

Galway County Council

Loughrea Town Hall

Design Statement to accompany Part 8 Application

Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) and Part 8 of the Planning & Development Regulations 2001 (as amended)

Pursuant to the requirements of the above, **Galway County Council** propose to carry out the following works:

- The renovation and refurbishment of the building to accommodate a change of use to provide a multi-functional performance and event space with supporting uses at ground floor level and a creative enterprise hub and co-working space with meeting rooms and open-plan areas at first floor level.
- The development includes demolition of the existing annex building to the rear and construction of a replacement annex to the rear of the building.
- The proposed development includes connection to existing services, associated site works, boundary treatments and new signage.

The subject works are located within Loughrea Architectural Conservation Area and include works to a Recorded Protected Structure No. 315 and listed on the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage No. 30337027.

The proposed development which is the subject of this Part 8 application is standalone to the previous Part 8 granted (LA/0613).

A Stage 1 'Appropriate Assessment' screening was carried out for the proposed development and Galway County Council has concluded that a Stage 2 'Appropriate Assessment' (Natura Impact Assessment- NIS) is not required.

November 2021 Galway County Council, Áras an Chontae Prospect Hill Galway

1. Introduction

Galway County Council is seeking Part 8 planning approval to carry out the following works at the former Townhall building, Barrack Street, Loughrea, County Galway:

- The change of use for the main building to, at ground floor level: a multi-functional performance and event space and supporting uses, at first floor level: a creative enterprise hub and co-working space with meeting rooms and open-plan areas. New uses within the proposed new annex building are, at ground floor level: a new elevator and lobby, universal accessible male and female sanitary conveniences and changing rooms, at mezzanine level a multi-function learning hub, training room and visual arts creation space, at first floor level a canteen, and at roof level mechanical plant and green planted roof to comply with the Sustainable Urban Drainage requirement.
- The works will include demolition of the existing annex building and the construction of a new annex building.
- Demolition within the main building of the projector room, the raked concrete floor at entrance level, minor localised demolition of external walls to facilitate proposed new circulation and new fenestration.
- Demolition of minor external elements including the granite stone steps at the eastern-most entrance door on Barrack Street, the rear boundary wall, pillars and gates. The pilar and gate on Church Street will be demolished and then reconstructed to facilitate access to the site during the construction process.
- Replacement of existing six-over-six timber sash windows and external and internal timber doors.
- Replacement of existing rainwater goods.
- Repair of existing roof structure and finishes. Replacement of existing roof slates with approximately 30% salvage rate for existing slates.
- Removal of the existing fireplace at first floor, the chimneys are to be repaired and capped.
- Raking out and repointing of stonework where required.
- Site work to include new security gates, boundary treatments, landscaping, and associated works.
- Thermal upgrade works to the main building including: under-floor insulation (replacement floor to entire ground floor area excluding the main stair lobby), the incorporation of calcium silicate boards as insulation (facilitated by the removal of the existing dry lining system as described in the accompanying Architectural Survey & Assessment document), roof insulation over the existing steel trusses (facilitated through the renovation of the existing roof).
- Renewable energy source is to be an air source heat pump and energy efficiency will be addressed through a mechanical ventilation system with heat recovery.
- New facade mounted, polished metal, illuminated signage refer to drawings herewith for position and extent.
- Existing rough dash rendered walls are to cleaned and repainted.
- Existing stone cladding and sills are to be cleaned and the limestone is to receive a clear, breathable sealant.

2. Background

The former Townhall building is in the ownership of Galway County Council. It is a sevenbay, two-storey building composed in the classical tradition and makes a significant contribution to the streetscape. The ground floor walls are clad in ashlar limestone with the fenestration piercing blind arcades at each bay along the street elevations. The walls at first floor level are rough dash render. The building was designed by Samuel Roberts Ussher in 1862 on the site of the old linen hall for The Marquess of Clanricarde. In 1928 the building was handed over to the people of Loughrea by Lord Lascelles. During the war years 1931 to 1939 it was converted to a cinema at ground floor and a ballroom at the upper floor. It is a Protected Structure (Ref: 315) and National Inventory of Architectural Heritage No 30337027

The structure consists of two parts, the main building which fronts onto Barrack Street with an annex structure to the rear on the north elevation. The main building consists of two large rooms, one over the other at ground and first floors, which are served by a generous stairs at the western end. The construction of the annex building took place in two stages across two different eras to adapt the changing use of the main building. The eastern part was most likely constructed some years after the completion of the main building while the western half was added around the same time as the cinema conversion in the 1930s. This sombre building has remained vacant for an extensive period of time and is consequently falling into disrepair.

3. Description of the Project

The Townhall has particular social and historical importance for the town of Loughrea and its proposed renovation and repurposing would bring it back into community use and save it from further dereliction. Once operational, it would provide space for the numerous community groups in Loughrea, accommodate local enterprise and act as an attraction for visitors to the town.

This project will involve the renovation of the main building and the demolition of the existing annex building to make way for the construction of a new, universally accessible, and code compliant annex, which will be designed to support the functions of the main building.

The demolition of the annex building is required firstly because it is in a serious state of dereliction and secondly because its tight footprint make it impossible to alter the internal arrangement to achieve building regulation compliance (particularly universal accessibility). These space constraints also prohibit the installation of adequate sanitary provision in response to the full quantity and variety of end users. It is worth noting that John Britton Consulting engineers stated in their report of 2013 that the then proposed works to the Annex 'involved the removal of the entirety of the roof, floor (ground and first) and internal walls' as well as the stairs which would need to be relocated to achieve fire code compliance. In essence, only the external walls would remain which, for the reasons listed above, is no longer a viable solution (for extent of demolition refer to Drawing No's LTH-GCC-XXX-00-DR-A-003, 004, 008 & 010 floor plans, elevations, & sections).

The former cinema on the ground floor of the main building will be converted to a multifunction performance and event space which would accommodate approximately 140 persons. There will be a ticketing office in the lobby of the eastern entrance and a control room above this at intermediate level to monitor the productions. At first floor level, the former ballroom will house a creative enterprise hub and co-working space with enclosed meeting rooms and open-plan office areas. The existing steel roof trusses will be renovated and exposed to bring added drama to this magnificently proportioned space, which is filled with natural light by the tall, elegant windows that also afford views across the lake.

To address thermal comfort and improve energy efficiency, the internal face of the existing walls will have their timber lath and plaster removed and subsequently be lined with a calcium silicate board which will support vapour diffusion while insulating the spaces. The existing ground bearing floor will be removed and reinstated incorporating a radon and moisture barrier membrane and new thermal insulation. The mechanical services will include a ventilation system which makes use of heat recovery technology to reduce energy demand and to reduce the risk of condensation. This system will be designed to provide adequate ventilation to the contrasting uses on each of the floors whose demand will vary greatly especially when the performance space is filled to capacity.

The new annex building will house the service elements of the structures thereby dedicating the spaces within the main building to the primary functions of the facility and allowing the majesty of these spaces to be preserved. The new elevator, the male, female, and universal accessible sanitary conveniences, changing rooms, and the canteen will all be accommodated within the new annex. The generous floor to ceiling height of the main building allows for the introduction of a new mezzanine floor in the annex (permitted by the demolition of the existing annex) to accommodate a multi-function learning hub, training room and visual arts creation space. At first floor level a canteen will be provided to cater for the creative enterprise hub and co-working space. The mechanical plant will be located on the flat roof over the new annex which will be a planted green roof to provide surface water attenuation and address the Sustainable Urban Drainage requirement.

New freestanding, metal, illuminated signage will be positioned on the gable elevation on Church Street, and above the eastern and western-most entrances on Barrack Street. The lighting element will be concealed within the construction of each of the signs. The illuminated signage will serve to indicate the location of the main entry points (to persons of all abilities) and to announce the contemporary functions within this important historical building.

It is proposed that upon demolition of the annex, a temporary structure be fixed into position to protect the main building from the elements until such time as construction of the new annex is commenced. This structure will preserve the fabric of the main building which, up until this point, would have been covered by the existing annex. This structure will be UPVC sheet on treated timber battens with profiled metal sheeting over for added security.

The full scope of the works are described in the drawings, outline specification, and accompanying documents herewith.



Figure 1. Townhall building in context – Aerial View

Figure 2. Townhall building in the streetscape – Barrack Street



4. Planning Context

National Planning Framework

This project is being applied for as a result of a funding award by the Rural Regeneration Development Fund, part of Project Ireland 2040. It is a primary objective of the National Planning Framework (NPF) national strategic outcome 7, to provide enhanced amenity and heritage. The proposed development seeks to address this by renovating a historic building, enhancing and improving the visual amenity of the streetscape and bringing the building into community use within the historic town centre.

Regional Economic & Spatial Strategy (RSES)

The North West Regional Assembly formally made the RSES on the 20th January 2020. This document seeks to guide development in the north western region as a whole. The adopted document contains numerous policies supporting the proposed works including RPO 3.4, To support the regeneration and renewal of small towns and villages in rural areas and RPO 5.14, Support the conservation of the Region's National Monuments and built heritage, structures that are of special architectural, historic, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social, or technical interest that are of Regional Significance or above.

Galway County Development Plan

A primary objective of the Galway County Development Plan 2015-2021 (CDP) is the proper planning and sustainable development of County Galway over the period 2015-2021 and beyond. The development plan sets out the overall vision, with strategies, policies, and objectives for the county as a whole. The proposal is in compliance with the CDP strategy to ensure that the physical environment and streetscape is enhanced, that streets are designed and well-lit and therefore

In accordance with the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), the planning authority is required to prepare a Local Area Plan (LAP) for towns with a population of more than 5,000 persons. The current Loughrea Local Area Plan 2012 – 2018 was deferred in July 2017 for a period of 5 years to 2022.

Loughrea Local Area Plan

The Loughrea Local Area Plan 2012-2018 (LAP) has been prepared in accordance with the requirements and provisions of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended). It sets out an overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of Loughrea in the context of the Galway County Development Plan 2015-2021 (CDP) and the Regional Planning Guidelines. It is informed by Ministerial Guidelines issued pursuant to Section 28 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, together with EU requirements regarding Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Appropriate Assessment (AA).

In order to preserve areas of architectural value, the Loughrea Architectural Conservation Area (ACA) has been designated. The Townhall falls within the ACA.

The Townhall site is designated Zone C1 Town Centre / Commercial

This proposal is supported by 3 key strategic priorities of the LAP:

• "Protecting and enhancing the heritage and character of Loughrea, including natural assets, environment, built heritage, public realm, local character and amenity, for the benefit of current and future generations."

- "Promoting strong community spirit, social inclusion, civic pride and local identity for the town within the broader rural area surrounding Loughrea."
- "Facilitating the provision of a range of facilities, amenities and supporting services to serve the needs of the town, including educational, recreational, religious, social, community and civic requirements for children, youths, adults and the elderly."

This proposal also seeks to comply with the following objectives as set out in the LAP:

Objective LU 1 – Town Centre (C1) (Refer to Map 1)

Promote the development of the Town Centre as an intensive, high quality, welllandscaped, human-scaled and accessible environment, with an appropriate mix of uses, including residential, commercial, service, tourism, enterprise, public and community uses as appropriate, that provides a range of retail services, facilities and amenities to the local community and visitors to the town. The town centre and associated main streets will remain the primary focus for retail and service activity in Loughrea.

Objective CF2 – Universal Access

Ensure that housing developments, community facilities, public spaces, public roads, public footpaths and transport services give due consideration to the needs of disabled or mobility impaired people and the requirements of the Disability Act 2005 and the Council's Disability Action Plan 2007-2015 and the Traffic Management Guidelines 2003 (an

Policy CF 2 – Community Facilities and Amenities

It is the policy of the Council to support the provision of an adequate level and equitable distribution of community facilities and amenities in the plan area that:

- Meets the needs of the local community as they arise and as resources permit.
- Are located in appropriate, accessible locations to serve the residential population in the plan area.

• Are clustered or linked together wherever facilities and amenities are complementary and it is practicable to do so, to allow for shared and multi-purpose use of facilities.

Objective BH 2 – Protected Structures

Ensure the protection and sympathetic enhancement of structures included and proposed for inclusion in the Record of Protected Structures (RPS) that are of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social, or technical interest, together with the integrity of their character and setting.

Objective BH3 – Architectural Conservation Areas

Protect, conserve, and enhance the essential character of the Loughrea Architectural Conservation Area, through the appropriate management and control of the design, location and layout of new development, alterations, or extensions to existing structures, and/or modifications to the setting of the structure and the character of the Architectural Conservation Area (ACA).

Objective BH5 – Development Relating to Protected Structures and ACA

Ensure that any development, modifications, alterations, or extensions materially affecting the character of a protected structure, or structure adjoining a protected structure, or

structure within or adjacent to the Architectural Conservation Area, is sited and designed appropriately and is not detrimental to the character or setting of the protected structure, or the Architectural Conservation Area. This will include the following:

- a) Works materially affecting the character of a protected structure or the exterior of a building/structure within an Architectural Conservation Area will require planning permission.
- b) Any works/development carried out to a protected structure or the exterior of a building/structure within an Architectural Conservation Area shall be in accordance with best conservation practice and use sustainable and appropriate materials.
- c) Works/development within the Architectural Conservation Area shall ensure the conservation of traditional features and building elements which contribute to the character of the area.
- d) Prohibit development proposals either in whole or part, for the demolition of protected structures, save in exceptional circumstances, or the demolition of structures within an architectural conservation area that contribute to the special character of the area.

Objective HC 5 – Energy Efficiency and Traditional Buildings

Ensure that measures to upgrade the energy efficiency of protected structures and traditionally built structures/buildings are sensitive to traditional construction methods and use appropriate materials and do not have detrimental impact on the material, aesthetic, visual character, or function of the building.

Objective U15 – Surface Water Drainage and Sustainable Drainage Systems

Maintain and enhance, as appropriate, the existing surface water drainage system in the Plan Area, ensure that new developments are adequately serviced with surface water drainage infrastructure and promote the use of Sustainable Drainage Systems in all new developments. Surface water runoff from development sites will be limited to predevelopment levels and planning applications for new developments will be required to provide details of surface water drainage and Sustainable Drainage Systems proposals.

5. Design and General Factors

The proposal brief takes into consideration the architectural integrity of the main building, its prominence in the streetscape, and the importance of its setting within the ACA. The primary objective of the brief is to improve and enhance the significance of this protected structure, within the broader context of the ACA, through carefully considered restoration which will allow it to be repurposed. Through this restoration proposal, the entire setting of Barrack Street will be bolstered, while the buildings conservation will win its place back within the heart of the community. The proposed works have been designed to be sympathetic to this context and to promote the status of the Town Hall.

The new annex has been designed to be subservient to the main building in height and scale. The proposed surface finishes will take inspiration from the main building and compliment it. The removal of the existing annex, with its confusion of levels and volumes, will not result in a loss of the character to the main building, whereas the replacement annex with its simplicity of form will serve to accentuate the features of the historic main

building. The gable end of the new annex will be set well back from the well-proportioned church street elevation of the main building, with its temple-like presence, such that it remains visually inconspicuous.

Restorative works to the main building will be undertaken to conserve its salient features and to facilitate its repurposing. For example: the replacement fenestration and doors will take into consideration the number, scale and proportion of the constituent elements while introducing thermal comfort and longevity. The replacement doors along the Barrack Street elevation will be housed in new timber frames which will be formed to accept the existing lattice work top-lights. All works will therefore be designed in such a way as to improve and enhance the presence of this historic building within the context of the conservation area.

From a technical standpoint, the proposed renovation works will include appropriate measures to reduce carbon emissions and to improve thermal comfort for the building's occupants. These measures will include:

- the replacement of fenestration will energy efficient contextually sympathetic fenestration.
- the introduction of lime-based renders,
- new wall insulation to internal face of external walls,
- over-truss insulation and diffusible membranes,
- below floor rigid insulation and radon and moisture barrier membranes,
- bespoke, timber framed, doubled glazed windows with slim profile beading,
- purpose designed mechanical ventilation to regulate humidity and reduce energy demand,
- the introduction of renewable energy source heating systems.

In order to bring this building back into community use, all proposed works have been designed with due consideration of Part B and Part M of the National Building Regulations. The designs will be further developed and implemented, in accordance with Parts A to M of the Technical Guidance Documents once this application has received approval.

6. Architectural Heritage

The Townhall occupies a prominent position on Barrack Street in Loughrea. Its scale, massing, rhythm, and proportions are distinctive and contribute to its significance and character. Its original civic and social standing will not be compromised by the proposed works, as the grand, open spaces will be retained reflecting their former purpose. The proposed development will have a positive impact on the ACA by bringing back into use a very important local building which is currently in a state of disrepair.

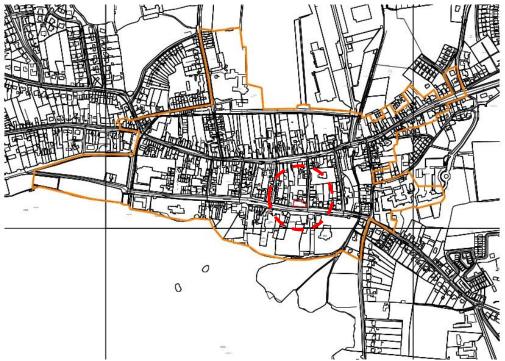


Figure 3: Loughrea Architectural Conservation Area

7. Protected status

The proposal involves carefully considered works to the former Townhall building which is number 315 on Galway County Council's Record of Protected Structures. The Townhall is listed as number 30337027 in the NIAH. Please refer to the Architect's Survey and Assessment which accompanies this application for detailed evaluation of the Townhall building.

8. Natural Heritage

The site is located 110 meters from Lough Rea which is a designated SPA, SAC, and Natural Heritage Area, as part of the Natura 2000 network.

It is located within 15 km of the following Special Areas of Conservation:

- SAC: Lough Rea SAC
- SAC: Sonnagh Bog SAC
- SAC: Peterswell Turlough SAC
- SAC: Rahasane Turlough SAC
- SPA: Slieve Aughty Mountains SPA
- SPA: Lough Rea SPA
- SPA: Rahasane Turlough SPA

The site is situated within the existing town centre and primarily involves works to an existing structure. The proposed demolition and reconstruction of the annex building will take place to the rear of the main building, separated from the street, being wholly enclosed by existing structures, thereby reducing the likelihood of any direct linkage with an SAC. The

external works are not of a significant scale sufficient to have a direct or indirect impact on the SAC's and SPA being 135 metres at its closest point to the proposed development across a built-up area.

Please refer to the Ecologists Appropriate Assessment Screening report and report on Bats and Swifts submitted in support of this application.

9. Surface Water Management

a) Sustainable Urban Drainage strategy

The Loughrea LAP notes the following: "There is no dedicated surface water sewer network serving Loughrea. In order to ensure that surface water is disposed of in a controlled and sustainable manner, future developments will be required to address surface water disposal through on-site systems, (depending on site characteristics), discharge to adjacent surface water (where available), or discharge to an existing surface water sewer if available."

John Britton Consulting Engineers report states that: 'Barrack Street is served with foul and storm water sewerage at suitable depths for connections. The existing connections may well be reusable.'

As part of these works it is proposed that existing storm water and foul connections be reused.

85% of this town centre site is presently covered by buildings. In addressing the Sustainable Urban Drainage requirement, the proposed development will incorporate an attenuating, planted green roof system which will encompass part of the flat roof (that which is not occupied by mechanical equipment). In addition to this, the portion of the site which will not be covered by the proposed annex, will incorporate permeable paving. The use of onsite soak pits is not feasible in this instance due to the tight confines of the site and could therefore lead to damage of the foundations of the historic structure.

b) Site coverage and sustainable drainage:

The below analysis of site area and attenuation shows a potential reduction in surface water discharge from the site.

- 85% of the site is presently covered with structures and has zero surface water attenuation capacity.
 Site area: 508m2
 Existing site coverage area: 436m2
 Existing surface water attenuation on site: 0m2
- 91% of the site will be covered under this proposal and will have 75m2 surface water attenuation capacity added.
 Proposed site coverage area: 464m2 (increase of 28m2)

Proposed surface water attenuation on site: 18m2 + 57m2 = 75m2

c) Surface water drainage summary

There will be no increased load on the existing surface water drainage system from the proposed development as demonstrated in the above SUD calculation and text. Furthermore, construction work will take place behind the main building, enclosed by neighbouring structures, and be set back 15 meters from Church Street. It is the intention to reuse the existing storm and foul connections in the combined storm and foul sewer in conjunction with the SUD system on site. The geography of the site, and the typical 'best practice' construction procedures expected for this type of development, will mean that during construction an insignificant amount of construction contaminated surface water might reach the existing combined drainage system. The existing drainage network leads to the local treatment plant.

10. Flood Risk Management

In respect of flood risk, the land use for the site is designated as Less Vulnerable Development and it is located in Flood Zone C. Therefore, the site is deemed to be appropriate for development. Flood Zone C is rated as having low probability of flooding < 1:1000 for river flooding.

11. Traffic Management Strategy

a) Parking provision:

The greatest demand for parking will be driven by the proposed performance space. Given that most functions will take place in the evening time, this demand will not coincide with the peak demand period in the town which falls within normal business hours. The District Court occupies a number of bays at the end of Barrack Street which will also be free for use after hours. Therefore, the majority of the on-street parking bays (which cease to be paid parking after-hours), along with the Barrack Street carpark, will be available to satisfy the Townhall requirement.

The number of available parking bays are as follows:

Barrack Street car park:	57
Barrack Street pay parking on-street bays:	144 incl. 2 E-Vehicle charging points
Castle Street:	11
Church Street:	8
Kelly Street:	7
King Street:	16
Piggot Street:	19
Total bays:	262bays

The occupancy figure for the Townhall for all floors is: 216 seated persons

There is a signalised pedestrian crossing in front of the eastern-most entrance to the Townhall which is served by drop kerbs and tactile paving making it universally accessible.

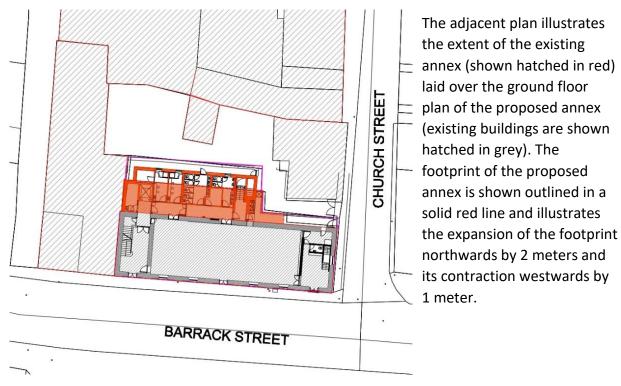
b) Construction traffic:

Construction Traffic will have little impact on Barrack Street by virtue of the fact that the majority of the works will take place to the rear of the main building which is accessed via Church Street. The impact of the works on Church Street circulation can be managed by restricting large deliveries to the site to fall place outside of the busiest days in the town which are Thursdays, Fridays and Saturday mornings. Given the tight constraints of this site, if required, machinery can be parked off-street at the Local Area Office which is a short distance away. Equipment, machinery and materials can also be stored in the local GCC depots reducing the impact on local circulation.

12. Amenity Value Impact Comparative Analysis

The purpose of the proposed works to the historic Town Hall is to bolster it's presence within the wider context of the Architectural Conservation Area. As it presently stands, it's state of accelerating decrepitude prohibits it from contributing to the social and built fabric of this place. These works will enhance the status of the main building within the conservation area and reinvigorate it's position of importance within the town's psyche.

Construction work involving modification of the external envelope will take place largely to the rear or north facing aspect of the main Town Hall building. The proposed works involve the demolition of the existing annex building and will result in a minor increase in footprint area. The new annex will remain one meter back from the boundary wall and rear wall of the adjoining property. The parapet height will closely match the main building eaves in height which is presently the case with part of the existing annex. Consequently, there will be no significant change in the extent of shadow cast over the rear yard of neighbouring properties when compared to the existing condition. North facing windows in the new annex will have frosted glazing to ensure privacy for neighbouring properties which will be an improvement over the present condition.





The adjacent elevations illustrate the extent of the existing annex (shown hatched in red) laid over the elevation of the proposed annex. This demonstrates the increase in height of the new annex (up to eaves height of the main building) and its reduction in width as it shrinks back from the Church Street elevation.

From the above note and diagrams, it can be concluded that there will be no perceivable change in the immediate environment should the existing annex be replaced with a new structure of similar height and footprint.

Works to the main building will be restorative and be specifically aimed at repurposing the main spaces such that the building can be successfully reintegrated into the community and be preserved.

13. Pre-Part 8 Consultations

Pre-Part 8 consultations were undertaken with the following key stakeholders: Galway County Council

- a) Planning Department
- b) Portumna Municipal District Area Engineer
- c) Roads and Transportation Department
- d) Conservation Officer

14. Part 8 Consultations

It is intended that details of the proposed scheme will be referred to the following in conjunction with the public advertising of the proposals.

Loughrea Municipal District Elected Members

- a) Councillor Joe Byrne
- b) Councillor Ivan Canning
- c) Councillor Shane Curley
- d) Councillor Geraldine Donohue
- e) Councillor Gerry Finnerty
- f) Councillor Pat Hynes
- g) Councillor Martina Kinane
- h) Councillor Michael Maher
- i) Councillor Jimmy McClearn
- j) Councillor PJ Murphy