

TUAM LOCAL AREA PLAN 2011-2017

Pre- Draft Issues Paper



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PREPARATION OF TUAM LOCAL AREA PLAN

PRE-DRAFT ISSUES PAPER

February 2010



Galway County Council,
Áras an Chontae,
Prospect Hill,
Galway.

1. INTRODUCTION

Under the National Spatial Strategy 2002- 2020 - Tuam has been awarded the status of Hub and, as such, “it will both assist in building links between the existing Gateway of Galway City and the new Gateway of Sligo, and energise its own substantial catchment in Co. Galway”.

It will perform this role through its position as the areas urban structure in terms of population, strategic location on the N.17 and Regional Road networks, as well as its energy and communication links, its substantial capacity for development and local employment and service functions.

Tuam’s capacity to develop as a Hub, and so cater for a target population will require:

- Improved access to National Gateways and Regional Hubs
- Advanced telecommunications
- Energy Supply
- Serviced land availability
- Disposal of waste
- Improved Town Centre Development
- Enhancement of Social Services
- Focus on history, protection of Heritage and development of associated tourism.

2. OVERVIEW OF THE LAP PROCESS

The preparation of a LAP has a pre-draft and post-draft phase and both phases must be accompanied by public consultation. The pre-draft phase will be dealt with through the submission of written comments. The post-draft phase will include the statutory 6 week public display of the Draft LAP and the submission of any further written comments, which will then be taken into consideration in the finalisation of the LAP.

Pre-Draft Submissions should be made in writing to the Planning Authorities by **4 p.m. March 26th 2010.**

Submissions may address any planning matter, from broad policy issues to specific types of development in identified areas. They may also refer to environmental issues, such as natural and built heritage, archaeology, landscape, ecological sustainability etc. All submissions will be given equal attention and will be taken into consideration in the preparation of a Draft Local Area Plan for Tuam.

A LAP must be prepared in accordance with the *Planning and Development Acts 2000-2006* and must be consistent with the *Galway County Development Plan 2009-2015*. It must also have regard to other relevant planning and environmental policy and legislation, such as the Regional Planning Guidelines for the West Region, Retail Planning Guidelines and the Childcare Facilities Guidelines.

Once adopted, the LAP will provide a 6 year statutory framework for guiding development and assessing planning applications in the area covered by the LAP. The LAP will help to ensure that the development pressures in Tuam are appropriately managed, that development occurs in a sustainable manner in accordance with a common vision for the area and that it is in the interests of local residents and other stakeholders in the area.

Why do we need Local Area Plans?

- To provide for orderly, balanced development in the interest of the common good;
- To ensure that all sectors of the community are properly considered and catered for;
- To provide a degree of certainty and security;
- To plan responsively for the future and manage resources in a sustainable manner;
- To apply EU, national and regional policy at local level.

How does the Local Area Plan affect you?

- The Plan indicates future development needs and highlights opportunities and constraints;
- It details future housing, economic development, conservation of the natural and built heritage, infrastructural projects and other proposals;
- It informs and guides anyone planning or investigating in future development, infrastructure or services;
- The Plan is a tool for controlling and guiding new development;
- It is used to assess planning applications and appeals;

- It is a vehicle for facilitating local proposals and priorities;
- The Local Area Plan can be an excellent source of information relating to its area.

Galway County Council has prepared this issues paper to initiate the LAP process and to stimulate debate on the planning issues that the new plan may address over its duration from 2011 – 2017. It deals with some broad planning issues under various topic headings.

Nine topics have been identified. As this is a Pre Draft Consultation Paper, the topics are not exhaustive and you are invited to raise other matters you may consider relevant.

1. Population, Settlement, Land Use Development and Growth Options
2. Economic Development, Retail and Tourism
3. Community Development/Social Inclusion
4. Natural & Built Heritage
5. Open Space, Recreation/Amenities and the Public Realm
6. Transportation and Access
7. Infrastructure and Services
8. SEA/Habitats Directive
9. Flood Directive and Flood Risk Assessment
10. EU Water Framework Directive & Western River Basin Management Plan.

3. ISSUES IN TUAM

3.1 Population, Settlement, Land Use Development & Growth Options

According to the Census of Population 2006, Tuam town had a population of 2,997 persons, with the overall population for the area (Tuam town & its environs) 6,885. This has been estimated using the CSO Boundary (CSO Preliminary Report - Vol2 p.45) However, the total population of Tuam town (urban area) decreased over the period 2002-2006 by 3% (Census 2006) while Tuam Rural during the same period had an increase of 37%. This is in contrast to population trends at a national level throughout designated Gateway and Hub towns as per the National Spatial Strategy.

The Census and other information point to a trend of population increase outside the town core notwithstanding the availability of zoned and serviced land within that area. This is an issue which will require further consideration during the plan review.

Draft Regional Planning Guidelines 2010-2022

The following are the population targets produced for Tuam Hub by DOEHLG in 2009 for the purposes of the Western Regional Planning Guidelines Review -

Minimum Population Targets for Tuam Hub 2016 and 2022 (DoEHLG)

Hub	2002	2006	2010	2016	2022
Tuam	5,947	6,885 (1.67%)	7,600 (1.72% *)	8,600 (1.77% *)	9,500 (1.82% *)

*Based on % of DoEHLG Regional Population Projections for the West Region;
Source: DoEHLG, 2009*

The Draft RPG's also sets out the residential housing demand and required residential zoning for the West Region including Gateway/Hubs/Linked Hub. This will form the basis of the Core Settlement Strategy for the West Region.

The following are the minimum requirements as set out for Galway Gateway and Tuam Hub by the Draft Regional Planning Guidelines -

Settlement	Population 2010-2016 (Based on Minimum Pop Targets)	Total No. of Residential Units required over period 2010-2016	Total zoned housing land required over period 2010-2016 (incorporating 75% over zoning)
Galway City	10,100*	4,200 based on 2.4 persons average household size	240 Ha based on housing density of >30 units per Ha
Tuam	1,000*	385 units based on 2.6 persons average household size	27 Ha based on average housing density of 25 units per Ha

As set out in DEHLG Minimum Population Targets August 2009

It will be a subsequent function of the City/County Development Plans/Local Area Plans and their Housing Strategies to set out more specific figures for other towns and planning authorities within their functional areas, working within the overall Regional Planning Guidelines Targets and Estimates.

Tuam Local Area Plan - How Much land is zoned for Housing?

The following Table provides a breakdown in relation to the total amount of lands zoned Residential and the amount of undeveloped Residential land available both within the 2005-2011 LAP Boundary and within the CSO Boundary for Tuam.

Under the Draft RPG's as issued in January 2010, in relation Tuam Hub, the Total Zoned Housing Land required from 2010-2016 (incorporating 75% over zoning) = **27 Ha.**

Table 1: Total land Zoned as Residential & Undeveloped Residential within 2005 – 2011 LAP Boundary & within the CSO Boundary

	Total Area Zoned as Residential	Undeveloped Residential	Land Required
LAP Boundary (2005-2011)	496 Ha	173.3 Ha	
CSO Boundary	316.3 Ha	88.09 Ha	
Draft RPG 2010 Land Allocation 2010-2016			27Ha

Given the RPG minimum allocation of 27 Ha presently there is an excess of 61.09 Ha of Undeveloped Residential Land available within the CSO Boundary and an excess of 146.3 Ha available within the current LAP 2005-2011 Boundary.

Taking an average density of 25 units per Ha (as per Galway County Council and Ballinasloe Town Council Joint Housing Strategy 2009-2015) and an average household size of 2.6 persons per unit, the Undeveloped Residential Land within the existing Tuam LAP 2005-2009 has the potential to provide for a population increase of **11,264 persons** (173.3 Ha x 25 x 2.6).

Population Targets/Projections for Tuam

The Regional population projections to 2022 for Tuam indicate that the total population for Tuam will grow from 6,885 in 2006 to 9,500 persons by 2022. This corresponds to an actual growth in population of 2,615 persons to 2022.

How many houses have been built?

Tuam has seen the housing stock grow and evolve from detached bungalows to housing estates of detached, semi-detached, terraced houses and apartments. Housing needs over the lifetime of the LAP will arise from an overall increase in the number of households; obsolescence of existing stock, subdivision of existing households and in migration.

Despite the relatively low rate of population growth within Tuam Urban between Census 2002-2006, housing unit completions in recent years have exceeded estimated requirements. It should be noted that housing unit completions have peaked and within the current economic climate this has resulted in some partly occupied housing estates within Tuam.

Residential Density:

The Draft LAP will continue to adhere to Government policy with regard to increased residential density where appropriate, subject to the provision of high quality design, layout and including a good quality living environment. The DOEHLG in 2009 published Guidelines on Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas and these guidelines in conjunction with the Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments (which recommend minimum standard for floor space) will be used within the drafting of the Tuam LAP.

Social, Affordable and Voluntary Housing

Galway County Council is currently implementing an extension of the four year Multi Annual Programme 2004-2008(extended until 2011), this will guide the provision of Social, Affordable and Voluntary houses throughout the County, including Tuam. Each programme element will seek to provide an appropriate housing mix taking into account national economic circumstances, local demand and affordability, and the outputs of the Joint

Housing Strategy 2009-2015. Under the current CDP 2009-2015, there is a requirement that 20% of the land zoned for residential development would be developed specifically for social and affordable housing

A Traveller Accommodation Programme is also being implemented and includes a stated policy to provide for the accommodation needs of Travellers, as far as is reasonable and practicable using the full range of housing options available to the Council in consultation with the travelling community, the settled community and with various other statutory and voluntary agencies concerned.

Government Policy on Architecture 2009-2015 promotes sustainable place making which draws on best practice in creating and maintaining integrated sustainable places in terms of architectural and urban design quality as well as social engagement.

GCC has a Voluntary Housing Programme and has constructed 15 units at Cluide Glebe.

Rural Housing Demand

According to the Census 2006 statistics, the trend in population change indicated that Tuam Urban decreased by 3% between Census 2002- 2006 while Tuam Rural increased by 37% during the same period. Planning permissions granted also indicate that there has been a larger demand for housing within Tuam environs/fringe than that within the urban boundary.

As part of preparing the Draft LAP, GCC shall address this trend through specific policies and objectives with an emphasis on developing a strong and a more compact and sustainable urban development form. Appropriate policies will be considered for lands within the Local Area Plan boundary which are currently zoned for agriculture.

Strategic Vision

Galway County Council has been working with the Tuam Chamber of Commerce since 2008 to identify ways to 'Green' the Town. This has involved looking at Tidy Towns Projects, visiting Sustainable Energy

Ireland, learning from the Dundalk 2020 initiative and working with GMIT about energy initiatives for the Town including the delivery of outreach BER training in Tuam.

The preliminary vision can be described as

Tuam 'Green Hub – A Greener Way/A Better Place'

A Hub town that is vibrant, self sufficient, innovative that will be driven by a high quality of life, an educated workforce, with flexible land use zonings (that is serviced by essential infrastructure) in order to attract and anchor smart business ventures/technologies, to nurture and support existing enterprises in an approach that is balanced and sustainable to Tuam and its rural hinterland/environs that it serves.

Galway County Council will seek to achieve this vision through a number of initiatives including –

1. The promotion of Tuam Hub as a strategic location on the Atlantic Corridor (M18/17) and Atlantic Technology Corridor;
2. The establishment of Tuam as an integrated transportation Hub Town by reducing car use and emissions, by increasing the demand for public transport, park and ride facilities and to become fossil fuel free centre as new innovative and green technologies become mainstream;
3. The promotion of Tuam as a 'Green Hub' by –

- Facilitating and diversifying existing 'green projects' that have already been established within Tuam;
 - Promoting Tuam Hub as a 'sustainable energy zone'
-
- Implementing Galway County Council's Energy Action Plan regarding energy efficiencies in relation to Tuam;
 - Reducing the carbon footprint of the community and buildings in the Town;
 - Galway County Council will have regard to best practice in the future proofing of buildings;
 - By implementing a 'Green Network' with local businesses to reduce waste, water and energy usage;
 - Improving the energy efficiency of the business community;
 - Creating employment that is located and connected to Tuam Hub in order to achieve sustainable employment;
 - Encouraging the implementation of the SEI Energy MAP process as the initial step towards achieving the IS393 Energy Management Standard for Tuam Hub;
 - By encouraging and enhancing biodiversity and ecology and in endeavouring to facilitate the majority of the population within 300m of green areas;
 - By supporting the establishment of a 'Green Town Index' – including CO2 emissions, energy, buildings, transportation, water, air quality, waste and land use, and environmental governance;
-
- By encouraging public awareness within the general public and within businesses community through workshops and seminars (e.g. the delivery of a 'Green IT Seminar' in order to promote energy efficiency in the IT business sector).
-
4. To promote Tuam as a Heritage Town with a strong ecclesiastical presence;
 5. To create a high quality sustainable environment through the protection and conservation of the built (Record of Protected Structures/Architectural Conservation Area) and archaeological heritage (Sites and Monuments/Zone of Archaeological Potential) and by encouraging high quality urban design;
 6. By implementing the recommendations of the BMW/GCC initiative 'Connecting Tuam, People, Places, Public, Private'. The objective of which is to improve connectivity of the Hub Town in a sustainable manner to bring about the economic, cultural and social development of Tuam.

Growth Options – Growth Scenarios

A number of development growth options/scenarios shall be considered in the drafting of the Tuam LAP process such as -

1. The continuation of the current plan and to proceed as per the present LAP Boundary and Land Use Zonings;
2. Consolidation of existing structures within an expanded Town Centre/Commercial (C1) zoning. This would include the consolidation of existing structures within the Town Centre with sequential development of vacant/under utilised or undeveloped lands from the centre out;
3. Down-Zoning with the LAP boundary reduced to various/preferred options;

4. Options for the phasing of development.

GCC may also identify a number of key strategic/opportunity sites within the Development Boundary as part of the drafting of the new plan. A framework plan/master plan including design and access statements shall be required for each of these sites to ensure their sustainable development potential.

Each of the development growth options shall be considered during the drafting of the plan in line with -

- The SEA/Habitats Directives and
- The Flood Risk Management Guidelines.

The following are required to be undertaken in conjunction with the preparation of the drafting of the Tuam Local Area Plan and the new draft plan shall be informed by their findings –

1. SEA Screening/Assessment;
2. Appropriate Assessment Screening/Assessment;
3. Strategic Flood Risk Assessment.

Land Use Development and Urban Form

GCC shall seek to ensure that there is adequate zoned and serviced land available to meet the future population needs. Consideration shall also be given to the type and mixes of land uses to be included in the new plan as well as appropriate development form and densities that may be required in the different parts of the town.

In addition GCC will encourage the promotion of architectural quality within the built environment and will engage with infrastructure and public realm projects.

Essential Infrastructure

The proposed Tuam Main Drainage Scheme which is due to commence in March 2010, will ensure that public water and wastewater infrastructure will be significantly enhanced, bringing it up to best international standards. Natural Gas and Broadband infrastructure will also be delivered as part of the proposed scheme. This will help sustain jobs and facilitate future residential/commercial and industrial development within Tuam at appropriate locations.

The provision, capacity and footprint of essential infrastructure such as public sewerage and public water supply will also be a consideration in the extent and location of a preferred development growth option/scenario for Tuam.

Questions

- How can the Tuam LAP promote balanced growth within the town?
- What type of vision do you envisage for Tuam Hub and how do you see this vision being achieved within the lifetime of this Plan?
- Are there particular areas of the Town which you consider are subject to flooding?
- What initiatives do you consider Tuam should take in the establishment of a 'green hub'?
- What policies should apply to rural housing proposals within the urban fringe?
- In accordance with the principles of sustainable/ phased residential/mixed use development – where do you consider development for new residential/mixed use should take place?
- What types and extent of housing/mixed use would be appropriate in Tuam?

- What ranges of house types are appropriate for Tuam?
- What would contribute to an attractive residential development within Tuam?
- How detailed should design standards for the new LAP be?
- How can the plan cater for a range of different needs – young, elderly, mobility impaired, traveller families, homeless and first time buyers?
- How should the plan deal with proposals for infill developments within existing residential areas?
- How can the plan provide for existing streetscapes and urban design features?
- What would be an appropriate development density for Tuam?
- Is there scope for improved social, economic and cultural facilities within the residential areas?
- What type of provision should the plan make for public transport in housing areas?
- What is needed to encourage people to choose to live within the centre of Tuam?

3.2 Economic Development, Retail and Tourism

Economic Development

The NSS designated Tuam as a Hub in Ireland's future spatial structure. The Draft RPG's for the West Region 2010 envisages the role of Tuam Hub and the Linked Hubs of Castlebar/Ballina, as providing for balanced patterns of growth supporting the role of the Gateway.

A key element of the Spatial and Settlement Strategy of the CDP 2009-2015 is to promote and facilitate the development of Tuam Hub as a town in which people can live and work in a quality and distinctive environment, and which will serve as a dynamic hub for the social and economic progress of North and East Galway. The town's location on the WRC will,

when this facility is fully restored, provide a sustainable transport link between the western gateways and hubs. It is important that Tuam promotes sustainable economic development and self sufficiency by supporting the creation of sustainable employment and job creation.

The Winter 2008 forecast from the ESRI illustrated that the national economy is in the midst of a contraction that is large by both historic and international comparisons.

The Census for 2006 identifies that there was a total of 2,996 people living in Tuam at work with a further 412 unemployed, representing 13.7% of those available for work. Using these statistics indicates that 36% of those signing on in the Welfare Office in Tuam were unemployed.

The live register in Tuam in 2006 (which covers a wider catchment area than that included within the Census 2006) indicated that 1,133 persons were signing on in the Social Welfare Office. The corresponding figure for July 2009 is 3,457 representing an increase of 205% in less than 3 years.

Industry

Tuam traditionally has been a centre of indigenous manufacturing in the region. This is mainly located around the fringes of the Town. The bias towards Manufacturing and Wholesale & Retail reflects the urban nature of employment.

In recent years Tuam has become a location for a number of Foreign owned companies which have been assisted by the IDA Ireland, by Enterprise Ireland and by Galway County Enterprise Board. It is essential that Tuam is well positioned to keep the Hub Town competitive and to be able to adapt to the demands of the 'SMART Economy'.

Galway County Council has given its support to identify ways to 'Green the Town in promoting and using 'green technology/industry as well as in the promotion and education in green energy initiatives. A number of joint projects have commenced with various agencies/institutions including The Western Development Commission (WDC), SEI, GMIT, the IDA Ireland and Enterprise Ireland.

Incubation or starter units should be considered to encourage industrial/enterprise as this is an area for improvement which can bring balanced development in and around the Hub.

GCC will facilitate the development of energy zones that will showcase initiatives in the reduction of energy costs and to promote energy efficiencies.

As part of preparing the Draft Plan GCC will ensure that sufficient land is available (including flexible zoning potential) within the Plan Boundary to facilitate inward investment, local indigenous economic development, expansion of existing enterprises and cross-sectoral employment opportunities.

Presently there are **81 Ha of undeveloped Industrial Land** within the existing Tuam LAP boundary.

GCC shall consider the creation of **Industrial/Business Park/Technology Enterprise Park** as an alternative zoning for current Industrial Lands in order to facilitate more flexible zoning for sustainable economic growth. The land uses proposed within Zoning Matrix may also allow for a wider range of uses.

Retail

CSO 2008 Retail figures (Retail Sales Index), saw the sharpest decline (8% approx) in the volume of retail sales in more than 25 years, reflecting the current economic downturn.

Tuam has also to contend with the retail forces of the nearby Gateway of Galway and the unsustainable transport patterns that this involves.

It is anticipated that Tuam will experience retail growth in the next decade. This projected growth in the retail sector is evident in the retail development schemes that were put forward in the Town.

The Love your Town and Near Field Technology initiative (in conjunction with ZAPA Technology Ltd) is a retail town loyalty scheme. This project will make Tuam a demonstration town for such technology throughout Europe.

The present Plan 2005-2011 has no Town Centre Zoning per say, most of the centre of the Town is zoned as Commercial and Community Facilities.

Within the existing Tuam LAP 2005-2011 - 52 Ha have been zoned as Commercial land of this **10.19 Ha remains undeveloped**.

GCC shall consider the zoning of land as **Town Centre/Commercial Zoning (C1)** with provision to extend Town Centre Zoning in locations that are appropriate and contiguous. The purpose of which is to increase the commercial footfall in and around the town centre, to reduce the dependency on the private car and to stem the retail leakage from Tuam by providing a stimulus for the development of independent and varied retail options.

The implementation of sustainable planning will encourage the reuse of redundant and under-used buildings that would be compatible with their character and significance.

Neighbourhood Centres and local shopping facilities shall also be encouraged at appropriate locations and shall not detract from the primary role of the town centre. Selection criteria shall include key access routes, infrastructure provision, connectivity/linkages with the town centre, and the size of the serving residential hinterland.

As part of preparing the Draft Plan GCC shall include Retail policies/objectives that will promote the existing retail function of the town centre in order to promote its vitality and viability and including the sequential approach.

Tourism

The National Tourism Development Strategy 2007-2013, focuses on achieving value growth based on a quality natural environment, good

accommodation and attractions (including culture) to entice visitors and to deliver authentic experiences.

Cultural Tourism

Significant work has already been undertaken by GCC in conjunction with Fáilte Ireland to develop a walking trail in the town. Audio material/brochure have been developed to accompany this trail as well as urban enhancements including enhancing pedestrian routes in the town that are linked to the town trail, tree planting and improving the permeability of the streetscape.

Fáilte Ireland has profiled Tuam as a 'Historic Town' as part of their key Heritage/Cultural attractions and the town is now part of its 19 Historic Towns nationally and is referenced as such by the Royal Irish Academy.

Galway County Council will work with relevant stakeholders to heighten awareness of the measures that can be taken to drive a quality agenda for urban design, architecture, architectural conservation, development management, town/landscape design and conservation.

As part of preparing the Draft Plan GCC shall include policies/objectives that will facilitate and encourage sustainable tourism development, which is based on and reflects Tuam's distinctive ecclesiastical history, culture, and environment.

Questions

- What type of enterprises would enhance the economic development and character of Tuam?
- Are industrial and commercial land use zones appropriate to current employment opportunities?
- How can the plan integrate enterprise land uses with other forms of land use (e.g. residential and transportation land uses)?

- Is there a need for additional employment generating land uses in Tuam and what type shall these be?
- How should the plan deal with the existing retail provision in Tuam?
- Does advertising and signage cause visual clutter in the town and what measures should be taken to reduce this?
- Are there opportunities to develop links between tourist attractions?
- How can we exploit in a sustainable manner our parks, civic open spaces, waterways for the benefit of the community and for tourists visiting the town?
- What areas within the Town Centre need improvement and in what way?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of Tuam Town Centre?

3.3 Community Development/Social Inclusion

The Planning Acts place an obligation on each Planning Authority to have specific objectives 'for the provision of community services, including schools, crèches and different childcare facilities'. It also facilitates the development of social, community and culture facilities in an integrated, sustainable manner. Social inclusion can be fostered in the planning of the built environment through the creation of living and integrated communities.

Social inclusion is also facilitated by the RAPID11 Programme¹ and through the Social Inclusion Unit of the Council's Community and Enterprise Section.

It is important that communities work together. An important asset in a town can often be the community spirit and co-operation that exists. Social vitality is fundamental to the success of any settlement; it is essential for sustainable development and ensures a healthy livelihood and living environment. Community vitality is an important asset in a town and can be the prime element of the magnetism of an area.

Education

Tuam has been noted as a centre of learning throughout its history. It is essential that primary and secondary educational facilities are provided to the highest standards to cater for existing and envisaged future needs.

Whilst a flexible approach is adopted towards the accommodation of such facilities, it is also possible to reserve specific lands for schools within the LAP process.

Childcare Facilities

The provision of childcare facilities at appropriate locations will continue to be supported during the preparation of the Draft Plan. There is a requirement of one childcare facility to cater for every 75 new houses. However there are increasing concerns about the blanket application of this rule, with many people advocating the provision of multi-use community facilities instead and this will be considered further in drafting the plan

¹ RAPID stands for Revitalising Areas through Planning Investment and Development.

Primary and Secondary Education

Tuam has four primary schools and four post primary schools. Plans are at an advanced stage to amalgamate the girls and boys secondary schools into a community college.

The Gaelscoil in Tuam is located in the former Community Centre complex on Bishop Street and provides primary education through the medium of Irish.

Third Level

The closest Third Level institutes include the National University of Ireland, Galway (NUI, G) and the Galway Mayo Institute of Technology (GMIT). The Tuam Chamber of Commerce in association with the Galway Mayo Institute (GMIT) and County Galway VEC are running an 8 week course in renewable energy on new products and processes.

Adult Education

County Galway VEC is involved in various VTOS programmes operating from Mc Hale College. Other education centres include the VTOS centre in Airlooney House, St Benen's Senior Traveller Centre, the Tuam Community Centre and the Library.

Healthcare

The HSE provides health and social services to the people of Tuam and its hinterland from its premises in Vicar Street, Hermitage Court and Arus Mhuire. The Irish Wheelchair association has a centre along the Sean Purcell Road and provides a day care centre at both a local and county level. The HSE also operate a training centre at Toghermore.

The Bon Secour Hospital now owned by the HSE has been closed for some time and it is hoped that the campaign for its re-opening and provision of a range of in-patient and day patient services adequate to serve Tuam and its north Galway catchment will be successful. Plans are also underway to develop an ambulance centre for the town.

Cultural Heritage

The Mill Complex is located adjacent to the River Nanny and west of the bridge on Shop Street and the pedestrian route through the town. It is a focal community owned building which has been used in the past as a museum and a Tourism Office. Plans are underway to restore the buildings in the mill complex to provide community meeting and training rooms something which is lacking in Tuam at present. This proposed project which is part of the BMW/GCC initiative '*Connecting Tuam, People, Places, Public, Private*' will involve improving the energy efficiency of the buildings in the Mill Complex and to increase the community usage of these resources.

The Arts

The Mall Theatre is a community run theatre in the heart of Tuam Town and hosts 30-50 performance events during the year. These events range from visiting professional artists to community groups and youth groups. The performances range from music, to theatre and drama. Plans are also underway as part of the BMW/GCC initiative '*Connecting Tuam, People, Places, Public, Private*' to improve the insulation of this building and the installation of a Solar powered heating system.

Community Facilities

The creation of a Community House on the Local Authority housing estate of Parkmore is a key RAPID project within the town. This will connect the residents through a focal point where they can hold community meetings, training and development programmes for the residents and children. Providing extra resources to ensure that the building which will be a converted local authority house on the estate is refurbished according to sustainable principles will provide a demonstrative model for the residents to inform them what can be done to their own households.

As part of preparing the Draft Plan GCC shall include policies/objectives that will facilitate and promote the social and educational welfare of the people of Tuam.

The amount of undeveloped lands zoned as Community Facilities = 29.6 Ha.

Questions

- What improved or additional community facilities would you like to see in your locality or elsewhere within Tuam and where could these be provided?
- How can the Plan encourage more social and cultural activity within the Town?
- How can the uniqueness of Tuam be expressed?
- With limited resources in community facilities, should we prioritise and promote shared usage?
- How can the Tuam LAP encourage a vibrant social culture while also ensuring that the residential amenities of neighbouring areas are respected;
- How can the plan promote cultural diversity and social inclusion?
- Are there adequate provisions for training and education within Tuam? If deficits are identified please state and indicate how they can be addressed within the Draft Plan?

3.4 Natural and Built Heritage

Natural and Built Heritage are a combination of the natural and built environment and or assets. They contribute to the character of an area and are what makes a place special.

Natural Heritage & Designated Sites

Natural Heritage consist of the natural landscape including rivers, lakes, peatland, and in an urban setting - public parks and civic open space. The natural landscape can also be important in controlling flooding and erosion or acting as carbon sinks.

Inland waterways which include lakes, rivers streams are living systems that function as 'ecological corridors' or 'stepping stones' that connect related habitats/designated sites which enables species to move from

place to place. The River Nanny is an important natural resource for Tuam providing long-term benefits for both people and wildlife.

Designated Sites

European and national legislation protects the most valuable of our natural heritage through the designation of sites as special Protection Areas (SPA), Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Natural Heritage Areas (NHA). The River Clare is part of Lough Corrib SAC/SPA/NHA catchment. The River Nanny and the Grange River are both tributaries of the River Clare.

The nearest area which is designated for conservation within the Plan Area is the River Clare, (which is protected under the Lough Corrib SAC site code: 000297), this river flows south westwards from the Ballygaddy Bridge to the Corrib and is located to the north west of the Plan boundary. The River Nanny flows through the town and joins the Clare River to the North West of the Plan Boundary.

It must also be recognised that such designated sites (Natura 2000 Sites) do not represent the full extent of our natural heritage.

Ecological Networks are supported at EU level through the European Development Perspective and Natura 2000 and underpin the Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy, which has been ratified by Ireland. The concept of ecological networks shall be considered for inclusion within the drafting of the Plan

Two key pieces of legislation which have been transposed into Irish Law are the EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) and the EU Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive (2001/42/EC). These are informally known as the Habitats Directive and the SEA Directive. It is a legal requirement that all land-use plans comply with the provisions of both of the aforementioned Directives.

The main difference between the two processes is the extent of focus of protection i.e. AA focuses on Natura 2000 Sites whereas the SEA has a

wider scope focusing on wider biodiversity issues arising from its proposed implementation, including impacts on other areas of importance for nature, including (proposed) Natural Heritage Areas and Nature Reserves and undesignated habitats of EU importance and areas important for birds.

As part of preparing the Draft Plan GCC shall include zoning/policies/objectives supporting the protection of designated sites or proposed sites for designation in accordance with National and European legislation. Any mitigation measures or measures proposed to avoid impacts on Natura 2000 Sites will be incorporated into the policy detail of the Draft Tuam LAP before finalisation.

Galway County Council has a Heritage Plan 2009-2015 and Biodiversity Action Plan 2008-2013 in situ and regard shall be had to both (and any other subsequent plan that may supersede either) in the preparation of the Draft LAP for Tuam.

As part of preparing the Draft Plan GCC shall include policies/objectives supporting biodiversity and will consider the undertaking of biodiversity management plans for certain areas within the Plan area.

Built Heritage

Built Heritage influences every aspect of our lives through the houses we live in, the streets that we move through, places where we work or shop and where we spend our leisure time. Structures and places have over time acquired character and special interest through their continued existence and familiarity. Sympathetic reuse can allow the architectural heritage to be enjoyed and used into the future.

The aim of the Record of Protected Structures (RPS) is to protect and conserve buildings and structures of architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social and technical importance. Elements such as historic gardens, stone walls, ditches and street furniture are also important in terms of providing a setting for built heritage protection.

The RPS will be reviewed as part of the preparation of the Draft LAP for Tuam.

An Architectural Conservation Area (ACA) is a place, area, group of structures or townscape, which is of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social and technical interest or contributes to the appreciation of a Protected Structure. An ACA may or may not include Protected Structures. In an ACA, protection is placed on the external appearance of such areas or structures and planning permission must be obtained before significant works can be carried out to the exterior of a structure in an ACA, which might alter the character of the structure of the structure or the ACA.

Galway County Council shall seek to promote an urban form that is composed of contemporary architecture and design which will play an important role in the design of buildings that make the best use of their location, while still blending into and enhancing the existing town/landscape.

Archaeological Heritage

Archaeological heritage includes structures, constructions, groups of buildings, developed sites, all recorded monuments as well as their contexts and moveable objects, situated both on land and underwater. The National Monuments Acts 1930-2004 provided for the protection of the archaeological heritage of an area. The Record of Monuments and Places (RMP) were established under Section 12 of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act 1994. Structures, features, objects or sites listed in the RMP are known as Recorded Monuments. Burial Grounds often contain the standing remains or sites of earlier structures and they also can contain a great diversity of animal and plant life. Burial Grounds, which are included in the Records of Monuments and Places, are afforded protection under Section 12 of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act 1994.

As part of preparing the Draft Plan GCC shall include policies/objectives supporting the Natural/Built/Archaeological Heritage of the Town.

Questions

- How can the plan best protect the character of the landscape while at the same time facilitate modern settlement and development needs?
- Is adequate protection afforded to the Natural Environment within the Tuam LAP boundary and its environs?
- What controls should apply to development proposals in environmentally sensitive areas such as SAC/SPA/NHA?
- How can the plan encourage the protection and conservation of species and habitats outside designated areas?
- What are the specific activities that should be controlled in order to protect rivers and water quality?
- What type of restrictions should apply to the archaeologically sensitive areas?
- What policies/objectives are required to protect the architectural/ecclesiastical and archaeological heritage while recognising the need for their reuse, and/or sustainable development where appropriate?
- Are there buildings and structures of merit within Tuam, including buildings and structures of contemporary/modern design, traditional, historical, social, or cultural importance, which should be included in the Record of Protected Structures?
- Are there any additional areas within Tuam, which display a distinctive character that should be designated as Architectural Conservation Areas (ACA's)?
- In what circumstances should 'enabling development' be considered in conjunction with the restoration of Protected Structures in order to ensure that such restoration takes place?
- Are there views, areas of special amenity, areas of local interest which are worthy of protection in Tuam?

3.5 Open Space, Recreation/Amenities & the Public Realm

Open Space, Recreation/Amenities

Open Space and Amenities ensure a good quality of life for residents of an area and ensure inter-action between locals. Recreation ranges from competitive sports to the passive appreciation of the natural environment and the expression of the artistic spirit through painting and/or craftwork. It can be natural and landscaped.

Settlement centres possess buildings and locations of local significance, which give a sense of place and provide a useful role for local people as congregational points or play/amenity areas.

- Active recreation includes organised sport activities (e.g. athletics, soccer, GAA) and informal sporting activities (e.g. street sports, kick abouts, roller skating and skate boarding).
- Passive recreation includes exercise, play, walking and cycling as leisure pursuits. The private sector also plays an important role in the provision of leisure facilities such as gyms and in some cases play a role in partnership with the Council.

The **Archishop's Palace Demesne** provides Tuam with an exceptional open space area; however the parkland has been heavily developed as it stands within the confines of the Town centre. Development includes new housing, car parks, playground, tennis courts, a pool facility and a school. All open space that remains is public park space.

Tuam GAA Stadium provides facilities for football matches and practice sessions. It is hoped that improvement works will commence in the future within this important facility.

Tuam is also surrounded by vast tracts of rolling topography and good quality agricultural land which are of high recreational and visual amenity. Potential exists to promote the diversification of farming and agricultural

practices that could help create synergies with tourism and tourism related products such as community allotments/farms, biodiversity gardens, organic products. Potential also exists to support and enhance community markets/artesian produce within the retail and food sector in Tuam.

Public Realm

The design of the Public Realm should be upgraded and improved in a strategic and co-ordinated manner with co-ordination between existing and proposed street furniture including public street lighting, bollards, litter bins, planters, signage and service distribution apparatus.

The enhancement of the '**Shambles**' public space in Tuam is a key cornerstone project within the BMW Gateway/Hub regional development grant scheme. This project has the potential to form the basis of the co-ordination of all public street furniture/public street lighting within Tuam.

As part of preparing the Draft Plan GCC shall include an objective to prepare a **Public Realm Plan** for Tuam in co-operation with GCC and the Heritage Council subject to the availability of funding. The Public Realm Plan shall set the context in which specific projects can be identified and prioritised as well as providing good guiding principles within which council officials, designers and developers can formulate more detailed proposals tailored to the time and place in which development should occur. It is also an ideal tool with which to evaluate the current context of the town through analysis and consultation, culminating in a framework which may ultimately be used to inform planning policy contained within the Tuam LAP.

In preparing the Draft Plan GCC shall include the promotion of enhanced passive and active recreation, improved access to the River Nanny for passive and active recreation and enhancement of and increased accessibility to sports infrastructure.

The amount of land zoned as Recreation/Amenity/Open Space within the existing Plan is 40.5 Ha of this 22.3 Ha remain undeveloped.

Questions

- What improved or additional passive and active recreation /sports facilities would you like to see in your locality/elsewhere within Tuam and outline where could these be located?
- Are recreational facilities within walking distance of residential areas?
- How can the plan improve walking and cycling routes?
- Where should amenity walks in and around Tuam and its environs be located?
- How can the Draft LAP best provide for existing and potential needs for sports and recreational facilities within Tuam area?
- Do the existing facilities have the potential to expand? If not, where should they be relocated to?
- How can we integrate areas of natural heritage value while maintaining access for recreation?
- What role can the Draft Local Area Plan play in protecting biodiversity in Tuam?
- How can the plan enhance the town's landscape, urban woodlands and trees?
- Are there enough parks provided within the town and are they of sufficient quality to meet the needs of Tuam? If not what additional provision should be made and where?
- Are there green areas/open spaces that need to be protected? If so, should they be maintained as informal or more formalised open spaces?
- How can the plan provide recreational facilities for all age groups?
- How should the plan deal with recreational related facilities that require extensive areas of open land?
- Can the plan provide facilities that are useful to both tourists and residents?
- How can the design of an open space improve the safety of that area?

- What proposals would be appropriate for the Public Realm areas within Tuam?

3.6 Transport and Access

Transport 21 is the capital investment framework under the National Development Plan for the development of transport infrastructure for the period 2006-2015. The main objectives are to create a high quality, efficient national road and rail network (the reopening of the Western Rail Corridor (WRC) is planned for under Transport 21) consistent with the National Spatial Strategy; to provide for a significant increase in public transport use in provincial cities and to strengthen national, regional and local public transport services

Transport and access play an important role for Tuam. It is important to pursue the integration of transport and land use by encouraging development which reduces dependence on the private car, and by promoting public transport and sustainable transport systems. This should be achieved by encouraging and consolidating development near or along existing public transport routes including the Western Rail Corridor (WRC).

Western Rail Corridor

Phase 2: The Athenry –Tuam line was scheduled for 2011 and

Phase 3: Tuam – Claremorris was scheduled for 2014 with all 3 Phases to be completed by 2014. It is expected that the re-opening of the WRC to Tuam will be delivered by 2012.

In the meantime, bus services continue to play a vital role in connecting Tuam and its environs to Galway Gateway and other important destinations.

The County Development Plan (Objective RT49) has identified Tuam as a location for an integrated transportation hub and GCC is committed to supporting the development of an Integrated Public Transport Facility in Tuam. The identification and location of such a site will be considered in the drafting of the new LAP.

Tuam Bypass

Modified proposals for the N17 Tuam Bypass scheme were approved by Galway County Council in October 2009. The scheme has now been upgraded to a four lane road and some changes have been made to junctions at the Ballygaddy Road and at the Weir Road. The scheme has been incorporated into the N17N18 Gort Tuam PPP scheme which is at tender stage and it is anticipated that construction will commence at the end of 2010. This scheme will greatly enhance connectivity of Tuam to Galway as well as to the south and the east of the County.

Details of the N17 Tuam Bypass can be found on Galway County website at -

<http://www.galway.ie/en/Services/RoadsTransportation/RoadProjects/>

Details of the N17N18 Gort Tuam PPP scheme can be found on the NRA website at -

<http://www.nra.ie/Publications/DownloadableDocumentation/PublicPrivatePartnership/file,16119,en.pdf>

Inner Ring Road

The Inner Ring Road has had some realignment(s) since it was first proposed within the existing Tuam 2005-2011 LAP. There is no date yet for its proposed construction. The route has been adopted under Part 8 planning process.

Accessibility is based on good planning, connectivity and safety. It is important to reduce reliance on motor transport. The greater the access, the less need there is to use motor transport as it increases the opportunity to walk and cycle throughout the town. This has environmental, social and health benefits.

Smarter Travel Project Fund:

Galway County Council has been awarded funding from the Department of Transport under the Smarter Travel Project Fund to develop an integrated walking and cycling strategy for the County of Galway and based on same

to deliver a number of pilot projects to achieve a modal shift in favour of walking and cycling over the period 2011-2012. The development of the strategy will include a particular focus on the walking and cycling linkages in the Hub town of Tuam with potential to develop one of these linkages as a pilot project.

Current forms of transport within Tuam include the private car, taxis and hackneys, buses, cycling and walking.

As part of preparing the Draft Plan GCC shall include policies/objectives to support the delivery of strategic infrastructure and the creation of Tuam as an integrated transportation hub.

Questions

- What transportation improvements are needed within Tuam and its environs?
- How best can transport and land-use planning be integrated to produce sustainable policies/objectives covering transport, roads, traffic management, cycling, walking, facilities for the mobility impaired, and parking.
- How can the use of public transport, cycling and walking be promoted within the plan and the use of the private car be reduced?
- How can transport and land use planning be integrated to produce a sustainable living and working environment?
- What measures are required to create safe, attractive good quality streets?
- Can you identify an appropriate location for the provision of an integrated transportation hub for Tuam?
- Where should new linkages be established?
- How does car parking impact on transportation. Is the car parking standards within the existing LAP appropriate?
- Is traffic congestion a problem in Tuam? Is the existing Traffic Management Plan 2007 working satisfactory? If not how can traffic issues be addressed in the Draft Plan?

- How can bus lanes, park and ride facilities be integrated with land use to improve transportation to Tuam?
- How can cycle-ways and Pedestrian ways be integrated into land use to ensure that they are an attractive alternative to the private car?
- How can the plan strike a balance between infrastructural development and protection of the natural and built environment?
- How can the Draft Plan provide good connectivity for recreational walking and cycling?

3.7 Infrastructure and Services

Wastewater Treatment

The existing Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) has a spare capacity of 2,000 Population Equivalent (PE). The Tuam Town Water Distribution and Main Drainage project which is commencing in March 2010 will provide for an upgraded network (Stage 2 of the Tuam Main Drainage Scheme which commenced in 1993). There are no short term plans to provide for a further upgrade of the WWTP at present.

The proposed Tuam Drainage Scheme - a 2 year project costing €28 million will replace the existing water mains network, leading to reduced leakage and increased security of the water supply

The project will provide for the following services -

- 32kms of water mains;
- 16kms of sewers;
- a new reservoir and stormwater tank to service the town;
- 10 km of broadband ducting;
- 10km of gas main;
- ESB/Eircom ducting
- The contracts also include the reinstatement of footpaths on a phased street by street approach.

A proposed Traffic Management Plan for the project will be put in place over the next few weeks in order to inform the public of what streets will be dug up so as to reduce disruption to the public and to the business community of Tuam.

As part of preparing the Draft Plan GCC shall be inserting a 100m buffer around the present Wastewater Treatment Plant site.

Public Water Supply

The Tuam RWSS at Luimnagh has 10,000m³/day spare capacity at present, provided that the current level of leakage detection and maintenance is maintained.

The water and wastewater infrastructure will be significantly enhanced, bringing it up to best international standards. This will help sustain jobs and facilitate future residential/commercial and industrial development within Tuam. In the long term this scheme will place Tuam in a better position to compete for economic development.

Water Quality

The protection of surface water and in particular groundwater, as it is generally a non-renewable resource, is of strategic importance within the County. Flooding can pollute water and cause significant damage to the local economy, local biodiversity and local public health.

The strategic aim of the Water Framework Directive is to protect and restore all waters to good status by 2015.

Waste Management

Waste prevention is at the core of Irish and EU environmental policy and therefore efforts must be aimed at reducing the ever-increasing quantities of waste generated. A region approach is taken toward tackling the waste problem with County Galway being covered by the Connaught Waste Management Plan 2006-2011.

Significant progress has been made towards recycling and this has been largely due to the introduction of segregated waste collection for dry recyclables, additional bring banks and recycling centres.

Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS)

The implementation of SuDS is encouraged within new development within the Draft LAP. The use of SuDS alleviates the risk of flooding, reduces pollutants, increases biodiversity and preserves the existing capacity of the drainage network. SuDS seek the minimisation of surface/storm water run-off associated with urban development and its management and treatment on site.

As part of preparing the Draft Plan GCC shall encourage the introduction of permeable surfaces, rainwater harvesting, green roofs, filter drains, constructed wetlands and retention ponds within new developments as opposed to the more traditional disposal of surface/storm water through piped drainage network and the use of impermeable surfaces, such as tarmac and concrete pavement.

Renewable/Green Energy

The National Climate Change Strategy 2007-2012 identifies improved energy efficiency and conservation in housing stock, alternative energy sources, maximised access to public transport, sustainable land use and continued improvement of waste management, as key measures in the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. Many small scale renewable energy sources can now be built without planning permission. The implementation of the EU Energy Performance in Buildings Directive and the new Building Energy Rating Certificate (BER) for public buildings and new and existing dwellings will make buildings more energy efficient.

Galway County Council has been working with the Tuam Chamber of Commerce since 2008 to identify ways to 'Green' the Town. This has involved looking at Tidy Towns Projects, visiting Sustainable Energy Ireland, learning from the Dundalk 2020 initiative and working with GMIT about energy initiatives for the Town including the delivery of outreach BER training in Tuam.

To date the following are proposed for Tuam Hub –

- GCC has produced an Energy Action Plan for energy efficiency measures and have identified the installation of a Combined Heat and Power Unit to Tuam Leisure Centre which will aid in the reduction of the carbon footprint of this facility;
- The new Tuam Area Offices will be included in GCC Energy Action Plan for energy efficiency measures;
- A 'Green Network' has been established with local businesses to reduce waste, water and energy usage;
- Natural Gas – with the mains gas pipe network being provided, GCC will be working with local business to see if there are opportunities to switch from oil/lpg;
- Create and improve public awareness and energy efficiency in the existing business community via the delivery of relevant seminars/workshops;
- The proposed testing of Near to Point Technology for public services including the library services in conjunction with the Tuam Chamber of Commerce;
- The development of a proposed wireless hot spot in the New Civic Offices;
- Energy proofing the Community Gym and Resource Facility;
- Ensuring the Tuam Leisure Centre Facility operates in an energy efficient manner in line with best practice for this sector';
- The green refurbishment of the Community House in Parkmore via RAPID;
- The greening of the Mall Theatre via improved insulation and the installation of solar powered heating system.

As part of preparing the Draft Plan GCC shall include policies/objectives to support energy efficiencies and renewable energy sources/technologies in order to enable the greening of the Town.

Questions

- What are the main infrastructure problems that should be considered in the Draft Plan?
- Where do you see the need for a sustainable urban drainage scheme and what is your preferred method?
- What policies/objectives could be included within the Draft LAP for Tuam to ensure that development does not exceed infrastructural capacity?
- In what way should the plan make provision to improve telecommunications?
- How can the plan strike a balance between infrastructural development and protection of the natural and built environment?
- Do you feel Tuam is under serviced in certain services/utilities? Identify which service/utility and its location if required?
- What could be done to reduce waste generation?
- How can Tuam preserve its unique environment while enabling sustainable development?
- How can the Tuam LAP encourage energy conservation and energy efficiency and the provision and development of alternative sources of renewable energy?
- Do you see Tuam becoming a 'green hub' and if so how do you see this being achieved?

3.8 SEA Directive/Habitats Directive

SEA Directive

The EU Directive 2001/42/EC of 2001, also known as the SEA Directive, has been transposed into Irish Law in the form of Regulations. The Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004 (S.I. 436 of 2004) applies to the preparation, review and amendment of land use plans. SEA is intended to provide the framework for influencing decision-making at an early stage when plans are being prepared.

The purpose of the SEA Directive is to ensure that environmental consequences of certain plans and programmes are identified and assessed during their preparation and before their adoption and that the plans or programmes are modified where adverse impacts are likely and/or that appropriate mitigation measures are incorporated to alleviate potential impacts.

The SEA process improves the quality of the plan making process by:

- Facilitating the identification and appraisal of alternative plan strategies – consideration of alternatives is required;
- Raising awareness of the environmental impacts of plans – while it is not always possible to eliminate all potentially negative impacts, SEA helps clarify the likely consequences of selected options and makes provision for mitigation;
- Encourages the inclusion of measurable targets and indicators, to facilitate effective monitoring of plan implementation.

SEA and the Plan making process

The SEA Regulations stipulate that SEA is mandatory for certain plans while screening for SEA is required for other plans that fall below the specified thresholds.

The SEA must run in parallel with the preparation of a new development plan/local area plan or programme.

Stage 1 – SEA Screening

Screening is a process for deciding whether a particular plan (development plan or local area plan) where the population involved in less than 10,000 persons or a variation to a plan, would be likely to have significant effects on the environment, and would thus warrant SEA. The SEA Regulations 2004 require case by case screening of such plans and variations based on the criteria set out in Schedule 2A of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001. These criteria must be considered when determining the likely significant effects on the environment caused by development proposals in a particular plan.

As part of the preparation of the Draft Tuam LAP GCC are preparing a SEA Screening Report to assess the need for an SEA as required under Article 14A of the SEA Regulations and including consultation with the appropriate Environmental Authorities.

Habitats Directive

Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive requires that Appropriate Assessment (AA), or screening for AA, be undertaken to determine that impact of plans and projects on Natura 2000 Site, which would include land use plans such as the Draft Tuam LAP.

The purpose of Article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC is to ensure that certain plans and programmes do not impact negatively on any Natura 2000 Site. An AA is an evaluation, based on best scientific knowledge, by a person with ecological expertise, of potential impacts of a plan or scheme on the conservation objectives of any Natura Site. This is understood to include Natura 2000 Sites not situated in the area encompassed by the Draft Plan or scheme but could potentially be impacted upon through 'ex-situ' impacts which may include a study area up to 15km.

AA should also develop, where necessary, mitigation or avoidance measures to prevent negative effects on a Natura 2000 Site. The impacts assessed must include the indirect and cumulative impacts of approving the plan, considered with any current or proposed activities, developments or policies impacting on the Natura Site.

Appropriate Assessment and the Plan making process

Generally a full Appropriate Assessment comprises of a number of stages:

- Stage 1- Screening to identify the likely impacts on a Natura Site by a Plan/project either alone or in combination with other plans/projects;
- Stage 2- Consideration of the impact on the integrity of the Natura Site of the Plan/Project, either alone or in combination with other plans/projects;
- Stage3 - Assessment of alternative solutions;
- Stage4 - Assessment where no alternative solutions exist and where adverse impacts remain.

Stage 1 - AA Screening

The purpose of this stage is to evaluate the effects of a project or plan, either alone or in combination with other projects or plans, upon a Natura 2000 Site and to determine whether it can be objectively shown that the plan will, or will not, have adverse impacts on a Natura 2000 Site. The competent authority (i.e. Galway County Council in this case) cannot approve a plan unless it can be objectively shown that the plan will not have adverse impacts on any Natura 2000 Site.

As part of the preparation of the Draft Tuam LAP GCC are in the process of undertaking AA Screening (Stage 1) for the Draft Tuam LAP. However, AA screening (and full AA if necessary) will be carried out before the adoption of the LAP.

AA screening of the Draft Tuam LAP shall be based on any ecological information available to GCC and on an adequate description of the plan and its likely environmental impacts. This should take into account any policies that will set the terms for future development.

The area which is designated for conservation within the Plan area is the River Clare, (which is protected under the Lough Corrib SAC site code: 000297).

The site synopsis for Lough Corrib maybe accessed on National Parks and Wildlife Service's website at <http://www.npws.ie/en/ConservationSites/> Individual site maps are also available on this website.

Any mitigation measures or measures proposed to avoid impacts on Natura 2000 Sites will be incorporated into the policy detail of the Draft Tuam LAP before finalisation.

3.9 EU Flood Directive

The effects of climate change, more severe rainfall events and rising sea levels, have increased risks of flooding and have put areas at risk that may not have flooded in the past. In recent years, we have become increasingly aware of the importance of factoring the risk to people, property, the overall economy and the environment from flooding into the planning system, and the role that good planning has in avoiding and reducing such risk that could otherwise arise in the future.

The EU Flood Directive recognises the importance of land use management and spatial planning as a key tool in flood risk management. The EU Flood Directive 2007/60/EC was transposed into Irish Law in November 2009. The key requirement of Articles 4 & 5 of this Directive requests the production of Preliminary Flood Risk Assessments (PFRA's by December 2011), Article 6 requests the production of Flood Maps (by December 2013), Article 7 requests the production of Flood Risk Management Plans (FRMP's by December 2015). Other provisions include the co-ordination with the EU Water Framework Directive (WFD), implementation and trans-boundary co-operation.

The OPW as the lead agency for flood risk management will continue its work in developing indicative flood maps and catchment-based Flood Risk Management Plans in partnership with Local Authorities.

Flood Risk Assessment

The DOEHLG and the OPW have published Planning Guidelines – The Planning System and Flood Risk Management (November 2009) which recommends a clear and transparent assessment of flood risk at all stages in the planning process. The new flood risk assessment system will be aligned with the existing SEA process introducing processes for identifying flood risk and determining what flood risk assessment is required and carrying out such assessments similar to the overall system for screening and scoping under the SEA process.

The Draft Tuam LAP is subject to a **Strategic Flood Risk Assessment** during the plan making process. The key principles of SFRA include the sequential approach - to avoid, substitute, justify and mitigate.

The SFRA has 3 stages:

- Stage 1:** Flood Risk Identification – identifies flood risk from all sources at the earliest stage in the planning process.
- Stage 2:** Flood Risk Assessment - confirms the sources of flooding that may affect a plan area/development site, to appraise the adequacy of existing information and to scope the extent of the risk of flooding which may involve preparing indicative flood zone maps. Where hydraulic models exist the potential impact of a development on flooding elsewhere and of the scope of possible mitigation measures can be assessed.
- Stage 3:** Detailed Flood Risk Assessment – assesses the flood risk issues in sufficient detail and provides a quantitative appraisal of potential flood risk to proposed or existing development or land to be zoned, of its potential impact of flood risk elsewhere and effectiveness of any proposed mitigation measures.

The Guidelines defines 3 types or levels of flood zones –

Flood Zone **A**: Probability of flooding from rivers or seas is **highest** (greater than 1% or 1 in 100 years for river flooding or 0.5% or 0.5% or 1 in 200 years for coastal flooding);

Flood Zone **B**: Probability of flooding from rivers and the sea is **moderate** (between 0.1% or 1 in 1000 years and 1% or 1 in 100 years for river flooding and between 0.1% or 1 in 1000 years and 0.55 of 1 in 200 for coastal flooding);

Flood Zone **C**: Probability of flooding from rivers and the sea is **low** (less than 0.1% or 1 in 1000 years for both river and coastal flooding).

The **Justification Test (Stages 2 & 3)** rigorously assesses the appropriateness, or otherwise of particular developments that are being considered in areas of moderate or high flood risk. GCC are in the process of undertaking Stages 1 & 2 of the SFRA's for the Draft Tuam LAP. However, Stage 3 screening if required will be carried out before the final adoption of the LAP.

3.10 EU Water Framework Directive & Western River Basin Management Plan

The EU Water Framework Directive (WFD) was adopted in 2000 to create a framework for the protection of natural waters through catchment management. Waters include rivers, canals, lakes, reservoirs, groundwaters, protected areas (including wetlands and other water-dependent ecosystems), estuaries and coastal waters.

Member States must ensure that their waters achieve at least good status by 2015 and that status doesn't deteriorate in any waters. To achieve good status and preserve the best waters, it is necessary to prepare and implement management plans for those waters.

Planning is based on river basins or catchments, so that all activities with a potential to impact on waters are managed in an integrated manner. Individual river basins are grouped into river basin districts; the districts do not follow administrative boundaries but are defined by catchment areas of rivers.

Tuam lies within the Western River Basin District. The River Basin Management Plan for the Western River Basin District, covering the period 2010 to 2015, aims to protect all waters within the district and, where necessary, improve waters and achieve sustainable water use.

The implementation of the Plan will bring incremental improvement leading to the majority of waters reaching at least "good status" at the latest by 2027, benefitting the whole community by providing long-term sustainable access to and use of those waters. Where waters are currently at less than good status, they must be improved until they reach good status and there must be no deterioration in the status of waters which are already at good status.

The River Clare flows along the north-western boundary of the LAP development boundary. This portion of the River Clare has been assigned Moderate status by the EPA. The Western River Basin District Management Plan requires that the river achieves good status by 2021. The River Nanny flows through Tuam, above Tuam this river is classed as High status, while below Tuam and above the confluence with the Clare River the classification is Moderate. The Western River Basin Management Plan requires that there is no deterioration from High status, while the section at Moderate status must achieve Good status by 2021.

The groundwater body underlying the Tuam area has been assigned poor status. The Plan requires the groundwater body to achieve good status by 2021.

In preparing the Tuam LAP Galway County Council shall include policies and objectives to support the implementation of the Western River Basin Management Plan 2010-2015.

4. OTHER ISSUES?

Pre - Draft Submissions and Observations

Written submissions or observations are invited from the general public. The submissions should be made in writing to the following address, to arrive not later than 4.00pm on **Friday March 26th 2010**.

Review of the Tuam Local Area Plan 2005-2011,
The Forward Planning Section,
Galway County Council,
County Hall,
Prospect Hill,
Galway.

Pre- Draft Submissions or observations may also be forwarded by fax

Guidelines for making a Pre - Draft Submission

- Pre Draft Submissions should be clear, simple and concise.
- Submissions should contain name(s), address(es) of the person, group or public body from whom same is received (and **map** if necessary).
- A submission should preferably indicate how it relates to the best interest of the wider community and common good.
- A submission should have regard to the principles of proper planning and sustainable development of the area.
- The policies and objectives of a LAP must be consistent with the County Development Plan; therefore it is essential that submissions for the LAP are in conformity with the County Development Plan 2009-2015.

to 091 509199 or by email to localareaplan@galwaycoco.ie

All Pre -Draft Submissions should state the name(s) and address(s) of the person, group or public body from whom same is received.

All Pre -Draft Submissions received during this period will accordingly be considered by the Council in drafting the proposed Local Area Plan.

Please note that there will be further opportunity to make submissions and observations when the Draft Local Area Plan goes on public display at a later date.

APPENDIX 1

- Maps of Tuam and Environs