

[Redacted -
personal
Information]
Galway

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11th April 2022

RE: Galway City Draft Development Plan 2023-2029

Dear planners for our future,

After the most recent report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, Mary Robinson put it most succinctly;

*“**Anybody** under 70 in our world today is going to suffer some kind of catastrophe as we go above 1.5 degrees up to two degrees [of global warming],”*

*“**Anybody** under 30 will live through, **if they are able to survive**, a catastrophic world. That was my take. So nothing distant about this. It’s awfully, awfully close.”*

.....

A catastrophic world. “IF” one is able to survive. The truly horrifying reality of this statement is worth pausing over.

.....

Irrespective of your views on our ability in Galway to influence the global future, Mary Robinson’s statement should be at the forefront of every planner and public representative’s mind in any and all decisions on our shared future. It should be at the top of each Agenda and read before each council meeting. Meaningful Climate Action simply has to be the primary consideration above all others when faced with difficult choices, and I do appreciate that there are many of these in your role. I hope that council members planning our future city environment can provide the strong leadership needed in this regard.

While you may or may not consider your decisions as having the ability to significantly impact this future, you do have the facility to at least say you tried. I urge you to do everything in your power to make Galway a model city for meaningful change in our approach to urban living, and specifically in relation to transport. Indeed, in the council’s own words I urge you *“to make Galway an exemplar of Smarter Travel in Ireland”*, an ambition which unfortunately we collectively in Galway are significantly and consistently failing to deliver on.

I am a resident of Galway City and I honestly value its potential. I welcome the opportunity to provide a submission on the Galway City Draft Development Plan 2023-2029 [hereafter *the Draft Plan*] and thank you for your time in considering the below.

I seek urgent action on any and all methods to improve **active travel & sustainable mobility**, discourage car use, reduce transport emissions and make the city a better place to live in.

I seek urgent action on any and all methods to provide for a **15-minute city**, which Galway's layout and scale particularly lends itself to, possibly more so than for any other city in Ireland.

Specifically, I request the following items from National, Regional and local policy documents are prioritised. My experiences and observations are included adjacent to *quoted text (in italics)* for consideration when finalising the Galway City Development Plan 2023-2029 [*the Final Plan*].

Stated Ambition of Galway City Council

Galway City Council's website, introducing the 2016 Galway Transport Strategy [GTS] (council's own text, with my emphasis in ***bold italics***) includes;

“Why we developed the GTS?”

Galway has a transport problem, due to its reliance on the private car, which has been influenced by the existing public transport network, limited cycling facilities, a large rural hinterland and being the key gateway in and out of Connemara..

Combined with this, it has a road and street network which is ill-suited to the high traffic flows currently prevalent are contributing to increased congestion and delay, affecting quality of life and impacting on the functionality of the City.

To address this, a fundamental shift is needed towards sustainable travel, reducing the dependency on the private car and taking action to make Galway more accessible and connected, enhancing quality of life within the City for all. We have an opportunity to work together to make Galway an exemplar of Smarter Travel in Ireland.

To address these problems, Galway City Council's strategic objectives for transport are:

- to promote and encourage sustainable transport***
- to manage the traffic in a way which maximises mobility and safe movement***
- to maintain and develop/upgrade Infrastructure”***

I do not accept that Galway City Council has prioritised this fundamental shift to date or in the Draft Plan. I believe it needs to improve significantly in this regard.

Walking

Simply put, I am constantly anxious about my children's safety in the non-pedestrianised streets of the City Centre. I worry for their safety on too narrow footpaths adjacent to the city's car-centric prioritisation; a car-centric culture that has led to unacceptable levels of double parking and parking on footpaths. I feel the pedestrian in Galway city is treated as a second class citizen as a result of strategic decisions favouring the car-centric culture. My experience as a pedestrian within the city **in no way** reflects the ambition for prioritising the pedestrian as set out in the Galway Public Realm Strategy (2019). That is my lived experience of the City Centre, and especially so at its western end.

I believe the city has so much more potential in being a child friendly city, and an altogether less stressful experience for parents bringing their children into the city, or indeed pedestrians of any age on any business. Specifically,

- Continuous footpaths are not mentioned in the Draft Plan. This is not acceptable if indeed the ambition is to "**maximise mobility and safe movement**" as outlined in the GTS and to provide this "**fundamental shift**" as expressed. As a pedestrian, one's experience throughout the city, but particularly at the northeastern end of William Street, from Quay Street to Spanish Arch and from Salthill village to the Prom are simply not acceptable. Our collective ambition needs to be better than "beg buttons"/pedestrian lights at these locations particularly. I have personal experience of my toddlers buggy being **reversed** into at the Salthill to Prom pedestrian crossing (during a pedestrian green light) by an inattentive "car enthusiast". Thankfully my child was not injured and I will say no more on the matter. The design here and in other areas of the city needs to be **radically** updated to completely change the cultural approach currently prioritising cars over pedestrians. Continuous raised footpaths and zebra crossings, with pedestrians being prioritised over car movements, need to be at the forefront of any ambition to improve safe movement.
- In line with The Northern and Western Regional Assembly REGIONAL SPATIAL AND ECONOMIC STRATEGY 2020-2032 recommendations in relation to walking I support the;

*"Provision of measures to **reduce traffic volumes in the city centre core, additional pedestrianisation and pedestrian priority, improvement of pedestrian facilities, in particular safe crossings, improvements to the public realm and use of universal design.**"*

- I do not accept any opposition to 30km/h zoning. I appreciate this is a separate decision being made by councillors but I do request an expansion of the ambition regarding "**Design for slower speeds within Local Streets (i.e. 10-30km/h)**" mentioned in the Draft Plan. This needs to extend beyond Local Streets as currently listed in Section 11.3 - General Development Standards and Guidelines.

- The Final Plan needs to deliver on the stated GTS “Key Aim” of Galway City Council to;

“reduce vehicular movement through the city centre, reduce vehicle speeds in the core city centre area, and to prioritise active modes (walking and cycling) and public transport in the city centre.....”

Including ***“the routing of traffic which currently passes through the centre to more suitable orbital routes around the core city centre area.”***

- I favour increased pedestrianisation of the City Centre in general, and particularly so Dominick St Upper, Middle Street, St Augustine St, Abbeygate Street Lower and Market Street.
- I also favour wider footpaths than the minimums listed in the Draft Plan, suitably segregated to negate the exceptionally poor parking habits and indeed the overall parking culture within the city. Unfortunately, I witness dangerous parking habits multiple times daily which I and my family must navigate. I can only imagine how hostile the environment is for wheelchair users or visually impaired citizens and visitors to the city. I encourage the reader to visit the account of @GalwayCityofCars¹ where a selection of these habits are chronicled daily. The person or people chronicling these unsafe practices are not personally known to me, but I appreciate their efforts and believe them to be passionate about improving pedestrian safety in the city. I include some recent examples from their feed in **Appendix A**. The prevalence of these examples speaks to the culture within the city and the scale of the problem. Solving it will require drastic design solutions and strong leadership.
- In line with the commitments of the Climate Action Plan 2021 (further referenced below) I favour removal of on-street parking on the streets mentioned above, but also generally within the city. In this regard the Final Plan needs to deliver on the stated GTS ambition that;

“the availability of on-street parking will be reduced, and access routes to off-street parking facilities will be rationalised and managed to minimise car circulation within the city centre. Parking measures will also need to aspire towards reducing and managing on-street parking on public transport routes outside the core city centre area.”

- I favour paid-for parking, facilitating a maximum period of 1 hours free parking, at the Salthill Prom to address the consistent abuse (by both advertisers and members of the public) of the free parking provided.

As an overarching comment on the city’s walkability, the benefits of Permeability do not have sufficient weight in the Draft Plan, nor does its promotion. I live adjacent to a busy pedestrian link providing access to local shops, schools, our local club, swimming pool, Salthill village and into the city. My family and I use this link multiple times daily. We also use Permeability solutions

¹ https://twitter.com/GalwayCityCars?ref_src=twsrc%5Egoogle%7Ctwcamp%5Eserp%7Ctwgr%5Eauthor

at Lenaboy Park, Oaklands/Monkfield and San Antonio Terrace. The presence of these links, and particularly the link adjacent to our house, have been a very significant factor in our decision to choose this neighborhood. These solutions provide links to quiet roads and consistently keep us from having to use our car. Permeability needs to be a central tenet of the Final Plan going forward to provide for safety, mobility, active travel and emission reductions in the suburbs. It is a relatively low cost solution but we experience those benefits daily, for at least part of our journeys.

The Northern and Western Regional Assembly REGIONAL SPATIAL AND ECONOMIC STRATEGY 2020-2032 recommendations in relation to walking also list the benefits of permeability;

- *“Improvements to permeability within suburban residential areas, improving the pedestrian networks and increasing connectivity and permeability within and to places of employment...”*

Cycling

Although I am a reasonably experienced cyclist I do not feel safe cycling in Galway.

I regularly question if I am doing the right thing in encouraging my child to cycle to school on our local roads. That is not a positive indication of a proper functioning, modern, responsible society with Active Travel goals. More weight is required than the stated *“promoting and encouraging”* the Safe Routes to School 2021 initiative. It is imperative that safe cycling routes to schools are developed and provided for. I also call for the following, some of which are extremely low cost solutions and have the potential to have hugely positive benefit-to-cost impacts;

- Increased Permeability as the central tenet of the 15-minute city plans;
- Pedestrian and cycleway gaps to be provided in all boundaries between housing estates to link quiet roads and encourage citizens to remain out of their cars;
- Widening of gaps in existing walls, where limitations are currently in place reducing permeability;
- Removal of all “kissing gates” from the city, not least to encourage the use of cargo bikes, a stated ambition of the Climate Action Plan 2021;
- Segregation of all existing cycle lanes from the road carriageway;
- Increase and improve provision of short-term bicycle parking facilities within the city;
- These should take the form of “Sheffield stands” as the most user-friendly and robust solution;
- Increase and improve provision of long-term bicycle parking facilities in sheltered, well-lit, off-street locations;
- Parking facilities should include for encouraging the use of cargo bikes, as put forward in the Climate Action Plan 2021;
- Provision for 2-way cycling on one-way streets, which is accepted as standard in other jurisdictions;

- Signage to inform other road users of cyclists rights in this regard.

In relation to section 11.3.1 (h) Cycle Parking Standards of the Draft Plan, I believe the following should be removed for the Final Plan, as it is not in keeping with the stated ambition of the GTS, or National/Regional goals;

“Any deviation from these standards shall be at the discretion of the planning authority and shall be justified with respect to factors such as location, quality of facilities proposed and flexibility for future enhancement.”

In addition to the above, I support the provision of a fully segregated, 2-way cycleway along the *Indicative Greenway Cycle Network* on the route shown within Map A attached to the Draft Plan.

I request the Final Plan is updated to include for a permanent Greenway along the indicated route, to match the ambition set out in various policy documents, including the Northern and Western Regional Assembly REGIONAL SPATIAL AND ECONOMIC STRATEGY 2020-2032. In this regard particularly we need leadership from our city planners and elected officials.

- “Provision of a core, secondary and feeder cycle network which includes segregated cycle routes, on-road cycle lanes and /or wide bus lanes to cater for both buses and cyclists along the same route.
- **Provision of a primary network of cycle routes comprising of two greenways connecting into the county settlements – the Oranmore to the City Centre and onwards to Bearna Greenway and City Centre to Oughterard Greenway.**
- Provision of additional primary routes including cross-city routes to the north of the city and some key north-south links.
- Develop a secondary cycle network that will comprise connections from residential areas and areas of employment to the primary network accessing key destinations.”

National Policy

The Draft Plan should be updated to include **Modal Targets** for Galway to contribute to the stated ambition of the Climate Action Plan 2021 (CAP21), calling for *“a significant cut in transport emissions by 2030 through measures including 500,000 extra walking, cycling and public transport journeys per day by 2030.”*

For all the reasons outlined in CAP21, *“embracing active travel (e.g. walking and cycling) can have improved health benefits, in addition to the positive environmental impact, while the shift to renewable fuel sources improves air quality.”*

In relation to the 15-minute city, CAP21 also supports and calls for improvements by; *“Specifically, promoting and supporting communities in which people can live and access most of their daily needs within a 15 -minute journey, mainly by sustainable modes (public transport, cycling and walking).”*

Galway in particular should be embracing this for environmental, tourism and quality of life benefits.

As outlined in CAP21 Chapter 15.3.1 Sustainable Mobility, the Draft Plan should further commit to;

“A significant increase in our walking and cycling investments”

and also Galway City Council taking a greater role in ***“promoting greater awareness of these improved walking, cycling and public transport options”*** and ***“encouraging cargo bicycle use”***

CAP21, Chapter 15.3.2 also commits that

“Planning policy will work to:

- ***Reduce demand for travel by car, travel distances, and journey times***
- ***Increase travel choices, reduce car dependency, and mitigate traffic congestion***
- ***Reduce air pollution and promote cleaner and more active modes of transport***
- ***Sustain economic and social activity at street level creating vibrant communities***
- ***Increase access to shops, employment, transport services, and local amenities”***

CAP21 also commits to the following, which should be further reflected in the Final Plan;

*“• Reallocating road space from the private car to **prioritise walking, cycling and public transport***

- ***Enhancing permeability for active travel***
- ***Delivering safer walking and cycling routes to encourage greater uptake of active transport***
- ***Encouraging lower speeds, employing stronger speed limit enforcement or in time, reviewing default speed limits***
- ***Reducing parking provision and/or increasing parking fees***
- ***Implementing low emission zones”***

I thank you for your time in reading this submission. I see the potential of Galway to be a fundamentally better, safer and environmentally friendly place to live and hope that you share my vision. I hope that my submission is considered in preparation of the Final Plan.

I wish you well in finalising the Development Plan and look forward to its implementation for our collective future.

Mise le meas,

John Brennan

Encl; Appendix A @GalwayCityofCars extracts

Appendix A

@GalwayCityofCars extracts from 3-day sample (April 8th - 11th, 2022)



GalwayCityOfCars
@GalwayCityCars

@ NewcastleRoad
one of the busiest junctions in
city

3:31 PM · Apr 8, 2022 · Twitter Web App

1 Quote Tweet

👍 🔄 ❤️ 📌

👤 Tweet your reply [Reply](#)

GalwayCityOfCars @GalwayCityCars · 10h

@ StHelensStreet
footpath parked





GalwayCityOfCars @GalwayCityCars · 10h



@ StHelensStreet
footpath parked



GalwayCityOfCars @GalwayCityCars · 10h

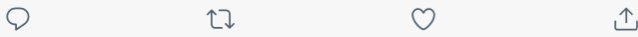


@ StMarysTerrace
thin pedestrians only



GalwayCityOfCars @GalwayCityCars · 10h

@Salthill
footpath parked

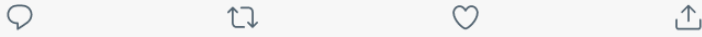


GalwayCityOfCars @GalwayCityCars · 10h

@Salthill
wannabe bus



GalwayCityOfCars @GalwayCityCars · 10h
@ NewcastleRoad



GalwayCityOfCars @GalwayCityCars · 10h
@ MiddleStreet
footpath parked



GalwayCityOfCars @GalwayCityCars · Apr 9

@ NewcastleRoad



GalwayCityOfCars @GalwayCityCars · Apr 9

@ NewcastleRoad



GalwayCityOfCars @GalwayCityCars · Apr 9
@Bohermore



GalwayCityOfCars @GalwayCityCars · Apr 9
@LoughAtaliaRoad



GalwayCityOfCars @GalwayCityCars · Apr 9

...

@ NewcastleRoad



GalwayCityOfCars @GalwayCityCars · Apr 9

...

@ Woodquay

clearway, double yellows

