

Uimhir Thagarta Uathúil: GLWC-C2-30

Údar: Eugene McKeown

Stádas: Submitted

Aighneacht:

Protection of the unique soundscape on the riverside walk

Comhairliúchán:

Dréachtphlean Forbartha Chathair na Gaillimhe 2023-2029

Chapter 5: Natural Heritage, Recreation and Amenity

Caibidil: Imleabhar 1 » Caibidil 5: Oidhreacht Nádúrtha, Áineas agus

T...

Galway City Council - Draft City Development Plan - 2023-2029

I wish to make a submission in relation to the Draft City Development Plan. My submission relates in particular to the riverside walkway connecting the Wolf Tone Bridge and the Salmon Weir Bridge and onwards to Riverside.

BACKGROUND

Draft Galway City Development Plan

The draft Galway City Development Plan (dGCDP) includes a specific policy (Policy 9.6.2 Air Quality and Noise) with the expressed purpose of controlling noise to :

'Ensure the design of development incorporates measures to minimise noise levels in their design and reduce the emission and intrusion of any noise or vibration which might adversely impact on amenities, in particular residential amenities where appropriate.'

The GCDP also includes a specific policy (Policy 5.1.1 Green Network) supporting an integrated green network policy. The policy objective includes sub-policies to:

- Support sustainable use and management of areas of ecological importance, parks and recreation amenity areas and facilities through an integrated green network policy approach in line with the Galway Recreation and Amenity Needs Study and where superseded by the Green Space Strategy, where it can be demonstrated that there will be no adverse impacts on the integrity of European sites;
- Support the Healthy Green Spaces initiative which seeks to improve the quality of green spaces in the city, to enhance climate change resilience, aesthetic value, biodiversity and improve public health and wellbeing;
- Retain, extend and enhance opportunities for recreation within the green network for all members of the community including people with disabilities.

The River Corrib and the city canal system are both recognised as important sites in the dGCDP. The City Council's *Recreation and Amenity Needs Study* and the *Northern and Western Assembly's Outdoor Recreation in the West Report 2014* recognises the potential of Galway's waterways in terms of recreation and amenity activities. The walkway is clearly indicated as part of the Green Network in Figure 5.1 of the draft Development Plan.

Figure 5.1 Green Network (extract)

Policy 5.3 Blue Spaces: Coast, Canals and Waterways includes the following sub-policies:

- Develop and enhance the recreational and amenity potential of the city's waterways and coastal area, while not compromising the ecological importance of these areas;
- Investigate the extensive water resource in the city with a view to exploring where public access and enjoyment can be improved and where potential sustainable uses and water based recreation can be developed to the benefit of the city, and have regard to ecological conservation and safety considerations.

The dGCDP includes a specific objective to investigate possible locations for the provision of municipal water based recreation infrastructure along the River Corrib and canal system.

National Planning Guidelines

Extra value is placed on areas with low sound levels, coined Quiet Areas, because they are deemed to be of environmental quality and to have a positive impact on quality of life.

'The Riverside Walkway'

The Riverside Walkway connecting the Wolf Tone and the Salmon Weir bridges is part of the designated Green Network and part of the Blue Spaces designated in the dGCDP. It is a particularly valuable city centre space because it is a 'quiet' space located in the heart of the city. The corridor along the river is unique among the cities in Ireland in that it is a city centre area where in spite of its proximity to two major traffic arteries it is possible to escape from the noise of the traffic. Quiet spaces such as this need to be preserved for the use of residents and visitors to the city.

At present there are virtually no industrial or commercial noise sources along this route, with the exception of traffic for short (20 m sections) adjacent to the bridges.

Protection of The Riverside Walkway amenity

Quietness is not silence and this is not a request for silence. Quiet is achieved on this Riverside Walkway by having the sound of flowing water dominate the soundscape. Located between the river on the West and the millrace on the East, the Riverside Walkway has a unique characteristic that is constantly changing but always providing a sense of wellbeing in the heart of the city.

The Riverside Walkway has 'physical' protection in the dGCDP in that it cannot be built on and will be maintained by the Parks Department. At present however there is no protection for the unique and special recreational value of the quiet space that exists along the Riverside Walkway. In the absence of specific noise control objectives, developments can be carried out individually or in combination which will gradually erode the unique recreational value of the soundscape that exists on The Riverside Walkway.

The dGCDP needs an objective that requires an adequate impact assessment of development led noise on the amenity. For too long items of mechanical plant are located 'at the back' of the development without consideration of the impact. The amenity has been degraded at one end by a restaurant exhaust fan and at the other by a hotel boiler,

thankfully the equipment does not run continuously but the impacts have never been properly assessed. An objective in the development plan would protect the amenity in the future.

Proposal for inclusion in the dGCDP:

That Galway City Council recognises the special aural character of the landscape and soundscape on The Riverside Walkway and adds the following Policy 5.3.21 Blue Spaces: Coast, Canals and Waterways:

Ensure the conservation of the special recreational value of the riverside walk from the Wolf Tone Bridge to the Salmon Weir Bridge and require that developments abutting the walkway do not have adverse impacts on the soundscape.

That Galway City Council recognises the soundscape of The Riverside Walkway as having special amenity value and interest and that it requires special protection. The enjoyment of the soundscape has the potential to be a key part of the experience of the city for the community and visitors. In order to achieve this Section 5.7.3 of the dGCDP to be retitled

5.7.3 Views and Areas of Special Amenity Value and Interest

and the following table be added to the dGCDP

Table 5.10: Protected Soundscape Amenities

Soundscape Amenities	
S1	The river and millrace soundscape from the Wolf Tone Bridge to the Salmon Weir Bridge

The inclusion of these elements in the dGCDP will not result in any prohibition of development but will require an appropriate level of evaluation by the developer and the planning department when determining planning conditions.

I sincerely hope you will consider this inclusion when adopting the plan.

Príomh-thuairim:

The riverside walk has a unique soundscape that creates a quiet space in the heart of the city and warrants protection in the development plan

Príomh-iarratais:

To include two specific objectives in the development plan to ensure proposed developments in the area carry out an assessment of potential impacts on the amenity value of the walkway.

Main reasons:

To protect an amenity that is unique to Galway

Documents Attached: Níl