

Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Report

Proposed Amendment No. 1 of Charlestown-Bellaghy Local Area Plan 2010-2016

**Determination of the need for Strategic Environmental Assessment of Proposed
Amendment No. 1 of the Charlestown-Bellaghy Local Area Plan 2010-2016 in
terms of the provisions of Article 14A of the Planning and Development (Strategic
Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004**



Mayo County Council



Sligo County Council

MARCH 2012

1. INTRODUCTION

In 2010, Mayo County Council and Sligo County Council (referred to hereafter as the Councils) adopted a Local Area Plan (LAP) for Charlestown-Bellaghy. Charlestown is located within the Mayo County Council functional area and comprises the greater part of the town and Bellaghy is located within the functional area of Sligo County Council.

Mayo County Council and Sligo County Council intend to make an amendment entitled “Amendment No. 1” to the Charlestown-Bellaghy Local Area Plan 2010-2016 under the Planning and Development Act 2010 (as amended). The purpose of the proposed amendment is to bring the LAP into alignment with the Core Strategy incorporated by variation into the Mayo County Development Plan 2008-2014 in October 2011 and the Core Strategy in Sligo County Development Plan 2011-2017. Proposed Amendment No. 1 will address excess residential zoning in the LAP area arising from revised population targets.

Proposed changes with regards to residential zonings will be made by Mayo County Council in respect of lands zoned within the Mayo County Council functional area and by Sligo County Council in respect of lands zoned in Bellaghy. The purpose of this screening report is to consider whether the proposed amendment requires full Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA).

Section 7 of the Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2010 sets out that the written statement of a County Development Plan must contain a Core Strategy which shows that the development objectives in the development plan are consistent, as far as practicable, with national and regional development objectives as set out in the National Spatial Strategy and Regional Planning Guidelines (RPGs). The new Regional Planning Guidelines for the Western Region 2010-2022 were adopted on the 19th October 2010. Accordingly, Variation No. 2 of Mayo County Development Plan 2008-2014, which provides for the inclusion of a Core Strategy, was adopted on 17th October 2011. This reflected revised population targets in the West Region RPGs. The new Regional Planning Guidelines for the Border Region 2010-2022 were adopted on 29th September 2010. Sligo County Development Plan was adopted on 16th May 2011 and includes a Core Strategy for the County which reflects revised population targets in the Border RPGs.

Core Strategy Mayo County Development Plan 2008-2014

In the Settlement Hierarchy which forms part of the Core Strategy in Mayo County Development Plan 2008-2014, Charlestown is identified as one of twelve Key Towns below the Linked Hub of Castlebar/Ballina, The strategic policy (P/CSS-2.1) for Key Towns as set out in the Core Strategy is:

“To promote and facilitate the growth and sustainable development of the towns of Belmullet, Ballinrobe, Ballyhaunis, Claremorris, Charlestown, Killala, Kiltimagh, Knock, Loiusburgh, Newport and Swinford in their role as Key support towns, towards achieving the population targets set out in the Core Strategy, with an appropriate range of social and physical infrastructure, facilities and services, including retail and commercial enterprise development to serve the inhabitants of those towns and their rural hinterlands”.

Table 1: Settlement Hierarchy County Mayo	
Linked Hub	Castlebar, Ballina
Key Towns	Belmullet, Ballinrobe, Ballyhaunis, Claremorris, Charlestown, Killala, Kiltimagh, Knock, Loiusburgh, Newport and Swinford.
Other Towns and Villages	Foxford, Crossmolina, Balla, Keel-Dooagh, Shrule, Kilkelly, Achill Sound, Bangor Erris, Ballindine, Bunnyconnellan, Bellavarry, Kilmaine, Cong.

The Core Strategy also sets out population targets and associated residential land requirements for the County and the towns and villages in the settlement hierarchy. LAPs are required to be consistent with the population targets and residential requirements set out in the Core Strategy. As the Core Strategy identified excess residential zoning on lands within the jurisdiction of Mayo County Council in the Charlestown-Bellaghy LAP, having regard to the revised population targets, this amendment is necessary to bring the LAP into alignment with the Core Strategy in Mayo County Development Plan 2008-2014 with regards to population targets and residential land use requirements for Charlestown.

In determining residential land requirements for the towns and villages the Core Strategy took into consideration the potential number of housing units that could be provided from:

- Vacant units
- Unfinished estates
- Live planning permissions.

Core Strategy Tables 1, 2 and 10 (Mayo County Development Plan 2008-2014) summarise the key statistics relating to the distribution of future population together with associated housing requirements for 2016 and 2022 and the shortfall/excess of residential lands in relation to population targets.

These tables identify excess zoning in the current LAP for Charlestown in the region of 8 hectares. Core Strategy Table 10 overleaf sets out relevant details in relation to Charlestown for the duration of the LAP period (i.e. until 2016).

In order to address the excess zoning provision on lands within the jurisdiction of Mayo County Council, it is proposed to phase residential development or, where necessary, having regard to flood risk assessment, where benefitting lands have been identified (See Map 3), rezoning such lands to a more suitable use such as agriculture or amenity uses. Phasing of development will be undertaken, whereby the release of land for residential development will be carried out in a phased manner over a prolonged period where an appropriate percentage of the lands zoned for residential development have been built on. The proposed amendment will involve changes to Map 1 Land Use Zoning together with associated changes to the text. See Map 1A attached to this Report which outlines the lands which it is envisaged will be subject to phasing, rezoning and strategic reserve designation.

TABLE 10: LOCAL AREA PLANS: POPULATION TARGETS; ASSOCIATED HOUSING REQUIREMENTS; EXCESS

Town (Period of Current LAP)	Population Target to end of plan period	Population Increase from 2010 to end of plan period	No. of Res Units Required from 2010 to end of plan period Including 50% Headroom	No of Housing Units that could be provided from:			Potential Housing Yield Total ⁴ from VU + UFE + LPP	Res Units Shortfall / Excess (+/-) from 2010 to end of plan period	Residential zoning 2010 to end of plan period based on shortfall or excess in Res units (Hectares)			
				VU ¹	UFE ²	LPP ³			T ⁵	UD ⁶	R/ND ⁷	E ⁸
Ballinrobe (2010–2016)	2820	431	258	162	59	103	324	+66	120	51	75/6	45
Ballyhaunis (2010–2016)	2296	351	210	132	50	88	270	+60	114	50	72/8	42
Claremorris (2006–2012)	3133	178	107	200	231	206	637	+530	272	132	172/32	100
Swinford (2010–2016)	1968	258	155	116	26	36	178	+23	86	33	56/3	30
Charlestown (2010–2016)	1000	153	92	58	51	28	137	+45	29	11	21/3	8
Kiltimagh (2010–2016)	1473	255	153	85	52	84	221	+68	60	24	41/5	19
Total	12,690	1,626	975	753	469	545	1767	+792	681	301	437/57	244

¹ VU= Estimated No. of Vacant Units; ² UFE= Unfinished Housing Estate; ³ LPP= No. of units permitted (in developments of 2+ units) but not yet commenced; ⁴ Potential Housing Yield Total = VU+UFE+LPP; ⁵T= Total lands zoned for residential development; ⁶UD = Total lands that have a residential zoning but have not been developed; ⁷ R = Out of the total lands zoned residential, the area of land to be Retained as residential zoned lands to meet population projections of which /ND = the amount of land that is undeveloped (and which equates to lands which have live planning permissions that are not yet commenced on residentially zoned lands. ⁸ E = Out of the total land zoned residential, the area of land that is considered in Excess. These are the lands zoned for residential purposes that are undeveloped and considered excess for the population projections estimated for each town that has zoning objectives.

Core Strategy Sligo County Development Plan 2011-2017

The Core Strategy for County Sligo is consistent with the National Spatial Strategy and the Border Regional Planning Guidelines (RPGs) in supporting balanced development throughout the County in parallel with the growth of Sligo as a Gateway City and the strengthening of its links to other significant urban centres in the Border Region and beyond.

The implementation of the Core Strategy is made possible by the Spatial Development Framework, the Settlement Structure and the Development Land Requirements set out in sections 3.2, 3.3 and 3.4 of the Sligo CDP 2011-2017 respectively.

In the Settlement Structure, Bellaghy is identified as one of the Villages Supporting Rural Communities (refer to Fig. 3.D on p. 27 of the Sligo CDP). The distribution of future population growth into settlements is based essentially on the settlements' role and position in the spatial hierarchy.

Table 3.I (p. 29 of the Sligo CDP) indicates that Bellaghy had a population of 78 persons in 2002 and grew to 115 persons in 2006 (Census figures). The recommended population level for the year 2017 (i.e. by the end of the Sligo CDP lifetime) is 135, in accordance with the existing Charlestown-Bellaghy LAP.

Two strategic settlement policies and one strategic settlement objective are particularly relevant to Bellaghy (see p. 25 of the Sligo CDP). Policy **SP-S-5** supports population growth to the levels set in Table 3.I, whilst policy **SP-S-2** imposes a moratorium on multi-unit residential development in settlements where the existing housing capacity plus the potential capacity of permitted (and not yet built) housing development can accommodate a population which is equal to or higher than the recommended population levels (see also subsection 3.5.3 Moratorium on p. 36 of the Sligo CDP). Schedule **3.L** (p. 36 of the Sligo CDP) includes Bellaghy among the settlements where the moratorium is applicable.

The strategic settlement objective **SO-S-1** provides for the monitoring of residential vacancy in all settlements, and particularly in those subject to the moratorium on new residential development. The most recent surveys of vacancy in Bellaghy indicate that the number of vacant units has increased from 28 to 31 between 2011 and 2012, while there is still a live planning permission for 39 houses.

Considering the Core Strategy requirements and the above figures, it appears that there is a surplus of land zoned for residential uses in Bellaghy. In accordance with the strategic zoning policy SP-Z-3 (p. 33 of the Sligo CDP), zoned land in excess of requirements must be included in a strategic reserve for potential development after the lifetime of the current CDP.

In order to address the excess residential zoning provision in Bellaghy, it is proposed to designate 4.5 hectares of land (two larger sites) suitable for multi-unit housing development (already subject to the moratorium) as Strategic Land Reserve (SLR). As indicated in the Sligo CDP:

“Any further lands that might be [proposed to be] zoned for residential uses in excess of the area corresponding to the requirements outlined in the Core Strategy shall be included in a Strategic Land Reserve and shall only be developed when future Housing Strategies will call for additional zoned land.

In exceptional circumstances, should the supply of residential land prove insufficient in any settlement during the lifetime of the CDP, it may be possible to release lands from the strategic

reserve by zoning it for residential uses through the development plan variation procedure. The need for any such rezoning shall be supported by factual evidence, corroborated by the results of the proposed annual housing vacancy monitoring process.”

(Subsection 3.4.7 Strategic Land Reserve – p. 33 of the Sligo CDP)

Following a flood risk assessment that will be carried out as part of the proposed LAP amendment, it may also appear necessary to rezone certain portions of land potentially liable to flooding for amenity/open space uses instead of town centre/commercial, light industrial/commercial or industry and employment.

1.1 Environmental Assessments carried out on the Plan

A Strategic Environmental Assessment (Screening) and a Habitats Directive Assessment Stage 1: Screening were carried out in tandem with the preparation of the current Charlestown-Bellaghy Local Area Plan 2010-2016.

Strategic Environmental Assessment

It was determined through the SEA screening process that the implementation of the LAP would not be likely to have significant effects on the environment taking account of relevant criteria set out in Schedule 2A of the SEA Regulations and responses received from the environmental authorities (See SEA Screening Report attached).

Habitats Directive Assessment

The Appropriate Assessment screening concluded that the LAP, either individually, or in combination with other plans or projects would not give rise to significant adverse impacts on the integrity of the Natura Site, having regard to its conservation objectives.

2. DETERMINATION WHETHER THE PROPOSED AMENDMENT NO. 1 TO THE CHARLESTOWN-BELLAGHY LOCAL AREA PLAN 2010-2016 IS LIKELY TO HAVE SIGNIFICANT EFFECTS ON THE ENVIRONMENT.

2.1 Introduction

The screening exercise outlined below has been carried out in accordance with Article 14A (2) of the Planning & Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004 taking into account the relevant criteria set out in Schedule 2A of the SEA Regulations

2.2 The Characteristics of the Proposed LAP having regard, in particular, to:

2.2.1 The degree to which the proposed LAP sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources

The Charlestown-Bellaghy Local Area Plan provides a positive framework for the proper planning and sustainable development of Charlestown and Bellaghy for a 6 year duration, unless amended. It consists of a written statement – which indicates land use and other development standards together with various local objectives – and maps – which provide graphical representation of LAP objectives.

The Charlestown-Bellaghy LAP is nestled into a hierarchy of land use forward planning strategic actions including the National Spatial Strategy 2000-2020, the Regional Planning Guidelines for the West Region 2010-2022 and the Regional Planning Guidelines for the Border Regions 2010-2022, the Mayo County Development Plan 2008-2014 and the Sligo County Development Plan 2011-2017. The LAP must be consistent with the policies and objectives of these strategic actions.

The proposed Amendment to the Charlestown-Bellaghy Local Area Plan is intended to address the excess (8 hectares) residential zoning provision within the Mayo County Council functional area of Charlestown primarily by phasing such lands for residential development and where appropriate rezoning (from residential use to other uses) taking into consideration the findings of Flood Risk and Habitats Directive Assessments.

On lands located in Bellaghy within the jurisdiction of Sligo County Council, it is proposed to designate in the region of 4 hectares of residential zoned lands as Strategic Reserve.

Therefore this amendment will lead to a more sustainable approach to development as the residential zoned lands will be designated as strategic land reserve, phased and/or rezoned, depending on any environmental issues that may be identified.

Due to the above development approach, it is anticipated that the proposed Amendment is not likely to have significant effects on the environment.

2.2.2 The degree to which the plan influences other plans, including those in a hierarchy.

The Charlestown-Bellaghy LAP, as amended, is intended to bring the objectives of the LAP into alignment with the Core Strategies in the Mayo County Development Plan and Sligo County Development Plan and therefore with the Regional Planning Guidelines for the West Region 2010-2022 and the Regional Planning Guidelines for the Border Region 2010-2022. In its making, the amended plan has regard to other relevant planning and environmental policy and legislation including European Union Directives, Ministerial Guidelines and other national and regional plans and policies. As it is at the lower level of the hierarchy of plans, it will only influence projects at a lower level such as master plans or any future development within the plan area.

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

The current Charlestown-Bellaghy LAP and the amendment thereto have been and will be made pursuant to the provisions of the Planning and Development Acts 2000-2010; as such, the plan seeks to achieve development in a sustainable manner. The amended LAP will be consistent with the objectives of the current LAP, the Mayo County Development Plan 2008-2014 and the Sligo County Development Plan 2011-2017, all of which were subject to SEA.

It is anticipated that the amendment to the Charlestown-Bellaghy Local Area Plan will have no predicted significant effects on the environment as it will not put any additional pressure on existing infrastructure which is in place to support the further development of the town.

2.2.4 Environmental problems relevant to the plan

The SEA screening which was carried out during the preparation of the current Charlestown-Bellaghy LAP identified the following environmental problems:

Status of the Mullaghanoe River

The status of the Mullaghanoe River was categorised as being at significant risk of failing to achieve the Water Frameworks Directive's objectives by 2015. This has not changed since the previous screening was carried out.

Waste Water Treatment Capacity

Waste water generated by Charlestown-Bellaghy passes through a treatment plant which has a capacity of 1,200 population equivalent. While there is available capacity in the plant, there is only enough to deal with short-medium term development. The Collection System in Charlestown/Bellaghy is a combination system in some places however the planned upgrades to the Plant and Collection system would separate these. Outfall from the waste water treatment plant flows directly into the SAC. A proposal to upgrade the plant is currently being planned as part of a Design Build and Operate bundle which includes upgrades in Belmullet and Foxford. Proposals to upgrade the plant are still pending.

Mitigation measures have been put in place in the Charlestown/Bellaghy LAP with regards to waste water treatment. Section 3.7.8 of the Development Management Standards states:

“The waste water treatment capacity of new development under the Charlestown-Bellaghy LAP must not exceed available waste water treatment capacity.

In order for permission to be granted for new developments, there must be sufficient capacity available to appropriately treat the waste water arising from such developments. In addition, in order for planning permission to be granted for new developments planning applications must demonstrate that new developments will be connected to the waste water treatment plant collection network”.

The proposed amendment will not affect these standards.

Integration of mitigation measures into the LAP has helped ensure that the LAP does not exacerbate existing problems and that it has and will continue to help in solving these problems.

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

The Charlestown-Bellaghy Local Area Plan was drawn up and adopted having regard to environmental objectives established at international, national and regional level. The proposed amendment to the Charlestown-Bellaghy Local Area Plan will remain consistent with same.

2.3 Characteristics of the Effects and of the Area Likely to be Affected, having regard, in particular, to

2.3.1 The probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects

The lands which will be the subject of the proposed amendment are zoned residential in the current Charlestown-Bellaghy Local Area Plan. It is not proposed to extend the LAP boundary for the proposed amendment, but to review and revise the existing residential zoning. Implementing the amendment to the Charlestown-Bellaghy Local Area Plan will have an impact on the entire plan area, but this will happen on phased basis over the lifetime of the LAP.

It is expected that the effects will remain in place until such time that any new policies and/or objectives are identified in a revised LAP or CDP. The lifetime of the LAP is until 2016, unless it is extended under Section (19)(1)(d) of the Planning and Development Act, as amended.

It is acknowledged that habitats and species may be lost as a direct result of development, but this will be limited as a result of existing mitigation measures contained in the current plans policies, objectives and development control standards. It is anticipated that the amendment to the LAP will have no negative effects on the environment and will have a positive contribution to the Charlestown and Bellaghy, whilst protecting the natural and build environment.

2.3.2 The cumulative nature of the effects

No cumulative negative effects are anticipated given that the purpose of the amendment is to address excess over zoning. It is anticipated that the cumulative effects on the environment will be positive as the current plan contains policies and objectives for the protection of the natural and built environment and the proposed amendment will remain consistent with the current plan in this regard.

2.3.3 The transboundary nature of effects

No significant effects likely. Note the LAP straddles the administrative boundaries of Mayo and Sligo County Councils. The LAP was prepared in co-operation with each other and adopted by both Local Authorities. A similar approach is being undertaken in the preparation of the proposed amendment.

2.3.4 The risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents)

The implementation of the amendment will not result in any risk to human health. The removal of residentially zoned lands from areas identified as benefitting lands following flood risk assessment could potentially benefit human health.

2.3.5 The magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected)

The LAP area encompasses 151.5 hectares. There are currently 46 hectares zoned for residential development, of which an excess of 12.5 hectares are the subject of this amendment.

The population of the LAP area in 2006 was 859. The census 2011 data for Charlestown and Bellaghy are not yet available.

The proposed amendment will take into account revised population projections for the area in accordance with the RPG's for the West Region 2010-2022 and the RPG's for the Border Regions 2010-2022. It is estimated that the population of Charlestown will increase by 153 from 2010-2016 and Bellaghy will increase by 20 persons to 135 to 2017. Approximately 92 housing units will be required in Charlestown to facilitate the population growth as per the RPGs for the west region.

Given that excessive lands were zoned for residential use in the current plan, in County Mayo it is proposed to zone these lands for phased residential development in the medium to long term, with a possibility of re-zoning some residential lands should environmental constraints such as flood risk arise. In Sligo it is proposed to designate these lands as strategic land reserve.

2.3.6 The values and vulnerability of the area likely to be effected due to:

a) special natural characteristics or cultural heritage

No significant effects likely given that the policies and objectives in the current plan protect these areas.

A separate Appropriate Assessment Screening of this amendment has been carried out in accordance with the requirements of Article 6 (3) of the EU Habitats Directive (Directive 92/43/EEC).

Policies and standards for the protection of designated sites and species are set out in Section 2.3.8 Natural and Built Heritage and Section 3.7 Development Management Standards – Environment of the Charlestown-Bellaghy LAP.

Policies and objectives to protect the area's natural and built heritage will not be affected by this amendment.

b) exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values

It is unlikely that any environmental quality standards or limit values will be exceeded as a result of the proposed amendment, which involves phasing of lands, designating lands as strategic reserve and possibly rezoning lands from residential to other less intensive uses. It is envisaged that the proposed amendment will result in beneficial impacts on the protection of various environmental components and would stabilise or reduce existing effects on the environment. Development proposals will be subject to assessment as part of the planning application process and will be required to demonstrate compliance with environmental quality standards and limits.

c) intensive land use

The proposed amendment will not result in an intensification of land uses within the area as it proposes to phase or where appropriate to rezone existing residentially zoned land to less intensive land uses such as amenity or agriculture. Similarly, the Strategic Land Reserve designation in Bellaghy will delay the potential for future development on the subject lands beyond the lifetime of the current Sligo CDP. Quality design standards and guidelines are already provided within the LAP with appropriate policies and objectives which seek to reduce the potentially negative impact of any increased land uses within the area.

2.3.7 The effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, European Union or international protection status.

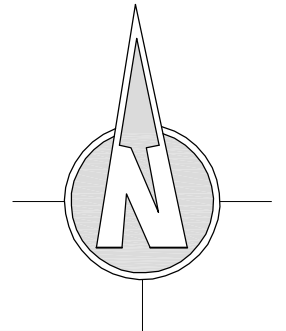
The LAP recognises the importance of sites within national and European designations, and sets out policies for their protection. This amendment remains consistent with those policies. It is not anticipated that the implementation of the amendment would have any significant adverse impacts on areas of recognised national, European or international protection status.

















3. INITIAL SCREENING DECISION



Having regard to:

- Schedule 2A of the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations
- The previous SEA screening carried out on the existing Charlestown-Bellaghy LAP which resulted in the integration of environmental consideration and mitigation measures into the plan
- The nature of the proposed amendment which will result in a more sustainable outcome in terms of land use within the plan area

Mayo County Council and Sligo County Council to date consider that the proposed Amendment to the Charlestown-Bellaghy Local Area Plan 2010-2016 would not be likely to have significant effects on the environment. However, the Environmental Authorities are invited to make a submission on the proposed amendment before the Planning Authorities make a final decision on whether or not the proposed amendment would be likely to have significant effects on the environment, taking account of relevant criteria set out in Schedule 2A of the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004 S.I. No. 436 of 2004 and any submissions or observations received in response to this document and the attached notice.



-  Local Area Plan Boundary
-  County Boundary
-  Public Utilities (PU)
-  Existing Residential/Infill (R)
-  New Residential (C)
-  Town Centre / Commercial (TC)
-  Transitional (T)
-  Open Space & Amenity (F)
-  Community & Education (E)
-  Industry & Employment (H)
-  Light Industrial/Commercial (T)
-  SAC (Biodiversity & Conservation) (G)
-  Route Option: Inner Ring Road
-  N5 Bypass As Constructed
-  Potential Links for N17 Proposed Bypass
-  Residential Sites

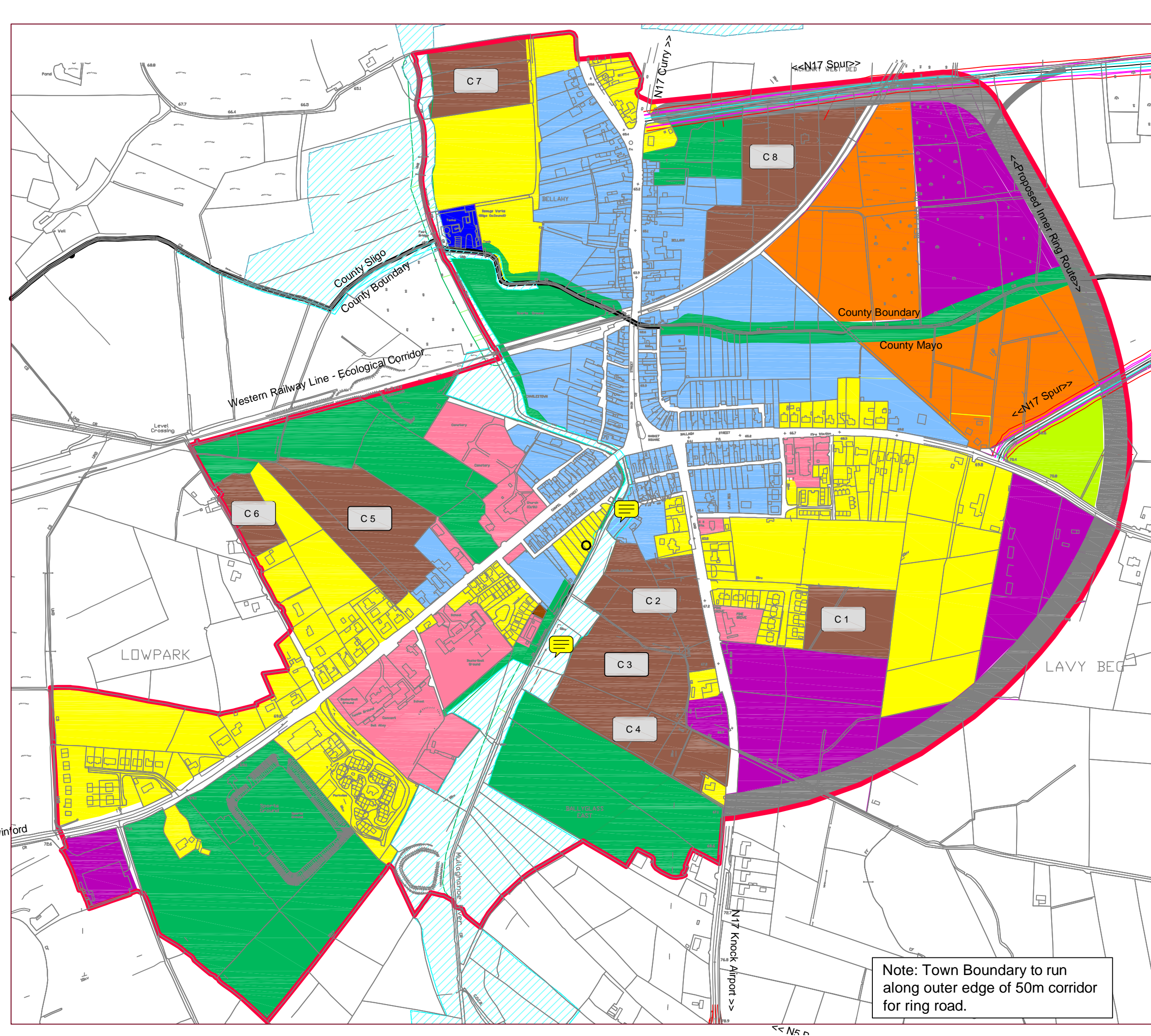

MAYO COUNTY COUNCIL
 Comhairle Chontae Mhaigh Eo

SLIGO COUNTY COUNCIL
 Comhairle Chontae An Sligeach

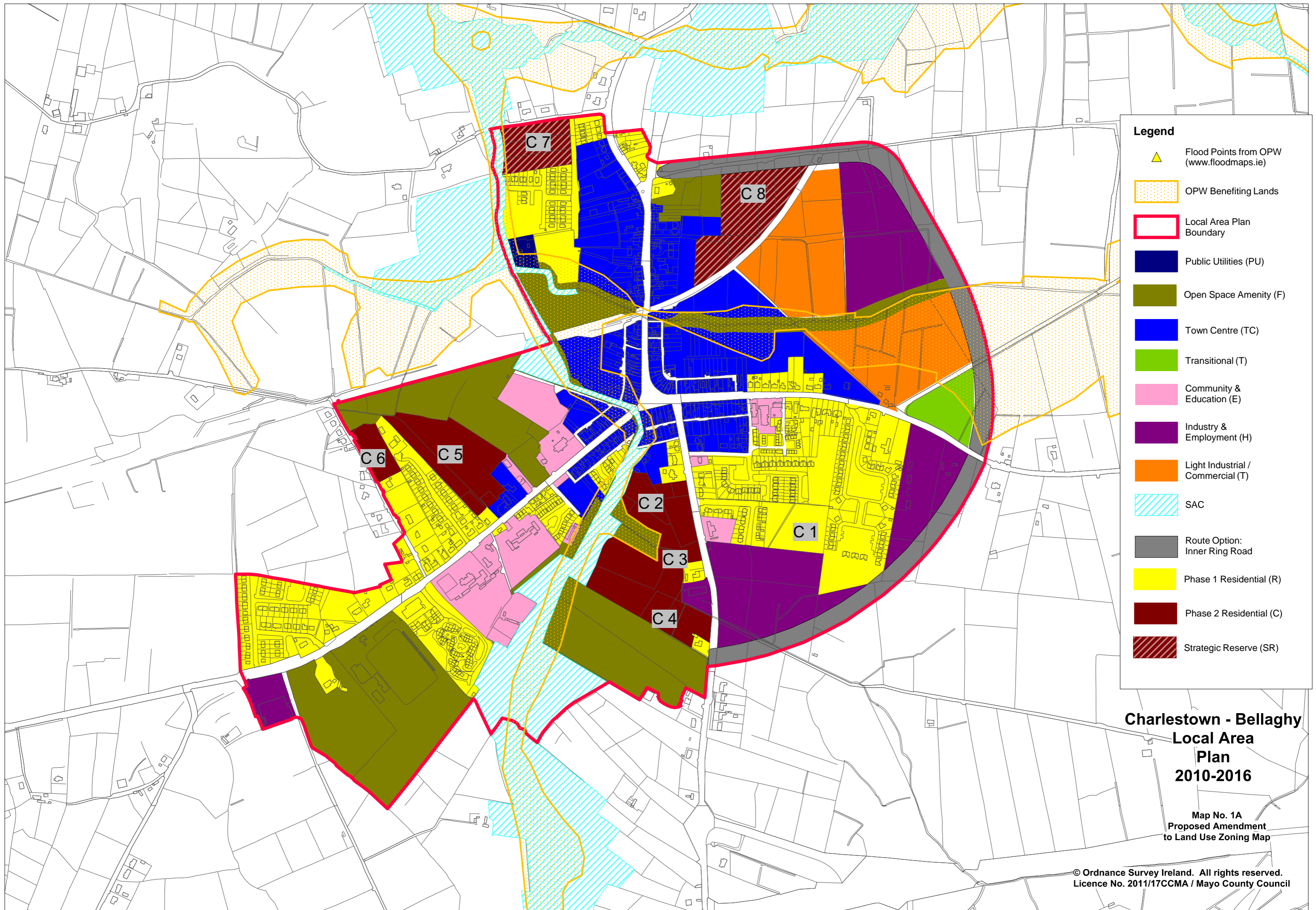
**CHARLESTOWN-BELLAGHY
LOCAL AREA PLAN 2009**

May 2010	Scales : NTS
Map No.1	Drawn : CAAS

Land Use Zoning

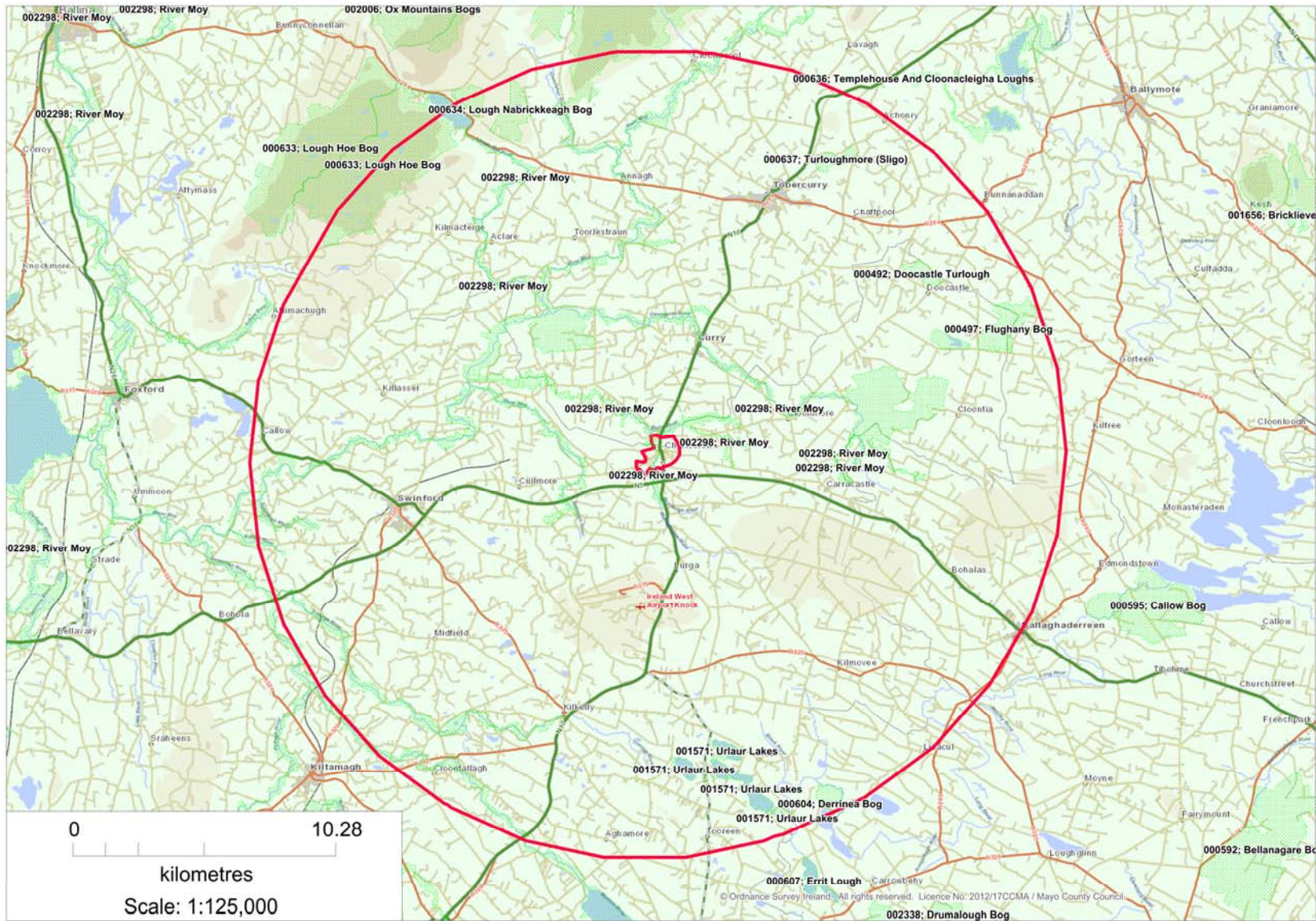
Note: Town Boundary to run along outer edge of 50m corridor for ring road.



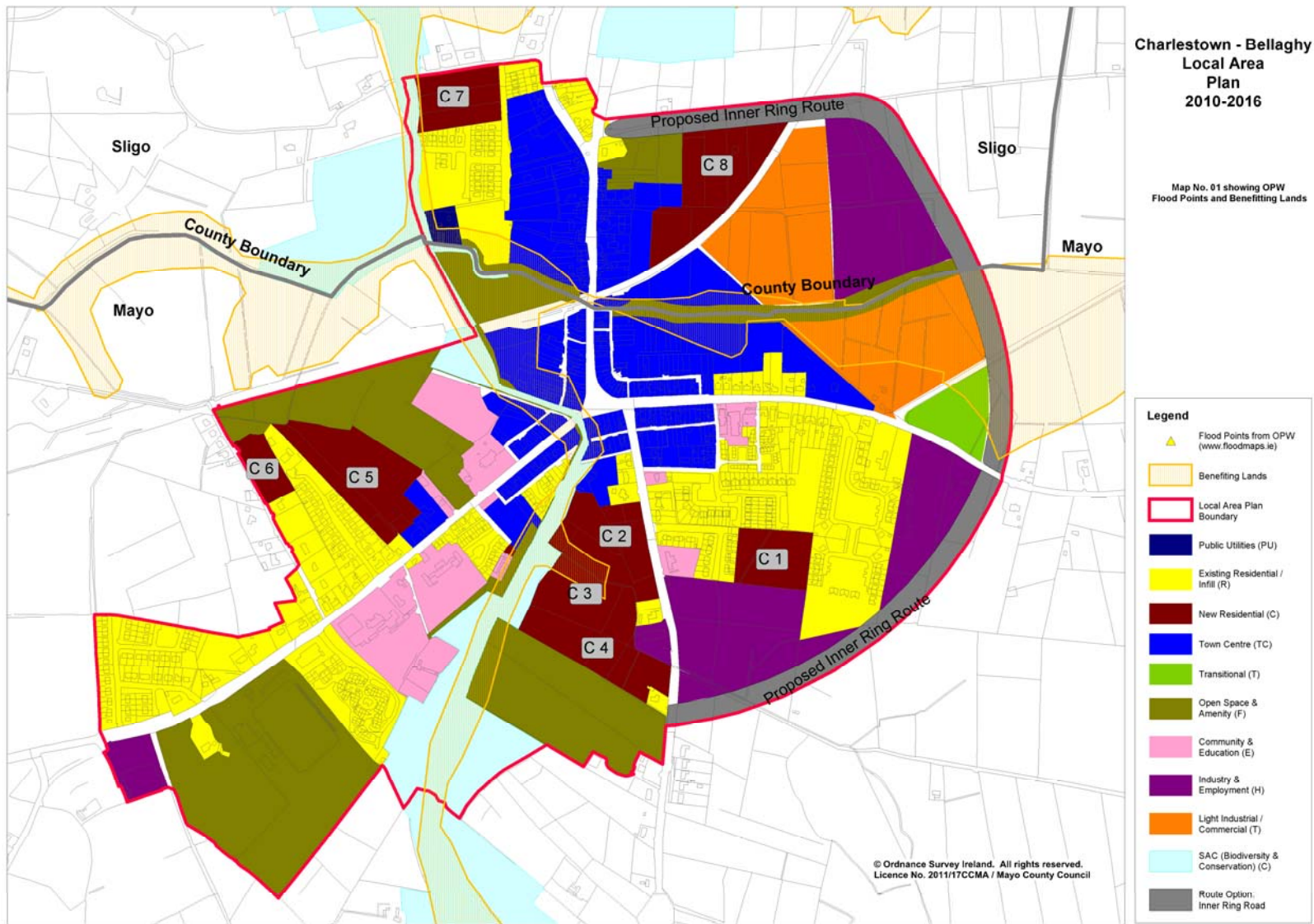


**Charlestown - Bellaghy
Local Area
Plan
2010-2016**

Map No. 1A
Proposed Amendment
to Land Use Zoning Map



Map 2: SAC's within 15km of LAP Boundary



Map 3: Areas identified as benefiting lands within the Charlestown/Bellaghy LAP Boundary.