

Galway County Council,  
County Buildings,  
Prospect Hill,  
Galway

10<sup>th</sup> September 2020

RE. **GALWAY COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN SUBMISSION**

A Chara,

Please see submission below relating the Galway County Development Plan Issue Paper Consultation.

### **Protecting and Enhancing Architectural Conservation Areas in County Galway**

- Provide educational and informational campaigns and workshops for owners of buildings in Architectural Conservation Areas (ACA) in the County.
- Introduce grant schemes for refurbishment works to buildings (prioritising owner occupied residential properties) in ACA, particularly window and door replacement and repair as inappropriate replacements are eroding the character of many ACAs.
- Facilitate radon testing scheme in ACAs and grant supports where remedial works are required
- A good understanding of context and character is important for any new interventions or developments within ACAs. These should be designed by appropriately qualified professionals skilled in design, e.g. Registered Architects.
- Historic mapping indicates the former rich network of clachans throughout the county. Many of these have been lost but there are some townlands where there the historic clachans are still legible, notwithstanding more recent development. There are also many smaller villages, crossroads and farmyard complexes of built heritage value which could be lost through inappropriate new development or demolitions. Should some of these clachans and smaller groups of buildings be designated as ACAs.



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## **Our towns and villages**

- Promote the establishment of town and village teams – combining local authority staff, community and business representatives
- Many of the residents in town and village centres are older, with increasing numbers of buildings becoming vacant.
- Identify the centre / core area for all settlements including 'other settlements', where opportunity for village / streetscape should be a requirement for new interventions. During the life of the current development plan, permission has been granted for one off detached houses in the centre of a number of settlements in the County. These detached houses on key, central sites are lost opportunities where more appropriate forms of development could have contributed to a sense of place, village streetscape (instead of road) and reinforced the character of the smaller settlements in the County for generations to come. In addition, slightly denser cores to these settlements increase the viability of more sustainable transport options.
- Might a Village Design Guide for the County help protect and ensure new development contributes to attractive settlements / village centres, particularly the smaller, lower tier settlements.
- Public realm plans are required in many towns and villages, with integrated mobility plans. Multi-disciplinary teams required to maximise the potential of towns and villages – avoid engineering only design responses / solutions.
- Greater focus should be placed on potential of villages and towns with sufficient infrastructure, particularly sewerage and water capacity.
- Where public sewerage cannot be prioritised for a settlement, should the council invite partnership proposals from private entities to deliver wastewater treatment systems in our towns and villages.
- More robust control, management or bond arrangements should be considered to allow appropriate development serviced by private communal wastewater systems to be accommodated in the smaller towns and villages in the County where there are deficiencies in public wastewater networks presently.

## **Ensuring new developments truly protect biodiversity**

- Significant emphasis is placed on environmental and ecological assessment and screening of new developments – assessing impact and determining appropriate mitigation when necessary. New development can contribute much more positively to biodiversity through appropriate design focusing on biodiversity enhancement.

- Galway County Council could adopt a Green Factor / Biotope Area Factor requirement as part of the Development Management Standards to mitigate the effects of new developments by maintaining sufficient levels of green infrastructure while enhancing the quality of the remaining vegetation.
- Green factor methods have been successfully used in cities such as Berlin, Seattle, Toronto, Malmö and Helsinki as an important tool for maintaining and increasing the ecological, environmental and social advantages of green structures and infrastructure. The environmental and climate benefits are in addition to enhanced wellbeing benefits of green spaces (or elements of buildings).
- Please see attached information note relating to Biotope Area Factor prepared by Architects Declare Ireland.

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you require any additional information.

Yours faithfully,



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Helena McElmeel

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