Name of Local Authority: Mayo County Council
Name of Town: Ballinrobe

Town Profile: Ballinrobe is identified in the Mayo County Development Plan as a ‘key town’. Strategically located in the south of the county, mid-way between Castlebar and Galway, it is a long-established market town for a sizeable hinterland in south Co. Mayo. A patent for a market was obtained in 1605. A strong central urban block (6ha) is bounded and defined by Main Street, Glebe Street, New Street and Bowgate Street. Consistent building frontages and relatively narrow street proportions emphasise the unique urban geometry. Rich in natural, built and cultural heritage assets, including the Bower’s Riverside Walk, 14th C Augustinian Friary & Harry Clarke Windows, the town has a vibrant and active community. Following extensive public consultation, a Ballinrobe Public Realm Plan and Ballinrobe Biodiversity Plan were published in 2018. Funding has been secured under T&VRS (2017/2018), HTI (2018), BHIS (2018); RRDF (2019) and LEADER 2019 for a number of historic structures and projects including the Market House, Bowers Riverside Walk and Church of Ireland/Library grounds. Population 2786 (Census 2016).

Project Objective:
Extent of dereliction and vacancy in the town centre is a major issue impacting the town, affecting perceptions, local confidence and, through lack of investment, the condition of the built heritage. Particularly affected is Bridge Street, which along with Main Street and Bowgate Street, is the study area chosen for the Residential Occupancy Pilot Project.

Project Outline:
An adaptive re-use study of 4 no. building typologies was undertaken (3 in private ownership and one recently purchased by Mayo County Council). Proposals for re-use, including commercial uses on ground floors and residential uses on upper floors, were developed. Approaches to planning applications, compliance with building regulations, energy efficiency, fire safety cert applications and disability access certificates were considered. Preliminary structural surveys were carried out.

D.L. Martin & Partners were commissioned to prepare comparative estimates for the re-use of 3 no. existing buildings compared to the cost of providing similar accommodation on “green field” sites. The proposed use of the existing buildings includes retail, office and residential accommodation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Building</th>
<th>Area m²</th>
<th>Existing Site refurbish and some new build</th>
<th>New Build greenfield site</th>
<th>New Build - efficient residential areas (adjusted total area)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A - Bridge Street</td>
<td>696</td>
<td>€1,430,000</td>
<td>€1,580,000</td>
<td>€1,290,000 (566m²)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B - Main Street</td>
<td>515</td>
<td>€840,000</td>
<td>€1,180,000</td>
<td>€890,000 (395m²)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C - Bowgate Street</td>
<td>425</td>
<td>€760,000</td>
<td>€970,000</td>
<td>€710,000 (312m²)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The cost of refurbishing an existing building is generally less expensive per square metre than providing a building of similar size on a “green field” site. Except for Building B where the difference is marginal, the cost of providing equivalent accommodation in a purpose-designed new building, without the constraints of the layout of an existing building, is generally more economical than refurbishment of the existing building. The “cost in use” of a new building, built to current standards, which cannot be economically achieved in the refurbishment of an existing building, would also influence the decision whether to refurbish or build new.

Using the 4 no. buildings as case studies, a workshop will be held with businesses, residents, town centre property owners and previous town centre owners/residents. The workshop aims to raise
awareness of the extent and type of vacancy within Ballinrobe; consider the challenges of adapting vacant buildings for re-use; consider options for the re-use of buildings; and consider and propose means of supports or resources that would make adaptation more achievable. A second workshop will be held with relevant staff in the Local Authority, to consider and propose means of supports or resources Mayo County Council could provide that would make adaptation more achievable.

Future Analytics Consulting Ltd (FAC) were appointed in July 2019 to undertake a detailed analysis and explore issues surrounding residential use and vacancy (economic, social, environmental and cultural); to propose policies (national and local) and fiscal and other incentives to encourage town centre residential use and to identify opportunities to guide and prompt public and private investment.

Preliminary Findings:

- There are a wide variety of funding options in place, many of which require significant skill and time to access, which can be confusing for potential applicants
- A variety of complex reasons have led to levels of vacancy and dereliction, including land value and the health of the local economy
- Ballinrobe is typical of many other Irish towns in terms of architecture, development pattern, and the issues facing it; correspondingly solutions that can be identified for Ballinrobe would apply equally to other similar towns
- One of the key issues facing Ballinrobe and other towns is that patterns of dwelling in recent years have tended to favour newly constructed dwellings in suburban multi-unit developments, or in one-off houses in hinterlands. The three main reasons for this are statutory risk, cost, and changing patterns of how people live and work
- Increasing traffic impacts on Ballinrobe is a key issue, one that is being proactively addressed by Mayo County Council
- Of five towns surveyed in Mayo, Ballinrobe has the highest overall proportion of derelict structures and among the highest proportion of vacant units. However, it should be noted that this data does not distinguish between commercial and residential properties.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Town</th>
<th>Derelict Buildings in Core Area</th>
<th>Vacant buildings in Core Area</th>
<th>Vacant &amp; Derelict Buildings</th>
<th>Total no. of buildings</th>
<th>Derelict Percentage</th>
<th>Vacancy percentage</th>
<th>Vacancy &amp; Derelict Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ballinrobe</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>461</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ballyhaunis</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>347</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Killala</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>273</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swinford</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>415</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belmullet</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>361</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This survey has also enabled the development of a fully electronic ARC GIS database with each property geo located, recording its vacancy/ dereliction status along with survey photographs and comments attached.

Initial consultation with owners of vacant buildings indicate barriers include cost of renovation and repairs and anti-social behaviour in the town centre at weekends discourages residential use. However, they also indicated a willingness to bring the buildings back into use if appropriate support was in place (e.g. low rate loans, tax incentives, partnership with council, more secure landlord entitlements, more control of anti-social behaviour specifically).
Joint Oireachtas Committee on Community and Rural Development

Peter Hynes
CE … Mayo
VC … CCMA
PLACE

Galway 1981 ......
FAILTE

Mayo
LOCAL GOVERNMENT

- PLACE
- PEOPLE
- DEVELOPMENT
- DELIVERY
VISION

- SUSTAINABLE
- INCLUSIVE
- PROSPEROUS
- PROUD
TOWNS

- NUMBER .... 460
- PURPOSE
- STATUS

- EXISTENTIAL THREAT !!
CHALLENGES

- VACANCY
- COMMERCIAL
- ENVIRONMENT
- LIVEABILITY
- SPIRAL ..........
RESPONSES

- COMMUNITY
- VISION - PLAN
- INVESTMENT ..... INCENTIVES
- IMPLEMENTATION
- LOCAL AUTHORITY LEADERSHIP !!
COMMUNITY

- COMMUNITY FUTURES
- VILLAGE DESIGN
- MD TEAM
DERELICTION

Housing ...
Westport .... Exemplar
Westport .... Location
Westport …. Layout
Westport .... Masterplan

Master Planning Westport 2000
An Integrated Action Plan
- New Streets
- Urban Sub-spaces
- Hard & Soft Landscaping
- Materials
- Signage
- Street Furniture
- Infill & Building Lines
- Tree Species
- Housing
- Pedestrian Permeability
- Shopfronts
- Passive Surveillance
- Car Management
- Fenestration patterns
- Enclosure
- Waters Edge

Westport: Incentives

Seaside Resort Scheme

Investment €200m
Westport .... Community
Westport .... Policy
Westport .... Signage
Westport .... Signage
Westport .... Public Realm
Westport .... Public Art
RECOMMENDATIONS

- Responsibility
- Methodology
- Residential Incentives
- Centre of Excellence
- Communication
Go raibh maith agaibh ... !!
Go raibh maith agaibh … !!