

Submission on the Draft Limerick Development Plan 2022-2028 on behalf of Galbally Tidy Towns Committee.

20th August 2021

On behalf of the Galbally Tidy Towns Committee, I wish to make a few observations on the *Draft Limerick Development Plan 2022-28*. As someone who has spent most of my life in the village, I feel many of topics outlined in the Plan are of interest both personally and to the Committee. Firstly, I would like to thank Limerick County Council for the preparation of the Plan and their great cooperation with us down through the years, which played a massive role in helping us win the Tidy Towns competition in 1994. Our village and its surrounding community is one of the most viable villages in the County outside the City Environs. Our population increased by 13 between Census 2011 and 2016 and hopefully will increase further in the next Census to be carried out in 2022.

I note the inclusion of Galbally as a Level 5, “Small Village” in “**Chapter 3 Settlement and Housing Strategy**” and Volume 2 of the Draft Plan. I would like to support some of the policies in the plan with regard to the sustainable development of Galbally Village and ensure it remains a viable and thriving place into the future. **Section 3.7.6 “Re-use of Buildings” and Chapter 10 “Compact Growth and Revitalisation”** (including Section 10.5 “Revitalisation of Towns and Villages”) is of key importance in promoting this. Active land management/dealing with derelict sites is very important. The Council needs to strengthen policy on this and ensure a system of monitoring is put in place to achieve this if necessary. For example one of the derelict properties in the village was taken over by the Council and has since been sold. Other properties need to be acquired, so that an example is given that it’s not acceptable to allow properties to lie idle for years. This includes properties in private ownership or those in receivership>Nama or owned by other money lenders. The psychological effect of having properties occupied and in good condition is huge in encouraging people both to remain in and to come to live in the village. As I have experienced myself, there are huge advantages to living in a village- less car travel, more easily accessible public transport, less travel to school for children and other amenities- broadband, access to water/sewerage connections, street lighting etc. One of main aims should be to encourage people back to living in the village as they used to. This could be the reuse of existing buildings or living over business premises. Some suggestions to encourage this include: reduction in electricity charges, bin collection charges, reduced property tax, more grants for house repair/renovation, reduced broadband charges, maintain public transport. Local businesses should be encouraged by reducing rates and water charges. The Council could liaise with statutory bodies to help achieve this. While the actions proposed under “**Chapter 8 Climate Action, Flood Risk and Transition to Low Carbon Economy**” are welcome, more practical methods such as those suggested above need to be taken, to encourage people to live in the most sustainable locations by supporting residential populations in towns and villages.

Galbally Village Square is very important from an architectural heritage perspective and more consideration may need to be given to protect this. If it is not felt that Architectural Conservation Area designation is needed, then a lower level of protection to protect its heritage value may be considered. Many of the shopfronts and building facades in the village are original, dating back to pre-1841. One shop in the village (Cummins') recently celebrated 200 years in business.

In terms of “**Chapter 9 Sustainable Communities and Social Infrastructure**”, Galbally village has a vibrant community and I note some of the amenities that have been listed for the village in Volume 2. We have 2 viable groceries stores, one which includes the post office, 2 hairdressers, a butcher, coffee shop, 1 health clinic (local GP, chiropodist), GAA, soccer, rugby clubs (all of whom have their own pitches), athletics, cycling, walking, Men's Shed, children's playground, tennis court, viable national school and pre-school. There are also water and walking resources and potential for tourism development. Encouraging people to live in the village is key to sustaining this and promoting the “10 minute neighbourhood” concept.

Another way to promote the village is to ensure the provision of a good broadband service. The village has been cabled for high fibre broadband but not installed into houses yet, which is most urgent. Somewhere like the Community Centre could be promoted perhaps as a “rural hub” as mentioned in “Objective ECON 022. Rural enterprise and employment is very important and locations where local people can work remotely with high-speed broadband connections would be a key way of achieving this.

Finally I'd like to comment on issues relating to wastewater and sanitation and water quality (**Chapters 5 Environment, Heritage, Landscape and Green Infrastructure and 7 Infrastructure**). Galbally Village used to have a problem with flooding but this was greatly resolved by cooperation between the local Council engineer, Tidy Towns and a private farmer. The Inland Fisheries are very familiar with the local rivers and wildlife above and below water. They have been advising the Committee on the protection of riverlife especially the local Lamprey species, when to clean the local stream etc. However one of the most urgent problems that needs to be solved both to protect water quality and ensure future, sustainable development of the village, is upgrading the local wastewater treatment plant. This would be a huge advantage in increasing its capacity and improving the quality of the outflow into the Aherlow River, which is a dedicated Salmon and Trout spawning river as part of the Suir catchment. A possible wetland (reedbed) system could be looked at to filter the outflow, though this may involve acquiring a piece of land.

Thanks for taking the time to read my submission and hopefully it may provide some useful suggestions in promoting the vitality and viability of Galbally Village into the future!

Tim Ryan,

Chairperson, Galbally Tidy Towns Committee.