

Senior Planner
Planning Department
Galway City Council
City Hall
Galway

23rd March 2015

Re. Review of Galway City Development Plan 2011-2017 and Preparation of New City Development Plan 2017-2023 – Pre Draft Issues Paper.

Dear Sir/Madam,

The National Transport Authority (the ‘Authority’) submits the following comments on the pre-draft Issues Paper, for the Council’s consideration in the preparation of the draft Development Plan.

Overview

The Authority has had an involvement in the planning of the Galway City Council area since our establishment in 2009, initially through our role on the West Regional Authority Regional Planning Guidelines Implementation Group, and subsequently, and additionally, as the administrative body in charge of the management of the Regional Cities Sustainable Transport Grants Programme for Galway City. At a national level, the Authority also has statutory responsibility for securing the provision of public passenger land transport services which, with respect to Galway City, would relate to the licencing of Bus Éireann and private bus operator routes, within the city and services connecting the city to other locations. In this context, the Authority seeks to promote the integration of land-use planning and enhanced sustainable travel patterns in Galway City through the statutory development plan process.

General Land Use Recommendations

The Authority seeks to promote key principles for the integration of land use and transport and the Authority requests that these principles are reflected in the objectives of the Development Plan, as follows:

- High volume, trip intensive developments, such as offices and retail, should primarily be focussed into the city centre, or areas well served by public transport;
- All non-residential development proposals should be subject to maximum parking standards to be set out in the Development Plan. Those standards should vary depending on location of the proposal with regard to its centrality within the city and the level of public transport provision at the location. Area-based parking standards could be considered;
- For all major employment developments and all new and extended schools, travel plans should be conditioned as part of planning permissions and be carried out in a manner consistent with NTA guidance documents – “Toolkit for School Travel” and “Workplace Travel Plans – A Guide for Implementers”. The Development Plan should contain a clear policy reflecting this requirement;
- To the extent practicable, residential development should be carried out sequentially, whereby lands which are, or will be, most accessible by walking, cycling and public transport - including infill and brownfield sites - are prioritised;
- Planning at the local level should promote walking, cycling and public transport by maximising the number of people living within walking and cycling distance of their neighbourhood centres, public transport services and other services at the local level such as schools. This could be done through, for example, the application of density gradients across development areas whereby the higher densities of development are focussed on centres and public transport;
- New development areas should be fully permeable for walking and cycling and the retrospective implementation of walking and cycling facilities should be undertaken where practicable in existing neighbourhoods;
- Where possible, developments should provide for filtered permeability. This would provide for walking, cycling, public transport and private vehicle access but at the same time would restrict or discourage private car through trips. This would give a competitive advantage to these modes and encourage their use as an alternative to the private car; and
- To the extent practicable, proposals for right of way extinguishments should only be considered where these do not result in more circuitous walking and cycling trips for local residents accessing public transport, or local destinations.

The draft Development Plan should make reference to the available planning guidance in providing for the implementation of all of the principles listed above. The DECLG’s *Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets*, and the NTA’s forthcoming *Permeability Best Practice Guide* document should be referenced where appropriate.

Transport Network Planning

Galway City Council has been allocated finance under the Regional Cities Sustainable Transport Grants Programme to prepare, in conjunction with the Authority, a Transport Plan for Galway City. This plan will guide the future allocation of Programme funding. A draft of this plan will be available in the forthcoming months, and an agreed plan is expected to be finalised at a time which will coincide with the preparation of the draft City Development Plan 2017-2023, as outlined in the Information Leaflet circulated in relation to the current stage of the Development Plan Review.

The Authority recommends that the proposals presented in this Transport Plan are fully integrated into the draft City Development Plan. The Authority will continue to work closely with the Council in order to complete this Plan and to implement it in full, through the Regional Cities Sustainable Transport Grants Programme, at the local level on a rolling annual basis.

Planning for Enhanced Sustainable Travel

The delivery of public transport measures will be afforded greater clarity through the formulation of the Transport Plan, as per the above paragraphs. Priority should also be given to the potentially significant contribution of cycling and walking to enhance sustainable travel patterns in Galway City.

The Regional Cities Sustainable Transport Grants Programme currently contains a number of projects which will deliver improved cycling and pedestrian infrastructure in the city, including:

- Greenway between City Centre and Bearna;
- Fairgreen Road Cycle Parking and Pedestrian facilities scheme;
- Threadneedle Road Cycleway; and
- The Galway City Bike Scheme (Coke Zero Bikes).

The Development Plan should formally identify these projects as objectives for delivery during the development plan period, in order to safeguard the potential investment in the projects. It should also contain objectives for other cycling and pedestrian projects that will emerge from the forthcoming Transport Plan discussed above, from the Galway Metropolitan Area Bus and Cycle Network Plan (AECOM, 2014), and from the consultation and drafting stages of the draft development plan itself.

Finally, the Development Plan should contain a commitment to deliver a comprehensive programme of public cycle parking in the city centre and neighbourhood centres, to which Regional Cities Sustainable Transport Grants Programme funding is also currently allocated.

I trust the views of the Authority will be taken into consideration in the preparation of the draft City Development Plan. In regard to the issues raised, the Authority would welcome the opportunity for further discussion with the Council.

Yours sincerely,



Michael MacAree

Head of Integrated Strategic Planning.