

Notes on Joint Galway City and County Planning SPCs Meeting at 10:30am, 1st December 2023

(A hybrid meeting)

Galway County Council:	Cllr Mary Hoade, Chair -Planning SPC Cllr Donagh Mark Killilea, Cllr Michael (Moegie) Maher, Cllr Michael Connolly, Cllr Shelly Herterich Quinn, Cllr Dáithí Ó Cualáin (online)
County Galway PPN Reps:	Mark Green, (online)
Industry Rep:	Colm Ryan, MKO
In attendance:	Liam Hanrahan, Director of Services – Economic Development and Planning, Eileen Keaveney, Administrative Officer, Valerie Loughnane-Moran, Senior Planner, Helen Coleman, Senior Executive Planner (online)
Galway City Council:	Cllr Peter Keane, Chair - Planning SPC Cllr Niall McNelis (online), Cllr Codagh Higgins (online) Apologies from Cllr Frank Fahy and Cllr Imelda Byrne
GCCN Reps:	Derrick Hambleton, Brendan Mulligan
In attendance:	Uinsinn Finn, Acting Director of Infrastructure Development and Planning, Eoghan Lynch, Senior Planner, Helen Coleman, Senior Executive Planner, Colm O’Riordan, Senior Executive Engineer

Cllr Mary Hoade chaired the meeting.

1. Minutes of Meeting 8th November 2022

Cllr Michael (Moegie) Maher proposed their adoption, seconded by Cllr Michael Connolly.

2. Former Galway Airport site at An Carn Mór – Masterplan

Liam Hanrahan gave a presentation [see attached presentation circulated 04/12/2023] in which he outlined the history of the ownership of the site by the two local authorities. He said the economic downturn had delayed the development, as had Covid subsequently.

The company behind the proposed Film Studio development was going back to the market for funding.

The site is designated as a Key Employment Site in Chapter 5 of the County Development Plan. The County Council is engaged in developing a masterplan. There has been good engagement with the IDA which has agreed to become a strategic partner.

Philip Lee has been engaged, on the IDA’s recommendation, to advise on procurement. There will be a two-stage process to appoint consultants.

The Shannon Group has advised the first stage should concentrate on infrastructure to determine all services that are currently available and their adequacy and identify what infrastructure will be necessary and when.

In the second stage, potential uses for the site will be considered. This will require the engagement of both local authorities, the IDA and other national bodies. There has already been a significant number of expressions of interest. Dexcom had expressed an interest before deciding to locate in Athenry. Companies seeking to expand and logistics companies had expressed interest.

The next stage will be to appoint a consultant. A “proper Steering Group” will be appointed to work with the consultant.

Cllr Clodagh Higgins asked how long will the Masterplan process take and noted that a motion had been passed at a recent City Council meeting to set up a Steering Group. She asked when will this happen? She also mentioned the concern about the 6 concerts that are proposed for 2024.

Cllr Mary Hoade responded that the setting up of a Steering Groups will go before the next County Corporate Policy Group (CPG) meeting and then it will go before the Joint City & County CPG.

Liam Hanrahan responded that the anticipated timeline for the Masterplan is as follows:

- Appoint Consultant: Q1 of 2024
- Infrastructure Survey: Q2 of 2024
- Masterplan: Q4 2024/Q1 2025

Cllr Niall McNelis welcomed the proposal to set up a joint Steering Group. He enquired about the current use of the Airport by the Fire Service and whether that was in accordance with planning. He also inquired if it is intended to have a slip road off the motorway to service the site.

Cllr Donagh Killelea was of the opinion that Galway Co. Co. should take full ownership of the site. If it did, it could make faster progress. He also expressed concern that the IDA already have a large site at Oranmore and wondered what is wrong with that now. Why is the IDA showing an interest in the Airport site? He is of the opinion that no serious decision should be made in advance of the Masterplan and we should keep an open mind about potential uses. He welcomed the preparation of a Masterplan.

Liam Harahan replied that the short-term use by the Fire Service was in order – there has always been fire-fighting training at the Airport site.

The site has been designated as a Key Employment Site in Chapter 5 of the County Development Plan for innovation, Business Technology, and Aviation.

As regards a slip road off the motorway, whether that is needed or not will be clear from the infrastructure survey.

The IDA are offering strategic advice. It always wants to have 3-5 options to show potential investors and would like to have the Airport site as an option in the West Region.

Derrick Hambleton asked if Liam Hanrahan’s presentation could be circulated to SPC members. B. Mulligan asked for documents to be circulated in advance of meetings to enable an informed discussion at the meetings. Cllr Mary Hoade observed that it was the practice to circulate presentations immediately after the meetings. B. Mulligan again emphasised that if members had

the opportunity to read the presentations in advance it would facilitate informed discussion. Cllr Mary Hoade noted his point.

3. Galway Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy (GMATS) update

Uinsinn Finn said that the GTS is being reviewed taking into account the Climate Action Plan – the GMATS will replace the GTS. It is being driven by the NTA. It had been hoped to have a representative of the NTA at the meeting but this hadn't been possible.

Colm O'Riordan gave a presentation on the GMATS 2023-2043 [see attached presentation circulated 04/12/2023].

Galway BusConnects Dublin Road will be published before Christmas as will Galway CycleConnects.

Colm Ryan, MKO, asked what the sequence would be on completion of the GMATS body of work. Will there be Area Based Transport Assessments (ABTAs) for Garraun and other sites proposed for housing?

Cllr Michael Connolly observed that there was no reference to improving transport for people stuck in traffic. Will anything be done to improve the situation? What is the vision going forward in improving transport? The city is in jeopardy – people don't want to come into the city from his area [Ballinasloe] and rather go to Roscommon instead.

Colm O'Riordan replied that the GMATS will be incorporated into the Development Plan. The purpose is to improve transport and decongest the city.

Cllr Peter Keane said he is aware from the Department that a review is underway. He observed that An Bord Pleanála will not reconsider the Ring Road until the GTS is reviewed.

Uinsinn Finn said that the GMATS will be very important to inform other projects including;

- The Ring Road
- The Cross City Link and
- The Dublin Road BusConnects which will go before An Bord Pleanála in 2024

Transport is very important to future development. The GMATS will replace the GTS. He expects it will be completed next year. He doesn't know what An Bord Pleanála will do but it is advancing consideration of the Ring Road application.

4. Update on the County Galway Development Plan

Valerie Loughnane gave a comprehensive presentation on the County Development Plan which was adopted on the 20th June 2022. [See attached presentation circulated 04/12/2023].

The County Council is involved with the City Council on the GMATS and is coordinating with the City and Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) with respect to the Eastern Environs.

Cllr Michael Connolly asked what is Irish Water's strategy for delivery of water and wastewater services for villages and towns in the county? He instanced Castleblakney which has no WWTP and the WWTP in Mountbellew which needs upgrading.

Valerie Loughnane responded that there had been a meeting earlier this week with Irish Water which is working on upgrades where there are WWTPs already. There is a policy objective in relation to settlement centres which are not serviced. The WWTPs in Mountbellw and Ballygar will be

upgraded soon. There is capacity in all 15 settlement centres. They had also spoken about services for the Galway MASP earlier this week.

There is a more formal engagement with Irish Water twice a year. The County's relationship with Irish Water is very good – they can get the answers they need.

Liam Hanrahan repeated that the Planning Section had good engagement with Irish Water during the week. There was housing pressure in areas that are not serviced and that had been raised with Irish Water. He said Irish Water will be providing capacity maps for water and wastewater and those maps will be shared with Councillors.

5. Update on Galway City Development Plan

Eoghan Lynch gave a brief verbal update on the Galway City Development Plan 2023-2039 which was adopted in January 2023. There is currently a Judicial Review before the High Court. This does not affect the adopted Development Plan other than specific sites.

He said that it is envisaged that Galway City will be a regional driver and transport challenges are associated with this.

Climate Action is a cross-cutting theme running through the development plan. He mentioned the 15-minute city concept, compact growth and modal shift in transport. The overall thrust of the Development Plan is to avoid the need for the city to expand its footprint as it has over the past 50 years. He mentioned the Ardaun LAP area and designated regeneration sites in the city. Funding has been obtained from the URDF for the Public Realm Strategy which is being activated.

Colm Ryan, MKO, as what is the City Council's perspective on LAPs? Is there any schedule for delivery of LAPs and masterplans? He particularly referenced the Headford Road and Murroogh.

Eoghan Lynch said that the review of the Ardaun LAP would be the priority and others would follow.

B. Mulligan observed that both the Headford Road and Murroogh had featured in several successive City Development Plans going back 15-20 years but nothing had been done. It took 7 years from commencement of the Ardaun LAP process in 2011 until its adoption in 2018. Is it going to take another 7 years to review the Ardaun LAP before a start is made on the LAPs for the Headford Road and Murroogh?

Derrick Hambleton observed that successive Development Plans had provided for the preparation of Statutory Local Area Plans rather than "developer masterplans".

Cllr Peter Keane also expressed his concern about the progress of the Ardaun LAP and the development of LAPs for Murroogh and the Headford Road. He observed that the Ardaun LAP took years to develop. What is holding it up?

He observed that we had asked for Irish Water to send a representative to this joint meeting to address the debacle around the withdrawal of the planning application for the stormwater storage tank at Merlin Park PS. He asked will it take 7 years to review the Ardaun LAP as Brendan Mulligan had said? When are we going to get news from Irish Water about an application for permission for the development at Merlin Park PS?

Eoghan Lynch responded that the City Council had met with Irish Water earlier this week with a view to establishing a relationship. Irish Water confirmed that Phase 1 of Ardaun could happen with the

existing Merlin Park PS only. A new application for stormwater storage will be submitted this month [December 2023]. As regards the review of the Ardaun LAP, it will have objectives of sustainable development and compact growth. The Public Realm Strategy will influence the design. The review will commence within the life of the LAP. The reviewed LAP will adhere to the existing zoning and the layout will be determined by the urban density strategy.

Uinsinn Finn said that the statutory time limit for the Ardaun LAP will expire next year [2024]. The review will take into account current government policies.

Using URDF funding the Martin Roundabout has been replaced by a traffic light controlled junction to enable improved pedestrian, cycling and public transport connectivity.

Irish Water has been working on infrastructure to support Ardaun. Irish Water's timelines will deliver the necessary infrastructure before any dwellings in Ardaun are occupied.

Cllr Peter Keane, referring to Eoghan Lynch's statement that Irish Water had confirmed there is sufficient infrastructure capacity in place already for Ardaun Phase 1, asked could a planning application for development within Ardaun Phase 1 be successful?

Eoghan Lynch said there was no impediment to a planning application. Uinsinn Finn said that Ardaun Phase 1 could be accommodated from a transport point of view. He was not sure if there is spare wastewater capacity.

B. Mulligan suggested that Irish Water was engaging in double-speak.

Uinsinn Finn responded that Irish Water was working on two infrastructure projects to serve Ardaun [stormwater and wastewater]. They could be in place before any dwellings are occupied.

B. Mulligan suggested that Irish Water have a credibility problem with An Bord Pleanála. An BP had refused permission for a SHD development in Roscam because it didn't believe that Irish Water would have upgraded the capacity of Merlin Park PS in time and it hasn't done so.

Uinsinn Finn proposed to invite Irish Water to the first meeting of the City Council Planning SPC in the New Year.

6. Any other business

Concerts at Galway Airport

There was a bun fight between the Councillors of both local authorities because the County Council had acted unilaterally in granting permission for a series of concerts at the Airport site in 2024 without any consultation with Galway City Council as co-owner.

After much discussion it was agreed to refer the matter to a meeting of the Joint CPGs.

Galway MASP Governance

Brendan Mulligan observed that at the last Joint SPC Meeting in November 2022 we were told that the next meeting would be held early in the New Year [2023] at which the consultant appointed by the NWRA to investigate and report on appropriate governance for the MASP would present his findings. The City Council SPC had been told at its meeting in May 2023 that the NWRA wanted to speak to the Chief Executives of both local authorities before presenting the consultant's report at a joint SPC meeting. We were also told then it was hoped to have a joint meeting very soon.

The MASP was included in the RSES adopted in January 2020. It is now almost 4 years into the 12-year strategy and we haven't got off first base yet. It was not even on the agenda for this meeting.

Liam Hanrahan responded that the consultant's report is a NWRA document. The local authorities don't have it and don't have any update on it. In response to B. Mulligan he confirmed that there has been no meeting between the Chief Executives of the two local authorities in relation to the consultant's report.

Galway City Ring Road

Cllr Donagh Killelea asked about the current status of the Ring Road application.

Uinsinn Finn responded that the application had been remitted back to An Bord Pleanála by the High Court as it hadn't taken into account the Climate Action Plan in making its decision to grant permission for the Ring Road.

An Bord Pleanála have asked Galway County Council, the applicant, to update some environmental reports.

Uinsinn Finn said there were different views as to whether An Bord Pleanála can or will make a decision in advance of the adoption of the GMATS. An BP will have sight of the draft GMATS on its completion early next year.

Proposed works to the hard shoulders on the Coast Road.

Cllr Shelly Herterich Quinn asked if the works (segregated walkways) proposed (by Cllr Alan Curran) on the hard shoulders along the Coast Road require planning permission?

The response was that it is really an operational matter. In any case, further details of what is proposed would be required to make a determination as to whether an application for permission would be required.

Brendan Mulligan, a GCCN Rep on Galway City Council's Planning SPC