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Response to the Galway CDP 2022-2028 Pre-draft Issues Paper

In addition to my own thoughts on the Issues paper, I have referenced the following documents in thinking about some of the questions posed:-

- The Program for Government (while not a legal requirement at this point, some commitments are likely to be relevant before the new GCDP comes into effect and should therefore be accounted for where possible e.g. The *NDP* for the period to 2031 will be reviewed and likely updated before 2022 and will be aligned with the *NPF*).
- The Galway County Climate Adaptation (and mitigation) Draft Strategy
- The Galway City Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan
- Smarter Travel – a Sustainable Transport Future
- The Galway CDP 2015-2021

1. Core Strategy and Housing

- How best can the County Development Plan cater for the projected population growth in the County over the lifetime of the plan?
By taking a holistic approach to housing, transport, water/wastewater, communications, education and health infrastructure, commercial and retail location, passive and active amenity space.
- Where should the increase in population within the County be directed?
Population growth should be directed at existing towns and villages with a focus on the Gateways of Galway Metropolitan Area and Tuam plus Ballinasloe followed by the larger towns (Gort, Athenry, Clifden etc),
- Development land is a limited valuable resource. How best do we maximise the development of appropriate land to create sustainable communities?
Development should be tightly centred on existing towns and villages including reuse of vacant, derelict or under-used brownfield and infill sites (expand and build on the Living Cities Initiative), living-over-the-shop etc and at a density commensurate with the type of settlement e.g. typically 2 storey in villages, 2-3 storey in large villages, 2-4 storey in towns. A masterplan for each settlement should ensure that necessary infrastructure is allowed for and, provided in tandem with development. Work with the LDA and other stakeholders to develop masterplans for strategic sites owned by the state.
- How can Council policy protect areas within the County currently under severe pressure for one-off dwellings?
Permission for one-off dwellings outside a village or town or recognised settlement envelope should be severely constrained e.g. no new single septic tanks or package waste systems, significant service contribution fees. Conversely, building within a settlement envelope should be encouraged both financially and by exercising CPO powers to buy land within the envelope for a mixture of one-off construction, developer-led units, social and affordable and housing-association units.
- Where in the County should population growth be directed to achieve balanced growth as per the RSES?
- The RSES and NPF requires delivery of at least 30% of all new housing in the county within the existing built up footprint of settlements with a population of over 1,500 (excluding the MASP area). Galway County is expected to grow by 25,000 in the period to 2026, so this equates to 8,000 people.

As there is also the objective to deliver up to 50% of new Galway city housing within the County MASP area, this could be up to a further 12,000. So 80% of growth should be directed at settlements greater than 1500 people.

- Is there a deficit in the provision of a particular type of housing that should be addressed eg. apartment, duplex etc?

Housing design should be required to be flexible (universally designed units) so that it can be easily repurposed as demographics change. Small, clustered, self-contained but separate-entrance units for older people and those with disabilities to remain in the community. Prioritise these as alternatives to long-term residential care (in line with the policy statement 'Housing Options for Our Ageing Population').

Note that the PfG will require the completion of Housing Need and Demand Assessments to inform the delivery of an appropriate mix of housing typologies to cater for the needs of disparate household types and sizes and avoid over-concentration of particular housing types in areas.

- What contributes to an attractive residential environment?

Good building design, quality materials and finishes for buildings and infrastructure, less hard surfacing, minimise shadowing/maximise daylight, green environment (inc more trees) with high biodiversity value as well as amenity value (structured and unstructured play areas). Minimal traffic interactions and maximum pedestrian and cycle-friendly measures.

- How can the plan best address increased residential densities?

Ensure most development is in towns/villages. Mix of unit types including larger (but flexible design) apartments (3-4 beds) in blocks in town centres while ensuring adequate open space and communal movement areas. Traditional 2-storey terraces.

- How should social housing be delivered and do we have the right balance between social and private housing?

Much more use of Housing Associations should be made in the provision of social and rental housing as it is in the UK for example. This has a shared responsibility model with tenants taking turns to serve on the maintenance committees and transparent, inclusive and democratic processes for running property portfolios.

2. Urban Living and Placemaking

- How can the plan support the delivery of a robust MASP?
- Claregalway, Barna, Oranmore, Garraun and Briarhill are in the MASP and in the County area. The NPF has the objective to deliver up to 50% of new Galway city housing within this area i.e. some 12,000 people. There needs to be a comprehensive, detailed and sustainable masterplan for the County areas in the MASP, in conjunction with Galway City (this is an expanded version of MASP policy objective 1b). The plan should be in line with other relevant MASP policy objectives e.g.
- Support the delivery of more compact residential-led mixed urban communities of appropriate scale and density with associated infrastructure.
- Support the growth of the GMA to sustain adjoining county rural areas by providing an increased concentrated employment base in the MASP area.
- Support the improvements in public transport as contained in the Galway Transport Strategy plus increased capacity on the Galway-Dublin rail line, including a dual track from Athlone to Galway.
- Support the development of a strategic cycleway network linking the periphery of the MASP area with Galway City and the Dublin-Clifden greenway.
- Support the provision of greenway infrastructure in the GMA.
- Encourage innovation and new enterprise in the area of renewable technologies.

- Support the delivery of the Galway East Main Drainage Wastewater Treatment Plant as a key growth enabler for the delivery of future development in the Galway Metropolitan Area (since Mutton Island is reaching capacity).
- Support the provision of childcare facilities in close proximity to existing and new residential and employment sites within the Galway Metropolitan Area.
- How can we make our urban places more attractive for people to live and work?
- The PfG has a number of commitments in this regard:-
 - A Town Centre First policy, modelled on the Scottish Government scheme and using the NPF as a template, utilising existing buildings and unused lands for new development and promote residential occupancy in rural towns and villages and using the Collaborative Town Centre Health Check (CTCHC) framework to gather data and lead actions.
 - The Town and Village Renewal Scheme will be expanded to bring vacant and derelict buildings back into use and promote residential occupancy
 - Seed capital will be provided to local authorities to provide serviced sites at cost in towns and villages, to allow individuals and families to build homes.
 - Engage with local communities to greatly expand urban tree planting and neighbourhood and community forests.
 - Look at how best to use the development levy and zoning/rezoning processes and planning permission conditions to enhance community gain
- What parts of the urban places (Metropolitan areas, Town and villages) are most suitable in your view for people to live and work?
- How can we make our urban places (Metropolitan areas, Towns and villages) more attractive and connected for pedestrians and cyclists?
Slow vehicular traffic - traffic islands, raised road surfaces (no kerb), digital speed warnings, narrower roads (and wider pavements, parking bays), crossings (cycle/pedestrian priority), segregated cycle lanes, localised cycle rental (i.e. not just in the cities), streetscapes permeable to pedestrians/cyclists (gaps in frontages, green corridors).
- Should we facilitate a better mix of employment and housing in our urban places?
Yes. Digital Hubs in all settlements to encourage remote working without sacrificing social interaction leading to isolation. Other low-impact/intensity employment within otherwise residential settings

3. Rural Place Making and the Countryside

- How should the countryside be enhanced through better design? [See below](#)
- How can the County Development Plan promote improvement in the quality of the built environment in rural areas?
 - Condition the retention of hedgerows and trees, including road-facing hedges and stone walls, and the planting of new trees in most planning permissions. Use the manual of house design developed by Galway Co Co (or as updated) as a guide. Require use of sympathetic and sustainable materials, forms and alignments including gable-end. Ensure compliance with NZEB regulations. Create ACA's in smaller settlements and publicise the protection afforded to all structures in ACA's e.g. with information boards in the ACA. Ensure that construction materials and standards adhere to UN Sustainable Development Goals, EU Green Deal objectives and national emissions targets. Prevent the proliferation of unauthorised signs and use standards for sympathetic signage in villages and settlements.
- How can the County Development Plan ensure that development is appropriate to its location?

Use the landscape assessment and the house design manual as a guide to form in different locations. Don't allow urban residential building types or layouts in rural areas or villages. Require retention of trees, hedgerows and additional planting for screening.

- How can rural housing be designed to a high standard? See above
- How can the new County Development Plan support development within the smaller settlements that do not have zoning plans?

Work with Irish Water to provide public settlement-level wastewater treatment plants. Provide serviced sites (Serviced Sites Fund) for affordable homes, incentivise Housing associations to build in these settlements. work with developers under Part V on affordable purchase and cost rental units as part of developments. build social housing, have a presumption of planning permission for houses within a set radius of a settlement centre (subject to water/wastewater infrastructure). Provide for adequate infrastructure e.g. lighting, pavements, traffic calming. Incentivize setup of services e.g. medical, shops, childcare

4. Economic, Enterprise, Tourism and Retail Development

- What are County Galway's strengths and weaknesses regarding future enterprise and employment growth?
Strengths - Medical Devices, IT, Tourism. Supported by 3rd Level colleges, arts & culture, landscape, biodiversity and air quality.
- How can the County Plan support inward investment and job creation in the County and where should it be directed?
- How can the Plan best support new and evolving work patterns which reduce the demand to travel to work, including e business and home-based activity?
Local IT hubs, broadband rollout, local childcare, reduce/remove planning and rates requirements for e-business/home/home-office working
- What areas of the County have the potential to become sustainable key tourism attractions?
Kilcornan Demesne (Clarinbridge) – built & natural heritage, outdoor activities, future arts & crafts hub. Slieve Aughty – heritage, outdoor activities.
- What areas within Galway have the potential to form part of the development of a comprehensive tourist trail within the County?
The PfG includes an aim to create a continuous walking route from Malin Head to Kinsale In consultation with communities along the Wild Atlantic Way and to continue developing an integrated national network of greenways to be used by commuters, students, leisure cyclists and tourists. The former would focus on the coastal areas while the latter has potential for the whole county.
- What policies should be introduced to further support town centre retailing and commercial activities that enhance the vitality and vibrancy of our town and village centres?
- How can the Plan policies help integrate enterprise land uses with other uses such as residential, transportation and tourism, etc?

5. Infrastructure and Transport

How can the plan support agencies in the provision of Water and Wastewater?

Allocate sites for water/wastewater plants. Protect potential pipe routes from development. Prevent proliferation of one-off rural developments to reduce need for extended water networks and septic tanks.

- Are there significant factors leading to deterioration in the quality of groundwater or rivers and how can these be addressed?
- Agricultural runoff – reduce use of nitrates & phosphates (replace by natural versions e.g. clover) and increase standards for animal sheds/waste storage.

- Septic tanks and small package systems – ban use of non-public wastewater systems for developments, significantly reduce permissions for one-off housing outside settlements, increase checks and penalties on existing tanks and systems.
- Over-capacity inputs to wastewater plants – restrict development until Irish Water have upgraded plants.
- Soil runoff – plant trees in riparian zones. Prevent clearfelling of woodland.
- What towns and villages should be prioritised for water/wastewater improvements?
- How can the County Development Plan make sure that there is a better co-ordination between land use and transportation facilities in order to achieve more sustainable development?
Identify transport corridor hierarchy (road, rail, walk/cycle) with secondary corridors branching off primary ones and tertiary off secondary. Identify weaknesses in routes e.g. poor bus service, narrow road for cycling and rank accordingly. Prioritise development in settlements on higher ranked routes.
- How can the plan best promote walking, cycling and the use of public transport?
The Program for Government requires every local authority, with assistance from the NTA, to adopt a high-quality cycling policy, carry out an assessment of their roads network and develop cycle network plans, which will be implemented with the help of a suitably qualified Cycling Officer and a new Regional Cycle Design Office in Galway NRDO.

The plan should also dovetail with the NTA's park and ride implementation plan for Galway city (also in the PfG) integrating car parking facilities with public transport and cycling networks.

The plan should work with the Dept of Transport, schools, the Green-Schools programme, and local initiatives (including Cycle Bus and School Streets) to increase the number of children walking and cycling to primary and secondary schools (another PfG proposal).

In conjunction with service providers, reserve & implement QBC's, priority signalling for buses and increased Real Time Passenger Information (supported by the PfG)

- How can rural transport and accessibility be improved?
The Program for Government has committed to a Sustainable Rural Mobility Plan to introduce a public transport service standard under which all settlements over a certain size in terms of population, combined with employment or education places, will have a service connecting them to the national public transport system. Local Link will play a key role in this development and its operation and funding will be expanded to attract three times as many passenger journeys.
- How can the concept of "Smarter Travel" be incorporated into the plan to reduce dependence on the private car?
Draw on the experience of Dungarvan and Westport Smarter Travel implementations. Allocate parking areas for both Park & Ride and Park & Stride for schools. Make Smarter Travel planning and infrastructure a requirement for all LAP's, masterplans and major planning applications, Create 30kph zones. Create more Active Travel Towns plans as in Oranmore and Loughrea.
- Should parking standards for new developments reflect the need to reduce car dependency? **Yes**
- How can the safety of vulnerable road users (cyclists/ pedestrians) be improved?
Segregated walking/cycling lanes, slow vehicular traffic (traffic islands, raised road surface, digital signs, lane narrowing etc), remove traffic from certain streets, increase road crossing priority for pedestrians/cyclists, better signage and marking (using resources in the PfG - 10% of the total transport capital budget is committed for cycling projects and 10% of the total capital budget for pedestrian infrastructure).

6. Environment, Renewable Energies and Communications

- What are the main environmental issues that currently face Galway?

Climate change manifested as increased storms & flooding and reduction in biodiversity. Water pollution, both surface and groundwater, from agriculture, septic tanks and over-capacity inputs to wastewater plants. Non-recyclable waste and dumping,

- What additional measures should be taken to protect the environment?
Build the principles of the *EU Biodiversity Strategy into the plan as appropriate.*
Adopt the new National Pollinator Plan when published and continue to promote and protect biodiversity. Strengthen protection (including enforcement) of hedgerows, native woodland, and wetlands including peatlands.
Adopt the new National Invasive Species Management Plan when published
Reduce the use of pesticides in public areas.
- How can the County Development Plan address matters such as adaptation to climate change?
The Galway County Climate Mitigation policy should act as the template for this e.g. Design Checklist and Guidance Document for new developments to take account of climate change over the lifetime of a development, especially with regard to location, site layout, buildings, ventilation and cooling, drainage, water, outdoor spaces and connectivity.
Use future flood risk projections to control infrastructure and building location & design.
Ensure robust site-specific Flood Risk Assessments prepared for new infrastructure and buildings.
Ensure urban storm water drainage systems for new developments account for potential future impacts of climate change in their designs, i.e. increased intense rainfall events and include SUDS.
Develop an Integrated Coastal Zone Management Plan for County Galway to restrict development in coastal erosion zones and require ecosystem-based adaptation actions.
Identify and promote nature-based solutions e.g. reduce the urban heat effect through tree planting, Reduce habitat fragmentation & strengthen habitat networks, reduce hard surface areas, plant species to increase food sources and habitats for pollinators.
- What methods should the Council encourage to maximise renewable energy provision, both for developments and individual homes?
Work with SEIA to expand and incentive micro-generation at individual and community level. Increase PV panel area which doesn't require planning permission including PV on ground. Identify potential Sustainable Energy Communities (the PFG commits to Increasing the target for these). Support the National Retrofitting Plan as part of the NEP.
- Where should wind turbines be encouraged / discouraged?
Should be encouraged offshore.
- What should the Council be doing to promote bio-energy production from waste streams, agri-food effluents, manures, municipal solid waste, sewage sludge and purpose grown energy crops?
Identify sites for bio-energy plants, setup bioenergy plants in conjunction with irish water and waste contractors using municipal waste/sewage sludge. Support local community bioenergy initiatives.
- How can the plan support the provision of telecommunications & broadband providers?

7. Architectural and Archaeological Heritage

- Is the existing level of protection for Galway's Protected Structures, ACAs and archaeology adequate? How can it be improved?
Include tree protection in ACA's. Put information boards in ACA's to inform community on protection offered (to encourage responsible change and reporting of unauthorised change). Better maintenance funding and rates relief for owners of protected structures.
- How can the new County Development Plan promote awareness of the County's past which includes Protected Structures, ACA's and archaeology?

Signage by co co, guidelines and support for signage by community/owners and easy permit process. Website and extensive network of simple QR codes signage for link to websites (public and private) and apps. Guidelines for developments in ACA's and for protected Structures

- How can the new County Plan facilitate modern living standards and conveniences in some of our older buildings that are Protected Structures located in Conservation Areas?
- Can you name any parts of County Galway that you would like to see becoming a designated ACA?
- Can you identify any older buildings that you are aware of that are worthy of protection?
- How can we secure the protection of our archaeological features including landscapes into the future?

Row of 19th c cottages at Tarramuid (Clarinbridge), 3 x 19c cottages in Slieveaun (Clarinbridge)
Include archaeological features in the landscape assessment. Promote awareness of existing protected features and their adoption by the community. Promote awareness of how to identify new features.

8. Social, Community and Cultural Development

- Are you satisfied with the provision of community and cultural facilities in your area? What kind of community facilities would you like to see provided for in the new County Development Plan?
Provide drinking water fountains with Irish Water as per the scheme envisaged in the PfG.
- Do you think that schools and childcare facilities should be co-located? Yes
- What type of facilities in your view would be required in County Galway to support existing communities? Apart from sport there is a dearth of facilities in rural areas for teenagers.
- How can the multi-use of existing community buildings and facilities in your area be facilitated and encouraged?
Financial aid for improved changing and toilet facilities, retractable seating, electric, lighting and heating (including heat loss) upgrades.
- What type of cultural and arts facilities are needed in County Galway and how can the new county development plan deliver these?
- Affordable workspaces for artists and other creative practitioners are required. Other countries have 'meanwhile use' legislation for vacant buildings.
- Existing cultural spaces should have to be taken into account when building is taking place ('Agent of Change' initiative).

9. The Galway Gaeltacht

How can we manage our cultural resources to ensure that the Gaeltacht economies and communities prosper in a sustainable manner?

How do you think that the Plan can support the Gaeltacht area?

10. Natural Heritage, Landscape and Green Infrastructure

- How can the new County Plan protect and enhance Galway's existing natural heritage and biodiversity?
New development should be surrounded by hedgerow to reinstate sections lost during construction and to continue the ecological corridor effect (as per 2015 Landscape character plan).

- How can the new County Development Plan tailor its policies and objectives in a manner that will continue to protect the natural heritage including landscape while supporting sustainable development?
Protect Landscape views by - Scattered development which cannot be screened by forestry should be of natural stone or render with colour finish to be sympathetic to the colours of the existing landscape. Advantage is to be taken of natural hollows in the existing landform and existing vegetation in order to site development with minimal visual impacts. Developments are to be located close to existing settlements (as per 2015 Landscape character plan).
- Are there any pieces of GI that you are aware of in County Galway that could be developed further to benefit the community? **Kilcornan Wood**
- How can the existing GI in County Galway be improved?
The Galway County Climate Mitigation draft policy contains many useful objectives in this regard e.g. Introduce a tree management policy with a view to (a) improving tree management to create a safer, healthier tree population. (b) Implementing a proactive, planned programme of maintenance. (c) Recognising the value of existing trees as well as planning for an increase in tree population. Promote green infrastructure, such as living roofs and walls in appropriate locations. Automatically protect all trees in ACA's by requiring planning permission for any work to them. Implement Tree Preservation Orders on a countywide basis.
Promote green infrastructure and sustainable design in the built environment to help nature to adapt to climate change by strengthening habitat networks, reducing habitat fragmentation and providing opportunities for species to migrate.

11. Agriculture, Fishing Marine and Forestry

- How can the Council support sustainable means of agriculture fishing and forestry related activities?
Support Investment in harbour and associated transport infrastructure to attract increased landings of local and sustainably caught fish, to aid the development of the blue economy in coastal communities.
- How can the County Development Plan support and encourage the development of the agri-food and related sectors?
- How can the new County Development Plan encourage the use of land for afforestation where appropriate?
Make change of use to (native broad-leaved) forestry easier including on Coillte/Bord na Móna land. Promote Close to Nature continuous cover forestry systems to create permanent biodiverse forests containing trees of all ages.
Support farm forestry/rewilding options including incentivising small-scale (e.g. one hectare) forestry/rewilding.
Identify suitable landscapes for afforestation as part of the Landscape assessment.
- Can you identify areas within County Galway that you would consider appropriate land for afforestation?
Most of East Galway, the riparian zone along rivers. The Climate Action Regional Office has been tasked by the PfG to work with public bodies to review land available for planting and provide feedback by the end of 2020.
- How can the new County Development Plan manage County Galway's maritime resources ensuring a balance is maintained between social, economic and environmental issues?
Support, in conjunction with PfG commitments, the development of the marine sector for renewable energy (wind, wave, tidal) which has the potential to make Galway a leader in this sphere and the introduction of Marine Protection Areas to help realise carbon sink potential.
Align with the proposed marine spatial planning policy and National Marine Planning Framework as envisaged in the PfG.