



Submission to Land Development Agency and Galway City Council on The Corrib Causeway Project

August 2024

Firstly, we welcome Galway City Council working in partnership with the Land Development Agency for the delivery of the Corrib Causeway. We would like to commend them on having the vision to develop this brownfield site on the banks of the Corrib and it is hugely positive to see this proposal for the development of much needed social and affordable housing in Galway City.

Further, it is very evident that a lot of consideration and planning have gone into the development proposal, taking into account important objectives relating to providing secure affordable housing, the green and blue infrastructure, the public realm, placemaking and creating inclusive communities.

We would like to make two observations.

Proportion of Social Housing

We would ask that the current plan to keep the social housing element within the development to a minimum of 10% be reconsidered. While we appreciate that there is significant need for both social and affordable housing, we would ask that the number of social homes to be delivered within the project would be increased to 15 or 20%.

There are approximately 4,600 households on the Social Housing Waiting List in Galway City, with 1,694 households counted in the most recent Social Housing Needs Assessment¹ (2023). In 2023, approximately 180 new social homes were delivered against a target of approximately 220 (81%). At this pace of delivery, (2023 was not unusual in not meeting targets), it will take approximately 26 years (until 2050) to meet current need, without considering the projected 50% growth in the population of the City by 2040 under the government's long-term overarching strategy Project Ireland 2040.

Given significant and consistent under delivery in recent years, there is an opportunity here to deliver an additional 10-20 much needed social homes.

Disperse social housing units in this mixed tenure development.

We welcome that the plan is 'tenure blind' and that the social housing units have been designed to the same specification as the affordable rental units, and we note that this approach is consistent with the recommendations from a number of different research studies.

However, we are concerned that the plan is to create one mono tenure block of social housing within the development rather than disperse the social housing units in order to create a social mix. The findings of a number of reports highlight the benefits of social mix or pepper potting over social clustering or stratification, with views of tenants, Local Authorities and AHB Social Housing Professionals reflected in research.

The argument was made at the consultation that it will be cheaper to maintain one block of social housing units. We would ask that, if we are truly committed to the aim of improving social mix, that a development led by two public bodies would look to challenge this assumption further.

In terms of Housing Policy, we have been years speaking of the Vienna Model and about best practice internationally in terms of social mix and aspiring to same. There is an opportunity here for two State bodies to further enhance the social mix in this development rather than perpetuating social stratification.

¹ <https://www.housingagency.ie/data-hub/households-qualified-social-housing-support>

In relation to costs, there are three key landlord costs:

1. Management of common areas. If a true social mix were to be created and social housing units are pepper potted across the development, it could be relatively easy for say the Housing Agency as the 90% landlord to cover 100% of the landlord utility bills etc and reallocate 10% (or 15/20% if the social housing allocation were to be increased) of these costs to the Local Authority on a pro rata basis.
2. Cyclical Maintenance. If the principle of tenure blind is to continue into the future of the development, it will be important that the cyclical maintenance programme is similar for both affordable rental and social housing units. Having a different programme, under a different body/landlord, for social housing could give rise to the potential that the principle of tenure blind would be diluted over time. As such, there is potential for the larger landlord/management body to coordinate the programme for the entire development and again reallocate the costs proportionately.
3. Reactive Maintenance. In terms of reactive maintenance, it really doesn't make a significant difference to a maintenance technician whether they are going to number 10 or number 110, if they are only going to one unit at a time on a reactive basis. Arguably, there would be lower reactive maintenance in a social mix scenario because people would feel more that they are part of a settled estate, rather than identifiable in a mono tenure block.

There is considerable research available in relation to the dispersal and clustering of social housing, see several references below. We would ask that the merits of dispersal over clustering would be considered further for this development.

- Social Housing in Mixed Tenure Communities: <https://www.housingagency.ie/publications/social-housing-mixed-tenure-communities>
- Rebuilding the Irish Neighbourhood: <https://www.housingagency.ie/publications/rebuilding-irish-neighbourhood>
- Living Together (UK study): <https://urbanrim.org.uk/cache/Jupp-mixed-tenure.pdf>
- Developing and Sustaining Mixed Tenure Housing Developments (UK study): <https://urbanrim.org.uk/cache/Bailey-and-Manzi.pdf>
- Combatting stigmatisation of social housing neighbourhoods in Dublin, Ireland: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/19491247.2018.1532673>

We wish you every success with the timely development of the Corrib Causeway, a very welcome redevelopment of this key public site in Galway City.