

## **9.1 Portumna Small Growth Town**

## **9.2 Town Context**

Portumna is located approximately 68 kilometres south east of Galway City, 31 kilometres south of Ballinasloe and 24 kilometres west of Birr. The town straddles the county boundary with County Tipperary and it is recognised as the principle urban setting in south-east County Galway serving an extensive rural hinterland on either side of the county divide. Portumna is served by the National Secondary Road, the N65 which acts as the main vehicular gateway to the town.

Portumna is bounded by the River Shannon to the east, Lough Derg to the south and the attractive Portumna Forest Park to the south-west which encompasses an area of approximately 600 hectares. The topography and natural features of the area have influenced the pattern and form of development in the town over the years. The town as a whole is attractive and inviting as a place to live and for visitors to the Lough Derg area.

## **9.3 Sustainable Communities**

### **9.3.1 Housing**

Portumna is delineated by two parallel, intersecting roads; St. Brendan's Street/ Clonfert Avenue and Abbey Street intersected by St. Brigid's Avenue/ St. Patrick's Street and this area has been the focal point for the Town, playing a pivotal role in the administrative, commercial, cultural, recreational, residential and community functions of the Town. These streets are wide in proportion to the building elevation heights giving the town a spacious feel. The domestic and commercial buildings themselves are, in most part, of a simple vernacular style, counter pointed by the neoclassical architecture of the public buildings.

The town core of Portumna is high density in layout and has developed in a sustainable manner overtime radiating out in all directions from the main streets. A number of housing estates have development to the north, east and west of the town core with some infill housing in the town centre and within the development boundary. The existing housing building stock in the town core comprises a mix of traditional housing stock with a good mix of new infill developments.

### **9.3.2 Education**

In terms of education, Portumna Community School is a co-education secondary school and St Brendan's National School in Portumna is also co-educational.

### **9.3.3 Community Facilities**

The town of Portumna has some well-developed community and recreation facilities, including schools, a library, a children's playground, church and graveyard, medical facilities, Garda station, bank, post office and a number of sporting facilities which are dispersed around the town.

Social clubs/groups that cater for both young and older persons include the Bridge club, Portumna Players Drama Group, Na Calai Community Development Project, An Gairdin Environmental Group, Portumna Town FC, Portumna GAA, Portumna Rugby Football Club and Portumna Golf Club. The town hall has recently been renovated and is centrally located in Clonfert Avenue, behind the Court House.

The River Shannon and Lough Derg are the base for leisure related activities and the woodlands associated with Portumna Forest Park are utilised for a variety of outdoor pursuits.

St Brigid' Catholic Church (old), situated on Saint Bridget's Avenue is a former church that retains its Gothic Revival architectural character and many of its original features. The adjoining buildings consists of a former convent, a graveyard with a mausoleum

that forms part of an important group of religious structures in this area. This Church was converted to a parish hall and is currently vacant and disused.

There are two supermarkets in Portumna in addition to a number of smaller shops with petrol stations, a good choice of restaurants and cafes as well as a large section of pubs serving food. There is a good mix of tourist accommodation in Portumna with a selection of apartment blocks, cottages, BnB's and a Glamping Village in the Town Centre. The Shannon Oaks Hotel to the west of the town centre was damaged in a fire in 2011 and has been derelict/ vacant since.

### **9.3.4 Environment and Heritage**

The natural, built and cultural heritage in Portumna contribute to its character and local distinctiveness. The townscape of Portumna is an important part of the areas visual amenity and the protection and enhancement of the townscape, streetscapes and historic street patterns need to be considered with respect to the future conservation and development of the town.

The designation of the historic town centre as an Architectural Conservation Area and the associated management of both individual buildings and the public realm in that area will significantly enhance the quality of the local environment within Portumna. The principal significance of the designated Architectural Conservation Area lies in the combination of its street pattern, plot sizes and architectural coherence. The vast majority of buildings span the late 18th to late 19th centuries and share many characteristics. Surviving traditional shopfronts are important features. Having regard to its size Portumna contains a generous number of buildings of national or regional significance. There are a number of protected structures located within Portumna plan area, examples include Williams Foodstore and Bakery on Abbey Street and the former Courthouse building on Clonfert Avenue. Portumna also has a rich archaeological heritage, with a number of recorded monuments, providing evidence of early settlement in the area.

In terms of natural heritage, Portumna has a considerable number of designated sites that traverse the Plan area and the key feature in Portumna is the River Shannon and Lough Derg which are two Special Areas of Conservation, namely the River Shannon Callows SAC and Lough Derg, North – East Shore SAC. Furthermore, there are also two Special Protection Areas that traverse the plan area, namely the Middle Shannon Callows SPA and Lough Derg (Shannon) SPA. The proposed Shannon Callows Natural Heritage Area and the proposed Lough Derg Natural Heritage Area both traverse the plan area to the south.

### **9.3.5 Employment and Economic Development**

Large scale employment uses are focussed in the west and north area of the plan on Industrial, and Enterprise zonings. The Plan identifies undeveloped industrial zoned lands (I) to cater for industrial development along with the availability of Business/Enterprise (BE) lands which can facilitate a variety of enterprise and business type uses.

The town centre area remains the primary target for the location of new retail development, with opportunities to develop this sector in a consolidated and sequential manner. The development of any future retail and non-retail services in the town needs to be carefully planned, designed and managed in order to protect and enhance the town's unique character while promoting the economic vitality of the town centre and providing a strong base for employment opportunities.

The Hub in Portumna is an information space that directs visitors to the various places of tourist interest in Portumna such as The Workhouse, local eateries and businesses. It also provides people with vital information on upcoming education courses and job opportunities. The office also serves the wider towns and villages surrounding Portumna. There are office spaces in the Hub with opportunities for business and start up entrepreneurs to avail of desk space within the Hub and presents an opportunity for businesses to showcase their products and services.

A significant industry and large employer, Green Isle Foods is located in the town along with a number of other employers. New employment creation could also be generated by smaller and medium sized local enterprises / service providers. The promotion of economic development and employment creation will be appropriately guided to ensure the protection of residential amenities, built and natural heritage, landscape and streetscape, character of the town and the vitality and viability of the town centre.

### **9.3.6 Town Centre /Retail**

Portumna Town serves a local urban population and extensive rural catchment. The policy objective for retail in Portumna Town Centre is to support the vitality and viability of the town and to ensure it provides an appropriate range of retail and non-retail functions to serve the needs of the community and respective catchment areas.

Historically, the Town Centre have been the focal point of the Town, playing a pivotal role in the administrative, commercial, cultural and recreational functioning of the Town. The area has a distinctive character and accommodates a number of buildings of architectural merit. The Town Centre has a distinct street frontage and core for urban activity where residential, commercial and community functions can take place side by side.

Portumna has a mix of both convenience and comparison shopping with a large Supervalu Supermarket towards to the east of the town centre with ample off street parking as well as a good number of restaurants and ample provision of medical services, bars and business services dispersed throughout the identified retail core. However, the retail core of Portumna town has a significant surplus of vacant retail space within the identified retail core. The retail focal point is split between the town core and the Aldi retail complex westwards of the centre which has the benefit of good connectivity via a new footpath to the town centre.

### 9.3.7 Tourism

Tourism is an important industry in the local economy and it is acknowledged as a catalyst for a considerable amount of commercial activity in the town. Portumna has a significant number of tourist attractions focused around its picturesque location beside the River Shannon and adjacent to Portumna Forest Park. The town subsequently has a rich natural and built heritage by virtue of its advantageous geographical setting. These characteristics and amenities simultaneously act as valuable recreational assets for the town and greatly enhance its overall appeal.

Portumna has grown from a small accommodation provider to being a town with a large choice of accommodation types. The town also has a good selection of café, restaurants and shops. Its outdoor pursuit provision encompasses sea based and land based activities, including, walking, angling, cycling, swimming, sailing/boating, canoeing and golf. Tourism provides employment of both a seasonal and permanent nature in Portumna and a lot of work has been done through local and national investment to promote this industry in the area.

Lough Derg and the River Shannon are key assets to Portumna town and surrounding area. The Lakelands and Inland Waterways area occupies much of central Ireland including the principal waterways or the Shannon and Erne catchments, together with a 30 mile corridor on either side. Key lakes include Upper and Lower Lough Erne, the Cavan and Monaghan Lakelands, Westmeath Lakes, Lough Allen, Lough Key, Lough Ree and Lough Derg.

Nationally, the 'Hidden Heartlands' marketing campaign by Failte Ireland and Discover Ireland encompasses a number of counties including Galway. Ireland's Hidden Heartlands including the River Shannon and Portumna places greater emphasis on the inherent beauty of the inland countryside, where activity and relaxation co-exist with the rural communities and their lifestyles. It provides linkages between key destinations and attractions, showcasing scenery and unique culture, providing easy access to walking and cycling routes.

Places of interest in and around Portumna include its Castle, Abbey, the historic Workhouse and Forest Park, the River Shannon and Lough Derg Lakelands. Portumna Castle is an important seventeenth century house and the ground floor heritage museum and gardens are now open to the public. The priory is also a notable building of interest. The Irish Workhouse Centre in Portumna affords the public a real insight into life in Ireland in the latter part of the 19th Century and early stages of the 20th Century as all seven workhouse buildings are intact and also open to the public.

Portumna Forest Park contains four looped trails which are dual use for both cycling and walking including the Forest Friendly Trail (1.4km), The Woodland Trail (2km), the Rinmaher and Bonaveen trails are longer loops (10 km each approximately), extending to the outer areas of the Park. Bike rental is also available in the town. Hymany way, a charming walking trail from Portumna arches onwards to Ballinasloe before terminating at Ballygar. The trail traverses beautiful terrain and watercourses, including the biodiversity, habitats and birdlife of the Shannon River.

Portumna Golf Club is idyllically situated within the tranquil environs of Portumna Forest Park. Portumna Quay which is accessed by Church Road is a popular bathing and picnic area especially during the summer months. Furthermore, Waterways Ireland identified tourism opportunities in respect to harbour developments in the town. The plan aims to work with key stakeholders to promote and develop the 'tourist attractiveness' of the town, through the development of a marketing and tourist strategy for the Town.

## **9.4 Services and Infrastructure**

### **9.4.1 Water Services**

Portumna town and surrounding rural area receives its water supply from Lough Derg. The abstracted water is treated prior to consumption at the local treatment plant.

## **9.4.2 Wastewater Disposal**

The town is served by a municipal wastewater treatment system. There is capacity within the network to accommodate development that is envisaged to take place.

## **9.4.3 Transportation Infrastructure and Movement**

Portumna is served by a good network of public road that converge in the town including the N65 national secondary road, the R352 Scarriff road, the R355 Ballinasloe road and the heavily trafficked local road the L-4313-0.

Public transport in Portumna is limited to bus services, consisting predominantly of local and private services which play a vital role in connecting Portumna and its environs to Galway City, Loughrea and Birr.

The walking network in Portumna is comprised of existing footpaths adjoining public roads and there are a number of amenity pedestrian and cycling loops within the nearby forest. Portumna Forest Park contains four looped trails which are dual use for both cycling and walking including two short and two longer walks each approximately 10 km, extending to the outer areas of the Park.

## **9.5 Flooding**

With respect to lands within the village that are liable to flood risk, the Council will require any proposed developments to comply with 'The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities (DEHLG, 2009) and Circular PL2/2014 and any amendment thereof. The Council, having regard to the nature and scope of development, may require the submission of Flood Risk Assessments, as appropriate, to assess the suitability of development proposals. There is a flood map identified for Portumna and it is in accordance with the guidelines and circular referenced above.



## Land use Zoning Policy Objectives for Portumna (Portumna Small Growth Town – PSGT)

### **PSGT 1 Sustainable Town Centre**

Promote the development of Portumna, as an intensive, high quality, well landscaped, human-scaled and accessible environment, with an appropriate mix of uses, including residential, commercial, service, tourism, enterprise, public and community uses as appropriate, that provide a range of retail services, facilities and amenities to the local community and visitors. The town centre and associated main street shall remain the primary focus for retail and service activity within these plan areas.

### **PSGT 2 Sustainable Residential Communities**

Promote the development of appropriate and serviced lands to provide for high quality, well laid out and well landscaped sustainable residential communities with an appropriate mix of housing types and densities, together with complementary land uses such as community facilities, local services and public transport facilities, to serve the residential population of Portumna settlement plan. Protect existing residential amenities and facilitate compatible and appropriately designed new infill development, in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the plan area. Specifically encourage living over the shop which can contribute to the vitality of the core and extend activity beyond business hours.

### **PSGT 3 Community Facilities and Services**

To encourage and support the expansion and development of existing facilities and services to meet the needs of the local community.

### **PSGT 4 Business & Enterprise**

To facilitate the expansion of businesses and enterprises uses in the plan area of Portumna where appropriate and to facilitate the provision of further local employment opportunities in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

### **PSGT 5 Industrial**

Promote the expansion where appropriate of industrial and industrial related uses, including manufacturing, processing of materials, warehousing and distribution on suitable lands, with adequate services and facilities and a high level of access to the major road networks and

public transport facilities. Adequate edge treatment and/or screening will be required to ensure high quality interfaces with public spaces and any adjoining residential areas or other sensitive land uses, as appropriate.

#### **PSGT 6                      Tourism Development**

- a) Promote and facilitate the further development of Portumna as a key tourist destination for the benefit of the town and its surrounding areas.
- b) Encourage the appropriate redevelopment of the Hotel Site (Former Shannon Oaks Hotel).
- c) To support and facilitate in co-operation with relevant bodies and landowners, the provision of tourism amenity routes around the town.
- d) Encourage and assist the development of the sustainable tourism potential within Portumna in a manner that respects, builds on, protects and enhances the cultural, built, architectural, archaeological and heritage significance of the town including natural heritage and biodiversity, and its local amenities.

#### **PSGT 7                      Public Infrastructure**

Support and encourage infrastructural development and improvement works that benefit Portumna as an SGT and the wider Region.

#### **PSGT 8                      Pedestrian and Cycle Network**

Encourage and support the development of a series of pedestrian and cycle routes linking the residential areas to the town centre and local community services, where feasible.

#### **PSGT 9                      Opportunity Sites**

Encourage the appropriate redevelopment of the Opportunity Sites identified in the plan and the refurbishment and reuse of the historical residential and retail element of the character of Portumna which will contribute to the vitality and character of Portumna.

## **OPT-PU1 Portumna - Mill Building to the east of Town Centre area**

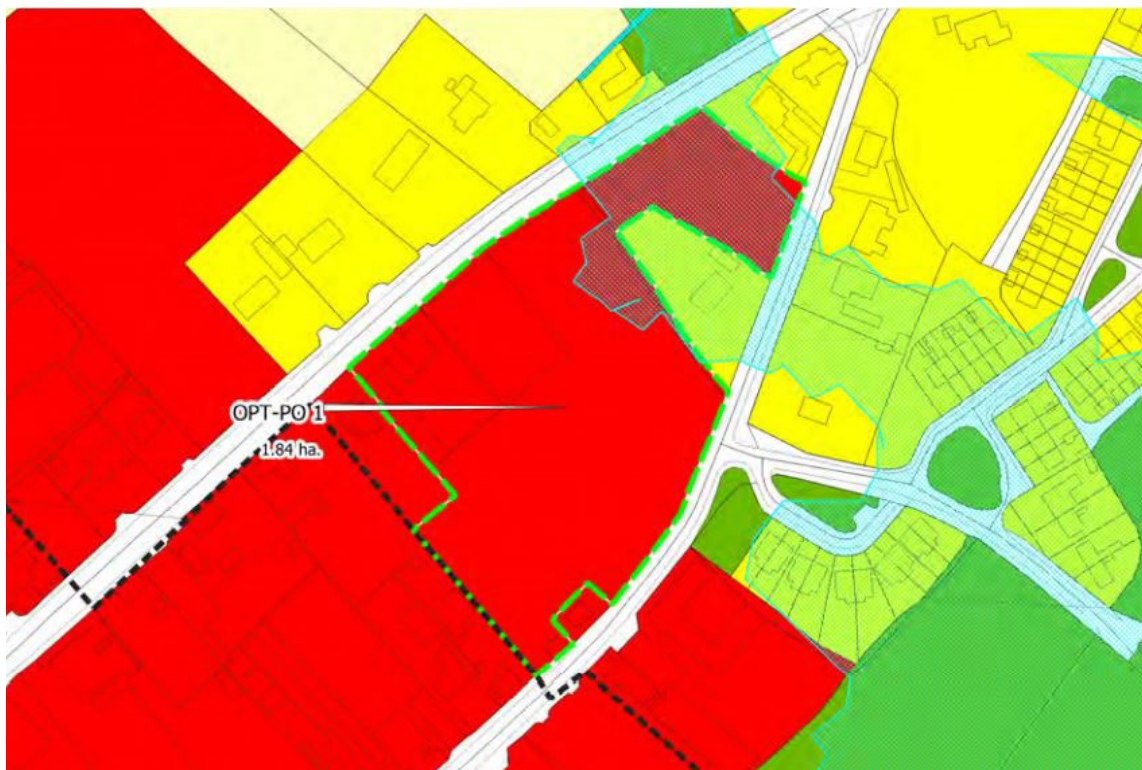
**Brief Description:** Large fairly level field to the east of Town Centre lands with large disused and unsightly warehouses to north-western part of plot. There is a derelict dwelling with an overgrown plait to both the eastern and the south-western corner of the field. Mix of low stone wall /sod and clay ditch with trees along northern roadside boundary as well as some palisade fencing along roadside boundary of cottage to east of site.

**Area:** The site area measures circa 1.84

**Zoning:** The site is zoned Town Centre.

**Current Land-Use:** The predominant use of this site is fallow agricultural land with disused buildings and two derelict /disused dwellings.

**Opportunity:** To provide for a mix of uses capable of accommodating tourism, residential, commercial or a mixed-use development. The overall development proposal for the site may include a detailed design statement.



**OPT – PU2 Portumna – Saint Bridget’s Church (old) and adjoining convent property and grounds, St. Bridge’s Avenue.**

**Brief Description:** Freestanding T-plan Gothic Revival Roman Catholic church, built c.1825, with three-bay nave and wide single-bay transepts with gabled porches to east sides. Three-bay wide, one-bay deep and two-storey porch to front, topped by square-plan tower drum.

**Area:** The site area measures circa 0.58ha.

**Zoning:** The site is zoned Community facilities.

**Current Land-Use:** Roman Catholic church converted to parish hall which is currently disused and vacant. Former convent to west disused also.

**Opportunity:** To provide for a mix of uses capable of accommodating tourism, residential, community uses, commercial or a mixed-use development.



### **OPT – PU3- Portumna - Abbey Street, Shannon Road - Derelict dwellings and Warehouse.**

**Brief Description:** Property 1 on Abbey Street, Shannon Road is an end-of-terrace three-bay two-storey house, built c.1880, with attic and having shopfront to front (north) elevation and two-storey addition to rear. Range of outbuildings to yard to south, forming road boundary.

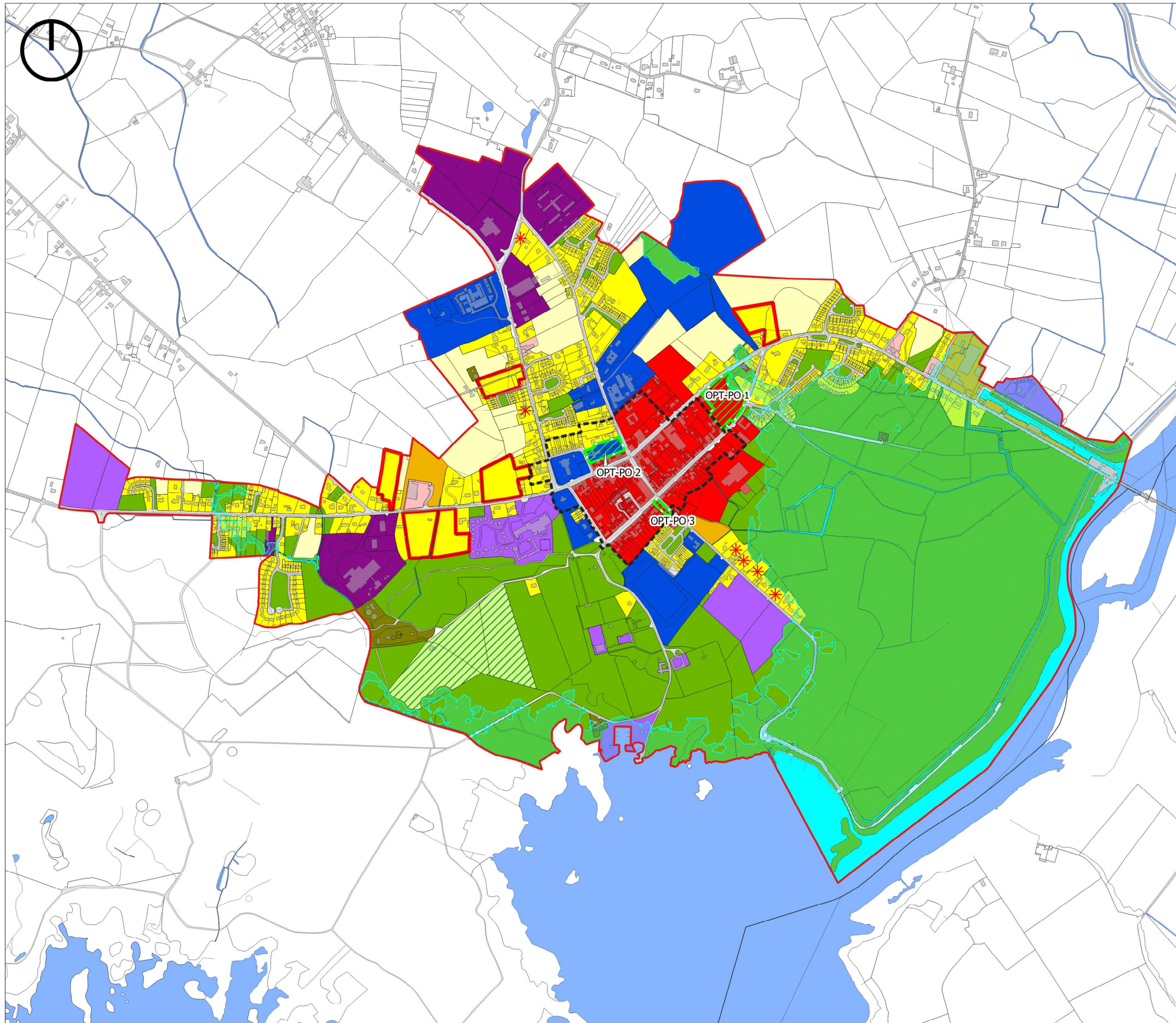
**Area:** The site area measures circa 0.12hectares.

**Zoning:** The site is zoned Town Centre.

**Current Land-Use:** Vacant – previous use as residential and retail.

**Opportunity:** To provide for a mix of uses capable of accommodating tourism, residential, commercial or a mixed-use development.

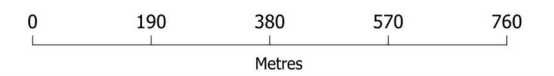




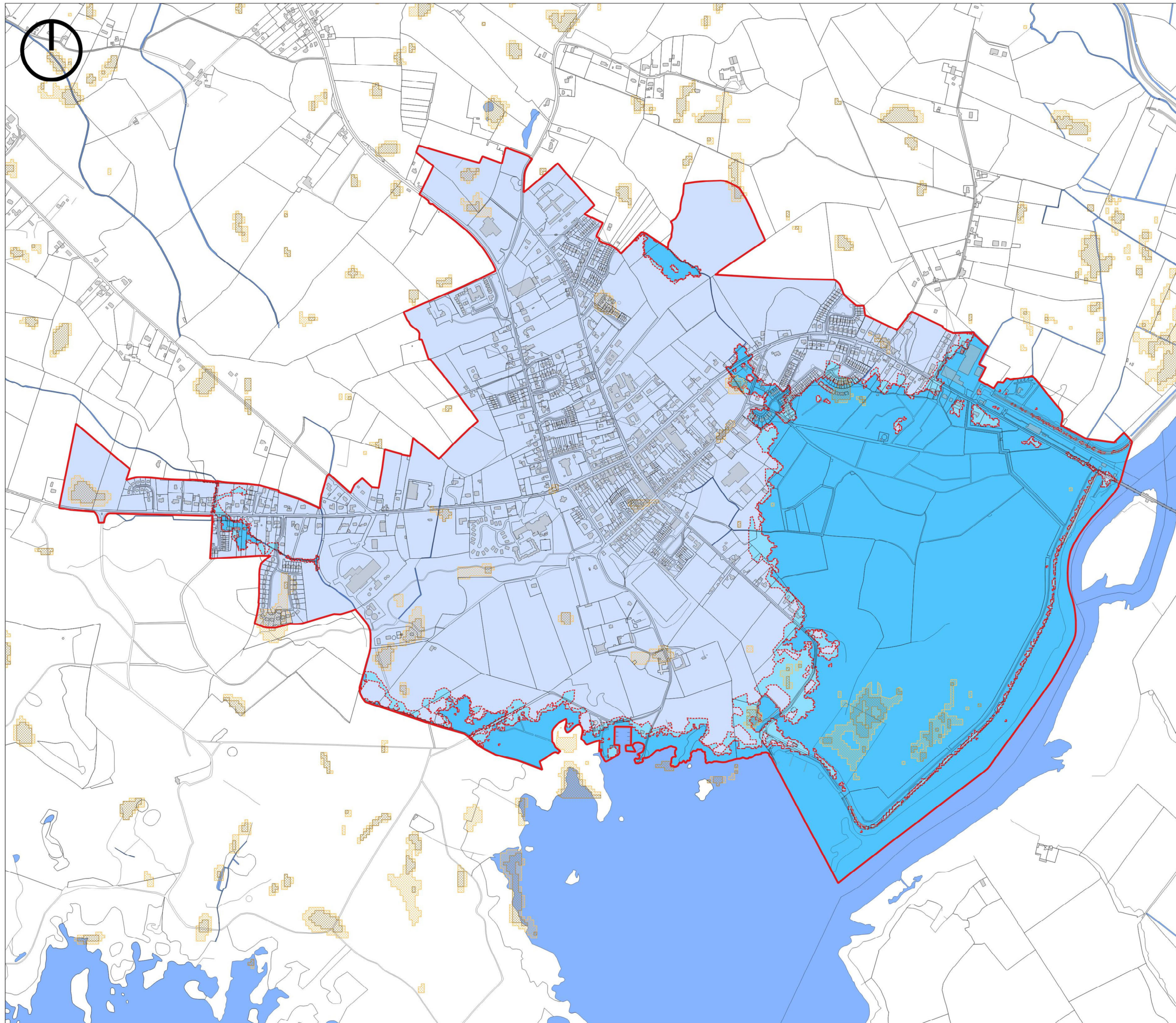
-  Settlement Boundary
-  R - Residential Existing
-  R - Residential (Phase 1)
-  R - Residential (Phase 2)
-  R - Residential Infill
-  C1 - Town Centre
-  C2 - Commercial/Mixed Use
-  BE - Business & Enterprise
-  T - Tourism
-  I - Industrial
-  CF - Community Facilities
-  PU - Public Utility
-  OS - Open Space/Recreation & Amenity
-  A - Agriculture
-  TI - Transport Infrastructure
-  Water/Rivers/Streams
-  Constrained Land Use
-  Architectural Conservation Area
-  Opportunity Site

**Galway County Development Plan  
2022-2028**

**Small Growth Town  
Portumna  
Land Use Zoning Map**



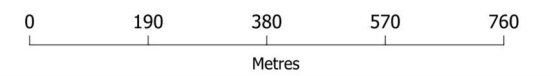
**Comhairle Chontae na Gaillimhe  
Galway County Council**



- Settlement Boundary
- Indicative Flood Zone A
- Indicative Flood Zone B
- Indicative Flood Zone C
- PFRA Pluvial Indicative
- PFRA Pluvial Extreme
- Water

**Galway County Development Plan  
2022-2028**

**Small Growth Town  
Portumna  
Flood Risk Management**



**Comhairle Chontae na Gaillimhe  
Galway County Council**

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