



Rebuilding
Ireland

Galway County Council - Housing Unit

**Proposed 31-unit Public Housing Development at
Mountain Rd., Maigh Cuilinn, Co Galway**

**Planning & Development Regulations 2001
Part 8 Planning Application Process**

Design Statement



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1. Overview of Proposed Development

Galway County Council, in conjunction with Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, under ‘Rebuilding Ireland – Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness’, proposes to carry out a 31 no. unit social housing development in the townlands of Coill Bhruachláin, & Gort Uí Lochlainn, comprising of 27 no. two-storey two-bed dwellings and 4 no. two-storey three-bed dwellings.

The site of the proposed development is located in close proximity to the town center, between existing residential estates to the north and south. A shopping center is located opposite the site to the South East. The site occupies circa.1.7ha of a larger parcel of lands (5.9ha) comprising variable and overgrown wooded area. An arborist’s survey report is included in the application outlining recommendations for management of the site as it integrates with the wider area.



Above: Extract from Site Location Map

The land is owned by Galway Co. Co. with a range of zoning designations as per the zoning map at Fig. 1 below. The zoning boundaries together with the Arborists recommendations have largely dictated the scope and shape of the proposed development as presented, the proposed housing units being arranged to occupy the Residential Phase 1 zoned area.

An urban-style housing development is proposed and owing to the significant space allocated to existing woodland or proposed landscaping / planning, a relatively compact and dense housing footprint results. The development is divided into three distinct streets, breaking up the overall design of 31 houses into smaller discerning zones and two being cul-de-sacs. This allows each street or group of houses to develop an individual identity within the overall scheme.

Project Details

Area of site 17,122m² / 1.7Ha.

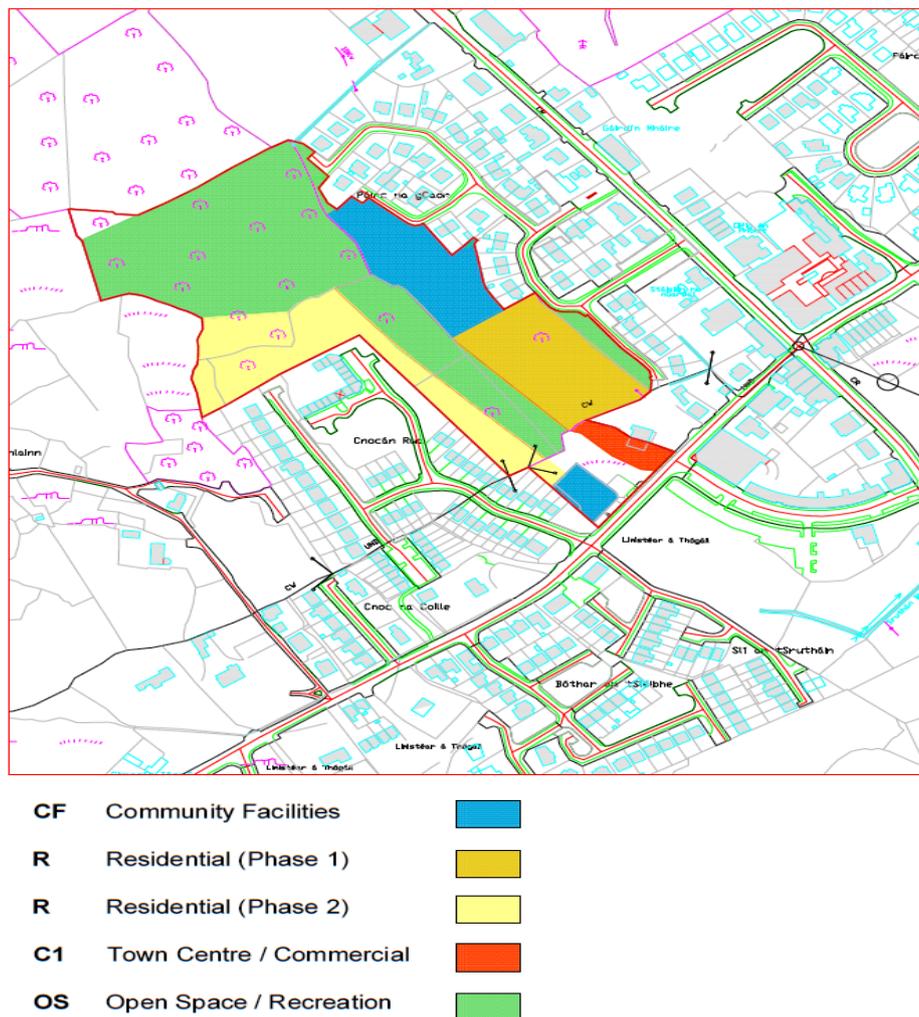
31 Social Houses at density of 18 units per hectare.

Accommodation provided.

- Type A - 1no three-bed two-storey (dual fronted, 96m² GFA)
- Type B - 27no. two-bed two-storey (84m² GFA)
- Type C - 3no. three-bed two-storey (96m² GFA)

Amenity Open space provided 3,479m² or 20% of site area.

Figure 1 – Maigh Cuilinn Zoning Plan / Land Uses



The site is accessed from Mountain Rd. (L-1320) on the west side of the town, within 150m from the existing N59. There is an existing playground close to the new estate entrance which will be retained, however the parking spaces along Mountain Rd. will be relocated to a more suitable and safer location along the new estate access road.

The existing 'Bring Banks' off Mountain Rd. will likewise be relocated, to a more suitable and safer location along the new estate access road. The relocation of the foregoing will result in an improvement in road safety and creation of adequate traffic sight lines at the L-1320 junction. Excavation of existing ground at the proposed site will serve to reduce the height of the development and will provide opportunity to reuse materials in filling low lying areas of the undulating ground along with forming the access road.

Additional development proposals include a new junction with existing road L-1320, relocation of existing bring banks, associated CCTV and parking; relocation of access and parking area for existing playground; site clearance works, hard & soft landscaping, roads, footpaths, boundary treatments, public lighting, parking, new connections to existing services and all associated site development works.



2. Design Features

The design of the proposed development arranges the houses in terraced groups. All houses have private open space to the rear and a small front garden to accommodate bin stores (mid-terrace units only). All units incorporate select brick around the front entrance to give a distinct finish demarking the front door and entrance focal point.

The housing is orientated north-east and south-west, so that all houses will get optimum sunlight, on both sides of the houses. The two-bed unit has a kitchen/living area that can be combined into one large space (or separated as the case may be). This allows for flexibility and ensures that occupants have access good sunlight at various times of the day.

The larger three-bed units have separate kitchen and living areas, one to the front and one to the rear, opening onto the rear garden. These units are used as ‘bookends’ to turn the corners at the ends of the terraces ensuring passive supervision by virtue of the dual aspect facades.

The ideology of the layout is to root the estate firmly in its pre-determined setting, create a sense of place that integrates with the existing established neighbourhood, while making a positive contribution to the existing Maigh Cuilinn locality.

The units will be BER A2 energy performance rated this being achieved mainly by use of Air-to-Water heat pumps for space heating & hot water needs. Demand-control ventilation will provide only the required amount of ventilation. The houses will not directly consume fossil fuels as stoves and accompanying chimneys are not proposed. There will be no need for immersion heaters or electric showers, therefore running costs for the occupiers will be minimal.



3. Public Realm & Materials

The proposed layout has been developed and refined hand-in-hand with the landscaping and the materials palette to ensure the finished estate will make a positive contribution to this established locality. The overall scheme will create a useable and appealing high-quality public realm with the landscaped areas providing enjoyable, functional and a visually appealing environment.

Sustainable low maintenance materials are proposed throughout. Concrete laid with ample positive drainage (dished channel & gully) will be used for footpaths; closed-texture bituminous materials (asphalt, wearing course macadam / thermoplastic coatings) will be considered for parking areas having regard to longevity, maintenance needs and degree of susceptibility to ice formation. Materials will be laid to falls to ensure positive drainage and removal of surface water. Prevention of ice underfoot will be a primary consideration.

The houses are designed in groups of terraced houses, so some of the bin stores are at the front of the houses. These will be designed with robust materials, brick, steel and timber infill.



Left: Indicative Bin stores / front of terrace units

Below: Indicative Materials palette



4. County Development Plan (CDP) 2015-2021

A primary objective of the CDP (section 3.3.2) in relation to residential development is to deliver high quality, sustainable living environments which are attractive, safe and vibrant and meet the needs of the residents and the community. In planning for future development and in assessing future development proposals, the Council is seeking to ensure that the objectives below are achieved. County Development Plan objectives are listed in the left-hand column, the Architects' responses to these in the proposed development are listed opposite in right-hand column.

GCC County Development Plan Objectives	Design Proposal Responses
<p>The overall design approach is to create a community rather than a new housing development.</p>	<p>The site for 31 houses is located in the centre of the village, adjacent to existing residential areas, within walking distance to all local amenities and services, incl. shopping centre opposite.</p> <p>The estate is laid out in three streets, two of which are cul-de-sacs for development as homezones / shared spaces.</p> <p>Whilst screening (planting / landscaping) is provided to the North East of the site, pedestrian connectivity is maintained between adjacent residential areas for convenience of residents.</p>
<p>While residentially zoned areas are intended primarily for housing development, a range of other uses, particularly those that have the potential to foster the development of new residential communities maybe considered e.g. crèches, schools, nursing homes or homes for older persons, open space, recreation and amenity uses.</p>	<p>The development doesn't include other specific uses; however, the development is located in close proximity to nearby services, amenities and transport links to Galway City and beyond.</p> <p>The proposal not only takes advantage of adjacent open spaces and recreation facilities, it also improves access and parking facilities for the wider community as cited above in relation to upgrades of existing Playground and Bring Bank.</p>
<p>To create high standards of layout, design, and landscaping, and to achieve a general segregation from roads used by through traffic from the outset.</p>	<p>The proposal is designed to a high standard with good design of home-zones and low maintenance finishes and enhanced landscaping. There will be no through traffic within the residential areas, streets being cul-de-sac / homezone areas with shared surfaces for children, pedestrians and residential parking uses. Parking for cyclists is provided throughout.</p> <p>The development, whilst intended to be compact set amid green predominance, remains fully</p>

	accessible by refuse collection and fire fighting vehicles, as required.
Appropriate provision is made for amenity and public open space as an integral part of new development proposals.	Ample green amenity space is provided for within the proposed site area which adjoins the existing Maigh Cuilinn playground, access & parking being upgraded as part of the proposed development. The development is surrounded by existing wooded areas which are the subject of the arborist's survey report. Recommendations include retention of trees / vegetation and supplementary planting.
The physical design of a proposed development should accord with the policies and objectives set out in the development standards contained in Chapter 13 (Development Management Standards and Guidelines) of this plan.	The proposed design is in accordance with the policies and objectives set out in Chapter 13. The design uses DoEHLG Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas - Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2009 including its accompanying document Urban Design Manual – Best Practices Guide 2009. The design is broken up into streets to give each housing group its own identity. Parking is clustered into groups enabling maximum allocation of development area to usable green open space. There is a pathway link to the adjoining estate to facilitate pedestrian movement, permeability of the wider area and fostering of community needs. Density is low to medium by virtue of the space given to existing and proposed green areas (housing is relatively small & compact footprint).
Proposed developments must also have regard to the policies and objectives for architectural and archaeological heritage set out in Chapter 9 (Heritage, Landscape and Environmental Management) of this plan.	Archaeological and arborist reports are included as part of the planning submission. The design has set out to minimise the footprint of the infrastructural development and maximise the opportunity to render existing areas undisturbed or supplemented with proposed landscaping & planting.

5. Flood Risk

A Flood Risk assessment for the development proposals has been carried out by Tobin Consulting Engineers. The report is included with this application and the conclusions are summarized as follows.

Fluvial Flooding:

Based on the results of the PFRA Study it is predicted that the subject site is not liable to fluvial (river) flooding during a 1000-year MRFS (mid-range flood scenario). It is therefore estimated that the risk of fluvial flooding to the development is minimal.

Groundwater Flooding:

Based on a review of the PFRA (Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment) study and GSI mapping of karst features in the area, there is no evidence to suggest groundwater flooding at the site. It is estimated that the risk of groundwater flooding to the proposed development is minimal.

Pluvial Flooding:

Pluvial modelling and analysis carried out by HR Wallingford as part of their PFRA study indicates that pluvial flooding (ponding of surface water) is not likely to occur within the proposed residential development site.

Impact of the Development Elsewhere:

The Report states ‘the development will not affect floodplain storage or obstruct the flow path of any existing watercourses.’

The drainage proposal is confirmed to be ‘surface water arising onsite will be managed by a self-contained storm water drainage system designed by specialists. The site drainage will include measures in accordance with the requirements of SUDS to limit runoff from the development to greenfield runoff rates.’

The conclusion in the Flood Risk Report is - ‘It is estimated that the risk of flooding the proposed development will be minimal, and it is predicted that the development will not increase the risk of flooding elsewhere’.

Surface-water Ponding at Mountain Rd.

Issues with existing drainage and periodic ponding adjacent to the site at Mountain Rd. are acknowledged. Galway County. Council., having regard to the Flood Risk Report and to the ‘surface water collection and disposal on-site’ proposals, is satisfied that the issue will not be exacerbated by the proposed development.

Separate to the proposed housing development, measures to resolve existing drainage issues at Mountain Rd. and the wider Maigh Cuilinn area are in train. A draft Preliminary Report has been submitted to Galway County. Council’s Infrastructure & Operations Unit outlining

options and proposed solutions. Assessment of options is underway and measures will be taken by Galway County Council's Infrastructure and Operations Unit to implement these as soon as possible and prior to the completion of the development.



6. Ecology

Ecological studies and assessments have been completed for the proposed development. The following reports are included in the Part 8 planning pack:

1. Ecology & EIA Screening Report
2. Appropriate Assessment Screening Report;

The **Ecology Report** concluded as follows:

Ecological desk and field studies were undertaken for the proposed Maigh Cuilinn housing development. Key ecological receptors identified with reference to the proposed development site include the protected sites of Lough Corrib SAC and Ross Lake and Woods SAC, the existing woodland on site, and protected faunal species including bats and birds.

The Ecology Report explores the issues in detail and includes mitigation measure recommendations.

The **EIA Screening Report** concluded as follows:

The proposed development does not meet or exceed Schedule 5 Part 1 or Part 2 thresholds and criteria, and as such, EIA is not a mandatory requirement.

The proposed development can be considered a sub-threshold project under Part 2 Class 10 Infrastructure Projects (b) (i) dwelling units; and (iv) urban development,

as the proposed development is for 31 residential unit on a site located within the built-up area of Maigh Cuilinn.

A screening determination however is required for a sub-threshold development. An EIA screening has been carried out considering the nature of the proposed development, its size and location having due regard to the criteria listed in Schedule 7 and the relevant information listed in Schedule 7A. It is concluded that the proposed development is unlikely to result in significant effects on the environment, and that the consideration of appropriate mitigation measures reduces the potential effects further.

The **AA Screening Report** concluded as follows:

Based on the information provided in relation to the works involved for the proposed development, this screening exercise concludes likely significant effects can be ruled out for the European sites including Lough Corrib SPA, Lough Corrib SAC, Galway Bay Complex SAC, Inner Galway Bay SPA and Ross Lake and Woods SAC.

It was determined that there is no entry points to the protected sites via surface and ground waters and due to the distances of the potentially impacted sites to the proposed development, significant effects from sediment and pollution run off can be ruled out for Lough Corrib SAC and SPA, the Galway Bay Complex SAC, Inner Galway Bay SPA and Ross Lake and Woods SAC. Impacts on the lesser horseshoe bat, which is an Annex II and IV species under the EU Habitats Directive, were also ruled out, as no impacts were identified to the conservation objectives for this species in the Lough Corrib SAC and Ross Lake and Woods SAC.

AA Screening Determination from ABP

A screening determination for Appropriate Assessment pursuant to Article 250(3)(b) of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001-2020 has been obtained from An Bord Pleanála (case ref. ABP-307007-20). The Board has directed the local authority not to prepare a Natura Impact Statement in respect of the proposed development as per Board Direction ref. BD-006142-20.

This Direction further supports the findings of the AA Screening Report and its conclusions adopted by Galway County Council. A copy of An Bord Pleanála Order is included in the Part 8 planning pack.

7. Tree Survey & Arborist Report

A tree survey has been carried out by Cunnane Stratton Reynolds across the 5.9Ha area. The resulting report is included in the Part 8 planning pack.

Trees which are required to be removed to accommodate the new housing development are detailed in the report section 3.6. It is noted also that a significant part of the lands in the ownership of Galway County Council will be left as a wooded area.

A number of trees within the development footprint itself are to remain unaffected and will be retained as part of the proposed estate; these are also detailed in the report and indicated on the site layout drawings.

The proposed site layout & design strategy works with both the existing trees and topography on the site. A buffer strip of green space is indicated along the North East boundary (Páirc na gCaor), which will assist with screening and in the actual retention of several larger trees found along this boundary.

Supplementary landscaping & select planting of the residual green areas forms part of the proposed development along with adoption of key objectives of the new 'All-Ireland Pollinator Plan 2021-2025.'

8. Invasive Plant Species

The 5.9Ha area owned by Galway County Council was surveyed for presence of invasive alien plant species. Winter Heliotrope, Mare's Tail and Gunnera have been identified on the proposed site area. The infestation is recorded at 5% to 25% and the recommendation is to dispose off-site in a/c with best practice. Gunnera and Winter Heliotrope will likely be dealt with in advance of any construction works.

9. Archaeology

An Archaeological Impact Assessment has been carried out by Seanarc Archaeology and their resulting report accompanies the Part 8 planning pack.

The report concludes that two areas of archaeological potential exist within the relative proximity of the site. These are the buffer zones (SMR Zone: R127214) associated with the Megalith Structure 520m to the west of the development area, and (SMR Zone: R127219) associated with the Cashel 570m to the North-East. Due to their distance from the development area, no impacts upon these Areas of Archaeological Potential are predicted.

The report recommended that:

1. A suitably qualified archaeologist shall monitor all ground disturbance works;
2. Archaeological investigation, in the form of targeted test trenching, should be employed to investigate the nature, date, extent and significance of any archaeology present within the footprint of the proposed development area; and
3. This work should be undertaken in accordance with Section 26 of the National Monuments Acts 1930 – 2004, the National Monuments Service (Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs) and the National Museum of Ireland.



10. Privacy and Amenity

The layout, whilst open in aspect, has been designed to achieve a careful balance between infrastructural footprint and integration with existing green area. Distance from unit facades (building line) to the adjoining Páirc na gCoar has been maximized taking account of the R1 zoning boundary constraints. As per the arborist's report, existing trees are retained and these will be supplemented with additional planting to enhance screening and privacy.

All units have substantial rear gardens spaces with minimum 11m dimension provided (22m between rear faces of back to back units). 1.8m high garden dividing walls will provide screening to private open spaces and prevent overlooking.

The terraced houses are grouped generally in fours, so that the two end-houses have side access to the rear gardens. Lockable gates will be provided for security and to prevent casual access to these areas.

The terrace ends have dual aspect three-bedroom units providing the necessary passive supervision on all sides (no blank gables).

Party walls will be detailed and constructed to meet the requirements of TGD Part E and minimize the transmission of sound from unit to unit.

11. Estate Parking

Recommended parking standard of 1.5no. spaces per unit have been provided. Passive supervision & security is inherent due to the parking spaces being close to the houses and the appearance of the development remains uncluttered without overwhelming the kerb appeal with excessive parking throughout.

Variations of the parking arrangements have been allowed for to reduce the regimented appearance and small outdoor spaces included to the front of the dwellings which could accommodate small grassed/planted area thus reducing the dominance of hardscaping. It is also be proposed to provide tree planting to soften the impact further within an intended homely streetscape.

A reduced kerb upstand height within homezones, together with appropriate warning signage at entrance points will further define and identify these high value amenity spaces.

Bicycle parking is proposed within the estate to promote an alternative to travelling by car. Provision for electric vehicle charging points (future) will be included to parking spaces.

12. Climate Change

Over half the energy consumption worldwide is attributable to that used in buildings, the resulting CO2 release adding significantly to climate change. The Energy Performance of Buildings Directive aims to address this issue requiring that post-2020, all buildings should be near zero energy buildings (nZEB). The 31 units proposed in this development are A2 energy rated and nZEB compliant. Further climate friendly features include:

- Designed to optimise the orientation and aspect of each unit / maximise solar gain
- Reduce heat loss through openings with efficient window specification
- Air-tight construction, reduced thermal-bridging, high levels of insulation
- Ventilation requirements met via ‘demand control ventilation’
- Departure from fossil-fuel dependent heating system
- Specification of a high efficiency air source heat pump providing space heating and hot water needs
- Measures for reduction in water consumption, e.g. low-flow cisterns
- significantly reduced operating costs of the dwellings
- Substantial materials and energy savings from not having to construct chimneys from foundation to chimney-pot level
- Construction phase will require a ‘Construction & Demolition Waste Management Plan’, stipulating maximum reduction, reuse and recycling of all materials
- The site location will afford opportunity for more sustainable modes of transport
- Landscaped to promote biodiversity
- Street lighting will be energy efficient LED lighting
- Galway County Council habitually utilise an energy supplier that is committed to the development of renewable and sustainable energy sources.
- Provision for electric vehicle charging points (future) will be included to parking spaces.

This approach to the proposed development will foster a reduction in energy consumption, a reduction in carbon footprint, and a corresponding reduction in factors contributing to climate change.



13. Traffic & Safety Improvements

Existing parking spaces (5no.) along Mountain Rd. that currently serve the playground are being relocated along the new estate access road (as shown on the site layout plans). Significant improvements in this regard include:

1. Improved safety by virtue of removing pedestrians (incl. children) from the Mountain Rd.
2. Provision of unobstructed sightlines for users of the new junction with Mountain Rd.

Use of pedestrian guarding measures (e.g. bollards) and alterations to the road markings on Mountain Rd. will prevent hap-hazard parking undermining the measures in this proposed development to improve road safety. A Road Safety Audit is included in the Part 8 planning pack.

Vehicle swept-path analysis drawings (Autotrack) are included in the Part 8 planning pack demonstrating there is adequate space for the safe turning movements of large car, fire and refuse vehicles in the various zones within the development.

Pedestrian Safety at Mountain Rd.

Safe pedestrian connectivity to / from the proposed development has been considered as part of the application, not least the issue of crossing the L1320 - Mountain Road. Funding has been received from a Low Cost Accident scheme for design & construction of a pedestrian crossing which will be provided separately by the Infrastructure & Operations Unit of Galway County Council and, in advance of completing the proposed housing development.

An indicative location / desire line for a pedestrian crossing is shown on the drawings. The most appropriate location for the pedestrian crossing is to be agreed on site with the Connemara MD and in accordance with overarching proposals currently being considered for this area.

Conclusion

Existing social housing demand in Connemara Central area of choice (Maigh Cuilinn & Oughterard) is 267 households with 215 of these (80%) requiring a 1-bed or 2-bed. There remains an ongoing demand for the 31 units proposed in this development, 90% of which are 2-beds, in line with the predominant need. The proposed development will result in the utilization of existing Residential Phase 1 zoned lands owned by Galway Co. Co. in response to a significant public housing need.

The proposal results in a development which accords with the proper and sustainable development of the area and, which is in accordance with relevant local, regional and national planning policies and objectives.

Issues have been identified with pedestrian safety and surface water ponding at Mountain Road as referenced above. It is confirmed that measures will be taken by Galway County Council's Infrastructure and Operations Unit to address same, prior to completion of the proposed development.

Immediate improvements and safety enhancements to the existing playground access & parking will be realized as part of the proposals. Likewise for users of the Bring Bank which will be relocated at a safer location within the new estate access road.

This Part 8 planning application process, if successful, will allow Galway County Council, in conjunction the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, to move forward with the construction of 31 no. homes.

