



DRAFT LEITRIM COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2023 – 2029 – APPENDIX IV  
RETAIL HEALTH CHECKS OF URBAN CENTRES



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# 1 HEALTH CHECK OF URBAN CENTRES

## 1.1 CARRICK-ON-SHANNON

Carrick-on-Shannon is the largest town within County Leitrim and is located on an important crossing point over the river Shannon. The town has a relatively young population with many adults in the family formative years, very much linked to employment sectors and access to housing. The town is divided into two physical distinct areas by the river Shannon, with the southwest bank comprising the Cortober area within the jurisdiction of Roscommon County Council. That part of the town on the northeast bank within Leitrim County Council jurisdiction comprises the vast majority of the town population and employment providers and the historic town core. Carrick-on-Shannon is very well-known as a town aligned to serve the tourism industry in addition to being the main administrative town for the County.

Proposals with respect to retail development within the town will be guided by the preparation of the joint Local Area Plan for Carrick on Shannon and Cortober in conjunction with Roscommon County Council which will follow the completion of the draft County Development Plan.

### 1.1.1 ATTRACTIONS

#### ***Retail Attractions***

Carrick-on-Shannon continues to offer considerable retail attraction in comparison to the smaller towns within the County. As the largest town within the County, it has the widest retail base and offering. Aside from the usual comparison goods shops expected in a town the size of Carrick-on-Shannon, the town hosts a sizeable number of speciality retail outlets specifically geared towards visitors to the area, including gift shops. The town also has a strong concentration of public houses, restaurants and cafes, which are particularly busy at the weekends.

Vacancy within the town is very much concentrated in locations where footfall is quite low, whilst premises along Bridge Street and Main Street are reasonably well occupied. There has been an improvement in the occupancy of the Courtyard development and also the retail outlets along Park Lane although many have been converted to other commercial uses rather than retailing. Rosebank Retail Park on the Dublin Road provides a more balanced layout to the retail infrastructure of the town. Retail parks are located on either side of the town centre (Rosebank and Cortober). Based on occupancy rates, bulky goods operators on the outskirts of Carrick-on-Shannon appear to have suffered most in the town during the economic downturn although it probably demonstrates an over provision based on demonstrable need in the first instance.

#### ***Tourism***

*“Carrick on Shannon is the regional gateway to the River Shannon and the Shannon – Erne waterway to the north and the Lakelands of Lough Allen and Lough Key. Within this extensive inland waterway system there is up to 41 lakes within a 10km radius of Carrick on Shannon. This waterway system has made Carrick on Shannon what it is today and has allowed the town to become synonymous with traditional river activities including cruising, rowing and angling. However, in more recent years there has been a growing trend in water based adventure activities such as kayaking. This rich environment and the natural facilities have made Carrick on Shannon an inland tourism hub on which the town has thrived (Carrick-on-Shannon 2020 Vision, p. 7)”*

Carrick-on-Shannon is a natural hub for boat cruisers who can utilise the town's expanding convenience and comparison shopping base. As noted under previous studies of the County, there is a concentration of tourist accommodation, particularly within the hotel sector in Carrick-on-Shannon. However, there is a wide variety of accommodation to suit a host of needs available in the town and surrounding area. It is important to note that many of the visitors to Carrick-on-Shannon do so because of its proximity to attractions outside the County, including the Arigna Mines, Lough Key Forest Park and Carrick-on-Shannon Golf Club.

Carrick-on-Shannon boasts an impressive architectural heritage including the Market Yard and the Costello Chapel opposite the town clock, reputed to be the smallest chapel in Europe. The provision of the new architecturally impressive roof over part of the Market Yard has enhanced the area and allowed activities to be scheduled without fear of inclement weather.

### ***Recreation and Leisure***

There are 3 hotels, 11 public houses and 21 restaurants/cafes located in Carrick-on-Shannon, providing an expansive array of eating and drinking options within the County town. Carrick-on-Shannon is home to attractive walking routes and green areas including the Riverfront Amenity Park with its boardwalk over the Shannon. The recently provided floating boardwalk along the private boating companies marinas is a welcome addition to the town offering.

The town hosts a number of festivals and events throughout the year including the Carrick Carnival, the Water Music Festival, rowing regattas, etc.

Carrick-on-Shannon Sport and Leisure Centre (The Aura) comprises a host of sports and recreation facilities including a swimming pool and gymnasium facility adjoining the Community School. Páirc Seán Mac Diarmada, is home to Leitrim GAA and comprises a stadium capacity of almost 9,500 persons including a 3,000 seat covered stand.

Housed in the impressive 19<sup>th</sup> Century former Courthouse building, The Dock on St. George's Terrace comprises a 100 plus seat 'Black Box' performance space, three art galleries, artists' studios, an arts education room and is presently home to The Leitrim Design House.

On the southwest side of the Shannon, there are additional facilities including, Carrick Cineplex comprising a 4-screen cinema and Mulvey's Bowling Centre.

### ***Accessibility***

Carrick-on-Shannon is strategically located on the N4 Dublin to Sligo national primary road and also along the Sligo to Dublin mainline rail. Access to Carrick-on-Shannon on this major artery, along with air access via Ireland West Airport Knock places the town in a strong position for regional investment, commuter-location choice and tourism.

The town is served by a railway station at Cortober with 7 no. scheduled services connecting to Dublin and Sligo on a daily basis. Bus Éireann services from the shelters fronting Cryan's Hotel connect with Sligo and Dublin (6 daily services), Strokestown (2 daily services on 3 weekdays) and Dromahair (Saturday service). Private bus services serving Sligo and Dublin are also offered by Furey's Coaches (3 services daily on Thursday, Friday and Sundays). Westlink Coaches provide a daily bus service from Drumshanbo to Sligo via Carrick-on-Shannon on weekdays (during college term), as well as services to Donegal, Galway and Athlone at weekends.

It is considered that the provision of a sustainable transport solution will alleviate the existing level of congestion experienced in the town and on the N4 national primary road. In addition, such a solution will improve the physical environment of the town, encourage further investment in the region through improved infrastructure and reduce travel time on the National road network.

An expanded area of the town is now controlled via on-street paid parking, which has helped to alleviate some of the congestion, along with an increase in off street parking with the notable provision of the new public car park in November last providing an additional 105 no. spaces.

### **1.1.2 CHANGES IN RETAIL PROVISION BETWEEN 2015-2021**

The vast majority of permissions relating to retail sought to change the use of the existing commercial premises or extend an existing unit with very few new permissions sought for new retail developments apart from the pharmacy (86m<sup>2</sup>) included with the new Primary Care Centre. The Planning Authority permitted the change of use of 2,132m<sup>2</sup> from retail / commercial use over the life of the existing County Development Plan to other uses. These permitted uses varied to include public house, restaurant / café, hairdressers, office, training and educational, accommodation, dentist surgery and gymnasium. The majority of these change of use permissions were implemented accounting for 1,685 m<sup>2</sup> (79% of permitted uses). In comparison, the Planning Authority granted planning permission for an extension to Aldi (264m<sup>2</sup>) and a new pharmacy as outlined above which displaced an existing pharmacy from Bridge Street which is now vacant. Planning permission was also granted on the Dublin Road for the change of use of a vacant cash and carry wholesalers / garage to a hardware retail store (240 m<sup>2</sup>) and bulky goods showroom display areas (1,233 m<sup>2</sup>). This permission has not yet being implemented but would remove a building that is currently detracting on the approach to the town from the Dublin Road. Finally, there is an extant planning permission to change the use of a bulky retail use to a combination of bulky, convenience and café use (237m<sup>2</sup>).

The trend evident in an analysis of planning permission activity over the life of the Development Plan is reflective of what is occurring on the ground with a number of boutique shops / speciality shops closing on Main Street and Bridge Street and a move away from conventional retailing. There is no vacancy in comparison in the Rosebank Retail Park on the Dublin Road noting that there are some vacancies in the Carrick on Shannon Retail Park and West Gate Business Park both in Cortober. What is encouraging however, is the number of planning permissions for change of use from retailing to other uses which have been implemented breathing new life into existing buildings and streets. The redevelopment of the Joe Simon site on the Dublin Road would be considered a beneficial addition to the retail offer of the town.

### **1.1.3 ACTIONS**

There has been a deterioration in the consistency in shopfronts and signage since the preparation of the previous County Development Plan and this is having a negative effect on the general appearance of the streetscape within the town centre. This is most notable along Bridge Street. A more visually appealing town centre will serve to attract more shoppers into the town. Any proposals for development or redevelopment along the town centre streets should incorporate façades, building height and proportions similar to other buildings on the street. Any new additional signage should provide a positive addition to the streetscape.

Continued improvements will be needed to further improve the visual appearance and impression of the town along the main approach roads. It is considered that the extensive public realm improvement scheme nearing completion along Main Street and St. Georges Terrace including link roads will greatly

enhance the presentation of the public realm and encourage commercial property owners to improve the buildings which frame these spaces.

The quality of retail outlets in Carrick-on-Shannon is generally quite good, but there is a clear preference to attract '*bijoux*' retailers into this area, given its attraction to the tourist trade. The needs of local residents are also well provided for, albeit with the exception of having to undertake the '*weekly*' shopping trip to edge and out of town areas. The development of niche market and quality produce retail outlets will continue to be encouraged in the future. Whilst Carrick-on-Shannon may not be able to compete with larger centres for comparison shopping due to its relative scale, the development of specialist products and services within Carrick-on-Shannon will act as a magnet attraction to the town. The weekly 'Farmers' Market' in the Market Yard complex is a popular element to the retail offer and provides an opportunity for local producers to highlight the quality ingredients and produce of the area.

## **1.2 BALLINAMORE**

Ballinamore is situated to the east of County Leitrim along the Shannon-Erne Waterway and surrounded by a necklace of lakes. Ballinamore performs an important service function for the east of Co. Leitrim and extending into the west of County Cavan. The commercial core of the town generally extends along Main Street and High Street, which runs in an east-west direction and is designated an Architectural Conservation Area. Cannoboe Road functions effectively as a bypass of the main town core and contains the Tesco shopping centre complex. A substantial number of units both on the Main Street and within the shopping centre are vacant.

### **1.2.1 ATTRACTIONS**

#### ***Retail Attractions***

Ballinamore is well served by convenience shopping for a town of its relative size (less than 1,000 population), with both SuperValu and Tesco supermarkets located in the town along with a number of smaller outlets, a reflection of its important service function. The most recent survey indicates 52 no. active retail businesses comprising a convenience floor area provision of 1,919m<sup>2</sup>, comparison floor area of 422m<sup>2</sup> and 320m<sup>2</sup> attributed to bulky goods. A good mix of services is available within the town but there is a distinct lack of comparison goods outlets. The town has a low level of bulky goods retailers albeit reflective of the population of the town / proximity to Carrick on Shannon / Longford and Cavan. The town centre generally lacks vibrancy and has a low footfall. As a sub-county town centre, it should have a greater and better comparison retail offering. The convenience offer within the town is located on the fringes of the town centre (SuperValu, Tesco and XL Park Store).

#### ***Tourism***

The economy of Ballinamore is highly-dependent upon services, agriculture and the tourism industry. The town and environs are served by a range of guesthouses, hotels and self-catering accommodation and the town must continue to develop as a tourism destination. Many visitors to the town travel *via* the Shannon-Erne waterways, with mooring points in numerous locations along the canal. Much of the tourism market is focussed upon activity holidays, but there is also a significant draw to the area from returning emigrants tracing their ancestry in the Genealogical Centre. Visitors to the town also have a range of festivals to choose from throughout the year. Glenview Folk Museum 3km southwest of the town is an important asset to the area.

### ***Recreation and Leisure***

Ballinamore and the surrounding areas are well-serviced in relation to recreation and leisure facilities. The canal and Shannon-Erne waterways provide for numerous boating and angling opportunities for locals and tourists to the area. Ballinamore Golf Club is located northwest of the town and Ballinamore Sports Complex on Railway Road offers a range of recreational facilities. Cycle and walking routes loop around the town, some of which take in the canals, the Kingfisher Cycle Trails and *Sliabh an Iarainn* hill walks.

The town contains the county library, a post-primary school facility, an Enterprise Centre and is well-served by broadband telecommunications. The bulk of employment in Ballinamore is associated with the services operated within the town.

### ***Accessibility***

Ballinamore is located at a busy intersection on the regional roads network with the R199, R202 and R204 regional roads all converging on the town. These routes provide ease of access to the town from surrounding and wider areas. Cannaboe Road linking with The Line provides an alternative route through the town for vehicular traffic, although HGVs and other large vehicles continue to travel along the shorter route of Main Street and High Street when passing through the town. The only buses serving Ballinamore at present are local Bus Éireann route 462 serving Sligo and Carrigallen on Fridays and Saturdays and route 464 serving Enniskillen and Mohill on Thursdays.

Vehicular movement speeds through the town are far from conducive to an attractive shopping environment and discourage motorists to stop and shop. This loss of passing trade requires addressing through implantation of self-regulating streets, as supported within the *Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets*.

Car parking is primarily provided in the form of parallel on-street parking, but there are also off-street parking areas in 'The Square' at the top of the town, within the Tesco complex, to the rear of SuperValu and adjacent to the river (behind AIB Bank). In general, the town appears to be well-served by parking, but the lack of formalised on-street parking appears to facilitate and encourage illegal parking and restrict movement on paths.

## **1.2.2 CHANGES IN RETAIL PROVISION BETWEEN 2015-2021**

In terms of planning applications submitted to the Planning Authority over the life of the existing County Development Plan, there have been no applications submitted seeking planning permission to construct a new retail outlet or to change the use of existing buildings to retail use. Planning permission was granted for 3 applications to change the use from retail to other uses (café / restaurant and boxing club uses), all of which have been or are being implemented with a combined floor area of 377m<sup>2</sup>.

## **1.2.3 ACTIONS**

The general visual amenities of Ballinamore are of a reasonably high standard with the majority of buildings in good condition. Many buildings which were previously used for retail purposes are now vacant and some are used for display purposes. Many shops use the Irish language to advertise and this has created a unique identity for the town despite not being located in a Gaeltacht area. This tradition should be recognised and further developed through appropriate policies.

The main street through the town is connected by a number of pocket parks and civic plazas, which offer interesting breaks in the street scene and well-landscaped seating areas. Parking in areas fronting these spaces, screens these spaces from view (at eye-level) and restricts views from these spaces, reducing the overall visual aesthetics and quality of these spaces.

Removal of some on street parking would allow for improvements to the streetscape, improved pedestrian facilities and some traffic calming. In particular, the provision of double yellow lines along one side of the road at the top of High Street would ease traffic congestion caused by parked cars in this area. There is a need for additional urban design treatment and removal of on-street parking to reduce the visual dominance of roads and parking.

Retail and associated services for the town are spread out along the Main Street/High Street over 600 metres and this results in the town lacking a fixed centre and low levels of footfall throughout. Creation of a more centric urban design concept between the Church, the Courthouse and St. Brigid's Street would provide for a focal point to the town. There is a distinct lack of uniformity in the styles of shopfront and this may be primarily relative to the variety in the age of buildings. Greater consistency should be sought in new shopfront proposals. A shopfront renewal scheme should be considered for Ballinamore to reinvigorate the streetscape and provide for greater consistency in appearance.

The development of new retail outlets in Ballinamore should only be considered where existing buildings are inappropriate for the envisaged use.

The vacant units along Cannoboe Road are impacting significantly upon the streetscape and efforts to improve the upkeep of these buildings should be made in the interests of the general visual amenity of the town. Alternative uses such as '*bulky goods*' could be appropriate for these units, particularly considering the availability of parking.

The land use strategy map for Ballinamore will delineate the retail boundaries for the town.

## **1.3 MANORHAMILTON**

### **1.3.1 ATTRACTIONS**

#### ***Retail Attractions***

Manorhamilton is located centrally within north County Leitrim and performs an important service function for the town and the wider area, including the glens of north Leitrim. The town history is steeped in the history of Manorhamilton Castle, which overlooks the town.

The main commercial streets include Main Street, Castle Street and the New Line with some retail having become established on Church Lane in more recent years towards the W8 Centre. The majority of the buildings in the town centre are traditional 3-storey townhouses, with commercial users at ground floor level. The town core is designated as an Architectural Conservation Area. In more recent times the provision of a national primary route through the town has resulted in the town expanding along New Line.

Prior to 2011 when the SuperValu supermarket opened up, Manorhamilton suffered from significant loss of retail income to other neighbouring centres, particularly to Sligo and Enniskillen. The most recent survey indicates 61 active retail businesses comprising a convenience floor area provision of 1,096m<sup>2</sup>, comparison floor area of 298m<sup>2</sup> and 500m<sup>2</sup> attributed to bulky goods.



The town has a reasonable mix of retail services, including bars and restaurants, although there is a distinct lack of comparison goods outlets. The town has a low level of bulky goods retailers. The town was well-served by financial institutions although the loss of Ulster Bank and impending closure of Bank of Ireland leaves only AIB Bank, the Credit Union and An Post with a financial presence in the town.

Retail activity within the town is primarily centred on SuperValu, the main convenience store in the town. Manorhamilton '*Farmers' Market*' takes place every Friday from (10am to 2pm) in the grounds of the Bee Park Resource Centre.

### ***Tourism***

The town has a magnificent setting against the backdrop of Benbo Mountain and the north Leitrim Glens. Manorhamilton is surrounded by significant swathes of unspoilt green countryside and glens. The town attracts visitors to the area who wish to explore the seven impressive glens that surround the town. The main tourist attraction within the town is Manorhamilton Castle and Heritage Centre. The Glen Centre also serves as an important tourist attraction to the town, with regular concerts held within this intimate setting. Compared with other towns of similar size within Leitrim, Manorhamilton was poorly-served by tourism accommodation although the development of the W8 centre and other guest house developments assist in addressing this issue. The absence of a hotel is noticeable in the town's accommodation offering. The arts, drama, heritage, hill walking and angling figure prominently as tourist activities associated with the area.

### ***Recreation and Leisure***

Manorhamilton is served by a number of sporting organisations and clubs with boxing, GAA, soccer, hill walking and tennis very prominent within the town. The Bee Park Resource Centre on New Line includes a large hall space and a gymnasium facility.

St. Clare's Comprehensive School is the town's secondary school and includes an all-weather athletic track, Gaelic football pitch, soccer pitch, basketball court and sports hall. Aside from the service providers, the main sources of employment within the town include Mirror Controls International (MCI), Merenda Ltd., Elastometall Ireland, the HSE, Leitrim County Council, Manorhamilton Livestock Mart & Export Sales, Lock Up Alarms Ltd. and Melvin Plastics.

### ***Accessibility***

Manorhamilton has excellent accessibility by private car, being served by the N16 road, which connects with Sligo 26km to the west and Enniskillen 40km to the east. Bus Éireann serves Manorhamilton each way to and from Sligo eight times daily and the journey takes approximately 35 minutes.

The N16 primary route dissects the town and transports high volumes of traffic through the town along the Sligo Road and New Line. There is no proposal to bypass Manorhamilton on any investment programme notwithstanding that a route for a possible N16 bypass running to the south of the town was included in the previous County Development Plan.

Car parking is primarily provided in the form of parallel on-street parking, but there is also off-street parking in backland areas. The Council have developed a new public car park with access / egress from the Sligo Road and exit onto Sráid Sheáin Mhic Dhiarmada. The extent of on-street parking leads to difficulties in servicing of retail units, with informal service arrangements prevalent throughout, but particularly along Old Church Street. The Council are presently commencing a Public Realm

Improvement Scheme which includes reimagining Old Church Street and it is hoped that this will enhance the pedestrian environment of this key approach to the town centre.

### **1.3.2 CHANGES IN RETAIL PROVISION BETWEEN 2015-2021**

There were no planning applications lodged which impacted on retail provision over the course of the previous Development Plan. There is an extant planning permission on an edge of town site to develop a new convenience supermarket (1,534 m<sup>2</sup>) with an extension of duration having been permitted. It is considered that the provision of competition to Supervalu would be welcomed by the Planning Authority and the site shall be reserved for this use in the land use zoning strategy for the town. The loss of the Post Office from the Main Street to Super Valu resulted in the loss of an important function for the town centre along with the closure of Bredin's shop on Main Street. It is noted that 3 no. permitted retail units within the W8 centre are now in use as restaurant / café use although they were never opened as retail units. There was another change of use from laundrette to take-away although insignificant in overall terms.

### **1.3.3 ACTIONS**

A significant number of the buildings in the town are vacant and falling into disrepair. The area is in need of regeneration and the recently approved public realm works is much needed investment which will act as a catalyst for private sector investment.

The development of new retail units in Manorhamilton should only be considered where existing buildings are inappropriate for the envisaged use. There is a need to remodel the space fronting Market House, as it is considered that this space has become underutilised, lacking function and redundant. This fact is emphasised by the location of the 'farmers' market' in the Bee Park Resource Centre car park, rather than the town centre. This is also included in the forthcoming Public Realm Improvement Scheme.

The land use strategy map for Manorhamilton will inform the retail boundaries for the town.

## **1.4 MOHILL**

Mohill is an important service town for south County Leitrim. Mohill is situated deep within an expansive drumlin belt extending into the neighbouring counties of Cavan, Roscommon and Longford. The town of Mohill is laid out in a cruciform street layout with a crossroads intersection at the centre of the town. The town centre mainly comprises 2 and 3-storey buildings with commercial uses at ground floor. The town is designated an Architectural Conservation Area although the extent of same has been reconsidered in the current review. Development within the town has stagnated in recent years and this is reflected in the high commercial vacancy rates.

Mohill Community College is the town's secondary school with St. Manchan's National School and the Hunt National School the primary schools. The town also contains a public library.

### **1.4.1 ATTRACTIONS**

#### ***Retail Attractions***

The most recent survey indicates 52 no. active retail businesses comprising a convenience floor area provision of 1,140m<sup>2</sup>, comparison floor area of 605m<sup>2</sup> and 1,034m<sup>2</sup> attributed to bulky goods. The

town has a traditional reputation for hardware stores, whilst it was noted that the town was well-represented by beauticians / hairdressers, public houses and butchers.

Many of the smaller historical convenience retailers within the town centre have closed shop and convenience shopping is primarily provided along the main routes serving the town. Centra is the main convenience retailer in Mohill, located on the edge of the town centre on the Cloone Road with a Gala convenience store having replaced Stenson's hardware store on Hyde Street.

### ***Tourism***

Mohill is located in an area with a reputation for coarse angling, whilst equestrian, water sports and hillwalking enthusiasts are also attracted to the area. Various festivals and the Annual Agricultural Show in Mohill during the summer attract additional visitors to the area. Keeldra Lake located 6km to the east of Mohill, includes the only designated bathing area for County Leitrim.

Lough Rynn Castle and its associated facilities serve as the main tourist attraction to the area, with its ornamental gardens and nature trails. The Castle is located outside the town with only minimal accommodation within the town, some of which indirectly draw business from the Castle. Caravan bays are available from April to September at Lough Rynn.

### ***Recreation and Leisure***

The GAA commands a prominent role in the livelihood of Mohill with a playing facility on Hyde Street in the town. The Mohill Sports Complex on the east side of the town provides indoor sporting activities including indoor soccer and basketball.

Aside from retail and administrative service employment, the main sources of employment in the town are Mohill Enterprise Centre, the Health Centre, Lough Rynn Castle, the Mart and Modular Cold Storage.

### ***Accessibility***

Mohill is 8km from the N4 Sligo-Dublin national route and Dromod Railway Station. Bus Éireann serves Mohill on Saturdays and Mondays with a connection to Longford which takes approximately 1 hour, whilst intercity bus services to Sligo and Dublin are provided daily from Annaduff Church 8km west of Mohill.

Car parking is primarily provided in the form of parallel on-street parking, with low levels of off-street parking areas. Where parking areas are delineated within the town, there is a reduced occurrence of illegal parking. However, where parking spaces are not outlined, for example, Hyde Street and Glebe Street, there is greater propensity for cars to be parked partially on footpaths or double-parked. In general, traffic volumes through the town are reasonable, allowing for ease in crossing roads with the exception of the main crossroads within the town centre. The general visual amenities of Mohill are of a reasonably-high standard but some improvements could be made. Soft landscaping along the road verge approaching the Church at the top of the town has softened the setting and improved the general appearance of the street. Most buildings are well maintained, despite an increase in vacancy rates within the town. Public realm works are proposed for Mohill and have been approved for funding under the RRDF Scheme.

## **1.4.2 CHANGES IN RETAIL PROVISION BETWEEN 2015-2021**

There were no planning applications lodged which impacted on retail provision over the course of the previous Development Plan. There was a change of use application converting a betting office to a

takeaway and a modest extension to an existing retail unit. Permission was also granted to convert a restaurant (formerly Greene's) to a shop (94m<sup>2</sup>) on Main Street which is in the process of being implemented at the time of preparing this Strategy.

### 1.4.3 ACTIONS

Unlike many Irish towns, Mohill does not turn its back on the river which runs through it, and there is a fine space opening onto the river on the east side of town, with the iconic O'Carolan statue. However, this space is dominated by car parking and hard surfacing and lacks soft landscaping, which detracts from the experience. The proposed public realm works will assist in addressing this area along with repairs / improvements to the wall of the Church of Ireland opposite.

The quality of signage and shopfronts varies considerably throughout the town with some fine examples, such as, Gannon & Co. and O'Brien's Tavern, whilst numerous units have no signage. Shop owners should be encouraged to install appropriate shopfronts and signage to commercial premises to enliven the space.

Mohill is fortunate to have numerous historical buildings of considerable quality, particularly those relating to the religious and financial institutions. Care should be taken with any future proposals to develop and maintain these structures.

The development of new retail outlets in Mohill should only be considered where existing buildings are inappropriate for the envisaged use.

The land use strategy map for Mohill will inform the retail boundaries for the town.

## 1.5 DRUMSHANBO

Drumshanbo is situated centrally within County Leitrim along the southern shores of Lough Allen set against the backdrop of *Sliabh an Iarainn* and Arigna mountains. The town has a compact commercial core, which has retained much of its architectural heritage and is designated as an Architectural Conservation Area. Drumshanbo is a market town with a history in food producing, celebrated in the running of an annual food festival in the town.

The Vocational School along Keadue Road, leading west of the town, provides post-primary education for teenagers in the catchment, whilst local children are educated at the Central National School.

### 1.5.1 ATTRACTIONS

#### ***Retail Attractions***

The most recent survey indicates 29 active retail businesses comprising a convenience floor area provision of 618m<sup>2</sup>, comparison floor area of 71m<sup>2</sup> and no provision for bulky goods. There is a reasonable provision of convenience retail floorspace within the town with Centra and Gala supermarkets both operating in the town centre. The Development Plan designates Drumshanbo as a support town to Ballinamore.

#### ***Tourism***

The local scenery and people serve as the major attraction to the area. *Sliabh an Iarainn* Visitors' Centre in the centre of town provides insight into the local landscape and mining history. Drumshanbo is well-served by an array of tourist accommodation. Lough Allen Hotel & Spa is the main visitor

accommodation in the area offering rooms, apartments and lodges while Lough Allen Educational Centre and Angling Club offers hostel accommodation. Lough Allen provides a host of water activities and horse-riding and hill-walking figure prominently as a draw for tourists to the town with numerous way-marked routes in the vicinity, including *Slí Liatroma*. Lough Allen Adventure Centre attracts many outdoor and water enthusiasts to the area throughout the year. Drumshanbo is also home to many festivals and events including the *Sliabh an Iarainn* Walking Festival, 'An Tóstal' and 'The Joe Mooney Summer School'.

### **Recreation and Leisure**

The Mayflower Community Centre facilitates various indoor sports including handball and badminton, whilst Bingo nights also feature. Community is an important aspect of the town with a variety of community groups operating. The town has a tennis court, playground and jetties for cruisers. Just one kilometre from the town centre is the heated-outdoor swimming pool at Acres Lake Amenity. Moorlands Equestrian Centre provides a full range of equestrian facilities for the area.

Much of the local employment is in the tourism and services industry, whilst there are also businesses involved in metalwork fabrication, sign-making, plant hire and refuse disposal, telesales, joinery works and crafts. Lough Allen Food Hub which includes the Shed Distillery visitor centre and cafe is an innovative food-orientated enterprise park aimed at providing *niche* food products.

### **Accessibility**

Drumshanbo is located centrally within the County of Leitrim, close to the boundary with County Roscommon and the busy intersection of the R207 and R208 regional roads.

Drumshanbo is located 16km from Carrick-on-Shannon with the nearest railway station in Carrick-on-Shannon. Bus Éireann serves Drumshanbo with connections to Sligo on Fridays and Saturdays and a service to Carrick-on-Shannon and Longford on Saturdays. Intercity bus services to Sligo and Dublin are provided daily from Carrick-on-Shannon. Westlink Coaches operate a daily commuter service between Drumshanbo and Sligo *via* Carrick-on-Shannon.

Car parking is primarily provided in the form of parallel on-street parking, with off-street parking beside the Bank of Ireland on Main Street and to the rear of Scallan's Gala supermarket and Millrace. Roads within the town are marked, with parking areas delineated. Parking pressure is greatest along Main Street, particularly below High Street. Some haphazard parking occurs at both ends of the ramp up to High Street and this can lead to congestion. The paved pathway fronting the premises on High Street should not be used to facilitate parking as it would undermine the quality of this space.

## **1.5.2 CHANGES IN RETAIL PROVISION BETWEEN 2015-2021**

Over the course of the previous County Development Plan, a 2 storey extension was constructed to the side of Scollan's supermarket (202m<sup>2</sup>) with the only permitted development of note being a change of use from bar and grocery to restaurant use (-60m<sup>2</sup>) The land use strategy map for Drumshanbo will inform the retail boundaries for the town.

## **1.5.3 ACTIONS**

High Street and neighbouring terraces of buildings provide a distinct and unique setting for the commercial core of the town. The town's architectural heritage needs to be preserved and development proposals need to be sympathetic to the setting.

The quality of signage and shopfronts is generally reasonably good throughout the town with some fine examples, for example, Conways. There are also some unique shopfronts which retain some of the main shopfront elements desired, whilst adding a unique slant, for example, Berry's Tavern.

The building beside Centra and the Bank of Ireland requires new windows which would need to be in keeping with the existing character of the building. One of the windows is missing.

Signage on gable walls should be discouraged and not permitted where this is not sympathetic to the building on site and relative to the business.

There are high levels of vacancy in the town with some buildings falling into disrepair. Alternative uses for such premises should be considered with flexibility. The development of new retail units in Drumshanbo should only be considered where existing buildings are inappropriate for the envisaged use.

## **1.6 DROMAHAIR**

Dromahair is a scenic town with a sylvan-setting, located in northwest county Leitrim and nestled within the River Bonet valley which flows westwards into Lough Gill. The town has a distinctive planned-estate layout incorporating buildings with local stone, native trees and many historical features and is designated an Architectural Conservation Area. Located a short distance from the main N4 Sligo-Dublin road and the N16 Sligo-Enniskillen road, Dromahair is just a 25-minute drive from the key Regional Centre of Sligo.

Local children are educated in St. Patrick's National School, whilst secondary students generally commute to Sligo for their education. Given the proximity of the town to Sligo, most residents are employed within Sligo and its environs reflective of the town being included within the urban influence of Sligo.

### **1.6.1 ATTRACTIONS**

#### ***Retail Attractions***

The town has a well-documented history as being a seat of power and an important service town. In recent years, the town appears to have waned in the shadow of Sligo. Previously, Dromahair as a market town had a fair green, a police barracks, hotel and a courthouse, none of which remain.

Dromahair acts as a support town to Manorhamilton. The most recent survey indicates 13 no. active retail businesses comprising a convenience floor area provision of 584m<sup>2</sup>, comparison floor area of 37m<sup>2</sup> and no provision for bulky goods.

#### ***Tourism***

The scenery and natural landscape in the area surrounding Dromahair attracts many visitors to the area annually. The Abbey Manor Hotel in town is closed and has fallen into serious disrepair, but there are other accommodation offers in the form of self-catering lodges, 'B&Bs' and an eco-retreat / yoga school at Ard Nahoo north of the town. The ruins of Creevelea Abbey in the town and Parke's Castle on the shores of Lough Gill attract many visitors to the area, whilst other popular activities include kayaking on Lough Gill, hill-walking and fishing.

### ***Recreation and Leisure***

The Depot Community Centre offers opportunities for community groups to meet and fundraise. The Dromahair Recreational Centre comprises a multi-surfaced sports area, training pitch, playground, outdoor gym and a walkway/running track. Soccer, GAA and boxing clubs have strong profiles within the town. The Sligo Way is a waymarked long distance walking route which starts at Lough Talt on the Sligo Mayo border. It continues eastwards for approximately 80km along the line of the Ox Mountains, ending in the village alongside the Abbey Hotel. The Sligo Way is a significant tourist attraction. Dromahair will also benefit from the Sligo Leitrim and Northern Counties Railway greenway project providing additional cycle routes for locals and visitors.

### ***Accessibility***

Dromahair is linked with Sligo via the R286 and R287 regional roads, whilst the R290 regional road links it with Collooney and the R280/R287 regional roads links it with Manorhamilton. Dromahair is almost equidistant from Sligo, Manorhamilton and Collooney. Railway services connecting Dublin and Sligo can be accessed at Collooney. Bus Éireann operates a number of routes serving Dromahair including the 462, 469 and 470 routes, which link Dromahair with Sligo, Drumkeeran and Manorhamilton respectively. Intercity bus services to Sligo and Dublin are provided daily from Collooney.

The town is not by-passed, therefore traffic must travel along Main Street to get through the town. Car parking is primarily provided in the form of parallel on-street parking with significant congestion occurring outside of McGoldrick's Centra supermarket.

#### **1.6.2 CHANGES IN RETAIL PROVISION BETWEEN 2015-2021**

Planning permission was granted to extend McGoldrick's supermarket (147m<sup>2</sup>) which would include welcome additional car parking to the town. This permission has not yet been implemented. It is also notable that retail use in the form of Gala (Leonard's) convenience store has being reinstated in a former vacant building (S.J. Gillmor & Sons, SPAR) with a hairdresser also opening in another former vacant commercial premises. These reinstatement of commercial uses into vacant commercial properties are particularly welcomed.

#### **1.6.3 ACTIONS**

The general visual amenities of Dromahair are of a very-high standard, however, with a number of premises now vacated, there is an increasing threat of these buildings falling into disrepair. It is envisaged that the construction of a modern library and digital hub on the site of the derelict Breffni Hotel, funded through the RRDF Scheme will reinvigorate and revitalise the Main Street.

The architectural heritage of the town needs to be preserved and proposals for development need to be sympathetic to this architectural quality, in line with the recommendations of the *Dromahair Urban Framework Plan* noting that a new Framework Plan is currently being prepared by the local community. Alternative uses should be considered for buildings that are lying idle in order to reinvigorate the street scene.

The quality of signage and shopfronts is reasonable throughout the town. Many of the historical buildings within the town do not lend themselves to easy adaption for commercial purposes and there is a distinct lack of consistency in shopfronts.

Proposals providing for off-street parking should be encouraged where this can be undertaken sympathetic to the buildings on site and streetscape.

The development of new retail outlets in Dromahair should only be considered where existing buildings are inappropriate for the envisaged use. The land use strategy map for Dromahair will inform the retail boundaries for the town.

## **1.7 KINLOUGH**

Kinlough has grown significantly over the past 15 years primarily as a residential centre with associated local level services because of the Upper Shannon Rural Renewal Scheme. The population of the town more than doubled between 2006 and 2016. Activity and footfall is centered around the Spar shop which now incorporates the Post Office. The Four Masters School is the village primary school. There is also a library, pre-school, montessori school and after school care service.

### **1.7.1 ATTRACTIONS**

#### ***Retail Attractions***

There is a Spar supermarket, hair/beauty salons, 2 pubs, restaurants and take-aways in the village. The most recent survey indicates 14 no. active retail businesses comprising a convenience floor area provision of 245m<sup>2</sup>, comparison floor area of 76m<sup>2</sup> and no provision for bulky goods. Simpson's garage provides a car servicing area, fitting tyres etc.

#### ***Tourism***

There is a folk museum, a Church of Ireland and a Catholic church in the village. The location close to the Drowes River and Lough Melvin attracts anglers and recreational users and proposals to develop this tourism industry are necessary. The development of a refined night-time economy in Kinlough is supported as an alternative option for tourists availing of the SLOW tourism campaign.

#### ***Recreation & Amenity***

The Kinlough Community Development Company is active in developing the community pitch and community centre. Lough Melvin Eco Park and children's playground is an attractive amenity within the village.

#### ***Accessibility***

The Local Link bus route 983 provides daily return connections from Kinlough to Bundoran and Ballyshannon. Bus Eireann also provide a bus service on Fridays with connections to Manorhamilton and Ballyshannon (route 495) and Sligo (route 483). There is significant leakage of expenditure to the Lidl discount store in Bundoran due to proximity and accessibility.

### **1.7.2 CHANGES IN RETAIL PROVISION BETWEEN 2015-2021**

There have been only two retail related applications in this period, both for a change of use. One for change of use of a beauty salon to take-away and the other for change of use of residential to restaurant associated with the established Courthouse restaurant. A butcher shop ceased trading but the public houses remain open.

### **1.7.3 ACTIONS**

The reuse of vacant commercial units in the village centre will be encouraged. Proposals which create employment opportunities locally shall be encouraged. Additional facilities in the town for residents would ensure that the town retains custom rather than losing footfall to centres outside the county.



There does not appear to be any car parking issues with ample parking to the rear of the Spar shop and along the street.

The development of new retail outlets in Kinlough should only be considered where existing buildings are inappropriate for the envisaged use. The land use strategy map for Kinlough will inform the retail boundaries for the town.