area. Any potential significant effects will be adequately addressed through the development management process.

ii) exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values

The existing CDP and proposed LAP ensures that adequate policies and objectives are in place to maintain environmental quality standards. These will be enforced through the development management process.

iii) intensive land-use

The LAP will focus on consolidation and limited growth. It is unlikely that high-intensity development will occur during the lifetime of the Plan. Any effects are unlikely to be significant in this regard.

g. the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognized national, European Union or international protection status;

The Plan area is located entirely within the designated Normal Rural Landscape as per the CDP 2011-2017. The LAP does not impinge on any SPAs, SACs or PNHAs, the nearest sites being as outlined earlier in this report. Whilst it is acknowledged that the LAP can have effects on the wider surrounding environment, it is considered that due to the mitigation policies of the CDP, together with the separation distances involved, significant effects will not occur.

E. Conclusion

The LAP will be prepared in the context of the existing CDP 2011-2017, which sets out a strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of the County and has already been assessed under the SEA completed as part of the CDP process.

The LAP will be consistent with the CDP. The CDP provisions (including the SEA mitigation measures) will apply to the LAP area.

The LAP will be focused on the consolidation of the town, with limited provision for some expansion in appropriate areas.

When compared to the existing Ballymote LAP 2005-2011, the proposed LAP will involve a significant reduction in the extent of overall area of greenfield land available for development during the plan period, particularly in relation to residential development.

Having described the characteristics and assessed the expected effects of implementing the Local Area Plan for Ballymote, and having regard to the characteristics of the area likely to be affected, it appears that the proposed LAP, if implemented, would have negligible effects on the environment.

On the basis of the above assessment based on the criteria set out in Schedule 2A of the SEA Regulations, it is the opinion of the planning authority at this stage of the process that the proposed Ballymote LAP is not likely to have significant effects on the environment.

Accordingly, a full Strategic Environmental Assessment is not required.