

Theme 4 Built Environment and Placemaking Sustainable Neighbourhoods

Eleven actions are listed below with their context.

Despite the title inferring that this theme focuses on present and future built environments, 4 out of 6 of the questions refer to heritage, conservation areas or the past only. It is unfortunate that an opportunity to create better spaces for residents and a better quality of life going forward is reduced to one third of the focus. We are fully aware of the importance of heritage and conservation areas. We acknowledge their importance in defining sustainability pathways. **Action 1 the focus of such a section cannot be mostly looking backwards there must be a balance between our focus on the past and on the present and future.**

Action 2 - this part of the development plan needs to be tied to the SDGs which are not mentioned in your questions despite being the international standard for sustainability. Every action needs to name the SDGs it impacts. **Action 3 - all actions need targets for which human resources and material resources are committed and time lines set.**

1. How best can the policies of the development plan contribute to the protection and appreciation of monuments and places of archaeological importance, Protected Structures and Architectural Conservation Areas? The council have a dedicated heritage officer and the plan needs to guide his work in protection and appreciation. The plan can determine more action in these areas and focus appropriate human and financial resources to this effect. Conversely the energy and infrastructure theme has no dedicated staff and no agency in the galway city council.
2. What policies are required to protect the architectural and archaeological heritage while recognising the need for reuse, and/ or sustainable development where appropriate? Policies exist to protect the former but policies toward reuse and sustainable development in the built environment are relatively thin on the ground. There is a register of sustainable resources for buildings at <https://www.igbc.ie/epd-home/> and at <https://www.greenspec.co.uk/green-products/> and **Action 4 new planning permissions should determine the use of same. Action Reusing materials should be a part of planning permission requirements.** As a start a new planning permission requirement could easily determine that 5% of a buildings materials (in either weight or cost) could be salvaged from previous use. This 5% should be reviewed within the life of this plan and if working increased to 10%. This could be a demonstration for other local authorities in Ireland. Rethink Consumption is working with our local authority to reuse and

remanufacture paint and this could be a significant contribution toward reuse needs.

3. Are there additional areas within the city, which display a distinctive character that should be designated as Architectural Conservation Areas? **Action 5 Jim Higgins and Galways conservation architects should be consulted on this question as an action in the development plan. A delphi method should be carried out to determine this.**
4. How can we achieve a balance between development pressures and the protection of structures of architectural, artistic, historical, archaeological, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest? Currently a balance is struck, absentee landlords of protected buildings which are being let into disrepair should be incentivised to complete works. **Action 6 - to compulsory offer such buildings (unused or unoccupied for 5 years) to the local market at a reasonable market cost. This would make sure that our protected buildings were better looked after.**
5. Thinking about where you live, what measures or policies could be introduced to contribute to the sustainability of your neighbourhood or community? A playground or two is needed between Cullough and woodquay as none exist. **Action 7 Install 3 simple wooden playgrounds in the local parks (like the plots)**, these need not cost €200k but perhaps sufficient units could be installed for €25k to provide a number of fun areas. **Action 8 lay a cycle pathway from Menlo to the city, the road is wide in most places.** **Action 9 open the Menlo boreens and maintain them for walkers and cyclers.**
6. How should sustainable neighbourhoods develop across the city to cater for new growth and development, especially in areas B - Established Suburbs, C - Inner Residential Areas and D - City Centre Residential as identified on page 30? **Action 10 fund a comprehensive assessment of sustainable and integrated building opportunities in the city so that household occupants are advantaged in terms of proximity to necessary resources, proximity to sustainable transport opportunities, proximity to green and blue experiences touching nature and biodiversity, and low ecological footprint housing opportunities.**

Neighbourhood orientation is key in relation to passive heating opportunities. The materials utilised, built form and layout of such neighbourhoods could be designed by an energy agency if such existed in the city council. Private practitioners follow the market and the customer but a council led energy agency would be the ideal design centre for such neighbourhoods. The galway energy agency is mentioned in the last development plan 2017-2023 but the companies office show the galway energy agency was dissolved in October 2014. Peter Keavney its manager at the time of his decease was working just

one day a week in the galway energy agency. This means it did not have dedicated staff and it would appear that other themes here are covered with paid up units or staff in the council eg: the heritage officer is a dedicated position, also the parks unit in galway city council have about 30 staff, why is energy the poor relation. It is ubiquitous and is required for everything we do. Why was the galway energy agency described as an important energy actor for the council in the last development plan when it was closed 3 years prior to that plan? Why was the council happy to propose this when it was no longer functioning and when it did function it did not have dedicated staff. Currently there is no dedicated energy auditor in the council with the necessary efficiency and renewables experience, knowledge and qualifications. The 70% renewable targets mean that government and local government have to up their game considerably. The galway energy cooperative currently work in this space in the city, they are building an energy master plan for the city and have attracted considerable funding from national and international funders. They have also attracted key staff from other energy agencies in Ireland such as the Tipperary energy agency. A collaboration between the galway energy cooperative and galway city council would be a good use of local resources and knowledge as they have staff and a considerable volunteer base. **Action 11 before we develop sustainable neighbourhoods we need sustainability practitioners working in the city council to define ways forward within the lifetime of this plan - we need to set up an energy agency or collaborate with galway energy cooperative.** If the galway energy cooperative is not utilised then a fit for purpose energy agency needs to be set up, with a dedicated senior engineer, an administrator and 2 junior engineers. These engineers above all need energy efficiency and renewable energy project experience and sustainable design experience for buildings and neighbourhoods. This capacity currently exists in galway energy cooperative. The responsible unit needs to be housed in the council so that the work of the council can occupy it. It is not appropriate to tender work of this weight to others who do not reside in the council and work within its context and constraints. This work relates to the lifestyles and quality of life of our residents and we need professionals based in galway to provide that. Significant work load exists and this will be discussed more fully in the energy theme of this consultation.